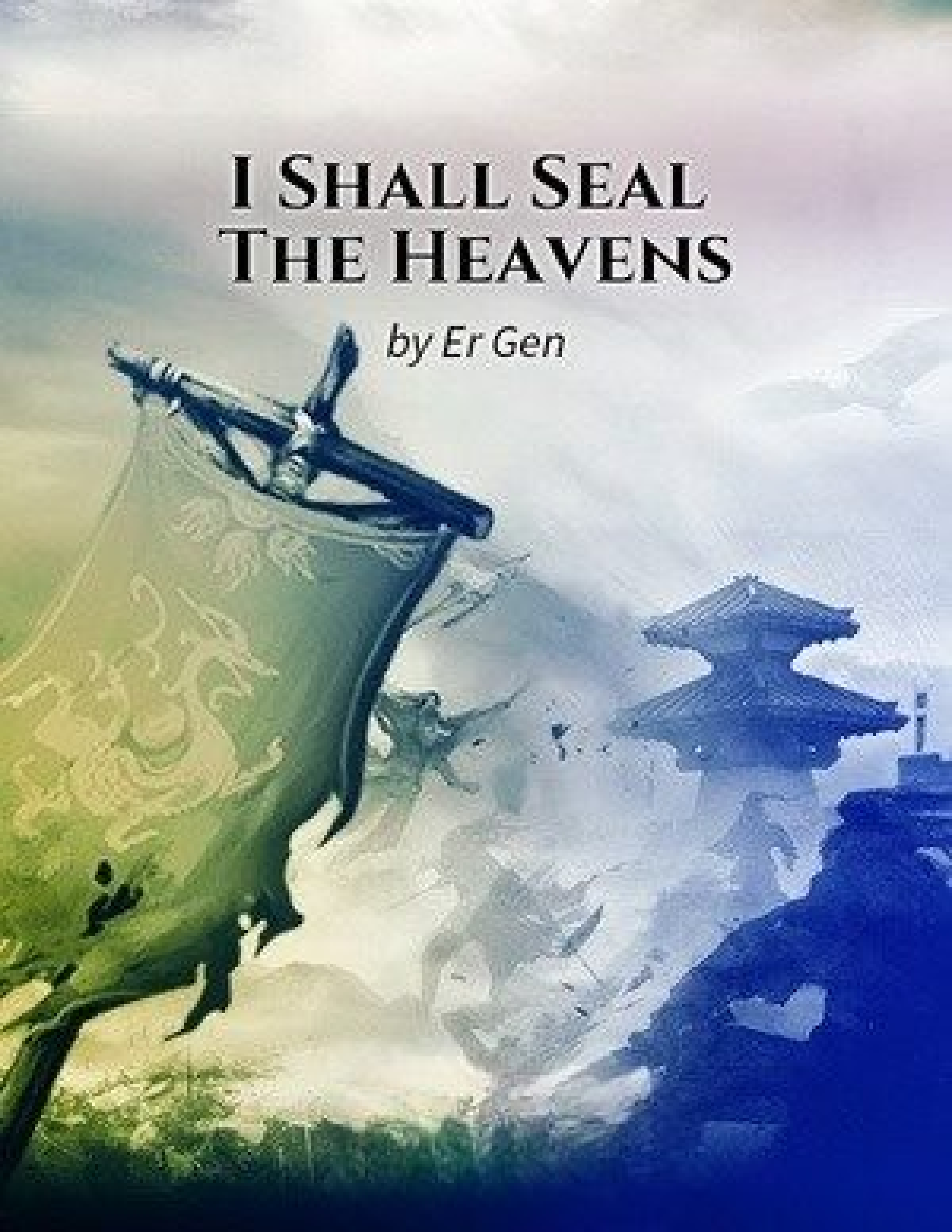
# I SHALL SEAL THE HEAVENS

*by Er Gen*



# Information

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# Chapter 0: Interlude

Interlude (beware of quasi, micro-“spoilers” of Xian Ni and Beseech the Devil!)

Amidst the boundless stars exists a vast, almost endless continent that seemed to be the very edge of the universe. It was apparently the last stop before the end of everything.

An infinite amount of spirits existed in this place, in the eastern region of which was a lake. Next to the lake was a house with a courtyard. Sitting next to the lake was middle-aged man, currently fishing. He had a mark on his forehead that appeared as if it might be a third eye. He looked handsome and intelligent, and his entire person emanated a strange, heretical aura.

He sat there, seemingly fused with the world itself, as if when he opened his eyes, it was day, and when he closed them, it was night.

This was Su Ming, also known as Old Devil Su.

After some time passed, he lifted his head and looked up into the sky. A figure was approaching, that reached him almost immediately.

“Pockmarked Wang,” said Su Ming slowly, his eyes shining brightly. “I’ve been waiting for you for a long time.”

“Old Devil Su, I’ve been here for quite some time.” He was a middle-aged man with a full head of white hair. His features were beyond ordinary, and he possessed an indescribable aura. His smile and his voice made him seem as if he were the Lord of everything. He seemed to have lived a life of killing, a life of defiance of the Heavens. His name was Wang Lin, also known as Pockmarked Wang.

“I heard that Er Gen was violated again,” Su Ming said.

Wang Lin laughed. “He violated so many other people in the past… this is simply the cycle of Karma. I’ve been separated from him by countless stars, for three years. I haven’t really been paying much attention to him.” A ponderous look filled his eyes as he stared out over the lake water, apparently recalling old memories.

“This time, he was violated by a large group of people,” said Su Ming slowly.

“Then violate them back!” said Wang Lin calmly with the flick of a sleeve.

“I am Wang Lin from Xian Ni!”

“I am Su Ming from Beseech the Devil!”

“For the sake of the five years of these stories, the both of us beg all Fellow Daoists to give monthly vote tickets to Er Gen and ‘Spirit Stones’ to Deathblade!”

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For those of you who upvoted my comment on reddit a while back, this is the interlude I previously didn’t translate. As usual, this is all Er Gen’s except for the tweak to the final line. By the way, what I’m translating as “violate” literally is “pop the chrysanthemum” which is a euphamism for … ahem. Yeah, you get it. I couldn’t find any information to indicate what the heck is going on in this passage, although some speculation is that it might have to do with certain characteristics of the copper mirror… Your guess is as good as mine, if anyone has more info please let me know….

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# Chapter 1: Scholar Meng Hao

The State of Zhao was a very small nation 1. Like other small nations in the Nanshan Continent, its people admired the Great Tang 2 in the Eastern Lands, and they admired Chang'an 3. Not only did the king carry this admiration, all scholars in the State of Zhao did. They could see it, almost as if they stood atop the Tower of Tang in the capital city, oh so far away.

This April was neither extremely cold, nor scorching hot. Light winds caressed the land, passing the Qiang Di flutes of the Northern Desert, blowing over the lands of the Great Tang. Under the twilight sky, it lifted the fog-like dust, then swirling, twisting, reached Mount Daqing in the State of Zhao. Then it fell onto a young man who sat there on the mountaintop.

He was a lean young man, holding a bottle gourd and wearing a clean blue scholar's robe. He appeared to be about sixteen or seventeen. He was not tall, and his skin was somewhat dark, but his bright eyes sparkled with intelligence. And yet, all his intelligence seemed to be hidden by the frown on his face. He seemed lost.

"Failed again…" He sighed. His name was Meng Hao, an average student from Yunjie County, which lay at the foot of the mountain 4. Years ago, his parents went missing, and did not leave much behind in the way of assets. Education was expensive, so he was almost completely broke.

"I've taken the Imperial exams three years in a row. In all that time, I read books written by the sages until I wanted to throw up. Maybe that isn't the path for me after all." Filled with self-deprecation, he looked down at the gourd bottle, his eyes bleak.

"My dream of becoming an official and getting rich just keeps getting farther and farther away. I might as well forget about trying to reach the

Great Tang… How useless to be a student.” He laughed bitterly. Sitting there on the silent mountaintop, gazing at the bottle gourd in his hand, he looked increasingly lost. He began to feel fear. What would he do in the future? Where would he go?

Perhaps a high-ranking official would take an interest in him, or a beautiful young maiden. Or would he continue to take the exams, year after year?

There were no answers to the questions. He was but a teenager, and this feeling of being lost had devoured him like a giant invisible mouth. He truly felt afraid.

“Even the teachers in town can only make a few pieces of silver. That’s worse than Uncle Wang’s carpenter shop. If I’d realized that earlier, I could have learned some carpentry skills from him. At least then I wouldn’t be starving like I am now.” He grew silent for a while.

“I don’t have much food or money left at home. I owe Steward Zhou three pieces of silver. What am I going to do?” He raised his head and looked up at the sky, blue and grand. It was so large you could not see its ends. Much similar to how he could not see his future.

After a while, Meng Hao shook his head and took out a slip of paper from his robe. He read it carefully, placed it in the gourd bottle, then stood up and threw the gourd down the mountain.

At the bottom of the mountain was a wide river which never froze during the winter, and was said to flow all the way to the Great Tang.

Meng Hao stood on top of the mountain, watching the gourd bottle drift further and further along down the river. He stared unblinking. For a moment, he seemed to have glimpsed his mother, and the happiness of his childhood. The gourd carried his dreams, his wishes, and his hopes for the future. Perhaps one day someone would pick it up, open it, and read the note.

“Regardless of what I do, be it study or work, I will keep living.” This was his personality: intelligent and determined. If he wasn’t this way, he would not have been able to survive after his parents left.

He raised his head toward the sky, the stubborn look in his eyes growing deeper. He was about to head down the mountain.

At that exact moment, he heard a weak voice coming from a nearby cliff. The sound seemed to be borne along by the wind. As it passed Meng Hao's ears, it was almost too faint to notice.

"Help… help…"

Meng Hao stopped for a moment, shocked, then listened carefully. As he concentrated, the sound of the voice calling for help grew stronger.

"Help…"

He walked a few steps forward until he had nearly reached the edge of the peak. When he peered over the edge, he saw a person, his body sticking out of a crevice halfway down the cliff. Pale face full of fear and desperation, he cried for help.

"You… you're Meng Hao, right? Help, Scholar Meng! Help me!" It was a teenager. As soon as he saw Meng Hao, he expressed surprise and happiness, having suddenly found hope in a desperate situation.

"Wang Youcai 5?" Meng Hao's eyes grew wide as he looked at the young man. He was the son of Uncle Wang, who owned the carpentry shop in town. "How did you end up here?"

Meng Hao looked at the crevice. The cliff itself was quite steep, and it seemed impossible to climb down. The slightest carelessness would send the climber falling into the river.

Considering how fast the river flowed, if you fell in, the chances of dying were about ninety percent.

"It's not just me, there are other people from nearby towns," Wang Youcai gushed. "We're all stuck here. Brother Meng, let's not chat, please, just help us get out." Perhaps he had been hanging out of the crack for too long. His hands grasped at the air, and if not for his compatriots, who grabbed him by the shirt, he would have slipped and fell down the cliff. His face turned pale with fear.

Meng Hao realized the danger. But he had climbed the mountain alone today, and had no rope. How could he save anyone? At that moment, he turned and realized that the mountainside was covered with rattan vines.

As frail as he was, it took him two hours to find a rattan vine that was long enough. Breathing heavily, he dragged the rattan to the cliff. Calling out Wang’s name, he bent over and lowered the rattan down the cliff.

“You still haven’t told me how you got down there,” Meng Hao said as he lowered the vine.

“By flying!” It was not Wang Youcai who spoke the words, but another young man who stuck his body out of the crevice next to him. This boy looked feisty and intelligent, and spoke with a loud voice.

“Bullshit! You can fly?” mocked Meng Hao, pulling the rattan vine back up a bit. “If you can fly down here, then why don’t you fly back up?”

“Don’t listen to his nonsense,” said Wang Youcai, clearly worried that Meng Hao wouldn’t lower the rattan vine back down. “We were captured by a flying woman. She said she’s going to take us to some Sect to be servants.”

“More bullshit?” said Meng Hao dismissively. “Only Immortals from legends can do that. Who believes in that?” In books he had read, there were stories of people who became rich after meeting Immortals, but it was all just lies.

Just as the rattan reached the crevice, Wang caught it. But then, Meng Hao suddenly felt a cold wind behind his back. From the temperature around him, it seemed winter had returned. He shivered. He slowly turned to look back, then screamed and stepped forward into emptiness, beginning to fall off the cliff.

He had seen a woman in a long silver robe and pale face, standing there staring at him. It was impossible to tell her age. She was extremely beautiful, but radiated a coldness that made one feel as if she had just crawled out of a grave.

“Sometimes when you find certain things with certain qualities, it’s just fate.”

When the voice hit his ears, it felt like bones rubbing together. This woman seemed to possess some sort of strange power, and when Meng Hao looked into her eyes, his whole body felt ice cold, as if she could see through him. As if he could hide nothing from her.

Her words still floating through the air, she shook her wide sleeve, and suddenly, a gust of greenish wind picked up Meng Hao. He flew down the cliff with her. His mind went blank.

When they reached the crevice, the woman waved her hand and threw him inside. As for her, she stopped moving, as did the greenish wind. Wang and his three friends scurried backward in fright.

The woman stood there, not saying a word. She raised her head and glanced at the rattan vine.

Meng Hao was so nervous he had started shaking. He stood up, glancing around quickly. The crevice was not spacious, and was in fact quite narrow. Even with only a few people inside, there was not much room.

His eyes fell on Wang and the two other young men. One was the clever fellow; the other one was clean and pudgy. The two of them shivered, looking as if they might cry from fear at any moment.

“I was short one person,” said the pale-faced woman. Now she looked at Meng Hao instead of the rattan. “I’ll put you in with them.”

“Who are you?” asked Meng Hao, concealing his fear. He was an educated person and had a strong personality. Despite being afraid, he controlled himself and did not panic.

The woman said nothing. She raised her right hand and waved, and the green wind appeared again. It lifted up all the young men, and they flew out of the cave together with the woman, shooting up into the sky. They disappeared. Left behind was only Mount Daqing. It stood there, straight and tall, merging in the darkness of twilight.

The blood drained from Meng Hao's face. He saw himself within the green wind, crossing the sky. As he flew above the ground, wind blew into his mouth, making it impossible to breathe. A word appeared in his head.

"Immortals?" He held his breath for the amount of time it would normally take to breathe ten times, until he couldn't hold on any more. Then he passed out.

When he opened his eyes, he found that they had landed on a platform paved with green stone, halfway up a mountain. More rolling mountains surrounded them. Clouds and fog drifted about; this was definitely not the mortal world. The beautiful peaks of the surrounding mountains looked very strange.

Wang and the other young men woke up, scared and shivering. They stared at the back of the woman.

Standing in front of her were two Cultivators wearing long green robes. They appeared to be in their twenties. They had sunken eyes with fear-inspiring green pupils.

"Excellent work, Elder Sister Xu," said one of the men, his voice flattering. "You found four talented young babies."

"Take them to the Servants' Quarter," said the woman, her face cold, not even looking at Meng Hao and the others. Suddenly, her entire body transformed. She became a rainbow and then disappeared into the mountains.

By this time, Meng Hao had recovered his composure. He stared, numb, at the place where the woman had disappeared. An expression appeared on his face which had not appeared there for sixteen years. His blood boiled.

“Servants?” he thought. “If the work is for Immortals, the pay must be good.” Now that he knew the people didn’t want to kill them, he took a step forward.

“Sister Xu has reached the seventh level of Qi Condensation,” lamented the second of the Cultivators. “The Sect Priest bestowed a Wind Pennant upon her, which means even though she isn’t at the Foundation Establishment stage, she can still fly.” He looked arrogantly down at Meng Hao and the others.

“You and you,” he said pointing at Wang and the clever young man. “Follow me to the Southern Servants’ Quarters.”

“What is this place?” Wang asked, his voice and body both shaking as the Immortal pointed at him.

“The Reliance Sect.”

1.The State of Zhao is named after the historical State of Zhao

2.The Great Tang is named after the historical Tang Dynasty

3.Chang’an is named after the historical Chinese city Chang’an

4.Meng Hao’s name in Chinese is (mèng hào) – Meng is a family name. Hao means “great” or “many”

5.Wang Youcai’s name in Chinese is (wáng yǒu cái) – Wang is a common family name. Youcai means “to have talent or ability”

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# Chapter 2: The Reliance Sect

The Reliance Sect, located within the borders of the State of Zhao, on the southern edge of the Nanshan continent, was once first among the Four Great Sects. Even though it was still famous in the Southern Domain, it had experienced a decline in recent years and did not maintain the glorious position it once had. Nowadays, compared to the other Sects within the State of Zhao, it could only be considered inferior.

Actually, it hadn’t always been called the Reliance Sect. But a thousand years ago, a Cultivator appeared who caused a great sensation in the Southern Domain. He’d called himself Patriarch Reliance, and had forced the Sect to change its name as such. He’d trod roughshod over all the other Sects in the State of Zhao, plundering their treasures, remaining unrivaled for some time.

But things were different now. Patriarch Reliance had been missing for nearly 400 years. If it were not for the fact that no one knew if he was alive or dead, the Sect would already have been swallowed up by some other Sect. It was past its glory days. Considering the lack of resources in the State of Zhao, and pressure from the other three Sects, if they wanted to get new recruits, they were forced to kidnap people to act as servants. There was no way they could open their doors to recruit openly.

Meng Hao followed the green-robed man along the small paths that wound among the mountain peaks. The surroundings were garden-like, with strange rocks and odd-looking trees everywhere. Amidst the beautiful scenery, extravagantly decorated buildings with jade roof tiles rose up out of the clouds and mist. Meng Hao sighed continuously. Sadly, the fat teenager next to him wailed the entire time, somewhat ruining the mood.

“I’m finished, really finished…. I want to go home,” muttered the fat teenager, tears rolling down his face. “There’s mantou waiting at home, and fish. Dammit, dammit. I want to inherit the family land, become a rich old man, and have a few concubines. I don’t want to be a servant here.”

He muttered under his breath for the time it takes to drink half a cup of tea, until the green-robed man turned. “If you spout one more bit of nonsense,” he said coldly, “I’ll cut your tongue out.”

The fat teenager suddenly trembled violently, his eyes shining with fear, but he shut his mouth.

When he saw this, Meng Hao began to reconsider how wonderful the situation might or might not be. But he had a persistent personality, so he took a deep breath and maintained his silence.

After a while, when they reached a point about half way up the mountain, Meng Hao saw a row of flat buildings emerging from the roiling fog.

Seven or eight young people wearing hemp robes sat outside the buildings. They looked exhausted. As Meng Hao and the others approached, the young people noticed them, but did not call out any greetings.

Some distance away, a young man wearing a light blue robe sat on a crag. His face was long, almost like a horse, and his robe was obviously more expensive and fancy than those worn by the other youths. Though his face was cold, when the green-robed man approached leading Meng Hao, the young man stood and greeted him with cupped fists.

“Greetings, Elder Brother.”

“These are two newly arrived servants,” said the green-robed man impatiently. “Please arrange for their accommodations.” With that, he turned and left, not even glancing at Meng Hao and the other young man.

After he left, the horse-faced young man sat down again, crossing his legs and coldly glancing over Meng Hao and the fat teenager.

“This is the Northern Servants’ Quarter,” he said in a cold, emotionless voice. “The Reliance Sect does not support slackers. Now that you’re here, you will work for thirty years, upon which you can leave. If you try to escape, well, there are many wild beasts in these lonely mountains, and you will certainly die. Go retrieve your work uniform. From now on, you are isolated from the mortal world, and will work peacefully as a servant.”

The fat teenager trembled even harder, his face filling with despair. Meng Hao remained calm. In fact, deep within his eyes was an indescribable sparkle. The horse-faced man noticed. He had held this position for many years and had seen many young people captured to be servants, but had never seen anyone as calm as Meng Hao.

“If you have a good temperament,” he said lightly, “you may not need to labor for the full thirty years. You can practice cultivation in your time off. If you manage to reach the first level of Qi Condensation, then you will be promoted to the Outer Sect.” He flicked his wide sleeve, whereupon two hemp robes appeared in front of Meng Hao and the fat teenager. On the front of each robe was a wooden badge the size of a thumb, engraved with the character “Servant.”

In addition to the robe, there was also a small booklet, upon the cover of which was written three characters: “Qi Condensation Manual.”

As soon as Meng Hao laid eyes on the characters, he began to breathe hard. He stared at the booklet and recalled how when discussing the cold-faced woman, the green-robed man had mentioned the seventh level of Qi Condensation.

“We can become Outer Sect disciples when we reach the first level, but that woman has already reached the seventh level… what is Qi Condensation? Perhaps that is the way to become an Immortal, like they talk about in stories.”

If that was the pay he would receive from his work, well, it might not be money, but it would be worth hundreds of pieces of gold in the outside world. Meng Hao’s excitement rose. He grabbed the robe and used it to wrap up the badge and booklet.

“The East Seventh house is where you will live. Starting tomorrow, your job is to cut wood. Ten logs each, every day. You are not permitted to eat until your chopping is finished.” He closed his eyes.

Breathing deeply, Meng Hao imitated the young man and saluted with clasped fists, then walked toward the house, followed by the fat teenager. The building appeared to be a siheyuan courtyard dwelling that had been expanded multiple times. Following the signs, they located the seventh one, then opened the door and entered.

The room wasn’t large. It contained a table and two small beds, and though simple, was quite neat and tidy. The fat teenager sat down on one of the beds, then, unable to hold it in anymore, began to cry.

He was about 12 or 13 years old, and he cried loudly. It surely echoed outside.

“My father is a Lord, and I’m supposed to be a Lord too. I’m not supposed to be a servant.” He seemed extremely distraught, and his fat little body trembled.

“Stop crying,” said Meng Hao, trying to comfort him. “Think about it. It’s not that bad here. We’re working for Immortals. How many people would envy us if they knew?” He quickly closed the door.

“I don’t want to work for other people,” he replied. “My marriage has already been arranged and engagement gifts sent. My poor, beautiful lady hasn’t even married me, yet is already a widow.” The more he cried, the more heartbroken he grew.

A strange expression appeared on Meng Hao’s face. This fat teenager was still young, he thought to himself. I can’t believe he’s been promised a wife, yet has never even felt the touch of a woman’s hand. He sighed emotionally, thinking about how amazing it would be to be rich. This fat teenager’s family is so rich that he never has to worry about food or clothing. And yet I have nothing. Even after selling my ancestral home last year, I still owe Steward Zhou a lot of money.

Thinking of the money he owed made him laugh. Now that he was here, Zhou could come to chase after him for the money if he was strong enough. If not, he would be dead by the time Meng Hao left.

The more he thought about this place, the better he felt about it. He didn’t need to worry about money, or lodging or food. He even got payment worth hundreds of pieces of gold, and that was before he even started working. Considering that this was a dwelling-place of Immortals, it could truly be said that he had unexpectedly been rescued from a desperate situation.

The fat teenager’s crying had begun to annoy him. Ignoring him, he pulled the manual out from the hemp robe and started reading. After reading the first line of the first page, he felt shocked.

“A person should have something to rely on. If you are a mortal who desires riches and titles, if you are a Cultivator who wants to live a life free from worry, join my Reliance Sect. You can rely on me.” That was introduction to the manual, and it was signed by Patriarch Reliance.

Even though it was only a handful of words, they were filled with an indescribable power. It was both an invitation and a description of the Reliance Sect. Meng Hao felt numb, and then, everything suddenly made sense.

“The Reliance Sect. Is this the meaning of the Sect? People must find something to rely on; when they find the Reliance Sect, then they will be rich, powerful and free from worry.” It made more and more sense. He realized that if he’d had an official to rely on, he would never have failed the examinations three times in a row. He sighed, his respect growing for Patriarch Reliance, whom he had never actually met. With that one sentence, it seemed as if a door in his life had suddenly opened.

“In other words, I have to find someone to rely on while I’m here. If I do, I won’t have to worry about anything.” His eyes grew brighter as he continued to scan the manual. Soon, he lost track of time, and didn’t even notice the fat teenager crying next to him.

The fat teenager finally cried himself to sleep around midnight, whereupon his snores began to reverberate around the room like thunder. Meng Hao reluctantly closed the manual. Even though he felt very tired, his eyes were filled with vim and vigor.

“This book isn’t worth 100 gold, it’s worth 1,000!” he said to himself. For someone who had always dreamed of becoming a rich official, something worth 1,000 gold was worth more than anything except his life.

In his excitement, he noticed that the fat teenager’s snoring had ceased. He looked over, and saw that the young man had sat up in bed and was waving his arms around and muttering.

“I’m gonna beat you to death! How dare you steal my mantou! I’m gonna bite you to death! How dare you steal away my wife!” As he talked, he got off the bed, his eyes still closed, waving his fists angrily. Then, amazingly, he grabbed the table and bit the corner hard with his mouth, leaving a deep mark. Then he went back to sleep and began to snore.

Meng Hao watched him for a bit, just to confirm that he had been sleepwalking just now. Then he looked back to the bite mark, realizing that he should never provoke the fat teenager when he was asleep. He inched away from him, then looked down at the manual again, feeling excited.

“The ninth level of Qi Condensation is the path to being an Immortal. Working for them, I have a chance to become an Immortal myself. That is the biggest payment possible. If I become an Immortal, I must have a chance to become rich.” Meng Hao gripped the manual, his eyes shining brightly. He had finally found another path besides studying for the exams.

At that moment, the door was kicked open with a bang, and a loud “harumph” sounded out.

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# Chapter 3: Promotion to the Outer Sect

“You went to sleep early. Now it’s time to wake up for Grandpa Tiger!” The door shook as it opened, and a tall, strong man entered wearing servants’ robes. He glared fiercely at Meng Hao and the fat teenager.

“Starting today,” he said angrily, “you two little bastards will chop ten trees per day for me, each. Otherwise, Grandpa Tiger will flay you alive.”

“Greetings, Grandpa Tiger,” said Meng Hao, scrambling off the bed and standing there nervously. “Maybe you could quiet down a…” Before he could finish speaking, the large man fixed his eyes on him.

“Quiet farts! You think I’m speaking too loud?”

Looking at his fierce bearing and large stature, Meng Hao hesitated, then said, “But… the Elder Brother in charge of servants already assigned us to chop down ten trees per day.”

“Then chop an extra ten for me,” he said with a cold harrumph.

Though Meng Hao said nothing, his brain spun. He had just arrived in the Immortal’s Sect, and was already being bullied. He didn’t want to give in, but the man was so big and strong, and he himself was clearly too weak, unable to fight back. Then he glanced at the table, and noticed the bite marks. Thinking back to how strong the fat teenager had been in the clutches of his dream walking, he had a flash of inspiration. He suddenly yelled at the sleeping fat teenager.

“Fatty! Someone’s stealing your mantou and your girl!”

As soon as the words were out of his mouth, the fat teenager sat up, eyes closed, shouting, his face twisted with furious savagery.

“Who’s stealing my mantou? Who’s stealing my wife?” he cried, leaping out of the bed. “I’ll beat you to death! I’ll bite you to death!” He began striking randomly around the room. The big man stared in shock, then took a step forward and made to slap the boy.

“You dare to shout in front of Grandpa Tiger!” His slap landed on the boy’s face, but then the big man cried out. The fat teenager, eyes closed, had bitten down onto the man’s arm. No matter how the man shook his arm, the boy refused to let go.

“Stop biting me, dammit. Stop biting.” This man was a servant, not a Cultivator. He had been a servant for a long time, and his body was strong, but the pain had caused him to break out in a cold sweat. He punched and kicked, but couldn’t make the fat teenager loosen his jaw even the slightest bit. The harder he hit, the deeper the boy bit. The man’s flesh was mangled, and it seemed as if a chunk were about to be ripped off.

His screams drifted outside, such that others began to notice. A cold voice shouted out.

“What’s the ruckus?”

It was the voice of the horse-faced young man. As soon as the big man heard it, he began to tremble in fear. Despite the horrible pain which twisted his face, he ceased his screaming.

“It’s not a good idea to upset the Elder Brother in charge of servants,” said the big man hurriedly. “There’s no benefit to continuing this. Quick, stop biting me! I don’t need the ten logs.”

Meng Hao never imagined the fat teenager’s dream state would be so intense, and also wanted to stop the situation. He walked forward and lightly slapped the fat teenager, then whispered into his ear.

“The mantou is back, and so is your girl.”

The young man suddenly relaxed and released his jaw. Continuing to punch the air, he returned to his bed, his face covered in blood, then fell back to sleep.

Giving another nervous glance toward the fat teenager, the big man left without saying another word.

Meng Hao stood there for a while gaping, admiring the fat teenager, then returned to bed with the greatest of care and went back to sleep.

The following morning at dawn.

As the morning sun filled the sky, the sound of bells filled the air. It seemed to carry with it a strange power; as people heard it, they woke and began their work. The fat teenager woke up. He looked down dumbly at the marks on his body. He touched his face.

“What happened last night? How come my whole body hurts? Did someone beat me up?”

Meng Hao dressed silently for a while before speaking.

“Nothing happened. Everything seemed normal.”

“How come my face feels swollen?”

“Maybe it’s mosquitos.”

“Then how come my mouth has blood on it?”

“You fell out of bed last night. Several times, in fact.” Meng Hao opened the door and stepped out, then stopped and looked back. “Look, fatty,” he said in a serious tone, “you need to grind your teeth more often, sharpen them up.”

“Oh? My dad used to say the same thing,” he said in surprise, gingerly putting on his robes.

Meng Hao and the fat teenager walked out into the sunlight and began their life as servants in the Reliance Sect, chopping down trees.

Each of them was responsible for ten trees. Around the Northern Servants' Quarter, the wild slopes were covered with trees. Although the trees were not big, they were very dense and spread like an ocean as far as the eye could see.

Carrying his servant's axe, Meng Hao rubbed at his shoulder. His arm felt both numb and painful. The axe was heavy. Off to the side, the fat teenager panted as they climbed. Eventually, they found a suitable area, and the sound of chopping axes gradually rang out as they began to work.

"My dad is super rich," said the fat teenager with a long face. He raised his axe. "I'm gonna be super rich too. I don't want to be a servant… These Immortals are strange, and they have magic. What do they need fire for? And why do they need us to chop down trees for them?"

Unlike the garrulous fat teenager, Meng Hao was too tired to speak. Sweat showered off of him like rain. Because of his poverty in Yunjie County, he hadn't been able to eat much meat and as such his body was weak. He didn't have much energy. After the space of time it takes half an incense stick to burn, he leaned up against a tree, breathing heavily.

He looked at the fat teenager, who, though he was so tired he trembled, he continued to curse under his breath and chop at the tree. He was younger than Meng Hao, but a lot stronger.

Meng Hao shook his head bitterly and continued to rest. He pulled out the Qi Condensation Manual and examined it again. Following the description in the manual, he attempted to sense the spiritual energy of Heaven and Earth.

Time passed, and soon it was dusk. In his day of work, Meng Hao had managed to cut down two trees. The fat teenager had managed to cut down eight. By pooling them together, it was enough for one of them to eat. They consulted for a bit, and then the fat teenager went to get some food which the two of them shared in their room. Then they fell to sleep, exhausted.

Eventually, the fat teenager’s snores filled the room, and Meng Hao struggled to sit up, his eyes filled with determination. Ignoring his hunger and exhaustion, he picked up the Qi Condensation Manual and started reading it again.

“When I used to study for the examinations, I would usually stay up reading until dawn. I’m used to being hungry. As for my life now, it may be tiring, but at least I have a goal. I can’t believe that after failing in the Imperial examinations, I will fail in Cultivation.” Stubborn persistence shone in his eyes. He lowered his head and began to study.

He continued on until late in the night, until he finally fell asleep, although when exactly that was, he didn’t know. As he slept, his dreams were filled with thoughts of sensing the spiritual energy of heaven and earth. The bells woke him up in the morning. He opened his bloodshot eyes, yawned, and got out of bed. Then, along with the energetic fat teenager, went back to chopping wood.

A day, two day, three days… time continued on until two months had passed. Meng Hao’s wood-felling ability slowly grew until he could chop down four trees in a day. But, most of his time was spent trying to grasp the meaning of spiritual energy. His eyes grew more and more bloodshot. Then one evening around dusk, as he sat panting in mediation, his body suddenly vibrated, and he felt a prickling numbness in his limbs. Then, it seemed as if tiny wisp of invisible Qi condensed within his flesh and blood, then seeped out of his body.

After that, he felt a strand of spiritual energy appear inside him. It disappeared almost instantly, but Meng Hao opened his eyes excitedly. His exhaustion disappeared, and his bloodshot eyes grew whiter. His body trembling, he clutched at the Qi Condensation Manual. He hadn’t eaten or slept much in the past months. Other than chopping down trees, he spent almost all his time on spiritual energy, and now, at long last, he had some results. He felt as if he were filled with power.

Time passed in a flash, two months, and now it was the eighth month of the year, summer. Broiling sunlight fell from the sky.

“Condense the Qi into the body, fuse and disperse it, open the blood vessels and Qi passages, resonate with heaven and earth.” It was noontime in the deep mountains near the Reliance Sect. Meng Hao used one hand to stoke the bonfire in front of him, and the other to hold the Qi Condensation Manual, which he studied intently.

He closed his eyes for the time it takes an incense stick to burn, sensing the delicate strand of Qi within his body. This was the Qi which had appeared two months ago, and Meng Hao regarded it as a treasure. The strand was clearly much thicker now. Using the mnemonics and circulation technique described in the manual, he sat in meditation, allowing the Qi strand to move about his body.

After a short time, Meng Hao opened his eyes and caught sight of the fat teenager approaching quickly, carrying his axe.

“Well, how is it?” panted the fat teenager as he ran up. Though fat, his body was strong.

“I still can’t disseminate it throughout my entire body,” said Meng Hao with a laugh. “But I’m quite confident that within a month, I’ll be able to reach the first stage of Qi Condensation.” Belief filled his demeanor.

“What I meant was, how is the chicken?” He licked his lips as he looked at the bonfire.

“Oh, pretty much done,” said Meng Hao, also licking his lips and pulling back the branch he’d been using to stoke the fire. The fat teenager used his axe to dig through the soil and pull the chicken out. It was fully cooked now.

A fragrant aroma filled the air. They split the chicken in half and began to wolf it down.

“Ever since you were able to get some spiritual energy,” said the fat teenager, his lips covered in grease, “you’ve been able to catch wild chickens. Compared to now, the first two months here were like a nightmare…” This was his new practice, to flatter Meng Hao.

“A lot of people get food out in the wild, you just don’t know about it, that’s all.” As Meng Hao spoke, he took a bite out of a chicken leg, making his speech a bit garbled.

“Ai, if you really reach the first level of Qi Condensation next week and become an Outer Sect disciple,” said the fat teenager, his face bitter, “then what will I do? I don’t understand any of those mnemonics.” He looked at Meng Hao expectantly.

“Look fatty, the only way you can get home is if you become an Outer Sect disciple,” said Meng Hao, dropping the chicken leg and looking him in the eye.

The fat teenager sat quietly for a while before giving a determined nod.

Six days flew by. It was night. The fat teenager was already asleep, and Meng Hao sat cross-legged in his room, meditating. He thought about how other than wood-chopping, he had spent all his time these past three months in sensing spiritual energy. He thought back to two months ago, when the strand of Qi had first stirred within him. He breathed deeply, closing his eyes and causing the strand of spiritual energy to circulate throughout his body. Then, a loud sound reverberated in his head. Up to now, he had been unable to disperse the Qi throughout his entire body. But just now, he had succeeded, diffusing the Qi to every corner of his body. He felt as if his body were floating.

At the same moment in which Meng Hao achieved the first level of Qi Condensation, the horse-faced young man sitting on the big stone outside slowly opened his eyes. He looked in the direction of Meng Hao’s house, then closed his eyes again.

At dawn, under the envious eyes of everyone in the Northern Servants’ quarter, Meng Hao walked out of the room that had been his home for the past four months. He stood in front of the horse-faced youth.

The fat teenager didn’t come with him. He remained in the doorway watching Meng Hao, determination filling his eyes.

“You reached the first level of Qi Condensation in four months. You’re not quite outstanding, but not stupid, either.” The horse-faced young man looked at him, his expression no longer cold. Calmly, he said, “Now that you are going to the Outer Sect, I must explain to you the rules there. Every month, Spirit Stones and medicinal pills will be distributed there, but it is not prohibited to take things by force from others, or to gang up. There is a Public Area there that some people call the Killing Zone. You … you will need to look out for yourself.” As he finished speaking, he lifted his right hand, whereupon a jade slip shot out and hovered in front of Meng Hao. He grabbed it.

“Imbue spiritual energy into that jade slip and it will lead you to the Treasure Pavilion in the Outer Sect. That is where you will register your promotion.” The horse-faced young man closed his eyes.

Meng Hao said nothing. Clasping his fist in salute, he turned and glanced at the fat teenager. They looked at each other for a moment, and Meng Hao felt emotion welling up in his heart. He chose not to dwell on it. He pinched the jade slip, which then began to glow with a green light, and gradually floated forward.

Meng Hao followed it, slowly leaving the Servants’ Quarter.

He trod a narrow road which led away from the main gate, walking further and further away, toward the foot of the mountain. Eventually he reached an area he had never stepped foot into during the past four months.

The Reliance Sect was comprised of four main mountains, with east, west, north and south peaks, respectively. Surrounding them were vast mountain chains which seemed to never end. At the halfway point up each mountain was a Servants’ Quarter. Meng Hao had been assigned to the Northern Servant’s quarter on the Northern Mountain. The way further up was protected by defensive spells. Beyond them lived the Inner Sect disciples and elders.

Each of the four mountains was like this. As for the flat area in-between them all, it was filled with countless houses inhabited by the Reliance Sect’s Outer Sect.

In this respect, the Reliance Sect was slightly different that other Sects. The Outer Sect was located at the foot of the mountain, whereas the servants lived halfway up. This was a sect rule created for unknown reasons by Patriarch Reliance.

From a distance, the entire area seemed to be filled with roiling fog. However, upon stepping foot into the fog, it disappeared. In front of him stretched a scene of carved balustrades and marble steps, of lofty buildings and roads paved with green stone. Outer Sect disciples bustled about wearing green robes. A few of them noticed Meng Hao as he walked past.

Some of them shot him contemptuous glances which lacked even the slightest bit of good intent. He felt as if he were being stared at by wild beasts, which caused him to recall what Elder Brother Horse-face had said about the Outer Sect.

Not long after that, he reached a black building in the southern section of the Outer Sect. It was three stories tall, and despite being black, appeared to have been carved from jade, and almost seemed to be transparent.

As Meng Hao approached, the building’s main door opened noiselessly and out walked a wizened, middle-aged man. He wore a long robe of deep green, and a shrewd expression covered his face. He lifted his right hand in a grabbing motion, and the jade slip flew into his hand. He looked at it then began to speak languidly:

“Meng Hao has been promoted to the Outer Sect. He shall be bestowed with a house, a green robe, a spirit tablet, and a bag of holding. The spirit tablet can be used to enter the Treasure Pavilion to retrieve a magic item.” He waved his right hand, and a gray bag appeared in Meng Hao’s hands.

He looked at the gray bag for a moment, then thought back to one of the Outer Sect disciples he’d passed on the road. That man had a bag just like this hanging at his waist.

The shrewd-looking man looked at Meng Hao, and could instantly tell that he was not familiar at all with the ways of the Outer Sect. Otherwise, how could he be unfamiliar with a bag of holding? Feeling a bit bad for him, he coolly said, “By imbuing the bag with spiritual energy, you can pack many things into it.”

Having heard this, Meng Hao imbued the bag with a sizable amount of spiritual energy. It grew blurry, and then he caught a glimpse of a space inside about half the size of a person. There, he could see a green robe, a jade slip, and some other objects.

At this point, his interest was quite piqued. This bag of holding must be worth at least a hundred gold. It clearly was the product of Immortal hands.

He concentrated, and the jade slip suddenly appeared in his hand. He focused his attention even more and found that inside the bag was a map of the Outer Sect Quarter. In a remote corner was his house.

“Go look at it later,” said the shrewd-looking man coldly. “The Treasure Pavilion is open and you haven’t entered it yet.”

Meng Hao lifted his head and stuffed the bag of holding into his robe. Looking at the opened door of the Treasure Pavilion, he sucked in a deep breath and stepped in, filled with anticipation.

As soon as he entered, his expression changed, and he sucked in a breath.

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# Chapter 4: A Copper Mirror

The Treasure Pavilion was indeed filled with treasure. Upon entering it, one's eye would be dazzled with brilliant lights. Neatly arranged jade shelves were filled with a dazzling display of bottles, swords, ornaments and jewelry. Meng Hao began breathing heavily, and his heart started pumping. It felt as if all the blood in his body had rushed to his brain. He stood there, dumbfounded.

In Meng Hao's short life, he had never seen so much wealth. He felt as if it had submerged him. His brain spun, and he inadvertently thought about grabbing all of it and running away.

"The value of these treasures…" murmured Meng Hao, "… they're priceless. The compensation for working for Immortals, it's incredible." He walked past one of the jade shelves, his expression filled with excitement, unconsciously stretching his head forward. He wondered if the third floor of the Treasure Pavilion was the same as the first, or if it perhaps had even more valuable treasures.

"Immortals… they're so rich!" Meng Hao heaved a deep sigh. Suddenly, his eyes fell upon something strange. On one of the jade shelves he noticed a copper mirror.

There were traces of corrosion on it. It didn't seem very special, nor did it glitter. It didn't seem like it could compare in any way to the treasures around it.

Surprised, Meng Hao picked it up and looked at it closely. It seemed quite ordinary, like something from the mortal world. Nothing about it seemed the least bit unique. And yet, here it was in the Treasure Pavilion, so he assumed it must have some value.

“Junior Brother truly has insight,” said a voice from behind him. He didn’t know when the shrewd-looking man had entered, but he stood there looking at the copper mirror. His voice filled with praise, he continued, “The fact that you picked up that copper mirror shows that you were destined to do so. There are many legends regarding it. The strangest thing is, only those with good fortune and accumulated good deeds in past lives can acquire it. It seems Junior Brother is just such a person. With this mirror, you can lord it over heaven and earth. You definitely have this opportunity.” As the man spoke, he sighed over and over. His voice seemed to contain some strange power which forced Meng Hao to listen to him.

“This mirror…” Meng Hao looked down at it again, a strange expression on his face. It was not covered with complicated carvings, but instead, corrosion, making it very unclear.

“Junior Brother, don’t look at the mirror’s blurriness. You should know that true treasures of a spiritual nature often conceal themselves in ordinary things. The more humble they appear, the more precious they are.” Meng Hao was about to put the copper mirror back onto the shelf when the shrewd-looking man took several hasty steps forward to prevent him. He looked seriously at Meng Hao.

“Junior Brother, the fact that you picked up this object shows that you were destined to do so. Will you really put it back just because it looks ordinary? I have been responsible for the Treasure Pavilion for many years, and I know the origin of all the items here. Many years ago, this copper mirror caused a huge commotion in the State of Zhao. It was created from a ray of light which fell from the Heavens. After acquiring it, Patriarch Reliance studied it in secret, believing it to be a treasure of the Heavens. In the end, he couldn’t unlock its mysteries, and came to the conclusion that it was predestined to fall into the hands of someone who would use it to trample upon heaven and earth.”

It startled Meng Hao to hear the name of Patriarch Reliance. He had just entered the Outer Sect, and there were many things he wasn’t familiar with. He began to hesitate.

“Patriarch Reliance studied it, but couldn’t understand it. I…”

“Your words are incorrect, Junior Brother. Allow Elder Brother to explain: Patriarch Reliance’s lack of success in his studies proves that there is something unique and unusual about this treasure. Before you, ten or more people took it to study it, and though none of them succeeded in understanding it, none of them regretted their decision.

“What if… what if you are the person destined to possess the mirror? In any case, if you take it, you can rest at ease. Of your fellow disciples who took the mirror in the past, most came back within three months, and I let them exchange it for something else. After dealing with me for some time, you will find that I am very easy-going. I don’t want to give fellow disciples a hard time.

“If you take it, but are unable to unlock its mysteries, then you can return it at any time and exchange it for something else. But if you abandon it, and it turns out you were destined to take it, then you will regret it for your entire life.” The shrewd-looking man stared intently at Meng Hao. When he saw Meng Hao hesitating, he laughed to himself. The new disciples were always the easiest to toy with. All he had to do was tell them the story of the mirror’s legend, and the grand words would seduce them. Their hearts would begin to boil.

“But…” Meng had studied and read from childhood, so he was quite intelligent. From the shrewd-looking man’s seemingly earnest expression, he could conjecture that the mirror was not exactly as had been described. But, the man stood there in front of him, clearly determined to prevent him from putting back the mirror. Even dropping it to the ground would be of little use. He began to regret picking it up in the first place.

“Junior Brother,” he said, his face stern, his voice low, “don’t violate the rules on your first day. When you pick something up in the Treasure Pavilion, you are not permitted to put it down.” The shrewd-looking man felt that enough was enough. This was his usual method to get people to take the mirror. He waved his wide sleeve, and a whistling wind picked up Meng Hao, flew him out of the Treasure Pavilion, and deposited him outside.

There was a crashing sound as the main door of the Treasure Pavilion slammed shut.

The voice of the shrew-looking man echoed from inside: “I’m soft-hearted when it comes to fellow disciples. If you truly are not destined to have the mirror, then you can return it in a few days.”

He walked along the green paths of the Outer Sect, using the information from the jade slip as a guide. Around noontime, he found his house. It was along the north border, in a very remote section of the Outer Sect. Several other houses crowded around it.

He pushed the door open, and it slammed against the wall. Inside were a bed and a desk. Meng Hao stood there, feeling quite content. This place was much better than his room in the Servants’ Quarter.

He sat down cross-legged on the bed, took a deep breath and pulled the copper mirror out of his robe. He studied it carefully, until the sun began to set over the western mountains. He lit an oil lamp and continued to study it, all to no avail. He had no idea what the purpose of the mirror could be.

No matter how he looked at it, the copper mirror seemed completely ordinary in nature.

When the night grew deep, Meng Hao put the mirror to the side and looked out the window at the moon. He thought about the fat teenager and his snoring. He missed it a little bit.

The bright moon shone outside, its rays touching the eaves of his window. Everything was silent, save for the sound of the wind among the leaves of the trees. Meng Hao took a deep breath, thinking about the moon. He felt emotional, as if he had entered a new age.

He murmured to himself: “I will never again be a scholar in Yunjie County. I’ve become a Reliance Outer Sect disciple…”

Meng Hao gathered his thoughts, closed his eyes, and sat in meditation, circulating the thread of spiritual energy in his body. He had been living in this fashion for months now, and was used to it.

One difference between the Outer Sect and the Servants' Quarter was that here, no one prepared food for you. You had to take care of your own food needs. If you didn't, you would starve to death and no one would care a whit. Although, in all the years, no one in the Reliance Outer Sect had ever starved to death.

Upon reaching the first stage of Qi Condensation, one could absorb and emit the spiritual energy of Heaven and Earth. Though that could not alleviate hunger, it could sustain your life.

Several days passed. One afternoon, Meng Hao sat cross-legged in meditation, when he suddenly heard a miserable scream from outside. He immediately opened his eyes, moved to the window and looked outside. He saw an Outer Sect disciple on the ground, being stamped upon over and over again by another. Blood oozed from a wound in his chest, but he wasn't dead, just wounded. The person who had been kicking him grabbed his bag of holding, then walked off with a cold harrumph.

The trampled disciple struggled to his feet, his eyes filled with violent ruthlessness. He staggered away. Surrounding onlookers stared at him coldly, their faces filled with ridicule.

Meng Hao observed silently. He had watched similar scenes played out countless times in the past few days, and as such had a deeper understanding of the ways of the Outer Sect.

Time blurred as seven days passed. During that time, Meng Hao saw even more instances of disciples being robbed. The fighting and plundering which occurred between Outer Sect disciples caused Meng Hao to grow more and more taciturn. Especially disturbing was when he had seen a disciple of the second or third level of Qi Condensation killed by another in the Public Area. This caused Meng Hao to be especially careful and cautious when he went outside.

Thankfully, his Cultivation base was low, and he didn't have anything of value, so others mostly ignored him.

Actually, Meng Hao had reached a standstill in his Cultivation. The second level of Qi Condensation was different than the first. He still needed spiritual energy, but according to the Qi Condensation Manual, his mortal body had already begun to change. As such, reaching the second level of Qi Condensation would require many more times the amount of spiritual energy than the first level did.

Similarly, Meng Hao now understood what latent talent was. The body's ability to absorb the spiritual energy of Heaven and Earth was just that, latent talent. The more latent talent someone has, the more energy they could absorb. The less latent talent one has, the less energy they could absorb. For someone with considerable latent talent, the more time they spent on breathing exercises, the more spiritual energy they could absorb.

According to his calculations, to reach the second level of Qi Condensation would probably take at least one or two years. The amount of time required to reach the third level would be many more times than that.

Of course, if he acquired some medicinal pills or Spirit Stones, he could use them to amplify spiritual energy, then, he could decrease that time. That was why so much horrific robbery occurred in the Outer Sect; every month, pills would be openly distributed.

“The strong become stronger, the weak become weaker,” said Meng Hao quietly. “This is how the Reliance Sect grooms disciples for the Inner Sect.”

One early morning, when the sky had just begun to grow dim with light, Meng Hao sat in meditation as usual. He had no special resources, except for his determination. Therefore, he did not give up on his nightly meditations and breathing exercises. Bells reverberated throughout the Sect, and Meng Hao slowly opened his eyes.

“These bells…” Meng Hao's eyes focused, as if he had come to a realization. An excited expression appeared on his face, and he dashed out of the room to see fellow disciples everywhere, rushing off into the distance.

“When these bells sound, the time has come for distribution of Spirit Stones and medicinal pills. It must be today.” More and more people began running in the direction of the bells. It seemed everyone within the Outer Sect was there.

“Pill Distribution Day,” said Meng Hao, breathing heavily. He ran along with the crowds until he reached the square in the center of the Outer Sect. The square was monumental in size, and along its borders were nine stone pillars covered in carvings of dragons. Placed on the foremost pillar was a platform over ninety meters in diameter, over which swirled a multi-colored cloud. Inside the cloud could be seen shapeless forms.

Over a hundred Outer Sect disciples stood there in their green robes, murmuring amongst themselves and glancing frequently at the multi-colored cloud.

Then, the cloud slowly dissipated, revealing a pock-faced old man wearing a golden robe. His face was placid and emitted a calm, natural power and dignity. His eyes shone like lightning. Two people stood next to him, a man and a woman, both wearing silver robes. The man was exceedingly handsome, with an upright appearance, although indifference covered his face. As for the woman, as soon as Meng Hao laid eyes on her, his pupils constricted.

This woman was the woman who had taken him from Daqing Mountain three months ago.

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# Chapter 5: This Kid isn’t Bad

“It turns out Master Uncle Shangguan is distributing the pills himself, along with Inner Sect disciples Elder Sister Xu and Elder Brother Chen. They all came. You don’t see this very often. Don’t tell me there’s an Individual Pill Distribution this time?”

“It must be. Look, Elder Brother Han Zong 1 is here. He’s the second-ranked disciple in the Outer Sect. His Cultivation base has reached the fifth level of Qi Condensation. If he can reach the seventh level, then he will automatically become an Inner Sect disciple. Too bad Elder Brother Wang Tengfei 2 isn’t here.”

“Considering Elder Brother Wang Tengfei’s abilities, he wouldn’t care a whit about medicinal pills. The year he joined the Sect, he caused a big sensation amongst the Sect Elders. He probably doesn’t want to violate Sect etiquette, so he’ll rely only on himself to enter the Inner Sect. Then there will finally be a third Inner Sect disciple.”

“Heh heh, this is gonna be fun. With Individual Pill Distribution, there’s a twenty-four hour period of sealing in which the pill can’t be used. Every two hours, the pill glows brightly. Anyone who wants to fight for it will be able to determine its location. Even if you grab the pill and run, you won’t be able to keep it hidden for twenty-four hours.”

Meng Hao listened to the discussions around him. Even though it was his first time taking part in this sort of thing, he knew whenever pills were distributed, there was a lot of fighting. In his half a month here, he had seen plenty of fights and even some deaths.

If today was really an Individual Pill Distribution day, then the fighting would be even more intense.

Meng Hao remained silent. Considering he was at the first level of Qi Condensation, there was no way he would end up with the pill. Just looking at the greedy faces around him gave him a deeper understanding of the expression “the law of the jungle.”

“Quiet!” said the old man in the gold robe. His voice was cold as he stood on the platform, and though he didn’t speak loudly, his voice reverberated like a booming thunderclap. The Cultivators standing below him were shocked to the core. Their ears hummed. Meng Hao was the most shocked of all, and it took him some time to recover.

“I am Shangguan Xiu 3. Today, everyone in attendance will receive one Spirit Condensation pill, and half a Spirit Stone.” Shangguan Xiu flicked his right arm, and immediately, hundreds of medicinal pills and Spirit Stones flew about in all directions. They landed perfectly in front of everyone present. Meng Hao gazed at the medicinal pill and Spirit Stone floating in front of him. A fragrant, intoxicating aroma washed over him. This was his first time ever seeing a medicinal pill or a Spirit Stone.

The Spirit Stone was about the size of his fingernail, sparkling and almost translucent. Just looking at it could mystify a person.

His heart began to beat rapidly. These two items must be worth thousands of pieces of gold. Without any hesitation, Meng Hao reached out and grabbed the pill. He was about to pop it into his mouth and swallow it down when he noticed that no one around him was doing any such thing. His heart lurched. He looked down at the pill in his hand and noticed that it had a faint glow to it, and was sealed with a strange mark.

As Meng Hao stared at the pill in his hand, Shangguan Xiu’s voice once again rang out from the platform: “There is also … a Dry Spirit Pill.” A purple-colored medicinal pill could be seen in his hand.

As soon as it appeared, a wonderful fragrance filled the entire square. Even just breathing it, Meng Hao felt as if his spiritual energy had increased a bit. This was clearly no ordinary pill.

“That’s… a Dry Spirit Pill!”

“That’s … that’s something incredibly precious to anyone under the fifth level of Qi Condensation. There can’t be many within the Sect, and yet, there it is!”

“When that pill is distributed, the fighting here in the Outer Sect will be fierce. Who knows how many people will die?” The crowd buzzed as they stared up at the glowing pill held by Shangguan Xiu, their faces filled with greed and desire. This was especially true of disciples who were on the brink of breaking through to a new level of cultivation. They fairly panted.

“Originally, the Dry Spirit Pill was not to be distributed today. However, I heard there was a disciple promoted to the Outer Sect this month, which makes me very happy. If we can do this every month, then brilliant glory lies just around the corner for the Reliance Sect. I bestow this pill upon that person as an encouragement.” Shangguan Xiu smiled, and his glittering eyes swept across the crowd to fall upon Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s heart began to race. The first half of the short speech had left him feeling unsettled, but he had no time to react; Shangguan Xiu’s right hand flicked, and the purple pill appeared in front of him. Before he could even make an attempt to refuse, the pill lowered into his hand.

As of that moment, Meng Hao’s entrance into the Reliance Sect could be called unprecedented. The eyes of the entire crowd focused on him.

Greed and cruelty filled their expressions, as if they planned to rip him to pieces alive. Even the man and woman standing next to Shangguan Xiu were staring. The woman had a look of shock on her face, which she quickly covered up with an icy expression.

“Haha, so a first level Qi Condensation disciple receives the pill. There will be a lot of fighting this time. This guy is going to be public enemy number one.”

“He’s finished. Last time there was an Individual Pill Day, the guy who received the pill was at the second level of Qi Condensation. He hesitated for just a moment too long, so Elder Brother Zhao Wugang 4 dragged him in a fury to the Public Area and lopped off his head.”

The sound of discussion reverberated across the square, and many disciples of the second or third Qi Condensation level, despite knowing the danger, grew greedy. Because the Cultivation base of the person who received the pill was so weak, they felt as if they were qualified to snatch it.

Meng Hao's entire body broke out in a cold sweat. He wanted to throw the pill away, but he found that it actually stuck to his hand, making it impossible to get rid of. Around him, covetous eyes stared at him menacingly, and suddenly, it was as if he could feel the shadow of death hanging over him. Some people began to slowly walk toward him, murderous expressions filling their faces.

"Junior Brother, why don't you toss that pill to me? If you don't, I'll give you a thrashing."

"If you don't give it to me, next year today will be the anniversary of your death."

The murmurs blasted at him like a cold wind from all directions.

At that moment, two old men sat cross-legged on one of the nearby mountain peaks, smiling as they discussed the scene unfolding in the Outer Sect Square.

"Master Shangguan really doesn't pay attention to things. To give the medicinal pill to a pup like that who just entered the Sect… He's finished. It seems our Reliance Sect will be short another disciple."

"The fighting this time isn't going to be interesting at all. I bet that as soon as the restrictive fog dissipates from the square, the pup will toss the pill."

As soon as the second old man finished speaking, the nine colorful, dragon-carved statues surrounding the square began to fade in color. From the look of it, after the space of about ten breaths, they would be completely colorless. At that point, the restrictive fog would also disappear.

Meng Hao's heart began to pound. He didn't need anyone to explain to him what would happen when the glowing pillars grew dark. The square would become a scene of madness. Even if he threw the pill away, that in and of itself would make some of the people angry at him.

“How… how could this be given to me?” said Meng Hao, sweating. His mind began to spin. If he didn’t get rid of the pill, he would die; if he did throw it away, he would become an object of hatred. Trying to make use of all the knowledge he had acquired in his three years of studying, he looked at the fading, colorful glow, and then at Shangguan Xiu, who stood amidst the colorful fog on the platform, preparing to leave. At this critical moment, Meng Hao suddenly had a flash of inspiration.

He took a step forward and called out, “Disciple has something to say.”

“Being able to come to the Reliance Sect and experience the wonders of living amidst Immortals has been a wonderful stroke of good fortune. Disciple would very much like to offer thanks to the one person who made this possible.

“Disciple has been waiting day and night for another opportunity to lay eyes on her, to offer thanks in person. Today, I finally have that opportunity.” He talked faster and faster, and as he did so, Shangguan Xiu stared in shock, no longer making his leave.

“That person is Elder Sister Xu. Elder Sister Xu, Junior Brother is extremely appreciative of what you did, and is truly unable to pay you back. I would like to offer this pill to you as a measure of my thanks to you for giving me a new lease on life.” Meng Hao lifted up his right hand, raising the medicinal pill up high.

Shangguan Xiu gaped, clearly never having imagined that Meng Hao would say such a thing. A strange expression appeared on his face, and he slowly smiled. Standing next to him in her silver robe, Ms. Xu also stared in shock. Even though she was still cold and detached, there was something different about her expression now. Her Cultivation base was the seventh level of Qi Condensation, thus the Dry Spirit Pills would not be of much help to her. However, Dry Spirit Pills were still relatively rare and not easy to acquire, even for her, a member of the Inner Sect. If she took this pill and melded it together with a few other pills, she could create a new pill worth five normal pills. For a moment, she couldn't help but palpitate with eagerness.

At this moment, even the man in the silver robe with the cool expression looked down at Meng Hao.

Everyone was quiet. The Cultivators who had been advancing on Meng Hao suddenly stopped in their tracks, strange expressions on their faces. They stared at him with confusion.

After the brief silence, there was a sudden uproar.

"You can do this…?"

"To give away a medicinal pill in front of all these people, to an Inner Sect disciple… who dares to fight for the pill now? That would basically be picking a fight with the Inner Sect."

"What a simple method! How come I never thought about that? Dammit, dammit!"

"That freaking… I can't believe I didn't think of doing this that one time. I was injured so badly I was bed-ridden for three months."

The people staring at Meng Hao seemed to all have different feelings on the matter. It was hard to say what had happened in ages past, but as for the Cultivators here, they had never seen anyone deal with a medicinal pill in this fashion. As of now, Meng Hao had been indefinitely impressed onto everyone's memories.

As of now, the dragon-carved pillars were completely colorless. The pill still lay in Meng Hao's outstretched palm, and yet no one moved to take it. This was truly something rare to see in the Reliance Sect.

Ms. Xu's expression had returned to normal. Without hesitation, her right hand flashed downwards, and the medicinal pill flew from Meng Hao's hand into hers. Seeing the pill taken away, Meng Hao secretly sighed. However, he knew that in his current state, it could only bring him calamity.

Around him, everyone else sighed, feeling angry at Meng Hao. But, as soon as they thought of Elder Sister Xu, any such anger dissipated.

Ms. Xu hesitated for a moment. Considering her status as an Inner Sect disciple, it would be a bit improper to take something so valuable from an Outer Sect disciple and not offer anything in return.

She was silent for a moment, then said, “Years ago, when I was a member of the Outer Sect, an Immortal’s Cave was bestowed to me. I shall lend it to you to live in.” She reached into her bag of holding and pulled out a white jade slip. She tossed it down toward Meng Hao and he grabbed it from the air.

“Elder Sister Xu’s Immortal’s Cave… this fellow really got lucky. They say there’s a lot of spiritual energy in there, more than anywhere else in the Sect.”

“Elder Sister Xu says she’s going to lend it, but she’s obviously just giving it to him. She just used the word lend so that everyone wouldn’t think too much. This kid really did the right thing in giving her the pill.”

“Dammit, I wish I had thought of this back then.”

Just then, back atop the mountain peaks outside the Outer Sect were the two gray-robed old men who had been betting on the proceedings. Tall and grand, their eyes glittered brightly with praise. They laughed heartily.

“This kid is pretty interesting. He just entered the Sect, but already knows that he should find someone to rely on. Don’t tell me he has innate instincts… Very good, splendid. He comprehends the true meaning of the Reliance Sect. This kid isn’t bad. He really isn’t bad!”

1. Han Zong’s name in Chinese is (hán zōng) – Han is a common family name. Zong means “Sect” or “religion”

2. Wang Tengfei’s name in Chinese is (wáng téng fēi) – Wang is a common family name. Tengfei means “to soar”

3. Shangguan Xiu’s name in Chinese is (shàng guān xiū) – Shangguan is a relatively obscure family name. Xiu is the same character which appears in terms like “Cultivation” and “Cultivator”

4. Zhao Wugang’s name in Chinese is (zhào wǔ gāng) – Zhao is a common family name. Wu means “martial” or “military.” Gang means many things, including “strong” and “unyielding”

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# Chapter 6: The Delights of the Copper Mirror

Elder Sister Xu was quite well known in the Reliance Sect. In fact, you could say that everyone knew her, because as of now, the Reliance Inner Sect only had two disciples.

Other than Elder Sister Xu, the only other disciple was the man currently standing next to Shangguan Xiu.

After Elder Sister Xu lent him her Immortal’s Cave, it had a fear-inspiring effect on everyone, allowing Meng Hao to leave the square with the Spirit Stone and Spirit Condensation pills. Everyone watched him as he left.

As he walked off into the distance, his back soaked with sweat, he felt the glares behind him like invisible blades. They slowly dissipated as he walked quickly away.

In the time it takes three incense sticks to burn, Meng Hao walked without stopping. He didn’t return to his room in the Outer Sect, but rather followed the white jade slip Elder Sister Xu had given him toward the Southern Mountain. At the foot of the mountain, he located the Immortal’s Cave.

Outside of the cave, two large stone slabs towered up next to the mountain face. Everything was covered with green branches and vines; it appeared to be an entirely unordinary place, very different from Meng Hao’s previous two dwellings.

The surroundings here were peaceful and lush. Not far away, a mountain spring flowed down, and the wind carried away the heat, replacing it with cool, fresh air.

Meng Hao stood in front of the mouth of the Immortal’s Cave, looking completely content. Now he truly understood how precious such a cave could be, clearly much more than any other dwelling place. No wonder all the other Outer Sect disciples had looked so jealous and envious when Elder Sister Xu lent it to him.

“This is a place for Immortals,” said Meng Hao. He waved his right hand, and the slip of white jade flew forward to the cave’s green stone door. It slapped onto the surface, and a buzzing sound filled the air as the door slowly opened.

The Immortal’s Cave was not very big, and only had two rooms. One room was for practicing cultivation, the other was sealed shut with a stone door. Meng Hao entered, and the green stone door slowly closed behind him. When it sealed, the white jade slip flew out and into Meng Hao’s hand. Thereupon, a soft glow began to emanate from the craggy stone ceiling.

The more he looked around, the more satisfied he felt. Finally, his gaze fell upon the sealed stone door. Muttering to himself, he placed the jade slip onto it, and the door slowly opened. At that moment, an odor of thick spiritual energy suddenly wafted out. Meng Hao looked into the stone room, his eyes wide with shock.

“Sister Xu’s Immortal’s Cave, this… this gift is just too valuable.” It took a while for him to recover his composure. He stared blankly into the stone room, at something that appeared to be the mouth of a spring. Out of it gurgled pure spiritual energy, multicolored and glowing as it curled up into the air. Who knew how long it had been accumulating in the stone room. As soon as the door had opened, it began to pour out, its aroma sweet in the nose and mouth. Even just a whiff would fill you with energy.

“So it’s a Spirit Spring,” Meng Hao murmured. It was something else he had never seen before, but had read about in the Qi Condensation Manual. Some springs in the world were Spirit Springs, which had no water. Instead, they flowed forth with spiritual energy. Not many existed, and most were occupied by Cultivators, considering how treasured was the spiritual energy they emitted.

The Spirit Spring was relatively small. When all its spiritual energy came out, it was only slightly thicker than outside. To anyone above the third level of Qi Condensation, it would not be very helpful. After the third level, the spiritual energy required was just too much; thus, it was only moderately useful.

Despite that, as far as Meng Hao was concerned, this gift was incomparably valuable, even much more so than a Dry Spirit pill. With this discovery, Meng Hao went nearly wild with joy.

With no time to think, he sat down cross-legged, closed his eyes, and began his breathing exercises. After a few hours, the greater part of the spiritual energy that had accumulated here was gone. Meng Hao opened his eyes, and they flashed brilliantly.

“These few hours of meditation here were worth about a month of Cultivation outside. This accumulation of spiritual energy took quite some time to build up, and probably won’t be like this again. Even still, practicing Cultivation in here, I will be able to achieve speed that’s impossible in the outside world.” He sighed. Looking around, he noticed that the walls were covered with strange markings that he didn’t understand.

“The Spirit Spring can accumulate so much spiritual energy because of these markings. Elder Sister Xu must have used this method to build up energy then dispose of it all in one shot.” Meng Hao thought for another moment, then had an inspiration. He again sat down and began to do breathing exercises.

The night passed quickly, and as the sun rose the next morning, Meng Hao opened his eyes. The spiritual energy in the stone room was very thin. But the Spirit Spring was still there. After some period of time passed, the spiritual energy would surely build up again.

Meng Hao took a moment to sense his cultivation level. It seemed that he had made an advancement worth nearly two months.

“If I can practice Cultivation in this fashion a few more times, I should be able to break through the first level of Qi Condensation and enter the second!” He sucked in a breath, excited. He very much wanted to break through the first level, because only by reaching the second level of Qi Condensation could one unlock the first Immortal Skill in the Qi Condensation Manual.

Thinking of Immortal Skills, Meng Hao left the stone room, closing the stone door as if it were some type of jewel or treasure. He decided to use Elder Sister Xu’s method. He wouldn’t stand guard next to the Spirit Spring itself. He would just wait for some time to pass, then come back to collect the spiritual energy.

Sitting there in the Immortal’s Cave, Meng Hao rubbed his stomach. Thinking over the recent days, and looking down at his skinny belly, he realized that he hadn’t eaten any wild animals recently. Not even wild fruits.

After becoming an Outer Sect disciple, he thought to himself, he hadn’t been eating as much as when he was a servant. As long as you had enough Spirit Stones, you could take them to the Sect’s Pill Cultivation Workshop to exchange them for Fasting Pills or Appetite Control Pills. It was said that one drop of such a pill would prevent hunger for days. Without them, people would have to spend time worrying about finding food.

After thinking about it for a while, Meng Hao decided to go out for a bit. The fresh wind blew past him into the surrounding jungle. As he walked, he pulled the copper mirror out of his bag of holding, as had become his custom.

By now, he was thoroughly convinced that the Treasure Pavilion Brother had tricked him. There was nothing unusual at all about this mirror. In more than half a month of study, he hadn’t uncovered anything even slightly peculiar about it.

“Sadly, I only have a half of a Spirit Stone in my bag of holding. I bet I’ll need to use it to bribe him to let me exchange it.” He stretched his hand into the bag to pull out the Spirit Stone, feeling a bit dejected.

He suddenly froze in place, lifting his head up when he noticed a flash of color off in the distance in the jungle. It wasn’t moving very fast. Meng

Hao’s eyes glittered. Based on his experience in the past months catching wild chickens, he knew exactly what it was. Wild chicken.

Without time to think about shoving the copper mirror and Spirit Stone back into the bag of holding, he shoved them into a pocket and leaped forward. Ever since spiritual energy had appeared in his body, Meng Hao realized that he was much more nimble than before. Despite still being somewhat frail, he now could burst forth with explosive force.

Especially nowadays, after reaching the first level of Qi Condensation, a leap like the one he just made propelled him forward very quickly. In the space of about ten breaths, he was able to snatch the alarmed wild chicken. He clasped it by the two wings so that it couldn’t move about.

“I wonder how good old Fatty is doing recently,” he said, thinking about the fat teenager as he lifted up the chicken. Maybe he would go find him and share a meal of wild game. Just as he turned, he suddenly felt something inside his robe growing hot.

Moments later, the previously quiet chicken in his hand started to struggle wildly and emit miserable squawking sounds. It moved around with such energy than Meng Hao almost couldn’t keep hold of it.

The wild chicken struggled even fiercerly, squawking with incomparable shrillness. Then, a popping sound could be heard coming from its butt, which then suddenly exploded, sending blood and gore flying in all directions.

Everything happened so suddenly. Meng Hao stood there gaping. Ever since arriving on the mountain, he had caught quite a few wild chickens. But this was the first time he had seen anything like this. He looked down with shock at the dead chicken and its exploded rear. Then he looked around. Everything was still and quiet. Not even a shadow moved.

“What just happened?” Meng Hao shivered. The wild chicken’s death had been quite miserable. It must have experienced incredible pain for its butt exploded.

Meng Hao took in a deep breath, suppressing the anxiety he felt. The wild chicken’s death had been too odd and horrific. He felt as if a cold wind was blowing down his back.

“Something’s not right,” said Meng Hao. He tossed away the dead chicken, and then pulled out the mirror and the Spirit Stone. He remembered that just before the strange thing had happened with the chicken, something in his robe had started to grow hot.

“Could it be the Spirit Stone…” Then his eyes fell onto the copper mirror. His heart began to beat faster and a powerful radiance shone forth in his eyes.

“Don’t tell me…” The hand holding the mirror began to tremble. He had no time to go eat with the fat teenager. Gripping the mirror, he ran as fast as possible into the jungle, trying to find another wild animal. He needed to know if the wild chicken’s killer really was the mirror.

He didn’t have to run for very long before a wild deer appeared right in front of him. It stood there looking at him stupidly, then angrily. Meng Hao immediately shined the mirror onto it.

The deer’s expression changed immediately. It leaped to flee, calling out miserably, in a heart-rending fashion difficult to describe. Anyone who heard it could only imagine how miserable the creature must be. Meng Hao could clearly see the animal’s flank as it leaped into the air. Before it could land, its butt exploded with a bang, its body twitching as it fell.

Looking at the dead deer, then back at the mirror, an unprecedented look of excitement appeared on Meng Hao’s face.

“What a treasure! A real treasure!!

“It’s so strange. A treasure that explodes the butts of wild animals…” Even though he didn’t understand it completely, he was still very excited. Regardless of why the treasure did this, he had an itching desire to go test it out on some more animals.

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# Chapter 7: I Need Spirit Stones!

As he walked, he grew more and more excited. The road he walked was filled with blood and gore…

The blood and gore of scores of wild animals, whose butts had exploded violently.

“Bang!” Another furry animal in front of him screamed shrilly as an invisible attack struck its rear end, three times, until it exploded, sending a mist of blood spraying into the air.

“Boom!” A foraging giant condor, not even landed on the ground yet, shrieked miserably, as if it were experiencing a nightmare. Then its butt exploded.

“Bang, boom.” That was a fierce, human-sized tiger that had been about to pounce on Meng Hao. In mid-air, it emitted a terrifying roar that changed into a horrific squeal, whereupon its butt blew open, showering gore and blood everywhere. Perhaps because it had so much fur, it actually exploded five times in succession.

“What a treasure. What a mighty treasure.” Before he knew it, dusk had fallen, and Meng Hao’s expression could not be more excited. He looked down at the copper mirror. Throughout the day, he had exploded the rear ends of over one hundred animals.

Fortunately, he was out in the multitudinous wild mountains, otherwise the stench of the blood and gore would be overwhelming.

“The mirror isn’t completely effective, though. When I tried it out on that python, and the fish, it didn’t do anything at all. It seems it doesn’t work on animals with scales. But it’s still awesome.” He had tested it out in many ways and had discovered that it didn’t work when inside the bag of holding. It only worked when he held it. He also got a strange, excited feeling when it was at work exploding wild animals’ rear ends. It also looked like the corrosion was beginning to fade, as if it had been hidden away for years and finally was able to stretch its legs.

As dusk fell, Meng Hao found himself some distance out in the wild mountains. The night wind blew, and he took in a deep, excited breath. He was just getting ready to head back to the Immortal’s Cave. After all, these mountains were filled with wild animals. Meng Hao had even heard that demonic beasts that practiced cultivation lived out here. Despite his excitement, he also knew that it could be dangerous.

He had come to this place while searching for wild animals, so the going had been slow. But on the way back, he could go much more quickly. Meng Hao sped along through the wooded mountains, and before long, a bright moon hung high in the sky. Soon, he could see that only three mountains lay between him and the Immortal’s Cave. Suddenly, he felt a hot wind on his face, accompanied by an acrid odor. He stopped, his heart thumping, then retreated a few steps.

Roar!

As soon as he stepped back, the air about him shook with a mighty roar, and once again the hot wind and acrid odor swept over him. There in front of him was a monkey-like creature about the size of a human. Its red eyes radiated cruelty, and its entire body was covered with thick, luxuriant fur.

The fierce beast gave Meng Hao a bloodthirsty stare. Meng Hao’s expression changed as he looked back at the creature. His mind reeled, as if he were about to be blown away by the creature’s gaze. He could sense the creature’s Cultivation base fluctuating.

“Second level of Qi Condensation!” Meng Hao took another step back, his expression horrified. This was no wild beast; it was a demonic beast. It must have been attracted by the reek of blood from all the slain animals.

There was no time for him to think. The long-furred monkey-like demonic beast leaped into the air, and then suddenly, its entire body was covered in fire, a fire that did not singe its fur in the least. It shot toward Meng Hao.

At this critical juncture, Meng Hao's expression changed. He wasn't sure if the copper mirror would be effective against the demonic beast, but there was no time for consideration. Even as it leaped into the air, he ducked to the side, pulled out the mirror, and shined it toward the demonic beast.

Then a miserable scream filled the air. In mid-air, a geyser of blood shot out of the demonic beast's butt. Its face twisted in horror, its eyes no longer filled with cruelty, but rather confusion. It was as if in the beast's entire life, it had never experienced anything so painful…. But, it didn't retreat. Moments later, more blood exploded out.

Now the confusion in its expression turned into complete astonishment. It stared in horror at the mirror held in the hands of the young man standing in front of it. It turned, covering its rear end with its claws. The fire went out, and it made to flee, but before it could go more than a handful of meters, its butt exploded again, this time, five explosions in succession. Its screams rang out as it ran about thirty more meters. Meng Hao felt the copper mirror trembling as if with excitement. A powerful boom rang out, shooting straight toward the demonic beast's rear end.

An incomprehensible scream rang out over the wild mountains as half of the demonic beast's body exploded. A cloud of blood and gore shot up, then slowly descended to the ground. Confusion filled its face as it gasped a few last breaths, then died.

Everything had happened so fast. The entire time, Meng Hao just stood there gaping. Finally, he took a breath, then looked down at the mirror, panting.

"Even demonic beasts can't avoid having their rear ends exploded. This mirror…" In his excitement, Meng Hao felt even more awe. He put it away, then looked over at the corpse of the demonic beast, his heart thumping.

“The Qi Condensation Manual has an introduction to demonic beasts. It says that they have a Demonic Core inside their bodies which contains spiritual energy. I should be able to just eat it.” He quickly walked over to the corpse. Sure enough, in the abdomen of the creature he found a pristine Demonic Core, about the size of a fingernail. It emitted a delicate, fragrant aroma which left him feeling extremely comfortable.

Having retrieved the Demonic Core, Meng Hao hurried along his way. Unfortunately, demonic creatures were not common in these parts. He didn’t see any more on his way back to the Immortal’s cave. He felt a little disappointed.

By the time he got back, it was deep into the night. He sat down cross-legged and looked at the Demonic Core and the copper mirror, his eyes shining.

“I can just eat the Demonic Core, but I still have the Spirit Condensation Pill that the Sect distributed. I’ll take that first, then take the Demonic Core.” His mind set, Meng Hao put the Demonic Core and the copper mirror down next to him, as well as the Spirit Stone. With the Spirit Stone at his side, it would allow him to absorb a little more spiritual energy.

Next, he took out the Spirit Condensation Pill and swallowed it down. As soon as it entered his body, strands of spiritual energy began to spread out slowly. Meng Hao rotated his Cultivation base, quickly absorbing the power of the medicinal pill.

When he opened his eyes an hour later, they glittered brightly. Taking this pill was definitely much faster than actually practicing cultivation, he thought to himself. Unfortunately, the Spirit Condensation Pill just did not have enough energy. There wasn’t anything he could do about that, though. His gaze shifted to the side and he picked up the Demonic Core and popped it into his mouth.

As soon as it entered his body, spiritual energy far outmatching that of the Spirit Cultivation Pill poured into him. It was almost too much to take in. He quickly rotated his Cultivation base and poured the energy into it. His body began to tremble, and strands of filth were pushed out of his pores.

Eight or ten hours later, his head buzzed, and he felt as if his body would begin to float. Now, there was not a strand of spiritual energy inside him. The strand had fused to form a stream.

“Spiritual energy like a stream, the body excretes the mortal filth. This… Don’t tell me this is the second level of Qi Condensation?” Meng Hao opened his eyes. They shined with an indescribable expression. He looked down at his body, then cast his senses inside and took a long moment to examine himself carefully. Sure enough, he had broken through the first level of Qi Condensation into the second.

“Demonic Cores really are incredibly effective.” Meng Hao’s eyes sparkled. He stood and strolled around the Immortal’s Cave, enjoying the feel of the stream-like spiritual energy circulating through his body. He was incredibly happy.

“I am now a second level Qi Condensation Immortal!

“Too bad Demonic Cores are so rare. Otherwise, I would be able to practice Cultivation much more quickly. And it’s all thanks to my treasured mirror.” Meng Hao looked at the mirror. When he did, his body suddenly trembled, and he unconsciously rubbed his eyes. He looked even more closer, an incredulous expression filling his face.

The copper mirror lay there just like before. But there was no Spirit Stone on top of it. Instead, there was a Demonic Core!

“This… this…” Meng Hao’s brain spun, filled with confusion. He felt as if he had lost his mind. He stared mutely at the Demonic Core sitting on top of the copper mirror and began to hesitate. He had placed a Demonic Core and a Spirit Stone onto the mirror. He remembered clearly. But, he had eaten the Demonic Core already. Suddenly, he wasn’t so sure. Had he eaten the Demonic Core? Or had he eaten the Spirit Stone?

“I couldn’t have eaten the Spirit Stone…” Meng Hao gaped for some time then slowly picked up the Demonic Core. He hesitated, then put it in front of his mouth and sniffed. The smell made him certain; what he had eaten moments ago was definitely a Demonic Core.

“What… what’s going on? There’s another one? Don’t tell me I was mistaken, and the demonic beast actually had two Demonic Cores in it?” Meng Hao’s felt even more confused. He shook his head, forcing himself to clear his thoughts. He looked at the Demonic Core, then the copper mirror. His body began to tremble and his eyes shone with an incredible brilliance, as if he had just glimpsed ten thousand pieces of gold. It seemed as if he would drop the Demonic Core at any moment.

“Could it be… the mirror absorbed the Spirit Stone and produced a second Demonic Core!” His voice quavered. He originally felt that the mirror’s ability to explode wild beasts was powerful enough. He had never imagined that it would have an even more profound ability.

After a while, he recovered a bit, although his heart was still filled with a multitude of thoughts. Right now, he didn’t have a Spirit Stone to test out, so his heart was filled with anxiety. He was filled with an aching desire to get one to experiment with.

“Spirit Stones. I need Spirit Stones!” His eyes shone like a ferocious wild beast. At this moment, Spirit Stones were more valuable than gold in his eyes. His desire for them was even stronger than his previous desire to become an official.

Spirit Stones are indispensable to Cultivators, especially Meng Hao. When worrying about personal gains and losses, one’s heart will be filled with nervousness and anxiety. As of now, Meng Hao’s desire to acquire Spirit Stones was stronger than anything he had ever experienced.

Unfortunately, the Reliance Sect was a small Sect. Other than the monthly Pill Distribution Day, there were almost no chances to get them, other than by taking them from others.

“There’s one month until the next Pill Distribution Day.” Meng Hao looked at the copper mirror, and his expression grew ferocious. Moments later, the ferocity disappeared, hidden away. Right now, his Cultivation base was only at the second level of Qi Condensation. Even if he wanted to take something by force, he wouldn’t be a match for anyone.

“Back in Yunjie County, I had no money,” said Meng Hao helplessly. “Now I’m an Immortal, and I still have no money.” In his mind, he pondered how he could get his hands on more Spirit Stones.

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# Chapter 8: Zhao Wugang

“It’s only one more month, but during that month, I must fight to increase my Cultivation base one step further.” He carefully put the copper mirror back into the bag of holding. He knew that he could not let anyone know of its abilities. If he did, it would be difficult for him to keep ahold of it, and he would surely lose his life in the process.

He looked down at himself, and the filth that covered him. In his excitement, he had almost forgotten about his dirty state. But now, he had calmed down quite a bit. He walked out of the Immortal’s cave to the nearby stream and washed off the grime and impurities.

By the time he returned, the sky was growing light. He took out the Qi Condensation Manual and began to study it.

“Upon reaching the second level of Qi Condensation, one can use Immortal Skills. Upon reaching the fifth level, one can study Wind Walking technique, which is an Immortal Skill similar to flying.” Meng Hao closed his eyes, feeling thorough anticipation regarding the Wind Walking technique of the fifth level of Qi Condensation.

In that instant, he suddenly felt the temperature increase rapidly within the Immortal’s cave. Then, tongues of fire appeared on his right hand. Considering that he still thought like a mortal, seeing this caused his heart and mind to feel great excitement, which in turn extinguished the flames.

Meng Hao promptly calmed himself and rotated his Cultivation base. Unfortunately, by the time afternoon arrived, after dozens of attempts, he still could do nothing more than produce a few sparks, whereupon the spiritual energy in his body would disperse.

“It’s difficult to use this Flame Serpent art,” said Meng Hao with a frown. But he had a persistent personality and would not be discouraged easily, so he practiced breathing exercises for a while before trying again.

Night fell, and then dawn came again. For two days Meng Hao tried again and again, failing each time, until he became completely exhausted. When the spiritual energy dispersed he would do breathing exercises, and the resolve in his eyes would grow stronger and stronger.

“I can’t believe I can’t use the Flame Serpent art!” said Meng Hao, grinding his teeth and slapping his palm against the bag of holding. Moments later, the Demonic Core appeared in his hand.

He knew that if he consumed the Core, and the mirror really had some other fantastic properties, then later when he had enough Spirit Stones, he would lack an original with which to make copies.

“Oh well, no need to worry about such details. Worst case scenario, I go back out into the mountains to look for demonic beasts.” He hesitated for a moment, then popped the Demonic Core into his mouth, closed his eyes, and began his breathing exercises. Spiritual energy exploded inside of him, pouring into every corner of his body.

Time passed, and soon it was afternoon. Meng Hao opened his eyes, and they flashed. His Cultivation base was still at the second level but was definitely much stronger.

“I think with three or maybe five more, I can reach the third level of Qi Condensation.” He felt somewhat disappointed, realizing that the higher his Cultivation base, the more difficult it would be to make progress. But anticipation filled his heart when he thought of the copper mirror. He raised his hand into the air and made a fist.

As he raised his fist, flames appeared, congealing on his right arm and creating a small flaming serpent as long as a finger, which radiated an oppressing heat. Meng Hao felt the spiritual energy in his body instantly reduced by thirty percent.

His face grew pale, but understanding flashed in his eyes and he smiled. He leaped out of the Immortal’s Cave and waved his right hand. The Flame Serpent flew, slamming into a nearby tree.

A banging sound rang out, and the entire tree was engulfed in flame, and within moments had collapsed into ashes.

“I have to find a chance to do this in front of Fatty. He’ll definitely praise me then.” He smiled broadly, feeling quite heroic.

Half a month’s time passed, during which Meng Hao searched the mountains for demonic beasts and trained his Flame Serpent art. He worked harder than he had in his secular studies, and soon was quite proficient with it, and was also able to reduce the amount of spiritual energy it used. But it still required considerable effort over the space of about ten breaths to be able to form it.

He also went into the Outer Sect and secretly tried the mirror out on some of the disciples. However, there was no reaction whatsoever. After a few tries, Meng Hao concluded that the copper mirror only worked on excessively furred creatures. A bit of a pity, but the mirror was still more powerful than he could have ever wished for.

Unfortunately, during the half month that passed, he never came across any demonic creatures, and his Cultivation base became mostly stagnant. Thankfully, every time after he practiced the Flame Serpent art, his Cultivation base would grow a little bit during the recovery period. However, he did not dare to engage in such practice in the wild mountains. Only in the Immortal’s Cave.

“There are ten more days until Pill Distribution Day. I’m going to go further out into the mountains.” Having made his decision, Meng Hao departed early in the morning, heading quickly out into the deep mountains.

He didn’t rest during the day, and by the time night fell, he’d forgotten how many mountain chains he’d passed through. Finally, at the foot of a black mountain, he ran into a bear-shaped demonic beast.

During the battle, he used the Flame Serpent art and the powerful copper mirror. A series of five explosions were followed by a miserable, reverberating scream, whereupon the creature died in a pool of blood.

He took its Core, and was about to head further along the black mountain when suddenly, the hairs on his body stood on end. Some distance ahead of him had appeared five demonic beasts with the heads of elephants and bodies of tigers. They stared at him, eyes cold.

With the mirror, he could easily handle one demonic beast. But five would be very difficult. He slowly retreated backwards, his right hand clutching the mirror tightly.

Suddenly, a massive roar sounded out from the trees covering the black mountain. It grew in intensity until it was like a huge explosion seething in the air. Meng Hao's expression changed, and he ran away as fast as possible, without the slightest intention of slowing down even a bit.

Fortunately, the five demonic beasts didn't pursue him, and he soon disappeared into the mountains.

"That cry sounded similar to when Uncle Shangguan called out. It seems there are a lot of demonic beasts in that black mountain, even Greater demonic beasts." As he sped along, he looked back at the black mountain, more and more convinced of what a dangerous place it was.

Ten days passed by quickly. With the black mountain as his boundary, Meng Hao ventured into the mountains but didn't come across any more demonic beasts. The Bear Demonic Core in his bag of holding seemed more and more precious, so he didn't eat it.

Pill Distribution Day arrived, and the sound of bells filled the air. Meng Hao left the Immortal's Cave and entered the Outer Sect. When he had departed a month ago, his Cultivation base was the first level of Qi Condensation, and now it was the second. Even though he was some distance from the third level, he speculated that if the copper mirror was as effective as he imagined, in the future he would progress by leaps and bounds.

As fearful as ever about suffering a loss, Meng Hao entered the Pill Distribution Square. Many of the disciples looked at him as he entered, obviously recognizing him.

His actions the previous month had caused quite a shock to the Outer Sect. Even though his cultivation level was low, and a month had passed, the matter had been discussed quite a bit.

This time, it was not Shangguan Xiu who presided, but another middle-aged man. Like last time, he distributed a Spirit Cultivation Pill and half a Spirit Stone. But there was no Individual Pill distribution this time.

As soon as the pill and the Spirit Stone were in his bag of holding, and the pillars grew dark, Meng Hao left as quickly as possible, not hesitating a moment. As he left, his eyes swept across the square, and he saw quite a few Cultivators blocking fellow disciples to take medicinal pills and Spirit Stones.

Elder Sister Xu's blessing still seemed to have an effect. Coupled with his quick departure, the only thing he received was a few cold stares. No one attempted to take anything from him.

He breathed a sigh of relief. He was well aware that Elder Sister Xu's name could only protect him for so long. This month was fine, but in a few more months, someone would surely make a move against him.

"As long as the copper mirror works, in a few months… we'll see who will be snatching from whom!" Eyes glittering, he lowered his head and walked a bit faster.

He left the Outer Sect, eager to try out the copper mirror, walking as fast as possible back towards the Immortal's Cave. When the cave was not far off, he suddenly stopped in his tracks, his pupil's narrowing. A person had just walked out of the jungle.

He wore a green robe and looked to be about twenty-four or twenty-five years of age. He had an arrogant look on his fierce face as he stood there staring coldly at Meng Hao. His Cultivation base was not that of an ordinary person. It was the third level of Qi Condensation. The man stood there, blocking Meng Hao's way.

"Greetings, Elder Brother Zhao," said Meng Hao, his expression changing as he took a few steps back. He moved his left hand behind his back, and began moving about in the air. He had seen this person before. Just about everyone in the Outer Sect knew Elder Brother Zhao Wugang. He was cruel and ruthless, and quite a few low-level disciples had died by his hand in the Public Zone. He was the kind of person to ingratiate himself to disciples above the third level, but lord it over the first and second levels.

"So, you've heard of me," said Zhao Wugang coldly. "I don't need to make any more introductions. Hand over your medicinal pill and Spirit Stone." Others didn't dare to even touch Meng Hao, but Zhao Wugang had entered the Sect years ago and knew how things worked. Elder Sister Xu often secluded herself, ignoring the lives of the people beneath her.

"Elder Brother Zhao, can't you make an exception?" said Meng Hao, taking a few steps back. "I… I'm just a simple scholar, and I just got the Spirit Stone and medicinal pill. Can't you give me a bit of time with them?" This person's cultivation level was greater than his by more than an entire level. Furthermore, he had never fought anyone before. His face grew pale from fear.

"You call yourself a scholar?" He sneered, then laughed loudly. "Don't tell me you were a scholar before you came here? Come, come, recite some poetry for your Elder Brother. Maybe you'll lighten my mood and I won't beat you and break your legs."

"Elder Brother Zhao…" Meng Hao was extremely nervous, and quite angry as well, but he had no choice but to hold on and try to talk some sense into the man. "The sages said, if…"

"Shut up. I'll take not only your medicinal pill and Spirit Stone, but the Immortal's Cave as well. From now on, we are fellow disciples in the outside world, but in the cave, you will be my servant. If you say even one more word, I'll help you to understand the meaning of the expression 'death is better than life!'" Glaring murderously, he began walking toward Meng Hao.

His Cultivation base had already broken through to the third level, and needed large amounts of spiritual energy. So of course he had taken a fancy to Meng Hao's Immortal's Cave. However, he still feared Elder Sister Xu, so he had come up with the idea to keep him as a servant. After some time passed, Elder Sister Xu would surely forget the nobodies beneath her, and he could just kill Meng Hao. Or if he didn't kill him, he could cripple him and force him to stick around reciting poetry to show how elegant Zhao Wugang was.

"The Immortal's Cave belongs to Elder Sister Xu. How could I act as her agent? Elder Brother Zhao, please don't make things so hard for me." Behind his back, strands of spiritual energy had collected in Meng Hao's right hand. He knew that he wasn't a match for Zhao Wugang, but the Immortal's Cave was just too important, and the Spirit Stone even more so. There was no way he would hand it over. Therefore, his heart filled with uncertainty and anger, he used the name of Elder Sister Xu.

"I give you some face and you ignore it," said Zhao Wugang with a snort. "You're just looking for trouble. I'll definitely teach you what it means to prefer death over life!" An impatient expression on his face, he raced toward Meng Hao, his outstretched hands twisting like claws. Meng Hao looked completely shocked and frightened, which Zhao Wugang liked. He enjoyed seeing such looks on the face of people weaker than him.

He could just imagine Meng Hao dropping to the ground in front of him, trembling. Just when he was feeling most proud of himself, right before he reached Meng Hao, Meng Hao's horrified expression disappeared, to be replaced with sternness. He flung his right hand out from behind his back, and a burning, finger-long Flame Serpent shot toward Zhao Wugang.

Meng Hao's heart thumped furiously. He knew that the Flame Serpent art was not strong enough to kill his opponent, but he still hoped that it would at least slow him down. He could not bear to be captured, much less hand over all his possessions and become a servant. He would flee into the mountains in an instant if he could.

“Flame Serpent art!” Zhao Wugang’s expression changed, and he retreated backwards. His hand slapped his bag of holding and produced a small white sword, which he threw toward the Flame Serpent.

There was a bang, and the Flame Serpent disappeared. The white sword had been twisted and bent, so he kicked it aside into the jungle. Looking quite embarrassed, Zhao Wugang continued to move backwards, watching as Meng Hao fled into the mountains. He was both furious and astonished.

“He reached the second level of Qi Condensation so quickly,” said Zhao Wugang furiously. “Elder Sister Xu’s Immortal’s Cave really is effective. It seems I must kill this guy.” He raced off in pursuit.

After pursuing him for a bit, he found that Meng Hao was much more familiar with this part of the mountain than him. Furthermore, he ran very quickly. Zhao Wugang was having trouble catching him.

“You little bastard,” called Zhao Wugang in a sinister voice. “There’s no one out here in these mountains. Do you want to die? I’m gonna finish you!” Considering how quickly Meng Hao was running, he decided that it was time to use one of his more powerful techniques. He roared, and his body expanded, the hair on his body growing thick and golden-colored. Some of the hair even stuck out through his clothing. It looked as if he had transformed into something like a demonic beast.

This was a technique he had picked up before joining the Sect: the Were-demon skill.

It was a skill which could be cultivated after reaching the second level of Qi Condensation, but the demonic transformation was not very obvious. The body grew bigger and stronger, and more frightening. Such a skill would allow him to rampage among lower-level disciples. He could only use this skill for a limited time, but it was quite effective. His killing trump card.

Now that his Cultivation base had reached the third level of Qi Condensation, the skill was even more fully developed. Being able to grow such thick, golden fur was a pleasant surprise. Being able to shapeshift into a demonic form like this would enable him to easily shock his opponents.

He brimmed with confidence, his thick, golden fur shining brightly, mighty and domineering. Fur even grew from his face. He looked exactly like a human-shaped demonic beast.

“You will be the first person to die under my Were-demon skill! How just and fair!”

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# Chapter 9: Impatience and Frustration

Using this technique at the third level allowed Zhao Wugang to increase his strength by several degrees, as well as his speed. Grinning hideously, face full of greed, he charged toward Meng Hao, sharp claws glittering in the sunlight.

He brimmed with confidence, certain that Meng Hao’s fear would break him. Flee he might, but escape he could not.

“Run,” laughed Zhao Wugang with a ferocious smile, his powerful voice reverberating through the air. “You can’t escape the skills of Zhao Wugang.”

When Zhao Wugang shapeshifted into demonic form, Meng Hao was fleeing up ahead. He saw what happened out of the corner of his eye, and a look of surprise filled his face. But then, it seemed he’d thought of something, and a different, stranger expression replaced the surprise. This demonic form looked exactly like the forms of the various beasts that had been exploded by the copper mirror. In fact, he had even more radiant fur covering his body than those other beasts had.

Meng Hao looked carefully at Zhao Wugang, the strange expression still covering his face. The thick, golden fur made him look like some sort of king of beasts.

When Zhao Wugang saw the look on Meng Hao’s face, he felt astonished. When he had broken through to the third level of Qi Condensation, he had tried out the Were-demon form, but this was the first time he had revealed it to another person. Meng Hao's strange expression irritated him. He let out a cold harrumph, and a murderous look appeared in his eyes.

"I think… you'll probably like this copper mirror," said Meng Hao. Seeing Zhao Wugang's speed increase so much in his Were-demon form, he realized that he would close the distance between them rapidly. He took a few steps back and slapped the bag of holding with his right hand. Instantly, the copper mirror appeared. With the strange expression still covering his face, he shined the mirror onto Zhao Wugang in all his arrogant splendor.

As soon as the mirror began to shine, Meng Hao felt it begin to emit a burning heat that he had never felt before. This was a much stronger reaction than when it had encountered other demonic beasts, as if some sort of powerful thirst had been unleashed within it. At that moment, a sort of invisible aura burst forth from the mirror and shot forward.

Zhao Wugang leaped toward Meng Hao, his aura radiating murder and ferocity. Suddenly, he felt strange, as if some sort of gas had entered his body. It roiled violently within him, and from the outside it looked as if the aura was trying to claw its way out. Zhao Wugang's expression changed. He felt severe pain in his organs, which quickly rose to a critical level. Without thinking, he pushed the aura down to his dantian region, in order to force it out.

The aura was powerful, and it seemed to be seeking a weak spot in his body to emerge from. When he pushed the aura down toward his dantian, it rushed directly toward his buttocks, and in an instant, exploded out with violent, gut-wrenching pain. Zhao Wugang let out an uncontrollable, blood-curdling scream.

He had never made such a sound before in his life, because never before had he experienced something like this. His body began to tremble, and he glared wrathfully at Meng Hao. The murder in his bloodshot eyes grew fiercer.

"Elder Brother Zhao," said Meng Hao, his heart thumping. This was the first time he had ever fought someone. "Why don't we end things here? If you don't make things hard for me, I won't make things hard for you. A happy ending.” He clamped his hand over the mirror. The sound of his opponents scream had unsettled him. He couldn’t take it. After all, this was a person, not a demonic beast.

“You little bastard!” shouted Zhao Wugang. “Today, I’m not just going to kill you; I’m going to go down the mountain, find your family and kill them too! I’ll humiliate your entire clan!” The pain had caused him to nearly go mad. His eyes burned, and with a roar, he pounced toward Meng Hao, sharp claws preparing to rip him to shreds.

Meng Hao was just a scholar, and had never been in a fight. But he possessed courage, and hearing Zhao Wugang say such things caused murderous intent to shine in his eyes. There was no point in trying to talk reason to a person who clearly wanted to provoke him. He couldn’t bear to hear the miserable screams, but hearing such threats would cause anyone to lose their temper. He took a few steps back and unflinchingly held up the mirror.

As Zhao Wugang approached, he felt something roaring toward him. Once again, the terrifying aura entered his body. Considering what he had just experienced, he protected himself, sealing off the aura so it couldn’t escape. But just when he was feeling confident in his success, it shot through his body, rumbling, then exploded out of his left ear.

The pain was many times more severe than before, and he let out a horrible, shrill shriek that was impossible to describe. Then, his right ear exploded, showering out blood.

His head felt as if it were about to split down the middle, and his face had grown pale white. Dumb with astonishment, he stared at Meng Hao. Then his face filled with monstrous savagery.

“I will kill your entire family, and then eliminate your whole clan! I’ll make them all feel pain like this, then let them die screaming!” Enduring the pain, and also deaf, he leaped toward Meng Hao, filled with insane determination to kill his opponent.

"I give you face and you ignore it!" said Meng Hao, gaping. He had never seen the mirror explode an ear before. Looking stern, he retreated further, again shining the mirror onto Zhao Wugang.

"Meng Hao!!" screamed Zhao Wugang, his right ear exploding into shreds. Both ears swelled. His expression was no longer one of ferocious rage but rather astonishment and dread. He turned, faster than he had ever turned in his life, and made to flee, having lost any desire to mess with Meng Hao. But the fear in his heart caused him to tremble so violently that he couldn't even flee. Instead, he focused, and once again, summoned his desire to kill. He would inflict pain on Meng Hao's family, and also take away that damned copper mirror.

However, even as he turned, the mirror, for the first time ever, flew out of Meng Hao's hands. It seemed its interest had been aroused. It flew after Zhao Wugang, attacking him multiple times. Zhao Wugang's eyes filled with desperation; it appeared as if some incredible power had entered his body. He screamed uncontrollably, unable to flee. Something tossed him into the air and his left ear, right ear, chest and legs all exploded violently.

As the aura exploded out, it sent mists of blood into the air, and in the space of time it takes to breathe ten times, Zhao Wugang's eyes grew dark, and his body slowly shifted from Were-demon form back to normal. The fur disappeared, and seemingly because of this, the copper mirror lost interest and flew back to Meng Hao. Zhao Wugang's body dropped to the ground.

Blood covered everything. Zhao Wugang's dead eyes still shone with horror and despair. Anyone who laid eyes upon him would surely tremble.

Looking at Zhao Wugang's corpse, Meng Hao sucked in a deep breath. The copper mirror flew back into his hand, whereupon his body shook. Awe and veneration filled his eyes. Seeing some wild animals explode was not a big deal, but this time it had been a living person. Seeing the blood and gore everywhere, he trembled. The stench of death on the mirror caused him to want to get rid of the mirror. He loosened his hand and tossed it to the ground.

He was just a scholar, after all. The mirror had seemed interesting at first, but now it seemed incredibly gruesome, and conflicted with the Confucian ideals which Meng Hao believed in.

He stood in silence for some time, feeling flustered at heart. The frustration could be seen in his eyes. In his heart, he was still a scholar from Yunjie County. He spoke the truth to people, and had never been in a fight, let alone killed anyone. That behavior was deeply rooted in his heart, and could not easily be changed. As he contemplated the situation, his heart struggled.

“The etiquette, happiness, kindness and justice of Confucianism, and its search for truth, demands a refraining from killing. But the Sect says ‘the strong shall prey on the weak.’ Now I understand the truth of that saying, but to actually put it into practice is different…” Trembling, Meng Hao felt frightened even just thinking about what had happened. After a long time, he let out a long sigh and started to walk off.

But having taken only a few steps, he ground his teeth, turned, and walked back to Zhao Wugang’s corpse. He picked up his bag of holding, then summoned a Flame Serpent and placed it onto the body.

The fire didn’t completely eat up the corpse, so Meng Hao consumed a Spirit Condensation Pill, then shot three more Flame Serpents down. Soon the corpse had withered up to the point where it was unrecognizable.

He did some breathing exercises, gritted his teeth, then shot down two more Flame Serpents. Now, the corpse was completely ash.

Glancing at the mirror on the ground, he clenched his jaw, walked over, and picked it up, gripping it firmly.

Still feeling conflicted and afraid, Meng Hao left, walking back to the Immortal’s Cave as quickly as possible. He sat in a daze. For a long time he just sat there, before finally moving again to open Zhao Wugang’s bag of holding. When he saw what was inside, his eyes glittered. The dark mood caused by his first kill suddenly changed.

“This guy was so rich,” he exclaimed, sucking in a breath. The bag of holding contained eight Spirit Stones, seven Spirit Condensing Pills and a bone fragment covered with strange symbols.

He looked at the bone fragment, then immediately tossed it aside. It described the Were-demon technique. He didn’t dare to even touch it. He didn’t want to turn into a Were-demon and then be destroyed by his own copper mirror.

As he tossed the bone chip aside, he suddenly remembered the flying sword. He immediately walked out of the cave and tracked it down in the jungle. He lifted up the short white sword and returned to the cave to examine it, eyes glittering.

Meng Hao couldn’t think of how to reconcile the differences between the ways of Immortals and the path of Confucius. He decided to stop thinking about the matter. Maybe he would understand it one day, but for now, the most important thing was to figure out a way to stay alive in the Sect.

Eyes filled with resolve, he took the Spirit Stones out and felt them. Then he pulled out the copper mirror and put it down next to him, looking at it for some time.

“Elder Brother Zhao provoked me,” he murmured. “I had to strike back. I tried to smooth things out, but he refused. I killed someone, but I tried to be reasonable. I tried to be kind, but he rushed into death.

“The mirror reeks of blood. In the hands of an evildoer, it would be a tool of evil, but in my hands, it will be different. I have Confucian kindness in my heart, and this treasure is mine. It will be different.” He looked down at the mirror and took a deep breath.

“It doesn’t just explode things, and doesn’t just seek blood. In the future, I will use it carefully.” He muttered to himself like this for some time, then lifted his head, thinking about the other mystery of the mirror, and his hope. He ground his teeth.

“Success or failure. Now we’ll see. If it’s a success, then Meng Hao’s cultivation practice will be anything but ordinary.” With no more hesitation, Meng Hao pulled out the Demonic Core and a half-Spirit Stone, then placed them down onto the mirror. He waited with nervous anticipation.

Enough time passed for half an incense stick to burn, but absolutely nothing happened. The Demonic Core didn’t change, the Spirit Stone didn’t disappear. There was still only one Demonic Core.

Meng Hao frowned. He paced around the cave for a bit before looking back at the mirror.

“It can’t be. Last month it definitely made two…” He stared at the Spirit Stone on the mirror, lost in thought. After a while, he slapped the bag of holding and pulled out another half of a Spirit Stone, which he carefully placed down onto the mirror.

Almost as soon as he put the Spirit Stone down, a black aura flashed across the surface of the mirror, and it seemed to turn into a lake. The two Spirit Stones sank down, and the blackness rippled, condensing onto the Demonic Core. And then, next to the first Demonic Core appeared a second!

Meng Hao was stupefied. Even though he had prepared himself in heart, he was still shocked. After some time passed, he picked up the two Demonic Cores and examined them excitedly.

“So it’s true! How profound!” He began to breathe hard, and took some time before he could pull himself back together. Suddenly everything seemed possible. He took a few deep breaths, then tried out the process again.

One Stone, two Stones… nine Stones, he only had one left over. In front of him were four full Demonic Cores. If you counted the original, that would be five.

The stones emitted a sweet aroma which grew thick in the air, leaving him feel intoxicated. A silly grin on his face, he realized that this was the most wealth he had ever possessed in his entire life. It was a sight none of the disciples of the Outer Sect had even seen.

His excitement lasted until deep into the night. Clutching the Demonic Cores, he placed one onto his tongue and swallowed it down. Two hours later, he opened his eyes and took another pill.

He had never done something so extravagant before. By the time the seemingly boundless energy of the two Demonic Cores was fully dispersed in his body, dawn had arrived.

His body thrummed, and gobs of filth had been excreted through his pores. When he opened his eyes they shone brilliantly.

“The third level of Qi Condensation!” Meng Hao was still not content. He looked down at the remaining three pills. He took another one. By the dawn the next day, he had consumed all the Demonic Cores. His Cultivation base was just a hairs breadth away from being at the peak of the third level of Qi Condensation.

As for the eight Spirit Condensation pills, they would not be of much use to Meng Hao considering his current Cultivation base. Even taking all of them at once wouldn’t do much good. He suspected that it had something to do with the Demonic Cores. Considering that the Spirit Cultivation Pills were regularly distributed by the sect, they shouldn’t be so ineffective.

“A small amount won’t do. Even if I took dozens, it wouldn’t have much of an effect.” Meng Hao closed his eyes, concentrating on the spiritual energy in his body. It was no longer a stream; it had turned into a river. It was not a massive river, but definitely larger than a stream. As it circulated through his body, it gave him a feeling of power. He could sense an astonishing amount of energy filling him.

Considering the shocking level of power, Meng Hao knew that compared to yesterday, he had undergone a thorough rebirth. Before, he was a weak Cultivator who anyone could push around. Now, amongst the third level disciples who could occupy the Public Zone, his Cultivation base was so high that it placed him as one of the most powerful.

He waved his right hand excitedly and a Flame Serpent as long as his arm roared to life. Its heat immediately filled the Immortal’s Cave. The fierce Flame Serpent, filled with awe-inspiring savagery, spit out a blast of fire.

If he had encountered Zhao Wugang with this level of power, his Flame Serpent would have flown forth. It would at the very least have seriously injured him, if not left him dead.

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# Chapter 10: Wang Tengfei

Toward the end of September, it grew as hot as usual. The heat refused to dissipate, instead growing more and more intense. In the Southern Domain of the Nanshan Continent, in the State of Zhao, things usually began to cool down around November. By January, the freezing grip of winter could be felt.

One morning at dawn, Meng Hao left the Immortal’s Cave, eyes shining, full of hope regarding the future.

“My Cultivation base is just a hairs breadth away from the peak of the third level of Qi Condensation,” he said, taking a deep breath. “Perhaps I can’t be considered powerful in the Outer Sect, but at least no one will pick on me.” He looked off into the distance. The mountain breeze lifted his hair up as it blew past, and he suddenly appeared quite elegant.

Originally a down-and-out scholar, he had entered the world of Immortals. When he thought back to the events which had occurred in the preceding days, they seemed almost unreal.

“It’s too bad I don’t have enough Spirit Stones. And the Spirit Condensation Pills aren’t strong enough to be of any use…” His excitement faded into disappointment when he thought about Spirit Stones.

“Fatty, Wang Youcai, and that other headstrong young man,” Meng Hao muttered to himself. “The four of us came to the Reliance Sect together. I wonder how they are now.” His body moved forward in a flash. Circulating the spiritual energy in his body, he immediately headed toward the North Mountain.

The East, South, West and North Mountains of the Reliance Sect towered mightily into the sky, covered with pavilions carved from jade. If you looked at the mountains closely, you could see rays of dawn light seeping over their peaks, just beginning to illuminate the surroundings.

White clouds wound around the peaks, concealing parts of the mountains. It really did seem like a place of Immortals.

If you wanted to go from the South Mountain to the North Mountain, but wanted to circumvent the Outer Sect, then you would have to pass along the East or West Mountain. Meng Hao walked along the path passing the East Mountain, two wild chickens in hand.

“I haven’t seen Fatty in about two months, I wonder if he’s lost any weight.” Thinking about Fatty, Meng Hao smiled. Then, his eyes flickered and he stopped walking.

He felt a gentle breeze from up ahead, which carried along with it a thin fog. Amidst the fog walked a young man wearing a luxurious white robe.

He was clearly different than other Outer Sect disciples. His garment was as white as snow and his long hair flowed over his shoulders. Incredibly handsome, almost pretty, he gave off the sense of being perfect in every way, both physically and in temperament. It was as if he had been blessed by Heaven, Chosen by nature.

His expression was cool and indifferent, as if nothing were worthy to cause him to change it. Even if the mountains crumbled in front of him, he would remain calm. The fog beneath him roiled and churned.

Behind him walked two youths, who were also handsome, but when compared to the white-robed young man seemed like trash.

“Elder Brother Wang, we’ve heard that in a few years, the Sect will have special training to promote disciples to the Inner Sect. We Junior Brothers would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you in advance.”

“Yes. When Elder Brother Wang entered the Sect, he was already famous. He even aroused the interest of the other three great Sects. But in the end, you decided to stick with the Reliance Sect. What extraordinary magnanimity! Refusal to violate the etiquette of the Sect, ignoring the invitations of the outsiders, reaching the sixth level of Qi Condensation in these two years. I even heard one of the Patriarchs say that the promotion training was being held just for Elder Brother Wang.”

“That’s right. Once Elder Brother Wang enters the Inner Sect, it won’t be long before he surpasses Elder Sister Xu and Elder Brother Chen. He’ll be the famous number one disciple of the Reliance Sect.”

“Don’t speak foolishly,” said the man in the white robe, his voice gentle. “Elder Sister Xu is a Chosen, and Elder Brother Chen is wholeheartedly focused on the Dao. They are both fellow disciples whom I admire and respect.” His voice was light and warm, but also manly and pleasant to the ear. This was the number one disciple of the Outer Sect, Wang Tengfei.

“Elder Brother has achieved outstanding mastery of Cultivation. With such latent talent and good nature, we Junior Brothers are happy to receive your instruction.”

“Yes, Elder Brother Wang treats everyone kindly, even disciples of the first level of Qi Condensation. Everyone in the Sect knows this. I truly admire you.”

The three of them talked, walking slowly toward Meng Hao. Elder Brother Wang, in his white robe, caught sight of the Meng Hao and nodded. He passed them, and the other two people didn’t even give him a single look. As they walked off, Meng Hao glanced back. It was then that he noticed the white-robed man’s feet were not on the ground. Instead, he floated along about seven inches off the ground. Meng Hao gaped in shock.

He realized that he himself couldn’t even compare in any way. He was frail and swarthy, not attractive in any way. Furthermore, he carried two squirming chickens in his hands.

“So that’s Elder Brother Wang Tengfei. He has the ability to float in the air, a skill which comes with the fifth level of Qi Condensation.” He had heard rumors about Elder Brother Wang, and knew a lot about him. When Wang Tengfei had entered the Sect, it had caused a big commotion in the Cultivation world in the State of Zhao. No one knew the true price paid by the Reliance Sect to calm the waves of commotion, or why he had decided to stay.

“If I looked like him, I could have placed first in the Imperial examinations. I could have married the Emperor’s daughter.”

Filled with admiration, Meng Hao turned and continued on toward the North Mountain.

He didn’t stop the entire way, and by midday, had arrived in the wild mountains bordering the North Mountain. This was where he and Fatty had usually come to chop wood. As soon as he arrived, he heard the sounds of chopping. With a smile, he walked briskly forward, and soon caught sight of Fatty, chopping away at a tree.

He was about to call out a greeting, then stopped and took a step back.

“You stole my wife, and my mantou. I’m gonna chop you to death! I’m gonna bite you to death!” Fatty hadn’t lost any weight. In fact, he was a bit fatter. He looked like a round ball.

His eyes were closed, and he stood there howling, surrounded by chopped up pieces of wood. He hacked at the trees, his body twisting. Then, he dropped the ax and fell to sleep.

Deep bite marks could be seen on the long handle of the ax.

Meng Hao was shocked. He had never imagined that in his two months away, Fatty’s sleepwalking behavior would become even more severe. Now it wasn’t just happening at night, but during the day as well.

He was hesitating as to whether or not to awaken him, when suddenly Fatty’s nose twitched and he rubbed his eyes. He gazed about, eyes shining, looking as if he were about to drool.

“I smell wild chicken! Yeah, two of them!” He jumped up and looked around, although he didn’t see Meng Hao standing there in the jungle. Then he saw the felled trees around him, a look of gratefulness filled his eyes.

“Ah, Meng Hao, you’re so kind,” he said emotionally. “You’ve been gone so long, but you keep coming back secretly to help me chop wood. It’s been like this for almost two months. Meng Hao, I, Li Fugui 1, have never had a better friend in my whole life.”

Meng Hao, still standing off in the distance, heard all of this and was amazed. He looked strangely at Fatty, then coughed lightly and stepped forward.

When he appeared, it seemed Fatty could sense him. He turned his head and caught sight of him, his face full of excitement.

“Meng Hao, you finally show your face,” he said eagerly. “Every time I wake up, I call out for you, but you never appear… ah?” His gaze fell onto the two wild chickens, and his eyes grew wide.

A bit later, fire surrounded the chickens, and a fragrant aroma filled the air. Meng Hao and Fatty sat together, just the same as when they had both been servants. They gobbled down the chicken.

“I haven’t had wild chicken for two months,” said Fatty, his mouth full of chicken. “How come you haven’t shown your face all this time? Since you always come to help me chop wood, why don’t you bring chickens too?” The joy on his face was clearly apparent as he looked at Meng Hao. It seemed that in his time in the Reliance Sect, he had come to view Meng Hao as a relative.

Meng Hao gave an enigmatic laugh and offered no explanation. Taking a bite of chicken, he looked at Fatty. It was then he noticed that Fatty’s teeth seemed to be longer than before.

“How has your Cultivation training been going?” he asked. “Have you been able to sense spiritual energy?”

“Don’t bring it up,” he said with a deep sigh. “I train every night, but the strange thing is, I haven’t been able to sense even a tiny bit of spiritual energy. The only thing that happens is that my teeth grow. I’m worried I might bite my tongue off.” He looked quite depressed.

“Open your mouth,” Meng Hao said suddenly. “Let me see your teeth.” What Meng Hao saw shocked him.

After swallowing a mouthful of chicken, Fatty opened his mouth to reveal a set of long teeth that glittered in the sunlight. As he examined them, Meng Hao’s expression grew even stranger. He almost couldn’t believe it. He could clearly sense spiritual energy fluctuating within Fatty’s teeth.

“How is Fatty doing his training?” Meng Hao thought. “How could the spiritual energy be moving into his teeth? They’ve become Spirit Teeth? If he keeps training this way, they’ll transform into true treasures…” He shook his head in amazement.

Time passed, and soon the sun was about to set. Meng Hao and Fatty chatted just as they used to in the old days. He told Fatty all about the things that had happened in the Outer Sect, with the exception of the copper mirror, of course.

Fatty listened raptly, filled with the desire to reach the first level of Qi Condensation and get promoted.

When it came time to leave, Meng Hao gave a Spirit Condensation Pill to Fatty. He swallowed it, and then they parted. Fatty watched Meng Hao disappear into the jungle, looking a bit melancholy, assuring himself that he would apply himself diligently to cultivation training.

He had come by route of the East Mountain, so Meng Hao decided to return by the West Mountain. This was his first time traversing the entirety of the Reliance Sect. By the time dusk fell, he was walking next to a plateau which jutted out from the West Mountain. On the plateau was a massive stone tablet.

The stone tablet was the color of blood, as if it had been painted with gore. Several characters were carved onto the cold stone.

Low Level Public Zone.

There were more characters off to the side, smaller. It explained that the Qi Condensation fourth level disciples were prohibited from entering. Only first through third levels could enter the Public Zone.

Looking up, Meng Hao could see the multiple figures interlocked in combat. Many techniques were being used as they fought desperately. Blood sprayed in all directions, and miserable cries rang out. An arm was lopped off, a bag of holding snatched.

As he watched, someone rushed down the mountain, screaming, followed by a huge man with a hideous grin.

“Help me!”

“Who can save you from Cao?!”

1. “Fatty” Li Fugui’s name in Chinese is (lǐ fù guì) – Li is a common family name. Fugui means “rich and influential”

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# Chapter 11: Pill Cultivation Workshop Outlet

Not too far ahead of him, Meng Hao saw someone screaming for help. Before the person could get off of the plateau, the huge man's flying sword hit him, piercing his neck. He fell twitching to the ground in a shower of blood, rattled out a last breath, then died. The huge man grabbed his victim's bag of holding, then turned and headed back into the Public Zone.

Meng Hao watched the grisly scene unfold, then further observed what was happening on the plateau. The sounds of slaughter drifted along with the wind, which carried the scent of blood and gore into Meng Hao's nostrils.

"You can get rich overnight in this place, but it's also extremely dangerous. For cultivation, for Spirit Stones, people put their lives on the line. It's not really worth it." Meng Hao frowned. He was almost at the peak of the third level of Qi Condensation, but what was happening up there was just too chaotic. It would be too easy to be injured, and if he were robbed, it would have a long-lasting effect.

Meng Hao thought about the lack of Spirit Stones in his bag. If he depended on receiving Spirit Stones distributed by the Sect, who knew how many years he would have to wait. Muttering to himself, he looked up at the Cultivators on the plateau. They fought fiercely, each and every one having suffered injuries. Suddenly, Meng Hao had a flash of inspiration, an idea.

His idea grew more and more clear, and his eyes began to shine. He turned and hurried off, not to the Immortal's Cave in the Southern Mountain, but rather down to the Outer Sect. He skirted the main square, and eventually arrived at a building.

The building appeared to be ancient, and was surrounding by the fragrant aroma of medicine. Inscribed above the doorway were characters which read: Pill Cultivation Workshop.

It wasn’t his first time coming here. Actually, in his first month after being promoted to the Outer Sect, he had come here once to check out the various medicinal pills which were for sale. That was when he had learned about the Fasting Pills you could buy which would prevent hunger for several days.

The only currency used here was Spirit Stones and Spirit Condensation Pills. Unfortunately, the exchange rate was very unfair. For example, one Spirit Condensation Pill could be traded for ten Fasting Pills. Because of this, few people came here, and it tended to be cold and deserted.

When he arrived, Meng Hao didn’t hesitate. It wasn’t large inside, and sitting cross-legged right in the middle of the room was a sickly looking middle-aged man. Surrounding him on the interlocking wooden shelves were an assortment of gourd bottles, inscribed upon which were the names of various medicines.

There were Blood Coagulation Pills which could treat external injuries, Skeletal Relaxation Pills to relieve fatigue, Spirit Refreshment Pills to temporarily increase energy and of course Fasting Pills and Appetite Control Pills. There were even Marrow Growth Pills which could treat broken and crushed bones.

There were many types of medicines, but all of them were considerably costly. For most, the cost of three to ten pills was one Spirit Condensation Pill. To most disciples of the Inner Sect, a Spirit Condensation Pill was worth fighting over, so few were willing to come here and trade them away.

Meng Hao strolled around the Pill Cultivation Workshop muttering to himself, his eyes glittering. Then, he pulled out five Spirit Condensation Pills and exchanged them for a handful of different types of medicines.

It seemed the sickly man didn’t see customers like Meng Hao very often. He brightened up immediately, handing over the bottle gourds of medicine.

Placing all the bottles gourds into his bag of holding, Meng Hao left, carefully taking a circuitous route through the mountainous forest back to the Immortal’s cave. By the time he arrived, night had fallen.

He sat down cross-legged, looking at the four bottle gourds.

“The sages said, if you do not expend, you will not profit. I’ve paid a lot this time, and I’m going get a lot in return.” Quietly comforting himself in this way, he stood and left the cave, returning shortly with a long tree branch about the thickness of his arm, along with a large pile of leaves.

He pulled a green robe out from Zhao Wugang’s bag of holding and tore the seams apart, then laid it out in front of him. It seemed the right size, so he pulled another robe out, tore the seams, and placed it with the first. He looked down, contented.

Next, he crushed up the leaves to produce a thick sap. Then, he dipped his fingers into the makeshift ink and wrote several large characters onto the cloth in sweeping calligraphy.

He looked at it, feeling quite satisfied, then closed his eyes and began doing breathing exercises.

The night passed, and early the next morning, he picked up the tree branch and left the cave hurriedly.

It didn’t take long to reach the plateau, and despite the early hour, there were already a few disciples there locked in battle. The fierceness of the fighting was readily apparent. Ignoring the other Cultivators, Meng Hao passed the large stone tablets and walked onto the plateau. His eyes scanned the surroundings, until falling to rest on a boulder which stuck up out of the ground along the border.

He walked over and sat down cross-legged on the boulder, looking every bit the peaceful and harmless scholar. Occasionally some of the others would look at him darkly, whereupon he would reveal some of his cultivation level. Frightened, they left him alone. He decided to wait until more people arrived.

Time passed, and gradually, more and more fellow disciples arrived in the Public Zone. Soon, there were about twenty people. Some of them looked at the kind, scholarly Meng Hao, and started to walk toward him. All he had to do was reveal a bit of his cultivation level and they would retreat in shock.

After a while, he figured there were enough people. He slapped his bag of holding, retrieving the cloth strip. He attached it to the tree branch, which he then stabbed into the clay soil next to the boulder. The mountain breeze lifted the cloth up, turning it into a streaming banner. It caught the attention of quite a few of the people nearby, particularly the characters written on it.

“Pill Cultivation Workshop Outlet.”

The dark green characters seemed to flash, causing the facial expressions of the nearby Reliance Sect disciples to change. Some seemed astonished, others confused. Some sneered and others frowned.

“Pill Cultivation Workshop Outlet? What does that mean?”

“Don’t tell me that guy is an apprentice alchemist sent by the Sect’s Pill Cultivation Workshop?”

“He looks familiar…”

Discussions broke out on the plateau after Meng Hao revealed the flag. But after a bit of time passed, the fighting and robbing resumed. Blood showered and screams rang out.

Meng Hao’s eyes shone as he looked about at the people in the Public Zone. Not far off from him were two Cultivators of the second level of Qi Condensation, locked in combat, their eyes red. One of them had a shoulder sliced open by his opponent’s flying sword. Blood showered out, and he seemed to be in quite a difficult position.

“Brother, come here,” called out Meng Hao. “Brother, the sages said, it is unwise to risk one’s life when injured. You seem to be bleeding quite profusely from your shoulder. It won’t benefit you to let yourself be killed. I happen to have a Blood Coagulation pill here from the Pill Cultivation

Workshop. It can heal all of the sword wounds on your body in less time than it takes to take three breaths.” As Meng Hao made his sales pitch, the two fighting men ignored him and continued to fight. The injured Cultivator’s eyes grew redder, and the wound on his shoulder grew worse. Then, blood poured from his chest as his opponent’s flying sword hit him again.

“Look, you got wounded again,” admonished Meng Hao of his first potential customer. “Quick, come buy a Blood Coagulation Pill! Otherwise, you might be defeated. All you have to do is give me one Spirit Stone, and I’ll give you the Blood Coagulation Pill. It’s definitely worth it.”

“Shut up,” roared the injured Cultivator, retreating a pace. “The Pill Cultivation Workshop is a rip-off, but they charge one Spirit Stone for five Blood Coagulation Pills. You’re even worse!”

“Ai, it’s not expensive. Your life is much more precious than a Spirit Stone. If you die, then all your Spirit Stones will belong to someone else. All you have to do is buy some of my medicine, and then you’ll have the chance to win and snatch your opponent’s bag of holding. All for the price of a single Spirit Stone. Is that expensive? You’re not buying medicine, you’re buying your own life.” Meng Hao stood. Perhaps his words had affected the wounded Cultivator. He struggled backwards a few paces, hesitation showing on his face.

“Dammit,” roared the man’s opponent, pointing his flying sword. “If you mess things up for me, then after I kill this guy I’ll come after you!”

“I’ll buy it!” said the injured man, slapping his bag of holding and producing a Spirit Stone which he shot toward Meng Hao. Meng Hao snatched it out of the air and tossed back a Blood Coagulation Pill. The Cultivator grabbed it and placed it onto his shoulder wound. It stopped bleeding almost immediately.

Refreshed, his spirit enlivened, he leaped back into the fight. Suddenly, his opponent retreated, blood flowing out from his wounded chest.

“Brother, Brother,” said Meng Hao, switching customers. “Your opponent bought one of my Blood Coagulation Pills and is now brimming with energy. I think if you don’t buy one as well, you will be facing much peril. I don’t just have Blood Coagulation Pills. I also have Skeletal Relaxation Pills to counter fatigue. I’ll give you one each for two Spirit Stones. That will guarantee you healing and plenty of energy. You’ll definitely be able to achieve victory.”

“You… you…” said the first man indignantly. He didn’t know what to say. Was this Pill Cultivation Workshop Outlet Pill boy here to help him or hurt him? He had just gone from a miserable situation to one of hope. Then, this happened. He attacked more incisively in his indignation. The scene playing out in front of him was exactly the same as when he had bought his medicine.

“If you win, then you’re actually spending someone else’s Spirit Stones on the medicine,” said Meng Hao enticingly, holding the medicinal pills in his hands. “It’s really worth it.”

“I’ll take it,” said the man who had already bought a pill.

“Dammit, give it to me,” said the Cultivator who had originally held the upper hand. Despite his hatred for Meng Hao, hearing the other man demand the medicine caused him to grit his teeth and open his mouth.

“I’ll give three Spirit Stones!”

“Brother, he’s offering three. If you can’t top that, I’ll have to give the medicine to him. Take care!”

“I’ll give four!”

“Brother, he’s offering four. Four!”

“Five!”

“Six!”

“Dammit. I give up. Die!” The Cultivator who had originally held the upper hand turned on Meng Hao, furious. At first, the battle had been quite simple. But once Meng Hao got involved, everything got complicated. He flew toward Meng Hao, murderous intent filling his face, clearly aiming to exterminate him.

As he neared, Meng Hao’s visage, meek, scholarly and business-like, suddenly changed, growing somber and stern. Just before the Cultivator reached him, he took a step forward, his right palm slapping forward. Spiritual energy poured out with a bang.

The Cultivator flew back with a shriek, overwhelmed by the spiritual energy of Meng Hao’s third level of Qi Condensation. The attack had struck him unconscious.

Meng Hao snatched his bag of holding, and then his somber, stern expression changed, and he was once again the weak scholar. All the onlookers were shocked.

“Brother, I believe you just offered me six Spirit Stones,” he said shyly, looking a bit embarrassed.

The other Cultivator’s face paled, and his body trembled. He stared at Meng Hao with astonishment and terror. How could he ever have imagined that things would turn out this way? How could this apparently weak and feeble person have changed so much? It was almost as if what he had just witnessed was a dream.

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# Chapter 12: Hello, Elder Sister Xu

The scene, which had attracted the attention of the other nearby Cultivators, caused their expressions to change. Many seemed to be at a loss, unsure of exactly what had happened. But now, they all knew that Meng Hao was not someone to provoke.

Even though they didn't know exactly what had happened, Meng Hao's trembling first customer did. His heart pounding madly, he slapped his bag of holding and produced six Spirit Stones, which he respectfully handed over. He regretted having hesitated in front of the Pill Cultivation Workshop in the past. By fretting over his Spirit Stones at that time, he'd ended up with no medicine. And now, he didn't have any Spirit Stones to go buy anything for himself.

Meng Hao accepted the Spirit Stones, produced a Blood Coagulation pill and Skeletal Relaxation Pill, and gave them to the man.

"Many thanks for your patronage," he said with a wide smile. "Come back again soon." Once again, he looked weak and feeble. But to the Cultivator standing in front of him, he was a vicious beast in sheep's clothing. Trembling, the man made his exit.

As he left, Meng Hao decided not to return to his spot on the rock. He grabbed the Pill Cultivation Workshop Outlet banner and began to stroll about the Public Zone. He stopped next to two battling disciples, sticking the banner into the ground.

"Brother, it seems you're injured," he said, stepping forward. "You also seem somewhat listless. You don't seem to be in the right state to be fighting."

The two disciples stared at him in amazement. Having just seen him knock someone out, they hesitated, and at the same time, both backed up a bit.

“I happen to have some Spirit Refreshment Pills from the Pill Cultivation Workshop. Take one, and you will be completely reinvigorated, your victory guaranteed. Since today is our opening day of business, it only costs one Spirit Stone. How convenient!” Meng Hao continued to walk forward, his face filled with sincerity.

“I already have some medicinal pills,” said the man he had been giving his sales pitch to. He slapped his grab of holding, and a Spirit Refreshment Pill appeared, which he popped into his mouth.

Upon seeing this, Meng Hao sighed. He had watched his first customer for some time before determining that he had no medicinal pills. With a light cough, he looked at the second man standing in front of him. The man gave a cold harrumph, then produced his own medicinal pill and swallowed it, sighing inwardly.

But Meng Hao wasn’t disheartened. He circled back to the boulder, continuing to watch the two of them. As time passed, they seemed to be looking worse and worse off. Soon, it was clear they were out of medicinal pills, and the critical juncture in the fight had arrived. Victory and defeat would be decided.

His spirits risen again, Meng Hao hefted the banner and approached them again.

“Brothers, the moment of life or death has arrived. You don’t have any medicinal pills left, but don’t worry, I have some right here.

“At this critical juncture, buy one of my Soul Congealing Pills. It will restore your energy in a flash, and even recover your spiritual energy. Brothers, you’re not buying a medicinal pill, you’re buying spiritual energy. Aiyo, you’re injured!” Meng Hao’s words distracted the Cultivators. A flying sword hit one of them in the arm, sending out a fountain of blood. He retreated backward with a scream.

Meng Hao was even faster than him, following and continuing his speech, looked as weak and scholarly as ever.

“Brother, now is the time. You’re bleeding profusely. Quick, buy a Blood Coagulation Pill. If you don’t, the danger is just too great.”

“Get out of here!” the man’s opponent roared at Meng Hao. He charged his injured opponent.

“Give me a pill,” said the injured Cultivator, his face pale. Retreating several paces, he gritted his teeth and pulled out a Spirit Stone. A Blood Coagulation Pill shot from Meng Hao’s hand onto the wound on the man’s arm. The blood flow began to slow. He focused his attention, then leaped back into the fight.

“Aiya, Brother, it seems you’re out of medicinal pills. Look, I have plenty. Now that your opponent bought one, he’s bursting with energy. But you’re injured. Why don’t you buy a Blood Coagulation pill?

“Oh no, you got slashed again. You must be really tired. Take it slow, and don’t be discouraged. Brother, I still have a Skeletal Relaxation Pill.

“One Spirit Stone for one pill. You should buy pills quickly. The sages said, Spirit Stones have a price, but a life is priceless.” Meng Hao slowly circled them. Sure enough, they were out of medicinal pills, and soon, they began buying. Feeling pressure from each other, they bought quite a few. The battle grew more serious. Their fighting today was more intense than four or five normal battles.

Originally, it had been a fairly simple fight, but with the Pill Cultivation Workshop Outlet here, things were complicated. With dangerous fighting, comes injury. The two cannot be separated.

Flop. Flop. The two men had finally exhausted every scrap of energy. They dropped to the ground, unconscious, Spirit Stones spent and medicinal pills eaten up. Even their magical items were destroyed in the battle, seemingly together along with their wits. How tragic.

As far as Meng Hao was concerned, he had saved their lives. Or at least one life. Hefting his banner, he once again strolled around the plateau, and once again found two Cultivators locked in devastating combat. From the look of it, even if they had healing medicine, it was gone by now. Eyes glistening, he stood the banner up next to the two of them.

“Brothers, your complexions seem bad, and you’ve received some serious injuries. But fear not, I have medicinal pills. One Spirit Stone buys one pill; your recovery is guaranteed.

“How come you aren’t saying anything? Don’t tell me you don’t trust me? Just now another disciple bought some of my pills. The result for his opponent was death.”

Shortly, each of the men bought a pill, then again, and again, until they had no more Spirit Stones left. After much bitter battling, they ended their fight in a tie, with nothing to show for it except empty bags of holding.

Meng Hao shook his head, picked up the banner and found a new place to do business.

By the time the sun set, Meng Hao had been everywhere in the Public Zone, selling medicinal pills. In the end, wherever he went, the battling would instantly cease, and the participants would leave. Eventually, Meng Hao stared out over an empty Public Zone. Contentedly patting his bag of holding, he left.

It was late at night when he arrived at the Immortal’s Cave. He sat down cross-legged and excitedly began to take inventory of his spoils.

“One, two…” He grew more and more excited as he counted. “Altogether I have fifty-three. I’m rich. This method is much faster than robbing people. It’s also much safer. No need for killing.”

“I don’t have many medicinal pills left, so tomorrow I’ll go to the Pill Cultivation Workshop and buy some more. If I want the business to do well, I should buy out all of this month’s healing medicines. If I don’t have enough Spirit Stones, I’ll just buy as much as I can. The scarcer the pills, the easier they’ll be to sell.”

Meng Hao opened the bag of holding he had taken from the unconscious Cultivator. Inside were a few Spirit Stones, two Spirit Condensation Pills, and a pink-colored medicinal pill.

He held the pill up and examined it. He recognized it as one of the Pill Cultivation Workshop’s Cosmetic Cultivation Pills, an expensive pill. It was worth about ten Spirit Condensation Pills, and could be considered one of the most expensive products available.

“This pill is designed to maintain one’s physical appearance. It would be a waste for me to use it on myself.” He figured the previous owner must have been trying to ingratiate himself to a female disciple. Not thinking any more on the subject, he put the pill into his bag of holding.

As he was looking down contentedly at all the Spirit Stones and medicinal pills, the main door of the Immortal’s Cave suddenly creaked and began to open. It happened so quickly, Meng Hao had no time to gather up all his spoils.

A woman entered, surrounded by a halo of moonlight. She was beautiful, but cold and expressionless. She wore a long silver robe that made it seem as if she had donned the moon itself.

It was none other than the Reliance Inner Sect’s Elder Sister Xu.

As she entered the Immortal’s Cave, moonlight fell onto the Spirit Stones and medicinal pills which lay in front of Meng Hao. A sliver of astonishment suddenly cut through her cold demeanor.

“Greetings, Elder Sister Xu,” said Meng Hao, scrambling to his feet. His right hand swept up the Spirit Stones and medicinal pills. He stood there, looking embarrassed.

Elder Sister Xu didn’t say anything. She just looked at Meng Hao, nodded, then turned to leave.

Look surprised, Meng Hao followed after her.

“Elder Sister Xu, you took the trouble to come here, why not stay a bit?”

“There’s no need,” she replied coldly. “I’ll be going into secluded meditation starting tomorrow, and I just wanted to check in on you.” She looked him over, then walked out of the cave.

Meng Hao felt embarrassed, regretting having not collected up the Spirit Stones more quickly. In that case, he would have looked a bit worse off, and perhaps Elder Sister Xu would have been willing to help him out some more.

At the same time, he felt a bit of warmth in his heart. Elder Sister Xu appeared cold and indifferent, but she had come here to see him, which meant she remembered him. His heart thumping, he slapped his bag of holding and produced the pink-colored medicinal pill.

“I’ve been wanting to thank you, Elder Sister Xu. I saved up quite a bit of Spirit Condensation Pills so that I could trade them for this Cosmetic Cultivation Pill. Please accept it. In my eyes, only you are worthy of such a pill. From the moment I entered the sect, I’ve had a dream, that you would stay young forever, and be eternally beautiful.” Without so much as a wink, he solemnly and respectfully held out the pill.

Elder Sister Xu stopped walking and looked back at him. She glanced silently at the pill in his hand, then accepted it.

“Even though Spirit Condensation Pills are common in the sect, they are only effective up to the fifth level of Qi Condensation. We Cultivators place much importance on our Cultivation base. We live in the world of Cultivation, a place where life and death hang in the balance. You can’t be like this in the future. You may be intelligent, but you need to work more on your cultivation.” This was the first time Meng Hao had heard Elder Sister Xu speak so much. As she spoke, he nodded respectfully.

“As long as Elder Sister Xu likes it, I’m willing to trade for it,” he said, lowering his head and blinking. He looked a bit shy.

“This pill… I’ll accept it this time, but next time don’t trade your pills like this.” She put the pill away, hesitated for a moment, then pulled out a pink-colored jade pendant which she handed to Meng Hao.

“This is a magical item,” she said. “You need to protect yourself.” She began to walk down the mountain.

“Many thanks, Elder Sister Xu,” said Meng Hao. “Would you allow me to accompany you while you walk? I haven’t seen you for so long, and I have some questions regarding Cultivation that I hope you can clear up for me.” He knew that this was an important opportunity. This was the only person he had to rely on, so he needed to get close to her. If he could walk with her through the Outer Sect and be seen by others, perhaps fewer people would be willing to mess with him in the future.

Elder Sister Xu hesitated. She was an indifferent person, and usually didn’t say much. She had never spent time with male sect members, and it felt a bit strange to have Meng Hao standing there next to her. She was about to refuse, but after he finished speaking, she thought bashfully of the Cosmetic Cultivation Pill he had given her, and she nodded quietly.

The moon shone down gently on the two of them as they walked.

Just then, at the peak of the North Mountain, a tall old man stood up, clad in a gray robe. As he looked down on the scene, a look of admiration appeared on his face.

“Excellent. This pup Meng Hao isn’t bad at all. He truly grasps the correct interpretation of the Reliance Sect. He knows how to find someone to rely on. And he also knows that if he protects his relationship with that person, then he will always have someone to rely on.” This was the same old man who had expressed admiration for Meng Hao on Pill Distribution day. The more he learned about Meng Hao, the more he liked him.

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# Chapter 13: Manly Cao Yang

Elder Sister Xu was like a tiger pelt, which, when worn while strolling about the Outer Sect, would immediately attract attention. When the Outer Sect disciples saw Elder Sister Xu walking with Meng Hao, strange expressions filled their faces. This was especially true for those who had bought medicines from Meng Hao earlier that day. Hatred blossomed, and then was held back.

As for those with higher level Cultivation bases, they didn’t know what had happened on the plateau, but they still recognized Meng Hao, and conjectured that he was not someone to be trifled with.

Actually, Meng Hao didn’t know it, but he had become a rather famous person in the Outer Sect in the past two months.

As far as he was concerned, the most important thing was getting through each day. Right now it was night, and not many disciples were about. Not even half of them saw the scene play out.

Realizing that his opportunity was not easy to come by, and shouldn’t be lost, Meng Hao prattled on with some of his best humble scholar’s words. He led taciturn Elder Sister Xu to the Pill Cultivation Workshop, where the middle-aged man, both nervous and anxious, sold him all of the various healing pills at a very low price. It would take months to restock the amount of pills he took.

They even went to the Treasure Pavilion. When Elder Sister Xu stared ferociously at the shrewd-looking man, his face grew pale. He surreptitiously slipped a Spirit Stone to Meng Hao and indicated that he could exchange the copper mirror at any time. Meng Hao gave a cold harrumph, looking detested, and told the man that he'd lost the mirror ages ago.

The Treasure Pavilion Brother laughed bitterly and apologized. He told him not to worry, that the mirror had been lost in the past and was always found again within two or three years. At the foot of the East Mountain, Meng Hao watched Elder Sister Xu walk off into the distance, surrounded by moonlight. That was the first time he realized that she was actually incredibly beautiful, like some sort of Immortal goddess.

"Too bad she's so cold, otherwise I would think about marrying her." He fantasized idly for a bit, then gave a few dry coughs and headed back to the Immortal's Cave.

The night passed by uneventfully, and early the next day, as the first rays of dawn appeared, Meng Hao energetically made his way to the plateau.

"I'm just a sliver away from the peak of the third level of Qi Condensation. It's too bad I don't have the right medicinal pills. Demonic Cores aren't easy to get, and I would have to go to that black mountain, which is just too dangerous." As he walked, an idea began to form.

"My goal now is to collect Spirit Stones. Then, the next time I can get a Demonic Core, I will be able to make a massive leap of progress. If I can get to the fifth level of Qi Condensation…" His heart began to thump, and his eyes shined with anticipation.

"Being of the fifth level in the Outer Sect makes you a kind of lord. And most importantly, you can use the Wind Walking technique." Meng Hao thought back to Elder Brother Wang Tengfei and how he was able to hover seven inches above the ground, and his heart beat even faster.

Soon, the plateau appeared in front of him, and he hurried forward. Looking every bit the humble scholar, he sat down cross-legged on the boulder.

Soon, more and more Cultivators appeared, including some who hadn't been present the day before. The sounds of battle filled the air, along with blood-curdling screams. Meng Hao scanned the scene, trying to pick out his first potential customer of the day. He didn’t notice that in another part of the Public Zone, a man was carefully making his way through the crowd.

The Cultivator walked slowly, looking all around. Suddenly, his gaze fell onto Meng Hao, and his body trembled. He stopped walking.

This was Meng Hao’s first customer from the day before. He had personally witnessed Meng Hao knock down his opponent, then act bashful afterwards. He hadn’t expected him to return today, yet there he was.

“How come he’s still here? That swindler! His wares are simply too expensive!” The Cultivator felt both hatred and fear. Heaving a sigh, he was about to leave, when suddenly his eyes caught sight of a manly disciple entering the Public Zone.

“It’s Cao Yang… He’s at the peak of the second level, just a step away from the third. His cousin Lu Hong is the number one disciple in the Low-Level Public Zone. Thanks to him, Cao Yang can bully people and use despicable tactics to hurt people when fighting. People get angry, but won’t say anything. If it were anyone else, people would have ganged up on him long ago. He didn’t show up yesterday, so things went relatively smoothly. Today’s going to be good.” The Cultivator moved a bit closer, convinced that Cao Yang would end up provoking the guy from the Pill Cultivation Workshop Outlet. Considering he hated both of them, he looked forward eagerly to their misery.

Some of the nearby combatants caught sight of Cao Yang, and their expressions changed. They stepped aside quickly, afraid of incurring the wrath of the manly disciple.

Cao Yang snorted coldly. He was tall, tough and stocky. His cold, hard stare was intimidating, as if the Low Level Public Zone was his own back yard. Other than two or three people who he didn’t want to mess with, he looked down on everyone. Frowning, he wondered why he hadn’t seen his good friend Zhao Wugang lately. This made his mood sour, so he stalked about looking for a newbie to steal medicinal pills from.

Then, his gaze fell upon Meng Hao, and the big banner sticking up next to him.

At first, he had barely noticed him. But then he saw the gloating Cultivator watching on in the distance, and his interest was piqued.

“Go, go, quickly,” said the Cultivator under his breath. He suddenly realized that watching the fighting was a lot more interesting than participating in it.

Perhaps his mumblings had some effect, because Cao Yang rolled his eyes and then strode over to Meng Hao. People hurried to get out of his way.

Meng Hao sat on the boulder, looking as resolute as ever, preparing to hawk his medicines. But as he saw Cao Yang approaching, he realized he could not accomplish his goal. He raised his head, feeling a bit of pity.

This man was no stranger to him. He was the violent man he had seen a few days ago. Meng Hao sat there, a weak scholar. Looking bashful and a bit ardent, he said:

“Brother, it’s our second day in business. All pills are in stock, and each one is essential for battle. Would you like to buy some?”

Cao Yang looked him over but was unable to estimate his Cultivation base. If a person’s Qi Condensation level is below the seventh, then unless they intentionally emit spiritual energy, their Cultivation base will be motionless, and it is impossible to see how powerful they are. Only at the seventh level of Qi Condensation does it become visible to others.

Therefore, he had no way to know Meng Hao’s level.

“When I buy things, I don’t need to spend money. Hand over all your medicinal pills and Spirit Stones. If you dally, I’ll snap your neck.” His eyes flashed, and his tone was utterly forceful and domineering. After all, this was the Low-Level Public Zone, and everyone here revered him. His cousin was Lu Hong. As far as he was concerned, Meng Hao was nobody.

Off in the distance, Meng Hao's first customer watched the proceedings eagerly.

"Beat him to death, beat him to death!" he said quietly. Even he didn't know which party he was referring to.

"Brother, the sages said, it is not good to steal," said Meng Hao delicately. "Look, let's discuss things a bit. I'm running a business here, but I haven't even opened shop yet. How could I have Spirit Stones already?"

"Sages? On this plateau, I am the sage," Cao Yang said, feeling even more confident after hearing Meng Hao speak. "If I want to beat you, who will stop me? If I want to cut you to pieces, who would even utter a peep?" Assuming Meng Hao was scared, he laughed heartily and took a step forward. He was very close now, and his eyes radiated insolence.

"Brother, I didn't do anything to provoke you. Furthermore, I'm not in the Public Zone. Look, I'm outside the borders." Pulling a long face, Meng Hao stood up on the boulder, trying to speak reasonably.

"You really can talk crap," said manly Cao Yang impatiently. "If I say you're inside, then you're inside." He stepped past the banner, then swiped his hand at Meng Hao.

"What a bully!" When he saw manly Cao Yang's hand moving, Meng Hao's countenance flickered, and he seemed to change into a different person. As Cao Yang moved forward, so did he, and his right palm shot out.

A bang sounded out, then a horrific scream came out of manly Cao Yang's mouth, followed by a fountain of blood. His body flew back some distance, his face filled with astonishment.

His Cultivation level was higher than that of the Cultivator Meng Hao had struck yesterday, so he didn't lose consciousness. But pain wracked his body. Even as he attempted to struggle to his feet, Meng Hao appeared next to him and kicked him viciously into the ground.

"The sages said, if you take things without paying, you're courting death.

“I told you, I’m running a business, and I haven’t opened shop yet. I don’t have any Spirit Stones.” As he spoke, he continued to ruthlessly trample Cao Yang. The manly man’s shrill, miserable shrieks sounded out over the plateau, punctuating Meng Hao’s each and every word. He protected his head with his hands, rolling about. Soon, footprints covered his green robe.

“I told you I was outside the Public Area, not inside,” said Meng Hao furiously. The manly man’s horrible cries began to grow weak, and it seemed that soon he wouldn’t even have the energy to cry out at all. The onlooking Cultivators all seemed to suck in their breath, looking at Meng Hao raging in all his fury. A few of them had been present the day before, and they started to think that they had struck it lucky.

The one who understood things the most was yesterday’s first customer. Looking at manly Cao Yang screaming, and watching Meng Hao’s fierce expression as he jumped up and down, he suddenly began to sweat and quiver. The longer he watched, the more he felt that Meng Hao was truly frightening and dangerous.

It appeared that Cao Yang was about to lose consciousness. The shadow of death seemed to float over him. His vision began to grow dim. Then, he rose up his left hand, trembling. In it was a Spirit Stone.

“I… I’ll buy some medicine!” he cried. He mustered all his strength to cry out as loud as possible, apparently afraid that Meng Hao wouldn’t hear him.

Meng Hao stopped, his foot in mid-air. His fierce expression flickered away, replaced with the innocent scholar’s. With a genial smile, he took the Spirit Stone.

“Why didn’t you say so earlier?” He helped Cao Yang to his feet, brushing the dusty footprints off his robe.

His manly body trembled, and he stared fearfully at Meng Hao. Looking at him, Cao Yang wanted to leave immediately, to get as far away as possible from the demon in human clothing.

As of now, he was just like the Cultivator from yesterday.

“Brother, looking at your current state, I think one medicinal pill will only help you temporarily.” He gripped Cao Yang by the shoulders. He seemed to stop in consideration for a moment. “You have a lot of enemies. Why don’t you buy some more?”

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# Chapter 14: Threats

Upon hearing this, Cao Yang’s body went stiff. It wasn’t just him. Everyone backed up, looking at Meng Hao in dread.

“Buy… buy some more?” said Cao Yang, shaking, his voice weak. Were it not for Meng Hao holding him up, he would have toppled over.

“One pill, one Spirit Stone,” said Meng Hao affably. He retrieved several Anti-hemostasis Pills from his bag of holding. “I’m honest with all customers, Brother, please rest at ease. I won’t take advantage of your misfortunate to raise prices. Just ask any of the Brothers nearby. The Pill Cultivation Workshop Outlet’s reputation is quite good.”

Seeing all the pills, Cao Yang’s face paled. And then he looked at the amiable expression on Meng Hao’s face and his back grew cold. Heart trembling, he gritted his teeth.

“Brother, you can really tell the good from the bad. These are genuine Pill Cultivation Workshop products.” As he spoke, he produced some Blood Coagulation Pills and held them out.

Cao Yang looked at the medicinal pills with a start, then glanced bitterly at Meng Hao’s bag of holding. He looked back at Meng Hao’s face and saw it filled with care and concern.

Cao Yang wasn’t stupid, and he understood Meng Hao’s intentions. The blood drained from his heart. But right now his life was the most important thing, and he had no other options. He took out more Spirit Stones from his bag of holding and reluctantly handed them over.

Meng Hao took them with a smile, then placed the medicinal pills into Cao Yang’s hand one by one. In a short period of time, the Spirit Stones in Cao

Yang’s bag of holding had been replaced by a pile of medicinal pills.

Cao Yang’s heart bled even more. Looking pained, he trembled.

Then he saw that Meng Hao still held five pills in his hand and a look of shock and desperation filled his face.

“Those other pills should be enough to help you recover. These five are for after that, to help you maintain your health.” He spoke considerately as he gazed at Cao Yang.

“I don’t have any left, I really don’t,” Cao Yang said, looking at Meng Hao, about to cry.

Meng Hao said nothing, looking as amiable as ever. Cao Yang’s scalp tingled. Gritting his teeth and ignoring his own distress, he pulled out some magic items, including flying swords, magic wands, Spirit Condensation pills and the like.

“I have no spirit stones, only these things,” he said desperately.

“Magic items are also acceptable,” said Meng Hao, taking them and putting them into his bag of holding.

Moments later, Cao Yang, carrying his bundle of medicinal pills, hobbled off, supported by the arms of some fellow disciples.

Meng Hao patted his bag of holding contentedly. It was only morning, and he had already sold out. He decided that it was best to quit while he was ahead, so he collected his flag and told the remaining Cultivators he would see them tomorrow. Conversations broke out as he strode down from the plateau.

Half a month flashed by, during which time, Meng Hao grew to be quite famous among the low-level disciples. They all knew about the Pill Cultivation Workshop Outlet on the plateau.

Even more talked about was the owner of the shop, who looked like a delicate scholar, but who had an explosive temper. Rumors spread.

One afternoon, Cao Yang walked out of his house, his face pale. Despite his poor complexion, his wounds had healed. The pills he had bought from Meng Hao at an exorbitant price were actually quite effective in helping him to recover.

He had hidden away for the past half month, and today was the first day he had been able to walk around. He looked hesitant at first, but finally walked through the Outer Sect, eventually reaching an area with few buildings. He stopped in front of one of them.

“Cao Yang requests an audience with Elder Brother Lu,” he said, standing outside and clasping his hands in front of him respectfully.

Sitting inside cross-legged was a man of about thirty years of age wearing a green robe. He was not a handsome man, but had an appearance of excessive arrogance. His eyes flickered open, and he looked out at Cao Yang appraisingly.

“What transpired?” he said coolly.

“Well, Elder Brother Lu, I … I was robbed a few days ago.” Cao Yang blurted it out, feeling nervous. People outside said that Elder Brother Lu was his cousin, but in reality, they were not related. Elder Brother Lu usually meditated in seclusion, and did not really care about Cao Yang at all.

He knew that whenever Cao Yang had some hardship, he would come calling.

Hearing his words, Elder Brother Lu seemed a bit annoyed.

“Who was it that robbed you?” he asked coolly.

“It was an Outer Sect disciple named Meng Hao,” replied Cao Yang.

“Meng Hao?” Elder Brother Lu thought for a moment.

“He’s completely ignorant and incompetent,” said Cao Yang hatefully. “But he opened up a shop on the plateau, hawking medicinal pills to disciples who get injured in battle.”

“Hawking medicinal pills?” said Elder Brother Lu with a frown. His eyes flickered.

“Yeah. Now he’s one of the most famous disciples in the low level. He opened up that shop and then forces people to buy from him. Now, everyone is complaining and ashamed to be associated with him at all. They all despise him. He’s aroused the wrath of heaven and earth! I beg Elder Brother Lu to administer justice.” Anger covered Cao Yang’s face as he thought about his own wretched experience that day.

Actually, Elder Brother Lu didn’t care at all about the things Cao Yang had just said. And yet, his eyes shone.

“My Cultivation base has reached this level because of all the low-level disciples I robbed. How come in all my years in the Reliance Sect, I never thought to open a store and hawk medicinal pills…” He sighed and slapped his thigh.

Upon hearing the noise from inside, Cao Yang stared in confusion at the building, not sure what it meant. He didn’t dare to ask. Moments later, Elder Brother Lu sent him away, with no assurance whatsoever that he would aid him in seeking vengeance.

The following morning at dawn, Meng Hao headed toward the plateau carrying his banner. He was in a good mood. He had grown accustomed walking the path to the plateau. When he reached it, he sat down on the boulder.

As soon as he appeared, the faces of the other Cultivators on the plateau grew pale. In the past half month, they had been tormented by Meng Hao until they were completely dispirited. But, if they didn’t come, how could they rob from other disciples? Killing outside of this area was not permitted, so they had no choice but to come. What they usually did was stop fighting as soon as Meng Hao showed up.

But people’s killing spirit would inevitably arise, animosities would be stoked. Even though Meng Hao’s business had slowed, he still made profit.

It is worth mentioning that ever since Meng Hao opened his shop, there were much fewer deaths. He was quick to point this out, and it had become a key feature of his sales pitch.

As usual, Meng Hao looked about for potential customers. He thought to himself that this really wasn’t the best method. The shopkeepers in Yunjie County always had assistants. Even as a new idea was coalescing in his mind, he caught sight of a man in the distance, about thirty years old. He looked extremely arrogant, and in his hand he held a banner which looked just like Meng Hao’s. Written on the banner were several large characters.

Pill Cultivation Workshop Outlet Number 2.

This was Lu Hong, the number one disciple in the lower level. His Cultivation base was similar to Meng Hao’s, just a hair away from the peak of the third level. Meng Hao glanced at him, then paid him no attention. Of course there would always be imitators in business, although Meng Hao wasn’t too pleased with the name on the banner.

The other Cultivators on the plateau looked at each other for a moment, then went back to their fighting. About an hour later, Meng Hao caught sight of two combatants. He hurried over and planted his banner next to them. At the same time, Lu Hong hurried over and planted his banner.

As the two banners were planted, the combatants dripped with cold sweat. As far as they were concerned, the people standing there were very powerful. Normally, one would be enough to make them uncomfortable, but here were two, standing there staring.

“Brother, buying a medicinal pill will ensure your safety,” said Meng Hao hurriedly. “One Spirit Stone per pill. I treat all customers fairly.”

“Buy Lu’s pills, they’re just as effective,” said Lu Hong from the other side. He looked at the two, murderous intent flashing briefly in his eyes.

The two combatants trembled down to their guts, having lost any desire to fight. They produced Spirit Stones and handed them over to Lu Hong, then raced off. Meng Hao frowned. This was clearly robbery, and if things went on like this, the Public Zone would soon be empty. That wasn’t his desire.

By afternoon, Meng Hao’s business had dropped significantly. Other than an order in the morning, he sold nothing at all. Lu Hong, who didn’t care a bit about right and wrong, forced people to buy. If they didn’t buy, then he attacked them. Soon, the plateau was completely empty.

Lu Hong looked down at the dozen or so Spirit Stones he had acquired. He looked cool and indifferent on the outside, but inside he burned with excitement.

“This really is a good business. If I had thought of this before, I wouldn’t have been made fun of for robbing so many lower level disciples. If only that Meng Hao weren’t here, I’m sick of him.” He had not come because of Cao Yang, of course, but rather to imitate Meng Hao’s business model. Now that he had a taste of it, he wanted to have the monopoly. He looked murderously at Meng Hao.

“I’ll practice a few more days,” he thought, “then kill him.”

The next day, thanks to Lu Hong’s powerful reputation as the number one disciple in the low level, few people showed up in the Public Zone. Those who did show up were ones who hadn’t been present the day before. They had no choice but to buy medicinal pills. Meng Hao wasn’t willing to do business like Lu Hong, so he didn’t get a single order.

The more Lu Hong looked at Meng Hao, the more his murderous intentions grew. By evening of the third day, when Meng Hao was making his silent exit, he heard Lu Hong’s arrogant voice from behind him. The few people present all heard.

“If I see your banner tomorrow, I’ll cripple your Cultivation base.”

Meng Hao stopped for a moment. He said nothing, but his eyes filled with cold power. He stalked off, returning to the Immortal’s cave.

“You’re the one who copied me,” said Meng Hao, his eyes fierce. “Then you stole my business, like a turtledove stealing the nest of a magpie. Then you say you’ll cripple my Cultivation base!” Thinking of the murder in Lu Hong’s eyes, Meng Hao pushed open the stone door of the second room in the Immortal’s cave. Instantly, thick spiritual energy began to pour out. Meng Hao sat down cross-legged.

He absorbed the several months’ worth of accumulated spiritual energy. As dawn approached, he opened his flashing eyes. He had experienced a breakthrough. No longer was he a hair away from the peak, he was at the peak of the third level. Now he was just a step from the fourth.

But that step was not an easy one. The higher one’s Cultivation base, the more difficult it was to progress, especially to the fifth and seventh levels. Those levels were often bottlenecks, extremely difficult. Meng Hao frowned, gritted his teeth, and forced himself to open the bag of holding and take out all of the Spirit Condensation Pills he had earned recently. Then he used copper mirror’s mystical ability along with all his valuable Spirit Stones to duplicate even more Spirit Condensation Pills.

Spirit Condensation Pills were of limited use, but with a large amount, there would be some effect. Each time he used this method, though, its efficacy would be reduced.

“If I don’t cripple him first, he will destroy me tomorrow.” Without hesitation, he popped the pills into his mouth.

The spiritual energy in his body lacked a bit, so as the huge amount of Spirit Condensation Pills dissolved, his body began to shake. He felt his Cultivation base erupt like a flood. His mind hummed, and his consciousness faded a bit. When things grew clear, his eyes glittered. And yet, he still had not reached the fourth level of Qi Condensation. He ground his teeth. With no other choice, he duplicated more Spirit Condensation Pills and swallowed them.

Once, twice, three times. His mind vibrated violently, as if it were being smashed by turbulent waves. Then there was a bang, and his eyes grew blurry.

Massive amounts of filth oozed out from his pores, and as it did, Meng Hao’s vision slowly grew clearer, his body cleaner. After about an hour, his eyes glittered dazzlingly, and he was completely clear-headed.

“The fourth level of Qi Condensation!” He felt his Cultivation base roiling like a massive river. As he rotated it, it sounded like a roaring tempest, astonishing and frightening.

His expression calm, he retrieved five flying swords from his bag of holding, spoils from the past half month. They were all products of the Treasure Pavilion, standard issue, and all looked exactly the same.

There were some other magical items which he had procured. He heaved a deep sigh, then closed his eyes and began to meditate, awaiting daybreak.

“After entering the sect and beginning my Cultivation practice, I had no choice… but to rob some people to improve my Cultivation base. But I don’t want to hurt too many people. Thus, I came up with the idea of running a business. But now my business has been stolen away, and I’ve been threatened with crippling… That is pushing things too far!”

When dawn broke, Meng Hao opened his eyes and left the Immortal’s cave. He washed, then headed straight for the plateau.

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# Chapter 15: Decisive Attack

Dawn. The plateau. Considering the months of Meng Hao’s hawking, and days of Lu Gong’s domineering, there were few Cultivators present, especially this early in the morning. There were only two or three, sitting there cross-legged.

When Meng Hao arrived, they opened their eyes, and each of them sighed inwardly, wondering when things would return to the way they had been before.

Moments later, they gaped in astonishment. Meng Hao didn’t enter the plateau, but instead sat outside, cross-legged, eyes closed. He remained there, unmoving.

This strange sight left them astonished. They looked at each other, then seemed to remember something, whereupon they began to gloat.

Time passed, and soon it was late into the morning. More and more people arrived on the plateau, and every single one noticed Meng Hao and his unusual behavior. People began to make guesses about what was going on. Everyone was so intrigued that none of them fought.

“Could it be that Elder Brother Lu’s words really worked? Meng Hao is too scared, so he doesn’t dare to hawk goods?”

“It must be. Elder Brother Lu is the number one disciple in the low level. If he tells you to beat it, then you have no choice but to beat it.”

“Who would have thought that this guy was so scared for his own skin? All he can do is bully people lower than him. Look at how arrogant he is. He thinks that just because he didn’t bring his crappy banner, Elder Brother Lu will let him off the hook.” Many of them were like this. They wouldn’t complain when being robbed by someone powerful. But if someone who looked weak and kind took their items through business, they would complain endlessly.

Lu Hong had been in power for quite a while. From his first vicious attack long ago, all the way to today, when he forced people to do business with him, everyone was helpless. And yet, they had no choice but to deal with the situation. In fact, many of them believed he had become a bit gentler recently.

Meng Hao hadn’t been in the sect for very long, and was neither very powerful nor arrogant. So even though his business was conducted gently, everyone complained relentlessly.

Meng Hao heard all of their talking, but his expression remained as neutral as always. Of course, his reason for sitting in meditation outside the Public Zone was not because he didn’t want to enter, but rather because his Cultivation base was now at the fourth level of Qi Condensation, and he couldn’t enter even if he wanted to.

In the midst of all the discussion, someone appeared at the bottom of the mountain. He wore a green robe, looked to be about thirty years old, and wore an incredibly arrogant expression. It was Lu Hong, slowly approaching, his hands clasped behind his back.

As soon as he appeared, Meng Hao’s eyes opened, and they shone brilliantly. Everyone watched as he stood up and slapped his bag of holding. A small white sword appeared. The sword aura glistened, pressing down with a cold pressure. Meng Hao charged forward, and the sword aura made a beeline for Lu Hong.

As soon as this happened, a buzz of conversation rose. Everyone was amazed at Meng Hao’s lack of fear… Was he really going to cause trouble for the number one low-level disciple Lu Hong?

“He… he’s going to battle Lu Hong!”

“They were going to fight sooner or later. Meng Hao injured Cao Yang and Lu Hong wrecked his business. This battle was unavoidable. I just never imagined Meng Hao would dare to attack like this. I think he doesn’t know his own limitations.”

“Elder Brother Lu has been at the third level for years. Meng Hao will definitely lose.”

Even as Meng Hao dashed forward, Lu Hong’s eyes glittered. He’d already planned to take Meng Hao’s head if he saw him today. And now, his opponent had dared to take the initiative. It was actually helpful. He snorted, and his body seemed to turn into a rainbow as he sped toward Meng Hao. His right hand slapped his bag of holding and a purple-colored flying sword appeared.

When the flying sword appeared, it was accompanied by a piercing whistle, and it radiated a golden purple color with a diameter of approximately 30 meters.

“It’s Elder Brother Lu’s Purple Yang sword!”

“It is! I heard he was awarded the Purple Yang sword by the Sect for some special service he did. It’s mystically sharp.”

Two people, one mountain. At the foot of the mountain, they charged each other.

Amidst a reverberating roar, Lu Hong’s expression changed and blood spurted from his mouth. He flew back several paces, staring at Meng Hao in shock.

“Fourth level of Qi Condensation!”

Meng Hao looked a bit embarrassed. He had just entered the fourth level of Qi Condensation, and his grasp of it was not firm. He could not release its full power.

He had made a simple attack, filled with ferocity. But cracks were already visible on his flying sword. His opponent's weapon was magically sharp, and had damaged his own weapon.

Even though Meng Hao didn't have much experience in fighting, in his half year or so hunting for wild beasts in the mountains, his reaction speed had grown. Furthermore, during his days on the plateau, he had observed many battles. Even as Lu Hong retreated backward, he moved forward, slapping his bag of holding. Another flying sword appeared next to the cracked sword. The two sword auras merged together and shot toward Lu Hong.

As he sped forward, Meng Hao's fingers flickered and tongues of flame congealed all around him. Three paces away, a Flame Serpent appeared, as thick as his arm, about half a meter long. It twisted in the air, then emitted a roar and shot toward Lu Hong.

Looking shocked, Lu Hong spit blood from his mouth and moved backwards anxiously. His eyes flashed with anger. He knew that because he had some magical items, and Meng Hao had just entered the fourth level, the outcome of this battle was not certain. But if he could exterminate Meng Hao, it would build his prestige.

Murderous intent flickered in his eyes. His fingers danced, whereupon a globe of glistening, radiant water appeared in his hands. He threw it out, whereupon it exploded, transforming into countless Water Arrows, which then shot toward the Flame Serpent.

His fingers moved again, and the Purple Yang sword slammed into Meng Hao's two flying swords. A booming sound rang out like iron being crushed. Meng Hao's two flying swords crumbled into pieces, whereupon the Purple Yang sword followed the Water Arrows toward the Flame Serpent.

With an echoing roar, the Flame Serpent disappeared into a cloud of dust. The Water Arrows became a mist and the Purple Yang sword returned to Lu Hong. Its golden-purple aura did not shine quite as brightly, and a crack had appeared on its blade, but it was still as sharp as ever.

“With a fourth level Qi Condensation like that, and no good weapon, killing you isn’t going to be hard. How many times can you use your Flame Serpent art like that, considering you aren’t at the fifth level?” In his heart, Lu Hong was worried about his flying sword, but outside, he put on a broad smile. He didn’t take a single step back.

“Your sword might be incredibly sharp, but let’s see how many times you can use it. Speaking of flying swords… I have some more, too. And as for the fifth level of Qi Condensation, with all the medicinal pills Elder Sister Xu gives me, it won’t be long before I break through.” He showed no expression on his face, but inside Meng Hao was very nervous. This was his first real battle, after all. He slapped his bag of holding, and three more flying swords appeared. They shot toward Lu Hong.

Lu Hong looked worried for a moment, but he didn’t hesitate for long. He roared, and then Meng Hao’s three flying swords met his Purple Yang sword.

Bang bang bang! The three swords shattered. And yet, the Purple Yang sword’s aura had diminished by at least half. More cracks had appeared on its surface, and Lu Hong looked incredibly worried.

Before he could do anything, though, Meng Hao nonchalantly slapped his bag of holding one more time, and three more whizzing flying swords appeared. He waved his arm, and another Flame Serpent congealed into being. The onlookers were all shocked.

“Meng Hao… He… He’s put Elder Brother Lu in a really tight spot. He’s actually at the fourth level of Qi Condensation!”

“He didn’t enter the Sect very long ago, and he’s already at the fourth level of Qi Condensation. He’s definitely at the fourth level, look at how he’s dealing with Elder Brother Lu. But, how did his Cultivation training go so quickly? What did Elder Sister Xu give him to help him so much? Dammit, if I had someone like that to rely on, then maybe I would be able to progress so quickly in my Cultivation.” The crowd buzzed, their faces filling with powerful jealousy.

Lu Hong’s face changed again, and he retreated, grinding his teeth. His fingers flickered again, and another Water Globe appeared. He’d never imagined that his opponent would have so many magical items.

A boom resounded as Meng Hao’s three flying swords broke to pieces, along with the Flame Serpent. The Purple Yang sword’s aura had now grown dark. But what shocked Lu Hong the most was Meng Hao’s expressionless face as he suddenly produced three more flying swords. Another explosion rang out as the three swords broke apart. But then, the Purple Yang sword let out a plaintive cry, then crumbled to pieces.

Lu Hong’s eyes went wide, and he staggered backward, spitting out gobs of blood. He glared at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao showed no emotion whatsoever, but inside he was extremely nervous. Every single flying sword was equal to a Spirit Stone. He waved his right hand, and yet another Flame Serpent appeared, roaring and twisting through the air around him. It flew toward Lu Hong.

Meng Hao shot toward the retreating Lu Hong like a rainbow, accompanied by the Flame Serpent. Yet another flying sword appeared, and in an instant, it was a meter away from Lu Hong, its sword aura glittering with death.

“You forced me to do it!” shouted Lu Hong, his hair in disarray, his clothes spattered with blood. From the day he had entered the sect until now, he had never been in such a bad situation. His eyes burned. With a growl, he tore open his robe, revealing a jadeite bottle gourd hanging from his neck. He poured into it all of the spiritual energy he could muster.

The jadeite bottle gourd began to glow brightly, and a droning sound filled the air. In the air in front of Lu Hong, the image of a massive bottle gourd appeared, many times larger than the one hanging from his neck. It was about half the size of a person.

Actually, Lu Hong’s Cultivation base was not strong enough to fully activate the bottle ground. The flickering image seemed as if it could dissipate at any moment. Before it could finish coalescing, Lu Hong spit out a mouthful of blood and retreated backwards again, his face deathly pale. And yet he still glared at Meng Hao with frenzied, murderous anger.

Even though the bottle gourd was not complete, the pressurized spiritual energy inside caused Meng Hao's expression to suddenly change. Then, the illusory bottle gourd emitted a thunderous roar and a thick, green beam shot from its mouth, slamming through the Flame Serpent and inundating Meng Hao.

"This is a magical item given to me by Elder Brother Wang Tengfei. It can be used when one reaches the fourth level of Qi Condensation. But you're just looking to die, Meng Hao, so you've forced me to use it early, and I've had to pay the price. You're definitely dead this time." Lu Hong started to let out a wild laugh, and yet the laugh could not leave his mouth; he felt as shocked as if he had been struck by lightning. He stared in astonishment.

The green beam slammed into Meng Hao, pushing him back about ten meters. However, it was blocked by a pink shield which surrounded Meng Hao's body. When the green beam dissipated, so did the pink shield. It shrank into a pink jade pendant which Meng Hao held in his hand. Cracks covered its surface.

He gripped the jade pendant, cold sweat dripping down his back, fear lingering in his heart. If he hadn't taken out the jade pendant Elder Sister Xu had given him, he would have been destroyed by the fearsome power of the bottle gourd.

"What magical item is that!?" Meng Hao looked at the jadeite gourd bottle hanging from Lu Hong's neck, who was clearly severely injured. He leaped forward and snatched the gourd bottle, immediately putting it into his bag of holding.

"That was given to me by Elder Brother Wang Tengfei! If you dare to steal it, you will have to deal with his wrath!" Lu Hong's countenance sank, and he began to tremble. He was filled with astonishment, never having imagined that the bottle gourd would be ineffective against this opponent.

“The Sect rules state that if you take something into your hand, it is yours,” said Meng Hao. He hesitated for a moment, but then decided that the bottle gourd was too powerful. He wouldn’t give it back. Enmity had been created which would be difficult to abate. Hatred in his heart, he stared coldly at Lu Hong.

“This isn’t the Public Zone,” said Lu Hong, his eyes filled with despair and fear. Raising his voice so everyone could hear, he said, “If you dare to kill me, it will be a violation of sect rules!”

“I, Meng Hao, will not violate Sect rules. However, you said yesterday that you would cripple my Cultivation base. So today, I will do the same to you.” Looking completely calm, he raised his hand and sent a flying sword piercing into the Qi passages of Lu Hong’s dantian, smashing his Cultivation base. Then he stood there amidst Lu Hong’s miserable screams, casting fear and awe across the entire plateau.

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# Chapter 16: Come here!

The faces of the surrounding Cultivators grew pale. Meng Hao’s attack was both decisive and also filled with a ferocious hatred that he himself didn’t even notice. This sort of thing was actually becoming a trend.

In the eyes of the onlookers, Meng Hao was now the number one person of the plateau. Perhaps in the entire Outer Sect, he was now one of the highest figures.

Many of the Cultivators thought back to the past half month. With a Cultivation base so high, Meng Hao could have robbed and taken at will. True, the customers of his shop weren’t happy, but he did treat them mildly. People now began to look at him with awe.

There was no fighting on the plateau that day. After Meng Hao left, the news of Lu Hong’s Cultivation base being broken spread like the wind. The fact that he had mentioned Wang Tengfei’s name was especially talked about, and caused the news to spread even faster. By nightfall, everyone in the Outer Sect had heard about what happened, and by this point everyone knew who Meng Hao was.

The East Mountain, covered with wisps of colorful clouds, was the Reliance Sect’s tallest mountain and also the Inner Sect’s base of activity. It had more spiritual energy than the other mountains, and was where Sect Leader He Luohua went for meditative seclusion.

Back in the heyday of the Reliance Sect, the four peaks had been fully occupied by the Inner Sect. Disciples of the seventh level of Qi Condensation had abounded. Now, only the East Mountain was occupied, by disciples Xu and Chen, whereas the other peaks were abandoned.

On the East Mountain there was an Immortal’s Cave which was much larger than Meng Hao’s. It was actually the finest Immortal’s Cave in the entire Outer Reliance Sect, rivaling even the dwelling-places of the Inner Sect disciples.

Inside was a Spirit Spring that was anything but dried up. It gurgled out dense, fragrant spiritual energy.

Of course, among all the disciples of the Reliance Outer Sect, the only one qualified to occupy such a place was the blessed Wang Tengfei.

He sat cross-legged in his white robe, his face placid, looking at Lu Hong kneeling in front of him. Lu Hong’s face was pale-white, and his body trembled. His Cultivation base had already been destroyed by Meng Hao.

“…I beg Elder Brother Wang to administer justice,” he said with bated breath. “He’s beyond cunning, more than you could imagine. He’s going to flee the Sect.” Every time Lu Hong saw Elder Brother Wang, he could not help but feel that the other man was perfect, beyond ordinary. That feeling had grown stronger and stronger over the past two years in which Wang Tengfei’s Cultivation base grew more and more powerful.

“If he flees,” said Elder Brother Wang after a while, resplendent in his perfection, “it will be a violation of Sect rules, and I will send some people to kill him.” He wore an amiable smile which would cause anyone to like him, and spoke with a lightness that caused him to seem even nobler.

Lu Hong had nothing more to say. He kowtowed, his face filled with entreaty, his body trembling uncontrollably.

“Very well,” said Wang Tengfei. “His methods are too vicious. An example should be made. I shall prevail upon Elder Brother Shangguan and make a trip over there, although I will be careful not to offend Elder Sister Xu. Meng Hao shall cripple his own Cultivation base, distribute his treasures and sever an arm and a leg. That shall be his apology. Good enough?” He spoke as if he held sway over every single matter within the Reliance Sect, as if with a single word, he could take command over Meng Hao’s

Cultivation base as well as his arms and legs. His smile was as amiable as ever, perfect and without flaw.

“My profound thanks. This fellow… he’s just filled with viciousness…” Lu Hong ground his teeth, his heart filled with enmity.

“Then I shall expel him from the Sect,” said Wang Tengfei coolly, as if he were talking about an incredibly insignificant matter. “He can go off into the wilds, and things will take their natural course.”

At that same moment, Meng Hao sat cross-legged in the Immortal’s Cave in the South Mountain, looking at the jadeite bottle gourd in his hands with a dark expression. Having broken through the fourth level of Qi Condensation, then fighting that battle, he had consumed almost all of his spiritual energy. There was nearly none left. At least he had obtained the magical gourd.

It seemed as though everything had gone smoothly since his entrance into the Reliance Sect, but actually, it was mostly because of his quick wit and foresight. If it had been anyone other than him, he would most likely have put his life in danger on his first Pill Distribution Day.

Later, he acquired the protection of the copper mirror and its mysterious power. Shortly after that, Elder Brother Zhao began to lust after his Immortal’s Cave. If he hadn’t died, Meng Hao’s situation would have been bleak, and he would have lost control of all of his belongings. That was the first time he had killed someone.

If he hadn’t started doing business with his shop, he wouldn’t have been able to arrive where he was now. But the wind that seemed to propel him from behind also held concealed within it hardships that he was unaware of.

Everything that had happened was like the thunder of an approaching storm. Meng Hao looked down quietly at the jadeite bottle gourd, thinking about the number one disciple in the Outer Sect, blessed Wang Tengfei. Thinking of him in all his perfection, Meng Hao felt as if the pressure of an entire mountain had come to rest on him. He almost couldn’t breathe.

He wanted to flee, but he knew that he was no servant, but a sect disciple. Fleeing was a violation of Sect rules. That would arouse the notice of the sect elders, and he would surely lose his life.

“If I’d known earlier that Lu Hong had Wang Tengfei backing him…” muttered Meng Hao. Moments later, unswerving determination filled his eyes.

“I would do the same thing. If I didn’t attack him, he would have killed me. I didn’t force him, he forced me. The grudge would have built either way. Unless I had run into Cao Yang earlier and been willing to let him rob me, things would have ended up this way. Even if it came down to killing, I couldn’t prevent people from coveting my business.” His eyes flashed as he looked gloomily around the Immortal’s Cave.

“It’s too bad Elder Sister Xu is meditating in seclusion…” The first thing he had done after crippling Lu Hong’s Cultivation base was to go looking for her. But he had been informed at the Inner Sect that parties in seclusion were not to be disturbed.

“This jadeite bottle gourd…” It was incredibly powerful, so much so that when he tested it out with his Cultivation base, it exploded out with a might that sent his heart thumping. He could only imagine how it could help him. Maybe now he would finally be able to break through to the fifth level of Qi Condensation. The strange thing was that the gourd bottle could not be placed in his bag of holding, but rather had to be hung on his body. Sadly, he had no more Spirit Stones. He had used all of them to break through the third level of Qi Condensation. Otherwise he would try to make a copy of the gourd bottle.

“This sect is not of the mortal world. It’s easy to lose one’s life here. If I can prevent disaster by handing over the gourd bottle, maybe I should just do it…” He did not wish to do so, but it seemed he had no other choice. Even as he wrestled with these thoughts, a sinister voice drifted in from the dark night, past the sealed door of the Immortal’s Cave.

“I am Shangguan Song 1, here to assist Elder Brother Wang in meting out justice. Meng Hao, please come out of the Immortal’s cave and kowtow to me.”

The dark voice seemed to fill the cave with icy cold shadow. Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and he lifted his head. He didn’t look the least bit surprised; he had anticipated that someone would come looking for him.

Meng Hao was silent for a moment, then slowly said, “It’s late at night, not a convenient time. Elder Brother, if you have something to say, just say it.”

“How haughty,” said the voice, clearly displeased. A cold snort rang out.

Meng Hao said nothing, maintaining his silence.

“If you won’t open the door, very well. I shall convey Elder Brother Wang’s instructions. Meng Hao, disciple of the Inner Sect, has not focused wholeheartedly on cultivation. He has caused disturbances in the Low-Level Public Zone, arousing mass complaints from fellow disciples, and has used vicious methods on others. However, he is young, so these offenses cannot be considered worthy of the death penalty. Hand over your treasures, cripple your Cultivation base and leave the Sect. Henceforth, you are not a disciple of the Reliance Sect.” As Meng Hao listened to the sinister voice, his face grew somber. Then, when he heard the final words, it filled with indignation.

“Elder Brother Wang’s decrees are not according to Sect rules,” said Meng Hao defiantly.

“Elder Brother Wang’s word are the Sect rules,” said the person outside, indifferent to Meng Hao’s interruption. “The following day is Pill Distribution Day. You will kowtow to Lu Hong and apologize, then await your punishment.” With that, the man flicked his sleeve, turned and left.

Meng Hao sat in silent contemplation. Time passed, and dawn approached. His eyes were bloodshot. He could not figure out what to do. His opponent obviously wanted the jadeite bottle gourd, and to see him dead. Out of supposed to mercy, he would cripple his Cultivation base, sever an arm and a leg, and then expel him from the sect into the wild mountains. If that happened, he would truly be hopeless.

“What should I do…” he said, fists clenched, eyes red. He suddenly felt completely weak and helpless. This was the first time he truly wished he were more powerful. If he were more powerful, he wouldn’t be bullied like this. He thought some more.

“Don’t tell me my only option is to flee…” His eyes filling with determination, he lifted up his head and walked out of the Immortal’s cave. But even as he walked out, he stopped in his tracks, hesitating.

“No, this isn’t right…” He lowered his head for a moment in thought, then turned back into the Immortal’s Cave, where he sat down cross-legged.

The following morning, Meng Hao opened his bloodshot eyes. He had not practiced any breathing exercises, but had spent the whole night in contemplation. But his Cultivation base was simply too low. He couldn’t think of any method other than fleeing the Reliance Sect. But surely his opponent had considered that he would do that. Fleeing was the same as death, and then he would be remembered as a traitor.

Bells rang out in the distance. Pill Distribution Day had arrived. Meng Hao knew that even if he tried to hide away in the Immortal’s Cave, catastrophe would still befall him.

“The law of the jungle. All of my problems are because my Cultivation base is too low. A true man doesn’t just take the suffering, he does something about it.” He gave a small sigh. He had been pushed to the brink, and had no room to maneuver. He calmed himself, then straightened out his clothing. He looked around the Immortal’s cave, then opened the main door and stared out at the blue sky and the emerald sea of trees.

Some time passed, and then he stepped forward. He had only taken a few steps when he noticed a person walk out from the jungle behind him, staring at him coldly.

“You didn’t flee. So you aren’t stupid after all.” Meng Hao recognized the person’s voice: it was Shangguan Song. It turned out he had stayed behind.

Meng Hao had seen him before. He was one of the disciples walking with Wang Tengfei that day by the East Mountain. His grandfather was one of the sect elders. He clearly had stayed behind to see if Meng Hao would flee. If he had, he would have been branded a traitor, and would have forfeited his life.

Meng Hao turned and headed toward the Outer Sect.

Shangguan Song laughed coldly, his eyes filled with ridicule. Actually, he had left the previous night, to go call on his grandfather Shangguan Xiu. Even had Meng Hao chosen to flee in the night, he would have been entrapped, and suffered a horrible death.

Shangguan Song followed Meng Hao the entire way. When they arrived at the Outer Sect, other disciples caught sight, one by one, and many different expressions filled their faces. Regardless, it appeared as if all had expected this, and none seemed to take pity on Meng Hao. Most actually jeered at him.

Soon, he arrived at the Outer Sect’s square. The dragon-carved pillars glowed brightly, and disciples were everywhere. Off in the distance, he saw white-robed Wang Tengfei, surrounded by a crowd of disciples.

The sun shone down on his white robe, making it shine like snow, and his long hair trailed past his shoulders. He looked perfect, flawless, like an Immortal being from a painting. His bearing made people want to get to know him. He really looked like a Chosen.

He chatted amiably with the disciples around him, friendly with everyone, regardless of their Cultivation base. He would nod, giving tips about Cultivation, causing everyone to treat him with utmost respect.

The female disciples all seemed to be infatuated with him. They looked as if they needed to be at his side, as if his each and every action could drive them crazy.

Even the sect elders on the tall platform gazed down on him fondly and with admiration.

Wherever Wang Tengfei went, he became the center of attention. His good looks, his gentleness, his perfection, melded together into a dazzling glow which burned Meng Hao’s eyes. He clenched his fists tightly.

As all the disciples arrived, and as the Pill Distribution concluded, gentle and cordial Wang Tengfei didn’t even look once at Meng Hao. He knew Meng Hao was watching him, but it meant no more to him than if a cricket were looking at him. He wouldn’t stoop so low as to return his gaze.

When everything concluded, and the dragon-carved pillars grew dark, Wang Tengfei’s gentle voice filled the air.

“Come here!”

It was a simple sentence, but the instant it rang out, everyone looked at Wang Tengfei, watching as his gaze fell onto Meng Hao.

1. Shangguan Song’s name in Chinese is (shàng guān sòng) – Shangguan is a relatively obscure family name. Song is basically just a name, with no special meaning

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# Chapter 17: I shall rely on myself!

Meng Hao stood there stiffly, staring at Wang Tengfei. He could suddenly feel the gaze of all the disciples who stood in the square. The Cultivators standing next to him moved away, creating an open area around Meng Hao.

A feeling of aloneness filled his heart, as if the world itself were about to forsake him. It was as if Wang Tengfei's single utterance had pushed him over the edge of existence.

No one spoke a word. The Outer Sect disciples just looked at Meng Hao. Wang Tengfei was too famous. His words reverberated in everyone's hearts.

No one was surprised at what was happening; news of yesterday's events had spread, and many people had already guessed what would happen this day.

The sect elders remained unmoving upon the high platform, gazing down at Meng Hao.

"Sect rules state that what you take belongs to you," said Meng Hao, forcing the words out one word at a time. He knew that compared to Wang Tengfei, his voice was laughably weak and small, and that he might be attacked. But, he still spoke up.

He knew that if he took out the jadeite gourd bottle, handed it over to Wang Tengfei, and made some tearful entreaties, then Wang Tengfei couldn't reject his apology. Not in front of all these people. He might exact some punishments, but would leave Meng Hao with his Cultivation base.

Maybe if he begged and kowtowed, admitted that he was in the wrong, accepted the humiliation and even insult himself, then he would be completely out of danger.

But Meng Hao would never do such a thing! Call him stupid and crazy, but he would never do it!

Even though he knew he was facing a dire calamity, he would never beg. He would never humiliate himself, would never crawl on the ground and plead. Never!

This was his spirit, his integrity. Some things in the world are more important than life or death, and that noble, unbendable, unbreakable spirit is dignity!

That was why he had spoken first, one word at a time. Even though his opponent was the mountain-like Wang Tengfei. Even though he faced dire calamity. Even though the whole world was against him. Even though he was alone, with no one to rely on. Despite all this… he still had his dignity. He lifted his head up and spoke.

This, was Meng Hao!

His words seemed to galvanize all the energy in his body. Death? What is death? So what if I haven't even lived to see 17! You can humiliate me, you can cripple my Cultivation. But you can never make me yield! You can never break my spirit!

His voice had rung out in the silence, clear and distinct, yet filled with a certain loneliness. As he spoke, his bitterness was plain, but perhaps only Meng Hao himself could understand it. His hands clenched into fists. No one else could sense it, but along with Wang Tengfei's words had come an invisible attack that attempted to force Meng Hao to collapse.

His body seemed as if it were about to disintegrate, his bones about to shatter. He felt a massive pressure trying to force him to kneel. His body shook, but he gritted his teeth and stood there, ignoring the pain in his bones.

"That treasure is mine," said Wang Tengfei with a friendly smile. "It belongs to whomever I give it to. I didn't give it to you, so you have no right to take it." His words seemed friendly, but were filled with menace, clear for everyone to hear. Smiling, he walked forward, raising his hand and waving a finger in Meng Hao's direction.

Winds surged in the square, screaming around in circles, causing the robes of the disciples to flap. Meng Hao stood still, as if the air in the square had become death itself and held him bound. He couldn't move a muscle. Suddenly, a pink jade pendant flew out from within his clothes and hovered in front of him. A pink shield appeared, covering Meng Hao protectively.

Wang Tengfei looked as affable as ever. His movements seemed completely casual, and as he took a second step, his finger waved a second time.

A bang resounded as the second finger movement stopped. The shield warped and twisted, flickering three times, then shattered in a deafening explosion. The jade pendant in front of him, the gift given to him by Elder Sister Xu, broke into pieces. Blood poured out of Meng Hao's mouth, and the pressure on him increased. He gritted his teeth, unwavering. He stood there, trembling, unwilling to yield.

An exceedingly dark look filled his eyes, and he clenched his fists harder. His fingernails dug deep into the flesh of his palms.

With his usual kind smile, Wang Tengfei took a third step forward, landing directly in front of Meng Hao. He waved his finger a third time, and a force like a giant invisible hand ripped open Meng Hao's clothing, revealing the jadeite gourd bottle hanging around his neck. The invisible hand snatched the gourd bottle, wrenching it away from Meng Hao and depositing it in Wang Tengfei's palm.

Meng Hao's face grew pale, and he coughed out a mouthful of blood. His body trembled, yet he couldn't move. Veins of blood appeared in his eyes, and his hands were clenched incredibly tight. He felt the pain of his fingernails digging deep into his flesh. Blood began to drip out from between his fingers and drop to the ground.

"Cripple your Cultivation base. Sever an arm and a leg. Leave the sect." Wang Tengfei continued to smile, his warm voice reverberating across the square. He extended a finger for the fourth time, pointing toward Meng Hao's chest.

Meng Hao glared back at Wang Tengfei. This entire time, he had only spoken once, never opening his mouth to say a second sentence. He did not scream or roar, but remained silent. More veins of blood appeared in his eyes and he clenched his fists even tighter. Because of the power he exerted, his fingernails snapped, lodged in his flesh. Blood dripped like rain.

Everything grew silent as people watched, their faces filled with derision. Their ridicule seemed to cut him away from the world, pushing him away until he was placed outside of everything.

And yet he still would not submit! What was a bit of physical pain?

Just as Wang Tengfei's finger was about to fall again, a sound rang out from a distant mountain peak and a gentle power appeared next to Meng Hao, blocking the crippling finger.

A bang rang out. Wang Tengfei flicked his wide sleeve and glanced to the side. An old man stood there, wearing a long gray robe. He had some mottled brown marks on his face, and though quite tall and big, didn't appear to be very mighty. This was the same person who had admired Meng Hao on the two previous occasions.

"You've taken the treasure back," said the old man. "Let the matter drop." With a frown, he looked at Meng Hao standing there silently, blood dripping from his fists. He sighed, then looked back at Wang Tengfei.

"Since it is Grand Elder Ouyang interceding, junior will give in." Wang Tengfei smiled, looking indifferent. During the entire time, he had only spoken to Meng Hao twice. Sunlight shone down on him, illuminating his elegant figure, his long hair, his perfect demeanor. As far as he was concerned, Meng Hao didn't even match up to an insect. As of this moment, he'd already placed Meng Hao out of his mind.

Meng Hao, covered in blood, was like a bug standing up against an elephant, who could crush him with a single step.

To Wang Tengfei, the things that had just happened were nothing. It was not that he felt contempt toward Meng Hao. He just didn’t care about him in the least bit. With a smile, he walked back into the crowd, chatting indifferently, as if nothing had happened. He began to give pointers to lower level disciples, emanating cordiality.

All the female disciples seemed obsessed with him. The other Cultivators viewed him with utmost respect. Everyone ignored Meng Hao, as if they had already forgotten about his existence.

Meng Hao was like the antithesis of Wang Tengfei. Covered in blood, his clothing in shreds, he cut a truly sorry figure.

Meng Hao could sense what Wang Tengfei thought of him. It wasn’t scorn, it was disregard. As Wang Tengfei left, Meng Hao felt a bit more relaxed, although his body hurt so bad it seemed he might collapse. Gritting his teeth, he saluted Grand Elder Ouyang with cupped hands.

Without another word, Meng Hao coughed up another mouthful of blood, clenched his jaw, and slowly walked off. His feet felt as if they would disintegrate at any moment. He was soaked with sweat, and every step caused heart-rending pain. Looking like a whipped dog, he slowly disappeared into the distance.

As he walked off, Grand Elder Ouyang seemed to be about to say something, but decided not to, and simply watched him depart.

Meng Hao returned to the Immortal’s Cave, and the instant the main door closed, he collapsed to the ground, unconscious. Wang Tengfei was already at the peak of the sixth level. There was no way for Meng Hao to compare to him. By refusing to give in and kneel, he had of course received internal injuries.

He was comatose for two full days, after which he finally opened his eyes, his body wracked with pain. It was difficult to move, but he lurched up into a sitting position. When he touched the ground with his hands, they burned painfully, as if the skin had been stripped off of them. Gasping huskily, he sat there quietly in the middle of the Immortal’s Cave.

After some time passed, he looked down at his hands. Ten broken fingernails protruded from the skin of his palms. After two days of coma, scabs had formed over the fingernails, but in his struggle to sit up, they had broken, and now blood oozed out.

Meng Hao looked at his hands, expressionless. After a while, he began to dig the broken fingernails out of his skin, one by one. Blood flowed out of his mangled palms, dripping to the ground and filling the cave with the scent of gore.

Through the entire process, Meng Hao’s facial expression did not change. It was as if the hands didn’t belong to him. There was a certain ruthlessness within him that was now clearly visible.

He looked down at the ten bloody fingernails. After a while, he collected them together and placed them next to the stone bed in the room. He planned to look at them every day as a reminder of the humiliation he had endured.

The day would come when that humiliation would be repaid in double!

He hadn’t spoken for a long time, but now he opened his mouth: “As for me, I shall rely on myself!” The hoarse voice almost didn’t sound like his own.

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# Chapter 18: Fatty of the Outer Sect

Time flashed by. Meng Hao didn’t even take half a step outside of the Immortal’s Cave. He didn’t want to go out and didn’t want to see anyone. He could never forget how Wang Tengfei had turned the whole world against him. He sat cross-legged, staring at the fingernails, encrusted with dried blood. His previous numbed expression changed into wrath, then somberness. Finally one day, the main door of the Immortal’s cave creaked open, and moonlight poured in.

Elder Sister Xu stood there in the doorway, wreathed in moonlight which obscured her features.

Meng Hao didn’t say anything, and neither did she. Time passed. Finally, she said, “I ended my secluded meditation just yesterday.”

Meng Hao stood, saluting her with clasped hands.

“Wang Tengfei has an important background,” she continued mildly. “He’s not from the State of Zhao, and his Cultivation base is at the sixth level of Qi Condensation. The Sect Elders have already selected him to be promoted to the Inner Sect. You… you must not provoke him.”

“Junior Brother understands,” said Meng Hao with a smile. His expression appeared to have returned to its usual state, as if he had abandoned any brooding about what had happened. Although, deep in his eyes existed something which had never before appeared in his sixteen years of life.

It was a cold light he kept buried so deeply that only he could sense it. Others were clueless.

“However,” said Elder Sister Xu, “if he causes any more trouble for you, all you have to do is smash this slip, and I will sense it, even if I’m meditating in seclusion.” A moment passed, and then she waved her hand. A purple-colored jade slip appeared next to him.

“Of the four people I brought to the mountain that day, you are the first to be promoted to the Outer Sect. Your companion who you worked with in the North Servant’s Quarter is being promoted today. Tomorrow at dawn, he will arrive in the Outer Sect to register.” With that, she turned to leave.

“Many thanks, Elder Sister. I have a question I wish to ask,” he said. “I was hoping Elder Sister could explain. My Cultivation vase is at the fourth level of Qi Condensation. Considering my latent talent, how long do you think it will take to reach the seventh level?”

“To reach the fourth level of Qi Condensation in less than a year seems to indicate that you have had quite a bit of good fortune in your Cultivation. You don’t need to explain the details, and I won’t ask. Without such fortune, it might take ten years at the fastest. At a slower rate, it could take half of a sixty-year cycle. The fourth, sixth and eight levels are all bottlenecks, especially the sixth. Without a bit of good fortune, it’s difficult to break through to the seventh level.”

“It’s like that for everyone?”

“For everyone.” Then she was gone. Meng Hao sat down cross-legged, a sharp look shining in his eye.

An hour later, he stood up and left the Immortal’s Cave for the first time in days. The seasons were changing again, and it seemed autumn would arrive within a few days. The leaves were beginning to change color and wind drifted across the mountains and valleys.

Beneath the bright moon, Meng Hao made his way along a small path into the wild mountains. Everything was quiet, and the only thing that could be heard was the gentle rustle of falling leaves as Meng Hao made his way toward the North Mountain.

He wanted to go see Fatty. In the entire Sect, he was his only friend.

The Northern Servant’s Quarter was quiet this late at night. As he approached, he heard the sounds of snoring filling the air, a special kind of snore that he had grown accustomed to in his four months as a servant.

The horse-faced young man who presided over the Northern Servants’ Quarter sat cross-legged on the large boulder. He suddenly opened his eyes and look at Meng Hao, surprised for a moment. Then he rose to his feet and saluted Meng Hao with clasped hands.

“Greetings, Elder Brother Meng.” Rumors about Meng Hao had abounded recently, and of course the horse-faced young man had heard them.

“No need for the formality, Elder Brother,” said Meng Hao. “I’m here to see an old friend.” Taking a look at the young man’s Cultivation base, Meng Hao could see that it was the third level of Qi Condensation. It appeared as if it had been stuck there for several years.

Elder Brother Horse-Face nodded. After Meng Hao stepped foot into the Servants’ Quarter, he sat back down cross-legged, a strange expression on his face. With a silent sigh, he closed his eyes again.

Meng Hao walked into the courtyard and found the East Seventh House. As he approached, the sounds of Fatty’s snores filled the air. As soon as he entered, a strange expression filled his face, and the antsy feeling that had filled his heart recently began to dissipate.

Fatty lay there on his back, snoring away. The other bed in the room had been pushed away from the wall, forming a small gap.

There in the gap, sound asleep, was the big man who called himself Grandpa Tiger. Even though he was asleep, his face seemed contorted in fear, as if he had encountered something terrifying in his dreams.

His wooden bed was covered with a multitude of bite marks. In some places, it was chewed all the way through, so much so that it seemed it might fall apart. The wooden table was long gone, and Meng Hao imagined that it must have been completely eaten up. Even the walls had bite marks on them. In sharp contrast, Fatty’s bed remained bite-less.

The big man in the corner shivered, then let out a miserable cry. He was obviously in the throes of a nightmare. Given his emaciated appearance, and the dark circles under his eyes, it seemed he hadn't been sleeping well lately. Meng Hao could only imagine the wretched circumstances that had tormented him into this state.

It seemed his cry had awakened Fatty, who sat up looking annoyed, then saw Meng Hao. He suddenly grew excited.

"Wild chicken! Did you bring any wild chicken?"

Meng Hao looked at him, unable to hold back his smile.

He was as round as ever, apparently having not lost even a bit of weight. In fact, he looked a bit fatter. His teeth had also grown longer, by about half. When he talked, they glittered brightly.

"I heard you reached the first level of Qi Condensation," he said with a smile, "so I came to see you. I was in such a hurry that I didn't have time to grab a chicken." He sat down on the bed next to Fatty, examining his teeth.

Fatty, proud of his Cultivation base, began to talk. Meng Hao didn't say much, instead listening to Fatty's garrulous chatter. Soon, the moon began to fall and the sun began to rise. The wounds in Meng Hao's heart also began to dissipate, leaving behind only scars. The fingernails in the Immortal's Cave and the cold look in his eyes fused together within Meng Hao to create a more mature look.

At dawn, Meng Hao left with Fatty. Grandpa Tiger watched them go, tears streaming down his face. His tears moved Fatty, and before they could leave the courtyard, he ran back, gave him a hug, and then said something. Whatever he said caused the big man's face to grow pale and his body to tremble.

"What did you say to him?" asked Meng Hao, when they were just about to reach the Outer Sect.

“He’s a good person. After you left the Servants’ Quarter, he became my friend. He was so upset at me leaving, I just couldn’t take it.” A pained expression appeared on his face. “I told him that I would definitely come back often to visit. He looks tough,” continued Fatty emotionally. “But he’s actually a bit of a coward. He always has nightmares when he sleeps. Poor guy.”

Meng Hao didn’t say anything, nor did he ask anything else about the man. As the two of them walked through the Outer Sect, people looked at Meng Hao, their expressions strange, as if measuring him up.

“Eh? Seems you really roiled things up in the Outer Sect, Meng Hao,” said Fatty excitedly. “Everyone’s looking at you.” In his mind, he figured that few people would be willing to bully him since he had Meng Hao at his back.

Meng Hao smiled but didn’t explain. When they were almost to the Treasure Pavilion, Meng Hao stopped walking. He watched Fatty approach the building.

In the amount of time it took for half an incense stick to burn, Fatty returned excitedly. In his hand he carried a short sword, covered with a layer of fish-like scales. It wasn’t the least bit sharp, but instead rough.

“See the treasure I got, Meng Hao? It’s truly a great treasure.” He waved the sword in the air, and Meng Hao was just about to ask what it could possibly be used for when Fatty opened his mouth and started filing at his teeth with it. A scraping sound could be heard, and Meng Hao wasn’t sure whether he should laugh or cry.

“It’s great!” said Fatty, sounding more and more excited. “My teeth keep getting longer, and I’m constantly looking for things to file them down. But whatever I find always breaks within a few days. I can use this treasure to file them down forever!”

Meng Hao showed Fatty around the Outer Sect. He even offered to let him stay with him in the Immortal’s Cave, but Fatty refused. He had been living with a roommate for too long, and had been looking forward to having his own place in the Outer Sect. No matter what Meng Hao said, he refused. When they arrived at his house, he looked completely content.

Meng Hao didn’t push him. When the night was deep, he returned to the Immortal’s Cave and sat down cross-legged.

Time flew, and soon three months had passed. Two months before, Meng Hao had re-opened his stall by the Low-Level Public Zone. Perhaps because of what had happened with Wang Tengfei, no one caused any problems for him, and soon, his business picked up again.

Soon, he added magic items to his offerings, and business grew even more. But now, there was more than one person in the company. At his side was a fat teenager who constantly filed his teeth with a flying sword. He had a good sense for business, and constantly hawked wares in the Public Zone. Soon, he was the main force in the business. With the cooperation of Meng Hao, who could not enter himself, they made quite a tidy profit.

One day, when winter had fallen and snowflakes filled the air, Meng Hao sat cross-legged at the edge of the plateau, meditating. Suddenly, Fatty let out a yelp and grabbed a person, dragging him toward Meng Hao.

“Meng Hao, Meng Hao, look who it is!”

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# Chapter 19: The Wind Stirs Again

Meng Hao opened his eyes and saw Fatty excitedly dragging over a young man. Short, sallow and emaciated, he made quite the contrast to pale, plump Fatty.

Meng Hao recognized him. He was one of the members of the group who had been brought to the Reliance Sect that day and taken along with Wang Youcai to a Servants' Quarters on a different Mountain.

At that time, he had looked strong and good-natured, but now he seemed gloomy and in poor circumstances. However, there was a certain hardness in his eyes that spoke of some unforgettable experiences in the Outer Reliance Sect.

Furthermore, he dared to enter the Public zone at only the first level of Qi Condensation.

"Greetings, Elder Brother Meng," said the young man, looking a bit excited. But then it disappeared and he made an extremely respectful salute to Meng Hao with hands clasped.

"Did you just enter the Sect?" Meng Hao asked him, thinking back with a sigh to his own first days.

"It's been about a month," he said, lowering his head.

"What about Wang Youcai?"

"He died," said the young man, a numb expression on his face. After the words left his mouth, a look of grief appeared in his eyes.

"Wang Youcai died?" said Fatty in shock. Meng Hao maintained his silence.

“In the Servants’ Quarter, we were responsible for drawing water,” he explained. “Big Bro Youcai thought I was too young, so he helped me a lot. Once on a mountain road, a powerful gust of wind hit us and knocked him off a cliff. I looked for his body for two months, but could only find some broken bones… he must have been eaten by wild animals.”

A look of sorrow appeared on Fatty’s face and Meng Hao let out a sigh. The four of them arrived at the same time, but in less than a year, one was already dead. Meng Hao felt bad, and even worse when he remembered that Uncle Wang the carpenter only had one son.

“Little Tiger, you stick with us. With Meng Hao around, no one will dare bully you.” Fatty clapped the young man emotionally on the shoulder.

“No, that’s okay, I’m… I’m fine.” The young man seemed to hesitate, and Meng Hao could tell that he was thinking about something. In the end, he shook his head and refused Fatty’s offer. He saluted them with clasped hands, then made his way away from the plateau.

“What’s the deal with him?” asked Fatty, still in shock.

“Everyone has secrets,” said Meng Hao slowly. “Perhaps he made some lucky break that he doesn’t want to talk about. Otherwise, why would he come here at only the first level of Qi Condensation?” Meng Hao seemed to be lost in thought as he watched the young man disappear into the distance.

“Even if Little Tiger has some secret, we could still find it out on our own if we wanted to. He’s looking down on us.” Fatty brooded. He had an open and straightforward personality, and didn’t think in scheming ways. To offer someone something in good faith and be turned down this way obviously raised his indignation.

In the lower regions of the Nanshan continent, winter was short and passed almost in an instant. The warmth of Spring arrived, and the flowers bloomed. It was once again April. A year had passed since Meng Hao had arrived at the Reliance Sect.

With Fatty’s help, he had accumulated quite a bit of Spirit Stones from the Low-Level Public Zone, and even more medicinal pills and magical items. He would often go into the wild mountains to hunt for demonic beasts. He even roamed close to the black mountain in his search, but always came up empty-handed. The roars which emanated from the black mountain region grew more and more intense, so Meng Hao didn’t dare to enter.

He had one third-level Demonic Core which he duplicated multiple times with the copper mirror. Eventually, his Cultivation base reached the middle of the fourth level. But then, his progress virtually ceased. No matter how many medicinal pills he consumed, the only thing it did was make his spiritual energy a bit more pure.

He had reached a bottle neck and could not break through to the fifth level and his much desired Wind Walking technique.

With Meng Hao’s help, Fatty reached the second level of Qi Condensation, which left him feeling quite awe-inspiring.

That April, all Outer Sect disciples higher than the fifth level, as well as Elder Sister Xu and Elder Brother Chen, were dispatched out of the sect. They each returned with two or three youths who possessed latent talent, who then became servants.

Once per year. That was the Sect rule. This was the only way to ensure the continuation of the Sect’s existence.

The spring wind blew across the land, taking the cold along with it. Heat returned. Soon, autumn arrived, and then it was October. During this period of time, two important things happened in the Reliance Sect. The first was related to one of the Sect’s Grand Elders. Other than the Sect leader, who everyone said had already reached the Core Formation stage, there were two other Grand Elders who had reached Foundation Establishment. One of them, who had reached the end of his longevity, passed away while meditating, at around one-hundred and fifty years of age. When Meng Hao caught wind of this, he asked around and confirmed that it had not been Grand Elder Ouyang.

When Cultivators reach Foundation Establishment, it expands their longevity to one hundred and fifty years. That seems like a long time, but it is actually a very intense period. If the Cultivator cannot reach Core Formation, then in later years, they can only sit in meditation, shrivelling up, their Qi and blood slowly dissipating.

However, after reaching Core Formation, longevity is then doubled to three hundred years.

Because of the Grand Elder’s death in meditation, the Reliance Sect was put in a bad position. It was already in a weak standing in the State of Zhao, and was now in even more danger. Suddenly, Cultivators from other Sects began to appear near the Reliance Sect’s borders.

They seemed to be searching for something, so the Reliance Sect set up defensive spells around the mountain. Everything within several thousand meters fell under their protection. Figurative storm clouds appeared, dark and thick, pressing down on the entire Sect.

Most disciples in the Outer Sect had their guesses. Some of them were more informed than others, and received bits and pieces of information. News spread, and soon, a rumor developed that the Cultivation world of the State of Zhao was stirring because of Patriarch Reliance, who had been missing for four hundred years.

As for the details, none of the Outer Sect disciples were sure.

During this time, Meng Hao’s Cultivation base continued to be stuck in the middle of the fourth level. Nothing he did seemed to have any effect, and finally he grew to accept that he was stuck in a bottleneck.

He sat cross-legged in the Immortal’s cave, frowning. “Elder Sister Xu told me that breaking through from the peak of the fourth level into the fifth level would involve a bottleneck. But why did my bottleneck come early… Is it really because I consumed too many Demonic Cores?

“If that’s the case, I need some medicinal pills especially designed for breaking through bottlenecks. Or perhaps I need some high level Demonic

Cores." He had quite a collection of Spirit Stones, but lacked the appropriate medicinal pills. He was confident that if he just had the right medicinal pills, he could break through to the fifth level of Qi Condensation.

The anxiety in the Reliance Sect was palpable. Many disciples walked to and fro with troubled hearts, trying their best to hide their feelings. Meng Hao felt the nervousness too, and of course he was dealing with his own critical matter.

The only person who seemed happy was Fatty. He was even more enthusiastic about their stall on the plateau than Meng Hao. Even when Meng Hao didn't feel like going, he would take the banner there himself to do business.

Three days later, bells sounded out. Pill Distribution Day had come. When Meng Hao and Fatty arrived at the square, Meng Hao caught sight of a golden-robed old man on the platform, behind whom stood Elder Sister Xu and Elder Brother Chen.

Seeing this, Meng Hao's heart began to thump, and a fire burned in his eyes.

"In the past year and a half, Master Uncle Shangguan has only appeared three times, and each time was an Individual Pill Distribution. My Cultivation base has been stuck in a bottleneck in the fourth level for almost a year. If there is a high level medicinal pill…" Other Outer Sect disciples had similar thoughts, and soon, conversations buzzed in the air. Of course, some disciples were thinking, "Please, don't give it to me."

This was especially so because after what Meng Hao did with his pill that time, the Sect had made a new rule that prohibited gifting Individual Distribution medicinal pills to members of the Inner Sect.

"It's… it's a Dry Spirit Pill!"

"It is! A Dry Spirit Pill. There was one distributed last year, and now one more. Only one per year! That just shows how valuable it is!"

“If I can get my hands on it, I will definitely have a breakthrough in my Cultivation base.”

A louder buzz of excited talked arose as the gold-robed old man lifted the glowing, purple pill into the air.

When the pill appeared, Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a brilliant intensity. He had never before wanted a medicinal pill so much. In his eyes, it was not a medicinal pill, but his only hope of breaking through to the fifth level of Qi Condensation.

He had been a member of the Sect for a while now, so he was now familiar with the various disciples. The Inner Sect had Elder Sister Xu and Elder Brother Chen, both of whom were at the seventh level of Qi Condensation. Rumor had it they would break through to the next level very soon.

Under them was Wang Tengfei, who was stuck at the peak of the sixth level of Qi Condensation. To him, a Dry Spirit pill would be of little use. Besides him, there was one more disciple of the sixth level, the number two disciple Han Zong.

Meng Hao had seen him twice, and had pegged him to be wildly arrogant, someone who considered everyone to be beneath his notice. If he were here, he wouldn’t even cast a glance at the Dry Spirit Pill, just to show that he had a collection of even better medicinal pills.

As for disciples of the fifth level of Qi Condensation, there were four in the Outer Sect and they could be considered to be virtual lords. They were rarely seen, as they often secluded themselves in meditation or traveled about the wild mountains in training.

There weren’t many disciples of the fourth level. Including Meng Hao, there were seven in total. As for those under the fourth level, they might as well be bugs.

“Very well, quiet down everyone.” Wizened Shangguan Xiu’s voice reverberated out, as astonishingly powerful and suppressive as ever.

However, compared to last year, Meng Hao was not as powerfully affected. Instead, his eyes shone with determination.

“In the past two years in which I have presided over Pill Distribution, I usually prefer to select a new disciple. The reason is that if we can continue to get new disciples, our sect will flourish.” He smiled, and his eyes swept over the crowd. Just when it seemed he had made his decision, his eyes fell upon Fatty, who stood next to Meng Hao filing away at his teeth with a sword. His face looked indifferent.

He looked as round as a ball, and anyone who for the first time caught sight of him filing his teeth would find it hard pressed to decide whether to laugh or cry. Shangguan Xiu stared in amazement, then laughed.

“Never mind,” he said. “I’m going to give the pill to you.” He waved his right hand, and a purple light flickered as the Dry Spirit Pill shot toward Fatty. With a look of shock, he instinctively caught it, looking as if he didn’t even know what had just happened. Then, his expression changed and he let out a yelp. His body began to tremble as the blood drained from his face. He looked like he was about to cry.

“This… Me… Crap, why did it have to be me?”

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# Chapter 20: Entering the Black Mountain

In a split second, everyone in the entire square suddenly began to stare at Fatty, making him feel as if a cold wind were creeping down his back. His body quivered, and he looked pitifully at Meng Hao, a weak smile on his face.

“Meng Hao, save me…” He wanted to throw the pill away, but for some reason it wouldn’t leave his hand. He was so frightened that as people began to surround them, his teeth chattered.

As the lights faded, he trembled violently. Then the lights were gone, and the restrictive spell released. Before Fatty could say anything, Meng Hao sent out a booming flash of his fourth level Cultivation base, then grabbed Fatty by his robe and charged away.

“Give me the pill,” Meng Hao said in a low voice. “You go back to the Immortal’s Cave and hide!” Without hesitation, Meng Hao tossed him the cave’s jade slip. Fatty threw him the Dry Spirit Pill as if it were a hot potato.

Meng Hao’s body flashed as he sped forward with Fatty in tow. Behind him, howling and roaring sounds arose as ten or more people raced in hot pursuit.

“Dammit, it’s Meng Hao. You can’t escape!”

“Hand over the Dry Spirit Pill. As a fellow disciple, I’ll show some mercy and not kill you. Otherwise, you’ll have a tough time escaping death!”

Meng Hao didn’t stop for even a second. After emerging from the edge of the Outer Sect, he tossed Fatty away from him. Fatty was a matter-of-fact kind of person, but he wasn’t stupid. As soon as he landed on his feet, he let out a miserable shriek.

“Pill thief!” he screamed, clutching the jade slip close to him as he ran off, trying not to look suspicious. He dashed toward the Immortal’s Cave at top speed.

Hearing this, the pursuers ignored him and continued after Meng Hao.

“Flee to the ends of the earth if you want, you won’t survive the next 24 hours!”

“You’re of the fourth level, and you still don’t give me the pill!?” Among the ten or more pursuers, most were of the fourth level of Qi Condensation, and only two were of the fifth level. The rest were of the third level, obviously hoping to be able to take advantage of the situation.

Cold sword auras whistled behind Meng Hao as over ten flying swords descended toward him like rain. But he was determined to keep the Dry Spirit Pill, and refused to toss it away.

“I just have to endure for twenty-four hours, then the pill will be mine,” he said, determination shining in his eyes. “Then, I will finally be able to break through to the fifth level of Qi Condensation.” He increased his speed. After spending so much time hunting for demonic beasts in the wild mountains, his top speed was not inferior. And he was much more familiar with the mountainous regions than most other fellow disciples. Thus, upon leaving the Outer Sect, he raced towards mountains.

Glancing behind at the approaching sword auras, Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding to produce a medicinal pill which he immediately swallowed. Then he sent his own flying swords shooting backwards.

Bang, bang, bang. Several trees were hit by the powerful flying swords and exploded into pieces, which flew about everywhere. Some smacked painfully into Meng Hao. Absorbing momentum from the explosion, he shot away several meters.

Before he could land on the ground, four Flame Serpents and three Water Globes shot toward him. Two of the Flame Serpents were almost eighteen meters long and as thick as a person, and emitted an intense heat which caused some of the nearby trees to catch fire. Those would be the work of the fifth level disciples, who were also the fastest of the bunch. Their feet didn’t even touch the ground as they flew toward him like the wind. Savage looks filled their faces. Actually, they didn’t hold the slightest bit of compassion even for each other. As far as they were concerned, the only competition involved were the two of them. Meng Hao didn’t count for anything.

Without hesitation, Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding again. Two flying swords appeared and rotated around him, then came to rest beneath his feet. Then they shot forward, carrying him nearly thirty meters before he lost his balance and fell off. The short movement enabled him to evade the Flame Serpents and gain some distance. Furious howls reverberated in the air behind him.

This was a technique Meng Hao had come up with himself. It wouldn’t work for long, only a few seconds, but at least it helped him to gain a bit of advantage on the two fifth-level Cultivators.

“If I were of the fifth level of Qi Condensation,” Meng Hao thought to himself, “I would have the Wind Walking technique. Then I could stay on the flying sword for a lot longer, and I could get away more easily. Sadly, this isn’t really flying…” Even more than ever, he desired to reach the fifth level of Qi Condensation. Not looking back, he sped along. Actually, the path he chose was not random. The instant the Dry Spirit Pill had landed in Fatty’s hands, his mind had been racing at top speed.

He had picked the wild mountains because his destination was none other than the black mountain inhabited by Demonic beasts. After thinking about it for some time, he had decided that his best advantage was the copper mirror. With the mirror, he would still have a good chance of surviving the area even though it was dangerous, and contained that ominous roaring beast. This was especially true if people followed him in.

“If these guys chase me into the black mountain, then I’ll be forced to kill them.” A harsh expression appeared on his face. He had been a part of the Reliance Sect for over a year now and was no longer the weak scholar he had once been. He didn’t appear to have changed much on the outside. He was a bit taller, and his skin was as swarthy as ever. But his heart was filled with decisiveness.

This was especially so after the matter with Wang Tengfei. He knew that he could only rely on himself. The only true path was to become stronger. In the world of Cultivation, the law of the jungle prevails. One must conduct oneself with caution and decisiveness.

They pursued him relentlessly. Sword auras glittered. Before long, the two fifth-level Cultivators had almost caught up with him, their eyes filled with murder. Just now, Meng Hao had evaded their attack using a single special move. Other than Wang Tengfei and Han Zong, they were were like high lords in the Outer Sect, so they found this particularly humiliating.

They had attacked at the same time, and yet Meng Hao had still managed to evade, which they both found hard to accept. Now, they wanted even more than ever to slay him. As far as his sword-riding technique, they didn’t give it a second thought. Any Cultivator of the fourth level could do that. But considering their Cultivation base, doing so would be would be a waste of spiritual energy, even if it gave some extra speed. Seeing Meng Hao use the technique, they sneered. Using such tactics would sap his spiritual energy sooner rather than later.

“Let’s see you escape this time!” they shouted, glancing at each other. One of them suddenly shot forward like a huge bird. In mid-air, he waved his hand, and two massive, roaring Flame Serpents shot down toward Meng Hao.

The other man continued to pursue Meng Hao. The two of them created a pincer attack, one in the air and one on the ground, ready to seal Meng Hao’s fate in death.

“You still won’t accept death!” grinned one of them hideously, his murderous intent filling the air.

Meng Hao’s expression didn’t change. He gave a cold snort. He’d dared to snatch the Dry Spirit Pill, so of course he had some special techniques prepared. He slapped his bag of hold, and flicked his sleeve. Six flying swords appeared. Their sword auras interlocked and then whizzed outward, away from Meng Hao.

“BOOM!”

Meng Hao let out a small shout of pain which reverberated into the mountains. When the two pursuing Cultivators heard the explosion, they gasped with astonishment, unsure of what had happened to produce such a sound.

Amidst the thunderous roar, Meng Hao spat out a mouthful of blood. And yet, his body shot away into the distance. Behind him, the effects of the attack dissipated, and the Flame Serpents collapsed with blood-curdling shrieks. The fifth-level Cultivators had no choice but to retreat a few paces, covered in dirt, their faces filled with disbelief.

“Dammit. What ruthlessness! He detonated six flying swords at once!”

“No wonder he opened up a shop! How many flying swords does he actually have?”

The two of them each sucked in a breath, but didn’t hesitate. Using the full speed of their Wind Walking technique, they raced in pursuit again, unwilling to let Meng Hao intimidate them. According to their estimations, Meng Hao could not have that many flying swords left. Even if he had opened a shop in the Low Level Public Zone, he couldn’t possibly have so many magical items.

“This time, you will die for sure!” The two pursuers increased their speed, entering the wild mountains. At this point, the pursuing fourth-level disciples caught up. One of them was Wang Tengfei’s friend Shangguan Song. His Cultivation base was at the peak of the fourth level of Qi

Condensation. His face was grim. He secretly feared Meng Hao’s speed. And yet, he continued to pursue.

Time gradually passed by, and soon an hour had passed. Meng Hao continued forward, maintaining the distance from his pursuers. A few times he came into danger, but each time he produced a flying sword, detonated it, and escaped.

This left the pursuing fifth-level Cultivator’s dumbstruck. They moaned to themselves, never having imagined that Meng Hao would have so many flying swords. At this point, he had detonated nearly twelve of them.

Combined with his sword-riding technique, his speed of evasion was quite high.

“Dammit! Even if he has more flying swords, I can’t believe that he’ll produce many more. In any case, at the speed he’s been maintaining, plus detonating all those flying sword, he has used a huge amount of spiritual energy!”

“Correct! His Cultivation base is at the fourth level of Qi Condensation, not nearly as deep as mine. Using spiritual energy to ride flying swords wastes so much, it can kill you!” The two pursuing fifth-level Cultivators were now getting pumped up. And yet just as they finished talking, they caught sight of Meng Hao up ahead, and they saw something that left them feeling anything but reassured.

Even as he ran, Meng Hao pulled out a second bag of holding, from which he produced a handful of medicinal pills which he swallowed. This he did with casual ease, leaving the onlookers with the feeling that he had countless medicinal pills at his disposal.

Actually, that was true. In the following four hours, the two pursuers discovered that he had an enormous amount of flying swords and medicinal pills. They were already deeply shaken.

“Opening a store is this profitable?” they thought. They were Cultivators of the fifth level of Qi Condensation, and could not possibly be without medicinal pills. Furthermore, after having spent so much effort in their pursuit, they couldn’t bear to give up. Reluctantly, they produced some pills and consumed them, then continued their pursuit, their hearts filled with the desire to slay Meng Hao.

By the time the sixth hour had arrived, the dark, black mountain had appeared in front of Meng Hao. Lying concealed among the other wild mountains, it gave off a ghastly, cold air. It seemed as if it were filled with sinister gloom.

When he caught sight of the mountain, his eyes gleamed. He had expended a lot of energy along the way, and felt a bit of painful regret. To him, every flying sword and every medicinal pill cost Spirit Stones. But he couldn’t worry too much about that right now. Without hesitation, he shot into the black mountain.

The two pursuing Cultivators followed him in.

Some more time passed and more pursuers appeared, one by one. Upon seeing the black mountain, they gaped in astonishment, then entered.

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# Chapter 21: Meng Hao, You’re Shameless!

The black mountain was not bare, but rather covered with a lush forest of trees that stretched up toward the heavens. The reason this place was called a black mountain was because all the trees were completely black, and it seemed to be filled with swirling Demonic energy.

It was completely different from any of the other mountains as far as the eye could see.

Upon entering the mountain, Meng Hao heard a deep roar, and two Demonic beasts of the third level of Qi Condensation charged toward him. They had the bodies of wolves with long snake-like tails and were covered with thin fur. They glared at him hatefully.

As soon as they approached, Meng Hao stopped, then lifted up the copper mirror and shined it upon them. Instantly, one of the Demonic beast’s right eye shot out a geyser of blood. It let out a miserable shriek, frightening its companion. Meng Hao’s eyes flashed. This time, the mirror had exploded the Demonic beast’s eye, not its buttocks. A similar thing had occurred when he fought Zhao Wugang. He didn’t have any more time to think about it. Even as they moved to evade him, he hurtled past them.

As for the two fifth-level Cultivators, they raced in pursuit, infuriated. Their flying swords shot out, instantly slaying the two Demonic beasts. They didn’t even stop to collect the Demonic Cores. Their bodies seemed to become rainbows as they raced in pursuit of Meng Hao.

“This is a Demonic mountain. I’ve heard that a Demon King lives on the peak. Meng Hao, fleeing to this place is just a way of seeking your own death.”

“There’s no need to flee. Come back and we can discuss things, maybe make a trade.” The two Cultivators called after him as they pursued, their voices seemingly sincere, but their hearts filled with murderous intentions.

Meng Hao neither looked back nor responded to their calls, instead speeding along in the direction of the peak of the mountain. Before long, he ran into a group of seven or eight Demonic beasts. Most of them seemed to be at the third level of Qi Condensation. After cowing them with the copper mirror, he made his escape. Of course, the two fifth-level Cultivators had no such ability, so they had to massacre their way through. Then, covered with blood—demonic blood, of course, not their own—they continued in pursuit. They were starting to grow exhausted. During the battle, they had used up even more medicinal pills. But as the saying goes, if you ride a tiger, it’s hard to get off. Gritting their teeth, they continued their pursuit.

“They’re still after me…” Meng Hao, his face grim, had already reached the farthest point he had ever travelled on the black mountain. If he went any further, it would be difficult to avoid Demonic beasts of the fifth level of Qi Condensation. A hard look appeared on his face, and with clenched jaw, he proceeded onward toward the mountaintop.

After time passed enough for half an incense stick to burn, a low roar suddenly sounded out, seeming to cover half of the mountain. Like a dark wind, a multi-colored giant wolf came toward him, howling. The wolf had legs six meters long, and bright red eyes which shone with killing intent. Suppressive fifth-level Qi Condensation spirit roiled away from it.

If it had been alone, it would not have counted for much. But behind it followed a group of five smaller multi-colored wolves with Cultivation bases at the peak of the fourth level, as well as another fifth level wolf. Their fierce howling filled the air.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and without hesitation, he lifted the copper mirror and shone it toward the wolves. A miserable shriek poured out from the mouth of one of the wolves and blood poured out from its chest as if it had been stabbed. The other wolves looked on in shock, retreating unconsciously.

Moments later, unsure of what exactly was happening, and full of guesses, he gritted his teeth and proceeded forward. Two flying swords appeared beneath his feet, carrying him forward over thirty meters in an instant. Further behind appeared the two fifth-level Cultivators. When they saw the pack of Demonic wolves, their expressions dropped. Even though they pursued Meng Hao together, they still had to guard against each other. This area was still in the jurisdiction of the Reliance Sect, but once outside the gates of the sect, it would not be a rules violation for one of them to kill the other.

Amidst pursuit, it would have been no big deal, but now they were facing a crisis. The two fifth-level Demonic wolves looked at them threateningly. That, not to mention the rest of the smaller Demonic wolves, caused the two to quickly come up with a plan. Immediately, they split, one running off to the left and the other to the right.

They moved quickly, but the Demonic wolves moved even faster. They were sentient Demonic beasts, and already felt an astonishing fear of the copper mirror, as well as, Meng Hao. Amidst their furious roars, however, he had made his escape, whereupon two Qi Condensation fifth-level Cultivators invaded their territory.

The Cultivators had no time to consider their fury. They ran, pursued by the howling Demonic wolves. In moments they had fled far away.

Meng Hao let out a sigh. Look up toward the mountaintop, and then back toward the fleeing Cultivators, his eyes flashed.

“Those Demonic beasts will cause them a bit of trouble, and will keep them off my tail for a while. But the fourth two-hour period is almost here. The pill beacon will shine again, and then they’ll be able to find me.” Meng Hao looked again toward the mountain top. He clenched his jaw and ran forward.

Shortly after that, a beacon of light burst out of his bag of holding, shooting up into the sky. Even someone a great distance away would be able to see it clearly.

Every two hours, the beacon would appear, as it had already a few times today. This was the fourth time.

Meng Hao proceeded carefully, trying to avoid as many Demonic beasts as possible. Most of the ones he saw were of the fifth level of Qi cultivation, so of course he feared them. It seemed they preferred to move about in groups, not alone, so even though the copper mirror provided some protection, he did his best to move around them. As such, his speed was reduced, and he could not run.

Time slowly passed, nearly an hour. Suddenly, a massive, furious roar sounded out throughout the whole mountain. At the same time, Meng Hao burst out from the thick forest, a worried expression on his face. Chasing him were seven or eight psychic Demonic apes. They were furious, and extremely fast, pursuing Meng Hao with unbridled fury.

Three of them were of the fifth level of Qi Condensation, and this made Meng Hao groan inwardly. He had been very careful so far, and hadn’t imagined that even as he carefully made his way around the troupe of Demonic apes, the mirror would of its own volition suddenly attack them, exploding one of the apes whose fur was so long it dragged on the ground. This of course raised the fury of the rest of the Demonic apes.

“Even if it is a Demonic ape with super long fur, it doesn’t mean you have to act like this,” said Meng Hao bitterly, looking at the copper mirror in his hands. He realized that he still didn’t fully understand all the mysteries of the mirror. Now, though, he didn’t have time to think about it. He ran down the mountain away from the Demonic apes. Looking back, he saw that the apes were closing in on him, so he waved the copper mirror, and another miserable shriek rang out. At that exact moment, Meng Hao saw that ahead of him, which was about the half-way point down or up the mountain, glittered the aura of flying swords.

His eyes shone and he raced forward. In an instant he was almost upon a group of four Cultivators of the fourth level of Qi Condensation. One of them was Shangguan Song. They were in close combat with several Demonic bears. Blood filled the air, and it appeared that they had the upper hand, as the corpses of two Demonic bears lay at their feet.

“Meng Hao!” They caught sight of him almost as soon as he caught sight of them, and their eyes filled with murderous intent, especially Shangguan Song’s.

They appeared to be exhausted. Their journey in the black mountain had been wrought with battle. Originally, they had been ten strong, but most of them had already given up. The four remaining had exercised control over their Cultivation bases with gritted teeth and followed after the pill beacon until they found themselves in this brave fight against the Demonic bears.

When they caught sight of Meng Hao, their eyes grew red, and they subconsciously wanted to switch the target of their flying swords’ attacks.

“Dear Brothers, I received your orders to attract the attention of this troupe of Demonic apes. Quick, make your move!” As Meng Hao approached, he ignored the flying swords and shouted his words loudly so that the pursuing psychic apes would be sure to hear.

Even as the words were out of his mouth, shockingly furious roars reverberated from behind him as the seven or eight psychic apes burst out from the trees, their red eyes glowing.

“Meng Hao, you’re shameless!!!”

“Dammit, you’re too despicable!”

The four men’s faces fell, and they tried to fall back, cursing Meng Hao. But the fight with the Demonic bears wouldn’t permit it. Meng Hao, who was still worried about the whole situation, had already passed them, and the red-eyed Demonic apes charged forward furiously.

Meng Hao looked back at the four of them, killing intent appearing in his eyes. He slapped his bag of holding, and some flying swords shot out with a low hum.

“BOOM!”

The explosion thundered out, as the flying swords exploded. Meng Hao instantly sent two Flame Serpents to follow them, and several nearby trees exploded into bits. Borrowing some of the momentum from the explosion, Meng Hao swallowed a mouthful of blood and shot away. Behind him, the four Cultivators were impeded by the explosions. As for the Demonic apes, they had lost sight of Meng Hao. But the Cultivators were right there in front of them, so they attacked instantly.

Miserable screams rang out, and Meng Hao continued onward without a backward glance.

“This place isn’t too bad… it’s just a bit dangerous.” Meng Hao ran along, until he was sure the Demonic apes weren’t following him, then stopped, panting. He looked around.

“It’s not easy to keep hold of a Dry Spirit Pill,” he murmured. He looked down at his bag of holding and let out a sigh, feeling somewhat distressed.

“I’ve already wasted thirty-one flying swords, and each one of those is basically a Spirit Stone. I’ve also consumed several medicinal pills, each of which is also equivalent to a Spirit Stone. And it isn’t even the fifth two-hour period yet…” Meng Hao laughed bitterly, feeling twisted at heart.

“In the end, if I can consume the Dry Spirit Pill and make a breakthrough in my Cultivation base, then it will all be worth it!” Veins of blood had appeared in his eyes. He was like a gambler who intended to win at any cost, and had gone all in.

“If those four fourth-level disciples don’t get killed, they’ll definitely be exhausted, and I doubt they’ll be willing to continue their pursuit. Now, all I have left to worry about are the two fifth-level Cultivators.” His expression grew somber. His opponents had higher Cultivation bases than him, and there were two of them. It would be difficult to stand up to them, and as far as he was concerned, it wasn’t worth it to kill them. The cost in Spirit Stones would be too great.

He rested for a bit, looking up at the mountaintop. Then he gritted his teeth and began to run. The fifth two-hour period arrived quickly, and almost as soon as the pill beacon shot up into the sky from his bag of holding, he heard the sinister voices of his two opponents coming from either side of him.

“Meng Hao, you can’t escape!”

“Hand over the Dry Spirit Pill to me. I can let you die with your corpse intact. Otherwise I’ll leave you here for the beasts, and nothing will remain of you.”

Even as their voices echoed off into the distance, the two Cultivators’ bodies flashed like rainbows as they charged towards Meng Hao. Determination filled Meng Hao’s eyes and he fled onward. It appeared that up ahead was the resting place of some Demonic beasts.

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# Chapter 22: A Sword Resting in Demonic Python Skin

Not much time had passed. It seemed as if the entire black mountain were seething. The roars of Demonic beasts shook the air, rising and falling one after another. Even more frequent were the miserable shrieks which sounded out. The ten or more Cultivators who had dared not further their pursuit into the mountain looked pale. Fear filled their hearts, and now they were even less willing to enter the mountain than before.

“What happened? How come it seems like all the Demonic beasts in the whole mountain are in a rage?”

“What’s going on? Elder Brothers Yin Tianlong 1 and Zhou Kai 2 are both of the fifth level of Qi Condensation, but even they would have a hard time raising the wrath of the entire mountain. Could they have use some unique and special technique?”

The small crowd at the foot of the mountain made their guesses, listening to the deafening roars.

As far as Yin Tianlong and Zhou Kai, they had already been tormented to near madness by Meng Hao’s tricks. They watched helplessly as Meng Hao moved about up ahead in the distance, along with vast amounts of Demonic beasts. Based on the hatred in their eyes, if looks could kill, Meng Hao would have been dead several times over.

Yet, within the hatred was helpless exhaustion that only Yin and Zhou could truly understand. Every time they had begun to chase Meng Hao again, he had constantly used some sort of Demonic magic to provoke all types of Demonic beasts. With the mere flick of a sleeve, he would cause some part of a Demonic creature’s body to explode. The stench of blood filled the air, slowly driving the creatures crazy.

Seeing so many Demonic creatures made their scalps go numb, as the creatures didn’t just pursue Meng Hao. Once the creatures caught sight of the two of them, they would begin chasing after them. Then, some distance away, Meng Hao would slip away like a loach.

“Dammit! I curse you to die in the belly of the beasts!!!” roared Zhou Kai. Next to him, Yin Tianlong sighed, looking even more exhausted.

Time slowly passed, and the beginning of another of the two-hour periods approached. In the darkness of night, the pill beacon was dazzling. As it revealed Meng Hao’s position, Zhou and Yin gnashed their teeth and pursued. As usual, Meng Hao used his Demonic magic to provoke more Demonic beasts, then led them to Zhou and Yin, whereupon he would watch them disappear amidst the pack of furious creatures.

“How can he have not been devoured by a Demonic creature already!?” Zhou and Yin were exhausted to the bones, whereas Meng Hao skipped and jumped about, filled with energy. Seeing this, hatred filled them to the marrow, and their gums itched with hatred. But there was nothing they could do.

In truth, Meng Hao was also exhausted. Every time the pill shone, he was forced to immediately arouse the attention of some Demonic beasts. Of course, the copper mirror allowed him to stop the fastest creatures screaming in their tracks, thus giving him time to escape. Were it not for that, he would have long since dropped to the ground in fatigue.

Suddenly, he realized that he had reached the top of the mountain. The ground was covered with fissures and crevices, some of them so large that a person could easily fit inside. Panting, Meng Hao sat down behind a boulder to rest, looking down at the copper mirror in his hands. It was burning hot, as if everything that had happened today had made it incredibly excited. With a bitter smile, Meng Hao looked around and noticed a massive fissure up ahead, out of which seeped a thick black mist.

Just then, a roar suddenly erupted from the giant fissure, the same roar that earlier had quelled all the fierce beasts on the mountain. The roar seemed capable of shaking the whole world. It resounded like a thunderclap. In an instant, the entire area was clear of all Demonic beasts, as if the entire mountain now contained only this roar.

The roar seemed to vibrate even Meng Hao’s mind, dispersing all the spiritual energy within his body. His facial expression changed. This roar was familiar. In his previous visits to the regions near the black mountain, he had heard it. It was a sound which curdled both blood and Qi, leaving one’s mind filled with unease.

As the roar sounded out, Meng Hao forced his eyes to remain open and watch as the black mist poured out of the fissure. As the mist dispersed, Meng Hao was able to see a huge black python, over six meters thick, with a heinous and fierce countenance. About half its length had suddenly moved out of the fissure.

It looked to be in pain, and its fierce roar shook heaven and earth. Meng Hao spat out a mouthful of blood. He leaped out from the behind the boulder and flew down the mountain, not daring to remain behind. But then he stopped, his curiosity having gotten the better of him. When he went back to take a second look, he noticed something interesting.

The python’s body, half of which was visible sticking out of the fissure, seemed to peeling. It looked as if it had two sets of skin. It coiled up on itself, rubbing the outer skin to shed it away.

“It’s shedding?” Upon recognizing what was happening, Meng Hao sucked in a breath. He knew that pythons were weakest during the time in which they shed their skin. It took a while for it to happen, especially if the python were demonic in nature. With a body as large as this one, it would probably take even longer, perhaps several years.

“No wonder you can hear it roaring all the time. It must have been in the process of shedding for years.” His gaze shifted, and he noticed something else in addition to the python.

Upon closer inspection, he gaped in amazement. It was a flying sword. It appeared to be exceedingly primitive, with no special characteristics at all. But, it had been stabbed deeply into the python's body. It appeared to have been there for quite a long time, many years perhaps.

The area around where the sword had stabbed into the body was dry and withered, which attested to the power of the sword.

“This demonic python has a Cultivation base of at least the seventh level of Qi Condensation, perhaps the eighth. Maybe even the ninth…” His mouth grew dry. He could only imagine how tough the python's skin was, which only further attested to how amazing the primitive-looking flying sword was.

“A flying sword which can stab a demonic creature like this must be a true treasure.” Meng Hao palpitated with eagerness, then let out a dejected sigh. With a Cultivation base at the fourth level of Qi Condensation, acquiring the sword was little more than a dream for him. Even if he were at the fifth level, it would be equally impossible.

Shaking his head, he headed down the mountain, eyes glittering. There was still something important to accomplish. The copper mirror in his sleeve continued to boil, and soon, he had a handful of Demonic beasts following him, howling.

A few hours passed and dawn broke. The last of the twelve two-hour periods would soon end. Zhou and Yin had already given up all hope. They stared up at Meng Hao, who sat cross-legged further up the mountain.

If the two of them made the slightest move, he would rile up a group of beasts, and not only would they not succeed in their goal, they would most likely be injured. Couple that with their exhaustion, and the only thing they could do was gasp for breath and stare venomously at Meng Hao.

“Dammit. Meng Hao, how could you escape me!?” Zhou Kai panted for breath then let out a helpless howl. Meng Hao really was a loach that could come and go like a shadow within the jungle.

“Don’t you have your own skills?” said Yin Tianlong, who wasn’t very far away. Able to neither kill nor pursue, he was half mad, and his words seemed to contain no logic. “Can you just, not flee? There’s no need to use such wicked demonic magic to send beasts after us. Why don’t we have a fair fight?”

“My Cultivation base isn’t as high as yours, how could I fight you?” said Meng Hao, also panting. “If you want to keep chasing me, I don’t really have any other choice.” He swallowed another medicinal pill.

Never before in their lives had Zhou and Yin ever met anyone as seemingly unreasonable as Meng Hao. They both felt regret at heart. If they had known it would turn out like this, they would never have chased after him to steal the pill.

Time slipped by, and the hour approached for the sealing spell on the pill to dissipate. Yin Tianlong let out a long sigh. With a bitter laugh, he shook his head. There was nothing left he could do. He couldn’t pursue or attack, lest he be forced to face Demonic beasts. His medicinal pills were exhausted, and he had lost two flying swords. How could he even attempt to steal the pill…? Of course, that was not to mention his opponent’s tactics. His dazzling, wicked ideas seemed to have no end. Even the slightest bit of inattentiveness would lead to injury.

With a humiliated sigh, he gave one last look at Meng Hao, then turned and headed down the mountain, finally tormented into surrender.

As he left, Zhou Kai felt wracked with indecision. Dawn approached, as did the ending of the twelfth two-hour period, and with it, the unsealing of the medicinal pill in Meng Hao’s bag of holding. Zhou Kai stamped his foot hatefully, then, without a word, turned and left. He was convinced that Meng Hao was just too hard to deal with. In fact, there was fear in his heart; if he didn’t leave this place now, perhaps he never would.

Meng Hao watched the two of them leave and head down the mountain. He let out a very long sigh, and felt exhaustion fill his body like floodwaters. He bit his tongue and woke up a bit, then hurried off into the distance. He didn’t leave the black mountain, but rather made his way to the mountaintop. There was the Demonic python there, but generally speaking it was relatively safe. After all, the python needed time to complete its transformation, and its roars kept away other Demonic beasts.

Meng Hao found a fissure in the rocks and sat down cross-legged. He glanced down at his bag of holding, suddenly feeling apprehensive.

“I wasted so many medicinal pills, each one worth Spirit Stones. Let me calculate… including thirty-seven flying swords and more than forty Demonic Cores, that comes to… one hundred ninety-eight Spirit Stones. One hundred ninety-eight.” His body trembled, and he felt quite upset.

“Thankfully, the twenty-four hours is now up,” he said, trying to comfort himself, “and the Dry Spirit Pill is mine.” Pushing aside his disappointment, he forced his mind to be clear, then, looking around to make sure it was safe, he pulled out the copper mirror and began to make copies of the Dry Spirit Pill.

Mid-day arrived, and Meng Hao looked down at the pills in his hands. Ten Dry Spirit Pills. He forced out a smile, but disappointment was still visible in his face. It took a lot of Spirit Stones to copy a Dry Spirit Pill, many more than were required for a Demonic Core. Now he understood the exchange rates required by the copper mirror.

He clenched his jaw, then popped one of the pills into his mouth.

“Fifth level of Qi Condensation! I have to reach the fifth level!” His eyes grew bloodshot, filled with resilient determination. He sat in meditation and began to rotate his Cultivation base. Booming sounds resounded through his body as boundless spiritual energy erupted out of the Dry Spirit Pill, causing the spiritual forces in Meng Hao’s body to turn into a spinning vortex which suddenly spread outward in all directions.

Time went by slowly, and days passed. When Meng Hao, his eyes closed, broke through the fifth level of Qi Condensation, the black mountain was filled with the roars of the python. Its transformation, like Meng Hao’s, seemed also to have reached a critical juncture.

1. Yin Tianlong’s name in Chinese is (yǐn tiān lóng) – Yin is a common family name. Tian means “Heaven” or “sky.” Long means “prosperous,” “swelling,” or “the sound of drums”

2. Zhou Kai’s name in Chinese is (zhōu kǎi) – Zhou is a common family name. Kai means “victorious” or “triumphant”

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# Chapter 23: An Ancient Beast!

As Meng Hao sat in secluded meditation in the small mountain fissure, rumors about what had happened regarding the Dry Spirit Pill began to ripple out. This was especially true when Zhou and Yin returned. Many people saw them, but of course none dared to ask about who had ended up with the Dry Spirit Pill.

Because Meng Hao didn’t appear, rumors began to spread that he had died.

At that exact same moment, Wang Tengfei stood with hands clasped in his Immortal’s Cave on the East Mountain. The mountain breeze caused his hair to waft about and his long robe to rustle. He seemed exceedingly perfect in every way, especially his face, which was so beautiful and flawless that it could send women mad.

As a matter of fact, a mere nod of his head could drive crazy not just the young female Cultivators of the Reliance Sect, but of the Cultivation World of the entire State of Zhao.

His gentle eyes, amiable disposition, beautiful features, superb latent talent, refined Cultivation base, astonishing family background… all of it seemed to prove that Wang Tengfei deserved to be Chosen, which in turn caused people to respect him even more. He was blessed by heaven.

He stood there, an enchanting smile on his face, his eyes seemingly filled with stars as he stared off into the distance. His gaze seemed to almost bore directly through the mountain ranges to fall directly onto the black mountain filled with Demonic beasts.

He stared for a long time, his eyes flickering with an indiscernible excitement.

“The time has come,” he said, his smile light but his heart afire. “I spent three years digging through the ancient records, then another year searching high and low throughout the State of Zhao. After that, I waited for two more years here in the Reliance Sect. Finally, today has arrived. Before the Winged Rain-Dragon died, it flew to this place.

“I never imagined that the two most important things to me would relate to the Reliance Sect. Is my destiny really to be realized here? After the current matter is ended, I will enter the Inner Sect and being my plans regarding my Foundation Establishment.” His smile grew even more enchanting.

“Elder Brother Wang, we are prepared,” said a man who stood behind Wang Tengfei. His Cultivation base was at the fifth level of Qi Condensation. He spoke with utmost respect. “Even the members of the other Sects are assembled according to your requirements. We shall certainly succeed. Unfortunately, Shangguan Song hasn’t returned, and we don’t know where he is. It’s not certain whether or not he was able to invite Master Uncle Shangguan.”

“Very well,” said Wang Tengfei with a smile. “We’ve been preparing for this matter for a long time. According to my deductions, the Demonic python is almost at the end of its two-year shedding period. The moment it completes the process, it is at its weakest.” His eyes grew brighter. Not only had he spent years in preparation, he had been required to pay the price of four valuable treasures, as well as tens of thousands of Spirit Stones, to prepare the spell. Even for him, it was a price which could only be paid once. As of now, he had nothing left.

“Don’t worry, Elder Brother Wang. We will definitely succeed. Allow Junior Brother to congratulate you in advance on acquiring the Core.”

“Of course we will succeed. I, Wang Tengfei, have never failed.” He laughed, and his expression grew even more resplendent. If the ancient records were correct, he would return with a valuable treasure that would accompany him for the rest of his life, and also an ancient legacy which would allow him to control heaven and earth. As for the Demonic Core, it could have been considered a treasure when it was in its prime. But after all these years, it would have faded, and would not be as effective. However, it could still help him break through from the sixth level of Qi Condensation to the seventh.

“Tomorrow at dawn, we shall go to the black mountain,” said Wang Tengfei mildly. With a smile, he rubbed his right arm. Hidden underneath the sleeve was a red mark. He rubbed it, and his eyes once again flashed with excitement.

It was a mark left by a Blood Drop which had fallen onto him from the Heavens when he was six years old. After that day, he was surrounded by a dream in which he flew through the air and became a sovereign of the sky.

With the Blood Drop had come knowledge of a legacy, as well as a special sense, which, when coupled with the information from the records of two-hundred years ago, had enabled him to find a thread of a clue which had led him here.

“No one in the entire world except for me could do this. And that is because I am connected to the legacy, and have the Blood Drop, which is unique in the world.” He gazed off toward the black mountain, his smile even more entrancing, filled with anticipation.

“If this was still the era of Patriarch Reliance, then he would definitely take control of the dragon. But he’s been missing for four hundred years. That is good fortune for me. According to the ancient records, as well as my own investigations, I know that when the dragon came here two hundred years ago, its aura had been suppressed by the treasure. Few people realized that. Even though this is Reliance Sect territory, the area has powerful restrictive spells. Not only was there no aura emanating out, even if there were, no one would have been able to sense it. And even if someone entered the area, their vision would have been blocked by the magic, and they would have been unable to see it.

“As for the Demonic python, it has spent most of its time in slumber. It was only because of the shedding process that it began to roar and howl. Only when the Demonic python sheds its skin fully will the restrictions dissipate, and it will be safe to enter. Thanks to my Blood Drop legacy, I was able to deduce these matters. No one else understands even the half of it.

“A valuable treasure, a complete legacy, all there, waiting for Wang Tengfei!” His smile growing wider, he flicked his sleeve and walked back into the Immortal’s Cave. Moonlight circled around him, unwilling to part from him. The mystical scene caused the other Cultivator’s expression to be filled with even more veneration.

The next day at dawn, atop the black mountain, in that virtually invisible fissure, Meng Hao’s entire body had grown crimson red. Sweat poured off him, and massive amounts of black filth oozed continuously out of his pores.

He had been in mediation for several days, but now his eyes opened. Outside, the roars of the Demonic python grew more intense. It seemed it had reached a critical juncture of its own.

Meng Hao was not distracted, though. He focused and rotated his Cultivation base. He pushed over and over again, but the fourth-level bottle neck was still there. His eyes red, he swallowed ten Dry Spirit Pills, whereupon his head began to buzz, and his body trembled violently. A loud ripping sound could be heard, and it seemed as if his body were floating like a piece of paper in the wind.

Inside his body, his Qi and blood vessels sparkled like crystal, nearly transparent, like an otherworldly omen. The spiritual energy in his body whirled, forming a magnificent lake. It wasn’t a big lake, but it was a lake nonetheless.

The lake, the Core lake, existed in Meng Hao’s dantian region, quite heavy.

Meng Hao knew that he could control the power and enable it to erupt with the power of the fifth level of Qi Condensation. To a Cultivator who had reached Foundation Establishment, it was weak and insubstantial, but as far as Qi Condensation went, the fifth level was a watershed, the second watershed being the seventh level, followed by the ninth.

His head buzzed for quite some time. Eventually, Meng Hao slowly opened his eyes, and they glittered like they had before. A burst of popping sounds rang out. He seemed to have grown a bit taller, and though his skin was still dark, a new air emanated from him.

“The fifth level of Qi Condensation.” Meng Hao took a deep breath, then smiled. He had reached the fifth level of Qi Condensation. Now he could practice the Wind Walking technique. That, combined with flying swords, would give him much greater speed both in movement and attack. It was completely beyond the fourth level.

“Dry Spirit Pills really are beyond ordinary,” said Meng Hao, looking down at the two Dry Spirit Pills in front of him. “But, they still have their limitations. Perhaps after consuming a lot of them, they will become less effective, just like the pills in the past. I wonder if I will be able to use them to get to the sixth level of Qi Condensation.” As he contemplated this, his expression suddenly changed. The roars of the Demonic python now carried a tone of misery. Booming sounds rang out. Meng Hao leaned forward, and he looked outside of the fissure.

As he looked, his pupils constricted and his hands clenched into fists.

Not far away on the mountaintop, was a white-robed youth, extraordinarily beautiful, as if his perfect body was a blessing from heaven. A golden flying sword rotated around him, and the wind blew furiously around as he battled with the Demonic python.

It was none other than… Wang Tengfei.

He smiled calmly, and his kind, amiable eyes made him seem like the sun. He seemed to glow, as if he could eliminate all the shadows around him.

When he attacked, he seemed perfect, as if the Heavens approved his each and every movement.

Around him were at least nine others, one of whom was Shangguan Xiu. He flicked his sleeves as he took the lead in battling the Demonic python. As for the others, all of them had Qi Condensation levels of the seventh level or higher. All were strangers whom Meng Hao had never seen before. They surrounded the Demonic python, preparing to kill it. Booming sounds rang out, and the python let out astonishing roars.

Meng Hao stared at Wang Tengfei, not moving a muscle. But deep in his eyes was a dark look that slowly grew, replacing any mildness until it filled his eyes.

After a short bit of time, the Demonic python's roars grew more and more miserable, and wounds covered its body. Blood splattered everywhere. This truly was its weakest state. The surrounding Cultivators attacked even fiercerly. Wang Tengfei smiled, as perfect as ever, his eyes filled with an indiscernible excitement.

He had waited for this day for a long time.

Suddenly, from to peaks of nine surrounding mountains, shining silvery light coiled up and linked together to form a spell. The spell ever so slowly filled the air, then broke into countless silver threads which then turned into a silver fog that shot down toward the ground. It seemed that they were preparing to seal the Demonic python.

But, just then, the python looked up toward the Heavens and let out a roar which resounded out over the black mountain, shaking everything. Suddenly, on top of the python's head appeared the ghostly image of a beast.

The creature was bright red, with enormous wings and a hideous-looking head. Its sharp claws glittered, and it had a long tail. The instant the phantom appeared, the swirling winds in the sky seemed to change colors, and astonished expressions appeared on the faces of everyone present. Only Wang Tengfei's eyes appeared more excited. Fortunately, the ghostly image appeared for only a moment, then disappeared.

When the ghostly image disappeared, the Demonic python shot out of the deep fissure, its body sleek and smooth. It let out a frightening roar and spit reddish mist out of its mouth, an attack which then shot out in all directions. The Cultivators couldn't avoid it, not even Wang Tengfei, and they could only watch helplessly as it enveloped them, then shot out into the distance.

Because of the attack, when the silver fog fell from the sky, it didn’t just fall down upon the Demonic python, but Wang Tengfei and the others as well.

As the silver fog descended upon them, Meng Hao’s heart began to thump wildly. Before, he had seen a sword sticking out from the Demonic python’s body. But as of now, the sword was nowhere to be seen. Without the slightest hesitation, he leaped up and, moving faster than he ever had in his life, jumped onto a flying sword and shot toward the top of the mountain and the large fissure.

“Go! Go! Go!” Meng Hao said under his breath. Without any regard for safety, he charged into the fissure-like cave, ignoring the strange odor which filled the air. As he moved deeper into the cave, he saw a massive snakeskin, stuck into which was the small, primitive-looking sword.

Without even a pause, he grabbed the sword, his heart thumping, face flushed with excitement. Just as he was about to leave, his eyes widened. Despite his extreme level of excitement, he was still able to gasp in shock. The thing really was a python skin, but it was also something else, something shockingly frightening that Meng Hao had never before seen in his life.

It was … the corpse of a creature. A massive, shriveled corpse, several hundreds of meters long. The black mountain seemed to be hollow inside, and the creature’s corpse filled more than half of it.

Also visible were two gigantic, mostly disintegrated wings. Despite being dead, the creature’s massive, hideous head was incredibly frightening. This creature looked the same as the ghostly image which had just appeared, and now it was clear that the so-called Demonic python was actually the creature’s tail.

“A tail that becomes a demon!” said Meng Hao, stupefied. “What Demonic beast is this?! If it’s a Demonic beast… it must have a Demonic Core!” He clenched his jaw. Based on his experience collecting Demonic Cores, it wouldn’t be located in the creature’s belly. Most Demonic Cores were located in the head. He dashed toward the horrific-looking head, and with a swipe of the primitive-looking sword, split it open. Sure enough, inside was a shriveled Demonic Core. He grabbed it, and was about to leave, when suddenly his heart began thumping even harder. From his current position, he could see that beneath the head of the creature’s corpse was a skeleton.

Who knew how many years the skeleton had lay crushed under the head. Next to the skeleton was a golden-colored bag of holding.

Blood boiling, Meng Hao suddenly had the feeling that his destiny was thick in this place. He had acquired the sword, the Demonic Core and now a golden bag of holding. He snatched it up, then shot out of the cave like the wind, and then down the mountain, filled with incredible excitement.

“I’ve struck it rich! This time, I’ve really freaking struck it rich!”

Meng Hao had only been inside the cave for the space of about ten breaths, and in ten more, he was gone from the mountain. The moment his shadow disappeared, a shape began to descend from the silver fog that hung in the sky. It was a person wearing a white robe; Wang Tengfei. With a flick of his sleeve, he floated down slowly. He looked around for a moment, then sped toward the cave.

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 24: Who was it?!

Wang Tengfei looked so excited that if anyone could have seen him, they would have been shocked. No one had ever seen such an expression appear on his face.

To other people, Wang Tengfei was a Chosen, with a mild expression, amiable smile, and beautiful appearance, perfect in every way.

But at the moment, he could not help but show his excitement. He had prepared for this moment for years, had spent so many resources, all to get to this point, a point he had looked forward to for years. He would finally have a treasure he could carry with him for his entire life. His heart nearly burst with frenzied excitement.

One of the main reasons he had joined the Reliance Sect to begin with was to acquire this treasure.

Moving as fast as he could, he entered the cave. When he caught sight of the massive, frightening corpse, he let out a loud laugh and his eyes glowed. He dashed toward the creature's tail, the part that had turned into the Demonic python. He searched about for a while, whereupon a look of confusion appeared on his face. His eyes widened. After looking across the entire corpse, he stood there looking dumbstruck.

"What's going on…? It can't be. The treasure can only be acquired after the python sheds its skin. The only safe time to enter is right now. How could it not be here? It's impossible!" A heinous look filled his eyes, and his head spun. He searched the corpse again, seeking out the place where he remembered the sword should have been sticking out. When he found it, it was clear that the sword had already been taken. Wang Tengfei's body began to shake, and an unbelievable fury appeared in his eyes. He let out a howl that shook the entire black mountain.

That was when he noticed that the corpse’s head had been split open and the Demonic Core removed. When he saw the skeleton, his mood sank even deeper, and he barely even looked at it.

His whole person appeared savage with fury. He dashed outside and pulled up his sleeve, hoping to get some reaction from the Blood Drop on his arm. But there was no reaction whatsoever. In fact, it was as if the Blood Drop had been wiped away!

He searched the black mountain high and low but found nothing.

In the end, he returned dumbly to the cave and looked at the creature’s corpse. He let out another shrill shriek.

“I spent three years searching the ancient texts. Three years, with no time for Cultivation! I spent hundreds of thousands of Spirit Stones before I found the clue from two hundred years ago that led me to the Flying Rain-Dragon!” His body trembled, and his face contorted. Any beauty at all in him was gone, replaced by madness.

“I spent a year searching throughout the State of Zhao, in the mountains and the wilds. I went everywhere, all the districts. The reactions of the Blood Drop finally led me here!” His eyes red, he clenched his fists angrily. Anyone who saw him like this would surely be shocked in the extreme.

“For the treasure, I deigned to begin my spiritual studies in this damned Reliance Sect. Dammit, Dammit! I’ve had to endure for nearly three years already!!!” His heart ached, as if it had been stabbed with an invisible sword that smashed his arrogance to pieces. Up until now, he really had never believed that he could possibly fail.

“To prepare the spell to suppress the dragon, I spent all my remaining Spirit Stones!! I used some precious influence from my Clan to suppress information about the ancient Flying Rain-Dragon from getting out. I even refused the aid of my Clan-members because I wanted the treasure and the Legacy to be the true starting point of my training!

“Who was it? Who took my treasure!?” His body trembled violently, his head buzzed, and his blood roiled. He had spent so much, and someone else had benefited. He spit out a mouthful of blood onto his white robe, staining it red.

It was like a man in the mortal world who paid the bride-price, bought a luxuriously decorated mansion, found the most beautiful bride, then arranged an amazing wedding feast to which he invited countless friends and family. Then, in front of everyone’s eyes, filled with anticipation, he entered the nuptial chamber and saw his beautiful, blushing bride in her red wedding gauzes, then threw himself upon her…

Only to suddenly find he had become a different person. Everything that belonged to him was suddenly being enjoyed by some other bloke. Even his face had been taken away!

“Who took my ancient Cultivation sword!?” Wang Tengfei again shouted mournfully, then spit out another mouthful of blood. He staggered backward a few paces, his face pale, his eyes burning with madness. He couldn’t accept it, not at all. Never before had he failed, ever. This, coupled with his arrogance, caused his heart to be filled with a powerful, humiliated fury.

“Who stole the treasure I planned to use to rebuke the Cultivation world!?” As he thought about the price he had paid to reach this point, he coughed up another mouthful of blood. His robe was now almost completely red as he staggered backward.

“You didn’t just take the treasure, you took the Demonic Core. Without that, I can’t break through to the seventh level! Who are you?! Who are you who took away my fortune! That was my treasure, that was my Demonic Core!!” His face twisted with madness as he continued his search, but to no avail.

His miserable roars reached Meng Hao’s ears as he fled for his life. His eyes glittered excitedly, and he ran even faster.

“I’m rich. Really, really rich.” His heart raced and his mouth felt dry, and his speed increased until it far exceeded his previous speed limitation. Only a short time passed before he reached the Immortal’s Cave on the South Mountain.

He had guessed that the treasures he’d taken were very important to Wang Tengfei. Since he had virtually stolen them, he could not very well announce their existence publicly. He wanted to hide himself away as well, but if he did so, it would only attract more attention to himself. Instead, he should place himself in the open and attach himself to a position of reason, be bold and assured, with justice on his side.

He licked his lips, and his eyes fairly shone. Even though Fatty still had the jade slip that opened the Immortal’s Cave, Meng Hao still had another jade slip given to him by Elder Sister Xu, which he knew could open the door. If there were only one key, how could she have opened the door when he sat counting his Spirit Stones that one time?

When he entered the Immortal’s Cave, he didn’t see Fatty. At first, he was worried. But then he realized that even though Fatty looked naive, he was actually quite clever, and wouldn’t let himself be taken advantage of. Not thinking about it any further, he sat down cross-legged, took a deep breath and pulled out the golden bag of holding. He grew even happier at the sight of it, and when he opened it, he started to murmur softly to himself.

“It’s so big. It seems it can hold… what?” Before he even finished his sentence, his body grew stiff, and he sucked in another breath. When he looked in the bag of holding, his mind went blank, then began to buzz.

“Holy crap! Holy crap! I really am rich!!” His hands trembled as they gripped the bag of holding. It took a few moments for him to get his thoughts in order again. He pulled out a Spirit Stone with a shaky hand.

The Spirit Stones in the bag were not quite the same as his other Spirit Stones. About as big as a finger, the Spiritual energy which swirled about in them was not dense, and they also contained a strange swirling mist inside. And the sheer amount… inside the bag of holding were over two thousand Spirit Stones!

He had never seen such a vast amount of wealth in his entire life. He could not even breathe for a moment. His body trembled, and he stared blankly. Other than the Spirit Stones, the only things in the bag were some articles of clothing and a few other miscellaneous items.

Sweat began to drip down Meng Hao’s forehead. It wasn’t hot inside the Immortal’s Cave, but his body felt as if it were burning. After a bit of time went by, he began to laugh, a hearty laughter filled with joy.

“These Spirit Stones are strange. They’re big, but their spiritual energy is just average. But the quantity, hahaha…” After some time passed, he got himself under control. Licking his lips, he pulled out another of the objects he had acquired, the withered Demonic Core. He looked at it, his eyes gleaming intensely. He took a deep breath.

“That gigantic Demonic beast must have been dead for many years. Eventually, its tail transformed into a Demonic python. It must have been incredibly powerful when it was alive. And its Demonic Core…” Meng Hao’s breathing grew ragged as he looked at the hard, dried out Core. He brought out the copper mirror, intending to make some duplicates.

Almost as soon as he pulled it out, and before he could even place the Demonic Core on its surface, the mirror suddenly began to burn so hotly that it almost injured Meng Hao’s hand. An invisible force burst out from the mirror, charging toward the Demonic Core.

A bang sounded out as the Core in Meng Hao’s hand was struck by the invisible attack. In an instant, another invisible force shot out from the copper mirror and struck out at the Demonic Core. It was as if the Demonic Core had suddenly turned into a long-furred Demonic creature, and the copper mirror had gone mad with the desire to destroy it.

Meng Hao was dumbstruck. He instantly grabbed the mirror, and, enduring the pain, shoved it back into his bag of holding. The Demonic Core dropped to the ground with a thump, a multitude of small cracks now visible on its withered surface.

“Dammit. This is a Demonic Core, not a furred Demonic beast.” Meng Hao painfully hurried to pick up the Core.

It was a good thing the withered Demonic Core had a tough outer crust. The copper mirror’s violent attack had damaged its surface, and now, a small gleaming pellet was visible, from which wafted the aroma of dense spiritual energy. It instantly filled the Immortal’s Cave and caused his eyes to glitter. Considering the violent reaction of the copper mirror, he didn’t dare to attempt to duplicate it. He hesitated for a moment, then stored it away.

After taking another deep breath, he pulled out the third of his acquisitions, the small, primitive-looking sword. Holding in front of him, he smiled.

“This sword is incredibly sharp. It could stab into the Demonic python, and was even able to split that giant demon’s head open. It’s definitely something special.” He looked at the small sword in his hand. It was made not of gold or iron, but wood. On its surface were some faint lines of gold that seemed to have some sort of magical properties. Even though it seemed primitive, even just thinking about the wooden flying sword and its incredible sharpness made Meng Hao incredibly excited.

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# Chapter 25: Sovereign of the Sky

“This treasure must have a special history.” Meng Hao swung the wooden sword, then stabbed it into the ground. It went in easily. Smiling, Meng Hao pulled it out, even happier than before.

Suddenly, he lifted his head, looking surprised. He sensed that the spiritual energy in the Immortal’s Cave was suddenly thinner than before. Actually, it seemed to have completely disappeared.

Even though there wasn’t originally a huge amount of spiritual energy, for all of it to disappear should not be possible. Spiritual energy was the Qi of heaven and earth, which pulsed through various mountains like great arteries. The Reliance Sect was just such a place. It should be impossible for the spiritual energy to suddenly dry up for no reason.

Curious, Meng Hao stabilized his aura and concentrated, casting his senses about. Suddenly, he looked back at the wooden sword, disbelief covering his face. He had just discovered that all the spiritual energy in the room had been absorbed by the wooden sword.

“The sword… it can absorb spiritual energy?” Meng Hao was shocked. After a moment, he slapped his bag of holding and produced a Spirit Stone. After placing it next to the sword, he watched as the Spirit Stone slowly grew dark over the space of about ten breaths .

He picked the Spirit Stone back up, feeling a bit sad at the loss of a Spirit Stone, but excited at the same time.

“This sword… it truly is a great treasure.” He gazed at the sword with a look of determination, then slowly drew it across one of his fingers. With ease, it sliced open a cut. Meng Hao focused on his Cultivation base. Sure enough, he felt the spiritual energy in his body being sucked out continuously through the cut.

He covered his finger, excitement clear in his eyes. Within moments, the wound had healed, and Meng Hao gazed at the sword, laughing foolishly.

“If I used this sword when battling a magic-user, all I would need to do is cut them, and their spiritual energy would be drained away and I could trample over them. Too bad I only have one. If I had two, or ten, or a hundred, then I could drain my opponent’s spiritual energy even faster. How astonishing would that be…?” An image appeared in his mind of himself wielding a hundred wooden swords, all stabbing into Wang Tengfei’s body.

His journey into the black mountain, and spending all those Spirit Stones, had definitely been worth it.

With that thought, he suddenly took a deep breath and pulled out the copper mirror.

“I wonder how many Spirit Stones…” He hesitated for a moment, but couldn’t stop thinking about how amazing the sword was. He placed it down onto the mirror. As soon as it touched the surface, the mirror flashed, and the sword was sucked inside. Meng Hao had never seen this happen before, and it caused him quite a shock. He tried to grab the mirror to stop it, but was too slow. The wooden sword was gone.

“What’s going on? Dammit, mirror, I went through a lot of painful hardships to get that sword, you, you, you… okay, calm down, calm down.” Panting a bit, he forced himself to grow calm. After considering for some time, he took out a Spirit Stone and placed it onto the mirror. It disappeared.

“Hmm. Has it already started the duplication process?” Meng Hao’s heart thumped, and with an anxious expression, he put in another Spirit Stone. One, two, three… A disheartened expression appeared on his face. The mirror was like a bottomless hole. Before much time had passed, Meng Hao had already put two hundred Spirit Stones into it.

“Dammit, dammit…” He wanted to stop, but refused to get to this point and have nothing to show for it. Also, he knew that if he gave up now, it would essentially mean giving up the mirror’s duplication ability.

He could only endure his frustration and put more Spirit Stones in. Three hundred, four hundred, all the way to one thousand. His face grew pale. His hand shook as he held out another Spirit Stone.

“When will this end, mirror? Are you stealing all the Spirit Stones I just got?” He gritted his teeth. He’d already dropped in one thousand Spirit Stones. He couldn’t give up now. With eyes as bloodshot as a gambling addict, he threw in more Spirit Stones. Finally, when he threw in the two thousandth stone, the mirror began to shine with bright, multicolored light, indicating that the duplication had begun. By this point, Meng Hao was a bit numb. He stared mutely at the multicolored light, which slowly dissipated over a few seconds.

When the light was gone, there were two identical wooden swords on the mirror.

When he saw them, some of the color returned to his face. He picked them up, feeling a mix of emotions from sadness to anger to pain. All he could do was comfort himself.

“It’s okay, no problem,” he muttered to himself through clenched teeth. “What are a couple thousand Spirit Stones worth anyway? Just a trifle. You can’t get something new without giving up something old. It’s worth it to have two of these wooden swords.” He spoke the word “trifle” with a bit of bitterness. He quickly put the copper mirror away and looked again at the two wooden swords. He sat there for a while thinking about their power. Slowly, he began to calm down.

Determination once again filled his eyes. After a while, he put the two treasured wooden swords away. As for the second sword, it was worth two thousand Spirit Stones as far as Meng Hao was concerned.

With a bitter laugh, he sat there cross-legged in meditation, waiting for the spiritual energy in the Immortal’s Cave to return. Suddenly, his eyes opened, and he retrieved the Demonic Core from his bag of holding.

“Even though I just broke through to the fifth level of Qi Condensation, who knows how much progress my Cultivation base will make if I take this pill…”

With a determined look, he swallowed the Demonic Core and closed his eyes. His body began to vibrate. The Demonic Core dissolved into an incredibly dense flood of spiritual energy which instantly inundated Meng Hao.

The density of this spiritual energy was beyond any medicinal pill Meng Hao had ever consumed. In fact, there was no way to even compare it to anything. The Core exploded with a white brightness, sweeping over Meng Hao’s body. Blood sprayed out of his mouth and his body shook. But he held on, and the Core lake grew larger and larger. Moments later, Meng Hao experienced a feeling of boundlessness.

With each pulsing expansion, he felt a severe pain and his body shook even harder. His face grew pale, and he gritted his teeth as hard as he could.

Then, the Core lake began to churn and roil, and an astonishing level of spiritual power began to form. Despite the pain, Meng Hao could sense his Cultivation base expanding from the initial stage of the fifth level to the middle stage. Time passed, although he wasn’t sure how much. Accompanied by the thundering of the Core lake, his Cultivation base climbed even higher to the peak of the fifth level.

Then, his head buzzed, and his Cultivation base suddenly broke through the fifth level and entered… the sixth level of Qi Condensation!

And not just the initial stage of the sixth level, it continued to climb to the middle stage of the sixth level. Then it slowly began to stop. The clothes on Meng Hao’s body had been reduced to ash. Only the bags of holding remained at his side. Black filth completely covered him, but if you looked closely, you would see that his skin sparkled translucently, as if rays of morning sun emanated from it.

His hair was longer, reaching down to his shoulders, and he was a bit taller. His body no longer seemed frail and weak, but rather tall and slender.

His features were still somewhat swarthy, but his countenance shone with a strength too difficult to describe. It was otherworldly.

His Core lake seethed and churned, filling his entire body. Deep in its recesses, the Demonic Core settled down. For some reason, it didn’t dissolve, but rather sat there, unmoving.

If it only just sat there, it would not be anything to think about. But when his Cultivation base reached the sixth level, his head buzzed, and within the buzzing, he felt the indistinct pull of some sort of Legacy. It seemed to be emanating from the Demonic Core, settling onto his mind like a branding iron.

It must be some sort of Blood Legacy from the Flying Rain-Dragon, left for its weak, young offspring. As it had approached death, it fused the Legacy into its Demonic Core. The Demonic python must have intended to consume it after shedding its skin. And of course, Wang Tengfei, possessing a Blood connection to the Legacy, had lusted for the same thing. Sadly… Meng Hao got it first.

Meng Hao suddenly found himself dreaming. He was flying in the middle of the sky, rebuking the highest heavens, rocking the earth, surrounded by churning winds and clouds. He was the Lord of the heavens, and when the other flying beasts looked at him, they trembled as if they had lost the qualification to fly, and would let him slaughter them.

He was the a sovereign of the sky, Chosen, worshiped by all creatures. It seemed as if it were an ancient age, very long ago.

That feeling of flying in the heavens left Meng Hao feeling almost crazy, almost in love with the feeling. He flew for a long time, and the entire time, a multitude of fierce beasts retreated from him in fear, and countless people on the ground prostrated themselves in worship.

With the wind and earth beneath him, only the heavens could match up to him, but he was their equal.

Then, he reached a lake, and he lowered his head to look at himself. He was a dragon, several tens of thousands of meters long, with two, massive wings, each one also several tens of thousands of meters long. He possessed an indescribable power which could shape the world.

His head was fierce and savage, and he had an incredibly long tail. All of it merged together to form a boundless nobility which created an electric buzz in Meng Hao's mind. His mind seemed to rip open, and a voice rang out.

"I am the Flying Rain-Dragon of ancient times!" It filled his mind, filled the world, and left everything trembling. All the living creatures roared. The ancient Flying Rain-Dragon's Qi and blood vessels had long since vanished from the earth, but some of its descendants still existed. Although they might be weak, the Legacy still existed.

At that exact moment, on the East Mountain of the Reliance Sect, in his Immortal's Cave, Wang Tengfei's face grew dark. The fury in his heart nearly made him go mad. He had tasted failure, and was having a hard time accepting it. No matter how many times he tried to use the Blood Drop to sense the Legacy or his opponent, nothing happened. He didn't know what was happening.

"Did you find it?" said Wang Tengfei, suppressing the fury in his heart as he lifted his head to look at the young man standing in front of him. It was the other young man who had accompanied him that day in addition to Shangguan Song.

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# Chapter 26: Bewilderment

“Elder Brother Wang, I secretly checked around and asked quite a few disciples throughout the Sect. I don’t think I left anything out.” This young man was also famous in the Reliance Sect, but in front of Wang Tengfei, he was completely respectful. He had never seen Wang Tengfei like this, and was a bit hesitant. He had begun speaking with a respectful bow. “I even looked around in the Servants’ Quarters and followed up on Zhou Kai, Han Zong and some others. At that time, there were thirty-seven people who weren’t present in the Sect. Of those thirty-seven people, I eliminated twenty-nine as suspects. Among the rest, there are six of whom there is no evidence to suggest they were at the black mountain. Only two were definitely there. Meng Hao and Han Zong.”

Wang Tengfei looked more and more angry. He raises his hard eyes, which caused the young man’s heart to grow cold. He nervously lowered his head.

“Han Zong was also at the black mountain… Meng Hao?” Wang Tengfei frowned. Meng Hao’s name sounded familiar to him.

“Meng Hao is… the person who injured Elder Brother Lu,” the young man said hastily.

Wang Tengfei’s face grew darker, and his heart burned. He had planned for so many years and expended so many resources. For so long, he had taken the whole matter to be concluded before it began. It was his great victory, something he could take back to his clan to refine them. But then, it was snatched away from him. When he thought of the sword, his face twisted in pain. That was his tool to rebuke heaven and earth. And when he thought of the Legacy of the Flying Rain-Dragon, his heart wept.

Before today, he had been fully self-confident, completely assured of his success. Everything belonged to him, that was just his good fortune. Only he was qualified to have such good fortune. Yet he then met an unexpected defeat, a blow he had never imagined he would receive. He found it extremely difficult to accept, as if the heart-rending turn of events had not actually happened.

Breathing deeply, Wang Tengfei opened his mouth to speak, but then suddenly began to tremble as a burning pain arose on his right arm. He lifted up the sleeve and stared at his arm, watching as the Blood Drop slowly disappeared. There was nothing he could do but watch it go away, and after it had left, his beautiful features twisted with fury and defeat. The Legacy was gone. He coughed up some blood.

He knew that at this moment, the person who had snatched away his treasure was now fully connected to the Legacy. He would never again be able to use the Blood Drop to sense anything, because the Legacy had already chosen the other person.

When the young man in front of him saw this happen, he grew frightened. He was about to take a step forward when Wang Tengfei suddenly lifted his head up and shouted, “Beat it!”

His booming voice reverberated, and the young man’s face went white. He had never seen such a succession of different expressions on Wang Tengfei’s face. His body cold, he left.

Within the Immortal’s Cave, Wang Tengfei’s eyes grew red and his mind seethed as he thought of Han Zong and Meng Hao. He could not help but think about the day he had looked down on the Outer Sect ants in the square.

He frowned, his face growing more somber. He thought about how the Blood Drop wasn’t able to sense the legacy, and how it had been wiped out by his opponent. Regardless of if it were Han Zong or Meng Hao, neither of them should have been able to do it.

“Just who are you?!” His eyes shot with blood, he slapped his bag of holding and a flash of silver light appeared and coalesced into a silver, octagonal spell device, which floated in front of him.

He stared at it for some time, then determination filled his eyes. This was one of the spell devices he had prepared for one of the mountains surrounding the black mountain. After being used, it needed to regenerate for several hours, whereupon it could be reused.

He had already decided that he would activate the spell device, and even if it injured him, he would cast his senses inside to see who was present that day in the black mountain region.

Looking at the silver spell device in front of him, Wang Tengfei bit his tongue and spit out a bit of blood. As the blood splashed onto the spell device, his fingers flickered in an incantation pattern, and suddenly his head hummed and his awareness flickered. Amidst the indistinct feeling, he was suddenly able to sense several auras emanating out in waves.

“One, two… nine people that I invited to help me, these are their auras…” Wang Tengfei’s face grew pale; the spell device in front of him began to quiver, and cracks appeared on its surface. But he didn’t give up, and instead continued to cast his senses into it.

A vague outline began to appear in his mind, filled with several dots of light. Ten of the lights were familiar to him, and another one of them belonged to Meng Hao.

In addition to those, there was another light. Wang Tengfei concentrated for a moment, then was certain it was Han Zong. Unfortunately, the spell device could only keep a record of who was in the region of the seven or eight mountains surrounding the black mountain, not their specific location.

Wang Tengfei frowned, and then suddenly noticed that the outline in his head contained… another light!

It was faint, and if he had not looked closely he would have missed it. Without pushing the spell device to the breaking point, to the limits of its power, he wouldn’t have been able to sense it.

“This is…” His heart trembled, and he concentrated, but even as he did so, his body shook and he coughed up blood. The spell device shattered. Pieces of it shot out, hitting both him and the walls of the Immortal’s cave.

His face white, he coughed up more blood, looking incredibly afraid. When sensing that last light, his mind had begun to tremble, as if whoever it belonged to could crush him to death with a single thought.

The spell device could only give him an approximate feeling regarding aura level, not the target’s Cultivation base. But for the aura level to cause such a reaction left him frightened beyond belief.

“Who was that?!” said Wang Tengfei, shaking. His fear left him certain that this fearsome person was definitely the one who could so easily rip away his Blood Spot sense.

His heart cold, he lifted his head and breathed deeply. After some time passed, he had recovered his senses. But the memory of that faint light pressed down on him with the weight of a mountain.

“How did this person know about the black mountain affair…? Could it be that they have been following me in my search…? Who was it…?”

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Time passed, and eventually the dream ended. Meng Hao opened his eyes, unsure how many days had passed, nor of how his Cultivation base had changed. He felt as if he had been dreaming for a very long time.

When the dream concluded, Meng Hao felt as if he had more memories than before, memories that were vague and ancient, and couldn’t be recalled. But that thirst to fly in the sky still flickered powerfully in his mind.

He felt certain that if one day he could really fly through the sky, then the memories in his head would become clear.

After some time passed, Meng Hao took a breath, his vision slowly returning to normal. As his senses returned, he felt his Cultivation base, then stopped, dumbfounded.

“The sixth level of Qi Condensation?” His eyes glittered fiercely, and after thoroughly examining his Cultivation base, he nearly went mad with joy. He sensed the majestic Core lake, and the Demonic Core floating within, and an amazing feeling began to overcome him.

“I actually reached… the sixth level of Qi Condensation!” He shook as he stood up, then laughed heartily. His laughter echoed throughout the Immortal’s cave.

Excitedly, he sat back down cross-legged, closing his eyes and casting his senses about. It seemed as if he could feel everything around him in complete detail. In fact, he suddenly heard Fatty’s voice outside.

“Meng Hao, you were cursed with ill luck. You took the pill, but I didn’t want that to hurt you. Please don’t come haunt me…

“Poor old Master Fatty, I’m actually more cursed than you. Did you know that our business is gone? It was stolen away.” Fatty squatted outside the Immortal’s cave in front of a small fire, his face pained as he burned yellow paper money.

“Meng Hao, when you become a spirit, you have to come back and help me. Look at how much paper I’m burning for you.” Tears streamed down his face as he continued to burn the paper money, weeping and wailing.

“You come from a poor family, but don’t worry; I, Master Fatty, am here to take care of you. I’ll come burn paper for you every day so that in the next life you’ll be able to buy a house and get a wife. You’ll finally achieve your goal of being rich.

“Oh, Meng Hao, how could you leave like this…” Fatty’s wails grew even louder, as if he were completely heartbroken.

Upon hearing this, a strange expression appeared on Meng Hao's face. He opened his eyes. This was the first time anyone had ever burned yellow paper for him, and he wasn't sure whether to laugh or cry. He stood and pushed the main door open with a long creak, then walked out.

As soon as he stepped out, Fatty's loud wails suddenly ceased, and he looked up in astonishment. He straightened, his eyes filled with fear. Then he recognized Meng Hao, and he leaped up, gaping.

Meng Hao looked at Fatty with a strange expression, then gave a light cough and walked over to the nearby stream and began to clean himself off. He had never been so dirty in his entire life. After cleaning off, he put on a fresh green robe, then used a flying sword to trim his hair. Now he felt, and looked, like his old self. He turned and smiled at Fatty.

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# Chapter 27: The Wind Stirs Again

Fatty stared at Meng Hao, tears streaming down his face. He rushed forward, bawling.

“You’re not dead. Meng Hao, you’re not dead!” cried Fatty as he hugged Meng Hao. “I was so scared these past few days. Everyone said that you had died, and I was so sad. You’re my only friend. What would I do if you died?

“I thought of fleeing the Sect. I even lost interest in filing my teeth. But if I left, how could I get revenge for you? So I didn’t leave. I swear that I will find a way to help you get vengeance…”

Fatty looked with warm sincerity at Meng Hao, and after speaking for a bit, his tears began to dry up. The two of them sat next to the stream and Meng Hao told him about all the things that had happened in the black mountain, leaving out, of course, the matters regarding the Flying Rain-Dragon and Wang Tengfei. Fatty listened anxiously, and when he heard that Meng Hao had reached the sixth level of Qi Condensation, he gasped, stupefied.

“The sixth level of Qi Condensation…” Fatty looked extremely excited. “Holy crap, you’ve, you’ve… you’ve reached the sixth level of Qi Condensation! The year Elder Sister Xu brought us here, she was at the seventh level. Meng Hao, you really are an Immortal! Can you fly?”

“Fly…” Meng Hao closed his eyes, visualizing the descriptions of the Wind Walking technique from the Qi Condensation manual. It would naturally be easier to perform the technique at the sixth level than at the fifth, but after trying several times, the best he could do was float in the air for a moment before dropping down. Muttering, he continued to try for a while, then took a medicinal pill. Finally, he was able to suspend himself about five inches in the air. Fatty looked on with wide eyes.

Meng Hao suddenly opened his eyes, and they shone brightly. He stood up, then made several laps around the area, moving like the wind. Fatty watched on, breathing heavily.

After moving around like this a few times, Meng Hao began to grow more accustomed to the technique. He slapped his bag of holding and with a flash, a flying sword appeared. It moved down to his feet, and then he shot into the air. Fatty looked shocked, as if he couldn’t believe what he was seeing.

“You’re flying…” he murmured.

Meng Hao felt incredibly excited. The wind blew against his face as he used the Wind Walking technique to fly with the sword. After about thirty breaths, he began to feel unstable, then started to lose his balance. As his happened, Meng Hao’s mind suddenly shook, and a mnemonic appeared in his head.

The mnemonic didn’t consist of words, and was fantastically mysterious. It appeared in his mind like an instinct, and as it did, the spiritual energy in his body suddenly began to circulate. He waved his right hand unconsciously, almost like the flapping of a wing. Suddenly, a Wind Blade appeared in front of him!

When the Wind Blade appeared, the flying sword underneath his feet quivered. The Wind Blade shot forward into the jungle, and three lines of trees were instantly sliced in half. A rumbling sound reverberated throughout the vegetation, and Meng Hao tumbled onto the ground.

Fatty was thoroughly astonished, and it took him a while to recover his senses. His face flushed, he looked at Meng Hao with reverence in his eyes.

“You really did it! If I stick with you, who would dare to bully me? And who would dare to mess with our business!” Thinking about this, Fatty suddenly laughed out loud.

Meng Hao closed his eyes and thought excitedly about the Wind Blade. He was intelligent, and realised that it most likely had something to do with the strange dream and the Demonic Core. The mnemonic which had appeared in his head was also connected to the Demonic Core. Suddenly, the shadow of the Winged Rain-Dragon appeared in the Core lake. Meng Hao wanted to give voice to the feelings he felt regarding the Dragon and being a sovereign of the sky, but try as he might, he could not.

“Oh right,” said Fatty, suddenly recalling something. “Special promotion training is beginning in a few days. I heard that there’s a month-long period in which you can sign up. You should join! You’ll definitely be accepted. Then you could be the Reliance Sect’s third Inner Sect disciple! You’ll be super famous!”

“Special promotion training?” Meng Hao looked surprised. He had heard about it before, but back then, his Cultivation base had been too low, so he hadn’t even considered it. But things were different now. In the entire Reliance Sect, there were only three people at the sixth level of Qi Condensation, including himself. The others were Wang Tengfei and Han Zong. Han Zong had been stuck at the fifth level of Qi Condensation for a long time, but had recently broken through to the sixth.

“I heard that they’re only going to accept one disciple, and everyone is saying that the training was set up specifically for Wang Tengfei. But now you’re at the sixth level, you might be able to succeed.” Fatty really wanted Meng Hao to agree. If he became an Inner Sect disciple, he would easily be able to become a big shot in the Reliance Sect.

Meng Hao hesitated, unsure of what he really wanted to do. He was excited about the prospect, knowing that being an Inner Sect disciple would different than being in the Outer Sect. After becoming a member of the Inner Sect, no one would be quick to offend him, not even Sect elders. Furthermore, there would be more opportunities for Spirit Stones and medicinal pills. But this was an important matter, and Meng Hao’s Cultivation base had developed quite rapidly. He needed to consider what others might think, or conjecture. If he attracted too much attention, his losses might outweigh his gains.

He had been a member of the Reliance Sect for almost two years now, and had developed a deep understanding of the phrase “the law of the jungle.” He also knew not to advertise his wealth. And yet, he hadn’t decided not to participate either. Maybe he would go. Although, after everything that had happened in the black mountain, his treasures and medicinal pills were almost completely used up. He would need to restock.

He could not help but think wistfully about the two thousand Spirit Stones.

Twenty days flashed by, and the registration period for the special promotion training was almost over. Not many had signed up. According to Sect Rules, upon registering, one could not leave the main square, but was required to sit in meditation beneath the dragon-carved pillars. No one was allowed to disturb the registrants, either.

Actually, the so-called training was in fact a contest of battle magic. It was said that years ago, the participants went out into the wilds to search for treasures, but with the Reliance Sect in decline, the only way to select who to promote to the Inner Sect was to see who would be victorious with their battle magic.

During that twenty day period, Meng Hao took a trip to the High-Level Public zone, but it was completely empty. Considering the Reliance Sect’s decline, Meng Hao could understand why. Once again, he opened up shop outside the Low-Level Public zone.

His return caused quite a big stir, and no one dared to interfere with the business. In fact, during the twenty days, business boomed and he earned quite a few Spirit Stones. Almost every day he was able to duplicated magical items and medicinal pills, which he slowly built up into a new stockpile.

Even though all the magical items and flying swords in his bag of holding were ordinary in nature, he already had nearly a hundred. Thinking back to his fight with Lu Hong, and the events in the black mountain, he now clearly understood the best methods to engage in magical combat. After pondering about this for a while, his eyes glittered. He had just come up with an idea to increase the effectiveness of all his flying swords.

Other than managing the business, most of the remainder of Meng Hao's time was spent researching this method of increasing the power of his flying swords. He performed various tests and eventually came up with a few new techniques, ways to control more swords at the same time. One of the things he did was change the appearance of various swords to disguise them. Some he purposely scratched and marked up, some he broke the tips off of, and some he painted various colors.

The rest of his time was spent attempting to connect his thoughts to those of a sovereign of the sky, the Flying Rain-Dragon. Even though he never succeeded, he found that his Wind Walking technique improved significantly, bringing him gradually closer to the sky.

Time whizzed by and now only two days remained of the registration period for the special promotion training. Meng Hao currently sat at his stall by the Low-Level Public Zone, watching Fatty inside, hawking wares with deep fervor. Suddenly, he turned his head and looked off into the distance. Far down the mountain, he caught sight of someone walked toward him. Every step carried him forward several meters, so he arrived at the plateau very quickly. He appeared to be twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old and looked proud and lofty. In front of him, a long strip of yellow paper floated in the air, upon which was written various magical figures. Wisps of black smoke emanated from its surface, curling up and around the young man.

"A talisman…" Meng Hao's eyes flickered as he examined it. He had read about this type of yellow paper in the Qi Condensation manual. It was a powerful magical item which could be used a limited number of times.

The approaching young man was none other than the second most powerful person in the Outer Sect, Han Zong, who was at the sixth level of Qi Condensation. As soon as he appeared, it caused quite a commotion on the plateau as everyone greeting him with cupped fists.

"Meng Hao," he said coldly, ignoring everyone else and staring at Meng Hao. "Master Uncle Shangguan has a matter he wishes to discuss with you. Please come with me to see him."

Meng Hao frowned. Master Uncle Shangguan was no stranger. Whether it was his presence during Individual Pill Distribution or his participation with Wang Tengfei in fighting the Demonic Python, it was clear that he was no ordinary individual.

“What could he want with me?” thought Meng Hao, slowly standing up. “Did he sense something about me?” He knew that the man was one of the Sect’s elder generation. Since he was of the Outer Sect, he could not refuse to comply. If he did, then it would look suspicious.

Muttering, Meng Hao looked at cold-faced Han Zong. He had assumed that if the truth about events that day were revealed, Wang Tengfei would be the first one to come looking for him. Could this summons have something to do with that affair?

Meng Hao’s face was calm, but his head spun and he laughed coldly to himself. With a seemingly casual glance at Fatty, he walked forward.

Moving along with Han Zong, they soon reached the West Mountain. At its peak, the spiritual energy was especially thick. Meng Hao caught sight of an exquisite residence, inside of which a group of young boys were planting Spirit Grass.

Soon they came to a stop in front of a three-story building. Han Zong looked at Meng Hao, and then the voice of Shanguan Xiu boomed out from inside.

“Come in, Meng Hao. Han Zong, you head to the South Mountain.” A jade slip suddenly flew out into Han Zong’s hand. He looked at Meng Hao with a cold laugh, then turned and left.

Meng Hao’s heart began to thump. This didn’t seem right. Shangguan Xiu gave Han Zong a jade slip and sent him to the South Mountain…

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# Chapter 28: Shangguan Xiu

Time did not permit Meng Hao to spend time thinking. The door to the building swung open silently. Inside was pitch black and emanated a sinister air.

“You still haven’t entered,” said Shangguan Xiu, his voice cold. Meng Hao hesitated, then, eyes flickering dimly, realised that he couldn’t retreat. After thinking about it for a moment, his nervousness grew. He stepped forward into the building.

Inside, rays of light gradually appeared which, though dim, revealed the surroundings. Shangguan Xiu sat there in his golden robe, expressionless, eyes cold as he watched Meng Hao enter.

Almost as soon as he stepped a foot inside, Shangguan Xiu’s eyes suddenly flickered, and he raised his right hand. A needle shot out, stabbed Meng Hao’s finger, then flew back in an instant. All his bags of holding flew away from him too, completely beyond his control, to land in front of Shangguan Xiu.

Some blood remained on the flying needle, which Shangguan Xiu licked.

“There’s no trace of heavenly material or earthly treasures…” Shangguan Xiu frowned. His gaze swept over Meng Hao as if he could see all the secrets he kept. The Demonic Core within Meng Hao stirred, and he did his best to conceal this from Shangguan Xiu.

Meng Hao’s face fell, revealing a terrified expression. He opened his mouth but didn’t seem to know what to say.

With another frown, Shangguan Xiu opened one of Meng Hao’s bags of holding. He rummaged around a bit, not even glancing at the large quantity of flying swords. It seemed as if he didn't even notice the copper mirror. After finding nothing unusual, his frown deepened.

"Master Uncle Shangguan, what… what are you looking for?" His face was covered with terror, but inside he laughed coldly. He had long since made preparations for such an event. The wooden sword, along with most of his Spirit Stones and medicinal pills, were in Fatty's safe keeping, hidden away.

"Let me ask you," said Shangguan Xiu, his gaze falling like lightning upon Meng Hao, "How did your Cultivation base progress so rapidly?"

"Elder Sister Xu and Grand Elder Ouyang have been watching out for me," he replied, beginning to tremble. "They gave me some medicinal pills…" He pretended to force himself to try to be calm, but inside he wasn't worried. It didn't seem he had been asked here because of what had happened with Wang Tengfei, but rather because of his rapid progress in Cultivation.

Shangguan Xiu frowned again. He obviously knew that Grand Elder Ouyang had taken a liking to Meng Hao, otherwise he would not have been so mild in his inquiries.

Just then, Han Zong's voice drifted in from outside.

"Reporting back to Master Uncle Shangguan. Meng Hao's Immortal's Cave is empty."

"You may leave," replied Shangguan Xiu. He sat in contemplation for a moment as Han Zong departed. He stared wordlessly at Meng Hao.

Time gradually passed, and soon it was evening. Meng Hao's countenance grew more and more nervous and filled with fear. Finally, he spoke, trembling: "Master Uncle…"

"Very well, you may go," said Shangguan Xiu with a wave of his hand. He looked irritated.

Meng Hao stood, saluted with cupped fists, and left, feeling relieved. After reaching the bottom of the mountain, his speed increased as he raced toward the South Mountain.

As Meng Hao left, Shangguan Xiu's expression changed. He lifted up the silver needle and examined it carefully, licking more blood off of it. His eyes glittered.

"Something's not right. This blood has large amounts low-level Demonic Core aura. I didn't notice it before because I was concentrating on Grand Elder Ouyang's potential influence. But now that the blood has dried, it's clear. He must have consumed hundreds of Demonic Cores. Where could he possibly get his hands on so many? This Meng Hao must be keeping some secret." Killing intent filled Shangguan Xiu's eyes, and his body leaped into the air in pursuit of Meng Hao.

Meng Hao sped along at high speed, feeling relieved, but also jumpy. He arrived outside the South Mountain Immortal's Cave, and as he approached, he saw Fatty stick his head out of the trees in the distance. Catching sight of Meng Hao, he ran over.

"I was scared to death," said Fatty, letting out a relieved sigh. "Meng Hao, you were gone the whole afternoon…" He took out the bag of holding Meng Hao had given him. "Thankfully no one noticed that I kept this hidden away."

With a dignified expression, Meng Hao nodded and accepted the bag of holding. And yet, as soon as he laid hands on it, a whistling scream could be heard some distance away. A beam of prismatic light seemed to be approaching, within which could be seen an old man wearing a golden robe. It was none other than Shangguan Xiu.

He was flying! Only Cultivators who had reached Foundation Establishment could fly. With the assistance of magical items, one could glide for a bit, like Elder Sister Xu, but this was not true flight.

Seeing this, Meng Hao's heart shook. He watched his opponent flying down from the top of the mountain. He moved with a speed similar to Meng

Hao’s when he borrowed momentum from flying swords.

Shangguan Xiu immediately caught sight of Fatty handing the bag of holding over to Meng Hao, and his eyes flashed. Without a word, he shot toward Meng Hao, certain that he would be able to grab him. Today, he would learn Meng Hao’s secret. Perhaps this secret would be of great assistance to himself.

Meng Hao’s expression changed, and his emotions spun. But the situation was urgent, and he didn’t have time to think. He put away the bag of holding and grabbed Fatty. Then he leaped up, and a flying sword circulated around him to land underneath his feet. He shot off into the distance.

It happened so fast that Shangguan Xiu’s pupils constricted. He let out a cold snort and flew off in pursuit.

Fatty was so scared that his face was white. But he didn’t move, afraid that he might distract Meng Hao. He trusted that Meng Hao would not abandon him.

Actually, this was very true. Meng Hao was not that type of person. He knew that if he dropped Fatty, he might be able to move a bit faster. But he also knew that Shangguan Xiu would then vent his wrath on Fatty.

“Dammit. To this guy, Outer Sect disciples are like ants, only Inner Sect disciples are true Cultivators of the Reliance Sect.”

Gnashing his teeth, he looked back at Shangguan Xiu, who was getting closer and closer. At the same time, Meng Hao was dropping closer and closer to the ground. He wouldn’t be able to keep going much longer. He pushed forward as fast as possible, sweat breaking out on his forehead, his mind racing. He saw the Outer Sect up ahead, and suddenly he had a flash of inspiration. He knew what to do.

His eyes shining, he leaped down to the ground, dashing into the Outer Sect. Then, regardless of the effect on his Cultivation base, he gritted his teeth and once again leaped onto a flying sword. A whistling scream reverberated out, causing nearby Outer Sect disciples to crane their necks, dumbstruck.

Shangguan Xiu's face grew dark. With a flick of a sleeve, he darted straight toward Meng Hao. The distance between the two grew closer and closer. When it reached roughly thirty meters, Shangguan Xiu's face suddenly changed as he realized where Meng Hao was heading. By then, it was too late to stop him.

Meng Hao approached the Outer Sect square, with its dragon-carved columns. On the tall platform, Grand Elder Ouyang sat in meditation. Beneath him in the square, Wang Tengfei also sat cross-legged, meditating.

This was the registration location for the special promotion training!

"I want to sign up!" cried Meng Hao as soon as he entered the square.

"Me too!" shouted Fatty, the blood draining from his face.

Shangguan Xiu stopped in his tracks, just outside the square. Murder filled his eyes, but it quickly disappeared, replaced with a genial smile. Grand Elder Ouyang had opened his eyes. He looked at Meng Hao, surprised by his Cultivation base. He gave Meng Hao a look of praise.

Wang Tengfei also opened his eyes, seemingly completely uninterested in Meng Hao.

"Now that you have signed up," said Grand Elder Ouyang coolly, "you must remain confined to this area. Training begins in two days." His gaze swept over Shangguan Xiu, whose heart subsequently sank. Making his smile look even more amiable, he looked at Meng Hao, false praise in his eyes.

Meng Hao looked back at him, and when their gazes met Shangguan Xiu's fury boiled. He could do nothing about it, though, so after a long moment he laughed and walked off.

Not much time passed before Han Zong strode up. He entered the square, glaring at Meng Hao. With a sneering laugh, he declared that he was registering.

As he walked past Meng Hao, he whispered, “You offended Shangguan Xiu. I dare you to stay here! The Inner Sect training is where you will reap death.”

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed as he stared coldly at Han Zong’s retreating back.

After that, the deadline for registration approached. Before Meng Hao had arrived, only Wang Tengfei had signed up. Then Han Zong arrived. Now, four more people entered the square.

They were no strangers to Meng Hao. Yin Tianlong and Zhou Kai were present. The other two each appeared to over thirty years of age. One of them was tall and stalwart, the other skinny and frail, with hideous scars on his face. Both emanated desolate auras of death. These were the other two members of the Sect who were of the fifth level of Qi condensation.

The four of them entered the square, casting dark looks toward Meng Hao and Fatty. The aggressive killing intent in their eyes was impossible to conceal.

Fatty started to get nervous, and Meng Hao narrowed his eyes. Now he knew the power of Shangguan Xiu’s influence.

Time passed slowly, and soon two days had passed. Now, only one hour remained until the registration period was over. The square was already surrounded by numerous Outer Sect disciples. They hadn’t come to sign up, but to watch the Inner Sect special promotion training, to maybe learn something, and to watch Wang Tengfei in all his glory.

Of course, there were eight people in the square, including Fatty, with his low Cultivation base.

Even as the sound of discussions buzzed, the time limit was reached. The sound of bells filled the entire Reliance Sect. They rang in succession, nine times, after which Grand Elder Ouyang opened his eyes and looked out at the eight people before him. He flicked his wide sleeve, and the large platform glowed with many colors then expanded outward until it encompassed a diameter of roughly three hundred meters.

He waved his right hand again, and eight jade slips flew out, toward each of the eight people. When the slips descended in front of each of them, they could see that numbers were inscribed onto their surfaces, from one to eight.

“Forfeiting before a battle is prohibited,” said Grand Elder Ouyang coolly. “In the competition for promotion to the Inner Sect, life and death are predestined. If, after stepping onto the platform, you feel you cannot win, you may admit defeat. First match, numbers one and eight.” Wang Tengfei opened his eyes, and raised up his jade slip, upon which was written ‘one.’ He stood and floated up to stand on the platform. The wind gently lifted his long hair. Clad in his snow-white robe, he looked perfect, beautiful, gentle and refined. He smiled. This caused all the surrounding Cultivators to let out a cheer. What none of them could see, however, was that beneath Wang Tengfei’s smile was concealed the bitter pain of loss and defeat.

At that moment, Shangguan Xiu appeared in the crowd, glaring menacingly at Meng Hao.

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# Chapter 29: Inner Sect Training

Yin Tianlong’s face fell as he looked at the character ‘eight’ on the jade slip in front of him. Hands behind his back, he used his Wind Walking technique to float up onto the platform.

The moment his feet touched down, Wang Tengfei lifted his right foot, and suddenly the entire platform began to vibrate with a loud hum, as if some sort of blast was accumulating from all corners. Wang Tengfei didn’t move, but the massive invisible force shot toward Yin Tianlong.

When he saw this, Yin Tianlong’s face changed. Wang Tengfei had not even moved, yet the massive pressure bearing down on Yin Tianlong was already making it difficult for him to circulate his spiritual energy.

“I admit defeat…” he said immediately and without hesitation. Apparently, he didn’t want to hear any comments about his decision. Saluting deeply with cupped hands, he leaped off the platform and left the square.

Grand Elder Ouyang remained expressionless. Slowly, he spoke again: “Wang Tengfei is victorious. Second match: numbers two and seven.”

As soon as the words were out of his mouth, Fatty looked at the character ‘two’ written on his jade slip and began to tremble. At the same time, the scar-faced Cultivator of the fifth level of Qi Condensation glared coldly at him, then stepped onto the platform.

“Just walk up and then admit defeat,” Meng Hao said to him in a low voice, pushing him forward. Fatty’s ball-like body flew up onto the platform.

As soon as he landed, he immediately said: “Admit defeat…” He dared not speak three words, only two, and yet the scar-faced Cultivator’s eyes flickered with murderous intent. Before Fatty could finish speaking, he lifted up his hand. A flying sword shot screaming toward Fatty at incredible speed. By the time Fatty said ‘admit,’ it was two meters from his throat.

By the time it was obvious what was happening, it was too late. Meng Hao’s face changed and he shot to his feet. At the same time, Grand Elder Ouyang flicked an object out with his fingers. Right before the flying sword penetrated Fatty’s throat, a ringing sound could be heard and the sword flew away. Fatty was left with a small nick on his neck.

Fatty took a step back, his face pale. Then he jumped down and returned to Meng Hao, so scared that his legs were like rubber. He had never before experienced the closeness of death in such a way.

Meng Hao looked at the line of blood on Fatty’s neck, and a murderous look appeared in his eyes. His opponent had attacked with extreme ruthlessness and an obvious desire to kill. Were Meng Hao his opponent that would have been fine, but Fatty’s Cultivation base was too low. To attack him in such a way was going too far.

Looking around, Meng Hao caught sight of Shangguan Xiu standing in the distance, his grim face filled with murder. Flames of fury burst out in Meng Hao’s heart. He had never done anything to offend Master Uncle Shangguan; Master Uncle Shangguan was the aggressor, the one who attacked with deadly force.

In all his years in the Reliance Sect, Meng Hao had never revealed an intense desire to kill. But now, his eyes shone with clear killing intent.

What had just happened was so obviously fishy that even the surrounding Cultivators could tell. One after another, they began to look at Meng Hao. Discussions broke out.

“Next match, numbers three and six,” said Grand Elder Ouyang with a frown.

Han Zong stood, the number three jade slip in his hand. As he walked past Meng Hao, he whispered, “You offended Master Uncle Shangguan. You won’t be the only one to die today. Your friend will die too.” You could say that other than a Grand Elder, Shangguan Xiu was the most powerful and influential member of the Sect.

Because of the decline of the Reliance Sect, its numbers were few. The chaos of the Sect rules, and mutual slaughter among the Outer Sect disciples, all of this, was because the Reliance Sect was at the end of an era, and just wasn’t like it used to be.

There were fewer medicinal pills, so how could they be distributed fairly… There were not many Spirit Condensation Pills, so of course they became objects of deadly struggle between the disciples who wished to consume them.

So, let there be chaos. Every man for himself. Whether it be members of the first level of Qi Condensation or the fifth, let chaos rule, and death. There was no fairness here; life and death were determined by destiny. There were no sermons, no one giving instruction on how to practice cultivation. There was only the Qi Condensation manual. Whether you were a worm or a dragon, you could only rely on your luck. If you succeeded, you lived. If you failed, you died. If you were tough, you survived. If you were weak, you didn’t.

Whoever could kill their way to the end of the path would become an Inner Sect disciple, and then be a true member of the Reliance Sect and Elder Ouyang’s true student.

In the past, Sect Leader He Luohua had been focused on making the Sect more powerful. But weighed down by the pressures of reality, he had completely exhausted himself, and had long since hidden away in seclusion. Grand Elder Ouyang had a soft personality, and as far as his Cultivation went, he was in his later years of longevity, with not much time left. Therefore, he didn’t have much energy to spend time on the Sect.

Among the Inner Sect disciples, Elder Sister Xu was usually in secluded meditation. With her cold personality, she didn’t pay much attention to Sect affairs. Elder Brother Chen was primarily focused on the Dao, and didn’t participate in Sect matters. Circumstances as such, only Shangguan Xiu remained.

His Cultivation base was at the ninth level of Qi Condensation, and he was over ninety years of age. He had served the Sect well, and could not help but become the Master Uncle to the disciples of the Sect. But the Sect was in decline. Were this some other Sect, considering he was still in the Qi Condensation stage, he would never be called Master Uncle.

Meng Hao watched Han Zong as he flashed up onto the platform. His opponent was Zhou Kai, and it seemed this would be no life and death battle. Zhou Kai immediately admitted defeat, and the match was over.

The last match of the first round had arrived. Meng Hao stood and flew up onto the platform. His opponent was the tall, strong man who had a Qi Condensation of the fifth level. His aura radiated murder, and from the look of him, he had experienced many bloody battles.

He looked at Meng Hao and growled, running straight toward him, his body expanding. He raised his hand, and instantly, a shining battle-ax appeared. This was clearly no ordinary object.

His face dark, Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding. A swift, sharp flying sword appeared and shot forward. But by the time it was about two meters away from the big man, a soft shield appeared, blocking the flying sword.

“You’re gonna die today!” said the big man with a hideous grin. Before coming to the training, Shangguan Xiu had given him a magical item. Even if Meng Hao’s Cultivation base was a bit higher than his, he didn’t have anything to worry about.

“Boom,” said Meng Hao coolly, his facial expression the same as ever. The flying sword exploded with a bang, sending the big man flying backwards. The shield in front of him flickered, preventing him from being injured.

Laughing, he charged again. But Meng Hao was faster. He dashed forward, slapping his bag of holding. Two flying swords appeared, shot forward and then exploded. The blast reverberated, and the shield bent. The big man’s face changed, and before he could even react, four more flying sword shot forth. A massive explosion rang out, and the shield was ripped to pieces.

The attack stabbed through, directly into the big man’s chest. He let out a miserable cry and spat out a mouthful of blood.

Before his body could hit the ground, another flying sword shot forth from Meng Hao, glittering as it stabbed into the man’s throat. He fell twitching to the ground in a pool of blood, dead.

Since entering the Sect, Meng Hao had not killed very many people. But this time he had slain the man with vicious ruthlessness. He floated down from the platform, giving Han Zong a cold glance.

“Next, you die,” he said, sitting down cross-legged and closing his eyes.

Han Zong’s pupils constricted and his killing intent grew stronger.

A buzz of discussion rose from the surrounding Cultivators as they recovered from watching the scene. They had been shaken by its bloodiness.

“Meng Hao is victorious. The first match of round two is Wang Tengfei and Xu Ge.” Grand Elder Ouyang’s voice was cool, as if he hadn’t even noticed the reek of blood in the air.

Xu Ge was the Cultivator who had tried to kill Fatty moments ago. As soon as he stepped foot on the platform, he admitted defeat. Giving Wang Tengfei a respectful salute, he turned and left the square as quickly as possible.

At this point, everyone could see that be it Han Zong or the four Cultivators of the fifth level, their goal was not to be promoted, but rather to kill Meng Hao.

“Match two, Meng Hao and Han Zong.” Grand Elder Ouyang looked intently at Meng Hao, and as soon as he finished speaking, silence prevailed. Everyone stared at Meng Hao and Han Zong.

Meng Hao looked as somber as ever as he stepped onto the platform. Han Zong arrived at almost exactly the same time. No introductory remarks were necessary. They both attacked at the same time.

A thunderous sound rang out as three flying swords appeared, circling around Meng Hao. A shield appeared, revolving around Han Zong, and in front of him appeared a glowing, five-colored banner. It instantly swept toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao said nothing. As the five-colored banner approached, he didn’t retreat. He lifted his left hand, and instantly, a fifteen-meter long Flame Serpent appeared. It roared and flew forward. The Flame Serpent didn’t appear to be just a snake, but more like a python. Blistering heat radiated out from it as it flew.

At the same time, Meng Hao’s right hand slapped his bag of holding; six flying swords appeared and shot forward.

Han Zong laughed coldly, his eyes shining with murderous intent. He took a step forward, then slapped his left hand onto the ground. When he stood, a deep rumble could be heard, and the entire platform began to shake. In front of him suddenly appeared a Stone Golem, approximately three meters tall. With a roar, the Stone Golem charged forward at incredible speed. When it slammed into the Flame Serpent, a massive explosion thundered across the platform.

Amidst the roar, the five-colored banner shot forward, approaching Meng Hao’s flying swords. Han Zong’s eyes glittered brightly.

“Five Radiances Art!”

As soon as the words were out of Han Zong’s mouth, the five-colored banner suddenly shook, and then began to shine brightly in all directions. A two-colored stream of mist shot out from it, transforming into two Spirit creatures, who charged toward Meng Hao with shrill screams. The second of the two Mist Spirits was only partly visible; obviously because of his Cultivation base level, Han Zong was limited in his ability to use this art.

As soon as the two-colored Mist Spirits appeared, the surrounding Cultivators cried out in astonishment.

“That’s Master Uncle Shangguan’s consummate Five Radiances Art! They say it’s one of the most powerful arts for Sect members who haven’t Perfected their Foundations. Brother Han Zong can only summon two of the colors!”

“So Han Zong can use this art! Yeah, it must be because of that banner. Could it be a magic item provided by Master Uncle Shangguan?”

Emitting shrill, ear-piercing cries, the two-colored Mist Spirits shot toward Meng Hao with irresistible force. The moment his six flying swords touched them, the swords shattered into pieces.

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# Chapter 30: Kill Han Zong, Battle Wang Tengfei!

Standing in the square beneath the platform, Shangguan Xiu’s lips twisted with a grim smile. He didn’t care at all whether Meng Hao lived or died. He only wanted the treasures within in Meng Hao’s bag of holding.

After Meng Hao had registered for the Inner Sect promotion training, he had gone to find Zhou and Yin to inquire after the events which had occurred in the black mountain. He knew that Meng Hao had provoked masses of Demonic beasts with some supposed Demonic magic.

Shangguan Xiu was convinced that it was no Demonic magic, but rather a magical treasure.

Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed. He watched the two-colored Mist Spirits approaching. He raised his left hand and waved it in front of him. An invisible Wind Blade appeared and shot toward the Mist Spirits at high speed.

At the same time, Meng Hao quickly swallowed a handful of Demonic Cores, then slapped his bag of holding and flicked his sleeve. A stream of sword auras flew from the bag. In the blink of an eye, twenty had appeared, filling the air. It was quite shocking. The swords also shot toward the two-colored Mist Spirits.

Many of the flying swords appeared to be in bad condition or of different colors.

Upon seeing this, the surrounding Cultivators gasped with astonishment, but before they could even begin to discuss the matter amongst themselves, the Wind Blade reached the Mist Spirits, and a bang rang out. The Mist Spirits vibrated. Then, the flying swords hit, and two miserable shrieks could be heard. The two-colored Mist Spirits were extraordinary, but there were just too many swords.

The Mist Spirits were torn to pieces, and the swords continued on to slash into the five-colored banner. A massive explosion occurred and the banner disintegrated, along with about half of the swords. Han Zong watched on, stupefied. Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding, swallowing another Demonic Core and produced ten more flying swords, which shot forward.

Han Zong had never imagined Meng Hao would have so many flying swords. He retreated backwards, waving his right hand. A shining, two-layered shield appeared around him. But he was still concerned. The hairs on his body stood on end, and his skin felt numb. He knew that life and death hung in the balance here. His right hand moved again, and a jade pendant appeared in front of him, adding another layer of shielding around him. With three shields in place, he felt a bit better.

Then, the sword rain descended. Sword auras flashed ceaselessly. They slammed over and over into the first shield layer, and it shattered almost immediately. Shortly after that, the second shield layer broke into pieces, unable withstand the sword rain.

“How can he have so many flying swords!?” Han Zong’s pupils constricted, and he looked terrified. He retreated further.

In the blink of an eye, the third shield fell apart, and the jade pendant split into pieces, unable to hold up against the multitude of swords. And then the sword rain descended upon Han Zong, and he screamed. Sword after sword stabbed into him. They lifted his corpse up into the air, then slammed it back down onto the platform. He twitched a few times, then rattled out his final breath. He had so many swords sticking into him that he looked like a hedgehog. Everyone watching gasped, their faces filled with astonishment.

“How… how.. how can there be so many flying swords!?”

“So many flying swords, no wonder he owns a shop. A few days ago I saw him sell at least ten! He hasn’t just been selling medicinal pills, recently. He’s also been selling magical items.”

“Meng Hao must have had some sort of windfall. His Cultivation base has grown incredibly fast. Maybe he obtained a bunch of treasures in some sort of adventure.” The buzz of discussion filled the air, and as it did, Shangguan Xiu frowned, his face dark.

Meng Hao stood on the platform, face pale. He still had some spiritual energy left. His attacks, especially the last one involved twenty flying swords, had quickly drained him. He was only at the sixth level of Qi Condensation, after all. Fortunately, he had been consuming Demonic Cores throughout the battle to replenish himself. This made his attacks even more effective. Meng Hao had invented this fighting method himself, and was quite familiar with it, having practiced it often.

He waved his right hand, and the swords lifted up from Han Zong’s body and returned to him, dripping blood along the way. They circled around his body before returning to his bag of holding.

He descended from the platform and sat down cross-legged next to Fatty. He popped a Demonic Core into his mouth and felt it dissolve. He didn’t care if people saw him consuming so many. As far as they were concerned, after the affair at the black mountain, he should have been able to acquire quite a few Demonic Cores.

Furthermore, he had another battle to be concerned about. The humiliation he had endured under Wang Tengfei’s four finger attacks would be repaid today in full measure. He had been waiting for this day a long time!

Grand Elder Ouyang looked at Meng Hao, his eyes filled with obvious approval. His admiration of Meng Hao had continued to grow from the day he entered the Sect. In his eyes, Meng Hao was growing up. His face radiated contentment.

Grand Elder Ouyang didn’t care what stroke of good fortune Meng Hao had. As a Cultivator, good fortune was a blessing dictated by fate. He especially liked people who were blessed with good fortune. His smile filled with kindness, but inside, he felt regret and nervousness.

“Regardless of who lives or dies in the battles of the Inner Sect training, Wang Tengfei’s latent talent is something rarely seen in the span of a hundred years. His Cultivation base is extraordinary at this young age. If he manages to perfect his foundation, he will be a talent rarely seen even during the Sect’s glory days. Meng Hao just isn’t a match for him….” He sighed.

Standing there in the crowd, Shangguan Xiu’s face grew even grimmer. He narrowed his eyes.

He had never imagined that Meng Hao would be able to defeat Han Zong, especially since he’d bestowed a powerful treasure to him. The power of the Mist Spirits summoned by the five-colored banner should have been able to destroy Meng Hao with no problem.

And yet Meng Hao’s dozens of flying swords had ripped it to shreds. Even Shangguan Xiu had been shocked to see so many flying swords. Even though they were low-level swords, they were still sharp. Even scrap iron in such large numbers could shock and amaze.

At this moment, far away on the East Mountain, stood a middle-aged man of approximately forty years of age. He wore a black robe and had the look of a scholar. As he watched the battle unfold in the Outer Sect square, his eyes filled with strange light and came to focus on Meng Hao.

“This kid… He wasn’t worth noticing before. His latent talent is nothing extraordinary, but he seems to possess incredible good fortune.” This man was none other than the amazingly powerful Sect Leader He Luohua, who had already reached Core Formation.

“If he wasn’t up against Wang Tengfei, this kid might be able to join the Inner Sect. But it’s Wang Tengfei… it will be difficult.” He Luohua watched Meng Hao with kind eyes. As a Core Formation Cultivator, and the Sect Leader of the Reliance Sect, he didn’t pay much attention to the twists of fate and fortune that occurred amongst disciples who still practiced Qi Condensation. Things would play out naturally.

If a disciple was lucky, then he would be happy. But with Wang Tengfei present, He Luohua didn’t give much stock to Meng Hao’s chances to gain victory.

“It’s too bad there are only three pieces of Vorpal Jade… Wang Tengfei’s spot was decided upon long ago, otherwise…” He Luohua shook his head, trying to decide whether or not to intervene if it seemed Meng Hao would die. He sighed.

Time slipped by. Grand Elder Ouyang watched on in approval as Meng Hao’s spiritual energy slowly restored. He was clearly showing partiality to Meng Hao, but none of the onlookers dared say anything.

As for Wang Tengfei, he didn’t pay attention to anyone. Even though Meng Hao’s rapid advancement in Cultivation base was astounding, Wang Tengfei didn’t think about it too much because of Grand Elder Ouyang’s intervention that time. Deep in Wang Tengfei’s heart, he didn’t think or even consider it possible that Meng Hao could be the person who took his treasures. He was convinced that it was the other dim light he had seen.

Thinking of this, Wang Tengfei’s heart throbbed with pain, and he nearly wept tears of blood. As of now, the Legacy had nothing to do with him. He could not sense even a sliver of it. He was an outsider as far as it was concerned. Even if the person who now possessed it stood in front of him, he would have no idea.

“The Legacy is no longer mine, but the treasure…” Wang Tengfei’s hands clenched into fists. He had only been able to catch a glimpse of the sword from a distance. Other than that, he had only been able to read about it in the ancient records. He didn’t even know what it could do. He only knew that the ancient records stated clearly that the sword was one of a kind, and that its spiritual power could overwhelm everything in heaven and earth.

He had planned to thoroughly study it after acquiring it, but now… all of that was just wishful thinking.

Wang Tengfei closed his eyes and took a deep breath. Sitting there cross-legged, he appeared as mild and gentle as ever, as if he didn't have a care in the world.

"I am Wang Tengfei. Even though the Legacy and the treasure were stolen away, the Reliance Inner Sect belongs to me. It is the second of my main goals. Even without the treasure or Legacy, I will join the detestable Inner Sect of the Reliance Sect. That will be my fortune!

"One defeat is nothing! I am Wang Tengfei!" On the outside he was peaceful and calm, so he forced himself to be equally calm on the inside, to emerge from the depths of defeat.

He was arrogant because he was Wang Tengfei, a perfect, blessed god, Chosen.

He was indifferent because he knew that the Inner Sect training had been opened especially for him, and was merely a show, carried out simply to comply with Sect Rules. From the moment he had entered the Reliance Sect, he was different. To the members of the Outer Sect, he had long since already become a member of the Inner Sect.

He was calm because he didn't care a bit about the Reliance Sect. A small Sect like this meant nothing to him. Even a single member of his Clan could lay waste to the entire Sect. Were it not for his insistence to come to this backwater State of Zhao, he would never be here. Not considering his status. He should be shaking heaven and earth back home in his powerful Clan.

So he was arrogant, indifferent and calm. He let the time pass, allowing this person whose name he could not even remember to recover his Cultivation base.

Enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, and then Meng Hao suddenly opened his eyes. They glittered with the desire for battle. He had killed a man of the fifth level of Qi Condensation. He had killed Han Zong. Never before had he killed so many people in one day. But his heart filled with anticipation. He would place Wang Tengfei underfoot and repay in full the humiliation he had endured that day.

Without a word, Meng Hao slowly stood up.

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# Chapter 31: Fight!

“Final match of the training,” said Grand Elder Ouyang, looking encouragingly at Meng Hao. “Meng Hao and Wang Tengfei. The victor shall be promoted to the Inner Sect.”

Everyone stared at Meng Hao as he leapt up onto the platform. Wang Tengfei opened his eyes and casually stepped up. Conversations erupted amongst the Outer Sect disciples.

“Meng Hao really dares to step onto the platform. His Cultivation base is pretty good, and he did kill Han Zong, but this is Elder Brother Wang he’s fighting. He really doesn’t know his own limitations.”

“There will always be stumbling blocks on the path to power. This is just a little pebble that Elder Brother Wang has to walk over on his rise to the top.”

“I remember when he snatched a magical item that Elder Brother Wang had given someone as a gift. When Elder Brother Wang took it back, he was like an ant in front of him.” Conversations filled the air, filled with ridicule. It wasn’t that everyone felt great enmity towards Meng Hao, but rather, in their hearts, Elder Brother Wang was someone you just didn’t mess with.

“If he dies under Wang Tengfei’s hand, it won’t be easy to get his bag of holding,” thought Shangguan Xiu, frowning. He looked at Meng Hao.

Even as everyone in the crowd sneered at Meng Hao, once again putting him at odds against the world, suddenly, a shrill, clear voice suddenly rang out.

“Go Meng Hao! You’re gonna win! The next Inner Sect disciple will definitely be Meng Hao!” It was Fatty, shouting out from down in the square in his cracking, teenage voice.

The jumble of voices reached Meng Hao, but they seemed very far away. He stood there calmly, staring coldly at Wang Tengfei. Meng Hao knew that from the moment he had entered the world of Cultivation until now, he had never faced a more powerful opponent. This would be his most difficult battle yet.

But he wouldn’t shrink back. He would fight. He would attack. There are some things in life that a man must do, because of dignity.

The scene from that day continued to play out in his head, and he absentmindedly rubbed his bag of holding.

Inside were the ten blood-stained fingernails he’d plucked out of his palms.

Wang Tengfei stood there calmly, giving a cool look to Meng Hao. His eyes were placid, as if he were looking down at an insect. He looked just like he did that year.

He waved his right hand as if he were flicking away a bug, and in front of him a spinning whirlwind appeared, about as tall as a person. It whirled towards Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed. He had nothing to say to Wang Tengfei. Everything he wanted to say could be said with swords, magic, and this most fierce battle in all his 18 years of life.

He stepped forward, lifting his right hand and sending a Wind Blade screaming toward the whirlwind. It radiated a savage wind as it flew forward.

Fight!

He slapped his bag of holding, and twenty flying swords flew out in a line. Some seemed to be bent, unable to fly straight, but their sword auras glittered blindingly. He lifted a finger on his right hand and pointed. The twenty flying swords became a rainbow as they shot with immense power directly toward Wang Tengfei.

Fight!

The dazzling sword auras were like rain, and as their combined power shot toward Wang Tengfei, the whirlwind slammed into them. An explosion reverberated through the air as the whirlwind was torn open. The flying swords, now directionless, were suddenly sucked up into the whirlwind. From a distance, it looked as if the whirlwind had transformed into a vortex of swords. But the whirlwind was growing weaker, and looked as if it would fall apart at any moment.

Wang Tengfei's expression didn't change in the least. He walked forward, and the power of his Cultivation base, at the peak of the sixth level of Qi Condensation, burst forth, forming into an unprecedented spiritual pressure. The fingers of his right hand moved in incantation patterns, and a thin, sparkling strand of water shot toward Meng Hao.

This was not a technique of the Reliance Sect, but rather Wang Tengfei's clan.

Seeing this, Meng Hao unhesitatingly popped a Demonic Core into his mouth. With his left hand, he called back the flying swords from within the vortex. They flew back to him unsteadily. With his right hand, he formed movements with his fingers to summon a Flame Python, a dozen or more meters long. It charged toward the Water Thread, roaring so loud that it seemed as if a tempest had struck.

"Water-Wind, slay!" said Wang Tengfei. Although he didn't look scornful, his calm expression was the same as it had been that day when he almost crippled Meng Hao's Cultivation base, confident and filled with disregard.

As soon as the words left his mouth, the glittered Water Thread melded with the whirlwind to form a massive, rapidly spinning column which then dropped down toward Meng Hao.

The twenty flying swords spun to block the descending column, and a boom rang out as the swords scattered. Some of them even broke to pieces. Meng Hao had already retreated to the edge of the platform. In front of him remained a large stain of water as wide as a hand and approximately nine meters long, frightening in appearance.

A line of blood appeared on Meng Hao's forehead. It slowly oozed down his nose, giving him an even more savage appearance.

Twenty flying swords had been able to shake Han Zong, but this was Wang Tengfei, and he hadn't even used any magical items yet, merely some techniques that Meng Hao had never seen before. Thankfully, Meng Hao had been able to evade death. Were his Cultivation base at the fifth level of Qi Condensation, he would not have been able to dodge.

"Wang Tengfei has powerful latent talent," thought Shangguan Xiu, "and has a lot of experience using the powers and abilities of Qi Condensation. Even someone of the seventh level would have a tough time with him. Meng Hao is definitely going to die." His frown deepened as he looked at Meng Hao, and his eyes shone with murder. However, he still didn't know how he would retrieve Meng Hao's bag of holding after he died.

Wang Tengfei seemed as calm as ever when Meng Hao evaded his attack. It was as his attack had been a mere afterthought. If an elephant wants to crush an ant, and its first step misses, the second will not. He gave a beautiful, indifferent smile then took another step forward, raising his right hand and waving a finger toward Meng Hao.

As soon as he waved his finger, Meng Hao heard a buzz from the surrounding audience. It reminded him of that day when he had stood against the world. Wang Tengfei had used one finger attack to bind him, one to destroy his jade pendant, one to take away the gourd bottle, and one to attempt to cripple his Cultivation base.

A powerful fighting spirit shone in Meng Hao's eyes. He had been humiliated by Wang Tengfei's finger attack, but he was a different person today. Even though he hadn't made up his mind to register for the Inner Sect training, but had rather been forced to sign up by circumstances, he had been prepared to do so for some time. In the past month, most of his time had been spent learning how to sacrifice a bit of dexterity to be able to control large amounts of flying swords.

As Wang Tengfei's finger descended, Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding, consumed a Demonic Core, and then began moving his fingers in incantation patterns. Suddenly, the ten or so remaining flying swords began to tremble, then suddenly lifted off the ground and flew back toward him from all directions.

They rotated around his body, and he lowered his hands, then pointed toward Wang Tengfei. The flying swords shot out with shocking speed, screaming toward Wang Tengfei.

At the same time, more flying swords appeared from within his bag of holding, until his limit was reached. There seemed to be enough to break down a city wall. With frightening power, they filled the sky, flying toward Wang Tengfei's finger attack.

BOOM!

An explosion rattled the entire Outer Sect as twenty flying swords collided with the invisible power emanating from Wang Tengfei's index finger. Amidst the explosion, the twenty flying swords twisted about, some of them shattering into pieces. They had successfully blocked the finger attack.

Blood seeped out of Meng Hao's mouth and veins of blood filled his eyes. He consumed another Demonic Core. His killing intent flared, but he still hadn't spoken a single word. That was just his personality; the more he wanted to kill someone, the more furious he became, the quieter he would be.

Wang Tengfei looked as placid as ever, as if he didn't give a care in the world that Meng Hao stood in front of him. Only he could be filled with such arrogance and disregard.

Taking another step forward, he made his second finger attack.

This was the attack that had shattered Meng Hao’s jade pendant. Meng Hao didn’t bother to spit the blood out of his mouth. He swallowed it. Fingers flickering with incantations, he sent the remaining scattered flying swords shooting toward Wang Tengfei in another attack. Then, surprisingly, he severed his control link to the swords, letting them fly forward with their own inertia.

He slapped his bag of holding, and suddenly more sword auras appeared, another twenty, forming a second wave that whistled forward. This was a sword rain that contained nearly forty flying swords in total!

Meng Hao knew that this tactic had its weaknesses. The flying swords wouldn’t be dexterous, only fast and sharp. His opponent wouldn’t find it difficult to avoid an attack. But Meng Hao was betting that considering his opponent’s vast arrogance, he would most likely not try to dodge.

Even if he did try to dodge, Meng Hao would be ready. He had naturally considered this possibility, and was prepared for it.

The scene that was unfolding could only be described as an epic battle. For Cultivators practicing Qi Condensation, it was something seldom seen. In the entire State of Zhao in the past several hundred years, there had never been such a battle between two people of the sixth level of Qi Condensation!

Meng Hao had plenty of flying swords. After his experience on the black mountain, he had put a lot of thought into his use of battle magic. With the help of the Wind Blade, he could control large amounts of flying swords. However, it took a lot of spiritual power, and he could only summon twenty each time. Furthermore, his Cultivation base only permitted him to exercise basic control, enough to shoot them forward. He couldn’t move them nimbly in the air, or cause them to change directions. He essentially sacrificed the dexterity of the flying sword and focused on its ability to fly.

As such, he could use even larger groups of them, the same way an ordinary person might just throw objects in succession. Except, he wasn’t using his hands, he was using spiritual power to ensure their forward movement. As long as he had enough swords and his spiritual power didn’t run out, he could pay the price.

Wang Tengfei didn’t use Reliance Sect techniques, because he disdained the Reliance Sect and their techniques. He used techniques of his powerful Clan, enabling him to gain an edge on his peers.

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# Chapter 32: This Finger Brought me Humiliation, Today, I Cripple it!

Meng Hao’s flying swords and Wang Tengfei’s special magic techniques left the surrounding Cultivators awestruck. No longer did they look down on Meng Hao, but rather were stunned by his vast array of magical items.

It wasn’t just them. Shangguan Xiu, Grand Elder Ouyang, and even Sect Leader He Luohua stared in amazement.

Wang Tengfei was strong, able to inspire fear into his Cultivator peers. Everyone knew this, so to see Meng Hao go toe to toe with Wang Tengfei caused everyone watching to feel shocked.

At the moment, forty flying swords descended upon him from multiple directions, a Sword Tempest that seemed as if it could rip apart any living thing that stood in its path. An ordinary Qi condensation sixth-level opponent would have difficulty standing up against it.

Meng Hao coughed up more blood. The only way to force himself to remain upright was to continuously consume Demonic Cores.

A booming sound erupted as Meng Hao’s forty flying swords collided with the power of Wang Tengfei’s second finger attack. More than half of them were destroyed, but the finger attack could do nothing to Meng Hao other than force him to cough up a bit of blood.

Anyone else would be cautious in their approach to dealing with Meng Hao, but Wang Tengfei was as dismissive as ever. He stepped forward and waved his finger a third time.

Meng Hao’s spiritual energy was almost completely exhausted. But he had a lot of Demonic Cores available to replenish himself. During this entire time, he had managed to keep his spiritual energy at roughly an even level. As he watched Wang Tengfei make his third movement, he could not help but recall the same finger attack taking away the gourd bottle. The killing intent in his eyes grew stronger. He didn’t retreat, and in fact took a step forward, flingers flickering in incantation movements. Three or four of his bags of holding began to tremble, and then suddenly a succession of sword auras appeared, to the astonishment of all the onlookers.

Waving his sleeve, he sent forth one wave, two waves, three waves of flying swords. They transformed into a dazzling sword rain. One sword, ten, twenty, thirty swords… Seventy swords in four waves, an unbelievable sword aura. They shot toward Wang Tengfei.

Meng Hao constantly coughed up blood, then consumed medicinal pills. His eyes were completely bloodshot, but the killing intent in them was as strong as ever. Even if he ran out of spiritual power, he would spare nothing!

Wang Tengfei gave a cold harrumph. With so many people looking on, he didn’t want to dodge the attack, but there were just too many flying swords. They appeared to be approaching in a direct line, and yet something about the attack looked off. He had a dark premonition that if he attempted to dodge the attack, he would still be walking into death.

For the first time, something flickered within Wang Tengfei’s eyes. Lifting his finger, he immediately moved into the fourth finger attack. A ripple appeared in front of him, and even as it began to spread out, Meng Hao’s fingers stopped moving and he clasped his palms together flat in front of him.

“Wind-construct Sword!” As soon as the words came out of Meng Hao’s mouth, the seventy flying swords suddenly began to combine together.

The onlookers gaped in shock as the fourth wave of swords picked up speed, slamming into the third wave, which then swept into the sword rain of the second wave, and then finally smacked into the back of the first wave. Then a sweeping wind pressed in from multiple directions to form them into the solid shape! From a distance, it appeared as if they had formed a gigantic flying sword.

This was Meng Hao’s Flying Sword Matrix, created along with the issuance of his Wind Blade. It was a sword technique he had developed after his time on the black mountain. It shot toward Wang Tengfei with irresistible force. Popping sounds filled the air as the ripple in front of Wang Tengfei began to warp as if it were being pushed against by a massive force. This in turn caused Wang Tengfei, for the first time ever, to take a step backward.

“How arrogant of you to force me to take a step back.” This was the first time he had spoken to Meng Hao during the entire battle. His left hand slapped his bag of holding and a glittering, crystal statue appeared. It was a statue of a horse, vivid and lifelike, seemingly full of energy and spirit.

A neighing sound filled the air, and the crystal statue seemed to come to life, leaping out of Wang Tengfei’s palm and flying straight toward Meng Hao’s giant sword. As soon as they collided, the giant sword began to collapse, starting from its tip. Layer after layer of swords peeled away, torn apart by the crystal horse. Within an instant, a huge portion of the giant sword had been destroyed, and the only thing left was the hilt. Flying swords scattered about in all directions.

Seeing this, the onlookers’ hearts raced, and they had little time to even process in their minds what was happening. They appeared shocked beyond belief.

And then, just as the giant sword was broken down into a mere hilt, a new sword flew out from the midst of the other swords. A sword made of wood. It shot toward the crystal horse, and when the two hit each other, a sound boomed out louder than any sound which had been heard so far during the battle. It echoed out multiple times.

As of now, the wooden sword was the only sword under Meng Hao's control. Everything up to this point had been a ruse to keep it concealed, then use it in a surprise move.

The sword, once meant for Wang Tengfei, was now in Meng Hao's hands. To Wang Tengfei, it was a treasure, but to Meng Hao, it was worth two thousand Spirit Stones. Regardless of how powerful it was, it was the most powerful weapon he had, so of course he would use it.

Amidst the deafening boom, the crystal horse began to shake, and a multitude of cracks appeared on its surface. Then, it simply collapsed into pieces.

Wang Tengfei's expression changed instantly. Carrying with it the remaining flying swords, the wooden sword shot toward him. As it neared, he reflexively lifted his arm, focused his Cultivation base on his finger and shot out an explosive force. The force sent all the flying swords spinning, but not the wooden sword. It continued on, stabbing into his finger and shredding it to bloody pieces. Then it spun back to hover next to Meng Hao.

“That finger brought me humiliation,” Meng Hao said slowly. “Today, I cripple it!” He spat out a mass of blood, staggering back several paces. Blood dripped from the corners of his mouth.

Wang Tengfei took several heavy steps back, ignoring the pain of his finger, eyes filled with disbelief. He stared at the wooden sword floating next to Meng Hao. The words Meng Hao had just uttered rang in his ears. And then, an unspeakable rage welled up within him.

He recognized this sword!

The moment Wang Tengfei's finger was shredded to pieces, all the Cultivators in the square were shocked. The buzz of conversation again arose.

“Meng Hao destroyed Elder Brother Wang's finger. This… this can't be!”

“Elder Brother Wang is injured. He’s a Chosen, but Meng Hao decimated his finger… Meng Hao…”

“It’s scary that he has so many flying swords. And he used seventy of them to make a giant sword. How astonishing!”

Shangguan Xiu sucked in a deep breath. Everything that was happening seemed unimaginable. He wasn’t the only one surprised. Grand Elder Ouyang had stood up and was looking at Meng Hao, his eyes filled with deep admiration and intense anticipation.

Even He Luohua, standing atop the East Mountain, stared down at Meng Hao, his eyes glittering.

The buzz of conversation reached Wang Tengfei’s ears, but he paid it no heed, as if he hadn’t heard it at all. Fury burned in his eyes, and he stared murderously at the wooden sword circling Meng Hao.

“So it was you!” Wang Tengfei didn’t even bother to stop the blood from gushing out of where finger had once been. He had only been furious once before in his life, and that was the day in the cave when he realized the treasure he had hunted for years had been snatched away. His inner humiliation and madness, and his hatred toward that unknown person, had seeped into his very bones.

This matter was his biggest regret. His shrill screams that day still seemed to echo in his ears. Often, he was shaken from meditation deep in the quiet of night, his heart dripping with blood, feeling like a fool. Every time he thought about it, he fought the urge to go crazy.

Today was the second time in his life that he was furious. He recognised the sword. In his eyes, it belonged to him, his own treasure with which control heaven and earth. And today… here it was in Meng Hao’s hands.

“So it was you!” Wang Tengfei’s eyes overflowed with murder. His desire to kill Meng Hao could not be any stronger. This look was so different from his usual calm visage that the surrounding Cultivators could not help but murmur to each other about it.

“It was you who stole away my treasure!” Wang Tengfei stared at the wooden sword, murder roiling in his eyes. He felt an impulsive desire to rip Meng Hao to pieces. He suddenly laughed, and as the laughter rolled out across the square, he seemed to grow even more awe-inspiring.

“I have no idea what Elder Brother Wang is talking about,” said Meng Hao coldly, wiping the blood off of his mouth. “This sword is yours? Are you sure you haven’t made a mistake?” He consumed several Demonic Cores.

“I planned for years to get that sword. It is one-of-a-kind, the only like it in the world. The gold lines on its surface were etched by Heaven itself. Of course I haven’t made a mistake.” Wang Tengfei looked up to the skies and laughed. It was a grim laugh, a laugh that seemed to make everything around it grow cold.

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# Chapter 33: Is This Sword Yours Too?

Wang Tengfei glared at Meng Hao with cold eyes, then took a step forward. He slapped his bag of holding, and two glittering beams of light shot out. Two magical treasures appeared, one a stone tiger, the other a stone aquatic dragon.

They were accompanied by two sounds which reverberated across the square, one, the roaring of a tiger, the other, the howl of a aquatic dragon. The treasures immediately transformed. The first became a white tiger, a few dozen meters in length, the other, a magnificent aquatic dragon. They circled around Wang Tengfei, making him look even more imposing.

“You can refuse to admit it, but that sword is mine,” said Wang Tengfei, his voice ghastly. “I never agreed to let you have it and you are not permitted to leave with it.” His fingers moved in an incantation pattern, and the white tiger roared and leaped toward Meng Hao. The aquatic dragon howled as it followed, its body becoming a streaking rainbow.

Meng Hao moved backwards, waving his right hand. The wooden sword flashed forward, followed by a Wind Blade and a Flame Python.

A boom reverberated out and Meng Hao coughed up a mouthful of blood. As he flew back, he saw Wang Tengfei walking out from the explosion, his snow-white robes and long hair floating in the wind, a look of murder on his beautiful features. His eyes shone forth with ridicule.

“Absurd!” said Meng Hao. “You clearly see that the sword is extraordinary, so you want to use the Inner Sect training as an opportunity to rob it from me!”

“It’s useless to keep talking. I will kill you today, and then you will know that you aren’t qualified to take things which belong to Wang Tengfei.” His eyes cold, he waved his hand again; roaring and howling, the white tiger and the aquatic dragon once again charged Meng Hao.

“One-of-a-kind? The only one like it in the world?” Meng Hao laughed, his eyes sneering. He made no attempt to hide the cold ridicule. “Why don’t you take a look and see if the sword really is one of a kind like you say?” His left hand slapped his bag of holding, and a black beam shot out to circle around Meng Hao. A loud humming sound rang out, like that of a sword. It was his duplicate copy of the wooden sword!

Now that it had appeared, two wooden swords swirled around him. They looked exactly the same in every aspect, their sword auras shining brightly and with immense power.

When he laid eyes on the second wooden sword, Wang Tengfei’s body shook and his eyes went wide, filled with disbelief. His mind dissolved into chaos, and he felt as if he had just been crushed by an entire mountain. He immediately lost control of the white tiger and the aquatic dragon.

“This… this…” His head spun. This unexpected turn of events had caught him completely off guard. He didn’t know what to think, and couldn’t even control his mind.

“Is this sword yours too?” Meng Hao’s eyes flashed, and he stepped forward, suddenly radiating the power of his Cultivation base. “Is this your one-of-a-kind sword?” He took another step forward.

Wang Tengfei couldn’t answer. Feeling the pressure of Meng Hao’s spirit, he involuntarily took two steps backwards.

“Is this the only sword like it in the whole world?” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as if with lightning. He continued moving forward, as if all the power he possessed were supporting him.

Wang Tengfei’s face grew pale, and he continued to retreat.

“Wang Tengfei, these two swords are Meng Hao’s! My swords of heaven and earth!” Eyes burning, Meng Hao leaped into the air, incantation patterns flashing in his hands. The two wooden swords glowed brightly, shooting toward the white tiger and the aquatic dragon.

A boom rang out as the white tiger was broken to pieces and the aquatic dragon shattered. Filled with power that seemed capable of destroying anything in the world, the two wooden swords shot toward Wang Tengfei.

Seeing them approach, Wang Tengfei suddenly lifted his head. He slammed his right hand down onto the ground, and a massive incense stick appeared. As it burned, tendrils of smoke curled up and then shot in Meng Hao’s direction. As they moved, they transformed into two figures which slammed into the two wooden swords. A thunderous boom sounded out.

The incense stick was smashed, and the wooden swords retreated back to Meng Hao, who spat out a mouthful of blood. He watched as Wang Tengfei moved forward through the smoke. He didn’t walk on the platform, but rather flew through the air, carried forward by tendrils of smoke. He looked at Meng Hao with a strange expression, then eyed the two wooden swords. At the moment, he was still completely at a loss about them, and had begun to doubt himself.

According to his research in the ancient records, the wooden sword really was unique in heaven and earth. There could not be a second one. Regardless of that, the sword was exactly the same one he had seen before, except now there were two…

Meng Hao looked at Wang Tengfei soaring through the air and let out a cold snort. He slapped his bag of holding and two ordinary flying swords appeared. He stepped forward onto them, and they carried him flying into the air. This caused quite a stir amongst the observing Cultivators.

“Only Cultivators who have reached Foundation Establishment can fly. But look, he’s flying…”

“Brother Wang has some magical item that lets him fly temporarily, but Meng Hao… he’s not sparing any spiritual energy at all. He’s using the flying swords to fly.”

Killing intent flickered in Wang Tengfei’s eyes as he stared at Meng Hao. He put the matter of the wooden swords out of mind. Regardless of whether or not these were the treasures he had sought, he would take them away.

As the killing intent filled the air, Wang Tengfei slapped his bag of holding, and a strip of yellow paper appeared in front of him, a talisman. Its surface was inscribed with various mystical patterns, and it emitted a strong spiritual pressure. It shined with a golden light. This talisman appeared to be quite different than the one Han Zong had used.

“If you allow me to take the treasure, you can feel some pride when you reach the yellow springs of the underworld,” said Wang Tengfei, glaring at Meng Hao. He felt somewhat distressed. This talisman was the last magical item in his bag of holding. He had spent everything else he possessed in his search for the wooden sword.

He would not have used the talisman were it not necessary. Normally, it could be used three times. But with the level of his Cultivation base, he could only use it once. Even still, it was powerful, enough to slay a Cultivator of the eighth level of Qi condensation.

Glaring coldly at Meng Hao, Wang Tengfei suddenly lifted his right hand and waved it in front of him. At the same time, his spat out some of his spiritual energy, transferring it to the talisman.

The talisman glowed with immeasurable brightness; as Meng Hao flew through the air, he looked down at it, and suddenly felt a stabbing pain inside him.

It was at this moment that Wang Tengfei’s face changed. He suddenly realized that he didn’t have enough spiritual energy… In fact, he now noticed that the spiritual energy in his body was continuously draining out through his wounded finger.

Because he had been enraged upon seeing the first wooden sword, then shocked and confused by the second, he hadn’t sensed it until now. As of now, there was not enough spirit energy to fully activate the talisman, and not enough time to consume medicinal pills to replenish himself.

“Even though the talisman can’t be fully utilized, it’s still strong enough to kill someone of the sixth level of Qi condensation. Killing you will be as easy as falling off a log!” With no hesitation, he flung the talisman out. It suddenly appeared to be a golden sun which shot toward Meng Hao.

At this life-and-death juncture, a strange light appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes. Even as he flew through mid-air, he suddenly caught a glimpse of the dream he had experienced the day he consumed the Flying Rain-Dragon’s Demonic Core. In the dream, he had looked down into a lake and seen the reflection of the ancient Flying Rain-Dragon. Now, he could see the same thing again.

“A sovereign of the sky…” Meng Hao felt as if he were filled with good fortune. He closed his eyes, and as the golden sun summoned by the talisman approached, the Demonic Core which rested in his Core lake began to shudder. Then, a massive force of spiritual power burst out, filling Meng Hao’s body and causing him to snap his hands out in front of him.

All of the various swords laying around, which he had previously lost control off, suddenly began to shake, then lifted into the air and sped toward Meng Hao. At the same time, the rest of the flying swords in his bag of holding flew out, along with the rest of the various magical items he possessed. They began to merge together, glowing with an intense brightness. All of this was happening, not because of Meng Hao’s spiritual energy, but because of the Demonic Core’s!

For some reason, the Demonic Core had suddenly been stirred into action, and its eruption had utilized some sort of underworldly power to control the nearly one hundred flying swords and magical items. In the blink of an eye, they had merged together to form… an ancient Flying Rain-Dragon!

Its form was somewhat indistinct, perhaps indistinguishable to the onlookers. Even Wang Tengfei wasn’t aware of it, now that he had lost his Blood connection to the Legacy. Only Meng Hao could sense it.

The two wooden swords were the Flying Rain-Dragon’s fangs. It let out a roar filled with the power of heaven and earth then charged toward the talisman. As soon as they met, a thunderous explosion rang out which shook the entirety of the Reliance Sect. The surrounding Outer Sect disciples retreated backward, nearly deafened. Some of the disciples with low-level Cultivation bases were nearly knocked senseless.

Both the talisman and the Flying Rain-Dragon contained power far beyond the sixth level of Qi condensation. When they smashed into each other, even someone of the seventh level would be shaken. Only someone of the eighth level might possibly be able to withstand the power.

As the reverberations from the explosion rang out, the golden sun faded rapidly, and the Flying Rain-Dragon began to fall apart. Layer by layer, one sword, ten swords, one hundred swords… they slowly fell, along with the other magical items which had merged together to form the dragon. They fell and transformed to ash, which drifted away in the wind.

The talisman slowly faded away, and the magical items forming the Flying Rain-Dragon disappeared… but not the two wooden swords. Instead, they shot forward toward pale-faced Wang Tengfei.

Wang Tengfei watched as the swords approached, stabbing toward his chest. Just as they were about to plunge into his heart, a light, sighing voice could be heard descending from the East Mountain.

“Very well, there’s nothing left to do.” Along with the sigh came a gentle force which appeared next to Wang Tengfei, blocking the wooden swords. Wang Tengfei was lifted up and pulled back, off of the platform and down onto the square. He coughed up blood, his eyes blank and confused. He couldn’t believe it… he had lost.

He Luohua had appeared on the platform. Grand Elder Ouyang immediately saluted him with clasped fists. “Greetings, Sect Leader.”

A buzz arose among the surrounding Outer Sect disciples. Each and every one greeted the Sect Leader and saluted respectfully.

Meng Hao looked pale. His spiritual energy was completely dried up. If the Flying Rain-Dragon's Demonic Core had not exercised its power, he would not have been able to continue. His bags of holding were now completely empty of any magical items. As far as he was concerned, this battle had been a bitter one indeed.

Although he wasn't quite willing to let Wang Tengfei continue to live, with the Sect Leader here, he had no choice. He would not be able to kill Wang Tengfei this day.

Without a word, he descended onto the platform, his stubborn personality forcing his body to remain upright. He took a few steps forward, then reached down to pick up the Wang Tengfei's talisman, which had drifted to the ground, and placed it into his robe. Then he lifted his head and looked at He Luohua.

"In this match, Meng Hao is the winner," said He Luohua, looking at Meng Hao with a slight smile. "From this day forth, he is the third member of the Reliance Inner Sect." His words rang out over the silent square. The minds of the onlookers were still reeling, the details of the battle replaying in their heads.

Wang Tengfei looked confused, and when he heard He Luohua's words, he let out a bitter laugh. He looked around at the crowd, who already seemed to have forgotten him, and his heart filled with regret. He laughed again, then coughed up some blood, and collapsed into unconsciousness.

As he collapsed, Meng Hao bit down hard on his own tongue. He saluted He Luohua, then sat down cross-legged and began to meditate.

Grand Elder Ouyang looked at him, his eyes filled with admiration. He slapped his own bag of holding and produced a medicinal pill, which flew forward toward Meng Hao. Meng Hao grabbed it and popped it into his mouth.

He was exhausted to the extreme. Despite his eyes growing dim, he continued on with his breathing exercises, slowly attempting to recover.

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# Chapter 34: Fame from 1,000 Years Ago!

Fatty beamed with joy, happy beyond belief, heart pounding. For Meng Hao to become an Inner Sect disciple was almost like he himself had.

Shangguan Xiu stood in the crowd, face grim. After a bit of time passed, he lowered his head, turned, and left. As he left, his face grew darker, but there was really nothing he could do. Now that Meng Hao was a member of the Inner Sect, even his status as an Elder didn't give him the right to interrogate him. Now, Meng Hao was a true member of the Reliance Sect.

"I reached the seventh level of Qi condensation before I was thirty. I was the number one disciple in the Inner Sect. But now…" Shangguan Xiu sighed. He was loath to give up, but had no choice.

Just then, something happened that no one noticed, neither Shangguan Xiu nor Grand Elder Ouyang. Not even Sect Leader He Luohua. Far away from the Reliance Sect, on the peak of the tree-covered black mountain, standing outside of the empty cave, was a mysterious, powerful figure.

The figure was indistinct, its face unclear. But its body was wreathed in an aura vastly different from the spiritual power of heaven and earth, an aura that actually seemed to have been rejected by the Heavens. The wind around the figure changed, filling with indistinct cracks that circled around him… and yet an onlooker would not be able to see any of this.

"Reliance Sect… what a vulgar name," the blood-red figure's voice was hoarse as it spoke, filled with a Demonic air. "The name was intentionally changed one thousand years ago to prevent the Heavens from carrying out the punishment of withholding reincarnation. But it is still… The Demon

Sealing Sect! And a disciple of the Demon Sealing sect actually dared to consume the Core of the Flying Rain-Dragon, and accept its Legacy… interesting. It seems it was not in vain that I helped you those two times.” Even as its voice continued to echo out, bolts of red lightning began to fall. The destructive lightning fell over and over again, but it was over three thousand meters away, as if the Heavens had no power to touch the figure.

The red figure seemed to frown, then looked up coldly into the sky. “Sooner or later, you shall be defied, Heavens!” Then it turned toward the Southern Domain and took a step forward.

“My true self has been slumbering, and in my boredom, my divine clone has swept throughout heaven and earth. What I’ve just seen is interesting. Very interesting.” Laughter rang out, and the figure disappeared, gone in the blink of an eye.

The figure’s arrival and departure, the roiling heavens, the approach of the lightning, onlookers could not see any of it!

Time raced by, and soon seven days had passed.

During the seven days, everyone in the Outer Sect was talking about Meng Hao’s ascension to become an Inner Sect disciple.

Even though everyone had seen the event with their own eyes, it had left them shocked to the core. Despite seven days having passed, they would often lift their heads to gaze at the East Mountain, eyes filled with envy.

There were some people who felt sorry for Wang Tengfei, but they didn’t say anything. It was as if after the battle, Wang Tengfei’s name had become a thing of the past.

Disciples who had been Meng Hao’s enemies were even more disturbed than before, filled with dread. But Meng Hao was no longer present in the Outer Sect, so all they could do was find Fatty to fawn over.

Fatty’s prestige exploded in just a few days. He was the new shop owner at the Low-Level Public Zone, having taken over for Meng Hao. He revelled in the attention of his fellow disciples, filing away at his teeth triumphantly. He was even able to move into one of the nicer residences in the Outer Sect.

Meng Hao was quite busy during the seven days. The Reliance Sect might have been in decline, but there were still rules to follow. Meng Hao bathed and donned new clothes. He kowtowed to the image of Patriarch Reliance and the other Patriarchs of the Sect. Of course, there were many complicated procedures and details involved in all of this.

During this time, he didn’t see Elder Sister Xu at all, as she had secluded herself in meditation. However, he did see Elder Brother Chen Fan 1, dressed in his silver robe. From his time in the Outer Sect, Meng Hao’s impression of him was that he rarely smiled and was rather old-fashioned. But after getting to know him he found that no matter what question he had, Elder Brother Chen would patiently give a detailed explanation. Meng Hao actually liked him. He thought back to the rumors he’d heard, that Elder Brother Chen Fan cared only about righteousness and the Dao, ignoring matters of the mortal world.

After the seven days had passed, Meng Hao was granted an Inner Sect Immortal’s Cave on the East Mountain. Its Spirit Spring bubbled with thick Spiritual Energy, much more so than his previous Immortal’s Cave.

Unfortunately, his good mood changed a bit the first time he laid hands on the Spirit Stones and medicinal pills available for Inner Sect disciples. He stood there, staring down at them stupidly.

These Spirit Stones were clearly better than the ones available in the Outer Sect. They were larger, and were not completely transparent, but rather filled with an indistinct, mist-like substance. Meng Hao’s face grew pale.

“These are mid-grade Spirit Stones?” murmured Meng Hao. “And Inner Sect disciples get one per year… It’s worth one hundred low-grade Spirit Stones from the Outer Sect…” His head spun as he absorbed the information from the ancient piece of jade in front of him, which described the identification methods and differences between the different types of Spirit Stones available to Cultivators engaged in Qi condensation.

“Above mid-grade Spirit Stones are high-grade Spirit Stones…. which don’t even exist in the State of Zhao. One of those is worth at least ten-thousand low-grade Spirit Stones… they’re basically priceless.” Meng Hao’s insides twisted, and he took out the few large Spirit Stones he had left in his bag of holding. His face looked more and more unsightly.

“You can tell the value of a Spirit Stone by looking at its size and its internal composition. High-grade Spirit Stones are the largest, and are at least half-covered inside with thick mist formations… The Spiritual Energy inside won’t leak out, and can only be used by a Cultivator who has reached Foundation Establishment.” Meng Hao looked mutely at the Spirit Stone he held in his hand. It was larger than a mid-grade Spirit Stone by at least three times, and was almost completely filled with mist formations. It was dazzling, and not a drop of Spiritual Energy emerged from it.

“This… this can’t be a high-grade Spirit Stone! I… I squandered two thousand high-grade Spirit Stones!” Meng Hao’s heart dropped, and he tried to comfort himself. He thought about the extraordinary wooden sword and how much Wang Tengfei cared about it. And then he thought about the price he had paid the copper mirror to duplicate it. He simply couldn’t comprehend the price he had paid in Spirit Stones…

“But how come it seems like this Spirit Stone is even bigger than the descriptions of high-grade Spirit Stones, and has even more mist formations inside?” His heart quavered, and he didn’t dare to think about it anymore. His face was pale, and he felt pained to the core.

It took him a while to get control of himself, whereupon he put away the Spirit Stones.

“An insignificant two thousand high-grade Spirit Stones,” muttered Meng Hao. “It was nothing, nothing at all.” But when he said the word ‘insignificant,’ it sounded a bit forced.

More days flew by.

“Junior Brother, I watched your battle. You used a lot of magical items. If you had run out, you would have been in a difficult situation. You should go to the Magic Pavilion more often. There are a thousand years of ancient Reliance Sect records there that you could study from.”

“Junior Brother, I noticed that you’re always hunting small creatures and cooking them for food. That’s not correct. Us Cultivators should breathe in the spiritual energy of heaven and earth and cast off our mortal bodies. If you’re always eating animals, aren’t you wasting your spiritual energy?”

“Junior Brother, you have too many bags of holding on your person. You shouldn’t do it that way. You should have all your items in one bag, that way they are easier to take out.”

As the days passed, Meng Hao forced himself not to think about Spirit Stones. It didn’t take long before he understood Elder Brother Chen Fan a lot better, and soon he spent most of his time with him, being instructed. He soon realized that this Elder Brother was nothing at all like the rumors in the Outer Sect held him out to be. Although he was very focused on the Dao, he wasn’t taciturn at all. In fact, when he he started talking, he would keep going for hours and hours, sometimes even an entire day.

Soon it came to the point that if he didn’t go looking for Chen Fan, then Chen Fan would come looking for him in his Immortal’s Cave, and the discussions would begin.

Meng Hao couldn’t refuse. He could only force a smile and listen. Sometimes he would fall asleep in the middle of it, only to wake up to find Brother Chen Fan still talking. He couldn’t help but feel sorry for him.

“There aren’t enough disciples in the Inner Sect, so Elder Brother Chen doesn’t have anyone to talk to. Therefore, he’s developed this strange tendency…” Meng Hao now understood why Elder Sister Xu went into secluded meditation so often. Even he himself had thought of going into meditation to get a break from Elder Brother Chen.

Whenever he left his Immortal’s Cave, Elder Brother Chen would be there to accompany him.

“I wonder when Elder Sister Xu is going to come out of meditation,” thought Meng Hao with a smile. “I can’t wait to see the look on her face when she sees me.” He now wore a silver robe, and his long hair fluttered behind him as he sat on a mountain crag. He stared at the setting sun, ignoring Elder Brother Chen’s constant yammering.

“Junior Brother must be wondering when Junior Sister Xu will be coming out of meditation,” said Elder Brother Chen with a smile, looking at Meng Hao.

“Yeah… Uh, what?”

Elder Brother Chen’s sudden change of topic left Meng Hao speechless.

“No need to be shy, Junior Brother,” bantered Elder Brother Chen with a smile. “Junior Sister Xu Qing 2 is a natural beauty, it’s perfectly normal for you to have a crush on her.” He had a uncomplicated disposition, and was easy to get along with. Meng Hao liked him. As soon as they had met, he had been willing to take Meng Hao on as a Junior Brother.

“Xu Qing?” Meng Hao coughed. He decided to change the topic. “No, no, I never… oh, right. Elder Brother Chen, a while back you were saying something about what happens after a Cultivator completes his Qi Condensation?”

“After Qi Condensation comes Foundation Establishment, the shedding of the mortal body. This is true spiritual cultivation, and truly being a Cultivator.” Elder Brother Chen smiled at Meng Hao, shaking his head. He was no longer bantering, but speaking warmly.

“During the process of establishing the Spiritual Foundation, nine Dao pillars will arise within your Core Lake, deep and bottomless. They will grow within your body, and this is Foundation Establishment. Of course, there are different types of Foundations, based on the various magical methods used to congeal the Dao pillars. If nine cracks appear, it is a Flawless Foundation. If eighteen cracks appear, it is a Cracked Foundation. More than eighteen cracks means it is a Fractured Foundation. Of these, Flawless is the best, Cracked is good. Fractured is the most common.

“The Reliance Sect used to have a manual describing a method to Establishing a Flawless Foundation, acquired by Patriarch Reliance. Because of this, he was famous in all of the State of Zhao. His name was even known in the Southern Domain. Sadly… when the Patriarch went missing, the technique was not handed down.” Chen Fan explained everything slowly and in great detail. This was just his personality, and Meng Hao had gotten used to it over the days.

“After Foundation Establishment is the great path to Core Formation. The Sect Leader is in this stage. After that, when you develop a Nascent Soul, then you can live forever, and be a true Immortal of this land.”

“What about after the Nascent Soul stage?” asked Meng Hao, listening intently and feeling longing in his heart.

“After the Nascent Soul stage is Spirit Severing. That was the stage the Patriarch was at. It is the most difficult stage, where life hangs on a thread. Spirit Severing involves several Severings before complete success. That year, Patriarch Reliance left the Sect to meditate in seclusion, and still hasn’t returned.” Chen Fan spoke calmly throughout his explanation, but his attachment to cultivate was clear from his expression.

“Perhaps one day I, Meng Hao, will have a chance to enter the Spirit Severing stage,” he murmured. “What is after that?”

“The stages after Spirit Severing are too high,” said Chen Fan lightly. “I don’t know the details. You have to go to the Southern Domain to learn about those things. In any case, the whole point is Immortal Ascension.”

“Immortal Ascension?”

“Immortal Ascension.”

The mountain breeze gently lifted the hair of the two disciples, carrying their voices off into the distance.

“Junior Brother, if one day you go out into the world to continue your training, you cannot limit yourself to the State of Zhao.” Elder Brother

Chen looked at Meng Hao kindly. “Don’t forget, the State of Zhao is a remote State in the Southern Domain of the Nanshan Continent. The Spiritual Energy here is not abundant, and there are few Cultivators.

“The Southern Domain is the true world of Cultivation. Even though the law of the jungle is brutal and ruthless there, it truly represents the peak of the southern regions of the Nanshan continent. Heroes abound, as do Chosen. Compared to there, the State of Zhao is quite calm and peaceful. Cultivators of my generation must climb mountains and tread upon piles of bones to succeed.” A strange light filled his eyes, as if he weren’t speaking to Meng Hao, but rather to himself.

Meng Hao felt quite moved by Elder Brother Chen’s words. Before, he had been somewhat ignorant, but having things so clearly explained left his head buzzing, as if a giant map had suddenly been rolled out in front of him. On the map was the Great Tang in the Eastern Lands, and the heroes of the Southern Domain.

“To follow the path of spirituality, one must abandon the mortal world. You are no longer a mortal. You are a Cultivator, destined to defy the Heavens. If you are not strong, then you are not qualified to exist. If you are not strong, you are not qualified to practice Cultivation. If you are not strong, then you are not qualified to stay alive, but only to be trampled over. Are you willing to live this kind of life?” Brother Chen gazed at Meng Hao. As his words entered Meng Hao’s ears and sank into his heart, his eyes began to glitter, and he began to think.

“I am a scholar from Yunjie County. My parents went missing when I was just a child, and my dream was always to be become rich and never again live in poverty, then eventually go see the the Great Tang in the Eastern Lands.” The chill night wind blew at his hair as he lost himself in contemplation, the same way he had that year on the top of Mount Daqing.

1. Chen Fan’s name in Chinese is (chén fán) – Chen is a common family name. Fan means “mortal” or “ordinary”

2. Xu Qing’s name in Chinese is (xǔ qīng) – Xu is a family name. However, it has a variety of other meanings as a character including “to

praise” and “to allow.” Qing means “pure” or “clear”

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# Chapter 35: I'm Not Willing!

Time slipped by, and at some point, Elder Brother Chen left. Even though Meng Hao had just entered the Inner Sect, he was still a junior Brother, and it was Chen Fan's responsibility to explain matters to him, to help him understand what Cultivation truly is. To help him to know what it means to move forward lest one fall behind, and to comprehend the life-and-death path that was the Cultivation world.

Entering the Inner Sect was his first true step across the threshold into that world. The next step was Foundation Establishment.

Meng Hao sat alone on the boulder, staring into the sky at the moon and the vast multitude of stars. He was silent, his mind filled with countless thoughts. He felt somewhat confused.

Time continued to pass, and soon it was the middle of the night. Wang Tengfei sat in his Immortal's Cave, looking down at his right hand with its missing index finger. He looked confused. In front of him was a jade slip, broken in half. When he had regained consciousness, that was the first thing he had done.

He hadn't managed to enter the Inner Sect, and thus had not accomplished his second goal. He was on the verge of despair. As soon as he had regained consciousness, he had snapped the jade slip in two with a bitter smile.

He had been defeated, thoroughly defeated, and by none other than an insect. He had been defeated by Meng Hao's sword and weak Cultivation base. Had He Luohua not intervened, he would be dead.

This defeat ended his path here at the Reliance Sect. He had not emerged from his Immortal's Cave after awakening. He had simply sat there in a daze.

He was a Chosen. His Clan’s reputation in the Southern Domain was indomitable. He had been insufferably proud since childhood, as if the world lay at his feet. That was why he had refused to stay in his Clan, but rather came here to the State of Zhao and the Reliance Sect, to search for the Legacy and treasure. He had even postponed Foundation Establishment in order to pursue his two goals. As of now, though, everything had blown away like ash in the wind.

Wang Tengfei’s bitter laughter echoed throughout the Immortal’s Cave. He laughed and laughed, clenching his fists tightly. Although, his nails were not very sharp, so he couldn’t experience the pain Meng Hao had that day.

He just could not accept it. If he had been defeated at the hands of a Chosen, then he could bear the loss. But the person who had robbed his place in the Inner Sect, who had trampled him underfoot, was someone he didn’t even deign to look at, an insect whose name he hadn’t even been able to recall. He just couldn’t accept it.

At this moment, the main door of Wang Tengfei’s Immortal’s Cave suddenly disintegrated noiselessly. The entire door turned into ash, which floated down to the ground of the Immortal’s Cave.

A middle-aged man stood in the doorway, wearing a black robe, hands clasped behind his back. He seemed somewhat emaciated, but carried a haughty air. The moonlight fell onto him, and seemed to quiver and turn into ripples. It was as this man’s mere existence could cause the surrounding mountain chains to tremble.

Next to the middle-aged man was a young woman, perhaps eighteen or nineteen years of age. She was incredibly beautiful, tall and slender. She wore no makeup, and yet her face glowed like the dawn. Her hair was pinned up in the shape of a swallow’s tail, and her body seemed as if it were carved from jade. She wore a thin, light green garment. Standing there in the moonlight, she emanated a magical aura, cool and composed, refined and free from worldly vulgarity. She looked just like a female celestial, descended from heaven.

“The Wang Clan is one of the three great Cultivation Clans in the Southern Domain,” said the middle-aged man coolly. His voice contained an awe-inspiring coldness difficult to describe. “It has outmatched many Sects, and has existed for ten thousand years in the Southern Domain.

“You are a Chosen of the Wang Clan. From birth, you have been destined to do extraordinary things, to rise higher than the highest heavens. You were foreordained to engage in struggles with other Immortals.”

As Wang Tengfei listened to the middle-aged man’s words, he slowly lifted his head, ignoring his severed finger.

“What do some minor setbacks count for? This paltry State of Zhao wouldn’t count for anything in the Southern Domain. It’s filled with ants. If I sent a single Nascent Soul stage Clan member here, he could wipe this place clean.” The middle-aged man spoke with complete certainty, leaving no room for argument. Wang Tengfei clenched his fists, and fire appeared in his eyes.

“Your true enemies are the other Chosen members in the Clan, the successors of the two major Clans in the Southern Domain, and the disciples of the rest of the five Clans. Only they are worthy to be your enemy. If they saw your sorry state now, how could you dare to claim the name Wang?!

“Tell me, what is your family name?” said the middle-aged man with a flick of his sleeve.

“My name is Wang!” Wang Tengfei stood, his eyes gleaming.

The middle-aged man looked at Wang Tengfei for a long moment, then his eyes grew soft.

“You are a Roc of the Wang Clan. In a few years, you will reach Foundation Establishment. In the future, on the great path to Core Formation, you will have the assistance of the Violet Qi from the East technique of your fiancée’s Sect. You will successfully achieve Core Formation soon. After that, you will have your Nascent Soul. When that happens, you will find that the pitiable person who defeated you here in the State of Zhao, is still practicing Qi Condensation.

“Then you can truly look down on him like the insect he is.” He gave Wang Tengfei a meaningful look, then turned away.

“Tengfei,” said the beautiful girl. Her light voice was pleasant, and combined with her beauty, made her incredibly enticing. She was perfect, in the same way Wang Tengfei was perfect. Were they to be together, they would truly be a match made in heaven, the envy of anyone traversing the path of Immortality.

Wang Tengfei looked at the girl silently. This was his fiancée, Chu Yuyan 1, daughter of the Sect Leader of the Violet Fate Sect. She was a Chosen of her Sect, and one of four most famous women in the Southern Domain.

“Let’s go back,” she said softly, gazing at Wang Tengfei tenderly.

Wang Tengfei nodded. He followed the girl out of the Immortal’s Cave. Along with the middle-aged man, they walked forward, and suddenly a rumbling sound shook the night sky. A massive lightning bolt shot down from the sky, transforming into a flying battleship, nearly three hundred meters long. The ship was black, and emanated the feeling of death, especially the massive flagpole from which flapped a red flag, embroidered with the character “Wang.”

On the ship stood numerous men with expressionless faces, standing at attention, radiating cold auras.

The massive noise which had just rung out, as well as the battleship, left the disciples of the Reliance Sect trembling in fear. They looked up at the sight, disbelief written across their face.

Meng Hao still sat on the peak of the East Mountain. Pulled out of his contemplation, he looked up at the shocking black battleship and red flag, and his heart quivered.

“I should never have agreed to let you come to this backwater place,” said the middle aged man as they stepped foot onto the ship. “Even if the Sublime Spirit Scripture was rumored to have been seen here, that was something that occurred hundreds of years ago.” Wang Tengfei stood there, looking out at the Reliance Sect. He slowly wiped away all the memories of the recent years.

No longer was his gaze warm and gentle, no longer was his smile kind and sincere. He had become cold, especially his eyes, which radiated hatred. He now seemed completely different from the old Elder Brother Wang.

He looked down at Meng Hao sitting there on the mountaintop. The two of them stared at each other for a moment, and then Wang Tengfei’s eyes once again filled with disregard. As far as he was concerned, Meng Hao was a bug. Pride filled him, because his family name was Wang!

At this moment, the middle-aged man caught sight of Meng Hao sitting there. He didn’t reveal his Cultivation base, but his gaze itself was enough to cause a thunderous roar which shook the entire East Mountain. Like a sharp sword, his it toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s expression changed, and he coughed up a mouthful of blood. His entire body felt ice-cold, and he sensed an intense, deadly force fall upon him. His head spun, and he lost the power to even think. He was so weak that he felt as if he could collapse from a single blow.

He felt death upon him. His body would shrivel up, his soul would wink out. Blood dripped down from his forehead.

Aloneness. Helplessness. Death. They melded together into a giant hand which pushed down on him, slowly crushing him to pieces, smashing him into a place beyond recovery.

Suddenly, a cold snort rang out, filling the entire Reliance Sect, and a figure in blue appeared in front of Meng Hao.

“Your Cultivation base is in the Core Formation stage. Not a Mixed Core, either, but at least Purple or Crimson. And yet you bully a Qi Condensation pup like this? Are you really Wang Xifan 2 of the Wang Clan of the Southern Domain, Third Generation Dao Protector?” It was Sect Leader He Luohua. Suddenly, a deafening, earth-shaking roar erupted.

The sound thundered out, seeming as if everything in sight would crumble from it. Then it turned into layer upon layer of ripples, emanating from He Luohua. He stood there as if he were the only person in the world, staring coldly toward the Wang Xifan as he stood there in the battleship.

“I’ve incurred Fellow Daoist He’s ridicule,” said Wang Xifan with a gentle laugh. “I’m here to take Tengfei away. Thank you for caring for him these years.” His eyes were filled with an indescribable arrogance. He flicked his sleeve. The battleship began to hum, then it transformed into a streak of colors and shot off into the starry sky, leaving behind only the twinkling starlight.

Meng Hao coughed up some more blood, but continued to stare off into the distance, his cold eyes glittering.

He Luohua looked back silently at Meng Hao, then sighed and left. Meng Hao gazed off into the distance toward the disappearing battleship.

“So that was a Core Formation Cultivator. He could crush me with a single look. And that’s just Core Formation. After that is the Nascent Soul stage and then the Spirit Severing stage, and even more… The Southern Domain, the Wang Clan!” Meng Hao ground his teeth angrily, fire burning in his eyes.

“If you’re not strong, you don’t qualify to exist. If you’re not strong, you don’t qualify to practice Cultivation. If you’re not strong, you don’t have the right to keep living, but can only be taken advantage of…. Are you willing to live a life like this?” Elder Brother Chen’s words echoed in his head, more and more strongly, burning indelibly into his mind, into his bones, into his soul.

“I’m not willing!” said Meng Hao slowly, clenching his fists. His voice was weak, but in his heart, the voice resounded like a thunderclap.

“I’m not willing to let anyone take advantage of me!

“I’m not willing to be weak!

“I’m not willing to be deprived of the right to fight back!

“I will be strong! I will become powerful!!” Meng Hao had always wanted to become rich and travel to the Great Tang in the Eastern Lands. He still had that desire, but in addition to that, he had a new belief. He would become powerful. On the path of cultivation, the path of defying the Heavens, if you are not powerful, you are dead.

1. Chu Yuyan’s name in Chinese is (chǔ yù yān) Chu is a family name. Yu means “jade” or “beauty,” and Yan means “captivating”

2. Wang Xifan’s name in Chinese is wáng xī fàn) Wang is a family name. Xi means “tin.” Fan means “model” or “example”

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# Chapter 36: The Perks of the Inner Sect

Half a month passed, during which Meng Hao spent most of his time sitting cross-legged in the Sect’s Magic Pavilion, studying the ancient records. Now he had a much deeper understanding of the State of Zhao and the Southern Domain.

He had even discovered a hand-drawn map of the sprawling Nanshan continent, which showed the Great Tang in the Eastern Lands, the Northern Desert with its Qiang Di flutes, the Barbarian Western Lands, and of course the Southern Domain, where he was currently located.

The whole world was neatly displayed on the map, and its image was now burned into Meng Hao’s brain. The Southern Domain comprised a vast section of the Nanshan continent, whereas the State of Zhao was just a tiny dot on its perimeter.

“The Southern Domain is so big that it could hold thousands of the State of Zhao…” He looked out at the blue sky outside the Magic Pavilion, his eyes filled with a fascinated look.

“So it turns out that traveling to the Great Tang in the Eastern lands isn’t that simple. You have to cross the Milky Way Sea…” After a while, Meng Hao looked back down at the map, looking at all the four major regions of the Nanshan continent. The Eastern Lands and the Northern Desert formed a subcontinent, separated from which by a large ocean were the Western Barbarian Lands and the Southern Domain, which formed another subcontinent.

When the sun began to fall behind the western mountains, and dusk approached, Meng Hao rubbed his eyes, returned the map to its place, and left the Magic Pavilion. He looked off into the distance toward the east for a while, then turned and headed back to his Inner Sect Immortal’s Cave.

Inside the Immortal’s cave, the luminescent pearls inlaid into the ceiling emitted a soft light onto the light green walls. There were five stone rooms, and a gurgling Spirit Spring, filling the cave with dense Spiritual Energy. This was a perk available only to disciples of the Inner Sect. Meng Hao entered and sat cross-legged onto a slab of white jade. It was not made of Spirit Stone, but meditating upon it helped one’s mind to be clear, and was a relatively rare treasure.

This also was something only for Inner Sect disciples.

“Only Inner Sect disciples can truly be considered members of the Reliance Sect,” thought Meng Hao, quietly looking around. The light green stone walls were carved with various birds and beasts, each of which seemed to be filled with deep meaning. Even looking at them left one feeling refined.

“These are very different perks from those in the Outer Sect. This is in order to emphasize the outstanding qualities of Inner Sect disciples. Just like in the mortal world, there is a division of layers. By struggling, one can surpass the Outer Sect. After that, if one wishes to become exalted, one must become stronger!

Soon, dusk fell, and then Meng Hao heard a respectful voice from outside.

“Elder Brother Meng, Li Fugui from the foot of the mountain requests an audience.” It was the voice of a boy, a servant. After Meng Hao had joined the Inner Set, this boy had been assigned to help him care for his daily affairs.

This was yet another perk of life in the Inner Sect. At first, Meng Hao had a hard time getting used to it. He had never had someone waiting upon him before. But when he saw Elder Brother Chen’s servant helping him, it was easier to accept. However, he still held firm to his desire to grow stronger.

Only the strong can have power over others, and prevent others from controlling them. The law of the Cultivation world and rules of the Reliance Sect were the same. It was not reasonable or fair, but it existed, and that was the way of life.

Existence was truth. The world is fundamentally unreasonable, and naturally, there is no true fairness.

“Send him in,” said Meng Hao coolly. Filled with reverence, the young servant complied. After being assigned to wait upon Meng Hao, his very life belonged to him.

Shortly thereafter, Fatty entered, clicking his teeth and striding with long steps. This was not his first time to visit, but rather his third. Every time he came, he was filled with excitement. This was not a place Outer Sect disciples could visit without the consent of the person they called upon.

The young servant led Fatty in respectfully. Fatty looked around, rubbing his hands along various items in wonder, even the white jade slab that Meng Hao sat on.

“It’s not your first time here,” said Meng Hao with a laugh, watching him.

“Meng Hao, this place is just too amazing. Every time I come, I just can’t control myself. The Immortal’s Cave of an Inner Sect disciple. It’s a place of legend! You know, after the last time I came here, a bunch of Outer Sect disciples crowded around me asking all sorts of questions. I’m important now!” His body trembled, and it took a moment for him to stop thinking about it. He sat down in front of Meng Hao.

“If you’d like, I can request for Wang Tengfei’s Immortal’s cave to be given to you.”

“That… that would be incredible,” said Fatty, looking excited, but at the same time a bit shy.

“Zhao Hai,” said Meng Hao coolly. He waved his right hand, and the main door opened. The young servant rushed in and gave Meng Hao a deep salute.

He looked to be about fourteen or fifteen, close to Fatty's age. He had delicate features, and had only arrived on the mountain recently. It was said he was from the same village as Little Tiger, and that his family was rich.

"Take my spirit tablet to the Cave Dispensing Pavilion and retrieve the jade slip to Wang Tengfei's Immortal's Cave." He waved his hand, and a white jade slip flew out into the young servant's hand.

The young servant accepted the assignment, then left with a respectful expression on his face.

"Meng Hao, when are you going to come down off the mountain?" asked Fatty eagerly. "I promised the Outer Sect disciples you would go to inspect them. You can't go back on your word, I promised them."

"Grand Master Ouyang said that I would preside over the next Pill Distribution Day," he said with a smile. "I believe that would be the day after tomorrow." The two of them had entered the Sect together, three years ago. A deep friendship had long since grown between the two of them.

"Great, the day after tomorrow it is. Oh, right, our business has been doing well in the past half month. I already separated out your 80%." He handed a bag of holding to Meng Hao, looking pleased with himself. It seemed he too understood the meaning of the Reliance Sect. With Meng Hao to rely on, who in the Outer Sect would dare to even say one wrong word to him?

Even better, the beautiful female disciples of the Outer Sect had begun to fawn over him until he fairly floated in the air. For the moment, Fatty was quite popular.

"Has Shangguan Xiu caused you any problems recently?" asked Meng Hao suddenly, his eyes flashing.

"Nobody has seen that bastard recently," replied Fatty, his voice becoming grave. "I've assigned a disciple to do some spying for me, and he said that Shangguan Xiu sits in secluded meditation all day. He never comes out."

“Just be careful,” he warned, and not for the first time. “If anything happens, snap the message token I gave you.”

Soon, the young servant Zhao Hai returned with the jade slip to Wang Tengfei’s Immortal’s Cave. Meng Hao gave it to Fatty. The two of them laughed and chatted deep into the night. It seemed Fatty didn’t want to leave. In fact, he seemed to be growing more excited.

Meng Hao was surprised at this, but when he remembered what day it was, and laughed.

“Today is the day Medicinal Fruits are distributed in the Inner Sect,” said Meng Hao.

Fatty licked his lips and nodded, his heart filled with envy at the differences between the Inner and Outer Sect disciples. Every month Medicinal Fruits were distributed, a special type of Spiritual Fruit infused with Medicinal Pills. The fruit itself tasted like a Medicinal Pill, but was much more effective than ordinary Medicinal Pills.

Inner Sect disciples received the fruits once per month.

After the time it takes an incense stick to burn, the young servant Zhao Hai entered. He actually despised Fatty, but didn’t show even the slightest hint of it on his face. In his hands he carried the Medicinal Fruits, wrapped up in a large green leaf.

A delicate aroma wafted out from it, causing Zhao Hai to swallow deeply. He put the fruits down and then left.

When the large leaf was removed, the medicinal fragrance filled the air. Inside the leaf were two small, semi-transparent, light-red fruits. They seemed so delicate that they might break if you touched them. Inside each one could just barely be seen a medicinal pill.

Fatty’s eyes went wide. He had never eaten Medicinal Fruit before, but had heard it mentioned recently by some Outer Sect disciples. After making some enquires, he had discovered the distribution date, and so had hurried eagerly to visit Meng Hao. He picked up one of the fruits and put it into his mouth. He bit down, then swallowed, and a delicious flavor filled his mouth. Then, a hot sensation filled his head and spread out through his whole body.

“Amazing, amazing. I must be the first Outer Sect disciple to ever eat a Medicinal Fruit. When word gets out, the girls will be envious to death. Everyone will be envious of Master Fatty’s good fortune.” It suddenly seemed as if he had remembered something, and he snapped his mouth shut, not letting any of the fragrant aroma escape. Using his hands, he signaled to Meng Hao that he needed to leave, then ran off.

“I have proof!” he thought. “I have to find some of those female disciples and let them smell it.” The more he thought about it, the more excited he got, and he raced down the mountain even faster.

Fatty’s clever plan was obvious, causing Meng Hao to laugh. He slowly placed the remaining Medicinal Fruit into his mouth. It tasted delicious, filled with dense Medicinal flavor.

“This is something else that Inner Sect disciples…” As he ate the Medicinal Fruit, he sighed. This life was not something that Outer Sect disciples could enjoy. If he wanted to, he could simply make a gesture, and any of the beautiful female disciples would instantly become devoted to him.

Soon, two days had passed, and Pill Distribution Day arrived. Meng Hao walked out of his Immortal’s Cave, followed closely by the young servant Zhao Hai. In his hand he carried a purple bag of holding, which was filled with Spirit Stones and Medicinal Pills to be distributed.

A mountain breeze welcomed the dawn as Meng Hao descended the mountain. Along the way, the Outer Sect disciples he ran into would look at him in surprise, then stop and give him a deep salute with clasped hands.

“Greetings, Elder Brother Meng.”

“Elder Brother Meng is as elegant as ever. I haven’t seen you in many days, Junior Sister has missed you.”

“Greetings, Elder Brother Meng. Your latent talent is spectacular, your Cultivation base astonishing. You will definitely be a pillar of the Sect.”

Amidst all the flattery Meng Hao walked along until he reached the square, which was already filled with a good number of disciples. Catching sight of him, they saluted, and then the air filled with their flattering words.

He nodded, smiling, then leaped up, carrying Zhao Hai with him onto the platform. This was not his first time here, but it was his first time to distribute Medicinal Pills.

His gaze swept across the crowd. Every single person’s face was filled with reverent devotion. Gradually, Meng Hao’s face grew distracted, and he thought back to his first Pill Distribution Day, and then to the time Wang Tengfei had humiliated him. Many memories flitted through his mind.

Finally, he heaved a deep sigh, and said, “Sound the bells.”

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# Chapter 37: Water and Ink in the Evening

The bells rang out, reverberating both in Meng Hao’s heart and throughout the Reliance Sect. Soon, Meng Hao could see countless disciples hurrying forward.

Before long, the square was packed. As the disciples entered, they looked at Meng Hao in shock, then saluted.

Fatty stood in the crowd, looking pleased, filing away at his teeth with his flying sword. He was surrounded by a group of fawning disciples.

“So Elder Brother Meng is distributing the Medicinal Pill today… ai, I remember back when he was an Outer Sect disciple like us, but now he’s a member of the Inner Sect.”

“Elder Brother Meng is scholarly and refined. I heard that he used to be a scholar of high rank, but he cared more about Cultivation, so he quit and joined the Reliance Sect.”

“Now that you mention it, I remember the first time I saw Elder Brother Meng those years ago. I could tell that he wasn’t ordinary. During his whole fight with Wang Tengfei, I knew that Elder Brother Meng would achieve victory.” The buzz of conversation filled the air, eventually reaching Meng Hao’s ears. He let out a dry cough.

Even though it was a relatively quiet cough, it caused all the disciples in the square to suddenly go silent. They looked up at him respectfully. The morning sun shone down onto his silver robe, and he truly looked like a celestial being.

Meng Hao caught sight of Zhou Kai in the crowd; his face looked conflicted. Then Meng Hao caught sight of somber Yin Tianlong, who gave him a forced smile. He also saw the other Qi Condensation fourth level disciples whom he recognized from that day. When his gaze fell upon them, their faces filled with ingratiating looks.

He even saw Cao Yang, standing there trembling.

“Today, I shall preside over Pill Distribution,” said Meng Hao. He was a scholar, so he had no need to prepare words; he just spoke naturally. When he spoke, his words carried force, piercing into the hearts of the onlookers. “Fellow disciples, please devote yourself to Cultivation, and eventually you will pass the sixth level. I look forward to that day, when the Reliance Inner Sect has one more member.”

The force of his words came not from his Cultivation base, but rather his status as an Inner Sect disciple.

“We will remember Elder Brother Meng’s admonitions.” Several people below spoke out, faces filled with emotion, as if they had just heard the voice of Heaven. One after another, they saluted Meng Hao.

Soon everyone was repeating the words, until the whole square spoke together in harmony.

Meng Hao took the bag of holding from the young servant at his side, opened it, and waved his sleeve. Medicinal pills and Spirit Stones shot out to everyone.

After that, his right hand flashed over the bag of holding, then held up a milky white Medicinal pill. It emanated white aura and a fragrant aroma. It seemed as if it contained the glow of dawn.

“It’s… it’s a White Spirit Pill!”

“That pill is extraordinarily effective for anyone of the fourth level of Qi Condensation or lower. They haven’t distributed one for a long time.

Finally one appears!” Soon, everyone in the square below was breathing heavily, staring at the Medicinal pill in Meng Hao’s hand.

His eyes scanned the crowd. Fatty was smiling. This pill wasn’t anything rare as far as he was concerned. He already had a few in his bag of holding, which Meng Hao had given him.

“This pill is extraordinary. All of you must surely know that I planned to give this only to a suitable disciple. And yet, I, Meng Hao, keep old friendships in mind. I just caught sight of an old friend, so I shall bestow the pill to him.” His gaze fell onto Cao Yang, who suddenly began to tremble. Meng Hao flicked his right hand, and the pill shot forth.

“I’m finished!” thought Cao Yang, looking like he was about to cry. “I’ll be recuperating from the injuries for months…” He wailed inside, and now he knew that Meng Hao could hold a grudge. Even though he had become an Inner Sect disciple, he had not forgotten about all the things that had happened before.

As the lights in the square faded, Meng Hao flicked his sleeve and left, not staying behind to watch the fighting break out.

Fatty ran over to follow him, his face flushed. He glared at the young servant Zhao Hai, motioning for him to step back a distance. It seemed he was worried the boy might replace him. He walked next to Meng Hao.

“Elder Brother Meng,” he said with anticipation, “why don’t we take a stroll around the Outer Sect?”

Thinking back to how he had done the same thing with Elder Sister Xu so many years ago, Meng Hao nodded his head with a smile.

The two of them walked forward, with Zhao Hai following in the rear, looking irritated. Not long after leaving the square, they saw Zhou Kai hurrying to catch up with them.

“Greetings, Elder Brother Meng,” he said, his expression somewhat perturbed. He had offended Meng Hao more than once, and had assumed that upon joining the Inner Sect, he would show more restraint. But upon seeing Cao Yang's fate, he was nervous, and so rushed over.

Meng Hao looked him over, but didn't say anything. Fatty took a step forward and said loudly: "What do you want?"

"A few days ago, I, Zhou, came across a treasured item. As soon as I saw it, I could tell that it was destined for Elder Brother Meng. Please, accept my gift." Biting his tongue, he pulled out a bag of holding from within his robe and presented it to Meng Hao. Fatty gave a cold harrumph and grabbed it, then handed it to Meng Hao with a wide smile.

Meng Hao accepted it and glanced over its contents. Then he nodded to Zhou Kai, turned, and walked off, his expression as cool as the clouds in the sky. Zhou Kai watched on helplessly, sighing in his heart.

"I'm not worthy to be an Inner Sect Disciple, perhaps these items will leave you dissatisfied…"

As Meng Hao walked away, Yin Tianlong, off in the distance, let out a sigh. With a smile on his face, he hurried forward. He too said that he had found some items which were destined to be Meng Hao's. He also offered up a bag of holding, inside of which were fifty Spirit Stones. Meng Hao accepted it with a slight frown.

"We're both fellow disciples," he said. "The grievances of the past are not worth keeping track of. There's no need to act like this."

Upon hearing this, Yin Tianlong's heart thumped, and he understood Meng Hao's true meaning. Inwardly cursing Zhou Kai for giving more, he clenched his jaw and produced another bag of holding, whereupon Meng Hao nodded.

As he walked, Meng Hao met more people who had offended him in the past, and they all acted similarly. Soon he had ten new bags of holding.

"What do you think?" said Fatty, looking pleased. "I handled things pretty well, didn't I? I found all of them earlier and gave them a bit of coaching. I told them that one must offer up a bit of blood now to avoid trouble in the future.”

Meng Hao laughed and shook his head. He had sensed something odd about the goings-on and had guessed that Fatty must have been up to something over the past half month.

“What about that fifth-level disciple who tried to kill you that day?” asked Meng Hao.

“Oh, him. I used the jade slip you gave me to make him go see the Minister of the Outer Sect, who arranged for him to go out into the wild mountains to catch some Demonic beasts. He can’t return until he gets 100.” As far as Fatty was concerned, anyone who offended him would have to pay the price.

“Just don’t do something publicly that could box you into a corner,” said Meng Hao, his eyes flashing and his voice low.

“I understand,” said Fatty in a similarly low voice. “It’s taken care of. Zhou Kai and Yin Tianlong will get rid of him for good.”

They looked at each other, then laughed. They never brought up the matter again.

After making a circle around the Outer Sect, and having been greeted by many disciples, they finally reached the Pill Cultivation Workshop. Meng Hao paused for a moment to look at it, then a smile broke out on his face and he entered.

When the middle-aged man who ran the workshop saw Meng Hao, he stood up.

“Greetings, Elder Brother Meng.”

Meng Hao smiled and nodded his head, glancing around at all the Medicinal pills.

“Don’t worry, Elder Brother Meng,” said the middle-aged man. “Junior Brother Li Fugui is taking care of the Pill Workshop. Business is good. I definitely won’t give any other disciples a chance to buy Medicinal Pills.” He thumped his palm onto his chest.

Fatty beamed with joy. Previously, he had given the middle-aged Cultivator a bag of holding when no one was looking. Soon, the man had grown accustomed to this. Although the Medicinal pills here belonged to the Sect, and weren’t personal property, the man wasn’t opposed to making a bit of profit of his own.

Thanks to Fatty’s anticipation and stubbornness, it wasn’t until midday that Meng Hao was able to satisfy him. They walked around the entire Outer Sect until everyone had seen them together. Finally, after much begging and pleading, they went to the Treasure Pavilion.

The shrewd-looking man at the Treasure Pavilion had been waiting outside for some time. When he saw Meng Hao approaching, he made a long, grand salute, then in a loud, clear voice said, “Treasure Pavilion disciple Sun Tiandi gives greetings to Elder Brother Meng. Elder Brother Meng is a dragon among men, powerful and imposing beyond the ordinary…” The man was not very educated, and his words were a bit over the top. His expression was one of excitement, but inside he was a bit worried, although only he knew that.

He feared that Meng Hao would bring up the matter of him cheating him all those years back. He glanced at the eager-looking Fatty.

Fatty cleared his throat. “My friend here wants me to go in to take a treasure,” he said, sounding a bit embarrassed. “If it breaks any rules, you can place the blame on him.”

Meng Hao was a loss for word. Finally, he went in with Fatty to inspect the Treasure Pavilion. After a while, they left, despite Fatty’s pleas to stay. By the time Meng Hao arrived back at the East Mountain, the sun was beginning to set. He sat down on a boulder outside the Immortal’s Cave, thinking about the day’s events. Now he had an even deeper understanding of what it meant to be a member of the Inner Sect.

As evening fell, Meng Hao looked out at the rosy sky. Then he noticed that off in the distance, a woman approached. She looked like some sort of celestial being, wearing a silver robe, with long black hair and a pale face that was beautiful even though she wore no makeup whatsoever. Her face, though cold, seemed to Meng Hao to contain something delicate and touching.

“Elder Sister Xu,” said Meng Hao, cupping his hands in greeting.

“Congratulations, you’ve become a member of the Inner Sect.” Just like her name, Elder Sister Xu was cold and cheerless. That was her personality, and yet, she didn’t treat everyone coldly. For example, upon hearing her young servant mention Meng Hao, she had come here to see him.

Meng Hao smiled, standing next to her. Their long robes rippled in the mountain breeze.

“Today I went to the Pill Cultivation Workshop and traded for another Cosmetic Cultivation Pill.” He lifted it up and handed it to her.

She said nothing, looking at the pill for a while, then eventually accepting it. She stood there with him, silently looking off into the rosy horizon.

She was incredibly beautiful, seemingly flawless, like jade. The glow of the setting sun reflected off her, increasing her beauty.

Time seemed to come to a standstill. As they stood there on the East Mountain, their shadows merged together in the evening sun, like ink blending with water. It was something which would last for an eternity.

The evening sunlight slowly faded past the horizon, and then the moon peeked out. Finally, Elder Sister Xu turned and began to walk off. She had only taken five steps before she stopped.

“I went to the Pill Cultivation Workshop. The Cosmetic Cultivation Pill you gave me before wasn’t purchased by you.” With that, she left, not looking back.

Meng Hao stared in shock, and wasn’t even able to react until some time had passed. He scratched his head. His eyes gradually filled with light. He had never imagined that something like this would happen. And yet, it seemed it had…

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# Chapter 38: Qi Condensation Manual of the Sublime Spirit Scripture

Two months passed in the twinkling of an eye. Meng Hao had already been a member of the Inner Sect for an entire season. He did not continue to visit the Outer Sect often. Like a fish in water, Fatty had grown accustomed to surviving on his own, and was quite at ease.

Most of Meng Hao’s time was spent in the Magic Pavilion.

One day, he sat there cross-legged, a calm expression on his face as he read a bamboo text. He raised his right hand and began to make incantation gestures, causing a magical light to circulate around it and cast flickering shadows onto his face.

A Water Globe appeared, but then unexpectedly transformed into mist and dissipated into the surroundings. Meng Hao frowned, putting down the bamboo text. He reached into his robe and pulled out a glowing jade slip.

It was pure white and blurry inside, as if it were filled with mist. A closer inspection revealed that the surface was actually translucent, like crystal.

“Chen Fan, Xu Qing, Meng Hao. Come to the main temple hall on the East Mountain.” The words were spoken by a dignified voice which transmitted out from within the jade slip. It was easily identifiable as belonging to Sect Leader He Luohua.

Meng Hao straightened up the bamboo texts, stood and strode silently out of the main door of the Magic Pavilion, making his way toward the top of the East Mountain.

At almost the same time as he walked out, two figures shot toward the peak. One had a warm, gentle face, filled with righteousness: Chen Fan. The other was beautiful but cold: Elder Sister Xu Qing.

Xu Qing cast a glance at Meng Hao. This was the first time they had seen each other since that evening the previous month.

The three sped toward the peak of the East Mountain, eventually arriving at the main temple hall. It had an ancient feel, the rich ornamentation giving the feeling that it had seen many ages pass. This was a very important place to the Reliance Sect, a place that throughout the generations, only Inner Sect disciples could visit.

Within the main temple hall were nine statues. The foremost one was of an old man, his expression not one of anger, yet still filled with might. His dark eyes seemed to shine with life. His left hand was lifted up in front of him, his chin raised as if he were staring down his nose at all creation. He seemed to emanate a sort of indescribable, domineering air. Behind him, eight statues were arranged neatly, all of them possessing the demeanor of transcendent beings.

Meng Hao had visited this place during his first seven days in the Inner Sect. He had kowtowed before these statues, and knew well that the calm, powerful old man was none other than Patriarch Reliance. The other statues were the other Patriarchs of the Reliance Sect.

Sect Leader He Luohua stood beneath the statues, his back toward Meng Hao and the others as they entered. He stared at the statues as if he were in a trance. It was impossible to tell what he was thinking. Next to him was Grand Elder Ouyang. He nodded to the three of them, a solemn expression on his face.

“Pay homage to the Patriarch,” he said, his voice profound.

Meng Hao, Xu Qing and Chen Fan bowed deeply to Patriarch Reliance, their faces somber.

“I joined the Sect when Patriarch Reliance had been missing for one hundred years,” said He Luohua. “At that time, the Reliance Sect was still in its glory days.” He sighed and turned around. Meng Hao, Chen Fan and even Xu Qing gazed at him with shining eyes.

He was silent a moment, before slowly continuing: “You have read about Patriarch Reliance in the ancient records, and know how glorious our Reliance Sect used to be… We even had a complete understanding of the three levels of Foundation Establishment. I’ve called you here today to explain the complete truth.

“The former glory of the Reliance Sect was all due to Patriarch Reliance. Because of his Cultivation base, he dominated the entire State of Zhao. His reputation even shook the Southern Domain. All of that was because of one of the manuals of the Sublime Spirit Scripture.” As He Luohua spoke, Chen Fan’s eyes began to shine brightly. Even Xu Qing’s grew sharp.

Only Meng Hao stared blankly; he had no idea what the Sublime Spirit Scripture was.

“The Qi Condensation manual?” said Chen Fan lightly. He was a senior disciple of the Inner Sect, and knew many secrets. Other things he had worked out through speculation.

“The Sublime Spirit Scripture is one of the three great classic scriptures in the Nanshan Continent,” continued He Luohua softly. “It was passed down through the generations since ancient times. Originally it was comprised of seven manuals, but most have been lost. One of them was the Qi Condensation manual, which describes how to establish a Flawless Foundation. The Foundation Establishment manual describes the method to Form a Purple Core, not a Crimson or Mixed Core. The Core Formation manual can enable one to develop a four-colored Nascent Form… In other words, each manual enables one to reach the strongest stage.

“That year, Patriarch Reliance obtained the Qi Condensation manual. The reason the heir to the Wang clan joined the Reliance Sect was because of the Sublime Spirit Scripture’s Qi Condensation Manual.”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and his heart began to race. He had heard Elder Brother Chen speak of the different levels of Foundation Establishment. Now that he knew how powerful this magic was that Patriarch Reliance had obtained, he understood why Wang Tengfei had joined the Reliance Sect.

“If I could obtain it…” The strong desire in his heart suddenly began to burn even hotter.

“Sadly, even I have never laid eyes on this Qi Condensation manual, let alone others,” said He Luohua. “The scripture was not handed down. It exists only in the memory of the Patriarch.” Meng Hao remained silent, and Chen Fan’s face flashed with realization. Xu Qing raised her head to look at the statue of Patriarch Reliance.

Silence reigned in the main temple hall.

“Four hundred years have passed, and everyone in the outside world assumes that the Patriarch died during his meditation. Only myself and a few others know that the Patriarch… is absolutely not dead.” As his words drifted out into Meng Hao’s ears, they seemed to transform into a thunderous roar.

“Four hundred years ago, the Patriarch’s Cultivation base had reached the late Nascent Soul stage. And yet, he was reaching the end of his life. In order to break through to the fabled Spirit Severing stage, one must be at least one thousand years old. If not, how can he defy the Heavens to sever his Spirit?

“The Patriarch chose to meditate in seclusion, in order to sever his Spirit body and be reborn. It was a meditation of… four hundred years.

“When he went into meditation four hundred years ago, the Patriarch left a command. Every one hundred years, he would send out some pieces of Vorpal Jade, formed from his own blood. Then, the outstanding members of the current generation of Inner Sect disciples could use the Vorpal Jade to enter his meditation zone. By kindling the Qi and blood inside the Vorpal Jade, they could have a chance, if lucky, to gain enlightenment of the knowledge he permeated throughout the area. Knowledge of… the Sublime

Spirit Scripture.” He Luohua’s words echoed out. Meng Hao lifted his head up, as did the others.

“Success is success. Failure is failure. If things had stayed the same, surely a disciple would have succeeded already. But two hundred years ago, the Patriarch experienced an accident in his cultivation. He almost lost his life. Afterwards, the chances of enlightenment in his meditation zone grew weak, and the restrictive spells stronger. He didn’t send any more Vorpal Jades out until five years ago… When he did, he sent out three pieces.

“Three pieces of Vorpal Jade indicate that three individuals may enter. It also reveals how powerful the restrictive spells are in the Patriarch’s meditation zone, and means that there are only three areas where enlightenment may occur.” He Luohua’s voice reverberated throughout the main hall. He flicked his right sleeve, and three blood-red streaks shot toward Meng Hao and the others, to stop floating in front of them.

They were jade-smooth Blood Crystals, also known as Vorpal Jade.

“You three are the only disciples of the Inner Sect, and therefore I bestow these Vorpal Jades to you. Whether or not you gain the enlightenment of the Sublime Spirit Scripture will depend on your luck.” With that, he flicked his sleeve again, and the statue of Patriarch Reliance began to hum. Its eyes shone with boundless radiance, and a vortex began to form in front of him.

“Enter,” said He Luohua, his voice sounding out like thunder. “I wish you luck in enlightenment.” Meng Hao and the others seemed to transform into auroras as they gripped their pieces of Vorpal Jade and shot into the vortex, disappearing inside. Outside, the vortex remained, but without a Vorpal Jade, no one, not even a Cultivator at the Nascent Soul stage, could enter it.

Looking up at the vortex, Grand Elder Ouyang quietly said, “Who knows which of them will acquire the Sublime Spirit Scripture, or… perhaps they will all come up empty-handed.”

“It depends on personal fortune, there’s no use in thinking too much about it.” He Luohua sat down cross-legged next to him and began to meditate.

When Meng Hao entered the vortex, a blinding light appeared in front of his eyes which forced him to close them. A rumbling roar sounded in his ears, and then he heard strange shrieks and screams coming from all directions. After what seemed like years, he felt his body suddenly tremble, and then the sounds ceased. The shrieking turned into silence. He opened his eyes to find himself standing on top of a sacrificial altar that was several meters tall. He looked around.

The place was enormous. Up above was black earth, dotted with small crystals that shone like stars, casting a dim light on the surroundings. Nothing was very clear, as if everything were covered with gauze. Various buildings rose up out of the fog.

“How desolate! It seems like no one has been here for hundreds of years.” It was Chen Fan’s voice, drifting from some distance away. Eventually, he appeared, walking through the fog. In the direction from which he came could be seen another altar, several meters tall.

“The soil up above has restrictive spells cast on it. These are the Sect catacombs.” Xu Qing appeared from another direction. Dressed in her silver robe, she appeared matchlessly beautiful.

“I entered the Sect earlier than both of you,” said Chen Fan. “Once I performed guard duty at the main temple hall, so I know a few secrets that you two don’t. These are definitely the Reliance Sect catacombs. Directly above is the Outer Sect.”

Meng Hao walked off the altar to stand next to Chen Fan and Xu Qing. Looking around at the hazy images of buildings around them, he could see plenty of withered plants and flowers. Everything was deathly still.

“This fog is a restrictive spell,” said Meng Hao with a frown. “It’s making everything appear to be black and white. No color whatsoever.”

“Precisely,” said Chen Fan with a serious look. “Don’t attempt to touch it. Because of the Patriarch’s weak state, he’s lost control of it. Let us use our Vorpal Jades to find our places of enlightenment.” He looked at them. “We don’t know how much time we will have to gain enlightenment. Let’s all wait for each other, then leave together. Junior Sister Xu, Junior Brother Meng, I wish you success.” He cast his spiritual power into the Vorpal Jade, whereupon it emitted a blood-red glow and began to drift away. Chen Fan followed, soon disappearing into the distance.

Xu Qing nodded at Meng Hao, then followed the blood-red glow of her Vorpal Jade in a different direction.

Meng Hao looked around, then was about to activate his own Vorpal Jade when suddenly, a shrill shriek rang out. It grew closer and closer, until it seemed to be only about thirty meters away.

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# Chapter 39: Patriarch Reliance!

Meng Hao’s expression changed. He suddenly saw the fog roiling, and then about thirty meters away a shrieking man appeared. He wore a long tattered robe as he charged toward Meng Hao.

He emanated a fierce heat, which transformed into a ruthless killing aura. Seeing him approach, Meng Hao retreated as fast as possible. This turn of events had happened too quickly. The figure advanced rapidly, and in the blink of an eye it was only nine meters away. Suddenly, it caught sight of the Vorpal Jade in his hand, and its eyes filled with dread and fear.

Meng Hao’s heart churned. He poured the spiritual power from within his body into the Vorpal Jade, and suddenly it began to glow blood-red. It illuminated the man in the dilapidated robe, allowing Meng Hao to see him clearly. He was middle-aged, his body gaunt, like some sort of evil spirit.

Blood-curdling screams shot out of his mouth as he retreated. Moving with incredible speed, he disappeared into the fog.

Sweat broke out on Meng Hao’s forehead, and he took a deep breath. The feeling the middle-aged man gave him was the same feeling he got from Grand Elder Ouyang, boundless and majestic.

“Don’t tell me he was a Cultivator of the Foundation Establishment stage?” Meng Hao hesitated, remaining on guard. He followed the direction of the blood-red light, moving forward carefully. After about half an hour, he stopped in shock. Several figures had appeared, and each of them seemed to have a Cultivation base equal to Grand Elder Ouyang’s. Some even seemed to be as powerful as Sect Leader He Luohua.

“Could they be… automatons?” Upon closer inspection, the figures didn’t actually seem to be alive. They floated around him in circles, none of them approaching him, seemingly terrified of his Vorpal Jade.

Time passed enough for an incense stick to burn, and they slowly disappeared. Meng Hao continued forward numbly, his breathing agitated, a blank look in his eyes.

“This… this…” he murmured. Ahead of him was a mountain, approximately three hundred meters tall. An ordinary mountain would not cause Meng Hao to act in such away. This mountain was made… of Spirit Stones!

Countless Spirit Stones piled together to form a Spirit Stone Mountain!

Meng Hao had never seen so many Spirit Stones in his entire life. His head spun, and he unconsciously wanted to go take them, but after taking a single step forward, he stopped. The Spirit Stone Mountain was gray in color and seemed to be covered with a fine mist. It was a restrictive spell which prevented anything from touching it.

He struggled for some time, not quite willing to give up. When he reached a position about sixty meters from the Spirit Stone Mountain, he suddenly felt a fierce sense of imminent danger. Looking at the mountain with a sigh, he stopped in place.

He knew that if he got too close, his body and soul would be reduced to ashes.

At a loss for a long moment, he turned his head and reluctantly left the Spirit Stone Mountain behind.

More time passed as he followed the blood-red glow, enough for an incense stick to burn, and soon the hazy image of a building appeared in the fog ahead of him. It had a courtyard, filled with withered plants and weeds. A stone sat in the middle of the courtyard, about half the size of a person. It was the only thing in sight that was neither black nor white, nor was there any fog visible near it.

The Vorpal Jade floated toward the large stone, then stopped above it. The blood-red glow began to fade.

Meng Hao walked forward and inspected the area around the stone. This must be one of the areas for enlightenment. He sat down cross-legged onto the stone and looked at the Vorpal Jade floating in front of him. His eyes began to gleam.

“Throughout all these years, many people have come here, and none have successfully achieved enlightenment. When the blood-red glow of the Vorpal Jade fades, it means the time to attempt enlightenment has arrived.” Meng Hao frowned. A strong desire burned in his heart to acquire the secrets of the Qi Condensation Manual. Originally, Wang Tengfei should have been given this opportunity. But Meng Hao knew that his latent talent was simply ordinary, and he had little chance of success.

He didn’t allow the Vorpal Jade to fade, but instead looked up at it, a strange light shining in his eyes. After a bit of time passed, he clenched his jaw, then grabbed it stubbornly.

“This time, I don’t care what happens; I will achieve the enlightenment of the Sublime Spirit Scripture!” Determination filled his voice as he slapped his bag of holding and produced the copper mirror. Grabbing a handful of Spirit Stones, he prepared to begin the duplication process.

Meng Hao had been a member of the Inner Sect for a month. Inner Sect disciples received significantly more Spirit Stones than Outer Sect disciples. Combine that with his profits from the shop as well as the Outer Sect disciples who were trying to ingratiate themselves to him, it ensured that his bag of holding contained many Spirit Stones.

But suddenly, his expression changed as he found that the Spirit Stones distributed by the Sect were incapable of duplicating the Vorpal Jade. It wasn’t that the copper mirror had lost its efficacy, but rather that there simply weren’t enough Spirit Stones. Even mid-grade Spirit Stones were useless.

He stared at the Vorpal Jade for a while before suddenly pulling out seven or eight of the extraordinarily large Spirit Stones he had left. He hesitated for some time, then ground his teeth. Eyes growing red, he put one of the Spirit Stones down onto the mirror, and before he could even put down another piece, the Copper Mirror began to glow with a blinding light, and instantly, fifteen pieces of Vorpal Jade appeared. Meng Hao stared, dumbfounded. Originally, he had assumed he would need multiple Spirit Stones to make it work. But then he ended up with fifteen of the Blood Crystals.

These were Blood Crystals, congealed from Patriarch Reliance’s own blood. Seeing fifteen of them appear left Meng Hao stupefied.

“What… what kind of Spirit Stones are these?” He sat in a daze, thinking back to how he had used two thousand of them that time, and his heart ached.

These large Spirit Stones were definitely some type of extraordinary object.

For now, the most important thing to Meng Hao was the Sublime Spirit Scripture. He clenched his jaw and set aside the matter of the two thousand Spirit Stones. Extending a Blood Crystal, he caused it to fade. As it did so, the blood red glow settled around Meng Hao and an indistinct voice could be heard. He slipped into a dream-like trance, unaware of the passing of time.

At this same moment, Xu Qing and Chen Fan, in their respective enlightenment areas, were also surrounded by the blood-red glow. Their latent talent was beyond ordinary, so their chances of achieving enlightenment were somewhat greater. In Patriarch Reliance’s meditation zone, everything was based on latent talent. So-called luck is the same.

After an indeterminable period of time passed, the red glow around Meng Hao faded, and he began to regain his senses. He seemed to be somewhat at a loss. After some time passed, he had completely recovered, and yet his mind was blank. Not even a scrap of information from the Sublime Spirit Scripture was there.

He sighed, having anticipated this all along. He took out another Blood Crystal and continued to seek enlightenment. Time passed, and even after having used up fourteen Blood Crystals, he still had not succeeded. His heart ached, and he wasn't sure if he should continue. Gnashing his teeth, he pulled out another large Spirit Stone and duplicated more of the Vorpal Jade Blood Crystals. Once again, he activated the blood-red glow, which then covered his body as he began to seek enlightenment.

By this time, the blood-red glow surrounding Xu Qing and Chen Fan had faded. However, they did not rise, instead choosing to remain seated in meditation, not sure when enlightenment might occur.

As for Meng Hao, he seemed to have gone mad, continuously activating Blood Crystals, trying again and again to achieve enlightenment. Anyone who saw this scene would surely go crazy with jealousy.

After activating the twenty-seventh Blood Crystal, Meng Hao suddenly heard what sounded like a voice murmuring next to his ear in the dream-like trance world. He could clearly hear two words.

"Sublime… Spirit…"

When Meng Hao opened his eyes, they were filled with determination. Without hesitation, he pulled out the twenty-eighth Vorpal Jade Blood Crystal, and once again sought enlightenment.

By this time, Xu Qing and Chen Fan had returned to the altar to wait for Meng Hao. They were a bit surprised when they didn't see Meng Hao, but they weren't sure which direction he had headed in, so they couldn't easily search for him. They decided to sit in front of the altar and wait for him.

By the third day, they were beginning to grow impatient and also a bit worried. Of course, they did not even consider that he might have achieved enlightenment, but rather worried that some sort of accident had befallen him.

"Did something happen to Junior Brother Meng?" said Chen Fan worriedly.

Xu Qing didn’t respond, but she looked worried.

After a bit of discussion, they decided to begin looking for him. Unfortunately, because of the frequent appearance of the automatons, their search went quite slowly.

Meanwhile, Meng Hao sat, hair disheveled, eyes bloodshot, murmuring to himself. His words made no sense; they seemed to simply express his desire for the Sublime Spirit Scripture. He pulled out the forty-third Blood Crystal, and the thick, red glow again surrounded him. In fact, the area he was in never lacked the red glow. Meng Hao had gone all out in his search for enlightenment. If he ran low on Blood Crystals, he simply duplicated more.

As of now, he could clearly hear the voice in his ear, but just couldn’t commit it to memory. He could only continue on in another attempt.

There was something that nobody, not Chen Fan or Xu Qing, nor frenzied Meng Hao, had noticed. After the Blood Crystal ceased to glow, it would transform into a barely discernible blood-red light, which would then enter into the ground and pass into a secret chamber below the catacombs.

There, a withered body sat cross-legged, seemingly lifeless. The room was filled with the feeling of death.

Every time one of the blood-red lights entered the room, the body would assimilate it, and begin to change slightly. By the time the third light entered the body, there seemed to be some shred of life in it.

The light of life was dim, though, and the body was unable to do anything except sit there.

This was Patriarch Reliance. The Vorpal Jade Blood Crystals were congealed from his own blood, and contained his aura. After being activated, they would return to him, continuing his life. Without them, he would be thoroughly dead.

Originally, he had planned to postpone his death in this fashion, until the very last spark of his ruthless and ambitious life was extinguished, where upon he would pass into death. He was already in a state of despair. He spent most of his time in deep sleep, awaking only occasionally, and briefly, whereupon he would sink back into slumber. He had no energy to waste on superfluous matters.

As for the Vorpal Jade, this was an arrangement he had prepared many years ago. Were it not for them, he would have passed into death hundreds of years ago.

“These are the last three pieces of Vorpal Jade…” Now that they had returned, he had regained consciousness. He sighed and went back to sleep, knowing that he would probably never wake up again.

And yet suddenly, a fourth blood-red light entered the secret chamber and fused with his body. He woke again, shocked.

“I am… already out of Vorpal Jade. Could I have remembered incorrectly… Hm?” Even as he talked to himself, a fifth blood-red light appeared, making its way into his body.

He observed, dumbstruck, as a sixth, seventh, eighth blood-red light appeared… By the third day, countless blood-red lights had appeared, one after another, continuously fusing with his body. Patriarch Reliance’s heart surged with excitement, and his face filled with hope. Suddenly, his eyes opened.

“These… holy hell, these are clearly not my blood, but they are definitely my Blood Crystals. What’s going on? What the hell is going on?”

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# Chapter 40: Sublime Spirit Scripture

At the same moment that Patriarch Reliance opened his eyes, Meng Hao activated the fiftieth Vorpal Jade Blood Crystal. His head vibrated violently, and a scriptural text floated around him. Each and every character of the scripture emitted a bright golden light which pierced through his body. It completely overpowered the blood-red glow, leaving behind a glowing golden aura.

As the golden aura spread out, Meng Hao began to change. His Core lake churned violently as it began to take on a golden hue. As the lake water became gold, a thunderous roar sounded out, transforming his entire body.

His body filled with loud cracking sounds. His bones grew longer, his blood and flesh grew stronger. In an instant, he grew more powerful, both inside and outside.

His Qi vessels seemed to be as transparent as crystal, completely integrated into his physical body. His hair grew longer as he transitioned into a new state according to the mnemonics of the Sublime Spirit Scripture.

More time passed, approximately six hours, and then another boom sounded out inside Meng Hao. When he opened his eyes, they shined with a golden light.

Time passed, and the golden glow faded. He looked excited. Within his mind he could clearly see a mnemonic, branded indelibly onto his spirit. He understood every single line. This was … the Sublime Spirit Scripture.

This was something that could cause blood to spray like rain in the outside world. This was the Qi Condensation manual that countless Sects would fight like mad for. And here it was, inside Meng Hao's head.

After the six hours of transformation, Meng Hao was still at the sixth level of Qi Condensation. But as for his new Cultivation method, it could be counted as one of the three best in the entire Nanshan continent.

This good luck was something that even the disciples of the great clans and Sects would have a hard time achieving.

Using the Cultivation method of this Qi Condensation manual, if Meng Hao was able to reach the Foundation Establishment phase, then he would definitely be able to establish a Flawless Foundation. In addition, his spiritual power would be much deeper than that of his contemporaries. Perhaps it would not be the most powerful, but as time passed, the power would slowly accumulate, and by the time he reached the Foundation Establishment stage, like a butterfly emerging from a cocoon, he would have a Flawless Foundation rarely seen in the world!

As of right now, if he ran into Wang Tengfei, he would not be put into the precarious position he had been that day. In fact, he could now simultaneously control ten flying swords without losing any of their dexterity. His power had doubled!

Filled with excitement, Meng Hao clenched his fists, his heart filling with intense longing. After a while he took a deep breath, descended from the stone slab, and walked off.

At the moment, Patriarch Reliance was going wild with even more excitement than Meng Hao. Upon opening his eyes, he could see Meng Hao, as well as Chen Fan and Xu Qing. He waited eagerly for Meng Hao to produce another Blood Crystal, then watched in a daze as Meng Hao suddenly achieved enlightenment.

"Dammit, dammit. I should never have placed the enlightenment field out there. No, no, no. If I didn't, how could I get the young pups to come here in the first place. But, but, but.. why did he have to gain enlightenment with only fifty Blood Crystals? A hundred would be better, two hundred, at least three hundred. If there were five hundred, I wouldn’t need to continue meditating here!” Patriarch Reliance was filled with depression. This was his greatest hope, and he was watching it disappear before his eyes. Without Blood Crystals to replenish himself, he could only continue on wasting away. And yet he knew there was nothing he could do.

“I didn’t do myself any favors that year. I closed myself up in here with no way out, and its very difficult to transmit my voice out. As far as magic goes, I’m currently too weak to do much of anything. What to do? What to do? I have to think of something…” His face grew anxious as he watched Meng Hao meet Xu Qing and Chen Fan out in the catacombs above the secret chamber. They proceeded toward the altar, clearly preparing to leave.

“If I caused all of the members of the Cultivation World of the State of Zhao to come here, I could use the power of their Cultivation bases to break me out of this meditation zone. If I can break out, then I can absorb their life force, then have a chance at my Second Severing.” Patriarch Reliance gnashed his teeth, squeezing as much as he could out of his weak Cultivation base, then slapping his right hand down onto the ground. It began to rumble.

At that same moment, Meng Hao was trying to come up with an excuse for why he had gone missing for those few days, and why his body looked different. Chen Fan smiled and nodded, and Xu Qing, seeing that Meng Hao wasn’t harmed, didn’t say anything. The three of them stepped up onto the altar, getting ready to depart.

Suddenly a roaring sound filled the air, and the entire catacombs began to shake. Their expressions changed as a giant crack split the earth in front of them and a massive stone stele slowly lifted up. After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, and it had finally completely emerged.

It was approximately thirty meters tall, inscribed with golden characters. It was a scripture, none other than the Qi Condensation Manual of the Sublime Spirit Scripture!

The three of them stared in shock, especially Meng Hao. After all the trouble he had gone through to acquire the Qi Condensation manual, here it was in front of him. He looked at it in a daze. But after examining it further, a strange expression appeared on his face. The first two lines of the scripture inscribed on the stele were accurate, but the rest was a complete fabrication. It appeared to be filled abstruse mysteries, but since Meng Hao knew the details of the true scripture, he could tell instantly that this one was false.

He hesitated for a moment but didn’t say anything.

Chen Fan’s eyes glittered. He walked forward to stand beneath the stele, as did Xu Qing. They looked at it for some time, then exchanged shocked glance.

“We should take this with us,” said Xu Qing slowly, “and let the Sect Leader decide what to do with it.”

Meng Hao blinked, then nodded as if he completely agreed.

When Patriarch Reliance saw this, he laughed, more than pleased.

“Take it, take it, quickly! Take it out and let as many people know as possible. Hahaha! I’m so smart. I was worried people might break in here during my meditation, so I prepared that false stele. Of course, fearing it might be identified as false, I prepared a little trick. Once it’s removed from this place, it will project a sign into the sky which people in all directions will be able to see. Originally it was designed to cause harm, but now, it’s going to be quite helpful to me. Excellent. Excellent!” Excitement filled Patriarch Reliance’s heart, but then suddenly, his eyes widened.

“We must not!” said Chen Fan in a dignified voice. After examining the stele carefully, his face filled with resolution. He shook his head, looking at Meng Hao and Xu Qing. “This stele is extremely important. If we take it out, then we would be bringing calamity upon the Sect. If an outsider learned of its existence, it could bring about our destruction. Let’s each of us use a jade slip to make a copy of the scripture inscribed onto the stele. That way, we can take the contents out, but leave the stele in place. That is the safest method.” Chen Fan’s face was filled with sincerity and righteousness. What he said was completely selfless in nature, and also took the safety of the Sect into consideration. Xu Qing nodded, and Meng Hao, of course, did not disagree. They immediately copied the contents onto their jade slips, then stood onto the altar and make their departure.

Patriarch Reliance watched on in shock, then let out a furious howl.

“Dammit! Dammit! I will crush this generation’s Sect Leader! How could you let a guy like this into the Inner Sect? He’s completely honest and upright, which I despise! In my day, everyone in the Sect was dark and crafty. Take the scripture and keep it secret, that’s a real disciple of my Sect. As for you, you righteous little pup, you… You’ve brought about my death!! Why did you have to stop them? Dammit! My Cultivation base! I, I, I…” Patriarch Reliance was so furious that his body trembled. He ground his teeth, and with an air of abandon, held his breath for a moment, then let out a low shout. He slapped the top of his own head, then spat up a mouthful of blood. The blood transformed into a shapeless blood-red glow, which then began to send a reverberating hum throughout the secret chamber.

Amidst the reverberations, the blood-red glow suddenly shot toward Meng Hao and the others as they left the catacombs.

As soon as they stepped foot into the main temple hall of the Reliance Sect, as soon as He Luohua and Grand Elder Ouyang saw them, before they could even open their mouths, the blood-red glow shot out. None of them noticed.

Suddenly a thunderous sound rang out, and a bright light spread out, millions of meters in all directions, turning the entire sky bright red. Then, in the middle of it all, amidst a multitude of colors, appeared a strange sign.

There were a multitude of characters. Most of the characters weren’t able to be seen clearly, but two were. They read…

Sublime Spirit…

The sign filled heaven and earth in all directions. The multitudinous characters of the scripture glowed brightly, especially the two characters “Sublime Scripture,” shining out across the entire State of Zhao. Within the three Great Sects of the State of Zhao, all the disciples stared up in astonishment at the strange phenomenon. Streak after rainbow-like streak flew from the various closed-door meditation zones as multiple Sect Patriarchs emerged.

“This….”

“The Sublime Spirit Scripture!!”

“The Sublime Spirit Scripture has appeared. It appears to be located in the Reliance Sect. Could it be… could it be that the legendary Qi Condensation manual really is there?”

In the space of a moment, powerful members of several great Sects of the Southern Domain emerged from meditation. For the Sublime Spirit Scripture and the Qi Condensation manual to appear was an exciting matter. Without hesitation, they shot from the Southern Domain directly toward the State of Zhao. They all feared that if they weren’t fast enough, their opportunity could be lost to the other powerful Southern Domain clans, or other Sects.

In the Southern Domain, the wind had shifted.

Prismatic streaks of light shot toward the Reliance Sect, as nearly twenty Cultivators from the three great Sects of the State of Zhao moved into action. The weakest among them was of the Foundation Establishment stage. Six were of the Core Formation stage. They cut through the sky with earth-shattering power.

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# Chapter 41: A Sensation in the State of Zhao!

When the sign appeared in the sky above the Reliance Sect, all of the disciples in the Outer Sect stared up in awe and shock, their minds buzzing. Their eyes filled with vacant looks, unable to comprehend what they were seeing.

Looking at the golden characters filling the sky, their hearts trembled. Fatty, who was filing his teeth with the fish-scale sword, made choking sounds, narrowly avoiding stabbing himself in the tongue as he gaped at the scene.

Shangguan Xiu, who sat in secluded meditation, suddenly lifted up his head. When he saw what was happening, his body began to tremble, and his eyes shined with disbelief. His face changed, as if he had suddenly just thought of something incredibly frightening. He stood in a flash, and suddenly, a teleportation spell appeared that he had prepared years before.

As fast as possible, he stepped into the spell, then disappeared.

In the main temple hall on the East Mountain, as Meng Hao and the others appeared, He Luohua’s face fell. Looking up into the sky, his face grew pale, and he staggered backwards a few paces.

Grand Elder Ouyang raced out of the main temple, looking up into the sky, his face grim.

“Did you touch anything in the Patriarch’s meditation zone?” he asked, turning to look back at them. His expression was very solemn, as was his tone of voice.

“When we were just about to leave, a stone stele appeared,” said Chen Fan, sounding pained. “We were worried that if we brought it out with us, it could bring disaster to the Sect. So instead, we made copies of it.” He took out his jade slip, as did Meng Hao and Xu Qing. They handed them to Grand Elder Ouyang.

“This is…” Grand Elder Ouyang’s brow furrowed, and then his eyes shone with disbelief.

“There’s no need to study it, it’s fake,” said He Luohua with a long sigh. “The stone stele as well as the sign in the sky. They’re both fake.” He looked down at the ground, then shook his head.

“Other Sects from the State of Zhao will be arriving soon. The Reliance Sect will not be able to evade this disaster. They’re here for the Patriarch.” He flicked his sleeve, and a rumbling could be heard throughout the entire Reliance Sect. A soft light arose, covering everything.

“You three are Inner Sect disciples, go wait in the main temple hall.” Just as his voice sounded out, blurs of light whizzed through the sky from all directions, nearly twenty of them, accompanied by high-pitched whistling shrieks.

The blurs approached the shield which surrounded the Reliance Sect, and as they did, heaven and earth shook. The four mountain peaks trembled as if they might collapse. Silence suddenly filled the surrounding wild mountains. The wild beasts all trembled in fear, not daring to make even a single sound.

Of the twenty or so people in the sky, there were six who formed the nucleus of the group. Four were men and two were women, and they were all elderly. They wore luxurious gowns, and the power which emanated from their Cultivation bases was petrifying.

Each of these six people had two or three Cultivators behind them, followers, each of whom had Cultivation bases on par with Grand Elder Ouyang. These nearly twenty people were the most powerful people in all the State of Zhao, and here they were at the Reliance Sect, bearing down on it like dark clouds.

“Reliance Sect!” a voice boomed out, billowing like thunder. The buildings which comprised the Outer Sect seemed as if they would collapse at any moment. Large amounts of Outer Sect disciples coughed up blood, fear covering their faces.

“The Cold Wind Sect is powerful,” said He Luohua with a harrumph. His voice rang out like a thunderclap as he stood there on the mountain’s peak, suppressing the voice which had just spoken. He raised his right hand, and a hum sounded out as an invisible wind sprang up. It shot toward the person who had just spoken, surrounding him, suddenly turning black and transforming into a massive shapeless mouth that seemed about to swallow up the Core Formation stage Cold Wind Sect eccentric. The man’s face changed, and he retreated quickly without hesitation.

“Enough, enough,” said one of the powerful Core Formation experts, looking down at He Luohua. His voice was light but filled with suppressive power. He wore a long, purple robe embroidered with images of flutes. Frowning, he raised his hand, and the shapeless black wind dissipated. “Fellow Daoist He, the sign in the heavens came from your Reliance Sect. Please hand it over to us.”

A deathly silence filled the Outer Sect, as the disciples felt the shadow of death looming over them. Within the main temple hall, Meng Hao, Chen Fan and Xu Qing sat silently. They knew that any one of the people outside had Cultivation bases so frightening they could annihilate all of them with the wave of a hand.

Meng Hao’s heart thundered as he looked at them. It was his first time seeing people so powerful. His thoughts suddenly filled with an intense desire to become more powerful.

He Luohua stood on the peak of the East Mountain, looking up at the group of people. After some time passed, he sighed.

“What do you want me to hand over? I have no idea where that sign came from.”

“Give in without a fight,” said the man in the purple robe grimly. “Disperse the Reliance Sect’s grand protective spell. Allow us to search freely. This is what we mean by handing it over. If you don’t, then despite the fact that we are fellow Cultivators of the State of Zhao, we will destroy your grand spell and then exterminate the Reliance Sect.”

“Exterminate the Reliance Sect…” He Luohua suddenly laughed, louder and louder. It echoed out throughout the Reliance Sect. As he laughed, he saw Grand Elder Ouyang standing there next to him, looking as if he were ready to fight to the death. He also saw the three Inner Sect disciples sitting grimly in the main temple hall. Then he glanced at the crowds of Outer Sect disciples, covered in blood. He knew that they were without hope, helpless.

How could he fight back? How could he ensure that the Outer Sect disciples lived to see another day? How could he avoid this disaster…

“As long as I am the Sect Leader of the Reliance Sect, I will not allow outsiders to bully and humiliate us. But there’s really no way for me to protect everyone…” His laughter carried sorrow within it, but also a tiny shred of hope.

“Even if you don’t exterminate the Reliance Sect, I fear that it cannot continue on for very long. Therefore… as of today, the Reliance Sect is disbanded. I have no further need of these trivial mountains!” He flicked his sleeve and flew up into the air. Looking shocked, Grand Elder Ouyang followed him. They floated in the air, looking down at the Reliance Sect, at what had been their home for so many sixty-year cycles. Their expressions were filled with grief.

“Disciples, hear my order. The Reliance Sect is hereby disbanded! As of now, you are no longer its disciples. This world no longer contains any Reliance Sect!” Veins of blood appeared in his eyes. The twenty or so experts from the State of Zhao began to laugh coldly as they listened to He Luohua’s shocking words.

“Are you satisfied?” he asked. “Any treasures or signs here have nothing to do with me, nor with these Sectless pups beneath me. If you dare to hurt anyone, I will detonate the grand protective spell, and then… we can all perish together.” His voice was resolute, and the bitterness in his words caused the State of Zhao experts’ hearts to quaver a bit.

“Fellow Daoist He, since you have made this decision, of course we will not make things difficult for you,” said an old woman from among the six most powerful of the experts. “The Reliance Sect is disbanded. If you step aside, then we will not cause problems for any of the disciples. You can rest at ease.” Her gaze was like lightning. As she looked over the Reliance Sect, she could tell that the object from which the sign had originated was located here, but was not being held by any of the people.

Meng Hao looked up into the sky, and as He Luohua’s words rang in his ears, he was reminded of the law of the jungle. Despite how powerful the Sect Leader was, he still had been forced to dissolve the Sect.

Chen Fan said nothing, but staggered back a few paces on unsteady legs. Xu Qing lowered her head.

“Hearing the words of the Fellow Daoist from Tianlao, I feel at ease.” He Luohua flicked his sleeve, and the grand protective spell dissipated. With that, he made to leave, followed by Grand Elder Ouyang.

Some among the group of people floating in the sky watched He Luohua with glittering eyes, clearly unwilling to allow him to leave. And yet their attention was captured by the prospect of being able to search the Reliance Sect.

Inside the main temple hall, Chen Fan’s face was pale. He took a few more steps back, until he was leaning up against the statue of Patriarch Reliance.

At that exact moment, a booming sound filled the sky and a multitude of lightning bolts approaching. A cold laughter rolled out, shocking all the Cultivators to the core. Even the faces of the experts from the State of Zhao appeared shaken.

“No one is permitted to leave,” the voice roared. A massive shield suddenly swept over the entire Reliance Sect, covering everything within countless kilometers in ever direction. No one could leave, even if they wanted to.

He Luohua’s face changed. He looked up into the sky and caught sight of a massive Feng Shui compass, roughly three hundred meters in diameter. On top of it stood a beautiful woman wearing a luxurious, dark green robe. Her hair was bound by a phoenix hairpin. Dozens of Cultivators surrounded her, most of whom were female, and all of whom were extremely beautiful. Their expressions were arrogant and cold as they looked down.

“Correct, no one is permitted to leave.” Suddenly, the air seemed to split, and a large, armored man appeared, laughing. He carried an enormous golden sword slung over his shoulder, and was followed by dozens of people, all of them big and tall, their faces filled with killing intent.

“Zhao Shanling of the Golden Frost Sect, Dao Protector,” said the beautiful, middle-aged woman who stood in the center of the Feng Shui compass, her voice cold. “You certainly have a sensitive nose.” Her voice rippled out, filling the air.

“If the ladies of the Black Sieve Sect can come,” replied Zhao Shanjun with a laugh, “then why can’t the men of the Golden Frost Sect?”

Just then, a sigh rang out from outside the massive shield. A cold light shot down from the heavens, and as it approached, it pierced through the shining shield. In through the damaged section shot a flying sword nearly three hundred meters in length.

The primitive-looking, blue-colored sword flew in, surrounding by swirling, intense coldness which caused snowflakes to begin to fall in all the area surrounding the Reliance Sect. Standing on top of the sword was a middle-aged man.

He wore a long scholar’s robe, and held his hands clasped behind his back. He was the only person atop the massive sword, but he emanated the aura of a person who could stride among the heavens unhindered by anyone.

"The Solitary Sword Sect!" said He Luohua, his face changing. He knew the identity of this scholar from the Solitary Sword Sect, the number one Sect in the Southern Domain. Their Sect had a saying: Only a solitary sword need leave the Sect, and the Heavens shall be rattled.

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# Chapter 42: Who Dares to Touch Him!?

“So, it turns out it’s Fellow Daoist Zhou Yanyun,” said the beautiful, middle-aged woman, greeting him with clasped hands. Even hulking Zhao Shanling gave him a silent salute in greeting, a look of fear hidden in his face.

Seeing all these sudden developments, Meng Hao’s heart began to pound. This was the first time he had seen so many powerful people from so many Sects. He was especially impressed by the appearance of the members of the three Great Sects from the colossal Southern Domain that Chen Fan had told him about.

“The Southern Domain…” Meng Hao sucked in a deep breath. Xu Qing stood next to him looking calm. It was impossible to tell what she was thinking.

In the back of the main temple hall, Chen Fan, pale-faced, sadly lifted his right hand up and pushed down on a hidden spot on the statue.

Immediately, the entrance to Patriarch Reliance’s meditation zone closed without a sound and disappeared. Actually, no one inside or outside of the Sect caught any sense whatsoever that this was happening, not even Zhou Yanyun and the others from the Southern Domain.

“Patriarch, Disciple Chen will keep you safe and sound,” he said, his voice filled with righteousness. “I will not allow any of these people to disturb your meditation.” He was faithful and true to the Sect, willing to protect it even at the greatest risk. When his plan succeeded, he let out a sigh, feeling not even the slightest regret.

Meanwhile, in the secret chamber beneath the Reliance Sect catacombs, Patriarch Reliance watched the proceedings triumphantly, filled with excitement.

“Soon, they will find my meditation zone entrance. Then they will charge in and break open my hidden chamber. At long last, I will no longer be stuck in here.” Even as he excitedly spoke these words, his face suddenly changed.

“This… This… Dammit! You… You… What are you doing?!” He watched as Chen Fan, with utmost caution, began to move. Patriarch Reliance watched on in a daze as the entrance to the meditation zone quietly disappeared without a trace. He couldn’t believe it.

Of course, the failsafe had been set up by him years ago as a backup in case a powerful adversary arrived. He had passed on the secret to his successors, and it had been handed down through the generations, the method to prevent outsiders from entering the meditation zone.

Once it was activated, no one would be able to find the entrance, excepting for someone at the Spirit Severing stage. At the time he had set it up, he had been filled with pride, for he knew that he would be perfectly safe.

But he had never imagined that this day would arrive, years later. He had actually forgotten about the whole arrangement, but … there were others who had not.

“Damnation! I should have left orders not to accept any people of moral character into the Sect! No righteous people, no good people. Kid, you, you, you…” He sat there in a daze, muttering to himself, wanting to weep, but having no tears to shed. He thought of the stone stele, of his carefully laid plans, of the blood he had sacrificed, and how it was all ruined by one person. Of course, this person’s intentions were good, but as he thought about his unflinching bravery and faithful demeanor, Patriarch Reliance began to tremble.

Just when he felt he was at the height of despair, Zhou Yanyun of the Solitary Sword Sect arrived. He gazed over the Sect, casting his senses across it, as did the beautiful woman from the Black Sieve Sect and hulking Zhao Shanling. With their powerful senses, they poured over the Reliance Sect, searching it in thorough detail.

The experts from the State of Zhao watched on in fear. And then, they too began to search about with their senses.

After some time, Zhou Yanyun of the Solitary Sword Sect frowned. He could sense the aura of the Sublime Spirit Scripture within these mountains, but also knew that it was not in the possession of any of the Reliance Sect disciples. He just couldn’t find it.

It was not just him. The beautiful woman, as well as Zhao Shanling, also frowned. They descended to the ground and began to search about in person.

The experts from the State of Zhao did the same, and soon people filled the Reliance Sect. Meng Hao and the others were kicked out of the main temple hall, whereupon it was searched to the point of being wrecked. In the sky, the strange sign began to fade, and yet, no one had found even a single clue.

People even descended into the underground areas to search, and yet, they came up empty-handed.

They watched the sign slowly disperse, transforming into a crystalline glow that eventually disappeared. The aura of the Sublime Spirit Scripture disappeared, too, as if it had come and gone with the sign.

The Reliance Sect slowly began to quiet down. No valuable treasures had been found. Even the dragon’s cave in the black mountain had been searched. As for the corpse of the dragon, it had been removed some time ago by Wang Tengfei, leaving the cave empty.

As dusk fell, the search reached its conclusion. The three members of the Southern Domain’s Great Sects looked somewhat embarrassed. They had expended Spirit Stones to teleport here, and yet had come up empty-handed. They were left with the feeling of loss.

“This kid isn’t bad,” said Zhou Yanyun, standing on his massive sword, floating in mid-air. His eyes swept across the land, falling onto Chen Fan. “If you are willing to become a disciple of the Solitary Sword Sect, then come with me to the Southern Domain.” During his search for the Sublime Spirit Scripture, he had noticed Chen Fan’s latent talent, and it had met with his approval. He especially took note of Chen Fan’s righteous air, which fell in line with the Cultivation practices of the Solitary Sword Sect.

As he spoke, he lifted a finger, and Chen Fen floated up into the air. In front of the eyes of Meng Hao, Xu Qing, and all the Outer Sect disciples, he drifted toward Zhou Yanyun.

The experts from the State of Zhao looked on in envy, knowing how lucky the young man was. He Luohua and Grand Elder Ouyang looked on silently, their feelings somewhat mixed. In the end, they knew that the Reliance Sect was too small; they would be very happy if an Inner Sect disciple had the chance to walk a better path.

“Disciple Chen Fan…” began Chen Fan, his face filled with conflicting emotions. He looked down at the Reliance Sect, at He Luohua and Grand Elder as they silently nodded their approval. He looked at Meng Hao and Xu Qing. Then, determination filled his face. “I offer my thanks to the good will of the senior generation,” he said, lifted his head up as he looked at Zhou Yanyun. “But disciple is a member of the Reliance Sect. In this life, I cannot join another.” He knew that if he agreed, he would have much better opportunities in the future. But there are some things that a man just cannot do. For him, there would be only one Sect in his life.

His words seemed to leave the experts from the State of Zhao quite moved. Disciples like this were a treasure to any Sect! And yet, most of them also sported looks of pity on their face. Refusing the Solitary Sword Sect in this manner was courting death.

He Luohua said nothing. He looked at Chen Fan, feeling even more conflicted. He sighed inwardly, wondering how the young man could be so stubborn. There was no need.

Zhou Yanyun’s eyes glittered. He stared at Chen Fan for a while, then dryly said: “Do you know what the words ‘Solitary Sword Sect’ mean in the Southern Domain?”

Chen Fan was silent for a moment, then nodded. He had studied the ancient records, so of course he knew about the Solitary Sword Sect, the number one Sect in the Southern Domain.

“Then you must know my status in the sect.” Zhou Yanyun’s expression was grim, and his eyes radiated killing intent. Even the sky around him grew dark, as if it were being torn by the power of his aura.

“I know of the Solitary Sword Sect, as well as you, Elder Zhou,” said Chen Fan in a soft voice. “Everyone knows you. You are the current generation’s Dao Protector. Your Cultivation base is profound, and your name has rocked the Southern Domain.”

“So, you know me. Then you know what you are giving up by passing up this opportunity.” His voice grew colder, as did the temperature of the air.

“The Solitary Sword Sect has a history tens of thousands of years old. Their Cultivation shrines, their proliferation of powerful experts, the meteoric progress made by the Sect’s members, Chen Fan of the junior generation is well aware of all these things.” He held his head high, unwilling to back down. His glistening eyes held no sign of regret.

Zhou Yanyun looked at him, then suddenly began to laugh loudly.

“Originally I planned to make you an ordinary Outer Sect disciple. But with a temperament like this… Excellent. Excellent! You will be my personal apprentice!” Zhou Yanyun’s smile was filled with admiration. With a flick of a sleeve, he pulled Chen Fan onto the massive sword and prepared to leave.

Seeing the Solitary Sword Sect’s actions, the beautiful, middle-aged woman realized that taking a qualified disciple back with her was the only way to prevent this trip from turning out to be a complete loss.

“This girl isn’t bad. The Black Sieve Sect wants her.”

She had long since taken notice of Xu Qing. She approved of her beauty and coldness. Without waiting for Xu Qing to speak, she bent her finger, pulling her up onto the Feng Shui compass. Everyone watched in envy as she began to transform into a diffraction of light.

Fatty stood there, filing away at his teeth. In his eyes, the Sect being disbanded meant that he was now free. He was filled with a confused happiness. He had only been gone a few years, which meant that when he got back to Yunjie County, the house and the bride that his father had prepared would still be waiting. Soon, he would be able to enjoy the life of a rich person.

“Too bad I won’t be able to see Meng Hao. Oh well. We’re brothers, so I’ll help him pay back the money he owes to Steward Zhou. Eventually, I will absorb the wealth of all the surrounding villages, and then, the entire State of Zhao. Hahaha! I, Li Fugui, will be the richest person in the world!” The more he thought about his plans, the more happier he was. He stood there, filing at his teeth and feeling the anticipation for the future.

Right about then, hulking Zhao Shanling of the Golden frost Sect frowned. He was a bit late in acting. After seeing two of this tiny Sect’s Inner Sect disciples taken away, he glanced at Meng Hao. He was a bit taken aback as he noticed a faint trace of a Demonic aura within him. Muttering to himself, his gaze swept the rest of the Sect, whereupon he caught sight of Fatty standing in the crowd of Outer Sect disciples. He stared in astonishment as Fatty filed at his teeth with his flying sword. His eyes shone, and he completely forgot about Meng Hao and his Demonic aura.

“How exactly is this fatty practicing Cultivation? He’s managed to develop a set of Spirit Teeth. In our Sect, the technique to develop Spirit Teeth has been lost for eight hundred years. With Spirit Teeth, you can crush Spirit Stones with your mouth, which is necessary to practice THAT technique. It seems this trip wasn’t a waste after all. If we take this kid back with us, he will be a true treasure in our Sect.” His eyes glittering fiercely, Zhao Shanling lifted his right hand and snatched up the stupefied Fatty. “Kid, from now on, you are an Inner Sect disciple of the Southern Domain’s

Golden Frost Sect.” He tossed wide-eyed Fatty into a gray-colored sack. Fatty’s shrill cries could be heard faintly as he disappeared inside.

Zhao Shanling turned. Followed by his retinue, he headed toward the immaterial fissure.

And thus, he, along with Zhou Yanyun and the beautiful woman from the Black Sieve Sect, all prepared to take their leave.

But then, Zhao Shanling suddenly remembered something. He turned back to look at the Reliance Sect, and his gaze came to rest on Meng Hao.

As he did, he stopped in his tracks, shocked. The beautiful woman from the Black Sieve Sect, as well as Zhou Yanyun, also stopped.

Meng Hao began to tremble. As the hulking man looked at him, it seemed as if he could see through him completely, as if his vision could pierce to his deepest parts, even to the Demonic Core which rested in his Core lake.

“This is…” the hulking man’s eyes narrowed, then began to shine. A moment ago, he hadn’t cared at all about this weak-looking disciple and had only thought to take Fatty. But something caught his eye about Meng Hao. He turned, and began to walk toward him.

“I want this kid too!” he said in a booming voice. Meng Hao’s face turned cold, and he felt as if his body were about to shatter into pieces. His Core lake seethed, and the Demonic Core felt as if it were about to be ripped out of his body by some invisible force.

Pain filled him, and he broke out in a cold sweat. He once again felt as if his body were being crushed, and he clenched his fists tightly. There was nothing he could do.

At that exact moment, a booming sound rang out from within the Reliance Sect. It was a voice, so powerful that it shook the heavens and earth. In the midst of moving upon Meng Hao, Zhou Yanyun and the beautiful middle-aged woman, as well as the hulking man, suddenly looked shocked. They turned their heads, their eyes filled with astonishment.

“I have one heir left in the Reliance Sect. Who dares to touch him!?”

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# Chapter 43: The Sole Heir

Patriarch Reliance sat in his secret chamber in the Reliance Sect catacombs, his hair disheveled, his eyes red. He looked as if he had gone mad. His plans were about to go awry; in moments, everyone would leave, and if that happened, they wouldn’t come back. He watched in sorrow as the Golden Frost Sect Cultivator began to make a move towards his only remaining Inner Sect disciple. Fury rose in him, and without holding anything back from his Cultivation base, he sent his voice thundering out.

It shook the Heavens and stirred up a gale-forced wind which swept back and forth. In the wild mountains surrounding the Reliance Sect, trees were uprooted as the tempest battered the land. Many other trees were simply splintered into pieces until the tempest became a dark green color, filled with flashing lightning. The experts from the State of Zhao floated in mid-air looking on, dumb with amazement.

Even Zhou Yanyun from the Solitary Sword Sect looked confused. Carrying Chen Fan’s unconscious form in his arm, he retreated. The massive sword began to hum, and then he was surrounded by multitudinous sword auras.

The beautiful woman from the Black Sieve Sect also looked surprised. She retreated, reaching down to slap the surface of the Feng Shui compass. It suddenly expanded to twice its original size.

As for Zhao Shanling from the Golden Frost Sect, he took a deep breath and retreated backward, his fingers moving in incantation patterns. The golden sword flew out from behind him, and his entire body glowed with a golden light, making him look like some sort of celestial general.

The three of them stared around at the Reliance Sect, as if they were facing a deadly opponent.

Meng Hao, who still stood on the East Mountain, looked at this change of events, at the dark green tempest which filled the sky with its deafening roar, filled with unparalleled might. He found it difficult to breathe. His eyes wide, he moved backwards, his clothing whipping in the frenzied wind. He grabbed onto a boulder and held on, lest he be sucked up by the wind. And yet, his eyes shined. Patriarch Reliance's words just now had reminded him of what he had read on the first page of the manual all those years ago when he had first arrived at the Reliance Sect.

He Luohua and Grand Elder Ouyang also looked surprised. This turn of events was too sudden, shocking them to the extent that it almost seemed as if their Cultivation bases would crumble under the might of the tempest.

"Let it be known, the Patriarch is still here!" roared Patriarch Reliance, deep in the catacombs. "No one is permitted to touch the kid surnamed Meng! He is my only Inner Sect disciple left. If he dies, I will have no hope!!" Gritting his teeth, he slapped the top of his head, and his body shook. He spat out a mass of blood, then continued to hit himself over and over again, spitting out more and more blood. His body began to spin.

A look of hatred appeared in his eyes. After hitting himself seven or eight times, a massive amount of blood had been spat out. It congealed together, then shot toward the stone wall with a resounding boom. It banged against the wall, and nearly half of it was gone by the time it was able to punch through.

Having accomplished this, Patriarch Reliance's head tilted to the side and he slipped into unconsciousness. He almost seemed dead, as if only the refined blood contained his awareness.

The refined blood burst out from the secret chamber and through the catacombs. Outside, in plain view of the awestruck bystanders, it spread out to cover the entire Reliance Sect into a roiling red fog. Within the mists of the fog boomed the sound of lightning as it continued to expand. In an instant, it had covered the surrounding mountainous region for countless kilometers in every direciton. From the outside, it appeared as if the entire area had turned into a red sea of fog!

The fog churned and the roaring sound lifted into the skies. All of the Cultivators present were stunned, and their shock was visible on their faces, even Zhou Yanyun and the others.

Within the red fog, the Reliance Outer Sect disciples all lapsed into unconsciousness, uninjured. On the other hand, Sect Leader He Luohua and Grand Elder Ouyang were pushed away, out of the fog. Their faces went pale as they watched on in astonishment.

The fog roiled ceaselessly, and the thunderous roar continued on until it seemed there was nothing in the world except its resonant booming. The land was like an ocean of fog, the sky colorless. Then, the fog began to move, forming together into a gigantic face.

The size of the face left everyone filled with fear.

The face was that of an old man, calm, powerful and domineering. His eyes were closed, but as soon as He Luohua and Grand Elder Ouyang saw him, their heads began to spin. They recognized this as none other than… Patriarch Reliance

“Patriarch…” said Grand Elder Ouyang, his eyes wide, filled with excitement.

“He… He’s not dead after all!!” The experts from the State of Zhao cried out in alarm, their faces draining of blood. One after another, they fled, their hearts trembling.

Suddenly, Patriarch Reliance’s colossal red-fog face opened its eyes a crack. They opened just a sliver, and yet they emitted a trembling power which seemed as if it could crack open the earth.

He glanced up at the Heavens, and they seemed to be bloodshot. As his gaze swept around, the dark green tempest smashed into the red fog, seemingly transforming into Patriarch Reliance’s long, dark hair.

As he watched this, Zhou Yanyun’s face went pale and he spat out a mouthful of blood. As he retreated backwards his massive sword suddenly split in two, leaving behind only a stump of a blade. His eyes filled with dread, and his heart pounded. His Cultivation base was at the Nascent Soul stage, but caught underneath this gaze, his Nascent Soul began to wither. He retreated even faster, pulling out a blue-colored talisman, which he activated. It covered his body, as well as unconscious Chen Fan, as he sped off into the distance. A powerful voice seemed to echo in his heart, telling him that his opponent was not at the Nascent Soul stage, but rather, the almighty Spirit Severing stage.

As the beautiful woman from the Black Sieve Sect saw all of this happening, the Feng Shui compass beneath her suddenly began to emit popping sounds, and was riddled with cracks. Then it exploded into pieces. This woman had never been so afraid. Spitting out blood, she retreated with an unconscious Xu Qing. The only thing that filled her mind was: flee!

As for tall, hulking Zhao Shanling, his body seemed as if it were being attacked by a falling mountain. He retreated backwards, coughing up blood. The golden sword in front of him shattered into fragments. His face pale, he turned and dashed away, fleeing toward the immaterial crack.

The experts from the State of Zhao all spit up blood. The Foundation Establishment stage Cultivators felt the spiritual energy in their body snapping, and they knew their longevity had been damaged. Their faces grew wan.

On top of the East Mountain, the red fog curled around Meng Hao, circling around his waist. Face pale, he continued to grip the boulder. To the onlookers, however, Meng Hao’s position was exactly in the middle of Patriarch Reliance’s forehead.

“You forced my Reliance Sect to disband, and you’ve attempted to slaughter my only heir! You truly have gall!” His world-shaking voice boomed out in all directions, and as it did, three red beams of light shot out, shooting straight toward Zhou Yanyun, the beautiful woman and the hulking man from the Golden Frost Sect.

“I, Zhou, am an Elder of the Solitary Sword Sect, a Protector of the Dao. If Patriarch Reliance kills me, the Solitary Sword Sect will destroy you!”

“Patriarch Reliance, please cease your anger. Junior is a disciple of the Black Sieve Sect, my grandfather is Ping Sandao, your good friend!”

“Junior was mistaken, Patriarch, please calm your anger.”

Words poured out of the three people as the red light pursued them; Patriarch Reliance let out a cold snort.

“Beat it, you three!” The three red beams disappeared. “Go back and ask your Sect Elders if they’ve forgotten about the Blood Pact we made all those years ago. The State of Zhao is my realm. Anyone who dares step foot here cannot blame me for annihilating them. As for those three other disciples, take them away, I don’t need them.” Their faces pale, the three Southern Domain disciples disappeared.

Seeing this, the State of Zhao Cultivators froze in place, trembling. Seeing Nascent Soul stage Cultivators act like that left them petrified. The most powerful among them was only at the Foundation Establishment stage.

The thousand-year-old legends about Patriarch Reliance had now come to being in front of their very eyes.

As the powerful, domineering voice boomed out, the fog began to roil and spin, with Meng Hao as its center. The fog congealed in front of him to form a long spear.

It was not red, but instead covered with talismanic inscribing of white, silver and gold. It appeared to be incredibly extraordinary.

“The Reliance Sect has been dissolved. So be it. But this kid is my only Inner Sect heir. If anyone dares to touch him…” His attention turned to Meng Hao. “In that case, Meng Hao, use this spear to exterminate that person! All of you, beat it!” His voice echoed out across the land. The State of Zhao experts immediately fled. What they didn’t seem to notice was that Patriarch Reliance’s voice had grown noticeably weaker. It was barely noticeable, but if one paid careful attention, it was definitely weaker.

The unconscious Outer Sect disciples suddenly lifted up into the air and flew away in all directions. Then, a turbulent, blood-red glow enveloped the entire Reliance Sect. No onlooker would have been able to see it, but Meng Hao could.

He Luohua and Grand Elder Ouyang watched on in a daze. Finally, shame appeared on He Luohua's face. He lowered his head and saluted respectfully toward the blood-red shield. Then, he let out a light sigh, turned, and disappeared into the distance.

Grand Elder Ouyang was silent. One by one, he took the Outer Sect disciples out into the wild mountains. Then he looked at the Reliance Sect from a distance. With a sigh, he departed.

He and He Luohua both knew that with the Patriarch's acknowledgment of the dissolution of the Sect, there was no longer such thing as the Reliance Sect.

Meng Hao stood within the blood-red glow, looking excited. He looked at the spear, which emitted a white, silver and golden glow. Suddenly and inexplicably, the spear, completely of its own volition, shot forward, combining with the fog to transform into the image of an old man in a red robe. It was Patriarch Reliance.

Clasping his hands in salute, Meng Hao said, “Disciple Meng Hao pays respects to the Patriarch.” Without even thinking about it, he began a flood of eloquence: “You cast awe into the hearts of the people of the State of Zhao, and your name is even known in the Southern Domain. I have revered you ever since I joined the Sect. Every day I pay homage to your words from the beginning of the manual. I have constantly reaped rewards…”

“Very well, very well. You haven't done well in your studies. Let me tell you, kid, when I was your age, my flattery sounded much more natural than yours. Don't try to pull that stuff off on me.” Patriarch Reliant glared at him, yet inwardly was a bit moved.

Meng Hao looked at him with a sheepish smile.

“Even though it’s useless to flatter me, well I… never mind. Listen up. I was only able to use a sliver of my consciousness, so it wasn’t easy to scare off those damned Nascent Soul stage Cultivators. I don’t have much time at the moment before this form disappears.” As he spoke, he began to grow more and more indistinct. “I need to rest for a year. When that year is up, you must use any means possible to attract every expert of the Foundation Establishment stage or higher from the State of Zhao to come to my meditation zone. If you can accomplish this, then I will give you an incredible reward!” He raised his hand and pointed a finger at Meng Hao.

Instantly, information entered Meng Hao’s mind, and he now knew how to open the entrance to the meditation zone.

“Kid, you are the only heir to my Reliance Sect. Don’t get yourself killed. If you get killed, I will have to find a concubine to bury with you… I… I find it annoying to have to…” The sound of his voice continued to echo about, but his body had dissipated. Not a shadow remained.

Meng Hao stared blankly for some time before recovering. It was at this point that he realized that everything which had happened had been Patriarch Reliance’s attempt to scare away the outsiders.

“So he didn’t kill those three people… But, what happened to the spear he was going to give me?”

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# Chapter 44: The North Sea Reveals the Dao

In the entire expansive Reliance Sect, only Meng Hao remained, standing alone on the East Mountain. He watched the red light fade away, then lowered his head. The formerly bustling Outer Sect was now empty.

Elder Sister Xu had been taken away. Elder Brother Chen had gone to the Southern Domain. Even Fatty was gone. He had no idea when he would see them again. Would it be months? Years?

His status as an Inner Sect disciple, his three years in the Reliance Sect, they all became memories. The twisting autumn wind hit his face and lifted up his hair, blowing away the dust that had settled there.

He quietly sat down on the boulder. A long time passed, and eventually the stars peeked out one by one. Then dawn came. Meng Hao sighed and lifted his head.

“They’re all gone… and here I am, still in the State of Zhao.” Suddenly, Meng Hao missed home. Even though he had gotten rid of his old ancestral house in Yunjie County, he still missed his old bed and dilapidated bowls. Even more so, he missed Mount Daqing. He missed… he missed his kind, smiling mother, and his father, who had always seemed afraid of his mother.

It was all somewhat vague. Meng Hao shook his head, and as the rays of dawn crept out, he stood up. There was no need to search the Reliance Sect. Everything worth taking was long gone, pillaged by the experts from the State of Zhao. It was all was empty.

Meng Hao patted the dust off his clothes, then changed out of his Inner Sect silver robe, back into the scholar’s gown he had worn all those years ago. It was a spacious robe, but as he put it on, it felt a bit small. He stared at the rising sun and let out a sigh. Deep within him, his golden Core Lake seemed to bubble, and within it, the Demonic Core emitted spiritual power that filled and replenished his body.

“I’m not too far from the seventh level of Qi Condensation. I can feel the bottleneck.” He walked forward, slapping his bag of holding. Two flying swords emerged and floated down to his feet. He glided down the mountain and left the Reliance Sect.

Using this technique with the flying swords granted him the ability of flight. But similar to Elder Sister Xu with her Wind Pennant, it was only temporary flight, nothing long term.

Meng Hao moved ever more swiftly, speeding along throughout the mountain forests. Finally, he was able to leave the Reliance Sect region, a place he hadn’t left for three years. He flew throughout the seemingly endless wild mountains, eventually disappearing over the horizon.

Time passed, and maintaining his original speed, Meng Hao eventually emerged from the mountainous region after two days.

“I’m not sure how long it took Elder Sister Xu to bring me to the Sect,” he muttered to himself, looking back at the mountains. “It was a few days, but I was unconscious. In any case, I think her speed at that time would have been similar to my own now.”

To Cultivators, the State of Zhao is not very large. But to mortals, it is actually quite a vast region. In his studies, he had read about its geography, and though he had never personally travelled about in it, he was nevertheless somewhat familiar with the area.

“As of now I’m in the north of the State of Zhao. I shouldn’t be too far from Yunjie County.” Off in the distance, he could see what looked almost like a mirror laying on the flat land. That would be what was referred to as the North Sea.

“Now that I think about it, with a Wind Pennant, and being at the seventh level of Qi Condensation, Elder Sister Xu could fly temporarily, but it would drain her spiritual power relatively quickly. She couldn’t have flown very far away.” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with longing. He had been away from Yunjie County for three years, and his desire to return was growing stronger. He knew that after crossing the North Sea, he would be about a half-day’s walk from Mount Daqing.

Breathing in deeply, he proceeded onward, eventually arriving at the shore of the North Sea. He looked down, and on the surface of the calm lake, he could see his reflection in the water. He was no longer a youth. He looked to be about 20 years of age. His face appeared steadfast and resolute, completely different from the ignorant, immature Meng Hao of the past.

Amidst the silence, a warm, hearty laugh rang out, breaking Meng Hao’s train of thought.

“Hello, young sir, do you wish to cross the sea?” A small boat slid across the water, guided toward Meng Hao by an old man wearing a woven rush raincoat. His face was covered with the evidence of a life of hardship, but he spoke with a smile.

“I do not wish to trouble you, old sir,” said Meng Hao, looking surprised. He hadn’t been called ‘young sir’ for three years now.

“It’s no trouble,” said the old man. “I’ve been ferrying people across the ocean for many years. I really admire young, talented scholars like yourself.” He pushed the boat up next to Meng Hao, who leaped easily onto the deck, offering his thanks.

There was a young girl inside the boat, seven or eight years old, her hair done up in two pigtails. She squatted in front of a little oven, tannings its flames as she boiled water. Steam wafted up.

Inside the pot of water was a bottle of alcohol.

“This is my granddaughter,” said the old man as he turned the boat around. “Too bad she’s a girl. If she were a boy, I would have sent her off to be a scholar. Young sir," he said with a smile, "where are you from?" The boat headed out toward the center of the lake. As the wind sprang up, the old man sat down next to the oven.

The little girl looked up at Meng Hao, her wide eyes innocent and charming.

"I am a young scholar from Yunjie County," Meng Hao said with a smile. "Below Mount Daqing." This type of mortal life caused him to think of his life from before, three years ago.

"Yunjie County, that's a good place! Great men lend their glory to a location. Many years ago, an auspicious sign appeared there. It even arose the notice of the officials." The old man picked up the bottle of alcohol. "This weather is turning cold and my body can't take it. Here, have a drink." He extended the bottle toward Meng Hao. "Can you drink?"

Meng Hao knew the auspicious sign to which he referred. It had been ten years before, the day before his parents went missing. When he thought of this, his heart grew a bit melancholy. He hesitated for a moment, looking at the bottle. He had never drank alcohol before. Back in Yunjie County, he had lived in poverty, and there had been no alcohol in the Reliance Sect. He lifted up a glass and allowed the man to fill it, then took a drink.

A spicy warmth suddenly filled his heart, then slowly spread out through his body.

"Old sir, your conversation topics are somewhat out of the ordinary. Have you been running a ferry here for a long time?" Meng Hao gazed at the rippling green waves, then took another drink of alcohol. The alcohol burned its way down, and he thought of the Reliance Sect, of Elder Sister Xu, Elder Brother Chen and Fatty.

"Twenty years," replied the old man with a laugh. "In my life, I've ferried many, many people across this North Sea. I've seen a lot of things, and of course, I've learned a lot about how people tend to have conversations. Please, don't laugh at me. Who knows how many years this lake has been here? It’s seen a lot of people too. People remember it, and it remembers the people.” The old man lifted his glass and took a drink.

Meng Hao stared at him for a moment. This was the first time he had ever heard someone speak in such a fashion. He looked back at the lake, muttering to himself, seemingly lost in thought.

“This is obviously a lake,” he said suddenly. “Why do people call it the North Sea?”

The old man thought for a moment, then smiled. “Lakes can dry up, grow quiet, and become still. If that happened, no living things would remain. But seas last forever, and can contain the water of countless rivers and lakes. Maybe people just didn’t want the lake to ever go away, so they named it that way. When all is said and done, if you believe it’s a lake, then it’s a lake. If you believe it’s a sea, then it’s a sea.”

When he heard the old man’s words, Meng Hao’s mind suddenly trembled. The hand holding the glass of alcohol began to quiver, and he stared out at the lake water, almost in a trance. He seemed to lose track of time.

Time passed, and the boat reached the shore. Meng Hao pulled out some silver that he had acquired from one of the disciples back at the Reliance sect and paid the fare. He gave the old man a deep bow of respect, then watched as the boat drifted off. His eyes shined with a strange light.

He didn’t leave, but instead sat down cross-legged on the lakeshore, looking out at the waters, and the lone boat disappearing into the distance. He could hear the old man laughing.

“If you believe it’s a lake, then it’s a lake. If you believe it’s a sea, then it’s a sea…” The old man’s voice echoed across the distance. It seemed as if… he were not disappearing into the distance, but rather… merging into it….

Meng Hao sat there in a trance, taking it all in. He sat for three days straight.

He didn’t move at all during that time, instead staring silently at the lake, the old man’s words echoing in his mind.

“Lakes can dry up, grow quiet, become still. If that happened, no living things would remain. But seas last forever, and can contain the water of countless rivers and lakes…” Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly lit up. The golden Core Lake within him seemed boundless, but in his eyes it was still a lake.

“If I believe it’s a lake, then it’s a lake. If I believe it’s a sea, then from now on… let it be a sea!” A thunderous sound filled him, and the Core Lake began to seethe and churn. Without the aid of any medicinal pills whatsoever, it suddenly expanded.

Meng Hao wasn’t aware of any of this. His eyes were closed tightly; he had entered a strange state. The old man’s words filled his mind. He didn’t notice it, but around him, the boundless Spiritual Energy of heaven and earth had begun to gurgle up, surrounding his body and then entering it. Waves broke out across the North Sea, and within its churning arose a massive amount of Spiritual Energy, which rushed forth and surrounded Meng Hao.

The North Sea was revealing the Dao!

If, at this moment, a Core Formation Cultivator could see what was happening, he would be thoroughly shocked.This type of Dao enlightenment was only possible for someone at the Spirit Severing stage. In addition, it required a huge amount of fortune and luck. Yet here was Meng Hao, already reaching out to the threshold!

The reason he could succeed in this was in large part due to the Demonic Core within him. It was the Core of a Flying Rain-Dragon, an ancient beast whose tail could transform into a Demon. Actually, that year in which he had dreamed of the Flying Rain-Dragon, Meng Hao had already reached Dao enlightenment.

Three days passed, and finally Meng Hao opened his eyes. They glowed with a golden light. Within him, his Core Lake had increased by a shocking double. As he examined it, Meng Hao realized that this was no lake. This was a Core sea!

He believed it to be a sea, therefore… it was a sea!

The seawater roared, and waves whipped about. The Demonic Core, as stable as ever in the depths, emitted Spiritual Energy which filled Meng Hao’s entire body. Using the techniques he had learned from the Sublime Spirit Scripture, he circulated the energy. His body began to glow with a golden light, as if something had suddenly broken out within him. The golden light emanated around him for nine meters in every direction.

Amidst the roaring, Meng Hao’s Cultivation base suddenly climbed upwards, breaking through the sixth level bottleneck directly into the seventh level of Qi Condensation.

Even though he had just broken through to the seventh level, his power was the same as if he had already reached its peak. This was because in his dantian region was not a Core Lake, but a Core sea!

Earlier, the Spiritual Energy which had built up in the North Sea for countless years had suddenly surged forth as if to help Meng Hao make his breakthrough.

Gradually, the Spiritual Energy of heaven and earth which surrounded him began to dissipate, as did the North Sea’s Spiritual Energy. Slowly, the golden glow which emanated from Meng Hao also began to fade, and slowly he returned to his usual appearance. He sat there cross-legged. The golden light eventually left his eyes, although they continued to sparkle brightly.

He slowly stood up and looked out at the North Sea. With clasped hands, he saluted the sea deeply. His mind was filled with descriptions he had read about in the Reliance Sect’s Magic Pavilion, of the various Demonic creatures of the Nanshan Continent. Wherever demons existed, there would be demons that appeared as mountains, demons that appeared as rivers, and demons that appeared as plants and animals.

“Today, the North Sea revealed the Dao. One day when my Cultivation base is high enough, I will return here and help you become a sea!” He gazed out at the North Sea. He wasn’t sure whether or not this lake, which desired to be a sea, might be like the descriptions he had read about, something with life, a demonic life.

Regardless, it had helped him make a breakthrough in his Cultivation base, helped him turn his Core Lake into a Core sea. He must repay the kindness. There was only one way: to help this lake become a sea!

After some time passed, Meng Hao turned and strode toward Mount Daqing.

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# Chapter 45: A Look Back at the Mortal World after Three Years

Autumn wind curled around Mount Daqing in the north of the State of Zhao. Most of the rattan vines had dried and withered, and leaves floated down from the mountain into the river below. Perhaps they, like that gourd bottle from years ago, would eventually reach the Milky Way Sea and then float on to the Great Tang in the Eastern Lands.

Beneath Mount Daqing lay three counties. Yunjie County was the most flourishing of the three. It wasn’t very large, but it bustled with people. When market day came, people from the whole mountain region gathered there, and a hubbub of voices would fill the air.

On this day, a young man wearing a clean, blue scholar’s robe walked into Yunjie, seemingly restless with emotion. Though he was a stranger, his face looked familiar. It was, of course, Meng Hao.

He walked down the familiar streets, passing houses and shops. As he strolled through the mortal world, he recalled many things from the past. This place contained his memories from childhood, the lonely bitterness of his youth, and his stubborn attachment to his studies. So many unforgettable events.

Passing a large courtyard, he said, “That would be where Miss Sun lives….” The walls which had seemed so tall in the past, now looked somewhat short. Past the walls were Miss Sun’s bedchambers, a place that had been the subject of many fantasies in the past.

He had often imagined that Steward Sun would take a liking to him, and then offer him Lady Sun’s hand in marriage. She was rumored to be as beautiful as a goddess.

Three years had passed, not a very long time, but to Meng Hao, it seemed as if an entire generation had come and gone.

Shaking his head emotionally, he was about to move on, when suddenly the main doors of the Sun mansion opened and a sedan chair emerged. Meng Hao stopped. How often in the past had he looked into the courtyard, hoping to catch a glimpse into Lady Sun's bedchamber? His eyes flickered as he gazed at the sedan chair. The wind suddenly lifted the screen curtain of the sedan, and he saw an extremely fat girl inside, her face covered with dark spots. She was young. Meng Hao's jaw dropped.

If he hadn't recognized the serving girl next to her, he would never have believed that the young woman was actually Miss Sun.

The sedan chair disappeared into the distance, and Meng Hao continued walking, feeling a bit regretful.

"I just destroyed the image of my dream lover…" he said, shaking his head. "Well, the sages were right: avert the gaze from inappropriateness. I shouldn't have looked, shouldn't have looked." A look of pity appeared on his face as he walked away.

Around noon, Meng Hao found himself staring blankly at a large house off in the distance. It was worn-out and dilapidated and there were clearly people living inside. He could hear noise drifting out from inside. It sounded like the occupants were arguing.

This was Meng Hao's ancestral residence. Years ago, he had been destitute, and was forced to sell it. Inside that house were many beautiful and happy memories from the past, as well as the bitter, yet empowering memories from the time after his parents went missing.

Image after image appeared in Meng Hao's mind. He stood there until dusk began to fall.

Silently, he approached the door, raised his hand, and knocked.

The knock silenced the din of argument that had continued unceasingly throughout the afternoon. After a moment the door opened. A middle-aged man stood there, frowning. His face was covered with lines from a lifetime of hardships.

“Who are you? What do you want?”

“Uncle Li…?” said Meng Hao quietly, looking at the man in front of him.

“You…” the middle-aged man stared in surprise. He looked closely at Meng Hao, and then a look of disbelief filled his eyes. “Meng Hao? You… Where have you been? Come in!” With a look of pleasant surprise, the man dragged Meng Hao into the house.

“Wife, come see who it is!”

A middle-aged woman sat inside, tears in her eyes. When she heard her husband’s words, and saw Meng Hao, she gaped for a moment, then rose to her feet, her eyes beaming with joy.

“It really is Meng Hao…” said the man.

“Child, everyone said you just up and left that year. Let Auntie have a look at you.” She stood in front of him, looking him up and down, her eyes filled with happiness. She seemed to have forgotten the afternoon spent arguing. “I haven’t seen you for years. You’ve grown taller, but, ai, you’re so skinny. You must have endured a lot over the years.

“Here, have a seat. Auntie will cook a few dishes for you. You just got back, stay a while. You may have sold this place to your Uncle Li, but it’s still your home.” She gave a kind, happy smile to Meng Hao, then glared at the man and went into the kitchen.

Soon, the table was filled with food. Looking at the couple in front of him, and the kindness in their eyes, it reminded him of the times after his parents had gone missing. Without the help of Uncle and Aunt Li, things would have been much more difficult for him.

“The harvests haven’t been good these years,” said Aunt Li, serving some food to Meng Hao. “We gave our house to our son so that he could get married. Since this place was empty, we moved here.” She gave him a kind look. “Where have you been all these years? We looked all over for you, but were never able to find you.”

Meng Hao listened to them talk and felt their kindness in his heart. He told them a somewhat vague story of traveling to a different part of the nation to study. After the meal was finished, he gave the couple a deep bow.

“Uncle Li, Aunt Li, I would like to repurchase my ancestral home. After all, my mother and father left it for me. Here are some pieces of silver. You two can continue living here and help take care of the place.” He pulled out some pieces of silver from within his robe and put them down.

“This…” Uncle Li hesitated, looking at his wife. Aunt Li said nothing, but after a moment passed, nodded.

“You’re right,” she said resolutely. “This house is yours, left to you by your father and mother. Your Uncle Li and I are getting old, so as you suggest, we will stay here. But we don’t need the silver. We looked after you as you grew up. You’re like our own child! How could we take your money?” She put the silver pieces back into Meng Hao’s hand.

Meng Hao didn’t say anything, instead clasping his hands and bowing deeply to them once again.

He didn’t stay for the night. Instead, he gathered together some things from the house that contained memories, then made his farewells and slipped off into the darkness of the night. He didn’t take the silver with him. He left it on the bed.

Later, he sat cross-legged on a bed in an inn, looking out at the night sky. He sighed.

“I’m no longer part of the mortal world, and yet, it’s hard to sever all the ties.” He closed his eyes. “Well, if they can’t be severed, then I shall just let them remain.”

At dawn the next morning, Meng Hao found the Wang Family carpenter shop. There, he saw an aged Uncle Wang, his face full of wrinkles, sitting in the shop staring at nothing. In front of him was a wood carving that looked just like Wang Youcai. Uncle Wang's face seemed to be filled with an indelible sorrow.

Meng Hao thought for a moment. He wasn't sure whether or not Wang Youcai was dead. After being promoted to the Inner Sect, he had sought out Little Tiger, then gone to inspect the area where Wang Youcai had fallen off the cliff. He hadn't been able to find any clues regarding what had happened.

With a sigh, Meng Hao walked into the carpenter shop.

Sensing that someone had arrived, Uncle Wang lifted his head. When he saw Meng Hao, he stared in surprise. Rubbing his eyes, he stood up, trembling.

"You… You're… Meng Hao?"

"Uncle Wang, it's me." Meng Hao reached out to support the old man.

"Where is Youcai?" he asked. It seemed he hadn't forgotten the details about what happened that year. Looking at Meng Hao, he suddenly seemed excited. "You both went missing at the same time that year. Where is he…?"

"Youcai wasn't able to return, so he asked me to send a message for him," said Meng Hao with a smile. "He'll be back in a few years. You can rest at ease, sir. Youcai is living very well." He helped Uncle Wang into his chair, then sat with him for a while chatting. He told him that they had gone off to study, and Youcai was so talented that he wanted to continue studying for some time before returning.

Tears of excitement rolled down Uncle Wang's face. He listened to Meng Hao's story, nodding, and it seemed as if some of the wrinkles on his face disappeared. Meng Hao continued to tell some interesting anecdotes, and the old man smiled.

“That kid was always smart. He never wanted to study carpentry from me. He would spend all day thinking about other things. Good, good. If he can go out to study, it’s a good thing.” Uncle Wang’s smile widened. Around noon, Meng Hao left, escorted to the door personally by Uncle Wang.

Little Tiger and Fatty weren’t from Yunjie County, but rather the other two surrounding counties. Meng Hao wasn’t very familiar with Little Tiger, but felt confident that he could take care of himself. On the other hand, he definitely had to go pay a visit to Fatty’s family to let them know he was doing well.

Fatty was most likely in the Southern Domain. Meng Hao sighed inwardly.

That afternoon, he went looking for Steward Zhou, but couldn’t find him. After asking around, he learned that Steward Zhou had moved his household away about half a year ago. People said he’d moved to the capital city of the State of Zhao. Learning this, Meng Hao made no further inquiries, and left Yunjie County.

There were many memories here, but Meng Hao knew that as soon as he had entered the Reliance Sect, his path lay in the direction of the State of Zhao, and the Southern Domain.

He left in silence, taking with him only a few items which he stored in his bag of holding: some pots and bowls, and some bed quilts. The pots and bowls had been given to him by his father as a gift, and the bed quilts had been quilted by his mother. To Meng Hao, these things were priceless.

There were three counties below Mount Daqing. In addition to Yunjie County, there was Yunhai County and Yunkai County. Fatty’s home was in Yunkai.

It was smaller than Yunjie, and although it was not as bustling, it was surrounded by vast tracts of land and was therefore quite a wealthy place. This was especially true of the handful of great families, who controlled sizeable properties and wealth.

Fatty’s father was the famous Moneybags Li of Yunkai County. From what Fatty had told him in the past, his family employed several hundred workers, and you could spend an entire day walking through the family compound, which was filled with menservants and maidservants.

He had said his chamberpot was made of silver, his quilts purchased from the capital city of the State of Zhao, and that from childhood, maidservants would heat his bed for him before he slept. That arrangement had continued as he grew up, and he said he couldn’t even remember how many maidservants he’d touched in his life. In any case, he had never lacked for want of anything, all the way down until the time his marriage had been arranged. His fiancée was an extremely beautiful young woman from a family of famous scholars in Yunkai. His father had put a lot of thought, and money, into successfully arranging the matter.

As he thought back to Fatty’s expression when he talked about it, Meng Hao smiled. He walked into Yunkai County.

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# Chapter 46: Three Long Spears

Meng Hao had been to Yunkai County a few times before. Usually it was when he needed to buy pens, ink, paper and inkstones. Perhaps because the excess of wealth in the village prompted a demand for scholarly embellishments, the price of writing supplies was cheaper than average.

Even though three years had passed, the place looked just like before. As Meng Hao walked down the streets, he couldn’t help but notice that outside of many of the shops hung lanterns, upon which the character “Li” was written in sweeping calligraphy.

From what Fatty had said, his father was the richest person in Yunkai, and actually owned about half of the county. And it wasn’t just land they owned, but business, all of which were marked with the character “Li.”

After asking around, he determined the location of Fatty’s house and headed in that direction. The sun was beginning to sink over the horizon, turning the sky dark and covering the land with a soft glow.

It didn’t take long for him to reach the east end of Yunkai County, where he saw a massive estate, filled with a veritable forest of grand buildings. Above the main door, which was guarded by retainers, was a board inscribed with the words “Li Mansion.” The lively sound of singing and dancing could be heard from within.

Meng Hao’s body flashed, and he was inside.

The mansion was a large, surrounding an inner courtyard where singers and dancers were currently putting on a show. Meng Hao caught sight of an extremely fat, middle-aged man wearing a luxurious robe. He closely resembled Fatty; this was obviously his father. Sitting next to him was a young man whose face was covered with a prudent expression.

He seemed wildly arrogant, and wore expensive garments, yet his body looked a bit frail, as if he had worn himself out with too much wine and women. He held a wine cup in his hand, and a somewhat indecent expression shone in his eyes as he looked over the singers and dancers.

“Still not here yet?” said the young man, frowning. His tone of voice was both cold and bored.

“Any moment, any moment,” said Fatty’s father, looking extremely embarrassed, but forcing an obsequious smile onto his face. “Young Lord Zhao, please just wait a bit longer. My daughter-in-law tends to take things slowly.” Even as the words came out of his mouth, several maidservants appeared in the distance. Walking behind them was a young woman. She wore a long, gauzy garment, and her hair was put up with phoenix hairpins. Her appearance was pure and beautiful, and yet there was a look of fear on her face; as she approached she seemed to shiver as if she were cold.

“Father…” she said as she approached. She bowed in greeting.

“Xiang’er, this is the young Lord from the house of Zhao in Yunhai County,” said Fatty’s father softly. “Why don’t you toast him?” He looked at his daughter-in-law apologetically. Even though his son had been missing for years, she continued to wait for him to return, never complaining. She treated her father-in-law with utmost filial piety.

“Greetings, young Lord Zhao,” said the girl softly, lowering her head. She was afraid, but she knew that the family was not in a good position at the moment. She lifted up the wine pot and poured some wine into a cup, which she extended to him with both hands.

He looked at her, his eyes shining brightly. He swallowed hard. The girl was shockingly beautiful, and in his heart, he was already prepared to make some trouble. A lecherous smile appeared on his face. He accepted the wine up and then tried to grab her hand. The girl stepped back, frightened, causing the cup to tumble to the floor.

“How dare you!” shouted young Lord Zhao, his eyes blazing. He kicked over the table, sending wine and food scattering about. He pointed at Fatty’s father. “You listen to me, Li Dafu. My younger brother is back, and he’s an Immortal now. He wants your property, not your lives! I felt pity for you and spoke kindly of you to him, but then you humiliate me like this!?”

“Young Lord Zhao, this…” Fatty’s father hastily tried to speak.

“Shut the hell up! Let me tell you, this matter isn’t finished! If you know what’s good for you, you’ll have your daughter-in-law spend the night with me. If she pleases me, then I’ll say some more nice things about you to my younger brother….” He laughed coldly, his eyes fixed on the girl, whose face had grown pale white. A dirty look once again appeared on his face.

Fatty’s father’s face grew ashen. At first, the young man had only mentioned toasting, which he had agreed to. But this was excessive. He gritted his teeth. His son was missing, and he couldn’t even protect his own daughter-in-law. What was the point of living?

“Beat it!” he roared. “Get the hell out of here! Men, kick this man out! Even if the Li family goes bankrupt, I won’t tolerate insults from the house of Zhao!”

“How impressive,” laughed young Lord Zhao. He spun and left, his eyes filled with murder.

Watching the feast being cleared away, the young girl bit her lip, tears streaming down her face. She lowered her head and looked as if she were about to say something.

“Don’t worry about this matter,” said Fatty’s father calmly. “Law still exists in this world. Please, take the young miss back.” Servants appeared to escort the young woman away. Everything was quiet. Fatty’s father began to tremble. He staggered, suddenly seeming to grow older.

Then he shook his head and began to walk. Before long, he reached a building. He pushed the door open and walked in. It was a luxurious room, but seemed as if it would look better if everything weren’t covered with bite marks.

“Fugui, where are you?” murmured Fatty’s father as he sat down into a chair. “Why haven’t you returned…?” He looked even older than before. He gently rubbed at a bite mark on the table.

“He’s doing well,” said a voice, breaking the silence. Fatty’s father lifted his head, and his eyes filled with fear as he realized that somehow another person was standing in the room, next to the window. He had no idea when or how he had come to be standing there.

He wore a long blue robe, and looked like a scholar. It was none other than Meng Hao.

“You…” Li Dafu stood up, looking alarmed. He took a few steps back.

“I’m Li Fugui’s friend from the Sect, Meng Hao, from Yunjie County.” Meng Hao turned. His eyes moved from some bite marks on the windowsill to rest on Li Dafu.

“Meng Hao!” said Li Dafu, shocked. He recognized the name. When he had checked into the disappearance of his son all those years ago, he’d learned that three other boys had gone missing at the same time. One of them was named Meng Hao.

“Fugui, he…” Li Dafu’s body began to tremble. Inside, he felt hesitation.

“He’s not in the State of Zhao at the moment, but I think he’ll be able to return before too long.” Meng Hao walked forward and sat down in a chair. “I saw what happened in the courtyard just now,” he said coolly. “I’ll stay here for a few days to take care of the matter.” He took a piece of paper out and placed it down onto the table. “Please forge me three spears according to these specifications. One iron, one silver, and one gold spear.” With that, he closed his eyes.

Li Dafu hesitated, but then nodded his head. Regardless of how unbelievable the situation might seem, he would rather believe what Meng

Hao had just said. Without a word, he picked up the paper and hurried off.

As for young Lord Zhao, he left the Li household, and Yunkai County, his face grim. Accompanied by his retainers, he made his way back to Yunhai County in the darkness of night, gnashing his teeth. As he walked, he slapped himself hard in the face, leaving behind a clear palm print. Soon, he arrived at a large courtyard, and the expression on his face suddenly turned to one of respect, even awe. His voice low, he spoke.

“Little brother, are you awake?”

“What’s the matter!?” said a cold voice. The voice was a bit shrill, as if its owner was a boy just beginning to go through puberty.

“Not only does the house of Li refuse to listen to your suggestions, they also humiliated me. They even slapped me.” Young Lord Zhao tried to put on his most humiliated expression.

The door slowly opened, and a young man walked out. He appeared to be about twelve or thirteen, and wore a richly embroidered gown. He had finely chiseled features and looked almost beautiful. Were Meng Hao here, this young man would instantly begin to act like a toady. He was one of the disciples saved by Grand Elder Ouyang the day the Reliance Sect was disbanded. He was Meng Hao’s servant, Zhao Hai.

He had the same idea as Fatty, to become a great landowner. With Fatty gone, he had returned to this area and began plundering the properties of the local rich families. He had actually begun to plan how to deal with Li Dafu back when he was still in the Reliance Sect. Unfortunately, after returning, he’d learned that the Li family forbade its members from revealing information about family assets.

“You good-for-nothing fool,” said Zhao Hai with a cold snort. “Do you really think I’m as stupid as you? The angle of that palm print is all wrong. You obviously hit yourself.” An expression of disgust appeared on his face. But, this person was his older brother. He frowned. “Never mind. I’m about to make a breakthrough in my Cultivation base. In seven days, I’ll go with you to the house of Li.” He turned and went back into the room, slamming the door behind him. Young Lord Zhao looked pleased. His heart burned as he imagined the young girl’s plaintive cries coming from underneath him, seven days from now.

Seven days passed. Zhao Hai walked out of the house of Li in Yunhai County, his hands clasped behind his back, followed by young Lord Zhao. They brought a group of family retainers with them. Their eyes filled with killing intent as they headed straight for Yunkai County.

In Yunkai County, Meng Hao sat cross-legged in Fatty’s room, meditating in silence. Around noon-time, a light knock could be heard on the door. Meng Hao slowly opened his eyes to see Li Dafu entering the room. Behind him were ten family retainers. Three groups of three men each carried a spear, one iron, one silver, and one gold.

Networks of fine lines were carved onto their surfaces, making them appear both primitive and luxurious at the same time. Meng Hao raised his hand, and the iron spear flew through the air toward him. Li Dafu and his servants gaped in astonishment and shock.

The iron spear was extremely heavy; to see Meng Hao snatch it from such a distance frightened them.

Li Dafu’s body shook, and his eyes shone. Before, he had surmised that Meng Hao was not an ordinary person. Despite only half trusting him, he had still complied with the request to craft the three spears. But now, he thoroughly believed his previous words. This person was clearly not ordinary.

Meng Hao nodded, retrieving the silver and gold spears. He tested them out, then deposited them into his bag of holding with the flick of a sleeve. When this happened, flopping sounds sounded out as the servants dropped to their knees and bowed to him, their expressions filled with shock.

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# Chapter 47: Another Encounter with Shangguan Xiu

“An Immortal!”

Li Dafu seemed to be frozen in place, trembling violently. He looked as if he, too, might drop to his knees. Before, he had assumed this person was extraordinary in some way, but had never imagined that he could be an immortal. Then he suddenly became even more excited as he remembered the man had said that his son was a friend from his Sect.

“Don’t tell me… Don’t tell me that useless kid is now an Immortal!?”

He was about to ask when Meng Hao lifted his head and looked out the window. The sound of a commotion drifted in from outside, then a series of cracks as the main gate was broken open.

“Li Dafu, get the hell out here! My younger brother is an Immortal, and he’s here to visit you. Come out here and bow to him!”

Li Dafu looked up. Meng Hao stood and walked toward the door. Li Dafu followed hurriedly, and they soon arrived in the outer courtyard of the mansion. Pieces of the door lay scattered about everywhere, along with a multitude of moaning family retainers. The cocky young Lord stood there, and behind him, a young man, one hand held behind his back, the other held up in front of him. Encircling his hand was a finger-sized Flame Serpent.

The young man looked proud and unyielding, and his Flame Serpent caused the surrounding onlookers to slowly move away from him, gasping with fear and astonishment.

“Kid brother, this is Li Dafu,” said the young Lord Zhao, ignoring Meng Hao, who stood behind him.

“So you are… huh?” Zhao Hai lifted his chin as he started to speak, then suddenly caught sight of Meng Hao. His body immediately began to shake, and his eyes filled with disbelief. The Flame Serpent instantly disappeared, and the blood drained from his horrified face. Unconsciously, as by instinct, an ingratiating look appeared on his face.

“Li Dafu,” shouted the swaggering young Lord Zhao, clearly unaware of Zhao Hai’s change in expression, “you dare to not kneel before my brother? Let me tell you, he’s an Immortal! Do you understand what that means? He could exterminate your whole family with a wave of his hand!

“You still haven’t brought the girl out? Prepare a good room immediately. If she takes care of me well, and I’m happy, then maybe if you beg, I can provide you with an heir. Otherwise, your name will die out!” The more he spoke, the more excited he became. Behind him, however, Zhao Hai’s face was deathly pale. He trembled as he looked at Meng Hao, his head spinning. And then his brother’s words hit his ears, and his heart filled with dread.

“If you don’t,” continued the young Lord, “then, heh heh, you’re dead, along with that scholar standing next to you… Hey, who’s he? Your adopted son? You dare to stare at me? Are you looking to die? My brother is an Immortal…” Before he even finished speaking, his words reached Zhao Hai’s ears like a thunderclap, causing him to leap into the air. Fury filling his eyes, he slapped his older brother across the face.

“Shut the hell up!!” he screamed, sounding as if he was about to weep. He knew Meng Hao too well. He remembered his status when he was in the Inner Sect, his victory over Wang Tengfei. Nobody in the Outer Sect was ignorant of Meng Hao, nor his sixth-level Cultivation base. Meng Hao was like a lofty mountain that could crush Zhao Hai to death with little effort.

Even as his brother cried out in pain, Zhao Hai dropped to his knees, body quivering. “Servant Zhao Hai extends greetings… greetings to Elder Brother Meng…”

His brother stood next to him, gaping in surprise. Covering his face with a hand, he blurted, “Brother, what did you call him? Elder Brother Meng? Hahaha! So he’s family! Ah, the girl must have caught his fancy too. Well, just give Meng…”

“Shut up!!” screamed Zhao Hai. He looked as if he were so scared he would drop dead. His body shook violently as his mind replayed all the things he’d heard about Meng Hao from the Outer Sect disciples. Utterly discomfited, he leaped to his feet and slapped his brother in the face again.

Li Dafu watched on in amazement. He sucked in a breath, then looked numbly at Meng Hao. He had guessed that Meng Hao was an Immortal, but he’d never imagined that upon seeing him, the powerful Immortal from the house of Zhao would be so terrified that he would break out trembling.

It wasn’t just him. The surrounding servants all watched on in a daze, their eyes filling with veneration as they looked at Meng Hao.

“Elder Brother Meng…” said Zhao Hai, kneeling again, his eyes filled with intense fear.

His face somber, Meng Hao looked at Zhao Hai coldly, wordlessly.

Zhao Hai’s heart thumped, and he clenched his jaw. He caught sight of his older brother standing next to him, and his eyes filled with rage. He didn’t dare to complain to Meng Hao, so he decided to vent his anger on his brother.

He waved his right hand, and once again the finger-sized Flame Serpent appeared. It slammed into the young Lord Zhao, who immediately began to scream shrilly. He fell to the ground, rolling back and forth. Within moments, he had turned into a twitching, charred corpse.

“I beg Elder Brother Meng to spare my life,” said Zhao Hai, ignoring his brother, kneeling before Meng Hao and kowtowing over and over again.

“It seems you are reluctant to leave the mortal world behind,” said Meng Hao coolly. “Therefore, from today on, you can set your mind at rest, and live as a mortal. He lifted a finger, and instantly, Zhao Hai's face went pale and he spat out a mouthful of blood. His dantian shattered, and his second-level Cultivation base was destroyed. He was no longer a Cultivator, but a mortal.

He staggered up, saluting Meng Hao with clasped hands. Then he turned and left in anguish, supported by his men. He gradually disappeared into the distance.

"I didn't discipline him well enough," said Meng Hao, not watching as Zhao Hai left. "He was my servant who ran away from the Sect. He caused trouble for you, Uncle Li." He bowed to Li Dafu with cupped fists.

"No harm was done, all is well," said Li Dafu, shaking his head. "My thanks to you, Immortal." He bent at the waist in a bow. His head was still spinning as he thought about the Immortal of the house of Zhao being Meng Hao's servant.

"No need for that, Uncle Li," smiled Meng Hao. "Fatty… Li Fugui is my closest friend in the Sect. I came here in his place to visit, so of course I would not turn a blind eye to a situation such as this." He took a step back, cupping his fists again in salute. "I shall take my leave." He departed in a flash. Within a few steps, he was gone, leaving Li Dafu looking a bit melancholy. He was thinking of his son. Then, he broke out in another smile, his eyes filling with pride and anticipation.

"My son has done well. He's an Immortal! I will go burn some incense in the ancestral hall. This matter has brought glory to our family and ancestors."

Meng Hao left Yunkai County. It was afternoon now, and his robe rippled in the autumn wind. The mountain wind grew stronger and stronger as he approached Mount Daqing.

He stood on the same place on the mountaintop where he had stood in a daze three years before. Emotion filled his face. Three years had passed so quickly. His face was no longer young and naive. He had matured, but

Mount Daqing was the same as always. It would never change, nor would the great river which flowed ceaselessly beneath it.

Looking down at the river, Meng Hao thought of the gourd bottle he had thrown into it that year. He thought about how he had encountered Elder Sister Xu, Fatty, Wang Youcai and Little Tiger.

Silently, he leaped into the air and onto a flying sword. He flew down the mountain to the fissure in the cliff. He entered.

It was exactly the same as it had been before. Meng Hao stood inside, looking around. That year, Elder Sister Xu had been at the seventh level of Qi Condensation. And now, he was a Cultivator of the seventh level. It was as if the three years had been a giant circle, with this as the starting point, and the ending point.

"But if the three years really were a circle, then perhaps returning here means that I've reached a new starting point…. It's like the sages said, if you don't take a first step, you will never know which direction the road leads." He closed his eyes for a while, then opened them.

"I've already taken my first new steps. That year, I lacked money, and now I lack Spirit Stones. It doesn't seem much has changed." Meng Hao shook his head, thinking about the scant amount of Spirit Stones in his bag of holding. He couldn't help but feel a bit of pain as he turned and left the cave. Atop his flying sword, he shot down in the direction of the river.

Suddenly, his eyes narrowed, and he lifted up his head. Up on Mount Daqing, in the same position he had just been standing in, was a man wearing a golden-colored robe. He gazed down coldly at Meng Hao.

"So, you did come back here," he said in a sinister voice which seemed to make the setting sun grow even darker, leaving behind only his eyes, filled with murder and greed.

It was Shangguan Xiu!

The day the Sect had been dissolved, he was the first person to flee. After a few days had passed, he reappeared. After some asking around, he learned about the dissolution of the Sect, as well as how Patriarch Reliance had cast terror into the hearts of the entire Cultivation world of the State of Zhao. So, covering his tracks, he left, deciding that it was time to go harvest some medicinal plants that he had planted in secret some time ago.

On the way, however, he had passed Mount Daqing, which caused him to think about the time he had investigated Meng Hao. He knew that this was where Xu Qing had found him, so he decided to stick around for a few days in the hopes of encountering him.

Killing intent shone in Meng Hao's eyes. He was currently at the seventh level of Qi Condensation, so he was able to detect the levels of other Cultivators. Shangguan Xiu was at the ninth level. Although his Cultivation base was not complete, it was close. With luck, he would soon be able to successfully reach Foundation Establishment, which would make him one of the most powerful experts in the State of Zhao.

Meng Hao knew that he was no match for him, even if he had a lot of magical items on hand. Right now, though, his bag of holding had not been replenished, and he had almost no Spirit Stones. It was not a good time to fight.

Without a word, he shot off into the distance, his body turning into a blur. As he sped off, Shangguan Xiu gave off a cold laugh. Within the Sect, he had feared Grand Elder Ouyang, and hadn't dared to make a move against an Inner Sect disciple. But that was in the past. His desire to kill Meng Hao and take his treasures burned brightly. His body flashed, and a talisman appeared in front of him. It picked him up, and he shot in pursuit of Meng Hao.

"This time, there's no special promotion training! How can you escape my hands?!" A sinister smile covered Shangguan Xiu's face. He was determined to succeed!

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# Chapter 48: Eccentric Song and Wu Dingqiu 1

Thunder rolled out in the evening sky. Rosy clouds drifted about, and the autumn wind rustled, picking up the fallen leaves and sending them floating. It should have been a beautiful, rainy autumn evening, but the peacefulness was interrupted by two figures who occasionally dropped to the ground, but then immediately shot back up into the air. They soared along, engaged in a life-and-death pursuit.

Meng Hao was in front, his eyes glistening. After reaching the seventh level of Qi Condensation, he could maintain top speed on his flying sword for the time it takes half an incense stick to burn. At that rate, he could not shake off Shangguan Xiu.

After some time passed, he was forced to drop to the ground, run as fast as possible for a while, and then resume gliding.

Shangguan Xiu pursued him doggedly. He knew that he couldn’t let him escape; if he did, Meng Hao could easily hide somewhere in the massive State of Zhao, and that would be very troublesome.

At the moment, he was extremely confident. A critical juncture had arrived. He knew that Meng Hao possessed some treasured item. He wasn’t exactly sure what it did, but he was determined to acquire it.

“Meng Hao, you can’t escape me! My aim has always been the Southern Domain. The only reason I haven’t ascended to the Foundation Establishment stage yet is because I didn’t want to. You’re like an ant to me! You will be my stepping stone into Foundation Establishment!” Shangguan Xiu was of the ninth level of Qi Condensation. Even though he was very close to breaking through to the Foundation Establishment stage, his level of power was still far from that level. That having been said, even though Meng Hao was in the same stage as him, their Cultivation bases were still two levels apart. This meant that not only was Shangguan Xiu faster, but because of his status as an Elder in the Reliance Sect, he'd had access to higher level magical items.

The talisman whistled through the air, propelling him forward with extraordinary power. He flicked his wide sleeve, snapping a jade slip. A green mist shot out, which coagulated into a green bottle, about half the height of an average person. It shot toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao's eyes flickered and he slapped his bag of holding. Ten flying swords appeared, shooting toward the magical bottle. As soon as they collided, the ten flying swords exploded into pieces, which mushroomed out in all directions. The bottle shattered, but Shangguan Xiu simply increased his speed and leaped over the cloud, intent on decreasing the distance between him and Meng Hao.

At that moment, Meng Hao suddenly turned, his hands flickering in incantation patterns. Wind Blades appeared, three of them. However, they didn't shoot toward Shangguan Xiu, but instead flew in circular patterns, faster and faster, creating a gravitational force which pulled in the shattered remnants of his flying swords. Soon, they had formed a spinning vortex.

A booming sound rang out, but Meng Hao didn't look back. The vortex behind Shangguan Xiu suddenly exploded, sending shrapnel shooting out. Shangguan Xiu was knocked forward, shredding much of his clothing. His eyes burned with fury.

“So you've reached the seventh level of Qi Condensation!” Shangguan Xiu glared as Meng Hao sped off into the distance. He continued his pursuit, albeit more cautiously. He knew that Meng Hao was incredibly crafty, and could not be underestimated. He must use all his power.

When he thought about the technique Meng Hao had just used, gathering the fragmented pieces of the swords together, Shangguan Xiu was a bit taken aback. If Meng Hao's Cultivation base were higher, then the attack just now, while it might not have killed him, would have seriously injured him.

“He’s so young, yet so sinister. Exploding the swords was just a diversion. Dammit!” He increased his speed, turning into a ray of light as he pursued Meng Hao.

Two people shot through the evening as the sky grew dark. The bright moon looked down, its gaze illuminating them.

Meng Hao’s face was grim. He consumed some Demonic Cores. Even though the North Sea had shown him the Dao, and he had broken through to the next level, his current situation did not bode well. He was at the seventh level of Qi Condensation, but had no way to lose his pursuer. He was in somewhat of a crisis.

“There will come a day when I will slay this man!” thought Meng Hao. As he considered the inexplicable enmity between them, he came to the realisation that it was all because of his opponent’s greed. Over and over again. It was extremely annoying.

Looking back at Shangguan Xiu, Meng Hao gritted his teeth. As his flying sword sputtered out of power, he leaped to the ground, racing toward the wild mountains. He was heading, not toward the Reliance Sect, but rather the east of Mount Daqing, where a chain of mountains rose and fell off toward the flatlands and the capital city of the State of Zhao.

The mountains here were numerous, even more so than the regions around the Reliance Sect. This mountain chain was the largest in the State of Zhao, and had come to be known as the State Shield Mountain range. From a distance, you couldn’t see past them, and in the night, they rose up like the undulating spine of a slumbering dragon, emanating a lofty air.

Meng Hao lowered his head, speeding deep into the State Shield Mountains. This was not the first time he had fled for his life in the past three years. From his experience that year on the black mountain, Meng Hao knew how to seize opportunities. He flew as fast as he could, heading deeper and deeper into the mountains.

Shangguan Xiu did not slow in his pursuit. No matter where Meng Hao went, he would follow. His mind was set; he would kill Meng Hao and take his treasures. And yet he knew he didn’t have much time. The medicinal plant that he had been growing was ripe and ready to be harvested. If he was too slow, it would wither, which would wreck his future plans.

In his estimation, it should take more than one or two days to take care of Meng Hao. That much of a delay was acceptable. So without hesitation, he continued into the barren mountains in pursuit.

About five hundred kilometers away from the point where Meng Hao and Shangguan Xiu entered the State of Zhao’s State Shield Mountains, there arose a lofty mountain.

The mountain’s peak pierced the clouds, and was visible from a vast distance away. Everything from half-way up the mountain all the way to its peak was covered with white snow. It was huge, much bigger than any of the surrounding mountains, and its very top seemed to emanate rays of light that covered the mountain like flowing water.

Next to this mountain was another mountain, whose top appeared to have been sliced off, forming a round, plateau-like platform. Assembled on the platform were nearly a hundred Cultivators wearing long, white robes.

They were young, the youngest of the group being eleven or twelve years old, the oldest, seventeen or eighteen. There were boys and girls, and all of them wore expressions of keen anticipation. Some of them seemed to be keeping their Cultivation base concealed, and their faces looked proud and unyielding.

Some of the group were at the seventh or eighth level of Qi Condensation, and a few were even at the ninth. The weakest were at the fifth or sixth levels. There was no Sect in the State of Zhao who had disciples like this. Clearly, whoever had gathered this group of youths was a major Sect from the Southern Domain.

Their clothing was all uniform, and they radiated an imposing air, as if they had the power to affect everything around them. Some of them had outstanding latent talent, and all of them were filled with vigor. Clearly, they belonged in the Cultivation world.

“These are some of my Outer Sect disciples,” said a voice with a complacent laugh. “What do you think, Eccentric Song?” At the front of the group, near the edge of the platform, two old men sat cross-legged, a Go board spread out between them. The person who had laughed was one of these old men. He had white hair, wore a white robe, and had the demeanor of a transcendent being.

His eyes flashed like lightning and were filled with pride. He continued to laugh.

Sitting across from him was Eccentric Song, wearing a long black robe that seemed to shimmer with iridescence. His long gray hair hung in disarray, and he wore an enigmatic smile on his face.

“Excellent, excellent. Your Violet Fate Sect is definitely worthy to be called one of the five Great Sects of the Southern Domain. There are clearly some promising subjects among your Outer Sect Disciples, Wu Dingqiu.” Eccentric Song smiled, and a cold wind seemed to spring up. The onlooking disciples’ minds seemed to shiver.

“Very well, let us carry out our wager,” said the white-robed man with a smile, his eyes flashing. His hand made a snatching motion, and suddenly a large stone appeared, about the size of a human head. It slammed down onto the ground next to him.

It was dark and opaque, and yet a black glow could be seen flickering inside it. A multitude of flickering twinkles could be seen within, as if it were composed of a vast number of gems.

“This is what I’m putting up, a Heaven Crystal!” The white-robed man’s eyes sparkled as he looked at Eccentric Song.

“No problem,” said Eccentric Song, flicking his sleeve. “This is the Star Fragment you’ve had your eye on.” A large lump of iron appeared, about the size of a fist. It emanated a black glow, as if it could swallow up everything in sight. It was clearly anything but ordinary. “See the flag on the peak of the mountain? If your disciples can topple that flag, then you win. But, if your Violet Fate Sect disciples aren’t skilled enough to ascend the mountain, then your Heaven Crystal is mine.” He laughed contentedly.

“Fear not,” said the white-robed man with a confident sneer. “My disciples can definitely snap your paltry flagpole. They will also clear the mountain of all its treasures and slay all the Demonic beasts you’ve raised. Don’t go back on your word when that happens!”

“I have roamed heaven and earth for four hundred years and have never gone back on my word. Yes, I have filled this mountain with many treasures and Spirit Stones, as well as numerous unique Spirit beasts that I have carefully raised. But mark my words, once the mountain is opened, anyone under the Foundation Establishment stage can enter, for seven days. This includes your Violet Fate Sect disciples, as well as disciples of any other Sect. Anyone!

“Anyone with skill can acquire the treasures. Even if someone comes along who can clear them all out, I won’t even so much as frown, let alone go back on my word. If I do, then I’m not surnamed Song!” Eccentric Song spoke all these words with head held high, looking unyielding, his voice decisive.

“However, anyone without skill who does not acquire treasures, and cannot ascend to the top of the mountain, will become food for my Spirit beasts. This is simply their destiny.” Having said this, his smile grew even colder, and his eyes filled with a sneer.

“All of my Violet Fate Sect disciples are outstanding among their peers,” said Wu Dingqiu with a glare, his voice booming out. “Clearing out your mountain will be as easy for them as turning over a hand.”

“For a hundred kilometres surrounding my treasure mountain, Spirit Beasts roam freely. I’ve fertilized the land with soil from the bottom of the Eastern Sea, which hasn’t seen the light of day for ten thousand years. I even transported the top of Mount Tian Shan from the Southern Domain to be this mountain’s highest peak, spending an entire sixty-year cycle refining it and assimilating it into mountain. There is nothing like it in the world. Each Spirit beast here is an exquisite specimen personally acquired by myself. They are fiendish and unusual, Mutated beasts that I painstakingly collected from everywhere under heaven! I think the hundred or so disciples you have brought are not enough food for my Spirit beasts!” Eccentric Song glared, slowly rubbing his beard.

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1. Eccentric Song’s surname in Chinese is Sòng. It has no real meaning. It is the same “Song” as the Song Dynasty. Wu Dingqiu’s name in Chinese is wú dīng qiū. Wu is a common family name. Ding is the fourth heavenly stem. Qiu means Autumn

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# Chapter 49: Mountain of Trial by Fire

“My Violet Fate Sect is one of the great sects of the Southern Domain. These may be just Outer Sect disciples, but even to enter the Sect, each and every one of them passed nine difficult tests. Every month, they immerse their bodies in a Spirit Spring. They possess inexhaustible amounts of heavenly materials and earthly treasures. All of them have extraordinary latent talent, rarely seen in any Sect.

“These disciples could flatten your crappy mountain with the wave of a hand. As for your Demonic creatures, they aren’t even fit to be eaten by my disciples. They’re not Mutated beasts they’re Mutt beasts!” Wu Dingqiu glared with wide eyes. The disciples behind him lowered their heads in embarrassment, glancing at Eccentric Song.

Eccentric Song stared for a moment, surprised. He flicked his sleeve and was about to say something when Wu Dingqiu suddenly leaped up and turned to face his disciples.

“Violet Fate Sect Disciples!” he roared. “This might be your first time to venture outside of the Sect, but this mountain, where life and death is predestined, is a promotion training ground for the Inner Sect. Anyone who steps onto the mountain and reaches the half-way point shall be remembered. Anyone who reaches the mountain top, even more so. And whoever manages to snap that crappy flagpole will be my personal apprentice, and receive immediate promotion into the Violet Fate Inner Sect! What are you gaping for?! Get moving!”

Upon hearing this, the faces of the white-robed disciples filled with inspiration and their eyes shined. This was their first time outside of the

Sect. Some thirsted to become a member of the Inner Sect, others desired to acquire treasures. According to the rumors they had heard in the Sect, vast amounts of Spirit Stones, medicinal pills, and magical items were hidden in this State of Zhao treasure mountain.

Nearly a hundred bodies flashed toward the mountain, a shocking sight.

The peak of the mountain was extremely high, and the mountain itself was surrounded by forest.

Almost immediately, thunderous noises arose from within the trees. The roars of the wild beasts shattered the quietness of the still night.

Two hours passed in which miserable shrieks continuously rang out from Demon Beast Forest, especially the border regions. Suddenly, seven or eight Violet Fate Sect disciples fled out from the forest, their faces filled with fear. They were being pursued by three mighty beasts who had the heads of dragons and the bodies of tigers. The ground shook beneath their feet as they charged forth.

The life force of these three beasts seemed boundless, their might extraordinary. Their fur was long and thick, causing them to look completely different from the average Demonic beast, savage and fierce to the extreme. When they breathed, their auras transformed into Mist Serpents which coiled around their bodies, leaving the inexperienced, novice disciples frightened to death. Their faces paled, and they ran away at top speed.

Once they stepped foot outside the trees, the Demonic beasts ceased their pursuit. They glared viciously at the seven or eight disciples, then turned and disappeared back into the forest.

On the flat plateau, Eccentric Song laughed heartily. “Look, Wu Dingqiu, these are the Spirit beasts I have raised. What do you think? Even if your disciples grew up inside a Spirit Spring, it wouldn’t do any good. Forget about the even more powerful Spirit Beasts on the treasure mountain, your Violet Fate Sect disciples can’t even get past the Spirit Beast Forest!”

Wu Dingqiu sat there in his white robe, an unpleasant look on his face. He stared angrily at the seven or eight Cultivators. And yet, his tone of voice was as arrogant as always as he calmly said: "Those disciples are merely at the fifth or sixth level of Qi Condensation. The truly Chosen in my Sect are all still in the forest. It won't be long before they step foot onto your crappy mountain, then they will clear out all the junk you have hidden there!"

Time passed by, another two hours…

So far, no one had been able to get past the Demonic Beast Forest to step foot onto the mountain itself. Currently, miserable shrieks and wails drifted out from the trees, and before long, a commotion broke out at the edge of the forest as ten or more Violet Fate Sect disciples fled out in terror. Dread filled their faces, and some of them were injured. This was their first time outside of the Sect, and they were like flowers grown indoors who had never faced wind and rain. They were being pursued by a group of five howling Demonic beasts; one was a fierce, pitch-black tiger. Another was a giant peacock, nearly six meters tall. The rest were hard to identify, but were clearly out of the ordinary.

On the plateau, Eccentric Song once again let out a complacent laugh. He appeared to be in very high spirits. He grew even happier when he saw Wu Dingqiu's increasingly somber face.

"Wu Dingqiu, are these really the most outstanding disciples in your Violet Fate Sect? It seems that being raised inside a Spirit Spring really doesn't cut it. I'm afraid that even if they ate meals made from heavenly materials and earthly treasures, it still wouldn't do them any good. My treasure mountain is filled with unusual items rarely seen in the Southern Domain. I've spent all my energy in the past years on this project. After years of allowing my creatures to grow in strength, my mountain is ready. I've been waiting for quite some time for your Violet Fate Sect to come for this trial by fire."

Wu Dingqiu's face grew so grim that it seemed it might explode at any moment, like a volcano. In a stiff voice, he said, "It's just a crappy mountain, nothing worth bragging about. I could level the whole thing with the wave of a hand. All the disciples that have come back out are useless. The true Chosen ones are…" Even as the words came out of his mouth, his eyes suddenly widened. A handful of disciples had just come running out of the edge of the Demonic Forest. He leaped to his feet. With a roar, he said, “Get back in there! If anyone dares to run away, I shall expel you from the Sect!”

His roar reverberated across the land, but not very far. He limited it to a radius of about fifty kilometers. When they heard it, the disciples who had just fled out of the forest grew pale and began to tremble. They didn’t dare to flee. Gritting their teeth, they turned and headed back. The Demonic beasts that had been pursuing them were also frightened, and dared not attack.

As for the twenty or more disciples who had already fled the Demonic Forest, their faces grew even paler, and they hesitated. They weren’t sure if they should go back in or not.

“Be it the Violet Fate Sect’s disciples, or another Sect’s disciple, during these seven days, anyone can enter my Spirit Beast Forest,” said Eccentric Song with a hearty laugh. “Anyone with the skill to step foot on my treasure mountain can have the chance to take away the treasures. I will neither stop them, nor even frown. Even the flag on the mountain peak is fair game. There I have placed a bag of the Cosmos, which can hold mountains and rivers inside.

Upon hearing his laughter, Wu Dingqiu’s face grew more unsightly. He was beginning to feel that this Eccentric Song was too spiteful. He had filled the mountain with treasures, and seemed to have complete confidence that they wouldn’t be touched. Wu Dingqiu flicked his sleeve and made to leave. He had already suffered too much humiliation, and would not stand for any more. But before he could go, Eccentric Song stood and blocked his way.

“Fellow Daoist Wu, we had an arrangement. Before we finish our game of Go, neither of us may leave. You’re an Elder from one of the Great Sects of the Southern Domain. You’re not going to go back on your word, are you?” As he laughed, his beard floated up a bit. His face was filled with utter pride, and it seemed he had no intention of letting Wu Dingqiu leave.

At that moment, Meng Hao was several thousand kilometres away, flying quickly through the mountain forest. Around him, autumn leaves floated in the air, and behind him, Shangguan Xiu was in hot pursuit, killing intent radiating out from him.

“This State Shield Mountain range goes on forever, Meng Hao,” said Shangguan Xiu, his voice sinister. “Its depths are filled with miasma! Going in this direction is the same as picking the road to death!”

“Pipe down,” said Meng Hao coldly. He frowned. It was the first thing he had said this entire time. He was really getting annoyed with Shangguan Xiu. As far as he was concerned, it was fine if he wanted to chase him, but the ceaseless chatter was unnecessary.

Shangguan Xiu’s eyes glittered and he lifted up his hands in front of him, then slapped them together.

Meng Hao suddenly felt a stab of pain in his chest that coincided with the slapping sound. It felt as if a sharp sword were slicing through into his heart. His face filled with pain and he coughed up a spray of blood.

“You finally speak, whelp! You fell for my trick! That was a special magic from my family that is designed to damage the heart and blood vessels.” With a sinister smile, he increased his speed. He lifted his right hand, and a five-colored pearl appeared. He flung it forward, and it shot toward Meng Hao. Before it reached him, it suddenly exploded, transforming into several five-colored streams of mist which then merged into the shape of a hideous evil spirit. It howled as it pounced toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao looked back with a grim expression. Having no time even to spit the blood from his mouth, his hands flickered in incantation gestures, and his body sped forward with increased speed. As the five-colored Mist Spirit approached, a head-sized Water Globe formed in his left hand. From his right had emerged a roaring Flame Python thirty meters in length. The Water Globe shot forth first, exploding to form a rain of Water Arrows.

The Flame Python flew forward, then exploded in mid-air, sending scorching heat roiling out into the night air. This caused the water droplets to transform into a mist. Guided by the aura from Meng Hao’s Cultivation base, it surrounded the area, sending the five-colored Mist Spirit into confusion. It no longer could identify Meng Hao’s position.

Even Shangguan Xiu’s vision was obscured, leaving him shocked. As soon as the mist appeared, before he had a chance to recover from his surprise, two cold, noiseless beams shot toward him.

A booming sound rang out, and Meng Hao let out a light sigh. Without hesitation, he changed his direction and kept moving forward, swallowing a Demonic Core to replenish himself. Behind him, a furious roar could be heard, and the fog was instantly dispersed by a sweeping whirlwind. Shangguan Xiu moved forward, an angry look on his face, blood dripping from a wound on his right hand. The Mist Spirit was nowhere in sight.

As he thought back to what had just happened, his eyes narrowed. Were it not for his quick reaction in detonating the Mist Spirit to block the two wooden swords, he would have lost his right hand. Even still, his hand had been cut open. Even more alarming, he felt the spiritual energy within his body slowly leaking out through the wound. Furthermore, the wound was not healing as fast as normal. He could stop the flow of blood, but not the leakage of spiritual energy.

“This swine is just too crafty. He has some low-level techniques, but he uses them in a multitude of tricky ways. It’s really difficult to deal with!” Shangguan Xiu frowned, but he continued on with his dogged pursuit.

The two of them moved on, and time passed. Before long, dawn had arrived. After a night of chasing and fleeing, both of them were exhausted. As for Meng Hao, he had it a bit better off. Even though he did not have any chance to rest, he had experienced this sort of pursuit in the black mountain. The only difference was that sadly, these wild mountains didn’t seem to contain any Demonic beasts. If they did, then it would have been a bit easier to deal with Shangguan Xiu.

As for Shangguan Xiu, this was his first time dealing with a Cultivator like Meng Hao, who released an endless stream of tricky methods. The two wooden swords were especially astonishing; he had originally planned to chase Meng Hao until his spiritual energy ran out. Instead, he seemed to be as lively and full of energy as a dragon or tiger. Did he have an infinite supply of medicinal pills?

“If he’s this difficult to deal with at the seventh level of Qi Condensation, how terrible would he be at a higher level?” Shangguan Xiu clenched his jaw, swallowed a medicinal pill, then continued in his pursuit. He was of the ninth level of the Qi Condensation stage, the same stage as Meng Hao. Despite his slightly superior speed, he could still do little more than chase.

Of course, he didn’t know that even though Meng Hao was at the seventh level, his Cultivation method was not the ordinary method used in the Reliance Sect, but rather that of the Qi Condensation Manual of the Sublime Spirit Scripture. Even though Meng Hao had not studied any special texts related to attack techniques, in matters related to spiritual energy, he could persist for much longer periods of time than the average Cultivator.

With the added help of some Demonic Cores, then there was no way that Shangguan Xiu could catch him in any short period of time.

By the time dawn broke, the two of them had travelled a very long distance. In front of Meng Hao appeared an incredibly high mountain, its peak stretching up into the skies, its top half wreathed in snow. At a single glance, one could tell that this was not an ordinary place.

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# Chapter 50: Iron Spear

As soon as he caught sight of the mountain ahead of him, Meng Hao's eyes began to shine. It was clearly beyond the ordinary, and perhaps even contained some Demonic beasts. In any case, he didn't have much time to think about it. His body flashed as he shot directly toward the mountainous forest which lay at its foot.

Behind him, Shangguan Xiu's expression changed. His Cultivation base was higher than Meng Hao's; he had tread the Cultivation world for many years, and had seen many things. He could tell that something was fishy about this mountain. But as he saw Meng Hao charge forward, he put aside his doubts, gritted his teeth, and followed.

Meanwhile on the plateau, white-robed Wu Dingqiu and Eccentric Song sat, seemingly playing Go, but in reality focused on the fighting going on below them. From their vantage point, it was clear that the Violet Fate Sect disciples were stuck in the mountain forest, and after an entire night, could not step foot onto the mountain. One by one, they were rebuffed by the Demonic beasts.

"The Violet Fate Sect disciples truly are beyond ordinary," said Eccentric Song, laughing. "To be able to stay in the Spirit Beast forest for an entire night is excellent. Wu Dingqiu, you really should be proud." He looked extremely complacent, and even happier when he saw the dark look on Wu Dingqiu's face.

Wu Dingqiu's face sank even deeper as he saw the sorry state of his disciples within the forest. He let out a cold harrumph.

"Wu Dingqiu, you should really proud. Last time the Golden Frost Sect came to me to engage in trial by fire, they were all defeated by my Spirit beasts. Not a single one could make it to my treasure mountain to see the truly powerful Spirit beasts. I felt really sad about that. I really hope that your Violet Fate Sect disciples can make a good showing. This Spirit forest is filled with Spirit beasts that I meticulously selected. For example, that one.” He proudly pointed a finger toward a white-colored ape.

Its entire body, even its eyes, were as white as snow, and its appearance was incredibly fierce. With a single swipe of its claws, it slashed the arm of one of the Violet Fate Sect disciples, sending blood spraying everywhere. It moved with incredible speed, like a white wind. It had already injured about seven or eight surrounding Violet Fate Sect disciples.

“That is a Snow Peak Mutated beast, rarely seen in the world. I got my hands on it about ten years ago. It’s extremely rare. Look at its fur, as pure white as snow and as smooth as silk. I should be able to sell it for a hefty price one day.” Eccentric Song laughed, pleased with himself. White-robed Wu Dingqiu looked even more grim. He’d never imaged that after all these years, Eccentric Song’s treasure mountain would have so many powerful Demonic beasts.

Even as Eccentric Song spoke, a figure appeared near the edge of the forest near the white ape. It was Meng Hao, with Shangguan Xiu hot on his tail. Eccentric Song laughed.

“So, some outsiders have decided to intrude. Wu Dingqiu, please observe what it means to keep one’s promise. I will not prevent any Cultivator of the Qi Condensation stage from entering this area. Anyone can enter. Although they will surely die, I will not block them.”

Wu Dingqiu let out a cold snort, not paying the least bit of attention to Meng Hao and Shangguan Xiu. Instead, he stared at the white ape, which had just encountered another Violet Fate Sect disciple. He appeared to be about seventeen or eighteen years old. His hands flickered in incantation patterns, and suddenly the image of an ancient scroll unfurled behind him. An aura billowed out, pushing down onto the white ape. It shrieked.

“A fine Mutated ape,” said Wu Dingqiu “Eccentric Song, no matter how incredible that beast is, it’s going to become my disciple’s pet! His name is

Shi Yan. Upon entering the Sect, he acquired that ancient scroll, which at the seventh level of Qi Condensation, can capture Demonic beasts.” Inside, Wu Dingqiu’s heart pounded, but his expression was cool and indifferent, somewhat proud. Considering his status and Cultivation base, he shouldn’t allow such an expression onto his face. But Eccentric Song made it impossible for him to hold back, especially after the humiliation of the previous night.

However, as soon as the words were out of his mouth, a piteous wail could be heard. Blood showered from Shi Yan’s chest, and his ancient scroll collapsed into pieces. He retreated backwards, fear in his eyes. The white ape’s body began to expand, until it was nearly eighteen meters tall. It beat its chest, seeming to brim with power.

Eccentric Song laughed loudly. Wu Dingqiu stared at the white ape, his face twisted, fighting the impulse to charge forward and crush the thing to death.

It was at that moment that Meng Hao shot out of the forest. As soon as he caught sight of the roaring ape, his eyes glittered brightly. He also saw the frightened young man off in the distance, but didn’t have time to consider the situation.

With people present, Meng Hao wouldn’t reveal the copper mirror. His eyes flashed as the white ape took notice of him. The beast charged him, howling ferociously. Meng Hao lifted his right hand, and suddenly an iron spear appeared, the one Fatty’s father had created according to his specifications. The young Cultivator named Shi Yan watched as the spear appeared.

Of course, in addition to the long spear, the copper mirror also emerged, concealed within Meng Hao’s sleeve. The sleeve was so wide that any observers would not be able to see it, especially considering how their eyes would be drawn to the long spear.

The spear was made of common iron, but its surface was covered with various complicated designs, all of which Meng Hao had designed. At a glance, it appeared to be extraordinary in nature. Brandishing the spear, he moved forward, pointing it toward the charging ape.

Suddenly, the white ape's large mouth exploded violently, blood and flesh flying around. Wretched screams immediately sounded out. The ape fell down onto the ground, looking at Meng Hao in astonishment.

"Perhaps when the mirror shines onto a beast with lots of fur, it causes some kind of disorder in the Qi within its body, making it swell. Demonic beasts are even bigger and stronger, so it will attempt to escape from any weak point in the body, not just the rear end, thus leading to these explosive injuries." Of course, all of this was just speculation, but Meng Hao seemed to understand the mirror a bit better after seeing what happened to the white ape. After having the copper mirror for three years, he felt this was pretty close to the truth.

Now was not the time for contemplation, however. Not giving the miserable white ape another glance, he shot off with the iron spear in hand. He was gone in an instant. Just then, Shangguan Xiu arrived. He looked at the white ape in shock.

The white ape was also surprised. And then it noticed that Shangguan Xiu also happened to be carrying a spear, and its fury exploded. It pounced toward Shangguan Xiu.

Back on the plateau, Eccentric Song's laughter had ceased. Next to him, Wu Dingqiu also watched on in surprise. They stared at Meng Hao and his iron spear, their eyes filled with amazement.

Meng Hao sped through the Demonic Beast forest, listening to the howls of the white ape and the roars of Shangguan Xiu. His eyes flickered, and he harrumphed coldly. Not too much time passed before he heard another commotion coming from up ahead. Soon, he saw four or five Cultivators wearing white robes, engaged in vicious combat with three Demonic beasts, each of them six meters tall.

One was a large black tiger, the other was a peacock whose body emanated a glowing, violet light. The last was an enormous giant rat, fierce and cruel in appearance, seemingly unable to be killed.

As soon as Meng Hao appeared in the midst of the fight, a vicious light appeared in the peacock's eyes, and it charged like an insane gale, straight toward Meng Hao.

Looking as calm as ever, Meng Hao kept moving forward, pointing the iron spear forward. Suddenly, the giant peacock's body trembled, and it shrieked miserably. Then, its head exploded, and it fell to the ground, dead, surrounded by blood and gore. The black tiger and the giant rat were shocked. As they stared dumbly, Meng Hao's body turned into a streak of light, and he shot off into the distance.

As for the Violet Fate Sect disciples, they watched, dumbfounded, as Meng Hao disappeared. His iron spear had left them awestruck.

Not pausing for even a moment, Meng Hao continued on. At this moment, Shangguan Xiu had resumed his furious pursuit.

A grim smile appeared on Meng Hao's face. He increased his speed, charging forward. Every time he encountered a Demonic beast, he would wave his spear at it, and it would retreat, crying out miserably. Not a single beast could block his path. In contrast, Shangguan Xiu was blocked at every turn. His enraged roars sounded further and further away from Meng Hao.

Meng Hao also encountered more and more young, white-robed Cultivators along his way, all of them locked in deadly battles with Demonic beasts. As he passed, he would cause these seemingly unmatchable, fierce creatures to flinch back with blood-curdling screams. The Cultivators would look at Meng Hao's retreating figure with awe.

“Who was that?”

“That long spear is some kind of magical item! It's so powerful!”

“How vicious! Dammit, if I had a spear like that, I could run amok through this Demonic Beast Forest.”

Conversation buzzed among the Violet Fate Sect disciples, caused by Meng Hao's shocking passage. On top of the plateau, Wu Dingqiu's eyes glittered, and a smile tugged at the corners of his mouth. His laughter rang out, filled with joy as well as a pleased anger.

“So these are Mutated beasts,” he said. “Excellent, excellent. They are all amazing beasts. Let me have a look. Hmm, some are missing eyes, others have had their heads ripped off. There are some whose entire bodies are covered with blood. One even had its butt exploded. Eccentric Song, didn’t you say that this Demonic Beast Forest was fertilized with soil from the East Sea? And didn’t you say that these Mutated beasts were all amazing? It seems they are having a bit of a rough time today.”

An unsightly expression filled Eccentric Song’s face as he watched Meng Hao make his way through the Demonic Creature Forest. He watched all his precious Demonic beasts retreating with blood-curdling cries, covered with blood. When he saw the death of the peacock, his heart felt as if it had been stabbed with a knife. This type of peacock was called a Snow Phoenix and was extremely rare. He had paid quite an exorbitant price for it several years ago, and had cared for it like a treasured jewel. And yet the iron spear had exploded its head in an instant. Even though it was dead, its powerful life force caused the corpse to twitch and writhe. Eccentric Song felt extreme regret, but his eyes shone forth with an air of indifference.

“Who cares?” he said. “There are a multitude of Spirit beasts in my Spirit Beast Forest. There’s no harm in it. In any case, this kid isn’t one of your Violet Fate Sect disciples, so what are you looking so happy for?!” He spoke in a light tone, but inside, his heart was beginning to pound.

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# Chapter 51: My Treasure Mountain…

“Even though this kid isn’t a disciple of my Violet Fate Sect, you said anyone could enter this area. Seeing him run wild in your crappy mountain forest makes me feel good. I’m happy, so what?” Wu Dingqiu laughed, obviously feeling quite pleased. He had been reigning himself in all night, and now he knew that even though Eccentric Song spoke casually, he was hiding his discomfiture. Feeling quite pleasant, Wu Dingqiu looked down below at Meng Hao.

“That magic item of his can really dominate the Spirit Beasts,” said Eccentric Song. “His Cultivation base is low, though. He won’t be able to make it out of the Spirit Beast Forest. This forest is planted with trees I harvested from all the lands of South Heaven. It is watered with Spirit Water from the Milky Way Sea. Not only do the trees grow tall and strong, but they emit spiritual energy which the Spirit beasts can assimilate through breathing exercises. In my Spirit Beast Forest, there is also…” His voice came to a sudden, screeching stop.

Meng Hao shot forward, attracting the attention of the surrounding Demonic beasts. He was nearing the foot of the Spirit mountain; it was several hundred meters away. He was about to enter the region that none of the Violet Fate disciples had made it to.

Even though Meng Hao didn’t know why this area had so many white-robed disciples, he could sense that there was something odd going on. But with Shangguan Xiu on his tail, there wasn’t much time to think about it. He continued to move forward through the forest. Suddenly, an enormous Demonic beast, nearly twelve meters tall, burst out in front of him.

It was a gigantic woolly mammoth, with red eyes and sharp, gleaming tusks. Its body was like a small mountain, and the earth shook as it charged with shocking power.

“The kid is dead this time,” Eccentric Song said casually. “This is my Mutated mammoth, which I captured in the Life-wasting Cave, one of the most dangerous places in the Southern Domain. I raised it with medicinal pills, and it is one of the three most powerful Spirit beasts protecting this area. It has limitless power and incredibly thick skin. Ordinary flying swords can’t even scratch it. It is also proficient in a variety of magic techniques. Even someone of the ninth level of Qi Condensation would have trouble dealing with it. It can stop anyone under the Foundation Establishment stage.” Eccentric Song’s eyes had almost popped out of his head when he saw Meng Hao about to make it out of the Beast Forest. But now, he let out a sigh of relief.

Wu Dingqiu stopped smiling for the moment. He could see that this mammoth was no ordinary creature. The Violet Fate Sect didn’t possess many Mutated beasts, but after hearing Eccentric Song blather on about it, he couldn’t help but frown and mutter to himself that the man really was strange. He didn’t care much at all for Cultivation, but loved seeking out Demonic beasts to raise, especially ones as strange as this.

Then, Wu Dingqiu’s eyes began to shine. Eccentric Song’s expression suddenly changed, and he shot to his feet, a horrified expression on his face.

Within the Demonic Forest, the Demonic mammoth charged at Meng Hao. Meng Hao took in a deep breath and retreated a bit, groaning inwardly about how many Demonic beasts were in this place. He raised the iron spear and pointed it. The charging Demonic mammoth stopped and began to quiver, then suddenly, its trunk exploded with a bang. Half of it flew through the air to land onto a nearby tree, which collapsed under its weight.

Enraged with pain, the mammoth continued to charge. Meng Hao waved his spear, and a boom sounded out. The mammoth’s back exploded, then its mouth. Finally, its right front leg completely shattered, and it fell to the ground, skidding to a halt some distance away.

Horrific shrieks filled the Beast Forest. Meng Hao looked a bit pale-faced. He glanced around, then charged forward, leaving the Demonic Forest behind and entering the treasure mountain.

Some distance behind, Shangguan Xiu was in a tight spot, unable to free himself from the surrounding, red-eyed Demonic beasts. He could only watch as Meng Hao disappeared, his fury billowing up to the heavens.

Meng Hao left the forest, leaving behind a long trail of blood, as well as the miserable cries of the various Demonic beasts. It looked like some kind of Judgement day had just passed. The white-robed disciples stared in shock, panting and murmuring about the viciousness.

Meng Hao continued on up the treasure mountain, hoping that if he could pass over it, maybe he could finally shake off Shangguan Xiu. He moved forward at rapid speed, and soon reached the foot of the mountain. As soon as he stepped foot onto it, he suddenly stopped and stared in astonishment. Up ahead, lying beneath a boulder, was a pill bottle.

Multicolored strands of light wafted about it; it was clearly not an ordinary item. Meng Hao picked it up and opened it. Immediately, a fragrant medicinal smell wafted out. Inside was a medicinal pill the size of a thumb!

Looking shaken, Meng Hao placed the bottle into his bag of holding. Now he knew what all the white-robed disciples were doing in the area; they were trying to reach this mountain.

“That’s a Universe Spirit Pill, extremely useful to anyone in the Qi Condensation stage.” Wu Dingqiu laughed as he looked at the trail Meng Hao had left through the Demonic Forest.

Next to him, Eccentric Song had an extremely unsightly expression on his face. And yet, he let out a cold laugh. “My treasure mountain has many medicinal pills and Spirit Stones in it. This kid can grab a medicinal pill, but if he thinks he can reach the top, he’s dreaming. The Spirit Beasts on my treasure mountain are one in a million. Only the best of the best have the requisite latent talent to be placed on the mountain itself.” He spoke as lightly as ever, and yet the pain in his heart grew more and more intense.

“Look there,” said Eccentric Song, pointing at a Demonic beast that rose up ahead of Meng Hao. “That is a fierce beast which I raised myself. It has the body of a deer and the head of a python. It is extremely fast, and if it’s injured, becomes even fiercer. It will never stop fighting until it dies, and once it catches the scent of blood, it goes crazy. A Qi Condensation Cultivator who faces it will surely perish.”

After enough time passed for half an incense stick to burn, miserable shrieks drifted down the side of the mountain. Upon seeing all the blood, Eccentric Song appeared as if he might begin to go crazy. The Demonic beast which would never give up until dying gaped in astonishment, then fled at top speed. Its tail was destroyed and an eye was badly mangled. Worst of all, it only had two legs left. And yet, it still moved quickly, just as Eccentric Song had said. It fled at top speed.

Meng Hao continued forward. Having passed through another Demonic beast’s territory, he now encountered a pile of several hundred Spirit Stones. Looking excited, he continued on up the mountain.

Contented laughter rang out from Wu Dingqiu’s mouth. In fact, you could say that from Meng Hao’s appearance until now, he hadn’t stopped laughing.

“Wow, it really could move fast. Wouldn’t give up until it died!”

“No matter, no matter. There are many treasures on the mountain, this kid can grab some, but he won’t be able to leave with them. After all, he has to come back down the mountain to do that.” The words ‘no matter’ left his lips, and he looked calm, but he pulled out a Concentration Pill from his bag and put it into his mouth. A crazed look had appeared in his eyes, and he felt a dark premonition in his heart.

An hour later …

Meng Hao had already reached the half-way point up the mountain. The entire time, no matter what Demonic beast came his way, he would send it away screaming. There were a few dangerous situations, but with a wave and point of his iron spear, the danger would melt away. Then, heart beating, he would collect up Spirit Stones, medicinal pills, and magical items.

To Meng Hao, this entire mountain was a treasure trove. Right now, he was retrieving a scroll painting from behind a big boulder. It emanated a gentle glow along with abundant spiritual energy. It was clearly extraordinary.

Excited, he put it into his bag of holding.

Below him in the Demonic forest, more than a few Violet Fate Sect disciples lifted their heads up and caught sight of him, leaving them shocked.

As Eccentric Song watched all of this happening, his face grew darker and darker, and his body began to tremble. He stared at Meng Hao’s bag of holding, inside of which were his Spirit Stones, medicinal pills, and magical treasures; especially the scroll painting. His heart hurt.

The scroll painting was a treasure he had acquired many years ago. Sealed within were the spirits of quite a few beasts. When his most beloved Demonic beast of all had died some years ago, he had sealed it within. And now, Meng Hao had taken it. Eccentric Song’s body shook even more violently, so he produced two more Concentration Pills and swallowed them down.

He still struggled to maintain an unconcerned expression, but the ringing sound of Wu Dingqiu’s laughter continued to pierce his eardrums.

“My treasure mountain has many treasures,” he forced himself to say. “So what if a few of them get taken? He will not be able to escape the mountain. I’ve carefully collected these Spirit beasts from everywhere in the world. There are too many, he won’t be able to escape them easily.”

Two hours later…

Meng Hao had almost reached the snowy area past the mountain’s halfway point. He wore an excited expression as he sped forward with even greater speed. Down in the Demonic forest, more than half of the Violet Fate Sect disciples engaged in this trial of fire could see him up there on the mountain. Expressions of surprise and envy covered their faces, especially when he stooped over to pick up things from the ground. Each and every one of them wished they could be in his place.

Shangguan Xiu stood, fists clenched, jaw clenched, completely helpless. He did not dare to go up the mountain. He was already in enough danger in the Demonic forest. Furthermore, he had overheard some of the white-robed disciples' conversations, and knew that this was a trial by fire for the disciples of the Violet Fate Sect from the Southern Domain. He felt conflict at heart, and seemed to have no other option than to give up. Only his intense hatred of Meng Hao caused him to reconsider.

As Eccentric Song watched Meng Hao injure the head of yet another of his precious Demonic beasts, he took out three Concentration Pills and swallowed them, continuing to pretend that he didn't care.

“I carefully collected that snow from the tops of auspicious clouds,” he said slowly through his teeth. “It is the most suitable environment for my most treasured Spirit beasts. One of them, the Sky Rending Condor, is well known. Its talons can shatter metal and stone, its wings can kick up a violent wind. It is incredibly fierce, perhaps the most dangerous Spirit beast on the mountain. Even with that crappy spear, this kid is dead for sure when he enters its territory.”

Three hours later…

One talon was shattered, half a wing was gone, and the giant condor coughed up blood. Wailing mournfully, it hid itself in the snow, crying out endlessly.

Meng Hao was almost at the peak of the mountain. All of the Violet Fate Set disciples were staring at him. They didn't care any more about fighting with the Demonic beasts. They stared in awe at his glittering, shining iron spear, and their eyes burned.

“Who is this person…”

“He intruded into our trial by fire and took away our rewards… it’s too cruel.”

“That iron spear is definitely a treasure from the Heavens! It’s so ferocious!”

Eccentric Song trembled in distress. He watched as Meng Hao, approaching the mountain’s peak, snatched up a black net. He could no longer feign calm. His stood up and took a step forward, ready to go teach Meng Hao a lesson.

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# Chapter 52: Bumper Crop

Once, he could endure. Twice, three times, four times, even five times he could continue to endure. By the sixth time, however, he was shamed into a rage and could endure no longer. The Heaven Entangling Net was even more precious to him than the scroll painting. It could instantly entangle an opponent, and had been among his treasured items for years. The higher your Cultivation base, the more effective it became. He had placed it on the treasure mountain to show off its splendor, so that people would see it and covet it. He had assumed it would be safe, and had never imagined that anyone would actually be able to take it. As of now, he had already begun to go crazy, and wished nothing more than to beat Meng Hao to death and take back the oil painting and Heaven Entangling Net.

But then, Wu Dingqiu, laughing smugly, flicked his wide sleeve and stood in front of Eccentric Song, blocking his way.

"Fellow Daoist Song is an illustrious Cultivator from the Southern Domain. What are you doing, exactly? Earlier, you said that for seven days, anyone could come here, and that all of the treasures of the treasure mountain were available for the taking. Don't tell me you're going to go back on your word?

"You carried the peak over here yourself from Mount Tian Shan. The land was fertilized with soil from the bottom of the East Sea which hadn't seen the light of day for ten thousand years. I remember someone saying that any Cultivator of the Qi Condensation stage could prevail, as long as they were skilled enough. Eccentric Song, acting like this really shows a lack of demeanor. If word gets out, you'll definitely lose face." Wu Dingqiu continued to laugh, clearly having no intention of allowing Eccentric Song to go anywhere.

Eccentric Song’s expression looked worse than ever, filled with bitter suffering. Before, he had spoken with utmost complacency, but now, everything he had said was being thrown back in his face. After a long moment, he slapped his bag of holding, pulled out two large Concentration Pills and swallowed them. Then he let out a long breath.

Suddenly, his eyes flashed, and he cast his consciousness out toward Meng Hao, intending to get some information about his iron spear. At first, he hadn’t paid the slightest attention to Meng Hao, focused as he was on what the iron spear was doing. As soon as his consciousness emerged, Wu Dingqiu laughed and flicked his sleeve. A glowing shield immediately covered the entire plateau, blocking Eccentric Song’s consciousness.

“Using your consciousness to inspect a lower generation Qi Condensation Cultivator? Eccentric Song, are you purposely trying to lose face?” Wu Dingqiu obviously was not willing to let Eccentric Song have his way in anything. He laughed. Eccentric Song, looking more put off than ever, could do nothing except flick his own sleeve. Another shield appeared just beyond the first shield.

“That kid’s iron spear is extraordinary,” he said. “If you won’t allow me to inspect it with my consciousness, then I won’t let you do so either.”

Four hours later, Meng Hao had reached the mountain’s peak, iron spear in hand. He walked up, look around, finally noticing the large flag stuck into the ground. Underneath the flag was a bag. Its surface was a mass of rioting colors; looking at it made you feel as if it could suck your mind out. Everything around it seemed to ripple and grow blurry. When Meng Hao laid eyes on it, he palpitated with eagerness and started panting. He grabbed the multicolored bag, and when he did, the flag fell to the ground.

Conversations had buzzed among the onlookers in the Demonic Forest as they watched Meng Hao calmly walked up the mountain, collecting huge amounts of Spirit Stones and medicinal pills. When the flag toppled more conversations broke out.

They gazed at Meng Hao with shock and envy, and then watched as he disappeared over the other side of the mountain.

Shangguan Xiu glared at Meng Hao murderously as he vanished. He didn’t dare to pursue him; there were too many things about him he didn’t know. Even though Shangguan Xiu’s desire to kill him was stronger than ever, he also knew that it was almost too late to reach his medicinal plant. Gnashing his teeth, he stamped his foot onto the ground, looking very pitiful indeed. But anger pushed away his depression. He would have killed Meng Hao already, if he could only have thought of a way.

As he watched Meng Hao disappear onto the other side of the mountain, Wu Dingqiu’s laughter rang out over the plateau. Eccentric Song stared with wide eyes as Meng Hao took his bag of the Cosmos. The blood drained from his face, and he seemed heartbroken. Now more than ever he regretted putting his bag of the Cosmos onto the mountain. He just couldn’t believe what had happened. This time, he really couldn’t endure any longer. He flicked his sleeve, and prepared to pursue the damnable Meng Hao. But, before he could leave, Wu Dingqiu once again blocked his way.

“Wu Dingqiu, you still dare to block me!” shouted heartbroken Eccentric Song. “The flag is fallen. You didn’t win our bet, and I didn’t lose. The trial by fire is over. If you continue to obstruct my way, you can’t blame me for attacking you!”

“Fellow Daoist Song, we agreed ahead of time that neither of us would leave before we finished this game of Go. You are a grand, illustrious Cultivator of the Southern Domain. Don’t tell me you’re going to go back on your word? When I made to leave earlier, you wouldn’t let me. Yet you wish to leave before finishing our game?” Wu Dingqiu laughed as he used Eccentric Song’s own words against him. Not a trace of a frown remained on his face, which was now filled with a wide smile. He clearly would not allow the other man to leave. Seeing the bag of the Cosmos taken away had filled his heart with joy. Eccentric Song had waved that bag in front of him mockingly for hundreds of years; to see him hoisted on his own petard was wondrous to the extreme.

“You…” Eccentric Song glared murderously at Wu Dingqiu, and didn’t say anything for a long moment. Then, he gritted his teeth and stamped his foot down, shaking the mountain so hard it seemed it would collapse. But considering his status and prestige, he could do nothing more than sit back down and begin playing Go again.

Of course, Wu Dingqiu wouldn't let him have his way so simply. He stroked his beard as he looked at Eccentric Song's unsightly expression. Laughing, he very slowly picked up a Go piece and then purposefully put a very thoughtful expression onto his face. After a very, very long time, he slowly put the piece onto the board, his face solemn, as if he intended to make this game last for months.

"Leave the mountain," said Wu Dingqiu, transmitting his voice to all of his white-robed disciples. "After I finish this game of Go, I will accompany you back to the Sect. In the meantime, the next stage of your trial by fire is to find the man you just saw on the mountain peak. I've taken a fancy to that treasured spear he has. Bring that spear back to me, and you will be promoted to the Inner Sect!" Each and every one of the disciples perked up at hearing this.

"Is the dignified Violet Fate Sect of the Southern Domain really going to kill people to take treasures?" said Eccentric Song. He was incredibly depressed, stuck in place because of his own words. But even though he hated Meng Hao, he couldn't pass up an opportunity to cause trouble for Wu Dingqiu.

Glaring at Eccentric Song, Wu Dingqiu said, "Listen well. You must not cause problems for that person. You must trade with him, not rob him. Anyone who violates this command will be expelled from the Sect!" His next move in the Go game was even slower than the previous.

The Violet Fate Sect disciples scattered in all directions. Some of them circled around the treasure mountain in pursuit of Meng Hao; others went as fast as possible in different directions, hoping to intercept him.

Their trial by fire had been an utter defeat, something they were not reconciled to. However, they didn't hold any ill will against Meng Hao, but rather admired him. After all, they had all witnessed the blood-soaked events of moments ago.

All of them were determined to get the iron spear from Meng Hao. They would trade anything to get it, and if he was unwilling to trade, would have to think of some tricks to get it.

In any case, they all had clearly heard Elder Wu’s words; they were to trade for the item, not rob it. Although… he had never said they couldn’t use force.

As the white-robed disciples scattered, Meng Hao raced down the treasure mountain, collecting more Spirit Stones and medicinal pills as he went. Even though he never saw Eccentric Song and Wu Dingqiu, he had guessed that this place was most likely a trial by fire region set up by some Sect.

Even though Shangguan Xiu was no longer chasing him, he knew that whosever’s trial by fire he had charged into might not be too happy about his interference. So, he maintained top speed, his heart pounding and his face filled with eagerness.

His bags of holding were all full; he had acquired more this time than on any other occasion since entering the Cultivation world, with the exception of the cave of the Flying Rain-Dragon. He casually packed away the Spirit Stones and medicinal pills.

Of course, the more things he picked up, the faster he tried to move. Gritting his teeth and continuously consuming Demonic Cores, he moved as fast as possible for three days, until he finally emerged from the mountain range. He looked both exhausted and energetic; in the past several days, he hadn’t had a chance to organize his treasures, and now all he wanted to do was find a place where he could safely examine everything. As he moved forward, he noticed that far in the distance was what appeared to be a walled city.

He was in the east of the State of Zhao, and this city appeared to be magnificent and beyond ordinary. It was surrounded by a gentle glowing light, a shield which mortals wouldn’t be able to see, and only Cultivators could sense.

“This place… it doesn’t seem like a city of mortals. Could it be a city of Cultivators?” He stared in surprise, recalling a map of the State of Zhao he had seen. The map had not shown any city in this place. At yet there at the gate of the city, people were coming in and out, almost all of them Cultivators of the Qi Condensation stage. His assumption had been correct.

He decided not to enter the city. Instead, he found a cave in the nearby mountains. Concealing himself inside, he took a deep breath and then began to take everything out of his bags of holding and sort them.

“What medicinal pill is this? It’s incredibly fragrant, even stronger than a Dry Spirit Pill… And this bottle, it has three pills inside, each one as transparent as crystal. They are definitely treasured pills.” Licking his lips, he emptied the contents of two bags of holding, and after counting everything, he found that he had seventy-eight pills. There were many different types, each one seemingly stronger than a Dry Spirit Pill. Meng Hao’s hands shook.

It took a long time for him to collect himself. Stifling his excitement, he pulled out ten more bags of holding.

“There were so many Spirit Stones on that treasure mountain. I just picked up the ones I noticed, and I wasn’t really even paying attention. Yet I acquired so many…” He began breathing hard again as he looked at all the Spirit Stones. When he put them together and counted, he found that he had eight thousand, seven hundred and sixty four!

“I’m rich! Rich!” he murmured. He pulled out another bag of holding, inside of which were flying swords, pearls, two flags, a scroll painting, a black net. All of them were magical items.

His smile nearly split his face as he took the items out. This was especially true when he took out the scroll painting and the black net. They emitted powerful spiritual power, causing his heart to beat rapidly. He slowly unrolled the scroll painting, and a bright light shined out, filling the cave with its brightness and illuminating Meng Hao’s face.

Inside, he could see a depiction of mountains and waters, within which existed a multitude of fantastic creatures. They had been painted, and yet somehow also seemed alive. When he opened the scroll he seemed to hear the roars of tens of thousands of beasts echoing faintly in his ears. His heart shook, and he dropped the painting to the ground.

After some time passed, he recovered from his shock. His eyes shining, he calmed his aura and picked up the painting again to examine it. It was clearly an incredibly valuable treasure. Meng Hao’s heart beat even faster.

“A treasure! What a true treasure!” he said, breathing deeply. Then he pulled out the black net. Walking out of the cave, he poured some spiritual energy into it, then tossed it into the air.

The black net instantly expanded, growing larger and larger, and flying up higher into the sky. It seemed big enough to be able to envelop the whole mountain, like some powerful black cloud. The mountain began to shake, and cracks appeared on its surface as if it were about to collapse. The suppressive power increased, causing Meng Hao’s heart to tremble. Astonished, he lifted his hand, sending out his spiritual energy, causing the black cloud to slowly shrink. It transformed into a black beam which shot back toward him and then became a small, black net.

He grabbed the net, his mouth dry. He breathed for a while, composing himself. His eyes glowed.

“This is better than even the best treasures from the Reliance Sect,” he thought, his heart pounding. Then, he pulled out the last item, the multicolored bag.

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# Chapter 53: How will you thank me?

“This… looks kind of like a bag of holding, but a bit better.” Meng Hao moved it back and forth in his hands, then used his spiritual power to feel it out a bit. Suddenly, his body began to tremble, as if it had been struck by invisible lightning. His eyes widened, revealing complete astonishment. After a long time passed, he lowered his head and looked into the bag.

“It’s so big…” he murmured. It was a bag of holding, but was so large inside that it seemed as if it could contain heaven and earth. The insides were misty, and so boundless that Meng Hao’s heart immediately shook.

It appeared as if entire mountains and rivers could be stored inside. Even though it was empty, its massive capacity was enough to call the bag itself a precious treasure.

Meng Hao’s mouth and tongue were dry. The Spirit Stones had made him happy. The medicinal pills had made him quiver with eagerness. And then there were the magical items. The scroll painting had shocked him and the spiritual might of the black colored net had left him shaken. But this bag left his head buzzing. It took a long time to pull himself together.

“I’m rich. This is true wealth…” Meng Hao muttered to himself, gripping the multicolored bag tightly. But then the expression on his face suddenly changed.

“If that was truly some great Sect’s trial by fire, it wouldn’t be a big deal if I interfered, but they surely won’t let me get away with so many treasures, medicinal pills and Spirit Stones.” His heart began to thump, and a conflicted look appeared on his head. However, he was determined not to give up the treasures he had acquired.

He organized everything carefully, then breathed in deeply and looked out at the evening. He emerged from the cave and left the mountains, looking thoughtfully at the walled city off in the distance.

“I have a lot of medicinal pills,” he muttered to himself as he gazed at the city with glittering eyes, “but I don’t recognize any of them. Therefore, I can’t safely consume any of them.” He began to walk toward the city.

He moved quickly, and soon approached the city gate, above which were written three characters.

Eastern Refinement City.

The characters had an ancient feel to them, and had clearly been there for more than just a few years. Their faded surfaces made one feel as if they had seen ages come and go.

“Refinement is similar to Cultivation. And this is the East. The meaning of this city’s name is relatively straight-forward.” [TL note: The character for “Refinement” is pronounced similar to the character for “Cultivation.”]

As soon as Meng Hao stepped foot into the city gate, he saw two disciples standing there chatting. Their gaze settled onto Meng Hao.

They wore light blue robes and were both at the third level of Qi Condensation.

“Fellow Daoist, please pay your tax before entering the city.” His smile disappeared as he felt the pressure of Meng Hao’s Cultivation base.

“Fellow Daoists, I can tell from a glance that you are from a great Sect. I myself am from a small Sect, and I just came off the mountain. This being my first time here, could I trouble you two Fellow Daoists to give me some information about this place?” Meng Hao was innately scholarly, and spoke in a very polite manner. The two low-level Cultivators were instantly impressed, and the young man who had just spoken laughed.

“Well spoken, well spoken! Fellow Daoist, your Cultivation base is quite refined. If this is your first time out of the Sect, then I suspect your name will become quite well-known in the future.” The young man smiled as he spoke. For someone with such a profound Cultivation base to treat him so politely left him feeling quite pleased. “This is Eastern Refinement City, founded by the Three Great Sect Alliance of the State of Zhao, and one of the great Cultivation Cities in the State of Zhao. In order to enter, you have to pay a tax of one Spirit Stone.

“The cost is actually three Spirit Stones, but for you, just one will do. Please note, fighting is forbidden within the city limits. Violators will be punished severely by the three Sects. You must not forget this point.” He held out a wooden tablet to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao thanked him hurriedly and paid his one Spirit Stone. Then, he saluted with clasped hands and passed through the city gate.

He felt a bit of regret about the Spirit Stone. It was only one, but it was still money as far as Meng Hao was concerned. He might have over eight-thousand more in his bag, but he was very familiar with the copper mirror’s appetite for Spirit Stones, and knew that it wasn’t actually very much at all.

“What an expensive tax. If I didn’t absolutely have to come here, I wouldn’t pay it.” He walked quickly through the city, looking around. Dusk was falling, but the city still bustled, with people walking to and fro everywhere. The streets were filled with shops, most of which emitted brightly glowing lights. A single look confirmed that this was no ordinary place.

Everyone was a Cultivator. As he walked through the city, he didn’t see a single mortal. However, all of these Cultivators were of the Qi Condensation stage. Scanning the crowds, Meng Hao only saw about three people who, like him, were at the seventh level. Most were at the sixth, or lower.

Meng Hao walked down the broad streets, looking for shops that sold medicinal pills. He didn’t buy any, but rather asked questions. Three days passed, during which time Meng Hao traversed the entire city, visiting over thirty medicinal pill shops.

Even still, he only could find out information about seven or eight of the dozens of types of medicinal pills in his bag of holding. And yet, Meng Hao was excited. Of the pills he had learned about, each and every one was considerably expensive. One of them was a Spirit Establishment Pill, worth fifty Spirit Stones, only useful at the seventh level of Qi Condensation.

In his bag of holding, he had eight of them altogether.

“Too bad there are so many pills that I still don’t know anything about.” On the third day, Meng Hao hesitated, then finally walked into an extremely luxurious building in the western district of the city.

It was three stories tall and emitted a glowing light. Even from a long distance, one could see its shine. Before, Meng Hao noticed that almost everyone who entered was of the sixth level of Qi condensation. There were even some of the eighth or ninth levels, and it seemed this was the only building they were willing to enter.

When he saw the name on the building, he was even more resolved to enter.

Hundred Treasures Pavilion.

The inside was filled with carved balustrades and marble steps. Everything seemed to be made of jade, and as soon as he stepped inside, Meng Hao instantly felt a dense spiritual force brush against his face. A dazzling assortment of displayed items met his eyes; medicinal pill bottles, flying swords, pearls, banners and other items could be seen everywhere.

There weren’t a lot of Cultivators present, so it was relatively quiet. They walked around separately in groups of four or five, each one accompanied by a young woman wearing a long, pink dress. The girls’ voices were light and airy, and they humbly answered all queries about the various items.

None of that was of very much interest to Meng Hao, though. What really captured his attention was some distance away on the second floor. Next to the stair case was an enormous Pill furnace. Wisps of smoke curled around it, and sitting next to it was a middle-aged man in a long black robe. He sat there cross-legged, back straight, expressionless, doing breathing exercises with his eyes closed.

He emanated a trace amount of power, but it was difficult to sense, as if he were keeping most of it hidden. If he didn't, the entire pavilion would probably begin to collapse.

"A Foundation Establishment Cultivator…" Meng Hao's pupils constricted. This middle-aged man emitted the same type of aura as Grand Elder Ouyang, making it immediately obvious to Meng Hao that his Cultivation base was at the Foundation Establishment stage, far above everyone else's.

"I wonder if the day will ever come in which I have a chance to be a Foundation Establishment Cultivator." After all the things he had experienced in the Reliance Sect, his heart was filled with the desire to become powerful. Right now, his head was lowered, but his eyes were filled with determination and stubbornness. His resolve was even stronger than ever.

"By using the Cultivation method of the Sublime Spirit Scripture, when reach Foundation Establishment, it will be a Flawless Foundation, much more powerful than Cracked or Fragmented. I will be strong even among Foundation Establishment stage Cultivators." He took in a deep breath and raised his head. A young woman in a pink dress approached him. She was beautiful, and wore a relaxed smiled on her face. She greeted Meng Hao with a slight bow. As she did, the front of her dress dropped, revealing an abundance of milky tenderness.

"Daoist Brother, do you need any assistance?" she asked.

Meng Hao's face immediately turned scarlet, and he murmured to himself that he shouldn't look at inappropriate things. Despite his determination, he couldn't help but glance down, and his heart began to race. Even though he had been in the Reliance Sect for three years, he hadn't spent time with any female disciples other than Elder Sister Xu. As for what he was looking at now he hadn't seen anything like it in his entire life. His face was a bit dark, but at the moment you couldn't tell at all.

"Do you have any jade slips which describe medicinal pills?" he asked with a dry cough, trying to cover up his embarrassment.

The girl was young, but her demeanor suggested she was quite experienced. She could instantly sense Meng Hao's awkwardness, and was quite amused. Throughout her years, she had seen many customers, but few like Meng Hao. Holding back a laugh, she smiled and leaned closer toward him so that he would catch a scent of her perfume.

When the fragrant scent reached his face, Meng Hao's face grew even redder. His eyes, however, contained no lasciviousness. Instead they were wide and clear; he was fundamentally not given to lust. He was just inexperienced with women, thus his flushed face.

"Of course we have jade slips regarding medicinal pills," she said with a wink. "Please follow me, Daoist Brother." She found his increasing awkwardness to be very cute. She turned, her waist swaying, her curves entrancing. Meng Hao couldn't help but look, and again his heart began to race. With a bitter smile, he gave a light cough and hurried to follow her.

She led him to a lattice shelf off to the side which was filled with various pieces of jade. Amongst them, on a white tray, were three slips of jade, inscribed with the characters Three Jade Slip. "These jade slips introduce most of the medicinal pills that can be found in the State of Zhao. However, this is a copy, so the contents are somewhat unclear."

When she saw Meng Hao raising his hand to take them, she smiled. "You can't look unless you buy. The Three Jade Slip costs one hundred spirit stones." When she smiled, two beautiful dimples appeared. As she looked at Meng Hao, she thought that even though his face was a bit dark, it contained a scholarly and youthful charm.

As her perfume wafted around Meng Hao, he pulled his hand back and focused himself. He looked thoughtfully at the Three Jade Piece. It seemed just a bit too expensive, and he was hesitant to part with that many Spirit Stones.

“Is there anything that provides even more information than this?” he asked after a while, clenching his jaw. His whole purpose in coming here had been to buy a jade slip such as this.

“Of course!” replied the girl with another wink. “Follow me.” She led Meng Hao to another corner, then pointed to a jade slip on a shelf. It was covered with small cracks.

“This is not a copy. It’s an ancient jade slip which contains records of the various medicinal pills of the Southern Domain. It even details information about poison pills and their antidotes. Furthermore, it contains very realistic artistic depictions of the pills. Unfortunately, it is cracked, and will eventually shatter. You will only be able to read it four or five times.”

Upon hearing her words, Meng Hao’s heart quivered. He needed it, not for long-term use, but to solve the problem of his current situation.

“Daoist Brother, I hope you don’t mind,” she said with a smile, leaning close and lowering her voice. “The cost of this item is two hundred Spirit Stones. You should understand that if it wasn’t cracked, it would be worth over one thousand. If you really want it, I can help you apply for a cost reduction. But, how will you thank me?”

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# Chapter 54: An Old Friend from the Sect

“I… I’m just a scholar…” Meng Hao gaped, his mouth wide, unsure of how to respond. When he had bought things back in Yunjie County, he had never encountered a situation like this. To have a beautiful girl smiling sweetly at him, looking so charming, caused the red flush to suddenly fill his face once again.

Seeing Meng Hao’s embarrassed expression, the young woman covered her mouth and laughed softly. She turned, her waist swaying enchantingly as she walked over to the Pill oven. She lowered her head to speak to the middle-aged man who sat there in meditation.

When she returned, she winked at Meng Hao. “How about one hundred seventy Spirit Stones?”

“Many thanks, Fellow Daoist,” said Meng Hao, sucking in a breath. Looking pleased at having saved a few Spirit stones, he quickly saluted with clasped fists.

“You can call me big sis,” she said, holding the jade slips out to Meng Hao.

He accepted them, then cast some spiritual power into them. Immediately a vast tableau appeared in his mind. Glancing over it eagerly, he already noticed three of the pills that were contained in his bag of holding. He pulled out the one hundred seventy Spirit Stones and gave them to the girl, then cupped his hands together as he made to leave. The girl sighed and escorted him all the way to the door.

“My name is Qiao Ling,” she said, her eyes filled with an interesting look. “Remember to ask for me next time you come.” She looked him up and down as she spoke, her eyes charming and filled with poise. Meng Hao, face scarlet, saluted her and retreated as quickly as possible.

His heart pounded as he left, and didn’t calm down for quite some time. He looked back at the Hundred Treasures Pavilion and caught sight of Qiao Ling standing there smiling softly at him.

He felt even more embarrassed. She had taken liberties with him!

He had never experienced a feeling such as this before. It wasn’t a bad feeling, and he actually enjoyed it a bit. Coughing again, he lowered his head and continued walking.

About this time, a group of people emerged from the second floor of the Hundred Treasure’s Pavilion. There were about seven or eight of them, including men and women. As they walked, they chatted with each other. Among them was a young man wearing a light blue robe, walking in the back. He didn’t look like he belonged, as if he were an attendant.

As the group left the pavilion, the young man happened to lift his head and catch sight of Meng Hao.

“Meng Hao!” he cried, staring. This caught the attention of the other men and women, as well as Meng Hao, who stopped walking and looked back to see all of them looking at him.

His expression did not change, but in his heart he felt conflicting emotions. The young man was none other than Zhou Kai, former disciple of the Reliance Outer Sect. His Cultivation base was at the fifth level of Qi Condensation. On the day of the Sect’s dissolution, he had been rolled out by the red fog, and here he was today.

He seemed to be somewhat down and out, following a group of people dressed in expensive, brocaded garments. Most of them had threatening demeanors, and one of them was at the seventh level of Qi Condensation.

The rest appeared to be at the sixth. They were clearly members of the great Sects of the State of Zhao.

Obviously, Zhou Kai had joined them after the dissolution of the Reliance Sect. For him to be with group such as this, he obviously could only claim the status of an attendant.

Meng Hao nodded to him but didn’t say anything. He turned and made to leave.

“Who is this?” said a young man who stood next to Zhou Kai. He spoke lightly, but his tone was one of pride and arrogance. He wore a resplendent robe and held a fan in his hand. He was at the seventh level of Qi Condensation, and the others standing around them began to whisper among themselves and watch.

“Elder Brother Sun, this is a fellow member of my former Sect,” said Zhou Kai hesitatingly, not mentioning Meng Hao’s name or his status in the Sect.

“Meng Hao… that name sounds familiar.”

“I remember,” said one of the women in the group with a laugh. “He’s the only remaining member of the Reliance Inner Sect. He looks a lot like the drawing.”

The eyes of all the onlookers suddenly began to shine. Two people dashed ahead to block Meng Hao’s path. In recent days in the Cultivation world of the State of Zhao, rumors of a shocking matter had been circulating.

The Reliance Sect had disbanded, but Patriarch Reliance wasn’t dead. He had put on a display of power all for the sake of a single Inner Sect disciple. He had frightened the most powerful experts of the State of Zhao, causing a huge sensation. After the experts had returned from the scene, these rumors had spread across the entire Cultivation world of the State of Zhao.

Even more hotly discussed was how Founder Reliance had given his Inner Sect disciple a precious treasure, something powerful enough to shake the heavens and earth and kill any and all Cultivators. These rumors spread fast and wide, and as inquiries were made of the former Reliance Sect disciples, this person’s name was soon revealed: Meng Hao.

If things had just ended in this fashion, then the matter would soon have come to rest. However, after returning from the Reliance Sect, the State of Zhao experts gradually realized something. Toward the end, it had seemed as if Patriarch Reliance’s power had begun to wane slightly. Furthermore, considering Patriarch Reliance’s famous temper, how could it be that they all were able to escape, without a single one of them being killed?

Speculation naturally blossomed, and many people began to pay more and more attention to the Inner Sect disciple Meng Hao. The three great Sects had issued orders that all disciples sent out of the Sect pay close attention and attempt to find Meng Hao. His picture had been distributed along with the order.

Now, people weren’t certain. Even if Patriarch Reliance was alive, was his Cultivation base as powerful as before? Filled with misgivings about the matter, the three great Sects had proclaimed rewards would be given to any disciple who, upon encountering Meng Hao, could get information about the power of the treasure he carried.

Meng Hao stood there, looking coldly at the two people blocking his way. He heard footsteps behind him as four others blocked his path of retreat. His left and right paths also contained people. It seemed he was completely surrounded.

Within the Hundred Treasures Pavilion, Qiao Ling looked down with a frown.

“May I help you, sirs and ladies?” said Meng Hao coolly, his gaze sweeping around. His expression seemed indifferent, as calm as still water. He seemed completely confident, yet also cautious.

“No,” said the extravagantly dressed young man with a smile, fanning himself. “We’ve just heard that Meng Hao has a gift bestowed upon him by Patriarch Reliance. Having happened to run into you, we were hoping to take a look.” Within his smile glinted an icy coldness. And yet, his heart was circumspect; any treasured gift given by Patriarch Reliance should be treated with utmost caution.

But, these were disciples of the three Great Sects, which granted them extremely high status. Therefore, despite Meng Hao being at the seventh level of Qi Condensation, they still felt themselves above him.

“That’s right,” said another of the people surrounding him. He laughed. “Fellow Daoist Meng does have the treasure. Why not take it out for us to have a look?” He clearly viewed Meng Hao as being completely boxed in, with no way out.

Meng Hao looked as calm as ever, his eyes shining with a cold light. His mouth twisted mockingly, and he suddenly slapped his bag of holding, causing the people surrounding him to dodge to the side. Some of them even pulled out magical items.

A beam of light flashed, and suddenly, Meng Hao’s iron spear appeared in his hand. He stabbed it down into the ground, imbuing it with some spiritual energy so that it appeared to be a mighty weapon. It hummed, the sound reverberating about, causing the surrounding people to unconsciously take a step back, their gazes fixed on the spear.

“Whoever wishes to die can come up for a closer look,” said Meng Hao coolly, taking two steps back and flicking his wide sleeve. He appeared supremely confident, especially his mocking eyes and smile, as if he knew beyond doubt that anyone who attempted to look closely at the spear would be killed by it.

Actually, Meng Hao had taken two steps back because it brought him closer to the city gate. As soon as the surrounding people walked forward to look at the spear, he would attack, then take advantage of the chaos to flee. After all, this city was controlled by the three great Sects, and he knew that he could not get involved in any trouble here.

Everything was quiet as the onlookers gazed at the iron spear. At first glance, it did appeare to be a bit beyond ordinary. It was covered with sweeping, decorative patterns, incredibly complex, dazzling even. The more people looked at it, the more amazing it seemed.

It glowed, its tip emitting beams of light which pierced the eyes like lightning.

Even Qiao Ling, up in the Hundred Treasures Pavilion, couldn’t help but gaze at it. More girls appeared around her, all of them staring down.

After looking at it for a while, the several disciples from the great Sects frowned.

“It doesn’t look like anything special; there are just some fancy markings on it. It doesn’t seem to have any incantations on it at all….”

The fancy young man with the fan also frowned. “That’s the treasure given to him by Patriarch Reliance?” After examining it, he laughed, then beckoned for Zhou Kai to step forward.

At this moment, the sound of footsteps could be heard from outside the East gate, drawing the attention of the surrounding Cultivators. Meng Hao’s eyes flashed, and then he frowned. Clustered outside the East gate was a group of ten or more Cultivators wearing white robes. Some of them looked familiar, and when he saw the color of their robes, he knew that these were the disciples from whatever great Sect had been holding the trial by fire.

As he saw them entering through the East gate, he realized that his path of escape was now blocked. His frown deepened, and his hand slowly lowered to his bag of holding.

The fancy young man with the fan looked at the white robed Cultivators, and his eyes gleamed. His face filled with reverence, he cupped his hands in salute and said, “Elder Brothers from the Violet Fate Sect, I am humble Sun Hua 1 from the Winding Stream Sect. Greetings, Fellow Daoists.”

Hearing this, looks of awe appeared on the faces of the surrounding Cultivators. They followed along with the first man as he saluted the white-robed Cultivators. They were famous figures from various Sects, and normally held a high position within the State of Zhao. But to meet disciples from a truly great Sect from the Southern Domain, they were instantly lowered down. Their expressions were suddenly that of longing and courtesy.

Recently, they had all received jade slips from their respective Sects reminding them that if they ran into any white-robed disciples from the Violet Fate Sect of the Southern Domain, they were not to provoke them.

As the white-robed Cultivators entered the city, they saw the State of Zhao disciples, but completely ignored them. Hearing their identities called out caused a couple of them to frown. Their eyes swept the surroundings, then came to rest on the iron spear stuck into the ground. They stopped in their tracks.

Other disciples who were watching the scene looked astonished. Their excited eyes flickered to stare at the State of Zhao Cultivators.

1. Sun Hua’s name in Chinese is sūn huá – Sun is a common surname. Hua can mean many things bun in names, most likely “magnificent” or “splendid”

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# Chapter 55: Overbearing

A dark look flashed through Meng Hao's eyes. He was surrounded by disciples of various Sects from the State of Zhao, and the white-robed Cultivators were approaching from the East gate. If he aroused the attention of the various eccentrics from the three sects within the city, then his chances of getting away would be very slim.

When the disciples of the State of Zhao Sects saw the Violet Fate Sect disciples walking up, excited expressions lit their faces. To be able to make friends with them would increase their standing in their own respective Sects, and would provide great advantages in further development. Most of them had assumed the Violet Fate Sect disciples would ignore all of them, but it turned out they really were approaching them.

"Elder Brother Sun is very well known; that must be why they're coming over."

"Yeah. He's a blood relative of one of the Elders of the Winding Stream Sect. His Cultivation base is extraordinary. The Violet Fate Sect disciples must be coming over to give him some face." One by one, ingratiating smiles appeared on the faces of the surrounding State of Zhao disciples, especially the young man in the expensive clothes. He was growing more and more excited. Hearing the whispers of the bystanders, his heart filled with pride. It seemed he was fairly well-known after all, enough so to cause the Violet Fate Sect disciples to walk over. This matter would surely be talked about near and far, and his standing in the Sect would change immediately. His name would be known throughout the entire Cultivation world of the State of Zhao.

It seemed that to Meng Hao, what was happening was no big deal. He smiled, looking like he didn't care at all. As the young man in expensive clothes moved forward to greet the white-robed Cultivators, the State of Zhao disciples followed. The female disciples among them looked especially excited.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. He pulled the iron spear out of the ground, and then turned to leave.

“Daoist Brothers from the Violet Fate Sect, I, Sun, shall treat you to a feast in the Phoenix Heaven Restaurant,” said Sun Hua, his expression one of extreme excitement and pride. “Fellow State of Zhao disciples, please join me in receiving the brothers from the Violet Fate Sect.” The collection of Cultivators behind him made the image even more distinct. Coupled with his excited expression, it was clear that he was taking the lead among the State of Zhao disciples.

Even as the words left his mouth, and he bowed with cupped hands, the Violet Fate Sect disciples walked past him, not even looking at him. En masse, they passed the entire group without a glance, hurrying quickly forward.

Sun Hua’s mouth dropped open as he watched this happen, as did the other State of Zhao disciples who were following him.

At the same time, the person in the lead position of the Violet Fate Sect disciples let out a hearty laugh.

“Fellow Daoist, please stay,” he said. “Brother, did you just return from the treasure mountain? You have an outstanding demeanor. All of us who witnessed your actions on the mountain hold you in the highest regard. I am Qian Shuihen 1 of the Violet Fate Sect. Greetings, Fellow Daoist, may I respectfully ask your esteemed name?”

“Fellow Daoist, we’ve been looking for you,” said another. “We never imagined that we would run into you here. Hahaha! If the Fellow Daoist has time, I will send someone to arrange a banquet. I am Lu Song 2 of the Violet Fate Sect. Please, allow me to treat you to a feast.”

Among the ten or more Violet Fate Sect disciples, these two had the highest Cultivation bases. They were at the eighth level of Qi Condensation. Faces filled with smiles, they hurried in front of Meng Hao, blocking his way. The spoke with utmost politeness, and when they approached, they saluted with clasped hands. When the State of Zhao disciples saw this happening; their faces filled with awe and veneration.

An almost imperceptible frown appeared on Meng Hao's face, but quickly disappeared. He smiled, and returned a polite salute. He mumbled his name unclearly, although he knew that even though he didn't say it clearly, these people could search him easily if they wanted to.

The State of Zhao Cultivators watched on in disbelief. Their heads spun as they watched the Violet Fate Sect disciples chatting in this way to Meng Hao.

This was especially true of Sun Hua, whose face went through a series of different expressions. He was insulted, of course, and watched Meng Hao with a look of disbelief.

He knew that the white-robed Cultivators were from the Violet Fate Sect in the Southern Domain. They were proud and arrogant, considering themselves to be unmatched in the world. And yet, they were incredibly polite to Meng Hao, and their eyes were filled with veneration.

Although he wasn't quite sure what had just happened, cold sweat broke out on his forehead when he saw them being so polite. He realized that if he had made a move just now to test out the spear, he would most likely have lost a lot of face.

He wasn't the only one who was shocked. Zhou Kai looked on, dumbfounded. Originally, he had regretted calling out Meng Hao's name, but watching this scene unfold, his eyes filled with admiration.

"Elder Brother Meng really did deserve to be an Inner Sect disciple. It's a good thing I gave him those Spirit Stones back then. The Sect was dissolved, and we were kicked away like stray dogs, but he's still out stirring up trouble. And somehow he's got the disciples from one of the great Sects of the Southern Domain to treat him so well.” Zhou Kai sighed inwardly.

Up in the Hundred Treasures Pavilion, Qiao Ling blinked a few times, watching in disbelief as the Violet Fate Sect disciples surrounded Meng Hao. When she saw him speaking calmly with them, she couldn’t forget what had happened moments ago between her and Meng Hao. Her interest in him was piqued even more.

“Elder Brother Meng,” said Qian Shuihen, shifting the conversation topic to the spear in Meng Hao’s hand. “Is this the treasured holy spear you used to rebuke the Demonic beasts on the treasure mountain?” He had looked the spear over just now, but it didn’t seem to have any extraordinary qualities. And yet he clearly remembered how Meng Hao had wielded it to bloody so many Demonic beasts.

“Of course it is,” said Lu Song, laughing. “Your actions on the mountain that day left me in complete veneration of you. Elder Brother Meng, there’s no reason to deny it.”

A strange look appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes, but only for a moment. He smiled and nodded.

“Yes, this is the spear I used that day on the mountain,” he said candidly.

“This spear can only be called a great treasure,” said Lu Song. “I saw you use it to injure many Demonic beasts. Countless, in fact. Elder Brother Meng’s mighty actions have replayed themselves constantly in my mind.” He glanced at the spear, his eyes burning. Then he looked over coldly at Qian Shuihen, and the two of them locked gazes. They clearly didn’t like each other, and both of them knew that the other was determined to come out on top.

When the State of Zhao Cultivators heard all of this, their gazes were drawn to the iron spear. Their original intention had been to examine this treasure of Meng Hao’s. As of now, they didn’t need to. If the Violet Fate Sect disciples were convinced of its power, then it must be true.

Sun Hua's eyes gleamed, and he walked forward a few steps, staring at the iron spear.

"Although, I do have to say," laughed Lu Song with a shake of his head, "Elder Brother Meng, you really threw our trial by fire into chaos. You took so many medicinal pills, Spirit Stones and magical items from the treasure mountain…." From his expression, it seemed he didn't mind.

"Oh that…." Meng Hao laughed, taking a few steps back.

"It's no matter," said Qian Shuihen, taking a few steps forward, eyes on the spear. "That treasure mountain belongs to Eccentric Song, and he shot his mouth off, saying that anyone with the skills could take whatever they want. Actually, Elder Brother Meng's actions left me feeling immensely satisfied. But… Elder Brother Meng, regarding this spear; would you be willing to offer it up for sale? The Violet Fate Sect would be willing to offer a fair price for it!" Because Meng Hao held it in his hand, Qian Shuihen had no way to thoroughly inspect it. Because he was not at the Foundation Establishment stage, he didn't have Spiritual Sense, and therefore no way to sense the minute details.

"Well…." Meng Hao looked hesitant.

"Elder Brother Meng," said Lu Song, his eyes glittering. "This spear is really very important to us. Please, allow yourself to part with it!" He knew that the first objective was to force Meng Hao into agreeing. Then he and Qian Shuihen would have to battle it out. He took a step forward as he spoke, an overbearing air filling his eyes.

"Eccentric Song treats people wickedly and mercilessly. You took away many of his most prized treasures. If our Violet Fate Sect's Elder Wu hadn't held him back, Elder Brother Meng would be in quite a bit of danger right now." Qian Shuihen advanced further, his bearing extremely overbearing. At this point, he made no effort to conceal his power and might as he spoke.

The other Violet Fate Sect disciples slowly moved forward, forming a circle around them. Their eyes gleamed with the desire to lay hands on the spear.

“This spear is just an ordinary item,” said Meng Hao, looking around at the circle of people, then turning back to Lu Song and Qian Shuihen with a frown.

“Elder Brother Meng, there’s no need for jokes,” said Lu Song with a laugh, his eyes moving over the haft of the spear. “I know I’m not mistaken. This is the spear that you used. That notch in the side, I saw it clearly that day.”

Meng Hao stared blankly. It seemed this person had looked at the spear even more closely than he had. He hadn’t notice any notch before, but now that he looked, sure enough, there it was.

When Lu Song saw his expression, it only served to further his certainty. Though he wore a smile on his face, his eyes were cold. He wasn’t allowed to kill Meng Hao to earn a spot in the Inner Sect, but could use other means, and he wouldn’t hold back.

“Even if it’s only an ordinary object, we still wish to buy it,” said Qian Shuihen threateningly, his voice even colder than before. “We are determined to have this spear. Please, Elder Brother Meng, don’t make things difficult for us, otherwise, we will be very displeased, and you will be too. You might have the spear in hand, but the Violet Fate Sect is one of the five great Sects of the Southern Domain. Even this far away, our power is greater than you can imagine, Fellow Daoist. Furthermore… it’s not we who want the spear, but rather Sect Elder Wu.”

Upon hearing this, the State of Zhao Cultivators all exchanged glances. Their faces lit up with sneers for Meng Hao, but they maintained their silence.

Sun Hua’s smile was especially wide. Gaining the help of these people to get information about the spear was a good thing. Regardless of what happened in the end, he should be able to take advantage of the situation to make a move. Furthermore, despite Meng Hao having a treasured spear, he wouldn’t dare to offend a great sect from the Southern Domain.

“If I don’t agree, will you force me?” asked Meng Hao, his gaze growing grim.

“Our Sect doesn’t steal treasures from people,” said Lu Song with a laugh. “But Elder Brother Meng should think things through carefully. What good will it do you to offend us? Furthermore… if we really wanted to steal the spear, we could get other people to do it for us. We wouldn’t have to do anything.” He glanced over at the State of Zhao disciples standing a short distance away and nodded. Sun Hua and the others suddenly looked very excited.

“Elder Brother Meng, I, Qian, very much admire your performance on the treasure mountain. But let’s not beat around the bush. Whether or not you want to sell the spear, you will!” His eyes were grim, and his words cold.

Meng Hao’s heart groaned. If these people wanted to bring trouble upon themselves, he wouldn’t stop them. A variety of expressions crossed his face, and he retreated a few more steps back, muttering to himself. Then, gritting his teeth, he lifted his head. His eyes were bloodshot.

“Esteemed Violet Fate Sect disciples. If you truly wish to purchase my spear, please, name your price.” Meng Hao flicked his sleeve, stabbing the spear into the ground. His face seemed to be grim and filled with pain.

1. Qian Shuihen’s name in Chinese is qiān shuǐ hén – Qian is a surname which also means “1,000.” Shui hen literally means “water mark”

2. Lu Song’s name in Chinese is lǚ sòng – Lu is a common surname. Song has no real meaning. It’s the same “Song” as the Song Dynasty

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# Chapter 56: Elder Brother Meng, Whether or not You Want to Trade, You Will!

When Meng Hao spoke, everything went quiet. Everyone's eyes focused on the iron spear sticking out of the ground.

Qian Shuihen laughed loudly, cupping hands in salute to Meng Hao.

"So, Elder Brother Meng is willing to part with his treasure. I, Qian, will not allow you to suffer a loss." He pulled out a bag of holding and tossed it to the ground. "Here are five hundred Spirit Stones!" Clinking sounds rang out as five-hundred Spirit Stones appeared, forming a small mountain. Off to the side, the State of Zhao disciples watched, gloating over Meng Hao's misfortune. Five hundred Spirit Stones was not a small amount, but also not a very large amount. If he sold a treasured item for that amount, he would become a laughingstock.

They weren't the only ones to think about the price. Meng Hao frowned. The difference was, his thinking was different from that of the State of Zhao disciples. In his estimation, the iron spear was probably worth two pieces of silver. To trade it for five hundred Spirit Stones meant that he was actually making a tidy profit.

"Are you kidding me?" said Lu Song. "Don't try to bully Elder Brother Meng. You think you can buy a treasure like that with just five hundred Spirit Stones? I will buy it for one thousand five hundred Spirit Stones!" With a cold harrumph and the flick of a sleeve, he produced a bag of holding. More clinking sounds rang out as one thousand five hundred shining Spirit Stones emerged, producing a pile much higher than Qian

Shuihen’s. It was a grand sight which left everyone nervous with anticipation.

The State of Zhao disciples’ hearts pounded. To them, one thousand five hundred Spirit Stones was a lot. Even though they were disciples of the three great Sects, it would still be difficult to accumulate so many. They panted as they watched. Even Sun Hua seemed to quiver with eagerness. Zhou Kai stood behind him, dumbfounded. His admiration for Meng Hao grew even stronger, and he felt regret in his heart. He shouldn’t have called out Meng Hao’s name just now. He sighed, realizing that it was his fault that Meng Hao was being forced to sell his treasure.

“Junior Brother Song really does have gall,” said Qian Shuihen, giving Lu Song a cold look. He was determined to win the treasure. As far as he was concerned, it was his ticket into the Inner Sect, and he would not give up, no matter what price he had to pay. As of now, his true opponent was Lu Song. The two of them could clearly not discuss acquiring the spear together.

“All of you! Give me your Spirit Stones,” said Qian Shuihen, turning to looking at the five or six disciples behind him. “When we return to the Sect I will find a way to repay you.” Without hesitation, they opened their bags of holding and produced all of their Spirit Stones.

“Two thousand one hundred Spirit Stones,” Qian Shuihen said coolly, looking as if he didn’t care in the slightest. “Elder Brother Meng, these are all the items that I possess.” He gave a cold look to Lu Song.

Lu Song’s face twisted. The one thousand five hundred Spirit Stones he’d offered had been borrowed from the handful of fellow disciples behind him. Seeing how many Qian Shuihen had produced, as well as Meng Hao’s apparent hesitation, he suddenly slapped his bag of holding.

“Elder Brother Meng, I have no more Spirit Stones. But, I have medicinal pills.” A bottle appeared in his hand. “Here are three Heavenly Water Pills, suitable for any Cultivator of the eighth level of Qi condensation or lower. It is one of the best pills produced by the Pill Cultivation Workshop of our Violet Fate Sect. Each pill is worth five hundred Spirit Stones.”

The burning look in the eyes of the State of Zhao disciples grew more intense. They knew how valuable Heavenly Water Pills were.

Sun Hua’s breathing grew heavier. He had heard the Elders of his Sect speak of Heavenly Water Pills, and knew that they were one of the three most effective types of pills within the Southern Domain for eighth level Qi Condensation Cultivators. Even within the Violet Fate Sect, prominent members of the Outer Sect would have a hard time getting their hands on one.

Qian Shuihen frowned, his eyes fixed on Lu Song. Clenching his jaw, he slapped his bag of holding and produced his own pill bottle.

“I have no Heavenly Water Pills,” said Qian Shuihen dramatically, “but, seeing that Elder Brother Meng is of the seventh level of Qi Condensation, please accept these seven Earthly Spirit Pills. They were awarded to me for meritorious service within the Sect. They are perfectly suited for the seventh level of Qi Condensation.”

“I have some piddling Earthly Spirit Pills too,” said Lu Song with a cold laugh. He looked back at the disciples behind him. They gritted their teeth and produced their bags of holding, handing over ten Earthly Spirit Pills. They looked with reddened eyes at Qian Shuihen and his group.

“Elder Brother Qian, look….” said Meng Hao shyly. His heart beat rapidly.

Qian Shuihen’s face changed as he realized that his offerings didn’t match up to Lu Song’s. But this was his opportunity to enter the Inner Sect. He would not let it pass.

“Junior Brother Lu, you are determined to have it out with me today, aren’t you? Fine!” His eyes flashing fiercely. He slapped his bag of holding, and immediately, a black beam shot out, transforming into a black spike. It glittered like lightning, producing multiple afterimages. The afterimages all came to rest on Qian Shuihen’s hand, and everything grew quiet.

It was pitch black and carried an air of indescribable sharpness.

“Elder Brother Meng, this is a magical item bestowed upon me by the Sect. It is called the Hellfighting Spike. Cold and dark, if it wounds an opponent, the wound will freeze over and an intense coldness will enter their body.” Qian Shuihen forced himself to ignore his heartache as he spoke.

When the spike appeared, the faces of the disciples behind Qian Shuihen filled with envy. Lu Song’s expression changed, and he looked distressed. He had never imagined that Qian Shuihen would take out the black spike.

Meng Hao’s eyes widened and his heart raced even faster. It wasn’t just him. A buzz of conversation arose among the nearby State of Zhao disciples.

“That’s a Hellfighting Spike from the Violet Fate Sect. I’ve heard the Elders speak of it. Only the Violet Fate Sect possesses them. It’s said there are only one hundred and eight in existence. Each one is shockingly powerful.”

Sun Hua’s mouth grew dry, and he stared fixated at the spike. He wished beyond anything that he could be Meng Hao, then he could have this treasure.

Lu Song’s face continued to twist. Grinding his teeth angrily, he thought about the chance to join the Inner Sect, and how there was only one spot available. He would not retreat from this opportunity. Enduring the disappointment, he slapped his bag of holding and produced a treasure.

It was a feather fan, composed of a total of sixteen multi-colored feathers. As soon as it appeared, it emanated a shocking spiritual power which struck fear into the hearts of the onlookers.

“Elder Brother Meng, this is my most valuable treasure. It is a Milky Way Fan. You don’t need to practice with it at all, you can use it immediately. It allows the user to soar, and can change size. The sixteen feathers can also fly out in an attack, or circle around you to form a shield. It can be used in both attack and defense. It is not a treasure of our Sect, but rather something I acquired by luck. Allow me to present it to you in trade, Fellow Daoist.” An unsightly expression filled his face, and his heart fairly dripped with blood, but in contending with Qian Shuihen for a spot in the Inner Sect, he charged forth without regard to rhyme or reason.

When the fan appeared, Qian Shuihen's facial expression changed. He took two steps back, his eyes filling with lines of blood. He knew that this was an extremely valuable treasure. To offer this up was almost like risking one's life.

As for the State of Zhao disciples, they looked shocked, and their heads hummed. They might not be familiar with the fan, but it was obviously a spectacularly extraordinary item. It emitted fierce spiritual power which left their hearts pounding in shock.

Sun Hua's eyes grew wide, and his body trembled as it filled with a fierce envy.

Meng Hao took in a deep breath. At the moment, he actually wasn't very happy, but instead apprehensive. He had already offended Eccentric Song, and the thought of deeply offending the Violet Fate Sect caused a cold sweat to break out over his entire body. But it seemed that whether or not he wanted to trade… he would have to.

His current appearance, his frown, and the dark look in his eyes, all made the onlookers think that he didn't view the treasures in front of him as valuable enough to trade.

"Elder Brother Meng, I also have a Plateau Charging Pill, useful at the ninth level of Qi Condensation." Ignoring the pain in his heart, Qian Shuihen slapped his bag of holding and produced a pill bottle. "It is very precious. Any Cultivator of the ninth level of Qi Condensation would go crazy upon seeing just one. Even though it can't compare to a Foundation Establishment Pill, it's still very valuable." As he spoke, he didn't even look at Meng Hao, but rather Lu Song.

"This spear…" Meng Hao felt even more conflicted at heart, and he was about to speak further when suddenly Lu Song raised his head to the sky and laughed loudly. He lifted up his hand and pulled a brocaded pouch out of his robe. He turned it over, and a thick, round pill fell out. It was black, and did not emit even a shred of spiritual power. But, seeing how Lu Song treated it with utmost care, it was obviously some sort of treasure.

“Elder Brother Meng, this pill is not reusable. In fact, it is a rare magical pill. When you crush it, it will turn into a hyper toxic black scorpion that can injure a Cultivator of the ninth level of Qi Condensation, perhaps even kill him. This magical pill was bestowed upon me by my clan. Here, take it!” Lu Song’s eyes were red, but they weren’t looking at Meng Hao, but rather Qian Shuihen. He held the magical pill up in trade, but he was actually using it to threaten Qian Shuihen, as if this were the tie-breaker.

Qian Shuihen’s expression changed, and his eyes flashed, filling with killing intent. But he quickly got himself under control, and then casually said, “Perhaps we should both trade for the treasure, then take it back to Elder Wu and let him decide what to do.”

Lu Song didn’t respond. He didn’t actually want to attack. If it were in a remote place where no one could see, perhaps he would. But things were complicated with so many people watching. He had only wanted to threaten Qian Shuihen. Upon hearing the suggestion, he nodded. Even though it hurt a bit, when he looked at the Plateau Charging Pill in Qian Shuihen’s hand, he could only clench his jaw and put his magical pill down in front of him.

Seeing this, Qian Shuihen relaxed a big. Without asking Meng Hao, he grabbed the iron spear and sped off. Lu Song went with him, also holding the spear. They shot toward the city gate, each of them eyeing the other suspiciously.

The other Violet Fate Sect disciples immediately charged after them, instantly disappearing through the city gate and off into the distance. They appeared to be heading in the direction of the State Shield Mountain chain.

Meng Hao’s heart raced. Without hesitation, he flicked his sleeve, collecting all of the various objects. Then he turned and sped off as fast as possible. The eyes of the disciples of the State of Zhao glittered brightly, especially Sun Hua’s. His eyes filled with fervor, and he moved to pursue and attack Meng Hao. But Meng Hao waved his right hand and the fan flew out to land beneath his feet. His speed increased rapidly, and he shot off into the distance.

At the same time, the middle-aged man sitting next to the Pill furnace in the Hundred Treasures Pavilion cracked open his eyes. They flashed like lighting as he watched Meng Hao disappearing.

“These Violet Fate Sect disciples get worse and worse with each generation,” he said coolly. “They are idiots. Even though they don’t have the Spiritual Sense of the Foundation Establishment stage, they should still be able to tell that thing is useless.”

Upon hearing this, Qiao Ling and the other girls, who had just watched everything happen, looked incredulous.

“It’s just an iron spear,” the man said quietly. “That young member of the junior generation, surnamed Meng, he said it himself.” He closed his eyes again.

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# Chapter 57: Was it Worth it?

Meng Hao felt quite conflicted. He stood on the treasured fan he had just acquired, using as much spiritual power as he could muster to flee at top speed. He feared that if he was even the least bit slow, he would be attacked and robbed.

“First I offended Eccentric Song,” sighed Meng Hao, “and then the Violet Fate Sect… But it’s not my fault, they forced me to trade.” In his mind, he was innocent. At the time, he had no choice but to trade the spear…. Sighing repeatedly, he pushed himself to go faster, getting closer and closer to the State Shield Mountain range.

“I need to find a place to hide for a while. If someone catches up with me, I’ll be in great danger…” Meng Hao frowned. The power of the treasured fan faded, and he dropped to the ground, tucking the fan away and starting to run.

“When will I be able to reach Foundation Establishment? Then I’ll be able to really fly!”

Two days passed, during which time Meng Hao didn’t rest at all. He just kept running, thinking about how he hadn’t rested at all since Shangguan Xiu began to chase him on Mount Daqing. But he had no choice. The thought of what would happen if he didn’t was too ghastly to contemplate.

Meanwhile, deep in the State Shield Mountain chain, atop the plateau next to the treasure mountain, Wu Dingqiu held up a Go piece, smiling broadly. After thinking for no less than one hour, he slowly put the piece onto the board.

Eccentric Song’s face was like iron. With a cold snort, he slammed a piece down onto the board.

“Eccentric Song, your Cultivation base is so refined. You shouldn’t allow yourself to be in such a mood.” Wu Dingqiu stroked his beard and laughed. He looked as calm as a cool wind. “Cultivators of our generation should be able to settle our Qi and calm our minds. Even with mountains crumbling around us, our expressions shouldn’t change. But look at you! Are you really so ill-at-ease because of some nobody from the junior generation?”

“If our positions were switched, you would be the same,” said Eccentric Song sourly.

“Absolutely not! If I, Wu, were in this position, I would only offer praise, and would certainly not feel anger. In the Violet Fate Sect, we cultivate our disposition, and would not allow something like this to arouse our anger. No offense, Eccentric Song, but as far as this type of cultivation goes, you really have something to learn from the Violet Fate Sect.” Wu Dingqiu laughed, obviously quite pleased with himself.

“How about this,” he continued. “After we finish this game of Go, you can come with me to the Violet Fate Sect. I will allow you to peruse our Moral Cultivation Manual, and then you will understand what it means to settle the Qi and calm the mind.” Wu Dingqiu’s smile was so wide that wrinkles appeared on his face.

Eccentric Song harrumphed, refusing to respond and simply looking off into the distance. Wu Dingqiu’s smile grew stronger, and he too looked off into the distance. Shortly, two figures could be seen racing toward them through the forest. It was Qian Shuihen and Lu Song. They gripped an iron spear between the two of them as they made a beeline for the plateau. They were followed by a small group of other Violet Fate Sect disciples.

Qian Shuihen and Lu Song stepped foot onto the plateau and both began to speak at the same time.

“Greetings, Elder Wu. Disciple has accomplished the task. I have acquired the treasured item through trade.”

“Greetings, Elder Wu, fortunately, I have not failed in my mission. I was able to trade for the spear.”

Eccentric Song’s face was grim as Wu Dingqiu’s laughter rang out.

“Excellent. Good job, you two.” He laughed. “I will take it upon myself to promote both of you to the Inner Sect. You didn’t cause any problems for that kid, did you?”

“I am pleased to report that we made a fair trade,” said Qian Shuihen hastily. Next to him, Lu Song nodded fervently, looking excited. “We didn’t cause any problems for him.”

“Eccentric Song, come, let’s take a look at this treasured, divine spear.” Wu Dingqiu laughed. He flicked his sleeve, and the iron spear flew toward him.

The instant it touched his hand, Wu Dingqiu’s expression changed. His eyes flashed as he examined the spear closer. Grim-faced Eccentric Song also took a close look, whereupon, his eyes began to shine. He stared open mouthed, then suddenly smiled.

Wu Dingqiu’s expression grew more and more unsightly. No matter from which aspect he looked at the spear, it was ordinary in nature. Refusing to believe that it was true, he pointed the spear at a random Demonic beast further down the mountain. The creature didn’t even notice.

The expression on his face was unsightly to the extreme. He slowly raised his head, looking coldly at Qian Shuihen and Lu Song.

When they saw the look in Wu Dingqiu’s eyes, their excitement faded, and they began to tremble. Blank expressions filled their eyes.

“What did you trade for this spear?” asked Wu Dingqiu, one word at a time.

Looking nervous, Qian Shuihen said, “Disciple gave two thousand Spirit Stones, seven Earthly Spirit Pills, one of the Sect’s Hellfighting Spikes, and… and a Plateau Charging Pill.”

Wu Dingqiu’s face grew dark.

Next, Lu Song spoke: “Disciple gave one thousand, five hundred Spirit Stones, three Heavenly Spirit Pills, a treasured fan, and a magical pill.”

Eccentric Song burst out laughing. It was the laughter of release, as if all of his pent up depression from the past few days had suddenly disappeared.

Wu Dingqiu was mad enough, but when he heard the price the two disciples had paid, along with Eccentric Song’s peals of laughter, his rage exploded. He suddenly let out a furious roar. “Good-for-nothing fools! This iron spear is a fake!”

It echoed out like thunder, shattering the Go board. Cracks appeared on the surface of the mountain beneath his feet. Qian Shuihen and Lu Song tumbled to the ground, blood spraying out of their mouths.Their heads spun as Wu Dingqiu’s single word echoed in their hearts.

“Fake…” They were stunned.

This word thundered out in all directions along with his roar, filling nearly half of the entire State Shield Mountain range and reaching even Eastern Refinement City.

It eventually reached the ears of Sun Hua, filling him with confusion. After a moment, his expression changed, and a look of shock filled his face.

“The spear was a fake?” He looked at his companions, and looks of realization appeared on their faces as well.

“It couldn’t be that the iron spear that was a fake, could it…?”

Inside the Hundred Treasures Pavilion, Qiao Ling was in the midst of introducing a magical item to a Cultivator when she heard the noise outside. Amazed, she thought back to Meng Hao’s iron spear, and a strange look appeared on her face.

Next to the pill furnace, the middle-aged man opened his eyes, and they flickered with a mocking expression. Without a word, he closed them again.

Far away from the plateau in the State Shield Mountains, Meng Hao lowered his head and ran even faster.

Eccentric Song's splitting laughter undulated throughout the mountains. Wu Dingqiu's face couldn't look more horrible. He, an Elder of the Violet Fate Sect, had been hoodwinked by a Cultivator of the Qi Condensation stage. Even though it didn't directly involve him, he would definitely lose face when word spread.

He wanted to track Meng Hao down immediately. He turned to look at Qian Shuihen and Lu Song, who stood there terrified. He was disgusted, but in his heart he sighed. These disciples had spent all their days within the Sect, and didn't have any experience dealing with outsiders. They were flowers raised indoors, inexperienced and incapable of dealing with schemes.

With a cold harrumph, he tossed the iron spear to the ground and took a few steps forward, casting his senses about in search of Meng Hao. But then, Eccentric Song stepped forward to block his way, laughing complacently.

"Fellow Daoist Wu, please don't lose your temper," he said. "Your Violet Fate Sect stresses the need to settle the Qi and calm the mind, to cultivating one's disposition. Don't allow a small matter like this to arouse your ire. When it comes to this type of cultivation, you should really do a bit more research into your Sect's Moral Cultivation Manual." Eccentric Song laughed heartily. Earlier, he had been prevented from leaving no matter what he said, so of course now he would do the same thing to Wu Dingqiu.

"You…" Wu Dingqiu's face grew dark, and he stared fixedly at Eccentric Song. But he didn't say anything.

"You broke the Go board, so now we can't finish," said Eccentric Song with a smile. "How about this: You were going to take me to your Violet Fate Sect, right? Well, let's go! We can chat and play Go for a few months." The depression had faded completely from his heart. Seeing Wu Dingqiu like this made him incredibly happy. As far as the treasures Meng Hao had taken, he didn't care anymore. What was most important to him was the look of outrage and insult on Wu Dingqiu's face.

He pulled at Wu Dingqiu, clearly having no intention of allowing him to resist.

Wu Dingqiu’s heart was filled with gloom. He glared at Eccentric Song, then let out a long sigh. He knew that the man wouldn’t let him pursue Meng Hao. He stamped his foot angrily, then allowed Eccentric Song to pull him up into the air.

“You useless imbeciles won’t be able to keep up,” said Wu Dingqiu, looking down at trembling Qian Shuihen and Lu Song. “The Inner Sect promotion is a failure. Return to the Sect and immediately go into secluded meditation!” The other disciples watched on, pale-faced.

“Damn you, Meng Hao,” said Lu Song, lowering his head, his face twisted with rage. “I will never forget this, you shameless bastard!” He ground his teeth when he recalled Meng Hao’s bashful expression, and it looked as if his eyes might erupt with flames. He had never met anyone so impudent in his entire life. The spear was obviously a fake. His face filled with pain when he thought of how much he had paid for it. When he thought about the lost chance to enter the Inner Sect, he was so angry that he almost spat up blood.

“Shameless! Despicable!” said Qian Shuihen, thinking about his precious items. He picked up the iron spear. “Meng Hao, you are a complete scoundrel!” As he thought about the failure of the Inner Sect promotion, he really seemed about to go crazy. And then he thought about all the medicinal pills and magical items, and his hatred for Meng Hao ascended to skies.

The two of them looked at each other, sharing a look of pain.

“We will place this spear up inside the Sect to remind us that we must kill Meng Hao!”

Fierce killing intent filled their eyes, and yet, the trial by fire was over, and they were required to return to the Sect. Their rancor and murderous thoughts could only be concealed in their hearts, never to be erased.

Meanwhile, Meng Hao was both scared witless and also felt that he was being accused wrongly. Sighing, he increased his speed, running as fast as he could for seven days straight. Eventually he found an Immortal’s cave in the deep mountains. Exhausted, he sat down cross-legged and began to meditate and do breathing exercises.

“Was it worth it…?” he sighed to himself. He was tired from the days of running, but had simply been too frightened of being caught. Now, he was on his last legs.

Two days later at dawn, he opened his eyes and began running again. For half a month, he didn’t dare to let anyone see him. Finally, deep in the remote mountains, when he felt it was safe, he used a flying sword to carve out a cave, then sealed himself inside to meditate.

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# Chapter 58: This is not its World

Two months passed. Meng Hao sat cross-legged in the Immortal’s Cave in the deep mountains. Suddenly, a thunderous noise rang out, sending the nearby animals scattering. The large stone slab he had sliced out to seal the cave suddenly shattered into pieces.

Stone fragments showered out in all directions as Meng Hao emerged from the Immortal’s Cave. His hair hung down like a cloak around his scholar’s robe. His eyes glittered like lightning, and a shocking aura emanated from him, as well as a pleasant, fragrant aroma.

A look of joy filled his face. After having been in secluded meditation for such a long time, he let out a laugh which echoed out and sent the wild beasts running.

“The eighth level of Qi Condensation!” he said, his fists clenched. His eyes shone, which would have been even more obvious were it nighttime.

The two months of meditation had begun with a sense of nervousness and imminent danger. Those feeling disappeared slowly as he practiced Cultivation. He used over ten thousand Spirit Stones to duplicate medicinal pills, which he used in his meditation.

He did not want to be in a position of danger ever again. He needed to become strong, so that he could surpass the people who threatened him.

“I need to become powerful. There is no other reason. I must become powerful!”

He stood outside of the Immortal’s cave, breathing the fresh mountain air, his eyes filled with resolve.

He was a simple scholar, a student of Confucianism. But the past three years had caused him to become a bit more inwardly focused. After everything that he had experienced, his personality was very different than it had been. His stubbornness was now much more obvious.

He had been stubborn in his refusal to give up even after failing in the Imperial examinations. He had been stubborn in his struggles in the Reliance Sect. He had been stubborn when he stood up to Wang Tengfei. And now he was stubborn in his hopes for the future.

Becoming powerful is much the same as becoming rich. It is a dream that does not require a reason. If a reason is required, perhaps it is fear of being poor or weak. That is what Meng Hao believed.

“Life is an ever-burning flame, filled with exuberance. In life, one must be strong, and never lower one’s head.” He looked up into the sky, thinking about the Reliance Sect. He thought about the arrogant conceit of the experts from the State of Zhao. He thought of the coldness of the people who had tried to kill him. He thought of the gaze of that middle-aged Dao Protector who had stood next to Wang Tengfei that night.

“My mother and father disappeared when I was young. If I hadn’t struggled to improve myself, I wouldn’t have lived down to this day. Instead, I would have resigned myself to the hopelessness. If I hadn’t struggled to grow stronger during my time in the Reliance Sect, I would never have become a member of the Inner Sect. Stubborn insistence on self-improvement. That is my path into the future.” He let out a very long breath. Then, he lifted his hand and flicked his sleeve. A black beam appeared which solidified into a black spike. Emanating a black glow, it shot toward a nearby boulder.

A boom rang out, and the boulder, which was over eighteen meters tall, collapsed into chunks, interspersed with pieces of black ice. They fell to the ground, emanating an intense coldness.

With a look of satisfaction, Meng Hao waved his hand, and the black spike flew back to him. He moved his hand again, and this time a multicolored beam swirled around him. The sixteen-feathered fan appeared, flying back and forth as it followed the movements of his fingers. Suddenly, there was bang as the feathers separated.

Sixteen beams of light circled around. The sixteen feathers had become like flying swords, swift and fierce. They followed the movements of his hand, moving to spin rapidly around him, making an impenetrable shield, empowered by his spiritual power.

Then the feathers re-formed into a fan and settled onto his hand.

“It’s too bad I didn’t have enough Spirit Stones. The copper mirror really eats them up. Duplicating one Earthly Spirit Pill required one hundred Spirit Stones. Not a bad price. The Heavenly Spirit Pill, useful upon reaching the eighth level of Qi Condensation, required five hundred. Just a bit too expensive…” Thinking about Spirit Stones, he frowned. Of the ten thousand Spirit Stones he’d had, not many were left. During the two months he had spent breaking through from the seventh level to the eighth level, he had consumed over eighty Earthly Spirit Pills. That was nearly two per day before he had broken through to the eighth level of Qi Condensation.

“In the future,” he muttered to himself. “I will require even more spiritual power to practice Cultivation.” A glance inside his bag of holding confirmed that he only had five Heavenly Spirit Pills. He had already consumed one, and had calculated that to reach the ninth level of Qi Condensation he would need roughly one hundred and fifty.

“I know I need a lot of spiritual power. But could it be that my excessive consumption of Demonic Cores has caused my body to begin to reject medicinal pills?” He hesitated, unsure of how to confirm his theory. If he was right, then he might need even more Heavenly Spirit Pills, or perhaps other types of medicinal pills.

“One hundred and fifty Heavenly Spirit Pills… that’s equal to seventy thousand Spirit Stones… Without them, it will take me a long time to accumulate that much spiritual energy. Plus, my latent talent is only ordinary, so that means it will take even longer….” He sighed as he thought about the emptiness of his bag of holding.

He had three more of the extraordinarily large Spirit Stones, but he didn’t dare to use them. The more advanced he became in his cultivation, the more he realized how rash he had been to duplicate the wooden sword all those years ago. The large Spirit Stones were clearly extraordinarily special, otherwise he would not have been able to duplicate the Vorpal Jade Blood Crystals.

“I won’t use these large Spirit Stones unless it’s absolutely necessary,” he said resolutely. “Maybe they will have some other use in the future.” The fan beneath his feet began to shine brightly, and his body transformed into a ray of light which shot off into the distance.

He was quiet as he travelled, circulating his spiritual energy. Eventually, the treasured fan began to fade and take on a more ordinary appearance. As he moved farther and farther away, he began to grow more at ease.

“After all these months, the Violet Fate Sect disciples will surely have moved on.” He was careful as he traveled, eventually emerging from the mountains. He looked off into the distance. If he was right, this area was close to the capital city of the State of Zhao.

Once upon a time, he had yearned day and night to go to the capital city. This desire was second only to his dream of visiting the Great Tang in the Eastern Lands. He sighed emotionally as he thought of his three years of examinations, and three years of failures. He had never even made it to the final examinations in the capital city. Another three years had passed, and now he finally arrived, not as a scholar, but as a Cultivator.

As he approached the capital city, he stopped gliding and began to walk along the public road. He tied up his hair and this, coupled with his scholar’s robe, made him look just like the old scholar that he used to be. Although, while he had then been somewhat short, after years of Cultivation, he was now tall and slender. His skin was still a bit dark, yet vigorous, emanating a strong air.

He walked along absentmindedly. It was March now, which was often a time for snowfall in the State of Zhao. As Meng Hao walked, the darkness of evening began to settle around him, and snowflakes began to slowly fall.

Soon, the ground was covered with whiteness, like a feathered quilt.

The wind blew snow onto Meng Hao’s hair. It didn’t melt, but rather began to collect together.

Everything was still and quiet. As he grew closer and closer to the capital city, a horse-drawn carriage approached from behind him, speeding forward at top speed. It seemed whoever was inside was afraid the city gates would be closing soon.

It passed Meng Hao, kicking up billows of snowflakes in its wake. As it passed, the wind blew open the carriage’s curtain just a crack, revealing a young scholar reading some texts.

Meng Hao looked at him calmly, recalling his own similar appearance years ago. As of now, Meng Hao was clearly about twenty years old. However, inside, he felt much older.

He let out a light sigh. Up ahead, the carriage came to a stop, and the curtain lifted up. The young scholar looked back at him, then stepped down out of the carriage and saluted Meng Hao with clasped hands.

“Brother, are you going to Capital City for the Imperial examinations?

Meng Hao quickly returned the salute. “Years ago I dreamed of doing so, but those dreams have long since faded. I just want to go take a look at the Tower of Tang.”

“That’s a pity, my Brother,” he said, looking regretful. “Your bearing seems very refined, I thought perhaps we were fellow candidates. Are you sure you wish to give up on your aspirations to become an official?” The young man appeared to be about the same age as Meng Hao.

Meng Hao shook his head silently.

“Well, never mind,” said the young scholar. He looked at Meng Hao’s scholarly appearance and smiled warmly. “It’s starting to snow harder, and it will be harder and harder to travel along the road. If it gets too late, you won’t be able to enter the city. Brother, why don’t you join me in the carriage? We should still have enough time to make it to the city.”

Meng Hao looked up at the sky, then back at the scholar. He bowed respectfully, then stepped up into the carriage.

A fire crackled in a small oven inside, dispelling the bitter cold. This, coupled with the fact that an old family retainer drove the carriage, made it clear that the scholar came from a rich family.

The old driver wore a wide bamboo hat and the knuckles of his hands were large. It seemed he could do some kung fu.

“I am Zheng Yong,” the scholar said with a smile, warming his hands. “Brother, there’s no need to be shy. We’re both scholars, and scholars should help each other whenever possible.”

“I am Meng Hao,” he said with a humble smile. “Many thanks to you, Brother Zheng.” His gaze fell upon the book resting next to Zheng Yong. It was the Book of Rites. It looked very old, and was obviously not a copy, but rather an ancient original text.

“You’re surnamed Meng?” said Zheng Yong, his expression brightening. It was somewhat cramped inside the carriage, but he still managed to stand and give Meng Hao a respectful salute. “Such an honorable family name. So you’re a descendant of Qingfu! I have been disrespectful; please forgive me, Brother Meng.”

Meng Hao stood and returned the salute. “There’s no need to act like this, Brother Zheng. It’s just a surname. My ancestors were resplendent, but as for me, I failed repeatedly in the Imperial examinations, which has left me extremely ashamed.” The two of them sat back down.

“Brother Meng, you spoke incorrectly just now,” said Zheng Yong solemnly. “Your surname will bring you good fortune. It has been passed down to you from ancient times. As a descendant of Qingfu, even if you didn’t pass the Imperial examinations, as long as you have kindness and virtue in your heart, you can still live by the values of Confucius.”

Meng Hao thought silently for a moment, then lifted his head and looked at the scholar sitting in front of him. “Brother Zheng,” he said quietly, “what is the true meaning of Confucianism?”

“Courtesy, benevolence, loyalty, and the golden mean,” he responded unhesitatingly. “This is Confucianism.”

Meng Hao didn’t respond. He looked out through the curtain at the snowflakes filling the air. After a while, he spoke again in a cool voice: “What is the meaning of life?”

“Life?” said Zheng Yong, looking surprised. He hesitated for a while, not saying anything.

The inside the carriage grew quiet, filled only with the sound of falling snow, which drifted in through the window. Meng Hao lifted up his hand and reached outside. Snowflakes gradually accumulated on his hand.

“Snow will only appear during winter,” he said quietly, “and can only exist in the cold wind. Therefore, its life exists only during the depths of winter.” He pulled his hand back into the carriage and held it next to the copper oven. The snow began to melt, turning into water, which flowed through the creases of his palm.

“Snow can only live in the winter. When it nears a fire, it dies. That is its life. It may yearn for summer, but… it can only desire it. In my hand, the snow becomes water, because this is not its world….” He raised his hand back up and brushed the water off outside the window. There, beyond the vision of the young scholar, it once again became snow.

Zheng Yong stared mutely, a deep look appearing in his eyes. Eventually, the carriage entered the city.

“Thank you for allowing me to accompany you, Brother Zheng,” said Meng Hao coolly. “I shall take my leave.” He saluted politely, and stepped out of the carriage, then treaded across the snow-filled street.

“Yearning for summer,” Zheng Yong murmured to himself, “but only able to exist in the cold of winter. Only able to look off into the distance… that is snow.” He watched Meng Hao disappearing into the distance. After a while, he got out of the cart and gave a deep bow in Meng Hao’s direction.

Snow began to cover him, but he knew that as soon as he reentered the carriage, it would die. He would never forget what had just happened, and what he had just seen and heard. Years later, after he became a famous Confucian in the State of Zhao, he would think back to that windy, winter night when the snow slowly melted into water. And he would think of a scholar named Meng Hao.

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# Chapter 59: Unable to see Chang’an

The State of Zhao was in the southern part of the Southern Domain, which was connected to the Western subcontinent. These two areas were separated from the rest of the Nanshan Continent by the Milky Way Sea, although it is possible that long ago, the Nanshan Continent had not been split in this way.

To state things more clearly, the State of Zhao exists on the edge of the Southern Domain, far from the sea. Only by passing over numerous mountains would the boundless Milky Way Sea become visible.

The State of Zhao was not very large, nor was it heavily populated. However, the capital city was a bustling place. Even though the evening air was filled with falling snow, the houses glowed with lantern light, keeping everyone warm inside.

Anyone who didn’t own a house, who walked about in the snowy night, would feel an indescribable loneliness.

Meng Hao walked down the street beneath the darkening sky. The crowds of people who would normally be visible during the day were nowhere to be seen. Anyone who moved about wore wide bamboo hats, and kept their heads lowered as they hurried along.

Looking off into the distance, Meng Hao could just barely make out the shape of a large, prominent building. It was a pagoda, a tower.

The Tower of Tang.

It was nearly three hundred meters tall, almost like a mountain, capable of capturing the attention of anyone within the city. Snow surrounded it, but could not hide the evidence of the devoted care spent by the King of Zhao, the scholars, and the many other people who had constructed it.

It faced the Eastern Lands, the Great Tang and Chang’an.

Meng Hao had never been to the capital city before, nor the Tower of Tang. He had never even seen it before. But as he walked down the street toward it, he knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that… this was definitely the Tower of Tang.

He had always imagined that one day he would become a government official, and then he would be able to climb to its top and stare out across the land.

He looked at the Tower of Tang sitting there amidst the swirling snow. A long time passed.

“Before mother and father disappeared,” he murmured to himself, “a violet wind blew outside. People said it was an auspicious sign, and that a celestial being had appeared in the sky….” He walked forward, staring at the Tower of Tang.

He thought about everything that had happened that night. He would never be able to forget. That night, he lost his youth. From that night on, he would never again have a father and mother to rely on. That was when he began to grow strong.

It was then that he started to dream of going to the Eastern Lands, to the Great Tang!

Rumors spread that his parents were dead, but Meng Hao knew that they were simply missing. They were out there, somewhere. He would never forget the violet robe his father had been wearing that night as he stood next to the window, looking out at the violet wind. Nor would he forget how his father had looked back at him, a disturbed look in his eyes.

He would never forget that night, nor the quiet sound of his mother weeping.

He had never spoken of these things to anyone, but had kept them buried deep in his heart.

As the Tower of Tang grew closer and closer, he wondered why he was suddenly thinking about such things from the past. He sighed. The sigh broke to pieces in the snowy wind. It would never leave the capital city, nor the State of Zhao, nor the Southern Domain. It would not cross the Milky Way Sea, nor would it reach Chang'an.

"Maybe it's because mother would always talk about the Great Tang," he murmured. "She told me that in the capital city of every nation, there is a Tower of Tang, and people say those towers are the closest you can get to Chang'an without actually being there."

As he approached the district surrounding the Tower of Tang, he looked up.

The snow fell in heavy sheets, and the winter wind whimpered around him. More and more snow was building up on the tower. From where he stood, he could see clearly that it had been constructed with great care. Its foundation was eight-sided, and it rose up like a massive pagoda.

It was constructed from green material, and looked just like he had imagined it would.

Despite the snow, soldiers patrolled around its perimeter. This area… was a place only highly ranked officials and powerful people could enter, in order to offer sacrifices and perform rites.

But the mortal soldiers didn't notice as Meng Hao's body passed by and entered the tower.

An ancient flight of stairs wound up inside, reaching slowly up toward the top. The walls were carved with brightly colored frescos, depicting the Eastern Lands, the Great Tang and Chang'an.

“I remember mother describing the Great Tang to me. I was so small then, that I didn’t really understand what she was talking about. But now that I think about it, the way she described the Eastern Lands, the Great Tang and Chang’an… it was as if she had seen them with her own eyes. If she hadn’t, how could she have described everything in such detail? It was just like these carvings.” He examined them as he ascended the stairs. Eventually he reached the top of the tower, and the end of the carvings. They had depicted life and culture, beautiful scenery, and countless amazing, legendary stories. It was all very moving and inspiring.

Outside, the snow whistled about in the air, buffeted by strong winds. It lay thick on the top of the tower. Meng Hao took a deep breath and looked off into the distance. The only thing he could see was snow. He could not see the Eastern Lands, nor the Great Tang, nor Chang’an.

“So you can’t see Chang’an from here after all,” he murmured quietly. He stood there quietly, wrapped up in countless thoughts. He was not a government official, here to offer sacrifices to the heavens. He was a Cultivator, a Cultivator of the eighth level of Qi Condensation.

“I walk a different path than before, but the direction is the same.” The wind blew his hair about, and the snow stuck to him un-melting, as if it approved of his life, as if he too, were snow.

After a while, he sat down cross-legged and began to meditate quietly.

During the night, the snow fell even harder. The lights shone within the houses of the capital city. From atop the Tower of Tang, everything grew pitch black and quiet. Within the quiet darkness, Meng Hao could see himself years ago, back in Yunjie County, amidst the snow.

The snowy night slowly passed.

At dawn, Meng Hao opened his eyes. It was hard to say whether he glanced at the rising sun, or if the rising sun glanced at him first.

The city came to life with the dawn. Soon, the streets filled with throngs of people. Meng Hao watched the mortal world spread out before him.

He observed silently, all the way until night fell. Another dawn broke. One day, two days, three days.

For seven days, Meng Hao gazed down on everything. At first, his eyes had seemed faint and weak, but then they grew bright, and finally, calm.

Something had changed in his mind. He had achieved a state of enlightenment regarding life itself. At dawn on the eighth day, he looked down to see officials and soldiers arrive at the Tower of Tang to perform a rite. A middle-aged man stood there wearing a golden robe. Behind him were crowds of people, standing neatly in formation. He offered sacrifices to heaven and earth, as did many of the commoners throughout the city.

Meng Hao stood as they began to bow to the heavens. He left the tower, avoiding their obeisance. Stepping onto the treasured fan, he soared forward, knowing that the time had come for him to leave. As he prepared to depart, he looked back toward the tower one more time.

When he did, his eyes grew wide.

He watched as the people kowtowed outside of the Tower of Tang, which then began to glow softly. It was a sparkling glow that the mortals could not see, but someone filled with spiritual energy could.

The light shot upwards, sending the clouds roiling, whereupon a huge vortex appeared. This, also, was invisible to the eyes of the mortals, but not to Meng Hao. He could see the vortex clearly, and it caused him to suck in a breath. He looked shaken.

Inside the vortex, he could see… an endless field of bones and ruins, filled with a ghastly aura and a curling, black fog. He couldn’t see very many clear details, but could sense a mysterious and gruesome air roiling out.

His mind was shaken, especially when he noticed that within the black mist of the vortex was an enormous coffin. There, amidst the ruins, sitting cross-legged next to the coffin, was a shrivelled corpse. It suddenly opened its eyes. They were as gray as ash, and within them seven faint spots of light rotated about like stars. The corpse’s vision shot out from within the vortex, straight onto Meng Hao.

His heart trembled, and he involuntarily closed his eyes as he felt a stab of pain within them. It felt as if seven stars were about to appear within his own pupils, the same as those within the ash-gray eyes.

Suddenly, withered wrinkles began appear across his body, and a terrible black mist began to seep out of his pores.

Shocked, Meng Hao retreated at top speed. At the same time, the vortex was suddenly sucked up into the clouds. The crushing feeling he had experienced vanished, and everything went back to normal. It was as if what he had just seen had been a hallucination.

And yet, his body was still withered, and faint wisps of death aura continued to seep out of him. His facial expression changed several times. He looked down at the Tower of Tang. The glow was no longer present, but the people continued to pay obeisance. His face grew dark, and without hesitation he pushed the treasured fan to its limits. His body turned into a stream of light and he disappeared into the distance.

He soared out of the capital city, looking back toward the Tower of Tang several times. His eyes scanned the sky, and doubt began to rise up in his heart.

“It couldn’t have been a hallucination. The Tower of Tang… what kind of place is it exactly? Originally I thought it was a mortal place, but that’s obviously not true! What was that place within the vortex…? The ruins, the death aura, all those bones…” His scalp grew numb as he thought about the corpse he had seen amidst the ruins.

Its eyes had been filled with callousness, grim and ghastly, especially the seven stars within the pupils of its gray eyes. As he thought of this, his body grew cold and began to drip with sweat.

“And that… coffin.” Meng Hao took a deep breath, his eyes filled with fear.

“Who is inside that coffin, and why did it suddenly appear within the vortex. Why…? Does it have something to do with the Tower of Tang…? Does it have something to do with the Great Tang in the Eastern Lands?” Meng Hao grew thoughtful, looking back yet again at the Tower of Tang. The sense of awe within him grew stronger. He breathed in deeply again, gliding forward a bit before dropping to the ground and running.

He was starting to think that being stared at by the corpse within the vortex… had been a catastrophe….

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# Chapter 60: Undispellable Death Aura

The capital city drew further and further away. A long time passed, during which time Meng Hao pushed down the feeling of fear that quivered in his heart. He frowned, scanning his body. It had withered; while before he had been somewhat slim, he was now somewhat emaciated.

That problem was secondary to what really alarmed Meng Hao. His body continuously emanated strands of black mist, as if it were burning. It continued to come out of him, no matter how much he tried to wave it away. It floated high up into the air, making it possible for anyone around to determine his location.

“My body stopped withering, but this weird black aura just won’t stop. It’s really making me stand out too much….” He flew forward as fast as possible, trying to find a place to hide within the mountains. After the black mist finished dissipating, he would come out again.

Two hours later, he sat angrily in the remote mountains. After sealing himself up in an Immortal’s Cave, he’d found out that the black mist could pass through some material objects.

“Dammit, how long will this mist last?” He gnashed his teeth, not daring to stop anywhere. If he did, the mist would gather together above him and become easily visible. Anyone who saw it would definitely think there was some sort of treasured item nearby.

Meng Hao frowned, pushing deeper into the mountains. He kept moving forward as fast as possible. When his spiritual energy ran out, he would consume a medicinal pill. It was only in this fashion that he could prevent the black aura from gathering together. It wasn’t as easy to see when it was spread thin, although it still floated up visibly into the sky.

Seven days passed. Meng Hao was frightened as well as exhausted, having had no chance to rest. The damnable mist was black during the day, then glowed white during the night.

After the seventh day, he could tell that the amount of mist dissipating from his body had grown weaker. In his best estimation, it would take approximately one month for it to disperse completely.

He didn’t dare to stay in the mountains for too long, as he might attract attention. He wasn’t sure whether or not the Violet Fate Sect disciples had actually left. So, he had no choice but to just keep moving forward.

On one particular day, he sat cross-legged on the treasured fan, soaring through a forest. Suddenly, he lifted his head up, his eyes flickering. He could see four shapes speeding in his direction from a distance away.

With a frown, he stopped flying and dropped to the ground. He slapped his bag of holding and a flying sword appeared. It shot toward an old tree, chopping a hole in it into which Meng Hao entered.

He had attempted this method before and found that the mist would not pass outside of the tree. However, after the space of about ten breaths, the tree would wither up.

He had done this several times in the past week in order to avoid the detection of other Cultivators.

Sitting inside the hole in the tree, he waited for the four people to go away. Unfortunately, instead of passing by, they stopped nearby and began to look around carefully. One of them was a young man in a violet robe. His face was expressionless as he leaped to the top of a tree, the power of his Cultivation base radiating out. In his hand he held a white pearl.

The black aura which had been emanating out from Meng Hao was instantly sucked into the white pearl, whereupon it began to turn black.

Meng Hao’s heart began to thump when he saw this.

The group of people was made up of three men and one woman. The woman wore a long skirt and was rather beautiful. A mysterious look gleamed in her eyes, a look that others might describe as demonic. “Come to speak of it, it really is strange,” she said. “This thick death aura has appeared a lot recently in the mountains.”

The two men standing next to her frowned as they gazed around the forest.

“Regardless of what’s causing it, we should leave once we finish absorbing the aura,” said one of the men, sounding a bit nervous. “Whatever is causing it is something very strange. It’s probably better if we don’t find out what it is.”

“What are you afraid of?” said the woman with a smile. She gave a charming look to the violet-robed young man, her eyes shining with charm. “With Elder Brother Yan here, we’re safe from any danger. He’s an Inner Sect disciple of the eighth level of Qi Condensation. He can prevent any disasters from occurring. And who knows, maybe we might even have a bit of good fortune.”

The young man with the pearl was of the eighth level of Qi Condensation, and was obviously the leader. The others were all at the sixth level.

It didn’t take very long for the pearl to absorb all of the black aura. The pearl itself was now pitch black, and didn’t seem as if it could even absorb any more. Meng Hao sat there watching, lost in thought.

“Let’s go,” said the man named Yan. He flicked his wide sleeve, and the four of them began to make their way off. As this happened, Meng Hao frowned. They were taking too long, and he had run out of time. The black aura was just now beginning to seep out from the top of the tree.

As soon as it appeared, the man named Yan turned and looked at it, his eyes flashing.

Meng Hao sighed, and then burst out from within the tree. He flicked his sleeve and sped off as fast as possible.

His appearance surprised the four people, as did the black aura emanating from him. The man named Yan stared at him.

“Fellow Daoist, please stay behind a moment,” he called out. His hands flashed in incantation signs, and instantly, a black wind sprang up which formed into the shape of a hideous, grinning skull. It opened its jaw and shot toward Meng Hao.

He had asked for Meng Hao to stop. But this skull carried the full power of his eighth level of Qi Condensation. It moved as swift as lightning, with incredible power.

At the same time, the two other men and the woman, their eyes glittering, attacked. Two flying swords and a jade bracelet transformed into beams of light which shot straight toward Meng Hao. The woman’s jade bracelet let out a buzzing sound as it flew through the air, expanding in size as it prepared to smash him.

Meng Hao frowned. He hadn’t been in a good mood before, having been frustrated to the extreme by the black aura. At the moment, these people had arisen a strong killing spirit within him. He let out a cold snort.

His right hand lifted up, and a roaring Flame Python appeared, twenty or thirty meters long. It shot toward the four incoming magical items, radiating blistering heat.

A boom shook the air. The jade bracelet shattered and the two flying swords melted away. The skull dissipated because of the collision. The Flame Python let out a wail and then vanished.

“Eighth level of Qi Condensation!” said the woman. The two men next to her gasped, their expressions intent. The Cultivator surnamed Yan took a step forward, staring at Meng Hao.

“I am Yan Ziguo, disciple of the Cold Wind Sect,” he said coolly, his eyes flashing like lightning. “Fellow Daoist, you don’t need to be in such a hurry to leave. Could you please explain the thick death aura emanating from your body?” Meng Hao was at the eighth level of Qi Condensation, but so was Yan Ziguo, so he spoke in a voice as cold as ever.

Meng Hao returned his cold stare, and didn’t say anything. He slapped his bag of holding, and in a flash, the treasured fan appeared. He shot away at high speed. Yan Ziguo looked at the fan in astonishment.

“A magic item which grants flight. He’s not of the Foundation Establishment stage, so he can only glide. He’ll be back on the ground shortly.” Yan Ziguo’s heart began to beat faster. The fan was a magical item that only disciples of the ninth level of Qi Condensation might get within his sect. With a cold harrumph, he charged off in pursuit. The other three hesitated for a moment, then followed him.

“Dammit!” said Meng Hao, his eyes growing even colder. His opponent had seen the power of his Cultivation base, as well as his use of magic, both of which were clearly warnings. And yet he still pursued. Meng Hao felt extremely annoyed.

His hand moved in incantation patterns, and then he pointed back at the four pursuers. Instantly, four beams of light shot out, four of the feathers from the fan. They cut through the air like flying swords, heading straight for the four people behind him.

Yan Ziguo narrowed his eyes and smacked his bag of holding. A small wooden shield appeared, about the size of his palm. It quickly expanded to the size of a head as it flew forward to meet the feather. A violent boom sounded out as they slammed into each other.

As for the other three, looks of shock appeared on their faces and they scrambled to produce magical items. Amidst the ensuing explosions, they spat blood out from their mouths and retreated, looking terrified.

Those three feathers weren’t damaged at all. Meng Hao waved his finger, and they shot back toward Yan Ziguo.

Yan Ziguo’s face twisted and he opened his mouth with a howl. A green mist suddenly emitted from his pores, forming a dense fog which circulated around him, turning into a giant green skull. It flew directly toward the three incoming feathers.

Banging sounds rang out, and the skull collapsed. The three feathers no longer glowed, and were now twisted and warped. They flew back to Meng Hao.

“I’m warning you,” said Meng Hao coldly, his eyes flashing, “if you keep pestering me….” Without finishing his sentence, he turned and disappeared into the distance, his body transforming into a prismatic beam.

Yan Ziguo didn’t pursue. He glared at Meng Hao’s retreating form, his hands trembling slightly within his sleeves. Meng Hao was a stranger to him. And yet this stranger had just casually forced him to use a life-saving art.

“That fan is not just a flight-bestowing treasure, but a powerful weapon!” he said to himself, his heart pounding. He turned to look at his three bedraggled companions. “Have any of you heard of someone from the State of Zhao who is at the eighth level of Qi Condensation and has a treasured fan?”

“Someone so young who is at the eighth level of Qi Condensation would surely have made a name for himself here,” said one of the other Cold Wind Sect disciples. “But I can’t think of anyone among the three great Sects who matches his description.”

“Who is he? He can’t be a Cultivator from the State of Zhao, can he?” Yan Ziguo frowned, even more interested in Meng Hao’s treasured fan.

“Elder Brother Yan,” said the female disciple, sounding hesitant. “I remember someone mentioned a treasured fan about a month ago. It was Elder Brother Sun Hua from the Winding Stream Sect. He said that some disciples from the Southern Domain’s Violet Fate Sect made a trade with a Reliance Sect disciple named Meng Hao. One of the items was a feather fan.”

Yan Ziguo looked shocked. He slapped his bag of holding, and a jade slip appeared in his hand. This was an item distributed to Inner Sect disciples. Inside was a depiction of Meng Hao, sealed with orders that anyone encountering him were to feel him out to get an idea of how strong he was.

The orders were several months old, so Yan Ziguo had mostly forgotten about them. Scanning the jade slip, he looked closely at the picture of Meng Hao's face and, sure enough, it was the same as the person he had just encountered.

“So it's him!” said Yan Ziguo, his eyes gleaming. His mouth twisted into a cold smile. He was just about to say something when suddenly, the ground trembled and the sky above turned crimson. Something shocking was happening not too far away in the Southern Domain, and the side-effects were spreading out to cover the entire area.

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# Chapter 61: A Shocking Event in the Southern Domain

An earth-shaking boom rumbled out from the heavens.

The source of the sound wasn’t close, but seemed to billow forth from quite some distance. It wasn’t directed toward the location of Meng Hao and the others, but rather seemed to cover the entire State of Zhao. At this moment, every Cultivator within the nation could hear the massive roar.

A red glow appeared, so large that it was impossible to tell how much area it covered. It seemed as if the entire sky was crimson. No one knew what was happening.

Far away from the State of Zhao and the eyes of its Cultivators, in the middle of the Southern Domain, an enormous rift had appeared in the sky.

It was a Heavenly Rift!

The booming grew more intense, rolling across not just the State of Zhao but the entire Southern Domain. Every place, every Sect, every Clan in the massive Southern Domain eventually heard it.

Meng Hao’s face changed. He was shocked to see the black aura roiling out from his body at an increased rate of speed. He moved forward even faster, his body turning into an iridescent streak of light.

Yan Ziguo and the others were awestruck. Their hearts began to race, and their Cultivation bases suddenly seemed unstable, as if they were about to fly out of their bodies.

At this moment within the mountains of the State of Zhao, a thick mist swirled around the Cold Wind Sect, one of the three great Sects. When the roaring boom sounded out, the mist began to seethe and the mountain peaks trembled. Within the Sect, hundreds of pale-faced disciples stared up into the heavens in shock.

On a mountain behind the Sect, its two strongest members, both Elders at the Core Formation stage, awoke and emerged from a secret chamber. They flew out and hovered in the air, looking up into the sky and gasping. Their Cultivation bases rotated rapidly. Even though they couldn't see exactly what was happening so far away, they could feel an enormous, shattering pressure from the Heavens. And then, because of their extraordinary Cultivation bases, they were able to sense the Heavens splitting.

"What happened? The noise is coming from the center of the Southern Domain. Impossible! That's such an incredible distance away, how can a sound travel so far?!"

Five of the Cold Wind Sect's Foundation Establishment Elders flew up behind them in succession. Their faces were pale and their bodies trembled.

Within another of the State of Zhao's three great Sects, the Upright Evening Sect, two Eccentrics of the Core Formation stage and four Elders of the Foundation Establishment stage floated in mid-air, gazing numbly toward the distant Heavens. The entire sky was crimson, as if it were on fire. Seeing this left them in shock.

"What… is this…?"

It wasn't just the members of the Cold Wind Sect and the Upright Evening Sect. The disciples of the Winding Stream Sect also heard the sound and stared dumbly up into the heavens, looking awestruck. The Sect's Core Formation Eccentric was trembling. His Cultivation base was profound, and yet he stared off into the distance, wondering what was happening. Even more shocking, amidst the burning screen which covered the entire sky, there suddenly appeared what looked like countless fissures.

"This is not a normal sound, otherwise it wouldn't transmit so quickly across the State of Zhao. Its speed… this sound could exterminate everything!"

The situation in Sects in other surrounding countries was the same as that of the State of Zhao. Far away in the Southern Domain, the Patriarchs of the five great Sects and three great Clans, with their profound Cultivation bases, also felt the enormous pressure bearing down from the Heavens. Being in the center of the Southern Domain, they could see what all those other could not.

They saw the enormous rift in the sky. Disbelief covered their faces.

On this day, at this moment, the entire Southern Domain was in an uproar. Countless Cultivators flew into the air, and an innumerable amount of experts looked up in amazement. This strange sign which had appeared in the air shocked them all to the core.

Meng Hao flew along as quickly as he could; more black aura than usual was pouring out of him, as if it were answering a summons. This, combined with the strange sign in the sky, had him scared nearly witless. He shot forward at full speed until he arrived at the top of a tall mountain. He stood there, looking off into the Heavens.

Far away, it seemed as if the Heavens were slowly being split open. Then, a dark glow spread out, filling heaven and earth both with pitch-black darkness.

A moment passed, and then the entire Southern Domain began to quake, as if a powerful force were shaking its very center, sending tremors rippling outward. Mountains crumbled and the land was rocked.

The Southern Domain was very large, so it took time for the effects to spread. It started in the center and then spread out in every direction, all the way to the borders. Mountains continued to collapse, but because the State of Zhao was so far away, the reaction there was not as strong. It only experienced minor earthquakes about seven days later.

Even that left the Eccentrics of the State of Zhao shocked. Some of them had been to the central district in the Southern Domain and knew how incredibly far away it was. Even a massive earthquake there would not have been able to travel seven days away to the State of Zhao.

Within those seven days, a rumor spread like wildfire through the Southern Domain. Soon, everyone had heard the shocking tale.

A corpse had fallen from the sky!

And it had fallen roughly five hundred kilometers from one of the three Danger Zones of the Southern Domain, the Rebirth Cave!

The news caused a huge sensation in the Southern Domain and sent everyone into a commotion. It was even said that experts from the Western Desert were gathering in the Southern domain because of it.

“Which expert did that corpse belong to? It fell down from the Heavens. It’s said… you can only step foot into the Heavens after achieving Immortal Ascension! Could it be that the roar which echoed out was emitted by that corpse before it died?!”

“Achieve Immortal Ascension? It’s easy to use those words, but according to the ancient records, only seven or eight people in the Southern Domain have ever done it. But that corpse… it was just too astonishing. When it hit the ground, it caused seven days of earthquakes.

“Qi Condensation and Foundation Establishment, Core Formation and Nascent Soul, Spirit Severing and Dao Seeking, finally Immortal Ascension. A total of seven stages to ascend to Immortality. To achieve Immortal Ascension and conquer emptiness is difficult, difficult. Oh so difficult!”

This news spread through the Southern Domain. However, the State of Zhao was a somewhat remote place, so the rumors didn’t reach there. Only a few Elders from the great Sects learned of the information.

As for Meng Hao, he continued to move through the deep mountains, a frown on his face. During the seven-day period, the death aura in his body had been reduced significantly. But then it had started to seep out again like before. He estimated that it would take about twenty more days for it to dissipate.

“This death aura is very annoying. If it weren’t for it, I could be out accomplishing things.” Meng Hao’s mood was one of vexation. Because of the inexplicable event seven days ago, all the Cultivators in the State of Zhao had been aroused, forcing Meng Hao to hide himself constantly. He had even been found out a few times and put into dangerous situations.

Each time he had to think of some way to extricate himself. He didn’t like killing, but lately he had felt killing intent more and more often.

“This won’t do. If I’m forced to kill someone, it will cause even more problems. It’s much better to just hide.” He thought for a bit, then suddenly looked up. There ahead of him in the multitudinous mountains, everything was quiet. Meng Hao stopped and looked around, but didn’t see any clues as to why everything was so peaceful.

He had a bad feeling, though. He frowned, slapping his bag of holding to produce the treasured fan. He shot forward through the forest.

There was a banging sound, along with a wind that sent leaves rustling throughout the area. Then, everything was still again, without the slightest trace of anything strange. Meng Hao’s facial expression, however, changed. The event from seven days ago had been shocking, but, things had calmed down since then, and none of the wildlife in the area had died. The boom that had sounded out just now should have sent the animals fleeing, and yet, everything was calm.

Without hesitating, Meng Hao sent the treasured fan shooting forward, this time, in a different direction. Just then, a cold snort sounded out, and from the peaks of several surrounding mountains, black beams shot forth. The beams of blackness connected, enveloping the entire area, like a seal.

Meng Hao was within the sealing area, although he wasn’t at the center, but rather toward the edge. If he had not been cautious just now, and had instead continued on forward, he would have been smack dab in its middle.

Eight figures appeared, their bodies blurs. Soon, the group became visible. Meng Hao saw a strange, water-like shield which he had been unable to sense before, that had been hiding them just now.

Eight people: six men and two women. One of the women wore a long white dress, and her face was pale. In her hands she held an aqua-blue pearl. The pearl emitted waves of water-like ripples which had served to conceal her presence. Except, the pearl was covered with cracks; it appeared to be a single-use treasure.

She didn’t approach him, but rather stayed off in the distance. The others approached him at top speed, surrounding him. One of them was Yan Ziguo.

Meng Hao’s face grew dark as he looked around coldly at the group of Cultivators. A killing air swirled around Yan Ziguo, but his Cultivation base was not the highest among the group. The highest belonged to someone who wasn’t even standing on the ground. Floating in the air on a flying sword above Meng Hao, was a middle-aged man wearing a sky-blue Daoist robe. His eyes were calm, but he emitted an air of supreme condescension.

His cultivation base was at the ninth level of Qi Condensation!

Among the Sects of the State of Zhao, people at the ninth level of Qi Condensation were in a unique position. If within a sixty-year cycle they could successfully establish their Foundation, then they would become Sect Elders. If they could not establish a Foundation within a sixty-year cycle, then they would no longer be members of the Inner Sect, but rather an Honor Guard.

If Shangguan Xiu had been a member of the Reliance Sect when it was powerful, then he would have been an Honor Guard and not an Elder.

The middle-aged man had only been at the ninth level of Qi Condensation for about two years. You could say that his future was limitless. If he succeeded in establishing his Foundation, he would have a completely different identity.

“You’re clever,” said Yan Ziguo coldly. “If you weren’t, you wouldn’t have been able to swindle the Violet Fate Sect. But even though you’re not in the center, once you’re in the perimeter of this spell, you’re dead. After all, Elder Brother Liu is here, and we’re going to take the real treasure from you. When we do, maybe we’ll leave your corpse intact.” He looked greedily at Meng Hao’s treasured fan. In the past days, he found out a lot about Meng Hao, including the details of his trade with the Violet Sect disciples, which he had learned from Sun Hua. Now he coveted Meng Hao’s items even more.

Meng Hao, his face grim, didn’t even look at Yan Ziguo. Instead, he stared at the ninth level Qi Condensation Cultivator.

This was the Elder Brother Liu that Yan Ziguo had mentioned. He looked ordinary, and didn’t speak; instead, he just stood there on his flying sword, emanating a powerful aura. When Meng Hao sensed his strength, his pupils constricted.

“If you want Meng Hao’s treasures,” he said coldly, “then you will have to pay the price.” He slapped his bag of holding and a silver light shot out. A glittering silver spear appeared in Meng Hao’s hand. He planted it in the middle the treasured fan next to him, its point straight up.

As soon as the silver spear appeared, it caught the attention of the onlookers. Even Elder Brother Liu’s eyes flickered, coming to rest on the spear.

In the same moment as their eyes focused on the spear, Meng Hao, eyes glittering, flung open his scroll painting. Howling sounds poured out from within the painting, and three mist-beasts appeared. They charged forth toward the group of people.

Taking advantage of the sudden chaos, Meng Hao quickly flashed an incantation pattern, and a black beam shot out at indescribable speed. Yan Ziguo’s heart leapt, and he ripped himself out of the shimmering glow caused by the magical item behind him, shooting backwards at the same time. Before he could barely even move, the black light sunk into his head, right between his eyebrows.

This was the Hellfighting Spike!

And this was Meng Hao’s temperament. Not attacking was fine. But when attacking, one must be the first to strike! Yan Ziguo was looking to die, so Meng Hao would send him to the yellow springs of the underworld!

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# Chapter 62: One Wave Settles Down

As soon as the Hellfighting Spike touched the space between Yan Ziguo’s eyebrows, a black frost began to spread out rapidly. In the blink of an eye, it had covered his entire body. A cracking sound could be heard, and Yan Ziguo’s eyes widened. His pupils shrank, and an astonished expression filled his face. Then, his entire body shattered into chunks of black, frozen flesh, which then fell to the ground.

Originally, Meng Hao had wanted to flee. But Yan Ziguo had arranged for his escape routes to be blocked. Therefore, Meng Hao made the decision to strike him down.

He had been a part of the Cultivation world for a while now, and was well aware of the law of the jungle. Not attacking was fine, but when the time came to attack, it should be without a shred of compassion; otherwise, it meant your own death.

This sudden turn of events instantly caused expressions of shock and horror to appear on the faces of the surrounding Cold Wind Sect disciples. The three mist beasts that had emerged from Meng Hao’s scroll painting were almost upon them, howling savagely.

Their appearance was fierce, and their roars enveloped the area with a powerful pressure. They looked like three conglomerations of black mist as they charged directly toward the Cultivators, then smashed into them.

A boom resounded out, and an expression of shock appeared on the face of Elder Brother Liu, the Cultivator of the ninth level Qi Condensation. He slapped his hands together and then waved them forward; a red banner flew out. It rippled in the air, causing a massive flame conflagration to shoot out, over thirty meters in every direction. The flames shot toward the mist beasts.

Meng Hao ignored the other Cultivation Monks, who were in complete disorder. He moved downward, charging straight toward the woman with the aqua-blue pearl. He could tell that the pearl was the magical item maintaining the special spell.

Her face suddenly filled with anxiety, and she retreated backwards rapidly. But Meng Hao was faster than her; he was upon her in an instant. He waved his hand, sending her spinning, blood spraying from her mouth. Terrified, she released the pearl, which went flying away.

The woman might be beautiful, but her presence here made her Meng Hao's enemy. He looked at her coldly, then raised up his hand with a claw-like gesture. The pearl shot toward him and landed in his hand.

Almost as soon as it touched him, a thunderous roar could be heard. The three mist beasts were completely destroyed as Elder Brother Liu's flame conflagration encompassed them. It then spread out toward Meng Hao.

"You might have a lot of treasures," said Elder Brother Liu with an unsightly expression, "but you killed members of my Cold Wind Sect. You're dead!" His fellow disciples behind him looked to be in very poor condition. But that was of secondary importance. He would have a hard time explaining the death of Yan Ziguo when he returned to the Sect. He made no attempt to conceal his intention to murder Meng Hao.

Meng Hao said nothing. As the flame conflagration descended towards him, his left hand slapped his bag of holding and a large, black net appeared. He flicked it out, and it shot up into the sky. It passed through the flame conflagration, extinguishing it instantly. The net expanded, growing larger and larger, making a beeline for Elder Brother Liu.

Elder Brother Liu's face twisted. He lifted his right hand, which contained a jade slip that he snapped. Suddenly, his body blurred as he just barely ducked out of the path of the net. Behind, two of the other disciples were caught up by the net. The net radiated an intense heat, which instantly set their clothing aflame. Within a moment, their charred bodies began to be sliced into pieces.

Horrifying shrieks rang out, causing the remaining Cold Wind Sect disciples' faces to grow pale. They trembled with fear. Even Elder Brother Liu looked on with wide eyes. He would never have been able to guess that Meng Hao would have magical items such as this.

Even while all of this was happening, Meng Hao continued to move, his right hand grabbing the pearl and smashing it. The giant sealing spell that covered the area flickered and then began to disperse. Meng Hao's left hand flickered in an incantation pattern which he aimed at the treasured fan. He grabbed the silver spear as the fan's sixteen feathers circulated around him to form a shield, which then carried him forward, shooting toward a hole in the unravelling spell.

"You want to run? Stop dreaming!" Elder Brother Liu jabbed his forehead, whereupon a sword aura emerged from his mouth. A small, translucent flying sword appeared, the size of a pinky finger. A glittering sword aura billowed out as it shot in pursuit of Meng Hao.

Meng Hao was moving fast and seemed just about to make his escape. He waved his hand behind him, and the black net made loud, reverberating noise. The two Cultivators who had been caught up in it were now cut completely into pieces. The net began to roll up, dragging their bags of holding along with it as it flew back into Meng Hao's sleeve.

By this time, Elder Brother Liu's glowing, crystalline sword had almost reached Meng Hao. It was just about to stab into him when he sensed the imminent danger. He was not in the position to stand up to the power of the ninth level of Qi Condensation. Seeing the fierceness of the sword aura, Meng Hao's eyes flashed. The sixteen feathers rolled together and then became sixteen swords which shot toward Elder Brother Liu's crystalline sword.

A thunderous boom rolled out. Eight of the sixteen feathers were destroyed, and the crystalline sword was sent spinning. The remaining eight feathers returned to form a fan beneath Meng Hao's feet. However, the fan was clearly slower than before.

"With fewer feathers, your fan just won't be fast enough!" said Elder Brother Liu with a savage laugh. And yet, even as the words were coming out of his mouth, his eyes widened. Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding, whereupon eight more identical feathers appeared. The treasured fan was once again whole, and Meng Hao transformed into a blur of light as he shot into the distance.

"Dammit!" Elder Brother Liu's killing intent grew even stronger. He raced off in pursuit. Seeing this, the remaining disciples had little choice but to follow. Gnashing their teeth, they produced their magical items and ran after him.

Only the female disciple, whose Cultivation base was not strong enough, hesitated and did not follow.

Meng Hao stood on his fan, his face grim, the death aura still emanating from his body. He took out the two bags of holding he had just acquired and looked them over. The magical items and medicinal pills inside were of little value to him. But, he did find three white pearls, items that he definitely needed.

He took one out, and it instantly began to suck in the death aura. In the space of about ten breaths, it had become completely black and unable to absorb any more.

Meng Hao frowned, looking at the pearl for a moment before dropping it.

"I can't do any duplication at the moment. Once I shake off these people, then I can make some copies of the pearl. That will take care of the problem of the death aura attracting people's attention." He looked behind him to see figurative thunder brewing. A glittering glow surrounded the Cold Wind Sect's Elder Brother Liu as he soared after Meng Hao in pursuit. Behind him, on the ground, three figures could be seen, racing along at breakneck speed.

“Those three people are nothing,” muttered Meng Hao to himself. “Killing them won’t be a problem. But that guy surnamed Liu is at the ninth level of Qi Condensation. He also has a lot of magical items. In our short battle just now, he didn’t even use any magic. Getting wrapped up in a fight with him wouldn’t be good….” A sneer appeared on his face. Even if Elder Brother Liu was of the ninth level, he couldn’t possibly have as many medicinal pills as Meng Hao. He would just keep running until the other party was exhausted.

His plan settled in his mind, he slapped his bag of holding and retrieved three Earthly Spirit Pills, which he popped into his mouth. He felt a bit of regret.

“I wasted eight duplicated feathers, and now I have to waste medicinal pills. If I keep fighting like this, I’m going to become poorer and poorer. I also forgot to grab Yan Ziguo’s bag of holding. I need to be more careful in the future.” He felt a little depressed. The Earthly Spirit Pills infused into his body, filling him with boundless spiritual energy. His speed increased.

Time passed, and soon it was dusk. Meng Hao sped along at top speed the entire time. Sometimes he would soar on the treasure fan, other times he would race along on foot. Elder Brother Liu was behind him the entire time, laughing grimly. Meng Hao was much more experienced now. Even though gliding via flying sword was not as fast as the treasured fan, he was still completely at ease.

Far behind him, the three Cold Wind Sect disciples who had been pulled into the chase were currently moaning and groaning. They didn’t dare give up, though, for fear of arousing Elder Brother Liu’s displeasure.

Meng Hao sped along as dusk fell. Suddenly, his expression grew intent. The death aura which continuously emitted from his body was now floating off into the distance. His heart began to thump. He looked off in that direction and suddenly saw a beam of prismatic light screaming through the air. Behind it were ten or more figures racing along on foot.

The beam of light turned out to be two people. Both were about twenty-five or twenty-six years old, and were at the eighth level of Qi Condensation.

Each one stood on a green jade flute, nearly two meters long. Their eyes flashed like lightning, especially one of them, who wore a red robe. From the power emanating from his Cultivation base, he was clearly just a hair away from entering the ninth level of Qi Condensation.

Among the people following them on foot was Sun Hua. He carried a pearl in his hand, which was currently absorbing the death aura.

“So, you’re still in the State of Zhao, Meng Hao!” said Sun Hua with a loud laugh. He stared greedily at Meng Hao. “Elder Brother Zhou, Elder Brother Xu, this is Meng Hao. He has the treasure of Patriarch Reliance. Even the Violet Fate Sect is interested in it! He tricked them and aroused their ire. He definitely still has the treasured item with him!” He palpitated with eagerness as he thought about the treasured item that Meng Hao possessed. He had been dreaming of getting his hands on it ever since he’d witnessed what happened that day.

Fortunately, he had run into Elder Sister Han of the Cold Wind Sect a few days before. During an intimate moment, he’d been able to coax some information out of her regarding Meng Hao. Then, he’d immediately found some Elder Brothers from the Sect and begun to use the death aura absorbing pearl to track down Meng Hao.

When they appeared and caught sight of the Elder Brother Liu chasing Meng Hao like thunder, murder on his face, their expressions changed in rapid succession.

Sun Hua’s eyes flickered, and the two soaring in the air, Zhou and Xu, let out cold snorts. They moved to block Meng Hao’s way, fingers flashing in incantation patterns. The flutes beneath their feet began to emit ghastly, shrieking sounds, accompanied by thin wisps of mist. The mist transformed into a gigantic hand which shot toward Meng Hao.

“Beat it!” said Meng Hao, his eyes flashing. He raised his right hand, and instantly, an twenty or thirty meter long Flame Python appeared. Radiating intense, scorching heat, it shot to meet the flying hand.

Meng Hao flicked his right sleeve, whereupon two wooden swords appeared. Glowing brightly, they became the fangs of the Flame Python as it surged forward.

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# Chapter 63: Another Wave Rises Up!

A boom rolled out. The giant mist hand had been created by the combined effort of two eighth-level Qi Condensation disciples from the Winding Stream Sect. Meng Hao by himself couldn’t possibly stand up to it directly. This was why he had used the second most mysterious items in his bags of holding, the wooden swords. The first most mysterious item was, of course, the copper mirror.

The wooden swords, which had been the object of Wang Tengfei’s desire, now flew out from Meng Hao’s hand. They slashed through the giant mist hand and proceeded toward the two Winding Stream Sect disciples.

The swords didn’t emit a powerful sword aura, but as they flew through the air, they sucked in the surrounding spiritual energy in a roiling current. Shocked, the two Winding Stream Sect disciples evaded immediately. Without so much as a cold snort, Meng Hao shot off into the distance.

The wooden swords circled back to him. He didn’t even look back, just increased his speed forward.

Behind him, Elder Brother Liu’s eyes narrowed, and the avarice in his eyes grew even stronger.

“This Meng character has way too many magical items. Those wooden swords are incredibly mysterious. It just goes to prove that the spear the Violet Fate Sect was after is incredibly extraordinary! But why hasn’t he used its power yet?” Elder Brother Liu’s eyes flickered as he continued in pursuit. Similar to Meng Hao, he did not have the ability to sustain long-term flight, but needed magical assistance to soar.

Sun Hua and the other Winding Stream Sect disciples had dark looks on their faces. This was especially true of Zhou and Xu. With cold harrumphs, they shot off in pursuit. Sun Hua clenched his jaw and followed them. Zhou and Xu transformed into multicolored streaks of light as they shot off in mid-air. They kept their distance from the Cold Wind Sect's Elder Brother Liu, but continued in pursuit of Meng Hao.

Meng Hao had a grim expression on his face. He knew that Elder Brother Liu from the Cold Wind Sect had not even really made a move yet. With the appearance of Sun Hua and the others, he now had two waves of Cultivators to deal with. He frowned.

"I just don't have enough Spirit Stones," thought Meng Hao somberly. "If I had enough, I could have duplicated a Heavenly Spirit Pill and broken through to the ninth level of Qi Condensation… If I were at the ninth level, these people wouldn't dare to pursue me.

"It seems I might have to go sell some of my treasures after all…" Meng Hao had thought of using the copper mirror to duplicate some of the magical items, then selling them. But the State of Zhao was small, and only had a few Sects. If he started selling magical items, then later used an identical magical item, it would arouse suspicion.

As he muttered to himself, conflicted, his eyes suddenly filled with determination. He dropped to the ground and began running, swallowing some Earthly Spirit Pills until his body was filled with plentiful spiritual power. Then, he jumped back onto the treasured fan and shot onward. Unfortunately, there were many mountains in this area, but few demonic beasts. The ones that he did see were weak, making it impossible for him to use his usual tactic to evade pursuit.

As he was trying to figure out what to do, the two Winding Stream Sect Disciples, Zhou and Xu, suddenly made incantation patterns. Another whistling sound rang out from the flutes beneath their feet.

It sounded out like a wailing spirit, circling around the two of them as their fingers flickered.

“Heavenly Thunder Spirit!”

As the words rang out, a fierce wind sprung up around Meng Hao, and black clouds appeared in the air. Lightning began to crackle within the clouds, then shot toward Meng Hao.

A look of shock appeared on his face, as this was the first time he had dealt with a lightning bolt attack such as this. He stamped his foot down onto the treasured fan, and immediately, ten feathers flew up, overlapping across each other. The lightning bolt slammed into them.

A thunderous sound rolled out, sending the feathers spinning. The lightning bolt had been created by the combined effort of two Qi Condensation Cultivators. Although it didn’t contain the power of heaven and earth, it was not weak, and as far as Meng Hao was concerned, was actually quite powerful.

His face drained of blood, he looked back, killing intent flickering in his eyes. The attack had not been strong enough to cause him to spit up blood, but at the moment, his spiritual energy was unstable.

“An excellent Heavenly Thunder Spirit,” said Elder Brother Liu coolly, his eyes flashing. “The Winding Stream Sect’s lightning bolt magic is very refined. Sadly, your Cultivation base isn’t high enough. Even with your combined efforts, the result is this. Were you stronger, he would be injured if not dead.” Despite his talk, he didn’t make any move on Meng Hao. Having fought with him already, he knew that he had a multitude of magical items. He’d decided that the best thing to do would be to rely on his own profound Cultivation base to exhaust his opponent, then attack.

He was happy to see the others attack him, forcing Meng Hao to use up his spiritual power.

“We haven’t finished with the magical technique,” said the Winding Stream Sect disciple surnamed Xu. “Don’t shoot your mouth off so much, Liu Daoyun!” Exchanging a glance, the partners each swallowed a medicinal pill and then began making incantation patterns, their fingers moving in unison.

Immediately, the black cloud roiling in pursuit of Meng Hao began to churn. Again, lightning began to form. A massive roar rumbled out across the land, and again the feathers from the treasured fan moved to defend. This time, the lightning didn't end. Bolt after bolt struck, booming ceaselessly.

In the blink of an eye, three bolts had struck, causing Meng Hao to spit up a mouthful of blood, and the killing intent in his eyes to solidify. He flicked his right sleeve, and the scroll painting appeared. He poured his spiritual power into it and two roars could be heard. Mist seethed, and two mist beasts sprung from the scroll painting, shooting toward Zhou and Xu.

The two men grew pale. They had already consumed medicinal pills to perform their magical art, which was the only technique they had. Even with their combined effort, they could only keep it going for so long. They were discussing this as the fourth lightning bolt struck, which was when the mist beasts emerged from Meng Hao's scroll painting.

These mist beasts had the appearance of wolves. Heads twisting with fierce howls, they charged the two men, black ripples spreading out from underneath their paws as they ran.

Liu Daoyun stared at Meng Hao with flashing eyes. He lifted his right hand, and at the exact moment that Meng Hao unfurled the scroll painting, and the lightning bolt was about to fall, he bit his tongue and spit out some blood. His fingers flickered, causing the blood to circle around his hand. His face began to glow red. He waved the finger at Meng Hao.

“Qi Condensation, Cold Wind Finger!”

The finger attack came without warning. The red blood suddenly became black and began to emit an intense coldness. In the blink of an eye, it had transformed into a finger made of ice crystal. This in turn transformed into a prismatic beam which shot directly toward Meng Hao. In an instant, it was within about nine meters of him.

The finger attack was cunning and powerful. As it approached, the mist beasts from the scroll painting collided with Zhou and Xu. Above Meng

Hao, the fourth lightning bolt began to descend.

Meng Hao felt a sense of critical danger in his heart. A grim smile appeared on Liu Daoyun’s face, and he advanced a pace. Beneath him, a glittering light could be seen as his crystalline sword shot toward Meng Hao.

“Let’s see you dodge his time,” he said, watching with flashing eyes. “You can’t! You must produce your silver spear and show us its might. I’m really looking forward to seeing it!”

Meng Hao’s pupil’s constricted. There was no time to pull out another magical item, so he released the scroll painting to float at his side. It was a critical juncture, with no time even to think. He stamped his right foot down onto the treasured fan. It instantly disassembled, the sixteen feathers transforming into a rain. Ten of them shot toward the crystalline sword, with six remaining behind to defend against the lightning bolt.

To deal with the incoming Cold Wind Finger, Meng Hao dropped toward the ground and then extended his right hand upward. A flame python twenty or thirty meters in length shot out from the center of his palm, rushing to intercept the Cold Wind Finger. At the same time, his left hand flashed an incantation, then waved forward. A Wind Blade emerged, lending its power to the Flame Python, which grew even larger as it shot toward the Cold Wind Finger.

All of this takes some time to describe, but in actuality it happened in the time it takes for a spark to fly up from a piece of flint. A massive boom rang out as the lightning slammed into the six feathers. It was weakened, but it still hit Meng Hao, causing him to vomit up a mouthful of blood.

At the same time, the crystalline sword collided with the ten feathers. A series of explosions could be heard as the feathers were shattered. The sword aura continued on, stabbing through Meng Hao. He coughed up more blood, his body trembling.

Next was the most powerful attack of all, the Cold Wind Finger. Once a lost art, it had been improved to allow Cultivators of the Qi Condensation level to use it. Currently, it could only be used by someone of the ninth level of Qi Condensation.

A boom resounded out. The disparity between the Cultivation base levels was immediately apparent. Despite the considerable combined might of the Flame Python and the Wind Blade, they were still torn to pieces. They managed to destroy about half of the black colored Cold Wind Finger. The rest of it continued on through, stabbing into Meng Hao’s chest. He coughed up even more blood, which instantly turned black and congealed into chunks of ice. His body spun backwards.

Intense coldness filled his body, making him feel as if he were about to freeze. He knew that this was a critical moment. His right hand shot out, and the elusive Hellfighting Spike emerged, along with two banners, which coiled around his body.

Currently, Meng Hao was seriously injured, but hadn’t lost his will to fight back. He gritted his teeth and made to flee. But then something happened that no one had expected, neither the fleeing Meng Hao, nor Liu Daoyun, nor the currently bedraggled Zhou and Xu from the Winding Stream Sect. Suddenly, a third party arrived to join the fight!

An arrow shot forth from the distance, accompanied by a shrill, piercing scream. It flew directly toward Meng Hao, filled with intense killing intent. It clearly was meant to pierce his heart and kill him.

It moved with incredible speed toward him. He suddenly felt a stabbing pain in his chest, whereupon he let out a roar. The two hovering banners moved to block the arrow. An explosion rang out as the banners were shattered. As the arrow continued forward, Meng Hao waved his right hand, sending the Hellfighting spike, which he had originally wanted to use to counterattack, to intercept the arrow.

There was a boom, and Meng Hao spit out more blood. He watched as the black spike disintegrated. The arrow slowed some, but continued on toward him.

He retreated, dropping toward the ground, but finding no place to conceal himself. Even if the few remaining unsheltered feathers caught him and carried him off, there were too few of them. He wouldn’t be fast enough to evade the arrow.

Borrowing some momentum from the explosion of the Hellfighting Spike, Meng Hao took in a ragged breath. A fierce look appeared in his eyes, and he smacked his bag of holding again. A wooden sword appeared. He didn’t even have time to point the sword towards the arrow. It came in so quickly that it slammed into the side of the blade.

Boom!

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# Chapter 64: A Massacre Caused by a Silver Spear

When the wooden sword connected with the arrow, it began to emit a droning sound. It was pushed back by the force of the arrow and smacked into Meng Hao’s forehead. Blood sprayed from his mouth, as he was sent spinning backward. As for the arrow, its power was spent, and it transformed into ash, which drifted away in the wind.

As Meng Hao flew backwards, he slapped his bag of holding, and produced a Demonic Core, which he swallowed. He was running low on Earthly Spirit Pills, so he opted for the Demonic Core. His eyes were shot with blood, and his injuries were severe. This was perhaps the worst he had been hurt since becoming a Cultivator.

Thankfully, the wooden sword was truly a treasured item and hadn’t been damaged at all. Actually, the reason Meng Hao had been sent flying back was because his Cultivation base wasn’t high enough to completely control the sword. If it were, the arrow wouldn’t have even been able to make the wooden sword move back an inch.

Meng Hao’s body was wracked in pain, and his mind a bit clouded. But his innate desire to survive still existed. He bit his tongue, and used the pain to focus. He lifted his pale, bloodless face and looked off into the distance. Currently approaching was a young man in a white robe, flying on an enormous green leaf.

His face was calm, and his eyes cold, without a trace of arrogance. However, a single look at him would leave anyone without doubt that he was superior to others.

His Cultivation base was at the ninth level of Qi Condensation, and yet he appeared to be only twenty-two or twenty-three years old. Seeing him approach, Liu Daoyun, who was also at the ninth level of Qi Condensation, narrowed his eyes.

He instantly understood. “At his age… he must be a Chosen from a great Sect,” he said to himself.

“White robes….” Meng Hao wiped the blood from his mouth, staring at the white-robed youth.

“I am Ding Xin 1 from the Violet Fate Sect,” he said coolly. “I’m here to take your life, on orders from the Sect Leader.” He had been dispatched months ago to the State of Zhao to search for Meng Hao. Using his own special methods, he had finally caught his trail today. He had actually been watching for some time, waiting to make his move.

He was completely different from Qian Shuihen and Lu Song. As an Inner Sect disciple, he was frequently sent out on Sect business. He was one of the Chosen of the Violet Fate Sect, destined to reach Foundation Establishment. When that happened, he would be a true Chosen. Handling matters outside of the Sect was simply training for him.

He was vastly more experienced than Qian Shuihen, and had even made a name for himself in the Southern Domain in the past two years. His personality was cold, his attacks ruthless. Back in the Southern Domain, he would always consider the reputation of his Sect. But here in the State of Zhao, he could be a bit less restrained.

He had attacked Meng Hao when he was in critical danger, and had never imagined that Meng Hao would actually be able to survive the lethal arrow.

Meng Hao’s face was grim. Three waves of attackers had appeared today. Two were of the eighth level of Qi Condensation, and two were of the ninth. Based on his Cultivation base alone, he couldn’t stand up to them. Furthermore, he was seriously injured. The situation was very dangerous.

Watching Ding Xin approach, Liu Daoyun’s eyes flickered, and he felt somewhat nervous. Yet his eyes were determined. He would not give up.

Zhou and Xu from the Winding Stream Sect, seemed even more hesitant. If they only had to deal with Liu Daoyun, they could do it. But now that the Violet Fate Sect had made an appearance, they were less convinced.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered faintly. His right hand slapped his bag of holding and five feathers flew out, combining with the four beneath his feet to make a nine-feathered fan. It took to flight, carrying him away at high speed.

Ding Xin’s eyes were calm. He flicked his sleeve, and the giant leaf beneath his feet flashed as he shot off in pursuit. Liu Daoyun burst into motion as well. Zhou and Xun from the Winding Stream Sect gritted their teeth, then joined in the pursuit.

Sun Hua wasn’t fast enough and had already been forced to drop to the ground. But, he wasn’t willing to give up, so he followed as fast as possible on foot.

The three waves of people were incredibly fast, so Meng Hao swallowed another Demonic Core. The coldness within him was still very strong, and his body was covered with sword wounds which oozed blood.

He clenched his jaw and circulated his spiritual power, then slapped his bag of holding. A silver light flashed in his hand. It was none other than the silver spear!

Liu Daoyun’s vision immediately became focused on it, and he slowed down a bit. Ding Xin, with his flashing eyes, as well as Zhou and Xu from the Winding Stream Sect, had never before laid eyes on the long silver spear. But Sun Hua, who was still running along on the ground, had. He immediately shouted out: “That’s the silver spear! That’s the treasured gift from Patriarch Reliance!!”

Hearing this, Zhou and Xu slowed down a bit, their eyes shining fiercely.

“You are all after this silver spear?” said Meng Hao. “Very well then. It requires a lot of spiritual power to use. Its true might can’t even be utilized unless you are at Foundation Establishment stage. If you are powerful enough to use it, then be my guest!” His face twisted with an expression of incomparable pain, as if he were throwing everything away in an attempt to save himself, he tossed the spear away as hard as he could.

He put all the spiritual power he could muster into his arm as he flung it. The silver spear hummed, transforming into a silver-colored rainbow as it shot off into the distance, shining so brightly that it virtually forced everyone’s eyes to follow it.

The instant it flew off, Meng Hao’s treasured fan transformed into a beam of light that shot off in the opposite direction.

Interestingly (whether or not it was on purpose was hard to tell) the spear just happened to fly in the direction of the three pursuing disciples from the Cold Wind Sect. When they saw the silver spear flying toward them, they gaped in shock.

Sun Hua’s eyes were red, and with a hoarse shout, he changed directions, running directly toward the silver spear. Killing intent billowed from his face, he slapped his bag of holding, and a sword aura emerged. He clearly intended to kill anyone who dared to take the spear from him.

Further behind him, the ten or more Winding Stream Sect disciples raced forward even harder.

Liu Daoyun’s facial expression changed as he debated to himself about whether or not the spear was real. Because he was not at the Foundation Establishment stage, he didn’t have Spiritual Sense, so it was difficult to make a judgement about this matter. There was a fifty-fifty chance about it, but in his mind, it didn’t matter. He couldn’t just let the Winding Stream Sect disciples gang up on his fellow disciples.

If they did, and word got out, he would be severely punished when he returned to the Sect.

And if the spear was real… well, if he gave up under those circumstances his punishment would be even more severe when he returned to the Sect. He was damned if he did, damned if he didn’t. He clenched his jaw.

“Dammit!” Liu Daoyun abandoned his pursuit of Meng Hao and made a beeline for the spear.

Zhou and Xu hesitated, watching as the long spear flew off, pursued by both Sun Hua and their fellow Winding Stream Sect disciples. At first, they weren’t sure if they should chase after the spear, but when they saw Liu Daoyun speeding off after it, they made their decision, shooting off in the same direction.

Only Ding Xin from the Violet Fate Sect stopped, his eyes flashing. His task was to slay Meng Hao, so he didn’t care whether the treasure was real or fake. With a cold laugh, his eyes shining, he pushed his giant leaf into a beam of prismatic light, speeding after Meng Hao.

Two people, one up ahead, one behind. One fleeing as fast as he could, the other pursuing with a magical item backed by the power of the ninth level of Qi Condensation. They disappeared over the horizon.

As for Liu Daoyun, he flew quickly in the direction of the silver spear, and seemed to be on the verge of reaching it, when someone howled out from behind him.

“Heavenly Thunder Spirit!”

As soon as the sound rang out, a black cloud formed in the sky above Liu Daoyun, and the crackling of thunder could be heard as a lightning bolt struck down toward him.

His face grew dark. He slapped his bag of holding, and a coldness spread out and shot toward the lightning bolt.

The lightning bolt dissipated with a booming sound, and the intense coldness continued onward to enter the black thundercloud. It began to rumble, as if it were about to break apart.

“Heavenly Thunder Spirit, detonate!”

Under normal circumstances, Zhou and Xu would never do something like this. But with the silver spear in play, and the Winding Stream Sect disciples on the ground having the upper hand, they couldn’t allow Liu Daoyun to enter the fray. Now that they had abandoned their pursuit of Meng Hao, they could pour all their combined power into play.

A massive explosion reverberated out as the thundercloud exploded. The force of it shot out in all directions. Zhou and Xu coughed up blood. Liu Daoyun, also injured, was not in a good position. A crystalline glow appeared in front of him as blood seeped from the corners of his mouth.

It was at this moment that the silver spear slammed into the ground. As it did, the Cold Wind disciples were about to grab. But then Sun Hua arrived, a savage look on his face. Behind him swarmed the Winding Stream Sect disciples, their faces radiating ferocity.

“This treasured item belongs to the Winding Stream Sect!” shouted Sun Hua excitedly. If he was the first person to lay hands on the spear, it might not end up belonging to him, but the Sect would definitely reward him. Perhaps he would end up having a breakthrough in this Cultivation base, and reach the eighth level!

The three Cold Wind Sect disciples were just reaching their hands up to take the spear, when they were surrounded by the ten or so others. They howled as the Winding Stream Sect disciples attacked them. They could do little more than watch as the prize which had just moments ago been theirs, was taken away.

“So brazen!” shouted Liu Daoyun, turning his head to see what was happening. His roar rumbled out, and he completely ignored Zhou and Xu. He waved his hand toward Sun Hua, and the Cold Wind Finger appeared, shooting forward as fast as lightning.

Considering the level of Sun Hua’s Cultivation base, he simply couldn’t avoid the attack. His facial expression changed into one of savagery, and he gritted his teeth. His only hope lay in the treasured item. As the Cold Wind

Finger approached, he snatched up the long silver spear, brandishing it in an imposing manner.

“You’re defeated!” he shouted. Liu Daoyun’s eyes focused on the spear as it flew into the air. Zhou and Xun held their breath.

The silver spear flashed as it flew forward, making a beautiful, silver arc. The instant it met the Cold Wind Finger, a bang sounded out. It wasn’t a very loud bang. The spear broke apart, most of it shattering into dust, with only a few fragments remaining intact.

Sun Hua gaped in astonishment. It was the last astonished look he would ever give, as the Cold Wind Finger pierced into his chest. His body shuddered, and a boom rang out, louder than that emitted by the silver spear, as he exploded.

Liu Daoyun stared in shock, as did Zhou and Xu. The Cold Wind Sect and Winding Stream Sect disciples were also dumbfounded.

Everything was suddenly quiet, except for the sound reverberating out from the attack that had killed Sun Hua.

Liu Daoyun was the first one to move again. He went forward and began to collect up the remaining fragments of silver. Zhou and Xu also approached and picked up some of the pieces.

“Silver… it’s really silver. It’s just a damned silver spear!!” Liu Daoyun’s eyes were crimson, and it seemed as if he was about to go berserk. He raised his head to the sky and let out a ferocious roar. He was humiliated, and furious. He had killed Sun Hua; had the spear actually been a treasured item, it would not have been a huge problem. But he had killed a Winding Stream Inner Sect disciple over a simple silver spear…. This could cause a huge conflagration between two great Sects.

“Meng Hao!!” He wanted to chase after him, but Meng Hao had long since disappeared. Zhou and Xu were also furious. And while they felt indignation toward Meng Hao, Sun Hua had been killed by Liu Daoyun. They couldn’t just let him go.

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1. Ding Xin’s name in Chinese is (dīng xìn) – Ding is a common family name. Xin means “believe” or “faith”

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# Chapter 65: Battle at the North Sea

An iron spear had cheated the Violet Fate Sect disciples.

A silver spear had cheated Sun Hua and Liu Daoyun, and had caused friction between two great Sects.

If Fatty’s father knew about this, his eyes would definitely grow wide. The iron, silver and gold spears were crafted by his artisans.

If Fatty had a chance to hear about it, he would definitely find it incredibly amusing.

Meng Hao hadn’t even known how useful the silver spear would be. The people from the Winding Stream Sect and the Cold Wind Sect had already stopped chasing him. And now, even if they wanted to pursue him, they wouldn’t be able to track him down.

And yet, his face was as grim as before. He stood on the treasured fan, popping down Demonic Cores. Ding Xin pursued him on his giant leaf, his face cold. In order to kill Meng Hao, he would follow him to the ends of the earth if necessary.

If it was a simple pursuit, Meng Hao would be able to lead him around in circles, considering his vast amount of Demonic Cores. But he was seriously injured, which made things difficult. The Demonic Cores were just barely enough to keep him going.

He could suppress the injury for a while, but eventually he would reach the point where he couldn’t. When that happened, the injury would become even more dangerous.

Even more frustrating, an occasional arrow would scream toward him from behind, forcing him to use the treasured fan to defend himself. The most dangerous position was when he reached the end of a glide and had to drop to the ground and run, decreasing his speed and agility. Thankfully, the land was mostly covered by forests, and by the time he reached the top of next mountain in his path, he would be able to jump onto the treasured fan again.

Of course, Ding Xin was also incapable of sustained flight. Just like Liu Daoyun, he also had to drop to the ground occasionally, waiting to find some favorable terrain to once again begin gliding.

“You can’t get away,” said Ding Xin with a smile, his eyes glittering. “If you give up without a fight, I can take you back to the Sect and let them deal with you.”

“There are some special circumstances regarding the matter between myself and the Violet Fate Sect,” said Meng Hao as he continued to speed forward. “Fellow Daoist Ding, do you understand what I mean?”

“I don’t need to understand,” he responded coolly, his eyes growing colder. “If I take you back to the Sect, the Sect Elders will surely punish you. The Violet Fate Sect is one of the great sects of the Southern Domain. Naturally, they will be reasonable, and discern what is true and false.”

“What happened that day was beyond my control,” Meng Hao explained. “Qiu Shuihen and Lu Song forced me to sell my item. I told them it was just an ordinary spear, but they insisted. They even threatened me! You can’t put the blame on me for that!” Having reached the top of a relatively high hill, he pulled out the treasured fan and began to glide once again.

“How could the fault not be yours?” said Ding Xin, his voice as cold as ever. He continued to move forward with great speed. “You could have broken the spear on the spot, then pulled out the real treasure. Then none of this would have happened.” He slapped his bag of holding, and a black wooden bow appeared in his hands. He pulled it back and released a screaming arrow toward Meng Hao.

There was a boom as Meng Hao used a magical item to defend himself. Coughing up blood, he laughed. The blood on his teeth made his smile even more ferocious.

“This is your so-called ‘being reasonable?’” he said. His eyes shone with killing intent, and he didn’t say anything more. Swallowing a Demonic Core, he pushed the treasured fan forward even faster.

Several hours passed. Afternoon came, then evening. Meng Hao was exhausted, but he could see that this pursuit might go on for days. He could see from the cold eyes of the person chasing him that he was ruthlessly toying with him.

He was prey, not to be killed forthrightly, but to be toyed with. Then, even as he began to go crazy from it all, he would be felled in a single blow.

The land of the State of Zhao whizzed beneath Meng Hao and Ding Xin. Time passed. Meng Hao’s Cultivation base of the eighth level of Qi Condensation was at the point that it seemed about to wither up. He continually consumed Demonic Cores, but that in itself was harming his body. Even his blood seemed to reek with a Demonic air.

To a Cultivator, this was essentially intentionally harming one’s own Cultivation base. Meng Hao had never heard of this before, but based on what he was seeing, he now had a clue. And yet, he had no choice.

As for Ding Xin, he had noticed what was happening, so had intentionally slowed his pursuit. An inquisitive look had appeared in his eyes, as if he had caught sight of some interesting toy.

“I really want to see what happens when you consume so many Demonic Cores that your entire aura becomes Demonic? When I kill you, will I find an eighth-level Demonic Core inside?” Ding Xin laughed.

Meng Hao heard his words, and more veins of blood appeared in his eyes. His face grew somber.

He was not the type of person to speak a lot during a fight. Just now he had tried to explain himself, only to find out that his opponent didn’t care. After that, he didn’t say a single word. This was just like the time he had faced up against Wang Tengfei. He had not roared or howled; he had faced everything with dark silence.

He continued to flee for some time, pushing himself to the limits of his speed. Finally, up ahead, he caught sight of Mount Daqing. He had been hiding away for about half a year, and had finally come back to the mountain again, a big circle.

As he continued on, he could see a vast, mirror-like lake off in the distance. It was the North Sea.

When he saw it, his eyes suddenly lit up.

“The North Sea….”

Meng Hao thought of the little ship, the old man and the young girl, and about how the North Sea had revealed the Dao!

His gaze grew hard, and he changed his direction, aiming for the lake.

He sped along on his treasured fan. Behind him, Ding Xin sneered. He had quite enjoyed forcing his quarry to continuously consume Demonic Cores.

“I’m not sure why this guy has so many Demonic Cores, but it doesn’t matter. I’ll force him to tell me before he dies. In any case, I really want to see what his body looks like after he eats too many.” He smiled, stamping down on his giant leaf and continuing on in pursuit.

The two of them continued on for a while, until suddenly a booming sound rang out in the air. Just as they flew out over the surface of the North Sea, Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding, then tossed out the black net.

It immediately grew out to a diameter of approximately nine meters and shot toward Ding Xin. Ding Xin immediately flicked his wide sleeve, and a violet-colored jade slip flew out, which transformed into a violet whirlwind.

The whirlwind sent the net spinning. Its connection with Meng Hao seemed to have been severed, and it flew off into the distance.

“Using a useless treasure like that shows how incompetent you are,” said Ding Xin coldly. The net appeared to be extraordinary, so he had used the jade slip just now. He’d never imagined that it would be defeated in one move.

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed. He bit down on his tongue and then spit out some blood. His face was even paler than before. As he moved across the surface of the North Sea, the water began to ripple as if a fierce wind were blowing across it. Its calmness had been broken.

The treasured fan stopped when he reached the center of the lake. It was the first time since Ding Xin had begun chasing him that he came to a full stop. He turned around, slapping his bag of holding, and the scroll painting appeared in his hands. His eyes glittered, emanating killing intent.

He would flee no longer. He would fight with Ding Xin, Cultivator of the ninth level of Qi Condensation!

Meng Hao was not in the upper hand, but he would fight. He had to fight. He couldn’t carry on much longer, so if he didn’t fight, he would die. There was only one option… fight!

“So, you’re not running anymore,” said Ding Xin as he approached. A sneer appeared on his face when he saw the look of murder in Meng Hao’s eyes. He waved his finger, and instantly a violet light appeared in front of him which transformed in a bird. It flapped its wings as it shot toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed. The instant the violet-colored bird appeared, the scroll painting trembled, and the sounds of roaring beasts could be heard. Meng Hao went all in with his Cultivation base. Perhaps because of the vast quantities of Demonic power within his spiritual energy, the roars of the beasts were particularly frightening. Four streams of mist appeared, solidifying into four Demonic beasts which charged toward the violet-colored bird.

At the same time, Meng Hao took a step forward. The treasured fan beneath his feet disassembled, the feathers circulating around him and then shooting toward Ding Xin like flying swords.

Meng Hao didn’t retreat. A flying sword appeared beneath his feet to support him, and he himself shot toward Ding Xin.

“You overestimate yourself,” said Ding Xin with a cold laugh, his eyes filled with ridicule. His right hand flickered in incantation patterns and then he pressed down on his forehead. A vortex emerged, accompanied by a roaring sound.

“Violet Fate Aura!”

Dense Violet Qi poured out from within the vortex, instantly transforming into a violet-colored ring, which expanded, and then flew toward Meng Hao.

Thunderous sounds continued to reverberate, causing the feathers around Meng Hao to crumble and collapse. As the massive sound roared out, it caused him to vomit up blood. And yet, stubbornness filled his eyes. He slapped his bag of holding, and roughly one hundred flying swords emerged, shooting toward Ding Xin.

The sword rain screamed forth, filling the sky. The light from the sword auras filled the sky. The swords reached Ding Xin in an instant, and yet his sneer grew thicker.

“So reckless,” he said, slapping his bag of holding. A red beam emerged, transforming into a red-colored whisk. He twirled the whisk, and a screaming red gust of wind appeared which cracked the nearly one hundred flying swords. Many of them simply shattered.

The wind gust smacked into Meng Hao, and he coughed up more blood. But then, within the fragments of the hundred flying swords, appeared two wooden swords. They flew out, piercing through the red wind and shooting toward Ding Xin.

Ding Xin’s eyes narrowed. His fingers flashed in incantation signs as he shot backwards.

Meng Hao lifted his right hand into the air, his face radiating killing intent.

His finger pointed up, and suddenly the black net which had been spinning away moments ago, expanded to a size of thirty meters, then dropped down with incredible speed.

All of this takes quite a bit of time to describe, but all happened in the space of just a moment. Ding Xin’s expression changed instantaneously. Before he could react, the huge net had caught him up. The two wooden swords shot toward him, and it seemed they would stab into his chest.

It was a simple tactic that had just occurred to Meng Hao. It wasn’t perfect, but it was the best he could come up with on the spur of the moment. He had even used the feathers of the treasured fan and sacrificed the multitude of flying swords in an attempt to catch his opponent off guard. He had done it all for one purpose: to distract his opponent. And it had worked.

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 66: A Great Kindness!

Everything was all to give the wooden swords a chance at a kill!

Ding Xin’s eyes narrowed as a feeling of sudden, intense danger welled up in his heart. This was the first time he had experienced this feeling in the backwater State of Zhao. Even in the Southern Domain, he had never provoked the wrath of Foundation Establishment Cultivators; he’d only ever been in tousles with people of the same stage as himself.

Astonished to be in such a perilous situation, he raised his right hand and pushed down on his forehead. An exploding sound rippled out, and a massive amount of Violet Qi poured forth from his head. It rapidly congealed into the figure of a person, his back facing Meng Hao.

The vague figure was dressed in a violet robe. An explosive pressure burst out from it, and Violet Qi roiled out everywhere, causing the net to stop in place.

Ding Xin’s face paled as the massive net slowed to a halt. He immediately shot backward. The two wooden swords gave no indication that they would stop. They continued to shoot forward without the slightest hesitation, passing through the violet cloud and speeding toward Ding Xin.

“Impossible!” Ding Xin’s scalp went numb and his face filled with astonishment. How could he ever have imagined that Meng Hao’s two wooden swords could defy the power of his lifesaving magic!?

This lifesaving magic was bestowed upon disciples of the ninth level of Qi Condensation, and was capable of resisting the complete power of a Foundation Establishment Cultivator. It could only be used once, and even after all these years, he had never employed its power. Finally, in the face of imminent peril, he had used it today. And yet, it couldn’t stop the two wooden swords.

“What type of sword is this!?” The blood drained from Ding Xin’s face. At such a critical moment, he didn’t have time to think about it. He clenched his jaw and then let out a mighty roar. He bit his tongue and spit out some blood. This was blood from his Cultivation base, and was connected to his longevity. As soon as he spat it out, his Cultivation base dropped a bit. It would take a significant amount of time in secluded meditation before it could recover.

As soon as he spit the blood out, it transformed into a red mist that was sucked in by the violet mist form that had emerged from his head. He let out a shout:

“Violet Qi from the East!” Immediately, the purple-robed figure turned around. Its face was blurry, but its eyes were clearly radiating a powerful, violet glow.

When the violet glow appeared, Meng Hao’s body shook and pain washed over him like floodwaters. He retreated backward, blood spraying from his back. A roaring sound filled his body, and his consciousness began to waver. He floated backward like a kite with its string cut, then dropped down onto the surface of the North Sea. He slowly sank down into the water.

At the same time, the two wooden swords started to shake. One of them turned violet, seemingly no longer under Meng Hao’s control. It spun out of control, then fell down into the North Sea.

But… that was only one sword. Ding Xin had gone all out, reducing his own life expectancy and damaging his Cultivation base to employ the full power of the lifesaving art. But he had only been able to target one of the wooden swords. The second one, though it was shaking, continued onward. In an instant, it passed through everything to stab into Ding Xin’s chest. Then, it seemed to lose the spiritual power which controlled it. It too fell down into the North Sea.

The sword had stabbed Ding Xin, but not in through the heart. With the aid of the Violet Qi from the East, he was able to avoid being critically injured. Even still, he let out a miserable scream as blood showered out of his chest and mouth.

His hair flew around wildly, and his white robe was soaked with blood. His eyes bloodshot, he covered the wound in his chest and let out a horrified howl. In all the battles he had fought from the beginning until now, he had never received a serious injury. Now here, in this backwater State of Zhao which he looked down on so much, he had been severely injured by a nobody Cultivator who he had completely disregarded. Furthermore, he had been forced to use his lifesaving method. His eyes were grim as he looked down at the North Sea.

“Your life has been taken by my Violet Qi from the East. But since you dared to injure me, I will drag up your corpse and hack it to pieces!” Ding Xin’s chest burned with pain. He had used blood from his Cultivation base and had damaged his longevity. At this point, he had sunk to the eighth level of Qi Condensation. His face was pale and filled with fury. He produced a medicinal pill and consumed it. And then, suddenly, his facial expression changed. He looked down at the wound in his chest, and his face was seized with terror.

“My spiritual power is being sucked out through the sword wound….” This was something Ding Xin had never experienced before. He gasped as he suddenly realized how amazing Meng Hao’s two wooden swords really were. He immediately shot down into the waters of the North Sea to search for Meng Hao’s corpse, and the two swords.

Deep down in the North Sea, Meng Hao’s body slowly floated down. His eyes were shut, and he didn’t move. It seemed as if he were dead. Ding Xin’s Violet Qi from the East had wrecked his longevity and his Cultivation base. Even though Ding Xin’s power could not compare to that of the Foundation Establishment stage, he was at the peak of the ninth level of Qi Condensation. Meng Hao was at the eighth level. He simply had no chance of surviving.

Right now, his body was cold, and the only thing that remained was the tiniest spark, flickering inside his spirit. It wouldn’t take long for that spark to vanish, and then there would be no more Meng Hao.

His Qi passages were shattered, his flesh devoid of life force. His Core sea seemed to be completely dried up.

But he was not willing. He was not willing to die. Unfortunately, this was the Cultivation world’s law of the jungle. He couldn’t fight or resist that. As his body sank deeper and deeper, the spark of life grew more and more faint. Everything was quiet. The spark was about to go out.

A wisp of Qi flowed out from within the North Sea. A droning sound could be heard, and deep within the waters, ripples flowed out to surround Meng Hao. His body suddenly began to glow.

As the glow spread, spiritual energy from the North Sea poured into Meng Hao from all directions, filling his body, mending his Qi passages. Violet-colored blood spilled out from his orifices and pores.

All of the damage inflicted by the Violet Qi from the East was mended. In fact, every single one of his numerous injuries were healed as the spiritual energy of the North Sea poured into him.

Popping sounds rang out from within him as his Qi passages began to flow again. His lifeless body was reformed, and in an instant, once again hummed with life force.

A thunderous roar sounded out as vast amounts of spiritual energy rushed into his Core sea. Once again it rippled boundlessly. He was still at the eighth level of Qi Condensation, but had actually made significant advancement, and his current power level was almost as much as someone at the ninth level of Qi Condensation.

Within his Core sea, the Demonic Core undulated, sending out a Demonic aura. It began to absorb all of the Demonic Qi that Meng Hao had accumulated. Its Demonic aura grew stronger and brighter.

Finally, Meng Hao opened his eyes.

He looked calm. He was not excited or shocked or astonished. He had intentionally picked the North Sea as the spot for the showdown. It had all been a gamble, in the hopes that the North Sea Demon would help him.

As he opened his eyes, he straightened his body. There was only water beneath his feet, although some distance away he could see the bottom of the lake. Everything should be pitch black. But because of the silvery sand that spread out, there was a little bit of a glow, which faintly illuminated the surroundings.

Within the murky waters, Meng Hao could see a boat.

The boat was dilapidated, sunken and resting on the lake floor. Meng Hao suddenly realized that he recognised this boat. It was… the boat he had ridden in that day when he crossed the lake!

He stared silently at the boat, and then cupped his hands and bowed in respect.

Even as he bowed, he heard the twittering laughter of a young girl echoing out across the lake bottom. The laughter circled around, making it impossible to determine its origin. Meng Hao narrowed his eyes, looking down at the floor of the lake.

As the laughter rang out, he saw arms emerging from the silver sand at the bottom of the lake. The hands were all as white as jade. Along with the arms appeared corpses. They were the corpses of young women, floating up from the silver sand.

Black hair swept across the faces of the dozens of them as they floated up from the depths of the lake. Their eyes were closed, their faces pale white but beautiful. Amidst the rippling lake water, Meng Hao watched on, an expression of astonishment on his face as he realized that all of the women… looked exactly the same!

At that same moment, a small girl appeared, standing there in the dilapidated boat. She gave Meng Hao a bashful smile. She seemed to be filled with childlike innocence, but as Meng Hao looked at her, his mind began to spin, and he felt a roaring inside his head.

He had just noticed that the faces of the corpses strongly resembled this girl's face, as if they were her after she had grown up!

"Big brother, will you stay with me here forever?" said the little girl with a light laugh. Her voice was young, and when she spoke, the dozens of corpses floating around her stopped moving, and despite their eyes being closed, it seemed as if all of them were looking straight at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao mind spun, and the roaring sound seemed to consume his thoughts. Everything in front of started to grow dim, and then to shatter.

He suddenly opened his eyes. He was still floating in the lake water, some distance away from the lake floor, further away than he had been just now. Had it all been a dream? There was no boat, no corpses, and no laughing little girl.

Meng Hao gaped in shock. After a moment, he realized that his body had been healed. He gave a silent nod to the distant lake floor, even though he couldn't see anything down there.

He knew that everything he had just seen had not been an illusion. It was real!

He raised his hands and bowed deeply with clasped hands.

"Meng Hao will always remember your two great kindnesses. I speculate that you wish to become a sea, and that this is what is most important to you. I, Meng, of the junior generation, promise that one day, when my Cultivation base soars to the heavens, that I shall come to your aid. If there is any other way that I can aid you, please tell me." Meng Hao bowed again, holding the bow for the space of ten breaths. Everything was quiet. He straightened up. He looked down one last time, then shot up towards the surface of the lake.

At the exact moment that he began to move toward the surface, his two wooden swords, which had sunk into the water, began to shake. Then, they shot toward Meng Hao.

One of the swords had just been tracked down by Ding Xin. His eyes gleamed as he reached out to pick up the sword. But then it began to move. Ripples spread out from it, and then, in the blink of an eye, it shot off into the distance.

When Ding Xin saw this, a look of surprise appeared in his eyes. Without hesitation, he raced in pursuit.

“This treasure is sentient!” thought Ding Xin. His heart began to thump wildly as he eagerly sped even faster to intercept the wooden sword.

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# Chapter 67: The Death of Ding Xin

Meng Hao sped along through the North Sea, moving faster and faster. The Core sea within him seethed and roiled, and before long he caught sight of the surface of the lake. He burst out of the water, sending waves surging in all directions.

At the same time as he shot out of the lake, his two wooden swords appeared, whistling through the air from different directions as they flew toward him. They circulated around him, one of them coming to rest beneath his feet, the other flying next to him.

Just then, Ding Xin burst out from the lake, and as he flew out, his eyes came to rest on Meng Hao. His face was immediately covered with a look of disbelief. How could it possibly be that Meng Hao… was alive!?

“Impossible! He’s not at the Foundation Establishment stage. Nobody can withstand my Sect’s consummate Violet Qi from the East, backed with the sacrifice of my own Cultivation base and longevity!!” He glared at Meng Hao, retreating backward a bit, still not quite believing what he was seeing.

Perhaps he wasn’t willing to believe because, at the moment, he was no longer at the ninth level of Qi Condensation. Even his eighth level of Qi Condensation was a bit unstable. The wound in his chest was not healed, and spiritual energy continued to leak out. He feared that he might soon slip from the eighth level of Qi Condensation down to the seventh.

His face immediately grew pale. However, he wasn’t like Qiu Shuihen and those others. Despite being shocked at seeing Meng Hao alive, he recovered in the blink of an eye. Without hesitation, he shot away, the giant leaf appearing beneath his feet and carrying him off into the distance. He was not fighting, he was fleeing.

He had no choice but to flee. He could tell that Meng Hao was completely recovered, and had in fact improved his Cultivation base, whereas he himself had suffered severe internal injuries. He had no other option than retreat.

Meng Hao watched coldly as Ding Xin fled. He didn’t pursue at first, but instead looked down at the lake, making yet another respectful salute.

“I will remember this great kindness for the rest of my life!” said Meng Hao in a voice that could sever nails and slice iron. Then he lifted his head and flicked his sleeve. The sword beneath his feet hummed, and he transformed into a radiant beam of light as he shot in pursuit of Ding Xin.

“Starting now, the hunter becomes the hunted,” he said, his eyes filled with the intent to kill. After leaving the Reliance Sect, Meng Hao had never felt the desire to kill anyone as much as he did Ding Xin, except perhaps Shangguan Xiu. His desire to kill spread into his eyes until they shined. During his entire life of Cultivation, he had never been so seriously injured before. In fact, it actually did not count as being injured. He had already… been killed!

A dazzling gleam filled his eyes as he raced in pursuit. In an instant, he left behind the North Sea. In the time it takes an incense stick to burn, he had caught up with Ding Xin, who was consuming medicinal pills even as his Cultivation base continued to drop.

Meng Hao didn’t say anything. Instead, he simply lifted his finger, and the wooden sword flying next to him sped forward toward Ding Xin. Pale-faced Ding Xin looked back, well aware of the strange powers of the sword. He smacked his bag of holding, and immediately, the long black bow appeared in his hand. Ignoring his continual loss of spiritual energy, he pulled back on the bow and shot an arrow.

The arrow thundered toward the wooden sword. When they met, an explosion rang out and the arrow collapsed. The wooden sword shuddered.

Meng Hao was expressionless. He lifted his finger again, and the wooden sword sped forward again. Ding Xin, his face pale, had no choice but to shoot another arrow.

A boom rang out. The wooden sword continued on.

Veins of blood filled Ding Xin’s eyes. Could he not see that Meng Hao was exacting his revenge, intending to drain his Cultivation base and push him to complete exhaustion?

After dropping from the ninth level of Qi Condensation, his injuries had worsened. He was weak, but he feared the wooden sword, so he could do nothing else but use his arrows to defend himself. Unfortunately, because of his weakened state, his arrows were also weak, and did not carry the power that they did before. When he shot out his sixth arrow, his body suddenly quivered as his Cultivation base suddenly began to drop from the eighth level of Qi Condensation to the seventh.

The wooden sword was upon him in an instant, stabbing into his chest. It wasn’t a critical wound, but blood surged out nonetheless. Ding Yen let out a miserable cry and tried to flee faster.

His body shook as he felt even more spiritual power flowing out of him. His tottering Cultivation base fell rapidly, from the eighth level of Qi Condensation to the seventh!

Of course, his Cultivation base wasn’t actually regressing. But he was losing spiritual energy at a rapid rate, and without any recovery. The spiritual energy loss was so great that his level of power was essentially at the seventh level of Qi Condensation.

He was consuming medicinal pills, but unfortunately had two sword wounds, both of which were leaking spiritual energy. There was no way for him to recover at the moment.

“I’m a Violet Fate Inner Sect disciple!” cried Ding Xin with a fierce howl. “If you dare to kill me, the Violet Fate Sect will track you down even if it takes a hundred years! They won’t stop until you’re dead!” His situation was desperate. He let out another blood-curdling scream as Meng Hao’s wooden sword passed by. It didn’t stab him, but cut him, whereupon his spiritual energy drained even faster.

“I’ve already died once,” said Meng Hao coolly. His eyes were cold as he waved his finger once more.

Time passed. An hour went by in the blink of an eye, during which time Ding Xin’s miserable cries continued to ring out. His body was numb, and appeared to be covered with hundreds of sword wounds. He was soaked in blood. None of his wounds were critical, but he dripped with so much blood that he looked like a dead person.

Ding Xin was a Cultivator, and as things grew dim, what frightened him the most was not his wounds, but rather, the fact that his body had seemed to become like a sieve. Spiritual energy poured out of him at a shocking rate.

The sixth level of Qi condensation, the fifth, the fourth…

…

A bang rang out, and Ding Xin fell onto the ground, spitting up blood. He scrambled forward, fleeing as fast as he could move. He was no longer capable of any sort of flight. His Cultivation base had dropped so low that it was the same as if he were at the third level of Qi Condensation.

“Meng Hao, if you kill me, you will be slaughtered without a proper burial! I’m a Violet Fate Inner Sect disciple. If I die, it will cause problems for the entire State of Zhao. You don’t dare to kill me!” His body trembled. He fought back the dread in his heart and coughed up more blood.

Meng Hao snatched up Ding Xin’s giant flying leaf. Without a word, he moved his finger again, and the wooden sword shot toward Ding Xin.

Enough time passed for an incense stick to burn. There in the middle of the woods, Ding Xin no longer resembled a disciple of a great Sect. He stared at Meng Hao, his eyes filled with venom. And yet within that venom was also regret. He regretted his desire to watch his opponent consume Demonic

Cores. Instead, he should have held nothing back and killed him immediately.

“I should have butchered you!” he said, gnashing his teeth, chest heaving. It seemed he was more interested in venting his anger than breathing.

“You know, you taught me something,” said Meng Hao. He was done with his revenge. His hand lifted, and the sword fell. Ding Xin’s head flew into the air, showering blood everywhere. It landed off in the distance, rolling across the ground to rest underneath a large tree.

His eyes were still filled with disbelief. He couldn’t believe it, because he was a disciple of the Violet Fate Sect, at the ninth level of Qi Condensation. He was a Chosen, he was to reach Foundation Establishment, whereupon he would be a true Chosen, and his name would rock the Southern Domain.

But here he was, dead in the backwater State of Zhao, killed by Meng Hao, an insect he had held in the palm of his hand.

Meng Hao closed his eyes for a long time. This was not the first time he had killed someone, and this time, he was not filled with emotions. He had already died.

“That day when I ran into Yan Ziguo, I should have killed him, as well as all the people with him.” Determination filled his eyes. He had now experienced the result of his indecisiveness back then, when he had the chance to kill Yan Ziguo.

“I don’t want to die a second time.” He lifted his right hand and made a beckoning gesture. Ding Xin’s bag of holding flew over. Then he flicked his sleeve and a Flame Python appeared. It consumed Ding Xin’s body and head, turning them into ash.

Meng Hao turned and walked away.

It was evening, and as he walked off into the distance, snow began to fall from the sky. It covered him, his footprints, and the reek of blood. The snow accompanied him as he walked further and further away.

“I am the snow during winter. If I get too close to summer, then… summer will melt me. That is not the world of snow, nor is it my world.” Meng Hao disappeared into the distance. He looked like a scholar, but deep down, he was as cold as snow.

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# Chapter 68: Milky Way City

After the battle at the North Sea, and his rebirth in the depths of the lake, the death aura had been completely dispelled. As he walked through the wind and snow, not a sliver of it emanated out.

The fact that the black aura, which had encircled him for more than a month, was now gone, made Meng Hao's pace a bit more leisurely as he moved through the snowfall.

Snow fell more and more heavily, making seem as if this was the year's last and heaviest snowstorm. The snowflakes appeared to be pushed along by the incoming season, falling out of the sky as fast as possible.

The snow covered him, until he finally reached the cave in Mount Daqing that he had been taken from years before. He sat cross-legged, looking out at the world of snow and listening to the cry of the wind.

Night fell.

Snowfall blocked the night sky, making it impossible to see the stars. The only things visible were the endless sheets of snow which covered the landscape.

A small bonfire burned in front of Meng Hao, illuminating the surroundings with flickering firelight. The light fell onto his face as he sat there thinking.

Nearly four years had passed.

It was almost four years since he had joined the Reliance Sect. He had started out as a youth and had grown into a young man; he was now twenty years of age.

For a long time, Meng Hao sat there, looking down at his hands. They were clean, without a spot of dirt on them. But Meng Hao knew without a doubt that they were stained with blood.

He had killed many times in the past four years. At first, it had caused him much mental tribulation. Now, though you couldn't say he was numb to it, at least he had come to accept it. He had adapted. It was as if some invisible force of heaven and earth had changed his spirit, his fate, and his future.

"What will I become in the end…." Meng Hao looked out at the snow outside of the cave, but it contained no answers.

Time passed by slowly, and soon dawn approached. Everything was pitch black. The only thing present was the whimpering of the wind and the frigid snow. The bonfire in front of Meng Hao slowly burned out, and the cave was consumed by darkness.

Meng Hao sat there in the dark, and a sense of deep loneliness filled his heart. The feeling grew stronger and stronger until it seemed as if it would consume him.

"Father, mother, where are you…." His voice was soft as he thought of his parents. He missed them so much.

"Fatty, what are you doing right now?" Meng Hao sighed as an image appeared in his mind of Fatty filing away at his teeth.

"Elder Sister Xu, Elder Brother Chen, you are in the Southern Domain… that's great…." He looked out at the dark night outside the cave, and it was almost as if he could see the Southern Domain. An absentminded expression filled his face.

"Reading hundreds of books is like travelling ten thousand roads…. One day I will leave the State of Zhao and go to the Southern Domain." A look of determination appeared in his eyes. The State of Zhao was on the very edge of the Southern Domain. The middle of the Southern Domain was very, very far away.

He remembered the map he had seen of the Nanshan Continent. There was a vast wilderness between the State of Zhao and the core of the Southern Domain, as well as several countries.

Given the current level of his Cultivation base, if he tried to travel by soaring, it would take an incredibly long time.

“If only I could become a Foundation Establishment stage Cultivator!” A fire seemed to burn in his eyes, a fire that contained a fierce longing. It was a longing to be able to fly in the sky, and a thirst to reach the Foundation Establishment stage.

“Reaching Foundation Establishment is being a true Cultivator. Then, my longevity will be extended to one hundred and fifty years.” The concept of extended life was a distant reality to Meng Hao. Usually, people wish for a longer life only when they get older. As of now, Meng Hao didn’t really care about that; what he was most concerned with was continuing to live on and not be in danger.

Unless one wants to live an average life, one must accept the limitations of one’s Cultivation base and latent talent, and fight on.

Meng Hao breathed deeply and looked out as dawn broke over the world. He pulled out Ding Xin’s bag of holding and looked over its contents. His eyes began to glitter.

“He really was the disciple of a great Sect. Even though he hadn’t reached the Foundation Establishment stage, he was filthy rich.” There were seven or eight thousand Spirit Stones inside, as well as the black, wooden bow.

When he pulled the bow out, his entire body felt cold. When he pulled back on the bowstring, it felt as if the spiritual energy of heaven and earth were being pulled into it.

Inside the bag of holding were several hundred black arrows, each one carved with strange markings. He collected them up. In addition to the Spirit Stones and treasured items, there were some pill bottles, assorted message plaques, and other random items.

Most of the pill bottles were empty. However, one small bottle caught Meng Hao’s attention. It was sealed, but when he heard the sound of the pill rattling around inside, his heart thumped. He broke the seal, whereupon a thick, fragrant odor buffeted his face. The entire cave was instantly filled with a medicinal aroma.

This aroma seemed even stronger than that of a Heavenly Spirit Pill. It seemed to be even stronger than Meng Hao’s most powerful pill, the Plateau Charging Pill. In fact, there was really no way to even compare them. It would be like trying to compare a firefly with a full moon. As far as Meng Hao could tell, one was like a tiny sapling, the other like a mighty tree.

“This is….” Meng Hao’s eyes shone, and he began to breathe quickly. He turned the bottle over and dropped the medicinal pill onto his palm. It was about the size of his thumbnail, and the color of amber. It emanated a powerful fragrance as well as a feeling of boundless spiritual energy. With a simple glance, you could tell this was no ordinary item.

He stared at the pill for a moment, then tapped his bag of holding, retrieving the ancient Pill-name jade slip he had purchased at the Hundred Treasures Pavilion. There were more cracks on its surface than before, although Meng Hao didn’t seem to care. Pressing the jade slip against his forehead, he poured spiritual energy into it.

A moment later, the ancient jade split into pieces, collapsing into ash. Meng Hao opened his eyes. They glowed with powerful excitement.

“A Foundation Establishment Pill! It’s a Foundation Establishment Pill! It’s hard to even determine how much it’s worth!” Palpitating with eagerness, he clutched the pill against his chest. His heart raced, and it took quite some time before he could calm down.

This Foundation Establishment Pill was one of the reasons Ding Xin just couldn’t believe that he would die. It had been made by his master and then gifted to him. Considering that he was at the ninth level of Qi condensation, if he came across a bit of good fortune in his travels, then he might be able to break through to the Foundation Establishment stage. He had kept it on his person so that he could have it handy when that critical juncture arrived.

Even in a great Sect in the Southern Domain, a Foundation Establishment Pill was not common. It was even less common for them to be distributed to disciples. The requirements to acquire one were very high. Even if more than the usual amount of pills were available, the supply would still fall short of the demand. Most people could not establish a Foundation with only one pill. Usually two or three were required. Some people with only average latent talent but the support of Sect Elders, might be able to break through with five pills.

Foundation Establishment Pills were truly treasured. Perhaps this had something to do with the fact that two of the medicinal plants required to concoct the pill only grew in the Three Danger Zones in the Southern Domain.

Ding Xin had an exceptional master, which gave him a special position within the Violet Fate Sect. When he had reached the ninth level of Qi Condensation, his master had bestowed him with the Foundation Establishment Pill. If he failed in breaking through to the next stage, when he returned to the Sect, his master would not hesitate to give him another.

Meng Hao opened his hand and looked more closely at the Foundation Establishment pill. It was then that he noticed a strange seal on its surface.

The seal bore the image of a demonic face. It was expressionless, solemn, and imparted the feeling that the face was looking at you. Meng Hao’s heart thumped. Upon further observation, he determined that the seal did not have any mystical properties. It was simply carved onto the surface of the pill, almost like a logo.

Meng Hao hesitated for a while, then clenched his teeth and put the pill away. Outside, the snowfall was growing lighter, and the rising sun was just becoming visible. He stepped onto the treasured fan and flew out into the cold.

“If I want to break through from the eighth level of Qi Condensation to the ninth, I will need more Spirit Stones. What I have now… it’s just not enough. I’m going to need to go sell some things to get more. Eyes glittering, he slapped his bag of holding and produced a jade slip, which he pushed up against his forehead.

This was a jade slip from the Cold Wind Sect, a map that depicted several of the Cultivator Cities within the State of Zhao. Meng Hao saw Eastern Refinement City, but he had no desire to go back there. He needed to go somewhere far away from there, to a place not controlled by the three great Sects, a place where the Cultivators would be more random.

“Milky Way City,” Meng Hao muttered to himself. Having made his decision, he raised his head, eyes flashing, and soared ahead as fast as the wind.

In the direction of the Milky Way Sea was an area protected by protective spells, a place that mortals could not even see, within which was a city.

Its walls were black, and were patrolled by cold-faced, black-robed Cultivators. They stared out at the people coming in and out of the city.

Milky Way City hadn’t existed before three hundred years ago. At that time, an eccentric with a Cultivation base at the Core Formation stage had appeared. His magical power and items were shocking. He had established this city, then gone into secluded meditation. Three hundred years later, no one knew if he was still alive, or dead. It actually didn’t really matter. Either he had extended his longevity, or had begun to form his Nascent Soul.

Currently, the city was controlled by his descendants. As for Patriarch Milky Way, he had never had poor a relationship with the three great sects of the State of Zhao. That, coupled with the relaxed rules of the city, had made it grow into the bustling place it was, filled with people of all sorts.

One day, a person appeared outside of Milky Way City. He wore a black robe, and his face was covered by the wide bamboo hat on his head. It was impossible to distinguish his features, although his body seemed to be a bit pudgy.

His getup looked strange, but didn’t attract any attention at all in Milky Way City. After all, this place was a jumble of all sorts of strange people. There were more than a few who didn’t want others to know who they were or what they were up to.

Of course, this person was none other than Meng Hao.

He had made up his mind to sell some of his magical items and medicinal pills. So, he had disguised himself and come to this place. He strolled in through the city gates, looking around. As he did, his eyes narrowed. He immediately lowered his head, and, putting on a nonchalant air, entered a shop.

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# Chapter 69: Young Lord Ding

Shangguan Xiu, garbed in a black robe, frowned as he walked down the street in Milky Way City. Two Cultivators of the seventh level of Qi Condensation, also wearing black robes, walked behind him. From the looks on their faces, they seemed to admire Shangguan Xiu quite a bit.

Accompanying Shangguan Xiu in his inspection of the city, they walked past the shop Meng Hao had just ducked into.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever. Even if it wasn’t, no one would have been able to see anyway, because of the wide bamboo hat that covered his face. His gaze swept around the place he had entered.

It was a pill shop, only one story high and not very large. Racks filled with pill bottles filled the small space. The bottles were obviously empty, although on the surface of each one was written the name of a pill along with a price.

Off in the corner, a young man sat cross-legged. Other than him, Meng Hao was the only person in the shop.

Meng Hao walked along, examining the names of the various medicinal pills. Eventually, he found a bottle upon which was written the characters “Earthly Spirit Pill.” It instantly caught his eye.

“So it’s worth three hundred Spirit Stones….” Meng Hao frowned. The copper mirror required two hundred Spirit Stones to duplicate an Earthly Spirit Pill. Although there was a bit of difference in the two prices, it wasn’t very much.

Seeing Meng Hao muttering to himself, the man sitting cross-legged in the corner opened his eyes and coolly said, “Earthly Spirit Pills are from the

Southern Domain. We don’t have many in stock, only five.”

Meng Hao nodded. Looking around one final time, he made to leave, but then suddenly stopped. “Do you happen to have Foundation Establishment Pills?”

When the man heard this, he smiled, although it contained a barely perceptible air of doubt. “Fellow Daoist, this must be your first time in Milky Way City. Foundation Establishment Pills can easily run over one hundred thousand Spirit Stones. They are truly precious. Unfortunately, we don’t have any in stock at all. I’ve only seen one in my entire life. If you are really interested in purchasing one, you’ll have to go to the Milky Way Workshop.”

“So expensive!!” said Meng Hao, his voice filled with awe. Hearing his tone of voice, the young man’s doubt seemed to disappear. He could tell that Meng Hao was simply inquiring, and didn’t have the resources to actually make such a purchase.

Hearing Meng Hao mutter to himself enviously about the incredible price of Foundation Establishment Pills, the young man ignored him and close his eyes again.

Meng Hao left the shop and moved along down the streets of Milky Way City, his eyes shining. Moments later, though, he frowned, for two reasons. One reason was that it didn’t seem it would be that simple to sell medicinal pills and magical items. The other reason was Shangguan Xiu.

“He was wearing a black robe, and was accompanied by more black-robed Cultivators. Those robes are the same ones worn by the city guards. It seems that after leaving the Reliance Sect, he didn’t join another Sect, but rather came to this place.” Meng Hao lowered his head. Instead of leaving, he continued to stroll through the city, checking out shop after shop. As he did, his frown deepened.

It seemed that pills for every level of Qi Condensation were available here. On the one hand, there weren’t a huge amount of pills available, but on the other hand, the prices were not much higher than what he would have to pay to duplicate them. In other words, the profit margin would not be very high.

“Forget about Medicinal Pills. I’ll go check out some magical items.” Meng Hao turned, heading down a different street. There were many Cultivators coming and going, their Cultivation bases of various levels. Most seemed to be between the third and fifth levels. Meng Hao had only seen three Cultivators who, like him, were at the eighth level of Qi Condensation. Their faces were covered, making it impossible to see their faces clearly.

There were many Treasure Pavilions here. Meng Hao visited them one by one, carefully examining their wares. Soon, evening fell. Meng Hao sighed. Low-level magical items fetched a high price, but nothing close to the hundred thousand Spirit Stones he wanted. To get that much, he would have to sell nearly one thousand flying swords, but such an astonishing event would attract unwanted attention. He simply could not do such a thing.

His other magical items varied in price, but none alone would earn him that many Spirit Stones. And if he sold all of his magical items, it would attract too much attention.

What he wanted to do was handle everything at once, then leave immediately.

Meng Hao currently sat cross-legged in a room in an inn. “If I really want to sell the Foundation Establishment Pill… I have to do it very carefully,” he said to himself quietly. “I can’t act rashly.”

Milky Way City wasn’t very big. By the evening of the second day, he had explored the entire city. Finally, he ended up standing across from a luxuriously decorated building. Muttering to himself, he walked toward it.

An inscribed board above the main door read, “Milky Way Workshop.”

It was three stories tall. Meng Hao wandered around the first floor, but was prevented from going up to the second. To gain access to the second floor, one must produce evidence of a large number of Spirit Stones.

Meng Hao didn’t force the issue. He turned and walked around for a bit looking at things, as if he were just an ordinary customer. Finally, he left.

He sat cross-legged back in the inn, frowning to himself. “There’s only one door, guarded by three Cultivators of the eighth level of Qi Condensation, and one of the ninth level…. I can’t go up to the second floor, nor see past the curve of the stairs. Everything on the first level is ordinary items, without any spiritual energy… I need to know what’s on the second level. You can tell by looking at the windows on the outside that there is an abundance of spiritual energy there. But the windows are sealed tight.” After a long moment, he pulled out the copper mirror.

In his bag of holding, he currently had just a bit over ten thousand Spirit Stones. Gritting his teeth, he took out the Foundation Establishment Pill and placed it onto the copper mirror. It instantly sank into the mirror, disappearing. With a deep breath, Meng Hao began feeding Spirit Stones into the mirror.

When he put the ten-thousandth Spirit Stone into the mirror, a bright light shone out of it, and then a second Foundation Establishment Pill appeared. Meng Hao was prepared; as soon as the fragrant medicinal aroma began to spread out, he put the two pills into his bag of holding, looking around cautiously.

Because of his speed, barely any of the aroma escaped out, and therefore no one noticed.

He sat cross-legged on the bed, his eyes filled with thought. After a moment, he slapped his bag of holding, producing a long, white robe. This was some clothing he had obtained from Ding Xin’s bag of holding. He put it on, then hung Ding Xin’s jade identification slip around his neck. He stood and started to pace back and forth in the room, looking even more thoughtful than before.

At dawn, two days later, Meng Hao once again donned the bamboo hat, as well as a long outer garment which concealed the white robe underneath. Lowering his head, he left the inn.

He strode directly toward the Milky Way Workshop, arriving in a very short period of time. A cold-faced middle aged man sat there cross-legged, a Cultivator of the ninth level of Qi Condensation. Meng Hao walked past him, heading directly toward the stairs.

As he approached, a cultivator of the eighth level of Qi Condensation glanced at him.

“Show a minimum of ten thousand Spirit Stones to get access to the second level,” he said.”

“Beat it!” said Meng Hao, lifting his bamboo hat and glaring at the man threateningly. He filled his voice with as much arrogance as possible. “We’re in a small town in the insignificant State of Zhao, and you dare to block the path of Ding Xin?” All of the Cultivators in the room looked at him.

The eighth-level Cultivator stared at him in shock. In all his years, no one had ever dared to speak to him in such a way. But considering the arrogance and veiled threats contained within Meng Hao’s words, the man hesitated, unsure of how to respond.

The pleasant voice of a woman drifted down from upstairs: “Young Lord Ding, please come up.”

The eighth-level Cultivator let Meng Hao pass. With a cold snort, Meng Hao climbed the stairs. As he turned the corner, his eyes quickly scanned the entire second floor.

The pleasant voice from just now belonged to a woman wearing a gauzy dress. She smiled at Meng Hao.

The second floor was richly decorated, and looked much more magnificent than the first floor, filled with a dazzling aura. There were no racks of treasures, but rather an enormous incense burner in the middle of the room, so large that three people could place their arms around it. The thick aroma of incense wafted out from it.

The surroundings were luxurious but also refined. Several tables could be seen around the room, as well as ornamental rock displays. It was the type of place that would make one's eyes shine just upon seeing it.

The woman standing there in front of Meng Hao appeared to be about thirty years of age. She was elegant and poised, and didn't say anything at first. She simply smiled, making her seem very warm and considerate.

"Young Lord Ding," she said, looking over him causally, "please have a seat. I am the second floor attendant. Please do not hesitate to tell me how I can help you." She took a seat off to the side. When she caught sight of the white robe underneath his long outer garment, a look of surprise flickered in her eyes, and then quickly disappeared.

Meng Hao looked around thoughtfully. There were seven tables spread about in various positions. Without hesitation, Meng Hao chose to sit, not at a table next to the stairs, or a window, but right in the middle of the room.

"Do you have Foundation Establishment Pills here?" he said as he sat down, not beating around the bush. He stared at the woman, his expression somber.

When the woman saw him sit down where he did, her eyes flickered again, as if he had just confirmed something to her. And yet, she still seemed to be uncertain about something.

"There are not many things in the State of Zhao that we don't have here at the Milky Way Workshop," she said with a smile. "Of course we have Foundation Establishment Pills. The price is two hundred thousand Spirit Stones per pill."

Meng Hao nodded slightly, then slapped his bag of holding. A pill bottle appeared in his hand. He flicked his sleeve, and the bottle shot toward the woman.

Her eyes flickered as she caught the bottle. When she opened it and looked at the contents, her expression changed to one of surprise.

“One Foundation Establishment Pill,” said Meng Hao coolly. “Name your price.”

“Young Lord Ding, you are quite audacious,” she said calmly, an unusual expression in her eyes. “You dare to casually hand me something so valuable. Don’t you fear that I might take it and flee?”

Meng Hao didn’t say anything. Staring at her coldly, he loosened his outer garment, revealing more of the white robe, as well as the jade medallion hanging around his neck.

It was violet-colored, and emitted a soft, flickering violet glow.

When she caught sight of the jade medallion, the woman’s expression changed.

“If you dare to swallow that pill,” said Meng Hao coldly, “Milky Way City will be reduced to rubble in less than a month.”

The woman’s expression changed several times as she looked back down at the pill bottle. She glanced back at Meng Hao sitting there. Having taken note of all the various clues regarding his identity, she finally smiled again.

“Young Lord Ding, please don’t take offense. I was simply making conversation.” She tipped the bottle over, sending the Foundation Establishment pill tumbling into her palm. Then she held it up and examined it closely. When her gaze fell upon the demonic face carved into the surface of the pill, her expression changed dramatically, and she stood up.

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# Chapter 70: Breaking Through to the Ninth Level of Qi Condensation!

“This pill was concocted personally by Grandmaster Pill Demon of the Violet Fate Sect. Its…. Young Lord Ding, what is your relationship to Grandmaster Pill Demon…?”

“Name your price.” He said nothing else. He frowned, his eyes filled with a look that made it seem as if whether he wanted to or not, he had no choice but to sell the pill.

“A pill personally concocted by Grandmaster Pill Demon could be auctioned off for an amazing price. This pill….” The woman hesitated for a moment, then seemed to come to a decision. “I can give you two hundred fifty thousand Spirit Stones!”

Meng Hao was silent for a moment. Finally, he nodded and said, “Done.” He stood up.

The woman lifted her hand and flicked her finger toward the incense burner in the middle of the room. A clear and melodious sound rang out, and about ten seconds later, a young girl came down from the third floor bearing a jade platter. She quickly reached Meng Hao, then offered up the platter with both hands.

On the white jade platter was a bag of holding.

Meng Hao took it and looked inside, then turned and walked down the stairs. Amidst the gazes of the Cultivators on the first floor, he walked out of the Milky Way Workshop and off into the distance.

A while later, when he reached a place that wasn't very crowded, he ducked into an alley and stripped off the outer garment. He quickly changed into another robe and then made his way off as quickly as possible, his head lowered.

Meanwhile, back on the second floor of the Milky Way Workshop, the woman stood respectfully next to an old man. The old man, who wore a resplendent garment, was currently standing at the window, looking off into the distance. In his hand was the Foundation Establishment Pill that Meng Hao had sold.

A long time passed before he finally opened his mouth. "Are you sure?" he said coolly.

"I of the junior generation already did some checking," she said in a respectful tone. "There was indeed a Violet Fate Sect disciple surnamed Ding who arrived recently in the State of Zhao."

"Are you sure that was him?" said the old man slowly.

"At first, junior was not certain. After all, Ding Xin is of the ninth level of Qi Condensation, and this person was of the eighth. However, his arrogant behavior on the first floor certainly seemed like that of a disciple of a great Sect. This was the first clue.

"Upon reaching the second floor, he didn't select a chair near the window or the stairs, but rather in the middle of the room. This gives evidence of his confidence, as if he didn't care that we might have made a move against him. This level of confidence is impossible for someone of the eighth level of Qi Condensation to have, unless of course they are a member of a powerful Sect. That was the second clue.

"Moments later, junior saw his white garments, as well as a jade pendant from the Violet Fate Sect. He revealed it intentionally, but this is the State of Zhao, after all. He has to take some precautions. This was the third clue.

“More telling, he directly gave the pill bottle to junior, as if he didn’t care whether or not I might consume the pill. When junior inquired about this, his response was one that a member of a State of Zhao Sect could never match. This was the fourth clue.

“Finally, the Foundation Establishment Pill is marked with the seal of Grandmaster Pill Demon. No one would dare to make a counterfeit of such a pill. Furthermore, junior has researched such things, and am certain the seal is genuine.

“Because of these five clues, junior is certain that this person was Ding Xin of the Violet Fate Sect. It is said that two years ago, Grandmaster Pill Demon accepted a novitiate with that name. It seems the person here today was none other than him.” The woman smiled, her expression filled with confidence, shrewdness and intelligence.

“Unless….” She suddenly seemed to hesitate.

“Unless what?” asked the old man, turning to look at her, his expression both warm and encouraging.

“Unless the person today was incredibly intelligent, and purposefully did all of these things. Perhaps he created the perfect cover story, and the seal on the Foundation Establishment Pill is actually fake. But, the probability of such a thing is remote. There is no disciple among the so-called Sects of the State of Zhao who could accomplish something like that.” The woman smiled, her expression once again one of confidence.

“Correct,” said the old man. “Being able to sort through all these clues in this way shows how intelligent you are, Mu’er. It seems you’ve really grown sharper in the past few years. This medicinal pill is real. It seems eighty to ninety percent likely that this person was none other than Ding Xin.” He looked fondly at the woman.

“Many thanks for your praise, Patriarch,” she said with a smile. Looking up at him, she asked, “Are you really going to let him go, just like that?”

“We cannot afford to cause trouble with the Violet Fate Sect. As for Grandmaster Pill Demon’s Foundation Establishment Pill…” The old man seemed to think for a moment, before softly saying, “Mu’er, considering that your latent talent is ordinary, why don’t you give the pill to your father?”

When she heard his words, her eyes suddenly flashed.

“He’s back?” Her voice suddenly seemed grim.

“He came back a few months ago. He left all those years ago to join the Reliance Sect, but the Sect was disbanded. As usual, he has yet to reach Foundation Establishment… you should go see him.” Looking at the woman, the old man frowned, then sighed.

She was quiet for a moment. “I have my responsibilities here to take care of,” she said coldly. “Whoever Patriarch gives the Foundation Establishment Pill to, well, it doesn’t have anything to do with me.”

“He’s your father, after all. Furthermore, it seems to me he has some weighty matters on his mind, and might leave again soon. You should think about it carefully.” Shaking his head, the old man turned and left.

“Father….” Shangguan Mu sat down quietly, looking out the window, her eyes filled with bitterness.

As for Meng Hao, after changing clothes, he left the black-walled Milky Way City without the slightest bit of hesitation. Some distance away from the city, he hopped onto the treasured fan and sped off into the distance, his body turning into a prismatic rainbow.

He kept going for several days, until it became apparent that no one was pursuing him. At that point, he felt a bit more relaxed. In the wilderness some distance away from Mount Daqing, he used a flying sword to cut out an Immortal’s Cave for himself and then entered into secluded meditation.

This time, he was determined to break through to the ninth level of Qi Condensation.

He had plenty of Spirit Stones which he could use to duplicate Heavenly Spirit Pills. When he consumed enough Heavenly Spirit Pills, and his Cultivation base reached the appropriate level, he would begin to push toward the next level.

Time passed slowly. Soon, several months had passed. Meng Hao did not leave the Immortal’s Cave. He sat there quietly, cross-legged, consuming medicinal pills and circulating his Cultivation base. As time passed, his Cultivation base grew more and more refined.

By the time the fifth month arrived, it seemed boundless. His Cultivation base roared, and his Core sea roiled. He had long since arrived at the peak of the eighth level of Qi Condensation. He was only a sliver away from the ninth level, and yet had been stuck at this sliver for two months already.

Thinking about the over one hundred thousand Spirit Stones he had spent already made Meng Hao’s heart hurt. But what hurt even more was that after spending all of those Spirit Stones, he still hadn’t been able to break through.

“Elder Xu told me that the fourth, sixth and eighth levels of Qi Condensation were bottlenecks. The year I broke through the fourth level, I had lots of Dry Spirit Pills. I broke through the sixth level when the North Sea demonstrated the Dao. Now I’m at the eighth level bottleneck… How do I break through?!” Meng Hao opened his bloodshot eyes.

Of the well over two hundred thousand Spirit Stones he’d had, only about fifty thousand now remained. The rest had been turned into Heavenly Spirit Pills. Currently, he was running low on Heavenly Spirit Pills as well.

As he had speculated, when relying only on medicinal pills to grow his Cultivation base, the effects grew weaker and weaker the more pills he consumed. He needed larger and larger amounts, a vicious cycle.

“I wonder what other people do in this situation,” he thought, frowning. Despite pondering the situation over and over, he couldn’t figure it out.

It seemed that no matter how many Heavenly Spirit Pills he consumed, and no matter how his Cultivation base grew, he just couldn’t make that final step.

Another month passed. Meng Hao had already spent half a year in secluded meditation. Today, he sat there, hair in disarray, eyes bloodshot. In the past month, he had duplicated ten Plateau Charging Pills, which were supposed to be effective in the ninth level of Qi Condensation. He had hoped that using them would enable him to break through the bottleneck. While they had been somewhat effective, they hadn’t produced the desired result.

“I must reach the ninth level of Qi Condensation!” He ground his teeth as he looked at what remained of his fifty thousand Spirit Stones. Not hesitating any longer, he took out the copper mirror. He had decided to duplicate the Foundation Establishment Pill!

A glow appeared, and there in front of him were two Foundation Establishment Pills. Including the original, he now had three Foundation Establishment Pills. If you showed these three pills to a disciple of one of the great Sects of the Southern Domain, they would gasp with astonishment. In the State of Zhao, it would be enough to cause a bloodbath if anyone saw them.

Today, Meng Hao would use these pills, not to reach Foundation Establishment, but to break through the bottleneck. Anyone who knew he was using the pills in this way would surely go crazy at the thought of such luxurious waste.

Through history, there were likely few people who would ever go to such extravagant lengths to break through a Qi Condensation bottleneck.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, then lifted up a pill, put it into his mouth, and swallowed it. A thunderous roar filled his mind, and his body shook. A majestic spiritual energy filled him that he never before could have imagined, exploding throughout his body.

…

During his half a year in secluded meditation, some events had occurred which he was unaware of. These events actually affected the entire State of Zhao. The first was the wildfire-like spread of the news of Meng Hao’s deal with the Violet Fate Sect disciples. It didn’t take long before Meng Hao’s name was known across the land.

Everyone knew that Meng Hao had mercilessly cheated the Violet Fate Sect.

Soon after this, the Cold Wind Sect and the Winding Stream Sect nearly declared war on each other. In the end, Sect priests of the Core Formation stage emerged and managed to calm things down. Shortly thereafter, the two Sects issued a joint order of arrest.

The evildoer Meng Hao of the Reliance Sect was now wanted. Anyone who killed him would receive a reward of Spirit Stones, medicinal pills and magical items. This was the first time in hundreds of years that two great Sects had joined together to issue an order of arrest. This news caused a great sensation in the Cultivation world of the State of Zhao.

Of course, no one really knew how to track down the man who had caused the bloody incident regarding the silver spear. But he had been marked for punishment, and the news spread quickly. Soon, Meng Hao was yet again the subject of discussion among all the Cultivators of the State of Zhao.

Whenever Cultivators gathered, they would end up talking about Meng Hao.

“I heard that when he was in the Reliance Sect, he robbed someone from one of the great Clans of the Southern Domain, a guy named Wang Tengfei who had joined the Sect. When he became a member of the Inner Sect, Wang Tengfei left in a rage.”

“That’s nothing. I heard directly from some former Reliance Sect members that Meng Hao opened a shop there. He ripped off a lot of his fellow disciples. They were all furious, of course, but didn’t dare to say anything.”

“Wow, it seems he’s been developing this devious personality for quite a while. It’s no surprise he cheated the Violet Fate Sect disciples, as well as Liu Daoyun and Sun Hua….”

“It looks like he just rips off whoever he runs into. He’s been cheating people ever since he left the Reliance Sect….”

Conversations and discussions like this filled the Cultivation World of the State of Zhao. If that was the extent of it, it would not have been a very big deal. Eventually the buzz would have died out. Except before that could happen, the three great Sects joined forces to recall the original arrest order and issue a new one. There was no discernable reason for this action.

The new arrest order was still for Meng Hao. However, killing him was now prohibited. Rewards would now be given, not for his death, but for his capture, or clues regarding his whereabouts!

According to the order, he could be injured or crippled, but not killed.

Such a strange arrest order instantly aroused the attention of quite a few people. Eventually, some of the most well-informed people were able to put the clues together to understand what was going on.

“The Core Formation Eccentrics of the three great Sects went last month to visit the State of Revelation. They paid respects to Lord Revelation, and asked him to divine whether or not Patriarch Reliance is really dead or not. According to his divination, Patriarch Reliance is weak to the point of death. However, the Immortal’s Cave he is in can only be opened by an Inner Sect disciple. Lord Revelation is already here with them in the State of Zhao, searching for where Patriarch Reliance is sealed in secluded meditation!”

As soon as the news began to spread, the three great Sects went to great lengths to stamp down the rumors. Anyone found spreading them would be punished by death penalty, and any city where the rumors appeared would be enveloped by a sealing spell casted by the three great Sects, preventing anyone from going in or out.

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# Chapter 71: Dong Hu

In the remote wilderness not too far from Mount Daqing, Meng Hao sat in the Immortal’s Cave, his body shaking. Sweat poured off of him, soaking him as he emanated an intense heat. This in turn produced a thick mist that circulated around the cave, filling it with the aroma of sweat.

Meng Hao’s entire body was bright red, and it felt as if an immense fire were raging inside of him that would soon wither up his flesh and blood and turn him into a pile of ash. At the moment, his body was completely stiff, incapable of the slightest movement.

Actually, this is one of the detriments of consuming a Foundation Establishment Pill. After swallowing it, the body becomes immovable. Until the power of the pill is disseminated, it wouldn’t matter if there was a flood or a storm, or if a person stood in front of you with a sword, ready to stab you through, you wouldn’t be able to move a muscle. This is why Cultivators are incredibly careful when selecting the area where they will consume a Foundation Establishment Pill.

After all, if one encountered an enemy while suffering from the side-effect of the astounding pill, death would be the result.

Meng Hao was the first person to ever consume a Foundation Establishment Pill while in the eighth level of Qi Condensation. Furthermore, this pill had been concocted by a Grandmaster.

But, he had no other choice. It was just too difficult to break through the bottleneck of the eighth level of Qi condensation without the aid of either some stroke of good fortune, or special medicinal pills.

The Plateau Charging Pills had not been effective, so now the only thing he had left were the Foundation Establishment pills. Of course, he didn’t dare use too many at once. They were incredibly powerful, and his body was not. Consuming them was actually gambling with his own life.

By now, Meng Hao felt quite certain he knew why this eighth level bottleneck was so difficult to break through. It definitely had something to do with his years of consuming so many Demonic Cores. Despite his rebirth in the North Sea, the Demonic power within his bones could not be dispelled easily.

Because of this reason, the blockage caused by the bottleneck was thicker than that experienced by the average person. Of course, there were also advantages to this situation. Once he broke through the bottleneck, he would explode into the middle of the ninth level of Qi Condensation. Furthermore, his body, although it seemed weak, was now much tougher than it had been during his scholar days. The change was slow, but sure.

This change had not been brought about by his Cultivation, but rather because of the Demonic power within his body, as well as the Demonic Core in his Core sea.

Days and days passed. Soon two months had gone by, during which time Meng Hao had continued to consume his scant supply of Foundation Establishment Pills. Just now, he had fully absorbed the power of a pill. Suddenly, he opened his eyes. He could move again! He felt a roaring within himself, along with a severe pain, as if various parts of his body were being ripped apart. He spit out a mouthful of black blood.

As he spit out the blood, his eyes grew dim, as if he were about to lose consciousness. Instead he bit his tongue, forcing himself to stay awake. He rotated his Cultivation base as it shot toward the ninth level of Qi Condensation.

A look of determination filled his eyes. Gathering together the explosive spiritual power within him, he pushed forward.

In an instant, the spiritual energy charged ahead, filling his head with a roaring like thunder. He felt as if his body were about to explode. Then suddenly, it felt as if the spiritual energy had opened up a new realm inside him. Instantly, he felt a wonderful sensation, difficult to describe. It was a tingling feeling, as if someone were caressing him with countless feathers.

He immersed himself in the feeling, and a long time passed before he opened his eyes. They glowed dazzlingly. It was as if the darkness of the cave were being split by brilliant lightning bolts.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, and the spiritual energy of the cave seemed to be sucked into him strand by strand. Then it left him, and massive amounts of filth extruded from his pores. His body grew lighter, his eyes brighter.

The boundless Core sea inside him was twice its previous size, as if you couldn't see from one side to the other. The golden water billowed and roared. Deep within, the Demonic Core rested, unmoving, sending out massive amounts of spiritual energy, making the golden light even more dazzling, filling Meng Hao's body. He almost felt like lifting his head up and letting out a long, loud cry.

"The ninth level of Qi Condensation! I, Meng Hao, have finally reached the ninth level! My next step will be Foundation Establishment!" His eyes filled with exuberance, he took several deep breaths.

"With the Sublime Spirit Scripture, I can establish a Flawless Foundation, far superior to a Cracked or Fractured Foundation." He stood up, filled with confidence and hope regarding the future.

He looked forward to traveling to the Southern Domain and seeing the lands there. He looked forward even more so to the day when he could reach Foundation Establishment. He wondered what it would be like to have a Flawless Foundation. What would other Cultivators think when they ran into him then?

Of course, having not reached Foundation Establishment, he didn't understand how rare a Flawless Foundation was. Despite his ignorance, he still looked forward with eager anticipation.

He flicked his sleeve, and a fist-sized Water Globe appeared. It stretched out, forming a sheet of water the size of his body. He walked forward, through the water. When he came out on the other side, the filth that covered him was gone, and instead, a fragrant aroma drifted off of him.

The door of the Immortal’s Cave shattered. It was midday outside, and the season had long since changed. Meng Hao walked out to feel a hot, dry wind on his face. His entire body felt relaxed and fresh.

“When I reach Foundation Establishment, I will finally be able to achieve true flight.” He looked up at the blue sky and his smile grew wider and wider. He walked forward a bit, then hopped onto his treasured fan and sped along.

He was flying along some distance away from Mount Daqing when he suddenly caught sight of someone racing in his direction. This person was moving as fast as possible, and was being chased by a large, vicious looking man.

The person being chased was pale-faced, but had hard eyes. He wasn’t very tall, and rather skinny, appearing to be about thirteen or fourteen years old. Despite this, his Cultivation base was at the fifth level of Qi Condensation.

He was being chased by a cultivator of the sixth level of Qi Condensation. The man wore a tattered aqua-blue robe and it seemed as if he had been wounded. Murder roiled within his furious eyes.

“It doesn’t matter where you try to run, Dong Hu. If you give me the pearl, considering my status in the Upright Evening Sect, I can leave you with your life. Otherwise, you’re dead!” The big man raised his right hand, and a frigid glow appeared which solidified into a Full Moon Scimitar. He tossed it spinning toward the youth.

The youth was none other than one of Meng Hao’s group who Elder Sister Xu had taken to the Reliance Sect, Little Tiger. (TL Note: The character “Hu” in the name “Dong Hu” means “tiger”)

After the dissolution of the Sect, he had been swept away and then disappeared. Meng Hao floated above, looking down at Little Tiger.

Little Tiger’s face was pale, but killing intent flickered within his hard eyes. He waved his sleeves, whereupon several beams of cold light shot out, glittering arrows. Based on their gleam they seemed to be coated with poison. The arrows shot toward the big man.

He laughed, waving his sleeve, which caused a wind to spring up and brush the arrows away. His hand flickered in incantation patterns, causing his scimitar to shoot toward Little Tiger. It was upon him in the blink of an eye. Little Tiger’s bloodshot eyes spun. Suddenly, an aqua-blue pearl appeared in his hand. It was partly transparent, and was filled with layers of curling clouds. A stream of clouds erupted from within the pearl, coalescing into a vague figure, which shot toward the scimitar.

When they collided, a bang rang out, and the scimitar collapsed into pieces, as did the vague figure.

The big man coughed up some blood, and the greed in his eyes grew stronger. He continued his pursuit.

The blood drained from Little Tiger’s face. It seemed the attack just now had been quite difficult to pull off. He staggered forward, running a few paces before tumbling to the ground.

“You can’t escape!” laughed the big man viciously, quickly approaching Little Hu, whose eyes filled with desperation. Off in the distance, Meng Hao sighed, looking back at the scene. Finally, he lifted a finger on his right hand, causing a furious wind to spring up in the forest. The crushing pressure of the ninth level of Qi Condensation instantly enveloped the big man. Trembling, he looked up in shock to see Meng Hao floating down toward him.

Simultaneously, Little Tiger, who was still on the ground, pulled a poisoned dagger out of his sleeve. He leaped up with surprising speed, and the dagger flashed. At the exact moment in which the big man was surprised by Meng Hao, the dagger slashed through his neck.

He let out a miserable cry as blood showered everywhere, covering Little Tiger. Little Tiger was still weak and exhausted, but falling down just now had actually been a trick. When the man approached with his guard down, he had planned to make his move.

The big man collapsed to the ground, twitching. He tried to cover the gash in his neck, but blood flowed out in vast quantities. Within moments, he was dead. His eyes stared blankly off into the distance.

Little Tiger took a few steps away, looking back at Meng Hao, seeming ready to flee at any moment. Then he felt the power of Meng Hao’s Cultivation base, and his body began to tremble.

Meng Hao didn’t say anything. He walked over and stood over the corpse, examining it. Then he looked at the obviously nervous Little Tiger, staring at him silently.

Little Tiger didn’t say anything either. He just looked at Meng Hao, a complicated expression in his eyes.

A long moment passed, after which Meng Hao opened his mouth. “It was because of this pearl that you killed Wang Youcai,” he said calmly. An imperceptible look in his eye revealed that he was bluffing, but Little Tiger didn’t see it.

Instead, Little Tiger stood there silently, refusing to speak. He was short, with dark skin and a skinny frame. His clothes were dilapidated, and he was obviously in a difficult position. He almost looked like a beggar. But the coldness he had just exhibited when killing the man just now seemed to make everything obvious.

Meng Hao looked at him for a while, before shaking his head. He let out a sigh, and turned to leave.

Just as he did this, however, a look of hesitation appeared in Little Tiger’s eyes. He suddenly spoke, his voice hoarse and filled with nervousness.

“Elder… Elder Brother Meng, are you going to Mount Daqing to save everyone?”

Meng Hao halted in his tracks and looked back at Little Tiger. “What are you talking about?” he said, his voice low.

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# Chapter 72: A True Man

Little Tiger looked closely at Meng Hao. He had been naive as a child, but after joining the Reliance Sect, had experienced many unimaginable misfortunes. In his heart, he had become as hard as iron. No one knew how many Cultivators he had secretly slain.

He stared at Meng Hao and gradually came to the realization that he really did not know about what had happened recently.

“Elder Brother Meng, in recent days, the entire Cultivation world of the State of Zhao has been searching for you. The three great Sects issued a joint order for your arrest. Multitudes of Cultivators have spread out in all directions to hunt you down.” He hesitated a moment before continuing.

Meng Hao’s expression did not change even in the least bit. He floated in the air, looking down wordlessly at Little Tiger.

“The three great Sects ordered that you were not to be killed,” he said slowly. “You could be injured or crippled, but not slain.” The entire time, he continued to look at Meng Hao, unable to tell what he was thinking.

“If what you’re saying is false,” said Meng Hao coolly, his expression the same as ever, “then don’t blame me for forgetting our past ties.”

Hearing this, Little Tiger inadvertently took two steps backward, his face flickering.

“Elder Brother Meng must surely remember Master Uncle Shangguan from the Inner Sect. Two months ago, he surrounded the three counties near Mount Daqing with a horrific, enormous spell.” His voice rang out as he spoke. He clenched his fists. “He plans to use the blood of the mortals there to concoct Blood Pills to reach Foundation Establishment. It’s been going on for two months already. With my Cultivation base, I'm no match for him, but I came to try to save my father and mother!"

Meng Hao stared at him in shock, his head spinning. Fury erupted within him, and a violent aura of killing intent began to emanate from him. He knew that Shangguan Xiu's true goal was not to concoct Blood Pills, but rather to lure him out.

His face grew incredibly grim.

"Shangguan Xiu has involved the mortals of three counties, and the Cultivation world of the State of Zhao does nothing to stop him?" Meng Hao's voice was as cold as ice as he spoke. "Does anyone actually believe his goal is establishing a Foundation?"

"Everyone says that Shangguan Xiu longs for Foundation Establishment," said Little Tiger, "and that he intentionally picked the three counties around Mount Daqing because of the auspicious sign that appeared here years ago. With Blood Spirit Pills, he can easily break through to Foundation Establishment. In the past, the three great Sects would never allow him to do something like that, but right now they seek out Patriarch Reliance's meditation zone. That's why they sent everyone looking for you, and have ignored what is happening here. They don't want to have to deal with extra trouble. Furthermore, Shangguan Xiu is no ordinary person. I looked into it and found out he's from Milky Way City. Apparently, the three great Sects did attempt to interfere at first, but then backed off for some reason."

Meng Hao listened quietly, then began to smile, a cold, dark smile. The killing intent which existed in his heart far outmatched the killing intent he had felt in the past toward Wang Tengfei or even Ding Xin. The intensity of this desire to kill sent this Core sea churning. It was fiercer than anything he had felt in his twenty-one years of life.

"Shangguan Xiu…." Meng Hao spun and looked off toward Mount Daqing. He flicked his wide sleeve and Little Tiger flew up onto the treasured fan, a shocked look on his face.

“Elder Brother Meng, what’s going on?” blurted Little Tiger, his breath quickening.

“We’re going to Mount Daqing. If what you’ve said is true, very well. But if you’ve lied to me, then you will never again have to worry about people chasing after you to get your treasure.” The treasured fan flickered, and they shot off.

Little Tiger was quiet, having nothing more to say. He stood on the treasured fan next to Meng Hao, a conflicted look in his eye. Soon the look disappeared, replaced by determination.

It didn’t take long before Mount Daqing loomed up in front of them. Meng Hao did not charge in directly. The treasured fan flashed, and they landed on the ground. Up ahead, everything was enveloped by a glowing red aura. It seemed that outside of the aura, every five hundred kilometers, a black robed Cultivator sat cross-legged, meditating.

There were a dozen or so of them, and they appeared to be the supporting the base of the spell which surrounded the three counties.

Far away on top of the mountain, someone sat cross-legged in meditation.

In the counties below the mountain, everything was quiet. Wispy strands of Blood Qi rose up from them.

Meng Hao’s killing intent grew stronger. Taking a deep breath, he released the bonds he had placed on Little Tiger.

“When I call your name, you must come,” said Meng Hao slowly. Then he walked forward, his body whistling in the wind and emanating an ice-cold air.

“Wang Youcai isn’t dead,” blurted Little Tiger. Meng Hao ignored him as he raced forward.

Little Tiger watched him disappear, then sighed and sat down silently to meditate. He had looked into Meng Hao in addition to Shangguan Xiu. He knew that Meng Hao had no immediate family in Yunjie County and that Shangguan Xiu was most likely using this blood magic specifically to draw him out.

“Elder Brother Meng, I just want to save my father and mother. If you live through this, then I will owe you a great debt.” He looked up, complex emotions flickering in his eyes.

Meng Hao shot forward, straight toward the blood-red aura. Little Tiger, though young, was clever and had been correct in his suppositions. As for Meng Hao, he had always been intelligent. Despite failing as a scholar, he had undergone a baptism of sorts in the Reliance Sect. After everything he had experienced there and after, how could he not see through to his opponent’s true purpose?

Shangguan Xiu had set a trap for him. But how could he not go? Even though he had no immediate family in Yunjie County, it was his home. His childhood memories were there, and they were beautiful.

Shangguan Xiu was utterly devoid of conscience, and his actions offended Meng Hao to the bone. His desire to kill billowed to untold heights.

Even though he was risking death, even though he was playing into Shangguan Xiu’s hand, Meng Hao knew that in life, there are some things a man must do…. even if it was dangerous, he would go anyway.

Fear and doubt were not for true men.

His murderous intent had never been so strong, his desire to kill never so intense. It could not be dispelled by the death of one person, but rather every person involved in maintaining the blood spell.

“In my years of Cultivation, there are people who I haven’t killed. It’s not because I couldn’t, but because I didn’t want to.” His speed increased, his eyes flashing with death, but his heart calm. By now he had reached the area of the blood spell. He shot toward a Cultivator of the sixth level of Qi Condensation who sat there meditating.

He wore black robes and looked to be about twenty-six or twenty-seven years old. As Meng Hao rushed toward him, he opened his eyes. Shocked, he lifted his hand, but in that instant, Meng Hao, his face expression cold and filled with death, shot past him.

There was a sword in Meng Hao’s hand. Behind him, a head flew up into the air, its face filled with confusion. The body fell over onto the ground.

The reek of blood filled the air. The corpse twitched a few times and then was still.

There was no shout of pain, no struggle. To Meng Hao, it was as simple as slaughtering a chicken. As he had said, it was not that he couldn’t kill, he just didn’t like to.

“When you try to cut off a chicken’s head,” said Meng Hao to himself, “it will usually put up a bit of a struggle. People usually struggle even harder. But without a head, you don’t even match up to a chicken.” Not even glancing back at the corpse behind him, he moved on, eyes filled with killing intent.

He moved quickly, and before long, another cross-legged figure appeared in front of him. This person had clearly not sensed the death of his compatriot; he sat there meditating, maintaining the spell.

He didn’t even have a chance to open his eyes before his head flew off his body.

“Shangguan Xiu, you force me into killing. Very well… today I will kill everything in front of me.” He flicked the wooden sword in his hand, sending droplets of blood flying about everywhere, then vanished.

Because of the death of the two Cultivators, ripples had appeared in the red-colored spell. This in turn shocked the rest of people who were maintaining it; one after another, they opened their eyes and stood up, glancing around cautiously.

Meanwhile, atop the mountain, Shangguan Xiu’s eyes flickered open. They glittered as he looked down at what was going on below.

The Blood Qi seemed to grow thicker, but he couldn’t see clearly what was happening. He frowned and harrumphed. He lifted his right hand, and a Globe of blood appeared, about the size of a human head. Blood Qi swirled around inside. With the flick of a sleeve, he sent the Blood Globe shooting down Mount Daqing, where it slammed through the blood-colored spell with a reverberating boom.

The blood-colored spell was growing weak. Suddenly, a shrill scream could be heard, echoing out from within the spell. Difficult to describe, it seemed to be filled with pain.

Moments later, another scream rang out. This scream clearly came from someone else, but it was equally blood-curdling. Shangguan Xiu frowned. Looking down at the blood-colored spell, it appeared to have shrunk by almost half and was somewhat murky.

A third person screamed, then a fourth, almost at the same time. More screams echoed out, over and over, until finally the blood-colored spell was completely translucent. Shangguan Xiu looked down to see… a dozen headless corpses.

His eyes narrowed, and his body spun. There, on a small mountain path, wearing a blue scholar’s robe, was Meng Hao. He was spattered with blood and gore, and despite looking somewhat frail and weak, walked slowly up the mountain, his face expressionless.

In his hands, he carried a dozen severed heads. Shangguan Xiu looked at him as he approached. Meng Hao tossed the heads forward, and they plopped to the ground in front of Shangguan Xiu, who then flicked his sleeve, sending them scattering about.

“Your turn,” said Meng Hao, his voice hoarse. He usually didn’t want to kill, but today. He did.

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# Chapter 73: Fierce Fighting

“Ninth level of Qi Condensation!” Eyeing Meng Hao, Shangguan Xiu took a deep breath. He had been maintaining the spell here for two months. The Cultivators from Milky Way City didn’t know the true reason he was here, and he didn’t want their top level experts around anyway. He was here for Meng Hao.

Based on everything he had seen and heard recently, he had been sixty-percent certain that Meng Hao possessed some sort of unholy treasured item that could endlessly duplicate treasures.

Otherwise, how could he have so many medicinal pills and flying swords? Also, how could Meng Hao have not noticed that ten of his flying swords went missing on the day of his battle with Wang Tengfei?

They appeared to have been broken, but in fact, had been secretly taken away by Shangguan Xiu and carefully studied. He had discovered that all ten of the swords were composed of exactly the same materials.

Even though all flying swords look the same in general, there will always be tiny differences left behind in the manufacturing process which can be spotted later. Except, among Meng Hao’s swords, the details were exactly the same. This, of course, aroused Shangguan Xiu’s suspicions.

And yet, he wasn’t completely convinced because of that evidence. But now, seeing that Meng Hao’s Cultivation base had already reached the ninth level of Qi Condensation, he was even more sure. Eighty percent or more.

“You may have reached the ninth level of Qi Condensation, but clearly you just broke through,” said Shangguan Xiu, his eyes shining coldly. “Should you try to run away again today, I will detonate that Blood Globe I just sent down the mountain. If that happens, then the people of the three counties will be reduced to ash and smoke in the blink of an eye.” He really was worried that Meng Hao would flee, so before attacking, had taken preparations to prevent him from doing so.

“I won’t be running away today.” As Meng Hao looked at Shangguan Xiu, nearly five years of memories flooded into his mind. Their issues from before the Sect dissolved, the chase after the Sect disbanded, all of these things flashed before Meng Hao’s eyes. His killing intent flashed. He lifted his hand, and a massive Flame Python appeared, over thirty meters in length. Not only was its size impressive, but from its head protruded a large horn. Flames flickered off of its body as it shot toward Shangguan Xiu, radiating intense heat.

The severed heads surrounding Shangguan Xiu crackled and burned from the heat, and some of them even began to roll in his direction. He laughed, slapping his bag of holding and producing a five-colored banner. The massive banner unfurled and a five-colored mist roiled out from within it. The mist then transformed into five mist spirits, each of them dozens of meters tall. With hideous grins, they charged toward the Flame Python.

A massive explosion occurred, smashing nearby boulders into dust and reducing the surrounding trees and rattan vines of Mount Daqing into powder. Dust and ash swirled in the air, making the scene somewhat blurry.

Amidst the haze, Meng Hao dashed forward at incredible speed. The remaining severed heads which had not been incinerated continued to tumble toward Shangguan Xiu. His eyes flashed, and his fingers flickered in an incantation sign. Then he shoved his hands out in front of him.

“Five-colored Death!” he shouted, and a shrill shrieking sound suddenly rose up around him. Meng Hao smacked his bag of holding. The scroll painting appeared in his hand. He unrolled it, and six beasts leaped out, howling.

A massive thunderous rumble surrounded them. Meng Hao charged toward Shangguan Xiu, whose cold eyes flickered radiantly. Shangguan Xiu moved forward as well. More severed heads were crushed into pulp.

“Do you know what the Reliance Sect was called before Patriarch Reliance?” said Shangguan Xiu coolly. “It was called the Demon Sealing Sect!” He suddenly looked toward the peak of Mount Daqing and stamped his foot down. Mount Daqing began to rumble, and then suddenly, an impossible-to-describe aura erupted out from within the mountain. It was only a strand, yet that strand seemed to quiver with the very power of heaven and earth. It was not sentient, but rather, under the control of Shangguan Xiu. It roiled up from the ground beneath Meng Hao’s feet.

Shangguan Xiu suddenly seemed to grow older, as if he had aged ten years. He looked almost like a corpse that had crawled its way out of the grave.

Clearly the magical technique he had just used was extremely difficult to employ, and required a sacrifice of longevity. Originally, he would never have used it, but seeing the level of Meng Hao’s Cultivation base, he decided that he had no other choice. He wanted to bring about a swift end to the battle. After all, all the Cultivators in the State of Zhao were hunting Meng Hao right now.

This battle would surely attract their attention. If he could end the fight quickly, then he would have plenty of time to get his hands on the treasure he sought.

“The Demon Sealing Sect sought out the great Demons of the world, sealed them, released their spirit, and took their power to trample on the Heavens! You just entered the ninth level of Qi Condensation, what could you possibly use to fight me with? If I wanted, I could have reached Foundation Establishment fifty years ago!” As Shangguan Xiu spoke, Meng Hao waved the scroll painting, using it to resist the aura strand that had burst out around his feet.

But as soon as the scroll painting touched the aura, an explosion rang out, and cracks appeared on its surface as it was thrown violently away. The aura strand shot toward Meng Hao.

There was a bang, and Meng Hao coughed up a mouthful of blood. The feathered fan had appeared in front of him in the blink of an eye to shield him. Cracks split the feathers, as Meng Hao took advantage of the moment to evade. Evade he did, but he was still sent tumbling backward, coughing up three mouthfuls of blood.

Only one move had been made, and Meng Hao was already injured. It was clear that Shangguan Xiu possessed unfathomable secrets. He laughed coldly. He had expended some of his longevity to make this attack. Even though it hadn’t killed Meng Hao outright, Shangguan Xiu was still determined to win. He walked forward, stepping over the smashed, bloody remains of the severed heads.

Meng Hao’s mouth was filled with blood, but his eyes shone with viciousness. At the same moment that Shangguan Xiu began to walk forward, Meng Hao lifted his hand, and within the pulp of the severed head, a black aura arose. In an instant, the aura coalesced into a black scorpion. It moved like lightning, so quickly that Shangguan Xiu had no time to pull back his foot, nor to leap away. The scorpion’s stinger sank into the flesh of Shangguan Xiu’s foot.

As the stinger sank in, the scorpion turned into strands of blackness which poured into Shangguan Xiu.

His face twisted. This turn of events was too sudden and unpredictable. The scorpion, of course, was from the rare magical pill that he had acquired that day from Qian and Lu from the Violet Fate Sect. This magical scorpion was hyper toxic!

The black aura entered Shangguan Xiu’s foot, and then merged into his Qi passageways, filling his entire body in an instant. His face turned black and he spit up a mouthful of black-colored blood, which stank like rotten fish.

“What poison is this!?” said Shangguan Xiu, his expression shocked as he retreated. A feeling of weakness spread through him like floodwaters. Knowing he had little time to think, he slapped his bag of holding and produced a medicinal pill, which he swallowed.

Meng Hao had planned things well to make a move in a moment just such as this. Even his three mouthfuls of blood had been coughed up intentionally, all to make Shangguan Xiu think that he had the upper hand.

As soon as his opponent retreated and pulled out a medicinal pill, Meng Hao charged forward. He smacked his bag of holding, and the black net shot forth, threatening to envelop Shangguan Xiu.

It takes longer to describe what was happening than the actual time it took to happen. Shangguan Xiu’s expression flickered as he downed the medicinal pill. His fingers began to flicker in an incantation, even as the net began to cover him. Meng Hao moved forward without pause. The black, wooden bow appeared in his hand, and he pulled back on the bowstring, then sent an arrow screaming toward Shangguan Xiu.

Shangguan Xiu moved backward at high speed. A medicinal pill, a black net, an arrow and an incantation. He didn’t have time for all, he would have to pick two.

A booming sound rang out. Shangguan Xiu downed the pill, but abandoned his incantation. He managed to evade the black net, but couldn’t avoid the arrow. It shot into his right shoulder, emerging from the other side in a shower of blackened blood.

Intense pain flashed through him, but Shangguan Xiu let out a low snort. Meng Hao didn’t pause for even a moment. A second arrow whistled forth, followed by a third and a fourth. Meng Hao moved forward relentlessly. Every step he took, he shot an arrow; seven steps, seven arrows.

The seven arrows shot forward, screaming through the air with shocking killing intent!

Shangguan Xiu continued to retreat, struggling to control the spread of the black strands throughout his body. And yet, he also had to dodge the incoming arrows. But being at the ninth level of Qi Condensation, he could only do so much. He might be at the absolute peak of the ninth level of Qi Condensation, a hair away from the Foundation Establishment stage, but he was still not at the Foundation Establishment stage.

No, he was still far from Foundation Establishment stage. Just like Meng Hao, he was still in the Qi Condensation stage. The difference in the level of power between the two was like the difference between the sky and the ground.

He couldn’t do everything perfectly at the same time. A booming sound reverberated through the air as the seven arrows pierced his right arm, completely destroying it. This was the only thing he could do to defend against the arrows. He paid the price of a right arm in order to be able to focus on bringing the poison in his body under control temporarily.

Even as he did so, an eighth arrow shot toward him from Meng Hao, then a ninth. He raised his head to the sky and howled.

From the day he began to walk the path of Cultivation until today, he had never been in such a dangerous, tight situation. He had lost an arm! The price he had paid, the pain he felt, drove his desire to kill Meng Hao to a new, intense height.

His eyes were bloodshot; the poison was under control, but could not easily be expelled. In fact, as of now, he could tell that it would be impossible to expel the poison while he was in the Qi Condensation stage. Only if he reached Foundation Establishment could he do so.

“Milky Way Sea!” he shouted, his hair flying about him crazily. He bit the tip of his tongue and spit out a glob of blood. A violet pearl flew out from within the blood, within which could be seen what appeared to be a seething mass of wind. As soon as it appeared, a fierce gale arose, sending Meng Hao’s latest three arrows into a spin. Then, they simply collapsed into pieces.

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# Chapter 74: Not Past One Hundred Years

The pearl spun back into Shangguan Xiu’s mouth, whereupon he used his remaining arm to slap his bag of holding. Multiple flying swords, banners and other magical items appeared, all flying forward at the same time. Then, one by one they exploded into pieces. Shangguan Xiu lifted his hands, and the fragments of the various magical items rose up to create something like a sea.

From a distance, the multiple fragments glinted blindingly, making it seem as if there really was a sea floating in the sky. The sea began to spin, and then shot directly toward Meng Hao, whistling through the air.

This was the Milky Way Sea, a magical technique that had earned Patriarch Milky Way his name many years ago. Eventually, he divided the technique into multiple levels. The lowest level could be used only by someone of the ninth level of Qi Condensation.

Of course, any Cultivator of the Foundation Establishment stage could flick a sleeve and create a Milky Way Sea out of fragmented items. However, during the Qi Condensation stage, this was truly something powerful.

As such, it was not an easy technique to pull off. Only someone at the peak of the ninth level could do it, and they would have to have the support of a vast amount of spiritual power. In all of Milky Way City, Shangguan Xiu was the only Cultivator at the Qi Condensation stage who could do it.

At the moment, he wanted to end the fight as quickly as possible, not only to acquire Meng Hao’s treasures, but also to get back to Milky Way City to dispel the poison from his body. So, he attacked with his most powerful technique, sending the cloud of fragmented treasures speeding toward Meng Hao. As it approached, Meng Hao took a deep breath and then slapped his bag of holding.

Flying sword after flying sword emerged. Ten swords, fifty, one hundred, until a total of three hundred flying swords were spinning around him. Meng Hao lifted his hands, then pushed them out ahead of him.

As he did, the three hundred flying swords formed a massive sword rain, which then congealed into the shape of a Flying Rain-Dragon. He walked forward, and two golden strands of light appeared in his hands,: the two wooden swords. His body turned into a beam of light as he flew up into the Flying Rain-Dragon sword rain.

It was as if he had become the spirit of the flying-sword Flying Rain-Dragon. It raised its head to the Heavens and roared, then shot toward the Milky Way Sea.

An explosion reverberated out which shook heaven and earth. The Milky Way Sea of fragmented treasures lashed against Meng Hao’s flying swords. Popping sounds could be heard as sword after sword collapsed into pieces. But if the Sea smashed ten swords, then Meng Hao would produce ten more to replace them.

Right now, the most flying swords he could control simultaneously was three hundred. Within his bag of holding, he currently had about seven hundred, which he had slowly duplicated over the last year. After his fierce battle with Ding Xin, and during the process of breaking through to the ninth level of Qi Condensation, he had prepared himself completely.

Seeing this, Shangguan Xiu’s face changed. His left hand flickered in an incantation pattern, then produced more magical items which he added to the conglomeration.

Meng Hao’s flying swords screamed as they continuously battered the Milky Way Sea. The sound of it reverberated out in all directions, and yet the power of this Milky Way Sea was formidable. At the moment, he wasn’t able to move forward very easily. Suddenly, he spun his body, causing the flying swords around him to begin to rotate around him. They rotated faster and faster until they became a whirlwind, with Meng Hao at the center. He stopped moving, but the flying sword whirlwind continued to spin faster and faster.

From a distance, it looked as if a rapidly spinning tornado were slicing through the middle of the Milky Way Sea. The fragmented treasure items of the Milky Way Sea continue to smash against the flying swords, but after the space of a few breaths, the swords pushed forward, slicing clean through the sea.

Shangguan Xiu's face twisted. Meng Hao's Cultivation base was shocking, as was the number of magical items he had. The most shocking thing, though, was his battle experience. His ability to quickly change his magical battle techniques was something that left Shangguan Xiu in utter disbelief.

Amidst the reverberating roar, Meng Hao and his sword rain ploughed through the Milky Way Sea, sending pieces of it scattering about. Meng Hao suddenly leaped forward, the two golden strands that were the wooden swords emitting shrill whistles as they shot through the air with him. Shock covered Shangguan Xiu's face.

"Meng Hao!" he cried, shooting backward as fast as possible, his face panic-stricken. In complete contrast, when Meng Hao attacked, he didn't say even a word. His expression was the same as ever. He increased his speed even more, aiming the two wooden swords, one to stab directly toward his opponent's heart, the other, his forehead.

Shangguan Xiu was vexed to the extreme. He had held the upper hand at first, but had then been poisoned. Things had only gone downhill from there. He couldn't dispel the poison, which meant he couldn't use the full power of his Cultivation base. He constantly needed to use some of his power to suppress the effects of the poison. Now, he was forced to retreat, one step at a time.

His hand flashing, Shangguan Xiu smacked his chest; he coughed up a mouthful of blood, amidst which was the pearl that had appeared a moment ago. A curving arc of light appeared, shooting forward to block the two wooden swords. The shield immediately began to tremor, and then shattered, shoving Shangguan Xiu backward even faster as he retreated.

Seeing the shield shattering, Shangguan Xiu quickly said, “Meng Hao, let’s stop here. The three great Sects are looking for you, and our fight today will surely have attracted their attention. They could arrive at any moment. I won’t harm the inhabitants of the three counties. Let’s abandon our enmity, what do you say?”

Meng Hao didn’t respond. His spiritual energy soared, and the wooden swords glowed, pushing through the shield. Shangguan Xiu was now extremely alarmed. With a howl, he waved his arm, pointing down toward the bottom of the mountain.

“If you keep going, I will exterminate the people of the three counties!”

“Little Tiger!” shouted Meng Hao. This was the second time he had spoken during the battle.

As his shout echoed out, a twinkling, blood-red color could be seen at the bottom of the mountain. A head-sized Blood Globe appeared. It began to expand, as if it were about to explode. An emaciated figure appeared; it was none other than Little Tiger. His jaw was clenched, and he held a pearl outstretched in his hands.

The pearl shot out toward the Blood Globe, spinning around it rapidly to form a restrictive barrier that caused the blood to stop expanding.

“Meng Hao, I can only hold on for the time it takes an incense stick to burn!” Having said this, Little Tiger coughed up a mouthful of blood, then sat down cross-legged to meditate.

Seeing this happen caused Shangguan Xiu’s face to flicker with more emotions. But he didn’t have time to do anything more. With a boom, the shield collapsed and Shangguan Xiu’s pearl shattered. The wooden swords advanced again, Meng Hao behind them, his killing intent rising to the heavens.

Blood sprayed from Shangguan Xiu’s mouth, and he lost control of the poison in his body. It exploded out, threatening to send him into unconsciousness. He continued to retreat, a sad smile on his face.

“The Heavens will give me no aid….” he said with a bitter laugh. “Meng Hao, I will not lose this battle. And you… I vow that I will smash your Qi passageways!” His smile seemed to contain intense discontent along with complete helplessness. But it did not contain despair. However, the discontent and helplessness created an air darker than any despair.

His left hand smacked his bag of holding. Ignoring the incoming wooden swords, he held up a medicinal pill. As soon as it appeared, the nearby spiritual energy seemed to surge, and a strong medicinal aroma filled the air. With a bitter laugh, he swallowed the pill.

When he saw the pill, Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed. It was amber-colored, and was none other than a Foundation Establishment Pill. Inscribed on its surface was a seal; this pill was the exact same Foundation Establishment Pill he had sold at Milky Way City.

“I, Shangguan Xiu, reached the first level of Qi Condensation when I was seven years old,” he muttered to himself. “At thirty, I was at the sixth level. By thirty-nine, I was the ninth level. Today, I’m ninety-nine years old….” He didn’t even look at Meng Hao, but instead stared up into the sky. In an instant, the power within his body surged. He didn’t move, of course; he wouldn’t be able to until the Foundation Establishment Pill had been fully absorbed.

However, even though this was a weakness, the power in his body was immense, already much more than that of the ninth level of Qi Condensation. As he soared toward Foundation Establishment, the two wooden swords slowly came to a stop about seven inches from his body.

Meng Hao’s expression changed. He could sense his opponent’s aura growing stronger and stronger. He was establishing his Foundation right here on Mount Daqing. If Meng Hao’s expression changed, then Little Tiger’s changed even more.

“I could have established my Foundation fifty years ago,” said Shangguan Xiu, a dark expression on his face, his appearance wild. “But I didn’t want to. I didn’t want a Flawless Foundation. I’ve been planning for fifty years to establish a world-shaking Foundation that would surpass a Flawless Foundation! I wanted a Perfect Foundation. But today…. Sadly, today I’ve been wounded and poisoned. If I don’t reach Foundation Establishment, then I will surely die. Fifty years of preparations, and the last step… ruined by you! Meng Hao, do you know how much I hate you!?” Shangguan Xiu lowered his head and stared at Meng Hao. He did not grind his teeth or howl. His face was calm, and yet his eyes were filled with an intense hatred that was clearly carved into his bones and onto his heart.

Meng Hao’s heart began to race, and he felt the shadow of death upon him. But he didn’t retreat. His eyes flashing, he thought back to his own experience consuming the Foundation Establishment pill. He hadn’t been able to move for two months.

“I was at the eighth level of Qi Condensation, so it took me two months,” thought Meng Hao. “Shangguan Xiu has been at the peak of the ninth level for fifty years, he will be able to absorb the energy much faster. But, there has to be a way!” His eyes glittering, he produced a Plateau Charging Pill and popped it into his mouth. As the spiritual energy billowed outing his body, he waved his hands toward the two wooden swords.

With a rumbling sound, the two wooden swords trembled and then began to emit a powerful air. Slowly but surely they moved closer to Shangguan Xiu. They were about three inches away from him when they slowly grounded to a halt. This was Meng Hao’s limit. He didn’t have enough spiritual power, and just couldn’t make the swords move any further.

“You don’t know your own limitations,” said Shangguan Xiu with a cold laugh. “I could have established my Foundation fifty years ago. With the profundity of my Cultivation base, I will be able to absorb the Foundation Establishment Pill in less than an hour. You’d best do whatever you can now to flee. But even if you run to the edges of the earth, I can tell you now, you’re dead.” He stared at Meng Hao, his hatred conjuring up hundreds of ways to kill Meng Hao.

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# Chapter 75: An Ancient Path Appears Again!

Meng Hao’s face was grim. He looked at the two wooden swords, which hovered three inches away from Shangguan Xiu. Those three inches were like a massive ravine that Meng Hao could not cross with his current Cultivation base.

As for Shangguan Xiu, at the moment, he couldn’t really be considered a Qi Condensation Cultivator. Although he was still some distance from Foundation Establishment, a Dao pillar was forming within his Core Lake. As of this moment, despite the fact that Meng Hao was at the ninth level of Qi Condensation, he was so weak compared to Shangguan Xiu that he wouldn’t be able to withstand a single blow.

The gap between the Foundation Establishment stage and the Qi Condensation stage is like that between the sky and the ground, and is something that will never change. With the exception of some unexpected event which goes against the will of the Heavens, it would be impossible for someone of the Qi Condensation stage to kill someone of the Foundation Establishment stage.

A contest between the two would be like a fight between an infant and a strong man. Even if the strong man were weakened somehow, he could still slay the infant with the movement of a hand.

Today, Meng Hao had little more than an hour before a Foundation Establishment Cultivator appeared in front of him. His chances were already small, but at that time, he would have no chance at all.

Time slipped by, and the shadow of death grew closer. Even if he fled, in a very short time, it wouldn't matter where he went, even if it were to the remotest corner of the Milky Way Sea, he would still be unable to evade death.

"What should I do…." Meng Hao's eyes were bloodshot. He wasn't the only nervous one. Down at the bottom of the mountain, Little Tiger's face was growing pale. Seeing the developments just now, he gritted his teeth.

"Meng Hao!" he shouted. His fingers flickered with an incantation, and then he pushed down on his chest. He spat up a massive amount of blood, which flew out in front of him and then formed into a handful of red-colored clouds. "This pearl is my life, allow me to offer some assistance."

As soon as the words were out of his mouth, he collapsed into unconsciousness. The pearl sucked Little Tiger's blood cloud into it and then began to shine with a red glow. It circulated a few more times around the Blood Globe, but then suddenly shot toward Meng Hao. When it reached him, the glow intensified, enveloping Meng Hao with its light.

At that moment, a strange sensation filled Meng Hao's heart. It felt as if is Cultivation base were suddenly climbing higher!

His golden Core sea began to roar as it expanded. Within an instant, it had suddenly doubled in size. Its boundlessness increased so much so that it felt as if it would explode out of his body.

Meng Hao body suddenly shined with a golden light, making him look completely extraordinary.

The Demonic Core within him did not undulate, but instead began to spin rapidly. As it did, intense spiritual power flooded through Meng Hao's body, filling his mind with a thunderous roar, and … a thread of Qi!

The Qi was weak, just like the thread he had felt when he reached the first level of Qi Condensation.

What Meng Hao didn’t know, was that this strand of Qi in his mind was actually something that only Foundation Establishment Cultivators should possess; Spiritual Sense!

Even Shangguan Xiu couldn’t develop it, because he hadn’t completely passed into the Foundation Establishment stage.

And yet, Meng Hao hadn’t passed into Foundation Establishment either. Instead, he had reached the tenth level of Qi Condensation! Popping sounds rang out through his body. Vast quantities of filth were pushed out through his pores as he experienced a sort of baptism into a higher level of Qi Condensation than anyone else in the world.

The tenth level of Qi Condensation!

Meng Hao’s head spun. In the blink of an eye, his body was much tougher and stronger. Not only had he developed Spiritual Sense, but his body has miraculously grown much more powerful.

In the Cultivation world, the tenth level of Qi Condensation was something rarely seen. In fact, throughout the years, many of the most powerful members of a given generation had done research about the Qi Condensation stage… to determine whether there really even was a tenth level, an eleventh level and a twelfth level.

Theoretically speaking it was possible; in some ancient text fragments these levels were mentioned. Supposedly, in ancient times, there were a total of thirteen levels in the Qi Condensation stage! According to the legends, even in ancient times, it was rare for someone to reach the tenth level, and even more rare the eleventh level. Any person who reached that level inevitably went on to rock the world.

In the modern Cultivation world, the tenth level of Qi Condensation was nothing more than a legend.

Over the years, generation after generation of Cultivators had researched it and eventually a consensus had been reached. In ancient times, there had been thirteen levels of Qi Condensation. But, the ninth level had been set as a limit. The tenth level and beyond had been crippled in accordance with the will of the Heavens. From that time on, there were only nine levels!

There was another opinion, rejected by most as being absurd, that the ancient will of the Heavens was dead, and that a new will of the Heavens had arisen. The new will of the Heavens only approved of nine levels of Qi Condensation, and had thus broken the path of the tenth level. This was because following the path of the tenth level allowed one to fight against the Heavens, which was prohibited.

If a Cultivator could accumulate enough spiritual energy of heaven and earth, then they could once again forge the path to reach the fabled tenth level of Qi Condensation of ancient times!

The path was the focal point. Unfortunately, that path had been broken since ancient times, and though it still existed, was essentially broken beyond all repair.

But today it appeared in Meng Hao's body, visible not only to him, but also to a dumbfounded Shangguan Xiu. How could he possibly believe that right there in front of him, Meng Hao… had actually entered into the legendary tenth level of Qi condensation?

"Impossible… the tenth level of Qi Condensation is just a legend." Shangguan Xiu's face was filled with disbelief. "According to the stories, the tenth level of Qi Condensation is a body-strengthening stage… It exists in theory, and even in ancient times, it was rare for it to be achieved…. Impossible!"

Were Little Tiger not unconscious, he would also be shocked. Even though the pearl was his, and was composed of his life force, it had never had such a shocking effect on him. Whatever level he was at, it allowed him to wield a level of power equal to half of the following level. For example, now he was at the fifth level of Qi Condensation, but in terms of power, he was already half way through the sixth level.

Meng Hao's hair flew about wildly and his eyes glowed brightly. He took a deep breath, feeling the immense power that surged through him. He felt the thread of Qi in his mind, as well as the strength rippling through his muscles and blood. He knew that as of now, he wasn't in the least bit weak.

And yet, there was a side-effect. As soon as he reached the tenth level of Qi Condensation, it seemed as if the Heavens immediately severed any connection to him. He couldn't sense any of the power of heaven and earth, as if he had been completely cut off. He felt a wild sucking feeling within him, as if he were a newborn child who needed nutrients… but was denied.

At the moment, his body still appeared to be that of a weak scholar, but in reality, his flesh was filled with enough strength that he felt as if he could rip a city wall in half.

Right now, there wasn't time to consider all of this, though. His eyes flashed as he looked Shangguan Xiu and the disbelief written on the man's face. Meng Hao took in a deep breath and then lifted up his right hand, pointing his finger toward the wooden swords.

This finger strike contained all the power of Meng Hao's tenth level of Qi Condensation, all of his Spiritual Sight, all of the strength of his physical body.

This was Meng Hao's most powerful attack. In fact, this was probably the most powerful attack than any Qi Condensation stage Cultivator in the State of Zhao could muster.

A boom rang out as he tapped the wooden sword. It erupted with sword might, piercing through the three-inch gap and stabbing deeply into Shangguan Xiu's chest. A bang sounded out as it stabbed completely through his chest, emerging from the other side in a shower of blood.

Shangguan Xiu's body shook, and yet he couldn't move. His eyes filled with dread as he sensed massive amounts of spiritual energy flooding out from the wound. In the blink of an eye, the energy seepage had caught up with this Foundation Establishment. Now the time it would take to reach the Foundation Establishment stage was much, much longer.

It was at this time that Meng Hao’s hand lifted up again, and tapped the other wooden sword. It hummed as it proceeded forward toward Shangguan Xiu’s neck.

“Meng Hao, you don’t dare to kill me….” Shangguan Xiu was completely in a panic now. His previous cold arrogance and killing intent had vanished, replaced with a desperate struggle to evade death.

Meng Hao said nothing. His eyes glowing darkly as the sword he had just tapped passed through the three-inch gap and stabbed into Shangguan Xiu’s neck. In the instant that it pierced into his neck, Shangguan Xiu suddenly twisted his head to the side in an impossible fashion. The wooden sword sliced open a massive wound which erupted with blood, and yet it didn’t kill him.

Dread permeated Shangguan Xiu. He could feel his life force beginning to fade and his spiritual power dissipating. As the spiritual energy poured out of him, his body was beginning to grow a bit more responsive.

“Meng Hao, there’s no hatred between us that can’t be resolved. If you let me go, I will give you the Sublime Spirit Scripture….” Shangguan Xiu couldn’t be any more terrified. Even before he finished speaking, the two wooden swords circled back, stabbing back through his chest, showering blood everywhere. Shangguan Xiu let out a blood-curdling scream filled with weakness and despair.

Meng Hao didn’t care in the least bit when he mentioned the Sublime Spirit Scripture. His eyes were as hard as ever; it didn’t matter what Shangguan Xiu said, he wouldn’t stop until he was utterly and completely dead.

This was Meng Hao. Once he made a decision, he wouldn’t change his mind easily.

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# Chapter 76: Beyond Flawlessness

The two wooden swords circled around, emitting a shocking sword aura. They sped toward Shangguan Xiu's head, one from the left, one from the right, carrying Meng Hao's killing intent with them. This time, it was clear that Shangguan Xiu would not be able to evade.

"There is something more precious than a Flawless Foundation," shrieked Shangguan Xiu in a piercing voice. "It's something that in the Southern Domain, in fact in all the four continents, is a hundred thousand times more rare than your tenth level of Qi Condensation. I'm talking about a Perfect Foundation!! Meng Hao, you…." Then Meng Hao's two swords stabbed into his head, sending fountains of blood in all directions.

Shangguan Xiu died instantly. He had not lived past one hundred years, but rather, had died feeling infinite grievance.

His non-reconciliation to death was due to his great plans, and due to the fact that he was in the middle of establishing his Foundation. But then his head exploded, and his body dropped down off of Mount Daqing and splashed into the river below. His aspirations, and his body, floated away into the distance.

Meng Hao snatched his dark green bag of holding as he fell. He didn't look at it, but instead tucked it into his robe.

He panted. Despite having reached the tenth level of Qi Condensation, he had just wielded the two wooden swords to slay someone who was on the verge of reaching Foundation Establishment. He now felt extremely drained.

He watched Shangguan Xiu’s body disappear in the distance, and then turned and hopped onto a wooden sword. His body transformed into a beam of light, and he shot down the mountain to where Little Tiger lay unconscious.

The boy’s face was as pale as death, and his eyes were tightly shut. His aura was like gossamer threads, and his life force flickered like a tiny flame that could be extinguished at any moment.

Meng Hao looked at Little Tiger thoughtfully, and then glanced at the pearl which floated in the air next to him. The power of the pearl was shocking to the extreme, and was truly a treasure. Its power could even be compared to that of the copper mirror.

“To duplicate it would cost an astronomical amount of Spirit Stones… what a pity.” Meng Hao sighed and looked up into the sky.

He’d known from the beginning that the pearl was linked to Little Tiger’s life force. If he stole it, then Little Tiger would die.

“You entrusted me with your life. How could I, Meng Hao, act the villain? If I did, it would plague my conscience for the rest of my days. I would never be able to think clearly, and my days of Cultivating would come to an end.” His eyes glittering, he flicked his sleeve, and tapped Little Tiger’s forehead.

Little Tiger’s body spasmed, then his eyes snapped open. He was instantly on guard, getting to his feet and retreating backward several paces. He glanced at the pearl in Meng Hao’s hands, and his body began to shiver slightly. A look of despair crept into his eyes.

Meng Hao lifted the pearl with a finger, causing it to shoot straight toward Little Tiger, who snatched it out of the air. A complex expression filled his face, and he stared at Meng Hao blankly.

“Many thanks for your assistance. This treasure is astonishing. You need to be cautious and take care of yourself.” As soon as the pearl left his hand, Meng Hao’s body began to grow weaker. The telltale signs of the tenth level of Qi Condensation began to disappear. As his Cultivation base dropped, the spiritual energy of heaven and earth which had just been cut off from him, slowly began to return.

The unbridled gravitational force within his body slowly vanished.

Meng Hao didn’t regret his decision. There were some things that he just couldn’t do. He refused to defy his own conscience in such a way.

The Blood Globe that Shangguan Xiu had used to threaten the lives of the people of the three counties was instantly smashed between Meng Hao’s fingers. It transformed into a vast amount of Blood Qi, which floated back toward the three counties.

As far as the common people went, all they knew was that for the past two months, they had felt somewhat dizzy, and now were much more clear headed. They also felt a bit weak. This was because, unbeknownst to them, their longevity had been damaged, and close to five years had been taken from the life spans.

Meng Hao could see this, but there was nothing he could do except sigh to himself. He flicked his sleeve and made to leave.

“Elder Brother Meng,” said Little Tiger, “Shangguan Xiu….”

“There is no such person in the world anymore.” He didn’t look back, just continued off into the distance. The battle here would definitely attract the attention of the three great Sects. And Meng Hao could guess why they had permitted Shangguan Xiu to cast this massive spell here; it was because of Meng Hao. Shangguan Xiu wanted his bag of holding, and the three Great Sects wanted him. At the moment, he had no way to deal with the situation. The only thing he could do was go somewhere remote to hide and think for a while.

Little Tiger didn’t say anything more. He watched Meng Hao leaving, and then a look of determination filled his eyes.

“Meng Hao, you didn’t covet my most valuable treasure. I, Dong Hu, am not a good person. But you can rest easy. In this life, I will never do anything to let you down.” He turned, casting his vision into the town far off in the distance. He caught sight of his father and mother, and a gentle look filled his eyes. Then the warmth vanished. Lowering his head, he quickly made his way off into the distance.

At that exact moment, the sky filled with countless beams of prismatic light. In the lead was none other than Liu Daoyun from the Cold Wind Sect.

“Meng Hao, you won’t escape this time!”

Meng Hao frowned, turning into a flash of light as he sped off into the distance. He used the last remaining vestiges of the power of the tenth level of Qi Condensation to instantly put a vast distance between himself and the pursuers. Far off in the distance, he had caught sight of more disciples of the three great Sects, and among them had been Foundation Establishment Cultivators and Core Formation Eccentrics. They had obviously been unwilling to show up themselves, and had instead sent some lower level disciples over to check things out. But now that Meng Hao’s presence had been confirmed, they would surely make appearances.

“Shangguan Xiu was backed by Milky Way City. It seems that power was not small…. The three great Sects must have stayed away because that was their agreement. When they felt the battle magic disappear, then they could approach. Shangguan Xiu had his secrets, and didn’t want people to see what was happening. He was even careful about the people from Milky Way City. He didn’t let them know his true purposes either.”

He left Mount Daqing, passing the North Sea and crossing the wide wilderness, heading in the direction of the Reliance Sect.

About half way through the wilderness, in a random mountain range, Meng Hao sped along at top speed, an indistinct expression on his face. As he raced along he would occasionally look down at a piece of turtle shell which he held in his hand. This was an item he had taken out of Shangguan Xiu’s bag of holding.

It was about the size of his palm, and its edges were rough. Obviously it had been broken off from a larger turtle shell.

It surface was inscribed with rows and rows of small characters. They were difficult to make out. Only by infusing his eyes with spiritual energy was he able to read them clearly.

“In the Cultivation world, it is possible to achieve the so-called… Perfect Foundation!” Meng Hao gasped.

On the surface of the turtle shell were two medicinal pill recipes. One was for a Perfect Foundation Pill, the other was for a Perfect Gold Core Pill.

“The turtle shell spells it out clearly. The Foundation Establishment stage doesn’t just have three types, the Flawless, Cracked and Fractured. There is a fourth type, the Perfect Foundation. It’s extremely rare, being seen only one ten thousand cases….” Meng Hao breathed rapidly, staring down at the turtle shell and thinking back to what Shangguan Xiu had said before he died. Now he understood his opponent’s regret at being forced to ascend to Foundation Establishment after being poisoned. And now he understood the raging hatred in Shangguan Xiu’s eyes.

Meng Hao contemplated things silently. He had read a lot about Foundation Establishment back in the Magic Pavilion of the Reliance Sect.

In Foundation Establishment, Dao pillars would come to being within the Core Lake. Because Foundation Establishment increased one’s longevity, it was categorized as stealing good fortune and defying the Heavens. As a result, the Dao pillars could never be perfect, but would always contain cracks. This was in accordance with the Dao of the Heavens. It could be summed up in the expression, “you get some, you lose some” or perhaps “when something comes in, something goes out.” It was part of the cycle of heaven and earth, and was permitted to exist.

Foundation Establishment consisted of early, mid and late sub-stages. In total, nine Dao pillars would appear. If each pillar had one crack, it meant a total of nine cracks would appear. This is what is referred to as a Flawless Foundation. A Flawless Foundation contained the least amount of cracks, and leaked the least amount of spiritual energy. After long periods of breathing exercises, the body would become incredibly powerful, much more so than other Foundations.

In the modern Cultivation world, this was the most powerful Foundation type. The special methods to achieve it could only be found amidst the clues in the great classic scriptures, for example the Qi Condensation manual of the Sublime Spirit Scripture. Such secrets could lead to horrific bloodbaths. In fact… that was why the Reliance Sect had been disbanded.

Without such a scripture, the only way to have a chance at establishing a Flawless Foundation was to have incredible latent talent or outstanding good fortune. Most often, it was a Chosen who could piece together the clues to do so.

If an additional crack appeared on each of the Dao Pillars, this was called a Cracked Foundation. Although this type of Foundation was weaker than a Flawless Foundation, it could not be looked down upon. Usually, only disciples of the great Sects were able to achieve it.

Last, of course, was the Fractured Foundation. This was when, after reaching late Foundation Establishment, more than eighteen cracks existed on the Dao pillars, which is too much. This Foundation could be considered nearly shattered. In terms of both Cultivation speed as well as battle prowess, both were much weaker. With this type of Foundation, the chances of forming a Core were much lower.

Meng Hao thought about all of this and then looked down at the turtle shell. According to the description here, by concocting and consuming a Perfect Foundation Pill, there was a high probability of establishing a Perfect Foundation. In this case, no cracks whatsoever would appear. This was a type of Cultivation that defied the Heavens, and was a path that could not be returned from.

Because this Foundation was not permitted by the Heavens, it would provoke Tribulation Lightning. True success required defiance of the Heavens. In this respect, it was similar to the tenth level of Qi Condensation.

“From what Shangguan Xiu said, it seems the tenth level of Qi Condensation is not tolerated by the Heavens. Apparently, establishing a Perfect Foundation is the same….”

“If you have a Fractured Foundation and then consume this pill, you have a ten percent chance of establishing a Perfect Foundation. With a Cracked Foundation, you have a thirty percent chance, and with a Flawless Foundation, a sixty percent chance. The pill repairs the cracks, enabling you to establish a Perfect Foundation. But… you have to be particular about when you consume the pill. The sooner you take it after Foundation Establishment, the better. If too much time passes, the effectiveness will be reduced. And it takes two months to concoct the Perfect Foundation Pill.” Meng Hao’s heart raced as he sped along.

“No wonder Shangguan Xiu wanted to join the Reliance Sect… Just like Wang Tengfei, he wanted a chance to get the Qi Condensation Manual of the Sublime Spirit Scripture! After establishing a Flawless Foundation, his chances would be much higher… It’s also no wonder he disappeared on the day the Sect was disbanded. With secrets like this on his person, he didn’t dare to show his face…” Meng Hao clutched the turtle shell tightly in hand, continuing to race forward.

In addition to the turtle shell, Shangguan Xiu’s bag of holding also contained a small pill furnace fashioned from translucent green crystal, about the size of a hand. He also had large quantities of medicinal plants, all of them placed in jade boxes. There were hundreds of different types.

Many of the medicinal plants were unfamiliar to Meng Hao, but thankfully, there was also a jade slip in the bag of holding with complete records regarding identification methods for all of the plants. Perusing this, Meng Hao grew more and more excited.

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# Chapter 77: Lord Revelation

Although these medicinal plants were not heavenly material or earthly treasures, they were still rare. Many Cultivators would spend decades attempting to collect them.

And yet here in Shangguan Xiu's bag of holding were hundreds.

There were also two medicinal pills placed inside of jade boxes, one orange and one blue. Obviously, they were extremely valuable.

"These plants are all materials needed to create a Perfect Foundation Pill… As for these medicinal pills…" After examining them thoroughly, he looked again at the turtle shell, eyes shining.

"Concocting the Perfect Foundation Pill requires seven minor pills. These are two of those seven that Shangguan Xiu already concocted." Meng Hao understood things now, but was still a bit shocked. Shangguan Xiu had spent fifty years collecting all of these things together, and yet that was still not enough time for him, a Cultivator of the Qi Condensation phase.

"And he was even backed by Milky Way City…."

Meng Hao felt that there were still things he didn't quite understand, though. In order to concoct the Perfect Foundation Pill, it seemed Shangguan Xiu had secretly taken items from Patriarch Milky Way's treasure storehouse, as well as items accumulated over hundreds of years by his clan. In addition, he had scoured the lands, all to collect these items together.

And yet, he still lacked a few necessary medicinal materials. He had one stem of a particularly rare plant, but required three. At long last, Meng Hao understood the insanity with which Shangguan Xiu had pursued him in his attempt to acquire the copper mirror.

In the end, he had delivered all his fortunes directly into Meng Hao's hands. If Shangguan Xiu had known this would happen, he never would have caused problems for Meng Hao. But he had, and his fifty years of preparations were irrevocably lost.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, placing the turtle shell and the medicinal materials into the bag of holding, which he then placed, along with his other bags of holding, into the bag of the Cosmos.

He stood there in the forest and looked up at the sky. His eyes slowly began to shine as he thought about the Perfect Foundation. His heart pounded.

"After consuming the pill, Tribulation Lightning will fall. I shouldn't even be thinking about a Perfect Foundation right now. I can make a decision about it after I reach Foundation Establishment. What I need to think about now is the matter between the three great Sects and Patriarch Reliance." He closed his eyes and took a few breaths, pushing down all the anxious thoughts. When he opened his eyes again, they were calm

"A year has already passed, and the time set by Patriarch Reliance has arrived. He promised that if I could gather the experts of the State of Zhao here, he would give me a handsome reward…" Meng Hao's eyes glittered.

"But to do such a thing would be very dangerous." He frowned, hesitating. "My Cultivation base is at the Qi Condensation stage. I would be like an egg thrown up against rocks."

"I probably shouldn't get involved. After all, Patriarch Reliance said a year later, but didn't give a specific date. When my Cultivation base is a bit higher, maybe after I reach Foundation Establishment, then I can think about it. At that time I'll be in a bit of a safer position." He lifted his head. Ever since the time Patriarch Reliance had suddenly caused the three-colored spear to disappear, he had lost a little bit of his faith in the Patriarch's trustworthiness.

“However, because of the arrest warrant of the three great Sects, their disciples are looking for me everywhere. If I get in a tight spot, then I’ll just have to face the danger and lead them into the Patriarch’s meditation zone.” Meng Hao raced on silently through the wild mountains, his decision having been made.

But even as he raced forward, he suddenly felt a strange, jittery sensation. His heart lurched, as if a giant, invisible hand had just passed through his chest and squeezed his heart.

He suddenly felt as if all of the vegetation around him had eyes that were staring at him coldly.

The feeling passed almost immediately. Even though the feeling was no longer there, Meng Hao’s face was pale. He looked around. Everything was silent, and nothing around him gave any clue as to what had happened. Had it been his imagination?

“What was that?” he thought, hesitating. After a moment, though, his eyes glittered, and he shot forward at top speed.

Meanwhile, somewhere very far away from Meng Hao but still in the State of Zhao, an old man in a purplish blue robe sat cross-legged on a mountain. His eyes were closed, but his right hand flickered as if he were performing an incantation. His eyes opened slowly and he looked off into the distance.

“There you are,” he said coolly. “The three Sects wanted to hide you from me. How laughable.” He took a step forward, and then disappeared.

At the same moment, Liu Daoyun was speeding along. Meng Hao had lost him, but he’d seen where Meng Hao had entered the mountains. He had followed in pursuit, his face filled with incredible hatred and murder.

His hatred for Meng Hao reached down his bones. The bloody incident of the silver spear had turned him into the butt of all the jokes of the State of Zhao and had nearly caused a war between two of the great Sects. Even though the war had been averted, he had paid a heavy price for his actions.

It nearly drove him insane to think about the day he had been brought up before the Elders of the great Sects. He had been bound on the Sealing Pole, then lashed with a Fire Whip over one hundred times. Oh, the misery and pain!

The lashes had torn his skin and left the flesh gaping. The pain had stabbed down into his bones. Even to this day, he would often wake in the middle of the night, and every time he did, his desire to kill Meng Hao grew stronger and stronger.

Unlike everyone else who was chasing Meng Hao, he did not plan to capture him. He would kill him!

It might arouse the displeasure of his Sect, but he had already decided to forsake them. At worst, he would flee the State of Zhao after killing Meng Hao. The Southern Domain was large, and filled with countries of Cultivators, especially in the center. As a Cultivator of the ninth level of Qi Condensation, he would surely be able to find somewhere willing to take him in. Then one day he would come back to the State of Zhao and wipe out the Cold Wind Sect. He would cleanse the pain of his lashing with blood.

At the moment, he moved at top speed, using all the power he could muster. He was determined to find Meng Hao and kill him before the Sect’s Foundation Establishment experts and Core Formation Patriarchs arrived.

“Meng Hao, you can try to run, but there’s nowhere to run to!” Liu Daoyun’s killing intent soared. He was even more confident of being able to kill Meng Hao when he thought of the astonishing treasure he had borrowed.

He stood on his crystalline sword as he entered the mountains. His gaze swept back and forth. Because he was of the ninth level of Qi Cultivation, and also an Inner Sect disciple, he had a voice transmission jade slip, which he used to inform all disciples in the area to notify him immediately if they saw Meng Hao.

A short time passed. As he soared along in the air, Liu Daoyun suddenly slapped his bag of holding, and a glowing jade slip appeared in his hand. He pressed it against his forehead and then laughed. He changed his course, shooting off toward the disciple who had just contacted him.

Time passed enough for half an incense stick to burn. It was then that Liu Daoyun caught sight of Meng Hao, moving forward on his treasured fan. Yes, this was the man who had killed a Cold Wind Sect disciple in one move by piercing his head.

At this same moment, Meng Hao looked back, and his cold eyes caught sight of Liu Daoyun. He frowned to himself. Ever since he had experienced the sensation of an invisible hand squeezing his heart, he had felt that he was being watched. Sure enough, after a while, he noticed that there were quite a few Cultivators around from the three great Sects.

There was no way to avoid them. Even if he attacked and killed them as quickly as possible, the word would surely spread via jade slips.

“Meng Hao!” shouted Liu Daoyun. His right hand flickered in an incantation pattern, and immediately, the flying sword beneath his feet issued a droning sound and shot toward Meng Hao.

“Let’s see you run away this time! I, Liu, will rip you to pieces today! That is the only way I can resolve the hatred in my heart!” Liu Daoyun’s eyes had grown red as soon as he caught sight of Meng Hao, and his killing intent grew even fiercer.

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed, and he was about to continue on forward when suddenly his mind trembled. A bit of Spiritual Sense still remained, which caused Meng Hao to suddenly move backward. Even as the flying sword approached him, a fierce wind arose, sending the crystalline sword spinning away.

At the same time, an old man suddenly appeared. He wore a purplish-blue robe, and had some age spots on his face, but his eyes shined with a fear-inspiring might that could make one’s spirit tremble.

His eyes seemed to contain the sun, moon and stars, making it seem as if you might be lost if you looked into them. A strange design was stitched onto his blue robe; it appeared to be an altar, in the middle of which was a solitary eye. This eye seemed to be filled with even more woe than the old man's eyes.

"Such strong grievances," he said coolly, looking at Liu Daoyun. When the old man spoke, the spiritual energy around Meng Hao seemed to be thrown into chaos, and suddenly he felt as if he were bound in place. Once again, he experienced the sensation of an invisible hand clawing at his heart. His face flickered, and his heart pounded.

When Liu Daoyun saw the old man, his face fell, and he immediately took a few steps back and raised hands in a salute.

"I am Liu Daoyun of the junior generation. Greetings, Lord Revelation."

At the same moment that Liu Daoyun made his salute, six figures appeared in the sky. They were quite some distance away, but in the space of a single breath had arrived onto the scene.

When he saw the six people, Meng Hao's heart sank. They were familiar to him. These were the Core Formation Eccentrics of the State of Zhao who had appeared on the day of the dissolution of the Reliance Sect. One of them was a woman, who had left quite a deep impression on Meng Hao.

Shortly after they arrived, the sky filled with droning streaks of light as over ten people approached. They were not soaring, but actually flying, sending out thunderous roars into the air. The nearby birds and beasts quivered. As the people arrived, their eyes all came to fall on Meng Hao.

His face grew grim as he looked around. He saw the irritable Foundation Establishment Cultivator who had attempted to attack him that day.

A powerful pressure was exerted on everything in the area. Liu Daoyun's face grew pale and he retreated backward several paces. He glared at Meng Hao; his killing intent was hidden for the moment, but the venom in his face was very clear.

Meng Hao’s heart sank; today there was nowhere to hide. After a moment, his expression returned to normal. He took in a deep breath and looked around at the experts of the State of Zhao. He said nothing.

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# Chapter 78: No Choice but to Believe!

“Fellow Daoist Revelation truly deserves his reputation of being able to make ingenious divinations,” said one of the Core Formation Eccentrics from the three great Sects. He laughed.

“He arrived here even faster than us.”

“You three Sects didn’t notify me, so I was forced to divine things for myself,” said Lord Revelation in a cool tone.

“Very well,” said one of the Cold Wind Sect Core Formation Eccentrics. He wore a long black robe. “Now that the kid has been found, it won’t be long before we can get into Patriarch Reliance’s meditation zone. This matter has been going on for quite a while. Even the great Sects in the Southern Domain are aware of what’s going on.” His gaze had fallen onto Meng Hao, and he looked at him expressionlessly, as if he were cricket.

The lot of them didn’t pay him any heed whatsoever as they spoke, as if they knew that their words could decide his life or death. In fact, their conversation would determine his fate.

Meng Hao said nothing. He knew that if he wanted to fight back against their bullying, he would have to think of a method. His mind spun as he analyzed the situation.

“Patriarch,” said Liu Daoyun, bowing with clasped hands toward one of his Sect’s Core Formation Eccentrics. “This person has a treasured spear hidden on his person.” He lifted his head and looked at Meng Hao with a sneer, the venom written clearly on his face.

“So, the tiny Qi Condensation Cultivator turns out to be of the ninth level….” said the black-robed Cultivator coolly, his face seemingly permanently red. “No wonder he was able to throw the Cultivation World of the State of Zhao into such chaos.” He lifted his hand toward Meng Hao as if he were about to grab him.

“I am here, and so is the spear,” said Meng Hao suddenly, his eyes flashing. His voice could sever nails and slice iron. A wild look appeared in his eyes that seemed to say he knew he was powerless to prevent them from taking his treasures, but if they did, he would end his own life immediately.

Hearing Meng Hao speak, the old man who had been about to make a move on him stopped and frowned. The onlookers also frowned.

“My Cultivation base is low and weak,” said Meng Hao. “If the older generation wishes to rob my treasures, please do so. But if I lose even one treasure, then I will end my life. And if I am dead, then I can’t take you to Founder Patriarch’s meditation zone. I would rather die than be robbed by you!” As he spoke, his face shone with determination.

“I can just kill you,” said one of the six Core Formation Cultivators, “then use a heaven-defying Soul Search to drag the location out of you.”

When Meng Hao heard this, he let out a hearty laugh. Not the slightest look of fear could be seen in his eyes. His laughter echoed through the mountains, stabbing into the ears of the old Eccentrics.

“If you plan to Search me then go ahead. Only Inner Sect Disciples know the location of the Patriarch’s meditation zone. But even if you know the location, without me alive, conscious, and unharmed, you’ll never be able to get inside.” When they heard this, all the old Eccentrics stared at him with eyes as cold as ice.

“You of the elder generation have profound Cultivation bases. Surely you know some Spirit Puppetry arts. But without my consciousness there, or if I have been injured in any way, you won’t be able to enter. You must have my complete and utter support!” Decisiveness filled Meng Hao’s voice. He gave them the feeling that he had thrown all caution to the wind, which made them frown.

Actually, when it came to Meng Hao, they didn't care so much about him; what they truly were interested in was Patriarch Reliance's Sublime Spirit Scripture. The Eccentrics frowned and then looked toward Lord Revelation.

He stared at Meng Hao, his eyes flashing. Even though he was capable of divining many things, he wasn't able to divine anything at all about this particular matter. All eyes were on him as he spoke.

"I can't divine the details. But even if ninety-five percent of what this kid says is false, we still can't afford to gamble on it." His words echoed the thoughts of all the onlookers. These Eccentrics were experienced and astute, as well as crafty. However, all their scheming couldn't assure victory under these circumstances. This was because… they couldn't afford to bet. Even if most of what Meng Hao said was a lie, there could be some truth to it.

If they lost, they lost the chance to get into Patriarch Reliance's Immortal's Cave. That in turn would mean they lost any chance at the Sublime Spirit Scripture. Anyone, be they at Foundation Establishment or Core Formation, could use Qi Condensation Manual of the Sublime Spirit Scripture to form a second Core Lake within their bodies. They could also repair the Dao pillars they had formed during their Foundation Establishment. If successful, it could make a Cracked Foundation into a Flawless Foundation. To a Core Formation Cultivator, this would also have a big influence on their Core level, which was something they all yearned for.

There were only three great books in the world which contained the secrets methods of how to Cultivate a new Core Lake, even beyond the Qi Condensation stage.

"Very well," said one of the six, a noble-looking old woman with a hoarse voice. When her words rang out, everyone grew silent. "We are here for the Sublime Spirit Scripture. There's no need to cause further complications. Child, we won't steal any of your treasures, nor will we Soul Search you or turn you into a puppet. But you must assist us, otherwise you are well aware of what the consequences will be. Which is more important, your life? Or the Patriarch's? As for which decision is best, I'm sure you don't need our advice on that."

Meng Hao was silent for a moment, then suddenly said, "Give me one million Spirit Stones! And, I demand the right to kill this person!" His eyes flashed as he pointed at Liu Daoyun.

Liu Daoyun's face grew somber and venom flickered within his eyes. He had just been contemplating various ways to kill Meng Hao. To be suddenly singled out by Meng Hao caused him to reflexively step backwards a few paces.

His heart raced, and cold sweat broke out on his forehead. He knew that these Patriarchs would most likely give in to Meng Hao's every demand to get what they wanted.

"Patriarchs…" said Liu Daoyun, his face pale as he looked up at the two Core Formation Patriarchs from the Cold Wind Sect.

The red-faced old man gave a cold snort. He flicked his sleeve and looked at Meng Hao with cold eyes.

"That will not happen! Tiny Qi Condensation Cultivator, you have an exaggerated opinion of yourself. You dare to make demands of us?!"

"Meng Hao," said one of the Core Formation Eccentrics, an old man in a red robe. "Don't bring up the matter of killing again. And as for the Spirit Stones, we have no way to meet your demand."

"If I get no Spirit Stones, and if this man doesn't die, then I, Meng, will absolutely not agree to take you of the elder generation to the Patriarch's meditation zone. Without my heartfelt consent, you'll never get into his Immortal's Cave." Meng Hao's voice was resolute, and his face emanated an expression that said he was ready to risk everything. He would die without even a frown if he had to.

"Meng Hao…" Liu Daoyun stared at him murderously, his eyes filling up with killing intent.

“Very well,” said the dignified old woman in her husky voice. “As for this Cold Wind Sect disciple, your request is denied. Regarding the Spirit Stones, I will take the responsibility for that. I will give you one hundred thousand now, and the rest after we open the Immortal’s Cave.” If Meng Hao hadn’t made any demands, it would have aroused suspicion. She flicked her sleeve, and a bag of holding flew toward Meng Hao. He didn’t catch it, but instead moved backward and let the bag fall to the ground.

“Very well,” said Meng Hao slowly. “The killing is off the table. Liu Daoyun, pick up that bag of holding and take the Spirit Stones out of it.”

The woman’s eyes flickered imperceptibly. The other Core Formation Eccentrics also gave him flickering looks.

Liu Daoyun was furious to the extreme. However, Meng Hao’s request was not overly excessive. Even the red-faced old man didn’t say anything, but rather indicated for Liu Daoyun to comply.

Liu Daoyun took a deep breath, pushed down his fury, then walked forward to pick up the bag of holding. He shook the bag, and a massive amount of Spirit Stones poured out onto the ground. They glittered brightly. Liu Daoyun looked at them for a moment, and started to breathe a bit faster.

Meng Hao looked over the Spirit Stones, his expression calm. Then he collected them into his own bag of holding. He had no choice but to exercise caution. These people were not Foundation Establishment Cultivators, but rather of the Core Formation stage. If they wanted to kill him, it would be easier than stepping on a bug.

If it wasn’t for the fact that they couldn’t afford to gamble in this matter, he wouldn’t be able to stand up to them at all, regardless if it were regarding Cultivation base or scheming.

Therefore, Meng Hao did not attempt to pull of some tricky, crafty plot. Instead, he plotted openly. He was betting that even if these people didn’t believe him, they had no choice but to believe.

“You have your Spirit Stones. But this is a weighty matter. Please consume this medicinal pill.” The old woman lifted her right hand, and a black-colored medicinal pill appeared.

When it did, a wind instantly picked up, as if a massive amount of spiritual energy were being gathered up. Slowly, the image of a wicked centipede came to be visible on the surface of the medicinal pill.

Meng Hao’s expression changed. He looked at the pill cautiously.

When Liu Daoyun saw all of this happening, a hideous grin appeared on his face. The Foundation Establishment Cultivators floating in the air watched on, their faces expressionless, but their eyes sneering at Meng Hao.

As for the Core Formation Eccentrics, none of them batted an eye. If the old woman hadn’t produced a pill, they probably would have. Their eyes glittered as they watched.

In terms of scheming, Meng Hao was like a child compared to them. If his plots had truly displeased them, then any ideas he came up with would be useless.

“If you consume the pill, then you can lead the way. If you don’t consume it, then we will have to try out our Soul Search and Spirit Puppetry arts.” The old woman spoke coolly, her expression containing neither happiness nor anger. She flicked her fingers, and the poison pill shot forward to hover in front of Meng Hao.

Meng Hao hesitated for a moment in thought. He wasn’t sure whether or not the pill really was poisonous. Perhaps it was something else even more nefarious. But he didn’t seem to have any other choice. He clenched his jaw, then reached out and grabbed the pill.

“Speaking of poison pills, I have one as well,” said the red-faced old man with a laugh. He flicked his wide sleeve, and a reddish pill appeared in his hand. It flew to Meng Hao.

“Actually, our Sect happens to have one as well.” It turned out the Core Formation Cultivators from the three great Sects all had poison pills. The pills transformed into beams of light as they flew toward Meng Hao.

The old woman’s face was calm, and it was impossible to tell what she was thinking. She looked around coolly at her fellow Eccentrics, saying nothing. They were all circumspect and far-seeing. If Meng Hao swallowed one poison pill, he might as well swallow more. This way, he wouldn’t just be under the control of the old woman. This was the most fair method.

“Seeing the Fellow Daoist’s actions, I must humbly act to save my own face.” Lord Revelation smiled and waved his right hand. A three-colored medicinal pill appeared and raced toward Meng Hao.

Compared to the other medicinal pills, this pill appeared extraordinary. Meng Hao wasn’t sure why, but when his gaze fell onto this pill, his entire body felt jittery.

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# Chapter 79: Kill!

“Four poison pills,” said Meng Hao, his voice grim and his expression unsightly. “I of the younger generation am worried that if I consume this pill, I won’t be able to lead you forward. If the poison takes effect, I will die. If it doesn’t take effect, then how will the elder generation ensure that I can dispel the poison later? Or have you not even considered that?!”

“Of course there is a poison dispelling technique,” said the red-faced old man from the Cold Wind Sect, his face expressionless. “Whether or not you chose to believe is up to you.” In this, he used Meng Hao’s own tactic against him. The complete resolution of all the various matters now rested on Meng Hao.

He stood silently for a moment. As the man had said, the choice to believe lay in him alone. Unfortunately, if he chose not to believe, then the current situation would never be resolved.

Meng Hao’s eyes glanced over the four pills. Three of them he recognized. “This is… a Centipede Dragon Pill. This one is a Frigid Corpse Pill and this is a Blood Withering Pill. As for this one….” The three-colored pill from Lord Revelation was something he had never heard of before. There had been no information about it in the ancient jade slip.

“Patriarch Reliance’s Cultivation base is as high as the Heavens,” Meng Hao muttered to himself. “He should be able to figure it out.” He clenched his jaw, then lifted his hands and put one of the pills into his mouth. It appeared to contain something alive within it, and sure enough, Men Hao felt a searing pain as it slid down his throat. And yet, the pain didn’t cause him to hesitate. His eyes bloodshot, he forced down all of the pills. As he swallowed the pill given to him by Lord Revelation, he looked the man in the eyes.

Lord Revelation smiled the entire time. Meng Hao didn’t hesitate at all. He knew that he had to swallow the pills to allay everyones’ suspicious.

The instant Lord Revelation’s pill entered his mouth, it dissolved into an aura which seeped into his flesh and blood. Seeing Meng Hao swallow the four pills in succession left Liu Daoyun feeling quite pleased.

The ten or more Foundation Establishment Cultivators watched Meng Hao with strange expressions in their eyes. Seeing his resoluteness left them feeling the need to be more vigilant.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. His expression grim, he looked up at the Eccentrics. He said nothing.

“Let’s go,” said the old woman with a nod. She waved a finger toward Meng Hao, then turned into a prismatic rainbow and shot away. The other Cultivators present followed, one by one. Her wave of a finger caused the bag of holding that lay on the ground at Meng Hao’s feet to suddenly transform into a hideous mist spirit. Its body flickered as it wrapped around Meng Hao and then shot into the sky.

Liu Daoyun followed along, looking at Meng Hao with a cold smile.

“You’re dead!” he said grimly.

Meng Hao didn’t reply. He just looked coldly at Liu Daoyun’s twisted face.

“After you take the Patriarchs into the Immortal’s cave, just wait until you come back out. You’re dead for sure. Even if you dispel the poison, I won’t let you go. There’s nowhere you can run to in the State of Zhao. By the way, you’re a Reliance Inner Sect disciple, yet you have no choice but to lead people to kill your own Sect’s Patriarch. How does that feel? Liu Daoyun’s malicious words were filled with ridicule.

“You killed Sun Hua over a silver spear. How does that feel?” said Meng Hao coolly, looking down at Liu Daoyun below him. The earth sped past beneath him. This was a speed Meng Hao had never achieved before.

As far as Liu Daoyun went, Meng Hao didn’t care about him at all. But Meng Hao’s words hit him like a stick jabbed into a fresh wound. His eyes were red through and through, and he looked at Meng Hao with a matchless hatred; he wished to rip him into pieces. The incident with Sun Hua was the most humiliating thing that had ever happened in his life. In fact, it had ruined any future prospects within his Sect. He had basically been cast aside. Right now, his eyes seemed as if they would shoot flames. He clenched his fists tightly as he glared murderously at Meng Hao.

Seeing Meng Hao’s lack of expression arose a hard-to-describe feeling that threatened to drive him mad. He punched the air with his fist.

Panting, he gritted his teeth for a long moment before saying, “You swallowed four poison pills. I’ll just wait until the poison takes effect. Your body will rot and your heart will be torn apart.”

“Today, you will die beneath my sword,” said Meng Hao coolly, sounding neither happy nor angry. He looked down at the barren mountains whizzing by beneath him, and then at the four mountain peaks of the Reliance Sect off in the distance.

“You sure can talk big,” said Liu Daoyun with a cold laugh and a sinister expression. It seemed he didn’t take Meng Hao’s words seriously at all. “You’ll do that all by yourself? I can’t wait to see the poison kick in!”

After he finished speaking, a booming sound rang out. The group of people had arrived at the Reliance Sect main square. It was deserted, occupied only by fallen leaves, bird droppings and a few animals which scattered in fright.

A fierce wind accompanied the group’s arrival, sweeping clean the Outer Sect square. Seeing the place, Meng Hao’s face flickered with a variety of expressions.

“What does it feel like to see your Sect become like this, Meng Hao?” said Liu Daoyun with a sneer. As he spoke, Meng Hao turned and looked at him, killing intent springing from his eyes. He had already begun moving. He lifted his hand, and fifty flying swords appeared, flying straight toward Liu Daoyun.

“I think this place is the perfect location to bury you in.”

There had been no indication whatsoever that Meng Hao would attack. Even as his words echoed out, the swords were upon Liu Daoyun. His expression changed; he had never imagined that Meng Hao would dare to attack him in the presence of all the Patriarchs.

He shot backward quickly, biting down on his tongue and spitting out some blood, along with a pearl. This pearl was different than the treasures he had used before. As soon as it flew out of his mouth, it began to radiate an intense killing aura. It transformed into a hideous, black demonic face, which then slammed into Meng Hao’s fifty flying swords.

An explosion reverberated out as the demonic face blocked most of the flying swords. However, one flying sword pierced through and continued on toward Liu Daoyun.

Liu Daoyun’s face twisted; he knew that he was in a dangerous life-or-death situation, a critical juncture. He let out a howl, throwing up his arm to defend against the sword. The sword stabbed through his right shoulder, sending blood spraying about. A horrified shriek rang out throughout the deserted Reliance Sect.

Even as the sword stabbed into his shoulder, it suddenly exploded, causing Liu Daoyun’s right arm to disappear into a cloud of blood. Blood also sprayed from his mouth, and he retreated backward, face pale and eyes shining with fear and astonishment.

Everything happened too quickly, in the space of time it takes for a spark to fly up. His right arm was destroyed, and his horrified screams still echoed through the air. The Eccentrics from the three great Sects looked back one by one, their eyes cold. This was especially so of the people from the Cold Wind Sect.

Liu Daoyun retreated, shrieking and howling.

“Patriarchs, this guy….”

His expression cold, Meng Hao stepped forward. Even as Liu Daoyun was in the middle of speaking, Meng Hao waved his right hand, and one hundred flying swords appeared, covering the entire square in a massive sword rain. It descended upon Liu Daoyun. Liu Daoyun might have been at the ninth level of Qi Condensation, but so was Meng Hao. Furthermore, Meng Hao's Cultivation was based on the Sublime Spirit Scripture, and he had a golden Core sea. He even has a sliver of Spiritual Sense in his mind. This was more than enough to crush Liu Daoyun. The sword rain whistled through the air. Liu Daoyun had no more time for speaking.

There was a boom, and Liu Daoyun spit up more blood. A glittering light shone in front of him as his crystalline sword defied the might of Meng Hao's one hundred flying swords. And yet, this in itself caused more injury to Liu Daoyun, who retreated further, howling.

"Patriarchs, save me!"

"Meng Hao, hold your hand!" came a voice from among the four Formation Establishment experts from the Cold Wind Sect. They frowned, obviously unwilling to allow Meng Hao to slay Liu Daoyun in front of all these people. Their bodies turned into beams of light as they sped forward.

"This is between me and him," said Meng Hao, not even looking at the four Foundation Establishment experts. "Even if the poison takes effect on me right now, I will kill this man!" His expression was filled with murder and resolve.

The person he wanted to kill was Liu Daoyun of the Cold Wind Sect. But there were others present from the three great Sects other than the Cold Wind Sect. They, of course, would not stand by idly and watch Meng Hao be poisoned to death before opening the Immortal's Cave. They would not allow small matters from other Sects to interfere with their interests.

The others flew forward, blocking the path of the Cold Wind Sect Foundation Establishment experts.

"Fellow Daoist Zhang, there's no need to pay attention to the trifling matters of Qi Condensation Cultivators. Come, come, we haven't seen each other for years. Why don’t we chat a bit about the old days?”

“Correct. Brother Chen, we haven’t seen each other for three years. I have a few questions about Cultivation that I was hoping to discuss with you.” The four Cold Wind Sect Foundation Establishment Cultivator’s faces grew livid when they heard all of these words. They were about to speak when suddenly Liu Daoyun let out another horrified scream.

Meng Hao’s fingers flickered in incantation patterns, and two hundred flying swords filled the sky. They descended upon Liu Daoyun with ear-piercing whistling sounds. Meng Hao took another step forward, and flashed an incantation pattern. A Flame Python emerged, several dozen meters long. Its roars reverberated out across the square. Blood sprayed from Liu Daoyun’s mouth as his crystalline sword shattered into pieces. He retreated backward constantly, desperation filling his eyes.

On the other hand, Meng Hao’s eyes shone with killing intent and determination. He flew forward, and a sword appeared in his right hand. It was the wooden sword, and it sped toward Liu Daoyun with unstoppable force.

“Get out of my way!” The faces of the four Foundation Establishment experts changed. They howled and attempted to force their way through to block Meng Hao.

“This man tried to kill me many times. This is a personal grudge. If anyone gets in my way, I’ll kill myself before opening the Patriarch’s Immortal’s Cave!” As his voice rang out, he completely ignored the four Foundation Establishment experts. Without a shred of hesitation, he shot toward Liu Daoyun, the wooden sword outstretched, clearly intending to slay him.

“Patriarchs, save me!!” screamed Liu Daoyun shrilly. It seemed the Foundation Establishment experts were about to attack, when a dry cough could be heard. It came from the old woman. Shock filled the hearts of the four experts, and they instantly stood stock still, their faces pale. The dry cough had slammed into their hearts like a lightning bolt from the Heavens, sending their minds spinning.

“This is too much!” said the red-faced old man from the Cold Wind Sect. He snorted, and a cold look appeared in his eye, which shot out toward Meng Hao. Even as this happen, Lord Revelation let out a hearty laugh. He flicked his sleeve; the cold look that had been shooting toward Meng Hao instantly fell apart.

“You!” said the red-faced old man, his eyes filled with rage.

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# Chapter 80: Meng Hao’s Scheming

“Fellow Daoist, there’s no need to lose your temper,” said Lord Revelation, smiling. “As far as these trifling issues amongst the junior generation, why don’t we just watch on?”

As these words were exchanged between the two of them, Liu Daoyun let out another miserable cry. Meng Hao stepped forward, and with the slice of a sword, sent Liu Daoyun’s left arm flying off from his body. Blood sprayed everywhere. More flying swords flew out from Meng Hao’s bag of holding. One after another, they stabbed into his opponent. Blood spread out everywhere. In the space of an instant, Liu Daoyun’s body was penetrated by a dozen swords.

Leaning up toward him, Meng Hao quietly said, “If I say that you will die this day, then die you shall.”

Despair filled Liu Daoyun’s wide eyes. Blood seeped out of his mouth.

The four Foundation Establishment Cultivators watched in shock as the scene unfolded. They were especially astounded by Meng Hao’s vicious expression.

“Enough!” said one of the Core Formation Eccentrics from the Cold Wind Sect, his face extremely unsightly. He waved his finger, and suddenly the spiritual energy in the area seemed to churn into motion and race toward Meng Hao. It wrapped around his body, leaving his own spiritual energy untouched, but pulling him away from Liu Daoyun.

As Meng Hao drifted away from him, hope gleamed within Liu Daoyun’s eyes, despite his severe wounds.

“Boom!” said Meng Hao coolly, the killing intent in his eyes flashing.

At the same time as the word left his mouth, the dozen flying swords impaled in Liu Daoyun's body suddenly detonated. A blood-curdling scream echoed out in all directions. Liu Daoyun's body was torn to pieces. Not even his head was left intact as chunks of flesh flew out in all directions.

As for the four Foundation Establishment Cultivators, the pupils of their eyes shrank to dots. They stared at the gore, and then at Meng Hao, whose face was expressionless. They would never forget this moment for the rest of their lives.

Especially memorable was the speed with which Meng Hao attacked, and the decisiveness in his voice. It revealed that his way of thinking was anything but ordinary. He had turned everyone who was not a member of the Cold Wind Sect into his assistants. The grisly result revealed how stubborn he truly was.

Anyone else might be able to think of such a plan, but few people would have the gall to pull it off. As of this day, they had witnessed Meng Hao's first true kill!

"He's dead, you can release me now," said Meng Hao, his voice indifferent.

The Core Formation Eccentrics floated in the air, staring down at Meng Hao. His resoluteness to kill left a deep impression in their hearts.

Even Lord Revelation took a long look at him. Everything that had happened just now gave him a glimpse of the cruelty Meng Hao was capable of.

The Core Formation Patriarch from the Cold Wind Sect who currently held Meng Hao bound had a grim look on his face. Meng Hao had killed Liu Daoyun right in front of him, even after he had intervened. He had lost face because of this. With a mere thought, he could rip Meng Hao to pieces in much the same fashion as Liu Daoyun had died. But considering the expressions on the faces of the surrounding Cultivators, that was not an option.

With a cold snort, he flicked his sleeve, and the invisible bonds around Meng Hao disappeared. But he still hit Meng Hao with an invisible attack, causing him to spit out a mouthful of blood. Meng Hao looked at him, his face pale, but his eyes shining with a dark look.

“Liu Daoyun constantly ridiculed me and swore to kill me,” said Meng Hao, looking at the Core Formation Eccentric who had injured him just now. “I of the junior generation had no choice but to attack first. I request that you members of the senior generation preside over manners in an impartial manner. At the moment, I am somewhat worried that the Cold Wind Sect will withhold their antidote pill. Could you please produce the pill so that I of the junior generation can rest at ease when I open Patriarch Reliance’s Immortal’s cave?”

The eyes of the four Foundation Establishment Cultivators flashed as they suddenly seemed to comprehend how cruel and treacherous Meng Hao was.

The Core Formation Eccentrics had been around a long time, and their eyes flickered upon hearing Meng Hao’s words. They instantly understood what he was thinking, and they frowned as they looked toward the two Cold Wind Sect Core Formation experts.

Their faces were as cold as ice.

“With a scheming heart like yours, you will find it hard to stay behind in the State of Zhao,” said Lord Revelation. “I have an opening for a servant, Meng Hao. You should consider it.” His eyes twinkled as he looked at Meng Hao. His smile seemed as grim and mysterious as the decoration on his long robe, a solitary eye set in the middle of a mystical square.

The red-faced old man from the Cold Wind Sect harrumphed. The three great Sects didn’t usually get along, and at the moment, he was well aware that the surrounding Cultivators were gazing at him with flashing eyes. He didn’t want to cause further complications, but in his heart, he had marked Meng Hao for death. He waved his right hand, and a white-colored medicinal pill appeared and shot toward Meng Hao.

It emitted a fragrant aroma. From his study of the ancient jade slip, Meng Hao could tell at a glance that this was the antidote for the Frigid Corpse Pill.

He grabbed it. He didn’t eat it, though, but put it into his bag of holding. Then he took a breath and headed toward the peak of the East Mountain.

As for the experts from the three Great Sects, they watched him closely, ready to make a move in an instant if he tried to do anything out of the ordinary. Lord Revelation floated next to them, eyes glittering as he gazed at the East Mountain.

Meng Hao didn’t soar directly up to the top of the peak. The Eccentrics would just have to be patient. Meng Hao walked the path up to the East Mountain, passing Wang Tengfei’s Immortal’s Cave. He also caught sight of Elder Brother Chen’s and Elder Sister Xu’s caves. Images from the past coalesced in his mind, and he let out a sigh.

Finally, he stopped in front of the Immortal’s Cave that had belonged to him. He looked at it quietly, then moved on, eventually reaching the peak of the East Mountain, and the Reliance Sect’s main temple hall.

The setting sun shone onto the hall, making it look very dignified. Taking broad steps, Meng Hao strode inside. His gaze swept over the statues inside, coming to rest on the statue of Patriarch Reliance.

The day that Patriarch Reliance had frightened off the Cultivators from the other Sects, he had told Meng Hao of the secret method to open the way to his Immortal’s Cave. Now, over a year later, Meng Hao had finally returned.

The appointed year had already passed, actually. As Meng Hao approached the statue of Patriarch Reliance, the experts from the State of Zhao watched him from behind.

He took a deep breath, then lifted his right hand and pushed his finger against a spot on the statue. Every few seconds, he would push his finger against the same spot. Again and again he pushed, until he had pushed it one hundred seventy-nine times. Suddenly, the temple hall began to shudder. The statues shook violently, then shattered, causing the entire hall to collapse into pieces. Then, a brilliant light shined out from the statue of Patriarch Reliance, sweeping away all the debris and rubble, leaving only the statue itself.

Underneath the statue was a stone platform. When the surrounding Cultivators caught sight of this, their eyes shone with anticipation.

The statue radiated an incredible power, and its eyes shone as if they were alive. This caused the Cultivators to be even more excited, although none of them dared to approach the statue.

Meng Hao took a few steps back, then cupped his hands and bowed deeply. “Disciple Meng Hao wishes to disturb the Patriarch’s slumber. Patriarch, can you please open the door to your Immortal’s Cave?” He lifted his head, and his eyes glittered. His back to the State of Zhao experts, his lips moved as he murmured some complicated sounds.

“Converge!”

The instant the word left his mouth, the statue began to vibrate, and an even more brilliant light shone from its eyes. The light grew intensely bright, and a fierce wind kicked up. Looks of astonishment covered the faces of the State of Zhao experts.

Cracks appeared on the surface of the statue, more and more. Within the space of a few breaths, it exploded with a bang, sending pieces flying around in all directions. Now, the stone platform which the statue had stood on began to issue a blinding light.

The blinding light issued by the rotating spell caused the State of Zhao experts to breath heavily. Anyone familiar with spells like this could tell that it was a sealing spell which was being unbound.

A thunderous roar echoed out, and a wide beam of light shot up into the sky. Then the beam began to twist around until it formed a giant ring.

The inside of the ring grew blurry, and then transformed into a vortex, a passageway to another location.

As soon as the ring of light formed, Meng Hao leaped into the air and shot forward. He disappeared into the ring. Behind him, the experts from the State of Zhao hesitated, their faces twisting.

“Foundation Establishment disciples, you go first,” said Lord Revelation. The six Core Formation Cultivators nodded their agreement, and the dozen or so Foundation Establishment Cultivators gritted their teeth and flew forward. They disappeared into the vortex.

After the space of ten or so breaths, Lord Revelation and the Core Formation Eccentrics exchanged glances. One member from each of the three great Sects went next. After they entered, the remaining Eccentrics as well as Lord Revelation followed.

Upon entering the vortex, their minds spun, and they began to breathe hard. Looking around, the first thing they caught sight of was an enormous stone stele. Golden characters were inscribed onto the stele. The characters at the very top instantly sent their eyes shining.

“Sublime Spirit Scripture!!”

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# Chapter 81: The Patriarch’s Immortal’s Cave

In Patriarch Reliance’s meditation zone, all of the Cultivators from the State of Zhao were staring at the stone stele which had been left behind by Chen Fan 1. With great enthusiasm, they copied the text onto jade slips.

“This stone stele is the Sublime Spirit Scripture!”

“I never imagined it would be so simple to get! Haha! Even though I’ve already established my Foundation, with this scripture, I can form a second Core sea. With this Qi Condensation manual, I can raise the Dao pillars of my Foundation from Fractured to Cracked. It might even be possible to form a Flawless Foundation!”

Lord Revelation approached, followed by the dignified old woman. “No,” she said, “only half of the scripture is here….” She could tell the truth of it from a single glance.

Lord Revelation continued forward a few steps, his eyes shining with a strange light.

Suddenly, the stele, as if it couldn’t withstand being the subject of so many gazes, began to fracture. Popping sounds could be heard as cracks spread out across it. Everyone watched on in shock.

As the cracks spread, the golden characters faded, to be replaced by another set of characters, these ones dim and barely readable. These characters were the second half of the Qi Condensation manual of the Sublime Spirit Scripture.

Before everyone could finish reading the text, a boom rang out and the stone stele exploded, fragmenting into eight pieces.

Eight multicolored beams of light could be seen as the pieces flew off in various directions.

The onlookers were shocked, but immediately scattered about. The seven Core Formation Eccentrics each shot after one of the pieces, as did Lord Revelation. The eighth piece was left to the ten or so Foundation Establishment experts to deal with.

Within an instant, everything was thrown into chaos. Upon scattering, the newcomers discovered that Patriarch Reliance's meditation zone was filled with magical items, spirit stones and medicinal pills. This of course caused quite a sensation among them. Unfortunately, all of the items were protected with restrictive spells. Unless they could force the spells open, the items were untouchable.

Suddenly, roaring sounds erupted within the meditation zone. Within the gray light appeared multiple figures. With crazed appearances, they charged toward the intruders.

As for Meng Hao, as soon as the chaos broke out, he pulled out a Vorpal Jade Blood Crystal and stepped off to the side. He had used quite a few Blood Crystals the last time he was here, but in the end had two left over, which he'd stuffed into his bag of holding. After pulling one of them out, the crazed automatons which had suddenly appeared refused to approach him.

"I've brought everyone here. Now let's see how Patriarch Reliance deals with them." Meng Hao's eyes glittered coldly. He didn't have any good feelings whatsoever about these people. He watched as they went chasing after the fragments of the stone stele, a cold smile on his face. He couldn't wait to see them dead.

Of course, the stone stele was a fake. He'd known that the instant it had appeared, a year ago. Exercising caution, he slowly walked forward, avoiding the other Cultivators. He wasn't sure of the exact location where

Patriarch Reliance sat in secluded meditation. But he knew that he couldn't leave this place until the Patriarch helped him dispel the poison from his body.

Also, there was the reward that the Patriarch had spoken of.

Shortly afterwards, Meng Hao stopped and looked around. Booms filled the air and explosions shook the ground. Off in the distance, he could see the dignified old woman, her hair flying about in disarray as she used one magical art after another to batter a glowing shield in front of her.

Within the glow of the shield was one of the stone stele fragments.

The old woman was of the Core Formation stage. Her attacks caused everything around her to shake wildly. Her magical arts shot out one after another like a silver river, sending out bone-piercing coldness which caused everything around her to freeze into pieces of ice. Within the river, there could be heard what sounded like the shrieks of countless wailing souls from the yellow springs of the underworld. It was as if the river itself had sprung from the nine hells.

She flicked her sleeve, and the murky image of a mountain appeared, bearing down toward the glowing shield. The mountain, which seemed to be composed of stars, solidified into a burning point, which then became black. Despite being black in color, it radiated a bright light.

In a spectacular display, the river and mountain began to interlock with each other.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. The silver strands which surrounded the old woman made it seem as if she had the power to destroy heaven and earth. She could definitely slay him as easily as stepping on an ant. There wouldn't even be a need for her to use the river from hell or mountain made from stars.

"So this is Core Formation…." Meng Hao watched closely, at the same time moving a bit further away. He didn't dare to get any closer.

The woman let out a howl, and an explosion reverberated out. Despite being some distance away, Meng Hao's body was shaken, and he spit up some blood. He moved back further, watching as the woman spit out a round pill from her mouth. The pill was composed of three intertwined colors. As soon as it appeared, Meng Hao felt a sensation as if everything in the world was about to crumble to pieces. In his eyes, this multicolored pill was the beginning and end of everything.

Shining brightly, the pill shot toward the shield, whereupon a massive explosion rang out. Meng Hao continued to retreat backward, his face pale.

"A Core Formation Cultivator could wipe me from existence in the blink of an eye!" As he moved backwards, he thought back to the Dao Protector Wang Xifan 2 from the Wang Clan.

"I'm at the ninth level of Qi Condensation. But even if I could get to the tenth… I would be so weak I couldn't stand up to a single bit of battle magic from a Core Formation Cultivator!" He stared at the proceedings, continuing to retreat.

"All these people are over one hundred years of age each. In terms of wisdom and experience, I can't match up to them…. It's a good thing my schemes just now all worked, otherwise…." When he thought about this, his heart twitched with fear.

"After the Core Formation stage is the Nascent Soul stage. I wonder how truly powerful a Nascent Soul Cultivator is…." When he thought of this, his heart began to thump, and he thought about Eccentric Song, whom he still had never met.

"What is the level of Patriarch Reliance's Cultivation base again? I remember the Sect Leader talked about it before. He's at the Spirit Severing stage… That's even beyond the Nascent Soul stage!" Meng Hao began to pant, and a look of envy appeared in his eyes. Stubbornness filled his heart. He desired to be powerful. He knew that only by being powerful could he avoid being an insect that others could trample upon and crush. Only by being powerful could he achieve his desires and fulfil his dreams.

On a more practical level, only by being powerful would he be able to survive in the Cultivation world!

Meng Hao watched in awe as the power of a Core Formation Cultivator was unleashed. Massive explosions filled Patriarch Reliance’s meditation zones. The explosions did not sound out from one location, but from seven. The entire area filled with thunderous roars, and the various protective spells appeared to be rippling.

The explosions caused by the seven Core Formation Eccentrics seemed as if they would cause the entire place to collapse.

“The Patriarch just said to bring the State of Zhao experts here. He never said what to do after that….” Meng Hao hesitated, and he considered making an escape. But then, a massive roaring sound could be heard, and far off in the distance a beam of light shot up.

From this distance it didn’t look very thick. However, Meng Hao could tell that it must be approximately thirty meters in diameter. It filled the sky of the Immortal’s Cave with its power.

A laugh echoed out from the same direction as the beam of light, and Meng Hao recognized Lord Revelation’s voice. He had obviously broken the shield and acquired one of the fragments of the stone stele.

Just then, another boom rang out, and another beam of light ascended up. This beam shot up from the direction of the dignified old woman. Her hair flew about wildly as the shield shattered. She stepped forward and took the stone stele fragment.

Meanwhile, within the secluded meditation zone, Patriarch Reliance’s eyes shined and he breathed rapidly. His body was gaunt and wizened, and he stared fixedly at seven oil lamps which were spread out in front of him. At first glance, they seemed to be scattered about randomly, but upon closer inspection it was clear that they had been organized in a mystical pattern.

Just now, two of the lamps had been extinguished. The other five flickered weakly.

“The kid was a few months late. I was starting to get more and more nervous. But in the end, he brought the people here!” Excitement filled his eyes as he looked at the oil lamps.

“Extinguish, dammit! These people are so weak. After all this time, they’ve only managed to extinguish two sealing lamps. I’m expending power from my own Cultivation base to weaken them so that the Core Formation level people can handle them. But they still haven’t succeeded. Dammit! Without my training these State of Zhao brats don’t know how to practice Cultivation. Back in the day, I would go beat them up every once in a while. Those people had much better Cultivation bases.” Thinking back to the old days, Patriarch Reliance let out a sigh. His desire to break out of the secluded meditation zone was even stronger than before.

“After I absorb these peoples’ Cultivation bases and scour their memories, I should be able to achieve enlightenment and succeed in my second severing. Then I can carry out my master plan! Dammit! For every severing, I need to achieve Dao enlightenment. Upon success, the severing can proceed. But afterwards, I will be incredibly weak. Without a bit of good fortune to help me recover, the severing can lead to death, and becoming one with the Dao.” Patriarch Reliance ground his teeth. But as he thought of his master plan, a look of hope gleamed in his eyes. It was a look that had existed there for many, many years.

About this time, an explosion thundered out, and another of the lamps in front of him went out. The look of anticipation in his eyes grew stronger.

As for Meng Hao, he stood outside in the meditation zone, trembling with fear. He wasn’t walking around any more. Instead, he had concealed himself in a distant corner, a look of vigilance on his face.

He was waiting for Patriarch Reliance to appear, put an end to these people, then dispel the poison in his body and give him his reward.

A short time later, another thunderous roar could be heard. Lord Revelation and the dignified old woman had joined the others in their struggles. The remaining shields soon broke. The third, fourth, and fifth shields broke….

In the time it takes an incense stick to burn, thunderous explosions rang out constantly. Soon, seven pillars of light shot up into the air.

Finally, the seven Core Formation Cultivators transformed into beams of light as they converged on the final shield, which was currently surrounded by the Foundation Establishment Cultivators.

They combined their powers, and within the space of about ten breaths, a boom shook everything, and an eighth pillar of light climbed upwards. The whole Immortal’s Cave seemed on the verge of collapse.

At this exact moment, amidst the roaring and shaking, massive cracks appeared in the ground. The roaring grew even more intense. The ground seemed to ripple, as if it were going to collapse into nothing.

The experts from the State of Zhao looked shocked at this sudden event. They flew up into the air and looked down at the collapsing earth. Within a moment, the shaking ceased. It was then that they noticed that all of the rubble and cracks had formed into… a massive face!

The face belonged to none other than Patriarch Reliance!

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# Chapter 82: The Great Art of Demonic Life

Upon the forehead of the giant face appeared seven ancient-looking oil lamps, all of them extinguished. A massive and ancient aura emanated out in all directions. The exquisite aura seemed to contain the essence of heaven and earth.

When the giant face appeared, the State of Zhao Cultivators all looked shocked, and some of them made to flee.

“Don’t panic,” said Lord Revelation, his voice booming out. “I knew from the beginning that Patriarch Reliance wasn’t dead. He’s incredibly weak, and we are of the Core Formation stage. If we join hands, we can easily wipe him out.” Everyone from the State of Zhao stopped moving.

A laugh rang out from the giant face, hoarse and potent. Filled with crazed excitement, it pierced the ears and hearts of everyone present.

As the laughter echoed out, the faces of the floating Cultivators changed. Without saying a word, the dignified old woman turned and shot toward the exit, panting.

Even as she attempted to fly away, a massive, indistinct hand popped into being next to her and wrapped itself around her body. A boom rang out, along with a blood-curdling shriek, as the hand crushed her to death. Everything shook. Meng Hao looked on in shock.

The giant hand opened, and inside could be seen a three-colored mixed Core. The hand made a flicking motion, and the Core shot toward the first of the seven lamps below on the ground. The lamp was now alight, burning the Core as fuel and emanating flames composed of life force!

Flickering firelight emanated out, filling the darkness with light.

“We cannot flee!” barked Lord Revelation, his face growing pale. “Kill what is left of Patriarch Reliance, and our spoils of victory will be immense!” The other Cultivators had looks of astonishment on their faces after watching the miserable fate of the old woman. They clenched their jaws.

Suddenly, a booming sound could be heard. The area around the mouth of the giant face suddenly collapsed, and a black, shadowy figure emerged.

Laughter accompanied the figure, echoing out in the Immortal’s Cave.

“Patriarch Reliance!” The echo of the laughter thundered out, and the Immortal’s Cave shook. The shocked Cultivators coughed up blood.

Amidst the blackness, Patriarch Reliance could be seen. His body was gaunt, almost nothing but skin and bones, as if he had just climbed up from the grave. His eyes were dim and dark, yet seemed to be filled with ferocity and power.

Up above them, clouds roiled, and around Patriarch Reliance’s body, ripples began to emanate out. It seemed as if he were standing on top of the world. His power, arrogance, and thirst for blood struck fear into the hearts of the other Cultivators.

“Patriarch Reliance….” The red-faced old man from the Cold Wind Sect suddenly looked pale, and his body trembled. He was a Core Formation Cultivator, but facing Patriarch Reliance, he was as powerless as a cricket. The only reason he had dared to come to this place for the Sublime Spirit Scripture was because Lord Revelation had divined that the Patriarch was weak to the point of death. At the moment, however, Patriarch Reliance seemed anything but weak.

“Revelation, things aren’t settled between us!” he said, spinning and rushing toward the exit. The others with him moved to follow, one by one. Their bodies transformed into prismatic beams as they shot away.

Meng Hao stood down below staring up at them, his fists clenched.

Patriarch Reliance laughed, and it was filled with both excitement and bloodlust. His body flickered, and suddenly he was floating in mid-air. He moved his hand in a downward motion, and a booming sound filled the air. A massive pressure pushed downwards, and the red-faced old man and his followers spat up blood. They fell down to the ground, their bodies no longer under their own control.

Patriarch Reliance’s body flickered again, and then he was standing in front of the red-faced old man. The old man’s pupils shrank in astonishment as Patriarch Reliance’s body suddenly fused with his own.

A blood-curdling scream sounded out, causing the scalps of the onlookers to go numb.

The red-faced old man’s body began to wither. His hair fell out as his flesh and blood dried up. A blackness appeared that seemed capable of consuming all blood and life. In the blink of an eye, it had completely swallowed him up.

His skin grew as thin as paper, and his bones began to crumble. Soon, his entire person had turned into a mist of blood, which then coalesced into another figure; Patriarch Reliance. Except now, he was not as gaunt as he had been moments ago. His figure was more fleshed out, and a slight death aura radiated out from him. It seemed as if some of his life force had been restored. In his hand, he held the red-faced old man’s three-colored mixed Core. He flicked his sleeve, and it shot into the second oil lamp.

“The Great Art of Demonic Life!”

“It’s the legendary Great Art of Demonic Life! Unending life! The Great Art of Demonic Life which can borrow bodies and spirits!” A buzz of voices sounded out. When the remaining Core Foundation Cultivators and the trembling Foundation Establishment Cultivators watched the scene unfold, looks of despair appeared on their faces.

“This is a Demonic magic from the Demon Sealing Sect, before the Sect’s name changed!” A strange look flashed through Lord Revelation’s eyes.

Meng Hao watched in astonishment. This was the second time he had heard of the Demon Sealing Sect. The first time had been from the lips of Shangguan Xiu. At the time, Meng Hao hadn’t paid it much heed. How could he believe what Shangguan Xiu had said? If Meng Hao truly was connected to such prestigious name, how could he have so many enemies in the State of Zhao?

At that time, Meng Hao had committed the name to memory, with the intention of getting further corroboration later.

Now, having seen the shocking events of moments ago, he’d heard the name again. Currently, the three words “Demon Sealing Sect” seemed to float in his head.

He thought back to the rumors he’d heard when in the Sect. It was said that a thousand years ago, the Reliance Sect had gone by a different name. However, no one had ever spoken the original name. Now that he thought about it, it seemed as if the name were taboo within the Sect.

He thought of the Demonic beasts in the black mountain outside of the Sect. Then he thought of the North Sea, and grew even more confused. When he had encountered the North Sea for the first time, why had it helped him?

Even though he didn’t completely understand everything, at least now he was gaining a bit more understanding.

“Demon Sealing Sect….” Meng Hao took a deep breath, thinking to the Demonic magic that Shangguan Xiu had used, and the fearsome power that had erupted out of Mount Daqing.

“If Shangguan Xiu reached Foundation Establishment, the power of his Demonic magic would have been extremely potent….” Meng Hao’s heart began to race as he realized that as a member of the Reliance Inner Sect, he was also… an Inner Sect disciple of the ancient Demon Sealing Sect!

A new question appeared in Meng Hao's mind. "Why did Patriarch Reliance change the name of the Sect?"

As Meng Hao considered these things, the slaughter above him continued. Patriarch Reliance's body had transformed into a fiery mist that filled the air. From the cries that rang out, it was clear that the Foundation Establishment Cultivators were completely incapable of escape. One by one, their bodies spasmed and began to dry up. Their life force was sucked out of them until they turned into nothing more than bones, which in turn were crumbled into dust. Every thread of life force shot toward Patriarch Reliance.

The remaining five Core Formation Cultivators couldn't flee either. Under the command of Lord Revelation, they produced various magical items and prepared magical techniques, launching them toward Patriarch Reliance in a last ditch effort to defeat him.

The four Foundation Establishment Cultivators from the Cold Wind Sect had died miserably, their bodies reduced to little more than dust. Their counterparts from the Winding Stream Sect and the Upright Evening Sect suffered the same fate. These were people who could shake the Cultivation world of the State of Zhao by simply stamping a foot. Yet here, they were as weak as children.

A partially intact head rolled to a stop in front of Meng Hao's feet. His face grew pale. The bloody slaughter was causing his heart to tremble. Looking down at the head, he recognized the face as that of the Foundation Establishment expert who had attempted to kill him a year ago in the Reliance Sect. A white aura emanated off of the head. Within moments, the head dissolved into blood, which soaked into the ground.

Just then, a horrified scream rang out from one of the Winding Stream Sect's Core Formation Eccentrics. His body began to rot. He continued to scream as he dried up. Even before he was dead, a third three-colored mixed Core flew out to land in the third lamp, which then began to burn brightly.

As of now, Patriarch Reliance’s body was no longer gaunt and shriveled. Instead, he was a middle-aged man.

His long hair swept about his tall frame. A dignified air emanated out from him, making him seem powerful to the extreme. And yet, buried deep within that power, was a Demonic aura.

However, there were still areas on his chest that were still withered, as well as some parts of his face and the rest of his body. There, the flesh seemed to twitch and writhe; clearly he was not completely recovered yet.

“I can already use the full power of my Nascent Soul,” he said with a smile. Combined with his partially recovered, writhing skin, the smile was utterly gruesome. Four people were left to observe this. With the exception of Lord Revelation, their faces drained of blood. One of them lifted up a trembling hand. In it was a jade slip, which he snapped. Instantly, his body began to grow blurry; it seemed he was attempting to teleport away.

At the same time, one of the Core Formation Cultivators from the Winding Stream Sect retreated rapidly. Suddenly, a burning fire shot out from his feet, which then wrapped around his body, enveloping him. He seemed to turn into a burning pillar of light as he shot away.

The other person, a Grand Elder from the Cold Wind Sect, suddenly seemed to be growing younger. His face, originally filled with wrinkles, now suddenly appeared to be middle-aged. His aura billowing, he took three steps, during which time he transformed into a beam of light.

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# Chapter 83: Patriarch, What About Disciple’s Poison…?

As he took the first step, blood and Qi roiled, and he was no longer middle-aged, but a teenager, and he moved three times faster than he had been before.

He took a second step, and his body quivered. His robes fell off, as he had turned into an infant. Again his speed tripled. His body was almost entirely transparent at this point, and a three-colored light began to envelop him.

By his third step, his infant’s body had shrunken into a spinning Core. Again, his speed tripled as he shot toward the vortex exit.

These three people were all Core Formation Eccentrics. Obviously, they would not come to such a dangerous place without taking certain precautions. As for everyone else who had died already, things had just happened too quickly. As for these three, if even one escaped, he could spread word to the experts from the great Sects in the Southern Domain, and they would come to slay Patriarch Reliance.

All of this took some time to describe, but happened extremely quickly. As the three of them attempted to make their escape, Lord Revelation chose to stay put, his eyes flickering. His right hand flashed an incantation sign. The large eye on his robe suddenly seemed to come to life. Light sprang forth from it, shining out to target, not Patriarch Reliance, but the three fleeing Core Formation Cultivators.

“You’ve overstepped your bounds,” said Patriarch Reliance in an awe-inspiring voice. He stamped his foot into the ground, whereupon ripples spread out to fill the air. A horrified cry filled the air as the Cultivator from the Winding Stream Sect, who was just about to make his escape, was suddenly thrust back down and into the fourth oil lamp.

At the same time, Patriarch Reliance’s right hand slammed onto the ground. It trembled as a restrictive spell appeared, out from which flew a thin band of black of light that turned into a black skull. The skull circled around Patriarch Reliance, and then shot toward the Cultivator who was attempting to escape via teleportation jade slip.

As the ripples of teleportation spread out, the black skull cackled evilly, then disappeared.

Next, Patriarch Reliance lifted his left hand toward the Core which was shooting toward the vortex. Just as it seemed it was about to enter the vortex, a bloodcurdling cry sounded out and the Core exploded. But the power of the explosion remained contained as it flew back toward Patriarch Reliance.

He snatched it out of the air, and within the white glow could be seen the shape of the Cultivator’s body, struggling wildly. Patriarch Reliance squeezed the white glow and it slowly congealed into a three-colored Core. He flicked his sleeve, sending it to light the fifth oil lamp.

At the same time, he waved his left hand, slamming into the light that currently shot forth from the eye on Lord Revelation’s robe.

A boom filled the air, and a large amount of cracks appeared on the restrictive spell that covered the ground. Blood dribbled from the sides of Lord Revelation’s mouth, and his face grew pale, but his eyes didn’t contain the least bit of panic. Instead, they shone with a strange light as he quickly retreated backward.

Massive amounts of life force streamed toward Patriarch Reliance, infusing his body. His face was almost completely recovered. He stood there looking at Lord Revelation, hands clasped behind his back.

“Whose Nascent Soul stage clone are you? You dare to mix with these Core Formation whelps who plot against me?”

“You truly live up to your reputation, Patriarch Reliance,” said Lord Revelation with a smile, his voice hoarse. “You could tell with a single look that I’m a clone. However, I’m not here to plot against you. Without me, these Core Formation Cultivators wouldn’t have dared to come here. Actually, there is a matter regarding Heavenly fortune that I wish to discuss with you.” His lips quivered a bit as he finished speaking.

Patriarch Reliance frowned, a thoughtful look in his eyes.

Suddenly, something black flashed up above them. The flying skull reappeared. In its mouth was a three-colored Core. It flew to Patriarch Reliance’s side. He flicked his sleeve, and the Core flew to light the sixth oil lamp.

Having seen all this, Meng Hao’s heart trembled. He looked at Lord Revelation. It turned out, he was actually just a clone, and yet was at the Nascent Soul stage! Hearing what he said, Meng Hao realized that the goings-on here were more complicated than he had imagined.

“If his clone is at the Nascent Soul stage, then… what stage is his true self at?” Meng Hao took a deep breath, thinking of the three-colored poison pill, his face twisting.

“Patriarch Reliance,” said Lord Revelation with a smile, “the Southern Domain is doomed to fall into chaos. What are your thoughts on this matter?”

“You mean the crap about the Dawn Immortal? I couldn’t care less. But since you’re here with your Nascent Soul, I might as well take the opportunity to replenish myself a bit more.” His eyes glittered as he took a step forward and raised his hand toward Lord Revelation.

“Patriarch Reliance, you really should think things through more clearly. You’re a simple Spirit Severing Cultivator, do you really dare to defy the Dawn Immortal?” Lord Revelation’s face fell as he watched Patriarch Reliance lifting his finger. A boom resounded out as a powerful mist came into being and began to surround him. Patriarch Reliance let out a cold snort.

The mist seethed, and the roaring sound mixed together with the howls of Lord Revelation until it seemed that the Immortal's Cave would collapse. At first, it seemed as if the restrictive spells nearby would disintegrate, but they began to repair themselves before that could happen.

Meng Hao watched on in shock as the restrictive spells fluctuated between collapse and repair. The mist lifted Lord Revelation higher into the air. He let out a blood-curdling scream as the mist squeezed, causing blood to squirt out of his body and drench his clothes. His eyes were filled with hatred.

"Demonic art, Wolf Smoke!" Patriarch Reliance's grim voice rang out into the mist. The mist seemed to devour Lord Revelation. Deep inside, a brilliant light shone out, and the vague image of flames and smoke could be seen. Nothing could be seen clearly, though. Only blood-curdling screams could be heard.

"Patriarch Reliance, I can do without this clone, but don't think it will be so easy to consume me!"

The images and feelings seemed to lash against Meng Hao. This battle could no longer be described in terms of magical techniques. He couldn't even think of any words that would do. Patriarch Reliance's powerful voice and the howls of Lord Revelation made Meng Hao realize how much beyond the Core Formation stage this battle was.

He stared blankly, his mind reeling, as if a new door along the pathway of life had been opened. This was what being a Cultivator truly was. This was the true path of defiance against the Heavens. This was the true all-powerful might of a Cultivator.

A short time passed, during which the booming continued to sound out. The mist suddenly contracted, then returned to surround Patriarch Reliance. When he looked closely, Meng Hao was shocked to see that Patriarch Reliance's features now closely resembled Lord Revelation's.

It was almost as if Patriarch Reliance had occupied Lord Revelation's body. Then the features began to melt down until Lord Revelation was completely gone, fully absorbed.

An immeasurable amount of black sealing marks rotated around Patriarch Reliance. As he floated there in the air, he exuded an extremely bizarre air.

In his hand he held the small image of a person. Its face was twisted ferociously, but its eyes were shut. It looked … like Lord Revelation!

This was his Nascent Soul!

The mist dispersed, and everything was quiet. No more breakage appeared on the restrictive spells. They seemed to be in the process of restoring themselves rapidly. From the look of it, it wouldn't take very long for them to recover completely. Patriarch Reliance flicked his sleeve, and Lord Revelation's Nascent Soul shot into the seventh oil lamp. The Nascent Soul acted as oil, and Lord Revelation's life force became flames as the lamp burned.

Lamplight filled the Immortal's Cave, illuminating everything with a flickering light that felt both ghastly and horrific.

Patriarch Reliance looked around, and his gaze came to fall on Meng Hao. He gave him a slight nod, and then turned to head back into the large fissure in the ground.

Meng Hao strode forward several paces nervously. Clasping hands, he bowed, and in a loud voice said, "Patriarch, in order to bring those people here, Disciple consumed some poison pills. Patriarch, can you please dispel the poison?"

"It's just some poison, I can dispel it as easily as taking a breath. Just wait a bit. I need to absorb this Nascent Soul, as well as this guy's true self. Then I'll dispel the poison for you. Don't worry about it. Oh, you did pretty well. I have a reward for you. Take this. This is your prize." Without so much as looking back, Patriarch Reliance flicked his sleeve, sending a low-grade Spirit Stone shooting toward Meng Hao. His body had already landed on the ground, and he was beginning to step into the fissure.

Meng Hao stared blankly at the completely ordinary low-grade Spirit Stone. He clenched his jaw and then spoke again.

“The reward is a low-grade Spirit Stone?”

“Low-grade Spirit Stone?” he said coolly. “That’s right. It’s a low-grade Spirit Stone. But if you look closely, is it really a low-grade Spirit Stone?” He jumped toward the fissure.

Meng Hao gaped in astonishment, looking back at the Spirit Stone in his hand. As he watched Patriarch Reliance disappearing into the fissure, he spoke again. “Patriarch, you… how long before you can dispel Disciple’s poison?”

“Not very long. It’ll be soon. I only have three, maybe five hundred years of work to do. Okay, well I need to go into secluded meditation now.” He muttered to himself about the difficulty of dispelling poison, and the fact that his Cultivation base wasn’t completely recovered yet. Based on what it would cost him, it wouldn’t be worth it. Furthermore, he had his master plan to think about. As for the Spirit Stone… it really was just a common low-grade Spirit Stone. He didn’t have any qualms about deceiving members of the junior generation. He had done such things many times in the past. He had cheated many Cultivators back during the days of the Demon Sealing Sect. Giving another dry cough to try to gloss everything over, he lowered his head and disappeared into the fissure. As soon as he entered, it closed up behind him.

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# Chapter 84: Meng Hao, What Are You Doing?

“Patriarch, Disciple went through innumerable trials and tribulations to bring those people here. I don’t mind if there’s no reward, but this poison….” A look of indignation had appeared on Meng Hao’s face. But before he could even finish speaking, the fissure in the ground closed up completely. There was no trace that it had even existed. Patriarch Reliance was nowhere to be seen and didn’t speak. The only things that remained were the seven burning lamps and the flickering light they cast. The seven Cores and the one Nascent Soul let of thin streams of Qi. The streams didn’t emanate up, though. As soon as they left the lamp, they were sucked into the ground.

“Patriarch Reliance, I allowed myself to be poisoned because of you. You’re from the senior generation, and you’re a powerful expert. How could someone as powerful as you do something like this?!”

“I’m neither an expert nor powerful,” replied the Patriarch with a light cough. “I’ve been like this since I was young. And that is not an ordinary Spirit Stone, kid. Your Cultivation base just isn’t high enough to be able to tell. Wait until you’re at the Spirit Severing stage, then you will know how amazing that treasure is.”

“You… Patriarch, what’s going on? I went through a lot of trouble! Why are you doing this!?” Meng Hao was furious. But everything around him was completely silent. Patriarch Reliance didn’t say anything; in fact, he seemed to be ignoring Meng Hao.

“Patriarch, I don’t need any other rewards. I just need help dispelling this poison. You… Patriarch, Disciple was constantly trying to figure out ways to bring those people here to help you recover your Cultivation base. How can you do this to me?!?!”

Meng Hao shouted out a few more times, but could see that Patriarch Reliance wasn’t responding. Even though he was just a simple scholar, he was enraged to the extreme at the moment. He had been deceived, and couldn’t help but begin to curse.

“Patriarch Reliance, you’re a bastard!” For Meng Hao to say something like this showed that he was exceedingly incensed.

Suddenly, Patriarch Reliance’s voice could be heard. “Kid, who do you think you’re cursing? Do you really dare to cuss at me? I’ll slap you to death!”

“I’m cursing you!” replied Meng Hao angrily. “If you’re gonna slap me, then go ahead. I’m poisoned, so I’ll die soon anyway. Get out here!”

Patriarch Reliance coughed a couple times. “Ahhhh. Never mind, never mind. I’ve always had a good temper. Hey, you’re the sole heir of the Reliance Sect. At the moment, we’re the only people in the whole Sect! I’m not going to get angry at you. Actually, a lot of people have cursed me over the years. It doesn’t really matter. Look, you can’t really blame me. I can’t even go back out! My secluded meditation zone has been sealed. I could only come out if you brought another group of people. I couldn’t help you now even if I wanted to.” His words became more and more convincing as he spoke. He really had just renewed the seals, and if he wanted to break through, would need to spend several months doing so.

“You bastard!” said Meng Hao, finally understanding the truth of the situation. He could only gnash his teeth and continue to curse. But no matter what he said, Patriarch Reliance didn’t respond. In the end, he just started humming a little tune. The happy little tune echoed out, and eventually Meng Hao realized that nothing he did would accomplish anything. Shameless Patriarch Reliance was not going to make an appearance.

His face filled with dark anger, he looked around. There were no bags of holding left behind from the Core Formation experts. Patriarch Reliance was obviously incredibly stingy and had taken them for himself. Meng Hao's gaze fell upon the seven Demonic lamps. Gritting his teeth, he slapped his bag of holding. Ten flying swords appeared and flew straight toward the lamps.

Before they could even get close to the lamps, however, the swords began to tremble and glow brightly. Then they shattered into pieces.

Meng Hao was livid. Seeing the Qi from the oil lamps seeping into the ground, he smacked his bag of holding again and the two wooden swords few out. They didn't meet the slightest resistance, but when they reached the oil lamps, they passed right through them, as if they weren't even there. There wasn't the slightest reaction from them.

"A Nascent Soul Cultivator and six Core Formation Cultivators," said Patriarch Reliance, his voice cheerful. "Their spiritual energy is quite abundant. As for your crappy swords, well, my seven demonic lamps are cut off from all other magical items. Non-sentient items can't affect them. Maybe if you were a bit more skilled, you would have some more options. But sorry, you can't steal things from me!" He continued to hum his merry little tune. At the moment, he sat cross-legged in front of a small Feng Shui compass about the size of a hand. The strands of Qi that sank down from above became bright red, and then were absorbed by the compass.

Meng Hao's face grew more and more grim as he retrieved the wooden swords. He had never imagined that Patriarch Reliance, being of the senior generation and having such an elevated Cultivation base, would treat Qi Condensation Cultivators with such shamelessness. A reward of a simple low-grade Spirit Stone? What was worse was how he claimed the Spirit Stone was an extraordinary object.

No matter from which angle Meng Hao looked at it, it appeared to be completely ordinary. It was nothing more than a low-grade Spirit Stone.

Before, Meng Hao had thought he cared a lot about Spirit Stones. But it turned out Patriarch Reliance was as stingy as an iron chicken from which feathers could not be plucked! He was a complete miser!

“One low-grade Spirit Stone. You bastard, you did this on purpose!” Meng Hao clenched his fists. He felt like he was about to go crazy. Not only were his words impolite, but in his heart, any and all good impressions he’d even had of Patriarch Reliance were wiped clean.

After a while, he turned, his jaw clenched. He wanted to throw the low-grade Spirit Stone away, but finally, he put it into his bag of holding. Then, he stalked off angrily.

“Aiya, you’re leaving? Okay, okay. Don’t forget to come back some time to hang out with Patriarch! You’re my only heir, and the Sect only has the two of us now. This is your home; you can come back any time. I get lonely sometimes, so make sure to come back and keep me company.” He continued to hum his happy tune.

Meng Hao didn’t say anything. He walked away angrily, Patriarch Reliance’s little tune echoing in his ears.

“Ai, it’s too bad I’m sealed in here, otherwise I would see you off personally.” Patriarch Reliance’s voice was incredibly cheerful as he watched Meng Hao from within his secluded meditation chamber. “Meng Hao, you’re such a good kid. You’re just a bit too uptight. Hopefully in the future you can learn to be a bit more like me.”

“You’re really not going to come out?” said Meng Hao wrathfully. At the moment, he was walking past an area covered with a gray-colored restrictive spell. Suddenly, he stopped walking.

“Of course. Listen, I never tell lies. If I say that I can’t go out, then I can’t. It’s not that I don’t want to help you, it’s just, hey…. Uh. What are you doing?” In the middle of his complacent little speech, he suddenly stopped talking and his eyes went wide.

Meng Hao had turned and was looking closely at a gray restrictive spell. During the battle between Lord Revelation and Patriarch Reliance, the restrictive spells in the entire area had been damaged. They were slowly recovering, but at the moment, there were still cracks visible. Some of the cracks were large enough to be holes, actually, although they were slowly sealing back up.

Within this restrictive spell was a veritable mountain of Spirit Stones. They had been collected by Patriarch Reliance over the course of his entire life. Most of them were low-grade Spirit Stones, but more than a few were mid-grade Spirit Stones, which were far more valuable.

Without a word, Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding. A wooden sword appeared and stabbed directly into the hole. Immediately, the sword's ability to absorb spiritual energy was manifested. The restrictive spell shook, trying to repair itself, but was unable to. The second wooden sword appeared, and it too was stabbed into the hole. The swords spread apart, and soon the hole was as wide as the hand of a child.

Normally, Meng Hao couldn't do something like this. But because of the cracks and holes in the spell, he had a unique chance.

"What are you doing?" echoed Patriarch Reliance's voice from within the ground. He stared in shock. He had a stingy personality, but enjoyed being able to put his lifetime accumulation of treasures on display. He liked to watch people's eyes turn red when they could look at, but not touch the treasures. He was also supremely confident in his restrictive spells. They were connected to his life force, so unless he died, no one would be able to break through them.

However, because of some strange properties that existed in Lord Revelation, some problems had cropped up when Patriarch Reliance absorbed him. Because of that, the restrictive spells were a bit slow in their recovery. This was a bit of a slip-up on his part.

"Meng Hao, even with that hole there, you won't be able to take all those Spirit Stones," laughed Patriarch Reliance. "There are too many. You won't be able to fit them inside. Oh well, it doesn't matter. I'm a generous person. Go ahead and take a few, I don't care."

Meng Hao let out a cold harrumph. Now that the wooden swords had opened up a hole, he reached deep into his robe and pulled out the bag of the Cosmos and aimed it at the little hole.

Meng Hao’s Cultivation base charged into action like a wild horse. The mountain of Spirit Stones began to shudder, and then, one by one they began flying out of the hole, sucked into the bag of the Cosmos.

Faster and faster, the Spirit Stones flew into the black-hole that was the bag of the Cosmos. Patriarch Reliance watched the dazzling display, and a horrified shriek rang out from his mouth.

“A bag of the Cosmos…. Dammit, how can you have that! It’s invisible to Spiritual Sense, and can contain mountains and rivers. You, you, you…. My Spirit Stones! I went through innumerable trials and tribulations throughout my life to accumulate that many Spirit Stones. Meng Hao, leave some behind for me!” His agonized cry continued to echo out, and the ground began to quake. He was obviously releasing some of his power. And yet the seal had just been put in place….

Meng Hao laughed coldly as he listened to Patriarch Reliance’s miserable cries. Soon the mountain of Spirit Stones shrank to become a small hill. Meng Hao was truly venting his spleen.

“You dare to rip me off?” thought Meng Hao, gritting his teeth. “Then I’ll rip you off even more! I’m going to clear out all of your treasures!”

“Meng Hao, you traitor! This is too excessive!” Patriarch Reliance felt as if the organs in his body were going to explode. He wanted to burst out of the seal, but it had just been put in place. It would take months before he could break it.

He could never have imagined that Meng Hao would have a bag of the Cosmos, nor that he would be able to snatch away his lifetime accumulation of Spirit Stones. At the moment, Patriarch Reliance felt as if a giant invisible blade were rotating around him, slashing him for every Spirit Stone that he lost.

It was as if he were being hacked to pieces. His heart ached.

He had always had a strange personality. In comparison to other Cultivators of his generation, he was a true weirdo. His greed and stinginess grew along with his Cultivation base and his age. He didn’t have even the slightest bit of an aura of a powerful expert. He didn’t seem to have a bottom line in anything either.

Several hundred years ago, during his first Severing, his Dao enlightenment had been regarding greed. You could say that it had been branding onto his spirit, and was a part of his Cultivation.

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# Chapter 85: Ancient Demon Sealing Jade

Greedy and stingy. A miser to the core, even in terms of Cultivation. This was his Dao. In his enlightenment, treasures were the most important thing. These were the things that led to his First Spirit Severing.

This was why his meditation zone had so many areas protected by restrictive spells. It was his life savings. Accumulating all these items was not just a hobby, it was his version of the Dao.

To see it all disappearing before his eyes filled him with grief and indignation.

Within the space of ten breaths, the mountain of Spirit Stones was gone. There was even a random piece of jade underneath the mountain. It too was sucked into the bag of the Cosmos.

“That was my good luck charm. Dammit, Meng Hao, leave my good luck charm behind. You….” Before he could finish speaking, his eyes went wide again. After taking all the Spirit Stones, Meng Hao looked around, his eyes gleaming. Patriarch Reliance began to tremble.

The look in Meng Hao’s eyes was like that of a master thief.

His gaze fell onto a small courtyard. Behind the cracked restrictive spell could be seen a variety of medicinal plants of many different colors. They were clearly beyond ordinary.

Meng Hao recognized some of the plants as ones described in Shangguan Xiu’s treasured turtle shell. As he strode forward, his fingers flickered, and the two wooden swords appeared. They stabbed into a crack in the shield created by the restrictive spell. The crack slowly widened.

“Meng Hao, are you really going to steal my treasured items too? I’m your Patriarch! I paid a heavy price to steal that medicinal courtyard all those years ago….” Patriarch Reliance was growing even more anxious. The rumbling noise from under the ground grew stronger, but Meng Hao didn’t even blink. He was happy to finally be able to vent his anger.

“My divine spirit plants… you, you… you’re plucking them all out!” Patriarch Reliance’s anger soared to the heavens. “That’s my Outlander Tree. I cared for it for hundreds of years before it sprouted, you can’t take it….” Amidst Patriarch Reliance’s shrill protestations, Meng Hao cleared out the courtyard as cleanly as if he’d used a razor. He sucked everything into the bag of the Cosmos. By the time he withdrew the two wooden swords, the courtyard looked as if it had been swept by a massive gale.

“Enough, enough,” said Patriarch hastily, looking over the emptiness. “Listen, little Patriarch, leave some things behind for old Patriarch here. Don’t take anything else…. You’re not allowed to touch any more of my things. Meng Hao, you listen to Patriarch, okay? As a member of the junior generation, you should have a bit of respect. You….”

“I’ve been like this since I was young,” said Meng Hao with a cold snort, throwing Patriarch Reliance’s words back at him. Looking around, he caught sight of a lone restrictive spell shield. Beneath it were what appeared to be three withered little trees. However, on each tree was a leaf that occasionally sparkled with arcs of energy, making them appear extraordinary.

Meng Hao had never seen anything like it, but considering this was Patriarch Reliance’s meditation zone, and it was protected with a restrictive spell, he figured it must be very valuable. His eyes glittering, he strode over and stabbed the wooden swords into a crack in the still-recovering restrictive spell.

“Those are my Thunderclap Leaves. It’s a Lightning type medicinal plant that’s even rare in the Southern Domain!” Patriarch Reliance once again howled fiercely. Completely ignoring him, Meng Hao lifted the bag of the Cosmos up to the hole in the restrictive spell. The trees began to shake back and forth. Then, the three leaves ripped off of the trees, transforming into three arcs of black lightning which shot into the bag of the Cosmos.

Even more infuriating to Patriarch Reliance was that after the leaves entered his bag, Meng Hao didn’t stop. The trees continued to sway back and forth until suddenly they flew up from the ground, roots and all, and were sucked into the bag of the Cosmos. Next to the trees was a little purple flag stuck into the ground, which was also sucked into the bag.

“You even… you ripped the Thunderclap Trees up by the roots and took them too! You’re really pissing me off!! Meng Hao, you little bastard, you took the Lightning Flag as well? It’s not very strong; it can only defend against a Foundation Establishment attack. But it can absorb lightning bolts! You need it to grow the Thunderclap Leaves!! Patriarch Reliance’s heart dripped with blood as he howled and cursed in his subterranean chamber.

“I’ve always had a good temper,” snorted Meng Hao, throwing more of Patriarch Reliance’s words back in his face. “You’re Patriarch of the Reliance Sect. At the moment, we’re the only people in the whole Sect! I of the junior generation am not going to get angry at you. Actually, a lot of people have cursed me over the years. It doesn’t really matter.” Once again, he looked around.

This caused Patriarch Reliance’s heart to seize. When he saw Meng Hao’s gaze slide past another area with medicinal plants, he let out a small sigh of relief. His meditation zone contained his life’s accumulation of treasures, but even still, the treasures could be categorized into high and low quality items.

“Just don’t touch my baby,” thought Patriarch Reliance. “Everything else… they’re just trifling worldly possessions. I can gather more together later if I want.” Patriarch Reliance’s teeth were clenched, but his heart still continued to drip blood. In actuality, the word “trifling” had been a bit forced.

Within moments, Meng Hao had cleared out a few more courtyards of medicinal plants. Then he moved on to another area. Patriarch Reliance could only clench his jaw. He could do nothing more than let loose a torrent of abuse upon Meng Hao. He cursed and cursed, never repeating himself for more than half a sentence.

As he cursed, Meng Hao started to hum a little tune. It was a happy little tune, and just so happened to be the one Patriarch Reliance had been humming earlier. When Patriarch Reliance heard it, it made him so mad that he almost coughed up blood. The feeling he experienced was impossible to describe, but suffice to say, he was now experiencing the full repercussions of incurring Meng Hao's wrath.

Patriarch Reliance watched as Meng Hao looked around. When his gaze came to fall on a stretch of short wall, Patriarch Reliance's heart began to race, and he furiously said, "You little bastard, you're too cruel! I didn't dispel your poison, that's all. I even gave you a reward. A low-grade Spirit Stone is still a Spirit Stone."

Meng Hao had inspected almost all of the restrictive spells for cracks. In this area, many of the restrictive spells were completely recovered.

He circled the area, his eyes flashing back and forth. Suddenly, he realized that Patriarch Reliance had stopped speaking. He had only taken about thirty percent of the treasures in the area, and most were medicinal plants. He still wanted to vent some anger, so he decided to make one more circle to check for damaged restrictive spells.

When he returned to the place he'd started from, he frowned. There didn't seem to be anything special in there. He looked around and noticed a stretch of short wall. When he started to walk toward it, Patriarch Reliance suddenly began talking again.

"Alright, alright. Meng Hao, you're my only heir." As Patriarch Reliance watched Meng Hao walking toward the short wall, he grew more and more anxious. But his anxiety couldn't be detected in his voice. He sounded somewhat emotional as he said, "I'll dispel your poison. Just wait three months. I'll break out and take care of it for you. Then you can give me my treasures back. What do you say? Don’t worry, I always keep my word. This time, I’ll swear it in the name of the Sect. I definitely won’t deceive you.”

Meng Hao stopped walking and looked down at the ground. His eyes flickered, and he didn’t say anything. He walked around, seemingly lost in thought; eventually he drawing close to the short wall.

“I never said that I wasn’t going to dispel the poison,” said Patriarch Reliance. He let out a sigh. “It’s just that dispelling the poison would require quite a sacrifice of my Cultivation base. I would have to spend a lot of the energy I had just absorbed.” His voice seemed to be deep and profound, but in actuality, as he saw Meng Hao nearing the short wall, his heart was filled with acute nervousness.

Meng Hao was silent. After the space of several breaths, he suddenly spoke.

“Why did you start talking when I began walking toward this wall, Patriarch? And why did you suddenly mention dispelling my poison? Could it be that there is some special treasure hidden here?” As the words came out of his mouth, Patriarch Reliance’s eyes went wide. He realized he had said the wrong things. He secretly cursed Meng Hao for being so crafty.

“I’m just trying to do the right thing,” said Patriarch Reliance with a cold harrumph. “Look kid, you…” Before he could finish speaking, Meng Hao jumped over the wall.

This filled Patriarch Reliance with fear and trepidation. His heart began to pound and his face fell. After leaping over the wall, Meng Hao looked around. As it turned out, there was a restrictive spell here.

It didn’t look very special. Sealed inside was a jade slip. As for the restrictive spell, it was not complete; it still had some cracks in it. Meng Hao had no idea what the jade slip was, but without hesitation, he flicked his sleeve, stabbing the two wooden swords into the spell. He pried open a hole, then used the bag of the Cosmos to retrieve the jade slip.

Seeing the jade slip disappear into Meng Hao’s bag caused Patriarch Reliance to emit a shrill shriek. The ground shook so hard it seemed it might crack. Before, Patriarch Reliance had been upset to see Meng Hao taking his treasures, but this fury was much more intense.

“Meng Hao, you cannot take that jade slip away! Even I don’t dare to go near it. It belongs to a friend who left it here for safe keeping. You do not have the latent talent or the destiny to touch it! Do not remove it!”

Paying him no heed, he leaped onto a flying sword and flashed toward the vortex exit. At the same time, he slapped the bag of the Cosmos and pulled out the jade slip. Pressing it against his forehead, he cast some spiritual power into it. His expression changed as three characters appeared in his mind, filled with a Demonic aura.

“Demon Sealing Sect….”

“Meng Hao, you little bastard, get back here! You wait until I break through this seal. Then you’re finished!” Patriarch Reliance let out a furious howl.

As the howl echoed out, Meng Hao’s eyes flashed. He stopped at the mouth of the vortex, and then looked back down.

His eyes began to glitter. When Patriarch Reliance saw this, his heart began to thump again, and a strange premonition filled his heart. In his heart, in his mind, Meng Hao looked like nothing more than out-and-out thief.

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# Chapter 86: Demonic Lamps that Separate Heaven and Earth!

“Break through the seal?” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he glanced down at the seven oil lamps on the ground. He looked at them for a moment, then shot toward them.

He ignored the howls of Patriarch Reliance. After pillaging all the previous treasures, he was now certain that the Patriarch wouldn’t be coming out.

“What are you doing!?” In his subterranean chamber, Patriarch Reliance’s fury rose to new heights. However, seeing the look on Meng Hao’s face, fear blossomed in his heart. He was starting to regret having let Meng Hao go. The look in his eyes was even stronger than the look which had appeared when Meng Hao began to steal his treasures.

Ignoring Patriarch Reliance, who he now knew was completely unreliable, Meng Hao stared at the seven lamps. He walked slowly around them, looking contemplative.

Every step he took seemed to land directly onto Patriarch Reliance’s heart.

“It doesn’t matter,” Patriarch Reliance said in an attempt to comfort himself. “This little bastard is only at the ninth level of Qi Condensation. He can’t take any of the spiritual energy from the demonic lamps….” His eyes went wide when he saw Meng Hao, after making a few circles around the lamps, sit down cross-legged to meditate.

Meng Hao sat there, his eyes flashing. He seemed hesitant, but before long, determination filled his eyes.

“Patriarch Reliance deceived me. Taking a few of his precious treasures isn’t enough to calm me down. I’m going to take this spiritual energy as well. Then I will finally be able to relax.” Meng Hao gritted his teeth when he thought about the single low-grade Spirit Stone the Patriarch had given him. And then there was the matter of the poison. As far as Meng Hao was concerned, not dispelling the poison had shoved him onto a road of hopelessness.

“Treasured items can’t absorb the spiritual energy from the seven lamps, because they aren’t sentient…. Fine, I’ll absorb it myself!” He suddenly closed his eyes and rotated his Cultivation base, attempting to breath in the spiritual energy pouring out of the burning oil lamps.

But no matter how he tried to absorb the spiritual energy, as soon as it left the oil lamps, it was sucked into the ground. Deep in his subterranean chamber, Patriarch Reliance let out a great sigh of relief.

“Meng Hao, you little punk, whatever you try will be useless. Do you really dare to try to steal my spiritual power?” Patriarch Reliance let out a hearty, although somewhat bitter, laugh. When it reached Meng Hao’s ears, he frowned for a moment. Then his face became calm again.

“No need to get antsy, Patriarch,” he said coolly. “I’ve only just begun.”

Patriarch Reliance stared in shock.

Meng Hao’s eyes, which he had just closed, moved about as he recalled the image of his battle with Shangguan Xiu, and Little Tiger’s pearl which had enabled him to reach the tenth level of Qi Condensation.

This was the method he wished to employ. He would return to the tenth level of Qi Condensation. Even though the incredible power of the tenth level of Qi Condensation left him cut off from heaven and earth, Meng Hao wanted to see if it could enable him to absorb the spiritual power of the lamps.

The legendary tenth level of Qi Condensation had existed in ancient times, but was now prohibited by the Heavens, cut off. But Meng Hao… had reached the tenth level once before… he had walked the severed path.

As he gathered his thoughts and his breath, his body gradually seemed to grow withered. The slender strand of Spiritual Sense in his head seemed to fill his thoughts. He sank into a strange and unusual state as he focused his entire being on remembering what it had been like to enter the tenth level of Qi Condensation.

Time slipped by. A day, two days, then three. Patriarch Reliance was growing more nervous. He couldn’t quite tell what Meng Hao was doing, but could tell that his body was changing in a very strange way.

“Just what are you doing?” he asked hesitantly, as he came to realize that he was unable to discern what Meng Hao was up to.

On the night of the third day, a tremor shook Meng Hao. His eyes opened, and his body began to tremble violently. Once again he felt power filling his body; he now could employ force strong enough to topple a mountain. At the same time, the powerful gravitational force once again appeared within him, and he was cut off from heaven and earth!

At the moment, he couldn’t absorb any of the spiritual energy of heaven and earth. His eyes glowing, he slowly stood up, fighting to remain in this state. He knew that without Little Tiger’s pearl, he could only hold on for the space of about ten breaths, after which he would sink back down.

He took a deep breath and then took a step forward. As his foot fell, the spiritual power emanating from the lamps quivered. Then, one tiny strand, instead of being sucked into the ground, drifted toward Meng Hao and was absorbed into his body.

When he saw this, Meng Hao’s eyes shone even brighter. As for Patriarch Reliance, his body trembled and a look of astonishment appeared on his face.

“Holy crap!” he cried. “This is impossible!! That’s… the tenth level of Qi Condensation! Dammit. Wasn’t the path to the tenth level severed by the current will of the Heavens? You, you, you…. You got to the tenth level of Qi Condensation?!?!”

Patriarch Reliance let out a miserable cry as he watched Meng Hao take three more steps forward. About ten percent of the spiritual energy from the lamps rushed toward him. As he absorbed it, Patriarch Reliance howled even louder. “How is it possible? The damned tenth level of Qi Condensation isn’t that awesome, but it was prohibited because it has the power to steal good fortune from the Heavens. If it’s strong enough to do that, then as for my spiritual energy… Dammit. And what about my Demon Sealing Jade? Back then, those old bastards said that it could only be taken and used by someone who had reached the thirteenth level of Qi Condensation. This, this….”

After three steps, Meng Hao’s body began to tremble, and he couldn’t go any further. Boundless spiritual energy from the lamps rushed into him. Panting, he sat down and began to meditate, absorbing tremendous amount of spiritual energy. Patriarch Reliance could only howl angrily.

The gravitational force inside him was astonishing, like a starving wolf who hadn’t eaten for years. Vast quantities of spiritual energy were sucked into him, and as it was, his body began to tremble more and more violently. He felt his physical body growing tougher and more powerful. It seemed as if even his bones were absorbing spiritual energy and becoming stronger.

The ancient tenth level of Qi Condensation was a stage of refinement for the physical body. Now here, in Patriarch Reliance’s Immortal’s Cave, he was seizing fortune for himself and entering this ancient state.

This level required lots of spiritual energy. Heaven and earth would not give it, but Patriarch Reliance had prepared a Nascent Soul and six Cores as fuel, and life force as flame. The spiritual energy pouring out of the demonic lamps was the nutrition that Meng Hao needed.

“Meng Hao!!! Stop! Stop! Let’s discuss things a bit. I need that spiritual energy. I really, really need it. DO NOT absorb it! Dammit, cut it out, Meng Hao. That’s my spiritual energy. I went to a lot of trouble killing all those people to get it. My seal! Meng Hao, if you don’t stop, then I will expel you from the Sect!!” Flustered and exasperated, Patriarch Reliance had already forgotten about the treasures Meng Hao had taken, as well as the Demon Sealing Jade. You could say that all the things taken by Meng Hao before couldn’t compare at all with this.

Meng Hao ignored him, continuing to absorb the spiritual energy like mad. His body continued to grow stronger. Soon, cracking sounds could be heard as his skin began to split and new flesh and blood grew.

More and more cracks spread out, and then the old flesh began to fall off. Meng Hao’s hair grew longer, and his eyes brighter. The tenth level of Qi Condensation was now completely solidified within his body!

He would never lose the tenth level again, it was there permanently. In addition to the power of the tenth level of Qi Condensation, Meng Hao realized he had a new ability; if he wished, he could at will return to the ninth level of Qi Condensation to absorb the spiritual energy of heaven and earth, and then return back to the tenth level.

Some time passed, and Meng Hao’s mind began to reel. The remnants of dried up flesh which remained on his body turned into ash and drifted away. His eyes glowed even brighter, and an incredible feeling of power filled Meng Hao. He was completely confident that with the power of the tenth level of Qi Condensation, he could use a single fist… to crush anyone of the ninth level of Qi Condensation.

This power was even stronger than what he had experienced when using Little Tiger’s pearl.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. He stood up, not to leave, but to take another step forward. He was now only five paces away from the seven oil lamps.

Panting furiously, Patriarch Reliance let loose a torrent of intense curses as he watched Meng Hao absorbing an even greater amount of spiritual energy. He had solidified his tenth level of Qi Condensation, but instead of leaving, he moved on. Patriarch Reliance’s heart pounded.

Now, thirteen percent of the spiritual energy emitted by the lamps was rushing toward Meng Hao. As the boundless amount of energy entered his body, a roaring sound filled him. His eyes were filled with determination. He took another step forward. He was now only four paces from the oil lamps.

The flames flickered as even more spiritual energy flew toward Meng Hao. As of now, he was taking sixteen percent!

“The gravitational force within me is not dispersing, it’s actually growing stronger. Is it possible that… after the tenth level of Qi Condensation, there’s an eleventh level?” Gritting his teeth, he called upon the power of the tenth level of Qi Condensation to take another step forward. He was now only three paces from the seven lamps. The flames within the lamps danced wildly as twenty percent of the spiritual energy they produced was sucked up by Meng Hao.

He took a deep breath, then sat down cross-legged to meditate.

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# Chapter 87: I Shall Reach the Peak of the Thirteenth Level of Qi Condensation!

“Meng Hao….” Patriarch Reliance ground his teeth. He felt quite grieved, and was even more regretful. If he had known things would turn out this way, he would have said some nicer things to Meng Hao.

How could he have imagined that Meng Hao would be so cruel? Forget his cruelty, he had a bag of the Cosmos! Forget his bag of the Cosmos, he had entered into the tenth level of Qi Condensation!

The scene unfolding before him made him want to weep, except he had no tears to do so. He gnashed his teeth as an even further sense of trepidation filled his heart. He remembered the requirements of the Demon Sealing Jade; it could only be taken away and used by someone who had reached the thirteenth level of Qi Condensation. When those old bastards had said that back in the day, his heart had filled with contempt. He’d believed that he could prevent the legacy of the Demon Sealing Sect from continuing on to future generations. But, now that he saw Meng Hao passing into the eleventh level, his trembling heart filled with anxiety.

Unfortunately for him, there was nothing he could do other than grit his teeth and continue to absorb as much spiritual energy as possible. He needed to get more than Meng Hao did, and be faster at doing so. He needed the Feng Shui compass in front of him to be completely repaired, and prevent Meng Hao from advancing any further.

The spiritual energy being sucked into the ground and absorbed into the Feng Shui compass was bright red in color. It seemed as if it were sucking something out of the very earth it passed through.

“Dammit, Meng Hao. All I did was give you a low-grade Spirit Stone and not dispel your poison. Haven’t you gone far enough? Haven’t you? I’m still your Patriarch after all.” Patriarch Reliance felt profoundly wronged.

As for Meng Hao, a roaring sound filled his entire body. With twenty percent of the lamps’ spiritual energy being absorbed into him, his body was trembling, and he felt himself changing. The change was occurring to his Core sea. It grew larger, and as it did, his Qi passageways grew thicker. A bang rang out in his head, and he felt the sensation of breaking through to another level.

The eleventh level of Qi Condensation!

His Core sea spread out to fill his entire body. This type of Core sea really was impossible for someone of the Qi Condensation stage. Its majesty would ensure unending future growth and fighting power.

It would be more difficult for Meng Hao to reach Foundation Establishment with such a Core sea but… if he succeeded, then he would be twice as powerful as someone of the same stage!

The eleventh level of Qi Condensation does not refine the body, but the Core sea!

The extent of his Core sea caused Meng Hao’s body to be filled with a thunderous sound. Spiritual energy as boundless as a sea filled him. The waves of the Core sea crashed and churned limitlessly.

Meng Hao opened his eyes and took a deep breath. The sound of the intake of his breath was like a clap of thunder. He stood up, his eyes gleaming with persistence. He took another step forward. Then two. Then three!

He now stood directly next to the seven oil lamps, close enough to touch them. He was absorbing thirty percent of their spiritual energy.

Thirty percent might not sound like a lot, but it would be impossible for Meng Hao were it not for the abilities of the tenth level of Qi Condensation. That was the stage of Qi Condensation that could steal good fortune from the Heavens, after all.

“Meng Hao, aren’t you finished yet….” Patriarch Reliance watched Meng Hao take his three steps forward, his anxiety increased even more. If Meng Hao reached the twelfth level, he would be only one step away from being able to use the Demon Sealing Jade.

“Many thanks for your help, Patriarch,” said Meng Hao calmly. “I’ll be finished soon.” He closed his eyes and began to absorb more spiritual energy into his body. His body shook as he stepped into the twelfth level of Qi Condensation.

Since ancient times, no one had ever entered… the twelfth level of Qi Condensation.

The instant he did so, Meng Hao felt a severe pain in his mind. His Spiritual Sense didn’t go anywhere. But he felt as if his mind were being split in two. Now he felt… something like a stream within his mind.

This was… the Sea of Perception!

In modern times, Cultivators who broke through from the Qi Condensation into Foundation Establishment would form a Sea of Perception from nothing. Usually, this type of Sea of Perception would not be very large. It had nothing to do with latent talent, but rather with the method used. Obviously, the larger the Sea of Perception, the more power it could wield, and the more boundless the Cultivator’s Spiritual Sense would be.

In ancient times, Cultivators preferred to break through to Foundation Establishment in the twelfth level of Qi Condensation. This is because the twelfth level is when the Sea of Perception opens up. By practicing Cultivation in this fashion, the Sea of Perception would be far more powerful than others of the Foundation Establishment stage.

In the modern Cultivation world, Meng Hao was the first Cultivator to ever enter the twelfth level of Qi Condensation. If news of this spread, it would shake the entire Cultivation world.

At the moment, Patriarch Reliance was shaken. He stared dumbly at Meng Hao, able to watch unimpeded as Meng Hao's previous ninth level of Qi Condensation now rose to the twelfth. He didn't know what to say.

"….In ancient times," he muttered, "the legends said that the great circle of Qi Condensation could be completed at the thirteenth level. But even in ancient times, such a thing was rarely seen. It was said that the thirteenth level of Qi Condensation was related to the good fortune of Heaven, and…. could change the latent talent of a Cultivator! It wouldn't change much. But latent talent is birthed from the Heavens, so even the slightest change would definitely be a defiance of the Heavens.

"I don't remember how many years ago it was that the old bastards from the Demon Sealing Sect boasted that I was incredibly lucky… but compared to me, this kid is the lucky one. Dammit, he's too lucky! How could I have possibly provoked this reaction!"

As Patriarch Reliance spoke, Meng Hao opened his eyes. They shined with a profound light. He felt splitting pain within his head, but within that pain, he also could sense an unprecedented clearness.

The world seemed different when he looked at it, although he couldn't quite tell which particular things weren't the same. It was as if everything now shone with radiances that he had never noticed before.

At this time, the massive gravitational power seemed on the verge of dissipating, as if his body knew that he was reaching his absorption limit.

Soon, the amount of spiritual energy he was absorbing from the oil lamps dropped from thirty percent to twenty, and then to ten.

This caused Meng Hao to frown. He could tell that his Cultivation base had not reached its peak…. he could sense that there was another layer beyond his current layer. He could feel the great circle of Qi Condensation.

It was a powerful feeling, but as the gravitational power grew weaker and weaker, it seemed as though that next level would be forever closed off to him.

“Haha, it’s like I said,” laughed Patriarch Reliance, his eyes glittering. “The thirteenth level of Qi Condensation was even rare in ancient times. It was such a thing of legends that you could basically say it didn’t exist. The twelfth level is the limit. Meng Hao, there’s no need to try any further. Quickly, back away. Don’t get in the way of my master plan. If you do, then just wait till I get out of here and see how I mop the floor with you! You need a spanking, you little bastard!” Even though Meng Hao had sucked away some of the spiritual energy, it actually wasn’t very much. There was still enough left to accomplish his master plan. And if Meng Hao didn’t reach the thirteenth level, then there was no way for him to have the required latent talent to use the Demon Sealing Jade.

“Seems this kid’s good fortune isn’t that amazing after all,” said Patriarch Reliance complacently. But then, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. He had a stubborn personality. Now that he had reached the twelfth level of Qi Condensation and caught a glimpse of the next level, he would do everything possible to break through.

“The gravitational power is weakening…. How can I continue to add spiritual energy…” Meng Hao’s mind spun with thousands of possibilities until finally his eyes began to glitter and he smacked his bag of holding. The two wooden swords whistled out.

He looked at them, then gritted his teeth and caused one of them to fly straight toward himself. Patriarch Reliance watched on in astonishment as the sword slashed Meng Hao. Soon, over ten gaping wounds covered his body.

Meng Hao clenched his jaw as the sword slashed the bloody marks across him. His eye shone with determination. As the blood splashed from the wounds, Meng Hao felt the spiritual power in his body seeping out as well.

This was exactly what he wanted!

As the spiritual power leaked out of his body, the gravitational power within him suddenly trembled, then gradually grew stronger. When this happened, Meng Hao's mind was set. Taking control of the second sword, he sent both of them flying around him, slashing his body with wound after wound. In the blink of an eye, nearly one hundred cuts covered his flesh.

The wounds sent the physical power of his body into action, and at the same time caused the gravitational power within him to grow more and more powerful.

Patriarch Reliance was simply dumbstruck. He could never in his wildest dreams imagine that Meng Hao would use such a method. When he saw the multitude of bloody wounds, and the determination in Meng Hao's eyes, it gave him a deep sense of how ruthless Meng Hao could be. If he could treat himself with such cruelty, how ruthlessly could he treat others?!

The more wounds that covered him, the stronger the gravitational force became. The amount of spiritual energy he siphoned from the lamps jumped from ten percent to forty. And yet, even though the spiritual energy poured into his body, he couldn't break through to that next level.

After some time passed, Meng Hao laughed. With a cold smile, he raised his right hand, causing one of the wooden swords to whistle around and fly toward his chest. It stabbed through him, sending out fountains of blood. Blood also sprayed out of his mouth. Instantly, the spiritual power in his body dropped by a huge percentage. This, in turn, caused the gravitational power to climb higher by several percentages.

By now, he was absorbing fifty percent of the spiritual energy coming from the seven oil lamps.

A booming sound rang out. Filled with boundless spiritual energy, Meng Hao launched everything at the barrier between the levels. Blood sprayed from his mouth, and the wooden swords once again slashed through his body. The spiritual energy from the seven lamps surged; as of now, Meng Hao was sucking away seventy percent of it!

It was in this way that Meng Hao launched his attack from the twelfth level of Qi Condensation into the thirteenth.

Time slipped by. More wounds appeared on his body, a product of Meng Hao’s ruthlessness. Soon, his body began to tremble and his vision grew blurry. He was now absorbing ninety percent of the spiritual energy from the seven oil lamps. It was as if he were bathing in thick, pure spiritual energy.

“You’re going to kill yourself….” Patriarch Reliance watched the scene, his breathing agitated. Meng Hao’s stubbornness left him reeling.

“I will become powerful! There’s no reason. I must become powerful!” Meng Hao began to lose consciousness, but his stubbornness wouldn’t allow him. Despite his current condition, he wouldn’t even think of giving up. He continued to murmur to himself, that he, must, become, powerful!

Meng Hao MUST break through to the thirteenth level of Qi Condensation.

“This is his Dao…” Patriarch Reliance took a deep breath, finally understanding.

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# Chapter 88: Lord Revelation’s True Self

Boom!

The two wooden swords stabbed simultaneously through Meng Hao’s body, sending showers of blood flying out. The flame of Meng Hao’s life force was growing dimmer. However, the gravitational force within him had grown to an unprecedented height. It was so strong that it seemed as if it might be able to suck in everything around him. It was as if regardless of whatever obstacle faced him, regardless of whatever danger he was in, nothing could block his path to becoming a powerful expert.

The gravitational force seemed to be affecting Meng Hao’s stupor. His mind expanded into boundlessness.

Patriarch Reliance looked at him and murmured, “This is… stealing good fortune from the Heavens!”

At the moment, Meng Hao’s desire to be powerful had fused with his Cultivation base, a stubbornness which belonged to the thirteenth level of Qi Condensation; he would steal from the Heavens; he would defy the Heavens to change his life force.

A thunderous boom sounded out as the full and complete spectrum of spiritual energy from the seven oil lamps poured into Meng Hao. As it entered his body, it became his blade with which to attack and break through the level gap.

It was the combined power of six Core Formation Cultivators and one Nascent Soul Cultivator. But that was only part of it. The most important part of his attack, the truest part, was his stubborn desire to become powerful. This desire was completely in line with the thirteenth level of Qi Condensation, which had been rejected by the Heavens. This was what forged his thirteenth level of Qi Condensation!

Amidst the roaring, the level gap disintegrated. The instant it did, Meng Hao, bathed as he was in inexhaustible spiritual energy, felt his Cultivation base soaring up from the twelfth level to the thirteenth level. He had now become the first Cultivator since ancient times to complete the great circle of Qi Condensation.

In that instant, the latent talent in Meng Hao which enabled him to practice Cultivation, suddenly changed. There was no sound or any other indication that it had happened. Even Meng Hao was only vaguely aware of the change. However, if an outsider were to examine his current latent talent, they would see that it was no longer average, as it had been in the past. Although he couldn’t be considered Chosen, his latent talent was now much higher.

From time immemorial, no one had ever been able to change their own latent talent. No heavenly material or earthly treasure had the power to change the destiny appointed by the Heavens. And yet today, Meng Hao had done just that!

He was the first person since ancient times to complete the great circle of Qi Condensation, as well as the first person to change his latent talent. This was a new beginning, a fresh start on the path to becoming a powerful expert.

The instant he completed the great circle of Qi Condensation, all of the wounds in his body healed instantly. Immersed in spiritual energy, his body had experienced another rebirth.

You could even say that Meng Hao himself had been reborn anew.

After the time it takes for an incense stick to burn, Meng Hao’s eyes flashed open. The surrounding spiritual energy once again began to surge down into the earth. Now that he had completed the great circle of Qi Condensation, the gravitational force within him was completely gone.

Having witnessed Meng Hao's transformation with his own eyes, Patriarch Reliance was left speechless.

Even more astonishing was that after Meng Hao opened his eyes, he reached out with his right hand and picked up one of the seven oil lamps. This was the lamp which contained Lord Revelation's Nascent Soul. After picking it up, he turned, and his body turned into a beam of light as he shot toward the vortex exit.

"You, you, you… aren't you afraid of getting burned to death!?" Patriarch Reliance sat in a daze for a moment, and then started cursing again as he watched Meng Hao disappear through the vortex.

"You little bastard! You're shameless!! You people from the Demon Sealing Sect are all bastards! Shameless to the extreme!!" He paced back and forth furiously, letting out a torrent of howls.

As soon as Meng Hao left through the vortex, the Immortal's Cave began to seal up behind him. Only a rapidly closing fissure remained, from which emanated the stench of death.

Within the Southern Domain, outside of the State of Zhao, was a bordering nation called the State of Revelation. The land itself wasn't much different from that of the State of Zhao, but its people were somewhat bizarre.

Whereas the State of Zhao revered the Eastern Lands, the State of Revelation did not. They did not pay obeisance to the Great Tang, but rather, the mysteries of the Heavens. Therefore, all the Sects within the State of Revelation were branches of the Revelation Sect.

In the mysterious eastern regions of the State of Revelation were three mountain ranges which wound back and forth like twisting dragons. One particular mountain peak had the appearance of two dragon heads locked in combat. This was the pinnacle of the State of Revelation. Mist curled around the peak, on top of which was a bell. Once per year, the bell would toll, and the echoes would reverberate out for three days.

Beneath the bell was a forest of ornate buildings. This was none other than… the most powerful Sect in the nation, the Revelation Sect!

Atop the main gate of the Revelation Sect sat a Cultivator who wore black robes. He was very old, and had the demeanor of a transcendent being. In the memories of the disciples of the Revelation Sect, it had been a very, very long time since he had sat down there in meditation. No matter how the wind and rain buffeted him, no matter how many years passed by, he sat there like a rock, eternally still.

Many disciples didn't even know who he was. Considering how he sat cross-legged in meditation underneath the Revelation Bell, he was clearly an Elder of the Sect. However, whenever the powerful experts of the Sect looked at him, their eyes would fill with intense looks of veneration.

At the moment, the Revelation Sect was filled with the uninterrupted sound of disciples chanting scriptures. The sound formed an invisible force which drifted about, then slowly congealed at the top of the mountain, where there seemed to be some type of vortex. The vortex would slowly suck in the power of the chanting.

This was something that only Cultivators could see. The chanting of the Revelation Sect disciples rose up and then merged into the Revelation Bell. In fact, the bell seemed to be sucking in, not just the chanting of the Cultivators, but the prayers of everyone in the entire nation.

At this moment, the old man who had been sitting under the Revelation Bell for seemingly an eternity, began to tremble, and then coughed up a mouthful of blood. Suddenly, the bell tolled, its sound echoing into the sky and sounding out through the entire State of Revelation.

The disciples within the Revelation Sect were shocked. The Sect Elders and powerful experts instantly opened their eyes from meditation. One by one, they turned into prismatic beams which shot toward the Revelation Bell.

When they arrived, they saw the black-robed old man sitting there, his eyes wide open.

“Greetings, Patriarch!”

“Patriarch, are you in good health?” Dozens of Cultivators surrounded him, bowing respectfully with clasped hands.

The black-robed old man’s eyes flashed as if with lightning. His left pupil blazed with an intense brightness and looked like the sun, whereas his right pupil exuded darkness and had the appearance of a crescent moon. The two pupils were completely different. One look at this man, and you would never be able to forget him.

When he opened his eyes, it seemed as if his forehead had split, and another eye appeared. However, this was an eye invisible to others. The only thing an observer would see was a blood-red glow. Above him, storm clouds began to gather, and a fierce wind whipped about.

“Patriarch Reliance! You destroyed my clone and refused my good intentions. You’re… You’re finished! I’m not the only one with a few tricks up my sleeve. What do you have to fall back on, your trifling Spirit Severing? You truly dare to arouse the wrath of the Dawn Immortal?!” The old man’s face was grim. He slapped his hand onto the ground, and the mountain peak trembled. Ripples shook the ground, sending the surrounding Cultivators retreating in shock.

At the same time as the mountain began to shake, the Revelation Bell sounded out, then rose up into the air. Surrounding the bell were countless magical symbols which flew and twisted about, glowing brightly. The glow was nearly blinding, and spread out throughout the entire State of Revelation.

“The Demonic forces are descending! It is exactly as our ancestors divined! This shall prove to be a calamity for Heaven and Earth, but also a chance for Revelation to rise! I shall take back my clone’s Nascent Soul, and then we will see if Patriarch Reliance still dares to be arrogant!”

Of course, this black-robed man was none other than Lord Revelation. His clone had been consumed by Patriarch Reliance, and this was his true self. As he spoke, he stood and flew up into the sky. He snatched up the enormous Revelation Bell and then transformed into a multicolored rainbow and shot toward the State of Zhao, radiating killing intent.

Meanwhile, within the state of Zhao, a buzzing sound could be heard within the ancestral hall of the Cold Wind Sect. With a strange look on his face, the disciple on duty pushed open the door. When he looked inside, his entire body began to shake, and a look of astonishment and intense dread appeared on his face.

Within the ancestral hall, the life slips of various Sect Cultivators were neatly lined up on display. Suddenly, the life slips belonging to the Sect’s Core Formation Priest as well as Elder Taishang began to crack and crumble!

This meant that the Core Formation Priest and Elder Taishang had died!

Furthermore, the slips belonging to the Foundation Establishment Elders fell apart. When this happened, the disciple on ancestral hall guard duty shook. A look of disbelief filled his face.

When the Core Formation Priest had departed with the others, he’d left behind a Foundation Establishment Elder to guard the Sect. When that man learned of the news, his face went pale, and he immediately ordered that no one be told. He knew that if something like this happened to a Sect, if its Core Formation experts were killed, it was nothing other than a catastrophe. It would likely lead to the downfall of the entire Sect. For almost all of the Foundation Establishment Cultivators to be wiped out would only hasten the fall.

“What happened in Patriarch Reliance’s meditation zone?!” The Foundation Establishment Elder immediately gathered a group of Qi Condensation disciples and sent them in the direction of the Reliance Sect.

Next, trying to calm his mind, he took hold of a special horn that hadn’t been sounded out for hundreds of years.

This horn had a name: Horn of the Dao.

Sounding the Horn of the Dao would awaken the Sect's Dao Reserves!

Every Clan and Sect had Dao Reserves, which would be passed down from generation to generation. For the three great Sects, their Dao Reserves would generally consist of a Sect Patriarch who had failed in reaching the Nascent Soul stage, but postponed death by resting in suspended animation in a Pseudo Nascent Soul condition. Only they would be able to suppress the panic that would arise because of the impending catastrophe.

When the horn call sounded out in the Cold Wind Sect, it reached the ears of an old withered man sitting cross-legged in a top-secret Immortal's Cave. He looked dead; his body was so emaciated it was little more than skin and bones. But when he heard the call of the horn, his eyes opened.

His Spiritual Sense instantly roared out, enveloping the entire Cold Wind Sect. When it entered the body of the Foundation Establishment Cultivator, the man began to tremble, and a look of pain appeared on his face. He was filled with a powerful feeling that seemed as if it could obliterate him. This was Spiritual Sense, which was being used to rifle through his memories.

After a while, the Spiritual Sense departed, and the Foundation Establishment Cultivator fell to the ground panting, his body limp and his face pale. He knew that if he wasn't of the Foundation Establishment stage, the memory search that had just been performed on him would have killed him.

A profound voice echoed out throughout the Cold Wind Sect. "Take my Freezing Jade and seal off all the mountains around the Reliance Sect. Do not let anyone out of the region. I will be awake in a few hours. In the meantime, you go search the area for any clues." The Foundation Establishment Cultivator immediately struggled to his feet, then clasped his fists and bowed deeply.

An ice-cold piece of blue jade flew into his hand.

Similar scenes played out in the Winding Stream Sect and the Upright Evening Sect. When the life slips belonging to their Priests and Elders crumbled, they all used their Sects’ Dao Reserves.

As of this moment, the Cultivation world of the State of Zhao had been thrown into an uproar.

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# Chapter 89: Guyiding Tri-Rain 1

Patriarch Reliance sat in his sealed meditation zone, the flames of his fury rising to the heavens. He cursed continuously in anger and pain. Regarding Meng Hao, the Patriarch had a somewhat helpless feeling. After all, he was the Reliance Sect's only heir….

"That little bastard is just too ruthless. I'm his Patriarch! First he steals half my treasures, then takes away my Demon Sealing Jade. After that, he robs me of my spiritual energy, and then shamelessly pillages one of my demonic lamps!!" He was nearly out of breath from cursing. When he thought of the ancient demonic lamp, he suddenly looked worried.

"Okay, so I didn't dispel the poison, that's true, but that doesn't mean you can act like this! An upright person should be reasonable. When I stole treasures from people, I discussed things with them reasonably first.

"He really reached the thirteenth level of Qi Condensation. All those years ago those bastards said that the Demon Sealing Jade couldn't be taken away by someone who hadn't reached the thirteenth level of Qi Condensation…. Originally I thought they were just trying to make it sound mysterious, and was really happy. Obviously, those old bastards tricked me. If the Demon Sealing Jade couldn't be taken away, then even if my plan worked, I wouldn't be able to break the seal. But… wow! He actually reached the thirteenth level!! And the little bastard took it away! I can feel that… the seal is weakening!

"I might be missing one of the demonic lamps, which reduces the chances of opening the Demonic Seal, but still, it's been unstable for years now. And now, it's showing even more signs of weakness… Holy crap, how come the Cultivators of the Demon Sealing Sect always deceive me!? Those bastards were like this years ago, and now the little bastard is the same…" Patriarch

Reliance ground his teeth, but as he thought about all this, he remembered Meng Hao throwing his words back at him. Then he thought of his stubbornness in reaching the thirteenth level of Qi Condensation, and couldn’t help but sigh.

“This kid really does things in line with my style. I didn’t want to put myself in a bad position that time; you deceived me, I deceived you. The old bastards from the Demon Sealing Sect didn’t tell the truth. They thought that if they ran away, I couldn’t get at them. Well, maybe that was true, but at least I could change the name from Demon Sealing Sect to Reliance Sect. I couldn’t deceive them, but I could deceive their descendants…. Dammit, if I’d known Meng Hao would reach the thirteenth level of Qi Condensation and then get the required latent talent to take away the Demon Sealing Jade, I would have just dispelled his poison and sent him on his way as fast as possible. Then he would never have had the chance to reach the thirteenth level. But if that happened, then I probably would never have the chance to open the seal, right?” Patriarch Reliance was somewhat at a loss. Even though he was upset, he could only sigh and feel torn.

Patriarch Reliance had a very eccentric personality and was not easy to get along with. Meng Hao didn’t know that, of course. In fact, before the Sect had been disbanded, no one else had known either. Only the people who were of the same generation as Patriarch Reliance could know of such matters. To them, the mere mention of Patriarch Reliance would arouse feelings of hatred.

But you cannot use normal methods to analyze people with eccentric personalities. For example, even though Meng Hao robbed his treasures, stole his spiritual energy, took away one of his demonic lamps and angered him to the point of driving him crazy, he actually felt admiration for him. This type of thing is not something that ordinary people can understand.

Actually, if Meng Hao had just silently left, then Patriarch Reliance would have forgotten about him completely within a couple years. But acting as he did had left a deep impression on Patriarch Reliance. He would never be able to forget the complicated, torn feelings he was experiencing.

Outside of the Reliance Sect, in the State of Zhao, it was a warm and sunny day. However, storm clouds were brewing on the horizon. Meng Hao's face was calm as he sat cross-legged on his treasured fan. He soared forward at high speed.

He had lowered his Cultivation base back to the ninth level of Qi Condensation. He wouldn't reveal the great circle of Qi Condensation unless he needed to. Even though his achievements were significant, the poisons in his body had not been dispelled. It was like a fishbone stuck in his throat. He sat in silent contemplation, trying to figure how to get rid of the poison.

"Of the four poisons, I was able to get rid of one. Excepting the poison from the three-colored poison pill, the other poisons will be easy to dispel…. I need to figure out the fastest way to find the poison dispelling pills." Regarding everything that had happened with Patriarch Reliance, Meng Hao's hatred and anger had already subsided.

He glided along, and before long thunder and lightning filled the sky; big raindrops the size of beans fell down. The land was covered with sheets of rain, making everything look dim and hazy.

It was raining now, but the general temperature was as hot as ever. The heat was stifling enough to make it difficult to breathe. Only within the rain could a bit of coolness be felt.

Amidst the heavy rain, Meng Hao stopped gliding and stood atop a mountain top. Looking off into the distance, he pushed the rain away so that it wouldn't fall onto him. It was like he was standing in his own land, separate from the rest of the murky world.

He looked out at the earth surrounding him and thought of all his experiences over the past years. He had completed the great circle of Qi Condensation, which seemed like something from a dream. After thinking about everything for a long time, he sighed.

"I wonder… I wonder how Elder Sister Xu is doing now," he said softly as her face appeared in his mind. He looked off in the direction he supposed was the center of the Southern Domain.

He lifted up his right hand, and a jade slip appeared. The jade slip was carved with mountains and rivers, and was covered with cracks. It looked as if it might crumble at any moment.

This was what Patriarch Reliance had called a good luck charm, which he had found at the bottom of the mountain of Spirit Stones. He looked at it closely, then sent a bit of his spiritual energy into it. There was no reaction.

Muttering to himself, he put the good luck charm back and then pulled out the palm-sized black flag. There appeared to be a spark of energy moving about inside it. Muttering to himself again, he opened his mouth and blew out some Qi from his Cultivation base, sending it into the flag.

“This item isn’t sealed to Patriarch Reliance, so I can use it. I’ll need to refine it a bit before I can use its full power, though….” He infused it with some more Qi before putting it back.

Next, he carefully brought out the burning oil lamp, within which was a tiny figure sitting cross-legged. When Meng Hao pulled out the burning Nascent Soul, streams of spiritual energy once again roiled out.

Flames appeared in front of his eyes, but he didn’t feel any heat. However, he knew that it was powerful. After all, the flame was life force and the Nascent Soul was the fuel.

“This item will be extremely useful. I can use it as a life-saving treasure!” Eager to the extreme, Meng Hao tucked it back into the bag of the Cosmos.

At last, he pulled out the ancient jade piece. It carried a sense of profound ancientness, as if it had existed for countless ages.

Meng Hao looked at it, heart thumping. He sent some spiritual energy into it, upon which three characters appeared in his head. “Demon Sealing Sect….”

Some mnemonics also appeared, which he couldn’t quite see clearly. Only the first three characters were legible.

He poured a greater amount of spiritual energy into it, whereupon a roaring sound filled his head. He involuntarily took a few steps back and immediately stopped forcing spiritual energy into it. He could tell that someone who hadn’t completed the great circle of Qi Condensation would only be able to see the three characters and a bit beyond that. As of now, he was only able to read the first line.

“”Ancient Dao; Tenacious Desire to Seal the Heavens; Benefaction for All in the Mountains; Inevitable Dao Tribulation of the Nine Mountains and Seas; Perennial Will.” Meng Hao’s body trembled and suddenly his vision cleared. The rain was currently falling on him, soaking him.

A strange light filled his eyes. He looked back down silently at the jade slip. In his head, images appeared of the Demonic technique used by Patriarch Reliance, and the Demonic magic Shangguan Xiu had used to control the aura of Mount Daqing.

After contemplating for a long time, he still didn’t understand. He sat down cross-legged, again pouring some spiritual energy into the jade slip. Once more, he contemplated the words’ deep meaning.

Enough time passed for an incense stick to burn. The rain had come quickly, and it passed quickly. Meng Hao suddenly opened his eyes. Even as a child, he had been very smart. Even though he hadn’t succeeded in his life as a scholar, once he entered the Reliance Sect, he had been very quick to grasp magical techniques. He didn’t need to spend a lot of time practicing. In fact, this was the first time he had ever had trouble utilizing a mnemonic.

It was as if the mnemonic was something which required enlightenment to understand. Without enlightenment, it could only be observed from the outside, never entered.

“The words seem extremely complicated, their true meaning obscure. It’s like trying to look at flowers in the midst of fog, or the moon on rippling seawater….” He pondered silently for a while, until a bright look appeared in his eyes. He lifted his head and gazed up at the sky, looking a bit hesitant.

More time passed. Finally, determination rose in his eyes. He leaped up, and a flying sword appeared beneath his feet as he shot off into the distance.

“If I can reach Foundation Establishment, then I can fly for long periods. That will be much better than this.” The wind buffeted his face as he soared forward. After a while, the flying sword’s momentum began to fade. Meng Hao dropped to the ground and continued to run.

Time passed slowly. The first time he had left these mountains, he had been at the sixth level of Qi Condensation, and it had taken him two days. Now, he was of the great circle of Qi Condensation, and it only took about an hour. Soon, he was out of the mountains, and had reached the North Sea. 2

He stood once again on the shore, looking out at the lake. He took a deep breath, and then, face filled with sincerity, clasped his hands and bowed deeply two times.

The first bow was for the North Sea’s kindness in demonstrating the Dao and helping him break through his bottleneck.

The second bow was for when the North Sea had helped him during his battle with Ding Xin, when it had saved his life and caused him to be reborn.

“I’ve already made my promise two times, so I won’t say it again. It has been imprinted onto my heart.” He lifted his head, looking out toward the center of the lake. After some time, he closed his eyes and sat down cross-legged to meditate. In his mind, the mnemonic from the jade slip appeared.

“”Ancient Dao; Tenacious Desire to Seal the Heavens; Benefaction for All in the Mountains; Inevitable Dao Tribulation of the Nine Mountains and Seas; Perennial Will.” A long time passed, and the words continued to reverberate in his mind. And yet, he still did not understand what they meant.

More time passed as Meng Hao continued to try to decipher the meaning of the words. Suddenly, a hearty laugh echoed out from across the lake.

“Young sir, do you want to cross the sea?”

Meng Hao lifted his head and saw a boat approaching. On the boat was an old man wearing a woven rush raincoat. Inside was a young girl, eight or nine years old, with big eyes. When she looked at Meng Hao, an innocent smile appeared on her face.

Meng Hao laughed, clasping hands and bowing to the old man and the girl. Then he leaped up onto a flying sword and shot toward them. He dropped down into the boat.

Just like before, there was a bottle of alcohol being warmed. The young girl took it out and poured a cup for Meng Hao, but didn’t hand it to him. She put her chin onto her hands and looked at him.

“Big Brother, why did you come back?” she said, her voice pure and clear. “Did you come to see Guyiding Tri-Rain?

Meng Hao stared at her blankly.

“Guyiding Tri-Rain is my name. But, you can’t tell anybody, okay Big Brother?” She laughed and winked at Meng Hao, looking very charming.

Meng Hao smiled and cupped his hands again in a bow, then accepted the cup of alcohol.

The old man laughed as the boat continued on toward the center of the lake. He looked back at Meng Hao. “We haven’t seen each other for many days. Young sir, your demeanor is much more refined than in the past. Are you heading for the other shore this time?”

“I of the junior generation am not here to cross the lake,” Meng Hao said lightly, taking a sip of alcohol. “I’m here to clear up some confusion.”

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Chinese characters:

Transliteration: Gu Yi Ding San Yu

Characters:

– Gu – ancient, old

– Yi – second; the second of the Heavenly Stems; bent; winding

– Ding – surname; man; fourth of the Heavenly Stems

– San – three

– Yu – rain

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# Chapter 90: The Great Path of Demon Sealing, a Concept Like a Scripture

The old man put down the oar and looked back at Meng Hao. Laughing, he walked over, poured himself some alcohol, and then took a drink.

“Clear up what confusion?”

Meng Hao held his cup of alcohol and then softly said, “I’m confused about something I read. It said, ‘”Ancient Dao; Tenacious Desire to Seal the Heavens….’” Shock suddenly covered the face of the old man. The blood drained from the face of the young girl. Waves suddenly surged across the North Sea, causing the boat to rock back and forth violently.

“Stop!” cried the old man. The cup of alcohol in his hand suddenly disappeared into a dark mist and he stared at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao gaped.

“Don’t say that again. I can’t explain those words to you. Neither can anyone else in heaven or earth. If you truly seek enlightenment, then enter the heart of the sea.” He closed his mouth and looked at the young girl. Some time passed, and finally her countenance returned to normal. She gave a slight nod.

Meng Hao was silent for a while, before asking, “What do you mean by the heart of the sea?”

In a tone of voice which carried deep profundity, the old man said, “There are things which have been concealed at the bottom of the sea for a thousand years. That is the heart of the sea. If you seek an answer to your questions, perhaps you should also examine your own heart.”

Meng Hao found himself lost in thought for a long time. When he finally looked up, his eyes widened in shock. There was no trace of the old man or the young girl. He was alone on the lake. In fact, the boat had disappeared too.

He stared blankly for a while, until his vision came to focus on a spot some distance away. There, on the far bank, a group of people was lowering a brand new boat into the water. It slowly entered the lake, and then laughter rang out. The sounds of the peoples’ celebratory cheers surrounded the boat.

The boat slowly approached the center of the lake. Rowing it was a middle-aged man, accompanied by a woman and a child. Meng Hao watched as, day after day, year after year, he rowed back and forth across the lake. Many years passed, and the man grew old. The man’s son grew up, and took over rowing the boat. Years and years passed. Generations and generations.

The boat, once brand new, slowly began to crack and grow old. It began to age.

Eventually it grew so dilapidated that it couldn’t be repaired. Like a life that has reached its limit, it couldn’t be forced to go on any further. It slowly sank to the bottom of the lake.

It had lived its life on the surface, and died at the bottom. Its existence had been on the waters of the lake, accompanying generation after generation of mortals who had created it. Other than them, the lake was its entire life.

In its life, the lake was its companion. No one could hear the voice of the lake, but it could. When it sank to the bottom, it died, but was also reborn.

At that moment, it awoke.

The moment it awoke, it saw a young girl standing at the bottom of the lake, smiling at him.

“Will you… accompany me forever?”

“I don’t know how long forever is, but in my past life, I could hear your voice. Now that I’ve died… I want to accompany you. I want you to be part of my next life.” At this moment it came to understand that… it was the spirit of the boat. Listening to the voice of the lake over the countless years had caused the boat’s spirit to come into being.

Before dying, its life had been the waters of the lake. After death, its spirit would protect the lake forever, into eternity.

It was then that a boat once again appeared on the surface of the lake. Inside the boat was a young girl warming a bottle of alcohol. Together, they floated to and fro across the lake.

Meng Hao’s mind shook as he saw all of this transpire in front of him. Everything grew blurry for a moment, and then came back into focus. He was once again in the boat. The old man was there in front of him, grinning at him and holding his cup of alcohol. The girl looked up at him, smiling, her chin resting in her hands.

The old man took a drink. “This is my heart. Do you understand… successor of the Demon Sealing Sect?”

Meng Hao was silent for a moment. Frustration shined in his eyes. He… did not understand.

“Don’t search too hard for an answer. If you do, the answer you find might be false. At some point in your life, perhaps you will be able to find the answer. Don’t give up.” The old man looked at Meng Hao solemnly.

“Big Brother,” said the young girl, “its aura … is beneath your feet. Don’t provoke it. Remember… the great path of Demon Sealing…” Waves once again surged across the lake in all directions, great, tall waves that seemed to touch the sky. Everything turned dark amidst the thunderous roar. The boat sank into the water.

Meng Hao didn’t leap out of the boat. Instead, he closed his eyes. After some time passed, he opened them, and found himself sitting cross-legged on the lakeshore. The lake was still. There were no waves and no boat. What that had just happened had been an illusion.

The girl had not appeared, nor had the old man. Everything had occurred in a dream.

“Its aura is beneath my feet….” Meng Hao’s eyes shone with confusion. He looked down at his feet. He saw nothing but his shoes.

“The great path of Demon Sealing, a concept like a scripture.” Meng Hao frowned, still unable to comprehend the meaning of the words. He slowly got to his feet, then clasped his hands and bowed a third time to the lake.

He looked out at the waters. “I don’t understand today,” he said softly, “but I will achieve enlightenment one day.”

Waves suddenly rippled out upon the lake, seemingly in response to Meng Hao. Meng Hao was just about to leave, when suddenly his eyes flickered. Turning his head, he saw that off in the distance, several beams of light were flying toward him.

“Meng Hao!”

“So here you are. The Priest sent us searching for you!”

“Grab him, and then everything will be made clear!”

There were three flashing beams, and three Cultivators. One of them was at the ninth level of Qi Condensation, the others were at the eighth. All three of them rode massive jade flutes. The two eighth-level Cultivators were known to Meng Hao. They were Zhou and Tu of the Winding Stream Sect, who had attempted to chase and kill Meng Hao before.

The person of the ninth level of Qi Condensation was a young man of about thirty years of age. A cold, indifferent look covered his face as he stared at Meng Hao.

They were being followed by five more people who sped along on foot.

Meng Hao’s expression was calm. He gave the people a glance, then ignored them, bowing once again to the North Sea. As he did, the eyes of Zhou and Tu flashed. Their hands flickered with incantation signs, and dark clouds began to accumulate in the sky, accompanied by the rumble of thunder.

The young man of the ninth level slapped his bag of holding, and an enormous drum appeared. He beat the drum once. It emitted a thunderous boom which caused surrounding rocks and dirt to leap up into the air and fly toward Meng Hao.

At the same time, a lightning bolt shot toward Meng Hao. As it approached, he calmly made a fist and punched the lightning.

A boom echoed out as the it shattered, transforming into a multitude of sparks which then dissipated into the air. Meng Hao’s eyes flashed.

“Are you looking to die?!” he shouted. He leaped forward, and a whistling flying sword appeared beneath his feet. He transformed into a multicolored beam of light as he shot toward the three people flying above him. At this moment, the mass of flying dirt and rocks was almost upon him. He punched a fist toward it.

The power of the thirteenth level of Qi Condensation, the great circle of Qi Condensation, erupted within Meng Hao’s body. He was now cut off from the spiritual energy of heaven and earth. However, the approaching cloud of sand and stones was smashed into nothing by the power of his fist. A massive wind rose up. His three opponent’s faces filled with shock as they felt a force like that of a mountain pushing against them.

They spat up blood, especially Zhou and Tu. Their jade flutes shattered, and they retreated, their faces filled with astonishment. Even as they moved backwards, two sword auras shot past them. Their heads flew into the sky, showering blood everywhere. Two Cultivators of the eighth level of Qi Condensation, dead in an instant.

Meng Hao turned and looked at the ninth-level Winding Stream Sect disciple. His face was pale and his body trembled as he retreated. The people on the ground had stopped moving, astonished expressions on their faces.

“What… what is the level of your Cultivation base!?” said the ninth-level Winding Stream Sect disciple, his heart trembling, disbelief covering his face. In his mind, someone of the ninth level of Qi Condensation couldn’t simply kill two eighth-level Cultivators in one instant. Perhaps he was… Foundation Establishment?

However, although Meng Hao emanated an enigmatic air, it was not the power of Foundation Establishment. Therefore, the Winding Stream Sect disciple was incredibly surprised and bewildered.

Even as the words came out of the man’s mouth, Meng Hao moved forward, his face tranquil. Seeing this, the Winding Stream Sect disciple’s heart began to race. He turned and fled.

Unfortunately for him, he was only of the ninth level of Qi Condensation. Even if he could go a bit faster, his speed could never come close to matching Meng Hao, who was of the great circle of Qi Condensation. He had barely begun to flee before Meng Hao was next to him. Meng Hao’s fist descended.

The ninth-level disciple’s pupils constricted, and a profound sense of life-and-death danger encompassed him. With a low shout, he slapped his bag of holding. Several flying swords appeared, as well as a drum and a jade slip covered with mystical carvings.

Meng Hao’s expression did not change in the least bit. His fist continued to descend. The flying swords shattered into pieces. The drum made a crashing sound as it exploded. Next was… the jade slip.

This jade slip could withstand an attack from someone of the ninth level of Qi Condensation. But Meng Hao was of the great circle of Qi Condensation. The jade slip was incapable of blocking him. It was shattered into tiny pieces.

None of these things were even slightly capable of providing a defense. The Winding Stream Sect disciple was now out of magical items. He watched wide-eyed as Meng Hao’s fist came closer and closer, until it landed onto his chest.

A bang rang out. This Winding Stream Sect disciple was famous in his Sect, and was even known throughout the State of Zhao. But now, his chest sank in, and a fountain of blood shot out of his mouth. Like a kite whose string has been severed, he tumbled backwards twenty or thirty meters, dead.

From beginning to end, it took the space of a few breaths for Meng Hao to kill three people!

The rest of the Winding Stream Sect disciples on the ground had looks of profound fear written on their pale faces. It was hard to tell who fled first, because they scattered almost immediately. The only thought in their minds was: run!

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever, but inside he sighed. Because of the incident with Yan Ziguo, Meng Hao had learned the importance of leaving behind no witnesses. He knew that killing must be done resolutely. Even though he didn’t want to, attacking… was a necessity.

The old Meng Hao would never have made a move against the fleeing people. But today was different. Meng Hao’s eyes flashed. Ten flying swords flew out, infused with the power of the great circle of Qi Condensation. The quality of the swords was poor, and incapable of containing such power, so they exploded, transforming into countless fragments, which continued to fly forward.

Blood-curdling screams rang out one after another. Each and every one of the fleeing Winding Stream Sect disciples dropped dead.

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# Chapter 91: What Goes Around Comes Around

Fire Globe after Fire Globe descended onto the corpses. The reek of blood still filled the air, but it was soon overpowered by the stench of scorched flesh. The disgusting odor emanated out in all directions.

Meng Hao collected the bags of holding. He sniffed the air, then with one last silent look at the North Sea, turned and left.

“I can’t stay in the State of Zhao any more… I need to leave.” Meng Hao knew that if the Winding Stream Sect had appeared, then the rest of the three great Sects must also be aware of the deaths of their Priests and Elders. Soon, the mountains would be crawling with Qi Condensation Cultivators seeking to determine how they had died.

Meng Hao frowned. Looking off into the distance, an image appeared in his mind, a map of the Southern Domain. On the other side of these mountains was a vast plain which was the border of the State of Zhao.

“It’s not far, but things will get violent here very soon. I can’t stay any longer.” Meng Hao changed his direction. These mountains belonged to the region of the Reliance Sect. He would leave the State of Zhao by a different route.

With his mind made up, Meng Hao raced forward. Unfortunately, before he could get far, his eyes narrowed, and he dropped to the ground. Frowning, he looked off into the distance with cold eyes. A few dozen kilometers ahead of him, an enormous glowing shield was descending from the sky. It transformed into countless flakes of flying snow which cut off the Reliance Sect outer reaches from the rest of the world.

Floating in the sky off in the distance was a middle-aged man wearing a long black robe. His Cultivation base was at the Foundation Establishment stage. In his hand he held a piece of frozen jade. Beams of light twirled around it slowly. This magical item was the source of the flying snow shield that surrounded everything, sealing it off.

Surrounding the man were seven or eight Qi Condensation Cultivators, with dignified looks on their faces. From their clothing, Meng Hao could tell that they were from the Cold Wind Sect.

“No wonder they’re called the three great Sects. Even with so many Foundation Establishment Elders dead, even more appear.” Meng Hao’s heart sank as he realized that this seal had completely cut off his path of escape. He had no way to leave now. Before he had time to examine the situation further, he suddenly shot backward. The flying snow shield had suddenly begun to contract rapidly.

As it did, it completely froze the land and trees it passed. It moved rapidly, heading directly toward Meng Hao’s position. Of course, it wasn’t targeting Meng Hao; this was just a normal function of the sealing spell. The contraction wouldn’t last for long; it would move inward a few hundred kilometers, then slowly come to a stop.

Meng Hao was not very far away from it. As he retreated, he had no time conceal his movements. As it approached, he hopped onto a flying sword, transforming into a beam of light, which of course attracted the attention of the Cold Wind Sect Cultivators.

“That person….”

“It’s Meng Hao! I saw his picture!”

“So, it’s Meng Hao. The Priests and the others are looking for him. Seize him! Then we can finally understand what happened here!” The eyes of the Cold Wind Sect Cultivators glowed with ill intentions.

“All of you, go capture him,” said the Foundation Establishment Cultivator. “I’m consolidating the sealing spell and still need few moments.” Having just activated the seal contraction, he wasn’t able to leave his position. However, as far as he was concerned, Meng Hao was incapable of escape.

As soon as the words left the man’s mouth, the seven or eight Cold Wind disciples shot after Meng Hao in pursuit.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. He shot forward, the seal contracting behind him, the Cultivators right behind it, hot in pursuit.

As he raced forward, the Cold Wind shield grew closer and closer, until it was only about thirty meters away. Finally, it slowed down and stopped contracting. It became a thick shield of ice, covering the entire Reliance Sect mountainous regions.

The seal was actually not completely solidified. If he was only at the ninth level of Qi Condensation, he would not have been able to tell. But he was of the great circle of Qi Condensation. Looking at the seal, he could tell that it would not last for very long.

“I can’t get out, and I can’t kill my way out. I need to get over the mountains as fast as possible. Looking at this seal, I can tell it will start to loosen up soon. Once it does, I can make my escape.” Meng Hao gritted his teeth. He knew that this plan was a bit of a stretch, but he didn’t have many other options. Finding a way to conceal himself for a bit of time would do, but first he had to take the initiative to get out of his current situation.

Eyes gleaming, he ceased his retreat. Instead, he stood there, watching coldly as eight Cold Wind Sect Cultivators approached.

“Eight people in all. Two of the ninth level of Qi Condensation, four of the eighth and two of the seventh. They all have magical flight items. It seems the three Sects are quite anxious. They didn’t spare any cost at all to get here as quickly as possible.” Meng Hao glanced back at the Foundation Establishment Cultivator; he was maintaining the spell and couldn’t move at the moment. However, as a Foundation Establishment Cultivator, he was extremely powerful. He floated there, looking coldly at Meng Hao.

As their gazes locked onto each other, the eight other Cultivators shot through the flying snow shield. This was one of the strange properties of this particular shield; it could be entered into, but not exited.

The eight people descended onto Meng Hao, their faces twisted with vicious grins. He sprang into action.

He clenched his right hand into a fist, stepped forward, and smashed it into the ground. The power of the great circle of Qi Condensation exploded out as a gale force wind slammed into the eight Cultivators. They stopped in their tracks, shock written on their faces.

At the same time, two wooden swords appeared in Meng Hao’s hands. They screamed through the air, and the heads of the two seventh-level Qi Condensation disciples flew into the air.

“One breath,” said Meng Hao to himself. The Foundation Establishment Cultivator had said he only needed a few moments. Meng Hao wasn’t sure if that was true or not. Either way, his own requirement was that he wipe out these eight people within the space of ten breaths.

Amidst the whistling screams of the wooden swords, the remaining six disciples scrambled to pull out magical items. Before that could happen, Meng Hao spun, dashing toward one of the eighth-level Cultivators. He didn’t use a magical item, but rather his shoulder.

Boom! Meng Hao slammed into him, and blood shot out of his mouth. His body caved in, and as he flew backward, Meng Hao flicked his right hand. A massive Flame Python appeared, sixty meters long. Roaring, it shot toward another eighth-level Cultivator. A blood-curdling scream rang out as the Flame Python consuming him whole.

“Four breaths.” In four breaths, Meng Hao had killed four people. The remaining four looked on in shock. Meng Hao had attacked with a viciousness they had never before seen. Now that he had revealed the power of his Cultivation base, the remaining four Cultivators trembled, unable to comprehend what was happening.

Off in the distance, the Foundation Establishment Cultivator looked on in shock. Moments ago, he had seen that Meng Hao was at the ninth level of Qi Condensation; but in the space of a few breaths, his Cultivation base had suddenly climbed to an incredible height.

“Six breaths.” Meng Hao’s hand flickered in an incantation, and the sword auras from the two wooden swords spilled out. The remaining two Cultivators of the eight level of Qi Condensation tried to defend with magical items as the swords shot forward. Horrified screams rang out as their hearts were stabbed through. Their bodies fell to the ground.

Now, only two Cultivators remained, both of the ninth level of Qi Condensation. Their faces pale, they had already begun to edge backwards. When Meng Hao’s cold gaze fell upon them, they scattered, each one running off in a different direction.

With a cold look on his face, Meng Hao raised his right hand, which flickered with an incantation. A massive Wind Blade appeared, fifteen or twenty meters long. It sped forth with a shrill whistling sound. At the same time, Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding. The black bow appeared in his hand. He drew back on the bow, and then shot an arrow toward the other person.

“Eight breaths,” said Meng Hao softly. Two booming sounds rang out. The Wind Blade slashed through the first ninth-level Cultivator, splitting his body in two and sending blood and gore splattering everywhere.

Simultaneously, a black arrow pierced the other Cultivator’s head, causing it to explode violently.

Eight breaths, eight kills!

Meng Hao, expressionless, looked out through the flying snow shield at the Foundation Establishment Cultivator for a moment. Then his body transformed into a glittering beam and he shot off into the distance.

He moved about, avoiding quite a few Cultivators. But the area covered by the sealing spell was not large. With so many Cultivators of the eighth and ninth levels of Qi Condensation, it wouldn’t take them long to search everywhere. As for Foundation Establishment Cultivators, they could fly, and would be able to search even faster.

Meng Hao continued to evade detection, until finally he approached the Reliance Sect itself. It was then that ten beams of light appeared in the sky, soaring forward at top speed. In the lead of this group of people was a grim-faced old man. Unlike the others who surrounded him, he was not soaring, but actually flying.

Cultivators of the Qi Condensation stage could not do this; this man was clearly a Foundation Establishment Cultivator!

“The Upright Evening Sect….” Catching sight of them, Meng Hao sighed. He finally came to accept that he would not be able to escape this day. He could try to hide, but he would be found eventually.

“Meng Hao!” Upon catching sight of him, the faces of the Upright Evening Sect Cultivators twisted. The old man of the Foundation Establishment stage raced toward Meng Hao, his eyes shining.

Meng Hao’s eyes grew dark as he watched the Foundation Establishment Cultivator approach. The massive power of the Foundation Establishment stage roiled out from the man. The immensity of this power caused the surrounding Qi Condensation Cultivators to shrink back, their Cultivation bases teetering.

This was the might of Foundation Establishment. He flew through the air with seemingly no effort, imposing to the extreme. Without even trying, he caused the Qi Condensation Cultivators to tremble.

But Meng Hao was not an ordinary Qi Condensation Cultivator. A thirteenth-level Cultivator of the great circle of Qi Condensation had not been seen since ancient times. He had Spiritual Sense. Although it wasn’t very strong, it was there. His Cultivation base was not thrown into chaos like the others.

His physical body was more powerful, his Qi vessels tougher, even his bones were stronger. Despite facing up against a powerful Foundation Establishment expert, he refused to retreat back even half a pace.

“So, the person who created all these waves in the State of Zhao is a Cultivator halfway to the Foundation Establishment stage,” said the Foundation Establishment Cultivator coolly. “Today, however, if I say you shall die, then die you shall.”

Just then, another beam of radiant light appeared from behind Meng Hao. It screamed toward them. This was none other than the Cold Wind Sect’s Foundation Establishment expert. He radiated a killing aura.

“I tread the path of Cultivation, and am not ignorant of the rules of life and death,” said Meng Hao coolly. “I can kill others, so naturally, others can kill me. But let me ask you a question. You three Sects permitted Shangguan Xiu to absorb the life force of the mortals of three counties. He even damaged their longevity. Mortals do not practice Cultivation. Harming a Cultivator is one thing, but you, for selfish personal gain, permitted such a horrific act. This is a violation of the theory of law. What goes around comes around!” He had wanted to say these words for a long time.

“Theory of law? In heaven and earth, the powerful people make the laws. And if what goes around comes around, then you’ve got something coming to you, wouldn’t you say?”

Meng Hao said nothing. He simply looked up into the sky.

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# Chapter 92: Exterminate Foundation Establishment!

In front of Meng Hao was the old Foundation Establishment Cultivator from the Upright Evening Sect. Behind him was the enraged Foundation Establishment Cultivator from the Cold Wind Sect. As of this moment, Foundation Establishment Cultivators from two of the three great Sects of the State of Zhao had appeared.

In his heart, Meng Hao knew that he was stuck between a rock and a hard place. It would be difficult to escape. Theoretically, he could lead them into Patriarch Reliance’s secluded meditation zone, but to do that would require the cooperation of Patriarch Reliance himself.

Considering everything that had happened between the two of them, and also considering the Patriarch’s temperament, it was doubtful he would help out. Furthermore, Meng Hao had already used that ruse that once. The chances of tricking more people in the same way was was not high. In the end, though, he had little choice but to try.

“The Priests and Elders of the three great Sects are not dead!” he said suddenly, just as the Foundation Establishment Cultivator from the Upright Evening Sect approached with hand raised.

As soon as the words left his mouth, the old man’s eyes gleamed. The face of the man from the Cold Wind Sect also flickered.

“They’re trapped inside Patriarch Reliance’s Immortal’s Cave. It’s right over there.” He lifted his hand to point at the East Mountain.

The eyes of the Foundation Establishment Cultivator from the Cold Wind Sect flashed like lightning as he glanced up at the peak. The group of Qi Condensation Cultivators from the Upright Evening Sect also looked toward the East Mountain.

However, the Upright Evening Sect Foundation Establishment Cultivator smiled. It was a gruesome smile filled with ridicule.

“I’m interested to know how you are aware that the Priests and Elders from the three great Sects are dead.” Hearing this, Meng Hao’s heart flip-flopped, although his expression did not change.

“It actually doesn’t matter what you say. Once I get ahold of you, you’ll answer all my questions.” He lifted his right hand and stretched it out towards Meng Hao. As he did, the power of his Foundation Establishment Cultivation base exploded out, and an enormous hand appeared in the air in front of him. It screamed through the air, heading directly toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao immediately began to dodge, but even as he did so, the Foundation Establishment Cultivator from the Cold Wind Sect flicked his sleeve and gave out a cold laugh. A fierce wind shot toward Meng Hao.

Both Foundation Establishment Cultivators attacked at the same time. Gritting his teeth, Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding. A sheet of lightning appeared which coalesced into a Lightning Flag.

This flag was one of the objects he had taken from Patriarch Reliance, and it had the power to defend against attacks from Foundation Establishment Cultivators. As soon as it appeared, it grew, transforming into a sheet of mist, within which lightning roiled. The mist expanded out to cover Meng Hao.

An explosion rolled out. Inside the mist, Meng Hao coughed up a mouthful of blood, and his body was shoved backward. The eyes of the old Foundation Establishment Cultivator grew wide, and he stared in shock at the mist.

The man from the Cold Wind Sect gasped loudly.

The mist surrounding Meng Hao was about fifteen or twenty meters in diameter. Meng Hao's face was pale and his mouth was smeared with blood. His internal organs ached and bled, and only by extorting a huge amount of effort was he able to keep them under control. To employ the full power of the flag would require significant refinement, and Meng Hao hadn't had very much time to practice with it. As such, he could only utilize half of its power. It rotated around him unstably.

"This is an excellent treasure," said the old man from the Upright Evening Sect. "Too bad you can't use it correctly. Let's see how much of my magic you can withstand!" He moved forward, raising his hand again. A field of black dust spread out in front of him. It glittered as it transformed into a multitude of black threads, which then flew toward the mist.

A boom rang out, and then the old man himself neared the mist. Every time he waved his hand back and forth, the black dust threads smashed into the mist, causing booms to ring out.

With a cold smile, the Cold Wind Sect Cultivator flashed an incantation sign. His hand instantly transformed into ice, which then shattered and reformed in front of him into a larger hand. The icy hand shot toward Meng Hao.

In the blink of an eye, it reached him. Thunderous roars filled the air as the black threads and the icy hand caused the mist surrounding Meng Hao to slowly contract. Inside, blood sprayed from Meng Hao's mouth, and his body felt as if it were about to be torn to pieces. His mind was in a jumble, and his face as pale as death. A feeling of life-and-death peril enveloped him; the thread connecting him to the Lightning Flag could be severed at any moment.

When that happened, it wouldn't matter that Meng Hao's Cultivation base had completed the great circle of Qi Condensation. That was still the Qi Condensation stage, and he was facing the Foundation Establishment stage. The gap between the two was too vast.

At this critical juncture, Meng Hao, his eyes bloodshot, suddenly slapped his bag of holding. In his hand appeared an oil lamp, from within which emitted an ancient Qi.

The wick of this lamp was a Nascent Soul, sitting cross-legged in meditation. It was none other than… Lord Revelation!

The Nascent Soul was the fuel, and life force was the fire. The blazing flame cast light onto Meng Hao's face. A ferocious expression filled his face, and his eyes shined with killing intent. He had thought of the only possible way to get out of this situation.

He took a deep breath, and suddenly, popping sounds rang out from his body. His Cultivation base began to rotate with the power of the great circle of Qi Condensation. His Core sea roiled and churned, and spiritual power raced through his Qi passageways. He poured the full power of his Cultivation base into a single mouthful of Qi.

He looked out past the mist.

Because the mist was covering him, no one could see the oil lamp in his hand. Furthermore, none of the Qi from the lamp emanated outwards.

Bangs rang out as the mist continued to contract. Currently, it only stretched out about three meters. More black dust appeared in the hand of the old Foundation Establishment Cultivator.

“Open up!” he roared, waving his hand toward the mist. Instantly, an explosion could be heard as the mist shattered and dispersed, reforming into the Lightning Flag, which flew back to Meng Hao.

“If I say today is the day you die, then you will die!” The old man waved his hand again, and the black dust descended toward Meng Hao.

It was then that the old man noticed the oil lamp in the hands of pale-faced Meng Hao. His expression suddenly changed.

“Is that…?”

Meng Hao’s killing intent soared. Without giving his opponent even the chance to think, he opened his lips and spit out the mouthful of Qi.

The Qi passed through the flame of the oil lamp. As it did, it expanded out into a massive conflagration. The old Foundation Establishment cultivator retreated, shocked. But the expanding flames were too fast, and reached him in an instant.

Miserable screams filled the air as fire consumed him. The black dust in his hand had already been vaporized. Within seconds, his clothing, and then his flesh, and been reduced to ash.

Everything happened too quickly. The surrounding Cultivators didn’t even have time to react. By the time the blood-curdling screams began to ring out, the old Cultivator had already been burned into nothingness. Nothing remained, not even his bag of holding.

Meng Hao’s face was pale, and his hands trembled. The Qi he had just shot out contained all the power of his Cultivation base, as well as the fearsome might of the oil lamp’s flame.

Everything was as silent as death… Wisps of twisting demonic flame still floated about in the spot where the Foundation Establishment Cultivator had been incinerated.

The sounds of his screams still echoed in the air. The nine or so remaining Cultivators from the Upright Evening Sect looked on with expressions of disbelief.

“Elder Zhang just….”

“What… what was that fire?”

“This is impossible…. Elder Zhang is a Foundation Establishment Cultivator. How could he possibly die under Meng Hao’s hand….”

They didn’t dare to believe. A mighty Foundation Establishment expert, unexpectedly… burned to death by a flame cast by a Qi Condensation

Cultivator. In their minds, this was an impossibility. Foundation Establishment Cultivators simply could not be killed by Qi Condensation Cultivators.

Even a weak Foundation Establishment Cultivator shouldn’t be able to die at the hand of a Qi Condensation Cultivator

What they had just witnessed set their minds spinning into chaos. They stared at Meng Hao in astonishment.

What they didn’t know was that the Foundation Establishment Cultivator from the Cold Wind Sect was even more flabbergasted than they were. He stared at the place where the old Foundation Establishment Cultivator had just been, his eyes wide, his face pale, and his heart trembling. An indescribable fear gripped his heart.

As a Foundation Establishment Cultivator, he was in an elite position in the State of Zhao, and rarely had anything to fear. Yet now, he was afraid. In fact, “afraid,” is probably not the appropriate word. He was petrified.

He looked at the oil lamp in Meng Hao’s hand, his mind reeling. The terror in his heart grew stronger. He didn’t know what fire this Qi Condensation disciple had wielded, but he had an inkling.

“That must have been Nascent Soul fire. That’s a Nascent Soul. That fire was kindled with life force to form Nascent Soul fire! It can burn to death, not only Foundation Establishment Cultivators, but also Core Formation stage Cultivators!” His breathing agitated, he stared at Meng Hao. His scalp grew numb, and he subconsciously retreated a few paces. He did not dare to get any closer. At the moment, he had forgotten completely about his prestigious Foundation Establishment status.

Meng Hao stood there on his flying sword, the lamp in his hand. He made a beckoning motion with his left hand, and the Lightning Flag flew back into his bag of holding. He rotated his Cultivation base, staring coldly at the Cold Wind Sect Cultivator.

It was at this moment, however, that three blurs of light appeared in the air above the Reliance Sect, each one over thirty meters wide. Ripples spread out from them as they shot mightily toward Meng Hao and the others.

Within the three beams were three old men who looked as if they had just climbed out of the grave. Their faces were covered with wrinkles, and strong Death Qi emanated from their bodies. And yet, along with the Death Qi that circled about them was the Qi of their Condensation bases. This Qi was eminently powerful. It was not quite of the Nascent Soul stage, but they had definitely completed the great circle of Core Formation.

Meng Hao’s heart sank, and he clasped his oil lamp tightly. He had just expended roughly eighty to ninety percent of his Cultivation base. It had taken that much to create the terrifying fire he had just utilized.

Their speed was incredible as they approached. A relieved expression appeared in the eye of the Foundation Establishment Cultivator from the Cold Wind Sect. And yet, at that very moment, a Qi appeared which surpassed that of the Pseudo Nascent Soul stage Patriarchs. In an instant, the Qi enveloped the entire State of Zhao.

An enormous bell appeared above the Reliance Sect, and a grim voice filled the air.

“Patriarch Reliance, get the hell out and face me!”

The voice crackled like lightning, its power filling the sky. Its might billowed out, shattering the flying snow shield. As for the nine or so Qi Condensation disciples from the Upright Evening Sect, blood fountained out of their mouths, and then one by one, they exploded, unable to withstand the power.

Meng Hao’s body shook, and he spit out blood. He looked up into the sky, his eyes narrowing.

The face of the Cold Wind Sect’s Foundation Establishment Cultivator twisted, and the approaching Patriarchs from the three great Sects looked amazed. They stopped flying and immediately clasped hands and bowed toward an old man in a black robe who stood next to the bell in the sky.

His robes whipped about in the wind. Behind him, the clouds spun violently. The pupil of his left eye looked like the sun, and shone with brilliant light. The right eye was dark, and its pupil looked like a crescent moon. On his forehead was a strange looking slit, within which appeared to be another eye. This eye itself was invisible, but emitted a bloody glow.

It was Lord Revelation!

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# Chapter 93: Sever the Dao, Change Heaven and Earth, Demonic Will!

The instant he saw Lord Revelation, Meng Hao's body grew stiff. In his hands, the Nascent Soul of Lord Revelation's clone burned in the demonic lamp.

Lord Revelation's shout shook the earth for millions of kilometers in all directions. Mountains trembled and the sky filled with dark, roiling clouds.

Meng Hao's heart quivered and blood seeped out of his mouth. His body was pushed backwards relentlessly. He coughed up an entire mouthful of blood.

Everyone in the region of the Reliance Sect, including the Pseudo Nascent Soul Patriarchs and the Foundation Establishment Cultivator from the Cold Wind Sect, were as frightened as cicadas in cold weather. They didn't dare to make even the slightest sound. They stared up into the sky, astonished, their eyes filled with dread.

And yet, despite the quaking of the earth, the area around Patriarch Reliance's secluded meditation zone was completely quiet. Not a sound could be heard from Patriarch Reliance.

Lord Revelation hovered in the air next to his bell. His eyes shone with the splendor of the sun and moon. The darkness and light seemed to interlock and then combine with the crimson bloody glow which emanated from the slit on his forehead. He lifted his right hand up, and then waved it downward.

As he did, the dark glow, the bright light and the bloody essence combined to form the image of a hand. It began to descend toward the earth.

It takes some time to describe, but happened in an instant. A roar filled the air as the hand fell downward toward the East Mountain of the Reliance Sect. As the hand descended onto the East Mountain, it began to crumble, layer after layer crashing down and disintegrating into dust. By the time the hand had finished its descent, the East Mountain… was gone!

The earth shook, and a fierce wind kicked up. After destroying the East Mountain, the hand didn’t stop. It continued to pierce down into the ground, as if Lord Revelation knew exactly where Patriarch Reliance’s secluded meditation chamber was located.

A boom resonated outward, filling nearly half of the State of Zhao. The earth rippled outwards. It seemed that the hand had pierced down and actually destroyed Patriarch Reliance’s secluded meditation zone!

After the hand finally disappeared, the onlookers saw a massive hole. Within it were numerous incomplete restrictive spells. The place… really was Patriarch Reliance’s secluded meditation zone. Stone steles and altars lay about in ruins. The massive image of Patriarch Reliance’s face was shattered into pieces, and the secluded meditation chamber had been knocked open.

But… Patriarch Reliance was nowhere to be seen!

“Patriarch Reliance, get the hell out here!” When Lord Revelation saw that Patriarch Reliance was not in the meditation chamber, he raised his head to the sky and let out a roar.

The roar vibrated the heavens, rippling outward until it filled the entire State of Zhao.

“You get the hell out here!”

“Get the hell out here!”

“Get the hell out…”

“Get the hell…” Innumerable echoes could be heard, swirling together to form a mighty sound of incomprehensible might.

Meng Hao’s body trembled as he looked out at the scene. In the place where the East Mountain had once stood, was a giant hole. Patriarch Reliance had been there just a few hours ago, but now he wasn’t.

“Where is he…” thought Meng Hao, his face growing pale. At the moment, he literally couldn’t move. The power of Lord Revelation’s voice suppressed everything. Anyone whose Cultivation base was lower than Lord Revelations could do nothing more that struggle to stand up against it.

The power seemed to contain elements of the Heavens, as if Lord Revelation’s will controlled everything.

“This is not Nascent Soul stage, this is Spirit Severing stage!!”

“It’s definitely Spirit Severing, otherwise this will could not be present!” The three Pseudo Nascent Core Patriarchs of the three great Sects appeared even more shocked.

“Patriarch Reliance, you won’t show your face? I’ll destroy your only Inner Sect disciple and wipe out the bloodline of your Sect forever! I’ll level all of these mountains and melt the entire State of Zhao until you appear!” He had already swept the State of Zhao with his Spiritual Sense, but no matter how he searched, he couldn’t find Patriarch Reliance.

And yet on his way here, he had clearly divined that Patriarch Reliance… was within the State of Zhao.

A cold look glowed in Lord Revelation’s eyes. This was his true self, here to battle with Patriarch Reliance. And yet, Patriarch Reliance was hiding. Powerful killing intent emanated from Lord Revelation. There was a wealth of methods he could use to force Patriarch Reliance to show himself, including killing his Inner Sect disciple and levelling the mountains. If exterminating the State of Zhao didn’t draw him out, he could literally melt the entire nation.

Lord Revelation had long since caught sight of the oil lamp in Meng Hao’s hands. He looked down, his gaze sweeping the land once again. He lifted his hand, then waved it downward a second time.

This time light poured from his eyes, and the slit on his forehead opened up to the width of a finger. The blood red light poured out, and as his hand descended, the mountains for tens of thousands of miles in all directions began to rock and sway. In the sky above the quaking mountains, appeared… an enormous hand!

At first it didn’t seem very large, but amidst thunderous rumblings, it grew larger and larger, until it seemed as if it covered the mountains for tens of thousands of kilometres in all directions. The earth trembled, and the faces of the three Pseudo Nascent Soul Patriarchs were filled with shock. They fled at the fastest speed they could muster.

The Foundation Establishment Cultivator from the Cold Wind Sect looked pale. He bit the tip of his tongue, sacrificing some of his Cultivation base as he transforming into a prismatic beam of light and fled off into the distance.

As for Meng Hao, his Cultivation base was the weakest. He couldn’t even move. The oil lamp flew out of his hands, racing toward the giant palm. The cross-legged Nascent Soul inside opened its eyes, and then radiated a glow similar to that emitted by Lord Revelation.

Meng Hao could only watch wide-eyed as the hand in the sky grew bigger and bigger. It covered everything, until it was the only thing visible in the entire sky.

Everything for tens of thousands of kilometers grew black. The hand covered everything. And then, it began to descend. The earth began to quake. Mountains buckled and collapsed. As the hand fell toward him, Meng Hao felt as if doomsday had arrived.

A bitter look appeared on his face as he stood there silently. There was no fear or dread in his eyes. He let out a soft sigh.

“Is everything going to end? I just… I can’t accept it.” Stubbornness filled his eyes, a flicker which turned into a roaring flame.

“In the Cultivation world, the weak are the prey of the strong. The Cultivation base is everything. Only by becoming powerful can you continue on living. Only by increasing your strength can you prevent yourself from being crushed beneath the feet of others. Only then can you stand high in the sky.” Meng Hao suddenly smiled. His smile was filled with deep understanding. His will carried the deep desire to become powerful. Now, in the face of such imminent danger, he truly understood himself.

“The sages said, learning is the most important thing in the life. But in the Cultivation world, only the powerful can remain undefeated!” Meng Hao stared up at the descending hand. He would watch as it landed onto his body, crushing him into the ground. He would not close his eyes. He would watch everything. He would imprint this vision onto his spirit. When he was reincarnated, it would still be there. If there really was a next life… he would become powerful and invincible then!

As the hand continued to plummet, the mountains around him crumbled. Everything started to grow blurry, and blackness filled Meng Hao’s eyes. It was as if at this moment, heaven and earth viewed him as nothing more than a bug. He didn’t struggle in the least bit.

“If there is an afterlife, I will never allow something like this to happen again!”

Amidst the deafening roaring, Meng Hao stood there, trembling. Blood seeped out of his orifices, and his bones made cracking sounds. Within moments, he would be reduced to nothing more than a pool of blood.

It was at this moment that, all of a sudden, a dark red light appeared. Glowing brightly, it shot toward the hand at high speed, speeding out from a location far away from Meng Hao’s vision.

The blood-red glow seemed to be formed from the dregs of blood refined over innumerable years. A powerful Demonic aura poured out, filling the heavens.

The Demonic aura was so thick that it seemed to be able to change the color of heaven and earth. In the blink of an eye, everything turned the color of blood!

The bloody glow approached, speeding toward the massive hand that Lord Revelation had summoned. And then it severed it!

The severing sent a bloody glow high into the Heavens!

This severing was powerful enough to rend all creation.

This severing seemed strong enough to split heaven and earth into two. And even if it wasn’t actually that powerful, it had the will to attempt to!

Sever the Dao, change heaven and earth, Demonic will!

This person… was not Patriarch Reliance!

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# Chapter 94: You Really Want Me To Come Out?

An incredible roaring boom sounded out from the massive hand as the glowing red beam sliced through it. Starting in the space between the middle and ring finger of the hand, a massive gash appeared, cutting it completely in half.

One slash, and the hand was severed.

“You!!!” cried Lord Revelation. His face flickered, and he lifted his head, his eyes flashing.

A thunderous boom rolled across the land. The giant hand, tens of thousands of kilometers wide, had moments ago blotted out Meng Hao’s vision, covering the entire land. But in the blink of an eye, a gap appeared, and Meng Hao could suddenly see the sky.

The hand split apart into two halves, each of which slammed into the ground on either side of Meng Hao.

The ground trembled and began to sink down. The mountains were crushed. All the wild creatures in the area, unable to flee, were instantly transformed to ash.

The Cold Wind Sect Foundation Establishment Cultivator, despite having spared no effort in his attempt to flee, could not possibly escape in such a short time. He was smashed to death into the ground.

The Cultivation bases of the three Pseudo Nascent Soul Patriarchs were anything but ordinary. Furthermore, Lord Revelation was not targeting them with his attack. They also sacrificed elements of their Cultivation bases to flee. Coughing up seven or eight mouthfuls of blood each, they just managed to reach the edge of the giant hand. Behind them, the earth seemed to have turned into a violently churning sea. As the hand disappeared, they mutely looked back at the scene.

Previously, the Reliance Sect had been surrounded by endless mountain chains. As of now, the only thing that remained was a massive recess in the ground. Its shape was that of a giant hand.

However, the handprint was not complete. Splitting it down the middle was a jagged section of earth jutting up into the sky like a mountain!

On top of the mountain stood Meng Hao. Beneath him was a stretch of earth about three hundred meters wide. It created a jagged path, on either side of which was a massive hole that sunk down deep into the earth.

Originally, this mountain should not have been here, but there it was … the only thing left.

A strange expression filled Meng Hao’s eyes as he looked up into the sky. He didn’t know who had saved him, and he didn’t stop to think about it. Immediately, a flying sword appeared under his feet, and he sped off into the distance, his body turning into a multicolored beam of light as he shot toward the edge of the massive handprint.

“I never thought the illustrious Demon Lord of the Southern Domain would show up in the tiny State of Zhao.” Lord Revelation’s face was dark as he flicked his sleeve. His voice echoed out like thunder in all directions. “But you’re only a clone! Your true self is suppressed and incapable of coming here to stop me from exterminating Patriarch Reliance!”

There was no response. It was almost as if the blood-red severing glow hadn’t appeared at all.

“Patriarch Reliance, get the hell out here!”

“Get the hell out here!”

“Get the hell out here!!” As his voice boomed out, Lord Revelation lifted his right hand and slapped the Revelation Bell. Its booming filled the sky, echoing out across the land, sweeping Lord Revelation’s voice along with it.

Countless tall mountains throughout the State of Zhao began to crack and crumble as a voice filled with profound ancientness filled the air. It was impossible to tell where the voice came from, but it filled the entire nation.

“You… really want me to come out?” As soon as he heard the voice, Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed. It was Patriarch Reliance’s voice. And yet, something about it sounded different. It seemed less unreasonable and more dignified. More ancient.

“So, you finally speak,” said Lord Revelation, his eyes glittering. “Patriarch Reliance, quit hiding. We have a score to settle from a thousand years ago. Even if you succeeded in your Spirit Severing, you should not have dared to take my clone’s Nascent Soul! Today, we battle, and in the end, I will remain, and you will not!” He flicked the Revelation Bell, and it sounded out with a boom and began to emit a blinding light. The light enveloped Lord Revelation, and he began to glow brightly.

As for this battle, it must be won. He had already determined Patriarch Reliance’s true level. Lord Revelation had already completed the Second Spirit Severing, and with that power, he could exterminate Patriarch Reliance.

As for this battle, he had complete confidence. He had thrown caution to the wind and come here as his true self. A Demon Lord had appeared and used a bit of remarkable magic, but that didn’t scare him in the least.

As for this battle, there was not the slightest chance he could lose. He had brought the Revelation Bell, which had absorbed countless prayers and sacrifices from the State of Revelation. It was sentient already, his most valuable treasure. With this bell, even if he faced someone of the Third Severing, he would still be able to achieve victory. In addition to this, the Dawn Immortal had gifted him with a portion of his Spiritual Sense.

Everything was quiet for a long moment. Then, Patriarch Reliance’s voice could be heard again, filled with profound ancientness.

“Back then… I only cared about the Milky Way Sea.” The voice was filled with a strange tone. It echoed out, seemingly filled with the ability to last through the ages. It echoed out across the entirety of the State of Zhao. The land began to quake.

This quaking filled the entire State of Zhao. Even the mortals could feel it. Meng Hao ducked his head and shot forward even faster.

“I don’t know how many years passed, nor how many times I slumbered and awoke. Finally, a day arrived in which I woke up to find myself facing a through and through bastard who should have died a thousand, no, ten thousand deaths!” From his tone of voice, he seemed to be getting upset. The last few words were spoken as if through clenched teeth.

As he spoke, the trembling across the State of Zhao grew more intense. Mountains and boulders trembled, tall buildings rocked back and forth. Within the three Great Sects, the remaining Cultivators looked around in shock.

The situation was the same in Milky Way City.

Meng Hao’s mind spun. He was wondering which bastard Patriarch Reliance was referring to.

“That damned bastard couldn’t possibly defeat me. He brought a bunch of other bastards with him, and we fought back and forth for years. In the end, they deceived me. They made a lot of promises to me, convinced me to leave the Milky Way Sea and come to the Southern Domain….” Patriarch Reliance seemed to be growing angrier and angrier. As he spoke, the land of the State of Zhao shook even harder. In the northern part of the nation, a thunderous roar sounded up into the Heavens. A massive crack appeared in the land, millions of miles long, and growing longer!

If you could stand far up in the sky and look down, you would be able to see that this massive crack was not a straight line, but a curving arc.

“When I got to the Southern Domain, the bastards tricked me. They fed me a bunch of random things that ended up placing me underneath an invisible seal!! They promised me that a few years later, they would give me some kind of special blessing of good fortune. But later, the damned bastards all died or disappeared. Finally, there was only the original one left. When I was asleep, he sneaked off to another planet. He left me with a Demon Sealing Jade, which I was supposed to give to a successor. In reality, those bastards were just afraid of Heavenly tribulation, and wanted to use me to fight against it!” Patriarch Reliance seemed to be gnashing his teeth. The sound reverberated across the land. A huge crack appeared in the eastern region of the State of Zhao, accompanied by a thunderous roar. The shape of the crack was a massive semi-circle.

Seeing all of this happen, Lord Revelation’s face changed. He appeared to be growing a bit apprehensive.

Meng Hao took in a breath, thinking of the Demon Sealing Jade that he had.

“The bastards didn’t keep their promise. They tricked me! I was enraged, and even though I slumbered, I still managed to squeeze out a bit of Spiritual will. It was weak, and constrained by the laws of the Dao of the Heavens, so it was incarnated into the body of a mortal. It started from scratch, practicing Cultivation. Because they tricked me, I decided to sever their legacy! I changed the name of the Demon Sealing Sect to the Reliance Sect. From then on, my Spiritual will called itself Patriarch Reliance!” As his voice boomed out, Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly grew wide. He looked back at the land of the State of Zhao behind him. It seethed like an ocean, under the echoes of Patriarch Reliance’s words.

When Lord Revelation heard the words, his expression changed to one of shock. Without even thinking about it, he began to move backwards. Another crashing boom rolled out across the State of Zhao, and a massive crack appeared in the south. At the same time, in the east, a fourth arcing crack appeared, accompanied by a thunderous bang. The four massive cracks split out to meet each other, surrounding the entire State of Zhao in a massive circle.

The entirety of the State of Zhao was contained in this enormous circle which suddenly… began to rise into the air. Black soil was revealed, and a fierce gale wind blew in all directions. Massive amounts of soil crumbled off the edges.

As it rose up, the land quaked and clouds roiled in the sky. Lord Revelation’s face was pale, his eyes filled with shock.

The ground rumbled as it rose higher and higher into the air. Three thousand meters, fifteen thousand, thirty thousand. It rose so high that it was impossible to describe.

The land rose up, and Meng Hao was still on it. He felt as if he were approaching the Heavens.

The land contained the cities of the mortals, the three great Sects, Milky Way city, and countless lives!

The entire State of Zhao was being lifted up, rising away from the earth, away from the Southern Domain. Beneath it was a massive, enormous hole in the ground!

The hole was, of course, the same size as the entire State of Zhao!

Standing above the hole was a vicious-looking turtle, as large as the entire State of Zhao, its body covered with countless black spikes!! It looked just like the mythical Xuan Wu black turtle!!

Earth covered the turtle’s massive shell, as if the shell were being held in place by the land. The earth was none other than… the State of Zhao.

A colossal head slowly emerged from the turtle’s shell. The head was roughly one tenth the size of the entire State of Zhao. Its skin was black, and covered with creases. Earth crumbled off from the head as it raised up. Its massive eyes turned to look down on Lord Revelation who stood there panting, as tiny as an insect, his face pale, his body quivering, a look of disbelief on his face.

“You called me out. Shall we fight?”

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# Chapter 95: A Rain Shower, a Cold Spell

Meng Hao stared dumbly, his mind reeling. All the fantastic and bizarre things he had seen in his life couldn’t compare to the shocking sight in front of him. His mind was blank, as if he had lost his ability to even think. He could only stand there and look numbly.

Patriarch Reliance was actually… a mind-bogglingly enormous black turtle!

And the State of Zhao existed on the earth upon his back!!

He himself had lived on Patriarch Reliance’s back for these twenty years. No wonder he was called Patriarch Reliance. He was relied upon not just by a single person, but by an entire nation! Cultivators and mortals alike relied on him!

After Patriarch Reliance had been sealed, he began to slumber. Yet he still managed to force out a tiny bit of his will, which then attempted to destroy the legacy of the Demon Sealing Sect.

Now it made sense why the Reliance Sect had formerly been called the Demon Sealing Sect, although few people even knew that nowadays. And no wonder the Reliance Sect was called an evil Sect and had such brutal, internecine struggles.

The body containing the sliver of his will practiced Cultivation until reaching the Spirit Severing stage, but as for his actual body… how powerful was it, exactly?!

There were still many things Meng Hao didn’t understand. For example, if Patriarch Reliance was so powerful, why hadn’t he been able to save himself from the very beginning? If Meng Hao hadn’t appeared, would he have died? Considering how powerful his actual body was, why did he need to absorb the power of those Cultivators?

Lifted up along with the land containing the State of Zhao, the three Pseudo Nascent Soul Cultivators stared in shock as all of this happened. Their minds spun and expressions of astonishment covered their faces. They were even incapable of feeling fear. They could only stare blankly. They could scarcely even believe what they saw.

Lord Revelation was also struck speechless as he looked up at the massive head. It was immeasurably larger than he himself; in fact, it was so large that you couldn’t even see from one end of it to another. Fear began to shine out from his eyes; how could he possibly have imagined that the Patriarch Reliance he had cursed and challenged to fight… would be like this?

As Patriarch Reliance’s voice echoed out, his words stabbed into Lord Revelation’s ears, causing his body to tremble and his scalp to go numb. He was sapped of any and all will to fight.

Patriarch Reliance didn’t need to strike out. Now that he had truly appeared, he casually exuded a bit of pressure onto Lord Revelation, causing his body to tremble. Lord Revelation’s blood seemed as if it would stop flowing. The Dao enlightenment he had acquired with his Spirit Severing collapsed. He was as weak as a bug. Patriarch Reliance could crush him with a single breath.

The terrifying pressure exuded by the head caused Lord Revelation’s mouth to go dry. Despite his extraordinary Cultivation base, cold sweat broke out across his body. The Revelation Bell next to him didn’t give him the slightest sense of comfort. Even the Spiritual Sense imparted by the Dawn Immortal didn’t give him the slightest sense of safety.

Now he understood why Patriarch Reliance hadn’t paid the slightest bit attention when he mentioned the Dawn Immortal. Of course he wouldn’t, considering his extraordinary actual body.

And now he knew why Patriarch Reliance didn’t fear the Dawn Immortal….

Even more astonishing was that in his recollection, according to all of the ancient texts he had studied, the State of Zhao had existed for a very, very long time. This made him even more frightened. Which had existed first…. Patriarch Reliance, or the State of Zhao?!

If it were the latter, that would be easier to accept. If it were the former…. Thinking of this, Lord Revelation began to tremble so violently he felt as if his skin might explode.

“Well, shall we fight?” The words echoed out Patriarch Reliance, each one of them rumbling like thunder. The thunderous booming caused Lord Revelation to be hurled backward several thousand meters. Blood showered from his mouth. The bell seemed completely ordinary now; it was covered with vast amounts of cracks and fractures.

“No… there’s no need to fight,” said Lord Revelation hastily, his face pale. “Just now, I of the junior generation was simply joking. Patriarch… Sir… please don’t take offense….” Patriarch Reliance’s two enormous eyes stared directly at him, and he trembled.

“Without your two palm strikes, I wouldn’t have been able to come out. Those damned bastards sealed me many years ago; the seal has been growing weaker recently. But to break through it, I needed to recover my Cultivation base a bit more. But then in the midst of it all, someone released the power of the Spirit Severing stage. That knocked the seal even looser, and finally I was able to break out!” His voice boomed out in all directions. When Meng Hao heard the words, his body trembled.

“Originally, I planned to use my sliver of will to break the seal. But mortal Cultivation and I don’t quite agree. Even with my knowledge of the Sublime Spirit Scripture, I couldn’t break through to the next level of Spirit Severing. Just when I was about to make the final breakthrough, I got cheated by a hateful little bastard. Dammit, everyone from the Demon Sealing Sect is a bastard! Stealing the spiritual energy I needed to break the seal, robbing me of my demonic lamp….” He let out a roar. Meng Hao wanted to flee; he knew exactly who Patriarch Reliance was talking about.

“You did well, very well. Luckily you attacked, helping break my seal. I need to repay you.”

Hearing Patriarch Reliance’s words, Lord Revelation gaped in shock. Then his expression changed to one of wild joy. How could he have imagined that he would score a lucky break? He had gotten lucky after all! Even as he clasped his hands in respect, Patriarch Reliance opened his mouth, and with blinding speed, snapped him up.

Lord Revelation and his Revelation Bell were swallowed down in an instant!

Crunching sounds emanated from Patriarch Reliance’s mouth, but no blood-curdling scream. When Meng Hao saw this, he began to breathe harder. He was all too familiar with Patriarch Reliance’s unreasonableness. He unconsciously retreated backward. Suddenly, Patriarch Reliance’s head swung around to face Meng Hao. It came to stop several hundred meters in front of him, staring at him.

Meng Hao squeezed out a smile. He didn’t necessarily believe everything that Patriarch Reliance had said to Lord Revelation, but neither did he disbelieve. From his experience, most of what the Patriarch said wasn’t true.

“Congratulations on emerging from seclusion, Patriarch. Your might is all-encompassing. You…”

“Now that you know the truth, are you frightened?” Patriarch Reliance’s voice rolled out like thunder, and he glared at Meng Hao. The sound of his voice was so loud it was almost deafening. He coughed up some blood.

“You Demon Sealing Sect people are all bastards,” said Patriarch Reliance slowly, staring at Meng Hao. “Those old bastards were like this, and you’re the same, kid. You all cheated me. Oh well, forget it. You’re a member of the Reliance Sect, after all. Allow me to bless you with…” As Patriarch

Reliance spoke, Meng Hao's scalp began to grow numb. He thought of what had just happened with Lord Revelation, and his mind began to race as he tried to think of what to do.

Suddenly, a spark of inspiration hit him as he remembered something.

He remembered what the young girl Guyiding Tri-rain had said to him at the North Sea.

"Big Brother, its aura … is beneath your feet. Don't provoke it. Remember… the great path of Demon Sealing, a concept like a scripture."

At that time, Meng Hao hadn't understood her words, but all of a sudden, now he did. The "it" beneath his feet… was none other than Patriarch Reliance!

Don't provoke it. Remember… the great path of Demon Sealing, a concept like a scripture.

"The great path of Demon Sealing, a concept like a scripture. Don't provoke it…." Meng Hao's mind flashed like lightning. Even as this happened, Patriarch Reliance finished speaking.

"…bless you with some good fortune. I need to repay you!"

The instant he finished speaking, Meng Hao lifted his hand and slapped his bag of holding. Instantly, the Demon Sealing Jade appeared in his hand.

When it appeared, a strong wind buffeted his face. The wind faded, and when it did, Patriarch Reliance's head was less than nine meters away from him.

The ends of the colossal head couldn't even be seen. The only thing Meng Hao could see was black skin and a massive eye the size of a huge city.

The eye seemed to be struggling.

"Ancient Dao," said Meng Hao hurriedly, reciting the first line from the Demon Sealing Jade. "Tenacious Desire to Seal the Heavens; Benefaction for All in the Mountains; Inevitable Dao Tribulation of the Nine Mountains and Seas; Perennial Will!”

As the words left Meng Hao’s mouth, Patriarch Reliance lifted his colossal head up and let out a massive roar. As it billowed out, ripples appeared in the air to accompany it. A nine-sided mystical symbol suddenly appeared on Patriarch Reliance’s forehead. It appeared to be ancient and archaic, and deeply imbedded into his forehead. It flickered, and his body shook.

“Stop! Damned Demon Sealing Scripture and damned Demon Sealing Sect!!” A ferocious expression appeared on his face and he let out another heaven-shaking roar, then stared at Meng Hao. Meng Hao’s heart pounded as he looked back at Patriarch Reliance.

“Those bastards were too malignant,” thought Patriarch Reliance. “The seal is broken, but the sealing mark is still branded onto my spirit, forcing me to be the Dao protector of the ninth Demon Sealer. This cannot be! The Demon Sealing Sect has committed crimes against the Heavens, and was plagued by misfortune. They understood that the number nine is a preeminent, sacred number according to the Dao of the Heavens. They knew that the greatest opposition from the Heavens would come upon the ninth Demon Sealer. Therefore, they took precautions. They wanted me to be the Dao protector for the ninth Demon Sealer. But this trifling kid is of the Qi Condensation stage! How could he possibly act as my master? Those damned bastards! I changed the name from Demon Sealing Sect to Reliance Sect and created rules to pit all the disciples against each other, all in the hopes of preventing someone like Meng Hao from appearing!”

A mist began to seep out from the North Sea, which of course was part of the lands of the State of Zhao that rested on Patriarch Reliance’s back. Within the mist, a boat magically appeared. An old man and a young girl stood at the prow of the boat, looking up at Patriarch Reliance. They clasped hands and bowed to him with utmost respect.

“Guyiding Tri-rain pays respects to Patriarch,” said the young girl. Her voice, clear and melodious, echoed out with a light and spiritual tone.

“Ah, you’re the sentient rain that fell in the third month of the Yiding year of the ancient Gu calendar. You fell onto my back… and became a lake.”

The young girl smiled and nodded. Then she looked toward Meng Hao and winked.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. Now he finally understood the meaning of the girl’s strange name.

Patriarch Reliance let out a cold snort. He looked at the little girl and then stared off into the sky. Meng Hao followed his gaze and caught sight of what appeared to be an indistinct blood-colored figure.

The figure clasped hands and bowed in respect to Patriarch Reliance, then disappeared.

Patriarch Reliance lowered his head once more and looked at Meng Hao. “Very well, Meng Hao. In the future, keep your distance from me!” He blew a breath out of his mouth, causing Meng Hao to fly up into the air. Buffeted by a glowing black wind, Meng Hao was tossed out of the State of Zhao to land on the edge of the massive hole in the earth.

“Son of a bitch! I can’t even look at him. In my life, I’ll never recognize him as my master. I’m out of here. The further away the better. He’ll never find me. As for the treasures of mine that he took, fine, consider them payment. All of our debts are settled. In this way, my heart can rest at ease and I can continue to practice Cultivation.” His eyes flickered, and then his body turned. Meng Hao watched as the colossal turtle, carrying the State of Zhao on his back, transformed into a massive beam of prismatic light… and then disappeared over the horizon.

He appeared to be heading in the direction of the Milky Way Sea. Perhaps this was why legends arose of an island of Immortals. If one searched for it, it could never be found. But when it appeared, anyone who stepped foot on it would find that it was a nation inhabited by mortals.

It was, of course, the State of Zhao.

Some time passed, and eventually the skies grew calm once again. Meng Hao stood there looking down at the deep, gaping hole. Then he looked off silently in the direction in which Patriarch Reliance had disappeared.

Time passed, and rain began to fall. It fell with urgency, slowly flowing down into the massive pit left by the State of Zhao. Many years later, this area would turn into a sea.

Standing amidst the sheets of falling rain, Meng Hao let out a long sigh. Images from the past several days flashed through his mind. It all seemed virtually inconceivable. Thinking upon it all, it seemed a dream-like fantasy.

The State of Zhao was gone…. Meng Hao looked around at the rain, then up into the hazy sky. He contemplated his life during the past four years.

“I started out as a scholar…” he murmured. “My life is like snow. I can only exist in winter. I can yearn for the summer of the mortal world, but that is not my life anymore….” After a long time passed, he turned. Surrounded by the falling rain, he once again began to trod a road which led away from his roots.

He struck a lonely figure amidst the rain. Eventually, he seemed to merge into it. Even if a hot wind blew over him, it would do nothing to disperse him. Because this was his life.

Life is comprised of one experience after another. Or, you could say that life is comprised of many experiences. Different experiences lead to different lives; if you experience a cold bitter wind, you will become snow. If you experience scorching heat, you will become rain….

Whatever you experience in life will shape the person you are. That is what makes life wonderful.

“Southern Domain, here I come! Although, before I get there, I must reach Foundation Establishment!” As he walked through the rain, he lifted up his head, and his eyes glittered brilliantly.

He would never forget the stubborn desire to achieve power that he had experienced underneath the descent of Lord Revelation’s palm attack. In this world, only the powerful can be invincible.

“Wait a minute, where did that blood-colored glow come from…?”

With questions circling in his mind, Meng Hao disappeared into the distance.

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This is the end of Book 1

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# Chapter 96: Demonic Jade in a Mountain Valley

Book 2: Cutting into the Southern Domain

There’s no need to explain what Foundation Establishment means to Cultivators. It is a world-shaking transformation which includes an extension of longevity. Of course, longevity means life, and the lives of Foundation Establishment Cultivators are much more fulfilling than those of the Qi Condensation stage.

There are injuries which will kill someone of the Qi Condensation stage, but can only hurt a powerful Foundation Establishment expert.

Meng Hao walked through the verdant mountains outside the edge of what had once been the State of Zhao, leaving behind the land that had once been his home. He headed toward the Southern Domain.

Even though the State of Zhao had technically been part of the Southern Domain, it was very remote, far, far away from the Southern Domain’s center. Given his current Cultivation base, if he went on foot, it could take years to get there.

However, Meng Hao wasn’t in a rush. Though he headed in the direction of the Southern Domain, what he was most concerned about at the moment was how to break through to Foundation Establishment and become a powerful expert.

Thinking about how previously, there had only been a few dozen Foundation Establishment Cultivators in the entire State of Zhao, Meng

Hao itched with anticipation. He longed to reach Foundation Establishment and then be able to fly through the sky.

“Who knows what dangers I will face in the Southern Domain. Plus, I still have to dispel this poison. I can only do that if I have a more powerful Cultivation base….” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. He knew that with the Qi Cultivation Manual of the Sublime Spirit Scripture, he could establish a Flawless Foundation. That was rare enough in itself, but Meng Hao also possessed Shangguan Xiu’s secret formula to create a Perfect Foundation Pill!

He already had most of the ingredients. With the items he’d obtained from Patriarch Reliance’s Immortal’s Cave, as well as the copper mirror, he was confident that he could gather together everything necessary to concoct the pill. If he succeeded, he would have a Perfect Foundation which currently only existed in legends in the Cultivation world.

“I wonder… how powerful is a Perfect Foundation?” His eyes shined as he sped forward.

Three months later, Meng Hao was far from where the State of Zhao had previously existed. He had passed through another nation of mortals and was now within a vast wilderness. He hadn’t seen signs of life for quite some time.

Lonely mountains stretched out as far as the eye could see. They seemed endless. During the day, the sounds of various wild animals could be heard, and the deep blue sky stretched boundlessly. At night, the sky was filled with the soft light of the multitudinous stars and gentle moon, the sight of which enchanted the heart.

Meng Hao stood on a mountain peak, looking out at the world. Its beauty filled his heart, causing it to swell. He started to walk down the mountain.

“Reading ten thousand books, travelling ten thousand roads. It’s hard to say how many tens of thousands of kilometers I’ve travelled so far. Mountains fill the horizon. Everything I’ve seen and heard fills my heart like an ever-growing sea.” His eyes shone brightly.

“In selecting the location for Foundation Establishment, the best thing to do is pick a place with outstanding spiritual energy. That will improve my chances of success. Meng Hao knew that establishing his Foundation would be difficult. Currently, he sped about attempting to find a suitable location. Time passed, another three months.

Meng Hao had now been wandering for six months. During that period of time, he did not practice Cultivation. Having completed the great circle of Qi Condensation, he didn’t need to. His heart was calm; deep inside, he knew that he could begin to establish his Foundation at any time he wished.

“For the highest probability of succeeding in establishing my Foundation, I must select a location with dense spiritual energy,” muttered Meng Hao. “That will reduce the chances of making any mistakes.” As he travelled, he would avoid any wild beasts he saw and didn’t instigate any bloody slaughters. The poison in his body had already flared up twice in the past half year. Each time it did, his body was wracked with intense pain, as if a myriad of ants were gnawing at his innards. The first time it had happened, he’d tumbled out of the sky, a three-colored mist seeping out of his body. He had sat with clenched teeth for three days before the pain subsided. Both times the poison had flared up, large amounts of stinking black liquid had oozed out of his body. Any vegetation it touched instantly decayed.

Upon further research he came to the determination that most of the poison had actually been expelled by his body during the flare-ups. Only the poison from the three-colored poison pill remained.

During the half-year, Meng Hao took time to practice with the treasures he had acquired from Patriarch Reliance, for example the Lightning Flag. As of now, he could use it much more effectively than the six months before. Now, he could use it to create a mist thirty meters in diameter. If any creatures approached it, it would shoot lightning bolts at it. Its power was greater than that of Foundation Establishment. He had gotten into the habit of using it to protect himself whenever he rested.

As for the good luck charm, Meng Hao couldn’t find any apparent use for the item.

Another month passed. In front of Meng Hao, a series of mountainous valleys appeared. They were filled with suspension bridges. People wearing rough hemp garments and headgear walked to and fro upon the bridges carrying large wicker baskets on their backs.

Seeing this, Meng Hao's eyes narrowed. This place was a wilderness, with no signs of habitation anywhere. And yet, suddenly some mortals had appeared.

Their clothing looked different from that worn in the State of Zhao. Meng Hao looked them over, muttering to himself, and was about to leave when suddenly his eyes flickered. He turned to look at one of the seven valleys.

After a moment, the flying sword he was standing on flashed, carrying him directly toward the valley. As he approached, a thick wave of spiritual energy billowed out and hit him in the face. His eyes gleamed. This was the most dense accumulation of spiritual energy that he had seen in the past six months.

The valley was extremely deep and long. Looking down at it from mid-air, Meng Hao couldn't even see its bottom. The only thing he could see was the dense spiritual energy, which roiled out from the deep within the valley. The spiritual energy caused all the living things nearby to grow abundantly and gave the place an otherworldly look.

"There's even more spiritual energy here than there was on the East Mountain of the Reliance Sect." Meng Hao looked down at the misty valley in amazement. It was at this moment that the mist in the valley suddenly roiled. Within Meng Hao's bag of holding, the Demon Sealing Jade quivered. His eyes flickering, he took out the jade slip.

As soon as he pulled it out, a roaring sound filled his head, and a text appeared in his mind.

"An understanding from ancient times, the smelting of a demon, severed by the hand of a of a Demon Sealer. Such a pity; an inch of joss ash upon which descendants can prostrate."

The text appeared suddenly, and then disappeared just as quickly, fading into Meng Hao's mind. Everything returned to normal, but Meng Hao's eyes shined brightly. He gazed down at the mist within the valley, then back at the Demon Sealing Jade.

"Severed by the hand of a Demon Sealer… The Demon Sealing Sect. The ancient jade. A demon… What secrets does this Demon Sealing Jade contain…?" Meng Hao lifted his head up and looked around. It turned out that many of the mortals on the suspension bridges had caught sight of him. Looks of terror appeared on their faces. One by one, they dropped to their knees and began to kowtow to him.

Suddenly, a piercing whistling sound emerged from one of the other valleys. Two beams of colourful light appeared. Two enormous condors flew out, upon the back of each stood a person.

Each person looked to be about forty years old. They wore robes of complexly interlaced blue and green fabric. Their faces were somewhat dark, and they were very skinny. One of the men had a dark greenish-blue snake coiled around his arm. The little snake's eyes were ghastly, and when it flicked its forked tongue out, a thin mist blew out of his mouth.

The other man had a centipede on his shoulder, slowly rocking back and forth. It was about a foot long, and very colorful, obviously extremely poisonous.

Of the two men, one was of the ninth level of Qi Condensation, the other was at the peak of the eighth level. They did not look very friendly. They came to a stop about nine hundred meters away from Meng Hao, looking him over with cold eyes.

Meng Hao's expression was as calm as ever. He put away the Demon Sealing Jade and looked at them. He had seen more than one Cultivator in the State of Zhao with Cultivation bases similar to these people.

As they looked him over, another piercing whistle sounded out. From another of the valleys, a winged, purple toad flew out. It carried a mist along with it as it flew; it seemed this toad had a Cultivation base of the Qi Condensation stage. Sitting cross-legged on its back was an old man.

The old man wore a garment of interlaced red and yellow. His face was painted with totemic symbols that formed a sort of mask. He looked very fierce as he flew out to join the other two in measuring up Meng Hao.

The old man’s Cultivation base was extraordinary. He was at the peak of the ninth level of Qi Condensation. Seeing him, the expressions on the faces of the other two changed.

The old man gazed at Meng Hao, frowning as he tried to assess his Cultivation base. “I am the Chief of Spirit Toad Village,” he said. “If you’re just passing through, Fellow Daoist, please continue onward. Outside Cultivators are not welcome here.”

Meng Hao’s expression was as calm as ever. The thick spiritual energy here was what he had been searching out for the past half year. If he left, it was impossible to say how long he would have to search to find another similar location.

Normally, he would just forget it and move on, but the strange reaction of the Demon Sealing Jade had piqued his interest. He had no desire to leave.

He said nothing. His right hand flickered in an incantation gesture, and one flying sword after another flew out, instantly forming a sword rain of over one hundred flying swords. They spun around, creating a vortex that began to expand outward in all directions.

The expressions of the old man on the toad, as well as the others, instantly changed. Meng Hao pointed down toward one of the valleys, and the swords shot forth. Banging sounds rang out as they slammed into a cliff face and carved out a simple Immortal’s Cave.

“Please allow me to hole up here for a few months,” said Meng Hao coolly. Not giving them another look, he shot toward the Immortal’s Cave.

The frightening image of the hundred or more flying swords caused the toad geezer frown. The other two Cultivators looked hesitant.

The man with the snake coiled around his arm glared at Meng Hao as he made to enter the Immortal’s Cave. He lifted his arm up, and the Spirit Snake turned into a black blur as it flew toward Meng Hao.

As it approached, a dark, cold look appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes.

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# Chapter 97: Cultivation Breakthrough in a Mountain Valley

Before Meng Hao could even make a move, the dark bluish-green Spirit Snake was already about thirty meters away from him. Suddenly, it stopped in mid-air and let out a shrill shriek, as if it could sense something terrible on Meng Hao’s person. It began to tremble, then shot backward in retreat, not daring to come even a bit closer.

Suddenly, a three-colored mist emerged from the top of Meng Hao’s head. It transformed into a demonic face with an enigmatic expression of both weeping and laughter. It spun around Meng Hao’s head, then let out an intangible shriek which shot toward the Spirit Snake.

The Spirit Snake let out a miserable cry when the intangible shriek slammed into it. Its body instantly began to rot. It transformed into a coagulation of blood which then splashed to the ground. Upon seeing this, the old man’s expression changed. The two other Cultivators gasped, looks of astonishment on their faces.

Meng Hao also looked on in astonishment, his heart thumping.

The three-colored mist was the poison in his body; it had flared up twice in the past half year, but this was the first time it had taken on a magical form and emerged from his body of its own volition. The poison was clearly incredibly mysterious; it could sense other poisons and wouldn’t permit them near, as if this host belonged to it alone.

Over the past months, Meng Hao had come to be convinced that during the previous two outbreaks of poison, the other two poisons from the three great Sects had been completely expelled.

It seemed they were not as powerful as the three-colored poison, and had been forced out of his body by it. Seeing the death of the Spirit Snake enabled Meng Hao to finally understand how powerful Lord Revelation's three-colored poison really was.

Of course, the three people he faced didn't know anything about that. They looked down at Meng Hao, fear written on their faces. The Cultivator who had just lost his Spirit Snake shot backward at high speed, blood seeping out of his mouth. He looked at Meng Hao with astonished fear.

"So, the Fellow Daoist also practices Poison Cultivation…." The old man on the toad, who was at the ninth level of Qi Condensation, stood and saluted Meng Hao respectfully. "Since that is the case, please feel free to stay here. But, there is something strange about this valley. It has thick spiritual energy, and every full moon, the mist erupts and fills the entire valley." His eyes flashed as he spoke.

"Thanks for the warning," said Meng Hao, his face expressionless. His body flickered, and he entered the Immortal's Cave. A large stone he had carved out fell in place to seal the cave shut.

Outside, everything was quiet. The toad geezer's eyes flashed as he looked at the other two men. They were all silent for a moment. Then, they patted their respective Spirit beasts and flew off toward another of the valleys. There, four more Cultivators were gathered.

All of them were at the eighth level of Qi Condensation and wore long gowns of interlaced green and blue. They sat on an enormous black boulder, which pulsed with a dim light. When the light appeared, the boulder seemed to become somewhat transparent. Inside could be glimpsed the skeleton of a two-headed bird.

When the toad geezer and the others arrived, the four men opened their eyes.

"That outsider is a Poison Cultivator," said the man who had lost the Spirit Snake, his voice filled with hatred. Venomous rage radiated from his eyes. "I'm not sure how much he saw, but he refused to leave."

“This complicates things…” said one of the four men sitting cross-legged, frowning. He was a pale-faced middle-aged man. “What is the level of his Cultivation base?”

“The peak of the ninth level of Qi Condensation!” said the toad geezer calmly. He wasn’t mistaken: although Meng Hao could easily pass into the thirteenth level of Qi Condensation, when he did, he was cut off from heaven and earth. Therefore, he usually remained at the peak of the ninth level.

“His Cultivation base is very refined, but if we attack together, he’ll be dead for sure,” said the Cultivator who had lost his Spirit Snake. “If we let him stay here, he’ll figure out what’s going on. He might not have any suspicions now, but the next full moon is in half a month. When it comes time to pull out the red rope, he’ll definitely know what’s happening. He’s a Poison Cultivator, how could he not be interested? I say, let’s attack together and exterminate him.”

Some of the others seemed to hesitate. After all, Meng Hao was at the peak of the ninth level. At the moment, only the toad geezer was strong enough to stand up to him. None of the others were powerful enough. If they all fought together, they might be able to win, but some of them would most likely die. Hesitating, they looked at the toad geezer.

“We don’t need to do anything. I told him that strange things happen in the valley on the full moon. Most likely he will go to see for himself. We won’t need to attack. The miasma that accompanies the red rope will kill him. If he doesn’t come out… well, the miasma covers everything anyway. Either way, he’s dead! Our ancestral Spirit Mountain Three Villages cannot be looked upon by outsiders. Any who do so… must die.” His eyes gleamed as he spoke. The other six people nodded their heads.

Meanwhile, Meng Hao sat down cross-legged in the Immortal’s cave. The dense spiritual energy surrounding him caused his Cultivation base to thrum. As he began doing breathing exercises, his boundless Core sea seemed to begin to consolidate.

He breathed deeply, lifting his head and looking at the large stone which he'd used to seal the Immortal's Cave. His eyes flashed, and the two wooden swords appeared, hovering at his side. He lifted his right hand and waved it in the air. A talisman appeared, floating in front of him. He sent it to hang on the large rock.

This talisman had been acquired from Wang Tengfei. He wasn't sure how powerful it was, and had never used it. But considering that he'd taken it from Wang Tengfei, it couldn't be a common item.

"It seems these people have some secrets they don't want outsiders to know about. If they leave me alone, then I'll leave them alone. But if they disturb my Cultivation…." Meng Hao's eyes gleamed. His expression was calm as he pulled Shangguan Xiu's turtle shell out of his bag of holding, the one that contained the details about the Perfect Foundation. He looked at it, frowning.

"To concoct a Perfect Foundation Pill, I need a pill furnace," murmured Meng Hao to himself. "I got that from Shangguan Xiu. But it also requires a bit of skill in alchemy. Without such skill, the chances of a misstep are much higher. These medicinal plants are extremely valuable. If I made a mistake, I could duplicate more plants, but the cost would be exorbitant." He had no skill in alchemy, which was somewhat frustrating.

After some time passed, Meng Hao pulled out the various plants required to make the minor pills which were part of the ingredient list. Then he produced the copper mirror and began to duplicate some of them. A few hours later, he had spent a huge amount of Spirit Stones. Despite having a mountain of Spirit Stones, if he kept going at this pace, he would once again be destitute.

"These are just minor pills…. Concocting the Perfect Foundation Pill has two major steps. The first step is to concoct seven different minor pills, each of which has a unique function. The second step is to take those seven pills and melt them together to concoct the Perfect Foundation Pill. If I'm missing even one minor pill, I have no way to succeed! Of the seven minor pills, Shangguan Xiu had concocted two. Now five remain…. I've never concocted pills before, what happens if I have to try dozens of times to succeed? If that happens, then I definitely won't have enough Spirit Stones. That could even affect my ability to reach Foundation Establishment. Alchemy… If I can develop enough skill in alchemy, then I shouldn't have any problems." Meng Hao frowned as he studied some basic Milky Way City alchemy techniques. Unfortunately, trying to teach yourself such techniques is not easy, and can take a very long time. Furthermore, some of the techniques were not common. Many master alchemists had secret techniques that weren't told to outsiders. Such techniques were often closely guarded Sect secrets.

"The best method would be to concoct the Perfect Foundation Pill first, then establish the Foundation. In that way, there would be no need for haste in concocting the pill. That was the route taken by Shangguan Xiu. But…" His eyes glittered. "That method seems suitable, but if I don't reach Foundation Establishment, I would have to face too many dangers. That is why Shangguan Xiu ended up dying. Otherwise, I would never have been able to kill him. Therefore this method… cannot be used!" He was silent for a moment, and then his eyes filled with determination.

"Regardless of anything, I must first reach Foundation Establishment. If I can concoct the Perfect Foundation Pill later, then it won't be too late. The Perfect Foundation Pill can repair the cracks in the Dao Pillars made by the Heavens. Therefore… a Flawless Foundation is fine!" Meng Hao gritted his teeth. Despite his intense desire to concoct the Perfect Foundation pill, it was not practical to do so right now.

"I can only enter the Southern Domain if I have first reached Foundation Establishment. Then I can figure out a way to dispel this poison. As a Qi Condensation Cultivator, that is virtually impossible." Having made up his mind, he didn't waste any more time thinking. He put away the turtle shell and the medicinal plants, then pulled out a Foundation Establishment Pill and began to duplicate it.

He was of the great circle of Qi Condensation, and was feeling very confident in his ability to break through to Foundation Establishment. However, to play it safe, he decided to use the power of the Foundation Establishment Pill.

Looking down at the five Foundation Establishment Pills in front of him, he took a breath and slapped his bag of holding. A small flag flew out. Lightning curled around it as it flew through the air. Meng Hao flickered some incantation gestures, and the flag stabbed into the ground without any assistance from Meng Hao's Cultivation base. It sucked in some of the surrounding spiritual energy, then transformed into a fog which enveloped the Immortal's Cave. It spread out thirty meters in all directions, surrounding Meng Hao.

"After consuming a Foundation Establishment Pill, my body will turn stiff and I won't be able to move." He eyed the mist created by the little flag. "With the Lightning Flag here, though, I will be protected. No one will be able to disturb me. Considering the current level of my Cultivation base, the paralysis will be relatively short in duration."

Of the treasures he had acquired from Patriarch Reliance, the Demon Sealing Jade was the most mysterious. But his favorite, other than the mountain of Spirit Stones, was this little flag. As for the good luck charm, he still hadn't been able to figure out anything about it. He would study it further after he reached Foundation Establishment.

Taking a deep breath, he picked up a pill and put it into his mouth. It dissolved instantly, and boundless spiritual energy shook his body. He trembled. It was not his first time consuming a Foundation Establishment Pill. But every time he did, he felt as if he was a tiny boat floating amidst massive, crashing waves. A roaring sound filled his head. He continued to rotate his Cultivation base.

Boundless spiritual energy flowed through Meng Hao, pouring into his Core sea, causing it to roar and churn. The Demonic Core within him suddenly seemed as if it were about to turn into a Dao Pillar.

Once the Dao Pillar appeared, Meng Hao would have broken through from Qi Condensation and crossed the threshold into the true realm of Cultivation… Foundation Establishment.

Once in the Foundation Establishment stage, he would never again be mortal. He would truly be upon the path of Cultivation, and would never again be a part of the mortal world. To fall back would indicate that he didn’t deserve to exist in the Cultivation world!

He would be a boat sailing against the current.

It can be summed up by the phrase, “Move forward, or you’ll fall behind.”

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# Chapter 98: Valley of the Red Rope

Time slowly went on. Soon half a month passed. On one particular night, the full moon was especially bright, outshining most of the stars. It hung up in the sky, filling the land with gentle silvery, light.

It seemed to shine especially brightly upon the group of valleys, especially the valley where Meng Hao was located. As it shined down onto the mist, it began to seethe, slowly spinning into what looked like a vortex.

Outside the valley, the seven Cultivators were waiting, their eyes shining. They stared at the mist within the valley, expressions of anticipation on their faces.

“The hour has arrived….” said the toad geezer, his voice low. Even as his words issued out from his mouth, a gurgling sound could be heard from within the mist.

The sound was indistinct, but when it reached the ears, it stabbed to the heart. Cracking sounds echoed out, and the mist within the valley roiled.

Time passed. The gurgling sound became clearer. Amidst further cracking sounds, the mist turned and turned until it appeared to be a giant whirlpool. The edges of the whirlpool of mist seemed to be able to pierce into the surrounding cliff walls, causing them to melt. Liquified rock poured down the cliff faces.

At the same, a red rope appeared from within the vortex. It was as thick as a person’s arm, and was as red as if it had been dyed with the blood of countless people. A droning sound filled the air as the vortex and the rope both spun. As soon as the rope appeared, the seven men seemed vitalized.

The toad geezer’s eyes gleamed. He bit down on his tongue and spit out some blood, at the same time flickering an incantation and producing a black metal fragment from within his bag of holding.

The other six men did the same thing, spitting out blood and producing fragmented pieces of black metal. They seemed familiar with the process, as if they had done this before.

The blood entered the vortex, and apparently because of this, the vortex suddenly stopped rotating. The rope, however, did not.

The black chips from the seven men spun about in the air and then formed together into a black broadsword.

The sword floated above the valley, pointing down toward the red rope, which then ceased rotating.

With a low shout, the toad geezer flew forward to grab the red rope with both hands. He gripped it without hesitation, despite the fact that it felt wet, as if it was coated with blood. The six other men appeared behind him, pooling their strength together to pull on the rope.

A thunderous roar filled the area as they did. The rope slowly emerged thirty meters from within the vortex. As it did, a black-colored Qi poured out to fill the area. Eventually it reached the point where Meng Hao’s cave was located it, submerging it.

“At three hundred meters we got the Jade Spirit Stone. Six hundred meters in we got the toxic miasma. Last time we pulled out nine hundred meters and got the stone-sealed beast. Today, we will go all out and reach fifteen hundred meters!”

“Right! According to the ancient records of our Clan, if we can pull out fifteen hundred meters, it will open the first seal, and the Clan’s ancestral spirit will awaken. It will form into a Poison Foundation, and our Cultivation bases can ascend another level!” The eyes of the seven men gleamed, and they heaved on the rope.

The bottom of the vortex couldn’t be seen; there was nothing but blackness, making it seem as if the red rope had no end. Every tug on the rope caused the surrounding valley to quake. The ground rippled, as if the end of the rope were plugged into the very core of the earth.

Shocking booms sounded out as they continued to pull. More toxic miasma billowed out as nine hundred meters of rope appeared. Suddenly, a stench like that of rotten fish poured out from the depths of the vortex.

It seemed this stench had never appeared before; the seven men’s faces changed. However, the area immediately around the rope seemed to naturally be protected from the stench and miasma. Their faces pale, the seven men gritted their teeth and heaved once again on the rope.

Thirteen hundred fifty meters. Thirteen hundred eighty meters. Fourteen hundred meters!

The men panted. They had expended seventy to eighty percent of the power of their Cultivation bases. Without hesitation, they popped medicinal pills into their mouths and tugged once again on the rope. Five of the seven men coughed up blood. Soon, only the toad geezer, and the other man who was at the ninth level of Qi Condensation, held out. They gritted their teeth, unable to stop their bodies from trembling.

“I’m at my limit….” said the toad geezer with a roar. He bit the tip of his tongue and spit out some more blood. As he did, a black beam of light shot out from the edge of the valley. It transformed into an enormous toad, which clamped its mouth down onto the red rope. As it bit down, its body began to wither, but it held fast and pulled.

Next, a centipede shot out, along with several human-sized spiders, summoned by the men to pull the rope. Even the huge boulder with the bird skeleton inside flew out. Its glow seemed to aid in pulling the red rope.

Fourteen-hundred thirty meters. Fourteen hundred sixty meters. Fourteen hundred ninety meters!

The rotten stench grew stronger, seemingly carrying the stink of a corpse as it filled the valley. It seemed the rope would soon be pulled out fifteen hundred meters. A shrill shriek came out of the whirlpool, piercing the air with wickedness.

The shriek grew more and more intense, seemingly filled with hope. Except… there were still ten meters to go before the fifteen hundred meter mark was reached. The poison beasts summoned by the seven men exploded one by one, unable to keep going. As they died, the faces of the seven men grew pale. The rope suddenly slipped out of their hands and was sucked back into the whirlpool. Had they not released it, they would have been pulled along with it into the vortex.

The men watched silently as the rope was pulled back inside.

“Forget it. We’ll try again next month.”

“Yes. The day will come when we will pull out fifteen hundred meters of rope. I will be making a breakthrough in my Cultivation base soon. Once I reach the ninth level of Qi Condensation, we will definitely be able to succeed.”

“That outsider is of the ninth level….” said one of the men suddenly.

“We don’t need to make things more complicated. That outsider is probably dead already, killed by the miasma. Even if he was at the Foundation Establishment stage, he couldn’t withstand it unless he was of our bloodline.”

The seven discussed the matter a bit further, then dispersed.

The mist continued to roil in the valley for three days before finally settling down. The spiritual energy in the area gradually grew thick again, and the miasma dissipated.

Within the Immortal’s Cave, Meng Hao watched with cold eyes. Surrounded by the arcing field of electricity, he had seen clearly everything that had happened during the three days. As for the miasma, the Lightning Flag made short work of, and Meng Hao remained safe from any harm.

“They think I’m dead. That’s good.” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered.

“I’m not sure if it’s because of the Sublime Spirit Scripture or perhaps the Demonic Core… Establishing my Foundation is turning out to be very difficult.” He lowered his head and picked up another Foundation Establishment Pill. He frowned. As of now, he was a bit suspicious. Was the Cultivation method in the Sublime Spirit Scripture the real method? Or had Patriarch Reliance changed it in according with his own Demonic Cultivation practices…. There was no way to know. Meng Hao’s eyes shone with determination as he popped the Foundation Establishment Pill into his mouth and closed his eyes to meditate.

His Core sea roared violently, seething and churning as it coagulated. It seemed to be forming a Dao Pillar. But to do so was incredibly difficult. Even with the Foundation Establishment Pill, he wasn’t able to succeed.

It can be said that Foundation Establishment is the first true hurdle that must be crossed on the path to real Cultivation. A Foundation Establishment Pill can only increase the probability of success by about ten percent.

Even though he had reached the great circle of Qi Condensation, and his latent talent had been increased, it still was not an easy matter.

Time slipped by. In the blink of an eye, another three months passed. Each full moon during that time, the seven men again made attempts at pulling out the red rope. More than a few times, they came to Meng Hao’s Immortal’s Cave to try to get his corpse.

But the cave was being protected by Patriarch Reliance’s Lightning Flag. A few insignificant Qi Condensation Cultivators didn’t have the slightest chance of getting inside. They started to wonder whether or not Meng Hao was actually dead.

Another three months passed, half a year of hard work. They hadn’t even seen a trace of Meng Hao. At this point, they were mostly certain that he was dead.

As for Meng Hao, even he wasn’t sure how many Foundation Establishment pills he consumed during the half year. Every time he failed, he would take another pill. Toward the end, he even tried consuming two pills at one time.

The poison flared up twice during the half year. Thankfully, Meng Hao was prepared. He dealt with it, then continued on in his attempts to break through to Foundation Establishment.

In this excruciating fashion, another month passed. One night, Meng Hao sat there, a roaring sound rising in his mind. Only Meng Hao could sense this roaring sound; it sounded like claps of thunder in his mind.

Within his body, his golden Core sea let out an unprecedented roaring sound, and a gold light filled his body. It seemed as if he himself were made of gold.

He sat there meditating, his eyes closed. As his Core sea emitted its thunderous roar, he focused everything on forming the Dao Pillar and breaking through into Foundation Establishment. Within the Core sea, the Demonic Core rotated rapidly. It looked as if it might melt.

During the past year, this had happened frequently. Meng Hao had come to understand clearly that if he didn’t have this Demonic Core inside of him, it would be much easier to reach Foundation Establishment. It was the Demonic Core that was making things so difficult. Coupled with the fact that he had completed the great circle of Qi Condensation, it meant that achieving Foundation Establishment was much harder for him than anyone else in the world.

Every time the Dao Pillar was beginning to form, it would be disturbed by the Demonic Core, and wouldn’t coalesce. At the moment, golden light shined out from Meng Hao’s Core sea. The waters began to congeal, slowly solidifying into a massive Dao Pillar. But then, the Demonic Core began spinning, causing the Core sea, which had just moments before been calm, to seethe. The Dao Pillar once again began to fall apart.

“Again!” Meng Hao’s eyes burned. Without hesitation, he lifted up his hand and swallowed three Foundation Establishment Pills.

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# Chapter 99: Foundation Establishment!

“The Demonic Core just keeps moving, and that prevents the Core sea from entering Foundation Establishment. It just can’t form the Dao Pillar…. I must form the Dao Pillar! I must reach Foundation Establishment! I must stop the Demonic Core from moving. And that requires more Spiritual Energy!”

The three Foundation Establishment Pills dissolved in his mouth, and a shocking amount of spiritual power erupted. It poured into Meng Hao’s Core sea, which moments ago had been in the midst of condensing, but was then interrupted by the Demonic Core.

The lashing power caused the Core sea to shine with blinding golden light. The Demonic Core, which seemed as if it would never stop spinning, suddenly began to slow. The spiritual energy within the Core sea seemed endless. A roaring sound could be heard which suppressed any indication that the Demonic Core would begin to spin furiously again.

It stopped, unmoving. Popping sounds rang out from within the Core sea and echoed throughout Meng Hao’s body. His entire Core sea seemed as if it were freezing over. In the space of a few breaths, it suddenly became completely solid.

At that moment, it seemed almost as if Meng Hao’s life had ended. His breathing slowed, and his body began to shake. His eyes shined, and he took a deep breath as the Qi Condensation Manual of the Sublime Spirit Scripture appeared in his mind. The solidified Core sea began to slowly shrink.

It grew smaller and smaller, changing into a diamond-shaped crystalline rock which contained the Demonic Core. More spiritual energy from the Foundation Establishment Pills poured down, and slowly the Core sea emerged again.

Even as it replenished itself, it began to shrink again upon itself to form an additional diamond-shaped lump of crystalline rock. Then, more spiritual energy poured in, and the process began again.

Meng Hao knew the process would take a long time, and would require a lot of spiritual energy, which was why he had selected this valley. He smacked his bag of holding and began to consume more medicinal pills.

Over and over again, his Core sea replenished itself and then solidified into the diamond-shaped crystalline rock. Meng Hao lost track of time.

One month. Two months. Three months… six months….

Spring passed and autumn arrived, then the cold of winter. A year had passed since Meng Hao entered the Immortal’s Cave to practice secluded meditation. Every full moon during that year, the seven Cultivators would come to pull on the red rope.

Their best effort resulted in pulling out fourteen-hundred ninety-nine meters. They were never able to pull out the final one meter. As time passed, the seven men noticed that the spiritual energy of heaven and earth in the area seemed to have been reduced.

Of course, it was being absorbed by Meng Hao, but they didn’t know that, and couldn’t figure out why it was happening. They searched the area, but came up with nothing. They didn’t even think to connect the phenomenon to Meng Hao. A year had passed, which in their minds was evidence that he had died.

The man who had lost his Spirit Snake that year would often look toward Meng Hao’s Immortal’s Cave with a cold sneer. The death of his Spirit Snake had left him with a deep hatred of Meng Hao.

He tried several times to break into the cave to collect Meng Hao's treasures from his corpse. But he was never able to succeed.

Time passed, another half year. Meng Hao had now been in secluded meditation for a year and a half. One late night, his Core sea was again solidifying into a diamond-shaped crystalline rock. This was the one-hundredth piece.

A roaring could be heard, and the hundred diamond-shaped rocks suddenly began to fuse together. Slowly, they formed into a transparent, crystalline Dao Pillar!

Foundation Establishment Dao Pillar!

As soon as the Dao Pillar appeared, Meng Hao's agitated breathing calmed down. His eyes grew dim, and the functioning of his internal organs slowed. He was motionless; even his blood seemed to stop circulating. His entire person seemed to be in a state of suspended animation.

Everything was completely still.

Meng Hao knew that this was the second phase in the process of reaching Foundation Establishment. This was Recuperation.

He sat there cross-legged, his mind echoing with the Qi Condensation Manual of the Sublime Spirit Scripture. He sank into a very strange state. Even though his blood and flesh did not seem to be undergoing any change, in actuality, they were. They were changing in a way that made it much easier to absorb spiritual power.

His Qi passageways enlarged. No spiritual power circulated through them. However, they grew tougher, firmer, and smoother. His bones were different as well, even crystalline in some places. He was transforming, becoming something other than mortal. These changes shook his entire body. His hair grew much longer and he became taller than before.

There was no Core sea within him anymore, but rather, a golden Dao Pillar. It was a flat, circular platform that did not shine, but rather seemed dark and somewhat lonely. It floated in the place where the Core sea had once existed. If you looked closely, you could see Meng Hao’s Demonic Core, right in the center of the Dao Pillar.

It sat there motionless, completely and perfectly fused with the Dao Pillar.

His heart did not beat, his blood did not flow. His Qi passageways were motionless, and his Qi had disappeared. Meng Hao sat there looking withered up. His Dao Pillar was in a similar state. All of his Qi had been sucked away.

He sat that way for another half of a year. Breaking through into Foundation Establishment had taken him two full years. Others would be shocked if they knew of this. Generally speaking, the longest amount of time a Cultivator needs to reach Foundation Establishment is half a year, often it will take only a few months. The amount of spiritual energy required was not immense either, nothing close to what Meng Hao had needed. The amount of time and spiritual energy wasted by Meng Hao was far and above the norm.

Toward the end of the last half-year, Meng Hao’s Dao Pillar began to tremble and vibrate. This was the first thing that began to move within his body. Next, his heart began to beat. All of his systems kicked into motion. His blood began to flow, his Qi passageways began to operate, and his Qi filled with signs of life force. Slowly, he began to awaken as if from sleep.

Soon, the Dao Pillar began to shine brightly with golden light, which grew more and more intense. His heart thumped so wildly it seemed as if it might burst out of his body. Its sound filled the Immortal’s Cave. Every beat of his heart sent blood flowing throughout his body. His Qi billowed out, and it seemed he would soon be filled with power and would be able to open his eyes at any moment.

This power was not to to be used simply to open the eyes, but rather to awaken his body. It moved about within him, growing stronger, imbuing his body with strength!

It was at this moment that the Dao Pillar within him emitted a thunderous roar. A powerful spiritual power burst out from it, blasting out into Meng Hao’s Qi passageways, flesh, blood and bones. Like the life of spring which causes a withered tree to sprout, his body awakened. His Qi grew stronger, and massive amounts of filth exuded from his pores, replaced by a fragrant aroma which arose from him. His long hair floated around him. He looked completely different than he had half a year ago.

As the spiritual power emanated out, his Qi passageways filled with power, and his blood flowed faster. His heartbeat caused the Immortal’s Cave to tremble, and his eyes… it was at this moment that his eyes flashed open.

A blinding light shot out from within them. If a Qi Condensation Cultivator saw it, their mind would reel and their Cultivation base would be damaged.

The moment he opened his eyes, the spiritual energy in the valley was swept up. It was as if Meng Hao had become a black hole, swallowing up all of the spiritual energy in sight. It was absorbed through his pores and into the Dao Pillar, which grew brighter and brighter. Meng Hao’s Qi grew even more powerful.

His heart thumped as the feeling of power blossomed in his mind. He knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that by simply lifting his hand, he could cause the entire Immortal’s Cave to collapse. This was a confidence based on his physical body, his mind, and his Cultivation base.

The Spiritual Sense in his mind grew larger. Because of what he had experienced in completing the great circle of Qi Condensation, his Spiritual Sense leapt to up to a higher level. At the moment it was far more powerful than that of the average Foundation Establishment stage Cultivator.

In fact, his Spiritual Sense completely exceeded that which a Cultivator should have at the early Foundation Establishment stage. It was actually equal to that of the middle Foundation Establishment stage.

And to Foundation Establishment Cultivators, Spiritual Sense was everything!

Meng Hao’s breathing echoed out. The spiritual energy of heaven and earth poured into him, and the Dao Pillar grew more and more bright. Soon, his entire body shined with golden light.

The power of Foundation Establishment Cultivators far exceeds that of Qi Condensation Cultivators. By moving his mind, he could see everything within fifteen hundred meters as if it were within his own heart. This… was Spiritual Sense!

A Cultivator at the beginning Foundation Establishment stage could normally only cast Spiritual Sense six hundred meters ahead.

“The beginning Foundation Establishment stage….” said Meng Hao slowly. As his voice echoed out, his face shone with vigor. His eyes glowed, and he breathed deeply, feeling the power of the spiritual energy emitted by the Dao Pillar. His was a hundred times stronger than the power he could utilize half a year ago when at the peak of the thirteenth level of Qi Condensation.

Of course, that difference of one hundred times was not in comparison to the ninth level of Qi Condensation, but rather the thirteenth. To Meng Hao, this was a complete and utter change.

This was why Foundation Establishment Cultivators could so easily wipe the ground with Qi Condensation Cultivators. The Core sea of Qi Condensation is congealed a hundred times to form the Foundation Establishment Dao Pillar. The change that Meng Hao had experienced this night sent his power leaping upward. It was without comparison!

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# Chapter 100: Blade against Flawlessness

When Meng Hao sent out his Spiritual Sense, he started to get the feeling that he was cut off from heaven and earth. He was familiar with this sensation; it was the same type of feeling he got when he was in the tenth level of Qi Condensation, or the thirteenth. Although now, the feeling was even stronger, as if the Heavens did not tolerate his Cultivation at all. And yet, along with the disapproval, he felt the strength of a different state. It seemed as if despite the fact that the Heavens did not tolerate it, and this state was rejected by all creation… it fought back, and because of that, was even more powerful.

That resistance came, not from Meng Hao, but from the Dao Pillar and the spiritual energy inside of him!

After feeling the resistance of the Heavens, Meng Hao quickly determined its source…. not a bit of the spiritual energy of heaven and earth he had absorbed into his body escaped back out. Furthermore, none could be absorbed in. No cycle could be created with heaven and earth, which was not permitted!

At the same time, because the spiritual energy was not emitting from him, he was able to vaguely make out some strange, immaterial vestiges. Were he able to grab ahold of them, he would instantly become even more powerful.

These vestiges were not permitted by the Heavens, so only Cultivators who were rejected could see them and gain enlightenment regarding them.

Although Meng Hao wasn’t aware of it, in the Cultivation world, these vestiges were called Dao Taboos! Every Cultivator who reached the Foundation Establishment stage could sense them.

At the same moment as Meng Hao began to sense the Dao Taboos, something shook his body. A cracking sound rang out as a fissure appeared on his Dao Pillar. When this happened, Meng Hao coughed up a mouthful of blood, and he was ripped out of that special state.

Vast amounts of spiritual energy poured out of the crack in the Dao Pillar. Meng Hao was powerless to stop it from happening; his body was once again connected to heaven and earth.

Although the spiritual energy rushing out of him could not really compare to the amount he had absorbed, he was now back in a cycle with heaven and earth. The strange vestiges he had just been able to sense were no longer there. He was no longer rejected by the heaven and earth, but had been accepted, and was now part of them.

A flash of weakness appeared in his heart. Meng Hao lifted his head, his vision piercing through to the outside of the Immortal’s cave. As he looked at the sky outside, his eyes shone with an unprecedented brightness.

This was a Flawless Foundation with one crack. In this aspect, Meng Hao was actually better than most. With a Cracked Foundation, he would be much weaker, and with a Fractured Foundation, there would be even more cracks, and he would be significantly less powerful.

“As long as there is a crack,” murmured Meng Hao, “it is not perfect, and thus, the Heavens can accept it…” His eyes shined brightly.

“Because the Dao Pillars have cracks, no matter what level I reach in my Cultivation, there will always be absorption and diffusion. Do I cultivate in this way for myself… or for the Heavens?” Meng Hao was silent for a while. The question was really too profound for a Foundation Establishment Cultivator to be able to contemplate.

However, since Meng Hao had studied the Qi Condensation Manual of the Sublime Spirit Scripture, and because he knew of the method to achieve a Perfect Foundation, he contemplated matters that normally only someone of the Spirit Severing Stage could comprehend.

The moment that Meng Hao reached the Foundation Establishment stage, it was late at night outside. The seven Cultivators outside watched the spiritual energy churning back and forth, and then looked toward where Meng Hao was within the valley.

“What happened?”

“Why is all the spiritual energy being sucked in that direction?” Muttering like this, the seven of them rushed forward. However, as they approached, they were forced to come to a halt, their bodies trembling. Their spiritual energy felt unstable, as if it might be ripped out of their body at any moment. They stood there in shock, uncertain of what exactly was happening.

To these people, Foundation Establishment was something very remote. They couldn’t possibly imagine that someone had reached that stage in this very valley.

In their shock, they didn’t dare to proceed further. They stood there, making various speculations, eventually coming to the conclusion that something strange was happening because of the valley itself. Because they couldn’t approach, guessing was the best thing they could do. There was no way to prove or disprove anything.

“I can sense that there is some immense power in the valley,” said the toad geezer, taking in a deep breath and narrowing his eyes. “It’s something that far, far exceeds us.”

“Too bad we can’t get any closer. Just what happened, exactly? I feel like if I approach any further, the spiritual energy within my body will get sucked out….”

“There have been a lot of strange things happening to the spiritual energy over the past two years. Now another thing is happening….” The seven of them exchanged glances, then grew silent, their hearts filled with various speculations.

Meanwhile, within the cave, Meng Hao lifted his head up, his eyes shining. If he hadn’t been able to glimpse the Perfect Foundation at all, then it wouldn’t have mattered. But, having felt it briefly, only to have it taken away and his power reduced, made him desire it even more intensely.

“The Perfect Foundation….” His eyes flickered and he stood up. He flicked his sleeve, and the mist in front of him rippled, then coalesced into a small flag, which came to rest in his hand. He glanced at it, the spat out some spiritual energy, which covered over it, turning it into a black beam of light which entered his mouth.

During Qi Condensation, Meng Hao could only passively use the flag. But now that he was in Foundation Establishment, he could refine and wield it in even more ways.

Looking pleased, Meng Hao took a moment to feel himself out. His eyes glittered.

“With the Qi Condensation Manual of the Sublime Spirit Scripture, a second Core sea can be formed. When the second Core sea moves from Qi Condensation to Foundation Establishment, it can improve the quality of one’s Foundation Establishment. For me, though it won’t really make much of a difference. However…. I might as well do it, just in case.” His eyes shining, he sat back down cross-legged and visualized the Qi Condensation Manual of the Sublime Spirit Scripture. Several hours later, his eyes snapped open. A roaring sound filled his body. Looking inside of himself, he saw that outside of his Dao Pillar was a new area, a vast golden sea. This was Meng Hao’s second Core sea.

Having completed this task, he raised hand. The large rock which had sealed his Immortal’s Cave exploded into pieces, which then turned into ash. Meng Hao shot outside, turning into a blur of light that shot into the air. He came to a stop, floating in mid-air.

He looked back at the Immortal’s Cave, a smile on his face. Back when he was in the Qi Condensation stage, if he lifted his finger the way he had just now, it would have been incapable of shattering rock. But as of now, it was a simple matter to do so.

“The gap between Qi Condensation and Foundation Establishment is like the difference between the sky and the land,” said Meng Hao to himself. “It really is true. However, I should be even more powerful. Sadly, my Dao Pillar was cracked by an invisible blade… that is the life of a Cultivator. There is nothing to be done about it. However, if I can repair the Dao Pillar, then I can establish a Perfect Foundation. To do that, I must first concoct a Perfect Foundation Pill. My biggest question, though, is… what is this symbol…?” His gaze had fallen onto his right hand. There, on the back of his hand, was a strange, glowing magical symbol which was slowly fading. It didn’t exist on his skin, but rather, inside of him. Looking at it, Meng Hao got the feeling that it had existed in there for a very long time.

This was the first time he had seen it, and he had no idea why it had appeared along with Foundation Establishment.

The symbol faded away, and Meng Hao frowned. It didn’t give him any feeling of danger. In fact, it seemed somewhat familiar. He thought about it for a while, but couldn’t come up with any clues as to its nature. He put it aside in his mind and then looked around.

He was surrounded by mist, which completely covered his body and would completely conceal him from any onlookers. At the moment, he hovered in mid-air, but he knew that if he wished, he could fly by simply moving forward.

Having completely set aside the matter of the strange symbol, Meng Hao began to consider why flight is not possible in the Qi Condensation stage. “True flight is not possible during Qi Condensation because the body doesn’t contain enough spiritual energy. Therefore, the body cannot be supported in the air. Flight is only capable with assistance from magical items. However, the spiritual energy within the body during the Foundation Establishment stage is more than a hundred times that of the Qi

Condensation stage. Because so much spiritual energy has been coalesced into a Dao Pillar, the body can be supported in the air, and can actually fly.”

“There are a total of nine Dao Pillars which appear throughout the Foundation Establishment stage. Three pillars signify the peak of the beginning level, six pillars are the peak of the middle level, and nine pillars complete the circle. Right now, I have one pillar….” Meng Hao looked at the mist filling the area, and his eyes flickered. His body turned into a prismatic beam as he shot further downward into the valley.

“This place provoked a reaction from the Demon Sealing Jade all those years ago. Back then, my Cultivation base wasn’t powerful enough to make it safe to search for some answers. But now…. I need to be careful, but I think my latent talent and power are enough to go look for some clues.” Eyes shining, he shot through the mist. The two wooden swords appeared, whistling as they circled about around him.

Now that he was at Foundation Establishment, the two swords felt somewhat different. However, he didn’t take the time to examine them closely. Instead, he shot down through the mist, intent on determining what this place really was.

After Meng Hao had proceeded about three hundred meters down the valley, the Demon Sealing Jade within his bag of holding started to glow. Meng Hao took it out and held it in his hand. He slowed down a bit, but continued to move downward.

As he descended, the mist grew thicker and colder. It seemed somewhat sinister in nature, but Meng Hao was no longer of the Qi Condensation stage. If he was, his body may not have been able to withstand temperature.

After moving along for the time it takes half an incense stick to burn, it grew painfully cold, so much so that it felt like blades on his skin. Finally, he made out what appeared to be the bottom of the valley.

There was no vegetation here, only endless mist. Strewn about on the valley floor were the bones of various birds and beasts. Everything was quiet. Meng Hao looked around cautiously. He would not act rashly, but instead take the time to examine his surroundings. Finally, his eyes glittered as they fell upon the only part of the valley that didn’t seem to have any mist in it.

It was… the mouth of a cave, roughly nine meters wide!

The edges of the cave mouth were formed of thick earth which seemed to be frozen over. It was impossible to tell how deep the cave was; it stretched back into inky blackness. Icy coldness poured out from the cave, which then turned into mist.

Stretching back into the cave, off to the edge, was a dark red rope. Other than this, there was nothing else.

At this point, the Demon Sealing Jade in Meng Hao’s hand glowed even more brightly. It seemed as if something was calling for it to enter the mysterious, endless cave. Who knew what was hiding inside?

Meng Hao hesitated for a moment, looking at the cave. After a moment, he smacked his bag of holding. A flying sword appeared. It turned into a beam of light as it shot toward the cave and then disappeared inside. Meng Hao concentrated, listening carefully. Soon, a sound rang out like that of metal hitting stone. Meng Hao’s expression changed.

“This ancient cave appears to be about twenty-five hundred meters deep.” He walked forward, stopping at the mouth of the cave. He hesitated for a moment, then looked at the brightly glowing jade slip in his hand. Determination appeared on his face. He slapped his bag of holding, causing several items to appear. The black net flew out, along with seven or eight feathers. Even with the wooden swords circulating around him, though, he felt a bit nervous. He bit his tongue, and the Lightning Flag flew out, turning into a flickering, lightning-filled mist that surrounded his body. Surrounded by his various magical items, Meng Hao entered the cave.

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# Chapter 101: Eighth Generation Demon Sealer

“If I don’t investigate just because it’s a little dangerous, then what will happen in the future when I face dangerous situations? I’d probably be even more willing to hold back. That’s not the proper attitude with which to face the law of the jungle in the Cultivation world. This Demon Sealing Jade is from Patriarch Reliance. It’s obviously an artifact from the Demon Sealing Sect. Furthermore… I myself am a disciple of the Demon Sealing Sect. I must figure out what’s going on!” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he thought back to the Demonic technique used by Shangguan Xiu, and the Demonic magic of Patriarch Reliance. Stubbornness filled his heart as he entered the cave.

“That having been said, I still need to be extremely cautious. If there are any signs of enemies that I can’t contend with, then I’ll leave immediately, with no regrets.” Meng Hao’s eyes shined with determination. Lightning-filled mist arced around him, his two wooden swords hovered around, and the feathers spun in a protective spiral. A look of utmost caution covered his face and spiritual energy emanated out from him. He would instantly be able to sense even the slightest sign of trouble.

As a Foundation Establishment Cultivator, his body was stronger; he could fly and had Spiritual Sense. All of these made it easier to protect himself and ensure that he lived a long life. They also gave him the opportunity to face dangerous situations with confidence.

At the moment, if Meng Hao were of the Qi Condensation stage, even if he had the courage to enter this place, he simply couldn’t.

It was pitch black, and Meng Hao felt the threatening pressure of the intense coldness which continuously roiled out from up ahead.

Within the cold, there was also the faint Blood Qi, which became thicker and thicker the further Meng Hao proceeded. A look of caution on his face, he continued onward. Three hundred meters in, he stopped momentarily and used a wooden sword to cut a hole into the earth wall. Then, he slapped his bag of holding to produce a talisman, which he placed inside the hole.

This talisman was the one he'd acquired from Wang Tengfei that day long ago.

He moved onward until he was about six hundred meters into the cave. There, he stopped and produced ten flying swords from within his bag of holding, which he stabbed into the walls. As he proceeded further into the cave, he continued to stop every few hundred meters and make such preparations. If anything unexpected happened, then he would have some backup life-saving options during his retreat.

By the time Meng Hao was about twelve hundred meters into the cave, the mist surrounding him had begun to seethe and roil. A faint moaning sound could be heard. A look of concentration appeared on Meng Hao's face, and he stopped momentarily. He looked around carefully for a long moment before proceeded further into the cave, following the red rope with flickering eyes.

Soon he was fifteen hundred meters. Suddenly, a piercing shriek emanated from within the recesses of the cave, along with an ear-splitting roar. The mist surrounding him flickered with massive quantities of electricity, which formed together to form a Lightning Globe. With a boom, it shot out and slammed into an indistinct figure up ahead. The figure flickered and disappeared.

Meng Hao gasped. His Lightning Flag was very powerful, even more so now that he was at the Foundation Establishment stage. The fact that it hadn't exterminated the indistinct form proved how powerful the figure was. Meng Hao stopped for a moment, hesitating. He looked up ahead in the cave, rubbing the Demon Sealing Jade. Gritting his teeth, he moved forward.

He continued on another six hundred meters, bringing him a full two thousand or more meters into the cave. The intense cold caused his body to quiver. The Blood Qi buffeted against him, filling his nostrils with every breath he took. Dark, crimson patches had begun to appear on his skin, and his eyes glowed red.

“I’m two thousand or more meters in, only about three hundred meters from the end….” His eyes had shined with more redness. At the moment, his unwillingness to let a matter drop had flared up. He moved forward, the full power of his Foundation Establishment Cultivation base in play. His Dao Pillar thrummed, sending boundless spiritual energy coursing throughout his body. He moved faster, speeding down the tunnel.

In the space of a few breaths, he caught sight of what appeared to be the end of the cave, as well as the sword he had sent in.

As things became clear, he realized that the cave was not twenty-five hundred meters deep as he had thought. Twenty-five hundred meters in was a round platform, in the middle of which was a hole, two meters wide!

The rope, which appeared to be soaked through with blood, disappeared into the deep hole, which seemed to drop down into eternity.

Meng Hao’s sword was embedded into the side of the platform, which was why he had assumed the cave was twenty-five hundred meters deep. He was surprised to see this. But then, his eyes suddenly narrowed; the Demon Sealing Jade was now emitting a massive amount of blinding light. It was then that he noticed a corpse, sitting cross-legged next to the platform!

In the corpse’s hand was an ancient-looking jade slip. This slip also emitted a brilliant glow, as if it were somehow connected to the jade slip he held in his own hand.

Before Meng Hao had the chance to process all of this, a shrill scream filled the air. A blurred figure raced toward him. The mist defended him, but

Meng Hao could clearly see a six-fingered hand pressing against it, reaching toward him. It stopped about two meters from him, where a massive conglomeration of lightning resisted it.

A ghastly coldness emanated from the hand, which appeared to belong, not to an adult, but a child!

Boom!

Meng Hao was shoved backward. Eyes flashing, he waved his hand, and the two wooden swords shot toward the indistinct figure. However, despite the swords' incredible speed, the figure was faster. It dodged and then shot backward to crouch next to the round platform. Underneath the glow of the ancient jade, Meng Hao could not see it clearly.

It had an emaciated body, like that of a feral animal. But upon closer examination, it looked more like a seven- or eight-year-old child. It's eyes were completely red, and as it stared at Meng Hao, it opened its mouth to reveal black teeth. It screamed.

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever, although coldness gleamed in his eyes. Sword auras began to glow around the two wooden swords as they circled Meng Hao. Suddenly, Meng Hao's eyes narrowed. From within the hole in the flat platform, ten dim streams of light emerged as ten figures appeared which looked exactly the same as the child. They radiated viciousness as they stared at Meng Hao.

If this was the extent of it, it wouldn't have been a big deal. But, behind the ten phantoms, revealed by the glow of the ancient jade, Meng Hao saw a white-haired man floating up out of the hole in the platform.

His face was devoid of blood, and he wore a white robe. His white hair floated about him. His eyes were closed, and a vicious scar stretched from his forehead down to his chin. The flesh around the wound stretched back to reveal bone. The ten phantoms surrounded him. The whole scene caused a profound sense of danger to well up in Meng Hao.

His scalp grew numb, and he began to inch backward. Before he could even take three steps, a shrill screaming filled the air. The ten phantoms launched themselves from the platform, shooting directly toward Meng Hao.

It was at this moment that the Demon Sealing Jade flew into the air of its own volition. A bright glow spread out from it. At the same time, the ancient jade in the hands of the corpse next to the platform also flew up into the air.

An ancient and profound voice filled the air. “Ancient Dao; Tenacious Desire to Seal the Heavens; Benefaction for All in the Mountains; Inevitable Dao Tribulation of the Nine Mountains and Seas; Perennial Will!” It boomed throughout the ancient cave, causing the ten phantoms to emit blood-curdling screams. Meng Hao watched as they instantly transformed into black smoke.

The white-haired man suddenly opened his eyes.

Within his eye sockets…. were no eyes, only bloody holes. It looked as if the eyes had been dug out years ago!

As his eyes opened, the two ancient pieces of jade emitted beams of light which interlocked to form a restrictive spell filled with magical symbols. It settled down over the area, causing the white-robed man to begin to tremble, unable to move further.

He slowly lifted his right hand, pushing against the restrictive spell. He himself made no sound whatsoever, but his action caused the entire cave to begin to shake.

All of this happened too quickly. Meng Hao breathed raggedly as he looked at the two ancient pieces of jade. He lifted his hand, and instantly, the two pieces of jade flew toward him to land on his palm.

The second piece of ancient jade was inscribed with a magical character. Meng Hao had seen this character before in his studies in the Magic Pavilion in the Reliance Sect. It was the character for ‘eight!’

As soon as it touched his hand, a profound voice filled his mind. It sounded ancient, as if it were being projected from a time long, long ago. It echoed out in his mind.

“The League of Demon Sealers has existed as long as the Dao. I am the Eighth Generation Demon Sealer Daoist Master. I am determined to walk the path of Dao Tribulation of the Nine Mountains and Seas. In all likelihood, I will perish, so I leave my sentience along with my clone here to resolve the ill-fated relationship between Da Nu and myself….

“Sealed three million meters down, pressed down by the weight of this section of the Milky Way Sea, buried. Grief and sorrow are part of the Dao of Heaven and Earth. However, I am a Demon Sealer Daoist Master, and I must not allow distractions into my heart… So I leave my clone here to accompany her and resolve her Demonic resentment.

“If you are of the League of Demon Sealers, place a drop of your blood onto the jade in confirmation. If you are not of the League of Demon Sealers, then remove yourself from this place. If the jade leaves without tasting blood, you will be cursed for three generations; your descendants will never see the moon and you shall perish.”

The voice disappeared, and the glow from the ancient jade slowly faded. Meng Hao muttered to himself, his eyes gleaming. He wasn’t sure whether or not to place a drop of blood onto the ancient jade. But if he didn’t, then he didn’t dare to take the jade away. He didn’t fully believe the warning uttered by the ancient voice. And yet, he couldn’t ignore it.

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# Chapter 102: Eighth Demon Sealing Hex!

Murmuring to himself, Meng Hao frowned. He looked over toward the black hole. At the moment, there was not just one white-robed man floating there, but about seven, all in different positions. Their bloody gazes were fixed upon him.

Although he couldn’t see their eyeballs, Meng Hao’s entire body grew cold. This place was incredibly bizarre, and he was filled with the desire to leave as soon as possible.

But then he looked down at the ancient jade pieces in his hand, and resolve filled his eyes. He bit the tip of his tongue, allowing a drop of blood to fall onto the second ancient jade.

As soon as the blood drop splashed onto it, it began to vibrate. A gaseous substance appeared in front of Meng Hao, which solidified into a gray-colored Qi. It shot toward him, entering his body in the spot between his eyebrows. A roaring sound filled his mind, and then an archaic voice sounded out again within his head. This time it was more clear, as if the speaker were standing next to his ear.

“I was not always the Eighth Generation Demon Sealer Daoist Master. It was outside of the Sixth Mountain that I gained enlightenment from the will left behind by the Seventh Generation Demon Sealer Daoist Master upon his death. I willingly cut away my past and reversed my Dao, inheriting the past generation’s Dao. I roamed creation, and eventually, refined half of the sea outside the Sixth Mountain in order to forge the Demon Sealing Jade that is required of each generation.

“With the help of the Demon Sealing Jade, I mastered the Seventh Demon Sealing Hex. Since ancient times, each new generation of the League of Demon Sealers must create a new Hex; therefore, I created the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex. Throughout my life, I sought out the other scattered Hexes, but sadly by the time I reached the Dao Tribulation of the Nine Mountains and Seas, I had only found three. What a pity.

“Successor, if you are lucky, able to absorb the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex, and then create the Ninth Demon Sealing Hex. Then the League of Demon Sealers will be in accord with the law of the Dao.

“The League of Demon Sealers seeks out the great Demons of Heaven and Earth, drawing out the aura of all the living things under vault of heaven. Seizing Demonic lives, refining Demonic blood, using it and then… the concepts of Demonic Sealing, Demonic Construction, and Demonic Transformation….

“I don’t know which generation of Demon Sealing you are, perhaps the Ninth. If so, you’re lucky, but at the same time, unlucky. Nine is ultimate number, a peak of deterioration. The path you tread… is filled with many variables.

“This clone only possesses the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex. I now pass it on to you. This Hex uses Demonic Qi as its foundation, and can… seal bodies, seal spirits, seal Immortals, seal divinities, seal the luck from the Heavens, seal all living things in the world!” The voice echoed out in Meng Hao’s head, more and more clearly until it became a thunderous roar that branded itself onto his mind. The brand was an ancient character, the character for Sealing!

Eventually the echoing roar faded away. Meng Hao didn’t know it, but ten days had passed in the outside world while he had been immersed in the branding process. Another full moon had arrived.

In the valley outside, the moonlight pierced into the mists, causing them to churn and seethe like seawaters. The toad geezer once again arrived on the scene. This time, there was an additional Cultivator of the ninth level of Qi

Condensation. He had obviously just broken through to the ninth level. Nonetheless, this filled the group with complete confidence.

“Now that brother Sun has made a breakthrough in his Cultivation base, we will definitely pull out fifteen hundred meters!”

“Right. We’ve waited for this day for too long. If we can pull out fifteen hundred meters, then our ancestral spirit will awaken. Our Cultivation bases will raise to another level. If the luck exists, we might even reach Foundation Establishment!”

“It’s hard to determine the probability of Foundation Establishment luck. However, according to the ancient records passed down from our ancestors, pulling out fifteen hundred meters will definitely bring some type of luck with it.” They exchanged gleaming glances, then immediately went to work under the thick moonlight. Of course, Meng Hao couldn’t be further from their minds; as far as they were concerned he had long since passed away.

They spat out globules of blood, and formed the black blade. The mists began to spin into a whirlpool, and then the red rope appeared. The toad geezer grabbed ahold of it and let out a howl as he pulled.

A thunderous boom echoed out and the rope began to move. The movement reached down through the valley into the cave, all the way to the spot where Meng Hao stood, then further down into the magically sealed hole.

As soon as the rope began to move, expressions of panic appeared on the faces of the eight or so white-haired men. Suddenly, nearly a dozen of the phantoms which looked like seven- or eight-year-old children appeared. Their shrill screams echoed throughout the deepness of the cave.

One of the strange properties of this rope was that when it was pulled, it began to emit massive amounts of intense coldness, as well as a rotten smell. The glittering restrictive spell trembled, as if it might collapse at any moment.

Time passed. The seven men outside heaved on the rope, gradually pulling out fifteen meters. The roaring grew more intense, and even more coldness poured out. The rotten smell grew many times thicker and stronger.

Soon… a panting sound could be heard in the cave. It sounded as if some living thing were in the midst of some sort of struggle. A figure appeared, screaming shrilly. It launched itself at the shining restrictive spell.

The spell shook, and cracks appeared on its edges.

It was at this moment that Meng Hao's eyes became fully clear. He shook himself and took in a deep breath. A gleam appeared in his eyes as he became aware of what was happening in the ancient cave. He saw the rope moving, as well as the rapidly collapsing restrictive spell.

There was no time to think. He clasped his hands and bowed toward the corpse. Then, carrying his mist with him, shot back toward the cave entrance. Before he could move even thirty meters, the shining restrictive spell shattered. Ten emaciated phantoms shot out, followed by the eight white-haired old men. All of them aimed directly for Meng Hao, screaming as they approached.

Behind them, thin streams of blackness floated up out of the deep hole. They looked like hair. The panting sound from within the hole became clearer.

Something inside was struggling fiercely, as if it desired nothing more than to burst out of the hole.

Meng Hao's face was pale but his eyes shined brightly. His Dao Pillar began to rotate, sending the power of Foundation Establishment coursing throughout his body. He dashed forward several dozens of meters. Unfortunately, the emaciated, child-like phantoms behind him were even faster. Over and over again, they crashed into Meng Hao's lightning mist.

Booms echoed out as the lightning mist rapidly began to deteriorate. The child-like phantoms didn't seem to feel any pain. Every time they were knocked away by lightning bolts, they immediately charged back again. Everywhere Meng Hao looked, spirits charged toward him.

Sword auras shined out brightly as the wooden swords circled around him. Feathers spun, causing a wind to blow out. Meng Hao moved onward as quickly as possible.

That was when the eight white-haired men drew close. At the same time, several of the child-like spirit phantoms appeared in front of him, blocking his path. Meng Hao felt a profound sense of danger. Without hesitation, he slapped his bag of holding. A hundred flying swords appeared, forming into a sword rain which charged forth.

“Boom!”

As soon as Meng Hao uttered the word, the flying swords detonated, turning into a cloud of shrapnel that swept the phantoms off of their feet. Meng Hao raced past them toward the entrance of the cave, which was now about fifteen hundred meters away.

The shrieking behind him grew more intense. More and more black tendrils billowed about. They were nearly three hundred meters behind him.

Meng Hao didn’t have time to look closely. He knew that if he slowed even a little bit, he would most likely lose his life. Even the slightest delay in reaction on his part, and he would be finished.

“With great risk comes great reward. Getting the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex makes all of this worth it. Too bad I haven’t gained complete enlightenment regarding the Hex, otherwise I could use it right now.” He took a deep breath and pushed forward at top speed. The cave entrance was now almost twelve hundred meters away.

It was then that the white-robed men behind Meng Hao raised their arms and waved their fingers toward him.

The finger attacks made Meng Hao’s entire body turn cold. Without hesitation, he flickered his hand in an incantation and waved backwards. The feathers surrounding him shot back, then suddenly detonated. Another hundred swords appeared from within his bag of holding. They also shot back and then exploded.

A massive boom filled the cave tunnel, resounding outwards and diminishing the power of the white-robed men’s finger attacks. However, despite this, they still bore down on Meng Hao.

His face was pale as the mist around him shook; a gap opened up. His body instantly became freezing cold, and he coughed up a mouthful of blood. The blood instantly froze into solid chunks. It felt as if the power of his Cultivation base dropped by half. He was in great danger. However, amidst the danger, Meng Hao suddenly grabbed the red rope. He pulled it, borrowing from its power to shoot forward.

Meanwhile, out in the valley, the seven men gasped for breath. Gritting their teeth, they continued to heave on the red rope, pulling continuously. Behind them were over a dozen poison beasts, mouths clenched onto the rope as they pulled with incredible might.

“Dammit, how come it suddenly became so heavy!?”

“What’s happening? We just pulled out three hundred meters, it shouldn’t be like this!” The seven men were shocked, and anxious expressions appeared on their faces. Suddenly, the rope pulled back on them, jerking them dozens of meters forward. Then the tugging force disappeared. But moments later, even as they gritted their teeth and pulled on the rope again, it was tugged backwards with great strength.

As they cried out to each other in confusion, Meng Hao was inside the cave, pulling on the rope to launch himself forward. He coughed up more blood. Without hesitation, he consumed some medicinal pills, not wasting any time as he used all his power to flee.

His expression was grim. The lightning mist around him was growing thinner and thinner. If his reaction time had been any slower in dealing with the finger attacks from the white-robed men, Meng Hao’s body would have been frozen to death.

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# Chapter 103: Treasures

“What is that thing!?” panted Meng Hao, his heart grim. With no time to even wipe the blood from his mouth, he popped a Foundation Establishment Pill into his mouth. Because of the level of his Cultivation base, the pill would not cause his body to be paralyzed. Its power instantly flushed out the coldness.

No one but Meng Hao could be so wasteful.

His body seems to transform into a flash of light as he pulled on the rope, borrowing its power to shoot even closer to the cave mouth. As of now, he was only six hundred meters away. At his heels, roughly nine meters away from him, were the black tendrils of hair and the other phantoms. Further back, twenty-five hundred meters into the cave, at the end of the floating black mass of tendrils appeared a human head!

The red rope penetrated the head between the eyebrows and then continued to stretch down into the darkness.

It was a woman’s head. The beauty of her features was difficult to describe, as if she didn’t belong in the mortal world. Her open eyes were filled with confusion and frustration, as if before her death, there were too many things that she didn’t understand, and too few answers.

To Meng Hao, six hundred meters was not very far. Given his current Cultivation base, he should be able to cross the distance in the space of a couple of breaths. But, the coldness in the cave was affecting his speed, and the relentless attacking pursuit behind him forced him to concentrate.

The hair tendrils continued to spread out, and it seemed as if it would reach Meng Hao’s feet at any moment. Meng Hao took a deep breath, then lifted his hand toward the rocky wall.

As he pushed against it, the power of his Cultivation base exploded out to activate some of the backup magical items he had placed there. Ten flying swords suddenly flew out, shooting toward the tendrils and then exploding. A boom echoed out, shaking the cave. Meng Hao shot forward, pulling fiercely on the red rope.

Outside in the valley, the seven Cultivators' faces were pale white. Three of them spat up blood and staggered backward. The remaining four gritted their teeth and held on. Behind them, the poison beasts seemed to be losing power.

"Maybe this time there will be an incredible treasure. That's why it's so heavy!"

"Right. When we pulled out that Spirit Sealing rock, it was incredibly heavy…."

"Haha! We'll pull out a similar treasure this time. Don't be stingy with your medicinal pills. We have to pull out this treasure!" The three injured Cultivators gritted their teeth, panting. They pulled out medicinal pills and consumed them. With looks of excitement and anticipation, they once again stepped forward and pulled on the rope.

Down in the cave, Meng Hao borrowed momentum from the rope to fly another three hundred meters. The black tendrils were now a bit further away from him.

His eyes gleaming, his hand shot out toward the cave wall, to where he had hidden the talisman. It began to emit a golden light, which swirled about and then coalesced into blurry figure which was impossible to see clearly. It turned and, emanating a shocking power, charged toward the black hair and the other pursuing spirits.

As the explosion billowed out, Meng Hao leaped forward. The pursuing spirits shrieked madly, charging once again toward him. A cold look appeared in his eyes, and he said a single word.

“Boom!”

The talisman would now serve an additional function. Another explosion ripped through the ancient cave. Borrowing the momentum of the explosion, Meng Hao surged forward. He was now only thirty meters from the cave mouth. He took hold of the red rope and pulled hard. In an instant, he shot forward thirty meters, flying out of the cave!

As he shot out of the cave, ten phantoms charged forward. However, they stopped immediately when they reached the cave mouth, shrieking, as if they dared not step outside. Their shrieks echoed out, but did not leave the valley; there seemed to be some sort of restrictive spell in place. As such, the seven struggling men outside didn’t hear it.

Meng Hao held onto the red rope, allowing it to pull him upward. He turned and looked back down at the cave. As he did, he heard the voice of a woman, filled with frustration and doubt. It also carried with it a billowing sense of grief which shook Meng Hao.

“The Dao…. What is the Dao?!”

The voice grew shrill as it spoke, causing Meng Hao’s heart to seize with pain. He drew further and further away from the valley floor, passing through layer after layer of mist, until he neared its border.

“Pull! Haha! Let’s see what treasure comes up!”

“Maybe it’s another Spirit Sealing stone. Whatever it is, we definitely will not have wasted our effort this time!”

The seven men pulled excitedly, their eyes burning with passion. And then Meng Hao emerged. Their mouths dropped open and they stared at what they had painstakingly pulled up. The red roped dropped from their hands.

They gaped, dumbstruck, their minds spinning out of control. This was something they couldn’t possibly have predicted, and it left their brains blank. They had expected a treasure, but instead had ended up with Meng Hao. They couldn’t believe their eyes.

“This…. This….”

“Dammit, what’s going on?! How can this be?!”

“That’s… that’s the outsider from before. He’s not dead after all. But, how could it be him that we pulled up?”

Their minds reeled, especially the toad geezer, who had no reaction other than to gape. As for the Cultivator who had lost the Spirit Snake, when he recognized Meng Hao, his eyes filled with rage.

“It’s that damned outsider….” he said angrily, taking a step toward Meng Hao. He couldn’t believe that he had spat up so much blood in his efforts to pull Meng Hao out of the mist. His rage billowed up.

As he walked forward, Meng Hao looked at him calmly. As he did, the man’s body suddenly began to shake and his organs felt as if they would stop working. His Cultivation base seemed as if it had lost its ability to function. The blood drained from his face, and astonishment filled his eyes. A massive pressure bore down on him, causing him to shake so violently that he thought he might fall into pieces. Meng Hao continued to look at him.

This was the crushing power caused by the vast difference in their Cultivation bases. The man knew that by merely lifting his hand, Meng Hao could explode him into a million pieces. An intense, indescribable dread welled up within him. Shaking, he coughed up blood, so scared that he didn’t even dare to take a step backward.

The six other men had already begun to feel sick to their stomach, but seeing this, seeing Meng Hao standing there like an imposing mountain, their hearts shook. They knew that this mountain could exterminate them all in an instant.

“He’s hovering in the air!!” It was at this moment that the toad geezer’s face changed. Looking at Meng Hao’s feet, he realized that this flight was not the same method used as when he and his fellows flew on their poison beasts. This was… true flight!

“A Foundation Establishment expert!” The words pounded into their hearts, causing all of the men’s expressions to change. Their faces were filled with shocked disbelief. They remembered that two years ago, he was only a ninth-level Qi Condensation Cultivator. They even had assumed him dead.

But here he was again, this time in a position vastly superior to theirs. As a Foundation Establishment expert, he could end their life at any time. Their were faces pale as they all cupped their hands and bowed deeply to him.

“The junior generation offers greetings to the elder generation…” said the seven men, their fists clasped in front of them. Dread filled their hearts as they thought about what would happen if Meng Hao suddenly turned hostile. This was especially true of the man who had lost his Spirit Snake; anxiety filled him. His body trembling, he dropped to the ground to kowtow to the expressionless Meng Hao.

Even as he dropped to his knees, Meng Hao lifted his hand and waved it forward. A flying sword appeared; it was an ordinary sword, but it contained the power of Meng Hao’s Foundation Establishment Cultivation base. It shot forward, disintegrating as it did so. The shrapnel shot down toward the Spirit Snake Cultivator.

A blood-curdling shriek rang out. He was of the ninth level of Qi Condensation, but blood showered out of his body, and he was killed instantly. His body toppled down into the mists.

The other six men stood there trembling, not daring to even flee. They kowtowed to Meng Hao, not showing any reaction whatsoever to the attack just now. Actually, the man’s death had come as no surprise. From the time that Meng Hao had first appeared until this day, he had been most venomous in expressing his hatred for him.

If Meng Hao did not eliminate him, the other six men would have found it strange. That, in turn, could have given birth to other problems.

Although Meng Hao had not been a part of the Cultivation World for a very long time, he had experienced many things in the past six years. He was not the soft-hearted scholar he once had been. When killing became necessary, he did it without hesitation.

Enmity had been created two years ago when the man had attacked him, and then had his Spirit Snake killed. The man was of the ninth level of Qi Condensation, so it was impossible to tell whether or not he would reach Foundation Establishment. Killing him now would prevent any future troubles.

From the incident with Ding Xin, Meng Hao had learned that even when attacking enemies weaker than yourself, you must be quick and thorough in the kill.

From the incident with Wang Tengfei, he had learned that even an opponent with a lower Cultivation base could harbor resentment, and pursue vengeance ruthlessly.

In these six years, Meng Hao had matured, both in his personality and in his methods of dealing with matters.

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# Chapter 104: A Great Wind Arises, The Roc Spreads its Wings

As he looked down at the six men who trembled in fear like cicadas during winter, Meng Hao for the first time experienced the strength and respect shown to powerful experts in the Cultivation world. It would be more accurate to say respect and fear. Two years ago, these men had been willing to attack him even though he was of the ninth level of Qi Condensation. But now, each and every one of them was shaking in his boots.

“I want you to tell me everything you know about this place,” said Meng Hao coolly. “If you hide anything from me….” He let his words trail off as his gaze swept over them. They trembled as they saw the remnants of the red glow emanating from his eye.

The glow was filled with a Demonic air, and when they saw it, their pupils shrank reflexively. The sight seemed to have been branded onto their spirits. Their expressions changed; they looked terrified to the extreme and would clearly not hide anything from Meng Hao. They told him everything, even taking out the village’s ancient records and giving them to Meng Hao. They showed him maps, ancestral poison recipes… everything.

Several days later, Meng Hao left the valley region, respectfully sent off by the six Cultivators. His bearing was calm and his face expressionless as he sat cross-legged on an enormous green leaf, which transformed into a multicolored beam and shot toward the Southern Domain.

After he left, the six Cultivators relaxed a bit. As for the man who had died, they had long since chosen to forget that. They did not have the slightest shred of a desire to seek vengeance. They simply gazed off in the direction Meng Hao had taken and hoped he would never return.

A few more days passed. It was late at night in the deep valley; there, in a region impossible to see, was the mouth of an ancient cave. Everything was calm.

Within the cave was a red rope, as well as several spirits who looked like seven- or eight-year-old children, squatting there, about twenty-five hundred meters into the cave. Occasionally they would let out a howl or two.

The rope went down into a hole that seemed endless. It stretched down into the earth, deeper and deeper. Soon, a woman’s head could be seen, pierced by the rope. Her face was pure white, her eyes open, gazing frustratedly at the darkness.

Past the head, the hole continued to stretch down, along with the red rope.

Thirty thousand meters, three hundred thousand meters, one million five hundred thousand meters…. There, it began to smell like the sea. In fact, at this point, seawater could be seen. The rope sank into the seawater, continuing on, seemingly without end.

If someone could see that far down, three million meters, they would be gazing upon… a pitch black sea. The rope stretched on into the sea depths to this area; it was impossible to tell exactly how far the sea and the rope stretched. Up ahead was a stone formation that appeared to be thousands and thousands of meters in diameter.

Massive stone boulders had been erected, ring after ring, layer after layer. In the very center of the stone formation was a wooden coffin, onto the surface of which was attached the red rope.

The distance between this location and the mountain valley is difficult to describe. The rope is simply too long, and not completely straight, either. If someone pulled on it with incredible force, perhaps about one thousand five hundred meters, then maybe you could measure it at approximately three million meters.

It seemed the coffin had been in this location for a very, very long time. At this moment, a scraping sound could be heard. Along with the scraping, the lid of the coffin… slowly began to open. It moved upwards about three inches!

A blackness seeped out of the coffin, spreading out into the seawater….

The name of this sea was… the Milky Way.

This sea existed between two great sub-continents of the world. As the blackness spread out into the sea, a school of a hundred fish, each about the size of a palm, swam quickly through the water. The blackness enveloped them.

Time passed, and the blackness slowly shrank down, then disappeared. The school of a hundred fish had been reduced to bones…. Except for one remaining fish. Swishing its tail, it swam out from within the bones. Its body was pitch black, and growing out of its body were two tentacles. The tentacles swiftly grew longer and longer, until they were nearly three hundred meters in length. As it swam upwards through the water, the tentacles writhed, making the fish look terrifying.

It moved upward rapidly, as fast as lightning. As it raced upwards, the Milky Way Sea around it began to churn and roar. Suddenly, it broke through the surface, soaring up into the night sky.

The instant it left the sea, a tremor ran through its body. In the blink of an eye, its body expanded, and it appearance changed. Soon it was thirty meters long, three hundred, three thousand, thirty thousand!

Within the space of a few breaths, it had grown to nearly three hundred thousand meters in length. It was now no longer a fish, but a bird. It appeared to be an enormous roc!

An aura of death roiled off of the roc’s body. It seemed ancient, as if it had just awoken from a deep slumber. Its life force was not strong, and its eyes were dim. It seemed as if its life might flicker out at any moment.

“Rebirth….” The resonant voice sprang out from the roc’s mouth as it flapped its wings and began flying in the direction of the Southern Domain.

Despite its enormous speed, if it wanted to leave the Milky Way Sea and reach the Southern domain, it would need to fly for more than half a year.

Meanwhile, Meng Hao sped along through the sky, sitting cross-legged on the enormous green leaf. Black clouds roiled above him, and lightning crashed down all around him, along with pouring rain.

However, the rain didn’t touch Meng Hao. The leaf emitted a glowing shield which blocked the rainwater. Meng Hao shot through the stormy night, occasionally illuminated by the flashes of lightning.

He lowered his head to look at the jade slip he held in his hand, a look of deep thoughtfulness in his eyes.

“According to the legends, that cave in the valley leads to the Milky Way Sea… The villagers have been watching over that area since ancient times, and every full moon, they pull on that rope. Every time they do, they get rewards of some sort. The whole thing seems a little fishy.” He turned his head, and his eyes glittered as he looked out through the thunderstorm toward the location of the mountain valley. Bits and pieces of some larger story seemed to be coming together. He put the jade slip back into a bag of holding, within which were a large assortment of bottles and jars. They contained various formulas refined by old man toad and the others, as well as a collection of poison pills created by their Clan.

They had given these gifts in tribute to Meng Hao, as well as a handful of jade slips.

Most of the poisons would be deadly to someone of the Qi Condensation stage, but would have less of an effect on someone at Foundation Establishment. However, there were a few that were special. For example, one was called Delight Pill. It would turn into a mist that, when inhaled, would cause the victim to have sexual hallucinations.

He glanced over the various poison pills, and then retrieved another jade slip. This jade slip contained maps of the area. He noticed one area which would take about half a year to travel to, that contained a teleportation portal.

The teleportation portal was controlled by a Clan of Cultivators, and was the only one in the area. Using it would allow him to teleport to the Southern Domain, which would cut a huge amount of time off of his journey there. After teleporting into the Southern Domain, he would be only about a half month's travel from the border of the State of Eastern Emergence, one of the Nine States of the Southern Domain.

"The Nine States of the Southern Domain form the center of the Southern Domain. Nine flourishing mortal nations, each one of them much larger than the State of Zhao. With such a huge amount of mortals, the resources available are even greater and thus, the rise of the illustrious Sects and Clans of the Southern Domain.

"Five great Clans and three great Sects. Each exists in its respective nation. As for the ninth nation, its proximity to the Western Desert caused it to become a flourishing trading hub. Eventually, it came to be called the Black Lands." Meng Hao put the jade slip away. There wasn't much information. However, it corroborated what he'd learned back in the Reliance Sect. As of now, he could visualize a rough outline of the Southern Domain, although it wasn't very detailed.

"Once I get to the Southern Domain, I'll have to acquire a better map, then I'll understand things better." He looked up at the rain and lightning, his eyes glowing brightly.

"I have a lot of acquaintances in the Southern Domain; Elder Sister Xu, Elder Brother Chen, Fatty and… Wang Tengfei!" A smile appeared on his face, a smile filled with stubbornness.

"It's been many years. Meng Hao is coming!"

Several months later, in an endless strip of barren mountains, atop a tall mountain peak, a thunderous boom rang out. It was a beautiful mountain, dotted with various stockade villages. The mountain peak was connected to surrounding mountains by long iron chains, which seemed to form a huge spell formation.

In the sky above, two people were locked in magical combat. Below, crowds of people looked up in awe.

One of the combatants was a burly man who appeared to be over thirty years of age. Bare-chested, a golden-colored centipede was wrapped around his right hand. His left hand flickered in an incantation, and a gigantic sail appeared. It rippled in the wind, emitting a piercing shrieking sound. The other person was Meng Hao.

He was not using the Lightning Flag, nor had the wooden swords appeared. A simple flying sword circled around him which he used to attack. At the same time, he flashed an incantation gesture, and a howling Flame Python flew forth, over sixty meters in length. Next, multiple spinning Wind Blades appeared, amazing the onlookers.

A massive boom echoed out, and the two of them each shot backward. The burly man laughed and clasped his hands in respect toward Meng Hao.

“Brother Meng, your Cultivation base is extraordinary. I, Shan, truly admire you.”

Meng Hao lifted his hand. The flying sword returned to circle around him. He smiled, and returned the salute.

“Brother Shan is being modest. You only attacked with eighty percent of your power, but I had to use all of my power to defend. I am the one to be doing the admiring.” The words seemed casual, but when he heard them, the burly man’s heart shook.

Two days ago, Meng Hao had arrived here and had asked about being able to use their teleportation portal. This place was unlike the mountain valley Meng Hao had just come from. The chiefs of the stockade villages in the area were all Foundation Establishment Cultivators. They welcomed Meng Hao enthusiastically, treating him to a feast and exchanging tips about

Cultivation with him. In order to prove the extent of his power, he had agreed to a sparring match with one of the Foundation Establishment Cultivators.

“Brother Meng is the one being modest. You attacked casually, and not with your full strength. I’m really curious how much of your power you used?” The man’s eyes shined; the sparring match had been his idea. But as it had proceeded, he had grown more and more apprehensive. Both of them were at the Foundation Establishment stage, but it seemed as if his opponent were only using about half of his power. Furthermore, Meng Hao had been able to tell how much power he was using.

“When might I be able to use your teleportation portal?” said Meng Hao, sidestepping the question. He smiled, although the smile didn’t touch his eyes. He had actually not even used a third of his full strength.

“Oh, that’s simple. You can use it today.” The burly man nodded, muttering to himself.

Soon after, the spell formation within the mountains activated, and Meng Hao’s body disappeared. As the glow faded, the burly man surnamed Shan frowned.

Next to him were two men of the ninth level of Qi condensation. As Meng Hao disappeared, one of them said, “Chief, that guy…”

“I’m not sure where he came from,” said the burly man, his voice deep. “His magic is strange, as is his Foundation Establishment Cultivation base. I felt him out with some attacks and could tell that he’s an experienced fighter. He came here alone, but seemed completely at ease. He must have some unique and special techniques. Yeah, it’s not worth it to provoke him.”

When he had attempted to feel out Meng Hao, he had failed. Meng Hao kept his power sealed up tight. This caused the man’s fear and suspicion to grow stronger. The teleportation portal couldn’t be used by just anyone; if your power is not sufficient, it could take your life, which happened occasionally. Therefore, he let Meng Hao use the portal, to ensure that no calamity befell his village.

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# Chapter 105: Poison Blossoms in the Right Eye

There is a wide plain on the border of the State of Eastern Emergence, in the center of the Southern Domain. There, the glow of a teleportation spell appeared, then faded. Outside of the teleportation portal, seven or eight Cultivators of the Qi Condensation stage sat cross-legged. They stood up as Meng Hao appeared, saluting him with clasped hands.

These Cultivators were posted here to defend the teleportation portal and to receive visitors to the village. When Meng Hao appeared and they sensed the deepness of his Cultivation base, their respect for him grew even greater.

Meng Hao walked out of the teleportation portal. His eyes swept over the Cultivators, then flickered up to the sky above the wide plain. Everything looked unfamiliar. He glanced back at the portal spell, marveling at the range of its teleportation.

Ignoring the surrounding Cultivators, Meng Hao shot up into the sky. He did not use a flying sword or the enormous green leaf or the treasured fan, but rather his Cultivation base. His body transformed into a prismatic beam of light as he disappeared into the distance.

The seven or eight Cultivators watched as he left, their veneration for him growing.

“I wonder if I’ll ever be able to become a powerful Foundation Establishment expert….”

“Stop dreaming. Even if you did reach Foundation Establishment, at the very best you would have a Fractured Foundation. People like us can only imagine what it would be like. Only people groomed by the great Sects have a chance to get a Foundation Establishment Pill. And even amongst the great Sects, the numbers who do are few. Most people go their whole lives without even touching one.”

“Even with a Foundation Establishment Pill, people with latent talent like ours would only have a tiny chance of succeeding. Ah, the Foundation Establishment stage… that is true power!” The Cultivators sighed. Being assigned to guard duty in this location, they rarely had a chance to see Foundation Establishment Cultivators. Seeing Meng Hao had filled their hearts with admiration and envy.

Days passed, and the entire time, Meng Hao did not use any flight-bestowing treasures, even though it forced him to waste a bit of spiritual power. He was as cautious as ever; this was the center of the Southern Domain, and he knew he had to be especially careful.

He had offended too many people from here; the Violet Fate Sect, obviously, as well as Eccentric Song and Wang Tengfei. Time passed, and soon he neared the State of Eastern Emergence. The closer he got, the more cautious he grew.

During the past months, he had attempted to use the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex almost every day. However, no matter what he did, he wasn’t able to gain the enlightenment he needed. Everything seemed a blur.

Ten days after leaving the teleportation portal, Meng Hao was flying along, when suddenly his expression changed. His body trembled, and he fell out of the sky, his face pale. He hit the ground running, making a beeline for a nearby forest. He waved his hand toward a tree up ahead that was large enough for three people to encircle with their arms. The tree cracked open, sending splinters of wood out into the air. Meng Hao leaped into the fissure, immediately sitting down cross-legged. His face was turning a deep purple color, and his body was trembling. He spat out the Lightning Flag, which immediately transformed into a protective lightning mist.

He coughed up a mouthful of blood as he attempted to take control of the poison that was flaring up within him.

This time, the flareup lasted for three days. The entire time, Meng Hao sat there, his jaw clenched tight. The pain of the poison within his body felt like insects ripping his insides apart. His eyes were blood red and savage, and would have shocked anyone who could see it. Suddenly, in the pupil of his right eye appeared a demonic face that seemed to be laughing and crying at the same time. Somehow, it also had the appearance of a blossoming flower.

Meng Hao was aware of this. More than ever, he desired to dispel the poison.

On evening of the third day, a vicious wolf wandered into the area and caught the scent of blood. It eyed the cavity in the tree where Meng Hao sat, and then shot forward. Just as it was about to reach the tree, a hand shot out from within, latching onto the wolf's neck. It squeezed.

A cracking sound could be heard. The wolf didn't even have a chance to cry out before it died. It twitched for a moment and then went still. His face pale, Meng Hao emerged from the tree. His eyes glittered, shining with an intense killing aura. Every time the poison flared up, he had a stronger desire to kill. The flickering, laughing-crying demonic face in his eye seemed to be having a strange effect on all of the Qi in his body.

Meng Hao looked down at the dead wolf he held. He flicked his hand, and the body was consumed with flames. Ash drifted out from Meng Hao's hand. The fire flickered on his face. He looked much less a scholar now, and much more a vicious Cultivator.

"In the past two years, the poison has flared up nine times. But this time was different. Why did a demonic face appear within my right eye….?" He reached up and felt his right eye. The demonic face slowly faded away. Meng Hao experimentally circulated his Cultivation base. When he did, the demonic face appeared again. His body transformed into a shining beam of light as he continued on toward the State of Eastern Emergence.

It was a large nation, about ten times larger than the State of Zhao, filled with Cultivators and Sects. The largest of the Sects was the Violet Fate Sect, which acted as the leader of the other Sects.

You could definitely say that the State of Eastern Emergence was the base of operations for the Violet Fate Sect.

Meng Hao knew this, but had no other options. Going around the nation would involve traveling a huge distance. He wanted to get the State of Blue Clouds, where the Black Sieve Sect was, a location actually closer to where the State of Zhao had been, but which was on the other side of the State of Eastern Emergence.

Fortunately, the State of Eastern Emergence was huge, so if he was careful, it shouldn't be difficult to hide. It wasn't like the State of Zhao, which was small enough to make searching for people easy. Furthermore, he was no longer of the Qi Condensation stage. Now that he was of the Foundation Establishment stage, he could protect himself much more easily. His decision made, he entered the State of Eastern Emergence.

"If I keep going on in this direction, there is a city of Cultivators." Meng Hao flew through the air, passing through the border. He wore a long, black robe and a wide bamboo hat. His eyes flickered about as he surveyed the lands of the State of Eastern Emergence. There were few mountains, mostly wide plains. There were cities of mortals scattered about everywhere, connected by trade routes that were filled with horse carts.

The hustle and bustle was far greater than that in the State of Zhao. As he flew through they air, other Foundation Establishment Cultivators flew past him, going in different directions. That was something which would be a rare sight in the State of Zhao.

There were also many Qi Condensation Cultivators. You could say that the spiritual energy throughout the State of Eastern Emergence was greater than that of some of the famous mountains within the State of Zhao. In fact, there were some places where the spiritual energy was so dense that it made Meng Hao apprehensive.

Several days later, Meng Hao finally saw a majestic city rising up in front of him on the horizon!

It would take a mortal many hours to travel fifty kilometers, but Meng Hao arrived at the city gate in less time than it takes an incense stick to burn.

It was currently dusk, and as the sun set over the city, it looked like a gigantic coiling dragon, its head lifted up to look at the heavens.

As he approached the city, he felt a pressure pushing him down from the sky. He landed on the ground and proceeded forward on foot, lifting his head up to gaze at the city. Even though he had seen cities before, this sight moved him. There were other Cultivators around him, some alone, some in groups of four or five.

Above, the sky was completely clear. There was a restrictive spell in place overhead that prevented flight, and the only thing that could be seen was its colorful glow. It made everything seem celestial in nature.

The gate was guarded by Cultivators of the eighth level of Qi Condensation. There were also guards on top of the city walls, and Meng Hao could see that they were of the ninth level of Qi Condensation, on the threshold of reaching Foundation Establishment.

“This is a great city of Cultivators of the Southern Domain…” As he contemplated, Meng Hao began to more fully understand the power the Violet Fate Sect wielded in this great nation.

Meng Hao looked ahead and noticed that as people entered the city gates, they paid a tax of Spirit Stones. Just as he was about to do the same, a whistling scream could be heard approaching in the air.

The sound was very sudden, causing all the Cultivators in the area to lift their heads. Off in the distance, a beam of light shot toward the city.

It was violet-colored, and roughly thirty meters wide. It approached like a screaming, shooting star. In its midst was a middle-aged man wearing a splendid garment. His face was expressionless, and he flew toward the city center as if the restrictive spell emanating from within meant nothing to him.

The pressure exuded by his body sent looks of shock to appear on the faces of the Cultivators on the ground. A wind kicked up, turning into a whirlwind, which swept across the land.

“A Core Formation eccentric. Only people like that can ignore the city’s restrictive spell and fly.”

“Keep your voice down. That’s Reverend Bi Hong of the Violet Fate Sect. They say that years ago, someone from the Cloud Resemblance Sect was disrespectful to him, so he slaughtered the entire Sect. He’s cruel and ruthless.”

The buzz of conversation slowly died out. Meng Hao looked off into the distance, his expression calm, but his heart pounding. Lowering his head, he entered the city.

The largest city of Cultivators he’d ever been in before was Milky Way City in the State of Zhao. Entering this great city in the State of Eastern Emergence, he felt as if his world-view had suddenly expanded. Items used in Cultivation were available everywhere, and tall buildings rose up as far as the eye could see. Qi Condensation and Foundation Establishment Cultivators bustled about, and Meng Hao even caught sight of two Core Formation Cultivators like the Reverend Bi Hong from moments ago.

Meng Hao was the only person wearing a wide bamboo hat, which actually caused many people to turn and look at him. He hesitated a moment before ducking into a random shop. When he came out, the hat was gone. His expression was calm as he walked past several more shops, and then began to walk through some snaking alleys. Suddenly, his body shot backward thirty meters, and his hand shot out like lightning. It came to rest on the neck of a boy of about fifteen or sixteen years of age. Meng Hao lifted him up and pressed him against the wall.

The boy’s Cultivation base was not very high, it was at about the sixth level of Qi Condensation. His body was bony, but his eyes seemed to be filled with wit and cunning. His face twisted as Meng Hao lifted him up. The boy knew that by exerting just a bit of spiritual power, Meng Hao could turn him into ash.

“Why are you following me? I’ll give you one sentence to explain yourself.” Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he held the trembling youth. The young man looked at his black robe and loose, long hair, and it seemed as if death itself were hovering in front of him.

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# Chapter 106: The Day the Resurrection Lily Blooms in Seven Colors

“Senior, I can help you find the things you need in the city,” blurted the young man hurriedly. He was nervous, and fear shone in his eyes. He believed what Meng Hao had just said. He knew he would only have one chance to explain himself clearly, otherwise, he would be exterminated. It wouldn’t matter that they were within the city limits.

Meng Hao gave the young man a look. He didn’t say anything, but the young man was clever, and picked up on Meng Hao’s intention. He continued speaking.

“I’m Qiu Lin of the junior generation,” he said, the words pouring out, his heart pounding. “I was born here in Eastern Greatness City, so I know the place well. I noticed you when you entered the city; I can tell that it’s your first time here. You need someone who knows their way around to help you find what you’re looking for. I’d like to offer my services.

“Senior, for only fifty Spirit Stones, you can save yourself a lot of time. I can help you find what you need much faster.” He looked nervously at Meng Hao. He wasn’t lying; everything he’d said was the truth.

He had done this type of thing before, but this was the first time he had encountered someone like Meng Hao, who exuded such a deadly air.

Meng Hao looked over him coldly and then slowly loosened his grip. He frowned; the more the poison flared up, the stronger his killing intent seemed to grow. It seemed to be slowly affecting his personality.

Qiu Lin took in a deep breath and then said, “What is it you seek to buy, sir?”

“Poison pills,” replied Meng Hao coolly.

“Poison pills?” Qiu Lin stared in surprise. He thought for a long moment, and then his eyes glittered and he went on to provide a vivid description of this aspect of the city.

“Senior, there are not many shops in the city that specifically sell poison pills. But, poison pills are still medicinal pills, and there are lots of shops in the city that sell medicinal pills. There are two shops that could be considered the best. One of them, called the Ten Thousand Pills Pavilion, has the most variety of pills. It’s very famous, and when they have auctions, even Foundation Establishment Cultivators will attend.

“There’s another shop that’s a bit smaller, but they conduct trade with the Western Desert, so they have a lot of imported items. They say the apothecary there used to work with Grandmaster Pill Demon of the Violet Fate Sect. He was some kind of boy genius when it came to medicines.

“Which place would you like to go to, sir?”

Meng Hao thought for a moment, then said, “The Ten Thousand Pills Pavilion.” Qiu Lin nodded and led the way off. Having his help really did save Meng Hao quite a bit of time. They walked quickly through the city, and within about an hour, arrived at a seven-story pavilion. A huge stone stele had been erected next to it, upon which were written the characters ‘Ten Thousand Pills Pavilion.’

“I can’t really go inside,” said Qiu Lin. “I’ll wait out here for you, sir.” Looking around, Meng Hao noticed that there were quite a few disciples of the fifth or sixth level of Qi Condensation milling about.

With a slight nod of his head, he entered the seven-story building. As for Meng Hao, he had cast a bit of Spiritual Sense onto him, to ensure that he didn’t try anything funny.

Now that he was of the Foundation Establishment stage, he was becoming much more familiar with the usages of Spiritual Sense.

In the Ten Thousand Pills Pavilion, Qi Condensation Cultivators were restricted to the first floor. The second and third floors were for Foundation Establishment; Core Formation was the requirement to enter the fourth floor. Meng Hao walked around a bit, frowning as he glanced over the various medicinal pills.

Enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, and he left. Qiu Lin immediately stepped forward.

“Let’s go to the second place you mentioned,” said Meng Hao, continuing to frown. Qiu Lin was clever, so he didn’t ask any questions. He immediately led Meng Hao away. It was nearing evening when they finally arrived in a relatively remote part of the city, to a shop that seemed to have been there since ancient times.

“This place is small, and it has three rules,” Qiu Lin told Meng Hao. “The first rule is that you can’t enter unless you put up a deposit of fifty thousand Spirit Stones. The deposit is non-refundable, whether or not you buy anything.

“The second rule is that only one person at a time may enter. Everyone else must wait outside. Furthermore, only twenty people are allowed in each day. Once twenty people have entered, others must wait until the following day.

“The third rule is that once inside, random questions are not allowed. Every question asked must be accompanied with a payment of Spirit Stones.”

Meng Hao stared in surprise for a moment, before understanding showed in his eyes. He walked forward. He hated to lose Spirit Stones, but if it led to being able to dispel the poison, then it would be worth it.

The door of the shop was closed. On it hung a plaque with the number 18 written on it.

Meng Hao settled his Qi and calmed his mind, then stood there quietly. Qiu Lin stood next to him. Finally, when the sun was about to drop over the horizon, the door creaked open and a middle-aged man walked out. A frown was on his face, and he didn't even look at Meng Hao and Qiu Lin. He walked out, turned, and then clasped hands and bowed to the old man who had shown him out.

When he saw the middle-aged man, Meng Hao's eyes narrowed and he lowered his head. He had seen this man before. It was none other than Reverend Bi Hong, whom he had seen flying through the sky earlier in the day.

The old man who stood in the shop door was of the late Foundation Establishment stage. For a Core Formation eccentric to salute him in such a manner was very unusual.

Reverend Bi Hong turned and then transformed into a colorful beam of light that shot off into the air. A screaming whistle echoed out, after which the old man in the shop looked at Meng Hao.

Without hesitation, Meng Hao produced a bag of holding, inside of which were fifty thousand spirit stones. He respectfully handed it over.

The old man accepted it with a slight nod, then turned and entered the shop. Meng Hao followed him, glancing back as the door closed behind him. The number on the plaque changed from 18 to 19.

The shop wasn't very large. There were no shelves. Instead, there were seven pill furnaces of various sizes, two long tables, and an oil lamp. The light was relatively dim, although to Cultivators, this didn't matter; they could see everything clearly.

"How can I help you?" said the old man coolly, sitting cross-legged behind one of the long tables.

Meng Hao said nothing, instead slapping his bag of holding to produce a jade vial. He pushed it across the table toward the old man.

The old man picked it up and opened it, then gazed at it closely. He lowered his head and sniffed it, then tipped it over. Blood flowed out onto the surface of the table.

The jade vial contained a sizeable amount of blood, which Meng Hao had extracted from his body.

“Interesting,” said the old man, his voice low. He stared at the blood on the table. He lifted his hand, and a long, silver needle appeared. He dragged it through the blood, and immediately, the needle began to glow. Then, in the blink of an eye, it began to melt with rot. In an instant, it had turned into bits of ash, which floated out in the air.

The old man’s eyes glistened. He smacked the table with his left hand, causing the blood to fly up into the air, where it congealed into a globule. He then smacked his bag of holding, and a withered seed appeared. He flicked his finger, and the seed merged into the globule of blood.

The blood instantly began to contract, and soon was gone. The seed was no longer withered, but rather, plump and nearly bursting. As it floated in the air, it slowly began to sprout.

Meng Hao watched with rapt attention as all of this happened, growing more and more nervous. He had spent a lot of Spirit Stones, all to attempt to dispel the poison.

The seed sprouted, forming into a long branch, upon which a single leaf grew. The leaf eventually grew into a flower. As soon as the flower appeared, the old man’s face went pale. Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed.

The petals of the flower were three different colors: yellow, blue and red, interlocking with each other. The flower itself had the appeared of a demonic face that was laughing and crying at the same time. The demonic-face-flower floated there in the air, seemingly alive. It was extremely bizarre.

“A three-colored Resurrection Lily…” said the old man in a hoarse voice 1. He stared at the flower, his eyes shining.

“When this poison flares up three times, it forms a complete cycle. After three cycles, the flower will bloom. After it blooms, a demonic face that seems to be both laughing and crying will appear in your right eye. It will come and go depending on your usage of your Cultivation base. If you circulate your Cultivation base for a long time, it will grow more clear. At this stage, the poison will not injure you, and in fact will protect you from all manner of other poisons. However, your desire to kill will grow stronger.

“After three more cycles, the flower will bloom again, and when the poison flares up, another demonic face will appear in your left eye. At this point, your desire to kill will be even stronger. You will become incredibly bloodthirsty. At this point, not only will you be immune to a vast array of poisons, you will begin to emanate a poisoned miasma. Your flesh will become incredibly tough, and you will be more resilient than the average Cultivator.

“However, you will find that your body is also becoming more and more stiff. Your agility will be reduced, and your life force will slowly become dim. You will often be surrounded by a death aura.

“After this, the flower will bloom a third time,” said the man, his voice filled with profundity. “Your… your mind will be lost, your life will be gone. Your body will transform into a three-colored Resurrection Lily. The person who planted the seed in you will come to pick the flower. Sometime after the transformation, you will turn into a four-colored Resurrection Lily.

“Mortal, Qi Condensation, Foundation Establishment, Core Formation, Nascent Soul, Spirit Severing, Dao Seeking. Seven stages, seven colors, one for each stage. Eventually, the Resurrection Lily will bloom in seven colors, the flower descends, Immortal Ascension, one thousand years.

“In ancient times, Cultivators used this flower in order to achieve Immortal Ascension.” The old man gazed at Meng Hao.

Hearing the man’s word caused him to shiver, not from cold, but from fear. He frowned as he thought about everything the man had said regarding the poison.

“Fellow Daoist, please, don’t joke with me. I have ordinary latent talent, and no special treasures that people are pursuing. It wouldn’t be worth it for an enemy to plot against me with such a rare flower.”

The old man looked at him with a smile, but said nothing.

Meng Hao was silent for a moment, then produced another bag of holding which he placed down in front of the old man. The man nodded.

“Young friend, what you said is both correct and incorrect,” said the old man slowly. “This three-colored Resurrect Flower is not complete; it’s defective. It won’t bloom past three colors. Otherwise, no one in the world would be able to dispel it for you.

“How can I dispel it?” When the man didn’t respond, Meng Hao threw over another bag of holding.

Meanwhile outside the shop, the stars and moon had appeared in the evening sky and lanterns were being lit throughout the city. A woman appeared in the distance, dressed in a long, sleeveless white garment.

She was incredibly beautiful. Graceful and slender, her appearance underneath the moonlight was like that of a celestial being. She looked cool, calm and very refined. Her appearance was beyond ordinary in every aspect. As the lamplight filled the city, she walked up to the shop. When she saw the number 19 on the plaque on the door, a slight smile appeared on her face that caused Qiu Lin’s heart to race.

Meng Hao himself had seen this woman before, in the Reliance Sect. She had accompanied Wang Tengfei when he left the sect. This was … Wang Tengfei’s fiancé.

Chu Yuyan.

1. The name Resurrection Lily is based on a real plant, although I doubt its appearance in real life is anything like how it’s supposed to look in ISSTH

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# Chapter 107: Spring and Autumn tree

“There are three methods to deal with this poison,” said the old man, collecting the bag of holding. “The third method is to simply alleviate the pain caused by the poison. There are three types of Spirit Fruit that you can eat which will have this effect.

“A second method can be used to suppress the effects of the poison and also reduce the frequency of the flareups. For this, you need a Spring and Autumn tree. One tree can suppress the poison for one year. By the way, this type of tree is actually capable of doing more than just suppressing a vast variety of poisons. It’s very rare, but not impossible to acquire. The only down side is that using it will cause the poisoning will deepen. Also that the rebound effect is severe; if the time comes when you cannot suppress the poison any more, it will erupt violently, and you will be unable to dispel it.

“As for completely eliminating the poison, and this is the first method, it’s actually quite simple. Find someone of the senior generation who is in the Spirit Severing stage. They can easily eliminate the poison for you using the power of the Spirit Severing stage.

“Very well, seeing how readily you spend such quantities of Spirit Stones, I might as well tell you of a fourth method. If you somehow have the good fortune to acquire a Poison Dispelling Pill personally concocted by Grandmaster Pill Demon, then you could use it to completely eliminate the poison.

“However,” said the old man calmly, “Grandmaster Pill Demon holds a lofty position in the Violet Fate Sect. It would be very difficult.”

Meng Hao thought for a moment, then without another word, pulled out another bag of holding. He cared a lot about Spirit Stones, but they were simple material possessions which could not compare to the value of his own life.

The old man accepted the bag of holding, eyes glittering, and a smile appeared on his face.

“I know what question you’re going to ask.”

“Where can I buy it!” asked Meng Hao coldly, his expression grim.

“There’s no way for outsiders to know about this, yet. But considering my status, I’m special, so I happen to have heard the news. In a month, a trading caravan from the Western Desert will arrive here. When they do, the Hundred Treasures Pavilion will host an auction. One of the items they will be selling is Spring and Autumn tree.

“Hundred Treasures Pavilion?” Meng Hao’s eyes flashed as he thought back to the Hundred Treasures Pavilion in Eastern Refinement City in the State of Zhao. 1

Meng Hao stood, and with a last glance at the old man, turned and walked to the door. When he opened it, the first thing he saw was a refined, beautiful woman. Their eyes met for a brief moment.

“Middle Foundation Establishment stage!” thought Meng Hao. His face showed nothing as he walked forward. The woman in white’s expression was normal. As Meng Hao left, she walked into the shop. As she did, her brow furrowed slightly, and she looked back at Qiu Lin and Meng Hao as they walked off.

She had forgotten Meng Hao, but he hadn’t forgotten her!

Meng Hao couldn’t possibly forget the middle-aged Dao Protector who had stood there that night. Neither could he forget the woman who had seemed to be on such intimate terms with Wang Tengfei.

“That was definitely her….” Meng Hao walked faster, his expression cold, but his thoughts racing. Based on her reaction, she hadn’t recognized him. In any case, he had changed a lot recently, especially in terms of his Cultivation base. It would be difficult for anyone to connect the current Meng Hao with the old one.

“I was a nobody back then. She seemed so close with Wang Tengfei; she must be the disciple of a great Sect. I wouldn’t have made any sort of impression on her. But her Cultivation base is in the middle of the Foundation Establishment stage. I wonder… I wonder what Wang Tengfei’s Cultivation base is like nowadays?” He thought back to everything that had happened that year, and barely perceptible cold smile appeared on his face.

Qiu Lin walked beside him, looking thoughtful. He looked back, and then suddenly stopped walking.

“Now I know! That was Chu Yuyan!” he said.

“Chu Yuyan?” asked Meng Hao, his expression flickering as he looked back at Qiu Lin. “You mean the woman back there?”

“Yeah,” said Qiu Lin excitedly. “She’s a Chosen from the Violet Fate Sect, and also one of the Four Great Beauties of the Southern Domain. That was definitely her!”

“Oh?” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered.

“According to the rumors,” gushed Qiu Lin, “when she was born, a celestial lotus bloomed. Her latent talent is incredible, and her beauty is extraordinary. She was taken in by Grandmaster Pill Demon as a personal apprentice! Her beloved, Wang Tengfei, is a Chosen from the great Wang Clan. The year they got engaged, the entire Southern Domain was talking about it.” He might be well-informed about the affairs within the Southern Domain, but as he spoke, he didn’t notice the look which appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes.

They continued on, and Qiu Lin proceeded to talk about various matters related to Chu Yuyan. At Meng Hao’s request, he led him to an inn in a far corner of the city. Meng Hao asked him a few questions regarding the auction and then paid the Spirit Stones he owed. By the time Qiu Lin left, it was late at night.

Meng Hao sat cross-legged in his room in the inn, his eyes twinkling. His mind was filled with the various things Qiu Lin had told him about Chu Yuyan. Enough time passed for two incense sticks to burn. He frowned.

“I wonder if there is some way to use Chu Yuyan to get Grandmaster Pill Demon to make me a Poison-Dispelling Pill….” When he thought about Grandmaster Pill Demon, he couldn’t help but think about Ding Xin’s Foundation Establishment Pill.

“Ding Xin was also an apprentice of Grandmaster Pill Master…” Meng Hao laughed bitterly. He had killed the man’s apprentice, and also offended the Violet Fate Sect. Dispelling the poison in that way would be very difficult.

After a while, he began to meditate. Meng Hao had found that after reaching Foundation Establishment, he needed larger amounts of spiritual energy, much more so than he’d needed in the Qi Condensation stage. In order to reach the middle of the Foundation Establishment stage, he would need to form four Dao Pillars.

“Right now I only have one Dao Pillar. Because of the crack on the Dao Pillar, I have a Flawless Foundation. Plus, I established my Foundation after reaching the thirteenth level of Qi Condensation. Furthermore, my Cultivation is based on the Sublime Spirit Scripture, making my Dao Pillar gold colored. My enlightenment is deeper, and I have much more Spiritual Sense. I don’t think that many people in the early stage of Foundation Establishment would be my match.

“I’ve never fought someone of the middle stage of Foundation Establishment, so I’m not sure, but I think I could hold my own.” His eyes shone as he thought of his match with the burly man surnamed Shan. At that time, he had come to have a much better understanding of the power of his Flawless Foundation. When the time came to form his second Dao Pillar, he would be prepared.

“I need some medicinal pills suitable for the early Foundation Establishment stage,” he said, taking a deep breath. He closed his eyes and spit out the Lightning Flag. A field of lightning mist sprang up, within which arcs of electricity sparkled. If anyone tried to make a move against him, they would immediately shoot out to protect him.

Within the mist, Meng Hao once again attempted to use the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex, and once again failed. However, with each of his failed attempts, he seemed to grow closer to enlightenment.

The night passed uneventfully. As dawn broke the next morning, Meng Hao opened his eyes. He left the inn to explore this city of Cultivators in the State of Eastern Emergence. He wanted to find some medicinal pills suitable for Foundation Establishment, and hopefully learn something about the Spring and Autumn tree.

Half a month passed, during which time he explored almost all of the shops in the city. This place was filled with an incredible variety of medicinal pills and magical items. However, the prices were very high. After considering his options for a long time, Meng Hao purchased a common medicinal pill which was useful during the Foundation Establishment stage.

This pill was called Massed Establishment Pill, and was suitable for the early Foundation Establishment stage.

“There are quite a bit of pills that are suitable for the Foundation Establishment stage, but it seems that their efficacy is just ordinary. The really high-quality medicinal pills are exclusively available from various Sects. It’s hard for outsiders to get their hands on them. The only chance to even see them would be during an auction.”

Another half month passed. Meng Hao had grown much more familiar with the city. At the moment, he sat in the restaurant of his inn, next to a window, looking down at the throngs of people below. In his hand was a cup of alcohol, which he sipped as he thought.

“I’ve consumed far too many medicinal pills over the years. I’ve pushed my Cultivation base with a quantity of pills far exceeding the average person.”

He frowned. It's not that the city didn't have pills suitable for the Foundation Establishment stage, or that the prices were too high. It was a problem of the five medallions.

In the city there were five types of medallions available that determined who could have the chance to buy certain products. Without one of the medallions, even if you had the money to buy certain items, you couldn't. That was the rule in the city, and also the way that the Violet Fate Sect could control the distribution of medicinal pills within the nation.

"Five types of medallions. The only way to acquire one is to do some sort of meritorious service. So annoying!" Meng Hao lifted up the cup of alcohol and took another drink. His frown deepened.

"Thankfully I don't need a medallion to participate in the auction. As long as I have enough Spirit Stones to pay the entrance fee, I can get in." Meng Hao's gaze swept the street below. As he muttered to himself, time passed. Soon, the inn's restaurant began to fill with Cultivators, who chatted and exchanged information.

Qiu Lin had selected a relatively well-known inn for Meng Hao. Here, they only served drinks. In fact, they only served one kind of drink, which was called Savor the Spirit.

The flavor of this alcohol was quite unique; it didn't burn going down. It was very strong, but was infused with spiritual energy. It wasn't a lot of spiritual energy, but it was enough to make the alcohol quite expensive.

"I heard that the trade caravan from the Western Desert arrived today. They brought way more people with them than they did in past years. I bet there's going to be a lot of treasures up for grabs at the Hundred Treasures Pavilion auction."

"There aren't as many resources in the Western Desert as there are in the Southern Domain, but they have a lot of very unique material that we really need here. When they show up every few years, they usually bring representatives from around a hundred different merchant groups and a variety of Sects from different nations. The techniques of their Cultivators are very strange. I hope we have a chance to learn something from them.”

“I don’t think so. They’ve obviously brought more people than usual. There has to be a reason for that. I’d say there’s an eighty to ninety percent chance it has something to do with the corpse of that Immortal.” The sound of voices filled the restaurant, and most of them were discussing the auction which was to take place in half a month, and how it related to the arrival of the Western Desert trade caravan.

Meng Hao was getting ready to make his departure. The trade caravan didn’t interest him. However, when he heard mention of the corpse of an Immortal, his eyes flashed, and he sat back down and poured himself another cup of alcohol. He took a drink and continued to listen.

“The Immortal’s corpse… heh heh, it’s been a bloodbath over there recently. Three years ago, the five great Sects and the three great Clans tried to force their way into the area, but were met with failure after failure. They had no choice but to back off.” 2

“The Immortal’s corpse must have fallen out from the heavens that year because it wanted to enter the Rebirth Cave, one of the Southern Domain’s three Danger Zones. And yet for some reason, it landed about three thousand meters away from it. Actually, it didn’t just provoke a reaction from the five great Sects and three great Clans. The strange things that exist within the Rebirth Cave also have been emerging occasionally.”

“Everyone wants a piece of the Immortal’s body. Even just a bit of it would increase anyone’s hope of achieving Immortal Ascension!” As Meng Hao listened to the buzz of conversation in the restaurant, a strange look appeared in his eyes. He thought back to the time in the State of Zhao when the land had continued to shake over and over again. He had gotten the feeling that something from the Heavens had fallen down to smash into the earth.

“You know what I heard? When the Immortal’s corpse fell down, some people saw it with their own eyes. They said its pupils were gray, and that inside, seven stars glittered!” When Meng Hao heard this, he was just lifting his cup up to take another drink. Suddenly, a tremor ran through his body, and his hand began to tremble, spilling alcohol out all over. 3

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# Chapter 108: The Secret Struggle Begins

The restaurant was filled with all sorts of people, so no one noticed Meng Hao’s strange behavior. He slowly put down his cup of alcohol. His expression was as calm as ever, but his heart had suddenly begun pounding, and a roaring sound filled his head.

He silently turned his head to look at the person who had mentioned the seven stars in the eyes of the corpse of the Immortal. Then he lowered his head and took another drink.

“You know what, it’s weird. That Immortal is dead, but it’s body still exudes a powerful pressure which caused all kinds of strange phenomena. The great Sects and Clans could only approach to a distance of three hundred meters.”

“I heard that recently the great Clans and Sects made some special preparations and were able to approach closer than three hundred meters.” The discussions continued until midday, whereupon people began to disperse. The person who had mentioned the seven stars stood up. Chatting and laughing with his companion, he made to leave.

It was at this moment that Meng Hao lightly tapped the table. The tap emitted a roaring boom, which sent a tremor through the bodies of the nearby Cultivators. Their expressions changed as they all turned to look at Meng Hao.

His Cultivation base suddenly emitted the massive pressure of Foundation Establishment, enveloping the restaurant. Then it dissipated. However, in that brief moment, the bodies of the eighth and ninth level Qi Condensation

Cultivators trembled. Their faces grew pale, and their hearts flip-flopped as they tried to remember whether or not they had said something to offend this Foundation Establishment expert.

“Elder generation….” One by one, they saluted, their hearts were filled with veneration. They knew that fighting was prohibited within the city limits, so this person wouldn’t attack someone lightly. But to them, the mighty pressure exuded by a Foundation Establishment Cultivator was incredibly powerful, and caused dread to well up inside of them.

“You,” said Meng Hao, pointing at one of the people. “Come here.” It was a young man who looked to be about twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old. He was at the eighth level of Qi Condensation. When Meng Hao pointed at him, his body began to shake and the blood drained from his face.

“Elder generation….” Fear filled his eyes, and confusion his heart. He had never seen Meng Hao before and had no idea how he had attracted his attention. The other Cultivators surrounding him quickly slipped away from the restaurant, letting out sighs of relief in their hearts.

Face expressionless, Meng Hao took another drink. The young man hesitated, not daring to refuse to approach. Reverently and cautiously, he took a few steps forward.

Meng Hao lifted his head and looked at him. “You just said that the corpse of that Immortal had gray eyes, within which were seven stars. Is what you said true?”

“Senior, allow me to explain,” said the young man quickly, not daring to leave anything out. “I didn’t see the matter with my own eyes, I only heard about it. However, I have a good friend who really did observe the whole thing personally.”

“And where exactly is this good friend of yours?” said Meng Hao, his voice low.

“I haven’t seen him for half a year,” he replied quickly, worried Meng Hao would think he was making things up if he took too long to respond. “He’s a Water Bamboo Sect disciple named Xu Yan.”

Meng Hao frowned and nodded, waving his hand dismissively. The young man bowed respectfully, and then left as fast as possible, heaving a sigh of relief. He decided that he would never again return to this place again.

Meng Hao sat there thinking. There weren’t many people left in the restaurant, and all of them were of the Qi Condensation stage. Having seen what just occurred, they all paid their bill and left, one by one. Soon the restaurant was empty.

“Gray pupils with seven stars. Could the corpse of that Immortal and the animated corpse I saw in the whirlpool above the Tower of Tang in the State of Zhao… be one and the same?!” Meng Hao sat there, contemplating the corpse he’d seen and the sense of calamity he’d felt. The more he thought about, the more it seemed that some complicated matters were unfolding behind the scenes.

“If I want to confirm it, I’ll have to see the corpse with my own eyes….” After a while, he returned to his room. The matter of the Immortal’s corpse was now a heavy weight on his heart. He had the sinking sensation that the reason the corpse had fallen to the earth… was he himself.

Meng Hao spent the next half-month trying to gather more information about the corpse of the Immortal. As he did, he slowly came to have a much better understanding of the all the momentous events which had occurred in the past two or three years because of it.

“The year the corpse fell, it immediately aroused the attention of the five great Sects and three great clans of the Southern Domain. One after another, they attempted to reach the corpse, but could never get closer than three thousand meters. Plus, they encountered problems with the strangeness from within the Rebirth Cave.

“They made further attempts, even using various Sect treasures, and were eventually able to get as close as three hundred meters…. The most momentous thing that happened was half a year ago. The Solitary Sword

Sect used their Dao Reserve to break past the three hundred meter mark. They were able to get two drops of blood from the corpse!

“One of the drops was purchased by the Violet Fate Sect for an exorbitant price. The other was taken back to the Solitary Sword Sect to be used to gain enlightenment regarding the meaning of Immortality.” Meng Hao sat cross-legged in his room, recording all of the information onto a jade slip. He had come across all this information at the cost of some Spirit Stones.

“There were even some Cultivators from the Great Tang in the Eastern Lands who came to investigate…. People from the Western Desert have also arrived. The corpse came to be called an Immortal’s corpse, and has sent shockwaves throughout the entire Cultivation world.” Meng Hao was quiet for a moment. He put the jade slip away and then left the inn, his eyes glittering.

In the past month, and everyone in this city of Cultivators was talking about the upcoming auction. Meng Hao had already gone to the Hundred Treasures Pavilion to pay his deposit and get his auction medallion.

At the moment, he strode down the street. After passing through a few alleys, his robe became black. He put on his wide bamboo hat and covered his face with a mask. Lately, more and more people dressed in a similar fashion. With the auction just around the corner, there were many people who didn’t want their personal affairs to be made known, and thus went about in disguise.

Soon, Meng Hao reached the area where the auction was to be held. It was a large, circular public square. Numerous restrictive spells could be seen, causing glowing magical symbols to fill the air.

Numerous Cultivators patrolled about on guard duty, ten of whom were at Foundation Establishment stage. Four Cultivators floated cross-legged in the air above the auction stage, their bodies glowing. The pressure they exuded around the area was that of the Core Formation stage.

This was just the guard force that was visible. To organize an auction of this scale would require the support of Nascent Soul Cultivators. A Nascent

Soul Cultivator could strike fear into the heart of an entire city. But even in the five great Sects and three great Clans of the Southern Domain, Nascent Soul Cultivators were rare.

Any Nascent Soul Cultivator would be referred to as Patriarch, and would usually spend time in secluded meditation. Usually, Core Formation Cultivators would be the ones to leave the Sect to handle matters.

Most of the people attending the auction were from the State of Eastern Emergence. Also present were Cultivators from surrounding nations, who had traveled here for the sole purpose of participating in the auction. Everyone who entered the auction square had an auction plaque. By the time Meng Hao arrived, there were already several hundred people present. More continued to stream in.

Meng Hao had paid for a seat at the very far edge. He sat down cross-legged in his position, looking coldly at the stage and the square. Above the main square were three levels of private booths, arranged, not for Cultivators with high Cultivation bases, but for Cultivators with high positions.

Looking around at the Cultivators around him, he saw a group who were clearly much taller than everyone else. They wore less clothing, and in fact, many parts of their bodies were encircled with iron hoops. Their skin was dark, and most of them had blue eyes.

Each and every one of them were big and tall, their hair wild. From their strange clothing and iron hoops, it was obvious that they weren’t from the Southern Domain. These were Cultivators from the Western Desert.

Time passed, two hours. Soon, when the auction square was filled with nearly a thousand people, the sound of a bell rang out. The bustle and noise died down, and everything grew quiet.

At the same time, a blinding, multi-colored glow appeared in the middle of the auction stage. It expanded out to cover the entire auction square.

As the glow expanded out, a man appeared on the stage, seemingly from nowhere. He was old, and wore a long, expansive robe. His hair was white, and he had an ancient look. He gazed about with gleaming eyes, causing quite a commotion amongst the surrounding Cultivators.

“It’s Sir Qiao from the Hundred Treasures Pavilion!”

“So, Sir Qiao is going to personally preside over the auction. He’s in the middle of the Core Formation stage. He’s not from the Southern Domain. He came here several years ago from the coastal islands in the Milky Way Sea.”

Discussions rippled out, after which the old man on the stage coughed lightly. Then he spoke, his voice filling the entire auction square.

“There shall be one hundred items auctioned today,” he said coolly. “They include medicinal pills, magical items, Legacies, heavenly materials and earthly treasures, materials from the Western Desert, treasures of the Southern Domain, and valuables from the Milky Way Sea. I don’t need to waste time stating the rules of the auction. Lot 1 is a thousand-year-old conch shell from the Milky Way Sea!” A woman appeared behind him, seemingly out of nowhere. She was lithe and beautiful, and had an air of extreme confidence. She carried a jade tray, upon which was a black conch shell, about the size of a hand.

The conch shell was covered with numerous lines, which ran and interlocked randomly across its surface. It glimmered as if it contained secrets of the Heavens and the Dao. As soon as it appeared, a mysterious, celestial sound filled the air in the auction square.

“This treasure is a thousand years old, and emits a celestial sound,” said Sir Qiao. The auction square went quiet. “The veins that run through the shell are magical in nature. By imbuing them with Spiritual Sense for three days, you can add half of a sixty-year-cycle to your longevity. There is no reserve price for this item.” As soon as he finished talking, the auction square erupted with conversations.

A treasure that could increase longevity could cause quite a sensation, and even fighting. Even many of the people in the private booths were shocked. It seemed this day’s auction would be quite an affair.

Even though he was far away from the auction stage, Meng Hao’s attention was focused on the composed young woman. An expression of shock covered his face as he realized he recognized her. This was the woman who had flirted with him in the Hundred Treasures Pavilion in Eastern Refinement City. Her name was Qiao Ling.

“How could she be here?” he thought. “The State of Zhao disappeared a long time ago…. Maybe she left before all the momentous events. After all, there’s a Hundred Treasures Pavilion in this city too.”

At the moment, Chu Yuyan stood in one of the private booths in the first level, looking down at the auction square. Next to her stood a middle-aged man, a respectful look on his face.

“Fellow Daoist Chu, the Spring and Autumn tree that you need is here. Unfortunately, the rules of our Pavilion cannot be broken. If you need it, you must acquire it through auction. It is lot 39 on the auction list.”

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# Chapter 109: The Legend of Doom

A thousand-year-old conch shell from the Milky Way Sea, capable of increasing the longevity of a Cultivator. Longevity is priceless. Long life is important to anyone; it is a thirst which springs from the soul itself.

This is especially true for Cultivators, even more so for those who are reaching the end of their years. To add half of a sixty-year-cycle to their life, they would pay almost any price.

The fact that this was the first item up for auction led to quite a buzz. People immediately began calling out bids, both from the ring of private booths up above, and from the throng of nearly a thousand down below. The prices being called out for the thousand-year-old conch shell grew higher and higher, until it reached a level that left Meng Hao somewhat apprehensive.

In the end, someone in the second level of private booths purchased it. Even though no one in the crowd below had been able to purchase it, their spirits were lifted by the purchase. When the second, third and fourth items appeared, the atmosphere grew even more exciting, and the prices called out even higher.

This was the first time Meng Hao had attended an auction like this, and also his first time seeing the unbridled excitement of Cultivators. His mind slowly grew clear, and he looked coldly around as the Cultivators called out price after higher price for the items they wished to purchase.

“Lot 8 is an item that many Fellow Daoists have traveled here specifically to purchase…” said Sir Qiao coolly. He flourished his right hand, and behind him, Qiao Ling appeared with yet another item on a jade tray.

It was a fragment of black bone. Its edges were jagged, and it appeared to be a piece of a skull. There were complicated magical symbols carved into it and it emanated and ancient, ghastly aura, which was sealed by a small shield produced by the jade tray.

Even still, some of the aura drifted out, filling the auction square with what seemed to be the stench of rotten flesh, accumulated over many years. Everyone present felt an ancient aura, filled with a wild, indescribable grief.

“One of the three Danger Zones in the Southern Domain is the Ancient Temple of Doom! The Doom Clan arose in ancient times, and did not meet with the approval of the Heavens. The Heavenly Dao cursed them, and thus, they died. But their spirits were not willing to pass away, so they defied the Heavens to create their temple!

“It’s hard to say how many years have passed since that time. The temple has become a Danger Zone, filled with incredible peril. Even Nascent Soul Cultivators will have a hard time making it out alive. However, inside the temple is an ancient Legacy, ancient Spirit medicines, and ancient treasures. A few years ago, one of the Solitary Sword Clan’s elders made it out alive, raving about the Long Life Pill he’d seen!

“I am pleased to represent the Hundred Treasures Pavilion in auctioning this item, which comes directly from the Ancient Temple of Doom. It has the power to ward against evil.” When he finished speaking, everything was quiet. However, it didn’t take long for people to begin bidding.

“Three-hundred thousand Spirit stones!”

“Five-hundred thousand Spirit stones. That item can ward against evil. If I go into the Ancient Temple of Doom, I’m dead for sure. But, I’m reaching the end of my longevity. With that item, maybe I can enter the Temple!”

“Six-hundred thousand Spirit Stones! I’m determined to get this item!”

As he listened to the price going up, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. He had read about the three Danger Zones of the Southern Domain. But he only knew some general information, nothing specific. Now he knew a little bit more of the Ancient Temple of Doom, thanks to Sir Qiao.

“The three Danger Zones; the Rebirth Cave, the Ancient Temple of Doom, and the Primordial Dao Lakes….” Meng Hao watched on as the bids on the item from the Ancient Temple of Doom slowly increased. After a while, he closed his eyes. He wasn’t interested at all in this particular item.

Time passed by as item after item was auctioned off. Finally, Sir Qiao’s voice rang out.

“Lot 38 is a bottle of Refined Establishment Pills, six in total. Personally concocted by Grandmaster Pill Demon, these pills are suitable for Cultivators of the Foundation Establishment stage. The reserve price is thirty thousand. The bidding shall be in increments of at least ten thousand.” Meng Hao’s eye snapped open.

Some of the previous auction items had included medicinal pills. However, the prices had been too high, or not appropriate for his level. The treasures had been similar. But this Refined Establishment Pill was the least expensive item to appear so far.

“Forty thousand Spirit Stones.” Qi Condensation Cultivators made up the largest percent of participants, and after that was the Foundation Establishment stage. The number of people who made bids previous hadn’t been very large, but for this item, many people began to call out prices.

“Fifty thousand Spirit Stones!”

“I’ll bid eighty thousand Spirit Stones. I need those Refined Establishment Pills. Please, Fellow Daoists, for the sake of the Cloud Peak Sect, allow me to take them.”

“One hundred thousand!” said Meng Hao, his eyes flashing. He also needed these medicinal pills. The instant he opened his mouth, the Cultivator who had just spoken turned around. His eyes flicked back and forth; there were too many people present, so it was impossible for him to determine who had spoken.

“One hundred ten thousand!” he said coldly.

“One hundred fifty thousand!” Meng Hao didn’t care a bit about the other Cultivator trying to figure out who he was. As soon as he spoke, the man’s gaze fell upon him.

This Cultivator from the Cloud Peak Sect was also at the early Foundation Establishment stage. He stared murderously at Meng Hao, clenching his teeth. “Two hundred thousand!” he said. No one else was willing to bid further. The pill was extraordinary, but two hundred thousand Spirit Stones was more than most of them could afford.

Meng Hao frowned. He needed this type of pill, but in actuality, only needed one. Also, he had no way to know how high the price for the Spring and Autumn tree would reach. Compared to that, the pill wasn’t very important. Therefore, he decided to give up.

“Lot 39 is a Spring and Autumn tree. This type of wood is not very common. It can suppress ten thousand types of poison, and can be refined into the primary ingredient required to make a variety of magical items. This is the first time I’ve personally auctioned off this item. As such, I would like to share some classified information with all of you Fellow Daoists.

“Spring and Autumn tree is created when normal wood is struck by Spring and Autumn Lightning. It cannot be produced by people, and only appears in accordance with the luck of the Heavens. Many of you probably know this already. This tree has no root, so if you place it into the earth, it will not grow. However, according to legend, this tree has a parent tree in the yellow springs of the underworld, the World Tree!” His words caused an uproar in the auction square. Hearing the word World Tree even caused the Cultivators in the private booths to look down in shock.

“Sir Qiao,” rang out a voice from one of the private books, “is this World Tree you mention the one from the legends, which leads to beyond the Heavens?”

“Correct,” said Sir Qiao, his expression calm. “Its shape is like that of an ox, its bark is easily peeled off, and when this happens, the ribbon-like strand looks like a yellow snake. Its leaves are like a net. Its fruit is like that of a golden rain tree and its trunk is like an elm tree. Its name is the World Tree.

“In ancient times there was a legend of an almighty power which had the potential to replace the stars within the sky. The sky was above it, and the stars outside of it. But the World Tree did not agree to be subservient to the Heavens. It exploded, and its body disseminated amongst the stars. However, its will remained within the earth. During the seasons of Spring and Autumn, Heavenly lightning will fall to destroy it; to protect itself, it creates the Spring and Autumn tree.

“Dark green leaves, a purple trunk. Black flowers and yellow fruit. There is no sound beneath its canopy, nor are shadows cast. Of course, these are just rumours that I’ve heard, I’m not sure if they are true or false. The opening bid for the Spring and Autumn tree will begin at one hundred thousand Spirit Stones.” Sir Qiao’s words made many who hadn’t previously been interested in the Spring and Autumn tree to suddenly be very interested.

Meng Hao frowned. Before, he was confident in being able to control the price of the tree, but now, with so many people interested in it, he would surely have to pay a much higher price.

He looked up at Sir Qiao standing there on the auction stage. His face was expressionless, but Meng Hao could clearly sense how shrewd and ruthless he was.

Also frowning was Chu Yuyan, up in the top level of private booths. Her delicate brow furrowed, and she sighed inwardly. She realized she had been a bit rash. The Hundred Treasures Pavilion had intentionally done this after she made her inquiries. Presumably, they also knew why she needed this particular tree.

In the auction square, multiple people began calling out bids.

“One-hundred fifty thousand!”

“Two-hundred thousand!”

“Two-hundred thirty thousand!”

As for Meng Hao, he sat there watching as the price went up; he held his hand.

“Two-hundred sixty thousand! That’s as far as I can go. It might be able to suppress poisons, but it’s a consumable item. I don’t need it because of some so-called World Tree. I need it to dispel poison.” The polite words were spoken by a soft-spoken Cultivator wearing a long black robe. He saluted the surrounding Cultivators with clasped hands.

It was at this point that Chu Yuyan spoke up. “Three-hundred thousand!” Her clear voice rang out, causing many people to look up, although they weren’t entirely sure who had spoken.

“Three-hundred twenty thousand!” said the other Cultivator, his heart thumping. He clenched his teeth and looked up at the ring of private booths. All the people up there were famous figures from throughout the State of Eastern Emergence, and were not to be offended easily. But, he couldn’t give up.

“Three-hundred fifty thousand!” said Chu Yuyan coolly. Some people down below were now able to tell where the voice was coming from, and they looked at the top level of private booths. However, most of the Cultivators still hadn’t determined where the voice was coming from.

The black-robed Cultivator’s face twitched. Finally, he let out a bitter laugh. Three-hundred twenty thousand Spirit Stones was his limit, and it included quite a bit borrowed from other people. Although, that was of secondary importance. What gave him greater reason to abandon the competition was the identity of the other party. Although he hadn’t been able to identify the exact location of the person who was bidding against him, considering it had come from the top level of private booths, he knew that it must be someone he couldn’t afford to provoke.

He sat down bitterly, not making another bid.

Everyone knew that whoever this mysterious woman was, she needed the Spring and Autumn tree. Nobody was willing to offend someone from within the ring of private booths.

Chu Yuyan let out a light sigh. She was spending three-hundred fifty thousand, which was far more than its actual value. But to her, it was worth it.

However, at this exact moment, a voice suddenly broke the silence down below.

“Three-hundred sixty thousand.”

When the voice rang out, everyone in the auction square gaped in shock, looking around to try to see who had just spoken. Because the Cultivators in his immediate vicinity were looking at him in amazement, it didn’t take long before everyone in the square was looking at him.

He sat there, his head lowered, his face covered, his eyes calm.

“Four-hundred thousand!” said Chu Yuyan, frowning. She never imagined that someone else would put forth another bid, but she had no choice other than to raise the price.

“Four-hundred ten thousand,” said Meng Hao coolly. His voice was deeper than normal, but he still spoke calmly.

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# Chapter 110: Chu Yuyan’s Killing Intent

“I can’t believe he’s going to try to outbid someone from the second level! Who is this guy? He’s wearing a big hat and you can’t see his face.”

“That guy’s got real nerve to jack up the price so high for a Spring and Autumn tree.”

“Who is the Cultivator in that top level booth…? This is interesting.” Discussions sprang up in the auction square. Only Sir Qiao, up on the stage, appeared the same as ever. He glanced at Meng Hao, then looked up toward the top level booth.

Behind him, a look of interest appeared on Qiao Ling’s face. She looked at Meng Hao closely, but because of his wide hat, and the cloth covering his face, she didn’t recognize him.

“Five-hundred thousand!” said Chu Yuyan, her brow furrowed. This was an incredible bid even for her. She stepped forward, lifting up the booth’s curtain. Suddenly, she became the center of attention of everyone down in the auction square.

They all recognized her.

“That’s…”

“Chu Yuyan! It’s Chu Yuyan from the Violet Fate Sect!”

“So, it’s her…” The entire square broke out into conversations. In the State of Eastern Emergence, Chu Yuyan was highly respected. She was a Cultivator of the Violet Fate Sect, was Grandmaster Pill Demon’s personal apprentice, and her father was the Sect leader. This, coupled with her unsurpassed beauty, instantly caused everyone to stare at her.

“Well, so much for the suspense. If Chu Yuyan hadn’t shown her face, very well. But now that she has, no one would be willing to try to outbid her for something as ordinary as a Spring and Autumn tree.”

“It seems Chu Yuyan has her heart set on that Spring and Autumn tree. She even revealed her identity! Don’t tell me those rumors from a few years back were true?”

“I think they were. Otherwise, she wouldn’t need a Spring and Autumn tree.”

The Cultivators’ conversations buzzed, and even Chu Yuyan assumed that the bidding for the Spring and Autumn tree was over. Then, Meng Hao’s cold voice rang out.

“Six-hundred thousand!” Meng Hao no longer increased the bid in ten-thousands. He immediately surpassed Chu Yuyan’s bid by one-hundred thousand. This caused quite the uproar; even Sir Qiao stared down at Meng Hao.

Chu Yuyan frowned at Meng Hao, but could only see the top of his hat.

“Six-hundred fifty-thousand!

“Seven-hundred thousand,” said Meng Hao calmly. He was determined to acquire the Spring and Autumn tree, and would not give up.

“Fellow Daoist, you must certainly know who I am,” said Chu Yuyan, her voice light as she stared at Meng Hao. “This item isn’t worth so many Spirit Stones. I need it to help suppress poison for someone I’m sure you know. Please back down; if you do, I’ll consider myself to be in your debt.”

This caused further discussions on the auction floor.

“So, the rumors are true. She’s buying it for Wang Tengfei of the Wang Clan!”

“According to the people from the Golden Frost Sect, Wang Tengfei, one of the Chosen from the Wang Clan, used to be a member of a Sect in some backwater nation. He was searching after some amazing Legacy. But he was trounced during a tussle over a spot in the Inner Sect, and a local Cultivator smashed his finger!”

“That’s most likely true. That guy Li Fugui who the Golden Frost Sect cares so much about has a beef with Wang Tengfei. He talks about it to everyone. And as for Wang Tengfei, he treats even himself poorly. He formed a new finger for himself, but it was poisonous. A lot of people know about it. Obviously, Chu Yuyan wants the Spring and Autumn tree to help Wang Tengfei suppress the poison of his finger!”

When Meng Hao heard this, a barely perceptible flicker appeared in his eyes. Now he knew why Chu Yuyan was so anxious to get the Spring and Autumn tree. And from what the other Cultivators were saying, it sounded like Fatty Li Fugui was doing quite well for himself in the Golden Frost Sect.

“Fellow Daoist Chu, I also very much need this item,” said Meng Hao coolly.

Chu Yuyan’s eyes flashed coldly. She gritted her teeth and stared at Meng Hao. “Seven-hundred fifty-thousand!” she said.

“Nine hundred thousand.” Meng Hao still had quite a bit of Spirit Stones in his bag of holding. He had made up his mind to win the Spring and Autumn tree, so immediately called out an exorbitant price.

Hearing such a high number, the surrounding Cultivators gasped and looked greedily at Meng Hao. But then they realized that anyone who dared to snatch an item out from in front of Chu Yuyan from the Violet Fate Sect, must surely have powerful backing.

“You!” Chu Yuyan gnashed her teeth so hard they seemed on the verge of shattering. She was a Chosen of the Violet Fate Sect. However, the spirit stones she carried belonged not to herself, but the Sect. It would be hard to explain why she had spent so much to help Wang Tengfei, regardless of her position within the Sect. Nine-hundred thousand was a number that left her feeling somewhat powerless. She said nothing, simply staring down at Meng Hao, her eyes shining with murder.

A long moment passed, and she didn't make a higher bid. The Spring and Autumn tree went to Meng Hao. Someone from the Hundred Treasures Pavilion approached him to accept his money and give him the item. He accepted it, then left the auction square as quickly as possible.

He didn't care what other items were being auctioned off. He had no intention of staying behind. In Cultivator auctions, anyone can leave at any time.

He hurried out, moving as fast as possible through several alleys. He tossed off his hat and cloth mask, and then changed his robe. He now looked completely different than he had in the auction square.

Moving at top speed, he headed straight out of the city gate. Three hundred meters out, he shot into the sky, turning into a beam of light that shot off into the distance. After he had been flying for the time it takes an incense stick to burn, a whistling scream could be heard behind him. It was a spotless white crane, chasing after him at a speed that exceeded his own.

Meng Hao frowned and looked back.

Standing atop the crane was a woman in white clothes. It was none other than Chu Yuyan, her face expressionless, but her eyes ice cold. She stared icily at Meng Hao's retreating form. The crane cried out, turning into a prismatic beam of light as it approached. A white glow emerged from its mouth, which transformed into a gigantic net which shot forward to envelop Meng Hao.

Chu Yuyan held a jade slip in her hand. There were black spots on the surface of the jade slip, which emanated an archaic aura. She used it to summon a phantasmic white-haired old man, who came into being above the jade slip. The phantom lifted his hand and waved his finger toward Meng Hao. A phantasmic finger shot out to follow Meng Hao, which was the special function of this particular jade.

“Hand over the Spring and Autumn tree, and I won’t cause you any trouble. Otherwise, I will use this searching jade to track you down. The ancient jade is locked onto you. Even if you flee to the ends of the earth, I’ll be able to find you.” Chu Yuyan slapped her bag of holding again, and a Violet Qi emerged, forming into a violet-colored lotus-seed pod, the size of a fist. She tossed it forward, whereupon it shook, shooting out a dozen lotus seeds. As they flew forward, the violet lotus seeds transformed into armor-clad phantom women, who shot toward Meng Hao brandishing battle spears.

As they approached, pressure from Chu Yuyan’s Foundation Establishment Cultivation base bore down on Meng Hao. In addition, the armor-clad women who sped toward Meng Hao seemed to be emitting the power of the early Foundation Establishment stage. Above, the clouds spiralled violently.

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed. In the past six or seven years, he had gained a lot of experience using battle magic. Not waiting for the massive white net to descend, he opened his mouth and spit. Amidst a burst of lightning, the Lightning Flag emerged, transforming into a mist that shot out from Meng Hao, arcs of electricity dancing back and forth within it. It shot, not toward the descending net, but instead the approaching phantoms, wrapping them up.

An explosion sounded out in all directions. The phantom women shattered into pieces. Chu Yuyan frowned, lifting her delicate hands up in an incantation gesture. Just as she was about to cast some type of magic, Meng Hao’s hand flashed. He used the mist emanated by the Lightning Flag to block his hand from Chu Yuyan’s field of view. Then he smacked his bag of holding to produce the copper mirror, which he shined toward Chu Yuyan’s crane.

Instantly, the crane’s eye went wide with disbelief. A booming sound rang out as the crane’s wing exploded into a mist of blood and flesh. Next, its rear end quivered and then exploded!

Blood and gore rained down, and a blood-curdling shriek came out of the once elegant crane’s beak. Having lost its ability to fly, it tumbled down to the ground, pain wracking its body. Chu Yuyan gaped in astonishment.

Seeing the crane’s wing and butt explode bloodily had left her momentarily terrified.

As the crane screamed and fell to the ground, the huge white net began to break apart. Meng Hao shot backward in retreat, taking in a deep breath and causing the Lightning Mist to return into his bag of holding. Then, he drew a great, black bow out. He pulled back on the bow and shot nine arrows toward an astonished Chu Yuyan. Backed by the power of his Cultivation base, the arrows screamed as they flew through the air.

Boom after boom filled the air. Meng Hao frowned, continuing to shoot backwards at top speed. A violet-colored shield now circulated around Chu Yuyan. When the arrows slammed into it, they disintegrated. However, the shield was also forced backward, and then was broken into pieces. Chu Yuyan’s clothing was ripped open because of the arrows, revealing some of her skin. She was beautiful enough to begin with; seeing her like this would cause most men to palpitate with eagerness. A sharp glow emitted from her eyes as she stared at the black bow in Meng

“That bow was bestowed by the Sect upon Junior Brother Ding Xin. Why do you have it? After Ding Xin went to the State of Zhao, his life slip shattered. The State of Zhao…” An astute gleam filled her eyes. As she spoke, her eyes widened. She’d thought Meng Hao looked familiar, but now she was able to connect the dots. She finally recognized him; this was the Meng Hao that Wang Tengfei was always muttering about. “You’re… you’re Meng Hao! Didn’t the State of Zhao disappear? You…”

“Clever girl,” said Meng Hao, then took to flight.

Now that she knew who he was, her killing intent grew thicker. She sped in pursuit, her heart filled with shock as she thought of how only a few years ago, Meng Hao had been at the fifth or sixth level of Qi Condensation. Now, he was at the Foundation Establishment stage; based on the vibrations of his Cultivation base, it was clearly not Fractured. She was eighty to ninety percent sure that it must be Cracked!

The events of a few years ago in the State of Zhao had caused substantial waves of shock to ripple through the Southern Domain. Chu Yuyan was amazed that Meng Hao would appear here. Obviously, he must have escaped from the State of Zhao before it disappeared.

Meanwhile, at a location far from the central region of the Southern Domain, an enormous Roc appeared. It emanated a powerful death aura as it flew in from the Milky Way Sea. It moved at incredible speed, whipping up fierce winds as it passed. Lightning filled the sky around it. Anyone who didn't immediately get out of its way would be whipped up into the whirlwind it created and tossed to who knew where.

As it passed, mountains split and crumbled underneath the Roc's screaming cry. From a distance, many Cultivators saw the Roc and its death aura, and their hearts quivered as they thought of the treasures that must exist on its body. Some tried to chase it, but they were too slow. In the space of time it takes for an incense stick to burn, they were left behind.

This solitary Roc was on the verge of death. And yet, just as ever, it flew through the sky, a sovereign of the sky!

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# Chapter 111: The Roc and the Flying Rain-Dragon

Chu Yuyan also had a Flawless Foundation. This was because she was the daughter of the Sect leader of the Violet Fate Sect, and also because of Grandmaster Pill Demon. Furthermore, her latent talent could be considered the third best in the entire Violet Fate Sect.

It was for this reason that her father sent a special request to the Upright Clan in the Eastern Lands for a Flawless Foundation Pill, which was very rare in the Southern Domain. It was in this fashion that Chu Yuyan acquired her Flawless Foundation.

Of course, the Violet Fate Sect had paid quite a price for this.

As she raced in pursuit of Meng Hao, her eyes flashed. According to her judgement, there was no way Meng Hao could have a Flawless Foundation. In the current generation of Chosen in the entire Southern Domain, there were only eight Cultivators with a Flawless Foundation, one in each of the five Clans and three Sects.

Even Wang Tengfei didn’t have a Flawless Foundation, only a Cracked one. The Wang Clan was large, and Wang Tengfei was one of many Chosen. Neither was he one of the most illustrious members of the clan. Most of the attention was actually focused on his older brother.

“Meng Hao….” Her eyes flickered, and her mouth twisted into a cold smile. To see such a cold expression on her beautiful face was actually somewhat arousing. “A trifling Cracked Foundation! The only things you have are a few strange magical items!” She increased her speed, and the two of them transformed into beams of shining light as they screamed through the air above the State of Eastern Emergence.

After reaching Foundation Establishment, flight is possible. But in terms of speed, Chu Yuyan, who was in the middle Foundation Establishment stage, was quite a bit faster than Meng Hao. In a relatively short time, she caught up to him.

Boom!

A massive explosion bellowed out. Chu Yuyan had flickered an incantation and sent a violet mist shooting toward Meng Hao. It had been blocked by the mist of the Lightning Flag, which subsequently fell apart.

As the explosion rang out, Meng Hao continued to flee, looking back coldly at Chu Yuyan.

“You might be fast, but you can’t catch me. I paid the highest price at the auction. The Spring and Autumn tree is mine, it’s just the will of the Heavens.”

“I will capture you today, and not for the Spring and Autumn tree,” she said calmly, “but for Wang Tengfei’s finger! Furthermore, you shall explain clearly how you obtained Ding Xin’s black bow!” She was beautiful in both complexion and figure as she flew through the air, her clothes rippling in the wind. Somehow she had managed to change her dress. The skin which had previously been exposed was now covered.

Meng Hao didn’t reply, but a sneer appeared in his eyes. From their encounter moments ago, he had determined that Chu Yuyan was in the middle of the Foundation Establishment stage, and that he couldn’t defeat her. But, she wanted to capture him, and that wouldn’t be easy. He continued on forward.

The two of them continued on for nearly two hours. She tried several times to get ahold of him, but the lightning mist protected him. Each time, a bang would ring out, and he would continue on. Chu Yuyan was starting to feel a bit helpless.

Evening was falling, and as it did, Chu Yuyan's frown deepened. She didn't pay attention at all to Meng Hao's Cultivation base, but rather the powerful lightning mist that protected him. It was extremely difficult to break through. She ground her teeth and then slapped her bag of holding. An ancient oil lamp appeared. This was one of her most valuable treasures; she had never even used it in battle before. But in order to capture Meng Hao, she couldn't afford to hold it in reserve.

The lamp was not lit when it appeared, but it already filled the air with an archaic noise. Chu Yuyan took a deep breath and then blew on the wick of the lamp. As she did, her face grew pale. But then a tongue of flame appeared.

Once the lamp was lit, the entire area within a three hundred meter diameter was filled with a bright sheet composed of countless flames.

It had no shape, and could not be touched, but could be seen. When it did, Meng Hao's eyes narrowed.

"Spotlight Threads, unite!" Her clear voice rang out, and the bright lights filling the area separated into multiple threads, which then blocked off Meng Hao's path of escape to the left, right and ahead. They slowly began to surround him.

Even as Meng Hao realized the dangerous situation he was in, the lightning mist began to shrink. It appeared that the enveloping threads of light were causing it to dissipate.

Meng Hao's eyes glittered as he stopped moving forward. Instead, he reversed his direction, the lightning mist swirling around his body as he shot toward Chu Yuyan.

When she saw him charging her, her eyes narrowed. She pushed her palms together in front of her, whereupon a huge field of Violet Qi poured out of the top of her head and swirled about her. Then, she struck out with both hands, pointing toward Meng Hao. The Violet Qi coalesced into the form of a long, violet dragon. Roaring, it charged Meng Hao.

Within the lightning mist, Meng Hao saw the violet dragon approaching. His right hand flashed an incantation gesture and then waved forward. The lightning mist roiled and then made a beeline for the approaching dragon. At the same time, his left hand slapped his bag of holding. One hundred flying swords emerged. Meng Hao took control of them with this Spiritual Sense, causing them to form a whirlwind of swords. When it, along with the lightning mist, collided with the violet dragon, a huge explosion ripped out. But the sword whirlwind continued on toward Chu Yuyan.

Her oil lamp had prevented Meng Hao from fleeing. She knew that soon, the threads of light would close in on Meng Hao, and he would be unable to escape even if he had wings.

Her face was calm as she slapped her bag of holding again. A red, white and black fan appeared in her hand, which she waved ahead of her three times.

The first time she waved it, a red glow appeared, which turned into a large red horn.

The second time she waved it, a white glow appeared, which transformed into a rhinoceros, to which the horn attached.

The third time she waved, a black glow appeared which coalesced into a black coat of armor which covered the rhino. Waving its head wildly, the rhino charged toward Meng Hao’s sword whirlwind.

Meng Hao let out a shout, and the sword whirlwind began to collapse. Suddenly, all of the swords exploded. Fragments flew about in all directions, and then fused together and shot toward the black-armored rhino.

At the same time, the lightning mist suddenly expanded out with a roar, filling the area within three hundred meters.

Meng Hao’s body flashed as he approached Chu Yuyan, his body covered with lightning mist. A Flame Python flew out from his right hand, causing her to let out a light snort. A string of bells appeared in her hand, which let out light tinkling sounds. The Flame Python began to wail mournfully.

Disdain covering her face, Chu Yuyan lifted her hand up. The bells rang as she waved her hand toward Meng Hao.

Violet Qi poured out from the fingers of her hand, speeding straight toward Meng Hao.

At this point, the shining threads of light had reached a position several meters away from Meng Hao. The multiple interlocking layers of light seemed to be completely under the control of Chu Yuyan's will.

An almost imperceptible gleam appeared in Meng Hao's eyes as the Violet Qi neared him. A variety of expressions flickered across his face, and he retreated, seeming to almost fumble as he slapped his bag of holding. A wooden sword appeared, and even as it slammed into the Violet Qi, a second wood sword shot out, followed by a small, black net. To Chu Yuyan it appeared as if she had caused Meng Hao to rush in his attack. Otherwise, why would he suddenly use so many treasures? It was really beyond the proper limits of reason.

"You're a backwater Cultivator from a backwater nation," said Chu Yuyan coolly, raising her hand. "Even if you're at Foundation Establishment, you only have a Cracked Foundation. You don't even deserve to show your face!" The power of her middle Foundation Establishment Cultivation base flared. The four Dao pillars within her body surged, and a gale force wind blew out from her right hand. Meng Hao's wooden swords twisted in the air, and then black net rocked back and forth.

But at this moment, Meng Hao's eyes gleamed brightly. The black net suddenly grew larger. Even as the threads of light contracted around him like iron bands, the net shot directly in Chu Yuyan's direction. Its speed and growth were too sudden, giving her no time to react. In the blink of an eye, she was enveloped by the net, which shrank around her and pinned her tight within its confines.

As it contracted around her, her white dress was once again shredded, revealing more of her graceful and elegant curves. It was enough to send any man panting. She was both angry and nervous. Hate filled her eyes as she glared murderously at Meng Hao, killing intent radiating out from her eyes.

“I don’t need to show my face anywhere,” he said coolly, looking back and Chu Yuyan. “Being able to catch you while I’m tied up is good enough for me.” The threads of light had securely tightened around him.

The two of them were both momentarily incapacitated. Neither of them dared to use any spiritual energy against the other. They were in a deadlock.

Chu Yuyan’s murderous intentions grew stronger, causing even Meng Hao to show a bit of killing intent.

Everything grew quiet. Chu Yuyan didn’t move, and neither did Meng Hao. They both circulated their Cultivation bases, attempting to free themselves from their constraints. Whoever got free first would be the victor.

Time slowly passed. Soon, it was dusk. Meng Hao rotated his Cultivation base rapidly, and as he did, he felt the threads of light growing looser. Chu Yuyan was doing the same thing. Under the power of her Cultivation base, the black net was beginning to show weaknesses.

As this was happening, far in the distance, the sound of wind could be heard. At first it wasn’t very strong. It caused Chu Yuyan’s hair to drift about, and Meng Hao’s eyes to grow dry. It didn’t take long for the wind to grow stronger, though. Soon it was whipping about wildly.

A black shadow appeared off in the distance. Despite being very far away, it was obviously a colossal flying bird. It was… the roc from the Milky Way Sea, flying toward the Rebirth Cave!

Like a sovereign of the sky, every flying thing in the sky must bow to this roc. As its sovereignly will of the heavens exuded out, the Demonic Core within Meng Hao’s Dao Pillar began to shake. It wished to battle with this sovereign of the sky.

Because the Flying Rain-Dragon is also a sovereign of the sky!

The wind grew even more violent. Meng Hao’s body began to be pulled backward. Chu Yuyan’s expression changed as she too began to be pulled up. Meng Hao’s lightning mist, Chu Yuyan’s oil lamp flame, and even the wooden swords, were all pulled into motion by the wind. It seemed as if they would all be blown away.

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# Chapter 112: Things Change

“That’s… that’s a roc!” cried Chu Yuyan. “In the Nanshan Continent, rocs can only emerge from the Milky Way Sea. Meng Hao, let me loose. Based on the death aura emanating from it, its obviously about to die, and is heading toward the Rebirth Cave. The wind it kicks up is going to sweep everything away!”

“You release me first,” he said, coldly. He could feel the shaking of the Demonic Core within his Dao Pillar.

“You!” said Chu Yuyan, gnashing her teeth. She was about to say something else when suddenly the wind’s ferocity increased dramatically. In the blink of an eye, a roaring sound filled the earth. Countless mountain peaks were shattered and crumbled by the wind, sending fragments of rock flying about. All of a sudden, the roc changed directions. Having felt the power of the Demonic Core within Meng Hao, a mysterious light began to shine from its eyes. It screamed through the air in the direction of Chu Yuyan and Meng Hao.

The sky grew dark as the gale-force wind blew over the land, threatening to sweep everything up. It was as if everything in this part of the world belonged to the roc, and it alone!

A twisting whirlwind accompanied the roc’s arrival. Mountains fell apart and trees were ripped up by the roots in a shocking display of power!

The wind swept up Meng Hao and Chu Yuyan. The oil lamp hovering next to Chu Yuyan shook violently, and was extinguished. The instant it did, the threads of light that bound him disappeared.

The power of the Demonic Core erupted once again within him, just as it had the day the Legacy had first appeared. Within Meng Hao's head appeared images from ancient times.

Within these images, a Flying Rain-Dragon and a roc were locked in combat!

Boom!

Meng Hao felt as if a huge wave had just crashed onto his mind. He spun up toward the whirlwind, and he felt as if he were being crushed. Blood sprayed from his mouth. Like a kite whose string was cut, his body flopped over and over in the air as he was sucked up.

In the last moments before he lost consciousness, he sent out his last bit of spiritual energy to drag the wooden swords and lightning flag back. Then he passed out.

Chu Yuyan was in an even worse situation. As she began to be sucked upward, she coughed up a mouthful of blood. Her body was still wrapped up by the black net. She tumbled upward along with her oil lamp. Her face was pale, and filled with despair. Another gust of wind from the roc buffeted her, and she coughed up even more blood, then slipped into unconsciousness.

Meng Hao and Chu Yuyan were both Foundation Establishment Cultivators. Despite that, when the screaming wind generated by the roc lifted them up, they were completely powerless to resist it. Thankfully, they were not like the mountains, which were connected firmly to the land. Their resistance to the wind left them shattered.

The two of them were like plucked willow catkins, powerless to offer any resistance. They were hurt by the buffeting wind, and knocked unconscious, but were not ripped to pieces. The wind held them tight and carried them off into the distance.

The wind continued to sweep across the State of Eastern Emergence for several days after the roc's passage, before finally dying down.

Meng Hao opened his eyes.

His entire body hurt, causing his eyes to flicker as they opened. An all encompassing pain filled him, causing him to tremble so badly he felt as if he would fall into pieces.

Calm slowly filled his eyes. The pain was alarming, but it actually didn't compare to the times when the poison within him flared up. Thanks to that, he was used to this kind of pain.

He slowly struggled into a sitting position, panting. He looked down at his body; his clothing was in shreds; bruises and abrasions covered his skin. There were countless wounds, some of which were deeper than other; there some areas where the skin had been removed entirely. If he bumped up against the nearby rocks, it sent piercing pain deep into his bones.

He gasped for breath as he examined himself. As he did, his eyes grew wide. His body felt weak. In fact, it felt almost the same as it had six or seven years ago on Mount Daqing.

"My Cultivation base…" Meng Hao immediately attempted to circulate his Cultivation base. He let out a sigh of relief when he found that it was still there. But then he frowned. He was completely incapable of accessing it, as if it were being blocked by some powerful force.

It was at this moment, as he glanced over his destroyed clothing, that he realized that none of his bags of holding were on his person. It seemed they had all been blown away by the raging wind.

His face fell. He lifted up his hand and reached deep into his robe. When he pulled it out, there was the bag of the Cosmos. This bag was different than a regular bag of holding, so Meng Hao always kept it tucked inside his robe. Therefore, the wind hadn't been able to touch it.

It's a good thing I keep most of my things inside the bag of the Cosmos," muttered Meng Hao, "including my wooden swords and the Lightning Flag. Otherwise this would have been a horrible loss." He tried to open it up, but no matter how he tried, was unable. Sighing, he looked around.

Within the darkness, black mists wafted to and fro. Strange rocks covered the ground, as well as numerous bones of birds and beasts. Who knew how long they had rotted here before turning into their currently deathly white color? Meng Hao was beginning to grow even more surprised.

Things were bad enough as it was, but then Meng Hao noticed that some of the bones were human…

He looked up toward the sky, but all he could see was endless swirling mists.

“What is this place…?” A grim, gloomy look appeared on his face as he sat there. A sense of imminent danger welled up within him.

“I wonder if the change to my Cultivation base was caused by the great wind… or by of this place.” A long time passed before he gathered enough energy to grit his teeth and struggle to his feet. Supporting himself on a nearby rock, he slowly began to walk forward. Time passed enough for an incense stick to burn, whereupon Meng Hao came to a halt. In front of him was a wall of black rock. The wall disappeared up into the mists, making it impossible to see its top.

Meng Hao looked behind him. At this point, he realized that he was most likely at the bottom of some deep abyss.

“So the wind kicked up by the roc carried me to the bottom of this precipice. Who knows what part of the State of Eastern Emergence I’m in? I need to restore my Cultivation base, then I’ll be able to get out of here.” He leaned up against the cliff wall and then sank to his feet to build up some more energy.

Time passed. Being unable to see the sky, it was difficult for him to know how much. Slowly, the strength in his body built up. He once again tried to open the bag of the Cosmos, but was unsuccessful. Finally, he had no choice but to give up. He stood, looking around until he caught sight of a tree branch about as wide as his arm. Using it to support himself, he began to walk again.

“If this is a cliff, then it will have an end,” he said, looking around. Everything around him was quiet, without the slightest bit of noise. The only thing he could hear was his own heartbeat. He took in a deep breath, deciding to explore the entire area until he found a way out.

He walked slowly, caution on his face. The place had a ghastly feel, and he wasn’t sure what danger might be lurking about. But he had to search around. If there was any danger, then so be it.

About four hours passed, and Meng Hao felt himself slowly recovering. He had reached Foundation Establishment after completing the great circle of Qi Condensation, so his body was naturally much tougher than before. But his heart began to sink when after all this time, he still hadn’t found any way out. In fact, the strange rocks which littered the ground seemed to be growing more dense.

After about another hour, he suddenly stopped walking. His eyes gleamed with a strange light as he looked up ahead, and a cold smile twisting the corner of his mouth.

Up ahead of him, a person was lying on one of the strange rocks. A dilapidated and torn white gown revealed great swaths of smooth skin. Long hair lay in disarray around… Chu Yuyan.

She lay there unconscious. Next to her was a small black net.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he slowly approached her. He placed his finger beneath her nose, then felt at a patch of exposed flesh on her abdomen. The skin was soft and pleasant-feeling. He pushed down hard onto her abdomen. Then, he stepped to the side, grabbing the black net and tucking it away.

“She’s not dead. I could feel that her Cultivation base is still there, just suppressed. She has no way to access her spiritual energy.” His eyes narrowed, and he looked at Chu Yuyan for a long moment. He laughed. “I know you’re awake. There’s no need to pretend to be unconscious.”

Chu Yuyan still didn’t move. Meng Hao let out a cold snort. Using the long branch in his hand, he poked at her.

Her eyes snapped open and she glared coldly at him.

Meng Hao gave her an empty smile. He suddenly realized that it was very boring in this abyss. His gaze passed over Chu Yuyan’s body, her delicate curves, the skin revealed by her torn clothing, and the edges of her red ‘dudou’ undergarment. All of this made her extremely beautiful.

Her face suddenly flushed, and anger filled her eyes as she stared murderously at him. She struggled to cover herself up, then gasped in pain. There was a strangeness to her gasp that was clearly audible in the silence of the abyss.

Hearing it, Meng Hao laughed.

“What are you laughing at, you despicable, dirty, THING!”

Meng Hao lifted his hand up and slapped her directly across the face, his eyes cold. “Shut up.”

“You!!” Her expression was livid as a palm print appeared on her beautiful face. Meng Hao had slapped her viciously, causing her body to tremble. In her entire life, no one had ever dared to strike her. Even Wang Tengfei treated her like an honored guest.

Another slap rang out as Meng Hao smacked her again in exactly the same spot.

“I told you to shut up,” he said calmly. “Wang Tengfei might treat you like a precious gem. But to me, you’re nothing.”

She gritted her teeth and stared him dead in the eye. With her Cultivation base being suppressed, she was just like a mortal. Chu Yuyan suddenly felt a sense of danger well up inside her. Once, she had been a high and mighty Chosen, but now she had fallen far, far down. Now, she was simply a weak woman, at the mercy of Meng Hao.

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# Chapter 113: An Altar in a Lake

“We’ve rested enough,” said Meng Hao coolly. “Get up. You walk in front.”

Chu Yuyan said nothing. Grinding her teeth, she struggled to her feet. As she did, her clothes shifted, revealing more of her body. Her face just now had been pale white, but was now crimson. As of now, the hatred in her heart toward Meng Hao was even greater than that felt by Wang Tengfei.

But she had lost access to her Cultivation base, and was now just a tender woman. She couldn’t compare at all to Meng Hao. Although he had started out as a scholar, the strength and toughness of his body were far beyond that of an ordinary Cultivator.

He might not be as strong as those Cultivators who focus on body training, but in terms of recovery and strength, he was far from ordinary. Otherwise, he would not have recovered consciousness so much more quickly than Chu Yuyan.

She could only endure and comply with his demand that she take the lead, the fury in her heart growing deeper and deeper. Meng Hao naturally was aware of this. He walked behind her, looking at her graceful figure. The rips in her garment revealed large portions of the skin on her back.

The reason he had Chu Yuyan walk in front, however, was because he still felt at danger in this place. Chu Yuyan would act as a wind vane; she would be able to provide advance notice of any potential threat.

They moved forward in single file. If he wanted to, Meng Hao would change their course by pointing and giving new instructions. Chu Yuyan had no choice other than to clench her jaw and comply. Hatred for Meng Hao had seeped into her bones. Yet she could only obey him. A very long time passed by, and it seemed as if soon they would have explored everywhere they could. Everything was cliff face, with no exits.

Strange rocks littered the landscape, as did the skeletons of various birds and beasts. Was this place some sort of death trap?

Meng Hao grew more silent. Chu Yuyan's mood slowly fell, until despair showed in her eyes.

They followed the cliff face, eventually coming to the realization that they were walking in a large circle. Sometimes, they would rest up against the cliff face for a while before continuing. One day they reached an area that seemed to contain an unusually large amount of bones. Suddenly, they caught sight of a lake.

The shores of the lake were piled with countless bones, many of which were human. It was impossible to tell how many years they had been there. The aura of the place was gruesome, and also seemed to be filled with the stink of blood.

In fact this lake, was a lake of blood.

As Chu Yuyan approached the lake, the formerly calm surface began to ripple. As soon as the tiny waves began to spread out, Meng Hao stopped.

Chu Yuyan's face drained of blood, and her body began to quiver. An intense sense of danger filled her, as if something horrifying existed within the lake, and was looking at her.

“Walk back slowly,” said Meng Hao softly. He stood a bit further away from the lake. “Don't panic. One step at a time. ”

Biting her lip, Chu Yuyan slowly moved backwards several meters. The lake began to roil, and a piercing shrieking sound could be heard coming from within it. Chu Yuyan moved backward as quickly as possible

Amidst the ringing shrieks which filled the air, a dark green altar suddenly rose up from within the lake. Waves swelled across the surface of the lake of blood. Figures appeared from within the blood. It was difficult to tell which were male and which were female, because they had no skin, only bloody flesh. They carried the dark stone altar on their shoulders as it rose out of the lake.

The altar was over one hundred fifty meters in diameter, and as it rose out of the surface of the lake, it emitted a sickly reddish-green glow. On top of the altar was a throne made of stone, seemingly the same dark green stone the altar was formed from.

Sitting on the throne was a corpse. A death aura wafted around it, and its face was covered with a mask. The mask was white and featureless.

Meng Hao’s pupils constricted and he stood motionless. Chu Yuyan stood there pale-faced, equally unwilling to move. Enough time passed to take about ten breaths, and then the stone altar slowly began to sink back down. Once again, the bloody surface of the lake grew still, and everything returned to quietness.

Meng Hao let out a long breath and walked backward slowly. Chu Yuyan did the same thing. When the two of them had retreated about three hundred meters, the sense of imminent danger in their hearts slowly faded.

“What was that…” said Chu Yuyan, the first words she had spoken voluntarily in days. Her voice was weak and hoarse.

Meng Hao didn’t reply. Instead, he turned and walked off. Chu Yuyan hesitated a moment, then followed silently. They returned to the cliff face, to a place where earlier they had discovered a natural cave. Inside, Meng Hao sat down cross-legged. Chu Yuyan leaned back against the cave wall, her arms hugging her legs. She stared blankly outside.

She was a proud woman, but what had happened now, coupled with the suppression of her Cultivation base, the presence of the detestable Meng Hao, all of this, gradually filled her heart with pernicious despair. Her only hope was that the Violet Fate Sect would somehow be able to track her down here.

But this place was very strange, and apparently could suppress Cultivation bases. Most likely, it also suppressed the brand of the Violet Fate Sect in her body, which would make it impossible for them to know where she was.

Her clothes were in tatters, and couldn't even cover her sufficiently. More than half of her body was exposed, especially when she sat in this posture. Almost all of her legs were visible.

Time passed. Every time it seemed a day had come and gone, Meng Hao placed a rock into a small pile next to him. There were already eight. According to his calculations, eight days had passed.

Their Cultivation bases were locked down, preventing any spiritual energy from dispersing. Luckily, they didn't need food. But this place had no spiritual energy, and if things kept going on like this, they would begin to grow more and more hungry. Considering they were stuck in a remote abyss, they really needed the energy of heaven and earth… except there wasn't any.

During the eight days, Meng Hao would spend about half the time circulating his Cultivation base, trying to break through whatever was suppressing it. At the very least, he was hoping to be able to open his bag of holding. And yet, he experienced no success.

The rest of the time he spent taking Chu Yuyan out to search for a way out. But, having searched the area so many times, they didn't find any exit. The only thing they found out was that there seemed to be a lot of vipers lurking about.

"I think this place is an inactive volcano," said Chu Yuyan, "not just a hole in the ground." She sat there in the small cave, looking out. She wasn't reconciled to cooperating with Meng Hao, but couldn't think of any way to get out of this place.

Meng Hao sat quietly at the mouth of the cave, looking out with a frown.

Chu Yuyan looked at him sitting there cross-legged, and then suddenly blurted, "I need a change of clothes!" The look in her eyes was solemn and earnest, more so than it had been this entire time.

Despite her haggard state, this look would cause desire to blossom in the heart of any man who gazed upon her beauty.

Meng Hao closed his eyes. ”I don’t have any,” he said coolly.

“You have some in your bag of holding.” Her clothes were ragged and soiled, revealing over half of her body. Even more of her undergarments were now visible. Her flesh appeared soft and supple. Half covered, half exposed, the sight of her was incredibly enticing.

Meng Hao’s eyes snapped open, and he looked at Chu Yuyan coldly. His gaze swept over her, over her body, her curves, her beautiful features. Most men who saw something like this would immediately be consumed with a fiery heat.

Eight days before, it would have been impossible for Meng Hao to catch a glimpse of Chu Yuyan’s body, even if he wanted to. And if he had, she would never have given up until he was dead.

But now… as Meng Hao looked at her, the only thing she did was unconsciously cover her chest. She had no way to prevent him from looking at her.

“You’re right,” he said slowly. “I do have some clothes in my bag of holding. But for some reason, I’m unable to open it because of the lack of spiritual energy here.”

“There’s a way,” she said quietly. “There’s a way to open your bag of holding and take some clothes out.

He looked at her coolly, his face as calm as ever, with no change in expression whatsoever.

Chu Yuyan had originally assumed that as soon as he heard her words, he would ask her for more details. But after waiting for a very long moment, she could see that he wasn’t planning to speak. With a cold harrumph, she continued speaking.

“My Cultivation method is the Violet Fate Sect’s ‘Violet Qi from the East.’ 1 Actually, two people can practice this type of Cultivation together. Even though the spiritual energy in this area is suppressed, if I teach you the method, and we work together, we might have a chance at success. Then, your bag of holding can be opened.”

He pondered for a while, then shook his head. “I don’t believe you. Please explain further.”

“Believe if you want,” Chu Yuyan said coldly, frowning. “If you don’t believe, then forget it.” She sat down in a far corner of the cliff cave. When Meng Hao glanced back at her, she unconsciously tried to cover herself up. She glared at him, covering her legs with her arms.

“I don’t have a lot of clothes,” he said calmly, “but there’s enough to allow you to cover yourself. If you don’t want them, then fine, just forget about it.” He closed his eyes.

An hour passed, during which time Chu Yuyan ground her beautiful teeth. She really just could not tolerate being exposed in this way. Before long, she wouldn’t be able to cover herself up at all.

Clenching her jaw, she said, “I lost my bag of holding in the wind, so I have no way to test it out. But the method I just mentioned should work. Violet Qi from the East is not an ordinary technique. It was passed down from the Eastern Lands. If two people practice the technique together, its power can open the vault of the heavens.

“If you have doubts, I can teach you the first mnemonic of the Violet Qi from the East. If you can master it, then I’ll tell you the second, and then the third. You can try to open the bag. All I need is some clothes.”

Meng Hao opened his eyes and looked at her. His face was expressionless, but in his heart was a cold sneer. He had experienced many hardships in the State of Zhao, and was no longer the ignorant youth he once was. He was much more calculating; how could he not tell that she was trying to set up a trap for him?

“Speak,” he said coldly.

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1. The name of the technique ‘Violet Qi from the East’ is also a Chinese idiom which means a sign of good luck.

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# Chapter 114: Many Thanks, Fellow Daoist Chu

Chu Yuyan slowly began to recite the secret method of the Violet Fate Sect. ”Violet Qi from the East, Cultivate the Nine Violet Qis of heaven and earth, use the method that comes from the East, understand the rise of the sun and moon, transform the will of your heart, observe the brilliance, taste the moonlight….”

Seeing Meng Hao sitting there, apparently lost in thought, she spoke the words slowly. In her heart, she smiled coldly.

“He’s surely guessed that I’m not simply after a set of clothing. But I’ve got him hooked. He wants to open his bag of holding as much as I do. He definitely won’t take advantage of that brief moment just to take out some clothes for me. He’ll take out some magical item or some medicinal pills. However, whatever he dares to take out, as long as he learns the Violet Qi to the West technique, then he’ll be crippled!” A bit of hesitation flickered on her face as she slowly repeated the mnemonic.

This, of course, was not Violet Qi from the East, but rather a top secret mnemonic developed later by the Violet Fate Sect, called Violet Qi to the West. Even Wang Tengfei didn’t know about it. It was taught only to special members of the Sect, and its purpose was to be able to provide spiritual power and life force to Chosen!

Every Chosen of the Violet Fate Sect would have an opportunity to select someone else to practice Violet Qi to the West. A Sect Elder would participate in order to prevent that person from resisting, as well as to keep them stable. After successfully performing the technique, that person would become a type of clone of the Chosen, whereupon the Chosen would be able to absorb their Cultivation base and life force with Violet Qi from the East.

It was because of the combination of the two arts that the Violet Fate Sect occupied its current position in the Southern Domain.

Chu Yuyan had not yet utilized the power of Violet Fate to the West on anyone. But there was no other option now, other than this technique.

Despite its power, there were potentially dangerous side-effects. Usually Sect Elders would be standing by, ready to provide assistance against any such mishaps.

“If you have no problems with the first mnemonic, then I’ll give you a bit of blood,” said Chu Yuyan calmly. “It’s impossible to see the sun, and without either the sun or moon in sight, it’s difficult to absorb Violet Qi. However, there is some in my blood, which will help you to use the technique.”

Meng Hao looked up at Chu Yuyan, his eyes flickering in contemplation. Inside, he was laughing coldly; before she had even uttered the mnemonic, he had guessed that she had ill intentions. The only thing he wasn’t sure of was the exact process she planned to use.

Having heard the first mnemonic, he had a faint clue. The main reason she was teaching him this Cultivation method was because even if it enabled him to open his bag of holding, it would also eventually harm him in some way.

He suddenly stood up, walked over and squatted down in front of her. He grabbed her hair and pulled her head close to him. She tried to struggle, but she just wasn’t as strong as he was. Even more of her body was exposed as she tried to resist.

“Meng Hao, what are you doing?!” she cried out, her expression changing. Suddenly, anxiety filled her heart, and her body began to shake. Her lips were only about one inch from his. She could smell his breath. His hand held the top of her head like an iron pincer; she was incapable of moving backward.

“You don’t need to give me any of your blood. I’ll take it myself.” He pulled her head to the side and then ruthlessly bit into her shoulder, chomping deep down into the flesh.

Her body trembled, and fierce hatred erupted in her eyes.

He was so close that she could feel his warmth. From a distance away, they almost looked like a couple embracing.

A moment later, Meng Hao loosened his grip and rose again. Not giving her another glance, he returned to his spot and sat down in meditation. Her blood dripped down the side of his face. His eyes closed, he began to Cultivate according to the mnemonic Chu Yuyan had just taught him.

It took a long moment for Chu Yuyan to settle her agitated breathing and recover her composure. She stared hatefully at Meng Hao.

“Just wait until you finish practicing this technique,” she thought. “I’ll suck up your Cultivation base and then chop you to pieces. I’ll use your own energy to activate the branding in my body. Then the Violet Fate Sect will be able to find me.” She ground her teeth until it seemed like they might shatter, vowing to pay back ten times as much insult to Meng Hao as she had endured today. This was especially true of the pain in her shoulder, and the bite marks. It was something she simply couldn’t accept.

Time passed by, several hours. Meng Hao’s eyes snapped open. Within his pupils, a bit of violet had appeared. When she saw this, Chu Yuyan felt a little bit better.

“The second mnemonic,” said Meng Hao casually.

Without hesitation, Chu Yuyan began to tell him the second mnemonic.”Violet Qi returns to the lake, dyeing the banks of the Dao Pillar; Nine rotations in three layers, a branding of a Violet Dragon…”

More time passed, even longer than last time. Chu Yuyan was starting to feel a bit hesitant.

“Back in the Sect, the person selected to practice Violet Qi to the West by Elder Brother Li only needed two hours to finish under the watch of an Elder. Why is Meng Hao going so slow?”

Her hesitation continued on for another four hours. Finally, Meng Hao opened his eyes. The violet glow was even stronger. When she saw this, Chu Yuyan let out a sigh of relief.

“He must just have ordinary latent talent, so it takes longer for him to Cultivate.” Next, she told him the third mnemonic.

Meng Hao thought for a while in silence. Then he closed his eyes and began to meditate. This time took even longer. Two complete days passed before he finished. However, when his eyes opened, his pupils appeared to be completely violet, and his eyes glowed the same color.

In fact, his whole body seemed to be emitting a faint violet glow.

Chu Yuyan was originally a bit worried. But seeing the thick violet color within his eyes, her Cultivation base seemed to twitch vigorously. Her mind was now made up.

“Now there’s only one more step,” she thought, “and when that’s finished, he’s doomed!” Her eyes flickered slightly, and she said, ”Now, we practice Cultivation together. When we combine our power, the bag of holding will open. You need to pay very close attention when that happens: you cannot slack off. The moment will be fleeting, and if you don’t get into the bag of holding then, there won’t be a second chance.” As she spoke, her loathing for him seemed to come out and settle onto his body. She lifted up her hands.

“Just hold on for a bit longer,” she thought, laughing coldly to herself. “And then everything will be over.”

Meng Hao’s face was expressionless. He looked coldly at Chu Yuyan, his violet pupils flickering. He took out the bag of the Cosmos and placed it next to him. He lifted his hands and placed his palms against hers. Suddenly, both of their Cultivation bases, which moments ago had been suppressed, began to boil.

The reaction grew stronger, and white Qi began to rise up from their bodies. Beads of sweat ran down their faces. As this happened, Meng Hao could clearly sense the violet-colored spiritual power in his body being called by something. It began to race toward his hands, and Chu Yuyan. The violet glow in his eyes began to fade.

At this moment, Meng Hao suddenly felt the suppressive force on his Cultivation base loosen a bit. A tiny sliver of spiritual power suddenly emerged. Without hesitation, Meng Hao sent it straight toward the bag of the Cosmos. It glowed, and something emerged.

“Violet Qi from the East and to the West, bind!” cried Chu Yuyan, ignoring whatever had emerged from the bag of the Cosmos. Her eyes shined brightly.

It was at this moment, when the power of Meng Hao’s Cultivation base was rushing toward Chu Yuyan, that suddenly, she felt her own energy shake… In the space of two breaths, it was like Meng Hao’s Cultivation base had disappeared completely. She wasn’t able to absorb anything more of it.

“He has a Foundation Establishment Cultivation base, it’s impossible that I could have only absorbed this little… This…” Her expression changed as she looked up at Meng Hao. He looked back at her with a sneering smile. As of this moment, there wasn’t the slightest trace of violet in his eyes.

When she saw this, Chu Yuyan’s heart flip-flopped, and her face twisted with an expression of disbelief. She scrambled backward.

“You…”

“Many thanks, Fellow Daoist Chu,” he said coolly. He lifted his hand up, and the object that had emerged from the bag of the Cosmos flew into it.

It was a crystal stone. Not an ordinary crystal, but one of the three extra large Spirit Stones that remained in his bag!

Her face went pale as she pressed herself up against the rocky wall. Her heart pounded, unable to figure out why Violet Qi to the West had failed. She had definitely sensed him practicing Cultivation using the technique. And the violet color in his eyes could not have been faked. If it had, her own Cultivation base could not have begun to boil, nor could she have absorbed the tiny bit of his that she had.

Her body began to tremble. Her plan just now had been made up on the spot, and had its flaws. It was a gamble and she was sure she had hooked him. Once hooked, there was no way he should have been able to escape.

Yet the facts remained. Chu Yuyan’s heart trembled. As she looked at Meng Hao, she was suddenly struck with how unpredictable he was. The feeling only grew stronger and stronger.

If that was all to the matter, then it wouldn’t be a very big deal. But then she noticed the large spirit stone Meng Hao held in his hand. Her pupils constricted. She looked closer, and then began to pant, a look of disbelief covering her face.

“That’s… an ultra-high-grade Spirit Stone!”

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# Chapter 115: Do You Want Out?

Meng Hao looked at Chu Yuyan for a moment. Then he shoved his hand toward the rocky wall, slashing a wound into his palm. Blood oozed out.

Chu Yuyan gasped. Next, Meng Hao shoved the large Spirit Stone into the wound. As she saw this, Chu Yuyan could almost feel how much it hurt. Meng Hao, however, didn’t frown, even in the slightest.

Compared to the pain he felt during the poison flare-ups, this was nothing.

As soon as the Spirit Stone buried into the flesh of his palm, he felt a soaring explosion of spiritual energy enter his body. His eyes flashed as if with lightning.

His suppressed Dao Pillar suddenly shook, sucking up large amounts of spiritual energy, then sent it out, circulating throughout Meng Hao’s body.

At the moment, his Second Core sea was nowhere to be seen. Actually, the reason why Chu Yuyan’s technique hadn’t affected Meng Hao was because of his Second Core sea. He had practiced the Violet Qi to the West technique, but only there in his Second Core sea, where there was no Dao Pillar.

That was why it had taken such a long time. As for Chu Yuyan, she had absorbed only the power of Meng Hao’s Second Core sea. Relatively speaking, its power was like that of a firefly.

Now that his Cultivation base was circulating, Meng Hao smacked his bag of holding, summoning the Lightning Flag. It surrounded him with a mist of flickering electricity, which caused Chu Yuyan to back further away, her face pale. She stared dumbly at the mist, her mind a blank.

Protected by the mist, Meng Hao closed his eyes and continued to circulate his Cultivation base. The suppressive force in the area still existed, but Meng Hao was now gradually able to feel the motion of his Cultivation base.

The first level of Qi Condensation, the second, the third… In the end, he was able to exert power similar to that of the seventh level of Qi Condensation.

His eyes flickering, he took in a deep breath. The mist around him rolled inward, condensing into a small flag which he then placed into his mouth. He stood, grabbing up the bag of the Cosmos and retrieving a medicinal pill which he placed into the center of his palm. The wound slowly began to close up, congealing into a scab. As for the large spirit stone, it was still stuck inside the wound. If he took it out, his Cultivation base would once again be suppressed, and he would become like a mortal. At the moment, the most power he could muster was that of the seventh level of Qi Condensation.

Ignoring Chu Yuyan, Meng Ha smacked the bag of the Cosmos again, and a wooden sword flew out. He stepped onto it, and turned into a beam of light that shot upward into the air.

Within the fissure-like cave Chu Yuyan watched in shock as he disappeared, her heart filled with complicated, bitter emotions.

Everything was quiet. This silence contained an unspeakable loneliness which spread out everywhere, submerging Chu Yuyan in its depths. She laughed silently. She was in some undetermined location, at the bottom of a volcano that no one would even think to look for. She was as trapped as a person who had been buried alive in a tomb.

Meng Hao flew along on a wooden sword, his eyes shining. Soon, he left the mists behind. His speed increased, although not too much; he was still only able to wield the power of the seventh level, plus his body was still not in top condition. When the mists disappeared, Meng Hao found himself looking up at a starry sky.

When he caught sight of the stars, a bright look appeared on his face. But then, his eyes narrowed, and he came to a stop. He didn’t emerge from the mouth of the volcano, but rather stood there looking up at it.

Had he not been careful just now, he might have overlooked the nearly transparent shield which covered the mouth of the volcano. It was some kind of seal. Meng Hao’s eyes flashed as he retrieved a flying sword from the bag of the Cosmos. With the flick of a sleeve, he sent it shooting toward the shield.

The instant it ran into the shield, the sword instantly turned into ash. Not a sound rang out.

Meng Hao watched this happen, a grim look on his face. He spit out the Lightning Flag. It transformed into a mist, which shot toward the shield. It could stand up against the power of Foundation Establishment, but when it ran into the shield, it couldn’t push through. It collapsed, and began to show signs that it might be destroyed.

Sucking in a breath, Meng Hao quickly called back the Lightning Flag. In the space of only a few seconds, several cracks had appeared on its surface.

“Could it be that one can enter this place, but not leave it? Even the Lightning Flag can’t break through. I wonder what would happen if I ran into the shield…” He frowned. The stars were visible outside the volcano, but this shield was blocking his way.

His eyes flashing, he flew back down on the wooden sword, soon landing on the misty floor of the volcano. He glanced around, then walked over to a section of rock. Moments later, he was flying back up, a brightly colored, three meter long viper in his hand.

The snake writhed, baring its fangs, which dripped with venom. However, Meng Hao held it behind its head so it couldn’t bite him.

Back at the shield, he tossed the viper toward it. As soon as the viper hit the shield, its body was turned into a mist of blood and gore. An intact viper skeleton fell back down into the mists.

Meng Hao took a breath and looked at the shield, an apprehensive look in his face. Then, he gave a cold snort and smacked the bag of the Cosmos with his right hand. A vast quantity of flying swords appeared. He flicked his finger, and the swords shot toward the rock wall. Booms rang out as the swords dug a hole into the rock. But as the swords carved inward, a sound rang out like gold striking iron. Meng Hao looked into the deep hole, and then around at the rock walls.

The rock was dark green, and covered with flickering magical symbols; it was obviously under a restrictive spell.

Meng Hao let out a sigh. He tried a few more methods, but the result was always the same. Finally, he dug a small pit into the rock wall and sat down cross-legged. He looked up silently at the shield.

He sat like that for seven days, during which time he tried out various methods of breaking through the shield, but none of them worked. More time passed. Soon, it had been a month.

He was trapped by the shield. But down at the bottom of the volcano, Chu Yuyan didn’t know that. She assumed that he was long gone.

On the first day, she sat outside, her arms wrapped languidly around her legs. She looked completely different from the beautiful woman from before. Now she seemed more like a withered flower.

When the third day arrived, she sat looking outside of the cave, frustration in her eyes, her face pale.

The third day, the fifth, the eighth… Soon ten days and then thirteen days had passed. More and more frustration appeared in her eyes, and she was getting more and more hungry. Her body was also starting to grow cold. She felt like she was the only person alive in the entire world. She grew more and more forlorn. When Meng Hao was here, this feeling hadn’t existed. Back then, she had just hated him, so much that she wished him to die a miserable death.

But thirteen days after he disappeared, the feeling of loneliness surrounded her like a giant mouth, ready to swallow her up.

She was now completely convinced that absolutely no Qi whatsoever could escape this place. Otherwise, the Violet Fate Sect would have already found her. But, soon it would have been a month, and no one had come for her. There was only one explanation for this.

The twenty-third day passed, then the twenty-sixth. The fear in her heart grew stronger amidst the silence that surrounded her. Her body trembled, and she felt incredibly alone. The depth of the silence made her feel as if she were in some sort of illusion. She had the sensation that there were countless shadows walking to and fro around her; she shivered. At this moment, she was no longer a Chosen of the Violet Fate Sect. She was simply a frail young woman.

She clenched her jaw, not emitting the slightest sound, and refusing to shed tears.

During the month, Meng Hao sat underneath the shield within the protection of the lightning mist. He had used every idea he could think of to break through the shield, but there it was, the same as ever. It seemed even his voice could not pass through it, although that didn’t matter because he hadn’t seen even a single person in the sky above. Finally one night, black clouds filled the sky, and a torrential downpour began. The rain fell down through the shield onto Meng Hao’s lightning mist.

Suddenly, a peal of thunder rang out, along with a bolt of lightning. When this happened, Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed. He looked closely at the shield. After a moment, another bolt of lightning descended. Meng Hao’s eyes began to shine.

He had noticed that every time lightning struck, the shield would ripple.

“So, lightning bolts can affect it… If lightning strikes it, maybe the shield can be opened.” His heart began to thump. A huge group of metal flying swords appeared. He tossed them, hoping to be able to use them to attract some lightning bolts.

However, thunder and rain vanished, and the sky started to grow bright. He hadn’t been able to attract any lightning bolts. However, hope now burned in his eyes.

“I can’t attract lightning. Maybe that is because of the shield itself. If only there was a way to force the lightning down and blow open the shield… I need something to attract it. I need… hmm…” A light of inspiration shined in his head. He retrieved a piece of turtle shell from the bag of the Cosmos; this was the formula for the Perfect Foundation Pill.

He looked it over closely a few times, and then his eyes began to shine even brighter. They filled with determination.

“Establishing a Perfect Foundation is not permitted by the Heavens, and will provoke Tribulation Lightning…”

He put the turtle shell away and sat there in silent contemplation for a while. After a time, his body flashed toward the mists below. Soon he had reached the bottom of the volcano, and Chu Yuyan.

He looked at her, at her frustrated, pale face.

When she caught sight of him, she reflexively said, “You…”

“You’re Grand Master Pill Demon’s disciple,” said Meng Hao coldly. “Do you know anything about alchemy?”

She nodded silently.

“Do you want out?!” His eyes flashed. As his words entered her ears, Chu Yuyan’s body began to tremble. Gradually, life began to seep back into her eyes.

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# Chapter 116: Legacy of an Immortal!

“There’s a shield up above which makes it impossible to get out,” he said coolly. “I can’t break through it. But after a month of observation, I noticed that lightning seems to be able to distort it.” Chu Yuyan’s eyes were no longer filled with frustration. Instead, they shined with life, and a bit of charm.

Meng Hao lifted his hand into the air and made a snatching motion. A hissing viper flew toward him, which he grabbed deftly, pushing his finger into the weak spot of its head.

Holding the snake, he looked calmly at Chu Yuyan. Not bothering to explain anything, he walked forward and grabbed her around her supple waist. Her face turned crimson. Because of the raggedness of her clothing, Meng Hao’s hand landed directly onto her skin.

His body flashed as the flying sword beneath his feet shot upward, Chu Yuyan in tow. They went up, speeding out of the mists and soon reaching the shield. Meng Hao tossed the snake toward it. Chu Yuyan didn’t avert her eyes. She watched as the snake’s body turned into a haze of blood, and then its ghastly, white skeleton fell back down. Her expression flickered.

Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding, and ten flying swords appeared. They turned into multicolored beams of light as they shot forward, and subsequently turned into ash.

Having done all this, Meng Hao stared at her with cold eyes. Then, holding her close to him, he flew back down to the bottom of the volcano.

Being held by Meng Hao felt strange to her. As soon as they stepped food onto the ground, she moved backward several paces.”What pill do you need?” she asked calmly.

“A Seven Thunders Pill,” he said, his expression the same as ever.

“Seven Thunders Pill?” she said with a frown. She’d never heard of such a medicinal pill before.

“I acquired it from an ancient location. It can provoke lightning from the Heavens. If you can concoct it, then we can leave this place.” He said nothing more, allowing her to weigh the pros and cons for herself. To offer further explanation could raise further questions, and he didn’t want her to begin thinking in that way.

She was silent for a moment. Finally, she said, “To concoct pills, I would need a pill furnace.” Although she had never heard of a Seven Thunder Pill before, she had seen the shield with her own eyes.

Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding and produced a small pill furnace, about the size of a hand. This was something he’d acquired from Shangguan Xiu’s bag of holding. Shangguan Xiu had prepared it with the intention of concocting the pills himself.

“Seven Star Jade Furnace!” When Chu Yuyan laid eyes on the pill furnace, an expression of shock covered her face. She knew of this type of furnace; its quality was beyond the ordinary, and was extremely valuable. She looked back at Meng Hao. “In addition to a pill furnace, I would need the fire of heaven and earth.”

Meng Hao lifted his hand, and immediately the two wooden swords appeared. They slammed into the ground, spiralling downward into the earth. A moment passed, and then a rumbling sound could be heard. A hot air billowed out, followed by two wooden swords. From within the palm-sized hole created by the two wooden swords, flames leaped up. This was earthly fire.

They were inside a volcano, and it turned out the volcano wasn’t dead after all. Meng Hao had checked into this after his Cultivation base was restored, and had been about seventy to eighty percent sure of it.

“You have a pill furnace, and earthly fire,” said Meng Hao, his voice low. “What else do you need?”

Chu Yuyan looked at the glowing hole from which red flames spat forth. She felt the heat of the flames, and then looked at the pill furnace in Meng Hao’s hand. She couldn’t help but admit that this place was very suitable for alchemy.

“I need to recover some of my Cultivation base,” she said, her eyes flickering.

He gazed at her coldly, then lifted his hand. A low-grade Spirit Stone shot forth to hover in front of her. Her spirits seemed to rise as she snatched the Spirit Stone out of the air with her delicate hands. She clenched her jaw, then, following Meng Hao’s example, split her hand open on an adjacent rock. Pain caused her face to pale, and her body trembled. Gritting her teeth, she shoved the Spirit Stone into the wound.

Then she sat down cross-legged to meditate. About an hour passed, and she opened her eyes. Her Cultivation base had recovered to about the second or third level of Qi Condensation.

“Give me the pill recipe,” she said, standing up. “I’ll also need a bag of holding.” Her skin had recovered along with her Cultivation base. It was now lustrous and let off a gentle shine. She looked at Meng Hao.

He pulled out a jade slip, which he then placed between his eyebrows. Then he threw it toward Chu Yuyan. Next, he produced a variety of medicinal plants which he handed over.

“The Seven Thunders Pill requires seven minor pills as its ingredients. This jade slip shows how to make the first of the seven. There are enough materials there to make two of them. That’s all there is, so you only have two chances. If you fail, we have no hope of leaving.” He tossed her the pill furnace along with an empty bag of holding. Without another word, he sat down cross-legged next to the cave, his eyes closed in meditation.

Chu Yuyan's brow furrowed. She quietly lifted up the pill furnace and placed the medicinal plants into the bag of holding. Next, neared the earthly fire aperture and studied the flames for a bit. Then, she sat down cross-legged and began to analyze the jade slip.

Meng Hao's eyes opened a sliver and he looked at her for a moment before closing them again.

The Seven Thunders Pill he had asked her to make was, of course, the Perfect Foundation Pill. Only by concocting that pill would he have the hope of attracting Heavenly Tribulation lightning, and thus the chance to break open the shield.

As Chu Yuyan began her alchemy, doubts and suspicions would no doubt begin to well up within her. However, Meng Hao didn't care about this. The Perfect Foundation Pill required the seven minor pills. Missing even one wouldn't do. However, the minor pills were useless by themselves. They were only effective when combined together.

Meng Hao had two of the minor pills in his possession, but of course, Chu Yan wouldn't be able to reproduce them.

"There are a lot of weird things about this place," he thought to himself. "I've been able to restore some of my Cultivation base, I should go look around. Especially at that lake of blood."

A moment later, he stood up. Ignoring Chu Yuyan, who was currently studying the jade slip, he walked forward, disappearing into the mists.

Chu Yuyan watched him as he left, then looked back down at the Spirit Stone stuck into her bloody flesh.

"A low-grade Spirit Stone isn't enough to activate my branding… At the very least, I would need a mid-grade Spirit Stone. Even with that, I wouldn't be completely confident of the results. It's already been more than a month, and no one from the Sect has arrived, which proves that the shield really can suppress everything. Very well then. I’ll concoct the Seven Thunders Pill for him. That’s the only chance of getting out of here.” With a light sigh, she continued to examine the jade slip. She did so more earnestly than she had ever studied anything with her master back in the Sect.

Seven days flashed by. Meng Hao hadn’t returned to the cave. Instead, he sat cross-legged in a cave he had hollowed out in the rock wall a bit over three hundred meters from the shore of the lake of blood.

In front of him were ten Spring and Autumn trees. His face was pale and his body trembled. In his hand was an additional Spring and Autumn tree. His eyes opened, and let out a long sigh.

The breath that he exhaled transformed into a three-colored flower that looked like a demonic face. It grinned ferociously, and then slowly disappeared.

His gaze swept across the ten trees in front of him. A moment ago, the poison had begun to flare up, and he had successfully used the Spring and Autumn tree against it. “So, the Spring and Autumn tree really can suppress the poison in me.”

He flicked his sleeve, collecting up the rest of the trees. He adjusted his Cultivation base and then opened his eyes again and looked at the lake of blood. His eyes filled with determination.

“This whole place is really bizarre, as if it’s been sealed somehow. Furthermore, it has this lake of blood… I’ve been stuck in here for two months, and other than the first time we came here, haven’t experienced any real sense of danger. I shouldn’t place all my hopes in the Perfect Foundation Pill. I should be prepared in case Chu Yuyan fails to concoct the pill. This is the strangest place in this whole location.

“In fact, I have the feeling that the reason this place is sealed to begin with has something to do with the lake of blood.” He slowly stood up and walked out of the cave. He spit out an arc of electricity which turned into a mist that surrounded him, then began to slowly approach the lake of blood.

As soon as he stepped foot within the area three hundred meters surrounding the shore, ripples appeared on the calm surface. His eyes glittered, and he took another step.

The closer he got, the more ripples appeared. Gradually, roaring sounds echoed out and the dark green stone altar appeared. Waves roiled as it rose out from the surface of the lake, supported on the backs of the countless bloody bodies, whose faces were twisted in agony. The altar rose higher and higher.

The throne was there, seated upon which was the corpse wearing a mask. More than half of the altar was visible.

Meng Hao stopped, and slowly walked backward. He found that as he did so, the altar also stopped rising up, and then slowly began to sink down.

“Very interesting,” said Meng Hao, his eyes gleaming. He stopped moving backward, and then resolutely strode forward. As he got closer, the men and women supporting the altar began to wail. The altar rose higher and higher. Soon, the entire one hundred fifty meter altar had emerged out of the lake.

Meng Hao stopped. Looking down, he could see that there was some massive object concealed in the lake.

Although it appeared as if the altar was being lifted up by the men and women, in fact, it was really being pushed up by whatever it was that lurked in the depths of the lake.

Surrounded by his mist, Meng Hao stood there silently for a moment. Then he walked forward, entering the thirty meter region surrounding the lake. The altar lifted up, and suddenly, an enormous head rose up out of the lake of blood. The altar was located the very top it!

It was about three hundred meters in diameter and was dark green in color. This was not the head of some living creature; it was formed out of rock. By the time Meng Hao reached the shore of the lake of blood, the head was completely visible.

Blood poured out of the orifices of the face, which was twisted into a hideous expression. Its mouth opened, and an archaic, howling voice could be heard.

“The Ancient Doom Clan, the Legacy of the Blood Immortal. Enter my sea of blood; nine will open in the Southern Domain; all creation will know. The first person… shall acquire the bloodline of the Blood Immortal!” The voice sounded out directly inside of Meng Hao’s head, filling it with its echoing roar.

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# Chapter 117: A Tiny Little Punishment

Only Meng Hao could hear the sound of the voice. No one else would have been able to sense even a bit of it. Even though Chu Yuyan was in the volcano along with Meng Hao, she couldn’t hear it either.

As the sound filled his head, Meng Hao’s eyes filled with an intense look.

“The Ancient Doom Clan… Don’t tell me we’re in the vicinity of the Ancient Temple of Doom!? The Legacy of the Blood Immortal. An Immortal…” Meng Hao was shocked. He was relatively familiar with all the various levels of Cultivation. After Nascent Soul was Spirit Severing, then Dao Seeking and finally Immortal Ascension.

However, in tens of thousands of years, only seven or eight people had ever succeeded in reaching that stage. Even reaching the Dao Seeking stage was not common.

“The Legacy of the Blood Immortal. Did that person just call himself Immortal, or did he actually reach Immortal Ascension…?” Even though he was excited, he suddenly thought of the battle between Patriarch Reliance and Lord Revelation, and the two words which had been uttered. Dawn Immortal.

His eyes flickered as he looked at the enormous head and its open mouth, beyond which seemed to be some sort of tunnel. Entering would signify the beginning of the pursuit of the Legacy.

“Nine will open in the southern lands, and all creation will know. Could it mean… maybe once I step in, then nine other entrances to the Legacy will open in the outside world? Then the wind and clouds will be disturbed, and everyone will know about it?” He hesitated, gazing at the mouth, deep in thought.

“It must be that way. There are nine entrances where people can enter to seek the Legacy. Among them, one will be selected to receive the Blood Immortal’s legacy… So, there are nine places similar to this. If one opens, then all of them open. I just wonder if anyone has opened it before…” Suddenly, he looked around at the shores of the lake. They were strewn with ghastly, white bones. Many of the bones were skulls, and were human.

The skulls had marks of wear; obviously, they had existed here for many years. Perhaps it was because of the strangeness of this place that they hadn’t been scattered, but instead remained here all this time.

Whatever the case, Meng Hao had no way to determine how long they had been here, nor any way to determine if they were intruders, or people sacrificed when this place was created.

He thought for a while, and eventually decided not to just rashly charge into the mouth entrance. He slowly walked backward. As he did, the giant head slowly sank back into the lake, along with the altar. By the time he reached the three hundred meter mark, everything was quiet.

As he walked backward, he flicked his sleeve, collecting some of the bones into his bag of holding. Then he stood there, looking at the lake of blood for a while, before turning and leaving.

Soon, he had returned to Chu Yuyan outside the fissure-like cave. Her face was pale, and she was concentrating on the pill furnace. She took out some medicinal plants, squeezed the juice out of them, and then placed them in the furnace. Meng Hao sat down cross-legged a short distance away. A look of deep thought appeared in his eyes. He took out one of the skulls he had just acquired and examined it closely.

“If I can’t determine the age of these bones, then I can’t just casually go after the Legacy of the Blood Immortal.” He thought back to everything that had happened in the State of Zhao, which had taught him the value of being cautious. He held up the skull in front of him looking at it closely.

Time slowly passed. Soon, five days had gone by. Chu Yuyan walked over to Meng Hao from the pill furnace. Looking exhausted, she tossed him a medicinal pill.

It was a deep blue color, and was very beautiful in appearance. It emanated a faint bluish glow, but no fragrant aroma.

“I failed once, but succeeded the second time. This is the pill you need. Now give me some clothes.” She looked down at him, weariness in her eyes. This was the price to be paid for performing alchemy.

Meng Hao took the medicinal pill and examined it closely. He put it into his bag of the Cosmos, and then retrieved another jade slip along with two complete sets of ingredients. He also pulled out a set of garments. He put them all down in front of him, whereupon Chu Yuyan picked them up and walked back into the cave. A while later, she emerged, wearing Meng Hao’s gown, her long hair spread out over her shoulders. She looked like an elegant, young maiden. She was tired, but that actually caused her to emanate a type of good looks different from before.

As Meng Hao looked at her, he realized that Elder Sister Xu could not match up with her in terms of beauty. In fact, Chu Yuyan was perhaps the most beautiful woman he had ever seen in his entire life. Only the beautiful young women he had seen at the bottom of the North Sea could come even close.

Now that she had changed clothes and covered up some of her nakedness, Chu Yuyan no longer looked so uneasy standing in front of Meng Hao. As she walked out, she caught sight of the skull that he had been examining.

Her eyes suddenly gleamed with a strange light, which almost immediately disappeared. “If you have nothing better to do,” she said coldly, “you could go stand watch by the shield. Maybe some Cultivators will pass by that could save us. That would be better than sitting around looking at an ancient skull.”

“How many tens of thousands of years have these skulls been here?” he asked suddenly.

She gave a cold laugh. It seemed changing clothes had restored her previous arrogance. Apparently, she assumed that since she was concocting pills that Meng Hao needed, he wouldn’t dare to treat her the way he had in the past. Ignoring him, she walked back to her alchemic work area. Meng Hao laughed and slapped his bag of holding. A wooden sword appeared which shot directly toward her.

It was fast, and reached her in an instant. Given the state of her Cultivation base, she had no way to evade. Nor did she try. She looked back at Meng Hao arrogantly, a sneer in her eyes.

The tip of the sword was already at her neck. A grim, cold air emanated from her body. But her chin was lifted as high as ever, her eyes filled with mocking.

“You have three seconds to take your sword away,” she said coolly. “If you don’t, or if you harm me, then you won’t have anyone to concoct pills for you.” Her skin was white like snow, her head tilted arrogantly. Her eyes glittered like eyes as she stared at Meng Hao with disgust.

She was convinced that Meng Hao wouldn’t dare to make a move against her. The sword was simply a threat, and to Chu Yuyan, such threats were infantile and laughable.

She was the type of person who could not tolerate being wronged. Now that she had successfully created one of the pills, she could hold her head high and make Meng Hao think twice before trifling with her. She might even be able to get the upper hand.

“You’re right,” said Meng Hao, frowning. “Without you, I would have no way to concoct pills.” From the look of things, it seemed he really couldn’t do anything to her. However, he knew that this flame of rebellion must be snuffed out, lest it grow even more troublesome. He thought for a while, then suddenly smiled. When Chu Yuyan saw his smile, her heart began to thump inexplicably, and suddenly she didn’t feel the least bit at ease.

“In fact,” he said coolly, “if I offend you in any way, considering that you are the disciple of Grandmaster Pill Demon, you could easily make the pills incorrectly, or perhaps slip something fatal into them.” His tone was leisurely, and the look on his face enigmatic. Chu Yuyan felt even more uncomfortable. She had, of course, thought of doing just as he said. Killing Meng Hao ahead of time wouldn’t influence the lightning. But now, he had spoken out her very thoughts. She didn’t know what he was planning, but she still felt that her alchemy would prevent him from harming her in. She gave a cold harrumph.

“What are you talking about?” she said coldly. It really felt to her as if his smile was amiss.

“The way that I, Meng, handle things is as such: if people don’t offend me, I don’t offend them. I promised to see you out of here, and I will not go back on my word. But don’t get arrogant because of your alchemy. Do not try to gain the upper hand.”

The wooden sword suddenly flew back toward him, leaving behind a tiny nick on Chu Yuyan’s throat. She opened her mouth reflexively, and as she did so, Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding. A pink-colored medicinal pill appeared, which shot forward directly into her mouth. It dissolved as soon as it entered. Chu Yuyan retreated backwards, her expression filled with shock. She wanted to spit the pill out, but couldn’t.

“What pill did you just give me!?” she said, glaring at Meng Hao.

“You used a special technique as a facade to try to absorb my Cultivation base,” said Meng Hao coolly. “We still haven’t settled accounts over that. Think of this pill as a little punishment.” He then closed his eyes and ignored her.

Such behavior on his part only served to make Chu Yuyan more perturbed. Her skill in alchemy was exceptional, but she really had no idea what pill she had just consumed. She gritted her beautiful teeth. Suddenly, hot steam began to accumulate within her. It quickly filled her, causing alarm to appear on her face.

She immediately sat down cross-legged in meditation, attempting to suppress it. But her Cultivation base was reduced to almost nothing; currently, she could only utilize the power of the third level of Qi Condensation. How could that possibly be enough to defuse the pill?

She sat in meditation for the time it takes an incense stick to burn. A roaring filled her head, and she began to lose the ability to even think. Then, she slipped into a deep hallucination.

It was at this time that Meng Hao opened his eyes. They were calm, not the least bit agitated. The pill from just now had been acquired in the mountainous valley area, when the toad geezer had given him a variety of poison pills as tribute.

He originally had never intended to give it to Chu Yuyan, but she had really been asking for trouble. Her arrogance had flared with her successful concoction of the pill. He had no choice but to wipe out that bluster. In order to reduce her haughtiness, Meng Hao had chosen to give her the pill.

His eyes were clear and bright, his mind made up. After descending into this volcano, he had placed Chu Yuyan under his complete control. She had no room to maneuver.

Her stubbornness and arrogance surfaced on multiple occasions even down to today… and yet she was still unable to free herself from Meng Hao’s control.

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# Chapter 118: Without Entering Mount Heaven, Immortal Ascension is Impossible

Meng Hao looked calmly at Chu Yuyan and took a few steps back. He had begun studying Confucianism and Daoism at a young age. Despite the incredible changes he had experienced, those teachings still existed in his heart. It’s not that he was incapable of taking advantage of someone in trouble, but when it came to morality, he had a bottom line. He wouldn’t touch Chu Yuyan.

She was his enemy, not his friend. Punishing her was one thing, but to sink to such a level of depravity would go against his very being. He might not be a complete gentleman, but he wasn’t a depraved scumbag.

There were some things that he would never do. Everyone has a bottom line. To Meng Hao, it was about principles, and morality.

He thought again about the Perfect Foundation Pill. He settled his Qi and calmed his mind, then stepped onto a flying sword and flew up into the air.

Enough time passed for an incense stick to burn. Everything around Chu Yuyan was quiet. She was finally unconscious, her aura feeble, as if she were suffering from some serious illness.

Meng Hao returned. When he landed onto the ground, he looked at Chu Yuyan and let out a soft sigh. Producing another set of clothing from his bag of the Cosmos, he covered her, and then sat down cross-legged nearby.

Time slowly passed. Four hours went by before Chu Yuyan's eyes opened. As soon as they did, they filled with confusion. Then they flashed as she seemed to remember something. She sat there silently.

She didn't yell or flip out. Instead, she silently walked into the cave. Some time passed, and she came back out, her clothes back in order. Her face was pale, and she looked very weak and tired. She gave Meng Hao a look filled with complexity.

She hadn't lost her memory. It was quite the opposite, in fact. She very clearly remembered every single thing that had happened, including Meng Hao flying off into the sky.

Meng Hao's eyes opened, and he gave her a level look. "I did nothing to harm you," he said slowly. "That medicinal pill was a punishment for your attempt to harm my Cultivation base. You need to understand the truth of the situation here. My instructions, are everything."

There was no arrogance left in Chu Yuyan. Her feelings regarding Meng Hao were incredibly complex.

Yes, she hated him. But under the circumstances just now, he had chosen to leave rather than touch her. Chu Yuyan didn't want to, but she actually felt appreciation mixed together with her hatred. The complex feelings within her felt like floodwaters threatening to submerge her.

She didn't know how many similar medicinal pills Meng Hao had, but from his actions, she could guess that even though the pill she was concocting was important to him, he wasn't worried about her trying to poison him by adding or changing the recipe.

"The pill formula he gave me is very strange. Because of the interactions between the various ingredients, to change the formula ratios is simply beyond my ability. I wouldn't be able to produce a complete pill.…

"However, even if I did successfully adjust the formula, given this guy's personality, it's possible he might make me consume it…. Actually, it's impossible at all to tell if he will even consume it himself. Maybe he'll catch a viper and force it to consume it.

"In fact, it's even possible… that the pill doesn't need to be consumed. Maybe he'll use some other method to melt it and provoke the lightning. Maybe that's why he doesn't care." She frowned. It was really impossible to figure out the answer, and she had no idea what to do. She looked at Meng Hao, her expression torn. The more she thought about him and the deepness of his schemes, the more frightened she became.

"Compared to him, Wang Tengfei really is inferior." She sighed. After thinking for a moment, she took a deep breath and said. "That skull has been here for several tens of thousands of years. Actually… I know where we are, and I know what this place is. When I saw the altar in the lake of blood, I started to suspect. I've thought about it a lot since then, and finally realized where we are."

Her voice soft, she continued, "This is one of the two undiscovered locations of the Legacy of the Blood Immortal. In total, there are nine. From ancient times until now, seven have appeared. This means there have been a total of seven chances throughout history to acquire the Legacy. Whenever a new location appears, it sets the entire Southern Domain abuzz. There are rules governing this place. Only Foundation Establishment Cultivators can enter. Any who does, has a chance at acquiring the Legacy.

"Every time the tournament begins, the previously discovered Legacy zones will emit a glow of blood that lasts for nine days. After nine days have passed, whoever is the first person to enter into the red glow, as long as they meet the requirement of having a Cultivation base at the Foundation Establishment stage, will be transported to the Blood Immortal's Mountain.

"When the Legacy tournament begins, it will last for a maximum of nine months. Only one person is permitted into each Legacy zone. From tens of thousands of years ago when the first Blood Immortal Legacy zone appeared, all the way until now, there have been seven. This means that there have been seven Legacy tournaments. Some people have had the luck to acquire various rewards, but down to this day, no one has succeeded in acquiring the true Legacy.

“Of the nine total Legacy zones, there are two remaining. Throughout all these years, no one has discovered their location. Therefore, there has been no way to begin the eighth Legacy tournament.”

As he heard all of these things, Meng Hao’s eyes began to narrow. “Who is the Blood Immortal?” he asked.

“I refuse to believe you didn’t go yourself to examine the lake of blood,” she said calmly. “And I also refuse to believe you are unaware that underneath the surface of the lake is a massive head with an open mouth. The seven other Blood Immortal Legacy zones throughout the world all have lakes of blood and altars. Underneath each altar is a mouth. Furthermore, I refuse to believe you didn’t hear the voice of the Legacy. I have no proof, but my intuition tells me that you’ve been there, and you know. You’re a cautious person, so you didn’t dare to step foot inside without first bringing back those skulls to analyze, to see if you could determine their age.”

“You didn’t answer my question.”

“The Ancient Temple of Doom. It was once a holy place for the Ancient Doom Clan. They were not looked upon with favor by the Heavens, and were punished with tribulation. There were three famous Immortals amongst them whose names were passed down through the generations after. One of them was the Blood Immortal.

“Anyone who acquires his Legacy will be qualified to fight on the path to Immortality, and step foot onto the Immortality Pillar.” Chu Yuyan’s voice was soft as she spoke. She continued.

“The path to Immortality is an arduous one. According to the ancient legends, it can be found only on Mount Heaven. It is not a mountain on the earth, but in the sky. On its peak is an Immortality Pillar. By stepping onto the pillar and knocking on the door of South Heaven, an Immortal realm shall be opened. You shall be bathed in the light of Immortality. Step into the void, and into Immortal Ascension.

“Since ancient times, countless heroes have fought over the ability to tread the path to Immortal Ascension. After all, if you analyze the character ‘Immortal ( )’, you will find that it is composed of the character ‘person ( )’ and the character ‘mountain ( )’. That mountain is Mount Heaven, and the person… is only one person!

“Ever ten thousand years, one person achieves Immortal Ascension!

“However, there is another understanding regarding the character ‘Immortal ( )’. According to this understanding, first is the character ‘enter ( ),’ then is the character ‘mountain ( )’. Combined, they mean Immortal. It is a simple truth. Without entering Mount Heaven, one cannot achieve Immortal Ascension!” She looked at Meng Hao, explaining things that were only known to members of the five great Sects and three great Clans in the Southern Domain.

What is Immortality? A person and a mountain!

What is Immortality? Entering the mountain!

In ten thousand years, one person entered the mountain, one person achieved Immortal Ascension!

Meng Hao’s eyes began to shine brightly, but then, just as quickly, the glow faded. Considering that he was just a Foundation Establishment Cultivator, Immortal Ascension was far, far away for him. For him to think about it now was really just too extravagant; it was basically a daydream.

“Before the path to Immortality are the Dao Seeking Stones, which only exist in the three Danger Zones. Dao Seeking is difficult, but before that is Spirit Severing and its three Severings. Each Severings requires enlightenment, and gives life. To be honest, I don’t really know what all of this means. But when I was young, my father would speak these words to me and tell me to place them within my heart, and never forget them for the rest of my life.” Chu Yuyan played with her hair, no longer looking at Meng Hao. She walked back to the pill furnace and slowly sat down. Taking out the jade slip with the information about the pill formula, she closed her eyes and began to analyze it.

Everything grew quiet.

Meng Hao looked at Chu Yuyan. She was different now. Her words continued to echo in his heart, and he analyzed them bit by bit. Based on the look on her face, as well as his own speculations regarding the Legacy of the Blood Immortal, he was now seventy to eighty percent sure that what she had said was the truth.

After some time passed, he spoke. “Why did you give me so much detailed information?”

“Because,” she said softly, looking at him, “I hope that you will go after the Blood Immortal’s Legacy and then… die inside. Then I can finally be rid of you. Many things have happened that shouldn’t have.” Having said this, she closed her eyes and continued to seek enlightenment regarding the pill formula.

Meng Hao suddenly laughed. He didn’t mind hearing her words. If she hadn’t spoken just now, then he would have grown suspicious. After all this time spent with Chu Yuyan, he was starting to understand her personality much better.

“The Legacy of the Blood Immortal. I wonder if I should go in after it…” he thought, his eyes flickering. It would be impossible for him to not be a bit tempted. A Legacy which could send waves throughout the entire Southern Domain. Anything related to the word ‘Immortal’ would drive Cultivators crazy.

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# Chapter 119: The Legacy Shocks the Southern Domain

“This Legacy tournament must surely involve some dangers that are impossible to imagine. If I’m careless, I’ll likely fail and die… But with great risk comes great reward. If something is riskier, it shows that there is more chance for reward. If there isn’t such danger, then fine. But if there is… Well, if I don’t go, then I’ll regret it for the rest of my life!” Determination filled his eyes as he continued to think over what Chu Yuyan had told him. However, after some time, he hadn’t come up with any new ideas about why she had told him so much.

“She was provoking me. Maybe her true goal was to get me to go in. Or perhaps it wasn’t… The chances of the latter are small. Perhaps she hopes that after entering and starting the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament, it will attract the attention of the outside world, and perhaps give the Violet Fate Sect a better chance of tracking her down.” His eyes flashed as he looked over at her.

“If I don’t go, nothing will happen. But if that’s what she wanted, why would she go into such detail right now, especially in a way that would make me hesitant? I wonder… what is she thinking? What is her true goal…?” His eyes flickered as he thought. Finally, he closed his eyes and began to meditate.

Time passed slowly. Soon, half a month had gone by. Chu Yuyan finally concocted the second pill. However, by the time another month passed, her attempts at the third and fourth pills had failed.

Meng Hao could not perform alchemy, but it was clear to him that she was not failing intentionally. Instead, the pill concoction was becoming more difficult. Throughout the month, Meng Hao didn’t spend time thinking about the Legacy of the Blood Immortal. He seemed to have put it out of mind.

One day, he slowly stood up and hopped onto a flying sword, shooting up through the mists to go observe the shield.

In the past half month, he had made it a practice to go up every ten days or so to observe the shield. Every time he left, Chu Yuyan would observe his departure expressionlessly.

This time, after Meng Hao left, she waited about four hours, then suddenly lifted her head, her eyes flashing. She frowned, as if she were having some problem with the pill concoction process. Then she stood up, looking off into the mists. Shortly after, she began walking toward the region of the lake of blood. When she got there, she looked around, then turned and returned to the pill furnace. It seemed as if whatever question was in her mind had been answered. She continued with her alchemy.

Another half month passed. Finally, she was able to successfully concoct the third and fourth pills. She then began working on the fifth pill. As far as Meng Hao was concerned, this was the last pill. Once it was finished, then all seven of the minor pills would be ready.

More time slipped by. In the blink of an eye, two months were gone. Meng Hao and Chu Yuyan had now been trapped in the volcano for half a year. Within the two months, Chu Yuyan would occasionally leave the area of the cave. Sometimes it was when Meng Hao was watching her, other times it was when he was away. It seemed as if every time she had some problem with the formula, she would pace about. However, she would never enter the region within three hundred meters of the lake of blood. She would always stop at that mark.

Finally one day, under Meng Hao’s watchful eye, she stood up. Frowning, she walked into the mists. When she reached the three hundred meter mark, her eyes flashed. Suddenly, the power of her Cultivation base flared up, and she sped toward the lake of blood at top speed.

As she neared it, the surface of the lake began to ripple. The altar appeared, followed by the enormous stone head. The mouth gaped, a passageway awaiting for the Legacy tournament participant to enter.

Chu Yuyan's eyes flickered with excitement as she raced forward. She was almost leaping into the air by the time she reached the mouth. Just as she was about to enter, a light laugh filled the air. A sword aura flickered, shooting toward Chu Yuyan.

As soon as she heard the laughter, her face went pale. Ignoring the approach of the wooden sword, she gritted her straight, white teeth and charged forward. There was only two meters between her and the large stone mouth.

Suddenly, a black net appeared, moving at a speed much faster than Chu Yuyan. It immediately enveloped her, and she was not able to move beyond that last two meter. The wooden sword scooped her and tossed her back to the lake shore.

Standing nearby within the mists was Meng Hao. His face expressionless, he slowly walked forward.

Chu Yuyan's face was pale, and her eyes flashed with venomous hatred as she glared at Meng Hao. The instant he had brought back that skull to study, she had put all the pieces together regarding the Legacy of the Blood Immortal. Furthermore, everything she had said those months ago was true. She thought she knew Meng Hao, and understood his innate skepticism. She intentionally tried to make him think that there was something suspicious going on. Given his nature, he would certainly suspect her. Based on all of this, she knew that he would not easily be convinced to act. That would give her time.

In the following months, she had made it a practice to go for walks; she did this so that Meng Hao would not find it unusual. Today, she had finally made her attempt, never having imagined that she would fail.

“You really are quite patient,” said Meng Hao. “I gave you a whole three months.” At the moment, he was disinclined to explain to her how he had seen through her plan. “You have one month. I want to see the fifth pill.

Now, get back to your alchemy.” He made a snatching motion with his hand, retrieving the large net.

Chu Yuyan bit her lip and got to her feet. Without another glance at Meng Hao, she made a bitter departure.

“So, she really did want to go in.” Meng Hao looked thoughtfully over his shoulder at Chu Yuyan’s departing figure. A cold smile lifted the corners of his mouth. Now, his doubts were dispelled. He walked forward and entered the mouth of the enormous statue.

The instant he entered the mouth, he disappeared, and the lake of blood began to seethe. A roaring sound rippled out, and the lake of blood transformed into a blood-colored mist, which dispersed in all directions.

An archaic voice echoed out from within the blood mist, resounding out from within the volcano. “The Ancient Doom Clan, the Legacy of the Blood Immortal. Enter my sea of blood; nine will open in the Southern Domain; all creation will know. The first person… shall acquire the bloodline of the Blood Immortal!” When it hit Chu Yuyan’s ears, she staggered, and her face grew pale. She gnawed on her lip as a look of extreme bitterness filled her face.

“If only I had realized earlier what this place was…” She shook her head. Her face was pallid. Her hatred toward Meng Hao, and toward fate itself, filled her with complicated emotions.

Meanwhile, outside in the Southern Domain, there were seven different locations, out from all of which suddenly could be heard a massive roaring. As soon as the sound raged out, the sky above the entire Southern Domain turned the color of blood.

From each of the seven locations, an archaic voice rumbled out.

“The Ancient Doom Clan, the Legacy of the Blood Immortal. Enter my sea of blood; nine will open in the Southern Domain; all creation will know. The first person… shall acquire the bloodline of the Blood Immortal!”

The echoing sound immediately sent the Southern Domain stirring. Regardless of their Sect or background, any Cultivators near the seven Blood Immortal Legacy zones looked on in astonishment. They immediately shot off in various directions at incredible speed.

“The Blood Immortal Legacy zones have re-appeared!”

“The eighth Blood Immortal Legacy zone has been discovered. Now that it’s been entered, the other seven Legacy zones have opened. The eighth Blood Immortal Legacy tournament is about to begin!”

“There will only be nine total chances to get the Blood Immortal Legacy. Over the past tens of thousands of years, it has happened seven times. This is the eighth time. If no one acquires the Legacy this time, who knows how many years will pass before the ninth tournament arrives…”

The other seven locations were places where previous Blood Immortal Legacy tournaments had begun. Whenever a new location appeared, it would cause a huge sensation in the Southern Domain. The eyes of countless Cultivators grew red with desire. Although no one had ever acquired the Legacy itself, in every race, lucky participants emerged with various magical items and techniques.

As the news spread, the five great Sects and three great Clans were the first to react. After them, other Clans followed in taking action.

At the moment, the roaring sound rippled out, and the words of the archaic voice echoed loudly. The entire Southern Domain buzzed with action. The Wang Clan, one of the three great Clans, was one of the first to act. Several hundred beams of light flew out, followed by several enormous flying battleships, filled with the disciples of the Wang Clan. They made their way toward the nearest Blood Immortal Legacy zone.

White-robed Wang Tengfei stood on the second boat in the procession. His hands were clasped behind his back as he stared coldly at someone on the ship ahead in the lead position. There stood a man wearing a similar white robe. He closely resembled Wang Tengfei, although he looked a little bit older. He frowned in thought.

This was Wang Lihai[1], Wang Tengfei's older brother. He was a Dao Child of the Wang Clan, which was a position higher than that held by a trifling Chosen. He was in the late Foundation Establishment Stage, and could achieve Core Formation at almost any time. He was surrounded by various elite members of the Wang Clan, including his Dao Protector, a Nascent Soul Clan Uncle.

As for Wang Tengfei… he stood there silently, hands clasped rigidly behind his back. One of the fingers of his right hand looked very different from the others. It was as transparent as crystal, within which circulated tiny black spiralling threads. It looked extremely bizarre.[2]

Standing next to him was Wang Xifan, the man who had almost killed Meng Hao with a single look that day, years ago[3]. "If things hadn't happened the way they did in the State of Zhao," he said coolly, "You wouldn't be at the early Foundation Establishment stage right now. You would be at the middle stage. You would still be behind your brother, but not as far as you are now.

"I will exceed my brother," said Wang Tengfei calmly. "I will become a Dao Child!"

"There will only be one chance to acquire the Legacy of the Blood Immortal," said Wang Xifan, his eyes flashing. He frowned. "It's too bad there hasn't been any word from the Violet Fate Sect about Yuyan. Apparently, she's in a critical stage of secluded meditation. Otherwise, she would be able to provide you with some assistance."

1. Wang Lihai's name in Chineses is (wáng lì hǎi) – Wang is a common family name. Li means "experience." Hai means "ocean"

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# Chapter 120: The Five Sects and Three Clans of the Southern Domain

Meanwhile in the Golden frost Sect, one of the five great Sects of the Southern Domain, hundreds of beams of light shot whistling up into the sky. These were Sect members who didn’t need the aid of magical flight items. Up ahead of them, the person in the lead ripped open a hole in the air, into which the others entered.

Zhao Shanling 1 was amongst them, carrying a gold greatsword, clad in a set of armor. He moved with incredible speed.

The Legacy of the Blood Immortal had sent the great Sects and Clans into a frenzy. In addition to the Wang Clan and the Golden frost Sect, there was the Song Clan, another of the three great Clans. Several hundred Cultivators emerged, all of them outstanding talents. Amongst them was Eccentric Song, whose treasures Meng Hao had stolen in the State of Zhao.

The most powerful Sect in the Southern Domain was the Solitary Sword Sect. Hundreds of sword auras shot up. It was a shocking sight. Every Cultivator amongst them stood on a sword. The hundreds of sword auras seemed as if they could split open the sky. At the front of the group were seven people with stern looks on their faces. One of the seven was none other than Chen Fan!

Chen Fan’s face was filled with righteousness. He wore a long white robe and stood on a dark green sword. His Cultivation base billowed out; he was at the early Foundation Establishment stage!

In front of the seven was a middle-aged man with a cold expression and a fierce killing intent. This was none other than Chen Fan’s master, Zhou Yanyun.

Wind whipped the clouds into turmoil above the Southern Domain as Wu Dingqiu 2 of the Violet Fate Sect shot through the air along with hundreds of Violet Fate disciples. As they flew through the sky, Wu Dingqiu’s brow was furrowed, and he seemed to be thinking about something very important. This, in turn, caused the others from the Violet Fate Sect to be incredibly quiet.

“Yuyan is missing,” he thought. “She was seen chasing after some Cultivator. Then that roc flew through, kicking up a whirlwind. She… where is she…? Her life slip is still intact, which means that she’s safe.” He sighed. Chu Yuyan was very important to the Violet Fate Sect. In fact, she was so important that many people in the Sect had opposed her engagement to Wang Tengfei.

Beams of prismatic light could be seen in the sky all over the Southern Domain, flying toward the seven Blood Immortal Legacy zones.

Amongst the great Sects and Clans, the Li clan was the most secretive. They rarely sent Clan members out into the world, and when they did, few people were aware of it. In fact, when the Blood Immortal Legacy zones opened, they only sent out five people!

Of those five people, two were old Dao Protectors of the Nascent Soul stage. The rest were at the Foundation Establishment stage, two men and one woman. These three were Chosen of the Li Clan, whom few outsiders had even heard of.

“Years ago the Patriarch revealed the secret that the eight Blood Immortal Legacy tournament would fall into the hands of the Li Clan,” said one of the old men. He wore a long black robe, and was tall and emaciated. He looked back at the three behind him. “The eighth tournament has arrived. Daoyi, the Legacy belongs to you, this is certain. As for you two, just observe, and take the opportunity to learn something.”

The most mysterious of the five great Sects was the Blood Demon Sect. They sent even fewer people than the Li Clan, only two.

One was old, one was young. The young man wore a scarlet robe, and appeared to be about sixteen or seventeen. He emanated a fierce killing aura. Located between his eyebrows was a mark of blood, which would occasionally let out a glow that covered half of his face. Beneath his feet was a mist of blood, within which could be seen countless fierce faces that appeared to be howling. This young man looked anything but ordinary.

If Meng Hao were there, or perhaps Fatty or Little Tiger, they would instantly recognize him. The young man looked exactly like Wang Youcai 3, from six or seven years ago. If it really was him, then it would mean he hadn't changed at all over the years. Very strange!

Of the five great Sects of the Southern Domain, four sprang into action. Only the Black Sieve Sect did not. In the main hall of the Sect, six people sat cross-legged, their bodies concealed in shadows. Within the hall, everything was silent.

An archaic, sinister voice suddenly rang out. "So, the time has come for the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament… Should we dispatch some people?"

"The Legacy of the Blood Immortal might be powerful, but no one has acquired it even after tens of thousands of years. Comparatively speaking, the ancient map we discovered is much more important!"

"We can't conceal the matter, though, so we won't. That will cause more chaos, which will serve to our advantage."

"If we succeed in our endeavor, the entire structure of the Southern Domain will be changed. As for the item, the Dao of the Black Sieve Sect will be refined, which is luck for the Sect!"

"I agree that we should not dispatch anyone to the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament. We've studied this ancient map for a long time. Even the Patriarchs view it with high importance and have studied it several times. We can take advantage of the suspicion which will arise from our lack of participation in the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament. We can guide more people here, whereupon their curiosity will increase. Then, we can begin the next phase of our plan.”

Outside of the Black Sieve Sect’s main temple hall, several hundred solemn-faced disciples had gathered. They had been called here to wait to for orders from the Sect Elders.

Standing off to the side in the crowd was Xu Qing. She wore a standard white robe. Her face seemed thinner than before, and her frame somewhat frail. Although she had always been a cold person, she didn’t seem to be very happy in the Black Sieve Sect.

Her Cultivation base was only at the ninth level of Qi Condensation.

A charming young woman appeared next to Xu Qing. Her voice low, she said, ”Junior Sister Xu, Elder Brother Chen said to give you one last chance. If you agree to what he wants, he’ll fight to get you a Foundation Establishment Pill. Come on, don’t be stupid. If you provoke Elder Brother Chen, then….” Even in the midst of giving her advice. Xu Qing raised her head and looked at her coldly.

“You don’t need to bring up this matter again, Elder Sister Xue. Please, have some self-respect!”

The girl surnamed Xue sneered. “You’re just an uncivilized biddy from a backwater nation. You try to act high and mighty, but you’re really an idiot. Elder Brother Chen taking a liking to you is good luck for you. This matter is beyond your control!”

Xu Qing didn’t say anything. However, her delicate hands clenched tightly within her sleeves, until they turned pale white.

The Xue girl laughed coldly and continued to deride her. “And as for that Cosmetic Enhancement Pill, concocted in some crude, tiny Sect on some crappy mountain. Elder Sister Han wanted to trade you for it to give to her servant girl, but you refused. You really have a one-track mind. What a waste of your good looks.”

Xu Qing's face was pale white, and she gnawed on her lower lip, but she said nothing.

Eventually, an old man wearing a dark green robe emerged from the main temple hall. He flicked his sleeve, and mist began to billow out. An enormous Feng Shui compass flew down from the sky. The Xue girl stopped her ridicule and hopped up onto it, along with the surrounding disciples, including Xu Qing. Under the control of the old man, the Feng Shui compass carried them off into the distance.

Wind and clouds roiled above the Southern Domain. Because the Black Sieve Sect didn't participate, the seven Blood Immortal Legacy zones were each occupied by one of the other four Sects, or one of the three Clans. Other could only yield to their approach. However, despite their high position, the great Clans and Sects could not force outsiders to leave. That would have raised public indignation. They simply cleared a way through to wait for the glow of blood to appear and the Legacy tournament to begin.

Time passed by. A few days later, the Blood Immortal's sacrificial altars began to thrum. Everything began to shake, and finally, a bloody screen appeared. Within the blood screen, a gateway slowly came to be visible. In this instant, all the Foundation Establishment Cultivators at the seven Blood Immortal sacrificial altars felt the desire to surge forward.

However… the gateway would only permit one person to enter. That right went to the first person who made it through. Only if that person died, or intentionally emerged to rest, could a second person enter.

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It was a vast world, with blue skies and white clouds. There was a feeling of purity, difficult to describe, which appeared in the hearts of everyone who entered.

Looking up, the sky was filled with an enormous sacrificial altar, dark green in color. At the top of the altar, sitting on an enormous stone throne, was a person.

It was a corpse, clothed in a blood-colored robe. On its face was a featureless silver mask. It sat there, unmoving.

The altar seemed to fill nearly half the sky of this world. All of the people who entered were able to see the person on top.

The Legacy of the Blood Immortal! There was no need to say it…. this person was the deceased Blood Immortal!

Beneath the dark green sacrificial altar were nine enormous spell matrixes. Each spell matrix seemed to be filled with a whirlpool of slowly rotating stars. The nine spell matrixes were like nine gigantic steps, leading up through the white clouds to the sacrificial altar.

Anyone who could pass through the ninth spell matrix, would then be able to step foot onto the dark green sacrificial altar.

However, since ancient times, no one had ever been able to do so!

At the moment, Meng Hao stood silently outside the first spell matrix, his eyes glittering. Suddenly, seven indistinct figures appeared around him.

He couldn’t tell whether these people were men or women, nor could he determine their age. Even their clothes were unclear; their entire forms were indistinct blurs. However, Meng Hao was able to see that all of them were looking around at each other.

Suddenly, an archaic, emotionless voice rang out. “The Legacy of the Blood Immortal, the Nine Matrixes are opened. Eight Legacy competitors have arrived, but only one can acquire the Legacy of the Blood Immortal.

“The eight of you will not be able to hear each other speak, nor will you be able to see the magic each other uses. You will be unable to attack each other. You will only be able to see these indistinct blurs. This is because… the eight of you are all in different locations. However, there is one thing in common about your locations; they all contain the same dark green sacrificial altar, and the same spiritual energy.

“The Legacy tournament will be open for nine months. At every matrix, you will have the option to depart. Any time during the nine months, you may choose to continue on to the next matrix. You may use any method you which, including trickery or special Sect or Clan powers. The first person to break into the ninth matrix, will be the second generation Blood Immortal!

“There are no rules here. Now, each of you must produce a drop of blood filled with your essence. It will magically transform into a Blood Divinity. There are countless types of Blood Divinity. As for which one your blood will create… that will be dependent on luck and fate.

“Do not forget, absorbing spiritual energy will cause your Blood Divinity to grow more powerful. This is because your Blood Divinity… is a key factor in whether or not you acquire the Legacy. And now, let the Eighth Blood Immortal Legacy tournament… begin!”

As soon as the voice finished speaking, eight dark green beams of light shot out from the altar and flew down toward Meng Hao and the others.

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# Chapter 121: Meng Hao’s Blood Divinity

Meng Hao’s heart pounded as he stood there. He took a deep breath. As soon as he had stepped foot into the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament, he’d found that his Cultivation base was completely restored. No longer was he stuck at the seventh level of Qi Condensation, but rather, was back at the early Foundation Establishment stage.

After hearing the words spoken by the archaic voice, Meng Hao knew why Chu Yuyan had wanted to enter this place.

“This place can recover your Cultivation base. If it stays that way after leaving, then that was obviously Chu Yuyan’s first goal. Furthermore, there must be some tricky ways that she could… alert people on the outside as to her identity, and then figure out a way to lead them to the volcano.” His eyes flashed as he looked at the dark green beam of light in front of him.

The dark green light was a formless mass, blurry and indistinct, as if life were brewing inside.

The other seven blurry figures around him seemed to be similarly studying the dark green lights. Soon, one of the figures spit out a mouthful of blood, which was absorbed by the green light. The light turned the color of blood, and then the cry of a phoenix sounded out from within. The clear sound filled the area as a miniature, finger-sized Blood Phoenix flew out and circled around.

When the Blood Phoenix emerged, the Cultivators surrounding the seven Blood Immortal Legacy zones throughout the Southern Domain were instantly shocked.

On the blood screen above each of the seven locations, images appeared… of Meng Hao and the eight others inside the Blood Immortal world.

The Blood Immortal Legacy tournament was very unique; outsiders were able to observe what was going on inside. When the competitors charged into the spell matrixes, people observing would be able to see it clearly. Although they couldn't make out all the details, they would be able to see who succeeded and who didn't.

Anyone with skill would also be able to observe the skill matrixes and learn from them. Everyone heard the archaic voice say that there were no rules; no matter the method used, the first person to pass the ninth spell matrix would be the second generation Blood Immortal.

A Legacy tournament with no rules. In some ways, this revealed the arrogance and power of the Blood Immortal. Any Cultivator in the world could observe and study the nine matrixes, and yet despite that, in tens of thousands of years, and seven tournaments, no one had ever successfully passed the ninth matrix. Anyone who had managed to enter it, had died.

Because of the open nature of the Legacy tournament, anyone who participated came with ample preparations. Many of the people who watched on the outside had heard various rumors about the Legacy of the Blood Immortal. This was why when the Blood Phoenix emerged, many people were surprised.

"So a Blood Phoenix emerged! Among the Blood Divinities, the Blood Phoenix and the Blood Dragon both grow very quickly. I remember reading in the ancient records about the sixth Legacy tournament, when a Blood Phoenix ended up being as powerful as a Nascent Soul eccentric!"

"I wonder which Sect's disciple it was who got so lucky this time…"

A buzz of conversation arose around the seven Legacy tournament zones. Near the fifth zone, Eccentric Song of the Song Clang stood there looking pleased. He said nothing, but based on tiny clues he'd spotted, he knew that the person who had acquired the Blood Phoenix was his fellow Clan member Song Jia. 1

“Excellent,” he thought. “Maybe there really will be a chance for that Song Jia girl to acquire the Legacy.” His eyes shined with anticipation.

Meanwhile back inside the Legacy zone, the second, third and fourth competitors spit heart’s blood into the dark green beams. Each of them received different Blood Divinities.

One was a majestic blood-red deer. The second was a Blood Tiger, which let out a roar when it appeared. But these two paled in comparison to the third. The third Blood Divinity was a Blood Dragon!

Its appearance was fierce, and its howls shook the entire area. A commotion instantly broke out in the outside world.

“A Blood Dragon!!”

“Four thousand years ago, in the seventh Blood Immortal Legacy tournament, a Chosen from the Li Clan acquired a Blood Dragon. He was the first person from time immemorial to pass the eighth matrix!!”

Outside of the Legacy zone, the two old members of the Li Clan stood there with expressionless faces. The appearance of the Blood Dragon was not surprising to them at all. The person who had acquired it was none other than one of the Li Clan’s Chosen of the current generation, Li Daoyi. 2

Before the roaring could die down, the fifth, sixth and seventh Blood Deities appeared within the Legacy zone. One was a Xuanwu turtle, the other a Blood Wolf, and the last was… shockingly… a tiny blood-colored sprite!

The blood-colored sprite looked similar to the Nascent Soul of a Cultivator. Its appearance sent the Cultivators in the outside world reeling in shock. Even the two old members of the Li Clan looked amazed. Every member of every Clan and Sect that was present were mind-blown.

“Since ancient times, there has never been a human-shaped Blood Divinity, not in any of the seven tournaments!”

“It’s hard to say what this Blood Divinity will grow into, it’s never been seen before. Who knows if it can measure up to the Blood Phoenix and Blood Dragon.”

As the buzz of conversation filled the air, the Elder from the most mysterious of the five great Sects, the Blood Demon Sect, sat cross-legged looking at the scene on the blood screen. His eyes were fixed on the blurry figure which had acquired the blood-colored sprite. A moment passed, and he nodded. He knew that this person was none other than his Sect’s disciple.

Within the Blood Immortal Legacy Zone, Meng Hao looked at the seven other people and the different Blood Divinities that had emerged to hover around their blurry figures. They all looked beyond ordinary in every way.

“These people must all be various Chosen from the Southern Domain….” Meng Hao looked over them. “I wonder what will emerge for me!?” His eyes glittering, he pushed down on his chest. His Cultivation base shuddered, and he coughed up a mouthful of blood.

The blood was from his Cultivation base, and it was instantly sucked in by the dark green glow. At the moment, it was not just he who was concentrating on the result; the other seven people were watching, as well as everyone in the outside world. There was no more buzz of conversation outside; everyone watched Meng Hao on the giant screen.

The black glow immediately turned the color of blood, whereupon a faint but powerful cry rang out from within. As soon as they heard the sound, the seven people, as well as the tiny deer-shaped Blood Divinity, all began to tremble. Next, the Blood Wolf, the Xuanwu Turtle, and the Blood Tiger all seemed as if they couldn’t take the sound, and began to shake.

The Blood Dragon and Blood Phoenix both began to emit looks of hostility, glaring toward Meng Hao. Only the blood-colored sprite looked on expressionlessly, not even moving.

“What will emerge for this person…. It’s a tiny little roar, but the Blood Divinities all seem shaken. Even the Blood Dragon and Blood Phoenix appear hostile….”

“Could it be another Blood Divinity that has never before appeared?”

It was at this moment that a roaring filled the air, and the bloody glow in front of Meng Hao began to ripple. An instant later, his Blood Divinity appeared in front of him. It was …. a tiny puppy with glistening eyes, the size of a finger! 3

The puppy looked ordinary in every way. There didn’t seem to be anything special about it at all. However, as soon as it appeared, the hostility within the Blood Phoenix and Blood Dragon seemed to grow stronger.

“It’s a dog!”

“That’s definitely never appeared before. I’ve never even heard of such a thing. From the very first Blood Immortal Legacy tournament to now, there has never been a Blood Divinity which was a dog!”

Around the seven Legacy zones in the Southern Domain, the sound of joking and laughter immediately rose up. Inside, everything was quiet. Meng Hao looked at the puppy floating in front of him, then around at the other Blood Divinities. His brow furrowed.

He lifted up his right hand, and the puppy immediately jumped onto his palm. It seemed to be shivering as if it were cold, and looked frightened. It looked up at Meng Hao with adulation, then lowered its head and licked his palm with its tiny tongue.

At the same time, the seven people stepped forward almost at exactly the same time, disappearing into the first spell matrix.

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed. He didn’t really know much about this place, so he didn’t want to act rashly. After looking around for a moment, he realized that the spiritual energy here was quite thick, much more so than in the outside world. It was almost as thick as the spiritual energy in the valley where he had reached Foundation Establishment.

There were no mountains or seas visible, just emptiness. There were only the nine spell matrixes and the dark green sacrificial altar.

Meng Hao thought back to what the archaic voice had said. “My hopes of acquiring the Legacy all rest on this dog?” He looked down for a moment at the puppy in his palm. Then he looked back up, and without any hesitation, walked forward into the first matrix. When he did, the world dissolved around him, then reformed into a world filled with the Immortal mountains and buildings.

In this world, everything was still and quiet. Looking around, he saw that Immortal mountains stretched out like a forest in every direction, covered with various buildings. This was not a place of mortals, but somewhere to be inhabited by Immortals. The spiritual energy of heaven and earth was very dense. In fact, it seemed about ten times as thick as that outside. It was so thick that it formed a thin fog which was visible everywhere.

“Where am I…?” said Meng Hao, looking around in shock. He gazed about with his Spiritual Sense, then took a deep breath and began to absorb the spiritual energy. It poured into him, racing into his Cultivation base, and then his golden Dao Pillar. Some of it leaked back out from the crack in the Dao Pillar.

“Such thick spiritual energy. If my Dao Pillar didn’t leak spiritual energy, then practicing Cultivation in here for one day would be like practicing for a month in the outside world.” His spirits were roused at this thought. Suddenly, he noticed that the puppy in his palm looked very happy. It appeared to be absorbing the spiritual energy, too. As it did, it’s body was gradually growing bigger. Fluffy fur was beginning to appear on its skin, making it look very cute.

Meng Hao watched on for a while, lost in thought.

“This dog will grow up with me. But from the look of its breathing technique, it will do so with the same speed as me. Could it be… that because of absorbing my heart’s blood, it has the same level of latent talent as me?” His eyes flashed, and he began to move forward. At his side ran the little puppy, which was now about two finger lengths in size. By straining to its limit, it was just barely able to keep up.

1. Song Jia’s name in Chinese is (sòng jiā) – Song is a family name. Jia means “excellent”

2. Li Daoyi’s name in Chinese is (lǐ dào yī) – Li is a common family name. Dao is the same character as in The Dao, and means “way” or “path.” Yi means “one”

3. If you’re interested in the roles of dogs in Chinese mythology, you can check out this article

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# Chapter 122: Reaching an Agreement

Time slipped by. Soon, three days had passed. Meng Hao frowned. He found that no matter how far or where he flew, this place seemed to have no end. It apparently had no borders. Furthermore, as time passed, there seemed to be less and less spiritual energy.

“How do I break through the first spell matrix….?” His brow furrowed, Meng Hao sat down cross-legged on a mountain peak. His eyes flashed as he looked around.

Meanwhile, outside the Legacy zone, the Cultivators surrounding the seven altars throughout the Southern Domain were all watching the scene on the blood screens. They could clearly see that seven of the blurry figures, upon entering the first matrix, immediately sat down cross-legged and began to meditate. However, the eighth and last person to enter starting flying around in seemingly random directions. A long time passed before he sat down and began to meditate.

“What Sect is that last person from? Doesn’t he understand how the first matrix works? Oh I know. He must be a rogue Cultivator. He somehow accidentally opened the Eighth Blood Immortal altar and started the tournament!”

“The first matrix is very simple. It’s a trial of latent talent. Basically, the first matrix will cause the Blood Divinity to grow. The Cultivators must snatch up as much spiritual energy as possible. That’s the key to breaking through the rest of the matrixes.” Conversations like this broke out among the Cultivators, who discussed things in hushed tones. Within the Legacy zone, Meng Hao lifted his head.

“This is weird. The spiritual energy in this place seems to be divided into eight… Including me, eight people entered.” Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed. He took in a deep breath and began to absorb as much spiritual energy as possible.

Although he didn’t quite know how to break through the first matrix, he was beginning to form a guess. The spiritual energy quickly began to disappear. Meng Hao closed his eyes, and five days passed.

On the fifth day, he continued to suck in as much spiritual energy as he could. His golden Dao Pillar gleamed brightly. In fact, it seemed as if the beginnings of a second Dao Pillar were forming.

As for the puppy, during these five days it had also been absorbing energy, much like Meng Hao. Its body was larger now. It was about the size of Meng Hao’s hand. Soon, all of the spiritual energy in the place was completely gone. A roaring sound filled the air, and the surrounding Immortal mountains and buildings began to collapse, crumbling down to form a large platform. Meng Hao opened his eyes to find himself sitting cross-legged on the platform.

Around him, the seven other people opened their eyes. Their respective Blood Divinities had all experienced changes. They were larger and seemingly more intelligent.

As for the blood-colored sprite, its size had not changed, but it had begun to grow tentacles, which writhed about slowly, giving it a very bizarre appearance.

Meng Hao’s puppy had experienced the least change of all. It was the size of a hand, and was covered with fluffy fur. It appeared to be very frightened of the other Blood Divinities; it shrank up against Meng Hao, trembling, rubbing its head against his leg and licking his robe. Its large, glistening eyes looked extremely cute.

A glowing door existed on this platform, emitting a slight gravitational force. Obviously, this was the exit of the Legacy zone. The seven people surrounding Meng Hao stood up one by one. Obviously having no intention of leaving, they transformed into prismatic beams as they and their Blood Divinities shot on toward the second matrix.

Meng Hao was silent. He could sense that most of the seven other peoples' Blood Divinities were emitting auras of the seventh or eighth level of Qi Condensation. The Blood Dragon and Blood Phoenix, as well as the person-shaped Blood Divinity, were all at the ninth level. His puppy was the only one that was at the third or fourth level.

"My lack of understanding about this place has put me in a bad position…." Meng Hao's brow furrowed, and his eyes flickered. "But my advantage is that I am the only one who can leave the Legacy zone. If they leave, then countless others would try to enter. Therefore, they have no option of leaving." Meng Hao was silent for the space of a few breaths. Then he stood up. He didn't fly toward the second matrix, but instead vanished into the glowing door.

When he emerged, he was in the mouth of the gigantic stone face in the lake of blood. As soon as he flew out, he found that, as he suspected, his Cultivation base was indeed fully recovered. The suppressive force from before now had no effect on him.

"The Blood Divinity didn't come out with me… It seems that it can only appear within the Legacy zone." Meng Hao looked back at the altar within the lake of blood, and suddenly frowned. He saw the glowing blood screen, as well as everything that was going on inside the Legacy zone.

"So, outsiders can see what's happening…." His calm gaze flashed over the screen, and he could see seven blurry figures within the second matrix. As he looked closer, he calmed down a bit.

The images on the screen did not reveal anything about where he was; furthermore, the doorway which had led him back to the volcano was still there.

His eyes shining, he flew into the air. In the space of a few breaths, he had arrived at where Chu Yuyan was concocting the pills.

She sat there cross-legged, her face pale. As Meng Hao approached, she lifted her head and saw him flying through the air toward her. A complex expression filled her face.

“How many more days do you need before you can finish concocting the fifth pill?” said Meng Hao coolly, landing softly onto the ground. He looked at her with cold eyes.

She was silent for a long moment. Finally, she replied in a soft voice. “I will succeed within half a month.”

“Considering our situation,” said Meng Hao, “there’s no need for us to keep fighting with each other.” He looked around at the mists, which he could now see through easily.

Chu Yuyan was silent for a while. She lowered her head. “I want to get out of here, but I don’t trust you.”

“If you concoct my pill, and help me understand the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament, then I swear by my Cultivation base that I will get you out of here safely.” He looked at her.

“The oaths of Cultivators cannot be trusted,” she replied, looking up at him.

“If you want to get out of here, then you have no choice but to trust me,” said Meng Hao, his voice cool. “My benevolence has a limit. First, you went after my Cultivation base. Second, you tried to trick me regarding the Blood Immortal Legacy. If there is a third, then I will just give up my medicinal pill and simply kill you.”

Chu Yuyan sat there silently, apparently having no words to speak. Meng Hao sat down cross-legged next to her. He didn’t say anything more to try to persuade her. An entire day passed, until finally, she sighed in her heart. She was out of tricks and schemes. All of her attempts to outwit Meng Hao had failed. It was exactly as he had said… if she wanted to get out of this place, she had no choice but to trust him. Furthermore, Chu Yuyan had experienced Meng Hao’s ruthlessness and she could sense the cold killing intent within the words he had spoken.

“The nine matrixes of the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament are all different,” she began quietly. “However, the various Sects have thoroughly researched them throughout the seven past Legacy tournaments. The path you will tread, is one of seizure!

“What must be seized is the spiritual energy of heaven and earth. Not only will it help you to grow your Cultivation base, but in accordance with your latent talent, it will also facilitate the growth of your Blood Divinity.

“The growth of your Blood Divinity is very important in the nine matrixes. Over the years, the Violet Fate Sect has come to the conclusion that if you can break through the ninth matrix, then the Blood Divinity should be able to achieve a level of power equivalent to an expert halfway to the Spirit Severing stage. It can enter the Blood Immortal Legacy treasure as its owner, and become the Weapon Spirit of the treasure!

“Whoever is the master of the Weapon Spirit will have acquired the Legacy of the Blood Immortal, and will be the first person since ancient times to carry out the treasure. After that, he will be able to release the incomparable power of a half-Spirit Severing stage Blood Divinity! This half-Spirit Severing stage Blood Divinity is in fact a Dao Protector left behind by the Blood Immortal of the Ancient Temple of Doom.

“With the exception of the first matrix, the Blood Immortal’s nine matrixes all have different essences. The various Sects have gathered a variety of details regarding this.

“Through mutual cooperation, it was eventually determined that each spell matrix changes. Over the course of many races, the heart of each one has evolved. Therefore, it is difficult to determine the exact essence of each matrix.

“Whoever is first to understand the essence of any given matrix, will be the first to begin absorbing spiritual energy; furthermore, that person’s Blood Divinity will be the first to begin to grow. The spiritual energy within each matrix is limited. The more you absorb, the less others can absorb.” Chu Yuyan looked up at Meng Hao. “Regarding the details of the essences of the various matrixes of the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament, I scanned over them back in the Sect. However, I don’t remember too much. The main thing I remember is that some of the matrixes are illusions.” Having said this, she closed her eyes.

Meng Hao seemed lost in thought as Chu Yuyan’s words continued to echo in his ears. After analyzing the matter for a while, he turned and shot back toward the Blood Immortal’s sacrificial altar. Looking up at the blood screen, he saw that the seven others were still within the second matrix. He strode forward and entered the giant mouth. His eyes grew blurry, then clear again, and he was standing on the platform he’d arrived at after passing the first matrix.

As soon as he emerged, the hand-sized puppy materialized in front of him. It jumped up and down happily, then ran around him a few times, wagging its tail furiously. It seemed incredibly excited to see Meng Hao. Finally, it came to rest on Meng Hao’s feet, laying down on top of them and licking his pant leg, looking up at him with adoring eyes.

Meng Hao’s reappearance did not cause much stir in the outside world. Based on his setback in the first matrix, he was now far behind everyone else. He was clearly in eighth place.

He took in a deep breath, then turned into a beam of light as he shot into the second matrix. From the outside, this spell matrix had the appearance of a whirlpool of stars, slowly rotating. However, as soon as he entered it, the stars’ positions all seemed to change. The world warped, heaven and earth twisted bizarrely. Then everything became clear. In front of Meng Hao was a vast blood-colored ocean.

The ocean seemed limitless, its color deep crimson. Off in the distance, the sun was setting. The evening wind carried a fishy stench, and caused waves to ripple across the ocean’s gleaming surface.

The spiritual energy was thin here, not enough to absorb. It would not become thick enough to do so until the spell matrix was broken through.

Suddenly, the blood-colored puppy ran forward a few paces, then let out a few threatening yips toward the ocean. The sound carried nervousness with it, and a sense of danger. The little puppy’s fur stood up on end and quivered.

A rumbling could be heard, and the ocean began to seethe. A booming sound echoed out as an arching, dark green wooden bridge slowly rose up out of the ocean of blood. It dripped blood as it stretched up. Lightning and thunder fell from the sky.

Atop the arching wooden bridge stood a young boy with long hair. His eyes glittered coldly as he stared at Meng Hao with a vicious expression.

“One attack,” said the young boy coldly. His eyes shined with killing intent. His voice sounded old and archaic, quite in contrast with his appearance. “If you live, the second bridge shall rise. If you pass three bridges, then you can break through this matrix.”

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# Chapter 123: Converging Sense into the Form

The killing intent was incredibly powerful, seemingly capable of causing the ocean to stir. The bridge dripped with blood, and massive waves rolled out across the ocean.

After he finished speaking, the young boy lifted his hand and formed a fist, which then began to descend toward Meng Hao. The ocean of blood roared as waves surged away from the young boy.

Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed. The boy’s Cultivation base was at the late Foundation Establishment stage. But Meng Hao also knew that having entered this place, he must fight. He strode forward, followed by the puppy, who continued to let out threatening yips. Wisps of blood floated around its hand-sized body. It and Meng Hao turned into two beams of prismatic light which shot toward the young boy.

Meng Hao slapped his bag of the Cosmos, and instantly, two wooden swords flew out. Next, he spat out the Lightning Flag, which surrounded him with mist. Like arrows loosed from a bow, he and the puppy slammed into the young boy.

An explosion sounded out. Meng Hao coughed up blood, and the wooden swords went spinning out of control. The Lightning Flag’s mist began to dissipate. Meng Hao and the puppy both shook as they flew backward, spraying blood from their mouths.

The young boy looked coolly at Meng Hao, then lifted his right hand. Behind him, the sea began to roil, and a second arch bridge appeared. The young boy disappeared. On the second bridge, a young man could be seen.

This young man’s appearance was very familiar. He looked just like the boy from the first bridge, except ten years older.

“You can come fight any time you wish,” he said, his voice cool. “If my fist doesn’t kill you, then you can pass to the third bridge.” With this, he closed his eyes and stood there, motionless.

Wiping the blood from his mouth, Meng Hao sat down cross-legged on the first bridge. The attack just now seemed to have been filled with the power of the late Flawless Foundation Establishment stage. Without the protection of the Lightning Flag just now, he surely would have perished.

“No wonder the seven others still haven’t broken through the second matrix in the last day. This Blood Immortal Legacy tournament is no joke. And this is only the second matrix….” After thinking about it for a moment, Meng Hao’s eyes filled with determination.

Taking a deep breath, he consumed a medicinal pill and adjusted his Cultivation base. He also placed a medicinal pill down in front of the puppy, who lapped it up immediately, then settled down in Meng Hao’s lap to recover.

Two days later, Meng Hao’s eyes snapped open. The puppy still lay in his lap, but its injuries seemed to be more than half recovered. It leaped up. Although he hadn’t grown any larger, his aura was different than before.

It seemed as if he had grown closer to Meng Hao, and more vicious toward the rest of the world. Were it not for the high quality of the Qi Condensation level medicinal pills that Meng Hao had given him, it most likely would have perished from his injuries.

“You’re just like I used to be,” said Meng Hao softly, looking at the puppy. “Simple and ordinary, but thrust into the Cultivation world. You have no choice but to change, no choice but to grow stronger and become cold-blooded. You must learn to kill.”

The puppy gazed up at Meng Hao as if he understand his words. It licked Meng Hao’s robe, ran around him in circles a few times, then lay down at his feet.

Meng Hao’s eyes filled with a resolute look. He slowly stood up and then looked toward the second bridge. He smacked the bag of the Cosmos, and a sword rain began to fly out.

One hundred, two hundred, three hundred… five hundred flying swords circled around him! They formed into the shape of a Flying Rain-Dragon. Power from the vibrating Demonic Core within Meng Hao filled his body. He waved both hands in front of him, and the wooden swords appeared, forming the Flying Rain-Dragon’s long fangs. All of this shot at high speed toward the young man on the second bridge.

The young man’s expression did not change. He slowly waved his right hand in a casual fist attack. No waves surged out on the ocean of blood, nor was there any roaring sound; it seemed extremely simplistic in nature. However, much the same as the first young boy’s fist, it did not wait for Meng Hao’s arrival. The vanguard of Meng Hao’s flying swords began to smash to pieces, as if they were colliding with an impenetrable stone wall.

They didn’t all shatter, only the ones in the very center of the lead position. An invisible line appeared, smashing through the flying swords toward Meng Hao. Sensing the imminent deadly threat, Meng Hao threw all the power of his Cultivation base into the lightning mist and sent the two wooden swords in front of him to block. Of his own volition, the puppy flew up toward Meng Hao’s chest, using his back to form a shield. Meng Hao immediately grabbed him and threw him to the side.

A boom rang out that seemed to last forever. Blood shot from Meng Hao’s mouth, and he tumbled backward, spinning like a kite with its string cut. He landed onto the first bridge, coughing up more blood, his face pale. It seemed as if his Dao Pillar would fall to pieces at any moment.

“That attack was many times more horrific than the first attack. And yet, from what I could sense, it only contained the power of the middle Flawless Foundation Establishment stage…. Also, did this dog just jump up to protect me…?” Wiping the blood away, he looked down at the puppy who he had thrown off to the side. It looked up at him worriedly. He rubbed its furry head, then looked back at the young man.

“You somehow managed to pass,” said the young man calmly. “However, given your level of power, unless there is some mishap, you will not be able to pass the third bridge.” He waved his right hand, and immediately a third bridge appeared behind him.

Along with the appearance of the bridge, he vanished. On the third bridge appeared a middle-aged man. He looked just like the young man from the second bridge, except ten years older. Based on the emanations from his Cultivation base, Meng Hao could surmise that the man was at the same level as himself: The early Foundation Establishment stage, with one Dao Pillar! What a shock!

“This is strange,” said Meng Hao, his eyes narrowing. “Why would the third bridge have someone with a Cultivation base like this…? It seems like the order should be opposite….”

“To pass this bridge,” said the man coolly, “you must withstand one of my attacks without coughing up any blood. You have three chances. Each attack will consist of one fist strike. If you fail three times, then you will no longer be qualified to acquire the Legacy, and will be interred into the ocean of blood, and your spirit will become part of the altar.”

Meng Hao said nothing. He sat down cross-legged on the second bridge and took out some medicinal pills. He also gave several to the puppy. Watching the puppy consumed the pills, Meng Hao thought back to how it had leaped to protect him, and a warm feeling filled his heart.

After three days, Meng Hao had recovered quite a bit. The puppy once again opened its eyes, seemingly quite energetic.

Staring at the man on the third bridge, Meng Hao’s eyes filled with thought. In his mind, he reviewed his battles with the young boy from the first bridge and the young man from the second bridge, trying to piece together some clues about what was going on.

Time trickled by until another day had passed. Meng Hao's heart stirred, and he slowly raised his head. He had thought of a possible solution.

"When the boy attacked, it was with the power of the late Foundation Establishment stage, and it caused the ocean of blood to seethe. That was because the power of the attack emanated outward. As for the young man, even though he was only of the middle Foundation Establishment stage, the power of the attack did not emanate outward. And of my five hundred flying swords, only about twenty were destroyed. It forced me to directly face the fist, head on.

"In these two battles, the Cultivation bases were not the same. Clearly, the most important thing is the technique with which the Cultivation base is utilized!" Meng Hao's eyes shone with understanding. He was no idiot; he now clearly understood the answer to the problem.

"So, this man's Cultivation base is the same as mine. But, what power will he put into play…?" Meng Hao looked at him as he slowly stood up. His eyes gleamed with a strange light. At this moment, he didn't really care about the Legacy of the Blood Immortal. He had suddenly realized that within the nine matrixes…. there were invisible Legacies just about everywhere!

He did not attack immediately. Instead, he stood on the second bridge and experimented a bit. He slowly sent power emanating from this Cultivation base, then attempted to control how the power dissipated. It was very difficult, but Meng Hao was stubborn. That was a fundamental characteristic of his personality. He ignored the passage of time, and soon seven days were gone. He lifted his head. He hadn't achieved complete control, yet, only about thirty percent or so.

"I can't keep delaying. I need to check to see if my idea was correct." His eyes gleaming brightly, he walked toward the old man.

Boom!

After the space of about ten breaths, Meng Hao tumbled backward, blood spraying from his mouth and a splitting pain filling his head. He landed back on the second bridge, his body quivering, supporting himself with one hand on the greenish wood. He coughed out another mouthful of blood. Next to him, the puppy quivered. One of its legs was broken, and its aura was very weak. Meng Hao looked up slowly at the old man on the third bridge.

“First try. Failure.”

He took a deep breath and sat down cross-legged. He fed some medicinal pills to the puppy to help heal it. After all, it was just as hurt as he was. The puppy’s appearance had changed. Its fur did not look very healthy, and its eyes were dim, but its life force was powerful. Every time it recovered, it emanated more killing intent.

“That man is only at the early Foundation Establishment stage. However, his attack leaked almost no power whatsoever, plus it was filled with a very peculiar feeling…. It seemed as if the fist was not really a fist…. However, I could also tell my seven days of work paid off. I’m on the right track!” He lifted his hand and pushed down between his eyebrows, dissipating some of the pain which wracked his body.

He got to his feet and continued to attempt to exercise control over his power seepage from his Cultivation base. Seven more days passed, and Meng Hao felt that he had about fifty percent control. Although his Cultivation base had not grown, in terms of fighting strength, he had advanced by leaps and bounds.

Meng Hao looked up, his eyes glittering brightly. He and the puppy shot forward, man and dog together, charging the figure on the bridge.

Boom!

Again, it took the space of ten breaths. Meng Hao flopped backward, spinning over and over, blood showering from his mouth to stain his clothes. However, his eyes were bright.

As for the puppy, it seemed to be changing as Meng Hao gained enlightenment. Its injuries were not as severe this time. It let out a fierce little howl.

“Spiritual Sense! He’s not just coalescing his Cultivation base, he’s adding Spiritual Sense into the fist attack! That makes the fist… capable of striking directly to the Cultivation base!”

Meng Hao took in a deep breath as the glow of enlightenment filled his eyes. He suddenly understood that although the Cultivation base is of critical importance to a Cultivator, when it came to spiritual power and the techniques with which to employ it, control is the key to true might in battle!

He sat down cross-legged and closed his eyes. This time, he spent about two weeks before he opened his eyes. He had been stuck in this matrix for around a month. He had no idea how things were going for the seven others, but as far as Meng Hao was concerned, even if he was in last pace, he had acquired something incredible.

He slowly stood up, flying forward. The puppy seemed to have been reborn in accord to Meng Hao’s enlightenment. It followed Meng Hao, charging directly toward the man on the bridge.

Boom!

Meng Hao retreated backward eight steps. He slowly lifted his head. His Qi and blood roiled, but there was no trace of blood in his throat. The man pulled back his fist. Meng Hao bowed to him with clasped hands.

“You are enlightened regarding the concept of converging sense into the form; you have passed the second matrix!” The old man nodded and flicked his sleeve. The world around began to crumble.

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# Chapter 124: Breaking Through the Matrix

As the world crumbled around him, Meng Hao felt a huge wave of spiritual energy sweeping out, encircling him and the puppy. He breathed in deeply, immediately circulating his Cultivation base and absorbing large quantities of spiritual energy.

The spiritual energy was thick here, even more so than in the first matrix. He had the feeling that if he could practice Cultivation in here for a while, he wouldn't need any medicinal pills whatsoever to form his second Dao Pillar.

Unfortunately, after absorbing the spiritual energy, some of it seeped out through the crack in the Dao Pillar. If it didn't, Meng Hao was certain that given a relatively short period of time, he would be able to condense the second Dao Pillar.

"The Perfect Foundation…." A gleam of anticipation appeared in his eyes.

He wasn't the only excited one. The puppy began to absorb spiritual energy at a rapid rate. Its body slowly began to change. Its Qi grew stronger, although some of it dissipated out, just like Meng Hao's.

It didn't last very long, unfortunately. After only three days, the spiritual energy in the area was sucked dry. Meng Hao opened his eyes. He sat cross-legged on a huge platform. Joining him on the platform in various directions were four other figures, all sitting cross-legged in meditation.

At almost the same time that Meng Hao opened his eyes, they did too. All of their respective Blood Divinities were changed in some way.

Although, in terms of change, Meng Hao's puppy had experienced the most of all. It was now about half the length of an arm. It had blood-red fur, sharp teeth, and glittering claws. It now had a somewhat fierce appearance.

Its eyes were not clear as they had been; a reddish glow was visible within them, as if it had transformed after the recent life-and-death situations it had experienced. Anyone who looked at it now would be able to sense its fierceness.

This was especially true of its Qi. It now carried the strength of Foundation Establishment!

For Cultivators, reaching Foundation Establishment is very difficult; but for the Blood Divinities, the Legacy zone was a special area. Here, they could experience rapid growth. After all, they were not Cultivators, but Legacy Blood Divinities.

“These Blood Divinities increase their level so quickly. Maybe it's because of some special ability they have. Or maybe they existed in the past, then died, and these are their spirits.” Meng Hao was lost in thought for a while. Some time passed, and then he looked over his shoulder at the second matrix. There was no one inside. Up ahead in the third matrix, were three indistinct figures. Further ahead in the fourth matrix, there was one.

Those three people had obviously left the second matrix much earlier. Apparently, instead of taking a lot of time to absorb spiritual energy, they preferred to charge ahead to gain some distance.

Meng Hao breathed in deeply, and then slowly stood up. His eyes gleamed as he strode forward into the third matrix.

Meanwhile in the world outside of the Blood Immortal Legacy zone, nearly ten thousand Cultivators had gathered around to watch the scenes playing out on the blood screen. The sound of conversations began to rise.

“The news is already spreading. The identities of most of the people inside have already been discovered. Who would have imagined that the person in first place is Li Daoyi, Dao Child of the Li Clan!? It's hard to say if he'll be able to acquire the Legacy in the end, but he certainly seems to have the best chance.”

“How detestable! The great Clans and Sects are always lording it over the Legacies. They never give anyone else the slightest chance! If only I were the person who had discovered the location of the Blood Immortal’s eighth sacrificial altar. The very least benefit is that there wouldn’t have been anyone to fight over it with.”

“What’s the use of even thinking about it? All the people who enter the matrixes are Chosen from various Sects and Clans. Even if you didn’t have to fight over it, compared to those Chosen, you’re too weak. Look, that guy is obviously the one who opened the Blood Immortal’s eighth sacrificial altar, and yet see how much time he took in the second matrix. Based on that, there’s no way he can pass through the third.”

Most of the discussions that filled the areas surrounding the Southern Domain’s Blood Immortal Legacy zones went something like this.

Within the fourth matrix was Li Daoyi, looking dashing and handsome in his long, yellow robe. He peered calmly off into the distance. A desert stretched out as far as the eye could see.

“Long ago, the Patriarch left behind a decree and a prophecy. The Blood Immortal would emerge from the Li Clan. This Legacy belongs to me. As for the others… well, their lives will be under my control within the sixth matrix.” His expression calm, he stepped forward.

Back in the third matrix, Meng Hao’s brow furrowed slightly. Next to him, the dog let out a threatening howl as it stared at a massive tree which had appeared up ahead.

Underneath the tree was a Go board, upon which were a myriad of Go pieces, spread out like the stars in the sky. Black was clearly in the losing position. There was one white piece sitting next to the board, as if it were waiting for someone to pick it up and play it.

Surrounding the Go board were several hundred trees, each one about as tall as a person. The whole place seemed deserted. The presence of the huge tree made it seem even more bizarre.

The archaic voice filled the air: “In the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament, the character ‘blood’ emphasizes killing. If you desire to acquire the Legacy but have insufficient killing intent, then it will be very difficult for you. This matrix emphasises killing. However, the one who kills must have a cold heart and a calm spirit. Place the white Go piece onto the board, and you will win this game of death!

“You have one chance. If you wish to forfeit, you must sacrifice one hundred years of longevity, and lose your chance at acquiring the Legacy.” The instant the voice finished speaking, one of the trees up ahead suddenly exploded into pieces. From within emerged a phantom emanating the Qi of Foundation Establishment, the same as Meng Hao’s Cultivation base.

The phantom was blurry, except for a pair of blood-red eyes which emanated a fierce killing aura. It immediately raced toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered sharply. Next to him, the puppy let out sharp yapping sounds as it charged forward with him.

A booming sounded out. A moment later, Meng Hao watched as the Foundation Establishment phantom dispersed into strands of spiritual energy, which then shot toward Meng Hao. As this happened, popping sounds rang out as three more trees began to split apart.

After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, blood seeped out of the corners of Meng Hao’s mouth. The puppy was injured and bleeding, although its appearance was as fierce as ever as it looked around. Five Foundation Establishment phantoms had appeared.

More time passed. It was hard to tell exactly how long. Meng Hao coughed up some more blood. He had fought his way through the trees to a position not quite six thousand meters away from the Go board and the large tree. His eyes were bloodshot as he raced through the world of the third matrix.

He was currently surrounded by twelve Foundation Establishment phantoms, each of whom emitted killing intent which billowed into the sky.

The puppy yipped next to him, and then a blood-colored beam flashed. Its sharp teeth crunched into the neck of one of the Foundation Establishment phantoms. Together, the two of them had slaughtered their way forward, at the same time trying to absorb as much spiritual energy as possible from this place. By now, the puppy had already reached the middle Foundation Establishment stage, and was continuing to grow. Its fierceness was now even more apparent.

Several hours later, Meng Hao staggered along, coughing up some blood. Up ahead, a Foundation Establishment phantom was on its last legs, panting. It seemed to use all the power it could possibly muster to dash forward. As it did, Meng Hao's killing intent flared. His right hand formed into a fist and, ignoring the incoming sword aura, punched his fist toward the phantom's chest. His fist suddenly opened, and a Wind Blade shot out with a boom. Meng Hao coughed up more blood. At the same time, the Foundation Establishment phantom trembled and then exploded.

Not too far away, the puppy was an unstoppable blood-red glow. It used its sharp claws and teeth to rip the Foundation Establishment phantoms to shreds. Then, it rapidly absorbed their spiritual energy and returned to Meng Hao's side.

Its body was covered with wounds which oozed blood. Its Qi was weak, but its ferocity was a strong as ever; it seemed to have been baptized in blood.

Meng Hao swallowed some medicinal pills, and then tossed some down to the puppy. His clothes were torn and ripped, but his eyes gleamed. Lifting his head, he saw that the distance between himself and the tree was now less than six thousand meters. It was at this time that a roaring sound filled the air. Twenty Foundation Establishment phantoms appeared, racing at full speed toward Meng Hao.

He took in a deep breath, fatigue covering his face, but his eyes flashing. He lifted his hand and the lightning mist appeared. Electricity surrounded him as he charged forward to battle the phantoms.

Wounds led to wounds, battles led to battles. Four hours passed. Meng Hao's face was white. He was now twenty-five hundred meters from the large tree. He raced backward with the puppy, away from the Foundation Establishment phantoms. One by one, they stopped, transforming back into trees.

Some distance away from them, Meng Hao sat down cross-legged and ate some medicinal pills to heal his wounds. Next to him, the puppy consumed quite a few as well, and began to recover quickly. Four days passed before Meng Hao suddenly opened his eyes. The puppy looked even more ferocious as the two of them once again charged into battle.

This time, they fought to within fifteen hundred meters of the tree, until they could proceed no further, whereupon they fell back.

In the following days, Meng Hao and the puppy continued to fight and rest. Meng Hao's eyes grew more and more ruthless, his attacks, more and more decisive. At this point, he had roughly seventy percent control over his Cultivation base. Furthermore, regardless of which technique he used, he imbued it with Spiritual Sense.

As for the puppy, its body was now as long as an arm. It appeared even more ferocious; its claws were fully grown out, as had its sharp teeth. It appeared as if it could rip anything to shreds. Its eyes glowed bright red, making it look even more savage.

Fifteen hundred meters, nine hundred meters, three hundred meters…. Meng Hao had been stuck in this matrix for more than a month. Soon, he reached a position sixty meters away from the large tree. The puppy let loose a howl and latched onto the corner of Meng Hao's robe with its teeth, dragging him forward. Meng Hao didn't mind at all. He let the puppy drag him, and the two of them shot forward, blasting through the defending Foundation Establishment phantoms, passing over the sixty meter mark.

As they approached the tree, the puppy loosened its mouth, then spun and charged back into the Foundation Establishment phantoms. Meng Hao didn't hesitate; he snatched up the white Go piece. His gaze swept across the Go board, and then he placed the piece down.

As soon as it touched the board, this entire world grew quiet. Everything in front of Meng Hao looked like a mirror that was shattering. Boundless spiritual energy surged into him.

He knew that he had passed through the third matrix.

When this happened, the Cultivators outside of the seven Blood Immortal Legacy zones around the Southern Domain flew into an uproar:

“The Li Clan Dao Child, Li Daoyi, broke through the fourth matrix. It took him a month…”

“That’s Wang Wu’de of the Blood Demon Sect. He’s right behind Li Daoyi. He was the second to enter the fourth matrix. Everyone else is stuck in the third matrix. I wonder who will be the third person to….”

“It’s got to be Wang Lihai. After all, he’s a Dao Child. The Wang Clan really isn’t holding anything back. They sent a Dao Child… ahh??”

“Three people just came out at the same time! That’s Wang Lihai and Song Jia, and that other person is… wow, it’s him?!”

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# Chapter 125: This Matrix Was Made for It

Boundless spiritual energy poured into Meng Hao’s Cultivation base. Deep inside, his Second Dao pillar slowly grew more and more solid.

“If the spiritual energy weren’t constantly leaking, I could form the second Dao Pillar at any time!” Meng Hao sighed.

A few days later, he opened his glittering eyes. He had no idea how much of a stir he had caused in the outside world by stepping out of the third matrix at the same time as Wang Lihai and Song Jia.

Some people were speculating that Meng Hao must be a Chosen from some Sect. However, there was no way to confirm this, which just fuelled the guesses and rumors. Meng Hao’s performance made him somewhat of a dark horse.

Amidst the various discussions, the common conclusion reached was that Wang Lihai was having some problems. Were it not for that, he would have emerged much earlier.

Meng Hao looked at the puppy in front of him, and a warm look appeared on his face.

The puppy was now much bigger. It was about half the size of a person, like a baby ox. Thick, elegant, red fur covered its sturdy body, which seemed to brim with intense power. When it opened its mouth, its teeth seemed as sharp as swords. Its claws were as thick as human fists, and seemed sharp enough to rip open heaven and earth. Its eyes were crimson red, making it appear ferocious to the extreme. As it stood there, it would cause anyone to be shocked.

In fact, it was no longer a puppy. It had become a full grown dog, a Blood Mastiff!

It stood there, looking about coldly, as if the place where it stood was about to be encroached upon by others. If anyone attempted to approach Meng Hao, it would rip that person into pieces.

Meng Hao looked at the mastiff, and his expression grew warmer. In just a few months, it had grown from a tiny, unassuming puppy, into this current state. As they had fought their way through the various matrixes, they had formed a strange friendship.

They were wounded together, they charged forth together. They experienced life and death struggles, and baptism by blood, all together.

As if it could sense Meng Hao's gaze, the mastiff turned its head and looked at him. The ferociousness instantly disappeared, replaced with happiness. Wagging its tail vigorously, it ran over to Meng Hao, stuck out its tongue, and licked his hand, looking at him with puppy dog eyes.

A smile broke out on Meng Hao's face. When he ruffled the fur on the mastiff's head, and saw the look of pleasure on its face, he couldn't help but laugh.

Raising his head, Meng Hao looked back at the third matrix. There were still three people stuck inside. Ahead in the fourth matrix were three indistinct figures. Further ahead in the fifth, there was only one.

Meng Hao stood up, patting the mastiff and then striding, not into the fourth matrix, but into the glowing exit door. When he emerged, he was back in the volcano.

Months had passed during which Meng Hao hadn't thought too much about the matter of his pill. He transformed into a colorful beam of light which shot toward Chu Yuyan. She sat there, eyes closed, meditating. As soon as

Meng Hao arrived, she opened her eyes. Their gazes met, and then Chu Yuyan looked to the side. She lifted her hand up, and a medicinal pill flew out. Meng Hao snatched it. It was none other than the fifth minor pill.

His face was calm as he put the pill into his bag of the cosmos, then turned and disappeared. Not much time passed before he returned. When he did, he flicked his sleeve, and seven pills shot forward and landed in front of Chu Yuyan.

“These seven pills concocted together are the Seven Thunders Pill,” he said. He threw her a jade slip, which described the concoction formula. The exact amount of time needed to concoct the pill, however, had been erased by Meng Hao.

“Who is in first place?” asked Chu Yuyan, looking at Meng Hao and temporarily ignoring the Seven Thunders Pill formula.

“I can’t see what he looks like, but his Blood Divinity is a dragon.”

She thought for a moment. “He must be from the Li Clan.” After this, she looked down and began to study the jade slip.

Meng Hao was silent for a while. Then, he slowly said, “You have one chance. If you fail, I don’t have enough ingredients for a second try.” He looked at her for a moment, then turned around and became a beam of light which disappeared into the distance. His eyes sparkled. “When she finishes the pill, she will no doubt consider consuming it. However, the turtle shell makes it quite clear that it takes about three months to use the seven minor pills to concoct the final pill…. She doesn’t know this, so I will be sure to be there at the key moment.” As he thought about this, he flew up to the glowing shield above the mists. He examined it carefully again, then shot back down to the Blood Immortal’s sacrificial altar. Without hesitation, he re-entered the Legacy zone.

Back on the wide platform, the mastiff instantly reappeared. It now exuded the powerful pressure of the late Foundation Establishment stage, which didn’t affect Meng Hao in the least bit. Meng Hao took a deep breath. Then his body flashed as he and the mastiff flew into the fourth matrix.

A vast, endless desert stretched out as far as the eye could see. Even though no scorching sun was visible in the sky, suffocating heat rippled throughout this world. It was as if the entire place were a giant steamer basket, intent on cooking everything inside until it withered up.

Meng Hao examined his surroundings, his heart filled with vigilance. After having passed through the second and third matrixes, he now understood a bit more how they worked. However, this desert was completely silent; not a shadow of a moving thing could be seen. No archaic voice echoed out to an explanation.

Meng Hao sat there contemplatively for a while, then lifted his foot and took a step forward. The mastiff walked quickly by his side. Man and dog, together they walked forward into the desolate and uninhabited desert. After he had taken a few steps, Meng Hao looked back at the path they had trod, and noticed that the footprints he had left behind had turned black.

Then, a black aura rose up from the footprints; the surrounding sand began to emanate a buzzing sound. From the speed with which the aura began to dissipate, it seemed as if it didn’t dare to even approach Meng Hao.

Suddenly, the black aura began to transform into a flower of three petals, which had the appearance of a demonic face. Then it disappeared.

Seeing this, Meng Hao eye’s narrowed. Suddenly, the mastiff began to howl. Looking off into the distance, Meng Hao saw a massive group of brown scorpions scurrying toward him. They seemed to be without number as they shot toward him from off in the horizon.

The mastiff flew up into the air, roaring. Above, the sky started to grow dark, as if evening were falling. But it was not evening, and if you looked closely at what above appeared to be dark storm clouds, you would see they were in fact clouds of winged scorpions, screaming through the air toward Meng Hao. In an instant, they had surrounded him, blotting out the sky completely.

“Poison….” thought Meng Hao. Looking back at his footprints he saw that the sand there was completely black. He turned and flicked his sleeve, comforting the mastiff, then walked toward the incoming scorpions.

The mastiff let out a threatening growl, following Meng Hao and eyeing the scorpions coldly.

But, as soon as Meng Hao neared them, they immediately fell back, emitting shrill, hissing shrieks. It seemed as if they didn’t dare to even come close to Meng Hao.

He didn’t slow down even the least bit. He walked forward, sending the scorpions into frenzied retreat. Sometimes a scorpion wasn’t fast enough. Immediately, a red tendril would emerge from the top of Meng Hao’s head and stab into its body, whereupon it would melt into a pool of black blood that sank into the sand.

It wasn’t just the land-based scorpions that acted in this way; the flying scorpions also gave him wide berth, not daring to get too close. Along with the mastiff, Meng Hao walked straight through all of them.

He walked across the land, surrounded by darkness. It seemed as if the poison in this place had no way to resist the power of the poison within Meng Hao’s body, and had no choice but to disperse in front of him.

Within Meng Hao’s two eyes appeared flickering flowers in the shape of laughing-crying demonic faces. Behind him gradually appeared… a three-colored Resurrection Lily!

The three-colors of the Resurrection Lily interlocked with each other and glimmered, making it impossible for any other poisons to exist nearby it.

Meng Hao’s face was expressionless. After he had walked for a day, an endless sea of vipers appeared in front of him. An acrid wind washed across his face. However, he just continued to walk forward, as if he hadn’t even noticed. When he approached, the vipers instantly began to twist and writhe, then let out anxious hissing noises as they slithered away. Some of them even allowed him to step directly onto their bodies. They would quiver, but offer no resistance. After he passed by they seemed to recover a bit.

It appeared as if within Meng Hao’s body existed the power of the sovereign of poisons. Facing this power, any other poison or poisonous creature had no choice but to lower its head in submission.

In contrast to Meng Hao, Wang Lihai proceeded through the desert with a frown, frequently consuming poison dispelling pills. In the seven previous Legacy tournaments of the past tens of thousands of years, this poison desert had appeared twice. The great Clans and Sects had taken special note of it. It didn’t appear every single time, because the spell matrixes often changed. But when it did, one needed to be completely prepared.

Even still, poison repelling pills were never completely effective, or were minimally effective against certain poisons. For example, at the moment Wang Lihai faced up against a thick poison mist.

Looking at it, his brow furrowed anxiously. From the first time he had stepped foot outside of the Wang Clan until now, he had never seen anything like it. He continued to wonder why the Patriarch had insisted that he be the one to come here. Thinking back to the look in the man’s eyes, there had to be some reason.

“There’s no way that I’ll actually die in here, is there?” His eyes flickered with a strange light.

Song Jia was also facing the poison mist in the fourth matrix. She had a beautiful face and an otherworldly countenance. Right now, a frown covered her face, despite the fact that a softly rippling shield surrounded her, protecting her.

The others who were in the fourth matrix were in similar situations. Time passed, and they slowly proceeded. Even the sand beneath their feet was poison, and they knew that if they were not cautious, they would die.

It can be said that without proper preparations, the fourth matrix is without a doubt a matrix of death. In fact, even having prepared, poison repelling items became less and less effective the further into the desert you went. You would have to rely on your Cultivation base, and your luck.

But Meng Hao was different…. He walked forward through the poison mist, his face expressionless. He drew in a breath, but the poison mist did nothing but float away from him. In fact, the air was completely clear for a space of thirty meters in all directions.

The mastiff followed Meng Hao eagerly. It seemed to be quite happy to take such a leisurely stroll through this matrix. It pounced forward and stepped down on a poison creature, batting it back and forth between its paws. It seemed to be having a lot of fun. It looked at Meng Hao, then bounded after him.

Seven days passed, and Meng Hao was already far, far ahead of any of the others. In the depths of the desert, he slowly stopped walking, looking forward in amazement. Something very strange had just appeared in front of him.

There, in an empty stretch of desert, was a place with no sand. It contained only a single flower.

This flower… had four petals that were composed of four colors. Its leaves were emerald green, and its petals had the appearance of a demonic face that was both crying and laughing at the same time…. This was none other than a four-colored Resurrection Lily.

A Resurrection Lily growing here, in this desert, in this spell matrix.

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# Chapter 126: Out of Nowhere

On the opposite shore is a flower; it blooms with seven colors; its name means Immortal Ascension. 1

Every Resurrection Lily in the world feeds on the life of someone powerful, is watered with that person’s blood. As a result of the countless condensations of mystical will, it lives, going from one color to another, seven in all.

Meng Hao had been infected with a three-colored Resurrection Lily. In front of him, was a four-colored Resurrection Lily. Complicated feelings arose inside him. He could clearly sense that this flower had once been just like him, a Cultivator.

As soon as he caught sight of the Resurrection Lily, a three-colored mist emerged from the top of his head and congealed into a beautiful three-colored Resurrection Lily. It swayed back and forth. The petals formed a demonic face that seemed to wish to cry, but didn’t. It was as if recalling its life made it wish to weep, but at the same time, it was unwilling to.

Gradually, the four-colored Resurrection Lily in front of Meng Hao also began to sway back and forth. Eventually, Meng Hao realized that standing on top of the flower was the dim image of a man in a white robe. He stood there silently, and though his figure was indistinct, he was looking directly at Meng Hao.

They seemed to be gazing at each other through time, from opposite shores of a river. A long moment passed, and finally the white-robed man sighed. He lifted his right hand and waved it; next to him in the sand appeared a glowing door.

People who share the same fate have no need to make things difficult for each other. The glowing door led out; stepping through it meant leaving the fourth matrix.

As soon as the glowing door appeared, the white-robed man vanished. The only thing left behind was the Resurrection Lily, swaying back and forth slowly. It looked like it wanted to cry, and yet at the same time, didn’t want to.

Meng Hao was silent for a moment. Then, he clasped his hands and bowed deeply. With that, he lifted his head and walked through the glowing door, his mood mixed and complex. The world around him fragmented, then came back together. He was on a large platform filled with dense spiritual energy that immediately enveloped him and the mastiff.

Ahead of him was the fifth matrix and Li Daoyi. Everyone else was stuck behind Meng Hao in the fourth matrix. To emerge from the fourth matrix in fewer than ten days was something that had never happened during all the Legacy tournaments since ancient times. Meng Hao had charged through the fourth matrix faster than anyone else in history!

Outside in the Southern Domain, Meng Hao’s appearance caused an uproar. Everyone watching the blood screens outside the Blood Immortal Legacy zones stared at Meng Hao’s indistinct figure, shocked. They simply couldn’t believe it.

“Seven days! This person charged through the fourth matrix in seven day! How did he do it? In the history of the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament, something like this has never happened!”

“Based on his performance in the fourth matrix, he’s now superseded all those others! Now, the only person in front of him is Li Daoyi! If he can do as well in the fifth matrix, then even if he doesn’t acquire the Legacy of the Blood Immortal, he’ll still be famous in all the Southern Domain.”

“Where is this guy from? I can’t believe that he has no history…. Unless… unless he’s from the Black Sieve Sect. After all, when the seven previous

Blood Immortal Legacy zones opened, the Black Sieve Sect never showed up!”

Amidst the continuous uproar, Eccentric Song stared at the indistinct form of Meng Hao as he sat meditating. It wasn’t just him. Wu Dingqiu of the Violet Fate Sect, Zhao Shanling from the Golden Frost Sect and even Zhou Yanyun of the Solitary Sword sect as well as Chen Fan, were all paying very close attention to Meng Hao.

Of course, none of them had any way to know that each and every one of them had met him before.

Wang Tengfei glanced at Meng Hao, his hands clasped together tightly. He had no way to recognize him either, and in any case, was paying more attention to his brother Wang Lihai.

In the Li Clan, frowns had appeared on the faces of the two old Nascent Soul Cultivators. They were now feeling a bit threatened by Meng Hao.

While the outside world buzzed about Meng Hao getting through the fourth matrix in seven days, he sat meditating, absorbing the boundless spiritual energy of heaven and earth as quickly as possible. The outline of his second Dao Pillar was becoming more and more distinct. His mastiff was also absorbing spiritual energy rapidly. Soon it was as large as a person. Standing next to Meng Hao, who was sitting cross-legged, it looked quite fear-inspiring.

It had a thick, luxurious coat of blood-red fur covering his body, and even his face. Visible through the fur covering its head were two blood-red eyes that shone with a cold, blood-thirsty light. Its claws were as sharp as flying swords, and seemed capable of ripping apart heaven and earth. When it opened its mouth, the first thing you saw were long, sharp teeth, seemingly capable of ripping apart any living thing.

Meng Hao continued to meditate for eight days after leaving the fourth matrix. Eventually, the air rippled, and Wang Lihai emerged. When he did, he looked at Meng Hao with surprise. He had assumed that he would be the first person after Li Daoyi to emerge from the fourth matrix. Having passed through the matrix in half a month should have caused quite a stir outside. However… any stir he might have caused was already stolen by Meng Hao.

He looked closely at Meng Hao for a moment, and then sat down cross-legged to meditate. Three more days passed before Song Jia came out. She staggered a bit, blood oozing out of her mouth, before sitting down cross-legged to begin breathing exercises.

Meng Hao opened his eyes. The spiritual energy in this place was dissipating. He muttered to himself for a moment. The outline of his second Dao Pillar was almost completely formed. If the surrounding spiritual energy remained as thick as it had at the outset, then he would only need half a month to completely solidify the Dao Pillar.

But the spiritual energy was thin now, and would require time to replenish.

“Perfect Foundation….” Again, Meng Hao’s desire for the Perfect Foundation grew.

Suddenly, his mastiff raised its head toward the heavens and let out an astonishing roar. Meng Hao, as well as the others on the platform, instantly looked over.

What they saw was the Mastiff’s aura growing more and more powerful. Its body suddenly grew another three meters longer. Its appearance was now thoroughly frightening. Such growth would be astonishing enough, but there was more. Multiple blood-red bone spurs suddenly grew out of its legs, and its teeth grew so long that it didn’t even have to open its mouth for them to be seen. One look would cause anyone’s heart to thump.

There was a roaring sound as its Cultivation base rose. In an instant, it no longer emitted the aura of the Foundation Establishment stage, but… the Core Formation stage!

The outside world once again erupted in shock.

“Core Formation!! This guy’s Blood Divinity is the second to reach Core Formation!”

“It seems he is the only person who will be able to give Li Daoyi a run for his money! Who is this guy…?”

Meng Hao looked at his mastiff’s fearsome appearance and shocking aura, and sighed in his heart. The dog could only exist in this place, and couldn’t be taken out. If it could, then based on the friendship that had developed between the two of them, Meng Hao would feel much safer in the Cultivation world outside.

“And it’s still not done growing….” thought Meng Hao, his eyes glittering. “The only way to take it outside of this place is to acquire the Legacy of the Blood Immortal.” He reached up to pet the mastiff. Others might think it looked cruel and savage, but in Meng Hao’s eyes it was incredibly cute. As he pet it, it let out a pleased grumbling sound, just like it had when it was small. Then it laid down on its stomach and licked Meng Hao’s hand, looking at him with the same fawning eyes it had when it was young. The only difference now was that its tongue was the size of Meng Hao’s entire hand.

It seemed that it could treat everything in this world with fierce savagery, but as for Meng Hao, no matter what happened, it would view him just as it always had. Meng Hao would pet it, it would lick his hand, and everything would be peaceful.

“Actually, I don’t care much about the Legacy of the Blood Immortal, but I will fight to take this Blood Divinity out with me….” Meng Hao lifted his head, and his eyes sparkled. He slowly stood up. Now that the spiritual energy here was weak, it was a waste of time to stay. He had a total of three months to spend in here, and half a month had already passed. He strode forward, and the mastiff followed. Under the watchful eyes of the outside world, the two of them flew into the fifth matrix.

Up until now, only Li Daoyi had entered the fifth spell matrix. As soon as Meng Hao entered, the archaic voice could be heard.

“This matrix is of the void, the void is of the end, thus the name ‘end the void.’ There are blood runes which form a seal over a myriad spirits; gain enlightenment, and it can be broken. If you break it, you retain it after acquiring the Legacy. Fail to acquire the Legacy, and it shall be erased.

“This matrix is exceedingly difficult, so the Blood Divinity may chose to leave at any time. However, the Legacy competitor must to fight the battle to the end, even if that end be in death.”

As the voice echoed out, a new world materialized in front of Meng Hao. To be specific, it was a mountain. On top of the mountain was an enormous stone stele. Next to the stele was a glowing door that could only be used by the Blood Divinity.

The stone stele was covered with blood-colored magical symbols. The symbols flickered, seemingly containing some type of Dao that required enlightenment to understand.

When Meng Hao appeared in this world, he found himself at the top of the mountain, beneath the stone stele. The mastiff stood next to him, looking around vigilantly.

Meng Hao’s eyes were thoughtful as he looked at the magical symbols on the stone stele. Even as he did so, his face twisted in astonishment. Something was happening that hadn’t occurred the entire time he had been in the Blood Immortal Legacy zone. He slapped his bag of holding, and a Spring and Autumn tree appeared. He grasped it in his hand.

However, he suddenly had no power to absorb the Spring and Autumn tree. Apparently, within the fifth spell matrix, he was completely cut off from the tree. Meng Hao’s expression once again flickered.

Before he could do anything else, his body suddenly trembled, and he coughed up a mouthful of blood. The blood was black, and even before it could reach the ground, it transformed into a three-colored Resurrection Lily. Its face of petals, crying and not crying, looked straight at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s face went pale, and within his eyes appeared faces made of three-colored flower petals. His body shook even harder, and severe pain flowed throughout him, threatening to send him unconscious. He doubled over as the poison within his body once again flared up.

“I suppressed the poison only half a month ago in the volcano….” he thought, forcing his eyes to stay open. He repeatedly told himself not to pass out; if he lost consciousness in the fifth matrix, he would most certainly die.

Actually, the poison flare-up had nothing to do with the fifth matrix, but the fourth. After seeing the four-colored Resurrection Lily, the poison within his body had been aroused, causing it to flare up.

Meng Hao’s body was covered in sweat, and an indescribable pain washed over him like floodwaters, causing him to become like a mortal in all aspects. His face twisted wretchedly, and he gritted his teeth tenaciously.

The mastiff didn’t understand what was happening, but seeing Meng Hao this way caused it to let out a nervous whine. And it was at this moment that suddenly, a multitude of roaring shouts could be heard drifting up from the bottom of the mountain.

Down below, a hoard of figures appeared. It was a group of people dressed in ragged clothing, like barbarians. They were tall, and their eyes were filled with cruelty as they raced up toward the top of the mountain.

Based on their speed, they would reach the top of the mountain within the space of a few breaths. Meng Hao’s face was pale, and his body trembled. This flare-up was more intense by far than previous ones. He didn’t even have the energy to lift up a hand. He could only look around with his eyes at the massive group of people rushing toward him.

1. The name of the Resurrection Lily in Chinese contains a reference to a Buddhist concept called Pāramitā, which literally translates as “the other shore”

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# Chapter 127: This is My Promise to You

The instant the savage figures appeared, Meng Hao’s mastiff let out a howl. It leapt forward, turning into a ferocious blur as it raced in circles around Meng Hao.

Blood flew out so violently it created a foam, and the bodies of barbarians tumbled down the mountain.

Their deaths did not frighten the barbarians behind them; instead, it incited further savagery as they charged forward. The mastiff’s ferocity billowed to the heavens as it protected the area around Meng Hao. Any approaching enemy met its attack; it clearly would not allow anyone to harm Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s body shook, but he forced his eyes to remain open. He could hear the mastiff’s attacks, and could see the seemingly endless sea of people, but he could do nothing.

Time passed by, and blood flowed down the mountain. The mastiff’s frenzy had created a no man’s land which surrounded Meng Hao thirty meters in each direction. Countless barbarians had died, forming a bloody mountain at its edge.

One day, two days…. the mastiff had no rest whatsoever. The barbarians seemed to never end. They charged relentlessly. On the second day, Core Formation Cultivators appeared in their midst, wearing barbarian suits of armor.

The bloody battle continued within the fifth matrix, with canine howls and miserable human shrieks filling the air. Late in the night of the second day, the mastiff killed the three Core Formation barbarians, although it was wounded in the process. After that, there was quiet. The barbarians retreated. Everything was still.

In a daze, Meng Hao looked at the mastiff. One of its legs was broken, and it looked exhausted. It hadn’t rested in two days, and had no medicinal pills to consume. Each fight had been a fight to the death, and it had prevented any of the people from harming Meng Hao. In fact, thanks to its frenzy, no one had even stepped within thirty meters of him.

As of now, it was overcome with fatigue. It lay down next to Meng Hao, panting. It licked his hand as if it wanted him to pet its head.

Everything was still; on the mountain peak, only a dog and a man could be seen. One couldn’t move, the other lay prone, ready to stand guard for an eternity.

Meng Hao looked at the mastiff, and a warmth rose up from the bottom of his heart that he had never felt before. It filled his entire body. This creature was just a puppy, a Blood Divinity with little spiritual understanding. And yet… it would not forsake him. Even under these circumstances, it wouldn’t leave, but instead fought to defend him.

Considering the accumulated injuries and exhaustion, if it continued to fight in this way, it would die eventually.

But it stayed by Meng Hao’s side to protect him. Soon dawn broke, and a clamor from the bottom of the mountain broke the stillness. The air seemed to fill with the Qi of Core Formation, and was followed by the furious shouting of barbarians charging up the mountain.

The mastiff… looked at Meng Hao, then licked his hand. It turned, and with a ferocious howl, charged into battle.

Meng Hao couldn’t move. He could only watch the mastiff charge into action. He couldn’t even turn his head. The only thing he could see was the half of the world which lay directly in front of him. Even what was down below on the mountain was not visible to him.

Barking and blood-curdling screams filled his ears for the entire day. He didn’t know exactly how fierce the fighting was, but he could sense that throughout the entire day, no one could step foot within a thirty meter radius of him.

When night fell, everything grew quiet again. Enough time passed for an incense stick to burn before the mastiff finally returned to Meng Hao and lay down next to him. Its back was broken, and it had trouble walking. Another leg was broken, and one of its long, sharp teeth had been snapped off.

Its Qi was weak, and its fur coat in disarray. Blood dripped off of its body as it lay there licking Meng Hao’s hand. It let off a faint whine, seemingly calling to Meng Hao, seemingly recounting to him the days’ events.

It seemed as if all of the fighting and exhaustion of the day was for this moment, when it could return to Meng Hao’s side to have its head pet. In its heart Meng Hao… was family. They had fought together, they had grown up together. Meng Hao had provided medicinal pills, and whenever he looked over, his gaze was filled with encouragement and warmth.

All of this had caused trust in Meng Hao to grow in its heart. It could depend on Meng Hao, and it would defend him.

The fourth day arrived, and more shouting could be heard. Meng Hao’s body continued to tremble, and he heard the sad howl of the mastiff. He wanted to struggle to his feet, but couldn’t. The poison flare-up filled him with intense pain. Sweat poured off of him, and all he could do was sit there, looking at the magical symbols on the stone stele. That was the only thing he could do.

On the fourth day, nothing came within thirty meters of Meng Hao. But that night, when everything grew quiet, it took the mastiff about one hour to slowly crawl back to him.

Meng Hao couldn’t see it, but the path the mastiff had crawled was a long streak of blood. Its teeth were smashed, its back caved in. It lay next to him, its head twisted to the side as it licked his palm. With weak whines, it seemed to recount the days' events to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao's eyes were red. He couldn't see the mastiff, but he could sense how weak its Qi was. At the moment, he had become just like a mortal, and he knew that without the mastiff there to protect him, he would have been dead on the first day.

But the price paid for his life was the mastiff's increasingly weak condition. Soon a day would come when it wouldn't be able to crawl back to him at all….

Meng Hao forced his eyes to remain wide open. He stared at the magical symbols on the stone stele, longing for enlightenment. But no matter how he looked at them, he was unable to gain any understanding. It was as if… they were nothing more than magical symbols that had nothing to do with him, an outsider.

And then, the fifth day arrived….

On this day, the miserable cries that reached Meng Hao's ears were more intense than ever before. Now, there were people who approached closer than thirty meters. But before they could reach him, they were torn to pieces. Blood showered onto Meng Hao's body, and he heard the increasingly mournful howls of the mastiff.

That night, it took four hours for the mastiff to return. It didn't touch him; it just laid there. Blood oozed out of its mouth, and its life force flickered weakly. It seemed only its stubbornness was keeping it alive. Despite its current state, it would fight to watch over the area… and protect Meng Hao.

Meng Hao could barely open his mouth. His body trembled, wracked with pain, and could barely move. But somehow, he was able to force out speech. "Go! Get out… of here…. Do you hear me…? Go!"

He couldn't see the mastiff. The only thing he could see was the inky black sky.

The mastiff lifted its head to look at Meng Hao. It glanced at the glowing door as if it understood his words. Then it let out a yipping sound.

“I’m telling you to leave!” said Meng Hao, panting, as if it took all the energy he possessed just to say the words.

The mastiff’s body trembled, and its eyes filled with sadness. It struggled to its feet, then walked over to Meng Hao’s side and licked his face. And then… it didn’t leave. It ignored Meng Hao’s orders and lay down next to his side.

Meng Hao’s heart ached. His eyes were filled with veins of blood as he stared at the stone stele. Suddenly, it grew blurry, and it seemed as if he had caught sight of something. And yet, he couldn’t grasp it. Dawn of the sixth morning broke, and the sound of movement could be heard at the foot of the mountain. A roar sounded out as the mastiff struggled up. It gave Meng Hao one last deep look, and then charged away.

As it left, Meng Hao’s hand slowly raised up, quivering. Within his eyes, the Resurrection Lilies flickered. He slowly formed a fist with his hand, and then stood up!

He raised his head to the sky and let loose a roar that had been suppressed for six days. Monstrous killing intent poured from his eyes as he flew into the air. As soon as he flew up, he caught sight of large man wielding an immense club. He had lifted it into the air and was about to smash it down viciously onto the mastiff, who was by now a shapeless wreck.

Meng Hao’s face filled with vicious rage. He lifted his hand, and a mist of lightning emerged, shooting toward the large man. When it reached him, it exploded out in a boom. The large man, who happened to have a Cultivation base at the Foundation Establishment stage, shot backward in retreat. In fact, multiple surrounding barbarians all retreated.

Meng Hao strode forward to stand in front of the mastiff. His eyes were bright red as he lifted his hand again. Hundreds of flying swords instantly screamed out, including the two wooden swords. They revolved around Meng Hao, transforming into sword rain, and then a massive whirlpool.

Meng Hao cried out, and the flying swords exploded. The shrapnel swept across the surroundings, and blood-curdling screams could be heard as the barbarians in the area were shredded to pieces.

Suddenly, from the foot of the mountain, eight Core Formation Qi auras suddenly shot up. They flew straight up toward the peak of the mountain.

Meng Hao was silent, and in fact completely ignored the approaching figures. He looked down at the mastiff, who was gasping and on the verge of death. He knelt down and gently stoked its broken body. It looked up at him weakly, and tried to open its mouth to lick his hand, but wasn't able to.

Meng Hao slowly looked up at the magical symbols on the stone stele, paying no heed whatsoever to the eight approaching figures. As he stared at the stele, he thought back over the six days. He thought about how the mastiff had risked its life in battle. He thought about back to the happy little puppy that had bounded along after him through the fourth matrix. He thought about the second matrix, when the fluffy, cute little thing had over and over again charged into battle with him. He thought about the very beginning of the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament, how it had appeared, shivering in his palm, and had licked him with its tiny tongue. He sighed.

"I should have realised earlier," said Meng Hao softly. "These magical symbols are not too different from the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex." His hand waved through the air, and then no magical symbols could be seen. Instead, they were now inscribed upon his heart, a magical text just like the one that had been inscribed on the stele.

As the text appeared, Meng Hao's hand came to rest on the mastiff's back.

As it did, a blood-colored glow suddenly formed within the mastiff. It was bone-piercingly cold as it it spread out in all directions.

As it spread out, the Core Formation barbarians were suddenly frozen in place, even as they flew through the air. It wasn't just them. As the blood-colored glow spread out, the entire mountain of barbarians, everything as far as the eye could see, the whole world, was filled with an intense coldness, and turned into the color of blood. This place … was completely sealed frozen.

Nothing in the entire world moved. Meng Hao knelt there, looking in surprise at the mastiff.

The fifth matrix, the stone stele, and the enlightenment all hinged upon the actions of the Blood Divinity…. The Legacy competitor and the Blood Divinity must develop a certain level of closeness.

After a long time, Meng Hao stood up, holding the mastiff in his arms. He walked toward the peak of the mountain, and the exit of the fifth matrix. The entire world around him was sealed with blood.

Meng Hao wasn’t sure how others would pass this matrix. But he knew that for him, its purpose was to strengthen the bond between the Legacy competitor and the Blood Divinity. He also wasn’t sure about the Blood Divinities of the others, but he knew that the mastiff had always returned to him. No matter how exhausted it was, it always came back to lick his hand. To Meng Hao this dog… was an inextricable part of his life.

“As of now, the Legacy isn’t important to me. I don’t care about it a bit. But I’m going to take you out of here with me. This is Meng Hao’s promise to you!”

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# Chapter 128: Li Daoyi’s Sixth Matrix

As Meng Hao walked out of the fifth matrix carrying the mastiff, Wang Lihai also emerged. His Blood Divinity, the fierce-looking Xuanwu tortoise, was also covered in wounds.

Ahead of Meng Hao and Wang Lihai was Li Daoyi, who still hadn’t passed through the sixth matrix.

Behind the two, five people were still stuck in the fifth matrix.

Wang Lihai’s gaze fell upon Meng Hao, and his eyes narrowed slightly. Then he sat down cross-legged off to the side. After he emerged from the spell matrix, the power of heaven and earth in the surrounding area rushed into Meng Hao, which he then channeled into the dying mastiff.

Meng Hao produced large amounts of medicinal pills, which he fed one by one to the mastiff to aid in the recovery process.

Thankfully, the spiritual energy was quite thick on the platforms, especially the one outside the fifth matrix. The mastiff absorbed the thick energy from Meng Hao, and its wounds slowly began to heal. Its shattered bones gradually grew back together. After a while, the mastiff was no longer on the verge of death. Having recovered some energy, it licked Meng Hao’s palm, and then struggled to its feet and began absorbing spiritual energy on its own.

In the outside world of the Southern Domain, everyone was in a stir. Nearly ten thousand pairs of eyes had all converged on Meng Hao and Wang Lihai; excited discussions filled the air.

Time passed. Seven days later, Song Jia staggered out from the fifth matrix. Her Blood Phoenix did not emerge with her….

She immediately sat down cross-legged. Soon after, a greenish beam of light emerged from the green stone altar off in the distance. It flew down toward Song Jia, who then spit out some blood from her Cultivation base. A blood-colored butterfly magically appeared and began to flutter around her.

Seeing this, Meng Hao came to the conclusion that her Blood Divinity had fallen. He wasn't sure how she had managed to pass through the fifth matrix, but whatever had happened, she now had the chance to select a new Blood Divinity.

A few more days passed. Wang Lihai finished meditating. With a look of determination on his face, he entered the sixth matrix. Song Jia sat there for a long time before following him.

One by one, the rest of the competitors emerged from the fifth matrix, except for the disciple from the Golden Frost Sect, who never appeared. He was the first competitor… to fall in the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament.

After his death, another Cultivator from the outside world entered the Legacy zone. However, considering everyone else had already passed the fifth matrix, unless this person had truly heaven-defying luck, they would never have a chance at acquiring the Legacy. There was simply not enough time.

The death of the Golden Frost Sect disciple caused the young competitor from the Violet Fate Sect to stand thoughtfully for a moment on the platform outside of the fifth matrix. Quite some time passed before he decided to leave, not confident of his ability to pass through the sixth matrix. This could very well be his last opportunity to make it out alive.

After a longer period of thought, the competitor from the Solitary Sword Sect, feeling it unwise to continue on, also opted to leave.

The disciple from the Blood Demon Sect, the one who looked like Wang Youcai from seven or eight years ago, emerged expressionlessly from the fifth matrix and immediately sat down to absorb spiritual energy for a few days. Then, he and his human-shaped Blood Divinity followed Li Daoyi, Wang Lihai and Song Jia into the sixth matrix, making him the fourth to enter.

Of the nine matrixes of the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament, the difficulty seemed to increase exponentially, especially after the fourth matrix. Even for those thoroughly prepared, it was still difficult.

This was especially true of the sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth matrixes. In the past seven tournaments, only one person had ever set foot into the ninth matrix.

And that person was a Chosen of the Li Clan!

Other than him, only thirteen competitors had ever made it past the sixth matrix. Only six had ever made it past the seventh matrix.

Starting with the sixth matrix, the level of difficulty, and the consequences of elimination, were increasingly brutal. Therefore, many left after the fifth matrix. Their main goal in participating was not to acquire the Legacy, but to undergo training.

You could say that the experience gained in the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament was something that few Cultivators ever had the opportunity to get.

Several more days passed, and finally Meng Hao opened his eyes. The spiritual energy surrounding him was almost completely dispersed. The second Dao Pillar within him was approximately ninety percent complete. After passing through the sixth portal, he should be able to thoroughly complete it.

The mastiff stood in front of him, completely recovered from injuries and in very high spirits. Once again, its Cultivation base had grown; it was now at the middle Core Formation stage. Its body was fifteen meters long, and it looked like a small mountain. Its red eyes glowed savagely, and its coat of red fur was long and luxurious. Its long, terrifying teeth glittered brilliantly.

Its claws were especially frightening, as long as a person’s face, and seemingly powerful enough to rip the earth to pieces.

When Meng Hao stood up, the mastiff seemed especially excited. Meng Hao walked forward, and its mountain-like shape followed along. The sight was an assault on the senses, filled with power, causing the thousands upon thousands of onlookers outside in the Southern Domain to watch on with quaking hearts. This scene would forever be imprinted in their memories.

“The sixth matrix…” Meng Hao looked at it and took a deep breath, then glanced back at the mastiff. Its fierce expression instantly changed. A charming expression showed in its eyes, and it lowered his head so that Meng Hao could pet it. It closed its eyes contentedly.

“I’m definitely going to take you out of here with me!” said Meng Hao, smiling as he looked at the mastiff’s happy expression. His eyes filled with determination. Patting the mastiff’s head one last time, he walked forward, stepping into the sixth matrix. The mastiff’s body turned into a flash of light as it followed.

The sixth matrix!

In this world, the sky was filled with thunder and lightning. As soon as Meng Hao entered, thunderclaps assailed his ears. It was immediately obvious that this world was not very large.

The ground was a sludgy swamp from which emanated the stench of decay and death. Off in the distance… was an enormous ancient temple. The entire temple was pitch black in color, and next to it was a gigantic statue. The statue was clothed in a simple robe, and its right hand was lifted up toward the sky. Its left hand touched the hilt of a sword.

The sword… was floating in mid-air.

The temple seemed almost primordial, and it radiated an ancient air. From this far away, it looked almost like a mountain. Lightning crashed down, seemingly desiring to destroy the temple, as if it did not approve of its existence.

The flashes of lighnting illuminated the sludge on the ground. Countless emaciated arms could be seen stretching up from the ooze, reaching and grasping for something. From a distance, the field of arms seemed to stretch out forever.

Also visible within the sludge were faces, from the mouths of which emitted tormented screams. There were men and women, old and young. Bizarre green tentacles grew out from the faces, which swayed back and forth….

Meng Hao looked at all of this, and though he wasn't familiar with this world, nor had he ever seen the temple which lay off in the distance, he was still able to guess its name.

"Doom…." Screams echoed up from the faces within the ooze. The screaming was composed of countless voices combined together. The screams seemed to be filled with rage against the heavens from people who had died unwillingly. The fury would not subside, no matter how many years had passed. This was a part of the name of their Clan.

Doom!

The Ancient Doom Clan, not tolerated by the will of the Heavens. Tribulation extermination was sent, but the clan was not willing to die. They gathered the entire power of their clan to form their sacred temple. They claimed the land as theirs, and defied the heavens. The land could not be harmed, nor the temple destroyed. The Doom Clan could not be completely eradicated!

At the apex of the temple was an enormous drum, completely black in color, as if it had been dyed over and over with blood over the course of countless years.

At the bottom of the temple, next to the gigantic statue, was a stone door, half-open. A glowing light emanated out, illuminating the carvings of various ferocious creatures which decorated the door.

An archaic voice rumbled out like thunder: “If you wish to acquire my Legacy, then enter my temple!” It rang out over the sound of the screams, covering everything.

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed, and next to him, the mountain-like, fifteen-meter-long mastiff bared its razor-sharp teeth and glared about. A low growl rumbled in its throat, and a fierce look emanated from its eyes. Its huge frame, and its luxuriant, crimson fur, along with the sharp spurs which protruded from its bones, caused it to look shocking to the extreme.

Thunder rumbled in the sky, and lightning struck constantly, illuminating the land. Meng Hao’s body turned into a multicolored beam as he flew into the air, heading straight toward the ancient temple. Behind him, the mastiff let out a roar, and then followed him.

As soon as the two of them flew into the air, the outstretched hands within the sludge suddenly began to stretch out. In the blink of an eye, they had reached Meng Hao, and were about to grab him.

He let out a cold snort and slapped his bag of holding. The two wooden swords flew out, circling around him at high speed. Blood spattered out as approaching hands were immediately lopped off, before they could even get near Meng Hao.

Black blood spattered down like rain. A foul stench began to fill the air, and, in fact, this entire world. The mastiff’s body began to glow red. Not a single arm was able to touch it; they were instantly ripped into shreds.

However, even as Meng Hao and the mastiff sped along, nearly to the half-way point, a forlorn, shrill sound arose from the various faces in the ooze. The green, parasitic tentacles which grew out from them suddenly stood up on end, one by one. They transformed into countless sharp spikes which shot toward Meng Hao.

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# Chapter 129: Li Clan Patriarch!

It was impossible to see clearly just how many of the green tentacles shot forth. They were fast, and within the blink of an eye were nearly one hundred meters away from Meng Hao. It seemed as if they would cross the space in an instant. But just then, the mastiff let out a roar and flew up.

Its fifteen-meter-long frame flickered as it shot to defend Meng Hao. A booming sound began to ring out, louder than the thunder, shaking the entire world. A blood-colored glow emanated out from the mastiff, slamming into the incoming tentacles. A shaking boom filled the air, which lasted for the space of about ten breaths. Then, one by one, the tentacles disintegrated into a green mist, which spread all about.

The mastiff appeared tired, but it looked down and let out a roar nonetheless. It moved to the side, and Meng Hao emerged unscathed. He pet the mastiff’s head, then continued on toward the ancient temple.

They shot forward at high speed, man and dog together.

When they were about six hundred meters from the temple, the green mist created by the disintegration of the tentacles suddenly started moving. It began to coagulate, and then, in the blink of an eye, transformed into a gigantic mist sphere, directly in Meng Hao’s path.

The mist roiled, emitting a rumbling sound as it gradually formed into the shape of a head. It was green colored and illusory, with glowing eyes. It opened its mouth, and more mist poured out. This mist was filled with mist horses, which flew in a beeline toward Meng Hao and the mastiff.

As they approached, Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed. He lifted his right hand and waved it in a gesture that only he could recognize as some type of sealing incantation. Then, he pushed his hand down onto the mastiff.

When the seal mark dropped onto the mastiff, a crimson glow began to emanate out. It contained an icy coldness that froze everything it touched! The flying mist horses were instantly sealed up!

The arms below, the faces, the sludge, everything was frozen.

If he didn’t acquire the Legacy, then Meng Hao shouldn’t be able to use this technique outside of this world, because he wouldn’t have the Blood Divinity with him. But having received the Legacy of the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex, he was familiar with sealing techniques. This new technique was relatively powerful, and Meng Hao had the feeling that with sufficient research, he could probably use it even without the Blood Divinity, were he at the proper level.

As the crimson glow swept out, sealing everything, Meng Hao continued to shoot forward. Avoiding the gigantic head, he and the mastiff sped on toward the ancient temple.

Just as it seemed they would be able to approach it successfully, an imminent sense of life-and-death danger rose up from within Meng Hao. Suddenly, the mastiff, its body trembling, grabbed his clothes in its mouth and pulled him back.

A boom resounded out as a massive sword blade nearly three meters thick, swung down right in front of Meng Hao. It stabbed into the ground, sending out massive tremors. A massive fissure spread out; at the same time, the ice seal began to split up. In an instant, everything had returned to its normal state.

The massive sword, which moments ago had been floating in mid-air, was being held by the statue which stood outside the temple.

Its descending attack had caused Meng Hao to cough up a mouthful of blood. His face was pale as the mastiff dragged him back. As they retreated, the gigantic statue suddenly seemed to come to life. It slowly lowered its head, and its gaze fell upon Meng Hao. A difficult to describe pressure suddenly enveloped him, filling him with icy cold. It was as if the thing's gaze could see the deepest secrets within him.

As this happened, the arms in the ooze no longer stretched out. Instead, they slowly sucked back into the sludge, as if the statue filled them with dread. The green mist head floating in the air lowered its gaze, seemingly paying respects to the statue.

The thunder and lightning in the sky, however, grew more intense. They focused on the statue, crashing onto its surface, as if the Heavens wanted the statue to crumble.

Next to Meng Hao, the mastiff trembled and stretched out prone, as if the statue's existence was a force that could not be resisted.

"Tribulation Lightning has fallen for countless years. Even though it is THIS matrix, even though I am not HIM, you still try to destroy my spirit…? Screw off!"

The statue lifted its right hand and snapped its fingers together. An enormous boom filled the air, and the statue's hand seemed to become like a black hole. The lightning quivered, then began to condense together and then collapse into countless arcs of electricity which then disappeared.

In an instant… the sky became completely devoid of lightning. Everything was quiet. The ground quivered, and the countless figures within the sludge trembled. The floating mist head bowed even lower, shaking.

The mastiff behaved the same. It seemed that the will of this statue was something it was incapable of resisting.

"Your Dao Pillar does not conform with the requirements for the Legacy," said the statue, looking coldly at Meng Hao. "You… do not qualify to acquire the Legacy. Considering you made it through the fifth matrix, I won't destroy you. Screw off!" Everything shook as its voice sounded out. Blood spurted from Meng Hao's mouth, and his body was thrown backward hundreds and hundreds of meters. An enormous glowing door appeared near him.

“And you….” said the statue coolly, its cold gaze lowering onto the trembling mastiff. “Second-rate spawn of Blood. You don’t even deserve to be consumed by me, let alone become the Weapon Spirit….” Its left hand slowly lifted up the sword, preparing to slash down onto the quivering mastiff.

Meng Hao’s eyes were bloodshot. Behind him was the glowing door. All he had to do was step through, and he could leave the sixth matrix. But what had just happened caused him to stop in his tracks. The effort caused a snapping sound to emanate from his right leg, and he coughed up a mouthful of blood.

“Senior, if I’m not qualified to acquire the Legacy, very well. But please, don’t hurt it….” As Meng Hao’s voice rang out, the mastiff trembled. It wanted to look back at Meng Hao, but the pressure exuded by the statue seemed to have activated some ancient branding within it. It could only tremble, powerless to resist. A weak whine sounded out from its mouth.

The statue’s giant sword paused. It looked at Meng Hao. “You’ve lost your qualifications to leave this place,” it said coolly. The glowing door instantly began to fall to pieces.

The sword swept through the air, not toward the mastiff, but toward Meng Hao. A boom resounded out, and blood exploded from Meng Hao’s body. He lost control of himself, tumbling down toward the sludge.

As he fell, grasping hands reached toward him, clasping onto him, preparing to drag him down inside.

It was at this moment that Meng Hao’s Cultivation base was suddenly restricted; he couldn’t circulate it at all. He could only watch as he was slowly pulled down into the ooze.

His eyes were red, filled with resistance and ferocity.

The mastiff, which was also being suppressed, suddenly let out a shrill howl. Trembling, it lifted its head. Its mountain-like body suddenly exploded with an unprecedented power. Cracking sounds could be heard from inside it. It suddenly seemed as if it would burst into flame, a flame of blood. Suddenly, its body began to expand; it was now thirty meters long. It burst free from the control of the statue and smashed through the ancient seal within itself. It flew up with a roar, charging toward Meng Hao, who was already half sunk into the ooze.

“So, the burning of the Blood spirit….” said the statue coldly. “Blood Divinities are bloodthirsty, and have no feelings. You second-rate spawn of Blood. You do not deserve to have spiritual consciousness.” It raised its left hand, and then the sword began to slash down again, to exterminate both Meng Hao and the mastiff in one fell swoop.

But then suddenly, before the sword could fall, a look of struggle appeared in the eyes of the statue. The sword paused in mid-air.

“The will of the Blood slave….” said the statue, its voice grim. “Damn you, won’t you just go away? I’m trying to help your master’s Legacy. I want his Legacy to live on, to be acquired by another. Why… why are you resisting me!? There are no rules in this Legacy tournament, so for me to possess you is simply the will of heaven!” The struggle in its eyes gradually began to fade.

Meanwhile, the mastiff’s body was engulfed in a bloody flame. It slammed into the ooze, roaring as the bloody glow of flames emanated in all directions. It instantly turned countless arms into ash. The sludge caved in on itself, revealing a pale-faced Meng Hao. The mastiff grabbed him in its mouth, then flew up into the air, shooting toward the large door in the ancient temple.

It flew with incredible speed, seemingly ready to sacrifice everything to get Meng Hao to the door.

Meng Hao’s eyes snapped open, and he looked at the mastiff. Then he glanced behind, and saw the statue. The struggle was now almost completely gone from its eyes. It stabbed its giant sword into the sludge, and suddenly, the countless arms emanated a demonic glow. They shot up, a myriad of grasping hands, flying toward Meng Hao.

The mastiff glanced down at Meng Hao, and a wistful expression appeared in its eyes. As the myriad of hands closed in, its body erupted into flames. It tossed its head, throwing Meng Hao toward the stone door. It had no time to lick his hand as it had when it was small.

The bloody glow around its body was already fading, and weakness flashed in its eyes. A death aura began to emanate out of it as the countless hands surrounded it. The tens upon tens of thousands of encircling hands wrenched it down into the ooze.

Its eyes were wistful as it seemed to recall the past. It seemed to be thinking of how it had stretched out on its master's palm, and how wonderful it felt to be pet on the head. It remembered all of these things, and thought of its master….

Meng Hao watched all of this dumbfounded. His body slammed into the half-opened door, and the world around him began to fall apart. Everything inside, including the mastiff, disappeared. And yet, what he had just witnessed could never be forgotten.

The mastiff's final glance into his eyes caused him to weep tears of blood, and kindled in him a blazing fury.

Back in the sixth matrix, the struggle within the statue's eyes was completely gone. Its right hand lowered and opened up.

There, standing on the palm of its hand, was a man. He wore a white robe, and was extremely handsome. Swirling in the air next to him was a thirty-meter long Blood Dragon. This was none other than… the Chosen of the Li Clan, Li Daoyi!

He stood on the statue's palm, an expression of utmost respect on his face. He knelt down on one knee and offered a deep salute.

"Junior pays respects to the Patriarch."

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# Chapter 130: The Perfect Foundation!!

“What about the rest of them?” asked the statue coolly. Having been called Patriarch by Li Daoyi, and considering what it had said about possession, it seemed that its true identity was now apparent.

This was the Li Clan Chosen who had passed through the eighth matrix four thousand years ago, but had not continued onto the ninth. That was the only interesting or amazing thing that anyone knew about him.

Even after returning to the Li Clan, he said or did little. A thousand years after that, he passed away in meditation. Nowadays, unless you mentioned the Blood Immortal Legacy, no one would even remember him.

However, one of the Li Clan’s deepest secrets, were the final words spoken by that very person. Those words had been passed down from one generation of Li Clan Lord to the next. Actually, the Patriarch… was not dead at all.

His last words stated that after the completion of the eighth Blood Immortal Legacy tournament, the bloodline of Ancient Doom had fallen to the Li Clan!

The person who had emerged from the Legacy tournament four thousand years ago was him, but not all of him. That person contained only a portion of his spirit. The rest of him had forced itself upon the slumbering Blood slave in the sixth matrix. From that day until this, only members of the Li Clan were aware of it.

It was an unimaginably fantastic situation. The Blood slave was incredibly powerful, and the Li Clan Patriarch, being at the Foundation Establishment stage, should not have been able to successfully possess it. In fact, anyone below the Nascent Soul stage shouldn’t be able to. Yet somehow… he had!

No one could possibly know how he’d accomplished it. However, afterwards part of him returned to the Clan missing most of its spirit. It faded away, leaving behind a final will and explanation.

“Patriarch can ignore the disciples of the Song Clan and Blood Demon Sect,” said Li Daoyi with a respectful smile. “And the one who just escaped counts for nothing. However, this Wang Lihai from the Wang Clan must die!” The Blood Dragon next to him lifted its head.

Suddenly, several Blood Divinities appeared in the region surrounding Li Daoyi. One of them was Wang Lihai’s Xuanwu turtle, as well as the Blood Sprite belonging to the young man who looked like Wang Youcai. The Blood Divinities trembled as soon as they appeared, and instantly, the Blood Dragon charged forward and swallowed them whole. They didn’t resist even the least bit.

“A junior member of the Wang Clan…” said the statue coolly, eyeing the Blood Dragon. “Exterminating Wang Clan Chosen is something I can do. I should only be able to help you here within the sixth matrix. As for the following three matrixes, I should be unable to help you directly. However, in the past four thousand years, I have come to understand much about the Blood Immortal Legacy zone. In fact, no one in the world understands more about it than me.

“After possessing your Blood Dragon, I am completely confident that in the time it takes for a few incense sticks to burn, we can charge through the seventh, eighth and ninth matrixes. Then you can acquire the Legacy.”

“Many thanks for your assistance, Patriarch,” replied Li Daoyi respectfully “Junior does not care too much about the Legacy. I am here on the orders of the Clan Lord, to receive you and lead you out.”

“When the eighth Blood Immortal Legacy tournament concluded, the bloodline of Ancient Doom fell to the Li Clan,” said the statue, its voice deep and archaic. “Those words were spoken by me, and are naturally true. The Blood Immortal Legacy belongs to you. I’ve been trapped in here for four thousand years, and have no idea what the outside world has come to be… I wonder how many of my friends from the old days are still alive.” When it finished speaking, the space between its eyebrows split, and a glowing light appeared. As the crack split open, the statue’s body grew dim. The glow flew out, forming a blinding beam of light that shot toward the Blood Dragon.

The Blood Dragon didn’t resist. The bloody light entered it, and its entire body spasmed for a few moments. Then its eyes began to glow, emitting an ancient aura. It made a gulping motion, as if it hadn’t completely swallowed the other Blood Divinities.

Its body flashed, and suddenly, it expanded until it was three thousand meters long, causing this entire world to shake and tremble. Time passed.

Eventually it shrank back down until it was only sixty meters in length. It circled around Li Daoyi, then flew toward the glowing stone door, and then left the sixth matrix. The only thing that was left behind was the lifeless statue, which stood there quietly, unmoving.

The instant Li Daoyi emerged from the sixth matrix, an uproar emerged among the nearly ten thousand observers outside in the Southern Domain.

Li Daoyi was the last to come out. The first had been Meng Hao, who had flown out, coughing up four or five mouthfuls of blood. He had struggled into a cross-legged position to meditate. His appearance had caused an uproar as he sat there, madly absorbing as much spiritual energy as he could to heal his wounds. Even though his eyes were closed, he radiated an intense killing intent.

After him was the youth from the Blood Demon Sect, who looked like Wang Youcai, and then Song Jia. Both of them seemed to be in bad situations. Their bodies were covered with wounds, and both seemed to have broken bones. Their breath came in ragged pants, and their Blood Divinities were nowhere to be seen.

Gritting their teeth, they sat cross-legged like Meng Hao, using the thick spiritual energy in the area to do breathing exercises to heal their wounds. Their injuries quickly began to heal, but quick glances revealed to both that their Blood Divinities were indeed gone. Complicated, thoughtful expressions appeared on their faces. It was quite obvious what they were thinking.

Wang Lihai didn’t emerge. This caused an unprecedented uproar outside. Everyone had seen the blurry image of Wang Lihai disappear within the sixth matrix. This clearly indicated that he had passed away.

The Wang Clan members’ minds were instantly sent reeling, especially that of Wang Lihai’s Dao Protector and the Wang Clan Elders. Expressions of disbelief filled their faces. Their eyes were instantly shot with blood, and it seemed as if their heads might explode.

The entirety of the Southern Domain was instantly thrown into chaos; no one could possibly have predicted that Wang Lihai would die. This would send the Wang Clan into an unimaginable fury.

Wang Lihai was extremely important among the current generation of the Wang Clan; he was the Dao Child of the Foundation Establishment stage. Chosen could fall, but Dao Children simply could not. This was an generally recognized rule among the various Sects and Clans. This was apparent by the fact that although the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament was important, none of the five Sects had dispatched Dao Children, only Chosen.

The Wang Clan and the Li Clan were the only to have dispatched Dao Children!

The most glad of all was none other than Wang Tengfei. His body trembled with excitement, and he clenched his fist tightly. He had been waiting for this day for a very, very long time. Next to him, Wang Xifan seemed equally excited. The two of the exchanged a look; their futures now seemed filled with limitless possibilities.

When Li Daoyi finally emerged, the sixty-meter long Blood Dragon circling about him, the outside world exploded with shock.

Song Jia slowly stood up and headed through the glowing exit door, her face pale. She had chosen to give up. After her, the youth from the Blood Demon Sect who looked like Wang Youcai stood up. Ignoring Li Daoyi, he looked at Meng Hao for a moment, and seemed to hesitate. Then, he turned and left through the glowing door, also opting not to continue on.

Their departure caused further uproar in the outside world.

“What exactly happened within the sixth matrix? It looks like no one else has a Blood Divinity except for Li Daoyi. And Wang Lihai… actually died! He’s a Dao Child of the Wang Clan!”

“Only Li Daoyi still has a Blood Divinity. And from the look of it, it’s way too powerful! Maybe he really does have a chance of acquiring the Legacy!”

As the discussions continued in the outside world, Meng Hao opened his bloodshot eyes. He slowly stood up and walked toward the glowing door, his expression one of stubbornness. Before he stepped through, he looked back toward Li Daoyi’s blurry figure. What he was looking at, however, was not Li Daoyi, but the clearly visible Blood Dragon.

As he gazed at the Blood Dragon, Meng Hao’s heart began to pound. He wasn’t sure if others had seen it, but the look in the eye of this dragon was exactly the same as that within the statue. His mind flickered as he put the pieces together. He was now eighty to ninety percent sure of what had happened.

As Meng Hao looked over, Li Daoyi let out a derisive chuckle. “Remember my name,” he said. “I’m Li Daoyi. Your dog died a horrible death.” He lifted his hand to rest on the Blood Dragon.

Hearing the words caused Meng Hao’s mind to rumble with the sound of a hundred thousand exploding lightning bolts. Blood dripped from the corners of his lips as he stared murderously at Li Daoyi. Within his eyes burned fury and killing intent that rose to the heavens. He had practiced Cultivation to a very high level, and had desired to kill many people. But at the moment, his desire to kill this person was intense to the extreme.

However, Meng Hao’s personality was such that, the more he wished to kill someone, the more taciturn he became. He had been like this when small, and was even more so now. The more quiet he was, the more vicious he grew. People who like to roar and scream were mere philistines. People who maintained their silence were the truly frightening ones!

A long moment passed. Finally, Meng Hao angrily turned on his heel and walked through the glowing door.

Laughing, Li Daoyi walked forward into the seventh matrix.

When Meng Hao appeared in the volcano, outside of the lake of blood, his eyes burned with the flames of fury. The events that had occurred within the sixth matrix continued to replay in his mind, and an increasingly profound killing intent emanated from his body.

“Li Daoyi, I, Meng Hao, will send you to your death!” His eyes were filled with blood, causing him to look more ferocious than ever. His body flashed, transforming into a beam of multicoloured light that shot toward Chu Yuyan and her alchemy workspace.

When he arrived, Chu Yuyan was in the midst of adjusting the earthly flame. The Perfect Foundation Pill was at a critical moment, on the verge of being complete. At first, she had thought that Meng Hao might not make it back in time, and that she would have a chance to study it some. And yet here he was, in complete opposition to her expectation. She considered trying to pull off something tricky, but when she saw Meng Hao’s grim expression, she hesitated. It was obvious that he was like a volcano on the verge of erupting, not someone to be trifled with.

Meng Hao approached and sat down cross-legged, uttering not a word. And yet, his hatred for Li Daoyi, and his desire to kill him, only continued to ferment and grow stronger. An intense, difficult to describe anxiety filled his heart. He refused to believe that the mastiff was dead. He would establish the Perfect Foundation, and then he would rescue the mastiff!

Chu Yuyan didn’t dare to speak. A look of concentration filled her face. She took a deep breath and ground her teeth. Then her hand flickered with an incantation gesture, and she pushed down onto the pill furnace. As she did, the earthly fire and magma beneath roared. The pill furnace quivered.

At the moment, it seemed as if all the mists within the volcano were roiling. The ground trembled. Outside, the wind and clouds seemed to have been disturbed. Great sheets of clouds began to form, one on top of the other, roiling out in all directions. Lightning crackled across the sky, filling the air with massive booms. With every crash of lightning, strange, mystical signs would appear in the the sky outside.

“Is this really a Thunder Pill?” Of course, Chu Yuyan had had her suspicious. But now, seeing the roiling of the mists, and everything above in the outside world, she was even more sure. This pill… was definitely not some type of Thunder Pill.

“For a pill to provoke this change in the Heavens based on its mere appearance… It seems as if the Heavens wish to destroy the pill itself! Just… just what pill is this!?” Chu Yuyan was shocked to the core. As she pressed down on the pill furnace, a roaring filled the air. Suddenly, the pill furnace collapsed into pieces, sending out a powerful blast. Chu Yuyan coughed up a mouthful of blood as she was flung backward into the stone wall. She instantly fell unconscious.

Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly opened, and he shot forward. As the pill furnace collapsed, the outside world filled with lightning and roaring, and the ground quaked, filling with cracks and fissures. Meng Hao reached out… and snatched the mystical seven-colored pill from within the furnace!

The Perfect Foundation Pill!

This pill was a defiance of the Heavens, not permitted by heaven and earth. The world outside the volcano rumbled. The layers of clouds shone brightly as they churned. A seemingly infinite amount of lightning was gathering, preparing to eradicate the pill which Meng Hao held in his hand. If anyone dared to consume this pill in the face of the Heavens, then they would face intense Tribulation of lightning!

The Heavens did not permit this type of pill to exist, nor did they permit anyone to consume such a pill. Swallowing it down constituted a type of Cultivation that warranted destruction! This path was a path of continued Heavenly tribulation!

And yet, Meng Hao did not hesitate. As he held the pill in his hand, it seemed as if it were beginning to melt. He had the feeling that if he did not immediately consume it, the pill would disappear on its own, without any help from Tribulation Lightning!

He didn’t know why this was happening, and didn’t have time to think about it. Nor did he have any time to think about duplicating the pill. Even as he looked at it, it began to show signs that it was about to fall apart.

Resolve filling his eyes, Meng Hao placed the pill into his mouth. Above, lightning condensed and prepared to fall down.

When the pill entered his mouth, it dissolved instantly and traveled down into his abdomen. A roar filled him, along with a strange power that seemed as if it might cause his entire body to collapse. This was not the power of heaven and earth, but something else, something difficult to describe. At this moment, Meng Hao’s Dao Pillar began to tremble.

As it trembled, the crack on its surface suddenly began to show signs of healing. A feeling of perfection condensed within Meng Hao’s body. His flesh and blood seemed to grow tougher. His golden Dao Pillar hummed and seemed to expand. His flesh began to shine with a faint golden glow that grew stronger and stronger.

He sensed a feeling of power that he had never before experienced with his Flawless Foundation. Along with it, his view of the world suddenly changed. His Spiritual Sensed experienced unbridled growth. Everything in his body was changing. The Perfect Foundation, which had not been seen in the Cultivation World for tens of thousands of years, was now evolving!

According to the legends, a Perfect Foundation had not been seen in millennia. But here it was in Meng Hao. The power of his Spiritual Sense far exceeded that of the middle Foundation Establishment stage. In fact, Meng Hao knew that if he had enough spiritual energy, he could instant form his second and third Dao Pillars!

Furthermore, he knew that future Dao Pillars that appeared would also be legendary Perfect Dao Pillars!

At this moment, booming sounded out in the sky above. Up in the air, an enormous lightning bolt shot down toward the volcano, slamming into the glowing shield.

When it hit the shield, each and every one of the seven Blood Immortal Legacy zones around the Southern Domain suddenly erupted with a blood-red glow. The bloody glow instantly wiped out the images that the onlookers had been watching, and shot toward the Heavens, forming enormous pillars of blood.

Around each of these pillars of blood whipped blood-red iron chains. Furthermore, on top of each pillar was a blurry, bound figure who let loose agonized screams.

All of this happened too suddenly. The audiences surrounding the seven Legacy zones were astonished, unsure of what was happening.

“What’s going on?! What happened!?”

“The blood screen shot up into the sky! We can’t see what’s happening inside the Legacy zone. What’s going on?!”

The Cultivators of the Southern Domain were one and all thrown into chaos. Multiple figures flew up out of the various temples of the five great Sects and three great Clans. All of these were ancient Cultivators who usually spent their time in secluded meditation. However the intensity of the outside events had awoken them, and one by one they appeared.

“The Blood Immortal Sacrifice! This is the legendary Ancient Doom Clan Blood Immortal Sacrifice!!”

“According to the legends, if anyone tries to invade the Ancient Doom Clan, then the Blood Immortal Sacrifice will appear. But the Ancient Doom Clan has long since been put down. Who could their enemy possibly be….”

As the booming filled the Southern Domain, Meng Hao stood within the volcano, staring up into the sky and roaring. He quickly took unconscious Chu Yuyan and wrapped her up in the black net, then set her to the side. After that, his body turned into a prismatic beam as it shot toward the Blood Immortal’s sacrificial altar.

Above him, the Tribulation Lightning descending, causing the glowing shield to tremble. And yet even as it trembled, a bright red glow erupted from within the volcano, transforming into a massive pillar of blood. This towering pillar of blood was the eighth to appear within the Southern Domain.

Generally speaking, the Blood Immortal altar would never do this; but Meng Hao had consumed a Perfect Foundation Pill and provoked Tribulation Lightning. It was the booming of the Tribulation Lightning upon the Blood Immortal sacrificial altar’s shield that provoked this defensive reaction.

Attacking this shield was the same as attacking the Blood Immortal!

“Wait for me,” said Meng Hao, the killing intent pouring out of his eyes. “I promised you that I would take you out with me. You wait for me, I’m coming to save you. Then, we will kill Li Daoyi together!” He flew forward like lightning, into the altar, not hesitating in the slightest.

The instant he entered….

Clouds billowed and wind whipped inside the Blood Immortal Legacy zone. Past the ninth matrix, the corpse sat cross-legged, trembling. It slowly lifted its dessicated head, within which a powerful glow appeared. It was a strange glow, but somehow it made the skull-like head look excited.

“Finally… I’ve been waiting….”

Within the eighth matrix, everything shook, and the sky seemed as if it would split open. A deep red glow covered everything. Moments ago everything had been completely silent, but suddenly howls filled the air. The howling seemed to contain excitement!

In the seventh matrix, the only thing that could be seen was an ancient tomb. Inscribed above the tomb were three characters: Tomb of Heaven!

Within the tomb was a coffin nearly three thousand meters long. Inside were heaps of bones, at the centre of which could be seen a dilapidated flag. The flag had three streamers, upon each of which was written a name. Seemingly having fallen victim to the passing of years, the first two names were not clear. However, the third was quite visible.

It was the surname “Ji.”

Standing within the tomb, Li Daoyi looked around in surprise. The ground shook and the sky roared. It seemed as if everything were spinning. The Blood Dragon next to him lifted its head, and it lifted its claws as if it were calculating something. Suddenly, its expression changed.

“Quickly. There’s no need to take the Three Immortal Souls Flag. Like I said, we need to proceed directly to the ninth matrix. If we are late… the Legacy will not be yours!!”

“What’s happening?!” said Li Daoyi, his face unsightly.

“The Legacy has long been awaiting someone who defies the Heavens as much as the Ancient Doom Clan. That person has arrived! But, we still have a chance. The Blood Immortal is dead, and whoever reaches him first will acquire the Legacy!!”

“If I had known the Legacy would select him, I would have destroyed him. With him dead, I would be the destined successor!” Li Daoyi’s eyes flashed with killing intent.

“Killing him before would have been simple, but now that he is within the Blood Immortal’s Legacy zone, who would dare to kill him! Who can kill him?!” The Blood Dragon circled around Li Daoyi, suddenly expanding to three thousand meters in length, clearly urgently desiring to leave.

Meanwhile, outside in the Southern Domain, in the Ancient Temple of Doom, one of the three Danger Zones, the temple itself seemed to be coming alive. Inside the ancient temple were countless statues, all of which usually stood there unmoving. Even if someone entered the temple, they wouldn’t change.

But now, these tens upon tens of thousands of statues suddenly began to shake. Their eyes opened, and they lifted their heads toward the Heavens. The entire Clan then let out a defiant howl. As the howl reverberated out, the statues began to fly up into the air and circle around the temple.

Quite a few Cultivators were on watch nearby the temple, and this instantly caused them to be completely shocked.

What caused even more disbelief to be written on their faces was when multiple ghost images of the Ancient Temple of Doom suddenly appeared. It was as if the soul of the temple suddenly was rising up from within the earth. It transformed into a blinding beam of light, carrying the tens upon tens of thousands of statues with it. As it soared up into the sky, the temple assumed the shape of an enormous war chariot, and the statues became thousands upon thousands of soldiers and warhorses. A Clan of countless warriors and warhorses, ready to do battle with the Heavens!

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# Chapter 131: I’m Here to Keep My Promise!

The Southern Domain was in an uproar. Eight columns of blood rose toward the Heavens, sending ripples throughout the sky above. The phantasmic war chariot formed by the Ancient Temple of Doom caused astonishment to fill the hearts of any and all who could see it.

At the same time, Meng Hao stepped foot into the Blood Immortal Legacy zone. When his foot touched onto the platform outside the sixth matrix, a tremor ran through the entire world, and a shocking rumble filled the air.

The platform continued to shake, all of the spell matrixes started to radiate light, and a roiling mist began to fill the surroundings. Countless beams of greenish light shot up from the sacrificial altar, swirling around and then shooting toward Meng Hao. The glittering beams seemed to be filled with excitement and hope as they waited for Meng Hao to select one of them to be his Blood Divinity.

Some of the greenish beams emitted auras that seemed to be even more powerful than the Blood Dragon or the Blood Sprite.

Even more hard to describe was how the spiritual energy of this place surged toward Meng Hao as he breathed in. It entered his body, causing his Cultivation base to begin to rotate. With every breath he took, his body grew stronger.

Wind and clouds surged, and the entire Legacy zone trembled. Thunderous roars sounded out everywhere.

A strange feeling rose up within Meng Hao; it seemed as if the Blood Immortal Legacy was calling out to him. The spell matrix, the platform, the aura, everything seemed different than from before!

Of course, the people the outside world in the Southern Domain couldn't see any of this. What was happening inside was now cut off from them; not even the slightest image was visible. The only person who could see anything… was Li Daoyi. Having charged through the seventh matrix, he now stood on the platform beyond it. His face was grim, and his eyes shone with an intense light. He glared back at Meng Hao standing on the platform outside the sixth matrix.

Next to him was the three thousand meter long Blood Dragon possessed by the Li Clan Patriarch. It too was looking at Meng Hao, its eyes radiating both intense jealously as well as a complex, hard-to-describe expression.

"So the Legacy belongs to him…." Li Daoyi raised his head up and let out a hearty laugh. "There's nothing I love in life more than stealing away the rightful Legacies of others. What a wonderful feeling." His laughter rang out as he stepped forward into the eighth matrix.

When the laughter reached Meng Hao's ears, he looked up, and a profound look of enlightenment shone from within his eyes. He looked at Li Daoyi with intense killing intent.

He did not race in pursuit. Instead, he waved his right hand, causing all of the greenish beams of light in front of him to fall back. He did not pick any of them to be his Blood Divinity.

"I only have one Blood Divinity!" he said to himself, his eyes radiating stubbornness.

He did not enter the seventh matrix. He did something that no competitor had ever done throughout the ancient history of the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament. He… turned around and walked back into the sixth matrix!

"I promise that I will find you and take you out of here with me," he said quietly, and then disappeared. When he reappeared, lightning filled the sky.

Innumerable arms stretched out from the sludge that covered the ground. Off in the distance, the frozen, motionless form of the gigantic statue still stood next to the pitch-black form of the Ancient Temple of Doom.

It was the same world, but Meng Hao was not the same person.

He no longer had a Flawless Foundation. His rapidly healing Dao Pillar had propelled him into the realm of the legendary Perfect Foundation!

As soon as he stepped forth into the sixth matrix, he flew up into the air, radiating power from within his Cultivation base. He took a breath, and everything shook. Thunder and lightning crashed, and the earth trembled. Because of his Perfect Foundation, Meng Hao could not absorb even the slightest bit of spiritual energy in the outside world, but this place was filled with massive amounts spiritual energy which rushed toward Meng Hao, filling him. As he breathed, Meng Hao could sense that he was like… the lord of this world!

Lightning and thunder crashed in the sky, and Meng Hao’s long hair whipped about. He lifted his right hand and waved it downward toward the ground.

As his palm descended, the sludge began to quiver. The grasping hands suddenly stopped moving, and the countless faces all looked toward Meng Hao. Their expressions were no longer hostile, but rather filled with veneration and even excitement.

Suddenly, a massive crack split the earth and the sludge. It grew wider and deeper, splitting apart the hands and faces along with it. Meng Hao flew down toward it.

As he approached it, the sludge crept away, not daring to come close to him, as if a deep fear of him existed within it.

Meng Hao shot inside, his body flashing like lightning and radiating determination. The crack grew wider and wider, and within the space of a few breaths, Meng Hao came to a stop. Even as the crack grew larger, he saw it, there, deep within… a body.

It was not thirty meters long. It was the mastiff, but only the size of a palm. Its eyes were closed, and patches of fur were visible through the sludge that covered its body. Its fur wasn’t red, but deathly gray. It was no longer fierce and savage. And the cute, furry puppy it had once been, now existed only in Meng Hao’s eternal memories.

He thought about how as it grew up, it would run in circles around his feet, letting out playful yipping sounds, its fur rippling.

Many images unfolded in Meng Hao’s mind. He thought of how he and the mastiff had rushed together head on into battle in the third matrix. He thought about how it had happily run back and forth around him in the desert of the fourth matrix.

He thought about how the poison flare-up had reduced him to little more than a mortal in the fifth matrix, and how the mastiff had protected him regardless of everything. He thought about how after every battle, it would crawl back to him, lick his hand and lay next to him, watching over him vigilantly.

He had tried to make it leave, but it chose to stay.

In the end, in the sixth matrix, it had chosen to help its master escape even at the cost of its own life. The last thing Meng Hao remembered was watching as the myriad of grasping hands pulled it away from him, not even giving it a chance to lick his hand.

“I do not permit you to die here. You’re not allowed to close your eyes!” Meng Hao’s eyes were filled with veins of blood. One of his hands came to rest on the mastiff’s tiny body. The other lifted up toward the sky. The power of his Cultivation base roared to life. Everything shook as the crack in Meng Hao’s Dao Pillar was completely sealed up!

When this happened, Meng Hao’s body trembled. He felt an incredible power within him, not a power of circulation between heaven and earth. This was a power of circulation in which he formed his own heaven and earth!

In this instant, he was not absorbing the surrounding spiritual energy, he was plundering it!

From this moment on, the spiritual energy of heaven and earth could only enter his body, it couldn’t circulate back. He was like a wound in heaven and earth that could never be healed; the spiritual energy lost to him, would never be returned.

His eyes glowed with a strange light, and his hair whipped around his head. His aura grew more and more powerful, and a golden light emanated out from his entire body. He bit the tip of his tongue and spit out some blood; the blood descended down onto the corpse of the mastiff, but it was incapable of absorbing it.

“Your life was born of my blood; you grew from ignorance into spiritual consciousness….” Meng Hao stretched out his hand, and the blood congealed onto his palm, forming into a Blood Globe, which he then pushed down onto the mastiff, forcing it to absorb into the body.

At the same time, his Cultivation base erupted and he began to forcibly suck in all of the spiritual energy within the sixth matrix. Meng Hao was like a black hole, causing everything to whirl toward him at fantastic speed.

Boundless spiritual energy poured into him, which he then transferred into the body of the mastiff. Time passed. The sludge covering the ground was beginning to dry up, and the arms and faces were beginning to crumble. Even the lightning had disintegrated into power which Meng Hao then absorbed.

The sky grew dim, and cracks spread out across it….

Off in the distance, the statue began to fall to pieces….

The Ancient Temple of Doom began to grow blurry and eventually faded away. The entire world grew deathly still. Only Meng Hao and the mastiff remained….

Its body twitched. It seemed to be struggling to open its eyes. It could sense the aura of its master. Slowly, it opened its eyes and looked at Meng Hao.

Boom!

The entire sixth matrix began to fall apart! Meng Hao pulled back his hand. The mastiff’s body trembled, but its eyes were filled with the fire of life. As the world crumbled around them, it slowly rose to its feet!

It was not a true life, so it had not truly died. It was a Blood Spirit, a Blood Divinity and therefore… could be reborn!

Throughout the ancient history of the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament, no Blood Divinity had ever been reborn. It… was the first. The first thing it saw when it opened its eyes… was its master, who had raised it from an unaware puppy into spiritual consciousness.

ROARRRR!!!

The mastiff lifted its head up and let out a thunderous roar. Its body rapidly expanded. In the blink of an eye it grew to sixty meters in length. Luxuriant fur grew out that was not red in color, but violet!

Its fur was violet and its stature like a small mountain. Sharp spikes grew out of its limbs, and from the top of its head protruded a long horn. Its teeth were long and sharp. All of this made the mastiff look even more fearsome and powerful than it had before!

As far as this world was concerned, it was completely ferocious and bloodthirsty. It was a blood Divinity, emotionless and cold. But there was one person who could make it act like it had when it was small, who could make it lick his hand, who would pet its head.

There was only one person like this in existence!

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# Chapter 132: Perfect Dao Pillar!

Meng Hao emerged onto the platform, and behind him, the sixth matrix collapsed in complete destruction. If onlookers from the outside world could see this, they would be shocked.

In the entire history of the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament, never before had a spell matrix been destroyed!

It didn’t stop there…. Not only did the sixth matrix crumble, further back, the first matrix also began to tremble. With a bang, it shattered, and as it did, massive amounts of spiritual energy spread out.

The spiritual energy immediately flew toward Meng Hao and the mastiff, who both absorbed it. The boundless spiritual energy thrummed within Meng Hao.

At this moment, his second Dao Pillar coalesced. It was Perfect, without even the slightest crack visible. A second Perfect Dao Pillar! Meng Hao’s Cultivation base soared up with explosive momentum.

An intensely powerful aura emanated out from Meng Hao, and as it did, his body flashed. Behind him, the second matrix as well as the third suddenly began to collapse into pieces. It seemed as if the entire Blood Immortal Legacy tournament would not continue past the eighth tournament.

Meng Hao lifted his head and looked at the seventh matrix. His eyes radiated with killing intent as he stepped into it.

The mastiff lifted its head up and roared, then turned into a beam of light and followed Meng Hao into the seventh matrix.

Within the seventh matrix was an enormous tomb with three shocking, blood-red characters inscribed above it.

Tomb of Heaven!

As soon as Meng Hao stepped foot inside, the Tomb of Heaven began to shake. Cracks appeared on the wooden coffin inside, and the countless white bones began to disintegrate into ash. A black mist emanated from the dilapidated flag.

Boom!

A massive booming sound echoed out as the Tomb of Heaven exploded like an erupting volcano. The three-sectioned flag flew up, fluttering in the air and emitting a power which instantly caused Meng Hao to look at it with narrow eyes. In an instant, it had disappeared, soaring out of the seventh matrix and flying directly toward the altar beyond the ninth matrix, and the throne. The flag flew past the corpse wearing the featureless mask, transforming into three white hairs on the corpse’s black head of hair.

At the same time, the seventh matrix crumbled to pieces in front of Meng Hao’s eyes. Along with its collapse, vast amounts of spiritual energy thundered toward him.

This nearly indescribable force of majestic spiritual energy caused a third Dao Pillar to begin to appear within Meng Hao. He moved forward to stand on the seventh matrix’s pillar. Behind him, the second, third and fourth matrixes all toppled into fragments. The way back was now gone. Only the fifth matrix remained behind him and it too was showing signs of fragmentation.

Multiple matrixes had collapsed, sending out dense spiritual energy which formed a mist that covered the sky of the Legacy zone. The mist began to swirl into a vortex, at the very center of which, was none other than Meng Hao!

From a distance, the sight was nothing more than shocking.

Meng Hao sucked in the spiritual energy, as did the mastiff.

The Cultivation bases of both man and dog climbed upward. Meng Hao’s cold eyes stared forward toward the eighth matrix. Though the figure there was blurry, it was obviously Li Daoyi, whose head was turned back to look at Meng Hao.

“How can he destroy the matrixes so quickly!?” Li Daoyi’s heart trembled. He knew that Meng Hao was the destined successor of the Legacy, but was still completely shocked.

The blood dragon roared. “These matrixes have been waiting for his arrival. They’re all destroying themselves to make way for him. But the Blood Immortal is dead. As long as you are fast enough, the Legacy will be yours!”

A cold light shone within Li Daoyi’s eyes and he immediately strode forward into the ninth matrix.

“Maybe the Legacy belongs to you…” he said, “but I’m here now. I’ll snatch it right out of your grasp!”

Seeing Li Daoyi and the anxious-looking Blood Dragon enter the ninth matrix, Meng Hao’s killing intent flashed brightly. Without hesitation, he shot forward toward the eighth matrix, followed by the mastiff.

As they entered, a frightening howling emerged from the abyss that was the eighth matrix. The howling was mixed and disorderly, as if countless souls were crying out at the same time with both excitement and hope. As the sound echoed out, the world of the eighth matrix began to crack and fall apart.

The matrix was destroying itself, which was a mystical command left behind by the Blood Immortal before his death. One of his commands had been that the first person to stand before him could acquire the Legacy. However, another command was if any person rejected by the Heavens appeared, then the nine matrixes would collapse, transforming into spiritual energy to help him acquire the Legacy.

The instant the eighth matrix fell apart, majestic spiritual energy rushed toward Meng Hao and the mastiff. The mastiff lifted its head up and roared. Its Cultivation base had just broken through from Core Formation to Nascent Soul!

Its body grew to three hundred meters in length, and looked even more ferocious than before. The violet-furred mastiff lifted up its head and roared, causing everything to tremble. Its body emanated an unprecedented power, difficult to even describe!

At the same time, Meng Hao's third Perfect Dao Pillar was more than half formed, and continued to coalesce. As soon as he stepped onto the platform past the eighth matrix, the fifth matrix behind him disintegrated.

There were no platforms left behind him. There were no spell matrixes. There was only dense spiritual energy, forming a foggy sea that enveloped the entire interior of the Legacy zone.

Ahead of Meng Hao was the ninth matrix, within which was Li Daoyi, receiving the aid of the Blood Dragon. However, he hadn't emerged from it yet!

"Li Daoyi!" Meng Hao's killing intent rose to the heavens. His Nascent Soul stage mastiff followed him as he rushed into the final matrix.

The instant he entered, the platform that he had been on collapsed. However, at that same moment, Li Daoyi emerged out of the ninth matrix!

As soon as he did, he coughed up a mouthful of blood. The Blood Dragon looked beleaguered. Obviously their swift passage through the ninth matrix had come at quite a price for the Blood Dragon possessed by the four-thousand-year-old Li Clan Patriarch.

"The fact that the destined Legacy successor is here is a good thing. The spell matrix is weakened, which made it much easier to pass through. Daoyi, ascend the sacrificial altar! When you stand before the Blood Immortal, you will become the second generation successor!" The Blood Dragon roared, an expression of unprecedented excitement and anticipation covering its face. If Li Daoyi acquired the Legacy, then it would be able to enter the Immortal treasure and become the Weapon Spirit. Then, he would never die!

Excited laughter spilled out of Li Daoyi’s mouth.

“This Legacy is mine!” he cried, laughing loudly, his face savage and cruel. The Li Clan had paid a heavy price for this Legacy, and he had been appointed to acquire it. In the past, he had truly believed in his heart that he was the person destined to receive the Legacy.

But then Meng Hao had appeared, and the Patriarch had said what he said. Then the spell matrixes had begun to collapse, without Meng Hao even striking a blow against them. Li Daoyi could not deny that this nameless Cultivator was the true destined successor.

But he refused to comply. He refused be resigned to this truth. He would snatch the Legacy for himself!

“I’ll take your Legacy and exterminate you!” laughed Li Daoyi. “I’ll wrest away your destiny!” He leaped forward, shooting straight toward the massive, green-colored altar.

Within the ninth matrix, everything was black. There seemed to be no end to it. Buried deep below the surface of the land in this place was a skeleton. The skeleton looked up, and within its empty eyes, a burning light appeared. It seemed to be the fire of hope, piercing up through the earth until it reached Meng Hao.

“The Legacy of the Blood Immortal has waited countless years for the hoped for one to appear…” murmured the skeleton softly. “I hope that in the end, you can avoid treading that path of no return which my Lord the Immortal tread….” The light in its eyes slowly faded into nothing. Its body transformed into drifting ash.

With that, the ninth matrix shuddered, and then split up into countless pieces. Again, massive amounts of spiritual energy poured toward Meng Hao. This in turn caused Meng Hao’s third Dao Pillar to appear in full!

A third, perfect Dao Pillar!

Meng Hao had now reached the peak of the early Foundation Establishment stage! His Spiritual Sense rapidly increased, far beyond that ordinarily seen at the late Foundation Establishment!

With one more Dao Pillar, he would be at the mid Foundation Establishment stage. That having been said, even though he wasn’t at the mid Foundation Establishment stage, his Perfect Foundation made him so strong that he could easily crush someone of the mid Foundation Establishment. Even late Foundation Establishment Cultivators with a Cracked or Fracture foundation were not his match.

Once Meng Hao formed his fourth Dao Pillar and reach the mid Foundation Establishment stage, the only Foundation Establishment Cultivators in the entire Southern Domain who would be qualified to battle him would be those who had completed the Great Circle of Foundation Establishment, and were on the verge of Core Formation.

People such as that were groomed by various Sects and Clans to be their most powerful disciples. Experts like that were addressed as… Dao Children!

For the most part, they all had Flawless Foundations, and because of their battle prowess, Cultivation bases, and various bits of good fortune, were the top experts in their stage. Yes, these were the Dao Children of the Southern Domain!

Li Daoyi was a Dao Child of the Li Clan. Wang Lihai had also been a Dao Child. These were people who could outclass Chosen. Within each Clan and Sect, there was only one Dao Child per stage!

The instant Meng Hao’s third Perfect Dao Pillar appeared, he strode out onto the platform outside the ninth matrix. Off in the distance, atop the greenish altar, sitting in the stone throne, was a corpse. It slowly lifted its head and looked at… Li Daoyi!

Its hand lifted to grasp the mask on its face. Then, it began to take off the mask!

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# Chapter 133: Do You Dare?!

Once the mask came off, the corpse would hand it to the person standing in front of it. That person would be the winner of the Legacy. This mask was the Legacy treasure!

The Blood Dragon next to Li Daoyi looked excited. It had waited for this day for four thousand years. Once it entered the mask, it would become the Weapon Spirit and would finally be able to leave this place and return to the Southern Domain.

“The Legacy is mine!” said Li Daoyi, his eyes glittering. However, it was at this exact moment that Meng Hao stepped out of the ninth matrix. When he saw what was happening, he didn’t hesitate in the slightest. His body shot forward at high speed.

After achieving the Perfect Foundation and then entering this place, a strange feeling had appeared inside Meng Hao. It was as if he was the lord of this Legacy zone. The feeling had grown even stronger after the destruction of the ninth matrix.

Next to him, the three-hundred-meter long mastiff raised its head to the sky and roared. Thanks to its incredible speed, it had arrived here even before Meng Hao.

“This is my Legacy,” said Meng Hao his eyes flashing. “If I feel like ignoring it, that’s my business. But if you think you can just steal it away, well, that will depend on your luck!” He had experience stealing Legacies, and that in itself didn’t make him angry. It was his opponent’s tactics that pissed him off.

Meng Hao’s desire to slay Li Daoyi had reached epic heights; utilizing the full power of his Cultivation base, he strode forward, his hand flashing an incantation gesture. The Lightning Flag flew out, as well as two wooden swords, which emanating a freezing pressure. They all shot toward Li Daoyi.

In the same moment, the corpse lifted the mask off of its face, and instantly turned into drifting ash. As the ash drifted out, the hand that held the mask also dissolved. The mask floated toward Li Daoyi.

Excitement filled Li Daoyi’s face. His right hand lifted up to grab the mask, but the instant he touched it, his hand was shoved away by the mask itself. It wasn’t that he couldn’t take it, but rather, before he could, it required a Weapon Spirit. Then it would become his.

The instant his hand was shoved away, the Blood Dragon lifted its head in a roar and then shot toward the mask. Currently, the mask had no Weapon Spirit. Whoever entered and took over the mask would assume that role.

As soon as he slammed into the mask, the mask became like a vortex. The Blood Dragon was half way into the mask when suddenly the mastiff roared. The roar created ripples in the entire area, and it sped forward. Ignoring the fact that the Blood Dragon was already in the process of taking over the mask, its three hundred meter long body slammed into it.

The mastiff’s body was sucked in as soon as it touched the surface of the mask. Its fight with the Li Clan Patriarch for control of the mask had begun!

“You don’t know your own limitations,” echoed out the voice of the Li Clan Patriarch. “When I become the Weapon Spirit, I shall consume you!” He had completely entered the mask, and yet, so had the mastiff.

A blinding red light emanated from the mask. And yet, within the redness could also be seen violet! It was as if two brilliant colors were trying to swallow each other up!

Because of this, the mask did not belong to Li Daoyi, and neither did it belong to Meng Hao. Which Blood Divinity took over the mask would determine the winner of the Legacy.

Furthermore… a situation in which two Blood Divinities struggled to be the Weapon Spirit was something the Blood Immortal had never imagined could happen. This was completely unprecedented.

There was one thing that was for sure…. Whoever won, mastiff or Blood Dragon, would experience an unimaginable increase in power. At the very least, the winner would break halfway through to Spirit Severing. With the proper Dao enlightenment, the winner could even reach full Spirit Severing!

“It was useless to save that second-rate Blood spirit,” laughed Li Daoyi. “It will just help me to acquire the Legacy!” Meng Hao approached, and their eyes locked. Now that the Legacy zone was beginning to crumble, at long last the two of them were in the same world together.

Meng Hao said one sentence: “Killing you will resolve all the issues.” He continued to move toward Li Daoyi.

“That’s exactly what I was going to say!” laughed Li Daoyi. He lifted his right hand, and it blazed with light. In front of him appeared a shining golden war chariot which shot toward Meng Hao.

Suddenly, a roaring sound filled the air and blood leaked out of Meng Hao’s mouth. He retreated backward. Li Daoyi’s face flickered, and he also retreated, blood spilling out of his mouth. He looked at Meng Hao, and it was at this moment that the entire Legacy zone began to crumble around them. Cracks appeared all over the surface of the dark green sacrificial altar.

Everything began to split up. Popping sounds could be heard, and from the appearance of everything, it seemed the Blood Immortal would destroy itself and disappear.

Anyone who didn’t leave, would be buried along with it!

The struggle inside the mask between the mastiff and the Blood Dragon seemed to be escalating. Originally, the mastiff would never have been a match for the Blood Dragon. But it had been resurrected by absorbing blood from Meng Hao’s Perfect Foundation. This had changed it into something never before seen among Blood Divinities.

The spiritual energy in the area rushed toward the mask, being absorbed by both the mastiff and the Blood Dragon. The difference was, however much the mastiff absorbed, it could use. None of it leaked out. With the Blood Dragon, this was not so.

Amongst the two of them, although the Blood Dragon started out with the upper hand, after a short time had passed, it was still unable to get rid of the mastiff. It also had no way to take control of the Legacy mask.

Seeing this, Li Daoyi’s expression changed, and he retreated. He flicked his wide sleeve in an attempt to snatch the mask, but was again rebuffed violently. With no Weapon Spirit in control of it, no one could dare to take it away!

The Blood Immortal had never predicted such an unusual situation. Normally speaking, one person should arrive to take the mask. The Blood Divinity would be able to take control of the mask within the space of a few breaths, and would become the Weapon Spirit. Then the Legacy zone would begin to collapse, and the winner could take the mask and leave.

Instead, something completely unexpected had occurred, and thus a shocking life-or-death crisis had come to be!

The world was crumbling around them. Down below, a huge vortex had appeared which was swallowing up everything. Nothing that entered could ever come out again. The destruction all around was creating an empty world!

Up above was a glowing shield, upon which ripples were beginning to form. It would only last for so long before it too shattered. This shield was the only exit to the outside world.

Entering that shield was the only way to escape destruction.

No one was in control of the mask. Both parties refused to budge. The mask could not be taken out, and the world was being destroyed. When Li Daoyi realized what was happening, his expression twisted.

Meng Hao, on the other hand, was completely calm. He moved backward for a moment, wiping away the blood from his mouth. Then he advanced forward. His three Perfect Dao Pillars emitted a powerful spiritual power, and as he charged ahead, his right hand flickered in an incantation sign. Instantly, a three-hundred-meter long Flame Python roared into being and shot toward Li Daoyi.

Actually, this was no python, it was a dragon! A roaring, gold dragon, enveloped in scorching flame. Behind it flew a Wind Blade thirty meters long. Burning wind filled the area, enveloping Li Daoyi.

Up to now in his Cultivation, Meng Hao hadn't learned very much magic techniques. All of his magical techniques were from the Qi Condensation stage, and he had none whatsoever from the Foundation Establishment stage. This was one of his weaknesses, and Meng Hao was well aware of it.

“We will see who is more ruthless….” said Li Daoyi with a cruel laugh. He could clearly see that the magic being used was unconventional. But he had also already determined that it would be difficult to quickly achieve victory. The true key to victory, was who would stay the longest in this collapsing world. Whoever left first without the mask, would lose any qualification to be the winner of the Legacy.

Li Daoyi's face was grim. He was a Dao Child of the Li Clan. The title of Dao Child was something he had won through pure slaughter. He was out for himself, and would kill without hesitation. As far as stealing good fortune from others, this was something he had done before more than once. He had come from an unremarkable branch of the Li Clan to become a Dao Child, far above Chosen.

This was all because of his personality. He arrogantly believed his stubbornness to be one of his greatest assets. Suddenly, a fan appeared in his hand. It was a fan of four colors, and when he waved it, the colors expanded out, slamming into Meng Hao's Fire Dragon and Wind Blade.

A boom echoed out. The four colors swished out in four directions, transforming into four swords which stabbed toward Meng Hao.

Li Daoyi laughed maniacally. His left hand slapped his bag of holding, and eighteen black pearls appeared in his palm. He tossed them toward Meng Hao, and as they approached, they unexpectedly exploded. Distortions rippled out along with the explosion, causing the crumbling environment to fall apart even faster.

“Still think you’re more ruthless than me?” Li Daoyi’s expression was one of pure insanity.

The four coloured sword and the attacking distortion bore down upon Meng Hao’s lightning mist. A massive boom exploded out, and Meng Hao shot backwards several paces. His eyes were filled with a ruthless light. His right hand lifted up, and another three hundred meter long Flame Dragon appeared in the air and flew, not toward Li Daoyi, but toward the glowing door up above.

“Making this place fall apart quicker isn’t ruthless,” he said coolly. “Destroying the exit… now that is ruthless. Do you dare to?” The Flame Dragon slammed directly into the glowing door, exploding. The already rippling door began to tear apart. Massive parts of it crumbled into nothing.

Seeing this, Li Daoyi, who had claimed to be incredibly ruthless, went completely wide-eyed. His heart began to pound.

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# Chapter 134: Eighth Demon Sealing Hex! 1

Now that he had engaged Li Daoyi in battle, Meng Hao could tell that if he had a fourth Dao Pillar, then he would be able to end the fight quite quickly. Now, he desired more than ever to slay Li Daoyi.

But Li Daoyi’s Cultivation base was at the late Foundation Establishment stage. Furthermore, he was a Li Clan Dao Child. He outclassed even Chosen, and would be difficult to kill.

More important than Li Daoyi, was the mastiff. So far the mask was not under the firm control of anyone. With Li Daoyi present, it was impossible to say when the struggle would end. And if Meng Hao wanted to aid the mastiff, he needed to get rid of Li Daoyi.

And his method… was to destroy the exit!

Below them were churning mists. The collapse of this world was increasing in speed. The vortex roared and grew larger. Soon, the dark green sacrificial altar was more than half sucked into it.

Meng Hao moved backward, flicking his sleeve. The lightning mist sprang up around him, and then shot toward the rapidly collapsing door.

Li Daoyi’s expression flickered. He clenched his jaw, and a cold look appeared in his eyes. He waved his right hand, and the fan flew up, shooting toward the glowing door. A booming sound filled the air as the door cracked even more under the power of the attack.

After all the destruction, the only thing left of the door was a thirty meter patch. And that patch was rapidly falling apart.

“There’s no way you are as ruthless as me,” said Li Daoyi. “I don’t believe that you’ll sacrifice your life!” His body flashed as he shot forward. His right hand flickered an incantation, then gestured forward. Instantly, a yellow-colored talisman appeared behind him. It shot through his body, increasing in size exponentially as it shot toward the thirty meter wide door.

Meng Hao’s eye glittered coldly. He slapped his bag of holding to produce ten whistling flying swords. They simply could not withstand the power of Meng Hao’s three Dao Pillars, and immediately exploded into pieces.

Amidst the reverberating boom, the thirty meter door shook violently as it disintegrated further. Now, only six meters were left. As for the green-colored sacrificial altar, it was almost completely sucked up by the whirling vortex. Now, the vortex began to rise up toward Meng Hao and Li Daoyi.

The entire Legacy zone was on the verge of complete annihilation. Cracks appeared on every surface, and an incredible, deafening roar filled the air.

Above them, the only exit was now growing smaller and smaller. At the moment, there was only three meters left. And yet, Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding again. Ten flying swords flew out. Li Daoyi’s face fell.

If the swords exploded onto the door, the door, now less than a meter wide, would completely collapse. Li Daoyi suddenly thought that Meng Hao had really given up any hope of living, and was resigned to staying in this place forever.

But then Meng Hao flicked his wide sleeve, and he flew up into the midst of the swords. This made it seem as though he had given up on the idea of staying, and would leave. But as he left, he would destroy the door. Then, even if Li Daoyi acquired the Legacy of the Blood Immortal, then he would have no way to leave.

A conflicted look appeared in Li Daoyi’s eyes. If Meng Hao did that, then getting the Legacy would be pointless. He was about to do something to block Meng Hao, but then he realized that anything he did would most likely send out ripples that would cause the weakened door to break apart.

“If I leave, the Legacy….”

He didn’t want to be buried in this place. He was a Dao Child of the Li Clan. He had limitless prospects in the future. Losing out on the Legacy of the Blood Immortal wouldn’t really change anything. But dying here….

“Compared to my life, the Legacy doesn’t count for anything. And who cares about some old Patriarch. Very well. But if someone else gets the Legacy, then they will be buried with it along with this place!” Li Daoyi’s eyes were red as he let out a howl. He leaped up, coughing out a mouthful of blood which splashed over him. He then transformed into a bloody shadow, which increased exponentially in size. He stretched up toward Meng Hao’s flying swords, reaching them, and Meng Hao, just as they were about to explode. He passed Meng Hao, and then shot into the door.

Even as he passed into the door, his right hand waved out, and ten black pearls appeared, ready to explode, smashing the door and cutting off Meng Hao’s escape route.

And yet, at the same time, as his right hand was still in the process of leaving through the screen, Meng Hao took a deep breath and then released a spell that he had been preparing for some time.

“Demon Sealing, Eighth Hex, Body Sealing!” His eyes were crimson as he uttered the words. This was the first time he had ever used the mystical art he had acquired from the Eighth Generation Demon Sealer.

After achieving intellectual enlightenment, Meng Hao had tried several times to use the spell, but had never succeeded. Then after the deep enlightenment from the magical text in the fifth matrix of the Blood Immortal Legacy zone, everything clicked.

Using his three Perfect Dao Pillars, his fingers flickering, Meng Hao had the intense feeling that he would succeed this time. The feeling had appeared earlier in his battle with Li Daoyi, and had continued to grow stronger.

His finger fell, and the entire world shuddered. And yet, it was not actually the world that had shuddered, but Meng Hao and his finger.

Tiny strands of intangible Qi appeared that seemed to be somehow connected to the collapsing world. They were everywhere, blended within the spiritual energy of heaven and earth, creating ghost images of the world. It wasn’t just Meng Hao and his finger that shook. In addition to the ghost images of the world, ghost images of Li Daoyi had also appeared!

Li Daoyi had not passed all the way through the glowing screen. But now, his body began to tremble and… he stopped moving!

At the same time, the three Dao Pillars within Meng Hao rapidly grew dim; it seemed that as Meng Hao’s technique took effect, it was using up almost all of the spiritual power he had.

Meg Hao’s face grew pale. He waved his right hand, and the lightning mist suddenly spread out, surrounding the ten pearls that were just about to explode. At the same time, the two wooden swords flew out, heading directly toward Li Daoyi. As for the other flying swords, they lost their spiritual power, and then exploded, sending ripples out in all directions.

A moment passed, and Li Daoyi was beginning to recover. However, everything had happened so quickly, he was still just staring in shock. His body was already outside, but before he had a chance to do anything else, he let out a blood-curdling howl. He hadn’t pulled his right arm through in time! In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao’s wooden swords slashed it off!

Within the Legacy zone, Meng Hao’s face was pale, and he coughed up blood. Everything around him was disintegrating and being sucked into the vortex. The lightning mist made a groaning rumble; it had successfully blocked the exploding attack of the ten pearls, but the glowing door rippled nonetheless, shrinking down to less than two meters in diameter.

Soon the lightning mist was so thin it seemed as if it might fade away; even the sparks of electricity were nearly undetectable. Meng Hao saw Li Daoyi escape, minus his arm, and sighed inwardly. Then he turned, and rushed over to the half-violet, half-red mask, inside of which the two Blood Divinities were attempting to consume each other.

At first, the red glow seemed to be winning out. But the instant Li Daoyi left, it suddenly became weak. Inside the mask, the Li Clan Patriarch trembled, his rage billowing up.

“Li Daoyi!!” he roared furiously. In the past, he had been a Cultivator, but now he was incarnated as a Blood Divinity. As such, he had no choice but to follow the only true rule of the ruleless Legacy zone!

The winner of the Legacy must have a Blood Divinity!

Similarly, a Blood Divinity must belong to a Legacy competitor! When a Legacy competitor departed, the Blood Divinity would vanish. Only upon the competitor’s return would the Blood Divinity reappear.

However, the Li Clan Patriarch had already placed himself in the mask. He didn’t disappear, and yet, because Li Daoyi had fled, he was now weakened. The glow which surrounded him began to fade.

Meng Hao approached. Ignoring the disintegrating and collapsing around him, he reached out, circulating his three Dao Pillars of his Perfect Foundation, causing all of the power of heaven and earth in the area to rush toward him.

The spiritual energy entered his body and then flowed into the mask, merging into the mastiff. With this assistance, the mastiff’s violet glow grew brighter, pressing down on the Blood Dragon that was the Li Clan Patriarch, completely cutting off his path of retreat. In that instant, the mastiff’s control of the mask exceeded half. And yet, it couldn’t completely take it over. Still, the mask could not be taken away.

The Li Clan Patriarch couldn’t be swallowed up so easily. Despite its dangerous position, it still continued to struggle fiercely.

“If you’re impenetrably thickheaded, then the worst thing that could happen is we will all die today,” rang out Meng Hao’s voice. Everything around them rumbled thunderously, collapsing into pieces. The glowing exit door was barely more than a meter wide. “If you give in, and let my Blood Divinity take control of the Legacy mask, then I won’t permit him to consume all of you. Some of your spirit can remain, and eventually the day will come when you can emerge and transform back into a person! The choice is up to you!”

“What makes you think I’ll help you win!?” replied the cruel voice of the Li Clan Patriarch. “And what reason do I have to trust you!?” He knew the danger they faced, and also knew that refusing Meng Hao meant death. But he still didn’t want to give in.

“You might not trust me, but you have no other options.” Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed.

A moment passed, the space of ten breaths. The surroundings were beginning their final descent into destruction. The vortex was only three meters away from Meng Hao, swallowing everything up. Above him, the exit was barely a meter wide. A helpless roar sounded out from the Li Clan Patriarch.

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# Chapter 135: Breaching the Volcano

As Meng Hao said, the Li Clan Patriarch had no choice but to trust him. If he didn’t, he would inevitably die. Trust Meng Hao, and he had a chance at life. If he didn’t trust Meng Hao, and Meng Hao left, he would have no chance whatsoever at a continued existence.

Even as Meng Hao spoke, the Li Clan Patriarch knew that his only choice was to stop resisting and allow the mastiff to consume him and take control of the mask. The mask flew into Meng Hao’s hand. He grabbed it, and then shot out through the rapidly shrinking exit.

As he flew out, a booming rang out as the Legacy zone was completely swallowed up by the vortex, gone forever.

In the volcano, Meng Hao shot through the air in a beam of light, the blood lake and the altar trembling around him. The massive stone head collapsed into fragments that sank into the lake. Within an instant, the lake itself had dried up.

The only thing left was a crater in the ground, as if all of it had been a mere illusion.

Even as the lake dried up, thunderous booms could be heard from overhead. Meng Hao lifted his head to look at the sky above the volcano. Thunder and lightning filled the air like silver dragons. They formed an enormous mass, as if they desired to smash downward, but instead, were blocked by a blood-red glow. The blood red glow seemed alive, as if it wished to do battle with the Heavens.

It was so far away that Meng couldn’t see it, but what he could see was that… the glowing shield at the mouth of the volcano was disappearing.

“All this strange celestial phenomena will definitely attract attention. I can’t stay here!” Gripping the mask in hand, he shot toward Chu Yuyan, at the same time sending some Spiritual Sense into the mask.

It had been completely taken over by the mastiff, who was now the Weapon Spirit. Having completely swallowed up the possessed Blood Dragon, the mastiff was now in a state of hibernation. The Li Family Patriarch’s Cultivation base was incredibly powerful, thanks to his initial incredible strength, added to which was the power of the Blood Dragon he had possessed. Even though the mastiff, also a Blood Divinity, could consume him, he would need quite some time to fully absorb him.

Meng Hao had no idea how long it would be before it awoke from hibernation. However, he could only imagine what it would be like when it woke up and emerged. It no doubt would have incredible power, which of course would be of immense help to Meng Hao.

It was asleep for now, but belonged to Meng Hao. The mask too, completely belonged to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s heart thumped, filled with anticipation. However, because the mastiff was sleeping, he was temporarily incapable of using the mask.

“How long will it sleep….” Meng Hao took a deep breath. Deep within the mask he also saw a tiny shred of the Li Clan Patriarch’s spiritual consciousness. It was very weak, as if Meng Hao could exterminate it with the slightest thought. He considered for a moment, and then decided not to blot out it out.

Deep within the mask, he also saw a blood-colored book of scriptures. Next to the blood-colored book of scriptures was a flag with three streamers.

After a moment’s examination, Meng Hao recalled his Spiritual Sense and placed the mask into his bag of the Cosmos. He landed next to unconscious Chu Yuyan, who was wrapped up in the black net.

Meng Hao looked thoughtful as he glanced up at the thunder and lightning outside the volcano. The bloody glow and the glow of the lightning interlocked within the sky. Determination filled his face.

“I can’t stay here. I’ve got to get away. The Tribulation Lightning is here for me, but it’s provoked a response from the Blood Immortal’s sacrificial altar….” He flicked his wide sleeve to scoop up Chu Yuyan. Using the incredible power of his Perfect Foundation’s Spiritual Sense, he examined the surroundings. He let out a cold harrumph. In various cracks and fissures in the area, Chu Yuyan had hidden quite a few complete minor pills. He collected them together, then flew up and out of the volcano. This was the first time in half a year that he had been able to leave this place. Now that he was able to, his heart filled with anticipation regarding the future.

But the anticipation on his face quickly turned into shock. As he gazed off into the distance, he could clearly see a massive, ancient temple that had the appearance of a war chariot, currently in the midst of bombarding the heavens. Surrounding it were a myriad of figures emitting a shocking aura, locked in combat with the lightning from the Heavens.

The Tribulation Lightning was shocking to the extreme. Even one bolt of it was enough to cause Meng Hao to fill with a feeling of dread that caused his pupils to shrink.

“So… this is the Tribulation Lightning sent after me?” His heart trembled. He could only imagine what would have happened inside the volcano if he hadn’t entered the Legacy Zone after consuming the Perfect Foundation pill. The Tribulation Lightning had attempted to break open the Blood Immortal’s Legazy Zone, and in doing so had provoked the Legacy, which sent the Ancient Temple of Doom into war. Had he faced it alone with his Perfect Foundation, he would have been completely destroyed.

Breathing deeply, Meng Hao shot away as fast as possible, grasping Chu Yuyan in tow. His scalp was numb, and he felt incredibly anxious. This was because he had noticed that the blood-red glow was beginning to fade, and the image of the Ancient Temple of Doom was growing indistinct.

Thankfully, the Tribulation Lightning was also beginning to disperse; there seemed to be only one volley left, and then it would be gone.

Actually, to flee to the world outside the volcano wasn't really the best choice; but Meng Hao had no choice but to do so, and flee as quickly as possible. He knew that the Tribulation from the Heavens would attract widespread notice. Surely there were already many people in the surrounding areas; as soon as the Heavenly Tribulation ceased, the area would be crawling with Cultivators. Under those circumstances, it would be very difficult to escape.

Only if he made his move now, would he be able to take advantage of the chaos.

Exactly as Meng Hao had suspected, the surrounding area was already filled with nearly a thousand Cultivators, who had been attracted to the area by the Tribulation from the Heavens. Of course, none of them dared to enter the area, instead choosing to watch from a distance. Now that the Tribulation was fading, their eyes began to glitter. It wasn't clear who went first; in an instant, all of them flow forward from all directions, filling the Tribulation zone.

Meng Hao was fleeing as fast as possible. He suddenly frowned, his eyes flashing. He stopped in his tracks, muttering to himself for the space of a few breaths. Then his eyes filled with determination.

"If I keep going, I'll definitely run into some Cultivators. Their first reaction will be to doubt me…. If I don't continue flying in this direction… Then I can do this!" He turned around. Instead of flying toward the border of the Tribulation area, he headed directly toward its center. This was opposite of his original direction.

He didn't fly quickly, however. And as for Chu Yuyan, he had long since deposited her into the bag of the Cosmos. It was not a bag of holding, after all, and its insides were an entire world. It was capable of temporarily holding a living person inside.

Meng Hao flew along, carefully observing his surroundings. After about the space of about ten breaths, his expression flickered. Ahead of him had suddenly appeared a group of about ten Cultivators. Like prismatic beams of light, they shot through the air toward him.

The group of ten split up. Three or four of them shot forward at top speed, their gazes fixed upon Meng Hao.

Their gazes immediately passed over him. He gave off the impression that he was doing exactly what they were, searching the Tribulation zone.

Currently, his eyes were fixed on the ground, not looking up toward them. Were it the opposite, they would have moved to bar his way.

It was at this exact moment that the Temple of Ancient Doom completely disappeared. As the bloody-red glow faded away, the thunder and clouds also began to break apart. But… there was one lightning bolt that did not seem willing to abandon its mission. Even as everything disappeared around it, it shot down from the sky, directly toward Meng Hao.

As it descended, it was clearly fading. However, it was still incredibly fast; it would without doubt fall onto Meng Hao.

When it landed on him, regardless of how minor the injuries, it would most definitely arouse the notice of the surrounding Cultivators. If they started to make speculations, then Meng Hao would definitely be in danger.

At the moment, the ten or so Cultivators were gaping in shock as the lightning bolt approached from the distance. They immediately began to retreat.

At this critical juncture, Meng Hao's mind was spinning. He suddenly let out a hearty laugh. Instead of retreating, he rushed forward. In a loud voice, he said, "So, there are some Tribulation Lightning aftershocks! Finally I, Wang, get some good fortune from the Heavens for me!"

Continuing to laugh, he charged onward. He waved his right hand, and instantly, the lightning mist appeared around him. Amidst the shocked gazes of the surrounding Cultivators, he shot directly toward the Tribulation Lightning bolt.

“Is this guy crazy?”

“He called himself Wang. Maybe he’s from the Wang Clan?”

From their perspective, rather than seeing the Tribulation Lightning seek out Meng Hao, they saw him rushing toward it. And this was exactly what Meng Hao wanted.

Boom!

A massive explosion radiated outward. The Tribulation Lightning slammed into the lightning mist surrounding Meng Hao. A rumbling roar rose up, and Meng Hao’s body trembled. He coughed up a mouthful of blood, and within him, his Three Dao Pillars narrowly escaped being destroyed.

This was only one Tribulation Lightning bolt, that had been weakened by who knew how much. Furthermore, it had grown more and more weak is it descended down. Thankfully, it had occurred in this way. Meng Hao knew in his heart that he had gotten lucky. Without the Blood Immortal sacrificial altar, and without the Temple of Ancient Doom, the moment he had achieved Perfection, he would have perished.

As the Tribulation Lightning dissipated from Meng Hao’s body, it turned into innumerable arcs of electricity, which were then absorbed by his lightning mist. It seemed the Lightning Flag had also been damaged by the Tribulation Lightning. However, it was now able to reinforce itself. The lightning glow increased in intensity, as if it had undergone some sort of baptism.

This left Meng Hao shocked, but he still managed to let out a loud laugh.

“I didn’t come here in vain, after all!” he said, flicking his sleeve and laughing. “With the help of the Tribulation Lightning, my magical treasure has become complete! Excellent! Excellent!” With that, he shot forward, looking for all appearances as if he were seeking more Tribulation Lightning.

“Ah, this guy is refining treasures!”

“Refining treasures with Tribulation Lightning! This Wang fellow is really daring!”

“You were only looking at the treasure refining, you weren’t looking at him. When the Tribulation Lightning hit him, it was like a baptism. For people who practice Lightning type Cultivation, this kind of thing is extremely beneficial!” The ten Cultivators charged onward, looking for more signs of Tribulation Lightning aftershocks.

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# Chapter 136: Zhou Daya!

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as the ten Cultivators passed him up. He continued to fly onward, although not as quickly. Soon, the other Cultivators were much further past him. His eyes flickered slightly. He didn’t leave, but continued to follow them, looking exactly as if he were seeking the source of the Heavenly Tribulation and, like the rest of the others, more Tribulation Lightning.

“Why did that Heavenly Tribulation come?” said Meng Hao in the same tone as the others. He looked very thoughtful as he asked, “What is there about this place that provoked it?!”

“Good question! I’ve never seen Heavenly Tribulation like that before. Don’t tell me there was a person here transcending Tribulation? No one has done that since ancient times, although you can read about it in the ancient records….”

“Yeah, it’s really weird…”

It was afternoon by the time the Tribulation clouds began to disperse. The midday sun shone over the land. Nearly a thousand people were scouring the area, but couldn’t find any clues. Eventually though, they found the volcano.

Before anyone could enter it, three beams of light appeared overhead, each of them three hundred meters wide. Soon three people appeared. No one could see their faces clearly as they flew directly into the mouth of the volcano.

Even though the surrounding Cultivators couldn’t see their faces, they could sense the powerful pressure they radiated. Only late Core Formation

Cultivators in the Pseudo Nascent Soul stage could emit pressure like that.

Within the large group of people, Meng Hao’s pupils constricted. However, he didn’t bat an eyelid. Moments later, the three people flew out from within the volcano. Their eyes swept over the crowd, which allowed everyone to see their appearances clearly.

“It’s the Black Cloud Elders!”

“So, it’s them. They’re the honor guard of the Black Sieve Outer Sect….”

“This place is within the area controlled by the Black Sieve Sect, so for them to appear is nothing out of the ordinary. Now that they’re here, there’s really no point for us to be here….”

The three old Cultivators wore long black robes, upon which were embroidered flowery cloud shapes. After looking around, the three of them seemed to be lost in thought for a moment. Then, a voice rang out.

“This area is sealed. Leave this place!” They sat cross-legged in mid-air as one of the three produced a jade slip. He flicked his sleeve, and the jade slip transformed into a black mist which rose up into the sky.

Meng Hao lowered his head with a resigned look on his face, just like the surrounding crowd, then began to disperse along with them.

“So, it turns out this place is close to the Black Sieve Sect….” thought Meng Hao, looking off into the distance. Suddenly, he increased his speed, transforming into a prismatic beam and shooting away. His right hand slapped his bag of the Cosmos, and a jade slip appeared in his hand. He looked at it closely.

“Wow, the wind generated by that roc blew all the way to … the Black Sieve Sect…..” Suddenly, an image appeared in his mind of that day back in the Reliance Sect when he had walked along with Elder Sister Xu.

“I wonder how Elder Sister Xu is doing?” he thought. He flew along for a few more days. After a while, he suddenly frowned. Spotting a location some distance away, he landed down next to a patch of forest.

His right hand slapped his bag of the Cosmos, and Chu Yuyan flew out. Her face was pale, and the instant she appeared, she looked at Meng Hao with cold eyes. She didn’t say a word.

His face calm, Meng Hao knelt down and ran his hands across her body. Of course, it was impossible not to feel the litheness of her figure. Her eyes widened and fury covered her face.

“What are you doing?!” she cried. But even as the words came out of her mouth, Meng Hao pulled his hand out from deep within the warmth of her robe to reveal four medicinal pills.

“These pills belong to me,” he said, tucking them away. He had long since guessed that Chu Yuyan had hidden away some of the Perfect Foundation minor ingredient pills that she had concocted.

Seeing him take away the pills, she let out humph. Her Cultivation base was now restored, but being tied up within the black net, she had no way to free herself.

“As we agreed, I’m going to let you go.”

Meng Hao looked down at her, then waved his right hand. The black net widened, and then flew off of her.

“I told you I would get you out of there, and Meng Hao never goes back on his word.”

Almost the same instant that Meng Hao took back the black net, Chu Yuyan’s eyes flashed with a strange light. Her Cultivation base was back at the mid Foundation Establishment stage, and now it seemed as if she were about to flash an incantation gesture.

Meng Hao looked at her indifferently, as calm as ever. Her heart sank, and she said nothing for a moment. A complicated expression appeared on her face.

“The enmity between us is settled,” she said, gritting her teeth. “But when we meet in the future, we will still be enemies. As for everything that happened in the volcano, you can never speak of it to anyone. If you do, I will be forced to kill you!” She hadn’t been awake for long, and didn’t know what had happened regarding the Tribulation or the Blood Immortal Legacy.

But as for her feelings toward Meng Hao, they were vastly different than what she had felt when she first met him. He looked like he was still at the early Foundation Establishment stage. But the way he stood there so calmly filled her with a powerful dread.

That dread was partly because of what she had experienced during the half year inside the volcano. The other was because of a feeling of imminent danger which rose up from within her heart.

She sensed that if she attacked at this moment, she would be doing something she would regret forever.

Her cold words having been spoken, she suddenly flew up into the air, transforming into a white beam that shot off into the distance. At the moment, she wanted nothing more than to get as far away from him as possible. The events of the past half year in the volcano were now complex memories that would never be forgotten.

Meng Hao watched her beautiful, slender form slowly disappear. He also thought back to the half year in the volcano. He thought about when her garment had been in rags, revealing her tender, snow-white skin and graceful figure.

He stood there smiling slightly for a moment, before coolly saying, “If you’ve seen enough, you can come out now.”

His voice was met with only silence from the surrounding area. He lifted his right hand, and a three hundred meter long Flame Dragon appeared. Instantly, the entire area filled with blistering heat.

“No, no, no,” said an alarmed voice. “Fellow Daoist, there’s no need to get excited….” The voice came from the air not too far away. Suddenly, a shimmering figure appeared which then coalesced into a young man. He had a somewhat depraved look to him, and in his hand was a paper talisman. He looked nervously at Meng Hao.

The Flame Dragon’s massive head was staring directly at him, its sinister eyes glowing. It seemed to be covering his every path of escape as it approached.

His expression as normal as ever, Meng Hao said, “His Excellency has been following me for a while, I’m curious as to his objective.” His eyes flashed coldly, causing deep anxiety to well up in the heart of the depraved-looking Cultivator.

His Cultivation base was at the early Foundation Establishment stage. But facing up against Meng Hao, he felt an incredible pressure bearing down on him. This was especially so because of the three hundred meter long Fire Dragon that Meng Hao had summoned. His heart shook. From what he could tell, this Fire Dragon seemed to have the power of a Cultivation base of the late Foundation Establishment stage.

The Fire Dragon’s appearance had basically locked down the entire area, forcing him to reveal himself.

“Senior, I am Zhou Daya from the Golden Frost Sect,” he said, his face pale. He quickly held out his identification medallion for Meng Hao to see. “Fellow Daoist, please, please do not attack. I have no ill intentions. I just happened to see the flag you used to absorb the Tribulation Lightning. I was very excited, and followed you to see if I could have a chance to trade for it.”

Having followed Meng Hao this entire time, of course he’d seen Chu Yuyan. He recognized her, obviously, and was shocked. He knew that Chu Yuyan was a Chosen of the Violet Fate Sect, and also Wang Tengfei’s beloved and fiancé. And yet, he had just observed her wearing mens’ clothing, which obviously belonged to the young man who now stood in front of him.

Seeing the complicated look in her eyes, and having heard what she said to Meng Hao, Zhou Daya of course had experienced countless speculations in his heart as to what was going on.

In fact, he had come to the conclusion that he must have just witness some form of adultery…. This in turn caused him to feel quite nervous. However, it also caused him to feel extremely excited.

“It’s adultery!” he thought. “Two adulterers! If the Little Patriarch knew about this, he would be really happy. In fact, he might even give me some kind of reward.”

“The Golden Frost Sect,” said Meng Hao, gazing coldly at the depraved-looking Cultivator. He frowned. “Do you know Li Fugui?”

“Li Fugui?” said Zhou Daya, looking surprised. “Uh, you mean Little Patriarch? Of course I know him! Everyone in the Golden Frost Sect knows the Little Patriarch.” From the expression Meng Hao saw when he looked into his eyes, it didn’t seem as if he was lying. Meng Hao felt a tug at his heart.

“How could Fatty have become a Little Patriarch?” he thought to himself. After a moment, his eyes fell to the paper talisman that Zhou Daya held in hand.

Zhou Daya’s heart flip-flopped. He hated to part with the talisman. But he forced himself to hand it over.

“Fellow Daoist, please don’t take offence. I, Zhou Daya, acted crudely today. Please accept my invisibility talisman as a token of apology for my indiscretion.”

Meng Hao eyed the invisibility talisman, sweeping it over with his Spiritual Sense. Seeing nothing out of the ordinary about it, he accepted it.

“The Golden Frost Sect is based in the State of Frigid Snow,” said Meng Hao coolly, his eyes narrow. “What brings you to this area?”

“The Black Sieve Sect didn’t participate in the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament,” he replied carefully. “Therefore, the Sect dispatched orders to myself and a few others to come here and investigate. Actually, we weren’t the only ones. There are people from various other Sects in the area as well. Not long after I arrived, I saw the Tribulation Lightning…” He seemed to be especially emphasizing that he was not alone here in the Black Sieve Sect region.

“Did your investigation produce any results?” asked Meng Hao placidly.

“This type of thing isn’t easy to investigate. Recently, the Black Sieve Sect has been distributing a lot of treasures to attract rogue Cultivators of the Foundation Establishment stage. After thinking about it for a while, I really think something is wrong with the whole situation.”

Meng Hao’s facial expression didn’t change. He looked at Zhou Daya for a moment, then without another word, flicked his sleeve and disappeared in a beam of light.

As his figure disappeared over the horizon, Zhou Daya’s heart began to relax. He wiped the sweat from his brow. Standing in front of Meng Hao, he had felt incredible pressure bearing down on him, and had been careful to exercise extreme caution.

Now, he was extremely happy, and his eye shone brightly.

“Adultery! That guy and Chu Yuyan committed adultery! She was even wearing his clothes. Haha! I have to get back as soon as possible to tell Little Patriarch about it. This news is going to make him super happy.” Back in the Sect, Zhou Daya was somewhat of a gossip and loved to spread news. Having come across what he believed to be an excellent rumour, he immediately flew up into the air, heading back toward the Sect’s established rendezvous point.

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# Chapter 137: 10th Patriarch of the Wang Clan

A few days earlier….

The Southern Domain. The State of Cloudy Skies.

This nation existed in the centre of the Southern Domain. It encompassed a huge territory, vastly larger than the State of Zhao. Even in the Southern Domain, nations like this could be counted on one hand.

Within the State of Cloudy Skies, there were no Sects whatsoever. It was one of those uncommon nations that didn’t have Sects. Instead, in this nation, there was a Clan. This Clan was named Wang. And this nation… was also named Wang!

Male members of the Wang Clan who were mortal and could not practice Cultivation became part of the royal family of the State of Cloudy Skies. Those who could practice Cultivation entered the Wang Ancestral Mansion.

As for Cultivators without the surname Wang, they formed auxiliary branches of the Wang Clan. It had been this way for generation after generation.

After Meng Hao consumed the Perfect Foundation Pill and emerged from the Blood Immortal Legacy zone, a sound could be heard. This sound came from the tenth mountain amongst the Three Thousand Forbidden Mountains within the State of Cloudy Skies. It was the sound of breathing.

The Three Thousand Forbidden Mountains of the Wang Clan were not connected. They were dispersed throughout the State of Cloudy Skies.

Underneath each mountain was a wooden coffin. Only the most powerful members of the Wang Clan could, upon death, be buried underneath one of the Forbidden Mountains.

According to the legends, one of the Wang Clan Patriarchs from tens of thousands of years ago was buried in one of the Forbidden Mountains, although no one knew which one.

There were many deep secrets within the Wang Clan, many of which the five great Sects only had general information about. Clues could be found in the ancient records, but the Wang Clan secrets were just endless, and their history too deep. According to the legends, they came from the stars….

Right now, within the tenth mountain, was a world of crimson light, the glow of blood and of fire. Here was a boiling sea that it seemed could never be extinguished within ten thousand years. Deep within the recesses of this volcano was a red coffin.

The coffin had no cover. Resting inside was an old man. His face was covered with wrinkles, and his body was skinny and shrivelled, as if he had been dead for a very, very long time. And yet, no death aura whatsoever emanated off of the corpse.

In fact, his eyes eyes slowly opened, and when they did, the peaceful sea of fire… suddenly began to move. It was not burning higher; in fact, the broiling heat seemed to reduce a bit.

“I feel…. A Perfect aura….” murmured the old man. His voice was extremely hoarse, as if he hadn’t spoken for a very long time. When he did speak, the entire tenth mountain began to rumble.

This rumbling immediately drew the attention of the elder members of the Wang Clan. Multiple figures suddenly emerged from within the Wang Ancestral Mansion.

These old Clan members’ faces were filled with excitement; based on their understanding, within the tenth mountain was one of their Patriarchs!

“Perfection….” said the person inside the coffin, his eyes flashing with a mysterious light.

When his eyes flashed, the roaring of the tenth mountain grew more intense. The group that had come from the Wang Ancestral Mansion all saluted respectfully.

“Prepare three thousand Rebirth Stones!” said the old man in the coffin, his voice echoing out of the tenth mountain. “The time has come for me to reincarnate!” When they heard this, the group of old Clan members’ faces grew even more excited.

“At the peak of the Dao Seeking stage, I sealed my Cultivation base. At first, I thought that like members of the elder generation, I could only struggle on death’s door, gazing at Immortality and sighing, ignorant and unable to take those final steps. I couldn’t step into the stars, and return to my Clan members….” A slight smiled appeared on the shrivelled face of the old man. The smile seemed to be filled with an intense, ghastly strangeness.

“But now… I have hope….” His smile grew wider, and his eyes shone even more powerfully.

“The legendary Founder of the Wang Clan passed down a truth of the Dao from generation to generation. He was born mediocre. But one year, he was able to wrest away someone’s Foundation Establishment, and thus tread the path of a powerful expert…. Then he became a legend.

“Now, a Perfect Foundation has appeared. I too shall tread the path of the legendary Founder. I shall wrest away Perfection, and then take the next step, Immortal Ascension!

“Except… this person’s Cultivation base is too weak. It’s not sufficient to sustain my Immortal Ascension. I must wait a bit longer, just wait a bit, wait….” Within the coffin, the old man’s smile grew more vigorous. Then, after a while, he closed his eyes. The sea of fire within the tenth mountain once again dared to rekindle its inextinguishable flames.

Several days later, underneath a seemingly endless, cloudless sky.

A bright, greenish beam of light shot through the air. This was Meng Hao, slicing through the sky. As for Zhou Daya, Meng Hao had known all along that the young man was following him, but let him go anyway. Of course, there were some things that he shouldn’t have heard, which Meng Hao prevented him from hearing. In any case, he was connected to Fatty somehow, so he’d let him go.

“It took a lot of Spirit Stones to concoct the Perfect Foundation Pill. I still have some left, but not many….” Meng Hao frowned, examining his bag of the Cosmos and letting out a sigh.

“Before I entered the Cultivation world, I was running low on silver. After I became a Qi Condensation Cultivator, I was always running low on Spirit Stones. Now I’ve reached Foundation Establishment, but… I’m still running low on Spirit Stones.” His brow furrowed as his longing for Spirit Stones was once again kindled. Now that his Cultivation practice had reached this level, his need for Spirit Stones was even greater.

“And then there’s the poison of the three-colored Resurrection Lily. If I can’t dispel it, it’s going to be a real problem.” His frown deepened.

“Furthermore,” he muttered to himself, “even though I’m much more powerful now that I have a Perfect Foundation, I’m cut off from heaven and earth. I have no way to absorb spiritual energy… the only way to get it is by consuming pills. I can’t keep doing that forever….” But, he had been prepared for that. Given a second chance, he would definitely chose to consume the Perfect Foundation Pill.

“You win some, you lose some. It’s fair.” Meng Hao lifted his head. Smacking the bag of the Cosmos, he retrieved the blood-colored mask. A warm feeling filled his heart.

“Despite my current situation, at least I acquired the Blood Immortal Legacy. Now I just have to wait for the mastiff to wake up. Then everything will be a bit better.” His eyes shone with anticipation. He cast his Spiritual Sense deep into the blood-colored mask. He could sense the mastiff’s slumbering form. Though he had no idea when it might awaken, he could sense a powerful pressure emanating from it, a pressure which was continuing to grow more powerful.

“And then there’s this flag.” Meng Hao’s eyes flashed. His Spiritual Sense fell onto the dilapidated flag of three streamers. His Spiritual Sense entered it, only to find that it was like an ocean. Compared to it, Meng Hao’s Spiritual Sense was incredibly small. He had no way whatsoever to do anything with it.

However, he was able to sense an incredibly might within it like that of the Heavens; it seemed mighty enough to lay waste to heaven and earth.

“My Cultivation base isn’t sufficient…. Even though this treasure is somewhat broken down, it was still inside the Blood Immortal’s Legacy zone. It must be extremely valuable. When my Cultivation base is strong enough, I’ll be able to use it, and I’m sure it will be powerful enough to shock the Heavens.” Palpitating with anticipation, he withdrew his Spiritual Sense. It was then that he caught sight of the character written on the third streamer, Ji .

“Why does it have the character Ji on it? Is it a family name?” He thought about it for a bit, then focused his attention on the Scroll of the Blood Immortal Legacy. The instant he looked at it, he felt as if his head were about to be split in half.

To the average person, this pain would be excruciating, and difficult to bear. But to Meng Hao, it was nothing compared to the anguish he suffered during his poison flare-ups. His expression flickered somewhat, but as he focused on the splitting pain in his head, he caught sight of a special technique.

“Spirit Devouring Scripture!” Meng Hao’s heart trembled as the three blood-colored characters appeared in front of him and branded themselves indelibly onto his mind.

Meng Hao’s head began to thrum as it was filled with an ancient voice. It was impossible to say whether the voice was male or female. “If you Cultivate according to my scripture, you can wrest control of Spirit and blood and fuse them into your body. Refine them into a body of blood, Spirit of blood, a Blood Immortal, a Blood Dao!

“There are countless Cultivation methods in heaven and earth. The bloodline of my Legacy stretches back to the powerful first Founder. The bloodline contains his will, and can be passed on to tens of thousands of generations. When the bloodline is awakened in the descendants, they shall possess latent talent!

“My technique can be used to wrest away latent talent, and then sense the almighty will of the Founder. Refine the body, make the latent talent yours. Some have even tried to bring the ghost of the Founder into the world, to destroy Immortals and devils!

“Practicing Cultivation according to the technique of my Legacy is an insult to the Heavens. But fear not ghosts and divinities; overturn the vault of the Heavens with the flip of a hand, lower your head to cause heaven and earth to mourn!” Slowly a scripture came to be branded onto Meng Hao’s mind. Then a vast amount of miscellaneous information about the mask poured into his head.

“I am the Blood Immortal. My whole life was spent battling the Heavens. I met defeat only thrice! I wrested Spirits away from heaven and earth. Because I desired to wrest away the bloodline of Ji, the Heavens shunned me and longed for my destruction. My body could be destroyed, but not my will!

“I was not willing to give in because of three defeats. Therefore, I created three techniques: the Blood Finger, the Blood Palm, and the Blood Death World!

“Descendants of the Legacy of my Dao, do not forget that you must wrest away the bloodline of Ji! Make the Dao of Heaven weep, and the earth mourn! Remember the techniques of the Blood Immortal, the Nine Killing Magics!

“Remember, the day your Dao is achieved, put on my mask and hoist the flag of three streamers. Defy the ancients, topple the Heavens!

“Without a face, a single word, the flames of war unify

“Sundered clouds, a bloody rain, seas that fill the sky

“Capture the gods, advance the troops, fire consumes the towers

“Forge all spirits and bloodlines into the 9 killing powers!”

Meng Hao’s body trembled and he opened his eyes. He was still flying through the sky, above a vast empty space, and barren mountains. His eyes continued to swim, and his mind echoed with the archaic voice.

“Wrest away bloodline, achieve success. The strength of the bloodline is up to the glory of the Founder…. Wrested latent talent of the bloodline, can be refined into a body of blood… a body refined outside the body…

“No one person can hold the power of an entire bloodline. The blood of three generations is required to refine even a minor blood clone. If six generations of bloodlines are congealed, then a magnificent blood spirit can be achieved. If nine generations of blood, then the Great Circle of the blood spirit can be completed!

“The ancestors determine the strength of a bloodline. The stronger the past generations, the stronger the Blood Spirit!

“Thus, it becomes death. Nine bloodlines, nine experts. They become the nine deaths, nine deaths fused into one. This is… the Blood Dao!” Meng Hao panted, his mouth dry. At the moment, he was no longer flying. He had landed onto a barren mountain, where he now sat cross-legged, feeling the Spirit Devouring Scripture pulsing through his head.

This was the complete scripture, the full Legacy. But within the Legacy was something that filled Meng Hao with the reek of blood. He sat in thought for a long time before his eyes began to shine.

“Without a face, a single word, the flames of war unify

“Sundered clouds, a bloody rain, seas that fill the sky

“Capture the gods, advance the troops, fire consumes the towers

“Forge all spirits and bloodlines into the 9 killing powers!”

“There are four magics within….” Meng Hao was thoughtful for a while before looking down at the mask in his hand. The mask was completely featureless, with no eyes, nose, ears or mouth. As he looked at it, his hand began to grow warm, and his eyes shined. It seemed as if he were about to put the mask onto his face.

As the mask neared his face, it grew warmer, and began to squirm. A bloody aura emanated from it. Just as Meng Hao was about to place it on his face, the copper mirror within his bag of holding suddenly let out a sharp sound that was like the call of a bird.

The birdcall entered Meng Hao’s mind, and his heart trembled. The light in his eyes suddenly became clear, and he suddenly put the mask down. His eyes filled with a hard look.

“Are you looking to die, you discarnate soul?!”

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# Chapter 138: Good Luck Charm

As Meng Hao uttered the words, his left hand flickered in an incantation gesture. He pressed a finger onto his solar plexus, and some blood from his Cultivation base seeped out of his mouth. This blood was very precious; Cultivators could only produce so much of it. But Meng Hao didn't hesitate. He wiped the Cultivation blood off of his lips with a finger, then pressed the finger onto the mask.

According to the Spirit Devouring Scripture branded onto his mind, this was a simple method to take control of the mask.

His finger sank inside, deep into the mask's recesses. It pushed very far back, into a distant corner. There, face gloomy and uncooperative, was the Li Clan Patriarch.

"Your will is weak!" cried the Li Clan Patriarch shrilly. "Therefore, the mask tried to bewitch you!"

Meng Hao's finger paused before the Li Clan Patriarch. His eyes were cold, and he said nothing. After a moment, he pushed down, causing the Li Clan Patriarch to let out a shrill, depressed groan. His body grew dim as he was pressed down; it seemed as he might fade away.

"In the outside world, I could destroy you countless times over with a single finger!" roared the Li Clan Patriarch furiously. Filled with stubbornness, he glared out with fading eyes. Meng Hao's finger paused, then slowly moved back. But then, just when the Li Clan Patriarch was heaving a sigh of relief, it pushed back down onto him.

Another miserable cry rang out, not depressed, but anguished. The Li Clan Patriarch's body wasn't just growing dim, it was now draining Blood Qi. He looked incredibly dismal. However, he continued to hold his head up and glare at Meng Hao’s finger.

“Was I bewitched by the mask itself, or were you secretly guiding it?” asked Meng Hao coolly. “We’re both well aware of what happened. These two finger attacks are punishment, and the repercussions have not disappeared. If it happens again, then I, Meng Hao, will be forced to break our agreement and obliterate you from existence.” He pulled his finger back. The Li Clan Patriarch might look strong-willed on the surface, but was actually very perturbed on the inside. Fear lingered in his heart because of Meng Hao’s ruthless tactics.

Just now, he really had taken advantage of Meng Hao’s period of enlightenment regarding the Spirit Devouring Scripture. He had secretly used some special methods to influence the mask and try to get Meng Hao to wear it. Just when he thought he had succeeded, Meng Hao had come to his senses.

“This discarnate soul is very strange,” said Meng Hao, glancing at the mask. “It’s not because of the Blood Divinity, there must be some other reason.” Having removed his finger, he squeezed some blood to drop onto the spirit of the Li Clan Patriarch.

As the blood descended, it turned into a blood mist, which then enveloped the Li Clan Patriarch. Miserable screams echoed out. Meng Hao’s expression was as usual. He pulled back his Spiritual Sense, allowing the Li Clan Patriarch to continuously wail inside the mask.

A part of the Legacy Meng Hao had acquired was a warning from the Blood Immortal. Now he knew that he should not put the mask on casually. If he did, he might lose himself. The Blood Immortal hadn’t even explained the origin of the mask, and it seemed to have countless changes within it.

However, wearing it had many advantages. Many of the techniques and magic of the Blood Immortal Legacy could only be used while wearing the mask. For example, the four great magics.

However, without a Core Foundation Cultivation base, the mask could not be worn under any circumstances.

That having been said, the techniques created by the Blood Immortal after his three defeats—the Finger, the Palm, and the Death World—did not require the use of the mask. Instead, they had been branded onto Meng Hao's mind.

"Even though I'm the winner of the Legacy, I couldn't control the power of the mask just now. And yes that discarnate soul could… The mastiff clearly took over the mask and became the Weapon Spirit, so how could the discarnate soul have done it?" Meng Hao's expression didn't change, but this issue was certainly weighing on his heart. It was one of the reasons why he hadn't simply slain the Li Clan Patriarch.

Putting the mask back into his bag of the Cosmos, Meng Hao sat silently in thought. He looked around carefully, then took out the copper mirror. Holding it in his hands, he examined it carefully.

If it weren't for the noise from the mirror just now, Meng Hao most certainly would have put on the mask. He wasn't sure what would have resulted, but considering the warning of the Blood Immortal, he couldn't help but feel a bit of fear in his heart.

"The sound just now was just like the call of a bird…." He looked at the copper mirror for a while, and even sent his Spiritual Sense into it. But nothing happened, so after some time passed, he put it back. Then, he lifted up the good luck charm he had acquired from Patriarch Reliance.

He had studied it in the past to no avail. But this time, as he held it in his hand, he rotated his Cultivation base and sent some spiritual energy into. Suddenly, his eyes gleamed.

"So, it does have a function…. I wonder how Elder Sister Xu is doing nowadays. I haven't seen her for so many years, I wonder if she'll remember me?" An image coalesced in Meng Hao's mind of Xu Qing's cold demeanor as she talked about the Cosmetic Enhancement Pill. A warm look appeared on his face.

“It’s been so many years….” Meng Hao slowly raised his head and looked off into the distance. A long time passed before he rose to his feet and flew off of the barren mountain, heading off into the distance.

Half a month later. A walled city within the Black Sieve Sect territory. A bustling city of Cultivators. A young man sat in an inn, dressed in long, black scholar’s robes. He sipped from a cup of alcohol he held in his in hand. Occasionally he would lift his head to look out the window toward the city center, and the towering black pagoda there that rose up into the sky.

This young man’s skin was a bit dark, but his demeanour was scholarly and refined. He had delicately chiselled features that, coupled with his scholar’s clothes, truly gave him the air of a mortal intellectual.

He had a simple but elegant gait, with bright eyes that were filled with intelligence. His lips were pursed in a way that seemed to indicate he was not easy to approach.

This was none other than Meng Hao. He had arrived in this place a few days ago to confirm the widely spread rumours regarding the Black Sieve Sect.

He wanted to go see Xu Qing, but obviously couldn’t just directly go looking for her. Instead, he figured he would take advantage of the gathering of rogue Foundation Establishment Cultivators called by the Black Sieve Sect. He wasn’t sure exactly when the gathering was to take place, but he’d decided to come ahead to gather some information before making any final decision.

“I never imagined that there would actually be a Tower of Tang here….” he muttered to himself, his eyes sweeping over the black pagoda off in the distance. 1

Before, he had assumed that Towers of Tang only existed in the cities of mortal. But here one was, right in this city of Cultivators.

He looked quietly at the Tower of Tang for a while, then put down his cup of alcohol. In his hand appeared an ancient piece of jade, covered with cracks. It wasn’t the Demon Sealing jade, but rather the good luck charm Meng Hao had taken from Patriarch Reliance.

He had studied it several times in the past but hadn’t been able to determine its use. After establishing a Perfect Foundation, however, he had been able to reach some conclusions based on various clues.

“This good luck charm can actually shift a person’s location…. it’s like a random teleporter. Unfortunately, it’s covered with cracks, and can only be used a few times.” He turned the good luck charm over and over in his fingers. By casting his Spiritual Sense into, he could sense it emanating its teleportation ability.

“There is no set teleportation destination. In other words, once used, the good luck charm could send me anywhere. I can’t just test it out randomly.” He glanced over the good luck charm again, then put it away. Considering his experience with the roc, he didn’t want to be taken anywhere beyond his control. Who knew what terrible situation he might find himself in?

As he sat in thought, more and more Cultivators began to fill up the inn. This place only sold one type of alcohol, brewed from bamboo. It didn’t burn in the mouth, but upon sliding down the throat, it let off a burning heat. Once in the stomach, it burned even hotter, causing the whole body to heat up. Such a feeling is hard to describe. If you liked such a feeling, then you would end up loving it; if you didn’t like it, you wouldn’t be willing to drink a drop.

Not far from Meng Hao, a group of Cultivators was conversing in low voices.

“Everyone’s being a bit more cautious than usual. There’s a lot of unfamiliar Foundation Establishment Cultivators around lately….”

“That’s right. They’re all rogue Cultivators, fishes and dragons mixed together. In fact, I saw a guy a few days ago who had intense killing intent. I think he must be a savage Cultivator from the Black Lands.”

“They’re all here for the reward posted by the Black Sieve Sect. The Black Sieve Sect really didn’t hold anything back. They’re offering Sieve Earth Pills. Those are one of the five most effective pills for the Foundation Establishment stage. It’s even said that Grandmaster Pill Demon from the Violet Fate Sect sings its praises. No one outside of the Black Sieve Sect can concoct it.”

“It’s not that they can’t, it’s that they’re not able. Each Sieve Earth Pill is inscribed with a talismanic seal. Regardless of person or Sect, if any attempts to concoct it, they will face the threat of extermination by the Black Sieve Sect.”

From their tone, it was obvious that they coveted the Sieve Earth Pills. In the midst of their discussion, someone entered from outside. It was a young man wearing a black robe. His expression was ice cold, and as he stepped foot into the inn, his gaze swept the crowd before he took a seat in the corner. He produced a chip of iron about the size of a finger nail, which he fiddled with as he sat there thinking, occasionally looking around the room.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever. He lifted his cup to his mouth and took a drink.

He had been sitting there an entire day. Outside, the sun filled the sky with its glow. He had heard quite a bit about about the Black Sieve Sect’s gathering of Foundation Establishment Cultivators.

Anyone Cultivator of the Foundation Establishment stage could participate and receive a Sieve Earth Pill, regardless of background or heritage.

“Anyway, back to the point. What exactly is the Black Sieve Sect trying to accomplish? They’re one of the dignified five great Sects of the Southern domain. Why are they gathering so many Foundation Establishment Cultivators? There’s obviously something strange going on. To offer up Sieve Earth Pills shows that whatever it is, it’s obviously incredibly dangerous!”

“Brother Sun, your information is a bit out of date. According to the rumors that I heard, the Black Sieve Sect discovered the site of an ancient battle field. They’ve already tried to search it a few times, but were resisted by some ancient spell. If they can get enough Foundation Establishment Cultivators to replace the eye of the spell, then they can break through. Obviously, it’s incredibly dangerous.”

“All of the rumors are just hearsay. Ancient battlefields are always incredibly inauspicious. No wonder the Black Sieve Sect is offering up Sieve Earth Pills!”

Although their voices were low, and not very clear within the inn, considering Meng Hao had three Perfect Dao Pillars and could hold his own against the late Foundation Establishment Stage, hearing the conversation of these individuals was not difficult.

A Perfect Foundation was a legend that had not appeared for tens of thousands of years. Once he reached the mid Foundation Establishment stage, he would be a match for Dao Children of the various Sects and Clans.

That having been said, having a Perfect Foundation was very dangerous. This danger came when it came time to pass into Core Formation. During that time, the Heavenly Tribulation would be incredibly powerful, far more powerful than that of the Foundation Establishment stage. Meng Hao wasn’t sure if he could pass through it. After all, if he hadn’t been assisted by the Blood Immortal and the Ancient Temple of Doom, then he surely would have perished under the Tribulation Lightning.

“Well, Core Formation Tribulation is very far away. I can think about it now, but I shouldn’t worry too much.” Meng Hao took another drink from his glass. A warm, burning sensation filled his body. Meng Hao thought about the information from Shangguan Xiu’s turtle shell, which described the Perfect Foundation and the Perfect Gold Core.

“I wonder, when I reach Core Formation, will I be able to refine a Perfect Gold Core? What will that be like?” He hesitated for a moment, then put the matter aside. However, he had decided that he would begin to gather the ingredients needed to refine a Perfect Gold Core.

Dusk was approaching, and there were few Cultivators left in the inn. Meng Hao was just about to get up and leave, when suddenly his expression changed. He turned his head, looking further back into the inn. There in the corner, was the black-robed young man. He was no longer frowning, but instead, was staring coldly at Meng Hao. A killing aura slowly emanated from him, surrounding him and transforming into what seemed like a mountain of corpses and a sea of blood.

“You have something I need,” he said coldly, his eyes fixed on Meng Hao.

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# Chapter 139: Thunderclap Leaf

As his cold voice rang out, the black-robed young man stood up. He strode forward to stand in front of Meng Hao's table. He stared at him coldly for a moment, then sat down.

Meng Hao's expression was calm as he looked at the young man. He said nothing, instead raising the cup and taking another drink.

"You have a Thunderclap Leaf!" said the black-robed young man, looking at Meng Hao 1. He lifted his right hand revealing a chip of iron laying on his palm. It glinted and emitted a blackish green glow.

"This is not ordinary iron," he continued coolly, his bearing insufferably proud. "This is a treasure of wood-iron, birthed at the moment a tree was struck by lightning. It is especially sensitive to lightning-based medicinal materials, such as the Thunderclap Leaf. So, do you want to trade your Thunderclap Leaf?" He placed the chip of iron onto the table. The movement seemed ordinary, but as his hand moved, a glow burst out from his palm, which transformed into an arc of electricity that expanded out.

The young man was at the mid Foundation Establishment stage. As the arc of electricity spread out, his Cultivation base enveloped the area, including Meng Hao.

Killing intent slowly roiled out of him. It seemed as if Meng Hao were to even say half of the word "No," the young man would attack. His eyes glowed with coldness.

"Screw off," said Meng Hao indifferently, taking a sip of alcohol.

The instant he said this, the black-robed young man frowned.

“I haven’t left the Black Lands for quite a few years. It seems people in the outside world have gotten really arrogant.” A cold smile twisted the corners of his mouth as he slowly began to lift up his right hand. Meng Hao raised his head and looked at him.

As soon Meng Hao’s eye met the young man, the young man’s entire body began to tremble. The hand which he had begun to lift up instantly stopped moving. He didn’t dare to lift it any further. His heart began to beat quickly. Meng Hao’s eyes were like two sharp swords which pierced his own. His heart thundered, and his head roared. His Spiritual Sense seemed unstable, and an icy coldness seemed to grow within him, causing cold sweat to cover his body.

No killing intent radiated from his eyes; instead, it was replaced by astonishment. The pressure exuded by Meng Hao had caused the black-robed youth’s body to instantly become stiff.

All of this was caused by a mere look from Meng Hao. This young man was not a Cultivator of the State of Clear Skies, but rather a savage Cultivator from the Black Lands. To him, bloody life-and-death battles were commonplace, so he had a sort of intuition when it came to matters of life and death. In this instant, he had a strong feeling that the person in front of him was not a Cultivator at the early Foundation Establishment stage, but some savage Spirit who could swallow him whole.

The intense coldness multiplied, and cold sweat dripped down his forehead. His heart beat rapidly, and he even felt as if his Cultivation base were being suppressed. His face fell, and he didn’t dare to move.

The entire time, Meng Hao looked completely calm. Even though the person in front of him had emitted a killing aura, and was at the mid Foundation Establishment stage, it wouldn’t take very long to slay him. Meng Hao put down his cup of alcohol. The a final glance at the black-robed youth one last time, he rose, flicking his sleeve and leaving the inn.

As he left, the black-robed young man’s eyes suddenly flickered. He turned to look at Meng Hao’s departing figure, his heart still fluttering with fear. A moment ago, he had been completely and utterly suppressed. It was not battle magic that had done it, but pure Spiritual Sense.

“What kind of Cultivation base does this guy actually have?” thought the black-robed youth, his face flickering. “It looks like Early Foundation Establishment, but his Spiritual Sense exceeds mine exponentially…. And although I couldn’t sense any killing intent, as soon as he looked at me, my mind began to tremble.” As Meng Hao disappeared into the distance, he suddenly stood up and began to walk after him.

“Fellow Daoist, please wait!” he blurted, “Senior, I am Lu Tao. Please, Fellow Daoist, hear me out.” He hastened forward, nearing Meng Hao. His attitude was completely different than from before.

“I’m willing to pay for that Thunderclap Leaf,” Lu Tao gushed as he approached Meng Hao. “If you can make yourself part with it, Fellow Daoist, I would be extremely grateful. Whatever you want for it, I’ll give, as long as I have it. Let’s talk it over.” The pressure exuded by Meng Hao was considerable, but the Thunderclap Leaf was very important to Lu Tao, so he really had no other choice.

Meng Hao frowned, ignoring Lu Tao and proceeding forward.

“Fellow Daoist, I beg of you. No matter how many Spirit Stones, magical items or medicinal pills, I’m willing to negotiate. If I don’t have what you want, I can think of a way to acquire it to offer in trade.” He watched as Meng Hao continued to walk off toward a relatively remote area. This caused him to be a bit nervous; he knew that he had started out on the wrong foot, so, fearful that Meng Hao might suddenly attack him, he decided not to say anything more to provoke him.

“Fellow Daoist… are you here for the Sieve Earth Pills of the Black Sieve Sect?” he asked resolutely. “Nowadays it’s not hard to get your hands on them, but to get away safely is a different matter. Fellow Daoist, if you’re willing to have a business discussion regarding parting with your treasure, I can refer you to a disciple of the Black Sieve Sect. This disciple has information about the Black Sieve Sect that outsiders could never know, it will definitely increase your chances of getting away safely with your Sieve

Earth Pill.” As the words left Lu Tao’s mouth, Meng Hao continued walking. They were now in a remote, abandoned alley.

“Fellow Daoist, senior,” Lu Tao said with a forced smile. “I very much wish to acquire the Thunderclap Leaf. It’s very important to me. Is there anything you would be willing to trade for it?” His pace slowed a bit.

Meng Hao suddenly stopped and turned. He looked at Lu Tao. There was neither happiness nor anger in his expression.

“Take out your wood-iron treasure and let me see it,” said Meng Hao coolly. His eyes flashed brightly.

When Lu Tao saw Meng Hao turn, it startled him. Without a word, he produced the wood-iron treasure and offered it toward Meng Hao. The iron chip flew toward Meng Hao, who grabbed it out of the air. He sent some Spiritual Sense into it. Immediately, he was able to sense the Thunderclap Leaf within his bag of the Cosmos. It emitted an aura of lightning that the iron chip absorbed. The iron chip then began to glitter.

“So, he’s not lying,” thought Meng Hao. “But, the whole thing seems a bit too coincidental.” He now knew that Lu Tao had used the iron chip to track him down because of the Thunderclap Leaf. But given his cautious personality, he still had some doubts.

“I do happen to have a Thunderclap Leaf. If you want to trade, then you’ll need to give a clear explanation of what you plan to do with it.” He waved his right hand, tossing the wood-iron treasure back to Lu Tao.

The Thunderclap Leaf was something that Meng Hao had acquired from Patriarch Reliance. And in fact, he had acquired not just a leaf, but an entire tree. It had been protected by a restrictive spell cast by Patriarch Reliance. However, Meng Hao wasn’t sure of its exact use. All he knew was that the Lightning Flag could be used to envelop and protect the Thunderclap Leaves.

“Well….” Lu Tao hesitated a moment, looking at Meng Hao with a hint of irritation. Finally, he gritted his teeth and continued. “Senior, I have a life magic that can be refined from stone from the Lightning Fringe Mountains. In order to release its full power, I have spent the past few years searching everywhere for various Lightning-type items. However, none of them can compare to the Thunderclap Leaf. It’s just that Thunderclap Leaves are very rare, so when I sensed yours, I was too eager, and accidentally offended you.” In order to prove the reliability of his words, he pressed down on the pit of his stomach; an electric flow emerged from his mouth, which then transformed into a fist-sized rock. The rock was black, and its surface was encircled with arcs of electricity as well as tiny plant-like vines that resembled rattan.

“So, what was that you were saying about the Black Sieve Sect?” said Meng Hao coolly.

“I can help you find someone from the Black Sieve Sect,” he gushed. “They don’t usually interact with strangers. If you pay this person a little bit, you can find out the reason why the Black Sieve Sect has arranged the gathering of Cultivators.

“Fellow Daoist, if you’re willing to trade me your Thunderclap Leaf, then I can take you to a secret meeting with me tonight. There will be about seven or eight other Fellow Daoists there, along with a prestigious member of the senior generation to act as host. Not only can you trade magical items, you can also trade information.

“One of the people there is a Black Sieve Inner Sect disciple.

“Fellow Daoist, please believe me. Nowadays, the State of Clear Skies has a bunch of dragons and snakes all jumbled together. There’s good people and bad people all over the place. Cultivators from all sorts of Sects and Clans are here. Furthermore, there are many factions within the Black Sieve Sect. Of course there will be conflicts between them. Therefore, news is bound to spread. It’s normal. Of course there’s sure to be some bad information, but if all the information was fake, then no one would believe anything. So of course there will be some good information out there as well.

“You really will have to make your own judgement about that, and to trust your intuition.”

“Let me think about it for a bit,” said Meng Hao, his face the same as ever. “If I make a decision, I’ll notify you.” It was impossible for anyone to tell what he was thinking. He threw a jade slip to Lu Tao, who was about to continue to try to persuade him. Before he could, Meng Hao left the alley, walking quickly away and soon disappearing. Lu Tao had no choice but to watch him leave. But then, his eyes began to shine.

“The Constellation Priest of the The Black Lands Sect sure charges an arm and a leg, but what he said was mostly true. I really was able to sense the Thunderclap Leaf in this place…. But now that I’ve found it, I have to think of some way to get it. Of course, since I infected this guy with my Qi Parasite, he’ll never be able to get away from me!

“With the Thunderclap Leaf, I can refine the legendary Eyeless larva!” He held the jade slip in hand, his eyes glittering. Of course he hadn’t explained to Meng Hao the true details of how he planned to use the Thunderclap Leaf. Lost in thought, Lu Tao turned and left.

What he hadn’t noticed was that behind him was an invisible phantom figure, in whose hand was a flying insect about the size of a finger nail. It was trapped, unable to fly. The figure stood a short distance away from Lu Tao, looking at him coldly. As Lu Tao left, the figure followed him.

This phantom was none other than Meng Hao, who had left, but had returned shortly afterward. He was using the invisibility talisman to secretly follow Lu Tao through the dark, starry night. Occasionally Lu Tao would take out the jade slip Meng Hao had given him. His face was gloomy as he eventually reached what appeared to be an ordinary mansion within the city. He knocked three times on the door, which then automatically slid open. Ripples seemed to spread out from the door as he entered.

After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, Meng Hao saw four or five more Cultivators approaching. It was hard to tell whether they were men or women, but they were all of the Foundation Establishment stage. One was even of the late Foundation Establishment stage. Their faces were wrapped up, and they hurried along to the mansion, using the same method as Lu Tao to gain entrance.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. With the twist of a finger, he crushed the bug in his palm, then ripped up the talisman that concealed him. He flicked his sleeve, changing into a new set of clothing. He donned a wide bamboo hat and then covered his face with a cloth mask. Then, he walked toward the mansion.

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# Chapter 140: Don’t You Know the Rules?

Meng Hao approached the mansion, lifted his hand, and knocked three times on the door. The door open inwardly without a noise. Inside, everything was pitch black. There seemed to be some kind of black-colored shield in place.

Looking at it, Meng Hao could see magical ripples on its surface, but nothing that indicated it would attack him. It was simply designed to control which Cultivators could enter. Meng Hao observed it for a moment, thinking back to the several people who had arrived before him. He quickly understood.

“This prevents anyone other than Foundation Establishment Cultivators from entering.” His face calm but covered by the bamboo hat, he strode forward into the shield.

Within the space of a few breaths, a soft glow appeared, shining into his eyes. He now stood outside of what appeared to be the palace of a mortal prince.

The palace was grand and imposing, like some enormous creature lying prone on the earth. It had a very solemn air to it. Outside the palace stood an old man wearing a Daoist robe. His expression was placid, and his Cultivation Base was at the late Foundation Establishment stage. When he saw Meng Hao, he approached, eyes shining.

He looked Meng Hao over and then quietly said, “Please produce your invitation slip, Fellow Daoist. If you have no invitation slip, then your Sect identification medallion will do.”

Meng Hao's eyes flickered beneath his bamboo hat. Without a word, he waved his hand and a medallion flew forward to land in the old man's hand. The old man looked at it, and suddenly a look of respect appeared in his eyes. He handed the medallion back with two hands.

"So, you're from the Violet…"

Meng Hao coughed, and the old man stopped talking. Without another word, he stepped back with a slight bow, allowing Meng Hao to continue.

Meng Hao took the medallion back and strode past the old man into the palace. The medallion was the same one he had taken from Ding Xin. This was his second time going under an assumed name, and he was a bit more use to it this time. 1

He knew that this place would be a jumble of dragons and fish, quite chaotic. If they were really strictly checking the identities of the participants, then how could it be called a secret meeting? Having observed the outside for some time to analyze the situation, he now felt calm and unhurried.

Upon entering the palace, he saw ornamental rock displays and streams over which arched dark green, wooden bridges. Not too far away was a pavilion, surrounded by musicians playing stringed instruments. The sound they produced was remarkable. Seven people were seated within the pavilion. Most of them maintained quite a bit of space from the others. As could be expected, they sat silently, sizing each other up.

When Meng Hao entered, their gazes all came to rest on him.

Three of the seven people wore masks. One of them was Lu Tao, who was sitting there frowning. His gaze passed over Meng Hao briefly.

Two others had not covered their faces. One was a woman who looked like a lady, and appeared to be about thirty years old. She wore splendid garments, and was quite good looking. She had an alluring look in her eyes that exuded charm. She looked at Meng Hao for a moment, then smiled and nodded.

Last, was a middle-aged man wearing a long, yellow robe. A lonely expression covered his face, and he held a flagon of alcohol in hand, which he constantly drank from. He gave Meng Hao a quick glance with eyes heavy from alcohol.

The features of the four others present were all concealed by masks. It wasn’t even possible to tell if they were men or women.

Without batting an eyelid, Meng Hao entered the pavilion and selected a table to sit at. Looking around, he saw that there were only nine tables within the pavilion. Including his, eight of them were now occupied.

Obviously, the final table was reserved for the host, and not any other Cultivator.

After some time passed, a large man entered the palace from outside. He was at the mid Foundation Establishment stage. He was big and tall, so much so that it would have been useless for him to try to conceal his identity. He strode into the pavilion, cold and haughty.

As soon as he entered, he stopped in his tracks. His brow furrowed as he looked around.

“This is not the first time I, Xu, have joined this secret meeting,” he said coolly. “Today I came with an invitation, and yet, there’s no place for me. Which of you Fellow Daoists doesn’t understand the rules?” He smacked his bag of holding, and instantly a blue-colored jade slip appeared. Its surface was inscribed with a character: “Secret.”

The jade slip glowed softly. With a smile, the young lady lifted her delicate hand to reveal her own jade slip, which she placed on the table in front of her.

Next Lu Tao followed suit, along with some of the others. Soon, only Meng Hao and one of the other disguised Cultivators had not produced a jade slip.

One of the other two was emanating the power of the late Foundation Establishment stage. This person sat there calmly, completely ignoring the large man. Not daring to say anything, the large man’s eyes came to rest on Meng Hao and the other person. Both of them were only at the Early Foundation Establishment stage. The large man’s eyes glittered coldly.

“You two. If you can’t show me a jade slip, then you can just get the hell out of here. Give me a seat. If you don’t, then you won’t be leaving this place alive.” His voice was filled with killing intent, which transformed into a coldness that filled the area. The rest of the people in the pavilion continued to look on with various expressions. None of them seemed willing to interfere; apparently they had no qualms whatsoever about observing a magical battle to the death.

Meng Hao said nothing, and neither did the other disguised person.

Everything was quiet within the pavilion.

The large man surnamed Xu snorted, and then strode, not toward Meng Hao, but to the other person, who happened to be a bit closer to where he stood.

His eyes shining brightly, he was about to raise his right hand when suddenly, a light cough could be heard. It echoed throughout the pavilion, and as it did, everyone inside, including the hulking Xu, turned their heads.

An old man wearing a long, yellow robe entered. His face was placid, and his body seemed to be somewhere in-between illusory and real. He didn’t seem to be moving quickly, yet within three or four steps was already inside the pavilion.

“Salutations, Fellow Daoist Qingshan.”

“Greetings, Fellow Daoist Qingshan.” The instant the old man appeared, everyone with the exception of Meng Hao, instantly stood up. Meng Hao’s expression flickered, and then he, too, stood and clasped hands in salute to the old man.

“There’s no need to be so formal,” said the old man coolly. “All of you are heroes of the current generation in the Southern Domain. I am merely here to host this secret meeting. Please proceed.” He sat down at the ninth table and looked at the assembled people, his eyes bright and shining. Finally, they came to rest on the large fellow surnamed Xu.

Being gazed upon by the old man caused him to lower his head respectfully. Meng Hao did the same. This old man was a Foundation Establishment Cultivator, but was clearly beyond the late Foundation Establishment stage. He was halfway to entering Core Formation, so he would be classified as a Pseudo Core Cultivator.

A person like this in the State of Zhao would have a position higher than Grand Elder. His presence made Meng Hao a little bit nervous, but also led to some guesses about the whole thing.

“Fellow Daoist Qingshan,” said the hulking Xu nervously. Bracing himself, he said, “I invite you to take charge of justice. I bear an invitation, and yet someone here has stolen my position.” He clasped hands and gave a deep, respectful bow.

“Who stole your position?” asked the old man lightly. His gaze was like lightning as it casually fell onto Meng Hao.

“This person!” cried the hulking Xu, raising his hand and pointing at the other disguised Cultivator.

That cultivator gave a cold harrumph. From the clear ring of the voice, it was obviously a woman.

“That is my personal guest,” said the old man, speaking neither fast nor slow, as if the affairs of these Cultivators was beneath his interest. “She could not have stolen your position.”

Hearing this, the hulking Xu gaped for a moment. But then, his gaze swept over to Meng Hao. A cold light appeared in his eyes. Since one of the two people was invited, that left only one without a jade slip. This must be the person who stole his seat.

Everyone was now looking at Meng Hao, even the woman who had just humphed coldly. She looked over at Meng Hao with icy eyes.

Beneath his wide, bamboo hat, Meng Hao’s expression was the same as always.

“Anyone who comes to this place has the qualifications to attend the meeting,” said the old man placidly. “However, if you do not have an invitation slip, then you must wait outside the pavilion. When the time comes to conduct business, you may only place bids if everyone inside the pavilion has renounced claim.”

“So, it was you who stole my place,” said Xu. “You don’t know the difference between life and death! There’s no need to get up. If I don’t tear you to pieces today, then I’ll become a laughingstock.” Xu had an irritable personality to begin with. Having his seat taken away in front of everyone had long since stoked his killing intent. His body flashed as the power of the mid Foundation Establishment stage exploded out of him. He charged directly toward Meng Hao.

No one moved to interfere. Even the old man just watched coolly.

When he was about three meters away from Meng Hao, he lifted his hand, causing a massive magical palm to appear and descend toward Meng Hao. Meng Hao sat there just as before. He simply lifted his left hand and waved a finger toward the hulking man.

When he waved his finger, the spiritual energy of heaven and earth within the entire palace was thrown into chaos. At the same time, the hulking man’s expression changed. He suddenly felt as if he had lost control of his Cultivation base, and was now completely suppressed.

This caused the pupils of the surrounding Cultivators to constrict, including old man Qingshan. Meng Hao’s right hand waved, and instantly, a roaring, three hundred meter long Flame Dragon appeared. Xu screamed as it shot down into his body.

His entire body shook violently. A look of disbelief and shock covered his face, and then despair. His skin burst into flame. A great wind buffeted him, slamming him into the ground. In the blink of an eye, his stalwart frame was reduced to bits of ash that drifted in the air.

The only thing left was a bag of holding. It flew up and into Meng Hao’s hand. He patted it lightly, then produced a jade slip upon which was inscribed the character “Secret.” He placed it on the table.

“Here is my invitation slip,” he said. The others couldn’t see his expression, as it was hidden by the bamboo hat. They could only hear his raspy voice coming out from underneath it.

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# Chapter 141: The Cosmetic Cultivation Pill Appears Again 1

The pavilion was completely silent. Xu's death was quick and clean, which caused Lu Tao's eyes to narrow. Fear filled his heart as he looked at Meng Hao, who sat there looking quite dignified.

It wasn't just him. The well-dressed lady gave Meng Hao a penetrating look, and in her heart, she realized that this was not a person to provoke.

The middle-aged man with the flagon of alcohol stopped drinking for a moment; his eyes narrowed and filled with a sharp look. The disguised Cultivator of the late Foundation Establishment stage slowly lifted his head to look at Meng Hao. Hesitation seemed to blossom in his heart as he tried to analyze Meng Hao's Cultivation base.

As for the woman who was in disguise, she glanced at Meng Hao for a moment, and then looked away.

"If there are no further disturbances, then we can begin our secret meeting," said old man Qingshan slowly. He looked at Meng Hao with a friendly expression. "All of you made contact with the Secret Trade Alliance in the State of Clear Skies. If you do business here, I can serve as a witness. You can proceed without any reservations. If any problems occur, the Secret Trade Alliance will take responsibility. Now, I would like to invite all of the Fellow Daoists to begin business." He spoke in a tone you would use with people of the same generation. Actually, Meng Hao's actions just now had not just caused the others to be frightened. This old man was somewhat in awe of him too.

When he finished speaking, he flicked his sleeve, and a copper furnace inlaid with eight golden dragons flew out. It landed directly in the center of the pavilion.

“Fellow Daoists,” said Lu Tao, clasping hands in salute to the others, “please allow me to go first this time.” He waved his right hand and a jade slip appeared, which then flew into the copper furnace that old man Qingshan had just placed in the middle of them all.

“This is a list of all the items I’m willing to trade today. There’s also a portrait inside. Fellow Daoists, if any of you see this person in the coming days, please send me a message with the information. I will repay you with a chunk of stone from the Lightning Fringe Mountains.” He said nothing more.

After this, the well-dressed, beautiful lady gave a slight smile and produced a jade slip. Without a word, she sent it into the copper furnace. The items she required as well as could offer for trade were all listed in the jade slip. Anyone who was interested would contact her.

This secret meeting was really just a small-scale hosted trade session. After all, most of the participants were not locals, and needed to be prudent when dealing with strangers, especially in business. Thus, the Secret Trade Alliance came to be. They would organize similar meetings throughout the Southern Domain, all presided over by a third party who could bear witness.

Soon, it was Meng Hao’s turn. He thought for a moment. He actually wasn’t sure exactly what was going on, but he pulled out a jade nonetheless. After branding it with some Spiritual Sense he tossed it into the furnace. He had left a single message inside; what was the Black Sieve Sect up to, and how dangerous was their invitation?

It didn’t take long for the eight participants to place their jade slips into the furnace. Old man Qingshan lifted his right hand and flashed an incantation gesture toward the furnace. A droning sound arose, and within the furnace an intangible flame came into being. The jade slips inside began to melt, and as they did, the eight golden dragons on the surface of the copper furnace began to squirm as if they were alive. Mist poured out from them, instantly beginning to envelop everyone present.

Meng Hao’s heart flip-flopped. Although he didn’t resist, he maintained the utmost vigilance.

After the mist had completely covered him, everything grew quiet. Ahead of him, he caught sight of eight glowing globes of light; it was as if he had been separated into his own area away from everyone else. Information began to pour into his mind. There were lists of dozens of available medicinal pills, magical items, and miscellaneous goods, as well as various descriptions of items desired for purchase.

Soon, Meng Hao’s eyes began to glitter. Pulling back his Spiritual Sense, he touched one of the glowing lights. Instantly, the information from the jade slip he himself had just prepared appeared in his mind. Now he understood. After perusing the information from his own slip, his attention was drawn to the very last glowing ball.

Inside was a portrait. When he saw it, Meng Hao laughed coldly to himself.

The portrait in the jade slip was of himself. Furthermore, the desired item was a Thunderclap Leaf.

“So, in this so-called secret meeting, you can ask for anything you need. This method is pretty good. You can confidently ask or offer things that you normally couldn’t. If you strike a deal with someone, you won’t know who it was you were dealing with.

“It seems there are two others who, like myself, want information about the Black Sieve Sect.” He sat there cross-legged, waiting, sure that someone would contact him eventually. As he waited, he sent his Spiritual Sense out to examine some of the other glowing lights.

Suddenly, a white light appeared out of nowhere within the mist. Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed. He touched it, and a message appeared in his head.

“I don’t know very much about matters regarding the Black Sieve Sect, only a smattering. But what I do know is accurate. For my news, I require five hundred thousand spirit Stones.”

Meng Hao frowned. When buying information in a place like this, one had to consider whether or not the information was true. It would be hard to determine.

Just then, another white light appeared. Meng Hao took hold of it, and another message appeared in his mind.

“There are several rumors floating around regarding the Black Sieve Sect. I have some news from the Inner Sect. Whether or not it’s true, you’ll have to decide for yourself. If you want this news, you will need to pay seven hundred thousand Spirit Stones.”

“This is my first time doing business like this,” thought Meng Hao with a frown. “I don’t have any experience, and I’m not sure how to trade. Furthermore, regardless of whether the information is good, the price is very steep. I don’t have very many Spirit Stones at the moment.” Ignoring the messages, he continued to examine some of the other glowing lights. He found that many of the lights had been updated with more details, or had prices increased or reduced. Suddenly, the copper mirror within his bag of the Cosmos grew hot. A moment later, the heat disappeared.

Meng Hao gaped in shock. He pulled out the mirror and examined it closely. He couldn’t find anything all that different about it. Lost in thought, he placed it back. Then, he continued to examine the items for sale within the glowing lights.

Soon, his eyes began to shine as he gazed at one of the glowing lights. Of the multiple items inside, one stuck out to him.

“Classic of Time…..” This item stuck out to him because within the glowing light, its name was somewhat dim. It hadn’t been there before, but rather, had seemingly just appeared. It seemed that if Meng Hao’s Spiritual Sense wasn’t currently higher than that of the mid Foundation Establishment Stage, then he wouldn’t be able to see it. It appeared to be cloaked by some mysterious technique, visible only to the Spiritual Sense of the late Foundation Establishment stage.

“The Classic of Time has a total of three volumes. Together, they describe Time refinement, which can in turn produce the magical Time Sword! I’m making the first volume available here. If you’re interested, please contact me.”

Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed. As he continued to examine the information, his eyes grew brighter. At the moment, there were quite a few requests floating about regarding Foundation Establishment Pills. He ignored them, as he was completely focused on the introduction to the Classic of Time.

“…. and Time is then produced. Lives are nothing…. The magic of this sword can produce varying results…. Three of these swords can produce powerful magic, nine, an even more consummate magic, and with eighteen, Time can be slain!

“Mystical trees can be used to forge the Time Sword. Because of their ancientness, such trees contain the vicissitudes of Time. They include the Spring and Autumn tree, the Missing Breath tree, and the best of them all, the Spiritualizaion tree. If none of these three are available, the mystical Thousand Times tree can also be used….” Meng Hao’s eyes flashed. He retracted his Spiritual Sense and took a deep breath, a thoughtful look in his eyes. He was very interested in this Time Sword, because he already happened to have a Spring and Autumn tree.

A moment later, Meng Hao lifted his hand toward the glowing light. Instantly, a white glow shot out and circled around his hand. He branded a message onto it, then sent it toward the glowing light. It disappeared.

It didn’t take much time for the white glow to fly back to him. As soon as he touched it, some text appeared in his mind.

“Since you could see the information about the Classic of Time, it’s clear you have the required Cultivation base. However, I only have one of the volumes. Acquiring the other two volumes will require us to work together.

There is one more person present who is willing to do so. If you wish to join us, then our chances will of course increase.

“If you plan participate in the Black Sieve Sect’s activity in this land, then you must swear a Dao oath not to reveal our information to anyone, including your Sect. Inscribe your Dao oath onto a jade slip and send it to me. With that, your share will be guaranteed.”

Meng Hao thought for a moment before his eyes shined with determination. He lifted up a jade slip and placed it between his eyebrows. After a moment, he sent it into the white light, whereupon the jade slip disappeared along with the light.

Some time passed, and Meng Hao’s eyes watched with shining eyes as several white glowing lights appeared. Scanning them with Spiritual Sense, he found the message he had been waiting for.

“One year ago, the Black Sieve Sect found a secret map. The map depicted a secret path to an ancient Blessed Land. The Black Sieve Sect has entered the place several times in the past year, but they have reached a standstill outside of a precipice. This precipice can only be entered by Foundation Establishment Cultivators.

“Those who enter must meet the demands of the Black Sieve Sect. The more objects they bring back from within, the more Sieve Earth Pills they will be given. Our meeting place is within this ancient savage land, where the shadows cast by the sun and the moon intersect.

“That is approximately ten days from now. You must quickly make your way to the Black Sieve Sect and join the group of rogue Foundation Establishment Cultivators they are gathering.”

Meng Hao frowned. As the white light disappeared, a look of deep thought appeared in his eyes.

“The information available nowadays in the State of Clear Skies is all over the place, so it’s impossible to say whether or not this information is true or false. However, most of it seems to involve some sort of ancient battleground or Blessed Land.

“It seems a lot of intelligent people have investigated and come to various similar conclusions. The State of Clear Skies belongs to the Black Sieve Sect. To say that the chaos within the nation doesn’t directly have to do with the Sect is ridiculous.

“However, that Sieve Earth Pill would definitely be of help to me….” Meng Hao had learned quite a bit about the Black Sieve Sect matter from this secret meeting. However, the more he learned, the more suspicious he became.

“I have to go,” he thought, having come to his decision. His Spiritual Sense swept over the rest of the glowing lights. He was just about to call it back when suddenly, his pupils constricted. Despite being sitting cross-legged, a strong spirit suddenly surged out of him. He stared fixedly at the same glowing light that contained the information about the Time Classic. A new item had just been listed for sale inside, a medicinal pill.

The name of the pill was “Cosmetic Cultivation Pill!”

Cosmetic Cultivation Pill. It was a common pill, and not very expensive. Among all the various pills, this was not one to catch anyone’s attention.

However, to Meng Hao, this pill contained memories from six or seven years ago. Memories of a beautiful scene underneath the moonlight.

“I never could have guessed that I would see a Cosmetic Cultivation Pill in this place,” said Meng Hao with a sigh. He payed the price for the pill, and soon a glowing white light carried it over to him. The pill landed in his hand, and when he saw it, his entire body shook with surprise.

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# Chapter 142: Black Sieve Sect

As Meng Hao’s body trembled within the mist, his eyes began to emit a powerful glow. Even his breathing grew rapid. His Cultivation base rotated rapidly, causing the mist to seethe.

Meng Hao didn’t notice any of that, though. He was staring intently at the Cosmetic Cultivation Pill and something that was etched onto its side: a mountain.

The mountain had obviously been etched by someone’s hand, not with magic. This was not a famous type of medicinal pill. It was ordinary. The etching was sentimental….

The mountain depicted was something that people outside of the Reliance Sect wouldn’t know about. It was the East Mountain of the Reliance Sect!

The shape of that mountain had been branded into Meng Hao’s mind, and he recognized it immediately.

Who would possibly have placed this image of a mountain onto this Cosmetic Cultivation Pill, which would then show up in the State of Clear Skies…? A clear image suddenly appeared in Meng Hao’s mind.

It was a beautiful, cold woman wearing white clothing. She had brought Meng Hao into the Cultivation World. Under the moon, she had glanced back at him…. Xu Qing.

Elder Sister Xu.

Meng Hao could not prove conclusively that this Cosmetic Cultivation Pill was the one he had given to Elder Sister Xu as a gift. But his intuition was telling him that it was.

He held up the pill in his hand, slowly closing his fist over it. He sat there quietly. Beneath the wide bamboo hat, a storm began to brew on his face.

“If she never used this pill, and even took it with her to the Black Sieve Sect, then… why is it here now? What has happened to her in the Black Sieve Sect? This is a picture of the East Mountain. Does she miss… the Reliance Sect, or does she miss a person…?

“What does this picture of the East Mountain mean? Did she give this pill to someone? Or did she sell it? The person I was just interacting with could not have been her.”

He loosened his grip and looked again at the etching on the side of the pill. His heart suddenly filled with a strong desire to see Elder Sister Xu. Deep inside, the answers to his questions existed already.

“Elder Sister Xu….” A sharp look glowed in his eyes and he took a deep breath. This pill told him that if she didn’t sell or give away the pill, then the only other possibility was….

He felt a stab of pain in his heart, and his eyesight grew blurry. In his mind was the image of Elder Sister Xu from all those years ago. So long ago. He slowly put the Cosmetic Cultivation Pill into his bag of the Cosmos.

“The Black Sieve Sect…. And then there’s this Classic of Time….” Meng Hao slowly lifted his head, staring at the glowing lights in front of him. This was not a place where he could attack; it was impossible to tell what would happen if he did anything impulsive. He didn’t want to beat the grass and startle the snake, thus putting his enemy on guard.

He thought for a bit more, and then his eyes filled with determination. His mind was now made up; he would definitely go to the Black Sieve Sect.

Meng Hao was in no mood to participate in the rest of the secret meeting. He kept thinking about the image of Elder Sister Xu from all those years ago. When the meeting finally came to an end, he let out a light sigh. The mist around him dissipated. Old man Qingshan nodded to the group and waved his hand. Then he turned and left. Those who remained in the pavilion didn’t stick around to talk. One by one, they disappeared, randomly being teleported away. Such methods were making the Secret Trade Alliance more and more popular.

When Meng Hao reappeared, it was outside the gate of another mansion within the city.

This location was halfway across the city from the place where he’d followed Lu Tao to. Meng Hao had already ascertained that the palace he’d been in was not located within the city at all. The place he’d followed Lu Tao to was merely an entranceway.

He walked down the moonlit street, looking up into the sky. His long, lonely shadow stretched out on the ground, seemingly filled with bleakness.

The moon above was the same, but the location was different. It seemed like years had passed since the previous day. Looking back in time, it seemed as if he had no place to call home.

He sighed and walked onwards.

He continued to walk until the sun rose, and then walking until he left this city of Cultivators. Finally, his body transformed into a prismatic beam which shot through the State of Clear Skies toward the Black Sieve Sect!

Several days later.

The Black Sieve Sect was located in the east of the State of Clear Skies, in the middle of the Hundred Thousand Mountains. Its main gate was vast and mighty. Its majesty would strike awe into the heart of any Cultivator who looked upon it.

The Hundred Thousand Mountains surrounding it served as a foil to the ninety-nine mountains within their center. Above these ninety-nine mountains floated a massive mountain, upturned to create something that was almost a continent. On its underside, willows draped down, some a few dozen meters long, others hundreds. Clouds curled up around this massive land, giving it a truly celestial feeling.

Richly ornamented buildings, pagodas and temples covered it. Beneath it, the ninety-nine mountains were all connected with colorful arching bridges. It was unsurprisingly beautiful.

Gurgling water dripped off of the ragged rocks on the bottom of the floating mountain, making this Sect a place of indescribable beauty. The faint sound of bells filled the air, creating an incredibly serene air.

The highest peak of the floating mountain seemed to stretch up to the Heavens. It was there that for generations had existed an enormous incense burner. Three massive burning joss sticks stood up straight within the incense burner. They seemed inextinguishable, as if their fragrance would last throughout all eternity. Their smoke rose up into the sky to eventually be transformed by the wind into wisps like willow branches, and then dispersed.

These were the lands of the Black Sieve Sect.

In fact, if the Black Sieve Sect wanted to, it could claim the surrounding Hundred Thousand Mountains as part of the Sect. After all, it was one of the five great sects of the Southern Domain. Its Dao Reserves were profound, and its Sect techniques tens of thousands of years old.

The spiritual energy here was very thick. In fact, the spiritual energy in the surrounding Hundred Thousand Mountains was thicker by far than any of the Spirit mountains within the State of Zhao. Any single mountain here had spiritual energy thicker than the valley where Meng Hao had reached Foundation Establishment.

This was especially true within the Thousand Mountains; there existed spiritual energy so thick that even the mortals who lived in the region had increased longevity. From birth, they breathed in the spiritual energy, and didn’t need to practice Cultivation to increase their lifespans.

Within the Hundred Mountains, it was even more astonishing.

A young man stood outside the Hundred Thousand Mountains. He wore a black robe, and his face was filled with a lofty and proud look. “The

Hundred Mountains of the Black Sieve Sect," he said coolly, "is where only qualified members of the Inner Sect may practice Cultivation. In fact, the Thousand Mountains are far superior to many so-called Spirit mountains in the world."

Standing around him were five Cultivators, all of them gazing at the Black Sieve Sect. Each one wore different clothing, and had obviously come from different areas. One in their midst wore a scholar's robe. His skin was a bit dark, but he had a scholarly and refined disposition. It was none other than Meng Hao.

"The Ten Thousand Mountains are for guests. However, my advice to you, Fellow Daoists, is to not lightly tread into mountains other than the one assigned to you." The young man smiled as he looked at the five of them. "There are many fierce beasts sealed in the area. Furthermore, there are certain mountains which are reserved for special use, and are guarded by Inner Sect disciples. If you charge into one of those areas, you might not come out alive."

The young man smiled as his gaze passed over them.

"Fellow Daoists, you all responded to the call of the Black Sieve Sect. Now that you are here, you are guests of the Sect. You will stay within the Ten Thousand Mountains, one person to a mountain. Everything you need to practice Cultivation has been prepared for you. Upon entering your mountain, a disciple from the Black Sieve Sect Pill Mountain will deliver a Sieve Earth Pill to you.

"This pill is a welcoming gift. However, I, Zheng, must remind you, taking the pill, entering the mountain, and signing your fingerprint signifies that you are entering an agreement. If you renege on your promise, or secretly leave, then you will be punished by the Black Sieve Sect." With a smile, he cupped hands and bowed.

Nearby, five Black Sieve Outer Sect disciples waited to receive them.

"Seems fair," said one of the five Cultivators, an old man in a gray robe. The others voiced their agreement. Meng Hao said nothing as he gazed off into the endless mountains.

“Very well then. Fellow Daoists, you should not have very long to wait until we begin. Quite a few others have arrived already.” The young man smiled and bowed again.

Within Meng Hao’s group of five was a middle-aged man with a sallow face. “How many Fellow Daoists of the Foundation Establishment stage have come already?” he asked suddenly.

“Not counting you ladies and gentlemen, there are already ninety seven.” The young man surnamed Zhen nodded, then turned, transforming into a beam of light that shot off into the distance.

“Fellow Daoists, please follow us. We will take you to your respective mountains.” The group of five young disciples, who obviously were from the Outer Sect, cupped hands and saluted respectfully, then led the way.

The person leading Meng Hao was a young woman of about twenty-six or twenty-seven years of age. Her Cultivation base was at the seventh level of Qi Condensation. She was pretty, and had an intelligent air to her.

“Senior, please, follow me,” she said softly. Although Meng Hao’s skin was a bit dark, he was cultured and refined. He had the air of a scholar, which wasn’t common among Cultivators. This caused the young woman to take more than a few glances at him.

What was especially alluring was his clear eyes, deep within which seemed to glint a bit of Demonic power. For a young, impressionable girl like her, being gazed at by Meng Hao made her blush.

“Senior…” she said, lowering her head.

“Lead on,” he said with a slight smile. Seeing her reminded him of the Reliance Sect, and of Xu Qing. He looked off at the endless mountains of the Black Sieve Sect, and stubbornness glinted within his eyes.

The young girl led Meng Hao to a tall, emerald green mountain. On its top was a residence and a courtyard. Rattan vines wrapped around everything, and a limestone path wound its way around the mountain. The wind blew, causing the spiritual power to curl up and about. The entire scene would cause anyone’s spirits to rise.

Upon reaching the courtyard, Meng Hao produced a pearl head-ornament from the bag of holding he’d acquired from the man named Xu, at the secret meeting. He gave it to the young girl, then sent her off. She left, her face flushed, glancing back repeatedly at Meng Hao. Her heart seemed to be quite abuzz.

Soon, the sky began to darken. As night approached, everything was silent. The only thing that could be heard was the chirping of insects which drifted in from outside. Meng Hao sat cross-legged on the second floor of the building, meditating. Suddenly, his eyes opened.

It was at this moment that the silence outside was suddenly broken by a blood-curdling scream. It sounded like the struggles of someone in the throes of death. The silence was ripped to pieces as the screaming filled the air.

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# Chapter 143: Ghost in the Night

Meng Hao stood in front of the second-floor window. The moon hung in the sky. Off in the distance, he could see a mountain covered with rippling spells that looked like a fine gauze.

The miserable cry was coming from that mountain. At the moment, multiple figures could be seen flying up from various surrounding mountains to see what was happening.

Soon, several prismatic beams shot toward the mountain. Not long after, the ripples in the spells faded away, and everything returned to how it had been moments before. Everything was quiet.

Meng Hao frowned, and his eyes flashed. He remembered that mountain from which the scream had emanated was the same mountain that the sallow-faced man had gone to earlier that day. Having seen the figures emerge and fly toward the mountain, Meng Hao was about to go investigate, but then paused suddenly.

His face flickered as he looked down at his bag of the Cosmos. He slapped it, and the Demon Sealing Jade flew out, which he grabbed.

It shimmered, emanating a mysterious glow. A very strange feeling rose up in Meng Hao's heart. He couldn't put his finger on what it was, but it seemed as if there were some invisible Qi prickling at his heart.

Thoughtfully, he took out the jade piece left by the Eighth Demon Sealer and placed it in his palm.

The archaic voice of the Eighth Demon Sealer rang out in his mind. "Some spirits in the cycle of reincarnation avoid burial. Their Qi seems Demonic, and yet not. They are above living creatures, but infected with the tens of thousands of variations of the mortal world. The Qi is serene. Consumed by bones and spirit, they can lead the way to the path. If you encounter such Qi, you must seal it!”

Meng Hao thought for a moment, and eventually decided not to leave. He stood next to the window, casting his Spiritual Sense out toward the direction where the bloodcurdling scream had come from. The first thing he heard was quarreling voices.

“This is the sixth fellow Daoist to die. If the Black Sieve Sect doesn’t provide an explanation right now, then we will leave!”

“That’s right. We responded to your call for the sake of a Sieve Earth Pill. If people were dying in battle, then very well; but recently people have been dying miserable deaths in the middle of the night! Then you seal the area up and don’t allow anyone to investigate. It’s very strange! Of course we have questions!”

There were about ten Cultivators near the mountain, staring coldly at the Black Sieve Sect Cultivators who were preventing them from investigating the scene of the death.

In the distance, no small amount of Cultivators had flown out from their respective mountains and were watching from a distance. They said nothing, but all of them were exuding the power of their Cultivation bases. A great pressure rose up, transforming into a sort of voiceless revolt.

The Black Sieve Sect disciples’ faces all turned very unsightly. It was at this moment, however, that a gravely voice suddenly sounded out.

“The Sect will offer an explanation within three days.” As the voice rang out, an old man wearing a wide Daoist robe appeared. The pressure exuded by his body caused the surrounding Cultivators’ faces to change.

The Black Sieve Sect disciples all bowed.

“Greetings, Elder Chen.”

The old man strode forward. He stood below them at the foot of the mountain, and yet the Foundation Establishment Cultivators floating in the air above him were all silent. Many of them offered respectful bows. They obviously knew who this old man was.

Meng Hao stood at the window, his expression the same as ever. However, a slight frown slowly appeared. The old man was an Elder of the Black Sieve Sect, and his Cultivation base was not at the Foundation Establishment stage, but Core Formation.

His gaze swept over the gathering of people. When he spoke, his voice wasn’t very loud, and yet it filled the minds of everyone in the area. “I very much appreciate that you all were able to come to the Black Sieve Sect. In regards to the killings that have occurred in the past days, I too am quite furious regarding this matter. Within three days, I will slay the killer with my own hand.”

“With Elder Chen present, we are much more at ease. Thank you, senior, for administering justice.” The Foundation Cultivators bowed one by one and then returned to their respective mountains. An Elder of the Black Sieve Sect had appeared; although he hadn’t offered an explanation, how could they possibly continue to argue about the matter?

Soon, everything was quiet again. Elder Chen departed, as did most of the Black Sieve Sect disciples. The mountain from which the scream had sounded out was also quiet. No one was willing to make further attempts to go investigate.

Looking pensive, Meng Hao returned to sit cross-legged and meditate. Within his mind echoed the words of the Eighth Demon Sealer.

“There’s something strange going on in the Black Sieve Sect….” Meng Hao’s eyes opened, filled with an intense glow. The prickly Qi that he felt seemed to be growing thicker.

He lowered his head for a moment, thinking. Then he took out the Blood Immortal Legacy mask. Sending his Spiritual Sense inside, he saw the Li Clan Patriarch, enveloped by Meng Hao’s blood mist. He seemed to be growing weaker lately. He no longer cried out like he had before; he didn’t seem to have the strength.

“What do you know about the Black Sieve Sect?” Meng Hao asked through Spiritual Sense. He’d always found the old man’s Blood Spirit identity to be somewhat strange. The feeling was even stronger when he thought of Li Daoyi.

“I know dog farts, you little son of a b*tch,” said the Li Clan Patriarch, his hoarse voice full of venom. “If you had any skill at all, you…”

Before he could finish speaking, Meng Hao calmly cut his finger and used a drop of blood to surround the old man in more blood mist. A miserable cry could be heard, and then Meng Hao retracted his Spiritual Sense. He asked no more questions, instead putting away the mask.

Meanwhile, underneath the Black Sieve Sect’s Ten Thousand Mountains, was an enormous network of limestone caves, like a giant labyrinth. Deep in its recesses was a tall platform adorned with burning torches. The dancing torchlight filled the place with flickering shadows.

Atop the platform, three old Cultivators sat cross-legged. Their bodies were withered, and as they sat there, they almost looked dead. A strong Death Qi swirled around them. And yet, their eyes were open, and gleamed with ancient, nether-worldly light.

Their figures seemed to twist and warp, as if they existed somewhere between the physical and the corporeal, and not completely within the world.

Situated in the middle of them was a hide. It appeared to be made from the skin of some wild beast. Its edges were tattered, and on its surface was some sort of map.

The hide map appeared to be slowly wriggling. Standing atop it was the phantom image of a man, who at the moment was letting out a soundless scream. It looked like the ghost of a middle-aged man, his face sallow. This was one of the five people who had arrived with Meng Hao.

His body started to get blurry, and soon disappeared. When it did, the edges of the hide slowly expanded a little, and the hide became a bit more glossy. It was a scene that anyone observing would find incredibly strange.

Some time passed, and then one of the old people spoke in a hoarse, scraping voice: “Under the moonlight tomorrow, it will consume another person. Then we can begin.”

“This time, we must succeed, no matter what. We must…! We must acquire that legendary item. Not just for us, but for the Patriarchs. Then we can all awaken. We will no longer have to conceal ourselves in this realm of darkness, this empty place with no land to step foot upon.”

“There still aren’t enough Foundation Establishment pups out there. We spread the news far and wide, but the Sects and Clans aren’t easily fooled. Hmph.”

“It can’t be helped. These Foundation Establishment pups are just a part of the whole. With everything else we’ve prepared, we will definitely succeed this time.” The sound of their voices slowly faded away. Soon the only movement was that of the wriggling hide, placed in between them like some sort of object of worship.

The night passed uneventfully, and soon dawn broke. Meng Hao opened his eyes from meditation. Outside his residence, he saw a beam of multicolored light approaching. It turned into a woman wearing a black gown. She was tall and slender, with fair skin and beautiful hair that draped over her shoulders. She slowed as she approached, coming to a stop outside Meng Hao’s residence.

“Disciple Han Bei 1 of Black Sieve Sect Pill Mountain has been dispatched to deliver you a Sieve Earth Pill,” she said. “Fellow Daoist, can you please come out?” She had an intelligent voice and a smile as beautiful as a flower in bloom. Her presence seemed to make everything brighter. Her eyes were alluring, her smile white and lovely. She wore a long, emerald-green gown, trimmed with violet embroidery. Overall, she had an otherworldly look.

Meng Hao emerged, and they sat at a table.

She looked at Meng Hao, her smile unchanging. As she did, her eyes seemed to grow brighter, although whether this was done consciously or subconsciously was impossible to tell.

“Fellow Daoist, may I ask your honored name?” she asked with a slight smile. Her voice was as pleasant as the call of a lark. Listening to it could be described as a pleasure.

“Meng Hao,” he replied coolly, making no attempt to conceal his identity. Looking at the woman in front of her, he could tell that her Cultivation base was extraordinary. It seemed to be at the early Foundation Establishment stage.

“Meng….” Han Bei looked at him in shock for a moment. She studied his face and then laughed. “So, you are Fellow Daoist Meng. This here is a contract. Would you please mark it with your thumbprint? Then I can give you your Sieve Earth Pill. Afterward, if you follow all the requirements laid out by the Sect, then you will get a second.” She lifted her delicate hand. Around her wrist was an emerald green bracelet. A glow flashed off of it, and within her hands appeared a paper scroll. She handed it to Meng Hao.

His expression the same as ever, he looked at her bracelet for a long moment, then accepted the scroll. He looked it over, then lifted his right thumb and left a mark on the paper.

Han Bei gazed at him the entire time. After he placed his thumbprint on the paper, she produced a jade box the size of a hand and placed it off to the side.

“Here is your Sieve Earth Pill. Please note, the pill cannot be consumed during the daytime. After all, its full name is Moon Sieve Mother Earth Pill. When you consume it, it will drink in the moonlight.” She smiled, then rose to her feet to take her leave.

Before she could depart, Meng Hao suddenly said, “Have we met before?”

His words caused her to stare at him in shock.

“I don’t recall ever seeing you before, Fellow Daoist Meng.”

“My mistake,” he said. “I took you for someone else.” He frowned as if he were thinking deeply. Han Bei laughed. With a final nod, she transformed into a beam of light and departed. As she left, her smile turned into a thoughtful look.

Meng Hao picked up the jade box containing the Sieve Earth Pill. After heading back into his residence, he opened it. Inside was a medicinal pill about the size of an infant’s hand. It was white, and wrapped in a wax seal. Despite that, a thick medicinal aroma wafted off of it, as well as rippling spiritual energy.

“Actually, one of these pills is enough for me. But, I can’t casually consume it. I need to test it out to see if it’s real or fake.” He put the jade box away, then closed his eyes and continued to meditate.

Time slipped by, and soon it was late at night. The moon hung brightly in the sky, and everything was quiet. Outside of Meng Hao’s mountain, however, a shadowy figure appeared noiselessly. It was very strange in appearance, like a rippling piece of hide. A closer look revealed that the person’s features were none other than the sallow-faced middle-aged man who had passed away.

His eyes shone. He looked around at the surrounding mountains, then selected Meng Hao’s. His body flashed, and he floated up toward Meng Hao’s residence.

As he approached the residence at the top of the mountain, Meng Hao, who was sitting cross-legged meditating, suddenly lifted his head. His eyes glittered brightly.

1. Han Bei’s name in Chinese is hán bèi – Han is a common surname. Bei means “shell”

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# Chapter 144: A Figure in the Crowd

Meng Hao gave a cold snort. His right hand slapped the bag of the Cosmos, and the two wooden swords appeared soundlessly. Next, a talisman dropped into his hand, and his body became invisible.

It was then that the figure of the sallow-faced man floated to the mountain top. All the vegetation he passed on his way withered up, as if the life had been sucked out of it. The limestone path turned into ash, and it seemed as if the entire mountain was encircled with a dense Death Qi.

However, no one outside of this particular mountain had any clue that this was happening.

The figure floated up to the outside of Meng Hao’s residence. Not pausing for a moment, it passed directly through the wall into the second floor.

He floated there underneath the moonlight, his listless eyes flickering. A strange demonic air emanated from him. Everything around was quiet as the sallow-face man looked around the second floor with his menacing eyes.

Meng Hao hadn’t moved even a centimeter. He sat cross-legged, invisible, looking at the figure in front of him. Naturally, he instantly recognized him. However, his appearance was very strange, as if something were wrong with him. Meng Hao thought back to the bloodcurdling scream from the mountain the previous night. That was where the sallow-faced man had been.

He already half-understood what was going on.

“This person is dead, and has been turned into an automaton. Or perhaps someone used some Spirit Puppet arts on him to control him….” Suddenly, his body flashed as he moved to the side about three meters.

There was a boom as the furniture near where he had been sitting all transformed into ash. The sallow-faced man, his eyes shining with a strange glow, charged toward Meng Hao, as if he could see him.

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed. Ripping up the invisibility talisman, he lifted his right hand and flashed an incantation gesture. The two wooden swords flew directly toward the figure in front of him. The figure didn’t even attempt to dodge. Both wooden swords flew directly through, leaving two holes, from which no blood flowed. It was as if the sallow-faced man was made of only skin, with nothing else inside.

If there were nothing more to it than that, it wouldn’t be a big deal. But then, the holes that had been punched in his body began to merge together. They transformed into a large mouth, which suddenly ripped off of the sallow-faced man’s body and shot toward Meng Hao, ready to consume him.

Meng Hao’s facial expression didn’t change. He retreated backward, his hand flashing an incantation gesture. Then he waved forward, and a Flame Dragon roared into being, rushing toward the figure. As it neared, the figure didn’t attempt to dodge, but instead charged forward and consumed the flame dragon.

It turned its head to look at Meng Hao, its lips twisted into a hideous grin. Then it threw itself toward him.

Meng Hao frowned, both hands flashing incantation gestures as they pushed forward into mid-air. A multitude of flying swords appeared. Instantly, they shattered into pieces, turning into a cloud of shrapnel which shot forward with incredible force. Like a tornado, it sped toward the sallow-faced man. At the same time, the two wooden swords circled back toward the figure, radiating sharpness. They stabbed directly toward it’s head.

They were followed by the black net, which Meng Hao had just tossed out.

Popping sounds rang out as the flying sword shrapnel ripped the figure almost completely in half and the wooden swords stabbed into its head. But the figure… despite being horrifically injured, still looked at Meng Hao with the half face it had left, and smiled. It tried to rush toward him again, but was enveloped by the black net. Its body writhed as it attempted to squeeze through the gaps in the net.

Its body appeared to be emitting some kind of gravitational force, which caused the second floor to shake as if it were about to be sucked into the figure.

“Can’t kill it… because it’s not really alive. No wonder it’s killed so many Foundation Establishment Cultivators.” With a frown, Meng Hao watched the figure trying to lurch toward him, its eyes filled with fierce coldness. Meng Hao lifted his right hand and flashed an incantation sign, then pointed down to the ground.

“Demon Sealing… Eighth Hex, Body Sealing!” He lifted his hand up from the ground and pointed at the broken figure in front of him.

The entire building, the entire mountain shook. Although, they weren’t actually shaking. It was only an illusion. Meng Hao’s body and his finger were what was really shaking. In Meng Hao’s eyes, the entire world seemed to congeal together. Then, multiple ghost images of the world appeared, one on top of another.

The building and the mountain were there in the illusion, and as for the figure, a ghost image appeared of it as well!

For the first time, a look of surprise and disbelief appeared on the figure’s face. It seemed as if its mouth were shaping to cry out, but before it could, the ghost images of the world fell upon it, binding it up. It couldn’t move at all.

At this moment, Meng Hao stepped forward and lifted his right hand. Using his thumb, he cut his middle finger. Blood flowed out, turning it into a Blood Finger.

This was one of the arts that had been branded onto his mind by the Blood Immortal Legacy, one of the three magical abilities that did not require the use of the mask.

However, these arts required a very powerful Cultivation base. After practicing a bit secretly, Meng Hao had been able to utilize the Blood Finger. However, as far as the Blood Palm and Blood Death World, he was still not able to use them.

In any case, this was the first time in tens of thousands of years that the Blood Finger had appeared in the Southern Domain. It was inherently powerful. When you consider that in the Blood Immortal Legacy spell matrix Meng Hao had already mastered the ability to focus the power of his Cultivation base, then this finger attack, combined with the three Perfect Dao Pillars of his Perfect Foundation, would shock even the Dao Children of various Sects.

Meng Hao strode forward and pressed the middle finger of his right hand between the eyebrows of the strange figure, then scraped it downward. A shrill scream sounded out as the figure’s body began to tremble. A massive bloody cut appeared starting between its eyebrows and stretching down about thirty centimeters. Vast quantities of gray-colored Qi poured out. Suddenly, its body could move again, and it retreated at top speed, shooting out of the second floor.

Without hesitating, Meng Hao followed in pursuit, his eyes flashing. Everything was quiet, which was odd, so Meng Hao stopped. After thinking for a moment, he returned to his residence and then slapped his bag of holding. He took out the good luck charm and cast some Spiritual Sense into it, then breathed a sigh of relief when he found what he was looking for. It was still operational. He chose not to teleport away, but instead looked coldly out of the building. There was no wind or rustle of leaves, no sign of trouble or disturbance. If there were, he could leave in an instant.

Time passed, and suddenly a bloodcurdling scream rose up from from one of the surrounding mountains. Then a second, and a third. In the end, there were a total of five!

Three of them were actually Black Sieve Sect disciples who were in the region but hadn’t hidden themselves. They screamed as their bodies withered up, their flesh and blood sucked away until their lifeless skin flopped onto the ground.

This night would not pass peacefully. Many of the Foundation Establishment Cultivators were on guard, and even many of the Black Sieve Sect disciples were dispatched out. It wasn’t until dawn broke that things seemed to calm down.

Many people saw that it was a broken-down figure who cruelly slaughtered the Black Sieve Sect disciples, and the two Foundation Establishment Cultivators. Eventually, the figure was put down by a Black Sieve Sect Elder. To most of the Cultivators, this counted as the explanation they had been waiting for.

In the following few days, there were no more mysterious deaths among the Foundation Establishment Cultivators. Gradually, people stopped talking about the event.

Time flashed by, and soon six days had passed since Meng Hao had arrived at the Black Sieve Sect. As the days passed, Meng Hao maintained his vigilance. However, no one bothered him during that time. On the dawn of the seventh day, the clear sound of bells rang out, filling the region of the Ten Thousand Mountains and reaching the ears of all the Foundation Establishment Cultivators.

“Fellow Daoists of the Southern Domain,” a voice echoed out. “You have already received your Sieve Earth Pills. The time has come to perform your services. If you can help the Black Sieve Sect to acquire the object we seek, then you will be rewarded with more Sieve Earth Pills!” Beam after beam of multicoloured light shot up from the various mountains as the Foundation Establishment Cultivators flew into the sky. Meng Hao followed suit, flying up and floating in mid-air, looking around coldly.

From the Black Sieve Sect Thousand Mountains, dozens of beams of prismatic light whistled up into the air. In addition, there were multiple black-colored Feng Shui compasses, each one around thirty meters in diameter.

Upon each Feng Shui compass stood only one person. Three or four wore Daoist robes of the Black Sieve Sect and were at the Qi Condensation stage. The others were all of the Foundation Establishment stage.

The Qi Condensation disciples all had embarrassed, nervous expressions on their faces, as if they didn’t want to be here. However, they could not defy the orders of the Sect. These were all Outer Sect disciples who had ordinary latent talent. Disciples with better latent talent would not have been dispatched out.

Shortly afterward, ten violet colored Feng Shui compasses, three hundred meters in diameter, flew out from the Hundred Mountains region of the Black Sieve Sect. Upon each of these compasses sat a cross-legged Cultivator. One of them was the girl named Han Bei. As far as the nine other violet-robed Cultivators who sat cross-legged on the compasses, there were both men and women. All of them seemed in high spirits. These were obviously Chosen from the Sect.

They flew forth and then hovered in the air. Further off in the distance, three golden-colored, three-thousand meter wide Feng Shui compasses appeared. They flew forward.

On each of these compasses sat a person. Two were men and one was a woman. One was Elder Chen, and the other two appeared to be middle-aged, with cold expressions. The power of Core Formation rippled out from them, attracting everyone’s attention.

After the golden Feng Shui compasses, another, smaller one appeared. It was only about three hundred meters in diameter, and violet colored. Sitting cross-legged on this Feng Shui compass was an old man in a violet robe.

He had a black birthmark on his face which somewhat spoiled his transcendent demeanor. He looked fierce, and the instant he appeared, it seemed as if everything suddenly grew dark.

However, what caught Meng Hao’s attention wasn’t the old man. Behind him was a massive Feng Shui compass with hundreds of Cultivators. Amidst them was a lonely looking woman.

The instant he caught sight of her, Meng Hao thought of that day years ago, under the moonlight. In his mind, he could see her looking back at him, and could even hear the words she had spoken.

“I went to the Pill Cultivation Workshop. The Cosmetic Cultivation Pill you gave me before wasn’t purchased by you.” 1

Elder Sister Xu.

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# Chapter 145: An Ancient Mountain Path

“Patriarch Violet Sieve!”

“I never imagined that the person leading us would be the Black Sieve Sect’s Nascent Soul eccentric Patriarch Violet Sieve. They say his killing aura is incredible! Years ago when he was forming his Nascent Soul, his name rocked the Southern Domain. Once he wiped out three Sects in an single night!”

“According to the rumors, the Black Sieve Sect has already entered that danger zone five times. Each time they leave behind people to stay on guard. Today is the sixth time. Even still, look at how many people they’ve mustered! This Sect is so powerful! No wonder they’re one of the five great Sects of the Southern Domain.”

Meng Hao heard the talk around him and also felt the pressure exuded by the violet-robed old man. But his vision was focused further back, on the enormous, nine thousand meter wide yellow Feng Shui compass which was flying in his direction. Standing atop it, amidst hundreds of Cultivators, was a woman.

She wore a long, black gown, and her face was pale white, almost bloodless. This made her already chilly disposition even icier. However… looking at her, Meng Hao got the sense that in truth, she was actually just covering up her fragile heart.

“Elder Sister Xu…” he murmured as he looked at her. Finally he could rest a bit at ease. Now, they weren’t so very far away from each other. And yet, despite being so close to each other, they were still worlds apart….

It was at this point that Meng Hao frowned. He noticed that standing next to Elder Sister Xu was a pretty woman with a coquettish air and a sneer in her eyes. It seemed as if she were criticizing Elder Sister Xu, who then lowered her head as if she didn't dare to speak. Her face grew even paler.

A cold glow appeared in Meng Hao's eyes.

Along with Elder Sister Xu, there were several hundred disciples on top of the massive Feng Shui compass. Their Cultivation bases were varied, but it was obvious that they were ordinary disciples, not Chosen of the Sect.

Also on the Feng Shui compass was a gigantic pitch-black statue of a bare-chested man with wings growing out of his back. The wings were half spread open, giving the statue a very peculiar look.

Even more strange was that a very tall hat was perched atop the statue's head, which seemed very out of place.

If that were all there was to it, it wouldn't be a big deal. But upon further inspection with his extraordinary Spiritual Sense, Meng Hao noticed that the statue was not entirely lifeless: it was breathing!

With every breath, it sucked in a bit of Qi from the hundreds of Black Sieve Sect disciples who stood around it.

Meng Hao's eyes narrowed. Many of the disciples on the Feng Shui compass looked in very high spirits; they obviously had no idea what the statue was doing.

On the ten-sided violet Feng Shui compass was a refined and elegant young man. He stood up with a smile and spoke to the group of rogue Cultivators, including Meng Hao. "Fellow Daoists, I presume many of you know me. I am Xie Jie 1 of the Black Sieve Sect."

Meng Hao recognized the voice as the one who had spoken moments before.

“I think quite a few Fellow Daoists have some speculations regarding our trip today,” he said with a smile. “I will explain further once we are on our way! Please, follow me!” The violet Feng Shui compass upon which he stood suddenly expanded in size until it was three thousand meters wide, and then flew toward them.

Meng Hao and the other rogue Foundation Establishment Cultivators all seemed to be thinking different things. However, one by one, they began to fly, transforming into beams of light and shooting toward the violet Feng Shui Compass.

Among the roughly one hundred rogue Cultivators, most were at the early Foundation Establishment stage, like Meng Hao. There were eighteen of the mid Foundation Establishment stage, and as far as the late Foundation Establishment stage, there were only three.

Of those three, one was the old man whom Meng Hao had arrived with. Another was a fierce-looking man who wore white robes and let off a ghastly air. He had no beard, and even his Adam’s apple was very small. However, he was surrounded by a desolate killing aura.

The last was a woman. Her features were plain, and she was somewhat overweight. However, her late Foundation Establishment Cultivation base rippled, causing everyone around her to treat her very politely. The three of them joined Xie Jie on his Feng Shui Compass. Xie Jie treated them much more respectfully than he did the others, leading them off to the side with him.

At the same time, Meng Hao looked around at the rogue Foundation Establishment Cultivators and caught sight of Lu Tao over in the corner, along with the richly-dressed woman from the secret meeting.

There was another person who caught Meng Hao’s attention; this person appeared to be at the early Foundation Establishment stage, and milled about innocuously in the midst of the crowd. Meng Hao’s eyes passed over him at first; it was a hard to describe Qi that caught his attention. It was like the stench which might roll off of a rotting corpse.

No one else seemed to notice, but after a while, Meng Hao thought about the information from the Demon Sealing Jade. He also thought back to the prickly Qi he had sensed in the Black Sieve Sect.

The Feng Shui compass began to vibrate beneath their feet and then shot forward. Together with the other Black Sieve Sect Feng Shui compasses, they transformed into colorful beams of light as they sped through the air.

The direction they were heading turned out to be the Hundred Mountains of the Black Sieve Sect.

Meng Hao stood there quietly, unmoving. Anyone who looked at him saw a Cultivation base at the early Foundation Establishment stage. He stood in the middle of all the Cultivators. Other than Lu Tao, no one seemed to notice him. Elder Sister Xu didn’t notice him either. Her face was covered with a bitter expression, as if she was pondering her own future.

As the Feng Shui compasses neared the middle of the Hundred Mountains, the tendrils of smoke rising up from the massive incense burner began to twist in the air above the Sect. Layer upon layer, they twisted together to form an enormous ring of smoke.

As the smoke ring formed, the space in the middle began to ripple. Meng Hao watched as the lead Feng Shui compass entered into the smoke ring and then disappeared. His eyes flickered as the violet Feng Shui compass he stood on entered the ring.

Soon all of the Feng Shui compasses and Cultivators had entered, whereupon the smoke ring disappeared and the Black Sieve Sect returned to its normal state. Outside of the Hundred Mountains, a shield appeared. Shields also sprung up around the Thousand Mountains and the Hundred Thousand Mountains. The entire Sect was now sealed up tight; no one could leave or enter.

About the same time that the Black Sieve Sect sealed itself, Divine Sense from multiple locations began to sweep about the State of Clear Skies. This was Divine Sense from various Sects and Clans within the Southern

Domain, come to investigate what was happening within the Black Sieve Sect.

Because of different agreements that they had with the Black Sieve Sect, they couldn’t interfere.

Back on the Feng Shui compass, Xie Jie’s voice rang out: “Fellow Daoists, there’s no reason to be alarmed. This is one of the Black Sieve Sect’s most valuable treasures, the Heaven Forged Furnace. In ancient times, it was inscribed with void-penetrating runes that turn it into a teleportation portal.

“As to where the teleportation portal leads to, I’m afraid none of you are familiar with it. Even I myself don’t really know….” The teleportation just now had caused a buzz of conversation to arise, but after hearing Xie Jie’s words, everyone quieted back down.

Meng Hao looked around coldly. They seemed to be surrounded by blackness interspersed with points of light that looked like stars. Everything around them was empty, without the least bit of light. Only the glow emitted by the Feng Shui compasses illuminated the people on them.

Ahead, one Feng Shui compass after another flew along. Most of the Black Sieve Sect disciples were sitting cross-legged meditating. Only the group of Chosen on the violet Feng Shui compass was staring out into the blackness.

Further away, the three Core Formation eccentrics seemed to be discussing something amongst themselves with Divine thought. And then, there was the most powerful person of all, Patriarch Violet Sieve, who sat motionless meditating, his eyes closed.

Elder Sister Xu was sitting silently in the midst of the several hundred Black Sieve Sect disciples. The statue in their midst seemed as if it were about to melt into the blackness of this dark world. Ghost images resonated out from it, adding to its bizarreness.

On Xie Jie’s Feng Shui compass, one of the three late Foundation Establishment Cultivators, an old man in a gray robe, frowned and said, “Fellow Daoist Xie, you said you’ve been to this place a few times before. Yet, you don’t know how to describe where we’re going….?”

Xie Jie seemed to hesitate in thought for a moment and then looked around for a moment. “Well,” he said, “I do know a bit about the path we’re traveling. As Fellow Daoist Tu surmised, this is a path that Cultivators in ancient times would use to travel to the stars to collect foreign Spirit lineages. It is a path between Mountains!” The surrounding Cultivators stared in astonishment at him and, then looked around them, seemingly intent on fixing everything around them into the memories.

“It’s not a true path between Mountains,” said Xie Jie, looking around contentedly at the shocked looks on the faces of the rogue Foundation Establishment Cultivators. “Only Immortals can tread that path. This is just a subsidiary branch, like one of the hundreds of streams which flow into the Milky Way. That having been said, it’s still a path we should not be able to walk, which is why we need the power of the Heaven Forged Furnace of the Black Sieve Sect. It can protect us as we travel the path.”

It turned out that this was not a true path between Mountains, but only a branch of one. Even still, to open it required the power of a great Sect; an ordinary Sect wouldn’t be able to.

Xie Jie’s eyes swept over the crowd and came to rest on Meng Hao. He frowned a bit, then said, “Ah, you must be Fellow Daoist Meng. Please, come sit over here.” He had actually taken notice of Meng Hao much earlier. Before departing earlier in the day, the three Core Formation Patriarchs had personally charged him with the task of keeping an eye on Meng Hao.

He wasn’t sure why, and didn’t understand why three Core Formation Patriarchs would pay attention to a trifling early Foundation Establishment stage rogue Cultivator. He smiled at Meng Hao, but this smile was not genuine. He had no goodwill toward Meng Hao and had called his name simply to sow discord among the other Cultivators. Perhaps in this way he could get some clues about Meng Hao.

Exactly as he had anticipated, his words caused the surrounding rogue Cultivators to look over at Meng Hao. Many of them stared.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever, as if he didn’t care in the least. He’d known that his actions the other night would arouse some sort of attention. It was unavoidable. So hearing Xie Jie’s words, he nodded slightly.

“I’m fine where I am,” he said. “My Cultivation base is weak, so it wouldn’t be suitable for me to sit amongst such powerful figures.”

Of course, the three Core Formation eccentrics who were communicating with Divine thought up ahead noticed this. They didn’t interfere. They weren’t sure what extraordinary abilities Meng Hao possessed. This was why the Black Sieve Sect Leader had issued special instructions to pay attention to Meng Hao.

Xie Jie smiled lightly and was about to say something else, when suddenly the Feng Shui compass shook, and suddenly stopped moving. The Feng Shui compasses up ahead also stopped. The magical light emitted by the compasses instantly went out.

The faces of the three Core Formation eccentrics changed. The eminently powerful Patriarch Violet Sieve opened his eyes for the first time. They shone with both dignity and caution.

An archaic voice suddenly echoed out in the minds of all the Cultivators. “Everyone quiet!” It was as if an intangible seal had been placed on all of them, preventing them from speaking.

Within the silent darkness around them suddenly appeared a beautiful, five-colored glowing light. In front of them appeared an enormous jellyfish, tens of thousands of meters large. Its countless tentacles swayed gently, and its semi-transparent body slowly rippled. Its glow shone down into the eyes of the onlookers.

Within the body of the jellyfish, everyone was able to see a rotting corpse. It appeared to have been half digested by the jellyfish.

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1. Xie Jie’s name in Chinese is xiè jié – Xie is a surname, and also the word for “thanks.” Jie means “outstanding” or “heroic”

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# Chapter 146: This is Ultimate Vexation!

There was a hole between the eyebrows of the corpse, which appeared to be completely frozen. It was as if the rest of the corpse might decay, but this spot would exist for all eternity.

Everyone stood stock still, gazing at the jellyfish as it slowly floated along. Its long tentacles drifted through the midst of the Feng Shui compasses, then proceeded on into the distance. Finally, Patriarch Violet Sieve let out a light sigh. He stood and faced the departing jellyfish. Clasping his hands together, he gave a deep, respectful bow.

Then, his ancient voice slowly filled the air. “That was the third generation Ancestor of the Black Sieve Sect. His Cultivation base was at the peak of the Dao Seeking stage. As he was attempting to reach Immortal Ascension, a Patriarch of the Wang Clan mounted a sneak attack against him. He was not able to achieve Immortality, and fell to this path.

“That year, our Sect and the Wang Clan fought a bloody war that lasted for three thousand years. Eventually, the hostilities ceased. However, all of you Black Sieve Sect disciples should take to heart this bit of Sect history.”

It seemed that for many of the Black Sieve Sect disciples, this was their first time hearing of the matter. Their eyes glittered brightly as they listened. Meng Hao’s heart thumped as he silently watched the jellyfish depart.

Soon, the group proceeded onward; they didn’t encounter any more strange phenomena like the jellyfish. They flew for about two days, until suddenly, the blinding glow of the Feng Shui compasses disappeared down a smaller branch of this path between Mountains.

Meng Hao could now see an incredible mountain range that stretched out seemingly without end. Everything was gray as far as the eye could see, with no vegetation present whatsoever. Far in the distance was what appeared to be a massive, fissure-like canyon that formed a path.

On either side of the path were cliffs that stretched down so far that the bottom wasn't visible.

Surprisingly, there were several hundred Cultivators sitting cross-legged outside of the canyon. Their faces were all pale, and they looked somewhat down and out. Forty or fifty of them were wearing random styles of clothing, and were obviously not Black Sieve Sect disciples. They were a group of rogue Foundation Establishment Cultivators who had arrived much earlier than the group Meng Hao was part of.

The two groups exchanged glances.

The rest of the Cultivators were Black Sieve Sect disciples. When they caught sight of the group led by Patriarch Violet Sieve, their expressions grew brighter. They all stood up, and from within their midst emerged a beautiful, middle-aged woman wearing resplendent clothing 1. She emanated a mature grace, although her face was somewhat pale.

When she saw Patriarch Violet Sieve, she let out a light sigh, and nodded.

The woman didn't notice Meng Hao, but he recognized her. She was the one who had taken Xu Qing away from the Reliance Sect all those years ago.

“Together with Patriarch Violet Sieve, there are now two Nascent Soul Cultivators present,” thought Meng Hao. “…. Exactly what is this place? Is it really a Blessed Land?” He thought for a moment, then lifted his hand up to pat his bag of the Cosmos. He then held up the good luck charm and sent a bit of spiritual power into it. He still sensed the teleportation ability within, which lessened some of his anxiety.

One of the main reasons he'd decided to come to the Black Sieve Sect was because of his ability to rely on the good luck charm's teleportation.

Patriarch Reliance had kept this object in his collection, which caused Meng Hao to be confident in it, even though he'd never tried it out.

Out of the corner of his eyes, he caught sight of Xu Qing within the large group of Cultivators. Her brow was furrowed as the coquettish woman next to her ridiculed her.

Meng Hao frowned. He could see that Elder Sister Xu was unhappy. He glanced at the coquettish woman, and the coldness in his eyes grew icier.

It was at this moment that Patriarch Violet Sieve stood up, and the Feng Shui compass beneath him shrank down. He strode forward toward the beautiful woman, and they began to converse in low tones. An unsightly expression appeared on the face of Patriarch Violet Sieve as they continued to discuss some matter. Then, they turned together and walked toward the fissure-like canyon.

Next, all of the Black Sieve Sect disciples left the Feng Shui compasses, transforming into beams of light as they shot into the fissure. The Cultivators sitting cross-legged outside of the fissure also rose to their feet and moved in.

Xie Jie clasped hands toward the rogue Cultivators, including Meng Hao. "Ladies and gentleman, please, follow me." The Feng Shui compass beneath them began to shrink. Everyone seemed to be considering what to do. However, no one retreated. Taking their various thoughts with them, the group turned into beams of light and shot into the fissure.

Meng Hao's expression was calm as he flew forward slowly. Behind him, the group containing Xu Qing began to follow. However, she was obviously not of Foundation Establishment; she couldn't achieve true flight and instead flew along on top of a colorful mist.

Meng Hao slowed down a bit, but then Xie Jie suddenly turned and looked at him, his eyes flashing like lightning. It seemed he was about to say something, but then didn't, as a woman suddenly approaching Meng Hao from off to the side.

“Fellow Daoist Meng, we meet again.” The woman wore a long, violet robe. She was beautiful and charming, and when she smiled, her teeth were were white. She flew along at Meng Hao’s side.

“Ah, Fellow Daoist Han,” said Meng Hao, looking at her and nodding. This was the woman who had delivered the Sieve Earth Pill to him a few days ago.

The group of people, nearly one thousand strong, whistled through the air into the fissure. Cliffs rose up on either side of them. Nothing was visible beneath them, as if the fissure was bottomless.

“Fellow Daoist Meng,” Han Bei said suddenly, her voice light and pleasant, “you have a very refined style. Presumably, you come from an extraordinary family. Do you really need to participate in this event just to get a Sieve Earth Pill?”

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he looked at her.

“I’m afraid I don’t understand what you’re talking about, Fellow Daoist Han.” At this point, the group had flown quite a distance into the fissure. The cliff walls around them were gradually turning black in color. The rocks were now beginning to glitter.

Before Han Bei could respond to him, the surrounding Cultivators began to speak excitedly.

“This is… a crystal cliff!”

“What is this place? There’s so much crystal! It’s even superior to high-grade Spirit Stones!”

Some of the Cultivators flew up and struck the crystal cliff face, clearly intending to dig some out.

However, the instant they struck the cliff wall, blood-curdling screams rang out as their bodies withered up. Their life force, flesh and blood were sucked away in an instant. In the blink of an eye, they were transformed into drifting ash, including their bags of holding. The places where they had touched the cliff walls now seemed to have grown a bit more crystal than before. It twinkled mysteriously.

Seeing this, Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed. The surrounding rogue Cultivators sucked in their breaths. As for the Black Sieve Sect disciples, they didn’t even seem to notice. Apparently, they were already aware of what the crystal cliff wall could do.

“Brother Meng,” said Han Bei with a deep, meaningful smile. “You’re being watched. Please look out for yourself. By the way… are you really surnamed Meng?” Before he could respond, she left his side.

Suddenly, an enormous roaring sound could be heard. It filled the air, causing everything to shake. Then, just as suddenly, it disappeared. Meng Hao frowned as Han Bei flew away from him. Then his gaze fell onto an enormous stone door up ahead, which Patriarch Violet Sieve and the beautiful middle-aged woman had worked together to destroy.

The stone door was refusing to stay in pieces. It seemed to have been congealed by some unusual power that caused it to grow back together.

Past the broken the stone door, Meng Hao saw another group of two hundred cross-legged Cultivators. They stood up. In front of them was a pale-faced young man who held a pearl in his hands. The pearl let off a gentle glow which seemed to be slowing the recovery process of the stone door.

“Junior Liu Wu extends greetings to the Patriarchs.” As he spoke, Patriarch Violet Sieve and the beautiful woman entered through the stone door. They flicked their sleeves, causing the door to repair itself even more slowly.

Next, the group of a thousand Cultivators, including Meng Hao, shot quickly through. It didn’t matter whether or not they wanted to, because behind the group were the three Core Formation eccentrics. With them taking up the rear, no one would dare to retreat backward.

The path beyond the stone door was even stranger. There were four similar doors in total that had to be destroyed, beyond each of which waited more Black Sieve Sect disciples.

As they proceeded, Meng Hao grew more and more cautious. Obviously, the Black Sieve Sect had investigated this area more than once. In fact, they seemed to have done so many times.

“These stone doors are like seals. This place….” Meng Hao looked ahead, his brow furrowed. Suddenly, he stopped moving. He wasn’t the only one; everyone stopped and stared ahead.

There in front of them was a large black door. This door was not made of stone, but rather of some metallic substance. It was inset into both cliff walls, and emitted a black glow. On the surface of the door was an enormous face. The face’s eyes were closed, as if it were sleeping.

As they approached, the eyes suddenly opened, and the face emitted a roar which caused everything to shake. Even Patriarch Violet Sieve couldn’t prevent himself from coughing up a mouthful of blood.

Meng Hao did as well. The blood spit up by the group of people turned into a stream that the giant face sucked in. After gobbling up the blood, it let out a burp.

The face’s voice was like the roar of thunder: “In accordance with the orders of my master, I guard Ultimate Vexation. Without the pendant, you may not enter the… Uh, what are you guys doing here again?”

Patriarch Violet Sieve and the beautiful woman both clasped hands and bowed deeply, reverent looks on their faces. Patriarch Violet Sieve pulled out a bamboo tube, out from which flew a dilapidated hide.

When he saw the hide, Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed. The feeling he got when looking at it was exactly the same as that from the strange figure that night.

As the hide flew out, the indistinct image of an eye appeared. The eye stared at Meng Hao.

Their gazes locked, and Meng Hao’s pupils constricted.

The hide unfurled and came to rest in front of the face.

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# Chapter 147: Looking at Each Other

“You can only use this thing one time,” said the face, yawning. As it spoke, a fierce cry suddenly rang out from behind the group of people.

Meng Hao looked back and saw that the strange statue that was being carried along suddenly was melting. It turned into three globes of black mist. Inside each mist sphere was an old person surrounded by an aura of death. These were none other than the three people who had been on the tall platform beneath the Black Sieve Sect!

The Elder shot toward the face within their black mists. Next, they merged into it, causing it to twist and distort. Slowly, the mouth opened wide.

An archaic voice sounded out: “Enter quickly, we can only hold on for the time it takes half an incense stick to burn!” The voice sounded as if it had sprung from the yellow springs of the underworld. It echoed out, shaking the hearts of everyone present.

Before anyone could make a move, a flickering figure emerged from within the depths of the mouth. It was a middle-aged man; it seemed as if his entire Cultivation base was burning. Half of his body was completely destroyed, and his Crimson Core was visible inside, burning.

His hair was wild, and his face twisted with insanity. As he rushed out, he screamed, “All dead! The Hundred Names Pillar was not completed. All dead. HAHAHA! All dead….”

“That’s Elder Zheng!”

“It is! He was in the advanced group that came here. How did he end up like that….”

A buzz of conversation immediately arose amongst the Black Sieve Sect disciples, who had instantly recognized the man. Xie Jie’s pupils constricted, and Han Bei’s expression flickered as she narrowed her eyes, within which flashed a strange light. The other Black Sieve Sect Chosen all had similar reactions.

The man rushed out in a frenzy, spewing lunacy, which echoed about within the fissure. Everyone was shocked at his words.

His shocking condition was even more astonishing. Considering his Crimson Core was visible, it was obvious that he was a Core Formation eccentric. For him to be in such a miserable state, and obviously insane, left everyone wondering what they might possibly be facing inside.

The man’s words continued to echo about, especially the word “dead,” which he’d uttered three times. It was like an invisible hammer, which struck down onto the hearts of those who heard him.

The Black Sieve Sect disciples were slightly less affected. After all, they knew a bit more about this place than Meng Hao and the other rogue Cultivators. Their numbers had increased as the group passed through one door after another, and now there were about two hundred of them. The faces of each and every one twisted.

An intangible shadow of death seemed to spread out from the crazed Core Formation eccentric, filling the area.

However, even as the man flew out of the black door ranting, Patriarch Violet Sieve’s eyes shone with a powerful glow. He strode forward toward Elder Zheng and raised his hand. Color suddenly seemed to fade from the world, and Elder Zheng rushed toward Patriarch Violet Sieve, seemingly out of control. As he lurched forward, Patriarch Violet Sieve lifted his right hand and slapped the man on the top of the head.

The slap rang out with a boom that shook everything. Crazed Elder Zheng's body trembled, and his eyes suddenly grew clear. The burning of the Crimson Core within him began to fade.

He had recovered his wits, but before he could say anything, Patriarch Violet Sieve let out a cold harrumph and then flicked his sleeve. A black wind appeared, sweeping up Elder Zheng and tossing him away.

"Ramblings! You're an Elder, so I've spared your life. Return to the Sect and go into secluded meditation for a hundred years as punishment!" Patriarch Violet Sieve acted quickly and efficiently. He lifted his hand, and immediately Meng Hao and the other rogue Foundation Establishment Cultivators felt an intense pressure that sent their hearts racing.

"Rogue Cultivators from outside the Sect," he said coolly, "you have accepted our Sect's medicinal pills and have signed our contract with your thumbprint. We have arrived at the ancient Blessed Land. Unfortunately, its interior is unstable and also incompatible with high level Cultivation bases.

"If you are able to acquire some of the designated items, then you can trade them for more Sieve Earth Pills. Take these jade slips." Pressure filled the area. He flicked his sleeve, and immediately two hundred jade slips flew out to hover in front of the rogue Cultivators.

"There is no doubt that this is a dangerous place, but it is not a death trap. After all, many of our Sect's own disciples will enter with you. Please, rest assured." As he spoke, the beautiful middle-aged woman next to him coolly looked over the crowd. The two of them did not need to utter any threats. Considering the Cultivation bases, no one could possibly defy them.

Meng Hao silently placed the good luck charm into his bag of holding. Around him, the other rogue Cultivators maintained similar silence. It was impossible to tell what any of them were thinking.

These were people who had reached Foundation Establishment but were not members of any Sect. There might be some among such rogue Cultivators who are stupid and foolish, but most of them could scheme and calculate.

They had chosen to come to this place for their own benefit, and were also aware that there would be danger.

Seven or eight figures flashed ahead, heading directly toward the black door. As soon as they entered the mouth, they disappeared.

With them having taken the lead, the others followed in quick succession, flying forward wordlessly into the face on the large black door.

Murmuring to himself, Meng Hao looked at Patriarch Violet Sieve and the beautiful middle-aged woman. In the very rear were the Core Formation eccentrics, who were watching over the proceedings with cold faces.

“Elder Sister Xu seems to be in some sort of trouble. Now that I’m here, I can’t just ignore it.” His eyes filled with determination. His body flew up along with a few dozen nearby Cultivators, who all turned into beams of light that shot toward the face in the black door. About halfway there, he turned his head and looked back.

He saw Xie Jie with his faint, hypocritical smile. There was pretty Han Bei, as well as the other Black Sieve Sect Chosen. And off in the distance, amidst the crowd, was pale-faced Xu Qing.

When Meng Hao’s gaze fell upon her, Xu Qing suddenly trembled, staring in shock. A look of disbelief filled her face as… she looked back at him.

Many years had passed, and Meng Hao had experienced great change. But, she recognized him immediately. She had brought him to the Reliance Sect, and he had become her Junior Brother. He was the one who had given her the Cosmetic Cultivation Pill underneath the moon.

Scenes from the past filled Xu Qing’s mind. The memories of that time, the frustrations, all merged within her heart to ripple out like a dream.

Their gazes locked. There were a thousand people in between them, but despite the distance and the time, they were not far apart. Rather, they were very, very close to each other.

Meng Hao gave her a warm smile. The entire reason he had come to the Black Sieve Sect to begin with was to see her, an old friend. Now, he had seen her, and she him.

He turned and disappeared into the mouth of the face in the black door. The moment he vanished, Xu Qing's heart suddenly seemed to grow empty. Without realizing it, she took a step forward.

But it was too late. Meng Hao was gone. Feelings welled up inside of her that she didn't understand. On the outside, she was as cold as ever.

Usually, no one could touch her heart; she protected it fiercely. However, for some reason a feeling of joy had arisen inside her.

Then Meng Hao had disappeared, and she felt as if she had lost something. She rarely experienced such feelings, and when she did, she would suppress them. Today, however, the feeling could not be suppressed.

"Hey, I'm talking to you, slut!" It was the coquettish girl who was standing next to her. "If you want to pretend you can't hear me, fine," she said venomously. "But do you really think you can avoid me? Humph!" She laughed coldly. "You got injured last time. If Elder Brother Zhao hadn't asked Junior Sister Han to save you, then you would have died inside. But, instead of being thankful, you got more standoffish! It's just a little cherry, why do you care so much about that? What an idiot!" The coquettish woman looked at Xu Qing's cold, beautiful face and gave a grim smile. The more jealous she got, the more she wanted Xu Qing to end up like her.

Xu Qing turned around to face the woman who had treated her so poorly all these years. One word at a time, she said, "That day in the Blessed Land, it was your own Elder Brother Zhao who broke the rules and almost got me killed. And Elder Sister Han didn't save me because Elder Brother Zhao asked her to, but because she took my bag of holding and just happened to grab me along with it."

Her demeanor was cold, and her expression very serious. This was the personality that she usually kept hidden from her fellow disciples. The coquettish woman could never have anticipated that the Xu Qing who she constantly taunted would ever talk back to her. She stared for a moment and then laughed coldly.

“So, the slut dares to speak,” she said derisively. “Elder Brother Zhao has already arranged everything. You won’t be able to get away this time. I’m going to stand there and watch while your cherry gets taken. Eventually, you’ll thank me.” The Cultivators around her began to fly up into the air toward the black door.

Xu Qing’s body flashed as she stepped onto her colorful mist and shot forward.

The coquettish woman was behind her, laughing coldly. But, then she noticed a man up ahead, wearing a violet robe. He looked back, and a charming smile instantly covered her face.

The handsome man in the violet robe was young and had a Cultivation base of the early Foundation Establishment stage. He nodded at her slightly. Then his gaze fell upon Xu Qing, and his eyes filled with a burning desire.

This was none other than the man the coquettish woman constantly spoke about. Elder Brother Zhao.

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# Chapter 148: Things Are About To Go Down

After everyone entered the black door, the massive face began to warp. Three misty figures dissolved out of the face, which then transformed into three wizened old Cultivators. They looked as if they had just crawled out of the grave.

Without hesitation, they head back toward the statue from which they had come. As they moved toward it, massive amounts of black aura emanated off of them, as if they were corroding.

“What happened?” said the face. “Oh well. Anyway, without the authentication item, you cannot enter!” It looked confused for a moment, but then its eyes grew clear and it began to howl.

Currently, there were only eleven people left within the fissure. In addition to Patriarch Violet Sieve and the beautiful middle-aged woman, there were nine others, all of them Core Formation Cultivators. They ignored the howls of the face in the door, sitting down cross-legged and closing their eyes. At the same time, their hands flickered with incantation gestures. In the middle of the group of nine appeared a Ginseng fruit, floating in the air.

The fruit was glittering and translucent. Its interior roiled as if it contained good fortune from the Heavens inside.

The Spirit fruit writhed along with the rotation of the nine Cultivation bases, and it looked as if it were beginning to grow a head and four limbs.

Patriarch Violet Sieve and the beautiful middle-aged woman stood off to the side, their gazes fixed onto the Spirit fruit.

“I went in once,” said the middle-aged woman with a frown. “But after the space of about thirty breaths, the expelling force within became very intense. Even with my Divine Sense, I was unable to locate the object. I can only hope that the Hundred Spirits Tower will be effective. It’s still not quite complete. Hopefully this time there will be enough.”

Patriarch Violet Sieve was silent for a moment before coolly replying, “I personally prepared this Spirit Ginseng. With the Ginseng form, we can stay inside for the time it takes an incense stick to burn. Everything is prepared. If we cannot succeed this time, then in accord with the words of the Sect Leader and the Patriarchs, we will open the Blessed Land to the public. We will borrow the might of the entire Southern Domain to refine the object of legends. After all, to Cultivators like us, that object is the only hope we have other than the Rebirth Cave!”

The beautiful woman hesitated for a moment and then said, “If that happens, though, we will be forced to share. Even if the Black Sieve Sect does the refining, the more people who are involved, the less of a chance we will get our turn…. I might have it a bit better off, but you and the others will be much more limited.”

“True. Even if we have to sacrifice some of our own Sect’s disciples this time, we will not fail!” A dark violet color appeared within the birthmark on his face, giving him a very fierce appearance.

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The world spun, making it impossible to determine which direction was which. Everything was murky. It wasn’t long, though, before everything began to grow clear. The dark sky grew a deep blue color. The earth below was filled with dark soil.

Verdant foliage was everywhere, covering the hills, which rose and fell off into the distance. A large river snaked through mountains, and the gurgling sound of water could be heard.

This was what Meng Hao saw when he appeared. No one else was visible, only him.

“This place is pretty big….” he said, looking up into the sky. The sun was beginning to set, filling the sky with a beautiful red color.

In fact, upon closer observation, Meng Hao was able to see evidence of an invisible moon.

“The meeting place for our Classic of Time group is the place where the image of the sun and moon intersect.” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he strode forward, transforming into a beam of prismatic light.

“And then there’s that supposed Hundred Spirits Tower. What’s that?” Meng Hao felt misgivings in his heart. As he moved forward, the first thing he did was retrieve the good luck charm from within his bag of the Cosmos. Probing it with Spiritual Sense, he felt a bit more at ease. He was really coming to value the good luck charm more and more.

“No wonder Patriarch Reliance had this charm in his collection. It can even teleport out of this place.” He put the good luck charm back. This was now his life-saving treasure.

“Elder Sister Xu was right behind me, but who knows where the Black Sieve Sect people appeared. Did they come out together, or were they sent in randomly? The latter is more likely. Well, in any case, I need to find her as quickly as possible.” A fierce glow appeared in his eyes as he thought of the cold laugh of the coquettish woman who had stood next to Elder Sister Xu, and of Xu Qing’s pale face.

As he thought about her, he took out the jade slip distributed by the Black Sieve Sect. Imbuing it with some Spiritual Sense, he saw a list of names. He perused the list, retracted his Spiritual Sense, and then crushed the jade slip.

Then he shot forward in search of Elder Sister Xu.

Time passed, and soon evening fell. The sky grew dark, and the moon rose. Everything was dark. Meng Hao currently stood on a small hill, looking out at some ancient ruins not too far off in front of him.

At the moment, the moon was covered by dark clouds, causing the ruins up ahead to be somewhat obscured. They seemed incredibly old, as if they had seen the passing of many ages. Meng Hao got the feeling that many, many years ago, it had been a bustling city.

Now, though, it was half consumed by the land. Only a few structures were visible, and even they were falling apart. On this moonlit night, it seemed very lonely. The wind blew across the ruins, carrying strange sounds with it.

It sounded like countless people murmuring softly. Meng Hao couldn’t make out what they were saying, but all of the voices combined together created a very bizarre feeling.

In front of the ruins was a stone stele. Almost nothing remained of the characters that had once been carved into it, but now it was almost completely blank, and covered with cracks.

He looked it over, and was about to turn and leave when suddenly his expression flickered. The dark clouds passed, and suddenly moonlight spilled down. Meng Hao caught sight of something in one of the cracks in the stone stele. There inside was a golden vine-like twig. It seemed to be squirming. It was covered with leaves that wrapped around tiny pieces of fruits the size of a thumb.

He recognized this fruit from the jade slip he had just crushed; it was one of the items the Black Sieve Sect wanted, and was called a Moonstone fruit.

His expression calm, Meng Hao did nothing. He simply sat on the hill cross-legged, looking out with cold eyes.

Not too much time passed before a figure sped out from the nearby forest. It was a middle-aged man with a Cultivation base at the early Foundation Establishment stage. He shot directly toward the stone stele, arriving in front of it in the blink of an eye. He reached up to grab the Moonstone fruit.

However, the instant he touched one of the fruits, a cold light sprang out from within the Stone Stele. The middle-aged Cultivator shot backward, a look of shock on his face. The cold light transformed into several beams, which swept toward him.

Popping sounds rang out, and the man coughed up blood. Astonishment was written on his face as he attempted to defend himself. But before he could do anything, his body began to tremble. Suddenly, his head flew off of his shoulders, severed. At the same time, the golden vines in the cracks of the stele extended out, entwining around the headless body. One of the vines stabbed into the bloody flesh. It seemed to be swallowing something. Sure enough, in the space of a few breaths, the Cultivator’s body shriveled and withered.

Meng Hao saw all of this happen. He continued to sit there quietly, a brilliant glow emanating from his eyes.

“What are the vines consuming?” he thought.

Even as he watched, the stone stele began to ripple and distort, and a grim-faced young man wearing a violet robe walked out of it. He was at the peak of the mid Foundation Establishment stage, close to the late stage. Wrapped around his arms were thick rattan vines, which stretched out like tentacles. He looked very fear inspiring.

Meng Hao had seen him before. He was one of the Black Sieve Sect disciples that had traveled in the group with him to this place. He had been among the Chosen on the violet Feng Shui compass.

The young man didn’t give a passing glance to the shriveled up corpse. Instead, he raised his head to look directly at the hill where Meng Hao was seated. His eyes flashed.

Meng Hao sat there cross-legged, looking back at him. There was only a few hundred meters’ distance between them. They looked at each other for the space of a few breaths. Then, the young man dashed forward and leaped into the air, his body transforming into a prismatic beam that shot toward Meng Hao.

Meanwhile, in a different location not too far away, Xu Qing sped along, her face pale. The colorful mist beneath her feet was on the verge of falling apart. Behind her was Elder Brother Zhao from the Black Sieve Sect. A smile covered his face. At his side was the coquettish woman, who was surnamed Xue. Together, they pursued Xu Qing in a leisurely fashion.

“Junior Sister Xu, you were able to get away last time because you got lucky,” he said. He was quite handsome, this young man named Zhao. “This time, however, I paid off Elder Brother Xie. He issued a secret order for any disciple who caught sight of you to notify me. Look, we’ve only been here for a couple hours and I already found you.” He laughed, and the sound of his voice rang into Xu Qing’s ears, causing her face to grow even more pale. She gritted her teeth tightly. She said nothing, instead shooting forward as fast as possible. However, it didn’t really matter how fast she went. Zhao was a Foundation Establishment Cultivator, and there was really nothing she could do to evade him.

“Junior Sister Xu, you’re lucky to have Elder Brother Zhao take a fancy to you. When it happened to me, I didn’t like either, but things are fine now. Just give in, and everything will be fine.” The coquettish woman did nothing as the young man named Zhao rubbed his hands across her body. She laughed.

“I don’t want to make it hard on you,” said Zhao, the fire in his eyes growing stronger. “I just want your cherry. I have a Foundation Establishment Pill that I can offer in trade. It’s a fair price, but you just keep refusing me. You can’t blame me for taking it by force.” He lifted a finger on his right hand.

The finger sent a stiff breeze flowing. It rushed past Xu Qing, causing her robes to lift up and reveal quite a bit of skin. Xu Qing trembled a bit, and some blood seeped out of the corners of her mouth. And yet, she just clenched her jaw and kept moving forward.

The young man named Zhao just laughed a few times. His eyes burned as he lifted his hand again.

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# Chapter 149: Killing Intent!

Meng Hao stood on the top of the hill, calmly watching the violet-robed youth charging toward him. As he approached, he kicked up a wind, and the seven or eight tentacle-like vines expanded to the size of pythons. At their ends were wide mouths filled with sharp teeth.

“Mid Foundation Establishment stage,” said Meng Hao calmly, his face not changing in the slightest. He himself was only at the early Foundation Establishment stage, but he had a Perfect Foundation. He might not know any techniques from the Foundation Establishment stage, but he had the boundless Core sea from when he was at Qi Condensation, thanks to the Sublime Spirit Scripture. Also, he had reached Foundation Establishment after having achieved the great circle of Qi Condensation.

He was equipped with all of this when he experienced his explosive growth during the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament. The battle prowess of his Cultivation base was at such high level that he was able to go up against a Dao Child of the Li Clan, Li Daoyi. Although he had not achieved victory, he had severed his opponent’s arm. If it had been a Cultivator who was not a Dao Child, Meng Hao could have killed him easily.

After reaching the mid Foundation Establishment stage, he would definitely be able to hold his own against the Dao Children of the various Sects and Clans.

So, there is no need to even mention a mere Chosen of the mid Foundation Establishment stage.

The violet-robed youth approached with a cold smile and powerful killing intent. Meng Hao stood there, framed by the dark night, the moonlight shining down on him. His expression was as calm as ever as he lifted his hand, using his fingernail to slice open the skin on his finger. He stepped forward casually, and the instant the violet-robed youth arrived, waved his finger in a seemingly random fashion.

As the finger descended, a great wind sprang up. In response, the violet-robed youth's expression changed. His pupils constricted, and his eyes filled with disbelief. Suddenly, his vision turned red; this was not an illusion, it was real.

Everything was red, and there was only a solitary finger, covered with fresh blood. It shot toward him.

The vines wrapped around his arms had been viciously writhing forward with open mouths ready to devour; but suddenly they began to emit miserable shrieks. They quivered, and before they were even thirty meters from Meng Hao, had collapsed into blood.

The blood transformed into a shield which surrounded the violet-robed young man. All of this takes some time to describe, but happened in time it takes for a spark to fly off of a piece of flint.

The violet-robed youth began to scream. He no longer charged forward, but tried to move backward in retreat. Meng Hao sprang into action.

He took a step and then flew into the air toward the violet-robed young man. He lifted his hand and touched the blood shield with his index finger.

“Break.” He said the word lightly, and then an explosion filled the air.

The blood shield collapsed, and the vines on the young man's arms broke to pieces. Only the violet-golden fruit rippled with signs of life. It seemed to be begging for mercy.

“You….” The violet-robed youth's face was pale and he coughed up a mouthful of blood. His eyes were filled with intense fear. This was the first time he had even shown fear; he was a Chosen of the Black Sieve Sect, and a violet-robed disciple at that. His position in the Inner Sect was very high, and he had never been defeated with battle magic. Usually people sought him out because of his popularity. But now, seeing the expressionless Meng Hao in front of him, he was filled with an unprecedented feeling of life-or-death danger.

At this critical juncture, the violet-robed youth lifted his hands and flashed an incantation gesture, then swiped his palm forward seven or eight times in succession. Each swipe sent ripples out, which then congealed into a massive, black-colored hand that faced up against Meng Hao.

Meng Hao, expression calm, opened his mouth and spat out the lightning mist. The mist slammed into the hand, and a boom filled the air.

The violet-robed young man’s expression filled with despair. He was about to make another incantation gesture when Meng Hao arrived in front of him. Meng Hao’s knee flew into the air, slamming directly into the young man’s neck, whose head filled with a buzzing sound, and then an intense pain. The hand which had been making an incantation sign went limp, and his entire body bent to the side.

All of the blood in his body rushed to his head, making his once handsome face a dark reddish purple color. He opened his mouth to speak, his expression fearful and his body trembling. One can only imagine what he wished to say as he faced death.

He never spoke the words. Meng Hao stretched out his hand and used his fingernail to slice open the skin between the young man’s eyebrows. His hand then made a strange gesture, and he pushed down.

A boom could be heard, and the young man’s body flew backward like a kite with its string cut. All of the blood in his body, which had already gathered in his head, began to fountain out of the cut on his face. He couldn’t even cry out. All he could see was blood, shooting out like a geyser from between his eyebrows. His pale body slammed into the ground and twitched a few times before lying still in death.

The blood that had shot out of his body seemed to be burning; it turned into a mist which then congealed into a drop the size of a fingernail. The drop of blood shot toward Meng Hao, who snatched it out of the air into his hand.

“Three generations of blood can form a small body; six generations of blood can form a full body, nine generations is called a Blood Spirit, or, death.” Meng Hao spoke the words coolly. What he had just used on the violet-robed youth was none other than the Spirit Devouring Scripture.

“This violet robe indicates that he was a Chosen of the Black Sieve Sect. As a Chosen, he must have a powerful bloodline. He lifted up the blood and looked at it for a moment before putting it away. Then he looked down at the young man’s corpse. He picked up the bag of holding, as well as the violet-golden fruit which had been begging for mercy just now.

The violet-golden fruit quivered in Meng Hao’s hand as if it were alive and pleading for forgiveness.

“Meng Hao does not keep useless objects. What can you do? Show me.” He tossed the violet-gold fruit onto the ground. It immediately began to wriggle. Vines sprang out of it, quickly growing in length. In the space of about ten breaths, there were ten or more vines, all of them thirty meters in length. They burrowed partly into the ground and then stretched up into the air, swaying back and forth, filling the area. It was quite awe-inspiring.

“Not good enough,” said Meng Hao, shaking his head.

The tentacle vines trembled. Suddenly they bent, shooting toward the corpse of the violet-robed youth. Shockingly, it began to rip the corpse apart like a melon and swallow it down!

Meng Hao frowned as the vines consumed the body within the space of a few breaths. Then, each of the tentacles began to tremble and suddenly, leaves with glowing magical symbols began to sprout out. Meng Hao was quite shocked.

Not much time passed, and soon nearly one hundred leaves had appeared. The magical symbols drifted off of the vines and floated toward Meng Hao. They began to merge together to form a book of leaves!

Meng Hao took the book and flipped through it. His eyes filled with a bright light. The magical symbols were filled with the power of something similar to Spiritual Sense. After examining them closely, he realized that they described a technique.

It was called the Nineteen Black Cloud Strikes, and was the magical technique that the violet-robed young man had just now used to attempt to fight him.

Unfortunately, it wasn’t complete. Only five of the strikes were described, whereas the rest were incomplete, missing various mnemonics. Perhaps the young man hadn’t completely mastered the technique. Meng Hao studied it for a moment, his eyes narrowing. With his Perfect Dao Pillar, it wasn’t difficult to deduce how to use the technique. After a while, he realized that the reason the manual wasn’t complete was because the violet-gold vines were not powerful enough.

That having been said, he was still quite excited. He looked at the vines; if he allowed them to continue to develop, things would be different. He put away the book of leaves and nodded his head. He waved his sleeve, and a drop of blood flew out to descend onto the vines, branding them deeply. This blood seal was one of the random techniques that Meng Hao had acquired from the Blood Immortal Legacy.

The vines began to shake, and their color slowly changed. Soon, they were dark red, looking somewhat Demonic as they swayed in the air around Meng Hao. A Demonic aura drifted up from them, although it was almost impossible to detect.

Meng Hao looked at the vines thoughtfully for some time, and then glanced back at the ruins up ahead of him. Taking up the violet-robed youth’s bag of holding, he examined its contents. Amongst several jade slips was one that attracted his notice.

It was pure white, and after casting his Spiritual Sense into it, a map appeared in Meng Hao’s mind. On the map were many white dots, all of which were moving….

In addition to the white dots, there were about two hundred gray dots, most of which were also moving.

“This is….” He observed the map for a bit before he was able to determine his location. Then, his attention was drawn to a place not far away from where he was. There, he could see three white dots, one in front, two in pursuit. The person in front was being chased!

He frowned, and his heart began to pound. He sent his Spiritual Sense into the first of the three glowing lights, and an image appeared in his mind.

The image was none other than pale-faced Xu Qing. She was biting her lower lip and speeding forward as fast as possible.

In that instant, Meng Hao’s killing intent rocketed to the sky. Studying the images of the two figures pursuing Xu Qing, he saw that one was the coquettish woman. She was being held by the playful looking young man named Zhao.

As soon as he saw this, a cold air began to emanate from Meng Hao’s body, and his eyes shined brightly. The vines around him sensed his killing intent, and began to radiate the same aura of death.

Without the slightest hesitation, Meng Hao transformed into a beam of colourful light that shot toward Xu Qing’s location. The swaying, red-colored vines followed, burrowing along underneath the ground.

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# Chapter 150: Simple and Uncomplicated

Zhao Shanhe was quite proud of himself. He held Xue Yuncui in one arm as he shot in pursuit of tender Xu Qing. A smile covered his face, filled with lechery.

He lifted his hand, sending a wind blowing past Xu Qing, lifting up her garments. He laughed loudly.

Seeing Xu Qing so stubborn and yet so weak filled him with excitement. He continued to send wind shooting over her, which caused more and more damage to her garments. She bit her lip as she fled. Soon, a feeling of desperation began to well up within her.

The fawning of Xue Yuncui coupled with the occasional vicious remarks uttered by Xu Qing caused Zhao Shanhe's eyes to shine even more brightly.

Yet, he wasn't in a hurry. It didn't seem to him that Xu Qing would fall into any good fortune like last time. She couldn't escape him, so he would enjoy the process of capturing her. That was what he liked the most. The weaker his prey, the more exciting it was. The more she struggled, the crueler he would be.

"Xu Qing, I've had my eye on you from the year you entered the Black Sieve Sect. I even spread the word about it. Why do you think no one has bothered you all these years? And yet, you continue to refuse my goodwill! You really don't know how to appreciate favors. You can't blame me for being ruthless." He let out a hearty laugh. Were he in the Sect, he would have more qualms about breaking Sect rules, especially because there were so many people around. However, in this place, he didn’t have anything to be scared of.

Furthermore, he was a Conclave disciple of the Black Sieve Sect, which was a position even higher than the Inner Sect. He could really call the wind and summon rain among his fellow disciples. (TL note: this expression means “to stir up all sorts of trouble”)

In addition to all that, one of the Patriarchs of his Zhao Clan was an Elder of the Black Sieve Sect. Plus, several hundred years ago, a Zhao Clan member had reached the Nascent Soul stage and become a Sect Patriarch, then went into secluded meditation and still hadn’t emerged. Because of that Nascent Soul Patriarch, the Zhao Clan was deeply entrenched within the Black Sieve Sect.

Actually, despite being a Conclave disciple, Zhao Shanhe did not have extraordinary latent talent. No other person in the Sect with his latent talent would ever have been able to reach Foundation Establishment. However, with the support and direction of a Core Formation Patriarch, along with multiple Foundation Establishment Pills, he was finally able to do it.

After becoming a Foundation Establishment Cultivator, Zhao Shanhe was quite pleased with himself. He had grown up in the Sect, and other than a few people who could not be provoked, everyone must bend to his will. If he wanted wind, it was windy. If he wanted rain, it was rainy.

Within the Zhao Clan, there were two sons of the current generation. One was him, the other was from another branch of the Zhao Clan, his cousin, Zhao Binwu.

Like him, Zhao Binwu was a Conclave disciple. In terms of latent talent, his was above and beyond Zhao Shanhe, and he was viewed as an important member of the Clan to be nurtured. Zhao Shanhe was well aware of this, of course, and didn’t get involved with rivalries with him. Instead, he immersed himself in pleasure. Normally, if he fancied a female disciple in the Sect, she wouldn’t refuse him. After all, even if she wasn’t willing, refusing him was useless.

The Patriarchs didn’t pay attention to such matters. If anything, he could expand the clan. In any case, if a female disciple really did get pregnant, she would instantly be in a much higher position than before.

Due to a variety of lucky circumstances, Zhao Shanhe was like a spoiled rich kid within the Sect. He wasn’t very well known in the outside world, but within the Sect he was quite infamous.

“Look, the stars are out. It’s almost time. We can use the stars as our wedding candles, and this place will serve as nuptial chamber. What do you say?” He laughed again, lifting a finger to send another blast of wind at Xu Qing.

Her body trembled and blood seeped from her mouth. Actually, Zhao Shanhe had to carefully control the spiritual energy he used, otherwise it would kill her.

As her body quivered, the colorful cloud beneath her feet suddenly fell apart. Xu Qing fell down to the ground. Laughing melodically, Xue Yuncui shot forward and grabbed her, shoving her down into the dirt. Xu Qing couldn’t even struggle.

Her face was pale, and her features somewhat wan. However coldness filled her eyes as she watched Zhao Shanhe walking over, untying his robe as he came. A look of desperation filled her, and she tried to bit off her tongue, but Xue Yuncui restrained her jaw.

“Now now, Junior Sister Xu, you can’t do that. If you really want to kill yourself, you’ll have to wait until Elder Brother Zhao is done having fun.” Xue Yuncui laughed. Her words were spoken tenderly, but were filled with sinister viciousness.

“Excellent, excellent,” laughed Zhao Shanhe, looking appreciatively at Xue Yuncui. He stroked her face, which caused her eyes to shine. It seemed his approval was very stimulating to her.

Zhao Shanhe looked at Xu Qing, who was helplessly pinned against the ground by Xue Yuncui. His gaze roved over her lithe curves, and he laughed.

“If I gave you some medicinal pills,” he said, “then I wouldn’t be able to enjoy the struggle. So of course I won’t give you any.” His robe was now completely untied.

Xu Qing’s body quivered, and tears seeped out of her eyes. She couldn’t struggle. Xue Yuncui’s Cultivation base was higher than hers. Plus, she was exhausted from fleeing, and was being held down tightly. There was no way to flee.

The coldness on her face dissipated, replaced with bitterness and desperation. Her eyes emptied. Suddenly, it seemed she could see the Reliance Sect, and Meng Hao, standing on the East Mountain. She thought of Mount Daqing, and the young scholar stooping down and tossing a rattan vine over a cliff.

She remembered the first time she saw Meng Hao 1. She had been standing behind him as he searched for rattan vines. She watched him throw the vine down the cliff, and had heard him talking about Immortals to the people below.

At that time, she’d thought that this mortal scholar was very interesting. Thus, she’d taken him with her.

She thought about the stares of the crowd 2 when Meng Hao had offered her the medicinal pill…. And she thought about how he had gazed back at her right before he entered the black door.

“It’s all over….” The streaming tears made her face seem very bleak. She couldn’t stop herself from shaking. She was scared. From the day she had left the Reliance Sect until now, she had not experienced any happiness. And now, it seemed everything was coming to an end.

When she was a little girl, she had realized that she wasn’t very intelligent, and in fact, sometimes very foolish. Therefore, she had mastered the ability to cover it up with a cold smile. She used coldness and silence to conceal her lack of intelligence, and to make the world a bit simpler.

She didn’t like complicated things, because she often didn’t understand them. She liked peace and quiet. She liked to practice Cultivation by herself. As she did so, she watched the years pass, observed the ebb and flow of life, and recalled beautiful memories from the past.

This was her. Xu Qing. A cold exterior, and a simple heart.

She tried hard not to cry. Her body shook, and she closed her eyes. She didn’t want to look at Zhao Shanhe and his overwhelming strength. She was simply a Qi Condensation Cultivator in a Sect where happiness was unachievable. She had no strength to resist… nor even the ability to die.

As she closed her eyes, Xue Yuncui laughed and then spoke into her ear, her voice cool and complex. “Hey, you can’t fight back, so just close your eyes. That’s what I did all those years back. If you want to blame something, blame your aloofness, and blame your Cultivation base. You’re just too weak….”

Zhao Shanhe’s laughter echoed out. He waved his right hand, and a pink glow spread out. It enveloped the entire area within a thirty meter radius, creating a glimmering, pink shield that concealed everything within. The three of them were completely hidden. From the outside, the area didn’t look unusual at all.

At the same time that the cloaking shield went up, a fiery beam of light shot across the sky nearby. It screamed through the air, a cold-faced Meng Hao in its middle.

He arrived in the blink of an eye, his gaze sweeping the land. He frowned. There didn’t seem to be anything unusual at all in the area. He was about to leave, when his eyes flashed. He took out the jade slip and examined it. It was then that he noticed that the white dot representing Xu Qing, as well as the two others, had vanished.

He wasn’t sure why, but a feeling of deep unrest rose up in his heart. He looked down at the ground, and then waved his hand. As he did, a thirty meter long Flame Dragon roared out, shooting downward. A boom sounded out, and dust rose up from the ground.

However, there was one area, about thirty meters in diameter, from which no dust rose up whatsoever. It was clearly different from its surroundings.

Zhao Shanhe was concealed inside the shield, looking pleased. He licked his lips and his eyes shone as he prepared to throw himself upon Xu Qing. Suddenly, a boom could be heard from outside. He frowned, looking up, his pupils constricting.

Xue Yuncui also looked up in astonishment. She reacted to the situation quickly. Almost reflexively, she pulled out a sharp sword and placed it against Xu Qing’s neck.

This was because she had seen a young man outside wearing a black scholar’s robe. His eyes glowed with killing intent, and as he lifted his hand, she could see that one of his fingers was coated with blood. He touched the surface of the shield, and an explosion shook everything. He opened his mouth, and a mist of lightning roiled out, slamming into the pink shield.

Another explosion rocked the earth and sky, echoing out. The shield couldn’t withstand the power, and collapsed in a boom. In the midst of her despair, Xu Qing opened her eyes. She stared blankly as the shield disintegrated. Beyond where the shield was breaking apart, she saw a person. Killing intent and murder boiled off of him. Behind his body writhed a mass of dark red vines!

He looked like a Death Immortal who had just emerged from the yellow springs of the underworld, filled with rage and insanity. As he approached, a massive wind kicked up that shook everything.

“Are you two … looking to die?!?!” It didn’t seem possible for Meng Hao’s voice to contain more fury than it did. It came out as a roar that filled their ears, as if it had been transmitted from hell itself!

“Meng Hao….” said Xu Qing, smiling. Her smile was beautiful, and didn’t contain any of her usual coldness. It was a simple smile.

Simple and happy.

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# Chapter 151: I’ll Do It Myself

The dark red vines seemed to have been infected by Meng Hao’s fury. They whipped about wildly, creating a buzzing noise. Dust rose from the ground like a fog, obscuring Meng Hao’s figure.

His black scholar’s robe now looked a bit faded. Long hair whipped around him, and killing intent, fueled by his intense anger, rose to the heavens. This killing aura was poles apart from Meng Hao’s usual disposition.

Veins of blood filled his eyes. He saw Xu Qing’s helplessness, her bitterness, her pale beauty, and then the simple smile that broke out on her face. That smile became Meng Hao’s everything.

Meng Hao loved her. It was the youthful love that comes from looking at a pretty girl. A simple love. After the dissolution of the Reliance Sect, they had been separated by an entire world. Now that they could see each other again, the years that had passed didn’t seem very long after all, almost like a dream.

Seven or eight years ago, you were a cold, a young girl who stood beneath the moon and accepted the Cosmetic Cultivation Pill. Now, seven or eight years later, here you are, your face pale, but smiling.

Seven or eight years ago I was a scholar standing on Mount Daqing who threw a gourd bottle down the mountain. You will never know the promise I placed in that gourd bottle.

Seven or eight years later, here I stand, my killing intent billowing to the Heavens. The road behind me doesn’t stretch very far, but it is filled with the bones of Cultivators.

Seven or eight years….

For mortals, many things can change in seven or eight years. For Cultivators, seven or eight years is not a long time; but then again, Cultivators all begin life as mortals. Meng Hao was no longer the scholar he had been seven or eight years ago, but the memories from that time still remained. He would never forget those years.

He gazed at Xu Qing and smiled. His smile contained warmth, and the happiness of seeing someone again for the first time in a long while. It lasted until he looked upon the trembling man surnamed Zhao who stood there pale-faced, his robe hanging loose on his body.

Zhao Shanhe felt as if Meng Hao's eyes were two sharp swords stabbing into his own eyes. The gaze entered his head, causing his mind to tremble. It pierced his blood and flesh, grinding against his bones and stabbing into his Qi passageways. It stabbed all the way to his Dao Pillar.

His Dao Pillar was filled with cracks; he obviously had a Fractured Foundation. The Dao Pillar shook violently, as if Meng Hao's gaze would cause it to crumble to pieces. Zhao Shanhe was frightened out of his mind.

"Fellow… Fellow Daoist, senior, I'm Zhao Shanhe, a Conclave disciple of the Black Sieve Sect. Fellow Daoist…." His tongue quivered as he spoke. He might be a rich kid, but he wasn't stupid. The pink shield from just now was a treasure that could only be broken by the late Foundation Establishment stage. And yet Meng Hao, who seemed to be at the early Foundation Establishment stage, had crushed it.

He also saw Meng Hao's frigid killing aura. It was powerfully intense, something that he had never actually seen before in his entire life.

"You're surnamed Zhao?" Meng Hao said coolly, beginning to a step forward. "I just killed another guy surnamed Zhao. His name was Zhao Binwu." Meng Hao had acquired Zhao Binwu's name from the identification medallion in his bag of holding.

As he took his first step, it felt to Zhao Shanhe as if Meng Hao was stepping directly onto his heart. His heart pounded, filling with a difficult to describe pain, deep inside.

It was then that Meng Hao’s words from just now registered in Zhao Shanhe’s mind. A thunder-like roaring filled him, and his body shivered. He unconsciously took a step backward. Meng Hao’s gaze swept over him, filled with an incredible pressure. Zhao Shanhe’s mind reeled again, and his trembling body lost the ability to move. Facing Meng Hao, his Cultivation base seemed completely incapable of producing even the smallest amount of power.

This was crushing pressure!

Meng Hao released the full power of his Perfect Dao Pillar, creating a pressure that could crush down upon any Foundation Establishment Dao Pillar!

This was an innate ability of a Perfect Foundation. Because the Perfect Foundation struggles with the Heavens over spiritual energy, it has the ability to emit crushing pressure on all other Foundation Establishment Cultivation bases!

Amidst his trembling, Zhao Shanhe’s expression flickered. Meng Hao took a second step, and as the step descended, Zhao Shanhe’s face grew deathly pale. Blood oozed out of his mouth, and an intense dread crept into his eyes.

“Fellow Daoist… if… if you want to talk….” His entire body shook, but even as he tried to speak, Meng Hao took a third step. He stomped down; Zhao Shanhe’s spirit shook and he coughed up a mouthful of blood. The Dao Pillar within him was unable to withstand the pressure exuded by Meng Hao. A large fissure sliced all the way through it!

More fissures grew, spreading out to fill the entire Dao Pillar. The blood drained completely from Zhao Shanhe’s face, and his eyes filled with anguish. Trembling, he was just about to use all the power he could muster to fight back, when Meng Hao, face blank, took his fourth step, which was filled with powerful killing intent.

The instant the fourth step descended, the roaring within Zhao Shanhe rose to the Heavens. His heart suddenly stopped beating for a moment. All of his organs seemed to slow as the cracks spread throughout his Dao Pillar until suddenly… it disintegrated!!

The Dao Pillar disintegrated!

When that happened, Zhao Shanhe let out a bloodcurdling shriek that was unlike anything that had emerged from his mouth before. He coughed up seven or eight mouthfuls of blood, and then began to wither and shrink. Cold sweat poured out of him, and his face was ashen. His body could suddenly move again, but all that he was able to do was retreat backward.

Before he could move backward very far, Meng Hao took a fifth step, and now he was standing in front of Zhao Shanhe. His knee flew up, not toward Zhao Shanhe's neck, but directly between his legs!

Pop pop!

The intense pain caused Zhao Shanhe to double over, screaming. Even as he screamed, Meng Hao's right hand shot up and clamped onto his neck. The scream now existed only within Zhao Shanhe's throat, with no way to emerge out.

He could only whimper as his face began to turn a dark purple color. Unable to speak, unable to scream, the pain seemed to grow ten times worse.

His eyes bulged, filled with insanity, and his body twitched. He suddenly wanted to fight back.

But… he couldn't resist. He was powerless to even struggle, unable to even utter threats. His body shook, filled with pain. He was like a mortal, his Dao Pillar destroyed, his Cultivation base in ruins.

"Stop!" cried a trembling voice. It was Xue Yuncui, who was still next to Xu Qing. Her body shook and her face was pale. But she still held the sword at Xu Qing's neck, seemingly ready to stab it in at any moment.

To her, Meng Hao appeared to be some sort of devilish fiend, cruel and ruthless. It caused the blood to drain from her face, and she didn't dare to even look him in the eye. Regret welled up from within her heart, but it was too late. She could only beg for him to let her go.

"You're Meng Hao, right? I've heard Xu Qing talk about you and the Reliance Sect…. This is all just a misunderstanding. I just want to leave…." Her voice trembled as she looked toward Meng Hao. Even though she held a sword, she was actually the frightened one.

"I used to be a scholar," he said coolly. He continued to hold Zhao Shanhe up by the neck, but turned to look at Xue Yuncui. His voice was soft as he continued, "Once I read an ancient text that was said to be from the Great Tang in the Eastern Lands. It described thousands of bizarre execution methods. There was one that, after I read about it, caused me to have nightmares for days." Eyes filled with loathing, he reached up with his left hand and grabbed one of Zhao Shanhe's fingers. One by one, he crushed the bones of the fingers of both hands. Then his arms. Then his shoulders. Then the rest of his body.

Zhao Shanhe wanted to pass out from the intense pain, but couldn't, not with Meng Hao there. Time passed for as long as it takes an incense stick to burn. Finally, Meng Hao twisted his right hand. A popping sound rang out as Zhao Shanhe's neck was snapped.

The entire time, he was unable to utter a single cry. Such was his death….

Meng Hao dropped Zhao Shanhe's body and then looked at Xue Yuncui. "How do you want to die? I'll let you decide."

Her face was completely pale, like a corpse's. Her body trembled, as did the sword she held in her hand. She looked at Meng Hao, and dread welled up within her. This was like the worst nightmare she had ever experienced.

"You… Don't you force me!!" she cried. Even as the words left her mouth, the ground beneath her feet exploded up. A dark red vine snaked out, wrapping around her body and sending the sword spinning into the air. Meng Hao flicked a sleeve to knock it twenty-five or so meters away. The vines circulated around Xue Yuncui, their mouths wide and seemingly dripping with saliva, just waiting for Meng Hao’s command, whereupon they would consume her.

“Don’t kill her…” said Xu Qing quietly, struggling to her feet. She looked at Meng Hao. “I want to do it myself. I’ve been wanting to cut her tongue out for years.” Gritting her teeth, she retrieved Xue Yuncui’s sword. The vines lowered Xue Yuncui toward her.

“Junior Sister Xu… I….” She faced Xu Qing, trembling, an imploring look on her face.

Xu Qing, her face cold, lifted the sword and stabbed it slowly into her mouth. Xue Yuncui’s screams echoed out.

Xu Qing leaned forward and whispered into her ear: “You can’t fight back, so just close your eyes and enjoy it. I’ve always wanted to tell you, you are the slut!” She twisted the sword in her hand. After the space of about ten breaths, Xue Yuncui stopped struggling. Xu Qing stabbed the sword in even deeper.

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# Chapter 152: Words Under the Moon With An Old Companion

Xu Qing looked at Xue Yuncui as she stabbed the sword all the way through her head. Then she stepped back, pale faced. Xue Yuncui slipped into death, and Xu Qing stood there silently.

Meng Hao looked at her and then walked up next to her. Together, they sat down. The vines dragged Xue Yuncui’s body down into the ground and began to devour it.

The moon hung high in the sky, and everything was quiet. No one had noticed the ripples of battle magic; after all, this Blessed Land was a very large place.

“First time?” asked Meng Hao. Their shadows overlapped in the moonlight.

She was quiet for a while before nodding.

“The first time I killed someone, my heart was troubled for quite a while,” he said softly. As he looked at her, images from the Reliance Sect floated into his mind.

A breeze passed by, cleaning away the stench of blood. Xu Qing’s hair curled up, brushing against Meng Hao’s face. It was hard to tell whether it wrapped around his face, or his heart.

“Was it after the Sect disbanded?” asked Xu Qing, turning her head to look at him. Her face was pale, but to Meng Hao, it was beautiful.

He remembered the night years ago when he had escorted her back to the East Mountain. As he’d watched her walking away from him, he’d thought to himself that he wouldn’t mind marrying her 1.

It was a memory from years ago, such a long time ago. It was hard to determine whether or not it was simply the idling of youth.

“Actually, it was inside the Sect,” said Meng Hao with a smile. He felt relaxed. This Blessed Land was a dangerous place, but for some reason he felt at ease, as if he were back in the Reliance Sect, on top of the East Mountain, standing beneath the moon.

“Oh?” said Xu Qing, looking shocked. She stared at Meng Hao, temporarily forgetting to cover her face with coldness.

To Meng Hao, her blank look was filled with beauty. It was very different from the Elder Sister Xu from his memories. Coldness was unapproachable; but her numb look now made her seem very dear.

Meng Hao laughed.

“I suddenly have the feeling I never understood the real you, Elder Sister,” he said with a smile, looking at her. He was no longer the scholar he once had been. He had experienced many things, and had grown through the years. In terms of both experience and wisdom, he had matured a lot. He was now able to tell that the coldness exhibited by Xu Qing was intentional.

He looked over her, catching sight of the milky white skin beneath the rips in her clothing. This was not the first time he’d seen a woman in such a position, but for some reason, when he’d looked at Chu Yuyan, he could remain calm. Seeing Xu Qing now, though, a different look filled his eyes.

Xu Qing’s gaze met Meng Hao’s for a moment, and then she looked away, her heart pounding. A flush appeared on her face, and she gripped her garment tightly in her fists. She was clearly nervous.

Meng Hao coughed lightly, and then slapped his bag of the Cosmos, producing a set of clothes which he began to place around her shoulders.

She said nothing, allowing him to cover her up. She lifted her beautiful face to look at the moon. As the moonlight shone onto her, Meng Hao looked at her hair and her lovely features. They were so delicate it seemed as if the wind might cause them to break.

“You killed someone in the Sect? Who?” Xu Qing tried to pretend she didn’t notice Meng Hao looking at her, but her flush had deepened.

“An Outer Sect disciple surnamed Zhao,” said Meng Hao, recalling Elder Brother Zhao’s horrific death by the copper mirror. “He wanted to take the Immortal’s Cave you gave me.”

“You’ve really got guts,” she said, turning her head and shifting her gaze from the moon to Meng Hao. “You actually killed someone inside the Sect.” Her words were spoken in earnest, and with the earnestness came her usual coldness. However, Meng Hao could see the uncomplicated simplicity beneath the coldness.

“Well… actually I didn’t just kill one person,” he said with a light cough.

“Oh?” Elder Sister Xu stared mutely again for a long moment. It was as if she were meeting him for the first time. She looked him over carefully, thinking for a while. “So you got used to it?” She hastily added: “What I mean is, after killing so much, did you stop feeling uneasy at heart?”

“Let’s talk about something else,” said Meng Hao. He could tell that she was very curious about the matter. But for a man and a woman to sit under the moon talking about killing people didn’t quite seem appropriate.

“Oh,” she said, nodding, looking at him. Her coldness concealed her true personality, but at the moment, she suddenly didn’t know what to say.

“I want to show you something.” Meng Hao tapped his bag of the Cosmos, and the Cosmetic Cultivation Pill appeared in his hand. With a smile, he handed it out to Elder Sister Xu.

When she saw the pill, she stared in shock. Her eyes were fixed on the pill as she slowly raised her hand and took it from him. Then she closed her

eyes.

It was impossible to tell what she was thinking inside. After a moment, she opened her eyes and looked at Meng Hao for a long, long time.

This was the third time Meng Hao had given her a Cosmetic Cultivation Pill.

She put it away quietly, then softly said, “A few years ago I heard that the State of Zhao… disappeared.”

Meng Hao sighed. Then, he proceeded to explain to her about Patriarch Reliance. She sat there underneath the moon, listening intently. When he told her that Patriarch Reliance was actually a gargantuan, vicious turtle, her mouth dropped open and a look of disbelief covered her face. To Meng Hao, she was truly beautiful. He suddenly stopped talking.

This in turn caused Xu Qing to look into his eyes. When their eyes met, she suddenly turned and stared off into the distance, her heart racing. She was experiencing a strange feeling, and a strange nervousness. She felt an emotion she wasn’t familiar with. In all honesty, she didn’t mind; actually she liked it a bit.

“I’ve seen Elder Brother Chen a few times…” she suddenly said, not sure what to talk about. “This place is an ancient Blessed Land…. Oh, right, how can your Cultivation base possibly be at the Foundation Establishment stage…?”

Meng Hao looked at her, a warm smile growing on his face.

“What was the situation with Zhao Shanhe?” he asked lightly.

“He was a Conclave disciple of the Black Sieve Sect,” she replied, a look of disgust appearing in her eyes. “His Clan has deep roots in the Sect. He was shameless and disgusting. Over the past few years, he used Foundation Establishment Pills as bait to force himself on numerous female disciples….”

“Foundation Establishment Pills….” He looked at her for a moment. He could tell that she had completed the circle of nine Qi Condensation levels. With a Foundation Establishment Pill, she could definitely go into secluded meditation and reach Foundation Establishment.

“That type of pill is very valuable,” she said, a dismal look on her face. “It’s even hard for Inner Sect disciples to get one. You can only acquire one with the support of someone of the senior generation, or if you perform some special service for the Sect. Or possibly if you have amazing latent talent.

“After Patriarch Zhen brought me to the Black Sieve Sect, she completely ignored me. However, my personality was similar to a Core Formation Cultivator of the senior generation, so she took me in as a disciple. She promised to give me a Foundation Establishment Pill, but she left for the sect a few years ago and has never returned. According to the rumors, she’s dead….”

Meng Hao slapped his bag of the Cosmos. Instantly, three Foundation Establishment Pills appeared in his hand. He held them out to her.

“I have some Foundation Establishment Pills,” he said.

Xu Qing stared wordlessly at the three pills. She was shocked, never having imagined that Meng Hao would have a Foundation Establishment Pill, let alone three. These three pills would cause a riot if they appeared within the Black Sieve Sect.

“Those…” Xu Qing breathed even harder when she saw the symbol etched into the side of the pills. Her eyes widened. “Those were concocted by Grandmaster Pill Demon.”

“I only have three. But if it’s not enough, then I can get some more for you when we get out of here.” He smiled, placing the pills into Xu Qing’s hand. To anyone else, these pills would be incredibly valuable.

“It’s enough, really. One… maybe two is probably enough.” She was about to say more when Meng Hao closed her hand over the pills.

“I don’t need them. You take them. If you need, I can stand guard for you when you use them.”

“Unless you’ve been at the ninth level of Qi Condensation for dozens of years, are completely prepared, and have refined your body to the extreme, then you would need several months at the least. This place isn’t appropriate. I’ll wait till I get back to the Sect and find an appropriate place to break through.” She gave him a deep look. “You can’t stay here for too long, Meng Hao. You need to be careful. The Black Sieve Sect has known about the existence of this place for a long time, but hasn’t been able to enter. Recently, though, they came across an ancient map.

“With the map, they were able to open the entrance. Originally, this was an ancient Blessed Land, but over the years it has changed, and is now a land of death.”

Meng Hao’s eyes glistened as he listened to her explanation.

“Supposedly, it has something to do with an ancient, violent Spirit. I’m not really sure what it is, and there are lots of rumours in the Sect about it. Although, I can tell you that the reason they’ve gathered so many rogue Foundation Establishment Cultivators is not to acquire treasures, but to create a Hundred Spirits Tower!

“It’s not a big secret to the Inner Sect disciples, and even some in the Outer Sect know about it, but they don’t care about rogue Cultivators. Actually, there are even a few amongst the rogue Cultivators who know about it.

“The Hundred Spirits Tower is actually quite simple to describe. Basically, by using a variety of magical Cultivation techniques, one hundred Dao Pillars are refined together to create the Hundred Spirits Tower.

“The purpose of creating the tower is top secret. I don’t think even the Inner Sect disciples know about it. Amongst the Conclave disciples, only two or three even know a little bit.” This was everything Xu Qing knew regarding the activities in the Blessed Land.

Suddenly, a massive roaring could be heard from somewhere off in the distance.

The instant the sound echoed out, the ground in the Blessed Land suddenly began to quake violently. At the same time, a mysterious gravitational force came into being. Meng Hao's eyes flickered. He felt the Dao Pillars within him trembling, as if something were trying to pull them out of him.

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# Chapter 153: Barring the Way

Meng Hao’s expression changed in a flash. His Cultivation base rotated, and intense power from his Perfect Dao Pillars expanded out to resist the gravitational force.

Xu Qing didn’t react whatsoever at first. But when she saw the expression on Meng Hao’s face, she suddenly started to look anxious and worried.

The roaring sound echoed across the land, affecting not just Meng Hao, but all of the rogue Foundation Establishment Cultivators within the Blessed Land. Each and every one of them, regardless of what they were doing at the moment, immediately sat down cross-legged to meditate.

However, in rapid succession, the bodies of multiple rogue Cultivators exploded, sending flesh and blood showering in all directions. Only their Dao Pillars were left intact. They flew through the air, dragged toward the location of the gravitational force.

The Dao Pillars flew toward what turned out to be a mountain range. Some powerful force had worn down a section of the mountains, so that it was sunken in. In the sunken area was a black tower.

From the looks of it, it wasn’t completely finished being constructed. There were currently three levels. From all directions, multiple Dao Pillars flew toward it and began to form the fourth layer!

When the fourth layer was completed, the gravitational power grew weaker and then disappeared. Over thirty rogue Cultivators had died just now in the Blessed Land.

This shocking event instantly struck fear into the hearts of all the other rogue Cultivators. However, they were stuck inside. No matter where or how they searched, they would not be able to find any exits.

The area where the gravitational force originated from was surrounded by nearly one thousand Black Sieve Sect disciples, sitting cross-legged, chanting bizarre scriptural texts. The Black Sieve Sect disciples who had entered the Blessed Land in random places were all rushing toward this area.

Meng Hao opened his eyes, and they gleamed with a mysterious light. He glanced toward the area where the roar and the gravitational force had come from. His Dao Pillars were now stable. They were Perfect Dao Pillars, so even though the gravitational force was not small, it was far from being dangerous to him.

Seeing Meng Hao's pale face, Xu Qing quickly said, "That is the gathering place for the Black Sieve Sect disciples. All disciples were informed before entering to go to that place as quickly as possible. When we get there, we have to chant some scripture, although I don't know why.

"I know of an exit. Including last time, I've been here twice now. I can take you there and you can leave this place. You can't stay here."

Meng Hao didn't say anything. He stood, looking off toward where the gravitational force had originated. After a long moment, he shook his head.

"The gravitational force doesn't affect me very much. And I have a way to leave here. As for you, though…" He looked back at her. "If that gravitational force hadn't appeared, it would be fine. But now, the rogue Cultivators will know something strange is going on. They'll be looking for Black Sieve Sect disciples to explain what's going on. Who knows what methods they will use to force out the information. Furthermore, if you know about that exit, then others will too. The people from the Black Sieve Sect wouldn't be so careless." He looked at Xu Qing, who had existed in his memories for so long as Elder Sister.

"We haven't seen each other for such a long time, I'd hoped we could spend some more time alone together," he said quietly. "But now is not the time.

I’ll escort you to the Black Sieve Sect rendezvous point. You will be much safer there.”

“You really have a way to get out of here?” Xu Qing asked, her tone serious.

“Really,” replied Meng Hao just as seriously.

Xu Qing looked quietly at him for a moment, and it seemed as if she wanted to say something. Before she could, Meng Hao stepped forward and wrapped his arm around her supple waist, then flew up into the sky.

Gale force winds blew about, but they were blocked by Meng Hao’s Cultivation base. All Xu Qing could feel was Meng Hao holding her. Her face reddened again.

Her black hair drifted next to his face, filled with a delicate, unforgettable fragrance. Xu Qing didn’t say anything as they sped along. In the past, she had been his Elder Sister. But he no longer exhibited any of the weakness he had as her Junior Brother. He was a Foundation Establishment Cultivator. The way he had slaughtered Zhao Shanhe was evidence of the incredible changes he had experienced throughout the years.

As Meng Hao breathed in her delicate fragrance, she also could smell him. It made her feel safe, like she was home.

She suddenly thought back to Mount Daqing, and the young scholar Meng Hao. She had carried him away to the Reliance Sect in much the same fashion as he was holding her now, pressed up against him.

A smile appeared in her eyes as she thought of this. She looked up at Meng Hao’s profile and time seemed to slow down.

She didn’t understand what she was feeling, but she knew that right now, everything was peaceful. Suddenly she had the feeling that Meng Hao really was like her younger brother.

“You grew up,” she said suddenly. She wasn’t quite sure why she said it, but she did.

Hearing this, Meng Hao suddenly stopped flying for a moment and smiled wryly. Her face was covered with a cold look of seeming indifference, but it was obviously an act.

“I think you’re a few years older than me….” he said, clearing his throat.

“Five years older!” she said seriously. “I’m your Elder Sister!”

“That’s no big deal.” Seeing her wide-eyed look, he laughed and added, “Okay, okay, I never said you’re not my Elder Sister.”

Time passed, enough for an incense stick to burn. Suddenly, eight beams of light appeared in front of them. Before the two of them could pass, the people caught sight of them.

“Qi Condensation…. That woman is a Black Sieve Sect disciple!”

“Yeah, she must be. She’s just what we’ve been looking for!” All of them were Cultivators of the early Foundation Establishment stage. Their eyes glittered viciously as their gazes shifted from Xu Qing to Meng Hao.

A blue-robed, middle-aged man amongst them looked coldly at Meng Hao and said, “Fellow Daoist, there’s no need to tell us what this woman told you. We want her, now!” It seemed that if Meng Hao didn’t comply, the man would attack.

Every person in their midst had hostile looks in their eyes. The gravitational power that had appeared had scared them witless, so they had decided to search for lone Black Sieve Sect disciples to extract information from.

Now that they had found one, they wouldn’t give her up easily.

Xu Qing started to pant with nervousness, unconsciously tightening her grip on Meng Hao’s robes. To her, these eight Foundation Establishment Cultivators had incredibly high Cultivation bases. Considering hers, she wouldn’t be able to resist even one of them.

“Screw off!” said Meng Hao coolly. He didn’t stop flying for even a second but continued to shoot directly toward them. Xu Qing was getting even more nervous. She had seen him dispatch Zhao Shanhe, but at the moment, they were facing eight people. She couldn’t help but be worried.

When he heard Meng Hao’s words, the blue-robed man laughed. Killing intent sprang up in his eyes. Meng Hao’s Cultivation base was at the early Foundation Establishment stage, just like he himself, and he had seven others backing him up. Considering Meng Hao was a single person, there shouldn’t even be a need to begin fighting. And yet, Meng Hao had unexpectedly dared to rave wildly.

Cold smiles broke out on the faces of the seven other Cultivators. In their minds, Meng Hao was simply talking big.

However, even as the blue-robed man lifted his hand to begin an incantation gesture and the seven others began to take out various magical items, Meng Hao opened his mouth. The lightning mist exploded out, and before any of the eight of them could react, it had enveloped them. The earth below showered up as a dozen dark red vines shot upward. They screamed up savagely, directly into the midst of the lightning mist.

Miserable, ear-piercing screams echoed out from within. They sounded like the cries emitted just before death. Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as, holding Xu Qing in his arms, he continued on flying. The lightning mist wrapped up the bags of holding and delivered them to Meng Hao, who tucked them away. The vines burrowed back into the ground. As for the eight Cultivators, they were nowhere to be seen.

The quick and efficient dispatching of the eight Cultivators didn’t phase Meng Hao at all. But Xu Qing sucked in a breath. Meng Hao had grown up to an astonishing degree.

He continued to fly along at high speed. They were getting closer to the origin of the gravitational force. Along the way, they ran into single Cultivators, or occasionally groups of three to five. In total, they ran into ten early Foundation Establishment stage Cultivators. None of them was able to obstruct Meng Hao’s progress in the least bit.

Soon, they were very close to the Black Sieve Sect rendezvous point. Behind Meng Hao appeared two beams of light which emanated the power of the mid Foundation Establishment stage. If that were the extent of it, it wouldn’t be a big deal. But at the same time, ahead of Meng Hao appeared another beam. Inside was an old man. This was the same old man with whom Meng Hao had entered the Black Sieve Sect. He was of the late Foundation Establishment stage.

He stopped several hundred meters in front of Meng Hao. The man’s cold gaze fell upon Xu Qing.

“Fellow Daoist, I have been waiting here for quite some time waiting to see a Black Sieve Sect disciple. Hand the woman over to me.”

The two mid Foundation Establishment Cultivators came to a stop behind Meng Hao and Xu Qing, who were now completely surrounded.

The two mid Foundation Establishment Cultivators were middle-aged. Their eyes were dour, and they radiated a cold aura along with significant killing intent. They were clearly vicious and cruel.

“What do you want to know?” said Meng Hao coolly. “I can tell you.” Xu Qing’s face was wan as she rested in his embrace. Without him there, she would definitely have been captured and interrogated by rogue Cultivators. Along the way, she had seen several Black Sieve Sect disciples who had been captured and questioned using various methods.

But rogue Cultivators were rogue Cultivators. They wouldn’t easily give up information when asked. After all, that information could be life-saving to them; by telling others, it could reduce their own chances and deliver both parties to death.

“I’m not used to listening to what others have to say,” said the old man calmly. “I only trust the results of my own handiwork.” The power of the late Foundation Establishment Cultivation base emanated out, sending massive pressure down onto Meng Hao.

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# Chapter 154: To Each His Own Path

Meng Hao didn’t respond. He looked down at Xu Qing and gave her a little smile. He retreated backward with her, causing the late Foundation Establishment old man to snort and then fly forward toward Meng Hao like a nightingale.

His speed was incredible, and he displayed the full power of his late Foundation Establishment Cultivation base, causing eight ripples to spread out in the air. He obviously had eight Dao Pillars within his body.

By this point, Meng Hao had already reached the two mid Foundation Establishment stage middle-aged Cultivators. They laughed, and one of them flashed incantation gestures. A hundred Ice Blades magically appeared and began to spin, forming a giant whirlwind. The whirlwind shot toward Meng Hao, each blade within filled with the power of the early Foundation Establishment stage.

The other man slapped his bag of holding to produce five black, buzzing, head-sized wasps with long, red stingers.

“You overestimate yourself!” said the man who had created the Ice Blades. The Ice Blade whirlwind screamed toward Meng Hao. Holding Xu Qing with his right arm, he waved his left hand. Instantly, an enormous Flame Dragon appeared, along with a Wind Blade. Shockingly,the Flame Dragon was not pure red, but streaked with gold! Because of the Sublime Spirit Scripture, the dragon had become a Golden Dragon.

The Wind Blade fused with the dragon, causing it to expand to three hundred meters in length. Furthermore, two bulges appeared on the left and right side of the Flame Dragon. As soon as the Wind Blade touched the dragon, they exploded out into two enormous wings. It unfurled the wings; this was a Flying Rain-Dragon.

Meng Hao had been enlightened regarding this technique when the roc had awakened the Flying Rain-Dragon Legacy within him.

The next thing to appear with the Dragon was a Flame Sea. This Flame Sea was birthed from the power of the Perfect Dao Pillar. Mid Foundation Establishment Cultivators simply had no way to resist it.

Boom!

The Ice Blade whirlwind broke apart in an instant, transforming into a mist which was consumed by the Flame Sea. The flaming Flying Rain-Dragon roared. The two mid Foundation Establishment stage Cultivators retreated, looks of shock on their face. In the blink of an eye, the Flying Rain-Dragon shot forward and consumed one of them in a single bite.

A miserable scream echoed out as his body was transformed into ash.

All of this happened in the time it takes a spark to rise off of a piece of flint. Neither the old man of the late Foundation Establishment stage nor the man with the five wasps had time to react before it was over.

Face expressionless, Meng Hao turned and strode directly toward the five ferocious buzzing wasps.

They shot toward him, but as they neared, their bodies suddenly began to tremble violently. It seemed as if they had sensed something frightening and didn’t dare to get any closer. They retreated instantly, something their master had never experienced before.

Even as shock covered his face, laughing-crying demon faces appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes. One was clear, the other was blurry, and they instantly caused Meng Hao to emit a bizarre aura. The five wasps emitted sharp cries, and their bodies trembled even harder, as if they might lose their ability to fly. Suddenly, they turned and savagely attacked each other.

As this bizarre scene played out, Meng Hao strode through the midst of the wasps, raising his left hand and slicing his own finger, covering it with blood. Suddenly, the entire area was covered with a bloody aura. When it disappeared, Meng Hao was standing directly in front of the middle-aged man. He lifted up his index finger and pushed between the man’s eyebrows.

The man’s body shook, and his eyes bulged. His body rapidly began to wither, and by the time Meng Hao removed his finger, his entire body had transformed into blood, which drained down onto the ground.

Meng Hao turned and looked at the shocked late Foundation Establishment old man. Only the space of a few breaths had passed since Meng Hao took action, and yet he had already completely exterminated two powerful mid Foundation Establishment Cultivators.

His methods were vicious, his techniques bizarre. A coldness suddenly appeared in the old man’s body, growing rapidly.

Now he understood why Xie Jie of the Black Sieve Sect had been watching Meng Hao that day on the Feng Shui compass, and had even tried to bait him into doing something that would reveal his abilities. Clearly, Xie Jie had heard something about Meng Hao.

“Want to keep going?” Meng Hao asked calmly. His index finger still glowed with a bloody light, casting a bloody light over his body.

The old man didn’t respond. Considering the level of his Cultivation base, he too could have easily killed the two mid Foundation Establishment stage Cultivators. But he couldn’t have done it in such a leisurely fashion. He felt fear in his heart, especially when he saw Meng Hao’s complete lack thereof. Clasping hands in salute, he moved backward several paces, giving way for Meng Hao to pass.

“I am Xu Youdao 1. As for the matter today, I offer my apologies. I believe we will be meeting again soon.” He said the last in a very meaningful tone.

Meng Hao thought for a moment, then nodded. The blood glow was beginning to fade as he shot off into the distance. In his arms, Xu Qing was completely shocked by the battle power of his Cultivation base.

She hesitated for a moment and then blurted, “What… what level is your Cultivation base, really?”

“I’m at the peak of early Foundation Establishment,” he said with a little smile. He now appeared to be a completely different person than the one who had just been fighting. He really had changed because of all his experiences through the years. However, this change was in the way he dealt with enemies. His disposition toward his friends was as scholarly as ever, and hadn’t changed in the least bit.

Actually, his ruthless killing had a lot to do with the poison within him. Someone infected with the three-colored Resurrection Lily would become increasingly cruel and ferocious until the day they transformed into an actual Resurrection Lily.

“How can you kill people of the mid Foundation Establishment stage…?” asked Xu Qing, her brow furrowed.

“Oh, there are many reasons,” he said simply. “I may be at the early Foundation Establishment stage, but I can hold my own against the late Foundation Establishment stage.”

Not much time passed before they reached a mountain. From the mountain peak, Meng Hao could see the large man-made area and the big black tower that was being erected.

He could just make out the nearly one thousand Black Sieve Sect disciples sitting cross-legged around the tall tower, along with the faint sound of scriptures being chanted. He couldn’t make out the details of the scriptures, however.

“I can’t get any closer,” he said. His gaze shifted from the scene below, to Xu Qing. “There shouldn’t be any rogue Foundation Establishment Cultivators in this area, you should be able to proceed on your own without being in danger. Take this, it’s an invisibility item. You’ll be able to use it after you reach Foundation Establishment.” He handed her the invisibility talisman.

She accepted it. She still had Meng Hao’s robes draped over her. They were a bit large, but she still was beautiful. She looked at Meng Hao and was about to open her mouth as if to say something. Instead, she leaned forward and embraced him lightly. Her head pressed against his chest, and she could hear his heart beating.

This was not an embrace of passion, but the embrace of a sister to a brother, of family.

The sky was growing light, and the darkness was fading away. Meng Hao looked down at Xu Qing’s beautiful hair. It seemed as if her hair knew he was looking at it; or perhaps it was the wind. It floated up gently to caress his face.

A long time passed, and then Xu Qing stepped back and looked him deep in the eyes.

“You need to be careful,” she said. “Get out of this place as soon as you can.” Then she turned, stepped onto a flying sword and shot down the mountain. She glided up and down a few times, eventually entering a small forest at the bottom of the mountain. When she emerged from the other side of the forest, Meng Hao’s clothes were gone and she was dressed in a fresh Black Sieve Sect robe.

Meng Hao stood there the whole time, watching her disappear into the distance. A sense of departure filled him, and for a moment, he felt like he was back in the Reliance Sect when it was being disbanded.

Now, though, he was no longer a Qi Condensation Cultivator. He was of Foundation Establishment, with a Perfect Foundation. He was no longer a child, but a young man. Wisdom birthed from maturity helped him to understand that it didn’t matter whether you are a man or woman; every person has the right to make their own choices.

His path could only be tread by he himself. Perhaps his path would cross the paths of others, and that was well and good. But for the moment, he needed to walk alone. Unless… he could be powerful enough to forge his own road. Change everything. The alternative was to live a life full of sighing.

He watched Xu Qing until she reached the Black Sieve Sect rendezvous point. Determination filled his eyes. He lifted his head, looking into the sky. There, the rising sun and the moon were almost on top of each other.

Meng Hao's eyes began to glow.

"Since I'm here, I might as well go check things out. If the Classic of Time is real, then using the copper mirror and Spring and Autumn trees, I can forge that so-called treasure of Time! And then there's my Thunderclap leaf. Lu Tao is in this place too, I might be able to get some more information." He turned and shot up into the air, using the position of the sun and moon to guide his path.

He proceeded on for a while. Suddenly, a booming sound filled the air, and the gravitational force appeared again. This time, Meng Hao saw with his own eyes an early Foundation Establishment Cultivator who couldn't fight against it. His body exploded, and an intangible Dao Pillar flew out from the remains.

"The gravitational force is getting stronger. I'm worried that eventually, I won't be able to resist it." He frowned, suppressing the trembling of his Dao Pillars and flying forward as quickly as possible. Soon, the sun and the moon would not be overlapping any more. But now that Meng Hao knew which direction to go, he realized that he was getting closer and closer to his destination.

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1. Xu Youdao's name in Chinese is Xúyǒudào – Xu is a common family name. You means "have." Dao is the same Dao as "The Dao," which also means "way" or "path"

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# Chapter 155: The Last Person

Time passed slowly, about four hours. The gravitational power appeared again once, during which time Meng Hao continued to fly past mountain after mountain.

This place was very strange. The sun blazed brightly up above in the sky. If you looked closely, however, you could also see the vague shape of a moon within it. It seemed that within another two hours, they would split apart.

After about another hour’s travel, a vast plain appeared up ahead.

The plain was filled with tall grass, half the height of a person. It swayed in the wind, making the plain look almost like a sea. The only sound present was the whispering of the wind. Within the plain was one area devoid of grass. Three people sat there cross-legged.

Two were women and one was a man. The man was middle-aged and dressed in a gray robe. His face was expressionless, and his eyes were closed in meditation. An icy air drifted off of his body. He was of the late Foundation Establishment stage. He was one of the three late Foundation Establishment Cultivators that traveled to this place on the violet Feng Shui compass.

Of the two women, one was middle-aged and a bit overweight. Her features were ordinary, almost like those of a farm-girl. She was another from that group of three powerful late Foundation Establishment Cultivators.

An impatient expression filled her face as she looked at the last woman. This woman wore a veil which covered half of her face and obscured her features in a mysterious blur.

“Fellow Daoist, do you invite me here so that I can sit around waiting? I somehow don’t believe that our destination is really as dangerous as a dragon’s lair or a tiger’s den. Are Fellow Daoist Sima and myself really not enough?” She laughed coldly. The cold, middle-aged man opened his eyes from meditation. They glowed as he looked at the woman in the veil.

“Fellow Daoist Li, please wait just a bit longer,” said the veiled woman, her voice light. “I have invited five people in total. If they do not arrive, then we might as well not proceed. With just the three of us, our chances of success will be small.”

The Li woman snorted and seemed to be about to say more. In the end she didn’t.

“Be patient for just a bit longer,” said the veiled woman. “The sun and moon will cease to overlap in about two hours. If they haven’t arrived by then, then we might have no other choice than to make an attempt ourselves.”

An hour passed, at which point a beam of colorful light appeared. Within it was a streak of violet. Whoever was approaching wore a violet robe.

This person approached at top speed, arriving in the space of a few breaths. It was a young man with handsome features and a slight smile on his face. From his violet gown, it was obvious that he was no ordinary person. After landing, his eyes swept over the three others. He smiled at them and then cupped hands in greeting.

“I’m late,” said Xie Jie 1. “Please forgive me, Fellow Daoists. Sorry to keep you waiting, Junior Sister Han.” This was none other than Conclave disciple Xie Jie of the Black Sieve Sect. He looked at the veiled woman with a smirk as he revealed her identity.

His appearance caused the Li woman to frown slightly. She stood and returned his salute. The cold man, however, did little more than give him a slight nod.

The veiled woman frowned as the two others looked at her.

She laughed lightly, removing her veil. Her face was incredibly beautiful and delicate, her skin as lustrous as jade. Everything seemed to grow brighter because of her beauty.

“Han Bei 2 extends greetings to all you Fellow Daoists,” she said. “Originally I didn’t want to reveal my identity for personal reasons. However, it seems Elder Brother Xie took issue with that, so I will be more open with my identity for the sake of everyone’s comfort.” This woman was none other than Han Bei. Her enchanting features coupled with the beautiful smile on her face right now made it impossible to be irritated with her.

Xie Jie smiled. “I wasn’t aware that Junior Sister Han had matters she wished to keep to herself. I spoke hastily, please don’t take offense.”

“It doesn’t matter,” she replied with a smile. “Considering the Sect activity in this place, Junior Sister was worried that revealing her identity would cause a misunderstanding. But with Elder Brother Xie here, I have nothing to worry about. Our chances of success are now much greater.” The Li woman looked on pensively, and the gray-robed Cultivator frowned.

Her words were like a cotton ball with a needle inside. Xie Jie was just about to say something, but then stopped and turned his head. Everyone did the same, except for the gray-robed man.

A colorful beam of light approached, accompanied by a roaring wind that sent the grass whipping about. It transformed into an old man; this was none other than Xu Youdao.

He strode up to the group, his eyes flashing. He looked around for a moment, and then focused his gaze onto Han Bei.

“So, it turns out the invitation was from Fellow Daoist Han. I think you owe an explanation regarding what the Black Sieve Sect is doing in this place.”

Han Bei smiled. “With you and your special technique, Fellow Daoist Xu, our mission will be much easier to accomplish. As for an explanation, you can rest at ease, sir. I will provide a full explanation soon.”

Seeing Xu Youdao, the Li woman quickly greeted him with clasped hands. Xie Jie smiled and did the same. The gray-robed man simply nodded to him. So far, he had paid almost no heed to anyone.

“Is everyone here?” asked Xie Jie with a smile.

“I heard there’s one more,” said the Li woman, smiling ingratiatingly at Xie Jie.

“Oh?” said Xie Jie, his eyes narrowing. These three were late Foundation Establishment stage Cultivators, and as far as he could remember there hadn’t been any others amongst the rogue Cultivators. “Could it be that Han Bei invited some other Black Sieve Sect disciple?” he thought. “Who might it be…?” He eyed Han Bei. “Who is this last person we’re waiting for?” he asked with a smile. “Would Junior Sister Han mind explaining?”

“That’s right,” chimed in the Li woman. “I’m very interested as to who this final Fellow Daoist could possibly be. If he’s important, I’ll be sure to make friends. If he’s not important, then I must ask, why are we sitting around waiting?”

The gray-robed Cultivator closed his eyes, ignoring them. Xu Youdao stood there thoughtfully, his eyes flickering.

Han Bei was silent for a moment and then said, “I don’t know who it is either, much the same as how I didn’t know any of your identities at first. My guess is that while he isn’t an important figure now, if we don’t have him in our group, we may very well wind up empty-handed in our endeavor today. With this person, our chances of success will be increased by thirty percent.” Her words were spoken calmly, but with iron-like resoluteness.

“Oh?” said Xie Jie. His interest was now piqued. “And why does Junior Sister Han attach such importance to this person?”

The Li woman laughed coldly, her face filled with disdain, clearly feeling that Han Bei was exaggerating. She didn’t believe that a Foundation Establishment Cultivator could possibly be so useful. A Core Formation stage Cultivator would have been a different matter, but it was fundamentally impossible for such a person to join them.

“Could this person be a Pseudo Core Cultivator?” asked the Li woman with a sneer. “Fellow Daoist Han, you should really be careful. There are many people in the world who fish for fame and compliments.” It wasn’t that she specifically didn’t like Han Bei; actually, she hated all beautiful women.”

“I’m truly not sure if this person is at the Pseudo Core stage or not,” Han Bei replied calmly, giving the Li woman a level look. “In any case, his is definitely extraordinary. Of that, you can be certain.”

The Li woman said nothing more. Suddenly, Xie Jie lifted his head and looked toward the horizon, as did Xu Youdao. Soon everyone’s eyes were fixed on the beam of light which shot toward them.

This was Meng Hao, of course. He whistled through the air, his eyes sweeping the land. Soon, he spotted the blank area on the plain, upon which the overlapping sun and moon shined, as well as the five people there.

He looked them over as he landed onto the ground. His expression was the same as usual as he walked over.

When he saw Meng Hao, Xu Youdao expression flickered. A bright glow appeared in Han Bei’s eyes, and her lips spread into a smile. As for Xie Jie, a cold look covered his face as he looked Meng Hao over.

“Greetings, Fellow Daoists,” he said coolly. “I was delayed on the way, and am a bit late.” He glanced over the group, his gaze lingering for a moment on Han Bei.

“Early Foundation Establishment stage?” said the Li woman, frowning. A haughty look of disdain appeared on her face. She couldn’t wait to rudely say, “This is the person Fellow Daoist Han claims is essential? She thinks a trifling early Foundation Establishment is so important? Laughable. Or could it be that this junior generation infant just happened to accidentally stumble upon this area?”

Meng Hao looked at her without a word.

“I’m also very curious about this,” said Xie Jie with a smile. An almost imperceptible flicker appeared in his eyes.

Hearing Xie Jie’s words caused the Li Woman’s arrogance to grow even greater. “For an early Foundation Establishment Cultivator to be in our midst is demeaning. Han Bei may have recommended him, but I, Li, shall test him out myself and see what skills he has.” She began to walk toward Meng Hao. “Produce every scrap of power from your Cultivation base,” she said. “If you can live through one strike from me, then I’ll agree that you’re qualified to join us. If you’re not qualified, then you’ll be killed by the Black Sieve Sect any way. It seems death will end all your troubles!”

By the time she finished speaking, she had reached Meng Hao. She lifted her right hand and a blinding orange light appeared, which transformed into a pink colored whip. It flipped about, emitting cracking sounds.

2. Han Bei appeared previously in:

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# Chapter 156: Fear of Meng Hao

Meng Hao’s expression was tranquil. No one moved to interfere with the woman. The man in the gray robed sat meditating with his eyes closed. Xu Youdao was aware of Meng Hao’s extraordinariness, so naturally he did nothing.

As for Han Bei, she had speculations regarding Meng Hao’s incredible power, but wasn’t certain. She just knew a bit of secret information, which had fueled her conjectures. For her, this situation would be a good chance to observe Meng Hao’s battle prowess.

She still wished to offer some words of caution, but would the Li woman really listen? The woman’s Cultivation base was at the late Foundation Establishment stage, but in terms of thinking ability, she was one of the weakest present. The only way she had reached late Foundation Establishment was good fortune accumulated by her ancestors that had been passed down to her.

Regarding Xie Jie, he had intentionally manipulated the whole thing, so obviously did nothing to stop it from happening. He watched Meng Hao from off to the side, a smile on his lips. He was very curious as to why the Elders of the Sect had instructed him to keep an eye on Meng Hao. After arriving at the Blessed Land, he hadn’t paid too close attention, but having run into Meng Hao again, he wanted to feel him out.

Everyone had their own plans and schemes. Meng Hao glanced them over, and although he wasn’t able to fully grasp their various motivations, he had a pretty good idea. He watched the Li woman approaching, her pink whip whistling through the air. His face was expressionless, and he didn’t take even a single step backward. In fact, in the midst of her approach, he took three steps forward.

As he did, he lifted his right hand and struck out.

As his palm struck out a fierce wind sprang up, causing the surrounding grass to whip about in a frenzy. Without pausing, Meng Hao struck out a second time, then a third, a fourth and a fifth time!

These five strikes were the Nineteen Clear Sky strikes that Meng Hao had acquired from the violet-robed young man, by means of the rattan vines. The manual was incomplete, but the first five strikes were whole.

Each of these five strikes were filled with the complete power of Meng Hao’s Perfect Dao pillars. After striking out five times, an enormous magical palm the size of a person appeared in front of him. Wind whipped about in all directions as the palm shot forward.

When the five Clear Sky strikes appeared, Han Bei and Xie Jie’s expressions changed. They instantly recognized the enormous palm. This was a magical technique from the Black Sieve Sect; there was no way for outsiders to know it. Yet, here was Meng Hao, using it right in front of their eyes. There was no denying it, and this caused their hearts to tremble.

The Li woman was of the late Foundation Establishment stage, but she only had seven Dao Pillars. Furthermore, they were not even Cracked, but Fractured. Disdain covered her face as her illusory whip slammed into Meng Hao’s enormous palm. She knew in her heart what was going to happen. The palm would collapse into pieces as her whip sliced through it like a hot knife through butter. After it disintegrated, her whip would fall upon her opponent’s body, severing tendons and crushing bones.

Boom!

An explosion reverberated out. There was a collapse. But it wasn’t Meng Hao’s palm. A soon as the middle-aged woman’s magical whip made contact with the giant palm, it shook, and then broke apart into pieces. The Li woman’s face fell when she saw this unexpected turn of events. A look of disbelief covered her face.

How could she possibly have imagined that this would happen? She had used a magical whip powered by late Foundation Establishment. Her opponent’s palm exceeded her wildest imagination; dread seeped into her eyes.

Meng Hao’s giant palm instantly destroyed the whip. It shot forward with shocking power, accompanied by gale force winds. The Li woman no longer scorned Meng Hao; instead, as the area began to shake, a sense of imminent danger rose up inside her. She retreated immediately, raising her right hand, into which a small shield appeared. She bit down on her tongue and then spit up some blood from her Cultivation base. When it landed on the little shield, it began to spin, expanding outward and meeting Meng Hao’s giant palm.

Another explosion rippled out. The shield shook, and was tossed backward several meters, just barely able to resist the palm. Meng Hao continued to stride forward. His Spiritual Sense, which far outmatched any late Foundation Establishment Cultivator, exploded out, crushing down onto the Li woman.

She screamed under the pressure. It felt like a sharp sword was stabbing through her brain, as if her own Spiritual Sense were about to shatter. She coughed up blood and staggered backward. By this time, Meng Hao had reached the small shield. He waved his hand, causing the massive illusory palm to wrap around the shield and drag it back to him. Using his Spiritual Sense, he erased the branding mark on the shield and then put it into his bag of holding. He looked at the woman surnamed Li.

The woman was in shock, her Spiritual Sense suppressed, her treasure un-branded and taken by Meng Hao. She retreated backward at top speed, coughing up blood, her face pale, her head buzzing. After she had moved backward a dozen or so meters, she finally came to a stop. She looked up at Meng Hao, astonished.

“You….” Her scalp was numb. It was clear that Meng Hao’s Cultivation base must not be at the early Foundation Establishment stage. She had never seen an early Foundation Establishment Cultivator display such incredible battle power. Nor had she ever experienced such terrifying Spiritual Sense.

Not even a Flawless Foundation could be like this, as far as she was concerned.

“This art contains a total of nineteen strikes,” Meng Hao said coolly, his expression the same as always. He didn’t even mention anything about the treasure he’d snatched from her.

Hearing his words, the Li woman sucked in a breath, and her face went a few shades more pale. Her body began to tremble. The attack just now had rattled her Dao Pillars, caused her to cough up blood, and had forced her to utilize a treasured item. If more than five strikes had been used, she wasn’t sure if her treasure could have resisted it. In that case, her Dao Pillars would surely have been damaged.

“Fellow Daoist, your Cultivation base is unfathomable,” she said in a strained voice. “I was crude and rash, please don’t take offense. Please keep my Cloud Peak shield as a token of my apology.” She clasped hands and bowed deeply to Meng Hao, her eyes filled with dread.

It wasn’t just her. Xu Youdao’s gaze was fixed on Meng Hao. He was now completely reassured that he had made the right decision not to attack Meng Hao earlier. Meng Hao could not be an early Foundation Establishment Cultivator. If he really was… then that was exponentially more frightening.

The gray-robed man’s eyes flickered open and came to rest on Meng Hao. He nodded.

Han Bei looked at Meng Hao thoughtfully, a light smile appearing on her face.

“Fellow Daoist Meng, you’re not late. The hour has arrived. Our chances of acquiring the Classic of Time has now increased thirty percent.”

Xie Jie laughed and said nothing. He didn’t bring up the Nineteen Clear Sky strikes. Fear of Meng Hao now existed in his heart, and he now knew that

Meng Hao was not a person to be provoked lightly. After all, he had only seen Meng Hao's colossal Spiritual Sense, and had no inkling what magical techniques or items he might have.

Whenever he dealt with people he didn't understand, he would be careful not to provoke them. Only after coming to understand them completely would he strike like lightning.

"Forget about the Classic of Time for a moment," said Meng Hao calmly. He looked at Han Bei, his expression the same as ever. "I came to this Blessed Land at the request of Fellow Daoist Han. However, your Sect controls this place. I'm very curious. If I help you to acquire the Classic of Time, will my Dao Pillars be ripped out afterward?"

Han Bei and Xie Jie's eyes flashed. Before they could respond, Xu Youdao laughed grimly and said, "Fellow Daoist Meng doesn't beat around the bush. I'm also very curious about this matter. Would the two Fellow Daoists care to provide an explanation to dispel our doubts?"

"I, too, would like to know the answer to this question," said the gray-robed man. His eyes flashed with a cold light as he looked at Han Bei and Xie Jie.

It seemed the Li woman was also concerned with her safety. She said nothing, but moved back a few paces, effectively closing a circle around Han Bei and Xie Jie.

Han Bei smiled. "Fellow Daoists, I must request that you do not press us regarding Sect matters. I really can't speak about it. Even if I did, you most likely wouldn't believe me. In any case, it's a Sect secret. Even though I'm a Conclave disciple, I don't know a lot about it. However, as for the place we're going to, I will of course take responsibility for your safety." She waved her hand and four jade slips flew out toward Meng Hao and the others.

Han Bei continued, "Within this jade slip is a detailed explanation of how to exit this place. Use the method described therein, and you can leave without a hitch. There are several exits to this ancient Blessed Land. If you don't believe me, read the jade slip and then check to see where the exits are.

Then you'll understand why I selected this location as our rendezvous point." She smiled, looking as earnest as always.

Meng Hao's Spiritual Sense swept over the jade slip, and he looked around the area he stood. According to the jade slip, there were three exits. One of them… was the area they were standing on top of.

Meng Hao's hands flashed the incantation method recorded within the jade slip and he immediately felt a teleportation power rising up from beneath his feet. However, now was not the time to test it out, so he did not continue to bind the incantation.

"Here are four Spirit Seal insects," said Han Bei. "If you wish to conduct further inspection, you can. Send some Spiritual Sense into them and then send them out of the exit. Then you can be assured that my words are not false." She waved her right hand. Four white, thumb-sized insects flew out toward Meng Hao and the others.

Xu Youdao grabbed one. After examining it for a moment, he nodded. Branding it with Spiritual Sense, he used the technique described in the jade slip to send the insect down into the earth. It disappeared.

The Li woman did the same. The gray-robed Cultivator completely ignored Han Bei's insects, instead slapping his bag of holding to produce a scorpion.

"Of course I believe you, Fellow Daoist Han," said Meng Hao. He glanced at the insects and then selected one. He continued with his incantation, sending the insect through the exit using the method from the jade slip. However, in addition to the bug, he sent one of the rattan vines that were hidden deep in the earth. From the insect, he caught the indistinct impression of another location. It was definitely somewhere else, somewhere far, far away.

However, at the same time, he suddenly caught a sense of intense danger from the vine. Meng Hao's eyes narrowed.

Almost immediately the vine died. As it did, it transmitted a final image to Meng Hao. It appeared clearly in his mind, an enormous bronze cauldron. It was incredibly imposing, appearing to be tens of thousands of meters tall.

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# Chapter 157: A Cauldron with a Square Exterior!

The image disappeared. Meng Hao's expression was as normal, revealing nothing. He looked at Xu Youdao and the others. Their expressions had not changed. It seemed all of them, including Xu Youdao and the gray-robed Cultivator, approved of what Han Bei had said.

"Could it be that they didn't notice the bronze cauldron?" thought Meng Hao. After being branded by his blood, the vines had begun to emit a faint Demonic aura.

Han Bei smiled. "Fellow Daoists, now that you can rest your hearts at ease, please accompany me to the location of the Classic of Time. No matter what happens today, if we acquire the Classic, then everyone will get a copy." She bowed toward the group, and then shot into the air and flew out across the plain.

Xie Jie was the second to fly up, followed by Xu Youdao and the Li woman. Meng Hao and the gray-robed Cultivator were the last of the six to turn into beams of colourful light that shot through the sky.

No one spoke as they traveled. Everyone was lost in their own thoughts. Meng Hao's face was expressionless, but his thoughts were filled with the image of the huge bronze cauldron. At the moment, he was about seventy to eighty percent certain that the area he had seen was no exit, but rather Han Bei's handiwork.

He wasn't sure if Han Bei could dupe the others, but he had his good luck charm, and thus felt reassured in his current position. The location of the

Classic of Time was surely bizarre and astonishing; if it weren’t, Han Bei wouldn’t have spent so much time and resources to go there.

“I wonder how Han Bei learned of this Classic of Time…” he thought to himself, looking up ahead at Han Bei’s lithe figure as she shot through the air.

Suddenly, Xu Youdao spoke up, giving voice to what Meng Hao had just been considering. “Fellow Daoist Han, you still haven’t explained how you learned of the Classic of time, nor how you acquired the first volume.”

Han Bei looked back with a smile.

“If Fellow Daoist Xu is anxious for an answer, then I will give it as soon as we arrive.” It was at this time that they reached the edge of the vast plain. Suddenly, the roaring sound once again appeared. It was very far away, but it still caused everyone except for Han Bei and Xie Jie to feel shaken.

Those of the late Foundation Establishment stage rotated their Cultivation bases until the roaring and gravitational force died down. Then everything went back to normal, except that their faces were a bit paler.

An apologetic look appeared on Han Bei’s face, but she said nothing. She raised her hand and pushed her hand down toward the ground. A strong wind suddenly sprang into being, sweeping across the land. Han Bei took a deep breath and then smacked her bag of holding. A jade bottle appeared in her hand.

It was blue-green in color, and as soon as it appeared, her expression became somewhat somber. She tossed it out, and everyone watched as it descended downward.

When it landed onto the ground, cracks appeared on its surface that spread out rapidly. A blue liquid appeared within the cracks which emanated a faintly bitter aura. As the aura spread out, the eyes of the gray-robed Cultivator narrowed.

“That’s… Blue Heaven Elixir!”

Even as his words rang out, the blue bottle split into pieces. The blue liquid within expanded out to form a mist that enveloped the surrounding three hundred meter area. Suddenly, all of the grass disappeared, as if it had been a mere illusion. The earth surrounding them was pitch black, as if it were suffering from some sort of curse, some ancient spell which had existed for millennia.

“Fellow Daoist Sima, you are certainly experienced and knowledgeable. You are correct, this is Blue Heaven Elixir. To acquire even one drop required countless hardships. It’s capable of piercing a variety of illusions.” She smiled at the gray-robed man, then glanced at Meng Hao and the others.

“Fellow Daoists, I know that you have many questions. We are currently standing above an ancient portal which leads to a sealed zone within the Blessed Land. In actuality, the Black Sieve Sect learned about this Blessed Land hundreds of years ago. However, the person who actually discovered it was not a disciple of the Black Sieve Sect, but an ancestor of my Clan.

“Because of the Blessed Land, the Black Sieve Sect made my ancestor join the Sect, which is how the Han bloodline came to exist there. In fact, the map used to enter this place was created after years of research on the part of one of my Clan uncles. He used a mysterious magical technique to refine and congeal his own blood into the map. Because….” She was silent for the space of a few breaths, then continued, “Because this Blessed Land was once ruled by a lord who was also a patriarch of the Han Clan. However, he eventually became one with the Dao, and dissipated. Despite that, a connection to this place will occasionally appear within his descendants.

“I’m not sure what the Black Sieve Sect is plotting. But before he transformed into the map, my Clan uncle told me that because of his bloodline connection to this place, he knew that a secret technique of the Han Clan existed within. The three volume Time magic. This magic can produce a Time-Ruining treasure. Wielding the treasure can enable you to suck away the lifespans of others. That is why it requires a Spring and Autumn tree or similar item as its base.

“Even in ancient times,” she said, her voice gentle and clear, “this Time-Ruining treasure was astonishing and rarely seen. Nowadays, it could be considered lost. If it still exists, then it’s only in this place! Regarding the first volume of the Classic of Time, well… that is an item that has been passed down through generations in my Clan.

“I shall combine the three volumes and refine the Time-Ruining treasure. It is my personal affair, and I don’t want other Han Clan members to know about it. I also wish to avoid the prying eyes of the Black Sieve Sect. That is why I invited you all here today. As for Elder Brother Xie, he is here because of a previous agreement between the two of us.”

Everyone obviously had their own opinion about how much of what she had just said was true and how much was false. The methods she had used on the outside to gather their group together gave some clues. Meng Hao’s eyes flashed over the group, and inside, he laughed.

“It seems like everybody is thinking something different. But other than me, it looks like nobody is even listening to Han Bei’s explanation. And she knows it. There does seem to be something wrong with what she said just now.

“However… the Classic of Time is most likely real. Right now, I don’t really have very many powerful magical items other than the wooden swords. I do have the Spring and Autumn tree which is easy to duplicate with the copper mirror. If I can learn the technique from the Classic of Time, then my problem will be solved.

“I still need to be cautious, though. If anything goes wrong, I’ll use the good luck charm to leave this place immediately.” Even as he made his mind up, Han Bei flashed an incantation gesture to open the ancient portal beneath them.

An ancient and archaic roar sounded out from within, as if some sleeping beast was awakening. Suddenly, a glittering light appeared. It did not spread out far; it only enveloped the surrounding three hundred meters.

When the light appeared, Han Bei looked up to the sky as if she were calculating something. Then, her body flashed and she shot down into the portal. With a slight smile, Xie Jie entered as well, followed by Xu Youdao and the others.

Meng Hao swept the area with Spiritual Sense to confirm that it was nothing more than a teleportation portal. After seeing everyone else enter and begin to turn blurry, he followed. The glowing light flickered and then faded. Everyone disappeared.

When they re-appeared, the sky above was the same sky as in the Blessed Land. However, the earth was covered with cracks. Far off in the distance, an object was visible. When Meng Hao's eyes fell upon it, they shone brightly for a moment and then returned to normal.

Up ahead was an enormous bronze cauldron!

The cauldron was several tens of thousands of meters tall, rising up so tall that it seemed to be supporting the sky. It looked both ancient and primitive, as if it had existed for countless years. A boundless might radiated out from the cauldron, causing everyone to feel an intense fear, even Han Bei.

A variety of thoughts ran through the minds of everyone present.

"Cauldrons are the utensils of nations. They can only be forged by people with incredible destiny. It turns out… such a fear-inspiring cauldron exists in this place!"

"What a true treasure! Who could possibly be so bold as to forge such a heavenly cauldron?!"

"It's archaic design seems to be matchless. It must have been here for countless tens of thousands of years. Could it have been forged by some ancient almighty being…?"

They all panted as they gazed upon the cauldron. Even the cold man in the gray robe gasped when he saw it. A strange light flickered in his eyes.

Xie Jie's eyes narrowed, and it took some time before he regained his composure.

Meng Hao instantly recognized it; this was the same cauldron he had seen in the transmission from the vine before it had died in the so-called exit. As he looked around, he could tell that… everything around looked exactly the same as what he had seen in the supposed exit.

He laughed coldly in his heart, but his expression didn't change at all. He furtively retrieved the good luck charm and checked to make sure that it was still working. Inwardly, he was incapable of holding back some admiration for Patriarch Reliance. He wasn't sure how treasured of an item this good luck charm was, but he did know that it still worked in this place.

Feeling a bit reassured, he looked back up at the massive cauldron. He couldn't help but feel awed. Even though this wasn't the first time he'd seen it, to stand in front of it like this made him feel like an insect.

"The cauldron is cracked…" said Xu Youdao with a sigh.

Everyone could see that the massive, awe-inspiring bronze cauldron had a huge crack running down through it. The crack seemed as if it wished to split the cauldron in two, yet wasn't quite able to.

Everyone else guessed in their hearts that the crack must have been caused by some other shocking magical item. But when Meng Hao saw it, he got a different feeling. The crack was not something that was caused by a magical item. He looked up into the sky and thought back to how it had felt to be struck by Tribulation Lightning. That was the same type of feeling he got when he looked at the crack; it must have been caused by Tribulation Lightning!

"Anyone who could take possession of this massive cauldron and use it as a magical item would definitely be able to shake the Cultivation World." Xie Jie's words were soft, but filled with passion.

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# Chapter 158: Coexist with Ji?!

Han Bei took a deep breath, and a look of excitement flashed across her face. She lifted her right hand, and an ancient, crescent-shaped piece of jade flew out. It was a deep green color, almost black, and had a completely extraordinary appearance. It was not an object that a person would normally hold in their hand, but rather something that seemed as if it should be buried deep in an ancient tomb, never to see the light of day. Its color seemed to be the result of absorbing far too much sinister death aura.

The crescent jade flew out and then shockingly emitted a bright glow which covered everything around. The glow rippled as it shot forward toward the crack on the surface of the massive cauldron, and then entered it.

“This is where the final two volumes of the Classic of Time are!” said Han Bei. She flew forward, followed by Xie Jie, the Li woman, Xu Youdao and the man in the gray robe.

Meng Hao proceeded along as well. Six beams of flashing light shot ahead, growing closer and closer to the enormous cauldron. As they grew near, they felt an enormous pressure spreading out from the cauldron, which continued to grow stronger and stronger.

Soon, they were nearing the gigantic crack, which looked like an enormous canyon on the surface of the cauldron. They came to a stop in front of the crack. A mist floated around within, thin, but all-encompassing. Inside was nothing but blackness.

Upon nearing the crack, Xie Jie slapped his bag of holding. A green light appeared that solidified into a furry green beast. Its body flashed as it shot directly toward the crack. The instant it touched the mist, however, it let out a miserable cry, and its body was torn to pieces.

Caution filled the hearts of the onlookers.

“Only someone with incredible Spiritual Sense can lift the mist and mend this crack,” said Han Bei. “Then we can enter.” She looked up at the sky again as if she were calculating something. Then she turned and looked at Meng Hao.

It wasn’t just her. Xu Youdao’s gaze fell onto him as well. Meng Hao’s battle with the Li woman, and the intense power of his Spiritual Sense, had left a deep impression on the man.

“Fellow Daoist Han, you must be joking,” said Meng Hao, somewhat impolitely. “This cauldron must have been cast innumerable years ago. It’s aura is beyond ordinary. I don’t think I can even touch that crack.”

“Fellow Daoist Meng, you misunderstand,” she said hastily. “Of course I’m aware that this cauldron is not something people with Cultivation bases like ours can touch. I have a family heirloom treasure that can eradicate the crack. However, it must be guided by Spiritual Sense. Doing so will cause the crack to be healed.” As she spoke, she slapped her bag of holding to produce a small fan the size of a palm. It only had three feathers, each of which was covered with magical symbols.

“Only one person can use the treasure, and your Spiritual Sense is the most powerful among our group. I truly hope to gain your assistance. Once we enter, there will be other areas where you will not be required to do anything. This item is a fan. When its spirit is pushed with Spiritual Sense, it will release a power that far supersedes our Cultivation bases. It is a treasure that the Han Clan specifically forged just for this location.”

Meng Hao looked calmly at the fan for a moment, and then lifted his hand. The fan flew toward him. He examined it for a moment but didn’t touch it at first.

Eventually, he gave a slight nod.

Seeing him agree, Han Bei let out a sigh of relief. She then moved off to the side, away from Meng Hao, in order to prevent any sort of misunderstanding.

His face was blank as he released his Spiritual Sense. As it emanated out, Han Bei and the others concentrated, sensing the immense power and comparing it to their own. All of them grew even more cautious.

Meng Hao sent his Spiritual Sense into the fan to examine it. Sure enough, it was branded, linking it to Han Bei. Meng Hao lifted his head up to look at the crack in the enormous cauldron.

A moment later he lifted his hand and thrust it forward. The fan suddenly erupted into flame. The three feathers began to wriggle in a bizarre fashion. A whirlwind sprung into being around Meng Hao.

As his hand moved forward, the whirlwind shot toward the mist. A boom echoed out as it slammed into it. The mist immediately began to roil and seethe. At first it seemed as if the two would cancel each other out. However, the whirlwind wasn't strong enough, and began to fade away.

"The crack can be erased, but it's somewhat draining." Meng Hao watched the mist within the crack restoring itself, as if it were being reborn. He thought for a moment, and then lifted his right hand and released even more Spiritual Sense. This time, he used more than before, causing the flames on the fan to rise up even more awe-inspiringly. Now, the flames were filled with two colors!

The onlookers' pupils constricted as they felt the power of Meng Hao's Spiritual Sense, which seemed to be over double their own. This shocked them to the core, especially Han Bei, whose eyes filled with fear as she watched him.

It seemed as if the fan were sucking in Meng Hao's Spiritual Sense as fast as possible. He proceeded with caution; if any signs appeared to indicate that he was losing control, he would instantly sever its connection to his Spiritual Sense.

The whirlwind appeared again, even more powerful than last time. Within an instant, Meng Hao's figure was almost impossible to see within its screaming winds. The onlookers could just barely make out the image of him waving his hand forward.

As he did, the fan’s first feather instantly transformed into burning ash and the second feather began to fall apart. The wind grew stronger, roaring with power. It slammed into the mist, and as it did, the third feather of the fan disappeared into flaming ashes.

The entire fan now fell apart, causing Han Bei’s heart to melt a bit. Then her gaze hardened; success or failure would occur at this juncture.

Boom!

A massive explosion ripped out as the enormous whirlwind collided with the mist. They ate at each other, and suddenly a gap appeared within the mist.

At the same time, a sinister coldness erupted out from within the cauldron, shooting out through the mist and blasting across the group of Cultivators.

It was as if a door had just opened which had been closed for ages. An aura that had been sealed up for countless years burst out, flowing across Meng Hao and the others. If that was all, it would not be a big deal. However, within the coldness of Time existed memories that swept across the six people. Suddenly, images appeared in front of them from countless ages ago.

Within the vision could be seen an enormous, shocking bronze cauldron. It floated above the earth, underneath a red sky. Astonishing bolts of lightning descended onto its surface, slashing it constantly, as if they desired to crush it into nothing.

However, the cauldron would not give in, and it rose up amidst the roar of the lightning. Up above in the red sky, a vortex appeared, beyond which could barely be made out the image of another world. The cauldron wished to defy the Heavens and pass through the vortex into the vague world beyond.

Below on the ground were hundreds of thousands of figures. They prostrated themselves on the ground, chanting scriptures at the same time. The sounds of their voices merged together and echoed out. When the sound reached his ears, it made Meng Hao think of the the Black Sieve Sect disciples sitting cross-legged, chanting scriptures. It sounded… similar, even though he couldn't make out the details of what they were chanting.

Suddenly a voice boomed out from within the cauldron. "It is thy wish for the vault of Heavens to replace the stars, to cover my eyes with the dome of the Heavens, to impede the World Tree, to shatter the stars. My master may be sleeping, but can he still exist under the same sky as Ji?!" Lighting fell down constantly from the Heavens, seeking to obliterate the cauldron. Suddenly, the vision passed from the eyes of everyone except for Meng Hao. They exchanged shaken looks with each other.

Meng Hao was a bit closer to the cauldron, however, and was the first to meet the blast of Time wind. His vision continued on a bit longer.

He saw the massive bronze cauldron continuing to rise up. The lightning falling from the red sky began to merge together. It was impossible to tell how many lightning bolts congregated to form a gigantic spear. It looked like a tooth surrounded by fields of lightning that shot down toward the cauldron.

A boom echoed out and the giant bronze cauldron trembled. A massive crack split down through it. It rose no more, and instead fell down. It slammed into the ground, and then another voice sounded out. It seemed to sigh.

"You are unwilling to let me take this cauldron from this place. Then… I will lay in rest here forever, waiting for the day on which you fall."

It was at this point that the vision faded from Meng Hao's eyes. He took a deep breath and then lifted his head to look at the cauldron. As of now, the mist and the crack caused by it, were disappearing.

An anxious expression appeared on Han Bei's face. Not hesitating in the slightest, she shot forward, flying toward the crack. Without a word, the rest of the group followed, their eyes flickering.

Meng Hao flew along with them as they headed at top speed toward the crack. As soon as he entered the cauldron, Meng Hao felt the copper mirror in his bag of the Cosmos growing hot.

Now was not the time to examine it, though. Meng Hao entered the cauldron to find himself in a world of lightning and thunder.

The inside of the cauldron was a space of several tens of thousands of meters in size. It was completely filled with crashing lightning, almost like a river. The light created by so much lightning was as blinding as sunlight.

However, there was no time for the group to gaze at the world within the cauldron. From within their midst, a blood-curdling scream rose up.

The Li woman was the last to enter. The instant she did, a bolt of lightning descended with incredible speed. It slammed into her. She screamed as her body was transformed into flying ash. Even her bag of holding was incinerated into nothingness.

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# Chapter 159: Square Without, Round Within; a Trend of the Heavens

It happened so quickly that Xu Youdao’s face flickered. Next to him, the eyes of the gray-robed Cultivator narrowed and he slapped his bag of holding to produce a wooden slip.

It emitted a bluish light that seemed to indicate it could repel lightning. The bluish light circled around the gray-robed Cultivator and he took several steps away, as if he didn’t want to stand close to any of the others.

Xie Jie’s face also flickered. About the same time that the bluish light flickered up around the gray-robed Cultivator, a wooden statue appeared in Xie Jie’s hand. The statue had three heads and six arms. As it appeared, it transformed into a soft, glowing light that circulated around Xie Jie.

Han Bei reacted even faster, sooner in fact, than even Xie Jie or the gray-robed man. A three-colored lotus throne appeared in front of her; obviously this was also some sort of lightning-repelling treasure.

Only Xu Youdao and Meng Hao seemed to be without such objects. Xu Youdao let out a cold harumph as he unwrapped a blue treasure shaped like a medicinal pill. The pill emitted a bluish-green shield which surrounded his body.

Seeing all of this, Meng Hao laughed grimly. The other three had obviously colluded; otherwise, why would they possibly have all come equipped with lightning-repelling treasures? Only he and the Li woman had come unprepared.

“Nice move, Fellow Daoist Han,” said Meng Hao coolly, his eyes sweeping across the four of them.

“I never anticipated there would be so much lighting,” said Han Bei lightly, “so I’m not sure what you’re talking about. Fellow Daoist Meng, if you don’t have a lighting-repelling item, then you’re welcome to use this Anti-Lightning Leaf. It’s only moderately effective, but it’s better than nothing.” A translucent leaf appeared in her hand, and she looked at Meng Hao. Actually, she had been eyeing him this entire time, especially the moment when he’d entered the cauldron. When that happened, her eyes had flickered.

Xie Jie and the other two men were all looking at Meng Hao, although it was impossible to tell what they were thinking. Their eyes seemed to be filled with an unanswered question.

Lightning crackled about above them, and booms of thunder filled the air. It was powerful and astonishing. Each bolt of lightning seemed to be incredibly fierce, strong enough to strike down even the late Foundation Establishment stage.

Suddenly, a bolt of lightning slammed down in the midst of them. An explosion rattled out as the lightning dissipated into countless arcs of electricity.

“I have no lightning-repelling item, but I do have a lightning-attracting technique,” said Meng Hao calmly. The lightning mist appeared around him, which then congealed into the lightning flag.

Electricity swirled around it, which included strands that contained the Heavenly Tribulation Meng Hao had collected. It was clearly an extraordinary item. The nearby lightning seemed to twist, as if it were being pulled down.

If all the lightning in the area were really called forth, then it wouldn’t matter if the others had lightning-repelling magic. They would all be transformed into dust just as quickly as the Li woman.

Almost as soon as the lightning flag appeared and the lightning around them began to ripple, Meng Hao sucked the flag back into his mouth. The converging lightning dispersed. However, it was now obvious that if the flag remained in the area for any amount of time, then it would call the lightning down, and they would all die.

Xie Jie's expression flickered, the gray-robed man's eyes narrowed, and Xu Youdao gasped and took a few steps back. Fear of Meng Hao filled their eyes.

The sensation of danger filled their heads, and their hearts began to pound. Unsightly expressions instantly filled their faces.

Xie Jie's voice was also grim as he said, "Fellow Daoist, you're really being a bit too excessive." His heart was filled with vigilance as he spoke, his attention focused solely on Meng Hao.

Xu Youdao had already been affected by Meng Hao's ferocity twice. Now, he stared at him with a complicated look, saying nothing. Yet again, he sighed inwardly. In his eyes, Meng Hao was no weaker than some Core Formation eccentrics.

He didn't need a lightning-repelling item. With a lightning-attracting item, he had suddenly turned the tables and put everyone else at a disadvantage.

"Fellow Daoist, what is the meaning of this?" said the gray-robed man, staring at Meng Hao.

"Oh nothing," said Meng Hao. "I just want to remind you, Fellow Daoists, that Meng Hao can call down lightning at any time." He spoke calmly and slowly as he stood there. He seemed ready to pull out his lightning treasure if even one bolt of lightning headed his way.

Han Bei said nothing for the space of a few breaths before a genial smile appeared on her face.

"I was joking with you just now, Fellow Daoist Meng. Of course I have a way for you repel the lightning." She waved her hand, and a leaf fell off of the lotus throne. She was just about to hand it to him, when he laughed and approached her.

Her face fell; her heart was filled with fear of his methods, and when she saw him nearing her, she involuntarily took a step backward.

But he had already arrived at her side. “There’s no need to go to the trouble, Fellow Daoist Han,” he said coolly. Lightning crackled above them. “Let’s just use your lotus throne together. Wouldn’t that be easier? Or are you unwilling to do so?”

A twisted look appeared on her face, but before she could say anything, the gray-robed Cultivator nodded.

“That would be the best,” he said.

“I agree,” said Xu Youdao, breathing a sigh of relief inwardly.

Xie Jie’s eyes sparkled, and he did nothing to indicate he disagreed.

Han Bei hesitated a moment, then gave Meng Hao a bitter smile.

“If that’s your requirement, Fellow Daoist Meng, then how could I disagree?” She gritted her teeth as she opened the lotus throne shield and allowed Meng Hao to enter.

Now that Meng Hao stood next to Han Bei within the shield, the other three men felt somewhat more at ease. Meng Hao’s threat moments ago had been beyond anything they could have anticipated. Even thinking back to it caused the hair on their necks to stand on end. Meng Hao was truly vicious.

Han Bei looked deeply at Meng Hao for a moment with a forced smile. Then she gave him a slight bow and began to move forward. Meng Hao went along, his face calm. Xie Jie and the others followed.

Five people gradually proceeded through the torrents of lightning. Roaring filled the air. Lightning fell, crashing into the ground and sending sparks rippling out in all directions.

Clearly, the lightning-repelling items were extraordinary; the party appeared to be completely safe. Meng Hao's eyes swept over them, and inside he laughed coldly. These magical items were clearly not things that Foundation Establishment Cultivators should have in their possession. Each of these Cultivators must have the backing someone extremely powerful, who provided the impetus for them to enter this place.

"Xie Jie only has the Black Sieve Sect," he thought. "As for the gray-robed man and Xu Youdao, they're obviously not ordinary rogue Cultivators. They must have some powerful connections." As the group proceeded on, the lightning grew more intense and frightening. The roaring never seemed to end. Meng Hao had seen Tribulation Lightning before, but the lightning here seemed even more formidable.

"This is not a place for Foundation Establishment Cultivators. Just one bolt could completely eradicate any of us. Yet, none of these people seem even slightly concerned. Obviously they knew ahead of time what they would be facing.

"I was targeted by Tribulation Lightning because of my Perfect Dao Pillar, which is not permitted to exist. As for this cauldron… the spirit of the Heavens must be furious, filled with intense desire to obliterate it, even more so than me." Meng Hao looked up ahead. This amount of lightning was unpleasant to the eyes, and made it impossible to examine the surroundings. The only option was to continue forward.

No one spoke as they traveled onward. About an hour passed, and they were much further in. Even though they were still surrounded by lightning, the intensity had lessened, and now they were able to see a bit more clearly. What they saw ahead of them caused them all to begin to breathe heavily.

Xu Youdao gasped. "That's…" His face was covered with shock.

Xie Jie eyes glittered, and he panted. Next to him, the gray-robed Cultivator's eyes shone as he stared dead ahead.

Han Bei's eyes also grew brighter.

Far up ahead, in the center of the giant cauldron, were nine enormous statues. Each statue depicted a middle-aged man. The clothing they wore was not like like the clothing of modern times; it was much simpler. And yet, they were clearly long robes.

Amongst the nine people depicted, three had crowns on their heads. Two had long hair, which draped over their shoulders. One was even completely bald. They exuded an imposing power that was difficult to describe. It seemed as if each statue represented some powerful Dao that demonstrated a path of heaven and earth.

Anyone who caught sight of these statues would be stunned, and filled with a sensation of ancient glory. The statues were not standing upright; rather all of them were were kneeling down on one knee, with both arms stretched upward, heads bowed.

Objects could be seen within their upstretched hands!

There was some sort of wheel-shaped treasure, something that was clearly an extraordinary sword, as well as a glowing jade bottle. Each statue had a different treasure. The flickering glow created by the treasures created multiple glowing afterimages. Meng Hao and the others couldn’t help but gasp.

In the hands up one of the statues could be seen two ancient scrolls! The features of this statue strongly resembled Han Bei!

On the back of the statue was a gigantic crack, which had obviously been rent by lightning from Heaven. It was impossible to say how many years has passed since that had happened.

If this was all there was to it, it wouldn’t be a bit deal. But there was more. Meng Hao was shocked, and everyone else was panting. In the center of the nine incredible statues was the object to which they were all bowing… a bronze, circular cauldron!

A voice sounded out in Meng Hao’s mind: “Square without, circular within; a trend of the Heavens!”

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As a quick reference, here are the two types of Chinese “ding cauldrons” that are being talked about. Square cauldron. Round cauldron. The character for cauldron “ding” is pretty cool. Looks just like a cauldron!

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# Chapter 160: No Meng in the Nine Families

The outside was an enormous square cauldron, whereas inside there was a Heavenly circular cauldron. This circular cauldron was truly a Heavenly trend!

Meng Hao’s mind buzzed as he saw this. Having experienced the world of the enormous cauldron, he felt as if it contained something cosmic.

“Nine kneeling figures, nine pinnacles of the Heavens,” muttered the gray-robed man, beginning to tremble. “These kneeling figures are not people, they obviously are referring to the will of the Heavens!

“No, no. How could the cauldron be reversed? It shouldn’t be like this. The heavens are circular and the earth is square. That’s a generally acknowledged truth from ancient times. It’s a law that was established tens and tens of thousands of year ago, a principle of heaven and earth.

“The cauldron should be circular on the outside and square on the inside. That would be correct. In that case, it would be as they say, the Heavens on the outside, above, the earth on the inside, beneath….” The man’s body trembled even harder as he continued to mumble to himself. It seemed as if he just couldn’t comprehend the world of this cauldron which was square on the outside and circular on the inside.

Xu Youdao stared blankly at the circular cauldron, his eyes radiating astonishment. It was impossible to tell what he was thinking.

Xie Jie’s eyes narrowed. Despite his shock, he immediately produced a jade slip, within which he inscribed all of this.

Han Bei seemed to be in shock as well. She looked at the massive fissure on the back of the statue, and then a brilliant glow appeared in her eyes that was obviously veneration for her ancestors.

“I understand,” said the gray-robed man, his voice quavering. “The heavens are circular, the earth is square. A circular cauldron on the outside becomes the Heavens, the square cauldron on the inside becomes the earth. That would be in accord with the will of the Heavens, but this… This embodies evil! This represents the earth covering the Heavens. This is the same as burying the Heavens!!

“This way, the circular cauldron is the Heavens, the square cauldron is the earth. This place…. is a tomb!!” Sharp astonishment filled his voice as he spoke. He slowly took three steps backward. He coughed up a mouthful of blood. His face was pale and his eyes shone brightly with astonishment. His hands flickered as if he were calculating something, and his voice began to grow louder.

“These nine worshippers are definitely pinnacles of the Heavens! They’ve just been embodied into these statues, which obviously represent the legendary Nine Mystical Stars. The Nine Mystical Stars are worshipping the cauldron. The Heavenly trend is solidified here. A bronze square cauldron, within which is buried the heart of the Heavens!

“How daring! How grand! A tomb in which the Heavens are buried inside the earth!! Just whose tomb is this? Willing to face death to steal good fortune from the Heavens! This is a coffin, and the Blessed Land outside is the tomb!

“Put it all together, and this place is no Blessed Land. It’s a Cursed Land! It’s a tomb of defiance against the Heavens!”

His words entered the ears of the others, and turned cold. Xie Jie’s and Xu Youdao’s expressions changed. Meng Hao took in a deep breath to settle his shaking nerves. The gray-robed man’s words resonated inside of him, creating a sense of familiarity. Perhaps this place… really was a tomb.

He thought back to the vision he had experienced outside of the cauldron, and of the man's voice he had heard when the lightning struck it.

"You are unwilling to let me take this cauldron from here. Then… I will lay in rest here forever, waiting for the day on which you fall."

Meng Hao took a deep breath and thought back to the other archaic voice he had heard from within the cauldron.

"It is thy wish for the vault of Heavens to replace the stars, to cover my eyes with the dome of the Heavens, the World Tree would not capitulate, shattered under the stars. My master may be slumbering, but can he still exist under the same sky as Ji?!"

The voice seemed to echo in Meng Hao's mind. His heart beat rapidly, and he thought back to the legend of the Spring and Autumn tree 1, and how the World Tree had voluntary collapsed rather than acquiesce to the Heavens. He also thought of the destruction of the Ancient Doom Clan 2, as well as the flag of three streamers 3, which was currently inside the Blood Immortal mask. That flag had the character Ji written on it!

He also thought back to the requirement of the Blood Immortal to refine the bloodline of Ji!

"Fellow Daoists," said Han Bei, "there's no need to be alarmed." Her clear, bell-like voice echoed out. Although it couldn't outmatch the sound of the thunder, everyone could hear her clearly. "I don't know whether or not this place is a tomb, but as you all can see, the person holding those ancient scrolls is my ancestor. The statue has been cracked open by Heavenly Thunder. That was how the first volume of the Classic of Time came out of this place, and was eventually acquired by later generations." She turned to look at Meng Hao and the others. "In fact, of all the treasures here, only these scriptures can be taken away. All the other statues are perfect and unharmed.

"I've attended quite a few secret meetings; the fact that you all saw my message shows that you are destined to be here. You all have your own reasons for coming here, and are surely backed by powerful forces.

Naturally, I am aware of that, and really don’t care who you represent.” She continued in a soft voice, “I only hope that for the sake of the Nine Mystical Stars, you will all keep your promises. Right now, we can only look, but when we draw near to the statues, I have a way to acquire the two scriptures. Then we can make copies for everyone.

“Actually, my only real purpose in coming here is to pay my respects in front of the statue of my ancestor.” Her voice seemed to contain some strange power that made everyone calmer. The gray-robed man’s complexion slowly returned to normal. Now that Meng Hao thought about it, he began to wonder if the man had purposefully said such crazy things.

He was also a bit skeptical of Han Bei’s words “for the sake of the Nine Mystical Stars.”

“It’s not far now,” continued Han Bei. “However, next I must ask for help from Fellow Daoists Xu and Sima. There will be more lightning after this point, and the going will be more difficult. Originally, we should never have had the chance we do. But the year that the first volume of the classic flew out, it carved out a path. Inside the path, we will be much safer. More importantly, the power of the lightning will not be as strong.

“Furthermore, it will have intermittent periods of weakness. Those times will be short, only about one hour. However, it should be plenty of time to get through safely. I picked the starting time of our mission to coincide with the lightning’s weak period!” Her gaze swept across them, and then she looked up, as if she were waiting for something.

After about ten breaths, the lightning in the area began to grow dimmer. It was still dense, but the pressure that bore down on them from it was significantly less. It was definitely not as fearsome as before.

“The lightning will be weak for one hour. Fellow Daoist Xu, Fellow Daoist Sima, hurry!” Her eyes shined as she lifted her right hand. A dark piece of ancient jade flew out and floated above them, seeming to point in a certain direction.

Muttering to himself, Xu Youdao flew forward. The gray-robed Cultivator seemed to have completely returned to normal. He accompanied Xu Youdao. The power of late Foundation Establishment roiled out from them. One of them was clearly emanating Wood-type Qi. But then the gray-robed Cultivator began to emit a Dust-type Qi, which completely eclipsed the Wood-type Qi. As they walked forward, a yellowish brown glow rippled out.

Both of them produced magical items, and Han Bei took in a deep breath. She waved her hand, and her ancient Time jade emitted a brilliant glow. Everyone proceeded cautiously.

Because of the temporary reduction in lightning, they were able to fly forward relatively quickly.

However, the closer they got to the statues, the more dense the lightning grew. Rumbling booms filled the sky. Lightning crashed down, some of it slamming into the ground very close to the group of five. Their hearts trembled as they proceeded.

Xu Youdao and the gray-robed Cultivator proceeded together with seeming difficulty. Soon, cracks appeared on their treasured items. Without hesitation, they pulled out even more lightning-repelling items. Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever, and he said nothing. He made no indication whatsoever that he would offer assistance. He had already accomplished his task, and from here on out, they would not likely be asking him to do anything.

This place was dangerous, but all of the others had chosen to come here and were well-equipped.

Within Meng Hao's hand was the good luck charm. That was the trick he had up his sleeve.

Time passed slowly, and gradually the group grew closer and closer to the statues. The faces of Xu Youdao and the gray-robed Cultivator grew ashen. They were reaching their limit. As the statues got closer and closer, the lightning grew more and more dense. They had already gone through multiple magical items, and were coughing up blood. They couldn't proceed.

Suddenly, a lightning bolt began to descend, heading directly toward their group. Seeing this, the faces of Xu Youdao and the others flickered. The ancient Time jade that Han Bei wielded suddenly emitted a bright shield. When the lightning bolt slammed into the shield, a massive explosion rippled out. Han Bei coughed up a mouthful of blood, as did all of the others. The glow of electricity surrounded them, and their faces drained of blood. This was especially true of Xu Youdao and the gray-robed man, whose bodies trembled.

The lightning dissipated into curving sparks of electricity, and everyone heaved sighs of relief. They looked about, their faces filled with even more caution than before.

"Fellow Daoist Han," said Xu Youdao, turning to stare at Han Bei. "Didn't you say that the lightning would become weaker? Why was that bolt now so powerful?!"

Meng Hao wiped the blood from his mouth, but his eyes were shining. The fragments of lightning within his body were being sucked in by the lightning flag. It seemed to be changing again.

Actually, though he looked injured, after coughing up the blood, he was fine. However, he continued to force his face to look pale.

Wiping the blood from her mouth, Han Bei coldly replied, "You all chose to come here. There is no way you were unaware that this place is not suitable for Foundation Establishment Cultivators. Were it not for my understanding of this place, were it not for this ancient Time jade, were it not for some other things that we all know about, then we wouldn't be walking through this place. We would not even have been able to enter the cauldron.

"As far as the lightning, it is weakened at the moment. However, there still exists the possibility that bolts will fall that have not been weakened." She turned to Xie Jie. "Elder Brother Xie, having come this far, we've now reached the point where you must act. This location also holds what the

Black Sieve Sect seeks, which they plan to fish out with the Hundred Spirits Tower. They seem to be ignoring our activities in here, but undoubtedly they are keeping guard outside.

“We both know that they don’t dare to enter this place. Other than descendants of the Nine Great Families, anyone who enters here will die. The Nine Great Families have experienced decline in the Southern Domain, to the extent that they can’t measure up to the current generation of Clans, and are mostly comprised of mortals. Ones who can practice Cultivation are usually herded up by various Sects. We have the appearance of elegance, but in fact we are little more than livestock. You and I are simply curious tools to the Black Sieve Sect.”

Xie Jie was quiet for a moment, an then smiled. “Actually, what makes me the most curious is that the Nine Great Families do not include Meng. Furthermore, not one of these nine statues resembles Fellow Daoist Meng at all. So, how was he able to enter this place?” He gave Meng Hao a deeply meaningful look.

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# Chapter 161: Ultimate Vexation Appears!

It wasn’t just Xie Jie whose attention turned to Meng Hao. Xu Youdao and the gray-robed Cultivator also gave him deep, meaningful looks.

His expression was calm, but inwardly, his mind flashed with understanding. Now he knew why everyone had looked at him so strangely when they had entered the large Cauldron.

The Nine Great Names didn’t include Meng, so once he entered, they must all have reached the conclusion that he was using an assumed name.

Even he was a bit uncertain regarding this revelation. He looked through the sheets of lightning toward the nine massive statues. Sure enough, amongst them could be found faces similar to Xu Youdao, the gray-robed Cultivator, and even Xie Jie.

These statues depicted their ancestors. They had surnames which could be traced back to ancient times, Clans which some people called the Nine Great Families.

“Am I of the Nine Great Families…?” Meng Hao asked himself. Moments later, a smile appeared on his face, although it was a bit cold. He was sure that he was not of the Nine Great Families.

He had remembered how upon entering the enormous cauldron, the copper mirror had grown hot within the bag of the Cosmos. If that was all, it wouldn’t be enough evidence to prove anything. But Meng Hao had also suddenly recalled how the mirror had grown hot during the secret meeting, when Han Bei had produced the information regarding the first volume of the Classic of Time.

“Han Bei must have prepared for this day for a long time,” he thought, “and it wasn’t just one secret meeting she attended. The information she sent out was not restricted just to late Foundation Stage Cultivators, but more importantly, to only bloodline members of the Nine Great Families.” With all this scattered information, he came to the conclusion that it must have something to do with the copper mirror.

“Just what is this mirror exactly? It can agitate the auras of wild beasts to explode, it has an astonishing power of duplication, and apparently has helped me achieve my goals by using underhanded means. Even though I’m not of the Nine Great Families, I was still able to enter this place. All these various thoughts flashed through Meng Hao’s mind in quick succession. Only a moment or two passed between Xie Jie’s question and Meng Hao’s response.

“Whether or not the Nine Great Families include Meng, I don’t really know,” he said coolly. “But the fact that I entered the cauldron and made it to this point raises a very important issue.” The look on his face made it very clear what he was thinking.

Xie Jie’s eyes flickered, and he furrowed his brow. Meng Hao’s words left him speechless. The words were a defense in themselves, even though he neither admitted nor denied anything; or perhaps he had done both. Xie Jie looked at him for a long moment.

The response had been clear; Meng Hao didn’t know. But maybe the reason he was here was because he was indeed of the Nine Great Families.

“Fellow Daoist Meng provided you with his answer,” said Han Bei calmly. “Elder Brother Xie, I know that you have some Green Cloaking Pills on your person that the Sect Leader gave you specifically for use in this place. I know this already, there’s no need for you to confirm or deny it.”

Xie Jie was quiet for a moment. He looked around at the lightning, his face somber. Then he slapped the top of his head and spit out a small green pill the size of a fingernail. As soon as it flew out, it exploded, sending large amounts of green Qi out in all directions. As it did, the lightning began to grow slightly transparent, as if they were being cloaked.

The five of them continued onward several hundreds of meters, with Xu Youdao and the gray-robed Cultivator taking the lead.

A hundred meters later, Xie Jie, his face grim, said, “I only have three Green Cloaking Pills!” He spat out another pill, and they raced forward amidst the indistinct lightning.

With the power of the two Green Cloaking Pills, they were able to reach the location of the nine statues. The statues were awe-inspiring, as was the cauldron in their center, which seemed as if it could contain the Heavens.

An ancient aura circled about the area, brushing against their faces and making them feel as if they had traveled back to a primordial time. It was like they could feel the boundlessness of that era.

Han Bei was incapable of concealing the excitement within her eyes. She panted as she looked up at the statue of her ancestor. Next to her, Xu Youdao, the gray-cloaked man, and even Xie Jie stood by silently, all of them gazing at the statues of their respective ancestors.

Meng Hao had no way to comprehend what was going through their minds. His face was the calmest of the bunch as he looked at the statues one by one. Finally his gaze fell upon the circular cauldron that represented the heavens.

Even as he looked at the cauldron, something in his peripheral vision caught his attention. Something was moving on one of the statues. Meng Hao’s eyes immediately darted over, and then opened wide.

There, upon the shoulder of the statue that resembled the gray-cloaked Cultivator, some dust had fallen away to reveal something. It was square, and looked gelatinous and somewhat elastic, like a slab of meat jelly.

It was pure and white, and after looking upon it, the first reaction of most people would be to try to eat it. The object sat on the statue's shoulder, wriggling a bit, causing more dust to fall down. Meng Hao stared, eyes wide, mouth agape. The thing seemed to be alive! Suddenly, it flew off of the statue's shoulder and onto its head. Then it leaped up into the air. A crack appeared on the surface of the meat jelly, which opened up into an enormous mouth. Instantly, the lightning in the sky crackled. Ten lightning bolts fell down directly onto the meat jelly.

It chewed for a bit, then stopped, as if it were digesting the lightning. Meng Hao gaped in astonishment as it dropped to the ground and then hop, hop, hopped over to land on the circular cauldron. It remained there motionless.

It wasn't just Meng Hao who saw this happen. The noise caused by the lightning and the meat jelly was incredible, causing Han Bei and the others to all look over. Han Bei's eyes narrowed, whereas Xie Jie's opened wider. He gasped, and the two of them exchanged a shocked, knowing glance.

"That's…"

The gray-robed Cultivator suddenly said, "That must be what the Black Sieve Sect needs the Hundred Spirits Tower for. They want to drag out Ultimate Vexation." A mysterious look appeared in his eyes. Within his pupils appeared magical symbols as he attempted to gain information. This had nothing to do with his Cultivation base, but something specific to his eyes.

Before Han Bei and Xie Jie could say anything, the meat jelly suddenly jumped up. The face of an old man, his eyes closed, magically appeared on its surface. His nose twitched, and his eyes opened. They appeared to be filled with frustration. The meat jelly suddenly flew up and shot toward the exit of the square cauldron. But then it stopped in mid-air, as if it were hesitating. It floated there for a moment and consumed more lightning.

Seeing this, the eyes of the five Cultivators gleamed.

"Why is this thing called Ultimate Vexation?" Meng Hao suddenly asked of the gray-robed Cultivator.

“Even I don’t know,” was the reply. “I haven’t been able uncover any information about its origin. The Black Sieve Sect has likely spent much more time researching it. The little I do know is that as long as it has existed, it has been called Ultimate Vexation.”

“I couldn’t care less what that thing is called,” said Xu Youdao. “Half an hour has already passed. If Fellow Daoist Han can’t retrieve the rest of the Classic of Time soon, then our whole trip here will have been a waste!”

Without a word, Han Bei sat down cross-legged beneath the statue of her ancestor. Her hands made incantation gestures, and her ancient jade began to emit a greenish glow as it rotated around her. Meng Hao’s eyes glittered and he stepped a bit closer to her.

Everything around them was relatively quiet. Only the claps of thunder roared out. Time passed, the space of roughly one hundred breaths. Han Bei’s eyes suddenly opened, and the sound of incantation words floated from her mouth. Xu Youdao, the gray-robed Cultivator, and Xie Jie all stood around, as vigilant as ever.

Suddenly, the sound of Han Bei’s incantation ceased, and she spat out a mouthful of blood onto the ancient jade. It emitted a blinding green light and flew toward the hands of the statue.

It didn’t move incredibly fast, and actually wobbled back and forth a bit in the air as it moved. The blood drained from Han Bei’s face, as if she were having trouble controlling it. As the jade neared the statue, the two scripture scrolls in the statue’s hands began to glow brightly. Cracks appeared on their surfaces, and a boom echoed out. Suddenly, two pieces of jade exploded out from within the two scrolls.

Everyone clearly saw this happen, and though they might have their suspicions as to what was happening, it was obvious that two pieces of jade were flying away from the exploded scripture scrolls. Whistling sounds echoed out from them as they shot out.

The two jade pieces flew out, seemingly completely out of control, not controlled by anything or anyone. They seemed to be shooting out in an attempt to leave the square cauldron.

Before they could go very far, though, they were grabbed by the greenish glow emanated from Han Bei’s ancient jade. It was as if they were all connected somehow. The two escaping pieces of jade suddenly stopped in mid air; they began to shake, as if they were struggling. A loud buzzing sound emanated out from them.

Han Bei coughed up some blood, and immediately seemed to grow listless. Exhaustion covered her face, and suddenly, her ancient piece of jade slipped out of her control and fell toward the ground.

In that instant, the other two pieces of jade suddenly began to fly off into the distance. It was very sudden, and there was no time for anyone to think. Xu Youdao’s eyes flickered, and his body shot up into the air as he flew toward one of the jade pieces. The gray-robed man’s eyes narrowed, but he too stepped up and shot forward, a green beam of light that shot toward the second jade piece. As for Xie Jie, he flew up and toward the original jade piece, a look of suspicion on his face.

“No fighting, Fellow Daoists,” cried Han Bei. “Great tribulation will come on anyone not of my bloodline who touches those items! I have a method to bring together the three ancient pieces of jade.” She coughed up some more blood.

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I found a lot of different articles about various varieties of meat jelly. Here is one relatively general article. From what I understand, most meat jellies in China are made from pork. In any case, the ingredients of meat jellies are not very important to the story. Check out the picture to get an idea of what it’s supposed to look like.

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# Chapter 162: Crafty Schemes

Her words were essentially meaningless. Xu Youdao increased his speed.

Three people, three different directions. They sped forward, their lightning-repelling items glittering. They flew forward in the twinkling of an eye. Meng Hao also took action; however, he didn’t rush in pursuit of the jades. Instead, he headed toward Han Bei, who seemingly had lost control over her own ancient jade.

At the same time Xu Youdao reached the jade he had been pursuing. He flicked his sleeve, collecting it into his bag of holding. Throughout the process, he avoided any dangers whatsoever.

“Hahaha! Fellow Daoist Han, I’ve retrieved the item for you. I’ll keep it with me for now and give you a copy later.” At the same time as his laughter rang out, Xie Jie’s eyes suddenly glittered brightly. Anyone looking at him would see the same suspicions that existed moments before on his face. However, Han Bei was not faking; the anxiety and enmity on her face after all the coughing up of blood were real. And yet, Xu Youdao had succeeded; Xie Jie seemed to no longer suspect anything. He increased his speed.

As he shot forward, a lightning bolt descended toward him. He spat a third Green Cloaking Pill out of his mouth. A boom sounded out as the pill activated, completely concealing Xie Jie from any lightning. He bit his tongue, spitting out some blood that turned into a blood mist. As he passed through it, his speed increased dramatically. In an instant, he was upon the piece of jade. With the flick of a sleeve, he collected it into his bag of holding.

Xie Jie’s eyes burned as he glanced toward the gray-robed Cultivator. He was rocketing forward, seemingly focused on pursuing the jade piece, but doing so with caution. Having seen Xu Youdao and Xie Jie’s successes, he increased his speed, and within a moment was almost in the position to acquire the last piece of jade.

All eyes were focused on him. Meng Hao watched him flick his sleeve to gather up the piece of jade. Suddenly, for some inexplicable reason, the lightning in the area began to accumulate. In the blink of an eye, ten bolts of lightning shot down.

The gray-robed Cultivator’s lightning-repelling treasure was simply incapable of resisting, and shattered. His face fell, and he was just about to do everything in his power to evade, when a shocking thunderclap sounded out. Everyone watched as the man’s body was transformed into bits of floating ash. Even his bag of holding was destroyed.

Only the ancient jade remained, floating beneath the lightning, undamaged. Bits of ash and bone, the remnants of the gray-robed Cultivator, slowly drifted down to the ground.

Han Bei coughed up some more blood. Her face was pale, but she gritted her teeth and raised her trembling hands toward the drifting piece of jade.

It shook, then changed directions, shooting back toward Han Bei and Meng Hao. Based on its trajectory, it seemed it was actually heading toward Meng Hao.

“Fellow Daoist Meng, be careful!” shouted Han Bei shrilly.

Everything was happening too quickly. Seeing the death of the gray-robed Cultivator caused Xie Jie’s expression to change. A horrified look appeared on Xu Youdao’s face. However, at the moment, both of them were looking at the piece of jade the was descending toward Meng Hao and Han Bei. The death of the gray-robed Cultivator seemed to have been an accident that had nothing to do with the ancient jade.

The two of them flew forward simultaneously. From the look of it, if Meng Hao attempted to interfere, they would join forces to destroy him. However, their speed was a bit slower than his. Even moving as fast as possible, it seemed that they would arrive a moment too late.

Meng Hao, eyes glittering, shot forward, a barely perceptible mocking smile forming on the corner of his mouth. The three of them closed in on the piece of jade.

It was at this moment that the closed eyes of the meat jelly floating in the mid-air suddenly opened. It caught sight of the three people flying toward the jade, and suddenly it shot forward with indescribable speed. In a flash, it landed on Xu Youdao's head.

Xu Youdao's body shook, and a look of astonishment appeared on his head. "Fellow Daoist Xie, help me…"

Before Xie Jie could even react to his words, the meat jelly opened its mouth. Suddenly, massive amounts of lightning bore down. It seemed as if they were entering the mouth of the meat jelly. But by the time they disappeared, Xu Youdao's body was nothing more than ash in the wind.

He didn't even have time to scream.

Xie Jie gasped, and his face flickered. He suddenly stopped moving, his heart pounding. He stared in astonishment at the floating meat jelly; his scalp began to go numb.

Without Xu Youdao and Xie Jie pursuing the ancient piece of jade, it quickly arrived at Meng Hao. He chuckled, shooting forward, and then actually moving out of the path of the piece of jade. Now, it was heading directly toward Han Bei. She gaped in shock, as did Xie Jie, who was still reeling from the actions of the meat jelly moments ago.

Meng Hao laughed, looking back and forth between Han Bei and Xie Jie. "Your act could fool gray-robes, but did you really think you could fool me?" A look of ridicule appeared in his eyes. He spit out the lightning flag. The surrounding lightning was instantly thrown into chaos.

Hearing Meng Hao’s words, Han Bei frowned and Xie Jie’s eyes flashed. They said nothing.

“The appearance of that meat jelly was not something you anticipated, and therefore Xu Youdao lost his life. That was an accident, not part of your scheming. In any case,” he continued coldly, “with Xu Youdao gone, your three person plan cannot be completed. I think now you should consider allowing me to take his place, assuming I wish to.” He smiled.

The lightning flag next to him sent out ripples, causing the surrounding lightning to roil even more violently. Not wanting to attract the attention of the meat jelly, he pulled the lightning flag close to him and suppressed the rippling.

An unsightly expression covered Xie Jie’s face. Meng Hao’s craftiness left him awestruck. During their entire journey, he had barely interacted at all with Han Bei and Xu Youdao. He’d assumed no one could possibly connect the three of them together. And yet Meng Hao had.

“It was Xu Youdao’s final words that made it clear to you,” said Han Bei with a little smile. “Fellow Daoist Meng, you are very perceptive. I can’t help but admire you in this.” There didn’t seemed to be any anxiety on her face whatsoever. “It’s true. There can only be three people in the end. I’ll be honest with you, Fellow Daoist. I’ve betrayed the Black Sieve Sect because of this place. Originally Xie Jie and I received authorization from the Sect to come here. Unfortunately, we never imagined that the object the Sect sought, Ultimate Vexation, would be here. And we never predicted that Xu Youdao would fall.” She straightened her hair and smiled. Despite her beauty, he had been careful of her machinations from the beginning. She was clever, but Xie Jie couldn’t compare at all.

As she spoke, Han Bei lifted her hand and made a grasping motion. A blue streak of light shot toward her from the position where Xu Youdao had been killed. Moments later, a gray streak appeared from where the gray-robed Cultivator had died. They circled around in the air. As they did, Han Bei opened her mouth and spit out a yellow strand. The three strands intertwined and began to emit a bright light.

The yellow strand was obviously from the Li woman, which Han Bei had somehow retrieved after her death.

“In this place of treasures of the Nine Great Families, only the Han Clan treasure can be retrieved. The rest of the statues have not been damaged, and are therefore still sealed. We originally needed strands from three bloodlines, and power from three people, to be able to open the true location of the Time refining treasure of the Han Clan. Now, we have no choice other than to use Xu Youdao’s strand. Brother Meng,” she said earnestly, “let’s not bring up everything from before. I hope we can agree on that. If you agree, then you can have your copy of the Time refining treasure. I’m willing to swear an oath on the name of my illustrious Ancestors!” She slapped her bag of holding to produce a Feng Shui compass. She quickly erased the branding inside of it.

“This object,” she said, “can serve as an expression of my apology. Actually, the exit I spoke of earlier is not really an exit. That place will only return you here. This Feng Shui compass is a Sect treasure. You can use it to get out of this place. However, it won’t take you out of the Blessed Land, It will merely take you out of the square cauldron.” The Feng Shui compass floated over to Meng Hao.

He eyed it expressionlessly, casting his Spiritual Sense into it for a moment. Then he exchanged a glance with Han Bei. Their eyes glittered simultaneously. Xie Jie looked at them, his face grim. He let out a cold snort.

Meng Hao took the Feng Shui compass, his expression the same as usual. He examined it further with Spiritual Sense. After confirming that it was a teleportation device, he nodded.

Han Bei’s smile grew even more beautiful. She gave Meng Hao a slight bow, then looked over at Xie Jie, who was glaring at Meng Hao. He made no attempt to hide his displeasure. He and Han Bei had been a couple for some time. Once their mission here was completed, they were to return to the Sect and be officially united as beloved.

Han Bei took a deep breath and then waved her beautiful hand. The three colored strands interlocked and flew out. They grew longer, creating a complex pattern which then shot toward the statue of the Han ancestor and into the crack on its back. At the same time, Han Bei bit her tongue and then spit out some blood. The three strands turned bright red, and continued to stream into the crack.

Next, the strands separated. Han Bei grabbed one, and the other two shot toward Meng Hao and Xie Jie respectively.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he grabbed the strand. As soon as he touched it, he felt the copper mirror growing hot within the bag of the Cosmos.

“The objects held aloft by the nine statues are not real. They are mere illusions. The true treasures are inside the circular cauldron. No one can take them, not even someone of one of the nine Bloodlines. However, the body of the Han ancestor was struck with Tribulation Lightning, and was cracked. Therefore, the Time refining treasure within the cauldron is the only of the nine that can be acquired!

“The only way to get it, is to break open the circular cauldron. With our Cultivation bases, that would be impossible. Brother Meng! Xie, dear! Please bolster the power of my bloodline. We will use the power of the ancestor statue to retrieve the item!” Her eyes glowed mysteriously as she looked at Meng Hao and Xie Jie, a sweet smile on her face.

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# Chapter 163: Tender Killing

A roaring sound filled the world within the cauldron. The lightning in the region danced about, and the meat jelly seemed to have been frightened. Its attention now appeared to be fixed upon Meng Hao and the others.

Han Bei’s voice rang out. “I shall now employ my bloodline magic. Brother Meng and Xie, dear, please assist me with all your power.” She bit her tongue, spitting more blood out onto the strands that wound into the crack on the statue. It began to emit a red glow.

A droning roar sounded out, and the entire statue began to tremble. Vast quantities of dust poured off of it. Meng Hao suddenly felt as if the strand in his hand was pulling at his Cultivation base, as well as his Spiritual Sense.

His eyes flickered, but his face remained still. Next to him, Xie Jie’s eyes glittered brightly as he poured power from his Cultivation base, as well as Spiritual Sense, into the strand he held. He looked at Meng Hao, killing intent flickering within his eyes. Then his gaze shifted to Han Bei, and his gaze grew warm. It could be said that the two of them were a ‘green plum and a bamboo horse,’ childhood sweethearts. When they were young, there had been some conflict between them, but as of now, it seemed that Han Bei really had worked her way into his heart.

Suddenly, the roaring grew in intensity. Han Bei’s face grew pale. She was in control of the three threads; Xie Jie and Meng Hao were simply providing the assisting power with their Cultivation bases and Spiritual Sense. They had no way to do anything to cause the statue to do anything. They poured their power in, while Han Bei employed the power of her bloodline.

Using her bloodline to touch the spirit of the ancestor statue was magic that only she could perform. If anyone else tried to touch the statue's spirit, their Cultivation base would wither up. It was something that neither Meng Hao nor Xie Jie could do.

About ten breaths worth of time passed. Booming sounds filled the sky. Suddenly the kneeling statue emitted a roar as… its eyes suddenly began to shine, as if it were alive. Its body… slowly began quiver, as if it were preparing to stand.

Han Bei's face grew paler, her eyes brighter. She spat out more blood, causing her Blood Qi to enter into the statue. The whole statue trembled violently, as if an earthquake were shaking it. Then, the massive statue… stood up!

Its eyes emitted a dull glow, and a mysterious pressure filled the entire area. It slowly lowered its hands. As Meng Hao watched, the images were burned indelibly into his memory.

He took a deep breath, continuing to provide Cultivation base power and Spiritual Sense. Han Bei's body shook. This was real trembling, not an act; her face was as pale as a corpse's. But determination radiated out of her eyes, and she spat out more blood.

Boom!

The statue slowly outstretched its right hand, pointing with its index finger. The finger seemed to be filled with an indescribable power; it descended toward the circular cauldron situated in the middle of the nine statues.

Meng Hao's eyes narrowed and gleamed mysteriously.

"I need more power!" said Han Bei, her voice urgent. Without hesitation, Xie Jie poured more power into the strand he held.

Meng Hao's eyes shined as he did the same. Some of the color returned to Han Bei's face, but moments later she spat out more blood, filling the statue with more power. Its finger continued to approach the cauldron; it seemed the cauldron would open at any moment.

At this exact time, however, the descending finger suddenly changed directions. It no longer headed toward the circular cauldron, but toward Xie Jie. It moved with incredible speed, causing a look of complete shock to cover his face.

“Han Bei, what are you doing?!” cried Xie Jie, throwing the strand away from himself. His eyes filled with intense terror, and he shot backward. Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. He opened his mouth, and the lightning mist flew out, preventing Xie Jie from moving backward. His body stopped moving. His words were still echoing out by the time the massive finger reached him.

The finger barely touched him, and his entire body exploded with a bang, even his Dao Pillar. In an instant, everything disintegrated; his life was completely gone.

He didn’t let out a blood-curling scream, only a furious roar that lingered on after his death. An orange strand curled up where his body used to be, which then entered the statue’s finger.

His bag of holding rose up and flew over to Han Bei. She grabbed it and immediately produced a small black vial. She crushed it, and a phantom figure floated up that looked in every way exactly like Han Bei. She absorbed it in through her ears, mouth and nose.

All of this takes some time to describe, but actually happened in space of only a few breaths. Meng Hao watched everything with the same expression as always, as if he had been expecting it to happen. He was completely expressionless, although his eyes flickered.

“Many thanks for your assistance, Fellow Daoist Meng,” said Han Bei with a sweet smile. She bowed slightly toward him.

“Fellow Daoist Han, it was a clever move to exterminate your dear Xie,” he said coolly. He was not surprised, because the violet Feng Shui compass she had given him now was not just unbranded, it also contained a message.

In the message, she had directly told him that she planned to kill Xie Jie, and when it happened, he shouldn't be alarmed.

"When the Black Sieve Sect captured me and my clansmen, it seemed as if they would treat us well. But in actuality, we were nothing more than animals in a cage. Xie Jie was the worst; he treated me horribly since childhood. After we grew up, he had further desires…. It's only natural for me to slay him. If I hadn't, then everything we acquired today would belong to the Black Sieve Sect. Now, we can share everything between the two of us."

She smiled at him and said, "Brother Meng is surpassingly astute, I don't dare to attempt to deceive you. That is why I left the message on the Feng Shui compass. I always accomplish what I set out to do. Today, the Time refinement technique will become ours. From now on, you don't need to do anything more."

Her expression was sincere, although she sighed inwardly. Of the six people who had begun the mission, all had their own thoughts and plans. Only Meng Hao had seen through everything and come through it all.

People had fallen around him, but he remained unscathed. This caused fear to grow in Han Bei's heart, as well as admiration. Had any mistakes been made along the way, Meng Hao would have been dead.

Because of this, she was subconsciously afraid of provoking him. Therefore, her words were actually true, and revealed her true intentions.

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever. He said nothing, just simply nodded. However, the lightning mist surrounded him. If Han Bei did anything threatening, he would call down the lightning; death would be assured.

Han Bei took a deep breath and looked at him. She abandoned any last bit of scheming. The journey here had been difficult, and she had used up all her tricks. She really did not want to meet any more mishaps. Her hand flickered an incantation, and the massive statue shook, then began to reach back toward the circular cauldron.

When it touched it, the entire world within the square cauldron shook. The lid of the circular cauldron slowly tilted up, and a violet Qi began to pour out of it. Inside, Meng Hao caught a glimpse of three jade pages floating up. Their appearance seemed to coincide with that of the violet Qi, and they hadn’t completely emerged from the cauldron, as if they might sink back in at any time.

Han Bei’s eyes filled with a bright glow, and she gasped. Her right hand slapped her bag of holding, and a small clay jar appeared, about the size of a person’s head.

It flew up into the air, transforming into a beam of light that shot toward the circular cauldron. As it neared, cracks spread out across its surface and it exploded, sending the ash that had been inside shooting forward.

Within the ash were what appeared to be ten phantom images. There were men and women, and their ages varied, but they all resembled each other; these must be Clan members of the same bloodline.

This was not just random ash; it was ash collected upon the cremation of various Han Clan members, and contained life force. The figures spread out, and then bowed respectfully toward the circular cauldron.

“Bloodline of Patriarch Han, according to the ancient agreement, the bloodline remains, Patriarch, please return….” As the phantoms spoke, they entered the violet Qi.

At the same time, the statue of the Han Clan Patriarch stretched out its palm and pressed it against the cauldron.

The instant the figures entered the violet Qi and the statue pressed on the cauldron, it vibrated, emitting a droning sound that shook everything. Amidst the roaring, the phantom figures began to burn. As for the statue, it trembled violently. Starting at its feet, cracks spread across its entire body. Suddenly, it began to collapse into pieces.

From this day forward, there would no longer be nine statues in this place, but eight!

Han Bei shook as if some invisible power were rocking her. She took a few steps back and then spit up some blood. At the same time, a violet glow flew out from the crumbling statue. Meng Hao could clearly see the excitement which appeared in her eyes. Within the violet glow appeared to be a small, sleeping person. It suddenly shot toward Han Bei, hitting her between the eyebrows and merging into her.

“That’s what she came for!” thought Meng Hao, his eyes narrowing.

At the same time, because of the sacrifice of the ten Han Clan phantoms, the three jade pages within the violet Qi freed themselves from the circular cauldron and flew out. As they did, a sound like a sigh could be heard from the circular cauldron.

As the sigh sounded out, one of the flying jade pages suddenly stopped and then spun backward toward the cauldron. The other two continued to fly forward.

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# Chapter 164: That Bird’s Aura…

The spot between Han Bei’s eyebrows glowed with a violet light. Panting, she shot into the air after one of the pages. Meng Hao also leaped into the air, moving with as much speed as he could muster after the other page.

They flew up simultaneously and in different directions, dodging in and out of the lightning in pursuit of the jade pages. Just as each person was about to lay hands on their respective pages, the meat jelly, which had been observing them this whole time, suddenly sprang into action.

It’s movement caused Meng Hao’s expression to flicker and Han Bei’s face to fall. Both of them were filled with fear.

The object itself wasn’t dangerous, but it seemed to enjoy jumping onto peoples’ heads, and then consuming lightning. In other words, its arrival heralded the onslaught of a sea of lightning!

“Dammit!” said Meng Hao, his eyes narrowing when he saw the meat jelly heading toward him. Han Bei, who was moving in a different direction, breathed a sigh of relief.

Keeping his eye on the meat jelly, Meng Hao grabbed the jade page and then shot backward as fast as possible. He caused the lightning mist to withdraw; it might be an effective tool to threaten others in this place, but would only serve to attract the meat jelly, and thus, more lightning. Unfortunately, it seemed he had acted too slowly.

He shot backward as fast as possible, but the meat jelly was clearly very persistent. In a flash, it was in front of Meng Hao. It shot downward, and appeared to be just about to land on Meng Hao’s head.

Before it did, and before Meng Hao could even do anything, the meat jelly suddenly trembled. The face of the old man appeared on its surface once again. His eyes were wide open, and his expression was one of both disbelief and disgust. Suddenly, it opened its mouth and spoke.

“Dammit! Dammit! How come you have that damn bird’s aura on you?!” It hopped backward through the air as if it was completely disgusted with Meng Hao and wouldn’t even come near him. It flew back up and then suddenly vomited, as if it had just seen something so disgusting it was painful.

If that were all, then it wouldn’t be a big deal. But then a flash of light could be seen as the meat jelly suddenly appeared in front of Han Bei. She watched in shock as it gulped down the jade paper in a single bite.

It started to chew, and when she saw this, Han Bei’s scalp grew numb. She could do nothing but move backward.

“Gross, gross, gross….” said the face on the meat jelly, its expression twisted as it looked over at Meng Hao. It looked as if it was scared to even get close to him.

Meng Hao had a strange expression on his face as he looked at the retreating meat jelly. He glanced at horrified Han Bei.

She was silent for a moment, and then said, “Congratulations on acquiring the Time refining technique of the Han Clan, Fellow Daoist Meng. There are three jade pieces in total, but each page has a technique that can be used by itself.” A complicated look appeared in her eye. Suddenly, the lightning in the area began to roar.

It rapidly increased in intensity, each and every bolt brimming with the fierce intensity it had at the beginning. The hour time period had passed. As of now, a lack of lightning-repelling objects equated to certain death and transformation into flying ash.

The sheets of lightning made Meng Hao’s expression fall. Han Bei also looked shocked.

“You acquired the object, so it’s yours, Brother Meng,” said Han Bei hurriedly. “I will lay no claim to it. But I must ask you to take care for it well. Please do not lose it. Next time we meet, you must give me a copy. That was our agreement.” As soon as the words were out of her mouth, she slapped her bag of holding. A violet Feng Shui compass appeared in her hands. It flashed, and then her body disappeared as she was teleported away. In that same instant, however, the meat jelly shot forward, borrowing some of the teleportation power to also leave the world of the cauldron.

Meng Hao looked around at the vast fields of lightning, and then immediately pulled out the violet Feng Shui compass, which he had examined closely earlier. He poured Spiritual Sense into it, activating its teleportation power. In an instant, he was teleported away from the world of lightning.

When he reappeared, the sky above was dark, and the earth was trembling. Booms echoed out everywhere, and his Dao Pillars were instantly unstable. He immediately coughed up a mouthful of blood and staggered forward a few paces. He looked around.

He was in the wide plain, not far from the place where he had met up with Han Bei initially. He took a deep breath. Han Bei hadn’t been lying; the Feng Shui compass did what she said it would.

He lifted his hand, within which was the good luck charm. He was just about to pour some Spiritual Sense into it and leave this bizarre Blessed Land, when suddenly a massive tower began to rise up from the earth off in the distance. Everything shook, and roaring filled the air.

He could see that this pillar was like a tower, and it emanated an aura. The aura was not that of Core Formation or the Nascent Soul stage, but of Foundation Establishment!

This was the the Hundred Spirits Tower, constructed with the Dao Pillars of over two hundred Foundation Establishment Cultivators!

Meng Hao sucked in a deep breath when he saw the Hundred Spirits Tower. Surrounding the tower were phantom figures of hundreds of Cultivators.

They emitted shrill howls which merged together into a powerful sound of grievance. The sound rose up into the heavens, causing everything to be dark.

From various directions, ten or so freshly acquired Dao Pillars flew through the air toward the tower and melded into it. The power spreading from the tower grew even more intense.

“I suppose the rest of the rogue Foundation Establishment Cultivators who came here are all dead….” He was silent, struck by the extent of the Black Sieve Sect’s plotting. His Dao Pillars trembled inside of him. Were they not Perfect Dao Pillars, he wouldn’t be able to keep them under control.

“I can’t stay here any longer….” he thought. However, it was at this time that he cocked his head and stared off into the distance. His eyes glittered slightly, and he decided not to leave. Instead, he flew up and off into the distance.

He flew for the space of about ten breaths before stopping. There below him in the plain, he saw a group of four Cultivators sitting cross-legged in meditation. Around them circled a protective spell which seemed to be resisting the power of the Hundred Spirits Tower.

One of them, was none other than Lu Tao!

Meng Hao watched on as one of the four people coughed up some blood. His body suddenly exploded, and an illusory Dao Pillar flew out of him off into the sky.

After that, another Cultivator began to tremble. His eyes snapped open and he stared at Lu Tao. He laughed bitterly. “You despicable….” Before he could finish, his body was torn to pieces as his Dao Pillar flew out. The third person’s face grew pale as his body also was torn to shreds. His Dao Pillar flew off into the distance.

However, the death of these three people made the protective spell many times stronger than it had been just now. Lu Tao sat inside pale-face, gritting his teeth with dogged will. The power of this spell was the only thing resisting the gravitational force outside.

Meng Hao looked down. He could see clearly that the three Cultivators had been under Lu Tao's control. In reality, their Dao Pillars had been blood sacrifices to protect Lu Tao. Their deaths had simply bolstered his spell.

Meng Hao, his face placid, descended toward Lu Tao. He landed next to the spell, looked down at Lu Tao, and gave a dry cough.

Lu Tao began to tremble. When he opened his eyes and gaze upon Meng Hao, a look of shock covered his face.

"So, it's… Fellow Daoist Meng…." His face was pale, his voice anxious as he looked at Meng Hao."

"Nice spell," said Meng Hao coolly. He spoke neither quickly nor slowly, but his words caused Lu Tao to feel extremely alarmed. From his perspective, it seemed that Meng Hao wasn't being affected at all by the gravitational force.

"Fellow Daoist Meng, what… what do you want?" His heart was filled with deep anxiety. If Meng Hao interfered with the spell, then it would be broken. He could imagine what the gravitational force would do to him after that; his body would shatter and his Dao Pillars would fly into the sky to join all the others in the enormous tower.

"Tell me what the Thunderclap Leaf really does," he said calmly, looking at Lu Tao within the spell.

"I already told you, Fellow Daoist Meng," he blurted, growing even more nervous. "The Thunderclap Leaf…." Before he could continue, Meng Hao reached out and pushed down on the spell circulating around Lu Tao.

As he did, the spell trembled, and a small crack appeared on its surface. Terror flashed onto Lu Tao's face.

“Stop, Fellow Daoist Meng, please… I’m not deceiving you. The Thunderclap Leaf really can…”

Meng Hao gave a cold snort and then pushed down again. A boom sounded out, and seven or eight more cracks appeared within the spell. Lu Tao could suddenly feel even more of the gravitational force that existed in the outside world seeping inside. His Dao Pillar trembled unstably. His scalp went numb; he was currently scared out of his wits.

“Thunderclap Leaves are rare in the Southern Domain,” he gushed, talking as fast as he possibly could. “Special techniques exist which can imbue them into magical items to increase their lightning power! Fellow Daoist Meng, listen to me, I have a jade slip here as evidence. Just read the technique in the jade slip and you’ll receive enlightenment!!” He produced a jade slip which he showed to Meng Hao. His entire body trembled, and a look of entreaty appeared on his face. His words sounded sincere, as if he weren’t concealing anything.

“Still trying to fool me?” A cold light gleamed in Meng Hao’s eye. His right index finger stabbed into the spell. A boom rippled out as more cracks filled the spell. There was even a wide hole in one place. The gravitational force poured in. Lu Tao’s face twisted and he coughed up some blood. It looked as if his body would explode at any moment.

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# Chapter 165: Sieve Net Thunder Tree!

“STOP!!!” shrieked Lu Tao, terror-stricken. His face completely drained of blood, and he felt as if the shadow of death were looming over him.

He clearly remembered the scene when he had entered this Blessed Land, how so many Cultivators had exploded, their Dao Pillars sucked away. He was from the Black Lands, and knew a secret method that he had been able to utilize to stay safe. But with Meng Hao here, he felt an incredible pressure weighing down upon him that he had never felt before.

Furthermore, it seemed that no matter what he said, Meng Hao wouldn’t believe him. Meng Hao completely had the upper hand. Faced with such life-or-death danger, Lu Tao’s schemes disappeared like ash into the wind.

“I’m telling the truth,” said Lu Tao pleadingly. “Thunderclap Leaves can be absorbed into magical treasures to imbue them with the power of lightning. Why don’t you believe me!?” His voice was hoarse, and from the look on his face, he had been pushed to the limit and had nothing more he could say. His eyes suddenly seemed to flash with understanding. He gave a hoarse laugh, and his eyes filled with boldness born of desperation. “I get it. It’s not that you don’t believe me, it’s that you want to kill me!

“Fine! Just shatter my spell, then. I, Lu, have already explained the Thunderclap Leaf’s usage. If you’re going to kill me, then just kill me. But you can forget about getting the information from my jade slip!” Gritting his teeth, Lu Tao pushed down hard on the jade slip. If Meng Hao was really going to destroy the spell, then he would crush it to make sure the fish died and the net was torn; everyone would lose.

Meng Hao looked calmly at Lu Tao. Some time passed, and then he sighed. He lifted his hand and pushed down again. A boom sounded out. What was destroyed, however, was not the spell, but rather the jade slip in Lu Tao’s hand.

Meng Hao destroyed it, transforming it into pieces of ash.

This caused Lu Tao’s face to fall and his heart to grow cold. Obviously, this action on the part of Meng Hao indicated that… he didn’t believe him!

“Tell me, or don’t tell me. I’m out of patience,” he said coolly. It’s not that he didn’t believe what Lu Tao said about the Thunderclap Leaves being able to imbue magical treasures with the power of lightning. But Lu Tao spoke his words too easily. They might be true, but Meng Hao couldn’t imagine that the Thunderclap Leaves collected by Patriarch Reliance would be so simple.

A bitter smile appeared on Lu Tao’s face, as if he had nothing left to say. Meng Hao nodded slightly, then began to press down onto the spell. This time, he would completely destroy it.

“I’LL TELL!!” Lu Tao’s body was trembling, and his heart nearly collapsed into pieces. The shaking of his Dao Pillar turned into a look of resolve in his eyes, and a bitter smile on his lips.

“I’ll tell you,” he said, quivering. “But you have to swear that after I tell you, you won’t do anything to damage my spell.” He smiled a painful smile. Everything he had said before was filled with half-truths, and yet, none of it even touched on the real truth, the most important part. Facing up against death the way he was now, however, he had no choice but to be honest.

“Speak,” said Meng Hao, his expression the same as ever, but his eyes shining mysteriously.

Lu Tao took a deep breath, and was silent for just a moment. Then, with a pained look, he slowly began to speak. “Thunderclap Leaves come from the

Thunderclap Tree. But the Thunderclap Tree’s real name is Sieve Net Thunder, or Mulberry Thunder Tree.”

Meng Hao’s expression was placid, and it was impossible to tell what he was thinking. He looked coolly at Lu Tao. This in turn caused indescribable terror to fill Lu Tao’s heart. His anguished expression grew stronger, and the coldness within him completely encompassed his heart and filled his body. He began to tremble with fear.

“There’s a legend about the Mulberry Thunder Tree. According to this legend, in ancient times there was an almighty being who achieved enlightenment while sitting underneath a Sieve Net Thunder Tree. Heavenly Tribulation descended, desiring to wipe out this new Dao. The will of the lightning infected the tree. As for the almighty being, it split apart the Tribulation Lightning and then stepped into the stars.

“Though the almighty being departed, the Sieve Net Thunder Tree absorbed some of its Dao in addition to the power of the Tribulation Lightning. It was destroyed, and yet, a thousand years later, a sprout appeared within the dead trunk!

“Thus was born a tree that was mulberry, but not mulberry. Thunder, but not thunder. A Sieve Net Mulberry Thunder Tree!”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he listened to Lu Tao, but he said nothing.

“In regards to the almighty being which achieved enlightenment underneath the Sieve Net Mulberry Thunder Tree, what he said that day beneath the tree was that if he could not achieve ultimate supremacy, he would rather his body be shattered, and stay underneath the tree for all eternity!” Lu Tao lowered his head as he spoke, hiding the stubbornness which shone in his eyes.

A strange expression appeared on Meng Hao’s face as he listened to the story. It seemed to him unlikely that Lu Tao was making this story up as he went.

“Countless ages have passed since the Sieve Net Mulberry Thunder Tree appeared. Eventually, it became part of the heart of the earth, which then caused more trees to sprout. Yet, they contained the experiences from events in ancient times. Because the will of the Heavens evolved, this tree was eventually able to cast off that which withered it. Today, it is as precious as phoenix feathers and qilin horns.”

Lu Tao was silent for a moment before continuing. “Most Cultivators will use the tree to meld it with magical items, or even absorb it into their Dao Pillars, acquiring the invincible thunder which exists within the Sieve Net Mulberry Thunder Leaf.

“However, in the Black Lands, there is a type of larva called Frigid Snow, which exists in the snowstorms of mid-winter. Of all the remarkable bugs in the world, it is ranked number ninety-seven. It’s a remarkable larva; it doesn’t produce silk, but rather, intense coldness. It is quite prized by Cultivators, and if it can be required, is viewed as a precious treasure. It can be refined into a Frigid Spirit, embodied into a Frigid treasure.

“This larva is not common, but not exceedingly rare, and occasionally appears.” At this point, Lu Tao paused for a moment and looked at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao looked back at him, and their gazes locked for a moment. Lu Tao sighed inwardly, and then continued.

“What only a few people know, however, is that there is an unusual relationship between the larva and the Sieve Net Thunder Mulberry Tree. If the larva consumes the leaves of the tree, it is possible for it to become the number four ranked remarkable bug… the Eyeless Larva!

“The Eyeless Larva turns into a chrysalis, and will produce a thread of silk. That thread cannot be broken, nor can the body be destroyed. The body cannot be destroyed, and the thread cannot be broken. It creates an unstoppable cycle. The thread becomes an invincible precious treasure.

“The Eyeless Larva has only appeared twice throughout history, and each time, the thread it produced caused a sensation in the Cultivation world.

There was even conflict in the Eastern Lands. To this very day, no one knows what caused the death of the Eyeless Larvae that appeared twice before.” Lu Tao sighed inwardly. Having finished speaking, he looked deeply at Meng Hao, then closed his eyes.

Meng Hao muttered to himself as he looked at closed-eyed Lu Tao. Finally, he laughed. Turning, his body transformed into a prismatic beam which shot off into the distance.

After Meng Hao left, Lu Tao opened his eyes. He looked blankly up at the sky, then let out a long sigh. Soon, his eyes filled with a cold glow.

“Everything I said now was ninety percent true and ten percent false. That guy might by smart, but he’ll have a hard time telling which is which. He’ll definitely go looking for the Frigid Snow Larva. If he really does feed it the Sieve Net Thunder Mulberry Leaf, then he’s dead!

“All I have to do now is endure this pain a bit longer until the Black Sieve Sect finishes. Then I’ll be able to find some clues in this place to find what I’m looking for.” A grim look on his face, he took a deep breath, and then closed his eyes to begin repairing his spell.

Meng Hao was lost in thought as he flew through the air. Of course he wouldn’t believe everything that Lu Tao told him. However, he was fairly certain that at least some of what he’d said was true. It would have been too difficult to simply make up such a story on the spot. Perhaps half was true and half were lies.

“With desire, comes incompleteness. If I have no desire, then the storms will not touch me.” Meng Hao smiled as he continued onward. Everything he passed was completely barren; he didn’t see even one rogue Foundation Establishment Cultivator. Up ahead, the Hundred Spirits Tower emitted a bright glow which surrounded everything.

From such a distance, Meng Hao was unable to spot Xu Qing amongst the crowd. He silently took out the good luck charm and poured some spiritual energy into it. Immediately, he felt the teleportation power.

However, he couldn’t teleport immediately. It would require some time before the power could be activated. Meng Hao took a deep breath and then shot toward the peak of a nearby mountain. He sat down cross-legged. Ignoring what was happening around him, he continued to pour spiritual energy into the good luck charm, feeling the teleportation power growing in intensity.

“I need to wait for the time it takes half an incense stick to burn…” This was his first time using the good luck charm, so it was also his first time encountering its downside.

His current location wasn’t exactly safe, but there were no people around, only the glow emanating from the Hundred Spirits Tower. However, his Perfect Foundation was still capable of resisting it. If too much time passed, though, it would become more difficult to fight back. Therefore, he concentrated fully on the good luck charm.

“I wonder where I’ll be teleported to….” His eyes flickered as he felt the teleportation power surging. He placed his right hand on the ground. The dirt began to churn, and tentacles burst up out of the soil. They transformed into a violet-golden fruit the size of a palm. Meng Hao closed his fingers over it and then placed it into his bag of the Cosmos.

It was at this moment that suddenly, something flickered in the air near the Hundred Spirits Tower. It wasn’t large, but Meng Hao immediately recognized it. It was none other than what he and Han Bei had encountered before teleporting out of the square cauldron… the meat jelly!

It floated in mid-air, its archaic features gazing curiously at the Hundred Spirits Tower.

Suddenly, it emitted a piercing howl which filled heaven and earth. The wind and clouds surged, and the ground shook. Even the Hundred Spirits Tower trembled as if it might collapse. The hundreds of phantoms which circled around all began to shriek. Lightning began to build up on their bodies.

Surrounding the tower at its base were nearly one thousand Black Sieve Sect disciples, all sitting cross legged. In the forefront were eight Core Formation Cultivators. As soon as the meat jelly appeared and the clouds whipped into a frenzy, their eyes opened, and they looked up into the sky.

“It’s appeared!!”

“That thing is Ultimate Vexation?”

Their eyes filled with excitement, and their hearts pounded as their hands flickered incantations. Immediately, the ground in front of them began to glow, and suddenly Patriarch Violet Sieve and the beautiful middle-aged woman appeared. Nascent Soul Cultivators!

“So, it was fished out!!”

“I shall acquire this item today!” cried Patriarch Violet Sieve. His eyes were fixed on the meat jelly and they shined with intense expectation.

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# Chapter 166: Ultimate Vexation Bonds a Master!

“According to the ancient records, this is Ultimate Vexation,” said Patriarch Violet Sieve. “It will never bond a master, it loves thunder, and consumes lightning. However, what excites it more than anything is not lightning, but the electricity within the human body!

“The electricity contained within the Dao Pillars of hundreds of Cultivators, as well as the power of their Cultivation bases, has been combined into the Hundred Spirits Tower. This thing has never encountered such immense, intangible aura as that which emanates from this tower!” He stared at the meat jelly, which was currently backing away slowly.

Next to Patriarch Violet Sieve, the beautiful middle-aged woman was also staring at the meat jelly. Both of them rotated their Cultivation bases. They seemed ready to spring into action at any moment.

Panting, Patriarch Violet Sieve used Divine Sense to communicate with the beautiful woman: “Wait just a bit longer. This thing is fast, and if it wishes to flee, even a Sect Patriarch wouldn’t be able to capture it alive. It has an incredible aura, and if captured, may detonate itself and wait to be reincarnated. If that happens, who knows how many thousands of years will pass before it reappears….

“We must wait for it to consume the Hundred Spirits Tower. Inside is a seal, which, combined with magic cast by the three Patriarchs on the outside, will strip it of its power of self-detonation. Then, the two of us will be be able to capture it alive!!”

Meng Hao’s brow furrowed as he looked at the meat jelly. In his estimation it was a very inauspicious item. Inside the cauldron, it had caused the death of several people. In the end, it had even spoken, which left Meng Hao with a very strange feeling. He really disliked the thing.

“So, that thing is what the Black Sieve Sect came into this place for.” He was lost in thought for the space of about ten breaths. The good luck charm was almost activated and would be usable at any moment. Meng Hao’s expression was calm as he observed the proceedings. In his heart, he was ready to leave at a moment’s notice.

Up above, the meat jelly suddenly let out another menacing howl. The Hundred Spirits Tower trembled as if it were about to collapse. Arcs of electricity sparked off of it, as did a fatally enticing aura that Cultivators couldn’t sense, but the meat jelly could. Its nose twitched and its eyes grew wide. Patriarch Violet Sieve watched excitedly as it shot forward, approaching the Hundred Spirits Tower. Its mouth opened wide and it took a giant bite.

As it took more bites, the magical face on the meat jelly looked more and more happy. It even began to emit contented humming sounds. It swallowed bite after bite, and soon the Hundred Spirits Tower was more than half consumed. Suddenly, what remained of the tower exploded!

A boom resonated out as the tower collapsed in upon itself and then shot toward the meat jelly. The meat jelly was clearly frightened half to death. The crumbling tower transformed into an enormous chain that moved with incredible speed as it encircled the meat jelly.

The meat jelly let out a frightened screech. It quickly tried to hop backward through the air, but couldn’t, as if it were being held down. At this very moment, outside the Blessed Land, next to the black door, the statue that had been carried to this place by the Black Sieve Sect began to emanate a mysterious glow. Within the dark glow were three figures sitting cross-legged in meditation atop the ragged hide, controlling it.

Within the Blessed Land, ear-splitting shrieks filled the air. Meng Hao looked at the meat jelly floating in mid-air, bound by the chain. The magical face looked panic stricken. It wanted to flee, but was held tight by the chain. As it tried to jump away, the chain stretched back behind it like a long tail.

At the same time, Patriarch Violet Sieve’s eyes flashed. He took a step forward, and then his body disappeared. He reappeared next to the meat jelly. He lifted up his hand to grab it.

Simultaneously, the beautiful women also moved, appearing on the other side of the meat jelly.

The fear on the meat jelly’s magical face grew more intense, and it let out a miserable cry. Its body suddenly began to shake, and lightning crackled off of it in waves. Heaven and earth shook, and Patriarch Violet Sieve’s face flickered. He retreated a pace. The beautiful woman’s eyes narrowed, and she too retreated, not daring to touch the lightning.

As the two retreated, the chained meat jelly rushed forward, its face filled with helplessness and despair. With the chain restricting it, it couldn’t move very fast. Behind it, Patriarch Violet Sieve’s eyes gleamed, and he let out a cold harrumph.

“You can’t escape,” he said, his voice filling the air. “Today, the Black Sieve Sect has come for you!” He took a step forward, reaching his hand out. The beautiful woman gave a cold snort and lifted her hand up as well. In the blink of an eye, her body seemed to be surrounded by stars, which then transformed into a multicoloured beam that shot up to surround the meat jelly on all sides.

The meat jelly quivered, and flew forward. The magical face spoke, its voice archaic, like that of an old man’s: “You people can’t do this….”

When they heard the words, shock filled the faces of the surrounding thousand Black Sieve Sect Disciples. They had never imagined that this object would be able to speak with the voice of a human.

“So, you truly are Ultimate Vexation,” said Patriarch Violet Sieve, laughing. He shot forward along with the beautiful woman. Their eyes glowed mysteriously as their bodies transformed into beams of light as which surrounded the meat jelly.

If that were all to it, it wouldn't be a big deal. But next, the eight Core Formation Cultivators among the Black Sieve Sect disciples all let out a shout. The rest of the disciples began to chant a scripture.

At the same time as scripture droned out from the mouths of the thousand disciples, far way in the Southern Domain, tens of thousands of Black Sieve Sect Cultivators sat cross-legged, also chanting a scripture. Above the Ten Thousand Mountains of the Black Sieve Sect, an enormous vortex circulated in the air. It sucked in the scriptures chanted by the tens of thousands of Cultivators and transmitted them into the Blessed Land via the mouths of the thousand Cultivators there. The power of the scripture caused everything to shake and tremble.

A concerned look appeared on the meat jelly's magical face. "You people are immoral. You should be converting that bird, you shouldn't be trying to convert me…." Its voice sounded frightened, and it let out another shriek. Suddenly, a huge bluish aura began to emanate off of it.

Screaming miserably, the meat jelly shot forward, its expression desperate. It wanted to flee. At this moment, a massive roaring sound filled the sky. Up above, an enormous cage appeared in mid-air.

It was composed of pitch black iron bars which were inscribed with countless magical sealing symbols. It emanated a shocking pressure which caused large amounts of fissures to split the earth blow.

The cage glittered as it shot toward the meat jelly, preparing to capture it alive and lock it tight. A black aura emanated out from the cage's bars, within which could be seen countless faces whose features were filled with excited avarice.

All of this takes a long time to describe, but actually happened in an instant. Meng Hao was not very close, yet was still shaken to the core. The good luck charm was almost ready to activate. Although everything that was happening was shocking, he didn’t really care too much about it, and was mostly focused on getting away.

But… suddenly, he leaped up and began to retreat backward.

“That damned meat jelly, why is it coming toward me?” He retreated unhesitatingly, eyeing the meat jelly as it changed direction and for no apparent reason shot toward him.

Meng Hao couldn’t make himself believe that the meat jelly would pass him by. Having seen the destruction left in its wake within the cauldron, he was certain that the thing was coming directly toward him.

Meng Hao’s scalp went numb. He thought about the two Nascent Soul eccentrics, about the bizarre sound of the scripture being chanted, and about the massive cage descending from above. His annoyance with the meat jelly grew more and more intense.

But he was merely a Foundation Establishment Cultivator. No matter how fast he moved, there was no way he could evade an item which was currently being chased by two Nascent Soul eccentrics and, in fact, the entire Black Sieve Sect. The meat jelly was chained, but its speed was still impossible to describe. One breath, it was off in the distance, and the next breath, it was directly in front of Meng Hao. It slowly descended onto his head.

A look of shock covered Meng Hao’s face. He reached up, grabbed it, and threw it away as far as possible.

The instant it was thrown away, it hopped back toward Meng Hao, opened its mouth and then bit his arm.

“If I can’t escape,” it wailed, “then neither can you, you immoral fellow….”

Patriarch Violet Sieve and the beautiful woman approached in pursuit, and when they saw what was happening, their eyes went wide with intense rage.

“Doth thou dare!” raged the violet-robed Patriarch. His roar reached to the Heavens, and the entire land began to quake. His speed was incredible, and within moments, was in front of Meng Hao, a look of indescribable rage on his face. His palm descended toward Meng Hao.

Boom!

As the boom echoed out, a twinkling shield appeared around Meng Hao. It wasn’t being emitted by Meng Hao, but rather the meat jelly. Furthermore, as Meng Hao retreated, it wasn’t under his own power, but rather because the meat jelly was pulling him along by the arm.

It had his arm firmly gripped in its mouth, which caused blood to seep out. Its body trembled, and was no longer translucent. Now it looked somewhat muddy.

“So disgusting, so disgusting, so disgusting…. gross, gross, gross….” it cried. Patriarch Violet Sieve and the beautiful woman stood by, their expressions mixtures of rage and disbelief.

“Bonding… it… it’s bonding a master?”

“I’ve bonded a master,” cried the meat jelly, hopping up onto Meng Hao’s head and transforming into the shape of a hat. “I bond this guy as my master. Useless! It’s useless to capture me now. You immoral people, I’ve already bonded a master! I have no more powers of flight and no more shield. I’m crippled, I’m going to die! You bunch of foolish fools, you’re too evil! I, I, I, I….” It suddenly turned its shocked attention to Meng Hao. “Hey, why haven’t you teleported away yet?”

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# Chapter 167: You Know, That’s Immoral…

“Are you an idiot? Ohh, I like idiots. Idiots are good. Idiots are great. Eee?[1] How come you haven’t teleported away yet? Wait, are you actually an idiot? Why did that bird pick an idiot?” The meat jelly continued to chatter without stopping.

Patriarch Violet Sieve raised his head up to the sky and howled. He shot closer, lifting his hand. All the light in the area seemed to grow dim, and ripples spread out everywhere, which then began to collapse in toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s face went pale. With a bitter smile, he looked at the glittering shield in front of him that was protecting him from Patriarch Violet Sieve. It was rapidly collapsing. Up ahead, the faces within the black aura emitted by the cage roared with rage. There was no time for Meng Hao to think. He pinched the good luck charm, and a roar sounded out. Pain filled his body. To everyone watching, it looked as if the moment before the protective shield broke, a black hole appeared next to Meng Hao. It swallowed him up, along with the meat jelly.

Meng Hao disappeared, along with echo of the meat jelly’s voice:

“Although it actually makes me like you more, are you really an idiot? No way. There’s really no way. That bird is the root of all immorality, and yet the person he selected turns out to be an idiot… idiot… idiot….”

The voice echoed out into silence. It was the only sound to be heard. Patriarch Violet Sieve stood there, his face unsightly, rage surging from his eyes. The chain fell to the ground in front of him. The meat jelly had bonded Meng Hao as its master, and had cast off the chain.

“Bonded….” panted the Patriarch. “It actually bonded a master. According the ancient records, it can’t bond a master! It has never bonded a master!” He lifted his head up and roared.

The beautiful, middle-aged woman took a deep breath. After a moment, her eyes glittered. The cage disintegrated and the chain broke up into countless pieces and drifted away. The figures within the black aura began to fade, and the aura itself dissipated. As it did, Patriarch Violet Sieve’s heart trembled.

“A good luck charm from the Milky Way Luck Sect…. So, that person was able to leave because of that object. I will find him. I will pay any cost necessary to find him. But his Sect can’t find out. Ultimate Vexation has bonded a master. That’s excellent. A new variable. Perhaps Longevity Qi cannot be produced, but Longevity Pills can!!”

Meanwhile, in the Southern Domain.

Near the sphere of influence of the Blood Demon Sect was a lake. The lake was as smooth as a mirror, and emitted spiritual energy, causing the entire area to be covered with mist throughout the year. It had a very otherworldly look.

But, that was only from the perspective of mortals. Although the spiritual energy in the area wasn’t bad, it was far from being close to what is was within the five great Sects. Even some smaller Sects had greater accumulations of spiritual energy.

Although this area was within the sphere of influence of the Blood Demon Sect, it was on the very edge, on the area bordering the Solitary Sword Sect’s territory. Occasionally, Cultivators from the Blood Demon Sect would fly by this area. In actuality, it was a relatively dangerous place.

That was because the Blood Demon Sect and the Solitary Sword Sect had a blood feud, which was common knowledge amongst Southern Domain

Cultivators. Although no major conflicts had broken out, small fights would occasionally occur.

Many areas surrounding the lake were actually battlefields for the Solitary Sword Sect and the Blood Demon Sect.

Next to the lake was a mountain village, which was inhabited by a Clan by the name of Xiao. The most powerful member of the Clan was of the mid Foundation Establishment stage. Seven or eight Clan members were at the Qi Condensation stage, and the rest didn’t have any latent talent whatsoever. Years ago, the Clan Lord had been a disciple of the Blood Demon Sect. However, he was growing old, and had been injured. His Cultivation base could make no further progress, and his longevity was running out.

In most cases, disciples like this are asked to leave the Blood Demon Sect and found Clans in the surrounding areas. Their heirs will then have the chance to enter the Blood Demon Sect.

Generally speaking, even if the Solitary Sword Sect came into the region, they would ignore such people. As a result, the Xiao Clan’s territory had been relatively peaceful in recent years.

However, that peace was mostly because no large Sect had made any attempt to bully them; often there would be friction with surrounding Cultivator Clans.

This was especially true because of the position they occupied next to the Spirit lake. Many surrounding Cultivator Clans coveted the lake, and glared at it like a tiger eyeing its prey. Were it not for the Cultivation base of the Xiao Clan Lord, their clan would definitely have been carved up like a melon.

Unfortunately, Xiao Clan Lord Xiao Chang’en’s [2] longevity was reaching its end, and his body was beginning to deteriorate. A crisis was forming. Today, members of the Xu Clan had arrived with ill intentions. They strolled through the Xiao Clan, cold smiles covering their faces.

“Fellow Daoist Chang’en,” said the Xu Clan Lord Xu Luodi 3 with a false smile and a sinister voice, “you should carefully consider my proposal. If we form a marriage alliance, then we can share this lake. That will ensure that the names of Xu and Xiao will exist forever. The day when our Clans can re-enter the Blood Demon Sect will be just around the corner.” Behind him trailed ten or more Clan members with Cultivation bases at the Qi Condensation stage. The most conspicuous among them was at the eighth level of Qi Condensation. He was currently casting smiles toward one of the members of the Xiao Clan, was a tall, slim young woman with a scowl on her face.

The girl wore a long green robe. Wind from the lake lifted her silky hair. She had beautiful features and skin like jade. Her intelligent eyes were like those of a red phoenix, tilted upward gently. She was truly a rare beauty.

Xiao Chang’en stood next to her, looking somewhat sickly. The flame of his life force was growing dim. Behind him were the seven or eight Qi Condensation Clan members. He glanced at the people from the Xu Clan, and opened his mouth to speak, but then trembled and began to cough. The young woman reached out to support him, a worried look on her face.

Xiao Chang’en took a deep breath and then said, “Xu Luodi, you can have the lake, but as for a marriage alliance, that’s impossible.” He patted the hand of the woman who stood next to him, and then glanced at the people from the Xu Clan. He was clearly weak, but his look could chop nails and slice iron.

“The Xu Clan wants this lake,” said Xu Luodi. “As for the Xiao Clan’s talisman expert girl, we want her too. If you agree, excellent. But if you disagree….” A smile covered his face, and yet his eyes glowed with killing intent. He took a step forward.

As his foot descended, a wave of mid Foundation Establishment pressure emanated out, filling the area. The faces of the Xiao Clan Qi Condensation Cultivators went pale and filled with nervousness and uncertainty. Ripples spread out across the surface of the lake.

At this exact same time, however, the sky above, which had previously been filled with blazing sunlight, suddenly seemed to grow dark.

It went back to normal in an instant. It happened so fast that if you blinked, you might not even notice.

However, the faces of both the Xu and Xiao Clan flashed, and they all gasped. A look of disbelief appeared on Xu Luodi's face, and as for Xiao Chang'en his heart was currently filled with the flames of fury, and yet all he could do was gape in astonishment. All of the Clan members present were currently staring toward the lake.

A gigantic black hole had appeared above the lake, sending the lake waters roiling. A person appeared from within the black hole, emerging along with massive amounts of black aura. He coughed up a mouthful of blood. A noisy voice could suddenly be heard.

"I'm not finished. Are you really an idiot… idiot… idiot?"

Face pale, Meng Hao emerged and glanced around. His gaze landed upon the Cultivators from the Xu and Xiao Clans. As the black hole disappeared behind him, Xiao Chang'en stopped panting and collected himself. A strange light gleamed in his eye. The woman next to him was about to open her mouth, but Xiao Chang'en lightly covered it with his hand.

He did this because he was the owner of the lake. Xu Luodi wasn't the only person who had come here recently with ill intentions and a desire to take a superior position. The current situation caused Xiao Chang'en's heart to be filled with anxiety. His eyes immediately began to shine with a stern aura. A cold smile appeared on his face.

At first, he had been nervous, but after checking Meng Hao's Cultivation base, he let out a light sigh. He was still a bit suspicious, though, considering the strange nature of Meng Hao's arrival.

"Fellow Daoist, who are you, and why have you intruded upon this Spirit lake land?" These words were uttered not by Xiao Chang'en, but by Xu Luodi. From what he could see, Meng Hao was at early Foundation

Establishment. Considering how tenuous the situation the moment, he couldn't be certain that this person wasn't here to assist Xiao Chang'en.

As he spoke, the seven or eight members of the younger generation of his clan started to get nervous and stare at Meng Hao.

"Senior, some problems occurred with my teleportation and I inadvertently appeared here." Meng Hao's body flickered, and he landed on the shore of the lake. When he did, Xiao Chang'en pulled the woman back with him a few steps, away from Xu Luodi. His fellow Clansmen followed suit. He said nothing, but an enthusiastic look had suddenly appeared in his eyes.

When Xu Luodi saw this, he frowned. As Meng Hao stepped foot onto the shore, Xu Luodi suddenly strode forward, the power of his mid Foundation Establishment Cultivation base flaring into power. A hypocritical smile filled his face as the pressure radiated out.

The hat on Meng Hao's head suddenly began speaking to him.

"You know, that's wrong. That's very immoral. You shouldn't tell lies. You obviously came here because you were fleeing for your life. You did have a reason to come here. You came here on purpose!"

Meng Hao's face grew dark and Xu Luodi stared in shock. Xiao Chang'en's eyes narrowed, although his expression went back to normal in an instant. The woman next to him looked in wide-eyed astonishment at the hat on Meng Hao's head.

Meng Hao frowned, then took the hat off his head, crumpled it into a ball, and threw it away as hard as he could.

"Fellow Daoist," he said, ignoring the hat, "where am I? What is the nearest Sect?" He glanced at Xu Luodi's rippling Cultivation base and vigilant expression, and then looked at Xiao Chang'en.

"Fellow Daoist there's no need to ask when you already know the answer. Why did you…." Xiao Chang'en was starting to get a strange feeling about the situation. But before he could finish speaking, he suddenly noticed that the hat which had just been crumpled and thrown away, suddenly restored its shape, and was back on Meng Hao’s head.

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1. A quick word about “Eee?” This is a sound made in Chinese to express surprise or amazement. I hear it all the time, and it literally sounds like you are saying the letter E in a questioning tone. I could have translated it as “oh” or “ah” or something, but I think this transliteration more accurately captures the feeling of this uniquely Chinese sound. In Chinese it’s yí.

2. Xiao Chang’en’s name in Chinese is xiào cháng ēn – Xiao is a family name. Chang means “long.” En means “favor” or “kindness”

3. Xu Luodi’s name in Chinese is xú luò dī – Xu is a common family name. Luo has no particular meaning. Di means “dyke” or “embankment”

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# Chapter 168: The Xiao Clan Gifts the Lake

“You know, that’s wrong. That’s immoral. You can’t just throw things onto the ground. What if you hit a little kid? That would be a sin. Even if you didn’t hit a little kid, you might hit one of the fish in the lake, or maybe some shrimp. That would also be wrong. Listen. You should carefully take me off. You should….” The hat continued to talk non-stop with its preaching.

Meng Hao frowned, and Xu Luodi stared in amazement. His surrounding Clansmen looked at Meng Hao’s hat in disbelief. After a moment, Xu Luodi’s face grew grim. He was getting the feeling that this early Foundation Establishment Cultivator was doing this on purpose.

“Enough!” said Xu Luodi. “This isn’t a place where you can just come and go as you please. If you won’t tell the truth, then I’ll just grab you and force the truth out of you.” He couldn’t figure out whether or not this guy was here to help the Xiao Clan or not, but at the moment, Meng Hao was being very annoying. More importantly, Meng Hao’s Cultivation base was only at the early Foundation Establishment stage. He would be able to determine his purpose in coming here after capturing him.

Before he even finished speaking, Xu Luodi walked forward. He lifted his right hand, and a dark red glow appeared, which coalesced into a red whip. The whip emitted cracking sounds as it screamed through the air and flicked back and forth. At the very end of the whip, a ferocious, fork-tongued snake head appeared. It shot directly toward Meng Hao.

As Xu Luodi made his move, the members of the Xu Clan behind him all looked incredibly excited. Whenever the Clan Lord attacked, he achieved victory; that was what they had seen in their experience. They couldn't wait to see their Clan Lord mop the floor with an early Foundation Establishment Cultivator.

Meng Hao gave Xu Luodi a cool look. During his time protecting Xu Qing in the Black Sieve Sect's Blessed Land, he had encountered many such Cultivators. He lifted his hand, which was holding a dark reddish fruit. He threw it toward the ground.

As soon as the fruit hit the ground, it burrowed down. Instantly, the ground began to shake. Even as the dark red whip neared Meng Hao, a boom filled the air. The ground in front of Meng Hao erupted as a mass of dark red vines shot out. They rose a dozen or more meters into the air, emanating rippling power that matched that of the mid Foundation Establishment stage. The instant they appeared, they shot toward the whip.

An explosion resonated out. The whip couldn't withstand even one blow, and it collapsed into pieces. The ferocious vines opened their wide mouths and shot toward Xu Luodi.

His face fell, and the Clan members behind him looked on in disbelief, even more astonished than him. He cried out in alarm as he saw the more than ten vines approaching. His eyes narrowed, and he suddenly pressed down on the pit of his stomach. He spat up a large mouthful of blood, which then transformed into a mist. The mist coalesced into a blood-colored head, which then slammed into the vines.

An explosion echoed out, and the blood drained from Xu Luodi's face. He staggered back several paces into his pale-faced Clansmen, who all coughed up mouthfuls of blood.

"A Shaman Cultivator!" gasped Xu Luodi, retreating backward again.

He wasn't the only one to have such a reaction. Xiao Chang'en's eyes suddenly went wide. The faces of the surrounded Xiao Clan members flickered. The young woman next to Xiao Chang'en began to breathe rapidly.

“Even if you’re a Shaman Cultivator, your Spirit minion is only at the mid Foundation Establishment stage….” His eyes filled with killing intent. He was deeply aware that when dealing with Shaman Cultivators, the most important thing was their Spirit minion. Such Cultivators had weak bodies, and they feared decapitation. However, before he was able to complete his sentence, he stopped speaking, as if something had clamped down on his jaw.

Up ahead of him, more earth showered up as another vine appeared. This vine was violet-colored, and twice as thick as the other vines. The instant it appeared, it emanated the power of the late Foundation Establishment stage.

The vine wasn’t originally like this; however, because Meng Hao had branded it with his blood, it had mutated, and now had a trunk which had the strength of late Foundation Establishment.

“Screw off!” said Meng Hao coolly. His expression didn’t change, and in fact, he wasn’t worried inwardly either. He had just escaped from the hands of Nascent Soul Cultivators in the Blessed land, so as far as he was concerned, even late Foundation Establishment stage Cultivators were too trivial to mention.

Hearing his words, Xiao Chang’en’s face flickered, and he felt anxiety. He had been about to speak, but seeing Meng Hao’s smirk made him temporarily speechless.

Xu Luodi’s expression flickered, and then he spun around. With the flick of a sleeve, he shot off into the distance with his Clansmen. His eyes were filled with venomous hatred. The object of his resentment, however, was not really Meng Hao, but the Xiao Clan. He was now convinced that Meng Hao had been called by the Xiao Clan to provide assistance.

Meng Hao watched with the same expression as ever as Xu Luodi left. He didn’t call back the vines, either. He looked at Xiao Chang’en with the same smirk as before.

“Fellow Daoist,” said Xiao Chang’en, “many thanks for your assistance. I, Xiao, was also pushed into a corner. Please accept my apology for causing you any trouble….” He clasped hands and bowed deeply to Meng Hao.

Honest people don’t need to speak with hidden words. Xiao Chang’en spoke very directly, causing a smile to break out on Meng Hao’s face. Even though he wasn’t sure of all the details of the situation he had stepped into, he had picked up on some clues, especially the excitement that had appeared earlier on Xiao Chang’en’s face. Meng Hao could see clearly that he had been used to put some pressure on the Xu Clan.

That was why he hadn’t killed anyone, but rather let Xu Luodi escape. This caused Xiao Chang’en to hesitate. Xu Luodi had left in a rage, angry not at Meng Hao, but at the Xiao Clan.

Even though he was being used, he helped. He fixed the problem for the moment, but sooner or later, the Xu Clan would return. If Meng Hao was gone at that time, then Xiao Chang’en would have to pay the price. That price wouldn’t merely be a daughter and a lake.

Xiao Chang’en laughed bitterly, and then bowed again to Meng Hao. Next to him, the young woman was silent, then seemed to come to a realization. She joined Xiao Chang’en in bowing toward Meng Hao.

“Many thanks, benefactor,” she said, her voice crisp and melodious.

At the moment, everything was quiet, except for the voice of the hat on Meng Hao’s head. “…. and then you should lightly pick me up. You mustn’t trample me underfoot.” Actually, the voice hadn’t stopped speaking this entire time. The word poured out in a steady flow.

Meng Hao frowned.

“Fellow Daoist, please forgive me,” said Xiao Chang’en. “I don’t care if the Xu Clan covets my Spirit lake, or even if they bully me because of my declining longevity. But they want to swallow up my entire Clan. Ai….” A bitter look appeared on his face. Suddenly he began to cough violently. The young woman stepped forward, her face covered with anxiety.

Meng Hao looked at Xiao Chang’en, and the thick death aura which emanated from him.

“What is this place?” he asked coolly.

“Sir,” said the young woman, “we are on the border between the Blood Demon Sect and the Solitary Sword Sect.” Her voice was light, but her expression filled with nervousness as she looked at Meng Hao.

Having heard this, Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding and retrieved a jade slip. He examined it for a moment, confirming his position with a frown. Xiao Chang’en continued to eye him and the ferocious vines that surrounded him. He gritted his teeth.

“Fellow Daoist,” he said, “I would like to give you this Spirit lake as a gift!” All of the Xiao Clan members, except for the young woman, stared in shock.

Meng Hao lifted his head and looked at Xiao Chang’en. He didn’t express any opinion whatsoever, nor did he speak.

“I myself used to be a disciple of the Blood Demon Sect,” said Xiao Chang’en. “But I was injured, barely escaping with my life. My Cultivation base is incapable of advancement, and my longevity cannot be increased. I’m afraid I only have a few years of life left.

“This Spirit lake was passed down to me from a member of the senior generation before he died. It’s become the only way to grow the Xiao Clan. However, more and more people have been casting eyes upon it lately. I’m not sure how to keep it within the Clan. The Spiritual energy in the lake might not seem very abundant, but it’s actually very beneficial for Spirit minions. Doing breathing exercises in this area is very good for them.

“Fellow Daoist, please accept the lake.” His words were sincere. Although his heart was filled with bitterness, he couldn’t think of any other option than this. His relationship with the Blood Demon Sect had been severed, and he couldn’t participate in any of the struggles and fighting that went on amongst the Clans founded by former Blood Demon Sect disciples.

His only option was this early Foundation Establishment Cultivator in front of him, who happened to have a Spirit minion at the late Foundation Establishment stage.

“Furthermore,” continued Xiao Chang’en, “there has been friction lately between the Blood Demon Sect and the Solitary Sword Sect. Occasionally great battles erupt, but this place isn’t a battlefield, and with the exception of occasional disturbances from other local Clans, no one pays much attention to it….” He chose his words carefully as he tried to persuade Meng Hao to stay. Meng Hao smiled, and his eyes glittered.

Although it wasn’t really what he had wanted, he ended up with the object the Black Sieve Sect had been seeking in the Blessed Land. He had no doubt aroused the ire of the Sect, and though they wouldn’t announce it publicly, they would no doubt be searching for him.

“I wonder if Elder Sister Xu will be implicated…” he thought to himself. “I don’t think that’s very likely.” Right now, his highest priority was to improve his Cultivation base. He needed to form his fourth Dao Pillar. That, coupled with his Perfect Foundation, would enable to him to stand toe-to-toe with Dao Children from the five Sects and three Clans.

At that time, he would be above any Chosen, and would actually be in the top ten most powerful people in the Foundation Establishment stage in the Southern Domain. After he formed six Dao Pillars, he was confident that he could destroy any of the so-called Dao Children.

“Unfortunately, now that I have a Perfect Foundation, I have no way to absorb the spiritual power of heaven and earth. Even if I could find a way to force the absorption process, it would still be just too difficult…. The only thing I can do is use medicinal pills. But that won’t work for long.” Meng Hao sighed inwardly. A Perfect Foundation was strong, but had its setbacks. That having been said, if he had to make his choice again, he would still chose the Perfect Foundation.

“What if I can reach late Foundation Establishment…” he thought, his eyes shining with a barely detectable glow. He looked at Xiao Chang’en for a long moment, and then nodded.

“We can talk about the lake later,” said Meng Hao coolly. “I’ll stay here for a few days in secluded meditation. Please don’t disturb me. Furthermore, please bring me all of the Spirit Stones you have in your clan.

Xiao Chang’en spirits seemed to lift at first, and then a bitter smile covered his face. He gritted his teeth and nodded in agreement.

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 169: Heavens, You Really Don’t Know?

Meanwhile, outside the Xiao Clan mountain village, Xu Luodi flew along grim faced, surrounded by his fellow Clan Members. He glanced back, his eyes filled with venomous anger.

“Xiao Chang’en, if you can recruit help from outside, then so can I! Trifling Shaman Cultivator. If you take his powerful Spirit minion out of the equation then I could slaughter him easily. With those type of Cultivators, the only main thing to worry about is their Spirit minion. I’ll behead him in an instant!” He let out a cold snort, and then eyed his fellow Clansmen. “You head back without me. This matter isn’t finished!”

The Xu Clansmen dispersed. Xu Luodi flicked his sleeve, transforming into a colorful beam that shot off into the distance.

“The only thing I can do is to go ask help from Mr. Sang Luo. He’s at the late Foundation Establishment stage, with seven Dao Pillars. He can easily take care of the Shaman Cultivator. The only problem is that he has a very eccentric personality, and might not agree to help…. But considering the price paid for that matter a few years ago, he’ll surely agree. It will all be worth it if I can get that Spirit lake!” His mind made up, Xu Luodi sped up.

He flew for about a day before arriving at the foot of a lonely mountain. A few vultures circled about overhead. Up ahead was a pile of wood about six meters tall. On top was a corpse.

The corpse had clearly been rotting there for several months. The sight of it was quite horrifying. A few vultures were perched on top of the wood pile, picking at it. They glanced at Xu Luodi, their eyes shining mysteriously. They clearly weren’t afraid of the living.

“Xu Luodi requests an audience with Mr. Sang Luo,” he said, eying the corpse, his heart thumping. The corpse was clearly completely lifeless. However, he recognized the remains as belonging to a local Clan Lord whose Cultivation base had been at the late Foundation Establishment stage.

His words rang out into the lonely mountain. After some time passed, a raspy voice drifted out.

“This fellow looked down on me a few months ago, so I grabbed him and brought him here. I tied him up as punishment, but never imagined he would be so weak. He died after only two months. You, what matter brought you here today!?”

Xu Luodi took a long breath as he gave a deep bow toward the lonely mountain.

“Senior, I’ve encountered some trouble. I would like to ask for Mr. Sang Luo’s assistance to kill someone.” He spoke directly, knowing that Mr. Sang Luo didn’t like long-winded explanations.

“Kill someone…. Wahahahahaha!” A peal of ear-piercing laughter rang out. “Because of the friendship we developed that year, I can help you. But there are some requirements. A lot of requirements, actually.”

“I understand,” said Xu Luodi, lifting up a bag of holding. He tossed it out, and before it could hit the ground, it spun off into the distance, snatched up by some invisible force.

“Wait for me a few days,” said the raspy voice. “After I finish refining this guy’s bones, then I’ll go with you.” Suddenly, the vultures picked up the corpse and flew off with it into the lonely mountain.

Xu Luodi took another deep breath, his eyes glowing brightly.

“Xiao Chang’en, let’s see how you fight back this time!” His eyes filled with killing intent, Xu Luodi sat down cross-legged to meditate.

Meanwhile, back in the Xiao Clan mountain village, Meng Hao also sat cross-legged, in a small room near the lake. A soft glow surrounded him that allowed him to see out of the room, but prevented anyone on the outside from seeing inside.

The glow was being cast by nine paper talismans. The talismans had been painted by the young Xiao Clan woman and then personally delivered to Meng Hao. After setting up the talismans, she had departed with a respectful bow.

After she left, Meng Hao spat out the lightning mist, which spread out to cover the area. Finally, he could open his bag of holding without anxiety. He pulled out the Sieve Earth Pill he’d acquired from the Black Sieve Sect, and examined it closely.

As he looked over the pill, the meat jelly hat on his head began to talk. “Hey, where did I leave off just now? Right, let’s continue the matter from yesterday. You can’t do that. It’s immoral! You can’t just throw me down onto the ground. That’s too excessive!”

Meng Hao didn’t respond. The meat jelly hadn’t stopped talking at all. It seemed it could speak on a single subject for an entire day. It would be one thing if it didn’t repeat itself, but it did, and never seemed to get bored, either.

“What would happen if you hit a little kid….?”

“It’s also bad for the grass and plants….”

“The little fish and other creatures are all innocent….”

It felt like a buzz in Meng Hao’s ears. He tried to ignore it, but the meat jelly hat’s voice seemed to be growing louder. Eventually, it was shouting, its voice so loud that it drifted past the lightning mist shield to the outside. When they heard the voice, the Xiao Clan members all exchanged glances.

“SHUT UP!!” Grinding his teeth, Meng Hao grabbed the hat and threw it onto the ground.

“Eee? I wasn’t finished. Where did I leave off? Oh well, let me change topics. You can’t do that. It’s immoral….” Meng Hao lifted his head up toward the sky, his expression more and more unsightly. After a moment, he stood up and began to trample on the hat.

The old man’s pedantic face suddenly appeared. Even though Meng Hao was fiercely trampling it, it didn’t let out any miserable cries. Instead, it seemed to speak even more earnestly. “You can’t do that, it’s too cruel! It’s too immoral!”

“What do you want?” said Meng Hao, taking a few steps back and clenching his jaw. “You escaped, why are you following me? Go away. Go!”

“Eee? I’ve bonded you as my master. Bonding a master means bonding for life. I would never, ever be so immoral as to leave. I would never do something so lacking in principle, so lacking in….” Meng Hao slowly lifted his head up and stared blankly into the air. Enough time passed for two incense sticks to burn, and he finally looked back at the hat.

“…so lacking in character. I just told you seven hundred and forty-five things that I lack. Do you see how civilized I am? How sincere? In a word, I would never leave you.”

Meng Hao didn’t say anything. He suddenly lifted his hand and summoned a Flame Dragon, which slammed into the hat. This time, a miserable cry rang out, only to be quickly replaced by endless chatter. The hat was undamaged. As Meng Hao stared at it, veins popped out on his forehead. He had always thought of himself as good-tempered, but as of now his temper was exploding. He jumped up and down a few more times on the hat, trampling it.

But… a few moments later he stopped. Continuing to gush words, the hat returned to Meng Hao’s head. This time, however, it changed colors. Now it was green, and its appearance was a bit more exaggerated than before 1.

Meng Hao’s face turned dark.

“Look, child, don’t struggle. I’m a good person. I’m trying to help you. You’re on the path of wickedness, but I’m willing to use my own power to help you. Child, perhaps you are unaware of how many young people take a wrong step in life, and then regret it for an eternity. I’ll help you cast off the bitterness. I’ll help you free yourself from that damned bird. I failed in my last life, and the life before that, and the life before that, too. That damned, despicable bird is the only bird I’ve never converted!” The hat seemed to be grinding its teeth now. “In this life, I will convert it!”

“Who is this bird you keep talking about?!” said Meng Hao, his face grim. A strange feeling had risen up inside of him. This hat couldn’t be killed and couldn’t be thrown away. It really was extremely annoying.

“You don’t know?” asked the hat, suddenly flying off of Meng Hao’s head. It’s shape suddenly rippled back into the meat jelly. The archaic face appeared, and it looked disbelieving as it gazed at Meng Hao. “Heavens, you really don’t know who that damned, mass-murdering, shameless….” The meat jelly began to quiver as it let off streams of curses. Meng Hao let out a long sigh and looked up into the air. After the time it takes an incense stick to burn, he finally looked back at the meat jelly.

The meat jelly was finally concluding its description: “…should be thrown into a cesspool, damned bird? You really don’t know who it is?”

Meng Hao glared at the meat jelly for a long moment before slowly saying, “I don’t know.”

“You really don’t know?” asked the meat jelly, shocked. “You really, really don’t now? Impossible! You really, really, really don’t know?”

“I. Don’t. Know!” Meng Hao clenched his teeth. It was really frustrating trying to communicate with this meat jelly.

“Heavens! You have its aura on your body, but you don’t know. How is this possible? How can you not know? Heavens, heavens. You really, really,

really don’t know?” Its eyes widened and filled with a look of complete disbelief.

Meng Hao didn’t know what to say. He closed his eyes and sat down to meditate. With a bang, the meat jelly transformed back into a bright green hat and flew back onto Meng Hao’s head.

Considering that Meng Hao was wearing scholars’ robes, the hat was extremely conspicuous. Anyone who caught sight of it would surely do a double take.

Enough time passed for an incense stick to burn.

“But, how can you not know?”

Two incense sticks.

“… Inconceivable! You actually don’t know….”

Two hours.

“Why aren’t you saying anything? Oh, I understand. You’re ashamed. Look, it’s okay. I’m a good person. I will do everything I can to bring you back from the path of wickedness. I….”

Meng Hao’s face grew more and more unsightly. He really had reached his breaking point. His temper exploded. He roared, grabbing the hat and throwing it outside. He slapped his bag of holding, and nearly a hundred flying swords appeared and shot toward the hat. Meng Hao’s hand flickered with incantations, and the Flame Dragon and Wind Blade appeared.

A boom rattled out in all directions, striking fear into the hearts of all the Xiao clan members. Xiao Chang’en’s eyes went wide. Even though he couldn’t see what was happening, the explosion itself was astonishing.

The young woman looked dazed, and then a strange expression appeared on her face.

Meng Hao ground his teeth, stalking forward, slashing his finger and covering it with blood. In a twinkling, the Blood Finger had appeared. His other hand flashed with the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex.

Massive explosions filled heaven and earth. A moment later, the ripples died down. Meng Hao's entire body exuded bitterness as he stared at the meat jelly, which skipping and hopping about energetically.

"It's so strange. You really don't know. How is it possible? You really don't know!"

1. If you're unfamiliar with what green hats mean in Chinese culture, check out this article

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 170: Lonely Sang Luo

Meng Hao was filled with regret. He should never have asked that question. He'd had no clue the meat jelly would talk on and on at such length. He took a deep breath, but before he could speak, the meat jelly's expression brightened.

"Oh, I know. You haven't reached Core Formation, so it can't come out. Hahaha! It can't come out…."

Meng Hao lowered his head, filled with helplessness. He looked at the meat jelly with a bitter smile.

He ground his teeth for a long moment before saying, "If you don't shut up, I'm going to take you back to the Black Sieve Sect!" He really just wanted to give voice to the frustration caused by the constant droning in his ears.

"That's okay. In any case, I've bonded a master, so it would be useless. Refining me would require refining you. Eee?" A dumbfounded look filled the meat jelly's face. It thought for a moment. "That's a good idea! I wonder what it would feel like if we got refined together. Let me think." A look of anticipation covered its face, causing Meng Hao too seem even more hopeless.

"How exactly can I get you to leave?" he said with a bitter laugh. His voice was softer this time.

Hearing this, the meat jelly instantly looked much more serious that before. Its voice solemn, it began to speak. Meng Hao ignored it, looking up into the air for the time it takes an incense stick to burn.

"… in short, I will definitely never leave you! I need to convert that bird. Until I convert it, I'll never leave!"

Meng Hao had always thought of himself as very focused. Once he set his mind to something, he couldn’t be distracted. But now, he realized, that was before he had met the meat jelly.

Be it he himself, or some other consummate expert, anyone who met this garrulous, long-winded thing would surely be driven crazy…. Meng Hao took a deep breath. He now had a much better understanding of the thing’s personality. It must not be given a conversation topic! He lowered his head, and after about an hour had reached a state in which he could somewhat ignore the chattering in his ear. Despite the meat jelly’s constant talking, Meng Hao took out the Sieve Earth Pill and began to examine it.

An earnest expression filled his face, but it was very hard to ignore the endless rambling. That was especially true when the meat jelly flew off of his head and landed in front of him. It seemed that it felt humiliated to be ignored.

“You can’t do that. It’s immoral!!” it cried, launching into another tirade.

Soon, night approached, and Meng Hao’s face was covered with exhaustion. Buzzing filled his ears, and his eyes were bloodshot as he completely ignored the meat jelly. It was with despair that he had discovered that even if it wasn’t given a conversation topic, the meat jelly would still continue to talk.

Until dawn. Until the next night. The moon hung brightly in the sky.

And then, finally, it seemed as the meat jelly had run out of things to talk about it. Meng Hao let out a sigh, and as he did, the meat jelly flew out to the lake shore and… began to talk to the fish within the lake….

Meng Hao let out another sigh of relief. He pulled out the copper mirror and the Spirit Stones given to him by the Xiao clan. He placed the Sieve Earth Pill onto the mirror and duplicated a single one. He thought for a moment, and then produced a jade slip. He branded it with Spiritual Sense, then flicked it out the window. Moments later, the young Xiao Clan woman approached nervously, leading a Spirit monkey with her.

The monkey screeched as it approached. The young woman looked off toward the lake shore for a moment, at the meat jelly hat, which was currently shouting out toward the lake.

“Xiao Caifeng 1 greets the elder generation,” she said, pulling her gaze from the meat jelly back to Meng Hao and the lightning mist which surrounded him. She bowed in greeting, and then proffered the leash which bound the Spirit monkey. Meng Hao’s eyes opened. Without a word, he sent an Earth Sieve Pill flying toward the monkey. The monkey consumed it instantly.

It let out a few screeches, and its eyes rolled about. Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he observed, probing the monkey with his Spiritual Sense. Suddenly, the moonlight in the sky seemed to form threads which the monkey began to absorb. A contended look slowly filled the monkey’s eyes.

About four hours passed in which Meng Hao observed the monkey, and Xiao Caifeng stood patiently off to the side.

Finally, Meng Hao nodded.

“Very good,” he said coolly. Xiao Caifeng let out a sigh of relief. Clasping hands and bowing to Meng Hao, she led the monkey away. It was obviously much more powerful than it had been before.

Meng Hao lowered his head thoughtfully. Using the Spirit Stones provided by the Xiao Clan, he began to duplicate the pill. The pill’s full name was Moon Sieve Mother Earth Pill, and could only be consumed at night. It used the moonlight as nourishment, and provided excellent results.

The cost to duplicate the pill was considerable, and the Xiao Clan was by no means a great Clan. They had not been able to provide many Spirit Stones, and soon, Meng Hao had already used half of them. The result was six duplicated Sieve Earth Pills.

“I wasted one pill, but caution required that.” Dawn broke, and Meng Hao looked down at the six Sieve Earth Pills. He closed his eyes in thought, wondering how many of these pills it would take to develop his fourth Dao

Pillar. Now that he had completed the circle of three Dao Pillars, it shouldn't be long before his fourth Perfect Dao Pillar started to become visible.

Time passed by slowly, and soon it was afternoon. The meat jelly was still at the lake shore, chatting with the lake waters. With his Spiritual Sense, Meng Hao was able to determine that all the fish had retreated to the bottom of the lake to hide. There was only one left, which was slamming its head against the shore, seemingly unable to take any more torment.

Fear lingering in his heart, Meng Hao collected up the remaining Spirit Stones. He was very much afraid of attracting the attention of the meat jelly and its excited ramblings. The last thing he needed was for it to come up with a new topic to talk to him about.

He retracted his Spiritual Sense, and then suddenly, his expression flickered. He looked past the lightning mist at the world outside.

At this moment, two colorful beams of light appeared in the sky above the Xiao Clan mountain village, then shot down screaming toward the village. In the lead was a Cultivator wearing a black robe. He was very short, a midget in fact. His long robe covered his face and trailed behind him through the air. At first glance, you wouldn't notice that there was a midget inside; you would only see a black robe flying through the air.

Behind the midget was grim-faced Xu Luodi, whose eyes radiated killing intent. Of course, the midget was none other than Mr. Sang Luo, from whom Xu Luodi had requested help.

The two of them were moving incredibly fast, and within moments had landed in the the Xiao Clan mountain village. The midget spoke with a cruel, piercing voice that rolled out like thunder, covering the Xiao Clan. Xiao Caifeng's face went pale, and Xiao Chang'en's pupils constricted, and his eyes filled with fear.

Before anyone could emerge, a roaring boom filled the air, and the Xiao Clan shook as its protective shield was smashed to pieces. The Xiao Clan main gate, just outside of the lake, immediately crumbled into dust. A gale force wind swept across the entire area.

The Xiao Clan's manor houses shook, and some collapsed. The Xiao Clan members who couldn't practice Cultivation trembled when they heard the voice. Pale faced, Xiao Chang'en quickly led a group of people out. Xiao Chang'en's face filled with astonishment when he saw the collapsed main gate, and the midget striding forward, his black robe trailing behind him. Xiao Chang'en staggered backward.

"So, it's this savage… Could it be that doomsday has arrived for the Xiao Clan…." Because of the midget's presence, he wasn't able to summon even the least bit of fighting spirit.

Mr. Sang Luo 2 was quite famous in the region. Although he didn't dare to rile the Blood Demon Sect, there was no one among the surrounding Cultivator Clans who dared to provoke him.

His Cultivation base was extremely high, at the late Foundation Establishment stage, in fact. It wouldn't be long before he could step into the Nascent Core stage. He was savage and cruel, and if even one word was spoken to him in the wrong way, he would attack with vicious cruelty. He really had earned a fearful reputation.

Based on that alone, he might not necessarily be in such a good position. After all, the Cultivator Clans in this area were all filled with people who had connections to the Blood Demon Sect.

However… this Sang Luo had once been a disciple of the current generation of the Blood Demon Sect. However, he had broken some Sect Rules, and was thus expelled. His Cultivation base had been left intact, and he had not been prevented from causing trouble outside. Xiao Chang'den had even heard that he had an older brother who wasn't a midget, and had extraordinary latent talent. Apparently, he was a Chosen of the Blood Demon Sect.

"I, Xiao Chang'en, extend greetings to Mr. Sang Luo," said Xiao Chang'en, his face pale white as he watched Mr. Sang Luo approach, Xu Luodi at his side, radiating murder. Xu Luodi had a pleased expression in his eyes, causing Xiao Chang’en to sigh inwardly. He didn’t place much hope in Meng Hao now. Meng Hao’s Spirit minion was powerful, but his Cultivation base was simply too weak.

Sang Luo let out a piercing snort as he approached the Xiao Clan with Xu Luodi. His eyes gazed about from within the robe.

“Xiao Chang’en,” said Xu Luodi, “Call out that Shaman Cultivator you invited!” He laughed coldly. “Are you scared to show your face, Shaman boy? Get the hell out here!” His voice thundered out, causing Xiao Chang’en to stand there bitterly, not daring to say even a word. Behind him, his Clansmen trembled. Only Xiao Caifeng stood there motionless, face pale but eyes filled with fury.

Sang Luo stood there, enjoying the looks of fear in the eyes of the Xiao Clan members. He also reveled in Xu Luodi’s words. He couldn’t help but sigh inwardly. To him, life was as desolate as snow. It was lonely at the top, and in his heart was the desire to find someone who could defeat him.

What he didn’t know was that as soon as Xu Luodi’s voice passed through the lightning mist, Meng Hao stood up.

Meng Hao also heard the meat jelly, and it seemed as if it was preparing to conclude its speech. In his estimation, it wouldn’t be long before it returned to pester him.

“I really need to find someone to help free me from this torment,” he thought. “I’m really in agony!” Gritting his teeth, he strode out.

The air around the lake rippled as a mist of thunder rolled out. Meng Hao looked somewhat bitter as he walked forward. Beneath him, the ground heaved as the vines shot up to sway back and forth and emit piercing shrieks.

Meng Hao’s eyes were bloodshot, thanks to the torment of the meat jelly. He looked at Xu Luodi, and then the midget. He decided to target the late

Foundation Establishment stage, in the hopes that the battle might last a bit longer.

“Trifling early Foundation Establishment stage,” said Sang Luo coolly as he eyed Meng Hao approaching. “Xu Luodi, you’re equally as hopeless.” His eyes peered out of his robe, filled with pride and aloofness. Again, his heart filled with the powerful loneliness of snow.

“Mr. Sang Luo, senior, you really can’t blame me,” said Xu Luodi hurriedly. “Just help me get rid of the Spirit minion. With that out of the way, I can easily smash this guy to pieces.” He glared ruthlessly at Meng Hao.

What Xu Luodi didn’t know was that true cruelty would not come to bear upon Meng Hao, but rather Sang Luo, lonely as snow. Something would happen that Sang Luo would never forget for the rest of his life. It would give him nightmares for the rest of his days, and leave a shadow on his soul… and it would happen shortly.

Perhaps afterwards, he would no longer feel as lonely as snow….

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1. Xiao Caifeng’s name in Chinese is xiào cǎi fèng – Xiao is a family name. Cai means “colorful.” Feng means “phoenix.”

2. Sang Luo’s name in Chinese is sàng luō – This is not a realistic name. Sang means “funeral” or “mourning.” Luo means “catch” or “net”

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# Chapter 171: Blood Demon Dao Child

Sang Luo gave an arrogant snort that was apparently a response to Xu Luodi. Xu Luodi seemed to glow with vitality as he gazed upon approaching Meng Hao. His eyes were thick with cruelty.

“Today, Xu Luodi will help you to understand that when you help someone you shouldn’t, you will incur my wrath!” he said, his voice filled with crazed fervor. “And I will also help you to understand what Shaman Cultivators fear the most!”

The various Xiao Clan members were all pale-faced. Xiao Change’en laughed a bitter laugh, well aware that he had no way to undo what had already been done. He took a deep breath, and strode forward, power from his Cultivation base suddenly exploding out. It was the power of the mid Foundation Establishment stage, but it seemed somewhat weak. He was reaching the end of his longevity, so his Qi passageways had long since begun to wither. With effort, he could display the power of the mid Foundation Establishment stage, but in doing so, would actually harm his life force.

“The matter today has to do with the Xiao Clan, not any outsider,” he said, his entire body seeming to grow taller. “This person wasn’t invited here by the Xiao Clan, he’s only passing through. If the disappearance of the Xiao Clan is the will of the Heavens, then take this Spirit lake! But if you intend to take any of my Clan members, then you must treat them well. Otherwise I’ll make you pay, even if I have to die in the process!” His words echoed out with great power, causing Xu Luodi’s brow to furrow.

As for Sang Luo the midget, he emitted a shrieking laugh.

Meng Hao looked over at Xiao Chang’en, and suddenly his feelings toward the man changed. He nodded, and then coolly said, “Fellow Daoist Xiao, didn’t you give this lake to me as a gift? In that case, it belongs to me. Does anyone here dare to attempt to take it away!?” The vines in front of him shot toward Sang Luo and Xu Luodi.

Sang Luo let out an ear-piercing laugh which was filled with contempt and disdain. He flipped his sleeve grandly, and from within a black sealing stone flew out. It expanded as it shot forward, emitting a strong pressure that caused all of the vines to stop in their tracks. Only the main trunk vine continued onward, howling.

Sang Luo’s piercing laughter accompanied him as he took a step forward. He lifted his right arm to reveal a hand much smaller than an average person’s. He waved it toward the approaching main trunk vine; a black wind sprang up and whistled toward the vine.

At the same time, Xu Luodi’s laughter filled the air. His body flashed as he made a beeline toward Meng Hao, his eyes shining with fierce killing intent. The instant he took to motion, however, Xiao Chang’en suddenly leaped to obstruct his path. A look of disdain covering his face, Xu Luodi flicked his wide sleeve. A roaring sound filled the air, and Xiao Chang’en was pushed back.

“I’m not going to kill you for now,” he laughed. “We’ll be relatives by marriage soon, and still have wedding wine to drink.” He shot toward Meng Hao. “And now I’ll help you to understand that what Shaman Cultivators fear most is being beheaded!” He laughed arrogantly.

Meng Hao’s face, on the other hand, was the same as ever. It hadn’t changed even the slightest bit as he allowed Xu Luodi to approach.

When Xu Luodi was roughly nine meters away, Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly shone with a cold light. He didn’t retreat, but instead flickered, and suddenly appeared directly in the path of Xu Luodi. He lifted his hand, and a billowing Flame Sea appeared along with a roaring, three hundred meter long Flame Dragon.

When the Flame Dragon appeared, Xu Luodi’s expression suddenly changed to one of complete disbelief.

“That… that….” It was almost as if he didn’t dare to believe what he was seeing. But he felt the intense pressure exuded by the Flame Dragon, which far exceeded that of the late Foundation Establishment stage.

A sense of life-or-death danger filled his entire body, inundating his head with a booming drone. It was as if his body had been struck with countless lightning bolts. His face continued to be filled with disbelief.

“Late Foundation Establishment!!” His body began to tremble, and intense dread shone from his eyes. How could he ever have imagined that the young man of the early Foundation Establishment stage could possibly erupt with the power of late Foundation Establishment? As for his so-called beheading, the person he thought he could so easily defeat had suddenly transformed into a violent beast who could slaughter him hundreds of thousands of times over!

It wasn’t just him who was shocked. Xiao Chang’en gasped and stared, dumbstruck. He was literally incapable of reacting to what he was seeing. His mind filled with buzzing. And then, his eyes filled with wild joy.

When the Flame Dragon appeared, the vines that had been suppressed by Sang Luo the midget suddenly shook and lifted up. Within the black robe, two eyes emanated shock.

All of this takes some time to describe, but actually happened in an instant. Even as Xu Luodi’s voice could be heard, it was replaced by a blood-curdling scream which sounded out throughout the whole area. The three hundred meter long Flame Dragon slammed into him, instantly transforming his body into bits of ash which floated in the air. Only his scream remained behind, echoing through the air.

His bag of holding flew into Meng Hao’s hand.

As the scene played out in front of everyone, Xiao Chang’en’s expression grew excited. Next to him, Xiao Caifeng gazed at Meng Hao, her eyes filled with a strange glow.

There is no need to even mention the rest of the Xiao Clansmen, who stared at Meng Hao with excited inspiration.

Sang Luo’s expression was unsightly. Having witnessed Xu Luodi’s death, his heart now was now thumping. He was a cautious person by nature, so he immediately retreated. He was of the late Foundation Establishment stage, but he wasn’t the type to risk himself. His body flashed as he attempted to flee. In his mind, his opponent would most likely have some apprehensions, and wouldn’t pursue.

If his opponent didn’t pursue, it would be evidence that he viewed himself as inferior. In that case, Sang Luo could make a sudden reverse attack to kill him. This was a tactic that he had frequently employed, and had practiced until the proverbial furnace flames burned blue. However, as soon as he began to fly off, Meng Hao gave off a cold harrumph and then leaped into the air, transforming into a prismatic beam that shot after Sang Luo.

Seeing this, Sang Luo’s face immediately fell.

“The fact that he’s chasing me proves that he thinks he can kill me. This can’t be right!” His heart trembled as he raced forward. He waved his right hand, causing the black sealing stone to emit a buzzing sound as it shot toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao could fight with late Foundation Establishment Cultivators who had nine Dao Pillars, although he couldn’t do so lightly. Sang Luo, however, only had a mere seven Dao Pillars. Meng Hao had the luxury of being able to look down on him. His right hand flickered with an incantation gesture and the two wooden swords appeared. One shot toward the black seal, the other became a colorful beam that shot in pursuit of Sang Luo.

A boom filled the air as the black sealing stone was shattered into pieces. Sang Luo let out an angry howl. He eyed the approaching wooden sword, and his body trembled. He quickly snapped a jade slip between his fingers, and then made an incantation gesture with both hands, after which he waved the index of his right finger in the air in front of him.

As he did, everything around him seemed to grow dark, as if his finger were sucking in some strange power from around him. His body began to emanate an annoying, prickly aura that caused Meng Hao to frown.

The first time he had sensed a aura similar to this was back in the Black Sieve Sect 1. This aura, however, was much weaker, like a firefly compared to a full moon. Actually, now that he thought about it, he had experienced a similar reaction when he was in the cave in the mountain valley.

A booming sound once again filled the air as the wooden sword came screeching to a stop in mid-air. A rushing wind blew back the midget's robes, revealing an ugly, scarred face and two strange eyes filled with fear. Beads of sweat dripped down his face.

"Fellow Daoist, let's talk things through," said Sang Luo nervously. He could tell that whereas he was using all the power he could muster, his opponent was acting casually.

The differences between masters are usually instantly obvious!

Meng Hao took a moment to sense the aura emanating off of the midget. His heart thumped. He had his speculations regarding this aura, and now that he had seen it once again, he lifted his hand and extended a finger.

"Demon Sealing, Eighth Hex!"

As his finger descended, everything grew dark. Sang Luo suddenly began to tremble, and his eyes shone with astonishment. He immediately sensed the Qi of heaven and earth changing. Suddenly, his Cultivation base was suppressed. A whizzing sound could be heard as the wooden sword in front of him shot forward; in the blink of an eye, it would plunge into his neck.

His eyes filled with despair. However, at this exact moment, Meng Hao flicked his sleeve. The wooden sword, instead of ripping his head off, spun down and then carried Sang Luo with it back toward Meng Hao. Meng Hao reached out and grabbed Sang Luo by the neck.

At this moment, Sang Luo's Cultivation base was restored and he could move his body again. His face was pale, though, his eyes filled with terror. He didn't dare to move even an inch. The hand which clamped down on his neck emanated a feeling of death that caused his heart to tremble. In fact, being this close to Meng Hao caused his entire person to shake.

The feeling caused by the aura that emanated from Meng Hao caused his heart to seize with terror.

His face was pale as he stammered, "You're… you're…"

Meanwhile, elsewhere in the world, there was a mountain range that was covered in black clouds year round. Within a valley in this mountain range were two young people. They sat upright, gazing at the Go board which lay between them, seemingly lost in thought.

One of the young people wore white clothing along with an indifferent expression. This youth's features were beautiful to the extreme, almost otherworldly. The fan in his hand slowly waved back and forth.

The other person wore a blue garment. He looked to be about thirty years of age. He held a Go piece in his hands as he stared down thoughtfully at the board. Hanging from his face was a jade pendant. Suddenly, a popping sound could be heard, and a crack appeared on its surface.

When the crack appeared, the blue-robed young man frowned. He looked at the jade piece, and then back at the Go board.

"Is something wrong?" asked the white-robed youth in a light, tender voice.

"Nothing," replied the blue-robed young man respectfully. "It's just my good-for-nothing brother. He must have offended someone who he's not a match for. He wants me to save him."

“That would be Sang Luo, correct…?” The white-robed youth smiled. “Go ahead and check out the situation. I don’t have anything else to do, I’ll tag along.”

The blue-robed youth immediately stood up. “Your highness, your status as a Dao Child is so lofty, I don’t dare….”

“There’s no harm.” This white-robed youth was none other than a Dao Child of the Blood Demon Sect!

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# Chapter 172: Charging into mid Foundation Establishment!

Within the Xiao Clan mountain village, Xiao Chang'en's face was filled with enthusiasm as he gazed at Meng Hao. His fellow clansmen stared with similar fanaticism. Meng Hao nodded toward them, but said nothing. He entered his shielded room next to the lake, holding Sang Luo by the neck. The lightning mist appeared.

He sat down cross-legged and loosened his grip on Sang Luo. He didn't fight back, but instead stood there pale-faced in front of Meng Hao, a look of respect shining in his eyes. Inside, however, he was nervously waiting for his older brother to arrive and save him. His tiny eyes darted around, eventually falling upon the hat, which still stood next to the lake. He heard the hat's garrulous voice, but didn't dare to stare. He suddenly got the feeling that this place was incredibly bizarre, even more ghastly than his own remote, lonely mountain.

Meng Hao looked at Sang Luo for a moment, trying to decide what to do with him. Finally, he lifted his hand into the air and made a grasping motion. The aura emanating from Sang Luo's body condensed into Meng Hao's palm. It seemed invisible, but to Meng Hao, it was very prickly and irritating in nature.

He frowned, looking closer at the aura. His eyes flickered.

"Could this be Demonic Qi….?" he murmured to himself. He let the aura disperse, and then looked closely over Sang Luo. Sang Luo felt goosebumps underneath Meng Hao's gaze.

"Fellow Daoist…." he said, but was interrupted by Meng Hao.

“There’s an evildoing Cultivator here who needs to be converted….” he said and then coughed lightly. Hearing this, Sang Luo gaped in astonishment. Suddenly, the meat jelly, which had been talking to the fish in the lake just now, leaped up and seemed to stare fixedly at Sang Luo.

“Who? Who is it?” said the meat jelly excitedly, rushing over. “You? My poor evildoer, you can’t do that! It’s immoral. In the name of Justice, allow me to convert you….” Before Sang Luo could even react, Meng Hao flicked his sleeve, pushing him backward and snatching his bag of holding. At the same time, the black net shot out and wrapped up Sang Luo tightly.

Then Meng Hao shot backward, putting some space between himself and Sang Luo, who watched stupefied as all of this happened. At that instant, the meat jelly hat landed onto Sang Luo’s head.

It sighed. “Child, there’s no need to fear. Just behave, and allow the mighty embodiment of Justice to lead you back from the path of wickedness….” It seemed to be fairly leaping with excitement. “What a well-behaved little child. There’s no need to resist, no need fight back, no need to feel perplexed. I will help you. Listen, the first thing you need to do is….” As the meat jelly prattled on, Sang Luou’s body began to tremble. However, he didn’t dare to fight back.

Meng Hao felt a bit sorry for Sang Luo. He erased the branding within Sang Luo’s bag of holding. When he opened it, his eyes shined brightly. There was quite an accumulation of Spirit Stones inside, many times more than that which had been given to him by the Xiao Clan.

“This should be just about the amount I need for duplication purposes. Plus, I have a handful of bags of holding that I acquired in the Black Sieve Sect’s Blessed Land. There are a few Sieve Earth Pills in those. Not many, but a few.” He waved his hand, causing the lightning mist to condense so that no one in the area could see inside. Then, he pulled out the copper mirror and began to duplicate.

Time passed, and soon dusk fell. From outside the lightning mist, enraged shouting could be heard coming out of Sang Luo’s mouth. It seemed to be filled with an indescribable torment and misery.

“Be quiet! Let me go! Aaahhhhhh! You damned hat! Shut up!!”

“Ai, don’t be like that, child. You know… you interrupted me. I forgot where I left off. Oh well, I’ll just start over. Listen well, okay? The path of evil is filled with thistles and thorns. But don’t worry, child, I’m here. I definitely will not allow the thistles and thorns to stab into your tender buttocks….”

Meng Hao glanced outside, feeling a bit sympathetic for Sang Luo. Then he looked down at the several dozen or so Sieve Earth Pills in front of him. He took a deep breath, and then picked one up and placed it into his mouth.

It dissolved as soon as it entered, turning into a wave of spiritual power that Meng Hao had not felt enter his body in a long time. His body was like a parched desert suddenly inundated with nourishing water; his face lit up, and he closed his eyes to begin doing breathing exercises.

Slowly, he filtered out the sounds of the outside world and sank into Cultivation. One pill. Two pills. Three pills…. As he swallowed the pills, beams of moonlight in the night sky began to twist and turn. The descended down toward the earth, and onto Meng Hao.

From a distance, it had the appearance of a massive sheet of silk descending upon the Xiao Clan.

The Sieve Earth Pill really did deserve to be called a divine pill of the Black Sieve Sect, and one of the five most effective pills in the Southern Domain for the Foundation Establishment Stage. It was powerfully effective, much more so than Meng Hao had imagined. When he put the seventeenth pill into his mouth, his body instantly began to shake. The indistinct image of a rapidly congealing fourth Dao Pillar was suddenly visible inside him. When it was complete, Meng Hao’s Cultivation base would have broken through to the mid Foundation Establishment stage!

He took a deep breath, frowning as he looked up at the shining waterfall of moonlight above him in the sky.

“It’s really a bit too conspicuous. This is an amazing pill, but it’s definitely going to attract a lot of attention….” There was nothing to do about it, however. The only thing he could do was try to break through as quickly as possible, form the fourth Dao Pillar and reach mid Foundation Establishment. He took a deep breath and picked up the eighteenth Sieve Earth Pill. When he placed it into his mouth, his three Perfect Dao Pillars trembled, sucking in boundless spiritual power. The fourth Dao Pillar was rapidly becoming solid.

Outside, in the darkness of the night, the sheets of moonlight had indeed attracted attention within the Xiao Clan. Xiao Chang’en might be nearing the end of his longevity, but his eyesight was sharp. His eyes narrowed, and he immediately moved over to the shielded area within which Meng Hao was practicing Cultivation. He sat down cross-legged to keep guard.

Meng Hao had showed great kindness to the Xiao Clan. Xiao Chang’en knew that after his own death, the only chance for his clan to survive had to do with Meng Hao. Therefore, he had resolved that no matter what, he would not allow Meng Hao’s Cultivation to be disturbed.

Meanwhile, outside the Xiao Clan, the sheets of moonlight had caused quite a stir in the various Cultivation Clans in the area. More than a few people flew up into the air to investigate the area where the moonlight was cascading onto.

This was especially true of Sang Luo’s older brother, the blue-robed young man. He flew along together with the white-robed youth. They flew through the air unhurriedly. It seemed as if they weren’t going very fast, but in fact, they shot forward several hundred meters with each burst of flight.

When they saw the falling sheets of moonlight, the white-robed youth’s eyes narrowed. The blue-robed young man frowned.

“That appears to be the same place where Sang Luo is….”

“Interesting. Someone in Blood Demon Sect territory is consuming a Sieve Earth Pill from the Black Sieve Sect. And from the look of it, more than one pill…”

At this exact moment, deep in a forested region some distance from the Xiao Clan, was an enormous tree. Within the tree was a group of ten Cultivators sitting closed-eyed in meditation. Each member of this group had a sword strapped to his back, and they all wore identical clothing. It was very quiet; not a crow or sparrow could be heard. But when the sheets of moonlight appeared, the ten people opened their eyes to look at it.

Chen Fan was among the group. He looked off into the distance, frowning. Hushed discussion immediately broke out among these Cultivators, all of whom were all disciples of the Solitary Sword Sect.

“That area is near the border of the Blood Demon Sect. What is that phenomenon…?”

“That’s the sign of someone consuming a Sieve Earth Pill from the Black Sieve Sect. It can’t be covered up. Someone in that area must be consuming medicinal pills.”

“Just how many pills did that person consume? That amount of moonlight is shocking….”

Within the Xiao Clan manor, Clan members all began to grow nervous, as if they were about to face up against a powerful foe. The past days had been a mixture of both pleasant surprises and horrifying dread. Once and again, they had faced extermination as a clan, and repeatedly had been saved. As of this moment, their hearts pounded. This was especially true when they saw the conspicuous cascading moonlight. It only served to cause them more anxiety and nervousness.

Xiao Caifeng was pale faced. She had a talent for talismans, but was hindered by her Cultivation base, and couldn’t fully employ their power. She could only stand off to the side, silently watching Xiao Chang’en sitting cross-legged as he guarded over Meng Hao.

Not much time passed before beams of multi-colored light filled the night sky, screaming toward the Xiao Clan from all directions. From the look of it, there were at least ten figures. They floated there in the sky, eyes glittering as their gazes fell onto the Xiao Clan, and Meng Hao's secluded meditation area, upon which poured sheets of moonlight.

An old man of the early Foundation Establishment stage approached, laughing loudly. "Interesting. I think I'll just have to see who exactly is in secluded meditation, causing such a scene." From his expression, it was clear he did not have good intentions. Greed flickered in his eyes. Obviously, he intended to disturb the meditation and snatch away the luck of whoever sat within.

It seemed everyone in the area had similar plans; the Xiao Clan was by no means weak. However, the Xu Clan was not the only one in the area who had coveted the lake. Many of the surrounding clans had eyed it like a tiger eyeing its prey.

The newly arrived Cultivators watched the old man as Xiao Chang'en looked up at him. The power of Xiao Chang'en's Cultivation base suddenly exploded out. He took a deep breath and shot up into the sky.

A boom rang out, and the old man spun backward out of control, coughing up some blood along the way. Xiao Chang'en's face looked deathly pale as he hovered in the air, glaring around.

"I, Xiao Chang'en, already have one foot in the coffin," he said coolly. "Life and death mean little to me. Anyone who wishes to tread the path of death with me, please, step forward." His Cultivation base was not incredibly high, but his words contained a powerful threat.

Underneath the shield, the growth of Meng Hao's Cultivation base had reached a critical juncture. As he continued to consume the Sieve Earth Pills, his fourth Dao Pillar was more than half solidified. It wouldn't be long before it was complete. When that happened, Meng Hao would not be infinitely more powerful than before, but he would be able to sweep effortlessly across the Foundation Establishment stage!

That was the power of a Perfect Foundation!

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# Chapter 173: Rejected by the Heavens? Plunder!

Meng Hao was focused on breaking through to form his fourth Dao Pillar. However, regarding what was happening on the outside, it was no surprise to him. He had anticipated that such circumstances would come about. The cascading moonlight had focused attention on his increase in level. Although it hadn’t attracted universal attention, it had certainly caused quite a disturbance.

Meng Hao was well aware that as more time passed, the situation would grow more volatile. The best method to bring matters to a conclusion was to finish breaking through as quickly as possible.

However…. a Perfect Foundation could not absorb the spiritual energy of heaven and earth. He was only able to rely on the Sieve Earth Pills, and despite their extraordinariness, the process was becoming more difficult. He could clearly sense that they were losing their efficacy.

Based on his current momentum, it didn’t seem they would be enough to complete the fourth Dao Pillar.

As Meng Hao silently continued to Cultivate, outside, Xiao Chang’en’s words echoed out amidst the moonlight. Everything was silent for a moment afterward, and then cold laughter rang out. Three figures shot forward.

Their features were indistinct within the darkness of night, but their Cultivation bases rippled, making it clear that one of their numbers was of the mid Foundation Establishment stage.

In the surrounding Cultivation Clans, even the mid Foundation Establishment stage was considered quite powerful. Were it not so, the Xiao Clan would not have been able to occupy the Spirit Lake for so long. It was only now that Xiao Chang'en was reaching the end of his longevity that the current situation had come to be.

The three figures whistled through the air toward Xiao Chang'en. A boom exploded out as the four people collided in battle. Xiao Chang'en coughed up a mouthful of blood. His face was pale as he flew backward like a kite with a broken string. The mid Foundation Establishment Cultivator laughed coldly and proceeded forward.

The other two shot toward Meng Hao's shield, laughing.

It seemed to be a moment of crisis. Xiao Chang'en was torn; he knew that Meng Hao must be at a critical juncture; unfortunately, he was currently powerless to intervene. Even burning some of his life force to gain extra power would be useless.

The two early Foundation Establishment Cultivators reached the shield; as soon as they touched it, a rumbling sound emerged. Within the space of two breaths, the shield collapsed.

The shield had been created by Xiao Caifeng, who was only at the Qi Condensation stage; for it to hold up against the early Foundation Establishment stage for the space of three breaths testified to the outstanding latent talent of the one who had created the talisman.

Booming echoed out as the shield was destroyed. As the two early Foundation Establishment stage Cultivators slammed into the lightning mist, miserable screams echoed out. In an instant, their bodies were surrounding by lightning; cracking sounds could be heard as they were thrown backward, blood spewing from their mouths. Expressions of shock covered their faces as their Dao Pillars trembled on the verge of collapse.

The lightning mist roiled; its protection extended about thirty meters out from Meng Hao in all directions, creating a no-man's land which no one could enter.

Xiao Chang’en heaved a sigh of relief. The mid Foundation Establishment Cultivator with whom he had been battling paused, looking over his shoulder at the lightning mist, astonishment filling his eyes.

Within the lightning mist, Meng Hao opened his eyes. They glowed brightly as he frowned and looked down at his last three Sieve Earth Pills. As for his fourth Dao Pillar, it was about ninety percent complete. These pills would be insufficient to complete the last ten percent.

“These Sieve Earth Pills are only so effective…. Perhaps I won’t be able to reach the mid Foundation Establishment stage after all….” A stubborn look shone within his eyes. He knew that his path of Cultivation was different from that of others; he had acquired incredible battle prowess, but the Cultivation he practiced was much more challenging. Even as he thought of these things, a racket could be heard coming from the outside.

“Fellow Daoists, this person’s Cultivation has stirred up such power, I’m afraid that once he emerges, all of our Cultivation Clans will be at his mercy. Let’s take advantage of this opportunity to destroy him now to prevent future troubles.”

“Correct. The Xiao Clan is weak. Their existence is meaningless. The extermination of such Clans is the natural order, it can’t be changed!”

“Let’s attack together. This lightning mist can’t hold up against all of us!”

The ten or more Foundation Establishment Cultivators outside began attacking the lightning mist in unison.

All of these people were from local Cultivator Clans; as they attacked, booming sounds lifted up to fill the sky. The lightning mist seethed violently.

“An evil heart, is a useless life.” Meng Hao’s eyes sparkled icily as he looked out through the lightning mist. He quickly gathered up the remaining three pills and popped them into his mouth.

They immediately dissolved, and the cascading moonlight grew stronger, as if a river were pouring down into Meng Hao's body. Although their effectiveness was waning, his fourth Dao Pillar was now just a hair away from being complete.

Just as the Dao Pillar was about to appear in full, Meng Hao's suddenly sensed an inexplicable roaring within his body. His expression flickered as he realized that his body was starting to wither, as if his flesh and blood and life force, even his Cultivation base, were being sucked into the fourth Dao Pillar.

He had just unlocked another of the secrets of the Perfect Foundation. It was with unbridled power that the fourth Dao Pillar began of its own will to suck in everything into it.

It seemed that the fourth Dao Pillar would form at any cost, even if it caused the death of Meng Hao!

His face flickered at this sudden turn of events. He had never imagined that something like this would happen. It was at this exact moment that the lightning mist finally collapsed under the attack of the ten Foundation Establishment Cultivators. They rushed in.

Meng Hao eyed them approaching, his face grim. His body was withering, and his life force was trickling away. The hair on his head had already begun turning white. His Cultivation base was still there, though. Suddenly, an early Foundation Establishment Cultivator appeared in front of him. Before the man could react, Meng Hao's hand shot out and grabbed him by the throat. He squeezed, and the Cultivator's eyes filled with disbelief. The man's neck shattered.

Even as he died, Meng Hao's body trembled, and his eyes filled with a strange light. The man's corpse suddenly began to shrink and wither. Within the blink of an eye, it was a mere skeleton. The man's Cultivation base rushed in through Meng Hao's hand and entered the fourth Dao Pillar.

"So that's how it is!" Meng Hao's eyes grew brighter. "I have a perfect Foundation, but when my first three Dao Pillars formed within the Blood

Immortal Legacy tournament, there was more than enough spiritual energy to absorb, so I couldn't even sense the potency of the Dao Pillars. But now, things are clear. After reaching a certain point, the fourth Dao Pillar reaches a phase in which only death can stop its progress. When this happens, it will even consume my own life force. The reason is because it can't absorb spiritual energy from the outside world, only from my flesh and blood!

"Perfection. Perfection is so potent! But such potency is also a weapon. I've been rejected by the Heavens. Therefore, I must plunder from the living! The bodies of Cultivators are filled with spiritual energy that does not belong to heaven and earth! Therefore, it can be pillaged away! Now I understand. It seems that in the future, it will be like this every time I form a new Dao Pillar!

"Today… my fourth Dao Pillar will appear!"

These thoughts ran through Meng Hao's head in an instant. He loosened his grip, then looked around at the surrounding Cultivators, his eyes radiating icy cold. His body flashed as he shot toward them.

Miserable screams rang out. All of these people had Cultivation bases at the mid Foundation Establishment level at the highest; most were at the early Foundation Establishment stage. Could they possibly match up against Meng Hao? As Meng Hao passed each person, his hand would snake out, and with no effort on his part, the fourth Dao Pillar would feed, thirstily sucking in energy.

Body after body turned into bones. Before the death of each Cultivator, their Cultivation base would be sucked rapidly into Meng Hao, consumed by his Dao Pillar. Soon, Meng Hao was no longer withered, and his flesh and blood began to rebuild.

As Xiao Chang'en observed this happening, dread appeared on his face. The Cultivators who had moments ago been charging forward, suddenly began to retreat at high speed.

In their eyes, Meng Hao was no Cultivator; he had transformed into some type of evil demon. Wherever he passed, blood-curdling screams could be heard, and he left behind only ragged corpses. Their minds reeled, and expressions of unbridled horror appeared on their faces.

“What magic is this!?!?”

“What is he doing!?!?”

“This guy… he’s sucking up the life and Cultivation bases of all those dead Fellow Daoists!?!?”

The remaining twenty or so Cultivators were scared witless and retreated in chaos. Meng Hao caught up with one of them. As he placed his hand on the crown of the man’s head, a blood-curdling scream echoed out. His body began to shrivel, and then he died.

Meng Hao’s face was no longer pale and bloodless; it was now ruddy and filled with life. He took a deep breath, and in his mind he suddenly recalled the scene in Patriarch Reliance’s Immortal’s cave, when Patriarch Reliance had absorbed the Core Formation Cultivators 1.

“The Great Art of Demonic Life?” thought Meng Hao, his eyes flickering. It seemed that what he was doing now was very similar indeed to the Great Art of Demonic Life that Patriarch Reliance had used. “Or perhaps this is some type of enlightenment that comes from being in a kill or be killed situation. The Great Art of Demonic Life. Demonic Life….” Meng Hao sighed inwardly as he suppressed his deeply-ingrained Confucian way of thinking. His body flickered with the power of the fourth Dao Pillar. He sighed as his hand clasped around the throat of another Cultivator. The fourth Dao Pillar sucked in the man’s Cultivation base. Soon, the fourth Dao Pillar would complete its circle and be complete.

“The path of my Perfect Foundation will be strewn with mountains of corpses and seas of blood. I… understand.” He sighed again, and yet continued forward without hesitation. His heart did not grow soft. Confucianism would always exist within him, and he would never be truly merciless. However, when the circumstances required, he could act without mercy.

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# Chapter 174: Perfect Mid Foundation Establishment!

Moonlight shone over the savage scene. It wasn’t just Xiao Chang’en whose heart was filled with icy dread; the rest of the Xiao Clan members looked at Meng Hao, terrified.

The other surrounding Cultivators retreated as quickly as possible, knowing that the slightest hesitation could result in a horrifying death. However, Meng Hao was faster. He looked like a specter, his hair floating around his head as he pursued his quarry. He sucked in a Cultivation base and life force, then loosened his grip, dropping the shrivelled, trembling skeletal body to the ground.

It wasn’t as if none of the Cultivators tried to fight back; unfortunately, their resistance was futile. To Meng Hao, they were like nothing. Even before the emergence of his fourth Dao Pillar, Meng Hao could easily battle the late Foundation Establishment stage. Now that his fourth Dao Pillar was almost complete, he was on the very threshold of the mid Foundation Establishment stage.

What could these outcasts from the Blood Demon Sect possibly do to resist him?!

It was their doom to be here today, a deadly choice on their part. They had chosen to destroy the lightning mist, and in doing so, had unleashed the spirit of death!

Meng Hao was more than half recovered now. His hair was no longer white, nor was his skin withered. Everything that his Dao Pillar had sucked away from him was now restored.

His fourth Dao Pillar emanated a demonic aura, as if it desired to plunder and consume all spiritual power!

I am cut off from heaven and earth, so I will take it upon myself to plunder! This potency is Perfection!

Boom!

Meng Hao closed in on two early Foundation Establishment Cultivators. They turned around, roaring as they unleashed the full power of the might of their Cultivation bases. They used magical arts, they used magical treasures, going all out against Meng Hao.

A booming echoed out, and then Meng Hao was standing directly in front of one of them. His palm pushed lightly against the man’s face. A dessicated corpse dropped to the ground.

His body flickered; another miserable cry echoed out. Everyone who remained alive trembled as they watched a middle-aged man grow old. His hair became white and then fell out. His flesh and blood wilted away. His eyes clouded over as he took one last breath and then passed into death.

Meng Hao sighed. He had no deep grudge against these people. However, they had appeared here and had attacked him with the intention of wiping him out and preventing him from making a breakthrough in his Cultivation. Although they were targeting him because of the Xiao Clan, the fact was: they were here. To suddenly be facing Meng Hao, was simply their fate.

Meng Hao understood; his eyes flashed with enlightenment, and he continued to attack without hesitation.

He sucked away the life force and Cultivation base of an old man of the mid Foundation Establishment stage, whereupon a loud roaring filled his body. It emanated out, filling the air, causing everyone to look on in shock.

The fleeing Cultivators trembled in dread. Everything that was happening was like a horrible dream, a nightmare which they would never be able to forget for the rest of their lives.

The image of Meng Hao had been branded indelibly onto their very souls, and would stay with them until their deaths.

As the boom rang out, a tremor ran through Meng Hao's body. He suddenly began to emit a golden light. It spread out, causing Meng Hao to appear as if he were covered with golden armor!

At the same time, the fourth Dao Pillar appeared in full; the roaring was coming from the Dao Pillar itself. Up above in the sky, dark clouds began to congeal. It seemed as if within them, an invisible pair of eyes was staring down onto Meng Hao.

A feeling like that of Tribulation Lightning suddenly appeared. It disappeared almost immediately, as if it were simply observing, waiting until Core Formation to unleash its destructive punishment!

Though there was no wind, Meng Hao's hair whipped about his head wildly. With the appearance of his fourth Dao Pillar, he had now broken through to the mid level of Foundation Establishment!

With the power of the Perfect Foundation, Meng Hao was now the most powerful person of the Foundation Establishment stage among the five Sects and three Clans of the Southern Domain!

The moment he broke through, the blood drained from the faces of the surrounding Cultivators, and their bodies trembled. The Dao Pillars within their bodies suddenly began to quiver. In fact, cracks appeared on the Dao Pillars of some of the Cultivators, causing them to cough up blood, faces filled with astonishment.

It seemed like their Dao Pillars were ashamed to be in the presence of Meng Hao's Perfect Dao Pillars. With his Perfect Foundation, he was a sovereign among the Foundation Establishment stage. His incredible might and power caused the hearts of all other Foundation Cultivators to tremble, and their Dao Pillars to become unstable.

In fact, because of the influence of Meng Hao's Dao Pillars, the trembling Cultivators began to prostrate themselves toward him. This was not their idea; it was veneration toward their sovereign from the Dao Pillars themselves!

Their bodies were not even under their own control as they lowered their heads. Their minds were filled with roaring emptiness.

This was true crushing pressure; this was a power that had reached such a level that it created a relationship like that between heaven and earth.

In the Cultivation world, a crushing pressure is a power that exists because of the vast difference between different Cultivation levels. However, this crushing pressure emanating from Meng Hao came from the Dao Pillar itself!

Perfect Dao Pillars can exhibit crushing pressure onto all other Dao Pillars. If a Cultivator who had completed the circle of Foundation Establishment had merely Fractured Dao Pillars, he could do nothing but tremble in front of Meng Hao.

This… this was the power of four Perfect Dao Pillars. It would be hard to imagine the power Meng Hao could wield after he created his fifth, sixth, and even ninth Dao Pillars! What crushing pressure would he then be able to employ?!

At that time, it wouldn’t matter if he faced a Cracked Foundation or even a Flawless Foundation; they would all be as weak as ants to Meng Hao. After completing nine Perfect Dao Pillars, then perhaps Meng Hao would be able to pass into Core Formation!

Meng Hao had no way to predict what that would be like, but his heart filled with increasingly powerful anticipation nonetheless.

It was at this time that just outside of the Xiao Clan, two beams of prismatic light shot through the air. One flickered with blue light, the other white as they flew forward and caught sight of Meng Hao.

“So it turns out to be a Chosen!” said the white-robed youth. The Blood Demon Sect’s current Dao Child looked down, eyes glowing. They were filled with battle, seemingly kindled into burning. They flashed like lightning as they examined Meng Hao.

To the side was the blue-robed young man, the brother of Sang Luo. As he gazed upon Meng Hao, his eyes narrowed and his heart filled with an indescribable sense of danger!

At this same moment, in a location not too far away, but not too near, existed an enormous basin in the earth. There were actually ten such basins, each one filled with richly ornamented buildings and pagodas. Each basin also contained a lake.

From a distance this place looked… mysterious and dark. This land… was none other than one of the five great Sects of the Southern Domain… the Blood Demon Sect!

Within the center of the ten basins was a tree. One half of the tree was wilted and dry, the other half was lush and flourishing. It was a very bizarre sight, and clearly something beyond ordinary. This tree was a precious treasure of the Blood Demon Sect!

Underneath the tree, an indistinct figure sat cross-legged. Suddenly, the figure raised its head. Its vision pierced through everything until it reached the Xiao Clan, and Meng Hao.

A smile appeared on its face, and an indistinct murmuring could be heard.

“So, it was not in vain that I helped you those three times,” the indistinct figure said, its voice husky. “This kid has certainly grown up…. It seems Yu’er is there too. Perhaps this is the tribulation that violet-robed Cultivator spoke of the day she was born?” Thunder rumbled above in the sky.

“The Dao of the Heavens is not dead, I shall not enter the yellow springs of the underworld!” The figure looked up into the sky, and its face suddenly emitted two beams of ferocious, red light. This was none other than… The blood-red figure who had appeared that year at the Reliance Sect!

This was the blood-red Demon Lord who had flashed through the sky to save Meng Hao from obliteration at the hands of Lord Revelation. 1

In the air above the Xiao Clan, a golden light glittered. The surrounding Cultivators trembled in fear. Meng Hao turned his head, his gaze sweeping to fall upon the white-robed Cultivator.

He could only be described as beautiful. His body was covered with a voluminous white robe, and he emanated a demonic aura. However, in addition to the demonic aura, there was a refined and cultivated air. He floated there, and though he was accompanied by another Cultivator, all eyes were on him. Even if there were countless thousands upon thousands of people present, he would be the center of attention.

His beauty, coupled with his demonic air, made it such that even most women would have trouble surpassing him. Were he wearing women’s clothing, he would be a beauty unmatched in his generation.

As Meng Hao’s looked upon the white-robed youth, their gazes locked. Instantly, Meng Hao could sense the desire for battle within those eyes. Next to the beautiful Blood Demon Dao Child was a blue-robed Cultivator. His gaze immediately fell upon Sang Luo, who laid entangled in the black net on the ground not too far of. He was just about to spring into action when the white-robed youth held out a hand to stop him.

“You’re not his match.” The white-robed youth smiled. “I find this person… very interesting.” His smile was warm and calm. Were this person to be wearing women’s clothing, this consummately elegant smile would make flowers grow dim!

After smiling, the white-robed youth took a step forward. This step landed on air, but as it did, Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed. It felt as if the step had landed directly on his heart. His entire condition changed, as if he were suddenly under great pressure.

A wave of power rippled out from the white-robed youth, clearly caused by a completed circle of late Foundation Establishment.

“These are my Seven Demonic Lotus Steps. Each step is unbreakable. Take care, Fellow Daoist.” With a smile, the white-robed youth began to take a second step. His power suddenly surged to immense heights, as if the power itself contained his will. It spread out in all directions.

Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed. As the white-robed youth approached, a strange aura seemed to be building up in the area. It circled around, emanating a mysterious aroma. It smelled pleasant; however, it could cause bewilderment which could lead to total loss of oneself.

As the second step descended, Meng Hao began to shake, and the gleam in his eye grew sharper. Smiling, the white-robed youth began to take a third step. As it fell, the power in the area grew exponentially stronger. His body seemed to transform into something invincible. It was only the third step, but in Meng Hao’s perception, time itself seemed to suddenly whiz by. It was as if the entire world were being replaced by something else.

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# Chapter 175: Li Shiqi

A strong feeling filled Meng Hao. It was as if the area surrounding him was cut off from everything else. It felt like his Cultivation base was about to degrade and he would soon fall back to the early Foundation Establishment stage.

At the same time, an incredibly realistic vision appeared in his mind. He returned to Mount Daqing, to Yunjie County, to the window of his room, underneath the moonlight. He saw himself sitting there reading.

Meng Hao had never experienced a magical technique such as this. This was his first time. His eyes narrowed.

The white-robed youth’s fourth step was just beginning!

As it did, Meng Hao’s mind reeled, and more visions appeared. He suddenly realized that the state caused by his opponent would be impossible to break once the seventh step was reached. That was the pinnacle, and when that last step descended, his opponent would be able to employ a pressure so intense that he wouldn’t need to attack.

That pressure contained a power that could sweep away the Foundation Establishment stage!

“If the art is unbreakable, then I must break the situation!”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and his head tilted up. He lifted his right hand and pointed down toward the ground. The earth seemed to shake, and yet, what was shaking was not the earth, but Meng Hao. Ghost images appeared everywhere; the only thing that didn’t have a ghost image, was Meng Hao!

“This is the Eighth Hex, Body-sealing Finger,” said Meng Hao coolly. “Take care, Fellow Daoist.” He lifted his hand and pointed forward.

Suddenly, Meng Hao’s body stopped vibrating. The ghost images all overlapped and descended toward the white-robed youth. They merged into his body, and suddenly, a conspicuous ghost image of the young man himself appeared. The fifth step that he had been about to take could no longer be completed.

The white-robed youth’s mind trembled; he looked at Meng Hao with eyes glowing, his expression dignified.

Meng Hao didn’t attack. This battle was more of an exchange of techniques, not a battle to the death. Meng Hao stood there indifferently, calmly looking at the young man.

After the space of a single breath, the white-robed youth recovered. However, the power caused by the overlapping momentum of his steps had dissipated, nullified by Meng Hao.

The Seven Demonic Lotus Steps was an art that utilized the power of momentum. Once unleashed, even high-level Cultivation bases would have difficulty breaking it. From the time he had emerged as a figure in the Cultivation world until now, the white-robed youth had never encountered someone of the Foundation Establishment stage who could break the Seven Demonic Lotus Steps; not even Dao Children of the other Sects or Clans were able to.

But today, in this place, he had witnessed an unprecedented occurrence. His eyes shined with a strange light as he gazed at Meng Hao. His face filled with respect; this was an esteem that only powerful experts of the same generation would feel for each other.

“To receive without giving is not a principle by which I live,” said Meng Hao coolly. “I also have an attack to share. Please prepare.” He lifted his left hand, using the nail of his thumb to slice his middle finger. Blood flowed out, causing his middle finger to become crimson. His hand moved in a casual motion, but his eyes were filled with ferocity.

As he attacked, observers could not see anything special happening. However, the white-robed youth's pupils instantly constricted. From his perspective, everything had suddenly turned to the color of blood. His expression flickered slightly, and a sense of imminent, fatal danger welled up in him. His right hand shot up to slap his bag of holding. A branch appeared in his hand upon which grew three withered leaves and three luxuriant leaves. He waved it in front of him.

No sound could be heard, but faint ripples circled out. Meng Hao gave a bored snort and retreated backward a three paces. As he did, his power began to decline, so he stopped and took a step forward.

The step descended, seeming to trample directly on the heart of the white-robed youth, whose mind shook. His body swayed, as if a massive, invisible force were pushing down on it. He retreated backward a few paces, the blood draining from his face despite the aid of his magical item. As the color slowly returned to his face, he gave Meng Hao a deep look.

"Senior, I am Li Shiqi." It seemed this white-robed youth actually had a girl's name 1. He stared at Meng Hao as he asked in a soft voice, "Fellow Daoist, would it be possible for me to enquire as to your illustrious name?"

Meng Hao got an odd feeling when looking at the white-robed youth. There was something strange about him. He thought for a moment, then replied, "Meng Hao."

"Brother Meng, the person you have in your custody is actually a blood relative of my Junior Brother. I hope you can release him. If he did anything to offend you, I offer my sincere apologies."

Meng Hao looked at blue-robed youth who stood by Li Shiqi. He was currently looking at Sang Luo off in the distance. Meng Hao raised his right hand, and the black net loosened. Sang Luo, face pale, shot away with all the power he could muster. Meng Hao's hat pursued him at top speed.

"Eee? Don't run away. Meng Hao, how could you do such a thing?" The meat jelly roared angrily as it shot after Sang Luo. "You can't do that, it's immoral! You can’t just let him go. I haven’t rescued him from the path of evil yet….”

Sang Luo’s body trembled as he raced to the side of the blue-robed Cultivator. His face was covered with terror as he clutched at his older brother’s clothes and stared in horror at the approaching hat.

Li Shiqi stared in shock at the hat.

The meat jelly’s voice suddenly sounded surprised. “Eee? What are you looking at? You’re a female? Heavens, you look like a guy, but you’re actually a girl. Strange, very strange. No rod, no rod!” It returned to Meng Hao, plopping down onto his head and once again changing color to bright green.

Li Shiqi’s face suddenly looked extremely unsightly as she glared at the hat, and then Meng Hao. All the good feelings from moments before suddenly evaporated.

Meng Hao made a wry smile. The meat jelly had suddenly made everything very clear. Meng Hao suddenly had an acute understanding of why people called the meat jelly Ultimate Vexation.

Ignoring the looks on the faces of Meng Hao and Li Shiqi, it started to prattle on, apparently preparing to talk for at least three days and three nights without stopping. “Strange, so strange. You’re actually a female… huh?” In the midst of its excitement, the meat jelly seemed to have found something else interesting. It looked off into the distance.

It was at this exact moment that off in the Blood Demon Sect, sitting cross-legged underneath the strange tree, the Demon Lord’s body suddenly quivered. He immediately retracted his vision, cutting off all connection to the outside world.

“Dammit,” said the indistinct image of the Demon Lord, panting. “How could that abominable thing have appeared. Didn’t his excellency suppress it? And yet, there it is, attached to the body of a disciple of the Demon Sealing Sect!!

“I cannot get entangled with it. According to the legends, there were many powerful experts in ancient times who were driven insane by it…. It looks weak though, it must not have been able to sense me….”

Back in the Xiao Clan mountain village, the meat jelly hat gazed off into the distance. It seemed to be lost in thought for a moment, after which its body flickered, and it looked back at Li Shiqi.

Li Shiqi gave a cold snort and then glared angrily at Meng Hao. Without another word, she spun and flew off. The blue-robed Cultivator gave a dry cough, then picked up Sang Luo and transformed into a colorful beam that shot off into the distance.

“Eee? You’re leaving, little girl? Don’t leave! I haven’t finished talking….”

Meng Hao’s face once again filled with a dark expression. The surrounding Cultivators wanted to leave. Unfortunately, their Dao Pillars trembled, and they were incapable of even moving. They stared nervously at Meng Hao.

“From this day forward, none of you are permitted to step a foot into the Xiao Clan,” said Meng Hao coolly. He flicked his sleeve, unbinding the Cultivators. They immediately gave deep bows to Meng Hao, and pledged to follow his instructions. After that, they fled at top speed.

When they were gone, pale-faced Xiao Chang’en approached. Clasping hands, he bowed deeply to Meng Hao.

“Many thanks, benefactor!!”

All of the Xiao Clan members approached and began kowtowing to Meng Hao. Xiao Caifeng stared at him blankly for a moment, and then nodded.

Meng Hao looked around at the Xiao Clan. “I can’t stay here,” he said gently. “I must leave in a few days. The only help I can provide is what I’ve already done.”

“It’s enough,” said Xiao Chang’en, bowing deeply. “Fear of benefactor will keep the Xiao Clan safe for dozens of years to come. Once the Xiao Clan produces another Foundation Establishment Cultivator, then our position will be secured permanently.” The death aura which emanated from his body had grown stronger. Most likely, he would reach the end of his life within a year.

Meng Hao said nothing. After a long moment, he nodded, then returned into the lightning mist.

Three days later, Meng Hao chose to leave. Before departing, he severed two vines and left them in the Spirit lake. He helped Xiao Caifeng to brand them to herself; in the future, they would belong to the Xiao Clan. Xiao Caifeng watched with a smile as Meng Hao left.

Her eyes followed him as he disappeared into the distance. Who knew how long his shadow would rest on her heart? Her gaze rested on the spot where he had disappeared; she knew inside that there was no possibility of anything happening between the two of them.

Xiao Chang’en looked at Xiao Caifeng and sighed. His body seemed even weaker in the early morning sun. He was only growing older and older.

Several days later, Meng Hao sped through the sky, flying along the border territory between the Blood Demon Sect and the Solitary Sword Sect. A frown covered his face because of the incessant yammering of the meat jelly hat. It hadn’t stopped talking at all during the previous days.

“A female. Wahaha! It turned out she was a girl. Meng Hao, don’t you think it’s strange? Hey, why aren’t you saying anything? You can’t do that, it’s immoral. It turns out you fought with a girl! Heavens…. You know, I’m an elder of the senior generation, with ever-changing forms. How can you treat me this way? Acting like this is very wrong, very immoral….”

Veins of blood filled Meng Hao’s eyes, along with a look of despair. He really couldn’t deal with this type of torment. The hat’s endless chattering was enough to drive a person crazy. Meng Hao could feel his temper growing worse and worse.

But attacking the meat jelly was useless. Cursing it did nothing. It couldn’t be thrown away. It was stuck to him like dog skin plaster, seemingly attached to him for life. Meng Hao couldn’t think of any other alternative than to simply go insane.

He proceeded forward wearily. Suddenly, his eyes flickered as he caught sight of eight bright beams shooting toward him. They were all Cultivators of the Foundation Establishment stage. The beams of light were all the color of blood. Several of the Cultivators were maintaining a spell, within which was the indistinct image of some sort of enormous blood-colored beast. It floated above them as they proceeded forward.

Seeing these eight Cultivators, Meng Hao’s eyes flashed, and he suddenly spoke to the meat jelly. “You say you have ever-changing forms? I don’t believe you.”

“You don’t believe me!?” cried the meat jelly furiously. It seemed incapable of accepting this. Its dignity and honor had been trampled upon!

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1. Li Shiqi’s name in Chinese is lǐ shī qí – Li is a common family name. Shi means “poem.” Qi means “fine jade”

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# Chapter 176: Believe Your Granny

Originally Meng Hao had planned to speak placatingly, but then opted to sound scornful and disbelieving. “If you can transform into a shiny bag of holding that obviously contains a precious treasure, then I’ll believe you,” he said. He worked hard to make himself sound as antagonistic as possible.

In a rage, the meat jelly instantly transformed into a shining, golden bag of holding. It was transparent, and within could be seen a square cauldron as well as four circulating demonic swords. The four swords revolved around the cauldron, and at a single glance, it was obvious that it was a precious treasure.

Even more realistic was how the cauldron and four swords seemed to be trying to push their way out of the bag of holding, as if they wanted to escape.

“Well, what do you think…?” The voice of the meat jelly emanated out from the bag of holding.

Inside, he was surprised, but on the outside, a look of disdain covered his face. “There’s no glow!”

There was a rustling sound, and even as the words left his mouth, the bag of holding began to emit a blinding glow which shot up into the sky. The golden light shined up, instantly catching the attention of the eight Cultivators. Immediately, they flew in Meng Hao’s direction.

“Do you believe me n….?” came the voice of the meat jelly from within the bag of holding. Before it could finish speaking, Meng Hao grabbed the bag of holding and threw it toward the approaching Cultivators.

“Believe your granny!!” Meng Hao had been raised not to curse, but in this case he couldn’t help it. He shot away from the meat jelly as quickly as possible.

He had thrown the glowing, golden bag of holding away from himself with all the power he could muster from his Cultivation base. As it neared the approaching eight Cultivators, they stared open-mouthed. They all had slightly different expressions. Some were suspicious, some were cautious, some even looked pleasantly surprised. However, each and every one reached out with outstretched arms to snatch the bag of holding.

“You tricked me! That pisses me off!” sounded out the voice of the meat jelly. Just when it was about to be grabbed by one of the Cultivators, it vanished. Then it reappeared off in the distance, directly on Meng Hao’s head. It once again transformed into a green hat.

As if that didn’t satisfy it, popping sounds rang out as one hat after another piled up on his head, over and over again, high up into the air….

Soon, the stack of hats was taller than Meng Hao’s entire person. The eight Cultivators looked on, completely dumbfounded. They had never seen something like this in their entire lives.

Meng Hao’s face grew even more unsightly. He felt like he was about to go nuts. If the meat jelly took this shape, then he would be the center of attention no matter where he went….

“Fellow Daoist with the green hats,” said one of the Cultivators coldly, a middle-aged man with a frown. “This is Blood Demon Sect territory. Outsiders are not welcome. Even less welcome are people who come here to make fools of us. Take your green hat and get the hell out of here!”

Meng Hao had just been about to leave when the words reached his ears. He suddenly stopped, turning to look at the eight Cultivators. His eyes shone fiercely. At the moment, he was in a horrific mood, and these words did not please him whatsoever.

“You still dare to turn your head back?” said the middle-aged Cultivator with a cold laugh. “In that case, why don’t you leave your eyes with me after you leave. With those green hats, you’ll be a laughingstock anyway.” With that, he and his companions shot toward Meng Hao.

“Screw off!” said Meng Hao, suddenly lifting his hand and waving his sleeve toward them. The power of his Cultivation base exploded out. A massive wind screamed out and then slammed into them.

A booming filled the air, and blood sprayed from the mouths of the eight patrolling Blood Demon Sect disciples. Their bodies trembled. A look of disbelief covered the face of the man who had taunted Meng Hao, and his pupils constricted. From what he could see, Meng Hao was at the mid Foundation Establishment stage, but his attack just now had been filled with the might like that of the late Foundation Establishment stage. Blood oozed out of his mouth as he skidded backward in retreat. When he saw the cold look in Meng Hao’s eyes, his heart shook.

Realizing he had been rash, the middle-aged Cultivator said, “Fellow Daoist, this….” Even as he began to speak, however, Meng Hao’s eyes shone with even more ferocious iciness.

The man’s face fell. He and his companions turned into beams of prismatic light that shot away into the distance. When they were far away from Meng Hao, they finally came to a stop and exchanged glances.

“That guy is just too aggressive. Where did he come from? Elder Brother, let’s report him to Master. Master will surely dispatch some people to apprehend him!”

“Correct. Elder Brother, this is Blood Demon Sect territory. Can we really allow that guy to just run amok?”

“Shut the hell up!” growled the middle-aged man, his face dark and unreadable. “He’s young, and with just a single sweep of his hand, look at what he did to us. Do you really think he’s just some random person? He’s obviously not a Cultivator of the Solitary Sword Sect. With war brewing between our Sect and the Solitary Sword Sect, we can’t afford to provoke the wrath of additional Sects! He's obviously just passing through and doesn't want to make enemies, that's why he went easy on us. All of you, shut your mouths. Forget about what happened here. There will always be friction among Cultivators like us. There's no need to report some trifling incident like this to the Sect." Having made his decision, he continued on into the distance, his fellow Cultivators in tow.

After they were some ways away, the vines on the ground beneath them that they hadn't noticed this entire time, burrowed into the earth and disappeared.

Back in Meng Hao's location, Meng Hao stamped his foot onto the ground. The soil seethed as the dark red vines emerged to sway back and forth in front of him. Moments later, they transformed into a small, dark red fruit, which he placed into his bag of holding. Finally, he turned his attention to the hat on his head.

"You can't do that! It's wrong. If you let them go, you should trust them completely. You can't secretly dispatch something to follow them. That's wrong. That's immoral. Eee? I just remembered something. You cussed at me just now!!

"Cussing is wrong. It's immoral. My granny never did anything to offend you. Why did you have to bring her up? It's very strange. What relationship do you have with her? Unless…" Suddenly, the meat jelly's pedantic voice filled with a strange tone. "Unless the two of you…."

Meng Hao ignored it. He slapped his bag of holding to produce a set of clothing. He ripped off some strips of fabric and stuffed them into his ears. Immediately, the meat jelly's voice became quieter. But then, the meat jelly gave a dry cough. It started to talk, and this time, its voice could be heard directly inside of Meng Hao's head.

Meng Hao's expression was somewhat haggard. He stared off into nothing for a while, then finally sighed and tossed the strips of cloth away.

"Now I know why people call you Ultimate Vexation," he said. Immediately, the meat jelly began to tremble with excitement.

“Why? Why?! This name was given to me a very, very, very long time ago by an old friend. I asked him about it many times, but he would never tell me what it means.” The meat jelly’s full and undivided attention was now focused on Meng Hao.

Meng Hao didn’t say anything. Instead, he pondered why the person who named the meat jelly wouldn’t explain the meaning of the name. Then he thought of the meat jelly’s long-windedness, and he shivered. He understood. By providing an answer regarding the name, it would give the meat jelly a conversation topic that would certainly last for months.

The thought of that made his scalp go numb. Anyone who had no experience dealing with the meat jelly couldn’t comprehend the nature of the torment it brought. He decided to change the topic.

“With you looking like this, we really can’t proceed onward,” said Meng Hao. “Is there any way you can take some form other than a pile of hats?” He was careful in his wording, fearful of agitating the thing. He could only imagine what it would look like if it decided to become a mountain of green hats perched on top of his head. What would happen then?

His tone was non-argumentative, but inside, his heart was filled with helplessness. He thought of the Blood Mastiff, and suddenly missed it terribly. Unfortunately, it was sleeping now.

Actually, Meng Hao’s words seemed to excite the meat jelly. “Eee? If I’m not a hat, then what shape should I take?” Meng Hao was used to this, so he didn’t say anything at first. He sat cross-legged within the mountain forest and retrieved the Time-refining jade page. He cast his Spiritual Sense into it and began to study the contents.

Some time passed, and then Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. He began to mutter to himself. “Time of Spring and Autumn requires a Spring tree and the frost of Autumn. The fire of mid-Winter, the spirit of Summer. Refine the four seasons, fuse with the Cultivation base. Refine the four seasons again to produce a small sword.

“This sword must be carefully nurtured. With enlightenment of Time, the veins of a hundred years can fill the sword. After the hundred years, a thousand years will pass, and it will take shape. In ten thousand years, it will appear to shake heaven and earth, the first Sword of Time.” Meng Hao frowned as he gazed at the jade page. The sword contained no small might, but the time involved in its creation seemed too vast.

“Han Bei is really focused on this sword, so it can’t really take that much time, can it…? There must be other methods that can be used to speed up the appearance of the sword.” Lost in thought, Meng Hao thought to the third jade page that the meat jelly had swallowed, as well as the first jade page, which had been sucked back into the circular cauldron.

“The answer must be on the third page. Too bad this damned meat jelly ate it.” Meng Hao lifted his head and looked at the meat jelly. About an hour had passed since he began studying the Time refining information. Of course, the meat jelly had been talking the entire time.

“What do I change into? What do I change into? What do I change into?” It had flown off of Meng Hao’s head and was now hopping back and forth in front of him. It looked very excited.

“Can you change into that jade page you swallowed?” Meng Hao said suddenly.

“Huh? Ok…” It agreed, and then immediately changed its mind. “Eee? Wait a second. What are you trying to pull? No way! It’s mine. You’re not getting your hands on it.”

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# Chapter 177: Using its Strength

Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed when he heard the words.

“Could it be that the things it swallows don’t get digested, but are just collected?”

“Trying to fool me? Quit dreaming. Hmph.” The meat jelly’s tone became sagely, “Child, you’ve walked too far down the path of evil. Repent and be saved.”

“Change into whatever it was that left the most profound impression on you,” Meng Hao said blithely. He was still thinking about what the meat jelly had said just now, and what it meant. He had to figure out a way to trick the meat jelly into coughing up the jade page.

“The most profound impression? There’s no need to even think about it. The thing which had the most profound effect on me in my entire life is this!!” The meat jelly seemed to be gnashing its teeth. There was a popping sound, and suddenly it transformed into….

A brightly colored parrot! It was about half the size of his arm, glistening as if it were covered with rainwater. It was somewhat emaciated, with a curved beak and triangular eyes. It had a somewhat perverted demeanor, and seemed to be filled with an immoral air.

It stood there in front of Meng Hao, looking at him with its perverted, triangular eyes. It lowered its head and pecked a few times at its body.

Meng Hao gaped at the parrot. In his entire life, he had never seen such a perverted looking bird. Its triangular eyes and the brightly colored feathers which covered its body were especially strange.

The parrot coughed dryly, looking at Meng Hao out of the corner of its eye.

“This is what left the most profound impression on me: that damned bird. In my last life, I just wasn’t able to get it to give in and convert. In this life, I will definitely convert it! That immoral, perverted creature who likes things with fur and feathers!!” The meat jelly sounded like it was gnashing its teeth. Its appearance and words just now instantly made this form seem even more lifelike.

Seeing the parrot and hearing the words caused Meng Hao to take a deep breath. He thought back to the day he had almost put on the blood-colored mask, and had heard a bird cry come from the copper mirror.

He thought about how fervently the copper mirror would attack furred creatures. His mind spun with various images. He didn’t really understand. Just what was this bird that the meat jelly kept talking about…?

Meng Hao hesitated for a moment before retrieving the copper mirror from his bag of the Cosmos. “You’re talking about this?” he asked. The instant it appeared, the meat jelly parrot let out a squawk. Wings fluttering, it shot forward and grabbed the copper mirror in its claws and began to viciously peck at it.

“Dammit! Yes, this is it. I can sense its aura inside. I’ll peck you to death, you damned mass-murdering bird! Peck you! Peck you…!” The meat jelly parrot seemed to have gone crazy. Its feathers stood on end as it squawked and pecked at the copper mirror.

Meng Hao watched on in a daze. He recalled the time he had acquired the mirror, and then when he had discovered its ability. From the very beginning, he had always wondered about its fantastical nature, but had never discovered any clues.

Meng Hao felt like he was going to be quickly driven insane by the meat jelly parrot. It was squawking madly and radiated a look of hatred. Meng Hao himself felt like venting a bit. He suddenly had an intense desire to meet the parrot that resided within the copper mirror.

“The parrot must be incredibly extraordinary to be able to make the meat jelly so angry. Maybe when it comes out, it can take care of the meat jelly for me.” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he suddenly reached an understanding. “Didn’t the meat jelly say earlier that when I reach Core Formation, the parrot can come out? Perhaps… it’s like the mastiff, a type of Weapon Spirit!”

“Why don’t you fight back? Hmm?” The meat jelly parrot blustered as it pecked at the mirror. “I won’t let you off this time, I’m going to convert you! Hahaha! You can’t come out. You can’t come out! I can piss you off as much as I want and you can’t come out.” The meat jelly quivered with excitement. However, it was at this point that the mirror suddenly flickered, and the meat jelly let out a cry. It released its claws and flew away. The copper mirror flew after it, repeatedly sending out invisible attack rays.

Meng Hao watched on contentedly, doing nothing to stop the copper mirror. However, it quickly became apparent that the meat jelly wasn’t being hurt at all. He flicked his sleeve, returning the copper mirror to the bag of the Cosmos.

The meat jelly parrot flapped its wings as it flew back over and landed on Meng Hao’s shoulder. It began to chatter into his ear like usual.

At least this form looked better than a stack of hats. Meng Hao’s desire to reach Core Formation was now even more intense. He took a deep breath. Ignoring the prattle of the meat jelly, he flew into the air and shot off toward the horizon.

“The poison within me is a big problem,” he thought. “I really need to figure a way to infiltrate the Violet Fate Sect and see if I can find a way to become Grandmaster Pill Demon’s disciple. Then I can get rid of the poison once and for all.” His eyes glittered as he proceeded onward. He had considered this the last time he was in a city controlled by the Violet Fate Sect. The Spring and Autumn tree could only alleviate the symptoms of the poison and buy him some time.

The only way to truly dispel the poison was to get into the Violet Fate Sect.

“Besides, if I want to form a Perfect Gold Core, I first need to have a Violet Core. To form a Violet Core requires a suitable technique. That technique is none other than the Violet Fate Sect’s Violet Qi from the East!” Meng Hao frowned. It was a good idea, but he couldn’t think of any way to infiltrate the Violet Fate Sect. He had offended too many people there. There was Wu Dingqiu and Chu Yuyan, as well as the disciples he had met in the State of Zhao, who were surely members of the Inner Sect by now.

“I need to switch identities. I need a way to become someone else.” He sighed. Obviously it was all a flight of fancy that should just be forgotten. Suddenly, his expression changed. He looked at the bag of the Cosmos, and his eyes shined with intelligence.

“The mask…. If I had an appearance-changing mask, then I could do it. As for a mask…I do have one! But who knows if the mask has that power? Furthermore, my Cultivation base needs to be at Core Formation before I can use it. Also, what if the mask just doesn’t work that way….” He slowly turned his head to look at the chattering parrot on his shoulder. His eyes glittered.

“What are you looking at me like that for?” said the meat jelly parrot with surprise, staring at him.

Meng Hao ignored it. He flew down to the ground and sat cross-legged. He smacked the bag of the Cosmos and retrieved the blood-colored mask.

As soon as the meat jelly saw the mask, its eyes went wide and it flapped its wings violently, flying around Meng Hao in a circle and letting out raucous squawks.

“What’s that? What’s that? Heavens! What is that evil thing? Child, you’ve trodden too far down the path of wickedness. Fear not, I can pull you back. I will convert you. Eeeeee? What’s that inside? Why am I seeing an old man? Waaah! This old man looks so miserable. Child, you can’t do this. It’s wrong. It’s immoral. Eee? This old guy has performed possession! Old man, that’s immoral. That’s wrong….”

Meng Hao poured Spiritual Sense into the mask and was immediately able to see the blood-red form of the mastiff. It lay there sleeping, its aura majestic and boundless and growing even stronger. Meng Hao looked at it, and his expression grew soft.

“Hurry up and awaken…” he said with Spiritual Sense. The mastiff’s body twitched, and warmth emanated from it, a reply of sorts. Meng Hao’s smile grew warmer, and he thought back to everything that had happened during the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament.

“I’m waiting for you to wake up,” said Meng Hao softly. His eyes flashed as they fell upon the flag with three streamers. He was fully aware that his Cultivation base was not high enough to use the flag. He could only pour some Spiritual Sense into it and brand it to himself.

“Core Formation…. If I can become a Core Formation expert, then I should be able to use this flag….”

Last, Meng Hao touched the Li Clan Patriarch with his Spiritual Sense. He sat recoiled in the corner, his body illusory and transparent, and his face wan and sallow. It seemed as if at any moment he might dissipate into nothing.

As Meng Hao looked at him, he raised his head and glared back. His gaze was as fierce as ever, sinister to the extreme.

“There’s a question I can’t stop thinking about,” said Meng Hao calmly. “Why did you help Li Daoyi? The first time I saw you was in the sixth matrix, and you were a statue. The second time I saw you, you had become Li Daoyi’s Blood Divinity. Why?”

The Li Clan Patriarch laughed coldly, refusing to respond.

“It turns out you possessed the Blood Divinity. That makes me curious. Before possessing the Blood Divinity… who were you!?” His voice was as calm as ever. However, when the Li Clan Patriarch heard his words, his heart shook. His identity was his biggest secret, and no one had any clue about it. Even Meng Hao could only speculate about his relationship to Li Daoyi. Any details would be difficult to ascertain.

The Li Clan Patriarch laughed disdainfully. “You want to know? Beg me for a year, then maybe I’ll think about it.” He didn’t care about anything, not even death. After facing the loneliness of the Blood Immortal Legacy zone for four thousand years, he had incredible strength of will. Even Meng Hao’s previous threatening methods couldn’t really affect him now.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever. He glanced one last time at the weak form of the Li Clan Patriarch, and then narrowed his eyes and retracted his Spiritual Sense. He gazed at the surface of the blood-colored mask, and then looked at the meat jelly.

“You like to convert people, right?” asked Meng Hao.

“No,” the meat jelly responded solemnly, “I don’t like to convert people, I like to persuade them. Understand? Persuade.”

Meng Hao sighed. “The old man in this mask lived a life of extreme wickedness. He’s performed the most evil of acts and is completely corrupted by immorality. He loves to bully the weak, and is extremely vile in all ways. I captured him and put him in here out of mercy, because I wanted to admonish him. However, his magic is just too powerful. I just can’t influence him…” Before he could even finish talking, the meat jelly parrot’s eyes grew wide and it began to fume.

“Do you dare!? This type of person should only be converted by me! I hate nothing more than evildoers! I must convert him!” It suddenly looked extremely excited at the prospect of converting a bad guy such as this. Without waiting for a response from Meng Hao, its body flashed and it entered the blood-colored mask.

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# Chapter 178: An Old Friend

As soon as it entered the mask, the meat jelly cried out in alarm.

“Th-th-that’s … a Yellow Springs Nine Burials Flag!! It already has three streamers! Evil! Profound evil!” Looking very stern, the meat jelly approached the gaping Li Patriarch. “Old man, it turns out you are evil incarnate! In the name of Justice, I shall convert you! You can’t be like this, it’s immoral. You won’t meet a good end this way….”

Meng Hao coughed lightly and then put the mask away. He let out a deep sigh, and his eyes glittered sharply.

“Yellow Springs Nine Burials Flag?” Lost in thought, Meng Hao was just about to fly out of the concealment of the forest, when he stopped. He hid his Cultivation base and narrowed his eyes.

His Cultivation base was at the mid Foundation Establishment stage, which meant that he could contend with Dao Children. However, he had no reason to do so. This area was the border region between the Blood Demon Sect and the Solitary Sword Sect. He must be very cautious, and not get carried away. He resolved to not forget this.

After the space of about ten breaths had passed, several colorful beams of light appeared in the sky overhead. Ten Cultivators appeared, each and every one standing on a flying sword. They all wore identical outfits, and looked very impressive and dignified. Their passage sent a roaring sound into the air.

Of the ten people, the three in the front were the most conspicuous. They wore robes of interlocking black and white. Sheathed swords were strapped to their backs, and the sword auras beneath their feet shined brightly, seemingly capable of slicing effortlessly through anything.

One of the three was a stately looking man of about forty years of age. He was at the late Foundation Establishment stage, and as he flew, his black hair whipped around him, interspersed with occasional strands of white hair.

Behind him was a young man of about thirty years of age with thin lips and a harsh expression. He had curved eyes like a red phoenix that radiated coldness. He was incredibly good looking, but seemed cold-blooded in nature. The sword under his feet issued a frigid pressure. He was at the mid Foundation Establishment stage, and seemed to be the picture of imposing power.

The last person appeared to be about twenty-seven or twenty-eight. His features were ordinary, but he radiated an air of righteousness. He was only at the early Foundation Establishment stage, but his eyes glowed brightly. He seemed to be filled with a powerful aura.

When Meng Hao caught sight of him, his mind flooded with memories. This man filled with righteousness was none other than… Meng Hao’s Elder Brother from the Reliance Sect, who had been taken away by the Solitary Sword Sect.

Years had passed. Yet here, right in front of him, was Chen Fan. He thought back to the day they had parted, and it seemed like a very, very long time ago. The Reliance Sect was no more, and the State of Zhao was gone. Meng Hao wondered if Chen Fan was still the same person he had been before. 1

He was silent as he observed the group of people. They were all disciples of the number one Sect in the Southern Domain, the Solitary Sword Sect. It wasn’t anything remarkable for the Solitary Sword Sect to appear here. After all, this area was a region of contention between the Blood Demon Sect and the Solitary Sword Sect.

Meng Hao knew about the constant friction between the two great Sects, as well as the occasional skirmishes that occurred.

Just as the group of people was about to disappear in the distance, Meng Hao's expression flickered, and he looked back up into the sky.

Soon, he caught sight of ten beams of blood-red light whistling through the air. They were moving at top speed, kicking up a wind that buffeted the mountain forest below. Above the group of ten people were a handful of enormous creatures, flying along with them.

These ten Cultivators had grim expressions, filled with death. Killing intent circled around them and up to the beasts above them, who seemed to be feeding on it. The beasts roared and howled.

These, of course, were disciples of the Blood Demon Sect. Their speed was incredible as they passed over Meng Hao. From the direction they were heading, it seemed they were pursuing the Solitary Sword Sect Cultivators.

As they disappeared over the horizon, Meng Hao emerged from the forest. Muttering to himself, he looked at the direction the Cultivators from the two Sects had gone. Instead of flying after them, he stayed down into the cover of the trees to follow.

Meng Hao sped through the trees for the time it takes two incense sticks to burn. It was then that he heard the sounds of explosions ringing out. He increased his speed, and before long, caught sight of the Solitary Sword Sect and the Blood Demon Sect Cultivators locked in fierce magical combat. Booms echoed out, and ripples of magic spread out through the air.

To the Solitary Sword Sect people, a single sword was an instrument of death, incomparably sharp. As for the Blood Demon Sect people, their magic was ever-changing. Surprisingly, it wasn't dominated by the color of blood; rather, they used an endless stream of techniques. The phantom beasts they controlled possessed extraordinary strength. There were only three of them, but they charged about violently, making them impossible to approach.

There were no Core Formation experts in the two groups of people. The strongest among them was of the Pseudo Core stage. The rest were all of Foundation Establishment. They fought back and forth wildly, surrounded by a bloody glow. Meng Hao watched as a few among them perished. At the moment, the Blood Demon Sect seemed to have the upper hand. Suddenly, though, the eyes of the Pseudo Core Cultivator from the Solitary Sword Sect flickered with a cold light.

“Solitary Sword Spell!” he shouted. The Solitary Sword Sect disciples, including Chen Fan, flew toward him. Their swords glittered shockingly. In the blink of an eye, the sword merged together to form a single enormous sword, three hundred meters in length. The massive sword shot toward the three phantom beasts.

An explosion rang out in all directions. The phantom beasts trembled and roared, and then one by one, disintegrated into nothing. The massive sword then transformed into hundreds of glowing sword beams, which shot toward the remaining Blood Demon Sect disciples, as well as… toward the ground, where Meng Hao stood.

Meng Hao frowned, and then leaped up into the air. He waved his right hand, causing a gale force wind to spring up. The approaching sword beams instantly broke apart into pieces.

Meng Hao’s appearance, and his quick dispatching of the sword beams, immediately attracted the attention of the surrounding Solitary Sword Cultivators. This was especially so of the harsh-looking young man of the mid Foundation Establishment stage, whose eyes radiated iciness. The sword beams that had shot toward Meng Hao just now had been under his control.

“This Blood Demon Sect villain harbors evil designs,” said the young man coolly. “Junior Brothers, hear my command. Snuff him out!” He seemed disinclined to even verify Meng Hao’s identity. His appearance here was enough for the young man to pass judgement on him.

As soon as the words came out of his mouth, the forty-year-old late Foundation Establishment Cultivator frowned. However, he didn’t intervene. The eyes of the surrounding Cultivators flickered with coldness as they charged toward Meng Hao.

At this moment, however, Chen Fan caught sight of Meng Hao. After a moment passed, his eyes filled with joy.

“Stop!” he cried, rushing forward with all the speed of the early Foundation Establishment stage. He passed the others, flying directly up to Meng Hao. “This is my Junior Brother!” he cried excitedly. “Everyone stop!”

His expression was one of intense happiness, almost trance-like, as he gazed at Meng Hao and recalled the past.

Meng Hao looked at Chen Fan and smiled. Chen Fan’s expression and words were filled with sincerity, and now Meng Hao was certain… he hadn’t changed. He was the same person he had been seven or eight years ago.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and then said, “Greetings, Elder Brother.” He clasped hands and bowed deeply.

Chen Fan laughed. He looked a bit different than he had seven or eight years ago, but his personality was the same. He stepped forward and embraced Meng Hao.

“Junior Brother Chen,” said the harsh-looking young man with a hypocritical smile. “How come I’ve never seen this Junior Brother of yours? I didn’t know the Solitary Sword Sect had a disciple such as this.” His voice was filled with sinister accusation.

Chen Fan frowned, standing protectively in front of Meng Hao. “Elder Brother Zhou, he’s not a Solitary Sword Sect disciple. He’s my Junior Brother from when I was in the Reliance Sect.”

Meng Hao didn’t say anything, and his expression was the same as ever. He wanted to see how Chen Fan would handle the situation.

“So he’s a disciple from a tiny, backwater Sect,” said Zhou, his voice sinister and yet leisurely. “He would normally be inconsequential. Yet here he is spying on us. He must take responsibility!”

The surrounding Solitary Sword Sect disciples exchanged glances, then moved backward silently. It seems this was not the first time they had seen conflict erupt between Zhou and Chen Fan.

The middle-aged Pseudo Core Cultivator sighed, looking at the two of them with an annoyed expression, and then glancing down at Meng Hao.

“Take responsibility?” said Chen Fan coolly. His eyes were cold as he stood there in front of Meng Hao. “Zhou Shanyue[2], I would very much like to know exactly how you expect my Junior Brother to take responsibility? With me here, which one of you dares to cause problems for him!?” He slapped his bag of holding, and a small black blade appeared, about the size of a hand. It flew up to circle around his head.

Meng Hao’s expression changed to one of shock the instant he saw the blade appear. So did the faces of the surrounding Cultivators. The Pseudo Core stage man gasped.

Zhou Shanyue’s face immediately grew extremely unsightly. A look of jealousy filled his eyes as he glared at Chen Fan. His heart, however, filled with dread.

The blade emanated the fearsome power of Core Formation!

“Zhou Shanyue, I’m waiting for your response,” said Chen Fan calmly.

2. Zhou Shanyue’s name in Chinese is zhōu shān yuè – Zhou is a common family name. Shan means “mountain.” Yue also means “mountain”

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# Chapter 179: Sect Brothers

“That’s my father’s flying dagger!” said Zhou Shanyue with a cold snort, staring at the black blade hovering around Chen Fan’s head.

“It’s a gift from my Master,” replied Chen Fan, his expression cold. Immediately, Zhou Shanyue’s expression darkened. He flicked his sleeve and began to move toward Chen Fan.

“To take responsibility is simple,” he said as he strode forward. “I want both of his eyes. Let’s see if you dare to try to kill me. If you do, you have my respect. But how will you explain that to your Master, my father?!”

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as always. He watched calmly as the scene unfolded. In front of him, Chen Fan gazed coldly at the approaching Zhou Shanyue. He lifted his right hand, and the flying dagger immediately began to glow.

Everything seemed ready to dissolve into chaos. Zhou Shanyue proceeded forward, a savage expression covering his face.

“I can’t believe that you would dare to attack me over an outsider!”

“To you, he’s an outsider, but to me, he’s a Junior Brother.” Chen Fan waved his hand, and the flying dagger shot toward Zhou Shanyue.

Zhou Shanyue’s hair stood on end, and he suddenly stopped moving. The black dagger had come to a stop right in front of his face.

“Don’t push me, Zhou Shanyue,” Chen Fan said softly.

Meng Hao was just about to take a step forward when the Pseudo Core stage Cultivator suddenly said, “Just what do you two think you’re doing?!

Zhou Shanyue, stand down! Chen Fan, if this is your Junior Brother from your former Sect, then you'll need to vouch for him. You will be responsible for all his future mistakes." The words obviously contained a threat. While it seemed on the surface that he was trying to smooth over the situation, he was actually making a small matter into a bigger one.

Meng Hao was quite experienced, so obviously he understood what was being said. He laughed coldly.

"My affairs have nothing to do with my Elder Brother," he said. "If you don't take your words back voluntarily, your excellency, then I'll be forced to make you take them back." His voice was ice cold. When the middle-aged man heard them, his eyes grew icy and he stared back at Meng Hao.

Chen Fan, of course, had never imagined that Meng Hao would dare to speak. Without another word, he flashed an incantation sign, and the flying dagger re-appeared at his side.

"Chen Fan, it's not that I didn't try to give you some face. Your Junior Brother here needs to be taught a lesson." With a grim smile, the middle-aged man flicked his sleeve and began to move toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever. His Cultivation base had four Dao Pillars. He could contend with the late Foundation Establishment stage and could even stand up to Dao Children with Flawless Foundations. There was no need to even mention this middle-aged man who clearly had a Cracked Foundation at best.

Meng Hao could slay him with ease.

Granted, the man was a fellow Disciple of Elder Brother Chen. However, Meng Hao couldn't allow people to level threats against him that could affect Elder Brother Chen later. That was why he had tried to separate himself from Chen Fan.

The surrounding Solitary Sword Sect disciples watched on with cold smiles, eyeing Meng Hao with looks of disdain. They obviously thought Meng Hao was being arrogant and conceited to think he could stand up to someone who had completed the great circle of Foundation Establishment.

Various thoughts ran through the minds of the surrounding disciples.

“I never imagined Elder Brother Chen would make friends with someone who so easily overestimates himself.”

“He’s relying on Elder Brother Chen’s presence, like a fox exploiting the might of a tiger.” 1

“He’s looking to die!”

A sinister smile appeared on Zhou Shanyue’s face. He moved backward a few paces, contentedly watching the commotion.

Meng Hao looked as calm as ever as the middle-aged man raced forward. A slight smile appeared on his face, and he was about to step forward, when Chen Fan held his arm in front of him.

“Elder Brother Li, my Junior Brother is young and insensible. Please give me some more face, and don’t take offense. Let’s just drop the matter.” Having said this, he clasped Meng Hao’s shoulder and gazed at him warmly. “Listen to Elder Brother,” he said. When the four words entered Meng Hao’s ears, they were filled with a gentle warmth that he hadn’t experienced in a very long time. He looked into Chen Fan’s eyes and then nodded.

The man named Li stopped in his tracks, glaring coldly at Meng Hao for a moment, and then looking back at Chen Fan. Slowly, his face relaxed. A long moment passed, and then he said, “You need to help your Junior Brother learn not stop overestimating himself. If he doesn’t, he’ll end up a mutilated corpse sooner or later.” He flicked his sleeve and began to leave. Zhou Shanyue smiled mockingly and followed, along with the other Solitary Sword Disciples.

“We’ll wait for you up ahead,” came the voice of Li. “You have the time it takes an incense stick to burn to catch up with your Junior Brother.”

As they disappeared into the distance, Meng Hao looked hesitantly at Chen Fan.

“Elder Brother, I….”

“You don’t need to say anything,” said Chen Fan, his face covered with a wide smile. He embraced him warmly again.

Laughing happily, Chen Fan looked Meng Hao over, eyes filled with excitement because of their reunion. “You’ve grown up big and strong, I see! Haha! You’re not the little scholar you used to be.”

In a voice as earnest as it had always been, he grabbed Meng Hao’s arm and said, “Can you believe it? Here we are, fellow Brothers who’ve run into each other yet again in in the Southern Domain. We have to celebrate! Come come, tell your Elder Brother what you’ve been up to these past years. A while back, I heard that the State of Zhao disappeared! Ai….” He didn’t even give Meng Hao a chance to respond.

His personality had always been like this. He talked and talked, and before long, enough time had passed for an incense stick to burn. The entire time, Meng Hao didn’t have a chance to even say a single sentence. It was just like it had been back in the Reliance Sect.

Chen Fan was definitely long-winded, but even were he more so, Meng Hao wouldn’t mind. Meng Hao’s heart filled with warmth as he realized that everything Chen Fan was saying was out of concern for him. He was considerate, excited, and happy.

“That fatty Li Fugui, do you remember him? He used to follow you around all the time. Well, he’s a pretty important person in the Golden Frost Sect now. Last time I went with Master to pay a visit to the Golden Frost Sect, I saw him swaggering around. He’s definitely a darling of the Sect. If anyone dared to mess with him, a crowd of Golden Frost Sect disciples would instantly rush to help him….

“Junior Sister Xu is in sore straits, though. The only thing I could do was ask some people I know in the Black Sieve Sect to watch out for her. She’s been stuck at the ninth level of Qi Condensation for years now. She needs a Foundation Establishment Pill. In the past years, I've performed some meritorious services for the Sect. I think it won't be long before I can get a Foundation Establishment Pill from Master to send to her.

"Oh, and then there's Wang Tengfei…. You'd best not provoke him again, he has an impressive amount of power backing him. Oh, right. You wouldn't believe the latest gossip. Rumor has it that his fiancee, Chu Yuyan from the Violet Fate Sect, is intimately involved with some stranger.

"The news is out, and all the Sects have heard about it. There was an eyewitness who saw Chu Yuyan wearing the clothing of some other man. There was obviously something shady going on…. Who do you think that guy could be? Whoever he is, I sure admire him. He was able to steal Chu Yuyan right from under Wang Tengfei's nose…." Meng Hao wasn't able to get a word in edgewise. When the topic of Chu Yuyan came up, a strange expression suddenly appeared on his face.

"So," he thought, "that Zhou Daya fellow did exactly as I predicted and immediately began to spread rumors…." He gave a dry cough, not admitting to anything. Instead, he said, "Wow, that guy really is amazing. I hope I have a chance to meet him some day and maybe be friends." His face was covered with an expression of admiration similar to Chen Fan's.

About this time, the clear sound of a sword could be heard ringing out in the air. Meng Hao looked up to see a Solitary Sword Sect disciple off in the distance, clearly urging them to hurry up.

Taking advantage in the break in Chen Fan's dialogue, Meng Hao scratched his head and said, "Elder Brother, maybe you should…." Before he could finish, he was submerged by more words from Chen Fan.

"Little Junior Brother, have you found a suitable beloved yet?" he said suddenly.

"Uh…." Meng Hao stared in shock. Chen Fan's question seemed to have come completely out of the blue. Before he could respond, Chen Fan nodded.

“Oh, I understand. You’re still hung up on Elder Sister Xu. Junior Brother, listen to me carefully. There are a lot of female Cultivators in the Southern Domain, but there are four who are considered to be the most dazzling.

“Chu Yuyan is one of them, but you might as well forget about her. She belongs to Wang Tengfei and that other mysterious guy. However, the other three are really a match for your good looks and Cultivation base.” Chen Fan’s eyes shined brightly as he looked at Meng Hao. He sounded almost like a match-maker.

This topic completely exceeded Meng Hao’s powers of prediction. He stared blankly at Elder Brother Chen. How could he have imagined that after all these years, Elder Brother Chen would suddenly have taken up this new interest? Meng Hao cleared his throat a few times. “Elder Brother, I….”

“Don’t be so shy! Look, your Elder Brother has a lot of experience. There may be some things you don’t understand about this kind of thing, but don’t worry. I’ll take care of everything. There’s still plenty of time, plenty of time.”

“Er… plenty of time, plenty of time….” Beads of sweat broke out on Meng Hao’s forehead.

“Alright, you come with me to the Solitary Sword Sect. When we get there, the two of us can have a proper reunion.” Not even giving Meng Hao a chance to refuse, Chen Fan grabbed him and made to leave.

“Elder Brother, this….”

“Listen to your Elder Brother, okay? Besides, pretty soon one of the three great Clans, the Song Clan, is going to have a big get-together. They’ve invited Chosen and Dao Children from all over the Southern Domain. I’m going, so why don’t you come along? It will be a good chance to meet some of the current generation of Chosen from the Southern Domain. You just stick with me, and I’ll arrange everything.

“The State of Zhao is gone, and the Reliance Sect is no more. Throughout all these years, what I’ve worried about most is you! A few years ago, I sent someone with a message to find you, but by that time the State of Zhao had disappeared, and I feared that you had been killed.

“Let’s not bring that up. Little Junior Brother, even now, what concerns me most is still you.” He looked at Meng Hao earnestly. “You’re on your own, without a Sect! That won’t do. You listen to your Elder Brother, okay?”

Meng Hao’s heart filled with warmth that spread out throughout his whole body. Unable to make himself refuse Chen Fan, he slowly nodded his head.

1. The idiom of the fox and the tiger is a very common Chinese expression which means to bully others by flaunting ones powerful connections

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# Chapter 180: Shan Ling

Chen Fan looked at Meng Hao and laughed heartily. Hearts filled with happiness, he and Meng Hao transformed into beams of prismatic light that shot off toward the other Solitary Sword Sect disciples.

When the man named Li saw Meng Hao approaching with Chen Fan, he frowned.

“My Junior Brother is acquainted with my Master and wishes to visit him,” said Chen Fan coolly in explanation. “He will accompany us back to the Sect.”

The man named Li said nothing. He simply turned and transformed into a colorful beam that shot up into the sky.

“Little Junior Brother, after we get to the Sect, I’ll go implore Master to take you as a disciple. Then we can be fellow Brothers of the Solitary Sword Sect. It shouldn’t be a very big deal. I’ve never asked anything of Master, so there’s an eighty to ninety percent chance he’ll agree. Of course, I expect he’ll only accept you as a novitiate. However, his Cultivation Base is at the Nascent Soul stage, so being one of his novitiates is still a high position within the Solitary Sword Sect.” It seemed Chen Fan already had Meng Hao’s future planned out meticulously.

Meng Hao hesitated for a moment, and then said, “Elder Brother, for the moment, I don’t think that’s necessary. I actually have some matters I need to take care of.”

“Little Junior Brother!” said Chen Fan, his expression suddenly very solemn. “I understand that you don’t want to join another Sect. I felt the same way back then. I only wanted to be a member of a single Sect for my entire life. However… we are Cultivators. Our Sect is the foundation of everything, especially in the Southern Domain. Anyone who is not a member of a Sect is a rogue Cultivator. Regardless of Cultivation base level, rogue Cultivators make progress only with great difficulty. Years can be wasted, and the results can be in vain.

“You need to listen to me in this matter. The Solitary Sword Sect is the number one Sect in the Southern Domain. It’s Dao Reserves are incredibly profound. It’s a place where both of us can grow up.”

Meng Hao didn’t respond.

As they traveled, Chen Fan continued to give him advice, all the way until afternoon of the next day. Eventually, the Solitary Sword Sect’s main gate appeared up ahead. Finally, Meng Hao nodded.

Chen Fan’s smile grew wider as he gazed at Meng Hao with the kind warmth of a member of the elder generation looking at a junior. Although he wasn’t very much older than Meng Hao, in his eyes, Meng Hao was still that young scholar who had just joined the Sect.

The Solitary Sword Sect was comprised of an enormous mountain, visible from far off in the distance. This mountain was the number one mountain in the entire Southern Domain, a hundred times larger than any other mountain.

The name of this mountain was… Solitary Dao Mountain!

Floating above it in the sky was another mountain that seemed to be a mirror image of it. From a distance, they made an outline like that of an hourglass. Anyone who caught sight of it for the first time would surely be shocked.

The name of the second mountain was… Solitary Sword Mountain!

The mountains were so large that it was almost impossible to look from one end to the other in a single glance. Meng Hao had never seen mountains as large as this in his entire life. He couldn’t help but tremble inwardly at the sight of them.

If it were only these two mountains, then it wouldn’t be a very big deal. But… in the center the two mountains was a massive sword, piercing through them into the ground!

The hilt of the sword protruded above the mountains and stretched up into the sky.

Boundless rays of morning sunlight filled the area, giving it a truly celestial feeling.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. Having laid eyes on the Black Sieve Sect and the Solitary Sword Sect, he had now seen two of the great Sects of the Southern Domain. The Black Sieve Sect was undeniably influential. The dread caused by their power would cause anyone to bow before them.

However, the Solitary Sword Sect’s sheer, raw might didn’t cause others to bow before them, but to fear them!

“I wonder what the other great Sects look like…” thought Meng Hao to himself as he gazed at the Solitary Sword Sect.

The group of people flew along quickly. As they approached Solitary Dao Mountain, they reached an area that was protected by a beautiful field of colorful light. Up ahead, the man named Li looked back coldly at Meng Hao and then gave a cold snort. With that, his disappeared into the light.

Meng Hao watched coolly as he left. In his estimation, the man was someone who couldn’t really see to the heart of things. If Chen Fan hadn’t stopped him earlier, the man would either have been injured or killed. It all would have depended on Meng Hao’s mood.

“Don’t worry,” said Chen Fan, clearly worried for Meng Hao. “Once Master accepts you as a novitiate, then Elder Brother Li won’t dare to bother you.” He gave a comforting smile, and then pulled Meng Hao in through the colorful field of light. He pulled out a glowing jade slip. The light swirled up around the two of them. It flickered, and then they disappeared.

When they reappeared, they were at the foot of Solitary Dao Mountain. The air was filled with the scent of blooming flowers and the sounds of birds singing. Gurgling streams could be seen. There were quite a few Solitary Sword Sect disciples going to and fro. When they saw Chen Fan, each and every one gave him respectful salutes.

Chen Fan led Meng Hao to the courtyard of a house. “Little Junior Brother,” he said, “you wait for me here. I’m going to go pay my respects to the Elders. After that, I’ll go look for Master. I probably won’t return until after nightfall. You rest a bit here, or go walk around if you’d like. Don’t go too far, though. When I get back, we can stay up all night chatting.” He clasped Meng Hao’s shoulder, and then turned and flew off in a beam of colorful light.

Meng Hao watched him depart, then looked around at his surroundings. He opened the gate of the courtyard and entered the house. It was decorated tastefully, although not extravagantly. Everything emanated refinement. This was especially true of the vast collection of scrolls. Meng Hao selected one of the ancient texts and sat down cross-legged to examine it.

After some time passed, he put the ancient scroll down, and a thoughtful look gleamed in his eyes.

“Maybe I should join the Solitary Sword Sect…” he thought, his brow furrowed. It wasn’t his first choice. However, the Black Sieve Sect surely wouldn’t just let go the matter of the meat jelly. Entering the Solitary Sword Sect might not be a bad choice.

His eyes glittered stubbornly at the thought of the Violet Fate Sect. Dispelling his poison wasn’t the only reason he wished to do so. “I’m still inclined toward the Violet Fate Sect,” he thought. “I really want to learn Violet Qi from the East…” With that technique, he could form a Violet Core, which was the pinnacle of Core Formation.

“Furthermore, I need to study alchemy. I can’t rely on others to do it for me every time I need a pill concocted. That’s especially true of the Perfect Core Pill….” Meng Hao sat there for some time lost in thought. Soon, evening began to fall. Sunlight streamed in from outside. Meng Hao took a deep breath and, seeing that Chen Fan hadn’t returned, decided to step outside of the house for a bit to look at Solitary Dao Mountain.

The setting sun shone onto the mountain, giving it a somewhat hazy appearance. Mist began to rise up around the mountain, and as Meng Hao looked closer, his eyes narrowed.

He suddenly caught sight of a woman wearing a blue-green garment, floating down a path on Solitary Dao Mountain.

The appearance of this woman made the haziness of the surroundings suddenly seem clear. The sound of people dropping to their knees and prostrating themselves to her could be heard.

“It’s Elder Sister Shan Ling.” [1]

“It’s really Elder Sister Shan Ling. I’ve heard that on the ninth day of every month, at dusk, she descends the mountain to collect dewdrops…”

“Greetings, Elder Sister Shan Ling.”

The sound of voices drifted down to Meng Hao. He watched as the woman slowly floated down the mountain, and his heart trembled as suddenly, the voice of the Demon Sealing Jade sounded out in his head.

“A stone of the Ninth Mountain descended and became a new mountain ( .) The mountain ( ) has a spirit ( ,) and the spirit ( ) is demonic. Its will is not of this world. If you encounter it… allow it to transform magically if it is good. Seal and exterminate it if it is violent. Make your choice after careful consideration.”

The sound echoed out in Meng Hao’s mind. He stood there silently for a moment recovering his composure. He was used to the bizarreness of the

Demon Sealing Jade. He looked at the woman, and his eyes shone with a strange light.

Quite a large group of Cultivators had flown over and were bowing to the woman and offering respectful words. One of them was none other than the middle-aged man named Li, who bowed toward her politely.

The moment that Meng Hao's gaze fell upon the woman, she looked down at him and seemed to pause in mid-air. A sharp look filled her eyes as she looked at him.

Their gazes locked for the space of a few breaths. The woman's brow furrowed slightly, and then she looked away and continued off into the distance. She left, but the man named Li seemed to have taken notice of the look that had passed between the two of them.

He had also noticed Shan Ling's furrowed brow. He gave a cold harrumph, and then his body flashed, and he shot down toward Meng Hao.

This aroused the attention of the surrounding Solitary Sword Sect disciples. In the blink of an eye, the man named Li arrived to float above the courtyard where Meng Hao stood. He looked down, a cold gleam in his eyes.

"You again!" he said coldly. "First you overestimate your strength, and then you dare to be disrespectful to the Solitary Sword Sect's Elder Sister Shan Ling! Just what is your purpose in coming here?!" This caused many of the surrounding disciples to look at Meng Hao.

"Who is this guy?"

"He looks a bit familiar, but I don't think I've seen him before…."

"I remember him. That's the guest who Elder Brother Chen brought with him earlier this afternoon. I wonder what Elder Brother Li wants with him?"

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he looked up at the haughty Li character.

“What exactly do you mean, your excellency?” said Meng Hao coolly.

“Whatever your purpose here, you’re in the Solitary Sword Sect. Considering your actions here, I think I need to take your Elder Brother’s place in teaching you a lesson.” He obviously wasn’t interested in providing any sort of education to Meng Hao. Meng Hao had left him with a bad impression originally, and when combined with the Shan Ling’s frown, caused him to be filled with ill feelings. He lifted his right hand, whereupon the power of the great circle of Foundation Establishment exploded out.

“Ridiculous,” said Meng Hao coolly. The Li man’s hand descended, and the illusory image of a large sword appeared. It descended toward Meng Hao, bursting with the power of the great circle of Foundation Establishment.

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed coldly, and he lifted his own hand. He didn’t have any good feelings toward this person, after all. However, before he could actually do anything, a small black dagger shot toward them and slammed into the Li man’s phantom sword.

A boom rattled out, and the phantom sword disintegrated. The Li man’s face flashed as Chen Fan shot toward them in a beam of colorful light.

“Elder Brother Li, you continue to harass my Junior Brother. With a Cultivation base at the Pseudo Core stage, must you really cause me to lose so much face? I’m one of the Seven Solitary Sword Sons. Just who the hell do you think you are?”

1. Shan Ling’s name in Chinese is shān líng. Shan means “mountain.” Ling means “spirit”

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# Chapter 181: Meeting One’s Match, the General Meets the Genius

Chen Fan arrived at the same time as his words. He landed in front of Meng Hao, glaring up coldly at the man named Li.

The Li man’s expression became somewhat unsightly. He stared at Chen Fan, and his gaze especially seemed to take note of the black flying dagger.

“Do you really think you can protect him forever?” he said with a cold snort. His face filled with disdain as he looked at Meng Hao. “He won’t amount to anything if all he can do is hide behind others. It seems mid Foundation Establishment is the end of the line for him!”

“As long as I’m here, I won’t let you touch a hair on my little Junior Brother’s head!” said Chen Fan, his voice cool, but hard enough to chop nails and slice iron.

Li glared hatefully at Meng Hao, his disdain growing thicker. “If it weren’t for your Elder Brother, I would kill you with the wave of a hand. Let’s see how long you can keep hiding!” He turned, flicking his sleeve and disappearing into the distance.

Meng Hao sighed as he watched the man leave. He had read the man’s expression, of course, but could do nothing about it. Exterminating him would be simple, but twice now, Chen Fan had stood in front of him, making it impossible to proceed with battle.

Chen Fan looked back at Meng Hao, who gave a wry smile.

Chen Fan, of course, misinterpreted Meng Hao's expression. "Don't worry, little Junior Brother," he said comfortingly. "That Li fellow is nothing. With me here, he won't dare to bully you." His expression was one of concern, leaving Meng Hao without a word to say. "Unfortunately, Master went into secluded meditation last month, and it seems he won't emerge for a few more months. I left him a message, though. He'll get it as soon as he comes out.

"After you and I get back from the Song Clan, you can officially join the Solitary Sword Sect. Then that Li guy won't dare to mess with you. Although, in the meantime, you need to be a bit more careful. Well, I'll be here by your side anyway, so it doesn't matter."

Chen Fan's concern made Meng Hao feel warm in his heart. "Many thanks, Elder Brother," he said, clasping hands and bowing.

"What's there to thank? Don't be so polite! Come come. Let's light some candles and chat all night." He laughed heartily as he pulled Meng Hao into the house. Once inside, he slapped his bag of holding to produce two jars of alcohol.

"Your Elder Brother doesn't have much to offer here. But when I went to Master's I grabbed these two jars of Sword Wine. This stuff is pretty good. I've really come to like it over the past few years." He handed one of the jars to Meng Hao, then opened his own and took a swig.

Meng Hao accepted the jar and took a drink. His face immediately grew a bit red, and his entire body suddenly felt hot and dry. Sweat broke out all over. He took a deep breath, and then slowly let it out.

He felt as if his entire body had just been washed out. Sweating, he continued to breathe in and out. His eyes seemed to glisten a bit more brightly. He looked at Chen Fan.

"What alcohol is this?"

"Master brews it himself. Heh heh. Come on, drink up. This alcohol is really good for Cultivators, especially for the Foundation Establishment stage. It’s comparable to medicinal pills!” He smiled and took another drink. “I drink this stuff all the time. Oh, by the way, little Junior Brother, I see your Cultivation base is at the mid Foundation Establishment level. Don’t forget, we Cultivators are building mountains; you must establish a firm foundation.” His words were earnest, causing Meng Hao to put down his jar of alcohol and listen thoughtfully. Occasionally he nodded in agreement. “Don’t greedily speed through the various stages and ignore your fundamentals.

“Take me, for example. I could have created my fourth Dao Pillar and entered mid Foundation Establishment last year. But Master wouldn’t permit it. He always says that creating Dao Pillars is like turning trees into boats. It can’t be undone. The best thing to do is go with the flow, and exercise caution. Creating a fourth Dao Pillar isn’t as important as refining the third pillar. Once it is full and complete, then the fourth Dao Pillar can be created properly.

“Another thing,” said Chen Fan, sounding extremely serious. “During the course of our Cultivating, we are bound to encounter friction with other Cultivators. But you cannot solve all problems by killing! You need to understand that regardless of whether you’re talking about magical techniques or magical items, they are all just ways to protect the Dao! They are protection, not the Dao itself!

“What is the Dao? My Cultivation base isn’t high enough, so I probably shouldn’t even bring it up. But Master told me that even though he doesn’t quite understand it himself, there’s something that should never be forgotten; killing and magical techniques are all just for protection!

“Don’t let your Dao be overwhelmed by killing. You need to listen to your heart, and follow your principles.” Chen Fan looked Meng Hao over. “You know, you seem to have a fairly strong killing aura.”

Even as the words came out of his mouth, a voice could be heard from within Meng Hao’s bag of the Cosmos.

“That’s right! That’s right! I said this child’s killing aura was too strong. You’re right. You make a lot of sense. Your words are extremely accurate!”

The suddenness of the voice's appearance left Chen Fan dumbfounded.

Meng Hao's face darkened. Before he could say anything, a flash of colorful light emerged from the bag of the Cosmos which turned into a parrot. It flapped its wings as it flew around the room.

The meat jelly parrot had previously been in the blood-colored mask, preaching to the Li Clan Patriarch. Now, it flew a few circles around the room and then landed on Meng Hao's shoulder.

"What's that…?" said Chen Fan, still in shock.

"I picked this thing up and found that it can't be thrown away…" replied Meng Hao. Before he could finish, the meat jelly parrot interrupted him.

"Son, you couldn't be more correct," it said, eying Chen Fan energetically. "Meng Hao's killing aura is too strong. It's wrong! Immoral! Come come, let's discuss a few things. I think I'm going to like you."

Meng Hao took a deep breath and looked at Chen Fan sympathetically. He could only imagine the torture Chen Fan would be dealing with momentarily.

"So you're my littler Junior Brother's Spirit creature," said Chen Fan, looking curiously at the parrot on Meng Hao's shoulder. "Pleased to meet you, sir. I'm happy to discuss anything with you."

Seeing the gleam in Chen Fan's eye, Meng Hao sighed to himself. There was really nothing he could do to save him…. But Meng Hao couldn't bear to just do nothing.

"Elder brother, this bird…."

"Junior Brother, you misspoke," said Chen Fan in a serious tone. "This isn't a bird, it's a parrot. And it can speak! You can see from the look in its eye that it's intelligent. It's a Spirit! You really need to take good care of it."

The meat jelly seemed to be on the verge of tears after hearing Chen Fan's words. It seemed to have finally met a kindred spirit.

“You are so correct. You make so much sense. Why couldn’t I have met you first? Aiiii. There’s no need to bring that up. Now, why don’t we discuss the meaning of life?”

“The meaning of life? Okay!” said Chen Fan excitedly. “I’ve always wanted to have a discussion about the meaning of life. But for some reason, my Master is always in secluded meditation. In fact, so are my Junior and Elder brothers. I originally planned to chat with my little Junior Brother tonight, but if you want to join, the please, by all means do.”

“A discussion about the meaning of life needs to be built up to, though. For example… why don’t we talk about this morning’s weather? Only a truly educated person can discuss the weather….”

“Huh? The weather? Well… okay. I think the weather was excellent this morning. But you know, I think it might be more beneficial to discuss the killing aura coming off of my little Junior Brother.”

“Eee? I completely agree with you there. You are so correct. You make so much sense. I always say that if the weather is bad, it can have a negative influence on your mood. I mean, I mean, don’t you agree about that…?”

“Well that’s the first time I’ve heard of such a thing,” said Chen Fan. “But it actually makes a lot of sense. I remember one day a few years ago, it was really overcast outside, and my Cultivation didn’t go very well. I was fidgety all day. Yeah, I think what you said just now makes a lot of sense.”

“A lot of sense? You think I make a lot of sense?! Heavens! Dear heavens! In this life, and the life before that, and the life before that, I’ve never met anyone who said such a thing. You think I make sense….” The meat jelly parrot was shaking in excitement. It flew off of Meng Hao’s shoulder to stand in front of Chen Fan.

Their talking turned into a buzzing that filled Meng Hao’s ears as he watched on in a daze. The eyes of both Chen Fan and the parrot began to shine brightly. They had both met their kindred spirits, and as they talked, it gradually became apparent that a contest of sorts had begun.

Meng Hao suddenly shivered and edged backward.

He moved as far away as possible, to a distant corner of the building, where he sat cross-legged to meditate. He feared that if he continued to listen, he would become far too annoyed. The clamor of the bird by itself was bad enough, but now….

As Meng Hao looked at Chen Fan and the meat jelly parrot, a single thought ran through his mind; “Meeting one’s match, the General meets the Genius….”

Time passed by, and Meng Hao did his best to ignore the sound of their conversation. Two hours passed, and he finally opened his eyes. He had assumed their discussion would be nearing an end, but when he peeked over, he discovered that they were engaged in a lively conversation.

“Right? Tell me, am I right, or not…?”

“Absolutely correct. Actually, that makes me think about one day last year when I….”

“Of course! That’s what I said earlier! Oh right, weren’t we going to talk about the meaning of life? How about this: after we finish talking about this morning’s weather, then we can talk about the noon sunshine….”

“Great idea. Let’s save the meaning of life for the end of the conversation. The best would be to wait until dusk. The best time to talk about life is under the setting sun….”

The sound droned on in Meng Hao’s ears. He stared blankly at Chen Fan’s excited face and the equally enthusiastic meat jelly parrot. One man, one bird, their eyes shining with anticipation…. It caused Meng Hao to shiver and close his eyes again to meditate, fearful of getting dragged into the discussion.

Time, slowly passed….

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# Chapter 182: There’s Always a Bird Out There That’s Better Than You

Dawn…. Meng Hao opened his eyes, then immediately closed them again.

“What a good friend! In the past several lives, I’ve only had myself to talk to. I never realized how boring it is to talk to myself… And I could never figure out why everyone hates me so much. They even call me Ultimate Vexation….”

“Yeah! I haven’t had a discussion like this the entire time I’ve been in the Solitary Sword Sect.”

“Come come, now that we’ve finished talking about the noon sunshine, let’s talk a bit about the afternoon….”

Late morning…. Sunlight filtered into the house. Meng Hao opened his eyes and stared blankly at Chen Fan and the meat jelly. He sighed and continued to meditate.

“Let me tell you, I’m sick of afternoons. I remember the afternoon of one year when I….”

“You’re right! I’m the same way. But the only thing I can do during that time is to grind my teeth….”

More hours passed, and soon it was afternoon. Meng Hao opened his eyes a few times, but all he could do was laugh bitterly and close them again.

Chen Fan and the meat jelly had talked through the entire night, all the way through the morning. One man, one bird, seemingly inexhaustible and, in fact, in high spirits.

Meng Hao couldn’t help but admire Elder Brother Chen. It seemed he really was a perfect match for the meat jelly.

Meng Hao sat quietly. He wanted to stand up, but was worried that Chen Fan and the meat jelly would drag him into their conversation. He took a breath and then closed his eyes, pretending that he couldn’t hear anything that they were saying.

Eventually, the sun began to set….

“I like sunset the best. Every time I gaze at the setting sun, I think of that time one year when I was just a tiny meat jelly, I….”

“Sunset is immeasurably wonderful. You know, you really don’t know how difficult it is to practice Cultivation. Oh, that reminds me, throughout the years, I’ve actually collected a thousand different stories about the sunset. I really want to tell you all of them. Come come. I’ll start with the first one….”

The sun had set, and evening passed. Soon it was night again. One man, one bird, chattering away endlessly for a day and a night. They talked on, seemingly not the least bit tired. When midnight came, it finally seemed that Chen Fan wasn’t able to keep going.

“Umm, why don’t we rest a bit?”

“No way! I don’t get many chances to have such a lovely discussion. We still haven’t talked about the meaning of life yet. Ah, the meaning of life. What a beautiful whatchamacallit flower 1. Oh, right. I forgot. Before we talk about the meaning of life, we need to talk about moonlight….”

“Uh… Alright. Actually, I have over three thousand stories about the moonlight….”

“Eee? I have some stories too! Actually, I have ten thousand. You go first, and then me.”

Meng Hao was almost on the verge of collapse. His eyes were bloodshot, and he panted as he forced himself to calm down and return to meditation.

The night passed slowly. Outside, everything was quiet. But within the room, one man and one bird had reached the pinnacle of their conversation. Early morning light once again made its way into the house. Chen Fan’s face was a bit wan, and his eyes were bloodshot.

“Let’s rest a bit… I… I have some plans today….”

“No way! I’m not finished yet. We still haven’t talked about the meaning of life. Now that I’m finished with my ten thousand stories about the moonlight, we can continue our discussion.”

Morning passed, and soon it was noontime, then another sunset. Chen Fan’s expression was dull as he stared at the parrot and its unceasing torrent of words. A look of admiration slowly grew in his eyes.

“Now that we have built up the conversation properly, we can finally discuss the meaning of life. Eee…? It’s dark outside. I just realized that when we talked about sunset, there were thirty thousand stories I forgot to mention. That won’t do! I don’t get chances like this very often. I need to tell you those stories….” The meat jelly cleared its throat a few times, and then began speaking again.

A few hours passed, until finally Chen Fan’s patience and long-windedness were run out. “I… I really do have some plans….” said Chen Fan, standing up suddenly.

His body swayed back and forth a bit, and then he took a few steps back, his face drained of blood. Meng Hao opened his eyes and looked admiringly at Chen Fan. He had just chatted nonstop for two days and two nights….

“Little Junior Brother, I actually have some plans, so I’m going to take off. Um… I’ll come back for you in a few days….” His face was pale and he looked dizzy. As of now, he didn’t look at the meat jelly with admiration, but rather, fear.

He’d always thought of himself as someone who could talk, but now he realized how wrong he was. There existed a bird that could surpass even him! Without waiting for Meng Hao to respond, Chen Fan opened the door and fled.

“Elder Brother,” Meng Hao called after him, “I think you have an affinity with this talking Spirit parrot, why don’t you take it with you….”

Chen Fan suddenly staggered, and his face twisted. Without an instant of hesitation, his body transformed into a beam of light that disappeared into the distance.

“What a good fellow,” said the meat jelly parrot, sighing with emotion. “I really like this Elder Brother Chen of yours. I haven’t met someone in years who could carry on such a long conversation with me. Eee? We never discussed the meaning of life!”

Meng Hao’s scalp suddenly began to grow numb. To be able to provoke such a reaction from Elder Brother Chen showed how truly powerful this meat jelly was. Such power was rarely seen in the world.

“It’s too bad I couldn’t finish,” said the meat jelly discontentedly. “I was just starting to get excited. Now it’s all over?” Chattering away, it flew up onto Meng Hao’s shoulder. “Why don’t you chat a bit with me, I’m feeling a bit lonely….”

Meng Hao’s face went pale, and he took a deep breath. He forced a wry smile onto his face, and his mind spun, trying to come up with an idea.

“I think perhaps you forgot someone,” he said.

“Who? Who? Who? Who did I forget? How could I forget somebody?” Given a chance to have a conversation, the meat jelly would definitely seize it immediately.

“You forgot about the old man in the mask!” said Meng Hao hurriedly. “You still haven’t turned him back from the path of wickedness.”

“Eee? Right! That old man isn’t too bad, actually. But you’re right. I need to go have a talk with him.” Face shining with anticipation, the meat jelly parrot flashed, instantly disappearing into Meng Hao’s bag of the Cosmos.

Meng Hao could just barely hear the sound of the Li Clan Patriarch’s sad, shrill cry when the meat jelly entered the mask. He had never heard such a cry come from the man before.

Meng Hao let out a long sigh and sat down on the ground, laughing bitterly. He looked at the moonlight outside and sighed again, wondering about what his life would be like in the coming days. Having the meat jelly with him constantly was a frightening thought.

“There must be a way to control it. That damned meat jelly….” Meng Hao gritted his teeth, and his eyes glittered brightly. “Its old enemy… the copper mirror… the parrot….” His eyes glittered even more brightly when he thought about reaching Core Formation. His anticipation soared to new heights.

Three days flashed by, during which time Chen Fan never returned. Obviously, he was so frightened of Meng Hao’s meat jelly that he didn’t dare to come back. If he did, the meat jelly parrot might draw him into another conversation.

It was on the fourth day that he cautiously made his way back. He opened the door to the room, then immediately retreated several steps. When he saw that there was no parrot on Meng Hao’s shoulder, he glanced around the room and then let out a sigh.

Meng Hao could only give him a wry smile. What else could he say?

Chen Fan stood nervously outside the room. “That…. Little Junior Brother, it… it’s gone?” He looked very nervous.

“Pretty much….” replied Meng Hao, standing up and walking out.

Chen Fan let out a long sigh and looked at Meng Hao with a forced smile.

“Little Junior Brother, that parrot of yours is… Wow, what a bird. I truly admire it. Well, no need to talk about it, really. There are only a few more days until the Song Clan’s banquet. I’ve already arranged everything. When it comes time, we can teleport directly there. Today, why don’t you let me show you around the Solitary Sword Sect? After all, when we come back from the Song Clan, this will be your Sect, so you should get to know it.” He grabbed Meng Hao’s sleeve and pulled him out to the courtyard.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever, but in his mind appeared an image of the map of the Southern Domain. The Song Clan was located relatively close to the Violet Fate Sect. As for the Solitary Sword Sect, Meng Hao thought about it a lot during the past days and had finally reached a conclusion. He decided that he would not take advantage of Chen Fan’s offer to join the Solitary Sword Sect.

He still wanted to figure out some way to disguise himself and join the Violet Fate Sect. He would learn Violet Qi from the East as well as alchemy. And he would also figure out a way to get Grandmaster Pill Demon to dispel his poison.

As for the Solitary Sword Sect, Meng Hao didn’t believe that Chen Fan’s master would be able to help him get rid of the poison. He needed the help of someone, not of the Nascent Soul stage, but the Spirit Severing stage!

Meng Hao was certain of this. However, Chen Fan was so warm and welcoming, he didn’t feel it was appropriate to tell him directly. Regarding the Song Clan, Meng Hao very much wanted to go see it; however, because of his concerns regarding the Black Sieve Sect, he was still hesitating.

“I need to figure out a way to get in touch with Han Bei….” he thought. “She should be able to tell me what ended up happening with the Black Sieve Sect.” He rubbed his bag of holding, and a cold smile touched his lips. There inside was a piece of jade which he could use to keep Han Bei in her place.

He followed Chen Fan around the Solitary Sword Sect. Buildings lined the meandering paths, and streams flowed here and there. The whole place looked both imposing and tasteful.

The two of them chatted as they walked, and soon it was noontime. Eventually, they reached a large circular structure which was filled with hundreds of energetic Solitary Sword Sect disciples.

“This is the Battle Arena,” explained Chen Fan, “where Solitary Sword Sect disciples can fight each other. You can injure, but not kill. There are strict punishments for anyone who breaks the rules.”

Meng Hao looked at it and was about to walk away when suddenly, his brow furrowed. A sinister voice suddenly rang out.

“Guests can fight in the Battle Arena to exchange techniques with our Sect disciples. I, Li, shall enter the arena. I would like to invite this outsider guest… to duel with me if he dares!” It was none other the middle-aged man named Li. A hypocritical smile covered his face as he strolled out from the crowd, staring mockingly at Meng Hao.

“Will you hide behind your Elder Brother again? Can you even make a single attack, you good-for-nothing loser? If you don’t dare to fight, then you’d better hope you don’t have to face me again in the future.”

Everyone’s eyes came to rest on Meng Hao and Chen Fan.

1. In this passage, he starts to erroneously quote a Chinese expression, but then kind of gives up in the middle

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# Chapter 183: How Long Since We Saw That Shy Face?

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as usual. He wasn’t the least bit moved. He looked calmly at the sneering Li, and Zhou Shanyue, who stood next to him, face grim.

Chen Fan looked angry. He knew that Elder Brother Li and Zhou Shanyue were on good terms, and that neither of them liked him very much. It was only because of his flying dagger that they never did much to him.

However, having Meng Hao at his side had caused innumerable difficulties with this sinister pair.

“If you want a fight, how about you two versus me?” said Chen Fan coldly.

“As fellow Sect members, we have nothing to learn from each other,” laughed Li. “I want to see if I can pick up a move or two from this outsider. Junior Brother Chen, you aren’t really going to prevent such an exchange, will you?”

Chen Fan gave a cold snort, grabbing Meng Hao to leave. Meng Hao smiled. He found the whole situation quite amusing. However, Chen Fan seemed devoted to keeping Meng Hao safe, and he didn’t want to refuse his good will. He was just about to follow along with Chen Fan when Zhou Shanyue’s dark voice rang out.

“If you’re scared, we understand.” The surrounding Solitary Sword Sect disciples all laughed loudly. “How about this: Elder Brother Li will restrict his power to that of the mid Foundation Establishment stage. That would make things fair. We really want to see what magic you outsiders have.

Junior Brother Chen, this matter has nothing to do with you. You can’t keep him hiding behind you forever.”

Solitary Sword Sect Cultivators generally stay away from outsiders. Many of them, although they didn’t want to sneer at Elder Brother Chen, were getting excited at the scene which was playing out in front of them.

Chen Fan ignored them, continuing to pull Meng Hao away. However, hearing Zhou Shanyue’s words caused Meng Hao to suddenly stop in his tracks. He turned and looked at Li and Zhou Shanyue, forcing an outraged expression to appear on his face.

“Since a battle to the death is out of the question, we need to make a wager,” he said, making his voice seem out of control.

Hearing this, the surrounding Solitary Sword Sect Cultivators burst into more laughter. Many of them had Cultivation bases lower than Meng Hao, but they were disciples of the Solitary Sword Sect, the number one Sect in the Southern Domain. It was only natural for them to feel somewhat superior.

Zhou Shanyue laughed, as did middle-aged Li.

“Excellent,” said Li. “If you stop hiding behind Junior Brother Chen and dare to fight me, then there’s no harm in making a little wager. I have a treasured sword as well as several tens of thousands of Spirit Stones!” Laughing, he slapped his bag of holding to produce an azure-colored sword. The sword aura which swirled around it wasn’t spectacular, but wasn’t ordinary either.

“Little Junior Brother, you….” said Chen Fan.

He was about to continue when Meng Hao, eyes bloodshot, interrupted him. Glaring, he said, “A handful of Spirit Stones and a sword aren’t enough for Meng Hao. Put some more onto the table, sir, and then I’ll fight you!” His loud voice rang out. The words he had spoken, and the expression on his face, were something he had long since become accustomed to using. He had faced many situations like this in the State of Zhao. Furthermore, he still had an unused golden spear in his bag of the Cosmos….

The crowd around them laughed loudly. Li looked at Meng Hao, his sneer growing larger.

“Very well,” he said. “Whatever you put up as stakes, sir, I will match in value.”

Next to him, Zhou Shanyue laughed. “No matter,” he said. “Whatever you produce, if Elder Brother Li matches it in value, then so shall I!” He glared at Chen Fan, and deep in his eyes, killing intent swirled.

Meng Hao gasped. His eyes darted around as if he wished to run away. “Are you serious?!” he said, his voice sounding forced.

“You’re in the Solitary Sword Sect, now,” said Zhou Shanyue haughtily. “Do you really think we would lie?”

Chen Fan grabbed Meng Hao’s arm and was about to say something.

Trembling, Meng Hao looked over at him and said, “Elder Brother Chen, can you please loan me your flying dagger?”

Chen Fan looked at Meng Hao for a long moment. Finally, he lifted his hand up, and the black flying dagger appeared, a blade which could unleash the power of the Core Formation stage!

This dagger was extremely important to Chen Fan. If he lost it, his position within the Sect would immediately become unstable. The repercussions would be dire. However, it only took the space of a few breaths for him to make up his mind to place it in Meng Hao’s hand.

This display of brotherly affection caused Meng Hao to look deeply at Chen Fan. A warm feeling filled his entire body, creating a memory that would exist for the rest of his life.

“Junior Brother,” said Chen Fan, his eyes glowing with encouragement, “if you’re really going to fight, then do so with a light heart. If you lose, it won’t matter. No big deal. And if you win, then win something good!” Although he didn’t have much faith that Meng Hao could win, this was his style.

Everything was quiet around them as the crowd stared at the black flying dagger in Meng Hao’s hand.

The silence lasted only for a moment before a buzz of conversation filled the air.

“That’s Patriarch Zhou’s Core Formation flying dagger!!”

“That’s the symbol of the Seven Solitary Sword Sons, and Elder Brother Chen is actually giving it to a stranger to put up as stakes for a bet….”

“These stakes are incredible!!”

The surrounding disciple’s eyes shone brightly, and more than a few produced transmission jade slips to notify other fellow disciples of what was happening.

“This is what I’m putting up. Now it’s your turn. No bet, no fight!” Meng Hao’s voice was resolute, and his eyes shone with a do-or-die look. To the onlookers, however, it appeared that his coolness was forced, and that he was simply trying to bluff Zhou and Li into leaving him alone.

Zhou Shanyue’s body trembled as he glared at the black dagger in Meng Hao’s hand. He panted, as did middle-aged Li. They exchanged an excited, shocked glance.

They had never imagined that Chen Fan would actually take out the flying dagger and give it to his Junior Brother to put up as stakes in the bet.

“If you don’t have anything to bet, then you can’t blame me for not participating,” repeated Meng Hao, preparing to hand the flying dagger back to Elder Brother Chen. Zhou Shanyue obviously couldn’t allow this to happen. His hand shot up and he ripped open the top of his robe to reveal a jade pendant hanging around his neck.

“This is a life-saving jade forged by my father himself with blood from his Cultivation base. It has no attack power, but it can stand up against an attack from the Nascent Soul Stage! If you win, then it’s yours. I’ll even give you some of my Cultivation base blood to use to refine it! I, Zhou, never go back on my word!” His tone of voice could chop nails and slice iron. As they rang out, Chen Fan, along with the rest of the onlookers, gasped. Chen Fan stared at the life-saving jade. It was a treasure his master had bestowed upon his son to protect him. In terms of value, it definitely exceeded his flying dagger.

Meng Hao put on a look of complete shock. He began to breathe heavily, causing Zhou Shanyue to laugh coldly, his eyes shining coldly.

In a seemingly forced voice, Meng Hao said, “That’s not enough. You just said that both of you would match the value of whatever I put up!”

Hearing this, middle-aged Li laughed heartily. He glared coldly at Meng Hao, and then gave pale-faced Chen Fan a sinister look. At the moment, he was convinced of what to do. He knew Chen Fan and Chen Fan’s personality. He wouldn’t do anything devious, so clearly his expression revealed his true feelings.

“I, Li, don’t have any precious treasures like Junior Brother Zhou. However, I do have some Spirit Stones saved up. Fellow disciples, if you are able to loan me some Spirit Stones, it will be to your benefit. I will pay them back with an additional one stone for every hundred you give.” He laughed again, watching as the hundreds of surrounding Cultivators saluted him respectfully. A few of them flew over to him, and then more and more.

“No problem, Elder Brother Li. Of course we can help you.”

“Hahaha! I don’t have a lot of Spirit Stones, just a few thousand, my savings from the past few years. If you need them, Elder Brother Li, then they’re yours.”

“Don’t worry, Elder Brother Li. We can definitely help you out.”

The voices of hundreds of Cultivators filled the air. All of them produced Spirit Stones, in amounts ranging from hundreds to thousands. Soon, they had been piled together into a group of several tens of thousands of Spirit Stones.

“These Spirit Stones can’t compare in value to Junior Brother Zhou’s precious treasure. Fine, fine, I won’t try to take advantage of you. I have some magical items in my bag of holding that are worth tens of thousands of Spirit Stones. In total, their value is roughly 500,000!” He flicked his sleeve, and then shot into the air, transforming into a beam of light which shot toward the Battle Arena. Amidst the excited cries of the surrounding Cultivators, he landed in the middle of the arena and turned to stare at Meng Hao.

Chen Fan looked at Meng Hao with a forced smile. He was just about to give some advice when Meng Hao put the flying dagger on the ground and then flew up in the air toward the Battle Arena.

No one made a move to stop him.

As he entered, the surrounding Cultivators craned their necks to watch. Middle-aged Li stood there arrogantly. He pressed his finger down onto the space between his eyebrows. Immediately, his Cultivation base sank down from the late Foundation Establishment stage to the mid Foundation Establishment stage, as if he had six Dao Pillars.

“Li is not the sort of person who would bully you,” he said, sticking his jaw out, “so I’ll only use the power of the mid Foundation Establishment stage. Under no circumstances will I use the power of late Foundation Establishment.”

“Actually, there’s no need for that,” murmured Meng Hao. He stood there in the Battle Arena, his expression very different than before. There was nothing fake about his expression now. He smiled, and within the smile was happiness, as well as a bit of shyness.

The people here weren’t familiar with this shyness. But the people from the Violet Fate Sect who had traded with him years before in the State of Zhao would know it well. It would cause their scalps to grow numb if they saw it. They would think themselves to be in some kind of nightmare, and would most likely fly into a violent rage.

“In a bit, you’ll have to eat your words….” said Meng Hao shyly. He looked just like the young scholar that had stood there on Mount Daqing years ago. He seemed a little embarrassed as he took a step forward.

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# Chapter 184: Seven Exterminations

This man named Li had no way to know how famous Meng Hao was in the State of Zhao, nor about the iron spear which was still located within the Violet Fate Sect….

Meng Hao’s body flickered as he shot toward Li. He lifted his right hand and flashed an incantation sign; immediately, a Flame Dragon roared out.

It wasn’t very large, only about thirty meters long, and its color was not normal. Instead of being the color of fire, it was dark, and had two flapping wings. This was obviously a Flying Rain-Dragon.

Power from Meng Hao’s Cultivation base was congealed inside of it, and not a drop seeped out. Only someone significantly more powerful than Meng Hao, someone of a higher stage, would be able to sense the slight fluctuations of the Cultivation base power within it.

From the look of it, it really did seem to be something that would be produced by the power of mid Foundation Establishment, or perhaps even inferior to that.

Sneers filled the faces of the Cultivators outside the Battle Arena. They were clearly very amused by the whole scene.

Chen Fan groaned inwardly. He didn’t say anything, but his eyes were dull as he thought, not about his flying dagger, but the fact that this was a Battle Arena, and there was no way to tell what deadly moves Li might use.

Zhou Shanyue watched on, a smile covering his face. He looked exceedingly pleased. He had never liked Chen Fan, not from the very beginning when his father had brought him back to the Solitary Sword Sect. He felt that his father treated him far too well for the outsider that he was.

As for the flying dagger that had been given to Chen Fan, Zhou Shanyue thought of it as his own. How could it be given to someone else? And how come he wasn’t a member of the current generation of the Seven Solitary Sword Sons?

He didn’t understand, but also didn’t dare to complain to his father. This caused his enmity toward Chen Fan to grow stronger and stronger.

“Finally I have a chance today!” he thought. “Chen Fan, ahh, Chen Fan, the flying dagger will finally belong to me. You trifling nobody. Do you really dare to contend with me?!” A smile broke out on his face, and he laughed.

Back within the Battle Arena, Li also laughed. A haughty look covered his face as he watched Meng Hao’s Flame Dragon speeding toward him. He sneered.

“A barbarian Cultivator from a backwater Sect,” he said loftily. “You don’t deserve to even be here. Your magic is so simple! You really dare to use a trifling Flame Dragon art? Even being restricted to the mid Foundation Establishment stage, I can still kill you with ease.” He flicked his sleeve, and the power of his mid Foundation Establishment stage boiled out. He raised his hand and the illusory image of a sun and a moon appeared on either side of his palm.

The images of the sun and moon transformed into two gleaming sword auras. Li waved his hand and they shot screaming into the air, straight toward the incoming Flame Dragon.

A cheer rose up from the surrounding Cultivators when they saw this.

Of course, all of this takes some time to describe, but happened in an instant. The images of the sun and moon swords slammed into the Flame Dragon, and as they did, for some unknown reason, they began to twist and warp.

A bang exploded out as the moon sword pushed up against the Flame Dragon. It seemed like it was trying to move a mountain. The sword instantly collapsed to pieces. Before the pieces could float away, they were transformed into ash by the heat of the Flame Dragon.

At the same time, the sun sword also collapsed. The thirty meter long Flame Dragon didn’t even seem to have been scratched. Its momentum increased as it shot toward Li.

As it shot forward, its body expanded. Thirty meters, ninety meters, one hundred and fifty meters… in the blink of an eye, it was three hundred meters long and growing!

A mysterious power emanated out from the Flame Dragon, forming into a monstrous Flame Sea. This was the aura of the Flame Dragon. Its massive wings spread out to cover the sky, causing the Battle Arena to be submerged in flame.

All of this occurred too quickly, and middle-aged Li could not possibly have predicted that it would happen. It was the same with Zhou Shanyue, as well as all the surrounding Solitary Sword Sect disciples, who watched on with stunned faces.

A roaring sound filled the air, and the Battle Arena shook. The shield covering the Battle Arena rippled as it held back the power.

At the same time as the roaring sounded out, Meng Hao suddenly shot forward, attacking as fast as lightning. Li’s face went white, and filled with an expression of disbelief. Nine jade slips appeared and floated around him, emanating a protective energy which defended him from the massive power of the Flame Sea.

These nine jade slips were clearly extraordinary in their protective power. However, Meng Hao continued to shoot toward him like an arrow. In an instant, he slammed into the shield generated by the nine jade slips.

Another boom resonated out, along with a miserable shout. The onlookers watched on, dumbstruck as the flames began to die out. Li spun backward like a kite with its string cut, blood shooting out of his mouth, his eyes filled with shock. He cut a sorry figure.

Meng Hao emerged from the Flame Sea, his face calm. He smiled, and still had the shy look on his face.

Zhou Shanyue gasped when this happened, and then stared in shock. Chen Fan blinked his eyes, looking at Meng Hao with disbelief.

Amidst the silence of the shocked audience, middle-aged Li's body stopped moving. A grim expression appeared on his face, and then he pushed down on his forehead.

Suddenly, his body quivered and then filled with the power of the great circle of Foundation Establishment. Pseudo Core stage power immediately exploded out from him.

This power was far, far beyond what he had exhibited moments ago. His eyes radiating killing intent as he watched Meng Hao striding out from within the Flame Sea. A haughty look once again filled his face.

"You seem qualified to be slain by the true power of my Cultivation base!"

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever. He smiled shyly, but said nothing. Seeing the smile, Li felt a strong feeling of abhorrence. He shot forward, his hand lifting toward his bag of holding and retrieving a sword.

The azure-colored sword spun rapidly above his head, forming the shape of a whale. It sucked in the power of Li's late Foundation Establishment stage power, whereupon a buzzing sound filled the air. Ghost images of the sword suddenly appeared, seven of them!

The buzz of conversation filled the air.

"Seven Exterminations! Elder Brother Li is using a killing move!!"

"That's one of the most powerful stances of Foundation Establishment, a profound magic of the Seven Solitary Sword Sons…."

Chen Fan's expression twisted. "Solitary Sword Seven Exterminations!" He was about to take a step forward when Zhou Shanyue laughed and stretched out his arm to block the way.

“Junior Brother Chen, it’s prohibited to interfere with matches in the Battle Arena. You’re not going to break Sect rules are you?”

As the observing Solitary Sword Sect disciples discussed the proceedings, within the Battle Arena, Li’s hair whipped about wildly. He flashed incantation gestures, causing a cyclone to spring up. The cyclone merged with the azure sword, and a roaring sound filled the air. A vicious expression appeared on his face as he waved a finger.

The azure sword seemed to split the air as it shot with incredible speed toward Meng Hao.

This attack was one of the most powerful moves from a Cultivator of the great circle of Foundation Establishment, as well as one of the most powerful arts of the Solitary Sword Sect. For Li to use it in this situation made it clear that he intended to strike a fatal blow!

“I plan to use this magic to win a place among the Seven Sons. Today… I’ll christen it with your head!” His sinister voice echoed out as the sword screamed forward. The sword and its seven ghost images bore down onto the Meng Hao….

A smile appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes.

“In terms of magical techniques, I’m still a bit deficient….” he muttered to himself. He suddenly struck his hand forward. Immediately, everything began to shake, and the approaching sword suddenly stopped.

Meng Hao then took a step forward and struck his hand out a second time, then a third and a fourth time. Each time he did, he took another step. By the time he reached the fifth strike, he was upon the sword. The ground quaked as the massive image of an illusory hand appeared in front of Meng Hao. It shot toward the sword. 1

At the same time, Meng Hao’s Spiritual Sense burst out. When he was in the early Foundation Establishment stage, his Spiritual Sense could shock late Foundation Establishment Cultivators. But now he had an additional Dao Pillar, which made him even more powerful. The Spiritual Sense merged into the giant illusory hand. When the hand slammed into the azure sword, a massive bang rang out.

The azure sword shook. One by one, the ghost images surrounding it popped and disappeared. All of this takes some time to describe, but happened in an instant. The ghost images of the swords disintegrated, and then cracks began to cover the surface of the sword itself.

The illusory hand passed through the sword and then continued on toward Li. There was no way for him to dodge it, so it slammed directly into his body.

Blood sprayed from his mouth, and he staggered backward, his face pale. Meng Hao's fifth step placed him directly next to the azure sword. He reached up and pushed against it.

A cracking noise sounded out and the sword… split completely in half.

"You lose… Now pay up," said Meng Hao. He flicked his sleeve, sending the two pieces of the azure sword flying away to land at the feet of Li. Li's face was deathly pale, and he coughed up another mouthful of blood. His aura seemed to have weakened. He looked at Meng Hao, a look of disbelief and bitter anguish covering his face.

He… had lost!

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# Chapter 185: Gathering at the Song Clan

Silence reigned outside of the Battle Arena. Hundreds of Solitary Sword Sect disciples stared at Meng Hao in shock and disbelief. As the seconds ticked by, their eyes filled with intense fear.

In the Cultivation world, respect is delivered to the powerful. Meng Hao was only at the mid Foundation Establishment stage, but the efficiency with which he had vanquished the great circle of late Foundation Establishment left a deep impression on everyone. Their fear transformed into respect. Respect for Meng Hao.

No one said anything. They watched him as he left the Battle Arena, the shy look still on his face as he walked back to Chen Fan.

Chen Fan gaped at him for a long moment. And then, a smile broke out on his face and he started to laugh. His laughter shattered the silence, and a hubbub immediately broke out.

“Who is that guy?!”

“He’s at the mid Foundation Establishment stage but actually defeated the great circle of Foundation Establishment! This type of Cultivation base… this type of power… he can’t be a nobody!”

“He… seems almost like a Dao Child! The magic he just used seemed somewhat familiar. It was like the Black Sieve Sect’s 19 Black Cloud Strikes….”

The sound of discussion echoed about. Zhou Shanyue's face was pale as he staggered back a few steps. He tilted his head and stared closely at Meng Hao, the first time he had done so. Previously, he had thought Chen Fan was the one he needed to pay most attention to. His eyes filled with an intense, venomous hatred and rage.

"You despicable, shameless bastard! You're a swindler!! You obviously know the power of your Cultivation base and pretended to be weak! You avoided battle before with the sole purpose of picking this fight!! Your depravity knows no bounds!!" Zhou Shanyue was gnashing his teeth and cursing as middle-aged Li exited the Battle Arena, his face pale. He chuckled bitterly, looking at Meng Hao with complex expression that included hatred and other emotions.

He still didn't understand. Clearly, he had been played. He'd thought he had the situation completely under control, and yet it turned out that his opponent had effortlessly tricked him.

Then he thought of the Spirit Stones he had wagered, which weren't even his. He had borrowed them from surrounding fellow Sect members and had to pay back everything with interest. His face grew even more ashen.

Meng Hao gave a light cough. His expression bashful, he said, "You were the ones who insisted on the match." Zhou Shanyue trembled. With the flick of a sleeve, he turned to leave, clearly intending to go back on his word and not hand over the jade pendant.

Chen Fan gave a cold snort. "Junior Brother Zhou," he said coolly, "The stakes of a bet mean nothing, but the prestige of the Solitary Sword Sect is everything. Don't tell me you intend to break your word!?" Instantly, the eyes of all the surrounding Cultivators came to rest on Zhou Shanyue.

They were all Solitary Sword Sect disciples. They might not always be able to measure up to others in terms of skill, but the importance of upright conduct had been drilled into them from the moment they joined the Sect. One's word could not be broken.

Zhou Shanyue felt the eyes of hundreds of his fellow disciples upon him, and his expression flickered. He stamped his foot angrily on the ground. Heart aching, he took off his life-saving jade pendant and threw it toward Meng Hao. He also tossed out a drop of his own blood.

He glared at Meng Hao, his eyes filled with fury and disgrace. If he could, he would kill Meng Hao hundreds of times over. Finally, his body turned into a colorful beam that shot off into the distance.

Meng Hao coughed lightly again. Such gazes were not unfamiliar to him, and he was actually used to them. His eager gaze next fell upon Li’s bag of holding. Inside were the tens upon tens of thousands of Spirit Stones which he had put up as stakes in the bet.

Pale faced, Li couldn’t help but wonder how he would possibly pay back his fellow Sect members. Then he thought about how he owed literally hundreds of people, and his vision grew dim.

Without the slightest trace of politeness, Chen Fan walked up and grabbed the bag of holding. Li did nothing to stop him. He could only smile sadly. Chen Fan was just about to turn and walk back, when Meng Hao coughed again.

“Elder Brother, there’s also a sword worth tens of thousands of Spirit Stones.” Could Meng Hao really forget that? Considering how much he cared about Spirit Stones, as well as desire to join a Sect, he might be able to forget about other things. But he could never forget matters related to Spirit Stones.

“The sword?” Chen Fan said to pale-faced Li, holding his hand out.

Face bitter, Li produced the sword. His heart trembled, and felt as if it would tear in half. He handed it over to Chen Fan, and from his expression, it looked like he was handing over the love of his life.

He glared murderously at Meng Hao, the venom in his eyes growing stronger and stronger.

“No shame whatsoever!” he said, clenching his jaw. He flicked his sleeve, turned and left.

Chen Fan gave a cold snort, and then hurried away with Meng Hao and all the winnings. They returned to his house, their faces covered with smiles.

“Little Junior Brother, we won out this time. But next time,” he exhorted earnestly, “you can’t do something like that. That was extremely dangerous, and also, you now have to worry about those two trying to get back at you.”

Meng Hao nodded, knowing that Chen Fan was simply concerned for him. With a smile, he said, “Elder Brother, how about I take the Spirit Stones, and you keep the jade pendant?”

Chen Fan thought for a moment, and then replied, “No, I don’t need it. You take it. Listen to your Elder Brother. You take everything. This is my Sect, so I have everything I need. As for the jade pendant… consider this: You take it, but when Master emerges from secluded meditation, return it. After all, you will eventually be a member of the Sect.”

Meng Hao tried to convince him to take the piece of jade, but Chen Fan, although he didn’t directly refuse, declined to take it. Finally, Meng Hao collected together all his winnings, whereupon Chen Fan produced some more alcohol. The two Brothers sat down to drink, and chatted about the Reliance Sect.

A few days passed, and Chen Fan’s master continued to remain in secluded meditation. The date of the banquet at the Song Clan drew closer. Finally, one morning at dawn, the sound of bells filled the Solitary Sword Sect.

At the bottom of the mountain was a stretch of ground normally covered with restrictive spells. Currently, people were flying from all directions toward this very area.

Meng Hao was among them, flying alongside Chen Fan.

As he approached, the first thing Meng Hao noticed was an enormous teleportation portal, surrounded by nine stone pillars. Not far away from it, a gray-robed old man sat cross-legged and motionless.

“That’s the portal keeper,” said Chen Fan quietly. “His only job is to keep watch over the teleportation portal.” Meng Hao nodded, shifting his gaze to look at the portal itself as well as the surrounding area.

Other than Chen Fan and himself, there were three others present. They all wore the Daoist robes of the Solitary Sword Sect, and had large swords strapped to their backs. When he looked at them, they looked back and gave him slight nods.

With a smile, Meng Hao clasped hands and saluted them. They smiled back.

Despite the lack of any words being exchanged, Meng Hao could tell that they knew who he was. Obviously, his match with Li had gained him no small amount of prestige in the Solitary Sword Sect over the past few days.

Time passed, and more people arrived. After the time it takes half an incense stick to burn, there were about eighteen people present. None of them were very old; most were around thirty, and some seemed to be as young as twenty.

They seemed to brim with vitality, and were all extraordinarily good looking. Furthermore, all of them were in the Foundation Establishment stage, two of the group being at the late Foundation Establishment stage.

As they arrived, each one would look at Meng Hao. Some would then nod, others simply ignored him.

“Soon Elder Fan will arrive,” whispered Chen Fan. “He’ll lead us through the teleportation portal to the Song Clan. Your Elder Brother is going to work hard to get you a beloved!” He chuckled, but his expression was very serious.

Meng Hao gaped. This was the second time Chen Fan had brought up the matter. Meng Hao had a strange feeling about this trip to the Song Clan.

Time passed, and soon a beam of light appeared in the sky, a few dozen meters wide. In an instant, it had reached them, and an old man appeared, wearing a voluminous Daoist robe. His face was ruddy, and he had a full head of long, white hair. He carried a gourd of alcohol in his hand, and strapped to his back was a huge pitch-black sword.

He had a brandy nose, and his entire body emanated the smell of alcohol. His robe was wrinkled and messy. He burped.

“Greetings, Elder Fan!” said Chen Fan and the others, immediately clasping hands in salute. Meng Hao also bowed his head and clasped hands in greeting.

“Alright, you little brats. Let’s see if any of you are lucky enough to take that Song girl in marriage and bring honor to the ancestors of the Solitary Sword Sect….” The old man’s sonorous voice echoed out, shaking Meng Hao, and even the very ground, it seemed.

When he said the words “bring honor to the ancestors,” his voice grew especially loud, causing the gray-robed man to open his eyes and then slowly shake his head. He seemed to find the wording somewhat inappropriate. However, he said nothing.

“He’s definitely not a Core Formation Cultivator,” thought Meng Hao, taking a deep breath. He had seen Nascent Soul eccentrics before, and it seemed… that’s exactly what this man was! Nascent Soul stage!

Chen Fan stepped forward. Raising hands again in a respectful salute, he said, “Elder Fan, this is a disciple from my former Sect, my Junior Brother who….”

“Got it. No problem! Don’t forget to bring me a few jugs of your master’s alcohol when we get back.” The old man clapped Chen Fan on the shoulder. He glanced at Meng Hao, and then strode forward toward the teleportation portal.

Meng Hao hesitated for a moment and then said, “Elder Brother, this trip to the Song Clan….”

Chen Fan hurriedly replied. “The Song Clan has an urgent need for a son-in-law, so they’ve invited the five Sects and two Clans to visit. Little Junior Brother, if you play your cards right, you might have a chance. Whether you join the Solitary Sword Sect, or become a member of the Song Clan, you will soon have a proper foundation upon which to practice Cultivation.” He grabbed Meng Hao’s sleeve and dragged him toward the teleportation portal.

Meng Hao was hesitant for a moment, and then made his decision. “The people from the Solitary Sword Sect are here, so I can’t try to get the meat jelly to help me change my appearance. This isn’t really working out how I want it to. Oh well, once we get to the Song Clan, I’ll think of an excuse to get away.”

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# Chapter 186: Another Encounter with Wang Tengfei

The Song Clan was one of the three great Clans of the Southern Domain, and was somewhat isolated in its position. It had a history stretching back tens of thousands of years, and was deeply rooted in the society of the Southern Domain. It existed on the edge of a wide plain which contained some rolling hills, but few mountains.

In the southeast of the plain, however, was a mountain range called Neck of Heaven, under which flowed a river. Look down on it from the sky, and it had the appearance of a woman resting her head on her arm. It was quite pretty and charming.

The Song Clan was situated atop the chain of mountains. It was different from other Clans. Its main gate was actually an ancient castle, connected to which was an enormous wall that snaked throughout the various surrounding mountains, creating a very spectacular sight.

As for the castle of the capital city, it was pitch black and had the appearance of an enormous wild beast, filled with indescribable ferocity. Anyone who saw it for the first time would be left with the impression that the Song Clan was not to be provoked.

The capital city was surrounded by eighty-one smaller cities, which were constructed according to the rise and fall of the mountains. Each city was densely populated by Clan members.

In the sky above the Song Clan was an enormous rotating Sun and Moon. When it was pitch black in the outside world, the sun blazed in the Song

Clan. When it was bright and sunny outside, the moon shone in the Song Clan.

This Sun and Moon was a precious treasure of the Song Clan.

Every great Sect and Clan possessed some valuable treasure. Only in this way could their continued status and glory be maintained.

For example, the Black Sieve Sect had their incense burner, and the Solitary Sword Sect its enormous sword. They were all precious treasures. As for the Song Clan, the sun and moon which hung in their sky enveloped the entire Clan, transforming it into a different world than what existed outside.

It was likely because of this treasure that for so many years, the Song Clan had not experienced any friction with outside Sects and Clans, and held such a lofty position. They did not provoke others, and others did not dare to provoke them.

The Song Clan was not as powerful as the Solitary Sword Sect, nor as mysterious of the Blood Demon Sect. It was not as extravagant as the Violet Fate Sect, nor did they have a vast array of magics like the Golden Frost Sect. They were not as erudite as the Black Sieve Sect, either.

Amongst the three great Clans, the Song Clan maintained the lowest profile. Their Dao Children did not perform sensational acts, nor did the Clan struggle for glory. They were relatively quiet. What they did have, though, was information, collected over many, many years.

They did not provoke others, and others did not dare to provoke them!

The mountains they occupied left others with a profound impression. If incredible change rocked the Southern Domain in the future, other Sects and Clans might very well collapse. The one organization that was most likely to remain was the Song Clan.

The degree of their inconspicuousness was such that people knew almost nothing about them. This in turn created a sense of fear and terror.

In the past few hundred years, the only person to venture out of the Song Clan was Eccentric Song 1, who everyone in the Southern Domain knew about. He had an odd personality, and enjoyed the collection of wild beasts. His occasional excursions gave him plenty of opportunities to interact with other Sects and Clans.

At this moment within the Song Clan capital city, dazzling lights flickered and people bustled about preparing for an ancient tradition of the Song Clan.

Women of the Song Clan were not permitted to marry outsiders. Instead, a husband would be sought from the outside, who would then marry into the family. Upon marriage, the new son-in-law would then become a Conclave Cultivator of the Song Clan.

Throughout the years, many Sects had desired to infiltrate the Song Clan. However, because of their strange and ancient marriage custom, those Sects had long since vanished. The Song Clan, however… still remained.

Of course, there were problems with the arrangement….

Song Jia 2 stood quietly at the window, looking out. The outside world was awash with sunlight, but inside the Song Clan, the sky was dark. Wind blew against her face, lifting up her hair and revealing her spectacular beauty. Right now, she wore a sad look and seemed to be apprehensive.

Her apprehension was because of her fate as a woman of the Song Clan. She felt melancholy for the same reason. There was nothing she could do to resist; it was useless to struggle. The Song Clan's rules had been laid down by the ancestors, and could not be changed.

The soft voice of a woman could be heard from behind her. "We're different from the other Sects and Clans. As a girl of the Song Clan, it's impossible to maintain your purity forever. You can't change that, nor can I." The voice belonged to a middle-aged woman who gazed affectionately at Song Jia.

Song Jia didn't reply.

After a while, though, she nodded. In her mind, images appeared from the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament. She remembered looking on helplessly as her Blood Phoenix died. She could only watch through tear-filled eyes as it faded away.

“Perhaps it’s just my fate.” Her face filled with exhaustion. The exhaustion did not mar her good looks; in fact, it seemed to give birth to a tender beauty.

The woman behind her could sense what Song Jia was feeling. She stepped forward and stroked Song Jia’s long, beautiful hair. “It is fate,” she said. “But it’s not destiny, it’s a mission. A mission from the Song Clan of the Southern Domain. 3”

“The destruction of the Southern Domain. Gather a hundred Clans. Fuse their bloodlines. Evade the palace of the Heavens….” Song Jia murmured the words which she had heard people recite ever since she was young. “But father said that no power within the entire Southern Domain could bring about its complete destruction. Nothing in the Eastern Lands could do so either.” She looked back at the middle-aged woman.

“That’s a legend which has existed since ancient times. Mother doesn’t know what it means either.”

Mother and daughter were silent for a while after that.

Meanwhile, outside of the Song Clan, the sun blazed brightly in the sky. On the plains below the Song Clan, a glittering light shined out, which grew in intensity over the space of about ten breaths. Then, it gradually disappeared, revealing a dozen or more people.

Meng Hao sucked in a deep breath and rubbed the bridge of his nose. It seemed his body wasn’t really suited for teleportation. He looked around and immediately noticed that up ahead existed a world of darkness.There was a huge mountain range, hanging over which was… a moon.

He gaped at the bizarre sight.

Next to him, Chen Fan sighed with emotion. “We’re in Song Clan territory now. It’s my first time here, but I’ve heard people talk of how astonishing the Song Clan is.”

The old man lifted his gourd of alcohol and took a drink. Then he let out a loud burp and laughed heartily. His laughter filled the air, after which several beams of light shot out from the darkness of the Song Clan.

“Brandy Nose!” said a voice from within the approaching beams of light. It didn’t sound pleased. “How come the Solitary Sword Sect sent you? I can smell the stench of alcohol coming off of you from here!”

“Eccentric Song! How could I not come? This old Daoist is going to drink his fill before he leaves!” The old man suddenly shot up into the air.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. The words ‘Eccentric Song’ filled him with fear. He looked up into the sky and could just make out the image of Song Clan members within the beams of light. One of them was an old man who, although Meng Hao had never seen before, he immediately knew was the same Eccentric Song from that time in the State of Zhao.

“I just arrived and already ran into him,” thought Meng Hao. “I can’t stay here long… if Eccentric Song finds out I’m here, the consequences will be terrible….” Meng Hao was just about to try to sneak off when Chen Fan grabbed him.

“Little Junior Brother, did you see? I’m not sure of the name of that member of the elder generation, but I heard everyone calls him Eccentric Song. They say he has a very bizarre personality, and that he owns tons of wild beasts. He also likes to make bets with other Sects all the time….”

Meng Hao interrupted him with a forced smile, “Elder Brother, I really can’t proceed any further, I have to….” Before Meng Hao could finish speaking, the old man from the Solitary Sword Sect and Eccentric Song suddenly started yelling at each other.

“Your Song Clan is entirely too stingy! Ten Thousand Trees Mountain only has a single pearl as the reward? What good is a crappy pearl!? That’s the prize that my Solitary Sword Sect kids are supposed to fight for? No way!”

“It’s a Cubic Pearl that can dispel even the strangest poisons in the world,” replied Eccentric Song. “It’s a treasure refined by the Sun and Moon of the Song Clan. It can only be given as a gift to a son-in-law of the Song Clan. Even if you wanted it, you couldn’t have it. Besides, what treasures could possibly compare to a girl of the Song Clan? Your granny! Are you Solitary Sword Sect people here because of the search for a son-in-law, or just to grab treasures?!”

Hearing this exchange, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. Next to him, Chen Fan frowned.

“Little Junior Brother, you should really think things through,” he said earnestly. “You’ll be able to make a lot of friends here. Li Fugui will be here too, and you haven’t seen him for years. However, if you truly must leave, then Elder Brother won’t stop you.”

Meng Hao lowered his head thoughtfully for a moment, then looked up and smiled.

“Fine, since I’m here, I might as well check things out.”

Chen Fan smiled in return. He clapped Meng Hao on the shoulder and was just about to continue speaking when another blinding light appeared. It spread out, attracting the attention of everyone, including Eccentric Song and the old man from the Solitary Sword Sect.

The glowing light spread out, and within, the figures of dozens of people gradually grew distinct. Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and Chen Fan frowned.

These were people from the Wang Clan.

The group was comprised of both men and women. They looked around after they appeared, and their eyes were especially drawn to the mountain chain in the distance, upon which the Song Clan was situated.

At the front of this group of people was an old man whose face was covered with a tranquil expression. He strode forward, looking up at Eccentric Song and the old man from the Solitary Sword Sect.

“Fellow Daoist Fan,” he said, “you arrived quickly. Could it be that you caught a whiff of the Song Clan’s alcohol, causing you to arrive faster than everyone else?”

Elder Fan laughed and took a swig of alcohol. “I’m not that fast. At least, I’m not as fast as Fellow Daoist Wang was that time back at the Rebirth Cave. The speed and beauty of your retreat were incredible.”

The old man from the Wang Clan smiled. He didn’t respond, but clasped his hands and gave a slight bow to Eccentric Song.

Behind him were various members of the Wang Clan, including Wang Tengfei 4 He wore a white robe, along with a cold expression and a slight, grim frown. It seemed as if he were thinking about something important. His features were handsome, his disposition perfect. Everything melded together to give him an air of flawlessness.

Standing next to him was Wang Xifan 5. His expression was proud and aloof as he gazed at the Song Clan mountains. Then his gaze shifted to the group from the Solitary Sword Sect. He frowned when he caught sight of Meng Hao.

“He looks a bit familiar…” His gaze passed by before he could recall who Meng Hao was. However, it was at this moment that Wang Tengfei’s surprised eyes fell onto Meng Hao. A look of disbelief appeared.

Meng Hao looked back at him. They were in different groups of people, hundreds of meters away from each other, and yet their gazes locked.

Just like they had years ago in the Reliance Sect!

3. This part contains a play on words of sorts in Chinese. The characters for fate, destiny, and mission are , , and respectively. As you can see, they

all share the same component, the character , which can have different meanings depending on the context or the other characters it’s paired with.

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# Chapter 187: Good Old Fatty

“Meng Hao!” thought Wang Tengfei, his eyes instantly shining with a mysterious glow. He felt a sudden stab of pain from the index finger of his right hand. The finger was pitch black, and inside, a pulsating black aura could be seen.

Seeing Meng Hao here was not something Wang Tengfei had ever imagined would happen. Many years had passed, but he recognized him immediately. This was that damned Cultivator from the State of Zhao who had stolen away his legacy and wrecked all of his meticulously laid plans!

As soon as he saw Meng Hao, Wang Tengfei’s breath quickened. He had assumed that Meng Hao disappeared along with the State of Zhao. How could he have predicted that he would suddenly appear here? Furthermore, he was in a group from the Solitary Sword Sect. Many thoughts ran through his head during the space of a few breaths. Then he recovered his composure and looked away.

“Since he’s here,” thought Wang Tengfei, “I’ll have to find an opportunity to sacrifice him to my poison finger.” His expression calm, he slowly began to exhibit the same disregard for Meng Hao that he had years ago. It was as if he would eternally be above Meng Hao. It didn’t matter if they were in the State of Zhao or the Southern Domain. He didn’t care at all about Meng Hao. He was a member of the Wang Clan. He was Chosen. He was superior, and as for Meng Hao, it didn’t matter what relationship he had with the Solitary Sword Sect. To him, Meng Hao was nothing more than an insect.

He had perfect good looks and a flawless temperament. He stood there, slowly becoming the center of attention. He smiled lightly, his expression indifferent. The disregard for Meng Hao which existed in his heart slowly transformed in to scorn and arrogance. He tilted his head up, and it appeared, for all intents and purposes, that Meng Hao was nothing to him and could be crushed on a whim.

At the same time, Wang Xifan frowned slightly. He looked at Meng Hao again, and a mysterious look appeared in his eyes. A smile tugged at the corners of his mouth. It was a smile similar to Wang Tengfei's, filled with scorn in disregard.

Now he remembered the scene from years ago. He remembered this ant that he almost crushed on the top of the East Mountain of the Reliance Sect, only to be stopped by He Luohua.

"Interesting," he said with a chuckle. His words did not echo out, and could only be heard by Wang Tengfei. "So, we once again run into this insolent kid. Tengfei, now is your chance to conclude matters from all those years ago. Kill him, and prove that everything I've told you is true. You are Chosen, and he is nothing more than an insect."

Wang Tengfei smiled. "I've long since stopped thinking about the things that happened that year," he said coolly. "However, I really should take his head." He looked at Meng Hao once again, and his eyes brimmed with confidence in his ability to kill him. It would be as easy as turning over his hand. He looked away, ignoring Meng Hao and staring off into the distance. He appeared thoughtful once again, as if he were wrestling with some matter in his heart.

"Don't overthink things," said Wang Xifan, his voice low. "You need to trust Chu Yuyan."

Wang Tengfei was quiet for a long moment, then growled, "If I ever find out who it was, I'll tear him into a thousand pieces!!" His eyes were filled with cold, callous hatred, as well as humiliation. Killing intent roiled out of him, much more intense than when he had seen Meng Hao. This matter was something he could not ignore, something he could not cool down from.

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever. Seeing Wang Tengfei here wasn't completely unexpected. However, it naturally caused various emotions to bubble up within him.

The enmity between him and Wang Tengfei was not something he cared much about any more. Years had passed, and as of now, Meng Hao actually felt that he had been a bit too hot-blooded in his youth. There were definitely some areas in which he was in the wrong.

Now, Meng Hao's Cultivation base was at the mid Foundation Establishment stage, and his battle prowess put him in the same league as Dao Children, although few people knew that. In Meng Hao's estimation, if he could defeat Wang Tengfei when in the Qi Condensation stage, then nowadays it wasn't even worth thinking about.

What concerned him most was the Song Clan's search for a husband, and the Cubic Pearl that Eccentric Song had mentioned moments ago. It could dispel the strangest poisons in the world, and that made Meng Hao's heart palpitate with eagerness.

He wasn't sure if the Cubic Pearl could dispel the poison of the Resurrection Lily, but considering the Song Clan was offering it up as a prize, it was surely no ordinary object.

"I wonder if it really can dispel the poison…. If it can, then maybe I won't need to infiltrate the Violet Fate Sect after all. Staying in the Solitary Sword Sect wouldn't be bad." His heart pounded in anticipation. As he traveled the path of Cultivation, his next big hurdle would be Core Formation. That was a difficult bridge to cross, and joining a powerful Sect would surely help.

After a long moment of thought, his eyes filled with determination.

Up above, Eccentric Song, Elder Fan, and the Nascent Soul Cultivator from the Wang Clan turned into beams of prismatic light that shot toward the darkness which surrounded the Song Clan.

Two other Song Clan members had come out with Eccentric Song. They split, one walking toward the Solitary Sword Sect's group, the other to the Wang Clan's group.

They clasped hands and bowed. Smiling, they said, "Fellow Daoists of the Solitary Sword Sect and Wang Clan, please follow us. We will enter the mountains of the Song Clan together."

Everyone flew up into the air. Various members of the Solitary Sword Sect and the Wang Clan were obviously acquainted. The two groups merged into a larger group. Talking and laughing could be heard as they transformed into beams of light and shot toward the Song Clan.

Meng Hao and Chen Fan were on the edge of the group, some distance away from the Wang Clan Cultivators. Wang Tengfei flew along, expression cold. He frowned, apparently too busy being lost in thought to pay any attention to Meng Hao.

They flew at high speed, and very soon reached the area where the brightness of the outside world gave way to the darkness of the Song Clan. The instant they entered, Meng Hao's heart leaped. He had just discovered a major difference between the outside world, and the Song Clan. The spiritual energy here… could be felt and absorbed!!

This unexpected turn of events shook Meng Hao's mind and heart. Of course, after all his years of practicing Cultivation, he was able to prevent his feelings from showing on his face. His expression was the same as ever.

"So it turns out… I can absorb spiritual energy in this place! This is the perfect location for me to practice Cultivation!" This discovery exceeded the entirety of Meng Hao's imagination. He was just preparing to rotate his Cultivation base and begin to absorb spiritual energy when a thought flashed through his mind, and he stopped.

One of the tools which Meng Hao had developed after escaping all the various snares and traps throughout the years, was caution. Therefore, he would be cautious here, too.

He looked around and soon began to pick up on some clues. As the Solitary Sword Sect disciples flew forward, frowns appeared on their faces.

"So, we can't absorb the spiritual energy here…" Chen Fan whispered to him. "I heard before that the Song Clan is strange, and that certainly seems true. Apparently, only members of the Song Clan can do breathing exercises here to absorb spiritual energy. Other Sects and Clans are unable to. It’s not that spiritual energy is forbidden here, it’s that we can’t absorb it.”

A bit more time passed. Seeing all the mountains and cities filled with Cultivators pass by beneath him, Meng Hao was filled with a sense of mystery. After passing scores of mountains, they reached the Song Clan’s capital city.

Within the capital city was an enormous square. Already, many Cultivators from outside the Song Clan had arrived there. Present were members of the Golden Frost Sect and the Blood Demon Sect.

The place was alive with activity, and the hubbub of conversations filled the air.

Even before the Solitary Sword Sect and Wang Clan Cultivators could land, a loud voice drifted up into the air. “It’s absolutely, one hundred percent true. I, Zhou Daya 1, saw everything with my own eyes. That day, Chu Yuyan wasn’t wearing proper clothing. She was wearing a man’s garment! Furthermore, she seemed to be on very intimate terms with the male Cultivator. You all don’t believe me? I, Zhou Daya, swear an oath that if my words are in any way false, you can gouge my eyes out!”

The person talking was a young Cultivator. He was speaking so passionately that spit flew out of his mouth. He gazed at the surrounding Song Clan members with exuberant, shining eyes. As he spoke, he gesticulated wildly and jumped up and down. The dozens of surrounded Song Clan members watched on in astonishment.

The Cultivators from the Blood Demon Sect were situated off to the side. They sat there quietly, cross-legged, and in their midst was a Li Shiqi 2, dressed in a white robe!

Sitting cross-legged next to Li Shiqi were two people. One was Sang Luo’s brother, and the other was none other than Wang Youcai 3!

Wang Youcai was looking quietly at the group of people from the Golden Frost Sect. In their midst was a rather fat fellow whose face had a few pimples on it. He wasn’t very tall, and at the moment he was smiling complacently at Zhou Daya. This was none other than Li Fugui.

When the two of them had run into each other earlier, Fatty found, to his surprise, that Wang Youcai responded coldly to his attempts to start a conversation and even pretended not to know him. At the moment, he wasn’t sure what to think, and could only sigh inwardly.

“You simply can’t imagine the expression on Chu Yuyan’s face,” continued Zhou Daya. “I guess you can only say that it was wonderful. And that male Cultivator, well, he was extraordinarily handsome, a dragon amongst men. Really. They embraced each other and exchanged some sweet words. As their hands groped each other frantically, they began to pant….” As he spoke, Zhou Daya got more excited.

Li Fugui suddenly cleared his throat and spoke out in a loud and clear voice. “I can bear witness to this,” he said, “as I was also present. Ai, at first I planned to go give them a piece of my mind. As all of you Fellow Daoists are well aware, Fellow Daoist Chu Yuyan is the beloved of Fellow Daoist Wang Tengfei. And of course, Fellow Daoist Wang Tengfei and I are the closest of friends.

“Therefore, when I saw what was happening, I wanted to speak my mind. However…. Ai, you have no way to know how the two of them looked. It was clear that the feelings between them, were true love.” As his voice rang out, the faces of the Song Clan members all filled with strange expressions.

They knew Fatty, of course. He was a member of the Golden Frost Sect that no one dared to provoke. He was a treasure of the Sect, and as such, his level of seniority was extremely high. Anyone who offended him would arouse the wrath of the entire Golden Frost Sect. To do so would be similar to rubbing a cat’s hair backward.

This was because the Golden Frost Sect had eighteen bloodline legacies. By combining their power, the Sect could wield the power of a great Dao Reserve spell. According to the rumors, the power of this spell was so incredible that it could slay Immortals!

However, for many years, the Sect only possessed seventeen of the bloodlines. The last one had disappeared, and no matter how hard the Golden Frost Sect searched, it could not be found. There was no one who the legacy could be passed onto. Therefore, for many years, the ultimate power of the Golden Frost Sect’s spell could not be unleashed. However, it turned out Li Fugui was perfectly suited to accept the legacy. Therefore, he was treated as a treasure of the Sect. Usually, the Sect Priest would treat him very amiably and was very protective of him. You could essentially say that the entire Sect was at his beck and call.

Furthermore… Fatty didn’t like to practice Cultivation, nor did he want an assigned Dao Protector. So to protect him….

Whenever he went out, a large group of Golden Frost Sect disciples would accompany him. The Sect was extremely worried that something might happen to him. The most extreme thing that had happened was that once after someone provoked Li Fugui, the Sect Priest personally slaughtered an entire Sect. Afterwards, he issued a proclamation in the Southern Domain that anyone who dared to even touch Li Fugui would provoke the unbridled fury of the entire Golden Frost Sect.

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# Chapter 188: True Love is Priceless

Actually, Li Fugui was diametrically opposed to Wang Tengfei, and wouldn’t let him off the hook for anything. Normally, whether he was inside the Sect or outside, he constantly said sarcastic things about him.

This, of course, made Wang Tengfei furious. However, there was nothing he could do about it. Offending Li Fugui was not an option. Their feud was a trifling matter of the junior generation. Furthermore, Li Fugui was too important to the Golden Frost Sect. The difference between Li Fugui’s importance to the Golden Frost Sect and Wang Teng Fei’s importance to the Wang clan, was immeasurable.

Fatty suddenly leaped up onto the table, to the embarrassment of his fellow Golden Frost Sect members. They could do little more than cough lightly and watch as he cried out, “Ah, true love. Fellow Daoists, could I really not see such a thing? It was definitely true love. How could I, Li Fugui, do anything to split apart such an affectionate couple? Would I really do that, just for my good-for-nothing friend Wang Tengfei? Would I really disturb a scene of true love? Never! I could never do such a thing!

“There’s a saying which speaks of a love that can transcend something-or-other, I forgot. Anyway, someone told me something once. Actually, it was the best friend I’ve ever had, the person I admire most in the world. He told me that love is the most valuable thing in the world, worth more than even millions of Spirit Stones!” As he spoke, his mouthful of extraordinarily large teeth became visible. In the end, he began to choke up and started to cry aloud.

Seeing this caused the Song Clan members to smile wryly. The Blood Demon Sect Cultivators eyed Fatty with strange expressions.

Li Shiqi frowned, but didn’t say anything. Wang Youcai also maintained his silence, although a slight smile appeared on his face.

“Therefore,” continued Fatty, growing more and more excited, “I pretended that I didn’t even see them. However, it left me with the feeling that Wang Tengfei is really a useless nobody. Furthermore, he’s completely shameless. Anyone could see that it was true love. Were I in Wang Tengfei’s place, I would simply smile, and hand over the beauty.

“That unknown Cultivator, in terms of appearance, of Cultivation base, of everything, is clearly above and beyond Wang Tengfei. Sadly…”

Suddenly, an infuriated shout could be heard from mid-air.

“LI FUGUI!!!” Killing intent roiled out from Wang Tengfei as he shot out from the group floating in the air. His entire body was like a sharpened sword slicing toward Li Fugui.

Before he could get very close, the Golden Frost Sect disciples behind Li Fugui leaped up with amazing speed. In the blink of an eye, they shot forward. One of them, a tall, strapping man, let out a cold harrumph and formed a fist, which he lifted into the air. Ripples spread out from it in all directions, and a roaring sound filled the air. Wang Tengfei’s facial expression flickered.

Wang Xifan exploded out with incredible speed. In an instant, he was in front of Wang Tengfei, waving both hands out forward.

A boom echoed out. The blood drained from Wang Xifan’s face as he grabbed Wang Tengfei and retreated backward. He glanced back murderously at the large man from the Golden Frost Sect.

“Members of the Wang Clan, please conduct yourself with dignity,” said the large man coolly. The power of his Core Formation Cultivation base rolled out.

The group of people Meng Hao was a part of descended to the ground. Meng Hao had a strange expression on his face, and he coughed lightly. He looked at Fatty hiding behind the large man. The things Fatty had been saying were somewhat embarrassing, and left Meng Hao feeling a little guilty.

“Do you see?” said Chen Fan quietly. “Li Fugui is no small figure in the Golden Frost Sect. Now that I think about it, Wang Tengfei’s current situation really is deserving of sympathy. Little Junior Brother, have you seen Chu Yuyan? Ai, I’m really curious which Sect that Cultivator is from who got entangled with Fellow Daoist Chu Yuyan….”

“Uh… yeah I saw her before….” said Meng Hao hesitantly, not sure of what else to say.

Chen Fan sighed. “I really hope I have a chance to meet that guy one day. He must be brilliant to be able to snatch Chu Yuyan away right out from under Wang Tengfei’s nose. Ah, such skill. He must truly be a man of character.”

“Such skill, such skill….” Meng Hao felt even more guilty. Lowering his head, he slowly edged backward. At the same time, he looked over the crowd. He suddenly noticed Wang Youcai, and he stared in shock. Wang Youcai sat there taciturnly, avoiding Meng Hao’s eyes.

“Wang Tengfei, do you really dare to attack me?” said Fatty, sticking his head out from behind the large man and pointing at Wang Tengfei. “Your granny!” he roared. “You truly dare to attack me? According to the rules of seniority of the five Sects and three Clans, I’m your Master Uncle. Do you actually dare to bully your seniors?!” Fatty slapped his bag of holding to produce a Spirit Stone, which he popped into his mouth. Crunching sounds echoed out as he crushed it into bits. It was quite a ferocious sight.

After crushing the Spirit Stone to pieces, Fatty extended his hand. With a wry smile, the big man produced a jade bottle which he handed over to Fatty. Fatty popped it into his mouth.

“Li Fugui, you are too excessive!” Wang Tengfei ground his teeth. Even as the words left his mouth, Fatty closed his eyes.

“What exists between them is true love,” he said. “Do you understand what true love is? True love exists between your wife Chu Yuyan and another man. I’ve seen it with my own eyes. Why would you possibly interfere with that?!” People around started to laugh, causing Wang Tengfei’s face to grow even more enraged. “If only you understood. Ah, true love. It’s priceless! I truly admire that Fellow Daoist. He’s so skilled. He truly handled things masterfully….” As Fatty went on with his speech, Meng Hao continued to edge backward. However, he wasn’t fast enough. He suddenly noticed that Zhou Daya was staring directly at him, a look of disbelief and astonishment covering his face.

Meng Hao’s heart began to thump. Although he had intentionally set this thing in motion, he had never imagined he would see a scene such as that playing out today. He wanted to hide, but suddenly, Zhou Daya’s raised his voice.

“It’s him!!” he shouted, pointing directly at Meng Hao, seemingly afraid people wouldn’t recognize him. “It’s him! That’s the Cultivator who I saw with Chu Yuyan!!”

Zhou Daya really did live up to his name, which means ‘big mouth.’ Not only did he like to gossip, he also had a very loud voice. His voice rang out clearly, causing everyone’s attention to instantly follow the line of his finger to fall onto Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s face flickered. The surrounding Solitary Sword Sect disciples stared at him in shock and unconsciously edged away from him. Soon, he and Chen Fan stood there alone.

Chen Fan was also gaping numbly at Meng Hao. He recovered his composure quickly, however, in the end, also quickly edged away. He didn’t want any misunderstandings to result from standing next to Meng Hao. If anyone tried to bully Meng Hao, he would leap to assist in an instant; but what was occurring right now was a romantic love scandal….

As he edged backward, Chen Fan’s eyes began to glow brightly. A look of both disbelief and admiration filled them.

As Zhou Daya pointed at Meng Hao, all of the Solitary Sword Sect disciples stared at him, as did the Cultivators from the Wang Clan, the Song Clan and the Blood Demon Sect. Everyone was looking at Meng Hao.

Li Shiqi from the Blood Demon Sect had a strange expression on her face. She had noticed Meng Hao moments ago. At the moment, she snorted, turning her head to ignore him. Wang Youcai stared in shock at Meng Hao.

As for Wang Tengfei, he stood there mutely, glaring at Meng Hao. Veins began to bulge out on his face, and veins of blood appeared in his eyes. He thought back to the Flying Rain-Dragon legacy, to the Reliance Inner Sect training. He thought back to his feelings in the Flying Rain Dragon's cave. His humiliation and rage billowed up to the heavens.

Everything was completely silent. All eyes were on Meng Hao. Of course, in the past days, the rumors about Chu Yuyan being seen with a strange man had been spreading throughout the five great Sects and three great Clans.

It had started in the Golden Frost Sect. Everything about the rumor made sense and was quite vivid. No one knew, and everyone wondered, who the strange man might be. Now here, in front of all these eyes, Meng Hao had been pointed out.

Fatty stared in shock. He stood blankly for a moment, and then rubbed his eyes vigorously. Suddenly, he started to look very excited.

Just as he was about to rush over, a dozen or so colorful beams of light approached from off in the distance. As they whistled down, it was clear that this was the Violet Fate Sect!

Chu Yuyan was not with them, however, there were two people who Meng Hao did recognize. They were none other than Qian Shuihen and Lu Song 1, who were now in the early Foundation Establishment stage.

They flew on either side of a young man with a cool expression. His body radiated the power of late Foundation Establishment, and seemed to occupy a position of great respect amongst the other Violet Fate Sect disciples.

At the same time, ten more beams appeared. This was the Black Sieve Sect. The beautiful Han Bei 2 was among them. She was dressed in men's clothing, but a single glance was enough to see that she was a woman. She was chatting and laughing with a Song Clan member as she flew down to the square.

The arrival of the Violet Fate Sect and Black Sieve Sect would normally cause various members of other Sects to seek out friends and catch up. But a strange atmosphere now filled the air. Most people just glanced momentarily at the new arrivals from the other two Sects.

As soon as Zhou Daya saw more people arriving, he once again cried out, his voice even louder, "It's him! That's the Cultivator I saw with Chu Yuyan. She was putting on his clothes…." In actuality, there is a vast difference between 'wearing his clothes' and 'putting on his clothes.' The Cultivators from the Violet Fate Sect all stopped in their tracks and stared at Meng Hao.

As disciples of the Violet Fate Sect, how could they not be aware of the rumors swirling about regarding Chu Yuyan? As for Qian Shuihen and Lu Song, the instant they caught sight of Meng Hao, their eyes grew wide and they stared in shock. Then their eyes grew hateful.

It had been years since they had seen Meng Hao, but the blow they had received that year was enormous. Even down to this very day, people still talked about what had happened. The events had caused hatred to seep down into their bones. It was the greatest humiliation they had ever experienced in their lives.

Qian Shuihen stared at Meng Hao, and he started breathing heavily. Killing intent began to roil within Lu Song's eyes.

"Dammit, it's you!!"

"So, it's you!!"

The two of them roared, filling the spectators with even more shock. The details of the matter with Chu Yuyan were still not clear, but the intense rage of these two Violet Fate Sect disciples was clearly no joke. They obviously hated Meng Hao down to the marrow of their bones.

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# Chapter 189: All the Enemies Arrive

Meng Hao smiled wryly. The spot he occupied in the square had long since grown empty, making him especially conspicuous. His smile grew more bitter, and he sighed inwardly.

“If I had known things would end up like this,” he thought, “I wouldn’t have let Zhou Daya go…. Ai, are all of my enemies going to appear today…?” He coughed and subconsciously rubbed his nose. He suddenly got the feeling that he’d done a bit too many things over the past few years. Now the moment had arrived in which his crowds of victims were accusing him.

“Damn you, Meng Hao!” howled Qian Shuihen. “I will never forget the matter of the iron spear from that year!” He immediately took a step forward. Next to him, Lu Song’s eyes were red. Throughout the years, the two of them were often derided by fellow Sect members because of the incident with the iron spear. They had often wished to go seek Meng Hao to exact revenge. However, the State of Zhao had disappeared, presumably Meng Hao along with it. They had never imagined that they would encounter him this day. Thoughts of vengeance immediately filled their hearts.

Wang Tengfei also took a step forward, his face filled with murder. “Meng Hao, I already loathed you back in the State of Zhao. You had better provide an explanation about what happened with Chu Yuyan….” Wang Tengfei felt as if he were an object of laughter among the entire current generation of Cultivators of the Southern Domain. It was something he couldn’t accept. He wanted to slay Meng Hao where he stood.

“What a lively scene, Brother Meng,” came a voice from within the Black Sieve Sect disciples. It was Han Bei. “I never imagined I would find you here. So many interesting stories.” She sighed. “Don’t forget the deal you and I made.” She covered her mouth and laughed, winking at Meng Hao. Her words made the audience’s eyes glitter even more brightly.

Meng Hao’s appearance seemed to be provoking the interest of one person after another. As of now, all the people who had never heard of him before were becoming intensely interested in the proceedings.

A buzz of conversation filled the air. One voice rose up from within the Blood Demon Sect. It was Li Shiqi. “Fellow Daoist Meng Hao, you really do have a lot of interesting stories to tell! However, I’m curious about what happened to that annoying hat of yours?” It was hard to tell what she was thinking, but her eyes shone with interest.

Chen Fen stood gaping. He took a deep breath as he gazed at Meng Hao, an indescribable admiration growing in his eyes. Fatty looked at Meng Hao excitedly. It seemed that no matter where Meng Hao went, he would attract attention.

It was the same back in the Reliance Sect as it was right here and now.

“No wonder he’s the Elder Brother!” thought Fatty, taking a deep breath. His admiration for Meng Hao had reached such heights that he wanted to fall to his knees and bow down.

Meng Hao gave a dry cough and continued to smile bitterly. He really did feel a bit guilty. However, before he could respond to anyone, ten beams of light suddenly appeared off in the distance. It was none other than the Li Clan.

As of now, all five great Sects and the two other great Clans had arrived.

In the middle of the Li Clan people was Li Daoyi 1. His arm had long since been replaced by the Li Clan. He was a Dao Child, so he couldn’t marry into the Song Clan. He had obviously not come because of the Song Clan’s search for a husband, but rather for some other reason. However, as soon as the Li Clan people touched down into the square, his eyes fell upon Meng Hao.

As soon as they did, he gaped. Almost immediately, his Cultivation base rippled with power, and the aura of the great circle of late Foundation Establishment filled the square.

“So, you finally appear!!” he said grimly, taking a step toward Meng Hao. Fierce killing intent emanated from his eyes. It was obvious to everyone that there was some big secret between him and Meng Hao that he wasn’t willing to talk about. Of course, their fight in the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament had given birth to enormous enmity that could only be wiped away by death.

To suddenly find Meng Hao here caused Li Daoyi’s killing intent to explode outward.

Everyone else in the square who didn’t know Meng Hao were now clamoring in excitement and shock at what was happening.

“First it was the matter with Chu Yuyan and then Wang Tengfei’s murderous intentions. Then something about the Violet Fate Sect and an iron spear. After that, some agreement between him and Han Bei from the Black Sieve Sect! Next, Li Shiqi from the Blood Demon Sect!! And finally… he’s provoked killing intent from the Dao Child of the Li Clan!!”

“How can this guy have gotten involved in so many situations? He seems to have provoked everybody! How come we’ve never heard of him before?”

“What’s going on…? His name is Meng Hao, huh? It seems like he really has the ability to piss people off….”

“Of the five Sects and three Clans, the only ones who aren’t involved are the Solitary Sword Sect and the Song Clan. He arrived with the Solitary Sword Sect, so he must not have any issues with them. But what about the Song Clan? He’s so good at pissing people off, I wonder if he had any issues with them?”

Amidst the buzz of conversation that filled the square, Fatty let out a roar and charged up to Meng Hao's side, his face filled with excitement.

"Meng Hao, I've missed you to death!" he said. He hugged Meng Hao, tears streaming down his face. Years had passed, and he had grown up quite a bit. He was now much stouter than before.

Meng Hao smiled, although the smile was somewhat bitter. Everything that was happening was actually because of Fatty….

"Meng Hao! You WILL give me an explanation!" Wang Tengfei's face was extremely grim as he stared at Meng Hao. Wang Tengfei felt as if he were wearing an enormous green hat 2, which filled his heart with indescribable humiliation. He took another step toward Meng Hao.

Li Daoyi also took a step forward. "You still haven't provided an explanation for what happened that day. Now that you're here, you have an opportunity to speak."

"Damn you, Meng Hao, we will resolve our enmity this day!" Qian Shuihen and Lu Song both began to walk toward him.

It seemed chaos would break out at any moment. Meng Hao's eyes glittered. Fatty spun and let out a roar.

"Meng Hao is my brother! Who dares to attack him?!" Hearing this, the Golden Frost Sect disciples exchanged glances and then strode over to stand next to Fatty. The big man from before simply shook his head, choosing not to say anything.

Fatty's sudden appearance next to Meng Hao caused Wang Tengfei to frown.

Chen Fan strode forward. "Meng Hao is my little Junior Brother. Fellow Daoists, if you insist on acting this way, then I, Chen Fan, must also take my stand." Suddenly, his flying dagger appeared.

The addition of Chen Fan caused Qian and Lu from the Violet Fate Sect to hesitate.

Han Bei moved forward with a laugh. “Brother Meng, considering our friendship, how could I not join you as well?”

Without a single word, Wang Youcai stood up in the midst of the Blood Demon Sect Cultivators and walked over to stand next to Meng Hao.

Li Shiqi’s cold voice rang out next. “Your hat is incredibly annoying. However, for the sake of my Junior Brother Wang Youcai, the Blood Demon Sect will also stand by you. Let’s see who dares to touch you this day.”

The crowd of people surrounding Meng Hao caused Li Daoyi’s brow to furrow. It was a delicate situation. In actuality, there could not be any killing on this day and place, considering they were in the Song Clan.

Also, he had never imagined Meng Hao would have so many powerful connections. The Golden Frost Sect. The Solitary Sword Sect. The Blood Demon Sect. The Black Sieve Sect. People from all of these Sects supported him.

Wang Tengfei’s eyes shone with a cold light as he glared murderously at Meng Hao. Shock filled his heart. How could he ever have predicted that this former disciple of the Reliance Sect could have accumulated such influence?

There was Chen Fan and Li Fugui. Add to that Han Bei from the Black Sieve Sect and Li Shiqi from the Blood Demon Sect. Who knew why they all supported him, but without uttering a single word, Meng Hao had suddenly made it impossible for anyone to attack him.

Qian Shuihen and Lu Song were suddenly very nervous. They, too, could never have imagined that after all these years, Meng Hao would reappear in such a fashion, with such connections.

The entire square grew silent, and it was at this moment than an impatient voice suddenly could be heard from off in the distance.

“What are you kids up to? What’s riled everyone up? Everybody simmer down! The Song Clan is throwing a feast to search for a husband, why is everyone stirring up trouble?!” The voice belonged to Eccentric Song, who was accompanied by the eccentric members of the other Sects and Clans.

Smiles covered their faces, and they obviously didn’t care about what was happening.

The appearance of the old-timers caused the tension in the square to begin to dissipate. Everyone began to return to their original positions. As they did, Meng Hao lowered his head and began to walk away with Chen Fan. Suddenly, Eccentric Song’s eyes fell upon Meng Hao.

“Hold on!” he said.

Meng Hao froze, sighing inwardly. With a silent, bitter laugh, he turned to face Eccentric Song. His mind spun as he tried to think of a way out of the situation. He placed his hand on his bag of holding. If necessary, he would try to use the good luck charm to escape.

“Kid, why do you look so familiar…?” Eccentric Song’s brow furrowed.

“Elder Song, sir,” cried Lu Song, “this is the person from the State of Zhao with the iron spear!!”

As soon as he heard the word, Eccentric Song’s eyes went wide. He stared at Meng Hao.

“So, it’s you, you little brat!!”

When they heard the words, the surrounding Cultivators gasped. Previously they thought that the Song Clan was the only one Meng Hao hadn’t offended. One and all looked at Meng Hao with admiration in their eyes.

Meng Hao hadn’t managed to offend someone from the junior generation of the Song Clan, but instead, a Nascent Soul eccentric!

Meng Hao smiled, clasping his hands and bowing toward Eccentric Song.

“Meng Hao of the junior generation extends greetings to Master Song of the elder generation. Senior, your Cultivation Base is extraordinary, your demeanor Heavenly in nature. That year, I of the junior generation, was ignorant and foolish. Senior, you have noble character and sterling integrity, I truly hope that on this joyous occasion for the Song Clan, you will not cause difficulties for the junior generation.”

Eccentric Song gave Meng Hao a long, meaningful look. Although he didn’t say anything, sometimes, you can speak volumes without saying a single word. Wang Tengfei’s eyes glittered, and he took another step toward Meng Hao.

“Elder Song,” he said. “There is enmity between I of the junior generation and this person. He humiliated my intended beloved. In the presence of all the various Fellow Daoists, I implore you to permit me to put an end to the enmity this day!”

Meanwhile, in the towering castle in the Song Clan capital city, Song Jia was looking at a glittering screen upon which played out the scene from down below.

A smile covered her face, and it seemed she was paying close attention to Meng Hao’s scholarly figure.

“What an interesting person,” she said with a laugh. “How could he possibly have offended so many people, even Uncle?”

The middle-aged woman standing next to her also laughed, and a warm expression appeared on her face. “Why, have you taken a fancy to him?”

2. As I mentioned in a previous footnote, the green hat is a symbol in Chinese culture which implies you’re being cheated on. More information here

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# Chapter 190: Respected Senior

“No,” said Song Jia quickly, her face reddening a bit. She was innately beautiful, and had a tender personality.

The woman next to her laughed, looking at her lovingly. She didn’t say anything.

Her voice light, Song Jia continued, “I just think he’s interesting. He offended so many people, and yet so many people are willing to stand by his side. Also, he doesn’t really look like a Cultivator. He looks more like a scholar.”

The middle-aged woman laughed again, and her expression grew even more gentle. She lifted her right hand, and a flaming jade slip appeared. It burned into nothing, and suddenly, a slight tremble ran through all of the mountains in the Song Clan. The tremble was so minor that anyone under the Nascent Soul stage wouldn’t notice it. Up in the dark sky, the moon shimmered.

Within the moon, countless magical symbols appeared that seemed to be deducing matters pertaining to both the past and the future. After a long moment, they faded away. It was then that in front of the middle-aged woman, time seemed to move in reverse. The jade slip seemed to un-burn as it reappeared in front of her.

Song Jia watched this happen, not with surprise, but with anticipation.

“Alright,” said the woman, pressing her finger onto the jade slip. “Let me take a look at the past of this person you find so interesting.”

As soon as she pushed down on the jade slip, it projected a screen into the air. On it could be seen a small county, and a boy sitting next to a window. He was reading a scroll by lamplight.

As he read, he slowly shook his head and fanned himself with a feather fan. It was obviously summer.

The boy was none other than Meng Hao.

The screen flickered, and Meng Hao was now wearing a neat, clean scholar’s robe. He walked out of his house and stood up against a nearby wall, looking a bit shifty-eyed. Soon, a sedan emerged from the courtyard opposite him. He craned his neck to look at it, an excited expression on his face. 1

The screen shimmered, and now Meng Hao stood on top of Mount Daqing. He sighed and tossed a gourd bottle down into the river. 2

Next, he was in the Reliance Sect, holding aloft a medicinal pill, face filled with anxiety as he gave the pill away. 3

When Song Jia saw this, she laughed out loud. The middle-aged woman smiled and shook her head.

The next image was of Meng Hao’s shop on the plateau, and his shy, bashful smile as he sold medicinal pills at exorbitant rates 4 There were many images from that time, but they suddenly flashed by quickly, making it difficult to make everything out quickly. The middle-aged woman frowned, seemingly lost in thought.

The next image that Song Jia saw was that of Eccentric Song on the mountaintop and Meng Hao running along with the iron spear. She saw Meng Hao in the city of Cultivators and the deal he made with Lu and Song for the spear. After that were all the bloody events that resulted.

Song Jia couldn’t stop laughing. “This Meng Hao is awful… he’s nothing like a scholar!” She continued to watch, her laughter causing her eyes to look like two crescent moons.

The images again became somewhat blurry. By this time, he was in the Southern Domain. However, in this instant, the jade slip suddenly begun to crumble into pieces. In the blink of an eye, it was covered with cracks. A woman’s cold snort could be heard from very far off in the distance. It filled, not only the room, but the entire Song Clan.

The middle-aged woman’s face filled with shock, and she coughed up a mouthful of blood. She grabbed the astonished Song Jia and staggered backward several paces, a look of disbelief covering her face.

All of the mountains within the Song Clan began to tremble. As they did, the moon in the sky above the Song Clan suddenly exploded with a blinding light. It was a flash that instantly began to tremble and darken, as if it were being forcefully suppressed by someone.

At this same moment, the seemingly endless mountains of the Song Clan continued to tremble and then… one by one, the mountains suddenly sank down an entire inch, as if they were being pushed down by some incredible force.

That inch seemed to be a warning, some demonstration of power by… someone. This person seemed to be saying that if they wished, they could wipe out the entire Song Clan mountain range.

At the same time, all of the Nascent Soul Cultivators began to tremble and spit up blood. Deep within the Song Clan mountains, near the location of their Dao Reserves, a roaring sound rose up. It didn’t disseminate outward, and only certain people could sense it.

In the deepest, most remote location within the Song Clan mountains, was a stone pillar. Atop the pillar was a corpse, or rather, half of a corpse. The bottom half was nowhere to be seen. The corpse’s eyes suddenly snapped opened, whereupon the aura of the peak Dao Seeking stage exploded out. The corpse trembled, as if it couldn’t stand up to the immense power which was bearing down upon the Song Clan.

“Respected Senior, calm your anger. The Song Clan of the Southern Domain is at fault….”

“If you know you are at fault, then correct it,” came the transmitted voice of a woman. She was clearly irritated. “Your Song Clan has the tradition of marrying daughters? I suggest she be a maidservant.”

The corpse hesitated. “Respected senior….”

“What was that? You know, the Song Clan of the Eastern Lands desire this honor but are unable to achieve it. Do you truly dare to refuse me?” As the woman’s voice transmitted out, the entire Song Clan mountains suddenly shook, and sank down three more inches.

Without hesitation, the corpse said, “Respected senior, we shall do as you bid!”

The woman’s voice faded away. At the same moment, back in the capital city, Song Jia’s face was pale white. Next to her, her mother panted, and blood oozed out from her mouth.

“Jia’er, this person cannot be provoked. This person is….” Before she could finish speaking, her body began to shake. It seemed as if Divine Sense were transmitting into her mind. She didn’t continue speaking, and eventually, looked at pale-faced Song Jia, a complex expression on her face.

Everything that had just happened in the Song Clan did not go unnoticed by Meng Hao and everyone else. The ground shaking caused everyone’s faces to flicker, especially the Nascent Soul eccentrics.

Eccentric Song’s body trembled, and he coughed up a mouthful of blood. His body continued to tremble, and he coughed up a second mouthful of blood, then a third. In the end, he coughed up a total of seven mouthfuls of blood. He staggered, his face pale and filled with astonishment.

He was the only one in the entire Song Clan who coughed up seven mouthfuls of blood.

It was at this moment that the illusory image of a woman appeared in the square, although no one could see it. She stood there, invisible to everyone except for the Song Clan’s most powerful Dao Reserve, the peak Dao Seeking corpse. Only he could sense her rippling aura as she arrived at the Song Clan square.

From the moment she appeared, her eyes were riveted on Meng Hao. They were filled with kindness, tender affection, and love.

After a long moment passed, the situation in the square returned to normal. Everyone was shocked, causing a deathly silence to fill the air. The Nascent Soul Cultivators looked around pale faced.

Eccentric Song’s face was deathly white; he was scared nearly witless. He wasn’t sure what had just happened, nor did he know that the entirety of the Song Clan had been shaken just now.

Panting, he wiped the blood from his mouth. Suddenly, his body shook as a voice filled his mind. The voice filled him with veneration; it was none other than the Spirit Severing stage Patriarch of the Song Clan.

It was clearly a transmission of Divine Will from the Spirit Severing Patriarch, who was passing along the orders of the Dao Reserve corpse. All of the Nascent Soul Cultivators of the Song Clan received the same message.

“Meng Hao is not to be provoked!”

Amidst the silence that covered the square, Wang Tengfei’s voice sounded out. “Meng Hao, you don’t have the qualifications to refuse a battle with me today!” He leaped up and began to stride toward Meng Hao, his Cultivation base erupting with power. Power exceeding the early Foundation Establishment stage soared higher and higher. It turned out Wang Tengfei’s Dao Pillars hummed with the energy of the mid Foundation Establishment stage.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he watched Wang Tengfei approach. Wang Tengfei’s right hand lifted up; black tendrils rose up and circulated around his finger. His eyes were calm.

“In the Reliance Sect of the State of Zhao, you stole my belongings and wrested away my position in the Inner Sect. In the Southern Domain, you insulted me. Do you really think you qualify to be the archenemy of Wang Tengfei?” His hair whipped madly around his head and a mysterious black glow began to emanate from his poison finger. You don't deserve to be Wang Tengfei's archenemy. You were an insect back then, and you're still an insect today! Today, you shall be a blood sacrifice to my poison finger!" Wang Tengfei's words echoed throughout the square.

"Are you finished?" said Meng Hao coolly. He strode forward, lifting his right hand and striking it out. The power of his four perfect Dao Pillars congealed into the palm. Not a strand leaked out. A roaring filled the air as he struck toward Wang Tengfei.

As the boom filled the square, the surrounding Cultivators watched, completely focused on what was happening. Only Han Bei and Li Shiqi, as well as Chen Fan, looked with strange expressions toward the blustering Wang Tengfei.

Fatty looked extremely nervous. The large man from the Golden Frost Sect was holding him back, otherwise he would have joined Meng Hao to fight.

Amidst the roaring boom, Wang Tengfei tumbled backward, blood spraying from his mouth. The palm blow just now had actually not been a level strike, but a slap. The sound of the slap rang out as some of Wang Tengfei's teeth shattered. He flopped backward, an expression of shock on his face.

"Impossible…."

Meng Hao strode forward after him, striking with his hand again. A boom sounded out, and more blood sprayed from Wang Tengfei's mouth. This time, the slap struck the other side of his face.

"Impossible!" Wang Tengfei's face was pale, and his eyes filled, not with confusion, but frenzied rage. He was no longer shocked or frightened. His humiliation washed away everything. He stared murderously at Meng Hao and then howled.

At the same time, Wang Xifan began to move forward, as did the frowning old Nascent Soul Cultivator from the Wang Clan.

But then, Eccentric Song’s eyes flickered. A look of discomfort and even disbelief covered his face as he reached out to prevent both of them from doing anything.

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# Chapter 191: Defeat after Defeat!

The Wang Clan Nascent Soul Cultivator turned his head and stared at Eccentric Song. Meng Hao continued to stride toward the retreating Wang Tengfei. He lifted his hand and grabbed Wang Tengfei’s index finger.

“So, this is the finger I decimated that time,” he said coolly. Wang Tengfei’s eyes flashed with hatred, as well as pleasant surprise.

He had developed this poison finger at great cost. He could have re-grown a normal finger, but had instead mastered perseverance and endured the pain necessary to grow a poison finger.

In his estimation, it was a metamorphosis. He had reached this conclusion in a flash of enlightenment; he would take his defeat and transform it into brilliant glory.

The pain had caused him no small amount of torment, but he had suffered through it and created a poison finger which was like a personal precious treasure.

Wang Tengfei knew that all people will endure setbacks in their lives. However, to transform a setback into a treasure can make life truly glorious.

Maybe he was right, but sometimes, fate can be cruel. Today… he ran into Meng Hao.

There were some things that Meng Hao didn’t do intentionally. Like it or not, though, the three-colored Resurrection Lily not only made him immune to all other poisons, it also made his body hyper-toxic.

When Wang Tengfei saw Meng Hao grab his poison finger, he began to laugh. The laugh contained both hatred and carefree cheer. He could just imagine how Meng Hao, in mere moments, would begin to wither up and then transform into a pool of blood.

However, even as his laughter began to ring out, it screeched to a sudden stop. A look of absolute disbelief appeared on his face. His finger disappeared within Meng Hao's hand, and then after the space of a few breaths, a popping sound could be heard. A black mist appeared that seemed to be sentient, it trembled, as if it didn't dare to near Meng Hao.

Meng Hao loosened his grip. Wang Tengfei's entire body shook, and blood sprayed from his mouth. He staggered backward, gazing numbly at the space his index finger had once occupied. He suddenly thought back to the scene from seven or eight years ago, when he had been defeated. He had always thought that he was Chosen, and his opponent was a mere insect. His defeat before had been an accident, and now he had reached Foundation Establishment. His opponent was far beneath him.

But today….

"You're right, you and I aren't archenemies," said Meng Hao indifferently. He had a bit of that same old bashfulness in his expression as he looked at pale-faced Wang Tengfei. "That term is too meaningful. It doesn't suit our relationship." He made no attempt to kill Wang Tengfei. It's not that killing him wasn't worth it, but rather, to kill him in this situation would cause too many complications.

The most important point in the whole thing was that Meng Hao always seemed to end up with the things that belonged to Wang Tengfei. It left him with a strange feeling that suddenly made him even less willing to kill him.

Everything surrounding them was quiet. The invisible woman was gazing tenderly toward Meng Hao. A smile appeared on her face, and when she saw Meng Hao dissolve the poison finger, it transformed into a look of love.

Seeing Meng Hao's shy smile, the woman laughed and shook her head. The loving look grew even stronger.

“This kid has always been a player….” the woman said quietly. “He just can’t help but make girls like him.” She glanced at Han Bei and then Li Shiqi, as if she were sizing them up as potential daughters-in-law.

“The Han Clan bloodline… not up to standard. She won’t do. As for this other one… she seems interesting. She’s powerful enough, at least.”

Smiling shyly, Meng Hao returned to his place beside Chen Fan. Fatty ran over, giving Meng Hao a wink.

His face pale, Wang Tengfei wordlessly returned to his spot next to Wang Xifan. He laughed bitterly, seemingly having lost any will to fight. Wang Xifan said nothing. He looked over at Meng Hao, his eyes radiating killing intent.

Meng Hao looked up, his eyes locking onto Wang Xifan. When their gazes met, Meng Hao thought back to that year when he sat on top of the East Mountain in the Reliance Sect. Today, however, he was not someone who Wang Xifan could kill with a single glance.

“I wonder if I’ll be able to fight against the Core Formation stage after I form my ninth Perfect Dao Pillar!?” He had been wondering this for some while. After seeing the incredible power of his Perfect Dao Pillars, it caused him to feel even more anticipation for the Perfect Core. In addition, he truly wanted to know if he could battle against the Core Formation stage while he was still in Foundation Establishment!

He wasn’t sure. But as of this day, Wang Xifan was someone who Meng Hao decided must be killed.

Seeing the coldness in Meng Hao’s eyes, Wang Xifan’s killing intent grew more intense. He had the feeling that if he didn’t kill Meng Hao soon, he might lose his chance to do so.

“This Meng Hao is progressing too rapidly….” Wang Xifan had to admit he had overlooked Meng Hao.

It was at this time that the sound of bells rang out, filling the capital city. Suddenly, multicolored beams of light filled the sky. The entire Song Clan passed from night into morning.

In the outside world, it was now night. As the change occurred, the spiritual energy within the Song Clan suddenly grew thicker. However, other than the members of the Song Clan, no one was able to absorb it through breathing exercises. Except for… Meng Hao. His eyes glittered. He actually didn’t need to do anything to absorb the spiritual energy; it naturally drifted into his body strand by strand, slowly replenishing his four Perfect Dao Pillars. In addition to restoring his nearly empty four Dao Pillars, it was causing the outline of his fifth Dao Pillar to appear.

Of course, it wouldn’t be possible to completely solidify the fifth Dao Pillar. That couldn’t happen in a short amount of time. Perhaps if he stayed in the Song Clan for a long period of time, it would.

The bells rang out, and the moon and sun alternated their positions. As day and night mixed together, a colorful glow appeared in the air. Suddenly, three figures emerged from the glowing light.

As this happened, numerous members of the Song Clan looked up at the multicolored glow with looks of veneration. This in turn caused the Cultivators from the other Sects and Clans to look up as well.

The three figures gradually grew distinct. They seemed to be solidifying out of nothing. One was an old man who wore white robes. His smiling face did not reveal the slightest bit of panic because of the events which had just occurred in the Song Clan.

Next to the old man were two middle-aged men. They were handsome, and had profound Cultivation bases.

The old man said, “I am so grateful that all of you could join the Song Clan in our search for a son-in-law! Please, let’s begin!” He laughed heartily, and then waved his right hand. The entire square trembled, and countless banquet tables appeared out of thin air. Simultaneously, time seemed to swirl about them, and suddenly they were no longer in the square or even the Song Clan, but floating somewhere up in the sky.

They were surrounded by clouds, and everything looked celestial in nature. Maidservants appeared, their features indistinct, but their figures graceful. They danced and flew about as they reverently placed alcohol and Spirit Fruits onto the tables.

The sound of wind, flowing waters, and birdcalls filled the air. It all seemed extremely graceful and elegant. Neither Meng Hao nor any of the other Foundation Establishment Cultivators had ever seen anything like this before. Some people looked around, others stared at the maidservants.

The Nascent Soul Cultivators who led the various Sects and Clans broke out in smiles and words of admiration. “Elder Song Tian’s Cultivation base is profound 1. This cosmic time shifting truly is of the highest degree of perfection.”

The old man was none other than Patriarch Song Tian of the Song Clan. According to the rumors, he had long since reached the Spirit Severing stage. However, it was really impossible for anyone to tell for sure, or even ascertain any clues.

Song Tian laughed and then sat down cross-legged, followed by the two middle-aged men who accompanied him.

The Wang Clan Nascent Soul Cultivator flicked his sleeve. Grim faced, he sat down next to Song Tian, glaring at Eccentric Song. Obviously, he was still brooding at the fact that he had been obstructed by Eccentric Song earlier.

Meng Hao sat at one of the banquet tables next to Fatty. Now that Meng Hao was here, Fatty refused to sit with the Golden Frost Sect, instead demanding to sit next to Meng Hao. He chatted energetically about his experiences in the Golden Frost Sect. He seemed exactly the same as he had been back in the Reliance Sect. Occasionally he would pull out a Spirit Stone and crunch it to pieces between his teeth.

Suddenly, Fatty pulled out what was clearly an extraordinary flying sword. It glittered brightly as he began to use it to grind his teeth.

“One of my friends in the Sect gave me this sword to protect myself,” he said. “But when I grind my teeth with it, it doesn’t feel very good. If you want it, it’s yours.” He handed the sword toward Meng Hao.

It just so happened to be covered with Fatty’s saliva….

Meng Hao hesitated. Next to Fatty, Zhou Daya’s eyes went wide. “Little Patriarch,” he said, “that sword is a magical Legacy weapon of the Nineteenth Bloodline….”

“So annoying! A magical weapon is a magical weapon. Ah, never mind. I guess I can’t give this one to you. But I have some other things.” He pulled out another large magical weapon, whose bright glow instantly attracted quite a bit of attention.

“Do you like this one?” said Fatty, looking pleased. His expression caused Meng Hao to smile.

Chen Fan sighed, looking enviously at Fatty. He knew how important Fatty was to the Golden Frost Sect. He could only shake his head.

Han Bei drifted over in her men’s clothing. She smiled lightly at Fatty.

“Fellow Daoist Li, would you mind scooting aside? I’d really like to sit here.”

Fatty stared at Han Bei and then looked at Meng Hao. Lowering his voice, he said, “Meng Hao, this chick has pretty good skin. Between her and Chu Yuyan, who do you think is better?”

Meng Hao lifted his glass to his lips and took a sip of alcohol, then cleared his throat.

Fatty laughed loudly, then moved over to make room for Han Bei. She sat down, clearly not offended at all by Fatty. She looked at Meng Hao, blinked, and then laughed.

She slid a bit closer to him, and then gently whispered into his ear, “Brother Meng, how exactly are you going to thank me for the matter regarding Xu Qing?”

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1. Song Tian’s name in Chinese is sòng tiān – Song is a common family name. Tian means “heaven” or “day”

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 192: Games with Han Bei

“Fellow Daoist Han, what exactly do you mean?” replied Meng Hao, his expression the same as ever. Despite his calm exterior, his heart trembled. He turned to look at Han Bei, and their eyes met. She was clearly watching him closely, feeling him out.

If Meng Hao’s expression changed even the slightest, Han Bei would noticed. That, of course, was why she had moved so close to him.

Han Bei was a schemer, which Meng Hao had come to understand very clearly in the Black Sieve Sect’s Blessed Land. In fact, he hadn’t encountered anyone among his peers who could come close to her in terms of plotting.

“Brother Meng,” she said with a charming smile, “there’s no need to ask questions you already know the answer to. Junior Sister Xu was a member of the Reliance Sect in the State of Zhao, and so were you.” Coupled with her men’s clothing, her sweet tone made her even more alluring.

“Oh?” replied Meng Hao, looking at her with a vague smile.

His expression caused her to start momentarily. Then she frowned, and she suddenly began to feel nervous at heart.

“Brother Meng, it was for your sake that I helped out Junior Sister Xu on multiple occasions. Were it not for my interference, she would have fallen under a lot of suspicion. Thankfully, I have a lot of influence in the Sect, so she wasn’t implicated when you took Ultimate Vexation.” She smiled. “So, how do you plan to repay me?”

Her smile was beautiful, but her eyes flickered with craftiness. Despite her charming appearance, Meng Hao knew the profound depth of her scheming nature, which was impossible to tell from her expression. He would never forget how she had repeatedly called out to her "Xie, dear" that day, only to then exterminate him in an instant. The scene played out in Meng Hao's mind.

She leaned a bit closer to Meng Hao. From the perspective of anyone looking at them, it would definitely seem they were on quite intimate terms.

"Fellow Daoist Han," he said coolly, "aren't you worried about being seen so close to me? What if the Black Sieve Sect starts to suspect something? I imagine that they're looking for me right now. After today, they'll definitely send people after me." His words seemed casual, but he was in fact attempting to feel her out.

"Brother Meng, you can just directly ask me what you want to know. There's no need to try to feel me out." She chuckled, looking at him. She breathed out slowly, and her breath brushed across him, carrying with it the aroma of orchids. Meng Hao frowned and edged away from her a bit.

Seeing him move away, Han Bei smiled thoughtfully. She moved closer to him yet again. A delicate fragrance wafted off of her.

Meng Hao frowned, and edged away even further. Han Bei let out a soft laugh that carried a bit of derision with it.

"The Black Sieve Sect is indeed looking for you. Don't worry, though. The other Sects don't have any idea. The search for you is being done in secret. You do need to be careful though…." She smiled and, finally seeming to think she was a bit too close, to Meng Hao, moved a bit further away. Suddenly, Meng Hao's hand snaked out and wrapped around her supple waist. He pulled her close to him.

"How exactly did you want me to thank you?" he said. "You tell me." He was so close to her that she could feel him breathing. They looked into each other's eyes, and though their expressions both seemed warm, they were clearly locked in a combat of scheming.

Han Bei suddenly looked a bit flustered. She had never anticipated that Meng Hao would do something like this. She recovered her composure quickly, however, and then her eyes shined with an unruly beauty.

“It’s simple,” she said gently. “Give me the jade page you took from within the square cauldron. I want the entire thing. That’s all.” Her body suddenly twisted imperceptibly, and she pulled away from Meng Hao and stood up.

“Brother Meng, think about it carefully,” she said with a smile.

Meng Hao looked back at her with a vague smile. He didn’t say anything, but after a moment lifted his hand to his bag of holding to produce a jade slip. He tossed it toward her.

She frowned. This was just an ordinary jade slip, not the jade page that she wanted. However, she also knew that Meng Hao was deeply skilled in scheming, and wasn’t someone she could easily trifle with. She accepted the jade slip, scanning it with Spiritual Sense. A strange expression flickered across her face before it returned to normal. She gave Meng Hao a deep look, and then a wide smile once again appeared on her face. She nodded, then turned and headed back toward where the Black Sieve Sect was seated.

Meng Hao lifted his glass and took a sip of alcohol. The only thing on the jade slip was an image of her killing Xie Jie, which Meng Hao had secretly recorded that day.

Actually, even if Han Bei hadn’t come looking for him, he would have thought of a way to get in touch with her. He had prepared the jade slip as a way to get information, and also as a bit of insurance.

Fatty watched Han Bei leave, then started peppering Meng Hao with questions. Chen Fan looked at Meng Hao admiringly. He suddenly realized that considering his Junior Brothers skills, there was no need to attempt to arrange a marriage for him.

Some time passed. After a while, the sound of bells rang out, and the multicolored glow appeared once again. From within its midst emerged two people, one a man, the other a woman. The man was handsome, tall and slender, with eyes like lightning. He wore a white robe and had long black hair that gave him a sort of demonic beauty. He smiled toward everyone and raised clasped hands in greeting.

“It’s the Song Clan Dao Child, Song Yunshu!!” 1

“Song Yunshu has an extraordinary Cultivation base. As the Dao Child of the Song Clan, he is the number one figure amongst their Foundation Establishment experts….”

“The girl next to him is Song Jia. She’s the girl the Song Clan is finding a husband for.”

Meng Hao looked up, his gaze sweeping across the man and woman as they walked out from the multi-colored glow. Song Jia was petite and delicate. She had long hair and clear, fair skin. She exuded a gentle femininity, and had beautiful, bright eyes. Her eyes shone, not with the scheming of Han Bei, the admonishment of Li Shiqi, or the coldness of Xu Qing. Her eyes shone with gentleness.

Anyone who looked at Song Jia would be able to sense her purity and gentleness. She seemed like the type of girl who would never lose her temper.

She looked out at the crowd. The instant Meng Hao looked in her direction, their gazes locked for a moment.

Song Tian, who sat in the very front, laughed and called out, “The hour has arrived! From generation to generation, the Song Clan has practiced Cultivation without excessive formalities. We prefer simplicity. Heroes and talented individuals of the various Sects and Clans, welcome to the Song Clan. With the exception of those here to observe, all of you are here for the same reason. I won’t waste time with further explanations.” Even as his voice echoed out, he waved his right hand, and the clouds up ahead began to churn. In the blink of an eye, a massive vortex appeared, beyond which a strange world could be seen.

Within this world was a vast sea, in the middle of which was an enormous tree that rose up into the sky. The colossal tree was taller than even a mountain.

Thick vines wrapped around its trunk, snaking up with it toward the heavens.

The trunk was enormously large. At its top, limbs stretched out to form a shape almost like a mushroom. Vines hung down, some of them even reaching down into the sea. A wild wind whipped across the waters, giving rise to seething waves.

Up above in the sky, black clouds billowed, and lightning crashed. The sound of thunder echoed out.

The banquet of Cultivators was actually located in the clouds above this world.

With a laugh, Song Tian said, “At the top of this tree is the Cubic Pearl. Whoever is the first to acquire the pearl, will be the newest son-in-law of this generation of the Song Clan!” He looked out across the crowd, and then at Song Jia. His eyes glowed with the love of an elder for a junior. Then, his gaze fell upon Meng Hao. Just as quickly, he looked away.

Eccentric Song hadn’t spoken during this entire time. It was impossible to tell what he was thinking.

Han Bei didn’t move, but the Black Sieve Sect disciples who surrounded her seemed itching to go. They had come to the Song Clan for the sole purpose of winning a place as a son-in-law of the Song Clan. Success would mean instant benefit, not for the Sect, but for themselves.

It was hard to say who was first. Multiple figures leaped up and flew toward the cloud vortex and the sea below.

Li Daoyi didn’t make a move. As a Dao Child, he had come only to observe. He obviously couldn’t marry into the Song Clan. The rest of the Li

Clansmen around him, though, were different. One by one, they flew toward the vortex.

Wang Tengfei sat there thoughtfully, hesitating. Wang Xifan held out a hand to bar his way. However, he had long since made his decision. He strode forward and then transformed into a colorful beam that shot toward the vortex.

His participation was different from that of the others. Looks of astonishment appeared on the faces of the Violet Fate Sect disciples, especially their Nascent Soul Cultivator. His eyes flickered. Next to him, the Wang Clan Nascent Soul Cultivator frowned.

Fatty gave a dry cough and looked at Meng Hao. Then, he flew up into the air. His Cultivation base wasn’t at the Foundation Establishment stage yet, but he had a host of magical items. The rest of the Golden Frost Sect Cultivators flew up with him. Together, they charged toward the vortex.

As for Chen Fan and the others from the Solitary Sword Sect, they flew up one after another. So did the disciples of the Blood Demon Sect, including Wang Youcai. Li Shiqi sat there, her expression cool.

Meng Hao looked through the cloud vortex at the sprawling sea and the massive tree. His eyes narrowed, and he sat there thoughtfully for a moment. Then he stood, strode forward, and shot toward the vortex.

The invisible woman was still there. She watched Meng Hao disappearing into vortex. The tender love in her eyes grew stronger. Finally, she sighed.

“You must walk your path alone. Perhaps one day, you will find your way to us, and then you’ll understand everything…. If you can’t make it, then mother will wait for you to be reincarnated in the yellow springs of the underworld.” Her voice was soft as she looked at Meng Hao. She closed her eyes, turned, and then disappeared. It was as if she had never been there to begin with.

Monstrous waves rolled across the surface of the sea, propelled by the screaming wind. It threatened to blow away all of the approaching

Cultivators, making it incredibly difficult to even reach the gigantic tree.

Compared to the tree, they were like crickets or ants, tiny to the extreme.

Meng Hao looked down at the waters and his eyes narrowed. Beneath the massive waves, dark shadows could be seen swimming to and fro. A sense of danger welled up within him.

“The Song Clan’s search for a son-in-law is a trial by fire,” said the Song Clan Patriarch. “We don’t want a bloody spectacle. If anyone feels the danger has become too extreme, you can forfeit with a single word and be instantly teleported out.” His words echoed out across the sea. At the sound of his words the wind suddenly lessened, as if it didn’t dare to interfere.

1. Song Yunshu’s name in Chinese is sòng yún shū – Song, of course, is a family name. Yun means “cloud.” Shu means “book”

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 193: The Flower Blooms at Dawn!

Above the sea and the enormous tree, was the endlessly roiling cloud vortex. Above the cloud vortex was the banquet set by the Song Clan in search of a son-in-law.

Currently the Song Clan Patriarch’s voice was ringing out across the sea, and the invisible woman had vanished. Deep within the recesses of the Song Clan mountains was where their Dao Reserves were located.

The corpse, composed of half a body, emitted a mysterious glow from its eyes. Hesitation flickered within the glow.

“Just… just who was she? She seems to have the spirit of an Immortal, but yet is not qualified to be one…. She was looking toward that young man Meng Hao with deep love and affection. However, the object of her gaze was not Meng Hao, but… that Resurrection Lily inside of him!

“She said that he would come before them, and would understand everything. Why did those simple words cause my hair to stand on end….” The old man’s eyes emanated an archaic light, and he sank into thoughtfulness. “She said that if he failed, she would wait for him to be reincarnated in the yellow springs of the underworld. How very logical. It seems she’s accustomed to such things…. This is not something a Cultivator can do. There is no reincarnation in Cultivation. For a Cultivator to attempt to reincarnate is useless. Otherwise, why would the Rebirth Cave have appeared?

“Rebirth is possible, which means the ability to live another life. However, there is no such thing as reincarnation. In terms of reincarnation, this is only possible for… the legendary Resurrection Lily! The Resurrection Lily merges with a person as a form of reincarnation. This is why it's called a Resurrection Lily! Once the flower merges with a person, the person disappears, but the flower remains. However, things are never so absolute in this world. If the Resurrection Lily were to be tamed and consumed, Seven Colored Immortal Ascension is possible!"

This Song Clan Patriarch who had just recently revealed himself to the rest of the Song Clan suddenly flew up into the air. His eyes glittered as the indistinct image of the lower half of his body appeared. His hair whipped around his head as he kneeled atop the pillar.

"Immortal, your origin is full of mystery. The Song Clan has watched over the Southern Domain for generation after generation. Immortal, I beg you to clear up my confusion!" He bit down on his tongue and spit up some blood from his heart. The blood flew out and instantly disappeared. However, the Sun-Moon treasure in the sky above the Song Clan suddenly flickered, and a glow appeared that no outsider would be able to notice. It shot down through the mountains until it was directly in front of the old man.

It transformed into a partially transparent figure. It was impossible to tell whether it was male or female. It was blurry as if it were both there, and not there….

When the old corpse caught sight of the figure, an expression of veneration appeared on his face. He knew that this was the Spirit of the Clan treasure. This Spirit… was also an ancient Patriarch of the Song Clan. According to legend, after achieving Immortality, he had left behind a fragment of his Spirit here.

The figure lifted its hand and gently tapped the top of the old man's head.

The man's body trembled, and suddenly his eyes shone with disbelief. He looked up and watched as the illusory figure slowly disappeared. It was as if it had never been there.

The old corpse took a deep breath. "The flower blooms at dawn, and achieves Immortality on the day of vicissitude. The mother of the

Resurrection Lily… the Dawn Immortal…. 1 This Meng Hao is too dangerous….” He was silent in thought for a moment. However, he gave no orders, nor did he do anything to reverse the words he had been forced to transmit earlier by the woman.

Meanwhile, in the roaring ocean beneath the cloud vortex, the wind screamed. The Cultivators who had entered this place numbered in the dozens. They circled the region of the enormous tree.

Whoever could break through the massive winds and actually reach the tree itself, would snatch the first place position in the race.

To be able to earn a place within the Song Clan would earn the right to practice Cultivation within the profound Clan regions. Almost all of the Cultivators present thirsted for such an opportunity. That was why they were here, and that was what they were fighting for.

Meng Hao, on the other hand, was not here for any supposed chance to marry into the Song Clan. Although this place was incredibly suitable for Cultivation, he wasn’t the type to be inclined to depend on others. Unless he had an important purpose, he preferred to be like the sea and the sky, free to roam as he wished, alone.

For a man to roam under the heavens, enjoy the scenery, observe the beauty of the earth and the animals… that was what life meant to Meng Hao. His eyes glittered as he looked up at the massive tree in the distance. At its vast top existed a pearl.

The others didn’t value the pearl itself, but rather, what it represented. Only Meng Hao cared about the former! Were it not for the pearl, Meng Hao wouldn’t even be here.

“I hope that pearl can dispel my poison. If it can, I won’t have to go through all the trouble of infiltrating the Violet Fate Sect.”

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, and his heart trembled as he shot forward. He narrowed his eyes and stopped flying for a moment.

“So, I can absorb spiritual energy in this place too. Furthermore, it’s even more dense here than outside. What big secret does the Song Clan have? How come the spiritual energy here is like that in the Blood Immortal Legacy zone? Why can I absorb it?” His eyes filled with thought, he once again shot forward at high speed. At the same time, he rotated his Cultivation base. His four Perfect Dao Pillars hummed, and his body became like a black hole. Immediately, the spiritual energy in the area began to rush toward him.

Meng Hao didn’t suck it in with unbridled speed, but cautiously, gradually.

Off in the distance, Wang Tengfei’s face was grim, his heart filled with bitterness and even a bit of insanity. Ever since he was young, he had been Chosen. Because of the blood of the Flying Rain Dragon which had fallen from the heavens, his path had been set as he grew up. It seemed he always had the same type of good fortune.

However… thanks to his brother Wang Lihai, he hadn’t been able to become a Dao Child of the Wang Clan. All the focus gradually drifted further and further away from him. In fact, for his entire childhood, he had lived within the shadow of his brother.

He wanted to resist, to fight back. He wanted to exceed his brother. He wanted to prove that he was worthy to be Dao Child of the Wang Clan. Because of that, he had left the Clan and gone to the State of Zhao in search of the Flawless Foundation.

He knew that if he stayed in the Wang Clan, it would be difficult to rise to prominence.

Filled with idealism and aspiration, he went to the State of Zhao to find the Flawless Foundation and the legacy of the Flying Rain-Dragon. His plan was to return from the State of Zhao and then challenge his brother to battle.

However, everything had been ruined by Meng Hao. He had been defeated. Utterly and thoroughly. But he refused to give up. Thanks to Wang Xifan’s encouragement, and the support of Chu Yuyan, he had emerged from the shadows with his poison finger.

In fact, it was only with the help of Chu Yuyan that he had achieved the Cracked Foundation that he had. When he had witnessed his brother die in the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament, it had suddenly felt as if the future were wide open. His extreme misfortune would finally give birth to a meteoric rise.

At that time, he believed that Wang Tengfei's life would finally be restored.

Except… subsequent events caught him completely unawares. To his astonishment, he found that Wang Lihai was not dead. The Wang Lihai that died in the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament was in fact a Dao Clone created by a Wang Clan patriarch.

Subsequently, the rumours of Chu Yuyan and the strange man spread like wildfire. It was something he simply could not tolerate. Yet even more unbelievable was how when he asked Chu Yuyan about it, she wouldn't respond.

It would be bad enough if that were all that he suffered. He could grit his teeth and endure. However, it was here in the Song Clan that he discovered the man who had been seen with Chu Yuyan was actually Meng Hao!

That had driven him crazy. He had gone all out in order to kill Meng Hao. However, that battle became the straw that broke the camel's back. That straw, that crushing defeat at the hands of Meng Hao, caused Wang Tengfei to laugh bitterly. His thinking, his temperament, his everything, all twisted and changed in that moment.

It pushed him toward the edge of insanity.

"I can do without the Wang Clan," he thought, his eyes filled with veins of blood, "and I can also cut off Chu Yuyan. I, Wang Tengfei, will tread my own path. I will take everything away from Meng Hao. I will snatch it all back!!" His body trembled with crazed fervor as he shot through the wind toward the tree.

Fatty plugged his nose against the wind as he floated in mid-air. Seven or eight Golden Frost Sect disciples formed a protective ring around him.

“The Sect Lord prohibited me from marrying into the Song Clan. But, I figured I would give it a shot anyway,” he said. He popped a Spirit Stone into his mouth and crunched it to pieces.

The surrounding Golden Frost Sect disciples could only smile bitterly.

“Little Patriarch, you really shouldn’t be doing this. Senior, what if you go berserk and then somehow become a son-in-law of the Song Clan? When we returned to the Sect, our punishment would be horrific….”

“That’s right, Little Patriarch, think things over again… Think things over again….”

Fatty stared at them with wide-eyed, his expression one of disbelief. “But I’m already here,” he said.

“Little Patriarch,” said Zhou Daya hurriedly, “don’t you know about all those Junior Sisters back in the Sect who have eyes for you? Plus, you have several official beloved assigned to you by the Sect Leader. They’re all waiting for you….” He understood Fatty the most, and as soon as the words were out of his mouth, Fatty took a deep breath.

“Alright, forget it. Let’s just go along to watch the fun.”

At the same time as the Golden Frost Sect disciples were trying to dissuade Fatty from participating, off in the distance, Wang Youcai floated in mid-air looking thoughtful. A strange aura circulated around his body. He appeared to be around seventeen or eighteen years old, but also emanated an extremely anti-social air. He gazed toward the enormous tree, lost in thought.

He looked at Fatty, and then Meng Hao. Whenever Meng Hao looked back at him, however, he would avert his eyes.

Whatever had happened between him and Dong Hu, it seemed would remain a secret that only the two of them could understand. 2

The mournful, screaming wind whipped the sea into madness. The dark shadows which swam back and forth in its depths made this whole place seem incredibly awe-inspiring. Amidst the howling wind, everyone surged forward. The wind blasted against their faces as they shot toward the enormous tree.

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# Chapter 194: Will of the World Tree 1

It was impossible to fly very high in this place, because the wind speed increased with altitude. Meng Hao saw one Black Sieve Sect disciple who tried to fly up directly toward the top of the tree. Before he got too high, he screamed, and his body disappeared into a haze of blood and flesh.

The wind continued to pick up. It seemed as if it were filled with sharp blades, as well as a hard-to-describe pressure that made the three thousand meter area around the tree seem like a wall.

When Meng Hao entered the area, he felt the intense pressure pushing against him. The closer he got to the tree, the thicker the spiritual energy got. Of course, he could absorb it, and the closer he got, the more quickly he did so. His eyes shone brightly.

“Moving forward must be very difficult for everyone else, but for me, this place is like a holy land of Cultivation!” He looked up at the enormous tree in front of him, which stretched thousands of meters up into the sky. “Just exactly… what kind of tree is this?” He could sense that the spiritual energy in the place was not the spiritual energy of Heaven and Earth, but rather, produced by the gigantic tree.

As all the Cultivators struggled their way toward the tree, up above the clouds in the sky, the members of the five Sects and three Clans watched on through the cloud vortex, eyes glittering.

They could see everything quite clearly.

Song Tian smiled. “Of all the heroes and Chosen of the various Sects and Clans that have come today, I wonder who will be the first to reach the tree?” The Nascent Soul eccentrics from the Sects and Clans all smiled.

“I’m afraid it’s difficult to say. I never imagined that that Song Clan’s search for a son-in-law would involve this treasured painting….”

“This tree must have been summoned by a will shard from the ancient World Tree. It was clearly painted by the ancient Daoist Grandmaster Shui Dongliu 2 when he gained enlightenment at the legendary location in which the World Tree destroyed itself. It is said that with sufficient enlightenment, the tree itself can be summoned. This is truly a precious treasure capable of summoning that which is ancient.”

Han Bei sat off to the side, observing the Nascent Soul Cultivators and their discussion. She looked for a moment at Meng Hao in the cloud vortex. Her face was calm, giving not even the slightest clue as to what she was thinking.

Li Shiqi stared at the tree created by the will shard of the World Tree, lost in thought.

The Nascent Soul Cultivator from the Black Sieve Sect was a middle-aged man. “The World Tree’s will shard is capable of releasing the legendary ancient Heaven-replacing spiritual energy,” he said. “Unfortunately, it is useless to Cultivators, and will only be an obstacle to them. However, with a suitable Cultivation base, and sufficient enlightenment, the World Tree could be placed in that world. What a truly precious treasure! Eventually, it could be possible for this treasure to help these disciples make a breakthrough in their Cultivation base.” As he gazed at the cloud vortex, his gaze lingered on Meng Hao.

He had noticed Meng Hao some time ago, of course, but had maintained his silence and done nothing.

“This tree is indeed a will shard of the World Tree. The painting is entitled Ancient Will of the World Tree. It was gifted to me by the Eighth Sea Lord of the Milky Way Sea when I was one thousand years old. I brought it out today for the purpose of helping these members of the younger generation gain enlightenment of ancient times, as well as to benefit all of you. This painting will not belong to me much longer.” Song Tian laughed, shaking his head. “I intend to give this painting as a gift to whoever is the next son-in-law of this generation of the Song Clan.”

This caused the other Nascent Soul Cultivators to stare wordlessly at the cloud vortex, their eyes shining brightly.

Suddenly, Eccentric Song, who sat several places down, laughed and said, “Patriarch, would it be appropriate for me to have a little wager with these Fellow Daoists in regards to who will reach the tree first?”

Elder Fan from the Solitary Sword Sect laughed heartily. He took a swig of alcohol and jeeringly said, “All of us will naturally bet on our own Sect’s disciples. Elder Song, who will you bet on?”

“I bet on HIM!” said Eccentric Song, lifting his arm and pointing toward the cloud vortex at…

Meng Hao!

All of the Nascent Soul Cultivators followed the line created by Eccentric Song’s fingers to look at Meng Hao. The eyes of the Nascent Soul Cultivator from the Black Sieve Sect sparkled.

The Wang Clan Nascent Soul Cultivator frowned.

Elder Fan from the Solitary Sword Sect laughed and gave Eccentric Song a meaningful look.

“Excellent, what are the stakes?” said the Nascent Soul Cultivator from the Blood Demon Sect, a withered old woman with a full head of silver hair. Her voice was raspy, like bones rubbing together. She smiled hypocritically.

“I put up this Soul Fruit!” he said. He flicked his sleeve and pressed his fingers down onto his forehead. After the space of a few breaths, the illusory image of a small, cross-legged figure emerged.

In the blink of an eye, the small figure coalesced into an object that looked like a Spirit Fruit. It emitted a delicate fragrance.

This was none other than a Soul Fruit, something that Nascent Soul Cultivators could congeal into being from their Nascent Soul, and could compare to heavenly materials and earthly treasures. Heaven and earth could produce Spirit Fruits, but to Nascent Soul Cultivators, their bodies were their own Heaven and Earth, and could naturally produce such fruits.

Soul Fruits are like good fortune from Heaven and Earth, and are the most precious treasures of Nascent Soul Cultivators.

Soul Fruits from others have replenishing powers, and to Nascent Soul Cultivators, are the most optimal source of healing and restoration.

Hearing Eccentric Song's words caused thoughtful expressions to appear on the faces of the other Nascent Soul Cultivators. Not much time passed before all of them coalesced Soul Fruits of their own. Soon, eight of them hovered together in mid-air.

Eight Soul Fruits. To any Nascent Soul Cultivator, such stakes would be incredibly tempting. All of the Cultivators pretended not to be moved, but inwardly, they shook with excitement. They gazed through the cloud vortex at the various disciples.

Song Tian smiled and did nothing to prevent the proceedings. Of the two men sitting next to him, one was meditating with eyes closed, the other was closely watching the Cultivators in the cloud vortex, his face grim.

The Song Clan Dao Child, Song Yunshu sat calmly near Patriarch Song Tian. He said nothing, just smiled. Within his eyes flickered an intense light.

Eccentric Song seemed enlivened. His eyes shone as he gazed at Meng Hao in the cloud vortex.

"Alright, boy," he thought, "I want to see the same skills you used that day in the State of Zhao. If you win, I'll gift you with one of these Soul Fruits as a reward.” Because of what had happened in the State of Zhao, as well as various rumors he had heard in the Song Clan, Eccentric Song keenly anticipated Meng Hao’s performance.

As the people above placed their bets, the dozens of Cultivators down by the enormous tree continued to forge ahead. Because of the pressure pushing against them, they couldn’t move very quickly. But they continued forward nonetheless.

At the moment, the fastest of the group was Wang Tengfei. His eyes were red, and he moved forward recklessly. To him this was his only chance. If he joined the Song Clan, then he could start everything anew, and begin a new rise to prominence.

“Chu Yuyan, you slut. And you, Meng Hao! Just wait for me!” He ground his teeth as he pushed forward a few dozen meters.

After Wang Tengfei was Wang Youcai, who approached quietly. Behind him was a group of Cultivators including Chen Fan, who had taken the lead among them.

Fatty, with his entourage of protectors, moved along neither quickly nor slowly.

Meng Hao was obviously a bit behind. However, his expression was calm as he proceeded forward. Every so often, he would pause and cautiously suck in a bit of the thick spiritual energy around him.

Soon, an hour had passed. Wang Tengfei was only about thirty meters from the tree. Wang Youcai was roughly sixty meters away. Everyone else was about three hundred meters or closer. Up above in the clouds, Eccentric Song was getting nervous. Around him, the other Nascent Soul Cultivators began to smile.

Three hundred meters away, Meng Hao took a deep breath. He had been carefully absorbing spiritual energy the entire way. The effect was the same as consuming a handful of Sieve Earth Pills. Despite his caution, he was able to absorb more and more spiritual energy. Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly glittered.

“This is a rare opportunity,” he thought. “I might as well absorb all of it!” Determination filling his eyes he began to move forward. In that instant, a tremor ran through his body as he ceased to repress his four Perfect Dao Pillars. They began to rotate, and a buzzing sound echoed out within him. A massive vortex appeared around him.

The vortex instantly caused the surrounding spiritual energy to shoot toward him.

The water beneath him was whipped into a fury, and Meng Hao’s very body seemed to distort and grow blurry. Mysterious spiritual energy screamed into him, and his speed suddenly increased dramatically.

It wasn’t that he was aiming to increase his speed. However, as he moved forward, the spiritual energy grew more and more abundant. In the blink of an eye, he was not three hundred meters away from the tree, but two hundred fifty, then two hundred….

Meng Hao’s Cultivation base was gradually increasing. The outline of his fifth Dao Pillar was now completely visible and rapidly congealing.

Meng Hao started to get excited. He took a deep breath and moved forward even faster. Considering he had decided to recklessly absorb the spiritual energy, there was no reason not to absorb all of it.

This was Meng Hao’s personality. Even when he was a scholar, he had been like this. It was simply how he lived. Normally, he didn’t like to cause a scene. But sometimes causing a scene was unavoidable. When it happened, he would go all out.

His fifth Dao Pillar coalesced and his Cultivation base continued to climb. His eyes began to glow brightly, and his aura grew more and more powerful!

In the space of a few breaths, he had rocketed forward until he was only ninety meters from the tree. His sudden blazing speed was too incredible, as was his absorption of the spiritual energy. The surrounding Cultivators noticed immediately.

They saw the fear-inspiring vortex which surrounded him, and could sense him absorbing the thick spiritual energy which had been blocking them. It shot toward him at incredible speed, sending ripples throughout the entire world.

“What’s he doing….?”

“He’s… he’s absorbing the spiritual energy? That’s impossible!”

“How… how can he be doing that?”

The surrounding Cultivators looked at him with shock.

It wasn’t just them. Up in the clouds, all of the onlookers were watching the scene, their hearts filled with astonishment.

“He’s swallowing up the ancient spiritual energy!”

“What is he? What kind of Cultivation technique does he use to be able to do that!”

The eyes of the Nascent Soul Cultivators glittered like lightning as they watched Meng Hao. They were shocked to the core, never having imagined that they would see something like this.

Interestingly, even though they were Nascent Soul Cultivators who should easily be able to see a person’s Cultivation base, Meng Hao’s Dao Pillars were currently obscured from their vision.

It was as if some bizarre force were interfering, making it impossible for them to pick up even the slightest clue. The middle-aged man from the Black Sieve Sect watched thoughtfully, his eyes narrowed. He had noticed this strange obscuration of Meng Hao’s Dao Pillars even before he entered the cloud vortex.

As the alarmed Nascent Soul Cultivators watched Meng Hao's advancement, the Song Clan Patriarch Song Tian looked at him, his eyes glowing brightly. In fact, his eyes hadn't left Meng Hao from the beginning.

He stared wordlessly at Meng Hao in the cloud vortex, eyes flickering with surprise.

Eccentric Song laughed loudly. He also found the scene to be unbelievable, but on the other hand was incredibly happy. As his laughter rang out, Han Bei sucked in a deep breath, thinking about how Meng Hao had been able to enter the square cauldron even though the name Meng did not exist in the Nine Great Families.

Li Shiqi's phoenix-like eyes flashed as she watched Meng Hao thoughtfully.

Down by the enormous tree, the spiritual energy roiled, causing the wild wind to grow in intensity. The wind buffeted Wang Tengfei, causing him to spin backward from thirty meters to about one hundred and twenty-five meters!

The others were blown back as well. With this reversal, Meng Hao was now the closest person to the tree, being only ninety meters away.

Wang Tengfei raised his head up and howled. He couldn't accept such a situation. He pushed forward with all his strength. However, at that same time, Meng Hao took a deep breath and also pushed forward. He moved forward about thirty meters, and then another thirty!

In two short bursts, he was now only thirty meters away from the tree. Compared to the tree, he was like a cricket. The vortex around him swirled, causing the boundless spiritual energy in the area to suck toward him. The full shape of his fifth Dao Pillar was now visible. If he continued at this rate, he would most likely be able to complete it.

When he formed his fifth Perfect Dao Pillar, Meng Hao would definitely be… the most powerful person in the Foundation Establishment stage.

Whether it be Chosen or Dao Children, the entire Foundation Establishment stage would be like dry weeds that could be crushed beneath his feet!

2. Shui Dongliu’s name in Chinese is shuǐ dōng liú – This is a somewhat odd name. Shui is a Chinese surname, which also means “water.” Dong means “east.” Liu means “flow.” So literally his name means “water flows east”

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# Chapter 195: Suppressing Everyone

The chance Meng Hao had now was sudden and unexpected. Thanks to this lucky break, his Cultivation base was climbing upward at incredible speed. Furthermore, the closer he got to the tree, the thicker the spiritual energy became.

He took a deep breath, completely ignoring the strange looks everyone was giving him. He was completely focused on the enormous tree and the bizarre spiritual energy it emitted that only he could absorb.

It had been a long time since he had been able to enjoy the refreshing feeling of absorbing spiritual energy. His eyes glistened brightly as his body flashed onward.

The spiritual energy beneath the tree roiled madly. His body was like a whirling black hole, sucking all the spiritual energy in, without exception.

His Cultivation base continued to climb, and the image of his fifth Dao Pillar grew clearer. Soon it would no longer be illusory.

Ten percent, twenty percent, thirty percent….

Meng Hao grew more and more excited as he absorbed the increasingly thick spiritual energy. He leaped forward, heading directly toward the base of the enormous tree.

Next to the towering tree, Meng Hao was little more than an insect, tiny and weak. It was essentially impossible to even compare. They were as different as a firefly and the shining moon.

Meng Hao was the first to step into the tree itself. The other Cultivators closed in. Within the space of about ten breaths, Wang Tengfei and Wang Youcai also stepped onto it.

They, of course, could not absorb the spiritual energy of this place, and therefore had no way to replenish themselves. There is no need to even mention how difficult it was for them to proceed forward. On the other hand, Meng Hao was like a fish in water. In an instant, he was already three hundred meters away from them.

After observing this, the eyes of the spectators shone with a strange glow. This was especially true of the Song Clan Patriarch. His eyes glittered brightly as he watched the cloud vortex, and Meng Hao.

“So he can absorb the spiritual energy there….” he thought. “But that place is merely a painting of the World Tree. It couldn’t even be considered a projected image. However, it does contain some of the World Tree’s will, as well as dense spiritual energy, although not much….” His eyes glittered, although they contained some amount of hesitation.

Eccentric Song too felt shocked, but was also about to go wild with joy. A wide smile emerged on his face. He looked at the shifting expressions of the other Nascent Soul Cultivators and smiled even wider. He flicked his sleeve to collect the Soul Fruits together.

“Fellow Daoists, I shall collect my winnings. Do you wish to make another wager? I bet this kid will become the next son-in-law of the Song Clan. What do you say? Wager, or no wager?”

The other Nascent Soul Cultivators ignored him, refusing to be provoked, and instead focused on what was happening in the cloud vortex. They gazed thoughtfully as Meng Hao ascended the gigantic tree.

Eccentric Song continued to prod a few more times, but seeing that the others refused to speak, he simply put away the Soul Fruits and laughed. The ill feelings toward Meng Hao from years ago were now completely gone.

“This Meng Hao kid isn’t bad,” said Eccentric Song, eyeing the cloud vortex. “Ai, if I had known he was like this, I would have bet on him against Wu Dingqiu all those years ago.”

Within the cloud vortex, Wang Tengfei’s eyes were red. He was on the tree now, proceeding up. The spiritual energy in the area pushed against him, and he had no way to absorb it whatsoever. The wind whipped about, but he forged on without regard to caution. He knew that if he were knocked off the tree, then he would have to start over from the very bottom.

Making progress was incredibly difficult, but every time he looked up and saw Meng Hao speeding along, it would cause him to ignore the screaming wind and intense pressure. Insanity and intense jealousy filled his heart, and he would proceed onward through the thick pressure.

“How could I possibly lose to him!?!?” he raged inwardly. “I am a Wang Clan Chosen! He stole my legacy and my beloved! Today, I shall wrest away his good fortune. Why are you always so unfair to Wang Tengfei, Heavens?! I refuse! I will not give in!!” Setting his teeth, he shot upward. The wild wind buffeted him, but he held doggedly onto the tree. It felt as if his arms were about to rip off.

To his astonishment, Wang Tengfei suddenly realized that the unabsorbable spiritual energy of this place, which exhibited such strong pressure, was actually lessening around Meng Hao. The closer he got to Meng Hao, the easier it was to progress.

Behind him, Wang Youcai, Qian Shuihen, Lu Song as well as Fatty and the others, had all reached the tree, and were relentlessly pursuing.

All of them noticed Meng Hao’s significant increase in speed.

Meng Hao had already sensed that although the spiritual energy in this place seemed thick and abundant, actually, the entire place was divided into different areas. The spiritual energy of the area he was currently in was almost sucked dry. Because of that, Wang Tengfei and the others were able to move more quickly.

However, although the spiritual energy below him was decreasing, he continued moving upward. Soon, he encountered more dense spiritual energy, which he began to absorb immediately. His fifth Dao Pillar was already about forty percent complete.

“The spiritual energy here is organized in layers,” he thought, his eyes shining brilliantly. “Each layer can be completely absorbed into my body. Although it looks incredibly dense, there’s actually not very much of it. However, if I absorb all of it, I should be able to complete my fifth Dao Pillar.” He continued onward, and the spiritual energy continued to pour into him. Whenever it began to grow thin, he would continue on upward to a new layer.

Behind him, Wang Tengfei and the others were continuing to increase their speed. The spiritual energy having dried up, the resisting pressure was gone. The only thing they had to deal with was the raging wind. Their progress now was much easier, so the gap between Meng Hao and them was slowly lessening.

The enormous tree was many dozens of meters in diameter, and from a distance, didn’t seem very far away from the cloud layer above, where the Nascent Soul Cultivators watched the proceedings. Seeing what was happening caused them to sit there quietly in contemplation. The Wang Clan Cultivator let out a cold harrumph. “Eccentric Song, let’s make another bet. This time, the stakes are two Soul Fruits!”

Eccentric Song hesitated for a moment, his brow furrowed.

The Black Sieve Sect Nascent Soul Cultivator coughed lightly. “I’m in,” he said.

The Nascent Soul Cultivator from the Li Clan chimed in. “So, another bet,” he said coolly. “Eccentric Song, why don’t we all join in? Two Soul Fruits per person. Winner takes all.” His words made Eccentric Song even more hesitant.

After a long moment passed, he gritted his teeth. He actually had incredible faith in Meng Hao’s ability to perform, so he flicked his sleeve.

“We’re on!” he said.

Subsequently, all of the Nascent Soul eccentrics produced Soul Fruits. Seeing so many in one placed caused all of the Cultivators to palpitate with eagerness. The stakes of this wager were significantly greater than the previous bet.

At the same time as all the eccentrics made their bets, Meng Hao shot up at top speed. He had passed through three layers of the enormous tree, and had now progressed roughly thirty percent up. By now, Wang Tengfei and the others were a mere thirty meters behind him. It seemed they might soon pass him.

Meng Hao’s face was calm. The good fortune of this place lay in the spiritual energy; as far as he was concerned, it didn’t matter who was in first place. Suddenly, Wang Tengfei roared. Employing some unknown magical technique, his body began to glow, and he shot up with incredible, explosive speed. In the space of a few breaths, he had progressed more than thirty meters. This caused him to pass Meng Hao by nearly ten meters.

However, before he even had a chance to rejoice, an enormous force caused his body to tremble. The pressure caused him to cough up blood as it enveloped his body. Just then, Meng Hao passed him, sucking the spiritual energy of the area into his body. The pressure began to subside. If it hadn’t, Wang Tengfei felt as if he might have been crushed down into the tree by a giant, invisible hand.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he proceeded onward, ignoring Wang Tengfei. He passed the area that was covered with the blood Wang Tengfei had coughed up, continuing to absorb the spiritual energy. After absorbing all of it, he moved onto the next layer.

Clearly, anyone who wanted to try to pass Meng Hao could do so by merely charging forward.

However, seeing what happened to Wang Tengfei shook the hearts of all the Cultivators below. They stared at Meng Hao with strange expressions. As for Fatty, he took a deep breath, and looked completely disbelieving.

As of this moment, none of the pursuing Cultivators dared to pass Meng Hao….

Meng Hao continued on slowly, which gave them no other option than to do the same. Looking embarrassed and helpless, they followed Meng Hao. Clearly, many of them had various plans in mind. They would wait until the very top of the tree, whereupon various techniques would explode out as they attempted to pass him!

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# Chapter 196: Followed by All Eyes

Meng Hao was aware of all of this, of course. His expression was the same as ever and he ignored everyone else. He paused at each layer to absorb as much spiritual energy as possible, and then continued to climb upward.

Several meters behind him were all the other Cultivators. They eyed Meng Hao helplessly, waiting for him to move onward before doing so themselves.

Each and every pair of eyes inside this world was watching Meng Hao. He was the focus of all attention.

The Song Clan’s competition in search of a son-in-law had turned into Meng Hao’s stepping stone. Regardless of whether Meng Hao was the winner or not, he had already left a deep impression on Song Jia. That, coupled with the events which had happened before the banquet began, caused her to ignore everyone else and focus solely on Meng Hao.

Perhaps it was fate; after today, the five Clans and three Sects would know that Meng Hao was also Chosen!

Perhaps it was fate; after today, stories of scholar Meng Hao of the State of Zhao would spread throughout the entire Southern Domain. There was now one more amongst the ranks of the Chosen!

Also fated was that previously unknown Meng Hao would be the complete center of attention. More and more Cultivators would hear of him and especially… the matter of him and Chu Yuyan. Rumors would spread like wildfire throughout the entirety of the Southern Domain.

Meng Hao would become the object of jealousy of countless male Cultivators. Of course he would also attract the notice of many female

Cultivators. He was now the subject of a huge scandal involving one of the four most beautiful women in the Southern Domain. Everyone was paying attention to him now.

At the same time, anyone who hadn't heard about Meng Hao's dealings with the Violet Fate Sect back in the State of Zhao, would surely know about it now. Meng Hao's name would only become more and more well known.

In actuality, if people knew about the feud between the Black Sieve Sect and Meng Hao, or how he had taken the Blood Immortal Legacy, then he would instantly become the most famous Cultivator in all of the Southern Domain. After all, he could now sweep across Chosen and push down Dao Children.

Today was only the first sign of what was to come, though. This was Meng Hao cutting into the Southern Domain! 1

Time passed. Meng Hao, his expression the same as always, continued onward slowly. Behind him, many of the Cultivators were growing impatient. A young man from the Violet Fate Sect looked at Meng Hao slowly absorbing spiritual energy, and frowned. Unable to accept the situation any longer, he shot forward.

He slapped his bag of holding, and immediately, eight talismans appeared to circle around him. A bright glow appeared, some sort of protective spell. With a triumphant cry, he charged onward, passing Meng Hao and entering the next layer beyond.

The Violet Fate Sect Nascent Soul Cultivator coolly mentioned, "This is a Chosen of the Violet Fate Sect, Liu Gao. His Cultivation base is beyond ordinary. His eight talismans treasure can reduce any force of pressure by eighty percent." Even as the words left his mouth, his face suddenly grew unsightly.

As soon as Liu Gao passed Meng Hao and entered the next area, his body began to shake. His face tightened, and blood sprayed from his mouth. His body trembled as if it were under attack. Everyone watched as he howled and tried to endure. Meng Hao cleared his throat. He stopped in his tracks for a moment, looking up and waiting.

After the space of a few breaths, the Violet Fate Sect disciple coughed up more blood. One by one, his eight talismans disintegrated. With a miserable scream, he fell down into the sea below. He emerged moments later, pale faced, and began to climb again. It didn’t take him long to rejoin the group of people below Meng Hao, where he stared upward with fear and respect.

Everyone looked thoughtfully at Meng Hao, who once again cleared his throat and moved upward, absorbing spiritual energy along the way.

No one dared to attempt to pass him. They could only follow helplessly. Time passed as Meng Hao proceeded through the layers. By now, his fifth Dao Pillar was about seventy percent complete.

The further he progressed, the more spiritual energy he needed. Before long, Meng Hao was roughly three thousand meters from the apex of the enormous tree.

Wang Tengfei’s eyes flashed, and though Wang Youcai said nothing, his eyes shined brightly. A look of anticipation covered Fatty’s face. He had no thoughts of trying to pass Meng Hao, but was very much looking forward to seeing what happened when Meng Hao reached the top.

It wasn’t just the Cultivators whose eyes glittered; up in the cloud layer, the eccentrics from the five Sects and three Clans, as well as all the Song Clan members, were all focused on Meng Hao. Although his participation in the Song Clan search for a son-in-law had been unexpected, a critical moment was approaching. Everyone watched on with keen anticipation.

With a smile, Song Tian said, “At the top of the tree, there is a final test. Of the heroes of the various Sects and Clans, it’s hard to say which one… will be able to pass the final test.”

One of the Nascent Soul Cultivators laughed and said, “I had heard that part of the tradition of your Song Clan search for a son-in-law involves a difficult test. I’m very curious as to the nature of this test. Elder Song, would you mind explaining a bit about it?”

“That’s right,” said the Golden Frost Sect’s Nascent Soul Cultivator. “I’ve also heard such things. Elder Song, would you mind telling us some about it? We’re all very curious.”

Everyone seemed very interested in hearing about the final test.

Song Clan Patriarch Song Tian laughed loudly. Then, he looked at the middle-aged man who sat at his right hand. “Muqiu, we are searching for a husband for your daughter. Why don’t you explain the final test?”

The middle-aged man was handsome and dashing. Hearing the words of the Patriarch, he clasped his hands respectfully and then looked at the group of people, eyes flashing like lightning. Then he glanced at Song Jia, and a warm, loving expression filled his face.

His voice cool, Song Muqiu said, “The final test in our search for a son-in-law is a bit different than the tests in previous generations. This is a test of a Cultivator’s Dao Heart!”

The Nascent Soul Cultivators frowned.

Elder Fan from the Solitary Sword Sect frowned and took a drink of alcohol. “Matters of Dao Hearts aren’t even clear to us, let alone these Foundation Establishment pups.”

“That is why this test is special,” replied Song Muqiu. “Elder Fan is correct, Dao Hearts are mysterious and unfathomable. Actually, the Song Clan believes that one of the most important aspects of the Dao Heart is determined by personality and behavior. The combination of the two, as well as a person’s stubbornness… that is the Dao Heart. Therefore, although today’s test is not conclusive, it will give us some inkling of what will be. Actually, as it relates to Dao Hearts, this test is actually a choice!” Having said this much, Song Muqiu closed his mouth and declined to comment further.

Everyone else sank into deep thought. As for Song Jia, she continued to watch Meng Hao within the cloud vortex, very curious as to what choice he would make during the final test….

Song Yunshu’s eyes flickered as he calmly watched the cloud vortex. He was Dao Child of the Song Clan, and yet, as he watched Meng Hao, an uneasy feeling welled up in his heart. He was used to concealing his emotions, though. His exterior was calm. But he was extremely curious to see what choice Meng Hao would make.

“As Dao Child of the Song Clan, I was able to take the test myself ahead of time. My choice….” Song Yunshu was lost in thought. He had only succeeded on his second try. Succeeding in such a fashion had earned him the praise of Patriarch Song Tian.

With a smile, Patriarch Song Tian said, “Muqiu makes it sound very complicated. The final test is a choice, and also a test of observation. I should make clear that the Dao Child of our Song Clan succeeded on his second attempt.” He glanced at Song Yuncai with a look of praise.

This caused everyone to grow even more curious. They all looked back down, waiting for Meng Hao to break through. They also peered at the group of Cultivators behind him, all of whom were waiting for their chance to spring forward.

Meng Hao began to move faster and faster. His fifth Dao Pillar was now eighty percent complete, and he now needed even more spiritual energy than before. Remembering the horrific scene that had accompanied the completion of his last Dao Pillar, Meng Hao wanted to be certain there was enough spiritual energy in this place before he reached the point of no return.

Otherwise, when the critical juncture arrived, then he would have no choice but to consume the other Cultivators. That was a path that Meng Hao refused to tread.

Cautiously, but quickly, he absorbed the spiritual energy. He proceeded, leaving behind some of the spiritual energy and moving on to the next layer.

He was rapidly approaching the top of the tree. Because he had left behind some spiritual energy, the Cultivators behind him suddenly encountered the resisting pressure, and had no choice but to slow down.

They trudged on desperately. However, there was now more and more distance between them and Meng Hao. Wang Tengfei’s eyes were completely red. He pursued madly.

Meng Hao was now only fifteen hundred meters from the top of the tree.

One thousand meters. Five hundred meters. Two hundred fifty meters…. One hundred fifty. Fifty…. Meng Hao leaped up, surpassing the final gap to stand on top of the tree.

At this moment, all eyes were upon him!

1. In case you forgot, this is the title of Book 2

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# Chapter 197: Sublime Spirit Scripture!

At this moment, the Song Clan Patriarch and Eccentric Song both stared at Meng Hao. In fact, without exception, all of the Song Clan members in the cloud layer were looking at him.

The attention of the Nascent Soul Cultivators of the five Sects and three Clans were all fixed on him as well.

To garner such attention showed how famous Meng Hao now was in the Southern Domain.

Members of the Song Clan such as Song Yunshu, as well as Han Bei, Li Shiqi, Li Daoyi… everyone’s attention was focused solely on Meng Hao.

The Chosen from the various Sects and Clans, regardless of their frustration or helplessness, regardless of what thoughts were running through their heads, were looking up at Meng Hao. Wang Tengfei, Fatty, Wang Youcai, Qian Shuihen, Lu Song….

Atop the tree, at the pinnacle of this world, Meng Hao stood alone, the focus of all the heavens.

As soon as he stepped foot on the top of the tree, he felt the boundless spiritual energy in the area sucking toward him. It was definitely enough to complete his fifth Dao Pillar. Far below the top of the tree, the massive sea seemed smaller; now it looked like a mirror.

Beyond the edges of the mirror, was nothingness…. This world was not limitless. In fact, in the midst of the nothingness could be seen what appeared to be handwriting, floating there faintly.

The ancient will of the World Tree; respect its strength, remember its intentions. Painted in the spot where the World Tree destroyed itself.

It was signed with three characters. Shui Dongliu.

“Shui Dongliu… could it be that this entire world is… a painting?” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he stared at the words. Then he took a deep breath and allowed the spiritual energy to flow into him. The instant his fifth Dao Pillar reached ninety-percent completion, a person suddenly appeared up ahead of him!

It was an old man who had the demeanor of a transcendent being. He wore a long, gray robe, and it was impossible to tell exactly how old he was. He was clearly ancient, although was impossible to tell how many countless ages he had lived.

Meng Hao could sense no ripples emanating from the man’s Cultivation base. It seemed as if he were a mortal, not a Cultivator. And yet, considering how ancient he was, how could he possibly be mortal?

The old man looked at Meng Hao, his face calm and filled with unspeakable dignity. It seemed as if even the Heavens would flee from before him.

The old man spoke, his voice cool, “The Heavens are not the Heavens, the Earth is not the Earth. The stars are eternal, and the Dao will always be!” His words floated out gently, much the same as his hair floated gently around his body. “This place does not belong to the Heavens, nor to the Earth. This painting of the World Tree contains endlessly flowing memories. Drink of them, and the great Dao in front of you will lead you to the utmost heights. Select a path upon which to approach me.” Suddenly, nine snaking paths appeared among the twisted leaves of the tree’s crown. They all led toward the old man, who stood only a few hundred meters up ahead.

Each path led to the same destination: the old man.

The old man lifted his hand. There between his fingers was a thumb-sized pearl. “Select a path upon which to approach me, and then take the pearl. Choose wrong, and you must start over.”

The pearl was white, and seemed to contain an entire world within its depths. Looking at it, Meng Hao noticed that it was not round. For some reason, it seemed to be the shape of a cube. It was very bizarre.

Suddenly, Meng Hao could sense the three-colored Resurrection Lily inside of him being suppressed slightly.

“Nine paths. And I have to pick one….” he frowned. By this time, Wang Tengfei and the others were approaching. However, they weren’t able to step onto the treetop. It seemed that there was some invisible force that prevented more than one person from being atop the tree.

Meng Hao thought for a while as he looked over the nine paths. He had no clue how to select a path. He looked at the man up ahead, and then his eyes gleamed. The man was holding the pearl with three fingers! After thinking for another moment, Meng Hao took a deep breath and then walked forward onto the third path.

The instant his foot stepped down on the path, the world seemed to turn upside down. A roaring filled his ears, and everything grew blurry for a moment. When everything became clear, he found that he was now at the very bottom of the tree!

He was only a few hundred meters from the surface of the sea, falling downward. His mind reeled, and he forced himself to a stop. Looking up, he saw Wang Tengfei climbing up onto the top of the tree.

“I chose wrong, so I have to start over….” He frowned. Selecting a path seemed to involve little more than random guessing. How could one pick, other than going through the paths one by one?

Meng Hao muttered to himself for a moment. Then, his eyes flashed as he saw Wang Tengfei falling down from the top of the tree like a shooting star.

He, too, had failed, and had to start from the beginning, at the sea beneath the tree.

Meng Hao leaped into action, heading up toward the top of the tree at top speed. In the time it takes for half an incense stick to burn, he was less than three thousand meters away from the top. During that time, he witnessed over ten Cultivators falling down toward the ocean.

Meanwhile, up in the cloud layer, the Nascent Soul Cultivators watched on with furrowed brows. Having seen everything that happened, they broke into discussions.

“Nine paths. How can one know which path to choose…? It must involve careful observation. The answer doesn’t lie in blind luck, but with that old man!”

“He is not emanating any Cultivation base ripples, and yet emanates a profound air. Perhaps the answer to the riddle is hidden in the words he spoke….”

“No wonder this test requires careful observation. There doesn’t seem to be any clear solution. For the Song Clan Dao Child to have passed the test in two tries really is worthy of admiration.”

Han Bei looked at the scene playing out on the tree. Her eyes shined with interest. After thinking for a moment, she said. “The fourth path from the left!”

Li Daoyi’s eyes flashed. Having heard that the Song Clan Dao Child passed the test in two tries, he felt a sense of competition rising within him. He slowly said, “The fourth path from the right. That path doesn’t look special. But the leaves there are somewhat thicker. Furthermore, the old man seemed to pause slightly after every fourth word he spoke!”

Li Shiqi’s eyes also flickered, but she said nothing. She was lost in thought as she stared at the nine paths.

Song Yunshu’s expression was placid, but in his heart, he sighed. He had succeeded in two tries, but in fact, it had all been a matter of luck. He actually had no idea how he had succeeded.

Patriarch Song Tian laughed but said nothing. Hearing the discussions, he shook his head and fixed his attention to the top of the tree. Meng Hao was nearing it again.

Meng Hao moved quickly, and the three thousand meters whizzed by. The only people left at the top of the tree were Fatty and others from the Golden Frost Sect. Seeing Meng Hao approach, Fatty immediately made way for him.

Meng Hao nodded. Another person up above failed, after which Meng Hao’s body flashed and appeared for a second time on the treetop. By this time, his fifth Dao Pillar was more than ninety percent complete. There wasn’t much spiritual energy left, but Meng Hao was certain it was enough to complete the Dao Pillar.

He took a deep breath as he stood there atop the tree. He gazed at the old man, then recalled his words again as he looked over the paths again. Then, he stepped forward onto the fourth path!

He had made exactly the same choice as Han Bei!

However, the moment he stepped onto it, everything turned upside down, and he was again shooting down toward the sea beneath the tree.

“I’m really starting to dislike this place!” he thought, his eyes filling with both frustration and determination.

All of the Chosen from the various Sects and Clans who had failed once were now making their second attempts. And yet, one after another, they failed, falling downward just like Meng Hao.

Meng Hao went up to try a third time.

By this time, everyone was watching with strange expressions. They were all lost in thought, trying to figure out what they had overlooked. Which path was correct?

More discussions broke out among the Nascent Soul Cultivators.

“This place is very mysterious. These kids have all had two chances each, and between the lot of them, have tried every one of the nine paths.”

“Clearly, the correct path changes. The route is not fixed. It seems that luck does have quite a bit of a role.”

Han Bei frowned, continuing to look on. She was now starting to form another opinion on which path was the correct one.

“There’s no need to get anxious, friends,” said Patriarch Song Tian. He laughed. “To find the correct path, each person most observe matters carefully. It will all depend on their Dao Heart.”

Atop the massive tree beneath the cloud vortex, Meng Hao shot back upward. He was currently about nine thousand meters from the top of the tree when suddenly his Dao Pillar reached the point where it was only a sliver away from being completed. The same phenomenon that had appeared in the Xiao Clan, once again began to occur.

His body immediately began to wither. Thankfully, there was plenty of spiritual energy in this place. The unbridled gravitational power of the Dao Pillar began to absorb all of the spiritual energy, no matter how far away it was. Each and every bit of it rushed toward Meng Hao.

His face was ruddy as he felt his Cultivation base climbing upward. He shot upward, and was soon only three thousand meters from the top. His mind began to reel.

A booming sound could be heard, and Meng Hao’s face flickered as suddenly, a golden light began to collect inside of him. His Cultivation base started rotating, causing the light to shine outward. It seemed as if it wished to eclipse the World Tree!

Amidst the golden glow, streams of magical symbols appeared. They were indistinct, but the instant they appeared, they caused the entire world to be filled with a golden color.

Up above, looks of disbelief appeared on the faces of the Nascent Soul Cultivators. One by one, they stood up. “That’s….”

“The Sublime Spirit Scripture!” said one of the other Nascent Soul Cultivators breathlessly.

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# Chapter 198: The Number One Person in Foundation Establishment!

The Nascent Soul Cultivators couldn’t keep their cool. One by one, they began to speak, their eyes shining with unprecedented brightness.

“That’s… that’s definitely the power of one of the three great classic scriptures. That golden glow… it’s a sign of the Sublime Spirit Scripture!!”

“That kid cultivates with the Sublime Spirit Scripture. That scripture has supposedly been lost for years. There are only fragments left. How did this kid get the whole scripture!?!?”

“From the looks of it, he acquired the Qi Condensation Manual of the Sublime Spirit Scripture. Supposedly, it appeared a few hundred years ago in the State of Zhao, and was used by a man named Patriarch Reliance. His Cultivation base was unfathomable….”

Their eyes were on Meng Hao, but what they were really paying attention to was the Sublime Spirit Scripture!!

Each and every one of them could crush Meng Hao between their fingers like he was nothing; he wouldn’t be able to fight back in the least. Whichever one of them got their hands on Meng Hao, would actually be acquiring the Sublime Spirit Scripture.

Such a text would be indescribably useful to any Sect. Whoever acquired it would be in the position to sweep across the Southern Domain with impunity.

That Sect would become incomparable, and would without fail become the overlord of the Southern Domain!

How could these Nascent Soul Cultivators not be excited? Even if Meng Hao succeeded in becoming a son-in-law of the Song Clan, they would still no doubt crazily pursue him regardless of anything!

In any case, Meng Hao currently was not a member of the Song Clan, and was only one participant among many.

It wasn’t appropriate to make a move at the moment, but once Meng Hao emerged, all of the Sects and Clans in the Southern Domain would want to grab him. In such an event, his life wouldn’t be important. To get the Sublime Spirit Scripture, there wasn’t a single Nascent Soul Cultivator who would hesitate to use Soul Search on Meng Hao to drag out the Sublime Spirit Scripture.

The result of such a Soul Search would kill him!

As soon as the Sublime Spirit Scripture appeared, Meng Hao instantly became the prey of all of these super Sects of the Southern Domain!

It was obvious what everyone was thinking. The Nascent Soul Cultivators’ eyes glittered. This was the Song Clan, but sooner or later, someone would make a move. They all glanced over at the Song Clan Patriarch.

Meng Hao had openly revealed his secret of possessing the Sublime Spirit Scripture. It would without fail arouse the lust of any Sect or Clan. However, in terms of positioning, the Song Clan currently had the clear advantage.

As the Nascent Soul Cultivators looked over at the Song Clan Patriarch, they discreetly retrieved transmission jade slips and crushed them between their fingers. This instantly sent notifications back to their various Sects and Clans.

Eccentric Song watched the scene in shock. The rest of the Song Clan members all seem to be in shock. Patriarch Song Tian suddenly stood up.

His eyes shone mysteriously, and he was breathing heavily. However, he then recalled what had happened within the Clan earlier, along with the warning transmitted by the Dao Reserve Patriarch, and his eyes filled with determination.

“This Meng Hao…” he said, “must not be provoked! Whoever causes problems for him is seeking death!” He flicked his sleeve. “Ladies and gentlemen, you are in the Song Clan!” His words echoed out like thunder, causing the faces of the Nascent Soul Cultivators to tighten. Blood seeped out of the corners of their mouths. Their eyes glistened with fear as they stared at the Song Clan Patriarch.

“Regardless of what objectives you might have, this is the Song Clan’s search for a son-in-law,” he said, his eyes shining. “Whoever succeeds will become a son-in-law of the Song Clan. Once everyone emerges, there will be time for your greed. However, if Meng Hao becomes the son-in-law of the Song Clan, then it must be viewed as the will of the Heavens.”

“Elder Song, we will naturally comply with your words,” said the Nascent Soul Cultivator from the Black Sieve Sect, smiling.

The rest of the Nascent Soul Cultivators all agreed slowly, pretending not to pay any attention to Meng Hao. However, in their hearts, they were preparing for the arrival of fellow Sect members.

Patriarch Song Tian was of course well aware of that. He sighed inwardly and said nothing more, continuing to gaze at the golden world within the cloud vortex.

Magical symbols appeared in the golden glow that spread out from Meng Hao. This was none other than the Sublime Spirit Scripture.

Observers would be able to make out the details of the magical symbols, but would be unable to commit them to memory. The only thing they would be able to remember would be a blur.

In the Southern Domain, there are three classic scriptures. Only one of them emits a golden glow… the Sublime Spirit Scripture!

There were no records of the origin of the scripture, or of who created it. There were many legends, though. One stated that it had been created by an eminently powerful Cultivator of the Dao Seeking stage who had walked the path of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

However, such a matter seemed too monumental. As such, many people refused to believe such a legend.

Regardless, each of the seven manuals of the Sublime Spirit Scripture could be considered precious treasures. In fact, the reason that the Violet Fate Sect became one of the great Sects was because it had acquired a fragment of the Foundation Establishment manual of the Sublime Spirit Scripture.

Just a fragment of one of the manuals could give birth to a great Sect; this alone demonstrates the boundlessness of the Sublime Spirit Scripture!

Practicing the Cultivation of the Sublime Spirit Scripture would eventually cause the body to reach the point where it would emit magical scriptures. This is a special state, and a special sign!

Such a state could only be reached after nine Dao Pillars had been formed. Then it would become visible. However, because Meng Hao had a Perfect Foundation, he was in a unique position with his Five Dao Pillars. That was why the sign made itself visible now.

Of course, this turn of events exceeded Meng Hao’s powers of anticipation and caught him completely unawares. His heart instantly filled with vigilance, and he immediately pulled out the good luck charm and prepared it for activation.

As the scripture floated out from his body and the golden glow filled the entire world, the Chosen from the various Sects looked up at him in astonishment and shock.

Fatty gasped and began to mutter to himself. “That’s Meng Hao for you. He was awesome in the Reliance Sect. Then he came to the Southern Domain and seduced Chu Yuyan. Now he’s showing off even more power….”

Wang Youcai stared wordlessly at the golden light. Inside, similar waves of admiration filled his heart.

As for Wang Tengfei, he felt as if he had been struck by lightning. His body shook. A sense of unwillingness wanted to rise up within him, and yet he was forced to admit that Meng Hao… was no longer someone he could afford to look down upon.

In fact, fear began to well up in Wang Tengfei’s heart; not even ten years had passed since they last met. After another ten years, how much further would Meng Hao have surpassed him? Wang Tengfei didn’t even dare to think about what would occur if one day, he himself was still in the Foundation Establishment stage, but Meng Hao reached Core Formation. If they met again at that time, what would happen…?

The stir caused by what was happening now far exceeded the recent spectacle created by Meng Hao when he had climbed the tree.

He panted as intense booming sounds filled his body. They far exceeded the roaring he had experienced when he created his fourth Dao Pillar in the Xiao Clan, so much so that Meng Hao’s heart shook and his flesh leaped.

He felt his fifth Dao Pillar being completed. After the space of a few breaths passed, his head suddenly resounded with an enormous roar. Finally, his fifth Dao Pillar appeared in full!!

His fifth Perfect Dao Pillar!

With this fifth Dao Pillar, his Cultivation base rocketed to new heights. Blinding golden light shined out from him, and the magical symbols of the Sublime Spirit Scripture revolved around him in circles. They seemed as if they were prostrating themselves toward Meng Hao.

Every breath he took caused the symbols to flutter. Every blink of his eye caused the golden light to shine even more blindingly. His Cultivation base rose higher and his battle prowess soared. Meng Hao was transforming in an unprecedented fashion!!

Suddenly, Tribulation clouds appeared in the mountains of the Song Clan, and they lingered for some time before dissipating.

Meng Hao’s long hair floated about him, and his body filled with an indescribable might. As the roaring continued to echo out, his heart began to thump. He took a deep breath as he allowed all the feelings to wash over him. The explosive growth of his Cultivation base caused his battle might to far exceed his previous pinnacle.

Meng Hao was now convinced that at the moment, he could easily sweep across the entire Foundation Establishment stage. Regardless of Chosen or Dao Children, all of them were beneath him. He had a Perfect Foundation and five Dao Pillars; he was invincible within the Foundation Establishment stage!!

In front of him, all Foundations except for Flawless Foundations, could be crushed by his Perfect Foundation.

At the same time, however, a profound sense of danger welled up within him. He knew that everyone outside was watching him. The scripture symbols which were floating around him were obviously from the Sublime Spirit Scripture.

Despite the feeling of danger, determination filled Meng Hao’s eyes. Fingering the good luck symbol, he leaped forward. This place was already devoid of spiritual energy, so he shot forward toward the treetop, surrounded by the golden glow.

“So far no one has come down after me. There’s definitely not much time left….” Meng Hao was nervous, but also wasn’t willing to leave quite yet. His goal, the Cubic Pearl, was still there for the taking. Then he could escape with the good luck charm.

“If the charm could get me out of the ancient Blessed Land, then this place will naturally be no problem either!” The good luck charm needed time to prepare, so at the same time as he poured power from his Cultivation base into it, he shot upward. Utilizing the strength of his five Perfect Dao Pillars, he shot past the final three thousand meters to arrive at the empty treetop.

The gray-robed old man stood there. The nine paths in front of him had been affected by the golden glow, and now appeared to be paths of gold.

This was Meng Hao's third time standing here. His eyes glowed brightly. The time had come to make his final choice. The choice he made… was one that only Meng Hao could make!!

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# Chapter 199: The Tenth Path!

Currently, all of the Nascent Soul eccentrics up in the clouds watched on with shining eyes. If they weren't in the Song Clan, they would have long since taken action. They were frightened, but had already made preparations. In their opinion, Meng Hao was like a turtle in a jar. He couldn't escape even if he sprouted wings.

The only thing they needed to worry about was the Song Clan. The importance of the Qi Condensation Manual of the Sublime Spirit Scripture was hard to describe. Actually, many of them couldn't understand how it was possible that their various Sects had permitted the scripture to remain in the Reliance Sect, and had chosen not to go take it….

Their eyes flickered as they watched on. They were simply waiting for Meng Hao to come out, and for backup from their Sects to arrive.

However… the Nascent Soul Eccentric from the Black Sieve Sect's eyes flickered with something else, undetectable to the others. The jade slip which he had crushed contained details different from that of the others. Not only had he passed on the information about the Sublime Spirit Scripture, but also news that he had tracked down Meng Hao.

Orders had already been issued by the Patriarchs of the Black Sieve Sect to search for the person who had snatched away Ultimate Vexation. The news hadn't been broadcast on the outside, of course, and their search could only be conducted secretly. Therefore, the appearance of the Sublime Spirit Scripture was not a good development for the Black Sieve Sect.

"All of the Sects are now paying attention to him," thought the Black Sieve Sect Nascent Soul Cultivator, his eyes flickering. "I need to grab him first, before all his secrets are revealed!" A cold smile appeared on his face.

“Ancient Blessed Lands cannot contain this guy. He has a good luck charm from the ancient Good Luck Sect. He can go anywhere in the world.” He was the only one among the Nascent Soul Cultivators who knew that this phantom fragment of the World Tree was incapable of keeping Meng Hao trapped within it. He wasn’t worried, though. Once the Black Sieve Sect learned that Meng Hao had the good luck charm, they had instituted a slew of contingency plans.

Down beneath the cloud vortex, in the glowing, golden world, Meng Hao took a deep breath. He stared at the old man, who stood only a few hundred meters away on the treetop.

They were separated by nine paths, all of which glowed with golden light. Three of the paths actually seemed to glow a bit brighter than the others.

“How do I pick…?” Meng Hao stood there thoughtfully for a brief moment. Then, a cold light gleamed within his eyes. He had made two choices before and had failed both times. This was his third chance. If he failed again, he knew that he would never get a fourth chance.

In actuality, Meng Hao had already guessed which path was the correct one to take. It was the same path he had walked before. If a person truly wishes to practice Cultivation, they must have persistence, and not easily change their mind. This was the key to treading the nine paths in front of him.

“But that choice… is not a choice born of my will….” Meng Hao’s eyes shone with coldness. He moved forward, and as he did, all of the Nascent Soul Cultivators above watched on. Even though the entire world was filled with the blinding golden light, their vision could pierce through it to observe the proceedings.

The instant Meng Hao shot forward, his five Perfect Dao Pillars exploded with power invincible to the rest of the Foundation Establishment stage. The golden glow grew thicker, and his speed increased.

However… he did not pick any of the nine leafy paths. Instead, he flew up into the air and… shot directly toward the gray-robed old man. All of this takes some time to describe, but actually happened in the blink of an eye.

Meng Hao completely bypassed the nine paths to appear directly in front of the old man. He lifted his hand, and his Cultivation base rippled out. Instantly, a six hundred meter long Flame Dragon appeared and then slammed down onto the old man.

Meng Hao lowered his hand, causing the Cubic Pearl to fly out of the old man's hand and into his own. The old man didn't do anything whatsoever to stop him. As the Flame Dragon engulfed him and the pearl was snatched away, a mysterious light appeared in his eyes, and a slight smile touched the corners of his mouth.

The old man's archaic voice filled the air. "You obviously realized which path was the correct one to take. Why make this choice?" As the voice echoed out, the golden glow that filled the world was suddenly suppressed. Now, all of the Chosen from the various Sects and Clans could clearly see what was happening on top of the tree.

The sight filled them with shock. Expressions of disbelief covered their faces as they saw the gray-robed old man being engulfed in flames. Meng Hao floated in mid-air. It was impossible for them to miss the fact that he had not picked any of the paths on the treetop, but had instead chosen to kill the old man.

"He dared to attack?!"

"This… this… this Meng Hao chose not to walk one of the paths. He chose to attack?! How could this be?"

"That old man is completely unfathomable…. You can tell from a single glance that he's beyond ordinary. This place is just too bizzarre. I can't believe Meng Hao dared to attack! Dammit… how come I didn't think of that!?!?"

Even as the Chosen beneath the treetop expressed their shock, the Nascent Soul eccentrics up above instantly shot to their feet, their eyes fixed upon Meng Hao.

This was especially true of Patriarch Song Tian. He gasped, and a glow of disbelief radiated from his eyes. A serious expression filled his face.

It wasn’t just him. Eccentric Song, Han Bei, Li Shiqi, Li Daoyi, as well as Song Clan Dao Child Song Yunshu all stared with completely disbelief.

Panting, Song Yunshu stared fixedly at Meng Hao. He had participated in this test and had succeeded on the second try after picking the same path as the first time. However, he had never imagined that you could actually raise a hand against the gray-robed old man.

“How could he do such a thing?” said Song Yunshu said hoarsely. “That’s the Spirit of the tree….”

It was at this moment that everyone heard the old man’s question echoing out from within the flames. It was the exact same question that was running through the heads of all the observers.

Why had he chosen such a path?

“Conforming to convention is emptiness,” replied Meng Hao. “Yielding to and complying with the Heavens is well and good. Unending persistence is fine, too. However, I cannot choose either of those.” Having said this, he shot up into the air!

He would not comply with rules of this place, but would instead create his own path. He was like the Perfect Foundation, not permitted by Heaven and Earth, and the target of extermination by Tribulation Lightning. However, he would continue onward. That was how he differentiated himself from others; his path was not one of inflexible adherence to the rules. As such, why would he follow the rules of this place? Why would he pick the correct path out of the nine?

He had chosen to break through and take the pearl by force, by slaughtering! He knew that he could succeed by persisting in treading the path from before. However, this so-called persistence was actually just a method of following the rules; it was not true persistence!

The old man’s laughter rang out from within the flames. His ancient smile was filled with happiness, as well as anticipation. He gave Meng Hao a deep look, allowing the flames to consume him. Soon, his body was gone.

As the old man disappeared and Meng Hao shot up into the air, the Chosen down below in the tree looked up mutely. They stared at Meng Hao in shock, their hearts in turmoil, incapable of calming down. Meng Hao’s choice had been simple, but not many people were capable of simplicity such as this.

They lived lives of compliance, lives in which rules must be followed. Perhaps the subconscious desire existed within them to break out of the rules, but they would never be able to imagine how to do so.

Meng Hao, however, was different!

Wang Tengfei’s face was pale white, and Wang Youcai was speechless. Fatty’s face slowly filled with even deeper admiration. Meng Hao’s words just now had left a permanent impression on all of their hearts.

When they heard his words, the Nascent Soul Cultivators in the clouds above all gasped. As they looked at Meng Hao, the same thought filled each and every one of them.

“If this kid lives, he will definitely achieve a high position within the Southern Domain!”

Such a personality, such mentality, such tactics… all of it led the Nascent Soul Cultivators to the same conclusion. Meng Hao might have the Sublime Spirit Scripture, but as of now, they didn’t want to capture him and use Soul Search to retrieve it. That would lead to his death.

If they could get Meng Hao to join their Sect, they could help him grow into a truly powerful expert of the Sect!

Li Daoyi’s eyes glowed with a powerful light; an intense desire to do battle fermented within him. Li Shiqi’s eyes also glowed brightly; looking at

Meng Hao down beneath the cloud vortex, she also suddenly desired to have a rematch.

Han Bei looked at Meng Hao thoughtfully. Deep within her eyes flickered a sense of admiration and praise. She couldn’t help but think that if she had been in Meng Hao’s place, she would have picked to follow the original path. She would never have had the resolve of Meng Hao. In retrospect, it seemed like an easy decision, but in reality, it was something almost no one would ever think of doing.

Song Yunshu sat in thought. Next to him, Song Jia gazed at Meng Hao. Everything that was happening was being burned deeply into her mind.

“Conforming to convention is emptiness,” said Patriarch Song Tian. “Well said!” His voice echoed out as he stood up.

The surrounding Nascent Soul Cultivator’s hearts began to thump; the situation was not unfolding well for them.

“This kid has managed to take the Cubic Pearl. Whoever he is, whoever he has offended in the past, this daughter of the Song Clan is now his! Who here dares to touch him!?” Hearing his words caused everyone to sit there thoughtfully. And yet, none of them seemed to notice the meaning within Patriarch Song Tian’s words. What he had said was strange; he never mentioned anything about marrying into the family. He words seemed to have a deeper meaning.

At this exact moment, the bright glow of multiple spells filled the air outside of the Sun and Moon mountains of the Song Clan. Powerful Qi suddenly appeared, as figure after figure emerged.

The five Sects and two Clans had arrived to investigate!

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# Chapter 200: Killing Amidst the Night Rain!

At the same moment that the five Sects and two Clans appeared outside of the Sun and Moon mountains of the Song Clan, Meng Hao was inside the world of the cloud vortex, shooting upward. All eyes were upon him as he pressed down on the good luck charm in his hand, pouring power from his Cultivation base into it.

He had begun to prepare the good luck charm much earlier, so the instant he poured spiritual energy into it, an enormous black hole appeared just in front of him in the sky. All of the Chosen and Nascent Soul eccentrics saw this happen.

The swirling vortex seemed to transform into a gaping mouth that instantly swallowed up Meng Hao. From below, the Chosen of the various Sects watched on in open-mouthed shock. The Nascent Soul Cultivators could only watch as he disappeared right in front of them. How could they ever have predicted that this would happen?

Seeing Meng Hao disappear, the Nascent Soul Cultivators were incapable of maintaining their calm. At almost the exact same time, they shot to their feet and flew toward the cloud vortex. Patriarch Song Tian sighed inwardly. He’d had no choice but to speak the words he had just now. However, even if this was Song Clan territory, it would be difficult to stand up against all the five Sects and two Clans. For Meng Hao to make an escape on his own was actually for the best.

At the moment, Song Tian couldn’t really prevent the Nascent Soul Cultivators from attempting to pursue Meng Hao. However, moments later, unsightly expressions appeared on their faces. They could clearly see that Meng Hao had used some sort of powerful magic to teleport away.

“It turns out a trifling Foundation Establishment Cultivator like him has a precious teleportation treasure. What other mysteries is this Meng Hao hiding?!”

“The Sublime Spirit Scripture, a precious teleportation treasure. The Violet Fate Sect will definitely get our hands on him!”

The Nascent Soul Cultivators returned, and the representatives of the five Sects and two Clans approached. Meng Hao’s good luck charm teleported him away. Meanwhile…

In the Black Sieve Sect, in the number one mountain which was situated in the very center of the Hundred Thousand Mountains, smoke curled into the air above a massive incense burner. At the moment, dozens of Cultivators began to shoot up and disappear into the smoke.

Down below, Patriarch Violet Sieve and the beautiful, middle-aged woman stood there grimly. They watched as the Cultivators above began to vanish.

Patriarch Violet Sieve frowned and said, “He’s using that good luck charm, which makes him difficult to track. If we dispatched Core Formation disciples, or magical items that can employ the power of Core Formation, then it would interfere with the Tri-Black Incense Burner, making it difficult to accurately pinpoint the teleportation ripples. The slightest mistake, and we could be hundreds of kilometers off. Furthermore, the Tri-Black Incense Burner can only be used once per month.”

“It doesn’t matter,” replied the beautiful woman coolly. “We may not be able to use Core Formation disciples, but Zhou Jie 1 is among the Foundation Establishment disciples we sent. Considering his Cultivation base, as well as his status as Dao Child, he’ll be able to distract Meng Hao. He only needs to keep him in place for a bit. The others can prepare the spell, and then we can be there in an instant. At that time, Meng Hao wouldn’t be able to escape even if he was given wings.”

“Don’t forget, we don’t know how many times he can use the good luck charm. If it was complete, then he would be able to use it seven times in total.” He watched thoughtfully as the last of the disciples vanished into the smoke above the Tri-Black Incense Burner.

“Don’t worry,” replied the beautiful woman, smiling. “Meng Hao is only at the mid Foundation Establishment stage. Based on the information in the ancient records, I did some calculation. Based on his Cultivation base, it should take him the time it takes two incense sticks to burn to be able to activate the good luck charm. As long as Zhou Jie and the others can hold him off for that amount of time, and prepare the spell, then Meng Hao is doomed. He’s nothing but a trifling Foundation Establishment Cultivator. Don’t worry, Elder Brother Violet Sieve. After that much time passes, we will be there in front of Meng Hao.”

As they continued their discussion, somewhere in an unnamed part of the Southern Domain, in the midst of a mountain range filled with hundreds of mountains, dark clouds filled the sky and lightning crashed down. A roaring filled the sky, causing the wild beasts in these desolate mountains to tremble, seemingly awed by the Heavens.

Great, bean-sized drops of rain poured down from the sky in a torrent. It was currently sunset, but the sun was completely covered by the clouds, making everything completely dark and hazy.

A lightning bolt slashed through the sky, and then suddenly ripples expanded out into the air, splitting the sheets of rain. A massive, swirling black hole appeared, and out staggered Meng Hao, his face pale. He immediately looked around.

The black hole disappeared, and rain fell onto Meng Hao. He didn’t even seem to notice it as he examined his surroundings. Finally, he let out a sigh of relief.

A cracking sound emanated from his hand. He looked down and could see that another large fissure had appeared on the surface of the good luck charm. It seemed he would only be able to use it a few more times before it shattered.

“This is a life-saving treasure,” he thought. “I can’t just use it lightly….” He hesitated for a moment, and then took a deep breath. His body suddenly vibrated. The rainwater shot away from him, and his clothes were no longer soaked.

“At the moment, I imagine all the Sects and Clans are looking for me.” He frowned. The golden glow of the Sublime Spirit Scripture had not been something he’d anticipated. Of course, he’d had no other choice than to flee.

“Thankfully, I got the Cubic Pearl. I wonder if it will be able to dispel the poison of the three-colored Resurrection Lily…?” His eyes began to glow, and he decided to go search for a quiet place in the mountains to carve out an Immortal’s cave and test out whether or not the poison could be dispelled. He had just taken a step when suddenly his expression flickered.

The place where the black hole had appeared moments ago had already returned to normal. And yet suddenly, he could see that another hole was opening up. It was pitch black inside and emanated a rippling power that caused the rain in the area to fly away.

Killing intent flickered within Meng Hao’s eyes. He could choose to flee. After all, the sudden appearance of this vortex could not be a coincidence. It must be someone pursuing him by tracking the ripples of his teleportation.

But he did not choose to flee. Rather, a cold light, threatening and determined, appeared in his eyes. He could flee for ten or so breaths worth of time, but instead, he decided that he might as well stay and attack.

As the thought coalesced into his mind, he began to stride forward. He waved his hand, and an enormous Wind Blade and Flame Dragon appeared, which shot toward the black hole and then slammed into it.

As the roaring Flame Dragon slammed into the black hole, a booming sound filled the air. The black hole began to fall apart. As it did, the shadows of dozens of Cultivators appeared. They began to coalesce, as if they were about to emerge.

Without hesitating, Meng Hao lifted his hand and bit down hard on one of his fingers. The Blood Finger technique instantly descended onto the weakened black hole.

Boom!

The massive booming sound drowned out the sound of crashing thunder. The black hole shook and then exploded into pieces. There were no blood-curdling screams. However, of the dozens of Cultivators who had been about to emerge, only half made it out alive!

The other half were wiped out with the destruction of the black hole!

Bloodless killing. It was only possible because of Meng Hao's decisiveness. Had he hesitated or fled, daring not to make a move, then he would now be facing not a dozen or so enemies, but double the current amount.

The dozen or so people who had appeared immediately erupted with the power of late Foundation Establishment. One in their midst was a man with long, dark hair. He was tall, slender and handsome, with thin lips and a strange glow in his eyes. His Cultivation base was at the great circle of Foundation Establishment, the Pseudo Core stage!

"Black Sieve Sect!" Meng Hao's eyes narrowed. He instantly recognized the garments of these Cultivators. His killing intent climbed higher. Now that he knew it was the Black Sieve Sect, everything made sense. He didn't say another word. From this moment forth he would attack with decisiveness, and not the slightest bit of hesitation.

He stepped forward, his five Perfect Dao Pillars rotating. They didn't leak the slightest bit of power. The raindrops around him vibrated as he approached the nearest Black Sieve Sect Cultivator.

The man gave a cold snort. He lifted his hand, and the illusory image of a large hand appeared, which shot toward Meng Hao. Without so much as a word, the other surrounding Cultivators also made beelines for Meng Hao.

Only the Pseudo Core stage Cultivator didn’t make a move. Off in the distance, he slapped his bag of holding to produce an incense burner about the size of a hand. He rubbed it, which caused it to ignite.

Smoke rose up into the air, congealing into concentric rings of magical symbols. It looked very much like a teleportation portal.

At the same time that the portal appeared, Meng Hao was closing in on the Black Sieve Sect Cultivator who had summoned the illusory hand. The Cultivator smiled ferociously. As far as he was concerned, this whole mission was really making a mountain out of a mole-hill. Being in the late Foundation Establishment stage, he could easily deal with a mid Foundation Establishment stage Cultivator. Wiping him out would be simple.

“I, Xie, shall get the credit for this one!” he said, laughing. He shot forward, and as he did so, a multitude of glowing spikes suddenly emerged from his shoulders. He clearly planned to slam them directly into Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever. He lifted his hand and pressed his finger into the approaching illusory hand. A boom sounded out, and the hand immediately disintegrated into countless shards. The Black Sieve Sect Cultivator named Xie stared in shock as Meng Hao closed in on him.

Meng Hao didn’t even look at the man. The power of his Cultivation base, which he had been concealing up to now, suddenly exploded out.

Boom!

Pressure billowed out from Meng Hao, and suddenly he was directly in front of the Cultivator. His hand shot out and clasped around the man’s neck. Eyes cold, he squeezed.

A cracking sound could be heard, and the Cultivator’s eyes bulged in death!

This was killing amidst the night rain!

1. Zhou Jie’s name in Chinese is Zhōu jié – Zhou is a common family name. Jie means “outstanding” or “heroic”

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# Chapter 201: The Dao Child Fights!

This could also be considered bloodless killing, because any shed blood was instantly cleansed by the pouring rain. The cleansing nature of the rain made Meng Hao more than happy to fight in the downpour. He didn’t waste power from his Cultivation base to push the rain away from him.

He slowly released his hand and then turned. Rainwater poured off of his chin and hair, soaking his clothes. Lightning flashed in the darkness of night, and Meng Hao suddenly seemed to emanate a demonic aura.

The surrounding Black Sieve Sect disciples were shocked. They looked at Meng Hao, not with contempt, but with concentration.

The Black Sieve Sect Dao Child Zhou Jie looked at Meng Hao with narrowed eyes. He didn’t attack, though, but continued to hold aloft the incense burner. Smoke curled up from it and was rapidly coalescing in mid-air. “Kill this person at any cost,” he said, his cold voice ringing out in the dark, stormy night.

There were more than ten Cultivators surrounding Meng Hao. Hearing the words of the Dao Child, they immediately prepared to attack. Magical techniques and treasured weapons of all sorts instantly bore down on Meng Hao. Booming sounds filled the air. This would be the most intense battle Meng Hao had ever faced; each and every one of these Cultivators was of the late Foundation Establishment stage.

As a matter of fact, a small Sect wouldn’t even be able to produce so many Cultivators of this level. A medium-sized Sect, even if they had so many, would never dispatch them all simultaneously. To any Sect, disciples of the late Foundation Establishment stage were good fortune from the Heavens. If even one from a group this size could reach Core Formation, he would be crucially important to the Sect.

Only a super Sect like the Black Sieve Sect had such extensive resources to be able to afford to dispatch so many late Foundation Establishment Cultivators.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. If he had not created his fifth Dao Pillar, then this battle would be extremely difficult, and potentially fatal. But now, with his fifth Dao Pillar, he was invincible to the battle power of the Foundation Establishment stage. Actually, you could say that currently, Meng Hao was the most powerful person under the Core Formation stage in the entire Southern Domain!

He laughed coldly as the Black Sieve Sect disciples approached. His left hand made a grasping motion in the air, and immediately, the Flame Dragon appeared in the form of the Flying Rain-Dragon. It didn’t completely appear, however. Meng Hao simply borrowed some of its heat to transform the surrounding sheets of rainwater into a thick mist.

As the mist roiled about, Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding, and the two wooden swords flew out. They circled around him for a moment, and then shot away.

The mist seethed, covering up the entire area so that nothing was visible. The heat in the area continued to turn to the rain into mist. Thunder pealed out, and lightning crashed down. One after another, blood-curdling screams rang out from within the mist.

Meng Hao’s shadow flitted about inside, carrying death with it. The two wooden swords swept out in front of him, severing the head of a Black Sieve Sect disciple. The disciple’s eyes filled with astonishment in the instant before he died.

The sounds of slaughter drifted out. Meng Hao moved like a specter. Cracking sounds rang out from his right hand as he crushed another

Cultivator. He tossed the body up ahead to block an incoming spear. A boom rang out as the corpse exploded to pieces. Meng Hao strode forward.

He waved his right arm, summoning the Wind Blade. It shot out, slicing another body to bits. The pieces of the corpse shot out from the mist and fell onto the ground.

Zhou Jie frowned when he saw this. However, he continued to manipulate the incense burner. The smoke drifting up from it appeared to be about sixty percent congealed.

Suddenly, another miserable shriek sounded out from within the mist. A Black Sieve Sect disciple, his body half destroyed, stumbled out. Just when it seemed he would escape successfully, Meng Hao's hand shot out and grabbed him by the top of the head. He pushed down, and the Cultivator screamed. Meng Hao's face emerged for a moment from the mist. He looked over at Zhou Jie.

Zhou Jie looked back, and as their gazes locked, Meng Hao smiled, and then disappeared back into the mist. He released his hand, and the Black Sieve Sect disciple slumped to the ground dead, his eyes still wide open.

Zhou Jie trembled at the sight of it, and an unsightly expression appeared on his face. The screams from within the mist seemed to be growing further and further apart. The booms grew weaker. Suddenly, a figure emerged from the mist.

“Elder Brother Zhou, save me!” cried one of the Black Sieve Sect disciples. His right arm had been severed, and a horrified expression covered his face. Despite his all-out push to escape, the words were barely out of his mouth when a meter-long phantom hand shot out from the mist. It moved at incredible speed, catching up to the escaping Cultivator in the blink of an eye.

It slammed into him, and a deafening explosion filled the air. The Cultivator's body began to tremble, and he opened his mouth to say something. Before he could, his body exploded.

By this time, the mist surrounding Meng Hao was beginning to dissipate. Meng Hao walked out. From the look of his robe and long hair, he seemed like a weak scholar. But the coldness in his eyes caused Zhou Jie to tremble.

More than ten Cultivators of the late Foundation Establishment stage… and only Meng Hao had emerged alive from the mist.

“Your excellency’s methods are a bit too ruthless,” said Zhou Jie, slowly lowering his hand. He knew that he had run out of time, and wouldn’t be able to continue his work with the incense burner.

The Black Sieve Sect had completely misjudged Meng Hao’s Cultivation base.

Actually, Patriarch Violet Sieve had received information regarding Meng Hao’s Cultivation base from the their Sect Elder who was currently in the Song Clan. He knew that his power exceeded that of the mid Foundation Establishment stage, and was more akin to the late Foundation Establishment stage.

However, Zhou Jie was now well aware that Meng Hao’s battle power was not comparable to the late Foundation Establishment stage. In fact, it could exhibit terrifying pressure that exceeded such power.

After close observation just now, Zhou Jie got the powerful sense that his opponent’s spiritual power was completely different from that of others. It looked like spiritual power, but it seemed to somehow be branded specifically to Meng Hao.

Logically speaking, the spiritual power of magical techniques with which Meng Hao attacked, should eventually dissipate back into Heaven and Earth. However, the power left over by Meng Hao’s attacks did not dissolve away. Instead, they seemed to be rejected by Heaven and Earth. They just floated there like oil on water.

It seemed that the explosiveness of this rejected power was one of the reasons Meng Hao was so powerful. Zhou Jie reached these conclusions quickly, but couldn’t figure out any solution to the problem. Fear filled his heart.

Because of this explosiveness, Meng Hao might be only at the mid Foundation Establishment stage, but decimating the late Foundation Establishment stage was as easy for him as crushing dry weeds and smashing rotten wood. That… was obvious!

Meng Hao’s spiritual power was different. It belonged only to him. The spiritual energy of others belonged to Heaven and Earth. By practicing breathing techniques, Cultivators could borrow it. Based on the various stages of Cultivation, the amount of time it could be borrowed varied. However, regardless of anything, all of the spiritual energy would once again return to Heaven and Earth upon death.

It was a cycle. Just like the nine paths in front of the gray-robed old man atop the World Tree, it was a rule of Heaven and Earth.

“I’m actually not ruthless,” said Meng Hao indifferently, “you people are. Actually, I’m pretty softhearted. However, your presence here is a bit of a problem.” He waved his hand, causing the mist behind him to disperse fully. The rain descended onto the two of them, seemingly dividing them inseparably. However, their gazes locked, and their expressions grew fiercer.

“I am Zhou Jie, Dao Child of the Black Sieve Sect!” Zhou Jie suddenly lifted his hand. In it appeared a one foot long, blue-colored joss stick. The joss stick was lit, and smoke curled up from its end to form the shape of a sword that glowed mysteriously. This was clearly no ordinary joss stick.

“I am Meng Hao from the State of Zhao,” said Meng Hao coolly. His right hand flashed an incantation gesture, and the two wooden swords appeared and rotated around him slowly. They emanated glowing sword auras, and emitted a droning buzz that made seem as if they thirsted for blood.

This was not the first time Meng Hao had faced a Dao Child in battle. The first time was when he had fought Li Daoyi, and had forced him to flee, severing his arm in the process. Then he had encountered Li Shiqi, and had competed against her in demonstrations of strength. Now he was up against Zhou Jie.

“I had three Dao Pillars when I fought Li Daoyi,” Meng Hao thought. “I had four when I faced Li Shiqi. Now I have five. I will now prove that the power of my five Perfect Dao Pillars is invincible in the Foundation Establishment stage!” An exuberant gleam appeared in his eyes. The two wooden swords seemed as if they could sense Meng Hao’s desire for battle. Their droning grew even louder, and their sword auras gleamed even more brightly.

“You look just like a woman I met while traveling a few years ago. I pursued her, but nothing ever came of it. She wasn’t named Meng, though.” Zhou Jie shook his head. Actually, Meng Hao was a person who he believed deserving of his respect. In truth, among the Foundation Establishment Cultivators of the Southern Domain, he had only ever respected about ten people. Each and every one of them was a Dao Child!

But today, he recognized Meng Hao’s existence. Meng Hao was someone who could stand shoulder to shoulder with the current generation of Dao Children.

Even as the words left his mouth, Zhou Jie’s body exploded with the power of the great circle of Foundation Establishment. It rippled out, causing his hair to fly about. The rainwater around him shot away from him, as if it didn’t dare to touch him. A fierce look filled his eyes as he strode toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed, and he too began to stride forward. His Spiritual Sense shot out.

Rain fell around them as this battle of those at the peak of the Foundation Establishment began!

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# Chapter 202: Confrontation of the Peaks!

The multiple layers of clouds overhead smashed into each other, and the sound of thunder shook the earth. Down below, Meng Hao and Zhou Jie strode toward each other. Their eyes locked, and the power of their Spiritual Sense rocketed forward.

An attack of Spiritual Sense is formless and invisible. In terms of killing potential, though, its power far exceeds that of magical items!

Mutually caught in each other’s gazes, Meng Hao and Zhou Jie both began to tremble. Zhou Jie felt like he was being crushed by innumerable mountains. Blood oozed out from the corners of his mouth. He set his jaw, and a look of ferocity sprang up onto his face.

Meng Hao seemed affected too. He pursed his lips, however, and no blood appeared. He snorted coldly, and then continued to walk forward. As the step descended, both people once again trembled.

Zhou Jie’s face was a bit pale. He could tell that he was not superior in terms of Spiritual Sense. Without hesitation, he retreated several paces, flashing an incantation gesture with his left hand. The foot long joss stick in his right hand immediately let off twisting strands of smoke which transformed into a curved blade that shot toward Meng Hao.

As the blade flew through the air, the smoke which comprised it began to spread out. Soon the outline of a figure could be seen. It appeared as if a person were holding the curved blade, chopping it directly toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. His left hand formed an incantation gesture, and the two seemingly eager wooden swords emitted an intense droning sound and then transformed into two beams of light which split the air as they sped toward the curved blade.

They arrived in an instant. There was no evasion, no twirling around. The two attacks seemed to be archenemies. They slammed into each other so powerfully, that it was clear one would be destroyed.

A boom echoed out, and Meng Hao waved both of his hands. It was as if there were invisible strings attaching the wooden swords to him; they immediately began to emit an intense sword aura that rippled out to fill the area. Everything started to shake. Who would possibly dare to approach?

A booming sounded out, and a strange look appeared in Zhou Jie’s eyes. He lifted his left hand and waved it in front of him, then pressed down on the joss stick in his right hand. More smoke billowed out; in the blink of an eye, it transformed into more than ten weapons, each of them wielded by a phantom figure. All of them charged toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s face was the same as ever as he looked at the approaching smoke phantoms. He lifted his hands, then extended them outward. The two wooden swords emitted explosive screeching sounds. Suddenly, all of the spiritual energy of Heaven and Earth seemed to rush toward them. The sword auras surrounding them expanded by thirty meters, and the swords themselves seemed to transform into two flying Sword Dragons which circled around Meng Hao.

A roaring sound echoed out from the approaching smoke phantoms as, one after another, they disintegrated, incapable of approaching Meng Hao.

“So you like defense,” said Zhou Jie coolly. “I can help with that.” A cold light shone in his eyes as his left hand flashed with another incantation gesture and then pressed up against the joss stick. It burned more furiously, and large quantities of smoke poured out. The smoke formed layers which expanded out in concentric rings.

Each new smoke ring was larger than the one before it. Soon, more than a hundred rings had formed, which then shot toward Meng Hao. They spun around him, as if in an attempt to envelop him.

The smoke rings seemed about to swallow him up, and yet Meng Hao’s expression didn’t change in the least bit. He opened his mouth, and the lightning mist appeared. In the past, the lightning mist had absorbed Tribulation Lightning, as well as some of the will of the lightning in the square cauldron. At the moment, it seemed to be undergoing another bizarre transformation. As it spread out, thunder crashed up above in the sky.

The lightning mist seemed to be affecting the clouds, causing them to congregate, as if lightning would begin to crash down at any moment. It seemed that the area outside of Meng Hao’s lightning mist would soon become a sea of lightning!

The mist expanded, and then the lightning crashed down; roaring filled the sky. The instant the smoke rings were touched by the lightning, they exploded into fragments.

Zhou Jie’s eyes narrowed. He had never expected such a tactic. Meng Hao walked forward, surrounded by the lightning mist.

The mist around him roiled, and thunderous booms filled the air. Incited by the lightning, the two wooden swords exploded with the vicious will of extermination. Meng Hao’s hair whipped around his head and rain poured down around him. Anyone who saw him would be struck to the heart with a frightening, demonic sensation.

Suddenly, a domineering aura began to emanate from Meng Hao, the first time such an aura had appeared on him!

“Actually,” said Meng Hao casually, “what I like best is attacking.” He strode forward, seemingly filled with overwhelming power. He was like some sort of ancient wild beast, ready to conquer the world.

Zhou Jie’s expression flickered as he suppressed the desire to retreat. Meng Hao now seemed completely different than he had been moments ago when he had been defending himself. He seemed to overflow with ferocity, as if he had previously been a sheathed sword… which had just been drawn!

It was time to display some skill!

One step, two steps, three steps…. With each step that Meng Hao took, thunder boomed even louder. Lightning filled the sky. The complete power of Meng Hao’s Cultivation base exploded out, bolstered by his expanding Spiritual Sense. Zhou Jie was shocked, and he knew that he must not allow Meng Hao to gather more momentum. If that happened, he would be very difficult to stop.

Just as Meng Hao’s third step landed, Zhou Jie’s eyes filled with determination. He loosened his right hand, and the joss stick, which was now little more than half a foot long, suddenly flew up.

Veins of blood shot through Zhou Jie’s eyes as both hands flickered with an incantation gesture. He shoved his hands out in front of him.

“Green Smoke Exterminating the East Pass!” He spoke the words in conjunction with the outstretching of his hands. The joss stick ignited, burning a significant amount of its length to create a thick smoke which flew straight toward Meng Hao.

“Burst!” cried Zhou Jie. The thick smoke suddenly exploded outward. Everything in the area shook violently, and the noise from the explosion drowned out the sound of thunder. The smoke even covered up the lightning as it rippled out in greenish waves that carried deadly, exterminating power.

Meng Hao’s body shook. The lightning mist around him quivered, and then simply burst apart under the strength of the attack. The two wooden swords fought against the incoming attack, and Meng Hao flew backward four or five paces. Blood seeped out from the corners of his mouth.

“It seems that Dao Children from the great Sects really are pretty badass….” Meng Hao took a deep breath, and his eye flickered. Zhou Jie stood there, his face somewhat pale. However, his eyes gleamed as he extended his hands forward in another incantation.

More of the joss stick burned away. Now, it was barely two inches long. Thick smoke roiled toward Meng Hao.

“Burst!” howled Zhou Jie, more lines of blood appearing in his eyes. Even as the smoke exploded out, Meng Hao lifted his right hand and struck it forward five times.

Black Sieve Five Strikes! 1

The five strikes were executed with extreme speed, and were completed in the blink of an eye. As the exterminating smoke mist expanded out, an enormous hand appeared in front of Meng Hao. It shot directly toward the smoke.

An earth-shaking boom resonated out. All of the raindrops in the area exploded into minuscule drops of water. Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed, and he shot backward a pace. His five Perfect Dao Pillars rotated, and made the five-strike attack over and over again.

One giant hand, two giant hands. In the blink of an eye, no less than ten giant hands appeared in front of Meng Hao. It was a frightening sight. All of the hands glowed with a golden light as they whistled through the air toward Zhou Jie.

Zhou Jie’s eyes were nearly completely filled with blood. His hands flickered continuously with incantation gestures. The joss stick was now completely burned away. The smoke mist it created shot toward Meng Hao’s incoming hand attacks. When they slammed into each other, a huge boom filled the air.

A gale force wind shot outward, and ripples emanated out in the air. The trees swayed backward, and the rainwater was transformed into a mist. Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth, and yet, his expression grew fiercer.

Zhou Jie staggered backward seven or eight steps, and, unable to control himself, coughed up a huge mouthful of blood. His face was pale, and yet his eyes gleamed brightly.

Neither of them spoke, as they stared at each other. Both of them knew that this battle… was far from over.

Zhou Jie had only used one magical item. He hadn’t even employed any of the magical techniques of his Sect, nor any killing moves. Neither had Meng Hao.

They looked at each other for the space of three breaths, whereupon Zhou Jie lifted his head up to the sky and laughed. “The Great Black Clouds Palm! What a familiar magical technique! Brother Meng, since you know this technique, I think today would be a good opportunity to exchange some pointers. Let me show you why the Black Sieve Sect’s Great Black Clouds Palm is known by the moniker Black Clouds!” He lifted his right hand, and his breathing suddenly seemed to become strange and ragged. As his hand rose, illusory images appeared.

Each image was the shape of a hand. In total, twenty-six of them appeared. Zhou Jie’s eyes narrowed, and he stretched his hand out toward Meng Hao.

“This is the true Great Black Clouds Palm!” As Zhou Jie’s voice rang out, he struck forward, and an enormous hand appeared. It emitted a black glow, and as it formed it seemed to be composed of mist. This black mist was none other than the namesake black clouds!

The Black Clouds Palm screamed through the air toward Meng Hao, filling the area with a thunderous roar. Be it in terms of profundity or power, this attack vastly exceeded the incomplete version which Meng Hao had learned.

Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed, but he said nothing. This was his personality; when engaged in magical battle, he would rarely speak. Everything he wanted to say was said in attacks. By not speaking, he increased the viciousness of those attacks.

He lifted his right hand and used his index finger to slice open a cut on his thumb. As the blood flowed out, everything in Meng Hao’s eyes turned red.

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# Chapter 203: I am Strong! I Shall Take My Stand!

Blood Immortal Legacy!

Without a face, a single word, the flames of war unify

Sundered clouds, a bloody rain, seas that fill the sky

Capture the gods, advance the troops, fire consumes the towers

Forge all spirits and bloodlines into the 9 killing powers! [1]

These words contained magical powers. For the power to be unleashed required a sufficient Cultivation base, namely, Core Formation. Meng Hao was well aware that he was incapable of using it.

However, the Blood Finger, the Blood Palm and the Blood Death World, did not have a Cultivation base requirement. With sufficient spiritual energy, they could be unleashed. In addition to the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex, these were his killing moves.

Upon the path he trod to reach this day, Meng Hao had used the Blood Finger technique multiple times. It was clearly uniquely powerful, enough to shock anyone who saw it being used. The world in front of Meng Hao appeared to be red, which was a sign of the Blood Finger. Meng Hao had long since gotten used to this blood-red world. He looked at Zhou Jie, and the massive hand formed by the Black Sieve Sect’s magical technique, Great Black Clouds Palm. It screamed through the air toward him.

The hand itself seemed to be formed from black coloured mist, and yet it was also interlaced with a strange Qi. As the hand approached, it seemed to grow larger and larger. Meng Hao could imagine that soon it would fill his entire vision, and blot out the rest of the world.

It made him think back to the time in the State of Zhao when Lord Revelation had floated in the air above the Reliance Sect, and sent a palm strike down into the ground. At that time, he had been too weak to even struggle. The palm destroyed the Reliance Sect, and left a massive hand print in the earth.

But a red blur had appeared in the sky, like a sword that could sever Heaven and Earth. It split the hand in two, saving Meng Hao. In his mind, Meng Hao could see that massive hand descending upon him. 2

Of course, Zhou Jie couldn't even come close to comparing with Lord Revelation. And yet, the scene today was very reminiscent….

Meng Hao suddenly smiled, a wordless, soundless smile. He lifted his hand toward the incoming palm. The incoming palm attack grew closer and larger, kicking up a fierce wind which sent Meng Hao's clothes and hair whipping about….

Meng Hao lifted the thumb of his right hand, and then slashed it toward the incoming Great Black Clouds Palm.

This slash was like a flash of blinding light in the midst of pitch blackness. It was a slash like the brightness seen when opening the eyes for the first time. This slash was just like the one the Demon Lord had used to sever Lord Revelation's palm attack. This slash… was evidence of the enlightenment Meng Hao had experienced underneath that massive palm in the Reliance Sect in State of Zhao!

I am strong! I shall take my stand!

A roaring boom filled the air. Meng Hao stood there, not moving a muscle. The massive incoming palm was a mere seven inches from him when a huge crack appeared, beginning at the top of the middle finger and snaking down all the way down through the gigantic palm. Then it split out, growing wider and wider. Meng Hao stood there calmly, safely, as the palm passed by. Wind screamed, buffeting his hair wildly. However, in the midst of the whipping hair, his eyes shined brightly. They were like sunlight in the dark of night. Anyone who caught sight of it would find the light… blinding!

“Do you want to keep going?” asked Meng Hao calmly, flicking his sleeve.

Zhou Jie stood there silently, looking at Meng Hao. Bitterness arose in his heart, but a moment later, the will to fight once again sparked to life in his eyes.

“Of course I want to keep going,” he replied coolly. “From the moment I became Dao Child until now, I’ve never been defeated.” He took a breath, waving his hand toward the incense burner off to the side. Instantly, the incense burner began to tremble. Cracks appeared on its surface, and popping sounds rang out as it collapsed into pieces. “No one should interfere with our fight now.” His words were simple, and so were his actions. However, this simplicity revealed incredible power, the power of a true expert. It was only the seed of power, but even that little bit caused Meng Hao’s eyes to narrow.

“He’s cut off his own path of retreat,” thought Meng Hao. “With nowhere to run to, he can only rely on himself, and will be forced to utilize all of the power he can muster. This Zhou Jie really is an outstanding person.3” He nodded.

Zhou Jie lifted his hand and then pressed down onto his bag of holding. From within, five glittering strands of light emerged. Suddenly, the darkness around them disappeared as brilliant light filled the air. The bright light was emanated from what now hovered in front of Zhou Jie. Five glowing swords!

Five glittering swords, glowing with a variety of colors!

Zhou Jie reached out and extended his fingers. The five swords moved to his fingers, one hovering beneath each.

“Sieve Moon Mother Earth, Heaven Splitting Sword Formation!” Zhou Jie’s hand pushed down toward the ground. As it did, the brightly glowing swords also shot down, and then disappeared.

The instant the swords disappeared, Meng Hao’s pupils constricted, and he shot backward six paces.

Almost simultaneously, the five swords suddenly reappeared out of thin air. They shot upward, heading directly toward Meng Hao, who was still in the midst of retreating.

The glittering light they emitted was dazzling as they screamed through the air. They were winding beams that were instantly upon Meng Hao, their sword auras billowing up to the sky. The sword Qi seemed to have locked Meng Hao up tightly; death surrounded him in all directions.

“Interesting,” said Meng Hao, his eyes narrowing. He lifted the thumb of his right hand and waved it toward the five swords.

A boom filled the air, and suddenly a blood-colored shield surrounded Meng Hao, thirty meters in each direction. The five swords slammed into the shield, causing a massive roar to echo out.

Zhou Jie coughed up some blood and then flickered in an incantation with both hands. The five swords emitted a shrill screaming sound. A flash of light burst out, and the five swords turned into twenty five swords!

The swords filled the air as they shot once again toward Meng Hao. Their intense power caused Meng Hao to be filled with a sense of life-or-death danger.

However, his expression remained the same as ever. As the twenty five swords shot toward him, he flicked his sleeve. The power of his Cultivation base roiled out. He slashed his index finger with his thumb causing blood to pour out. Using the power of two Blood Fingers, he gestured up into the air.

Boom!

The massive explosion was enough to distort one's vision. Everything in the area seemed to twist. The twenty five swords were blocked. Zhou Jie let out a howl. He pushed his hands against his chest, and veins popped out on his face. The twenty five swords flew up into the sky, and in an instant, transformed. One hundred and twenty five swords now filled the sky. From all directions, they descended upon Meng Hao.

They slammed into the glowing blood shield, which distorted and began to retract. In the blink of an eye, it had shrunk by nearly ten meters. Nearly half of the swords passed through it, pressing on toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and slashed a third and fourth finger. Four fingers were now filled with the power of the Blood Immortal Legacy. The glow of blood filled the air as Meng Hao slashed the fifth finger!

The five fingers were covered in blood, forming the shape of a bloody handprint. This was the second of the three Legacy techniques, which contained power exceeding the Blood Finger. This was… the Blood Palm!

The Blood Palm appeared, filling the sky with a shocking roar. A massive blood-colored palm magically coalesced above Meng Hao's hand. He waved his hand, and the bright red, bloody glow spread out, sweeping through the sword formation and causing the more than one hundred glittering swords to tremble and fly backward. Meng Hao took a step forward, waving his hand once again.

A roaring sound could be heard as the space three hundred meters surrounding Meng Hao suddenly was filled with the image of an enormous, blood-colored hand. Meng Hao stood at its very center. The massive hand shot into the air, then clenched into a fist.

Zhou Jie's face twisted. He coughed up more blood and rapidly flashed some incantation gestures in an attempt to regather his glittering swords. Instead, his face drained of blood.

The more than one hundred swords were apparently under the control of the massive clenched fist. They struggled as if they wished to free themselves, but were unable to.

Thirty of the swords trembled so violently that they eventually let out plaintive whines and collapsed into pieces.

Meng Hao snorted coldly. Roaring filled the air as thirty more flying swords disintegrated, and then another thirty. Finally, another thirty….

In the space of a few breaths, all of the flying swords were shattered to pieces by the massive clenched fist. The blood-colored hand slowly disappeared. As it did, five glittering, crack-filled swords appeared in front of Meng Hao.

“I have one last technique!” said Zhou Jie through clenched teeth. His eyes were crimson as Meng Hao waved his hand, sending the five glittering swords into his bag of holding.

“Black Sieve, Immortal Subjugation!” howled Zhou Jie. His left hand pushed down on his forehead. At the same time, he waved his right hand. Instantly, dozens of jade slips flew out. Cracking sounds filled the air as each and every one cracked into pieces. A sweet, beautiful aroma filled the air. However, it quickly turned into a disgusting odor which made one wish to vomit out their internal organs.

Suddenly, a Qi filled the entire area, which seemed to belong to Zhou Jie…

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. Suddenly, the archaic voice from the Demon Sealing Jade echoed in his mind.

“A hosts of evil spirits which call themselves Immortals ( ). But why fear a man ( ) and a mountain ( )? If you encounter them, seal them immediately!” 4

Meng Hao was used to the sudden appearance of the voice in his mind. He looked over at Zhou Jie, sensing the increasingly powerful Qi which radiated out from him. Zhou Jie’s twisted face no longer looked handsome. Instead, it seemed as if countless faces of others were flickering atop his own.

Anguish filled Zhou Jie’s face, and it appeared as if he couldn’t hold on much longer. Slowly, the life began to drain away, and his face began to grow dark. It turned out this technique could not be used by someone of the Foundation Establishment stage, not even…

A Dao Child!

“Demon Sealing, Eighth Hex!” Meng Hao slowly lifted his hand. A Qi suddenly began to emanate from him that outsiders would not notice, but was absolutely visible to the countless bizarre spirits which were currently pouring into Zhou Jie.

The legion of faces which hovered on top of Zhou Jie’s face, one and all, filled with expressions of terror…

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3. This is a slight play on words, because the “jie” character in Zhou Jie’s name means “outstanding”

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# Chapter 204: The League of Demon Sealers!

Demon Sealing, Eighth Hex!

This was the only technique among the Demon Sealing Sect’s magic that Meng Hao had truly mastered. You might even say that it was not a magical technique, but a divine ability!

Every generation of Demon Sealers must create a new hex, and this one was created by the Eighth Generation Demon Sealer. As the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer, Meng Hao should have been prepared to face everything. However, Patriarch Reliance had ruined everything. Had it not been for a host of coincidences, as well as good fortune, Meng Hao would never have been able to learn the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex.

He took a deep breath and lowered his right hand. Ghost images appeared of everything in sight. Meng Hao’s body trembled, and the world shook. Everything folded in onto Zhou Jie, causing countless ghost images to appear around him.

All of this takes some time to describe, but in fact happened in an instant. The ghost images began to vanish. Miserable screams echoed out from Zhou Jie; the voices did not belong to him, but rather the spirits which had entered his body.

Zhou Jie’s body trembled, and his eyes were filled with confusion. A pulsating black aura drifted out from his body. The aura was extremely dense, and within it could be seen nine phantoms, images of old men with faces twisted in insanity and horror. They glared at Meng Hao.

No observer would be able to see these images… neither could they hear… the blood-curdling shrieks!

Meng Hao was the only one who could see or hear any of it. He was the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer, and despite having not yet fully realized his potential, his drop of blood had already confirmed his identity as the Ninth Generation. That was irrefutable.

Therefore, he could see these things.

The phantom spirits screamed miserably and then began to speak.

“The League of Demon Sealers, you’re the Ninth Generation….”

“The day our Dao was realized, you Demon Sealers blocked us, refined us, preventing us from becoming Demons!”

“Who cares about the League of Demon Sealers? They’ll become like us eventually, discarnate souls of Heaven and Earth!”

As their words echoed out, their bodies began to tremble, and their screams grew more intense. The black aura around them began to dissipate, and they began to be absorbed into the ground. Their figures grew indistinct and then began to disappear.

Meng Hao watched on thoughtfully. He didn’t know much about the League of Demon Sealers; he was gradually learning along the way. Looking at the discarnate souls had caused a coldness to flash through his eyes. He waved his right hand.

As he did, the discarnate souls vanished. Their dying cries echoed into Meng Hao’s ears.

“Shatter the League of Demon Sealers! Lord Ji has replaced the Heavens and forged the Immortality Bestowal Dais. We struggled to become Immortal, and then died. What of it? Your League prevented us from achieving our Dao. Just wait until things change, then see which of the countless discarnate souls in Heaven and Earth will devour you!!”

As the sound of the voices continued to echo out, Zhou Jie's pale face began to recover its complexion. His eyes were still filled with confusion.

Meng Hao glanced at him thoughtfully for a moment, then turned with the flick of a sleeve and began to walk off into the rain.

Zhou Jie watched Meng Hao's figure disappearing. He took a deep breath, and then clasped hands and bowed deeply.

"Next time we fight," he said under his breath, "I won't kill you, even if I win. I will repay your kindness, and prove the determination of my Cultivation." Then he turned weakly, disappearing into a beam of light.

Meanwhile, deep in a limestone cave in the Hundred Thousand Mountains of the Black Sieve Sect…. The moment the discarnate souls died, furious howls could be heard. Although they echoed up into the sky, not a single Black Sieve Sect disciple could hear them.

"The League of Demon Sealers! He's of the League of Demon Sealers!!"

"Damn those Demon Sealers, each and every generation! Lord Ji fears them, and cursed the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer to die! This is the Ninth Generation…."

"Death, death, death…. The League of Demon Sealers must die! Every generation!!"

"Immortality Bestowal Dais lacks only the spirit of a Demon Sealer. Find him! Snatch his spirit and drink his blood to gain an Immortal body!!"

As the howls rang out, the entirety of the Hundred Thousand Mountains suddenly shook. The mountains shook, the ground shook, as if the spirit of the mountains was aroused. Pulses of black aura drifted up, causing the sky to grow dark.

However, at the very moment in which the pulses of black aura were about to shoot out, the corpse which had fallen from the sky to land near the Southern Domain's Rebirth Cave, suddenly shook 1. As it shook, and aura emerged from it, an aura not visible to any living person. It instantly spread out throughout the Southern Domain, filling it with terrifying force.

This terrifying force caused the discarnate souls beneath the Hundred Thousand Mountains to tremble. Everything grew silent.

“Who are you!?” Amidst the deathly silence, a powerful aura exploded out from deep beneath the Hundred Thousand Mountains. It seemed powerful enough to cause the corpse to tremble. When the other discarnate souls saw it, they prostrated themselves as if this aura were their sovereign.

The billowing aura filled the sky above the Black Sieve Sect, covering the land for millions of kilometers in every direction. Everything became pitch black. The strangest thing was… no one could actually see this! To any onlooker, the sky was as blue as the deep blue sea!

The voice which responded was deep and archaic. “I came seeking destiny,” it said. The sound echoed throughout the Hundred Thousand Mountains of the Black Sieve Sect, filled with the ancientness of countless years. It seemed… somewhat tired.

Within the exhaustion was a barely detectable… killing aura.

It seemed as if this person had lived a life of battle, had killed so many times that it was impossible to describe. The voice seemed to contain a shocking will.

“What do you want?!” said the sovereign-like aura above the Black Sieve Sect.

“Destiny comes and destiny goes. The Dao will always exist. This kid has destiny. If you interfere, I will abandon rebirth, change my plans, and instead slaughter all of you.”

The sovereign-like aura said nothing. After some time passed, it faded away. As it did, a haughty voice rang out.

“There’s no need to change your plans. We will come for you! Select thirty Chosen from the Black Sieve Sect and send them to our Black Underworld Cave! We will return to the mortal world!”

Meanwhile… deep in the recesses of the Rebirth Cave, was a corpse. It was not the corpse of a human, but rather, a fish. It was a small fish, about the size of a hand.

The place where the fish’s eyes once had been suddenly began to burn with a underworldly fire.

Next, deep beneath the Milky Way Sea, the long rope stretched along the seafloor toward the wooden coffin that rested amidst the massive formation of stones [2]. A scratching sound could be heard, as if someone was inside the coffin, scratching the lid with their fingernails.

A raspy voice sounded out: “League of Demon Sealers….” The voice was filled with melancholy, and reminiscence. The words drifted slowly up, causing a violent storm to break out on the surface of the Milky Way Sea.

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End of Book 2: Cutting Into the Southern Domain

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Note from Deathblade: He’s right. Book 3 is amazing

[1] For more information on this see the entry “Immortal’s Corpse” in the glossary

[2] For more details on the rope and the fisth, see the entry “Roc” in the glossary

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# Chapter 205: Dispelling Poison with the Cubic Pearl!

Book 3: The Honor of Violet Fate

The rain continued to fall, but the horizon was no longer pitch black. Moonlight could be seen through the clouds, and far in the distance, the glow of the morning sun was just becoming visible. Night was beginning to fade, and sunlight approached.

As the sun replaced the moon, rain fell down, and Meng Hao proceeded onward. His expression was calm, as if nothing had just happened. This rainy day made him think about the snow back in the State of Zhao.

He wasn't sure exactly where he was within the Southern Domain. The only thing he could see was a mountain range that stretched off into the distance. His only company was the falling rain and the cold wind.

His battle with Zhou Jie had confirmed the battle prowess of his five Dao Pillars. He could definitely suppress Dao Children, the most powerful of the Foundation Establishment stage!

"Unfortunately, I'm still lacking in terms of techniques," he thought. "I have a similar problem with magical items, otherwise I could have completely crushed him." He walked along in the rain, lost in thought. The Cultivation world was much different from the life of a scholar. He was gradually learning how to identify his weaknesses. He could not allow his weaknesses to cause his next battle to end with his own death.

"There's not much I can do regarding magical techniques. Joining the Violet Fate Sect would help a lot, if I could somehow figure out a way.

However… as for magical items….” Meng Hao frowned.

All of his magical items had been acquired through battle. However, the more powerful his Cultivation base grew, the less effective his magical items became. The wooden swords, the lightning mist and the little black net all grew with him, but as for the fan, the bow and the other items, they were gradually becoming less and less useful.

“I’m not completely stuck in this regard, though. I have two methods which can be used to forge magical items. I could go to the Black Lands to search for the Frigid Snow Larva. If I feed it the Sieve Net Thunder Mulberry Leaf, it will transform into the Eyeless Larva, which can produce indestructible silk threads! 1

“I also have the jade page from Han Bei’s ancestor which can be used to forge the Time treasure. Either one of these two could solve my current problem. Unfortunately… both are incredibly difficult, and can’t be accomplished quickly. Of course, there’s also the flag with three streamers, although I can’t even touch it with my current Cultivation base….” He shook his head, looking around at the unceasing rain. It seemed to be growing heavier. Meng Hao’s body flickered, and he shot toward the nearby mountain range. He waved his hand, and a flying sword screamed out and carved an Immortal’s Cave into the side of the mountain.

With the flick of a sleeve, he flitted like a nightingale into the Immortal’s Cave, where he sat down cross-legged to meditate. His Cultivation base rippled with power, and the heat which spread out from him caused all the moisture in the newly carved cave to instantly disappear.

He spat out the lightning mist, which spread out to cover the entire cave, including the entrance. Then he closed his eyes and rotated his Cultivation base. After the time it takes half an incense to burn, he opened his eyes and slapped his bag of holding. When he lifted his hand up, it was holding the Cubic Pearl.

At first look, it appeared to be square, but upon closer examination, it actually wasn’t. It was very bizarre. Meng Hao looked at the pearl and took a deep breath. His eyes shone with anticipation.

He took out the copper mirror and made a copy. Unfortunately, he didn’t have many Spirit Stones left. After hesitating a moment, he decided not to make any more copies.

“I hope this pearl can dispel the poison of the Resurrection Lily,” he said, eyeing the pearl with glittering eyes. He wasn’t sure exactly how the pearl worked, but he was not the same Cultivator he used to be. He was as powerful as someone from the late Foundation Establishment stage. Without a moments hesitation, he cast his Spiritual Sense into the pearl.

After a moment, he frowned, then bit the tip of his tongue and spit out some blood onto the pearl. In the blink of an eye, the pearl absorbed the blood, and then suddenly began to melt.

Strands of white light floated up, along with a delicate, purifying fragrance. Meng Hao’s eyes began to shine. After a long moment, he waved his hand, and the Immortal’s Cave shook. A crack spread out on the ground, and suddenly a vine burrowed up.

Under Meng Hao’s direction, the vine stretched out toward the white strands, and then began to absorb them. The white strands instantly shot toward the vine, entering into its body. Meng Hao watched on, eyes glittering.

After the space of about ten breaths, the vine began to change color. Soon, it was no longer dark red, but pure white. A sense of purity radiated out from it.

More time passed. Meng Hao looked thoughtfully at the slowly melting pearl, and the white strands which floated up from it. His eyes filled with determination, and he began to breathe deeply. The strands flew toward him, entering his body through his mouth and nose.

He closed his eyes, and after about ten breaths had passed, his body began to quiver. Veins bulged on his face, and his eyes snapped open. Within his pupils could be seen the crying-laughing demonic faces. On top of the faces suddenly appeared layer after layer of white strands.

It appeared as if the white strands were attempting to purify the Resurrection Lily within Meng Hao.

Time slipped by. Soon, an hour had passed. Sweat poured off of Meng Hao like rain. His face was pale, but his eyes radiated stubbornness. He took a breath, and more white strands floated into his body through his mouth and nose. As they did, the demonic faces in his pupils began to twist and distort.

Faint screams echoed out in Meng Hao’s mind, and his body felt as if it were about to be torn to pieces. There seemed to be a battle of life-and-death going on inside of him. The demonic faces in his eyes were even more twisted. Ghost images appeared, and a black aura began to pour out of the top of Meng Hao’s head. The aura twisted and coalesced into… a three-colored Resurrection Lily!

The Cubic Pearl seemed about to darken, as if it were going to release the full power of its aura. It was now half of its original size. It seemed that it would soon have used all of its effectiveness, and the white strands would disappear.

Meng Hao’s eyes shined brightly. Without hesitation, he reached out and grabbed the pearl. This time, he didn’t breath in the strands, but actually consumed the entire pearl.

A roaring sound filled his body that seemed to create a harmony with the crashing thunder on the outside. The Resurrection Lily on his head writhed as if it were being buffeted by a powerful wind. Finally, it showed signs of dissipation.

Shrill shrieks filled his head, and his face distorted. However, without hesitation, he lifted up the second Cubic Pearl and, gritting his teeth at the loss of Spirit Stones, made another copy.

After making the second copy, he was now out of Spirit Stones. Eyes radiating stubbornness, he lifted both Cubic Pearls and put them into his mouth.

A shocking, thunderous roar filled Meng Hao as soon as the Cubic Pearls entered his mouth. The roaring was so incredible that it expanded out to fill the surrounding mountains. White strands spread out from Meng Hao's pores, swirling up and surrounding his body.

The three-colored Resurrection Lily on his head suddenly quivered. It seemed to be fading, as if it would completely dissipate at any moment. As Meng Hao sat there surrounded by the white mist, the demonic faces within his eyes emitted constant ghost images, and slowly began to fade away. It seemed the pearl really was capable of dispelling the poison.

After about an hour passed, the image of the Resurrection Lily on the crown of Meng Hao's head was almost completely invisible. There was no trace whatsoever of the demonic faces in his eyes. But then…

Suddenly, the mist which had been dispelling the Resurrection Lily suddenly diffused outward. Next, the white strands began to seethe, congealing above Meng Hao's head. A red streak appeared in their midst, followed by a bright yellow streak, and finally a streak as blue as the sky.

The four colors mixed together within the churning mist, forming together to make… a four-colored Resurrection Lily!

Apparently, the Resurrection Lily couldn't be destroyed. Even as it died, it would reappear as if it had been reincarnated.

An unsightly expression appeared on Meng Hao's face as he observed the four-colored Resurrection Lily. His eyes glimmered darkly, but then suddenly began to shine.

Upon closer inspection, it seemed the four-colored Resurrection Lily, which resembled a demonic face, had an aura that was not any stronger than the three-colored Resurrection Lily from before. In fact, this new Resurrection Lily was trembling.

"That's not the fourth color!" thought Meng Hao, his eyes narrowing. After thinking back to the four-colored Resurrection Lily he had seen in the

Blood Immortal Legacy tournament, he realized that his own Resurrection Lily was different. 2

“If it had actually developed a fourth color, then my consciousness would have been lost, and I would have transformed into a Resurrection Lily. But I don’t feel strange at all. Furthermore, the color of this fourth petal….”

Suddenly, the quivering four-colored Resurrection Lily spasmed. Its white petals collapsed into pieces, which then transformed into a white glowing light. The light shot toward the blue petals, and the Resurrection Lily began to tremble even more violently for the space of a few breaths. Meng Hao continued to observe, eyes shining.

He watched as the blue petals began to wither, and then disappear. Now, the Resurrection Lily was composed of only two colors. Upon closer inspection, the blue petals hadn’t completely disappeared, but was still barely visible. In fact, it seemed as if they would gradually reappear.

The two-colored Resurrection Lily seemed weaker, yet at the same time emanated a pure aura. Apparently, after absorbing the Cubic Pearl, the Resurrection Lily had lost one of its colors. Other than that, it seemed like the poison-dispelling power of Cubic Pearl didn’t affect the Resurrection Lily at all.

The two-colored Resurrection Lily flickered. Meng Hao was powerless to do anything as it slowly sank back down into him through the top of his head. Its aura was much weaker, however. Meng Hao stood up. After a moment’s hesitation, his eyes filled with resolve.

“The Cubic Pearl was somewhat effective. However, if I want to completely dispel the poison, I have no other choice than to infiltrate the Violet Fate Sect. There, I can search for a method to completely rid myself of it. This thing is really like a bone stuck in my throat!”

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# Chapter 206: The Huang Clan Five Immortals 1

Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding to retrieve the blood-colored mask. He looked at it for a moment. Unless it was absolutely necessary, he didn’t want to get tangled up with the meat jelly again.

It had reached a terrifying level in terms of being annoying, which Meng Hao had experienced first hand. After a moment of thought, he reached into the mask with Spiritual Sense.

It was dark inside, and as soon as Meng Hao entered, he sensed the mastiff’s aura. It was growing more and more powerful, causing Meng Hao to feel somewhat calm.

The Blood Mastiff was his most powerful and deadly ally. He couldn’t wait for it wake to up and stand at his side like it had when it was a puppy. It would lift its head to the sky and roar.

Next, Meng Hao’s Spiritual Sense moved on, pausing for a moment on the flag of three streamers. After a moment, he moved on. It was obviously a precious treasure, but he couldn’t do anything with it now.

When his Spiritual Sense reached the Li Clan Patriarch, he stared in shock.

The man was more thin and pallid than ever. He was incredibly weak, and it seemed as if his spirit might collapse at any moment. Despair filled his eyes. Meng Hao suddenly got the feeling that he had underestimated the fearsomeness of the meat jelly.

The meat jelly parrot was currently perched on the shoulder of the Li Clan Patriarch, its eyes glowing as it talked. Every few breaths, the Li Clan Patriarch would shudder.

Meng Hao hesitated, then gritted his teeth and slowly approached. The meat jelly suddenly looked up, having sensed Meng Hao's Spiritual Sense. It cried out.

"Eee? You're here! Why don't you join us? The old man and I were just discussing a sunset from seventy thousand years ago. We haven't finished yet, and he promised to listen until the end." The meat jelly seemed very excited at the prospect of Meng Hao joining the discussion.

Meng Hao's heart trembled, but before he could say anything, the Li Clan Patriarch looked over at him. His eyes glistened as if he were looking at a blood relative, and he emitted an excited shout.

It was a shout that seemed to be filled with reckless abandon.

"My name is Li Xuefeng! I'm a Patriarch of the Li Clan from seven thousand years ago. I possessed one of the Divine Watchmen within the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament. I beg you, please take the bird away. I'll tell you everything. Ask me anything, what do you want to know…? I know techniques from the Li Clan, divine abilities. Whatever you want to do, I can help you. I can tell you anything. Please, take it away, I…"

"Shut your mouth!" said the meat jelly indignantly. "You show no respect for your elders! Am I really so annoying? Y-y-you, you're too immoral! You're mine!!" He turned to look solemnly at Meng Hao. "He's mine! I still haven't brought him back from the path of wickedness. I still have seventy thousand years of…."

"He's yours! Yours!" said Meng Hao hurriedly, in a voice which could sever nails and slice iron. Without hesitation he continued, "I guarantee it. He's definitely yours!"

"Very well, then. You seem to be in a lovely mood, so I won't permit you to participate in the current discussion. I need to teach a lesson or two to this old man," it said angrily. "I can't believe he tried to tattle on me. I hate tattling, it's very immoral…." It spoke with fury, but excitement filled its eyes. The sudden introduction of a new conversation topic made it very enthusiastic.

Despair filled the face of the Li Clan Patriarch. He gazed pleadingly at Meng Hao, his eyes filled with regret. Why had he insisted on being so arrogant before? If he had just yielded earlier, he would never have been forced to face the torment of this frightening bird.

His life recently had been a living hell, a nightmare worse than death. His entire body suddenly shook.

Meng Hao cleared his throat.

Paying very close attention to his wording, Meng Hao said, "Senior, I was thinking about your ever-changing forms. Soon, Junior will be infiltrating a Sect. Is there any way Senior could possibly lend me some of your power of ever-changing forms?" Even as he spoke, he slowly edged backward.

The meat jelly turned and looked at Meng Hao in surprise.

"What are you going to do? Are you planning some evil deed!?"

"Of course not!" His voice filled with an air of righteousness, Meng Hao said, "You see, there are some extremely wicked people in this Sect. I want to infiltrate them in an attempt to catch the evildoers. Then, Senior can educate them, and help bring them back from the path of wickedness."

The meat jelly suddenly seemed very excited. "Oh, so that's your plan! Very well, very well. Meng Hao, you are really doing the right thing. Such evildoers really must be educated by me… although…." Suddenly it seemed hesitant.

Meng Hao's next words were spoken in a mesmerizing tone. "Senior, how about this: over the next few days, I will go capture some bullies for you to guide and help."

“Oh?!” The meat jelly seemed even more excited, and its hesitation began to wane.

It was time to strike while the iron was hot! “How about two bullies?” said Meng Hao.

The meat jelly quivered and flapped its wings excitedly. However, it still seemed a bit hesitant.

Gritting his teeth, Meng Hao said, “Five bullies! It will take me a few days, but I can go find five bullies for you.”

The meat jelly let out a delighted squawk. Its entire body shook, and its eyes shined red with excitement. It stared at Meng Hao, panting. “Bring me three bullies!!” it cried. It looked at Meng Hao nervously, as if it were worried he would disagree.

“Huh? Three?” Meng Hao stared in shock. At first, he had assumed the meat jelly would try to get even more out of the deal. Instead, it was the opposite.

“Three!” roared the meat jelly. “Bring me three bullies, and I’ll help you. Less than three and the deal’s off!” It seemed it felt it was risking everything in its request.

Meng Hao felt that the whole situation was very strange, but he nodded nonetheless. “Okay, I’ll get you three bullies. Not one less!” With that, he retracted his Spiritual Sense. He took a deep breath as he looked at the blood-colored mask. A strange expression covered his face.

“Could it be that the meat jelly doesn’t know how to count? I offered five, and then it demanded three, and looked like it was going all out….” Mumbling to himself, Meng Hao put the mask away, turned, and left the Immortal’s Cave. The rain had long since ceased. He turned into a white beam of light which shot off into the distance.

Two days later.

On a mountain path walked a muscular man of about thirty years of age. He wore a yellow gown, had small eyes, and a mustache shaped like the character . Next to him walked a young man, toward whom he smiled and said, “Junior Brother Meng, it’s not far now. Up ahead is where my older brothers and I reside. Once we’re there, you’ll have to stay for a while. You and I hit it off immediately, didn’t we? We’ll definitely have to become sworn brothers. You know, the Huang Clan Five Immortals are very well-known in these parts. We can really be of some help to you!”

The young man had a bashful expression on his face. His Cultivation base seemed to be at the eighth level of Qi Condensation, one level higher than the yellow-robed Man.

“Thanks, big bro Huang,” the young man said shyly. “This is the first time I ever left the Sect, so I’m very fortunate to have met you.”

“Outside your Sect, you have to rely on friends. It’s really no imposition. My older brothers and I are all very hospitable. Little bro, you’re so young, and yet have such a high Cultivation base. Your future prospects are limitless! I’m sure that you’ll soon be a very famous person in the Southern Domain. You might even be able to outshine Chosen. You know, my older brothers and I think that making friends is very important, and we’re happy to do so.” The yellow-robed man laughed heartily, then slapped Meng Hao on the shoulder. His eyes, however, glittered with contempt and greed. He glanced conspicuously at Meng Hao’s bag of holding.

He had never seen such a bag of holding before; it was obviously something beyond ordinary.

Of course, a man like him would never have a chance to lay eyes on such a bag of holding. This bag was none other than the bag of the Cosmos. And the young man was obviously Meng Hao.

They had run into each other just this morning out in the wild mountains. The instant the man caught sight of the bag of the Cosmos, he had coveted it. But once he saw the level of Meng Hao’s Cultivation base, he gave up any ideas of trying to steal it. Instead, he had engaged in lively smalltalk for quite some time.

The man smiled at Meng Hao and thought, “Some disciple from a Sect I’ve never heard of goes out on his own for the first time. A disciple like that must surely have some life-saving treasures from his Sect. However, someone like this doesn’t have any experience. Only a few flattering words, and I’ve already won him over.” In the man’s mind, he had already figured everything out about his opponent.

Meng Hao looked more bashful than ever. However, in his heart, he was rejoicing. It had only taken him two days to find some local tyrant Cultivators. Even better, the man was leading him to a place where there would surely be more tyrants of the type that the meat jelly would like.

As they chatted, an Immortal’s cave suddenly appeared up ahead of them at the bottom of a mountain. Its sealed main door was enormous, made from solid limestone. From the look of it, the Immortal’s cave must take up half the inside of the mountain. On either side of the main door were two stone guardian lions, extremely lifelike in appearance. They didn’t seem to fit in with the surroundings, as if they had been transported here from somewhere else.

There were also two towers near the entrance of the Immortal’s Cave. These towers were constructed, not from earth and wood, but from bones. There were bones of both humans and animals, all piled up. It all was very gruesome.

“Here we are, little bro!” said the yellow-robed man, laughing loudly.

Meng Hao frowned. “This place….”

“I know what you’re thinking,” said the man. He continued, his voice firm: “But we’re out in the wilderness. Though we don’t cause problems for others, we do have to take some precautionary methods. Decorations like this only serve to frighten off the thieves and miscreants.”

Meng Hao didn’t respond, but a cold light gleamed in his eyes.

The yellow-robed man didn’t notice Meng Hao’s look. He waved his sleeve, and a flying sword flew out. He jumped on, and transformed into a colorful beam of light which glided through the air toward the Immortal’s Cave.

Meng Hao followed suit, his eyes gleaming coldly.

As the two of them approached the main door of the Immortal’s cave, the yellow-robed man waved his sleeve. A bright beam of light shot out, landing on the door. It rumbled, and then slowly began to open up.

Almost as soon as the door began to open, three Cultivators emerged from within. They were all about forty years old, with Cultivation bases at the ninth level of Qi Condensation. Two had fierce bearings, while the other was lean and haggard, with treacherous eyes. He held a fan in hand. He smiled as his gaze swept over Meng Hao.

The yellow-robed man laughed as he landed next to the three others. He turned and looked at Meng Hao, smiling. “Older brothers, I ran into friend Meng here on the road this morning. This is his first time outside of his sect. I invited him to spend some time with us. Please, join me in welcoming him!”

1. In this case, Huang is the Chinese character huáng, which is a common surname, but also means “yellow”

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# Chapter 207: This is a Pretty Nice Immortal’s Cave

The two large, fierce-looking men eyed Meng Hao for a moment and then smiled. Whichever way you looked at their smiles, they appeared vicious. It was as if they were staring down a helpless little lamb.

The man with the fan seemed to be the most treacherous of the group, and his smile appeared the most sincere. He clasped hands and saluted Meng Hao.

“I, Huang, heard the birds singing earlier, and couldn’t help but wonder if a guest would be arriving. Fellow Daoist, a single glance at you and I felt the aura of a hero wash over me. Hearing Fifth brother’s words just now, I can tell that you are a dragon among men, venturing out of his Sect for the first time. Fellow Daoist, you are the type of person I revere the most. Please, come into our Immortal’s Cave and relax for a moment.”

“Well…” said Meng Hao, seemingly unsure of how to respond to such praise. Clasping hands, he bowed back to the man. However, he appeared to be hesitant to enter the cave. Inwardly, he sighed. The man’s flattering words were obviously full of lies. Meng Hao could have come up with something much better to say, were he in the other position.

“Little bro,” said the yellow-robed man, his eyes flickering, “we’re here at the main door. Come come, follow me in. Now that you’re here, you’re home!” He pulled at Meng Hao’s sleeve, dragging him into the Immortal’s Cave.

The other men clustered around hesitating Meng Hao as the yellow-robed man graciously led him inside. The limestone door slowly closed behind them. Immediately, the glow of luminescent pearls filled Meng Hao’s eyes.

The Immortal’s Cave was quite spacious and luxuriously decorated. It was filled with a variety of different rooms, including a pill concocting room and a medicinal plant courtyard.

With a candid laugh, the yellow-robed man made introductions: “Little bro, this is Second Brother, and this is Third Brother. After Fourth Brother, is me the Fifth Brother.” As he made the introductions, he gave a meaningful glance to the treacherous looking man who ranked second.

“Greetings, Fellow Daoists,” said Meng Hao shyly, clasping hands to them. He glanced around, a pleased expression in his eyes. When his gaze fell upon the luminescent pearls, his eyes shined brightly.

“Fellow Daoist Meng, what do you think of our Immortal’s Cave? Not bad, huh?” said Second Brother Huang with a smile, gently fanning himself. His expression was tinged with a disdainful look that he assumed others wouldn’t see, an expression that made it clear he was playing some sort of game. He stared at Meng Hao.

“It’s pretty good,” said Meng Hao, “pretty good. Very complete, with plenty of private rooms. Really, it doesn’t seem common in any aspect.” His praises sounded very sincere. “These luminescent pearls are especially incredible. It seems the spiritual energy here is quite abundant. Don’t tell me you have a Spirit Spring, too?” He asked the question in a very astonished tone.

“There absolutely is a Spirit Spring,” said Second Brother Huang with a laugh. “That’s exactly why the five of us decided to build our Immortal’s Cave here.” The contempt in his eyes grew more obvious. In his mind, Meng Hao was prey trapped in a tiger’s lair.

The Third and Fourth Brothers Huang both gazed at Meng Hao, their hideous grins growing wider. They clearly viewed Meng Hao as a sheep in a wolf’s den!

As for Fifth Brother Huang, he continued to eye the bag of holding strapped to Meng Hao's waist. His smile grew more brilliant. He obviously thought that today was his lucky day to have snatched up such a cash cow.

Meng Hao also smiled. Although he still looked a bit bashful, his smile was genuine, and quite happy. The Immortal's Cave really seemed to contain some good opportunities, as did this group of men. They continued to herd him along.

"Eldest Brother recently brought in an artist to paint a portrait of him," said Second Brother Huang. "It's not really convenient for him to come out. Fellow Daoist Meng, why don't we go see him?" Without giving Meng Hao a chance to refuse, he pulled him toward the middle of the Immortal's Cave, where there was a vast, open area filled with luminescent pearls. At the far end was an enormous throne.

The throne was constructed from crystals, and upon it sat a large man. He appeared to be about fifty years old. He wore a long violet robe, and had a very dignified countenance. Even though he tried, it was impossible to cover up his fierceness. He radiated an intense killing aura.

His Cultivation base was not at the Qi Condensation stage, but the early Foundation Establishment stage!

In front of the large man sat a stooped, withered old man with long white hair. His body trembled and the paintbrush in his hand quivered. The outline of the large man could be seen on the canvas in front of him.

The man's eyes flashed over the group as they approached. He completely ignored Meng Hao, focusing instead on the yellow-robed man. He gave a cold harrumph.

"If you don't have something important to do, don't leave," he said. "I've been jumpy lately, and have a bad feeling. Now that you're back, sit down. I'll have this painter do a portrait of all of you."

Eyes filled with veneration, the yellow-robed man nodded his head in agreement. He stepped forward and sat down next to the violet-robed man.

Second Brother Huang and the others clasped hands in respectful salute. Ignoring Meng Hao altogether, they moved forward to sit down.

No one said anything, and soon Meng Hao was standing there alone, an awkward expression on his face.

The large, violet-robed man looked at the painter and said, “You paint some good portraits of us, you hear? If you do, then I won’t cause any trouble for you.” Hearing the man’s cool words, the stooped, white-haired old man shivered and nodded.

“Second Brother, I’ve really been feeling uneasy lately. Don’t forget to check the teleportation portal. If any problems occur, we can get out of here instantly. Third and Fourth Brothers, you two listen well. No going outside!” Each and every word uttered by the violet-robed man caused the others to nod in agreement. None of them payed any attention whatsoever to Meng Hao. He stood there awkwardly. In his opinion, the man should at least greet him. Finally, he gave out a dry cough.

They ignored the cough and continued talking. The violet-robed man didn’t so much as look at him. The others, including the yellow-robed man, didn’t look his way either.

Meng Hao sighed, then coughed a little louder, interrupting the dialogue. Finally, the eyes of the five men fell upon him.

“Who’s this?” said the violet-robed man with a frown, his voice sinister.

“That’s a kid that Fifth Brother picked up when he went out,” said Second Brother Huang, waving his fan. He laughed. “Apparently it’s his first time out of his Sect.”

“This kid is a real idiot,” said the yellow-robed man, laughing. “His bag of holding is clearly incredible, so I chatted him up. Who could have imagined that he would be taken in by my rambling!? I led him right here.”

Hearing this, the violet-robed man looked Meng Hao over, then coolly said, “Hand over your bag of holding.” His expression was one of arrogance;

seeing that Meng Hao was at the Qi Condensation stage, he obviously felt that he was virtually beyond notice.

Meng Hao smiled and glanced around. The look in his eye made it seem as if he were looking at his own house. “This is a pretty nice Immortal’s Cave. Why don’t you give it to me? Oh, your throne looks pretty good too, if a bit extravagant. I’ll take that as well.”

The violet-robe man gaped at Meng Hao. The Third and Fourth Huang Brothers, as well as the yellow-robed man, all burst out into arrogant laughter. As it echoed throughout the Immortal’s Cave, Second Brother Huang’s eyes narrowed and filled with a look of concentration.

“Actually, I’ll take all of you along with the Immortal’s Cave,” said Meng Hao. With a chuckle, he began to walk forward. Before he could even take a step, the Third and Fourth Brothers Huang leaped up. They were tall and stalwart, with fierce expressions. Laughing contemptuously, they rushed toward Meng Hao.

“You brat, you dare to speak such nonsense in your Elders’ Immortal’s Cave!? Aren’t you scared!?” They weren’t very far away from Meng Hao, and it took only a moment for them to near him. They were just about to employ some magical techniques when Meng Hao again cleared his throat.

As he did, he completely ignored the two, and took another step forward. When they ran into him, it was like they had slammed into some immovable force. Blood sprayed from their mouths, and their trembling bodies tumbled backward, slamming up against the wall. They coughed up more blood and looked in shock at Meng Hao. Their Cultivation bases were suddenly suppressed, making them little more than mortals.

Everything happened too quickly. Before the others could even react, Meng Hao had reached the crystal throne.

“Are you looking to die!?” cried the yellow-robed man. His body shot forward. Next to him, Second Brother Huang’s eyes flickered, and he waved his hand. A Flame Bird magically appeared, which shot toward

Meng Hao. Second Brother Huang himself, however, shot backward in retreat.

All of this takes some time to describe, but actually happened in an instant. Meng Hao didn’t even need to lift his hand. He glanced indifferently at the incoming yellow-robed man. The man’s mind suddenly reeled, and he felt a stabbing pain as some incredible power pulsed in his heart. His vision grew dim, and he began to tremble in despair. The incredible pressure inundated him, and he was powerless to resist it.

Blood shot from his mouth, and he tumbled backward, slamming into the wall. Fear and intense astonishment filled his eyes. His body trembled. The only thing he could think of was the weak, shy expression on Meng Hao’s face when he had met him, that made him look like a helpless animal.

“Who… who are you…?” he said, his heart filling with indescribable dread. How could he possibly have imagined that what he brought into his home was not a helpless lamb, but a vicious wild beast!?

As for Second Brother Huang’s Flame Bird, before it could even near Meng Hao, it shook, and then disintegrated. To Meng Hao, a Flame Bird technique such as this was like a child’s toy sword.

In the space of an instant, four of the Huang Clan Five Immortals were reduced to a state of shock. The large, violet-robed man still sat on the crystal throne, his face draining of blood. He watched Meng Hao approaching, and his face distorted. With a cry of rage, he leaped up. The instant he did, Meng Hao’s gaze fell upon him.

When the gaze entered the violet-robed man’s eyes, it hit him like a world-shaking thunderclap. An incredible roaring filled his mind, causing his body to spasm. A feeling of imminent life-or-death crisis washed over him. It was as if this gaze could pierce the world itself, and instantly exterminate him.

“The great circle of Foundation Establishment….” gasped the large man, his voice faint. Disbelief filled his eyes.

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# Chapter 208: Ask Not The Heavens Regarding Slaying the Flower

Despair and bitterness welled up within the heart of the large, violet-robed man. He immediately lost all will to fight back. Being at early Foundation Establishment, he simply didn’t have the courage to attempt to fight with someone of the great circle of Foundation Establishment.

As Meng Hao calmly approached him, he retreated backward several paces. Without hesitation, he clasped hands and saluted.

“Greetings, senior,” he said. Then to the others, “Hey you, why haven’t you paid respects to the Elder?!” Mumbling and trembling, the Second Brother Huang hurried over and bowed deeply to Meng Hao.

His heart quivered with fear. How could he ever have imagined that what he previously believed to be a weak little lamb could instantly transform into a devilish fiend that could slaughter him hundreds of times over?

Third and Fourth Brothers, as well as the yellow-robed man, immediately joined the violet-robed man. Trembling, the five brothers all bowed repeatedly to Meng Hao.

The most bitter and regretful of all, of course, was the yellow-robed man….

He glanced over at the violet-robed man to find him staring over with an expression of deep, venomous hatred. The yellow-robed man’s eyes darkened, and he very nearly fell into a coma out of fright.

Coughing lightly, Meng Hao sat down onto the crystal throne. The five men were now standing where he had been just moments ago….

The old painter stared in frightened awe.

The violet-robed man's heart was filled with anxiety and his scalp was numb. "Sir…." he said. He was just now wrapping his mind around what had happened. His body trembled.

Meng Hao looked at him and said, "I can see that you have some problems with your Cultivation base. You've been stuck with only one Dao Pillar for years. How about this: I have a medicinal pill that would be very beneficial." He lifted up his hand, in the middle of which was a medicinal pill.

It was a very common pill for the Foundation Establishment stage. However, its effectiveness was a bit….

"How many Spirit Stones are you willing to pay for it?" asked Meng Hao coolly.

"Uh…." The violet-robed man gritted his teeth, then pulled out his bag of holding and handed it over to Meng Hao. Meng Hao frowned slightly, causing the trembling violet-robed man to turn and glare ferociously at the four men other behind him. Each and every one was shaking in their boots. One by one, they pulled out all of their belongings. In the end, the violet-robed man procured all of the items and wealth they had saved up over the years in their Immortal's Cave, as well as the cave itself, and offered it to Meng Hao. All in exchange for one medicinal pill.

His expression the same as ever, Meng Hao collected up the various valuables. Then he glanced at the yellow-robed man, who looked back sullenly, and then the Second Brother Huang.

"I heard you mention there's a teleportation portal here?"

"Yes, yes there is," replied Second Brother Huang. Not daring to leave out any information, he quickly gave a full description: "Actually, we didn't bring the portal here; it's a natural function of the Immortal's Cave, which we accidentally discovered. It works, but it will only teleport to one fixed location." His heart was filled with virtual agony, as well as complete enmity for the yellow-robed man. “Dammit, Fifth Brother,” he thought, “who is this that you brought back with you? He’s some kind of Patriarch!!”

Meng Hao nodded. He had already used his Spiritual Sense to confirm the location of the teleportation portal. Looking back at the five men, he suddenly waved his arm. Unable to resist, the five of them were instantly swept up. All they could see was a blur as they entered the world of the blood-colored mask which lay inside Meng Hao’s bag of the Cosmos.

Everything was the color of blood. The meat jelly was in the midst of educating the Li Clan Patriarch, who sat there, emaciated, a blank, agonized look in his eyes. He looked more dead than alive, his body slack.

The meat jelly immediately noticed Meng Hao appear with the five Huang Clan men. Its eyes filled with excitement, and he instantly cast aside the Li Clan Patriarch.

“Bullies!” he cried, flying over. “I smell bullies! They’re all bullies, all immoral!!” It flew a few circles around the five Huang Clansmen, who were clearly disoriented and terrified. The meat jelly was getting more excited.

Meng Hao cleared his throat and said, “Senior, these are the bullies I promised to bring you a few days ago. They need education from you to bring them back from the path of wickedness.”

“Excellent, excellent,” said the meat jelly with a nod. “You kept your word, as shall I. First, let me count.” It flapped its wings as it settled onto the shoulder of the large, violet-robed man.

“One… two… three…” The meat jelly began to count, starting with the violet-robed man and the proceeding onto the Second and Third Brothers. When its eyes fell upon the Fourth Brother, it suddenly stared in shock. “One… two?” It flapped its wings as it reached the yellow-robed man. Suddenly, an angry, humiliated expression appeared on its face. It spun and glared at Meng Hao. “Liar!!”

Meng Hao gaped at the meat jelly.

“Look!” roared the meat jelly furiously. “One, two, three, one, two!! You’ve brought me two bullies, and I asked for three! I wanted three bullies!!” It clearly believed itself to have been swindled.

Meng Hao stared with wide eyes. Suddenly, everything became clear. This damned meat jelly really could only count the numbers one, two and three?

Without hesitation, Meng Hao quickly swept up the yellow-robed man as well as the Fourth Brother. Instantly, they disappeared.

“That was just a little mistake,” said Meng Hao quickly. “Why don’t you count again?”

The meat jelly carefully began to count again. “One, two, three… Haha! There are three! Three bullies. Excellent, excellent.” Excited once again, it beat its wings and flew around in a few more circles. Suddenly, a glow like lightning shot out from it toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao didn’t evade. The lightning glow slammed into him, melding with his Spiritual Sense.

“This is my will of lightning,” said the meat jelly, which had already landed on the shoulder of the violet-robed man. “You can use it to change forms one time. Make sure to bring back some more bullies!” It looked at the violet-robed man with a friendly expression. “Hey. Hello. My name is Ultimate Vexation. What’s your name?”

The large, violet-robed man stared in shock. Not waiting for him to reply, Meng Hao quickly left the blood-colored mask. He could only imagine what would happen after the man responded. A sea of suffering awaited him….

Back in the Immortal’s Cave, Meng Hao sat there, a thoughtful expression on his face.

“The meat jelly can only count from one to three…. Very useful.” After a moment, he looked over at the old painter, who sat there with a dull expression on his face.

“Senior,” he said softly, “what village are you from? I can take you back home.”

The man looked scared. He hesitated for a moment, then said in a trembling voice, “But… my painting isn’t finished yet. Do you mind if I paint you?” His eyes shined with anticipation.

Meng Hao was shocked for a moment. Then his eyes narrowed, and he looked closely at the old man. No matter which way he looked at him, the man seemed mortal. After a while, Meng Hao nodded. “Thank you so much, sir,” he said, continuing to sit there on the crystal throne.

The old man took a deep breath, and then lifted the paintbrush, hand trembling. Looking at Meng Hao, he began to paint.

Time passed slowly. It took about four hours, during which time Meng Hao waited patiently. The man painted earnestly, and Meng Hao sat without moving.

After a while, the old man put down his paintbrush. He eyed the painting in front of him, and a satisfied expression filled his eyes. He looked up at Meng Hao and smiled.

“Finished,” he said. “Why don’t you take a look? Does it look like you?” His face was filled with anticipation.

Meng Hao smiled. He stood up and walked over to stand next to the old man. What he saw on the canvas was a young man sitting upright in a chair, surrounded by mountains. You couldn’t say that the painting wasn’t good, but there was something about it that just didn’t seem right. It only bore a thirty percent resemblance to Meng Hao.

“Very good,” said Meng Hao, smiling and nodding his head. “What are these two marks here?” He lifted his hand to point at the painting, where two long, thick marks could be seen. Meng Hao wasn’t sure what they meant.

“What’s above all of us?” asked the old man, smiling.

Meng Hao looked at him in surprise. Then, he smiled. “The sky,” he said quietly.

“Think about it for a moment,” said the old man, gazing at Meng Hao. His smile seems to contain some sort of hidden meaning. He looked completely different than he had just moments ago. Meng Hao thought for a moment, and then looked up. His eyes glittered as his vision passed through the Immortal’s Cave to look up at the sky outside.

After some time passed, Meng Hao lowered his head. The instant he did, his pupils constricted. The old man… was nowhere to be seen!

An archaic voiced suddenly filled the Immortal’s Cave, causing Meng Hao’s body to quiver. His Spiritual Sense suddenly scattered. “Because of the ten thousand year old will of the World Tree, my residual self is here today. It is fate that I came here today to paint for you. I have sealed the true form of the Resurrection Lily, refined its nature talent and fused it with your spirit. While it is sealed, it cannot harm you. Furthermore, you will be able to draw upon the Resurrection Lily’s nature talent of plants and vegetation. When enough time passes, you can cast away my residual will which seals the flower. Every ten thousand years, I commit one person to memory. Furthermore, a person who exists in my memory cannot be exterminated by the Karmic Severing of those surnamed Ji.”

A long moment passed before Meng Hao took a deep breath. His eyes shone brightly as he turned once again to look at the painting. He gasped and stared in shock.

The image on the painting was not that of Meng Hao, but of a… Resurrection Lily!

It looked savage, unwilling, and even insane. It appeared to be sealed inside the painting! The image was incredibly lifelike!

There were also some words written on the painting.

The day the Resurrection Lily blooms with seven colors, the flower falls, Immortal Ascension, one thousand years. Karma is hidden in the Immortal

Mountain. Ask not the Heavens regarding the path to slaying the flower.

Painted in the Southern Domain, Planet South Heaven, for my young friend.

Shui Dongliu. 1

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# Chapter 209: Opportunity for a Secret Meeting

Meng Hao took a deep breath. He lifted his head and was lost in thought for some time. Within his mind swirled images from that day within the cloud vortex in the Song Clan. When he'd stood on the enormous tree looking out into the emptiness, he'd seen words written and signed by Shui Dongliu!

A long moment passed. Finally, Meng Hao sat down cross-legged on the ground to examine himself. After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, he opened his eyes, which shone brightly. It was clear to him that the Resurrection Lily had been completely repressed by some intangible force. It seemed to be asleep, sealed.

This effect was much more powerful than that of the Spring and Autumn tree, and would give him much more time to completely dispel the poison. Taking a deep breath he carefully rolled up the painting, and then clasped hands and bowed deeply for the old man.

"Many thanks for your assistance, Elder," he said, holding his bow for the space of ten breaths before straightening. He had no idea why this old man had appeared, or why he had been waiting, seemingly for Meng Hao himself.

"Shui Dongliu…." After another moment, Meng Hao turned and headed to examine all of the secret rooms in the Immortal's Cave. Everything that he could take with him, he packed away. Afterward, he went to the teleportation portal. Although he hadn't studied teleportation portals very much in the past, he had used them several times. He pulled out a spirit stone and placed it into the middle of the portal. Gleaming light shined out, and soon, the glow of teleportation surrounded Meng Hao.

A droning sound filled the air, shaking the entire mountain. The light flashed blindingly, and then disappeared. Meng Hao also disappeared without a trace.

Southern Domain. State of Eastern Emergence, Violet Fate Sect territory. In the middle of the remote mountains was a towering peak, carved into which was an Immortal's Cave. A radiant, glittering light appeared and then slowly vanished. Meng Hao immediately walked out.

He looked back at the abandoned Immortal's cave and the run-down teleportation portal. Not sure whether he would need to use it again one day, he committed its location to memory, then disappeared into a beam of prismatic light.

As he flew along, a rippling glow suddenly spread out in layers over his body. When it faded, his appearance had completely changed. His skin was no longer dark, but rather fair and clear. He looked much younger, perhaps sixteen or seventeen years old, and emanated a completely scholarly and refined air. He looked completely different, even somewhat soft and immature.

“I bet all the Sects and Clans in the Southern Domain are looking for me, thanks to the Sublime Spirit Scripture incident. But now, I can infiltrate the Violet Fate Sect. Be it with the goal of dispelling my poison, learning alchemy, or to master Violet Qi from the East… I absolutely must join this great Sect.” His eyes filled with resolve.

Several days later, outside the Violet Fate Sect, in a city of Cultivators.

Violet Moon was a flourishing, bustling city, a hub of activity for Cultivators in the State of Eastern Emergence. This was especially true in the seventh month of the year, when the Violet Fate Sect held its yearly Pill Auction. During that time, the city usually was filled with even more Cultivators than usual. It wasn't just the Sects of the State of Eastern Emergence that would come, but Sects from throughout the Southern Domain. Many would teleport here just to attend the Pill Auction.

The so-called Pill Auction was a massive convention hosted by the Violet Fate Sect to auction off medicinal pills. Master alchemists from the Violet Fate Sect would offer up their best medicinal pills. Not only would they make tidy profits, but it allowed them to show off their pill concocting talent to the rest of the world.

During the Pill Auction, even the Furnace Lords of the Violet Fate Sect would sometimes participate. When that happened, it would always cause quite a stir, and attract the attention of other great Sects.

After all, Furnace Lords from the Violet Fate Sect were different than normal master alchemists. Other Sects wouldn't be able to raise up a single one, no matter how high of a price they paid. In the entire Southern Domain, only the Violet Fate Sect could train Furnace Lords.

Half the reason the Violet Fate Sect could become one of the great Sects of the Southern Domain, was because of its alchemists. The other reason was the fragment of the Sublime Spirit Scripture which gave them the Violet Qi from the East technique.

Because of this, the Violet Fate Sect was structured into two divisions. One part of the Sect was made up by the Violet Qi Division, the other part of the Sect was made up of the East Pill Division!

The Violet Qi Division practiced Cultivation related to the Dao of magical techniques. The East Pill Division was devoted to the Dao of alchemy. The two divisions both complemented and respected each other. Because of this relationship, the Violet Fate Sect occupied its current position.

This year's Violet Fate Sect Pill Auction would take place in only a few days, within Violet Moon City. Currently, a young scholar of about sixteen to seventeen years old stood in the public square in the city center, gazing off into the distance at a mountain. The mountain glowed with a violet light that rose up to the heavens. It turned the entire sky a violet color, and from a distance, it didn't appear to be a mountain but actually… a colossal mountain-sized statue!

The statue depicted an old man. In front of the old man was a pill furnace shaped somewhat like a mountain, as well as an enormous scroll, both of which emanated violet-colored light. With a mere glance, anyone could tell that this place was anything but ordinary.

This was the main gate of the Violet Fate Sect!

Next to the young scholar was a skinny, middle-aged man of about thirty years of age, with shifty eyes. He sighed emotionally and said, “That’s the Founder of the Violet Fate Sect. His Daoist name was Reverend Violet East. He’s long since achieved Immortality. However, the Daoist doctrines he left behind have been built upon down until this very day. They became the foundation upon which was built one of the five great Sects of the Southern Domain, the Violet Fate Sect.”

His eyes filled with veneration, he continued, “Later generations remembered his countenance and, using a mountain as the base, carved out that statue. The pill furnace in front of him represents the East Pill Division of the Violet Fate Sect. The scroll represents the Violet Qi Division. Together, they form the majestic main gate of the Violet Fate Sect. Beyond that gate are endless mountains, all connected with suspension bridges. It forms an amazing sight that outsiders aren’t able to gaze upon. That, is the Violet Fate Sect.”

The young scholar seemed to be completely wrapped up in the man’s words. However, deep in his eyes existed a cold light.

Naturally, this young scholar was none other than Meng Hao, with his new appearance. The skinny man next to him was a guide he’d found who helped strangers familiarize themselves with the city.

“If only I could join a great Sect like this, then I would be able to live without regrets,” Meng Hao said softly, gazing at the majestic main gate. His words were filled with longing.

“That’s pretty much impossible,” laughed the skinny man. “The Violet Fate Sect rarely recruits new disciples. Even when they do, it’s usually only from the Sects and Cultivator Clans within the State of Eastern Emergence. They almost never accept outsiders. If they did, the State of Eastern Emergence would be filled with people dreaming of joining. Young friend, it's still early. What sort of things are you interested in buying, I can take you to find them?"

"There's no need, I already found what I was looking for." Meng Hao laughed, then took out a Spirit Stone and handed it to the skinny man. He gave him a slight bow and then walked out of the square.

The skinny man stared at him in surprise for a moment, and then pocketed the Spirit Stone. He had led the young man around all morning, showing him all around the city but not taking him to any markets whatsoever. Putting the matter aside, he walked off. There was still a whole afternoon in which to find other customers.

Meng Hao traversed the streets surrounding the public square. Halfway down one block, he suddenly stopped and glanced over at a nearby store. It was a medicinal pill shop. On the wall inside the shop, he could see some old, dried up medicinal pills, arranged to form the outline of a pill furnace. In the middle of the image of the pill furnace was an elliptical symbol.

Within the symbol were four dried up medicinal pills.

Nothing about it looked out of the ordinary or unique. However, after catching sight of it, a smile broke out on Meng Hao's face. He walked around the corner into an alley. When he emerged, he was wearing a wide, bamboo hat and a long robe. He strode directly into the medicinal pill shop.

The shop wasn't large. Other than the shopkeeper, there was no one else inside.

"I want one of these pills," said Meng Hao, pointing to one of the low-priced pills on the shelf.

The shopkeeper opened his eyes and glanced at Meng Hao, then pulled out one of the pills Meng Hao had pointed to.

“This pill is useful during the fifth level of Qi Condensation. It costs seventeen Spirit Stones.”

Meng Hao grabbed the pill without even looking at it, and with the flick of a sleeve, sent it shooting toward the image on the wall. It immediately smashed into the middle of the elliptical symbol. Now, instead of four pills, there were five.

With that, he tossed some Spirit Stones to the shopkeeper and then left.

The shopkeeper watched all of this in surprise. Then his eyes began to glitter, and he clasped hands and bowed toward Meng Hao’s back as he walked off.

Time passed. Meng Hao had been staying in Violet Moon City for two days. On the same day that the Violet Fate Sect Pill auction started, he was sitting there cross-legged in the night when suddenly he opened his eyes and retrieved a jade slip from his bag of holding. It was glowing brightly.

This particular jade slip was an invitation medallion to a secret meeting! Recorded in the jade slip was a map, marked with the same symbol that was on the wall of the shop he’d visited earlier.

Outside, the moon was rising. Meng Hao put away the jade slip, and then left.

Soon, he appeared outside the same shop as before, wearing a wide bamboo hat, and voluminous robes. Without hesitation, he walked up and knocked on the wooden door.

After three knocks, the door slowly swung open. Inside was a nothing but pitch black.

His eyes flickered. After a moment’s examination, he walked in. Ripples flowed out across the surface of the blackness, as if it were water. Meng Hao saw a bright glow, and then he was in a different place. Up ahead of him was a princely palace.

This palace looked exactly the same as the place he had visited the first time he went to one of these secret meetings 1. An old man, hands crossed and folded up within his sleeves, stood outside the palace. He looked Meng Hao over wordlessly.

Meng Hao approached, pulling out the secret meeting invitation medallion. The old man lowered his head, and Meng Hao walked past him into the palace.

He could hear the sounds of singing and dancing coming from further inside, just like the last time. Beyond some ornamental rock displays was a pavilion, within which sat four Cultivators. All of them wore masks covering their faces, making it impossible to see who they were.

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# Chapter 210: Joining the Violet Fate Sect

Meng Hao stepped into the pavilion calmly. He didn’t look at the four others, nor did they look at him. He sat down off to the side.

Not much time passed before three more people arrived. They were surrounded by the sound of singing, and yet no dancers could be seen. It created a truly bizarre air. Suddenly, contented laughter rang out as a ruddy-faced old man appeared and strode toward them. He sat down in the seat of honor.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, let today’s secret meeting begin. I won’t go into all the rules. I’m sure this is not your first time participating as guests in a secret meeting, Fellow Daoists, so let’s get going.” He flicked his sleeve, and a Nine Dragons Furnace appeared in the middle of all the participants. Mist began to spread out, and Meng Hao glanced at the old man.

This man was clearly not the same old man Meng Hao had seen at his first secret meeting. However, Meng Hao’s Cultivation base was not the same as it had been at that time. With his Spiritual Sense, he could tell that the old man wasn’t even real.

He was actually a projection!

“These secret meetings are really mysterious,” Meng Hao thought. “There must be some powerful forces behind the scenes that organize them. The meeting back in the Black Sieve Sect territory was exactly the same as this one.” He pulled out a jade slip, which he sent into the furnace.

All the other participants did the same, and soon the mist from the dragon furnace filled the area, enveloping everyone.

Glowing lights began to appear, which Meng Hao started to browse through. His eyes began to flicker. The vast majority of the offerings were for pill formulas and medicinal plants.

“There must be at least one person from the East Pill Division here today, and not just a master alchemist, but a Furnace Lord.” In the past few days, Meng Hao had made a few inquiries about the East Pill Division, and now knew much more about it.

For example, disciples of the East Pill Division started out as apprentice alchemists. Eventually, they could become master alchemists, then Furnace Lords. Higher than the Furnace Lords were the Violet Furnace Lords, who were very important figures within the Southern Domain.

Violet Furnace Lords were automatically novitiates of Grandmaster Pill Demon, and thus could receive direct instruction from him. The only other way to become a novitiate of Grandmaster Pill Demon was to have special backing, and thus reach heaven in a single bound, so to speak.

For example, Ding Xin from all those years ago, had been a disciple of the Violet Qi Division. However, his gift for pill concoction impressed Grandmaster Pill Demon, and he eventually was selected to become a novitiate. Sadly, before he could even begin his studies, he had been sent to the State of Zhao and had fallen at the hands of Meng Hao. 1

After that, the only disciple Grandmaster Pill Demon had accepted to be a novitiate was Chu Yuyan. However, her skill in pill concocting was actually only at the level of a Furnace Lord. She was still quite a distance from Violet Furnace Lord.

Meng Hao sat there thoughtfully, looking over the various twinkling dots of light. After a while, he reached out to grab the glowing dot that contained his information. He quickly imprinted it with some more details and then threw it back out to wait.

Not too much time passed before a streak of light appeared in front of him.

“You have a friend who wants to join the Violet Fate Sect’s East Pill Division and become an apprentice alchemist? You’ll need a recommendation for that. What do you have to trade?”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. This was the exact purpose for which he had chosen to attend the Violet Moon City secret meeting.

According to the rules of the Violet Fate Sect, it was impossible to just randomly join the Sect. However, the larger a Sect is, the more dragons and snakes will be jumbled together 2. Of course there would be some people who would break the rules out of self-interest. And apparently this secret meeting had a Furnace Lord in attendance, most likely because of the recent Pill Auction.

If medicinal herbs could be sold for profit, then why not a spot in the Sect for an apprentice alchemist? After all, in the Violet Fate Sect, there were roughly one hundred thousand apprentice alchemists. One spot didn’t really count for anything.

Meng Hao didn’t respond immediately. He waited for about the time it takes two incense sticks to burn. No more responses to his request came in, so he began to negotiate with the person who had just messaged him. They felt each other out to confirm each other’s legitimacy. Meng Hao was familiar with this process.

It didn’t take long for the two of them to reach an agreement. Meng Hao traded some of the medicinal plants he had acquired in Patriarch Reliance’s Immortal’s Cave in exchange for a spot as an apprentice alchemist. When the deal was completed, Meng Hao had a new jade slip in his hand.

It was dark green, and the image of a pill furnace was carved on its surface.

Soon, the secret meeting came to an end. The mist dissipated, and one by one, the various participants disappeared into beams of light. When Meng Hao passed through the glowing exit, he found himself in a remote corner of Violet Moon City. He lowered his head and promptly disappeared into the night.

Three days later, at the foot of the Violet Fate Sect, Meng Hao appeared, still looking like the sixteen or seventeen year old scholar. He had a nervous expression on his face as he respectfully handed the dark green jade slip over to a stout middle-aged man.

The man wore a Daoist robe and had a thin beard. He appeared to be at the eighth level of Qi Condensation. He glanced at Meng Hao and then looked over the jade slip.

“Since you have this jade slip of recommendation, you may join the Violet Fate Sect as an apprentice alchemist. However, all apprentice alchemists must cross the Pass of Truth. Including yourself, there are three people here today who wish to join the Sect. If any of you harbor sinister intentions, then you will meet your death on the Bridge of Truth.” He flicked his sleeve and began to walk.

Meng Hao followed him along the foot of the mountain, the one that was shaped like a pill furnace. Up above was the imposing statue of Reverend Violet East. Meng Hao and the middle-aged man walked for some time, until they were about halfway up the mountain. Up ahead was a chain bridge, which swayed lightly back and forth. Clouds drifted about above and below, making the image of Reverend Violet East just barely visible. Behind the giant statue was the peak of a mountain, surrounded by curling mists and clouds.

Beneath the bridge was a deep abyss. Falling into the abyss meant sure death for anyone who couldn’t use their Cultivation base.

Not far from the chain bridge stood a Cultivator of about thirty years of age, with a blank expression on his face. Behind him were two youths, one boy and one girl, who cast nervous glances at the chain bridge. Clearly, they were so frightened that their scalps had gone numb.

The stout Cultivator led Meng Hao up to them and then yawned.

“The three of you must cross the bridge,” he said. “If no duplicity exists in your heart, then you will reach the other side safely. With that, you will be a Violet Fate Sect apprentice alchemist. However, if you do harbor duplicity, then you will die. Throughout the years, many youths have perished before reaching the other side.” Having finished his speech, the man completely ignored Meng Hao and the others.

The expressionless Cultivator closed his eyes.

Meng Hao looked over at the chain bridge. Without hesitation, he walked forward toward it. Behind him, the young man gritted his teeth and followed.

As soon as Meng Hao stepped foot onto the bridge, it began to sway back and forth. He took a deep breath as he walked away from the pill furnace mountain. About half way, a strong wind picked up, whistling past and causing the bridge to sway even harder. At the same time, a soft sigh could be heard. The sound of it pierced into Meng Hao’s ears and sent his mind reeling.

Distracting thoughts suddenly filled his head. They contained information about the various reasons he wanted to join the Violet Fate Sect. They bubbled up, beyond his control, as if at the moment anyone could read his thoughts.

At this exact moment, however, the aura which powered the meat jelly’s transformation ability suddenly rose up. It immediately pushed down the distracting thoughts. Suddenly, Meng Hao felt an invisible gaze descending upon him from the statue of Reverend Violet East, inspecting him.

His heart trembled. As the other distracting thoughts were pushed down, he tried hard to continue thinking about his desire to study pill concocting as well as his yearning to join the Violet Fate Sect.

The invisible gaze swept over Meng Hao for the space of about ten breaths. Then, it moved on to the two young people behind him.

Meng Hao continued on, his face pale. Behind him, a scream rang out. Nothing had happened to the young woman, but the young man suddenly fell off of the chain bridge, plummeting down.

Suddenly, the power of early Foundation Establishment erupted out from the young man. As soon as it did, though, his body suddenly trembled. A look of fear shone in his eyes as his Cultivation base suddenly vanished. Like nothing more than a mortal, he fell down into the abyss.

Meng Hao sucked in a deep breath. With an expression of both determination and fear, he continued on, clenching his jaw. The gaze swept over him a total of nine times. Each time, it stayed on him longer and longer. Finally, he reached the statue of Reverend Violet East. He stepped onto the mountain that formed the main gate of the Violet Fate Sect. He had succeeded.

There in front of him was an old man wearing a black gown. A thick aroma of medicinal plants wafted off of him.

He looked coolly at Meng Hao for a moment, and then nodded. Generally speaking, people could not cross the Bridge of Truth if they harbored secret motives. The chain bridge seemed ordinary in nature. However, it was a method that the East Pill Division had used for years to test disciples. If they passed the test, then they could join the Sect.

“State your name.”

“Fang Mu,” replied Meng Hao, nervously clasping his hands. 3

“I am the honor guard of the East Pill Division’s herb district, Xu Chen,” said the old man coolly. “I also supervise new apprentice alchemists. You’re lucky to be able to join the Violet Fate Sect’s East Pill Division. Apprentice alchemists are the foundation of the East Pill Division. Every single Furnace Lord was promoted from the ranks of the master alchemists, who of course all start out as apprentice alchemists. In the future, perhaps you will become an esteemed Furnace Lord. That will depend on your good fortune and latent talent.”

The young woman finally approached from the bridge. She trembled as she stood next to Meng Hao. Her face was pale white.

“Let’s go. Having reached this point, you can now call this Sect your home.” The old man smiled kindly, and then flicked his sleeve. A gentle wind picked up Meng Hao and the young woman as the old man flew off with them to another location.

Winding paths snaked through the surrounding mountains as they flew along. Looking around, Meng Hao could only see endless chains of mountains, as well as countless valleys filled with richly ornamented buildings. The whole scene looked celestial in nature.

“This place…” thought Meng Hao, “Is the Sect where Fang Mu will reside for a very long time….” His eyes shined brightly as he looked at all the sights.

Then suddenly, a strange expression filled his eyes. He had just noticed that in one valley was an empty space between the buildings. Stabbed into the side of the mountain there was an iron spear.

That iron spear looked very familiar….

2. This expression means that good and bad people will be mixed up together

3.Fang Mu in Chinese is fāng mù – Fang is a surname, although the character has multiple meanings, some of which are “square” and “direction.” Mu means “wood” or “tree”

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# Chapter 211: A Despicable Name

Soon, the old man brought Meng Hao and the young woman to their destination. It was a very large mountain valley, filled with a variety of buildings. Off in the distance were areas devoted to growing medicinal plants. As soon as they arrived, Meng Hao could smell a fragrant aroma wafting through the air.

There were many young people in the valley, all of whom wore short, light yellow garments. Some were picking medicinal plants and others were lost in thought as they studied jade slips. Some sat beneath the evening sunshine, staring at medicinal plants which they held in their hands. The plants swayed back and forth in a very bizarre fashion.

After landing, the old man flicked his sleeve and cried, “Bai Yunlai!” 1 The young people nearby all looked up. Catching sight of the old man, their faces filled with respect, and they saluted with clasped hands.

An average-sized young man ran out of one of the buildings and approached them. He looked to be about thirty years of age.

“Master Xu, sir, I’m here,” he said in a flattering tone. “What orders do you have? I can help you with absolutely anything.”

The old man glared at him. “These are two new apprentice alchemists who just joined the Sect. Explain things to them and then take them to get their medallions.” With that, the old man turned to look at Meng Hao and the young woman. He nodded encouragingly, then transforming into a beam of light and shot away.

Now that the old man was gone, the surrounding youths ignored Meng Hao and the others and continued on with their various activities. They didn’t seem to have any good or bad will toward Meng Hao whatsoever. Their expressions were calm and even.

Meng Hao was going to have to get used to being in a Sect like this. Life in the Reliance Sect had been very different. This was now the second Sect he had joined. He sighed inwardly.

The young woman next to him clasped hands toward Bai Yunlai and said, “Greetings, Elder Brother Bai.”

“Hey, no Elders here, and no need for saluting.” Bai Yunlai laughed heartily, looking back and forth between Meng Hao and the young woman. “You two came just at the right time. Most of the apprentice alchemists in the Sect have been very busy with the Pill Auction. There aren’t very many people left behind. Alright, you two don’t worry. With Old Bai here, you’ll quickly get into the swing of things. Come come. Let’s walk around a bit, and I’ll introduce the place to you.” After asking their names, Bai Yunlai led the way as they began to walk around.

“If you want a description of the Violet Fate Sect’s East Pill Division, well, that’s a massive topic. There are no less than a hundred valleys just like this one. Each one is home to nearly a thousand apprentice alchemists. Most of our time is spent growing medicinal plants, memorizing the names of various medicines, and occasionally harvesting the plants. Do you know who the most tired people in the whole Southern Domain are? Us Violet Fate Sect apprentice alchemists, that’s who!

“One hundred thousand apprentice alchemists, each with their own work to do. Actually, we have to participate in all the different activities. We need to memorize the names of over one hundred thousand medicinal plants, we have to care for the growing plants, plus we have to find time to practice Cultivation. If we didn’t do that, then we wouldn’t be able to catalyze the plants into growth. As for you two, well, you’ll figure everything out eventually.

“Us apprentice alchemists are real peons. Only if you stick out like an awl poking through a sack, and distinguish yourself in some way, can you possibly become a master alchemist and study true alchemy. Then Inner

Sect disciples will come looking for you to concoct pills. According to Sect rules, they have to provide compensation to us when we concoct pills for them. It’s always a good day when that happens.

“Too bad there are one hundred thousand apprentice alchemists. How many do you think become master alchemists? There are only a thousand in the entire Sect! It’s so difficult!”

Bai Yunlai spoke very quickly as he led Meng Hao and the young woman through various valleys.

“See here? This is one of the places where only master alchemists can go. We aren’t allowed in….” They continued on. “This area belongs to the Violet Qi Division, although it’s not the Inner Sect, just the Outer Sect.” Bai Yunlai had led the two of them to one of the valleys toward the front of the Sect. Here were congregated quite a few Cultivators of the Violet Qi Division. Courteous expressions appeared on their faces when they saw Bai Yunlai. It seemed he was a relatively influential person within the Sect.

Meng Hao cleared his throat and then said some flattering things to Bai Yunlai, who instantly looked very happy and said, “You know, I know almost everything about the Sect, and there aren’t many things I can’t take care of. Junior Brother Fang, if you ever have any problems in the future, you just come look for me and I’ll take care of everything for you.”

Suddenly, Bai Yunlai stopped in his tracks. He pointed up toward the center of the valley, where an iron spear was stabbed into the side of the mountain. The spear was bent, and having been exposed to the wind and rain, was covered in rust.

Bai Yunlai looked around, then lowered his voice and said, “Do you see that iron spear? There’s a story behind it.”

A strange expression appeared on Meng Hao’s face. He had noticed this valley when they’d flown past earlier. He looked up at the spear, coughing slightly, and feigning extreme interest.

“Do you know who put that spear there? It was Wu Dingqiu of the senior generation. They say that ten years ago, on a dark and stormy night, Elder Wu returned to the Sect in a foul rage, with that spear in his hand. He threw it with all his might, and it landed right there!

“According to the rumors from that year, he wanted all the Outer Sect disciples to remember the shame caused by that spear. He said, ‘You fools are always stupid to the point of death! If you keep being this stupid, you really will die one day!’” Bai Yunlai’s voice was very quiet as he spoke, and yet extremely vivid. The young woman’s eyes went wide as she listened.

Meng Hao spontaneously gave another light cough.

“Where did the spear come from?” asked the young woman.

“Where did it come from? Heh heh. You might not believe it. According to the legend, ten years ago, a group of Outer Sect disciples participated in an Outer Sect promotion test. It was held in an extremely dangerous location, where they met a vile creature of a man. That guy ended up selling the iron spear to the two strongest of the disciples!

“The price they paid reduced them to poverty and ruin. They even borrowed Spirit Stones from fellow disciples to pay for it. They thought it was a precious treasure, which was why they bought it. Ai, it wasn’t until a few years ago that they finally paid back all the Spirit Stones. Anyway, when Wu Dingqiu heard what happened he felt it was an utter humiliation. And he was the leader of the group! What do you two think, was that man despicable or what?” 2

The young woman had been listening with wide eyes and gaping mouth. She looked up at the iron spear, which looked in all respects to be completely normal. She couldn’t understand why the two strongest of the disciples would waste so much money on it.

Meng Hao felt a little guilty. Then he noticed that Bai Yunlai was looking at him, so he nodded and solemnly said, “That fellow is definitely matchlessly despicable. It’s enough to make one’s hair bristle with anger!” Actually, after meeting Qian Shuihen and Lu Song back in the Song Clan, he had guessed that the matter from that year had had a profoundly negative effect on the two of them, which continued on down to this day.

What he had never imagined was that it actually affected the entire Violet Fate Sect. Suddenly, he felt a bit sorry for Qian Shuihen and Lu Song. And now he understood why they had been gnashing their teeth with fury back at the Song Clan.

Bai Yunlai sighed and shook his head. “The spear is here as a reminder to all Violet Fate Outer Sect disciples. They are never to forget this matter….”

“Who was the person who sold them the spear?” asked the young woman, her curiosity piqued.

“His name is Meng Hao,” said Bai Yunlai quietly. “Have you heard of him? Recently, everybody in the Southern Domain has been talking about him. At the Song Clan search for a son-in-law, he revealed himself as the successor of the Sublime Spirit Scripture. He’s the same person who was involved in that scandal with Chu Yuyan.”

“Meng Hao?” said the young woman, gaping.

“Quiet!” said Bai Yunlai quickly. “That name is taboo in the Violet Fate Sect! No one dares to speak it aloud….”

Meng Hao stood off to the side, feeling even more guilty. He continued to clear his throat. He suddenly had the feeling that coming to the Violet Fate Sect might not have been the best decision.

It was at this time that his facial expression suddenly flickered. He had just caught sight of a beam of light approaching from the distance. It transformed into a grim-faced young man who stared ferociously at Bai Yunlai. This was none other than… Qian Shuihen.

“Bai Yunlai, what are you doing sticking around here?! Why haven’t you moved on?!”

Bai Yunlai suddenly shivered, and a flattering expression appeared on his face.

“Elder Brother Qian, I’m just showing these two apprentice alchemists around the Sect. We were just leaving, just leaving.” With that he grabbed Meng Hao and the young woman and hurriedly led them away.

“Did you see? That was one of the two who bought the spear that year. In the future, you must never under any circumstances utter the name Meng Hao in front of him. If you do, he’ll fly into a violent rage.” He continued on with some more earnest exhortation: “Furthermore, if you two ever leave the Sect to do training in the future, you must be extremely careful if you ever run into Meng Hao. His deviousness knows no bounds!”

The wide-eyed young woman’s face was covered with disbelief. However, she quickly nodded, clearly placing the warning deep in her heart. Inside, Meng Hao laughed bitterly. Now he knew why they had looked so wary back in the Song Clan when they heard his name, and yet he didn’t even recognize them.

“Remember,” Bai Yunlai repeated, “the name Meng Hao is taboo in our Sect. Don’t forget that! Okay, now we need to go get your identity medallions and handle your living arrangements.” As of now, the girl clearly viewed Meng Hao as a fearsome tiger. Meng Hao could only laugh bitterly inside as Bai Yunlai led them away.

Soon they arrived at a valley which was relatively large and crowded.

“Since you’ve joined the Violet Fate Sect, you’re obviously from local Cultivator Clans. As you know, we all have limits to our Cultivation bases. As apprentice alchemists, you must master the first technique of alchemy. Pay attention.

“This technique is called Violet Cloud Spirit. With this technique, you can feed a plant with your spiritual energy, and catalyze its effectiveness, which is based on its medicinal age. Depending on your skill and the nature of your Cultivation base, the catalyzation will produce different results.”

There were several hundred people here. Most sat cross-legged, looking at the medicinal plants rocking back and forth in their hands. In the very front was a solemn, middle-aged man who was currently giving a lecture about some alchemic technique. He held up his hand, within which was a growing medicinal plant. In the blink of an eye, it grew up two inches.

Meng Hao looked around, focusing especially on the medicinal plant in the hand of the middle-aged man. His eyes gleamed with a strange light. Bai Yunlai led them to the center of the valley, where an unimposing man old man in a gray robe sat there with eyes closed. He looked like he was asleep. It was impossible to tell the level of his Cultivation base. Seemingly out of habit, Bai Yunlai walked over and retrieved two medallions and a bag of holding from the old man's side. He pulled out two violet-colored jade slips which he then handed to Meng Hao and the young woman.

"Give it a try," he said solemnly as the two looked at the jade slips. "The technique is very simple. You should be able to master it very quickly. Then, you'll have a chance to try catalyzing for the first time. It's very important, though. It will reveal your aptitude toward alchemy, and we have to record the results."

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1. Bai Yunlai's name in Chinese is bái yún lái – Bai is a common surname which means "white." Yun means "cloud." Lai means "come."

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 212: Nature Talent Appears!

The young woman, whose name was Chen Ling, seemed nervous when she heard what Bai Yunlai said. With an anxious, earnest expression, she examined the jade slip. Perhaps her latent talent was average. After looking at it for the space of about ten breaths, she reached out her hand, which began to glow with a purple light…

Bai Yunlai's eyes began to glow.

"Not bad, Junior Sister Chen! Okay, take out a medicinal plant seed."

Chen Ling quickly opened her bag of holding and took out a seed. She placed it on her open palm, then, her face very serious, began to catalyze it. The violet Qi in her hand grew denser, until it seemed it couldn't grow any stronger. The seed began to wriggle, and then three leaves sprouted out of it.

Many of the surrounding onlookers noticed this, and then looked at Chen Ling. Her face grew red, and she was clearly excited. She looked at Bai Yunlai expectantly.

"To produce three leaves on your first try shows that you have pretty good latent talent. Junior Sister Chen Ling, according to my calculations, you have a ten percent chance of becoming a master alchemist in the future." He sighed emotionally, looking a bit jealous. It seemed that someone who could produce three leaves was uncommon among the hundred thousand apprentice alchemists. Bai Yunlai quickly recorded the results of her catalyzing.

After that…

The voice of the man lecturing about alchemy techniques drifted over. He sounded calm and solemn. “You will join District Two Valley Thirteen.” His face was austere as he looked at her.

In a low voice, Bai Yunlai offered an explanation: “The hundred thousand apprentice alchemists of the Eastern Pill Division are separated into Districts One to Four. Generally speaking, only those with outstanding latent talent can enter District Two. Junior Sister Chen, go on over there to Master Uncle Zhou. Good fortune is with you today!” Looking excited and nervous, Chen Ling immediately ran over.

“Junior Brother Fang, it’s your turn now,” said Bai Yunlai with a sigh. He looked at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao stood there thoughtfully for a moment. The technique described in the jade slip was simple, but obviously, the implementation of it was fantastic. Essentially, it could catalyze the medicinal age of medicinal plants, and as such, could be viewed as a force of nature.

“It seems only simple medicinal plants can be catalyzed using this technique,” thought Meng Hao. “Basically, you use spiritual energy to nourish the medicinal plant. Even still, this technique is extraordinary. I wonder how the Violet Fate Sect prevents it from being stolen….” He silently retrieved a medicinal plant seed from his bag of holding and placed it on his palm. He looked at it for a moment, then used the technique described in the jade slip to begin catalyzing it.

He had two Core Seas, the first one of which contained five Perfect Dao Pillars. Before arriving at the Violet Fate Sect, he had used the Sublime Spirit Scripture to once again form the second one.

At the moment, the only Cultivation base visible to outsiders was the aura of his second Core Sea. Its power caused the purple glow to appear on his hand. It was immediately apparent that the glow was thicker and brighter than that created by Chen Ling.

Immediately, the seed in Meng Hao’s hand began to wriggle. Then it sprouted one leaf, two leaves, three leaves… in the blink of an eye it had already sprouted seven leaves!

The purple glow in Meng Hao’s hand grew blinding, filling the air. Instantly, all the surrounding apprentice alchemists looked over, shocked. All eyes were on Meng Hao.

The blinding rays of light were unthinkable, unbelievable. The man lecturing about alchemy techniques looked over wide-eyed, staring openly at Meng Hao. Next to him, Chen Ling stared in shock.

As for Bai Yunlai, his jaw dropped, and he rubbed his eyes vigorously before staring in complete shock.

Everything was quiet as all onlookers stared at the violet glow and the medicinal seed plant in Meng Hao’s hand. Then, Meng Hao continued to use the technique. He fell into a strange state, as if he himself had turned into nature, and this seed had become a part of him.

It was a marvelous feeling, and as Meng Hao immersed himself in it, the seed suddenly sprouted an eighth leaf, then a ninth…. A cracking sound pealed out as the seed continued to grow. The emerald green leaf sprouts grew larger, wrapping up and around Meng Hao’s right arm.

The white-haired, wrinkled old man who had been dozing behind Bai Yunlai opened his eyes. They glowed with an ancient light as he looked at Meng Hao. At the same time, they filled with excitement.

Meng Hao hadn’t just caused new leaves to sprout, he had grown an entire plant. Meng Hao’s mind reeled as the cracking sounds from moments ago pulled him out of the bizarre state he had just been in. His eyes flickered, and he frowned. He hadn’t intended to show off such talent, and actually, he had been completely immersed in the strange state just now, which had somehow led his actions.

He hesitated for a moment, his face pale. His Cultivation base was dried up, and following the reduction in his spiritual power, the medicinal plant also began to slowly wither up. Soon it died, and then fell off of Meng Hao’s arm.

Panting, Meng Hao stepped back a few paces, eyes shining with confusion.

Everything was deathly silent. It seemed like Bai Yunlai couldn’t understand what was going on. He had been in the Violet Fate Sect for years, and had never seen someone perform such an astonishing feat the first time they practiced catalyzing. He looked at Meng Hao as if he weren’t even human.

All of the surrounding apprentice alchemists were completely shocked. What they had just witnessed exceeded their imaginations. The middle-aged man panted as he looked at Meng Hao, his eyes shining with passion.

“Umm….” said Meng Hao, hesitating for a moment. He was a little bit scared, unsure of what he should say. At this moment, the old man behind Bai Yunlai stood up and walked forward to stand next to Meng Hao. He reached a hand out to grab Meng Hao’s wrist. His spiritual power burst out, flowing through Meng Hao’s body, examining him.

The power was incapable of completely examining Meng Hao. Despite having some suspicions, he could only see Meng Hao’s second Core Sea, which contained the power of the sixth level of Qi Condensation.

He wasn’t able to see the true color of the Core Sea either, as it had been completely transformed by the frightening power of the meat jelly. As far the man could see, everything was normal.

Eventually, he released his grip. He picked up the withered medicinal plant and looked at it carefully for a moment. Then he returned his gaze to Meng Hao. His eyes were now filled with the glow of praise.

“First rate latent talent! You will join District One Valley One!” A wide smile covered the old man’s face as he clasped Meng Hao’s shoulder. Then he flew up into the sky, taking the withered medicinal plant with him.

As he flew off, the entire valley broke out into a huge commotion.

“First rate latent talent!! No wonder his catalyzing is so astonishing!”

“With latent talent like that, he’s destined to become a master alchemist, which we haven’t seen for years….”

“Wow, I’ve heard of people having first rate latent talent, but I’ve never heard of someone as inhuman as this! He catalyzed full plant growth!”

As the air filled with conversations, Bai Yunlai approached Meng Hao, eye shining with excitement. “Junior Brother Fang,” he said, “make sure to watch out for yourself from now on. You have first rate latent talent!”

“Could there have been a mistake?” asked Meng Hao, still hesitating.

“There’s no way! Elder Wang tested you personally. How could he possibly make a mistake? It seems he took that medicinal plant to go show other Elders. Haha! Junior Brother Fang, you’re going to be famous! Come come, I’ll take you to District One Valley One. It’s like a celestial paradise. I look in every time I pass it, but I’ve never been able to go in.” He pulled Meng Hao along with him, leaving behind the hubbub and shining eyes. Even after they were gone, the commotion continued to echo out.

Time passed. Soon half a month had gone by. Meng Hao was now much more familiar with the East Pill Division of the Violet Fate Sect. Division One Valley One wasn’t very large, but was occupied by few people, clearly much less than other valleys.

The scenery was enchanting. The mountains were lush, and a small mountain stream flowed down from up above. Fish swam within its depths, which Meng Hao could see from his house, located just north of the stream. It was a small house with a courtyard outside.

Within the courtyard was a small garden where he could grow medicinal plants. Currently, Meng Hao sat cross-legged in the courtyard, holding a scroll of bamboo slips. The scroll was filled with handwriting and pictures, all describing various medicinal plants.

Meng Hao sat all morning and into noon reading the scroll. Finally, he looked up. He smelled the medicinal aroma that filled the air and listened to the gurgling of the stream. A light mist filled the area, causing the valley to truly seem celestial. Maybe that was somewhat of an exaggeration, but there was no denying that this was an ideal place for Cultivation.

This was basically the number one valley for apprentice alchemists in the entire Sect. Meng Hao had found out that including him, less than fifty people in the entire Sect had the requisite latent talent to live in here. Everyone had their own living quarters where they could study, grow plants and practice pill concocting.

It was a quiet location, and Meng Hao felt very at home. He was especially happy to read books that weren’t jade slips but actual scrolls. It reminded him of his life as a scholar back in Yunjie County.

“One hundred thousand medicinal plants, all different and organized into different categories. Not only do I need to memorize them, I also need to remember their habits and characteristics, how to plant and harvest them, and how to store them. I need to remember which medicinal plants cannot be mixed together, where and how to grow them, and also the proper ratios when using them.

“Furthermore, it’s not just the whole plant itself. The leaves, stems and sap of various plants are all different. Splicing plants together can lead to countless variations. They talk about one hundred thousand medicinal plants, but actually, when you combine everything together, it’s more like a million.” Meng Hao rubbed the bridge of his nose. For the past half month, he had been studying information about medicinal plants every day.

As an apprentice alchemist of the Violet Fate Sect, he must remember all such information. Of course, there was simply so much information, it was essentially impossible to magically brand it all onto the mind. The only method was rote memorization.

The more he memorized, the more prepared he would be. Forewarned is forearmed, so to speak; there was no trickery about it. Besides, Meng Hao didn’t find it annoying. He was a born scholar, after all, and this type of environment suited him quite well.

There was no killing, no danger and treachery, no dealing with the wind and rain of the outside world. Meng Hao attempted not to think about the past, and instead fully immersed himself in the role of Fang Mu. He was in the Violet Fate Sect now, and he intended to take advantage of the peace and quiet. As he examined all the information available to apprentice alchemists, his mind began to swirl with many images. Now he knew that this sort of knowledge, was nature talent.

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# Chapter 213: Violet Fate Celestial Land

Time flashed by, and soon two months had gone by. Meng Hao was now completely accustomed to life in the Violet Fate Sect. Because of testing in with first rate latent talent, he had been able to enjoy some special perks, although it wasn’t anything as amazing as others might have expected of some important person.

In fact, during the two months, he didn’t see the white-haired old man at all. Bai Yunlai, on the other hand, frequently came to visit. It was with his help that Meng Hao came to understand the Violet Fate Sect so quickly.

There were lectures regarding alchemic techniques every day, which Meng Hao almost always attended. In the midst of the hundreds of others also in attendance, Meng Hao didn’t stick out at all.

Different senior members of the Sect would give the lectures; they would rotate every few days. It seemed everyone’s understanding of matters was slightly different. By listening to all of them, Meng Hao quickly began to have a much deeper understanding of the catalyzing techniques.

In addition, when it came to growing medicinal plants, the Sect had a special area to distribute medicinal plant seeds, much the same as the Reliance Sect had distributed Spirit Stones. The purpose, of course, was to allow the apprentice alchemists a chance to practice planting.

The various lectures by senior members of the Sect gave the whole place a very tranquil atmosphere. There was no fighting to the death. Meng Hao couldn’t help but think that the Reliance Sect had been extremely different.

To him, this place was in some ways more like an institute of higher learning than a Sect.

Every month, there would be a special sermon regarding medicinal scriptures. The officiators were always veteran master alchemists. Each and every one had risen up from the ranks of the apprentice alchemists. When it came to pill concocting, their skill was by no means shallow. Their alchemy lectures were not always limited to the topic of medicinal plants; they sometimes spoke of concoction techniques, too. Meng Hao learned a lot after only listening to a few such sermons.

In addition to all of the studying and planting of medicinal plants, apprentice alchemists also had monthly catalyzing quotas to meet. Every month, a certain amount of catalyzed medicinal plants were required to be delivered up to the Sect.

This was the life of an apprentice alchemist in the East Pill Division. Life was a never-ending cycle.

Currently, Meng Hao sat amongst throngs of apprentice alchemists, listening to a middle-aged man supposedly discuss methods of distinguishing between several easily misidentified medicinal plants. “Apprentice alchemists are involved in the growing, catalyzing, and picking of various medicinal plants, as well as other related tasks. In essence, your purpose is to serve the great system of alchemy instituted by our Sect. In actuality, the most direct way to serve the Sect, is by means of assisting the nearly one thousand master alchemists.”

Meng Hao sighed. “I think joining the Violet Fate Sect was the right decision. In all the Southern Domain, this is the only place where I can study true alchemy. Also, only the Violet Fate Sect can produce true Grandmasters of the Dao of alchemy! The Violet Fate Sect’s Dao of alchemy is such that the fame of the alchemy division actually exceeds that of the other division. All Sects and Clans in the Southern Domain recognize this.” Meng Hao sat there thoughtfully, his eyes shining with anticipation.

“If I want to have any contact with Grandmaster Pill Demon, and get his help in dispelling my poison, then I have to be a disciple here!” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered with ambition.

His true goal in joining the Violet Fate Sect was to become a novitiate of Grandmaster Pill Demon and study the most powerful Dao of alchemy in the entire Southern Domain. Then he would create his own branch of alchemic arts. Afterward, any medicinal pills he needed, he could create himself, and not have to go through great pains to acquire by other means.

He was lost in thought when suddenly, the sound of bells filled the air. The sound rang throughout all of the valleys of the East Pill Division, causing everyone to immediately lift their heads. Even the master alchemist giving the lecture immediately stopped and looked up.

Each and every apprentice alchemist in the Eastern Pill Division raised their heads. Their faces were filled with excitement.

“The furnace bells! Violet Fate Celestial Land day has arrived!”

“The last time was a year ago. I can’t believe a whole year has already passed. Finally, we can go back into the Celestial Land!”

As the excited voices echoed out, the peal of bells continued to ring out. Meng Hao’s eyes flashed as he looked up into the air, where suddenly appeared an illusory shape.

It was an enormous violet-colored pill furnace floating in mid-air, imposing to the extreme, tens of thousands of meters in diameter. Next to it, dozens of beams of prismatic light shot up from nearby valleys to sit cross-legged around it, as if to guard it.

At the same time, the glow of spells interlaced in the air, as if the entire area was being sealed. A radiant light filled the area, casting brilliant colors upon the massive pill furnace and the Cultivators who floated nearby it.

An archaic voice rumbled out, seemingly from nowhere. “Apprentice alchemists, enter the Celestial Land. Harvest nine mature leaves.” The enormous pill furnace began to glow, and suddenly, what appeared to be one hundred thousand strands of light snaked out and shot down. Meng

Hao's apprentice alchemist identification medallion began to glow, as did those of all the other apprentice alchemists.

The glowing strands and the medallions seemed to have some sort of connection. One of the glowing strands approached Meng Hao and fused into the medallion. A gentle power seemed to take hold of Meng Hao and pull him up into the air.

From the hundred surrounding valleys, one hundred thousand apprentice alchemists all lifted up into the air, carried by the glowing strands. They transformed into beams of prismatic light that shot toward the gigantic pill furnace.

The massive pill furnace seemed to be like a bottomless pit which instantly swallowed them all up.

Meng Hao's vision grew blurry for a moment. When it cleared, and he saw what lay in front of him, he gasped. The scene was difficult to comprehend. The expression which appeared on Meng Hao's face was one of complete and utter shock.

In front of him stretched endless fields of medicinal plants. This place was a different world; there were no clouds in the sky. However, nine suns could be seen. Next to each sun, was a moon. This place had nine suns and nine moons.

This incredible sky was the perfect place beneath which to grow medicinal plants. The whole world seemed to be under some sort of sealing; as soon as Meng Hao appeared inside, an indescribable medicinal aroma washed over him. It was intoxicating.

Most of the hundred thousand apprentice alchemists had been here before. All of them were excited, but few were as shocked and moved as Meng Hao.

Even more shocking to Meng Hao was that within the endless fields of medicinal plants, were thousands of enormous, three hundred meter tall trees. And there were giants. These giants seemed to be remnants of an ancient past. They carefully strode through the fields, occasionally reaching down to plant seeds.

Up in the sky were several hundred war chariots, which emitted an archaic aura. The chariots were enormous, and overlapped with each other to form what almost looked like clouds that cast shadows down on certain areas within the world.

Further off in the distance, Meng Hao could see another type of tree that appeared to be three thousand meters tall. Its trunk was violet, and its top was not dense with foliage, but rather an enormous, solitary eye. The eye was dozens of meters wide, and it looked around the area attentively. As Meng Hao looked around more carefully, he saw that there a few hundred other trees similar to this one amidst the fields of medicinal plants.

Meng Hao wasn’t sure when, but Bai Yunlai had appeared at his side. With an emotional sigh, he said, “The Violet Fate Celestial Land is a Blessed Land of the Violet Fate Sect’s East Pill Division! According to the legends, this place was once a Celestial Land of Immortals. However, Reverend Violet East moved it here to create this endless medicinal plant garden. There are some things growing here that are extinct in the outside world. Every once in a while, we apprentice alchemists are teleported here to harvest medicinal plants, which gives us a good chance to practice our skill in identifying them. This is the only place in the entire Southern Domain where you can see so many different types! They’re virtually endless!”

Suddenly, a roaring sound filled the air, along with the archaic voice. The various conversations of the apprentice alchemists all ceased.

“You have one month to harvest at least nine mature medicinal plants. You may only harvest plants which you recognize, and you must also be thoroughly familiar with their habits and characteristics. In one month, you will hand over your harvest, as well as a jade slip describing your findings. This will be one of the evaluation criteria for promotion to master alchemist. Now, you may begin.” As soon as the voice finished speaking, the hundred thousand apprentice alchemists took a collective breath, and then scattered.

Bai Yunlai didn’t follow Meng Hao, but instead went along a meandering route of his own toward some other location. Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, shining with excitement. His recent days had been spent devoted to reading medicinal plant scrolls. He had read several times about the hundred thousand varieties of medicinal plants, and although he hadn’t memorized all of them yet, he knew quite a few. Now, he would be able to test his knowledge. His body flashed as he shot off into the distance.

As the hundred thousand apprentice alchemists scattered in all directions, above them in the sky, in one of the rotating moons, appeared eight figures.

“See that kid? That’s Fang Mu, the one who I tested two months ago and found to have first rate latent talent.”

“First rate latent talent is quite rare. We examined the withered plant you brought, and it’s definitely not fake. Because of his latent talent, his spiritual energy is extremely suited to growing medicinal plants.”

“He’s just a seedling now. Let’s see how many medicinal plants he manages to harvest. If he has a talent for identifying medicinal plants, then perhaps we should consider including him in the next promotion examination.”

As the figures within the moon engaged in their discussion, Meng Hao walked away from the groups of other apprentice alchemists, out into the fields of medicinal plants. He took each step prudently, being careful not to step on any seedlings. He kept his head lowered, looking around in all directions.

“That’s… Spirit Shattering grass. I remember its description from the scrolls. However, why does it have more foliage on the right side…? Oh, right, it’s a hybrid. The right side is actually a Residence sapling…. This is Thunderbolt Elegance leaf, its shape is like that of a woman, and it sways back and forth entrancingly… When used medicinally, it can be concocted into pills suitable for the early Foundation Establishment stage.”

Meng Hao walked along, gradually identifying various medicinal plants and attempting to recall all the information he had read about them in the scrolls. The more he tried, the easier it became. A feeling of pleasure gradually filled his heart.

This feeling was different than that of making a breakthrough in Cultivation base. However, being able to master a branch of knowledge that had previously been elusive, filled him with a sense of profound confidence.

This was a Cultivation of the self!

From what Meng Hao could tell, his ability to identify all the different medicinal plants was a type of nature talent….

Meng Hao walked further and further away. Each time he saw a medicinal plant suitable for harvesting, he would immediately take it. At the same time, he would record a description and other information on the jade slip he had been given.

He continued to corroborate what he had studied recently; he was like a fish in water. He forgot about everything except the medicinal plants in front of him. His alchemy was advancing by leaps and bounds in this Celestial Land.

Meanwhile, outside in the Southern Domain, the name Meng Hao had caused an enormous search to begin among the great Sects and Clans. In recent days, everyone was looking for him. Soon, Meng Hao's name came to be known to more and more Cultivators.

Of course, the Violet Fate Sect was one of the Sects participating in the great search. However, no one had been able to find even the slightest trace of Meng Hao. It was as if he had completely vanished.

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# Chapter 214: We Finally Meet Again….

No one could possibly know that the same Meng Hao who had stirred up such waves in the outside world, was currently carefully looking over medicinal herbs in the Violet Fate Sect’s Celestial Land, an innocent student confirming the validity of his studies.

Time passed by, and Meng Hao lost track of how many medicinal plants he had harvested. As long as he recognized a plant, it counted toward his quota, and he placed it in his bag of holding.

At one point, Meng Hao found himself about three hundred meters away from one of the giants. For quite some time, he observed how it planted the seeds, moved the seedlings around, and cared for the plants.

Later, he stood beneath one of the Cyclops trees, watching the enormous eye gazing about. He even climbed up one of them to harvest some of the red grass that grew on its trunk.

Eventually, he was far, far away from where he had started. The fields of medicinal plants seemed to have no end. In Meng Hao’s estimation, these more remote areas would most certainly have even more amazing medicinal plants, perhaps even some of the legendary extinct variety.

However, everything was simply too big. Around him stretched never-ending fields of medicinal plants. As he proceeded, he started to realize that he actually only recognized about one medicinal plant out of one hundred.

“The Dao of alchemy is endless,” he thought with a sigh. “It’s just as difficult as Cultivation, a road without end, an almighty facet of Heaven and

Earth. At first I thought that memorizing a bit more than half of the hundred thousand medicinal plants would be enough. But now I can see that those one hundred thousand plants are simply the threshold.” However, stubbornness glinted in his eyes. This type of Cultivation had nothing to do with his Dao Pillars. His excitement actually became even stronger.

“I’m a scholar at heart,” he said, reassuring himself. “Although my aspirations were never realized, when it comes to studying, I definitely have an advantage over all the other apprentice alchemists.” He would focus, do his best to remember everything he saw, and then go back to do more research in the ancient records.

It was in this fashion that time slipped by. Soon, the sound of bells filled the Celestial Land; the one month time period had passed quickly. Time was up, and Meng Hao wasn’t content. He felt as if he had just started. However, the strands of light appeared in the air, and he sighed. He gave one last look at the Celestial land before a strand of light whisked him away.

When they reappeared in the various valleys, there were a variety of expressions on the faces of the hundred thousand apprentice alchemists. Meng Hao wasn’t the only one to have grown during the month inside the Celestial Land. All of the apprentice alchemists had.

Soon, people came to collect the medicinal plants they had harvested, along with their jade slips which contained information about the harvest. Meng Hao chose not to secretly duplicate any of his spoils. He was fully devoted to his Violet Fate Sect identity, and wouldn’t do the slightest thing that might give himself away. He handed over all the medicinal plants, then slowly headed back to the valley that contained his house.

Once back in his courtyard, he immediately took out some scrolls and began to study. When he found areas that he had overlooked before, his face would flash with excitement, and he would commit the information to memory.

Two more months passed. He had already been in the Violet Fate Sect for half a year. Already, the search for Meng Hao in the outside world was slowing down. The various Sects and Clans had searched throughout the Southern Domain, and still hadn’t been able to find a trace of Meng Hao. A variety of speculations began to circulate, but nothing conclusive could be determined.

Meng Hao heard all about the situation from Bai Yunlai, who well deserved his reputation for being well informed about everything. He wasn’t just familiar with the latest news about the Violet Fate Sect; he kept himself plugged into the events of the outside world as well.

One morning, Meng Hao walked out of his house to sit in the courtyard. He lifted up his right hand, within which was a small, growing plant. His medicinal plant garden was filled with quite a few plants, all in full bloom. A medicinal aroma filled the air. Suddenly, Meng Hao’s expression flickered, and he looked up.

Bai Yunlai was racing along the side of the meandering stream. Before he even arrived, he called out, “Junior Brother Fang, there’s an excellent opportunity! Your Elder Brother won a great opportunity for you!”

Meng Hao smiled. He waved his right hand, and the medicinal plant in his hand disappeared. At the same time, the courtyard door swung open, just in time for Bai Yunlai to rush in.

“What opportunity?” asked Meng Hao, smiling. Bai Yunlai’s Cultivation base was ordinary, only at the seventh or eighth level of Qi Condensation. However, he was viewed as indispensable within the Sect. He often came to visit Meng Hao, and they spent quite a bit of time together.

“There’s an Inner Sect disciple from the Violet Qi Division who requested Alchemist Li Tao 1 to concoct some pills for him,” gushed Bai Yunlai. “Alchemist Li wanted me to arrange for two apprentice alchemists to assist. I will go, of course. As for the second spot, you were the first person I thought of.

“Quickly gather your things and come with me. This will be an excellent opportunity to expand your knowledge of alchemy. Lots of apprentice alchemists would like to go, but Alchemist Li’s personality is a bit eccentric. Just don’t say anything, and follow my lead.”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. He’d learned some time ago that Inner Sect disciples from the Violet Qi Division would often request master alchemists to concoct pills for them. Under most circumstances, the Violet Qi Division disciple would gather together the necessary medicinal plants, as well as some Spirit Stones. If this pleased the master alchemist, then work could begin.

As for Furnace Lords, who ranked above master alchemists, they were well versed in the Dao of alchemy, and had reached Foundation Establishment. There were only about one hundred of them in the entire Violet Fate Sect, and each one occupied a very prominent position. Generally speaking, Inner Sect disciples didn’t qualify to request their services. Only Conclave disciples and Sect Elders could request pill concocting from Furnace Lords.

As for Violet Furnace Lords, they could be considered to be virtually at the Grandmaster level. Each and every one was a precious treasure of the Sect, and all were Pill Demon novitiates. Only those with extremely high influence within the Sect could request pill concocting services from them.

The Alchemist Li who Bai Yunlai referred to was naturally not a Furnace Lord, but one of the one thousand master alchemists. Considering how things were arranged, and considering how few master alchemists there were in the Sect, it was only natural that they would seek apprentice alchemists to act as assistants when concocting pills for Violet Qi Division disciples.

Meng Hao immediately rose to his feet. This really was a rare opportunity. He had joined the Sect more than half a year ago, and this was his first time to encounter such a chance. After clasping hands in thanks to Bai Yunlai, the two of them left. Soon, they arrived at the valley that connected the East Pill Division with the Violet Qi Division. Waiting there somewhat impatiently was a man in a blue robe who appeared to be about thirty years of age. It was none other than Alchemist Li.

Standing next to him was another Cultivator whose Cultivation base was at the early Foundation Establishment stage. He was smilingly engaged in conversation with Alchemist Li, his demeanor extremely courteous.

As Meng Hao and Bai Yunlai approached, Meng Hao's eyes glittered slightly. He recognized the Cultivator next to Alchemist Li. It was none other than Lu Song 2.

Meng Hao's expression was calm as he and Bai Yunlai walked over. "So," he thought, "it turns out he's the one who wants the pills concocted."

Alchemist Li frowned as he looked at them. "Well, you're finally here."

Bai Yunlai hurriedly moved forward to say a few words of explanation, offering a few words of subtle flattery. Alchemist Li's expression softened a bit, and he flicked his sleeve. Together, they all followed a very courteous Lu Song out of the valley. As they passed through several valleys within the Violet Qi Division, Meng Hao examined the surroundings calmly. There were quite a few Violet Fate Sect disciples to be seen.

These were not disciples who cultivated the Dao of alchemy. When they saw Meng Hao and the others, respectful smiles filled their faces, and they clasped hands in greeting.

Soon, Lu Song led them to his Immortal's Cave, which was located halfway up one of the mountains. It had an excellent view, and was quite spacious inside, as well as excellently decorated. Once inside, Lu Song clasped hands and bowed to Alchemist Li.

"Brother Li, many thanks for your assistance," he said. "This batch of medicinal pills will be very useful." With that, he produced a bag of holding which he offered to Alchemist Li.

"You're too kind," said Alchemist Li, nodding. He smiled vaguely. "Unfortunately, this is my first time concocting pills for someone, and I'm worried I might not be the most suitable choice for you. However, considering you insisted, I really couldn't refuse." He scanned the bag of holding quickly with Spiritual Sense, and then tossed it to Bai Yunlai.

Lu Song looked a little embarrassed. Inwardly, he cursed the master alchemists for their tricky thievery. If they weren’t invited out to concoct pills, where they could be observed, they would usually secretly pilfer some of the concocted pills. If they claimed success and returned some, then so be it, but if they claimed complete failure, there would be no way to confirm their story. This type of thing often occured in the Sect.

“If it wasn’t for the fact that I can’t concoct my own pills,” Lu Song said to himself, “and the Sect doesn’t distribute them, then I wouldn’t have any dealings with these alchemists….” His face, however, was covered with a smile. He bowed again, and then glanced at Meng Hao and Bai Yunlai. They were not of the Foundation Establishment stage, however, he knew that among the apprentice alchemists were people who would one day be promoted to be master alchemists.

Meng Hao’s face was calm, but inside he was laughing. If he showed his real face, Lu Song would surely go crazy. Instead, Lu Song stood there smiling politely.

Alchemist Li laughed, knowing full well what Lu Song was thinking. He cleared his throat, and then produced a pill furnace. At the same time, several crimson-colored Spirit Stones flew out and embedded themselves into the ground. The pill furnace floated in the air above them. Alchemist Li’s face instantly became somber.

“I looked over the pill formula. With my mastery of the Dao of alchemy, there’s only a forty percent chance that I can successfully concoct the Six Harmonies Pill. Watch carefully during the process so that you don’t suspect me of hiding anything should I fail.” With that, his left hand pressed down onto the pill furnace. After a moment, it turned red and began to emit waves of heat.

“Take six blades of Seven Sieve grass and extract the veins. They must not be broken. Approaching Music flower petals, seven of them. I need them with stamen attached; catalyze if necessary. Red Apricot leaf, maturity level seven years, seven months, seven days. A deviation of more than ten days is unacceptable.” Alchemist Li’s words came faster and faster. In one breath he spoke out ten different medicinal plants.

Bai Yunlai immediately opened the bag of holding, which was full of a variety of medicinal plants, and began to produce the required plants. By the time he finished preparing the Approaching Music flower, Meng Hao had already catalyzed the Red Apricot Leaves with his left hand, and extracted the veins from the Seven Sieve grass with his right hand. He handed them over to Alchemist Li.

Alchemist Li looked up at Meng Hao for a moment, then nodded slightly and began concocting. Occasionally he would say the name of a medicinal plant that he needed. Bai Yunlai sat there mutely for a moment. It was with a wry smile that he realized that Fang Mu was Alchemist Li’s assistant, whereas he had become Fang Mu’s assistant.

Whatever was required of him, Meng Hao would produce almost instantly. Not only was he fast, he didn’t make any mistakes. Furthermore, when it came to catalyzing, he seemed to barely need to think before it was completed, and with utmost accuracy.

Alchemist Li continued to cast glances at Meng Hao, which eventually turned into looks of shock. Very quickly, it seemed as if he was no longer looking down on Meng Hao, but rather viewed him as an equal.

Even Lu Song noticed that when Alchemist Li spoke, Meng Hao would complete the task almost as soon as the words were out of his mouth. He took a deep breath. “This assistant alchemist isn’t even human….”

It was at this exact moment that suddenly, a woman’s voice echoed into the Immortal’s cave from outside.

“Lu Song, do you have any news about that thing I asked you to look into?”

As soon as Meng Hao heard the voice, the plant he was currently catalyzing suddenly trembled.

1. Li Tao’s name in Chinese is Lì tāo – Li is a common surname, which also can mean “strict” or “severe.” Tao means “great waves”

2. Lu Song is one of the two “iron spear victims” haha

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# Chapter 215: Lift Your Head

He only paused for a moment. It would be undetectable by anyone else. His expression didn’t change in the slightest, and of course, he completed catalyzing the medicinal plant, which he then handed over to Alchemist Li.

He didn’t look over as the woman entered the Immortal’s cave.

She wore a white garment, and was pre-eminently beautiful. Upon looking at her, any man would stare and be instantly infatuated.

Her skin was so delicate it seemed a breath could damage it. She was tall and slender, with white, clear skin and luxurious hair that hung about her like a cloak. She gave off an otherworldly aura, and as she entered, a delicate fragrance filled the Immortal’s Cave. Even Alchemist Li started to breath somewhat heavily, ignoring the pill furnace to watch her enter.

Chu Yuyan!

Her brow was slightly furrowed, and though her face was as beautiful as ever, it contained a hint of unpleasantness. No veil could conceal the bitterness which caused her to sigh lightly, and no wind could disperse it. Only she could understand the pressure, and the furtive glances, that she had endured recently.

After the events at the Song Clan half a year previous, Meng Hao’s name instantly spread throughout the entire Southern Domain. That, of course, caused her name to be mentioned. Add in the fact that Wang Tengfei had participated in the Song Clan’s search for a son-in-law, and the whole matter turned into a storm that had overwhelmed her. The engagement agreement between Chu Yuyan and Wang Tengfei instantly became a huge joke.

All of it was because of Meng Hao.

Chu Yuyan didn’t hate Wang Tengfei. She could understand why Wang Tengfei didn’t trust her, and had chosen to participate in the Song Clan’s search for a son-in-law. She had picked the wrong person. Thankfully, they were only engaged, and had not become official beloved. Nonetheless, Chu Yuyan couldn’t help but sigh emotionally. Regardless of the circumstances, in the end, it had helped her to see what kind of person Wang Tengfei truly was.

She could accept the end result. She didn’t need Wang Tengfei to explain anything. After the events at the Song Clan, she immediately sent the engagement agreement back to the Wang Clan, putting an end to the childish arrangement.

The person she truly hated was Meng Hao. It was a hatred that had seeped into her bones. However, at the same time, she continued to dream about the events within the volcano. It had turned into a pestering torment to her.

“Greetings, Elder Sister Chu,” said Lu Song hastily. Alchemist Li also greeted her with clasped hands. Bai Yunlai sucked in a breath and lowered his head in greeting. Meng Hao also offered her greetings, although inside, he felt a bit remorseful.

How could he not have a bit of a guilty conscience? In all truth, it was the same in regard to the matter with Lu Song and Qian Shuihen. However, of all the people in the Violet Fate Sect, the person he least wanted to run into had been Chu Yuyan.

In his heart, Meng Hao felt that he had been a bit excessive in the way he dealt with her. However, given the circumstances at that time, he hadn’t had much of a choice. Furthermore, if Chu Yuyan hadn’t chased him down and tried to kill him to begin with, then none of it would have happened.

In any case, Meng Hao still felt bad.

“I was planning to go look for you just after this,” said Lu Song. “I made a lot of inquiries about that damned Meng Hao, but he seems to have disappeared into thin air.” He couldn’t help but grind his teeth when he said Meng Hao’s name. “There’s not a single clue to be found about him. In fact, some of the Sects have been watching the people he’s made friends with, but in this entire half-year, he hasn’t appeared. A lot of people think that that damned, despicable, wretched animal must have left the Southern Domain. He deserves to die by a thousand knife cuts!”

Chu Yuyan frowned. During the past half year, she had constantly sent people out to look for Meng Hao. Despite her insistence on tracking him down, he seemed to have thoroughly vanished.

“How could he have left the Southern Domain?” thought Chu Yuyan. “All his old Sect members are here. Unless he provoked some calamitous, irreparable disaster, why would he leave? Actually, what happened in the Song Clan was really a stroke of good fortune on his part. He could join any Sect, hand over the Sublime Spirit Scripture, and turn a dangerous situation into a position of safety. Meng Hao is bizarrely crafty, there’s no way he would fail to realize that, is there?

“In my estimation, he is most certainly still in the Southern Domain. We just don’t know where he’s hiding. If I ever find him….” She gnashed her teeth. She was just about to turn and leave, when her gaze fell upon Meng Hao. She stared at him, and then suddenly spoke. Her voice was no longer warm, but filled with coldness. “Lift your head.”

Meng Hao was astonished. “I’ve changed my appearance,” he thought, “and yet she still focuses on me.” Despite his astonishment, his face was blank and confused as he looked up at her.

Chu Yuyan’s brow furrowed. She wasn’t sure why, but when she looked over this young man, her heart filled with an unexplainable irritation. Looking at him, though, she was sure she had never seen him before.

Her eyes flickered as she thought, “Something’s wrong. Why would I instantly be annoyed with someone for no apparent reason?” She studied Meng Hao for a moment longer to no avail.

Meng Hao groaned inwardly. “How can this girl be so astute?” he thought. Despite his change in appearance, and the other people present, she had somehow sensed something and come to focus on him. His heart suddenly began to race. Suddenly, he shifted his gaze to look at her chest, and then deliberately gulped.

A somewhat dirty expression flitted over his face, and he intentionally blushed. Now, he didn’t look lecherous, but rather like a teenager seeing a beautiful woman for the first time. In such a situation, it would be a natural reaction to look so ill at ease.

His expression caused Chu Yuyan’s frown to deepen. A look of disgust appeared on her face, and she turned wordlessly to leave the Immortal’s Cave, ignoring the feeling of irritation which had welled up within her.

After Chu Yuyan left, everyone in the Immortal’s Cave breathed a sigh of relief. Lu Song quickly sealed the main door, and Alchemist Li shook his head. It was hard to tell what he was thinking, but after another sigh, he continued with the pill concoction.

“Elder Sister Chu has sure changed a lot recently,” murmured Bai Yunlai. “She never used to be like this. Now she’s completely cold and gloomy. I was shivering just now.”

“It’s all the fault of that Meng Hao,” said Lu Song, grinding his teeth. “That damned, despicable wretch deserves to die by a thousand knife cuts, ten thousand times! If I ever run into him, I’ll tear him to pieces! I’ll rip his flesh off the bone with my own teeth and grind his bones to pieces!” The depth of his hatred was visibly apparent. After he finished speaking, he looked at Meng Hao with a strange expression in his eyes, then suddenly smiled good-naturedly and nodded.

He had obviously noticed that Meng Hao was no ordinary apprentice alchemist, and there was no small chance that he would become a master alchemist in the future. Obviously, the sooner he made friends with him the better.

Meng Hao coughed dryly. He wasn’t exactly thin-skinned. However, moments ago Lu Song had been hatefully grinding his teeth and cursing, and with the next breath, was beaming with goodwill. Meng Hao had the feeling that he would have to get used to such things.

It took the entire day to finish concocting the pills. The moon was rising by the time the fragrant aroma wafted up from the pill furnace, and the medicinal pills that Lu Song needed emerged.

Because it had been a relatively hasty concoction, the medicinal plants which should have produced seven or eight pills ended up only producing two. Meng Hao could easily tell that it had something to do with Alchemist Li’s technique.

This was the first time he had participated in pill concoction. The entire time, he had been observing Alchemist Li’s concocting techniques, and had learned quite a bit. It seemed it would soon grow dark outside. Lu Song happily escorted them out of the Immortal’s Cave and all the way back to the East Pill Division, before clasping hands and leaving.

In the following days, Meng Hao continued his studies regarding medicinal plants. However, because of the deep impression he’d left on Alchemist Li, he had a new daily task. Whenever Alchemist Li concocted pills, be it in his own Immortal’s Cave or someone else’s, he would always send for Meng Hao to be his assistant. Li Tao found that with Meng Hao at his side, pill concocting went much smoother.

In addition, Li Tao would often give Meng Hao pointers regarding alchemy. Soon, Meng Hao no longer considered himself unfamiliar with alchemy. He was becoming more and more comfortable with it. The more he saw, the more he learned; he was steadily improving, bit by bit.

Dealing with others was not a complicated matter. For example, Meng Hao’s relationship with both Bai Yunlai and Alchemist Li was very simple. It was all based on how they could help each other.

If it weren’t for Meng Hao’s skill as an apprentice alchemist, Li Tao wouldn’t have been so impressed with him, nor would he constantly seek him out as an assistant.

The days passed like this for three months. Meng Hao was completely assimilated into life in the Violet Fate Sect. In the time he had been there, he had met a lot of people, and many people had come to know his name.

Whenever he went out, he would run into familiar faces with whom he could chat and joke. Everything was very harmonious and peaceful. Everyone greeting him with clasped hands. Not a soul knew that this up and coming apprentice alchemist named Fang Mu, was the person who so many months ago had caused a storm in the Southern Domain, Meng Hao.

One day, Meng Hao found himself in Li Tao’s Immortal’s cave, assisting in pill concocting. After the pill concocting was finished, Li Tao escorted Meng Hao to the mouth of his Immortal’s Cave. Suddenly, he spoke.

“Fang Mu, I want you to know that to me, you are no apprentice alchemist. Your skill with medicinal plants places you in the rank of master alchemist as far as I’m concerned.”

Meng Hao stopped walking and looked at Li Tao. He clasped his hands and bowed. It was a completely sincere bow. Li Tao was at the early Foundation Establishment stage, but in the time they had spent together, Meng Hao had found him to be, not cold and haughty, but actually very approachable, even kind.

Meng Hao’s understanding of alchemy had significantly improved as a result of their relationship.

“In one month,” continued Li Tao enthusiastically, “there will be a promotion examination. I’ve made some inquiries, and found that only one apprentice alchemist will be selected for promotion. If that happens, and you are raised to master alchemist, then you will finally be able to learn the true Dao of alchemy of the Violet Fate Sect. If you become a master alchemist, you will be assigned your own Immortal’s Cave, and your own furnace fire. You will no longer study medicinal plants, but pill concoction!

“The only frustrating thing,” he continued sincerely, “is that only people who have served as apprentice alchemists for ten years can participate in the exam this time. If you’re interested in participating, though, I’ll see if I can apply to get you a spot. You think about it. Perhaps you can come up with your own a method to join. If you manage to seize an opportunity like this, you might be able to save yourself ten years of time.”

Meng Hao’s heart began to thump, and he once again bowed to Li Tao. “Many thanks, Elder Brother Li.”

They exchanged a few more words, whereupon Meng Hao bowed and took his leave. As he walked along the mountain paths, he looked up at the moon, and his eyes began to shine brightly.

“I can’t spend ten years as an apprentice alchemist,” he thought. “I must think of a way to seize this chance. My previous activities in the Sect must have drawn a bit of attention….” Continuing to ponder these matters, Meng Hao entered Division One Valley One. As he walked into his courtyard, his heart trembled, although his expression stayed the same. After pushing open the gate, he found that standing there in the courtyard was a white-haired old man. He immediately caused a look of surprise to appear on his face.

This was the same old man who had tested his latent talent the year he joined the East Pill Division. He was a Furnace Lord named Wang Fanming[1]. He stood there looking at Meng Hao’s medicinal plant garden. As soon as Meng Hao entered the courtyard, he turned and gazed into Meng Hao’s eyes.

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1. Wang Fanming’s name in Chinese is wáng fán míng – Wang is a common surname. Fan means “ordinary.” Ming means “clear” or “bright”

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# Chapter 216: The Meaning of Grandmaster

The instant the old man turned and looked at Meng Hao, his eyes filled with a bright light and he said, “You joined the East Pill Division with a recommendation medallion from a Furnace Lord. What is your purpose here?!” A mysterious pressure locked onto Meng Hao’s body.

As the man spoke the words, he took a step forward.

When the step fell, ghost images vibrated up everywhere, as if the area had been cut off from the rest of the world. Such a scene gave the feeling that any escape was impossible.

Even while his first words were still echoing out, he spoke again, “I’ve thoroughly investigated all of the Cultivators with the surname Fang in the entire State of Eastern Emergence. I couldn’t find any record of you anywhere. As an alien in the State of Eastern Emergence, tell me… why are you here?” It was obviously supposed to feel like an interrogation. Add in the display of power, and it seemed as if dark storm clouds were rolling Meng Hao’s way.

Inside, Meng Hao was calm. However, his face visibly paled, and he stood in place, body trembling slightly. His chin, though, was set stubbornly.

“State your real name, and reveal your purpose here! This is your last chance. If you refuse to come to your senses, then don’t blame me for being ruthless!” The old man took another step forward. When the step fell, the sound of rumbling thunder filled the courtyard. A fierce wind sprang up, and waves of pressure roiled out. The medicinal plants in the garden seemed as if they were being harmfully catalyzed; they were growing dark and ugly.

Meng Hao’s face grew paler. However, inwardly, he was as calm as ever. This old man’s Cultivation base was at the Core Formation stage, and his words seemed cold and merciless. In reality, though, he was obviously bluffing. Considering Meng Hao’s path of Cultivation, and the level of his experience and training, how could he not tell?

He had already been in the Violet Fate Sect for the better part of a year. After all this time, the fact the old man chose today to come visit was telling. Meng Hao only had to think a moment to come to a fairly certain conclusion.

Obviously, the promotion day was approaching, and although Meng Hao didn’t qualify to participate, his first rate latent talent had attracted quite a bit of attention in the East Pill Division. That was the whole purpose of this whole scene; the display of power was basically a warning of sorts.

All of these thoughts flitted through Meng Hao’s mind in an instant. He also thought about how he had crossed the chain bridge to enter the Sect, and his heart grew even calmer. He took a deep breath and, continuing to keep his face pale, clasped his hands and bowed deeply to the old man.

His expression bitter, his voice light, he said, “Sir, my name really is Fang Mu, and I am not from the State of Eastern Emergence. I have long yearned for the Dao of alchemy, and that is why I thirsted to join the Violet Fate Sect. I have no other purpose. I wholeheartedly wish to study alchemy.

“Unfortunately, the Violet Fate Sect does not accept outsiders, so I had to figure out another way to get the recommendation medallion from a Furnace Lord. In order to enter the Sect, I had no choice other than to use subterfuge. I had no option. Sir, if you believe junior is in error, then I will accept any punishment the Sect deems fit.” Meng Hao bowed down and held the bow, not lifting himself up straight.

Everything was quiet. The old man looked at Meng Hao. He had long since investigated Meng Hao, and knew there were some things about him that weren’t quite right. However, there were one hundred thousand apprentice alchemists in the Sect. More than a few of them had things about them that weren’t quite right. The fact that they had passed the Bridge of Truth, however, was evidence that they harbored no ill intent toward the East Pill Division. If they did have any such secrets, they would not be able to pass the bridge.

If Meng Hao was an ordinary apprentice alchemist without first rate latent talent, then the old man wouldn’t have paid him the least bit of attention, and things would have run their course naturally. However, Meng Hao’s latent talent had attracted not just the attention of this old man, but other Furnace Lords in the East Pill Division. When the question came up regarding his qualifications to participate in the promotion examination, he went against convention to acquire a spot for Meng Hao… which therefore led to the current scene.

Wang Fanming was quiet for a moment. Then, he looked at Meng Hao and coolly said, “Once you join the Eastern Pill Division, you may never forsake it, not for the rest of your life. Can you do so?”

Meng Hao finally stood up straight. Looking at the old man with determination in his face, he spoke in a voice that could chop nails and sever iron: “It is a great kindness on the part of the Sect to teach me about the Dao of Alchemy. As long as the Sect doesn’t kick me away, I will never forsake it!”

Actually, after living in the Violet Fate Sect for the better part of a year, being part of the East Pill Division, and studying alchemy, Meng Hao really had developed this view. As long as he could stay here and study alchemy, he would not leave the Sect.

The old man gave Meng Hao a deep look. “I don’t care about your background. If you say you’re Fang Mu, then you are Fang Mu. However, if you ever betray the Sect, I will take away your Dao of alchemy. If I am unable to, there will be another alchemist in the East Pill Division who can.” He flicked his sleeve, and a medallion shot toward Meng Hao.

It landed in Meng Hao’s hand, glowing mysteriously, radiating coldness.

"In one month, you may attend the examination for promotion to master alchemist. Only one candidate will be selected. Whether or not you are selected will depend on your luck." With that, Wang Fanming turned and flew away, disappearing in the blink of an eye.

As he said, he didn't care about Meng Hao's background. There were many people in the Violet Fate Sect who had mysterious backgrounds. Even among the Furnace Lords were people who had previously been members of other Sects, or who had enemies in the outside world and joined the East Pill Division to hide.

Actually, Wang Fanming himself was not from the State of Eastern Emergence. It was only because of various circumstances that he ended up becoming a Cultivator of the East Pill Division.

This was the tradition within the East Pill Division, a tradition created by someone who commanded high prestige and universal respect in the Violet Fate Sect: Grandmaster Pill Demon.

Grandmaster Pill Demon had uttered the following words regarding the East Pill Division: "One must take the long view when traversing the great path of the Dao of alchemy. Any qualified alchemist may become a Cultivator of the East Pill Division. The only requirement is that he harbor no ill intentions, nor have the reckless ambition of wild wolves."

Because of this, the traditions of the East Pill Division of the Violet Fate Sect had existed for a very long time. Unfortunately, it had also led to circumstances in which disciples forsook the Sect. Despite that, the techniques of the East Pill Division had never been revealed. Many outsiders wondered about this mystery, and also why those who forsook the Sect were so sentimental about it afterward.

In actuality, from time immemorial, all disciples who forsook the Sect were eventually brought back. Except for two. Those two had rocked the Southern Domain, and were the only two people other than Pill Demon to become Grandmasters of the Dao of alchemy!

Both of them had once been novitiates of Grandmaster Pill Demon. Eventually, they brought forth new ideas and innovations. Regardless of what outsiders thought, these two never believed their skill could outmatch that of their Master.

The reason they had become famous, and the reason they never returned to the Sect, was also because of the words of Grandmaster Pill Demon, words that continued to be passed down to this very day.

“Along the path of the Dao of alchemy, if a hundred flowers bloom, who has the right to permit only the Mudan peony to exist? Cannot the lesser peony and the orchid also coexist? Thus is birthed the flower garden. If the medicinal plant garden only contained one medicinal plant, how could the Dao of alchemy come into being? 1

“If those who inherit my Dao of alchemy are full of the ambitions of wild wolves, I will take back the Dao of alchemy. However, he who can weed through the old to bring forth the new, he who can tread the untrodden path, that person may establish his own school of thought. If he is able to bear the weight of the title Grandmaster, then it has nothing to do with me. In that case, there is no need to discuss returning to me.”

Because of this, there are three alchemists called Grandmaster. In reality, though, the Dao of alchemy in the Southern Domain has only one true Grandmaster!

Pill Demon!

Meng Hao watched Wang Fanming leave, and his eyes shone with a mysterious light. He never thought he would be able to secure a spot in the promotion examination so quickly. He looked down thoughtfully at the jade slip he held in his hand. His eyes glinted, and he cast Spiritual Sense into it. His mind suddenly shook.

In his head suddenly appeared the words:

Alchemy Scripture!

He sat down cross-legged in the courtyard, holding the jade slip in hand. He closed his eyes and immersed himself in the Alchemy Scripture which had appeared in his head. It wasn’t until the sun began to rise the following morning that he slowly opened his eyes. He took a deep breath, and looked off at the distant mountain peaks. His eyes were filled with reverence. He sat there quietly for a long time.

This so-called Alchemy Scripture was in fact not really a scripture. Actually, it was a record of events which had occurred in the East Pill Division in the thousand years since Grandmaster Pill Demon rose to fame.

There were many stories recorded, for example the origins of the two other Grandmaster alchemists of the Southern Domain, as well as various quotations from Grandmaster Pill Demon. After examining the entire Alchemy Scripture, an image appeared in his mind of a figure standing at the peak of the Dao of alchemy.

Now he understood why Wang Fanming was so quick to discard the issue of his hidden past.

Meng Hao slowly put away the jade slip. He took a few deep breaths, and then began his daily apprentice alchemist cultivation.

Time went by slowly. Soon, a month had passed. The news about the examination for apprentice alchemists with ten years of experience, spread like wildfire throughout the East Pill Division. It quickly became the only conversation topic among the apprentice alchemists.

Roughly eighty percent of the apprentice alchemists had ten or more years of experience. However, not all would participate in the promotion examination. Only thirty thousand slots were available for registration.

When the day of the test came, the entire East Pill Division bustled with noise and excitement. The furnace bells rang out, and an enormous pill furnace once again appeared up in the air. Tens of thousands of strands of light reached out toward the qualified apprentice alchemists, who were all bursting with excitement. Meng Hao was among them as they shot toward the pill furnace.

In the blink of an eye, thirty thousand people vanished. When they reappeared, it was not in the Celestial Land of medicinal plant fields. Instead, they were in an enormous public square paved with limestone. In the middle of the square was a gigantic blue-green pill furnace. Medicinal aroma wafted out from it, filling the square with medicinal mists and clouds.

Arranged in the enormous square were thirty thousand worktables. On the surface of each worktable was a black jade slip. As the thirty thousand participants arrived, there was no hubbub or racket. They all looked nervously toward the pill furnace, which was surrounded by eight old men, sitting cross-legged.

One of them was Wang Fanming.

The crowd of people looked down at the eight men, who slowly opened their eyes. They looked over everyone with kind, gentle expressions.

“In the promotion exam of the East Pill Division, one person shall be selected from your midst to practice the Cultivation of the Dao of alchemy! The examination consists of two rounds. The first round is an elimination round which only ten participants will pass. The second round is the final round, from which one master alchemist will emerge!

“One hundred thousand medicinal plants. One million variations. Your task is to silently list them out. Write down as many as you can think of! In front of you are thirty thousand work stations. Please organize yourselves among them and prepare to begin!”

1. The “Mudan peony” referred to here is the peony which once was the national flower of China. It is also called the “king of flowers.” What I’m translating as the “lesser peony” is another type of peony flower that resembles the Mudan peon. These two are sometimes contrasted. For example, in the ancient court, the Empress would be the Mudan peony and the concubines would be the lesser peonies

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# Chapter 217: Struggling for Plant Mastery

All thirty thousand apprentice alchemists were respectful and solemn. Quite a few had full heads of white hair. Other than Meng Hao, not a one appeared to be under thirty years of age.

They had all been apprentices for at least 10 years and had deep, profound understanding of medicinal plants. Practice had ingrained the knowledge so deeply that if they left the Sect for another on the outside, they would be rated as a medicinal plant Grandmaster.

Right now, they solemnly filed forward toward the workstations. Meng Hao took a deep breath as he looked around at the workstations, selected one, and sat down.

This was his first time participating in an examination for promotion from apprentice alchemist. However, the feeling was not strange to him. Actually… everything felt quite familiar.

The scene around him was very much like the examinations he had taken part in back when he was a scholar in the State of Zhao. He had participated in the preliminary rounds of the Imperial examinations on multiple occasions, and although he had never scored top marks, he was still very familiar with the process.

Meng Hao chuckled to himself. “There really are a lot of similarities between the two. This master alchemist promotion examination tests your knowledge of medicinal plants. The more plants you remember, the more details you recall, and the more accurately you do so, will determine how close to perfection your final score is. It’s not very different at all from the imperial examinations.” He felt like he was back in the imperial examination hall. Except this time, he was not aiming for a scholarly rank, but promotion in the Dao of alchemy.

He took another deep breath and looked around at all the apprentice alchemists as they peered down at the jade slip in front of them. Suddenly, magical glowing screens appeared in front of them, upon which could be seen various medicinal plants.

The task of all the apprentice alchemists was to identify the plants they recognized and then record their habits and characteristics, planting requirements, harvesting methods and any other details.

Seeing that many of the participants had already started, Meng Hao tapped his jade slip, and immediately, a magical screen appeared. He stared thoughtfully at the medicinal plant which appeared, and then began to record the name of the plant, its characteristics, and some other details.

Time passed. The square was quiet and peaceful. The eight old men who sat cross-legged by the pill furnace appeared to Meng Hao to be the test administrators. They looked around the examination square. Clearly, if anyone caused a disturbance, severe punishment would follow.

Meng Hao soon fell into a rhythm of answering the questions. He quickly recorded the information about the plants that appeared in front of him. Many of them he had seen with his own eyes in the Celestial Land. Others, he had even held in his own hands when assisting Li Tao in pill concoction.

Six hours quickly passed. Meng Hao was immersed in filling out his answers. His eyes shone with determination. He had discovered that this was an excellent method to verify how much he had learned. All of the information he had studied about medicinal plants during the better part of the year once again floated up in his mind.

As he reached down into the depths of his memory, he began to experience the same feeling he had as a scholar all those years ago, the joy that can be found in the midst of hardship.

Soon, it became apparent that some of the surrounding apprentice alchemists were wearing out. Some frowned, obviously wracking their brains for answers. More time went by, another four hours. Some of the apprentice alchemists were pale-faced. Many were clearly encountering unfamiliar medicinal plants, which they would skip past quickly. However, soon, they discovered that the unfamiliar plants became more and more frequent. Eventually, people began to abandon their struggles and bitterly leave the examination field. They moved off to the side to observe.

Within a short time, more and more apprentice alchemists began to stare bitterly at the screens in front of them. They would stare blankly for a while, then stand and walk off to the side, heaving bitter sighs. Despite ten or more years of experience, many of these people had difficulty remembering so many medicinal plants. After all, there were one hundred thousand of them, with a million variations. If one’s Cultivation base was high enough, Divine Sense could be used to brand the information in one’s mind; without that ability, though, the only other method was rote memorization, which was incredibly difficult.

Meng Hao, of course, was by nature a scholar and an intellectual. From the moment he had begun to tread the path of a scholar, each and every day had been devoted to memorizing things.

His expression was calm, and his gaze was locked onto the screen in front of him. He zoned out everything else, focusing completely on the ever-changing medicinal plants. The more questions he answered, the happier he grew. His movements were like floating clouds and flowing water, natural and spontaneous. Soon, he began to attract the attention of some of the people who had given up, and were now observing the proceedings.

More time passed. The examination had now been underway for twenty hours. Of the original thirty thousand participants, only twenty thousand continued to fill in answers. The surroundings were as quiet as ever. Those who had abandoned their efforts did not leave, they stood by quietly, watching on.

By the time the thirtieth hour arrived, only seventy percent of the twenty thousand participants remained. The eyes of these more than ten thousand apprentice alchemists were bloodshot. Each and every one doggedly stared at their respective glowing screens, continuing to fill in information from their studies.

Meng Hao was as calm as ever. The speed with which he answered the questions caused Wang Fanming and the other old men to cast sidelong glances at each other.

By the fortieth hour, only thirty percent or so of the participants had not given up.

By the sixtieth hour, only six thousand remained in the square, continuing on madly with the examination. Already, quite a few were obviously about to give up. If they looked around, they would see that their compatriots were madly going all out, jaws clenched as they pondered the images of the medicinal plants in front of them, attempting to recall their habits and characteristics.

By the time eighty continuous hour of testing had passed, only three thousand participants remained. They had been answering questions for four days and four nights with no rest whatsoever. They were like mad devils who could remember everything.

When the one hundredth hour arrived, an older man who appeared to be about fifty years old coughed up a mouthful of blood and then collapsed to the ground. His previously gray hair was now completely white. The scene caused quite a commotion, and quite a few of the surrounding apprentice alchemists immediately stood pale-faced and gave up.

They knew that if they continued, they may very well die here this day. They walked off to the side, supported by fellow apprentice alchemists. Everyone was now watching the remaining thousand test takers, their eyes filled with fear and dread. They knew full well how fearsome these people were.

Only incredibly extraordinary individuals could remember so many of the hundred thousand plants and one million variations.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. His eyes felt gritty, so he closed them for a moment to rest. Then he opened them, focusing on the medicinal plants and continuing to fill out answers.

Time passed by in a blur. The number of people who remained answering questions grew smaller and smaller. One thousand, eight hundred, five hundred, three hundred… By the time one hundred and eighty hours had passed, only eleven people remained!

The eleven people all sat in different locations within the enormous square, competing with unbridled frenzy. Meng Hao was frowning. Some of the plants in front of him required a careful search of his memory to recall.

This was especially true of the medicinal plants that were easily misidentified. These could only be correctly identified by carefully examining various tiny details. In fact, in some cases, they could only be distinguished by taste; unfortunately only images were available, which meant that even further examination was required before any information could be recorded.

The other ten people all were pale-faced, and their eyes radiated with ferocity. Having endured all the way down to this point, they obviously were not willing to give up. This test was a trial by fire, and an unforgiving one at that. Only ten mistakes or oversights were allowed, and then, instant disqualification.

In this test, no one could masquerade as having ability. The best among the apprentice alchemists would be visible in a single glance.

Suddenly, one of the final eleven suddenly grew white as death. His expression changed as the screen in front of him suddenly disappeared. He stared mutely for a long moment, then staggered to his feet and laughed bitterly. A fellow apprentice alchemist held him by the arm as he left his workstation.

The observing apprentice alchemists began to breathe heavily. There were now only ten participants left; these ten had already passed into the second round of the examination.

However, not a single one stood up!

Despite being assured a pass to the next round, all of these apprentice alchemists aspired to be master alchemists. Being so ambitious and proud, they possessed the spirit of competition; they naturally wanted to see who would be the first among them all!

Each and every one of them possessed the same mentality. All of the surrounding thirty thousand apprentice alchemists were watching on with rapt attention. They were all wondering, in the end… who would place first?

Wang Fanming and the seven other old men watched on wordlessly. They said nothing to end the examination, and instead watched on quietly.

Time passed by. These ten people, including Meng Hao, were all well-known figures amongst the apprentice alchemists. All of them were clearly qualified to become master alchemists. Their eyes were completely bloodshot as they stared at the screens in front of them. None gave up.

Meng Hao closed his eyes for a moment and took a deep breath. When he opened them, he found himself looking at a very rare medicinal plant. In fact, this was a plant that was not among the one hundred thousand medicinal plants, but rather, a hybrid grass that was one of the one million variations.

Even those Cultivators in the Southern Domain who considered themselves experienced and knowledgeable, would only be able to stare in frustration at such a plant.

“It’s getting harder and harder,” thought Meng Hao, sighing deeply. “But that only makes things more interesting.” His face radiated stubbornness. As of now, the aura of a Cultivator had grown faint around him, to be replaced by the implacability of a scholar. This was the stubbornness of someone who had repeatedly failed in the imperial examinations, and yet continued to participate.

After joining the East Pill Division, Meng Hao realized that he really was innately inclined to practice alchemy!

Perhaps in terms of Cultivation, his latent talent was not extraordinary. But when it came to alchemy, however, he possessed true genius! Whether it was memorizing medicinal plants, or catalyzing them, he stood head and shoulders above all others.

In fact, you could say that this was not innate talent, this was nature talent! Nature talent regarding all plants and vegetation!

Meng Hao suddenly recalled the words of Shui Dongliu 1. Gradually he came to realize that he didn't always have nature talent. This nature talent came from the Resurrection Lily!

Meng Hao wasn't sure how much time had passed. Soon, one screen after another went dark among the final ten. They had clearly made more than ten mistakes, and were out.

Soon the hour arrived in which only two people remained!

One was Meng Hao, the other was a grim-faced, middle-aged man. As they continued with the examination, the middle aged man would look up from time to time at Meng Hao. His eyes slowly filled with crazed determination.

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# Chapter 218: First Round First Place!

The middle-aged man’s eyes were blood red as he stared at the medicinal plant in front of him. “I joined the Sect twenty years ago,” he said “I’ve been an apprentice alchemist for half my life. Do you really think you can compare to me?” However, his face was gradually growing white. He had already made nine mistakes, so he now had only one chance left. Unfortunately, as for the plant in front of him… he didn’t recognize it.

After a long time passed, the middle-aged man laughed sadly, then slowly stood up. He didn’t record an answer. He took a long look at the medicinal plant, committing it to memory, then walked away.

As of now, Meng Hao was the only person left in the square!

The gaze of every single person, including Wang Fanming and the seven other old-timers, was focused solely on Meng Hao!

This was because… he was still filling out answers!

Meng Hao had no idea many how many answers he had provided. One hundred thousand medicinal plants, one million variations. Perhaps he had recorded half, perhaps more. He took a deep breath and focused on the medicinal plants on the screen in front of him. He gradually became aware that some of the medicinal plants were ones he had never seen before. However, after looking at them and thinking for a moment, the information regarding them would appear in his head.

The hundred thousand plants and one million variations that he had studied were simply a foundation. However, that foundation enabled him to awaken the nature talent of the Resurrection Lily that he acquired. That nature talent of plants allowed him to expand on what he had built in his head, using that accumulated knowledge to form answers.

Inside his bag of the Cosmos, the portrait of the Resurrection Lily painted by Shui Dongliu was trembling. It seemed to be struggling, resisting, screaming a noiseless scream. This was because as Meng Hao continues to answer questions and corroborate what he had learned, the endless images of plants that appeared in his head were all being plundered from the Resurrection Lily! He was wresting away the talent of the Resurrection Lily!

If that were simply it, perhaps it wouldn’t be a big deal. However, as Meng Hao continued, he realized that the Demonic Core within his Dao Pillar seemed to be rotating. With every rotation, strands of invisible power would emanate out, entering into his mind, causing the nature talent from the Resurrection Lily to grow even more powerful.

This examination of plants and vegetation, was also a chance for him to steal away nature talent from the Resurrection Lily! There was no other method that could possibly be faster, that could push Meng Hao to such heights! This examination was essentially a huge stroke of good fortune!

He proceeded on, even more lost in thought than he was before. He continued to fill out more and more answers, more and more quickly. No one could hear the screams of the Resurrection Lily as its nature talent was wrested away and fused into Meng Hao, becoming his and his alone!

If someone asked Meng Hao to stop now, he would refuse.

His eyes were bloodshot. Sometimes he had to think, but he never made a mistake. As he thought and recorded his answers, everyone around watched with baited breath, stupefied at what was happening. Wang Fanming and the seven others exchanged glances. All of their eyes were filled with shock.

Some of the information Meng Hao filled out, even they would have difficulty with. Some of these hybrid plants required ten varieties of medicinal plants to be grafted together at different times to produce the final rare version.

Wang Fanming and the others exchanged excited glances and then began to transmit a conversation between themselves.

“One hundred thousand medicinal plants, one million variations, ten million hybrids. Three realms of plants and vegetations. Mastering even the first indicates one has the nature talent required to become a master alchemist…”

“In the Southern Domain, only Violet Furnace Lords have the enough talent to master the second realm. As far as the third realm goes, there are only three: Grandmaster Pill Demon and the other two Grandmasters!”

“Just how skilled is this Fang Mu when it comes to plants? He’s simply inhuman! He’s already passed the second realm and has now encroached into the domain of the third realm…. If his alchemic skill is comparable to his talent with plants, then he… he will be able to rock Heaven and Earth!”

“Not necessarily. His talent with plants is inhuman. But skill in alchemy is different. However, if he does possess some skill, then even if he doesn’t become a Violet Furnace Lord, he will surely reach the pinnacle of the Furnace Lord rank!”

“It will all depend on the results of his alchemy, and the level of the medicinal strength he develops. Ordinary master alchemists can produce about thirty percent. Only Furnace Lords can draw out fifty percent or more of the medicinal strength. Violet Furnace Lords can extract seventy percent. In all the Southern Domain, only Grandmaster Pill Demon and the other two Grandmasters can refine ninety percent or more! And Grandmaster Pill Demon is the only one who can concoct pills of one hundred percent medicinal strength, pills that do not lose any effectiveness!”

As the eight men continued their discussion, the apprentice alchemists watched on, dumbstruck. Their minds reeled as they watched Meng Hao. The other tenth-place finalists also watched on, some with admiration and respect, others with jealousy and discontent.

Time passed, and Meng Hao continued on without stopping. As the medicinal plants flashed in front of him, his expression slowly grew more and more excited. More and more information flooded into his head, and the legacy Demonic Core inside him rotated even more rapidly.

Meanwhile, elsewhere within the Violet Fate Sect, on an isolated peak deep within the East Pill Division, an old man sat cross-legged, observing a pill furnace which floated in front of him. He wore a white Daoist robe, and his entire person emanated the aroma of medicinal pills. His eyes were focused completely on the pill furnace.

His features were not particularly impressive. However, his eyes were clear, like deep springs. At first look, his white Daoist robe seemed ordinary. However, on each sleeve was embroidered a pill furnace.

He was archaic, ancient, as if he had existed for countless years. As he looked at the pill furnace, he smiled. It was impossible to tell his Cultivation base, but his presence on the mountain seemed to cause the clouds to disperse and the wind to calm. It seemed that with him present, the world would always be like that.

Next to him was a young woman clad in a long, violet robe. She was consummately beautiful, although her brow was wrinkled in a frown. It was none other than Chu Yuyan.

The old man… was he who commanded high prestige and universal respect within the Violet Fate Sect. He was the Grandmaster alchemist whose name had dominated the Southern Domain for a thousand years. His two novitiates had forsaken him to become Grandmasters in their own right. This was… Pill Demon!

Demons can take countless forms, just like the variations of medicinal pills. The day this old man achieved his Dao, he took the name Pill Demon. This Grandmaster Demon whose name had filled the Southern Domain a thousand years ago, now spoke. “Were you able to concoct the Three Mortalities Pill?” he asked, shifting his gaze from the pill furnace to Chu Yuyan.

“I failed again,” she replied, frowning. “Master, the Three Mortalities Pill is too difficult.” She looked at the floating pill furnace.

The old man shook his head and chuckled. With an expression that seemed to be filled with the emotion of many years, he looked off into the distance, toward the enormous statue of Reverend Violet East. Eventually, he looked back to the pill furnace. After some time passed, he spoke again: “Your heart is unsettled, and is lacking in determination. It seems you still do not grasp the purpose for which Master asked you to concoct the Three Mortalities Pill. In that regard, you could really learn something from him.” He pointed toward the pill furnace. As he did, the furnace grew blurry, then magically transformed into an image of the Meng Hao on the square.

When she caught sight of him, Chu Yuyan’s brow furrowed instantly. She remembered him. She recalled how seeing him had for some unknown reason caused her heart to fill with irritation. It had filled her with an almost unstoppable impulse to beat some sense into him.

Even afterward, she couldn’t explain it. Casting eyes on him again today caused that same irritated feeling to reappear.

“On the path of the Dao of alchemy,” Grandmaster Pill Demon said coolly, “talent is only an assistant. Unswerving determination is even more important.” He waved his right hand and the scene disappeared. The pill furnace was once again a pill furnace. “Go back. When you finish concocting the Three Mortalities Pill, then Master will permit you to leave the Sect.” With that, he closed his eyes.

Chu Yuyan’s lips curled into a pout. Clearly not happy, but unable to do anything about it, she stamped her foot as she turned and left. For some reason the face of Meng Hao, or rather Fang Mu, appeared in her mind, and her irritation rose again.

“I’m going to go see why this guy makes me so uncomfortable!” she thought, clenching her jaw and transforming into a beam of light that shot off into the distance.

Back in the master alchemist examination square, tens of thousands of eyes were all focused on one thing as the time slowly passed. When Chu Yuyan arrived, she saw Meng Hao, and once again frowned. She examined him intently for a while, but in the end, his features were unfamiliar. And yet within that unfamiliarity was something that she seemed to know.

More time passed. A day. Two days…. Eventually three days had passed.

Chu Yuyan's eyes were glued onto Meng Hao, but in the end, her eyes filled with frustration. Much the same as Wang Fanming and the others, she was familiar with the third realm of plants and vegetation. Seeing Meng Hao answer question after question, how could she not be filled with astonishment?

At the end of the third day, the screen in front of Meng Hao suddenly flickered. No more medicinal plants appeared. He slowly looked up.

Everything was completely silent. Everyone was staring at the screen in front of him. Wang Fangming gasped and stood up. The other old men also stood up one by one, their eyes filled with disbelief.

"He answered all the questions…."

"Grandmaster Pill Demon personally prepared all of the images of the medicinal plants. In one thousand years, no one has ever answered all the questions. What… just what inhuman talent does he possess…?"

As the words of Wang Fanming and the others echoed out, the excitement that had been suppressed for days by the surrounding apprentice alchemists suddenly exploded out. A deafening hubbub filled the air.

"No more questions…. How is that possible!?!? He answered all the questions!"

"From ancient times until now, no one has ever done that…."

"Is it possible that this Fang Mu will become another blazing sun of the East Pill Division…?"

Even as the commotion filled the air, exhaustion washed over Meng Hao and he closed his dry eyes. He had no idea how long he had been sitting there. Once the screen went out, his energy seemed to disappear. The knowledge of plants and vegetation in his mind seemed to surge with life, buffeting up against and overwhelming any ignorance that might have existed before.

It surged again and again until finally it began to stabilize. Now that the ignorance had been broken, Meng Hao wasn't sure the extent to which his skill with plants and vegetation would grow.

He had attained… Instantaneous Formula Scrying!

By simply placing a medicinal pill in his hand, he would be able to see the pill formula floating in his head. This was a realm that only Violet Furnace Lords could achieve.

Chu Yuyan took a deep breath as she stared blankly at Meng Hao. There was no doubt about it; just looking at him caused her to feel irritated. And yet, she had to admit that Fang Mu's skill regarding plants and vegetation was beyond human!

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# Chapter 219: Not Fair!

As everyone seethed with excitement, Meng Hao stood up. As he did, everything gradually grew quiet. All eyes were focused on him alone. Some filled with complicated expressions, some were purely envious, others were shocked or jealous.

A variety of expressions were directed toward Meng Hao, who appeared to be extremely worn out. He turned toward Wang Fanming and the others, clasped hands and bowed. Then, he left his workstation and found a place to sit cross-legged and meditate.

Wang Fanming took a deep breath. He glanced at Meng Hao for a moment, and then his gaze swept out across the crowd. “In twenty hours, the second round of the master alchemist promotion examination will begin. It is also the final round. Of the ten finalists, only one will become a master alchemist. The second round will consist of a test of the power of your catalyzing technique. You have twenty hours in which you may rest, but are not permitted to leave.”

Chu Yuyan had been watching Meng Hao the entire time. The shock had still not left her eyes. Even though looking at him still annoyed her, she had no choice but to admit that Fang Mu was someone she had to look up to in terms of qualifications.

“Skill with plants and vegetation is only part of being an alchemist,” she said, still unconvinced. “Let’s see if this guy really is qualified to perform alchemy. That includes catalysis, as well as control of the spiritual energy of the Cultivation base. Those are not things to be taken lightly. Let’s see if his skill in that regard is equally astounding.” The more she looked at Meng Hao, the more annoyed she got.

Not a single of the thirty thousand apprentice alchemists chose to leave. They continued to converse in low tones. Seventy percent of the conversations were about Meng Hao. The other thirty were about the other nine finalists who had passed the first round of the examination, and thus revealed their talent, like awls sticking out from a bag.

These other nine were all very nervous. They sat cross-legged, using each and every moment to rotate their Cultivation bases. They wanted to be in peak condition to face the second and final examination.

Meng Hao's participation in the first round had crushed them down with a weight that made it hard to breathe. That having been said, there was no difference between first place and tenth. All would have a chance to pass the second round of the examination.

The second round was actually the focal point.

As far as they were concerned, there was still a chance to surpass Meng Hao. He might know more about plants and vegetation than them, but to catalyze medicinal plants required use of the Cultivation base, as well as significant practice. It demanded careful control of spiritual power; too much, and the medicinal plant would grow until it burst. Too little, however, and it would not grow healthily. It was difficult to find the perfect balance.

The nine other finalists breathed deeply as they sat in meditation. Images appeared in their minds from their years of experience catalyzing plants. Gradually, they began to fill with confidence.

Meng Hao sat there with eyes closed. Actually, he hadn't wasted very much energy from his Cultivation base. The main reason he was tired was not because of his body, but because of the effort in wresting away the legacy of the Resurrection Lily, as well as the rotating of the Demonic Core. His head felt like it was swollen. As he rested, his mind slowly began to simmer down.

Soon, the twenty hours had passed. Wang Fanming's voice suddenly rang out across the square. As he spoke, he moved his arm to rest on the pill furnace next to him.

“The time has come for the second round of this trial by fire. Would the ten final participants please approach!” As he spoke, the sound of furnace bells rang out, shaking the entire square. The eyes of the thirty thousand spectators focused intently on the proceedings.

The square was the same as before, but the thirty thousand workstations had been replaced by ten stone pillars, each one roughly nine meters tall. As they rose into the air, they glowed with an eye-catching light.

With the exception of Meng Hao, all of the final participants leaped up into the air, alighting nimbly onto the stone pillars, excited expressions on their faces.

All eyes were on them; after all, these were people who had distinguished themselves amidst thirty thousand peers. Considering their talent, they quickly covered up their excitement, replacing it with looks of determination.

Meng Hao opened his eyes, and they shone with a bright light. The swelling pain in his head was gone. The nature talent of plants and vegetation was now completely amalgamated, and was a complete part of him.

“I WILL become a master alchemist,” he thought, his eyes shining with decisiveness. He stood up and strode forward. In a flash, he appeared on the final stone pillar. Instantly, everything grew completely quiet. Countless gazes came to be fixed upon him. Everyone would witness the promotion today and see… who would be promoted to master alchemist!

Whoever became master alchemist would instantly rise above one hundred thousand others!

In terms of status, position, renumeration from the Sect, and reputation, this person would no longer be in the same level as the apprentice alchemists. The difference between apprentice alchemists and master alchemists was like the difference between Heaven and Earth. After all, in the entire Violet Fate Sect, there were only about one thousand master alchemists. Later, if one could reach the realm of the Furnace Lord, then he could shake the entire Southern Domain. Any Furnace Lord occupied a lofty position in the

Dao of alchemy; be it in the Violet Fate Sect or the outside world, they would receive utmost respect and veneration.

Within the whole of the Violet Fate Sect, there were currently only around a hundred Furnace Lords.

Eight of that group were Violet Furnace Lords. They existed just beneath the three Grandmaster alchemists as the pinnacle representatives of the Dao of alchemy! All of the other great Sects and Clans thirsted to have any one of this group join them. They commanded extreme respect from one and all.

Everyone was watching as Meng Hao stepped onto the pillar. Wang Fanming and the others exchanged glances. One of the old men lifted his arm to push down onto the surface of the pill furnace. It began to emit a droning sound, and then opened up. Ten beams of light shot out and then came to rest, floating in mid-air.

The globes of light were blurry and indistinct, making it impossible to see what was inside.

“Ten different types of medicinal plant seeds, all of different categories. Candidates, make your selection. Whoever catalyzes theirs to the most mature degree, will be a master alchemist!”

With the exception of Meng Hao, the eyes of everyone on the stone pillars began to glitter brightly. They looked up at the ten indistinct medicinal plant seeds. It was completely impossible to tell what they were, causing the nine other participants to hesitate slightly. Then, one of them set his eyes in resolve. He lifted his hand and made a grasping motion, causing one of the glowing globes to shoot into his hand. It transformed into a blue-colored seed.

The other eight participants looked over. “That’s a Bluewater flower seed….” This flower could be used to concoct a variety of medicinal pills useful for the Foundation Establishment stage. It was relatively difficult to catalyze.

Without hesitation, the other participants reached up to lay claim to the various glowing globes of light. One by one, the globes descended into their hands. They looked around to examine which seeds the others had acquired. Some would be easier to catalyze, others more difficult. It would all depend on luck, considering that the differences between them all was not great.

After everyone made their choice, Meng Hao calmly lifted up his hand to retrieve the last glowing globe. The light transformed into a gray-colored seed.

When the surrounding tens of thousands of apprentice alchemists saw the seed in Meng Hao’s hand, they were sent into an uproar. “That’s Flying Ash leaf….”

“Of all the ten types of medicinal plants, Flying Ash leaf is least complex. That Fang Mu got really lucky….”

“You can’t really say that. It’s not necessarily easy to get the leaf to turn into ash.”

As the sound of the discussions rose up, unsightly expressions appeared on the faces of the nine other participants. No one said anything, though. After all, Meng Hao was the last person to take a seed, so he obviously had no choice in the matter. They couldn’t accuse him of cheating.

The old man standing next to Wang Fanming also started when he saw the Flying Ash leaf seed. He exchanged a look with the other old men, but no one said anything. Suddenly, he spoke out in a cool voice which rose up above the hubbub that filled the square: “Begin!”

There was instant silence. Meng Hao and the other nine people on the stone pillars all focused on the seeds in their hands. They circulated spiritual power, then, using the East Pill Division technique, began to nourish the seeds with it. The medicinal plant catalyzing had begun.

After the space of ten breaths, popping sounds began to ring out from the hands of all the participants, including Meng Hao’s. Sprouts appeared, swaying gently back and forth and slowly beginning to grow taller.

Meng Hao concentrated fully, slowly pouring out power from his Cultivation base. He didn’t squander a drop. This convergence technique was what he had learned in the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament 1. During the past months in the Violet Fate Sect, he had practiced the technique daily, especially when working with Li Tao. He channeled spiritual energy into the seed. Soon a gray-colored medicinal plant appeared in his hand, roughly two inches tall, with seven green leaves.

As it grew, gray veins began to appear within the leaves. “When the leaves turn completely gray, it means that the plant is fully mature. Eventually, the leaves will turn into ash. That ash is the true essence of the plant which is used as a medicinal ingredient.” Information regarding this particular medicinal plant appeared in his head, as well as ten hybrid variations.

The plant began to grow taller. It was now three inches tall, and the leaves were about half gray. Now it had twelve leaves in total, which was actually the maximum number of leaves that a Flying Ash plant could have.

As for the other nine participants, none of them had grown their plant past sixty percent; obviously theirs were not as mature as Meng Hao’s.

Their faces were dark and obviously filled with intense discontent. Even many of the surrounding tens of thousands of apprentice alchemists sighed. According to their understanding, it was obvious that Meng Hao’s medicinal plant was superior.

“This test really isn’t fair…. If that Fang Mu had gotten any other medicinal plant besides Flying Ash leaf, then it wouldn’t have been so easy….”

“It’s not necessarily unfair. The Flying Ash leaf might just be particularly suited to Fang Mu’s spiritual energy. If someone else got it, they might not necessarily find it so easy. Growing that particular plant isn’t simple. In fact, to cause the leaves to transform into ash takes more spiritual energy than most other medicinal plants.”

Voices began to echo out. The Flying Ash plant in Meng Hao’s hand made a popping sound. It seemed to be burning. A gray flame covered it, and then gray ash began to spread out.

When this happened, the surrounding nine participants faces tightened. Their eyes were red as they frustratedly looked at Wang Fanming and the others. Nervously, they began to speak.

“Seniors, this isn’t fair!!”

“The Flying Ash leaf that Fang Mu got is way simpler than my medicinal plant. If I’d gotten Flying Ash leaf, I could have done the same thing!”

“We worked hard for so many years for a chance at promotion. Don’t tell me that we lose, not because of skill, but because of luck!? Elders, it really isn’t fair!”

“Please, re-start the second round and give everyone the same medicinal plant. If we lose then, we will be sincerely convinced!”

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# Chapter 220: Promotion to Master Alchemist!

Meanwhile, outside the square, on a mountain peak in the East Pill Division, Chu Yuyan’s master, Grandmaster Pill Demon of the Violet Fate Sect, looked away from the pill furnace calmly and lifted his hand. There on his palm was a small pile of gray powder.

This was none other than some of the ash created by the burning Flying Ash leaf that had been catalyzed moments ago by Meng Hao.

Pill Demon lifted his hand and closely examined it, his eyes thoughtful. He then waved his hand, and the ash dissipated.

“No seepage of spiritual power….” he murmured faintly after a while.

Down in the square, Chu Yuyan silently watched Meng Hao along with the other nine complaining finalists. She wasn’t sure why, but she felt somewhat pleased to see what was happening. The sound of all the condemnation piling up against Fang Mu was quite pleasant to the ear.

As the nine other participants continued to make repeated requests, Wang Fanming and the seven others looked at each other, brows furrowed. After a moment of discussion, Wang Fanming stood up.

As he did, everything grew quiet.

“If all of you truly desire to be completely convinced, well, Fang Mu, do you agree to restart the round?”

Meng Hao smiled. He said nothing, but simply nodded.

Wang Fanming nodded back in admiration. “Very well. In that case, we shall restart the round. This time, all ten of you will receive exactly the same type of medicinal plant. Those who do not win, will have no grounds for complaint!” He waved his right hand, and ten identical seeds shot out toward Meng Hao and the others.

The seeds were crimson, and emanated a plant-like aura.

“Crimson Spirit sapling!” thought Meng Hao, his eyes glittering. The hearts of the other nine participants trembled. They frowned as they examined the crimson seeds in front of them.

A collective gasp could be heard from the onlookers as they peered forward.

“So, it’s a Crimson Spirit sapling. That’s a medicinal plant useful for the great circle of Foundation Establishment. It has the appearance of a fire type, but actually, all types of spiritual energy can be used to nourish it.”

“Considering the level of our Cultivation bases, catalyzing a medicinal plant like that would be just too difficult…”

On the pillars, all the participants except for Meng Hao hesitated for a moment, then clenched their jaws and grabbed the seeds which floated in front of them. Then they used all the power of their Cultivation bases to begin catalyzing.

Meng Hao reached up and took the seed into his hand. He looked at it closely, then closed his eyes for a moment. When he opened them, a violet glow appeared in his hand, encircling the crimson seed. Spiritual power emerged, and the catazlying began.

After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, one of the middle-aged men on the pillars began to sweat profusely. His face was pale white, and his body trembled. However, he gritted his teeth and slapped his bag of holding to produce a Spirit Stone. He gripped the Spirit Stone in one hand and catalyzed the Crimson Spirit sapling in the other.

One by one, the other participants began to follow suit. An hour passed. Soon all of the participants, excluding Meng Hao, were relying on Spirit Stones to catalyze the plants. One and all had pale faces and bloodshot eyes.

Only Meng Hao looked as calm as ever. His gaze was fixed on the Crimson Spirit sapling as he carefully controlled his spiritual power. Not a drop leaked out. All of it poured into the seed of the Crimson Spirit sapling.

Clearly, none of the other participants were able to do such a thing. Of all the spiritual power they sent out to nourish the medicinal plants, only thirty percent actually ended up being used.

Another hour passed. The man who had been the first to produce the Spirit Stone suddenly staggered. Face white as a sheet, he coughed up a mouthful of blood and took a few steps back. He stared mutely at the seed in his hand. He had expended all of his power and hadn’t been able to produce a single sprout.

He shook his head bitterly and chose to withdraw.

Not much time passed before a second, third and then fourth participant left. By the time more than two full hours of the catalysis round had passed, only five participants were left.

It was then that a popping sound rang out, causing everyone to look toward Meng Hao’s right hand. There in his palm, a sprout suddenly popped out from the crimson seed!

Moments later, a sprout popped out from the seed of one of the other competitors. This seed belonged to the man who had lasted in the first round of the competition longer than anyone else except Meng Hao.

His face was somewhat unsightly as he tightened his grip on the Spirit Stone in his hand and then gave Meng Hao a grim look.

As for the other three participants, their faces were white. Despite using all the power they could muster, they were still unable to cause the Crimson Spirit sapling seed to sprout. All of them withdrew.

The true test of the second round had arrived. Once again, it was a battle between the middle-aged man and Meng Hao.

“I prepared a lot of Spirit Stones for this part of the examination,” said the middle-aged man, his eyes red. “There’s no possible way that I can lose to you.” The pillar he stood on was situated directly opposite of Meng Hao. He looked up and glared at Meng Hao, then pushed down on his forehead. A roaring sound filled the air as his Cultivation base suddenly began to soar.

It flew from the eighth level of Qi Condensation all the way to the ninth, the great circle of Qi Condensation! Clearly, he had been suppressing his Cultivation base the entire time, all with the intention of unleashing his true power in the end of the catalysis exam. In this way, it would only take one step to sweep past any opponents.

When the man’s Cultivation base suddenly erupted, it caused quite a commotion among the onlookers. At the same time, the Crimson Spirit sapling seed in front of him slowly began to grow.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever. He didn’t employ the power of his Foundation Establishment Cultivation base. He relied only on the spiritual power of Qi Condensation to catalyze the Crimson Spirit sapling. He completely ignored the middle-aged man, and in fact closed his eyes to focus solely on catalysis.

More time passed. Both Crimson Spirit saplings continued to grow taller. Several hours passed. By now, both plants were about the height of a person.

The middle-aged man’s body quivered and veins bulged on his face. He had lost track of how many Spirit Stones he had used, and felt like he was beginning to grow crazy. As soon as a Spirit Stone was used up, he would produce another. His Qi passageways seemed unable to bear up under the strain, but he ignored them. Determination filled his eyes. He must win! He must become a master alchemist! For that, he would charge on regardless of anything.

Finally, blood sprayed from his mouth, and even as his body trembled violently, he pushed all out with his Cultivation base, which was now beginning to sink down in level. Spiritual energy which stemmed from his very life force poured out to catalyze the Crimson Spirit sapling. This instantly caused the plant to grow up about three meters. As of now, it no longer looked like a sapling, but instead a tree. The middle aged man staggered backward several paces, unable to continue. He had already risked his life, and to continue on would no longer be risking it, but delivering it up!

His Qi passageways burned as if with fire, causing his entire body to spasm. Sweat poured out, and his Cultivation base continued to sink lower. Despite all this, his eyes glowed with loftiness and pride.

Amazed discussions instantly broke out among the surrounding apprentice alchemists. Even Wang Fanming and the others exchanged glances. Chu Yuyan nodded her head. Clearly, what he had done was no slight accomplishment.

“My Crimson Spirit Sapling had grown so tall it’s now a tree! Your sapling isn’t even seventy percent as tall as mine. Let’s see how you secure the master alchemist position now!”

For the first time, Meng Hao looked over at the middle-aged man. “I’m not finished yet,” he said coolly. The Crimson Spirit sapling in his hand slowly began to grow higher. From seventy percent of the height of the other man’s, it grew to eighty, then ninety…. In the time it takes an incense stick to burn, the middle-aged man’s face grew paler and paler. His body trembled, and his eyes filled with disbelief. Meng Hao’s Crimson Spirit sapling was now three meters taller than his.

Everything was completely silent. Everyone stared blankly at Meng Hao. They had already been astonished by his nature talent in the first round. Now, in terms of catalyzing skill, the results caused everyone to stare with deep shock.

However, Meng Hao still wasn’t finished. He stared at the Crimson Spirit sapling, his eyes blazing with determination.

“If I’m going to put on a show,” he thought, “I might as well go all out. I’m really curious to know how much I can grow the Crimson Spirit sapling with this catalysis technique!” Eyes glittering, more spiritual energy appeared in his palm, pouring into the Crimson Spirit sapling. Of course, he did not use the power of Foundation Establishment; he wanted to show off, but he wouldn’t forget himself in the process.

Six meters, nine meters… slowly, the Crimson Spirit sapling stopped growing up, but began to grow out instead. Thicker and thicker it grew until it was now a large tree!

This tree might not be amazing enough to attract the attention of the entire world, but it certainly became the focal point of the entire examination square.

Meng Hao catalyzed the tree to such an extent that suddenly a single flower appeared on it, along with a fruit. It was a crimson-colored Spirit Fruit that instantly began to emanate spiritual energy.

When Chu Yuyan saw this, her eyes went wide and filled with an expression of disbelief. Wang Fanming rose to his feet, as did the other old-timers. Strange expressions filled their faces.

“The Crimson Spirit sapling is blossoming!! It’s bearing Spirit Fruit!”

“He’s a Qi Condensation Cultivator, but can do this? Inconceivable!”

The tens of thousands of observing apprentice alchemists couldn’t hold back; a buzz of discussion instantly filled the air. All the other participants who had failed stared blankly. As apprentice alchemists themselves, they were well aware of the significance of the Crimson Spirit sapling bearing fruit.

“Crimson Spirit saplings can be used to refine medicinal pills for the great circle of Foundation Establishment. But their fruit contain the essence of the entire plant; they can create medicinal pills for the early Core Formation stage!”

“I can’t believe Fang Mu did it! This technique can catalyze out all types of medicinal plants suitable for the Qi Condensation stage, and even some for the Foundation Establishment stage. But it’s impossible to use on medicinal plants needed for the Core Formation stage. And yet… he actually catalyzed Crimson Spirit Fruit!”

As the sound of conversation drifted in the air, Meng Hao took a deep breath and waved his right hand. The Crimson Spirit sapling abruptly trembled, as if it had suddenly lost its source of power. It began to wither. Even as it withered, though, Meng Hao’s left hand reached up and grabbed the Crimson Spirit Fruit. Without a moment’s hesitation, he placed it into his bag of holding.

The nine meter tall Crimson Spirit sapling was now completely withered. Amidst the continuous buzz of conversation, Meng Hao hopped off of the stone pillar.

Wang Fanming took a deep breath, then gave Meng Hao a deep look and said, “The person promoted to master alchemist today is… Fang Mu!” His voice rang out across the square, and then seemed to enter the pill furnace and echo out throughout all the valleys of the entire East Pill Division.

All one hundred thousand apprentice alchemists heard each and every word!

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# Chapter 221: A Newcomer to the Dao of Alchemy

Time flashed by. Soon two months had passed. Meng Hao still resided in District One Valley One. However, he was no longer located next to the stream. On one of the mountains that formed the valley, a narrow path wound up to the peak, where there was an Immortal's Cave.

Clouds drifted past its green, stone door. Standing there, one could see the entirety of the valley below. The spiritual energy was much thicker, and within the mountain itself was a vein of fire.

This was the Immortal's Cave that had been bestowed upon Meng Hao after he was raised to master alchemist.

Only master alchemists could live in the upper reaches of the mountains. There, separated from the apprentice alchemists, they could enjoy the special privileges they had earned as master alchemists. For example, they could seek apprentice alchemists to serve as assistants. Furthermore, for slight compensation, they could acquire various pill formulas and even medicinal plants from the Sect.

The only demand placed upon master alchemists was that they meet the monthly quota of medicinal pills.

In order to receive less common medicinal plants and pill formulas, they would have to turn over a greater quantity of medicinal pills. The more they provided, the more they were rewarded.

After becoming a master alchemist, it was also possible to engage in trade with other master alchemists. All of this was designed to improve knowledge and familiarity with alchemy, and to increase the quality of the medicinal pills produced.

On this particular day, a roaring sound filled Meng Hao’s Immortal’s Cave. Despite the door being sealed, the sound still echoed out far and wide. Down in the valley, the apprentice alchemists held their tongues. They looked up toward Meng Hao’s Immortal’s Cave, unable to contain their admiration and envy.

During the two months since Meng Hao became a master alchemist, this type of roaring sound could be heard frequently.

Inside, Meng Hao was covered with filth and grime. It was with a bitter laugh that he watched the pill furnace in front of him explode. He sighed, flicking his sleeve to collect up the bits of the broken pill furnace, and the remnants of the medicinal pill he had been concocting. He frowned as he sat there on the stone platform.

“Concocting pills is not easy,” he said. “The slightest lack of control of the earthly fire can ruin the pill and stress the pill furnace to the point of destruction. In the past two months, I’ve already blown up forty seven pill furnaces….” The sleeve of his long, black gown was embroidered with a tiny pill furnace. This set of clothing representing his status as a master alchemist.

“I’ve improved quite a bit, though. In the past two or three days I’ve only exploded one.” He looked at the seven or eight pill bottles lined up next to him, and his eyes shined contentedly. The pills inside these bottles were the accumulation of his two months of practice. They were only useful for the Qi Condensation stage, but the feeling of making something with his own hands left Meng Hao feeling very happy.

“Concocting pills is definitely not easy, and is clearly connected to latent talent. What’s even more important though is… concocting pills is expensive! No wonder there aren’t very many master alchemists….” Meng Hao sighed emotionally. He hadn’t felt this way back when he was an apprentice alchemist. When he had worked with Li Tao, he had only seen the respect given by outsiders, as well as Li Tao’s profits when he concocted pills for Inner Sect disciples.

After becoming a master alchemist, though, he realized that behind every truly successful alchemist existed a mountain of spent Spirit Stones. That was the only way to achieve true success. Of course, latent talent was also necessary; with only ordinary latent talent, the Spirit Stones necessary to succeed as a master alchemist could fund a small Sect.

“A pill furnace costs twenty thousand spirit stones… and that’s for the lowest level pill furnace provided by the Sect. And I’ve destroyed forty seven….” When Meng Hao thought of this, and the fact that he had to pay for all the pill furnaces, his heart ached.

“Pill furnaces are only one aspect,” he thought. “Concocting pills requires medicinal herbs, which are even more costly. Sometimes a single pill requires a combination of dozens of medicinal herbs. When you add them all together, it’s not cheap. That’s not the worst, though… What’s really killing me is… my success rate is only one in ten….” He took a deep breath as he thought of the whole situation. “The more expensive the medicinal plants, the more ancient the pill formula, the higher quality the pill… the more likely I am to fail.” He sighed emotionally.

“However, now that I’m a master alchemist, there are also a lot of perks. For example, this medallion.” He slapped his bag of holding to produce a white medallion.

It felt cold in his hands, and seemed to be made of jade… and yet not. A pill furnace was carved on one side, along with calligraphy that read “Blacklist.”

“Pill Blacklist!” Meng Hao looked at the command medallion, and his eyes filled with a strange light. This wasn’t the first time he had taken out the medallion to look at. Every time he did, his heart filled with a feeling of veneration for the position of master alchemist.

The Pill Blacklist medallion was a right given to all master alchemists by the Sect. Only one was distributed per alchemist, and could be used twice.

It was the ultimate expression of the respect demanded by master alchemists, and was enough to strike fear into the heart of any member of the Violet Qi Division.

One of the main reasons that master alchemists had such a high position compared to the Violet Qi Division was because of the Pill Blacklist. The thought of being added to the Pill Blacklist would cause most Cultivators to feel an intense terror.

There was only one purpose to the Pill Blacklist. Any Violet Qi Division disciple whose name was added to the list, would be refused service by all master alchemists for a time period of one hundred years.

This had been a Sect rule for countless ages, and a power possessed solely by the East Pill Division. This arrangement caused master alchemists to command incredible respect within the Violet Fate Sect.

Because of this, few would dare to offend a master alchemist. To offend one master alchemist was equivalent to offending them all.

The rule had existed since ancient times, and in the past one thousand years, had not been exercised by very many master alchemists. During that time, the list had never exceeded a few hundred people. Considering there were nearly ten thousand disciples within the Inner Sect, that wasn’t a very large number.

To master alchemists, NOT using the Pill Blacklist made it that much more of a deterrence. After all, after the second usage, its effectiveness vanished.

The names of everyone on the one hundred years Pill Blacklist were branded onto the medallion. After becoming a master alchemist, Meng Hao earned the right to use the power of the medallion, but of course, was also required to respect the arrangement. Currently, there were thirteen people who had been Pill Blacklisted; for one hundred years, no master alchemist, Meng Hao included, would concoct pills for these thirteen people.

He looked at the Pill Blacklist medallion for a moment longer, then put it away. After a moment’s thought, he retrieved a jade slip and branded it with some information. Then he ignited it; in the blink of an eye, it disappeared.

Not much time passed before he heard a voice from outside the Immortal's cave. He lifted a finger, and the door to the Immortal's Cave opened. A pretty girl entered who appeared to be about eighteen or nineteen years old. As soon as she entered the Immortal's Cave, her nose wrinkled as if she were gagging on the odor of the exploded pill furnace.

"Alchemist Fang," she said, smiling, "I was feeling a bit confused yesterday. I was wondering why so many days had passed since you asked me for a replacement furnace…." She produced a brand new pill furnace from her bag of holding and handed it over to Meng Hao with a smile.

The girl's name was Lin Rui, and she was in charge of daily affairs for master alchemists. Her Cultivation base was not very high, but according to the rumors, one of her Clan members was a Violet Furnace Lord. Furthermore, she had a pleasing personality. Therefore, many of the master alchemists had taken a liking to her. Over time, she came to take care of whatever the various master alchemists needed.

For example, during the past two months, she had delivered pill furnaces to Meng Hao on forty six different occasions. Today would be the forty seventh.

Feeling slightly embarrassed, Meng Hao cleared his throat. He accepted the pill furnace, along with a jade slip that she handed over. Now that he was a master alchemist, he didn't actually have to pay up front for pill furnaces, medicinal pills, pill formulas. The Sect would provide them willingly. However, that didn't mean that they were free. They could be acquired on credit. But eventually, he had to provide compensation in the form of medicinal pills.

"How much do I owe?" he asked, looking at the jade slip with a frown.

"Including today, you owe 6,757 Qi Condensation Pills to the Sect." She winked at him, and covered her mouth as she laughed. Then she continued on in a conciliatory tone: "It's not a big deal. You actually don't owe very much. The most I’ve seen someone owe is 1,730,000. That much… would probably require a lifetime of pill concocting to pay back….”

Hearing the enormous number caused Meng Hao to stare in shock. Then he smiled wryly, shook his head, and sighed. He took out his own jade slip and inscribed the information on it, then handed the original back to the girl.

“Alchemist Fang, just keep working hard. Um… the most recent Pill Delivery Day has already passed. Do you think you could provide a bit more than the quota? If you do, it will make it easier to make an explanation.” Lin Rui’s smile was like a flower. It was little wonder the master alchemists all liked her. Of course, Meng Hao was the youngest master alchemist by far, so every time she came here she would find opportunities to make fun of him a little. She seemed to love it when Fang Mu blushed with embarrassment.

Meng Hao sighed, then picked up one of the pill bottles. Inside were five Qi Condensation Pills. He handed them to the girl. It was his first time turning over pills toward his quota.

The girl covered her mouth as she giggled. She took the pills and left. Meng Hao watched her depart, after which he sealed the cave door. He held the pill furnace up in his hand and sighed.

“If things keep going like this, considering the level of my pill concocting, there won’t be any Inner Sect disciples from the Violet Qi Division who come looking for me. I’m not going to make any profits whatsoever, and I won’t be able to get any new pill formulas.”

The most important thing was to get invitations from Violet Qi Division Inner Sect disciples to concoct pills. So doing would provide more chances to encounter new pill formulas. The more invitations, the more pill formulas. Over time, his skill in alchemy would grow increasingly high. Not only would he be using medicinal pills that weren’t essentially on loan from the Sect, but also, he would make a handsome profit.

As far as the embezzlement factor, well that had basically become a rule. What could the Violet Qi Division do about that?

Meng Hao took a deep breath as he put the pill furnace down and picked up one of the pill bottles. He opened it up and looked at the medicinal pills inside. They were smooth and round, and spiritual energy wafted up from them. Meng Hao slowly began to frown.

“Perhaps there are some mistakes with my concoction techniques. If there aren’t, then how come it takes so much effort to concoct pills? When Li Tao does it, it seems so much easier.” Lost in thought and muttering to himself, Meng Hao stood up and began to pace around the Immortal’s Cave. Suddenly, he stopped, and his eyes began to glitter.

He lifted his right hand, and the pill furnace floated over. Eyes shining brightly, he slapped his bag of holding, and ten medicinal plants emerged. His hands flew as he catalyzed them and then extracted the sap from them. In the space of about ten breaths, he prepared all the ingredients and then placed them in the furnace.

He stamped his foot lightly on the ground, after which an area just in front of him began to glow red. An intense heat emanated out. He suspended the pill furnace about three inches above the bright red spot and began to gesture incantation symbols. The pill furnace then floated up a bit higher, and then lower, going back and forth at various intervals. Soon, a medicinal aroma filled the Immortal’s Cave.

As it did, Meng Hao sat down cross-legged. His right hand then reached out and pushed down onto the pill furnace. He closed his eyes and began to pour spiritual energy into it, beginning another catalyzing process.

This catalyzing technique he had learned from Li Tao. Not only did it increase the medicinal age, it… was actually required for the pill concocting process.

Soon, Meng Hao’s eyes glittered even more brightly. According to the changes occurring within the pill furnace, he adjusted things here and there. He occasionally added some medicinal plants, or removed sediment from the pill furnace. Previously, he had required ten or twelve hours to finish concocting, but this time, after only six hours, he flicked his sleeve and removed the pill furnace from the heat. He opened the lid, and as the medicinal aroma brushed across his face, he removed four Qi Condensation Pills from inside.

The pills were still soft, but as he removed them, they quickly began to harden, dried by the air.

“I was wrong….” He looked carefully at the relatively crude pills he had just produced, and picked up one of the pill bottles which contained another set of pills, ones he had painstakingly made to be as perfect as possible. After comparing the two types of Qi Condensation Pills, his eyes suddenly filled with enlightenment.

“These exquisitely produced pills wore me out. The medicinal strength is clearly much higher, perhaps seventy or eighty percent. The crude pills, on the other hand, only have a medicinal strength of about thirty or forty percent.

“My previous refining technique was too strenuous. If I had known that I could make pills like I did today, then I wouldn’t have wasted so many pill furnaces.” He was lost in thought for a moment as he put away the Qi Condensation Pills.

“Such a large difference in quality, about double…. Perhaps it has something to do with the time spent refining the pills. However, it shouldn’t have that much of an effect. After all, I’ve seen Li Tao concoct pills both for himself and others, and there is never much of a difference.”

Meng Hao frowned and muttered to himself for a moment, before his eyes finally glittered again.

“Could it be that it has something to do with my Perfect Foundation? My spiritual power belongs to me and does not circulate back into Heaven and Earth. It’s branded as being mine alone. My five Dao Pillars can trample upon the Foundation Establishment stage. When I use it to concoct pills, it’s infected with my aura…. Maybe that’s why the pill furnaces kept blowing up, because the medicinal pills I was refining could be classified as Perfect?” His eyes continued to shine as he pondered the matter, eventually coming to the conclusion that his theory was correct.

He continued to think about the matter for some time, when suddenly, his expression flickered. He looked down at the bag of the Cosmos. From within the blood mask, the voice of the meat jelly transmitted into his mind. It sounded weak.

“I can’t hold on any longer! I can’t continue to support your transformation! Damn me, I knew I shouldn’t have lent my transformation power to others. Meng Hao, I need to shed. I’m finished! Finished! Ah, one month. I need one month. You need to … make sure to … be careful….”

The meat jelly’s voice grew weaker and weaker and then finally faded into nothing. As it did, Meng Hao’s features flickered, and his real face returned.

As luck would have it, it was at this exact moment that the voice of Chu Yuyan could be heard outside his Immortal’s Cave.

“Fang Mu! Open up your Immortal’s Cave, I want to talk with you about something!”

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# Chapter 222: Signs of Rocking the Violet Fate Sect

Meng Hao’s face tightened. All of a sudden, his features looked exactly the same as they used to. He was his old self, skin a bit dark, cultured and refined, with the air of a scholar. Within the scholar’s air existed a touch of something demonic, and a hint of callousness.

Meng Hao frowned, neither lifting his head up nor paying any attention to Chu Yuyan’s voice, which drifted in from outside the Immortal’s Cave.

“Fang Mu!” she said again, her delicate brow furrowed. She had come with the specific purpose of thoroughly examining Fang Mu to find out why he irritated her so much.

However, the door to the Immortal’s Cave was sealed shut. No sound emerged to indicate Fang Mu was inside. Looking far from pleased, Chu Yuyan gave a cold harrumph. Before coming she had asked around and determined that Fang Mu hadn’t left his Immortal’s Cave for days. Along the way, she had also encountered Lin Rui, who said she had just come from Meng Hao’s after delivering a pill furnace.

“You close the door, don’t come out, and won’t even talk?” she said coldly, her eyes narrowing. “Don’t tell me there’s something you don’t want me to know about, is there Fang Mu?”

Within the Immortal’s Cave, Meng Hao frowned, continuing to ignore Chu Yuyan. He slapped his bag of holding to produce the blood-colored mask. He looked at it for a moment, then entered it with Spiritual Sense.

Within the world of the mask, he could see that the meat jelly seemed to have lost its shape-changing ability. It was no longer a parrot, but a simple rectangular slab of a meat jelly. It seemed completely lifeless, and a death aura even rose up from it.

It was extremely hard to the touch. After examining it for a moment, Meng Hao extracted his Spiritual Sense and sat there thoughtfully.

“According to the meat jelly, because it lent me some of its transformation ability, it now has to shed. It said one month….” He felt somewhat relieved. He could most likely last for a month, as long as he didn’t let anyone see him, and didn’t venture outside.

“Having Chu Yuyan outside is really annoying, though,” he thought, looking up at the large door of the Immortal’s Cave.

“Fang Mu, get out here right now!”

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever. He simply closed his eyes.

After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, Chu Yuyan’s eyes began to burn with rage. Something seemed off, and yet she couldn’t think of any reason why Fang Mu would do this.

“Not going to say anything, huh?” she said. “Fine. If I have to, I’ll go get a door-opening medallion and then use it to open this door. I’m going to ask one last time. Fang Mu, are you home?” She slowly began to walk away.

“I’m not home,” he said coldly, an irritated look on his face.

Hearing this, Chu Yuyan stared back in shock. She had never imagined she would get such a response. She then took a deep breath. Taking one last hateful glance at the door, she turned and transformed into a beam of light that shot off into the distance.

Having dismissed Chu Yuyan, Meng Hao pulled out the lifeless, shedding meat jelly and placed it down in front of him. He looked at it for a long moment, then sighed and closed his eyes to meditate.

After leaving Meng Hao, Lin Rui returned to the Pill Pavilion, where she made a record of the medicinal pills Meng Hao had handed over. She wrote the character “Fang” onto the pill bottle, then placed it in a pile with the bottles she had collected from other master alchemists.

After that, she paid the matter no more heed. She left the Pill Pavilion. The Pills she had collected would be organized and then delivered to the Violet Qi Division’s Honor Guard to be distributed amongst Outer Sect disciples who were in the Qi Condensation stage.

Of course, before being delivered, they would be thoroughly inspected by someone from the Violet Qi Division to ensure that all the medicinal pills were safe.

Time passed by slowly. Soon half a month was gone. Meng Hao was no longer so wasteful in his pill concocting, and actually saved quite a bit of material. No longer did his pill furnace explode, and he managed to concoct increasingly greater numbers of Qi Condensation Pills.

It was about this time that the Qi Condensation pills were taken from the Pill Pavilion and delivered to the Violet Qi division for their bi-weekly Pill Distribution.

Su Zhonglun did not have a very high Cultivation base. He was in the mid Foundation Establishment stage. Originally, he had not been a member of the Violet Qi Division, but rather an apprentice alchemist in the East Pill Division. However, in the end, he was unable to become a master alchemist. Furthermore, his Clan occupied a relatively low position within the Violet Fate Sect. Therefore, he finally decided to switch from the East Pill Division to the Violet Qi Division, and focus his Cultivation on magical techniques.

Because he had once been an apprentice alchemist, he had eventually been assigned to inspect the pills sent over for distribution. Only pills approved by him would be distributed to Outer Sect disciples.

He had been doing this for quite a long time. Furthermore, considering the pills he tested were merely Qi Condensation Pills, all Su Zhonglun needed to do was pick one up, and he would instantly be able to tell whether it was genuine, or a fake. In addition, he could very easily tell the medicinal strength of the pill.

On this particular day, the East Pill Division had just delivered a batch of pills. He sat, sipping some fragrant tea with one hand, and unsealing pill bottles with the other. One after another, he would open the bottles then place in front of his nose and sniff. It was a very leisurely task.

Behind him was a young servant who was responsible for keeping records and straightening things up.

“These Qi Condensation Pills are all pretty much the same,” said Su Zhonglun with a sigh. “There’s virtually no difference between them all. Well, they are master alchemists after all….” He picked up another bottle and unsealed the wax. Before inhaling the aroma, he drank a mouthful of tea. Then he slowly placed the bottle beneath his nose and breathed in.

As soon as he did, he suddenly stared in shock. He lowered his head and sniffed again. His eyes narrowed as he turned the bottle over and dumped the pills out into his hand. There were five of them, all Qi Condensation Pills. After examining them closely and smelling them again, a look of shock appeared on his face.

“These….” He suddenly stood up, overturning his cup of tea. He didn’t even notice that, however. His attention was completely focused on the medicinal pills.

Behind him, the young servant looked on, dumbstruck. He had never seen Su Zhonglun act like this. This was especially true of what had just happened to the tea. Tea was one of Su Zhonglun’s greatest loves, and if he himself knocked over a cup, would be punished. However, just now, Su Zhonglun didn’t seem to even notice the spilled tea.

“The medicinal strength… how could it be of this level? Who concocted this pill?” Taking a deep breath, he picked up the bottle and looked at the character “Fang” inscribed on the side.

“Fang…. There are a thousand master alchemists, and I can think of three or four surnamed Fang. Which one is it?” As he muttered to himself, he carefully placed the five Qi Condensation pills back into the pill bottle. His eyes were shining.

“I can tell that these Qi Condensation Pills have a medicinal strength far beyond ordinary,” he said, panting. “Too bad they’re only Qi Condensation Pills. If they were medicinal pills appropriate for Foundation Establishment….” His eyes glittered as he shot toward the Inner Sect.

Naturally, there was no way for Meng Hao to know how much of a stir his handful of Qi Condensation Pills had caused. At the moment, he sat in his Immortal’s Cave, frowning as he looked down at the meat jelly.

The meat jelly’s body was now completely dry and lifeless, which made Meng Hao a bit nervous. If it was still like this after the month had passed, then all the gains he had made in the Violet Fate Sect up to now would be completely for naught.

The days passed, and Meng Hao’s anxiety grew deeper. Several people had come looking for him in recent days, including Lin Rui and Li Tao. Chu Yuyan had come twice. Meng Hao had utilized various methods to stall them, but he couldn’t keep it up for too much longer.

Thankfully, about twenty days in, cracks could be seen on the surface of the meat jelly. Every day, more appeared. Faint signs of life soon became apparent. Meng Hao finally started to feel a bit relieved.

After a few more days passed, there was only one more day until the month-long period was up. The meat jelly was now almost completely covered with cracks, and life force seemed to throb within it. Meng Hao could tell that the meat jelly was still inside, struggling to break out.

Meng Hao sat there quietly, waiting for the moment when the meat jelly would burst out from within the dried husk.

The night passed silently. The next day at dawn, dense cracks completely covered the surface of the meat jelly. Splintering sounds filled the air, and it seemed as if the re-born meat jelly would burst out at any moment.

Meng Hao couldn’t do anything to help, he could only watch. It was at this moment that Bai Yunlai’s excited voice could suddenly be heard from outside the Immortal’s Cave.

“Fang Mu, quick, open the door! I have some good news. Really good news!”

“Sir,” replied Meng Hao immediately, “I’m in the middle of concocting some pills. I can’t really come out. Brother Bai, please wait just a moment. Once this batch is finished, I’ll come out.”

“Aiya! What pills are you concocting?” replied Bai Yunlai, his voice urgent. “Hurry up and finish. I managed to get some business for you from an Inner Sect disciple. He needs some medicinal pills, and I recommended you. If you concoct the pills for him, word will get around, and then more Inner Sect disciples will come to you looking for business.” Bai Yunlai and Meng Hao had developed a very good relationship during the better part of the last year. Now that Meng Hao was a master alchemist, Bai Yunlai had been attempting over and over again to get some Inner Sect disciples to accept a recommendation for him to concoct pills. However, it had been difficult to get anyone to agree. As soon as he had, he’d rushed over to find Meng Hao.

Meng Hao laughed bitterly. Before, he would have jumped eagerly at such an opportunity. This was a very important step in his growth as a master alchemist within the Sect. Having just been promoted, he had to struggle to distinguish himself from the other thousand master alchemists. In the entire past three months, not a single person had come to him looking for pill concocting.

If he didn’t take advantage of the first opportunity, then there would never be a second….

Unfortunately, today….

Meng Hao was just about to open his mouth, when suddenly, his expression flickered. He looked at the meat jelly for the space of a few breaths.

Outside, Bai Yunlai suddenly heard a thunderous boom from inside the Immortal’s Cave.

It filled the entire valley, causing the mountains to tremble. Anyone inside the valley would have been able to hear it, and it attracted quite a bit of attention. Bai Yunlai stared in shock. His ears rang, and it took a long moment for him to regain his composure.

He took a deep breath, and stepped back a pace, his heart trembling in fear. He had no idea what pill Meng Hao was concocting to have produced such an uproar. However, not much time passed before the door of the Immortal’s Cave opened. Fang Mu appeared from within, smiling.

“In my haste, I exploded the pill furnace,” he said. “But, that doesn’t matter. I have more. Brother Bai, let’s go!”

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# Chapter 223: How Alchemist Fang Carries Himself

Bai Yunlai looked at Meng Hao and said, “Should I find you an apprentice alchemist?” At the moment, Meng Hao’s status was different than before. He was a master alchemist; regardless of whether he walked about in the East Pill Division or the Violet Qi Division, his position was much the same as an Inner Sect disciple. He was extremely important.

According to some of the long-standing rules of the Violet Fate Sect, master alchemists were equal to Inner Sect disciples of the Violet Qi Division. In reality, however, their position was a bit higher.

“There’s no need,” said Meng Hao with a slight smile. He descended the mountain with Bai Yunlai, then headed toward the Violet Qi Division. On the way, Bai Yunlai explained the situation. The person who had requested a pill to be concocted occupied a high position in the Inner Sect. However, despite being Chosen, he wasn’t able to ask for help from a Furnace Lord. Furthermore, his reputation was not very good, so most master alchemists weren’t willing to help him.

The East Pill Division occupied a relatively aloof position; any master alchemist had the right to refuse a request. If they did, the Inner Sect disciples of the Violet Qi Division would be helpless to do anything about it. This particular Chosen had very few other options. Of the master alchemists who were willing to concoct pills for him, none met up to his standards.

Bai Yunlai was aware of this, and figured that it was a good opportunity for Fang Mu. Even if it ended in failure, this Chosen couldn’t do anything whatsoever against the East Pill Division. Therefore, Bai Yunlai had hurried over to find Meng Hao.

After hearing the explanation, Meng Hao thought for a moment and then asked, “What pill does he want concocted?”

“He didn’t say. You can ask when we get there. My status doesn’t afford me the right to ask. In any case, Ding Yong 1 is a Chosen of the Violet Qi Division. He wouldn’t answer me even if I did ask.” Bai Yunlai sighed.

Meng Hao nodded. As they passed through the various valleys, the scene from moments ago played out in his head. The incredible noise had been caused by the meat jelly breaking out. As soon as it appeared in its reborn state, it surprisingly didn’t seem interested in talking. It quickly changed Meng Hao’s appearance back to that of Fang Mu’s, and then flew back into the blood-colored mask to sleep.

Now, it slumbered just as the Blood Mastiff did. After a quick inspection, Meng Hao came to the conclusion that it would wake up in a few months. With that, he paid it no more attention. Then, it was with great excitement that he quickly gathered up the shed skin which had exploded moments before.

The shed skin was extremely tough. Even with Meng Hao’s Cultivation base, he had no way of breaking even a single piece. Since it had come from the meat jelly, Meng Hao considered it to be a magical item. Not having time to examine it in detail, he had put it away and then walked out of the Immortal’s Cave.

It didn’t take long for Meng Hao and Bai Yunlai to reach the valley which connected the East Pill Division and the Violet Qi Division. Waiting for them there was an arrogant looking young man, who currently had his hands clasped behind his back and was looking up into the sky.

This was Ding Yong. He wore a red-colored robe, which flashed in the sunlight, and actually emitted a violet aura. The year Meng Hao had joined the Violet Fate Sect, he had learned that regardless of East Pill Division or Violet Qi Division, violet-colored Qi was to be treated with respect.

Therefore, even though this young man didn’t wear the violet robes of a Conclave disciple, the fact that his clothes emitted a violet aura indicated that he had a very high position within the sect. He was Chosen of the Violet Fate Sect.

His Cultivation base was at the peak of mid Foundation Establishment, just a hair from the next level.

When Ding Yong saw Meng Hao, he frowned and said, “So you’re Fang Mu?” In his opinion, the older a master alchemist, the better. To him, Meng Hao was obviously much too young.

Meng Hao frowned coldly, stopping in place. During his time with Li Tao, he had grown accustomed to how the man handled himself in front of the Inner Sect disciples. The position of master alchemist was one that inherently demanded respect. However, it also required a bit of personal effort to earn that respect. If you set the bar too low, then others would assume your skill was lacking.

Therefore, he stood in place, then flicked his sleeve and let out a cold snort.

“Bai Yunlai,” he said coolly, “from now on, there’s no need to seek me out for such pill concocting matters as this.” Without another look at Ding Yong, he turned and began to walk off.

Bai Yunlai often worked with master alchemists, and he was also very familiar with Meng Hao. How could he not understand what was happening? Feeling secretly pleased, he allowed horror to cover his face. Then he stared accusatorially at the target of Meng Hao’s little tactic, Ding Yong, who stood there gaping.

“He’s a master alchemist of the East Pill Division, it doesn’t matter if he’s young. He placed number one in the last promotion examination! Think about it! Out of one hundred thousand apprentice alchemists, only one was selected. You… Ai, you don’t know how long I begged Alchemist Fang to come before he agreed. And here you….” Shaking his head, he turned to chase after Meng Hao.

Ding Yong laughed bitterly, then sighed. He was not like Qian Shuihen and Lu Song, who had been able to leave the Sect to gain experience. But how could he not see the way Meng Hao carried himself? When he thought about Bai Yunlai's words, he realized that this Fang Mu's skill in alchemy must be significant. After a moment's thought, a smile appeared on his face, and he walked forward a few steps.

"The grand name of Alchemist Fang has long since reverberated like thunder within my ears," he said. "Just now when I saw how young Alchemist Fang is, I was so shocked that I made a slip of the tongue. Alchemist Fang, please don't take offense."

Meng Hao stopped again, then turned to looked Ding Yong in the eye coldly. "What pill do you need?"

Ding Yong's eyes glittered. Seeing Meng Hao speak in such a manner led him to believe that he must be a person with a relatively short temper. He quickly said, "Barrier Breaking Pill!"

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever, without the slightest bit of change. Seeing this, Ding Yong came the conclusion that he was obviously very worldly wise and eccentric. Actually, Meng Hao was currently frantically searching through his memory. Unfortunately, he had no information regarding Barrier Breaking Pills.

"There are at least seventeen pill formulas for that type of pill," he said coolly. "Furthermore, there are hundreds of types of medicinal herbs that can be used, along with many complicated variations, three hundred ninety seven to be precise. The refinement process requires delicate adjustments, which further adds seventy percent to the total possible variations. Which particular version do you want concocted?" In truth, his words were a complete fabrication. Next to him Bai Yunlai gasped; actually, he too had been wondering what a Barrier Breaking Pill was. Hearing Meng Hao's words caused a look of admiration to appear in his eyes.

The way it looked to him, the words seemed to come from a perspective of extreme comprehension. At least, that was the feeling he got.

It seemed even Bai Yunlai had been duped. Naturally, Ding Yong stared in shock for a moment before a bright glow appeared in his eyes. Meng Hao's words struck him as being profoundly enigmatic. He took a deep breath, then clasped hands and bowed. Avoiding any careless words, he said, "Alchemist Fang, to be honest, I'm not really sure which type. I just have one pill formula, perhaps… you could take a look, sir?" He quickly retrieved a jade slip from his bag of holding which he offered to Meng Hao.

Were Ding Yong not within the Sect, he might not be so easily bluffed. However, they were inside the Violet Fate Sect, and Meng Hao was a fellow Sect member. Furthermore, he knew that Meng Hao was a master alchemist who had the upper hand. Therefore, Meng Hao's words truly had the desired effect.

Meng Hao accepted the jade slip expressionlessly, and then scanned it with Spiritual Sense. His face was the same as always, but inwardly, he was shocked.

"So, there really is such a medicinal pill. The Barrier Breaking Pill can actually only be consumed twice in a lifetime. If consumed a third time, instant death will result!

"The interactions of various medicinal plants, as well as the addition of various toxic vegetation, will create an explosive mixture that will stimulate the Qi passageways and give the Cultivation base the ability to break through a bottleneck!" Meng Hao was silent for a moment as he thought.

Next to him, Ding Yong watched on nervously. He had previously consumed one Barrier Breaking Pill. Unfortunately, at the very last critical moment, he had failed to break through. Now he only had one chance left. The worst of it all was that over the past years he had somehow managed to offend all the Furnace Lords and master alchemists. Even if one of them agreed, he wouldn't feel at ease with the results. He was still hesitant. To Fang Mu, this was a simple pill concoction. But to him, it represented his very, very last chance.

If he succeeded, he would be able to enter late Foundation Establishment. Therefore, he couldn't help but be cautious.

In reality, even after choosing to seek out Fang Mu, he still hadn’t completely made up his mind about the matter. He still wanted to feel the situation out, then make a decision based on his feeling at the time. He desired a reliable master alchemist to concoct this crucially important pill. Ding Yong was no Outer Sect disciple. He knew very clearly that the medicinal strength of any given pill would be different depending on who concocted it. Some people produced pills with high strength, others low. As far as Ding Yong was concerned, the medicinal strength of this Barrier Breaking Pill was crucially important.

The pill he had consumed previously had been of ordinary medicinal strength. Had it not, he wouldn’t be here today, sighing as he was.

A long moment passed, before Meng Hao returned the jade slip. He muttered to himself for a moment before walking up to Ding Yong.

“Raise your hand.”

Ding Yong gaped for a moment, and his eyes narrowed. However, he didn’t refuse. He lifted his hand up, whereupon Meng Hao clasped his wrist and began to send a bit of spiritual power into him.

“Don’t resist,” he said coolly. He poured the spiritual power of Qi Condensation into Ding Yong, who looked hesitant as he stared at Meng Hao. However, he allowed the spiritual power to circulate fully through his body.

Meng Hao quickly became certain which level of medicinal strength was required of the pill that Ding Yong needed to break through his bottleneck. Meng Hao had also detected some other complex medicinal powers within Ding Yong’s body. Those medicinal powers seemed to contain remnants of the Qi of the medicinal plants from the first Barrier Breaking Pill he had consumed.

“You’ve already consumed one Barrier Breaking Pill,” said Meng Hao, retracting his spiritual power.

Hearing Meng Hao's words caused Ding Yong to take a deep breath. His eyes shined brightly as he looked at Meng Hao, shocked. He had never told anybody that he had previously consumed a Barrier Breaking Pill.

"I will help you concoct this pill," said Meng Hao calmly. "Prepare six sets of the medicinal plants required to make the Barrier Breaking Pill. In addition, I require thirty thousand Spirit Stones."

"I already found a few master alchemists who can make this pill…" said Ding Yong slowly. "The most they asked for was three sets of ingredients and ten thousand Spirit Stones."

"I guarantee that my pill will enable you to break through," Meng Hao replied coolly. His tone was calm, but there also existed potent air within it.

"Are you serious?!" gasped Ding Yong, his eyes flashing brightly. He had long since come to the conclusion that this Alchemist Fang Mu was very different from the other master alchemists.

"If you don't believe me, then never mind," said Meng Hao, turning to leave.

Ding Yong's heart twisted. It only took a moment for a determined look to break out on his face. Seeing how different Fang Mu was from the others, and how he had been able to detect his previous consumption of the Barrier Breaking Pill, caused him to make up his mind. Without any further hesitation, he produced a bag of holding and quickly put the required medicinal plants and Spirit Stones inside. He handed it to Meng Hao.

"In two weeks, at twilight, you may come collect your pill," said Meng Hao. With the flick of a sleeve, he left with Bai Yunlai, his black gown fluttering in the breeze. A scholarly aura swirled around him, as did the faint scent of medicinal pills. He seemed otherworldly.

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1. Ding Yong's name in Chinese is Dīng yǒng – Ding is a common surname that has many meanings. Yong means "brave"

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# Chapter 224: Medicinal Pills Can Foster Life, Poison Can Exterminate It!

Bai Yunlai held his tongue for the entire way back. Finally, when they reached the door of the Immortal’s cave, he couldn’t keep his mouth closed any longer. “Fang Mu, your plan….”

“I need Spirit Stones,” he said with a laugh. “I asked for six sets of medicinal plants because I plan to give a Barrier Breaking Pill to you. I can see that you’ve been stuck at the bottleneck of the eighth level of Qi Condensation for years now.” He clasped Bai Yunlai on the shoulder, turned, and entered his Immortal’s Cave.

As the door closed shut, Bai Yunlai stood there alone for some time. Finally, he clasped hands and bowed deeply, then left. His words of thanks were not spoken aloud, but imprinted on his heart.

Time passed. Soon seven days had gone by. Meng Hao sat cross-legged in his Immortal’s Cave, looking at the three Barrier Breaking Pills in front of him. He picked one up and looked at it closely.

“The difference between medicinal pills and poison pills is a matter of will. If murder were on my mind, I could simply adjust the poisonous elements of this Barrier Breaking Pill, and then whoever consumed it would be exterminated. Even if that person was extremely prudent and had someone else test the pill first, I could figure out a way to cause the pill to initiate a self-change. Undetectable killing….”

Meng Hao sat there silently, thinking about all of the medicinal pills he had consumed over the years. At that time, he had no understanding of the Dao of alchemy. Thinking about it caused all the hairs on his body to stand up on end. Now that he knew more about alchemy, a sense of fear slowly filled him.

“From now on, I must only consume pills that I have concocted myself,” he murmured. “As for pills from outsiders, I must employ my full knowledge of the Dao of alchemy to identify them before consuming them. The difference between Dao of alchemy and the Dao of poison is a matter of will. Medicinal pills can foster life, poison can exterminate it. A true grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy is in actuality also a grandmaster of the Dao of poison.” Meng Hao closed his eyes, and within his mind appeared images of medicinal plants. There were endless varieties of plants that had poisonous elements. By combining certain ones together, lethal poisons could be created.

Based on the level of the Cultivation base, poisonous powders for pills could be made with different potencies. After thinking about it for a very long moment, Meng Hao slowly opened his eyes. They glowed with enlightenment. To Meng Hao, concocting this Barrier Breaking Pill had been a sort of baptism. He now had a much more profound understanding of the Dao of alchemy.

“Maybe one day when my skill in the Dao of alchemy reaches the level of Grandmaster Pill Demon, then I can dispel the poison of the Resurrection Lily myself!” His eyes shined brightly.

Slowly the glow faded. Meng Hao’s state of mind gradually grew calm. He had the feeling that even though he was still in the Foundation Establishment stage, with five Dao Pillars, when you added in his understanding of the Dao of alchemy, his battle prowess was now far beyond what it had been before.

In fact, if he created some poison pills now, then next time he encountered Zhou Jie, it would be easy to kill him, regardless of how many techniques his opponent used.

After more thought, Meng Hao took out the broken pieces of the meat jelly's shed skin. He studied them carefully for a while. His time in recent days had not just been spent in pill concocting. He had also thought a lot about various methods of using the meat jelly skin.

It was exceptionally hard. He had used a variety of methods to attempt to damage it, none of which had been successful. He had even tried to refine it in the pill furnace, to no avail. Thankfully, although most of the skin had broken into pieces, some had exploded into dust, which Meng Hao had also collected.

Meng Hao closed his eyes to think. "I have to think of a way to use this stuff in the future. Also, I can't just focus on improving my skill in the Dao of Alchemy. I also have to improve my Dao Pillars. I need to gradually increase the level of the Cultivation base I reveal when I'm out in the Violet Fate Sect." He frowned. "I need some formulas for medicinal pills useful in the mid Foundation Establishment stage."

With that, he stood up and left the Immortal's Cave to visit Li Tao. It was dusk when he returned. In exchange for the formula for the Barrier Breaking Pill, he had acquired the formula for a Spirit Platform Pill, which was appropriate for the mid Foundation Establishment stage.

Now that he had the formula, Meng Hao began to consider concocting it himself. He would only need one; there was no need to concoct more than that. As for the required medicinal plants, he was a master alchemist of the East Pill Division, so they could easily be acquired on credit.

Time flashed as seven days passed. On this particular day, Meng Hao's eyes suddenly snapped open. He had just finished absorbing the Spirit Platform Pill that he had concocted a few days before. Unfortunately, refining the pill had used up several sets of ingredients, and in the end, the medicinal strength wasn't ideal.

"I guess I have no other options for now, unless there are different formulas for the Spirit Platform Pill," he murmured. "The rare medicinal plants for this formula can't be acquired on credit, I have to pay for them up front. My only option now is to grow my reputation. That way, more Inner Sect disciples will come to me to concoct pills. My profits will increase, and of course my pill concocting skill will too. Then I can acquire more medicinal plants to use to concoct medicinal pills for myself.” With that, he waved his right hand to collect together the medicinal pills in front of him, then walked out of the Immortal’s Cave. By this time, it was dusk.

As soon as he left District One Valley One, he ran into Bai Yunlai. Today was the appointed day to meet with Ding Yong. The two of them chatted as they walked to the designated meeting place.

Ding Yong had arrived early. He was nervous, but didn’t show it on his face. He stood waiting; when he caught sight of Meng Hao approaching, his eyes glittered.

Meng Hao was as calm as ever. As he approached, he slapped his bag of holding to produce a pill bottle, which flew toward Ding Yong.

“You must not take this pill under the moonlight,” said Meng Hao indifferently. “It should only be consumed at high noon, when the sun burns brightly. That is when the medicinal strength will be highest.” With that, he turned and walked away, paying no further attention to Ding Yong.

Ding Yong took the pill bottle and stared deeply at Meng Hao for a moment. Without a word, he also turned and left.

The next day at noon, when the hot sun filled the sky, Ding Yong sat cross-legged on a wide stone platform in his Immortal’s Cave. Various restrictive spells were set up around him. He breathed deeply as he produced the medicinal pill Meng Hao had concocted for such an exorbitant price. Ding Yong looked at, and a bit of hesitation flickered in his eyes. However, the hesitation quickly turned to determination.

“Fang Mu, if you pulled a fast one on me, then matters between us are not concluded!” He clenched his jaw, then quickly placed the pill into his mouth. Instantly, a roaring sound filled his mind, and his entire body began to quiver. Furious waves of spiritual energy exploded within him.

Time slipped by. Soon three days had passed. Ding Yong's body continued to shake. On the evening of the third day, his eyes opened, and as they did, the power of late Foundation Establishment stage rippled out from his Cultivation base, filling the surrounding area. His eyes shone with excitement, and he trembled as he rose to his feet. As he examined his Cultivation base, his heart surged. He lifted his head up and began to laugh with joy.

The laughter spread out, attracting the attention of quite a few nearby Inner Sect disciples. Soon, expressions of shock appeared on their faces.

"Ding Yong finally broke through!"

"He's been stuck in mid Foundation Establishment for years. He finally broke through!"

News of Ding Yong's breakthrough caused quite the uproar in the Inner Sect of the Violet Qi Division. Now that he had reached late Foundation Establishment, he had a chance for promotion to Conclave disciple. Considering how many years he had been stuck in mid Foundation Establishment, his breakthrough also caused him to suddenly be viewed as competition by many other disciples.

If the matter were limited to a simple breakthrough, then all eyes would be fixed on Ding Yong alone. After all, a late breakthrough is still simply a breakthrough. However, Bai Yunlai had been keeping an eye on Ding Yong's Immortal's Cave. As soon as he sensed that the breakthrough had been made, he immediately used all his skill and resources to spread word of it, and the fact that it was Fang Mu who concocted the pill.

It was in this fashion that he was able to borrow the momentum of Ding Yong's breakthrough to rapidly spread word of Fang Mu's skill in alchemy. Word spread like storm winds through the Inner Sect disciples. Within a few days, all of the Inner Sect disciples in the Violet Qi Division were talking about Ding Yong and Fang Mu.

When Inner Sect disciples went to master alchemists for pill concocting services, what was sometimes more important than alchemic skill, was reputation. The greater the reputation of the master alchemist, the more people would seek him out. Thanks to Bai Yunlai's promotion, as well as Ding Yong's breakthrough, the resulting ballyhoo immediately caused Fang Mu's name to spread throughout the entire Inner Sect.

Ding Yong had no reservations about this. In fact, not only was he happy to allow Fang Mu to use his name to promote himself, but whenever people asked him about his breakthrough, he would directly explain that Fang Mu's medicinal pill was what had led to his breakthrough in Cultivation base.

The reason for this was quite simple. A few words on his part could verify how astonishing Fang Mu's medicinal pills were. This would prevent any cause of offense on the part of Fang Mu, and would build up good karma for the next time he needed a pill concocted.

It was in this fashion that Fang Mu's reputation slowly began to build among the Inner Sect Disciples. Soon, everyone knew of Alchemist Fang, one of the thousand master alchemists of the East Pill Division. However, Inner Sect disciples all had master alchemists of whom they personally approved. Mere rumors alone wouldn't cause them to switch to a new master alchemist for pill concocting, not even when combined with Ding Yong's breakthrough. Many were still hesitant.

Soon, the news reached the Violet Qi Division's Outer Sect, and the disciple in charge of pill inspecting, Su Zhonglun. His eyes began to shine. For a month now he had been wondering about the master alchemist surnamed Fang. He had gone to the Pill Affairs Pavilion in the Inner Sect for information but had come up empty-handed. After that, every time medicinal pills arrived in the Outer Sect, he would inspect them very carefully. However, he never saw any more pills marked Fang. This caused him to sigh endlessly.

He had saved the original bottle of pills, and frequently took them out to study. The more he did, the more admiration grew in his heart, and the more curious he grew regarding the identity of this Alchemist Fang. When the news about Fang Mu and Ding Yong reached him, he was immediately eighty percent sure that Fang Mu was the person he had been looking for.

He instantly rushed out of the Outer Sect and headed toward the East Pill Division. He tracked down Bai Yunlai and begged him to recommend him to Fang Mu.

During these days, Meng Hao was well aware of all that Bai Yunlai was doing to spread his name. He sat patiently waiting for requests to come in, yet none did, which caused him to frown.

It was at this moment that Su Zhonglun’s request for a pill came in. Meng Hao was immediately enlivened, and sent his response.

A few days later, Su Zhonglun received the medicinal pills he needed. He immediately returned to his room. After doing some breathing exercises, he thoroughly examined the pill. As he did, his eyes began to shine more and more brightly. In the end, he was panting.

“I provided medicinal plants with fifty percent strength, and this pill also has fifty percent strength. Only a Furnace Lord could mix the various medicinal plants together to create a medicinal pill like this. Ordinary master alchemists could never do it. At the most, they could create a pill with thirty percent medicinal strength. This is astonishing! This Fang Mu… he’s only a master alchemist, but he can concoct the medicinal pills of a Furnace Lord!” Unable to contain his excitement, he held up the fifty percent strength medicinal pill and then placed it into his mouth. A few hours later, he opened his eyes.

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# Chapter 225: Rising to the Pinnacle!

“If you consume one type of medicinal pill too often, it will become less and less effective. This is the result of problems with the medicinal plants within the pill. Therefore, a medicinal pill like this with fifty percent medicinal strength, well, its true value can only be imagined!” Now that he had personally confirmed his conjectures regarding Fang Mu, he quickly decided that they needed to become friends.

“It is a foregone conclusion that he will rise to the pinnacle. At the moment, though, his reputation is still growing and lots of people are hesitating. Helping him now will definitely be a way to build up good karma for the future!” Su Zhonglun’s line of thinking was the same as Ding Yong’s. The difference was that he had a much better understanding of Fang Mu’s ability with plants and vegetation, as well as his skill in concocting medicinal pills, and the value thereof.

A new commotion rose up among the Inner Sect disciples of the Violet Qi Division. This was because Su Zhonglun, although he hadn’t made a breakthrough, had made significant progress in his Cultivation base. Furthermore, he repeatedly talked about Fang Mu’s pills within the Inner Sect. In fact, he would even pull out two of the same type of medicinal pill, one concocted by Fang Mu, one concocted by another master alchemist. Then he would compare the two, point by point.

First was Ding Yong, and then Su Zhonglun. Their recommendations, coupled with the waves spread by Bai Yunlai’s promotion, caused all of the discussion within the Inner Sect over the next half month to revolve around Fang Mu.

Finally, more and more Inner Sect disciples began to seek out Fang Mu to concoct pills.

At first, it was just a disciple here and there. They were hesitant, and clearly just wanted to test the waters. They would seek out Bai Yunlai, whereupon he would recommend Fang Mu’s services.

Meng Hao didn’t refuse anyone who came for pill concocting services. When his pill furnace exploded under the strain of such frequent use, he would immediately get a replacement.

The first group of three or four Inner Sect disciples who came to him for pills came back a few days later and took their purchases back to their Immortal’s Caves.

Zhang Shuilai, who was at the early Foundation Establishment stage, was one of them. He wasn’t very prominent among the Inner Sect disciples, and had only sought out a master alchemist once before for pill concoction. After experiencing how impressive they were, he was deeply moved. Unfortunately, he was embarrassingly short of Spirit Stones, and could only afford to acquire pills during the Sect’s Pill Distribution.

The reason he sought out Fang Mu’s services was because he could tell that Fang Mu’s name was on the rise. This might be his only opportunity, so he decided to take advantage of it while he could

He sat in his Immortal’s cave, holding a pill bottle. Inside were ten medicinal pills useful for the early Foundation Establishment stage. He took a deep breath, and put one of the pills into his mouth. Almost immediately, his eyes grew wide, and filled with the glow of disbelief. He looked down at the rest of the medicinal pills. Just looking at them, they didn’t seem any different from any of the other pills he had consumed in the past.

A long while passed. After absorbing the power of all the pills, Zhang Shuilai took a deep breath. He produced yet another pill bottle. Inside were two pills useful for the early Foundation Establishment stage. After examining them closely, he consumed them. A few moments later more disbelief filled his eyes.

“What’s going on? The pills the master alchemist concocted for me before didn’t do much. They just transformed into spiritual energy. But… but… Fang Mu’s medicinal pills are incredibly potent! They created more than fifty percent more spiritual energy than the others!” He panted, and his eyes shone. If at this point he didn’t realise what was going on, then he didn’t deserve to be an Inner Sect disciple.

Without the slightest hesitation, he leaped up and rushed out of the Immortal’s Cave and headed directly to find Fang Mu. He would take advantage of others’ hesitation to have more pills concocted.

However, as soon as he neared the East Pill Division, he found that the other Inner Sect disciples who had recently picked up pills from Fang Mu apparently all had the same idea as him. They were all returning, excited expressions on their faces. The group all exchanged glances, then wordlessly shot together to the East Pill Division to find Bai Yunlai.

Before, they had been interested in simply trying out the pills; now, things were clearly different.

They did not possess Su Zhonglun’s ability to identify and analyze medicinal pills. However, after consuming them, they immediately realized that Meng Hao’s medicinal pills were beyond ordinary. You could say that if other master alchemists could create pills of one hundred percent strength, then Meng Hao’s were one hundred and fifty percent strength.They were at least fifty percent stronger, which of course made these Inner Sect disciples incredibly happy.

What they didn’t know was that Meng Hao’s medicinal pills were not just fifty percent stronger in terms of medicinal strength. In the world of alchemic Cultivation in all of the Southern Domain, the medicinal pills concocted by master alchemists never exceeded roughly thirty percent medicinal strength. The rest of the strength was lost in the concocting process. In the end, the medicinal pills they created were not complete. On the other hand, Meng Hao could concoct pills of fifty percent medicinal strength. It was instantly apparent who was in the superior position and who was not.

Fang Mu’s imminent explosive popularity among the Inner Sect disciples was obvious.

The news that the first group of Inner Sect disciples returned for more pills quickly spread. Soon Bai Yunlai didn’t need to do any promotion whatsoever. Rumors passed between friends inside the Inner Sect, and soon more and more disciples came looking for pill concocting. It wasn’t long before the spreading word caused Meng Hao’s name to rise above that of the other master alchemists. His reputation grew and grew.

“Did you hear? The East Pill Division has a master alchemist named Fang Mu. The pills he creates are twice as effective as the pills created by the other master alchemists!”

“How is that possible? I don’t cultivate the Dao of Alchemy, but I’ve dealt with a lot of different master alchemists, so I know what I’m talking about. Unless this Fang Mu is a Furnace Lord, there’s no way his pills could be that much more effective in comparison.”

“Hahaha! All you have to do is try them out, then you’ll know whether you’re right or not. Have him make a pill for you, then you’ll know.” Conversations similar to this could be heard throughout the Inner Sect of the Violet Qi Division.

Eventually, people began to seek out Bai Yunlai every single day.

According to the rules of the East Pill Division, outsiders were not allowed to enter. The only way to seek out master alchemists was to use messaging jade slips. However, Meng Hao did not have any direct contact with anyone, only Bai Yunlai did.

More and more Inner Sect disciples arranged to visit Bai Yunlai. Soon, he was starting to get more work than he could deal with. Meng Hao was surprised by this turn of events. Before long, he was spending almost all his time concocting pills. It was getting to the point where he couldn’t keep up. It was a happy sort of pain. Because of the volume of pills he was concocting, his Dao of alchemy advanced by leaps and bounds. Furthermore, he was acquiring a large amount of pill formulas, and was also building up quite a store of medicinal plants which he acquired from the excess ingredients provided.

Things only continued to grow more and more intense. After two months, every single Inner Sect disciple in the Violet Qi Division knew about Fang Mu. The whole place was abuzz. Anyone who had the mind to try one of Meng Hao's medicinal pills would immediately be astounded, and would return for more.

More than a few acquired sample pills by trading with others. Some relied on the word of others and would without hesitation seek out Bai Yunlai.

Soon Meng Hao had reached the point where he simply had too much work to do. Pumping out so many medicinal pills was driving him to exhaustion. Therefore, he discussed matters with Bai Yunlai and decided to raise prices!

He arranged a pricing system with different values assigned to different types of medicinal pills. The prices were obviously higher than other master alchemists'. This had been Bai Yunlai's idea, which Meng Hao had approved of. What neither of them had expected was that raising the prices actually caused his popularity to rise. Both of them were stupefied.

More and more Inner Sect disciples came, which was now causing complaints among the other master alchemists. However as soon they took time to study Meng Hao's medicinal pills, the complaints disappeared….

The reason Meng Hao was so incredibly popular was because of the fifty percent medicinal strength of his pills. To the Inner Sect disciples, the benefits of consuming such pills went without saying.

Most importantly, in the entire East Pill Division, the only other people whose skill in the Dao of alchemy was enough to produce pills of fifty percent medicinal strength, were Furnace Lords.

However, Furnace Lords would not concoct pills for Inner Sect disciples, only Conclave disciples. With the appearance of Meng Hao, suddenly, all Inner Sect disciples had the chance to get medicinal pills of Furnace Lord quality, but at the price of a master alchemist. After all, they could only make requests of Meng Hao, and not the Furnace Lords.

Therefore, even after raising prices, Meng Hao’s medicinal pills were still cheaper than those concocted by Furnace Lords. As such, Inner Sect disciples could accept the higher cost.

Fang Mu was all the rage!

His name wasn’t just popular within the Inner Sect of the Violet Qi Division. The apprentice alchemists of the East Pill Division were all talking about his shocking promotion to master alchemist. Eventually, Fang Mu’s name reached the ears of some of the Elders of the Violet Fate Sect, causing them to take note of the situation.

Many of the master alchemists in the East Pill Division were still not resigned to the situation. Through various methods, they were able to acquire some of Meng Hao’s medicinal pills, which they researched thoroughly. Their research left them astonished. More and more master alchemists participated in the research. In the end, when Meng Hao raised his prices, the orders Bai Yunlai accepted only increased.

Over the course of a few months, Meng Hao had acquired hundreds of pill formulas. The Spirit Stones were rolling in, and his stores of medicinal plants were plentiful. Meng Hao was happy, although now he had almost no personal time. Each day, every day, he concocted pills. When his spiritual power began to dry up, he would consume some medicinal pills to recover. Over the months, his sixth Dao Pillar came to be roughly half complete.

One can only imagine his life during these few months….

Finally, it reached the point that Meng Hao really didn’t think it was possible to complete all the orders. Finally, he made a new decision. He had Bai Yunlai make an announcement that only three orders would be processed per day.

He really had no other option than this. The proclamation of this rule brought instant results. Not a few complaints were voiced, and malicious talk spread. Despite that, the rules of three orders per day stood. There were no rest days. The Inner Sect disciples of the Violet Qi Division came up with various methods to secure spots among the three orders per day.

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# Chapter 226: Liu’s Rule!

Fang Mu had risen to prominence within the Violet Fate Sect. There was not a single Inner Sect disciple in the Violet Qi Division who didn’t know of him. The name of this newly promoted master alchemist reverberated like thunder in the ears of the other master alchemists of the East Pill Division.

Considering the situation with the Inner Sect disciples and the master alchemists, there is no need to even mention the Outer Sect disciples and the apprentice alchemists. The name of Alchemist Fang Mu swept across the Sect like a raging wind, and his prestige among the Violet Sect Disciples only grew greater.

Speculation began to run wild regarding Fang Mu. The general consensus was that he had an eccentric personality, didn’t speak much, didn’t like to go out or engage in social activities. In truth, very few people actually knew what he even looked like.

All requests for medicinal pills went through Bai Yunlai. As for Fang Mu, although everyone knew his name, no one ever had the opportunity to meet him. Because of the rules of the East Pill Division prohibiting the intrusion of Violet Qi Division disciples, Fang Mu became an increasingly mysterious figure.

This, in addition to his rule of only three orders per day, the results of which were equivalent to the work of Furnace Lords, only served to increase his reputation.

In fact, the rule of three orders per day had caused the Inner Sect disciples to create a trade system, in which prices continued to increase.

At this particular moment, deep within the East Pill Division, was a violet-colored mountain peak. The peak was not very high, and in fact was somewhat concealed by the surrounding peaks. However, an indescribable aura existed here which made it clear that while the mountain was not tall, it served as the heart of the entire mountain range.

Sitting atop this mountain was an old man. In front of him was a worktable, upon which lay a medicinal pill. He looked at it, his eyes glowing with a strange light. Behind this old man were three other persons.

These people were by no means young. All of them had Cultivation bases at the Nascent Soul stage. However, it seemed as if they didn’t dare to breathe too loudly in front of the other old man. Their expressions were filled with respect.

This old man was none other than Chu Yuyan’s master, Grandmaster Pill Demon, whose name could rock the entire Southern Domain.

He examined the medicinal pill in front of him for some time. Soon, the sun began to set. Finally, he slowly waved his hand and picked up the pill.

“Interesting,” he said, then began to laugh. He closed his hand over the pill and rubbed it. When he opened his hand again, ash drifted out into the wind.

One of the three men behind Grandmaster Pill demon hesitated for a moment, then quietly said, “Pill Demon, there is discontent within the Violet Qi Division….”

“Discontent?” said Pill Demon coolly. “Let them be patient. If anyone causes problems for the disciples of the East Pill Division, they will be cut off from medicinal pills for ten years.” With that, he flicked his sleeve and disappeared.

The three men exchanged glances. With bitter smiles, they bowed to the position Pill Demon had just occupied, then turned and left.

Beneath the evening sky, behind the short, violet-colored mountain was a towering peak which stretched up to the sky. Half way up the mountain was a pavilion, the greater part of which stretched out of the mountain to hang in mid-air. During the day, you could stand here to look out across the land. At nighttime, when the stars came out, it almost seemed possible to reach up and touch the sky.

This particular evening, the rays of the setting sun fell across everything, creating a languid atmosphere. The golden glow, combined with the rosy clouds on the horizon, led to a scene of incredible beauty.

Within the pavilion, the evening air stirred. The wind did not disperse the clouds, but did send strands of long, black hair drifting into the wind. The hair belonged to none other than Chu Yuyan.

She stood quietly within the pavilion, her hair dancing in the wind. Her brow was furrowed slightly as she lifted her hand up. There in her palm was a medicinal pill.

“How did he concoct it….” she thought. “Could it be that his aptitude with the Dao of alchemy is similar to his latent talent with plants and vegetation…? Is there really someone so gifted in the Dao of alchemy? It’s breathtaking….”

The pill was waxen and yellow, and did not seem to be a complete product.

By expending some Spirit Stones, she had been able to purchase a pill from an Inner Sect disciple. Of course, that medicinal pill had been the handiwork of Meng Hao.

After getting ahold of the pill, Chu Yuyan’s first reaction was that of disdain. But then she had studied it fastidiously. As she did, her expression changed. In the end, she stared wide-eyed and disbelieving.

After studying the pill for seven days, she had eventually ground it into powder. After such thorough examination, although she still felt annoyed at the thought of Fang Mu, she couldn’t help but admit that as for this medicinal pill… even she could only create it if she devoted her complete mind and spirit to the task.

Finally, she had used Grandmaster Pill Demon’s unique method to re-concoct the pill. She had taken the powder of the original pill to form a second pill. After the second refinement, the pill’s medicinal strength was actually sixty percent. That was her limit.

“If he learned my master’s refinement technique,” she murmured softly, “who knows what level of medicinal pills he would be able to concoct…?” She looked off at the rosy clouds in the distance, then back down at the pill in her hand.

“Master said that he might hold the secret to enlightenment regarding the Three Mortalities Pill. But he’s so arrogant! Last time I went to visit he locked himself inside and refused to come out!” Thinking of this made her more annoyed. Even the mere name of Fang Mu would cause her temper to boil up with irritation.

“This Fang Mu’s detestableness is second only to that damned Meng Hao!” she said, gnashing her teeth. Clearly, the two people she hated most in her heart were Meng Hao, first, and Fang Mu, second.

However, she still didn’t know why Fang Mu caused her so much irritation. Of course, if she knew that Fang Mu and Meng Hao were one and the same, then she would immediately understand why.

At the same time that Chu Yuyan was muttering to herself, Meng Hao sat in front of his pill furnace concocting a batch of medicinal pills. A roaring sound could be heard, filling the Immortal’s Cave. Meng Hao sighed. The past few months, he had spent every day concocting pills. He was just now finishing with all the pills he owed to various members of the Inner Sect. The pill furnace in front of him was reaching the end of its life; it would definitely crack to pieces soon.

Meng Hao rubbed the bridge of his nose, then opened the door of his Immortal’s Cave to look at the sunset. He took a deep breath. The mountain breath carried the chill of autumn. As he breathed it in, the tension slowly eased from his painfully swollen head.

“Once I finish with all the old orders, then all I have to worry about are the three orders per day, as well as the medicinal pills I need for my personal Cultivation. Spirit Platform Pills are already only nominally effective. If I concoct anything, it should be a Foundation Establishment Day!” His eyes glittered. Foundation Establishment Day was a medicinal pill suitable for the late Foundation Establishment stage. It was an incredibly potent pill, one of the most valuable types in all of the Violet Fate Sect for the Foundation Establishment stage.

Recently, Meng Hao had refined over a thousand batches of pills, and had acquired hundreds of formulas. One of them was the formula for Foundation Establishment Day. After some research, he’d come to the conclusion that in order to make any progress, he would have to rest some, then use all his skill to concoct a Foundation Establishment Day with at least ninety percent medicinal strength.

With such a pill, he could complete his sixth Dao Pillar and begin formation of the seventh.

“It’s too bad that the Violet Qi from the East manual is only available to Furnace Lords. It’s a legendary art, and there’s no other way to get a look at it. Careful records are kept of everyone who studies it.” Lost in thought, Meng Hao strolled down the mountain. This was the first time in a long time that he had been outside.

“Even Inner Sect disciples aren’t qualified to consult the Violet Qi from the East manual. They are forced to cultivate based on speculations. Only Conclave disciples of the Violet Qi Division or Furnace Lords can personally peruse the real manual to study the technique.” Meng Hao was determined to gain access to it. Only in this way could he prepare to form a Violet Core. With that foundation, he could consume the pill to form the Perfect Gold Core.

“I’ve searched for some of the medicinal plants required for the Perfect Gold Core, but am still missing quite a few. Once I become a Furnace Lord, it should become a bit easier.” Meng Hao passed through various valleys, lost in thought. Along the way, he ran into quite a few apprentice alchemists. Some of them recognized him, and stared in amazement. Then their faces would fill with excitement.

After all, thirty thousand apprentice alchemists had watched him be promoted to master alchemist. It was no surprise that many would recognize him still. However, now that he was a master alchemist, they didn’t dare to stop and chat with him. Instead, they simply saluted respectfully.

Meng Hao wanted to find a quiet place to think. After smiling in response to the apprentice alchemists, he disappeared in a flash. He left the mountains and valleys of the East Pill Division to enter the Violet Qi Division.

Here, very few people would recognize him. He walked happily amidst the mountains, wearing his master alchemist’s robe. No one stopped to question him, so he proceeded along quietly.

As he strolled, he looked around at the scenery. He had been in the Violet Fate Sect for roughly three years. Although he was relatively familiar with it, it was actually a very large place. There were many areas he had never been to. As he walked, he suddenly heard the sound of an argument in which his name was being mentioned

“That Fang Mu is definitely fishing for fame and compliments. He thinks his pills are so amazing, so he wants to make trouble for us. We can’t accept it! I already reported to the Elders about it and they’re going to get in touch with the people from the East Pill Division. Fang Mu will be punished! As for you, you measly apprentice alchemist, you had best apologize for your offense!”

“Elder Brother Liu, please calm your anger. This is my fault. However, it really is true that the next ten days or more worth of orders have already been filled…”

There was a jumble of conversation, then laughter. Meng Hao listened to a few sentences and was certain that one of the voices belonged to Bai Yunlai.

He walked around an ornamental rock formation into a wide public square within which could be seen four pagodas.

Within pagodas sat a handful of young men who were all looking at the square, where could be seen a few dozen Violet Qi Division Inner Sect disciples.

The young men sitting in the pagodas were not ordinary disciples, but Chosen of the Violet Qi Division. There were four pagodas in total, and four Chosen, one in each Pagoda.

The handful of people who stood in the square, were scattered about, with Bai Yunlai in the middle. A blue-robed young man was currently pointing at himself and swearing at Bai Yunlai contemptuously.

“My words might not be rules in the Sect, but as far as you’re concerned, they are! If I tell you to slap yourself on the face and apologize, then you better well do it!”

Bai Yunlai’s face went pale and his body trembled. His Cultivation base was weak. He was a well-informed person, but quite a few people actually viewed him as being in a very low position. This was not the first time something like this had happened recently. However, he never told Meng Hao, as he didn’t want to distract him. He was always careful in his interactions, but it was impossible to avoid offending everybody.

As for this young man named Liu, he had relied on his relatively high position within the Sect to request medicinal pills of Meng Hao. However, only three orders per day were allowed, and they were first come first serve. Bai Yunlai had done his best not to provoke this Liu youth, but his conciliatory words had only caused him to become hostile.

Even lowly people have their honor. However, Bai Yunlai, trembling, bitter, stared at Liu. He lifted his hand, and seemed just about to slap himself in the face when…

Meng Hao’s calm voice echoed out. “Bai Yunlai!”

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# Chapter 227: Pill Blacklist!

When Meng Hao's voice rang out, Bai Yunlai looked shocked. He suddenly turned his head and saw Meng Hao slowly strolling out from behind the ornamental rock. He walked slowly, and his face was expressionless.

When Bai Yunlai saw him, his heart leapt with excitement, as well as a little bit of shame. In his mind, he had lost face for Fang Mu. He was about to open his mouth to say something, when Meng Hao's gaze fell upon him, and it was filled with admiration.

That gaze made Bai Yunlai take a deep breath, as if he was proud to have someone recognize all the work he had been doing. It was a good feeling to be following along with Meng Hao as he rose to prominence.

Meng Hao's appearance obviously attracted the attention of the others in the square. They looked over, but of course none of them recognized who he was. The Chosen in the four pagodas frowned. Obviously, Meng Hao was a stranger to them as well.

"Who told you to put your hand down?" said the young man named Liu. "Do you want me to help you slap yourself?" His voice was filled with contempt. He, too, had caught sight of Meng Hao. But this was a valley of the Violet Qi Division. He wouldn't let his grandeur be lessened just because some master alchemist showed up. This was especially true because he knew all of the important master alchemists in the Sect.

Standing directly behind Liu were five others. Their gazes were filled with contempt, and cold smiles broke out onto their faces.

"Bai Yunlai, come here," said Meng Hao, ignoring Liu. He also ignored the other gazes which fell upon him. Meng Hao had encountered many people like this. It didn’t matter if they were Chosen or Dao Children, considering Meng Hao’s position, they were nothing more than wild dogs that he could afford to simply ignore.

Bai Yunlai quickly turned and took a few steps toward Meng Hao, but then Liu snorted coldly and began to shove his hand out toward him.

“I never said you could leave! Seems you need a beating!” His hand was just about to slam into Bai Yunlai when Meng Hao’s previous expressionless calm changed. A cold light suddenly sprang from his eyes and swept over Liu.

The look was like a clap of thunder, a lightning bolt that split the night sky, or dark clouds of destruction that suddenly appeared in the middle of a sunny day.

It was as if rumbling peals of thunder had filled Liu’s mind. His expression changed. Meng Hao’s gaze was like that of a gargantuan beast that had the power to consume all living things. It caused Liu to unconsciously hold his hand back. By this time, Bai Yunlai had reached Meng Hao.

Meng Hao retracted his gaze, then turned to leave with Bai Yunlai. Considering the level of his Cultivation base, as well as his position within the Sect, these disciples were far beneath him. There was no reason for him to show off in front of these so-called Chosen.

Of course, other than the young man named Liu, none of the other Violet Qi Division Culitvators within the square had been able to sense what just happened, not even the five people who stood behind him. The only thing they saw was Meng Hao’s fierce attitude, and the harsh glint in his eye. However, anyone in the world could give a harsh look to someone; they couldn’t care less about that.

The expression of the Chosen in the four pagodas did change, though. They looked pensive. However, the followers who stood outside the pagodas were obviously much the same as the Cultivators in the middle of the square. They had no clue as to what had just happened.

The five people behind Liu immediately rushed forward to obstruct Meng Hao's path. Their eyes shined with ill will.

"The Violet Qi Division isn't somewhere that you can just run your mouth and then leave at will!"

"Halt! Elder Brother Liu was explaining the rules. Bai Yunlai, you can't leave on two feet! You'll need a beating!"

"Such gall! Even if you are a master alchemist, do you really think that you can look down on Inner Sect disciples of the Violet Qi Division so wantonly?"

Liu took a deep breath and then strode forward. His voice cold, he said, "You can leave if you want to, but this Bai Yunlai disrespected us. To let him go unpunished would be an insult to the entire Violet Qi Division Inner Sect!" He was scared of Meng Hao; however, while his voice was less arrogant than it had been moments ago, it was still arrogant nonetheless.

Bai Yunlai's face grew pale and he forced himself to suppress the fury that arose in his eyes. He knew that Meng Hao was a master alchemist, but they were in the territory of the Inner Sect disciples of the Violet Qi Division, so he still had some misgivings. He didn't mind slapping himself in the face a few times. He didn't want Meng Hao to get caught up in any troubles because of him. So he stopped in his tracks.

Even as he did, Meng Hao also stopped and turned around. "Who are these people?" he asked coolly.

Bai Yunlai's voice was low as he replied, "Violet Qi Division Inner Sect disciple Liu Yanbing… he…."

Meng Hao nodded, then calmly said, "From today on, I will not accept any medicinal pill orders from this Liu Yanbing."

As the words rang out, the Inner Sect disciples all stared in surprise. A few of the more astute among their numbers were already starting to get an idea of what was going on.

The Chosen in the pagodas all stared at Meng Hao with glittering eyes. One of them had already stepped out of the pagoda and walked forward a few paces.

“Not just him,” said Meng Hao unhurriedly. “Those people behind him, too. I won’t accept any orders from them either.” Bai Yunlai’s face filled with shock, but he nodded nonetheless.

Liu Yanbing face tightened as he suddenly looked at Meng Hao. His eyes shined with disbelief. If at this point he didn’t realize who Meng Hao was, then he didn’t deserve to have practiced Cultivation up to the Foundation Establishment stage.

However, there are a lot of stupid people in the world. One of the young men next to Liu Yanbing suddenly laughed.

“Who do you think you are? Seems you think we were begging you to concoct pills or something, so now you’re not afraid of your superiors. What makes you think you’re so amazing that you can talk like that?”

“Because I’m Fang Mu!” said Meng Hao coolly. This single sentence instantly caused the young man’s eyes to bulge and a look of disbelief to cover his face.

“Fang… Fang Mu….”

The faces of others who stood behind Liu Yanbing all twisted. They looked at Meng Hao, stunned. It wasn’t just them. All of the Violet Qi Division disciples in the square gasped when they heard these words. Their eyes began to shine brightly as they looked toward Meng Hao.

The faces of the Violet Qi Division Chosen flicked through a variety of expressions. Silence instantly filled the square.

The name of Fang Mu had towered over the Violet Fate Sect throughout the past months. He had an illustrious reputation. Few people didn’t know about him and his pill concocting.

Therefore, when Meng Hao spoke the name of Fang Mu, it was like a thunderclap resounding across a plain.

Liu Yanbing's face fell, and the Cultivators behind him suddenly looked worried. Moments ago, they had been happy to teach Bai Yunlai a lesson. After all, he was merely an apprentice alchemist. But now that Alchemist Fang was here in the flesh, they had no desire to offend him. They immediately rushed forward in an attempt to provide explanations.

However, Meng Hao turned. He had no desire to continue speaking with these so-called Inner Sect disciples. Regardless of whether it was because of his status or his position, in all aspects, he and these people were as different as black and white. He turned to leave, Bai Yunlai in tow. Even as he did, though, the four Chosen hurried to catch up, obviously intent on starting a conversation.

Liu Yanbing's heart was filled with bitterness. However, it is difficult to dismount a tiger after you start riding it. He refused to yield so easily. Gritting his teeth, he forced his mouth open to try to regain some face, "So, you're Fang Mu. Well, maybe you won't concoct pills for me, but do you think you're the only master alchemist in the East Pill Division? Besides, the pills you concoct are low quality, not even worth looking at!"

Meng Hao laughed coldly. He stopped in place for a third time. Turning, he looked intently at Liu Yanbing. If this guy hadn't continued to speak, then he would never deign to argue with him, as uninformed as he was. But his strange, contradictory words caused Meng Hao's gaze to grow icy.

"I'm only one among a thousand master alchemists in the East Pill Division. Maybe my pills aren't worth looking at. So from now on, I won't concoct pills for anyone who has any dealings with you." Meng Hao's cold words caused the Cultivators surrounding Liu Yanbin to edge away. It was hard to tell which one went first. None of them wished to cause any further offense.

Liu Yanbin soon stood there alone. All of the people he had been on friendly terms with had moved far away from him.

Fang Mu was now a very popular master alchemist. It was even difficult to get one pill from him; offending him simply wasn’t worth it.

Meng Hao continued calmly, “Also, if I hear of anyone selling you one of my pills, then that person will also be cut off from me.” When the onlookers heard this, they all gasped.

These words completely showed how powerful Fang Mu was. Some people might think he was being a bit overbearing, but… he was a master alchemist.

Master alchemists are not to be offended!

“Except, you know what? You offended me…” continued Meng Hao, his voice even colder. Actually, he didn’t care if what he was about to do caused others to be dissatisfied. Their dissatisfaction would not come to fall upon him, because he was a master alchemist, a position which demanded respect. They would only blame Liu Yanbing’s inability to open his eyes to reality. “Therefore, for the next one hundred years, not a single master alchemist will concoct pills for you!”

Meng Hao said the words calmly. As he did, he lifted his right hand to reveal a white medallion, upon which he branded Liu Yanbing’s name.

This was the ultimate power wielded by master alchemists in the Violet Fate Sect. The Pill Blacklist!

As soon as he branded Liu Yanbing’s name onto the medallion, all the master alchemists in the East Pill Division could sense it. They pulled out their Pill Blacklist medallions to look at them. Before, there had been thirteen names on the Blacklist. With Liu Yanbing… there were now fourteen!

The entire square was completely silent. All eyes were on the medallion in Meng Hao’s hand. Looks of shock appeared on the four Chosen.

Somebody in the crowd recognized the medallion and said hoarsely, “That’s… a Pill Blacklist Medallion!!” The voice was filled with astonishment.

“A Pill Blacklist Medallion. Alchemist Fang Mu actually used the Pill Blacklist Medallion!!”

“Liu Yanbing is finished. It doesn’t matter what Clan he’s from. He’ll never have the seniority to get his name removed from the East Pill Division Blacklist!!”

“Now that he’s on the blacklist, not a single master alchemist will concoct pills for Liu Yanbing for the next hundred years. He basically can’t practice Cultivation. Alchemist Fang Mu… he really dared to use the medallion….”

Meng Hao stood there as the buzz of conversation filled the air. Next to him Bai Yunlai trembled and stared in amazement. His heart filled with powerful emotions; as of now, he felt as if he would even be willing to die for Fang Mu.

To be treated the way that Fang Mu treated him, caused him to wish to repay the favor with his life!

Liu Yanbing’s expression was filled with despair, and he was panting rapidly. His eyes were bright red and his entire body shook. His face was deathly white. As he thought of the fearsomeness of the Pill Blacklist, and the consequences of having his name on it, his eyes filled with hopelessness. The Pill Blacklist Medallion could only be used by a master alchemist twice, and was only to be used out of absolute necessity.

How could he have ever imagined that Fang Mu would actually… would really… would truly use the Pill Blacklist Medallion on him? His body grew cold and his eyes blank. It was like his head had been struck repeatedly by lightning.

His heart trembled. He knew what it meant to be placed on the Pill Blacklist. Regardless of his Clan, there was no way anyone would be able to help him. He suddenly regretted everything. If time could flow backward, he would never have offended Meng Hao. Body trembling, the only thing he could say was, “Alchemist Fang… I….”

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# Chapter 228: Falling Leaves are Beautiful; They Only Live One Season

Suddenly, laughter rang out. The four Chosen had already pushed their way through the crowd. Ignoring Liu Yanbing, they walked straight for Meng Hao, clasping hands respectfully as they approached him. Their expressions were serious and polite, but they spoke with smiles and laughter.

“Alchemist Fang, sir, I’ve always wanted to meet you! Now that we’ve run into each other, allow me to humbly act as host. Let’s drink some alcohol and gaze at the moon together. Wouldn’t it be wonderful?”

“Hahaha. Elder Brother Xu beat me to the punch. Alchemist Fang, your skill in the Dao of alchemy is the talk of the Sect. Since we happen to meet today, would it be an imposition to allow Junior Brother here to join you? We can all treat you!”

“Alchemist Fang, that pill order I placed recently isn’t urgent. Just get to it whenever it’s convenient. Please don’t leave yet! As Junior Brother Bai Yunlai knows, we sincerely wish to pay you our respects.”

As for Liu Yanbing and his friends, they were completely ignored. It didn’t matter if Liu Yanbing was related to a Patriarch of the Sect. How could his position possibly compare to that of a master alchemist? Fang Mu was a master alchemist with obviously unlimited potential, and one who didn’t shirk from using the Pill Blacklist… it was clear who was superior here.

Among the thousand master alchemists, some wouldn’t use the Pill Blacklist medallion even once in their entire life. Some would use it only if absolutely necessary. Generally, they would be hesitant, though. Most people are not decisive enough to do so. But Fang Mu used it without hesitation. The threatening aura this created permeated into the hearts of everyone present.

The four Chosen crowded around Meng Hao, as did the rest of the Inner Sect disciples who were with them. Smiles covered their faces. Even though it appeared as if Fang Mu's Cultivation base were not even in the Foundation Establishment stage yet, they still treated him with utmost courtesy.

Meng Hao smiled slightly, clasped hands and bowed back to them. After a moment, he tried to make some excuses and get away, but couldn't. Eventually, he decided it would be ungracious not to accept their kindness. Nodding, he followed them off into the distance, trailed by Bai Yunlai. The sound of their happy laughter and harmonious chatting echoed out.

Back in the square, Liu Yanbing stood there, his face pale white. His mind spun, and his eyes were blank and filled with despair. The other Cultivators in the square stared with various expressions. However, it was as this moment that off in the distance, Meng Hao suddenly turned to them and clasped hands in a bow. "Fellow Daoists and Sect members. Why don't you join us?"

Hearing this, the eyes of the four Chosen glittered brightly. Giving meaningful looks to Meng Hao they also turned and beckoned for the others to join them.

Seeing this, the faces of the other Inner Sect disciples in the square lifted. They hurried over, clasping hands and bowing. Soon the whole group of dozens or more Cultivators all walked off into the distance.

Meng Hao was at the center of it all, a blazing moon surrounded by glittering stars. The laughter and talking drifted out with the wind.

Now only Liu Yanbing and his friends remained in the large square. Their faces were unsightly, especially the faces of those who stared at Liu Yanbing. Their eyes were filled with fury.

In the following days, Meng Hao didn’t spend all day every day concocting pills. He often went to the mountains and valleys of the Violet Qi Division. Slowly, more and more people began to recognize his face. Gradually, his reputation in the Violet Qi Division grew even better.

At the same time, he also spent time with the other master alchemists. He would call on them to visit, exchange pointers about the Dao of alchemy, and share recent experiences. He made sure that each visit was one of mutual gain; it was in this way that he gradually began to build up his social network.

As for Liu Yanbing, it was with great bitterness that he came to realize how truly horrifying the Pill Blacklist was. The master alchemists who used to concoct pills for him would now completely ignore him. It didn’t matter how much money he offered, none of them would concoct a single pill.

Furthermore, all the people whom he had used to be close to, gradually began to drift further and further away.

In fact, on one occasion when he went to visit his Clan Patriarch, he was severely berated and then sent on his way. In the Violet Fate Sect, master alchemists are not to be offended. Once the Pill Blacklist Medallion is used, the word would spread throughout the whole Sect. Even Patriarchs know that the most fearsome thing in the East Pill Division was not the Dao of alchemy, but the protection they had set up for themselves.

That protection was evident from the results of the Pill Blacklist.

Within the East Pill Division, there can be power struggles, and competition. But if outsiders dared to dishonor it, then the alchemists would stand together united in their fury, and desire for revenge. This is because master alchemists are NOT to be dishonored or offended. That was an ironclad rule of the East Pill Division.

That was how the Pill Blacklist Medallion arrangement began in the first place.

In the outside world, it might not be a big deal to offend a master alchemist who was not from the East Pill Division. Other master alchemists wouldn’t get involved. However in the East Pill Division, if you offended one, then you offended all.

In some ways, it might not seem very reasonable. But that unreasonable arrangement ensured that the master alchemists were treated with respect wherever they went, inside the Sect or outside.

Offend one, offend all. Few could afford to do such a thing.

Of course, if someone offended another master alchemist, Meng Hao would not go against the tide. As a master alchemist, the most important thing to him was to defend the position of all master alchemists.

And so, time passed. Meng Hao continued to concoct medicinal pills. Three batches per day. The new arrangement made the other master alchemists much less resentful.

After all, there were tens of thousands of disciples in the Inner Sect of the Violet Qi Division. Seeking out master alchemists involved certain rules, but as long as the alchemists didn’t get too greedy, there wouldn’t be too much resentment.

When you added in the fact that Meng Hao went out of his way to go visit the other master alchemists, it was like a cool wind blowing through their hair. Their sulkiness dissipated, and gradually, they all came to accept him.

As for Meng Hao, in addition to his three batches of pills per day, he spent a lot of time creating medicinal pills to hand over to the Sect. In addition, he used Foundation Establishment Day to slowly increase his Cultivation base.

Several months later, on one late night, Meng Hao sat cross-legged in his Immortal’s Cave. In front of him were three bottles of Foundation Establishment Day. After looking at them closely for a while, his eyes began to shine brightly.

“Today I will create my sixth Dao Pillar!” He took a deep breath. As of now, his sixth Dao Pillar was more than ninety percent complete. Because of the engulfing power he knew would appear, he had waited some time before attempting to complete the final ten percent. The preparations had taken some time, but now that he was certain it was safe, he was ready to start.

His eyes shined with determination. He picked up a Foundation Establishment Day, swallowed it, and closed his eyes. The sixth Dao Pillar began to congeal inside of him. A golden glow began to spread out from his body, within which were streams of magical symbols. All of a sudden, a garrulous chatter drifted out.

“Three bullies, three bullies. Less than three won’t do!” The noise, of course, came from the meat jelly, who had just woken up. It spoke the words and then spit out a mouthful of Qi.

The Qi spread out to cover the golden glow that surrounded Meng Hao. It made the Qi coming off of his Perfect Dao Pillars look ordinary. This way, the Violet Fate Sect wouldn’t detect anything unusual.

Time passed slowly. By dawn, Meng Hao’s body was trembling. His skin was withered, and an intensely violent gravitational force suddenly appeared. It seemed as if it had been thirsty for thousands of years and wanted to swallow up Meng Hao’s body and soul to sate its thirst.

Meng Hao was prepared for this, though. As soon as the gravitational force appeared, he immediately crushed the several pill bottles that remained in front of him. These were what he had worked so hard to produce: Foundation Establishment Day pills of ninety percent medicinal strength. He popped them into his mouth.

As soon as they entered his mouth, they exploded, transforming into boundless spiritual power that immediately began to be sucked into the sixth Dao Pillar.

At noontime, Meng Hao’s eyes snapped open, and they shined with a bright, glittering light. As he sat there cross-legged, he didn’t seem much different than before, except that he looked a little weaker. Inside, however, was a raging storm. The shocking ripples which emanated from his Cultivation base were consumed one by one by the meat jelly.

His sixth perfect Dao Pillar had appeared. Meng Hao took a deep breath and slowly closed his eyes. After a moment, he opened them again. They no longer glowed, but were calm, and filled with a strange light. The light was confidence born of his Cultivation base.

Six Perfect Dao Pillars. Mid Foundation Establishment. With one more Dao Pillar, he would be in late Foundation Establishment! At that point, a Dao Child with a Flawless Foundation wouldn’t qualify to even attack him. Their Dao Pillars would be reduced to trembling by the crushing pressure he could emit.

Even now, with his six Dao Pillars, he could easily exterminate any Dao Child.

As for the so-called Chosen, they were like ants or dried weeds that could be crushed on a whim.

“Perfect Foundation. Such incredible potency….” Meng Hao’s voice was soft, but his eyes shone with anticipation. This anticipation was for his ninth Dao Pillar, when he completed the great circle of Foundation Establishment.

There was a flickering in front of Meng Hao and the meat jelly appeared. It danced back and forth, it’s eyes wide. “Three bullies!” it cried.

After shedding, the meat jelly hadn’t transformed back into a parrot, but had maintained its meat jelly form.

“Three bullies! No less than three bullies!” it repeated in a voice that could chop nails and slice iron.

It appeared content. With a burp and some muttering, it disappeared into the bag of the Cosmos to find the Li Clan Patriarch and discuss noon-time naps.

Meng Hao stood and opened the door of his Immortal’s Cave. Dazzling morning sunlight filtered down. He took a deep breath. Winter was ending and Spring was beginning. There was no snow, like in the State of Zhao. Winter in the Violet Fate Sect had no snow.

He looked quietly up into the sky and suddenly realized that he had been in the Violet Fate Sect for more than three years now. In fact, now that he calculated it carefully, it would soon be four years.

“Time flies so quickly…” he said quietly. Practicing Cultivation on his own, he could truly sense the passage of time. His senses were no longer those of a mortal’s.

As he reminisced, he thought of Chen Fan, Elder Sister Xu and Fatty. Various scenes played out in his head. He knew where they were, but they… they had no idea where he was.

By this time, the name of Meng Hao was already a thing of the past. Few people brought it up any more. Soon, everyone would forget it. All the waves from the events four years ago had died down and disappeared.

“Life is like a dream, like a leaf that, no matter how beautiful, can only live for one season….” He looked at the buds sprouting from the great trees off in the distance and a smile broke out on his face. He liked his identity here as Fang Mu. He enjoyed how being in the East Pill Division felt like being in an institute of higher learning. He lifted his hand, and a jade slip appeared on his palm.

This jade slip had been branded by the Li Clan Patriarch at the behest of the meat jelly. It was branded with a Li Clan Conclave technique.

Self Will Incantation.

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# Chapter 229: Because this Will, Can Only Belong to Devils!

Self Will Incantation.

A Li Clan Conclave technique. In this technique, one’s will was the key in which magic can be Cultivated. Furthermore, if cultivated to a consummate level, then during Spirit Severing or Dao enlightenment, Karma could be seized.

The technique actually seemed more like a scripture. Except it wasn’t a scripture scroll, but seemingly a fragment of a scroll. Nonetheless, this short passage was enough to become a Conclave technique of the Li Clan.

Meng Hao examined it thoughtfully for a while. Then, his expression flickered and he waved his hand. The jade slip disappeared.

Not much time passed before Bai Yunlai appeared, walking up hastily. He formally greeted Meng Hao in a respectful tone. Ever since the matter with Liu Yanbing, Bai Yunlai carried himself differently in front of Meng Hao. They were still close, but it was now clear that their positions were different. There was a slight tension between them.

Meng Hao tried a few times to get him to act more like he had when Meng Hao first joined the Sect. However, it just made him nervous. So, he allowed Bai Yunlai to greet him formally every time they met, and to speak in a reverent tone.

Meng Hao could only sigh at this change. He understood that it would be impossible to maintain the same relationship they always had. His own Dao of alchemy was growing further and further away from Bai Yunlai’s, and as such, the respect the man showed grew deeper and deeper.

“Grandmaster Fang, these are the orders I’ve accepted recently. Please, take a look.” He handed over a bag of holding.

Meng Hao glanced it over and then tried to chat a bit with Bai Yunlai. Bai Yunlai’s respectful expression didn’t change, which caused Meng Hao to sigh again inwardly. With a slight nod of his head, he tucked the bag of holding away.

Bai Yunlai hesitated for a moment, then looked at Meng Hao and lowered his voice. “Grandmaster Fang, there’s only one more month until this year’s Pill Auction. Sir, I’m not sure if you plan to participate in the auction or not…?”

“Pill Auction….” Meng Hao thought back to four years ago when he had first joined the Violet Fate Sect. There had been a Pill Auction underway at that time. Now, he had quite a reputation in the East Pill Division. The Pill Auction was a place for master alchemists to manifest their reputation.

Also, it was a place where medicinal pills were directly sold for Spirit Stones in an official capacity. The Pill Auction only happened once per year, and Meng Hao had never attended one before. Suddenly, his heart began to thump. He was a master alchemist who was quite popular within the Sect. But he wanted to know how much a price his pills would fetch in the Southern Domain in general.

Master alchemists could offer their wares with their name attached to it, or anonymously. In the case of the latter, no one, not even members of the Sect, would know whose pill it was that was up for sale.

However, there is no wall in the world which can hold back any wind. It might be difficult for the Elders to figure out which pill was made by whom, but if Grandmaster Pill Demon wanted to know, then he could naturally be able to figure it out.

Meng Hao muttered to himself for a moment, and then nodded. Not only did he want to see how much his pills were worth in the outside world, he also wanted to replenish his supply of Spirit Stones. Copying the Foundation Establishment Day had cost him quite a bit. Even as a master alchemist who was frequently compensated by Inner Sect disciples for pill concocting, he still couldn’t afford such expenditures.

As of now, he had quite a collection of medicinal plants, but not a lot of Spirit Stones. This, of course, caused Meng Hao to sigh. When he was young, he had always dreamed of being rich. That dream seemed to be just as far away as ever.

He saw off Bai Yunlai and was standing there in thought, when suddenly a bright beam of light appeared off in the distance. The image of a slim, graceful woman was visible inside. It was none other than Chu Yuyan.

The instant he saw her, Meng Hao sighed at his bad luck, then immediately turned and entered his Immortal’s Cave.

“Fang Mu!!”

The instant her voice echoed out, the door of the Immortal’s Cave shut and sealed. Then, Meng Hao’s voice could be heard:

“Fang Mu isn’t home.”

Chu Yuyan’s eyes blazed with killing intent. Her veins bulged as she stood outside the Immortal’s cave, gnashing her teeth. She had come to call on Meng Hao on multiple occasions during the past year, but he always seemed to be away, and never inside the cave. For him to act like this, as if he had just caught sight of some kind of devilish fiend, caused fury to burn within her.

Teeth clenched, she said, “Fang Mu, are you hiding from me because you have some secret you don’t want people to know about!?” Every time she came here and found the door shut, she would say something like this.

She was more and more certain that Fang Mu was harboring some secret. For him to act like this every time she came really set her on fire. Whenever anyone said his name, the irritated feeling would fill her and she would feel like doing something to him.

Meng Hao’s voice drifted out of the Immortal’s cave: “What you can’t see, can’t annoy you.”

Chu Yuyan’s stared with wide eyes. She banged her fist onto the door. A boom echoed out. The door rattled a bit, but wasn’t damaged in any way.

“Get out here!”

“I’m concocting pills.”

“Are you coming out or not?”

“Aiii. Elder Sister Chu, I’m concocting pills, really!”

“Who the hell said I’m your Elder Sister? I’m a Furnace Lord. You’re just a master alchemist. If you don’t come out here right now, we’ll see how long you can stay there in your Immortal’s Cave.”

“Fine, Fellow Daoist Chu. You know, last time, you camped out next to my Immortal’s Cave for seven days. Later, a lot of slanderous rumors spread throughout the Sect. It’s really not a good thing. Don’t you agree?”

“You….”

“I, Fang Mu, am not married to any beloved, and am very concerned with my reputation. Such rumors are really intolerable. Fellow Daoist Chu, please refrain from harming my reputation in this way. Take your leave, quickly.” Meng Hao sighed. Actually, Chu Yuyan’s intuition frightened him. He had been avoiding her for years now, because he had the strong feeling that if he had any interaction with her, she might begin to pick up some clues.

If she somehow realized that he was Meng Hao… well, he didn’t dare to think of how horrific the consequences might be.

Chu Yuyan gnashed her teeth and stamped her foot angrily. Then she turned and left.

Sensing that she'd gone, Meng Hao sighed in relief. A wry smile appeared on his face. Everything about the East Pill Division was good except for Chu Yuyan. With her here, he didn't feel secure.

"If she keeps causing problems for me, I might have to think of some other method to deal with her…." His eyes shined with a cold light, but his face's usual calm expression returned. He stopped thinking about Chu Yuyan. With the wave of a hand, the earthly fire within his Immortal's Cave sprang to life. A pill furnace appeared to hover directly over the fire.

This particular furnace of Meng Hao's had three cranes carved onto its surface. As the furnace began to glow red from the heat, the three cranes turned the color of blood. They looked like they might fly out from the surface of the furnace at any moment. It was a cowing sight.

Meng Hao had traded a large collection of medicinal pills and plants with a veteran master alchemist to acquire this Blood Crane furnace. Having used it for some time, he was very familiar with it.

The furnace quickly became bright red, but Meng Hao stood off to the side, paying it no attention. A thoughtful look appeared in his eyes.

"What type of pill should I concoct for the Pill Auction…" he thought. Hundreds of pill formulas flashed through his mind, but none of them caught his attention. Enough time passed for an incense stick to burn. The pill furnace was as red as blood, and its glow filled the entire Immortal's cave, causing everything to look red. Meng Hao's eyes suddenly flashed.

"I'll concoct a poison pill!" Based on Meng Hao's understanding of the Dao of alchemy, poison pills generally did not have recipes that were handed down. They were usually created spontaneously or from memory by the master alchemist. This prevented unauthorized pill formulas from being passed around.

Poison pills were somewhat of a taboo. However, most master alchemists would research and concoct them at some point. It was a way to prove not only a master alchemist's skill in the Dao of alchemy, but rather, his understanding of plants and vegetation. One must have a thorough mastery of the variations of plants and vegetation to be able to concoct a poison pill uniquely classified as belonging to a given master alchemist.

A pill created by one person that ten thousand people couldn't dispel. All master alchemists thirsted to create something like this.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, then sat down cross legged next to the pill furnace. He allowed the heat from it to fill his body, and then closed his eyes. He sat silently in meditation. Days passed. The fire continued to burn. The Blood Crane furnace showed no signs of degrading; it maintained its bright red appearance the entire time.

Seven days later, Meng Hao's eyes suddenly opened. His eyes were filled with determination.

"This poison pill will not be a pill to give to enemies, but to oneself. Poison, but not poison. Medicine, but not medicine. This pill…." He thought back to the time in the State of Zhao when he had killed Shangguan Xiu, and of the pearl Little Tiger had given him. The pearl caused one's Cultivation base to rise by one level. Thanks to the help of the pearl, Meng Hao had been able to open the ancient path which led to the tenth level of Qi Condensation. 1

The images from that day sprung clearly into his mind. The pearl had fearsome power, and had left a deep impression on Meng Hao.

"Pierce the Qi vessels throughout the body, chop them like mincemeat. Turn the body into a treasure, split open the chest. Crush the mind, consolidate millions upon millions of murderous intentions. Explode the Dao Pillars within the Core Sea; killing intent can exterminate spirits. Use the mortal soul to fuse with spirits. Use the power of killing to subvert consciousness. The mind and the Core Sea, fused into nothing in the blink of an eye. This Devilish Will shall transform into a suicidal heart, which will cause the Cultivation base to climb to the skies!

“It is not a burning of the soul, it supersedes that! This pill… will be called Bedevilment Pill! That is because, this Will, can only belong to devils!” Meng Hao’s bloodshot eyes glittered. His right hand grabbed his bag of holding and then waved it in front of him. Immediately ten thousand varieties of medicinal plants appeared to float in mid-air in front of him. Bathed in the crimson glow, the scene seemed bizarrely demonic.

Meng Hao’s hands blurred, and a flickering shadow appeared beneath them. Meng Hao’s entire mind, all his energy, poured into the pill furnace. He catalyzed and pulverized medicinal plants. He created hybrids to look for one particular root he needed.

From the time Meng Hao had begun to study the Dao of alchemy, during all the various situations in which he had concocted pills, he had never been so possessed. It was his first time to make full and thorough use all of his skill in the Dao of alchemy, all of his nature talent of plants and vegetation.

His hair was wild and disheveled, and he lost awareness of everything. He was immersed in pill concoction. All his desire poured into the Bedevilment Pill. It was like he himself was possessed by a devil!

This Bedevilment Pill was actually… the first true pill ever created by Meng Hao in his time Cultivating the Dao of Alchemy!

There was no formula for this pill. It didn’t need one. This was a pill that contained the true will of a master alchemist, a pill that had been created by the influence of will. Therefore, its true value and price was impossible to describe. Even more important was the fact that, if a Furnace Lord could see Meng Hao in his current state, that person would surely go mad.

In Cultivation, there is enlightenment. The Dao of alchemy also has enlightenment. Pill Demon had experienced such enlightenment. So had the other two Grandmasters in the Southern Domain. Some Violet Furnace Lords might experience it once in their life, although that depended only on luck and fortune. Just now, Meng Hao had experienced alchemic enlightenment!

The pill created as a result of alchemic enlightenment was as miraculous as if it had been created by the Heavens themselves. It was unparalleled and unmatched!

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# Chapter 230: Bury Devils Beneath the Earth

This pill concoction lasted an entire month. From the time Meng Hao had learned to concoct pills until now, this was by far the longest time he had ever spent doing so. For one month, he didn’t rest. All of his energy was focused on the concoction of this pill.

Over ten thousand varieties of medicinal plant variations, all shaped by the will of Meng Hao’s mind. Based on endless adjustments and variations, it slowly transformed into a unique pill that was solely of Meng Hao.

On the last day of the month of concocting, late in the moon-filled night, the Blood Crane pill furnace trembled. It was no longer bright red; it was gradually returning to its original color. This process took several hours. When the moonlight was beginning to grow hazy and dim outside, the furnace finally returned to its original state. Meng Hao’s hair was in a mess, and his eyes filled with veins of blood. His face was pale white. His Cultivation base had been rotating and emitting power for an entire month straight.

Thankfully, he had six Dao Pillars now. If he only had five, like a few days ago, then even replenishing himself with medicinal pills, he would have been forced to suspend pill concoction midway.

If alchemic enlightenment ceases before completion, then it cannot be resumed.

Seeing the completely recovered pill furnace in front of him, Meng Hao took a deep breath. He was exhausted from the month of work. During the most critical part of the concocting, he had experienced what felt like a bitter struggle between life and death. He closed his eyes, and as he did, they burned painfully.

A long time passed before he opened them again. Without hesitation, he lifted his right hand up to press onto the pill furnace. It trembled, and two black colored pills flew out. The instant they did, a black cloud suddenly began to form above the pill furnace.

The black cloud wasn’t outside of the Immortal’s Cave. No, it was inside; the bizarre sight caused Meng Hao to stare blankly, his eyes filled with confusion. It took only a moment for the cloud to finish forming. Suddenly, lightning shot out from it, directly at the medicinal pills.

At this critical moment, Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding and the meat jelly flew out. As soon as it saw the black cloud, it stared in shock. Then its eyes glowed, and it flew to meet the descending lightning bolt. It opened its mouth and consumed the entire lightning bolt. It smacked its lips as if it had just eaten something delicious.

“Pill Tribulation Lightning,” said the meat jelly, licking its lips. “So, it turns out that’s the tastiest….” Suddenly, its eyes fell upon the two pills Meng Hao held in his hands. It seemed eager to try them.

“Three bullies!” said Meng Hao resolutely. The meat jelly hesitated for a moment, as if it were torn about something. Finally, it returned to the blood-colored mask, muttering to itself, apparently preparing to vent its frustrations on the Li Clan Patriarch.

Having dismissed the meat jelly, Meng Hao took a deep breath and looked down at his palm. The two black pills seemed to be struggling, as if they wanted to fly away. This was the first time he had concocted what were apparently sentient pills, ones that had provoked Tribulation lightning.

Meng Hao’s eyes shone. He may be tired, but couldn’t stop from staring at the two pills.

They were essentially the same size. However, one was pitch black, whereas the other had a violet hue. It only took a moment for Meng Hao to come to the conclusion that the violet-colored pill was the superior of the two. The other could also be considered a consummate product, just slightly inferior.

Despite the struggles of the pills, they were incapable of leaving Meng Hao's hand. The two black pills did not emit a medicinal fragrance, and seemed to suck in all the light that touched them. If you looked at them for too long, it seemed as if your soul would be sucked inside.

"I concocted these pills with true will…." murmured Meng Hao. Eventually, his eyes flickered. He waved his left hand and a flying sword appeared. Very slowly, he carved a mark onto the side of each pill. It was a simple mark which depicted… a cauldron!

It was the same cauldron he had seen in the Blessed Land of the Black Sieve Sect, the cauldron which had desired to defeat the Heavens.

It wasn't a completely accurate depiction, but very close. Strangely, after inscribing the pills with the mark, they stopped struggling. The cauldron mark flickered, as if it had branded itself onto the hearts of the pills. Now, the cauldron mark suddenly seemed as if it were alive, real.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, and then a smile broke out on his face. At the same time, a wave of exhaustion swept through him. He hadn't rested for an entire month. He was a Foundation Establishment Cultivator, but this was too much even for him; he simply didn't have enough energy.

"This is a pill of bedevilment, the very peak of bedevilment. The brand of the cauldron represents the Earth, and has suppressed it. Bury devils beneath the Earth, in accordance with the name of the pill." Meng Hao retrieved a pill bottle and put the first Bedevilment Pill inside. He sealed it with wax, and then placed the violet-colored Bedevilment Pill into another pill bottle.

After this, he pulled out a jade slip which he used to summon Bai Yunlai. Soon, Bai Yunlai appeared outside the Immortal's Cave. He didn't have to wait long before a pill bottle flew out to land on his hand.

Meng Hao’s tired voice echoed out from the Immortal’s Cave. “Put this up anonymously in the Pill Auction. It’s called Bedevilment Pill. Come for me when the auction is about to begin.” He sat cross-legged, his eyes closed, seemingly half asleep, immersed in restoring his energy.

Bai Yunlai clasped hands in salute, then left with the pill bottle.

Three days flashed by. During that time, the entire State of Eastern Emergence bustled with activities as one Sect after another arrived in Violet Moon City 1. There weren’t just Sects from the State of Eastern Emergence, but from other places as well.

In fact, all of the other four great Sects, as well as the three great Clans, all dispatched disciples to the Violet Fate Sect to participate in the yearly Pill Auction. Actually, for an event to take place yearly made it a somewhat frequent event; nonetheless, it still attracted the attention of Cultivators throughout the entire Southern Domain. That was because all of the items in the auction were concocted by master alchemists of the East Pill Division.

Furthermore, Furnace Lords would usually participate as well, and would provide a unique variety of medicinal pills. The medicinal strength of their pills would be considerable, enough to cause a sensation in the Southern Domain. Occasionally, stunning, one-of-a-kind creations would appear.

Every year, different master alchemists’ names would rise and then spread throughout the outside world. You could say that the Pill Auction was a platform for master alchemists to gain fame. Of course, the East Pill Division encouraged this, and urged the master alchemists to concoct pills to sell at the auction.

Not only were the master alchemists encouraged to provide medicinal pills so that their fame would grow within the Southern Domain, but also, for material gain. After all, the profits from the sale of the medicinal pills all went back to the master alchemists.

This was a set rule, which caused virtually all of the master alchemists to participate.

Furthermore, the Violet Fate Sect strictly controlled its medicinal pills. The only way for outsiders to acquire them was by participating in the Pill Auction. There would always be a few types of pills that would give rise to frenzied bidding. Usually, this was not because of the medicinal strength of the pill alone, but also the concoction method used.

After all, despite not acquiring the pill formula, research of the pill would reveal much about the methods which had been used to concoct it. The master alchemists of the Violet Fate Sect had no way to prevent this from happening. Anyone with sufficient skill could perform such research on medicinal pills.

In short, it is easy to imagine the stir caused by the yearly Pill Auction.

The location of the Pill Auction was, of course, Violet Moon City. In the southeast corner of the city, was an enormous circular edifice, a stadium which could seat a hundred thousand Cultivators.

Generally speaking, during every Pill Auction, because of the influx of Cultivators from all regions, the seats would be completely filled.

The Pill Auction usually lasted for seven days, and could be rated as a grand occasion hosted by the Violet Fate Sect.

This particular day was the first day of the auction. The auction stadium was already full. The eyes of the Cultivators from all the various Sects and Clans were focused on the stage in the middle of the stadium.

Standing there was a middle-aged man who smiled and clasped hands respectfully to the audience.

“Fellow Daoists of the Southern Domain, Ladies and Gentlemen, you all know the rules of the Violet Fate Sect’s Pill Auction, so I won’t go into all the details. We have a total of 789 types of medicinal pills up for auction, including pills appropriate for Qi Condensation, Foundation Establishment, Core Formation, and even Nascent Soul stage Cultivators! Furthermore, there will be poison pills and magic pills available as well.

“According to the rules of the Violet Fate Sect Pill Auction, before auctioning each pill, a small shaving will be taken to test the medicinal strength of the pill, as well as to clearly demonstrate its effectiveness.” Having said that, the man waved his hand, causing a gigantic curved portal to open up behind him.

Bright ripples spread out, after which everyone could see a group of seven hundred Cultivators standing on the other side, their faces expressionless.

These Cultivators had Cultivation bases of various levels, and their ages were different. There was one similarity between all of them, however. All of their eyes glowed with a violet light. Outsiders might not know what this meant, but Meng Hao would. It would only take one glance for him to determine that these people… had all cultivated the Violet Qi to the West technique! These were puppet disciples of the Sect! 2

“These Cultivators of the East Pill Division have been selected to sample all the pills which will be auctioned today. Ladies and Gentlemen, most likely this is not your first time to attend our Pill Auction, so you must surely already know, the Violet Fate Sect’s Pill Auction is unmatched in the entire Southern Domain!” The man’s voice echoed throughout the stadium, which subsequently filled with respectful laughter.

“Let the auction begin!” the man cried. “Lot one is a bottle of Yang Toppling Pills concocted by Furnace Lord Liu Yong of the East Pill Division! Transform life force into Death Qi, cause enormous transformation! Use this pill in your Immortal’s cave to collect Yin powers. Consume it to cause an abrupt rise of Death Qi. This pill is suitable for any Fellow Daoist who cultivates Spirit Puppet arts.” Even as the man’s voice rang out, Bai Yunlai and Meng Hao were hurrying toward the stadium.

Being a master alchemist, Meng Hao caught the attention of many apprentice alchemists as he entered. He sat down in the pavilion reserved for master alchemists, and then looked down at the auction proceeding below.

He took a deep breath of anticipation. He keenly anticipated finding out if people would be interested in his Bedevilment Pill, and how high of a price it would fetch. After all, since becoming a master alchemist, he had never been more pleased with a pill. Although he had complete confidence in it, he was a bit worried about whether or not it would be profitable.

He glanced over the crowd, a thoughtful expression on his face. Suddenly, a look of shock appeared, which then transformed into a slight smile. His gaze had fallen onto a group of visitors, amidst whom was a certain fat young man, casually grinding his teeth.

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# Chapter 231: Pill Auction

In all of the Southern Domain, there was only one person who could appear so domineering, who would use a flying sword to grind his teeth!

Li Fugui…

… Also known as Fatty. Other than him, there was no Cultivator in the Southern Domain who dared to grind his teeth in such a fashion. Clustered around Fatty were a group of Golden Frost Sect disciples with vigilant and protective looks on their faces. Their presence actually served only to draw more attention to him.

Fatty was… even fatter.

The other Cultivators who sat nearby eyed him with strange looks, and engaged in furtive conversations. How could Fatty pay attention to such things though? He complacently pulled out a Spirit Stone, popped it into his mouth and crunched it into bits.

This caused the eyes of the surrounding onlookers to fill with shock, and their hearts with envy.

Meng Hao hadn’t seen him in four years. However, he would think of him often, as well as Elder Sister Xu and Chen Fan. Seeing him here, Meng Hao couldn’t help but smile and sigh emotionally.

Being Fang Mu for the past four years, taking root in the Violet Fate Sect and rising to prominence, had given him the means to send out some inquiries about his friends. He knew that all of them had made progress in their various Sects. For example, Elder Sister Xu had long since reached Foundation Establishment. She had taken Han Bei as her Master, and was in a much better position in the Black Sieve Sect than she had been all those years before.

As for Chen Fan, after four years' time, he was now a Chosen in the Solitary Sword Sect.

Fatty, of course, was the least given to studying and learning techniques. However, he was still in the same position as he had been within the Golden Frost Sect. If he wanted wind, there was wind, and thanks to his value to the Sect, he also had reached Foundation Establishment.

The name of Meng Hao was now nearly forgotten in the Southern Domain.

Meng Hao smiled happily. To be able to see his old friend really lifted his mood.

Seeing Meng Hao looking at Fatty, Bai Yunlai leaned over and, in a low voice, said, "That's Li Fugui from the Golden Frost Sect. I remember hearing that last year, he married his third beloved…. According to the rumors, the Golden Frost Sect will go to any lengths to find appropriate female Cultivators to become his beloved, all with hopes of continuing his bloodline…."

Hearing this, Meng Hao gaped for a moment, then laughed and shook his head wordlessly.

Sighing, he thought, "I never thought that from the group of us from the Reliance Sect in the State of Zhao, Fatty would end up in the most comfortable position." Even he couldn't help but feel a bit of envy at Fatty's special position on the path of Cultivation.

He suddenly thought back to when they had first joined the Reliance Sect. Fatty had constantly wept and wailed about wanting to go home and get married. Meng Hao couldn't help but smile at the memory. A gentle light filled his eyes.

The auction was continuously underway, of course. Each pill that came up for auction would have a bit of powder shaved off and given to one of the

Cultivators who had practiced Violet Qi to the West. After consuming the powder, the Cultivator's body would become translucent, so that all the onlookers could see the effect of the medicine.

This was a tradition of the Violet Fate Sect Pill Auction that had existed for countless years, a method to guarantee the quality of the products.

Time passed, and soon it was noon.

"This lot is for a Barrier Breaking Pill. Fellow Daoists, Ladies and Gentlemen, I'm sure you're all very well aware of the properties of this pill…." As he spoke, a Violet Qi to the West disciple consumed some of the powder, giving everyone a clear view of the results.

"20,000 Spirit Stones!" cried Fatty, his voice filled with a domineering tone that well matched his stocky frame.

"30,000 Spirit Stones!"

"Your granny!" shouted Fatty gruffly. He stood up. "Fine, you punk, 50,000 Spirit Stones!"

"60,000 Spirit Stones!"

"70,000 Spirit Stones…." someone else said.

Actually, the value of a Barrier Breaking Pill was dependent on individual circumstances. With a hundred thousand Cultivators present, the number who were currently stuck in a bottleneck, or who soon would be, was hard to determine. A high price was always required to break through a bottleneck.

"100,000 Spirit Stones," roared Fatty. "I have Spirit Stones to spare, punks! They're not even mine! Do you really dare to compete with me!" He pulled out a Spirit Stone which he then placed between his teeth and crushed. The surrounding Golden Frost Sect disciples could only make wry smiles.

Fatty's words seemed to have the desired effect. Besides, Barrier Breaking Pills were good, but not necessarily guaranteed to be completely effective.

100,000 Spirit Stones was an incredible price that apparently no one was willing to exceed.

A strange look had appeared on Meng Hao’s face. The Barrier Breaking Pill hadn’t been concocted by him. From this distance, he could clearly see the pill’s effect on the translucent body of the Violet Qi to the West disciple, as well as its medicinal strength. Based on his skill in the Dao of alchemy, it was obvious that whoever had concocted the pill had only been able to extract thirty percent medicinal strength from the plants and vegetation which had been used as ingredients.

“It seems the price I charged Ding Yong for the same pill… was a little low….” he thought. Of course, it wasn’t really possible to compare the prices within the Sect with those without. This was especially true when one was sold to a fellow Sect member, whereas the other was sold at auction.

The auction continued on. As more pills appeared, the atmosphere in the auction stadium climbed. This was especially true when a pill concocted by a Furnace Lord appeared. The price for that particular pill had already reached hundreds of thousands of Spirit Stones. This caused Meng Hao to pant. It was the first time he had seen how much profits master alchemists could make. It was really shocking.

It was especially astounding because Meng Hao knew the base cost of the pill, which was just a few tens of thousands of Spirit Stones. Furthermore, the so-called medicinal strength was only at fifty percent. Meng Hao could produce a similar pill without barely even concentrating.

Fatty made bids on just about all of the pills, and acquired quite a few. He was becoming one of the most recognized figures in the auction stadium. This was especially true considering how he continuously made furtive glances at nearby female Cultivators. When he caught the eye of one, he would put on the most casual, cool look he could.

The others from the Golden Frost Sect could only sigh. They did nothing to stop him. After all, he was engaged in a “righteous cause.” That “righteous cause," was of course, finding wives. It was an order passed down by the Sect Leader himself.

The middle-aged auctioneer smiled and flicked his sleeve. "This next lot contains medicinal pills concocted by Alchemist Li Tao," he called out. "The name of the pill is Foundation Establishment Day. It can be used by the mid Foundation Establishment stage and sometimes even the late Foundation Establishment stage. In total, there are three bottles, and each bottle contains six pills. All the bottles will be sold together." Three pill bottles appeared. When the Violet Qi to the West disciple sampled the powder from one of the pills, the entire auction stadium immediately went silent. The silence lasted for only a moment, whereupon a buzz of conversation filled the air.

"That pill…."

"It has forty-five percent medicinal strength!!"

"This is not an ordinary Foundation Establishment Day! Who is this Alchemist Li Tao? This pill is second only to the type concocted by Furnace Lords!"

"The interactions of the plants and vegetation in this pill are extraordinary!!"

Of course, most of the hundred thousand Cultivators in the auction stadium understood little about the Dao of alchemy. However, the interactions happening within the translucent body of the Violet Qi to the West disciple gave some clues as to the astonishing nature of the pill.

The auctioneer also stared in amazement, then looked back down at the three pill bottles he held.

Meng Hao's gaze fell upon the bottles as well. After a while, he smiled. He was friends with Li Tao, and as such, the man had come to him before concocting this batch of Foundation Establishment Day. During their discussion of the Dao of alchemy, Meng Hao had pointed out some variations in the plant and vegetation interactions. You could actually say that it was with Meng Hao’s help that Li Tao gained enlightenment that day, and was able to concoct this batch of pills, which was the pinnacle of his current achievements in pill concoction.

“I won’t ask him about this batch of Foundation Establishment Day,” thought Meng Hao. “However, the variations I talked about that day could only have extracted forty percent medicinal strength from the plants. The final five percent was an achievement based on Li Tao’s personal enlightenment and skill.” Seeing the fervent reaction of the crowds around him, Meng Hao smiled.

Within his bag of holding, he still had several Foundation Establishment Day pills that he himself had concocted. Those pills had ninety percent medicinal strength. If he put those up for auction, it would certainly cause some waves.

“I wonder what the auction of my Bedevilment pill will be like….” he thought, his heart filling with anticipation. The energy he had expended concocting the Bedevilment pills exceeded that he had spent on Foundation Establishment Day by double, triple or perhaps more.

The concoction of the Bedevilment Pills was the true expression of his will, and the pinnacle of his Dao of alchemy.

With a smile, the auctioneer said, “Again, these three pill bottles will not be auctioned separately, but together. The opening bid for the three bottles is 250,000 Spirit Stones.” In his estimation, the price for these bottles would surely reach an incredible height.

In fact, it might be the crux of the entire auction, and would likely cause Li Tao’s name to rise to prominence in the Southern Domain.

This was because, although he wasn’t a Furnace Lord, he had concocted pills of almost exactly the same quality as a Furnace Lord’s. As such, the pills must have plant and vegetation interactions of his own creation, which was the hallmark difference between master alchemists and Furnace Lords.

Any master alchemist who wished to become a Furnace Lord must be able to produce plant and vegetation interactions that were uniquely his own. By rising above other master alchemists in such a way, he could then advance to being a Furnace Lord.

Because of those interactions, the value of such a medicinal pill was far beyond the value of an ordinary pill. Their appearance in the auction would immediately cause a huge scene. Many people would be willing to pay an exorbitant price to acquire the pills for research.

After all, once a master alchemist was raised to Furnace Lord, he would be able to use alchemic concealing techniques to hide the plant interactions. In that way, it would be much more difficult for others to unlock his secrets.

However, a pill concocted by a master alchemist would contain no such alchemic concealing, and would be much easier to unlock and research. The East Pill Division was aware of this, of course, and really had no way to control it. Skill manifest in the path of medicinal pills, was innately researchable.

Leaks like this didn’t occur in all Pill Auctions, but rather, perhaps one in ten. As such, one can only imagine the frenzy caused because of the appearance of this batch of pills.

The East Pill Division naturally had a degree of forbearance. Since the pills had been put up for auction, the East Pill Division would not attempt to cover up their true nature, nor try to prevent people from researching them.

Immediately, people began calling out bids.

“300,000 Spirit Stones!”

“500,000 Spirit Stones. I must acquire these three bottles of Foundation Establishment Day!”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. For a Foundation Establishment Day pill of forty-five percent medicinal strength to be so explosively popular caused him to wonder what kind of reaction his own pill would provoke.

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# Chapter 232: Bedevilment Pill!

“600,000!” cried Fatty, leaping to his feet. “Who dares to contend with his superiors?! These three pill bottles are mine!” His voice reverberated like thunder throughout the auction stadium.

However, these three bottles of Foundation Establishment Day were not like the Barrier Breaking Pills from before, in which Fatty’s bids caused others to give up. These three bottles represented a chance that might come only once in ten years, perhaps even one in a hundred!

Considering the East Pill Division’s lofty status, they could afford to not care about such a thing. But other Sects lacked the East Pill Division’s deep stores of knowledge. Clearly, there were many Sects present who were determined to win this chance to study the interactions contained within the pills.

Regardless of great Sect or small Sect, the eyes of all the Cultivators in the stadium were red. These medicinal pills were just too important, not just to the Cultivators, but to their Sects as a whole.

By fully researching the plant and vegetation interactions within the pills, a Sect could gain significant advancements in their Dao of alchemy. As such, the bids in the stadium continued to flow out, even from the three great Clans and the other great Sects.

Meng Hao watched on from within the pavilion, his eyes wide, almost as if he couldn’t comprehend the scene. His eyes began to shine as the price for the pills climbed higher and higher. After this Pill Auction, Li Tao’s name would definitely become known throughout the Southern Domain. Soon, all Cultivators would wish to make his acquaintance. Considering he was able to produce such pills while still just a master alchemist, it mean that… he definitely was qualified to become a Furnace Lord in the future!

There were only around one hundred Furnace Lords in the East Pill Division. Any one of them could cause a huge sensation in the Southern Domain, and would be sought after by countless Cultivators. Their position and status invoked solemn respect of the highest order.

Fatty continued to make bids in the auction for the Foundation Establishment Day. However, eventually he had to give up as the price eventually reached the incredible height of 4,000,000 Spirit Stones!

This was the highest price offered for a lot in the Violet Fate Sect’s Pill Auction in the past one hundred years!

It was hard to use words to even talk about such a price. Every participant in the auction was panting heavily, and deathly still filled the air.

The winner of the auction was one of the great Clans, the Li Clan!

Only three people had come from the Li Clan. One was Clan Elder, and the other two were Chosen. Of course, each of the great Clans had their own Dao of alchemy. Although theirs were different from the East Pill Division’s, comparatively speaking, they were also similarities. These three bottles of Foundation Establishment Day would give them an incredible opportunity to discover new plant and vegetation interactions.

As such, the auctioneer hesitated a moment. However, the East Pill Division was filled with deep reservoirs of knowledge, and as such, they could afford to disregard a leakage of information about plant and vegetation interactions. For these medicinal pills to end up in the hands of the Li Clan showed how incredible they were.

In the past thousand years during which the Violet Fate Sect Pill Auction had been held, the Violet Fate Sect itself had never purchased one of its own auction items. The Eastern Pill Division never withheld items from auction, or prevented them from being sold. Such a matter was unheard of throughout the thousand year history of the auction.

In fact, Violet Fate Sect disciples were prohibited from purchasing items from the auction. It didn’t matter how rare a given item was, bids were not permitted.

It was a thousand-year-old rule that had never changed!

After the three bottles of Foundation Establishment Day were sold to the Li Clan, the Li Clan Elder immediately extended an invitation for Li Tao to come for a visit to the Li Clan 1. This in turn caused Li Tao to gain even more prestige.

Discussions regarding Li Tao spread throughout the auction stadium. The master alchemists sitting around Meng Hao in the pavilion were all amazed, and began to talk about Li Tao with admiration and envy.

By now, the auction had already been underway for two days. The auctioneer pulled out another medicinal pill, but considering what had just happened, it was impossible for him to arouse the passion of the crowd.

Few people were paying attention, and the bidding was no longer intense. The next few hundred pills all sold within the space of ten or so breaths. Things were selling so quickly that it hardly seemed an auction anymore….

It reached the point that some people began to leave.

After the wonderment of the Foundation Establishment Day, the hundred thousand or so Cultivators participating in the auction seemed to have come to the conclusion that even though there might be some amazing items yet to appear, none of them would be able to match the astonishing Foundation Establishment Day pills.

To many people a bid of 4,000,000 Spirit Stones was something that wouldn’t be seen again in the next hundred years. The three bottles of Foundation Establishment Day were nothing less than a miracle.

Therefore, interest in the remainder of the auction was waning. The auctioneer was well aware of this. He was still a bit excited. To have officiated over the sale of an item at such an astounding price was something he had never experienced before in his life.

Even he didn’t think that the remainder of the auction would feature anything that could possibly outmatch the Foundation Establishment Day. As such, he could understand the feelings of the rest of the hundred thousand Cultivators, and was willing to let the rest of the hundreds of medicinal pills be auctioned off at a relatively rapid rate.

It was in such a fashion that Meng Hao’s Bedevilment Pill finally came up for auction, on the evening of the third day. Few of the Cultivators present were very interested. Most of them were still wrapped up in regretfully recalling the events surrounding the Foundation Establishment Day and sending messages about it back to their various Sects.

The voice of the auctioneer sounded out, “This pill was concocted by an anonymous master alchemist of the East Pill Division. Even I don’t know who this person is. The name of the pill is… Bedevilment Pill, a poison pill.” He placed the pill bottle in front of him.

Meng Hao’s spirits instantly lifted, and he took a deep breath. He stared at the pill bottle, which of course contained the pill he had concocted.

When the pill bottle appeared, most of the surrounding Cultivators were still discussing the Foundation Establishment Day matter in hushed tones. Only a few people looked down, mostly because of the words “poison pill,” which managed to arouse a bit of interest.

The auctioneer spoke quickly. In his opinion, even though this pill was a poison pill, it wasn’t likely to attract much attention. Other than a Foundation Establishment Day pill, nothing else would be able to cause much of an excited bidding. Despite the pill in front of him having obviously been created by paying a Heaven-defying price, he still doubted that it would sell for much more than ten thousand or so Spirit Stones.

Therefore, he didn’t spend much time introducing the pill. Looking out, he saw that the vast majority of the hundred thousand Cultivators weren’t paying attention at all. He cleared his throat, and decided that the time was coming to wrap up the auction. It didn’t seem that this auction would last seven days, but rather four at the most. There was really no other alternative. After the shock of the Foundation Establishment day, all other auction items would really pale into insignificance.

Having come to the decision to end things quickly, the middle-aged auctioneer called over one of the Violet Qi to the West disciples. He poured the black pill out of the bottle and, not seeing anything strange about it, quickly scraped off some powder and gave it to the Violet Qi to the West disciple.

Few of the Cultivators were paying attention to all of this, and in fact, only a handful of people seemed interested in purchasing the pill. After all, it could really only attract the attention of the few Cultivators who studied the Dao of poison.

Meng Hao noticed all of this, and kept his expression calm.

Only Bai Yunlai seemed to be nervous. He sighed; clearly he felt the whole situation was unfair. In his opinion, Meng Hao’s Dao of alchemy was far above that of Li Tao’s. They weren’t even on the same level!

That much was evident from the fervor with which the Inner Sect disciples of the Violet Qi Sect contended for his pill concocting services.

As for the Violet Qi to the West disciple, he was a young man of about thirty years of age with an expressionless face. Despite the lack of interest on the part of the surrounding Cultivators, he earnestly accepted the powder from the pill and then consumed it without hesitation. His Cultivation base rotated, causing the powder to dissolve into his body. He became translucent, allowing everyone to see the results inside of him.

Despite the fact that this was a poison pill, the man didn’t hesitate in the slightest.

As soon as he consumed the powder, his body began to transform.

As he did, Meng Hao quietly looked at him and murmured, “Pierce the Qi passageways throughout the body, chop them like mincemeat. Turn the body into a treasure, split open the chest. Crush the mind, consolidate millions upon millions of murderous intentions. Explode the Dao Pillars within the Core Sea, killing intent can exterminate spirits. Use the mortal soul to fuse with spirits. Use the power of killing to subvert consciousness. The mind and the Core Sea, fused into nothing in the blink of an eye. This Devilish will shall transform into a suicidal heart, which will cause the Cultivation base to climb to the skies!

“It is not a burning of the soul, it supersedes that! This pill… will be called Bedevilment Pill! That is because, this will, can only belong to devils!” With every sentence Meng Hao uttered, the Cultivator’s body changed, almost as if it were under Meng Hao’s control.

His expressionless face immediately changed. Sweat began to pour down his forehead, and his whole body shook. Veins popped out on his forehead.

He could clearly sense that the powder which he had swallowed had been immediately absorbed by his body and then transformed into an indescribable stimulating force. His body filled with pain, and spiritual energy exploded out. It felt as if his Qi passageways were being slashed to pieces by countless swords!

As this happened, a roaring sound emanated inside of him, as if the unrestrained power of his very life force were shooting out. The intensity of this power exploded out of his chest, transforming into a frenzied desire for murder, which completely shattered his three Dao Pillars!

As his Dao Pillars fell to pieces, his Core Sea evaporated, and his Cultivation base was smashed. The power flooded into his mind, pulverizing his soul, erasing his mind, filling it with a devilish will which would end his life!!

It seemed all of his consciousness had disappeared and he had gone completely mad. He lifted his head to the sky and let out a shocking howl. The howl echoed out, containing indescribable desire to murder, which then transformed into killing intent that emanated out from him in booming waves.

A shapeless Flame Sea enveloped his body, burning it, burning his soul, filling him with a frenzied, devilish insanity. His breathing became ragged, and his Cultivation base…. suddenly exploded upward. He had no Dao Pillars, and yet his aura was so powerful that it rivaled the late Foundation Establishment stage!!

His roar, filled with killing intent, slammed down onto the hundred thousand Cultivators who were discussing Foundation Establishment Day. Instantly, all of their eyes fell upon the Violet Qi to the West Cultivator.

Meng Hao stood there, his expression calm, his eyes calm. He seemed like… an alchemist devil!

1. Just a quick note to remind you that Li Tao’s surname a different surname from that of the Li Clan, both in terms of the character and the pronunciation Lì versus Lǐ

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# Chapter 233: The Earth, The Heavens!

It was impossible to describe how the killing intent imbued the howl which rose up to the Heavens. Its intensity spread about, causing a pulsating black aura to emanate from the body of the young Cultivator.

The black aura swirled around him, making him look like someone who had risen up from the yellow springs of the underworld. His closed eyes suddenly snapped open, and all of the hundred thousand Cultivators gasped. What they saw were two eyes that appeared as if they belonged to wild animal, filled only with frenzied death.

The eyes were crimson, and they glowed with insanity. From this moment onward, this was no longer a Cultivator, but a devil!!

He emanated the power of the late Foundation Establishment stage; moments ago, he had only been at the early Foundation Establishment stage. Such an explosive transformation caused the hearts of the surrounding Cultivators to echo with thunderous shock.

Because of the roaring in their hearts, the surroundings grew completely silent. All eyes were focused on the Cultivator, who looked like some sort of devilish deity. The auctioneer stared in shock. He breathed heavily, his face covered in astonishment.

This was because even though the Violet Qi to the West disciple looked like an insane devil, with billowing killing intent and mad, crimson eyes, actually, there was also a calmness within those eyes.

This calmness was even more terrifying than the insanity. It showed that even though he was inundated with frenzied killing intent, he actually had not lost his mind!

Furthermore, all of the hundred thousand Cultivators could clearly see the changes within his body caused by the medicinal powder. If the tiny amount of powder that had been used could cause such an incredible transformation, what could the entire pill do…?

All of the Cultivators present were breathing heavily; the answer to such a question floated in their hearts. Their eyes shone with amazement.

The auction stadium instantly exploded with conversations.

“What… what pill is this!?!? It’s astonishing!!”

“That was… that was just a bit of powder, and yet it caused such an incredible transformation. If just a bit of powder could do that, imagine if the entire pill were consumed! What would that be like….”

“It can cause someone to go insane, and unleash all of the potential contained within the body. It fuses the Core Sea and the Dao Pillars, and emits a consummate killing aura. This pill…. is no poison pill! It could be used at a critical moment to save one’s life!!”

“Poison pill, poison pill…. All alchemists will eventually dabble in poison pills at one point or another. But there are usually no formulas for poison pills. The pill… this pill….”

“What’s most important is the medicinal strength of the pill. I was watching closely, and I think I know. It’s only a powder shaving, but in my estimation, this pill displayed at least fifty percent medicinal strength!!”

“Fifty percent…. Don’t tell me this is a poison pill concocted by a Furnace Lord…?”

Discussions raged, just as they had upon the appearance of Foundation Establishment Day! All eyes were on the black medicinal pill, and especially the mark which was branded onto its side.

“Look, it has a mark on it!”

“That’s… a cauldron! The pill is branded with a cauldron!”

“That’s the mark of the alchemist who concocted the pill! They only brand pills with a personal mark when they are completely satisfied with results. A cauldron…. I’ve never heard of any alchemist using a cauldron as a personal mark!”

“I demand that the auction house perform a test to determine the medicinal strength of this pill!!”

“Yes! We demand a test!”

The demand for a test caused the atmosphere in the auction stadium to grow even more intense. How could the auctioneer have ever imagined that another pill would appear after Foundation Day that could cause such a commotion?

Looking at all the Cultivators demanding a test, their voices growing louder and louder, the auctioneer didn’t hesitate. He waved his hand, and two old men walked out from the portal behind him.

Both had hair long and white. These were veteran master alchemists of the Sect, responsible for performing tests of the medicinal strength of pills in the auction. As they walked out, the auctioneer immediately grew very courteous.

The old men had proud looks in their eyes, and completely ignored the surrounding hundred thousand Cultivators. One of them reached out to take hold of the pill. He eyed the cauldron mark, and didn’t look very pleased. In his opinion, alchemists who hadn’t reached the rank of Furnace Lord weren’t qualified to leave a mark on a pill. The crowd could tell that if the man could, he would wipe the mark away.

Looking annoyed, the old man sniffed the pill, whereupon his body suddenly trembled. His eyes filled with disbelief, and he tilted his head forward to examine the pill more closely. As he did, he seemed to grow more agitated. His body trembled even harder, and his eyes grew wide with even more disbelief.

“Impossible…” he said, his voice hoarse. “This pill is an impossibility. It’s impossible….” When his voice floated up to the surrounding Cultivators, they all began to pant anxiously. At the moment, they couldn’t imagine what medicinal strength the pill must have to cause a veteran master alchemist to turn pale from astonishment.

The other old master alchemist strode forward. He examined the pill, smelled it, and then his eyes gradually began to shine with a strange light. Having seen through the pill, his face began to grow pale, and a look of disbelief and astonishment filled his face.

“This… this is…” The two old men looked at each other, and could clearly see the astonishment in each other’s eyes. Their bodies trembled and they breathed heavily.

“Master alchemists, this pill….”

“This pill cannot be sold!!” said one of the two master alchemists. His voice echoed out, filling the auction stadium. A buzz rose up.

“What do you mean it can’t be sold! We asked for a test. Is the Violet Fate Sect Pill Auction really going to break their one thousand year tradition by not selling something?!”

“According to the rules of the Pill Auction, we have the right to ask for a test. You haven’t even revealed the results and are already saying you won’t sell it?”

“We want the test results! Tell us… what is the medicinal strength of this pill!”

The voices of the hundred thousand Cultivators rose up, including that of Fatty, who roared at the top of his lungs. The auctioneer’s expression tightened. He had never encountered a situation like this before, and was starting to get nervous. Suddenly, a new portal appeared on the stage.

Seven people emerged.

Seeing these seven people, the auctioneer’s face flickered with shock. He immediately clasped hands and bowed deeply. The two master alchemists’ faces filled with veneration, and they, too, clasped hands in salute.

The hundred thousand Cultivators in the auction stadium fell silent. However, their eyes went wide with shock. The seven people who had just emerged were all Furnace Lords of the East Pill Division!

Each and every one had a name that reverberated like thunder throughout the Southern Domain. All hearts trembled at the sight of these seven. They walked out and approached the Bedevilment Pill. One reached out to take it in hand, then examined it carefully. His hand began to tremble, and his expression filled with shock.

He tried to conceal the shock, but the surrounding Cultivators couldn’t help but notice. To see a Furnace Lord looking shocked caused the hearts of the hundred thousand Cultivators to feel as if they were filled with thousands of lightning bolts.

The Furnace Lord’s gaze swept across the hundred thousand Cultivators. With an inward sigh, he caused the Bedevilment Pill to float up into the air, then sat down cross-legged. “In previous Pill Auctions,” he said, “the East Pill Division has offered one opportunity to test the medicinal strength of a pill. Are all of you certain that this pill is the one you wish to test?” There was no need to wait for an answer.

The six other Furnace Lords joined him, sitting in a circle around the floating Bedevilment Pill. They all performed incantation gestures, after which seven pill furnaces appeared in front of them. Each of these pill furnaces was clearly made from extraordinary materials!

“Each pill furnace that ignites, represents ten percent medicinal strength. This is a fair method, since all of the plant and vegetation ingredients used to concoct pills in this Pill Auction were grown in the East Pill Division. If they were not, we would not be able to so accurately determine their medicinal strength.”

Even as the voice rang out, the hundred thousand Cultivators all watched on closely. These seven Furnace Lords had illustrious reputations and commanded utmost respect. They closed their eyes, and a fragrant medicinal aroma filled the air, giving rise to a strange atmosphere within the stadium. Suddenly, one pill furnace began to glow. Next, a second, then a third, and finally a fourth began to grow brightly.

“Four furnaces lit up. That means it employed forty percent of the power of the plant and vegetation ingredients….”

“Ah, so it’s only forty percent. That’s not quite as good as the Foundation Establishment Day. However, it’s really not so simple to compare the medicinal strength of the two, since this poison pill is a completely different type of pill. In fact, I’d say… huh?” A moment after discussions broke out among the Cultivators, a deathly silence filled the air, as if the throats of those speaking had suddenly been clamped shut.

The hundred thousand Cultivators began to pant, and looks of shock filled their faces one by one. They stared as a fifth furnace lit up, then a sixth, and a seventh! In the blink of an eye, seven furnaces had begun to glow brightly!

“Seventy… Seventy percent?”

“It must have been concocted by a Furnace Lord! This… this….”

“Seventy percent! But, what if there were eight pill furnaces…?” As the roar of conversation filled the air, the faces of the seven Furnace Lords flickered, and their hearts trembled. Suddenly, yet another glowing portal appeared, from which emerged three more alchemists, who were also Furnace Lords. Their faces were calm and dignified as they strode forward. They sat down and then produced pill furnaces of their own.

Almost the instant their pill furnaces emerged, they began to glow. Eight pill furnaces, then nine, and finally ten. In the blink of an eye, all the pill furnaces were glowing!

Ten pill furnaces, their glow rising up into the sky. There was no roar of conversation, because the surrounding hundred thousand Cultivators could only stare with blank looks….

As for the ten Furnace Lords who were performing the test, they too stared mutely. Their minds spun, and they panted. An unprecedented look of shock appeared in their eyes.

And then, the reaction came. One hundred thousand Cultivators went crazy. Their minds buzzed, their eyes were crimson, and their breath came in ragged pants. They had obviously… gone mad!

One hundred percent medicinal strength! This was a perfect product! From ancient times until now, such an item had never appeared in the Pill Auction!

The difference between the Foundation Establishment Day and this Bedevilment Pill was clear. One was the Earth, the other was the Heavens!

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# Chapter 234: Grandmaster Pill Cauldron

Throughout the history of the Violet Fate Sect Pill Auction, a one hundred percent consummate pill had never before appeared. In fact, when it comes to such pills, a pill of eighty percent concocted by a Violet Furnace Lord would be considered a supreme level pill. Even something like that had never been seen before.

A medicinal pill that could employ more than eighty percent of the strength of the plant ingredients was considered supreme! Something ninety percent or higher… such pills were referred to as consummate pills!

A ninety percent pill was considered consummate; a one hundred percent pill, though generally referred to as consummate, could actually be considered sub-celestial!

Throughout the tens of thousands of years that encompassed the history of the Violet Fate Sect's East Pill Division, very few people had ever been able to concoct supreme pills. Every single one was a Violet Furnace Lord, and every single one had a name which could rock the Southern Domain. As for one hundred percent consummate pills….

In the tens of thousands of years of the history of the Violet Fate Sect's East Pill Division, only two people had ever been able to concoct such pills. One was the founder of the Sect itself, Reverend Violet East. The other was Grandmaster Pill Demon.

Only those two people had ever been able to concoct consummate pills. Consummate pills were not only a defiance of the Heavens, but also a watershed mark in the Dao of alchemy. They were the watershed mark for promotion to Grandmaster!

Only people who could concoct consummate pills could be called Grandmasters! In all the Southern Domain, other than Grandmaster Pill Demon, there were only two other Grandmasters who were capable of concocting consummate pills. However, their consummate pills were only ninety percent, not one hundred.

In all the Southern Domain, only Grandmaster Pill Demon… could concoct one hundred percent sub-celestial consummate pills!

It is therefore obvious how valuable a pill like the Bedevilment Pill would be, and why its appearance in the Pill Auction would send everyone into a wild frenzy.

One hundred thousand Cultivators all stared with red eyes. The Foundation Establishment Day had caused a stir, but that was far removed from this development. One hundred thousand people, one hundred thousand pairs of eyes. Their minds swam with the shocking sight of… a one hundred percent consummate pill!

Fatty panted as he stared fixedly at the pill; everyone was the same. In the pavilions on the top level of the auction stadium, the master alchemists from the East Pill Division who had come to observe the proceedings, also were completely shaken, their faces filled with shock and disbelief.

It wasn’t just them; the apprentice alchemists who were present were in an uproar. Even the disciples from the Violet Qi Division were filled with massive waves of shock.

The entire Pill Auction seemed as if it might boil into collapse.

The auctioneer stood there trembling, his mind filled with thunderous roaring, his breathing agitated and his eyes bloodshot. He had never imagined that he would ever be able to touch a one hundred percent consummate pill.

When he thought about how he had personally shaved off some powder from the pill, his heart filled with intense regret. In his mind, such an action was essentially blasphemy.

A one hundred percent consummate pill could be considered a sacred object to any alchemist, a truly precious treasure. His reaction, his madness, might be difficult for an outsider to comprehend. But as an alchemist, his greatest dream in life was to one day concoct a consummate pill.

The ten Furnace Lords stared blankly at the Bedevilment Pill floating in front of them. Their eyes shined with religious fervor, and their breath came in ragged bursts. They seemed to have forgotten everything else except for this pill.

As Meng Hao watched all of this happening, his heart began to pound. All of a sudden, he was getting the feeling that maybe this wasn't such a good development after all…. He had never imagined that the Bedevilment Pill would lead to such a frantic uproar.

"That pill… it…." murmured Bai Yunlai. He seemed to almost be in a daze. He slowly looked over at Meng Hao, and he seemed as if his soul had vanished into thin air.

Before the auctioneer could even set a price, the frenzied crowd began roaring out bids. "5,000,000 Spirit Stones!" someone cried. "I'll get this one hundred percent consummate pill even if it reduces me to poverty!"

"10,000,000 Spirit Stones!! I'm from the Mount Dao Sect, and I'll spend all the resources of my entire Sect to buy this pill!"

As people began shouting out prices, the atmosphere in the auction stadium grew even more frenzied. Naturally, most of the people participating in the auction knew at least something of the Dao of alchemy. It had been easy to establish the value of the Foundation Establishment Day, a forty-five percent pill with a variety of plant and vegetation interactions. But as for a one hundred percent consummate pill….

The mysterious plant and vegetation interactions made its value hard to determine. The Cultivators here, regardless of which Sect they came from, obviously knew that. Any Sect who could unlock a tiny bit of the secrets of this pill would be able to make unprecedented advancements in their Dao of alchemy.

It was no ordinary pill, but rather a one hundred percent consummate pill, something that no one in the entire Southern Domain except for Grandmaster Pill Demon could concoct.

The Cultivators here knew that anyone who acquired the pill and studied it on a daily basis, were they to achieve complete enlightenment, would be able to found their own alchemic Sect!

This pill was a rarity in the modern world!

Even without complete understanding of the pill, any Sect who possessed it would have a precious treasure!

The explosive atmosphere in the auction stadium continued to rise. It seemed chaos would soon break out; some people seemed to be preparing to fight for the pill. Unfortunately, the appearance of the pill seemed to have incited the potential for frenzied struggle.

The auctioneer was incapable of keeping the situation under control. Were he to dare to say that the pill was not for sale, killing intent would surely fill the auction stadium in an instant.

Nothing like this had ever happened throughout the long history of the Pill Auction. The auctioneer’s face was pale as he looked around at the frenzied one hundred thousand Cultivators. He didn’t even dare to speak.

“Who made this pill?” somebody suddenly shouted. It seemed many of the Cultivators realized that they had little hope of acquiring the pill, and so began to focus their attention on whoever had concocted it.

The question rang out like thunder, causing the hundred thousand Cultivators to suddenly grow deathly quiet.

The Cultivators were still in a frenzy, but they seemed to have recovered some of their wits. As they did, it seemed everyone was suddenly wondering about the same question.

“If I remember correctly, it was a master alchemist?”

“Master alchemist? What? This pill… was concocted by a master alchemist?”

“It… it surely was concocted by Grandmaster Pill Demon himself. How could it be a master alchemist? The only person in the entire Southern Domain who can concoct one hundred percent consummate pills is Grandmaster Pill Demon!”

The buzz of conversation filled the air, and everyone began to focus once more on the pill. The auctioneer’s face was pale, but he hurriedly said, “This pill was concocted by an anonymous master alchemist of the East Pill Division.” The man’s breathing was ragged, and even he seemed to be shocked by the words he had just uttered.

If he had such a reaction, how much more of a reaction would the surrounding hundred thousand Cultivators have? Upon hearing that the pill had been concocted by a master alchemist, the hundred thousand Cultivators immediately began to pant. They were dumbfounded, and their faces filled with astonishment and surprise.

After a moment of silence, the Cultivators once again exploded with conversations that buzzed even louder than before.

“A master alchemist…it really was concocted by a master alchemist!!!”

“Not a Furnace lord, not a Violet Furnace Lord, and not even Grandmaster Pill Demon. If it was concocted by a mere master alchemist, well, this is a hundred percent consummate pill! This master alchemist… he….”

“Such talent. Such skill in the Dao of alchemy! He concocted a one hundred percent consummate pill! Who is he? Who is this Grandmaster?!?!”

“Such a heaven-defying master alchemist exists in the Violet Fate Sect! Could he… could he be a personal apprentice of Grandmaster Pill Demon?

A one hundred percent consummate pill was well and good. The plant and vegetation interactions were important. All of it was hard to put a value on. But to compare that to the master alchemist who concocted such a pill, one was the Earth, the other was the Heavens!

It was impossible to describe how valuable such an alchemist would be to a Sect. In fact, few Sects would hesitate to spend any price to acquire such an alchemist. Present in the auction stadium were the three great Clans and the other four great Sects. All of them seemed moved; their disciples’ eyes glittered, and they all had produced jade slips to transmit reports back to their various Sects.

“Who is this master alchemist!!”

“If he becomes a Furnace Lord, or a Violet Furnace Lord, then the pills he concocts will surely be a defiance of the Heavens!”

“We want to meet this master alchemist!!”

As the frenzy in the auction stadium built, Meng Hao took a deep breath. He looked at Bai Yunlai, who appeared to be in a panic. Bai Yunlai seemed about to say something, but when Meng Hao’s gaze fell upon him, his heart calmed.

Meng Hao’s heart, however was racing. He could never have possibly predicted that the pill he had concocted would cause such a violent storm of a reaction. In fact, he felt a bit of regret. Thankfully, he hadn’t attached his name to the pill, but had only left the mark of the cauldron branded on its side.

“Maybe the master alchemist didn’t reveal his identity, but look at that cauldron. That’s his mark!”

“Cauldron… cauldron…. Don’t tell me that’s his alchemist name? Pill Cauldron!!”

“Grandmaster Pill Cauldron!” It was impossible to say who said it first. However, it only took an instant for the Cultivators to identify with the name Pill Cauldron. Thus began the rise of this name.

Meng Hao watched on blankly, blinking. He was still feeling unsettled, but at the same time, a proud sense of self-confidence began to fill him. For the pill he had concocted to garner such acclaim was a lofty honor for any alchemist.

It was at this moment that suddenly, a violet glow emanated from the glittering portal in the middle of the auction stadium. It filled the stadium, along with a massive pressure that immediately suppressed the racket.

As the auction stadium grew quiet once again, the violet glow rose up from the portal, and then two figures walked out.

The person in the lead wore a violet robe, the sleeves of which were embroidered with golden pill furnaces. His long, black hair flowed down his back, and his expression was one filled, not with anger, but with power. He looked to be a bit over fifty years of age, and yet, he also emanated an air of ancientness. It was unnecessary to state that this person had clearly had many years of experience.

He walked out slowly, and as he did, all of the hundred thousand Cultivators in the audience looked at him.

His appearance caused the ten Furnace Lords’ expressions to instantly change. They rose to their feet, looks of veneration covering their faces as they clasped hands in salute.

“Greetings, Violet Furnace Lord An,” they said in unison.

The words rang out, causing the hundred thousand Cultivators to suddenly gasp.

This shock was caused by the words, “Violet Furnace Lord.”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as his gaze came to rest on the violet-robed man and the incredible medicinal aura which emanated from him.

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Note from Er Gen: Many people have been wondering about the title of Book 3 “The Honor of Violet Fate,” and have come to the conclusion that it refers to the Violet Fate Sect’s honor within the Southern Domain. Actually, grammar in the title is a bit vague, making the subject and object unclear. It really should be “The Honor of Meng Hao in Violet Fate!”

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# Chapter 235: Apprentice’s Fee 1

After the violet-robed man emerged from the portal, the eyes of the onlookers fell upon the person behind him, a hunchbacked Cultivator. His expressionless face was filled with scars that seemed to be self-inflicted.

An indescribable sense of power emanated from him, which seemed to bolster the powerful pressure which maintained silence within the auction stadium.

“Patriarch Hunchback!”

“So it’s Patriarch Hunchback! They say his Cultivation base is at the mid Nascent Soul stage. Three hundred years ago, he gave up everything to become the Alchemy Protector of Violet Furnace Lord An….”

“For Patriarch Hunchback to appear means… the man in the violet robe really must be one of the eight Violet Furnace Lords of the Violet Fate Sect, An Zaihai!” 2

The eyes of the hundred thousand Cultivators immediately shone with respect. The rank of Violet Furnace Lord was virtually the pinnacle of the Dao of alchemy. Other than Grandmaster, there was no higher position.

An Zaihai’s expression was calm. He nodded to the ten Furnace Lords, then lifted his right hand into the air and made a grasping motion. The Bedevilment Pill flew over and settled onto his palm. He didn’t sniff the pill, but rather let it rest in his palm as he closed his eyes.

Time slowly passed. The surrounding Cultivators watched with rapt attention. Meng Hao maintained his silence, watching thoughtfully as Violet Furnace Lord An Zaihai used his skill in the Dao of alchemy to gain enlightenment regarding Meng Hao’s pill.

After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, Violet Furnace Lord An Zaihai slowly opened his eyes. His face looked moved, and as he stared at the pill in his hand, a strange light filled his eyes.

“What is the name of this pill?” he asked slowly, his voice somewhat husky.

An excited expression filled the face of the auctioneer. He clasped hands and bowed to An Zaihai, then said, “According to the records, the name of this pill is Bedevilment.”

An Zaihai looked at the pill for a long moment, then sighed and said, “What an amazing pill. Bedevilment. Melt the soul and transform it into evil. Rely only on the self to rise to the skies. It is not a burning of the soul, it supersedes that!” This was his attempt to state the essence of the pill. He couldn’t possibly deduce the formula of the pill in such a short time.

Others might not understand his words, but as soon as Meng Hao heard them, his pupils constricted.

“No wonder he’s a Violet Furnace Lord. In one glance, he was able to determine the true essence of the pill.” Meng Hao was lost in thought for a moment. In the future, he would need to add some confusing elements into his medicinal pills, so that they wouldn’t be so easy to analyze. Despite the man being a Violet Furnace Lord, the whole situation made Meng Hao feel a bit uneasy.

“This is not a one hundred percent pill,” said An Zaihai. “Its medicinal strength is actually ninety-five percent. However, even more deserving of praise is the fact that this pill was concocted amidst alchemic enlightenment. There is no formula for it.” The instant the hundred thousand Cultivators heard his words, they began to pant, and their minds reeled, especially because of the words alchemic enlightenment.

“Alchemic enlightenment…”

“This pill was created because of alchemic enlightenment. There’s no formula for it!”

“A pill created during alchemic enlightenment is one of a kind. You’ll never find another pill like it! That means… its value is at least double!” The hundred thousand Cultivators continued to discuss the matter, their burning eyes fixated on the Bedevilment Pill. They seemed to be going mad once again.

An Zaihai looked at the Bedevilment Pill for another long moment, then lowered his hand, allowing the pill to float in the air. Then he stepped back a few paces and closed his eyes.

It seemed he had only appeared to verify whether the Bedevilment Pill had been created during alchemic enlightenment.

“20,000,000 Spirit Stones! The Li Clan must have this pill!”

“20,500,000 Spirit Stones! A consummate pill like this, created in alchemic enlightenment, is unique under the heavens.“

The entire place boiled with excitement as more bids were called out. Meng Hao was breathing heavily, and his eyes were shining. Hearing all the bids filled his heart with excitement. However, a bit of hesitation suddenly appeared. After hearing the explanation from the Violet Furnace Lord, he now knew that the strange state he had been in when concocting the pill that day was known as alchemic enlightenment. However, what he didn’t understand was that the Violet Furnace Lord had described the pill as one of a kind, which seemed incongruous with what had actually happened.

“Maybe there are some variations that I don’t quite understand….” thought Meng Hao, suppressing his confusion and instead listening to the excitement with which the bids for the pill increased. Before, he had understood that it wasn’t difficult for alchemists to make profit from pill concocting, but he had never imagined the Bedevilment Pill would sell for such an incredible price.

He suddenly realized that his choice to join the Violet Fate Sect had definitely been a wise one.

Soon, the price for the Bedevilment pill reached 40,000,000 Spirit Stones. Such a price could bankrupt most Sects. Other than the four great Sects and three great Clans, no one else was even qualified to compete for it now.

“43,000,000 Spirit Stones!!” cried Fatty, leaped up onto the table.

“48,000,000!” yelled someone from the Black Sieve Sect.

“60,000,000!” raved Fatty. “Screw your granny! Do you dare to try to snatch my belongings!?”

The price had reached an unimaginable height. To most of the onlookers, this might be a rare, consummate pill, but it wasn’t worth that much, even with the added factor of Alchemic Enlightenment. After all, the pill had incredible medicinal strength, but it wasn’t clear what the results would be if it were consumed by the Core Formation stage. Considering it was apparently designed for the Foundation Establishment stage, a price of 60,000,000 Spirit Stones for such a pill was already relatively high.

The value of being able to research the Bedevilment Pill was already hard to determine. However, if after complete research it was found that the pill was effective for the Core Formation stage, then the value would be nearly limitless.

It must be stated that for an alchemist of the Southern Domain to reach the Grandmaster level, he must concoct, not just one ninety percent consummate pill, but one for each of the five stages of Qi Condensation, Foundation Establishment, Core Formation, Nascent Soul, and Spirit Severing. After concocting all of those ninety percent consummate pills, one could truly be considered a Grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy.

In any case, the research value of the Bedevilment Pill was truly hard to imagine. It was incredibly exciting because it was not only a consummate pill, but a supposedly unique pill concocted amidst alchemic enlightenment.

Meng Hao continued to grow more excited. He wanted the price to increase even more. In fact, were it not for his low Cultivation base, despite deep anxiety, he would pull out the second Bedevilment Pill and auction off that one too.

Although, now he was wondering how he would be able to retrieve his profits after the pill was sold. That was a bit of a problem.

It was at this moment that An Zaihai's eyes suddenly opened.

"100,000,000!"

Hearing this caused the surrounding Cultivators to stare, dumbfounded. Fatty and the others looked over at An Zaihai, and their faces slowly filled with anger.

Everyone knew of the unwritten rule of the Violet Fate Sect Pill Auction, that Violet Fate Sect Cultivators do not participate. Earlier, during the auction for the Foundation Establishment Day, the East Pill Division had let it be sold for research without batting an eye.

But this was a consummate pill…. Violet Furnace Lord An Zaihai was participating, creating a situation in which seller was competing along with buyer. Who could truly compete?

How could the bidding continue…?

"110,000,000!" yelled Fatty, his eyes red. He didn't care about Spirit Stones, but about face. It didn't matter if he was up against a Violet Furnace Lord. After his previous high bid, he had been trampled upon, which made him extremely unhappy. This wasn't an actual fight or a battle. As far as Fatty was concerned, crushing Spirit Stones was nothing, and he surely had more.

"200,000,000," said An Zaihai calmly. All of the one hundred thousand Cultivators gasped. Such a price was inconceivable. Even ten consummate pills, all concocted in alchemic enlightenment, would not be worth such an incredible price.

200,000,000 Spirit Stones could fund a great Sect for ten years.

“200…” Fatty’s anger raged to the heavens. He was just about to increase the bid, when An Zaihai’s cool voice rang out.

“I’m not purchasing this pill for myself. I’m purchasing it at the behest of Grandmaster Pill Demon, as his agent.”

These words caused silence to fill the air. Everyone looked on thoughtfully. Now, they understood. No matter what anyone said, the Violet Fate Sect wouldn’t allow such a pill to be sold. Even if the tradition of the Pill Auction was broken, their mind had been made up. This Pill would not leave the Violet Fate Sect.

Giving no regard to this, Fatty still seemed willing to increase the price. “200…” Suddenly, one of the disciples from his Sect grabbed him and whispered something into his ear. Face filled with an irritated look, Fatty gave an unwilling harrumph, but didn’t say anything more.

No one else said anything either. An Zaihai made a clutching motion with his right hand, and the Bedevilment Pill flew into his hand. Without another word, he turned, followed by the hunchbacked old man, and then disappeared into the glowing portal.

Meng Hao watched with wide eyes as all of this happened. Suddenly, he was feeling a bit nervous.

He hesitated for a moment. “Grandmaster Pill Demon bought it. Considering how prestigious he is, he wouldn’t… he wouldn’t hold back the money, would he…?” Thinking about Grandmaster Pill Demon’s position, he felt a bit more secure.

After An Zaihai left, there was no way to continue with the auction. Meng Hao grabbed Bai Yunlai, who looked somewhat absent-minded, and left.

After returning to the Sect, Meng Hao spent quite a bit of time repeatedly giving various instructions to Bai Yunlai. The entire time, Bai Yunlai looked at him with a strange look. The look of respect in his eyes far exceeded that from before.

Watching Bai Yunlai leave, seemingly in a trance, Meng Hao couldn’t help but laugh bitterly. After thinking about it, he decided that even if someone found out he had concocted the pill, it wouldn’t matter too much. Deciding not to worry about it any more, he headed back into his Immortal’s Cave.

“200,000,000 Spirit Stones! Even if I only get eighty percent, that’s still 160,000,000!” He sat down, thinking about the Spirit Stones, his eyes shining.

Deep in the East Pill Division of the Violet Fate Sect, at the main peak of the mountain range, An Zaihai stood respectfully next to an old man. The old man was, of course, none other than Pill Demon. In his hand was a black pill which was… the Bedevilment Pill.

Pill Demon examined the pill for nearly two hours. Slowly, a smile began to appear on his face. The smile was filled with both kindness and admiration.

An Zaihai looked at Pill Demon, his eyes filled with respect. In his entire life, he had never admired anyone more than Grandmaster Pill Demon. He was a Violet Furnace Lord, but it was actually because of that that he understood the vast gap between himself and his master. This caused his respect to grow even deeper.

Every time he stood in front of Grandmaster Pill Demon, he felt as if he were a tiny fish in the vast sea of the Dao of alchemy.

“Master,” said An Zaihai, “I’ve already looked into who concocted this pill. There are a few problems with his background. He’s….”

“Don’t say it,” the old man said coolly. “I forbid it. There’s no need.” He put the pill away with the wave of a hand.

An Zaihai stared in shock for a moment, then respectfully said, “Yes.”

“Don’t bother him either. Allow this little Grandmaster Pill Cauldron to maintain his mysterious anonymity in the Sect.” Pill Demon smiled, a smile filled with happiness and an indescribable contentment. Even as his voice continued to echo out, he disappeared into the distance. The entire time, he didn’t mention the Spirit Stones.

“Master, what about the Spirit Stones….” said An Zaihai hesitantly.

Pill Demon’s voice could be heard from off in the distance. “What Spirit Stones? Those are his apprentice’s fees!”

An Zaihai watched his master disappear into the distance, and then laughed. As he turned, a name floated in his mind.

“Fang Mu….”

Time passed. Soon half a month had gone by. It was on this particular day that, with great anticipation, Meng Hao asked Bai Yunlai to go check to see if the Spirit Stones could be collected. Bai Yunlai returned in the evening, his face long. His explanation was like a bolt from the blue.

With great care, he said, “I used a variety of methods to ask around, but the answer was always the same…. Aiiii, after the pill was sold, no Spirit Stones were deposited into the account…. I’m not really sure what exactly is going on, but how could we expect the auction house to dare to go and demand Spirit Stones from Grandmaster Pill Demon…?”

Meng Hao gaped in astonishment. He felt as if he had just been struck in the head with five lightning bolts. His eyes went wide with fury.

“My Spirit Stones! My 200,000,000 Spirit Stones! Pill Demon, you bought my pill. Give me my Spirit Stones!” Meng Hao gnashed his teeth. However, there was nothing he could do except sit there feeling at a loss.

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1. A more complete translation of “apprentice’s fee” would be “fee for formally becoming the apprentice of a master”

2. An Zaihai’s name in Chinese is ān zài hǎi – An is a surname which also means “safe” or “quiet.” Zai means “at” or “in.” Hai means “ocean” or

“sea”

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# Chapter 236: More Aftershocks

Meng Hao was at a loss because, as far as he was concerned, 200,000,000 was an impossibly high number. However, throughout the Southern Domain, many others were feeling at a loss as well.

They were at a loss because of the appearance of a consummate pill in the Violet Fate Sect Pill Auction, a pill that had been concocted during alchemic enlightenment, a pill unique under the heavens.

The name of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron immediately began to spread far and wide, shaking the Southern Domain. Countless Sects and Cultivators all heard about it.

Although officially rising to the rank of Grandmaster required successful concoction of several pills of ninety percent medicinal strength or higher, the pills that appeared in the Pill Auction always led to a commotion in the Southern Domain. Add in alchemic enlightenment, and this caused Grandmaster Pill Cauldron's name to instantly rise to unprecedented heights. It also furthered the mystery surrounding his identity.

Everyone was in a frenzy trying to determine who Grandmaster Pill Cauldron was. Speculations ran wild. Some claimed it was another form of address for Grandmaster Pill Demon. Others believed that it must be one of the Violet Furnace Lords.

No one believed that it could be one of the ordinary master alchemists. After all, other than Violet Furnace Lords, who else could possibly have such skill in the Dao of alchemy?

Wild rumors spread like storm winds across the Southern Domain. The only things that had happened in recent years that could match up to the stir caused by Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, were the repeated search attempts made by various Sects in the area around the Rebirth Cave, and the matter of Meng Hao and the Sublime Spirit Scripture.

As time passed, amongst the various rumors and opinions about Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, a new theory arose that was a complete contrast to the idea that he was a Violet Furnace Lord.

Many people believed that Grandmaster Pill Cauldron really was an ordinary master alchemist. However, he was gifted with an incredible nature talent of the Dao of the alchemy. Otherwise, why would his pill appear in the Pill Auction? Perhaps even the master alchemist himself hadn’t been able to predict the outcome.

If it were a Violet Furnace Lord, he would surely state his identity, and use the Pill Auction to gain fame, and perhaps set the stage for promotion to Grandmaster.

Soon, more and more people began to agree with this line of reasoning. And yet, more rumors arose to the contrary. The name of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron filled the entire Southern Domain, like thunderous storms.

Whoever he was, everyone had to admit that since this Grandmaster Pill Cauldron had concocted a consummate pill, even if he wasn’t truly a Grandmaster like the other three Grandmasters of the Southern Domain, he most likely would be in the future.

After all, his pill was a ninety-five percent, nearly one hundred percent consummate pill!

If Grandmaster Pill Cauldron concocted more consummate pills in the future, then the Southern Domain would no longer have three Grandmasters of the Dao of alchemy, but four!

In fact, because of the sudden rise of his name, there were many people who believed that Grandmaster Pill Cauldron already had the skill of a Grandmaster, and that there were already four Grandmasters!

The Black Sieve Sect, Golden Frost Sect, Blood Demon Sect, and even the Solitary Sword Sect, as well as the three great Clans all extended solemn public invitations offering to entertain Grandmaster Pill Cauldron.

This in itself caused quite a commotion, and caused Grandmaster Pill Cauldron’s name to shine as brightly as the sun itself.

The Violet Fate Sect was in just as much of a stir as the outside world. Regardless of whether it was the Violet Qi Division or East Pill Division, everyone was talking about Grandmaster Pill Cauldron and speculating as to his identity.

It wasn’t that nobody suggested Fang Mu might be Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. Rather, Grandmaster Pill Cauldron’s name was so inestimably high, that those who suggested it might be Fang Mu became objects of ridicule. Fang Mu was known in the East Pill Division and the Violet Qi Division alike for his skill in pill concocting, but when compared to the mysterious Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, no one believed they could be one and the same.

The general consensus in the East Pill Division was that he was a Violet Furnace Lord, who had concocted the consummate pill, but for some reason did not wish to reveal his identity.

There were even many master alchemists who began to venerate the mysterious Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. Anyone who said anything disrespectful about him, would earn the wrath of these alchemists.

While the rest of the Southern Domain discussed Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, the older generation of the Violet Fate Sect wanted to open an investigation. However, the East Pill Division was in a special position; without the approval of Pill Demon, no one would be able to uncover any information at all. The strangest thing of all was that Pill Demon seemed to be paying no heed whatsoever to the entire thing. He wouldn’t talk about it, nor would he permit the Violet Qi Division or the East Pill Division to investigate.

Even his own people in the East Pill Division couldn’t investigate the matter; it seemed as if Pill Demon had erased all traces of information.

As more and more rumors spread, as more and more people talked about Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, Meng Hao heaved more and more sighs.

Whenever he heard the name Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, he thought of his 200,000,000 Spirit Stones. And whenever he thought of that, he thought of how Pill Demon hadn’t paid him what he owed.

“You owe me 200,000,000 Spirit Stones….” Meng Hao felt twisted. Normally, considering the level of his Cultivation base, he wouldn’t worry about a few Spirit Stones. But this was 200,000,000 of them!!

Every time he thought of the matter, it felt like a sword was stabbing into his heart. Long ago when he had joined the Reliance Sect, he had thought that he would be able to get rich by working for Immortals. This entire time, he had drifted along, pushed along by the current, until he reached this point. However, he still retained that stubborn desire deep in his bones.

His methods were now much colder, and many others viewed him as crafty and ruthless. But deep in his heart, he was still the same scholar he had always been, and he still desired to be rich. He hadn’t forgotten that wish of his.

If you can imagine how much Meng Hao rejoiced at not having to pay back the silver he owed to Steward Zhou 1 when he joined the Reliance Sect, then you can imagine how he felt to have 200,000,000 Spirit Stones dangled in front of him, only to find that they weren’t his.

He took a deep breath, and then continued to concoct pills, a bitter smile on his face. Time passed by, but the name of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron did not fade from the Southern Domain or from the Violet Fate Sect. After the initial waves settled down, the name continued to be mentioned frequently.

Some of this had to do with the mystery surrounding the name, and all the rumors that accompanied it. In fact, more pills marked with a cauldron began to appear in auctions throughout the Southern Domain.

However, the fake pills would always end up being exposed. Furthermore, the counterfeit pills only served to bolster the reputation of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron.

Meng Hao heard about most of these things from Bai Yunlai. Whenever Bai Yunlai talked to him about matters regarding Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, a strange look would appear on his face, and his eyes would fill with glowing veneration. Obviously, he knew that the person who was the subject of such glowing praise throughout the Violet Fate Sect, and even the Southern Domain, was standing right in front of him.

Day and night, both when dreaming, and when walking about, the image would appear in his mind of how he had held the Bedevilment pill in his own hands as he secretly delivered it to the auction house.

When he thought about how he had held a consummate pill, and about the identity of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, he felt like he was in a fantasy.

Someone else in the Violet Fate Sect who was moved by the name of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, was Chu Yuyan. The only thing she heard people talking about was Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. Her own investigations into his identity led nowhere. Furthermore, some people were making vague statements implying that perhaps she was Grandmaster Pill Cauldron.

She could only laugh bitterly about that. She was incredibly curious about who he was, and as she tried to find out more information, her heart began to fill with reverence.

It didn’t matter who Grandmaster Pill Cauldron was; as an alchemist, Chu Yuyan knew the skill required in the Dao of alchemy to produce a consummate pill. It demanded the respect of all alchemists. As for Chu Yuyan, her reverence grew, and she couldn’t wait to meet this mysterious Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, and discuss alchemy and alchemic enlightenment with him!

To alchemists, alchemic enlightenment was a mysterious realm, where pill formulas didn’t exist, and one could only rely on one’s understanding of the

Dao of alchemy. Using only the materials at one's fingertips, one would create a new medicinal pill. This was the reason that Chu Yuyan so worshiped Grandmaster Pill Cauldron.

Her veneration only grew stronger and stronger as Grandmaster Pill Cauldron's reputation grew. She even begged her master over and over to let her borrow the Bedevilment Pill to study it. When he finally consented, she poured herself into researching it.

She felt the insane, devilish will contained inside. She could sense the frenzied burning which exceeded a burning of the soul. She could sense a profound sharpness inside the pill, a proud will that exceeded Heaven and Earth.

Gradually, an image of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron began to form in her heart. His face was archaic, and his eyes shone with wisdom. He was tall and slender, with an imposing disposition. All of this was based on the feeling she got from within the pill.

And yet, no matter how she searched, no matter what methods she used, she couldn't find anyone within the Sect who matched such an image. This didn't cause her veneration to lessen , but rather the opposite; it continued to deepen.

Once, Meng Hao accidentally ran into Chu Yuyan while walking through the Sect. He was just about to dodge to the side to avoid her when he noticed that she hadn't even noticed him. Instead, she was engaged in a deep conversation about Grandmaster Pill Cauldron with a fellow female disciple. She walked right past him.

Her expression was one of determination, and her eyes shone with a strange light. Every time she said the name of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, her eyes would glitter brightly.

Meng Hao stared in shock, a strange look on his face. He suddenly wondered what Chu Yuyan's face would look like if she ever discovered that Fang Mu was Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. He also wondered what her expression would be like if she found out that Fang Mu was actually Meng Hao….

Another half month passed. On this particular day, Meng Hao had just finished concocting a batch of medicinal pills. Suddenly, his expression flickered as he heard noise from outside his Immortal’s Cave, a hubbub of conversation.

The East Pill Division was usually a very peaceful place. A ruckus like this was very rare. Astonished, Meng Hao rose to his feet and walked to the door of the Immortal’s Cave. Down below, the apprentice alchemists were all running in the same direction.

“Grandmaster Eternal Mountain from the Golden Frost Sect is here! He’s one of the three Grandmasters of the Southern Domain, with a name as famous as Grandmaster Pill Demon’s!”

“Don’t tell me he’s here to issue a challenge!?!?”

“Grandmaster Eternal Mountain used to be just like us! He was an apprentice alchemist who slowly rose up through the ranks. But eventually, he forsook the Sect. Fortunately for him, Grandmaster Pill Demon approved of his long, hard work, and didn’t cripple his Dao of alchemy! If he had, a day such as this would never have come!”

“I wonder why Grandmaster Eternal Mountain has come to the Violet Fate Sect today….”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he stood outside his Immortal’s Cave. A multitude of apprentice alchemists and even master alchemists were all coming out of their dwelling places. All of them began to rush off in the same direction.

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# Chapter 237: Meeting Grandmaster Pill Cauldron

The Violet Qi Division and the East Pill Division of the Violet Fate Sect were both in shock. A disciple who had forsaken the Sect and then become a Grand Elder of the Dao of alchemy in the Golden Frost Sect, Eternal Mountain, had returned. For the first time in four hundred years… he stepped foot into the Violet Fate Sect!

Along with him had come one of the Golden Frost Sect’s two Dharma Protectors, Tang Shicang 1. The other was a Nascent Soul Elder. Each of these individuals had practiced Cultivation for more than seven hundred years. Despite being only at the Nascent Soul stage, they were experts in magic, and together could destroy ten thousand enemies.

In addition to this, they were followed by a large group of Golden Frost Sect disciples, including Fatty. He looked very complacent, standing there at the forefront of the group of disciples, right next to Tang Shicang.

The Golden Frost Sect’s arrival, especially the presence of Grandmaster Eternal Mountain, provoked the appearance of the Violet Qi Division’s Dao Protector Wu Dingqiu 2, as well as several Nascent Soul Cultivators. On the peak of one of the mountains located on the border between the Violet Qi Division and the East Pill Division, was a large public square, where the ceremonies would take place.

Two Violet Furnace Lords from the East Pill Division were also present. One was An Zaihai. The other was clearly superior to An Zaihai both in position and in age. In fact, he was the most senior of the Violet Furnace Lords of the East Pill Division. His skill in the Dao of alchemy was at the peak level, and he could be considered sub-Grandmaster. This was Lin Hailong. 3

At the moment, the Violet Qi Division's Outer Sect disciples, as well as the apprentice alchemists of the East Pill Division, were congregating down at the foot of the mountain. They settled their Qi and calmed their minds, looking up toward the square at the peak of the mountain. Their hearts filled with speculation as to the purpose of Grandmaster Eternal Mountain's visit.

Some of the Inner Sect disciples and master alchemists proceeded up toward the top of the mountain. However, not many were qualified to do so. The entire mountain was sealed tightly, and many who attempted to get closer were turned back.

Meng Hao arrived at the mountain with the rest of the crowd. He stood off some distance away, observing. As far as Grandmaster Eternal Mountain, he had heard quite a few stories about the man throughout his years in the Violet Fate Sect.

As he looked over the scene, he suddenly saw several beams of colorful light shooting through the air. His eyes glittered. The beams shot directly toward the public square at the peak of the mountain. Within were Cultivators of the East Pill Division, all of whom were Furnace Lords.

One of them was Chu Yuyan.

After thinking about it for a moment, Meng Hao's body flashed, and he shot forward. Just as he neared the mountain, he caught sight of Li Tao. Their eyes met, and they proceeded together up toward the top of the mountain.

There were some who attempted to block their way, but Li Tao simply flashed his identification jade slip, whereupon they gave way with respectful looks on their faces. After the auctioning of the Foundation Establishment Day in the Pill Auction, Li Tao's name had also risen to prominence. Were it not for the appearance of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, his name would most likely have become even more well known.

Li Tao gave Meng Hao a meaningful look, and then, his voice low, said, “Grandmaster Eternal Mountain forsook master and the Sect. It’s said that he hasn’t stepped foot back inside for four hundred years. I wonder why he’s back…. Brother Fang, do you think it might have something to do with Grandmaster Pill Cauldron?”

Meng Hao smiled slightly, shaking his head and saying nothing. Soon, they reached the mountain peak, where they stood off to the side. Meng Hao looked over at Fatty, and then Chu Yuyan.

All of the Furnace Lords, including Chu Yuyan, stood respectfully behind the Violet Furnace Lords, looking forward at the Cultivators from the Golden Frost Sect.

Chu Yuyan glanced at the Golden Frost Sect Cultivators and yawned. Then her gaze fell upon Fatty, and it seemed as if she wanted to give him a good thrashing. A cold look gleamed in her eye. After all, this Fatty Li Fugui was the cause of the entire scandal with Meng Hao.

The Golden Frost Sect had brought no small amount of Cultivators to this meeting. However, less than ten people actually qualified to sit down at the table. The rest of the Inner Sect disciples, like Fatty, could only stand behind them.

Sitting in the foremost position were two people. One was Dharma Protector Tang Shicang. He appeared to be middle-aged, but his Cultivation base was at the mid Nascent Soul stage, and few people in the Southern Domain would dare to look down at him. If he made a bit more progress, he would reach the late Nascent Soul stage. In the current age, in which only a few Spirit Severing Cultivators appeared in the Cultivation world of the Southern Domain, this would place him at the pinnacle of his generation.

At the moment, he was laughing and chatting with Wu Dingqiu over some trivial matters.

Sitting next to him was a white-haired old man. He had been sitting there the entire time, his eyes closed. He seemed as if he did not belong in Heaven and Earth. In fact, anyone who looked at him for too long would begin to feel as if their eyes were burning, as if his entire body were some type of fearsome furnace.

Even more shocking, as he sat there with his eyes closed, green grass slowly began to sprout up from within the limestones around him. It seemed that this old man’s aura was capable of causing living things to spontaneously grow.

This was none other than one of the three Grandmasters of the Dao of alchemy of the Southern Domain, Eternal Mountain.

Compared to him, the rest of the Golden Frost Sect Cultivators seemed to be there for nothing more than a supporting role. Even the Nascent Soul Cultivators were clearly lessened by his presence.

Meng Hao and Li Tao stood off to the side, along with quite a large group of other disciples who encircled the square. Meng Hao looked at Grandmaster Eternal Mountain, and the grass slowly growing up around him. His eyes narrowed.

“What realm of the Dao of alchemy is this?” he thought. “He can cause medicinal plants to grow up from the limestone. That’s creating life out of nothing….”

Then, he caught sight of An Zaihai, and felt anger welling up in his heart as he suddenly remembered his 200,000,000 Spirit Stones.

On the Violet Fate Sect side, An Zaihai smiled as he and Wu Dingqiu chatted courteously with Tang Shicang and the three other Nascent Soul magic experts.

The most senior of the Violet Furnace Lords, Lin Hailong, sat there expressionless, staring icily at Eternal Mountain.

The square seemed to be filled with both fire and ice. On the one hand, harmonious chatting could be heard, on the other hand, an icy wind full of frost seemed to be blowing.

“Hahaha!” laughed Tang Shicang, looking at Wu Dingqiu. “Fellow Daoist Wu, please stop asking. I’m just here out of courtesy to accompany Grandmaster Eternal Mountain. As far as the details of our visit, I’m afraid I can’t really say.”

It was at this moment that Grandmaster Eternal Mountain suddenly opened his eyes. When he did, they were staring directly into Lin Hailong’s icy glare.

He was quiet for a moment, and then said, “Long time no see, Elder Brother Lin.” His voice was archaic, and filled with a strange power. As his words rang out, the green grass around him fluttered. Instantly, the entire square grew quiet. Regardless of who was speaking, Tang Shichang, Wu Dingqiu or An Zaihai, they all instantly closed their mouths. All eyes fell onto Grandmaster Eternal Mountain.

“You flatter me with the words ‘Elder Brother,’” Lin Hailong said coolly. “Have some self-respect, Grandmaster Eternal Mountain.”

Eternal Mountain was quiet for a long moment. Finally, he said, “The purpose of my visit is to pay respects to Grandmaster Pill Demon. Fellow Daoist Lin, could you please make an introduction for me?”

“Master is busy at the moment,” replied Lin Hailong, his voice cold. “Please leave.” Although Lin Hailong’s Master was not offended by Eternal Mountain’s past actions, Lin Hailong would never be able to forget that he himself had recommended him to join the Sect. Furthermore, he had unselfishly provided him with much assistance. He had never imagined that because of his talent in the Dao of alchemy, that he would eventually become a Violet Furnace Lord, and then forsake Master and Sect. To this day, he had never been able to dispel the negative feelings in his heart.

Eternal Mountain was again silent for a long moment. After the space of about ten breaths passed, a glow filled his eyes like that emitted by a pill furnace.

“If Grandmaster Pill Demon has no time, then I would very much like to meet the person the whole Southern Domain is talking about: Grandmaster

Pill Cauldron of the East Pill Division!”

Hearing this caused Chu Yuyan’s eyes to shine brightly. In fact, the eyes of all the surrounding Violet Fate Sect disciples began to glimmer. After all, Grandmaster Pill Cauldron’s illustrious name was what everyone was talking about recently.

Meng Hao’s face was expressionless. He had long since become used to his alternate identity. Seeing the reverent look in Chu Yuyan’s eyes caused him to suddenly come up with some very wicked ideas.

“You want to meet Grandmaster Pill Cauldron?” said Lin Hailong, a cold smile turning the corners of his mouth. “He’s here in the Sect. If he wants to meet with you, then naturally he will step forward. But I have no way to force him to do so.”

“Why be this way, Elder Brother Lin?” said Eternal Mountain. “You treated me so well all those years ago, as did the entire East Pill Division. When drinking water, one must bear in mind the source. I will never forget your kindness.”

“Kindness?” cried Lin Hailong gruffly. His eyes shined with coldness. “If there was kindness, then why would you forsake the Sect?! Do you know that after your betrayal, Master sat on the East Mountain for three days, looking at the pill you had concocted?!”

Eternal Mountain said nothing. After a long moment, he sighed. “It was because my Dao of alchemy differed from that of Master’s. If I stayed in the Sect, then I would not have my own Dao of alchemy, and therefore, no path to tread. Perhaps after many years, I would become another Pill Demon. However… that is not me. Elder Brother Liu’s decision was the same as mine. Our decision was made three hundred years apart, but we both chose to leave the Sect.” He looked at Lin Hailong. “Elder Brother Lin, I respected Master, and I respected the Sect. After all these years, I haven’t changed. I wish to pursue the Dao of alchemy, not just concoct pills. My Dao is not that of Elder Brother Liu with his poison pills, but rather… magic pills! The pills I concoct are not to be consumed; instead, they fuse magic with the Dao of alchemy! The pills concocted by Eternal Mountain are treasured pills!”

He waved his hand, and immediately a gold-colored medicinal pill flew out. As soon as it appeared, it filled the surroundings with a shocking pressure. A medicinal aroma filled the air, but even stronger was the sense that this was a magical item!

The medicinal aroma was like that of the glow of a magical treasure. Its luster was as blinding as that of the sun.

Meng Hao’s heart trembled. Having heard Eternal Mountain’s explanation, he looked at the pill treasure, and his mind spun. Seeing this pill had opened up a new door in his mind regarding the path of pill concoction.

Meng Hao murmured to himself, seemingly enlightened: “There are millions upon millions of paths in the Dao of alchemy, much the same way that there are countless variations among plants and vegetations….”

“This pill cannot be consumed,” said Eternal Mountain, “because it is indestructible. It is a pill treasure which I personally concocted, the glow of which can absorb spiritual energy. The plant and vegetation interactions within the pill become their own Heaven and Earth. You could also say that this is not a pill, but a magical item that can never be destroyed! Elder Brother Lin, could you please appraise this item?” With the flick of a sleeve, he sent the medicinal pill shooting toward Lin Hailong.

Lin Hailong grabbed it.

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1. Tang Shicang’s name in Chinese is táng shì cāng – Tang is a surname which also means “boastful.” Shi means “world.” Cang means “blue” or “vast.”

2. Wu Dingqiu is the same guy who had the bet with Eccentric Song back in the State of Zhao, and then threw the spear into the wall in the Violet Qi Division

3. Lin Hailong’s name in Chinese is lín hǎi lóng – Lin is a surname which also means “forest.” Hai means “sea” or “ocean.” Long means “grand” or “eminent”

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# Chapter 238: Determined to Prevail!

Lin Hailong eyed the pill. “Heresy! You’re so low, you don’t even deserve to make a fool of yourself here!” He imperceptibly exerted pressure with his fingers in an attempt to crush the pill, but failed. He was in the mid Nascent Soul stage, and had reached a point where he could destroy magical items without the use of magic. And yet, he wasn’t able to harm the medicinal pill in the least bit.

“The path of the Dao of alchemy is focused on creating new pills,” he said coolly. “Anyone in the East Pill Division could practice this heretical art. But no one would deign to do so! This doesn’t even deserve to be called a pill!” He waved his right arm, sending the pill flying back to Eternal Mountain.

“This pill was not created from gold or iron,” said Eternal Mountain calmly, catching the pill. “Nor was it fused with crystal or stone. It was concocted from 37,924 types of medicinal plants together with countless variations, and is perfect in all respects. It contains the full and complete strength of all the five elements, and is matchless in Heaven and Earth. This truly represents the Great Dao of alchemy, and does not count as a mere refining. Years ago, I observed that Heaven is round, while the Earth is square. It was this enlightenment that caused me to found the World Pill Division, and also seeded my desire to forge a great pill of Heaven and Earth. This very pill contains the Heavens, the Earth and the world itself!” He tossed the pill over to Fatty.

“Li Fugui is a Golden Frost Sect disciple who practices the cultivation of Spirit Stone consumption,” he said in a deep voice, his eyes glittering. “He was born with superhuman strength that is concentrated within his teeth.

Elder Brother Lin, you call this pill a heresy, and claim that anyone in the East Pill Division could concoct it. Very well. If anyone can concoct a pill that this kid is incapable of crushing with his teeth, then I will give you the pill formula. However, if the East Pill Division cannot do this, then please request Master to reveal himself and provide an assessment of my pill."

Even as his voice rang out into the silence, Lin Hailong snorted coldly. "The East Pill Division doesn't want your pill formula."

Before Lin Hailong even finished speaking, Tang Shicang of the Golden Frost Sect cleared his throat. He pulled out a pill bottle from within his robe. It was gray-colored and covered with blackish marks. It emanated a feeling of ancientness, as if it had been hidden away for countless ages.

Tang Shicang only uttered one sentence: "This is a product of the Dao of alchemy of ancient times, an Entrancement Pill of the tenth level of Qi Condensation."

His words instantly caused all of the alchemists of the East Pill Division to stare at the pill bottle. An Zaihai's eyes narrowed.

Even Lin Hailong seemed shocked.

The tenth level of Qi Condensation was a legendary realm. After the change in the Heavens, the path of Qi Condensation was not complete, and thus, Entrancement Pills appeared. They were the ancient Dao of alchemy's response to the changes in Heaven and Earth, and a way to continue to tread the ancient path. With such a pill, a Cultivator could gain a chance to enter into the tenth level of Qi Condensation.

Unfortunately, pills like this were rare even in ancient times, and were not guaranteed to be completely effective. In any case, the benefits of being able to study an Entrancement Pill were hard to quantify.

It turned out, the Golden Frost Sect had come prepared with just such a pill!

Eternal Mountain spoke, neither quickly nor slowly: "This Entrancement Pill is complete. Elder Brother Lin, I would like to place this pill up as stakes of a wager…. Will you accept, or not?” His words instantly put a great pressure on Lin Hailong.

Accept, or not? It was a good question. If he accepted, but couldn’t produce a pill impervious to Fatty, then the he would become a laughingstock. If he didn’t accept, then it would be obvious he was avoiding the challenge. If this were battle magic, it wouldn’t matter, but battling with alchemy was different…. Furthermore, the competition was only a Foundation Establishment pup….

Lin Hailong really had no choice but to accept!

The Golden Frost Sect obviously had foreseen this, which was the very reason they had come today. It was a very serious matter. They clearly wanted to force the issue, and make the East Pill Decision accept their challenge.

An Zaihai’s face looked unsightly. He and Lin Hailong exchanged a glance. Both clearly felt themselves to be in an awkward position. Their opponent had chosen a Foundation Establishment pup as champion, and the only stipulation of the challenge was to create a pill he couldn’t crush. If a Violet Furnace Lord of the East Pill Division produced such a pill, it might not count as a loss, but certainly wouldn’t be a win.

It wouldn’t even be fair for a Furnace Lord to participate; the position wasn’t compatible. A win would still be a loss, and a loss… would be a complete disgrace.

Wu Dingqiu frowned. As everyone sat there silently, Fatty walked forward to stand next to Eternal Mountain, clearly in very high spirits. He pulled out a Spirit Stone, placed it into his mouth, and crunch, crunch, crunched it into pieces. He looked around at the alchemists of the East Pill Division, grinning. Then he pulled out a flying sword and began to grind his teeth, apparently desiring to sharpen them.

All of this caused the people from the East Pill Division to gasp and stare wide-eyed in shock.

“What are those teeth…?”

“I’ve heard of this fat guy. They say his teeth can crush flying swords….”

As the discussions broke out, a strange look appeared on Meng Hao’s face. The sight of Fatty looking so triumphant, his teeth glittering, caused Meng Hao to sigh emotionally. He remembered all those years ago in the Reliance Sect how he had encouraged Fatty to focus his Cultivation on his teeth.

Lin Hailong and An Zaihai looked even more worried after seeing Fatty crush the Spirit Stone. They frowned, knowing full well they had to accept the challenge. However, if they accepted, it would only be appropriate for challengers from the ranks of the thousand master alchemists to participate. If one of them won, the results would be acceptable. If a Furnace Lord participated, it simply wouldn’t be appropriate.

Besides, if a Furnace Lord lost, it would be far too embarrassing for the East Pill Division. If a master alchemist lost, at least it wouldn’t be so embarrassing.

“Would the Violet Fate Sect please respond?” said the Golden Frost Sect’s Dharma Protector Tang Shicang, smiling.

An Zaihai, brow furrowed, glanced over at the master alchemists. Suddenly, his gaze fell upon Meng Hao. It was only a glance, but he instantly recognised him.

“It is beneath a Furnace Lord to concoct such a heretical pill,” replied An Zaihai quickly. “However, there is definitely one amongst the thousand master alchemists of the East Pill Division who can concoct such a medicinal pill.”

Lin Hailong had just been thinking about how to avoid the whole situation, but hearing An Zaihai’s words, he nodded slightly. His heart, however, was pounding. He looked over at Li Tao, who was standing next to Meng Hao. “Li Tao, please step forward and concoct a pill,” he said, completely ignoring Meng Hao.

Li Tao's eyes filled with concentration, and he took a deep breath as he clasped hands and bowed to Lin and An. Considering he was a master alchemist of the East Pill Division, he didn't need to formally greet Wu Dingqiu and the others from the Violet Qi Division.

Lin Hailong looked at Li Tao with an expression of praise. He had been paying attention to the man for some time. He may have been eclipsed by Pill Cauldron at the Pill Auction, but as far as Lin Hailong was concerned, Pill Cauldron was a mystery. Li Tao, however, had the potential for much future growth. "Take this Earthly fire," he said "Quickly concoct the pill!" He flicked his sleeve, and a violet-colored crystal flew over to land on the ground. The limestones seemed as if they were about to melt from the intense heat of the Earthly fire.

Li Tao looked thoughtful for a moment, then produced a pill furnace and some medicinal plants and began to concoct.

The Earthly fire given by Lin Hailong made the concocting process go fairly quickly. Li Tao carefully performed his catalyzing and concocting, and after the time it takes two incense sticks to burn, the pill furnace roared, and a white medicinal pill flew out.

Li Tao had condensed hundreds of various hard medicinal plants into the pill. The concoction time had been relatively short, but he had employed all the skill he possessed. He was confident that even a fierce tiger would break its teeth if it bit such a pill!

When the pill emerged, Li Tao didn't even look at it. He simply tossed it over to Fatty, who grabbed it from mid air. He cleared his throat, and then, as everyone watched, placed it into his mouth. With a crunch, the pill shattered.

"I can't even grind my teeth with this crappy thing," said Fatty, his face filled with disdain. He spit out the remnants of the pill, looking quite proud of himself.

Lin Hailong's face was filled with embarrassment. He singled out one master alchemist after another, but the pills they concocted were are easily crushed by Fatty, then spit out onto the ground. Fatty's dialogue grew even more arrogant.

"Ai, it seems it really is difficult to find a medicinal pill that my teeth can't destroy. What a lonely life…. Do any of you have any skill? Come, concoct something I can't crush." He looked more and more complacent. The same gall he had shown at the Pill Auction, was now in full force. He seemed very much in his element.

Lin Hailong's face grew more unsightly, and he slapped his palm down onto the table. Looking at Eternal Mountain's expressionless face, his heart filled with fury. Suddenly, he said, "Master alchemists of the East Pill Division! Whoever of you can concoct a pill that this kid can't crush will instantly be promoted to Furnace Lord!" His words echoed out through the mountains, all the way down to the master alchemists who were congregated at the foot of the mountain. Everyone's faces filled with shock, and their eyes began to glow.

Meng Hao's pupils constricted, and he stared at Lin Hailong, his heart pounding.

Being promoted to Furnace Lord was a very important matter. Barring unusual circumstances, before being considered for promotion, one usually needed to be a master alchemist for a full sixty-year cycle, be at the Foundation Establishment stage, and concoct over a thousand different types of medicinal pills with fifty percent medicinal strength. Even more importantly, the Sect required that the candidate master alchemist have concocted ten million medicinal pills for the Sect.

After meeting all those requirements, the approval of all the other Furnace Lords was also required. If there was more than one candidate, then a rigorous pill concocting competition was required, whereupon one person would be selected for promotion.

Meng Hao had previously thought about becoming a Furnace Lord, and had even considered using his identity as Grandmaster Pill Cauldron to attempt to do so. However, he was still hesitating and analyzing the whole matter.

Hearing Lin Hailong’s words caused him to take a deep breath. His eyes began to glow.

To him, this was a chance that might only come once in a hundred years!

Of course, many other master alchemists were thinking the same thing. All of them began to pant; if they seized this opportunity to be promoted to Furnace Lord, it would be as if the gate of the Dao of alchemy had been opened. Granted, being promoted in such a way would arouse the ire of the other Furnace Lords, and would likely lead to scorn from others. However, it was still an incredible opportunity.

It didn’t matter if one was qualified or not. After becoming a Furnace Lord, one would have access to many special techniques, as well as secret formulas regarding various interactions of plants and vegetation. This in itself was enough to enable a master alchemist to advance by leaps and bounds. They would suddenly have access to plant and vegetation combinations that they would never otherwise be able to comprehend. The respect commanded by a Furnace Lord was enough to send almost all of the master alchemists into a frenzy.

Furthermore, the words had come out of the mouth of Lin Hailong himself, the most senior of the Violet Furnace Lords, and a sub-Grandmaster. No one would disbelieve him.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and looked at complacent Fatty. Feeling a bit guilty, he thought, “Fatty, brother, I don’t want to cause problems for you, but this is my only chance…. I am determined to prevail!”

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# Chapter 239: Li Fugui – Give Me Face, or Give Me Death!

Lin Hailong’s words instantly caused all of the master alchemists to begin panting. Their eyes glowed at the thought of Furnace Lord promotion. This type of good fortune was incredibly amazing!

If they could seize such good fortune, it might almost amount to destiny!

It was an opportunity, which, if taken advantage of, would allow them to soar to the heavens!

The master alchemists rushed forward, even the ones down below at the foot of the mountain. Eternal Mountain had never predicted that Lin Hailong would say what he did. His eyes narrowed.

Based on his understanding of Lin Hailong, he knew that the man wouldn’t make such an offer for no reason. There was definitely some deeper meaning within his words. After thinking for a moment, Eternal Mountain’s eyes suddenly began to gleam. “Don’t tell me he’s trying to … flush out Grandmaster Pill Cauldron!?” he thought.

It seemed Chu Yuyan and the ten or so other Furnace Lords present were thinking the same thing. Each and every one watched on with glittering eyes. A faint smile could be seen on the face of An Zaihai, and he glanced briefly at Meng Hao. He was well aware of Lin Hailong’s intentions.

In the entire East Pill Division, An Zaihai was the only person other than Grandmaster Pill Demon who knew the true identity of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. He wouldn’t announce it, of course. He wasn’t sure of Grandmaster Pill Demon’s intentions, but he had stated three times in a row that An Zaihai was not to do anything about Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. An Zaihai wouldn’t even mention the name to anyone.

One by one, the master alchemists of the East Pill Division arrived. Fatty was growing more and more complacent. He stood there, grinding his teeth with the flying sword. They glinted brightly. His air of complacency began to fill with more and more arrogance.

“Come come,” he said haughtily. “My teeth are feeling a bit itchy. If you have the skill, please concoct me a pill that will break them. Anyone who can, I’ll call them grandpa!” One of the master alchemists stepped out from among his hundreds of comrades. He clasped hands in salute to Lin Hailong and An Zaihai, then began to concoct a pill.

It wasn’t just him. Seven other master alchemists stepped forward and began to work. Everyone watched as the master alchemists concentrated on their medicinal plants and concoction. It was a dazzling sight. Time passed, and soon one pill after another flew out toward Fatty.

These pills had been concocted with utmost care by the handful of master alchemists, all of whom had utmost faith in their handiwork. Fatty yawned, and threw all the pills into his mouth. The crunching sounds which emanated out pierced into the hearts of the eight master alchemists. Their faces fell.

“Blech!” said Fatty, spitting the medicinal pills out. “Who else!?” he yelled, looking very pleased. He seemed to feel that his teeth deserved utmost respect in Heaven and Earth.

Seeing the defeat of the eight master alchemists, others who had been planning to participate now hesitated. They eyed Fatty’s teeth. In their estimation, it was like he had a mouthful of sharp swords. It seemed any medicinal pill that entered his mouth would be reduced to rubble.

“Who else?!?!”

No one responded to Fatty, nor did anyone step forward to concoct a pill. Fatty arrogantly pulled another Spirit Stone out, popped it into his mouth, and then crunched it into pieces.

The surrounding master alchemists gasped. Moments ago, many of them had found it easy to muster their courage, think of a pill formula, and then attempt to concoct it. Seeing the spectacle in front of their eyes, however, caused them to change their minds.

They looked at Fatty angrily. They sighed inwardly as various thoughts ran through their minds:

“This guy is inhuman! What pill could possibly stand up to teeth like that…?”

“Dammit, this fatso must have been growing these teeth from birth. He’s not a Cultivator, he’s a monster!”

“Isn’t he worried he might accidentally bite his tongue off one day…? He actually eats the Spirit Stones? What kind of a stomach does he have? Can he digest them?”

All of them seemed to think that there would be no good fortune for them on this day.

Fatty swallowed the Spirit Stone and then began loudly grinding his teeth again. From the moment he had joined the Golden Frost Sect, he had been doted upon, and had never been embarrassed. He of course took this opportunity to show off, and was currently glancing around, looking for pretty female alchemists.

He ignored Chu Yuyan, of course. In his opinion, Chu Yuyan clearly belonged to his brother Meng Hao, and he wouldn’t interfere. After all, Fatty completely revered Meng Hao.

Even as Fatty was in the midst of his arrogant complacency, Meng Hao coughed lightly. He wasn’t stupid, and could tell that Lin and An were trying to use this occasion to determine the identity of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. This was the main reason why he had been hesitating. However, he’d made up his mind. Coughing lightly, he stepped out from the crowd and began to walk over. This of course, drew the attention of all the master alchemists.

Chu Yuyan frowned, then gave a cold harrumph. After a single glance, she ignored him. An imperceptible glimmer appeared in An Zaihai’s eyes, and a faint smile touched his mouth.

Lin Hailong’s eyes filled with a deep look. He looked Meng Hao over closely.

“Is it him…?” he murmured to himself.

Eternal Mountain also looked at Meng Hao, his expression the same as ever.

No one could determine any clues whatsoever.

Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed to An Zaihai and Lin Hailong. “I am Fang Mu. I would like to take a shot at concocting a pill. Would the two members of the senior generation grant me permission to do so?”

An Zaihai said nothing. Lin Hailong gave a light nod, then tossed over a fire crystal, which came to float in front of Meng Hao.

“Heyo!” cried Fatty, glancing at Meng Hao out of the corner of his eyes. “Another kid steps forward. Don’t forget to concoct a really hard pill. My teeth are itchy. I want to bite down on something super tough!” His tone of voice made it sound like his whole life was filled with loneliness, and his annoying expression was one that made you want to thrash him.

Meng Hao didn’t immediately being the concoction process. He looked at Fatty, and smiled.

Fatty wasn’t sure why, but he got a good feeling when he looked at Meng Hao. Patting his stomach, he said, “What are you looking at me like that for? Aiii, I’m such a nice guy. You know what? This time I won’t crush it in one bite, I’ll take three bites.”

Meng Hao sighed, and a guilty look appeared on his face. He clasped hands and bowed toward Fatty. In truth, he didn't want to embarrass Li Fugui, but this opportunity was too rare to pass up.

"Eee? What kind of an expression is that? Aiiii, fine, fine. Five bites. I'll take five bites to crush it. How about that?"

Hearing this, Lin Hailong's face grew even darker, as did the faces of the surrounding master alchemists. Chu Yuyan glared ferociously at Fatty, and then at Meng Hao.

"Ah, Fatty," thought Meng Hao. "Big bro really doesn't want to trick you like this, but I really don't have any other option…" With another cough, he waved his hand and produced the Blood Crane pill furnace, sending it to float above the fire crystal.

Everyone's eyes were fixed upon Meng Hao as he concentrated and stoked the pill furnace to a glowing red color. Then, he began to produce medicinal plants. Some he catalyzed, from others, he extracted sap. The entire process took roughly an hour. Finally, Meng Hao produced some gray-colored powder. There didn't seem to be anything special about. When concocting pills, it isn't always necessary to use fresh ingredients. There are certain medicinal powders which will turn gray over time, as well as other ingredients, such as Flying Ash Leaf, which are gray to begin with.

Only Meng Hao knew that his confidence in being able to produce a pill that Fatty couldn't crush, was largely because of this gray powder. It was no ordinary item. It was… powder created by the explosion of the meat jelly's shedding process.

Some of the skin had directly turned into powder, which was what Meng Hao had just used as one of the ingredients in his medicinal pill.

The meat jelly's skin was extraordinarily tough. In the past, Meng Hao had tested it on multiple occasions. The meat jelly had a mysterious background, and was virtually indestructible. Meng Hao was sure that there was no way Fatty would be able to destroy the shed skin of the meat jelly.

However, his true killing move in this little competition wasn't the powder, but something else inside the medicinal pill….

"Fatty, please forgive me…." he thought. Meng Hao's eyes gleamed as a black medicinal pill flew out, which he grabbed. The pill furnace slowly returned to its original color.

The pill was about the size of a fingernail, and looked ordinary in every aspect. However, it was filled with the meat jelly skin powder. The powder couldn't be melted; however, Meng Hao had fused it into the medicinal plant ingredients. It was less a concoction than an amalgamation.

The pill emitted no medicinal fragrance, and was as black as night. He tossed it over to Fatty with an apologetic look.

Fatty grabbed it haughtily. "I've taken a liking to you," he said. "Don't worry, I'll crush it with five bites, no less." Looking pleased, he popped the pill into his mouth, posing heroically as he glanced at a few of the female alchemists he'd noticed.

As soon as the pill entered his mouth, he laughed, then closed his eyes and slowly bit down.

"See! One bite!" The words were a bit garbled, but everyone understood what he was saying.

The alchemists of the East Pill Division all looked embarrassed. Clearly, they found Li Fugui to be completely repulsive.

Continuing to talk, Fatty bit down a second time, secretly using quite a bit of strength. His heart began to tremble. Keeping his expression calm, he laughed a few more times, then continued to blabber incoherently about how he would keep his word and bite down five times.

He was starting to get nervous. The first time he had bit down, he'd only used thirty percent of his strength. The second time, he'd used eighty. However, he hadn't even been able to put a tiny dent in the medicinal pill. It seemed to have some sort of elastic element to it. His teeth actually hurt a bit.

“Fatty seems like he’d rather die than lose face. When did he become like this?” thought Meng Hao, looking both sympathetic and apologetic.

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# Chapter 240: Screw This

“Third bite! I’m gonna take a third bite!” Filled with determination, Fatty used one hundred percent power to bite down. A roaring filled his head, and his teeth ground down onto the medicinal pill so hard it seemed like sparks would fly off of it.

The medicinal pill’s incredible elasticity pushed back against his teeth. The feeling was impossible to describe, and caused Fatty to begin to tremble. His face drained of blood, and sweat began to pour down.

Gritting his teeth against the pain, he called out in a loud voice, “See how I keep my word!? Hahaha! I’m even sweating to add to the illusion… Okay, time for the fourth bite, kid. After this one, I won’t be able to hold back any more.”

How could the onlookers not pick up any clues as to what was really going on? Strange looks began to appear on their faces; they could see how twisted he was at heart. The Golden Frost Sect disciples had especially strange looks, considering how well they knew Li Fugui.

Eternal Mountain’s eyes narrowed. He frowned and began to mutter to himself.

Everyone could see the determination filling Fatty’s eyes; he was obviously going all out. He switched the medicinal pill to the other side of his mouth and bit down viciously.

“Your granny! There’s no way I can’t bite it to pieces!”

A cracking sound rang out as Fatty’s teeth pierced deep into the pill. However, as soon as they did, a foul, fishy, incredibly spicy fluid sprayed out from the hole that had been punched into the pill.

Fatty’s face suddenly went pale white. His body began to tremble, and his eyes went wide, and filled with veins of blood. Tears began to stream out of his eyes, and a roaring filled his mind. It seemed as if his soul were about to fly out of his body. The feeling in his mouth was impossible to describe.

“You… you….” Body trembling, face pale, he involuntarily leaped back and was just about to spit the pill out when he realized that everyone was looking at him. He quickly closed his mouth shut tight, refusing to spit the pill out.

The situation didn’t seem to be very complicated, but to Fatty, it seemed as if he were in a living nightmare. Sweat poured off of his body. He could handle foul odors. He could handle fishy flavors. But what he hated more than anything else, was spicy food.

His mouth felt as if it were on fire, and it seemed about to drive him insane.

Meng Hao felt even more guilty. He had learned of Fatty’s hatred of spicy food back in the Reliance Sect. Fatty had accidentally revealed the matter to him personally. During the pill concoction process just now, he had intentionally added some medicinal plants which would create spiciness….

The pill was an amalgamation that included the meat jelly skin powder, which was virtually indestructible. However, Meng Hao was worried that Fatty’s teeth would exceed his own powers of prediction, and had therefore included a backup contingency…. spiciness.

Fatty’s face was bright red as he glared at Meng Hao. His tongue was numb, and his head was buzzing. “I still have one bite left…. you… you little…. you just wait, this time, I’ll crush the pill to pieces!”

Everything was quiet. The surrounding Cultivators looked on with strange expressions.

Li Hailong’s eyes were wide. Next to him, An Zaihai gaped for a moment, then began to shake his head with a wry smile.

Fatty was just about to go all out as he took his final fifth bite. Meng Hao could no longer hold back. “It’s even more spicy the deeper you go…” he blurted.

When Fatty heard this, it hit him like a bolt from the blue. A tremor ran through his body, and it seemed he was too frightened to take another bite, and perhaps would give up. The people who had been repulsed by Fatty before, now seemed to be feeling a bit bad.

“What do you want…?” said Fatty. He looked like he was about to cry.

“I….” Meng Hao sighed. He really felt guilty at this point.

“Screw this!” Fatty opened his mouth to spit out the medicinal pill. However, the pill was now stuck on one of his teeth, which had punctured the pill but not bitten all the way through it.

Fatty quickly plucked the pill off of his tooth and tossed it back to Meng Hao. Eyes glowing with hatred, he retreated back to his place among the Golden Frost Sect disciples.

Currently, his lips and tongue were completely numb. The words he had spoken just now had been a bit slurred, and his face was bright red. Sweat continued to pour off of him, and the roaring sound continued to fill his head. Tears streamed down his face, and he felt as if his mouth might begin to emit flames at any moment.

Everything was quiet. Who could possibly have imagined or predicted that Li Fugui would hate spicy things so much? Cultivators are not mortals, and should be able to prevent such things from affecting them. Fatty’s reaction was therefore a testimony to the pill itself.

“What sinister spiciness does that pill contain to be so effective!?!?”

“So that medicinal pill… was actually vastly more powerful than a poison pill!”

“That pill… was so bizarre!!”

Everyone’s attention was completely focused on the medicinal pill in Meng Hao’s hand. Two lines of teeth marks could be seen on either side, and in one spot was a tiny hole where Fatty’s tooth had punctured the pill. It was no longer round, but flat.

Whichever way you looked at it, though, the pill had not been crushed into pieces!

Soon all eyes moved from the pill, to Meng Hao’s face. The East Pill Division, the Violet Qi Division, and the Golden Frost Sect were all looking at Meng Hao.

There were a variety of expressions: looks of confusion, wry smiles, glares of envy. Everyone who knew him suddenly decided that in the future, they should be very cautious about consuming pills he had concocted.

Meng Hao was used to being stared at. His expression was the same as ever, but his heart began to beat faster. He put his pill away, then looked at Lin Hailong, and An Zaihai, who was still shaking his head and laughing.

Grandmaster Eternal Mountain’s archaic voice broke the silence. “Kid, would you mind giving me that pill to examine for a moment?”

Meng Hao hesitated, then shyly asked, “Um… Elder, didn’t I just win?” With his pale skin and scholarly appearance, he really looked like a defenseless young animal. It was the kind of look that made people instantly sympathetic.

Meng Hao’s question actually didn’t sound like a question. Were it anyone other than him who responded in such a way, Eternal Mountain might take offense.

Seeing Meng Hao’s expression caused Fatty’s hair to stand on end. His eyes went wide, and he stared. His tongue was still numb, his vision was still blurry with tears. But seeing what was happening now caused a face to appear in his mind.

The expression on this master alchemist’s face, and his words, were exactly like what he remembered from the Pill Cultivation Workshop Outlet back in the Reliance Sect! 1

“He’s… he’s….” The more closely he looked, the more confused he got. This was especially so as he thought to how Meng Hao had disappeared without a trace a few years before. No matter what inquiries Fatty made, he hadn’t been able to turn up a single clue. But Fatty just couldn’t believe that Meng Hao would have left the Southern Domain.

“Don’t tell me… dammit… if that’s really him…. Only Meng Hao knows that I hate spicy food!!” Fatty’s eyes went wide, and he began to breathe heavily. He felt even more wronged now. If this person wasn’t Meng Hao, then he would definitely figure out some way to get revenge on him. If it was Meng Hao, though, he obviously wouldn’t.

Grandmaster Eternal Mountain smiled as he looked at Meng Hao. Inwardly, he smiled. He felt as if he were looking at himself all those years ago. He didn’t care whether or not spiciness had been added into the medicinal pill. The fact that Li Fugui couldn’t crush the pill in four bites was testament to its strength and resilience.

“It appears I’ve lost the wager,” said Grandmaster Eternal Mountain, smiling. With that, he flicked his sleeve, and the pill bottle with the ancient medicinal pill flew over to Lin Hailong. “Kid, are you going to give me that pill to have a look at?”

“I’m afraid not,” replied Meng Hao, his expression no longer bashful. “Without the express approval of the senior generation of the East Pill Division, junior doesn’t dare to allow others to appraise the pill.” Meng Hao couldn’t possibly hand the pill over; as soon as Grandmaster Eternal Mountain got his hands on it, he would definitely be able to detect the meat jelly skin powder. Then, Meng Hao’s position would be compromised, which would lead to all sorts of trouble.

Eternal Mountain stared in shock at Meng Hao’s reply. It had been many years since he had requested to appraise a pill. Never before had any master alchemist refused. Considering his status, each and every one would hand over the pill eagerly. One word from him could cause the name of an alchemist to spread throughout the Southern Domain.

Meng Hao’s response caused Lin Hailong’s face to soften a bit. He smiled at Meng Hao, and nodded slightly. “What’s your name?” he asked.

“Disciple Fang Mu,” Meng Hao replied with a start.

“What I said just now was no joke,” he said with a smile. “Fang Mu, from this day forward, you are a Furnace Lord. I will send people for you shortly to complete the Furnace Lord branding process.” With that, he looked over at Eternal Mountain. “What now, Grandmaster Eternal Mountain?”

Eternal Mountain gave Meng Hao a long, deep look. Then, smiled and rose to his feet, shaking his head.

“I’ve lost,” he said, “but I have no regrets. With a kid like this, the East Pill Division could last forever. However, first there was Elder Brother Liu, then me. Who knows when the third person to forsake the Sect will appear?” He gave Meng Hao a final smile, then turned and left.

The rest of the Golden Frost Sect followed him. Tang Shicang gave Wu Dingqiu a smiling bow, then left with his disciples.

Before leaving, Fatty turned back with a pitiful expression to look at Meng Hao. Seeing his wronged expression, Meng Hao felt extremely guilty. He also realized that Fatty most likely knew his true identity.

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# Chapter 241: Violet Qi from the East

Outside of the Violet Fate Sect, several 300 meter long airships shot through the sky. On one of the airships, Dharma Protector Tang Shicang stood with Grandmaster Eternal Mountain, looking off into the distance.

Tang Shicang hesitated for a moment, then finally spoke out the question that was gnawing at his heart. “Grandmaster Eternal Mountain, are you really going to give them that ancient Entrancement Pill so easily?”

Eternal Mountain was silent for a long moment, then gave a very faint smile. “The Entrancement Pill is defective, and I studied it thoroughly long ago. Besides… do you really think that with all the resources the East Pill Division controls, they don’t have an Entrancement Pill already?”

Tang Shicang’s eyes glittered. After a moment, he nodded.

“Besides,” continued Eternal Mountain, “my purpose for visiting the Violet Fate Sect has been accomplished. A trifling Entrancement Pill was well worth it.” His eyes shone with a strange light.

“Oh?” Tang Shicang said, surprised. He still didn’t quite understand. “But Grandmaster Pill Demon didn’t show his face. Grandmaster Eternal Mountain, how exactly did you accomplish your purpose?”

“Who ever said I went to the Violet Fate Sect to pay respects to Master?” he replied, his voice archaic and filled with wisdom. “Master would never agree to see me. My medicinal pill was just an excuse. The true purpose was to get a look at Grandmaster Pill Cauldron!” Eternal Mountain laughed.

Anyone who had Cultivated the Dao of alchemy to the realm he had, would of course possess extreme powers of insight.

Tang Shicang stared in astonishment. “Grandmaster Pill Cauldron? He’s…” He was about to continue speaking, but stopped. His pupils constricted, and suddenly, his eyes filled with disbelief. He looked over at Eternal Mountain. “Don’t tell me….”

“Grandmaster Pill Cauldron is none other than that young man!” said Eternal Mountain in a voice that could chop nails and sever iron. The words hit Tang Shicang like a thunderbolt. He immediately began to breathe heavily.

He had no reason whatsoever to doubt anything Grandmaster Eternal Mountain said about the East Pill Division. However, the matter of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron was just too shocking, and he found it hard to believe.

“An Zaihai obviously knows,” said Eternal Mountain. “Considering his powers of perception, he was surely told by Master. As for Elder Brother Lin, his skill in the Dao of alchemy hasn’t made any progress for hundreds of years now. He will never pass through the door to become a Grandmaster. He naturally was unable to see Fang Mu’s skill in pill concoction, especially the ambiguous final method he used to achieve victory. Fang Mu is clearly brilliant.”

“The boy is so young, and yet he is Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. This matter….” Tang Shicang took a deep breath, and a strange light filled his eyes.

“For now, the title Grandmaster is out of the question for him. However, he is a truly rare seed…. If you want to offend him, go ahead and spread word of his identity. But don’t forget, a true grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy, is also a grandmaster of the Dao of poison. Wiping out an entire Sect would be as easy to him as blowing some dust off of a table. He became famous because of his Bedevilment Pill, and the mad, devilish will within it. Even though I didn’t get to see the pill with my own eyes, the images branded on the jade slip were enough to cause my hair to stand on end.” His words were spoken calmly, but they stabbed like ice into Tang Shicang’s heart.

“He obviously doesn’t want to reveal his identity,” continued Grandmaster Eternal Mountain, “so you would do best not to cause problems. What I am most interested in knowing is… will he become the third forsaker?” He smiled. His words were a question, but in his eyes, he seemed to already know the answer.

At the same time that the people from the Golden Frost Sect were calling upon the Violet Fate Sect, far off in the Southern Domain, near the Rebirth Cave, was the corpse which had fallen from the sky years before. Currently, several dozen Cultivators were shooting toward it at top speed from a very far distance away.

They all wore black clothing. The auras which emanated from their body was sinister and cold. It was as if they could turn the hot summer air into the frostiness of the yellow springs of the underworld.

The Cultivation bases of these Cultivators were unstable. Sometimes they were at the Foundation Establishment stage, sometimes Core Formation, sometimes Nascent Soul. Occasionally, they would even explode with the aura of the Spirit Severing stage.

The so-called Immortal’s Corpse had caused many waves to pass through the heart of the Sects of the Southern Domain over the past years. It seemed that the five great Sects and three great Clans still had not given up on their investigations. The scale of activity was not as great as it had been before, but all of the Sects had reaped some benefit throughout the years. Right now, it was possible to get very close to the corpse.

It was easy to predict that in the near future, this corpse would cause an even greater stir, a true commotion within the Southern Domain. Then, vast amounts of Cultivators would come to approach it. The people here now were simply feeling things out.

However, the Cultivators which were now shooting toward the corpse were very bizarre. Black smoke filled the air as they passed, as if their bodies contained, not one soul, but two. Apparently, they weren’t even alive, but rather, puppets whose bodies contained discarnate souls.

They moved quickly, and were almost immediately upon the corpse. Suddenly, the smoke emanating out from them twisted and warped, transforming into a sickle of black mist. The sickle seemed capable of slashing through anything. It cut directly toward the neck of the corpse.

It was a few days after the Golden Frost Sect left the Violet Fate Sect when suddenly the so-called corpse emitted a massive roar, the likes of which hadn’t been heard since the day it fell from the sky.

This roar actually exceeded that first one. It was like a gale force wind which swept across the entire Southern Domain, rumbling like thunder.

As the roar sounded out, the dozens of Cultivators nearing the corpse coughed up blood. Their bodies became indistinct, and they tumbled backward. A voice sounded out in their minds which they could hear, but no one else could.

“Screw off!”

The roaring words seemed to echo out to the heavens. Half of the group of dozens of Cultivators screamed miserably as their bodies exploded. Blood and flesh flew about in all directions. Discarnate souls appeared from within, but before they could flee, they began to disintegrate.

The ten or so survivors immediately fled at top speed. However, before they could get very far, their bodies began to tremble, as if they couldn’t control the discarnate souls within their bodies.

These people were of course from the Black Sieve Sect!

Even as they left, a new piece of news began to spread around the Southern Domain. A mark of blood had appeared on the neck of the Immortal’s corpse!

It looked as if someone had tried to cut off its head, but had only succeeded in leaving behind the mark.

As soon as this news reached the various Sects, large amounts of Cultivators emerged and headed toward the Rebirth Cave. They didn't dare to approach too closely, but observed from a distance.

The news caused a stir in all the five great Sects and three great Clans.

The news reached the East Pill Division of the Violet Fate Sect, of course, as did the sound of the roar emitted by the corpse. However, they were located quite a distance away. Furthermore, Fang Mu had just been promoted to Furnace Lord. Therefore, the Sect didn't pay too much attention to it.

Usually, the promotion of a Furnace Lord was a grand occasion for the East Pill Division, second only to the promotion of a Violet Furnace Lord. However, the unorthodox and relatively simplistic nature of Meng Hao's promotion led to a much more muted reception.

Things were simple, but Meng Hao was still quite busy for several days. He got a new Immortal's Cave and a new robe. Some people might be talking down the method by which he was promoted, but he still received the perks of the new position.

For example, his Immortal's Cave. As of now, Meng Hao had an entire valley to himself, deep within the East Pill Division, far away from the master alchemists. It wasn't large, but couldn't be described as small either. And it belonged only to him.

His alchemist's robe was black, interlaced with violet, and was equipped with a special function. It had a magical, short-range teleportation ability, which could be used to teleport anywhere within a 50 kilometer radius. After the ability was used three times, he could exchange the robe for a new one.

As for pill furnaces, like Meng Hao's Blood Crane pill furnace, these would be provided to him by the Sect as needed. Before, if he wanted to concoct some high-value medicinal pills, he would often have to trade with others to acquire the necessary medicinal plants. Now that he was a Furnace Lord, though, such things would be provided by the Sect, free of charge.

Furthermore, there were some very expensive and rare medicinal plants that he was now able to buy on credit. Even more importantly, as a Furnace Lord, he was now allowed to enter the Violet Fate Celestial Land once per month! 1

There were many benefits, and they are difficult to describe in detail. It could be said that in terms of status and position, in everything, he was now far beyond a master alchemist. One was the Heavens, the other was the Earth.

There are a thousand master alchemists, but only one hundred Furnace Lords. As of now, Meng Hao could look down on all Inner Sect disciples. Even Conclave disciples of the Violet Qi Division would treat a Furnace Lord with utmost respect. In principle, Conclave disciples could request pill concocting from a Furnace Lord, but generally speaking, usually only Sect Elders would do so.

Outside in the Southern Domain, any Sect would attach extreme importance to any Violet Fate Sect Furnace Lord, in such a way that was far, far beyond master alchemists.

It could be said that becoming a Furnace Lord was like becoming a Conclave disciple of the East Pill Division. Unfortunately, becoming a Furnace Lord was predicated on gaining the approval of all the other Furnace Lords. Therefore, Meng Hao's sudden promotion caused the other Furnace Lords to look at him with disfavor.

Meng Hao didn't care, though. Almost the very first thing he did after being promoted was go borrow a copy of Violet Qi from the East. He had been waiting for a very long time to get a chance to do so. As soon as he finished reading it, he went into secluded meditation and began to practice cultivation.

Two months later, he emerged. He still had six Dao Pillars, only now they weren’t gold colored, but violet. Finally, he could heave a sigh of relief.

From now on, no one would be able to see the traces of the Sublime Spirit Scripture on his Cultivation base. As of now, the Cultivation he practiced was not from the Qi Condensation manual of the Sublime Spirit Scripture, but from… the Foundation Establishment manual!

Violet Qi from the East!

The manual wasn’t complete, but Meng Hao did possess the complete Qi Condensation manual. As such, he actually understood the technique better than the Cultivators of the Violet Qi Division. The benefits he acquired were vast. His Dao Pillars now emanated a threatening violet Qi. The pupils of his eyes glinted with a violet glow, and the aura emanating from his body was very different than from before.

Violet Qi from the East was extremely suited to Meng Hao, almost as if it had been prepared just for him. By continuing to practice this type of Cultivation, he would definitely be able to form a Violet Core.

With a Violet Core, he would have the foundation upon which to build the Perfect Core!

Before going into his two months of secluded meditation, he spread word that he was planning to rise to Foundation Establishment. After emerging, he revealed an early Foundation Establishment Cultivation base, which offered a perfect explanation for the violet hue to his pupils.

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# Chapter 242: Alchemy Dao Transmutation Incantation

“Violet Qi from the East….” The faint violet aura flickered in his eyes. He lifted his right hand and extended his fingers. They glowed with a violet light.

“This technique is the same as that in the Qi Condensation manual. It’s not magic, but rather, a cultivation technique. However, it seems the Violet Fate Sect has created some divine abilities based on the techniques in Violet Qi to the East.” He closed his eyes for a moment, then reopened them. In his mind, the text from the fragment of the manual floated in his eyes. He had memorized two passages which described techniques that could be used by Furnace Lords.

“Violet Pupil Transformation and Violet Qi Guillotine.” He gazed for a moment at the five fingers of his outstretched hand. Suddenly, he waved his hand, and violet smoke drifted out from his fingers. It congealed in the air into a violet, crescent moon. With a thought, Meng Hao sent it crashing into the wall of the Immortal’s Cave.

The cave shook, as did the entire mountain peak, and a massive curved impression appeared on the wall of the cave.

“That was only ten percent power.” Meng Hao’s eyes filled with a thoughtful look. After some time passed, the violet glow in his pupils flickered, then spread to completely cover his pupils, and then his eyes. Then, lines of violet streaked out onto the skin surrounding his eyes. These were the veins that, in an instant, had turned from bluish to bright violet in color.

At the moment, Meng Hao looked like some sort of evil spirit. A suppressive aura roiled off of him. His expression was the same as ever as he lifted his right hand and cut his left arm with his fingernail. A wound opened up, but even as the blood began to well up, the wound started to heal. In a moment, it was gone. Meng Hao wiped away the blood that remained behind. There was no mark on his skin at all.

He sat there quietly for the time it takes half an incense stick to burn. Finally, his body began to return to normal.

“Violet Pupil Transformation: what an amazing art! It doesn’t increase the battle prowess of my Cultivation base, but my recovery is far beyond normal.” To employ the full potential of these two techniques would require a bit more practice.

There were other restricted techniques of the Violet Qi Division that could only be practiced by Conclave disciples. The East Pill Division occupied a very high place within the Violet Fate Sect, but as for their restricted techniques, it was impossible to even look at them.

Unless… he became a Violet Furnace Lord. That rank was not just illustrious in the East Pill Division. It was the pinnacle of the entire Violet Fate Sect. They were qualified to read the greater part of all the ancient records in the Violet Fate Sect, with no restrictions whatsoever. After all, in all of the Southern Domain, there was only one Sect who could ever hope to have Violet Furnace Lords, and as such, they were given special treatment.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. Putting the magical techniques out of his mind, he sank into thought. Equipped with his superior Furnace Lord resources, he began to concoct medicinal pills. He didn’t just need to create pills for his own usage. He would use his status as a Furnace Lord to acquire more ingredients, and more formulas, to ensure that his skill in alchemy continued to grow.

Time flashed by. Soon half a year had passed. Meng Hao spent most of this time in seclusion, submerged in Cultivation and pill concocting. Every month he would visit the Celestial Land, where he would acquire a good collection of medicinal plants. He concocted various medicinal pills according to his previous arrangement of three batches per day for Inner Sect disciples. Of course, the prices were now significantly higher. Despite that, his pills were as popular as ever throughout the Sect.

By this time, he had begun to collect quite a few of the medicinal plants he would need to concoct the Perfect Core Pill. Currently, he was only missing a few. As for his own pills, when he created good ones which had a medicinal strength of eighty percent or higher, he would not put them up for sale, but would brand them with the cauldron seal and store them away.

Every time he marked a pill with the cauldron image, an image would appear in his mind of a vast amount of Spirit Stones. He was very passionate about that aspect; whenever he looked at the large collection of cauldron-marked medicinal pills in his bag of holding, he could only imagine the vast amount of Spirit Stones he would acquire if he sold them.

It was impossible for anyone but Meng Hao to know how many medicinal pills he concocted in total during the more than half a year’s worth of time. He grounded himself completely in the world of alchemy. The amount of time, coupled with the deep stores of information available within the East Pill Division, caused his skill in the Dao of alchemy to grow significantly.

Now, he didn’t need to waste much. It was much easier for him to extract sixty percent of the medicinal strength of the plant ingredients into his pill. He was even able to concoct quite a few at eighty percent strength. After having been raised to Furnace Lord, Meng Hao was nothing like the other normal alchemists, especially considering how he had access to such precious medicinal plants.

Even more importantly, after becoming a Furnace Lord, he acquired the second level catalysis technique. Actually, it wasn’t really a technique for catalyzing plants, but a pill concocting method.

It was called Alchemy Dao Transmutation Incantation!

It allowed him to refine a pill that he had previously concocted. Meng Hao instantly fell in love with the technique. After thinking about it for a long time, he tested it out a few times, and gradually became quite proficient.

Because of the gradual amalgamation of his nature talent of plants and vegetation, as well as the Alchemy Dao Transmutation Incantation, Meng Hao advanced by leaps and bounds.

Using this technique to transmute an ordinary medicinal pill enabled him to produce even more powerful pills. This was definitely one of the most advanced techniques in the East Pill Division.

It was also one of the reasons there was such a vast difference between Furnace Lords and master alchemists. It was also why Furnace Lords received such a warm welcome whenever they traveled outside of the Sect in the Southern Domain.

In addition to the Alchemy Dao Transmutation Incantation, Meng Hao also learned a few dozen methods for creating plant and vegetation interactions which would make it very difficult for anyone to ascertain what methods he had used to concoct any given pill.

This was something Meng Hao very much needed. Combined with this nature talent of plants and vegetation, he was able to combine all the various methods together to produce the most straightforward, and also most difficult, method to commingle the plant and vegetation ingredients together.

It was simple, but it involved adding extra ingredients into the mix. Therefore, it was both simple and complicated. The fundamental skill wasn’t difficult, but the more complex of a result he wanted, the more ingredients he needed to add. And of course, because of the variations encountered in different medicinal pills, it required careful work to prevent such interactions from affecting the basic function of the medicinal pill in question. There was little room for error.

If the process wasn’t performed perfectly, it might be possible to make a mistake and not even notice!

But to Meng Hao, this was the best technique to hide the secrets of his pill concocting. His skill in plants and vegetation was already firmly within the third realm of ten million variations!

Meng Hao was very happy throughout these days. Both his Cultivation base and his skill in alchemy gradually grew higher. His seventh Dao Pillar was now more than half formed. Based on his calculations, he would need to spend at least ten years as a Furnace Lord. He would work hard to improve his skill in the Dao of alchemy, and completely master the Alchemy Dao Transmutation Technique. By the time he became a Violet Furnace Lord, his Cultivation base would be at the great circle of Foundation Establishment, with nine Dao Pillars. The next step would be Core Formation.

Chu Yuyan never came looking for Meng Hao. When he did venture out, he heard that recently she was obsessed with her search for the mysterious Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. She spent all her days trying to figure out who he was.

After hearing this bit of news, a strange look appeared on his face. During the past five years, he had gotten used to this new identity of his.

Just now, Meng Hao had finished concocting a batch of medicinal pills. He rubbed the bridge of his nose, then walked out of his Immortal’s Cave. It was midday, and the sun burned hot overhead. There was a slight breeze, but all it did was blow hot wind against his face. He looked out at the valley, the entirety of which belonged to him.

Over the past half year or so, he had planted quite a few varieties of medicinal plants. The current heat wave caused them to emit a faint medicinal aroma which filled the valley. Being in an environment like this, it was little wonder that alchemists always smelled like medicinal pills.

He walked down into the valley and began to tend to some of the medicinal plants. As a Furnace Lord, he could call apprentice alchemists to come plant and care for his gardens. He could also summon master alchemists to assist him in pill concocting.

However, Meng Hao liked the quiet, so therefore hadn’t called for any help. As for Bai Yunlai, every time he met Meng Hao, he would treat him with the ultimate level of respect. Meng Hao had thought of asking him to come live in the valley. If he did, though, the man would never be able to rest, and would be extremely out of sorts.

There was nothing Meng Hao could do about it. It was exacerbated by the fact that while no one on the outside knew anything about Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, Bai Yunlai did. Whenever he looked at Meng Hao, his eyes would fill with fervent ardor and respect. Meng Hao could only laugh bitterly at this.

He was there in his garden tending to medicinal plants when suddenly his expression flickered. Behind him, two apprentice alchemists, each about thirty years of age, hurried into the valley.

As soon as they entered, they saw him, and their eyes filled with respect. Clasping hands, they bowed and said, “Greetings, Grandmaster Fang.”

Meng Hao thought for a moment as he reached down to pluck some withered leaves off of a medicinal plant. After becoming a Furnace Lord, he had given one lecture about plants and vegetation. After calculating for a moment in his mind, he realized that it was about time for him to give another. “Time for another lecture?” he asked indifferently.

This was one of the responsibilities of Furnace Lords. They were like Masters to the master alchemists and Patriarchs to the apprentice alchemists. By means of their lectures, it was ensured that the junior generation of the Sect would continue to advance and grow.

These two apprentice alchemists had been assigned to Meng Hao as servants to handle various trivial matters for him. “Grandmaster Fang, it was actually two days ago…. However you never came out, and we didn’t want to disturb you.”

Meng Hao nodded. He finished tending to the medicinal plants, then followed the two apprentice alchemists out of the valley. As they walked through the East Pill Division, each and every apprentice alchemist he ran into was extremely respectful. They saw his long black robe, interlaced with violet trim, and immediately knew his rank.

There were only around one hundred Furnace Lords in the entire Violet Fate Sect, as opposed to the over one hundred thousand disciples in the East Pill Division alone. It was impossible for one hundred people to remember one hundred thousand people, but for one hundred thousand people to remember one hundred people was very easy.

As soon as Meng Hao appeared, everyone recognized him. This was Fang Mu, who had risen to Furnace Lord just half a year ago. It didn’t matter how he had been promoted, his black and violet robe clearly announced his status. In the East Pill Division, he might not have supreme power, but his illustriousness was incredible.

Even the master alchemists who caught sight of Meng Hao treated him with utmost respect.

He walked the entire way, and was saluted the whole time.

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# Chapter 243: I Dare You To Say That Again!

One of the valleys in the East Pill Division was called Alchemy Day Valley. Twenty thousand people were gathered, seated in a semi-circle around a high platform.

This was one of three locations where Furnace Lords would give lectures about alchemy. Back when Meng Hao had been an apprentice alchemist, he would often go to those three places to hear the Furnace Lords speak about medicinal pills, plants and vegetation. The benefits he had received were significant.

In addition to these three valleys, there were ten other valleys where master alchemists would lecture. It was for this reason that Meng Hao felt as if the East Pill Division was not a Sect, but rather an institute of higher learning. Thirteen valleys existed in which either master alchemists or Furnace Lords would come to lecture, not because they were required to, but because they wanted to.

Furthermore, the content of the lectures of the various master alchemists and Furnace Lords was always different. The Cultivators of the East Pill Division could choose which lectures they wished to attend.

Some lectures would be attended by only a few hundred or thousand. Others would be packed. Of course, the lectures by the Furnace Lords were usually different from those of the master alchemists. The Furnace Lord lectures were always extremely popular.

Except… Meng Hao’s first lecture after becoming a Furnace Lord had only been attended by a few thousand. It was by no means packed. Meng Hao hadn’t really cared, though. He had spoken for about four hours, then flicked his sleeve and left.

Accompanied by the two apprentice alchemists, Meng Hao arrived at Alchemy Day Valley. He hadn’t minded when his first lecture was sparsely attended. However, he was shocked to see how many people were currently in the valley.

As he approached, he could see apprentice alchemists sitting cross-legged everywhere, as well as some master alchemists. All of them were looking up at the high platform. There stood a white-haired old man who emanated the aura of a transcendent being.

The old man was a Furnace Lord, and a very senior ranking one at that. He spoke in a cool voice which rang out in all directions. Everyone could hear very clearly. Some people’s eyes glowed brightly, apparently in the midst of enlightenment.

Meng Hao’s lecture slot was actually a few days earlier; unfortunately, he had been delayed because of his pill concocting. Now, he would have to wait for this senior Furnace Lord to finish his lecture before he could take his turn.

He would have to wait, but as a Furnace Lord, he wouldn’t have to wait outside the valley. As soon as he entered, he was noticed by the nearby apprentice alchemists. One head after another turned to look at him, whereupon they would stand and salute him respectfully. He smiled and nodded in return. They parted, making a path for him, which he walked down, feeling a bit embarrassed.

It didn’t take long before everyone in the entire valley had caught sight of him, including attendees far off in the distance. Even they stood to salute him in greeting.

In short, his entrance to the valley caused a small-scale commotion. The old man on the stage frowned and stopped talking, eyeing Meng Hao with a look of displeasure.

“Alchemist Fang, don’t tell me you’re unaware of the rules?” he said coolly, his voice sounding out clearly throughout the valley. “I’m giving a lecture on alchemy at the moment. Why, pray tell, are you here? This ruckus is really ruining my mood!”

Meng Hao glanced at the old man with a slight frown. He knew the other Furnace Lords weren’t too happy with him. Were the situation different, Meng Hao wouldn’t let the man’s words slide. However, his presence here really did cause a commotion, and he had interrupted the man’s lecture.

“Forgive my inconsiderateness,” said Meng Hao with a slight smile, and then sat down off to the side. He was here, so he might as well wait for the lecture to finish.

Hearing this, the old man snorted coldly, then ignored Meng Hao and continued with the lecture.

Time passed by slowly. The old Furnace Lord prattled on, occasionally holding up some medicinal plants to analyze. The surrounding apprentice alchemists listened thoughtfully. Many appeared to have looks of enlightenment on their faces. It seemed as if they were really benefiting from the lecture.

Meng Hao, however, was feeling a bit drowsy. Strangely, it seemed he was the only one. Perhaps it was because he was tired from his pill concocting; plus, the old man lectured in a very wordy way. Generally, after only one sentence, Meng Hao would understand the point he was trying to make. But then the man would go on to explain with ten or more additional sentences. Furthermore, Meng Hao was already familiar with the aspects of plant and vegetation variations about which he lectured. Among the Furnace Lords, if Meng Hao placed second in terms of plants and vegetation knowledge, then there was no first.

Whatever reasons Meng Hao had for being bored, the man was giving a lecture about alchemy. He may be long-winded, but Meng Hao would not do anything to supplant him. Do not do to others what you would not wish them to do to you.

After some time passed, though, he couldn’t hold back from letting out a yawn. He wasn’t located very far away from the lecture platform, so the long-winded old man noticed, and was clearly displeased. His mood seemed to sink even lower than before. Seeing Meng Hao’s indolent attitude, he suddenly got angry.

He stopped lecturing and looked at Meng Hao; his eyes burned and his words were ear-piercing: “Furnace Lord Fang Mu, don’t tell me you have some doubts regarding my lecture!?”

As soon as the words left his mouth, the surrounding apprentice alchemists no longer had entranced looks on their faces. Instead, they looked excitedly toward Meng Hao.

From the look of things, it seemed the entranced looks on their faces just now had been there out of force of habit. Some may have been real, but the majority were apparently fake.

Silence reigned among the apprentice alchemists, but a variety of thoughts ran through their heads.

“Two Furnace Lords are arguing. I’ve been to lots of lectures, but I’ve never seen anything like this before!”

“Furnace Lord Zhou sure can talk. If he’s not happy during his lecture then he’ll really flip out. That’s why we all have to pretend to be so interested. If we don’t, bad luck will surely strike….”

“Ah, that’s the new guy who’s on the rise. All the Violet Qi Division Inner Sect disciples are crazy over Furnace Lord Fang. Furnace Lord Zhou, on the other hand, is one of the most qualified of all the Furnace Lords. I wonder which one will come out on top…?”

Meng Hao frowned and looked up at the old man named Zhou.

“I don’t doubt anything you’ve said, Furnace Lord Zhou,” he said coolly. “I’m just a bit exhausted from concocting pills and need a short rest.”

Seeing Meng Hao back down twice in a row caused contempt to flicker in old man Zhou’s eyes. “Lies! You’re clearly being disrespectful on purpose! Please, I would very much like for you to explain in detail what various doubts you have. If you’re unable to, then please leave immediately. I’m really fed up with your ‘resting’ here!”

A cold glow appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes. He had already backed down twice in a row. He knew that it truly was improper for him to have interrupted the man’s lecture, but the man was really going overboard. Although Meng Hao had a relatively good temper, the cold light in his eyes showed the level of his displeasure.

“Originally, I, Fang Mu, did not want to cause any embarrassment because of the black Furnace Lord’s robe which you wear.” Meng Hao’s indifferent voice suddenly turned sharp. “But since Furnace Lord Zhou is so insistent, then I guess I will express a few doubts!”

Instantly, all of the surrounding apprentice alchemists perked up. Something interesting was about to happen! Even the master alchemists’ eyes began to glow. These expressions were far more genuinely enthusiastic than those from moments ago.

The man named Zhou gave a cold harrumph, and was about to say something, when Meng Hao interrupted him without the slightest trace of politeness.

“According to your understanding of the Dao of alchemy, one must first embrace into one’s heart all of the variations of plants and vegetation, and then craft out a thorough plan. Afterwards pills may be concocted. This concept is nothing more than a load of dog crap!”

“Fang Mu, you’ve really got guts!” roared the man, glaring furiously. “I dare you to say that again!”

When Meng Hao replied, his voice was calm, but his words were aggressive and menacing. “What pills do you intend to concoct with such a method? The Dao of alchemy was created by the Heavens, and requires personal enlightenment. Success can only come after constant defeat and subsequent improvement. It is the result of the concoction process itself! When concocting, one must identify what is true from what is false, select the proper time and location, adjust the flame to the proper temperature, and modify the interactions between the medicinal plants! Was I mistaken to say your words are dog crap? You want me to say it again? You’re the senior, so in accord with your demand, I’ll say it again. Your words are a load of dog crap!”

The words blew over Zhou, making him so angry that his body trembled. He lifted a finger and pointed at Meng Hao, a ferocious look filling his eyes. “Treason! Heresy!” he shrieked. “There are rules on the path of medicinal pills! You ignorant child! The fact that you finagled your way into a Furnace Lord promotion is a humiliation to all other Furnace Lords. We’re ashamed to even be associated with you. Apparently, you aren’t familiar with the word ‘rule,’ or the term ‘pill formula.’ Pill formulas themselves are rules. The pill concocting to which I refer is one in which a pill formula is followed!”

“Pill formulas are merely a simplified way of recording the process of pill concoction,” replied Meng Hao calmly. “They are there for alchemists to refer to, like a roadmap, or a light to use on a dark night.”

“You….”

Meng Hao’s words were growing more relentless. “If you follow a pill formula, then of course you can concoct a pill. But if you concoct pills in such a way, doesn’t that make you a mere master alchemist? Do you really deserve the title of Furnace Lord? It seems to me that you’re nothing more than a boring old pill-concocting puppet!”

“Y-you…. Pill formulas are rules! You….” The old mans sputtered in his anger, and was about to continue to explain when Meng Hao held his head high and interrupted again.

“You can’t even speak clearly! Pill formulas are rules? Examine all of the pills that exist under heaven. How many of those pills have a variety of formulas which have been handed down throughout the generations? In fact, for some pills, more than a hundred formulas exist, all with different interactions. And yet, each one produces the same pill. You speak of rules. Are you trying to say that multiple sets of different rules exist for each pill?!

“Very well, assuming there really are rules, then after the first pill formula appeared, who was it that created the second pill formula? What about the third? Or the fourth? By the time you reach the hundredth pill formula, can you explain who exactly created that pill?” Meng Hao’s indignant words filled the entire valley. All of the apprentice alchemists who were listening had looks of excitement on their faces, as well as the glow of enlightenment. The master alchemists were panting as they pondered Meng Hao’s words. The looks on their faces were much similar to the looks on their faces as they had been listening to Zhou’s lecture just now. However, the difference between the words of the two different Furnace Lords was incredible.

Zhou’s fury rose to the heavens. His entire body shook as he howled: “Treason! Heresy! Rebellion against the Dao of alchemy…!”

“Do you dare to proclaim that the creator of the next pill formula, the one hundred and first, isn’t among the East Pill Division disciples present today?” Hearing this caused a wave of excitement to pass through the apprentice alchemists. Ignoring old man Zhou, they immediately spoke out their agreement.

Meng Hao’s words smashed down onto old man Zhou like an iron hammer. He couldn’t help but walk back a few steps, staring back at Meng Hao with bloodshot eyes.

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# Chapter 244: Debate in the Alchemy Valley

“Can you say anything other than the words ‘treason,’ ‘heresy’ and ‘rebellion against the Dao of alchemy?’” Meng Hao sat there cross-legged, as calm as a spring breeze. His expression hadn’t changed; he still had a smile on his face. But his words were incredibly sharp. The surrounding apprentice alchemists watched on, their faces shining with admiration.

Zhou burned with wrath, and his mind was reeling. His words began to grow more venomous. “You ignorant youth!” he said. “You don’t even know what it means to concoct pills. I suggest you get the hell out of the Sect and go back to suck your mother’s teat! Wait until….”

His words only caused Meng Hao’s smile to disappear. The cold look in his eye grew icy. “You don’t even deserve to utter the words ‘concoct pills.’ Medicinal pills are concocted, and concocting requires intelligence. That’s why it’s called concocting. Your Dao of alchemy is nothing more than copying. Concocting pills and copying pills. That’s a difference of only one word. The crux of the difference, however, is that your Dao of alchemy reached the end of its road years ago!”

“Lies! Lies!” howled Zhou, his hair in disarray as he glared at Meng Hao. He had always thought his own words to be sharp, but today he found out that Fang Mu’s words were beyond sharp; they were diabolical. He took a deep breath to clear his mind, and then made his counterattack. “How could you blaspheme the rules of the Dao of alchemy? They have been passed down amongst alchemists for tens of thousands of years. If you don’t respect the rules, then you are concocting not pills, but abominations!”

“Abominations?” said Meng Hao with a cold smile. He stretched out his right hand. “Apprentice alchemists, does anyone present happen to have a medicinal pill on hand? Give it to me!”

As soon as his words rang out, one of the cleverest of the nearby apprentice alchemists quickly produced a medicinal pill and handed it to Meng Hao. Everyone one else looked on.

Meng Hao took the pill, glanced at it for a moment, then looked back at Zhou.

“This is a Qi Condensation Pill of twenty percent medicinal strength. Currently, there are ninety seven formulas for this pill. Now, I will help you to understand what rules are! The first formula for this pill requires three leaves of Blood Cinnabar grass, root of Blue Residual, Gyrfalcon leaf vein…. The second formula requires…. The third formula….” Without stopping, Meng Hao slowly recited all ninety seven different formulas. All present were disciples of the East Pill Division, including master alchemists, some of whom were recording the information as Meng Hao spoke it. When he finished reciting all ninety seven formulas, there was a deathly silence.

All the formulas he had recited were correct; each one could be used to concoct a Qi Condensation Pill.

“The ninety eighth formula requires three pistils from Eastern Dust Flower, three Spicewood seedlings, a flaming leaf from a Luan Phoenix plant…. The ninety ninth pill formula requires East Path sap; three years, seven month, nine day old Ink leaf, as well as…. The one hundred and third formula…. The one hundred and seventeenth formula….”

Everything was completely silent. The old man named Zhou stared with mute astonishment at Meng Hao. It wasn’t just him. All of the apprentice alchemists and master alchemists were staring blankly at him as if he weren’t even human.

No one had ever heard of the final twenty formulas he had recited. Based on the thoughtful look on his face, it was obvious Meng Hao was not reciting them from memory, but rather, had spontaneously created them himself after looking at the pill.

Such actions were exponentially more incisive than any of Meng Hao’s previous words. After he finished reciting all one hundred and seventeen pill formulas, the space of ten breaths passed in which no one said anything. Then, everyone exploded into a huge hubbub.

“He created pill formulas!! What realm is this? No wonder he’s a Furnace Lord! This is just astonishing!”

“He didn’t just create one pill formula, but twenty! I was listening carefully, and I can say with ninety percent confidence that all of them could be used to concoct a Qi Condensation Pill!”

“That’s Instantaneous Formula Scrying! According to legend, only Violet Furnace Lords with incredible skill in the Dao of alchemy can do such a thing!”

Up on the stage, old man Zhou’s face was pale white. His breathing was ragged, his expression lifeless as he stared dully at Meng Hao. His mind roared as if with thunder.

“Could I be mistaken…? Is my Dao of alchemy flawed…? Impossible, I couldn’t be mistaken. If I were, how could I have become a Furnace Lord? But…. but if I’m not mistaken, how come my skill in the Dao of alchemy hasn’t improved for an entire sixty year cycle….?”

“I just created twenty pill formulas. According to Furnace Lord Zhou’s logic, I, Fang Mu, am the maker of rules!” Meng Hao flicked his sleeve, sending the medicinal pill in his hand flying back to the apprentice alchemist who had given it to him. The apprentice alchemist clutched it excitedly. He had already decided to save this pill as a keepsake for the rest of his life.

Meng Hao’s words slammed like a thunderclap into old man Zhou’s ears. His face drained of blood, and his body trembled. His eyes were filled with veins of blood.

“Cease your ravings! Everything you’ve said is a contradiction of the East Pill Division’s Dao of alchemy! You’re simply trying to sow seeds of doubt in my heart. Such actions are worthy of execution!! My unfamiliarity with those pill formulas proves only that I’m unaware of where you acquired them! You’re just trying to put on a show!”

In Meng Hao’s mind, this old man was tenaciously annoying. A cold smile spread on his face as he retorted: “Oh? I’m just trying to put on a show? Furnace Lord Zhou, let me ask you this. What medicinal plant were you just holding in your hand?”

“Medicinal plant?” Old man Zhou was so furious that he could only stare blankly for a moment. He slapped his bag of holding to produce the medicinal plant he had been lecturing about earlier. “This is Seven Leaf clove….”

He was about to continue talking when Meng Hao let out an uproarious laugh. “Seven Leaf clove thrives on light which contains opposing Yin and Yang properties. It only grows during the evening, when the sun and moon shine together. Furthermore, at dusk, it will shine with a glow that contains seven colors. It looks almost exactly the same as Confusion Apex leaf and Blue Dawn leaf. The only way to tell the difference is by examining the stems, leaves and branches. The sky conditions can also be used as a determining factor.” Meng Hao’s gaze was as cold as ice. “Obviously, the plant you are holding in your hand is not Seven Leaf clove, but Blue Dawn leaf!”

His words sent the valley into an uproar. All of the apprentice alchemists turned their heads to look at old man Zhou, whose face instantly tightened. To misidentify a medicinal plant would lead to an incredible loss of face within the Sect.

More importantly if Zhou, as a Furnace Lord, had misidentified a medicinal plant, it could have a destructive effect on his reputation.

“Dusk is about to fall,” said Meng Hao in a voice that could sever nails and chop iron. “Soon the sun and the moon will shine together in the sky. If that plant you’re holding is really Seven Leaf clove, then it will glow with seven colors, and prove that I am wrong. In that case, I will humbly apologize to you in front of all the Sect disciples here today. Furthermore, in the future, I will never dare to place myself in your presence.” He flicked his sleeve.

The debate with old man Zhou had long since gone past the appointed time to end the lecture. Dusk was about to fall, and the moon was just becoming visible.

The debate had gone on for a long time, but the apprentice and master alchemists present could barely hold back their enthusiasm. They were virtually entranced with the proceedings.

“Nonsense!” fumed old man Zhou. “I’m one hundred and thirty seven years old! How old are you? How could I possibly misidentify… huh?” Before he could finish, the sky grew dark as dusk arrived. The sun and moon were both shining in the sky!

However, as the light of dusk fell onto the medicinal plant in his hand, no trace of a seven-colored glow could be seen. Meng Hao didn’t need to say another word. The buzz of conversation lifted up from the apprentice alchemists in the valley.

“That’s not Seven Leaf clove!!”

“I can’t believe… Furnace Lord Zhou actually pulled out the wrong medicinal plant!”

“If he can’t even produce the right medicinal plant, who could possibly listen to him speak of the Dao of alchemy!”

When Zhou heard all of the things people were saying, his face paled. He felt so ashamed that he wanted to hide. However, fury rose within his heart as he stared angrily at Meng Hao. It seemed he still had some fight left.

“You ignorant youth. You’re spouting nonsense! I became a Furnace lord sixty years ago. You….”

“You became a Furnace Lord sixty years ago, and sixty years from now, you will still be a Furnace Lord. As for me, perhaps I’m ignorant, and perhaps I’m young, but I am a Furnace Lord, just like you. In sixty years, you will be forced to prostrate yourself in worship to me! The reason for that is… your Dao of alchemy is flawed!” Meng Hao stood. Without so much as looking at Zhou, he walked out of the valley.

Meng Hao’s words reverberated in the man’s ears like thunder. He raised his hand to point at Meng Hao, but then a tremor ran through his body, and he coughed up a mouthful of blood. “Flawed…? Flawed…..?” Meng Hao’s words echoed about in his mind, causing him to forget to even offer a retort.

As Meng Hao departed, the eyes of the tens of thousands of apprentice alchemists glowed brightly. They watched him leave, absolutely certain that in the days to come, his name would continue to send shockwaves throughout the East Pill Division. Furthermore, his future lectures would certainly be explosively popular.

Unfortunately, the ways of the world are impossible to fathom. Meng Hao’s days of comfort within the Violet Fate Sect were soon to come to an end.

A month after his debate with old man Zhou, Meng Hao sat in his Immortal’s Cave. He had just finished with a batch of medicinal pills, and was fantasizing about how he would take advantage of the resources of the Sect to concoct more pills and then accumulate a vast amount of Spirit Stones. It was at this time that a command jade slip arrived. Based on the recommendation of all the Furnace Lords of the East Pill Division, he was to be sent out of the Sect to gain experience.

After being promoted, all Furnace Lords were required to leave the Sect for a period of time to get experience. It was actually a rule, although a flexible one. Generally speaking, alchemists prefer to concoct pills in solitude, and don’t like to travel on the outside.

However, the Black Sieve Sect had offered vast compensation in exchange for the Violet Fate Sect to dispatch two Furnace Lords, one to give lectures on the Dao of alchemy, one to concoct special medicinal pills. Such an arrangement was common within the great Sects and Clans.

Even Li Tao, who wasn’t a Furnace Lord, had been invited a month before to visit the Li Clan. This was of course because they had purchased his Foundation Establishment Day.

As for Meng Hao, the reason he had been recommended to the Black Sieve Sect in the first place was because of the unorthodox nature of his promotion to Furnace Lord.

Of course, there were quite a few people who were just waiting for Meng Hao to make a fool of himself. The pills to be concocted outside for a great Sect were not ordinary, and every one would require the full skill of a Furnace Lord.

Considering that Meng Hao had bypassed some of the requirements for becoming a Furnace Lord, there really was no way for him to refuse the order.

“The Black Sieve Sect….” Meng Hao’s brow furrowed.

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# Chapter 245: Back To the Black Sieve Sect

Meng Hao didn’t really want to go, but the command jade slip had been issued, and he had no good reason to refuse. Furthermore… he owed a lot of medicinal pills to the Sect. All of his debts were in the official records, and although he didn’t have to pay up immediately, sooner or later, he would.

If he didn’t, then his access to medicinal plants would be restricted. Therefore, this trip outside the Sect would serve more than one purpose. Not only would he be able to gain experience, but he would could reduce some of his debt to the Sect.

“For Fang Mu, a trip to the Black Sieve Sect… is a great opportunity!” Determination glittered in Meng Hao’s eyes. His decision to go to the Black Sieve Sect having been made, the image of Elder Sister Xu appeared in his mind.

He also thought of Han Bei, as well as Zhou Jie, and all of the events which had occurred that year connected to the Black Sieve Sect. 1

“This time, I will be traveling in the Southern Domain as a Furnace Lord of the Violet Fate Sect.” Chuckling, Meng Hao flicked his sleeve to gather together the various items he would take with him. Then, jade slip in hand, he left his Immortal’s Cave.

Several days later.

“Grandmaster Zhou, Grandmaster Fang, this is a Black Sieve Fruit, which we grow here in the Black Sieve Sect. The flavor is as delectable as fine wine, and they are usually only given to Sect Elders.”

Somewhere outside of the Violet Fate Sect, a massive black airship shot through the air at top speed. It was crewed by several hundred Black Sieve Sect disciples, all of whom had extraordinary Cultivation bases within the Foundation Establishment stage.

There was one disciple of the Core Formation stage, the Alchemy Protector dispatched by the Black Sieve Sect to guard over the Violet Fate Sect disciples. He sat with them in the center of the airship, smiling, concealing the thoughtfulness which exist in his mind. In front of him was a white-haired old man in a black and purple robe; he seemed to emanate the Dao, and pure transcendence. Next to the old man was a handsome, fair-skinned young man.

The old man’s expression was that of indifference mixed with austerity. His Cultivation base was at the late Foundation Establishment stage. This was none other than Furnace Lord Zhou, whom Meng Hao had debated in the valley one month before.

The young man next to him emanated the faint scent of medicinal plants. He looked less like a Cultivator than a scholar. Naturally, this was none other than Meng Hao.

In addition to the Core Formation Cultivator, the Black Sieve Sect had also dispatched a young man who appeared to be a bit over thirty years of age. He wore a long bluish-black robe and seemed to abound in profundity and knowledge. He sat wordlessly off to the side, looking somewhat taciturn. When Meng Hao had caught sight of him for the first time several days ago, he had felt shock in his heart.

This was Zhou Jie!

Dao Child of the Black Sieve Sect!

This was the same person Meng Hao had battled years ago, a battle of the peak of Foundation Establishment! In that battle, Zhou Jie had lost. His open and upright actions had earned Meng Hao's respect, and he had spared his life. 2

Meng Hao hadn't seen him for five years, and now, something about him seemed different. Meng Hao couldn't quite tell what it was, but it left him with a very bizarre feeling.

Such thoughts swirled in his heart, but were not revealed on his face. After hearing the words of the Core Formation Cultivator, Meng Hao was still considering how to respond, when old man Zhou reached out to take one of the Black Sieve Fruits.

"What an extraordinary fruit," he said coolly. "It would be best used as a medicinal ingredient. I won't waste it by eating it." He glanced at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao didn't say anything. With a smile, he accepted the Black Sieve Fruit and then placed it in his bag of holding. Inwardly, he sighed. How could he possibly have imagined that the Violet Fate Sect would send him out with old man Zhou? Zhou was responsible for giving lectures regarding the Dao of alchemy, whereas he would be in charge of pill concocting.

For the entire time they had been on the airship, Zhou hadn't given Meng Hao anything but dirty looks. Of course, the people from Black Sieve Sect had picked up on this.

The Core Formation Cultivator had a wide smile on his face, but inwardly had some doubts. "This Furnace Lord Zhou Dekun is famous and deeply qualified. He's one of the top Furnace Lords, and his frequent visits to the Black Sieve Sect show how much the Violet Fate Sect respects us. However, this Fang Mu…. After asking around, I found that he finagled his way to Furnace Lord half a year ago. He's really nothing more than a master alchemist." Of course, the man would never allow any expression onto his face which would indicate he was looking down on Fang Mu. However, he did treat old man Zhou with a higher level of respect. 3

He laughed loudly. "If you'd like, Grandmaster Zhou," he said, his voice kind, "I can entreat the Sect Leader to provide both of you with even more

Black Sieve Fruits.”

Off to the side, Zhou Jie sat taciturnly. He hadn’t said a single word the entire time. In this respect, he was somewhat like Meng Hao, who wasn’t in the mood for conversation. Furthermore, it seemed to please old man Zhou that he was left to handle all the formalities.

The four people sat there, only two engaging in conversation, their expressions cheerful. Old man Zhou seemed very proud of himself. “This time,” he told himself, “I’ll show this pup how formidable I truly am.”

Time passed. The airship traveled quickly, and even made use of several teleportation portals. A few days later, the Hundred Thousand Mountains of the Black Sieve Sect appeared off in the distance.

Meng Hao had spent most of the time in secluded meditation. No one had dared to interrupt him; the Black Sieve Sect disciples all gave him looks filled with utmost respect.

As for Zhou, his actions were quite the opposite of Meng Hao’s. He engaged in bombastic discussions with the Core Formation Cultivator, flagrantly displaying his profound and awe-inspiring understanding of the Dao of alchemy.

Meng Hao didn’t mind, nor did he care about the way old man Zhou seemed to loathe him. Despite his loathing, he didn’t dare to ridicule Meng Hao like he had before. In fact, his debate with Meng Hao had left him fearful at heart.

This was Meng Hao’s first time to appear in front of outsiders as an alchemist. Observing the respect with which others treated him because of his position, he was even more reassured that he had made the right decision in joining the Violet Fate Sect.

Of course, if the people here found out that he was actually Meng Hao, then their killing intent would billow to the heavens. Whenever he heard the stories people told about Meng Hao, he would sigh inwardly.

“As of now, I’m truly a part of the Southern Domain. Five years ago, I was just an outsider.” He stood at the bow of the airship, lost in thought, staring off at the Black Sieve Sect, which was slowly growing closer and closer.

The Hundred Thousand Mountains stretched out seemingly without end. Black smoke from the gigantic incense burner rose up into the sky. The Black Sieve Sect seemed to be filled with a mysterious, incredible power.

The Black Sieve Sect disciple’s faces emanated a pride that seemed to stem from their bones, birthed by their endless mountains and the smoke which rose to the heavens.

Zhou and the Core Formation Cultivator strolled up, chatting. When Zhou saw Meng Hao, he snorted. They were fellow Sect members, and whatever ill feelings they had toward each other shouldn’t be overtly revealed to outsiders. Therefore, he only snorted, but didn’t say anything else, joining Meng Hao to look out at the Black Sieve Sect.

Of course, this wasn’t the first time Meng Hao had come to help the Black Sieve Sect. However, the circumstances this time were vastly different. As soon as the airship approached the Hundred Thousand Mountains, the sound of bells filled the air.

Six peals rang out, attracting the attention of hundreds of thousands of Black Sieve Sect disciples. Actually, none of them knew what was happening, but soon, inquiries were made and news began to spread.

The Black Sieve Sect had invited Furnace Lords from the Violet Fate Sect for a visit.

Soon, Meng Hao caught sight of dozens of beams of light flying out from the Black Sieve Sect, followed by hundreds of Conclave disciples.

Among the Conclave disciples was Han Bei. She had a strange expression on her face when she looked at Meng Hao. Meng Hao had made inquiries earlier about Elder Sister Xu, and had discovered that she had already become a Conclave disciple. However, she was not among the group that approached now.

Laughter rang out, followed by a clear, powerful voice from the group of Cultivators in the lead, who were all of the Core Formation stage. One was even of the Nascent Soul stage! “Greetings Grandmaster Zhou and Grandmaster Fang! Welcome to the Black Sieve Sect!”

The Nascent Soul Cultivator was no stranger to Meng Hao. He was none other than… Patriarch Violet Sieve! 4

He was also the person who has just spoken!

When enemies meet, eyes will usually turn red, and killing intent will explode out. Instead, Patriarch Violet Sieve’s face was filled with a smile. He expressed no arrogance because of his Nascent Soul Cultivation base, but rather utmost respect for the two alchemists.

Meng Hao’s expression was solemn. He quickly stepped forward, a respectful look on his face. Almost at the same time, old man Zhou also walked forward. Together, they clasped hands and greeted Patriarch Violet Sieve.

For the Black Sieve Sect to dispatch a Nascent Soul Cultivator to receive them was an extreme honor. As representatives of the Violet Fate Sect, Meng Hao and old man Zhou could certainly not commit a breach of etiquette.

“Grandmaster Zhou,” said Patriarch Violet Sieve, “you are one of the highest ranked Furnace Lords. Your rise to Violet Furnace Lord is surely just around the corner. Your esteemed presence in the Black Sieve Sect has added glitter to our humble abode.” He laughed heartily, smiling at Zhou, and then turned his attention to Meng Hao. “Grandmaster Fang, you are the youngest of the Furnace Lords of the Violet Fate Sect. Your fame is spreading throughout the Southern Domain, and I’ve long since heard your name. Seeing you today, I am now assured that you are a hero amongst commoners.”

Patriarch Violet Sieve’s words were spoken well. Although he inwardly cared more about old man Zhou, he did not show any disregard for Meng Hao. The Core Formation Cultivators who surrounded him clasped hands and saluted Meng Hao and old man Zhou. None of them showed even the slightest trace of arrogance, only utmost courtesy.

After some pleasantries were exchanged, one of the Core Formation Cultivators called over the Conclave disciples and introduced them to Meng Hao and old man Zhou. A slight smile appeared on Meng Hao's face as he nodded to the various disciples one after another.

"My respects, Grandmaster Zhou, Grandmaster Fang!"

"Greetings, Grandmaster Zhou, Grandmaster Fang." Normally, these Conclave disciples would have lofty and proud demeanors in front of outside Cultivators. But today, their expressions were filled with respect. The fame of Furnace Lords was enough to awe anyone.

The title of Grandmaster by which they were called was simply honorary, of course, as neither of them were true Grandmasters.

Old man Zhou smiled toward the Black Sieve Sect's Conclave disciples. Considering his age, all that was required of him was a slight nod. However, when he noticed that Meng Hao was doing the same, an irritated feeling arose in his heart.

When Han Bei was introduced, Meng Hao looked at her with a smile. He hadn't seen her for five years. If anything, she was more beautiful. Her figure was curvaceous 5, her face alluring, and as she stood there, it seemed as if rainbows would lose their color if they neared her. She was uniquely gorgeous.

"Han Bei extends greetings to Grandmaster Zhou and Grandmaster Fang," she said, her voice soft and velvety. Such a voice seemed capable of making the heart itch.

Meng Hao smiled and nodded, and was just about to glance over to the next person, when suddenly, a voice rang out in his mind. It had been a long time since the Demon Sealing Jade had spoken to him.

“Discarnate souls possess the body, desiring to return from the afterlife, a technique of quickening. Demons under the vault of the Heavens shall be incinerated; ashes shall fly. Seal them, and the sun of the seventh month shall be concealed; help them, and the blood of the Demon Sealer can fuse with its will!”

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3. Zhou Dekun’s name in Chinese is zhōu dé kūn – Zhou is a common surname. De means “morals” or “virtue.” Kun is one of the Eight Trigrams which represents Earth and has a variety of other meanings

5. The word I’m translating as curvaceous is kind of cool in Chinese. The characters are very visual:

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# Chapter 246: World Pill Division

“Fellow Daoist Han,” said Meng Hao suddenly, looking Han Bei up and down, “you look somewhat familiar. Have we met before?” Such presumptuous words were actually part of Meng Hao’s plan.

As soon as the words came out of his mouth, all of the Black Sieve Sect Conclave disciples looked at the two of them. Even the Core Formation experts glanced over, their eyes sparkling with interest.

Patriarch Violet Sieve’s interest was also piqued.

Old man Zhou was astonished.

Han Bei’s eyes focused on Meng Hao. “Grandmaster Fang, please forgive me, but, I really don’t remember….” She looked thoughtful, and seemed to have something flickering deep within her eyes. Meng Hao was sure that she was hiding something.

Had he not experienced her craftiness personally in the Black Sieve Sect’s Blessed Land, then he would never have been able to detect it.

“My mistake,” he said with a laugh. “Perhaps it’s just that I wished I had met you before.” Hearing this, the Black Sieve Sect Conclave disciples all smiled.

The Core Formation experts also smiled and shook their heads. Considering their age, they had long since abandoned the pursuit of beautiful women.

Old man Zhou frowned. In his opinion, it didn’t matter if Fang Mu was young, such behavior was really embarrassing for the Sect.

Patriarch Violet Sieve laughed. “Grandmaster Fang Mu, there will be plenty of time later for you youngsters to get to know each other. For now, why don’t you follow me as we enter the Sect?”

His face red, Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed to Patriarch Violet Sieve, “I’ve embarrassed myself in front of Senior,” he said.

Han Bei covered her mouth with her hand and blinked.

Meng Hao and old man Zhou entered the Sect, surrounded by the various members of the Black Sieve Sect. It was at this exact moment that suddenly, Patriarch Violet Sieve’s expression flickered. He turned to look off into the distance. Everyone else stopped moving and followed suit.

Patriarch Violet Sieve chuckled. “It seems Grandmasters Li and Chen from the Golden Frost Sect’s World Pill Division arrived half a day early.” He waved his arm, and immediately bells tolled another six times within the Black Sieve Sect.

Meng Hao looked off into the distance, and before long, caught sight of a massive airship approaching at top speed. As it neared, a group of people flew off of the deck and down toward them. Two of their number wore long crimson robes, the sleeves of which were embroidered with pill furnaces. They seemed powerful and extraordinary, and both emanated a medicinal aroma.

“Hmph!” snorted Zhou Dekun, who stood next to Meng Hao. “I never imagined the Black Sieve Sect would also invite Grandmaster Eternal Mountain’s World Pill Division.”

Meng Hao looked at the two middle-aged master alchemists from Eternal Mountain’s World Pill Division. They smiled as they approached.

Meng Hao turned to Zhou Dekun and asked, “When other Sects extend invitations to alchemists, do disciples of the other Grandmasters of the Dao of alchemy always show up?”

“Sometimes, but not often,” replied Zhou Dekun. He had the mind to ignore Meng Hao. However, they were two fellow Sect members on the outside. Now that there were two people from Eternal Mountain’s World Pill Division present, it would be difficult to avoid friction regarding the Dao of alchemy.

Not wanting to make the following days in the Black Sieve Sect unstable, Zhou Dekun added, “It seems the Black Sieve Sect really wants to improve their Dao of alchemy, and as such, has also invited the World Pill Division.” Zhou Dekun frowned. By the time he finished speaking, Patriarch Violet Sieve and the others had already clustered politely around the two World Pill Division master alchemists to lead them into the Sect.

Almost as soon as they neared, one of the scarlet-robed alchemists from the World Pill Division, a tall, sturdy man with a powerful, extraordinary air, began to speak. “Fellow Daoist Zhou is also here? I seem to remember his mighty words from years ago, when he spoke of becoming a Violet Furnace Lord. Sixty years have passed already, Fellow Daoist Zhou, have you achieved your goal yet?” His gaze fell like lightning upon Zhou Dekun and Meng Hao.

“So, it’s Fellow Daoist Li,” said Zhou Dekun with a snort. The man’s words had touched directly on a painful matter in his heart, and he couldn’t help but snidely remark, “I haven’t seen you for years, and yet somehow your breath has gotten worse.”

The second of the two alchemists was somewhat skinny, and had a mustache shaped like the character . He looked at Meng Hao and gave a false smile. “This must be Grandmaster Fang Mu, the East Pill Division alchemist who people say finagled his way to becoming a Furnace Lord. Haha! Sir, I’ve been looking forward to meeting the famous Brother Fang for some time! Your name resounds like thunder in the ears of those who cultivate the Dao of alchemy. They say you’re a master alchemist who wears the clothing of a Furnace Lord!”

The instant these two alchemists from Eternal Mountain’s World Pill Division appeared, they spoke words filled with ill intentions. Their diametrical opposition to the East Pill Division alchemists was obvious.

The people from the Black Sieve Sect seemed to take all of this in stride. The Dao of alchemy of the East Pill Division was the most recognized throughout the Southern Domain, and their reputation was the most illustrious. The World Pill Division had been created by Grandmaster Eternal Mountain of the Golden Frost Sect. Although Eternal Mountain showed respect for Grandmaster Pill Demon, his disciples and followers grew more aggressive by the day. They refused to acknowledge the glory of the East Pill Division, and whenever the two sides met, regardless of the occasion, sparks would fly.

Meng Hao looked at the man named Chen, who had just spoken in such a sarcastic tone. “Who might you be?” he asked, his brow furrowed.

“Sir, I am Chen Jiaxi1, scarlet-robed master alchemist of the World Pill Division!” He smiled broadly as he looked at Meng Hao, his heart filled with envy because of Meng Hao’s status as a Furnace Lord. In his opinion, his own skill in the Dao of alchemy might not earn him the rank of Violet Furnace Lord were he in the East Pill Division, but he would definitely rank among the highest of the Furnace Lords.

Actually, many people in the World Pill Division entertained similar thoughts. After all… the alchemists of the World Pill Division were famous in the Southern Domain, but did not receive the same level of acknowledgement that the East Pill Division did. They were just a little bit lower, which of course fueled their disdain.

“You mean, you’ve heard of me?” asked Meng Hao, sounding astonished. No onlooker would find anything about his expression to be out of the ordinary. However, Zhou Dekun was well aware of the vicious language Meng Hao was capable of, and his heart began to thump. He knew that Meng Hao’s words were by no means a retreat.

Chen Jiaxi laughed at Meng Hao’s stunned expression, and his eyes filled with scorn. “How could any Cultivator of the Dao of alchemy not have heard of Alchemist Fang’s rise to Furnace Lord? In fact, I’d like to ask, how does it feel to wear the clothing of a Furnace Lord?”

It was as if a lightbulb went off over Meng Hao's head. He laughed, and said, "Oh, I get it. You know me because I'm a Furnace Lord of the East Pill Division. My words and deeds are common knowledge among all Cultivators of the Dao of alchemy. Therefore, my name reverberates like thunder in your ears. However, you are a simple scarlet-robed disciple of the World Pill Division who I've never even heard of. I guess you must have come today because you wanted to get to know me!"

"You!!" cried Chen Jiaxi, his eyes exploding with a cold glow. In his opinion, such words were a direct insult. Not only did they proclaim that his reputation was so unremarkable that his opponent had never heard of him, they also implied that the reputation of someone who had finagled his way to Furnace Lord rang like thunder in his ears.

Not only were the flames of Chen Jiaxi's anger stoked by Meng Hao's words, the man next to him, Li Yiming, glared at Meng Hao icily. "How sharp-tongued!" he said.

Seeing that the altercation was about to intensify, Patriarch Violet Sieve cleared his throat and stepped between the two parties, followed by other Core Formation experts. With smiles on their faces, they led the way into the Hundred Thousand Mountains.

The arguing ceased immediately. Now that they were in the Black Sieve Sect, both the East Pill Division and the World Pill Division must give face. After all, they had been invited here, and the Black Sieve Sect wouldn't want a violent conflict to erupt the moment their guests entered the Sect.

Zhou Dekun surreptitiously glanced at Meng Hao. Although he had a low opinion of him, he was secretly pleased. Meng Hao's words just now had left him feeling quite satisfied.

They flew along, eventually reaching the Hundred Mountains, and a large temple which spread out beneath a green mountain peak. Here, the Black Sieve Sect had arranged a banquet to welcome the East Pill Division and World Pill Division.

Patriarch Violet Sieve made no more appearances. The mere fact that he had arrived to escort the master alchemists from the two Divisions was evidence of the respect offered by the Black Sieve Sect.

Most of the Sect’s Conclave disciples attended the banquet. Meng Hao saw Zhou Jie and Han Bei. However, he didn’t see Elder Sister Xu, which made him a bit worried, although he didn’t show it on his face.

Zhou Dekun engaged in lively conversation with the crowds of people. Li and Chen, the scarlet-robed master alchemists of the World Pill Division seemed very comfortable in such a setting, and quickly became a center of attention.

Also in attendance were six Core Formation Cultivators, who all sat together but interacted courteously with everyone present. The Black Sieve Sect really seemed to have gone all out in their attempts to welcome the alchemists from the two Sects.

The banquet wound to an end as night fell. As everyone began to depart, Meng Hao was escorted to an area of the Hundred Mountains called the Black Welcoming Mountains. On the peak of one of the mountains was a luxurious residence which was surrounded by various restrictive spells that made it extremely safe.

Considering Meng Hao came as a representative of the Violet Fate Sect, the Black Sieve Sect could not possibly allow any harm to come to him. This of course was a matter of face and relationship between two great Sects.

Late in the night, Meng Hao sat cross-legged within the building, breathing deeply. After meditating for some time, his body began to emanate a white Qi as he dissolved the alcohol from the beverages he had consumed during the banquet. Before consuming them, he had examined the alcohol using his skill with plants and vegetation, and knew that it was safe.

Some time passed, and then Meng Hao’s eyes opened. They glowed with a brilliant light.

“Han Bei is incredibly intelligent. Perhaps I shouldn’t have openly addressed her earlier. What is she hiding?” He thought about the matter for some time, but couldn’t come up with any theories. “I didn’t see Elder Sister Xu today, I wonder how she is…? And what about Zhou Jie? Something seems very off about him. He seems different than before….” After more thought, his eyes began to flicker. “What exactly did the Demon Sealing Jade mean….” He closed his eyes and continued to meditate.

1. Chen Jiaxi’s name in Chinese is chén jiā xǐ – Chen is a common surname. Jia means “good,” “splendid,” and a variety of similar words. Xi means “happiness”

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# Chapter 247: Kill Me!

Early the next morning, the dawn sun peeked out and sunlight fell upon Black Welcoming Peak. The mountain was verdant and green, and while there were no singing birds or fragrant flowers, Meng Hao’s spirits were lifted as he gazed out of the second story balcony at the lush vegetation of the surrounding mountain range.

The undulating mountains, covered with emerald green vegetation, were illuminated by brilliant sunlight. The glow fell upon Meng Hao’s black robe, causing its violet aura to grow stronger. Anyone who looked at it would have a hard time deciding if it were black or violet.

The mountain breeze lifted up his long hair, making it seem as if Meng Hao himself wished to float away with the wind. As he stared off into the distance, a violet light gleamed within his eye.

This was the manifestation of Violet Qi from the East, which had also turned his six Dao Pillars a violet hue.

After a long moment passed, Meng Hao took in a deep breath, then left the residence. As he began to walk down the mountain path which threaded through the Black Welcoming Mountains, he encountered Black Sieve Sect disciples who immediately saluted with clasped hands, their faces filled with politeness, yet maintaining some of the pride they felt as members of the Black Sieve Sect. Obviously, word had been spread throughout the Sect regarding how to treat the visitors.

Meng Hao smiled, returning the salute, and continuing on his way.

He soon emerged from the Black Welcoming Mountains and found himself in the middle of the Hundred Mountains. This was an area restricted to

Conclave disciples.

Looking around at all the Black Sieve Sect disciples and buildings, and the enormous incense burner up above, Meng Hao sighed inwardly. Before joining the Violet Fate Sect, he could never have imagined that one day he would be able to stroll about the Black Sieve Sect in such a leisurely fashion.

“It’s a good thing the meat jelly shed its skin a long time ago. If that happened now, my identity would be revealed immediately.” He walked among the buildings, eventually coming to a halt at the edge of a public square. There, he could see dozens Black Sieve Sect disciples sitting cross-legged, Han Bei included.

An old man was in the midst of giving a sermon, explaining various scriptures regarding Black Sieve Sect magical techniques. Meng Hao had seen this man before; he was one of the Core Formation Cultivators who had received him yesterday along with Patriarch Violet Sieve.

The old man’s voice rang out coolly: “The magic of the Black Sieve Sect can be divided into the will of the Black Underworld, and the teaching of the Sieve of Heavens. The Underworld represents the spirits of the nine earths. The Sieve represents the will of the nine heavens. Therefore, in the Black Sieve Sect, Underworld magic is used to kill, and the will of the Heavens is divine. You must bear these sacred teachings in mind as you practice your cultivation. In the future, your path will lead to the Heavens.” It was at this point that he caught sight of Meng Hao.

He nodded slightly, obviously aware of who Meng Hao was. He didn’t say anything, but instead looked over his audience. Eventually his gaze came to rest on Han Bei. He gave her a meaningful look, and she sighed inwardly, then rose and walked over to Meng Hao.

The old man’s expression remained the same as he continued to discuss the Sect scriptures. He would never have allowed any other outsider to hear such discussions of Sect matters, but considering Meng Hao’s status, it wouldn’t be appropriate to drive him away. Therefore, he asked Han Bei to lead him away.

Han Bei actually did not want to accept this assignment, but she really had no way to refuse. Without any trace of her feelings showing, she arrived at Meng Hao’s side. A beautiful smile blossomed onto her face.

“Grandmaster Fang, you’re such an early riser! Why don’t you accompany me? I’ll show you some of the sights around the Sect.” She was as beautiful as a flower, her voice soft and entrancing.

Meng Hao was well aware that it wasn’t very appropriate for him to stay and listen to the Sect sermons. He nodded pleasantly at Han Bei and then said, “To be accompanied by such a stunning flower would be my honor.”

The two of them strolled off.

When they were some distance away from the square, Han Bei smiled and said, “Grandmaster Fang, you are truly refined and poetic. I don’t deserve to be referred to as a flower.” Her eyes sparkled, and her flowing, blue silk garment wrapped around her in a way that truly made her look like a flower.

Han Bei was inherently beautiful, her smile dazzling. She might be a flower, but to Meng Hao, she was a rose, covered with poisoned thorns. He would never forget the softness with which she had uttered the words “Xie, dear” in the Black Sieve Sect’s Blessed Land. 1

In response to her words, Meng Hao laughed a bit, but didn’t respond. Instead, he just looked her up and down.

“Grandmaster Fang, don’t tell me you’re still thinking about whatever place it was that you wished you had seen me before?” She laughed lightly, but deep within her eyes, Meng Hao could see that she harbored a measure of anxiety. She didn’t think Meng Hao could tell, but considering how well he knew her, he noticed it with a single glance.

Meng Hao’s mind instantly spun into action. He knew that Han Bei was not the type of woman to get nervous easily. He thought back to all the times he had seen her before.

“I’ve embarrassed myself in front of you, Fellow Daoist Han,” he said. “It’s just that, I really am interested in you.” He looked at her, allowing a glow of interest to shine in his eyes.

When Han Bei saw this, her heart instantly seized. From the moment Meng Hao had entered the Sect, an uneasy feeling had overtaken her. Now, her anxiety was growing stronger. However, her skill in scheming ran deep, and she did her best to hide her feelings. She kept her brow smooth, and covered her face with a smile.

Continuing to stroll along, she responded, “Grandmaster Fang, I’m truly honored by your words. However, I truly don’t understand. What exactly about me interests you?” She looked at him, blinking.

“The surname Han is a special one,” said Meng Hao slowly, looking at the rising sun off in the distance.

Hearing this, Han Bei’s expression didn’t change. She smiled and replied, “How is it special?”

“It’s special because it’s one of the Nine Great Families.” His expression was the same as usual, but his words caused Han Bei to frown and sigh. Meng Hao knew that these actions were simply a means to cover up her true reaction.

His heart trembled, and more than ever he got the feeling that something fishy was going on.

“You’re right,” said Han Bei, looking at him. “My ancestors were among the Nine Great Families.”

They came to a stop outside a stretch of emerald-green mountain forest. The wind blew softly, causing the leaves to rustle. Off in the distance, the sound of running water could be heard. The sounds of nature merged together into something similar to music.

Surrounded by the beauty, Meng Hao said nothing. He gazed at Han Bei, and she returned his look.

After a long moment, he laughed, turning his head to look at the green forest. He strolled over to where a mountain stream ambled on toward the east. He looked down into the stream, where fish flitted above the smooth stones of the stream bed. A thoughtful expression appeared in his eyes.

“Something is unusual about Han Bei,” he thought. “How come she’s so nervous around me? It can’t have anything to do with Fang Mu, and she doesn’t know that I’m Meng Hao. In that case… it must have to do with the East Pill Division!”

Han Bei stood next to him, her expression the same as ever. Enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, whereupon she suddenly slapped her bag of holding. A glowing jade slip appeared. After glancing at it for a moment, she gave Meng Hao a slight curtsey.

“This place is secluded and quiet, Grandmaster Fang. If you wish, you can stay here a while. Unfortunately, there are some matters I have to attend to, and I don’t wish to disturb your ruminations. This jade slip contains a map of the Black Sieve Sect, please feel free to use it to go enjoy some of the scenery. I’ll take my leave now.” She handed him the jade slip, then turned lithely and made to leave.

As she did, Meng Hao casually said, “One of your friends in the East Pill Division wished me to pass on greetings to you. As for that matter….” His words seemed to be filled with meaning, and yet were ambiguous and equivocal. Really, any meaning could be derived from them.

However, as soon as Han Bei heard them, her heart began to pound. Her back was turned to Meng Hao, so she allowed her eyes to narrow. However, her posture betrayed no clue regarding her thoughts. She slowly turned her head, and when she did, her face was covered with a look of surprise.

“Grandmaster Fang, I’m not really sure what you mean,” she said, blinking. Her expression filled with confusion, as if she were trying very hard to figure out which friend Meng Hao was referring to.

If she had not manifested such an expression, Meng Hao would have been left guessing. But such a reaction solidified his speculations.

There was definitely something going on with Han Bei.

Based on his understanding of her, he knew that were she not harboring some deep anxiety, she would take advantage of such a topic of conversation to gather more information from him. Instead, she instantly displayed an expression of surprise.

He laughed. “I see. I clearly mistook you for someone else.” He said nothing further. Currently, he wasn’t sure exactly what secret Han Bei was keeping. That would take further deliberation. However, he also knew that speaking too much could lead to slip-ups. Then, Han Bei might come to the conclusion that she was being played, and that could lead to unnecessary complications.

Hearing Meng Hao’s words, Han Bei gave him a vague smile. Saying no more, she gave another curtsey, then turned and left. It wasn’t until she was very far way, that her face grew pale and went tight with anxiety.

“East Pill Division…” she murmured as she sped off into the distance.

Meng Hao watched her disappear, and his eyes glowed with thoughtfulness.

Han Bei had been acting strangely from the moment he had entered the Black Sieve Sect. She didn’t want anyone to notice her nervousness, but Meng Hao could tell that he had just managed to charge directly into whatever secret she was harboring deep in her heart.

After much thought, though, he wasn’t able to deduce what relationship Han Bei could possibly have with the East Pill Division. He looked down at the jade slip she had given him. He scanned it with Spiritual Sense, and a map of the various mountains of the Black Sieve Sect appeared in his mind.

Some areas were marked with magical symbols indicating that they were prohibited. After a while, Meng Hao lifted his head and walked off.

He strolled alone through the Black Sieve Sect until about midday. Off in the distance, he could see Black Welcoming Peak, and was just about to return when suddenly his eyes narrowed. He turned and looked off into the distance.

In that exact instant, a shrill scream shattered the peace and quiet within the Black Sieve Sect. At the foot of a distant mountain, roaring could be heard. The ground trembled and a crazed Cultivator flew forward, his hair whipping around his head.

“Kill me! Kill me!” he bellowed, his voice shaking the surrounding land. As he flew forward, multiple beams of light flew up into the air and shot toward him.

Meng Hao stared with narrowed eyes, because he recognized this Cultivator. It was none other than Black Sieve Sect Dao Child Zhou Jie!

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# Chapter 248: The Origin of Time!

The incoming figures flew with incredible speed, but Zhou Jie was even faster. His howls echoed up as he transformed into a beam of light that sped through the air.

He wasn’t far from Meng Hao, and soon grew even nearer. Meng Hao could clearly see Zhou Jie’s insanity and confusion. His eyes were bloodshot and filled with pain.

It seemed as if he truly wished to die!

“Kill me!!” he screamed. It was at this point that the other Black Sieve Sect people arrived. There were five of them, all Core Formation Cultivators. Their hands flickered in incantation gestures, and suddenly the ground around Zhou Jie sank down. A booming sound rippled out, and Zhou Jie seemed to be suddenly suppressed. His face warped, and the frenzied agony in his eyes reached a pinnacle of intensity.

A massive boom exploded out from Zhou Jie’s body, sending the five Core Formation Cultivators tumbling backward several paces, their faces pale and blood spewing from their mouths.

Seeing all this, Meng Hao’s mind was reeling, and he had trouble believing it all was real. Zhou Jie was of the great circle of Foundation Establishment, halfway to Core Formation. However, his attack just now caused five early Core Formation stage Cultivators to spit up blood. Meng Hao gasped at the sight of it.

Suddenly, Zhou Jie’s Cultivation base started to climb. Explosive power emanated out, and his howls reached up to the heavens.

The voice of the Demon Sealing jade suddenly rose up in Meng Hao's mind, although it was a bit different from earlier when he had seen Han Bei for the first time. "Discarnate souls possess the body, returned from the afterlife, a quickening. Intentional or not, the soul has already been harmed."

Suddenly, a person appeared next to the crazed Zhou Jie. He lifted his hand and pressed down onto Zhou Jie's shoulder. Zhou Jie's body trembled, and his power began to dissipate. The insanity seeped out of his eyes, and the confusion disappeared. The only thing that remained was a strange pain.

His body trembled. The pain in his eyes seemed to contain immeasurable torment. This was a Dao Child who had won Meng Hao's respect all those years ago. He seemed clearheaded now, but he still uttered two words. "Kill me…."

Most people are not capable of truly seeking death; the desire to live is ever-present. The only people who will truly seek death are… those whose lives are a living hell!

After speaking, Zhou Jie lost consciousness. The figure who had appeared next to him was none other than Patriarch Violet Sieve. His expression was dignified as he grabbed unconscious Zhou Jie and made to leave. Suddenly, he turned his head to look at Meng Hao.

"Grandmaster Fang Mu, we've incurred your ridicule. This kid Zhou Jie became addled while practicing cultivation, and went a bit crazy." He sighed and shook his head. With that, he carried Zhou Jie away, followed by the five Core Formation Cultivators.

Meng Hao stood there silently. Everything that had just happened had left him shaken. The Dao Child from five years ago and the Zhou Jie from right now were completely different. What had happened to cause such an unfortunate change?

He began to think subconsciously about his battle with Zhou Jie that rainy night.

Late morning had arrived. Meng Hao turned and headed back to the Black Welcoming Peak, and his residence there.

He sat down cross-legged, reviewing everything that had just happened with Zhou Jie, as well as the words of the Demon Sealing jade. The bizarre secrets of the Black Sieve Sect seemed to grow even more numerous. A long time passed, and Meng Hao finally shook his head and put the matter aside. He slapped his bag of holding to produce a pill furnace.

He was outside of his Sect, but he still would maintain his custom of concocting pills every day. He tapped the pill furnace, and a roaring could be heard. He produced some Earthly fire crystals and prepared to concoct a batch of poison pills.

After becoming a Furnace Lord, poison pills were what he concocted the most often. Based on the various interactions of plants and vegetation, powders or poison pills could be created.

There were countless varieties, each with their own unique characteristics.

Based on the requirements, Meng Hao would produce a medicinal plant and catalyze it. At the moment, he held a Treasure Leaf flower in hand, which wasn’t poisonous. Meng Hao catalyzed it until it was almost withered.

By catalyzing it to this point, and then grafting it onto another medicinal plant, he could create traces of undetectable poison.

A purple glow rose up from Meng Hao’s palm, the power of catalysis. The Treasure Leaf flower began to sway and grow. It was at this point, that a tremor suddenly ran through Meng Hao; his eyes went wide and began to shine. He began to breathe heavily, and in his mind, thoughts flashed about like lightning. He’d just had an idea.

It was an idea related to Zhou Jie, Han Bei and the East Pill Division!

As soon as the idea flashed into his head, great waves seemed to seethe within his mind. His concentration was broken, and his spiritual power grew unstable. The precious Treasure Leaf flower in his hand suddenly began to collapse.

At the moment, Meng Hao didn’t care about how valuable the Treasure Leaf flower was. His breathing was agitated and his eyes glittered. He stood up, forgetting about his pill concocting and focusing fully on the idea, which grew and expanded in his mind.

Meng Hao began to mutter to himself. With each statement, his eyes began to shine more and more brightly. “East Pill Division…. Violet Will Incantation…. The power of catalysis… it causes medicinal plants to grow… speeds up pill concocting…. the Han Clan, one of the Nine Great Families…. Han Bei…. Refining Time…. Forging a treasure of Time… something which can transform Time….” By this point, his eyes seemed to be shining as brightly as the sun. He suddenly lifted his head up and gasped.

“The East Pill Division’s Violet Will Incantation is clearly the Time-refining skill of the Han Clan!!” Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding to retrieve the Time-refining jade page that he had acquired with Han Bei in the ancient Blessed Land.

This wasn’t the first time he had studied the jade page. It recorded information about how to refine Time and forge the Time treasure. Meng Hao strongly desired to possess such a treasure.

However, this was only one jade page of three. The first remained in the cauldron in the Blessed Land, and another had been swallowed by the meat jelly. Meng Hao had the third page, which did contain information on how to refine the Time treasure. However, to do so would require several hundred years to build up sufficient Time power. After learning this, Meng Hao had given up.

It would simply take too long; it was impossible for him to forge the treasure that way.

Time passed, and soon it was nighttime. Moonlight covered the land. Meng Hao took a deep breath and began to compose himself. His eyes glowed with an unprecedented light.

“I should have thought of this earlier…. Refining Time, Violet Will catalysis…. They are both essentially the same type of divine ability! Basically, they are both magical techniques that were developed from the same magical source! This third page describes a time-sealing technique. The power of one year of Time can be locked in for every ten years. Six hundred years will lock in sixty years of Time. In that case, the power of ten sixty-year cycles could be used to create a lesser version of the Time treasure.” Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding to produce a Spring and Autumn tree.

“Perhaps the page swallowed by the meat jelly, the second page, or even the first page which is still in the Cauldron in the Blessed Land, contains a record of the East Pill Division’s Violet Will catalysis technique! In order to forge the Time treasure, Violet Will catalysis is absolutely necessary!” He looked down at the jade page and the Spring and Autumn tree, his eyes shining.

“There’s only one way to find out for sure!” Without hesitation, Meng Hao caused a violet glow to appear in his hand. A look of concentration filled his face as he employed the full power of the Violet Will Incantation and poured it into the Spring and Autumn tree.

Time passed. Soon two hours had gone by. Meng Hao frowned. The Spring and Autumn tree was like a black hole which relentlessly sucked in all the catalyzing power of the Violet Will Incantation. It didn’t seem to have any effect whatsoever on the Spring and Autumn tree.

Meng Hao muttered to himself and looked around. Finally, he let out a cold harrumph and then produced his Furnace Lord medallion. He pressed it, and a violet shield emerged, surrounding Meng Hao’s residence.

This was a function of the Furnace Lord medallion; it would create a screening shield that could block even Spiritual Sense. In this way, the Furnace Lords couldn’t be spied upon while concocting pills.

It had taken quite a bit of resources for the East Pill Division to develop such an art. To date, no one had ever been able to break it. Furnace Lords didn’t always use it when concocting pills. However, it would last for several hours, during which time it was impenetrable.

If too much time passed, though, it was possible for Spiritual Sense to break through.

With the shield in place, Meng Hao ceased to restrict his Cultivation base. Immediately the full power of his six Perfect Dao Pillars was unleashed.

The shield around him glowed with a gentle warmth, covering everything with its protection. At the same time, the meat jelly’s transformative powers dissipated. Meng Hao exploded with the full power of his Cultivation base.

He knew that he couldn’t keep this up for a very long time; he didn’t want to cause any complications with his current situation. Therefore, he went all out with his power, employing the peak of the power of Violet Will catalysis.

In the blink of an eye, the Spring and Autumn tree slowly began to grow green. Suddenly, a bud appeared!

Seeing the bud caused Meng Hao’s eyes to fill with excitement. The power of his Cultivation base instantly dissipated. He lifted his left hand and performed an incantation. Phantom images appeared, ten seals, which he immediately slapped down onto the Spring and Autumn tree.

These ten sealing incantations were none other than the Time sealing magic.

Beneath the power of the sealing, the Spring and Autumn tree trembled, then slowly returned to its normal state. However, Meng Hao could clearly tell that something was different about the tree than from before. It seemed thicker and heavier, and deep inside was just a touch of a sensation that seemed to be the aura of Time.

“It worked!” His eyes glittered brightly as he put the tree away and dissipated the violet shield emanated by the Furnace Lord medallion.

“Unfortunately, its not convenient to employ the full power of my Cultivation base. Once I leave the Black Sieve Sect, I can do some more tests and see how many years of Time I can add to the Spring and Autumn tree.” He took a deep breath to calm his racing heart. He had thought a lot about the Time treasure throughout the years. But when it came to the hundreds of years of refinement that were required, he could only sigh. Now, though, he had a method that seemed to be able to allow him to proceed with creating the Time treasure. He was confident that it wouldn’t take long for him to do so, and end up with a treasure that contained a full sixty-year cycle of Time.

He wasn’t sure exactly what powers such a treasure would have, but he keenly anticipated finding out. He was sure that a treasure forged by either the Han Clan’s divine ability or the East Pill Division’s Violet Will incantation, would not disappoint!

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# Chapter 249: Reconciled

“Well, it seems this trip to the Black Sieve Sect was by no means for naught!” Having put away the Spring and Autumn tree, Meng Hao smiled. However, deep in his eyes flickered a bit of doubt.

“There seems to be a deep connection between Han Bei and the East Pill Division. I wonder what secret lies there….” He thought about it for a bit, but then put the matter aside. Early morning light once again filled the sky outside.

“As for Zhou Jie, why did he go crazy? When I reencountered him for the first time earlier, something didn’t seem right… Discarnate souls possessing the body, returned from the afterlife….” Meng Hao sat there lost in thought for a while, before raising his head to look outside.

Moments later, he heard a respectful voice from outside. “Grandmaster Fang, the World Pill Division’s Grandmaster Chen will deliver an alchemy lecture today. Would you like to attend?”

Meng Hao thought about it for a moment. He was curious as to how these alchemists from the World Pill Division understood the Dao of alchemy. He rose to his feet and joined the disciple from the Black Sieve Sect. Together, they descended Black Welcoming Peak.

The location of the alchemy lecture was the fifty-seventh mountain of the Black Sieve Sect. This mountain had no peak; its top had been shorn off to create a massive public square which was filled with rings of seats that could fit tens of thousands of spectators.

By the time Meng Hao arrived, there were already more than twenty thousand Black Sieve Sect Cultivators present. They represented a variety of stages, including Qi Condensation, Foundation Establishment and Core Formation, all seated around a raised dais.

Chen Jiaxi and Li Yiming from the World Pill Division sat cross-legged atop the dais, meditating.

Surprisingly, off in the distance were three tables, seated behind one of which was Patriarch Violet Sieve. Next to him was a beautiful middle-aged woman. Meng Hao recognized her as the same woman who had taken Elder Sister Xu from the Reliance Sect all those years ago.

At the third table was a ruddy-faced old man who sat at his table, his eyes flashing like lightning. It was impossible to fathom the level of his Cultivation base, but it seemed to Meng Hao that he was slightly more powerful than Patriarch Violet Sieve.

To have three Nascent Soul Cultivators present would make this alchemy lecture especially superb.

Seated cross-legged some distance in front of the three tables was Zhou Dekun, who was currently staring grimly at Chen Jiaxi and Li Yiming.

Meng Hao strode over and sat down next to him, his expression the same as ever.

Seemingly ignoring his previous distaste for Meng Hao, Zhou Dekun said, “These two are far too arrogant. They came to visit me yesterday on the pretense of paying their respects. In actuality, their words were filled with haughtiness. Apparently they believe that the World Pill Division has already exceeded the East Pill Division!” He really seemed to hate the two alchemists from the World Pill Division. Furthermore, Meng Hao was a fellow Sect member. There had been friction between them, but now they were in the outside world and had to stick together.

Meng Hao had barely seated himself before Zhou Dekun continued to rant: “The Black Sieve Sect invited alchemists from two other Sects to help train their own alchemists. Instead of having us lecture first, they ask the World Pill Division to speak! It’s outrageous!

“The two of us need to be careful. The World Pill Division clearly has ill intentions. They obviously want to humiliate us. If that happens, then we’ll lose a lot of face when we go back to the Sect.” Zhou Dekun clenched his jaw and stared fixedly at Chen and Li. “I probably have it a bit better off than you,” he continued. “You need to be careful in your pill concocting. Ai… Alright, listen. If you have any problems with your pill concocting in the coming days, come find me immediately. I can answer any questions you have. I’ll do my best to help you get up to speed as quickly as possible.”

Meng Hao smiled. There had been friction between the two of them, but the recent days spent together caused him to realize there was no reason to be so irked by the man. He shook his head with a smile. “I don’t think I’ll make any mistakes, don’t worry.”

“You… Ai… Fang Mu, we’ve had our differences. Big or small, it doesn’t really matter. Right now, the World Pill Division is trying to provoke us. We are here to represent the East Pill Division!” He looked over at Meng Hao. With a sigh, he slapped his bag of holding to produce a jade slip which he handed over. “I prepared this for you last night. It’s a collection of information based on my hundred years of cultivation of the Dao of alchemy. All of my knowledge and experience is collected together here. Take a close look, and we can corroborate and test the information together. I’m sure it will help you improve your skill in the Dao of alchemy.”

Meng Hao stared in shock for a moment. He accepted the jade slip and then scanned it with Spiritual Sense. He studied it silently for a long moment. Finally, he looked back up at Zhou Dekun. The information inside was genuine. It contained all the experiences of one of the most senior Furnace Lords of the Violet Fate Sect. The information therein was incredibly valuable.

After examining the jade slip, Meng Hao knew that he had been a bit rash before. Any Furnace Lord deserved respect, and could be learned from. Zhou Dekun’s way of thinking was a bit rigid, but his detailed understanding of the Dao of alchemy had reached the pinnacle.

Such attention to detail would affect the success rate of pill concoction. Meng Hao might be somewhat more talented than Zhou Dekun in the Dao of alchemy, and have a more profound understanding. However, his success rate in pill concoction was only around three or four batches out of ten.

From the jade slip, though, Meng Hao could see that Zhou Dekun's success rate was around eight batches out of ten.

"Many thanks, Grandmaster Zhou!" said Meng Hao, his expression serious as he clasped hands and bowed deeply to Zhou Dekun. This jade slip would be of no small help to him.

"There's no need for that," said Zhou Dekun. His expression, however, revealed how pleased he was. In his mind, he thought, "This kid might have finagled his way to being a Furnace Lord, but he doesn't seem that bad. When I get back to the Sect, I'll have to discuss things with the other Furnace Lords and see if I can improve his reputation." He cleared his throat, and then sighed and finally brought up something that had puzzled him endlessly, "For the past few days, I've been thinking about what you said in the valley that day. Actually, some of it does make sense…. Also, I wanted to ask you something. I really was sure that the plant I was holding was a Seven Leaf clove. I really didn't think I could have made a mistake. But, I know that the leaves should glow with seven colors at dusk. I just…."

Meng Hao gave an embarrassed grin. With a slight cough, he changed the subject.

If Meng Hao didn't seem willing to talk about it, then Zhou Dekun wouldn't press the subject. However, given his skill in the Dao of alchemy, he had some theories already. It seemed the relationship between the two of them was on the repair, and he didn't intend to cause any further problems. They began to discuss the Dao of alchemy, and both were benefiting. In fact, when the alchemy lecture started, they didn't pay hardly any attention to it. As the voices of Chen and Li rang out from the dais, they would frequently be filled with displeasure as the two men glared down at Meng Hao and Zhou Dekun.

Inwardly, Chen and Li laughed coldly at the disregard shown by the East Pill Division. However, they weren’t in a position to say anything openly. Meng Hao and Zhou Dekun continued their discussion, and appeared to be benefiting more and more as the time went on.

Zhou Dekun’s eyes gradually began to fill with admiration. Being able to calmly state their differences in opinion regarding the Dao of alchemy caused him to gradually reach new enlightenment.

As for Meng Hao, he realized that his own grasp of some of the finer details was simply insufficient. After getting advice from Zhou Dekun on the matter, he could tell that he was making improvements.

One old man, one youth, discussing matters passionately. Eventually, Zhou Dekun slapped his hand down onto the table and gasped in admiration. The action seemed a bit affected, causing Meng Hao to laugh. He decided that it was time for him to make a scene as well, so he also slammed his palm down onto the table and let out a gasp of admiration.

This instantly caused Chen and Li to exchange a cold look. Then, cold smiles broke out on their faces. Actually, they had long since decided to use this visit to the Black Sieve Sect as an opportunity to intimidate and shame the East Pill Division.

They didn’t plan to do so by means of the alchemy lectures, but rather the pill concocting. In this way, word would spread throughout the Southern Domain, and the two of them would immediately rise to prominence and gain sterling reputations.

Therefore, they held their tongues. Their alchemy lecture went on for two days, and not a single person left. However, throughout the course of the lecture, the spectators gradually divided into two groups. More and more people began to cluster around Meng Hao and Zhou Dekun to listen in on their discussion. They listened in entranced, understanding the majority, but not all, of the things which were being said.

This had been Zhou Dekun’s intention all along, so he was quite pleased.

Chen Jiaxi’s eyes grew darker. Finally, he finished his lecture, then turned to glare coldly at Zhou Dekun and Meng Hao. His voice grim, he said, “You two have been talking for two days. Well, now it’s time for the East Pill Division’s lecture. I’m very interested in hearing your understanding of the Dao of alchemy!”

Next to him, Li Yiming’s face was filled with displeasure. With a cold laugh, he said, “That’s right. The East Pill Division occupies the pinnacle of the Dao of alchemy in the Southern Domain. I’m very curious about your honored Sect’s understanding of the Dao of alchemy. What exactly is so amazing about it?”

Meng Hao frowned slightly. At first, he and Zhou Dekun had really been exchanging important knowledge about the Dao of alchemy. The majority of the time, though, they had mostly been putting on a show. As such, he had been able to listen to some of the World Pill Division’s understanding of the Dao of alchemy. They had some truly unique perspectives, many of which seemed reasonable.

Zhou Dekun gave a cold snort as he stood and headed up to the dais. As for him, he had also noticed some of the special areas from the World Pill Division’s lecture. How could he not have picked up on some of the uniqueness of their understanding? As the assigned lecturer during this trip to the Black Sieve Sect, he would not shrink back. He felt as if his knowledge had been honed by his chat with Meng Hao. Now he would do anything to avoid making any slip-ups.

Chen and Li left the dais, and Zhou Dekun stood there, his heart filled with determination. His current plan was to use his command of all the various explicit details to finagle his way through the first part of the lecture.

“In the great path of the Dao of alchemy, special attention must be focused on the variations of plants and vegetation, which must be committed to the heart. These things form Ultimate Truth! As such, the Dao of alchemy is eternal! Fellow Daoists, today, I, Zhou Dekun, shall elaborate upon the third realm of the plant and vegetation variations.” Zhou Dekun clearly wanted to drag things out as much as possible to give himself time to think.

However before he could continue, a cold laugh rang out from Chen Jiaxi.

“This is the first time I’ve heard of such a thing,” he said. “Grandmaster Zhou, you claim that the Dao of alchemy means to commit plants and vegetation to heart, which leads to Ultimate Truth. Therefore, I would like to ask you, what is this Ultimate Truth to which you refer?” He slapped his palm down onto the table. The sound echoed out, bolstered by his Cultivation base, to form an overbearing aura. He stared at Zhou Dekun.

Strange looks appeared on the faces of the surrounding Cultivators. Everything was quiet. Patriarch Violet Sieve and the other Nascent Soul Patriarchs did nothing to interfere. The conflicting views of the East Pill Division and the World Pill division had come to a head.

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# Chapter 250: Giving Birth to the Transformations of the Sun and Moon

Meng Hao frowned. He and Zhou Dekun might not like the World Pill Division very much, but just now, they had merely engaged in a discussion during their lecture. They hadn’t done anything particularly aggressive.

Chen Jiaxi’s words just now were far too direct, almost like the stab of a sword.

The World Pill Division had chosen to openly assault Zhou Dekun, to shame not just him, but the entire East Pill Division. They clearly wanted to improve their prestige by destroying Zhou Dekun and Meng Hao’s.

If Meng Hao and Zhou Dekun came out on the bottom today, it was easy to imagine how quickly the news would spread throughout the Southern Domain. The East Pill Division would suffer an incredible loss of face, and Meng Hao and Zhou Dekun would become laughingstocks.

For an alchemist, reputation was of utmost importance.

This was obviously exactly what Zhou Dekun was thinking about. His face was grave as he looked down from the dais at the proud Chen Jiaxi.

Chen Jiaxi glared right back at him. He had been waiting for this day for a long time. Based on his skill in the Dao of alchemy, he could be considered a Chosen in the World Pill Division. Furthermore, in terms of debating, there were few within the Sect who could outmatch him.

Days before, when he'd learned that the Black Sieve Sect had extended invitations to both the East Pill Division and the World Pill Division, he had immediately realized that it was an excellent opportunity.

At that time, he had decided to go to any length to take advantage of this opportunity to elevate himself…. As an alchemist, there was no better method to rise to prominence than humiliating a Furnace Lord of the East Pill Division.

The mere thought of it made him incredibly excited. As he stared at Zhou Dekun, what he saw was not a Cultivator, but a stepping stone to fame.

"After I crush this old fogey and that punk kid from the East Pill Division," he thought, "the name of Chen Jiaxi will rise to fame both within the Sect and without!"

Standing next to Chen Jiaxi was Li Yiming, who harbored exactly the same idea.

Zhou Dekun looked away from them and began to continue his lecture. "There are three realms of plants and vegetation. The first contains one hundred thousand medicinal plants. The second…." Before he could continue, Chen Jiaxi laughed uproariously. It echoed out gratingly.

He slammed his palm down onto the table and stood up. "Grandmaster Zhou Dekun, Furnace Lord of the East Pill Division, don't tell me you deny other Fellow Daoists the right to question or doubt the content of your lecture? Are you scared, or simply spouting nonsense? Or… could it be that you're trying to hoodwink the Fellow Daoists from the Black Sieve Sect?" His words were filled with sarcasm, and the sneer on his face was impossible to ignore. Complacency filled his heart; in his mind, he had already won!

Zhou Dekun angrily spun to face Chen Jiaxi. At this point, there was no way he could pretend to not have heard the words which were blatantly directed, not at him, but at the East Pill Division. Even if the attack was complete nonsense, he had no choice but do address it openly.

Seeing Zhou Dekun's reaction filled Chen Jiaxi with confidence. Before coming to the Black Sieve Sect, his inquiries had revealed that Zhou Dekun would be coming. The man was quite famous, but Chen Jiaxi's thorough investigation left him confident that he could defeat him in terms of understanding of the Dao of alchemy.

The Black Sieve Sect disciples in the square observed silently, but seemed to be getting excited. Many present were Conclave disciples, including Han Bei, who watched on with a smile as the conflict between the East Pill Division and the World Pill division intensified.

The three Nascent Soul Patriarchs sat there with eyes closed, apparently meditating. They did not interfere. Apparently they were more than happy at the scene which was unfolding.

"Grandmaster Zhou, glowering at me is useless," said Chen Jiaxi coolly. "You still haven't explained exactly what you mean by Ultimate Truth." His voice seemed completely normal. However, his eyes were filled with ridicule, which made Zhou Dekun even more furious.

"Truth is represented by rules," he replied, one word at a time. "Regardless of any other countless permutations, rules will always exist in your heart. Utilizing the unchangeableness of rules makes it possible to catalyze the ten thousand medicinal plants. Furthermore, verifying the Truth of the Dao of alchemy makes it possible to beget pill formulas. With enlightenment, one can sense the vast length of that which we call the path of alchemy. Continued exploration is the true goal!"

Chen Jiaxi stared in shock at his words. He had never imagined that Zhou Dekun would be able to respond in such a way. Actually, before meeting Meng Hao, Zhou Dekun wouldn't have been able to. However, their discussion just now had contained both verification of his previous understandings, and also new enlightenment. Chen Jiaxi and Li Yiming both frowned. The surrounding Cultivators also seemed to have gained new enlightenment.

"Grandmaster Zhou, I really can't agree with your explanation," said Chen Jiaxi, his eyes gleaming. As of this moment, he no longer looked down on

Zhou Dekun, but actually took him seriously. “If the self is unchangeable,” he said slowly, “then where do transformations come from?! The self is like a river. If the river does not flow, it will die. Moving water ensures the never-ending flow of the river; similarly, a changeable self ensures continued existence!” His words caused Zhou Dekun’s face to flicker. He was about to respond when Chen Jiaxi flicked his sleeve and interrupted: “Can a tree remain motionless amidst the wind? The only tree that doesn’t… is the tree that exists in a painting! The movement of the tree is evidence of the blowing wind, and of its own very existence!

“Grandmaster Zhou, you claim that the self is unchangeable. How laughable! Perhaps this is why you are still not a Violet Furnace Lord. Your understanding of the Dao of alchemy makes it clear that you are like a flower in love with its own fragrance! You’re simply fishing for fame and compliments! The only place you will become a Violet Furnace Lord is in a fairytale!”

The increasingly vicious words caused Zhou Dekun to tremble. He pointed at the man and said, “You… You….”

“I what? Don’t tell me you’re at a loss for words? A motionless river is nothing but dead water. An unmoving tree can exist only in a painting. Grandmaster Zhou, you obviously exist in a world of dead water, belittling the floating clouds. Are you, or are you not… fishing for fame and compliments!? You live in a painting, ignoring Heaven and Earth, blithe to the brilliance of the world outside. I say, you are a flower in love with its own fragrance. Am I wrong?” Chen Jiaxi’s voice continued to grow louder. By the time he reached the end of his tirade, Zhou Dekun’s face was pale, and his eyes seemed on the verge of bursting forth with flame. It was obvious to him that his opponent was twisting his words, and yet, the words somehow also seemed reasonable. His mind filled with words of response, but he just couldn’t get them out of his mouth.

“Nonsense!” he cried furiously. Hearing this, Meng Hao sighed inwardly.

“Nonsense?” said Chen Jiaxi. “Very well. Let me explain to you what Truth really is! Consider the Yin ( ) and the Yang ( ), the moon ( ) and the sun ( ). In the great world of alchemy, the boundless sun is the Yang, which encompasses everything that melts and burns. This is the pill furnace! The bright moon is the changeable Yin, which is the pill formula! This is Truth! Grandmaster Zhou, if you really stand at the pinnacle of the Dao of alchemy, do you really dare to claim that the pill furnace, which is represented by the boundless sun, can exist in your heart? Are you bold enough to claim that the moon, which represents endless pill formulas, can be formulated in your heart? To say that you are fishing for fame and compliments, a flower in love with its own fragrance, is really going easy on you!”

There was no response but silence. Chen Jiaxi’s words echoed back and forth in the square. All of the Black Sieve Sect disciples looked on in shock.

Patriarch Violet Sieve and the beautiful woman had opened their eyes, and were looking at Chen Jiaxi, their expressions serious.

Zhou Dekun’s body trembled. He wanted to speak, but his mind was in chaos. All eyes were focused on him. To be openly ridiculed in such a way made him so upset that he was speechless.

Just when he was opening his mouth to speak, Meng Hao’s cold voice rang out. “I, Fang Mu, have a few questions.” He stood, flying up to stand next to Zhou Dekun atop the dais.

Zhou Dekun looked at Meng Hao as if he were a blood relative. He knew Meng Hao’s incisive way with words. Breathing deeply, he said no more, instead taking a few steps back, more than happy to let Meng Hao take center stage.

Meng Hao’s cold gaze swept about, eventually landing on Chen Jiaxi.

“Please, elaborate,” Chen Jiaxi said, smiling. His expression was one of indifference, but inwardly, he was composed and ready. He didn’t know much about this Fang Mu, but considering their first conversation outside of the Black Sieve Sect, he knew that he wasn’t someone who could be messed with easily.

However, he had faith in his own Dao of alchemy. Besides, Fang Mu had finagled his way into being a Furnace Lord. Therefore, Chen Jiaxi was supremely confident. A snide smile filled his face.

All the surrounding Black Sieve Sect disciples turned to look at Meng Hao. Han Bei’s eyes narrowed, hiding the glow which filled them. All attention was focused on Meng Hao, even the gaze of the beautiful woman, who sat there cross-legged, looking at him with a quizzical expression.

After hearing Chen Jiaxi’s words, most of the Black Sieve Sect disciples felt that they were quite reasonable.

“I have three questions,” said Meng Hao, his voice cool. “The first question is regarding Truth. You mentioned the sun and the moon. The boundless sun, you say, is the furnace, and the bright moon births the pill formula. Let me ask you, who invented the pill furnace, and who created the pill formula?”

“Grandmaster Fang, have you really learned so little of the Dao of alchemy?” replied Chen Jiaxi with a laugh. “The ancients gazed upon the boundless sun, and were inspired to forge the pill furnace. As for the pill formula, again, the ancients gained enlightenment from the moon and then recorded the countless variations of plants and vegetation. Thus, I say that the boundless sun is the furnace and the bright moon is the formula. The sun and the moon are a forge which bring forth all living things!” A murmur of excitement rippled through the crowd.

Meng Hao responded in a cool voice, speaking neither quickly nor slowly: “The boundless sun is a heavenly body in the sky. Its blinding radiance makes it impossible to see any other star. When the ancients gazed upward, what they looked at was not the sun, but rather, the sky! You claim Grandmaster Zhou is fishing for fame and compliments. Well, Grandmaster Chen, I say that you are a frog in a well, who looks at the blazing sun, but cannot see the sky which contains that very sun!

“The moon is another of the many heavenly bodies, frequently seen in the night sky. Because of the existence of the darkness and the light, people believed that the night sky and the bright daytime moved in rotation. In reality, among all the heavenly bodies, the only thing that does not move, are the Heavens themselves!

“You assert that Grandmaster Zhou is a lone flower in love with its own fragrance. Grandmaster Chen, I say that you are shortsighted. You, a tiny alchemist, dare to claim that the sun and moon are a forge that give birth to all living things! Since you thus reveal how much you overrate yourself, then I, Fang Mu tell you today, if the sun and moon are a forge that gives birth to all living things, then the forge of the Heavens is what gives birth to the transformations of the sun and moon!” By the time he reached his final sentence, his voice rang out like thunder, stabbing into Chen Jiaxi’s heart, whose face immediately fell.

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# Chapter 251: Meng Hao’s Dao of Alchemy!

Each and every Black Sieve Sect Cultivator in the enormous square watched on with excitement. It was as if massive thunderbolts had struck their hearts and minds, and continued to echo out.

“The forge of Heavens is what gives birth to the transformations of the sun and moon!”

The words echoed out, causing everyone to pant. The beautiful woman stared at Meng Hao with wide eyes. Next to her, Patriarch Violet Sieve was so moved that he closed his eyes.

Everything grew silent.

“You…” Chen Jiaxi’s expression immediately changed. How could he possibly have imagined that Fang Mu would be able to speak so viciously? He felt as if a sharp blade had pierced into his very heart.

Zhou Dekun took in a deep breath and stood there, trembling. He wasn’t excited, though. Actually, moments ago, he had actually thought Chen Jiaxi to be correct. But hearing Fang Mu speak, he knew what he said to be the truth.

Chen Jiaxi took a deep breath and composed himself. “Grandmaster Fang, you startled me,” he said, staring dead at Meng Hao. “However, it doesn’t matter whether you are talking about the sun and moon, the sky, or the forge of Heaven and Earth. All exist on the path of alchemy. All types of plants and vegetation can be concocted into medicinal pills. All spirits and souls can concoct the spirit of the pill! What I disagreed with just now was

Grandmaster Zhou's assertion that the self is unchanging, but that pill formulas contain countless variations. I said nothing about the transformations of the sun and moon of which you speak.

"In my opinion, alchemists must embrace transformation of the self. Only by embracing transformation can countless variations be produced. Only in this way can you speak of endless pill formulas, or concoct the endless varieties of medicinal pills that have existed since ancient times."

"Your excellency did mention a person being able to produce countless variations," said Meng Hao coolly. Once again he spoke slowly and calmly. As he stood on the dais, the breeze lifted his long hair, blowing it across his face, partially obscuring the stellar glow in his eyes. "Countless variations? The wind and clouds, the thunder and lightning, these are all Heavenly changes. The quaking of the earth, the rise of mountains, the flow of great rivers, these are Earthly changes. Are you responsible for these great changes of Heaven and Earth? Is the rain which falls from the sky birthed by the will of Grandmaster Chen? Grandmaster Chen, is it your will which causes the rise and fall of mountains?

"That was to be my second question. However, there's no need for you to attempt to respond to it, because you can't! In truth, you are no Grandmaster. Even if you become one in the future, you will never be worthy to lay claim to such transformations. Can the transformations of Heaven and Earth truly be contained in your heart? How laughable! As conceited and arrogant as the King of Yelang! You truly overestimate yourself!"

Meng Hao was now ridiculing Chen Jiaxi in the same voice that Chen Jiaxi had used to ridicule Zhou Dekun. The words cracked like lightning, causing Chen Jiaxi's face to flicker.

"You… you really do have a sharp tongue! That's obviously not what I meant. You're completely exaggerating what I said. I was speaking only of pill concocting philosophy!"

"Philosophy? I would love to hear some more details."

“I speak of nothing other than the philosophy of transformation,” he replied immediately. “Take the best of many schools of thought and fuse it into your own. Absorb the finest aspects of your acquaintances. Eliminate the dregs which exist in the self. Refining pills is like refining the self! By reaching perfection, the path to the pinnacle can be trodden, and the full power of transformation can be employed!” The surrounding Black Sieve Sect disciples seemed to approve of his words.

He continued in a voice that could sever nails and chop iron: “It’s like when a painter paints a mountain. He first observes millions of mountains, and then is capable of painting his own. That mountain he paints will contain the essence of all the other mountains he observed; thus, a masterpiece is created! Similarly, millions of tiny streams will fuse together to create a great and boundless river! This is the philosophy of which I speak. Assemble the thoughts from many schools, and coalesce them in the self! This is my path, and how I achieve the Dao of alchemy!” He flicked his sleeve, and his eyes glittered as he stared at Meng Hao. “I’m curious to hear Grandmaster Fang’s philosophy of alchemy!”

His words echoed out into the hearts of the tens of thousands of Black Sieve Sect disciples. Han Bei looked on thoughtfully. Behind Meng Hao, Zhou Dekun stared, an introspective look in his eyes.

Meng Hao looked back at Chen Jiaxi, his expression the same as ever. His tone light, he began, “When a painter observes millions of mountains, then paints one, perhaps his painting contains the essence of the mountains he observed. However, the mountain he paints… is not real. It emerges from his imagination, and is what he believes a mountain to be. In truth, he has already forgotten the first mountain he ever saw, because he has seen too many. He has also forgotten the feeling he experienced when he gazed at that first mountain’s peak.

“Millions of streams fuse together to become a great and boundless river. But that river… is no longer the stream it once was. It is the amalgamation of many waters, fused together and indistinguishable. That first tiny stream which dreamed of being a river is now dead, killed by the very process it desired.

“The process of his pursuit causes the painter to forget that first mountain, and because of that, the very reason he wished to paint a mountain in the first place. The process of becoming a river causes the stream to lose itself. Its will is diluted as it becomes a river, and then it is gone.” As he spoke, Meng Hao’s voice grew louder.

“This is my third question. By fusing many schools of thought, you lose yourself. You think you have benefited, but in reality, you have no path of your own. If you have no ideal of your own to adhere to, then you have observed millions of mountains, but forgotten why you wanted to paint a mountain to begin with!

“Without principles of your own to stick to, then you are a stream that has become a river. However, such a river has no soul! That, is true death!” Meng Hao flicked his wide sleeve. His words poured into Chen Jiaxi’s ears and sent his mind spinning.

“As Cultivators, we must adhere to our own set of principles. As alchemists, we must adhere to our own Dao of alchemy. Acquaintances and other schools of thought can bolster or support our confidence. But we must never allow the process of the search to result in losing our own ideal.

“If the heart is unyielding, nothing can ever supersede it. This type of heart may seem as if it contains transformations, but in reality, is stable, a foundation. From beginning to end, it will never disappear. It will always exist. An unchangeable heart!” Meng Hao’s powerful words shook the square. Chen Jiaxi’s face twisted, and without even thinking about it, he retreated a few paces. His eyes shone with confusion.

“If your heart yields, how can you create anything lasting?!” Meng Hao continued. “Grandmaster Chen, you do not possess a resolute heart. Do you truly have the confidence to mention other schools of thought? Do you have the courage to boast shamelessly of blending together your own path? Do you truly dare to speak to me of the Dao of alchemy?”

Silence filled the square for a moment, and then conversations filled the air. Chen Jiaxi was panting, and his heart was filled with confusion.

Behind Meng Hao, Zhou Dekun trembled, his mind reeling. All of a sudden he realized why after all this time he had never been able to become a Violet Furnace Lord. “Over the years, I’ve paid too much attention to the Dao of alchemy of those around me,” he thought. “I’ve picked and chosen randomly…. I’ve forgotten about the path I originally wished to tread…. If your heart yields, how can you create anything lasting?”

Patriarch Violet Sieve and the beautiful woman exchanged a meaningful glance. Only the ruddy-faced old man next to them sat there with his eyes closed, not having moved a muscle.

A buzz of conversation rose up from the Black Sieve Sect disciples. Meng Hao’s words had caused great waves of emotion to rise up in their hearts.

“You….” Chen Jiaxi’s face was pale. Next to him, Li Yiming was breathing heavily.

Meng Hao flicked his sleeve. His voice thundered up to the heavens. “Because the self never changes, the heart can tolerate the ever-changing transformations of the sun and moon, the maelstroms of Heaven and Earth, and those arduous journeys through thousands of crags and tens of thousands of torrents.

“The Dao of alchemy is eternal. The countless transformations contained within the heart are the pill formula. The unchangeable self is the pill furnace.

“I am the pill furnace, and my heart is the pill formula. Refine the interior to achieve Immortality. Refine the exterior to achieve the boundless Dao of alchemy. Fuse them together, and this is the Truth of alchemy. Alchemy is the Heavens! Alchemy is the Earth! Alchemy is the world!

“This is my Dao of alchemy!” Finally, the ruddy-faced man next to Patriarch Violet Sieve opened his eyes and looked at Meng Hao.

Each and every one of the Black Sieve Sect Cultivators, regardless of who they were, were now looking at Meng Hao. A silence as thick as death hung over them as they stared with brightly shining eyes.

Zhou Dekun stared excitedly at Meng Hao. As of now, not a shred of doubt existed in his heart. All of it had been replaced by passion, and pride. It was all because of Fang Mu, alchemist of the East Pill Division!

He had already made up his mind. When he returned to the Sect, he would help Fang Mu to gain the acceptance of the other Furnace Lords.

Actually, after this debate, it wouldn’t take long for the entire Southern Domain to be talking about Fang Mu.

Chen Jiaxi’s face was pale, as if his spirit were completely gone. Next to him, Li Yiming was covered in cold sweat and was mumbling to himself. What no one could tell was that he was actually reciting Meng Hao’s words, and branding them onto his heart.

An indescribable silence filled the square. Everyone was shaken to the core by Meng Hao’s words.

Patriarch Violet Sieve and the other Nascent Soul Cultivators were all thinking exactly the same thing: “This kid… has a limitless future!”

“Nonsense!!” cried Chen Jiaxi, his shrill cry breaking the silence. He leaped up onto the dais to stand directly in front of Meng Hao. His eyes were bloodshot, and glared angrily at Meng Hao, shamed into rage. “You’re nothing but sharp-tongued and shameless! If words could concoct pills, then even mortals could practice alchemy! I have been cultivating the Dao of alchemy for years. I have memorized one hundred thousand varieties of plants and vegetations. I know of eight hundred thousand grafting variations! You finagled your way to being a Furnace Lord, but really, you’re nothing more than a master alchemist! In this regard, do you dare to compete with me?!” Chen Jiaxi really had no other option left. His previous aggressiveness had been thoroughly trampled down by Meng Hao’s fierce diatribe.

It felt like being slapped across the face, like having a dagger plunged into his chest. As an alchemist, all of it was a direct attack on him.

“How do you want to compete?” replied Meng Hao, his voice cold, and his eyes filled with an icy air. He had long since decided to thoroughly crush Chen Jiaxi.

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# Chapter 252: Crushing

“You and me, a contest of plant and vegetation knowledge!” said Chen Jiaxi, glaring at Meng Hao. In his opinion, Fang Mu had finagled his way to being a Furnace Lord, and was far too young to compare to him, considering how many years he had spent working with plants and vegetation.

He had utmost confidence in his ability. True, there were people within the Sect who could surpass him, but he was absolutely sure that he could achieve victory over this trifling, sharp-tongued Fang Mu.

Even as he spoke, he waved his right hand, causing two black, withered branches to fly out of his bag of holding.

“Dried Spring Equinox Sapling!” thought Zhou Dekun, staring at the dried branches.

“These treasured items have been passed down since ancient times! Dried Spring Equinox Sapling!” Chen Jiaxi grabbed one of the branches and held it in his hand.

“Grandmaster Fang Mu. You most likely do not recognize this item, so allow me to explain. This plant is rarely seen in the modern world, and does not occur naturally. The ancient method used to produce it has long since been lost. It has many uses, but it is because of one of its most amazing uses, that it came to be called the ancestor of all plants! Contained within this ancient plant is the essence of most types of plants and vegetations.

“As such, an alchemist such as myself can fill my Spiritual Sense with all my knowledge of plants and vegetation, imbue it into this Dried Spring Equinox Sapling, and cause it to sprout! The greater the body of knowledge, the more sprouts will appear. This will clearly prove which of us has the greatest mastery of plants and vegetation!” Chen Jiaxi only had these two stems of Dried Spring Equinox. He had previously acquired them through a series of lucky coincidences, and considered them to be precious treasures.

Now that he had been pushed into a corner, he pulled them out in his attempt to grow his reputation in the future.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever, although inside he was actually leaping up and down with excitement. He had read about the Dried Spring Equinox Stem in the ancient records. It had miraculous usages that were difficult to explain. One of its greatest functions was its ability to improve the success rate when concocting medicinal pills!

By adding one of the stems to a batch of medicinal pills, the success rate would be increased significantly, perhaps even to one hundred percent.

Without the slightest hesitation, Meng Hao took the Dried Spring Equinox Stem in hand and glanced down. In his heart, he felt that it was a bit unfortunate. This particular Dried Spring Equinox Stem was somewhat small, only about as thick as a finger.

“Grandmaster Fang, let’s begin!” said Chen Jiaxi eerily. He sounded like he couldn’t wait to crush Fang Mu.

All of the Cultivators from the Black Sieve Sect looked on with expressions of concentration. The benefits they had received from this particular alchemy lecture were hard to quantify. Han Bei sat in the crowd, looking at Meng Hao.

Zhou Dekun was feeling a bit anxious. He had heard the story of the shocking way Meng Hao had passed the test to become a master alchemist. But he was still worried. Seeing his expression, Chen Jiaxi’s confidence grew stronger.

He didn’t wait for Meng Hao. Instead, he poured Spiritual Sense into the dried stem on his palm.

With a cold laugh, he said, “The appearance of one sprout indicates mastery of one hundred thousands types of plants and vegetation. Two sprouts represents two hundred thousand variations. Grandmaster Fang, I suggest you take the situation very seriously.” A bright glow began to emanate out from the dried stem, filling the entire square and attracting the attention of all the onlookers.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever. His Spiritual Sense burst out, flying directly into the dried stem.

Time passed slowly, enough for a single incense stick to burn. Suddenly, a green sprout appeared on the dried stem in Chen Jiaxi’s hand, the same you might see during the spring equinox.

“One hundred thousand plants… Grandmaster’s Chen has already shown mastery of one hundred thousand plants!”

“Who knows how many Grandmaster Fang… huh?” Even as the Black Sieve Sect Disciples began to discuss the proceedings, two sprouts appeared on the stem in Meng Hao’s hand!

Meng Hao’s expression was calm as the two sprouts appeared. However, the onlookers were shocked, as was Chen Jiaxi. His eyes went wide. He had never seen anyone be able to produce two sprouts from the dried stem in the time it takes one incense stick to burn.

“It doesn’t matter,” he comforted himself. “Considering my skill with plants and vegetation, I will definitely be able to defeat this finagler in the end!” A snide expression filled his face. However, it was at this exact moment that….

A third sprout appeared, then a fourth, a fifth, and… nine sprouts appeared in total! It all happened in the space of about ten breaths!

The scene caused gasps of astonishment to fill the air. The Black Sieve Sect Cultivators were completely astounded.

“How is this possible….”

“Nine sprouts. That represents nine hundred thousand medicinal plants, nine hundred thousand variations! This Grandmaster Fang is so young, how could he have such terrifying skill with plants….”

“That’s nine….”

Suddenly, a tenth sprout grew out of the dried stem. Chen Jiaxi, on the other hand, had only produced three sprouts.

“Impossible!” thought Chen Jiaxi, his eyes growing red. He just couldn’t believe what he was seeing. His hair was in disarray, and he let out a wild howl as he attempted to make more sprouts come out as quickly as possible. Actually, he hadn’t clearly stated earlier what level of mastery he had obtained. In reality, he only knew nine hundred thousand plant and vegetation variations, placing him at the peak of the second realm.

As such, he really could only cause nine sprouts to appear.

It was at this moment, right after the ten sprouts had appeared on the stem in Meng Hao’s hand, that suddenly… a flower bud appeared. It wriggled out, immediately attracting everyone’s attention, even Chen Jiaxi’s and Li Yiming’s.

A popping sound rang out as the flower bud opened… into a tiny white flower!

Li Yiming’s face drained of blood. “An ancient Dried Spring Equinox blooming… it’s… it’s…” His expression was one of ultimate astonishment. He was well aware of the significance of the dried stem blooming.

His voice filled with excitement, Zhou Dekun said, “One hundred thousand medicinal plants, one million variations, one hundred million grafting variations…. The blooming of the ancient tree represents the millions of grafting variations. If ten flowers appear, it represents all one hundred million graft variations!!” He had never imagined that Meng Hao’s skill with plants and vegetation could have reached such a shocking level.

Most Furnace Lords’ mastery of plants and vegetation stopped somewhere in the tens of millions. Only Violet Furnace Lords could reach the level of one hundred million grafting variations.

“You… you….” Chen Jiaxi gaped in astonishment at Meng Hao, his mind reeling. His vision began to grow dim. Even in his wildest dreams, he would never have imagined that Fang Mu’s mastery of plants and vegetation could have reached this shocking state. Had he known, he would never have attempted to compete against him.

His voice quavered, and his body trembled. He was about to say something more when suddenly a second flower appeared, then a third and a fourth….

One flower after another, rocking Chen Jiaxi’s spirit. The Cultivators in the square were thrown into a frenzy. They stared at Meng Hao with looks of complete shock and disbelief.

Six flowers. Seven flowers. Eight flowers. Nine flowers….

Every new flower sent waves of astonishment through the hearts of the onlookers, even Patriarch Violet Sieve and the two Patriarchs next to him. Their breathing was ragged as they watched Meng Hao, their eyes burning.

Finally… the tenth flower appeared!

When the tenth flower appeared, Chen Jiaxi’s vision went black. He was on the verge of passing out. Anguished howls of grief welled up in his heart. This turn of events could never have been predicted. How could he have encountered someone so… inhuman here in the Black Sieve Sect? In truth, were he to know that Fang Mu was Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, he would certainly pass out immediately.

“Inhuman…” thought Zhou Dekun, his body trembling, his vision blank.

This was not a competition between two people. Fang Mu had completely crushed Chen Jiaxi. There was simply no way for him to even fight back. He was utterly and thoroughly defeated.

Patriarch Violet Sieve and the two others were breathing heavily, staring fixedly at the calm Meng Hao, as if he were some sort of precious treasure. A massive commotion of conversation exploded among the Black Sieve Sect Cultivators.

The Cultivators in attendance all had some knowledge of the Dao of alchemy. How could they not understand the significance of what they were seeing…?

“Grandmaster Fang Mu!!”

“The dried stem blossomed ten times! The ultimate achievement, one hundred million grafting variations!!”

Amidst uproarious hubbub, Meng Hao suddenly lifted his head. Without even looking at the dried stem, he put it into his bag of holding. Obviously, he didn’t plan to return it.

“So, do you still want to compete in plants and vegetation?” he said. In front of him, Chen Jiaxi’s face was deathly pale, and his entire body was quivering.

He tilted his head back. His hair was dishevelled, and his eyes shone with demented insanity.

“YES!” he cried, staring at Meng Hao, his eyes filled with jealousy and hatred.

He hated that his opponent was so young, yet possessed such mastery of plants and vegetation. He hated that his opponent was an East Pill Furnace Lord. He hated that his opponent left him speechless, both with his words and his Dao of alchemy. He especially hated that his opponent wouldn’t let him win, wouldn’t let Chen Jiaxi trample over him to rise to prominence.

His hatred seeped into his bones, giving rise to devilish insanity.

“We will compete in Instantaneous Formula Scrying!” said Chen Jiaxi, his voice hoarse. Down below, Li Yiming had planned to pull him back.

However, after seeing the wild, animalistic look in Chen Jiaxi’s eyes, he simply sighed inwardly.

“Alright, if you want another competition, you’ll have it,” said Meng Hao coolly. Glancing over at Chen Jiaxi and his maddened state, he added another thought: “However, a competition like that bores me. If you want to compete, then let’s make a bet. Any pill produced that the other party can identify, will be surrendered immediately!”

Zhou Dekun gasped at the viciousness of it. This would truly be the fatal blow.

Li Yiming’s face twisted. At the same moment, Chen Jiaxi seemed to recover some of his common sense. However, he couldn’t let go of the hatred within his heart. He pushed his common sense down, ignoring it.

“Fine! I won’t stop until I win!!” His voice rang out, causing all of the Black Sieve Sect disciples to let out a collective gasp. Li Yiming and Zhou Dekun both seemed to be shaking with anxiety.

‘I won’t stop until I win’ indicated that the competition wouldn’t be over as long as there were medicinal pills to produce. The only way it could end would be for someone to quit, and that would be the ultimate defeat.

Li Yiming was incredibly worried as he watched red-eyed Chen Jiaxi slap his bag of holding to produce a medicinal pill, which he then tossed over to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao grabbed it and looked at it.

“World Mirage Pill. Heavenly Dawn sap, Hundred Tombs soil, Peace Dissemination leaf, Ninth Sexagenary grass….” Having finished speaking, Meng Hao placed the medicinal pill in his bag of holding and looked at Chen Jiaxi.

Chen Jiaxi glared at him. He wanted to say that Meng Hao was wrong. However, they were both alchemists. To do that would lose him even more face than being openly defeated, and he would lose any right to continue.

He slapped his bag of holding to produce another medicinal pill, which he threw over to Meng Hao.

“Frigid Lightning Pill,” said Meng Hao coolly. “Not many of these pills exist. It requires root of Seasonal Glory Grass, harvested amidst the snows of winter, as well as Gold and Iron sap, Lightning Fire Grass….” He continued to list out dozens of medicinal plants.

“This pill… interesting. I’m not sure of the name, but it contains power to strengthen the arms. It’s obviously a body-refining pill. It contains Indomitable Mountain flower, Containment sapling….”

“This… this is actually a magic pill which can melt the blood and transform it into explosive power. It contains crushed Green Burst, Celestial Heaven oil….”

“Fellow Daoist Chen, you have many unique pills. Excellent, excellent. I’m not sure the name of this pill, but it’s clearly a poison pill. It contains….”

Time passed by slowly. Zhou Dekun stared on in shock. Chen Jiaxi seemed to be on the verge of collapse, his face as pale as death as he tried to outdo Meng Hao. However, he really had no chance. He was essentially just handing over his medicinal pills….

In the time it takes for only half an incense stick to burn, he had already delivered nearly a hundred different medicinal pills over to Meng Hao….

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# Chapter 253: Primordial Heavenly Replenishing Pill!

In the time it takes for half an incense stick to burn, a hundred different types of medicinal pills had been “delivered” over. Chen Jiaxi trembled; his face was ashen. His madness had reached an explosive height as he found that there wasn’t a single medicinal pill he could produce that his opponent couldn’t identify.

This level of skill left Chen Jiaxi in despair. He wanted to cry that his opponent was wrong, but he didn’t dare. If Fang Mu then used the formula to concoct an identical copy of the pill, Chen Jiaxi’s entire reputation would be in ruin.

Li Yiming stood off to the side, watching bitterly as Chen Jiaxi handed over pill after pill, and Meng Hao put pill after pill into his bag of holding. His scalp was numb, and his heart had filled with an indescribable fear.

The surrounding Black Sieve Sect disciples watched the scene in astonishment. From their perspective, Chen Jiaxi wasn’t competing with Fang Mu, he was just giving him pills.

On the other hand, Meng Hao’s actions left them buzzing with shock. His unfathomable skill with plants and vegetation, his irrefutable logic regarding the Dao of alchemy, and his fearsome Instantaneous Formula Scrying just added layer after layer of mystery. As they watched him, their faces filled with continuously growing amazement.

From beginning to end, Meng Hao didn’t pull out even a single medicinal pill. This was because he never misidentified any of the pills that were produced. Eventually, he started to feel a little bit embarrassed.

Chen Jiaxi, of course, had the worst of it all. His heart bled, his eyes were growing dry, and his body trembled. Everything seemed to be going black.

However, he continued to pull out medicinal pills. He had utmost confidence in each pill, and yet they all ended up in his opponent's bag of holding.

There was no way to put an end to it. Just now, he had said, 'I won't stop until I win.' He wouldn't be able to end until he ran out of medicinal pills.

As he pulled out the one hundred and twenty seventh pill, he suddenly lifted his head to look at Meng Hao. Then, he radiated madness as he slowly put the pill back into his bag of holding and instead retrieved a jade box.

The jade box was covered with black splotches, as if it had been entombed in the earth for countless years. This was an object that Chen Jiaxi originally hadn't intended to reveal. To him, it was a precious treasure of a lifetime. In fact, when he had uttered the words 'I won't stop until I win,' he hadn't even considered to include this item in the statement.

Suddenly, he realized that if he wanted to gain complete victory, he would have to win at least one time. And if he wanted that, then he must use the item in the jade box. After all the fierce struggle now, pulling out this object finally gave him hope.

The instant the box appeared, all eyes came to rest upon it. Anyone could tell that the pill inside this box would most certainly determine victory or defeat!

The black stains on the box made it obvious to all the onlookers that the box was so old it was beginning to decay. There was even a faint, gruesome death aura wafting out from the box.

A serious look filled the eyes of Patriarch Violet Sieve and his two companions.

Chen Jiaxi gritted his teeth and slowly said, "If you know the formula to this pill, then I, Chen Jiaxi, will admit defeat and, if I ever meet your excellency in the future, will immediately fall to the ground and kowtow to you! If you don’t know the formula, then I will not cause any further trouble for you. I will only require that you return all the pills I produced just now. Then, this matter will be concluded!”

Zhou Dekun’s eyes narrowed, and before Meng Hao could say anything, he strode forward and beratingly said, “Chen Jiaxi, you are a scarlet-robed master alchemist of the World Pill Division. Do you have any face? This is obviously an ancient medicinal pill whose pill formula has been lost for countless ages. How could a modern-day alchemist possibly be able to identify it!?” He was obviously worried about Meng Hao leaping to accept the challenge.

A buzz rose up from the surrounding Black Sieve Sect disciples. “An ancient medicinal pill!” Such pills from ancient times were very rare. Even one would be enough to cause an incredible stir. Furthermore, the formulas for most ancient pills were lost. Even the three great alchemists might have trouble identifying an ancient pill. Each and every such pill could be considered a consummate pill.

“Where did Grandmaster Chen get an ancient medicinal pill? You almost never see something like that! If it were auctioned off, the price it would get would be unimaginable!”

“Could it be one of Grandmaster Eternal Mountain’s treasures that he bestowed upon Grandmaster Chen as a gift?

As the conversations broke out, Li Yiming took a deep breath. Even he never imagined that Chen Jiaxi would possess an ancient medicinal pill.

“Do you dare?!” shouted Chen Jiaxi, glaring at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao looked at the jade box, and his eyes filled with imposing aura. He had seen an ancient medicinal pill before, the day Grandmaster Eternal Mountain had visited the Violet Fate Sect. That pill had been an Entrancement Pill.

Meng Hao thought for a moment, and then his eyes flickered with resolve. He made a grasping motion, and the jade box in Chen Jiaxi’s hand flew over to him.

Seeing Meng Hao agree to the challenge caused Zhou Dekun’s heart to fill with anxiety. Li Yiming also appeared shaken. Chen Jiaxi, on the other hand, let out an inward sigh of relief. His eyes filled with a cold sneer. He knew from the moment his opponent had agreed, that victory was his!

He had acquired this treasured ancient medicinal pill a few years ago from some old painter. It had nearly left him in poverty, and he had been forced to concoct pills like a slave for three years as part of the deal to acquire it.

He didn’t dare to casually consume it; he planned to wait until his longevity was reaching its end before doing so. Or perhaps he would trade it for some incredibly priceless treasure. As a matter of fact, the pill’s appearance had already caught the attention of the Black Sieve Sect; it seemed they already were interested in acquiring it.

Meng Hao took hold of the jade box. His expression was serious as he slowly opened it. As he did, a reddish glow shined up from within. Faint strands of celestial music drifted about, and within the glow, the phantom image of a young boy could be seen. He appeared to be dancing in pleasure.

The image instantly caused Patriarch Violet Sieve and his two companions to gasp. The beautiful woman immediately rose to her feet.

The amazement of the surrounding Black Sieve Sect disciples was really at its peak. Buzzing conversations filled the air, and Zhou Dekun’s face went pale white.

“An ancient medicinal pill which can create illusory images, this pill… is even surrounded by celestial sound. Just… just what pill is this?”

Li Yiming was also completely shocked as he stared at the glowing red light emanating up from Meng Hao’s hands.

As for Chen Jiaxi, a fresh breath of life seemed to have washed over him. He was in high spirits, and gave a cold laugh as he looked at Meng Hao. Seeing Meng Hao’s look of intense concentration, he lifted his chin.

“Grandmaster Fang, considering your skill in the Dao of alchemy, don’t tell me that you can’t identify this pill? Ah, forget about it. I’ll just explain it for you. You know what pill this is? The name of this pill should be known to all alchemists. This is one of the three great medicinal pills of the ancient Dao of alchemy. Primordial Heavenly Replenishing Pill!!”

The Black Sieve Sect Cultivators didn’t seem to be familiar with the name of the pill. However, upon hearing the name Li Yiming immediately stood up. A look of disbelief filled his face as he stared at the glow rising up into the sky.

“Primordial… Heavenly Replenishing Pill….”

Zhou Dekun was panting, and his body shook. He took a few steps forward, breathing raggedly, staring at the medicinal pill in Meng Hao’s hands. Suddenly, his voice rang out through the Black Sieve Sect’s massive square: “Crimson glow, a dancing child accompanied by celestial music…. This… this is most certainly one of the three great ancient medicinal pills! Primordial Heavenly Replenishing Pill!! According to the legends, anyone who consumes this pill can steal luck from the heavens and increase their longevity by one thousand years!!” The audience buzzed in excitement. A medicinal pill which can increase longevity, even if only by a sixty-year cycle, would be incredibly rare. The price people would be willing to pay for such a thing would be unthinkable.

A consummate pill which could increase lifespan by one thousand years was even more incredible!

Patriarch Violet Sieve’s eyes shined with unprecedented brightness. The only other time a glow like this had been seen in his eyes was when he had been about to snatch Ultimate Vexation. After all, his longevity had long since been approaching its end.

The ruddy-faced old man next to him also looked at the jade box with profoundly glowing eyes. He began to mutter to himself.

With his chin set complacently, Chen Jiaxi looked at Meng Hao and said, “Primordial Heavenly Replenishing Pill. The word Primordial includes ten thousand variations of plants and vegetation. As for the words Heavenly Replenishing, it is just as Grandmaster Zhou just said. It can increase longevity by one thousand years!” Chen Jiaxi was now completely back in control of himself. He had suffered defeat before, but with the appearance of this pill, he now viewed himself as having already won.

“Grandmaster Fang,” he continued, “I believe it’s now your turn. Please, tell me the pill formula for the Primordial Heavenly Replenishing Pill, if you’re able!” He glared at Meng Hao aggressively.

Everything went quiet, as all eyes focused on the crimson glow emanating out of the jade box, and the red pill which rested inside.

Li Yiming also seemed to have recovered his wits. He took a deep breath, and his eyes began to shine. He knew in his heart that there was no way Fang Mu could achieve victory now.

Zhou Dekun cursed silently. This was an ancient pill, one of the three great miraculous pills. Its name was majestic, and there was definitely no modern-day alchemist who could know the formula.

He took a step forward. Glowering at Chen Jiaxi, he said, “Chen Jiaxi you are a scarlet-robed alchemist of the World Pill Division. Such tactics as this are contemptible! People like us, even people like your Master, Grandmaster Eternal Mountain, could never identify the formula of the Primordial Heavenly Replenishing Pill! Furthermore, the contest just now was to identify pills that you had concocted. Did you concoct the Primordial Heavenly Replenishing Pill? Even you don’t know the formula, yet you dare to bring it out as part of this contest?!?!”

Chen Jiaxi laughed coldly. “This was agreed upon by Grandmaster Fang,” he said in a growling voice. “You can’t claim that I’m breaking the rules.” He ignored Zhou Dekun, and stared again at Meng Hao. “Grandmaster

Fang, I’m not the only person awaiting your answer. There are tens of thousands of others who are all eagerly awaiting to hear the pill formula. Haven’t you been looking at the Primordial Heavenly Replenishing Pill for long enough!?” He took a step forward and, seeing Meng Hao’s brow furrowed as it was, felt all his previous feelings of depression melting away. “If you can’t identify it, then so be it. However, you must produce all of my pills from just now and return them immediately.

“Fang Mu!” he shouted, his voice echoing throughout the square. “Can you, or can you not identify the pill formula!” Meng Hao slowly raised his head. His gaze moved from the medicinal pill and came to rest on Chen Jiaxi.

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# Chapter 254: Thunder Across a Plain

“This pill….”

Meng Hao’s face looked the same as it always did. It was impossible to tell what he was thinking. His voice echoed out as if from unfathomably deep waters, immediately attracting the attention of all the onlookers.

Everyone, even Zhou Dekun, seemed to have assumed that Meng Hao had already lost. He didn’t appear to have even the slightest hope of achieving victory. Even a Violet Furnace Lord wouldn’t be able to identify the pill formula of an ancient pill.

“What of this pill?” interrupted Chen Jiaxi. “Fang Mu, why be wordy about it? Losing is losing! There’s no need to struggle against it!” He gave a cold laugh.

Meng Hao looked calmly at Chen Jiaxi.

When he spoke, his words were neither hasty nor halting. “The outer layer of this pill bears evidence of having been buried in the ground for at least one thousand years. Its death aura is dense, infecting even the jade box. However, the pill has not been harmed at all.

“The strange thing is that the middle layer of the pill is different. It contains only seven hundred years of time. Furthermore, although some of the plant and vegetation variations appear at first to have been refined with the ancient non-smelting technique, in fact, there are actually traces of smelting fire on them.” As Meng Hao spoke, Chen Jiaxi’s cold smile grew wider.

“The inner layer of the pill,” continued Meng Hao, “is very strange. There are seventeen various plant and vegetation variations there, none of which exceed two hundred years in age! That is why it took me a bit longer to inspect it. I’m not sure why this supposed Primordial Heavenly Replenishing Pill, which can extend one’s lifespan by one thousand years, would have an exterior, a middle, and a center, that are so vastly different!” As soon as he finished speaking, a buzz rose up from the audience.

“What does that mean? Don’t tell me the pill is a fake?”

“How could it be fake? There was obviously celestial music just now, and the dancing child. Those things couldn’t be fake!”

“Don’t tell me Fang Mu is just babbling nonsense?”

As the Cultivators discussed the matter, Chen Jiaxi began to laugh uproariously. His grim, cold laughter echoed out in all directions.

He flicked his sleeve, and once again spoke, his voice dripping with ridicule: “Fang Mu, by simply admitting defeat, then I, Chen Jiaxi, could show respect to your status as a Furnace Lord of the East Pill Division. But instead, you use low-down, underhanded means to attempt to achieve victory! You try to besmirch this ancient medicinal pill by saying that it’s a forgery!? Competing with you has truly brought me great loss of face! What a waste!

“I can’t believe the East Pill Division has produced an alchemist such as you. Such an utter disgrace! No wonder you had to finagle your way into being a Furnace Lord. Now I, Chen Jiaxi, thoroughly understand the entire situation.”

Li Yiming’s expression also filled with derision. Zhou Dekun’s face was bright red. As an alchemist, defeat should be recognized, and respect for the Dao of alchemy should never be forgotten.

He sighed inwardly, and was just about to open his mouth in an attempt to smooth the situation over, when Meng Hao’s calm voice once again rang out.

“When did I ever say the pill was a forgery?” he asked, his expression the same as ever. He appeared to be completely oblivious to the gazes of the onlookers, as well as to Chen Jiaxi’s complacency.

“You sharp-tongued punk!” cried Chen Jiaxi, throwing any thoughts of mercy to the wind. “Are you still trying to argue? Just now you obviously implied that the pill was fake, didn’t you? Do you have an explanation for that? Fang Mu, do you have even the slightest scrap of face left?”

All the Black Sieve Sect disciples were now looking at Meng Hao. Their faces were filled with strange expressions. Patriarch Violet Sieve and the other two watched on wordlessly with furrowed brows.

“Would you pipe down!?” roared Meng Hao. His eyes filled with a brilliant light that shone like lightning on a pitch black night. His words echoed out like thunder across a plain, echoing out with such force that Chen Jiaxi’s mind was instantly shaken. Without realizing it, he stepped backward a few paces, the sound ringing in his ears.

Meng Hao stepped forward. He spoke, his words devoid of any courtesy: “You babble nonsense! You invert right and wrong! You don’t measure up to me when it comes to the Dao of alchemy, nor can your skill with plants and vegetation compare to mine. You are even further behind when it comes to Instantaneous Formula Scrying. And yet you still dare to bare your fangs and brandish your claws in front of me?!

“I, Fang Mu, made three points just now, and none of them contained the word ‘forgery.’ That word came from you, you self-righteous twit! This competition was your idea. Defeat after defeat has revealed your true face, you stooge! You ask me if I have face? Let me ask you? Who is there that would possibly give face to you?” Meng Hao’s voice grew louder and louder, each sentence stabbing into Chen Jiaxi’s psyche like a sharp sword. His eyes filled with flames of fury. However, as Meng Hao approached him, dread welled up in his heart, and he again retreated.

“You are a mere scarlet-robed master alchemist of the World Pill Division. Even people above you in the World Pill Division don’t qualify to constantly accuse me of finagling my way into being a Furnace Lord. I became a Furnace Lord because of the graces of Grandmaster Eternal Mountain, and he approved of the pill I concocted. Therefore, repudiating me is the same as repudiating Grandmaster Eternal Mountain, and therefore the whole of the World Pill Division!” Meng Hao took another step forward, his words ringing out around him in a roar.

“Such actions on the part of a member of the World Pill Division are nothing less than treason against your Sect!”

The roar of Meng Hao’s words sent Chen Jiaxi’s mind spinning. His eyes filled with veins of blood. “You….” His body trembled and he raised an accusatory finger toward Meng Hao. He was normally capable of sharply incisive words, but now, his mind was in chaos, and he couldn’t even speak.

Meng Hao’s words roared out like thunder: “In an attempt to further your personal glory, you’re even willing to repudiate Eternal Mountain and commit treason against your Sect! You are a lowlife, worse than pigs or dogs! What makes you think you have the face to stand in front of Fang Mu and rave so arrogantly? What gives you the courage to stand on the same stage as me when I am lecturing about alchemy?” Meng Hao flicked his sleeve. His words slammed into Chen Jiaxi’s ears, causing his body to shake and his mind to reel and rock.

“Fang Mu!” he shrieked shrilly.

“Finally, let’s discuss this medicinal pill of yours. Its exterior is a thousand years old, its middle is seven hundred, and its interior roughly three hundred. It is no forgery. However, it will not add a thousand years to your lifespan. Why? Because this pill is clearly a poison pill! The outer layer is simply a coating, while the middle layer serves to conceal the poison congealed within the center!

“What kind of scoundrel alchemist are you to produce such a pill? Furthermore, what is your intention in bringing it out? Don’t tell me you planned to sell it to the senior generation of the Black Sieve Sect? Upon consuming this pill, the Qi passageways will turn backward, and the Qi and blood will reverse their flow. Within the space of three breaths, you will begin to bleed from your eyes, nose and mouth. Within ten breaths, your garments will be soaked with gore, and you will be in such excruciating pain that you will wish you weren’t alive. After enough time passes for an incense stick to burn, your blood will freeze, and you will be dead!” Meng Hao waved his hand, sending the jade box and the red pill flying back to Chen Jiaxi, who stood there, his hair disheveled, his entire body quivering.

Meng Hao gave a cold snort, then continued in a voice that could sever nails and chop iron: “That is the response of Fang Mu. If you pulled out a forgery, I could identify it easily. But to pull out a poison pill like this shows how truly pernicious you are. Worthy of death! There is no need for me to continue to compete with you!!”

Chen Jiaxi felt as if his mind were being ripped in two. “This is no poison pill!!” he bellowed madly.

“If so, then why don’t you consume it?!” said Meng Hao, his voice as sharp as a blade, his eyes flickering like lightning.

“You!” raved Chen Jiaxi. He had gone through countless hardships to acquire this pill, and actually had planned to sell it at an exorbitant price to the Black Sieve Sect. However, Meng Hao’s words just now had caused Patriarch Violet Sieve and the other two Patriarchs to stare suspiciously. The surrounding Black Sieve Sect disciples also stared, their expressions grim.

Li Yiming felt as if his internal organs were about to burst. The tables had turned too quickly. Just now, Chen Jiaxi had clearly been in the superior position, and then in a blink of an eye, everything had been reversed. Li Yiming’s mind spun blankly.

It wasn’t just him. Zhou Dekun watched on dumbly. He had been very sure that the pill was real, and had never imagined that the events just now could occur. Everything Meng Hao said seemed perfectly reasonable.

“You… you!!” Chen Jiaxi’s mind spun so violently he almost couldn’t comprehend what was happening. He had been pushed into the ultimate corner by Meng Hao. If he didn’t consume the pill, then everyone would obviously suspect him.

“Fang Mu!!” he howled.

Suddenly, he threw the pill into his mouth. Immediately, streaks of blood snaked through his eyes, and blue veins bulged on his forehead. He looked like some sort of devilish fiend. Patriarch Violet Sieve hesitated for a moment when this happened, but didn’t move to interfere.

The ruddy-faced man sitting next to him also was shaken inwardly, yet did nothing.

“I’ve consumed it,” he howled glaring at Meng Hao. “Did you see, Fang Mu? I consumed the Primordial Heavenly Replenishing Pill!!”

“One, two, three…” said Meng Hao, his voice light. When he said the word “three,” three breaths had passed. Chen Jiaxi’s face suddenly changed. His body began to tremble, and his face distorted. He let out a blood-curdling scream, and then blood began to ooze out of his eyes, mouth and nose.

Immediately, all of the Cultivators present on the fifty-seventh mountain of the Black Sieve Sect burst into a commotion. Many of them shot to their feet, their eyes filled with astonishment.

Li Yiming’s vision began to grow dark, and his mind filled with a spinning roar that caused him to nearly lose consciousness.

Zhou Dekun gasped, his face filled with disbelief as he looked at Chen Jiaxi standing there, screaming miserably, blood dripping down his face.

Patriarch Violet Sieve’s pupils constricted, and then began to fill with fury. Next to him, the ruddy-faced old man frowned, and his eyes began to fill with displeasure.

Meng Hao stood there on the stage, continuing to count softly.

“Four, five, six….”

As Meng Hao counted, Chen Jiaxi fell to the ground, screaming shrilly. His body thrashed, and blood flew everywhere. His Qi passageways had reversed, and popping sounds could be heard ringing out from within his body. A mist of blood sprayed from his mouth, turning his red robe into a true garment of gore.

All of this was exactly as Meng Hao had described. Soon, the tenth breath would arrive, and Chen Jiaxi would die. However, the moment Meng Hao spoke the word nine, his body suddenly flickered forward. His right hand pressed down onto the top of wheezing Chen Jiaxi's head.

Immediately, Chen Jiaxi's screaming ceased. His body trembled, and his aura was feeble, but it seemed that his trip down the road of death had paused momentarily. From the look of it, though, he only had a few moments left before death found him.

"For the sake of Grandmaster Eternal Mountain, Fang Mu is going to save your life today," said Meng Hao coolly. His face was as calm as ever. Therefore, no one knew that his heart was actually surging with waves of indescribable excitement.

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# Chapter 255: She Was Floating in the Wind

As soon as the words were out of Meng Hao's mouth, he slapped his bag of holding. A pill cauldron flew out along with some Earthly fire crystals and a host of medicinal plants, which Meng Hao began to work with. In front of everyone, he began to concoct a pill.

He worked at incredible speed. To everyone watching on, it seemed obvious that he must be doing all of this in an attempt to save Chen Jiaxi. Apparently in order to completely ensure his success, he even extracted a drop of blood from Chen Jiaxi's forehead.

The blood entered the pill furnace, clearly as a way to make the medicinal pill more effective in purging the poison.

Everything was deathly silent, and all eyes were on Meng Hao as he concocted the pill. From the moment he had stepped foot into the Dao of alchemy, this was the quickest he had ever concocted a pill. It only took a few moments for a fragrant aroma to fill the square.

Meng Hao then waved his hand, and a pink-colored medicinal pill flew out. It shot like lighting into Chen Jiaxi's mouth. His life clearly hung by a mere thread at the moment.

Tens of thousands of eyes were fixed on Chen Jiaxi. As soon as he consumed the pill, a tremor shook his body.

Then, even more shockingly, his hair began to rapidly change color, from black to white. His skin began to wither, as if his vitality had seeped away.

In the space of a few short breaths, he seemed to have aged nearly a hundred years.

Before, he had been middle-aged, but now he looked like an old man with one foot in the grave. Wrinkles covered his face, and he emanated ancientness. Before, his Cultivation base had been at the late Foundation Establishment stage, but now it seemed to be vanishing because of his decrepitness.

The entire process, from beginning to end, only took about ten breaths' worth of time. Chen Jiaxi looked completely different; he was now a feeble old man with no Cultivation base. However, the death aura which had been drifting off of him moments ago, had been replaced with life force.

When this happened, his eyes suddenly opened. Suddenly he coughed up a massive congealment of blood, along with what remained of the medicinal pill. It was about the size of a fingernail, half as large as it had been before.

It wasn't the pill Meng Hao had concocted, but the pill everyone had taken to be the Primordial Heavenly Replenishing Pill!

As soon as he spat the pill out, Meng Hao waved his sleeve, collecting it into a pill bottle. Before he could put it into his bag of holding, however, Patriarch Violet Sieve's eyes flickered. He waved his right hand, causing the pill bottle to fly out of Meng Hao's hands and into his own.

Meng Hao ignored this, focusing instead of Chen Jiaxi, who was trembling, a look of confusion in his eyes.

"In the moment before the poison killed you, I managed to prevent it from continuing to dissolve. The poison is not impossible to dispel. However, given my current skill in the Dao of alchemy, I was unable to find the proper combination of medicinal plants in such a short time. Therefore, I used the simplest method possible, and also the most direct. I stimulated your life force, and shattered your Cultivation base. In this manner, I was able to force out the poison. As for your Cultivation base, if you practice recuperative cultivation, it should slowly recover."

Chen Jiaxi said nothing as Li Yiming rushed over and helped him to his feet. Chen Jiaxi stared blankly at Meng Hao, then let out a bitter laugh.

“Eternal Mountain once said that alchemic battles are just like magical battles: death can come with a single thought. As of today… I am convinced of this truth.” With that, he clasped hands in salute. His body trembled, and he lowered his head to conceal the venomous hatred which seeped out from his heart.

Li Yiming also clasped hands and bowed to Patriarch Violet Sieve and the others. They clearly could not stay on the mountain, so, he took hold of Chen Jiaxi and flew up into the sky, disappearing off into the distance.

A few Black Sieve Sect Cultivators rose to accompany them as they left. Considering all of Meng Hao’s experiences, it was impossible for him to not notice Chen Jiaxi’s hatred. Had that hatred not been there, Meng Hao, well aware of how much he had come out on top, would have helped the man recover his Cultivation base more quickly.

But now, he abandoned such thoughts. Long before he had become Fang Mu, he had learned to treat his enemies with icy coldness.

Meng Hao turned to look at Patriarch Violet Sieve, who was currently examining the medicinal pill which Chen Jiaxi had just vomited out.

“Elder Violet Sieve,” he said with a polite smile, “I won that pill in the competition just now. If you would like it, sir, perhaps you could state what you intend to trade for it?”

Patriarch Violet Sieve laughed loudly. Shaking his head, he flicked his sleeve, and the medicinal pill in its bottle flew back to Meng Hao. He had scanned it with Divine Sense just now. Even though he didn’t know much about the Dao of alchemy, he was a Nascent Soul Cultivator, who had lived many, many years. How could he not have an understanding of things like the ancient medicinal pills? Actually, he had previously specifically studied ancient medicinal pills.

Just now, no matter how he examined it, he couldn’t see anything particularly special about the pill. In fact, when he held it in hand, he could detect a fishy, rotten odor. After a brief discussion with the ruddy-faced man using Divine Sense, they had determined that it definitely was a poison pill.

The fact that he so quickly returned the pill to Meng Hao had a lot to do with everything that Meng Hao had just said and done. Before, everyone in the Black Sieve Sect, including Patriarch Violet Sieve and his companions, hadn’t paid much more than a glance to Fang Mu. As of now, though, it was obvious to everyone that Fang Mu… far exceeded Zhou Dekun.

This was especially true of his final vicious display. From now on, Patriarch Violet Sieve would pay closer attention to this Fang Mu.

Meng Hao accepted the pill bottle with a smile, then casually tossed it into his bag of holding.

The alchemy lecture was now over. Zhou Dekun invited Meng Hao to join him at a feast thrown by the Black Sieve Sect, but he politely declined. His face covered with exhaustion, he returned to Black Welcoming Peak.

Back in his residence, he sat down cross-legged to restore his energy. Time passed by, and soon moonlight filled the sky. Meng Hao suddenly opened his eyes and waved his right hand. A pill furnace appeared, along with an Earthly fire crystal. He also produced his Furnace Lord medallion, and its protective shield.

After securing himself within the shield, he slapped his bag of holding to produce the pill bottle and the poison pill. He took a deep breath, and took out… the jade box! He had placed it in his bag of holding much earlier.

In reality, the medicinal pill really was one of the three ancient medicinal pills, the Primordial Heavenly Replenishment Pill!

It was only half of the original pill, therefore, the essence of Time AND the medicinal strength within the pill hadn’t completely vanished!

In ancient times, pills were not concocted using flames. Instead, the power of Heaven and Earth was used. The jade box was actually the final step of the concoction process. After being sealed inside, the pill would gradually become complete.

This was common knowledge; almost all ancient medicinal pills that had been discovered were like this. Despite being sealed in the jade box, the passage of so much time caused most such ancient medicinal pills to gradually dry out and become defective, although they generally contained a bit of medicinal strength.

Meng Hao had no idea how long this Primordial Heavenly Replenishment Pill had existed, but for some reason, it hadn't dried out, and had contained the full level of medicinal strength. Furthermore, the pill contained the power of Time.

If Meng Hao had not mastered the technique to refine Time, achieved enlightenment regarding the Violet Will Incantation, and refined a Spring and Autumn tree, then it would have been very difficult to spot the uniqueness of this medicinal pill. All three were essential. If one were missing, he wouldn't have been able to pick up on the clues.

Time was both visible and corporeal, yet at the same time, invisible and incorporeal. Ancient medicinal pills will dry out, and reveal their ancientness. This was a result of their passage through Time. However, this medicinal pill was different. It sucked in Time, filling the pill with its illusory power. This pill was actually… a Time treasure!

Because of that, when consumed, the pill would reverse the Qi and blood passageways, and immediately cause the body to begin to wither and age. However, after that, when the pill was fully dissolved, then the true power of the Primordial Heavenly Replenishment Pill would explode out.

That is exactly what had happened with Chen Jiaxi.

The so-called medicinal pill that Meng Hao had concocted was a ruse to cover up the truth. The only function it had served was to smear over the evidence of the Primordial Heavenly Replenishment Pill in Chen Jiaxi's body.

Meng Hao's true goal had been to first prevent Patriarch Violet Sieve and the others from picking up on any of the clues, and next connive his way into getting the pill for himself.

Meng Hao took a deep breath as he extracted the globule of blood from within the pill furnace and placed it into a jade bottle. Next, he put the Primordial Heavenly Replenishing Pill into the oven and began to clean the filth off of it. Then, he gingerly placed it back into its original jade box, which he then held up to examine.

"The true value of this pill to me is not its medicinal strength, but the fact that encased within it is the power of Time. When it comes time for me to forge my treasure of Time, I will be able to learn a lot from it! It will increase my chances of success by quite a bit." Meng Hao was itching with anticipation. He could only imagine the power that he would be able to wield after producing his own treasure of Time.

"It's too bad that Chen Jiaxi… will obviously never tell me where he got this medicinal pill. However… I should know soon enough." He lifted up the jade bottle, inside of where he had placed the globule of blood. This blood… was from Chen Jiaxi.

"Once I'm able to produce a blood clone, the clone should be able to use its power to see the memories of whosever blood it was created from." Meng Hao's mind filled with excitement. As for Chen Jiaxi, he had chosen to fight with Meng Hao in terms of alchemy. His Cultivation base hadn't been irreparably destroyed, and furthermore, they were in the middle of the Black Sieve Sect, and the victory had been made openly and fairly. Therefore, there were no negative repercussions.

A few days passed by in a flash. The World Pill Division left, leaving the Black Sieve Sect alchemy training fully in the hands of Meng Hao and Zhou Dekun.

Patriarch Violet Sieve personally requested that Meng Hao concoct some Soul Refining Pills for the Black Sieve Sect. Such pills were nourishing to the soul. Meng Hao decided to politely decline; he didn’t want to have to work in such close contact with the Black Sieve Sect. As for Zhou Dekun, he seemed excited with the current situation. He had been giving lectures throughout the Black Sieve Sect, and was feeling quite content with everything.

Meng Hao spent his time visiting the sights in the Sect and paying respects to some of the Conclave disciples. He tried in a roundabout way to get information about Xu Qing. After five days passed, he still hadn’t seen a trace of her.

As of now, he was starting to get worried; the Black Sieve Sect was a bizarre place. The incident with Zhou Jie had solidified this fact in his mind.

On this particular evening, Meng Hao was walking along in an area near the edge of the One Hundred Mountains. He lifted his head up, and saw a woman standing atop one of the mountains off in the distance. She wore a black robe, and stood upon a stone pillar which jutted up from the mountain. The wind caused her garment, as well as her long black hair, to flutter about her. The instant Meng Hao saw her face, his mind trembled.

This woman was beautiful, but cold and cheerless….

He had been searching for her everywhere, and then suddenly, here she was, floating in the wind.

Her expression was one of blankness. She stood on the stone pillar, looking like she wanted to float away.

This was… Xu Qing.

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# Chapter 256: Bottom Line

The blank look in her eyes made it seem as if she had lost her soul, as if her spirit itself had been injured.

Her pale skin did not seem to contain even the slightest trace of blood, like that of a corpse which had been entombed in a coffin of ice for a thousand years. The wind which blew across the pillar she stood on was incapable of blowing away her look of confusion.

Her garments were stained with blackened spots of dried blood that seemed to have been there for a very, very long time. Never having been washed away, they had dried and branded themselves onto the fabric.

On her forehead was a wound, a gash that had clearly been there for some indeterminable length of time. It looked like a sword wound… that hadn’t healed.

As her garments fluttered in the wind, her right wrist became visible. It had a second sword gash on it.

Xu Qing was thinner.

She was thin, and even colder than before. She looked as if she had just emerged from the midst of a frigid snowstorm. Her garment was blue, her long hair draped around her like a cloak. Her skin was so delicate it seemed as if a breeze could puncture it. Meng Hao stared up at her beauty, seemingly unwilling to even blink.

If he blinked, everything would go dark, light would disappear, and he would no longer be able to see the beautiful figure in front of him.

He saw the sword wounds, as well as her blank look. He also saw that her blood vessels had been damaged. In that moment, the entire world seemed to disappear, except for Xu Qing, standing there on the mountain peak amidst the wind.

Meng Hao suddenly felt a twinge of pain in his heart.

He could ignore Han Bei's secret. He could ignore Zhou Jie's bizarre behavior. The Demon Sealing Jade had spoken to him twice, but be it Han Bei or Zhou Jie, Meng Hao felt as if it didn't have much to do with himself. Their life or death, their bizarre situations, were things he didn't want to get involved with.

After all, the root of all the various situations was none other than the Black Sieve Sect itself!

Meng Hao had grown up as a scholar, and was innately intelligent and farsighted. How could he not understand the meaning of the words of the Demon Sealing Jade? It was especially obvious considering the divine ability Zhou Jie had used at the end of their battle that year, and the discarnate souls which had appeared. How could he not understand… what had happened to Han Bei and Zhou Jie? And how could he not understand the terrifying power of the Black Sieve Sect?!

He did understand. In fact he knew that the Black Sieve Sect's forces were much greater than the people who walked about on the surface of the land!

"Discarnate souls possess the body," he thought to himself. "The discarnate souls are like those which appeared along with Zhou Jie's divine ability that year, Cultivators who have long since died. It seems countless discarnate souls exist underneath all of the Hundred Thousand Mountains of the Black Sieve Sect….

"This Black Sieve Sect, is a Sect of the underworld!

"Returned from the afterlife, desiring to rejoin the world of men, possessing the bodies of Cultivators and living parasitic lives. Zhou Jie exists in this very state, his body having been possessed. He is incapable of recovering his own mental faculties, and should not have been able to seek out death as he did that day. Clearly, something unexpected had occurred after his possession.

“Because of that unexpected event, the discarnate soul that had possessed him was injured, which allowed his own soul to reawaken. That was what had caused his confusion, his madness, and his struggle.

“As for Han Bei, there is clearly nothing wrong with her. However, she wants outsiders to think that her body has been successfully possessed. This is because there are not two souls within her, but three! One is her own, one is a discarnate soul from the Black Sieve Sect, and the third… is the Han Clan Patriarch which emerged from the statue in the Black Sieve Sect’s Blessed Land, and then entered her body!”

How could Meng Hao not understand these things!?

It was because he understood, that he didn’t want to get sucked into the situation. But as time passed, and he hadn’t been able to track down Xu Qing, he’d started to get nervous. Finally today, he was able to see her….

And now he understood that… he could not ignore the situation. Xu Qing’s soul possession was a bottom line that Meng Hao couldn’t accept.

He took a deep breath, then strode forward, heading directly toward the peak of the mountain. His body transformed into a prismatic beam. In an instant he had arrived behind the pillar upon which Xu Qing stood.

He looked at her back, and was about to approach her, when she turned. Her cold features were no longer filled with a blank look. Instead, a grim expression appeared.

In that moment, a sense of impending crisis welled up from the bottom of Meng Hao’s heart. As he looked at Xu Qing, he couldn’t see a Foundation Establishment Cultivation base any more. Instead, everything was blurry.

Meng Hao’s expression did not change. He looked at her, and at the same time surreptitiously performed an incantation gesture with his right hand.

Within his mind floated the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex. Because of the way he had performed the incantation, the Hex changed. It floated about in his mind, and stayed there, not moving out even the tiniest bit.

However, as soon as the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex appeared in his mind, his eyes, though they didn’t look any different, now viewed the world in a completely different way.

The mountains were still green; the land below was the same land as before. But, the greenness of the Hundred Thousand Mountains was now covered with a black aura. This black aura roiled up from all the mountains to circulate about in the air. In this moment, it looked to Meng Hao as if the Black Sieve Sect really had become a Sect of the underworld.

Strands of black aura drifted up off of Xu Qing’s body and swirled around her. Its nucleus seemed to be in the pit of her stomach, where a flickering globule of black mist existed. Deep within that black mist, Meng Hao could see Xu Qing’s soul, sleeping, as if it had been sealed.

The black aura emanated out constantly, and in fact, behind Xu Qing, it congealed together to form into the blurry image of a woman.

The phantom figure emanated a seemingly endless ghastly aura. It was bizarre, and emitted thick an aura of death as it looked at Meng Hao along with Xu Qing.

“Who are you?” said Xu Qing, her voice unhurried. From Meng Hao’s perspective, this voice did not belong to Xu Qing, but rather the gruesome discarnate soul which floated behind her.

As her words drifted out, Meng Hao suddenly sensed that the surrounding black aura was rushing toward them. It swirled around, forming into countless faces that grinned hideously as they stared at Meng Hao.

Of course, they were unaware that Meng Hao could see them as they floated around.

“I am Fang Mu of the Violet Fate Sect,” Meng Hao replied with a smile. “Elder Sister, are you a Conclave Disciple of the Black Sieve Sect? I’ve been here for a few days, but this is my first time seeing you.” As he clasped hands and bowed, he allowed the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex to dissipate, and the world around him returned to normal.

“Oh, so you’re Grandmaster Fang,” Xu Qing said coolly. “This is a prohibited mountain, please leave immediately.” She turned, ignoring Meng Hao and staring off into the distance. A blank look once again filled her face.

His expression the same as usual, Meng Hao bowed again and then turned into a beam of light that shot away from the mountain. He took his time going back, enjoying the sights along the way. By the time he got back to Black Welcoming Peak, the moon hung high in the sky.

He entered the building and immediately settled himself in the protective shield of the Furnace Lord medallion. His face instantly grew grim. He had been extremely cautious on his way back, careful to make sure nothing at all seemed amiss about him. However, there were still some discarnate souls who followed him. They had swirled around him the entire way, finally disappearing when he arrived at Black Welcoming Peak.

“To save Xu Qing, I have to get close to her,” he thought. “Furthermore, I can’t let anyone find out about it. This Black Sieve Sect is obviously an underworld Sect, with discarnate souls flying around everywhere….” Had he made an open move just now, not only would he have been unable to save Xu Qing, but he would also have broken his own cover.

He sat thinking, his eyes flickering. After some time passed, he closed his eyes.

Early the next morning, his eyes snapped open. He lifted up a jade slip, branded it with some information, then flicked his sleeve to send it flying out of the building.

His cool voice echoed out: “I have a matter to discuss with Patriarch Violet Sieve regarding pill concoction.”

As soon as the jade slip flew out into the air, a Cultivator appeared out of nowhere to grab it. It was impossible to determine his Cultivation base, but he wore a black robe. He immediately disappeared off into the distance.

Inwardly, Meng Hao gave a cold laugh. Ever since his alchemic showdown with Chen Jiaxi, he had sensed an aura outside of the Black Welcoming Mountains. Obviously someone was there watching him.

A few moments later laughter could be heard, followed by Patriarch Violet Sieve, who had come in person to discuss things with Fang Mu. He stood there with a smile on his face, clasping hands and bowing to Meng Hao.

“Grandmaster Fang,” he said with a smile, “please don’t take offense. I arranged for a disciple to stand watch outside to ensure your safety. After all, our Sect is a complicated place, and I’m incapable of controlling everything. According to the information in this jade slip, you say you can concoct the Soul Refining Pill. Well….”

Meng Hao sighed and then in an embarrassed voice said, “Elder Violet Sieve, actually, I’ve never heard of the Soul Refining Pill. Considering that, along with its strange name, it obviously has something to do with souls. I fear that the concocting such a pill would be extremely difficult. With so many variations, it would be very draining. That is why I hesitated to agree.”

Patriarch Violet Sieve didn’t reply. Instead, he stood there waiting for Meng Hao to continue, which he did. “Any other ordinary medicinal pill would be simple, but for strange new pills, even if I wanted to concoct them, I’m worried that it would really be too draining. Furthermore, I don’t really have the appropriate pill furnace….” He gave a wry smile, and looked even more embarrassed. “Also, I don’t think I really have enough of the medicinal plants that would be required. And I’m sure that the medicinal plants required are very valuable….

“Of course, I’m actually happy to help out, sir. I don’t mind getting tired. However, what I’m more worried about, would be the wasted time…. Furthermore, I don’t want to bother anyone during the concoction process, which will require one hundred percent concentration on my part….”

Patriarch Violet Sieve frowned for a moment, then suddenly laughed. “I understand, Grandmaster Fang. I can provide all of the medicinal plants you need. Even if you aren’t able to concoct the pills in the end, it won’t matter. Furthermore, I have the authority to provide you with some Spirit Stones as a way of thanking you for your work. As for a pill furnace… the Black Sieve Sect’s treasure storehouse happens to have a Ten Thousand Refinements furnace. We can gift this treasured furnace to you, Grandmaster! In addition, I can guarantee that no one will disturb you during your pill concocting. It will be just the same as if we sealed Black Welcoming Peak.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, but his expression was one of shyness, as if he was still embarrassed. “Sir, I am here at the Black Sieve Sect as representative of my own Sect. How could I possibly lay claim to treasured items of your honored Sect…?”

As soon as Patriarch Violet Sieve saw his expression, he smiled and raised his hand to cut off Meng Hao.

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# Chapter 257: Soul Refining

Meng Hao hesitated for a moment but then seemed to have made his decision.

“Sir,” he said, his voice resolute, “since you seem to place such faith in me, then… I will do the concocting! I will use everything I have learned to concoct the Soul Refining Pill for your honored Sect!

“As for your kindness, it will be engraved upon my mind forever. How about this. I’m sorry to say that I can’t do a bulk concoction. Concocting the pills that way might simplify things on my part, but the medicinal strength would be average, and the pills wouldn’t be as effective. Each person’s soul has slight differences. If I adjust each medicinal pill based on those differences, then I can concoct pills with maximum possible medicinal strength!”

Patriarch Violet Sieve looked at Meng Hao thoughtfully for a moment. From the moment Fang Mu had entered the Sect, Patriarch Violet Sieve had not noticed anything about him that was amiss.

As far as his background, his identity, his skill in the Dao of alchemy, there was nothing at all to cause him to be suspicious. He had been a bit skeptical regarding the matter with the Primordial Heavenly Replenishing Pill, but after thinking about it for a long time, he couldn’t come up with any evidence of anything fishy.

The matter of the Soul Refining Pills was currently of extreme importance to the Black Sieve Sect. However, the alchemy Cultivators of the Black Sieve Sect were incapable of concocting such pills.

Only the East Pill Division and the World Pill Division were skilled enough to handle matters related to souls. With the World Pill Division gone, and Fang Mu being so prominent, Patriarch Violet Sieve only had to think for a moment before nodding.

“There are thirteen Conclave Disciples in the Black Sieve Sect who, because they cultivate a special type of divine ability, ended up injuring their souls. The symptoms are dementia and hallucinations, as you saw that day with Zhou Jie. Ai….” Patriarch Violet Sieve sighed, and then stared solemnly at Meng Hao.

“We can rely only on you, Grandmaster Fang, to concoct the pills we need. I will arrange for the thirteen Conclave disciples to be sent here one at a time for you to examine and concoct pills for.” When he finished speaking, Patriarch Violet Sect turned to leave. Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed as he did so.

Not much time passed before a bag of holding was delivered to Meng Hao. Inside were a large amount of Spirit Stones, roughly one hundred thousand. Seeing this caused Meng Hao’s heart to start pounding.

In addition, there was a vast collection of medicinal plants, as well as the formula for the Soul Refining Pill.

Last of all was a pill furnace. Meng Hao took it out, and immediately his eyes began to shine.

The pill furnace was completely white, seemingly jade, and yet not. There were no carvings on its surface, and was a very unusual shape. Not a bit of medicinal aroma wafted out from it. However, what Meng Hao did see were strands of white colored Qi circulating around inside.

“Ten Thousand Refinements furnace!” murmured Meng Hao, palpitating with eagerness. Back in the East Pill Division he had studied a jade slip with introductions to all the various types of pill furnaces. There was one type which, after having successfully concocted ten thousands batches of medicinal pills, would gain sentience because of all of the nourishment it had received from the Qi of the medicinal pills.

Such a furnace would have been constructed from incredible materials to begin with. After the ten thousand concoctions, it would become even more incredible. Such pill furnaces were rarely seen in the world. Generally speaking, pill furnaces are viewed as consumable items, and will explode after one hundred uses or so.

For a pill furnace to survive for ten thousand batches placed its value at an incredible level.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and then swirled his hand about inside of the furnace, grasping one of the strands of Qi and pulled it out to examine. After a moment, he sighed, sounding somewhat regretful. It seemed this pill furnace had been used to concoct ten thousand of the exact same type of medicinal pill.

In this case, it couldn’t quite measure up to some of the other of this type of furnace which had been used to concoct countless different types of medicinal pills. However, as far as Meng Hao was concerned, this furnace far exceeded his Blood Crane furnace.

Putting away the Ten Thousand Refinements furnace, Meng Hao stood and then looked outside. A group of dozens of Black Sieve Sect disciples had surrounded the mountain and were now sitting cross-legged in meditation. Bluish light flickered around them. Clearly, once Meng Hao began his concocting, they would employ the full power of the light to create a shield around the mountain, ensuring that he wouldn’t be disturbed.

Meng Hao muttered to himself for a moment, then decided to prepare for any emergencies which might arise. He lifted his Furnace Lord medallion, then branded it with some information. It immediately flickered. Moments later, Zhou Dekun flew toward him in a beam of colorful light.

Having received Meng Hao’s transmitted message, he ended his alchemy lecture and immediately came to Black Welcoming Peak. Sensing the dozens of Black Sieve Sect disciples meditating in the area, he felt a bit of surprise.

Meng Hao went out to meet him and explain the situation. Furthermore, he asked Zhou Dekun to stay behind as Dharma Protector, and to act as his assistant.

Some time ago, Zhou Dekun would surely have refused. However, his attitude toward Meng Hao had completely changed recently. Hearing all the information, he nodded solemnly and pulled out his Furnace Lord medallion. Meng Hao felt much more reassured now, and handed over the bag of holding with all the medicinal plants.

With the protection of two Furnace Lord Medallions, no matter what the Black Sieve Sect did, he would have temporary protection from any sort of Divine Sense.

As far as the discarnate souls went, Meng Hao had some methods that would prevent them from noticing anything untoward. In any case, he did not plan to do anything too noticeable. In this whole matter, caution would be of the utmost importance.

Not much time passed before two Cultivators appeared, carrying between them a young man in a blue robe as they hurried over.

When they arrived, Meng Hao and Zhou Dekun both took a close look at the young man, and then frowned.

His face was pale white, seemingly without any trace of blood. His eyes were vacant and blank, and his body was emaciated, his skin so thin that you could see the bones sticking out from within. It was obvious that his Qi passageways were not even moving. He was almost like a mortal.

One of the middle-aged men supporting him said, “This is Conclave disciple Huang Zhongxi. While cultivating a secret magic, the technique backfired, weakening both his body and soul. If the Sect Elders didn’t maintain his life with magical power, he would have long since died.” The man sighed, and then bowed deeply to Meng Hao.

“Muscle atrophy and a weakened body,” said Zhou Dekun, his voice soft. “The soul is spilling out and the mind is dying. This man….”

Meng Hao looked closely at the young man, who clearly seemed to have lost his spirit. After a long moment, he approached the young man and placed his fingers onto his neck.

He muttered to himself for a moment, then moved his hand to grasp the young man’s arm, after which he closely inspected the faint blue veins visible in his skin.

“First we will concoct a Spirit Fusing Pill to see how much damage has been inflicted on his mind. Elder Brother Zhou, what do you think?” Meng Hao looked over at Zhou Dekun, who nodded.

“Three Yellows grass, Seven Souls spice, Hundred Years flower….” Meng Hao slowly listed out several dozen kinds of medicinal plants. Zhou Dekun recognized many of these plants as being very rare. All were related to recovering mental faculties. He quickly retrieved the medicinal plants from the bag of holding provided by the Black Sieve Sect and began to catalyze and prepare them according to Meng Hao’s directions.

Meng Hao pulled out the Ten Thousand Refinements furnace. When he saw it, Zhou Dekun’s eyes went wide. However, he knew that now was not the time to ask about it, and suddenly understood why Meng Hao attached such importance to this job….

After placing the various medicinal plants into the pill furnace, Meng Hao performed a catalyzing incantation with his left hand, and then pressed a finger from his right hand directly into the forehead of the young man, opening up a small wound and retrieving a drop of blood.

The drop of blood floated in front of Meng Hao for a moment, and then flew into the pill furnace.

A few moments later, a black-colored medicinal pill appeared. With the flick of a sleeve, Meng Hao sent it into the mouth of the young man. About ten breaths passed, and then suddenly, the young man’s body began to tremble. He let out a miserable howl, which caused the faces of the two middle aged Cultivators to flicker.

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever, completely calm.

The blood curdling screaming lasted for the time it takes half an incense stick to burn, after which a black Qi began to emanate out from the top of the young man's head. Within the black Qi was also a white-colored mist. The two seemed to be fused together. However, neither seemed to be able to make use of the other, and were attempting to disperse.

However, it was as if some power were preventing them from separating. The more they fused together, the more the attempted to separate. From the look of it, they would only be able to stay fused together for a limited time, before completely separating.

"I'm not sure what technique this person cultivated, but it caused Death Qi to enter his body, which then began to consume his life force. It was suppressed, but that will not last forever. Unless something is done to save him, he will definitely die within three months.

"I, Fang Mu, can attempt to save him," said Meng Hao coolly. "I'm fifty percent confident that I can succeed. However, his blood vessels are already in ruin. I need three generations of blood from his ancestors to create a Blood Vessel Pill. With that, I can reconstruct his blood vessels, and afterward, give birth to a new soul for him. Souls are birthed from the blood, so after this has been accomplished, I can concoct the Soul Refining Pill. At that point, success should be assured."

Hearing this, one of the middle-aged Cultivators supporting the young man turned and left. After the time it takes two incense sticks to burn, he returned and handed three jade bottles to Meng Hao.

Inside were three generations of blood from the young man's ancestors. In addition to the requisite latent talent, most Conclave disciples had ancestors who attained high positions within the Sect. As such, acquiring three generations of blood was not difficult.

Meng Hao indicated for the Black Sieve Sect Cultivators to take the possessed young man inside the residence. Then he asked them to leave, and produced his Furnace Lord medallion. Zhou Dekun did the same, and immediately the glowing shield appeared to lock down the area. Outside, another shield appeared to cover Black Welcoming Mountain. Everything was sealed down.

The only people in the building now were Meng Hao, Zhou Dekun and the pale-faced young man with the lost mind.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he looked thoughtfully at the young man.

“This person has been possessed by a discarnate soul evading the reincarnation cycle of Heaven and Earth…. After possession, if the body does not contain its original soul, it will become like a walking corpse. Without the ability to sustain itself, the body will begin to decay in a matter of days.

“Therefore, the discarnate soul is incapable of consuming the body’s original soul. Instead, it must exist as a parasite that controls the body!

“Originally, there was balance, but due to some unexpected circumstances, the balance was broken. Thus, the current situation arose.” A barely detectable glitter appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes.

“The discarnate soul is already damaged. The thing to do is to transform Yin into Yang… turn misfortune into the opposite! As the Demon Sealing Jade said, either seal it so that it cannot see the summer sun, or assist it with the blood will of the Demon Sealer!” Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a cold light. He wasn’t sure if the Soul Refining Pill would have any effect. But what he did know was that the will contained within his blood was the only hope the young man had of living, either now, or in the future.

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# Chapter 258: Grand Matriarch Phoenix

“Three Heaven Pearl leaves. Dust Wind root, nine stalks. Sixty-year old Spirit Flow sap….” Meng Hao slowly listed off nearly a hundred different varieties of medicinal plants. Next to him, Zhou Dekun immediately retrieved them from the bag of holding and handed them over.

The earthly fire crystal blazed explosively, and the floating pill furnace immediately turned bright red. A strong medicinal aroma wafted out from the Ten Thousand Refinements furnace. Meng Hao fed the medicinal plants into it according to the proper interactions. He put them in carefully, making sure not to waste anything. Then he sliced a cut onto his finger and placed a drop of his blood into the pill furnace.

He exercised utmost control over the concoction process, which ended up taking three days.

After three days passed, a bright red medicinal pill emerged. Without hesitation, Meng Hao placed it into the mouth of the young man.

As soon as the pill entered his mouth, the young man’s body began to spasm. He did not scream, but as his body shook, a blank look filled his eyes. The struggling became more intense. It lasted for the time it takes an incense stick to burn. Finally, his body vibrated, and then suddenly went still.

He lowered his head, and didn’t move. The space of ten breaths passed, after which a gruesome Qi began to spread out from his body. Finally, he lifted his head up. The blank look was no longer there in his eyes, but instead, somberness.

“Many thanks, Grandmaster,” said the young man slowly. His words were those of thanks, but they were spoken with an incredible arrogance, as if saying the words were similar to giving alms to a beggar. He rose to his feet, ignoring Meng Hao, then turned and strode out of the building.

Zhou Dekun frowned with displeasure.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever, but inside, he laughed coldly. It seemed that balance had been restored between the young man’s body and the discarnate soul inside. However, because of the drop of Meng Hao’s blood, he now had the ultimate power; if necessary he could directly destroy the discarnate soul.

A single drop of the blood of a Demon Sealer can thoroughly exterminate a discarnate soul!

Patriarch Violet Sieve, the beautiful woman, and the ruddy-faced old man were waiting for the young man at the bottom of Black Welcoming Peak. When they saw him approaching, they began to breathe heavily. They quickly clasped hands and greeted him with a bow.

“Congratulations on your recovery, Minor Patriarch!”

Of course, they didn’t let anyone see what was happening. They had long since sealed off the area they were in.

The young man glanced at the Nascent Soul Cultivators. “That otherworldly corpse which fell from the sky has really caused some problems. In fact, our lord is once again in deep slumber because of it. We’re back in the world of men, but we still haven’t accomplished the task ordered by our lord…. However, you three did well to make use of that person. After all, he was able to facilitate my recovery. Now, we still have a chance.

“Arrange for the discarnate souls of the other Patriarchs to come. As for the one who contains… Grand Matriarch Phoenix, well, no mistakes can be made with her. If there are no problems with the others, send her as well.” Having finished speaking, the young man’s body flickered, transforming into a black smoke which then disappeared, melting back into the earth.

Patriarch Violet Sieve and the others reverently saluted him as he departed. Then they stood an exchanged bitter glances. With that, they left, arranging for the other twelve people to be sent to Meng Hao, one at a time.

Time passed slowly. Meng Hao treated one after another of the so-called Minor Patriarchs. As of now, Black Welcoming Peak had become a very important place in the Black Sieve Sect.

Whatever requests Meng Hao made were met immediately. Of course, how could he not make use of this opportunity? All he had to do was say the name of a medicinal plant, and it would be delivered to him. Many of the ingredients he needed for the Perfect Gold Core gradually began to fill his bag of holding. Seeing what was happening, Zhou Dekun began to grow a bit envious, and also began to request some medicinal plants.

As they concocted pills, they both slowly began to reap rewards.

In this way, Meng Hao was also able to collect quite a few sets of three generations of blood. They had nothing to do with the pills he was concocting; they were required to create blood clones, and he would naturally not lose out on an opportunity for that.

If blood was not available from a given ancestor, Meng Hao wouldn’t press the issue. He would just extend the time spent concocting the pill.

Finally one day, the pale faced Zhou Jie entered the building. This was the first time Meng Hao had seen him since that incident when he first arrived at the Black Sieve Sect. Zhou Jie sat down cross-legged. Meng Hao said nothing for a moment, then began to concoct the pill.

After Zhou Jie left, Han Bei arrived. She had a cautious look on her face. When she sat down in front of him, Meng Hao looked at her and then chuckled.

“Grandmaster Fang….” she said with a smile. Suddenly, she felt very nervous. The voice of the Han Clan Patriarch suddenly rang out in her mind.

“Be careful of this person! He is complicated, and most likely is able to sense my presence!!” This was not the first time she had heard something like this from the ancestor. The reason she had been nervous the first day she met Fang Mu outside of the Black Sieve Sect, was because of the voice of the Han Clan Patriarch.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever. He smiled, then began to concoct. When the pill came out, Meng Hao looked over at Han Bei. Her expression was also the same as usual. However, her heart was trembling. Inside her mind, the trembling voice of the Han Clan Patriarch could be heard.

“That pill… you must not consume it!! This person… he….”

“Grandmaster Fang,” she said softly, rising to her feet calmly. “I’ll take the pill away and consume it later.”

Meng Hao turned to Zhou Dekun, clasped hands and said, “Elder Brother Zhou, I have a small personal matter I wish to discuss alone with Fellow Daoist Han.”

Zhou Dekun laughed. He had long since sensed that something was amiss. However, having been able to collect so many medicinal plants in the past days, he paid it no heed, and immediately left the building.

Seeing Zhou Dekun leave, Han Bei’s heart trembled. “Grandmaster Fang….” she said, keeping her expression the same as always, like a flower. She was about to continue speaking when Meng Hao interrupted her.

“If you don’t want to consume the pill, very well. In that case, however, you will owe me a favor that must be repaid at some point in the future.” He looked at Han Bei with a profound look that seemed to penetrate deep into her mind.

Han Bei looked back at him and gritted her teeth. She was full of schemes, but right now, couldn’t think of any way out. A blank look appeared in her eyes.

“Grandmaster Fang,” she said, “I don’t quite understand what you mean. But, I suppose I can agree to this favor.”

“I don’t need a favor from you,” replied Meng Hao coolly, “but rather the third soul that exists within your body!”

The words entered Han Bei’s ears like a thunderbolt. Her expression immediately changed completely.

She was about to say something when, suddenly, a blue Qi emerged from the top of her head. It congealed above her into the shape of a man. He stared at Meng Hao for some time before finally nodding.

“The Han Clan owes you a favor,” he said in an archaic voice.

Meng Hao clasped hands and saluted. The figure disappeared, and Han Bei stared at Meng Hao, an expression of shock and fear on her face. After a long moment passed, she turned and left as quickly as possible. Before leaving the building, she collected herself, then caused a cold, somber look to shine in her eyes. As far as any outsider could see, there was nothing unusual about her. Soon, she disappeared off into the distance.

A month of pill concocting went by until finally, the Black Sieve Sect sent the last person to Meng Hao. It was none other than… Xu Qing.

Based on all of Meng Hao’s experiences, the fact that she was the last to be sent was very telling. The discarnate soul inside of her must be someone not to be trifled with in the Black Sieve Sect, someone of utmost seniority.

Just as Meng Hao had suspected, as soon as she arrived, things immediately changed around Black Welcoming Peak. The protective shield protecting the mountain grew stronger, and countless discarnate souls circled around up in the air. All of them seemed to be looking down toward Black Welcoming Peak.

Seeing all of this, Meng Hao’s heart sank a bit. However, the feeling didn’t show on his face. He watched Xu Qing slowly enter the building and sit down cross-legged in front of him. She looked calm, and there was much less blankness in her eyes.

Meng Hao looked at her, glanced at the wound on her forehead, then activated his Furnace Lord shield. His face was the same as usual, but as he concocted the pill, he put in, not a normal drop of blood, but a drop of blood from his Cultivation base!

Such blood contained the essence of his life force, including his identity as the Ninth Demon Sealer, and the persistence of his will.

It entered the pill and joined the various interactions; furthermore, Meng Hao used some of the power of the meat jelly to ensure that no clues would spill out. When the concocting was done, he held the pill out to Xu Qing. She picked it up with her delicate hands, but didn't consume it.

“So, this is the pill which helped everyone to recover?” she said, her voice cold as she looked at Meng Hao. Without waiting for his response, she rose to her feet and strode out of the building.

Meng Hao watched her leave, then sat there thinking silently. He was certain that although she didn't consume the pill in his presence, she would soon.

This was because although she appeared to be in the process of self-recovery, it was actually just a front. The problems with the discarnate soul in her body far exceeded those of the others he had seen, by at least two or three times. In fact, her situation was the most grave he had seen so far. This was evident by the fact that the wound on her forehead was much worse than when he'd seen it the first time.

The next day at evening, within the seventh mountain of the Black Sieve Sect, Xu Qing sat cross legged within her immortal's cave. Her face was pale white, and her eyes filled with both struggle and blankness. Her body trembled.

She continued in this way for several hours before finally lifting up her hand from her bag of holding. Inside was the medicinal pill concocted by

Meng Hao. The process of lifting it up to place into her mouth took nearly ten breaths.

If Meng Hao were here, he would be able to see multiple discarnate souls drifting around her body. All of them were staring nervously at Xu Qing as they flew to and fro.

In fact, outside, all of the Black Sieve Sect disciples who Meng Hao had saved, including Zhou Jie and Han Bei, kneeled before the Immortal’s cave, bowing respectfully. It seemed as if they were waiting for a summons to enter.

Xu Qing still held the pill in her hand. After a long moment passed, the gruesome coldness in her eyes overcame the blankness and struggle. The discarnate soul inside of her sighed. She knew that because of the injury to the soul, balance couldn’t be restored in this body. She was fading, and the original soul of the body was also fading. The body’s life force was disappearing, and the wound on her forehead was growing worse. She knew that if she put things off any longer, the body would begin to decay.

Originally, she had never believed that consuming medicinal pills created in this world could lead to recovery. However, seeing the recovery of all the other discarnate souls caused her to question her view. After studying the pill for some time, she was unable to unlock its mysteries. Therefore, she decided that she had no other choice than to consume it. She placed the pill into her mouth.

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# Chapter 259: I Want To Watch You Fade Into the Distance

As soon as the pill entered her mouth and began to dissolve, Meng Hao’s blood began to emit a crimson glow. At the same moment, the soul of Matriarch Phoenix within Xu Qing’s body began to shake. A sense of impending life-or-death danger appeared, but before she could do anything, a frightening aura submerged her, making it impossible to send a warning to anyone on the outside.

Suddenly, Xu Qing’s soul, which had previously been in a state of slumber, was infused with the red glow, nourishing her, causing her to recover. Xu Qing’s soul was being directed…. Matriarch Phoenix was being suppressed by the blood of a Demon Sealer, allowing Xu Qing to rise from her weakness, whereupon, a soul consumption began to take place within the body!

This soul consumption had been Meng Hao’s goal all along. He wanted Xu Qing to be able to do what Han Bei had done; fuse the discarnate soul, make it her own. Such a fusion would be undetectable by the Black Sieve Sect and the other discarnate souls. No one would be able to tell who truly held mastery over the body!

One in the midst of the other, a dangerous rebirth!

As Xu Qing raised the pill to her mouth, Meng Hao was sitting cross-legged in his residence. When the pill entered her mouth, his eyes opened. They were filled with a brilliant light. The blood in his pill came from deep within him, so obviously he could sense what was happening.

“The power of the meat jelly’s ever-changing forms really is hard to penetrate….” Meng Hao rubbed his face for a moment, then slowly lifted his hand, within which was a jade bottle.

Inside the jade bottle was a medicinal pill. This was a pill he had concocted back in the Violet Fate Sect, before coming to the Black Sieve Sect. The pill bottle was sealed with wax, and hadn’t been opened.

Originally, he had planned to give it to Xu Qing, but up until now, hadn’t had a chance to.

He looked at the pill bottle, and then closed his eyes.

Early the next morning, Meng Hao walked out of his residence. Immediately, the disciple dispatched by Patriarch Violet Sieve to guard Black Welcoming Mountain, turned and saluted him with clasped hands.

“Please deliver this pill bottle to Fellow Daoist Xu Qing. She requested me to concoct it when she visited the other day.” He handed the bottle to the Cultivator. Because of Xu Qing’s special standing within the Black Sieve Sect, he felt it was unlikely anyone would open the bottle.

Even if someone did, they wouldn’t understand.

A few days passed. On the seventh day, Zhou Dekun kept saying that they needed to leave. Meng Hao could delay no further. He left the mountain peak, flying up to join the impatient Zhou Dekun.

There were no problems whatsoever between him and Zhou Dekun. The alchemy lectures were over, as was the pill concocting. The invitation period from the Black Sieve Sect had long since expired.

There really was no reason to stay behind any longer. Meng Hao had had no other choice than to give in to Zhou Dekun’s prompting.

At the moment, a large group from the Black Sieve Sect was escorting Meng Hao and Zhou Dekun out of the Sect. Patriarch Violet Sieve was among them, and was very courteous as they proceeded along.

As for the pill bottle, Meng Hao had been right. No one dared to open it. It had been delivered to Xu Qing's secluded meditation area, where it was received by a girl with a grim expression in her eyes. She scanned the bottle with Divine Sense and didn't notice anything special about the pill stored inside. Yet, she didn't dare to actually open the bottle. She was aware of Matriarch Phoenix's personality. This girl had already done the unthinkable by returning from the afterlife; however, a mere thought from Matriarch Phoenix could exterminate her instantly.

A trifling medicinal pill wasn't worth such a risk. Therefore, the girl paid little attention to it.

Finally the door of Xu Qing's Immortal's cave opened. As the sunlight poured in, the girl lifted her head up and then strode into the Immortal's Cave. Catching sight of Xu Qing sitting there cross-legged, she dropped to her knees and kowtowed.

"Congratulations on your recovery, Matriarch Phoenix."

Xu Qing said nothing. The girl didn't dare to lift her head, and as such, didn't notice the blank look which appeared in Xu Qing's eyes, followed by surprise.

After a few moments passed, Xu Qing stood up. She wore a long, greenish-blue robe, and her features were cold. As she left the Immortal's cave, she coolly said, "Rise."

The girl took a deep breath and then quickly rose to her feet, carefully following Xu Qing out of the Immortal's Cave.

Xu Qing looked up at the azure blue sky, and the bright sun, and the strange expression in her eye slowly faded away and turned into coldness. Deep within this coldness, however, was emotion, something only she was aware of.

"Please call over the other twelve Black Clan souls," said Xu Qing, her voice cool.

The girl immediately nodded, and was about to leave, when she suddenly hesitated.

“Yes?” said Xu Qing, the coldness in her eyes glistening as she looked at the girl.

The girl’s body trembled, and she quickly said, “Grand Matriarch Phoenix, a few days ago Alchemist Fang Mu delivered this pill bottle. He said you had requested a pill to be concocted.” For some reason, the girl felt as if Grand Matriarch Phoenix was now even colder than she had been before.

She retrieved the pill bottle from her bag of holding and held it out.

Xu Qing’s expression was calm as she looked at the pill. Inwardly, though, her heart trembled, and her breathing grew rapid. She made a snatching motion, and the pill bottle flew into her hand. She unsealed the wax and poured the pill out of the bottle.

It was an ordinary medicinal pill, worth very little. However, despite its relative lack of worth, it caused an enormous storm of emotions to rise in her heart.

This was none other than… a Cosmetic Cultivation Pill.

She stared in shock at the medicinal pill.

“Which mountain is he located in?” said Xu Qing, closing her eyes to recover her grim coldness. The soul fusing wasn’t complete at the moment, and her mind was still a bit conflicted, and filled with confusion.

“Black Welcoming Peak….” replied the girl. Even before she could finish speaking, Xu Qing took a step forward and then disappeared.

Meng Hao and Zhou Dekun stood smiling outside the main gate of the Black Sieve Sect. Patriarch Violet Sieve and the others clasped hands and bowed. Meng Hao and Zhou Dekun politely declined the offers to escort them further. After exchanging the proper formalities, they prepared to leave.

It was at this very instant that a bright beam of light shot through the air with indescribable speed. It emerged from the Hundred Mountains of the Black Sieve Sect, whistling through the air at such speed that ripples emanated out. A roaring sound filled the air which caused Patriarch Violet Sieve's face to twist. He spun and looked up at the approaching prismatic beam, and his face flickered again.

It all happened in the blink of an eye. Within the space of a breath, Xu Qing appeared in mid-air, wearing her long greenish-blue robe, her demeanor icy. Her grim, cold gaze swept over the crowd, coming to rest upon Meng Hao. Inside her heart was pounding.

The world seemed to disappear around her, forming a haze… except for one space.

This look… is because I want to catch another fleeting glimpse of your figure within the crowd.

This look… is because I want to always be able to see you.

This look… is because I want you to know… I've watched over you this whole time.

Meng Hao smiled as he looked at Xu Qing. She was immeasurably cold, but he was used to that. His smile contained happiness, within his eyes was warmth.

Their gazes met; Meng Hao's smile and Xu Qing's coldness. Only the two of them knew how their gazes reached into each other's hearts. He knew that she understood. She knew that the person standing there in front of her was none other than Meng Hao.

It was the same as that look they had shared outside the Black Sieve Sect's Blessed Land. It was just like the smile underneath the moonlight in the Reliance Sect. It was like the time Meng Hao had turned his head to look at her back on Mount Daqing.

Obviously, this was not the proper place for words. In truth, though, there was no need for words; the emotions of their period of separation were contained deep within their eyes. A look was all they needed to express the joy which existed in their hearts.

“I’ll escort you,” said Xu Qing coolly.

“Many thanks, Fellow Daoist Xu,” said Meng Hao with a smile, clasping hands and lowering his head.

Zhou Dekun stared in shock for a moment. Patriarch Violet Sieve and the others also gaped; they knew who Xu Qing really was, and they also knew that her presence here far, far exceeded that of their own.

Xu Qing ignored them, having eyes only for Meng Hao.

The three of them left.

Far outside the Black Sieve Sect, Meng Hao and Xu Qing stood atop a tall mountain peak, looking at each other. Zhou Dekun tactfully waited some distance away.

“Thank you….” said Xu Qing, her voice soft.

Meng Hao shook his head and looked back in the direction of the Black Sieve Sect. Xu Qing waved her right hand, and the ghastly coldness once again appeared in her eyes. She turned, and her voice echoed out into the emptiness.

“Any soul within thirty thousand meters of this place will be instantly exterminated!” As she spoke, a ghastly aura accompanied the sound to echo out. Meng Hao immediately sensed the countless discarnate souls in the area fleeing at top speed. An instant later, there was no sign of any discarnate soul.

Time passed, and the two of them stood there in the early morning air on top of the mountain. They spoke simple words, smiling, listening. Time passed, but neither of them seemed willing to part.

In the past, they had been friends in the same Sect. Later, they met in the Black Sieve Sect Blessed Land. Now here they were, meeting again in the outside world. All of these things things melded together deep in Meng Hao's heart, as well as Xu Qing's.

Her expression was cold, but her heart was filled with joy. Within her seemingly cold pupils could be seen a touch of warm light. No matter how his appearance had changed, the person in front of her was still her Junior Brother Meng Hao.

As soon as she had realized that Fang Mu was Meng Hao, her heart had begun to pound. There were so many things she wanted to tell him, but as soon as he looked at her, she felt like she didn't have any words to speak.

The fact that he hadn't left the Southern Domain, that he was a Furnace Lord of the Violet Fate Sect… this was enough. As soon as she saw the Cosmetic Cultivation Pill, she completely understood everything. She wasn't sure when it had happened, but Meng Hao's figure had at some point become deeply ingrained into her; he was now a part of her very heart, a part that would never leave her.

No matter how many years passed that tried to wash clean the memory, as long as she thought back, she could see that faint smile. The years could not wash it away, so it grew deeper, to the point where she didn't need to think back. She just kept moving forward, because she knew that one day, the two of them… would meet again, and would walk together amidst the snow and wind.

Soon, moonlight caressed the branches of the willow trees, and the sky began to turn slightly violet. The mountain breeze lifted Xu Qing's long, black hair to cover her face. The sight of it filled Meng Hao with warmth, and a slight smile.

The smile appeared on his face, but came from his heart.

It was faint, but like water, it was something her life could never do without.

“Go,” she said softly. “I want to watch you fade into the distance.”

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# Chapter 260: Five Years Without a Fight!

As Meng Hao disappeared off into the moonlight, he looked back and saw Xu Qing standing there on the mountain peak. Memories of the times he had spent with her filled his mind.

The first time he handed her a medicinal pill in the Reliance Sect. Outside the Immortal’s cave in the Reliance Sect, when he gave her a Cosmetic Cultivation pill. Her voice underneath the moonlight. Then their time together in the Black Sieve Sect Blessed Land. And now.

For some reason, it seemed as if many stories lay therein.

Meng Hao wasn’t sure if this was romantic love. The feelings within in him now were things he’d never felt before, never experienced. What he did know was that every time he saw Xu Qing, he felt happiness well up within him that seemed to have been buried deep in his memories.

It was a good feeling.

In fact, during his five years in the Violet Fate Sect, the thing he found himself thinking about most often was cold Xu Qing, standing under the moonlight, her black hair floating in the wind.

“I wonder what it would be like… if the Reliance Sect were still there, if the Black Sieve Sect hadn’t taken Elder Sister Xu away? What if we were still back in the Reliance Sect?” Meng Hao looked forward again. The moonlight shone down onto his back as he proceeded off into the distance. Questions such as that had no answer.

He drew further and further away….

Two days later, a pair of prismatic beams shot through the air above a path to the teleportation portal which led to the Barren Mountains. They were none other than Meng Hao and Zhou Dekun. Their task having been accomplished, they were now on their way back to the Sect.

After leaving the Black Sieve Sect, Zhou Dekun, had cleared his throat and then said, “Aiii. You should get out of the Sect more often and make more friends with these Cultivator Clans. You know what? How about this: I’ll take you to meet some of them while we’re on our way to the teleportation portal.”

Looking sorrowful, he had continued, “We’re Furnace Lords, and we spend most of our time holed up in the Sect. You can’t deny that concocting pills takes a lot of resources. What you can earn in the Sect isn’t enough to survive on. So… ah, Fang Mu, whenever you get sent out of the Sect, don’t be in a hurry to get back. Take some time to interact with the outside. They have wealth to spare, and are the perfect companions for alchemists like us.”

Meng Hao had nodded approvingly. After the events in the black Sieve Sect, the previous hard feelings between him and Zhou Dekun had disappeared. They now had a relatively good relationship.

Thus, Zhou Dekun spent the better part of half a month taking Meng Hao to the various Cultivator Clans in the region, as well as to a mid-sized Sects, where they were received with great ceremony. No matter where they went, they were treated with utmost respect. Seeing the pretentious air with which Zhou Dekun carried himself amongst these Cultivator Clans made Meng Hao smile.

Furthermore, whatever needs they had were met; in fact, whenever there were opportunities to sell medicinal pills, the Spirit Stones came flowing into their bags of holding. That caused Meng Hao’s eyes to shine brightly. During the half month, he was able to sell quite a few medicinal pills.

Actually, most of the pills he had sold were ones he had acquired from Chen Jiaxi.

Finally, half a month later, Meng Hao and Zhou Dekun were nearing the teleportation portal that led to the Barren Mountains

The Barren Mountains were located very near to the center of the Southern Domain, an area that could be considered a major intersection between the various Sects and Clans. Because of the location of this teleportation portal, it had eventually turned into a centralized travel hub.

In a valley in the east of the Barren Mountains was a location that usually bustled with activity. Now, however, it could only be described as gruesome.

The reek of blood filled the air, and the ground was littered with corpses. Searching through the corpses for bags of holding were a few dozen Cultivators who wore black robes and white masks. Occasionally they would encounter someone gasping their last breaths, and would immediately run them through with a sword.

Beyond the black-robed Cultivators was a black, iron cage, several meters tall. Considering the cage floated in the air and emanated a mysterious glow, it was obviously a magical item. Inside the cage were two Cultivators.

Their faces were pale, and they were both unconscious. They were splattered with blood, and were clearly seriously injured, but not dead. A faint aroma of medicinal pills emanated off of them; they were obviously alchemists. One of them wore a long green robe, which was embroidered with a pill furnace, marking him as an alchemist of the World Pill Division.

Not too far away, three Cultivators were locked in magical combat in mid-air. Ripples spread out through the air. This was not the magic of the Nascent Soul stage; however, the level of power made it obvious that they were not Foundation Establishment Cultivators, but rather Core Formation.

Of the three Core Formation Cultivators, two wore black clothes and azure masks. Their attacks were vicious; they were only of the early Core

Formation stage, but were clearly beyond normal.

As they attacked, booms filled the valley.

“Who are you?!” roared the besieged Core Formation Cultivator. “I’m from the Golden Frost Sect….” Blood sprayed from his mouth as he shot backward.

There was no response to his question. Of the two azure-masked Cultivators, one was pudgy, the other skinny. They advanced forward, their attacks growing even more vicious.

It was at this exact moment that suddenly, one of the three teleportation portals in the valley began to glow. As soon as the glow rose up, the group several dozen Cultivators with black robes and white masks began to close in on the portal.

The glow of teleportation lasted for the space of a few breaths, and then slowly began to disappear. Two figures appeared: Meng Hao and Zhou Dekun.

Zhou Dekun was laughing and saying something to Meng Hao.

“I have a good relationship with several of the Cultivator Clans in the Barren Mountains. Next, I’m going to take you to….”

Meng Hao was smiling, but in an instant, his expression immediately changed. Even as the teleportation was completing, before he and Zhou Dekun could see anything on the outside, a sense of danger rose up within him.

Before he could speak, the sense of danger rose to the heavens. Meng Hao’s face changed. He flicked his left sleeve, and a wild wind sprang up, rippling toward Zhou Dekun and knocking him to the side. Borrowing some of the momentum, Meng Hao’s body snapped like a willow branch off at another angle.

Meng Hao and Zhou Dekun flew off into opposite directions. Almost in the same instant that they left the teleportation portal, a boom filled the air as the combined magical might of the dozens of Cultivators slammed down onto it.

As the boom echoed out, Meng Hao shot backward nine meters, both hands flashing incantation gestures and then waving out in front of him. Popping sounds rang out as the incoming power of the dozens of Cultivators dissipated.

Zhou Dekun’s face flickered. After being pushed off of the teleportation portal by Meng Hao, his right hand flickered in an incantation sign and then slammed into the ground. A great beam of light shot out from his body, blocking the power of the magical attack. Despite being of the late Foundation Establishment stage, blood sprayed from his mouth. His eyes filled with astonishment and fury as he looked at his attackers.

Meng Hao’s eyes filled with a cold glow. It had been a long time since he engaged in battle magic with anyone. During his five years in the Violet Fate Sect, he hadn’t made even a single attack against anyone. However, his skill in battle magic, and his ability to kill, had by no means been reduced. In fact, his five years of hibernation had made him even stronger.

Some of that had to do with the Dao of alchemy and the Dao of poison. During the past five years, he had concocted no small amount of poisons. Killing intent flickered in his eyes as he looked at the dozen or so Cultivators in black robes and white masks.

The instant he saw them, he could sense the intense killing intent radiating off of them. He saw the corpses laying around on the ground, and the two people in the cage. He also could see the battle going on in the air off in the distance.

He didn’t hesitate at all. His right hand slapped his bag of holding, and the two wooden swords flew out. Their sword aura flared up; they had been kept in silence for a very long time, and now that they were out, a massive killing intent boiled up. This caused most of the black-robed Cultivators to turn their heads toward Meng Hao.

“How dare you!” roared Zhou Dekun. “I’m a Furnace Lord of the East Pill Division. You…” He hadn’t personally engaged in magical combat for a very long time. Ever since becoming a Furnace Lord, he had trodden a path filled with courtesy and respect. Yet just now, even before he could step off of the teleportation platform, he had been the victim of a sneak attack.

Before Zhou Dekun could even finish speaking, Meng Hao saw the eyes of the black robed men beginning to glisten as they looked over toward the old man.

“Not good,” thought Meng Hao, his eyes flashing. Without a moment’s hesitation, his body flickered, and he shot forward.

He moved at incredible speed, the two wooden swords screaming next were like two Sword Dragons that charged directly toward two of the black-robed men. Before the two men could retreat, the wooden swords stabbed through their foreheads, coming out the other sides of their heads in fountains of red and white.

Continuing forward, Meng Hao flashed an incantation and then shoved his palm forward. Multiple images of a hand appeared. They began to emit a roaring sound, then fell apart into small attacks which shot toward the black-robed men. The black-robed men instantly fell back.

“Senior Zhou,” Meng transmitted to Zhou Dekun, “don’t forget the ability of the robe! Get out of here!” The dozens of Cultivators immediately split into two groups, one of which headed toward Meng Hao, the other toward Zhou Dekun.

Everything was happening too quickly. Zhou Dekun was in a panic. However, as soon as Meng Hao reminded him, he stamped his foot onto the ground. His Furnace Lord’s robe began to glow, and suddenly he disappeared.

He had just activated the teleportation function of the Furnace Lord robe, which he could only do three times. Seeing Zhou Dekun disappear, a cold snort filled the air. One of the two Core Formation Cultivators, the pudgy one, transformed into a beam of light and shot in pursuit of Zhou Dekun.

As he disappeared off into the distance, his voice rang out, “We have some East Pill Division Cultivators delivered right to our doorstep. Brother Yang, I’ll go catch the one that just ran off!”

Without a word, the other Core Formation Cultivator, the skinny one, resumed his battle with the man from the Golden Frost Sect, who was clearly seriously injured at this point. From the look of things, he would be slain at any moment.

Down on the ground, the dozens of black-robed men turned their attention from Zhou Dekun to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao didn’t flee. His eyes glittered with killing intent, and the corners of his mouth turned up into a slight smile. It had been a long time since he had been able to make any sort of attack against anyone. These people in front of him were mere Foundation Establishment Cultivators. In Meng Hao’s eyes, they were already dead.

“I haven’t killed anyone in five years. I guess you guys are going to make me break my record of abstinence!” This was the first time in five years in which Meng Hao’s Cultivation Base would explode to its full potential!

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# Chapter 261: The Killing Heart is Still There!

Fleeing was far from the first of his thoughts!

Before fleeing, he must first make the enemy pay a price!

That was Meng Hao’s personality. Core Formation Cultivators were engaged in battle not far away and his decision was still… KILL!

As the black-robed men approached, Meng Hao’s eyes filled with coldness. He lifted his hands and waved them forward. As he did, no magic appeared. Instead, a cold wind sprang up.

The wind blasted over the dozens of black-robed men, causing a displacement force to spring up. Immediately, the corpses of the two men Meng Hao had just slain with the wooden swords began to expand.

It happened extremely quickly. In the blink of an eye they had expanded to the point of explosion.

BOOM!

Amidst the roar, chunks of blood and gore showered out in all directions, rapidly turning black. A rotten smell filled the air.

As the blood and gore flew out, miserable screams could be heard. The seven or eight black-robed men nearest to the corpses were clearly infected by the black blood.

The blood contained poison!

As a Furnace Lord who focused on studying the Dao of poison, he had long since coated the two wooden swords with poison that he himself had created. He had done this even when he was still in the Violet Fate Sect.

The black robed men looked on in shock for a moment. Before they could react, the ground exploded up as a mass of dark violet vines burst up. There were more than ten of them, which shot toward the crowd of people.

All of this happened in an instant. Blood curdling screams echoed out, and everything was thrown into a deadly chaos. The killing in Meng Hao's eyes boiled, and his body flickered as he shot forward.

He cut a slice into his index finger with his thumb. Blood flowed down, and the Blood Finger appeared, something that hadn't been seen in the Southern Domain for a long, long time. Meng Hao's six Perfect Dao pillars glowed with a violet aura, and began to rotate. His seventh Dao Pillar was nearing completion, and was now around eighty percent formed.

Power invincible to the Foundation Establishment stage poured out from Meng Hao. A massive crushing pressure emanated out in all directions. These black-robed men were of the full circle of Foundation Establishment. However, their Dao Pillars immediately began to shake. Their faces filled with astonishment. Meng Hao's fearsomeness exceeding anything they could have imagined.

How could they ever have predicted that this stranger who had charged into their trap looking like a weak scholar, was actually a divinity of death!

Meng Hao hadn't fought for five years, and now that he did, he made only killing moves. The index finger of his right hand flashed like lightning, slamming down onto the mask of one of the black-robed men. It pierced through the mask, stabbing down into his forehead. Perfect Dao Pillar power burst out, transforming into a terrifying, all-encompassing explosive force. It immediately destroyed the man's Dao Pillars and Core sea, crushing his will, exterminating his life.

Meng Hao's face was cold as he took hold of the man's corpse. He took a step forward, toward another black-robed man. He squeezed the corpse, which subsequently exploded. Blackened blood splashed out in all directions. A look of shock appeared on the other man’s face, and he wasn’t fast enough to avoid the blood. It drenched him, and immediately, terrifying screams filled the air. Meng Hao moved on toward another black-robed man.

His body flitted around like an evil spirit. Beneath his mask, the face of one of the black-robed men twisted. Without hesitation, he bit down on his tongue, spitting out a blood mist which spread out mysteriously to cover his body. He had to attempt to delay Meng Hao; there were still three other black-robed men nearby who were approaching with magical items in hand.

Meng Hao gave a cold snort, which echoed out like a clap of thunder. The sound pierced to the very hearts of the four remaining black-robed men. The three who were currently approaching suddenly stopped in their tracks. The man who had just employed the blood mist felt as if his mind was spinning out of control.

Meng Hao’s right knee flew into the air, slamming viciously into the blood mist. It immediately fell into pieces and scattered. His knee continued on, slamming into the black-robed man’s chest. Even as the cracking of bones rang out, Meng Hao’s right hand snaked out to latch onto the man’s neck.

He turned, and spit out the lightning mist, and a boom filled the air as it enveloped them all. Screams rang out, and after the space of a few breaths, Meng Hao emerged from within. The three men who had just been approaching were now dead, their eyes still wide with astonishment. Even up to the moment death took them, they couldn’t understand how an alchemist… could have such intense killing intent.

Originally there had been twenty seven black robed men. In just a few moments, their numbers were reduced to eleven. Their minds were shaken, and they backed up nervously. The person in front of them didn’t seem to be a single Cultivator, but an entire army.

Meng Hao’s hair swirled around his head. The dozen or so tentacles writhed in the air around him bizarrely as he stood there. He emanated the smell of medicinal pills, and the stench of blood. His cold face, his grim eyes, all of it, caused the black-robed men's heart to shake.

"Who are you?!" asked one of the black-robed men, his voice quivering. It was a question that Meng Hao should have been the one to ask.

Meng Hao didn't respond. His clothes fluttered in the wind. It was a north wind, blowing stiffly, as if it wished to wash away the reeking smell of blood. As the north wind blew, Meng Hao lifted his hand. There in his palm appeared a bit of red powder.

The powder lifted up into the wind, blowing about. The faces of the black-robed men twisted as they thought back to the hyper toxic poison from moments ago.

Without the slightest hesitation, the eleven men retreated. However, even as they did, Meng Hao made an incantation gesture and then pointed out with his finger. A mass of tiny Flame Globes appeared. As they floated in mid-air, they began to change into a green color.

The ignited, and suddenly a massive, green Flame Sea appeared. It was shocking, its heat impossible to describe as it expanded along with the wind, seeming to mix with the powder that was floating in mid-air.

The raging three thousand meter wide Flame Sea expanded out, and as it did, it seemed as if the surrounding valley couldn't withstand the heat. It began to crack and melt.

The eleven black-robed men were moving backward quickly, but they simply weren't fast enough to escape the ghostly, greenish Flame Sea, and were consumed.

It was at this same moment that a boom could be heard off in the distance. With a single blow, the azure-masked Cultivator lopped off the head of the Golden Frost Sect Cultivator. Then he turned, a grim look appeared in his eyes as he looked at Meng Hao, just barely visible behind the Flame Sea

Separated by the Flame Sea, Meng Hao looked back at the azure-masked Cultivator. Their gazes locked as the screams of the dying black-robed Cultivators drifted up from within the flames.

Glancing at Meng Hao's clothing, the azure-masked Cultivator said, "Such a young East Pill Division Furnace Lord. There's only one person like that…. You must be Fang Mu!" His voice was hoarse and muffled, yet filled with coldness.

"Cultivators with killing intent like this can only be found in one place in the Southern Domain," replied Meng Hao coolly. "The Black Lands." Actually, from the moment he had first laid eyes on the black-robed Cultivators, something about them had seemed familiar. It was the same feeling he'd gotten from that Cultivator in the Black Sieve Sect's Blessed Land, the one who had told him about the usefulness of the Thunderclap Leaf to Black Lands Cultivators.

Meng Hao couldn't tell what the azure-masked Cultivator was thinking. What he saw was the man take a seemingly leisurely step forward. In actuality, he was moving very quickly and was apparently planning to cross the Flame Sea. A wind sprang up, and it appeared as if he planned to carve a path through the flames.

The instant the azure-masked Cultivator shot forward, Meng Hao's Furnace Lord garment began to flicker. Even as the man passed through the sea to arrive in front of Meng Hao, Meng Hao's body began to fade away.

At some point, the azure-masked had called forth flying swords, which passed harmlessly through the disappearing image of Meng Hao.

"Fang Mu, prominent in the East Pill Division of the Violet Fate Sect, victor of the Dao alchemy debate in the Black Sieve Sect between the East Pill Division and the World Pill Division." The azure-masked Cultivator's voice was cool. He didn't seem to be in a rush to pursue. As he spoke, his right hand slowly lifted and began to make an incantation.

"You are the ninth alchemist on our list. How fortunate to run into you. You won't escape." The man's eyes flickered, and even as he finished speaking, his fingers finished with the incantation.

“Ahh, that direction.” The azure-masked Cultivator’s body flickered, and he shot off like lightning. His speed was far, far greater than that of the Foundation Establishment stage. They weren’t even remotely on the same level. Even more shocking was his Core Qi. Core Qi could only be employed by Core Formation Cultivators. Because the varying techniques and power levels of each Cultivator, the Core Qi they employ will be different colors.

However, even the weakest Core Qi is sufficient to crush the great circle of late Foundation Establishment. Even a group of late Foundation Establishment Cultivators wouldn’t have the hope of raising a hand to a Core Formation Cultivator using Core Qi.

Core Qi can make Core Formation magic reach the pinnacle. Afterwards, when the Cultivator reaches the Nascent Soul Stage, their magic will be half way to the point of divine ability.

This azure-masked Cultivator’s Core Qi was a light yellowish color, which indicated that he had an Orange Core. As the Core Qi emanated out, the indistinct shape of a roc seemed to exist inside of it.

Core Qi had ever-changing forms which can alter according to the will of the Cultivator. For example, the roc which appeared in the mind of this Cultivator added explosive speed to the Core Qi.

It was because of this characteristic that allowed Core Formation magic to employ its greatest power!

It was also why it only took about ten breaths of time before Meng Hao, who was fleeing at top speed, suddenly sensed an incredibly powerful aura approaching from behind him.

This was not the first time he had faced Core Formation Cultivators. He didn’t have much reverence for them. Even back in the State of Zhao, he had led Core Formation Cultivators to their deaths.

Just as the Core Formation Cultivator was almost upon him, the Furnace Lord garment flickered again, and he was immediately transported about forty kilometers away.

Without hesitation, he began to flee. In his palm was the good luck charm, which he hadn't used in five years. It was flickering, but he could tell that it would be some time before he could activate it.

"My seventh Dao Pillar is almost complete. However, I'm still no match for a Core Formation Cultivator. However, I have enough Spirit Stones, enough medicinal plants, and enough medicinal pills…. I have to push forward without stopping until I reach the great circle of Foundation Establishment!" Resolve appeared in his eyes. Soon he would be able to employ the full accumulated knowledge of five years of studying the Dao of alchemy!

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# Chapter 262: First Battle with Core Formation!

A shocking roar sounded out in all directions. At the same time, an icy coldness raced toward Meng Hao.

Thirty breaths had passed since Meng Hao used the Furnace Lord robe displace himself for the second time.

Before he could fly much further away, the azure-masked Cultivator was in hot pursuit. In this instance, the man was clearly some distance away; however the light yellow glow continued to emanate from the top of his head. In it, the image of a sword was faintly visible.

It appeared illusory, but even glancing at it from this distance caused Meng Hao's heart to tremble. An intense feeling of danger filled his heart and mind.

"This guy has cultivated Core Qi!" thought Meng Hao. He was no longer a newcomer to the Cultivator World. He had seen and experienced many things, and had learned long ago of the fearsomeness of Core Formation, especially the shocking Core Qi.

Back in the state of Zhao, none of the Core Formation Cultivators he had met had been able to utilize Core Qi, except perhaps for the old woman. All of this was information Meng Hao had deduced from reading the ancient records of the East Pill Division. 1

"Core Qi has ever-changing forms. However, it has a nucleus which does not change. I wonder what the essence of this guy's Core Qi is…." His heart trembled, but suddenly an idea flickered into his mind.

At the same time, he unhesitatingly used the Furnace Lord’s ability to warp away to another location. As soon as his body disappeared, the sword image appeared, with its power to shake Heaven and Earth. The aura rose up, a sealing force that locked down the entire area. However, Meng Hao’s illusory body was able to slip past it.

“What a nimble and crafty alchemist,” said the azure-robed Cultivator. “However, you can only use that robe three times, and it won’t take you more than fifty kilometers away. Let see… how you plan to escape next time!” The Cultivator closed his eyes, and the light yellow Core Qi spread out. The illusory sword flickered and began to rotate. After the space of three breaths, it began to hum, and the tip pointed north.

The azure-masked Cultivator’s eyes snapped open, and his body flickered as he shot off toward the north.

Forty kilometers away, Meng Hao reappeared. As soon as he did, blood began to seep out of the corners of his mouth. There was a sword wound on his chest, from which blood flowed out. If he had teleported away even a tiny bit slower, the sword just now would have cleaved him in half.

He didn’t take the time to wipe the blood from his mouth. His body flashed like lightning as he shot away.

“A phantom sword. I wonder if this guy’s personal Core Qi is a sword….” A grim look appeared on Meng Hao’s face. A Core Formation Cultivator who had not cultivated Core Qi wouldn’t cause Meng Hao to be in such a tight spot. However, Core Qi is the most powerful tool of Core Formation Cultivators. Meng Hao knew that for this azure-masked Cultivator to have cultivated Core Qi in the early Core Formation stage, indicated that he had incredibly high latent talent.

After becoming a Furnace Lord, Meng Hao had done quite a bit of research in the ancient records about the Core Formation stage. Therefore, he was quite familiar with things such as Core Qi. Generally speaking, Core Qi is cultivated in the late Core Formation stage, or occasionally the mid Core Formation stage. Only a small group of Chosen can cultivate Core Qi in the early Core Formation stage.

Such Cultivators are very rare. The rarest of all are those who seem to innately possess Core Qi from the moment they step into early Core Formation.

Within the ever-changing forms of Core Qi is a form that does not change. This is a personal form related to the individual Cultivator, which is different for every Cultivator.

Meng Hao's face was dark as he charged forward. He popped a medicinal pill into his mouth. As it dissolved, warmth filled his body, and his speed increased.

"Thirty breaths left…." The good luck charm in his hand had been warming up from the moment he began to fight the black-robed men. As of now, there were still thirty breaths left before he could activate it.

When that happened, Meng Hao would disappear, and the azure-masked Cultivator would have no way to track him down.

However, after eighteen breaths passed, the glow of the light yellow Core Qi filled the sky. The bitter coldness appeared again. Off in the distance, the thin frame of the azure-masked Cultivator could be seen in mid-air. The surroundings seem to be shaken into a jumble as he approached relentlessly.

As soon as Meng Hao sensed his approach, he slapped his bag of holding to produce a jade pendant, which he smashed between his fingers.

"I, Yang, already said that you can't get away," the azure-masked Cultivator said coolly. "You're a trifling Foundation Establishment Cultivator. You should feel proud that you managed to scurry around for this long." The sword image in the Core Qi emitted an ear-piercing scream. Emanating an icy coldness, it shot directly toward Meng Hao.

Its speed was incredible, and in the blink of an eye… was directly in front of him.

It sped directly toward his forehead, and was about to pierce it through. There was absolutely no time for Meng Hao to dodge. The difference between their two Cultivation bases was too great. Death approached.

However, at this exact moment, a glow shot out from Meng Hao’s palm. A rippling, water-like glow flowed out to cover Meng Hao’s body. It expanded out, forming a greenish-blue shield, which the Core Qi phantom sword slammed into.

The azure-masked Cultivator’s eyes went wide underneath his mask when he saw the shield. His pupils constricted, and an expression of disbelief appeared in his eyes. He was about to recall his Core Qi phantom sword, but was too late.

The Core Qi phantom sword, seemingly infinitely sharp, noiselessly slammed into the greenish-blue shield. Instantly it weakened and then began to break into pieces. In the blink of an eye, it was transformed into dust.

Seeing the Core Qi phantom sword disappear into powder caused the azure-masked Cultivator to give an irritated harrumph. Beneath his mask, blood oozed out of his mouth. His eyes filled with fury. He was a Core Formation Cultivator who had cultivated Core Qi. However, during this attempt to toy with a measly Foundation Establishment Cultivator, his Core Qi had been shattered, causing him injury.

“Nascent Soul Cultivation blood…. Let’s see how many times you can pull that off!” The killing intent in the azure-masked Cultivator’s eyes grew more intense. He shot toward Meng Hao, his right hand flickering an incantation gesture. Magical power erupted, transforming into ten dragons and ten phoenixes, which spiralled toward Meng Hao.

At the same time, the greenish-blue shield began to shrink, returning into Meng Hao’s palm and transforming into a jade pendant. This pendant was one of the spoils of his victory in the Solitary Sword Sect. It was a life-saving treasure that contained blood from the Cultivation base of Chen Fan’s Master, Zhou Yanyun, and could defend against an attack from a Nascent Soul Cultivator. 2

It could defend against an attack by a Nascent Soul Cultivator, but could only be used once at a time. Defending against a Core Formation Cultivator caused its glow to weaken, and it still could be used again, just not right now.

The azure-masked Cultivator’s mouth was oozing with blood. He had been injured, and the Core Qi above his head was unstable. However, he continued to advance toward Meng Hao, the ten dragons and ten phoenixes howling as they shot through the air. Suddenly, an intense killing intent appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes.

He did not flee, but instead lifted his hand and pointed toward the azure-masked Cultivator.

“Eighth Demon Sealing Hex!” Veins of blood shot through his eyes. As he pointed his finger out, Heaven and Earth shook, Meng Hao’s body moved, everything moved. Even the ten dragons and ten phoenixes moved. Ghost images sprang up and pressed down toward the the azure-masked Cultivator.

The azure-masked Cultivator’s expression flickered. The ten dragons and ten phoenixes began to tremble, as if they were being held down. The world seemed to turn upside down; everything in the area was sealed.

The sealing was such that the azure-masked Cultivator seemed incapable of controlling his Cultivation base.

“What magic is this?!” he said, his heart shaking.

Veins of blood filled Meng Hao’s eye, and he coughed up a mouthful of blood. Using the sealing hex on a Core Formation Cultivator was an incredible load; all the blood vessels in his body seemed on the verge of bursting. Meng Hao’s killing intent soared. He flicked his sleeve, and a red powder flew out, filling the area, transforming into a red mist. The mist roiled, and as Meng Hao moved forward, it shot toward the azure-masked Cultivator.

At the same time, Meng Hao placed the life-saving jade pendant into his robe. His left hand rose up, and he slashed one finger, two fingers, three fingers… all five fingers! Blood flowed down all five of his fingers, forming… the Blood Palm!

When the Blood Palm appeared, the red mist around him seethed even more violently, seeming to transform into a mist of blood. The mist began to erode everything in the area; it seemed to be hyper toxic, adding thirty percent power to Meng Hao's attack.

All of this takes a long time to describe, but actually occurred in an instant. As Meng Hao's multiple killing attacks descended upon the azure-masked Cultivator, the man's eyes went wide. Suddenly, he was able to move again; after all, he was a Core Formation Cultivator. The Eighth Hex was beyond ordinary, but couldn't keep the man sealed for more than two breaths.

"Insignificant skill! DIE!" howled the azure-masked Cultivator. His right hand flickered in an incantation gesture and then pushed out toward Meng Hao. Instantly, a roaring filled the air, and an illusory, ten-headed dragon appeared. Snarling fiercely, it shot to meet Meng Hao's magical attack. A boom rang out.

The red mist collapsed. The Blood Palm disintegrated. Blood sprayed from Meng Hao's mouth as he was tossed backward like a kite with its string cut. The azure-masked Cultivator was about to shoot after him. However, the man's eyes went wide as Meng Hao, even in the midst of being seriously injured and tossed backward, suddenly slapped his bag of holding. He flicked his sleeve, sending more powder out to fill the air. It was thin, but it was enough to cause the azure-masked Cultivator to pause momentarily.

Moments ago, he had prevented the blood mist from entering his lungs. However, he had still been able to sense the terrifying power of the mist. That was because he had a tiny cut on the pinky of his right hand which had been slightly infected. That tiny bit caused an intense pain to shoot through him.

Even as blood sprayed from Meng Hao's mouth and he toppled backward, his pupils began to glow with a violet light. His skin and Qi passageways also began to glow violet, making his entire body glow.

This was the Violet Pupil Transformation! 3

Within Violet Pupil Transformation, Meng Hao’s body began to recover rapidly. Surrounded by poison mist, he glared at the azure-masked Cultivator and the Core Qi which emanated from his head. The man was stabilizing rapidly. Within ten breaths at the most, he would be able to release his Core Qi.

Meng Hao didn’t hesitate a moment longer. He immediately pressed down on the good luck charm, activating the teleportation ability.

Instantly, a black hole appeared, a massive mouth which consumed Meng Hao. This turn of events caught the azure-masked Cultivator completely by surprise. His face flickered, and he shot forward in pursuit.

He was too late.

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# Chapter 263: Ancient Dao Geyser

The azure-masked Cultivator’s expression was somber. His eyes radiated coldness, a deep coldness that contained fury. From the moment he had entered the Core Formation stage and cultivated Core Qi, he had been able to sweep with ease across any other Cultivator who lacked Core Qi.

But today, a Foundation Establishment Cultivator had disintegrated his Core Qi, injuring him in the process, and then had just as quickly suppressed him. Despite all this, his fury burned as hotly as ever.

Even more infuriating was that someone he viewed to be as weak as an ant, had before his very eyes slaughtered all of his white-masked men. Such provocation caused killing intent to rise within his heart. However… even beneath such killing intent, the man had fled.

The coldness in the man’s eyes grew even sharper. He knew that if his fellow Sect members learned of this, they would surely ridicule him. After all, the Cultivator who had escaped from his hands was not adept in magic, but alchemy.

He couldn’t accept it, nor could he understand what had happened. In fact, among all the Cultivators he knew who were famous for their abilities in magic, he couldn’t think of any who could compare to this alchemist.

In terms of decisiveness, fighting skill, and treachery, he couldn’t help but think that this alchemist who had just fled, really seemed like a ruthless Black Lands Cultivator.

“How could there be an alchemist like this?!” He stared at the place where Meng Hao had just disappeared from. His Core Qi was now fully restored, but no matter how he cast his senses about, he couldn’t pick up the slightest track to follow.

It was clear that his opponent had teleported to somewhere very far way, somewhere he could not sense.

After some time passed, the azure-masked Cultivator gave a cold harrumph. “Well, he was injured by the frigid power of my Ten Flood Dragons. He can run away from me, but not from death, even if he is a Furnace Lord. Let’s see whether or not he dies in the end.

“He’s looking for death…. Foundation Establishment Cultivator…. No one can live more than ten days after being hit by the frigid power of my Ten Flood Dragons.” Abandoning thoughts of pursuing and killing, he turned and disappeared.

In the western region of the great Southern Domain is an area covered with thin mists. Few mountain ranges exist, and many lakes can be seen. Among them is one of the famous three Danger Zones of the Southern Domain, the Primordial Dao Lakes.

At a glance, the western regions seem to be covered with a myriad of mirrors placed on the ground. These mirrors are of course the countless lakes.

At this moment, above the middle of the one of the lakes, the previously glass-like waters suddenly began to ripple. A massive black hole appeared, and Meng Hao staggered out.

The instant he appeared, he coughed up a huge mouthful of blood. The blood was black, and emitted intense coldness. It splashed into the lake, and disappeared. However, moments later, the surface of the lake was covered in a thin sheet of ice.

Meng Hao’s face was pale. He lifted his head and looked around, then transformed into a prismatic beam that shot off into the distance.

Several days later, in one of the sparse mountain ranges in this western part of the Southern Domain, Meng Hao sat cross-legged inside of a freshly carved out Immortal's Cave. He consumed medicinal pills and rotated his Cultivation base as he treated his injuries.

Time passed slowly. Soon, a month had gone by. During that time, Meng Hao didn't step half a pace outside of the Immortal's Cave. He was focused completely on treating his injuries. The Immortal's Cave he was in was in a remote location. Considering that few people inhabited this western area, as well as the mists that covered the land, it was very peaceful.

Finally one day, Meng Hao's eyes opened. His face was no longer pale, and his body was now mostly recovered.

"Azure-masked Cultivator!" Meng Hao's eyes glowed with a cold aura. This was the first time he had been injured in five years, and the injury had been quite severe. Were it not for the Violet Pupil Transformation increasing his healing abilities, then he would not have lasted long enough to carve out this Immortal's Cave.

Furthermore, were he not an alchemist, equipped with a variety of medicinal pills, he wouldn't have been able to last through the month.

After all, he had been injured by a Core Formation expert who could wield Core Qi!

If the Core Formation expert had faced any Foundation Establishment Cultivator other than Meng Hao, that person would never have been able to flee, and would certainly have been defeated.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. His expression was grim as he produced a pill furnace and some medicinal pills, and then began to concoct. His injury was not completely healed. There was still intense coldness within his body.

Meng Hao began to concoct a medicinal pill specifically designed for his current circumstances.

A few more months passed. Three days after Meng Hao consumed his specially designed medicinal pill, his eyes suddenly opened. He then spat out the last of the icy coldness from within his body. It scattered about the Immortal’s Cave, causing frost to appear, which then turned into ice.

After a long moment passed, the cave began to return to normal.

If that azure-masked Cultivator was here to observe the scene, he wouldn’t be able to believe his eyes. He had complete faith that no Foundation Establishment Cultivator could survive the frigid power of the Ten Flood Dragons. However… Meng Hao had obviously recovered from his injuries.

He took a deep breath, and killing intent grew strong in his eyes. He sat there thoughtfully for a while, and then determination grew in his eyes. He smacked his bag of holding to produce the pill furnace once again.

He held it in his hand, lost in thought.

“I need to concoct a batch of pills that will help me to surge ahead. I need a medicinal pill that will without fail produce a Dao Pillar, something that exceeds Foundation Establishment Day, and will cause my Cultivation base to soar.” A deeply thoughtful look appeared in his eyes. In his mind, countless pill formulas appeared. Finally, he decided on a formula for a pill known as Stage Charging Pill.

“This pill can be used with the Three Mortalities Pill in order to break through from the Foundation Establishment Stage into the Core Formation stage!”

After thinking for a while longer, his eyes filled with decisiveness. He immediately produced a large amount of medicinal plants from his bag of holding and began to concoct the Stage Charging Pill. He focused his complete attention on the concoction process. Several days passed. Even while using the Alchemy Dao Transmutation Incantation, he failed several times. It wasn’t until the seventeenth day that he was able to successfully concoct the pill. 1

When it appeared, a medicinal aroma emanated out, filling the Immortal’s Cave. If Meng Hao hadn’t already made special preparations to prevent the aroma from seeping out of the Immortal’s Cave, it could very well have attracted unwanted attention.

Holding the pill in hand, his eyes glittered. He took out the copper mirror and an accumulation of Spirit Stones, then began to duplicate.

One Stage Charging Pill after another appeared, which Meng Hao all placed into pill bottles. Soon, ten full pill bottles were arranged neatly in front of him. He spit out the lightning mist, and sent the wooden swords circling around him. In addition, he activated the Furnace Lord medallion. Having made all of these preparations, he took a deep breath, picked up a Stage Charging Pill, and placed it into his mouth.

His seventh Dao pillar was already eighty percent complete. When he placed the pill into his mouth, it transformed into spiritual power which immediately caused his entire body to tremble. The seventh Dao Pillar began to emanate a purple glow, and became even more solid.

“Press on to the finish!” he thought, his eyes shining with determination. He then closed his eyes and began to meditate.

Time passed slowly. A month later, Meng Hao’s body began to tremble and wither up. He calmly produced a large handful of medicinal pills and began to put them in his mouth one after another.

Seven more days passed. A roaring filled his body, and a purple glow emanated out brightly, filling the entire Immortal’s Cave. The seventh Dao Pillar had fully appeared!

As soon as it did, Meng Hao’s Cultivation base shot upward. His Spiritual Sense grew stronger, and his battle prowess more formidable. His entire person was like an unsheathed sword, incomparably dangerous.

Now, he was no longer in the mid Foundation Establishment stage, but rather the late Foundation Establishment stage!

Even someone with a Flawless Foundation would not be able to give rise to the slightest bit of struggle against the suppressive pressure he could emit. As of now, he was without a doubt the number one person in the entire Foundation Establishment stage!

However, Meng Hao wasn’t content. Being matchless in the Foundation Establishment stage wasn’t something he had looked forward to. He wanted to fight that azure-masked Cultivator! To do that, his current Cultivation base simply wasn’t sufficient!

A bright glow filled his eyes, and he took another deep breath. He retrieved a vast amount of Spirit Stones and began to duplicate medicinal pills. These Spirit Stones included his profits from selling pills in the East Pill Division, as well as what had been gifted to him by the Black Sieve Sect, plus what he had received during his travels with Zhou Dekun as well. It was quite an amount, but every time Meng Hao looked at it, it didn’t seem enough for him.

However, if he truly wanted to go the distance today, then he would have to ignore the pain and use them to duplicate medicinal pills. The cultivation he was about to practice was something that no one in the Southern Domain had ever seen before.

Even Dao Children would not be able to squander medicinal pills in the way that Meng Hao was right now!

Time passed. One month, two months, three months….

Meng Hao lost track of the passage of time in his Immortal’s Cave. As he cultivated, his eighth Dao Pillar slowly became visible.

Ten percent, twenty percent, thirty percent…. After half a year, his eighth Dao Pillar was now eighty percent complete.

Meanwhile, outside in the Southern Domain, a violent windstorm of a commotion had arisen.

This storm came from the Black Lands!

Black Lands Cultivators were making incursions into the Southern Domain!!

More than seventy alchemists mysteriously disappeared!

These two events caused a huge commotion in the Southern Domain. The missing alchemists were mostly from the East Pill and World Pill Divisions, although other scattered alchemists were also involved. This unforeseen misfortune caused the fury of the Violet Fate Sect and the Golden Frost Sect to rise to the heavens.

These two Sects were the first to take action. Mysterious Patriarchs from both Sects immediately traveled to the Black Lands. According to the rumors, Grandmasters Pill Demon and Eternal Mountain both secretly made the trip themselves.

The Black Lands had existed for many years, and was a brutal place, but there was little the Southern Domain could do about it. The details of the affair between the two powers were not made public. The only thing that people knew was that the Golden Frost Sect did not recover any of their alchemists, whereas the Violet Fate Sect managed to bring back all of theirs, with the exception of a Furnace Lord named Zhou Dekun. After the incident, neither Sect brought up the Black Lands ever again.

As for the Black Lands, they laid down the flag and stilled the drums, so to speak. Everything seemed to go back to normal in the Southern Domain. No more alchemists went missing, and as for what was happening in the Black Lands, no one knew.

After half a year in which the Black Lands’ aggressiveness had been reigned in, a Dao Geyser appeared not far away from the Primordial Dao Lakes, in the western part of the Southern Domain.

Within the fountain of water that shot up from the geyser, an illusory image could be seen. It was an image from ancient times, of a Foundation Establishment Cultivator breaking through into the Core Formation stage.

The appearance of the geyser immediately caused a huge stir among the great Sects and Clans of the Southern Domain. Veteran old timers from the various Sect went to inspect the geyser, then left. Afterward, Chosen disciples of the Foundation Establishment stage, as well as Dao Children, were dispatched to continue observation of the geyser.

A message was sent out by a late Nascent Soul Stage Patriarch from the Solitary Sword Sect:

“This geyser contains enlightenment. Gain this enlightenment, and you might enter Core Formation. It is not suitable for us, but rather for you Foundation Establishment Cultivators.”

These words caused a huge commotion among all of the Foundation Establishment Chosen within the Southern Domain. From all areas, they began to flock to the western region of the Southern Domain. A month later, Zhou Jie, Dao Child from the Black Sieve Sect, made a breakthrough next to the Dao Geyser, and entered Core Formation. He formed a Green Core, astonishing everyone.

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# Chapter 264: A Shout Like a Clap of Thunder

After Zhou Jie of the Black Sieve Sect reached Core Formation because of the ancient Dao Geyser, a long-lasting storm wind kicked up among the Foundation Establishment Cultivators of the Southern Domain.

It swept across the great Sects and Clans, causing all disciples of the Foundation Establishment stage to rush to the western region of the Southern Domain.

Now, the western region, which previously contained hardly the trace of a person, quickly became a convergence of Chosen. Of course, friction immediately broke out. For months, there were countless battles. Whoever came out on the top of such battles would instantly become famous.

Spontaneous conventions such as this rarely occurred in the Southern Domain. It was not often for there to be such an assemblage of Chosen, all gathered together in one place and contending for supremacy.

That was exactly what was happening now, though, thanks to the appearance of the ancient Dao Geyser!

The geyser erupted on a monthly basis. Furthermore, there was limited space in which to properly observe it. As such, it was common for magical battle to erupt.

In the second month after the appearance of the ancient Dao Geyser, Conclave Disciple Xu Qing of the Black Sieve Sect defeated Li Clan Dao Child Li Daoyi 1, which rocked the entire western region.

Before the battle, few knew the name of Xu Qing. Afterwards, though, it spread far and wide.

In the fourth month, Dao Child of the Wang Clan, the one who had been rumored to have died all those years ago, Wang Lihai, along with Han Shandao 2, one of the Seven Sons of the Solitary Sword Sect, both gained the enlightenment of the ancient Dao Geyser. Although they didn't have breakthroughs, their Cultivation bases experienced significant growth. According to the rumor, both of them received enlightenment regarding a certain magical technique.

In the fifth month, Dao Child of the Song Clan, Song Yunshu 3, battled Chen Fan, another of the Seven Sons of the Solitary Sword Clan. In the end, they were evenly matched; however, because of the battle, Chen Fan's reputation grew rapidly.

During the same month, Dao Child of the Blood Demon Clan, Li Shiqi 4, fought heroine Shan Ling 5 of the Solitary Sword Sect. The explosions caused by the battle filled the area, and did not end with victory or defeat, but rather, with both parties gaining the enlightenment of the Dao Geyser.

In the sixth month, friction arose between the Golden Frost Sect's Dao Child, and Wang Youcai 6, Chosen of the Blood Demon Sect. A bloody battle was fought, during which the Dao Child's arm was severed. This sent mighty waves of astonishment throughout the Southern Domain.

During the same month, Wang Tengfei, Chosen of the Wang Clan and younger brother of Wang Lihai, also achieved enlightenment. He made a breakthrough in his Cultivation base, reaching the great circle of Foundation Establishment. This also caused quite a stir.

By observing the tableau within the erupting geyser, and gaining the power of the enlightenment, one could gain something from nothing, and cause the Cultivation base to grow, without the use of any medicinal pills. It was an opportunity for incredible luck for anyone in the Foundation Establishment stage in the Southern Domain.

Because of the Dao Geyser, it was possible to suddenly break through from Foundation Establishment into Core Formation. The only thing that would be more incredible would be to break through from Core Formation into the Nascent Soul stage. One could imagine the struggles that would result from something like that.

In the blink of an eye, the western region of the Southern Domain was thrown into turmoil. It was only the Violet Fate Sect who didn't dispatch any disciples to the Dao Geyser. There were many speculations about this, and most people came to the conclusion that it had something to do with the previous incident with the Black Lands.

The western region of the Southern Domain quickly became the focus of all attention. Not very far off from the location of the Dao Geyser, Meng Hao sat cross-legged in meditation.

His body was once again as withered as a corpse's. However boundless life force existed deep inside him. The sound of his heartbeat began to ring out, louder and louder.

His eighth Dao Pillar was now more than ninety percent complete. The critical juncture had arrived, and he had consumed roughly seventy to eighty percent of his medicinal pills. At the moment, over a hundred empty pill bottles were strewn about the Immortal's Cave.

Time slowly passed. Soon, half a month had gone by. Outside the Immortal's Cave, black clouds filled the sky, and a thin rain fell down. The curtains of rain made the outside world hazy. Suddenly, the peaceful rainy atmosphere was broken as two prismatic beams of light shot into the area.

Two young Cultivators approached, locked in magical combat. One was from the Solitary Sword Sect, another was from the Blood Demon Sect. The booming sounds caused by their magical techniques echoed out constantly. Both of these Cultivators were well-known in the world; they were Chosen of their respective Sects. And now here they were in the western region, fighting a bitter battle.

Booms echoed out, and shocking magical techniques were employed. They charged along, attacking, rocking the surroundings. Unbeknownst to them, they were nearing Meng Hao's isolated mountain. At a glance, it was obvious that the effects of their magical techniques were rippling out toward his mountain.

A massive boom sounded out, and within the Immortal's Cave, Meng Hao, his body withered like a corpse, suddenly opened his eyes. They flashed like lightning.

The instant they opened, his gaze blasted out, filled with a powerful, brilliant light. It was shocking, so much so that the mountain itself began to shake. Even the falling rain outside began to vibrate.

Moments ago, the two fighting Cultivators had only been worried about each other. All of a sudden, though, their hair stood on end, seemingly out of instinct. An indescribable sense of danger rose up, and their facial expressions immediately changed. Their Cultivation bases were suddenly suppressed, their bodies began to twitch, and their scalps grew numb. They felt as if death itself were staring down upon them, causing their hearts to pound.

Meng Hao's shrivelled lips suddenly opened. When he began to speak, the sound was a bit weak, but it instantly rose to frenzied heights, a shocking roar which filled the world outside the Immortal's cave. It slammed into the ears of the two Cultivators louder than thunder. It turned into their whole world, engulfing them, as if it were the only sound in the world.

“SCREW OFF!”

SCREW OFF…

…OFF….

…off….

…

The booming echoed back and forth in the surrounding five kilometer region, the lone mountain being the centre of it. It seemed this area was a forbidden zone.

The two Cultivator’s minds reeled, and they immediately coughed up mouthfuls of blood. Their Cultivation bases were in the late Foundation Establishment stage; however, beneath the voice they had just heard, they seemed weak enough to fall at a single blow. Faces pale, scalps numb, expressions that of astonishment and panic, they retreated at top speed, using all the strength they possessed. It wasn’t until they had fled fifty kilometres away that they finally looked back.

The rain fell down around them. Moments ago they had been in a life-and-death battle. However, at the moment, neither of them seemed to be in the mood for fighting. They glanced at each other, and they both seemed to feel they had just barely avoided a disaster.

“Who… was that?”

“All the heroes of the Southern Domain have come to the western region, a multitude of Dao Children and Chosen. I’m not sure who this guy is, but the feeling he gives is even more terrifying than the feeling I get from Elder Sister Shan Ling or Elder Brother Han Shandao of my Solitary Sword Sect!”

“Same here. Even facing up against Elder Sister Li wouldn’t be as frightening. I felt like I was a mortal….”

Seeing how they were both so shaken, they silently turned and sped off, each in a different direction.

Three days after they left, Meng Hao sat in the Immortal’s Cave. Suddenly, a violet light rose up from his body. It didn’t spread out of the Immortal’s Cave, which had been thoroughly sealed. However, the light caused the entire world of the Immortal’s Cave to turn violet.

The glow lasted for several hours, then slowly began to fade. There sat Meng Hao; he hadn’t moved for nearly half a year.

He no longer looked withered and weak; he was completely recovered. His eyes were closed. However, an explosive power seemed to be growing stronger within him.

He didn’t move, but looking at him, you would get the feeling that he was moving in a way that would shake the heavens and earth.

1. Li Daoyi is the Dao Child Meng Hao fought in the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament

2. Han Shandao’s name in Chinese is hán shān dào – Han is a common surname. Shan means “mountain.” Dao means “way” or “path.” Same characters as “the Dao.”

3. Song Yunshu was introduced when Meng Hao went to the Song Clan

4. Meng Hao fought Li Shiqi right after he escaped from the Black Sieve Sect with Ultimate Vexation. He thought she was a guy at first

6. Wang Youcai was one of the group originally taken by Xu Qing to the Reliance Sect

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# Chapter 265: Out of Seclusion!

A long time passed, and slowly, the ferocious aura emanating from Meng Hao’s body faded. Finally, he opened his eyes. His pupils looked normal, but deep in their recesses was a shocking profundity. They were like deep pools of water, or an endlessly starry night sky.

Meng Hao took a long, deep breath. Within his body, his eight Dao Pillars glowed with a violet aura. They rotated, emitting spiritual power throughout his body which far, far outmatched his previous power.

“It’s still not enough,” he thought. “But it’s the best I can do for now. Eight Dao Pillars. I don’t have quite enough to pass the critical juncture for the final Dao Pillar.” It wasn’t that he didn’t have enough medicinal pills. For some reason, he had the strange feeling that there was something about the ninth Dao Pillar that didn’t have anything to do with medicinal pills.

He felt as if he were in a bottleneck, and that at some point he would reach a turning point. Once that turning point arrived, he wouldn’t need any medicinal pills whatsoever. Instead, he would be able to rely on his eight Dao Pillars to create the ninth. Then he would have completed the great circle of Foundation Establishment.

He took a deep breath, and sat there thoughtfully for a long moment. Finally, he lifted his head and looked outside of the Immortal’s Cave. It was still raining. The murmur of the rainfall filled the land. Everything looked dim and hazy.

His secluded meditation had lasted for a long time, and he had no idea of the events which had transpired during that better part of a year. He also had no idea whether or not Zhou Dekun had escaped with his life.

For the moment, Meng Hao chose not to go out. His eyes shining, he looked down at his bag of holding and then produced a Spring and Autumn tree.

Having been in secluded meditation for more than half a year already, he didn’t really care much about how much time had passed. Once he did go out, he wanted to be prepared to make up for his previous defeat at the hands of the azure-masked Cultivator. With death!

Meng Hao took a deep breath. He lifted up the Spring and Autumn tree in his right hand. A blinding violet glow appeared in his palm. He employed the full, massive power of his eight Dao Pillars to begin the catalyzing process.

The violet light grew more and more intense, and the Spring and Autumn tree sucked it in. Soon, a second sprout appeared on its surface. At the same time, Meng Hao’s left hand performed the incantation to brand the Spring and Autumn tree with the Time locking magic.

“Including the test I performed in the Black Sieve Sect, twenty years of Time are now locked within this Spring and Autumn tree.” He pulled out a jade box, within which was the Primordial Heavenly Replenishing Pill. He examined it closely, comparing it to the Spring and Autumn tree.

“Time is like a poison, a poison which can be used to refine treasures. It melts away life force….” Within Meng Hao’s mind appeared the images of what had happened to Chen Jiaxi. After some time passed, he took a deep breath, and then once again picked up the Spring and Autumn tree and began to catalyze the Time within.

Time passed, ten days, in the blink of an eye. On this particular day, a look of concentration covered Meng Hao’s face. The Spring and Autumn tree in his hand was now half gray. However, locked within was nearly fifty years of Time. The further along he went, the more of his Cultivation base he had to use to perform the catalyzation, and the slower it went.

As of now, he was completing the last ten years of a sixty year cycle. When this catalyzation was completed, the Spring and Autumn tree would look completely different than it had before.

It was dusk, and the rain outside was still falling down in sheets. Meng Hao was completely focused on the Spring and Autumn tree. He continued catalyzing without pause. Suddenly, his expression flickered; the Spring and Autumn tree had begun to wither.

It seemed as if the tree couldn’t handle the fifty years of Time. Regardless of what mystical properties the Spring and Autumn tree had, at this moment it was decaying. Soon, it turned into gray ash, which collapsed through Meng Hao’s fingers.

An unsightly expression appeared on his face. He looked down at the ash, and then back at his right hand. His hand appeared to have aged as well. It wasn’t fifty years, but obviously the failure just now had resulted in a recoil.

Ignoring his hand, Meng Hao began to think.

“No wonder treasures like this are so rare; forging the Time treasure is extremely complex. One failure can negate all the previous successes. It’s possible to expend great cost, but then make a slight mistake in the very end. If that happens, all is for naught. Furthermore, every failure comes at the price of a Time recoil….” Meng Hao could clearly sense that the recoil just now had caused some of his life force to disappear.

“However, if there’s anyone who can actually forge this treasure… then that person is me.” His eyes began to glow brightly, and, muttering to himself, he slapped his right hand down onto his bag of holding to retrieve another Spring and Autumn tree. Once again, he began to catalyze it.

Time passed. By that night, the Spring and Autumn contained ten years of Time. Ten days later, Meng Hao had once again reached the point where fifty years of Time was locked within the Spring and Autumn tree.

He took a deep breath, and consumed some medicinal pills to restore his energy. Two hours later, he opened his eyes. He didn’t begin to immediately catalyze the final ten years of Time. Instead, he produced the copper mirror from within his bag of holding. He duplicated some medicinal pills, then used some of his remaining Spirit Stones to duplicate the Spring and Autumn tree with the fifty years of Time locked inside.

It seemed that a full sixty year cycle of Time was a watershed mark. Before reaching it, the duplication cost wouldn’t be very high. However, after reaching the sixty year cycle, Meng Hao had the strong feeling that the duplication cost would increase tremendously.

A few moments later, a bang sounded out. An irritated look appeared on Meng Hao’s face as his entire right arm aged, and the Spring and Autumn tree once again crumbled into dust. He didn’t have many Spirit Stones left, but he pushed down the sense of pain and used almost the entire remaining amount to produce another copy, which he then began to catalyze.

This catalyzation lasted a full two days before the Spring and Autumn tree turned gray. After sealing it with the Time-sealing magic, the tree began to emit an archaic sense of Time.

He had finally succeeded in embodying the Spring and Autumn tree with a full sixty year cycle!

Meng Hao began to pant as he looked at the Spring and Autumn tree. His eyes began to shine. He could sense that the Spring and Autumn tree contained a feeling of Time similar to the Primordial Heavenly Replenishing Pill! It was much, much weaker, but it was definitely there.

“Sadly, I don’t have enough Spirit Stones. In the future, this treasure will definitely require a lot of them. A Time treasure with a sixty year cycle of Time is considerably powerful, though. It’s good enough for now!” His eyes flickering, he looked thoughtfully at the Spring and Autumn tree for a moment, then used his left hand to begin to whittle it.

A few moments later, Meng Hao was holding a simple wooden sword. Its appearance was crude, but this crude wooden sword was a magical treasure that Meng Hao had created himself.

He looked at the Wooden Time Sword for a moment, then put it into his bag of holding. Next, he produced some jade bottles. Each of these bottles contained blood; they were none other than the three generations of ancestral blood that he had collected from the Black Sieve Sect when concocting the Soul Refining Pills.

“I concocted pills for thirteen generations of the Black Sieve Sect, and of them, was able to collect five sets of ancestral blood from three generations…. From this blood, I should be able to create five rudimentary Blood Clones.” Within his mind he could see the description of Blood Clones which was contained in the Blood Immortal legacy.

“Blood Clones are like shadows. Meld the self into the shadow, and it becomes like a doppelgänger, its life and death tied to my thoughts. A Blood Clone contains twenty to thirty percent of the power of the Cultivation base of my true self. If I can upgrade it to a Blood Spirit, it can employ one hundred percent of my true self’s Cultivation base. The final version, which is created with nine generations of ancestral blood, is a Blood Divinity, which is a defiance of the Heavens!” The legacy of the Blood Immortal was truly sinister! Early on, he had had his doubts. However after all his years in the Cultivation World, and after studying the Dao of alchemy and the Dao of poison, he now had a much better understanding.

“Much like poison, there are thousands of types of magic. The great Dao is limitless, filled with paths which may be trodden according to one’s will and one’s own decisions.” He lifted his right hand and, according to the method described in the Blood Immortal legacy, began to create his Blood Clones.

This technique used one’s own blood as the spirit, and the three generations of ancestral blood to bolster it. Furthermore, a sacrificial object was also necessary. According to the Blood Immortal legacy, this sacrificial object was of utmost importance. Of course, there are myriad objects in Heaven and Earth. Plants and trees, rocks and earth, anything could be used. In fact, the ancient Blood Immortal even used the skin of his enemies as the sacrificial object.

As long as the sacrificial object was not destroyed, the Blood Clone could not be destroyed. The greater the fusion between the two, the more power could be manifested by the Blood Clone’s Cultivation base.

After thinking for a moment, Meng Hao decided that the sacrificial item he would use would be the meat jelly’s shed skin!

When the meat jelly had shed, it had left behind plenty of residual skin which Meng Hao had collected. Meng Hao retrieved five pieces the size of a fingernail, and then began to use them to refine the Blood Clones.

Time passed by slowly. Soon, three months had gone by….

The Dao Geyser in the western region of the Southern Domain eventually increased its rate of eruption from once per month to every three days. Soon, the interval grew shorter; every two days, and then every day. Eventually, it was erupting multiple times per day, with no end in sight!

According to the ancient records of the Sects of the Southern Domain, continuous eruptions would go on for seven days, and then the geyser would disappear.

Time was running out. The Chosen of the great Sects and Clans spent all their time and focus on trying to gain enlightenment, vying for a chance to receive good fortune at the critical moment.

One day, Blood Demon Sect Dao Child Li Shiqi gained enlightenment and made a breakthrough, reaching Core Formation. Spiritual energy poured out of the geyser, absorbable only by her. No one else dared to steal away even a scrap.

After her was Dao Child of the Li Clan, Li Daoyi, the very same one who had been defeated but not killed by Xu Qing. His name immediately spread throughout the Southern Domain as the third Cultivator to break through to Core Formation. Again, the spiritual energy which poured out of the Dao Geyser could only be absorbed by him, the one who had gained enlightenment.

The Southern Domain was in full commotion.

It was during this period of time that Meng Hao finally left his secluded meditation, after nearly a year. He stepped out, his hair long, his right hand somewhat withered. He no longer wore the clothing of a Violet Fate Sect Furnace Lord, but instead an azure robe.

It was a rainy morning when he emerged. He immediately transformed into a beam of prismatic light that shot off into the distance.

His expression was placid, but his eyes seemed to contain the profundity of the stars.

His Cultivation base was still in the Foundation Establishment stage, but his battle prowess was no longer on the same level as Foundation Establishment Cultivators. As for exactly how much more powerful….

Meng Hao wanted to find out for himself!

Therefore, he would go to battle!

By battle, he would gain enlightenment of Heaven and Earth. By battle, he would gain enlightenment regarding his ninth Dao Pillar. By battle… he would shock the world!

He would seek out that turning point which would lead to a breakthrough in his Cultivation base!

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# Chapter 266: The Faceless Azure Hero!

Seven days later, massive, figurative storm winds buffeted the Southern Domain. The hearts of each and every Southern Domain Cultivator in the western region was completely shaken.

All of this was because of one name.

The Faceless Azure Hero!

According to the rumors, he wore a long, azure-colored robe, and his face was nothing but a blur.

According to the rumors, he was only in the late Foundation Establishment stage, but his battle prowess was incredible, something rarely seen.

According to the rumors, whenever he attacked, he would only say one thing:

“Fight!”

The rumors had begun to spread immediately after his first battle, seven days before. He had fought a Chosen of the Golden Frost Sect, who was of the great circle of late Foundation Establishment. They had met each other flying in mid air, and for no apparent reason, the words “fight” had been uttered, whereupon a boom filled the sky.

In an instant, the Golden Frost Sect Chosen was defeated. It happened in the blink of an eye, as if the man were dry weeds or rotten wood, just waiting to be crushed.

Many people saw the fight. It was incredibly shocking, but before they could even spread the news, they witnessed the Faceless Azure Hero’s second battle.

His opponent was a Chosen of the Blood Demon Sect. Again, the Chosen was defeated in an instant!

Their lives were spared. However, such decisive defeats were like massive floodwaters that could smash away one’s self-confidence, and left each opponent at a complete loss.

In the following days, the Li Clan, the Black Sieve Sect, the Song Clan, the Solitary Sword Sect, the Wang Clan… all the grand Sects and Clans saw similar fates befall their Chosen disciples. Anyone who met the man in the azure robe would never even have a chance to make two attacks. They were all instantly defeated.

The western region of the Southern Domain was in an uproar as everyone began to speculate regarding the identity of this faceless, azure-robed man. Opinions were widely varied.

On the eighth day, roughly fifteen hundred kilometers away from the Dao Geyser, where the Solitary Sword Sect disciples were gathered together, an azure-robed form flitted about in mid-air. Up ahead was a middle-aged man with a flushed face. His eyes shone brightly as he stared at the azure-robed man in front of him.

“Just who exactly are you?!”

The azure-robed man was naturally none other than Meng Hao.

For the past several days he had been constantly fighting, all in an attempt to gain battle enlightenment regarding his ninth Dao pillar. He had heard of the Dao Geyser, of course, as well as of the people who had reached Core Formation.

However, he didn’t immediately go to the Dao Geyser. Instead, he continued to issue challenges to the heroes of the Southern Domain. After days of facing off against multiple opponents, and achieving victory after victory, he now had his sights set on the Dao children of the various Sects and Clans.

The middle-aged man in front of him was none other than the First of the Seven Sons of the Solitary Sword Sect, Han Shandao, of the great circle of Foundation Establishment, half way to Core Formation!

“Fight? Or not?” asked Meng Hao, his voice cool.

Han Shandao’s eyes shone brightly. Lifting his head to the sky, he laughed heartily, then rose his right hand, sending his massive greatsword screaming out. The sword aura shone up to the heavens as it shot toward Meng Hao. A light smile touched the corners of Meng Hao’s lips, and he advanced forward a step.

A massive boom filled the air, and at the same time….

Blood sprayed from Han Shandao’s mouth as he tumbled backward through the air. Astonishment filled his face. His greatsword had begun to crumble into pieces. Hidden inside was a flying dagger which could unleash the power of Core Formation. However, it too was shaking and covered with cracks, and flew backward along with Han Shandao.

One moment, one move, utter defeat!

A long slash stretched from Han Shandao’s right shoulder all the way to his left armpit. Bone could be seen within the wound, and blood gurgled out from within. Han Shandao’s face was pale as one of the other Solitary Sword Sect disciples helped him to his feet.

He took a deep breath and stood there on wobbly legs. “Your excellency has gained enlightenment regarding the ancient battle incantation contained in the Dao Geyser. I concede defeat.”

Meng Hao didn’t respond. He simply turned and left. During these eight days, he had battled many people. Quite a few of them brought up the matter of the Dao Geyser, and the ancient battle incantation.

After Meng Hao took his leave, the blurriness on his face changed. A moment later, he once again looked like Fang Mu. However, he still wore the azure robe. An hour later, Meng Hao looked out over a massive lake.

It was a lake, but it would be more proper to call it a Dao Geyser!

The lake was surrounded by quite an assembly of Cultivators, over ten thousand of them. They all sat cross-legged, seemingly deep in meditation.

Meng Hao’s arrival didn’t attract any attention whatsoever.

He looked around at the crowds, and then selected a spot with fewer people, where he sat down cross-legged and began to silently observe the Dao Geyser.

Time passed. On the second day, Meng Hao noticed that more and more Cultivators were arriving, from all directions. By midday, there were now several tens of thousands of people present.

By evening, the entire area was packed. There appeared to be nearly one hundred thousand Cultivators!

Suddenly, water shot up and then glowing lights appeared above the Dao Geyser. The lights interlocked to form a screen in the sky. Within the screen was the indistinct image of a person, sitting cross-legged in meditation, both hands flashing an incantation. It was a Dao Projection!

“It’s appeared!”

“What exactly is the enlightenment contained in the Dao Geyser? What the hell? I’ve been here for nearly a year, but my Cultivation base hasn’t made the slightest bit of progress.”

The voices of the surrounding Cultivators filled the air. Meng Hao looked up to examine the screen. As he did, the blurry image began to glow clearer, as did the man’s two hands. Meng Hao suddenly realized that the illusory image of the man was emanating killing intent!

The killing intent was faint, but Meng Hao was sure it was there, and that he was not the only person to notice it.

Murmuring to himself, he calmed his heart and forced himself into a state of tranquility. He stared at the figure on the screen, and gradually began to zone out everything else. He was in this state for an entire night. Early the next morning, he frowned. He had made no progress whatsoever.

Even as he sat there thoughtfully, an eager voice came to him from off to the side. “Hey, Fellow Daoist, check this out.” It was a middle-aged man, gaunt, but with bright eyes. His entire person seemed to radiate shrewdness.

Meng Hao had noticed him earlier. He had been making his way through the crowds surrounding the Dao Geyser, peddling books from out of his bag of holding. Few people seemed interested in buying, though, and the vast majority seemed to find him extremely annoying.

The man was discreet, though, and as soon as he sensed he wasn’t wanted, would smile and take his leave.

He stood next to Meng Hao, his expression one of eagerness. With an ingratiating bow toward Meng Hao, he bowed from the waist and hurriedly began to speak.

“Fellow Daoist, are you worried because you haven’t gained the enlightenment of the Dao Geyser?” His voice was filled with infectious enthusiasm. “Have you encountered a mountain of treasure, but aren’t really sure what to do with it?”

Meng Hao stared at the man, taken aback.

“Don’t worry a bit,” continued the man, his eyes shining brightly. “You are about to gaze upon the Exalted Lord’s Limitless Ancient Dao Geyser Enlightenment primer!” He slapped his bag of holding and immediately a faded pamphlet appeared in his hand.

“In this Exalted Lord’s Limitless Ancient Dao Geyser Enlightenment primer, I have humbly recorded the enlightenment of countless Fellow

Daoists. In fact, at no small cost, I even went to pay my respects to Celestial Goddess Xu Qing of the Black Sieve Sect, Celestial Goddess of the Blood Demon Sect Li Shiqi, as well as Dao Child of the Wang Clan, Wang Lihai. All of their enlightenment is contained therein. It also contains the knowledge of more than one hundred Chosen from various Sects. It was with copious blood, sweat and tears that I produced this Exalted Lord's Limitless Enlightenment primer!" The man spoke very quickly, holding the book in one hand and making various gestures with the other. Meng Hao stared in shock.

"Fellow Daoist, I know what you're thinking. The value of a book such as the Exalted Lord's Limitless Ancient Enlightenment primer is impossible to determine. It's priceless, right?" He slapped his thigh, as if forcing himself to make a decision.

"Fellow Daoist, you can rest assured. The cost to acquire this Exalted Lord's Limitless Enlightenment primer is not one hundred thousand Spirit Stones. It is not ten thousand Spirit Stones. Nor is it one thousand Spirit Stones. This book, which contains the enlightenment of over one hundred Chosen, as well as several Dao Children, which was compiled at the cost of countless blood, sweat and tears, this Exalted Lord's Limitless Enlightenment primer can be yours for only ninety-nine Spirit Stones!"

Meng Hao cleared his throat and was about to say something.

"Fellow Daoist, don't lose out on this opportunity! You have a chance now that will never return again. Listen, I'll tell you a secret." He looked around, then lowered his voice. "Have you heard of the Faceless Azure Hero? That's the famous, ruthless wanderer who has defeated countless Chosen, all in the blink of an eye. In fact, you might not have heard that just a few days ago, he fought with Han Shandao of the Solitary Sword Sect, and Han Shandao was defeated decisively!

"Fellow Daoist, listen. Just half a month ago, the Faceless Azure Hero purchased one of my Exalted Lord's Limitless Enlightenment primers!"

Meng Hao frowned as he took another look at the middle-aged man.

“Okay, okay. How about ten Spirit Stones? I’ll sell you a copy for ten Spirit Stones. You’re my first customer of the day, which makes us friends. I’m Xu Liushan, disciple of the Blood Demon Sect.”

Meng Hao hesitated for a moment, and then said, “I only have three Spirit Stones.” He promptly pulled out his final three Spirit Stones from his robe.

“Deal!” replied the middle-aged man, without a moment’s hesitation. He immediately placed the Exalted Lord’s Limitless Enlightenment primer into Meng Hao’s hand, apparently fearing that Meng Hao might change his mind.

Meng Hao looked at the pamphlet with a wry smile. A sudden breeze passed by, flipping open the pamphlet. Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly narrowed, and he handed the three Spirit Stones to Xu Liushan.

Xu Liushan quickly left, sighing and muttering to himself about how difficult it was to do business these days. Actually, the images in the booklet had been drawn by himself. He had been in the area of the ancient Dao Geyser for quite some time. Each time the screen appeared, he would draw an image of it. After some time, he came up with the idea of selling it.

Meng Hao ignored Xu Liushan and began to leaf through the pamphlet. Each drawing seemed to be almost exactly the same. However, it wasn’t long before a strange light began to gleam within Meng Hao’s eyes. He lifted his head to look up at the image on the screen which hovered in the middle of the Dao Geyser.

“The images in this booklet all appear to be the same, but actually there is something different about each one….” Meng Hao studied the screen for some time, until finally it began to fade. The instant it was about to fade completely, a tremor ran through Meng Hao’s body. He had seen what the difference was. Within the figure on the screen was… a strand of Qi!

The strand of Qi was constantly in motion. Therefore, each of the drawings was slightly different. The differences were so minute, however, that even Xu Liushan hadn’t noticed.

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# Chapter 267: Black Lands Cultivators

A moment later, the screen completely faded. The surrounding Cultivators began to depart. Meng Hao remained, sitting cross-legged and staring out into the blank air, thinking.

Two days after the appearance of the Dao Projection, in the evening, Meng Hao closed his eyes. When it was deep in the night, his body flickered, and he disappeared.

The Wang Clan Dao Child and Chosen, in fact anyone in whose veins ran the blood of the Wang Clan, were all congregated on a mountain not too far from the Dao Geyser.

This particular night was doomed to be anything but tranquil.

The moon hung high in the sky when Meng Hao appeared just outside the mountain. He glanced up at the Wang Clan banner fluttering in the wind at the top of the mountain, then shot up toward it.

“Who are you? You dare to charge into Wang Clan territory!?”

“This place is marked with the Wang Clan banner, your excellency, please halt!”

Voices rose up as eight figures flew out, shooting toward Meng Hao. In front of them appeared whistling sword Qi, which also shot directly at Meng Hao.

His face was calm as he flicked his right sleeve. Power exploded from his eight Perfect Dao Pillars. What appeared to be the simple flick of the sleeve was actually crushing pressure from his Cultivation base, which transformed into a gale force wind that spread out in all directions.

A boom filled the air, and the eight sword auras collapsed into pieces. The eight Cultivators’ faces filled with shock as they tumbled backward, mouths spewing blood.

They couldn’t even cause Meng Hao to pause. He passed through their midst, continuing on toward the top of the mountain. It was at this time that ten beams of prismatic light flew out. Behind them were nearly a hundred people, a massive group, all heading straight for Meng Hao.

“You dare to charge into Wang Clan territory!? It doesn’t matter what Sect you’re from, we’re gonna bury you here today!”

“What’s the point of being so long winded, kill this guy!”

As the group of people approached, magical lights began to shine up. Even people far way would be able to see the shocking glow which filled the night sky.

Meng Hao’s expression was calm. He lifted his right hand, slicing his finger. He catalyzed the blood with the power of his Dao Pillar; everything turned red and began to rumble. It grew into something that looked like a massive Blood Dragon; a roar filled the air as it blasted forward directly into the charging Wang Clan Cultivators. Their faces filled with shock and blood sprayed from their mouths. They spun backward head over heels, seemingly completely out of control.

A path now led to the top of the mountain, a path carved out by the Blood Dragon. Amidst thunderous roars, Meng Hao advanced, and within the space of about ten breaths, stood at the peak of the mountain.

Behind him, the Chosen of the Wang Clan coughed up blood. During his entire way up the mountain, no one had been able to do anything to block Meng Hao’s way.

“The Faceless Azure Hero!” people cried amidst their gasps. The Wang Clansmen surrounded the mountain peak, all of them staring at Meng Hao.

In front of Meng Hao was a Cultivator wearing a black robe and a grim expression. He appeared to be about thirty years of age, and his eyes shone with a profound gleam as he looked at Meng Hao. This was none other than Wang Lihai, Dao Child of the Wang Clan.

His Cultivation base was halfway to Core Formation. His presence made it seem as if there were another mountain peak on his mountain.

“Sir, I have come here today to fight the Wang Clan Dao Child!” said Meng Hao. His cool voice rang out in a tone that could sever nails and slice iron.

“You want to fight? Then let’s fight!” Wang Lihai’s eyes glittered, and he took a step forward, lifting his hand at the same time. Behind him, an image appeared that seemed to contain both a sea of stars and the yellow springs of the underworld. Three finger attacks shot toward Meng Hao.

The first finger seemed capable of transforming life into death. The second embodied killing intent that seemed to stem from the yellow springs. The third contained the silence of extermination, making the world seem empty.

These three finger attacks were a magical technique of the Wang Clan, the Vermillion Bird Three Fingers.

Wang Lihai was well aware that this Faceless Azure Hero was unfathomable. Therefore, he attacked him without the slightest bit of contempt, and led with his most powerful magical technique.

Meng Hao’s eyes glowed brightly. He strode forward, also lifting up his right hand, immediately attacking with one of the three Blood Immortal techniques, the Blood Finger.

A boom rattled out, causing everything to rumble. At the same time, a massive wind sprang up as Meng Hao’s body turned into a beam of light that shot up into the air.

All eyes on the mountain peak were fixed on Wang Lihai. His expression was the same as ever as he watched Meng Hao disappear. After a long moment, he coughed up a mouthful of blood, and then staggered backward a few paces. His index finger was quivering, and was so swollen he couldn't bend it.

"Defeated," he murmured. The other Wang Clansmen heard the words, looks of astonishment covered their faces.

Wang Lihai wasn't the only one to be defeated that night. Song Yunshu, Dao Child of the Song Clan, as well as the Dao Child of the Golden Frost Sect were also vanquished!

As Meng Hao flew away from the Song Clan airship, Song Yunshu leaned up against the wall, blood dripping down onto the ground. His face was pale as he stared at Meng Hao's disappearing shadow. Eventually, a stubborn look appeared on his face.

Outside the valley occupied by the Golden Frost Sect, a shocking roar filled the dawn air. It echoed out all but once, and then the Golden Frost Sect Dao Child was defeated. He immediately went into secluded meditation. Only a few people witnessed the shocking battle.

The next day, the name of the Faceless Azure Hero swept across the western region of the Southern Domain. There was not a single person who hadn't heard that he had defeated not only Chosen from the various Sects, but Solitary Sword Sect Dao Child Han Shandao, Wang Clan Dao Child Wang Lihai, Song Clan Dao Child Song Yunshu, and the Dao Child of the Golden Frost Sect!

In just a few days, the Faceless Azure Hero had risen to prominence in the western region of the Southern Domain.

In fact, some people had already taken him to be on par with Zhou Jie, Li Shiqi and Li Daoyi, who had all broken through to Core Formation.

Many people believed that the mysterious azure-robed man would continue to challenge more Dao Children, or perhaps even Li Shiqi and the others.

Shockingly, however, after the three successive battles, he suddenly went into hiding.

At the moment, the illustrious azure-robed man was actually sitting cross-legged near the Dao Geyser, staring at the screen, and the figure on it, lost in thought.

After sensing the Qi in the Dao Projection, he had gone to fight the three battles in the night. However, fighting them did nothing. He had the feeling that if he was able to gain enlightenment regarding the Qi in the figure, then he would be able to create his ninth Dao Pillar.

Meng Hao didn’t know what the Qi was, but after the Dao Projection disappeared this time, he was able to sense that his own body… also had a similar strand of Qi within it.

After observing the screen and the figure, he was able to circulate the Qi strand. When evening fell, he once again stood up.

For two days, Meng Hao was unable to find an appropriate opponent. Li Daoyi, Zhou Jie and Li Shiqi had apparently all left the western region of the Southern Domain. Meng Hao couldn’t find them.

Eventually, he returned to the Dao Geyser to once again observe the screen. Eventually, he closed his eyes and began to mentally review his various victories over the Chosen and Dao Children.

Gradually, the images of the various opponents grew clearer in his mind, and he realized that they had a similar Qi strand within them. Within some, it was thick, others, thinner. But they existed in all of them.

Early on the second day, Meng Hao opened his eyes to glance about at the tens of thousands of people surrounding the Dao Geyser. After observing them for a while, he could tell that all of them had this mysterious Qi within them.

It seemed to appear within anyone who observed the Dao Geyser.

Meng Hao sat there thoughtfully for some time, his brow furrowed.

In the following half month, the reputation of the azure-robed man only continued to grow. Everyone spoke about him with fear. He seemed to have gone crazy! The instant he encountered a Cultivator of the late Foundation Establishment stage, he would instantly attack them, regardless of who they were or which Sect they belonged to.

The entire time, he never killed anyone. At the same time, no one was capable of making even two attacks against him. Everyone suffered complete defeat.

All of the Chosen from the Solitary Sword Sect who were present in the western region, were defeated. The same went for the Chosen of the Golden Frost Sect. As soon as anyone saw the azure-colored robe, their face would fill with fear. Regardless of whether it be Wang Clan, Li Clan or Song Clan, during this half month, everyone suffered defeat at the hands of the azure-robed man.

It was as if an azure-colored storm had descended upon the entirety of the western region of the Southern Domain.

Half a month later, the Dao Geyser was reaching its final moments. As of now, the screen had appeared, and wasn’t disappearing. According to the ancient records, this meant that the Dao Geyser would dry up and disappear in seven days.

More and more Cultivators sat cross-legged near the Dao Geyser, staring at the screen. It was at this exact same time that the challenges issued by the azure-robed man ceased.

Meng Hao once again sat cross-legged near the Dao Geyser, looking at the figure on the screen. His eyes were bright. During the half month, his every victory had caused the Qi strand to grow.

He was able to make the frequency of rotation of the Qi strand within his body match that of the figure on the screen.

Meng Hao then noticed that the Qi strand of the figure was rotating faster and faster, building up an attack momentum that seemed just on the verge of exploding out.

“This is a strand of battle Qi which can be cultivated after constantly winning successive battles. It can be used to break through a bottleneck, and increase the Cultivation base! This is the supposed ancient battle incantation.” He took a deep breath, then began to rotate the Qi strand within him. He was just a hair away from being able to create his ninth Dao Pillar, and yet, was unable to make that final charge.

Time passed. It was now the fifth day of the Dao Geyser’s final seven days of eruption. Suddenly, several beams of prismatic light appeared in the air.

The beams were filled with black-robed figures, all of whom wore masks. Shockingly, three of them wore azure-colored masks. Seven or eight wore white masks.

There were two, a man and a woman, who took the lead, and they wore gold-colored masks!

The dozen or so people whistled through air toward the Dao Geyser, immediately catching the attention of the tens of thousands of Cultivators below.

Immediately, some of the people recognized the black robes and the masks. “Black Lands Cultivators!”

Meng Hao also looked up. His gaze fell upon one of the azure-masked Cultivators, a skinny man who stood off to the side.

In that instant, Meng Hao’s eyes began to glow.

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# Chapter 268: The Height of the Heavens and the Depth of the Earth

This azure-masked Cultivator was the same Core Formation expert who had attempted to kill him that day not long ago.

“I’ve already run out of people to fight here,” thought Meng Hao. “This guy… is definitely my next opponent!” The glittering in his eyes soon subsided. He took a deep breath and closed his eyes, meditating and rotating his Cultivation base, ensuring that he was at the peak of his ability.

Now that he had decided to fight, he was extremely calm.

Regardless of whether he won or lost, he must attack! This battle would be the final step in his enlightenment!

The instant he closed his eyes, the people from the Black Lands arrived, attracting the attention of almost all the surrounding Cultivators.

Zhou Jie and the others who had reached Core Formation were not present. However, Wang Lihai and Han Shandao, as well as all the other Dao Children and Chosen of the other Sects, were all there.

Among the tens of thousands of Cultivators near the Dao Geyser, there were many who recognized the two in the gold masks.

“Those two in the gold-colored masks… they’re Dao Children who have risen to prominence in the last year in the Black Lands!

“Black Lands Dao Children Luo Chong and Xu Fei!” 1

“That must be them. Only they would be wearing gold-colored masks!”

The discussions spread, and soon all eyes came to rest on the two Black Lands Dao Children. In the past year, stories about them had spread into the Southern Domain, making them quite well known. They were half way to Core Formation, and according to rumor, might increase their Cultivation bases at any time.

“The three in the azure masks behind them must be the Black Lands Three Azures. All three have Cultivation bases at the Core Formation stage. Even more shocking is their Core Qi…. They say that a lot of alchemists were captured by them.”

“Core Formation Cultivators who have Core Qi are not to be trifled with….”

Wang Lihai frowned as he looked at the group of people from the Black Lands. Not far off, Han Shandao of the Solitary Sword Sect didn’t look very pleased. This was especially so as he looked at the Black Lands Dao Children.

Song Yunshu stood wordlessly in the crowd, his face grim.

The two gold-masked Dao Children from the Black Lands peered down at the crowds. One of them spoke. His voice was soft at first, but then rapidly escalated into a roar like thunder. “I, Luo Chong from the Black Lands, wish to challenge the Southern Domain’s heroic Dao Children to a duel!”

Immediately, the black-robed, white-masked Cultivators moved backward.

The three azure-masked Cultivators’ faces didn’t change in the slightest. They hovered cross-legged in mid-air, paying no attention to what was happening.

The other gold-masked Black Lands Dao Child, Xu Fei, also spoke, in a voice much much softer than Luo Chong’s, but which became icy cold as it entered the ears of the surrounding Cultivators. “I, Xu Fei from the Black

Lands, also wish to challenge the Southern Domain's heroic Dao Children to a duel!"

Not a single of the tens of thousands of Cultivators surrounding the Dao Geyser said a word. They simply looked up at Luo Chong and Xu Fei, a variety of different thoughts running through their heads.

Luo Chong gave a cold harrumph. "Don't tell me that among the throngs of Southern Domain Cultivators, not one dares to fight with us?" His words rang out, filled with an intangible domineering aura that made his challenge seem even more intense.

Suddenly, a cold snort filled the air. A beam of light shot up; this was not someone from one of the five Sects or three Clans. It was a Cultivator from some other Sect, with a Cultivation base of the great circle of Foundation Establishment. He shot directly toward Luo Chong.

Beneath his mask, the Black Lands Dao Child smiled. His body flickered as he advanced to meet the attack. As the man approached, he stretched out both arms; multiple ghost images sprang up, and suddenly, the illusory image of a huge cauldron appeared and shot forward.

A massive boom rang out. The Southern Domain Cultivator staggered backward, coughing up blood, his face pale. Luo Chong waved his sleeve and advanced further. More booms filled the air, for the space of a few breaths. Finally, a blood-curdling scream could be heard. Blood fountained out from the neck of the Southern Domain Cultivator. Only a thin strip of flesh connected it to the body as it tumbled to the ground.

Luo Chong slowly lifted his gore-covered right hand and wiped some blood onto his gold mask. The sight was terrifying.

"Fellow Daoist Wang Lihai. As Dao Child of the Wang Clan, do you dare to fight with me!?" Luo Chong cried. His eyes shone brightly beneath his mask as he looked toward the Wang Clan Cultivators, and Wang Lihai.

Wang Lihai lifted his head, and began to stride toward Luo Chong, his eyes glowing.

The instant he began to move, Han Shandao from the Solitary Sword Sect also rose to his feet, then flew into the air toward Black Lands Dao Child Xu Fei.

The appearance of the two of them caused quite a stir among the Southern Domain Cultivators. All eyes were fixed on them; this battle was a fight between four Dao children. Unless something unexpected happened, their names would rock the world, regardless of who gained victory.

The eyes of the Black Lands Dao Children, Luo Chong and Xu Fei, glistened with concentration. They watched as Han Shandao and Wang Lihai approached. It seemed none of the four wanted to make the first move.

As far as Luo Chong and Xu Fei were concerned, this battle represented the pinnacle of the might of the Southern Domain. No one under Core Formation could possibly unleash greater power in battle than the great circle of Foundation Establishment.

Therefore, their eyes filled with concentration, and within their hearts burned the fiery desire for battle.

Everything was quiet as the crowds looked at the four Dao Children and waited for this pinnacle of battles to begin.

However even as everyone was paying rapt attention to these four, suddenly, someone among the throngs of cross-legged Cultivators slowly stood up.

He wore an azure scholar’s robe, and as he rose, he flew up into the air. This was none other than Meng Hao.

His appearance caused looks of astonishment to appear on the faces of the tens of thousands of Cultivators who surrounded the Dao Geyser. It wasn’t just them. The four Dao Children in mid-air stared at him in surprise.

Wang Lihai’s eyes came to rest on Meng Hao’s clothes. Seeing their azure color, his eyes narrowed, and the image of a person appeared in his mind.

Not far off, Han Shandao looked equally thoughtful as he stared at Meng Hao’s clothes.

“Interesting,” said Luo Chong with a smile. “This Fellow Daoist seems to have made his move a bit late. But he seems to have his mind made up. Fellow Daoist Wang, Fellow Daoist Han, would you permit me to first slay him?” As he looked at Meng Hao, he didn’t seem to think much of him. He had seen pictures of all of the famous Chosen and Dao Children in the Southern Domain, and Meng Hao didn’t look familiar to him at all. As such, he came to the conclusion that he wasn’t even worth paying attention to.

A Cultivator like this could be killed without a second thought by Luo Chong.

Without waiting for a response from Wang or Han, Luo Chong flicked his sleeve, turned, and headed directly toward Meng Hao.

“When Luo Chong attacks,” he said with a laugh, “he leaves behind only fatal wounds, not injuries. You deserve praise for your courage, so I’ll leave your body intact.” Seeing all this happen, the surrounding tens of thousands of Cultivators frowned.

To them, Meng Hao’s actions seemed far too impulsive. If anything, it was simply delaying the amazing battle that was about to take place.

“Who is that? Does he really think he can join a battle of Dao Children?”

“He must think his Cultivation base is pretty amazing, so he wants to join the battle to earn some fame….”

As the discussions were beginning to spread, Luo Chong descended upon Meng Hao. As Meng Hao hovered there in mid-air, his cold voice suddenly rang out like rolling thunder, “You’re no match for me,” he said to Luo Chong. “The person I want to fight….” He suddenly pointed. “Is YOU!!”

This second ‘you’ was directed to none other than the skinny azure-masked Cultivator who was sitting cross-legged in mid-air off in the distance.

The instant the words came out, the skinny, azure-masked Cultivator’s eyes snapped open. They glowed brightly as he looked at Meng Hao. His pupils constricted as he recognized him.

Meng Hao’s words obviously caused an enormous buzz of conversation to rise up among the tens of thousands of Southern Domain Cultivators. Many immediately rose to their feet, looks of disbelief written across their faces.

“Is that guy insane? He wants to fight an azure-masked Cultivator from the Black Lands?!?!”

“They’re in the Core Formation Stage, and have cultivated Core Qi. Who is that Cultivator? He looks like a scholar! Does he really dare to issue a challenge to a Core Formation Cultivator!?”

“Late Foundation Establishment fighting Core Formation. Hahaha! This isn’t something you see very often. This guy wants to be famous so badly, he’s willing to die for it!”

As the buzz of conversation filled the air, Wang Lihai’s eyes narrowed. Moments ago, he was unsure of Meng Hao’s identity. But now, he had no doubts whatsoever. He took a deep breath. He knew that this person was none other than the Faceless Azure Hero.

Only that mysterious azure-robed man qualified to look down on Foundation Establishment, and do something that since ancient times was rarely seen in the Cultivation world. He was turning everything upside down, issuing a challenge to the Core Formation stage while in the Foundation Establishment stage!

Han Shandao also took a deep breath. The exact same thoughts were going through his head as were going through Wang Lihai’s.

Luo Chong laughed loudly. “Southern Domain Cultivators really are very interesting. Apparently you aren’t familiar with the height of the Heavens and the depth of the Earth, and really have an exaggerated opinion of yourself! You are a trifling late Foundation Establishment stage Cultivator, not even of the great circle, and yet still dare to challenge a Black Lands azure-masked Cultivator." An expression of ultimate ridicule covered his face beneath the mask. Before he even finished speaking, he lifted his right hand and waved it toward Meng Hao.

"I'll leave your corpse intact," said Luo Chong with a cold laugh. "Before you die, I'll help you to understand the height of the Heavens, and the depth of the Earth!" Actually, his heart did not contain the contempt which filled his expression. He actually was taking the matter very seriously; he simply couldn't believe that this guy was actually challenging the Core Formation stage. In his opinion, he must be expecting to rely on some help. As he waved his sleeve, a bright beam shot out toward Meng Hao. Behind him, the massive, illusory cauldron reappeared and then also shot toward Meng Hao.

1. Luo Chong's name in Chinese is luó chōng – Luo is a surname which also means "sieve" or "net." Chong means "charge" or "clash." Xu Fei's name in Chinese is Xú fēi – Xu is a common surname which also means "gentle" or "slow." Fei means "humble"

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# Chapter 269: He’s the Faceless Azure Hero!

“Pipe down!” said Meng Hao coolly, completely ignoring the incoming beam of light and the large cauldron. He slapped his bag of holding, and instantly, a simple wooden sword appeared.

Gripping the sword in his hand, he swiped it at the beam and the cauldron.

The slash of the sword seemed to split the very air, sending ripples out, as well as a bright white glow. The seemingly casual slash appeared to contain some great Dao, as if great winds of Time were sweeping out through the ripples.

Within the approaching beam of light was a flying axe. Storm winds filled with a sixty-year cycle worth of Time slammed into the flying axe. Immediately, black spots appeared on its surface, as if it were aging. The spiritual power of the axe began to decay. Within the blink of an eye, it was so decayed that it seemed as if it would wither away. It immediately dropped down onto the ground.

The wind was still there; it rushed toward the illusory cauldron, which began to tremble and distort. A full sixty-year cycle worth of Time seemed to have passed. Something illusory like this could not withstand such a passage of Time. The previously seemingly impregnable cauldron suddenly began to dissipate.

The wind landed onto Black Lands Dao Child Luo Chong, gently brushing across him. The vitality in his skin seemed to be carried away by the wind. Wrinkles appeared on his hands, and beneath his mask, his face began to age. A sixty-year cycle worth of life force was suddenly sucked out of him.

An indescribable feeling of weakness welled up inside. An unprecedented expression of fear covered his face; his body trembled and he coughed up a mouthful of blood. He staggered backward, a look of disbelief filling his eyes.

“You….” His body trembled, and his face went pale. His skin continued to wither, and his entire body became emaciated. The mask suddenly fell off, revealing that his once black hair was now white. His face was that of an old man, a face that still contained a trace of its former bravery, but was now mostly covered with shock and dread. Everything was deathly silent.

The three azure-masked Cultivators suddenly stood up, their eyes filled with serious expressions. On the ground, the tens of thousands of Cultivators from the Southern Domain were silent for a moment. Then a massive hubbub broke out.

The other Dao Child, Xu Fei, subconsciously retreated a few steps, eyes filled with a look of dread as she looked at Meng Hao.

Wang Lihai and Han Shandao both took in deep breaths, staring in shock. Their hearts were pounding.

A divine ability like this was enough to shock everyone under Heaven. The entire time, Meng Hao, had only made one swipe with his sword!

The axe had been sent into a state of decay, the illusory cauldron had been dispelled, and Luo Chong had lost a sixty-year cycle of life. All of it gave rise to great waves of discussion.

“What… what magical technique was that?!?!”

“It was that sword! It must be a divine ability from that sword!!”

“No wonder he dares to challenge the Core Formation stage. Who is he…? He’s wearing azure-colored clothes. Don’t tell me….”

As the buzz of conversation filled the air, Dao Child Luo Chong stood there trembling, his face pale. His expression was one of thorough confusion.

Meng Hao flicked his sleeve and, his voice cool, said, “I’ve taken a sixty-year cycle of Time away from you. Now do you understand the height of the Heavens and the depth of the Earth?” With that, he ignored him, focusing his gaze on Wang Lihai and Han Shandao.

Wang Lihai looked at him and suddenly said, “It seems your excellency is wearing his true face today. I understand that you thoroughly defeated me that day. However, there is still another fight to be had between us in the future!”

Han Shandao from the Solitary Sword Sect clasped hands and bowed. “Faceless Azure Hero…. Sir, I’m much obliged for your pointers before.”

Their words caused the surrounding Cultivators to instantly grow quiet. However, the silence only lasted for the space of a few breaths. Suddenly, a clamor arose which was loud enough to shake the land.

“What?! He’s the Faceless Azure Hero!”

“The Faceless Azure Hero! He’s made a sudden rise to prominence recently! He swept over Chosen and suppressed Dao Children. So, it’s him!!”

“I wonder what Sect the Faceless Azure Hero is from? Considering how incredible he is, he must be a Dao Child!”

As the noise of the clamor lifted up, everyone stared with burning eyes at Meng Hao. The Faceless Azure Hero’s reputation was just too incredible. It was a mystery that few people within the western region of the Southern Domain weren’t talking about.

Luo Chong gasped, and immediately retreated several paces. Before coming to the Southern Domain, he had heard of the Faceless Azure Hero, and had come to view him as a formidable adversary. How could he have ever imagined that the person in front of him was none other than that Faceless Azure Hero? His heart filled with bitterness as he realized that he was decisively defeated.

Considering that the defeat had been witnessed by tens of thousands of Cultivators, it was obvious that the word would quickly spread throughout the Southern Domain. Black Lands Dao Child Luo Cheng had lost a sixty-year cycle's worth of Time in a single sword blow.

A fierce glow sprang up in Luo Chong's eyes as he retreated. Suddenly, he cried out, "Azure-masked Elders, please kill this guy!" Suddenly, the eyes of the two other azure-masked Cultivators began to flicker with killing intent.

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever, without even the slightest change. The instant he made his decision to attack, he had anticipated that something like this would happen. Before the echo of Luo Chong's words could die out, Meng Hao's voice could be heard.

This time, he spoke to the surrounding tens of thousands of Cultivators.

"Fellow Daoists of the Southern Domain. I am Fang Mu, a simple Furnace Lord of the Violet Fate Sect. A year ago, Black Lands Cultivators ambushed me and my Fellow Furnace Lord Zhou Dekun in the Barren Mountains. I escaped by a fluke, but I'm not sure if Zhou Dekun made it out alive or not. Because of enlightenment from this Dao Geyser, my Cultivation base has reached new heights. Today, I come to battle my opponent from that day in the Barren Mountains. Fellow Daoists of the Southern Domain, I would like to request that all of you bear witness to this battle!" His words rang out like thunder, causing a great stir among the tens of thousands of Cultivators below.

"Furnace Lord… he's… actually a Furnace Lord from the East Pill Division!!"

"Fang Mu. I remember! A year ago there was a new Furnace Lord in the East Pill Division named Fang Mu!"

"He's Fang Mu! A Furnace Lord!"

The Cultivators were in an uproar as they looked at Meng Hao. Great waves of astonishment filled their hearts. The name of the Faceless Azure Hero already caused their hearts to shake, but what was even more shocking were the words ‘Furnace Lord.’

The glittering eyes of all the Cultivators were now glued onto Meng Hao!

“No wonder he didn’t kill any of the heroes that he challenged in battle!”

“Grandmaster Fang Mu was doing it all to gain enlightenment! He had to attack, but he’s an alchemist, and didn’t want to make enemies. Therefore, he restrained his killing intent. This is an alchemist of our Southern Domain! This is a true Chosen Cultivator of the Southern Domain!!!”

Amidst the uproar, Black Lands Dao Child Luo Chong’s face suddenly changed. He stared blankly at Meng Hao, his mind reeling. Meng Hao’s identity was causing a huge commotion amongst the crowd, but it was completely rocking his mind and heart.

Next to him, Xu Fei was also panting and looking at Meng Hao with an expression of disbelief.

The three azure-masked Cultivators had grim expressions in their faces. Two of them, not the skinny one, were frowning.

Intense killing intent poured from Meng Hao’s eyes, and his gaze shifted to the skinny, azure-masked Cultivator. “My battle today is with this man. If anyone interferes, if any other Black Lands Cultivators participate, then I request all the Fellow Daoists from the Southern Domain to stop them!”

Wang Lihai’s eyes glittered, and he immediately said. “The Wang Clan of the Southern Domain will bear witness to this battle. If the Black Lands Cultivators interfere, then they will make an enemy of the entire Wang Clan!”

“The Solitary Sword Sect of the Southern Domain will bear witness to the battle. If a second Black Lands Cultivator makes a move, they will make an enemy of the Solitary Sword Sect.”

“The Golden Frost Sect of the Southern Domain will bear witness to the battle! If any Black Lands Cultivator dares to join the battle, the Golden Frost Sect will be forced to interfere!”

“The Blood Demon Sect of the Southern Domain will bear witness to the battle!”

“The Black Sieve Sect of the Southern Domain will bear witness to the battle!”

“The Song Clan of the Southern Domain will bear witness to the battle!”

“The….”

One after another, voices rang out, without end. The tens of thousands of Cultivators were no longer sitting cross-legged. The were all standing, glaring up angrily at the Black Lands Cultivators.

All the Clans. All the Sects. Their voices rang out, melding into a roar that shook heaven and earth. It was like an endless thunder.

The Cultivators here were all of the Foundation Establishment stage. However, they represented countless Sects and Clans of the Southern Domain. Clearly, they could influence the attitude of their Sects as a whole. Considering that they were all giving voice to the same opinion, the Black Lands Cultivators were now pushed into a very narrow corner.

One mistake could give rise to a great war between the Southern Domain and the Black Lands!

Luo Chong’s face twisted, and his body trembled. Next to him, Xu Fei was panting. The other black-robed Cultivators from their group all looked very nervous, and were currently rotating their Cultivation bases.

The faces of the three azure-masked Cultivators immediately changed.

The skinny Cultivator had a grim expression underneath his mask. He stepped forward and said, “This is a personal matter between this kid of the junior generation and I, Yang. Outsiders need not interfere. It has nothing to do with the Black Lands. Fang Mu, you pup, it seems you're seeking to die. Very well, I shall help you!" His voice rang out, causing the surrounding Black Lands Cultivators to back up. In an instant, the only people floating in the air were him and Meng Hao.

This was to be their battleground!

"It seems you've put a lot of thought into how you want to die," said the azure-masked Cultivator coolly. "If I didn't help you, I would feel bad." Killing intent radiated out of his eyes. He lifted his hand, and suddenly a light yellow aura appeared. This was none other than his Core Qi!

This Qi had ever-changing forms, and currently it transformed into the image of a sword.

Meng Hao watched on with concentration in his eyes. This was a crucial battle for him. His Cultivation base was constantly rotating, along with that imperceptible Qi. It seemed to thirst for Meng Hao to make an attack, to grow stronger. When he did, it would transform into a charging force that would lead to a breakthrough in his Cultivation base!

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# Chapter 270: Battling Core Formation!

The azure-masked Cultivator, who was surnamed Yang, glanced coldly at Meng Hao. Meng Hao had left a deep impression on him; it was extremely shocking that not only was he not dead, he had actually made a breakthrough in his Cultivation base. It left the man with an uncomfortable sense of danger.

It was actually very humiliating. This was a late Foundation Establishment Cultivator, and yet he felt a sense of danger because of him. Beneath his mask, the man’s face was grim. Almost the same instant that the words left his mouth, he began to move forward.

His foot descended, sending ripples out into the air. An indescribable roaring sound rose up which vibrated inside the hearts of the tens of thousands of Cultivators. Only the azure-masked Cultivator and Meng Hao were up in the air. The man’s first step seemed to be reverberating around throughout the entire area, but in fact, was aimed directly at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s face was the same as ever. The roaring inside him wasn’t bothersome in the slightest. His eight Perfect Dao Pillars rotated with power of the Violet Qi from the East technique, causing Meng Hao’s body to glow with a violet aura. It spread throughout him and out, causing his azure garment to suddenly appear violet-colored!

The air around him filled with a violet glow, causing him to appear anything but ordinary to the surrounding Cultivators!

“Violet Qi from the East! That’s the Violet Fate Sect’s Violet Qi from the East!”

“Furnace Lords from the East Pill Division can cultivate that! He really is Fang Mu!” Everyone was completely focused on what was happening. Before, there had been some who suspected Meng Hao wasn’t who he said he was. However, the buzz of conversation washed away any such doubts. After seeing the violet glow, everyone was certain about his identity.

“I let you go last time, and now you’re back looking to die!” The azure-masked Cultivator gave a cold snort, then advanced further. His right hand suddenly lifted up, flashing an incantation and then pointing forward. It seemed like a very casual movement, but actually, this was not the first time the azure-masked Cultivator had faced off against Meng Hao. Their battle a year ago had left quite the impression on him. That, combined with the sense of danger he currently felt, made him feel very uneasy. Therefore, he attacked with full force.

Howling sounds like those of phoenixes filled the air. In the blink of an eye, ten massive dragons appeared in front of the azure-masked Cultivator, followed by ten illusory phoenixes. Their appearance caused everything to begin to shake. They carried a frigid iciness with them that seemed capable of freezing everything around them. The azure-masked Cultivator waved his finger, sending them racing toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. His Cultivation base roared into action; his Perfect Dao Pillars fully rotated emitting boundless power to fill his body. The violet glow around him grew thicker, and his eyes filled with the desire for battle.

This battle was of utmost importance to him!

This battle was the key to completing the great circle of Foundation Establishment!

This battle was the result of a year of waiting! He had been defeated a year ago, and now, he would turn the tables and… battle Core Formation!

Meng Hao’s right hand shot up, and he quickly used his thumb to slice his four fingers. Blood flowed down as he extended his hand forward.

One finger, two fingers… in the blink of an eye, five illusory fingers appeared. Meng Hao’s vision turned the color of blood and a roaring filled the air as the five fingers formed together into the Blood Palm.

The massive, blood-colored palm emanated a reddish glow, along with a shocking killing aura. It was filled with the power of Meng Hao’s eight Perfect Dao Pillars, as well as a violet aura, then shot forward with indescribable speed.

A roaring like that of thunder filled the sky. At the same time that the palm appeared, Meng Hao bit down on the tip of his tongue and spit out some blood. The blood drop shot out to merge into the Blood Palm.

“Blood Palm!” bellowed Meng Hao. His left hand lifted up and he quickly formed another massive Blood Palm, this one of a left hand. It also shot forward.

The power of the two Blood Palms, filled with blood from Meng Hao’s Cultivation base, began merging together. It was a shocking sight. It only took a moment for them to reach the ten phoenixes and ten dragons. They all slammed into each other.

A shockingly loud boom rattled out like thunder. The ten dragons and ten phoenixes howled. They were formed from the power of a Core Formation Cultivation base, and were virtually invincible. Meng Hao’s first Blood Palm immediately disintegrated.

As it did, the blood from Meng Hao’s Cultivation base burned away. The second Blood Palm roared in. There was a massive boom as six dragons and seven phoenixes were exterminated!

The remaining four dragons and three phoenixes screamed through the air toward Meng Hao, slamming into him, submerging him. However, the roaring sound soon dissipated, and the ripples in the air ceased. Everything became calm again, and Meng Hao emerged, the violet light emanating from his body rising up to the heavens.

A bit of blood seeped down the corner of his mouth. His eyes were violet-colored, as were all the veins in his body, and a powerful aura emanated from him. All of this demonstrates that Meng Hao had just used his own power to stand up against the magical technique of a Core Formation Cultivator!

Violet Pupil Transformation flowed rapidly through Meng Hao's body, healing his injuries. Meng Hao didn't care about the injuries, of course. The desire for battle grew even stronger within his eyes as he stared at the azure-masked Cultivator.

Beneath the mask, the man's face was extremely unsightly. He knew that his opponent was not ordinary, and had experienced an increase in his Cultivation base. But how could he possibly have predicted that the increase would be so shocking?

This first exchange of blows between the two opponents caused the surrounding Southern Domain Cultivators to reel in shock. This included Wang Lihai, Han Shandao, and all the other Chosen.

"Foundation Establishment battling Core Formation!!"

"Fang Mu is in late Foundation Establishment, but his divine abilities and magical techniques are almost the same as a Core Formation expert with no Core Qi!! But… that azure-masked man from the Black Lands hasn't utilized his Core Qi yet…." The buzz of conversation filled the air. Before, they had voiced their support for Meng Hao in the belief that he dared to battle Core Formation because he had some treasured item.

The shocking scene which had unfolded in front of them, however, had nothing to do with any treasured item, but rather, a magical technique!

This clearly showed that he was by no means weak. He had directly resisted a Core Formation Cultivator's magical technique. Granted, his opponent hadn't employed Core Qi, but even so, Meng Hao was clearly qualified to challenge Core Formation!

Meng Hao advanced, lifting his right hand. As he did, the violet light emanating from his body seemed to transform into liquid, which flowed toward his hand. There, it coalesced into something that looked like a blinding, violet sun.

His eyes glittered brightly as the power of his eight Perfect Dao Pillars catalyzed the Violet Qi from the East technique. As the Violet Pupil Transformation healed his body, Meng Hao used the power of Violet Qi from the East to unleash the most powerful magical technique he had learned.

“Violet Qi Guillotine!” 1

The Qi in Meng Hao’s hand transformed into a long, violet-colored blade. The curving blade expanded out, trailing wisps of violet smoke, seeming to take all of Meng Hao’s violet aura with it. Soon, it was dozens of meters long. Suddenly, it shot forward with indescribable speed toward the azure-masked Cultivator.

“What an insignificant skill,” said the azure-masked Cultivator with a cold snort. “You overestimate yourself.” To be pestered by a Foundation Establishment Cultivator, even one with clearly extraordinary abilities, was nothing more than a humiliation to this man. From the moment their battle had begun, he had felt shame.

He was filled with intense desire to kill Meng Hao. A virtually imperceptible light glittered in his eyes as his Core Qi suddenly appeared. The light yellow light roiled out, and within could be seen the indistinct shape of a sword. It emitted a fierce sword aura, along with an icy coldness.

Even as Meng Hao’s Violet Qi Guillotine approached, the azure-masked Cultivator’s Core Qi exploded out. The sword shot forward, transforming into a blinding beam of light.

It slammed into the Violet Qi Guillotine, and a booming roiled out. The strands of Violet Qi trembled, then collapsed into pieces. The blinding sword continued on, speeding directly toward Meng Hao’s head.

Meng Hao’s pupils constricted as a sudden sense of intense danger filled him. Even as the Core Qi sword destroyed the Violet Qi Guillotine and shot toward him, a greenish-blue shield appeared around him. This was none other than his protective jade pendant.

A boom filled the air as the azure-masked Cultivator’s Core Qi sword collapsed into pieces. When that happened, the azure-masked Cultivator let out a grunt and slapped his bag of holding. Immediately, a black flying sword appeared in his hand. He tossed it up, fusing it with Core Qi. The process seemed to backfire somewhat, diminishing his Core Qi momentarily before it restored itself.

“In terms of stances, how could I possibly meet defeat a second time!” The man’s eyes filled with ridicule as he waved his right hand. From the Core Qi above his head, the black sword shot out toward Meng Hao.

“Let’s see how long your Nascent Soul Cultivation blood can resist for this time!” The black sword emitted a piercing shriek as it approached Meng Hao.

Suddenly a massive boom filled the air, and Meng Hao was shoved backward. His expression never changed, though; in fact, his desire for battle grew even more intense. At the moment, Meng Hao could clearly sense the Qi inside of him that would help him break through in his Cultivation base. It was fairly bursting with activity, constantly rotating, faster and faster. He could sense the imminent appearance of his ninth Dao Pillar!

“Almost there, but not quite enough battle Qi!” His eyes shining brightly as he watched the flying sword slam into the shield, which then filled with cracks. As he retreated, he slapped his bag of holding to produce a large collection of bottles.

The azure-masked Cultivator’s eyes were grim as he sent another black flying sword slamming into Meng Hao’s greenish-blue shield. He wanted the shield broken as soon as possible, and to do so, had already wasted several of the specially crafted life swords.

“Once your Nascent Soul blood protection is gone, you’re dead,” he said coldly. “It will only take one slash of my Core Qi sword.” His voice was filled with intense killing intent.

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# Chapter 271: Soul Emergence Sword, Slay the Lone Star!

The boom which sounded out could be heard for fifty kilometers in every direction. The tens of thousands of Southern Domain Cultivators looked on in shock. Even the screen above the Dao Geyser flickered.

As the boom reverberated through the air, popping sounds could be heard as cracks filled the shield surrounding Meng Hao. Finally, it collapsed into countless pieces which then drifted away.

A bit of blood seeped out of the corner of the azure-masked Cultivator's mouth. In the process of destroying Meng Hao's Nascent Soul blood shield, he had lost six life swords. This had cost him his Core Qi; it would not be able to recover for the time it takes half an incense stick to burn.

However, the azure-masked Cultivator didn't care. From what he could tell, as long as this Fang Mu didn't have the protection of the Nascent Soul blood, then he could be killed with little difficulty.

His Core Qi would recover in the time it takes half an incense stick to burn. After all, it was produced as a product of his cultivation, and belonged solely to him. In his opinion, if this Fang Mu hadn't possessed the Nascent Soul blood the previous year, it would have been simple to capture him.

"Let's find out how long you can last against me without that blood!" laughed the azure-masked Cultivator. He slapped his bag of holding to produce what appeared to be a ball made of intertwined hair. He flung it out with his left hand.

“Distilled Fiends!” As the man’s gruff voice rang out, the hair suddenly expanded into a massive black net, fifty meters wide. It emanated an intense killing aura that shot up into the sky; in the middle of the net could be seen multiple phantom souls. Their faces were filled with agony, and they emitted soundless wails.

A buzz of conversation immediately arose among the tens of thousands of Southern Domain Cultivators. It seemed many of them recognized the treasured item which the azure-masked Cultivator had produced.

“Black Lands Distilled Fiends Net!! That’s one of the three great treasures of Black Lands Cultivators! Any Black Lands Cultivator can create it, but each one will be different, based on the personality of who created it. The power of each treasure will also be different.”

“It’s definitely a Black Lands Distilled Fiends Net, created from living souls. Living people are distilled down into souls, which are then sealed into hair and then weaved into a net. It’s a shocking, sordid treasure which is so sinister that it is impervious to all poisons under Heaven.”

“I can’t believe that Black Lands Cultivators really are all so cruel and merciless! That net must have over a thousand souls in it….”

Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed. The killing aura of this Distilled Fiends Net rose into the sky, and the silent screams of the souls filled the air. Looking at it, Meng Hao felt as if his own soul were about to be torn from his body.

“So,” he thought, “he’s using this treasure to counter my Dao of poison!” He lifted his right hand and waved it in front of him. The pill bottles in front of him flew out and then exploded in mid-air. Massive quantities of colorful mist poured out, filling the surroundings. Anyone who looked at it would be immediately shocked; it clearly contained multiple types of poisons.

As the mist roiled out, the Distilled Fiends Net flew through the air. As soon as the two ran into each other, hissing sounds emanated from the poison mist. In the blink of an eye, the souls within the Distilled Fiends Net began to consume the mist.

At the same time, the net began to spread out, surrounding Meng Hao.

The azure-masked Cultivator's hands flashed with relentless incantation gestures, and he would occasionally gesture with a finger. The souls within the Distilled Fiends Net shrieked and consumed the poison mist. At the same time, the net drew closer to Meng Hao, threatening to envelop him completely.

The azure-masked Cultivator's eyes were cold. There were many magics that he could use, but he had opted for the Distilled Fiends Net. This was not only because he feared Meng Hao's poisons, but even more so because he wanted him to die screaming. The more miserable and shrill his cries, the more his own anger could be sated.

The mist was rapidly diminishing and the Distilled Fiends Net was shrinking. It was now less than fifty meters away from Meng Hao. Meng Hao's eyes flickered. He could sense the Cultivation base breakthrough Qi inside of him growing larger as he battled against Core Formation. It circulated rapidly, and seemed that at any moment, his ninth Dao Pillar would appear.

"Just a little bit more!" he thought, his eyes glittering coldly. He lifted his right hand to produce one of several poison pills that he had concocted after becoming a Furnace Lord in the East Pill Division….

Poison Flame Pill. Meng Hao crushed the pill between between his fingers and then waved his hand. A green Flame Sea immediately roared up.

At the same time, he flung out his left hand, sending more pills soaring into the air. When they hit the green flames, they melted. In the blink of an eye, they transformed into a blue Water Screen. This was Sourceless Alchemy Water!

Water and flame cannot coexist. However, the Water Screen and the Flame Sea both seemed to be working in unison. They spread out with a roar, making a beeline for the Distilled Fiends Net.

“Sourceless Water sets spirits adrift!” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as the Sourceless Alchemy Water reached the Distilled Fiends Net. It gently passed through the net, covering the souls within. They seemed to stick to it as if it were glue, seemingly about to be pulled completely away from the net.

As the souls were torn away, the green Flame Sea landed, its heat radiating out in all directions.

All of this takes some time to say, but the azure-masked Cultivator reacted in the blink of an eye. Eyes narrowing, he immediately made an incantation gesture with his right hand and then lifted his finger. At the same time as it descended, Meng Hao produced ten black medicinal pills from his bag of holding.

These medicinal pills emitted no medicinal aroma, and in fact emitted a shocking aura. The original pill had not been concocted by Meng Hao, but rather, won from Chen Jiaxi. Furthermore, they had not been concocted by a scarlet-robed alchemist of the World Pill Division, but rather a rank higher than that, a golden-robed alchemist who could concoct magic pills. The name of the pill was Magical Thunder Peal!

Chen Jiaxi had only possessed one, which had been gifted to him by his Master to study. After winning the pill, Meng Hao had realized how incredible it was and thus made a few copies.

His eyes shone with a cold light as he waved his arm, sending the Magic Thunder Peal pills flying out.

“Thunder, detonate!” he cried suddenly. As his voice echoed out, the ten Magic Thunder Peal pills suddenly exploded. A massive roar filled the air, which transformed into a shocking attack. The Distilled Fiends Net began to tremble, and the souls began to emit miserable shrieks.

Thunder magic can restrain all types of apparitions. Therefore, the Magic Thunder Peal pill was not very useful against Cultivators, but was incredibly powerful when used on souls.

“Fang Mu, how dare you!!!” The azure-masked Cultivator’s heart dripped; he had spent many years refining the Distilled Fiends Net. It was only one step away from turning from a net into a flag, whereupon it would be even more powerful. The net contained a thousand souls, and normally couldn’t be damaged by a Magic Thunder Peal. However… Meng Hao had led with a poison mist, then poison water, then poison flames, and finally the thunder magic. Because of all of these reasons, the souls in the Distilled Fiends Net were being destroyed.

The azure-masked Cultivator’s eyes were filled with veins of blood. A vicious aura blazed from his eyes. He lowered into a half horse stance, then stretched his arms down. He lifted his head, and then stretched his arms out as if he were grasping something. Then he suddenly straightened up.

“Shade Horses, charge!”

Everything grew dark, and gasps could be heard from the tens of thousands of surrounding spectators. Suddenly, in front of the azure-masked Cultivator, nine black horses appeared. A pulsating aura of death emanated off of them.

The nine horses’ flesh was decomposing. They were clad in armor, and emanated a damp coldness. They raised their heads to the sky and neighed as they charged toward Meng Hao.

There were only nine horses, but as they charged, it seemed more like an army of ten thousand horses. In fact, it seemed that riding atop the Shade Horses were intangible spectres. A cold wind screamed out, blasting across Meng Hao.

His eyes flickered. Even as the Distilled Fiends Net dissipated around him, he squinted his eyes. He was filled with a sense of imminent danger, but at the same time, he could also sense the Qi strand within him becoming even more active. It rotated furiuosly, and he sensed that soon he would be able to achieve a breakthrough in his Cultivation base.

From what he could tell, he was only half a step away from the breakthrough!

He knew that the only way to take that half step was… to fight!!

Without hesitation, he advanced forward. As the nine Shade Horses approached, he lifted his hands, five fingers splayed, and struck forward. Coldness radiated out of his eyes.

“Eighth Demon Sealing Hex!” Meng Hao could suddenly see ghost images springing up everywhere. Everything was overlapping, as if the entire world were filled with duplicates of itself. The ghost images folded in toward the approaching Shade Horses, pushing down onto them.

The Shade Horses suddenly stopped moving and began to tremble. Previously, their eyes had been red and blank, but now they filled with fear. They trembled so hard that it seemed they might disintegrate at any moment.

The sight of it struck fear into the heart of the azure-masked Cultivator.

“Damned Foundation Establishment pup. It’s time to end this fight!” The azure-masked Cultivator’s mind filled with fury. No matter how he attacked, he couldn’t kill his opponent. The battle was being witnessed by the tens of thousands of Cultivators, making the whole thing incredibly embarrassing. His killing intent grew more intense, and he suddenly raised his right hand and pushed down onto his forehead. His eyes began to glow with a crimson light.

“Core Soul Emergence Slaying!” he said suddenly. The indistinct image of an Orange Core began to coalesce out of the top of his head.

“Soul Emergence Sword, Slay the Lone Star!” The azure-masked Cultivator’s body trembled, and he closed his eyes. The instant he did, a fissure appeared on the Orange Core, from which emerged a golden glow. It coalesced into a flying dagger which shot toward Meng Hao.

Atop the dagger was the faint image of a soul, which had the appearance of none other than the azure-faced Cultivator.

This sword disdained all defenses. It looked down on all magical techniques. Its power came from shocking killing intent. Once it emerged, it demanded a slaying!

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# Chapter 272: Massive Cultivation Base Breakthrough!

This sword could rock Heaven and Earth!

This sword shook the tens of thousands of Cultivators!

This sword embodied the fury of the azure-masked Cultivator. His desire to kill Meng Hao could grow no higher!

A sense of danger had existed in Meng Hao’s heart since the beginning of the battle. However, the moment it had appeared, the Qi strand inside of him had begun to grow rapidly. Soon he would be able to experience a Cultivation base breakthrough.

Currently, Meng Hao had a very strong feeling that if he could stand up to this attack… then he would be able to have that breakthrough. The ancient battle Qi would give rise to his ninth Perfect Dao Pillar; he would be the first Cultivator in ages to be of the great circle of Perfect Foundation Establishment!

Determination filled Meng Hao’s eyes. The Soul Sword approached, splitting the air as it raced toward him. Meng Hao suddenly stretched out both of his arms. His eyes were crimson as he called:

“Five Clones of Blood! Come!” Five blood-colored figures suddenly appeared around him. These were none other than the five Blood Clones Meng Hao had created.

The instant they appeared, ghost images sprung up around them as they transformed into their clone essence: the meat jelly skin!

They transformed at almost the same instant as the azure-masked Cultivator's Soul Sword arrived, filled with killing intent. Instead of slamming into Meng Hao's forehead, it hit the meat jelly skin!

A massive explosion filled the air. The five pieces of meat jelly skin were sent flying back, undamaged, but unable to control the force of the impact. They slammed into Meng Hao, causing him to spin backward like a kite with its string cut, blood spraying from his mouth.

The Soul Sword whistled through the air, looking a bit dimmer than before. Obviously the obstruction of the meat jelly skin had shaken it; however, it was nothing more than a pause before it once again shot toward Meng Hao.

Although Meng Hao coughed up some more blood, everything was actually happening just as he had predicted. He retreated backward and, having no time to wipe the blood from his mouth, drew out the Wooden Time Sword.

A ferocious look covered his face, and intense killing intent radiated out. On the surface, it seemed that this battle with Core Formation was an even match; only he knew that the slightest mistake on his part would result in instant death.

It was astounding that he had been able to last as long as he had. The most critical aspect of the fight had of course been when he used the jade pendant to nullify his opponent's powerful Core Qi!

The resulting temporary weakness in his opponent was what had allowed Meng Hao to hold on to this point.

The resulting life-or-death battle was causing the Cultivation base breaking Qi inside him to grow. Every attack he had made caused the Qi strand to grow many times faster than it had in his previous fights with Foundation Establishment.

Therefore, he would not flinch from this battle.

The Time Sword had arrived in the Southern Domain; exactly how powerful it was, Meng Hao wasn't sure. It had whittled away some of Luo

Chong’s longevity, but he was merely a Foundation Establishment Cultivator, and Meng Hao had expended almost no effort in the attack. He had not even attempted to draw more power out of the sword. But now, he was up against Core Formation…. Meng Hao’s eyes filled with decisiveness; the entire battle now rested upon this treasure!

As he lifted up the Wooden Time Sword, he zoned out everything around him. All of his concentration was focused upon the sword. It was as if he were the sword, and the sword were him!

It was hard to tell whether his body followed the movements of the sword, or if the sword followed the indications of his will. Right now, Meng Hao had complete and utter faith in the sword. He had faith that the sword could turn the tide of death!

This faith seems fantastic, but actually, after his mind entered the sword, he underwent a type of spontaneous enlightenment. It was like he was practicing cultivation… that resulted in faith!

The wooden sword did not emit any kind of brilliant light, nor did it send out shocking ripples. It merely rose up and then slashed toward the incoming Soul Sword.

The azure-masked Cultivator’s Soul Sword shook.

For the first time in the battle, the azure-masked Cultivator sensed a profound feeling of danger. As he floated there within the soul, he suddenly thought about what had happened to Dao Child Luo Chong.

And yet, he didn’t retreat. He was unwilling to retreat, because if he didn’t slay Fang Mu, then it would be hard to recall the soul. So he pushed forward at top speed, slamming into the descending Wooden Time Sword.

There was no roaring sound. No boom. Instead, a shocking wind of Time rose up, filling the entire area. It was a song of ages, a glow of life that seemed like some kind of illusion.

An archaic Qi filled the air and then melded with the surroundings. When the Soul Sword and the Wooden Time Sword collided, the azure-masked Cultivator’s soul emitted a blood-curdling shriek that no one but he could hear. He had suffered no wound, but instead, was filled with indescribable pain. It was as if… his life force had been injured, as if life itself had been sucked away. Suddenly, he was incomparably weak.

The feeling of weakness filled him with unprecedented fear. It only took an instant for him to realize that the Wooden Time Sword had caused him to lose a full sixty-year cycle of longevity!!

This was the result of only one blow of the sword. Before a second blow could land, the azure-masked Cultivator’s soul let out a fierce shout. The Soul Sword shot forward, stabbing completely through Meng Hao’s chest and then disappearing in the resulting shower of blood.

Blood sprayed from Meng Hao’s mouth, and his face went pale white. His body turned into a beam of colourful light as he fell down toward the Dao Geyser, and the glowing screen.

When the Soul Sword disappeared, the azure-masked Cultivator’s body shook. Blood sprayed from his mouth as his eyes opened. As he staggered backward, his body aged. He coughed up more blood. His mask suddenly fell off, revealing the pallid face of an old man, completely devoid of blood.

After entering the Core Formation stage, this man had never met someone as difficult to slay as Meng Hao. He panted, his face pale. He didn’t let his guard down at all, though, and was just about to charge again. This was because he knew… the sword had not pierced through Meng Hao’s heart. At the last minute, Meng Hao had moved to the side, causing the sword to miss the vital spot.

Suddenly, shock covered his face as he looked toward Meng Hao.

Below, the tens of thousands of Cultivators also looked shocked. They saw everything that had happened, including the sword piercing Meng Hao through the chest. Now, though, their eyes went wide with disbelief.

All eyes were fixed on Meng Hao!

He had been falling, but then he stopped in mid-air. He floated there, and when his eyes opened, they radiated an icy glow. His wound was serious, and even the restorative power of the Violet Pupil Transformation wouldn’t enable him to recover in a short period of time.

What was so shocking to the unmasked Cultivator and the other tens of thousands of Cultivators, had nothing to do with that. What shocked them to core was that Meng Hao was currently floating… in the exact same position as the figure on the glowing screen! Their bodies were superimposed.

A powerful feeling suddenly surged through Meng Hao. He could clearly sense the Qi strand exploding out with the power to cause Cultivation base breakthrough.

This explosive Qi caused incredible shock to fill all hearts: that of the unmasked Cultivator, Wang Lihai, the Black Lands Dao Children, and everyone else!

A Cultivation base breakthrough in the midst of battle!

Even as everyone felt shock running through them, Meng Hao took a deep breath. He had been waiting for this moment for a long time. In order to achieve this breakthrough, he had even been willing to battle against the Core Formation stage. Finally, the ancient battle Qi erupted within him. Finally, Meng Hao could sense the indescribable speed with which his ninth Dao Pillar was forming.

Ten percent, twenty percent, thirty percent….

He didn’t need the approval of Heaven and Earth to form his ninth Dao Pillar. However, he needed Spiritual Energy. At the moment, the eight Dao Pillars within his body were emitting shocking amounts of spiritual power, all pouring into the ninth Dao Pillar.

Forty percent, fifty percent, sixty percent….

Meng Hao’s aura grew more and more powerful. As it did, his body emitted a blinding violet light that shot up into the sky and filled the surroundings. A mighty pressure emerged from him, pressing down onto the tens of thousands of Foundation Establishment Cultivators, shaking their minds and spirits. Their Cultivation bases became unstable, and their Dao Pillars trembled. It was beyond their control! It was as if Meng Hao’s presence was causing all of the other Dao Pillars to bend in worship of him.

It seemed as if Meng Hao were the sovereign of the Foundation Establishment stage. The massive pressure he exuded seemed capable of causing the rest of Foundation Establishment to be nothing more than mortals.

The aura grew more and more intense, causing everyone’s minds to reel. The heart of the now unmasked Cultivator filled with an intense feeling of danger.

“I can’t let him get any stronger,” he thought, his face twisting. “Dammit, he’s in the midst of the Dao Geyser enlightenment!” Without hesitation, he began to fly toward Meng Hao at top speed.

However, as he neared, a roaring sound suddenly rose up from the Dao Geyser. In front of the shocked tens of thousands of Cultivators, it erupted with boundless spiritual energy!

Massive amounts of it shot up, and the nexus of the eruption was none other than Meng Hao himself. Immediately, the unmasked Cultivator was forced to stop. He didn’t dare to approach, and could only watch as Meng Hao was enveloped by the spiritual energy, and then disappeared.

“Fang Mu gained enlightenment! The Dao Geyser only erupts with spiritual energy when someone gains enlightenment!!”

“But… it’s erupting with so much spiritual energy….”

“When Li Shiqi advanced to the Core Formation stage, there was only about thirty percent as much spiritual energy as this. It was the same with Li

Daoyi. Fang Mu… just what stage is he breaking through to? There's so much spiritual energy!!"

The tens of thousands of Cultivators were in an uproar as they watched the spiritual energy exploding out and then pouring into Meng Hao's forming Dao Pillar.

It seemed as if this spiritual energy no longer belonged to Heaven and Earth, but to Meng Hao himself!

Seventy percent, eighty percent, ninety percent….

Finally… one hundred percent!

However, just as the ninth Dao Pillar was complete, a tremor of shock ran through Meng Hao. He had assumed everything was over. He felt an unprecedented amount of power inside of him. However….

A look of shock and disbelief filled his face as he noticed that the spiritual energy coursing through his body was actually forming…

A tenth Dao Pillar!

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# Chapter 273: Tenth Dao Pillar, Form!

Nine was the ultimate number in Heaven and Earth. But ten was perfect!

Meng Hao’s mind and spirit trembled. In all the ancient records he had researched, he had never read anything that mentioned a tenth Dao Pillar in Foundation Establishment. Even in ancient times, Cultivators never had more than nine.

Because of the change in the Heavens, the path of the Qi Condensation stage had been broken, making the tenth level of Qi Condensation disappear. That information was recorded in the ancient records. However… there was no such information about a tenth Dao Pillar!

As a Furnace Lord of the East Pill Division, he was required to have a deep understanding of history. As such, it was very beneficial to comb through the ancient records looking for clues about the ancient Dao of alchemy. After becoming a Furnace Lord, he had browsed through a vast amount of the Violet Fate Sect’s ancient records.

Despite all of that, he had never encountered any information regarding a Cultivator with a tenth Dao Pillar during Foundation Establishment.

And yet, Meng Hao could clearly sense… a tenth Dao Pillar was now forming!

Only Meng Hao was able to sense this tenth Dao Pillar, anyone else would be unable to. In much the same way that no one could sense which Cultivator the Nascent Soul blood he possessed came from, Meng Hao made sure that no one could pick up any clues about his Dao Pillars.

The only thing people could see was the increasing amount of spiritual energy erupting from the Dao Geyser. It showed no sign of lessening; it continued to envelop Meng Hao and he continued to absorb it.

As he absorbed the spiritual energy, the outline of the tenth Dao Pillar grew clearer.

Ten percent, twenty percent, thirty percent…

Dao pillar energy roared within Meng Hao, filling him with a power he had never experienced before. A shocking feeling filled him, as if he were soaring to the highest heavens.

Power! Unprecedented power!

His Spiritual Sense continued to increase exponentially. Before, it could spread out over roughly two hundred fifty meters; now, five hundred, one thousand….

His mind was filled with clarity, and as the spiritual energy poured in, he could sense everything around him. His perception of everything was different than it had been before, clearer, as if everything was in more detail. This clarity was even deeper than what he had experienced in the moment when he acquired the Perfect Foundation.

“This… is this the true Perfect Foundation?” he murmured to himself. The world outside of the spiritual energy vortex was not visible, but with his Spiritual Sense, he could see it clearly.

His heart began to race. A feeling of resolve and excitement welled up within him. He took a deep breath, intense anticipation and steadfastness filling his eyes as the spiritual energy surged into him.

He slowly lifted his hand up, then looked down at it, closing it into a fist. As the fist tightened, he felt strength.

Unprecedented strength!

It felt as if his blood and flesh were reforming, filling with a power that shook his mind.

The shocking level of this power was such that Meng Hao felt as if he could tear magical treasures to pieces with his bare hands. This was a similar transformation as that which had occurred when he entered the tenth level of Qi Condensation. It felt like a baptism of sorts; the power of the tenth Dao Pillar was completely transforming him, making his body more suitable for cultivation, turning his body itself into a treasure! 1

Meng Hao had the strong feeling that at the moment, he could crush all Foundation Establishment Cultivators without the aid of any magical techniques. Even Dao Children and Cultivators of the great circle of Foundation Establishment could be destroyed bare handed.

Meng Hao began to pant. From the moment he had entered the Cultivation world, he had thirsted for power, had dreamed to stand at the pinnacle. One thing after another had happened to cause him to grow stronger, all the way to this day. Meng Hao clenched his fists. He knew… that he was striding the path he had dreamed of!

Only the strong could tread this path, and now, there was no turning back. He could only stubbornly continue!

More spiritual energy erupted from the Dao Geyser, inundating Meng Hao, growing his Spiritual Sense, feeding his body, growing his Cultivation base.

The range of his Spiritual Sense increased, his body grew stronger, and his Cultivation base shot upward. His tenth Dao Pillar was rapidly solidifying!

Forty percent, fifty percent, sixty percent….

The surrounding Southern Domain Cultivators watched on dumbstruck and panting. The indescribable spiritual energy erupting out of the Dao Geyser left them in a daze. The sheer amount of spiritual energy dwarfed that seen during the enlightenment experienced by anyone in the past.

This was especially true of the following ten or so breaths. The spiritual energy was not subsiding, but growing even more abundant, as if all of the power of the Dao Geyser were exploding out.

Black Lands Dao Children Luo Chong and Xu Fei panted in shock. Wang Lihai and the other Southern Domain Dao Children also watched on in disbelief.

“Is he… is he going to reach Core Formation?”

“It doesn’t look like Core Formation, but… the spiritual energy seems without end! It seems like an ordinary Core Formation Cultivator couldn’t even match up!”

Conversations buzzed endlessly among the surrounding Cultivators. The person with the most unsightly face of all was none other than the unmasked azure-masked Cultivator. His aged face was now filled with shock. He could only stare fixedly at the shadow of Meng Hao within the dense spiritual energy.

The sense of impending crisis within him grew even more intense. The shadowy figure within the spiritual energy seemed to be transforming into something from his nightmares.

“I can’t let him continue!” the man said, gritting his teeth. His eyes filled with ferocity and determination. He lifted his hand to push against his forehead. A booming sound rolled out as the Core Qi, which had previously dissipated, once again seemed to ignite into being. The image of a sword once again appeared within the Core Qi. At the same time, the unmasked Cultivator flashed incantation gestures with both hands. The Core Qi sword screamed forth, heading directly toward Meng Hao, who was still enveloped with spiritual energy.

The sword moved with incredible speed, almost immediately reaching the spiritual energy vortex. A massive boom sounded out, but the sword was incapable of penetrating more than a teeny bit into the spiritual energy!!

The unmasked Cultivator was of the Core Formation stage, but the density of the spiritual energy erupting from the Dao Geyser was such that even his Core Qi sword couldn’t pierce through it.

The sword was stuck part way into the spiritual energy vortex. It began to tremble, as if it might be swept away at any moment.

It was at this moment that Meng Hao’s tenth Dao Pillar reached seventy percent completion!

His face unsightly, the unmasked Cultivator flashed an incantation sign with his right hand and then pressed down on his forehead. He then opened his mouth and spat out a mouthful of blood. The blood rapidly began to coalesce into the shape of another sword.

“Core Soul Emergence Slaying!” roared the unmasked Cultivator, his eyes glowing brightly. His right hand formed an incantation gesture and then waved forward. Immediately, his eyes bulged and a tremor ran through his body. Ghost images of his own face suddenly flickered into existence. This was none other than his soul.

The soul flew out of his body, merging into the blood, solidifying into the form of a blood sword.

The sword buzzed, emitting a power seemingly capable of destroying anything. The blood sword shot out to merge with the Core Qi to form… a real sword!

The blood was an embryo, the soul was the sword spirit, and the Core Qi formed the blade. This was… the Cultivator’s Consummate Life Force Sword! It emitted a shocking scream as it pierced into the spiritual energy vortex and headed directly toward Meng Hao.

It slowly approached him. Its speed was not great, but it showed no signs of stopping. It seemed it wouldn’t stop moving until Meng Hao was dead. It approached at a crawl: one hundred meters, fifty meters, twenty five meters, fifteen meters….

Meng Hao closed his eyes. He floated in the midst of the vortex of spiritual energy, his tenth Dao Pillar now eighty percent complete!

The unmasked Cultivator's body trembled and his face was pale. It seemed as if his life force was being suppressed; a death aura appeared. Despite this, he continued to exert maximum power, using his soul to power the Consummate Life Force Sword closer to Meng Hao.

The soul within the sword let out a deep howling noise. In the blink of an eye, the sword was now only ten meters from Meng Hao. The unmasked Cultivator could now clearly see Meng Hao floating there, eyes closed. He could also sense something awakening within Meng Hao, something that seemed like an ancient wild beast.

No one would interfere in this magical battle. It didn't matter that Meng Hao was at a critical juncture of a Cultivation base breakthrough. It didn't matter that the unmasked Cultivator's actions were virtually a sneak attack. This battle was between the two of them, and the two of them alone.

The other azure-masked Black Lands Cultivators did nothing to assist their compatriot. Nor did the Southern Domain Cultivators do anything to block him.

Within the space of a moment, the sword was three meters away from Meng Hao. It glittered coldly, heading directly toward his forehead….

Meng Hao's tenth Dao Pillar was rapidly congealing. It was now ninety percent complete!

"DIE!!" screamed the unmasked Cultivator's soul shrilly. The Consummate Life Force Sword emitted a roaring sound as it approached Meng Hao. Three meters. One meter. Half a meter….

Soon, it was only a few centimeters from Meng Hao's forehead!!

It was at this moment that an incredible, heaven-shaking roar filled Meng Hao's body. His tenth Dao Pillar was now one hundred percent complete!

Meng Hao slowly lifted his right hand, clasping two fingers down onto the tip of the Consummate Life Force Sword, which was only half a centimeter from his forehead.

“This is the true Perfect Foundation!” Meng Hao murmured to himself. His eyes suddenly snapped open, revealing frigid iciness and shocking killing intent.

This gaze contained a cold, callous aura.

This gaze was filled with a shocking, threatening glow.

This gaze erupted with an unbelievable domineering aura.

At the exact same time, Meng Hao could sense something within his bag of holding. Something inside was suddenly calling out with an incredible thirst.

This call came from within the blood-colored mask. It was coming from that which Meng Hao previously had been unable to even touch… the flag of three streamers! 2

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# Chapter 274: The Flag Flies; Destroy the Three Incarnations!

During this explosive moment, all of the spiritual energy in the area poured into Meng Hao. It only took a few moments for it to disappear, having been completely absorbed by Meng Hao. Not a scrap remained.

The Dao Geyser had ceased its eruption and, in fact, seemed to be drying up. The Dao Projection in mid-air flickered, then completely disappeared. The Dao Geyser was indeed… thoroughly exhausted.

The tens of thousands of surrounding Cultivators watched on in silence. The Dao Geyser, which had been the focal point of such shocking events for the past year in the Southern Domain, dried up and turned into ash, which then disappeared into the air. Nothing remained.

Meng Hao had apparently exhausted all of the spiritual energy it contained. There was no more enlightenment to be gained, so it disappeared.

A deathly silence filled the air. The tens of thousands of Cultivators looked on with blank expressions… however, it didn’t take long before they were thrown into an uproar.

“The Dao Geyser… is gone?”

“It should have lasted for a few more days, but… it’s been completely dried up!”

“Just what sort of breakthrough did Fang Mu have? He obviously hasn’t reached Core Formation. But he’s… he’s clearly… caused the Dao Geyser to dry up early!!”

Black Lands Dao Children Luo Chong and Xu Fei were panting. To them, this visit to the western region of the Southern Domain had been shocking to the extreme. The cause of this shock was none other than a single Cultivator.

This Cultivator was… a Furnace Lord from the East Pill Division of the Violet Fate Sect!

The two other azure-masked Cultivators from the Black Lands watched on, seemingly unaffected. However, great waves of shock surged through their hearts, not because of the drying up of the Dao Geyser, but because of Meng Hao’s attacks earlier.

This was the first time they had ever witnessed Foundation Establishment battling Core Formation. Furthermore… while Meng Hao was clearly at a disadvantage, he had not suffered defeat. Even more astonishing, Meng Hao had experienced a Cultivation breakthrough in the midst of battle. That was something rarely seen. Something even more rarely seen, was how Meng Hao was currently clasping a Life Force Sword between his fingers!

“A Foundation Establishment Cultivator shouldn’t even be able to touch a sword like that…. Is he… is he really an alchemist?” This was the shocking question which floated in the minds of both of the azure-masked experts.

As the conversations buzzed out, the tens of thousands of Southern Domain Cultivators stared up at Meng Hao, their eyes filled with a variety of complicated expressions.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever. Despite being the focus of tens of thousands gazes, not an ounce of change touched his face.

He wasn’t sure how powerful his ten Dao Pillars were, but deep in his heart he knew that… before, despite his caution, he really was no match at all for even the early Core Formation stage. Now, however… things were different.

He now faced a Core Formation Cultivator whose longevity had been damaged and whose soul had been injured. He wasn’t completely sure he could come out victorious, but this Cultivator had sustained severe internal injuries… killing him shouldn’t be too difficult!

A cold glow filled his eyes. He pinched down on the sword which he held between his two fingers. Power rose up within him, and his ten Dao Pillars rotated. Unprecedented power flowed through his arms and into his fingers!

Popping sounds rang out from the sword, and suddenly, cracks covered its surface. Within the space of a few breaths, it completely collapsed into dust.

The soul within it emitted a blood-curdling shriek and then vanished.

As the soul vanished and the sword disintegrated, tears of blood ran down the face of the unmasked Cultivator. Blood also poured out of his nose and ears as he staggered backward, coughing up a mass of blood. He lifted his pale face, and it was filled with ferocity, appearing to the onlookers to be even demented with insanity.

He lifted his right hand to slap his bag of holding. A black statuette appeared; it appeared to be a dragon, and yet not a dragon, like a python and yet not a python. This was none other than a Flood Dragon!

It had a single horn jutting out of its head, and two clawed arms on its abdomen. Its body was bluish black. The instant it appeared, a fiendish aura filled the area, causing the previously sunny sky to fill with dark clouds.

A faint cry rose up that seemed to come from ancient times, echoing out to shake the minds of the tens of thousands of Cultivators.

As the cry echoed out, the ancient Flying Rain-Dragon Core within Meng Hao’s first Dao Pillar suddenly seemed to wake from slumber. It began to tremble.

A moment later, the air behind Meng Hao began to ripple, and an enormous, illusory ancient Flying Rain-Dragon appeared. It glared down at the statue of the Flood Dragon as if it were looking at… food!

In ancient times, Flood Dragons were nothing more than food for Flying Rain-Dragons!

The phantom image of the Flying Rain-Dragon was invisible to the onlookers. Suddenly, the roar of the Flood Dragon statue seemed to cease.

The unmasked Cultivator glared at Meng Hao. One word at a time, he said, “Transform Core Qi into a Flood Dragon Ancestor! Open a great Dao with Cultivation base blood. Feed this dragon spawn with the body. Use the soul to give birth to slaughter!” The man bit down on the tip of his tongue and spit out a glob of blood onto the statuette.

“I draw on my power to call upon the Flood Dragon Ancestor!” His body trembled as he raised his head to the sky and howled. In an instant, cracks covered the Flood Dragon statue. Popping sounds filled the air, and the surrounding tens of thousands of Cultivators watched as the statuette crumbled to pieces.

It disintegrated, and before the countless bluish black fragments could scatter, a wind sprang up, gathering them together, distorting them, transforming them into the image of a Flood Dragon.

The image was extremely lifelike, and when it appeared, a vast coldness sprang up and spread out. The unmasked Cultivator’s expression was vicious as he glared at Meng Hao.

“Flood Dragon Ancestor, I request that you slay this man!”

As soon as the words were out of his mouth, the phantom Flood Dragon turned. Two cold dots that resembled eyes appeared on its head. It stared at Meng Hao for a moment, seemingly itching to attack. Suddenly, it sprang into action, shooting directly toward Meng Hao.

As it approached, the coldness soared to the heavens; it seemed as if everything around it would be frozen in an instant.

In the blink of an eye, it was three hundred meters from Meng Hao!

Meng Hao’s eyes shone brightly. He didn’t retreat or evade; instead, he took a deep breath, lifted his hand and began to slice his fingers. Five fingers were soon covered with blood. He closed his eyes, bent down, and stretched his hand out.

“Blood Death World!” he cried, his voice filled with an aura of blood and gore. The instant the words rang out, his vision turned the color of blood.

At the same time, a bloody aura emanated from his right hand, enveloping the surroundings, causing everything within three thousand meters to turn the color of blood!

The Flood Dragon, too, was enveloped within this world of blood.

This unique world was… the third magical art from the Blood Immortal Legacy, the one he had previously been incapable of unleashing… the Blood Death World!

As soon as the Blood Death World appeared, five blood phantoms appeared around Meng Hao. These were none other than… his five indestructible Blood Clones!

A boom filled the air, filling the hearts of the tens of thousands of Cultivators with shock. The unmasked Cultivator’s face was pale white; it goes without saying that the appearance of the Blood Death World filled his heart with astonishment.

This was especially true because the Flood Dragon, which he previously thought to be incredibly astonishing, was now emitting a miserable shriek as it struggled within the Blood Death World. It seemed to be fighting against some invisible power that it just couldn’t shake off.

As its shrieks rang out, Meng Hao slowly straightened up. He began to clench the fist of his right hand.

As his fist slowly closed, the Blood Death World suddenly shrank, seemingly following the movement of his hand.

As its borders shrank, they slammed into the shrieking Flood Dragon, carrying it with them. In the blink of an eye, the Blood Death World had disappeared, completely shrinking into Meng Hao's fist. A faint aura of blood seeped up from between his fingers.

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever. He slowly loosened his fingers, and as he did, chunky bits of bluish-black dust floated off his palm to dissipate in the wind.

Gasps could be heard as people recognized the powder as… the remnants of the Flood Dragon statuette!

The unmasked Cultivator stared at Meng Hao, his eyes filled with fury. "Today's battle will end only in your death. The Foundation Establishment stage… is simply incapable of challenging the Core Formation stage." He lifted his left hand and used his fingernail to scratch three bloody streaks onto his face, forming a triangle.

Bone was visible beneath the cuts, which oozed blood. The sight was shocking, but the unmasked Cultivator showed no signs that it hurt even the slightest bit. He glared at Meng Hao with even more ferocity than before.

Hoarse-voiced conversations immediately sprang up among the Cultivators below.

"That's…."

"That's a forbidden technique of the Black Lands, the Yellow Springs Three Incarnations Seal!"

As the word spread among the Cultivators, the unmasked Cultivator's sinister voice filled the air: "Three incarnations are carved out within the yellow springs, three incarnations that can destroy all incarnations! Yellow Springs… Three Incarnations Seal!" A bizarre aura filled the eyes of the unmasked Cultivator. This was his most powerful magical technique. Utilizing this technique would come at no small cost to him, but at the moment, he didn't care. The three bloody lacerations on his face began to burn, branding deeply into his face. They began to turn into scar tissue, filling his eyes with even more demented ferocity.

As the words left his mouth, he raised his right hand toward Meng Hao, then chopped it down into the air. At first, it seemed as if nothing had happened. However, Meng Hao’s heart trembled.

Meng Hao’s gaze was like lightning as he gazed at the unmasked Cultivator. His brow was furrowed. He had been able to exterminate the Flood Dragon because of the might exerted upon it by the Flying Rain-Dragon within the Blood Death World. As such, it had been dispersed when the Blood Death World dissipated.

“Time to end things,” he said softly, his brow relaxing. He raised his right hand to smack his bag of holding. Instead of retrieving an object, however, he sent his Spiritual Sense into the blood-colored mask. It circled around the flag of three streamers, which he previously had never been able to use.

This was a precious treasure from the Blood Immortal Legacy.

As his Spiritual Sense hovered over the flag of three streamers, it began to sway, then suddenly unfurled. It entered his body, filling him with enlightenment. He raised his right hand and then waved it.

Behind him, surrounding him, in all directions…

Filling the sky, covering the land, appearing tattered and yet still emitting a power of Heavenly might… was one streamer from the flag of three streamers!!

It appeared dilapidated, and was gray, but stretched out seemingly without end.

As it stretched out… the yellow springs seemed to dry up, the three incarnations were exterminated, everything sank halfway to hell!!!

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# Chapter 275: The Difference Between Meng Hao and Fang Mu!

Meng Hao hovered in mid-air, his eyes closed, concealing the veins of blood which filled his eyes. His mind was reeling; he’d never imagined that taking out the flag of three streamers would unleash such heaven-shaking power.

Furthermore… this was only one streamer. In addition, the full flag of three streamers hadn’t truly been unfurled; this was only a shadow of the treasure, projected by means of Meng Hao’s Spiritual Sense.

However, even this projected power of the dilapidated flag was able to blot out the sky and cover the entire land. It completely filled the vision of the tens of thousands of Cultivators. Heaven and Earth were filled with darkness.

At this moment, Heaven and Earth seemed to be split in two. Heaven was Heaven, Earth was Earth. The flag existed beneath the Heavens, an Earth of its own, and above the Earth, a Heavenly Flag!

The world was covered with darkness; spirits faded, the Cosmos itself was pitch black.

An indescribable pressure roiled out, and an unprecedented sense of calamity filled the hearts of all the Cultivators. It was impossible to dispel, as if an enormous boulder was crushing down onto their bodies.

The entire world was suddenly plunged into deathly silence.

A gray aura began to emanate from the bodies of everyone present. It curled up into the air, forming a mist, outside of which only the fluttering, dilapidated flag was visible. It twisted beneath the Heavens and the Earth, stretching out seemingly for hundreds of kilometers in all directions. It seemed as if it had replaced the Heavens, changed its will….

This dilapidated flag used one side to change the Heavens, and the other side to change the Earth.

A long time passed, or perhaps it was only a moment; the sky's normal color returned, and that which covered the earth disappeared. The gray mist dissipated, and the shocking flag that had appeared in the sky… disappeared without a trace.

Only Meng Hao remained floating in mid-air. No living thing existed alongside him. The Black Lands Cultivators remained, as did those from the Southern Domain. However, the appearance of the undulating flag up in the sky had caused their bodies to tremble and begin to sink down into the ground.

In addition to Meng Hao, the only thing left in the sky was a headless corpse which was slowly beginning to fall down to the ground. This corpse was none other than the unmasked Cultivator!

As of this moment, everything was over.

In the space of a breath, all eyes came to rest on Meng Hao. And then, the astonishment in everyone's hearts exploded out.

"The azure-masked Black Lands Cultivator… is dead…."

"A Foundation Establishment Cultivator just exterminated a Core Formation Cultivator. This is… this is…."

"How can Fang Mu possess such battle power? He dried up the Dao Geyser! Just what kind of good fortune was he able to seize?!?!"

"He's an alchemist, a Furnace Lord of the East Pill Division. But he was able to challenge Dao Children. In the future, he'll… he'll definitely be the number one figure of his generation in the Southern Domain!"

"More importantly, just what magical technique did Fang Mu just use? It's a technique that can slay Core Formation!"

Conversations buzzed. The Black Lands Cultivators, Luo Chong and Xu Fei, were pale-faced beneath their masks. They stared blankly at Meng Hao. Before this battle, they had believed themselves to be Chosen of Heaven; they truly thought that few people within the Foundation Establishment stage in the Southern Domain could possibly exceed them. At the most, perhaps someone existed who could match them in battle.

But now, they found that it didn't matter if it were them, or other Chosen from the Southern Domain, they were are all simply foils that accentuated the magnificence of Fang Mu.

Even if they grew more powerful, even if they could be considered Chosen within their various Sects, all of them… were merely ordinary when compared to Fang Mu.

Fang Mu floated like a blazing sun in the sky. He was too bright, dazzling, causing all the surrounding stars to fade. They might be unwilling, they might be unconvinced, but it didn't matter. They had no choice….

An inhuman Cultivator had appeared in the Foundation Establishment stage who could exterminate Core Formation Cultivators. Everyone of his generation had no choice but to be shaken and feel suppressed.

Wang Lihai's face was pale, and he stood there silently. Han Shandao shook his head with a bitter smile and sighed inwardly. The Golden Frost Sect Dao Child, Song Yunshu of the Song Clan, and the others of various clans who considered themselves to be at the peak of Foundation Establishment, all looked up at Meng Hao, their eyes filled with deep veneration.

They were in awe of his Cultivation base, and they revered him for his status as a Furnace Lord of the East Pill Division. Because of all of this, it was impossible for them not to understand that in the future, the name of Fang Mu would be matchless in the Southern Domain. From now on, he would be a critical element within the Southern Domain!

Fame had come with one battle!

All eyes were fixed upon Meng Hao as he floated there in mid-air. No roars filled the air, only silence.

Such silence, such deathly emptiness, usually represents intense fear….

The various Cultivator’s eyes’ were filled with conflict, shock, reverence, admiration, and envy….

Such a variety of looks seemed to transform into a sharpness which circulated around Meng Hao. In fact, if Meng Hao hesitated at all, it seemed like the sharpness might transform into killing.

Meng Hao’s astonishing power caused many hearts to fill with a disastrous level of jealousy. This was one of the reasons he had chosen to change his appearance so often in the past, and had been so careful to not accidentally reveal himself.

If it weren’t for the fact that this battle had been key to his breakthrough, then he would never have openly revealed so much about himself.

The death of the azure-masked Cultivator would not be closely investigated. Neither the Black Lands Dao Children nor the azure-masked Cultivators would look into the matter too closely, not with Meng Hao at the height of his power, and surrounded by the shocked Southern Domain Cultivators.

However… he was in a precarious situation. The looks being cast by many of the surrounding Cultivators caused the two azure-masked Cultivators’ eyes to glitter slightly.

Their gazes came to fall on Meng Hao. So did that of Wang Lihai, Dao Child of the Wang Clan. His right hand seemed to be resting casually at his side, but only he knew that he was slowly preparing the Wang Clan's Vermillion Bird Three Fingers.

Han Shandao of the Solitary Sword Sect narrowed his eyes. Even his normally forthright face began to fill with a slightly sinister expression.

The Golden Frost Sect Dao Child, as well as the Chosen from the other Sects, had all been defeated by Meng Hao recently. Their eyes began to flicker as they looked at him too.

They didn't dare to attack… although, if they knew he was Meng Hao, then surely they wouldn't have so many misgivings. The Black Lands Cultivators would have none whatsoever, and would definitely immediately attack. However, this wasn't Meng Hao… this was Fang Mu!

A Furnace Lord from the East Pill Division of the Violet Fate Sect!

As people grow in life, they form nets to fall back on. To avoid the problems that result from killing someone, you must first sever that person's nets. That is the only way to prevent future consequences. Acting in any other way is equivalent to killing oneself.

Before, Meng Hao was only Meng Hao. He had no such nets, and as such, anyone who wished to kill him could simply attack.

But now, his identity as a member of the East Pill Division was his biggest safety net.

Meng Hao gained enlightenment of this when he had first joined the Reliance Sect. Having someone to rely on is in fact one of the greatest safety nets that can exist in a person's life.

Wang Lihai didn't make a move. However, one of the other Wang Clan Chosen suddenly took a step toward Meng Hao.

That step seemed to fall upon the hearts of the surrounding Cultivators. Luo Chong suddenly moved!

The two Black Lands azure-masked Cultivators also began to advance…

Amidst the stifling deathly silence, the seemingly peaceful scene was actually filled with incredible danger. As Meng Hao floated in mid-air, his closed eyes suddenly snapped open.

The instant this happened, the Wang Clan Chosen stopped in his tracks. Luo Chong also stopped moving, as did the two azure-masked Cultivators.

Everyone looked at Meng Hao, their looks even more thoughtful than before.

His expression was the same as ever, cold and detached. The coldness of his gaze was even thicker than before, and deep within could be sensed an aura of ridicule.

Not even the slightest injury could be seen on his body, making it seem as if this wasn't his first time exterminating a Core Formation Cultivator!

He suddenly spoke, his voice cool: "My enlightenment from the Dao Geyser included a divine ability. I am a Furnace Lord of the East Pill Division, unfamiliar with magical battle. However, because of the profundity of the enlightenment, I was unable to control myself. Fellow Daoists from the Black Lands, please forgive me." With that, he waved his hand, causing his azure-colored robe to disappear. It was replaced with the alchemist's robe of a Violet Fate Sect Furnace Lord, black, with a faint violet aura glowing within. The sight of it instantly caused everyone to be filled with shock.

He floated there in mid-air, looking coolly about at the crowds of people.

It seemed as if an appointed time had arrived. The two azure-masked Cultivators gave deep looks to Meng Hao, then turned and transformed into beams of light that shot off into the distance. Apparently, Meng Hao's identity as a Furnace Lord was their greatest misgiving. It was well known that anyone who trifled with one of Pill Demon's alchemists could arouse the wrath of the entire Sect!

Luo Chong and Xu Fei gave a final glance at Meng Hao, and then departed.

The departure of the Black Lands Cultivators caused the previously stifling atmosphere among the Southern Domain Cultivators to slowly relax. The pressure eased, and they began to grow excited. Even as everyone began to discuss this Fang Mu, Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed deeply to everyone.

“Many thanks for your assistance, Fellow Daoists,” he said. “I, Fang Mu, am very moved. Now, I need to deeply analyze and meditate upon my recent enlightenment. Furthermore, I recently received orders from the Sect, calling me back. Next time you are able, call on me in the Violet Fate Sect, I will most happily receive and entertain you.” With that, he gave another deep bow. Most of the surrounding Cultivators understood that as a Foundation Establishment Cultivator, it was an astonishing thing to have slain a Core Formation Cultivator. Of course, the divine ability which had appeared was a projection of some magical item that no one had actually seen. Clearly, he had incredibly mysterious magical techniques and divine abilities at his disposal.

The confidence instilled by this achievement in battle would give birth to an ever-present confidence. It would help in everything in the future, be it in terms of cultivation or magical techniques.

As they digested his words, Meng Hao once again clasped hands to the Dao Children of the various Sects and Clans, thanking them deeply for their assistance. Clearly having no intention of staying behind any longer, he turned into a beam of light that shot off into the distance.

Wang Lihai and the others frowned as they watched Meng Hao disappear. They had no choice but to eventually just look away. Now as before, there was no way for them to truly understand the level of Meng Hao’s profundity. Because of the Violet Fate Sect, it was impossible for them to make any rash moves. They could only sigh inwardly.

Meng Hao flew away at top speed. After a day passed, his face was completely pale, and he coughed up a mouthful of blood. His aura was incredibly weak. Gritting his teeth, he found the mountain where… he had just recently spent so much time in secluded meditation.

He entered the Immortal’s Cave, coughing up more blood, and immediately sat down cross-legged. Popping a medicinal pill into his mouth, he waved his sleeve, sending out a vast amount of poison pills. They immediately turned into a mist which completely surrounded him.

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# Chapter 276: Stop Fooling Around

Meng Hao’s face was pale as he sat cross-legged in the Immortal’s Cave. A few days later, he finally opened his eyes. They shone with a brilliant light. However, his brow remained furrowed for quite some time before finally relaxing.

“I injured my soul….” he murmured. He could sense a sinister coldness within him, an iciness which filled him through and through. In the cultivation of Foundation Establishment, the Cultivation base is related to the Dao Pillars. Spiritual Sense is born, as well as the Sea of Perception and the Cultivation soul.

That soul would become the foundation for the future Nascent Soul.

Right now, though, Meng Hao could faintly sense that his soul had been pulled out of place, a price paid for the use of the flag of three streamers. Such an injury would be difficult to recover from. An injury of the flesh would naturally recover through rest and recuperation, or through the use of medicinal pills. However, an injury of the soul could not be healed in such a way.

Battling and slaying Core Formation had been an impressive feat, but as far as Meng Hao was concerned, the level of difficulty was far too high. Even with a tenth Dao Pillar, it had been extremely difficult.

There was simply too great a difference between Foundation Establishment Cultivators and Core Formation Cultivators, especially those who had cultivated Core Qi. In truth, he was not really qualified to challenge a Core Formation Cultivator.

Even with a Perfect Foundation and eight Dao Pillars, his fight with the azure-masked Cultivator had been too challenging. He had used every trick he could think of just to hold his opponent off. It seemed as if he hadn’t been defeated, but in truth, the power had existed to destroy him. If any more time had passed, then he would have been vanquished in spectacular fashion.

Thankfully, his ninth Dao Pillar had appeared, and then the situation changed for the better. Of course, that is what Meng Hao had been aiming for; the intense life or death struggle was what had caused the Qi in his body to multiply, enabling him to break through the bottleneck and increase his Cultivation base!

The need for battle was what had prompted Meng Hao to attack in the first place!

Without the tenth Dao Pillar, and completing the great circle of the Perfect Foundation, he would have been incapable of killing the Core Formation Cultivator. At best, he would have been able to fight a bit longer.

Once the tenth Dao Pillar appeared, however, the vast gap between Foundation Establishment and Core Formation, which was like that between Heaven and Earth, had been narrowed by perhaps half.

That jump caused the battle prowess of his Cultivation base to leap up, far exceeding that of Foundation Establishment, and approaching Core Formation.

The fact was, even with power reaching halfway to Core Formation, the most he could do would be to tangle with a Core Formation Cultivator. He would never be able to slay one. Similarly, although his opponent would occupy a superior position, they wouldn’t find it easy to slay him.

What had truly changed the tide had been the flag of three streamers, that precious treasure which resided inside the blood-colored mask.

The treasure had existed for an indeterminable period of time within the Blood Immortal Legacy zone. One of its streamers was sealed with the character Ji. Its power was clearly enough to shake Heaven and Earth, and the Blood Immortal of the Ancient Doom Clan had desired to use it to drink the blood of the Ji!

Meng Hao remembered the meat jelly’s shocked reaction upon first seeing the flag. Considering all of that, how could Meng Hao not realize how astounding it was?

In reality, he did not have the requisite Cultivation base to even touch the treasure, let alone employ its power. However, once his tenth Dao Pillar appeared, he had been able to sense the parched call of the flag of three streamers.

Now that he thought back, he realized that its thirst… was a thirst for destruction!

In fact, instead of saying that Meng Hao had employed the power of the flag of three streamers, it would be more accurate to say because of Meng Hao’s new qualifications, the flag was able to borrow his hands and his power to appear once again in the sky.

Furthermore, instead of saying that Meng Hao had slain a Core Formation Cultivator, it would be more accurate to say that the flag of three streamers was the one to exterminate the azure-masked Cultivator!

Even the appearance of just one of the flag’s three streamers caused Meng Hao’s Cultivation base to wither, and had injured his soul. That moment in which he had hovered in mid-air, facing down the Black Lands Cultivators and the crowds from the Southern Domain, everything about him had appeared normal. In reality, he had been extremely weak.

Thanks to the transformation powers of the meat jelly, he had been able to force out the sensation of a powerful aura. No one had been able to sense even the slightest clue as to his true state. Considering that and their other misgivings, no one had dared to make a move against him.

In addition, the flag of three streamers hadn’t even fully appeared. It had only been a phantom image that appeared to be a divine ability. Therefore, most people had assumed that it was not a magical treasure, but some technique. Furthermore, no one had made a connection between him drying up the Dao Geyser, and the appearance of the flag.

Upon waking up just now, he had spit up a glob of impure Qi, and his eyes had begun to shine. His Cultivation base was now recovered by eighty to ninety percent. Based on how fast it was going, it wouldn’t be long before it was completely recovered. The injury to his soul, however, was impossible to deal with. He could only exercise caution and not cause any further injury.

“Injuring the soul is like sowing Karma. If the day comes in which I can break into the Nascent Soul stage, then the Karma will be reaped.” Meng Hao sat there thoughtfully for a moment, then took a deep breath and slowly stood up. He walked out of the Immortal’s Cave to find that it was raining again. The murmuring rain carried with it the cold of autumn. Meng Hao stared off into the distance, his long azure robe fluttering in the rainy wind.

“Core Formation….” His eyes glittered. There was really no need to think of the difficulty of reaching the Nascent Soul Stage. Suddenly, he thought of Wang Tengfei’s Dao Protector, the Core Formation Cultivator Wang Xifan.

All those years ago, a mere glance from him had nearly killed Meng Hao. As of now, Meng Hao was confident that if he faced him again, the man would be stunned.

Lost in thought, Meng Hao recalled Grand Elder Ouyang and He Luohua from the Reliance Sect. He also thought of the other Core Formation Cultivators from the State of Zhao. Gradually, his eyes began to gleam.

“I have ten Dao Pillars and a perfect Foundation. I can even battle the Core Formation stage…. I may be cut off from the spiritual power of Heaven and Earth, but in return, I am the most powerful person in this stage! I must continue down this path! I have a Perfect Foundation, next is… a Perfect Gold Core!” The thought of it left him panting. “As for the injury to my soul, that will just have to wait until later.” He was no longer the youngster he had been when he began practicing cultivation, and now had much deeper comprehension of all that was involved with it. For example, he now knew that in the cultivation world of the Southern Domain, the Core Formation stage was divided into three levels. Violet as placed on top, beneath which were Orange, Crimson and Green; at the very bottom as Mixed.

Based on various methods, and the variety of latent talent, different Cores could be formed. For instance, the Violet Fate Sect's Violet Qi from the East was able to produce a Violet Core. As for other Sects and Clans, they naturally had their own secret magics that gave their Chosen Disciples a chance to produce a Violet Core.

Different Cores would produce different Core Qi. Of course, the higher the level of the Core, the more likely it would be to produce Core Qi, and sooner. Obviously, the Core Qi would be much more powerful as well.

Generally speaking, among Cultivators with a Violet Core, ninety percent would be able to cultivate Core Qi in the early Core Formation stage. For Orange, Crimson and Green Cores, they were monochromatic Cores, and would generally produce Core Qi during the mid Core Formation stage. As for the three azure-masked Black Lands Cultivators, they were obviously Chosen, and had somehow been able to force the superior power of a Violet Core out of their Orange Cores.

Regarding Mixed Cores, they contained a variety of colors and were the lowest of the entire stage.

Of course, Meng Hao knew that when it came to the Perfect Core, it was Gold!

Just as there had been a Perfect Foundation Pill, there was also a Perfect Gold Core Pill. After forming a Violet Core, and then consuming the Perfect Gold Core Pill, he would have a high likelihood of rising to a Gold Core.

When that happened, he would have to face Tribulation Lightning.

Before, such things had been far away for Meng Hao, but now that he had ten Perfect Dao Pillars and had completed the great circle of the Perfect Foundation, Core Formation was just around the corner.

He looked thoughtfully out into the windy rain. Finally, he flicked his sleeve to gather together the poison mist from within the Immortal's Cave. It collected into the palm of his hand, after which he placed it into his bag of holding. Then, his body flickered as he moved off into the distance.

Several days later, Meng Hao hovered in mid-air, frowning. On his head, the meat jelly, transformed into a hat, was jabbering on and on. "Bullies. Three bullies. Meng Hao, you're picking on me! You've taken advantage of my feelings. You're taking advantage of my assistance…."

It had come out two days ago, relentlessly requesting bullies. However, out here in the western region of the Southern Domain, there were no Cultivators. They'd all left after the disappearance of the Dao Geyser. Meng Hao hadn't been able to find any new bullies.

Therefore… the meat jelly was furious.

"How can you be so immoral, so wrong? It's unconscionable…. My bullies! My three bullies!" The more it talked the more wronged it sounded.

Meng Hao coughed lightly. His face was unsightly, but after all those years, especially after his time in the Violet Fate Sect, he had gotten used to the meat jelly's frequent harassment. Therefore, he simply allowed it to chatter on endlessly.

After three more days of garrulous talking, the meat jelly finally paused for a moment. Meng Hao cleared his throat and began to speak: "Didn't you say once that the parrot can emerge from the copper mirror after I reach Core Formation?" He had been waiting for three days to be able to ask this question.

"Correct!" the meat jelly screeched. "After reaching Core Formation, that damned, evil, shameless, low-down, despicable bastard will appear. I've been waiting for that day for a long time! In this life, I will definitely convert it!” In a frenzy, the meat jelly began to chatter away ceaselessly. Now, instead of blabbering about bullies, it was talking about the mystical parrot.

Meng Hao relaxed a bit. At long last he had figured out a way to handle the meat jelly. All you had to do was keep giving it conversation topics. Usually, one or two topics later, it would forget about what it had been concerned about previously. Leading it back and forth in this way was the easiest method to deal with it.

Meng Hao flew along as the meat jelly hat prattled. The buzzing went on for seven days before it finally paused to rest for a moment.

Before it could, Meng Hao said, “Who do you think is more incredible, you or that parrot?”

It seemed Meng Hao’s words had offended it, and it once again went crazy. Trembling, its fury rose to the heavens. “Me, of course! Obviously it’s grand, handsome, extraordinary, intelligent me! That shameless bastard of a bird is nothing but a bird. I’m gonna to convert it, I’m gonna knock him down!”

“How is the Li Clan Patriarch doing lately?” Meng Hao quickly asked. “Has he been obedient?”

The meat jelly gaped for a moment. “The Li Clan Patriarch? Damnation! Damnation! He hasn’t been obedient at all recently. His immorality, his evil, is without limit! I have to go lecture him for a bit!” It seemed to have suddenly realized how to give vent to all its anger. A bang sounded out as it disappeared in a puff of smoke into Meng Hao’s bag of holding and the mask, filled with ardor and sincerity.

Meng Hao was finally able to breathe a long sigh of relief.

“At long last, some peace and quiet….”

He looked around. He didn’t intend to immediately head back to the Violet Fate Sect. Instead, he would visit some Cultivator cities and find some Pill

Auctions where he could earn some Spirit Stones.

However, even as he was sizing up the surroundings and figuring out which direction he would travel in, his expression suddenly flickered. He looked down at his bag of holding for a moment, and then pulled out his Furnace Lord medallion. It was emitting a flickering, violet glow. He pressed down on the medallion, and suddenly an archaic voice filled his head.

“Hey kid, have you had enough fun? It’s time to stop fooling around. I want you back in four days. Trial by fire for Violet Furnace Lord promotion begins then in the Celestial Land. The frequency of these trials by fire is completely up to my mood. It starts four days from now, and everyone who joins has a chance to become a Violet Furnace Lord. If you don’t get back ASAP, then you’ll lose your chance to participate.”

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# Chapter 277: Eastern Emergence Mountain

Meng Hao opened his eyes and stared blankly at the Furnace Lord medallion for a moment as the voice faded from his mind. For some reason its tone made it seem that whoever was speaking was very familiar with him.

The tone had been one of idle chit-chat, which left Meng Hao even more surprised.

However, the voice was clearly that of a stranger; Meng Hao was sure he had never heard it before.

He frowned for a moment, then transformed into a beam of light and shot forward. Before he had flown very far, he suddenly stopped and looked down at the Furnace Lord medallion. His eyes narrowed for a moment, then began to shine. Within the shining glow were bits of fury.

“I know who that voice belongs to. The only person who has the authority to start a trial by fire for Violet Furnace Lord promotion… completely based on his mood…. Other than the Violet Furnace Lords themselves, the only person who could transmit a message from such a distance is….

“Pill Demon!” Meng Hao ground his teeth. He had really had no option but to go.

“My Bedevilment Pill! My 200,000,000 Spirit Stones….” Thinking about the vast amount of Spirit Stones made Meng Hao’s heart seize with pain. It was as if someone had taken a valuable treasure right out of his pocket and dangled it in front of his face, while he was powerless to resist.

Within the Violet Fate Sect, Pill Demon was the only one other than the Violet Furnace Lords who might possibly know that he was Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. The Bedevilment Pill might be able to fool others, but definitely not Pill Demon.

Considering Pill Demon's position within the Violet Fate Sect, if he wanted to know something, it would be virtually impossible to keep the information from him.

Actually, Meng Hao hadn't really done anything to conceal his identity as Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. He had simply not taken the initiative to proclaim who he was. After all, his original intention in participating in the Pill Auction was to increase his reputation a bit. He had never imagined that the Bedevilment Pill would cause such a stir. His subsequent caution had caused the entire Southern Domain to begin to speculate as to who Grandmaster Pill Cauldron really was.

As he looked at the Furnace Lord medallion, he recalled the voice that had just entered his head and let out a soft sigh. Obviously, Pill Demon had known all along that he was Grandmaster Pill Cauldron.

Meng Hao was suddenly furious. "So you knew the whole time that I was famous in all of the Southern Domain. Any Sect would love to have me work for them as Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. In that case, why didn't you give me my Spirit Stones?!"

There was little to do about it, though. Pill Demon was like a Patriarch in the East Pill Division. If he wanted to cheat him, there was really nothing Meng Hao could do about it. He couldn't simply up and demand to have Spirit Stones.

"Back in Yunjie County, the Stewards were always miserly. If they weren't taking advantage of people, they took it as losing money! It seems the same principle exists in the Cultivation world. The more Spirit Stones they have, the stingier they get!" Meng Hao sighed, then once again proceeded forward in a beam of light.

“You owe me 200,000,000 Spirit Stones. Right now I don’t even have a single Spirit Stone left….” thought Meng Hao, his face long. When he thought about his empty bag of holding, and the 200,000,000 Spirit Stones, he just couldn’t keep his cool.

“Four days to get back to the Sect. I’m much further than four days away right now….” He sped up.

“Trial by fire for promotion to Violet Furnace Lord…. Could batty old Pill Demon perhaps feel guilty for taking my Spirit Stones, so he’s giving me a chance to become a Violet Furnace Lord?” His eyes suddenly began to glitter, and his heart palpitated with eagerness. He knew that becoming a Violet Furnace Lord would come with a host of benefits.

After a thousand years, the Violet Fate Sect currently only had eight Violet Furnace Lords. Finally there would be a ninth….

Meng Hao began to breathe heavily, and he pushed himself even faster.

“Four days…. No matter what, I have to get back to the Sect in four days!” He shot off into the distance, a prismatic beam charging at high speed. He had risen to prominence in the western region. His Cultivation base had climbed to new heights. Now he was being called back to the Sect. All of it seemed to smack of some hidden agenda. He decided not to be concerned about the suddenness of the whole matter.

He sighed again and pushed down his concerns. His Cultivation base was now much different than when he had left the Sect, but he could use the Dao Geyser to explain that. After considering the matter for some time, Meng Hao found it unlikely that the Sect was plotting against him.

After all, the Violet Fate Sect was one of the great Sects of the Southern Domain. If they really harbored ill intentions toward him and deigned to use some sort of tricks on him, then there was nothing he could do about it. They would be able to seize him with little effort.

Besides, he had been in the East Pill Division for more than five years. He understood the Sect fairly well and knew both the exceptional areas of the

East Pill Division, as well as its shortcomings.

Thinking of all these things, his apprehension lessened quite a bit. However, he was no less cautious than ever. Taking advantage of every teleportation portal he could, he made his way back toward the Violet Fate Sect.

Every teleportation portal he arrived at belonged to some Sect or Clan. All he had to do was flash his Furnace Lord medallion and they would let him pass. They were happy to let a Furnace Lord use their teleportation devices.

Four days passed in a flash. It was late in the night of the third day, in the moment when dawn of the fourth day was about to break, that Meng Hao, windswept and covered in dust, arrived in the region of the Violet Fate Sect. He had passed through over twenty teleportation portals and had crossed nearly half of the Southern Domain.

“Batty old Pill Demon! If he gets to choose when the trial by fire starts, then why the hell did he pick four days!” Meng Hao wasn’t in a good mood, and was in fact slightly depressed. Anyone who used over twenty teleportation portals in a brief four day period would be just as completely exhausted. Thankfully, he had ten Dao Pillars and much stronger Spiritual Sense. With his previous Cultivation base, being teleported so many times in such a short period of time would have left him painfully exhausted.

Meng Hao would rather have spent the fourth day in meditation and rest, but had no time. The constant flying and use of teleportation portals wasn’t without benefit, though. Because of the constant rotation of his Cultivation base, his ten Dao Pillars were completely stable; he could now break through to Core Formation at any time.

His breathing rough, Meng Hao shot through Violet Fate Sect territory. Dawn light climbed up into the sky as he flew along. Occasionally he would encounter other Cultivators who, upon seeing his clothing, would look shocked, and then respectfully clasp hands and bow to him.

This was Violet Fate Sect territory, so all the other Sects and Clans therein were connected in some way to the Violet Fate Sect. As such, his clothing, and the identity they heralded, garnered deep respect.

Off in the distance, he could see the Violet Fate Sect and the enormous statue of Reverend Violet East. It was still early morning, but Meng Hao was worn out and in a rotten mood. As he approached the Sect, the previously still air suddenly began to ripple.

Meng Hao ignored the ripples, and continued to fly at top speed. The ripples spread out for a moment, and then soundlessly disappeared.

These ripples would instantly slay any Cultivator of the Nascent Soul stage or below who was not of the Violet Fate Sect.

Meng Hao whistled through the air within the Sect. Along the way, he ran into quite a few disciples of the Violet Qi Division. They looked at Meng Hao with expressions of complete astonishment.

Seeing the expressions, Meng Hao got a bad feeling. Suddenly, he turned a corner and found himself face to face with a Chosen disciple he knew from the Violet Qi Division, who immediately said, “Fang Mu, what are you doing back?”

Meng Hao paused for a moment, turning back to look at him. “Hey, Brother Song… I was out of the Sect to gain some experience, but now the training is over….”

“You just got back from training?” was the reply. “You’d better get to Eastern Emergence Mountain as fast as you can. All the Furnace Lords and master alchemists of the East Pill Division headed over there at dawn. The word is that there’s a Violet Furnace Lord trial by fire!”

“Eastern Emergence Mountain?” An image of the mountain immediately appeared in Meng Hao’s mind. It was in the eastern part of the State of Eastern Emergence, quite some distance from the Violet Fate Sect.

“Yeah! The trial by fire for Violet Furnace Lord Promotion has caused a big stir among the other great Sects and Clans. Members of the senior generation arrived quite some time ago to observe the proceedings. You…” As the words were still coming out Song’s mouth, Meng Hao took a deep breath, clasped hands, and then disappeared in a beam of bright light.

He sent his Spiritual Sense out and found that there really were no master alchemists present at all within the East Pill Division. He immediately shot off into the distance.

“Batty old Pill Demon,” he said through gritted teeth, “why can’t you explain things clearly?!” Despite his exhaustion, he shot forward at the highest speed possible.

Eastern Emergence Mountain was the most prominent mountain within the State of Eastern Emergence. It towered up into the sky, and throughout the year, its upper half was enveloped in white clouds that appeared Celestial in nature. Many legends about this mountain existed within the State of Eastern Emergence.

Its peak was covered with ice and snow; mortals would be incapable of climbing up to such a place. Furthermore, the mountain was guarded year round by Violet Fate Sect Cultivators, making it a restricted area.

Even Violet Fate Sect disciples were not allowed to climb the mountain unless they had a special command medallion. Obviously, outsiders would never be allowed onto the mountain unless some solemn Violet Fate Sect matter was underway.

According to one rumor, ten thousand years ago, the Violet Fate Sect wasn’t located where it was now, but rather, on Eastern Emergence Mountain. Eventually, because of various circumstances, the Sect had moved away.

Regardless of that, Eastern Emergence Mountain was under constant guard by the Violet Fate Sect. In fact, it was less of a restricted area and more of a holy place!

Currently, an enormous pill furnace rested on the peak of the mountain. It was covered with countless protruding magical symbols, and emanated an archaic air. An air of Time seemed to spread out from within, an air that felt thousands of years old.

Were Meng Hao here, he would recognize this pill furnace… this was the same one that appeared in illusory form above the East Pill Division, and led into the Violet Fate Celestial Land.

This was the actual pill furnace itself!

Surrounding the pill furnace were the thousand master alchemists of the East Pill division, the one hundred Furnace Lords, and the eight Violet Furnace Lords, including An Zaihai and Lin Hailong. 1 Everyone was here!

Close by were representatives of the other four great Sects, as well as the three great Clans, along with members from other Sects who devoted themselves to alchemy. Elders from all these organizations sat cross-legged atop the mountain peak, waiting.

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1. An Zaihai is the Violet Furnace Lord who assessed the Bedevilment Pill in the auction, and knows that Fang Mu is Pill Cauldron. Lin Hailong is the most senior of the Violet Furnace Lords, the one who presided over the meeting with Eternal Mountain.

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# Chapter 278: The Tenth Candidate

A Violet Furnace Lord promotion was not a grand occasion for the Violet Fate Sect only, but rather the entire Southern Domain as a whole. This was not just because a Violet Furnace Lord represented a peak position of incredible height, but also because…

A promotion to Violet Furnace Lord was actually an apprentice-accepting ceremony of Grandmaster Pill Demon!

Currently, there were eight Violet Furnace Lords in the Violet Fate Sect, and all of them were novitiates of Grandmaster Pill Demon. This ceremony was actually a way of formally becoming an apprentice!

Some disciples, such as Chu Yuyan and Ding Xin, were qualified to directly become Grandmaster Pill Demon's apprentices. However, this generally didn't meet with the approval of the alchemists of the East Pill Division. Alchemists were partial to those who relied on their own hard work, who started out as apprentice alchemists, then worked their way to become master alchemists, Furnace Lords, and then finally apprentices of Grandmaster Pill Demon, by joining the ranks of the Violet Furnace Lords.

Chu Yuyan was a bit different. Because of her skill in pill concocting, she had a good reputation in the East Pill Division. Add in her incredible beauty, and the alchemists were more easily able to accept her.

Despite that, to Chu Yuyan, promotion to Violet Furnace Lord was incredibly important. She stood there in the crowd, her eyes glowing with determination. This was her chance to become a Violet Furnace Lord, and she was determined to succeed.

Her gaze came to rest upon a man who was standing behind one of the Violet Furnace Lords. He was middle-aged, and his face was flawless and handsome. His expression was tranquil, and he wore the robe of a Furnace Lord. A faint medicinal aroma wafted off of him; he was clearly beyond ordinary.

Within his face could be seen a hint of lonely arrogance. His expression and appearance were exactly how Chu Yuyan imagined Grandmaster Pill Cauldron to be.

“He will be my biggest competition for promotion to Violet Furnace Lord….” she thought with an inward sigh as she looked at him. This proud, aloof man was like a Chosen among the Furnace Lords. His name was Ye Feimu. 1

Among the Furnace Lords, Ye Feimu was well known as having incredible skill in the Dao of alchemy. His skill was the type only seen once in a thousand years, and he was generally acknowledged to be the alchemist most likely to be promoted to Violet Furnace Lord. Upon joining the Sect many years ago, he had immediately caused a huge stir in the East Pill Division. Furthermore, Violet Furnace Lord Ye Yuntian took special notice of his talent and showed him favor. This was mostly because they shared the same surname, Ye. 2

With assistance the entire time, he became the number one apprentice alchemist at the time, then the number one master alchemist. Finally, he became a Furnace Lord, whereupon not much was heard about him for many years. According to the rumors, his skill in the Dao of alchemy had reached the peak of the Furnace Lord rank, and he was halfway to being a Violet Furnace Lord already.

Even more stunning was that it wasn’t just his Dao of alchemy that was so high; he had long since reached the Core Formation stage. He hadn’t cultivated Core Qi yet, but many people speculated that if he hadn’t devoted himself so much to alchemy, he would already be above the mid Core Formation stage.

In this Violet Furnace Lord trial by fire, Ye Feimu was viewed as the most likely candidate to win. Second was Chu Yuyan. There were other candidates, but the general consensus was that the main competition would be between these two.

Chu Yuyan had one advantage; she was an apprentice of Pill Demon. As for Ye Feimu, his advantage, which even Chu Yuyan had to acknowledge, was that he had the support of ninety percent of the Furnace Lords, as well as five of the Violet Furnace Lords. In addition, Pill Demon himself had praised him on past occasions. All of this really put Ye Feimu in a superior position.

Even more importantly, Chosen-like Ye Feimu had been talked a lot about in the past year. More and more people outside the Sect were spreading rumors that… he was Grandmaster Pill Cauldron!

Ye Feimu never made any comments on the subject, which of course caused even more rumors to spread. Soon, everyone was convinced that Pill Cauldron was none other than Ye Feimu.

In fact, many people felt that the reason he sealed his pill with the cauldron ( ) was because of his name, Feimu (   )!

The characters   and   can both be seen in the character  !

Even many of the Furnace Lords agreed with this, as well as a few of the Violet Furnace Lords, who began to pay closer attention to him because of it.

Chu Yuyan was very focused on the matter of Pill Cauldron. She had even gone to visit Ye Feimu to ask about it. While he hadn’t openly admitted that he was Pill Cauldron, he had vaguely implied that such was the case. How could Chu Yuyan not have understood his meaning?

After finally resolving the issue, she actually felt a little bit disappointed. It was an indescribable feeling, sort of like waking to find that reality was very different from the dream world you had just been in.

“Even if he is Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, I will fight with everything I have to become a Violet Furnace Lord,” she thought, taking a deep breath and deepening her resolve. For some strange reason, as soon as she made her mind up, the image of another person suddenly appeared in her mind. Fang Mu.

“Why am I thinking about him…?” She frowned, dispelling the image of Fang Mu from her thoughts.

It was early morning on Eastern Emergence Mountain. Cool sunlight fell upon the snowy mountain peak. The enormous pill furnace emitted an archaic aura of Time, and the surroundings were very quiet.

The eight Violet Furnace Lords of the East Pill Division sat cross-legged. Behind them were the Furnace Lords and master alchemists, over a thousand people altogether.

Also present off to the side were representatives from the other Sects and Clans, here to observe the ceremonies. If someone was promoted to Violet Furnace Lord, they would witness the event and then announce throughout the Southern Domain that there was a ninth Violet Furnace Lord, and that Grandmaster Pill Demon had accepted a new apprentice.

“The hour has arrived!” cried Lin Hailong, the most senior of the Violet Furnace Lords.

As soon as his words rang out, the sound of bells filled the mountain peak. The clouds above roiled, forming together to form an ancient-looking face that stared down at everyone.

At the same time, the enormous pill furnace began to emit a gentle glow. Multi-colored beams of light shot out, twisting around to fill the entire area with brightness.

From off in the distance, it looked as if the entirety of Eastern Emergence Mountain was covered by a massive, illusory pill furnace.

Ripples appeared in the air, out from which a figure emerged to stand atop the pill furnace. He wore a white robe, and his features were ordinary; however, his aura was anything but. He gave off a sense of ultimate refinement.

The air around him distorted as he appeared, as if he didn’t quite belong in the world.

The sleeves of his simple robe were embroidered with images of pill furnaces. His hair was white, and his gaze soft as he looked around at everyone. A smile appeared on his archaic face.

“Fellow Daoists of the Southern Domain, many thanks for coming to attend my ceremony of accepting a new apprentice. I am unable to attend in person, so I’ve embodied my Divine Will to come in my place. I hope you can all forgive me for this.” This of course was the man who occupied the ultimate position in the Dao of alchemy in the Southern Domain, Grandmaster Pill Demon.

His voice caused all the disciples of the East Pill Division to salute respectfully, including master alchemists, Furnace Lords and Violet Furnace Lords. Grandmaster Pill Demon was essentially the Patriarch of the East Pill Division.

Grandmaster Eternal Mountain hadn’t come, but instead, Grand Elder Xiao Xifeng, whose Cultivation base was at the great circle of the late Nascent Soul stage. He laughed, then coolly said, “No need to be so polite, Grandmaster Pill Demon. Accepting an apprentice and promoting a Violet Furnace Lord is a grand event for the entire Southern Domain, I, Xiao wouldn’t think of not coming.”

He occupied a noble and prestigious position within the Golden Frost Sect, and was nearly nine hundred years old, making him a sub-Patriarch. He was not yet one thousand years old, and had not defied the Heavens. If in the next hundred years he could break through to the Spirit Severing stage, then he would truly become a Patriarch.

If not, then he would simply pass away in meditation and become one with the Dao.

Next to him were ten or more Golden Frost Sect Cultivators, including Fatty. Right now, Fatty looked extremely nervous, and didn’t show the slightest hint of being lively or excited. In fact, he was acting unprecedentedly well-behaved.

The person he feared the most in the entire Golden Frost Sect was none other than Grand Elder Xiao.

“After hearing that Grandmaster Pill Demon was accepting a new apprentice, I came as fast as possible,” said Patriarch Violet Sieve of the Black Sieve Sect, smiling. “Thankfully, I didn’t arrive late.”

He sat cross-legged off to the side. Next to him was Zhou Jie as well as Han Bei, who was currently looking around, sizing up the surroundings. It seemed as if she were looking for someone.

A Violet Furnace Lord promotion was a huge event, something that hadn’t occurred for a very long time. It was only natural for the other great Sects to show up. Also present was Daoist Wu Sheng, second of the Solitary Sword Sect’s Three Sword Dao Lords, who sat cross-legged, surrounded by Solitary Sword Sect disciples. Chen Fan was there, as was the woman Shan Ling. 3

With a slight smile, Daoist Wu Sheng said, “You’re truly too polite, Grandmaster Pill Demon. For a Grandmaster to accept an apprentice is a legacy of the Dao of alchemy that any disciple in the Southern Domain would covet. How could I not humbly come to bear witness to such an event?” His voice was calm. He was an honored senior member of the Solitary Sword Sect who was qualified to look down on a myriad of other Sects. However, in front of Grandmaster Pill Demon, all of his pride turned into respect.

The representative from the Blood Demon Sect was a withered old man in a red Daoist robe. He had silver hair, and his skin was shriveled; he emanated a thick death aura, and his eyes had no pupils; they were completely white.

He didn’t say anything in response to Pill Demon’s words. He merely smiled and nodded his head.

This blind old man was incredibly famous in the Southern Domain. He was the third Demon of the Blood Demon Sect, Tu Luo, the Corpse Demon! The only other person from the Blood Demon Sect to come to Eastern Emergence Mountain was Li Shiqi.

The main representatives from the three great Clans were all of the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage. All of them said various words in response to Grandmaster Pill Demon.

Afterwards Grandmaster Pill Demon smiled and said, “In total, there will be ten Cultivators participating in the Violet Furnace Lord trial by fire. Candidates, please step forward.” His voice was solemn, and as it filled the mountain top, Chu Yuyan, Ye Feimu, and seven other Furnace Lords stepped out from the crowd one by one. They walked over to stand in front of the pill furnace.

Including Chu Yuyan and Ye Feimu, there were only nine alchemists standing there, not the ten of which Pill Demon had spoken. The Cultivators of the East Pill Division immediately noticed this, as did the representatives of the other Sects.

Chu Yuyan and the other candidates for Violet Furnace Lord Promotion exchanged glances, silently wondering who the tenth participant was.

Before anyone could say anything, a beam of light appeared in the distance. It shot through the air toward the mountain peak, then transformed into a panting Meng Hao. Everyone looked over at him, although he didn’t care about that. He glanced around, and immediately noticed Chu Yuyan and the other eight standing in front of the pill furnace, as well as Grandmaster Pill Demon.

As far as Meng Hao was concerned, Pill Demon was just some old man that he didn’t recognize.

“The tenth candidate has arrived,” said Grandmaster Pill Demon, his expression the same as ever. “Fang Mu, step on over.”

Hearing this, Meng Hao walked over without hesitation to join the other nine. Then he looked up at Pill Demon, bottling up his frustration and helplessness.

1. Ye Feimu’s name in Chinese is Yè fēi mù – Ye is a surname which also means “leaf.” Fei is a negation word that basically means “not.” Mu means “eye”

2. Ye Yuntian’s name in Chinese is yè yún tiān – Ye is a surname which also means “leaf.” Yun means “cloud.” Tian means “sky” or “heaven”

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# Chapter 279: Opening the Pill Furnace

The voice that Meng Hao had just heard was exactly the same voice he had heard coming from the Furnace Lord medallion four days ago. Considering that, as well as the expressions on everyone’s faces, how could Meng Hao not come to the conclusion that… this person was none other than the illustrious Grandmaster Pill Demon.

In Meng Hao’s eyes, Grandmaster Pill Demon looked completely ordinary. He did not possess the demeanor of a transcendent being, nor did he emanate some powerful, domineering fierceness. He looked just like a regular old man.

Then… Meng Hao thought about the 200,000,000 Spirit Stones, and his mood worsened. Of course, he couldn’t mention anything about that now. Next, he thought about how he had been told to return in four days, but hadn’t been told where to go. He had rushed over to the Sect only to be forced to scramble back in the opposite direction. It had left him completely drained.

All of these depressing thoughts caused Meng Hao’s expression to flicker with a bit of anger and frustration.

Chu Yuyan looked at him and let out a light snort. She looked away, ignoring him, gazing instead at Ye Feimu. Meng Hao stood there by himself, silently.

Most of the other seven just glanced at him, and then paid him no further attention as they focused on not allowing excitement regarding the Violet Furnace Lord promotion to show on their face.

An Zaihai looked over at Meng Hao, and a barely perceptible smile touched his face. He knew that Fang Mu was Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, and he also knew how his Master felt about the young man. Pill Demon had given Fang Mu free reign to enjoy himself in the Sect, and as far as the identity of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, if Fang Mu wanted to reveal it himself, he could. If he didn't want to, that was his business.

As far as the representatives from the other Sects and Clans, Patriarch Violet Sieve was the first one to give a friendly nod to Meng Hao. Zhou Jie's face was expressionless, but when Han Bei looked at him, she smiled, her face as beautiful as a flower. The look she gave him was noticed by quite a few others. Chu Yuyan glanced over and saw it, and then frowned, although she wasn't sure why. For some reason, she just was not in a good mood.

Fatty's eyes were wide as he looked at Meng Hao, then Chu Yuyan and then back to Meng Hao. Finally he glanced at Han Bei out of the corner of his eyes, and his expression filled with admiration. As for what he was thinking, only he himself knew.

The representative from the Wang Clan was an old woman, her face covered with wrinkles. "So, this is the Alchemist Fang who rose to fame a few days ago in the western region." Behind the old woman, other Wang Clan members sat cross-legged, including Wang Tengfei.

His expression was somber, and the entire time, he hadn't even looked once at Chu Yuyan. She reacted to this with utmost calm, and not the least bit of negativity. It seemed as if she had placed the matters from previous years completely behind her.

"A hero at such a young age!" someone laughed from within the Song Clan representatives. It was none other than Eccentric Song, who sat far off toward the edge. He laughed again as he looked Meng Hao up and down, measuring him up.

Sitting around him were a dozen or so members of the Song Clan. Song Yunshu wasn't there, but Song Jia was. She, of course was… Meng Hao's fiancé, at least theoretically speaking. There she was sitting right next to

Eccentric Song. Meng Hao hadn't seen her for years now. She was slim and graceful, with an elegant expression on her face. She was beautiful, like an orchid in full bloom.

However, there was a slight furrow in her brow caused by years of gloomy thoughts. It made her entire person seem like an orchid, but a dark one.

The Li Clan representative was a senior member of the Clan, Li Guobang, who was over five hundred years of age, and had a Cultivation base at the late Nascent Soul stage. He was incredibly powerful and influential within the Li Clan. "Congratulations, Grandmaster Pill Demon, your Violet Fate Sect really has produced some amazing disciples!"

Sitting next to Li Guobang amidst the other Li Clan disciples, was Li Daoyi, who frowned as he looked over at Meng Hao.

Grandmaster Pill Demon smiled, but didn't respond to any of the comments. He looked over Meng Hao and the nine others.

"Hailong, please explain the rules." With that, he stepped off to the side and sat down cross-legged.

Lin Hailong, the most senior ranking of the Violet Furnace Lords, hastily stood up. He clasped hands and bowed to Grandmaster Pill Demon, then turned toward Meng Hao and the others.

"Violet Furnace Lord promotion is about more than just collecting medicinal plants, concocting pills, memorizing formulas, testing the Cultivation base and gauging the Dao of alchemy. It is a trial by fire! I myself have experienced this trial by fire, as have all of the other Violet Furnace Lords you see here today. Only by rising above your peers can you achieve the rank of Violet Furnace Lord!

"However…. since ancient times, the East Pill Division of the Violet Fate Sect has held a Violet Furnace Lord test seventy-nine times. Down to this day, only seventeen of those tests resulted in a successful promotion. In other words, in the other sixty-two tests, all the candidates failed, unable to make the furnace turn violet. Therefore, despite being qualified to participate in this trial by fire, there is a seventy percent possibility that you will fail.” A serious look was written on his face as he slowly looked over Meng Hao and the others, one by one.

Meng Hao’s face was placid. He was physically tired, but also excited. He had previously read that throughout the history of the Violet Fate Sect, there had only been seventeen alchemists promoted to Violet Furnace Lord. Two of them ended up forsaking the Sect, one of whom was Eternal Mountain; the other was surnamed Liu.

Of the fifteen others, in the past thousand years, five had perished. Two left the Sect to gain experience, and then disappeared without a trace. Grandmaster Pill Demon had personally searched for them, but hadn’t been able to turn up a single clue. The only thing he was certain of was that they weren’t dead. For some reason, though, they had disappeared from the Southern Domain.

Lin Hailong continued: “Even if you fail, you will be able to seize good fortune within the test. During the Violet Furnace Lord trial by fire, your life will not be in any danger. But… you may only participate in this test once in your life. If you fail, you will never get a second chance!

“Therefore, since ancient times, many alchemists have left personally created pill formulas and other personal information about the Dao of alchemy within the test. These things have been passed down within the test for many years, available only to those qualified to participate in the test. For example, I remember how I personally left behind information regarding my understanding and speculations of the Three Mortalities Pill….” Lin Hailong’s eyes filled with a look of recollection for a moment.

“The location of the trial by fire is a mountain in the Celestial Land. At the base of the mountain is the Mother of Furnaces. This Mother of Furnaces is the first stroke of good fortune of the ten of you will encounter. Inside, you will find your own Life Furnace. More precisely, at the same time that you select a furnace, that furnace will be selecting you! To complete the test, you must make your Life Furnace turn violet. If you do that, and are able to ascend to the peak of the mountain, then you will earn the right to be called Violet Furnace Lord!

“Unfortunately, only one person can earn such a right. If more than one person is able to reach the peak, then the final decision will be made by the Furnace Lords and the Violet Furnace Lords. Their approval will be critical in the decision of who becomes the next Violet Furnace Lord!”

Lin Hailong gave deep, meaningful looks to Meng Hao and the others as he spoke his final words: “The pill furnace behind you is a precious treasure forged thousands upon thousands of years ago by Reverend Violet East. Inside is a Celestial Land, and a towering Celestial Mountain. There are ten paths on the mountain, which is divided into four regions. Each of the four regions contains different trials and tests. Use your Dao of alchemy to pass through them. Based on your achievements, the color of your furnaces will darken. I must remind you, everything you do within the trial by fire will be seen clearly by everyone on the outside…. Do your best. I truly hope that this trial by fire will result in one of you becoming… my Ninth Junior Brother in the East Pill Division!” With that, he turned to look at Pill Demon. Pill Demon gave a slight nod.

Lin Hailong flicked his wide sleeve and said, “Chant the Alchemy Scripture to open the Pill Furnace!” As his voice rang out, the eyes of all the alchemists, Furnace Lord and Violet Furnace Lord alike, immediately closed. Their lips moved slightly, and an indistinct sound filled the air. It was impossible to understand or hear clearly. Even a Nascent Soul Cultivator wouldn’t be able to comprehend it.

Only alchemists of the East Pill Division would be able to make out that this mysterious so-called Alchemy Scripture was none other than the Alchemy Dao Transmutation Incantation!

Seemingly in sync with the droning sound, Eastern Emergence Mountain began to shake. Multicolored light spread out everywhere, filling the sky. Countless faces suddenly appeared within the clouds, their expressions dignified. From their mouths emerged indistinct symbols. The sound echoed about, causing the sky to be filled with bright colors.

The land around the mountain was peaceful. However, a mist sprang up, with Eastern Emergence Mountain at its center. It roiled out rapidly, quickly covering the entire State of Eastern Emergence. All the land and all the living things in it were submerged within the mist.

As the mist spread out, Violet Qi Division disciples flew out in all directions to keep guard and maintain peace.

Up in the sky, colorful lights danced about, beneath which, clouds and mist covered the land like a sea. Eastern Emergence Mountain rose up from it like an island, towering up. Far off in the distance, the enormous statue of Reverend Violet East also towered up above the sea of clouds, looking, not like a mountain, but an enormous giant watching over the land.

“The pill furnace is opened. Enter!” cried Lin Hailong.

The pill furnace emitting buzzing sounds. In the blink of an eye, its side began to ripple and grow transparent. It looked almost like a waterfall. Ye Feimu took a deep breath, and then stepped into the pill furnace, the first one to do so. He disappeared into the rippling water, followed by Chu Yuyan, whose eyes radiated determination.

Meng Hao looked back at Grandmaster Pill Demon, who sat there cross-legged, his eyes closed. Without a word, and without the slightest hesitation, he entered the waterfall. Coldness filled his body, and it began to grow transparent. He disappeared.

The other seven candidates entered as well, vanishing immediately. Although it might seem like these seven were people of little note, in reality, to be qualified to participate in the trial by fire showed how extraordinary they were. Such qualifications meant that they were inherently famous, the best of the best in terms of both personality and the Dao of alchemy!

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# Chapter 280: Life Furnace?

Violet Fate Celestial Land. The holiest place in the Sect.

There were many legends regarding this particular Celestial Land. All of them, however, had something to do with the almighty Reverend Violet East, who had founded the Sect tens of thousands of years ago.

Many years after the Sect’s Founding, this Celestial Land gradually came to be the location where the Violet Fate Sect grew its medicinal herbs. Eventually more types of medicinal plants came to grow there than in the entire rest of the Southern Domain put together.

That was the location of the East Pill Division’s Dao Reserve. Within the Violet Fate Celestial Land, at the far end of the limitless stretches of medicinal plant fields, was a mountain so tall it seemed to have no top!

This mountain, which could be seen from an incredible distance, was known as Violet East Mountain!

According to one legend, in his later years, Reverend Violet East sat atop this mountain and slowly passed away in meditation… afterward it became a place of pilgrimage.

At the foot of the mountain was an enormous pill furnace glowing with a seven-colored light. It looked exactly the same as the furnace on top of Eastern Emergence Mountain, except somehow more real. It emanated an archaic aura.

Suddenly, the air at the foot of the mountain began to ripple like liquid. Multiple figures emerged, and when the ripples faded away, Meng Hao, Chu Yuyan, Ye Feimu and the others were all there.

In front of them was the shockingly high mountain. Starting at the foot of the mountain, ten small paths zigzagged up toward the top. Each path began there, and then took different routes to the top.

As to which path to select, that would be based on the feeling each candidate got from the paths. In any case, it was easy to see that there was little difference in the difficulty of traversing the various paths.

Meng Hao looked up toward the peak of the imposing mountain. Its higher regions were blurry, and it was actually impossible to see the peak itself. Nor was it actually possible to even estimate how tall the mountain was.

Meng Hao wasn’t the only one looking up at it. The other nine people around him, including Chu Yuyan and Ye Feimu, were gazing toward it.

Other than the ten paths, the main thing that filled their vision was the enormous pill furnace!

After some time passed, Ye Feimu’s eyes glittered with determination. He turned to glance over at the others. His gaze did not come to rest upon any of them. His supercilious expression seemed to say that he knew he would become a Violet Furnace Lord, and that none of the other candidates were able to match up to him.

His pride and dignity seemed to fill him with one hundred percent confidence that this title of Violet Furnace Lord belonged only to him!

He shot toward the pill furnace and sat down cross-legged in the spot directly east of it.

Chu Yuyan looked at him and took a deep breath. Her eyes also filled with the glow of determination.

“You might be Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, who I admire so much, but now the time has come for me to go up against you….” Closing her eyes, she sat down next to the Pill Furnace.

After her, Meng Hao and the others approached and selected various positions to sit down. The first phase of the competition had begun; it was time for the candidates to acquire their Life Furnaces!!

Meng Hao had no clue how to actually get the furnace. However, as soon as the ten of them sat down cross-legged around the seven-colored pill furnace, the glow around it began to flicker, and then suddenly shot out toward the candidates.

A tremor ran through Meng Hao's body, and he suddenly sensed something calling to him, murmuring within his mind. He reached out to touch it with Spiritual Sense, and suddenly his mind reeled, and he felt as if he had lost contact with his body.

He could no longer see the mountain or the Celestial Land. Instead, a strange world stretched out in front of his eyes.

It was boundless and filled with curling mists. A six-colored glow was everywhere, a glow that was missing the color violet. It pierced through the mists, shining everywhere. Meng Hao looked at everything mutely. He couldn't feel his body, but he was somehow there. He suddenly realized that by concentrating, he could move.

His body was not here in this world, only his will. The world sped by in front of him as he shot through the mists. As he moved, occasional beams of bright light would shoot past him.

It seemed like this place had no end. Everything was a blur….

Inside the Celestial Land, beneath the mountain, next to the pill furnace, Meng Hao sat there cross-legged. His expression seemed to be constantly changing, as if he were lost in a dream. All of the others around him looked exactly the same. Their expressions seemed to flicker with surprise, confusion and thoughtfulness.

Meanwhile, outside of the Violet Fate Celestial Land, atop Eastern Emergence Mountain, ten glowing, richly colored screens suddenly blossomed up out of the pill furnace. Images gradually became clear on the screens, depicting each of the people within the trial by fire.

As they sat there cross-legged, their expressions were clearly visible to all of the alchemists of the East Pill Division who sat on the mountaintop, as well as the representatives from the other Sects and Clans who had come to observe the proceedings.

Each and every action of the ten within the Celestial Land was clearly visible to everyone.

The mountaintop was peaceful, and everyone seemed to be dividing their attention between the ten various screens.

Lin Hailong looked at them and murmured to himself, “Every Violet Furnace Lord trial by fire requires the candidates to proceed through four regions and face four tests. However, before facing the tests, they must acquire their personal Life Furnaces. The Life Furnace is the key… the type of furnace acquired will depend completely on the good fortune of the alchemist….”

Meng Hao lost track of time as he proceeded on through the endless emptiness. All he could see was mist, and the six-colored glow. There was nothing else.

After a very long time had passed, Meng Hao was starting to feel tired. Suddenly, a violet glow flickered up ahead of him. Meng Hao peered forward. His attention was seized by this violet glow that suddenly appeared in a world which lacked violet.

The violet glow didn’t move, but just sat there, flickering. Suddenly, a pill furnace became visible within the glow, about the size of an infant’s fist.

Magical symbols circulated around the pill furnace, which emanated a violet light.

Just as Meng Hao’s will moved forward to touch the pill furnace, it suddenly shot backward, streaming magical symbols. Before Meng Hao could get any closer, it sped off into the distance.

Meng Hao muttered to himself for a moment, then proceeded forward. Not much time passed before he caught sight of another violet glow, within which was another pill furnace. It looked a bit different than the other one, as it had three legs. However, as Meng Hao approached, it too disappeared off into the distance.

“So,” Meng Hao thought to himself, “I have to select a furnace, and the furnace has to select me….” He decided to stop moving, and instead calmed himself and settled his will. “I’ll use my Dao of alchemy to communicate with this world created by the Mother of Furnaces. I will search the emptiness for the Life Furnace that is fated to belong to me….” With that, he figuratively closed his eyes.

Time passed, a very, very long time. Meng Hao gradually grew calmer. Soon, within his mind, he saw nine spheres of will; these nine spheres were the other candidates within the trial by fire.

He could sense them, and they, in turn, could sense him.

It was a strange feeling. They couldn’t see each other, but they could feel each other. Meng Hao and the other nine relied on their Dao of alchemy to sense this world, and to attempt to draw out their own personal Life Furnace.

Gradually, Meng Hao could see one beam of glowing light after another appearing around the other nine people. Chu Yuyan had attracted seven or eight pill furnaces of various colors.

As for Ye Feimu, he had dozens spinning around him; all of them seemed to desire to be selected by him.

The other people had two or three at the minimum.

Meng Hao was the only person who only had one pill furnace in front of him. His heart sank momentarily before he calmed himself.

“In my Dao of alchemy,” he thought, “my body is the pill furnace and my heart is the pill formula. Few people can conform to this philosophy, therefore, it is difficult for me to attract a suitable Life Furnace.” He began to murmur, sending his will out in all directions. “Pill Furnaces, if you follow me, you will reach the pinnacle. Come with me, and become eternal!”

Suddenly an almost countless number of glowing lights appeared throughout the nothingness of the world. More than ten thousand of them flickered in all corners of the world. The pill furnaces trembled, as if they were reacting to Meng Hao’s voice.

“In my Dao of alchemy, my body is the furnace and my heart is the formula. I will refine all the myriads of things in nature; I will refine the transformations of the sun and moon. Such a refining requires a furnace, my Life Furnace. Follow me for a life of transformation….” His will surged out, growing stronger, increasing the number of pill furnaces that reacted to him to over one hundred thousand. Half among them began to quiver violently, seemingly excited, and yet hesitating.

“I vow that whichever pill furnace follows me will never be destroyed. It will never shatter!” His will echoed out, growing even stronger. Among the fifty thousand trembling pill furnaces, ten thousand of them began to emit droning noises.

“I vow that whichever pill furnace follows me will concoct medicinal pills of the stars, and will give birth to Pill Spirit! This is my personal vow!” His will soared, and in that instant, within the ten thousand pill furnaces, one thousand began to drone even louder, and emit even brighter, glittering auras.

“I vow that whichever pill furnace belongs to me, when I achieve my Dao, it will incarnate a body!” His will thundered out. Among the thousand pill furnaces was a violet furnace which suddenly shot out of nowhere, heading directly toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao formless eyes opened, and in front of him, he saw a nine-legged violet furnace!

It shone with a flickering, violet glow as it floated in the air in front of him. Magical symbols emanated off of it. It was obvious from a mere glance that it was completely beyond ordinary.

“This is the Life Furnace which belongs to me, selected from within the void….” Meng Hao’s eyes shone brightly, and he slowly lifted up his hand to take hold of the furnace. It was at this exact moment that suddenly, a powerful screaming noise shook the entire world.

The pill furnace in front of Meng Hao began to tremble, as did all the pill furnaces hovering around the other nine candidates. They all seemed… terrified….

Something violent and shocking was about to happen!

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# Chapter 281: … Rather Die Than Submit!

A black beam of light appeared, streaking toward them from off in the distance. Its speed was almost impossible to describe as it shot toward Chu Yuyan's will and then slammed into some of the pill furnaces which were circling around her. The instant it hit them, they shattered into pieces, which the black beam devoured.

It was with great difficulty that Chu Yuyan had attracted these pill furnaces out of the group of one hundred thousand others. Just as she had found one she had synergy with, the black beam slammed into it and destroyed it. It seemed as if the furnaces didn't dare to flee or evade, like they were allowing the black beam to consume them. It was as if the black beam was an Emperor who had demanded the death of a government official. Of course the official had no choice but to die!

Chu Yuyan's will was instantly shaken.

Not all of the pill furnaces were shattered; there were two or three that the black beam seemed to disregard and leave alone.

An instant later, the black beam shot toward Ye Feimu. It circled around him and the dozens of pill furnaces which he had attracted from out of the hundred thousand. Half of them shattered to pieces and were consumed. The beam then moved on to the others.

All of this takes some time to explain, but the black beam moved in the twinkling of an eye. Next it shot toward Meng Hao. He had no time to snatch the pill furnace which hovered in front of him. The black beam slammed into his violet pill furnace, and it disintegrated and was sucked up by the beam.

Rage instantly billowed up from the depths of Meng Hao’s heart. His fury soared to the heavens. He was not like the other candidates who had been able to attract multiple pill furnaces from out of the hundred thousand. To them, losing a few was not a huge matter; they could always select another one that the beam didn’t destroy.

However, Meng Hao had expended a lot of effort to persuade the violet pill furnace to accept him. Then, it was destroyed in the blink of an eye by the black beam. Now he was left without anything at all. How could he not fly into a rage?

This was even more the case when, after destroying Meng Hao’s pill furnace, the black beam exuded a will of arrogance, and then shot off into the distance. It seemed as if it were an Emperor surveying his territory, who would kill a few officials here and there and then continue on his way.

Meng Hao could clearly make out the image of a pill furnace within the black beam. It was completely black, and emanated no magical symbols whatsoever. Black was not one of the colors within this world, making it seem completely incompatible, as if it were above all the other pill furnaces.

“Destroy my pill furnace, will you? Fine, my new pill furnace is going to be you!” His fury billowing up, his will suddenly shot into pursuit of the black pill furnace.

At this moment, Meng Hao took the so-called “follow your heart” theory and tossed it out into the void. He also tossed aside the idea of finding the Life Furnace that belonged to him and him alone. This was his personality.

If you destroy Meng Hao’s pill furnace, then regardless of the reason you did so, you will pay the price to replace it!

This is Meng Hao. His fury rippled, and his will shot out in pursuit of the black beam.

To add insult to injury, the black pill furnace didn’t seem to even notice him. Its level of arrogance was incredible. As it proceeded along its way, it would viciously smash into other random pill furnaces, destroying and consuming them.

It seemed that this pill furnace had its own Spirit, which viewed Meng Hao with contempt and disdain.

Meanwhile, just outside of Violet East Mountain, everyone sat around the Mother of Furnaces. Chu Yuyan opened her eyes; slowly, so did Ye Feimu and the other seven. As they did, the air above their hands began to glow, and then transformed into pill furnaces.

It didn’t matter the color of the pill furnace they had acquired within the illusory world just now. The pill furnaces that appeared in their hands now were white, each and every one of them.

Everyone had awakened except for Meng Hao. He still sat there, eyes closed in meditation, his brow furrowed and his jaw clenched.

Outside of the Celestial Land and the illusory world, everyone, including the Violet Furnace Lords, actually had no way to see what was happening within the Mother of Furnaces. The only thing they could see were the expressions on the faces of Meng Hao and the others. Now, everyone was focused on Meng Hao, and his lack of success.

Chu Yuyan also glanced at him. Not saying a word, she stood and raced toward Violet East Mountain, pill furnace in hand. Ye Feimu’s body flashed as he also charged forward, head toward the first of the paths that led up the mountain.

The other seven candidates also silently headed toward Violet East Mountain, each picking a path of their own. As they did, the paths disappeared behind them. Soon, there was only one path left on the mountain, left behind for Meng Hao, who was still in meditation.

Within the illusory world of the furnace, Meng Hao was engaged in mad pursuit of the black beam. It had led him to every corner of the place, and as it did, its contemptuous will seemed to grow stronger and stronger.

Finally, Meng Hao lost his patience, and he gave a cold snort. “Demon Sealing, Eighth Hex!” His senses told him that this world was under some type of sealing, making it impossible for outsiders to be able to tell what was happening inside. Therefore, he held nothing back. His invisible body dissipated, and a part of Meng Hao’s soul suddenly appeared amidst endless ripples. The ripples transformed into gossamer strands which immediately shot toward the black pill furnace, entangling it.

The black pill furnace seemed to be frozen in shock. In its memory, it had never encountered anyone who could catch it. Within this world, it was the sovereign; no one could possibly lay hold of it. And yet, today it had run into a magical technique which was capable of shaking both its will and its pill-furnace form. Immediately, it stopped. It only took the space of two breaths to shake itself free.

However, just as it was about to speed off, an illusory hand appeared out of nowhere and clamped down onto it. Originally, Meng Hao’s presence here had been invisible. However, because of the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex, an illusory phantom image of his body could now be seen.

“Where do you think you’re running off to?!” he said, locking his grip onto the pill furnace. The black pill furnace began to struggle, sending out massive waves of power. As it did, a face appeared on its surface.

It was the face of an evil, vicious youth. It radiated enmity and hatred, and after it appeared, it glared at Meng Hao and let out a threatening howl.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered with coldness. He lifted up his left hand and slapped the thing right across the face. The slap to the pill furnace’s Spirit rang out with a boom. The face was flung to the side, but then spun back around and let out another roar of rage toward Meng Hao.

The roar rose up to the heavens, as if it contained an incredible might within it. The force of it washed over Meng Hao, shaking his will. However, he did not allow his grip on it to weaken in the slightest. Instead, he gave a cold harrumph.

“Fighting back? Well, fighting back won’t do you any good!” He lifted his left hand, employing the power of the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex as he pressed his finger down onto the youth’s face.

“You consume other pill furnaces? Fine, I don’t care. But you dared to consume MY pill furnace. In doing so, you’ve sown Karma. Now you will reap the Karma, and earn your reward!” His left hand flickered in an incantation as he again employed the power of the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex. Streams of seals flew down onto the pill furnace; it seemed as if it would soon be sealed into complete suppression.

The Spirit of the pill furnace, embodied in the face of the youth, struggled violently. Its will of hatred grew more powerful than ever; in a frenzy, it opened its mouth and let loose a piercing scream.

The sound of it filled the entire illusory world, reaching its every corner. All of the pill furnaces inside heard it, and began to tremble. They immediately began to rush toward Meng Hao.

In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao was surrounded by stream after stream of glowing lights. A thousand, five thousand, ten thousand, fifty thousand, one hundred thousand….

More than one hundred thousand beams of light circulated around Meng Hao. The glow they caused rose up endlessly, and gradually transformed into one hundred thousand pill furnaces. They had Meng Hao completely surrounded. The buzzing noise they emitted echoed out as they spun around him at top speed. It seemed they had Meng Hao in their cross-hairs; if he didn’t release the black pill furnace, they would attack him.

The black pill furnace youth, ceased its attempts to flee. A proud look appeared on its face, then aggressive arrogance. It looked at Meng Hao as if it were attempting to provoke him. However, it was at this moment that Meng Hao lifted his hand and once again slapped the face.

Rage covered the face of the black pill furnace youth. A scream rang out, causing the surrounding hundred thousand pill furnaces to suddenly charge in attack. They shot toward Meng Hao, sending out ripples throughout the air. Their glow lifted up to the heavens. Meng Hao merely gave a cold snort, and closed his eyes.

“Time to leave!”

His will sprang into action, immediately beginning to disappear, along with the furnace he gripped in his hands. Its shrill cry slowly dissipated as the hundred thousand pill furnaces charged in attack. Not a single one of them was even able to touch Meng Hao.

Outside of the pill furnace in the Celestial Land, Meng Hao sat cross-legged in meditation. Suddenly, his eyes flashed open. The instant they did, a black glow shot up in front of him, and a pill furnace appeared. Despite the fact that it was here, it appeared to be struggling.

But Meng Hao’s will was still in his body; how could he possibly allow it to flee? He gripped it hard, and his eyes glowed with a fierce cold aura.

“Are you really looking to die?!”

The pill furnace continued to struggle, and as it did, a strand of will entered Meng Hao’s mind. It said… it would rather die than submit!

Meng Hao smiled, although it was a smile filled with coldness.

“Rather die than submit? No, I’m not going to destroy you. Starting today, I don’t care if you want to or not, you’re my pill furnace, no matter how much you resist!” He stood up and looked toward Violet East Mountain, and the only remaining path leading up it.

At the same time, outside of the Celestial Land, on Eastern Emergence Mountain, the onlookers didn’t seem to be very impressed. However, the eight Violet Furnace Lords’ faces all flickered.

“That’s….”

“That black pill furnace contains its own will!”

“I saw that same furnace when I was in there all those years ago…. I wanted to take it, but failed. This Fang Mu seems to have created some kind of connection with it….”

“It’s extremely rare to see that pill furnace within the illusory world. The will of a Cultivator is no match for it, and should be incapable of capturing it. After all these years, it has become the sovereign pill furnace of the illusory world….”

“Just what promises did Fang Mu make to the black pill furnace to get it to accept him…? From the expression on his face, it seems that maybe the two of them are having some conflicts!” As the Violet Furnace Lords discussed the scene, the other onlookers also began to notice Meng Hao and the pill furnace.

“That’s strange, why does Fang Mu have a black pill furnace? Everyone else got white ones….”

As people expressed their surprise, Grandmaster Pill Demon’s eyes began to glitter with a strange light.

“This kid… actually managed to bring it out….” An imperceptible smile touched the corners of his mouth.

Back in the world of the Celestial Land, the pill furnace beneath Violet East Mountain began to tremble. A roaring sound filled the air, along with a seven-colored glow. It seemed almost like… the hundred thousand pill furnaces within were in a frenzy, trying to break their way out from within.

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# Chapter 282: The First Region

This scene caused everyone on the outside world to stare with wide eyes.

Many of the East Pill Division alchemists had faces filled with disbelief. The furnace within the Celestial land was emitting shocking booms. The roaring was so intense that the massive furnace rocked back and forth.

Quite a distance away, Meng Hao suddenly looked back. No one in the outside world would know why the furnace was doing this, but he did. The hundred thousand pill furnaces inside were attempting to bash their way out to pursue him.

His eyes glittering, he shot away from the pill furnace, reaching the final path available to tread on Violet East Mountain. He was exhausted, but he still propelled himself forward with full power. In the space of a few breaths, he was on the path, climbing upward. The mountain path disappeared behind him.

The pill furnace’s booming grew even more intense, and popping sounds rang out. Meng Hao wasn’t worried. Not even looking back, he continued up the mountain path.

Everyone in the outside world could see the pill furnace rocking violently back and forth; it seemed as if it would explode into pieces at any moment.

“Crafty move, kid,” said Pill Demon with an enigmatic smile. He reached his hand out toward the image of the Celestial Land, and extended a finger. When his finger descended, a roar filled the sky of the Celestial Land, where magically appeared the massive image of a finger. The finger seemed to fill the entire sky and cover the entire land, becoming a canopy covering the whole Celestial Land.

The finger was incredibly thick and coarse; the fingerprint was clearly visible on its surface. The appearance of this immense finger seemed to shake the Celestial Land like the will of the Heavens itself! The sub-Patriarchs from the outside Sects were also astonished.

They watched the screen mutely as the scene unfolded within the Celestial Land. The power it emitted shook the heaven and rocked the earth, as if it had governance over both. Endless, infinite ripples emanated out, as if the finger had a will of its own. It slowly pressed down on the furnace at the foot of Violet East Mountain.

The instant it pressed down, the entire world of the Celestial Land shook; after that, everything was still. The previously rocking and trembling pill furnace was now incapable of any movement whatsoever as the finger pressed down on it.

All of this lasted for the space of about two breaths. Then, the enormous finger disappeared, and the pill furnace was once again calm.

On Eastern Emergence Mountain, everything was quiet. Patriarch Violet Sieve was panting as his heart raced. He looked over in shock at the expressionless Grandmaster Pill Demon.

“According to the rumors,” he thought, “the most powerful expert in the Violet Fate Sect is not a Patriarch of the Violet Qi Division, but Grandmaster Pill Demon himself. The rumors also say that Grandmaster Pill Demon’s Cultivation Base reached the Spirit Severing stage years ago. If it hadn’t, how could he have lived more than a thousand years?”

The sub-Patriarchs from the other Sects all seemed to be thinking the same thing. The Second Dao Lord of the Solitary Sword Sect lowered his head slightly. He was one of the few people present who knew how frightening Grandmaster Pill Demon’s Cultivation base actually was.

Because Pill Demon didn’t want to make a big deal about it, he’d only invited these sub-Patriarchs to the apprentice-accepting ceremony. Otherwise, he would have invited the true Patriarchs of the great Sects and Clans.

Xu Luo from the Blood Demon Sect was panting slowly, and his eyes glowed with a blood-colored shine that quickly turned into reverence. He thought silently about how much the Blood Demon Sect feared Grandmaster Pill Demon. They had compiled many of the rumors regarding Grandmaster Pill Demon, and had uncovered a shocking secret.

Unfortunately, such a secret would never be known to very many people.

Zhou Jie of the Black Sieve Sect looked on with narrowed eyes. A cold will gleamed in his eyes, mixed with an unprecedented sense of concentration.

“Seems somewhat familiar, like the aura of an old friend….” His eyes flickered as he looked at Pill Demon.

As the outsiders were shocked by Grandmaster Pill Demon’s actions, Meng Hao was walking up the steps of the path on Violet East Mountain. Occasionally he would look up ahead, but all he could see was mist. The peak of the mountain itself was not visible.

Time passed slowly. Meng Hao trudged up the steps, feeling more and more apprehension at how tall this mountain was. Five days had passed already. He had long since lost sight of the land below; clouds and fog completely surrounded him, obscuring his vision, making it impossible to see the world outside the mountain.

However… however high he was, Meng Hao got the feeling that when compared to the peak of the mountain, he was still at its base.

The higher he went, the thinner the air got. There was nothing that could put pressure onto his Cultivation base, but the further along he went, the more effort it took to take each step. Soon it took twice as much as it had when he started out.

Meng Hao had started out his journey along the path at a dead rush, and already exhausted at that. Add in the effort he spent struggling with the black pill furnace, and he could no longer race ahead. Now, he went one slow step at a time. Every once in a while he would pause and look around.

The immediate surroundings were lush and verdant. Grass grew all around, which Meng Hao would occasionally pick.

From the perspective of the outside observers, Meng Hao had already fallen far behind. All the other candidates were much further ahead of him.

This was especially true of Ye Feimu, who was the first alchemist to enter the first of the four regions. Just up ahead of him was an enormous stone boulder which was covered with dense inscriptions. After examining it for some time, Ye Feimu sat down next to it cross-legged. After that he pulled out a pill furnace and began to concoct a pill.

The next day, the pill emerged. Holding it carefully with both hands, he proceeded past the boulder.

Not long after, Chu Yuyan also concocted a pill, and then proceeded forward. All of the other alchemists except for Meng Hao did the same.

The master alchemists of the East Pill Division began to discuss what was happening.

“No wonder Ye Feimu is at the peak of the Furnace Lord rank. His Cultivation base is extraordinary, and he was the first person to step into the first region. His ability to recognize medicinal pills as well as his pill concocting skill are both anything but sloppy. I bet he’s going to win.”

“Chu Yuyan is also doing well. This promotion trial by fire is most likely going to come down to a decision between the two of them. Earlier, I thought Fang Mu might have had a chance, but I never thought he would spend so much time getting a pill furnace. What a pity.”

“Right. If your first step is slow, then all of them will be slow….”

Most of the sound of discussion came from the ordinary master alchemists. The Furnace Lords and Violet Furnace Lords just watched on thoughtfully, opting to say nothing.

A few days later, Meng Hao finally reached the first region, and saw the enormous boulder. He looked at the inscriptions, studying them for a while, before glancing at the path which proceeded on upward.

“This is the first region. After this boulder, the path to the second region is covered with a poisonous miasma…. One must concoct a poison repelling pill to be able to get through safely. The greatest difficulty is that throughout the journey, different miasmas will appear, and special pills will have to be concocted for each one.” Meng Hao thought about the situation for a moment. Finally, he pulled out the black pill furnace and looked it over. It seemed to him that he hadn’t truly won out over it, so he decided to put it back into his bag of holding, leaving it suppressed for the time being. Instead, he took out the Ten Thousand Refinements Furnace, put some medicinal plants in it, and then started concocting.

After two hours he had produced a medicinal pill. He swallowed it, then glanced around at the scenery once more, and then walked past the enormous rock. As he proceeded onward, his body was enveloped by a thin mist.

The master alchemists immediately started to discuss what had just happened.

“Furnace Lord Fang Mu thinks a bit too much of himself. He only used two hours to concoct the pill. Of all the other candidates, the one who used the least amount of time was Ye Feimu, who took four hours. The longest was a day.

“How could he possibly compare with Furnace Lord Ye? Furnace Lord Ye is Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. Look, he’s the furthest ahead, and is already half way through the first region.”

Everyone watching the screens could clearly see what was happening, and knew exactly how far everyone had progressed. Even some of the Furnace Lords exchanged glances; to them, it really did look like Meng Hao was being sloppy and careless.

Of course, Meng Hao had no idea what things they were saying, nor did he care to know. He continued on relentlessly through the miasma. It grew thicker as he went, and the color changed as well, to dark gray.

All the plants and flowers in the area were withered, and seemingly had been for years. A gloomy, cold aura filled the air. As Meng Hao went on, he occasionally caught sight of arm-length centipedes, scurrying about quickly through the shrivelled grass.

However, whatever poisonous bugs that appeared as Meng Hao walked along, would suddenly pause, seemingly incapable of doing anything to him. They would just let him continue on his way.

Time passed slowly. As he traveled he would occasionally take break, using some of the nearby withered grass, as well as some of the poisonous bugs, to concoct a medicinal pill. He did this a total of three times.

More and more poisonous bugs began to appear, soon, they were swarming. But as soon as Meng Hao neared, they would either begin to tremble, or run away. As for the roiling miasma, it would consistently move out of the way, making way for Meng Hao to travel along the path.

This too, was clearly visible to the observers, who watched on with wide-eyed astonishment. Soon, more and more eyes were focusing on Meng Hao’s screen. It wasn’t just the East Pill Division; even Cultivators from the other Sects were watching closely.

“He’s using the poison bugs to make medicinal pills, but what pill exactly?”

“What medicinal pill is that? It has such an incredible effect….”

The Cultivators watched on in astonishment, then glanced over at the screens of the other candidates, including Ye Feimu and Chu Yuyan. It seemed most of them were reaching the end of the stairs that were part of the first region. Most of them had concocted medicinal pills on many occasions during the journey. They also would concoct pills to ward off the poison, but none of them were as dramatically effective as Meng Hao’s.

This, of course, was because the poison bugs along the path didn’t seem to have any inclination of avoiding Ye Feimu and the others. However, in their terror, they clambered over each other in order to get out of Meng Hao’s way.

If this scene was taking place anywhere except the Violet Fate Sect trial by fire, then plenty of people would begin to make connections. But this was a Violet Furnace Lord promotion, so there ended up being only one conclusion drawn by the observers.

The pills Fang Mu concocted were anything but ordinary!

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# Chapter 283: Goofing Off

Actually, even if Meng Hao hadn’t concocted the various medicinal pills, the miasma wouldn’t have been the least bit harmful to him in any way. The Resurrection Lily had been suppressed, but its nature talent was still within him, which could innately dispel all varieties of poisons.

Meng Hao did not fear poison.

Granted, many years had passed since the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament, which so many Cultivators had witnessed 1. However, anyone observing could easily make a connection between the two. Thus, he had concocted the medicinal pills to make it seem like they were repelling the poisons. However, their true function was to suppress his own aura, which was was affecting the poison bugs and the miasma.

That of course was something about him that was completely different from the other candidates.

There was really no choice but to suppress his aura in this way. If he didn’t do so with the medicinal pills, then as he traveled through the miasma, it would explode away from him immediately, and the entire area would be completely free of it, without the slightest trace.

Even having suppressed his aura, the miasma still spread out away from him. There was literally nothing he could do to make himself walk through the miasma and have it remain still.

As for the poisonous bugs, were it not for the fact that his aura had been suppressed, they simply wouldn’t dare to exist nearby. In fact, Meng Hao was worried that he might lose control of his suppressed aura, and that any bugs which hadn’t fled far enough away from him would spontaneously die. If that happened, it would definitely attract attention from the outside world.

Therefore, the best he could do was use medicinal pills to suppress his aura, be extremely cautious not to allow the miasma to completely disperse, and try to make the poison bugs behave a bit more normally. Despite all of that, he caused quite a stir on the outside world.

However, it was just a stir, not enough to draw any connections to the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament.

Several days later, the first person made it to the second region, and of course, it was Ye Feimu. Behind him was Chu Yuyan, and then in third place, Meng Hao, the newcomer to the top of the group.

As far as the other seven people, two more eventually appeared at the boulder marking the second region. The other five were still stuck back on the path in the miasma, concocting pills and slowly moving forward.

When the candidates arrived at the large boulder, all of them discovered the same thing. Strands of Violet Qi emerged and latched onto their pill furnaces and then merged into them, causing them to change color.

The same thing happened to the Meng Hao. The black pill furnace seemed very opposed to this happening, but considering how it was suppressed by Meng Hao, there was nothing it could do to resist.

People outside immediately began to discuss what was happening.

“The’ve only just passed the first region, and you can already see the difference….”

“It looks like the final candidate will be one of these five people. However, I still think Furnace Lord Ye has the advantage.”

Suddenly, Violet Furnace Lord An Zaihai’s voice rang out. “The Violet Furnace Lord trial by fire promotion is a test of an alchemist’s skill in the Dao of Alchemy. Falling behind doesn’t mean anything. The year I took the test, I came in last in the first two regions. However, I successfully passed the third region, the one in which most people get stuck. You might better spend your time observing how these ten Chosen alchemists concoct pills, than discussing things the way you see them now.” An Zaihai’s echoing voice immediately silenced the discussions of the surrounding alchemists. They grew silent and thoughtfully began to watch what was happening.

What they saw was that the five alchemists in last place were all very calm. All of them were concocting pills in different ways, and not one of them experienced the slightest failure.

Time passed slowly. Meng Hao had already been staring thoughtfully for several hours at the boulder leading into the second region. It wasn’t just him. On their various respective paths, Ye Feimu and Chu Yuyan were also staring with furrowed brows at the boulders.

The boulders completely blocked the various paths. Only by fulfilling the requirements laid out, would a fissure open in the boulder and allow passage through.

Meng Hao murmured to himself as he sat cross-legged next to the boulder. “Concoct medicinal pills for the four great stages of Qi Condensation, Foundation Establishment, Core Formation and Nascent Soul. Each one must have medicinal strength of eighty percent or higher, and must contain variations from among the ten million variations of plants and vegetation. If you can create your own unique medicinal pill, this will be counted as perfection….” A thoughtful look appeared in his eyes.

The four regions of the Violet Furnace Lord trial by fire contained practical tests of an alchemist’s skill in the Dao of alchemy. The first region tested the skill of concocting pills based on the current circumstances. Different situations required different pills to be concocted, requiring flexibility. It seemed simple, but in reality, most Furnace Lords were incapable of doing such a thing.

The second region was even more difficult. It tested fundamental pill concocting ability. Four medicinal pills, one for each of the four great stages. Medicinal strength must be maintained, and mastery of the ten million variations of plants and vegetation was a necessity.

This trial by fire was comprehensive, and as for this second region, someone not at the peak of the Furnace Lord rank would be incapable of passing it. Even for someone with those qualifications, passing was not an easy thing.

Meng Hao sat there thinking silently for some time, as did Chu Yuyan, Ye Feimu, along with the other candidates who made it to the second region boulder.

There were no requirements regarding the medicinal plants which could be used; each alchemist could do however he pleased. In fact, based on one's mastery of the variations of plants and vegetations, one could simply make a depiction of a medicinal plant on the surface of the boulder, and the power of the Celestial Land would produce an illusory replication, which could be used for illusory pill concoction.

They were only illusory replications, but were actually very realistic.

“There are two options,” thought Chu Yuyan. “One is the easy path, to concoct an existing pill. After all, the only requirements are those regarding medicinal strength and skill with the ten million variations of plants and vegetation.

“The other path, is much harder, and that is to create a new medicinal pill, to make something out of nothing…. Both of these two paths can lead onward, toward the highest pinnacle. However, it is clear that, the road of a Violet Furnace Lord… lies along the second path!” Determination filled her eyes. She was an apprentice of Grandmaster Pill Demon, so in order to become a Violet Furnace Lord, she had to prove herself.

Ye Feimu obviously felt the same way. He stared at the boulder, and as he did, a bright light shone in his eyes, along with a proud, unyielding look.

“If I'm going to concoct something,” he thought, “I will concoct a pill no other person has ever seen, a pill which contains my very self! I will show that I have the will of a Violet Furnace Lord!”

At almost the same time, resolve showed on the faces of Chu Yuyan and Ye Feimu as they chose the second of the two paths.

As for the others, most picked the easy path, although some attempted to concoct original creations. Each one made their decision based on their own Dao of alchemy.

Meng Hao looked at the boulder thoughtfully, sighing as he rubbed the bridge of his nose. He had recently traveled for four days nonstop, had engaged in a battle of will with the black pill furnace, and was now completely exhausted. He looked at the requirements listed on the boulder, and realized that traversing the path of medicinal pill creation would definitely make him more tired.

He began to murmur to himself: “Concocting an existing pill is definitely better than coming up with something new. Creating a new medicinal pill requires good fortune, alchemic enlightenment, and meticulous concentration, otherwise the quality will be inferior…. Yeah, this is the best decision. My analysis is definitely correct. I will not let my quality drop.” The more he thought about it, the more it made sense to him. His mind at ease, he began to concoct medicinal pills. He lifted his right hand and pressed down onto the boulder; immediately it rippled like water. The medicinal plants which floated in his mind, slowly began to appear in front of him.

“A medicinal pill for the Qi Condensation stage. I’ll make the simplest one, a Qi Condensation Pill.” He flicked his sleeve, and an illusory pill furnace emerged from the boulder, into which he fed bunch after bunch of medicinal plants. After another moment’s thought, he began to concoct.

Not too much time passed before Chu Yuyan’s eyes opened and she waved her beautiful hand. A pill furnace appeared and her eyes glittered brightly as she began to concoct.

After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, Ye Feimu opened his eyes. Filled with self confidence, he began to concoct.

The observers outside on Eastern Emergence Mountain were watching intently as everything happened; their eyes passed back and forth among the ten screens, including Meng Hao, the tenth person.

Of course, the focus was Ye Feimu and Chu Yuyan, who had performed spectacularly in the first region. And of course many were paying attention to Meng Hao, who had attracted such attention with his own performance there.

However, Meng Hao was taking the easy path to pill cultivation. Currently, he was concocting a Qi Condensation Pill; he wasn't the only one, in total, seven were doing so.

The audience could see the instructions on the boulder, and thus began discussing things in low tones. It was relatively easy to determine what this part of the test was about.

“It turns out Fang Mu is concocting a Qi Condensation Pill…. It seems like he's falling further and further behind Chu Yuyan and Ye Feimu in this second region.”

“I heard about Furnace Lord Ye Feimu a long time ago. His skill in the Dao of alchemy is at the pinnacle. Based on the look of it, he's not just concocting some ordinarily medicinal pill. Could he be working on an original creation?”

Lin Hailong gave a slight smile as he turned to An Zaihai and said, “Chu Yuyan is most likely also creating an original medicinal pill…. Simply having the confidence to do that is worthy of praise.”

An Zaihai gave a slight nod. His expression was calm as he glanced at the ten screens. When he saw Meng Hao, and took note of what he was concocting, he felt slightly amused. In his opinion, Meng Hao understood that an original creation would allow him to pass this critical juncture, but had decided instead to save time and effort.

Time passed, and in the blink of an eye, three days had gone by. Meng Hao had produced a Qi Condensation pill of eighty percent medicinal strength, as well as a Foundation Establishment Day of similar quality. Now he was working on a pill for the Core Formation stage, a Spiritualization Pill.

Before, Meng Hao would have had a difficult time concocting such a pill, considering his Cultivation base. However, now that he had ten Dao Pillars, and was of the great circle of Foundation Establishment, concocting a simple, common Spiritualization Pill required a bit of effort, but wasn’t very difficult.

In fact, he was both concocting and resting at the same time. Having been in Violet East Mountain for several days now, he had now recovered quite a bit of energy. He was no longer exhausted, and his pill concocting went a bit faster than before.

However, the moment his Spiritualization Pill emerged was also the exact moment when Chu Yuyan’s original Qi Condensation stage medicinal pill came out. When it did, brilliant light swirled up from her pill; at a single glance, it was obvious this was no ordinary pill. It immediately attracted quite a bit of notice on the outside world.

At the same time, Ye Feimu’s original medicinal pill emerged. A four-colored glow enveloped it, a bit brighter than the glow from Chu Yuyan’s pill. A sudden gasp of astonishment could be heard from the spectators.

As for Meng Hao, however, he produced nothing extraordinary whatsoever. Like most of the others, he had chosen to concoct familiar pills. Furthermore, from his attitude, it seemed as if he were goofing off. It was completely different from the conscientiousness of Chu Yuyan and Ye Feimu.

In fact the clear cut difference between them… made Meng Hao seem even more unremarkable.

Only one person on Eastern Emergence Mountain was different. Grandmaster Pill Demon. When he casually glanced at the screen depicting Meng Hao, an imperceptible shadow of a smile appeared on his face.

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# Chapter 284: Three People; Three Daos of Alchemy

By the time Chu Yuyan and Ye Feimu were in the midst of creating their Foundation Establishment stage medicinal pill, Meng Hao had already finished with the Spiritualization Pill, and had begun to work on the Nascent Soul medicinal pill.

Medicinal Pills for increasing the Cultivation Base during the Nascent Soul stage were made from rare medicinal plants not often seen in the world. There were not many such pills in the Southern Domain; for four or even five people from a single Sect to possess one would be considered beyond incredible.

These were not pills that could be mass produced; one batch might make three, or perhaps five. Therefore, they were quite prized. Such pills were not common even in the Violet Fate Sect.

When you consider that a Nascent Soul Cultivator who practices breathing exercises can absorb all of the spiritual energy of Heaven and Earth within a three kilometer radius in a single breath, it is easy to imagine how important medicinal pills can be to them. If they possess such pills, all is well. If they don’t, the only remaining option is to take them by force.

However, when it comes to medicinal pills for Nascent Soul Cultivators, the most difficult type to concoct, as well as the most valuable, are pills which extend longevity!

The value of such pills is extremely high; a lifespan that does not exceed on thousand years, is not a defiance of the Heavens. The only way to live past one thousand years, to defy the Heavens, is to to sever the Spirit. Otherwise, one can only waste away in death.

Of all the medicinal pills for the Nascent Soul stage, the most basic are healing pills, and such pills are also the easiest to concoct.

Generally, they are of average effectiveness; however, no matter which way you look at them, such pills must be considered of the Nascent Soul stage. Meng Hao decided to concoct just such a simple medicinal pill for the Nascent Soul stage. As far as he was concerned, this wasn't considered finagling, but rather, using the most simple method to pass this part of the test. He didn't want to expend a lot of mental energy to concoct a unique, one-of-a-kind pill.

Therefore, several days later, one of the most common healing pills for the Nascent Soul stage emerged. Meng Hao held the pills from the four stages in hand, and then, pushed them into the boulder. The boulder began to tremble, and then a fissure appeared that snaked down the very middle of the boulder, a little over half a foot wide.

It almost seemed like the boulder wasn't pleased with Meng Hao's medicinal pills. However, he had met the requirements; each pill contained five of the ten million medicinal plant variations, although most of them had been obscured by Meng Hao using a technique just for that purpose.

He looked at the fissure and then cleared his throat. He knew that he was being observed by others; with a bit of a bashful and embarrassed expression, he lowered his head and walked up to the crack. By turning his body to the side, and exerting a bit of effort, he was just able to squeeze himself through. Then, with a solemn and dignified expression, and not the least bit of awkwardness, he continued along the steps up the mountain, toward the third region.

When the spectators in the outside world saw this, the master alchemists of the East Pill Division could be seen making bitter smiles. Those who were relatively familiar with Fang Mu seemed a bit embarrassed. Using such a method to pass this part of the test really was a bit of an eyesore.

This was especially after looking back at the earnestness with which Chu Yuyan and Ye Feimu persisted in their work. Meng Hao's attitude immediately aroused the scorn of those who hadn't liked him very much to begin with. A few of the eight Violet Furnace Lords also frowned.

However, regardless of anything, Meng Hao was the first one to make it past the second region. Hands clasped behind his back, he casually walked into the third region, looking exactly as if he were just going for a stroll and taking in the scenery.

One of the Violet Furnace Lords, a middle-aged man named Ye Yuntian, said, "Fang Mu doesn't seem to be taking things very seriously. With such sub-par character, he's clearly not suitable to become a Violet Furnace Lord." His voice was cool and seemed to carry the weight of authority.

An Zaihai laughed and said, "Not necessarily. There's no rule against using the simplest method to charge past."

"That's true, Elder Brother An," replied Ye Yuntian with a smile. "Now, though, I'm very curious to see what sort of decision he will make in the third region."

Moments later, more candidates emerged from the second region. Only Chu Yuyan and Ye Feimu remained. A total of five people came out. The other two were unable to complete medicinal pills with eighty percent medicinal strength, and thus declared forfeiture.

Now, only eight screens remained of the original ten above the pill furnace in the outside world.

When Meng Hao reached the boulder marking the third region, Violet Qi poured out. It was only a tiny thread, and lasted only for the space of about three breaths. He had succeeded, but the approval of the Celestial Land was not great.

After the strand of Violet Qi entered the pill furnace, Meng Hao looked at the boulder, then sat down cross-legged in front of it. He took a moment to erase the last bit of exhaustion in him, until he was filled with energy.

Chu Yuyan’s final pill emerged, and when it did, her face was pale. It had been extremely difficult for her to concoct the fourth pill. As for original creations, she had persisted up until the Foundation Establishment pill; as for the Core Formation and Nascent Soul pills, she was unable to create new versions of such pills. Instead, she had selected the most difficult of the pill formulas she knew to concoct the final two pills.

Wiping the sweat from her brow, she watched as a three meter wide fissure split apart the boulder in front of her. A self-confident smile on her face, she strode forward.

After her, Ye Feimu finished his pill concoction. Similar to Chu Yuyan, he had been unable to make original creations for all four pill varieties. He had succeeded in making an original pill for the Core Formation stage, but as for the Nascent Soul stage, he could not proceed. Having no other choice, he created the most high-level and difficult pill for the Nascent Soul stage that he could think of. It took ten attempts before he finally succeeded.

Everything happened relatively quickly, because everything moved more quickly within the world of the Celestial Land. Were it outside, it would take over a year to concoct the four pills he had.

Ye Feimu took in a deep breath as he watched a six meter wide fissure cracked open the boulder in front of him. A proud look filled his eyes as he strode through.

It was becoming readily apparent to the observers which of the various candidates were above the others. A buzz of discussion echoed out as they began to talk about the shocking sight of the fissure created by Ye Feimu.

As Chu Yuyan and the others reached the boulder marking the third region, dense Violet Qi poured out toward them. The Violet Qi which emerged for Chu Yuyan lasted for the time it takes an incense stick to burn before dissipating. Most shockingly was Ye Feimu. His lasted for the time it takes two incense sticks to burn; furthermore, his pill furnace had already turned light violet!

On their various respective paths, the other candidates’ pill furnaces absorbed the Violet Qi. Afterward, they began to concentrate on the boulder. Frowns appeared; the test for the third region was even more difficult than the first two.

Meng Hao finished his meditation. He opened his eyes, and they glowed brightly. He was completely recovered, and his eyes glittered as he examined the text on the boulder in front of him. A thoughtful expression appeared on his face.

Beyond the boulder, there were no stone steps. The path of steps seemed to end right here, and only clouds were visible.

“Nine Treasures Pearl Curtain Plants….” Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed as he looked at the carving on the boulder. It depicted a type of medicinal plant with nine flowers on it, each of which was a different color. “Three Treasures Pearl Curtains Plants are common. Six Treasures Pearl Curtain Plants are uncommon. As for Nine Treasures Pearl Curtain Plants… they are rarely ever seen! Each flower contains different medicinal properties. The nine petals all work in harmony with each other. This single medicinal plant can be used in over a thousand different pill formulas…. The formulas used and the quality of the medicinal pills concocted will determine how many steps appear….” Meng Hao closed his eyes for a moment to think.

On the other paths, the other candidates were facing the exact same test.

Chu Yuyan reached up to place her right hand onto the boulder. Immediately, a flickering, glowing light appeared, and the Nine Treasures Pearl Curtain Plant materialized in front of her.

The Cultivators on the mountain peak in the outside world, including the representatives from the other Sects and Clans, were all paying very close attention to the incredible scene which was taking place within the trial by fire.

Violet Furnace Lord Ye Yuntian coolly opened his mouth and said, “The third region tests both pill concocting and decision making. How many pills must be concocted to magically create a perfect set of stairs? That is the key.” From start to finish, his gaze never left Ye Feimu’s screen.

His words caused the faces of many of the master alchemists to fill with astonishment. One by one, they began to focus intently on the various screens.

Chu Yuyan looked at the plant floating in front of her. A thoughtful look glittered in her phoenix-like eyes.

“The Dao of alchemy is like the great Dao of cultivation,” she thought. “Plants and vegetation grow within Heaven and Earth. However, Heaven and Earth are not alive. Concocting pills… is like refining the Heavens and transforming the Earth, finding a spark of life therein, and turning it into a medicinal pill. Therefore, pill concoction… is a search for life, a way to find that spark which doesn’t exist within Heaven and Earth!

“Nine is the ultimate number; therefore, I will make nine pills, and each pill will contain eight flowers. Furthermore, each pill will contain the medicinal properties of the one missing flower! These nine pills will form a cycle that will open up the path to the Heavens!” Chu Yuyan’s eyes glowed with determination now that she had made her decision. She immediately set to work concocting.

After thinking for several hours, a serious look filled Ye Feimu’s face, and he took a deep breath. His eyes narrowed as he flicked his sleeve; a Nine Treasures Pearl Curtain Plant appeared in front of him, and he began to concoct.

“If I’m going to concoct a pill, I’ll only make one,” he thought. “It will contain the medicinal properties of all nine flowers, as well as that of an additional medicinal pill! I will concoct not the number nine, but the number ten! I will concoct a pill that contains a medicinal property that the Nine Treasures Pearl Curtain Plant does not. In keeping with my identity, this tenth medicinal property will be unprecedented!”

It was difficult to say whose thinking in regard to the Dao of alchemy was more advanced. Between the two of them, one used the Dao of alchemy to refine life to the pinnacle. The other combined all the complex variations to create something unique.

At this moment, their skill in the Dao of alchemy was clearly visible to the spectators on the mountain top, and caused quite a stir. Everyone, including the representatives from the outside Sects, began to think deeply about the proceedings.

After Chu Yuyan and Ye Feimu made their decisions, the eight Violet Furnace Lords nodded in praise.

Grandmaster Pill Demon’s face, however, was unreadable, making everyone wonder which screen he was watching….

It was at this moment that Meng Hao opened his eyes, and they gleamed with a strange light. He lifted up his hand and pushed it onto the boulder. The Nine Treasures Pearl Curtain Plant appeared, along with his pill furnace. He did not immediately begin to concoct, though, but rather stare at the medicinal plant, his eyes shining.

Within his mind flitted countless pill formulas. His skill with plants and vegetation was in full force as well. The Nine Treasures Pearl Curtain Plant rotated in his mind as he mentally began to organize the various medicinal properties and how they worked together.

However, Meng Hao quickly decided to clear his mind. He looked at the medicinal plant, and then his eyes began to gleam even more brightly. He looked… interested. His bearing now was vastly different than the laziness he had displayed in the second region.

“I’m going to concoct ten pills,” he thought. “Nine minor pills, and one master pill. Nine is the ultimate number, representing strength. My body is the pill furnace, and my heart is the pill formula. Refine the Heavens, refine the Earth, refine the changes of Time. Concoct a pill that… contains the essence of nature’s simplicity!” A look both deep and bright shone in his eyes. Were this any other place, he would not display such an attitude toward pill concocting. But within this Violet Fate Sect trial by fire, his interest had been piqued. He would no longer conceal his true self; he would fully display his skill in the Dao of alchemy.

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# Chapter 285: Who is the Strongest?

Meng Hao took a deep breath. Then, he lifted up his right hand, took hold of a flower, and put it into the pill furnace.

Only the Violet Furnace Lords on the mountaintop could get an idea from Meng Hao's actions what he intended to do. However, all of them had different expressions on their faces. Some were frowning, others seemed lost in thought.

"Fang Mu's choice is… interesting…. However, he won't be able to pull off something like that!"

"Even still, that type of thinking in the Dao of alchemy is laudable. It contains some of the frivolity of youth, but considering his skill in the Dao of alchemy, he definitely won't be able to succeed. I still favor Ye Feimu. That kid's Dao of alchemy contains persistence. Persistence is a necessity for all of us alchemists."

The Violet Furnace Lords continued to discuss matters as they watched on.

Only An Zaihai gaped for a moment, before a bright gleam filled his eyes. "He wants to concoct…." An Zaihai's breathing grew heavier. He did not agree with the others. Without thinking about it, he turned to look at his Master, Pill Demon. Grandmaster Pill Demon sat there cross-legged. A strange light flickered in his eyes, then disappeared.

Time passed, three days. Chu Yuyan had completed her first medicinal pill. When it appeared, 1,111 steps appeared up ahead of her.

For over one thousand steps to appear caused a buzz to rise up among the crowd on the mountain top.

Moments later, Ye Feimu also produced a pill. As soon as it appeared, so did the stone stairs, 2,000 of them. This caused the observing alchemists on the mountaintop to immediately rise to their feet, looks of astonishment on their faces.

What caused even more of a stir was that Ye Feimu looked at the pill with a frown, and then crushed it between his fingers. Immediately, the 2,000 stairs vanished.

It seemed that 2,000 steps… didn’t satisfy him!

In addition to Chu Yuyan, Ye Feimu, and Meng Hao, two others were concocting pills. All had made different choices in their concoctions, and all paled in comparison to Chu Yuyan and Ye Feimu. Each of them concocted three pills respectively, which produced a total of seven hundred stairs each.

They did not dare to crush their medicinal pills, though. No matter how many pills it took, they would cause all of the stairs to appear.

As for the alchemists who had fallen behind, they slowly showed up. After experiencing the difficulty of the second test, they sat there thoughtfully for a bit before beginning to concoct pills.

Of course, none of them produced results as spectacular as Chu Yuyan or Ye Feimu. They took the easy route; this was not in error, however, it did not count as being part of their personal Dao of alchemy.

Enough time passed for an incense stick to burn. Meng Hao was now finished with the first minor pill!

It emerged, a bluish-green medicinal pill, which Meng Hao had concocted using the bluish-green flower from among the nine.

The pill furnace was illusory; the Nine Treasures Pearl Curtain Plant was also illusory. Therefore, the pill that was produced was obviously not real. Despite that, it could be held in hand, and it could be crushed.

This was one of the bizarre, miraculous aspects of the Celestial Land, a magic that could create something from nothing!

Meng Hao looked at the bluish-green medicinal pill in his hand, then lifted his head. Further up, the mountain path began to buzz. Suddenly, out of thin-air appeared… a step.

A single step!

Meng Hao’s face was the same as ever, without the slightest hint of change. Much earlier, he had predicted that this would happen. He looked back down at the Nine Treasures Pearl Curtain Plant’s crimson flower, grabbed it, and began to concoct.

Seeing this caused a buzz to immediately rise up among the audience on the mountaintop. Of course, the Violet Furnace Lords didn’t participate, nor did the Patriarch-level Cultivators from the outside Sects. They only looked on in silent thought. Based on their concentration, their age, and their experiences in life, eccentrics like this wouldn’t easily show what they were thinking.

However, the disciples who had accompanied them had not reached such a level. Seeing what happened instantly caused astonished exclamations and discussions to fill the air.

“Alchemist Fang Mu only created a single stair…! That’s simply too few! Is he really a Furnace Lord?”

“At the very least, the other candidates created a few hundred stairs. Furnace Lord Ye created the most, 2,000, and wasn’t even satisfied with that. But Fang Mu… he doesn’t look even the least bit embarrassed!”

“Maybe he has some special plan….”

Such discussions couldn’t be avoided. Meng Hao’s medicinal pill, and the one stair it had produced, was immediately divisive. Everyone could clearly see what had happened, and it was only natural that people immediately began to make comparisons.

Han Bei frowned. She couldn’t believe that Fang Mu’s skill in the Dao of alchemy was so limited. After her interactions with him in the Black Sieve Sect, she knew of his extreme cunning, and was convinced that he must be pulling off some clever trick.

Zhou Jie’s expression was normal, without the slightest reaction whatsoever. It seemed as if nothing would cause him any surprise whatsoever.

Fatty was secretly clenching his fists. He knew that Fang Mu was Meng Hao, which caused him extreme anxiety inside, especially considering that he could not possibly charge forward and warn Meng Hao about what was happening.

Li Shiqi’s eyes glittered slightly as she watched Fang Mu on the screen. She then glanced at Ye Feimu, and frowned, as if she wasn’t quite sure the meaning of everything that was happening.

Of course, Meng Hao couldn’t hear any of the commotion which he had caused on the outside, nor would he pay it any heed if he could. He was thoroughly engrossed in concocting his second medicinal pill. Again, his bearing was completely different from before in the second region.

However, the more earnestly he worked, the more derision rose up from the outsiders.

A day later, Chu Yuyan finished her second medicinal pill. Just the same as before, 1,111 stairs appeared. Ye Feimu’s second pill also was completed. When it appeared, a great roaring shook the Heavens and rocked the Earth.

“4,000 stairs!! He’s… he’s no Furnace Lord! This Violet Furnace Lord Promotion definitely belongs to him!”

Violet Furnace Lord Ye Yuntian chuckled. He looked at Ye Feimu with an expression of deep praise. The other Violet Furnace Lords also looked at him with similar approval. They nodded, slight smiles on their faces.

Their praise grew even more obvious when they saw Ye Feimu once again crush the medicinal pill. The 4,000 stairs disappeared.

“Striving for perfection is Ye Feimu’s weakness, and also his strength,” said Ye Yuntian, smiling. “This kid’s determination is something you rarely see in others. I hope that after becoming a Violet Furnace Lord, he will retain his tenacity, and use it to tread into realms we have not.”

As they discussed the matter, An Zaihai sat there silently. He wasn’t looking at any of the other candidates, only Meng Hao. Slowly, the shock in his eyes grew more intense.

Fatty gave an inward sigh as he looked at the screen with Meng Hao on it. “There’s no way to compare. Ah, Meng Hao, why did you have to encounter somebody so inhuman? How can you possibly compare to this Ye guy…?”

As the discussions proceeded, the other alchemists on Violet East Mountain continued to produce medicinal pills, Meng Hao included. When Meng Hao’s pill was completed, a roaring sound filled the air, and a second stair appeared. This immediately caused muffled laughter to rise up from the Cultivators on the outside world. They seemed to find the appearance of a single stone step to be quite amusing.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he began to concoct his third minor pill.

Time passed by slowly. Meng Hao was by far in last place. In this third region, Chu Yuyan held her spot in first place. She had concocted eight medicinal pills, and was currently working on her ninth.

Up ahead of her on the mountain were 8,888 stone steps. It was an astonishing sight, and was already being given great recognition by the observers in the outside world. She was now being viewed as a possible contender with Ye Feimu.

This was especially the opinion among many alchemists of the East Pill Division. Quite a few greatly admired Chu Yuyan, and as they watched, their eyes burned with passion and hope as they wished her luck.

Besides Ye Feimu and Meng Hao, among the other candidates was an old man who had concocted thirty pills to produce a total of more than 8,300 stairs. Before, he hadn’t attracted much attention, but now, of course, people were talking about him.

He had produced a lot of medicinal pills, however, all of them stemmed from his own Dao of alchemy.

As for the others, anywhere from 5,000 to more than 7,000 stairs had appeared. Meng Hao only had… 8 steps.…

A single stone step had appeared each time he concocted one of the eight minor pills. However, Meng Hao was not in last place; rather, Ye Feimu was.

Of course, nobody actually believed him to be in last place. He was currently concocting a pill for the ninth time. The previous pill, the eighth one, had immediately produced 9,300 stairs. That, of course, had caused a commotion in the outside world. Surprise had even been visible in the eyes of some of the Patriarchs from the outside Sects.

Slowly, everyone on the mountaintop grew quiet, settling their Qi and calming their minds. They looked at the paths on the eight screens in front of them; they could clearly see that the moment of truth had arrived in the third region test. Any moment now, people would begin to pass onto the next region.

After enough time passed for two incense sticks to burn, Chu Yuyan’s medicinal pill emerged. This was her ninth pill; immediately a black-colored cloud appeared above her pill furnace, the size of a hand. Electricity crackled, circling around above the pill furnace. The pill furnace emitted a roaring sound, and the ninth pill flew out; the path up ahead of Chu Yuyan immediately extended.

It grew from 8,888 stone stairs all the way to 9,999!

The absolute limit of stairs was 10,000. Chu Yuyan had created an incredible number of stairs. Reaching such an achievement in the Violet Furnace Lord trial by fire proved that she was an outstanding talent, worthy of being a Violet Furnace Lord.

Immediately, conversations broke out in the world outside.

“A Tribulation cloud appeared! That only happens for the most difficult to concoct medicinal pills…. Chu Yuyan is definitely worthy to be Grandmaster Pill Demon’s apprentice! This is clear proof that she is qualified to be a Violet Furnace Lord!”

“9,999 stairs! Chu Yuyan’s skill in the Dao of alchemy is shocking.”

All eyes were on her, including master alchemists, Furnace Lords, Violet Furnace Lords, Sect Patriarchs!

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# Chapter 286: The Most Powerful!

Chu Yuyan took a deep breath as she strode forward, walking directly up the stairs she herself had created.

Everyone else was still in the middle of concocting; the old man who had previously been in second place had now created more than 9,000 steps. Barring any unforeseen circumstances, he would be the second to pass through the third region.

However, it was just then that….

A shocking thunderclap sounded out, booming out from within the world of the Celestial Land. Concurrent with the sound of the thunderclap, a Tribulation cloud nearly three hundred meters in diameter appeared above Ye Feimu's pill furnace. The Tribulation cloud roiled as it appeared in mid-air, and thunderclaps echoed out in roars. It seemed it desired to destroy the medicinal pill which had just been concocted.

The thunder existed only within the world of the Celestial Land. Outside on Eastern Emergence Mountain, where the audience was, the weather was sunny with a gentle breeze. Everyone was closely watching Ye Feimu's screen and the Tribulation clouds within the Celestial Land.

Intense praise filling his eyes, Violet Furnace Lord Ye Yuntian lightly said, "Tribulation clouds. It seems the pill Feimu concocted has provoked Pill Tribulation."

Just as the Tribulation cloud was about to explode downward, Pill Demon lifted his hand and waved toward the screen. Immediately, the Tribulation cloud of Ye Feimu quivered and then began to disperse. The lightning within completely dissipated.

At the same moment, Ye Feimu’s pill furnace exploded with a loud sound as a medicinal pill emerged. It was a nine-colored pill, containing all the nine colors of the Nine Treasures Pearl Curtain plant flowers. However, it also used their medicinal properties to produce a tenth medicinal property!

As soon as the pill appeared, the stairs in front of Ye Feimu boomed. Step after step appeared; ten, one hundred, one thousand… all the way to ten thousand steps!

Chu Yuyan would have had to produce more steps to make her stairs absolutely complete.

In the blink of an eye, Ye Feimu had risen from last place, to first!

He flicked his sleeve, and the pill furnace disappeared. As he proceeded up the stairs, he immediately became the focus of all attention.

“Such a Chosen of the Dao of alchemy… ten thousand stairs!”

“Who else could possibly be the Violet Furnace Lord other than him….”

“It seems that he really and truly is… Grandmaster Pill Cauldron!”

It just so happened that at this exact moment, Meng Hao’s ninth minor pill emerged, adding one more stair to his path. Now there were nine. When compared with ten thousand, nine stone steps were almost too insignificant to mention.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever. He had no idea what was happening on the outside; he had no clue regarding the commotion caused by Chu Yuyan and Ye Feimu. His expression was as earnest as ever as he took his nine minor pills and placed them all into the pill furnace. He took a deep breath and, eyes filled with determination, began to concoct… a pill which conformed to his own Dao of alchemy! A pill which would be in accord with his skill, and would be a return to the simplicity of nature.

As the pills entered the pill furnace, Meng Hao’s eyes slowly closed. His hands pushed out into the air as he began to concoct.

Meng Hao’s actions on the screen went relatively unnoticed thanks to the shocking scene caused by Ye Feimu. The only people who seemed to notice were Fatty, Han Bei and An Zaihai.

Ye Feimu walked slowly up the steps, looking every bit like a Chosen. His screen was the only focal point atop the mountain; the only one who could remotely compete was Chu Yuyan.

As far as the others, they had fallen far behind. After the time it takes an incense stick to burn, the old man who had been in second place finally concocted enough pills; the 9,937th step appeared. The pill furnace in front of him exploded, and the Nine Treasures Pearl Curtain plant disappeared. This indicated that he had reached his peak.

He took a deep breath as he began to ascend the stairs.

Behind him, time continued to pass. The remaining candidates continued to persevere; to be able to participate in this trial by fire indicated that these were no ordinary alchemists. They might be a bit slower, but even the least among the group was able to create more than 9,600 stairs before his pill furnace exploded and he proceeded up.

Unfortunately, missing hundreds of stairs in the Violet East Mountain trial by fire was an indication of failure. Several people were forced pale-faced to admit defeat when they reached the end of the stairs they had created. Only a middle-aged man happened to succeed.

Of the group of eight just now, only five were left. Four had already succeeded; only Meng Hao was still concocting a medicinal pill.

Other than Fatty, Han Bei and An Zaihai, no one else was paying any attention to him at all. All of them were looking at the screens of Ye Feimu and Chu Yuyan.

Until… about half an incense stick later, the faint sound of thunder suddenly echoed out. This attracted some attention; almost immediately, more thunder could be heard, this time much clearer. Everyone suddenly began to look around, confused, trying to figure out which screen the sound was coming from.

When their eyes finally came to rest on Meng Hao’s screen, thunder pealed out for the third time, echoing out loud enough to shake the Heavens and rock the Earth, filling the entire world of the Celestial Land which could be seen on the screens. More and more people turned their gazes from Ye Feimu and Chu Yuyan, to look at Meng Hao.

Immediately, they began to gape.

This was because, although Meng Hao’s expression was one of unprecedented concentration, above the pill furnace in front of him was a roiling black cloud three hundred meters in diameter. It looked exactly the same as the cloud which had appeared above Ye Feimu.

“Fang Mu….”

“Don’t tell me he also concocted some type of astonishing pill?”

As astonishment spread throughout the mountain peak, An Zaihai began to breathe heavily, and his eyes shone with an incredible light. His unusual expression immediately attracted the notice of the other Violet Furnace Lords.

Suddenly, another incredible peal of thunder boomed out, far more intense than the previous three, by at least ten times. Meng Hao’s pill furnace trembled violently. Up above, the Tribulation cloud rapidly expanded, from three hundred meters to three thousand!

This caused shock to fill the hearts of everyone in the outside world. But then, a fifth, a sixth and then a seventh Heaven-shaking thunderclap rang out!

The thunder shook the Celestial Land, and the screens began to flicker, as if they were experiencing some sort of interference. Tribulation clouds swelled outward; by now, they were several tens of thousands of meters in diameter. The scene caused the minds of the Cultivators in the outside world to reel.

“What’s… what’s going on…?”

“What medicinal pill did he concoct to cause this?! Ye Feimu’s pill didn’t provoke such shocking Tribulation clouds!!”

Everyone was in an uproar; it was impossible for them not to be astonished. Before, they had believed the scene caused by Ye Feimu to be incredible, but now they were struck dumb. This… was truly incredible!

The thunder echoed out throughout almost the entire world of the Celestial Land. The sound of thunder rose up to the Heavens. Now, it wasn’t just Meng Hao’s screen that was flickering, but all of the screens. They distorted and twisted so violently that it seemed they might rip apart and disintegrate.

Even more shocking was that clearly visible to everyone on the mountaintop outside, the rest of the candidates had all stopped in their tracks. Their expressions flickered and began to fill with disbelief.

Obviously, all of them could hear the thunder and see the Tribulation clouds. This caused shock to fill everyone’s hearts. Ye Feimu’s pill had definitely caused an extraordinary sight. However, only he had been able to see it. The candidates were all within the Celestial Land, and on the same Mountain. However, they were treading different paths, so no matter what the others did, they wouldn’t be able to see or sense it.

But right now, a shocking scene was unfolding. The booming caused by Meng Hao’s medicinal pill was breaking through any such barriers, making it so that all the candidates could see the Tribulation clouds.

“How could this be happening…?”

“Furnace Lord Fang Mu, what… what is he doing…?”

Fatty stared open mouthed, panting. Suddenly, an excited glow filled his eyes, and his body began to tremble. Inside, he was yelling out, crying for

Meng Hao to become famous. It seemed possible that he was more excited at the moment than Meng Hao was.

Han Bei’s eyes glittered; her expression quickly returned to normal, but inside, she was thinking that this was what she had expected of Fang Mu.

An Zaihai sat there cross-legged, his eyes shining with an intense light. All of the other Violet Furnace Lords were staring with unprecedented concentration at what was happening.

It was at this moment that the ninth thunderclap rose up.

Its appearance caused the entire world of the Celestial Land to quake. Atop Violet East Mountain, Chu Yuyan, Ye Feimu and the others all felt the shaking.

Up above them, they saw the sky completely covered with endless Tribulation clouds. They were huge and never-ending, thick, black and stacked in layers. As the booming rattled out, an uncountable amount of lightning bolts began to surge about in the clouds. The power on display was astonishing.

“Who is doing this…?” murmured Chu Yuyan, her face pale. It was as if she had lost her mind; she had no way to see who had instigated such a shocking scene. The first person who appeared in her mind was Ye Feimu. However, for some unknown reason, his image was suddenly replaced by someone who made her feel incredibly irritated.

Ye Feimu’s face drained of blood. He stared mutely up into the sky, one expression after another flickering across his face. Disbelief, confusion and a variety of other complicated expressions appeared. His mind was suddenly blank.

What happened next was even more astonishing. As the ninth thunderclap could be heard, it wasn’t Ye Feimu, Chu Yuyan and the others on East Violet Mountain who were shocked…. Completely unpredictable was that this ninth thunderclap influenced the outside world! In the sky above Eastern Emergence Mountain, black, roiling clouds suddenly appeared.

Within them, lighting danced back and forth, and a rumbling roaring could be heard.

When this happened, An Zaihai leaped to his feet. The other Violet Furnace Lords who sat around him also had expressions of shock written on their faces. Pill Demon sat there quietly for a moment, then lifted up his right hand and flicked his finger.

The same move he had used to dissipate Ye Feimu’s Tribulation clouds, was enough to get rid of the thunder and Tribulation in the outside world. However, the Tribulation clouds within the Celestial Land were still there.

Seeing that the Tribulation clouds were about to reach the point where they would erupt, Meng Hao began to sweat. However, his eyes filled with determination. After the space of a few breaths passed, he growled then pushed out both hands toward the pill furnace.

As he did this, a roaring sound filled the air. Popping sounds rang out as cracks spread out over the surface of the pill furnace. A moment later, it exploded, and a colorless medicinal pill flew out. Suddenly, the Tribulation clouds up above began to shrink in on themselves. A massive lightning bolt, as thick as a person, began to descend.

Pill Demon’s eyes glittered, and he said, “Disperse!”

It was one word. However, it caused the entire world of the Celestial Land to suddenly tremble as if some new intangible rule had been proclaimed within it. This rule seemed as if it could affect everything inside; it warped the sky, changed the lightning bolt, covered the Tribulation clouds, causing them to suddenly… disappear. It was as if the sky had instantly been replaced.

Meng Hao stretched out his hand and grasped the semi-transparent medicinal pill.

Everything was still and quiet in the outside world. All eyes were glued to Meng Hao’s screen, and his right hand. The master alchemists, Furnace Lords, Violet Furnace Lords, and all the disciples of the visiting Sects, even the late Nascent Soul stage sub-Patriarchs, were all staring at the same thing.

What they wanted to know was, considering this medicinal pill had elicited such a shocking reaction, something that had even rippled out into the outside world….

How many stone steps would it create?!

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# Chapter 287: Creating Something out of Nothing

A moment passed, and there were still nine stone steps. Not one more, not one less.

Nonetheless, no one made a single comment. This was because… Meng Hao opened his hand, and the transparent medicinal pill therein floated up to hover in front of him. Then… it blossomed with nine, glowing colored lights. The light emanated out from the pill, slowly forming into the shape of a Nine Treasures Pearl Curtain Plant!

The plant was vivid and lifelike, and the instant it appeared, it attracted everyone's attention. The gazes were filled with countless thoughts. Shock, amazement, and disbelief filled everyone's minds until they were complete blanks.

An Zaihai's voice broke the silence. "This is… creating something out of nothing!!" He was panting as he once again rose to his feet. Earlier, he had guessed that this might happen, but to see it with his own eyes sent his mind reeling and shook his heart.

Normally he would never have made such an outburst. He was an alchemist, and stubborn pursuit was part of the Dao of alchemy. He was the type of eccentric who would never reveal his emotions regardless of whether he was happy or furious. But in this regard, his sentiments ruled him.

"A great Dao of alchemy. Returning to the simplicity of nature! Creating something out of nothing!!" As An Zaihai's voice echoed out, everyone watched the screen as Meng Hao lifted his foot onto the first step. He walked slowly up the nine steps, then raised his foot out into the emptiness. As it descended, a tenth step appeared. He walked forward. As he did, more steps appeared beneath his feet.

The limitation of number had already been exceeded; this was a realm far past that of Ye Feimu. Most people didn't even understand such a realm; however, the eight Violet Furnace Lords did!

His heart trembling, mind reeling, Lin Hailong was the second to rise to his feet. With a gasp, he said, "This… this is… Fang Mu didn't just concoct a pill, he concocted a seed! A Nine Treasures Pearl Curtain Plant seed!!" Shock filled his eyes. "It's impossible… He took an illusory model based on the Dao of alchemy, and then concocted a real seed!!

"If you plant this seed, there is a high likelihood that within a few years, a Nine Treasures Pearl Curtain Plant will grow. But… but… the ingredients he used were all illusory, not real! This realm… it is creating something out of nothing!"

After An Zaihai and Lin Hailong finished speaking, silence reigned. The master alchemists sat mutely in their places. The Furnace Lords were breathing heavily. All of the people who had been laughing at him earlier now felt their minds spinning, as if they had been slapped in the face by an enormous, invisible palm. The slap had both cleared their minds and sent them reeling at the same time.

After the space of a few breaths passed, an incredible hubbub broke out.

"Creating something out of nothing? Fang Mu was able to take something that didn't really exist and use it to make something real? What level of skill in the Dao of alchemy does that represent? It's…."

"Is Ye Feimu the strongest? Or is this Fang Mu even better…?"

The people from the visiting Sects weren't able to discern what was going on. The only thing that was abundantly clear was the shock they saw on the faces of the Violet Furnace Lords.

Of their number, only Ye Yuntian had a gloomy look on his face. He frowned as he looked at Meng Hao's screen.

A breathtaking medicinal pill!

The disciples from the visiting Sects were shocked by the scene playing out in front of them. Truth be told, they had been shocked over and over from the moment this trial by fire began. However, this moment was the most shocking yet!

Creating something from nothing. Concocting pills in a Celestial Land. Refining the rules of alchemy. Turning an illusory Nine Treasures Pearl Curtain plant into an actual seed that could be planted. All of these things caused waves of shock to fill their minds.

As of now, they had forgotten Chu Yuyan and Ye Feimu. All eyes were fixed like glue onto Meng Hao. He was the focus of attention of all the people here.

Fatty was panting. Han Bei's eyes shone with a strange light as she looked at Meng Hao. Li Shiqi's expression was one of fascination. She herself had never imagined that Alchemist Fang Mu would concoct a pill such as this.

Chen Fan had never been very interested in Alchemy. But he gaped in astonishment, and admiration grew within his heart for Fang Mu.

Patriarch Violet Sieve from the Black Sieve Sect laughed. "Starting today, the name of Alchemist Fang Mu will be known to everyone within the Southern Domain."

Sub-Patriarchs from the other Clans laughed and said similar things. When their words entered Ye Yuntian's ears, his face grew unsightly, and unconsciously he glanced toward his Master, Pill Demon. Pill Demon's face was expressionless, which caused Ye Yuntian to sigh with relief.

Turning his head to look at the other Violet Furnace Lords, he said, "Unless Master makes a specific choice, then everyone has a chance. Fang Mu may have some unique skills in pill concocting, but… the general trend is clearly favoring Feimu to become the next Violet Furnace Lord!” He gave meaningful looks to those among the Violet Furnace Lords with whom he was close. He felt a bit more calm after that, and when he looked back at Meng Hao’s screen, his expression was the same as ever. His heart, however, was filled with rancor and cold laughter.

Meng Hao had no way to know what was happening in the outside world. However, from the moment he had begun to concoct the pill, he had decided to make a big scene. At the moment, he was walking up the mountain path. Ahead of him was nothingness, but every step he took, more stone steps would appear to support him.

Time passed. The buzz of conversation still filled the outside world when Meng Hao stepped onto the final stone step of the third region. He wasn’t really sure how many total steps he had traversed. If he thought about it, then perhaps it was more than ten thousand.

Meng Hao didn’t actually care about a specific number; it wasn’t important.

“Who was it…?” thought Chu Yuyan, her breathing heavy. She still wasn’t sure who had caused the shocking scene just now. Whoever it was, that person was on a different path. Unless they were at the peak of mountain, it would be very difficult to see anything. At the moment, the first person that came to mind was, again, Ye Feimu.

But then, she hesitated. Suddenly she wasn’t so sure. Something inside of her was telling her that it probably wasn’t Ye Feimu. And yet from her perspective, other than Ye Feimu, none of the other candidates, including herself, could possibly have done something like that.

As she thought, determination filled her eyes. She turned and continued upward.

The most conflicted of all was none other than Ye Feimu. He stood mutely on the stone steps, thinking for a very long time.

“Who was it? What pill did they concoct…? I concocted one medicinal pill, the pinnacle! I can’t believe that someone else’s decision regarding the Dao of alchemy could surpass my own. In the third region, I definitely produced the most steps with the least amount of medicinal pills! I only concocted one! This person could not possibly have outdone me!” Ye Feimu’s pride caused pain in his heart, but it quickly vanished. “I must be in first place!”

His eyes glittering, he raced forward, hurrying toward the end of the third region. In his preparations to participate in this trial by fire, Violet Furnace Lord Ye Yuntian had actually violated Sect protocol by secretly telling him in detail about his own experience in the promotion trial by fire.

For example, Ye Feimu knew that at the end of the third region, it was possible to see who had passed through the region, what method they had used to do so, and what position they were granted by the Immortal Land.

His eyes filled with stubbornness, Ye Feimu hurried on, panting.

In addition to Chu Yuyan and Ye Feimu, there was also the old man and the middle-aged man. They were were also racing forward.

Time passed. The first person to reach the end of the third region was Chu Yuyan. She leaped across the gap created by the last few missing steps. Then, a tremor ran through her body. She had just seen the boulder marking the beginning of the fourth region. The first thing which entered her vision was not the requirements for concocting a pill, but rather, the rankings from the previous region, which floated in the air in front of the boulder.

In third place, was her own name, Chu Yuyan. Next to it were written the numbers 9,999!

She gasped, then looked up toward second place. It was Ye Feimu’s name, and the number was 10,000.

“Ten thousand…. He really does deserve to be called Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. Ten thousand steps marks perfection in the third region. However… how could he possibly have only placed second….” She stared at the name for a moment, and her heart began to pound. Slowly, her gaze moved up until she saw the listing for first place. Instantly, a roaring sound filled her head, and her eyes shone with disbelief.

“How could it be him…?” She was suddenly out of sorts. The boulder was spewing out massive amounts of Violet Qi, but she didn’t notice. All she could do was stare at the rankings.

“Fang Mu!” muttered Ye Feimu, his body trembling slightly. His eyes filled with disbelief and, even more so, shame. If it had been Chu Yuyan who beat him, he could have accepted it. But instead, it was someone he completely looked down upon. Furthermore, that person had surpassed him in the third region.

As far as he was concerned this was a complete humiliation. Actually, from the moment Fang Mu had been raised to Furnace Lord, he had aroused the dislike of the other Furnace Lords. That was especially true for Ye Feimu. He held nothing but contempt for the manner in which Fang Mu had received his promotion.

Next, Ye Feimu’s body trembled, and began to fill with rage. This was because he had just seen the numbers written after Fang Mu’s name. 10.

“Ten stone steps…. Ten stone steps…? I created a perfect set of ten thousand stone steps! How could a trifling ten stone steps even compare! Just what pill did this Fang Mu concoct?” Ye Feimu wouldn’t go so far as to question the fairness of the trial by fire, but inside, he just couldn’t accept it.

By now, he had already put the pieces together, and realized who the Pill Tribulation had come for.

Violet Qi poured out from the boulder, but Ye Feimu felt a sense of irony. His eyes filled with a cold light.

Meng Hao stood in front of the fourth region boulder, looking at the rankings. His right hand lifted up, causing the image to scatter. Massive amounts of Violet Qi poured out, dense to the extreme. Those watching in the outside world could easily see the boundless extent of the Violet Qi, and how much it exceeded that of Chu Yuyan’s and Ye Feimu’s

Several hours passed, during which time, this point was even further impressed upon all onlookers.

Meng Hao’s black pill furnace absorbed the Violet Qi, and as it did, its color slowly changed. Now, it was no longer pitch black, but tinged with violet. At first glance, it would be hard to tell whether it was black or violet. However, the pill furnace was now struggling about half as much as it had before, and no longer as fiercely.

About an hour later, the Violet Qi disappeared. Text gradually appeared on the boulder, revealing the requirements for the final region.

Become an apprentice!

Seeing these words caused Meng Hao’s vision to suddenly blur and twist. The mountain in front of him was no longer a mountain. The sky above… was no longer the same sky!

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# Chapter 288: Peach Blossom

The mountain vanished. Far, far off in the distance, a mountain range was just barely visible.

The sky, was no longer blue. Instead, it was as red as flame, because it was dusk.

The dusk carried with it the afterglow of the setting sun, which trickled across the land to blanket over a small county-level city. The walls surrounding the city had existed for many years, which was clear from their ancient appearance. They were covered with blotches and marks, evidence of the passage of time.

Atop the walls, a few guards lazed about. Occasionally the faint sounds of their laughter and chatting would drift down into the bordello below. There was a new girl in town, and their laughter contained the beauty of anticipation which comes in life.

Horse carts lined up to enter through the city gate; atop each cart sat a driver brandishing a whip and bellowing out directions to his horses as they ambled toward the city center.

The sun was setting, but oppressive heat still held sway over the land, turning it into something like an oven that wanted to bake the earth.

There was no wind or rain.

The only thing that existed was arid heat.

This walled city was not very large; it was only a county after all. People walked the streets in groups of two or three, cooling themselves with fans, occasionally cursing the weather.

The most lively places in the town were the teahouses, where a cup of cold tea could dispel a bit of the heat. On a sweltering summer evening like this, gossiping with friends and neighbors there was the primary pastime of the populace.

Other than the teahouses was the town bordello, which was a place for rich people. Many men who passed by couldn’t restrain themselves from glancing up at the gorgeously dressed young ladies who leaned against the wooden shutters up above. It was enough to make any man’s heart burn, and then cause him to think about how unbearable the weather was.

If a man’s wife walked with him past the bordello, her face would twist with jealousy and she would hastily pull him away. A more shrewish wife might look up at the licentious, headstrong girls up above and curse them a few times.

It was said that the girls in the bordello were as delicate as flowers and as refined as jade, almost inhuman. Inside, the rooms were filled with ice cubes and cute servant girls with fans. Because of this, rich customers had the luxury of enjoying an ice-cold breeze.

Supposedly, the bordello also abounded with delicious food and wine…. Every man wished to go there, either for the girls, the food or the ice cubes.

“Look, the point is, this place is awesome!” said Meng Hao in a low, earnest voice to the two kids next to him, clenching his fists tightly. Both the kids were around the same age as him, twelve or thirteen years old. “You guys just don’t have any sense of brotherhood!”

Meng Hao put his arms around their shoulders. One was skinny, the other chubby. Both looked excited, but at the same time, a bit shy and nervous.

Meng Hao gave them a very serious look, as if he were a Sect Patriarch arranging to hand over a legacy. “Tomorrow, I, young master, am being sent away to boarding school. From now on I’m handing over the title of Eastern Emergence County’s #1 Bully to you two. Don’t forget, you can’t do anything to ruin young master’s reputation!”

If… if they were in some sacred location, then perhaps his words would carry some power. But unfortunately, the three of them were currently lying on their bellies atop a wall.

What was inside the wall was nothing other than the bordello, and the wall they were on surrounded it. Further inside was a two-story building, connected to another building which filled the front of the courtyard. From their position on the wall, they could clearly see the shadows of men and women inside the second story windows. The sound of chatting and laughter drifted out.

The fat kid, whose face was covered with freckles, excitedly said, “Young master Fang, don’t worry. The name of the #1 Bully in Eastern Emergence County will always belong to you. As for us two, #2 and #3 Bullies, we will definitely maintain your reputation!” The skinny kid next to him nodded enthusiastically.

“Good, I know I can trust you two,” Meng Hao replied solemnly. “However, you still need your gang initiation plaques. Today, your final test has arrived. Now pay attention. Soon, someone is gonna come out. When that happens, you have to throw these bricks as hard as you can!”

Each of the kids held a brick which was about the size of their own hand.

“That damned bastard!” said Meng Hao through gritted teeth. “He dares to go chasing after my Peach Blossom!? Young master is definitely going to find out who exactly it is who has the gall!” He glared at the second story of the building. Panting, he continued, “Peach Blossom promised me that she would wait until I grew up, and then she would sleep with me. Who could have guessed that some damned son of a b*tch would dare to go pick on her!” His heart filled with rage. When the other two kids saw the look in his eyes, their hearts filled with intense admiration.

“He definitely deserves to be the Elder Brother,” they thought. “The #1 Bully in Eastern Emergence County has a mistress. He’s for sure the only twelve year old kid in the entire county who could pull that off!” They exchanged a glance, and their expressions grew more fanatical. As far as they were concerned, anyone who could enter the legendary bordello and get a mistress, had skill that reached to the Heavens. To be able to talk about it openly made them feel even more proud.

Soon, enough time had passed for an incense stick to burn. Evening had fallen, and the moon was rising. The second floor balcony door opened, and a beautifully dressed young woman led a middle-aged man out by the arm. He appeared to be drunk, and they talked in soft tones as they emerged.

The moonlight was thin, and the sky somewhat dark, making it difficult to see their exact appearance. However, Meng Hao could instantly recognize Peach Blossom. Immediately, his eyes grew red, and he shouted, “You crusty son of a b*tch, young master’s gonna beat you to death! You dare to see my Peach Blossom!” With a howl, he hurled the brick. With equally vicious howls, the two kids also threw their bricks.

“Young master is gonna… huh?” Meng Hao was just about to charge into the courtyard when his body began to tremble. The drunk, middle-aged man easily dodged the three bricks and then raised his head furiously. As soon as he saw Meng Hao, he gave a slight smile. Then, his fury burned hotter.

“You little bastard!” he cried. “This is mutiny!”

Meng Hao instantly began to shiver.

“Father….” All of his ardor and sincerity evaporated, as if freezing water had been poured over his body. He immediately leaped off of the wall and began to run. His two sidekicks’ faces went pale with fear, and their calves burned as they raced off.

“We’re finished. Finished! Fang Mu’s father is the former #1 Bully in the county! Now he’s a constable, so he can kill people without blinking an eye…!” The two kids’ faces were as pale as death as they fled.

After the three of them vanished, the middle-aged man stood in the courtyard, both angry and amused. The idea of a son making a move on his father was both infuriating and hilarious.

“That little bastard never studies and has no skills whatsoever. Sending him to study in boarding school is definitely the right decision!”

Late that night, Meng Hao ambled through the streets, heaving continuous sighs. When he finally reached the main gate of his house, he looked at the lights shining from within and gave a deep frown.

“Why did it have to be dad…? Oh, mother, you left too early. If you hadn’t gone, things wouldn’t be like this. I’m going to go have a few words with him for you!” He had just pushed open the gate leading into the courtyard, when suddenly he began to cry.

“Mother, I miss you! Mother, you visited me in my dreams last night and told me to go visit Peach Blossom…. Mother….”

“Shut up!” bellowed an angry voice from within the house. The door opened to reveal Meng Hao’s father, the middle-aged man from before. His brow was furrowed, and he looked haplessly at Meng Hao. “Quit your faking! Why aren’t you in bed yet? I’m taking you to the boarding school early in the morning to meet your new teacher.”

“I’m not going!” cried Meng Hao, taking a step back. “I want to go to regular school! All the people in the city are going to laugh at me!”

“You little bastard. Still up to the same old tricks at your age….” The man frowned, then suddenly rushed forward and grabbed Meng Hao, who was just getting ready to run away. He lifted him into the air and spanked him on the bottom a few times.

The slapping sounds rang out clearly, but there was no pain. Things had been like this for Meng Hao since he was young. He and his father had only each other to depend on. Every time they had some sort of disagreement, his father would put on the appearance of being very strict, but couldn’t actually bear to hit him hard.

“What good is regular school?” his father roared. “You need to learn to respect the teachers and their teachings! You need to learn about ethics! Are you gonna go, or not!?”

“I’m not going!” cried Meng Hao, his eyes rolling.

“You…!” Meng Hao’s father raised his hand high into the air.

Meng Hao hurriedly said, “If you promise to never go see Peach Blossom again, then I’ll go…. You can go see anybody else, just not her!” He was afraid his father might actually start to spank him hard this time.

Meng Hao’s father wasn’t sure whether to laugh or cry. He lowered his hand, placing it onto Meng Hao’s head and tousling it gently.

“Alright. You’re growing up, kid, and I can see that you have a fertile imagination. Fine. From now on, I’ll never see Peach Blossom again. I’ll leave her for you. After you grow up, I’ll arrange for her to be your concubine!”

“Really?” said Meng Hao, his eyes growing bright.

“You’re still not in bed?!” He glared at Meng Hao as he released him. Meng Hao beamed with joy as he ran into the house, threw off his clothes, and jumped into bed. He had some beautiful dreams that night.

Early the next morning, when the sky was just beginning to grow light, Meng Hao’s eyes were still blurry as his father dressed him.

Father glanced at son, and could see that he clearly hadn’t gotten enough sleep. A solemn expression covered his face, as well as love and kindness, something Meng Hao didn’t often see.

He reached down and picked up Meng Hao, just like he had when he was young. Meng Hao’s head fell onto his shoulder, and he continued to sleep. Meng Hao’s father grabbed the gift he planned to present to the teacher, and then left.

Along the way, his gait was a bit unsteady. Carrying such a large boy wasn’t an easy task.

An hour later, they reached the main gate of the house of a famous old man who lived in the east part of the city. Meng Hao’s father woke Meng Hao up and then put him down. Then, he knocked on the door, and entered the courtyard.

Meng Hao was left yawning out in the courtyard as his father entered the house, so he didn’t see his father respectfully clasping hands and making other imploring gestures.

Not much time passed before his father emerged. Next to him was an old man with a full head of white hair. His features were ancient, but full of vigor. It gave him a noble and prestigious bearing, much different from that of an ordinary person.

This was especially true of his eyes. They were filled with profundity, as if they contained stars within them. Anyone who looked at them would be entranced. The old man gazed down at Meng Hao.

This gaze seemed to be able to see lives that had been lived, and lives yet to be lived.

This gaze seemed capable of piercing through the haze to see all three lives: past, present and future.

This gaze made it seem as if this young man’s entire life had been lived for the purpose of coming here and kowtowing three times to become his apprentice.

A long moment passed, and the old man nodded slightly.

Meng Hao’s father looked down at Meng Hao and said, “A Master is like a father. Fang Mu, I want you to respect your Master. Respect him even more than you respect me! If you can’t do that, then you aren’t my son!” With that, he left.

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# Chapter 289: Which Path to Choose?

Meng Hao gaped at his father. He’d forgotten how long it had been since he’d seen him act so strictly. The seriousness of his tone instantly caused him to wake up.

“A Master is like a father….” Meng Hao watched his father’s back as he left. He clearly was wearing a simple, unlined robe. However, for some reason, it seemed to Meng Hao as if he were surrounded by a violet wind.

The wind seemed to shatter some barrier in his mind; suddenly an image appeared. It was his father. The image was blurry, but he could tell that his father was looking at him and sighing softly.

His mother was there too, gazing at him warmly. It looked like there were tears in her eyes.

For some reason… there was also a Tower of Tang, as well as many, many complicated memories. Meng Hao thought for a long moment before shaking his head roughly and turning to look off in the distance. There, in the middle of the county, was a very tall tower. It was… a Tower of Tang.

“That wasn’t there before, was it…? No, it never was.” A confused look appeared on Meng Hao’s face.

In the midst of his vacantness, an ancient-sounding voice reached his ears. “This isn’t a boarding school.”

As his father disappeared into the distance, Meng Hao turned to look at the old man who stood in front of him. Now that his father was gone, only he and the old man were there in the coutryard.

The old man looked down at Meng Hao, then slowly continued, “Up to now, I’ve had seventeen apprentices. A few ended up returning to dust. A few left and forged their own path. There were also a few… who are still pondering what they wish to pursue. In fact, when you think about it, some don’t really even count as my apprentices. As of today, you are my eighteenth apprentice. However, I’m actually going to call you… Little Ninth.” As the man spoke in his ancient voice, all the sound in the air around Meng Hao seemed to fade until he was focused completely on the old man.

“You have a Junior Sister. She became my apprentice before you, but in a bit of an unorthodox fashion, so she ranks below you. She is surnamed Chu.”

Meng Hao wasn’t sure why, but he felt nervous. He didn’t know whether to get onto his knees and kowtow, or bend from the waist with clasped hands. He was completely ill at ease.

“I haven’t used my own name for a long time,” said the old man. “Outsiders usually call me by my alchemist name, whereas friends usually call me Mr. East. I’ve never been married, so I have no heir. My apprentices are my heirs. Eventually, you will pass on my teachings, and the mark I have made on the world, will be extended by you. As far as I am concerned, you apprentices are… my closest relatives.” The old man gazed at Meng Hao, looking very majestic. However, his eyes were warm and filled with kindness and love. It seemed almost as if he had been watching Meng Hao for years, and had been testing him for a very long time. “From now on, I’m your Master!”

Without thinking, Meng Hao responded, “Respect Master, venerate the Dao. Master is like a father. I….”

“There’s no need to say such things,” said the old man, his eyes gleaming with a keen light. “As long as they exist in your heart, that is enough. Little Nine, kneel!” In the blink of an eye, his entire person seemed to become the pinnacle of Heaven and Earth.

Meng Hao couldn’t really describe exactly what he was feeling. It was as if in this instant, the old man had become the Heavens. And yet, he was not cold, but instead filled with deep kindness and warmth. It was as if he were a mountain that could shield against wind and rain alike.

Meng Hao bowed his head and got down on his knees.

As he was kneeling, he could not see how everything above him in the sky had stopped moving. The clouds were still. The birds no longer flitted about. The earth did not quake, but everything within the city grew silent.

“As my apprentice, you only kowtow twice in life, at least in the true sense of the word. The first time is upon becoming an apprentice. This kowtow sows Karma with me, whereupon our fates are intertwined. If you do not break this connection, then neither shall I! As for the second kowtow, wait until you come to your senses, then come ask me about it, and I will tell you.

“The first kowtow upon becoming an apprentice is actually divided into three further kowtows, those of the Innocence, the Roaming, and the Sunset Gazing. Your kowtow today is the kowtow of Innocence.”

Meng Hao didn’t really understand. However, he placed his hands onto the ground and kowtowed deeply.

With this kowtow, the sky sprung back into motion. The winds and the clouds swept along. The birds flew!

With this kowtow, the earth shook, as past events flitted dream-like through the minds of all the living creatures.

With this kowtow, past life Karma, future Karma, present life…. If you do not sever it, then I shall not sever it!

The old man laughed contentedly. It echoed about, filled with emotion, satisfaction, kindness and duty.

From this day forward, the young man in front of him was his apprentice. In the future, the young man's every action would be marked by him. From now on he was… the young man's Master!

This is Karma. Karma is not something predestined, but something decided by people. It can be called fate; not fate determined by the Heavens, nor doom from the underworld, but something decided between two people.

One person decides to take another as Master; the other decides to take an apprentice. This creates… Karma!

His voice soft, the old man said, "You must still experience the kowtow of Roaming, and the kowtow of Sunset Gazing. Throughout the process, you will be able to choose from many paths. As for which path you choose… that is your decision. If in the end you are able to perform the kowtow of Sunset Gazing, then that will name us Master and apprentice. No one will ever be able to sever that bond! I will accept no gifts in becoming your Master; I have already accepted everything I need to accept." He reached down and softly tousled Meng Hao's hair. His smile was kind as he helped Meng Hao to his feet.

Meng Hao still didn't really understand. As he stood, he looked at his master, and could feel the kindness and love within him. Beneath the man's gaze, he could also feel a warmth deep inside of himself.

He nodded his head solemnly.

Springs and autumns came and went. Years passed. Meng Hao was now nineteen years old. In the past seven years, he spent most of his time living with Master, studying, observing the cool breeze and the white clouds, gazing up at the moon and the stars.

After reading from many books, he finally understood what it meant to respect Master and venerate the Dao. He also understood that the world was a very large place.

During the seven years, his father had aged quite a bit. Master had grown even older. Peach Blossom's popularity in the bordello waned. Eventually, some moneybags from another county paid her debts and took her as a concubine.

Before she left, she came looking for Meng Hao. It seemed she viewed him as something like a little brother. She spoke some tender words, then, accompanied by Meng Hao’s smile, got into a sedan chair and left Eastern Emergence County.

According to their agreement from years ago, his two friends really did grow up to become the biggest bullies in the county.

Meng Hao, however, no longer called himself a bully. He didn’t wear fancy, expensive clothes, but instead, a simple scholar’s robe.

It was green, just like the greenness of his youth. However, in just the same manner that spring changes into autumn, his face no longer carried the frivolity it used to, but instead, calmness. He liked to think, and to gaze off into the sky, even though he didn’t really know exactly what it was he was looking at.

He liked the wind and the rain. He liked to stand in the pavilion and look at the lightning off in the distance, and hear the thunder. When the rain fell down onto the earth outside, he liked to open up a book and read about how life had changed throughout the ages.

Everything was like a dream. Seven years passed like the falling of a rainstorm. Meng Hao didn’t feel like he had changed much, but from the perspective of others, he had changed quite a bit.

As he watched his Master continue to grow older, he often thought of bringing up the subject of the Roaming. He wanted to climb mountains, travel to distant lands, to see the realities of the world.

But in the end, he looked at the city, his father, and Master, and instead maintained his silence, saying nothing.

A year. Another year… soon, seven more years had passed. During autumn of that year, as the leaves drifted down to the ground, floating in the wind to return to the earth, his father fell sick. One night, a violet wind blew, and his father passed away.

Meng Hao stood in front of his father’s grave, a blank look in his eyes. He vaguely remembered how, fourteen years ago, his father had held him in his arms and taken him to meet Master. In the blink of an eye, fourteen years had passed. Meng Hao stood there silently, sipping from a pot of alcohol.

Finally he turned and left. He found Master, and told him how he desired the Roaming. It was the only dream he possessed now, and had been fermenting in his heart for years.

Before he left, Meng Hao kneeled before Master and kowtowed a second time. This was… the kowtow of Roaming.

Master watched early one morning as Meng Hao shouldered his scholar’s pack and walked off into the distance, framed by the rising sun.

Eventually, Meng Hao looked over his shoulder. By that time, Master was no longer visible. Later, he looked over his shoulder a second time, and even the Tower of Tang couldn’t be seen.

He was thoughtful for a moment, then gradually seemed to come to an understanding. He looked forward once again, and continued to walk off into the distance. He did not look over his shoulder a third time.

He reached a mighty river and encountered a ferryman, with whom he chatted about some of the legends of the river. Supposedly, an Immortal resided somewhere here.

In the books Meng Hao had read, he had occasionally come across the title Immortal. He decided to live next to the river. Unfortunately, in the three years that he did, he never saw an Immortal. What did see, however, was his own inverted reflection in the river waters, a different him.

He saw himself flying in the sky, practicing cultivation in the mountains, and some place called the East Pill Division of the Violet Fate Sect, where he concocted….

It seemed as if all he had to do was jump into the water, and he could become that other person, and this life would be over.

By the time the three years had passed, Meng Hao was twenty nine years old. In the end, he did not jump into the water. Instead, he left the river and travelled far off to another place.

A year later, in the depths of a seemingly endless forest, on a blustery and nearly moonless night, Meng Hao caught sight of woman floating in the air. There was also an abandoned tomb, with no incense burning in front of it. The surrounding forest was pitch black, and Meng Hao was a bit scared. A moment later, he found himself surrounded by countless shadowy forms. Suddenly, a sealing incantation popped into his mind.

He extended his palm, and everything around him vanished.

Starting then, he was very curious about this dark, mysterious forest. He continued to travel about in it, sleeping in thickets when necessary. He saw many, many strange things, including a variety of fantastic fierce and wild beasts.

It took three years to travel through the forest. When he emerged, he looked back, and an absentminded look covered his face. He had the feeling that if he wished, he could stay and become a part of the forest.

In a place like this, a person could become one with Heaven and Earth, and transcend the mortal life.

As Meng Hao gazed at the forest, he thought back to Master's words from twenty-one years ago. There are many paths in life, as to which path he would choose… that was his decision to make.

"This place is not the path I wish to tread." Lost in thought, Meng Hao turned and walked off into the distance.

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# Chapter 290: This Life

Two years later, Meng Hao was thirty-five years old. It had been nine years since he left home. However, during that entire time, he had only lived in two places, the river and the forest.

This year, he ran into a gang of bandits.

Bandits are generally killers, but they didn’t kill Meng Hao. Perhaps it was because of his worn scholar’s robe, or the scholar’s pack that he wore on his back. He certainly looked down on his fortune. The bandit leader was a beautiful, seductive woman. She asked him a single question.

“Can you keep financial records?”

Meng Hao shook his head. However, they took him anyway. They led him to their mountain fort, which was really a stockaded village where more than a thousand people lived. Most of them were the family members of the bandits, including quite a few children.

It was arranged for Meng Hao to become a teacher, which mostly involved instructing the children how to read. He didn’t have to teach anything very complicated. They just needed to be able to read bank notes and understand basic messages, things that any good bandit should be able to do.

This was a requirement laid upon all the bandits by the beautiful bandit Chieftess.

Time trickled by. Meng Hao adapted himself, and quickly felt at home. He taught reading, and looked up at the sky. It was almost like life in Eastern Emergence County. Sometimes he thought of Master, or of his father, and how he hadn’t gone back to sweep his grave for a very long time.

People died every month in the mountain fort. During a three year period, the camp moved locations twice. In the fourth year, the army came. The mountain fort faced overwhelming numbers; at a critical moment of life and death, Meng Hao unhesitatingly proposed using poison.

At the moment, a north wind was blowing, and the army was located to the south.

Meng Hao wasn’t sure why exactly he had thought of using poison. It was just that, in the past few years, he seemed to have an abundance of knowledge in his head. The poison… was of course concocted by Meng Hao.

As the poison powder drifted south with the wind, Meng Hao closed his eyes. A long time later, he heard shouts of rejoicing. It had been a massacre. The mountain village had won.

Meng Hao was thirty-nine years old. That night, during the third watch, something like burning fire burrowed under the covers with him. It was the bandit Chieftess. During the day she was a conservative woman, but right now she was like a beautiful spirit.

Overnight, Meng Hao’s life changed. He was no longer a teacher, but instead, a so-called military adviser. He had never experienced such a life before. It was fresh and exciting. Soon he was forty years old. He was past the prime of life when the blood boiled. And yet all of this was… addicting.

Killing. Plundering. For three years, no blood physically stained Meng Hao’s hands. However, with his assistance, the number of lives taken by the bandits increased by tenfold.

That winter, Meng Hao finally got fed up with it all. He had not chosen this life, and he wanted to leave. But by now, the mountain fort had grown very large. When he brought up leaving, the beautiful Chieftess refused to allow it.

But Meng Hao… persisted, and left the mountain fort anyway. Therefore, they tried to chase him down and kill him.

They chased him for a year before finally giving up. In the end, Meng Hao wasn’t killed. Exhausted, he turned, and there, one hundred or so paces behind him, was the Chieftess. She sat atop a horse, staring at him, a big black bow in her hand. She was older, but still beautiful, and within her eyes was a torn expression.

The wind blew past the two of them. Meng Hao shouldered the same scholar’s pack he’d taken with him when he left his hometown, turned around, and walked off into the distance.

No arrow was loosed from the bow.

That year, Meng Hao was forty-three years of age.

Eventually, he caught sight of a Daoist temple located on top of a mountain.

It was autumn, and the leaves rustled as they drifted down onto the green limestone of the temple. The sky was overcast, and occasionally the soft rumbling of thunder could be heard. Rain was coming.

Meng Hao took up residence in the Daoist temple. He watched the Daoists practice their religious cultivation, observed them live their daily lives, and enjoyed a kind of peace he had never experienced before.

He had the unshakeable feeling that his hands were stained dark with blood that just wouldn’t wash off. Perhaps in this place he could discover a way to cleanse it.

Two years later, Meng Hao was forty-five years old. He let out a soft sigh.

“It turns out there’s no way to cleanse it. In that case, I’ll just have to live with it.” Shaking his head, he bid farewell to the Daoist temple, and strode out once again into the world.

Eventually, he reached the capital city. After he had been living there for a year, a bloody war broke out with a neighbouring nation. Despite his age, Meng Hao was forcefully conscripted into the military, and became a soldier in the army. The war between the two countries had just started at this point.

Two years into the war, Meng Hao used some poison that he had concocted to win a battle that shocked both of the countries involved. This sparked his rise to prominence. He was no longer a common soldier, but a Poison Specialist.

Five years into the war, he was a General. He led a special offensive, commanding a force of one hundred thousand soldiers, along with a special unit of one hundred personally trained Poison Specialists.

Eight years into the war, the enemy withdrew from the battlefield and turned to defense. Meng Hao was more than fifty years old, and his name was famous throughout the entire nation. He led his men into the enemy nation in a campaign to destroy them thoroughly.

By the tenth year of the war, Meng Hao was fifty-six. It had been thirty years since he left his hometown. The enemy was destroyed. He returned to his home nation, and was welcomed with grand ceremony.

He was now a legend, and as such, was conferred with the title Royal Advisor.

Everything was like a dream, and Meng Hao wasn’t used to it. Perhaps it was because of him or perhaps because of the nation’s growing power, but after becoming the Royal Advisor, the nation turned into an aggressor. A new round of wars began.

Year after year passed, and eventually, Meng Hao was sixty years old. Once again fed up with everything, he left the army and returned to the areas that had been scorched by the flames of war. Pestilence raged there. He was able to save the lives of a few people, after which, he was the Royal Adviser no longer, but a doctor, the Alchemy Doctor.

He continued to travel, pursuing the dream he’d had when he was young, climbing mountains and traveling to distant lands.

However many people he had killed in the past, that was how many he would save.

His travels lasted for twenty years.

Throughout those twenty years, Meng Hao traveled through countless nations and climbed to the top of who knew how many mountain peaks. He saved many people, and soon, word of “the miraculous hands of the Alchemy Doctor” spread throughout the land.

The year Meng Hao turned eighty, he looked thoughtfully up into the sky. His weathered face was covered with the evidence of a life full of memories.

“I’ve traveled many paths in life,” he thought to himself, “but as for my choice… just what is it…? I did not choose to be the reflection in the water of the river. Nor did I choose to live the peaceful life of a hermit in the forest. I absolutely did not want to live the romantic life of a bandit couple, nor did I choose to become a Daoist priest…. I’ve long since given up on being a Poison Specialist or a Royal Advisor, on waging war…. I thought that my final decision would be to become an Alchemy Doctor. But now that I look back… that’s not my path either. Just what am I pursuing in this life?” He looked up into the sky, but could not think of any answer to the question. The only thing he found was more frustration, and deep exhaustion.

He missed home. That autumn night, he sat beneath the stars looking up at the sky. Next to his foot was a fallen leaf. He didn’t notice as the wind whispered through the forest, picked it up, and returned it back to the tree it had fallen from. At the moment, he was somewhat like that leaf. He had been way from home for almost a full sixty year cycle. Now, he needed to return.

Meng Hao began to walk. After he had left home, it had taken him fifty four years to reach this point. The return trip only took six.

Eastern Emergence County was still there, flourishing more than ever. Meng Hao’s hair was white when he entered the city. He was just barely able to make out some of the traces of the past.

The bordello was gone. The wall had long since been knocked down, and the location was now home to a large mansion.

The house where he grew up had vanished with the passing of time. In its place was an inn. Meng Hao stood across from it for a very long time, staring at it. His face was covered not just with the ravages of time, but with a complex expression. Finally, he turned and left.

When he returned to Master's house, the person who opened the door was a stranger. After making some enquiries, Meng Hao turned his head to look at East Mountain off in the distance.

His father had been buried there more than fifty years ago. Master had been buried there more than twenty years ago.

Meng Hao sighed. Silently holding a pot of alcohol under his arm, he climbed the mountain. First, he visited his father's grave, which was covered in weeds. "I know this is all an illusion," he said softly, "and that you aren't my real father. However… you let me feel the fatherly love that I've been missing. It was only a simple embrace so that I could sleep…." About thirty years ago, in the Daoist temple, he had come to understand everything. This world was nothing but an illusion, a test to become an apprentice.

The real Meng Hao was still in the world of the Celestial Land in the Violet Fate Sect, atop Violet East Mountain.

He closed his eyes. A long time passed before he left his father's grave. Finally, he arrived at Master's grave. He looked at it for a while before speaking.

"Becoming an apprentice involves three kowtows," he murmured. "The first is during the time of innocence. The second is in the time of roaming. The third is when gazing at the sunset…. You gave me an entire life to decide whether or not to become your apprentice. Everything in this realm of illusions was created, not by you, but me. You only provided the starting point. Every person in the trial by fire will create their own world.

“In this world, I liberated my heart. I… I experienced everything. In the end, I’ve come back here. But I still haven’t found what it is that I wish to pursue….

“The Dao of alchemy? Obviously not.” He lifted the jug of alcohol and took a long drink.

“Eternal life?” he said quietly. “I’m not qualified.” Soon, the sun began to sink in the west, and the jug of alcohol was empty. He did not begin the third kowtow. Instead, he turned and headed back toward Eastern Emergence County.

He knew that once he performed the third kowtow, he would leave this world of illusions. But he still had not found his answer. Therefore, he would not leave. He would stay.

From then on, a very old man took up residence in Eastern Emergence County.

Outside of the world of illusions, within the Violet Fate Celestial Land, atop Violet East Mountain, tears seeped out of Chu Yuyan’s eyes. She opened them, and they were filled with grief, as if being immersed in her world had caused her to forget about reality.

A long time passed, and then a tremor ran through her body. She blinked. Her eyes were filled with confusion at first, but they quickly grew clearer. Her expression was one of melancholy. Eventually, she looked up and saw that there were two others with her here high atop Violet East Mountain.

One was Fang Mu. The other was Ye Feimu. Both of them had their eyes closed. One had a face filled with thoughtfulness, the other, confusion. The former was Meng Hao, the latter was Ye Feimu.

As for her, she was still about ten paces from the very peak of the mountain. Further behind her were the other two nameless candidates in the trial by fire.

It was at this moment that Ye Feimu suddenly trembled and began to awaken.

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# Chapter 291: A Thousand Pills Form a Cauldron!

Bitterness arose from deep within Chu Yuyan’s heart. She thought about everything that had happened within her world of illusions. Then she looked up toward the two trial by fire candidates who were at the peak of the mountain.

One was Fang Mu, whose presence, she felt, was somewhat of an accident. For some reason, though, she also felt like she had known all along that it would happen like this.

Then there was Ye Feimu, Chosen of the Dao of alchemy. Were he not there, she would have been surprised.

“I lost…” she said with a sigh, then turned and began to walk down the mountain. This mountain could be ascended, but not descended. One step back signified forfeiture, and departure from the Celestial Land.

As her foot descended, her vision blurred. When everything grew clear again, she was back on the peak of Eastern Emergence mountain. She looked over at the alchemists of the East Pill Division, and then the Cultivators from the visiting Sects. Finally, she understood; these people could not see what had happened inside her world of illusions.

This was because as she turned her head to look at the screens projected by the pill furnace, all she could see was Fang Mu’s thoughtful expression, not the world he was in.

“Welcome back,” said Pill Demon with a slight smile.

Chu Yuyan suddenly wanted to weep. The realism of the world of illusions had lasted until the moment she returned to reality, and it was still hard to tell one from the other. Wordlessly, she walked over to stand next to Pill Demon.

After Chu Yuyan, the old man and the middle-aged man appeared in quick succession, also having admitted defeat. Their eyes were vacant as they walked toward the other alchemists and then sat down cross-legged. They seemed as if their souls had been lost, and all they could do was stare blankly.

Hushed discussions immediately sprang up.

“Just what exactly did they experience in the final test in the world of illusions? Why do they all look so confused?” Even the majority of the master alchemists of the East Pill Division were unclear about the details and began to make various speculations.

Seeing the questioning looks on their disciples’ faces, the sub-Patriarchs from the various Sects began to discuss the matter.

“The world of illusions in the Violet Fate Sect’s Celestial Land uses the heart as a seed upon which to grow illusions. Under the influence of this art, no one would be able to tell the true from the false, not even someone with a Nascent Soul Cultivation base. You can never come to your senses within the illusion; therefore, it is really another life.”

“Yes, exactly. While inside, previous and future lives don’t matter, because it’s a dreamland. As for telling the difference between reality and the dream, between the past lives and the future… well, few people nowadays could do that.”

“Upon waking, the illusions will shatter, and that is when they wake up. That’s why they look so confused.”

It seemed as if they were simply discussing the matter, however, what they were actually doing was taking advantage of this East Pill Division trial by fire to train their disciples about the difference between reality and illusion.

After all, it wasn’t often that a spectacle such as this could be observed; any enlightenment derived therefrom was nothing more than good fortune.

Li Shiqi muttered to herself for a moment and then quietly asked, “The illusion shatters the moment they wake up? What happens if someone gains enlightenment, but the illusion doesn’t shatter? Would it be possible for them to gain even deeper enlightenment?”

Next to her, Tu Luo coolly responded, “For the moment, don’t even contemplate the value of such enlightenment. If someone becomes clearheaded, and is able to prevent the world of illusion from collapsing, well… that would require incredibly powerful Spiritual Sense. In fact, it would require Dao enlightenment! Therefore, something like that can only happen serendipitously, and not by choice. In my entire life, I’ve only seen one person do such a thing.”

Off to the side, the second Dao Lord of the Solitary Sword Sect heard their interchange and added, “Furthermore, doing such a thing is incredibly dangerous. The more time that passes, the more likelihood by the time that person came to their senses, they would be lost, and never be able to emerge.”

As everyone engaged in their discussions, a rippling buzz filled the air as people noticed that Ye Feimu had awoken. They watched the screen as he looked over at Meng Hao. A dark look washed across his face. However, in the end, he chose to retreat, leaving the world of the Celestial Land and returning to the peak of Eastern Emergence Mountain.

The moment he appeared, calls of welcome could be heard coming from the mouths of the various alchemists he was close to.

“Congratulations in your efforts to secure the win, Furnace Lord Ye. Your rise to Violet Furnace Lord will bring about a true golden age for the East Pill Division!”

“Furnace Lord Ye, as Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, your efforts to secure the win are simply a formality. I’m just afraid that the visitors from the outside Sects might still be curious about the details of everything.”

“Congratulations Furnace Lord Ye….”

As one person after another spoke out from the crowd, Ye Feimu’s expression was no longer proud. With a slight smile, he clasped hands to the crowd. As for the title of Pill Cauldron, he hesitated, neither endorsing it, nor offering any explanation. This, of course, created a feeling of tacit approval.

While everyone was looking at Ye Feimu, Furnace Lord Ye Yuntian gave a hearty laugh. He stood and looked approvingly toward Ye Feimu.

“Feimu, why don’t you take out your pill furnace so everyone can see that you are qualified to be a Violet Furnace Lord!” Immediately, the eyes of the surrounding alchemists began to glow brightly.

An Zaihai’s brow furrowed, but he didn’t say anything.

Ye Feimu took a deep breath, and then once again, a proud expression covered his face. He smacked his bag of holding with his right hand to produce the pill furnace. It was none other than the one he had acquired within the world of the Mother of Furnaces. It had started out white, but was now violet, and emitted a violet glow which caused the glimmers of violet to reflect within the eyes of all the observing Cultivators.

Ye Yuntian looked at the violet furnace and immediately let out a loud laugh. He turned toward Pill Demon, clasped hands, and bowed deeply.

“Congratulations, Master,” he said excitedly. “It appears that this Violet Furnace Lord promotion has resulted in you acquiring a new apprentice, and that we have acquired a new Junior Brother. Feimu, why haven’t you bowed to your new Master yet?”

A glow of excitement also appeared in Ye Feimu’s eyes. He took a deep breath, and was just about to walk forward, when An Zaihai spoke up. “Junior Brother Ye,” he said coolly, “this is somewhat incongruous with protocol.”

The interchange between the two immediately caused the expressions of the six other Violet Furnace Lords to flicker. However, they didn't reveal what they were thinking. The expressions of the Furnace Lords, however, all changed; naturally they could pick up on what was happening.

Ye Yuntian's goal was all too obvious. That having been said, the Furnace Lords generally didn't favor Fang Mu, and most of them liked Ye Feimu. Each and every one of them watched with various thoughts and ideas running through their heads.

As far as the ordinary master alchemists, not many of them understood what was going on. However, they could pick up on some of the clues. They watched on, speechless, waiting to see what would happen. The sub-Patriarchs from the other Sects were all experienced and astute; how could they not see what was going on?

In fact, they had begun to expect this development some time ago. Of course, they were more than happy to watch such a scene unfold.

Fatty watched on wide-eyed. He glared at Ye Feimu, and had long since begun to curse him inwardly.

Pill Demon was the big exception. From the very beginning, he hadn't said a single word. It was as if he hadn't heard or seen anything that had transpired.

As all eyes came to fall upon the scene, Ye Yuntian gave a slight smile. "Oh?" he said, a strange note in his voice. "Elder Brother An, Junior Brother doesn't really understand what you mean. Would you mind clearing up my confusion?"

"Ye Feimu wasn't the only person to step foot onto the peak of the mountain," replied An Zaihai calmly.

Ye Yuntian laughed loudly. "Oh, so that's the protocol you were talking about, Elder Brother An. Junior Brother would of course never overlook such a matter. However…." He was only half-way finished speaking when suddenly, a booming sound erupted from the screen depicting the world from the Celestial Land.

When the booming sound appeared, it was obvious that it was coming from within the Celestial Land itself. The entire Celestial Land was shaking, and the nexus of it all was none other than Violet East Mountain. Immediately, all of the spectators looked over.

Even Ye Yuntian’s words were immediately drowned out by the boom.

No one noticed, but Pill Demon’s eyes suddenly emitted an unprecedented glow, and a smile slowly spread out across his face. It was a smile of satisfaction, filled with emotion and contentment.

Back in Meng Hao’s world of illusion, he continued to reside in Eastern Emergence County. Three more years passed. Meng Hao was currently ninety-nine years old, and had once again returned to his Master’s grave. He looked at the gravestone, and his face filled with emotion.

“Heaven and Earth are just resting places for the myriads of living creatures. Time represents the passage of hundreds of generations of passing travellers.” A smile broke out on Meng Hao’s face. Life is a journey, every turn of which is filled with new scenery. This path that he tread now contained his mark. Whether the mark was shallow or deep didn’t matter. That was because, it was his choice.

“Maybe my path hasn’t even arrived.” He shook his head. Perhaps in the future he would realize what his purpose in life was. For the moment, he still didn’t know. Since he didn’t know, he wouldn’t force himself to choose. When traveling, it is never possible to know what unfathomable things might occur. That is what makes it beautiful.

A carefree smile broke out on Meng Hao’s face. When it did, his white hair became black. His crooked frame straightened. His features were no longer ancient, but once again filled with the vigor of youth.

He took a deep breath, then looked at the gravestone and dropped to his knees to kowtow a third time!

The kowtow of Sunset Gazing!

With this kowtow, Karma was finalized, and the Master and apprentice relationship solidified. If you do not sever the bond, then neither shall I….

With this kowtow, Eastern Emergence County began to turn translucent behind Meng Hao, and then disappeared.

With this kowtow, the entire world around him began to disintegrate, leaving behind only the grave.

With this kowtow, a roaring sounded out between Heaven and Earth. Everything began to fall apart. Meng Hao… opened his eyes, and the world vanished. He saw the sky once again, the world of the Celestial Land. And there he stood on the peak of Violet East Mountain.

He looked off into the distance, and then took a step forward. As he did, ripples like that on the surface of water spread out. His body melted away. When he reappeared, he had left the world of the Celestial Land, and was now standing on Eastern Emergence Mountain, outside of the pill furnace.

His appearance garnered much attention, including a dark glare from Ye Feimu, and a cold smile from Ye Yuntian!

Everything was quiet for a moment, and then Ye Yuntian’s cool voice echoed out.

“Just now I wasn’t able to finish speaking. Elder Brother An, two people did step onto the peak of the mountain. However, when that happens, the resulting decision is not made by those two people, but rather, by you, me and the other Violet Furnace Lords, as well as all the Furnace Lords. We make the final decision. That is the protocol for the raising of a Violet Furnace Lord. Does this explanation suffice, Elder Brother An?” Ye Yuntian smiled. An Zaihai, on the other hand, said nothing. He merely flicked his sleeve.

“According to Sect protocol, because two people stepped foot on the peak of the mountain, it requires a decision to be made on our part. Whoever receives the most support will become the Violet Furnace Lord. I am Violet Furnace Lord Ye Yuntian. Please, will all Fellow Daoists of the Violet Fate Sect bear witness today? I believe than Ye Feimu is more qualified than Fang Mu. As such, I select Ye Feimu."

"Violet Furnace Lord Chen Xuyang selects Ye Feimu!"

"Violet Furnace Lord Shen Long selects Ye Feimu!"

"Violet Furnace Lord Yuan Daoming selects Ye Feimu!"

"Violet Furnace Lord Ma Feifeng selects Ye Feimu!"

In an instant, five Violet Furnace Lords had picked Ye Feimu as their choice. This caused Ye Feimu's expression to fill with pride and excitement.

Lin Hailong hesitated for a moment. He thought for a moment as he looked at Meng Hao, not making his decision immediately. The Violet Furnace Lord next to him was a middle-aged woman. her expression was one of indifference, and she didn't speak immediately either.

The disciples from the other Sects watched as all of this happened. The sub-Patriarchs watched with vague smiles, not speaking.

Behind the Violet Furnace Lords were the Furnace Lords, who now began to speak.

"Furnace Lord He Jin selects Ye Feimu!"

"Furnace Lord Sun Zexuan selects Ye Feimu!"

As the voices rang out, it seemed that the greater part of half of them all selected Ye Feimu.

An Zaihai's face was extremely unsightly. He was about to open his mouth to say something, when suddenly, Meng Hao's voice calmly filled the air.

"Violet Furnace Lord Ye, I would like to ask a question," he said. "Could you please explain exactly why I, Fang Mu, am not as qualified as Furnace

Lord Ye?" His expression was as calm as always as he asked the question.

Ye Yuntian looked at him, and in a very impolite tone replied, "At the moment, it doesn't matter whether we discuss your skill in the Dao of alchemy, or your reputation, or even your ability to create new medicinal pills. In my judgement, you are less qualified that Ye Feimu in all of these areas. Even more importantly, Ye Feimu became famous in the Southern Domain ten years ago. Half a year ago, he concocted a ninety percent consummate medicinal pill. He is destined to become a Violet Furnace Lord. As for you, you lack such qualifications!" His words sounded almost like a reprimand, and in fact, as a Violet Furnace Lord, he was qualified to say such things to a Furnace Lord.

"Qualifications?" replied Meng Hao, glancing at Ye Yuntian for a moment. Then he flung his sleeve out in front of him. A medicinal pill flew out. Then ten. Then one hundred. Then one thousand….

In an instant, more than a thousand medicinal pills flew out. Meng Hao swirled his sleeve, and they rolled through the air. Each medicinal pill was clearly marked with the symbol of a cauldron. That symbol was exactly like the mark which had been branded into the Bedevilment Pill!

When the pills appeared, the air was filled with an intense medicinal aroma like nothing anyone had ever encountered before. Every single pill in this shocking display contained ninety percent medicinal strength. These were all ninety percent consummate pills!

These were all the highest value pills that Meng Hao had concocted after the Bedevilment Pill. He had concocted such pills often, in the hopes of finding an opportunity to sell them off one at a time. However today, he put them all on display, to shocking effect!

The medicinal pills floated in mid-air. The cauldron symbol instantly caused the minds of all of the alchemists to spin. Chu Yuyan immediately rose to her feet, an expression of disbelief on her face.

The minds of the disciples from the visiting Sects began to reel, even the sub-Patriarchs. Their eyes went wide and they stood up, their faces shining with shock.

The medicinal pills filled the air, and the medicinal aroma was as thick as fog, roiling out and filling the peak of Eastern Emergence Mountain. The grass in the earth struggled upward. Dark clouds filled the sky. Thunder crackled across the entire State of Eastern Emergence.

Even more surprising was that when Meng Hao tossed out the medicinal pills, they began to mass together in mid-air. Slowly, they formed together into the shape of an enormous cauldron, which gave rise to a resplendent glow that rose up with boundless radiance!

Meng Hao’s cool voice rang out in all directions: “If you add in the fact that I’m Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, then would you say I’m qualified enough?”

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# Chapter 292: Pill Cauldron Fang Mu

Over a thousand medicinal pills swirled together to form a cauldron. Medicinal aroma filled the area. In an instant, everyone began to breathe heavily, shocked by the sight of the giant cauldron. Everything was quiet.

Lin Hailong shot to his feet, staring at Meng Hao, eyes glowing with unprecedented brightness.

Next to him, An Zaihai, who already knew the true identity of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, couldn't help but be shocked by the sight of the cauldron formed from ninety percent consummate pills.

The other Violet Furnace Lords were gobsmacked. This many ninety percent consummate pills, all of them marked with a cauldron symbol, clearly indicated Meng Hao's identity. As of now, no one would be stupid enough to deny that he was Pill Cauldron.

If he wasn't Pill Cauldron, how could he possibly have so many ninety percent consummate pills?

If he wasn't Pill Cauldron, then how could he have shockingly created something out of nothing within the third region?

Thinking of everything that had happened, and then being faced with the pill cauldron floating in mid-air, everyone could clearly see that the famous Grandmaster Pill Cauldron was none other than Fang Mu.

Ye Yuntian's face was pale white as he staggered back a few paces, panting. His eyes overflowed with disbelief. He knew that Ye Feimu wasn't

Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, but no matter how he'd thought things through, he'd never anticipated that Fang Mu could possibly be the owner of that mysterious identity. In fact, he had harbored other speculations regarding the identity of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, and was dogged in his conclusions. But now, everything had been turned around. Ye Yuntian's mind spun!

The name of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron resounded throughout the entire Southern Domain, to such an extent that he was included among the other three Grandmasters. In fact, many people believed that Grandmaster Pill Cauldron really was the fourth Grandmaster of the Southern Domain.

Such an identity, such knowledge, were like a shocking, resounding slap across Ye Yuntian's face, stinging, burning, causing his mind to buzz.

He thought about what he had just said, and the question Fang Mu had asked him regarding qualifications. Now, the words he had said… made his face burn even hotter. He was so ashamed he felt like finding a hole to crawl into.

If Grandmaster Pill Cauldron wasn't qualified to be a Violet Furnace Lord, then who in the world was? Were the current eight Violet Furnace Lords even qualified…?

Ye Feimu's body shook, and his face was devoid of any trace of blood. He looked as gray as death as he stared mutely at Meng Hao and the giant pill cauldron floating in the air. His mind was blank, as if he had completely lost the ability to even think.

He had known all along that he wasn't the mysterious Pill Cauldron. As more and more people speculated that he was, he had always felt as if he should tell the truth, but instead maintained his silence.

He needed that identity to help propel him into being a Violet Furnace Lord. Therefore, when Chu Yuyan came asking about it, he said nothing, and thus, gave implicit approval.

In truth, he held deep admiration in his heart for Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. As such, he had always felt twisted inside about the matter.

Now, he was stunned to learn that Fang Mu was the mysterious Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, which made his mind go completely blank.

Chu Yuyan trembled and her mind spun. This development was just simply impossible for her to accept. Her mental image of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, and Fang Mu's appearance, had never once overlapped in her mind. In fact, she had believed Ye Feimu to be Grandmaster Pill Cauldron.

But now, facing the pill cauldron of medicinal pills, seeing Meng Hao's tranquility and calmness, and hearing his words echo in her ears, her face filled with blankness and disbelief.

She couldn't understand how the Fang Mu who had irritated her from the first day she saw him years ago, was actually Pill Cauldron, who she secretly esteemed so much. There was no way for Chu Yuyan to accept this; she could only stare awkwardly.

Now, the expressions of all of the Furnace Lords who had supported Ye Feimu changed, filling with disbelief. Grandmaster Pill Cauldron was much more important than their ordinary relationship with Ye Feimu.

Supporting Ye Feimu was nothing like supporting Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. In the hearts of the master alchemists of the East Pill Division, Grandmaster Pill Cauldron occupied a revered place similar to that of Pill Demon.

Therefore, though they had supported Ye Feimu, things had now changed in an instant. Now that Fang Mu's identity was revealed, his words echoed in the air like a shocking clap of thunder, resonating into the minds of the Furnace Lords to the point of detonation.

All of the Furnace Lords stared mutely, breathing heavily, their faces filled with acute astonishment.

No one spoke, but their minds all buzzed with similar thoughts.

“So Furnace Lord Fang Mu is the real Grandmaster Pill Cauldron….”

“So many ninety percent consummate pills. Only Grandmaster Pill Cauldron could concoct so many. Fang Mu… really is Grandmaster Pill Cauldron!!”

In addition to the members of the East Pill Division, the Cultivators from the outside Sects all had expressions of incredulity on their faces.

Patriarch Violet Sieve from the Black Sieve Sect stared in shock. Suddenly, he thought back to when Fang Mu had concocted pills for them back in the Sect, and then he realized why they had been so effective. Fang Mu was no ordinary Furnace Lord, he was… Grandmaster Pill Cauldron!

Han Bei’s narrow mouth was opened wide, as if she couldn’t breathe. She stared dully at Meng Hao; Grandmaster Pill Cauldron’s reputation was just too great. It resounded like thunder in her ears! And now it turned out that all along, Fang Mu was Grandmaster Pill Cauldron!

Fatty was panting, and his expression was one of intense admiration.

As for Chen Fan, Li Daoyi and Li Shiqi, as well as all the other disciples from the visiting Sects, they simply stared, their minds shaking because of the revelation of Fang Mu’s identity.

Even the sub-Patriarchs were staring thoughtfully, their eyes shining with strange expressions. They could very well imagine how after this day, the name of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron would thoroughly fill the entire Southern Domain.

When that happened, Fang Mu… might not be like the sun in the sky above the Southern Domain, but he would certainly be nearly as illustrious!

“Violet Furnace Lord Ye,” said Meng Hao coolly, staring the pale-faced Ye Yuntian straight in the eye, “is my status high enough?”

Ye Yuntian wanted to say something, but considering that Fang Mu was Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, all the words became stuck in his throat. How could he have the face to say anything?

“I support Furnace Lord Fang Mu!” An Zaihai said suddenly. Next to him, Lin Hailong did not hesitate for a moment. He immediately repeated An Zaihai’s words. After that was the middle-aged woman. Next, all of the Violet Furnace Lords who had supported Ye Feimu sighed in their hearts, and then voiced their support for Fang Mu.

After that, were the Furnace Lords. Roughly ninety percent of the nearly one hundred Furnace Lords all echoed words of support.

“I support Grandmaster Pill Cauldron!”

“I support Furnace Lord Fang Mu!”

Their voices echoed out, layer upon layer, transforming into a cacophony that filled the air.

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# Chapter 293: Legacy Apprentice

Ye Feimu smiled sadly as he looked at Meng Hao. The sense of loss within his heart had reached the ultimate level. In order to fulfill his desire to become a Violet Furnace Lord, he had neglected his cultivation, and had spent all of his time stubbornly pursuing the Dao of alchemy.

He had always believed that with enough persistence, his skill in the Dao of alchemy would assure his place as a Violet Furnace Lord. Ye Yuntian had given him this affirmation; even some of the other Violet Furnace Lords had approved.

“Why… why did he have to show up…? Why does the Violet Fate Sect’s East Pill Division have to have Ye Feimu AND Fang Mu…?” With a bitter laugh, he staggered backward and coughed up a mouthful of blood.

It wasn’t that he was unconvinced; the instant he learned that Fang Mu was Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, he knew it all to be correct. He couldn’t blame others for supporting Fang Mu. He could only laugh, and bitterly at that.

He proudly told himself that if it wasn’t for his opponent’s strength, and the fact that he was Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, then Ye Feimu, who was at the peak of the East Pill Division Furnace Lords, would be second to none. He would definitely have succeeded, and taken first place in the Violet Furnace Lord promotion trial by fire.

Now, however, he was defeated. He could even imagine the scorn with which people would look at him later in the Sect. It would not be scorn regarding his Dao of alchemy, but scorn because of his tacit implication that he was Grandmaster Pill Cauldron.

Therefore, he could only laugh bitterly, utterly disheartened.

Blood seeped out of the corners of his mouth. “My Dao of alchemy, can’t be defeated…. One loss, I can accept, or even two, but repeated failure… will destroy my Dao of alchemy. No. What has been defeated is not my Dao of Alchemy, but myself!” He wiped the blood from his mouth, and his eyes once again shone with determination. “My Dao of alchemy will never be defeated. It is unprecedented, one of a kind, original in Heaven and Earth! This is my great Dao of alchemy!” His breathing was ragged as he looked over at Meng Hao.

Chu Yuyan said nothing. She gradually suppressed the trembling of her mind as she stared at Meng Hao. An unparalleled bitterness rose up in her heart. She had long since been defeated. She realized that from the moment she had stepped into the world of the Celestial Land… she had lost.

If Fang Mu had not been there, nor Ye Feimu, then she definitely would have become a Violet Furnace Lord. She still wanted to prove herself, but as of now, there was no chance.

In the Violet Furnace Lord trial by fire, only one alchemist could become a Violet Furnace Lord.

Miss this one opportunity, and no matter what stunning achievements you made later, you could only live with regret. There would never be a second chance at the trial by fire.

“Just like my Dao of alchemy, which seeks to find that missing spark of life. Today, that spark of life has completely vanished, and there is no way to find it again. Just like my Dao of alchemy….” Within her bitterness, blood seeped out of the corners of her mouth. The pain she felt inside was because of the Dao of alchemy.

Everyone was silent. Ye Yuntian looked agonized, incapable of saying anything further. He felt stabbing pains in his heart, and he could only think that Ye Feimu’s path was now over. His future was nothing more than a grave.

The surrounding Cultivators observed the scene with various thoughts in mind. They all had their own concept regarding the path of the Dao of alchemy; this was because everyone had a different concept of what stubbornness meant. Everyone had their own path.

It was not easy to compare such things. After all, what was defeated was not just an individual, but a Dao of alchemy. Because endurance became impossible, collapse was inevitable.

As silence filled the area, a light sigh could suddenly be heard, seemingly from very far away. Grandmaster Pill demon slowly rose to his feet. His gaze swept over the alchemists. Everyone whose gaze he met slowly lowered their heads, their faces filled with respect.

Eventually, his eyes came to rest on Ye Feimu.

“The Dao of alchemy is invincible,” he said. “Even more invincible, is the determination to cultivate the Dao of alchemy. If that determination exists, then even after ten thousand defeats, your Dao of alchemy will always be there. You have done well. Ever since you joined the Sect, you have consistently pursued your own path.

“Your path is winding, and full of thorns and thistles, making it slow to traverse. Only with never-ending determination can you have the courage to face defeat, and yet proceed onward to reach your goal. Walk such a path, and your path will be invincible. Fear not defeat. Fear giving up!”

Ye Feimu’s body trembled as he stared blankly at Pill Demon. Silently, he clasped hands and bowed deeply. “Many thanks for your enlightenment, Patriarch.”

“You may be a Violet Furnace Lord,” said Pill Demon coolly. “From this day forth, you are my novitiate.”

Ye Feimu trembled, and his face filled with excitement. This was his dream, finally becoming a reality. The path had been winding, but to become a Violet Furnace Lord had been the most important pursuit in his life for many years.

The minds of the surrounding alchemists of the East Pill Division were reeling as they watched. None of them knew what to say as Pill Demon's gaze next fell upon Chu Yuyan.

"You have searched for a Dao of alchemy that embraces life, life like that which we live. You wish to find that spark of life which doesn't exist. It is exceedingly hard to reach the peak of such a Dao of alchemy. It is not a winding path, but a very difficult one.

"In fact, sometimes, there is no spark of life. When that happens, what will you do? The path of your Dao of alchemy lies not in pill concoction, but in refinement of the heart. You have always been my apprentice. But unlike the others, you are my Personal Apprentice. You… also may become a Violet Furnace Lord." As Pill Demon's voice sounded out, tears began to stream down Chu Yuyan's face. She immediately bowed low to Pill Demon.

Each and every one of the alchemists of the East Pill Division was speechless. Only the Violet Furnace Lords seemed to want to speak up, but held their tongues.

Lin Hailong hesitated a moment. He was the most senior of the Violet Furnace Lords. Bracing himself, he opened his mouth. "Master, according to the custom of the trial by fire for promotion to Violet Furnace Lord, only one person can be selected…."

"Ever since Eternal Mountain left, you have made no progress in your Dao of Alchemy. You haven't moved at all since that year. Do you know why?" Pill Demon calmly looked over at Lin Hailong. "I haven't told you all these years, because I wanted you to realize it for yourself. But you still don't understand. Is custom… really that important?"

Feeling a bit awkward, Lin Hailong forced a smile onto his face and said, "But… the custom was begun by you, Master."

"Since I began the custom, then naturally I can change it. Let it be so!" He flicked his sleeve, paying no further attention to Lin Hailong and turning to look at Meng Hao.

Lin Hailong heaved a sigh of relief in his heart and immediately stepped backward. Actually, he only spoke because there were outsiders present to observe the ceremonies. Being the most senior of the Violet Furnace Lords, he was required to say at least something, even if it was in a roundabout way.

Pill Demon looked at Meng Hao. “Using the body as the pill furnace, and the heart as the pill formula. Refining the sun and the moon, refining the ancientness of the stars. Such a Dao of alchemy….” He paused for a moment. “Master looks forward to finding out where your future path will lead.” A smile broke out on his face.

As he spoke, the onlookers could tell that there was something different about his words. This was because, Pill Demon was calling himself Master!

“Violet Furnace Lords become my novitiates, and thus only need to kowtow one time. Since you are Pill Cauldron you can become my Personal Apprentice with two kowtows.

“However… I already accepted a hefty apprentice’s fee from you, so from today on, I will have a second Legacy Apprentice. Now, kowtow before me three times!” As he smiled at Meng Hao, the kindness in his eyes overlapped with those of the Master from Meng Hao’s world of illusion.

Meng Hao had a strange expression on his face. The words “apprentice’s fee” suddenly made him recall his 200,000,000 Spirit Stones….

Before he could say anything, though, Pill Demon raised his right hand and flicked his sleeve. Immediately, ripples appeared in the air, surrounding Meng Hao and then disappearing into his body.

“Hailong,” said Pill Demon. “Please assist Master in receiving all the friends from the other Sects. Announce to all the Southern Domain that I have accepted Fang Mu as my Legacy Apprentice!”

As his words filled the air, everyone stood up and clasped hands toward the Heavens. Lin Hailong trembled inwardly when he heard the words, and his vision came to rest on Meng Hao. The other Violet Furnace Lords were the same. They all knew what a Legacy Apprentice was.

Envy shone in Han Bei's eyes. She knew that from this day forward, Fang Mu would be different than anyone else in the Southern Domain.

Fatty sighed inwardly, reminding himself how the oldest brother was the most awesome. This time, he had worked his way into being Pill Demon's Legacy Apprentice.

When it comes to apprentices, there are three levels, novitiate, Personal Apprentice and Legacy Apprentice.

Novitiates only receive simple advice, although they are permitted to ask questions. Personal Apprentices follow the Master by his side. They receive instruction verbally and by example. Personal skills are passed down, including some secret techniques.

Legacy Apprentices are the most important of all. They receive a lifetime of knowledge; they are the hope for the future, the hope to pass on everything. Nothing will be held back from such an apprentice. Such an apprentice is even more important than a son!

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In the deepest corner of the Violet Fate Sect, within the East Pill Division, is a squat mountain. The mountains which surround it are much higher than it; however, this mountain seemed to be embodied with a profound air of dignity, as if it were the most senior of all the mountains.

This mountain was actually the pinnacle of all the mountains of the East Pill Division!

Located on this peak of mountains was a building, which Pill Demon led Meng Hao to. The instant Meng Hao saw it, he gaped. The building looked exactly like his Master's house from the world of illusion.

Pill Demon pushed the doorway open and walked inside, back facing Meng Hao. As he walked, he explained, “You experienced the kowtow of Innocence. You walked the kowtow of Roaming. In the end, you chose to perform the kowtow of Sunset Gazing. With these three kowtows, you took me as your Master.”

Meng Hao followed, watching the old man’s back as he walked along. Suddenly, he realized that this man didn’t seem like a stranger at all. The life he had lived in the world of illusions was overlapping with reality. Meng Hao suddenly clasped hands and bowed deeply toward Pill Demon.

“Apprentice greets Master,” he said.

“In the Celestial Land, Master told you that you would only need to perform two kowtows. The first kowtow was broken up into three parts. Master has sown Karma, and because you did not break it, neither shall I! As for the second kowtow, I didn’t explain it back then.

“Now the time has come for you to understand. The second kowtow will come if the day ever arrives in which I return to the dust. Then you must kowtow to break our Karma, so that our fates are no longer intertwined. I will give you a lifetime of favor as your Master; all you must give me, is the ability to smile before I die. That smile will be because I know that my legacy from this life will be passed on.

“If in the course of being my apprentice you choose the same path as my first Legacy Apprentice, Liu Rufeng, and leave me, then there will be no need for the second kowtow.

“Your feet belong to you, and the path lays beneath your feet. The choice will be yours to make in the future.” Pill Demon suddenly turned to look at Meng Hao.

“However,” he continued slowly, “if I were to tell you that I am unable to dispel the poison of the Resurrection Lily, would you still be willing to take me as your Master?”

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# Chapter 294: Complete Legacy!

Meng Hao looked at his Master silently for a moment. Then, he quietly said, “At first, I came because I wanted to get rid of the poison. After I joined the Sect, I stayed because of the Dao of alchemy!”

Pill Demon gazed at Meng Hao for a long moment. Finally, a look of contentment appeared on his face, and he smiled.

Slowly, he said, “From your first day in the Sect, Master felt the aura of the Resurrection Lily. Later, when I saw you, I understood the situation. There are three ways that you can dispel the poison. One is for it to merge with you, after which, you will no longer be you. The second is for you to devour it, then it won’t be it!

“As for the third… it is to use your own Dao of alchemy to dispel the poison yourself. Karma exists within Heaven and Earth. The Resurrection Lily in your body is the cause of the Karma. Other than you, no one else can dispel it. The reason is because no one else is you. The fact that no one else can dispel the poison but you, is the result of the Karma.

“On this path, the first is the passive, the second is the active, and the third is the most active method, that of using your Dao of alchemy. I presume you understand the meaning of my words.”

Meng Hao was silent. The poison had been within him since the State of Zhao, pestering him all the way until now. He had been unable to dispel it for that entire time. When he first joined the Violet Fate Sect, he’d had no understanding of the Dao of alchemy. However, thanks to his constant cultivation, he had gained more enlightenment regarding the poison, as well as some bit of hope. Hearing Master’s words now, though, caused him to sigh in his heart.

“This poison is nothing,” said Pill Demon. “With your skill in the Dao of alchemy, you’ll be able to dispel it sooner or later. Master can see that the Resurrection Lily has somehow been suppressed. Strange. Right now it’s as if it’s asleep. However, the power of suppression seems to be gradually weakening….”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. Calmly, he said, “Master, if I must dispel the poison myself, then, can I ask, in your experience, have you ever known someone else to successfully do so in the past?”

“One person,” replied Pill Demon. “He lived by the Milky Way Sea, and his name was Reverend Silverlamp. His Cultivation base was unfathomable. He came to me seven hundred years ago, looking for a method to dispel his poison. I said the same thing to him that I told you. Three hundred years later he returned to me to repay my kindness. He had successfully dispelled the poison.”

Meng Hao was thoughtful for a moment, then gave a slight smile. “If that person could dispel the poison, then I will definitely be able to use my Dao of alchemy to do the same.”

His voice low, expression somber, Pill Demon continued, “If Master forcefully assisted you in dispelling the poison, it would harm the cycle of Karma. That would not benefit you at all. However, under my tutelage, your Dao of alchemy will eventually reach the point where you can dispel it yourself! The poison of the Resurrection Lily gave you the power of nature talent. If in the future you dispel the poison, then you will be able to assimilate its full power. In that case, you can turn one of the most ultimate poisons under Heaven, into a rarely seen treasure!

“Such a treasure will enable you to open up your path to the Heavens. Having this poison within you might seem like a disaster, but one aspect of the disaster is unprecedented good fortune!” He suddenly changed the subject. “After the three kowtows, you became my Legacy Apprentice. Therefore, Master has three gifts for you.” He raised his arm and flicked his wide sleeve. Immediately, everything around them swirled into a riot of colors.

“The first gift is a batch of Outlander Pills. The name comes from the expression ‘a night of outlandish tales.’ A pill such as this has never before appeared in the Southern Domain. I created it during alchemic enlightenment three years ago.

“This batch contains three pills in total. Consuming one pill will cause the Resurrection Lily to slumber for one hundred years, will increase your longevity by one hundred years, and will allow you to make progress in your Cultivation base; if you face any sort of blockage, it can help you to break through. These three pills will help you, my apprentice, to reach the Nascent Soul stage with no problems!

“In total, it will also give you three hundred years of extra time to dispel your poison. If you have not succeeded after three hundred years, then I will concoct another batch of pills for you, and will continue to do so until the day you dispel the poison.”

The words entered Meng Hao’s ears and sank all the way to his heart. He looked at his Master, and could feel the sincerity in his words, as well as a kindness and love.

Three years ago, Grandmaster Pill Demon had concocted pills during alchemic enlightenment, just for him. Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed deeply.

“Many thanks, Master!”

“Master’s second gift for you is a legacy technique of the East Pill Division. The name is Spirit Summoning Incantation. It can be used to refine a pill up to six times, although, with sufficient latent talent and Cultivation base, the limit of six can be broken! Again, this is a legacy technique of the East Pill Division. To date, I have only ever passed it on to two people. You, and your former Elder Brother Liu Rufeng.” With that, Pill Demon reached up and pushed down onto Meng Hao’s forehead.

Instantly, Meng Hao’s body trembled, and an icy coldness swept through him. A long passage of text appeared in his mind; it seemed abstruse and profound, but after scanning over it, Meng Hao seemed to have gained complete enlightenment.

“This is a legacy technique which may not be passed on to anyone other than a Legacy Apprentice. There is no complicated process to understand how to employ it; as long as you master the fundamentals, you can use it. Later, you must pass it on to another, and so it will go from generation to generation.” A profound look gleamed in Pill Demon’s eyes.

“The last of my three gifts is a precious treasured item of the East Pill Division. The East Pill Everburning Flame!” He flicked his right sleeve again, and the mountainside split open. A rumbling sound filled the air as a massive fissure appeared.

Within was a flight of steps that seemed to descend down into the depths of the earth. Pill Demon and Meng Hao, Master and apprentice, walked downward. They walked for a very, very long time.

Eventually, they were deep down in the earth beneath the Violet Fate Sect. Meng Hao’s mind trembled as he looked ahead. In front of him was an enormous limestone cavern.

Within the cavern were three enormous, half-burned black joss sticks. Strands of black smoke emanated up from them to swirl and float about. In addition to the smoke floating around the cavern, greenish flames also burned everywhere.

Above the three joss sticks floated a black pill furnace, approximately three meters tall. It seemed as if it were being supported by the smoke and fueled by the flames.

Pill Demon looked at the pill furnace, and his eyes shone as if he were recalling some memory. It was a complicated expression which lasted for only a moment before he sighed lightly.

“This incense is not of this world. The smoke never disperses and the incense never ceases burning; this is the East Pill Division’s Everburning Flame! It has been burning for more than twenty thousand years…. It is a legacy which cannot be extinguished. Instill it into your heart, and it can become an alchemic flame!

“After you reach Core Formation, fuse this flame into your Violet Core, and it will ignite. Thereafter, whenever you concoct medicinal pills, you will not need to use Earthly fire. This is your personal alchemic fire, with which you can refine all objects in Heaven and Earth. In the entire East Pill Division, only you and I are qualified to use this legacy fire.

“The Everburning flame is always here, as am I.” This last line was uttered by Pill Demon in a murmur, making it difficult for Meng Hao to hear clearly. As he spoke, Pill Demon was staring at the joss sticks, the smoke and the flame, and it seemed as if he wasn’t even speaking to Meng Hao.

After a moment, he looked toward Meng Hao. “You will stay here in secluded meditation. When you have assimilated the will of the fire into your heart, then you may emerge.” With that, he turned and slowly strode up the stairs, eventually disappearing.

Meng Hao thought about everything for a long time, then sat down cross-legged. He looked down at the pill bottle in his hand. Inside were the Outlander Pills Master had concocted for him. Meng Hao could hardly imagine how precious the pills were.

He put the pill bottle into his bag of holding, and then closed his eyes. Within his mind floated the Spirit Summoning Incantation. Within were techniques to refine a pill three, four even six times. By using this technique on an ordinary pill, it was possible to transform it into a consummate pill.

The power of such a technique caused Meng Hao’s mind to shake. This was a divine ability of the Dao of alchemy, congruous in cultivation terms to the Sublime Spirit Scripture!

You could say that with this pill concocting technique, Meng Hao truly was a sort of Grandmaster in the field of pill concoction. Skill in this technique was not something that anyone could cultivate. Starting with the fourth refinement, any flame other than the East Pill Division’s Everburning Flame would not be sufficient to employ the technique.

In the entire East Pill Division, only Pill Demon and Meng Hao could use the Everburning Flame and employ the fourth refinement. Only they were qualified.

Meng Hao took a deep breath as he opened his eyes. Now he understood why Master had instructed him to stay here and gather the East Pill Everburning Flame into the depths of his heart.

“This is a complete legacy,” he thought, looking at the joss sticks, the smoke, and the greenish inextinguishable flames. “The flame and the technique complement each other. Without one or the other, it would be impossible to reach the pinnacle….”

Time passed by. In the blink of an eye, three months had passed. During those three months, Meng Hao never left the limestone cavern. However, the promotion of three Violet Furnace Lords had caused a shocking commotion throughout the Southern Domain.

Many people were saying that this was the most incredible Violet Furnace Lord promotion trial by fire that had occurred within the past ten!

Thanks to word being spread by other Sects, Chu Yuyan’s Dao of alchemy, as well as her skill in pill concocting, became the talk of the Southern Domain. It was said that she fully deserved to become a Violet Furnace Lord.

Her name spread throughout the great Sects, as did the expression ‘Violet Furnace Lord Chu Yuyan.’

Above her, and causing even more of a stir, was of course Ye Feimu. He was stunning to the extreme, as was the potency and invincibility of his Dao of alchemy. He concocted one pill to create ten thousand stairs up the mountain. The stories spread until everyone in the Southern Domain had heard of him.

Considering he had already garnered impressive fame in the past, now that he had become a Violet Furnace Lord, his name was thoroughly prominent. In fact, he could be considered a pillar of the Violet Fate Sect.

Most shocking all, was none other than Fang Mu!

He was Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, Legacy Apprentice of Grandmaster Pill Demon. He had risen to prominence in the western region of the Southern Domain, where he had slain a Black Lands Core Formation Cultivator. All of this caused Fang Mu to instantly become the most talked about person in all of the Southern Domain.

More and more people viewed him as the fourth Grandmaster of the Southern Domain.

Word spread of how, atop the peak of Eastern Emergence Mountain he had formed the enormous pill cauldron of a thousand medicinal pills. When people heard the story, their blood boiled, causing even more people to talk about how he was the fourth Grandmaster.

In the Violet Fate Sect’s East Pill Division, the honorable Fang Mu was second only to Grandmaster Pill Demon. All of the Cultivators in the East Pill Division recognized this.

Many people took Meng Hao to be the Dao Child of the East Pill Division, equal even to the Dao Child of the Sect itself, or perhaps even a bit higher in reputation.

It was at this time that a great change occurred to the corpse which had fallen from the sky to land in the Southern Domain all those years ago. Magical symbols appeared on its skin, then floated out into the air, creating refracted reflections of themselves. There were some who recognized what this text was. It was one of the three classic scriptures… the Dao Divinity Scripture!

The Sublime Spirit Scripture, the Dao Divinity Scripture and the Heaven Severing Scripture. Three classic scriptures, each one capable of arousing terrifying waves of peril. Even people from the Western Desert and the Eastern Lands employed various shocking methods and powers to teleport to the Southern Domain because of it.

Furthermore, upon the appearance of the scripture, the force preventing people from nearing the corpse suddenly vanished. The corpse, which was as large as a mountain, was now approachable.

The Solitary Sword Sect paid quite a price to acquire a hair from the corpse's head. According to the rumors, they refined the hair into a precious treasure which could shock Heaven and Earth!

Grandmaster Eternal Mountain from the Golden Frost Sect employed all the power of the Sect to acquire a blood sample from the corpse. Supposedly, the pill he concocted with it was almost a Celestial Pill!

As word spread of the various events, the Southern Domain was thrown into a thorough commotion. More and more Sects and Clans dispatched forces to the Immortal's Corpse.

At the same time, an increasing volume of shrill calls could be heard from within the Rebirth Cave. Soon, they turned into sustained roars. Furthermore, a black wind emerged from within the cave to sweep around the area surrounding the corpse.

Throughout the years, countless Cultivators who were nearing death had entered the Rebirth Cave, hoping to be reborn. As to whether those people were alive or dead, no one was sure. But based on the resulting legends and stories, the Rebirth Cave had slowly come to be just like the Ancient Temple of Doom; one of the three Danger Zones!

After more than ten years had passed during which the corpse was under investigation, the bizarre life force within the cave was finally on the move, and revealing its avaricious will.

Figurative storm clouds roiled over the Southern Domain.

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# Chapter 295: Green Mark

As more news spread about the Immortal’s corpse, the Violet Fate Sect gradually began to pay closer attention to the matter. The first to be dispatched were some Chosen from the Violet Qi Division, along with a Sect Elder. It was at around the same time that other of the great Sects and Clans also sent their forces there.

At the same time, more and more Southern Domain Cultivators gathered in the region of the Rebirth Cave, hoping to eke out some good fortune there.

The momentous events in the Southern Domain went so far as to attract the attention of the Western Desert. Actually, years ago, when the corpse had just fallen from the sky, Western Desert Cultivators had arrived to investigate. Because of the new rumors spreading about the corpse, large amounts of Western Desert Cultivators once again appeared.

Even the Eastern Lands viewed the developments with importance and sent Cultivators.

Eventually, the Cultivators gathering around the Rebirth Cave and the Immortal’s corpse found out something very bizarre. The Cultivation base of any Nascent Soul Cultivator who approached the corpse would be severely suppressed. If they continued to push forward, it would eventually be pushed down to the Core Formation stage.

Core Formation Cultivators, on the other hand, experienced no hindrances whatsoever.

Even more bizarre was that any Cultivator who touched the corpse, which resembled something like a small mountain, would immediately disappear, teleported away. Most would be teleported back into the area a short while later.

When recounting their experience, everyone described things differently.

One person saw a river, another saw buildings, palaces and temples. One caught sight of precious treasures, but was unable to acquire them. Another described seeing Celestial Pills, and one person, pill formulas carved onto stone walls. Even more far-fetched was someone who claimed to have seen a battlefield, deep in the middle of which was a coffin!

There were all sorts of descriptions, none exactly alike.

All of this made the Immortal’s corpse even more fantastic, and caused it to attract even more people to come investigate.

In a period of a few months, the Violet Fate Sect had already dispatched five groups of people. Starting with the fourth group, it wasn’t just the Violet Qi Division who went, but also alchemists from the East Pill Division.

This was because the Cultivator who had seen pill formulas was none other than a Violet Qi Division disciple. After returning and telling his tale, it only took a few days for the East Pill Division to include alchemists with the fourth group dispatched.

The leaders of this particular group was none other than Ye Feimu, An Zaihai and Ye Yuntian.

Three Violet Furnace Lords emerged simultaneously, along with experts from the Violet Qi Division. This was the fourth wave sent to enter the region of the Immortal’s corpse.

A month passed, and more bizarre events occurred. The various Sects and Clans continued to dispatch more people, now, even eccentrics of the Patriarch level appeared.

It was at this time that the Violet Fate Sect began organizing the fifth group of people to travel to the Rebirth Cave.

By this time, Meng Hao had been in secluded meditation for half a year. It was three days after the fifth group left, led by Chu Yuyan and Lin Hailong, that he finally emerged.

When he walked out from the subterranean cavern, his body was somewhat weak. However, his eyes were filled with profundity much deeper than before. There was no evidence on him that he possessed the Everburning Flame. However, if you looked deep into his eyes, you couldn’t help but think that there was some massive conflagration deep therein.

Meng Hao had already melded the East Pill Everburning Flame into his mind and heart. Once he broke through from Foundation Establishment and formed a Violet Core, then he could transform it, and cause the Everburning Flame to ignite, and never be extinguished!

After emerging from meditation, Meng Hao could immediately sense the storm winds which flitted about the Sect. After some inquiries, he learned about the phenomena regarding the Immortal’s corpse which had begun half a year previous.

Meng Hao actually knew much more about the Immortal’s corpse than most others. On more than one occasion, he had gotten the feeling that the corpse had fallen into the world… because it was searching for him.

This speculation caused him to hesitate, and hold back from nearing the thing.

Hearing the various stories regarding the corpse caused Meng Hao to think about the matter quietly for a while. Then, he went to pay a formal visit to his Master. Afterward, he decided to once again go into secluded meditation, this time, to concoct a Three Mortalities Pill and break through to Core Formation.

At the moment, Meng Hao was thoroughly within the great circle of Foundation Establishment. The only road for him now was the one leading to becoming a Core Formation Expert.

After that, he could cultivate Core Qi, and then he could truly rise to prominence. Then, even Core Formation Cultivators would have to be careful around him. Many new paths would open up.

You could say becoming a Core Formation expert is truly becoming a Cultivator!

The breathing exercises that Cultivators practice are actually a way of preparing for the path of Core Formation, and counts as just the beginning. During Foundation Establishment, a foundation is laid; the more solid it is, the more powerful the result will be in Core Formation. In fact, Core Formation… is the first true explosive power upon the path of cultivation.

Core Formation Cultivators can use Core Qi to make magical techniques reach the pinnacle of power. Beyond that pinnacle, such techniques become divine abilities. Divine abilities are techniques that really only Nascent Soul Cultivators can master.

“Charge through to Core Formation!” thought Meng Hao. His eyes gleamed with stubbornness as he sat cross-legged in his Immortal’s Cave. He waved his right sleeve, and a black pill furnace materialized. As soon as it did, the face of a youth appeared on its surface. It stared hatefully at Meng Hao, its eyes filled with venomous hatred as it screamed a noiseless scream.

It was still filled with rage because Meng Hao had taken it out from the world of the Mother of Furnaces.

Meng Hao eyed the materialized youth on the surface of the black pill furnace. Then, he snorted coldly. The spirit of the pill furnace was unable to tell the difference between good and bad. Whenever Meng Hao used it to concoct pills, it was always filled with resentment.

“Since it seems you are seeking to die, I’ll help you to understand what it means to live a life worse than death. It won’t be long before you’re pleading with me to help you.” With that, he grabbed the black pill furnace, and, ignoring the fierce struggling on the face of the youth, as well as the noiseless screaming, he directly placed it into the blood-colored mask.

"Elder Ultimate Vexation, this is the spirit I spoke of a while ago. I joined this Sect just to capture this bully. May I prevail upon you to convert it?"

The meat jelly was currently perched atop a listless, ingratiating Li Clan Patriarch, leaning over and looking down at him. When it heard Meng Hao's words, it began to tremble, and its eyes shone with a brilliant light. Filled with excitement, it immediately looked at the black pill furnace which Meng Hao had delivered to it.

"Fear not," said the meat jelly with a smile. "You may be immoral, you may be incorrect, but you can rest at ease. The great, handsome, kind-hearted Ultimate Vexation will help bring you back from the path of wickedness!" It hopped over next to the black pill furnace….

Meng Hao retracted his Spiritual Sense, ignoring the spirit of the furnace. Instead, he pulled out the Ten Thousand Refinements furnace and some medicinal herbs. After a moment's thought, he devoted himself fully to pill concoction.

He would concoct the Three Mortalities Pill, which was required to be able to break through from Foundation Establishment to Core Formation.

The diligence with which Meng Hao focused on concocting the medicinal pill he needed for his breakthrough does not need to be described in detail. He took a full half a month, which, considering it didn't involve alchemic enlightenment, was actually quite a long time for him, something that didn't happen very often.

Half a month later, he looked down at the Three Mortalities Pill in his palm, and took a deep breath. Then, he started to duplicate it. Early in the morning of the next day, Meng Hao unhesitatingly consumed a Three Mortalities Pill and began to circulate the power of Violet Qi from the East in an attempt to form a Violet Core.

Days passed. Meng Hao lost track of how many Three Mortalities Pills he consumed. He had never imagined that using the ten Dao Pillars of the Perfect Foundation to form a Violet Core would be such a difficult process.

A month went by, and Meng Hao was completely immersed in using the Three Mortalities Pill to reach Core Formation. However, after a month of attempts, he had not succeeded. He was only a bit away, but no matter what he did, the only thing he could do was produce violet Qi. Every time he tried to form it into a Core, he failed.

Failure after failure caused Meng Hao to begin to regret having borrowed such a vast amount of Spirit Stones from the Sect after becoming a Violet Furnace Lord. Watching them flow away like water caused him intense pain. However, there was nothing he could do about it.

“Based on this rate of success, could my chances of success with ten Dao Pillars really be one in a thousand?” Meng Hao sighed. That thought was quite frightening. Without the copper mirror, his Cultivation base would never be able to progress beyond Foundation Establishment.

He sat thinking for a while, his brow furrowed, considering Li Daoyi and the others, and their breakthrough at the Dao Geyser.

“It must have something to do with my ten Dao Pillars,” sighed Meng Hao. He didn’t completely give up; based on his speculation just now, even if he only had a one in a thousand chance, that meant there was still hope.

“The first step is to form a Violet Core. Then after I concoct the Perfect Gold Core pill, I can form a Gold Core. For me, the Core Formation stage will involve a huge jump in power. Once I’m at Core Formation, I can wear the blood-colored mask and employ the Blood Immortal’s divine abilities! Also, according to what the meat jelly said, after I reach Core Formation, the parrot will appear….” Meng Hao’s eyes filled with determination as he thought these things.

“I must form a Violet Core!” He flicked his sleeve, and was about to go borrow some more Spirit Stones when, suddenly, his entire body trembled.

It wasn’t just him that was shaking, it was everything around him. More than half of the Southern Domain was vibrating, and the center of it all was none other than the Immortal’s corpse, where nearly one hundred thousand Cultivators had gathered in the vicinity of the Rebirth Cave.

The vibration came from the chest of the corpse, as if its heart were beating. It emanated out in all directions, rocking the earth, sending out ripples through the land. As it spread, it touched mountaintops, sweeping through one Sect after another.

The location of the Violet Sect Fate was not incredibly far away, so it was also affected. Many people heard it, and their hearts shook. Meng Hao suddenly paused, lifting his hand up to feel his chest.

He could feel the vibrations which filled everything. Suddenly, his expression changed, because at that moment he realized that, to him, the vibrations sounded like a beckoning.

In his estimation, it was a beckoning that came from none other than the Immortal’s corpse, which he had been trying so hard to avoid!

Filling the beckoning was an archaic voice that sounded directly into Meng Hao’s mind.

“You…. I know your bloodline. I know where you’re from….

“You…. Do you want to know why you could see me in that other world all those years ago…?

“You…. Do you want to know what world that was…?

“I came here for you, and I’ve been waiting a long time. Come to me. Come to me here…. You will know the truth about everything!”

The voice sounded ancient, as if it were floating through countless years of time, filled with ancient Qi. As it echoed within Meng Hao’s mind, it caused his blood vessels to surge. Blood pumped rapidly through his body. Suddenly, on the back of his right hand… a greenish mark appeared! 1

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# Chapter 296: Another Encounter with… Ji!

The mark looked like a magical symbol. It didn’t exist on top of his skin, but rather inside his flesh. Meng Hao was not unfamiliar with it; the moment he had reached Foundation Establishment, he had seen this exact same mark.

Today was the second time!

Meng Hao looked at the mark, his mind buzzing.

After a long time, the shaking disappeared. The strange sign which had filled half of the Southern Domain caused even more attention to be drawn to the Immortal’s corpse.

Meng Hao stood there within his Immortal’s cave for a long time before he lifted his head. His eyes were now filled with a sharp light.

“Just… who is he? Why was I able to see him that year? Why did he fall into the Southern Domain? And why is he able to affect my blood flow, and give rise to this mark…. Was the mark placed upon me by him that year? Or was it part of me all along, there within my flesh from the beginning?” Meng Hao silently thought about the night his father and mother went missing, and the violet wind which had blown outside.

If Meng Hao remembered correctly, when that wind arose, it had swirled around his body. He remembered that it was no ordinary wind, but that it contained some type of power.

Meng Hao thought for a long time, all the way until it was dark outside. A bright light began to shine in his eyes, as well as resolve.

“Regardless of whether this person’s words are true or false… I’m going!” Determination gleamed in his eyes. Great reward only comes by taking risks. Cultivators cultivate self-confidence! When a decision has been made, it must be pursued with determination, and without the slightest thought of wavering!

He flicked his right sleeve as he walked out of the Immortal’s cave.

Several days later, the sixth group of Cultivators left the Violet Fate Sect. It consisted of thirty people, who transformed into thirty prismatic beams that shot off into the air. In front of this group was none other than Meng Hao.

He wore the robe of a Violet Furnace Lord, and his long hair whipped about behind him as he shot forward. All of the people behind him looked at him with expressions of veneration, regardless of whether they were from Violet Qi Division or the East Pill Division.

Together, they shot off into the distance at top speed.

Meng Hao was quiet during the entire trip. He didn’t speak; within his mind spun the echoing beckons of the Immortal’s corpse.

This sixth group of Violet Fate Sect Cultivators teleported three times and spent half a month before arriving in the vicinity of the Rebirth Cave. Once more during that time period, the vibration echoed out.

When the vibration hit them, everyone dropped to the ground, where they sat cross-legged. Only Meng Hao floated in mid-air, looking off into the distance. Once again, he felt the beckoning.

“Come to me…. I’m here… waiting for you…. All the truth… all the answers….”

Meng Hao’s mind spun. Of the hundreds of thousands of Cultivators in the region of the Rebirth Cave, the voice within the beckons could only be heard by Meng Hao. His eyes glittered even more relentlessly than before.

There are three Danger Zones in the Southern Domain: the Primordial Dao Lakes, the Ancient Temple of Doom and finally, the Rebirth Cave. At a glance, it looked like an enormous depression in the ground. Multitudinous volcanoes could be seen in the area, so many that they were impossible to count. They seemed to never end.

What was visible was the black sky, and the thick black fog that covered everything.

This was the region of the Rebirth Cave.

According to the legends, people who were nearing death could enter the Rebirth Cave at the right moment, and if they succeeded, could get a chance to live another life!

Whether this was true or false, since ancient times, many, many almighty Cultivators, unwilling to pass into death, had entered the Rebirth Cave. Throughout the countless years, only three people had ever emerged successfully.

Without exception, after leaving the Rebirth Cave, those three people never once talked about what had happened inside. Eventually, they had disappeared, never to be heard from again.

Despite that, the legends regarding the mysteries of the Rebirth Cave continued to grow more and more exaggerated. Regardless of anything, stories about the Rebirth Cave had been circulating for tens of thousands of years, which was sufficient to show that… it had some astonishing properties.

Meng Hao understood that by proceeding forward, he would be entering the region of the Rebirth Cave. Upon entering, the level of danger would be extreme.

As for the Immortal’s corpse, it had fallen directly in front of the Rebirth Cave, no more than fifty kilometers away.

Currently, the vibrations were slowly fading away. As they did, one figure after another shot up from the ground into the air.

Currently, hundreds of thousands of Cultivators from all over the Southern Domain were gathered in a thousand kilometer radius of the Rebirth Cave, forming a perimeter around it. In this area, the Cultivators had established temporary strongholds representing the various Sects and Clans.

Every stronghold contained members of the elder generation of the various Sects. It seemed that every day, more people from a variety of Sects entered this huge region. Many would face the danger and approach the corpse, hoping to seize some good fortune. Some came back, some never did.

Because of the accumulation of so many hundreds of thousands of Cultivators, it was impossible to avoid the eruption of various feuds. Therefore, magical battle was not uncommon, and every day at least a few people were killed.

As for the great Sects and Clans, they were under the protection of the elder generation; there was a bit of chaos, but it was kept under relative control.

After the shaking vibration faded away, Meng Hao led the group of dozens of Violet Fate Sect Cultivators into the area. This of course attracted quite a bit of attention, and many people looked over to see what was happening.

When they saw Meng Hao, and recognized his Violet Furnace Lord’s robe, a great buzz of discussion rose up.

“That’s Fang Mu from the Violet Fate Sect!”

“That’s the Dao Child of the East Pill Division, Fang Mu!”

Meng Hao heard some of these words, but his expression was always the same as ever. He continued onward, leading his group further inward toward the area near the Rebirth Cave.

As they flew along, he scanned the area with Spiritual Sense. He could immediately sense a vast amount of Cultivators there. There weren’t as many as outside the inner perimeter, perhaps only around ten thousand.

Compared to the area outside, inside the perimeter, the fog was denser, thicker, exerting pressure on Spiritual Sense and making it more difficult to hear and see.

Eventually, Meng Hao caught sight of an enormous basin. Hovering in mid-air above the basin was a roiling black fog that rose up high into the sky.

Beneath the fog, the basin had a perimeter of about 500 kilometers. It was enormous, and within that enormity, was the Southern Domain's mysterious Rebirth Cave.

This was the nucleus of the Rebirth Cave. Surrounding this nucleus were a dozen or so pillars of light which rose up into the sky. Each and every pillar undulated shockingly, making it impossible for anyone to not notice them.

They embodied shocking power; the existence of these more than ten pillars of light made the huge area surrounding the Rebirth Cave seem a bit less dangerous.

Many of the strange creatures that lived in the area hid away, and would not emerge to harm people.

Each one among the dozen or so pillars of light was fixed at a stationary point. There, large groups of Cultivators sat cross-legged, meditating. Only the five great Sects and three great Clans were capable of creating strongholds like this near the nucleus of the Rebirth Cave region.

As Meng Hao approached, he immediately caught sight of one of the pillars of light that was violet-colored, and emanated an oppressive, pressure-filled energy. Because of this violet pillar of light, not a scrap of black fog could be seen anywhere nearby. Even the ground was a violet color because of it.

Wu Dingqiu 1 was there inside, as well as Chu Yuyan, An Zaihai, Lin Hailong, and the other Cultivators from the Violet Qi Division. There were roughly a hundred people, all sitting cross-legged, eyes closed in meditation.

Included in the number were two old people, meditating cross-legged in the very center of the glowing pillar. They wore long, white robes, and their countenances were ancient. Meng Hao could sense a fearsome pressure contained within their bodies.

Wu Dingqiu was obviously much weaker than these two old people, by about an entire stage!

“Spirit Severing stage….” Meng Hao took a deep breath. As he continued toward them, his eyes flickered about, glancing toward the other pillars of light. He saw the Solitary Sword Sect, the Black Sieve Sect, the Golden Frost Sect, the Blood Demon Sect, as well as Cultivators from the three great Clans including Han Bei, Chen Fan, Zhou Jie, Wang Lihai, Li Daoyi and others. 2. Meng Hao’s gaze finally came to fall upon a white-robed woman in the Black Sieve Sect group.

Xu Qing.

He stared at her for a moment and then looked away. There were other pillars of light. One was orange-colored, and filled with an air of potency and dignity. Sitting cross-legged within were a few dozen Cultivators upon whose skin were tattooed depictions of various totems. They were tall, and did not look like people from the Southern Domain.

“Western Desert Cultivators….” thought Meng Hao, his eyes narrowing. This wasn’t his first time seeing Cultivators from the Western Desert. The first time he’d arrived in the center of the Southern Domain, he’d seen these strange, tall Cultivators.

Meng Hao also knew that the actual name of the Western Desert was the Barbarian West. In fact, that was the name that was written on the map he’d seen years ago. However, the people from the Western Desert felt that the word Barbarian was too belittling, and therefore took up the name Western Desert. This corresponded with the name of the Northern Desert. Despite this, there were still people who called them Western Devils.

As he proceeded onward, Meng Hao’s gaze fell upon two other pillars of light. One of them glowed with a light as blue as the sky. Next to it, a large flagpole had been stabbed into the ground. Floating in the wind was a flag embroidered in gold with the character…

Ji!

When he saw it, Meng Hao's pupils constricted, and he began to breathe heavily. There were over ten Cultivators sitting beneath the pillar of light, meditating. One of them was a young man with thin lips, a lofty air, and impatience written on his face. He seemed to have sensed Meng Hao's gaze. He turned and looked over, then gave a cold snort. Contempt flickered within his eyes.

The cold snort immediately entered Meng Hao's mind, causing him to pause momentarily. He quickly rotated his Cultivation base to disperse the uneasy feeling.

"Core Formation stage." His expression was the same as usual as he looked away. The young man's eyes flashed as he examined Meng Hao for a moment, and then ignored him.

Meng Hao next looked at the other beam of light, which was a greenish color and emanated terrifying power. The Black Sieve Sect's pillar was also greenish, but this color was different, deeper.

Beneath the green pillar, three people sat cross-legged. One was a middle-aged woman, another was an old person, and the third was young woman. The young woman wore a green robe, and her long hair cascaded down over her shoulders. She was rather beautiful, but she also possessed a cold, proud air. She seemed to be the kind of person that had a short temper, and wasn't easy to approach.

As he looked over everyone, Meng Hao stayed calm and collected. He led his group directly toward the Violet Fate Sect's violet pillar of light, and as he neared, quite a few people opened their eyes vigilantly. When they saw Meng Hao, expressions of respect filled their faces.

As for Chu Yuyan, a complicated look appeared in her eyes. Ye Feimu simply lowered his head silently.

1. Wu Dingqiu was the guy who made the bet with Eccentric Song about the spear. He was also present when Grandmaster Eternal Mountain visited the Violet Fate Sect, and Meng Hao competed against Fatty

2. Okay here’s a quick refresher. Han Bei, sexy schemer. Chen Fan, protective talkative brother. Zhou Jie, possessed Dao Child. Wang Lihai, brother of Wang Tengfei. Li Daoyi, fought Meng Hao in the Blood Immortal Legacy

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# Chapter 297: Still Somewhat Pleased With Himself

Wu Dingqiu, who sat there cross-legged, suddenly opened his eyes. After he caught sight of Meng Hao, his face filled with a smile and he nodded. Considering the level of his Cultivation base, and his status within the Violet Qi Division, for him to treat a Foundation Establishment Cultivator in such a fashion was enough to see what position Meng Hao occupied in the Violet Fate Sect.

You could say that Meng Hao even exceeded Wu Dingqiu. If Meng Hao’s Cultivation base was any higher, Wu Dingqiu would have been required to rise to his feet.

Meng Hao had been a part of the Cultivation world for years now, and knew that the best way to conduct oneself was without arrogance. He immediately clasped hands and bowed to Wu Dingqiu, which of course caused the man’s smile to grow even wider.

Meng Hao’s Cultivation base was weak, but his position was high. Because of his lack of arrogance, it caused Wu Dingqiu’s favorable impression of him to grow even stronger. Smiling, he said, “Grandmaster Fang, allow me to introduce you to these two Patriarchs.” This was a situation of giving a plum in exchange for a peach.

Meng Hao also smiled. Having been introduced by Wu Dingqiu, Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed deeply to the two ancient-looking Patriarchs within the violet pillar of light.

“Junior Fang Mu of the East Pill Division pays respects to the two Patriarchs.”

Sitting there cross-legged within the violet pillar of light, their faces covered with wrinkles, they seemed the very picture of intense power. As Meng Hao bowed to them, they opened their eyes slowly, looking him over, their vision filled with abstruseness. They seemed to be committing Meng Hao's aura to memory.

"Your Cultivation base isn't sufficient," said one of them coolly, his eyes closed. "To the greatest extent possible, do not venture outside. Stay here, and you'll be fine." The other Patriarch smiled at Meng Hao, eyes filled with praise.

Meng Hao knew that their good will was all because of his Master.

After Meng Hao payed his respects to the Patriarchs, Wu Dingqiu led him to greet more Cultivators from the Violet Qi Division. All of them treated Meng Hao with utmost politeness. Be it with their words, or the way they carried themselves, they showed complete respect.

Even the Core Formation Cultivators were very respectful to him.

Wu Dingqiu introduced Meng Hao to the Violet Qi Division Cultivators, but as for the East Pill Division disciples, no introductions were needed. One by one, they approached Meng Hao to offer him their respects.

When Meng Hao approached Lin Hailong, An Zaihai and the others, it was noticed by the forces from other Sects in the area. Many gazes fell upon them, most of which lingered on Meng Hao. The expressions of the onlookers instantly changed into shock; clearly most of them had guessed who Meng Hao was.

Meng Hao greeted Lin Hailong, An Zaihai and the others with clasped hands. He looked toward Chu Yuyan and nodded, smiling. He also gave Ye Feimu a glance, then sat down cross-legged.

He was also a Violet Furnace Lord, but he was Grandmaster Pill Demon's Legacy Apprentice, which was a very high position. According to Sect rules, he was actually higher than a Violet Furnace Lord.

However, Meng Hao knew that his Cultivation base wasn’t very high, so he didn’t want to show off. Therefore, he sat next to An Zaihai, subtly placing Lin Hailong in the center position. Old Lin Hailong was an astute person, so how could he possibly not understand what Meng Hao was doing? He smiled and shook his head, not saying anything to break the facade.

An Zaihai chuckled. Looking at Meng Hao, he lowered his voice and said, “Elder Brother Lin is just another Violet Furnace Lord. He only cares about the Dao of alchemy….” Before finishing, he stopped, giving Meng Hao a look. He knew that Meng Hao was a smart person, and would be able to ascertain the meaning of his words.

“Don’t worry, Elder Brother An, I understand.” Meng Hao could tell that An Zaihai was trying to make sure that he didn’t brood over the events from the day that Meng Hao was raised to Violet Furnace Lord. Meng Hao smiled, then looked around the area, his eyes eventually coming to rest on the flag with the Ji character on it.

No one knew it, but when he first laid eyes on the flag, his heart was shaken by great waves. Of course, he had covered it up well, not letting the tiniest shred of a reaction be seen.

However, deep in his heart, the character Ji was surrounded by many unfathomable mysteries.

The flag of three streamers was sealed with the surname Ji!

The lifelong wish of the Blood Immortal of Ancient Doom was to refine the blood of the Ji clan into instruments of blood slaughtering!

Furthermore, in the ancient Blessed Land where the Heavens were round and the Earth was square, when he had stood next to the square cauldron that wished to reverse the order of the Cosmos, Meng Hao had experienced a vision in which the cauldron refused to exist under the same sky as the name Ji!

There was also the legend of the ancient World Tree, which had destroyed itself and dissipated into the stars.

All of these things seemed to have connection to the name Ji. There were countless ties that caused Meng Hao to tremble uncontrollably. This was especially true now, after seeing the name with his own eyes, branded onto that flag.

Having noticed what Meng Hao was looking at, An Zaihai was silent for a moment, then quietly said, “That’s the Ji Clan from the Eastern Lands!” It seemed almost as if he was worried others might hear, and thus lowered his voice in caution. He seemed to be jumpy when talking about the name, even filled with dread, as if he were an ant discussing an elephant.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered imperceptibly. When he heard the fear in An Zaihai’s voice, he looked over at him.

“I don’t know much about their Clan,” continued An Zaihai, his voice still low. “Everything I know is what I’ve heard from Master. The Ji Clan from the Eastern Lands is the number one clan in the Nanshan Continent…. Their base, of course, is in the Eastern Lands, and no one knows exactly how deep their power runs. However, you must absolutely, positively never forget that the Ji Clan is by no means, under any circumstances, to be provoked!”

His voice was so low that only Meng Hao could hear his words. “There actually aren’t very many Clan members, but any one of them should be considered beyond provocation. This is especially true of any Quasi-Array Sons of Ji. Every one is inestimably highly ranked. The one you saw just now…

“If my guess is correct, he is definitely one of the Sons of Ji, of the Quasi-Array of the Ji Clan. If he were not, he wouldn’t be of the Core Formation stage, considering how young he is. Ji Clan members, especially those of the Quasi-Array, are all Chosen. Every generation must undergo a variety of intense training regimens to prepare to fight for one of the one hundred spots available for true Array Clan members. I only know this much, which Master happened to casually mention once.”

Meng Hao sat there thoughtfully. He, too, only had a very basic understanding of the Ji Clan. Based on all of his experiences related to Ji, he was sure that they possessed fearsomely deep resources, perhaps infinitely beyond what anyone understood.

His voice low, An Zaihai glanced over at the green pillar of light, and the three people sitting cross-legged therein, and continued, “You must not provoke those three any more than you should the people from the Ji Clan. They are another of the most powerful Clans in the Nanshan Continent. Fearsome! You came to the scene a bit late, so you don’t know all the details of everything that’s happened. I personally witnessed one of the Ji Clan Cultivators address that girl as a member of the Fang Clan, and he looked scared 1. Think about it! What sort of profound background must those three have in order to inspire fear into the Ji Clan? They must also be from the Eastern Lands.”

Thanks to An Zaihai’s explanation, Meng Hao now had a general understanding of the various forces in the area. He continued to look around, and as he did, his eyes suddenly locked with Xu Qing’s.

Neither said a word; everything was spoken through the look they exchanged. Their gazes quickly separated, but not before both understood everything that needed to be understood.

Han Bei, Wang Youcai, Li Shiqi, Li Daoyi, Zhou Jie, Wang Lihai, Han Shandao, Chen Fan as well as Song Yunshu from the Song Clan, along with beautiful, bitter Song Jia, were all familiar to Meng Hao. All were present among the forces of their various Sects and Clans. Scanning over everyone, Meng Hao didn’t see Fatty anywhere.

Time passed by. Meng Hao wasn’t sure what everyone was waiting for, but he didn’t see anyone leave the area of the pillar of light.

Eventually, the black fog up above grew even darker. It was at this moment that Chu Yuyan approached Meng Hao and sat down next to him. She looked at him intently.

Meng Hao had always felt that her intuition was far too keen. However, he kept his expression the same as ever as he looked back at her.

When their gazes met, Chu Yuyan didn’t look away.

“From the year you arrived in the East Pill Division,” she said softly, “I felt annoyed every time I looked at you. I’ve never been able to figure it out. However, perhaps… it’s possible that I saw you somewhere before in the past!”

Meng Hao’s expression looked the same as it always did. However, inside, his heart pounded with shock. He sighed again inwardly because of Chu Yuyan’s frightening thinking ability.

“Where exactly did we see each other before?” she said suddenly, staring into Meng Hao’s eyes as if looking for some clues.

After a long moment, she could tell that Meng Hao was not going to reply.

She looked at him intently. “I don’t care if you’re Pill Cauldron or Fang Mu,” she said, one word at a time. “I know that you have another identity. You’re not willing to talk about it, so I won’t ask. But one of these days I’m going to find out. I’m going to find out… who you are!” There was a trace of radiance within her stubbornness. It was faint, but Meng Hao could see it clearly. It was a glow that sprang up when she first talked about Grandmaster Pill Cauldron.

“Impossible….” he said to himself. Although he had never experienced the type of relationship that could exist between a man and a woman, he was no longer an ignorant youth, and was capable of picking up on much of such interactions.

That glow in her eyes was very similar to the glow that had been in Xu Qing’s eyes when they had parted outside the Black Sieve Sect.

Meng Hao felt a little bit guilty, but also a bit proud. Chu Yuyan had been pestering him for years, even when she was engaged to Wang Tengfei. For her to change in this way, actually made him feel somewhat pleased with himself.

He cleared his throat, deciding that it was time to prove whether or not his speculations were correct. He lifted his right hand. Chu Yuyan watched, stupefied, as he reached out to place his hand onto her beautiful face.

Immediately, her face turned crimson and her eyes went wide. Clearly she had never imagined that Fang Mu would possibly be so rude.

Before he could actually touch her, he pulled his hand back, then looked at her and sighed.

As he sighed, Chu Yuyan's face grew even redder. Fury blossomed in her phoenix-like eyes. She glared at Meng Hao, clearly on the verge of flying into a rage from shame.

It was at this moment that, suddenly, a shocking roar filled the entire area surrounding the basin. Immediately, the two Violet Fate Sect Patriarchs opened their eyes. The Patriarchs in the other nearby beams of light similarly opened their eyes.

In almost the same instant, all of them, nearly twenty people, flew out toward the basin. Wu Dingqiu's eyes began to glow and he spoke to the surrounding Violet Fate Sect disciples.

"It's starting again. The Patriarchs from the various Sects will suppress the area surrounding the Rebirth Cave. We must move as quickly as possible. Remember, the Violet Qi Division will cooperate with the East Pill Division. We must acquire a sample of blood from the corpse!"

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1. This character Fang is a common surname, the same Fang as in Meng Hao's assumed name, Fang Mu.

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# Chapter 298: The Corpse Moved!

Wu Dingqiu’s eyes glittered as he leaped into the air and began to fly forward. “East Pill Division disciples, do not touch any part of the corpse!” he cried. “Violet Qi Division, follow my lead. We will have the time it takes an incense stick to burn! Let’s take advantage of that time to acquire some of this Immortal’s blood!”

The Violet Qi Division Cultivators flew into the air with him. The East Pill Division Cultivators around Meng Hao also began to shoot into the air to follow.

Chu Yuyan glared viciously at Meng Hao for a moment. Then she turned her supple waist and flexed her long legs. As she turned, her robe pulled tight around her firm rear end, which Meng Hao couldn’t help but notice. She, along with Lin Hailong and the other alchemist Cultivators all shot off toward the basin surrounding the Rebirth Cave.

Of course, that is exactly where the Immortal’s corpse was located.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. He was no longer thinking about the matter regarding Chu Yuyan. Instead, as he flew up into the air, he focused his thoughts. Flying next to him was none other than Ye Feimu.

Ye Feimu was quiet for the space of a few breaths, then began to explain to Meng Hao what was going on, “There is nothing blocking the way to the corpse. However, if you touch it, you will instantly be sucked into a strange realm. Some people return from it, others don’t. Every day at about this time, the strange power of the corpse suddenly drops by half. Therefore, when this happens, the bizarre life within the Rebirth Cave will emerge.

“Therefore, the Patriarchs from the various Sects will go ahead to stand guard, giving the rest of the Sect disciples a window of time. Unlike some of the other Sects, all we need is a sample of blood. As for the Violet Qi Division, it’s possible they have some other goals. However, they will cooperate with us. After we get some blood, then we can focus on other priorities.

“The reason so many alchemists and Violet Furnace Lords are here is because the blood from the Immortal’s corpse is actually invisible. The instant it leaves the corpse, it dissipates into Heaven and Earth. Only us Cultivators of the Dao of alchemy can take advantage of that instant to use pill concoction techniques to capture and refine the escaping blood.”

Ye Feimu’s explanation was extremely detailed. Once he finished, he lowered his head and increased his speed as he proceeded forward. It seemed the only reason he had been hanging back was to explain these things to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao could sense the ease in tension between them. However, a bit of challenge still existed within his words, as if he wanted to warn Meng Hao that he would be waiting to see who would be the first to refine some of the Immortal’s blood.

Meng Hao had not come here for any blood sample, though. He had come because of the beckoning voice. Everyone else might be unaware, but Meng Hao knew that this person… was not dead at all!

Many thoughts flowed through his head as he transformed into a beam of light that shot forward. He flashed through the air, soon catching sight of Li Daoyi, Zhou Jie, Xu Qing and the others. All of them were converging on the basin.

What most captured Meng Hao’s attention was the young man named Ji. His Cultivation base was at the peak of the early Core Formation stage, and he was surrounded by seven or eight guards, all of them old men. He moved forward, his entire body exuding a lofty and proud air. Completely disregarding all of the surrounding Southern Domain Cultivators, he sped off into the distance.

At the same time, the young woman surnamed Fang shot forward, her face filled with cold indifference, her entire body emanating blinding silver light. The beams of light shot off of her like sharp arrows, causing anyone who looked at her to feel stabs of pain.

The Ji youth and the Fang girl were both matchlessly stunning. Whether intentionally or not, they had long since become the focus of attention in the area. Next to them, anyone, be they Chosen or Dao Child, were like ants. The difference in status was just too great. This of course caused the Southern Domain's Chosen and Dao Children to feel somewhat recalcitrant. However, keeping in mind the warnings of their various Sects, and fearsome power of the two, they maintained their silence.

The Western Desert Cultivators were also present. They were big and tall, and their bodies were covered with totemic tattoos. As they flew forward toward the basin, their totems shone with rays of bright light, clearly beyond ordinary.

A short amount of time passed, and soon, the moment of opportunity arrived for any Cultivator who neared. It didn't matter what purpose the various Sects had, all their disciples charged forward.

In fact, many of the disciples from the other Sects outside of the main periphery, had calculated the time and were now charging forward too.

Meng Hao focused himself, accelerating for the space of about ten or more breaths. Suddenly, he felt as if a wind were blowing up against him. The wind carried with it the stench of decay, and as it passed over him, he felt his skin becoming sticky, as if he were covered in sweat.

The bizarre wind of decay penetrated into his flesh, piercing through him, causing his expression to change. He could immediately sense that everyone around him was feeling the exact same thing.

At the same time, the aura of the Nascent Soul Cultivators from the various clans began to weaken, as if it were being violently suppressed. Meng Hao recalled being told about this phenomena when he first arrived.

It didn’t take long for Wu Dingqiu’s Cultivation base to be suppressed down to the great circle of Core Formation. His face was pale as he led everyone forward through the black fog, closer and closer to the mountain-like corpse.

The instant Meng Hao caught sight of the corpse, he saw that it really was the size of a small mountain. Its skin was gray, and covered with brands that looked like magical symbols. The symbols seemed to squirm bizarrely, and emitted glowing light.

The five-colored light twisted up into the air, but was obscured by the black fog, making it difficult to see clearly. However, the closer he got, the clearer it became. The magical symbols were obviously grouping together into a larger text.

As the Cultivators from the other Sects approached and saw the magical text, someone cried out, “The Dao Divinity Scripture!” More and more Cultivators neared, and more than half of them sank to the ground cross-legged to stare at the scriptural text.

Some of the Violet Fate Sect disciples also stopped and sat down cross-legged to stare at the magical symbols. Meng Hao glanced over, frowning slightly. In that slight glance, he suddenly realized that his Spiritual Sense was showing signs of disorder.

He immediately focused his vision, looking toward the corpse. Disciples from other Sects who were clearly more interested in the corpse itself were now nearing it.

As he approached, its sheer vastness filled his vision. Wu Dingqiu led the Violet Qi Division disciples, clearly fearful of the strange teleportation effect. All he intended to do was break the skin of the corpse and extract some blood. Suddenly, the beckoning feeling once again appeared, floating deep within Meng Hao’s mind.

“Come…. Come to me…. I’ve been waiting a long time for you…. The whole truth, all the answers, will be explained to you, my heir….”

The beckoning filled Meng Hao’s whole body, causing him to tremble. Looking around, it was clear that no one else could hear the sounds which he was now hearing in his ears, the calling.

The instant he began to look around, a roaring sound suddenly began to fill the air, coming from the corpse itself. At the same time, the ground began to shake. The entire Rebirth Cave basin began to quake violently.

A thunderous sound echoed out, causing the surrounding Cultivator’s expressions to change immediately.

“It moved!!” cried someone from one of the other Sects. “I just saw the corpse’s hand move!”

“That’s impossible! This corpse has been dead for years. How could it possibly move!?”

“I saw it too! The corpse’s hand moved a bit…. It couldn’t have been an illusion….”

Meng Hao began to pant. He too had just seen the supposedly dead corpse move its right hand!

He knew that he wasn’t mistaken. After all, he had known from quite some time ago that this supposed corpse… was actually alive!

As gasps of astonishment filled the air, and the thunderous sound filled the air, all eyes instantly swivelled to look toward the corpse. The corpse… slowly lifted its enormous hand into the air. The speed with which it moved seemed slow, but within the blink of an eye, the hand had reached up high, as if it were going to place its hand on its head. Instead, its hand suddenly descended at high speed toward the ground.

This caused everyone’s scalps to go numb, and to gape with wide eyes. Just as everyone was about to shoot backward in retreat… the hand slammed into the ground.

BOOM!

BOOM!

BOOM!

An indescribably loud sound shattered the air. The ground quaked, and the sky drained of color. At the same time, the black fog shot up into the sky. The earth rippled into great waves, sweeping out as if it were an attack.

Bloodcurdling screams filled the air. Everything went dim, and was thrown into chaos.

The shocking boom resonated out, and the ground heaved. The faces of the various Sect Patriarchs who were leading the way to the Rebirth Cave immediately fell. At the same time, the fog floating in the sky began to seethe violently, then shoot back toward the ground.

Next, an incredible, indescribable gravitational force sprang into being. It emanated out from the corpse, immediately beginning to drag everything in the area toward the corpse. The nearby Cultivators had no time to avoid it, and were instantly snagged by the force and sucked in. As soon as they touched the surface of the corpse, they disappeared.

Li Shiqi, Wang Youcai, Li Daoyi, Wang Lihai, Zhou Jie, Chen Fan, all of them were instantly grabbed by the wild gravitational force. In the blink of an eye, they were sent tumbling toward the corpse, and then disappeared, teleported to who knew what strange place.

Next to Meng Hao, Chu Yuyan and Ye Feimu, as well as the rest of the East Pill Division and Violet Qi Division Cultivators, were incapable of evading. All of them were sent spinning toward the corpse, and then disappeared.

To Meng Hao, it felt as if some enormous hand had grabbed him and was dragging him toward the corpse. There was nothing he could do to prevent it. His expression, however, was calm. He could tell that the force which was grabbing him contained no evil. If it did, then considering its abilities, even if he tried to escape far way, he still wouldn’t be safe. This he knew.

“Well, you’ve called for me three times already, I might as well go along!” His eyes shone brightly. After feeling the beckoning three times, and hearing the words contained therein, he had long since understood that he absolutely must come here!

The importance of Heaven and Earth is superseded by the importance of one’s father and mother.

The matter of his parents had weighed on his heart from the very beginning. He had an intense feeling that this was his chance to get some answers!

The instant he touched the corpse and vanished, Meng Hao saw the Ji Clan youth and the young Fang woman also being sucked in and vanishing.

After that, everything went black….

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# Chapter 299: Destroying Totems in the Maze

In the same instant, the world in front of him was no longer black, but filled with grayish light. Meng Hao could clearly tell that just now, his body had been affected by a teleportation spell.

The teleportation had moved him somewhere, although he wasn’t sure exactly where.

When things became clear, Meng Hao looked around. Immediately, his brow furrowed.

He saw an ancient wall, which was flecked with spots of blood that had been there for who knew how many years. Looking overhead, it seemed as if the wall stretched up into the Heavens themselves. Apparently, it was endlessly high.

There wasn’t just one wall, but two, forming a corridor. Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. He didn’t go forward down the corridor, but rather, flew straight into the air.

He shot upward for a while. However, even after focusing the power of his Cultivation base into his eyes, he still was incapable of seeing the tops of the walls.

“They have no end….” he thought, slowly floating back down. He didn’t land onto the ground, but rather floated there in mid-air.

This place had a stifling air; it seemed that there were only two paths to pick from, either forward, or backward.

Meng Hao thought of the other Cultivators who had touched the corpse, and of the things they had talked about. Upon returning, each had described different scenes. One saw mountains, another a river. One saw buildings, another, Celestial scenes. One even saw a battlefield.

Meng Hao thoughtfully lifted his hand into the air, and then struck out seven or eight times. A roaring filled the air as a black-colored palm appeared that looked as if it were formed from roiling mist. It shot forward toward one of the walls.

Considering its incredible speed, it only took a moment before it slammed into the wall. No sound could be heard; it was like the palm had been sucked in by the wall. There wasn’t even the tiniest mark left now.

Meng Hao’s face sank.

Just now, he had only attacked with fifty percent power. However, considering he was of the full circle of Foundation Establishment, he could easily smash a wall into powder. However, this wall didn’t even tremble.

After a moment’s thought, Meng Hao set his jaw. Eyes glittering, he shot forward. If he could’t fly up, and the walls were unbreakable, then he might as well go forward.

He whistled through the air at top speed, heading forward. Before he got too far, the two walls on either side of him began to grow wider apart. The area in front of him grew larger, and another wall appeared, causing the path to split into two.

When he saw the path split ahead of him, realization flickered in his eyes.

“A maze….”

Meanwhile, elsewhere in the maze, Li Daoyi shot forward, grim faced, as did Zhou Jie, Wang Lihai, Xu Qing, Han Bei and the others. All of them were inside the maze.

So was the young man from the Ji Clan as well as the girl surnamed Fang. All of them were in different areas of this huge maze.

So far, no one had encountered any of the others, which made everyone come to the conclusion that they were alone inside.

In the past, whoever had returned after touching the Immortal’s corpse, described being teleported to different places. Never had there been a repetition.

Days passed. Meng Hao’s expression was calm. He had encountered many junctions in the path, and never once did he hesitate. He would pick a road and proceed forward without thinking too much about it.

“Considering you called me here, well… I’m not going to go looking for you. You’ll show up eventually.” He flew along calmly for several days. One day, a five-path junction appeared up ahead of him. Meng Hao glanced it over, and was about to pick the center path, when suddenly his eyes flickered, and he retreated backward.

At the same time, he lifted his right hand, quickly slicing his index finger as he shot back, and then waved it toward the intersection.

Even as he moved backward, a black streak like lightning shot toward him through the air. If he hadn’t retreated just now, he definitely would have been seriously injured.

Instead, his finger attack just now erupted with billowing killing Blood Qi. It slammed into the incoming black streak.

An explosion filled the air. As it rang out, Meng Hao’s face grew grim, and killing intent flickered within his eyes. He fell back three more paces and then came to a stop. He lifted his hand again, and as he did, Biolet Qi swirled around his body. The Qi flowed toward his hand, transforming into a long, violet-colored blade.

Suddenly, he moved forward without hesitation, and as he did, he waved his hand ahead in a chopping motion.

A rumble filled the air as a flash of violet light slashed out from his hand, transforming midair into a curved, three meter long arc. Wisps of Violet Qi continued to emanate out from Meng Hao, melding into the curved shape.

This was… the Violet Qi Guillotine! 1

Filled with the power of a Perfect Foundation, ten Dao Pillars and Violet Qi from the East, this was a deadly magical attack.

The Violet Qi Guillotine looked like a crescent moon as it shot through the air toward the intersection. As it entered the crossroads, the air distorted around it, rippling. The emptiness twisted, making what had seemed like a void before look as if it were covered with a veil that was now being lifted up. Suddenly, a figure became visible.

It was a middle-aged man. He was more than three heads taller than Meng Hao, and incredibly muscular. He wore a simple garment, and visible on his skin was a depiction of a three-headed flood dragon totem!

This was a Cultivator from the Western Desert!!

Now that he had been revealed, he suddenly lifted his right arm and opened his mouth with a shout. A black glow emerged from his forehead. The totem covering his body began to glow with a black aura, and in front of him, an incredibly realistic image of a three-headed flood dragon appeared. Roaring, it shot forward and tore into the Violet Qi Guillotine.

A boom filled the air, rocking everything. Meng Hao watched as the Violet Qi Guillotine began to disintegrate, transforming into wisps of Violet Qi that dissipated into the air. At the same time, the three-headed flood dragon also began to break up into pieces. The Western Desert Cultivator’s face was unsightly as he stared in shock at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao gave a cold snort, lifting his hand and waving it forward.

“Violet Qi Garrote!” As he waved his hand, the Violet Qi in the area suddenly stilled. Then it began to twist, extending, transforming into countless threads that circled around the Western Desert Cultivator. It rapidly surrounded him, emitting sharp whistling sounds. Suddenly, Meng Hao clenched his hand into a fist, and the strands of Violet Qi contracted.

This technique was something Meng Hao had learned after becoming a Violet Furnace Lord. This was the second form of the Violet Qi Guillotine, a technique from the Violet Qi Division. In addition to this second form, there was a third form called Violet Gibbous Moon!

The Western Desert Cultivator's face was dark as the Violet Qi Garrote closed in around him. He gave a cold harrumph, then began to lift his right arm, upon the back of which suddenly appeared a totem.

This totem was simple; it was a red fist, about the size of an infant's hand. However, in the blink of an eye, a roaring power exploded out from the body of the Western Desert Cultivator.

The hand of his upraised arm clenched into a fist and punched downward.

The fist hit nothing but air, but as it did, layers of ripples surged out. The piercing shriek of an infant could be heard, and as it echoed out, the ripples slammed into the surrounding Violet Qi. Immediately, the Violet Qi began to disintegrate.

The face of the Western Desert Cultivator was pale. Blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth. He looked toward Meng Hao with fear in his eyes.

"You're an alchemist from the Southern Domain's Violet Fate Sect," he said, retreating backward. "I never imagined that you would have a Cultivation base such as this. Sir, I was rash just now. I'll take my leave." A third totem appeared on his left arm, but it appeared to be only half completed, not a full totem. The Cultivator's body began to grow blurry, as if he would disappear into the air.

"A bit rash?" said Meng Hao, his eyes glittering with killing intent. If he hadn't dodged at just the right time, he would have been beheaded. Even as the words left his mouth, he shot forward.

“You Southern Domain Cultivators really don’t know when to give up!” said the Western Desert Cultivator with a cold snort. “It’s obvious that we’re both in the Pseudo Core stage. You used full power just now! Clearly we’re an even match!” Ferocity suddenly filled his face.

His expression had changed because as Meng Hao advanced, he began to rotate his Cultivation base, causing power to explode out. This power was even greater than that from before, causing everything in the area to shake.

Meng Hao lifted up his right hand and extended three fingers!

A shocking three fingered Blood Palm appeared. It transformed into a murderous Blood Qi which shot toward the Western Desert Cultivator.

“Live through this three finger strike and you can leave!”

The face of the Western Desert Cultivator flickered, filling with astonishment. The blurriness surrounding his body instantly disappeared; he couldn’t possibly maintain his invisibility. He lifted his hand and tapped his forehead; the three-headed flood dragon totem, as well as the blood-colored fist totem, both appeared and shot forward.

Meng Hao’s three-fingered blood palm slammed into them.

The resulting massive boom echoed out in all directions. The Western Desert Cultivator let out a blood-curdling scream. His body shook as the fist totem shattered. Blood sprayed from his mouth as the three-headed flood dragon totem disintegrated. He retreated backward several paces, his face pale. Before he could say a single word, a single Blood Finger slammed into his forehead.

A tremor ran through his body, and he toppled to the ground, dead.

Meng Hao approached. He looked down at the dead Western Desert Cultivator, whose name he didn’t even know. He knelt down next to the body and fished out a bag of holding. His eyes shone with thoughtfulness.

“So, it seems I’m not alone in this place…. These Western Desert Cultivators have some strange techniques. They’re as different from those of the Southern Domain as black is from white…. If not, a single Blood Finger would have been sufficient to slay a Pseudo Core Cultivator.” Giving a final glance to the Western Desert Cultivator, he noticed that the totem on the man’s arms were fading and transforming into black ink.

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# Chapter 300: An Ancient Starry Sky

“The Western Desert….” Meng Hao frowned. On this side of the Milky Way Sea was the Western Desert and the Southern Domain; in the middle of the two were the Black Lands, which weren’t very large.

The Black Lands were the only passageway between the Southern Domain and the Western Desert. Other places had long since been sealed by Patriarch Cultivators from either of the two major powers, creating two continents or territories.

Throughout history, there had been two great, world-shaking wars between the two continents. During those two great wars, all of the Sects of both the Western Desert and the Southern Domain had participated. Such wars were not the type between two Sects or Clans. They were major wars between both of the enormous powers.

The aggressor in both wars was the Western Desert!

The Western Desert’s cultivation resources were extremely limited; furthermore, the climate was abominable and the spiritual energy scarce. Despite all that, it produced many outstanding individuals. Thus, in the midst of all the hardships, the Western Desert’s power grew greater and greater.

In the Western Desert, cultivation was not the focal point; the most important thing was survival. There, the law of the jungle was even more brutal, many times more so than in the Southern Domain. Under such circumstances, Cultivators with talent, who stood out like awls sticking out through a bag, were generally much more powerful than their Southern Domain counterparts of the same level.

They envied the Southern Domain’s riches and fertility. Thus, they went to war!

The two wars were what had given shape to the enormous sealed demarkation between the West and the South.

Meng Hao lifted his hand; a Flame Sea surged out, completely burning the Western Desert Cultivator’s body into ash. Eyes flashing, Meng Hao transformed into a beam of light and proceeded onward, even more vigilantly than before.

Time slowly passed by. Within this maze were not just Cultivators from the Western Desert, but also locals from the Southern Domain. When they ran into each other, sometimes they would help each other, other times fighting would erupt. Everything was quite chaotic.

In the outside world, the Patriarchs from the various Sects had returned to their pillars of light.

By now, anxiety could be seen on their faces. A month had already passed, and not one person had returned.

A phenomenon such as this had never occurred in the past. Previously, upon touching the corpse, people would be teleported away, but at the most, they would be gone for half a month, and then would be teleported back. Either that or… they died!

Another change from before was that a month ago, a shield had sprung up around the corpse that prevented anyone from nearing it. No one could get past the shield, not even Spirit Severing Patriarchs.

However, they could sense that the shield was some type of aura which was emanating from the corpse. It was easy to speculate that this aura was… life force!

This supposed Immortal was not dead! He still had one breath left!

The Southern Domain was shaken to the core. Even more Patriarchs arrived, but none of them were able to do a single thing. The only other option for the short term was to use some precious treasures to burst open the shield. However… it was obvious to them that even without the use of precious treasures, the shield would naturally dissipate within another month.

Also, the Sects could not help but notice that the majority of the life slips of their various disciples were still intact, and had not been shattered. Obviously, most of the disciples were alive, although in danger. For the moment, the best thing to do was to wait.

After all, even though no one spoke it out loud, how could the Patriarchs not see that the shield was less of an obstruction, and more of a protection? The mass disappearance of all the disciples was dangerous, but could also be viewed as a stroke of good fortune.

This was obviously… a legacy!

Within the maze, the Chosen and Dao Children were using a variety of methods to attempt to find exits. None had succeeded so far. However… more than a few had acquired various bits of good fortune.

For example, at the moment, Chu Yuyan was breathing heavily. She had just reached the end of a fork in the road. Up ahead was a huge wall covered with pill formulas. Each and every one sent her mind reeling.

Li Shiqi reached an area filled with buildings. She stared out at them for a while before realizing that she was surrounded by phantom figures that were walking to and fro.

It was as if she had discovered some strange world in which she was simply an observer.

The young man from the Ji Clan, the Quasi-Array Cultivator, stood proudly with hands clasped behind his back as he looked out over a huge battlefield.

The endless wreckage surrounding him didn’t cause his expression to change in the slightest. He strolled aimlessly for a while until a coffin appeared in front of him.

As for the young woman from the Fang Clan of the Eastern Lands, her expression was cool as she walked through a Celestial land. White cranes flew overhead and the surroundings were incredibly beautiful.

Li Daoyi, Wang Youcai, Han Shandao, Chen Fan as well as Xu Qing and Han Bei, were all in various regions of the maze. As it turned out, the scenes they were witnessing were the very same scenes that had been seen by others who had entered the maze previously!

After traveling for many days, Meng Hao’s path finally reached an end, as he emerged into a new world.

More accurately, it was a vast field of stars!

Endless, uncountable stars, emitting glorious starlight. Everything was quiet; not the slightest sound could be heard. Meng Hao walked amongst the stars, looking around. As he did, he sensed the power of Time; he could feel the vestiges of archaic ancientness in this place.

The ancientness felt like the decay of more than a hundred thousand years. It was filled with an incomparable exhaustion, as if it were struggling to find a single breath within which pulsed the will to live.

This field of stars felt unfamiliar to Meng Hao. The starry sky that he normally saw when he looked up at night… was completely different!

There didn’t seem to be even a single star that was the same. These heavenly bodies emanated ancientness; after gazing upon them, it was clear that this was not the night sky of the Southern Domain. Meng Hao felt a tiny sensation, as if he were somehow melding together with these stars. When the feeling rose up, a profound sense of confidence and hope suddenly floated in his heart.

It was a strange feeling.

Meng Hao knew that every person who was teleported from the corpse into this place, and then returned, all saw something different. However, all of the places that people had seen before, were now being revisited by the people currently inside. Except for this starry sky….

From beginning to end no one, neither those who had lived, nor those who had died, had laid eyes on this scene.

Meng Hao was the only one!

As he contemplated matters, Meng Hao suddenly looked down toward his feet. He could sense that far beneath him was a particular heavenly body that was emitting some sort of beckoning power. He felt himself being rapidly pulled toward it.

The speed was hard to describe. He saw the heavenly body growing larger and larger, until it filled his entire field of view. He saw clouds, and then a sea, and then land.

The land stretched out limitlessly. Meng Hao could see mountain peaks and rivers, and then, suddenly a particular mountain appeared in front of him. It was nighttime, and overhead, the stars were visible. Without thinking about it, Meng Hao compared the sky to that of the Southern Domain. His heart trembled.

It was true! This starry sky was absolutely different!

The stars were clearer, as if there were nothing obscuring their glory; their ancientness, their archaicness, was clearly visible. It was impossible to tell how long they had hung there in the sky.

All of the stars were strange. Not a single one was a star that existed in the sky of the Southern Domain.

“These are the ancient stars which exist in my memory,” said a calm voice from behind Meng Hao. Meng Hao slowly turned. He wasn’t sure when, but at some point a middle-aged man had appeared there, sitting on top of a boulder.

The man wore a simple but elegant robe. His long, black hair flowed over his body. He was handsome, with a bit of a heretical aura in his face. He looked different than the corpse Meng Hao had seen back from the Tower of Tang; however, if you looked closely, you could see that it was the same person.

Surprisingly, a small campfire burned in front of the man. Above the flames, he was roasting… a snake-like creature.

“Sit,” said the man coolly.

Meng Hao stood there thoughtfully for a moment, then approached and sat down. He looked at the bizarre snake roasting over the fire. It had claws, and despite being charred, it wasn’t completely dead yet; it was still struggling.

Even more shocking to Meng Hao was that the snake had horns like that of a deer. He stared at it even closer; its body was almost as black as a piece of coal, but even still, he could pick up some clues. He suddenly gasped.

“This is….”

“A White Dragon, that’s all,” said the man casually. “It has a limitless Cultivation base that brings it close to the first level of the Immortal Realm. I ran into it on the Eighth Mountain. It was hungry and wanted to eat me. However, I was also hungry.” Meng Hao wasn’t sure how powerful the first level of the Immortal Realm was, nor exactly what the Eighth Mountain was. However, he was able to sense that this White Dragon was shockingly powerful.

“Want to have a bite?” asked the man, looking at Meng Hao. He lifted up the White Dragon, which was about the length of an arm, and then quickly chopped it into two pieces. “Do you like the head more, or the tail?” he asked.

Meng Hao hesitated, causing the man to laugh scoffingly.

“Uh… I’ll have the head,” Meng Hao said finally.

“You sure know how to eat, kid,” replied the man, handing over the front half of the White Dragon.

Meng Hao took it, feeling somewhat trepidatious. He looked over as the man took a large bite from the tail part of the White Dragon. After the first bite, he took another, then another, crunching the creature into pieces as he did. Meng Hao took a deep breath, eyeing the front half of the White Dragon. Telling himself that this was just an illusion, he placed it into his mouth.

Crunch, crunch, he began to eat it. The head was very crispy, and the flavor was actually quite delicious. His eyes lit up and he quickly consumed the entire thing. Soon, the whole front half of the White Dragon was in his belly.

“Good?” asked the man with a laugh, looking at Meng Hao. “I used to eat one every year.”

“It doesn’t taste bad at all,” said Meng Hao, looking a bit embarrassed.

“Actually, you know what tastes even better than White Dragons? Flying Rain-Dragons, just like the one you have inside of you. Boil them into a soup, and the flavor is amazing. Unfortunately, Flying Rain-Dragons are quite rare. Once they grow up, tangling with them is very difficult. If I’m lucky, I might pursue one for thirty thousand years before being able to have some of that soup.” The man licked his lips and looked down toward Meng Hao’s dantian.

The look in the man’s eyes caused Meng Hao to take a deep breath. This was because he had suddenly noticed that his first Dao Pillar, the one with the Flying Rain-Dragon Core inside of it, was suddenly trembling in intense fear.

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# Chapter 301: Immortal Shows the Way

Meng Hao quickly decided to change the topic. “Senior, sir, I’m sure you didn’t just call me here to eat some White Dragon.” The way the man had looked at him just now made him feel like food, and had caused his scalp to go numb.

Only at this point did the man reluctantly look back up. From the look if it, it took quite a bit of willpower to do so. He tilted his head back to look up at the stars.

“These stars come from my memories of ancient times….” said the man softly, sounding a bit melancholy. “Unfortunately, I’ve been asleep for far too long…. When I woke up, I was here, in this land. I couldn’t tell if the starry sky was the same or not, or whether there were more stars or fewer.

“Listen up, kid. My surname is Choumen. I was born outside the Seventh Mountain, on Planet Tiger Cage. My full name is Choumen Tai! 1 The man looked back down from the stars and stared at Meng Hao with a solemn expression.

“Because I was on good terms with an old friend from the Eighth Mountain, I took part in the Dao War between the Eighth and Ninth Mountains. During the course of the war, I was seriously injured. I should have perished, but I had one breath left that has kept me going until now.

“I may die, but I will not allow my legacy to end with me…. As for you, the moment you saw me way back then, I acquired the coordinates to this planet, allowing me to fall here 2. You have a special bloodline. If you’re lucky, you should be able to leave this tiny Planet South Heaven, travel to my home and return the legacy….

“That is my hope. If you’re able to do it, well and good. If not, I still won’t have any regrets!” He studied Meng Hao for a moment. “I have three boons to bestow upon you, as way of repayment!

“The first boon is a mark that I created after I achieved enlightenment and gained Immortality. Its name is ‘Immortal Shows the Way.’ Only someone who has ascended to Immortality in the Nine Mountains and Seas, and who is willing to sacrifice some Cultivation base, can create something like this. It was supposed to be given to my descendants as a treasure.

“When you are of the great circle of Dao Seeking, you can use it to step from that peak toward Immortal Ascension. Someone will show you the way, and your chances of succeeding in Immortal Ascension will increase by thirty percent!

“By the way, after achieving Immortal Ascension, you won’t just attract the powerhouses of this planet; you’ll be catching the interest of all the heavenly bodies!!” He lifted his hand up and pressed down on his forehead. A resplendent ball of light immediately appeared.

The glowing ball of light emanated an aura which did not belong to this world. As soon as Meng Hao sensed it, his mind began buzzing. He had the powerful feeling that this light contained a fearsome power. Were it to detonate, it could turn the entire Southern Domain into ash.

“This….” Meng Hao began to pant as he stared at the glowing ball of light in the man’s hand. Meng Hao could also sense that when the aura emerged, the man instantly grew weaker by almost half. The stars and the land around them seemed to grow more unstable, even blurry.

“Immortal Ascension is difficult… but with this Immortal Shows the Way, that difficulty will be reduced by quite a lot. All you have to do is continue to grow until you reach that point. When that time comes, you will most likely be able to make the final step!

“This item is the first boon I shall bestow upon you.” The man’s face was pale and his body was becoming less distinct. However, he gave a hearty laugh and, without hesitation pressed the glowing Immortal Shows the Way into Meng Hao’s forehead. Such an object could cause countless experts among the stars to engage in ruthless struggle, but the man handed it directly over. The glow of it fused into Meng Hao’s body.

Meng Hao trembled, and closed his eyes for a while. When he opened them, he felt completely different than before. However, he couldn’t quite tell what was different. The only thing he was sure of was that his head felt much clearer.

“The second boon I will bestow upon you is something you’ve likely heard of before: one of the three classic scriptures, the Dao Divinity Scripture! Sublime Spirit, Dao Divinity, Heaven Severing. These three scriptures aren’t just passed down on this planet where you reside. These three classic scriptures are handed down throughout all the Nine Mountains and Seas!

“Unfortunately, what most people possess are mere fragments of the full scriptures. Up till now, only two people have ever been able to collect the full text of any one of them, and been able to acquire the Dao Realm title. One of those was the Dao Divinity of the First Mountain!

“The other was Sublime Spirit from your Ninth Mountain!

“Only these two powerful experts were able to collect the complete Sublime Spirit Scripture and Dao Divinity Scripture respectively. Everyone else only possesses fragments. As for the most mysterious of all, the Heaven Severing Scripture, for countless ages no one has ever been able to collect it in its entirety, nor cultivated the great circle of that realm to acquire the designation Heaven Severing.

“As for my Dao Divinity Scripture, I only have one manual, which is actually far more valuable than the rest. Mine is the Divine Sense Manual! One of the main reasons why I didn’t die in the Dao War was because of this manual.

“My Divine Sense is about three times more powerful than anyone in the same stage as me. This… is the superiority which comes from cultivating this manual of the Dao Divinity Scripture. Triple is the limit; however, if you acquire other Dao Divinity fragments, then you can increase that number!

“This art, I pass to you!” The man raised his right hand and pushed down onto Meng Hao’s forehead. Immediately, a scriptural text began to float in Meng Hao’s mind. Each magical symbol radiated a black glow as it branded itself onto Meng Hao’s mind. Immediately, his body trembled as his Spiritual Sense experienced frenzied growth.

After the space of a few breaths passed, he found that his Spiritual Sense had increased by about double. As of this moment, he could easily send it out to cover everything around.

The stronger one’s Spiritual Sense is, the stronger the Core Qi will be. With Core Qi powering magical techniques, the result will be even more shocking; similarly, Meng Hao’s ability to deduce the ultimate form of his techniques far surpassed others.

At the moment, it was only a simple branding, and Meng Hao had only received a doubling of Spiritual Sense. Through continued cultivation, that increase would be even greater.

Even this seemed like a huge stroke of good fortune to Meng Hao, though, and left him breathing heavily.

“What do you think?” laughed the man. “Just having it branded to you increased your Spiritual Sense by double. That’s because of the half dragon you ate. The power of White Dragons stems from Divine Sense. Your Cultivation base isn’t capable of completely assimilating it, though. That will take some time. When that happens, your Divine Sense will become vastly more stable.”

“White Dragon….” said Meng Hao without thinking. “You mean that wasn’t an illusion?” Feeling the increase in his Spiritual Sense caused him to be vastly more confident in being able to reach Core Formation.

“Who said it was an illusion!?” said the man as he glared, reached up and smacked Meng Hao’s head. “You gluttonous little punk! That was the last dried White Dragon that I had saved up. Its efficacy was rather low, but I still had planned to save it for my last meal before I died. Unfortunately, I gave you an entire half! Oh well, it doesn’t matter.”

The man seemed to be a bit jealous at the level of Meng Hao’s good fortune. He sighed and then reached into his robe. “Alright, I didn’t finish what I was saying. You have the first and second boons. Now, I’ll give the last boon…. Kid, I want you to remember something. If you aren’t able to deliver my legacy back to Planet Tiger Cage, then even if I’m dead I will definitely curse you!” From within his body, he dragged out a glowing white globule.

The glow carried with it a faint, delicate fragrance. Meng Hao gaped when he saw it; the glow contained something that looked like a slice of a water chestnut.

“This is….”

“This is my legacy,” he said with a whisper, “contained in a breath of my Immortal Qi. This is what you must take to Planet Tiger Cage. Dissolve the Immortal Qi, and you will be able to see the legacy. Only you! If you wish to study it, you may. Just get it to Planet Tiger Cage!

“To be honest, though, according to my calculations, it would be difficult for you to fully assimilate it within several hundred years.” Looking pained, he took the white water chestnut and pushed it into Meng Hao’s chest.

Meng Hao’s body spasmed. The white water chestnut suddenly appeared amidst his ten Dao Pillars. The white glow emanated out, connecting with his Dao Pillars.

At the same time, a boundless roar filled his Cultivation base, exploding outward throughout his body. His ten Dao Pillars shook and radiated massive amounts of Violet Qi, which then interlocked over the the white water chestnut. Meng Hao’s mind spun. He suddenly sensed a feeling that was similar to when he had consumed the Three Mortalities Pill in his attempt to reach Core Formation.

“I’m… approaching Core Formation!” Meng Hao said, panting.

The man’s body began to fade, causing him to speak in a rush: “You’ve reached the critical point leading to Core Formation. Dissipate some of my Immortal Qi, and it will help you to form your Core…. Look out for yourself. I’m placing all of my hope in you. Be careful of the Black Sieve Sect. Be careful of the ancient power which comes from the East in this planet. The Lord who controls that power has already reached the pinnacle of this planet.

“The uniqueness of your bloodline and my speculations regarding your past are contained in that breath of Immortal Qi. Some years from now, after you completely dissolve my Immortal Qi, you will be able to see. However, I can’t guarantee that all of it will be true….” The world around them began to crack and break. “I’m gonna make one last bet by entering your planet’s Rebirth Cave. According to my analysis, the mysteries within have something to do with the Dao Sea beneath the Ninth Mountain. Look out…. yourself…. mental realm is collapsing. When it… everyone inside will be teleported out….” The voice came and went in spurts, and then finally disappeared. An intense rumbling filled the area around Meng Hao, and then… everything collapsed.

He was once again surrounded by walls. However, this time, the walls were filled with fissures.

Cracking sounds filled the air. Meng Hao looked around and took a deep breath. Everything had happened too quickly just now. As he thought back to it, it seemed like a dream. And yet, the Dao Divinity Scripture was there in his mind, and within his body was the Immortal Qi in the shape of a water chestnut. It was all real.

Furthermore, his ten Dao Pillars were rapidly beginning to melt, releasing an unprecedentedly dense Violet Qi. The Qi wrapped around the water chestnut, and was slowly beginning to take the shape of a Core.

Meng Hao knew that he was now entering Core Formation. The process would normally take a very long time; however, because of the assistance of the Immortal Qi, the process would be sped up. Right now, he had reached a critical juncture!

It was at this exact moment that a boom filled the air. The sound came from a nearby wall, which suddenly exploded. A potent aura suddenly poured through.

“Finally found it,” said a voice. “This is the place the Patriarch spoke of. That person’s Immortal will is slumbering in this… eh?” The young man surnamed Ji suddenly appeared, a look of surprise on his face. He wore a long, azure robe.

His eyes flickered as they fell upon Meng Hao. A mysterious light glowed therein. His expression suddenly turned grim. “Did you steal it?” he asked.

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1. Choumen Tai’s name in Chinese is chǒu mén tái – This is a bit of a strange name. Choumen is a made up surname. As for the meaning of this name, each of these characters has multiple definitions. Instead of listing them here, I will just put links so that you can research it yourself if you wish. Chou, men, tai

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# Chapter 302: Crisis!

The Ji youth’s expression was one of unyielding pride, his words aloof and remote. He didn’t seem to think Meng Hao was even worth looking at, and spoke to him as he might a servant.

Meng Hao frowned. However, he thought of the fearsomeness of the Clan, as well as the fear An Zaihai had shown. He thought about everything he had experienced, and all the stories regarding Ji. Then, he immediately suppressed any feelings of displeasure he felt.

Now was not the appropriate time to attack; his Cultivation base had reached a critical juncture, the time when the important transformation would occur. Meng Hao knew that to attack now would affect the growth of his Cultivation base.

Furthermore, the Ji youth’s Cultivation base was at the peak of the early Core Formation stage, even higher than the azure-masked Cultivator from the Black Lands he had fought.

“Your excellency, I’m not quite sure what you mean,” said Meng Hao, looking surprised. “I just arrived here myself, and haven’t been able to find anything. Don’t tell me there’s some sort of treasure here?” The glow of greed shone in his eyes as he spoke.

The Ji youth’s eyes glittered as he glanced at Meng Hao, and an expression of utter disdain covering his face. He looked around, heart still filled with suspicion.

“This guy’s Cultivation base is at the Foundation Establishment level,” he thought. “No matter how weak the Immortal is, there’s no way this guy could penetrate his Immortal Sense. Plus, he’s slumbering. Even I couldn’t forcibly break into the Immortal Sense, not even with the device given to me by the Patriarch. So, could it have been taken earlier by someone else?” Within the Ji youth’s mind appeared the image of the girl surnamed Fang. He glanced over at Meng Hao. “Did you encounter anyone on your way here? Whatever it is you saw, tell me immediately,” he demanded. “If you leave out anything, I will wipe you and your Sect and Clan!” He made no attempt to cover over his disdain and superciliousness.

Meng Hao hesitated, then lowered his voice. “Someone else? Yes, I did see someone, actually, wearing a green robe. I couldn’t really see clearly which Fellow Daoist… it was… This place….”

Before he could finish, the Ji youth seemed to have made his mind up. He flicked his sleeve impatiently. “Screw off!” he said.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with an imperceptible coldness. However, a cowardly look appeared on his face, and he immediately backed up, then turned to leave.

It was at this exact moment that suddenly, the wall next to him exploded outward, and a person in green emerged.

Along with this person came an incredibly potent aura, which immediately enveloped the entire area. Not only did it contain power, but also feeling of extreme conceit.

As the aura roiled out, the figure emerged slowly, a young woman. This was none other than the girl surnamed Fang, who was also from the Eastern Lands. As soon as she appeared, her eyes fell onto the Ji youth.

Meng Hao was standing right next to her, but she completely ignored him. The arrogance which emanated from her was virtually palpable.

“Ji Hongdong, give the Immortal’s scripture to me!” said the young woman coolly. She was beautiful, and emanated icy arrogance. 1

When he saw the girl appear, Meng Hao’s heart began to thump, and he backed up a few paces. Before he could get very far, the Ji youth’s eyes narrowed.

“Fang Yu, it turns out you took the Immortal’s scripture, and still….” He only finished half of his thought when his heart suddenly trembled. He abruptly looked at Meng Hao, and as he did, he blinked his right eye seven times in rapid succession. Suddenly, two pupils could be seen within his eye. They seemed to possess some power of psychic sight! As he looked at Meng Hao, he immediately was able to see the white water chestnut in Meng Hao’s dantian. 2

In addition to the water chestnut, there was a blurriness. Even the water chestnut by itself was enough to cause killing intent to spring out from the Ji youth’s eyes. However, just as soon as it appeared, it then vanished.

The speed with which all of this happened was such that if you blinked, you wouldn’t be able to pick up even the slightest clue that something was happening.

“Preposterous!” said the Ji youth with a cold laugh. Ignoring Meng Hao, he immediately shot toward Fang Yu. As he neared, he waved his right hand, causing a field of stars to appeared behind him. Fang Yu gave a cold snort and also advanced. She lifted her hand, forming a fist and punching out into the air. A huge boom resonated out in all directions.

Meng Hao immediately tumbled backward, then picked a random direction and sped off.

His face was grim. He could see that Ji Hongdong had seen through him; he didn’t point it out and immediately pursue Meng Hao because of the Fang girl. Instead of saying something, he planned to come after Meng Hao later, alone.

The walls continued to fill with cracks, although Meng wasn’t sure how long it would take until they completely crumbled. He slapped his bag of holding to retrieve the good luck charm. He pressed down on it, after which a frustrated look appeared on his face.

For the first time ever, the good luck charm was powerless to teleport him away.

“I can’t place all of my hope on the collapse of this place….” thought Meng Hao. He knew full well that before the place fell to pieces, he had somewhat of a chance to flee. However, once the collapse was complete, if Ji Hongdong came after him, he would be in a very bad position.

Ji Hongdong’s status, his place in the fearsome Ji Clan, made it such that if he were killed, it would be equivalent to deliberately invoking monolithic disaster. Meng Hao wasn’t sure if the Violet Fate Sect would even be able to fight back. The two powers weren’t even on the same level.

His face grim, Meng Hao continued on for a bit less time than it takes half an incense stick to burn. Finally, he gritted his teeth and stopped, sitting down cross-legged on the ground. Ignoring the crumbling of the walls around him, he began to meditate, rotating his Cultivation base and pushing as fast as possible toward Core Formation.

“Regardless of anything, I will only be able to seize the initiative… after I reach Core Formation!” A bright glow appeared in his eyes. This was a moment of crisis, leaving him little time to think things through. He closed his eyes and spit out a mouthful of mist, which immediately crackled with lightning as it surrounded him. At the same time, a halo the color of blood emerged from Meng Hao, and a Blood Clone materialised and began to guard over him.

Meng Hao’s ten Dao Pillars emitted a roaring sound that only he could hear. Massive amounts of Violet Qi poured forth, causing the Dao Pillars to begin to melt and then merge together.

After the Dao Pillars fully melted he would be able to form his Core. Thanks to the Immortal Qi, this process would happen much more quickly. Once Meng Hao reached Core Formation, he would set the record as the fastest person to do so since ancient times.

Time passed by. Meng Hao wasn’t sure when Ji Hongdong would come for him. However, it would happen quickly, he was sure of that. Ji Hongdong had picked up on the clues. Once he shook off the young Fang woman, he would be coming for Meng Hao.

“Must go faster!!” thought Meng Hao, circulating all the power within his Cultivation base. Suddenly, a shocking roar filled his mind. His tenth Dao Pillar was now melting.

As the Dao Pillar melted, vast quantities of Violet Qi poured out, wrapping around and around the collection of violet mist which already existed around the Immortal Qi. The globule of violet mist rotated rapidly, emitting countless strands of Violet Qi throughout Meng Hao’s body.

A brutally powerful aura appeared within Meng Hao; his physical body grew more powerful, his Spiritual Sense expanded, and most obviously, the Blood Clone and the Blood Death World he was within slowly began to grow stronger.

As the true self grew stronger, so did they!

Meng Hao wasn’t satisfied, though. The speed was too slow. Veins bulged on his face as he pushed everything into rotating his Cultivation base. Amidst the roaring, his ninth Dao Pillar began to melt. More Violet Qi poured out. The violet mist globule rotated even more rapidly; it was now showing signs of condensing into a Core.

Next, his eighth Dao Pillar, then his seventh. They melted one after another, filling him with rumbling booms. Boundless spiritual energy exploded out, causing the violet mist to roil at even greater speed. It sucked in Violet Qi. As of this moment, Meng Hao’s body was emitting a bright violet glow.

The globule of violet mist spun at high speed. All signs pointed to it forming into a Violet Core at any moment. Seeing this, Meng Hao quickly consumed a large amount of Three Mortalities Pills. It still wasn’t enough. Meng Hao could clearly sense that he was… immeasurably close to Core Formation!

“Even faster!” thought Meng Hao with an inward growl. A thunderous noise could be heard as his sixth Dao Pillar, fifth Dao Pillar and fourth Dao

Pill all melted. It was at this time that off in the distance, Meng Hao could hear a loud noise; someone was using a magical technique.

“It’s not Ji Hongdong….” thought Meng Hao. He was focused on rotating his Dao Pillars, but he had long since sent his Spiritual Sense out into the area. He immediately caught sight of a figure making its way toward him at high speed.

Meng Hao sighed inwardly and opened his eyes. Off in the distance was Li Daoyi, wearing a thoughtful smile.

Catching sight of Meng Hao, he gave a slight smile and said, “I was wondering who it was that Fellow Daoist Ji wanted me to pursue and delay. So, it turns out it’s Grandmaster Fang Mu.” He slowly approached. As he neared, he suddenly stopped and gaped at Meng Hao. “Core Formation aura? You picked this moment to form your Core?” He laughed, his expression filled with a sneer.

“You really live up to your reputation, Grandmaster Fang Mu,” he said. “Very audacious! However, you took something that belongs to Fellow Daoist Ji. That’s a no-no. The mere sight of you fills me with the desire to kill.”

“Make a move against me and you’ll cause a war between the Li Clan and the Violet Fate Sect,” said Meng Hao coolly, his expression the same as ever. He was in a race against time; his Cultivation base was rotating rapidly, causing his remaining three Dao Pillars to begin to melt away.

“I would of course never attack you,” said Li Daoyi with a hypocritical smile. “I’ll just block your way, make sure you stay behind and don’t leave. Your life does not belong to me, but rather, Fellow Daoist Ji. The Clan Patriarchs will be more than happy to allow something like this to happen.” He lifted his hand, extending it toward Meng Hao’s forehead.

Meng Hao sighed. It seemed he would not be able to make his breakthrough at the moment. Killing intent glittered in his eyes, and he was just about to make a move, when suddenly, his face flickered.

At the same time, Li Daoyi’s face also changed. He spun, and then dodged to the side.

Just as he did, a clear, melodious snort rang out, filling the air. A band of white light flashed through the spot where Li Daoyi had just stood, then shot after him.

Next, a prismatic beam shot toward them, coming to a stop next to Meng Hao.

There, wearing a white robe, facial expression icy cold, was Xu Qing.

She glared at Li Daoyi.

“Make your breakthrough,” she said calmly to Meng Hao. “I’ll take care of him.” Her voice was cold, but as her words made their way into Meng Hao’s heart, they transformed into gentle warmth.

1. Ji Hongdong’s name in Chinese is jì hóng dōng – Ji is a family name. Hong means “great” and also “goose.” Dong means “east”

2. Fang Yu’s name in Chinese is fāng yú – Fang is a family name. Yu means “beauty” or “jade”

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# Chapter 303: The Bloodline of the Ji Clan

“Xu Qing!” Li Daoyi’s eyes glowed brightly. He was not unfamiliar with Xu Qing; back in the western region of the Southern Domain, he had fought against her.

During that fight, he had suffered a great defeat!

Later, he was able to make a breakthrough and enter the Core Formation stage, but the loss that day had been extremely irritating. Seeing Xu Qing again now caused his eyes to fill with coldness. Killing intent flickered inside of him, and he lifted his hand. Power of Core Formation emanated out.

Xu Qing’s expression never changed from being cold. Her eyes glittered as a white colored Qi emanated out from her body, transforming into threads which shot toward Li Daoyi.

A boom echoed out immediately. Meng Hao’s eyes were closed, and he was completely focused on rotating his Cultivation base. His third Dao Pillar began to melt, sending Violet Qi surging through his body, permeating it. Meng Hao’s entire body was now violet-colored.

Xu Qing and Li Daoyi were locked in a magical battle. Xu Qing obviously had the upper hand; in reality, in terms of Cultivation base, she had fused with Matriarch Phoenix, making it impossible for Li Daoyi to even compare to her. She was essentially at the level of a Sect Patriarch.

However, even if Xu Qing actively attempted to meld, she would be unable to do so in a short period of time. Currently, she was only able to wield about one percent of the full power. Even that small amount still placed her above Li Daoyi.

No matter what methods Li Daoyi employed as they fought, Xu Qing’s expression was the same as ever. Were she able to leave Meng Hao’s side, to pursue Li Daoyi and use all the magical techniques she possessed, then she would easily be able to defeat him.

However, she didn’t want to take such a risk. She was worried that if she fully engaged in the battle, Li Daoyi would use some trick or another to affect Meng Hao’s Cultivation base.

As the two of them fought, Meng Hao’s second Dao Pillar began to melt, and after it disappeared, the first. In the space of ten breaths, the Flying Rain-Dragon Core was visible in his Core Sea. It immediately moved into the violet mist.

The Demonic Core was already small; after merging into the violet mist, the mist globule began to rotate even faster. It was very obviously congealing into a Core at this point.

It was at this very moment that Ji Hongdong appeared off in the distance, flying in their general direction at high speed. His eyes were actually closed, as if he were following the trail of an ayra.

His face was pale; obviously he had been injured while battling with the young Fang woman. Having shaken her off, here he was now, an intense light glittering underneath his eyelids.

“I’m not sure how that lowbrow Cultivator managed to pierce the Immortal Sense and acquire the Immortal Qi that the Patriarch talked about. Well, it doesn’t matter. With his Cultivation base, he won’t be able to absorb it very quickly. As long as I’m able to kill him, then I can take the Immortal Qi and absorb it myself. Once I do, then I’ll definitely be able to be promoted out of the Quasi-Array. Then I can be a true member of the Clan Array!” As he reached this point in his train of thought, he opened his eyes. They gleamed with intense anticipation.

He suddenly turned his head and looked toward Meng Hao. “Found you!” he said, flying directly toward him.

As for Meng Hao, cracking sounds could be heard within his body. The violet mist globule within his Core Sea was shrinking. As it did, it began to grow more solid; it emanated a brilliant violet light as a thick exterior began to form.

Once it was completely solid, the Violet Core formed, then Meng Hao’s Cultivation base would rocket up. He would leave Foundation Establishment and enter Core Formation, and the ranks of the truly powerful experts!

Ten percent, twenty percent, thirty percent…. The rotation of the violet mist globule inside of him began to slow, and looked more and more solid. It was shrinking also; all that remained was about the size of a fist.

It didn’t take long before the Violet Core truly began to emerge. As of now, Meng Hao could feel a throbbing power pulsing through him; far, far greater than anything he had felt before.

This was not a normal Violet Core, but one formed from the ten Dao Pillars of a Perfect Foundation. The moment it appeared, it became the most powerful Violet Core ever seen in the tens of thousands of years that made up the history of the Violet Fate Sect.

This level of power was unheard of. Furthermore, after merging with the Demonic Core of the Flying Rain-Dragon, the Violet Core was even more brutally powerful.

No one in the Violet Fate Sect had even come close to touching such a level of power; even Reverend Violet East, when he was in the Core Formation Stage, had never reached this astonishing level.

In addition to all that… Meng Hao’s Violet Core was formed with the assistance of the breath of Immortal Qi. This Core… was something that had never been seen in the Violet Fate Sect, the Southern Domain, the Western Desert, the Northern Desert or the Eastern Lands!

Forty percent, fifty percent, sixty percent…. Meng Hao could sense the aura of the violet mist within him growing stronger. His heart began to beat faster, his body grew stronger, the range of the Spiritual Sense grew greater. He could sense all these constant changes.

It was at this moment that Meng Hao suddenly caught sight of Ji Hongdong with his Spiritual Sense. He approached rapidly; in one breath, he was far off in the distance, a moment later he was upon Meng Hao and the others.

At the same time that Ji Hongdong appeared, a boom filled the air. Li Daoyi coughed up some blood as he staggered back several paces to stand next to Ji Hongdong. He glared at Xu Qing, his eyes full of murder.

Xu Qing's face was a bit pale, but her expression was cold as she stared at Ji Hongong.

"Excellent job, Li Daoyi," said Ji Hongdong coolly. "I will notify my Clan regarding this matter, and tell them that your Li Clan performed a meritorious deed."

"Please don't be so polite, young master Ji. It is my honor to be able to assist the Ji Clan. Young master Ji, please allow me to take this woman away. She has attacked me twice so far, and today I plan to help her understand what it means to live a life worse than death!" A vile, licentious look shone in his eyes. He liked cold women like this.

"Do as you wish," replied Ji Hongdong coolly. He glanced at Xu Qing, then looked at Meng Hao, who was still sitting there cross-legged, meditating.

Looking at his Cultivation base, and seeing that he was forming his Core, caused a look of derision to appear in his eyes.

"If Fang Yu hadn't appeared, I might have been fooled by you. Since you have the Immortal Qi in your body, then I have no choice but to slay you and refine it out of your corpse." With that, he took a step forward. A massive power emerged from his body. An image appeared behind him, that of mountains and rivers and a great land. It was a strange scene; it made it seem as if he were an emperor, and that the land he stepped on was part of his empire.

As he proceeded forward, the violet mist within Meng Hao reached eighty percent completion, and headed toward ninety percent. The powerful aura within him didn’t emanate out from him at all. Instead, it surged throughout his body, filling him.

Xu Qing set her gaze, and then stepped in front of Meng Hao to block Ji Hongdong’s way.

“You overestimate yourself!” said Ji Hongong with a cold snort. He took another step, and the massive image behind him of the mountains and rivers suddenly expanded, exerting pressure down into Xu Qing.

This was the manifestation of Ji Hongdong’s Core Qi. The mountains and rivers made him seem like an emperor exuding a royal aura. Xu Qing’s face went pale under the pressure; her eyes suddenly shined with a blackness that completely covered over the whites of her eyes. Anyone who looked at her eyes now would see only dark emptiness.

Suddenly, the aura emanating from her body was no longer white, but black. Strands of blackness emerged, transforming into a host of vicious, demonic faces. The faces congealed together above her face to form into… a black phoenix!

It immediately charged directly toward the royal will embodied by the mountains and rivers.

Ji Hongdong’s eyes narrowed, shocked by what had just happened. A boom rattled out, and blood sprayed from Xu Qing’s mouth. She staggered backward, then grabbed Meng Hao. It was the same way she had grabbed him all those years ago when she took him from Mount Daqing. 1 Holding him at her side, she shot off into the distance.

Her face was pale, and blood seeped from the corners of her mouth. Just now, she had used the power of Matriarch Phoenix, a power which did not fully belong to her; as a result, she had significantly injured herself.

She was willing to take the risk, but in truth, she could not employ too much of the power, only a bit of it.

At the same time as she sped away with Meng Hao, Ji Hongdong, his face pale white, looked down and pulled a damaged jade pendant out from near his chest.

His face was unsightly, his eyes filled with killing intent as well as astonishment.

“Just now, she erupted with power similar to that of a Nascent Soul Cultivation base. She even crushed my life-saving jade…. This girl’s aura… is interesting. It must be the power of a discarnate soul. Now I just have to see which discarnate soul of the Southern Domain dares to take shape before me, Ji Hongdong of the Ji Clan. Who is it exactly that dares to attack me!?” A cruel smile twisted his face as he shot forward in pursuit.

Li Daoyi followed him, sighing inwardly. Now he knew that Xu Qing hadn’t been using her full power during their fight. If she had, he would without a doubt be dead already.

“Obviously, she didn’t use her full power when she attacked just now. That would cost her too much….”

Meng Hao couldn’t physically see what was happening, but because of his Spiritual Sense, he was aware of all the changes in the situation. In fact, things were even clearer than if he had seen it with the naked eye. He saw Xu Qing’s blood, saw her risking her life.

He felt a stab of pain in his heart, and waves of anger surged up in his heart. By the time she coughed up blood for the third time, the violet mist inside of Meng Hao was ninety percent complete and closing in on one hundred percent.

“Elder Sister,” he said, opening his eyes. “Put me down, okay?”

Xu Qing didn’t say anything. She ignored him, speeding forward as quickly as possible.

He looked at her, warmth filling his eyes.

Suddenly, a whistling sound could be heard as Ji Hongdong appeared, flying through the air. By now, the walls in the area were more than half crumbled to pieces. It wouldn’t be long before they completely disintegrated.

When Ji Hongdong appeared, a look of determination appeared in Xu Qing’s eyes. She waved her left hand, and her body trembled as massive amounts of black aura shot out, forming into the shape of a black phoenix, filled with countless discarnate souls. Shrill screams filled the air as it shot toward Ji Hongdong.

“Are you blind?!” said Ji Hongdong with a cold snort. “Do you really dare to offend the bloodline of the Ji Clan?!” He continued forward without hesitation.

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# Chapter 304: Core Formation!!

By the time the words left Ji Hongdong’s mouth, the phoenix, formed from the black aura as well as countless discarnate souls, was around twenty to twenty five meters away from him. Suddenly, it began to tremble.

The previously vicious faces of the discarnate souls were suddenly filled with dread and shock, as if they had suddenly encountered something they found terrifying.

The black phoenix emitted a shrill scream, as if it didn’t want to proceed any further forward. It lowered its head, almost like it was bowing to Ji Hongdong.

The expression on Xu Qing’s face immediately changed. She began to tremble, and her eyes filled with disbelief. How could she possibly have predicted that the discarnate souls of the Black Sieve Sect, who were as powerful as the sun at high noon, would prostrate before a Core Formation Cultivator?

“Your bloodline….” Her heart thumped as she suddenly considered the words Ji Hongdong had just spoken.

Ji Hongdong gave a cold harumph, and once again spoke: “Trifling discarnate souls! In front of the bloodline of the Ji Clan, they don’t even count as wild dogs. They’re nothing but insects. When they died, they died under the Heavens of the Ji Clan!” His words were cool, his countenance proud. He never stopped moving forward; as he did, the discarnate souls shrieked. They retreated backward, prostrating, their faces filled with looks of entreaty.

The black phoenix trembled violently as Ji Hongdong approached, and suddenly, a face appeared on its surface.

It was the face of a woman. This was not Xu Qing's face, but rather the sealed Matriarch Phoenix!

Her eyes were closed, and her expression was one of terror, and even more so, imploring. She wanted to offer an explanation, but it seemed she had lost her power to speak or even open her eyes. Slowly, a bright red sealing mark appeared on her face.

When Ji Hongdong saw the face, he blinked seven times. A bizarre light shone out as he studied her. A strange expression appeared on his face, and then he laughed.

"Interesting," he said, with a meaningful smile. "I've heard of discarnate souls possessing people, but I've never heard of a host taking control of the discarnate soul." He looked at Li Daoyi. "What is her name and Sect?"

"Black Sieve Sect, Xu Qing!" replied Li Daoyi immediately.

"Xu Qing. Interesting," he said, a wicked smile on his face. "I'm not sure how you did it. You fooled the Black Sieve Sect, as well as the other discarnate souls. You've fooled everyone into thinking that you are the discarnate soul. Tell me, if word of this gets out, what would happen to you?" He proceeded forward, laughing loudly. He waved his right hand, and all the discarnate souls retreated, even the black phoenix. Trembling, they didn't dare to proceed any further forward.

They weren't necessarily afraid of the young man in particular, but rather the fearsome bloodline of the Ji Clan inside of him!

Xu Qing's face changed even more, becoming even paler. She well knew that if word spread, she wouldn't be able to flee far enough. She would be dead without doubt. It wouldn't just be the Black Sieve Sect that was chasing her, but all the fearsome discarnate souls.

Whether it be the Cultivators who lived on the surface of the Black Sieve Sect, or the discarnate souls beneath, not a single one would let her go free. There would be nowhere to flee to in the entire Southern Domain. All of her resources in the Sect would be purged. No shelter would be found anywhere in the Southern Domain. Besides, even if she fled, she couldn't physically stay away for very long. The process of fusing with Matriarch Phoenix could only happen within the Black Sieve Sect.

It was only there that she could continue the process. Until Matriarch Phoenix was completely swallowed up, if she stayed away from the Sect for too long at one time, then her Cultivation base would begin to deteriorate. This matter had suddenly turned into a great disaster for her.

Seeing Xu Qing's change of expression caused Ji Hongdong to laugh. His eyes filled with derision; he loved seeing people like this. It gave him a feeling of power, as if he were a great lord. "And then there's this seal…." he said. "It's very interesting. It can help you control the discarnate soul. I think the Sect Patriarchs will be very interested in this." He laughed as he approached, his face filled with derision, as if everything was under his control.

Xu Qing's face was pale. Having temporarily lost control of the discarnate souls, and without the power of Matriarch Phoenix, she was just an ordinary Cultivator. Even the power of Core Formation could only be wielded by her with difficulty.

Furthermore, she couldn't retreat. She suddenly felt a binding around her, holding her in place as if she were being sealed. She couldn't move even an inch.

"Don't worry, I'm not going to kill you," said Ji Hongdong. He neared lifting his hand toward Meng Hao to grab him.

Even as his hand closed in, Meng Hao's eyes snapped open. A frightening power surged out from his Cultivation base. It ripped through the area like an invisible cyclone, causing Ji Hongdong's face to twist. He retreated backward immediately, nearly thirty meters. His face was dark, and his pupils had constricted.

Next to him, Li Daoyi’s expression was one of astonishment, disbelief and alarm. Body trembling, he stared at Meng Hao’s figure within the cyclone, and a look of venom and shock filled his eyes. He suddenly said, “You’re… you’re… you’re not Fang Mu! You’re Meng Hao!!” His voice was shrill, and his breath came in pants. How could he ever have imagined that the person he had searched in vain for throughout all these years, was actually right in front of him!!

As the words left his mouth, thunderous roars filled the air, and the violent winds surged outward. Meng Hao’s figure seemed to surge upward. He was the nucleus of the cyclone; the terrifying winds were coming out from his body.

Meng Hao’s face suddenly changed. No longer was it Fang Mu’s, but rather, his own face, his original face. An intensely terrifying aura suddenly shot up from within him.

Li Daoyi’s face went pale. His mind was reeling; he just couldn’t believe what was happening. However, how could he not understand that Fang Mu was Meng Hao, and Meng Hao was Fang Mu!

“Violet Fate Sect Legacy Apprentice, Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, Fang Mu, Meng Hao….” He retreated backward, thinking about the pain he had experienced when he lost his arm. It had been restored, but the enmity created in the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament was something he considered to be the greatest humiliation in his entire life.

Surrounding by a violet glow, a profound look filled Meng Hao’s eyes. Other than him, no one could know the reason for why he had just switched to his original appearance….

His eyes glowed with coldness. Within him was a Violet Core, about the size of a child’s fist. It rested in the position once occupied by his Core Sea, floating there, rotating. Every time it spun in a full circle, vast quantities of violet-colored strands surged out like lightning to every corner of his body.

The violet-colored strands flickered as they surged through his Qi passageways, filled with a boundless Cultivation base power that far exceeded Foundation Establishment. This was Core Formation Qi, from a Core Formation Cultivation base!

In fact, this Core Formation Qi was not the type of Qi that would be emitted by a Cultivation base that had just entered the Core Formation stage. This was the explosive power of the pinnacle of the early Core Formation stage.

The violet wind screamed as it spun throughout the area. Even Meng Hao's long hair was now violet as it whipped around his head. Next to him, Xu Qing sighed; it seemed she had thought of something. Her face changed, and she was about to speak when Meng Hao suddenly interrupted.

"Don't worry, I'll take care of it," he said, his voice light. He turned, his eyes glowing with a violet light as he looked at Ji Hongdong.

Ji Hongdong's expession was the same as usual. "Fang Mu? Meng Hao? It seems you have quite a few identities. Considering how quickly you entered Core Formation, it also seems that the breath of Immortal Qi really is incredibly valuable. That makes me happy." He smiled, lifting up his arm and then flicking his sleeve. Suddenly, a field of stars appeared behind him.

The starfield was large, filling the air. It rushed toward Meng Hao, exerting a suppressive force. It was clear that this field of stars was that which shined above the Southern Domain, including the Western Desert and the Eastern Lands. It was vast and mighty.

As it approached, it enveloped everything, making it impossible for anyone to avoid it.

Meng Hao lifted his head, his expression a bit blank. He was silent, almost as if he didn't notice the starfield approaching him. As it descended, the blankness on his face disappeared, replaced instead with determination.

As of now, a decision had been made!

He lifted his hand, forming a fist. A red glow suddenly shot out; this was the Blood Death World. It slammed into the starfield.

An explosion filled the air, and Meng Hao tumbled backward like a kite with its string cut.

“Fool! You….” said Ji Hongdong with a cold laugh, his voice filled with contempt. However, before he could finish speaking, Meng Hao’s tumbling body suddenly changed direction. It was with indescribable speed, before anyone could react, that he suddenly appeared directly in front of Li Daoyi. Li Daoyi had been on guard the entire time, but he was still incapable of evading.

Actually, Meng Hao’s initial goal this entire time had been Li Daoyi. After all, he would be the easiest to exterminate, no matter how prepared he was.

Li Daoyi’s pupils constricted; he was about to shoot backward when Meng Hao lifted his right hand and pushed it down onto Li Daoyi’s forehead. A boom filled the air, and an exterminating power poured into Li Daoyi’s body, filling him, crushing him, mangling him. He was dead instantly.

“Did you pay attention to the face of the person who killed you?” he asked softly, looking at Li Daoyi’s bloody corpse. He turned to look at Ji Hongdong.

Meng Hao sighed, then slapped his bag of holding to retrieve his East Pill Division identification medallion. He looked down at it for a long moment, his eyes filled with a complicated, disconsolate look. Finally, determination filled his eyes and he… crushed it.

The instant he crushed the medallion, his Violet Furnace Lord’s robe began to disintegrate. A green robe now covered his body.

As of this moment, he was no longer Fang Mu, Legacy Apprentice of the East Pill Division. Now… he was Meng Hao from Mount Daqing in the State of Zhao!

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# Chapter 305: Do You Dare to Kill Me!?

The instant Meng Hao crushed the Violet Furnace Lord medallion, the moment his Violet Furnace Lord robe began to fade away, something happened in the State of Eastern Emergence, Violet Fate Sect, East Pill Division, on Grandmaster Pill Demon’s low mountain.

In one particular building were three racks of jade slips.

On the third rack were nine jade slips. Upon each slip was written a name, and if you looked closely, you would see that they belonged to the nine great Furnace Lords, An Zaihai, Ye Feimu, and the others. These were all of Pill Demon’s novitiates.

There was only one jade slip on the second rack. This one belonged to Chu Yuyan, his Personal Apprentice.

The first rack also contained one jade slip, upon which was written two characters. Fang Mu!

His position was the highest. Legacy Apprentice. This jade slip represented the importance of Meng Hao’s place in the East Pill Division of the Violet Fate Sect. Suddenly, Fang Mu’s jade slip began to tremble. Cracking sounds rang out, and fissures sprang out from the middle of the slip. In an instant… it exploded, transforming into flying ash.

The moment the jade slip collapsed, white-robed Pill Demon was sitting cross-legged on the mountain’s peak, looking off into the distance. A tremor ran through his body. He turned his head, looking down into the room with the jade slips. He held his gaze for a long time. His ancient face suddenly seemed to grow older; more wrinkles appeared.

Meanwhile, in the center of the Southern Domain, in the middle of the territory of the Li Clan, was a location that appeared to be just like the dwelling place of Immortals. Suddenly, a roar filled the air. Along with the roar appeared a figure bristling with rage.

As the figure charged, out, seven or eight others appeared behind him. The man held a shattered jade slip in his hand. It emitted a bright glow, in the middle of which was a face… it was none other than that of Meng Hao!

This was the reflection stored in Li Daoyi's pupils the moment before he died. Meng Hao's face.

"Daoyi!!" howled the old man, lifting his head to the sky and letting out a howl. A Dao Child of the Clan had been slain. Such a thing was said to have occurred to the Wang Clan years ago, but it turned out to only be a rumor. Even still, it had shocked the Southern Domain. Now, it really had happened to the Li Clan. This time, it was no falsehood; this Dao Child really had met his death.

"I don't care who you are," the old man raged, "you killed a Dao Child of my Li Clan! No matter which Sect you belong to, you shall die!!" He and the eight figures shot off into the distance. Behind them, even more Cultivators of the Li Clan followed, dozens. They transformed into prismatic beams of light that shot toward the Rebirth Cave at such speed it seemed possible they would tear a hole into the sky.

At the same time, in the Wang Clan of the Southern Domain, deep within that endless chain of mountains, was the lava cave of the tenth Patriarch of the Wang Clan. Suddenly, the lid of his coffin shattered into pieces, and the tenth Wang Clan Patriarch slowly rose to his feet.

He walked into the lava, and as he did, it slowly cooled and grew dark, as did the cave.

“As one of the legendary Wang Clan Patriarchs once said, all living things sow Karma. Therefore, Karma must be reaped. With life, comes death…. Today, I will help you. Yes, it’s sowing Karma, but in the future, I will consume you, and that is the reaping of Karma that you must pay. Today, you will not die. However, that merely indicates that in the future, you will belong completely to me.” The tenth Wang Clan Patriarch laughed hoarsely as a red glow surrounded his body.

“I haven’t been out in so long….” he muttered lightly, then disappeared.

——

Near the Rebirth Cave, within the mental realm of the Immortal’s corpse, in the depths of the maze, Meng Hao stood next to Li Daoyi’s corpse, breathing heavily.

From the moment he had revealed his true features, Meng Hao had been in constant deep thought. Li Daoyi had to die. The instant Meng Hao had heard Ji Hongdong’s words, Li Daoyi’s fate had been sealed; he must be killed!

Only dead men can truly keep secrets. 1

Xu Qing had her secret, as did Meng Hao. Were word to get out, Xu Qing would face unspeakable danger to her life…. In fact, her death would be certain.

Therefore, Li Daoyi had to die!

However, there was a polar difference between dying beneath Fang Mu’s hand, and dying beneath Meng Hao’s.

Meng Hao was no longer the ignorant youth he had been when he first entered the Cultivation world. In his years practicing cultivation in the Violet Fate Sect, his understanding of things had grown exponentially. How could he not understand that the death of a Dao Child of any Sect would instantly be made known to that Sect?

Furthermore, they had techniques to be able to reveal the appearance and aura of whoever did the slaying. Even determining the exact location where it had happened would not be difficult. It might be possible for the meat jelly to help him cover up the truth from the Li Clan. However… Meng Hao wasn't confident enough to take that risk.

Meng Hao was well aware of the situations, and the ramifications…. Therefore, he could not kill Li Daoyi while wearing the face of Fang Mu.

As such… he had no choice but to discard that identity.

As for Ji Hongdong, Quasi-Array member of the number one Clan in the entire Nanshan Continent, well, if he died, Meng Hao could only imagine what the reaction of the Ji Clan would be. Any powerful and fearsome Clan would take serious action to handle the slaying of one of their Clan members. That was a necessary reaction to maintain the dignity and power of the Clan.

Killing Ji Hongdong would be like killing the prince of an Empire. An Empire might have many princes, but such a thing would provoke severe catastrophe and endless problems.

The Violet Fate Sect would really have no way to fight back against the Ji Clan. Based on An Zaihai's description, and Meng Hao's personal understanding, although the Violet Fate Sect was a great Clan in the Southern Domain, compared to the Ji Clan, it was like… a tiny mayfly.

If a Violet Fate Sect disciple killed a member of the Ji Clan, that death wouldn't just involve whichever trifling disciple did the killing. Most likely, the entire Sect would collapse because of it.

As Meng Hao's fingers crushed down onto his Violet Furnace Lord medallion, what he was thinking about was his Master. He also thought about the other Violet Furnace Lords. He thought about the green mountains and clear blue waters of the East Pill Division. He thought about all his experiences through the years there.

Despite all that… Ji Hongdong had to die!

If he didn’t, Xu Qing would be in incredible danger. Furthermore, if the Ji Clan knew of the existence of a Demon Sealer, well… the mere thought of it caused Meng Hao’s scalp to prickle with danger.

Therefore, Ji Hongdong was doomed to perish. Only his death could ensure Xu Qing’s safety, and allow her to stay in the Black Sieve Sect and completely fuse with Matriarch Phoenix, without anyone suspecting her.

And so, Meng Hao crushed the Violet Furnace Lord medallion. It represented him casting off all ties with the Violet Fate Sect; he had nothing to do with them now. He was Meng Hao. Fang Mu was merely an alias. Once that information was revealed, the Violet Fate Sect would be able to offer a clear explanation.

Most importantly, destroying the medallion indicated that he was forsaking the Sect. It might even offer implication that Fang Mu was dead.

The only frustrating factor was that when he left this place, the Li Clan would be after his head. There would be nowhere in the vast Southern Domain where he could hide. He would be forced to leave, to truly disappear from the Southern Domain.

Furthermore, before disappearing, he must prepare for what would surely be a vast series of storm-like upheavals.

All of this had been rushing through his mind the moment Xu Qing’s identity was revealed to Ji Hongdong. Despite Meng Hao’s breakthrough in Cultivation base, he was still hesitant at first. In the end, though, he was filled with resolve.

“Master,” he thought, slowly looking off in the direction of the Violet Fate Sect. “I’ve been unfilial…. Please view Fang Mu as… dead!” His eyes flashed as he looked back at Ji Hongdong. For the first time, they flickered with killing intent. It takes some time to analyze all of the thoughts that went through Meng Hao’s head, but in actuality, they flashed through his head in an instant. As they did, they transformed into intense killing intent.

This killing intent caused Ji Hongdong’s mind to tremble. This was the first time he had ever seen someone staring at him in such a way. In the past, it didn’t matter where he went or which enemy he fought, people would attack him, but never with the desire to exterminate him.

That was because his surname was Ji. The bloodline of the Ji Clan pumped through his veins. In the Southern Domain, in the Nanshan Continent, few people would ever dare to provoke the Ji Clan!

“You want to kill me? Do you dare?!” His eyes glittered coldly as he lifted his right hand and performed an incantation gesture. Immediately Core Qi blossomed above his head. Again, the starfield appeared. This time, there were clearly far more blinking stars than there had been before. They covered everything above them, filling the area, then rushing down toward Meng Hao.

As the bright starlight descended upon him, Meng Hao’s killing intent continued to flicker just as before. The stars approached, and he lifted his right hand, striking forward. As he did, his blood-covered fingers caused everything to shake. Suddenly, a massive blood-colored palm appeared beneath him.

The bloody palm grew larger, expanding; next the Blood Death World came to being, within which Meng Hao’s Blood Clones could be seen. They faced the incoming starlight and starfield, and immediately moved to defend against it.

The Blood Palm shot upward like the hand of a giant, slamming into the starfield.

A boom filled the air. Meng Hao’s entire body trembled, and blood oozed from his mouth. The starfield began to collapse, and the starlight dissipated. However, Meng Hao’s Blood Death World also began to disintegrate.

At the moment, Meng Hao hadn’t yet cultivated Core Qi. Right now, he was now facing up against a Cultivator who had; however, Meng Hao was vastly different than the last time he had done so, against the azure-masked

Black Lands Cultivator. He would not flee; no, he was much more evenly matched now.

Ji Hongdong’s expression changed; blood sprayed from his mouth and he staggered backward. A fierce expression washed over his face, and he waved his right hand out.

“Other than that damned crazy lunatic from the Fang Clan, you’re the first person to ever injure me! Damn you! Dungeon of Heaven; Incarnate Prison!” As he cried out, his hand flashed an incantation gesture and then waved toward the air above Meng Hao. Immediately, a blue glow appeared, spreading out to cover everything. It transformed into… a blue sky complete with white clouds, its own Heaven.

Even stranger, this sky covered Meng Hao only; everywhere else looked just as it had before.

“Let ring the Bell of the East. Nine exterminations; use the will of the Heavens to destroy the body; use the gaze of the firmament to punish the spirit; use the bloodline of the Ji Clan to punish this person with Heavenly Tribulation!” Veins of blood filled Ji Hongdong’s eyes. He lowered his finger, and the blue swath of Heaven above Meng Hao filled with roiling black clouds. Thunder crackled, and even more shockingly, it seemed lightning would soon fall.

“You want to kill me? You’re not qualified!” Ji Hongdong slapped his bag of holding, and a silver bell appeared in his hand. Immediately, a clear ring sounded out.

“Use the bloodline of the Ji Clan and the guidance of the Bell of the East to call forth the judgement of the will of the Heavens against this Meng Hao! DIE!” His face distorted with rage as he let out a roar.

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1. I really wanted to translate this as “Dead men tell no tales”… but it would have been a bit too much of a stretch from the original haha

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# Chapter 306: Slaying Ji!

As Ji Hondong’s words resonated out, the sky above Meng Hao’s head began to crackle with lightning. A bolt of lightning as thick as an arm shot down with incredible speed, heading directly toward Meng Hao.

The Violet Core within him rotated rapidly, bursting forth with boundless Cultivation base power. As it surrounded Meng Hao, his right hand shot upward. Massive amounts of Violet Qi appeared above him, transforming into a curved shield.

A boom filled the air as the lightning slammed into the shield, causing it to shatter to pieces. Immediately following, a third, fourth, fifth lightning shield… a seemingly endless numbers of shields popped into place to resist the lightning. Soon the lightning bolt was as thin as a finger. Meng Hao then spit something out of his mouth, and the lightning mist appeared. It immediately swallowed up the lightning.

“Time to finish things!” said Ji Hongdong with a cold laugh. He waved the bell again, causing a chiming sound to ring out. Immediately, within the black clouds in the sky above Meng Hao, three lightning bolts intertwined with each other, seemingly on the verge of exploding down.

A gleam appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes. He had already reached a good estimation of his true battle power; he had no Core Qi, but he was definitely capable of fighting someone at the peak of the early Core Formation stage who did.

However, he would not be able to secure victory; he would only be able to match blows. Meng Hao would have had the upper hand if he was fighting anyone other than Ji Hongdong, who possessed the bloodline of the Ji Clan.

If he were at this moment to once again encounter the azure-masked Black Lands Cultivator, defeating him would be a simple matter.

Realization flickered within him. “Were I to cultivate Core Qi,” he thought, “or acquire a Perfect Core… then exterminating the early Core Formation stage would be as simple as turning over my hand!”

He calmly looked at Ji Hongdong and said, “You’re right. It’s time to finish things.” He slapped his bag of holding, and the blood-colored mask appeared in his hand.

The mask of the Blood Immortal Legacy. The minimum criteria to wear this mask was to have Cultivation base at the Core Formation stage.

Above Meng Hao, the three lightning bolts were condensing, preparing to descend upon him. Meng Hao slid the mask onto his face. As soon as it touched his skin, a tremor ran through his body.

He instantly felt indescribable pain on his face, as if the mask were adhering permanently to his skin. At the same time, everything in his field of vision began to turn blood red.

An evil viciousness suddenly appeared in his mind, replacing his intellect. A billowing killing intent shot up, as if he had been bedeviled.

One word echoed in his mind: “Kill…. Kill…. Kill….” It seemed as if it were being spoken by an innumerable host of people, some men, some women, some old, some young. There even seemed to be the voices of animals and plants. It was if all living things were speaking that one word directly into his ears.

The world in front of him grew even more deeply crimson; within the space of a single breath, everything was completely red!

Within this world of redness, he felt his Cultivation base suddenly explode; he was still of the early Core Formation stage, but in this instant, he was able to form a crimson Core Qi!

The Core Qi was incredibly dense as it appeared above Meng Hao's head. If you studied it closely, you would be able to see that this Core Qi did not belong to Meng Hao, but rather to the Blood Immortal Legacy mask!

With the mask on his face, Meng Hao looked utterly bizarre. There was even a sinister demonic aura about him. Ji Hongdong looked at the mask; there were no facial features on it, only two eye holes, where Meng Hao's bright red eyes could be seen!

The redness of his eyes was the same color as the Core Qi hovering above him.

His green robe was now stained with redness; it fluttered about him, making him look like some sort of Blood Devil!

"What magical item is this?" said Ji Hongong, his expression flickering. An intense feeling of danger appeared inside him as soon as Meng Hao donned the mask. He actually had not experienced many things in life, so this feeling caused his entire body to tremble. Without thinking, he rang the bell in his hand once more. Above Meng Hao, the three lightning bolts shot down.

Meng Hao laughed. The smile produced by his laugh was obscured by the mask, but the laughter itself was grating. He began to raise his right hand up toward the three incoming lightning bolts. His hand clenched into a fist, and as he did, the crimson Core Qi above him transformed into a massive fist. A rumbling roar filled the air as it shot toward the three lightning bolts.

The resulting boom shook heaven and earth. The three lightning bolts collapsed into pieces. The sky above even trembled.

Ji Hongdong's face fell, and his eyes were filled with veins of blood. The bell in his hand suddenly rang, and he coughed up a massive mouthful of blood. His expression grew fierce, and let out a shrill howl. "Let the will of the Heavens descend! Trial by Tribulation!"

As his words rang out, the clouds in the sky above Meng Hao suddenly redoubled, layer after layer. Within the thick blackness, nine lightning bolts appeared, seemingly congealing the will of the Heavens as they prepared to strike.

An aura which seemed powerful enough to destroy all living things suddenly spread out. A look of consternation appeared on the face of Xu Qing, who stood off in the distance.

It was at this exact moment, however, that Meng Hao spoke.

His voice was hoarse, and bizarrely mesmerizing.

“Without a face….” Meng Hao only spoke three words of the Blood Immortal Legacy’s divine ability. Without a face, a single word, the flames of war unify; Sundered clouds, a bloody rain, seas that cover the sky; Capture the gods, advance the troops, fire consumes the towers; Forge all spirits and bloodlines into the 9 killing powers!

These words actually contained nine Blood Immortal divine abilities; only by wearing the mask could they be utilized. Right now, a shocking magical technique of the Ancient Doom Clan, not seen for tens of thousands of years, suddenly appeared in Meng Hao’s outstretched hand.

As soon as the words were out of his mouth, the massive amounts of Core Qi above his head suddenly began to spread out, transforming into a massive face. The face had no features whatsoever, except for two eyes; it was nothing but a sea of red!

The left eye was also completely red; shockingly, though, within the the position of the right… was Meng Hao!

As soon as the massive face appeared, it shot toward the nine descending lightning bolts.

Everything shook; even though this place was not real, it could still be rocked by frantic insanity. The nine lightning bolts immediately shattered into pieces. The black clouds in the sky began to disintegrate, and as the face collided with the spirit-punishing Heaven, it too thoroughly collapsed.

This magic of facelessness transformed into a gigantic face, with an abstruse left eye and Meng Hao in the right, with no other features. It caused Ji Hongdong’s scalp to go numb, and filled him with the intense sensation of death that inundated his body.

“You….” Ji Hongdong was about to continue speaking, but his words caught in his throat. This was because at this moment, the magic of facelessness, transformed into the enormous face, suddenly appeared directly in front of him. Meng Hao, standing in the position of the right eye, lifted his hand up and seized Ji Hongdong’s neck.

His grip cut off Ji Hongdong’s words, causing the young man’s expression to twist. He wanted to struggle, but he suddenly found that his Cultivation base was suppressed; he had no way to fight back.

His eyes filled with terror and intense dread; he could sense Meng Hao’s killing intent. Its ferocity was without equal, and yet… he just couldn’t believe that in the Nanshan continent, someone would dare to slay someone of the bloodline of the Ji Clan.

This concept was deeply rooted in his heart. It was something that had existed within him since he was very small. At the moment, he was in a crisis, but his fear quickly disappeared, only to be replaced with grimness. He glared at Meng Hao, and a snide smile appeared on his face.

He couldn’t speak, but his eyes spoke the words: “Do you dare to kill me?” The message was immediately transmitted into Meng Hao’s heart.

He did not beg for mercy, nor did he speak any ingratiating words. In this moment of life and death, he could not forget about the dignity and nobility of the bloodline of the Ji Clan. He lifted his chin and stared coldly at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao was quiet for a moment, then hoarsely said, “I really… don’t want to kill you….” The redness in his eyes began to fade, replaced instead with that which was Meng Hao.

Hearing this, a cold smile twisted Ji Hongdong’s lips. Suddenly, Meng Hao’s right hand tightened. A popping sound could be heard, and Ji Hongdong’s eyes went wide. His neck was smashed into nothing; the power of the Blood Immortal which coursed through Meng Hao’s hand, suddenly poured into Ji Hongdong’s body. He trembled, and his body immediately began to wither. All the blood in his body congealed into his forehead; a mark of blood appeared, congealing into a collection of the bloodline of the Ji Clan, which suddenly flew out into the air!

The blood merged into the forehead of the mask that Meng Hao wore. The mask rippled, as if it were excited. Meng Hao loosened his grip, dropping Ji Hongdong’s remains.

He closed his eyes, then lifted his right hand to remove the mask. When it came off, it revealed how pale Meng Hao’s face was. The power of the mask was shocking. Were Meng Hao’s Spiritual Sense not as powerful as it was, then he would never have been able to maintain control of his own mind.

In the short period that he had wielded the power of the mask, he realized that he had lost half of a sixty-year cycle of longevity.

The price of wearing the mask was extremely high.

Meng Hao turned to Xu Qing, his face pale. Biting down on his lip, he softly said, “We’re safe now. No one will know your secret.”

Xu Qing stared blankly at Meng Hao, her eyes filling with tears. She was a simple person, but she knew the price Meng Hao had paid to protect her secret.

He had killed a Ji Clan member, and had thus provoked great calamity. In order to not implicate his Sect, he had forsaken it…. Now, he had no choice but to become a wanderer. He would never be able to return to the Southern Domain, nor would he be able to hide from the Ji Clan.

Furthermore, he was only a Core Formation Cultivator….

Xu Qing bit down on her lip, but couldn't hold back the tears. They slid down her face, and yet, never touched the ground; Meng Hao lifted up his hand to wipe them way.

"Don't cry," he said, smiling. "There's a long road ahead. Who knows when it is that we will meet again." His face was pale as he smiled, which served only to imprint his words deeper in Xu Qing's heart.

"I'm leaving now," he continued. "This place will be collapsing soon." He looked deeply into her eyes, knowing that after he turned to leave, they would be as separated as if one was alive and the other dead. Even if he made it out with his life, who knew how many years would pass before he could return.

When he was able to return, who knew if the beautiful woman who stood in front of him now, would still be the same as before.

But Meng Hao had no regrets. Ji Hongdong had to die. Be it for Xu Qing, or for himself, only Ji Hongdong's death could assure their continued life.

Even if he hid Ji Hongdong's body within the blood-colored mask, Meng Hao knew it would do no good against the power of the Ji Clan. In fact, the consequences might be even more severe.

Perhaps there had been a third path he could have trod; unfortunately, things had happened too quickly, and he hadn't been able to puzzle out what that third path might have been. As far as trying to kill using Meng Hao's identity, then live normally as Fang Mu, attempting that would show that he didn't understand the terrifying power of the Ji Clan. That was his judgement based on everything that he had experienced.

Had he attempted to do that, then there was a ninety percent probability that the entire Violet Fate Sect would be sucked into destruction. That was a choice he refused to make.

Meng Hao turned, and as he did, he suddenly realized someone was embracing him from behind. It felt soft and warm.

“I’ll wait for you,” said Xu Qing. Her voice carried persistence. Regardless of past, present or future lives, they would be together forever.

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# Chapter 307: Fang Mu is Meng Hao!

The moment Ji Hongdong died, something happened on the other side of the Milky Way Sea, on the border of the vast Eastern Lands, atop a white mountain. The mountain had no snow on it; instead, the crags which formed it were completely white in color, seemingly without blemishes or impurities.

In the Eastern Lands, this place was called White Mountain.

Somewhere on White Mountain was a cistern. This cistern was so deep, that according to the legends, the waters within went down as far as the mountain was tall.

Sitting next to the cistern was an old man. He was gaunt, his face expressionless, and in his hand he held a fishing pole. The fishing line descended down into the cistern, and at the moment, it was motionless.

Suddenly, the fishing line went taut. The old man’s expression didn’t change; he simply pulled up with his right hand. A bizarre, miserable shriek pierced the air as the fishing line flew up. Hooked on the end was a globule of light.

If you looked closely at the light, you could see that it was comprised of countless glowing threads. On each of these threads were faces, and in the middle of them all, in the center of the globule of light, was a middle-aged man. His expression was one of terror, and he immediately dropped to his knees and began to beg for mercy.

The old man looked at him and coolly said, “For me to fish your Karma out of all the multitude of living creatures is nothing but good fortune for you, right? Why beg for mercy?” His hand made a clutching motion in mid-air, and the globule of light flew into his hand. As he grabbed it, the middle-aged man within let out a defiant howl, the kind that comes the moment before death. In addition, he emitted the Qi of the great circle of the late Nascent Soul stage.

The old man allowed the Qi to emanate out. Then, he popped the globule of light into his mouth. A few crunching sounds could be heard, and then he swallowed. Some blood oozed out from the corners of his mouth, which he quickly licked up. His eyes filled with a bright glow.

“Ah, the flavor of Karma….” he murmured. After some time passed he looked up into the sky, then suddenly dropped to his knees and prostrated himself.

He kowtowed nine times, then raised himself up and looked at the cistern. After a while, he frowned. He thrust his hand out, and a shattered jade slip appeared in his hand.

“Hmm?” His eyes glowed. “A son of Ji died…. One of the sons of Ji, of my bloodline. Dead in the Southern Domain…?” He pinched down onto the jade slip, and the image of a face appeared in his mind.

The face belonged to none other than Meng Hao!

At the same time, a sharp voice echoed out in his mind.

“Patriarch, the person who killed me is named Fang Mu of the Violet Fate Sect, also known as Meng Hao!” The voice belonged to none other than Ji Hongdong. This was the last bit of will that remained in him before he died. The voice was sad and shrill, filled with intense resentment.

There was no way Meng Hao could possibly have predicted that this would happen. The Ji Clan had a method with which to transmit voices along with their death; Meng Hao was only aware of the ability to transmit images.

Luckily, extracting the Clan blood from Ji Hongdong before his ultimate death had inflicted quite a bit of pain; as a result, Ji Hongdong's consciousness had been thrown into chaos. The only thing he had been able to do was transmit Meng Hao's name; he had completely forgotten about the matter of Xu Qing.

“Useless fool,” said the old man with a slight frown. “However, useless as he might have been, the blood of the Ji Clan still flowed within his veins. How could mortals have killed him so easily? Although, the Violet Fate Sect….” Shockingly, this old man viewed Cultivators as mere mortals!

He flicked his wide sleeve, transforming the jade slip into ash. Then, he leaped up into the air, disappearing in the blink of an eye.

Only his sinister voice remained, echoing throughout the mountain: “The Southern Domain. I haven't been there for years.”

——

Outside the Rebirth Cave, eight old men sat cross-legged beneath the banner of the Ji Clan. One by one, their eyes opened. Astonishment and disbelief shined out as they rose to their feet.

Their eyes were filled with veins of blood, and intensely violent killing intent poured out. This shocking sight shook everyone in the area. One by one, Cultivators from the other Sects and Clans looked over in astonishment as they watched indescribable frenzied rage and killing intent rising up from the eight old men.

All of them were Nascent Soul eccentrics, with extraordinary Cultivation bases. Their combined killing intent was enough to shake the Heavens, rock the Earth and change the color of the wind.

“One of the sons of Ji has perished….” The eight men exchanged glances. Amidst their rising killing intent, they could also sense the mutual fear which caused their hearts to tremble.

Based on the laws of the Ji Clan, they knew that if they did not find Ji Hongdong's killer, then they would be sent to the grave with Ji Hongdong as burial offerings. In fact, all of the Clan members within their sphere of influence would instantly be exterminated.

That was the price to be paid if they did not find the killer and bring him back to the Eastern Lands!

One among the eight men lifted his hand to slap his bag of holding. Immediately, fragments of a jade slip appeared, eight of them. Each of the other old men took one, and then they held them out to join them together. Immediately, a warm glow shone out.

The light climbed up into the sky, and the faces of the eight old men were incredibly grim as they studied it closely. It wasn't just them; the Cultivators of the surrounding Sects were also closely observing what was happening.

Within the glow appeared a figure; he wore a mask, making it impossible to determine what he looked like. However, the mask overflowed with bloody killing intent. It immediately caused the hearts of all onlookers to tremble.

"That's…."

"That's the mask of the Blood Immortal Legacy! That's the mask of the Blood Immortal of the Ancient Doom Clan!"

"You're right! During the last Blood Immortal Legacy Tournament, I saw it with my own eyes…. But didn't the Li Clan say that there was some accident, and that it was lost within the Blood Immortal Legacy zone? Of course, the great Sects didn't believe them, and conducted their own investigations, however, in the end they determined that the Li Clan didn't acquire the legacy…."

When the eight old men heard these words, their eyes glittered, and their killing intent grew more intense. They looked at the pillar of light belonging to the Li Clan, causing the Li Clan members' faces to instantly flicker.

Before any explanations could be made, though, eight beams of light suddenly approached from off in the distance. They screamed forward, and as they approached, it was clear that Li Clan Elders were approaching.

The old man in the lead cried, “Li Clan Dao Child Li Daoyi perished in this place. Fellow Daoists, do you recognize this person?” He waved his hand, and an illusory screen appeared, upon which was the image of Meng Hao.

At the exact same moment, the masked figure within the beam of light protected by the Ji Clan’s had slip suddenly distorted, transforming into another image. Again, it was none other than… Meng Hao!

Right now, the eyes of everyone in the area were fixed on the two glowing screens, and the person depicted there. Their minds reeled.

They reeled because of the news that the Dao Child of the Li Clan had perished.

They reeled because all of the Clans and Sects of the Southern Domain suddenly put the pieces of the puzzle together; now they knew why the Ji Clan had produced the broken jade slip, and why the figure there was the same as that produced by the Li Clan.

One of the Patriarchs from the Golden Frost Clan gasped. “Could it be that… one of the sons of Ji of the Ji Clan….”

“If that’s true, then whoever did it has provoked a great disaster! The Ji Clan of the Eastern Lands…. How could they possibly let this matter rest!?”

“Which Sect is the killer a disciple of…?”

Everything was deathly silent. All of the Cultivators present began to slowly back away.

“That… that looks like that guy Meng Hao who disappeared a few years ago….”

“Meng Hao? The Sublime Spirit Scripture! I remember! That’s Meng Hao!”

“Meng Hao….”

A great buzz of conversation filled the area surrounding the basin. Amidst the uproar, the eyes of the old men from the Ji Clan boiled with killing intent, as did those of the Elders from the Li Clan.

The old man from the Li Clan gritted his teeth and said, “This Meng Hao is still within the Corpse’s illusory land. Let’s seal off the area! Teleportation is prohibited! It doesn’t matter what treasures that little bastard has, he won’t be able to escape even if he has wings!” The surrounding Nascent Soul Elders immediately shot off toward the north, south, east and west.

Clearly, they planned to seal the area and prevent anyone from teleporting away.

“One of the sons of Ji of the Ji Clan has perished here. Fellow Daoists of the Southern Domain, please remain here and wait until all details are brought to light. Until then, no one is permitted to leave.” Immediately, four of the eight Ji Clan Elders dispersed. Obviously, they did not put complete faith in the methods of the Li Clan, and would implement their own sealing measures.

“Apparently this person possesses some arts of transformation,” said another of the old men from the Ji Clan, along with a cold snort. “That doesn’t matter. Having killed a member of the Ji Clan, he has been stained with the Karma of Heaven and Earth. Once he emerges into the world, we will be able to sense him.”

It was at this moment that suddenly, a freezing Qi suddenly blasted out from near the Rebirth Cave. It contained a fearsome potency; the might of Spirit Severing. Slowly, a tall figure strode out from within the basin.

He was a middle-aged man, wearing a long, orange robe. As he strode out, he attracted the attention of all of the surrounding Cultivators from the various Sects. They all immediately recognised him; this was the most powerful expert present among the Ji Clan.

His Cultivation base was at the Spirit Severing level; when all of the other Clan Patriarchs had retreated from the basin surrounding the Rebirth Cave, he had remained behind. He knew that the cave was a fearsome place, even for someone of the Spirit Severing stage, and that unless absolutely necessary, no one would enter it. In fact, none of the Patriarchs from the various local Sects were willing to enter it; at most, they would approach the mouth of the cave.

This man had not retreated, and as such, had engaged in quite a few battles with various strange life forms in the vicinity of the cave. As he emerged from the area, his face was grim. When he reached the eight old men from the Ji Clan, all of them respectfully clasped hands in salute.

The middle-aged man opened his hand to reveal some shattered powder that was all which remained of a jade slip.

“The killer is Fang Mu of the Violet Fate Sect, also known as Meng Hao!” the man said coolly. “That was the message transmitted by Ji Hongdong before his death. This matter has even stirred Patriarch Ji Fang, who is currently hurrying here from the Eastern Lands.” Though his voice was calm, it contained an intense threatening air, which caused the hearts of the members of all the surrounding Sects to fill with trembling. 1

“Fang Mu…. Meng Hao….”

“How could that be possible!? Fang Mu of the East Pill Division of the Violet Fate Sect is also the same guy everyone was looking for throughout the Southern Domain that year, Meng Hao?!?!”

“This…. No wonder no one could ever find Meng Hao. He was hiding in the Violet Fate Sect. He even became a Legacy Apprentice….”

Amidst the commotion, one gaze after another came to fall upon the pillar of light belonging to the Violet Fate Sect. Within, the faces of the Violet Fate Sect Cultivators instantly began to change.

An Zaihai’s face fell. Next to him Lin Hailong gasped and rose to his feet. Wu Dingqiu stared mutely for a moment, and then his face grew incredibly grim. A profound sense of crisis filled the minds and hearts of all the Violet Fate Sect disciples.

It was at this moment that within the Violet Fate Sect’s pillar of light, the eyes of the Spirit Severing Patriarchs slowly opened.

1. Ji Fang’s name in Chinese is jì fāng – Ji is a family name. Fang is the same Fang as “Fang Mu.

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 308: I’m His Master!

The first Violet Fate Sect Spirit Severing Patriarch was silent for a moment before saying, “I’ve received a message from the Sect Leader. Fang Mu of the East Pill Division has forsaken the Violet Fate Sect. We do not know whether he is alive or dead. If he is alive, he has nothing to do with the Violet Fate Sect. Similarly, If he is dead, it similarly does not have anything to do with us.”

His eyes glowed brightly as his words echoed out one by one. To speak such words caused him to feel utter humiliation, as well as intense sorrow.

The other Spirit Severing Patriarch said nothing, but a slight frown appeared on his face. There seemed to be a fury in his eyes that was just on the verge of exploding. However, he knew that they could not under any circumstances offend the Ji Clan.

They were the only people present who knew about the matter of Fang Mu, and in fact, they really had just received an urgent command from the Violet Fate Sect. The wording in the command was simple. It didn’t mention the death of a member of the Ji Clan, but it did say that momentous changes were about to occur. It said that Fang Mu had voluntarily forsaken the Sect, and that if any mishaps were to occur, the two Patriarchs were to explain this immediately.

The two of them had assumed something important had happened, and with the developments just now, it was obvious exactly where the problem lay. Each had lived for a thousand years, so it naturally took only a moment for them to ascertain the crux of the matter.

Regardless of whether his name was Fang Mu or Meng Hao, the kid apparently had been faced with no other choice than to attack, and had killed a member of the Ji Clan. In order to not implicate the Sect, he had voluntarily crushed his Violet Furnace Lord medallion, making a clean break.

Such a choice caused the two Spirit Severing Patriarchs to feel pain in their hearts. This was a disciple of their Sect, a Legacy Apprentice of the East Pill Division. In a moment of crisis, he had taken steps to prevent any trouble for the Sect.

Unfortunately… they had no way to protect him. No one in the Violet Fate Sect could do anything for him now. The two Patriarchs had no choice but to coldly distance themselves from him, in front of all of the Cultivators in the entire Southern Domain.

His life didn’t matter. His death didn’t matter. He had nothing to do with the Violet Fate Sect.

The words they had spoken led to instant silence in the area. Shocked and perplexed looks filled the faces of many of the Cultivators from the other Sects. They could hear the helplessness within the words, and when compared to the domineering power of the Ji Clan, it caused them to instantly feel sympathy.

The Spirit Severing Cultivator from the Ji Clan stared coldly at the Violet Fate Sect disciples for a moment, then snorted. Other than that, however, he did nothing.

Silence reigned. No one spoke. Everyone was waiting for the disciples who had disappeared to return.

Restrictive spells had already sprung up all around. As of now, there was absolutely no way for anyone to use the power of teleportation. After a moment, however, within the Black Sieve Sect’s pillar of light, Patriarch Violet Sieve’s eyes began to glitter.

Finally, he spoke up. “Fellow Daoists from the Ji Clan, and other members of the senior generation. I happen to know that Meng Hao possesses a good luck charm from the ancient Good Luck Sect. I’m afraid your restrictive spells….” He smiled, but didn’t finish speaking.

Hearing these words immediately caused the eyes of the Ji Clan Elders to flicker as they exchanged glances. The Spirit Severing Cultivator waved his right hand, and a jade pendant appeared.

“Place this within the restrictive spell. It can block the good luck charm.”

The faces of the two Violet Fate Sect Spirit Severing Patriarchs grew dark. They glared at Patriarch Violet Sieve, ill intentions flickering in their eyes, barely concealed.

The disciples of the various Sects were so shocked that they were like cicadas in the dead of winter. Various thoughts ran through their heads. They thought of Fang Mu, and then Meng Hao, and their expressions flickered through various stages of astonishment.

Fang Mu was thoroughly famous in the Southern Domain. It was said that he was like the sun at high noon amongst the others of his generation. No one could compare to him. He was Grandmaster Pill Demon’s Legacy Apprentice, Dao Child of the East Pill Division, one of the four Grandmasters of the Southern Domain… Pill Cauldron….

As for Meng Hao, the appearance of the Blood Immortal mask caused everyone’s hearts to be filled with a roar of shock.

He possessed the Sublime Spirit Scripture, was son-in-law of the Song Clan, and now, recipient of the Blood Immortal legacy!

Amidst the silence, the faces of the Song Clan members were somewhat unsightly as they sat in their pillar of light. Eccentric Song was there too, frowning and sighing inwardly.

All of the Cultivators present, including the Spirit Severing Patriarchs, were oblivious to the fact than an old man had suddenly joined the crowd. He was emaciated and unimposing in appearance. However, no one noticed that he was there, almost as if he weren’t part of the world.

The old man smiled. “You entered the realm of Perfection, kid,” he said lightly to himself. “There’s a thing called Karma in the world, and today, I will help you to sow it. In the future, I will seize your Perfection, that will be the reaping of the Karma.” No one, of course, could hear him. This was none other than the ancient tenth Patriarch of the Wang Clan.

Everyone continued to wait silently.

Meanwhile, at the very edge of the Southern Domain, near where the State of Zhao used to exist, past the numerous mountain ranges, was a vast sea.

This was none other than the Milky Way Sea, which separated the West and South from the North and East.

Suddenly the air above the Milky Way Sea outside of the Southern Domain began to ripple and distort. A blurry image appeared, a person, who suddenly stepped forward. The figure was indistinct at first, but it rapidly coalesced into an old man.

This was none other than the old man who had been fishing Karma on the peak of White Mountain in the Eastern Lands, Ji Clan Patriarch Ji Fang!

He hovered in mid-air above the Milky Way Sea, looking out at the Southern Domain. Then, his body flickered, and he shot forward. However, even as he neared the border of the Southern Domain and was about to enter, he frowned and let out a cold snort. He raised his right arm and flicked it out ahead of him.

A boom filled the air, spreading out in all directions, causing the ocean water beneath him to seethe and roar. The land comprising the border of the Southern Domain quaked, and the great boulders lining the seashore cracked and disintegrated.

As the land crumbled and the seawater churned, an old man appeared in front of Ji Fang. He wore a long gray robe upon each sleeve of which was the image of a pill furnace.

The old man’s hair was long and white, and he was very thin, with dark blotches on his skin. His expression was placid, yet filled with power. His eyes glowed brightly, and a Heavenly aura seemed to be concealed within them.

The strong aroma of medicinal pills wafted out from him to fill the area.

Ji Fang gave him a cold look and then said, “Should I call you Violet East, or Pill Demon?!”

This old man was none other than Meng Hao’s Master, Pill Demon!

Pill Demon was silent for a moment, then looked back at Ji Fang. “Violet East has perished, I’m Pill Demon.”

“Well, it doesn’t matter if you’re Pill Demon or Violet East,” he said coldly, lifting his head slightly, “if you want to prevent the Violet Fate Sect from being destroyed, then get out of my way. Anyone who kills a member of my Ji Clan must die!”

Pill Demon shook his head. “I’m his Master. He kowtowed to me three times, now it’s time for me to do something for him.” He waved his right arm, and suddenly a bronze pill furnace magically appeared in his hand. It immediately emanated an ancient Qi, which spilled out in all directions. A bluish mist poured out from the pill furnace, circling around, making the entire area into a world of fog.

“If you were really Violet East, then I might have some misgivings,” said Ji Fang with a harrumph. “But as for you, you’re clearly… looking to die!” With that he raised his hand, and the mist grew thicker, immediately inundating both himself and Pill Demon.

It was impossible to see them now. Only explosion after explosion could be heard, echoing out from within the mist. Beneath them, the Milky Way Sea seethed. The border lands of the Southern Domain quaked. Each and every attack made by either man contained enough power to shake the Heavens and rock the Earth.

A grim voice echoed out from within the mist. “Pill Demon, is it really worth it to do something like this for your apprentice? You might be able to stop me, but can you stop the entire Ji Clan?”

“He chose to become my apprentice, and I chose to become his Master. That’s not something that can be erased by forsaking a Sect. I believe it’s worth it. All of it! I can’t stop the Ji Clan, but I can hold you off for a moment. That’s enough!”

Another explosion shook the heavens. The battle shook this remote area where the Southern Domain met the Milky Way Sea.

The mist churned, lightning crackled, thunder boomed; the battle rose to a climax.

The walls within Choumen Tai’s illusory mental realm were now collapsing. As Meng Hao disappeared, Xu Qing bit her lip and closed her eyes.

Meng Hao left. He was no longer Fang Mu, but instead looked like he had when he’d left the State of Zhao, although now his Cultivation base was at the Core Formation stage. He transformed into a beam of light and shot off into the distance.

He wasn’t leaving the maze, he was leaving Xu Qing.

He didn’t look back.

The green mark on the back of his hand flickered. It had appeared after he had formed the Violet Core, and the blood began to circulate through his veins.

It appeared to be a magical symbol. Of course, he had seen it before, back when he reached Foundation Establishment, as well in the Violet Fate Sect when Choumen Tai had called out to him.

As he proceeded forward, more and more walls began to crumble into pieces. The entire maze seemed to be collapsing, and many of the

Cultivators stranded within were now able to see each other. They quickly began to form groups based on whichever Sect or Clan they belonged to.

However, anyone who wasn’t fast enough to regroup became the subject of attack, causing the entire place to begin to dissolve into chaos.

Meng Hao whistled through the air, moving faster and faster. No one could make out his face, only the shape of his figure as he shot past.

The rumbling roars grew more intense as the walls continued to collapse. Meng Hao suddenly paused for a moment. Based on the collapse around him, he knew that it would only be moments before the entire place was gone.

“Because of the deaths of Li Daoyi and Ji Hongdong, the outside world has been sealed down. It seems my good luck charm… is not going to help me.” A glow appeared in his eyes. The instant he had made his move on Ji Hongdong, many thoughts had been racing through his mind.

“My only chance… will be the Rebirth Cave, fifty kilometers away!” He took a deep breath, and then suddenly, his expression flickered. A mist suddenly covered his body, and he shot off in a new direction.

It didn’t take long before up ahead of him appeared Chu Yuyan, Ye Feimu, as well as some other Violet Fate Sect disciples. They were surrounded and under attack by Western Desert Cultivators.

“Fellow Daoists from the Violet Fate Sect,” cried one of them in a grim voice, “hand over the copy of those inscriptions you just made, and we’ll leave you alone. If you don’t, then we don’t care if you belong to a great Sect of the Southern Domain, we will exterminate you nonetheless!” The totem tattoos on their bodies began to ripple. Chu Yuyan, Ye Feimu and the other disciples, who were from the Violet Qi Division, were doing their best to defend themselves.

Ye Feimu was seriously injured, and his face was pale. However, he continued fighting doggedly. Blood oozed out of the corners of Chu

Yuyan’s mouth, and her right arm dripped with gore. Her face was pale, and her jaw clenched.

Everyone else was also injured, and were clearly fighting for their lives.

Next to them, two Violet Qi Division disciples slumped against the wall, although it wasn’t clear whether they were dead or alive.

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# Chapter 309: Another Wave Rises 1

“This place could collapse at any moment!” said Ye Feimu, his voice weak. “Once it does, we’ll be teleported out!” He was speaking, of course, to the Violet Fate Sect disciples, not the Western Desert Cultivators.

His face was pale, and within the paleness could be seen pulsing black lines. It wasn’t poison, but rather some sort of parasitic insect, the result of some bizarre magical technique from the Western Desert. After being infected, the result would be either injury and critical Cultivation base loss, or death.

Were it not for this, Ye Feimu wouldn’t be in the current state he was, not considering the level of his Cultivation base.

Chu Yuyan clenched her jaw, slapped her bag of holding, and produced some medicinal pills which she swallowed. The whole group wore expressions of resolve. Unfortunately, other than Chu Yuyan, all of them had the strange black lines on their faces; it seemed they had all had been infected by the parasitic insect.

The Cultivation bases of the Western Desert Cultivators were not that much higher than those of Chu Yuyan and the others. They were all in the early Core Formation stage, and not even the peak. Therefore, they hesitated for a moment. The reason they hadn’t moved in for the kill already was that they didn’t want to provoke too much trouble in the Southern Domain. However, the etchings from just now were a precious treasure; seeing the resolve on the faces of the Violet Fate Sect disciples caused them to exchange glances. Finally, killing intent sprang from their eyes.

“Kill them! Before this place collapses!” Eyes glittered and attacks were begun. The power of their totems manifested, transforming into four enormous beasts which charged toward Chu Yuyan and the others.

It was at this moment of crisis that Meng Hao appeared. Mist covered him, making his features indistinguishable. Before the Western Desert Cultivators could even see him clearly, he was standing in front of Chu Yuyan and the others. He lifted his right hand and waved it forward. Immediately, a violet glow appeared in front of him which transformed into an enormous curved moon shape.

A violet moon, with the power to sever lives. It slammed into the four beasts, sending out a massive explosion. The Western Desert Cultivators looked on in shock, and then retreated one after another. The totem tattoos on two of them immediately began to ripple, incapable of holding up against the power. The attack then slammed into the Cultivators, ripping their bodies to shreds.

As for the other two, one coughed up a mouthful of blood, narrowly managing to avoid the attack. The other was the most powerful of the group, and the one who had put Ye Feimu out of commission. His Cultivation base was at the mid Core Formation stage.

Meng Hao’s appearance caused Chu Yuyan to stare in shock. Seeing the appearance of the Violet Gibbous Moon filled her with astonishment.

That was an art only the Violet Fate Sect possessed, and that no outsider could ever master.

“Screw off!” said Meng Hao, glaring coolly at the two unharmed Western Desert Cultivators.

His words were filled with enormous pressure, causing the Cultivator who had avoided the blow to immediately turn to flee. He was a Western Desert Cultivator; to him life was filled with adversity. He had no concept of honor and glory; to him survival was the most important thing. Therefore, since he could clearly see that he had no chance of winning, he chose to retreat.

Before leaving, he clasped hands and bowed to Meng Hao. He respected strength; it didn’t matter if Meng Hao had just killed his compatriots.

The other Western Desert Cultivator, the middle-aged man with the mid Core Formation Cultivation base, hesitated for a moment. He looked at Meng Hao, and then at Ye Feimu and the others. Finally, he turned to depart.

“Leave behind the antidote!” said Meng Hao coldly.

The man sighed inwardly, then waved his arm to send a black bottle flying out. Meng Hao wasn’t worried about whether or not the man was planning any tricks. The complete collapse of this place was just around the corner; once it did collapse, everyone would be sent out. When that happened, all of the minor problems would be easily solved.

Meng Hao turned back to look through the mist at Chu Yuyan and the others.“This place is about to fall apart. All of you… take care of yourselves.” His face filled with conflicting emotions, he made his way off into the distance.

“Who are you?” Chu Yuyan suddenly asked.

Meng Hao didn’t respond. He made his way off thoughtfully.

Ye Feimu watched him leaving, and then suddenly said, “Fang Mu, what happened?!”

His words instantly sent Chu Yuyan reeling. The other Violet Qi Division disciples all looked off toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao paused for a moment. He sighed softly, then called back, “From now on, there is no more Fang Mu in the Violet Fate Sect….” Then he continued on his way.

Chu Yuyan and Ye Feimu gaped, their faces filled with astonishment. However, it took only a moment for Chu Yuyan’s phoenix-like eyes to suddenly narrow.

“That voice….” Her breathing suddenly grew ragged as she looked off at Meng Hao’s retreating form.

Rumbling booms echoed out as the collapse of the surrounding walls continued. The walls in the immediate vicinity were completely toppled, revealing nothingness. Some of the Cultivators began to be sucked out into the nothingness, and then disappear.

Meng Hao looked around with an expression of concentration and cautiousness. He wasn’t sure of the exact circumstances outside, but he could guess that there would be extreme danger. He didn’t take any sort of reckless action, but instead carefully observed the nothingness beyond the collapse of the walls.

Not much time passed before the roaring grew more intense. Everything was falling apart. Meng Hao’s gaze flickered, and he was just about to fly off into the nothingness when suddenly, his expression flickered. He lifted his hand and waved his sleeve; the two indestructible wooden swords flew out, moving to defend Meng Hao’s side.

It was at this exact moment that a boom resonated out. The fist of a woman punched through the air toward him, seemingly out of nowhere. The fist smashed into the violet mist which surrounded him, causing it to collapse instantly. The fist didn’t pause, instead proceeding directly on toward Meng Hao’s swords.

An enormous blast radiated out.

The two swords hummed and shook, spinning back and slamming into Meng Hao’s chest. Pain filled his body, and he flopped backward like a kite with its string cut, blood spraying from his mouth.

He looked over to see that the owner of the fist was none other than the young woman surnamed Fang. She wore a long green robe, along with an air of aloof elegance. She slowly approached through the void.

She was beautiful, but she had hit Meng Hao with an astonishing blow from her fist. The power of the fist far exceeded the early Core Formation stage. Physical power such as this was shocking to Meng Hao.

The violet mist roiled around Meng Hao, and as he stared at the woman, his pupils turned violet. His wounds began to rapidly heal, and within the space of a few breaths he was completely back to normal, except for a slightly paler face.

He wiped the blood from his mouth and looked up at the woman, his face grim.

“Such power…” he thought. “Such incredible power! That was far beyond Ji Hongdong; I think that blow just now could easily wipe out a normal early Core Formation stage Cultivator!” His eyes narrowed.

“Running away pretty quickly, I see,” she said coolly. “I see you killed that annoying Ji Hongdong who everybody hated. Well, I can kill you easily. Take out the Immortal treasure and give it to me. You can’t even use it anyway.” She was not proud and arrogant the way Ji Hongdong was, but rather aloof. Clearly, she was much more powerful than him as well.

She also seemed to possess an incredibly domineering air, even a bossiness.

She waited for the space of two breaths and then said, “You don’t agree? Fine, then you can just DIE!” She stepped forward at incredible speed, and was instantly directly in front of Meng Hao. She raised her right hand, and the fist descended toward him.

Meng Hao began an incantation with both hands. A five-fingered Blood Palm sprang up; beneath his feet, the glow of the Blood Death World appeared. Blood Clones popped out and seemed to merge with his body. As the fist neared, he struck out with his palm.

A shocking boom filled the air, and massive power shook the ground beneath the two of them, shattering what remained of any nearby walls. A vortex of nothingness appeared and began to suck everything in.

Meng Hao coughed up some blood as he tumbled backward. Violet Qi roiled throughout his body, and his pupils glowed with a blinding violet radiance. His wounds once again healed; however, his face was even paler than before.

This recovery had cost him some of his life force, and life force represented longevity. He retreated, a cold glow emanating from his eyes. He slapped his bag of holding to produce the blood-colored mask.

The young woman took two steps back, a fierce expression filling her eyes.

“You’re the first person in the early Core Formation stage that’s ever been able to make me fall back!” she said unyieldingly.

“I can make you bleed as well,” replied Meng Hao, his eyes filled with as much coldness as hers. He lifted his hand to place the mask on his face, and as he did, the young woman let out a cold snort. The killing intent in her eyes grew even stronger. Her body flickered as she shot toward Meng Hao, raising her fist into the air.

“FANG!” She called out only the one word, but the instant she did, the colour of her fist changed into green. Countless green lightning bolts surrounded it, and it emanated a shocking and terrifying Qi that caused Meng Hao’s scalp to go numb.

The speed with which the young woman approached caused Meng Hao’s heart to fill with an intense sense of crisis. He had not experienced such a feeling even when fighting against Ji Hongdong just now. In fact, it had been a very long time since he had experienced such a crushing pressure from anyone in the same generation as himself.

“DIE!” cried the young woman, her voice echoing out in all directions as she neared Meng Hao.

At this exact moment, Meng Hao’s right hand placed the mask onto his face. A Qi of blood and death immediately exploded out from him.

It was also at this exact same moment that the back of the hand he had used to place the mask on his face was suddenly facing the Fang girl. In addition, the green mark which had appeared on the back of his hand when he formed his Core had not disappeared. It suddenly… flickered slightly.

The green mark flashed like a magical symbol, and the young woman saw it. The instant she did, her eyes went wide, and filled with complete disbelief.

Her fist was almost upon Meng Hao. She suddenly let out an exasperated grunt. Risking a recoil of energy, she twisted her attack to the side, causing her fist to slam into the ground next to Meng Hao.

A boom filled the air, and massive cracks filled the ground, revealing nothingness beneath them. Even the nothingness seemed to tremble, threatening to collapse from the power of the fist.

The young woman coughed up a mouthful of blood. Her hair flew about her in disarray, and she turned her head to glare at Meng Hao, her eyes filled with fury and disharmony.

This caused Meng Hao to gape at her openly. He wasn't sure what had happened just now in the critical moment to cause her to change the direction of her fist. She must have known that doing what she had done just now would result in injury to herself.

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1. This is the last half of a common Chinese expression describing how a new conflict appears when a previous conflict remains unresolved. The expression literally translated is "one wave calms, another wave rises"

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# Chapter 310: Blazing as Brilliantly as Ever!

“DAMMIT!” howled the young woman. She was very beautiful, and her appearance before she had attacked just now was charming and gentle. However, her moves had been as explosive as a dragon.

Right now, her howl was filled with potent power, and an aura that seemed to proclaim that she was the most important person in the world. Seeing her like this caused Meng Hao’s scalp to go numb; he had never before witnessed a woman behaving like this.

“DAMMIT!” she roared. She clenched her right hand into a fist and smashed it into the ground. There wasn’t much ground left to begin with, and her blow caused it to crumble even further.

“Why couldn’t it be black!?”

BOOM!

“Why couldn’t it be red!?”

BAM!

“Why couldn’t it be violet!?”

With every sentence, she violently slammed her fist down onto the ground around Meng Hao, causing the ground to begin to disintegrate. Soon, only the spot directly beneath his feet was left remaining.

The slamming fists even caused the nothingness around them to begin to collapse….

Meng Hao’s scalp grew even more numb. This girl was crazy! Such bizarre power… really went beyond Meng Hao’s imagination. He had the feeling that even though he was wearing the blood-colored mask, he still wasn’t a match for this lunatic.

Suddenly, Meng Hao thought back to how Ji Hongdong had described this young woman, and suddenly completely agreed.

Seeing how she was smashing the nothingness into smithereens, Meng Hao quickly turned and sped off in a different direction into the nothingness. As he charged off, he heard the girl raging.

“Why did it have to be green!?”

BLAM!

His face pale, Meng Hao prepared to be teleported out of the nothingness. He looked down briefly at the back of his hand, and the mark, which was gradually fading.

“Could it really be because of this mark….” he thought, hesitating for a moment. Thinking back to the fearsomeness of the crazy young woman, he shuddered. From the time he was small until the time he grew up, from when he studied as a scholar to when he began to practice cultivation, this was the first time he had ever been this frightened of a woman.

Meng Hao’s eyes began to grow hazy. When they cleared, he could see a black fog overhead, and could also sense a familiar aura. This… was the region of the Rebirth Cave.

Right now, the Immortal’s corpse was rapidly shrinking. From the looks of it, it would very soon return to the size of a normal human.

People were currently being teleported out all over the place, in various positions. The instant Meng Hao appeared, he pulled out the good luck charm. It took only a moment to test it out, whereupon Meng Hao frowned. As he had anticipated, it wouldn’t work.

Putting the good luck charm away, Meng Hao immediately shot off in the direction of the Rebirth Cave. Even before emerging, he had made up his mind. He knew that he would be stuck in this area, and as such, was dead without a doubt. There would be no way to flee.

His only chance of survival lay upon the path of death… the Rebirth Cave!

Such a path of death, in comparison to his current predicament, was a chance for survival!

He had no other options. It was a gamble, but he had thought through everything, and as such, charged forward immediately.

The instant he had teleported out, outside of the misty basin, by the more than ten pillars of light, the eyes of the middle-aged man from the Ji Clan suddenly opened.

“He’s here!” he said, waving his right hand. Immediately, a glowing image appeared in front of him; it was none other than the fleeing Meng Hao. “He’s heading north!” he said coolly, flickering off in pursuit. The Nascent Soul Elders of the Ji Clan followed him into the fog of the basin, their faces grim and filled with killing intent.

The dozen or so Li Clan Cultivators also flew into the air in quick succession, faces filled with killing intent as they went in pursuit of Meng Hao.

Any one of these people could kill Meng Hao with the wave of a finger. However, each and every one of them joined the chase; pursuing Meng Hao was a matter which all felt that they must participate in.

They entered the fog, but as they did, not a single one could sense the presence of the tenth Wang Clan Patriarch. He smiled as he also moved in the same direction. He was in plain sight, and yet no one noticed him as he joined them within the fog.

The Nascent Soul Cultivators of the Ji and Li Clans proceeded through the black fog, and as they did, their Cultivation bases were slowly suppressed.

Soon, they were back within the great circle of the Core Formation stage.

Despite that, any one of them was powerful enough to immediately slay Meng Hao.

They moved onward with incredible speed. As for the middle-aged Spirit Severing Cultivator from the Ji Clan, his Cultivation base was even more suppressed. He could fight against it, but not for long. At the moment, his Cultivation base was at the Nascent Soul stage.

He was moving with the greatest speed through the fog. As he whistled through the air, suddenly, he heard a cough that sounded very ancient, coming from off to the side.

The cough was too sudden; it immediately caused the middle-aged man's face to flicker and stop moving temporarily.

"Who are you?!" he said, anxiety and doubt showing on his face. Even though his Cultivation base was suppressed, he was still a powerful Spirit Severing expert; his ability to sense danger had flashed as soon as he heard the cough. It transformed into a droning in his mind, and he had the feeling that the owner of the voice could kill him immediately if he so wished.

"Which member of the senior generation is here?" he asked, his scalp growing numb. He thought of the Rebirth Cave, and suddenly a sense of crisis filled him that caused him to begin to pant. "Sir, I am of the Ji Clan…."

"How is… Ji Eleven?" said the ancient voice, seemingly filled with emotion.

"The Eleventh Divine Patriarch…." The middle-aged man's mouth and throat immediately went dry, and his heart began to thump. Ji Eleven was a name that outsiders didn't know, the name of a person who was a member of a group of the most ancient members of the Ji Clan.

Any one of that group was an ancestor who the entire Ji Clan would prostrate in worship to.

“Sir… sir, I have never seen the Eleventh Divine Patriarch….” The man trembled; the seemingly imperceptible pressure coming from the owner of the ancient voice caused him to feel as if the entire world was about to fall apart.

“Very well,” said the voice, drifting about like a breeze around the middle-aged man. “I won’t cause too much trouble for you. Sit here and meditate for the time it takes an incense stick to burn. Then you may leave.” The voice was filled with somberness. It caused the middle-aged man’s face to instantly flicker. He hesitated for just a moment, then chose to sit down cross-legged.

The tenth Wang Clan Patriarch stood right in front of him, staring off into the black fog. However, the middle-aged man couldn’t see him at all.

“Child, I’ve already delayed this person for you,” he said softly to himself. “I’ve fixed your biggest problem for you. The rest of them are suppressed into the Core Formation, which means you still won’t be able to escape. That, in turn, means that even if I help you get away, you’ll still die on the outside. In that case, I may have no choice but to take your perfection away from you now.

“It’s too bad. From time immemorial, it has never been possible to force perfection to develop. I’m not sure what power it was that caused the interference…. If it weren’t for that, I could just grab you and let you grow in my custody. After you reached the Nascent Soul stage, then I could take it from you. Well, you’d better not let me down. You need to get powerful quickly, okay?” The old man’s eyes flickered with a sinister glow. At this moment, he looked incredibly bizarre.

“Only 60 kilometers….” Meng Hao’s eyes glowed brightly. The spot he had been teleported to was not very close to the Rebirth Cave. Normally speaking, such a distance would be nothing to him.

However, he was surrounded by danger on all sides. This distance of 60 kilometres represented either life or death.

He was currently moving at the fastest speed he possibly could.

55 kilometers, 52 kilometers, 50 kilometers…. Meng Hao could now see the shrinking corpse of the Immortal. He was about to fly over it when his expression suddenly changed.

A boom filled the air; multiple members of the various Sects suddenly appeared as they were teleported out into the fog, sending it roiling out in all directions. Their expressions flickered as they saw the group of old men speeding through the air after Meng Hao.

The group included Chen Fan, Han Bei, Chu Yuyan, Wang Youcai, Li Shiqi as well as… Xu Qing.

They saw what was happening; they saw the old men chasing, and they saw who they were chasing. Off in the distance was… Meng Hao!

Because the churning fog had suddenly dispersed, Meng Hao was completely visible. Everyone could see him; furthermore, he had no inclination to conceal his identity. All eyes were now fixed on him alone.

“Meng… Meng Hao!” said Chen Fan, staring in amazement. His mind spun as he gaped at Meng Hao. He had searched for him for years, but had never been able to pick up his tracks after the year he disappeared. How could he ever have anticipated that he would suddenly catch sight of Meng Hao here?

Chu Yuyan’s face was pale, and her body trembled. She stared blankly at Meng Hao’s garment. Her face filled with bitterness as she suddenly understood that… Fang Mu was Meng Hao!

He was the Cultivator from the State of Zhao with whom she had spent half a year stuck inside a ravine. It hit her like a bolt of lightning. In truth, that lightning bolt had begun brewing within the mental realm. She had even begun to prepare herself then; however, as of now, she couldn’t control the emotions inside of her. Her heart surged with countless complexities.

There were two people in her life that she considered to be unforgettable. One was Meng Hao. She could never forget him because of the twisted feelings he caused that year in the volcano; those events had filled her with hatred she found difficult to put into words.

The second person she found to be unforgettable was Fang Mu. The instant she found out he was Pill Cauldron, she would find herself thinking about him, even though she didn’t know why. Sometimes, his face would appear in her mind, and she would find herself giving a light snort, or occasionally, a slight smile. Other times, her face would grow red.

“Fang Mu…. Meng Hao….” Two faces appeared in her mind, overlapping. In the end, the only thing that remained was deep bitterness and complex emotions.

Wang Youcai looked silently at Meng Hao. His heart was calm, but deep inside, he recalled the scene from all those years ago in the cave of Mount Daqing. He remembered sticking his head out, looking up, and seeing Meng Hao the scholar. 1

Li Shiqi looked at Meng Hao silently, thinking back to their battle years ago.

Han Bei sighed. She was clever and farsighted. The instant she saw the expression on Chu Yuyan’s face, some clues as to their relationship suddenly appeared in her mind, although she had no way to completely solve the puzzle. Meng Hao, of course, had left her with a deep impression long ago. Her phoenix-like eyes gazed at him.

Meng Hao…. It was a name that hadn’t appeared in the Southern Domain for a very long time. And yet, here he was, blazing as brilliantly as ever!

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# Chapter 311: Now That is a Cultivator!

Meng Hao’s face was grim as he looked around at the roiling fog. He immediately bit down on the tip of his tongue, spitting up some blood. As soon as it flew out into the air, it transformed into a blood mist beneath Meng Hao’s feet.

This helped him to amplify his speed by several times; he immediately reappeared five kilometers away, next to the shrinking Immortal’s corpse.

The instant he did, he coughed up a mouthful of blood, and his once black hair was now white. Just now, he had used one of the multifarious forbidden techniques of the Blood Immortal Legacy. A Core Formation Cultivator could use this technique to instantly gain speed far beyond the normal capability of his body.

It wasn’t quite a minor teleportation, but considering the short distance involved, there wasn’t much of a difference. Minor teleportation was a divine ability of Nascent Soul Cultivators. As for Core Formation Cultivators, they could use this forbidden art only three times throughout their life.

As Meng Hao’s body disappeared, the position he had just occupied collapsed, the air shattering because of the forbidden technique. He would never be able to do something like this using only his own skill and power.

This was the only way to avoid death!

The entire area was locked down with restrictive spells, making teleportation impossible. However, this forbidden art was not a minor teleportation, but rather an explosive increase in speed. However, it caused him to cough up blood, indicating that he had sustained injuries to internal organs. In addition, cracking sounds could be heard from his legs.

His face was pale white. However, he didn’t hesitate in the slightest. His pupils glowed violet as he drew from his longevity to heal his injuries.

Meng Hao’s longevity had increased after reaching Core Formation; ordinarily speaking, he would be able to live to around four hundred years. However, as of now, he had already wasted a significant amount of that longevity.

Because of this price, he still looked young, but his face was pallid, something that could not be altered by the Violet Pupil Transformation.

“They’re still gaining.” Around Meng Hao, the Nascent Soul Cultivators from the Ji and Li Clans, despite having been restricted to the great circle of Core Formation, were whistling toward him at top speed.

Meng Hao had evaded them just now, causing the eyes of this collection of Elders to flicker. The fact that he had avoided death just now filled them with surprise.

Han Bei, Chu Yuyan and the others were watching from a distance, hearts filled with shock.

Xu Qing’s hands were balled tightly into fists, and she was gnawing on her lower lip. She watched Meng Hao, her face pale, desiring to help him. However, the panting Meng Hao had just made eye contact with her, and within his gaze was the clear message that he forbade that.

Don’t make all my painstaking effort be for nothing, he told her through the look. She watched on, trembling, tears welling up in her eyes.

One of the old men from the Li Clan shot forward, glaring at Meng Hao. “It’s not that I look down on you, junior,” he said with a cold laugh. “No wonder you were able to kill our Dao Child. But today, you will not be able to escape! You’ll compensate with your life!”

“What a load of crap!” replied Meng Hao, slapping his bag of holding. The blood red mask appeared, and he slipped it on without hesitation. As it melded with his face, a bloody killing aura emanated out. All who saw it were instantly shaken.

Chen Fan and the others were shocked, too, but not too badly. As the sinister Blood Qi enveloped the area, they retreated backward a few paces. On the other hand, the faces of the elders from the Ji and Li Clans immediately changed.

Meng Hao’s green robe was suddenly bathed by the red light, making it seem as if he were clothed in blood itself. The crimson glow and the red mask, which was featureless except for the two eyes, immediately caused the Nascent Soul Cultivators to recall depictions they had seen in their Clans’ ancient records.

The Blood Immortal of the Ancient Doom Clan!

It looked exactly the same!

Intense killing intent, boiling murderous desire, immediately erupted above Meng Hao’s head into a red-colored Core Qi. It roiled, emanating out in all directions.

Beneath Meng Hao, the Immortal’s corpse had shrunk down until it was little more than thirty meters high.

The dozen or so old men from the Ji and Li Clans were still approaching at high speed. One of the eight Ji Clan elders, eyes flashing with intense killing intent, said, “You overestimate yourself!”

In order to ensure his own safety, he had resolved to personally slay Meng Hao. Without any hesitation, nor having any compunctions about damaging his reputation by bullying someone weaker than him, he shot forward ahead of the others, his killing intent billowing to the heavens.

“DIE!!” he cried, his voice sinister. He quickly lifted up his right hand. Normally, Meng Hao wouldn’t even have been able to make out his movements because of the speed. Now, though, he could make out a blur of motion.

The man was approaching with rapid speed!

“Without a face!” Meng Hao’s eyes were bright red as he waved his right hand. His hair was completely white; however, because it was inundated by the crimson grow, it actually looked red!

The Core Qi seethed, immediately transforming into an enormous face. The left eye was bizarre in appearance, whereas Meng Hao existed in the right eye. It flew out, heading directly toward the Ji and Li elders. A boom filled the air.

Put life and death on the line! End the opponent to assure your own existence!

The instant the boom could be heard, the ground heaved. Everything shook, even the black fog. The explosion was audible even outside of the basin.

The eyes of Patriarch Violet Sieve of the Black Sieve Sect glittered. Behind him, the Spirit Severing Patriarch of the Black Sieve Sect had a similar expression. They flew up, and were about to head into the black fog, when suddenly, the two Spirit Severing Patriarchs from the Violet Fate Sect disappeared. When they blinked back, there were directly in front of the two from the Black Sieve Sect.

“If you take another step forward, don’t blame us for killing you,” said one of the Violet Fate Sect Patriarchs, his voice grim. His eyes glowed with killing intent and fury.

Back within the black fog, the boom continued to echo out. The enormous face which surrounded Meng Hao disintegrated. Blood sprayed from his mouth as nearly half the bones in his body were broken. Countless lacerations shredded his flesh, from which blood spilled out, causing his clothes to truly turn red. The redness of his garments was no longer caused by the crimson glow in the air; now he was actually wearing a robe of blood!

His body tumbled backward, falling down onto the Immortal's corpse. Trembling, he gritted his teeth and rose to his feet. Right now, Meng Hao looked very much like he had when he faced up against Wang Tengfei back in the Reliance Sect 1 … His stubbornness, his tenacity, and his powerful heart would always exist, regardless of whether or not his body was on the verge of collapse!

A reddish glow flickered in his eyes. Blood dripped off of his body down onto the Immortal's corpse beneath his feet, which was now less than fifteen meters tall.

As for the Nascent Soul Cultivator from the Ji Clan, his body trembled, and his face had fallen. He was not injured, but he looked at Meng Hao with a serious expression. His attack just now had been backed by the power of the great circle of Core Formation. Even that bit of power should have been more than enough to destroy a Core Formation Cultivator. And yet Meng Hao… was not dead!

Immediately, intense killing intent flickered in the man's eyes, along with greed.

He could clearly see that Meng Hao's Cultivation base was merely at the early Core Formation stage; for him to be able to wield the power he had just now… was only because of the blood-colored mask!

He wasn't the only person who realized this; all of the others at his side began to look toward Meng Hao with flashing eyes.

Meng Hao's attack now had seriously injured himself. However, considering the level of his Cultivation base, the fact that he could withstand an attack from even a suppressed Nascent Soul Cultivator showed how incredibly powerful the mask was.

You could easily say that with the mask on, Meng Hao was absolutely, completely different than before.

However… despite that, he was still not a match for his opponent. His body was on the verge of collapse, like an oil lamp with no oil left in it. Beneath the mask, his face was pale and covered with wrinkles. And yet, his eyes burned with frenzy, and emitted a violet glow.

Again, he burned his longevity to heal himself.

He looked at the dozen or so incoming Cultivators, and then suddenly lifted his head to the sky and laughed. His expression contained unyielding pride, the kind of obstinacy which indicated that he would never bow his head.

He was Grandmaster Pill Cauldron! He was the Ninth Demon Sealer! He was Fang Mu! He… was Meng Hao!

He was born a scholar, but today, he was a Cultivator of the Core Formation stage. He was fighting against a dozen or more experts with Nascent Soul Cultivation bases. They were suppressed, and because of the blood-colored mask he was almost inhuman. But when you consider the Southern Domain as a whole, for the past thousands of years, he was the only person who could possibly do this!

Therefore, Meng Hao laughed. It was a laughter of no regrets, a laughter filled with lofty sentiment, a laughter filled with stubbornness that soared to the heavens!

Damaging his life force to heal himself, his face beneath the mask rapidly aged. His hair had long since grown completely white. However, from the perspective of an outsider, beneath the crimson glow, his hair was bright red!

Such an image immediately burned a deep impression into everyone who was watching. As all of the Chosen of the Southern Domain teleported out from the crumbling mental realm, the first thing they saw was Meng Hao. The image was branded into their minds, something that they would never forget for a hundred years, for a thousand, for their entire lives!

At this moment, he was like the sun burning in the noon sky, the representative of a generation. Never again would someone like him appear. Never would someone be able to outmatch Meng Hao.

This was what each and every one of them was thinking.

Chosen? Dao Child? Wearing his mask, his crimson hair fluttering, facing up against more than ten Nascent Soul Cultivators and laughing…. The rest of them were like insects!

“Now that… is a Cultivator!” It was hard to say who muttered the words first, but it only took a moment for them to resonate throughout the minds of all the Chosen.

Note from Er Gen: Cultivators have what it takes to stand up to Heaven and Earth. Cultivators have the stubbornness to never bow their heads, no matter how bloody the battle. That is a Cultivator. To me, a Cultivator is someone who stands, covered in blood, hair snow white, facing a host of enemies. And yet, no matter the danger, no matter how difficult the path, a Cultivator will grit his teeth, lift his head up and laugh! In this manner, he will become a legend! That is what a Cultivator is to me.

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# Chapter 312: Because This Person, Is Filled With Insanity!

Amidst the laughter and the whipping red hair, Meng Hao lifted his right hand. There between his fingers was a violet-colored medicinal pill! This pill contained a devilish will, and the instant it appeared, rumbling filled Heaven and Earth.

An indescribable aura seethed out from it to fill the surroundings, causing all onlookers’ faces to flicker. Without hesitation, Meng Hao placed the pill into his mouth.

The violet-colored pill dissolved with shocking speed, staining his internal organs as if with ink, filling his viscera.

ARRRGGHHH!

Meng Hao lifted his head toward the sky and let out a shocking roar. Beneath the mask, his face twisted and distorted. His crimson eyes filled with insanity and billowing killing intent. The blood-colored mask seemed to approve of the aura which surged throughout his body; it caused it to spread out even more intensely!

Pain!

Incomprehensible pain!

His entire body felt as if it were being slashed into pieces, as if he were being punished with death by a thousand cuts. As this happened, it released all of the potential of his latent talent and Cultivation base. It was as if a treasure chest within his body had been opened. A final intense pain rushed through him; it felt as if someone had ripped open his chest, pulled out his beating heart and lifted it up to the sky!

Chaos!

Earthshaking chaos!

An indescribable power seemed to take all of the memories in his head and crush them to dust. His will and his consciousness were thrown into disorder. Within the disorder and chaos, strands of intense and incomparable killing intent filled him!

One strand, one hundred strands, one thousand strands, ten thousand strands, one hundred thousand strands… all the way to ten million strands of killing intent!!

The killing intent sent Meng Hao’s mind into chaos. It crushed his Core, sent his soul into insanity, staining it with terrifying frenzy!

The insanity transformed into world-shaking killing dementia. It toppled his thinking ability, melted his mind into nothing, filling him with a devilish will. It turned into a self-destructive desire, which in turn caused his Cultivation base to climb upward.

Mid Core Formation, late Core Formation, great circle of Core Formation…. Meng Hao’s roars filled the area, filling everyone with complete shock.

Meng Hao was not experiencing a burning of the soul; this superseded that, because this pill… was the Bedevilment Pill! And this will, was a devilish will!

This person, was filled with insanity!

The Cultivation base burned, releasing the soul. The frenzied will and the desire for self-destruction, transformed into devilish insanity. This was Meng Hao!

His eyes were crimson, filled with blood, with devilishness, with imperceptible malevolence. Beneath the mask, he was growing older. His red hair whipped around him unrestrained.

The image of Meng Hao in this moment was indelibly branded onto the eyes of everyone who was watching.

At the moment, the ten or more Nascent Soul Cultivators, still suppressed into Core Formation, approached Meng Hao. They outnumbered him, and their Cultivation bases were inherently greater than his by far. So they still closed in, each and every one preparing to attack.

It was as if each feared that they would not personally be able to exterminate him, and would thus incur trouble within their Clans.

Their killing intent billowed up to the heavens as they whistled through the air. No one was there to help Meng Hao. In this moment, he was completely alone; the only person who could help him, was he himself. The only person he could rely on, was himself!

Meng Hao's laughter was filled with insanity. It echoed through the air, and as it did, he waved his right hand in front of him.

"Without a face!"

Heaven and Earth shook, and the enormous face once again appeared around Meng Hao. It was larger than before, and even more substantial than before. It did not seem illusory in any way now, but real.

The face towered up, blood flowing from its eyes. The sight was startling and shocking. Like a mad devil, it shot roaring toward the dozen or so incoming Nascent Soul Cultivators.

To the onlookers, Meng Hao seemed like a moth willingly flying into a conflagration, seeking death. And yet in doing so, he unleashed all the splendor of life, causing everyone's hearts to twinge with emotion.

A moth flies into the flame seemingly because the moth loves the flame. It wishes to be reborn within the flame. To onlookers, it would seem that death was unavoidable; however, who could possibly know that this moth had no love of flame? Instead, it wished to use its life to extinguish the flame!

A boom filled the air, rocking everything. Blood sprayed from Meng Hao’s mouth as the massive face collapsed. Despite the fact that his Cultivation base was climbing up because of the Bedevilment Pill, he was facing the combined attack of ten or more people. How could he possibly measure up to that?

As the blood shot from his mouth, massive injuries wracked his body. His eyes were listless and a wan smile covered his face as he flopped backward like a kite with its string cut. The faces of his more than ten opponents all flickered as they attacked again. Their intense killing intent were like sharp arrows preparing to stab through Meng Hao.

However, even as they surged forward in attack, Meng Hao’s listless eyes, shone with unbridled frenzy.

“A single word!” he cried, his voice hoarse. Shockingly, he was using the fearsome power of the Bedevilment Pill to fuel the divine ability of the Blood Immortal Legacy.

As the words left his mouth, the collapsing face immediately ceased disintegrating. The cracks which covered it seemed to seethe with ferocity as vast quantities of red mist poured out from them.

The red mist spread out in front of Meng Hao. The massive face seemed to be rapidly passing through time; it began to shrink, and the cracks disappeared. It was complete once again. And then… in the place where previously no mouth could be seen, two lips appeared.

The mouth opened and seemed to be speaking, although no one could hear the sound it uttered. However… as soon as the noiseless sound appeared, the ten or so old men all felt their minds shaking. Streaks of blood instantly covered their bodies, as if they would be ripped to pieces in an instant.

It was at this exact moment that Meng Hao spoke the third sentence.

“The flames of war unify!”

Without a face, a single word, the flames of war unify!

This was the first of the three divine abilities of the Blood Immortal Legacy, forcibly pushed into motion by Meng Hao. Immediately smoke rose up from all directions, along with flames of war, twisting, spiralling, surrounding Meng Hao with a massive swirling pillar of fire. The roaring of it lifted up to the heavens.

More of Meng Hao’s bones snapped. Blood showered out from his body as his body was swept off of its feet and sent rolling onto the ground. The recoil of power caused the mask to be violently ripped off his face.

Meng Hao’s features were like that of an old man. His face was pale as he lay there on the ground; however, devilish frenzy still flickered within his eyes.

His Cultivation base was already at the point of shattering. His body seemed on the verge of complete ruin. Too much of his longevity had been wasted. However, his heart would not give up. It was with full conscious effort that he chose to continue the burning.

Roars filled the air as the pillar of fire expanded out. The ten or more Nascent Soul Cultivators were slowly pushed away. Shockingly, three of them immediately coughed up blood.

The intense power of this divine ability of Meng Hao’s was incredibly shocking.

“The Blood Immortal Legacy is incredible….” said one of the Nascent Soul Cultivators. The expressions of all of the ten or more old men were grim, especially the three who had sustained injuries. Their injuries were not serious, but they were collectively attacking a single Core Formation Cultivator. For this to have happened to them was something they found hard to accept.

“It’s over,” said another of the old men. They looked at their opponent; he had no power to fight back; he had sustained severe injuries throughout his body. He was like a lamp with no oil left to burn. They slowly advanced toward him, preparing to end this troublesome confrontation.

Xu Qing was trembling. She was just about to rush out when Han Bei reached out and grabbed her arm, holding her back with incredible power.

Xu Qing turned to look at Han Bei, when suddenly Meng Hao laughed.

His skin was pale white, and his features aged; he was no longer young. However, there was something visible inside his face that had always existed there..

His laughter contained something strange, something fierce; it was filled with intense killing intent!

“Awake, my mastiff!” he said. He struggled to raise his right hand and place it gently onto the blood-colored mask. As he spoke the words, his eyes filled with warmth and anticipation.

The moment Meng Hao had reached core Formation, he had been able to sense the mastiff slumbering. He also knew that although it must remain sleeping, it was possible for it to occasionally awaken from sleep for just a moment.

All he need to do was call to it, awaken it. This… was his true killing intent. In fact, everything Meng Hao had been doing up to now had merely been to buy time to allow the mastiff to awaken. The entire time, he had been calling to it silently, over and over again.

Starting within the mental realm, all the way until now, all the way until the fierce and deadly fighting, he had been silently calling to the mastiff. He had been calling it the entire time, all the way up until the moment just now when he finally lost all power to fight back. It was then that the mastiff… finally began to show signs of movement.

The signs of movement contained anxiety, as well as a frenzy similar to that which filled Meng Hao. It seemed as if the mastiff were using all the power it possessed to fight against the slumber which held it. It woke, filled with the same desire it had in the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament; it would protect its master.

The ten or more old men shot forward, and as they did Meng Hao reached out to touch the blood-colored mask. Then, he spoke the words calling the mastiff. The mask instantly began to tremble; it flew up into the air with incredible speed, stopping to hover in front of Meng Hao.

Suddenly, a massive blood-colored screen appeared, over three hundred meters in diameter.

The blood-colored screen looked like an enormous mirror of blood. When it appeared, the surface of the mirror filled with countless ripples, as well as growling sounds which emanated out from within.

The sound of the growling shook heaven and earth, and immediately caused the faces of the dozen or so old men to fall. It sounded like the mastiff had found an enemy, and was threatening it. The echoing sound filled the air, passing through the black fog to the world outside of the basin.

The Ji Clan Spirit Severing Cultivator who had been stranded by the Wang Clan Patriarch suddenly opened his eyes. His pupils constricted. In front of him, the Wang Clan Patriarch let out a light gasp of surprise.

A frenzied, heaven-shaking roar sounded out from within the blood-colored screen. It was the roar of a wild beast, filled with insanity and billowing killing intent. As the roar filled the air, the ten or so old men in front of Meng Hao immediately experienced unprecedented feelings of life-or-death crisis floating up from their hearts.

It was at this moment that the surface of the blood-colored screen distorted. It protruded… as if something were trying to break out!

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# Chapter 313: She’s… an Immortal!

The intense feeling of life-or-death crisis caused the elders from the Ji and Li Clans to feel shaken at heart. Their eyes shone with intense astonishment.

Considering their Cultivation bases, age, and vast experience, there were not very many things in the world which could truly cause them to be astonished.

But now, deep feelings of danger welled up simultaneously within their hearts.

For Nascent Soul Cultivators to feel crisis like this also filled them with vast terror.

It was extremely difficult to practice cultivation all the way to the Nascent Soul Stage. Many, many people fell while treading such a path; for these men to reach this point meant that they possessed good luck and had experienced plenty of fortunate circumstances. Now, however, facing this life-or-death crisis had a profound effect on their hearts and minds.

For the first time, these more than ten men suddenly felt regret….

However, before they had the chance to retreat, an intense roaring sound poured out from the three hundred meter wide blood-red screen. It seemed to be filled with enough power to destroy any obstacle in its way.

The sound of it filled the air, causing everyone that heard it to be completely shaken in heart and mind. Some people with less powerful Cultivation bases coughed up blood. The ten or so old men watched on in shock as the massive blood-colored screen suddenly seemed to be rent open.

From within billowed a massive glowing red light. Within the red light… could be seen….

An enormous, paw, stretching out toward them!

It was only one paw, something that belonged to a gigantic wild beast. It possessed long, razor-sharp claws, and was covered with thick, red fur. It carried with it an indescribable, demonic aura. It was only one paw, about thirty meters in size, that emerged from the blood-red screen; it ignored the force which was suppressing Cultivation bases, and shot out.

The instant the claw appeared, an intense, terrifying aura also could be clearly sensed. It exploded out, filling the area, causing the faces of the dozen or so old men to fill with shock. Their pupils constricted, and they retreated backward, minds reeling.

“That’s….”

“The aura of Spirit Severing!!”

“Dammit! How could this Meng Hao have a Spirit Severing aura with him!?!?”

The scalps of the ten or so old men immediately went numb, and the sense of crisis grew even stronger. In the very instant in which they attempted to flee, the paw which had emerged from the blood-colored screen raised into the air. Then, it struck down toward them.

This was of course the paw of the sleeping Blood Mastiff. During the fleeting ten years which had passed, it had been incapable of awakening. However, after Meng Hao reached Core Formation, a greater connection had appeared between them. Meng Hao’s repeated calls, and the critical moment of life-or-death he faced, were an intense provocation that caused the Blood Mastiff to suddenly wake up.

In this moment, all it could do was extend its paw into the world and strike down.

A roaring sound filled heaven and earth. The mastiff, which had already evolved to the Spirit Severing level, sent its paw whistling down. Three of the elders from the Ji Clan had expressions filled with insanity as, unable to evade, their Cultivation bases exploded.

The three men emitted blood-curdling screams. Blood sprayed from their mouths, and their bodies began to collapse. Their Nascent Souls made to flee, but before they could get very far, were shattered by the paw.

Among the elders from the Li Clan, there were four who were too slow to evade. This slowness resulted in their instant death.

A boom could be heard as the Blood Mastiff’s massive paw descended onto the four of them. Their bodies were instantly turned into mutilated flesh; their Nascent Souls were incapable of fleeing, and were immediately crushed into powder!

This scene caught everyone by surprise. In the blink of an eye, of the dozen or so Nascent Soul Cultivators, seven had been instantly slain!!

These seven men were incapable of withstanding even a single blow from the paw of the Blood Mastiff, and were thoroughly and instantly exterminated. This instantly caused the rest of the old men to be filled with fear; the blood drained from their faces, their hearts began to race, and their scalps went numb. The only thing they could think of at the moment was to flee as quickly as possible.

Everything was going opposite to expectation, and was exceeding the limits of their imagination. How could they possibly have predicted that Meng Hao, a trifling Core Formation Cultivator, would be… so difficult to kill!

They had no way of knowing that to Meng Hao, reaching Core Formation was merely the first stepping stone on his path to the top. After reaching Core Formation, he had a vast array of magical techniques and other methods that he could employ.

You could say that Meng Hao had saved up everything for an explosive finale!

The boom was still echoing out as the mastiff's paw slowly began to fade away. The massive blood-colored screen also began to disappear. Meng Hao grabbed the mask as it fell toward the ground.

At the moment, Han Bei and the others seemed to be incapable of even breathing. They stared at the oilless lamp which was Meng Hao. None of them had ever imagined that events could turn about in the way they had.

“Blood Divinity!” breathed Li Shiqi, trembling. “That was a Blood Divinity!!” The others immediately thought back to the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament, and the blood-colored mastiff.

Back then, they'd had no idea who the mastiff belonged to. Now, you could say that they understood, but had little time to think about it. Seeing everything that they just had, with their own eyes, caused their minds to spin.

Clutching the blood-colored mask, Meng Hao produced some medicinal pills, which he consumed. Gritting his teeth, he struggled to his feet. He looked over at the group of people. His gaze lingered on Xu Qing for a moment, and then, he turned and continued to head toward the Rebirth Cave with as much speed as he could muster.

“Fang Mu….” cried Chu Yuyan. Seeing him turn to leave, she suddenly realized she had no way of knowing when she might see him again. If she didn't call out, perhaps she would never have another chance to do so.

Meng Hao's body quivered slightly, but he continued onward.

He was well aware that the Nascent Soul eccentrics had been intimidated by the sudden appearance of the Blood Mastiff, and its slaying of their seven compatriots. However, it wouldn't take long for them to realize what was really going on. After a moment's hesitation, they would surely see that Meng Hao might seem strong on the outside, but was actually incomparably weak. Then, it would only be moments before they went after him again.

As for the Blood Mastiff, after attacking just now, it had instantly fallen back into slumber. Now, it didn't matter how many times Meng Hao called to it, it wouldn’t be able to awaken.

“All paths to the outside are sealed tight. My only option is… the Rebirth Cave.” Gritting his teeth, Meng Hao whistled forward through the air.

It was at this point that the remaining seven or eight old men who had not been slain, suddenly ceased their fleeing. Their expressions were now filled with hesitation. It seemed they were analyzing everything that had just happened. Considering their age and experience, it only took the space of about ten breaths for them to grasp the situation. Unsightly expressions appeared on their faces; they immediately turned and headed back.

In the blink of an eye, all of the fleeing Nascent Soul Cultivators once again headed in pursuit of Meng Hao.

Meng Hao was only about twenty-five kilometers from the Rebirth Cave, when from within it, a soft sigh could suddenly be heard.

It was the sigh of a woman. The sound was completely unexpected, but the instant it filled the air, the faces of the remaining Nascent Soul Cultivators flickered, and they coughed up blood as they tumbled backward, bodies shaking. Dumbstruck looks filled their faces; it seemed that whatever they had just encountered was even more intensely powerful than the Blood Mastiff.

Within their trembling bodies, their Nascent Souls also shook, and their fear climbed to the pinnacle.

It wasn’t just them. All of the Cultivators outside of the basin also heard the sigh, and it sent their minds and heart shaking. Blood sprayed from their mouths. Unprecedented looks filled the faces of the Spirit Severing Patriarchs from the various Sects.

“That’s….”

Their faces fell and blood erupted from their mouths; they appeared to have received severe internal injuries!

Within the fog of the basin, the Spirit Severing Cultivator from the Ji Clan also coughed up blood. The astonishment on his face could not be any more intense as he heard the sound from the Rebirth Cave.

This was not the voice of one of the strange life forms that existed there; this was the sigh of a woman!

Within the fog, the Wang Clan Patriarch, who was invisible to everyone, felt his entire body shaking. “Who is that…? She’s… an Immortal!!” It was as if a violent storm had kicked up within him; an intensely somber look filled his face, and his eyes glowed brightly. Threads of dread and shock filled his eyes as he looked toward the Rebirth Cave.

It was at this moment that the voice of a woman could be heard coming from the Rebirth Cave.

The voice was warm, and accompanied by another soft sigh. “Years ago, you accidentally loosened the seal which held me. That counts as sowing Karma…. You cannot come to the Rebirth Cave today. Go, I’ll help you to escape. This counts as reaping Karma.” As the voice echoed out from the cave, a white, glowing light could suddenly be seen flying out.

It was a scale!

A fish scale!

Even as it flew forth, it suddenly also appeared to be a feather.

The feather of a roc!

The scale-like feather flew out with incredible speed, almost immediately appearing directly in front of Meng Hao. As it did, it immediately branded itself onto his forehead. Meng Hao’s entire body shook as a warm power surged out from the scale-like feather, filling his entire body.

Immediately, his Cultivation base became stable. It was no longer burning and collapsing. Instead, it was completely restored. As before, he was at the early Core Formation Stage. In the blink of an eye, his wounds were healed by nearly twenty percent.

In fact, even his longevity was increased by a bit; Meng Hao's face was no longer that of an old man. It looked young, as it had before. The paleness of it, however, could not be changed.

The whiteness of his hair was also not possible to change.

"I will lend you the power of a roc. Go. Leave this place…." As the voice echoed out, Meng Hao's body suddenly felt an incredible power pushing at him, sweeping up against his body, propelling him. Suddenly, he began to shoot forward like a roc.

The eight Nascent Soul Cultivators hadn't the slightest inclination to block him. The voice of the woman from the Rebirth Cave was enough to send terror into the hearts of anyone in the area.

Meng Hao had no time to think as he suddenly shot out of the basin and appeared in the outside world, in front of the eyes of the Cultivators of all the Sects and Clans of the Southern Domain.

What they saw was something like a shooting star. Within the shooting star was Meng Hao, his hair white, his robe the color of blood.

Meng Hao's eyes glowed with confusion, but only for a moment, and then was replaced with understanding. He knew who it was that was helping him.

"The roc…. She's the roc that was flying toward the Rebirth Cave that year…. But why is she saving me? How exactly did I sow Karma with her…?"

"Everyone in the League of Demon Sealers is heartless…." she said with a sigh. "You're on your own now." As her words echoed in his ears, his eyes went wide.

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# Chapter 314: Art of Righteous Bestowal

In the years to come, the Cultivators outside the basin of the Rebirth Cave would be unable to forget the events they had witnessed.

In their memories, they would always be able to see that shooting star flying out from the fog within the basin. It seemed to be ablaze with heaven-shattering fire, emitting a bright glow that they would never be able to forget.

Within that flame and glow was, of course, Meng Hao.

Legacy Apprentice of the Violet Fate Sect; fourth Grandmaster of the Southern Domain, Pill Cauldron; owner of the Sublime Spirit Scripture; inheritor of the Blood Immortal legacy. Any one of these would be enough to make a Cultivator famous.

But for all of them to be embodied in a single person… would cause that person to become a legend in the Southern Domain.

By now, Meng Hao was absolutely a legend. His Cultivation base was not very high, and he had not been in the Southern Domain for a very long time. That didn’t matter, though. He could not prevent himself from shining brightly; from that day forward, he was like the sun in the noon sky!

No one would be able to forget that shooting star, nor the massive image of the roc which appeared in the air. The roc was massive, and Meng Hao seemed to make up its nucleus. It shot out from the basin, flying over the staring Cultivators.

They watched him soar out from the basin, charge through the blockade of Nascent Soul Cultivators from the Ji and Li Clans, and shatter through the swirling sealing spells. The seals collapsed behind him as the shooting star and the roc soared through Heaven and Earth!

Thousands of kilometers off in the distance, they disappeared from the region of the Rebirth Cave, fading off over the horizon.

Soon after, a vortex appeared, into which he flew. Then he was truly gone.

The Cultivators from the Violet Fate Sect, including the two Spirit Severing Patriarchs, looked off into the distance as Meng Hao disappeared. They saw with their own eyes that he had made it to safety, and, deep in their hearts, heaved sighs of relief.

Wu Dingqiu stood there, a complicated look on his face. In his heart, he sighed with emotion, thinking back to Meng Hao in the State of Zhao. He thought about the first time he’d seen him, and the events regarding the iron spear.

It seemed like a dream. As he thought back to it all, Wu Dingqiu almost couldn’t believe it was real.

Eccentric Song looked up into the sky, and his expression was as emotional as Wu Dingqiu’s.

Next to him was Song Jia, who had appeared some time earlier. She was silent as she looked off toward the horizon. As she watched the man who was ostensibly her husband, and yet with whom she had never exchanged even a single word, her furrowed brow revealed the bitterness that she had been unable to dispel throughout the years.

Patriarch Violet Sieve also looked on silently. He shook his head with a bitter smile. The Black Sieve Sect was quite familiar with Meng Hao. Because of the events in the ancient Blessed Land, and the matter of Ultimate Vexation bonding him as master, the Black Sieve Sect was truly in a hopeless deadlock with Meng Hao.

However, regardless of any of that, Meng Hao, wearing the face of Fang Mu, had dared to swagger back into the Black Sieve Sect and engage in an alchemic battle. Then he even concocted pills for them.

As Patriarch Violet Sieve thought of all of these things, he felt admiration deep in his heart.

The members of the Solitary Sword Sect, the Golden Frost Sect and the Wang Clan all had various expressions on their faces. Fortunately, Wang Tengfei was not present; if he was, his complicated emotions would overwhelm him like floodwaters.

Throughout the years, all of the five great Clans and three great Sects had unknowingly become familiar with either Meng Hao or Fang Mu.

Han Bei sighed. Images of Meng Hao and Fang Mu spun in her mind, gradually overlapping with each other, to create an image of a man in a red robe, wearing a mask, lifting his head and laughing toward the Heavens. It created a truly profound impression on her.

Wang Youcai was also silent as he thought back to Mount Daqing, and Yunjie County.

Chu Yuyan bit her lip, unable to determine what exactly she was feeling. It seemed that inside of her was pain, melancholy, and disappointment. It was like something had slipped through her fingers. She felt as if… she had suddenly lost something.

Ye Feimu lowered his head, refusing to look up into the sky. However, within his eyes was the glow of stubbornness. He had faith that Meng Hao would rise to prominence in some other location. That meant that he could not slack off. There would be a day in the future when the two of them would meet again; when that day came, he would gain victory over Meng Hao in the Dao of alchemy.

Chen Fan let out a light sigh. He now knew that he and his little Junior Brother from the Reliance Sect had long since begun to tread vastly different paths.

In his heart, he held deep admiration for Meng Hao. He didn’t envy his identity, but rather admired his life. It seemed that Meng Hao’s life was… vastly more wonderful than his own.

“Perhaps, he is a true Cultivator….” murmured Chen Fan.

A look of astonishment blossomed in Li Shiqi’s eyes. She thought back to what the mysterious Patriarch had told her the day she left the Sect to come here.

“Will we meet again?” she thought with a slight laugh.

Some distance away, Xu Qing was gazing off at the horizon. “We’ll definitely meet again,” she murmured inwardly. Her personality was simple, and her features cold. She wasn’t very intelligent, but her stubbornness ran much deeper than the average person.

Her stubbornness was such that it transformed into a promise.

“I’m waiting for you….” she said in her heart. Then she sighed.

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The Milky Way Sea divides the Nanshan Continent into two parts: east and north, west and south.

The Great Tang in the Eastern Lands, the Qiang Di flute of the Northern Desert, the outstanding heroes of the Southern Domain, the totems of the Western Desert.

The Great Tang in the Eastern Lands is known for its power, the Northern Desert for its intrepid barbarians, the Southern Domain for its many outstanding heroes. As for the Western Desert, well, it is known as the Barbarian West with its Western Devils. In fact, its name actually represents madness.

Chaos is the normal state of affairs in the Western Desert. There are no Sects there, only countless Tribes. Some Tribes formed alliances, and then larger coalitions of power.

Because of the infertility of the land, and the scarcity of resources, as well as the deplorable condition of the environment, the Western Desert Cultivators lived a life of merciless killing. They cultivated the power of their totems, longing for the day when they would take over the Southern Domain.

The two great wars between the west and the south had resulted in great sealing spells that separated the two powers. The regions left unsealed became the Black Lands. They belonged to the Southern Domain as well as the Western Desert. As such, there was more freedom there, as well as more ruthlessness.

Some areas there were infertile, but some were the opposite, creating a polarizing effect. Killing occurred at the slightest pretext, causing the land to constantly be filled with the reek of blood.

At this very moment, at a spot roughly a day’s journey from the Black Lands in the Southern Domain, was a vast plain overgrown with weeds. It was midday, and a bleak wind blew across the leaves, causing them to rustle slightly.

Suddenly, a vortex appeared, with a gaping mouth like that of a black hole. As it appeared in mid-air, it emitted no sound.

The sudden appearance of a vortex like this would naturally arouse quite a bit of attention. However, few Southern Domain Cultivators ever came to this area.

Moments later, someone emerged from the vortex of the black hole. He staggered forward, then looked back at the vortex, causing his white hair to whip around his head.

On his forehead could be seen a mark that looked both like a scale and a feather.

This was none other than Meng Hao.

Using the powerful momentum of the roc, he had activated his good luck charm to teleport away from the region of the Rebirth Cave, to reappear here.

He floated in mid-air, watching the vortex disappear, a look of confusion covering his face. Everything around him was quiet, except for the sound of the wind.

After some time passed, he produced a jade slip, and looked down at it with a serious expression. Having confirmed his current location, he let out a sigh. He turned toward the direction of the Violet Fate Sect and gave a deep bow.

He held the bow for the space of several breaths. When he looked back up, the confusion in his eyes was gone, replaced instead with determination.

“I spent roughly ten comfortable years in the Violet Fate Sect,” he murmured quietly. “I’ve almost forgotten what it’s like to live life as a lone Rogue Cultivator.” He waved his right hand, causing a violet-colored seed to fly out and burrow into the ground. Suddenly, the dirt heaved, and a mass of thick vines flew up to circle around Meng Hao.

He sat down cross-legged in their midst. Eyes glittering, he passed his will into the vines, and they surged forward, carrying him toward the Black Lands.

He closed his eyes as he traveled as quickly as possible away from the Southern Domain. He would not allow any delays. However, his Cultivation base was unstable at the moment, and he had been seriously injured. His life force and longevity had been restored somewhat by the scale-feather. However, what remained was still less than a sixty year cycle.

Unless it were absolutely necessary, Meng Hao had no desire to waste or consume it.

“I’ll be in the Black Lands soon; once I’m there, I can find a suitable place to treat my injuries…. It’s impossible to say for sure how long it will be before people from the Ji Clan come looking for me to kill me.” His expression was calm as he traveled along, sitting cross-legged atop the vines. He permitted them to move forward at the fastest speed possible, which allowed him to spend some time tending to his wounds.

He slapped his bag of holding to produce the copper mirror. He glanced at it for a moment, then put it back.

“As soon as I reached Core Formation,” he thought, “I got the feeling that all I had to do was calm myself and cast my sense into the mirror. With that, I would be able to awaken the spirit within…. Unfortunately, the circumstances were far too dire at the time.” He wasn’t sure what would happen when the spirit within the item emerged. Now, his mind was not at peace, so it wasn’t the best time to attempt to communicate with it; he would wait until after he was fully healed.

Next, he produced Ji Hongdong’s bag of holding. The first thing he noticed was a magical sealing mark on its surface. It wouldn’t be easy to open. After a moment’s consideration, he put it back. With the flick of a hand, he next produced a small bell.

This bell was the magical item Ji Hongdong had used. Meng Hao examined it for a moment, then closed his eyes and focused on dealing with his injuries.

As of dusk of the following day, he had encountered nothing startling or dangerous. Meng Hao’s vines carried him into the Black Lands, which was an easily identifiable area. The ground here was black, as were most of the plants that grew in the area.

This was the reason it was called the Black Lands.

However, the instant Meng Hao entered the Black Lands, the ancient voice of the Demon Sealing Jade suddenly appeared in his mind.

“An Immortal of the Ninth Mountain; the pinnacle of brushwork; magical symbols of all creatures; collapse of the Heavens…. The power is fused within this land, transformed into destruction, and filled with Demonic life force. This land… can be used to cultivate… the art of Righteous Bestowal!”

Meng Hao’s mind shook, and his eyes immediately snapped open.

He snatched out the Demon Sealing Jade; as soon as he touched it, an icy coldness poured into his fingers, filling his mind. It transformed into a mnemonic, a unique divine ability of the League of Demon Sealers!

Righteous Bestowal, impart Demonic power upon any living creature!

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# Chapter 315: The Immortal’s Cave of Huang Daxian[1]

It was dusk in the Black Lands. The sky was pocked with darkness, the land beneath was pitch black. Everything felt desolate.

No mortals could be seen; it was difficult for them to survive in an environment like this. This area was occupied for the most part by Cultivators. If you did occasionally encounter mortals, they would be descendants of Cultivator Clans, powerfully built, with hearty Qi and blood.

When Meng Hao entered the Black Lands, he looked back for a moment, and a flash of suspicion appeared on his face. For some reason, he had the feeling that upon entering this land, there was some sort of invisible thread attached to his body that had been covered up.

Before entering the Black Lands, he had been unable to detect it; however, as soon as it was covered up, he could.

Meng Hao muttered to himself thoughtfully as the vines carried him forward at high speed. Moments later, he cleared his thoughts. His eyes glittered as he cast his Spiritual Sense about.

The region three hundred meters in all directions suddenly appeared in his mind.

“I need to find a quiet place where I can recuperate…. I remember that Zhou Dekun[2] was taken to the Black Lands…. Furthermore, there should be information about the Eyeless Larva[3] here. I wonder if I’ll be able to refine one.” Meng Hao once again produced Ji Hongdong’s bag of holding. The magical symbol on it was by no means weak. Meng Hao was able to suppress it slightly, but was unable to open the bag. He could tell that if he was able to suppress the seal for long enough, then he would be able to.

A long time passed, after which Meng Hao once again closed his eyes. He allowed the vines to continue forward without rest. Soon, more than a month had passed.

Occasionally he would encounter some Black Lands Cultivators. They were for the most part skinny and bony, with an intensely fiendish aura. They were usually alone, or rarely, in groups of three or five. To Meng Hao, most of them seemed like lone wolves.

This was very different than the Southern Domain.

It seemed people here were used to treading the line between life and death. The only way to ensure continued existence was to soak one’s hands in blood.

However, despite their ferocity, when the local Cultivators saw Meng Hao, their pupils would constrict. Meng Hao’s white hair was very conspicuous as it billowed around his head. Combined with the paleness of his face, it left people with a very ghastly impression.

When you added the vicious-looking vines, the entire picture was one of powerful maliciousness. Meng Hao emanated the aura of Core Formation, as well as the reek of blood. Anyone who saw him would immediately come to the conclusion that he was someone not to be trifled with.

Even some Cultivators of the same level as he, after sensing the aura of his Cultivation base, would hesitate for a moment and then get out of his way.

In the Black Lands, killing was a constant part of life, and it was common to see bodies laying about.

As Meng Hao traveled, he saw dozens of vicious magical battles between Cultivators. He also saw quite a few deaths. Based on his observations, he quickly came to a better understanding of the Black Lands.

What he found the strangest was that after a month passed, despite his constant vigilance, no one from the Ji Clan came in pursuit of him. He couldn’t help but think of the invisible thread that had been covered up the moment he entered the Black Lands.

He hesitated for a moment, uncertain of exactly what was going on. “Could it be that the thread appeared after I killed Ji Hongdong? Is it a mark that the Ji Clan can use to track me down? If that’s the case, why would it be covered up when I entered the Black Lands?”

Time slowly passed. Soon, another month had gone by. Compared to the Southern Domain, the Black Lands wasn’t very large. As he traveled, though, Meng Hao found that there weren’t very many cities, which made everything seem much further spread out.

Nearly everything was empty and desolate. The soil was pitch black, permeated with oppressive, deathly stillness. Even fewer places were filled with spiritual energy. Thankfully, Meng Hao currently didn’t have any strong requirement for spiritual energy. One day as he sat cross-legged on the vines, he suddenly opened his eyes to look off into the distance.

With his Spiritual Sense, he could see a short mountain about forty kilometers away, as well as a simple Immortal’s cave. The Immortal’s cave wasn’t located within the mountain, but rather, underneath it, almost like a burrow. Next to the mountain was a spring, the waters of which had pooled together to form a cistern.

The waters of the cistern were muddy and foul, and the whole area was littered with animal droppings and weeds. The place looked abandoned. If Meng Hao weren’t specifically looking for a place to rest and restore his health, he would most likely have overlooked a location like this.

“Actually, it’s not that bad,” he thought. He transmitted his will to the vines, and they moved off in the direction of the short mountain.

Soon thereafter, he arrived in the area. He approached on foot, allowing the vines to burrow down into the soil and conceal themselves.

Meng Hao walked through the weeds, passing the cistern. As he did, he noticed a small, black creature drinking from its waters. It looked up at him, emanating a cruel and vicious air.

Meng Hao ignored it, flying up in the air to inspect the mountain. Afterward, he flew toward a wide fissure on the surface of the mountain, a look of satisfaction on his face.

The jagged fissure led downward, and it took only a moment for the main door of the Immortal’s cave to appear in front of him. Meng Hao waved his hand, causing the door to tremble, then slowly open.

The Immortal’s cave wasn’t large; almost everything inside was covered in dust. Apparently it hadn’t been occupied for some time, although some aura of the fifth or sixth level of Qi Condensation still lingered inside. It appeared that the original owner of the cave didn’t have a very high Cultivation base.

After looking around for a moment, Meng Hao flicked his sleeve, causing a wind to spring up that instantly cleared away the dust and the damp.

Next, he sat down cross-legged and took a long, deep breath. A thoughtful look filled his eyes, after which his hand flashed in an incantation gesture and he waved his finger toward the main door. It slowly closed, after which magical symbols appeared on it, sealing it.

“My injuries are currently about fifty percent healed. I really was seriously hurt this time….” He produced some medicinal pills, consumed them, and then closed his eyes to meditate. Slowly but surely, his injuries began to recover.

As a Grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy, he was naturally able to concoct the optimal pills for treatment of his own injuries.

Time passed slowly and peacefully. It was quiet inside the Immortal’s cave, and dark as well. He sat alone for some time. When he finally awoke from his trance, he opened his eyes and looked out at the darkness. For some reason, the events from his time in the Violet Fate Sect appeared in his mind.

“The Ji Clan….” A bright glow appeared in his eyes, which he closed once again.

Three months slowly went by, although Meng Hao wasn’t very aware of the passage of time. His wounds were mostly recovered now, at least eighty percent so. According to his calculations, within a few months, he would be completely recovered, and back at the peak state he used to be in. In fact, he might even be able to make a bit of progress.

The absolute strangest thing to him was that in the past three months there hadn’t been the slightest bit of pursuit on the part of the Ji Clan. Meng Hao couldn’t help but draw some of his own conclusions about this.

He suddenly thought of something. “Could it be because of Master…?” He thought silently about this for a while.

Finally, he sighed, closed his eyes, and continued to focus on his injuries. After a moment, though, his expression suddenly flickered, and he focused his attention outside of the Immortal’s cave.

About fifty kilometers away from the short mountain was an emaciated man of about thirty years of age, walking along with utmost caution and prudence.

His Cultivation base was not very high, perhaps at the sixth level of Qi Condensation. A savage gleam could be seen in his eyes. Were this the Southern Domain, few people of the same level would be able to come out victorious against this man.

“I really struck it unlucky this time,” grumbled the man through gritted teeth. “What the hell was that place anyway!? Kept me trapped for two years!” His eyes flitted about as he proceeded at top speed toward the small mountain.

Seemingly out of routine, the man took a circuitous route toward the small mountain, glancing this way and that the entire time. Assured that he was in no danger, and seeing no one following him, he hopped into the fissure and made his way down.

“From now on, I’m never going to that damned place ever again. Thankfully, even though I was trapped for two years, at least my life wasn’t in danger. Anyone else would most likely have been killed.” He sighed, muttered to himself as he climbed down into the fissure. Having seen so much death, he had reached the point where he was perhaps not numb, but at the least took it all as a normal part of life.

“Unfortunately, I still have no medicinal elixir,” he muttered. “However, considering that I have my own Immortal’s cave, I definitely count as someone who has a lot of good fortune.” Looking complacent, he relaxed a bit. Finally, he was back to his Immortal’s cave, where he could rest. He lifted up his right hand and produced a command medallion which he tossed toward the door.

His eyes immediately went wide as he watched the medallion clatter to the ground. The main door of the Immortal’s cave didn’t budge.

“Is it broken?” he thought, gaping. He walked forward, picked up the command medallion, and then looked over it carefully. He was about to try to use it again, when suddenly he noticed some marks in the dust on the ground that made it obvious the door had been opened recently.

Fury immediately burned in the man’s eyes. How could he not understand that his Immortal’s cave had been stolen by someone!

“I don’t know where you came from, you stupid ignoramus!” he immediately shouted. “But this is the Immortal’s cave of Grandpa Huang! Get the hell out of there this instant!” In his estimation, the spiritual energy in the Immortal’s cave had long since dried up. High level Qi Condensation Cultivators would obviously have little interest in it, let alone anyone more powerful than that.

Furthermore, he had occupied this Immortal’s cave for many years. Sure, some people had attempted to take it from him before, but all of them were people of a lower level than him, and he had exterminated each and every one. In the end, he was definitely the master of this tiny Immortal’s cave.

However, now it seemed obvious that in the two years he’d been away, someone had indeed come to seize it.

“Open the door! Your granny! This is Grandpa Huang’s territory, and Grandpa Huang’s Immortal’s cave. Everyone in the entire area knows that I’m the Eight-armed Dragon King, Huang Daxian!”

Within the Immortal’s cave, Meng Hao frowned. The place had looked abandoned before; he’d never imagined that someone was actually living here….

“You’ve got some big aspirations and the guts of a leopard to try to steal Grandpa Huang’s Immortal’s Cave!” howled Huang Daxian. Seeing no response coming from inside, he gave a cold snort and then began to perform an incantation with his right hand. He stretched out his finger, and, face flushed, sent a tongue of fire shooting out. It transformed into a Fire Globe which shot toward the main door of the Immortal’s cave.

A boom filled the narrow fissure, after which Huang Daxian immediately began shouting again, “Open the door! You damned….”

Before he could finish speaking, the main door quietly opened a sliver. Huang Daxian gave a cold harrumph, congratulating himself on intimidating his opponent with his magical technique. He was filled with fury, but he didn’t immediately charge inside. A look of caution gleamed in his eyes.

He slowly opened the main door. Inside, he saw that there was no dust; instead, Meng Hao sat there peacefully.

Seeing Meng Hao alone, he said, “Your grann…” However, in the midst of his fury, he suddenly looked into Meng Hao’s eyes. Within their profundity was an icy dignity.

His hair was completely white, and he emanated a shocking, terrifying aura. His skin was pallid, as if he needed more blood to make it look normal again.

All of this caused Huang Daxian to feel as if a bucket of cold water had just been dumped onto his head. He immediately began to shiver.

“Fellow… um, Fellow Daoist….”

1. Huang Daxian’s name in Chinese is huáng dà xiān. Huang is a surname which also means “Yellow.” Da means “great” or “grand.” Xian means “Immortal.” So literally his name could also be “Grand Immortal Huang”

2. Zhou Dekun was the old Furnace Lord from the Violet Fate Sect that Meng Hao initially hated but eventually befriended. He was kidnapped by Black Lands Cultivators and never seen or heard from again.

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# Chapter 316: Meng Hao’s Virtue

“Uh… Fellow Daoist….” Huang Daxian could not stop the pounding of his heart. His face was pale white, and as he trembled, he pasted a benevolent smile onto his face. Without even thinking about it, he began to edge away.

“Haha, greetings…. What a lucky coincidence that we meet each other. Fellow Daoist, if you want to live here, well, no problem… no problem.” Body quivering, Huang Daxian immediately made to leave.

However, as he did, Meng Hao’s calm eyes swept over him, coming to rest on his feet. A tremor ran through Huang Daxian’s body. He didn’t dare to move even an inch. Beads of cold sweat began to bead up on his forehead and then drip down his pale face. It seemed almost like as soon as Meng Hao’s gaze landed on his feet, they suddenly didn’t belong to him any more.

Eventually, Meng Hao’s gaze rose up and he looked Huang Daxian in the eyes. Huang Daxian’s brain felt like it was convulsing, as if his soul had fled his body. An intense feeling of dread completely submerged him.

“Foundation Establishment…. This is definitely Foundation Establishment….” The most powerful person Huang Daxian had ever faced in his entire life was of the Foundation Establishment stage. The terror he felt because of Meng Hao was nearly unfathomable; this in turn caused him to think of the most powerful person he had ever seen.

Before Meng Hao even said a single word, a flopping sound could be heard as Huang Daxian dropped to his knees, his face devoid of blood.

“Senior, please spare my life. Sir, I spoke rashly just now, I was mistaken. Senior, you are a great man, and truly magnanimous. Please spare my life….” Huang Daxian’s appearance was that of the ultimate supplication. The back of his garment was already soaked with cold sweat.

Meng Hao hesitated for a moment. There was no need to cause trouble for this tiny Qi Condensation Cultivator. Furthermore, if the Immortal’s cave did indeed belong to the man, then it meant he truly had stolen it.

As soon as Huang Daxian saw his hesitation, it immediately filled him with even more terror.

“He wants to kill me!!” he thought. “I’m finished. Finished! I’ve heard of these Foundation Establishment Cultivators. They kill people all the time, and I’ve even heard that some of them have the habit of eating raw human flesh….” As he thought of this, Huang Daxian’s vision suddenly began to grow dim. His heart filled with grief and indignation. He suddenly realized he would rather stay stuck in the place he had just escaped from than be here. At least there his life hadn’t been in danger. But now….

Suddenly, Huang Daxian gave a start. He didn’t want to die and therefore, several ideas suddenly sprang to being in his mind. Just as it seemed Meng Hao was about to say something, Huang Daxian let out a shout and said, “Eee? Is this actually my Immortal’s cave? How strange, it seems the spiritual energy here is much too dense! Furthermore, everything is so glittering and translucent; it really feels like the dwelling place of an Immortal!

“Senior, you truly are an amazing person! See, this Immortal’s cave used to be so ordinary, but once you started living in it, your presence lent it a graceful glitter. It’s like some sort of Celestial wonderland!” Hearing Huang Daxian’s words caused Meng Hao to gape.

His gaping caused Huang Daxian’s spirit to be roused. It seemed he had managed to grasp hold of a chance at survival. Therefore, he went at it with even more gusto.

“After seeing this Immortal’s cave, I don’t think I could possibly ever calm down!” He looked around at the extremely ordinary Immortal’s cave as if he had seen some type of miracle. His eyes filled with passion and reverence. “Now I suddenly understand what I have been missing, which is nothing other than your stubborn persistence in cultivation, sir, as well as your transcendent temperament which gives birth to such impressive dignity.

“Sir, you truly have the air of a transcendent being. I really can’t help but bow to you in my heart. With each bow, my excitement rages out of control, and even my Cultivation base leaps with joy!” The more he spoke, the more excited Huang Daxian became, until spittle flew from his mouth. He seemed to be sparing nothing in his efforts to ingratiate himself to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao stared, dumbstruck, and once again hesitated for a moment. Finally, his face began to grow red.

“I was thinking,” gushed Huang Daxian, “perhaps this is the will of Heaven. The will of Heaven has caused senior to appear here. Sir, I have no other request than to simply be able to stand in front of you and be touched by your Immortal Qi. Senior, I beg that you allow me this one request.” Glistening teardrops poured down his cheeks as he stared earnestly at Meng Hao, looking feverishly hopeful.

All of his words had caused Meng Hao’s scalp to grow numb. He had always thought he had learned quite a bit about flattery back in the Reliance Sect, and was more than equal to the task. However, he suddenly came to the realization that there were many more capable people in the world than him.

One such person existed here in the Black Lands…. Unfortunately, such words were useless on Meng Hao. He looked at the Cultivator standing in front of him, his expression solemn.

The solemnity immediately caused Huang Daxian’s heart to tremble once more. Bracing himself, he spoke once again.

“Senior, you have another virtue, your greatest, and that is, when the moment of truth arrives, you are not swayed by flattery. All fawning words are like a slight breeze hitting a mountain. If you wish to get angry, you get angry. You are efficient and decisive. You are truly a great hero, a towering figure."

At this point, Meng Hao couldn't take it any more. He laughed, and the laugh loosened some of the pressure that had been weighing down upon him because of all of the events back at the Rebirth Cave.

Interrupting any further ass kissing on the part of Huang Daxian, Meng Hao said, "Very well. I'm accustomed to quiet. Since this Immortal's cave belongs to you, I won't occupy it for free. Whatever you require, I will provide to you as rent."

Huang Daxian's head was soaked with sweat, but finally he felt somewhat relaxed inside. In order to save his own little life, he had used all the mental power he could muster; hearing Meng Hao's words just now, how could he possibly speak out any sort of requirement?

"Senior, since you've taken a liking to this Immortal's cave, how could I possibly ask for anything? Sir, there's no need, really. Please live here without any hesitation whatsoever."

Meng Hao looked at Huang Daxian for a moment, muttering to himself for a moment. What he lacked most now was Spirit Stones. He slapped his bag of holding to produce a Qi Condensation Pill that was not marked with a pill cauldron.

This was a Qi Condensation Pill that he had concocted a very long time ago, and was of ordinary medicinal strength. It was one of the types he had concocted before becoming famous, and he actually didn't have many left in his bag of holding.

As he pulled the pill out, Meng Hao got the feeling that it wasn't very much to offer. He was about to put it back and pull out something else, when suddenly he heard ragged panting.

Huang Daxian's eyes went wide, and he was breathing heavily. He stared fixedly at the medicinal pill in Meng Hao's hand, his eyes filled with intense anticipation. His body trembled, not from fear, but from excitement.

To him, the medicinal pill appeared to be shining and beautiful, plump to the extreme. Its appearance instantly filled the entire Immortal’s cave with thick spiritual energy.

The spiritual energy enveloped the Immortal’s cave, immediately causing all of the pores on his body to open up; his Cultivation base immediately seemed to grow, causing Huang Daxian’s mind to spin.

“Medicinal… that’s a medicinal pill!!” His mouth and tongue were dry, and he seemed to have lost his faculties, as if at any moment he might lunge forward and try to snatch the pill away from Meng Hao.

In his entire life, he had only been fortunate enough to consume one medicinal pill. That was long ago when he was with his Master. Upon receiving a serious injury, he and his Master had fled. On his death bed, his Master had bequeathed him with a dark, bumpy medicinal pill.

That medicinal pill had been highly valued by his Master. It was also the first medicinal pill Huang Daxian had ever eaten, and, in fact, the only one.

However, that pill had absolutely no way to compare to the one he was looking at right now. One was the Earth, the other was the Heavens!

The Black Lands were barren and the Cultivators there lived arduous lives. Medicinal plants were not easy to grow, and there were virtually no alchemists, therefore, medicinal pills were extremely hard to come by. Of even more relevance was the polarization of the Black Lands. One half of it was part of the Southern Domain, the other half was of the Western Desert. Cultivators here either never saw medicinal pills, or, like Huang Daxian, caught sight of one once or twice in their lives.

Generally speaking, Cultivators here relied on medicinal elixirs, which were created by repeatedly breaking down medicinal pills until they formed a liquid. Such medicinal elixirs were not incredibly effective, but they were something that Black Lands Cultivators couldn’t live without.

“Senior, are you… are you going to give me that medicinal pill?” asked Huang Daxian, his voice quavering. He stared at the pill, panting.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. He had been in the Black Lands for several months, but hadn’t had much dealings with the outside world. He had seen much while traveling, and had come to understand quite a bit; however his thinking regarding the value of objects was still based on his time in the Southern Domain.

Now, he understood everything. He waved his hand, sending the medicinal pill flying into Huang Daxian’s hands.

“One medicinal pill to rent your Immortal’s cave for a period of time,” said Meng Hao coolly.

Huang Daxian clutched at the medicinal pill as if it were some sort of treasure. He looked at Meng Hao, his face filled with intense veneration. He bowed deeply, then remembering how Meng Hao had said he valued quiet, suddenly was worried that Meng Hao might change his mind. He quickly took his leave, hurrying out of the Immortal’s cave. When he was away from the short mountain, he took a deep breath, and his eyes gleamed with the excitement he had been holding back just now.

“I’ve struck the jackpot!” he thought. “This medicinal pill… it’s a miracle!” He hurried away, preparing, not to consume the pill, but to break it down into medicinal elixir, which could be used for quite some time.

Meng Hao sat cross-legged in the Immortal’s cave, his eyes filled with thoughtfulness. His experience with the Qi Condensation Cultivator had helped him to realize how scarce resources really were for the impoverished Black Lands Cultivators.

“I still have quite a few medicinal pills in my bag of holding,” Meng Hao thought. “Most are marked with a pill cauldron, but I can erase that. Considering my lack of Spirit Stones, though, I need to be careful. There are no alchemists in the Black Lands, so a sudden influx in medicinal pills would definitely arouse suspicion.” He continued to think about the matter for a while. He had left a bit of Spiritual Sense on the Qi Condensation Cultivator; if the man tried to plot against him, he could immediately activate the Spiritual Sense and kill him.

Eventually, Meng Hao closed his eyes and focused once again on treating his injuries. As far as the damage to his longevity, Meng Hao wasn’t too worried about it. That problem would be easy to solve, either with the Outlander Pill or the Primordial Heavenly Replenishing Pill, one of the three great pills of the ancient Dao of alchemy.[1]

Time passed, and eventually, Meng Hao’s wounds were fully healed. He opened his eyes, which glittered as he retrieved the copper mirror from within his bag of holding.

“Upon reaching Core Formation, the spirit within this copper mirror should awaken.” He looked at the mirror, which he had acquired all those years ago in the Reliance Sect; it had been with him all the way until this day.

Now, it was time for the spirit within to awaken!

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# Chapter 317: I am an Ancient Celestial Bird!

You could say that without this treasure, Meng Hao would not have the Cultivation base he did. Nor would he have been able to travel to the Southern Domain, or join the Violet Fate Sect. He would still be in the State of Zhao, floating with that old turtle Patriarch Reliance, off in some unknown location.

Memories flitted through Meng Hao’s eyes. So many things had happened since he had acquired this copper mirror that so loved to emit an aura that browbeat creatures of fur and feather. Furthermore, it had a Heaven defying ability of duplication.

Then there was the painful abhorrence the meat jelly showed toward it. The meat jelly had gone so far as to take the form of a parrot, in which it constantly chattered and gnashed its teeth.

Meng Hao thought back to the time he had left the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament, and had touched the blood-colored mask. Thanks to the Li Clan Patriarch, he had almost lost control of his mind; it was only the bird call from within the copper mirror that had enabled him to avoid calamity. 1

Then there was the time in the ancient Blessed Land, when the power of the copper mirror had enabled him to step foot into the square cauldron, despite the fact that he did not possess an ancient bloodline. 2

The instant Meng Hao had reached Core Formation, he had felt an aura awakening within the copper mirror.

“Parrot….” he said, his eyes glittering. His Violet Core began to rotate as he drew on the power of his Cultivation base. Guiding it with his will, he sent it through his right hand and into the mirror.

The mirror gradually began to emit a mysterious glow. The light grew more intense, and then suddenly the meat jelly flew out from the blood-colored mask in his bag of holding. It emerged in a beam of light, and the face of the old man appeared on its surface.

Its eyes glistened with stubbornness, determination and sincerity, as if it were about to face its greatest enemy. Its expression also contained a bit of holiness, as if it were its mission to participate in a great battle that would decide the fate of all the stars in existence.

“Evil archenemy, you finally appear,” it said, its face filled with a sacred air. “I’ve been waiting for you for a very, very long time. This time, the first thing you’ll see when you awaken is me. I will definitely convert you. I will bring you back from the path of wickedness.” The meat jelly actually seemed a bit less long-winded than before. A pedantic air slowly began to grow thicker and thicker around it.

Ignoring the meat jelly, Meng Hao concentrated, focusing on his Cultivation base and sending a continuous flow of power into the copper mirror, which seemed like a bottomless pit. Time slowly passed by, and soon Meng Hao was using nearly sixty percent of his Cultivation base.

It was then that the glow in the mirror exploded out. A phantom image began to appear above the surface of the mirror.

It was still very blurry.

“Come out, my archenemy!” said the meat jelly solemnly. “Come out! We are destined to fight this battle. Come out! Uh… hey, Meng Hao, push a littler harder. He’s almost out!”

Hearing the meat jelly’s voice caused Meng Hao to remember something, and he cleared his throat. Actually, one of the main goals in causing the spirit to emerge from the mirror was because he wanted it to deal with the meat jelly. Perhaps it would be able to suppress the thing’s chattering.

He took a deep breath, and then sent out more power from his Cultivation base. Seventy percent, eighty percent, ninety percent….

The image above the mirror began to grow clearer. It was now obviously the shape of a bird. It was covered with colourful feathers, gaudy even. Its eyes were closed, and it had a curved beak and sharp claws. Actually, it’s appearance wasn’t perverted in the way the meat jelly’s had been when it assumed the parrot form. Instead, it exuded an air of extreme, wild arrogance. Even asleep, the arrogant aura seemed to buffet against Meng Hao’s face.

“What an evil aura,” said the meat jelly, trembling. “That’s it! That’s its aura. The appearance is dead on! This is my archenemy. This is my mission in life. I will convert it!” The air of holiness swirled around the meat jelly even more thickly.

Meng Hao suddenly felt weak inside. It caused him a bit of alarm; perhaps it hadn’t been the best decision to call to the spirit after having just recovered from his injuries. If he sustained any injuries now, then he wouldn’t be able to provide the power the copper mirror needed. That would result in further nasty injuries to himself.

Time passed. Just as Meng Hao’s Cultivation base was almost completely pouring into the copper mirror, suddenly, a shrill cry echoed out from within. It contained vast arrogance and immense bossiness.

The sound of it echoed about, in such a way that would cause any living creature that heard it to bow in veneration.

As the cry echoed out, the parrot above the mirror suddenly opened its eyes. A bright light shone out, along with a blast of aura that felt like Immortal Qi; it emanated out, filling the entire Immortal’s cave.

It had a blank look in its eyes, as well as an archaic air. It only took a moment for haughtiness to appear; clearly, its body was that of a small bird, but anyone who looked at it would get the feeling it could split the Heavens and rend the Earth in two.

Even the very air in the area seemed to grow thicker.

The meat jelly emitted a howl that made it difficult to determine whether it was excited or furious. It immediately appeared directly in front of the parrot and looked it dead in the eye. “Look at me, my archenemy. Do you see who I am?”

The parrot looked back at the meat jelly, and a cool look of contempt appeared. Its expression was arrogant to the extreme as it tilted its head back to look at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao didn’t move or say anything. He took a few steps back, looking at the parrot and meat jelly, and also working on recovering his Cultivation base. Based on his experience with the meat jelly, he figured that his best course of action was to first observe what was going to happen.

The meat jelly gave an angry howl, then it flickered, moving to block the parrot’s line of sight.

The meat jelly stared at the parrot, and as it did, it seemed all enmity bubbled up.“Archenemy of my life, the Heavens have opened their eyes, and seen fit to allow us to meet again. You are evil! Immoral! So tell me, do you remember me?” The color of the meat jelly’s body changed into a turbulent blur as it shouted, “Speak! Why don’t you speak!? You wicked, perverted bird! Why don’t you speak!” It had waited many years; now the parrot was here in front of it, but wasn’t responding.

Then.

“Are you crazy? Screw your sister, b*tch!” squawked the parrot, its face filled with impatience.

Immediately, the meat jelly’s eyes began to gleam; this reaction on the part of the parrot seemed to be in line with the wickedness it remembered.

“Cursing at people is wrong,” said the meat jelly solemnly. “You’ve sinned yet again!”

“Screw your granny! Screw your aunt! Screw your other granny! Screw your uncle! Screw your grandkids! Screw your sister, b*tch!” The parrot slowly said one sentence after another, ignoring the suddenly trembling meat jelly. It flapped its wings a few times, and then flew up into the air, making a few circles around the Immortal’s cave. Eventually, it landed on Meng Hao’s shoulder and looked over at him arrogantly.

“So, you’re my master in this world? Remember my name, Lord Fifth. I’m an ancient Celestial bird. After being born, I was revered and respected. Even the Heavens bowed their head to me. Before I was born, no living creature wore clothes. After I was born, who dared not to? Before me, no spirit creatures had fur or feathers. After my birth, great aspirations burned, and furred and feathered beasts were required in Heaven and Earth. After that, which creatures in the world dared NOT grow furs or feathers!

“On the outside, I permit you to call upon my name,” it said arrogantly. “When the name of Lord Fifth is spoken, all living creatures become terror-stricken. No one will dare to offend you. That is because within the entire world, in and out of the Heavens, if anyone offends me, I screw them to death!” Its domineering air leaked out, filling the area. However… Meng Hao had a strange look on his face. From his perspective, he was looking at nothing but a colorful, boasting bird.

Off to the side, the meat jelly solemnly said, “Boasting is immoral! You’ve sinned yet again! I will convert you!” An air of righteousness shot out from it toward the parrot. However, as it neared, a look of disdain filled the parrot’s face, and its arrogance grew even thicker, as if it were the boss, and the Heavens were its assistant.

Looking at the meat jelly, it said, “Years ago, countless almighty beings refined the Milky Way into a statue for me in the Flaming Mountains. Do you want to know why? Long ago, deep within the Star Sea, I forced thirty-thousand Great Peace virgin Daoist nuns to bathe in front of me. Do you want to know why they agreed?

“Countless years ago, who was the greatest bully in all the stars? Furthermore, do you remember the fatso who ambushed you that one time, and then kowtowed to me for a hundred thousand years? Do you want to know where he is now? Do you want to learn how to count past one, two, three?” The parrot’s words came out slowly, and as they did, the meat jelly slowly began to stop moving. By the time the parrot finished, it was staring mutely, its faced filled with conflict. However, it still seemed able to suppress its curiosity.

The parrot eyed the meat jelly with a look of utmost haughtiness. “If you want to know, then you need to behave a bit better in front of Lord Fifth. Bitch, I haven’t seen you for years, and yet you’re still completely retarded!”

Witnessing all this, Meng Hao suddenly realized how the parrot was able to deal with the meat jelly. The meat jelly was incredibly curious, and this was actually its greatest weakness.

That having been said, Meng Hao had the feeling that the personality of this parrot was a bit different than that portrayed earlier by the meat jelly. He wasn’t able to sense any perverted air on it, only wild arrogance.

It was at this moment that the parrot’s beak suddenly clicked, and a suspicious expression appeared on its face. It looked around for a moment, then flew into the air, circling a few more times around the Immortal’s cave.

“Eee?” it said suspiciously as it flew around. “This isn’t right. What smell is that?”

This immediately aroused the curiosity of the meat jelly, and it also began to look around dubiously. When it saw the parrot seemingly sniffing for something, a popping sound suddenly rang out as it transformed into a big white dog. It pushed its nose into the ground and began nosing about, wagging its tail.

“What the heck is it?” the meat jelly asked after sniffing around for a while. “I don’t smell anything! What are you smelling?” It looked up curiously at the parrot.

“You don’t understand crap! It doesn’t matter if you turn into a dog, you wouldn’t be able to smell anything. I’m an ancient Celestial bird, esteemed in all the Heavens! These black colored lands have a very curious aura. I’ve already determined what it is. Amazing! Incredible! Ahh, now I understand what’s going on.” The arrogant look on its face made it seem as if it understood everything within Heaven and Earth.

The meat jelly’s face twisted with unbearable curiosity. It seemed to itch with anxiety. Apparently it didn’t matter which form it took, it wouldn’t be able to detect this supposed aura.

Off to the side, Meng Hao watched the commotion. Hearing the dialogue between the two, he suddenly thought back to the words spoken by the Demon Sealing Jade when he entered the Black Lands, and felt a twinge of excitement.

“So what’s so special about this place?” he asked.

The parrot glanced back at him; the look said that it was an ancient Celestial parrot, and that it didn’t need to explain anything to him. It continued flying around, a look of arrogance on its face, as if it were matchlessly unique in all Heaven and Earth.

Meng Hao frowned and then coolly said, “Well, anybody can brag. If you don’t know the answer, there’s no need to go about pretending like you do.” He was of the Core Formation stage. On his path to becoming a powerful expert, and having experienced what he did at the Rebirth Cave, he was able to speak his words in a completely dull tone, as if he weren’t the least bit upset, and also completely confident in himself.

His words caused the parrot to immediately stop in mid-flight. All of the colorful feathers on its body stood on end, and it glared at Meng Hao, looking as if it had been woefully dishonored.

“I don’t know? I’m an ancient Celestial bird! I know about the Immortals above and the mortals below! You think there’s something Lord Fifth doesn’t know? I know everything!”

“You really don’t need to boast,” replied Meng Hao quickly. His heart trembled, and his eyes shone with a strange light.

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# Chapter 318: Have Faith in the Lord Fifth, Gain Eternal Life!

“Lord Fifth knows!”

“You don’t know!”

“Arrrrhhhh! Fine!” squawked the parrot, flapping its wings. “You shall know how powerful an ancient Celestial bird is!” The parrot’s eyes had turned green; its dignity had been questioned! A multicolored light suddenly blazed out from it, filling the entire small mountain in the space of a single breath.

Then, the light returned, as if it had collected something from within the mountain. The light gathered together, transforming into a pile of black soil the size of a fist.

“See?” said the parrot arrogantly, its voice shrill. “The secret of these black-colored lands can be found within this very mountain. This was refined out by me, Lord Fifth, personally!”

Off to the side, the meat jelly watched in a daze, completely quiet, as if it had just been enlightened. Despite its apparent sudden realization, however, it quickly grew more curious.

“What the heck is it?” it said. It rolled its eyes as it considered Meng Hao’s words from just now, and then the arrogant posturing of the parrot. Suddenly, it felt very excited and gushed, “You’re trying to use that crap to fool us, you old bird! You don’t have any idea at all what it is!”

The parrot looked scornfully at the meat jelly. This time, it didn’t react at all like it had toward Meng Hao, causing the meat jelly to stare dumbfounded.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he looked closely at the soil, which was actually a dark purplish-green. Just looking at it, he didn’t see anything unusual; in fact, it seemed quite ordinary.

“You don’t even know where this random clump of mud came from, and yet you dare to claim that you’re omniscient?” said Meng Hao coolly. It seemed that the parrot… didn’t like to be provoked by people.

Even though the meat jelly had tried this method moments ago, to no effect, Meng Hao decided to try it out one more time.

Even as the words were leaving his mouth, the parrot’s colorful feathers stood up on end, a green light shone from within its eyes, and a white Qi began to seep out from the top of its head. It seemed that its dignity had been seriously slighted, something it couldn’t accept in its arrogance.

Apparently it could ignore whatever the meat jelly said, but not even the slightest bit of provocation from Meng Hao.

“You dare to look down on Lord Fifth!?” shrieked the parrot furiously. “Lord Fifth is an ancient Celestial bird! There’s nothing I don’t know! Mountains and Seas, the Heavens, who doesn’t know that if you have faith in the Lord Fifth, you can attain eternal life!? You listen to Lord Fifth, buddy. This stuff is Immortal Sense soil! Many years ago, an almighty member of the senior generation painted a talisman out amidst the stars. He threw it down, with the intention of sealing this particular planet. However, someone else blocked it, and as the talisman entered the planet, it was burned into ash.

“However, that almighty ancient had an exceedingly high Cultivation base, and therefore, the magical symbols he painted contained divine abilities. Even though it became ash, it still contained the power of an Immortal. The ash fell down onto this very land. That’s why the soil in this place is black, because the land here contains the remnants of that burned talisman! I, an ancient Celestial bird, saw all this happen, so many years ago. How could I possibly be mistaken!?”

After hearing all this, Meng Hao’s pupils constricted, and his heart trembled.

A Cultivator who wielded power great enough to be able to paint magical symbols among the stars, and use them to seal an entire planet…. Before the events at the Rebirth Cave, Meng Hao would not have easily believed that such a thing could be true. But after seeing Choumen Tai, he now had a much greater understanding of such matters.

Right now, he breathed deeply as he looked at the incensed parrot, having already been seventy to eighty percent convinced of what it was saying.

“Some almighty person capable of painting a seal that can lock down a whole planet, that’s just shocking,” he thought. “But for someone to interfere with it, to burn it and cause the ash to create the Black Lands… well who was that?” At the moment, the character Ji was hovering in his mind.

“It can be hard to distinguish illusions from reality,” said Meng Hao coolly. “That’s a nice story, but who knows whether it’s true or not?” Actually, Meng Hao was mostly convinced already, but he allowed no change of expression to appear on his face.

The parrot looked even more enraged. It flew around in circles around the Immortal’s cave, glaring at Meng Hao. Then, it opened its mouth and spit out a glowing green light which shot toward Meng Hao.

It happened so fast that Meng Hao had no chance to dodge. The green light entered into him through his forehead, transforming into information that branded itself onto his mind.

The information consisted of a few hundred characters. They were complex, but after examining them, Meng Hao realized what it was: a vision technique.

“Use this technique, and look again! This Celestial technique has been branded onto you, so there’s no need for enlightenment or study. Just use it!” The parrot glared at Meng Hao, apparently unwilling to rest until Meng Hao believed what he said.

Meng Hao closed his eyes. When he opened them, the pupil of his right eye shrank. As it did, he felt as if Cultivation base power were suddenly being emitted out of his right eye.

In an instant, it felt as if his Cultivation base were withered, causing Meng Hao to feel quite alarmed. Suddenly, a strand of the Immortal spiritual energy within his body went toward his right eye, fusing with it.

He felt a stab of pain in his right eye, and tears flowed out of it. His vision grew blurry, but then cleared. Now, the world as he viewed it through his right eye looked very different, although it was hard to describe exactly how.

He looked down at the violet-green clump of soil.

Even at first glance, Meng Hao’s mind was shaken. Slowly, pulses of a golden-colored aura became visible, floating up from the soil and congealing in the air to form faint magical symbols. The symbols, of course, were golden-colored; furthermore, they emitted an intense pressure that only Meng Hao was able to sense.

Under the influence of the pressure, the magical symbols seemed to transform into tiny people. All of them floated there in front of Meng Hao, and they appeared to be painting something.

There was only a tiny bit of pressure, but it caused Meng Hao’s mind to fill with a roaring sound, and his Spiritual Sense to grow unstable. He suddenly closed his eyes, cutting off his vision and thus ending the technique. Even still, his face was pale, and it took him a while to recover his senses. When he opened his eyes, his right eye was filled with veins of blood.

“Well, did you feel it?” asked the parrot haughtily. “Lord Fifth knows everything. This is nothing but a clump of dirt with a bit of magical symbols in it. If you had encountered the ash created by the true Immortal Talisman that year, you wouldn't have been struck absentminded, you would have been struck dead!

"You know, soil like this is everywhere in this black-colored land. You can't say there's a huge amount, but there is quite a bit. People like you who can actually gaze upon the will of the Immortal Talisman, well, let's just say you're as rare as phoenix feathers and unicorn horns. Were it not for the fact that this area is suppressed, it wouldn't have lasted until now.

"If this soil is taken away from this land, then it will become useless. Oh, and let me tell you another secret. If you possess enough fortune and luck, you can collect more soil like this, and then you might gain enlightenment regarding some of the divine abilities within the magical symbols of that almighty senior. Now, please repeat after me in a loud voice: Have faith in the Lord Fifth, gain eternal life! When the Lord Fifth appears, who dares to cause strife! Many years ago, countless people chanted these very lines!" It looked at the pale-faced Meng Hao even more egotistically, apparently more and more convinced of how powerful it was.

Meng Hao ignored the parrot. "Such a powerful aura… especially considering this is just a tiny clump of soil. And yet, it contains such shocking power. To think that there is more of this dirt throughout the Black Lands…." He began to breathe deeply, and his eyes glowed.

He suddenly thought of the words of the Demon Sealing Jade.

"An Immortal of the Ninth Mountain; the pinnacle of brushwork; magical symbols of all creatures; collapse of the Heavens…. The power is fused within this land, transformed into destruction, and filled with Demonic life force. This land… can be used to cultivate… the art of Righteous Bestowal!"

Meng Hao's eyes glittered. The method for cultivating the art of Righteous Bestowal already existed in his mind. During his time focused on healing his injuries, he'd had no time to work toward enlightenment, but having seen this clump of soil, he suddenly found himself lost in thought.

Time slipped by. Soon, half a month had gone past. The parrot and the meat jelly had disappeared somewhere, and were no longer in the Immortal's cave. The interchanges between these two old enemies usually involved the meat jelly provoking the parrot in some way. However, the parrot was always able to respond with only a few words that would send the meat jelly shrinking in on itself.

Meng Hao was focused on the art of Righteous Bestowal. Occasionally he would use the vision technique to examine the soil; each time he would come up lacking in some aspect of enlightenment or another. As he continued to study it, he would sometimes take out Ji Hongdong's bag of holding. The magical sealing symbol was still there, but it was growing weaker. After a few attempts at breaking it, Meng Hao got the feeling that it wouldn't be long before he would be able to open the bag.

Time slowly passed. Other than research, he spent his time thinking. He didn't consume the Outlander Pill that Master had given him. True, it could extend longevity, but more importantly, it could be used to suppress the Resurrection Lily.

He could only consume three in his life, and did not wish to squander those opportunities.

As for the Primordial Heavenly Replenishing Pill, it could also extend longevity, but he only had one. At the moment, he didn't have enough Spirit Stones to duplicate a copy, so after a moment's thought, he sealed it back up. At the moment, he was completely recovered; his longevity was significantly shortened, but it wasn't an extreme emergency.

For now, what he was most worried about was the Heavenly Tribulation that would come with his Perfect Gold Core. Right now, he had all the ingredients he needed to make the Perfect Core Pill, except for one plant.

The plant he needed wasn't extremely rare; Meng Hao guessed that even in the Black Lands, he would most likely be able to get ahold of one.

However, after thinking for quite a long time about the Heavenly Tribulation, Meng Hao still had no idea how he would deal with it, other than the meat jelly.

On one particular day, after gaining a bit of enlightenment regarding the Celestial soil, Meng Hao's mind suddenly quivered. He sent his Spiritual Sense out roughly fifty kilometers out from his Immortal's cave. There, he could see Huang Daxian, very cautiously leading a group of grim, malevolent-looking Foundation Establishment Cultivators in his direction.

"Seniors," he said in a low voice, "up ahead, the four of you will be able to see the place where that guy is staying." His nose was bloodied, and his face swollen, and it seemed he was even missing a few teeth. His expression was very dispirited.

"Cut the crap," said one of the four Foundation Establishment Cultivators with a cold snort. "Keep leading the way!"

"I really want to see if this guy truly has the superhuman abilities you claim!" said another. "And then there's the supposed medicinal pills!"

The four Cultivators' eyes glittered with avarice. Among the four, one was surprisingly of the great circle of Foundation Establishment. The other three were in the mid Foundation Establishment stage. These four held sway over the region with iron fists, and they were quite well-known. Their bodies were festooned with what could almost be called totem tattoos, very similar to those of Western Desert Cultivators, although not quite the same.

The four of them exchanged glances and began to converse in hushed tones.

"We'll need to be careful. With so many medicinal pills, he must not be an ordinary person. Make sure not to damage his bag of holding before he dies, otherwise this trip will have been in vain."

"Right. We'll all attack at once, and wipe him out. Don't give him a chance to destroy his own bag of holding before that!"

Huang Daxian looked furious, but didn't dare to say anything other than to mumble in agreement with them.

Meng Hao retracted his Spiritual Sense. Huang Daxian was branded with his Spiritual Sense, so Meng Hao was aware of all of his activities, including the disaster he had brought upon himself because of the medicinal pill, and how he had been captured.

If he wanted to, Meng Hao could just exterminate all of them. However, after thinking about the Celestial soil which contained the Celestial talismanic symbols, he changed his mind and allowed Huang Daxian to lead them here.

“I need enough Celestial soil. The more the better. That will increase my ability to achieve full enlightenment.” Meng Hao closed his eyes.

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# Chapter 319: A Booming Voice from the Rubble

It requires a bit of time for Foundation Establishment Cultivators to travel fifty kilometers.

While he waited for them, Meng Hao sat meditating. He had now gained more experience in researching the art of Righteous Bestowal. As far as enlightenment regarding the Celestial soil, there was no need to be anxious. It would require slow and steady progress. By gradually increasing his collection, he would have time to study it properly. In that way, he would be able to slowly supplement whichever magical symbols he lacked.

He currently sat cross-legged, examining his Violet Core as it slowly rotated. In the blink of an eye, it would send out a massive pulsating aura throughout his body, which would then retract.

It was like lightning; extend, retract, a cycle. This allowed him to burst forth with a type of Cultivation base power completely different and far more formidable than that of the Foundation Establishment stage.

“Master said that after reaching Core Formation, I would be able to fuse the Everburning Flame with my Core. Then I would be able to utilize my personal alchemic flame….” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. To accomplish that would of course require painstaking effort in secluded meditation.

He hadn’t even been in the Black Lands for a year, and yet his time spent recovering in secluded meditation had led to a complete lack of mental focus. However, the matters of the Celestial soil, the art of Righteous Bestowal, igniting his alchemic flame, and Ji Hongdong’s bag of holding were all things that he needed to allocate time for now that he was in the Core Formation stage.

Because of his concerns of being tracked down by the Ji Clan, he was constantly on guard. This entire time, he hadn't been able to relax. However, he already had an inkling as to why no one from the Ji Clan had come after him yet.

He made his decision. "It seems I need to stay in secluded meditation for a bit longer. When I've accomplished everything I need to, I can go out and track down the final medicinal plant I need to make the Perfect Gold Core Pill."

He lifted his head, and within his eyes could be seen a cold glow. His lips twisted into a meaningful smile that had a touch of a demonic air. It seemed to be filled with frigidness.

At the moment, the four Foundation Establishment Cultivators were flying through the air toward the short mountain. They approached without hesitation, and reached the fissure in the mountain in only a moment, and then shot down inside.

Huang Daxian's face was pale and fear filled his heart. However, he also had an idea. Gritting his teeth, voice trembling, he loudly said, "Just… just down here…."

The Foundation Establishment Cultivators looked at him with killing intent springing from their eyes. "Quiet!" said one.

The four of them reaching the bottom of the fissure in an instant. They looked at the Immortal's cave, and their expressions changed to fill with vigilance.

This was because the door of Meng Hao's Immortal's cave was not closed. Instead, it was wide open, allowing them to see Meng Hao sitting inside cross-legged. He slowly raised up his head; his expression was that of complete calm.

He wore an ordinary green robe, but considering how it strikingly framed his white hair, it immediately caused an intense fear to push down onto their hearts.

In addition, his face seemed devoid of any blood. That, combined with the icy coldness of his gaze, made the temperature in the area seem to instantly plummet beyond freezing.

The four Foundation Establishment Cultivators all gasped. Meng Hao’s appearance immediately caused an intense feeling of crisis to rise up inside of them. It made the man sitting in front of them seem to be, not a Cultivator, but an ancient wild beast. His gaze seemed as if it would consume them whole.

Cold sweat immediately began to pour down their foreheads. Their mouths and tongues went dry, and their minds seemed almost lost. They stood there, not moving a muscle.

Meng Hao didn’t say anything. Deathly silence filled the mountain fissure; not even the sound of breathing could be heard.

The silence gradually transformed into an intense pressure, as if the entire mountain were weighing down on the hearts of everyone present. The feeling seemed to place them at the border between life and death; Meng Hao’s gaze filled them with the profound impression that if they moved, they would be dead instantly.

Finally, though, one of the four Foundation Cultivators, the one with the lowest Cultivation base, couldn’t take the pressure any longer. Unable to stay standing there, he let out a howl and shot upward toward the mouth of the fissure.

Even as he began to fly up, Meng Hao lifted the finger of his right hand. “Pipe down.”

Two words, one sentence, and a miserable shriek rang out. A corpse fell down to land directly in front of the three other Foundation Establishment

Cultivators, causing their faces to grow even more white, and their bodies to tremble even harder.

The corpse that had just fallen down had a bloody hole on its forehead, out from which fresh, red blood gurgled. The corpse’s eyes were wide open, and clearly filled with dread and despair.

The scene transformed into a new pressure that caused the remaining three Foundation Establishment Cultivators to be filled with awe. Although they had done their fair share of killing, they knew that it wasn’t a simple thing to be able to slay a Foundation Establishment Cultivator. All of them instantly began to shake violently.

“Core Formation…. This guy is definitely in the Core Formation stage!”

“Dammit, why did we have to provoke a Core Formation expert!?”

The three of them exchanged glances filled with bitterness and desperation.

Huang Daxian was trembling even harder than they were, and anxiety filled his face. He had guessed that Meng Hao was powerful, but he had never imagined that his power had reached the level that he could exterminate a mid Foundation Establishment Cultivator.

Some time passed, and the three Foundation Establishment Cultivators grew so nervous and frightened that it seemed their hearts might explode. Being forced to wait such a long time under the threat of death was something that ordinary people usually can’t endure.

Finally, another among the remaining three couldn’t take it any more. Seeing that Meng Hao had long since closed his eyes, the middle-aged man gritted his teeth and suddenly flew up into the air. At the same time, he crushed a jade slip, which caused a mist to surround his body and explosively increased his speed. As he seemed on the verge of making his escape, Meng Hao didn’t move; he didn’t even open his eyes. A look of excitement appeared on the face of the escaping Cultivator, causing the remaining two to hesitate momentarily and consider following him.

Suddenly, the rocks on either side of the mountain fissure suddenly seemed to loosen. A dark violet vine suddenly erupted out, emanating an intense viciousness. The end of the vine split into a jagged, gaping, bloody mouth. The Foundation Establishment Cultivator let out an astonished scream as he was instantly swallowed up whole as if by a giant snake. After swallowing the man down, massive amounts of gooey fluid flowed down the vine. At the same time, even more vines burrowed out through the mountain rocks.

There were dozens of them, writhing about. They sealed off the mouth of the fissure, and then stretched out to point in the direction of Huang Daxian and the remaining two Foundation Establishment Cultivators.

Huang Daxian’s face was pale white and completely blank.

The two Foundation Establishment Cultivators were left panting. The scene just now replayed in their minds, and suddenly they had the intense sensation that they were currently in hell.

“S-s-senior… spare me….” said the Cultivator of the great circle of Foundation Establishment, his voice trembling as he dropped to his knees and kowtowed to Meng Hao.

“Senior, I was in the wrong, please spare me,” said the other Foundation Establishment Cultivator, also plopping to the ground and kowtowing.

Both of them were scared out of their minds.

Meng Hao slowly opened his eyes and coolly gazed over the two of them, as well as Huang Daxian. He had long since taken notice of the totems tattoos on their bodies. They weren’t the same as those of the Western Desert Cultivators, but they appeared to be able to move just as fluidly.

“Are you here to request medicinal pills?” asked Meng Hao. He lifted his hand, and two medicinal pills appeared in his palm. They were bluish black, and emitted no medicinal fragrance whatsoever. In fact, faintly visible on the surface of each pill was the image of a ferocious, writhing centipede.

At a glance it was obvious that these were poison pills.

Before the two Foundation Establishment Cultivators could respond to his question, Meng Hao flicked his sleeve, and the two pills shot out like lightning toward their mouths. They had no time to react; the pills slammed into their teeth and then entered their throats. In the blink of an eye, they had dissolved.

The two men's faces changed immediately. However, they didn't do anything to resist. They could only let out bitter sighs; they knew that at the very least, they were being allowed to live a bit longer.

"Think of this pill as a punishment," said Meng Hao calmly. "I want the two of you to take Huang Daxian and look around for soil that looks like this. The more you find, the faster I'll dispel that poison. In fact, if you find enough, I'll even give you some medicinal pills." He glanced over at Huang Daxian for a moment.

Huang Daxian immediately gave a start, then loudly voiced his consent.

Meng Hao flicked his sleeve, sending a bit of violet-green soil shooting out to each of the three of them. Then, the Immortal's cave slammed shut with a boom. The tentacles sealing off the fissure drew back, and everything returned to normal. With bitter smiles, the two Foundation Establishment Cultivators let out quiet sighs. They weren't sure what extraordinary properties were contained in the soil given them by the powerful man in the cave. However, it actually seemed to them that they had come across a bit of luck. Their eyes gleaming, they exchanged a glance, then shot out of the cave, taking Huang Daxian along very politely.

According to Meng Hao's requirements, they went searching for the soil.

Time passed by. Soon, it was half a month later. During that time, Meng Hao had become much more familiar with the art of Righteous Bestowal. The power of the art was difficult to fathom. It was similar to being able to touch something and make it become demonic; however, instead of using the word "touch" it used the word "bestow!"

Bestow Demonism upon any living thing, and use it. It also contained the character "righteous," which was the opposite of "evil." And yet, the art itself was clearly very aggressive and oppressive. It seemed like… receiving the Righteous Bestowal of a Demon Sealer gave the beneficiary some sort of official approval!

Furthermore, every time Meng Hao rotated his Cultivation base, he could feel a faint aura in existence. It seemed that if he wanted to… he could use this aura to perform the Righteous Bestowal and perform Demonic transformation.

The resulting demon would have no spirit, only an involuntary aura; however, Meng Hao would be able to control it. It would be a strange sensation, similar to the astral projection Meng Hao had read about in the ancient records of the Violet Fate Sect.

“Compel any living creature to become demonic….” Meng Hao eyes gleamed with a mysterious light. He lifted his hand and gazed at his finger. After a moment’s thought, he pushed his finger down against the floor of the Immortal’s cave.

“Righteous Bestowal!” he said. Immediately, ghost images sprang up throughout the Immortal’s Cave. Immediately he was able to sense a faint aura inside of the Immortal’s cave, set free from within the short mountain.

This aura was strange and filled with variations. Meng Hao’s senses couldn’t tell clearly exactly what it was. However, it didn’t take long for him to understand that this was… Demonic Qi of living things!

His eyes flickered as he sent his Spiritual Sense into the aura. A roaring filed his mind, and suddenly his field of vision expanded rapidly; he was now able to see everything for 150-200 kilometers around the short mountain.

By concentrating on the fusion of his Spiritual Sense and the Demonic Qi, he could sense everything in the area. Just when he was about to retract his vision, he suddenly saw something off to the northwest, what appeared to be a field of rubble. Ordinarily, he wouldn’t take note of it, but in this unique state, he suddenly heard a voice coming from within the rubble.

A mournful, archaic voice suddenly boomed out. “Heavens of Ji do not die; I do not die… Heavens of Ji…. You’ve been suppressing me for thirty thousand years, but I still refuse to step foot onto the Immortality Bestowal Dais!” As the voice echoed out, it suddenly said, “Who are you!?” Meng Hao felt as if a gaze as powerful as the Heavens had suddenly fallen upon him.

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# Chapter 320: Igniting the Alchemic Flame

Meng Hao’s heart trembled as his eyes snapped open. He pulled his fingers back from the ground; he felt as if some incredible force had battered him out of the strange state he was in just now.

His eyes glittered as he raised his head, allowing his gaze to pass through the rock walls of the Immortal’s cave to look toward the field of rocky rubble.

“So it’s another enemy of the Ji Clan. However, this person seems different from the square cauldron in the ancient Blessed Land. The fact that he noticed me shows that his will is still here!” After collecting his thoughts, Meng Hao rose and left the Immortal’s cave. Moments later he emerged from the fissure in the small mountain.

It was midday, and the sun burned brightly overhead, baking the land until it seemed it would bubble with grease. After leaving the mountain, Meng Hao looked in the direction of the field of rubble. After a moment of thought, he flicked the sleeve of his robe and shot off toward it.

It didn’t take long before he floated in mid-air above the field of rubble, looking down at it. It wasn’t a very large area, perhaps several dozen kilometers wide in either direction. The entire area was strewn with bizarrely shaped rocks, some of which were more than half sunken into the soil. Some, on the other hand, lay on the surface of the ground.

It gave off a very bleak air, as if each and every stone in this place had been here for ages.

Meng Hao didn’t get too close, choosing instead to remain up in the air. However after some time passed, he still had no idea what this place was. It seemed completely ordinary. Maintaining his attitude of vigilance, he sent out his Spiritual Sense to investigate further, but yet again came up empty handed.

“Of course,” thought Meng Hao. “This is exactly how you would expect it to be. Outsiders wouldn’t be able to notice anything unusual, not even me. If I hadn’t been in that unusual state, I would never have sensed anything strange here.” He decided not to rashly proceed forward, instead choosing to turn and leave.

Absolutely nothing happened as he left.

Back in the Immortal’s cave, he thought back to the powerful, archaic voice which had pierced into his mind, and the bone-deep rancor it had expressed regarding the Ji Clan.

“Heavens of Ji….” thought Meng Hao. After all of his experiences, his curiosity had been suppressed for far too long. However, he knew that in the Cultivation world, each step can be fraught with peril; a lack of caution can lead to mistakes that can never be righted.

Therefore, after thinking for a bit longer about the archaic voice, he decided to ignore it until he had a more powerful Cultivation base. At the moment, he was only at the early Core Formation stage, and as such, the situation was just too risky. Even though this person claimed to be an enemy of the Ji Clan, that didn’t necessarily mean he wouldn’t harm Meng Hao.

“With the help of this Demonic Qi, my Spiritual Sense can be amplified by several times…. Who knows the extent to which I can cultivate the art of Righteous Bestowal? I wonder if I can combine my will with the Qi to produce an Incarnation of myself?” Giving no more thought to the powerful voice, Meng Hao focused his attention onto the art of Righteous Bestowal. His first test of the art had left him with the sense that this technique was definitely beyond ordinary.

"I wonder if it might have something to do with cultivating the Dao Divinity Scripture, and how it made my Spiritual Sense far beyond that of any Cultivator of my same level." Meng Hao continued to analyze the matter calmly. Eventually the sky outside began to turn dark, and Meng Hao closed his eyes. Enlightenment regarding the art of Righteous Bestowal swirled within his head. He had the feeling that this technique was something extremely important to him.

A month passed, during which time Meng Hao never opened his eyes. One day, he sensed ten or more Cultivators outside of the Immortal's cave.

They wore deferential expressions, and were kowtowing just outside the cave. Each of them possessed some of the violet-green soil, and two of their number were the Foundation Establishment Cultivators from before.

During the past month, they had returned a few times. Each time, Meng Hao dispelled some of their poison, to the point where it was more than half gone. He had even bestowed them with medicinal pills. They had long since forgotten their other two Fellow Daoist friends who had been killed. In order to earn even more medicinal pills, they had recruited others they knew, and the group had formed a small-scale power base.

A few in the group had harboured ill intentions. However, after the ground shook and fierce tentacles burst out to rip them to shreds and eat them, anyone else with similar thoughts put them to rest.

When you added in the fact that Meng Hao gave out real medicinal pills as rewards, which to these Cultivators were extremely rare, it arose a zealous fanaticism among them.

In addition, the fact that Meng Hao's Cultivation base was deeply unfathomable to them also had something to do with it.

As for Huang Daxian, even though his Cultivation base wasn't very high, he held a special position within the group. At the moment, he stood outside of the Immortal's cave looking complacently out over the group of people. The meat jelly was perched on his head and the colourful parrot on his shoulder.

“I shall impart to you the words of the Patriarch,” he said. “You did well, and this is your reward.” He produced a small bottle, from within which he distributed a tiny medicinal pill to everyone present. As the Cultivators received their medicinal pill, their faces lit with excitement and they immediately consumed the pills.

Meng Hao didn’t have a lot of low level medicinal pills such as these in his bag of holding. Seeing the increase in the number of people during his month of secluded meditation, he had taken a single medicinal pill and refined it into dozens of smaller pills.

Even still, to these Cultivators, something like that was like a precious treasure, as different from the medicinal elixirs they usually consumed as Heaven was from the Earth.

It was thus not difficult to understand why the area around Meng Hao’s Immortal’s cave attracted a dozen or more Cultivators in one short month, all of them willing to join the group.

In fact, they had settled in the area, constructing simple houses that surrounded the Immortal’s cave and the small mountain. Eventually the mountain itself came to be a sort of holy ground….

Meng Hao had never anticipated that something like this would happen. However, this small-scale power base was providing him with more and more of the soil that he needed.

Because of this soil, Meng Hao ignored everything else. Based on his experience, the Cultivators who took up residence here were doing it not just for the sake of the medicinal pills, but also for protection.

Meng Hao was a formidable person, and although these people hadn’t seen much directly, the ferocity of the vines had been personally witnessed by quite a few eyes. People were able to draw the connection between the two; whoever was able to raise something like the vines must be terribly frightening.

Therefore, they believed this place to be safe.

In the Black Lands, safety was an invaluable treasure.

Actually, at one point during the month, a group of a dozen or so Cultivators belonging to a different local power group showed up. They desired to slay Meng Hao and take his medicinal pills by force. A single cold snort echoed out from within the Immortal’s cave, causing Heaven and Earth to shake, and instantly killing half of the group.

The other half coughed up blood and sustained serious injuries. The most powerful of their number was a Pseudo Core Formation expert. His shock was extreme, and he immediately retreated five kilometers. However, at that point he suddenly lost control of his own body; a powerful force bound him up and dragged him back. After seeing this, other Cultivators immediately swore fealty.

Shocked, even the Pseudo Core Cultivator gave in and became a member of Meng Hao’s group.

On one particular day, Meng Hao sat cross-legged in his Immortal’s cave, a strange light shining in his eyes. Within his pupils, something appeared like a burning fire. This was none other than the East Pill Division’s Everburning Flame legacy.

“Feed it with your Core, ignite the Everburning Flame. With this flame, the Spirit Summoning Incantation can be used, and a great path of the Dao of alchemy can be opened.” Meng Hao took a deep breath and closed his eyes. As he did, tongues of flame appeared on his Violet Core.

They appeared weak, but they did not burn out, and as they flickered there, they gradually grew stronger.

At the exact moment in which Meng Hao ignited his alchemic flame, off in the Southern Domain, within the East Pill Division of the Violet Fate Sect, Pill Demon sat in the limestone cave next to the Everburning Flame, his face devoid of blood.

“So you ignited the Everburning Flame, huh…? Good. With the legacy of the flame passed on, if I, your Master, end up returning to the dust, then he can smile on his way to the underworld.” Pill Demon smiled, a smile filled with kindness, and even more exhaustion. Clearly, he still hadn’t recovered from his battle with Ji Fang.

Pill Demon lifted his head to look at the East Pill Everburning Flame, and memories seemed to flicker within his eyes. “So long as this flame before me is not extinguished, then neither shall I be!”

More time passed, three months. In his Immortal’s cave in the small mountain in the Black Lands, Meng Hao was thoroughly engrossed in stoking the alchemic flame. No flame burned on his body, but a broiling heat surrounded him. His skin was as pale as before, but the Violet Core within him was now a ball of fire, burning oh so slowly.

This was none other than Meng Hao’s alchemic flame!

Three more days passed, and when Meng Hao opened his eyes, flames flickered within. They quickly disappeared, and as they did, Meng Hao turned his head to look toward the Southern Domain.

“These three months were like a dream,” he thought. “I dreamed of the look of kindness and praise on Master’s face.” As his alchemic flame had kindled brighter during the months, he could sense his Cultivation base growing stronger. He was now definitely at the peak of the early Core Formation stage.

After some time passed, he sent his Spiritual Sense sweeping about, and instantly gaped in shock.

He could see that the area surrounding his Immortal’s Cave was inhabited by dozens and dozens of Cultivators. Most were of the Qi Condensation stage, and six or seven were of the Foundation Establishment stage!

This was no longer a small-scale power, but a medium-scale power. They surrounded the small mountain in all directions; neatly arranged houses had been constructed, and the entire place was quite bustling.

Huang Daxian was now at the ninth level of Qi Condensation, close to Foundation Establishment. With a Foundation Establishment pill, it would not be difficult for him to break through.

That, of course, would require a stroke of luck, or perhaps assistance from totemic power. In the Black Lands, totemic tattoos were a common sight, just like the ones he had seen on those Foundation Establishment Cultivators earlier.

Now Meng Hao understood. Cultivators here who wanted to enter Foundation Establishment, but who did not have a Foundation Establishment Pill, had no other choice than to use totemic power to increase their chances of doing so.

Meng Hao had observed a bit of totem cultivation, and had even made some inquiries about it. The initial process didn’t seem difficult. Apparently, you simply had to kill some creature, then use its life blood to inscribe an image onto your body. Then, you would be able to wield totemic power.

Such a method seemed problematic. However, Meng Hao didn’t understand totemic arts too well, so it was difficult for him to analyze the specifics.

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# Chapter 321: Cover Over Li With the Heavens!

Outside of the Immortal’s cave, the parrot was currently soaring about in the sky, calling out with its shrill voice.

“Listen to me, all of you. Lord Fifth is a Celestial bird, an ancient Celestial bird. I know of the Heavens, and I know of the underworld, because there is nothing that Lord Fifth doesn’t know. If I’m in a good mood, then I’ll pass on to you a Celestial magic. Celestial magic! Do you know what that means? Now repeat after me, as loud as you can: Have faith in the Lord Fifth, gain eternal life! When the Lord Fifth appears, who dares to cause strife!” As it finished speaking, it landed onto Huang Daxian’s head, its expression lofty and proud, as if it were innately above all the masses.

“You’re nothing but a flashy bird!” said the meat jelly solemnly. It was currently perched atop the head of a Cultivator of the great circle of Foundation Establishment. “You call yourself Celestial, but you’re really just a bird. And what do you mean by the number five Lord? What is number five anyway? At the most you’re a First Lord!” The Cultivator beneath it gave a wry smile, his face pale.

“How many lives have I been trying to teach you this!?” said the parrot, glaring with contempt at the meat jelly. “You still can’t count past three? You’re not even qualified to talk to Lord Fifth!”

“Oh yeah? How high can you count?” asked the meat jelly, sounding both furious and humiliated.

“I can count to nine!” replied the parrot haughtily, glaring with wide eyes. Immediately, the meat jelly stared in shock as it tried to comprehend how vastly high of a number nine must be. It wanted to say something back to the parrot, but seeing its haughty appearance, the meat jelly realized that nine must be an incredibly high number. It suddenly started to feel a bit low in the self-esteem department.

All of the surrounding Cultivators had strange expressions on their faces, but none of them dared to hold back from repeating the words that so recently caused their blood to freeze upon hearing them. After all, they knew how fearsome the meat jelly and the parrot could be.

The meat jelly was completely indestructible. Two months before, yet another greedy nearby group had come, but the meat jelly had transformed into an enormous bubble and surrounded them. No matter what the dozen or so Cultivators inside had done they had been incapable of even leaving a mark.

Eventually, they had had no choice but to just look out helplessly. Eventually, the meat jelly had let them go, giving a provoking look to the parrot at the same time.

Later, another group of Cultivators arrived, and then, the local Cultivators caught a glimpse of what could be called true insanity, and true misery.

One of those Cultivators ended up cursing the parrot, whereupon the seemingly innocuous multicolored bird had… delved into any hole it saw, at top speed. In the blink of an eye, blood-curdling screams filled the air as the invading Cultivators had half their bodies filled with bloody holes as the parrot shot through them.

As for some of the unlucky ones, the parrot ended up shooting in and out of their eyes. Miserable screams rang out that people still couldn’t forget.

The man who had cursed the parrot, well, the parrot threatened the meat jelly, forcing it to transform the man into a luxuriantly furred ape.

Then… came a nightmare which continued to plague everyone who witnessed it.

With a howling roar, the parrot shot like lightning toward the hairy ape. Specifically, toward its rear end….

The shrill screams which came out of the mouth of that Cultivator, as well as the sinister and wicked excitement of the parrot, immediately caused everything else to be blanketed with thick silence….

After these two battles, the group’s power in the area was established, and no one dared to trifle with them.

The haughtiness of the parrot became well known, as was its love of cursing people, its pettiness, and its unwillingness to forget a grudge.

As for Huang Daxian, every time he saw the meat jelly or the parrot, he would flatter and fawn over them. Eventually, others learned from him. Soon, the entire region became the territory of the parrot and the meat jelly.

From then on, it was on a daily basis that the Cultivators would shout, “Have faith in the Lord Fifth, gain eternal life! When the Lord Fifth appears, who dares to cause strife!”

Their numbers grew, as did the range of their sphere of influence. As such, more and more of the Celestial soil was collected.

Meng Hao retracted his Spiritual Sense and examined his bag of holding. Actually, having so many people here was a bit of a headache. If any more people joined them, then even if Meng Hao had more medicinal pills, it still wouldn’t be enough.

After thinking about the situation for a while, Meng Hao stood and left the Immortal’s cave. As soon as he appeared, the meat jelly flew over. The parrot seemed a bit unwilling, but also approached and began to circle around Meng Hao. The vines popped up from the ground and swayed back and forth, seemingly happy to see him. Some of the Cultivators who had previously witnessed Meng Hao’s power also bowed to him in greeting.

The entire area was soon in relative chaos. Most of the people here had never seen Meng Hao, but had heard of him, and now craned their necks to catch a glimpse.

Meng Hao looked at the crowd with a frown and then walked over to the cistern located near the Immortal’s cave. Suddenly, he had an inspiration; he slapped his bag of holding, sending three medicinal pills flying out.

Before anyone could see clearly what exactly the pills were, Meng Hao had sent them directly into the cistern. Next, he performed a quick incantation gesture with his right hand, and then pointed at the cistern. The water began to seethe as if it were boiling, and an intense heat could be felt, as if an invisible fire were burning.

After a moment, a thick spiritual energy wafted out from the cistern, enveloping the entire area. The faces of all the Cultivators immediately changed, filling with shock and excitement.

Based on the thickness of the spiritual energy, it seemed like drinking a mouthful of the cistern water would be like drinking medicinal elixir.

“Everyone may drink once from this medicinal cistern!” said Meng Hao, giving a look toward Huang Daxian and the Cultivator of the great circle of Foundation Establishment. When his gaze passed over them, their hearts trembled; the Dao Pillars of the Foundation Establishment Cultivator trembled, as if they could sense the intensity and fearsomeness of Meng Hao.

Everyone slowly lowered their heads, and then Meng Hao turned, taking the Celestial soil that had been collected recently, and returning to the Immortal’s cave to study it and gain further enlightenment.

Another month passed. By this time, Meng Hao was able to study the soil for a sustained time equal to the burning of half an incense stick. During that time, he could observe the tiny figures formed from golden magical symbols, and their paintings.

Based on Meng Hao’s judgement, he had actually only collected one part out of hundreds. In order to gain enlightenment, he would need to collect a lot more of the Celestial soil.

Recently, Meng Hao had also suppressed the growth of his Core. The reason was that once his Core Qi appeared, it would signify that his Core was completely solidified; the only following step would be to achieve the Perfect Gold Core.

As far as the essence of his Core Qi, according to Meng Hao's understanding, it would be better to develop it after he acquired the Perfect Gold Core. He was confident that at that time, his battle prowess would experience instantaneous and incredible advancement.

On this particular day, after Meng Hao concluded his research, he rested for a moment, then once again tried out the art of Righteous Bestowal. His recent days had been spent on cultivating these two divine abilities. Of course, whenever he used the art of Righteous Bestowal, he would not go anywhere near the field of rubble.

The more he used it, the deeper his understanding became. He already had a basic mastery, and could fuse his will with Demonic Qi to create an Incarnation.

He placed his hand onto the ground, and ghost images sprang up everywhere. It took only a moment to merge his Spiritual Sense into the local Demonic Qi, and then send it out in all directions. At the moment, it could cover everything within a full three hundred kilometer radius. That was equivalent to the Spiritual Sense of the late Core Formation stage.

To reach past five hundred kilometers was possible only for Nascent Soul eccentrics.

As the amalgamation of Meng Hao's Spiritual Sense and the Demonic Qi spread out, it was as if he had an invisible body outside the Immortal's cave. This invisible body could go anywhere within the three hundred kilometer radius, directed by his will.

He saw the Cultivators outside the Immortal's cave. They were already seventy or eighty in number, all of various levels of cultivation. There was only one assignment they were tasked with; every day they had to leave the camp and then return with some of the violet-green Celestial soil. They could use any means necessary to do so. The greater amount one returned with, the more they would be allowed to drink from the medicinal cistern.

Meng Hao took a glance at it all, then ignored it, submerging himself in this strange state, traversing the local area, experiencing what it felt like to utilize the Demonic Qi.

Before he even realized it, an hour had passed. According to Meng Hao’s experience, the Incarnation he had formed using the art of Righteous Bestowal would only last for a little more than an hour. He was just about to disperse the effects of the art, when his Incarnation suddenly turned its head and looked off into the distance, eyes narrowed. He experienced no alarm, only calmness.

There, off in the distance, was the field of rubble. Shockingly, he could see a fog of black Qi emanating out, coalescing into the image of an enormous old man.

The old man was huge, as large as a giant, and he was looking at Meng Hao.

His lower half was formed from black mist, above which, he was dressed in a black robe. His white hair fluttered around him, and his eyes were like lightning. His expression was filled with ancient profundity, and a rift split the middle of his forehead. From within the rift emerged a host of tiny black snakes which wriggled and squirmed and emitted hissing noises.

“Greetings, senior,” said Meng Hao, clasping his hands and bowing.

The old man looked at Meng Hao for a moment. “I’ve been watching you,” he said. Then he continued, his voice containing no politeness: “Why do you have a Ji Clan Karma thread attached to you? Answer me!”

“That has nothing to do with you, sir,” replied Meng Hao with a cool frown.

“Oh?” said the old man with a piercing gaze. His aura suddenly flared out, and his entire body seemed to surge with Heavenly might. The black mist seethed, and the host of black snakes protruding from his forehead glared at

Meng Hao. Their forked tongues flicked in and out as they emitted savage screams.

At the same time, over a hundred enormous black pythons appeared in front of the old man, seemingly reflections of the small snakes on his forehead. After they appeared, they spread out in all directions. The sight of it was incredibly shocking.

Of course, no one but Meng Hao could see this, and his expression was as calm as ever.

“You came here once before,” said the old man, continuing to look at Meng Hao. “You saw the seal which suppresses me. That’s why you’re so confident, isn’t it?” His voice echoed out like thunder, causing even the sky to seem to grow dark.

“Correct,” replied Meng Hao casually.

The man stared at him for a while, then suddenly let out a hearty laugh. “Nice response. You have a Ji Clan Karma thread attached to you, which means you will have trouble evading their Karma in this life. Cultivators who have achieved enlightenment regarding the Essence of the Ninth Mountain and Sea become prey for the Ji Clan.

“You’re young, so for you to be able to sense the Essence of the Ninth Mountain and Sea means you must be on the path of some great legacy. However, such a path… will lead you into conflict with the Ji Clan. It seems to me you won’t get very far on your journey.” With another laugh, he turned and the black fog began to disappear.

Hearing the old man’s words caused Meng Hao to feel a bit confused. Seeing the man was about to disappear, he suddenly blurted, “What is the Essence of the Ninth Mountain and Sea? What does the Ji Clan want with it?”

“There are nine Mountains in the vastness. Each Mountain has four planets, as well as a sun and a moon which revolve around the Mountain and Sea. One Mountain, one Sea, one Essence. Acquire the Essence of a Mountain and Sea, become the Lord of the Mountain and Sea… The Lord of the Ninth Mountain and Sea was surnamed Li ( ), but he perished in a great calamity. The Mountain then had no Lord; therefore, all of the Immortals vied for the position!

“Lord Li had two subordinate Celestial warriors. The most powerful of the two changed his surname. He used the Heavens ( ) to cover over Li ( ), and called himself Ji ( ). From then on, Ancestor Ji occupied the Heavenly Palace. He hunted and killed ancient names, changed the positions of the Heavenly bodies, and sealed the hosts of Immortals….

“Tribulation for Mountain and Sea! A great war among the Stars. Immortals perished. There was boundless weeping. All living things raised their heads, but instead of glimpsing the stars, they saw the Heavens of Ji!” The old man’s powerful voice seemed to be filled with both laughter and insanity as he slowly disappeared.

Meng Hao floated in mid-air staring blankly. His mind spun, echoing with the old man’s words, and his bitter laughter, which seemed part song and part lunacy.

Here is a slightly closer look at the characters mentioned above:

Heaven

tian

Li

li

Ji

ji

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# Chapter 322: Ji Clan Bag of Holding

After quite some time passed, Meng Hao’s figure gradually disappeared, transforming into a pulsing aura which disappeared into nothing.

Back in the Immortal’s cave, he slowly opened his eyes. They were filled with an expression of blankness, as well as a somewhat embarrassing feeling of fear.

His breathing was a bit heavy. Everything the old man had said, every word, every sentence, continued to echo in Meng Hao’s mind like thunder.

Various memories began to flicker through his mind, and his eyes began to glow.

“The boundless Ninth Mountain…. Choumen Tai is from the Eighth Mountain’s Planet Tiger Cage, and participated in what he called the great war of the Ninth Mountain…. That must be the great war among the Stars that the old man talked about! 1

“Also, I remember that the Eighth Generation Demon Sealer said that he came across the legacy of the Seventh Generation Demon Sealer in the Sixth Mountain, which was how he joined the League of Demon Sealers. He said he refined half of the Sea of the Sixth Mountain to form his Demon Sealing Jade!” 2

Various clues that used to be scattered about in his mind were now being drawn together by the old man’s words. Now, he was getting a much clearer image of everything.

“The vastness beyond this world includes Nine Mountains and Seas of indescribable size. Each Mountain has its own respective sun and moon…. Each Mountain even has four planets! According to what Choumen Tai said, I’m on one of the four planets of the Ninth Mountain, Planet South Heaven!” In this instant, the world that Meng Hao used to know was torn to pieces. Everything was vastly larger than he had ever imagined. Currently, his mind was filled with knowledge of the Heavens that… only Immortals understood.

“The Ji Clan is powerful not just here on Planet South Heaven, but the other three planets as well. This is because Ancestor Ji seized the Essence of the Ninth Mountain and Sea and became the most powerful of all, eventually changing the Heavens of the Ninth Mountain! Ancestor Ji ( ) covered the name Li ( ) with the Heavens ( )! How audacious of him!” Meng Hao took a deep breath; he suddenly felt a great pressure upon him. Could he ever have truly imagined how powerful the Ji Clan was? It was unimaginably terrifying.

Furthermore, what he was up against was merely a minor branch of the Ji Clan here on Planet South Heaven.

“Karma thread….” he thought. “That must be the invisible thread that attached to me after I killed Ji Hongdong. With that thread stuck to me, I won’t be able to flee anywhere in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Hmm… I wonder what position the Fang Clan occupies?” He frowned, having no way to answer the question.

“The Essence of the Ninth Mountain and Sea…. Could that be the Demonic Qi I’m able to sense using the art of Righteous Bestowal? Is the Essence of the Ninth Mountain a Demon?” Meng Hao frowned. Considering his Cultivation base and experience, these were things that he had difficulty comprehending.

“Choumen Tai is from the Eighth Mountain. The Eighth Demon Sealer was from the Sixth Mountain. The Seventh Demon Sealer’s legacy was in the Sixth Mountain…. I’m the Ninth Demon Sealer from… the Reliance Sect.” Meng Hao’s mind was in complete disorder. It was as if some vast, mysterious scroll was slowly spreading out in front of him. The more he wished to see, the more of the scroll he needed to spread out.

“And then there’s that woman from the Solitary Sword Sect, Shan Ling. The Demon Sealing Jade said that she was a stone from the Ninth Mountain who fell to here and became a spirit….” Meng Hao rubbed the bridge of his nose. He felt like his entire mind was in a shambles. 3

“What kind of people were the previous eight generations of Demon Sealers? By cultivating their magic, I can sense the Essence of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. How powerful were they, exactly? And why didn’t Ancestor Ji approve of the League of Demon Sealers….” He frowned again. He liked thinking, but no matter how he thought about everything he knew, he couldn’t put all the pieces together. He was just missing too much information.

Using a tiny bit of information to try to understand a huge picture will of course lead to frustration.

“Demon Sealers, Demon Sealers…. If the Qi Essence of the Ninth Mountain and Sea is Demonic Qi, then wouldn’t the League of Demon Sealers be in a position above the Ninth Mountain and Sea? If that is the case, then I….” His heart began to pound at the enormity of the question. However, he quickly decided to dispel the notion.

“Impossible. If that were true, then how could the previous eight generations of Demon Sealers have perished? And why would I, the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer, be in such dire straits? My only Dao Protector is an old turtle who has long since fled.” Meng Hao laughed bitterly. No matter how he tried to get rid of the idea, it seemed impossible; and yet, it had taken root in his mind.

“The Eighth Demon Sealer had to experience Dao Tribulation in the Nine Mountains and Seas…. He didn’t say Ninth Mountain, he said Nine Mountains. He meant all of the Nine Mountains and Seas….” Meng Hao thought for a while, and then decided to stop analyzing everything. He let out a soft sigh. He knew that speculating would do him no good; he was nothing more than a Core Formation Cultivator.

“Who knows, I might never leave Planet South Heaven. The only way to do so is to reach Immortal Ascension .” He shook his head to clear his mind.

Immortal Ascension was just a vague concept to him; what was of more immediate concern was the path of the Perfect Gold Core.

In the following months of practice with the art of Righteous Bestowal, Meng Hao never again sensed the old man in the rubble field. However, he consistently had the feeling that he was being watched.

Through the months, the number of outside Cultivators who joined the force surrounding his Immortal’s cave surpassed one hundred. It was now the most powerful force in the entire region.

More than one hundred people surrounded the small mountain. The medicinal cistern was the second of the holy locations, the first being Meng Hao’s Immortal’s cave.

Every day, they were all required to recite the words regarding faith in the Lord Fifth bringing eternal life. Because of the sheer force of numbers, when they shouted their rallying cry, it sounded like thunder.

The increase in numbers did benefit Meng Hao. Whenever he needed something, a large group of Cultivators would appear at a single word to handle whatever matter it was. The parrot and the meat jelly seemed extremely interested in commanding all of the Cultivators. Therefore, Meng Hao didn’t need to pay them much attention, and instead left them to their devices.

On one particular day, Meng Hao sat cross-legged meditating, when suddenly his eyes snapped open. He could sense that the magical symbol on Ji Hongdong’s bag of holding had finally completely dissipated.

“I wonder what will be inside the bag of holding of a member of the Ji Clan…. It’s hard to say, considering that Ji Hongdong was just a member of the junior generation.” Now that he understood more of the fearsome power of the Ji Clan, his anticipation was even greater. He took out the bag of holding and scanned it with Spiritual Sense.

His face immediately changed, and he gasped.

“He was definitely worthy of being a Ji Clansman….” he murmured. “I made out big this time!” He had long anticipated that the contents of the bag of holding would by no means disappoint. However, regardless of the vast power and resources of the Clan, Ji Hongdong was a tiny member of the junior generation. As such, Meng Hao had assumed he wouldn’t be disappointed, but also didn’t expect too much.

However, it seemed he had underestimated the resources of a member of the Ji Clan Quasi-Array….

“Ultra high-grade quality Spirit Stones….” A glow shone over Meng Hao’s right hand as a Spirit Stone appeared. The interior of the Spirit Stone was turbid, not translucent. It looked ordinary, and was something most people had never even seen. However, Meng Hao was familiar with it.

This was the exact same type of ultra high-grade Spirit Stone he had used to duplicate the wooden sword all those years ago!

Such Spirit Stones were incredibly useful. Meng Hao had long since run out of them. When he thought back to how he had squandered them that time, his heart hurt. In fact, considering that he felt that particular wooden sword to be only moderately powerful, it really felt like a waste.

He really regretted his ignorance at that time. Having practiced cultivation down to now, he truly understood the value of ultra high-grade Spirit Stones. In all of the Southern Domain, high-grade Spirit Stones could be found, but the ultra high-grade variety were exceedingly rare.

As he looked at the Spirit Stone in his hand, power suddenly surged from his Cultivation base. The Spirit Stone began to glow with a resplendent light. At the same time, an immense amount of spiritual energy emanated out, filling the entire Immortal’s cave.

It permeated the cave, spilling outside as well. The more than hundred Cultivators outside all opened their eyes wide with shock as they sensed the spiritual energy.

“Fifty ultra high-grade Spirit Stones!” thought Meng Hao. He suppressed his excitement; to him, such a collection of Spirit Stones would be incredibly useful. They could serve as the nucleus of certain magical treasures or spell formations.

Furthermore, he could also try to duplicate the Primordial Heavenly Replenishing Pill, which he needed to help recover his longevity. Then, he would be able to use the Blood Immortal mask again, and wield its shocking power.

He began to put the Spirit Stone back. “Alright, so there’s Spirit Stones. What else is… oh!?” Suddenly, his body began to tremble, and he rose to his feet, a look of disbelief on his face.

“This… this….” He began to pant, astonishment written on his face. Just now, something had happened which he hadn’t sensed in a long time… spiritual energy had flowed into his body!

This place was neither the Blood Immortal Legacy zone, nor the Song Clan. But suddenly, he was able to absorb the spiritual energy in the area. It poured directly into his body, seeping in through his pores, filling him.

The sensation of being able to once again absorb the spiritual energy of Heaven and Earth caused Meng Hao to close his eyes. Ever since he had formed the Perfect Foundation, he had been unable to absorb spiritual energy in any place other than the Blood Immortal Legacy zone and the Song Clan.

A moment later, he opened his eyes, and they glowed with an intense light. He had already absorbed all of the spiritual energy in the entire area, including that outside the Immortal’s cave.

This in itself completely changed his impression of this bag of holding. His mind was spinning even more intensely than it had when he heard the words of the old man in the field of rubble.

“Ultra high-grade Spirit Stones….” He once again looked at the Spirit Stone he held in his hand. He rotated his Cultivation base, and felt boundless spiritual energy surging into him. This proved his assumption; it was not an illusion.

"It must have something to do with my Cultivation base. In any case, it seems that once I form the Perfect Gold Core, I can still use ultra high-grade Spirit Stones to absorb spiritual energy. I couldn't do that during Foundation Establishment. With these Spirit Stones, I won't have to only rely on medicinal pills and the Violet Pupil Transformation to heal myself." He looked back down at the fifty ultra high-grade Spirit Stones in the bag of holding. As of this moment, they were even more valuable to Meng Hao than they had been before.

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# Chapter 323: Goddess Duo Lan1

Meng Hao took a deep breath. The glow in his hand lasted for a long time before he finally put away the ultra high-grade Spirit Stone. After that, a silver-colored magical symbol appeared above his palm. It began to emit a silver glow, as well as a faint aura that floated up into the air and transformed into more magical symbols. It gave Meng Hao a feeling very similar to that given off by the Celestial soil.

The magical symbols emanated powerful ripples which immediately caused Meng Hao to feel a sense of danger; he examined everything closely before sending the symbol away.

“Exactly as I anticipated. To kill a son of the Ji Clan, one must not get involved in a prolonged battle. Exterminate like lightning, giving him no chance to use any magical items…. If I hadn’t been so decisive in my use of the blood-colored mask, then I’m afraid….” Fear filled him as he thought back to the fight; had he hesitated in the slightest, there might have been a much different outcome.

The Ji Clan was truly fearsome; Meng Hao just couldn’t believe that they wouldn’t have some powerful tricks up their sleeves. The main reason he had achieved victory was because he had attacked like a clap of thunder, giving his opponent little time to react.

Looking at the silver magical symbol, Meng Hao could tell that it required preparation time to use.

“At its very weakest, this thing is more powerful than my Cultivation base; I’m just not sure exactly how to use it.” After thinking for a moment, his hand flickered again; this time, a translucent pill bottle appeared.

Clearly visible inside was a medicinal pill the size of a longan fruit 2. The pill was branded with the image of a hand. Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he opened the pill bottle; after sniffing the aroma of the pill, he was visibly moved.

“This is not an ordinary medicinal pill! This is… a one hundred percent consummate pill!” He took a deep breath as he closely examined the pill. A long moment later, a look of amazement filled his eyes.

“Soul Procurement Pill! One of the three great ancient medicinal pills! A consummate Soul Procurement Pill!” Breathing deeply, he examined it once again to confirm he was correct. He was. There was no mistake. His expression filled with wonder.

Of the three great ancient medicinal pills, Meng Hao already possessed a Primordial Heavenly Replenishing Pill. Therefore, he would be able to compensate for longevity he had squandered. Also, his Master had given him three Outlander Pills, which he could use to suppress the Resurrection Lily, as well as add to his longevity.

“The Nascent Soul of a Nascent Soul Cultivator is based on the five elements, and is divided into five colors. A Four Color Nascent Soul is actually considered the ultimate. With a Flawless Foundation and a Violet Core, along with a One Color Soul Procurement Pill, then it’s possible to add one more element!

“If I had four elements, then this pill could increase it to five. But, if I already had five elements, then… would it be able to become a Six Color Nascent Soul? Too bad it doesn’t matter how many times you consume this pill, it will only be effective once.” He held the One Color Soul Procurement Pill and stared at it, his eyes glittering. Finally, he carefully put it away.

He had the strong feeling that this pill would be extremely important to him in the future!

Next, he looked down at the bag of holding as he pulled out a fishing rod.

It was long and slender, and completely emerald in color. He hefted it in his hand, not quite sure exactly what function it served. It was glittering and translucent, and also appeared to be very sharp; the hook at its end shone with a cold light.

“This thing….” After a moment’s pause, he flicked the rod; immediately an illusory pool of water appeared in front of him. The fish hook flew down into the pool of water, and as it did, a tremor ran through Meng Hao’s body. He heard the sound of infants wailing, the gasping breath of old people just before death, the laughter of able-bodied men, the stubborn oaths uttered by teenagers. He heard the voices of all living things.

The sounds entered his mind and heart, shaking them. He felt as if he would be torn apart. He immediately loosened his hand; the fishing pole fell to the ground, and everything else vanished.

It had only taken that brief moment for Meng Hao’s entire body to be covered with sweat. His breath came in ragged gasps.

“What is this thing?” he thought, looking down at the fishing pole. It didn’t look like anything particularly extraordinary at first, but now, it seemed vastly mysterious.

This was especially so when he thought about how terrifying the Ji Clan was; clearly, this fishing pole must surely be some type of important item.

Some time passed, after which Meng Hao put the fishing pole away. He looked back at the bag of holding. Other than a collection of ordinary Spirit Stones, there seemed to be only one other noteworthy item.

It was a box.

The box was square, seemingly crafted from jade, and yet not. It was pitch black, and on the right corner was a mark, a character.

Fang ( ).

The box seemed ancient, permeated with an archaic aura. Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he slowly opened it. Inside was a single glove. It was as soft as the wing of a cicada as he picked it up.

He used Spiritual Sense to examine it carefully for a moment before placing it on his right hand. The instant he put it on, he sensed an incredible power exploding out from within it, flowing into his right hand.

He took a deep breath and looked at his hand. There was no glove visible; however, when he made a fist, cracking sounds could be heard, as if the air itself was being pulled toward it. Everything in the Immortal’s cave trembled, then flew into the air toward Meng Hao’s closing fist. Even the air seemed to be reduced, by at least half, sucked into the fist.

“What power….?” Suddenly, an image in his mind appeared of the young woman of the Fang Clan, and her terrifying fist.

“Fang…. This item must be related to the Fang Clan. If it is, though, why is it in the bag of holding of a member of the Ji Clan? Furthermore, why wouldn’t he use it?” After much pondering of the matter, he remained puzzled. All of the other items, the ultra-high-grade Spirit Stones, the fishing pole, even the silver-colored magical symbol, were things that required time to use. Ji Hongdong had no time to use any of them.

And yet he didn’t wear the glove, which was clearly extraordinary. Had he put it on, it would not have been so easy to kill him.

“I still have his blood,” thought Meng Hao. “When I’m able to create a Blood Spirit, then its consciousness will be linked to me, and I will be able to see his memories. Perhaps then I can find out the answer.” He took some time to feel the power of his right hand, then slowly opened it. He looked once again at the bag of holding. Inside were some miscellaneous items. As for the ordinary Spirit Stones, there were about twenty or thirty thousand, not enough to duplicate any of the medicinal pills he needed to copy.

Eyes glittering, he put the bag of holding away.

With these objects, he now had even more ability to rise to power outside of the Southern Domain. He could truly roam free now.

“Except, I can’t at the moment,” he thought, shaking his head. He retrieved Ji Hongdong’s bell, then spit out a mouthful of Qi from his Core and melded the two together. He then studied it for a while, trying to figure out how to use it. Like the other objects, it seemed that learning how to use it would require a bit of research.

“There’s no hurry. My wounds are healed, and the time to emerge is almost here. First, though, I need to duplicate the Primordial Heavenly Replenishing Pill!” At first he was a bit hesitant; he knew that the One Color Soul Procurement Pill could only be used once. Unfortunately, there was no way to test whether the Primordial Heavenly Replenishing Pill had a similar restriction.

If it did, then duplicating it would be a waste. However, if he didn’t duplicate it, but could use it more than once, it would be a huge loss.

He had a decisive disposition. Therefore, eyes glittering, he pulled out the copper mirror and the Primordial Heavenly Replenishing Pill. He took a deep breath, and then began to duplicate it with an ultra high-grade Spirit Stone.

The three great ancient medicinal pills were rare in the modern world, and he wasn’t sure at first if duplicating it would even work. It pained him a bit to have to spend five of the ultra high-grade Spirit Stones to duplicate one pill.

He immediately put the duplicate into his mouth.

Time passed by. Several days later, his hair slowly began to change. It was no longer white, but black; his face began to show signs of color, and soon shone with life. His entire person glowed, and in fact, his Cultivation base had even grown. It wouldn’t be long before he would be able to break into the mid Core Formation stage.

Meng Hao held back though. His primary goal was the Perfect Gold Core; he could not turn back once Core Qi appeared and he entered the mid Core Formation stage.

A few more days passed before he opened his eyes. They glowed with a bright and piercing light. His longevity was completely restored. He cast his Spiritual Sense outside, where it was currently early morning. Beneath the dawn sun, the parrot was flying in circles in the sky, continuously calling out orders to the more than one hundred people below.

“Lord Fifth is going to teach you a Celestial spell formation. This Celestial spell formation uses people as its base! I guarantee that if you master the formation, then you will be invincible! Now, cry out the words with me!”

“Have faith in the Lord Fifth, gain eternal life! When the Lord Fifth appears, who dares to cause strife!” The roaring of the more than one hundred Cultivators was like thunder….

The meat jelly sat off to the side, face filled with disdain. However, it couldn’t conceal the envy and jealousy it felt inside.

Meng Hao had watched similar scenes on multiple occasions recently. He had merely smiled wryly and ignored it. He was just about to retract his Spiritual Sense, when suddenly he frowned. He pushed two fingers down against the ground and invoked the art of Righteous Bestowal. The Qi in the area poured into him, focusing in his eyes. Combining his vision with his Spiritual Sense, his swept the region with his gaze. There, several hundred kilometers away, was a procession of Cultivators, flying in this direction.

In the lead was a man and a woman. The man wore a gold mask, and Meng Hao recognized his aura. It was Black Lands Dao Child Luo Chong! 3

The woman next to him wore a fine gauze veil; her beautiful features were just barely visible behind the hazy fabric. She seemed to embody all of the beauty in Heaven and Earth.

She had long, slender legs, and a full chest. This, coupled with the somewhat provocative gown she wore, made her emanate a fatal attractiveness.

The garment hugged her slender waist, accenting her curvaceous rear end. On her forehead was a totemic tattoo of a butterfly, which made her appearance even more arousing.

Her arms seemed as if they were carved from jade, and were also decorated with glittering totem tattoos. Behind these two people were four more. Two were masked Black Lands Cultivators of the mid Core Formation stage.

The other two were large-framed; at a glance, it was obvious that these were powerful Western Desert experts. The four of them were obviously the followers of Luo Chong and the woman.

“This is one of the most infertile regions within the Black Lands,” said Luo Chong. “The only people who live here are lowbred Rogue Cultivators, not decent enough even for you to look at. Goddess Duo Lan, why exactly does your visit from the Western Desert bring you here?” Luo Chong’s face was hidden behind his mask, but a warm smile could be heard as he spoke. His eyes sparkled with intense adoration as he looked at the woman.

She gave him a graceful smile that looked like a blooming lily. She was without a doubt a natural born beauty. Her smile caused Luo Chong to breathe a bit more heavily. She was just about to respond to him, when suddenly, her phoenix-like eyes flickered. The butterfly totem on her forehead flickered as if it were about to fly out.

“Who are you?!”

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1. Duo Lan’s name in Chinese is duǒ lán – Duo is a surname, which also means “flower.” Lan means “orchid”

2. Longan literally means “dragon’s eye,” and is a common fruit in China, similar to lychee.

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# Chapter 324: The Cutting Edge of the Black Lands

Meng Hao sat cross-legged in his Immortal’s cave, the fingers of his right hand pushed against the ground, eyes closed. His Spiritual Sense was currently merged with the mountain’s Demonic Qi. Not only was the range of his Spiritual Sense now greater, but the sensation that he could form an Incarnation was even stronger than ever.

Luo Chong of the Black Lands and the woman from the Western Desert were directly in front of Meng Hao’s field of vision. The world in front of him was a rippling blur, both the air, the land, as if it were some other location.

Luo Chong and the four others were also rippling, blurry figures. As for the beautiful woman, however, as soon as her butterfly fluttered into action, she immediately became crystal clear.

Meng Hao looked at her, and in that same instant, she looked back at him.

To the woman, however, Meng Hao did not appear as the image of a person, but rather, a blurry mountain!

The mountain was not very high, but emanated a majestic and vigorous will; it rose up above the earth, exerting a pressure that made the woman’s face flicker.

“Demon….” Her eyes flashed and her pupils constricted. “Sir, I am Duo Lan from the Western Desert. I have no intention of offending you, Demon Lord….” Her voice was soft and filled with fear.

Meng Hao didn’t respond. He looked at her closely for a moment, especially the totem on her forehead.

After a moment the image of the mountain faded away from the woman’s vision, disappearing without a trace.

Her entire body shook, and her eyes shined with a bright glow. She began to breathe heavily, which made her chest rise and fall. This in turn caught the attention of Luo Chong.

“Goddess Duo Lan,” he said, sounding surprised, “what happened?” He could see that her face was somewhat pale. It wasn’t just him that noticed; the four people behind them had also seen it.

“Nothing,” she replied with a smile, quickly recovering her composure. However, a look of fear still lingered in her eyes.

At the same time, back in the Immortal’s cave in the short mountain, Meng Hao opened his eyes. They glittered brightly as he lifted up his hand to look at his two fingers.

“This is the first time I’ve entered this state and then seen… the power of totems. It seems as if they have something to do with Demons!” A thoughtful look appeared in his eyes. In the past, he had done a bit of research regarding totem variations, but had never been able to determine anything definitive. However, the woman just now had been using totemic power, and had been able to sense him. Furthermore, he sensed Demonic Qi coming from her totem tattoo.

“Interesting,” he thought, closing his eyes again.

Not much time passed before Luo Chong, Duo Lan and the four others neared Meng Hao’s group of Cultivators.

Their approach caused the Cultivators in the area to look up toward them. As soon as they saw the golden mask worn by Luo Chong, and the two green-robed Cultivators behind him, as well as the Western Desert Cultivators, their faces immediately filled with awe and veneration.

In the Black Lands there were two great powers, sort of like empires. One was the Black Lands Palace, the other was the United Nine.

The United Nine was a group of allied cities controlled by different Cultivator Clans. Of the two, however, the Black Lands Palace was the most frightening. Its Cultivators wore masks, the colors of which indicated the level of their Cultivation base.

Azure masks represented Core Formation. Silver masks represented Nascent Soul. Gold masks represented Dao Children.

The Black Lands Palace ruled by force in the Black Lands. It was referred to as the number one power, and was known to have the support of the Western Desert. Because of that, even the Sects of the Southern Domain feared the Black Lands Palace.

A Dao Child from the Black Lands Palace was like a Chosen of the Heavens. One word from him could determine life or death for these Cultivators. He was the Heavens, they were nothing but bugs.

The parrot tilted its head up, looking with contempt at the group flying through the sky. Next to it, the meat jelly had a solemn look on its face. “These people are immoral,” it muttered. “They are just too wicked….”

Up in mid-air, Luo Chong’s gaze swept over the group, and he suddenly let out a cold snort.

The sound of it fell upon the group of Cultivators. It felt like the fury of an emperor, causing all of them to silently lower their heads and kowtow.

Seeing this caused a pleased expression to fill Luo Chong’s eyes. He looked over at the incredibly beautiful Duo Lan.

“Goddess Duo Lan, what exactly are you looking for?” he said with a smile. “We have a bunch of backwater Cultivators here. I can make them go looking for whatever it is you need.” Based on his words, he obviously really did view the Cultivators down below as nothing more than insects.

Duo Lan’s pretty brow furrowed slightly, and she hesitated. She thought about the place she wished to locate, and it was true: having people familiar with the area would be of help. Just when she was about to nod in agreement, her eyes suddenly narrowed. She had just seen that in the middle of the location occupied by the Cultivators, was a small mountain.

At first glance, the mountain seemed strange to her. At second glance, she felt a peculiar sensation that made her think back to the Demon she had just seen….

Luo Chong happened to see her looking over at the mountain. He glanced at it passingly before his gaze came to fall on the medicinal cistern. As soon as he saw it, his eyes narrowed, and he shot forward through the groups of people to land directly next to it.

He scooped up some water and sampled it, after which his eyes shined brightly.

“This is a natural medicinal elixir cistern! The quality is amazing, the highest quality!” He laughed heartily, ignoring the incensed expressions of the surrounding Cultivators. He waved his right hand, within which appeared a jade bottle that he prepared to fill with the medicinal cistern.

“If I procure some of the medicinal stones from this area,” he thought, “I can take this cistern back with me and put in the Palace!” It seemed that escorting this beautiful woman was going to pay off for him after all.

In the blink of an eye, the bottle shot out into the air. The cistern water began to gurgle, and then shoot toward the bottle. The more than one hundred Cultivators in the area were growing more and more furious. It was hard to say who was first, but they all stood up in quick succession, their eyes shining with hatred. Black Lands Cultivators are inherently a cruel and savage lot, and to see someone so brazenly steal their cultivation resources caused their veneration to turn into frenzy.

However, in the exact instant in which all of the Cultivators stood up en masse, one of the mid Core Formation Cultivators floating up in mid-air gave off a cold snort. The sound transformed into something like rolling thunder which swept across the ground, causing the faces of the other Cultivators to instantly go pale. Some of them even coughed up blood.

“You people sure are brazen!” said Luo Chong with a cold laugh. “I’m a Dao Child, and I’ve taken a liking to this medicinal cistern. That’s good luck for the cistern, as well as you. If I didn’t need you to help Goddess Duo Lan, then based on your actions just now, I would have a mind to exterminate the lot of you!”

As soon as the words left his mouth, a calm voice echoed out from within the small mountain. “They may be brazen, but your temper takes the cake.”

The suddenness of the voice caused Luo Chong to immediately turn, a look of concentration in his eyes. The two Black Lands azure-masked Cultivators from up above shot down to appear on either side of him, their eyes flashing. They had already scanned the mountain with Spiritual Sense, but hadn’t detected anyone within. This unexpected voice immediately filled them with fear.

As Meng Hao’s voice echoed out, he reached down and touched the ground with one finger. The ground shook, and vast quantities of Demonic Qi tendrils rose up from the ground. They emanated out from the mountain and began to congeal at its peak.

No one could see this Qi, not even Luo Chong and his companions. The only thing they could sense was a crushing feeling of danger. The two Western Desert Cultivators, on the other hand, as well as Duo Lan, could clearly see it. Their faces flickered as the huge amount of Qi began to take the shape of a phantom figure.

The phantom figure seemed to be draped with a black robe. His features were indistinguishable, but as he stood there, he seemed to be fused with the mountain, as if he were the mountain, and the mountain was him.

Duo Lan was experiencing the exact same feeling she had from moments ago.

She looked around and realized that the more than one hundred local Cultivators all had looks of respect on their faces. They were not kowtowing to the short mountain, but, the sight in front of her reminded her of what you might see in a Tribe of the Western Desert.

Such Tribe members were constantly prostrating themselves to the most powerful totems in the tribe. That was how they acquired totemic power…. What she was seeing here was the early stages of such an arrangement.

Suddenly, the black phantom atop the short mountain flickered, gathering together the Demonic Qi in the area and shooting toward Luo Chong and the other two people with him. Though they couldn't see it, they could feel the danger, and retreated in shock.

However, the speed of their retreat could not compare to the quickness of the black phantom. Just when they were about to collide, Duo Lan's face twisted. She could not allow the Dao Child of the Black Lands Palace to die right in front of her. That would most certainly affect her prestige. She lifted her right hand and then waved a finger; the butterfly on her forehead flew out, speeding directly toward Luo Chong and the others.

At the same time, the two Western Desert Cultivators let out gruff roars. A giant bear totem coalesced, snarling as it charged forward. After that was a giant elephant, which also barrelled ahead.

In the blink of an eye, the phantom Meng Hao had created with the art of Righteous Bestowal was now racing to attack six individuals at the same time.

An explosion rippled out; Meng Hao's Demonic Qi phantom shook and then dissolved. Blood sprayed from Luo Chong's mouth. The faces of the two azure-masked Cultivators went pale. One of them grabbed Luo Chong and shot backward. The two Western Desert Cultivators howled as they retreated backward several paces. As for Duo Lan, her face flushed red briefly before returning to normal.

"Your Excellency, Demon Lord, we're here today…." She actually felt a bit relieved, and was about offer words of mediation when suddenly a cold snort echoed out from within the short mountain.

“My Incarnation is a bit weak,” said Meng Hao lightly. The black Qi around him covered his body, which suddenly flashed, speeding out of the Immortal’s cave like a black smoke.

In the blink of an eye, he was in front of the bear totem Western Desert Cultivator. He raised his right hand, the one covered in the diaphanous glove, and formed a fist, which then descended down toward his opponent.

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# Chapter 325: Tribulation Transcending Miraculous Life Form!

Boom!

As the fist descended upon the bear totem Western Desert Cultivator, his face flickered. The first thing that happened was that the giant bear shook violently and then shattered into countless pieces. As the boom echoed out, the man’s body caved in. Blood sprayed from his mouth in seven or eight spurts as he was hurled violently backward several hundred meters. Eventually he ground to a halt, coughed up another mouthful of blood, and then sagged visibly, his body covered in blood.

His complexion suddenly seemed to grow older. Before he had even stopped moving, he’d changed from being a middle-aged man, to an ancient one. His hair was gray, his skin covered with wrinkles, and his eyes listless.

Most terrifying of all, the three totem tattoos on his body faded and then disappeared.

Shockingly, a tiny, shrieking phantom version of the enormous bear from just now, floated above Meng Hao’s right hand.

Meng Hao wasn’t finished. In the space of a single breath, he took a step forward and lashed out with three more fist strikes.

The first fist slammed into the elephant totem Western Desert Cultivator. Blood showered from his mouth as he tumbled backward about fifty meters. He groaned, and it sounded like his body might be about to explode. He rapidly grew older; his life force dissipated, and his totems faded. Now a bear and an elephant circled around Meng Hao's hand.

His second punch slammed into the chest of one of the azure-masked Cultivators. Crunching sounds could be heard, and the man screamed. His mask shattered as blood shot from his mouth. He also was flung backward fifty meters or so; his body aged rapidly, and it seemed as if his Cultivation base might collapse.

The third punch landed onto the other azure masked Cultivator. His Cultivation base was a bit weaker than the other; he had just stepped into the early Core Formation stage and as such, his Core was not completely stable. Meng Hao's fist strike sent him tumbling back about thirty-five meters; his scalp went numb as he felt a terrifying power surging through his body, destroying everything. His Core shattered, and then his entire body exploded into a haze of blood and gore.

All of this happened in the blink of an eye. Then, Meng Hao was in front of Luo Chong. His diaphanously gloved hand shot out, latching onto Luo Chong's neck, lifting him up into the air.

Behind his gold mask, Luo Chong's eyes shone with intense fear and astonishment. His body trembled and he panted raggedly. However, he didn't dare to struggle. He could sense the intense killing intent emanating out from his faceless attacker. The denseness of the killing intent caused his mind to reel.

Seeing Meng Hao's billowing killing intent, Duo Lan's face paled and she cried, "Great Demon Lord, please listen to me! We harbor no ill intentions. What happened just now was a misunderstanding. Great Demon Lord, I beg you to forgive our hot-headedness. We did not know this was your territory. Great Demon Lord please stay your hand…. We are willing to provide compensation for our actions just now."

"Great Demon Lord," gushed Luo Chong, "this… this is all just a misunderstanding. Really, just a misunderstanding…." He felt like he already had one foot in the grave, the same feeling he'd had when facing

Fang Mu from the Southern Domain, about whom he still frequently had nightmares.

That was the first time he'd felt like this. Now was the second.

Except, the feeling this time was even more intense than the first time. All of his arrogance from moments ago had completely disintegrated.

"Misunderstanding?" said Meng Hao, his voice hoarse, like two rocks rubbing against each other. His left hand reached into his robe to pull out a medicinal pill. He shoved it into Luo Chong's mouth, and then sent an identical pill shooting over toward Duo Lan.

"Consume that pill," he said coolly, "and then we can consider this matter a misunderstanding." Luo Chong's eyes flickered with even more intense fear. He wasn't sure what medicinal pill he had just consumed, but he could imagine what it might be. There was nothing he could do about it now; he would have to wait until he got back to the Black Lands Palace, where the effects could surely be dispelled.

Duo Lan's face flickered as she hesitated. She didn't care too much whether Luo Chong lived or died. However, if she didn't consume the pill, then the result of the offense given just now would not be good.

Gritting her beautiful teeth, Duo Lan lifted up the medicinal pill and then swallowed it down. She looked at Meng Hao.

He loosened his hand, then flicked his sleeve and turned to walk back toward the mountain. Purposely putting an imperious expression onto his face, he said, "Get the hell out of here. If you ever again enter the area three hundred kilometers in any direction, the poison will kill you! No alchemist under Heaven can neutralize my demonic pills." With that, he disappeared into the Immortal's Cave.

Luo Chong, Duo Lan and the others hesitated only for a moment before disappearing off into the distance.

When they were about a hundred kilometers away, they finally stopped and looked back in the direction of Meng Hao's Immortal's cave.

"Dammit…. Once I get back to the Black Lands Palace, I'll dispatch some people to wipe that place out!" said Luo Chong, a dangerous look on his face.

"I'll take care of it," said one of the old azure-masked Cultivators through clenched jaw. "Let's see what superhuman abilities that guy really has. I'll…" Before he could finish speaking however, a single word suddenly rang out from nowhere.

"Bestow!"

One word. The instant it echoed out, the azure-masked Cultivator began to tremble. Luo Chong and the others watched in astonishment as a pulsating black aura emerged from his ears, eyes, nose and mouth. Soon a massive black aura was spreading out from him. As for Duo Lan, she could see that above the old man's head was a phantom figure; it was none other than Meng Hao's Righteous Bestowal Demonic Incarnation.

The blurry Demonic Incarnation burrowed into the man's body through the top of his head. The azure-masked Cultivator began to scream, and his right arm suddenly began to quiver. Luo Chong watched on in astonishment as the man's right arm suddenly struck out toward his own forehead.

A boom could be heard as the man's head exploded, killing him instantly.

"Take care of yourselves," said Meng Hao coolly before disappearing.

Everything was as silent as death.

Luo Chong's body shook uncontrollably, and he immediately abandoned any thoughts about what he had just been talking about. The only thing he could think of was that he would never come with three hundred kilometers of this place ever again.

Duo Lan was panting and her eyes were wide. She had seen some so-called Demon Lords in the Western Desert, but none of them were as bizarrely frightening as this one.

“What if it was turned into a totem…?” thought Duo Lan. Her heart beat even faster.

Maintaining their silence, the remaining four Cultivators shot off into the distance.

Outside the Immortal’s cave, the retreat of Luo Chong and the others caused the eyes of the more than one hundred Cultivators to fill with fanaticism. Cultivators worshipped the powerful, and the power displayed by Meng Hao just now left their minds reeling and hearts trembling.

“Did you see that?” squawked the parrot, immediately flying up into the air. Its eyes slowly passed over the amassed Cultivators. “That was none other than Lord Fifth’s Celestial magic! If you diligently practice your cultivation according to my methods, then it won’t be long before you are just as powerful!”

Back in the Immortal’s cave, Meng Hao’s looked down at his right hand, and his eyes filled with a mysterious glow.

“This right hand, coupled with the power of my Cultivation base and the Demonic Qi, can exterminate the mid Core Formation stage. However, when it comes to late Core Formation, my only option is to use the Blood Immortal mask.

“Either way, considering I’m at the peak of the early Core Formation stage, there aren’t many other Core Formation Cultivators who are a match for me. Once I succeed with the Perfect Gold Core and enter mid Core Formation, a Cultivator in the same stage who could deal with me would be a rarity indeed!” His eyes gleamed with self-confidence.

As far as he was concerned, the difference between the power he had wielded in Foundation Establishment, and his power now, was vast.

“Getting the last medicinal plant ingredient won’t be hard. But the Heavenly Tribulation which will come after I form the Perfect Gold Core… that will be a problem.” Meng Hao frowned. That was what he had the most misgivings about. The Heavenly Tribulation from back in Foundation Establishment had been terrifying. If the Blood Immortal Legacy hadn’t fought against it for him, Meng Hao would never have been able to form the Perfect Foundation.

Muttering to himself, his eyes glittered as he sent his Spiritual Sense out with a message. A few moments later, flapping sounds could be heard as the colorful parrot flew in from outside, looking a bit impatient.

“What’s going on?!” it said, eyeing Meng Hao. “Don’t you know that Lord Fifth is in the middle of training those Cultivators out there? Don’t you know how precious Lord Fifth’s time is?”

“How do I transcend Heavenly Tribulation?” asked Meng Hao, not beating around the bush.

“Heavenly Tribulation?” The Parrot stared in shock, and then flew a few circles around Meng Hao, seemingly sizing him up from various angles. Finally, it made a clucking noise and shook its head. It sighed. “Nobody can transcend it. You’re dead. It seems that I, Lord Fifth, ancient Celestial bird, should consider getting a new master.”

It was about to leave, when Meng Hao, his expression the same as ever, calmly said, “So, you don’t even know how to transcend tribulation. And you still call yourself an ancient Celestial Bird.” His face was clearly filled with a sneer.

When the parrot saw the sneer, its feathers immediately stood on end, and it glared at Meng Hao.

“I don’t know?” it said, panting. “You dare to tell me I don’t know? I… I can’t be fooled so easily!” Instead of continuing any further, it put on a supercilious expression and began to preen its feathers.

“So, you really are just a flashy old bird!” said Meng Hao casually, his sneer growing even more obvious. He even went so far as to close his eyes, as if he didn’t deign to continue the conversation.

The parrot was instantly furious. Pecking furiously at its feathers as it preened, it roared, “Who said I don’t know?! I know a method that can suppress and delay Heavenly Tribulation. There’s no Celestial magic like that which I don’t know!”

“So, you really don’t know,” replied Meng Hao lightly.

“Heavenly Tribulation is nothing but farts!” roared the parrot. “Back in the day, I could transcend tribulation with a single breath! Even now, I know at least ten thousand ways… no, I mean, a million different ways to do it! I’ll tell you one of them. All you have to do is find a miraculous life form, the type whose roots and leaves are connected the same way a mother and a son are connected. The roots cannot be destroyed, and the leaves never die. The leaves never die, and the roots cannot be destroyed! You hold onto the roots, and use the leaves to defend against the Heavenly Tribulation. That is how you can transcend tribulation!

“Too bad for you miraculous life forms like that aren’t common. Even things similar to it aren’t common. They’re all extinct. You would have to have an incredible amount of luck and fortune to happen across one. Just from looking at you, I’d say it’s not gonna happen. You’re not that kind of person. Most likely, you’re dead.”

Hearing the parrot’s words actually caused Meng Hao’s eyes to flicker. After analyzing the parrot’s words, they seemed to make quite a bit of sense. Furthermore, his mind was currently reeling. This was because he had thought of a miraculous life form from the Black Lands that was very similar to what the parrot had described!

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# Chapter 326: I Haven’t Tried That Out Before!

“The roots cannot be destroyed, the leaves never die. The leaves never die, the roots cannot be destroyed….” Meng Hao’s eyes filled with thought as he put the pieces together. A miraculous life form that inherently displayed the type of relationship between a mother and a son. Rare in the world, almost never seen.

What appeared in Meng Hao’s mind now were words he had heard years ago.

“The larva cannot be destroyed, and the thread cannot be broken. The thread cannot be broken, nor can the larva be destroyed!” These words were describing a creature that, when fed Sieve Net Thunder Mulberry Leaves, would transform from Frigid Snow into the miraculous bug called the Eyeless Larva. 1

“Besides that larva, there’s another way, but their growth isn’t complete….” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he thought of his Blood Clones.

Because the nucleus of each Blood Clone was the skin of the meat jelly, as long as he himself didn’t die, they couldn’t be destroyed. Even if they were, they could easily be recreated. It might be a bit of an exaggeration to say that they were eternally indestructible, but the fact remained that it would be very difficult to truly kill them.

However, the Cultivation bases of the Blood Clones were too far removed from his own. They might be difficult to destroy, but when it came time to face the Heavenly Tribulation, Meng Hao knew that the Blood Clones would be defeated.

“Unless I refined nine generations of blood, then added myself in, thus forcing another generation on top of the nine. Then it would be a Blood Spirit. I could not be destroyed, and the spirit would never disperse!”

As Meng Hao sat lost in thought, the haughty parrot once again looked at Meng Hao with disdain. “Don’t even think about it,” it said suddenly. “Only people with incredible luck and amazing fortune can ever have a chance to get a miraculous life form like that. As an example, I, Lord Fifth, once had a miraculous lotus root. Only someone like me could ever get something of the sort.”

Meng Hao ignored the parrot and continued to think. A new thought suddenly flickered in his mind. The parrot’s words had opened up the floodgates of his mind regarding transcending tribulation. After all, he was not in the Blood Immortal Legacy zone; this time, he would be facing the test alone.

He had been thinking about the matter for a very, very long time. The parrot’s words just now had lit a virtual fire in his mind; all kinds of thoughts and questions exploded inside of him.

“Regarding miraculous life forms,” he thought, “there’s something else I could do. I could borrow Demonic Qi from Heaven and Earth to create an illusory Incarnation. After all, the Incarnation can carry my will with it to kill people. I wonder if I could use it to defend against Heavenly Tribulation…. It’s too bad the Incarnation is so weak. However, it’s an area that could be explored.” His eyes lit up as he realized that he actually already had three types of miraculous life forms.

“Plus, I have the meat jelly!” he thought. His eyes contained an imperceptible glitter. Using the meat jelly when transcending tribulation would be his last resort. He had long since taken note of its ability to consume lightning.

“Forget it. Just forget it,” said the parrot, looking askance at Meng Hao. It sighed, its face filled with an expression that exuded omniscience. “That method just now was definitely too difficult. In all the Heavens, I think only

Lord Fifth could pull off something like that. For other people, well, it could only happen in their dreams.

“Lord Fifth is an erudite, ancient Celestial Bird. Omniscient. Okay, I’ll tell you of another method. This one isn’t very hard. Actually, it’s pretty simple. However, such a method is also only available to people with extraordinary luck and fortune.

“It’s not very complicated. You just need to have a Soul of Lightning next to you. If you do, it will be much easier to transcend the tribulation. However, you’ll have to train the Soul of Lightning yourself. Basically, you start out with the soul of a Cultivator with a very profound Cultivation base. Then, you slowly use lightning to transform its soul embodiment. Over time, you gradually increase the amount of lightning. Assuming the soul isn’t destroyed, then you eventually force it to transform into a Soul of Lightning that you can use.” The parrot yawned and then flew out of the Immortal’s cave in a flash of light. Outside, it once again began to instruct the Cultivators about its self-proclaimed Celestial magic.

Meng Hao sat cross-legged in the Immortal’s cave, thinking about what the parrot had said about the Soul of Lightning. A strange expression appeared on his face, and after a while, he slapped his bag of holding. The blood-colored mask appeared in his hand. He sent his Spiritual Sense inside to find the Li Clan Patriarch, who had been forgotten by the meat jelly after the appearance of the parrot.

The Li Clan Patriarch was no longer listless like before. However, as soon as he caught sight of Meng Hao, his entire body began to tremble. Clearly, his fear of the meat jelly had reached the ultimate level.

Meng Hao circled around the Li Clan Patriarch, examining his soul embodiment. After a while, his eyes began to shine.

The glow in his eyes struck terror into the heart of the Li Clan Patriarch.

“What… what are you planning?!” he asked cautiously. He had a bad feeling, as if something miserable were about to happen to his soul embodiment. After his time spent being tormented by the meat jelly, without even the option of seeking death, he was no longer as proud and haughty as he used to be.

Meng Hao didn’t say anything. After examining the Li Clan Patriarch for a moment, he did something with his Spiritual Sense, and a lightning bolt appeared within the blood-colored mask. It crackled down toward the Li Clan Patriarch, slamming directly onto his soul embodiment.

“Dammit! What the hell are you doing?!?!” He trembled, and his soul embodiment flickered as if it were about to dissipate.

Meng Hao nodded, then used his Spiritual Sense again to summon another lightning bolt, and then another. Rumbling booms sounded out as they fell down onto the Li Clan Patriarch, who emitted constant miserable shrieks.

This process went on for about two hours, until the Li Clan Patriarch’s soul embodiment was growing dim.

“You psycho!” cried the Li Clan Patriarch, gnashing his teeth. “You’re a damned lunatic! And that meat jelly is nothing but a nightmare! One of these days I’ll get my revenge!” He continued to curse, but inside actually felt quite pathetic, and was heaving constant sighs.

In the Immortal’s cave, Meng Hao opened his eyes.

“The Li Clan Patriarch has an extraordinary Cultivation base. He meets all the requirements to become a Soul of Lightning. From now on, I’ll need to use all methods at my disposal to get him accustomed to lightning. I also need an Eyeless Larva. Before that, though, I should head out and collect the last medicinal plant ingredient I need for the Perfect Gold Core.” Having made up his mind, Meng Hao sent his Spiritual Sense out to find Huang Daxian.

He was currently looking on complacently as the parrot flew around above a group of people who were all running around in various patterns. Huang Daxian’s body trembled as Meng Hao’s voice suddenly echoed out in his head. Then, his mind was branded with an image of the plant Meng Hao needed.

Half a month later, Meng Hao was looking down at a jade slip, inside of which was information regarding the medicinal plant he needed, a clue uncovered during the investigation carried out by his group of over a hundred Cultivators. Meng Hao stood and left the Immortal’s cave.

“Dongluo City, member of the United Nine Cities.” Inside the jade slip was also a map of the Black Lands, marked with the location of Dongluo City, which wasn’t very far away. 2

By now, Meng Hao was familiar with the power structure of the Black Lands, thanks to his more than one hundred followers. Other than the Black Lands Palace and the United Nine, the Black Lands were inhabited completely by Rogue Cultivators. In some cases, groups banded together to form small-scale powers. Some were strong, some were weak, but regardless, they existed in a state of disunity.

As far as the United Nine, it was made up of nine of the Black Lands’ most powerful Cultivator Clans, and the cities that had grown up around them. They had banded together and formed an alliance to stand up against the power of the Black Lands Palace.

The ingredient Meng Hao needed was a Spirit Orchid Leaf, a medicinal plant that wasn’t particularly rare. That having been said, it wasn’t something that the small-scale powers would have. It would only be available in one of the nine major cities.

According to the information he’d received, Dongluo City would be holding an auction soon. Medicinal pills would be up for sale, as well as medicinal plants. As for the Spirit Orchid Leaf, it could actually be consumed directly to treat injuries, so of course people would be willing to purchase it.

Meng Hao flicked his sleeve as he left the region of his Immortal’s cave for the first time in more than a year. Transforming into a beam of prismatic light, he shot like lightning off into the distance.

Thanks to the Primordial Heavenly Replenishing Pill, his hair was now black once again and his eyes were filled with abstruseness. He wore a green gown, and his features were handsome and refined. On his forehead was mark that looked both like a scale and a feather, and yet was neither. Overall, he appeared completely extraordinary.

As he flew away from the Immortal’s cave, the meat jelly and the parrot followed him.

As they flew along, the parrot continuously chided the meat jelly, who squabbled back endlessly. It went on for a few days, with the two of them occasionally getting into blows. Finally, the parrot used its trump card. It went on with a series of “Do you want to know?” questions, which resulted in the meat jelly transforming into a small bell which the parrot fastened around its leg.

The parrot finally came to rest on Meng Hao’s shoulder, perched there with an arrogant look on its face that said that it was a one-of-a-kind ancient Celestial bird, esteemed in Heaven and Earth, unique in all creation.

The ground beneath them was pitch black, with occasional black-colored plants growing up from the soil. It all looked very sinister. The entire time, Meng Hao didn’t stop once; following the information on the map, he flew straight toward Dongluo City.

On one particular evening several days later, a green city appeared up ahead. It wasn’t grand and majestic, but rather, square in shape, and apparently constructed from vegetation.

The city walls were created from interwoven plants. The greenness created by the plants made the city stick out conspicuously from the black soil.

In the middle of the city, trees grew up. All of the trees had massive amounts of branches growing out from them, which were also interwoven to form layers. The city as a whole seemed to be formed of two levels, one on the ground, the other in the sky.

There was a third level, which was formed by a single, enormous tree, the interior of the city. From a distance, the city looked very bizarre. Meng Hao’s eyes began to shine.

As they approached, they saw the city gate, which was formed by eight giant interlocking trees. Cultivators walked in and out of the gate, and inside the city itself were quite a few Cultivators.

Perched atop the massive tree in the center of the city was what appeared to be an enormous phoenix, several dozens of meters in length. It had bright, scarlet feathers, and was incredibly beautiful.

A closer look revealed that it wasn’t actually a phoenix, but a peacock.

It would occasionally look around at the city with an arrogant expression. It didn’t emit the power of a Cultivation base, but from a distance it still emanated a powerful, threatening aura that Meng Hao could sense. It caused his pupils to constrict.

The look in the peacock’s eyes seemed to say that no one was worthy of its gaze. It looked around arrogantly, seemingly despising all that it saw.

Suddenly, Meng Hao heard the parrot whisper: “You dare to act like that in front of Lord Fifth, bitch!?”

Meng Hao had read some information about this scarlet peacock in the jade slip. It was a holy animal of the Dongluo Clan. For some reason unknown to outsiders, it would occasionally take to flight and circle around the city; everyone who saw the spectacle would praise its beauty.

Just as they were about to enter the city, Meng Hao heard the parrot next to him, panting heavily.

“Eee? Now that I’m closer I can see that flirty look in its eyes… Hm, a red bird, I’ve never tried that out before….” Before Meng Hao could react or even think about what it meant, the parrot was gone. Meng Hao watched as ripples spread out in the air, and a multicolored streak shot up through the air toward the peacock.

2. Dongluo in Chinese is dōng luò – Dong means east. Luo is a sound word with no meaning. Dongluo is also the name of a real location in China.

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# Chapter 327: Angry Dongluo Ling! 1

Everything was happening too quickly. Meng Hao gaped in astonishment. Before he could react, he saw the multicolored streak flying through the air at high speed. It looked like a shooting star as it headed toward the beautiful, proud Scarlet Peacock.

Within the colorful light was none other than the parrot, shooting forward like a spear, head upraised. Its sharp, curved beak emitted a cold glow, as it clenched its body tight into something that looked like a spearhead.

Meng Hao wasn’t sure if he was mistaken or not, but it very much seemed like its eyes were shining with excitement, as well as determination and lasciviousness….

It moved with incredible speed. In one breath it was quite a distance from the peacock. In the next breath, it was upon it.

All of the feathers on the body of the Scarlet Peacock stood on end as it turned its beautiful head, emanating the powerful might of a phoenix, seeming to warn everyone from encroaching upon its space. Meng Hao’s eyes went wide, and his mind began to spin. He suddenly had a very bad feeling about what was happening. He watched the multicolored streak of light that was the parrot as it charged directly toward the peacocks rear end….

Aaiiieee!

An intense, miserable screech echoed out from the once graceful and beautiful peacock. The sound was wretched, as an indescribable pain washed over it.

All its feathers stood on end, and its expression was twisted and distorted. It was no longer elegant, and its beauty had now been transformed into suffering. It trembled violently as its scream filled Dongluo City, which of course attracted the attention of large numbers of Cultivators. All of them lifted their heads up in astonishment.

What they saw was the peacock, always so graceful and haughty, now trembling violently and screaming miserably. It was flying haphazardly through the air, beating its wings, as if it was trying to shake something off of its body.

Its efforts were of no avail. As it screamed, its eyes turned red, and a billowing Flame Sea appeared around it. Within the fire, the peacock continued to scream intensely. Its feathers bristled to the point where it looked like it might explode from insanity.

All of the Cultivators in the city were staring with gaping mouths, unsure of what exactly was happening to it. However, they could all sense that the peacock was currently experiencing indescribable pain.

It was at this time that members of Dongluo City’s Cultivator Clan emerged, looking worried as they flew up toward the peacock. One among their number was a young woman wearing a long, emerald green garment. Her features were beautiful and enchanting, but her phoenix-like eyes were filled with worry and confusion as she approached the peacock.

“Scarlet Peacock, what’s wrong…?” she said. Her voice was pleasant, like the song of a lark.

As soon as the Cultivators down in the city saw her, they began to discuss the matter in hushed tones.

“That’s Goddess Dongluo Ling of the Dongluo Clan….” [2]

“That’s none other than one of the three most beautiful female Cultivators in the Black Lands, Dongluo Ling!”

By this time, Meng Hao had ducked his head down and hurried into the city, his scalp slowly growing numb. He blended into the crowd, his face ashen, looking up at the flames in the sky. The miserable shrieks of the peacock continued to ring out.

“Damned parrot!” thought Meng Hao, grinding his teeth. There was nothing he could do about it, though. He should have considered the parrot’s indulgences. Back when it was stuck in the copper mirror, Meng Hao had to take the initiative to provoke something like this. But now that it was free, it couldn’t hold itself back after seeing a pretty, feathered peacock.

“I can’t let people find out that I brought it here….” he thought with a frown. Up above, the peacock let out another shriek. Now, everyone could see a multicolored beam of light whizzing through the air near the peacock’s rear end. Before anyone could see clearly what was inside of it, it built up some momentum and then shot back toward the peacock.

The peacock tried to dodge out of the way, but was unable to. When people saw this, they could only watch on in dumbstruck silence.

Based on what they had just seen, they now understood why the elegant Scarlet Peacock was emitting such blood-curdling screams.

A buzz of conversation immediately rose up as everyone expressed their disbelief and astonishment.

“This is….”

“What is that thing? What it’s doing is… indescribable….”

“That multicolored light is entering…. My god! Is there really a magical item that does something like this? What is it? It’s simply too vicious, too malicious, too penetrating….”

Meng Hao stood in the crowd, his jaw clenched. He felt as if his face were burning, and he was very worried about everyone finding out that the multicolored light had been brought into the city by him.

The Dongluo Clan Cultivators floated in mid-air, trying to figure out how to help the peacock. Dongluo Ling’s face was filled with anxiety. However, the sight of the multicolored light caused them to stare in shock.

The Scarlet Peacock’s wails were pitiful, its eyes filled with humiliation and pain. Suddenly, it began to fall to the ground, body trembling. The Dongluo Clan Cultivators rushed forward in a frenzy. As they neared, the multicolored light disappeared, leaving behind only an exhausted panting sound.

The Dongluo Clan Cultivators’ faces were extremely unsightly. Dongluo Ling’s was virtually bursting with flames. Moments later, the entire city was sealed down tightly. More Dongluo Clan Cultivators appeared, bursting with bestial killing intent and rage as they began to search for the multicolored light.

One could imagine what savage methods they would employ to punish the mysterious multicolored light if they ever found it….

As for the Scarlet Peacock, it was currently being given emergency treatment….

Meng Hao’s face was just as unsightly as he dispersed along with the crowd. He wasn’t sure where the parrot had gone to. If it suddenly appeared on his shoulder, then he would have to leave the city immediately.

He suddenly realized that the meat jelly was actually very well behaved….

As night fell upon Dongluo City, word of what had just happened spread through the various Cultivators. Late that night, the wrath of the entire Dongluo Clan was burning.

In the Dongluo Clan’s manor house, Dongluo Ling stood there with tears in her eyes as she comforted the trembling, sleeping Scarlet Peacock. Every time it trembled, her eyes would flash with killing intent.

“I’m going to find that multicolored light,” she said, gnashing her teeth, “and when I do, I’ll hack it into pieces!”

Meanwhile, Meng Hao sat cross-legged in his room in a local inn, his face dark. Finally, he opened his eyes from meditation and let out a soft sigh as the parrot appeared.

It looked the same as ever, multicolored, with the meat jelly bell still attached to its foot. Its expression was one of arrogance, and its eyes flickered with contentment and complacency.

“Heyyy, Lord Fifth is back,” it said, strutting back and forth on the table, lifting its head up to stare at Meng Hao.

“Did you have fun?” asked Meng Hao coolly, his facing expressionless.

“Lots of fun!!” replied the parrot. It took a deep breath, and the haughtiness in its face disappeared, to be replaced by a look of reminiscence.

“I’ve tried out many different purely colored birds such as that,” it said with a sigh. “One year I even tried out their ancestor, the phoenix. However, scarlet is the only color I haven’t tried. Not bad. Really not bad.”

“Do you know how much difficulty it’s going to cause if they found out it was you?” said Meng Hao.

“What are you scared of?” it said, its face filled with conceited grandeur. “Have faith in the Lord Fifth, gain eternal life. When Lord Fifth appears, who dares to cause strife? If they dare to mess with me, I’ll screw ‘em to death! I’ll deal with them like I dealt with that bird. I’m not talking about you, of course. Birds have their tenacity, and so do people. Tenacity, that’s the key. Look, I have a duty to help you out. Join me in your loudest voice….”

A solemn-looking face suddenly appeared on the bell on the parrot’s foot. “You’re immoral! Simply too wicked! My life’s mission is definitely to convert you, you sinister bird!”

The parrot looked down at the meat jelly with a look of disdain. “Shut up, b*tch! Did I ever not take you with me to do these kinds of things? Do you remember the Space Ape from that year? Did I take you with me, or not?

How about the Flame Phoenix? Did I take you with me, or not? What about that big hairy fish in the Star Sea, or that tiger in the Eighth Mountain? What about the great Golden Dragon? Did you forget about that?”

The meat jelly hesitated for a moment, then gritted its teeth and said, “Uhh… You forced me!”

Meng Hao sat off to the side, watching on silently. Originally he had planned to say a few things about what had happened today, but hearing the parrot list off its “achievements,” he suddenly realized he didn’t have anything to say. He sighed, shaking his head and ignoring the two, instead closing his eyes and continuing to meditate.

As the night went on, the Dongluo Clan used all its power, all their precious treasures, all their Divine Sense, to search every corner of the city. It was all to no avail. As the search continued, three days slowly passed.

During the three days, Meng Hao went out twice. Each time, the parrot would perch pompously on his shoulder to accompany him. On a few occasions, they encountered members of the Dongluo Clan. However, the uncomely parrot didn’t seem to attract any suspicions.

“Don’t worry,” said the parrot. “I’ve done things like this before on many occasions, and I’ve never gotten caught. The only things left behind are legends of Lord Fifth. However, no one ever knows my true appearance.”

Meng Hao didn’t respond.

On the two occasions he went out, Meng Hao made inquiries about the auction which was to take place in ten days, and was able to confirm that ten Spirit Orchid Leaves would be up for sale.

He also made some inquiries about the price. This particular plant would appear in the auction every few years, and the price was always a bit over ten thousand spirit stones.

Meng Hao personally didn’t have many Spirit Stones, but Ji Hongdong’s bag of holding had ultra high-grade Spirit Stones, as well as a collection of regular Spirit Stones to the number of about twenty thousand. It wasn’t much when it came to duplicating medicinal pills, but it should be enough to purchase the Spirit Orchid Leaf and still have some left over.

On evening of the fourth day, Meng Hao sat cross-legged in his room. Suddenly, his eyes opened, and he let out a sigh. As he had anticipated, trouble had come looking for him. He looked up at the door.

It didn’t take long before it exploded, shattered to pieces that showered into the room.

1. I’m pretty sure this is a reference to Angry Birds

2. Dongluo Ling’s name is dōng luò líng – Dongluo is the name of their clan, kind of a made up a name. Ling means spirit

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# Chapter 328: Establishing Strength!

The instant the door shattered into pieces, a whooshing sound could be heard, and the parrot disappeared without a trace. Meng Hao wasn’t sure where it had gone to hide, but obviously it had seen the look on his face and knew the trouble it had stirred up. However, instead of cleaning up its own mess, it left it to Meng Hao. Meng Hao’s mood sank even deeper.

His eyes flickered with coldness. He knew that the law of the jungle was a strict one and was revered as a way of life in the Black Lands. Weakness and retreat gave an opponent even more power and reason to crush you.

In the Black Lands, there was no reasoning, there was only strength.

The strong could plunder cities and enslave Clans. In the Black Lands, you could do anything you wanted and no one would do anything against you unless it was to their benefit. If you didn’t encroach on someone’s territory, they wouldn’t pay attention to you at all even if you slaughtered countless other Cultivators.

For example, the nine Clans that made up the United Nine had changed countless times throughout the years. One would rise, another would fall, down to this very day.

After the door was destroyed, two people charged into the room, accompanied by a cold, glittering light. As they descended upon him, Meng Hao let out a cold snort. It didn’t matter that he was actually in the wrong. He sat there cross-legged, his killing intent flashing. His lifted his right hand up as fast as lightning, and a single finger attack shot out.

A miserable scream immediately filled the air, and a corpse toppled backward out the door. At the same time, his four remaining fingers curled into a claw which latched onto the neck of a black-robed Cultivator.

No matter how he struggled, the man couldn't move an inch. Meng Hao immediately sent spiritual power into the man's Cultivation base, sealing it down tightly.

When attacking, one cannot hesitate, nor show weakness. That is a fundamental rule in the Black Lands.

Meng Hao's expression was calm as he looked over at the door. Standing outside were eight Cultivators wearing black robes. Their expressions were serious, but they didn't dare to enter the room. Instead, they stood there looking vigilantly at Meng Hao.

“Dongluo Ling,” said Meng Hao coolly, “is this the way the Dongluo Clan receives its guests? You'd better provide an explanation, or I'll turn your skull into a cooking pot.”

The people outside remained silent as a woman stepped out from behind them. She wore a long, emerald green robe, and was quite beautiful. Her skin was so delicate it seemed a breeze could break it. This was none other than Dongluo Ling. Her brow was furrowed as she glared into Meng Hao's room.

“Since you know who I am, then you'd better let my man go immediately. Then we can discuss some matters.” Her voice was pleasant, but filled with iciness. Her Cultivation base was beyond ordinary; it appeared to be at the early Core Formation stage.

Meng Hao grinned. He might have the appearance of a scholar, but looking at him now, he possessed a certain fierceness. He suddenly clenched his right hand. Loud cracking sounds could be heard; the man's body twitched as his neck was crushed into pieces. After he was thoroughly dead, Meng Hao stood up and turned into a blur as he rushed toward the door.

Dongluo Ling laughed mockingly. She stood her ground, not moving at all. As she glanced down at the body of the dead man, the eight men around her suddenly moved forward to obstruct Meng Hao’s way. Two of them were white-haired old men. Their gazes were like lightning, their stature tall; shockingly, they even had totem tattoos on their arms. However, they didn’t look like Western Desert Cultivators. They had extraordinary Cultivation bases at the mid Core Formation stage. Their bodies flashed as they moved forward to defend Dongluo Ling.

They were fast, but Meng Hao was even faster. In the blink of an eye, he was out the door. He flicked his sleeve, and a gale force wind suddenly exploded out. It screamed out in all directions, causing the bodies of the eight Cultivators to shake as they spit up blood. They all retreated, looks of astonishment on their faces.

This caused Dongluo Ling’s face to change and her pupils to constrict before she could even think about it. The faces of two old men in front of her fell.

Meng Hao was as calm as ever as he neared Dongluo Ling. The eyes of the two old men flickered as they also advanced, hands flickering in incantation gestures. Their Cultivation bases roared with power as their magical techniques appeared.

“No Core Qi,” said Meng Hao, his expression intentionally lofty. “Insects.” Even as he spoke, his right hand lifted up and then descended downward in a fist.

Boom.

An expression of shock filled the face of one of the men. The magical technique he had been incanting immediately collapsed to pieces. He felt an incredible power slam into him, and blood sprayed from his mouth as he staggered backward several paces.

As for the other old man, his eyes narrowed and he let out a howl as he attacked. Meng Hao’s left hand snaked out, and he tapped the man’s forehead lightly. Suddenly, Demonic Qi rose up, visible only to Meng Hao.

It poured into the man, causing his veins to bulge and his eyes to fill with confusion.

All of this happened in a single instant, and then, Meng Hao was standing directly in front of the shocked Dongluo Ling.

Dongluo Ling knew that she had acted rashly, and that her opponent was far more powerful than her. The only thing she could do now was angrily say, “Do you really dare to offend me in my own Clan’s city? You’re dead for sure!”

Meng Hao looked her over coldly. Then he lifted up his right hand and was about to grab her, when suddenly he frowned and paused in mid-motion. Then, he pointed his hand down toward the ground. The entire inn began to shake as invisible Qi rushed up from all directions to circle around Meng Hao. It formed into a barrier to protect against a black spear which was currently shooting toward him from off in the distance.

The spear was as thick as the hand of a child, and was covered with complex, swirling patterns. It whistled through the air, slamming into the Demonic Qi vortex surrounding Meng Hao. A boom echoed out, and the spear shook, then collapsed into pieces. The pieces transformed into green-colored Core Qi, which then dissipated in all directions. The spearhead, however, did not disappear; it was still stabbing through the vortex. Just as it seemed it would pierce all the way through, Meng Hao reached up and tapped the top of the spearhead.

As soon as he touched it, the spearhead trembled and then exploded into fragments of Core Qi.

Dongluo Ling took advantage of this opportunity to back up about twenty meters. It seemed she was about to flee. Meng Hao coolly said, “Get back here.”

The words were simple, but the instant she heard them, Dongluo Ling’s face went pale white. She had suddenly discovered that her entire body was incapable of moving.

The old man who Meng Hao had just tapped on the forehead looked confused, as if his spirit had fled. Seemingly not even under his own control, he bound Dongluo Ling, grabbed her, and then flew back toward Meng Hao.

It was at this moment that Meng Hao lifted his head and looked off into the distance. It was currently dusk, and there were no Cultivators visible anywhere. Even the inn seemed to be empty. However, far off in the distance, a middle-aged man stood on a rooftop. His body was skinny and withered, almost like a skeleton. However, he emitted a dignified aura as he looked toward Meng Hao.

Their gazes met, and their Spiritual Sense shot out, emanating with massive pressure. Invisible ripples exploded out. Meng Hao didn't move, but the face of the middle-aged man flickered, and he retreated several paces, coughing up blood.

“So,” said Meng Hao, his voice cool, “mid Core Formation Core Qi turns out to be slightly more powerful than insects.”

“Your excellency, who are you?” asked the stooped, middle-aged man. “Why do you wish to make the Dongluo Clan your enemy?” His expression was serious, and it seemed he couldn't see Meng Hao's Cultivation base.

“Sir, that is exactly the same question I wanted to ask you,” said Meng Hao calmly. “I have no grievance with the Dongluo Clan. So why did you send everyone in the area away, and then surround me and try to kill me!?”

Dongluo Ling ground her teeth and glared at Meng Hao, her eyes radiating hatred. “From the day the Scarlet Peacock was injured until today, thirteen people have entered the city. I've personally looked into the other twelve. You are the last one, and also the most suspicious!” When she thought about how the Scarlet Peacock couldn't even fly now, and would always tremble and shake as it slept, her hatred toward Meng Hao seeped into her bones.

Meng Hao's face sank. His voice cold, he said, “What ultimate absurdity! You're just trying to stir up trouble!” He didn't even make an attempt to explain anything; his simple response made him seem even more awe-inspiring.

The middle-aged man hesitated for a moment. Finally, he clasped hands and bowed toward Meng Hao, a bitter smile on his face. “This is all just a misunderstanding,” he said with a sigh. “My little sister went off on her own to investigate things. Fellow Daoist, I truly hope you can forgive us. That Scarlet Peacock is my little sister’s most beloved pet, and what happened has really aroused our ire. Therefore, we accidentally offended you. Sir, I am Dongluo Han. I implore you to give me a bit of face. What do you say?” 1

Meng Hao looked hesitant. He waved his right hand, and the old man who had bound up Dongluo Ling no longer looked confused; he regained his senses, then immediately began to tremble. He looked at Meng Hao as if he were a ghost.

Dongluo Ling’s body flashed, transforming into a beam of light as she flew over to stand next to the middle-aged man. She glared viciously at Meng Hao.

“Many thanks, Fellow Daoist,” said the man. “Allow me to give you a Dongluo City command medallion. With this medallion, your time in the city will be much more convenient.” Dongluo Han pulled out a black command medallion which he tossed toward Meng Hao. Meng Hao grabbed it and looked it over. In his time spent in the city recently, he’d learned that in Dongluo City there were five different types of command medallions. Scarlet was the highest, black was secondary, then yellow, blue and white. Each medallion came with various privileges within the city.

For example, in order to participate in the upcoming auction, one needed, at the least, a yellow command medallion.

After Meng Hao took the command medallion, Dongluo Han once again clasped hands and bowed, then grabbed the obstinate Dongluo Ling and left, along with the other Cultivators. As she left, Dongluo Ling’s features were filled with fury.

“Third Bro, why did you compromise with that guy?” she asked. “We surveilled him for several days. Of the thirteen suspects, he was definitely the most suspicious. Some people even saw him with a multicolored parrot.”

Before Dongluo Han could respond, a dignified voice suddenly could be heard from off to the side.

“I told him to.” Along with the voice, a man appeared. He looked to be middle-aged, but there was also some sort of ancientness to him. As soon as he appeared, Dongluo Han and Dongluo Ling lowered their heads and saluted.

“Greetings Clan Chief.”

“The Black Lands are falling into great chaos. The United Nine face imminent danger. At the moment, the last thing we need is to provoke powerful enemies. That guy appears to be in the mid Core Formation stage, but his attack just now was matchlessly ruthless. He dispatched another mid Core Formation Cultivator with no difficulty. He seems like a Rogue Cultivator, but at the same time, not. Under normal circumstances, it wouldn’t matter, but for now, we need to exercise caution.”

1. Dongluo Han’s name in Chinese is dōng luò hán – Dongluo is their Clan name. Han is a sound word

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# Chapter 329: Lord Fifth Flies Into a Rage

“The Black Lands in great chaos?” said Dongluo Han, gaping at the Clan Chief.

Dongluo Ling also gaped for a moment. For as long as she could remember, the law of the jungle in the Black Lands made it appear on the surface as if there were no rules. However, because of the Black Lands Palace and the United Nine, there was a bit of stability. Superficially, the Black Lands seemed chaotic, but the powers beneath the surface made things much less chaotic than they seemed.

The Dongluo Clan Chief was quiet for a moment before looking up at the stars in the sky and saying, “Four days ago in Saturn City, Elder Tumou was killed by Patriarch Death Spirit from the Western Lands….”

His words caused Dongluo Han’s face to flicker. The surrounding Cultivators all looked shocked and doubtful.

Breathing heavily, Dongluo Han said, “Elder Tumou was an almighty Spirit Severing Cultivator…. He….” The nine Clans that made up the United Nine were all very different. Furthermore, various Clans had come and gone throughout the years. However, the main reason the United Nine was able to stand up to the Black Lands Palace was because of their four great mountains.

These four mountains housed four Spirit Severing Patriarchs. The Clans of these four were naturally the leaders in the alliance. With the presence of the four Patriarchs, they had been able to oppose the Black Lands Palace down to this day.

The Dongluo Clan Chief slowly continued, “After Elder Tumou perished, the Black Lands Palace immediately invaded his Saturn Clan. In a single day, all the Clan members were slaughtered, and their city was taken over by the Black Lands Palace.”

Dongluo Han gasped. “The Black Lands Palace…. The Western Desert….” After a moment’s thought, his heart and mind trembled. This news caused him to completely forget about the matter of the Scarlet Peacock.

“This matter must be kept a secret….” said Dongluo Ling, looking at the other surrounding Cultivators.

The Clan Chief shook his head.“It won’t take long before news of the incident spreads throughout all the Black Lands, even if the United Nine tries to cover it up, the news will spread.” He looked tired and very anxious.

Dongluo Ling was about to say something else, when suddenly, a miserable shriek could be heard coming from the top level of the city, where the Scarlet Peacock was. The cry was one of ultimate misery, as if it were experiencing indescribable pain.

Dongluo Ling’s face immediately flashed. Next to her, Dongluo Han gaped in shock. All of the Cultivators immediately looked upward.

As for Meng Hao, he was sitting cross-legged inside of his room. After the Dongluo Clan members left, the staff of the inn returned, giving Meng Hao a wide, respectful berth. The owner of the inn waited on him nervously, allowing him to change rooms and even giving him some Spirit Stones before making an excuse to leave.

“At first I thought I was going to have to fight my way out and come back in disguise,” thought Meng Hao, looking down at the black command medallion. “Who would have thought that the Dongluo Clan would back down?” A puzzled look appeared on his face. “Has something happened I don’t know about?”

It was at this point that he heard the miserable shrieks coming from outside. He immediately stood, opened a window, and looked out, a strange expression on his face.

Another scream rose up into the air. This time, it was obvious that it was a different Scarlet Peacock than the one from before. Even as looks of shock filled the faces of everyone in the city, a third shriek echoed out.

At the same time, three figures, blazing like fire, shot out from the second level of the city. It was three more Scarlet Peacocks. The largest was nearly a hundred meters long, the smallest only about thirty. They were letting out shrill shrieks; anyone who heard them could almost feel their pain.

A boom rattled out, and for some inexplicable reason, a massive force seemed to rip through one of the huge trees that made up the second level of the city. It shot in and out several times, until it had cut out a character.

5!

A bang rang out as a tall, strapping man appeared in mid-air, surrounded by a multicolored glow. His features were indistinct, but he gave on an eminently conceited air as he floated there in mid-air looking down on the ground.

The three peacocks trembled. Beneath them, the massive character 5 that had been cut into the tree, was extremely clear.

“You all listen carefully to what Lord Fifth has to say. When I was born, I was the most revered in Heaven and Earth. If I want people to wear clothes, they wear clothes. If I want animals to have fur or feathers, then they grow it immediately!”

The echoing voice immediately evoked the wrath of the Dongluo Clan. Furious shouts could be heard from within the Dongluo Clan. A ruddy-faced old man suddenly charged out, emanating the power of the Nascent Soul stage. He shot toward the parrot, who was currently utilizing the meat jelly’s transforming ability.

“You dare to defame the residence of the Dongluo Clan!? Get back here!”

“You old fart!” screeched the man-form parrot. “Lord Fifth is gonna screw you to death!” His body flickered as he shot toward the old man. He radiated a savage potency, as if he were a member of an elite death squad 1, the most powerful and esteemed person in all the Heavens.

This powerful vigor radiated thickly off of him, as if there were no orifice in the world that he couldn’t conquer!

The parrot, in the form of a virulent, muscular man, suddenly appeared next to the old Nascent Soul Cultivator. The speed of his movement left the man shocked, and before he could do anything, they slammed into each other.

As the boom rattled out, the Nascent Soul Cultivator’s face twisted. Cold sweat burst out from his forehead as he realized that his opponent had been shooting straight toward the area roughly a handsbreadth below his navel. If he hadn’t moved quickly enough….

Before he could continue along with this train of thought, he suddenly felt a cold air on his back.

The man-form parrot was off to the side, raising his head up and giving out a piercing howl.

“You’re far too wicked!” said a voice. “Doing this kind of thing is very immoral! Very, very immoral. You shouldn’t….”

“Shut the hell up, b*tch! Lord Fifth is gonna screw this guy to death!” The man-parrot’s eyes grew green as he glared at the Nascent Soul Cultivator, let out a wild shout, and then charged forward.

The old man’s scalp went numb as he saw the strange man approaching him. This was the first time he had ever felt such fear in his heart. However, it was at this exact moment that a cold snort suddenly sounded out from within the Dongluo Clan. Two prismatic beams of light flew out, emanating the power of Nascent Soul Cultivation bases. One of these men was even of the late Nascent Soul stage.

A boom echoed out, and the man-parrot tumbled backward. His eyes grew even more green, and its body began to tremble with rage.

“I’m gonna screw you to death! All of you….”

“No need to get so excited,” said the meat jelly. “Don’t be so impulsive….”

“Asura Fire!” cried the man-parrot as it floated there in the air. Suddenly, black flames leapt into being.

“Sky Walker Slaying!” it cried again. The flames roared up into the sky. In the middle of all the black flames was the man-parrot, its body trembling. Suddenly, a black band of cloth appeared in its hand, which it wrapped around the top of its head, covering one eye. It was really a bizarre sight. Suddenly, it shot down toward the Nascent Soul Cultivators.

It moved with incredible speed. As it did, a black mist emanated out from its body, as well as fire. It gradually transformed into an enormous one-eyed raven, hundreds of meters long. It emanated a shocking power as it charged in a frenzy toward the three Nascent Soul Cultivators.

Everyone who saw this was astonished. Even Meng Hao’s eyes were wide.

The three Nascent Soul Cultivators were pale faced. They all began to perform incantations. Above them, the intensely shocking flames descended down. The faces of the Nascent Soul Cultivators fell, and they retreated. A massive boom shook everything as a huge crater appeared in the ground.

This crater was located in the very center of the city, causing the plants which composed the floor to begin to sway and sag. The entire second level of the city was virtually destroyed. The ground quaked, and all of the Cultivators currently in the city flew up into the air, faces pale with astonishment.

There was nothing alive within the crater, and the enormous black raven had disappeared without a trace.

The only thing left behind was a wildly arrogant voice which broke the silence.

“Have faith in the Lord Fifth, gain eternal life. When the Lord Fifth appears, who dares to cause strife!”

This was the only sound that echoed out into the quiet. Dongluo Ling’s eyes were filled with fear, and off to the side, Dongluo Han was panting. The Dongluo Clan Chief had a serious expression on his face as he shot off toward the crater. His solemn voice called out, “Remember this: never, ever provoke that Cultivator. A person like him has a lot of helpers. We’ve reached a moment of truth. Make friends, not enemies!”

The ground eventually ceased quaking. Meng Hao stood at the window, his expression strange. Everything that had happened just now made him suddenly think that the parrot was actually kind of funny.

A multicolored light suddenly flashed in the room. The parrot appeared, looking exhausted. It flopped down onto the table and looked at Meng Hao out of the corner of its eye. It was huffing and puffing, but its expression was as haughty and proud as ever.

“Bitches. If Lord Fifth hadn’t just recently awoken from slumber, then he would be much more powerful. I could have screwed the entire city! Then they would know how badass Lord Fifth is! As for you, kid, feel free to express your thanks by offering me some worship. Come, come. Say it with me: Have faith….”

Meng Hao turned, ignoring the parrot and instead looking once again out the window, his eyes shining with vigilance. He had long since pulled out the good luck charm to see if he could use it.

“It’s too bad I haven’t been able to harness the power of the roc. If I had, then even a Nascent Soul Cultivator wouldn’t be able to keep up with me.” He continued to look out in the direction of the Dongluo Clan.

As time passed, however, it seemed that the commotion had died down. No one came to cause trouble, and the Dongluo Clan didn’t seem to be furious.

Everything was smoothing over.

This, however, made Meng Hao even more nervous, although what he was worried about wasn't the Dongluo Clan, but whatever momentous event had led to the current circumstances.

If something major hadn't happened, the Dongluo Clan definitely wouldn't be acting like this.

Three days later, Meng Hao finally understood everything. One of the cities of the United Nine had been taken over after its Spirit Severing Patriarch perished. The Western Desert was controlling the Black Lands Palace; it seemed their goal was to devour all of the Black Lands.

This news swept over the Black Lands like storm winds over the following days. Soon, everyone knew about it….

When the day of the auction arrived, Meng Hao left his room. A cold wind blew outside, and the sky above was filled with dark clouds. It seemed a thunderstorm was approaching.

"The Black Lands are heading towards an upheaval," said Meng Hao to himself. He looked around to see Cultivators all around him hurrying in the direction of the auction.

The parrot was perched on Meng Hao's shoulder, looking around proudly as if it knew that one day it would take care of this place once and for all.

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1. The way he is described here is a reference to the movie series the Expendables

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# Chapter 330: I’ll Marry Anyone But You!

The crater in the middle of Dongluo City had long since been filled in with vast amounts of vegetation. The damaged second level was also restored to its normal condition. However, the “5” on the big tree could not be covered up, no matter what the Dongluo Clan did.

The auction was being held not very far away from that very tree. As Meng Hao approached the auction, he couldn’t help but see it. The parrot, perched on his shoulder, looked up at it out of the corner of his eye. With an egotistical expression, he lifted his head up as if everything were beneath him.

The auction facility wasn’t very large, a far cry from the Violet Fate Sect auction, in which tens of thousands of Cultivators could participate. There were only a few hundred people seated around the auction floor, conversing in whispers. In the middle of it all was a raised platform.

Only Cultivators with the appropriate command medallions from the Dongluo Clan could enter. As soon as Meng Hao produced his black command medallion, he was immediately treated with favor, and escorted to a comfortable seat.

If the auction floor had been set up with private booths, Meng Hao would have been entitled to one because of the black command medallion.

He sat down, his expression the same as ever, then closed his eyes and settled his mind. There weren’t very many people seated near him, nor were there many people in the auction in general. This wasn’t a very common sight in Dongluo City.

Because of the latest news circulating around the Black Lands, people were nervous. Many Cultivators had already fled the cities. At the moment, the cities of the United Nine were now no longer as safe as the outside world was.

After all, the Black Lands Palace was targeting, not Black Lands Cultivators in general, but the Clans of the United Nine.

Under such circumstances, Meng Hao knew that any people who had chosen to come attend this auction were people with utmost self-confidence. Considering war had already broken out, an auction like this most likely wouldn’t be held again for some time. In fact, this would probably be the last auction in Dongluo City until the war ended.

“I have to attend….” said Meng Hao to himself. After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, the auction would begin. More people began to filter in, and as they did, a man and a woman approached Meng Hao.

As they neared, Meng Hao opened his eyes and saw Dongluo Han and the beautiful Dongluo Ling. Dongluo Han had a broad smile on his face, whereas Dongluo Ling looked irritated, like she didn’t want to be there.

“Fancy meeting you here, Fellow Daoist,” said Dongluo Han with a grin, approaching Meng Hao and sitting down next to him. “When last we parted, I was unable to enquire as to your respected name. Would it be possible to find out?”

Dongluo Ling hesitated for a moment and then sat down on the other side of Meng Hao.

“My humble surname is Meng,” said Meng Hao coolly. “I’m a simple Rogue Cultivator.” He smiled at Dongluo Han. He could sense that the man hadn’t come to cause him trouble, but must have some other request, and had chosen this moment before the auction to bring it up.

His presence here was not unexpected; Meng Hao had actually predicted that something like this would happen.

“Brother Meng, there’s no need to be so modest,” replied Dongluo Han with a polite smile. “Considering how strong you are, I don’t think any other Rogue Cultivators could measure up to you.” His glance flitted over the parrot, and an imperceptible flicker of fear flashed through his eyes.

As for Dongluo Ling, she sat on the other side of Meng Hao. During the entire time, she had been glaring fiercely at the parrot. If looks could kill, then she would have slain the parrot many times over by now.

Meng Hao chuckled but didn’t say anything. Since Dongluo Han hadn’t brought up whatever request he planned to discuss, Meng Hao would just have to remain in the dark. However, he turned the good luck charm over and over in his palm, just as he had been doing for the past several days, never returning it to his bag of holding.

It was at this point that the parrot looked impatiently at Dongluo Ling and said, “What the hell? Are you crazy? What do you keep staring at Lord Fifth for? Are you looking for a screw?”

Dongluo Ling’s eyes went wide, and the veins on her face bulged out. Her beautiful features went purple, and she lunged to her feet, filled with explosive power. She was so angry that her entire body trembled.

During her entire life, she had never met anyone who she wanted to chop into pieces as much as this parrot. As such, her disgust toward Meng Hao had also reached an incredible level.

Dongluo Han gaped for a moment, then laughed bitterly and was about to say something when the parrot rolled its eyes. “Lord Fifth hates featherless, furless necks,” it said in its high-pitched voice. “Lord Fifth also hates waists with no fur or feathers. Nice chest and rear end, but again, no fur, no feathers. Even if you offered yourself free of charge, Lord Fifth wouldn’t accept.” The expression on its face said that no matter what she said, it would never like her.

Meng Hao felt a massive headache coming on. He cleared his throat.

The parrot’s words just now made Dongluo Ling feel as if her mind were about to explode. Flames of fire raged in her eyes, and she seemed on the verge of losing control. She was about to spring into action when Dongluo Han’s face suddenly darkened.

“Fifth Sis, SIT DOWN!”

Dongluo Ling’s head shot up to look at him. Gritting her teeth, she thought about the safety of her Clan, and of Dongluo Han’s solemn expression. Bottling up her frustration and fury, she could do nothing but sit back down. However, she made a firm decision that in the future, no matter who tried to get her to come see this detestable parrot, she would absolutely refuse.

“We’ve incurred Brother Meng’s ridicule,” said Dongluo Han. “Please don’t take offense at my younger sister’s impulsiveness. Actually, I brought her with me today to offer an apology for the matter from the other day.”

“You’re too courteous, Fellow Daoist Dongluo. That was just a misunderstanding, there’s no need to bring it up.” Meng Hao smiled, but inwardly, he was on guard. He had anticipated that the Clan would seek him out eventually. Because of the power he had displayed, and the parrot’s performance, most likely, he met the qualifications to be recruited by the Clan.

However, based on what Dongluo Han had said just now, Meng Hao could tell that he had something even bigger planned.

“My younger sister lacks discipline, and unfortunately, the Clan is facing upheaval. Brother Meng, you are handsome and talented. You and I hit it off well right from the start. In fact, I don’t even take you to be an outsider. Brother Meng, I wonder if you would….”

Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly flashed, and he was about to say something when Dongluo Ling once again shot to her feet.

“What are you talking about, Third Bro? You said you brought me here to make an apology! I get what you’re trying to say, and I completely disagree! I don’t care if it’s your idea or the Clan’s idea, I will never comply. If you try to force me, then I'll kill myself! I will never become anyone's beloved, especially this shameless, vulgar, despicable hoodlum!" She turned to glare coldly at Meng Hao, making no attempt to conceal her hatred, disgust and contempt. "You might as well quit your dreaming. I've taken an oath to never become someone's beloved, but even if I hadn't, there are countless heroes in the United Nine, and you don't measure up to even a single one of them!"

With that, she gave Meng Hao a final contemptuous look, then turned her supple waist and stalked off. Her slender, lithe figure would cause any man who saw it to feel tremors in his heart.

Meng Hao frowned. After hearing Dongluo Han's suggestion, he had been about to refuse. However, hearing Dongluo Ling's reaction caused him to smile and hold his tongue. He looked back at Dongluo Han.

Dongluo Han sighed inwardly. The idea hadn't come from the Clan. It was something he had spontaneously come up with himself. He had the feeling that this Cultivator named Meng possessed some unfathomable secret. As such, the idea of convincing him to join the Clan had wormed its way into his head.

Seeing Dongluo Ling's fierce reaction, however, caused Dongluo Han to shake his head with a bitter laugh. He gave Meng Hao an apologetic look, and didn't bring the matter up again. Instead, he sat silently in thought for a moment and said, "I assume you guessed my purpose in coming, Brother Meng. The Black Lands are falling into chaos. The Alliance of United Nine Cities isn't equal to the Black Lands Palace, but our power is not too far off. Fellow Daoist, join the United Nine, and your every wish will be but a command away."

Meng Hao didn't immediately refuse. He sat thinking for a short while, before slowly responding, "I can't make a decision immediately, sir."

"No matter," replied Dongluo Han. Actually, if Meng Hao had agreed immediately, it would have aroused his suspicions. An initial refusal was actually the most appropriate response. "The United Nine will be recruiting Black Lands Cultivators throughout the coming days. I want you to know that the United Nine will naturally treat recruits with utmost sincerity. Even though war has broken out between the Black Lands Palace and the United Nine, you should be able to see that the United Nine will not easily be exterminated. Brother Meng, I will await your decision. You can use that command medallion to notify the Dongluo Clan. In addition you can use the medallion to borrow some Spirit Stones for use in the auction today, a gift from me.”

It was at this time that bells echoed out from the platform in the center of the auction floor. A glowing light emanated out, and a figure appeared on the platform. The auction was officially beginning.

Dongluo Han clasped hands and smiled, then made his way out of the auction area to look for other Cultivators to recruit. The entire Dongluo Clan had been mobilized in an effort to get more Rogue Cultivators to bolster the alliance.

There weren’t a lot of people present, but the auction atmosphere was still lively. However, Meng Hao quickly noticed that there were three particular groups of people with whom others would not compete, regardless of what item was up for auction. At the most, they would watch on with dark expressions, but would hold their tongues.

These three groups were located carefully in opposite locations of the auction floor, and would not compete with each other.

Meng Hao glanced them over, then paid them no further attention. Regardless of where you went, there would be groups of various levels of influence and power. Groups like this would invariably flex their muscles at an important auction such as this.

Perhaps under normal circumstances they would be a bit more cautious. However, considering this was Dongluo City, and also considering the general chaos in the Black Lands, groups such as this were now far more valuable than before.

What Meng Hao needed, though, was the Spirit Orchid Leaf, of which ten would be available in the auction. Considering the turmoil on the horizon for the Black Lands, medicinal plants that could heal injuries would be increasingly valuable.

Despite that, Meng Hao still was able to acquire one. When he did, seven or eight Cultivators eyed him greedily.

His expression was the same as ever as he waited for the auction house to deliver the Spirit Orchid Leaf to him, whereupon he prepared to leave.

“Next up for auction is a flag. This flag is a treasure suitable for the Core Formation stage, and is called the Black Days Banner. When unfurled, it unleashes incredible power, and places inky blackness beneath your feet. It can be used both offensively and defensively, and most strange of all, can be fused with your Core Qi!

“This treasure was acquired from within some ancient ruins. Furthermore, we guarantee that in all the Black Lands, there is only this one.” As auctioneer introduced the item, a woman walked out from behind him bearing a copper tray. Atop the tray was a piece of cloth the size of a fist.

Meng Hao was just about to leave when he heard all of this. Suddenly, the parrot’s eyes went wide, and it stared at the flag, its eyes filled with disbelief.

After a moment the parrot didn’t speak, but rather transmitted its shrill, disbelieving voice into Meng Hao’s head. “Get it! You have to get it! This is incredible luck for you!”

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# Chapter 331: Just Steal It!

Meng Hao paused in mid-step, then sat back and focused once again on the auction, his eyes glittering slightly. There didn’t seem to be anything very special about the flag, but for the parrot to show such interest in it left Meng Hao assured that it was something extraordinary.

“10,000 Spirit Stones!” someone cried in a husky voice, even as the introductory words were still echoing around the auction floor. Meng Hao glanced around surreptitiously and saw that the owner of the voice was someone among one of the three groups of Cultivators who were dominating the auction.

The opening bid caused everyone to frown. However, nobody dared to offer another bid. Not even the Cultivators from the other two groups did anything more than discuss the matter in low tones.

The auctioneer sighed inwardly. In the past, such a situation would never have arisen in the Dongluo City auction. However, because of the current disorder in the Black Lands, the United Nine wanted to recruit powerful groups of Cultivators just like these ones. Therefore, the auction itself wasn’t very important, and matters such as those occurring right now were ignored.

Just as the auctioneer was about to bang his hammer down to set the final price, Meng Hao’s cool voice rang out.

“15,000 Spirit Stones,” he said calmly. The instant he did, the entire auction floor went silent, and one gaze after another came to rest on him. This was especially true of the group of Cultivators who had called out the opening bid. There were more than ten of them in the group, three of whom were of the Core Formation stage. The rest were Foundation Establishment, but all of them gave dark looks to Meng Hao.

One of the three Core Formation Cultivators, whose Cultivation base was about the same as Meng Hao's, coldly said, "Hand over your 15,000 Spirit Stones to me and then leave. If you do, we won't cause any trouble for you."

His words only caused Meng Hao to smile. "16,000 Spirit Stones," he said.

This caused the surrounding Cultivators to gasp. They could see a strange light in Meng Hao's eyes that caused the face of the middle-aged man who had just spoken to darken. Killing intent gleamed in his eyes.

"Are you fool enough to reject a face-saving offer? 20,000 Spirit Stones!"

"21,000 Spirit Stones!" Meng Hao didn't have many more Spirit Stones, and in fact, this was his limit. After purchasing the Spirit Orchid Leaf, his supply was dried up.

"Interesting," said an old man standing next to the middle-aged man. He was one of the other three Core Formation Cultivators. His Cultivation base was the same as Dongluo Han's, at the mid Core Formation stage. "So, it turns out that there's someone in Dongluo City who dares to steal things that belong to one of the three great Sects. I'll offer 40,000 for this flag."

He glared at Meng Hao as if he were already a dead man.

Meng Hao was silent for the space of a few breaths and then said, "50,000 Spirit Stones!" The surroundings were completely silent. Even the auctioneer appeared to be shaking with fear. In his estimation, this flag was worth no more than around 40,000 spirit stones. 50,000 was an extremely high price.

Perhaps auctions could reach such a high price in the Southern Domain, but this was the Black Lands. Furthermore, the actual function of the flag was not as amazing as he had made it sound; he had actually exaggerated a bit.

The mid Core Formation old man looked at Meng Hao, his gaze icy cold. It wasn’t just him; many of the surrounding Cultivators seemed to think that Meng Hao was specifically targeting one of the three major powers of the Dongluo City region, the Han River Sect.

“If you want to make a bid like that, you’ll need to show the Spirit Stones,” said the old man, his gaze flickering. “Otherwise I could make random bids too.” He looked over at the auctioneer, who hesitated for a moment and then faced Meng Hao.

“Fellow Daoist,” he said, “according to the rules of the auction, since you’ve incurred the suspicion of fellow participants in the auction, you’ll need to produce the Spirit Stones to prove that you have them. Please, don’t make things difficult for me.”

“How many Spirit Stones can I borrow with this?” asked Meng Hao, lifting up the black command medallion.

“100,000,” replied the auctioneer, looking back at the Core Formation Cultivator.

“I’ll pay 150,000 for the flag,” said the Core Formation Cultivator coolly. He looked at Meng Hao with cold laughter in his eyes. Given the power of the three great Sects, as well the fact that they had received recruitment invitations, a mere 150,000 Spirit Stones was a price that could easily be erased by the Dongluo Clan. Therefore, he didn’t care too much. What he did care about was having his Sect targeted in front of all these Cultivators. Killing intent already glowed in his eyes.

Meng Hao was silent for a moment, and then sighed inwardly. He just wanted the flag; he wasn’t targeting anybody. However, the auctioneer was now looking over at him, apparently preparing to announce the winner of this lot.

“Just how important is this flag?” Meng Hao transmitted to the parrot.

“Very important,” was the response. “If Lord Fifth isn’t mistaken, that’s no flag. Whoever it was that refined that thing into a flag is an idiot. He wrecked a precious treasure! Do you remember the guy I told you about who painted a talisman which ended up getting burned? The falling ash from the talisman became the Black Lands. Well, that talisman wasn't completely destroyed; some of it remained and fell to the earth.

"Well, this flag is none other than a remnant of that scorched talisman. If you can get it, it will help you a lot in gaining enlightenment of that Immortal's magical symbols. You could say that getting this flag will make you qualified to practice cultivation based on those magical symbols! If you don't have the money, then just steal it! What are you waiting for! Don't be scared! Have faith in the Lord Fifth, gain eternal life. Lord Fifth is watching over you. Steal it! That's what I did all those years ago. Steal it! I'll even help you break the shield protecting the platform!" The parrot seemed to be getting more and more excited at the prospect of getting Meng Hao to steal the flag.

The voice of the meat-jelly bell interrupted the mental conversation between the parrot and Meng Hao. "Stealing is immoral, wicked, wrong," it said solemnly. "For you two to do this is really bad, I …."

However, having heard the parrot's words, Meng Hao's eyes glittered and filled with determination. This auction was hosted by the Dongluo Clan, and Meng Hao was even considering joining them. However, he was only one person; how could he possibly compare to ten?

It was hard to tell who the Dongluo Clan would side with in the end, which was a problem. Seemingly having no other options, and seeing the auctioneer about to say something, Meng Hao suddenly stood up.

This caused the auctioneer to stare over in shock. As he did, Meng Hao's body flickered. In front of the gaping eyes of all of the surrounding Cultivators, he shot toward the platform in the center of the auction floor.

He moved too quickly for anyone to react. As he neared the platform, the parrot continued to grow more excited. It squawked loudly, spitting something out of its mouth.

It was an attack that instantly slammed into the podium, causing a resounding boom to fill the air. The auctioneer stared in shock as the invisible shield protecting the podium shattered into countless pieces. Meng Hao descended, ignoring the auctioneer and grabbing the flag, then turning and shooting away.

Most of the Cultivators participating in the auction didn’t even have time to react. However, the instant Meng Hao began to make his escape, two roaring howls rose up from the center of the auction floor. Two old men had suddenly appeared and flew to intercept Meng Hao.

“You dare to steal from our Dongluo Clan auction!? You’re looking to die!”

“Get back here!” The Cultivation bases of the old men exploded with the power of the late Core Formation stage. Seeing them approach only seemed to make the parrot more excited. It squawked again, and a piercing sound rang out, an attack which spread out explosively toward the two late Core Formation old men. Their bodies shook, and they were incapable of approaching any closer.

Meng Hao dodged past them, flying like a shooting star above the heads of the other Cultivators. He kicked up a stiff wind that blew across their faces as he transformed into a beam of light that shot off into the sky.

This entire process took only the space of a few breaths. From the moment he snatched the flag until he disappeared, he moved with incredible speed. The method he had used to snatch the flag was natural and smooth, almost rehearsed. The minds of the observing Cultivators reeled and were filled with blankness.

This was the first time they had ever seen anyone rob an auction. Even in the Black Lands, this was something extremely rare, especially considering that it was always major Clans who hosted auctions. All of the Cultivators had strange expressions on their faces.

The people from the three great Sects watched on, stunned. Most shocked of all was the old man who had just made the top bid; how could he have anticipated that his opponent would actually… violate the rules in such a way?

He had no money, so he just stole the item…. Granted, these three great Sects often did similar things, but usually it was in secret. They would never dare to do so publicly.

In fact, now it seemed as if everything the old man had just said was a joke. An angry expression quickly appeared on his face. Even more angry were the two Core Formation old men who had tried to stop Meng Hao. Their eyes blazed with fury and the veins on their forehead bulged out; they were clearly incensed.

A buzz immediately rose up among the onlookers.

“Who was that? How brazen! He actually stole the item!”

“He’s far too daring. He had no Spirit Stones, so he stole it?! Compared to him, we don’t even count as Black Lands Cultivators! He is the true Black Lands Cultivator!”

“We need to learn from him!”

Off in the distance, on one particular wall that no one in the auction could see, was a small booth. Inside stood Dongluo Han, who was currently staring out in shock. From this booth, everything on the outside could be seen, however, no one could see inside.

He had long since noticed Meng Hao’s lack of Spirit Stones, and had felt a bit embarrassed. After all, Meng Hao had been competing with the Han River Sect, one of the three great Sects that the Dongluo Clan had already made an initial agreement with. Dongluo Han had already begun to prepare a diplomatic response if Meng Hao gave voice to complaint. He had never imagined that Meng Hao would actually resort to theft!

“What a daredevil….” Another man stood next to Dongluo Han. He looked gentle and refined, but he also let out a sigh of praise.

Dongluo Han could only make a wry smile.

At the same time….

The old Core Formation Cultivator from the Han River Clan let out a roar. “You dare to steal things at the Dongluo Clan auction, and my things at that!? The three great Sects won’t let you get away with this!” His body flashed as he flew up into the air He was immediately followed by ten or more people who all transformed into colorful beams that shot up into the air.

The other two groups from the three great Sects exchanged glances. Then, they also flew into the air to pursue at top speed.

As for the remaining Cultivators, they saw that the auction was now over, so they too flew up into the air to follow.

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# Chapter 332: The Great Con

Meng Hao sped through the air. The parrot gripped his shoulder tightly with its claws, flapping its wings and looking extremely pleased.

“Steal, steal, steal!” it squawked. “That’s the way to do it! Steal what you feel like, screw whatever you want. That’s the way to live! Have faith in the Lord Fifth, gain eternal life! When the Lord Fifth appears, who dares to cause strife!”

Meng Hao ignored the parrot. His face felt a bit red. This was the first time he had openly stolen something, and it felt strange. Back when he was a scholar, he would never have been able to brazenly rob in the way he had just now.

Actually, without the urgings of the parrot, he still would never have done so. Even with all the egging on, he had still hesitated. Actually, if he had been able to, he would have tried to sell some medicinal pills first. In the end, though, that didn’t seem possible.

Therefore, for whatever reason, he had listened to the parrot, and performed the robbery in the auction….

Such brazen theft made him feel quite nervous inside, but also a bit excited.

He shook his head, laughing bitterly as he moved along at top speed. He suddenly realized that he had been unconsciously influenced a lot by the parrot since it woke up.

“Damned parrot,” he thought with an inward sigh. Suddenly, the Cultivators speeding through the air at top speed could be heard from behind him, along with roars of rage.

“You little bastard! You stole my stuff! Are you looking to die?!” The voice echoed and rolled about like thunder. Meng Hao sent out his Spiritual Sense, and immediately saw the dozen or so pursuing Cultivators, whistling along through the air just behind him. He wasn’t sure what technique they were using, but their bodies were surrounded by a red glow, seemingly connecting them all together and lending them greater speed as they pursued.

“I’m not gonna do something like this again,” thought Meng Hao. “Stealing doesn’t really suit me. Yeah, next time I’d rather let the old guy buy the item, then find him later and take it from him. That way I can avoid this kind of attention.” Meng Hao was good at problem solving, so he thought for a moment and then sent his Spiritual Sense out again. One of the three Core Formation Cultivators, an old man with a face full of pockmarks was the only one Meng Hao was paying attention to. He had a Cultivation base at the late Core Formation stage; everyone else Meng Hao ignored.

The pock faced old man hadn’t said a word the entire time. Instead, he had observed everything with cold eyes; this made Meng Hao feel a bit of pressure.

Unless he put on the Blood Immortal mask, it would be difficult to defeat him.

He looked over and gave the parrot a look. “This whole disaster is your fault!”

“What are you scared of?” said the parrot, looking back at him with an intense look of pride. “Screw them to death!” Suddenly, its claw lifted up toward its face, placing a black band around its head, covering one eye. After that, it flew off of Meng Hao’s shoulder.

It squawked, and suddenly a black fire appeared around its body, which began to grow rapidly. In the blink of an eye, it was now twenty or thirty meters tall. It lowered its head, looking every bit like the member of some sort of elite death squad. With a cry, it made its attack.

Meng Hao’s eyes went wide. He saw the parrot advancing bravely; it only took an instant for it to slam into the dozen or so pursuing Cultivators. A boom rang out, and the red glow which surrounded the Cultivators instantly collapsed. Some of them coughed up blood; the three Core Formation Cultivators scattered.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. Without hesitation, he shot forward. In an instant, he was in front of the early Core Formation Cultivator. He lifted his fist and struck out.

The man’s mouth twisted into a vicious smile. He made an incantation sign with both hands, and immediately a spinning vortex shot out. It was black, and lightning crackled within. Furthermore, terrifying shrieks could be heard, along with a multitude of spirit faces, which shot toward Meng Hao, apparently intent on consuming him.

Meng Hao gave a cold snort. Without hesitation, he landed his punch. A boom filled the air. The faces twisted and screamed, and then collapsed into pieces. The lightning disintegrated, and the vortex broke up into pieces. This magical technique couldn’t stand up in the least to Meng Hao’s fist. Before the middle-aged Cultivator could react, Meng Hao’s fist passed through them all and slammed into his chest.

Boom!

The man toppled backward, blood spraying from his mouth and out from his back. His body shook as a massive hole appeared in his chest. He only had time to look down at it before his entire body exploded.

Meng Hao didn’t pause for a moment. His right hand immediately began to form an incantation.

In front of him was the old mid Core Formation Cultivator, who brimmed with killing intent. He waved his sleeve, and nine pagodas appeared around him, upon the surfaces of which were carved the images of bizarre creatures. Suddenly, countless phantom creatures sprang into being around the pagodas, filling the sky. They immediately charged toward Meng Hao.

However, it was at this moment that Meng Hao cried, “Eighth Demon Sealing Hex!” His finger fell, and immediately, ghost images sprung up everywhere, from everything. It was as if a second phantom world existed on top of the current one. They folded in onto the old Core Formation Cultivator; causing his expression to flicker. His Cultivation base was immediately locked down, as if he had been removed from the world, shoved alive out of Heaven and Earth.

“What magic is this….” His mind spun as the cold-faced Meng Hao approached. His fist descended, then another, then a third!

By the time the third punch fell, the nine pagodas had been smashed into smithereens. In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao’s fist was speeding toward the old man’s forehead.

Suddenly, an intense feeling of danger filled Meng Hao’s head. Without a moment’s hesitation, he transformed the fist into a claw and snatched the mid Core Formation old man. Meng Hao shoved the man in front of himself and then pushed, using the immobilized old man to propel himself backward.

As he lifted his head, he saw an orange light shining out from the face of the pock marked old Cultivator. It flew through the air to the spot he had just been in, which was now occupied by the mid Core Formation Cultivator. Suddenly, the glowing light stopped.

That orange light was what had just caused the sense of crisis to appear in Meng Hao’s mind.

He laughed coldly as he fell back. The parrot shot over like lightning, and together, they flew off into the distance.

“I’m the Patriarch of the Han River Sect!” said the pock faced old man, his face grim. “Let’s see how you try to escape me!” The mid Core Formation Cultivator’s Cultivation base was now recovering, but his face was pale white and he looked at Meng Hao with fear. His killing intent, though, was stronger than ever.

The group of Cultivators once again began to pursue Meng Hao, this time, with the pock faced old man in the lead.

Meng Hao’s expression was calm. He had the good luck charm in his hand still. It was full of cracks, and he wasn’t sure how many times he could use it before it completely disintegrated. Unfortunately, he had discovered long ago that he could not duplicate the good luck charm. However, he would still use it without hesitating if the situation demanded.

“Hold on,” said the parrot. “Don’t use that thing. I know what it is. Why waste the excellent opportunity we have right now?”

As Meng Hao sped along, he looked at the parrot, who was clutching tightly to his shoulder.

“What are you talking about?”

The parrot’s eyes gleamed as it said, “Don’t you want to get rich? Don’t you want to get a bunch of treasures? Don’t you want to become the wealthiest person under the Heavens?”

Meng Hao blinked a few times. Ever since he was young, he had dreamed of being rich. For the parrot to mention such a thing at this moment left him feeling a little bit suspicious.

He sent out his Spiritual Sense to glance at the people pursuing him. Given his own current speed, he guessed that it wouldn’t be long before the Han River Sect Cultivators caught up with him.

“Lord Fifth doesn’t care too much about riches. Lord Fifth loves fur and feathers. Okay, how about this…. You can keep everything, but you have to promise that in the future, you’ll find more beautiful furred and feathered creatures for Lord Fifth. Ones similar to that Scarlet Peacock would do nicely.” Without waiting for an an answer from Meng Hao, it lifted up one of its claws and shook it.

“Ultimate Vexation, get the hell out here!”

A face appeared on the small bell that was attached to the Parrot’s claw. It looked incensed. “I know what you’re planning. This time, I won’t do it. I have principles! I won’t do it. I won’t! Never!”

The parrot yawned and said, “Remember the fatso who attacked you that year? I’ll tell you where he is.” Its expression was one of complete disdain, as if the meat jelly’s consent was a foregone conclusion.

As soon as it heard the parrot’s words, the meat jelly’s face appeared to twist with indecision.

“That damned fatso. I hate him! It was with complete good will that I spent ten thousand years converting him. Then, he repaid my kindness with enmity. I… I… Fine! I need to finish converting him. For that reason, I’ll help you one more time. But only this once! And this is the last time… Really….” As the meat jelly chattered, an impatient look appeared on the parrot’s face. It kicked its claw one more time, and the meat jelly flew off.

“Bitch! Will you ever shut up!? Alright, turn into some Spirit Stones for Lord Fifth. I want one million, okay?” When the parrot finished speaking, the meat jelly let out a growl, and then, to Meng Hao’s shock, suddenly exploded.

The sound of the explosion immediately caught the guarded attention of the Han River Sect Cultivators. Even the pock faced old man suddenly stopped moving.

However, a moment later, vast amounts of shining, glittering Spirit Stones appeared. They looked like rain as they descended from the sky all over the place.

They were dazzlingly bright in the sunlight, and a thick spiritual energy emanated out from them, completely shocking. The amazing, brilliant sight of it caused all of the nearby Cultivators to begin to pant.

One million Spirit Stones, and the quality of each one was beyond average; these were not low-grade Spirit Stones! To see them slowly floating down in mid-air caused the Black Lands Cultivators to instantly charge forward with reckless abandon.

Even the pock faced old man’s eyes went wide. To him, one million Spirit Stones was a vast number. Behind him were the members of the other two great Sects, and behind them were nearly hundreds of other Cultivators. All of them, rushed forward with wide eyes.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and he immediately transformed into a beam of light that shot off at high speed, like a shooting star. He left behind all the people who were suddenly enthralled with the idea of getting rich.

It was as if they had lost their minds, and didn’t even stop to think why Meng Hao would suddenly have so many Spirit Stones. If he did, why would he need to perform robbery at the auction? Actually, Meng Hao was feeling a bit torn; he couldn’t believe he had never thought to have the meat jelly turn into Spirit Stones.

“Heh heh,” chuckled the parrot with an arrogant, sinister smile. “Steal away. The more you steal the better. Years ago I forced Ultimate Vexation to use this method on the eight Taiping Dao Patriarchs to rob them blind!”

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# Chapter 333: Conning the Whole Way

One million Spirit Stones appeared; brilliant sunlight reflected off of them, creating a radiant glow. This afternoon in this part of the Black Lands, a crazed frenzy rose up among hundreds of Cultivators.

This was especially true of the Cultivators in the very back, who had come along to watch the excitement. Their eyes went red as they immediately used every technique they knew to increase their speed, scattering in all directions to grab Spirit Stones.

The people from the Han River Sect were the closest. The pock faced old man hesitated for a moment; something didn’t seem right to him. He thought back to the auction, and how Meng Hao had apparently been short on Spirit Stones. However, it was impossible to tell whether the Spirit Stones were illusory or real. Seeing how the disciples surrounding him were all breathing heavily, he gritted his teeth, abandoned the chase, and went after the Spirit Stones. His sleeve flicked as he tried to gather together as many as possible.

The other Han River Sect disciples charged forth madly. The disciples from the other two Sects immediately began to struggle for supremacy in taking the Spirit Stones. It only took a moment for hundreds of Cultivators to be flitting about in all directions after Spirit Stones. Soon, they began to fight and plunder.

“Dammit, that’s my Spirit Stone!”

“The guy who robbed the auction tossed out these Spirit Stones to save his own skin! They don’t belong to anybody. First come first serve!”

The sound of explosions echoed out. One million Spirit Stones seemed like a lot, but considering hundreds of Cultivators were fighting over them, they were divided up very quickly. It was without hesitation that the Cultivators tossed them into their bags of holding.

Suddenly, their excited, complacent thoughts changed, and they looked off in the direction Meng Hao had fled.

In their opinion, for him to have thrown out a million Spirit Stones just to buy some time, indicated that he must have even more Spirit Stones on his person.

A strange light appeared in the eyes of the Han River Sect Cultivators. They had snatched up the most Spirit Stones of all, perhaps more than two hundred thousand. The expression on the face of the pockmarked old man indicated that he was determined to win. He knew the Spirit Stones weren’t fake; after snatching them up, he had carefully examined one. With a hearty laugh, he shot in pursuit of Meng Hao, his disciples in tow.

Almost all of the other Cultivators in the area did the same. There were a few who hesitated, worried that something untoward would happen if they were too greedy. Some even considered leaving; after all, everyone had gotten some Spirit Stones, which meant that everyone had profited at least some. Some people were surreptitiously examining their bags of holding to count exactly how many Spirit Stones they’d acquired.

It was then that a flabbergasted gasp could be heard.

“Huh? Where are the Spirit Stones? I just took about ten thousand, where did they go?”

“Mine are gone too! What’s going on…?”

Others who overheard such remarks immediately looked down to check their own bags of holding, whereupon their faces instantly fell.

“My Spirit Stones are gone! Impossible! I stole at least eight thousand just now!!”

“Something fishy is going on….”

A buzz rose up, mixed with miserable cries. As they checked their bags of holding, the faces of all the Cultivators grew deathly pale. Some of the Cultivators even began to shake, and veins began to pop out on their faces. Intense rage and insanity poured out from their eyes.

“My magical items are gone!!”

“Dammit, my medicinal elixir! There’s none left at all in my bag of holding!!”

“Ahhhhhh! My bag of holding has nothing in it! What’s going on!? It’s totally empty! Even the magical item I just bought at the auction is gone!”

As word spread, the miserable cries grew even louder. The pock faced old man from the Han River Sect flickered as he looked down to his own bag of holding. Then, his face went as gray as ash; he lifted his head up to the sky and let out a desolate howl.

His body shook, and smoke began to rise up from the top of his head. Veins of blood shot through his eyes, which radiated vicious frenzy. How could he not go crazy? His heart virtually dripped with blood, as if someone had literally ripped it open.

His bag had originally contained hundreds of thousands of Spirit Stones, which had apparently vanished into thin air. All of his medicinal elixir, magical items, medicinal pills… everything was gone, even the random odds and ends he had collected inside.

His bag of holding had been thoroughly cleaned out. He was now completely empty handed.

His savings of many years, half of the wealth of the Han River Sect, had all been on his person. Now, however… it was gone.

The pock faced Patriarch howled. Behind him, the Patriarch from one of the other great Sects was shaking and howling madly. His bag of holding was equally empty.

The bags of holding of all the hundreds of Cultivators were completely empty. Someone had inexplicably removed their contents, leaving behind not a sound or hint of how it had occurred….

“That Heaven-damned bandit! I won’t rest until he’s dead!” These words came out even before Patriarch Pockmarks could say anything similar. They came from a rubicund old man whose entire body was quivering. The insanity in his eyes outmatched that of Patriarch Pockmarks’. This was the Patriarch from one of the other Clans.

The source of his madness was the fact that just before the auction, he had filled his bag of holding with a million Spirit Stones. That was the price he had demanded from the Dongluo Clan to join them.

In addition to the Spirit Stones, there had been magical techniques from the Dongluo Clan, which he had long thirsted for. Now, though… they were all gone. How could he not go mad?

These Black Lands Cultivators weren’t stupid. If they couldn’t figure out that Meng Hao was the culprit, then their years of Cultivation had been spent in vain. And the root of the problem was those Spirit Stones….

Hundreds of Cultivators were now in a rage. Their eyes were red, and they used all the power they could muster to shoot at top speed after Meng Hao.

Revenge must be had! However, there was no sign of Meng Hao. Fearing that he would escape completely, the hundreds of Cultivators used a variety of methods to call upon friends.

Some arranged for people up ahead to block Meng Hao. Others contacted people from other power groups or Sects up ahead, requesting either direct assistance, or to borrow jade slips or Spirit Stones.

Of course, none of them realized that Meng Hao hadn’t actually conned them; the parrot had. However, it didn’t matter. Meng Hao and the parrot had both done such things many times in the past.

When you think about how many people Meng Hao had conned throughout his time in the Cultivation world, well, you could say that he had conned people the whole way….

As a tiny example, there was a certain group of discarnate souls back in the Black Sieve Sect who Meng Hao could send into instant misery if he felt like it…. 1

As Meng Hao whistled through the air, the meat jelly reclined lazily on top of his head, looking quite arrogant.

“This is wrong….” It coughed up dozens of magical items.

“This is immoral….” It burped up a vast quantity of Spirit Stones.

“This is too wicked….” In the blink of an eye, it spat up mouthful after mouthful of bottles of medicinal elixir and hundreds of jade slips.

“You two are going to turn me into an evildoer….” With a sigh, the meat jelly coughed up some more items.

Meng Hao stuffed the belongings of hundreds of Cultivators into his bag of the Cosmos. Only it was large enough to contain so many things.

Seeing such a vast collection of items caused Meng Hao’s mouth and tongue to go dry. The sight of more than a million Spirit Stones caused his eyes to shine. Then there were the jade slips, which surely contained a vast array of information. As for the magical items, none of them particularly caught Meng Hao’s attention. However, if he sold them, he would be able to make a heap of Spirit Stones.

Then there was the random collection of other items, one of which happened to catch Meng Hao’s eye. It was a book, plated in something that looked like gold. It consisted of three pages, and three illustrations.

The first illustration depicted ten swords arranged so that their tips pointed outward to form something that looked like a lotus flower.

The second illustration depicted one hundred swords, formed together to make ten lotus flowers which were arranged into a large ring.

The third illustration depicted one thousand swords arranged into one hundred lotus flowers, creating a massive formation. They circled around each other, forming ten layers which all seemed to be revolving in different directions. The mere sight of it was dazzling.

“A sword formation?” thought Meng Hao. He glanced at it for a moment, then put it aside. He continued flying on, heart thumping. He really had struck it rich this time, having stolen the wealth of hundreds of Cultivators.

“It’s too bad….” he was just whispering this sentence in his heart, when the parrot next to him let out a sigh and spoke out loud exactly what he was thinking.

“It’s too bad there weren’t very many people,” said the parrot. “If there were more, then this transaction would have truly been profitable.”

“Don’t even think of trying to get me to do it again!” blubbered the meat jelly. With a pop, it again transformed into a bell and attached itself to the parrot’s foot.

Meng Hao looked at the parrot, and the parrot looked back at him. One man, one bird. In this instant, seeing the light in each other’s eyes caused them both to experience the feeling of mutual friendship.

“From now on, you are Lord Fifth’s master!” said the parrot, its voice sincere.

“In the future, I’ll find some more fur and feathers for you.”

After exchanging these words, the man and bird looked down at the meat jelly bell. The meat jelly quivered and opened its eyes, as if it had just felt something very cold. After opening its eyes, it saw Meng Hao staring off into the sky, and the parrot looking down at the earth below.

“You’re both evildoers….” said the meat jelly loudly.

“Wow, the weather is great today,” said Meng Hao, looking up at the beautiful white clouds, seemingly entranced, as if he’d never seen them before.

“Eee!” said the parrot, looking down at the ground with an expression of rapture. “The flowers down there are beautiful! They almost look like they’re covered with feathers!”

Soon, three days had passed. Meng Hao proceeded onward at top speed the entire time. Behind him, the hundreds of Cultivators stretched out in a line as they pursued him, based on the level of their Cultivation base.

Their eyes were filled with killing intent. Their hatred for him had not quite reached the point where they refused to live under the same sky with him, but it was close.

Black Lands Cultivators were used to living in constant danger, and as such, usually keep most of their belongings in their bags of holding. That was especially the case… when going to an auction.

You could even say that it was at the very moment when their bags of holding were fullest that they met Meng Hao. As such, their hatred toward him was incredibly intense.

This was especially true of the three great Sects. The Patriarch Rubicund was the most frenzied of them all. He had taken the lead position in the group. After him was Patriarch Pockmarks. Their eyes billowed with venomous killing intent as they glared ahead toward Meng Hao. They couldn’t wait to tear him to pieces and eat him alive.

“Little bastard, I’ll hunt you to the ends of the earth if I have to. You’re dead!” screamed Patriarch Rubicund, gnashing his teeth as he thought of his Spirit Stones. His heart bled.

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# Chapter 334: Celestial Spell Formation

“Look, you old fart, you’re the ones who started chasing me. That’s what started this whole thing.” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with coldness as he proceeded onward. Off to the side, Patriarch Rubicund whistled toward him.

The man gave a cold snort, then increased his speed. “Stealing auction items is a high crime! Then you used depraved tricks to steal our wealth! You’re a disgrace to the Black Lands, which earns you the death penalty!” Behind him, Patriarch Pockmarks’ eyes were darkly sinister. Further back, the rest of the Cultivators were all looking at Meng Hao with intense killing intent.

“Your Cultivation base is in the late Core Formation stage, and yet after three days you’ve been unable to catch up to a paltry early Core Formation Cultivator like me? How do you have the face to raise such a ruckus?” Meng Hao also increased his speed.

“You sure know how to run your mouth! It won’t be long before I help you to understand what it’s like to live a life worse than death!” As he spoke, Patriarch Rubicund used some unknown technique to cause his face to suddenly grow purplish-black. His speed then increased by several times as he shot toward Meng Hao. At this speed, he would catch up in the space of just a few breaths.

“Greedy to the bones,” said Meng Hao coolly. “Considering your Cultivation base, do you have any face whatsoever?” The parrot opened its mouth and a gale force wind sprung up along, with a shocking roar.

Meng Hao’s speed increased. Facing up against the fierce wind, Patriarch Rubicund and the rest of the hundreds of Cultivators behind him could do nothing except howl in rage as their speed decreased.

Currently, none of them had any magical items. Some of them were able to use secret techniques or Core Qi to close some of the distance between them and Meng Hao. However, a single breath from the parrot would immediately increase the gap. Therefore, no matter what they did to increase their speed, it did no good and they were unable to catch up with Meng Hao.

During the three days, their rage only continued to grow more and more intense.

Seeing the distance between them and Meng Hao grow once again, the killing intent in Patriarch Rubicund’s heart spread to fill his entire body. The Patriarch Pockmarks was exactly the same, as were all the hundred Cultivators behind them.

After three days of travel, Meng Hao could tell from the landmarks and regions he was passing that he was getting close to his Immortal’s cave.

“Considering how pissed off they are, are you sure your idea will work?” said Meng Hao to the parrot, frowning.

“Of course it’ll work,” replied the parrot boastingly. “You can never go wrong when you listen to Lord Fifth. Just lead these people into our lair. You can go practice Cultivation and leave everything else to Lord Fifth!” It patted its chest and proudly continued, “Don’t worry, the more people there are, the more chaotic the aura will be, and the easier it will be to use that technique I mentioned to delay the Heavenly Tribulation.”

The frown remained on Meng Hao’s face. During his three days of travel, he had discussed with the parrot the matter of delaying the Heavenly Tribulation. He knew that the method was a type of deception, using a variety of miscellaneous auras to confuse Heaven and Earth. It was like spreading a gauze over the face of the Heavenly Tribulation.

Therefore, these pursuing Cultivators, more than a hundred of them, would actually be of some use to Meng Hao and the parrot. However, as to whether the technique would succeed, and as to whether the parrot would really be able to hold off the crowd, well, Meng Hao wasn’t completely certain.

Even as he was thinking about these things, his eyes suddenly flashed. He looked ahead of him, and his eyes narrowed; there he could see a dozen or so beams of prismatic light whistling toward him. He was being blocked in!

There was a blockade up ahead, and people pursuing him from behind. The people up ahead merely had to delay him for a bit, and then the pursuers would arrive. He was encircled.

Behind him, Patriarch Rubicund and many of the others all of a sudden looked very excited. Obviously, they had used various methods to call for help earlier, and result was this group of people up ahead preparing to block Meng Hao’s way.

Among the approaching Cultivators was a middle-aged man of the mid Core Formation stage. Core Qi floated above his head, but it appeared to be a muddle of colors; clearly the man had just recently cultivated it. Furthermore, he obviously had a Mixed Core.

His expression was grim as he sized up Meng Hao. Then, he performed an incantation sign, which caused the Core Qi to transform into the shape of the head of a wild beast. It roared as it shot forward.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he lifted his hand and then pointed a finger down toward the ground.

“Righteous Bestowal!” A strange light flickered in his eyes; in an instant, ghost images sprung up from the ground everywhere. Now, he could see wisps of Demonic Qi which were invisible to everyone else. They shot toward Meng Hao and then began to circle around his body.

The invisible pulsating aura which surrounded Meng Hao coalesced into a phantom. It was blurry, but after taking shape, it emanated Meng Hao’s aura.

Next, he waved his hand toward the group of Cultivators up ahead, causing the phantom to shoot toward them.

Meng Hao didn’t want to split his attention to control the phantom, so as soon as it neared the group of Cultivators, he said, “Burst!”

The phantom immediately exploded.

A huge boom rocked Heaven and Earth. What everyone else saw was Meng Hao simply pointing toward the group Cultivators, after which blood sprayed from their mouths. A few people even directly blew up. The face of the Core Formation Cultivator fell, and he retreated seven or eight paces. However, he was powerless to fight back against what seemed like an invisible gale force wind that slammed into him and sent him tumbling backward.

Astonishment filled his face as he was knocked head over heels, blood spraying out of his mouth. Before, he had assumed that even if his opponent was extraordinary in some way, he was with a group of a dozen or more people. Furthermore, all he had to do was delay him, which should be no problem.

And yet Meng Hao had used an unknown technique to simply point a finger and then unleash some sort of incredible power. The man’s heart felt cold as he watched Meng Hao approach; he didn’t dare to do anything further to stop him.

Meng Hao shot forward, immediately passing the scattered group of Cultivators who had been attempting to block his path.

This scene caused the hundred or so pursuing Cultivators to feel completely shocked. All of them slowed, hesitating. However, when they thought about their empty bags of holding, and the expression ‘strength in numbers,’ then their killing intent once again billowed up. Not a single one retreated; they immediately shot in pursuit of Meng Hao, stringing out in a line that resembled a sharp arrow.

Time passed. After three or four more breaths from the parrot, Meng Hao finally caught sight of the short mountain and the Immortal's cave. He also saw the group of more than a hundred Cultivators living around the mountain.

When they caught sight of him and his pursuers, looks of vigilance and uneasiness appeared on their faces.

The instant they began to feel uneasy, the parrot's shrill voice blared out, "Okay children, Lord Fifth is here with some guests. Get in formation!"

At the same time, Meng Hao transformed into a beam of light which shot directly toward the fissure in the side of the mountain.

As he did, the parrot loosened its grip on his shoulder and flew into the air. The meat jelly bell attached to its foot made dainty clinking sounds.

When the more than one hundred local Cultivators heard the parrot's voice, tremors ran through their bodies. Gritting their teeth, they immediately rose to their feet. Then, they began to run in a particular order and fashion, coiling around the short mountain as they did so.

A strange expression appeared on Meng Hao's face as he used Spiritual Sense to watch all of this. He thought back to what the parrot had called a Celestial spell formation, and all the running training it had made the Cultivators do. He hesitated for a moment, then clenched his jaw and sat down cross-legged. He pulled out the medicinal plants needed to make the Perfect Gold Core Pill and began to concoct.

He would make the Perfect Gold Core Pill, consume it, and then replace his Violet Core with a Gold Core. Furthermore, he would go all out, breaking through from the early Core Formation stage into the mid Core Formation Stage, all using his Perfect Gold Core!

"After that happens, I will delay the Heavenly Tribulation and cultivate Core Qi. If all goes smoothly, then when I leave this Immortal's cave…." Meng Hao's eyes glowed with a frigid light. "I'll help them to experience true deadly pursuit!” He took a deep breath and then produced the copper mirror, which he used to duplicate some of the medicinal plants he needed.

Before, he would have had to be very careful, considering his lack of Spirit Stones. Furthermore, using the ultra high-grade Spirit Stones would have been far too distressing. Now, however, he had more than a million Spirit Stones in his bag of holding; therefore, he felt free to use them without being miserly.

In addition to that, Meng Hao felt supremely confident in his Dao of alchemy, far more so than Chu Yuyan had been back when she concocted the Perfect Foundation Pill. Using the mysterious legacy technique of the East Pill Division, along with his alchemic flame, Meng Hao was more than seventy percent confident that he would succeed.

Outside the Immortal’s cave, Patriarch Rubicund, Patriarch Pockmarks, and all the others approached, faces filled with murder. They saw Meng Hao disappear into the short mountain, the detestable parrot flying around squawking, and the group of Cultivators running in circles around the mountain.

All of it caused them to gape in shock for a moment, and then begin laughing uproariously. As more people arrived, they too looked at the Cultivators running in circles, and laughed out loud.

“What are these people doing? Have they gone insane?!”

“Are they jogging for exercise?”

“What kind of Cultivators are they? They’re really losing face for the Black Lands!”

The sneering ridicule of the Cultivators who had been pursuing Meng Hao caused embarrassed looks to appear on the faces of the Cultivators on the ground. However, they didn’t dare to stop running. This was the only Celestial magic that the parrot had taught them, which drew its power from people running.

According to what the parrot said, this technique was incredibly, unbelievably amazing. It was supposedly the ultimate spell formation in all Heaven and Earth.

“Come come,” cried the parrot excitedly as it soared through the air. “Everyone put your voices together….”

The more than one hundred local Cultivators hesitated for a moment. However, nearly a year of practicing had created a virtual instinct. As soon as one person cried it out, everyone joined together to shout.

“Have faith in the Lord Fifth, gain eternal life! When the Lord Fifth appears, who dares to cause strife!”

Their voices joined together and echoed out in powerful waves. As the sound rose up, so did a wind. It was hard to tell whether the wind was started because of the running, or because of their shouting.

In any case, the wind caused the area fifty kilometers around the Immortal’s cave to suddenly become blurry. The blurriness was faint, so faint, in fact, that no one noticed it all, not even Patriarch Rubicund, who was of the late Core Formation stage, or the others of similar level.

“Kill everyone!” cried Patriarch Pockmarks. “Don’t even leave a blade of grass left alive!” His words floated through the air lightly, but were filled with shocking killing intent. As they rang out, the Han River Sect disciples behind him, as well as many of the other random Cultivators, transformed into prismatic beams. They shot forward, their faces twisted viciously, their killing intent billowing. It was with ultimate derision that they prepared to vent their venomous hatred of Meng Hao.

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# Chapter 335: Valiant!

The large group of Han River Sect disciples descended with killing rage and taunting laughter. Eyes beaming with viciousness, they neared the over one hundred Cultivators who were running around on the ground.

“Children, don’t look! Ignore them!” cried the parrot as it flew back and forth in the air. The clinking of the bell on its foot could also be heard ringing out. “Come come. Join me in your loudest voice….”

The more than one hundred Cultivators once again joined voices to call out loudly. The Cultivators who had been pursuing Meng Hao all the way from Dongluo City grew closer. However, as they neared, their expressions flickered as they felt a wind picking up.

The wind brushed against their faces, rippling their clothes, blowing against their hair. It even began to push their bodies about. The charging Cultivators were gradually forced to stop. Their clothes whipped violently, their hair was in disarray, and their expressions were gradually changing to that of shock.

A vortex of slowly moving wind began to spread out from beneath the feet of the running Cultivators. As it extended outward it pushed back against the incoming Cultivators, blocking them. In an instant, it changed from a gentle breeze into a screaming gale force wind.

The screaming of the wind was shocking, and it mixed with the cries of the Cultivators inside to form a power that seemed as if it could rend the very Heavens. The Cultivators from Dongluo City retreated in astonishment. Some were too slow, and were caught up by the cyclone of wind. Blood sprayed from their mouths, and even their organs were broken into pieces.

A dozen of the Cultivators who had weak Cultivation bases suddenly began to scream. Their miserable cries drifted along with the wind, piercing the ears of the onlookers. People watched on in horror as the clothing of their dozen compatriots was ripped to shreds. Their hair turned gray, and their skin was slowly peeled off of their bodies as if they were being punished with death by a thousand cuts. Blood and flesh flew about within the screaming wind. In the blink of an eye…

The skin and muscle of the dozen Cultivators were completely flayed off of their bodies, turning them into skeletons. Cracking sounds could then be heard as the skeletons were smashed into pieces and then disappeared into the wind.

This scene caused the pursuing Cultivators’ scalps to grow numb. Their faces shone with intense horror and disbelief. Their breathing came in ragged pants as they hurriedly backed up. No one dared to proceed forward, and complete silence filled the air, with the exception of… the cries of the wind and… the voices of the running Cultivators, joined together and melded into the wind.

“Have faith in the Lord Fifth… gain eternal life….”

During this moment of relative silence, Patriarch Rubicund gave a cold snort. From behind him walked out a Cultivator of the mid Core Formation stage. Another mid Core Formation Cultivator appeared at the side of Patriarch Pockmarks, his jaw clenched.

A third mid Core Formation Cultivator appeared along with a Patriarch who was obviously from the third of the three great Sects. This man was tall and well-built. After he stepped forward, the three Core Formation Cultivators turned into beams of prismatic light that shot forward.

They appeared intent on piercing through the massive, foggy whirlwind to destroy the more than one hundred Cultivators within.

However, as soon as they neared the wind, their faces changed immediately. They emitted howls as Core Qi appeared above their heads, taking various forms as they charged into the foggy wind.

They had advanced nearly half way to the hundred or more Cultivators, and were roughly thirty meters away from them when, suddenly, a gigantic, phantom figure appeared within the whirlwind.

It was formed from wind itself, and was no less than thirty meters tall. Its facial features were indistinct; the only thing visible was its strapping frame and the illusory clothes which rippled on its body. As the phantom appeared, it was running and emitting an indistinct howling sound. It seemed to have not even noticed the three incoming Cultivators.

The killing intent of the three men flickered as they performed incantation gestures. Core Qi exploded outward, transforming one into a stretch of sandy soil, another into a vast array of flying swords, and the third into a painting of mountains and rivers. The Core Qi enveloped the area, sweeping directly toward the gigantic phantom.

“Shatter!” cried the three men, their voices cold.

However, their Core Qi passed directly through the giant phantom, as if it were completely illusory.

This caused the three men to gape in astonishment. The next thing that happened was that the phantom turned and barreled directly toward them.

The phantom was supposedly illusory, and yet it caused the bodies of these three men to tremble violently. Their faces turned ashen, and they coughed up mouthfuls of blood. Looking astonished, they were about to retreat when they suddenly saw a second, a third, a fourth… and in an instant TEN giant phantoms had appeared within the wind. All of them charged forward toward the three men, who immediately began to retreat.

The Core Formation Cultivator from the Han River Sect was a bit slower than the others. Before he could retreat more than a few paces, one of the phantoms was upon him. Eyes filled with viciousness, the Core Formation Cultivator bit down on the tip of his tongue and spit out a mouthful of blood out into the air. He passed his hands through it, created a blood-colored mark.

He pushed against the blood-colored mark, causing it to ignite and then transform into a massive blood-colored skull. With a roar of rage, it shot toward the approaching phantom. Instead of slamming into each other, the blood-colored skull passed directly through the phantom, and then flew past it through eight more phantoms before finally dissipating.

A look of despair appeared on the face of the Han River Sect Cultivator as the first phantom slammed into him. Blood sprayed from his mouth and he let out a blood-curdling scream.

“Patriarch, save me….” he cried in a voice filled with fear and dread. Patriarch Pockmarks’ face fell. He was about to charge forward to save the man, when his eyes narrowed. Suddenly, he felt as if he didn’t dare to charge forward, and instead retreated.

The reason for this was that he suddenly caught sight of dozens of phantoms approaching at high speed within the wind. Their approach shook the ground, as if giants were trampling the earth. Howls mixed with bloodcurdling shrieks as the Han River Sect Core Formation Cultivator was trampled to death in a bloody pulp.

This scene caused the hearts of all of the outside Cultivators to begin to pound, regardless of the level of their Cultivation base. The foggy wind was growing more and more blurry; as for their expressions, there was no longer even a hint of derision to be seen. Instead, their faces were filled with terror.

Immediately, people began to consider fleeing. However, what they hadn’t noticed was that behind them, another foggy wind had appeared. It surrounded them, completely enveloping them and cutting off their escape.

These Cultivators had pursued Meng Hao with menacing viciousness, but now, their hearts grew cold.

This was even more so when they noticed that inside the foggy wind ahead and behind were dozens of phantom figures. The figures were running, causing the ground to heave. It was easy to imagine how quickly they would be injured, or even killed, were they to be struck by the phantoms.

After all, the phantoms had just trampled a mid Core Formation Cultivator to death in an instant. This filled the other Cultivators' hearts with dread.

It didn't take long for them to realize that the phantoms running through the wind were actually none other than the more than one hundred Cultivators they had previously derided.

As they circled the area, their voices grew louder and louder.

"Have faith in the Lord Fifth, gain eternal life. When the Lord Fifth appears, who dares to cause strife!" The shocking sound of the voices shook the earth, causing everything to tremble and the other Cultivator's faces to drain of blood.

"What spell formation is this?!" the words were not spoken by Patriarch Rubicund, whose heart trembled with fear and trepidation as he looked at the foggy wind around them growing less and less clear. Nor were they spoken by Patriarch Pockmarks, who stood there with an unsightly expression on his face.

Instead, they were spoken by another Cultivator. He was short, with a very large head. Because of that, he didn't stand out very much within the crowd. Even Meng Hao hadn't even noticed him.

When the big-headed Cultivator spoke out, looks of reverence appeared on the faces of many of the surrounding onlookers, who stepped back politely. Patriarch Pockmarks was from the Han River Sect. Patriarch Rubicund was from the Sky High Sect. And this big-headed Cultivator was the Patriarch of the third great Sect, the Talisman Sect.

His Cultivation base was at the late Core Formation stage. His methods were ruthless, and few people in Dongluo City would dare to provoke him. Furthermore, he was known to be very skilled with spell formations. As he stepped forward and looked out at the foggy wind, he slapped his bag of holding to produce a jade bracelet.

Patriarch Rubicund and Patriarch Pockmarks looked at Patriarch Big-head's bag of holding with bitter smiles. They said nothing, but it was obvious that he hadn’t been part of the great Spirit Stone theft incident. Clearly, his bag of holding was completely intact.

Patriarch Big-head stared down at the bracelet, the surface of which was murky, but upon which could be seen over one hundred dots of light, moving to and fro. He studied it for a long moment and then took a deep breath. His eyes shone with amazement, and his heart trembled. “What a splendid Celestial spell formation,” he said. “This is a legendary magic from ancient times, long since lost to the world. And yet here it is today, being employed in front of our own eyes!

“This Celestial spell formation is based upon humans. Ancient Cultivators used powerful corporeal bodies to form the eye of the spell. The more people in the spell formation, the more power it can employ…. The wind of this spell formation has the potential to slay Immortals. Those phantoms are Human Celestials!!” Patriarch Big-head’s scalp was numb. He suddenly turned his head to look at the foggy wind behind them, and his eyes began to glitter brightly.

“However, there are only one hundred people powering this particular spell. Furthermore, these are not ancient Cultivators, and their Cultivation bases are varied and weak. In turn, that means… this spell formation can be broken! What is your choice, to break through the wind in front of us and slay the people therein, or break through the wind behind us, retreat and then come up with another plan?” He looked at Patriarch Pockmarks and Patriarch Rubicund, his eyes gleaming.

The three of them exchanged glances, whereupon their eyes filled with determination.

“I don’t want much,” said Patriarch Big-head with a smile, his eyes filled with avarice. “Just that parrot.”

“I want my belongings back, plus half of the contents of that guy’s bag of holding,” said Patriarch Pockmarks, his voice grim.

“The other half goes to me,” said Patriarch Rubicund, his killing intent flickering, “along with his life!”

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# Chapter 336: League of Hellfire!

A brutal glow flickered within the eyes of the three Cultivators. Patriarch Big-head laughed heartily and then once again slapped his bag of holding to produce what appeared to be nothing more than an ordinary grain of rice.

It was plump, glossy and white. At first glance, the sight of it would make you hungry.

The eyes of Patriarch Rubicund and Patriarch Pockmarks narrowed. “That’s….”

“This object was pried from the mouth of an ancient Giant Locust,” said Patriarch Big-head, his voice cool. “It was passed down through generations to me. After studying it thoroughly, I refined it anew. It can be used to break any spell formation in Heaven and Earth.” He waved his hand, and suddenly, waves of rice grains flew out from his hand, pouring in sheets toward the black, foggy wind ahead of them.

The pure white rice instantly began to turn dark. It only took the space of a few breaths for it to become pure black. Patriarch Big-head gasped, and a strange look appeared in his eyes. His body trembled, and he began to shrink as if he were being withered. Veins of blood appeared in his eyes.

“Fellow Daoists, I need power from your Cultivation bases!” He lifted his right hand, and Patriarch Rubicund and Patriarch Pockmarks immediately began to transmit power from their Cultivation bases. Patriarch Big-head absorbed it without hesitation.

Other surrounding Cultivators heard the words uttered by Patriarch Big-head. Patriarch Pockmarks glanced at the remaining Han River Sect disciples, and soon, a mutual understanding was reached by everyone.

Power poured out from the Cultivation bases of the hundreds of surrounding Cultivators. Patriarch Big-head turned into a black hole as he sucked in the power. His eyes turned bright red, and he raised his hand straight up into the air and extended a finger.

“Luminous Rice…” he said, his voice hoarse. Instantly, the blackened sheets of rice began to emit blinding rays of light, which shot out, forming together into a vast sheet of brightness. The light illuminated the surrounding darkness of the foggy wind, and if you didn’t look too closely, everything suddenly didn’t seem as mysterious as before.

Patriarch Big-head bit down on the tip of his tongue and spit out a mouthful of blood. The glowing blood, which was filled with the power lent by the surrounding Cultivators, melded into the shining rice grains within the foggy wind.

“Heavenly Army Transformation!”

A powerful boom filled the air, and the surrounding Cultivators instantly saw a vast array of emaciated figures appear within the fog. They were short, about half the size of an average person, and did not appear to be any sort of Heavenly Army. In fact, they looked more like evil spirits that had just crawled out of hell. All of the grains of rice transformed into such evil spirits.

In the blink of an eye, there were hundreds of them!

The bodies of the evil spirits were indistinct, as if they couldn’t quite fully manifest into the world. Even still, a cruel and bloodthirsty viciousness emanated out from them.

Patriarch Big-head’s face was pale as he retreated a few steps, clasped hands and bowed. “Heavenly Army, I beseech you to break this formation! The more than one hundred people inside are my sacrifices to you, oh Heavenly Army!” Up ahead, the fog roiled as the massive phantoms began to slam into the evil spirits. Shocking explosions rang out.

Inside the spell formation, the parrot's eyes went wide with both fear and irritation.

"Dammit! That's an Immortal divine ability that's supposed to turn rice into soldiers. Who was it that changed it into something that summons evil spirits!? That's not something a Core Formation Cultivator could pull off, and it's also not a technique from the Ninth Mountain. That's something from… the League of Hellfire from the Fourth Mountain!

"Somehow that guy managed to get his hands onto an incomplete legacy…. Dammit, everybody else can pretty much ignore these evil spirits, but considering the current state of my body… it could cause some big problems if I ran into them." For the first time, the parrot looked somewhat nervous. "So annoying…." it said, taking in a deep breath.

Meanwhile, back in the Immortal's cave in the short mountain, Meng Hao's eyes glowed brightly as he looked at the black pill furnace he held in his hand. On the surface of the pill furnace was the face of a youth, which looked back at Meng Hao with an expression that said it would never yield.

This was none other than the pill furnace he had acquired in the Violet Furnace Lord trial by fire. 1. However, from the moment he had acquired it, it had showed no sign that it would ever submit to him. At the moment, Meng Hao looked at it with brow furrowed. Finally, he gave a cold snort and performed an incantation with his right hand. Then, he pushed his finger down onto the face of the youth. It twisted and filled with a look of pain.

Meng Hao was currently surrounded by countless threads of Qi, visible only to himself. They swirled toward him from all directions to pour into the pill furnace.

"If you still won't give in, fine," said Meng Hao coolly. "A pill furnace with a spirit inside is a bit better, but I'm already used to the kind without." Meng Hao pushed down, and the Demonic Qi in the area poured in, transforming into a cage. The cage surrounded the image of the youth, and then transformed into something that looked like a net, which completely suppressed it.

The youth screamed, filled with anxiety. However, the scream was weak.

"If I want to let you live, then you can continue to exist. If I want you dead, it will take a mere thought." Meng Hao's voice was cold, and even as he spoke the words, the net tightened, thoroughly restricting the youth in all aspects. The blackness of the pill furnace began to grow dim, to be replaced by a violet color.

Glancing at the pill furnace, Meng Hao waved his right hand, whereupon a vast quantity of medicinal plants emerged. His left hand flickered like a ghost as he began to catalyze, extract fluids, make adjustments, and feed ingredients into the pill furnace. A flame appeared in his right hand; it was not red, but violet.

This flame was none other than the East Pill Everburning Flame, the legacy alchemic flame stoked by his Violet Core. This ever burning alchemic flame would allow him to employ the Spirit Summoning Incantation. 2

Just when Meng Hao was about to begin concocting, the anxious voice of the parrot was transmitted into his mind. Meng Hao immediately sent out his Spiritual Sense, whereupon he saw the fog in the outside world, as well as the hundreds of vicious evil spirits.

He was silent for a moment, and then looked at the pill furnace. His eyes filled with determination as well as a cold glow.

"I don't care what price you have to pay, give me three days!" he transmitted back. Then he severed his connection with the outside world and began to concoct.

"Three days…" thought the parrot, a feverish light shining in its eyes. A flicker could be seen at its feet, and the meat jelly appeared.

"Lord Fifth gets it, b*tch! How annoying! I never imagined that someone would have a Hellfire legacy. Even though it's not complete, it still… could restrain Lord Fifth!" The parrot eyed the meat jelly earnestly. "Three days. You need to cooperate with me for three days. If Meng Hao isn't finished by that time, then we'll just have to flee."

Only on rare occasions would the meat jelly not be talkative. However, as soon as it heard about the Hellfire legacy, its eyes grew wide.

The meat jelly shivered and nodded repeatedly. “The League of Hellfire from the Fourth Mountain…. How is it possible for them to appear here?!”

Time passed slowly. Meng Hao’s expression remained calm the entire time. Rumbling sounds were already detectable from outside of the Immortal’s cave, the results of the unanticipated problems the parrot had mentioned.

Meng Hao wasn’t the type of person to lay blame on others. True, it had been the parrot’s idea to lure all the people here. However, even though unexpected problems had cropped up outside, Meng Hao was still confident that they could be handled.

This was the self-confidence of a Cultivator.

“As long as there are no Nascent Soul Cultivators, then all I have to do is put on the blood-colored mask, and I can take care of everything myself if I have to. This is a good opportunity to teach the parrot a bit of a lesson.” Meng Hao’s left hand flickered as he poured more medicinal plants into the pill furnace, along with a mouthful of Violet Qi. This Qi was not Core Qi, which could give birth to divine abilities, but normal Cultivation base Qi.

The purpose of this action was to cause his alchemic flame to grow even stronger. A variety of complex thoughts filled his mind as he began to concoct the Perfect Gold Core Pill.

Under normal circumstances, this pill would require quite a bit of time to concoct. However, Meng Hao was a Grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy. Furthermore, he had his legacy flame and the Spirit Summoning Incantation. Considering all of that, he was confident that he could reduce the concocting time by quite a bit.

Time passed. Three days later, the squawks of the parrot echoed out throughout the foggy wind. Explosions filled the air. The fog had already subsided by about half. The killing intent of the Cultivators from the three great Sects billowed to the Heavens. They had been trapped for days now, and had constantly been sending power out from their Cultivation bases. They were growing more exhausted, but their hatred for Meng Hao caused them to intensify their efforts.

Of the hundreds of evil spirits, only about half remained. As for the more than one hundred Cultivators who ran about within the spell formation, many were coughing up blood and their bodies were stooped over. They did not seem to fear for their lives; nonetheless, they slowly began to slip into unconsciousness.

As more and more of them passed out, the forces of the three great Sects grew nearer. Patriarch Big-head pulled out more rice, flinging it out into the air. Darkness filled the area, even the sky itself. There were no clouds; this darkness bore the appearance of a turbid magical river.

“The yellow springs appear…. This is definitely the work of the League of Hellfire….” The parrot laughed bitterly. Inside the fog, a light glittered as the meat jelly appeared. It flew through the air listlessly, looking dispirited. The two of them had used quite a variety of special defensive techniques throughout the past three days, but now they were running out of steam.

“Dammit!” said the parrot hatefully. “If I had just one more year to practice, or five hundred Cultivators, then the power of this trifling incomplete legacy couldn’t possibly break through Lord Fifth’s Celestial spell formation!” Suddenly, an explosion could be heard from within the Immortal’s cave.

Meng Hao’s eyes were bloodshot. He had used all the energy he could muster to concoct the Perfect Gold Core Pill. At the critical moment, the pill furnace began to shake. Strands of golden light began to emanate out from within, bathing the entire Immortal’s cave with a golden glow.

Meng Hao’s hair was in disarray, his expression listless. And yet, determination still glowed within his bloodshot eyes. His alchemic flame burned as he continued to refine the pill, increasing its medical strength.

At this moment, the sky in the outside world, which was dark and gloomy to begin with, suddenly filled with massive amounts of black clouds. The black clouds churned and seethed, covering an area fifty kilometers in diameter. The illusory visage of the yellow springs was concealed, and the gruesome darkness banished. However, the Earth below only grew darker. Booming sounds filled the air as countless bolts of lightning writhed up above like silver snakes.

This was not the Heavenly Tribulation of Perfection. This was Pill Tribulation caused by a medicinal pill!

However, if the pill was successfully concocted, and Meng Hao consumed it, then the Tribulation would change. Its explosiveness would increase exponentially, and it would transform into a horrifying, exterminating Heavenly Tribulation!

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# Chapter 337: Perfect Gold Core Pill

When the Pill Tribulation appeared, Meng Hao sat in the Immortal’s cave, his eyes shining brightly as he stared at the pill furnace in front of him. The pill furnace was thoroughly inundated with golden light, illuminating the entire Immortal’s cave with the color of gold.

As the gold light spilled out, Meng Hao could sense cracking sounds.

The sounds came from within the pill furnace; Meng Hao sensed something like a liquid gold within the pill furnace, rapidly congealing, shrinking. Each time it shrank, a cracking sound could be heard, as if the liquid was being compressed.

It was at this time that the Pill Tribulation appeared in the sky overhead. Such tribulation was unavoidable; Meng Hao took a deep breath and concentrated on the pill furnace.

In the outside world, the Tribulation clouds spread out in all directions; lightning crackled and thunder boomed up to the Heavens. Outside of Meng Hao’s Immortal’s cave, wisps of white Qi were rising up from the short mountain. They circulated together to form into the shape of a pill furnace that seemed to wish to fly up into the sky.

The sight of it caused the late Core Formation Patriarchs of the three great Sects to stare mutely. However, it didn’t take long for their expressions to fill with disbelief.

“That’s… Pill Tribulation!!”

“That’s definitely the legendary Pill Tribulation. I’ve read about it in the ancient records. They say that when certain medicinal pills appear, or sometimes other Heavenly materials or Earthly treasures, the Heavens become angry and wish to exterminate the object!”

“That damned Cultivator is concocting pills? Who knew he could do that?! And who would have imagined he could concoct a pill that would provoke Pill Tribulation!?”

Greed appeared on the faces of the three Patriarchs.

The Cultivators behind them didn’t understand what the black clouds meant, so their eyes filled with confusion. Then, the booming of thunder began to grow more intense, and their faces filled with fear.

It was at this moment that a huge tremor ran through the earth as what remained of the more than one hundred Cultivators powering the spell formation all coughed up blood and then passed out. As they fell, the fog dissipated.

The short mountain was now visible, as were the parrot and the meat jelly, floating in mid-air. They were currently looking up into the sky, odd expressions on their faces.

When the fog fell, the remaining evil spirits began to scream, as if the lightning and thunder in the sky filled them with terror.

Suddenly, a massive, thick lightning bolt began to descend down toward the earth. As it shot down, over a thousand smaller lightning bolts merged together with it until it was nearly a meter and a half wide. It shot directly toward the short mountain.

The sight of it caused the Patriarchs of the three great Sects, along with the Cultivators who surrounded them, to stare open-mouthed.

However, just when everyone thought that the lightning bolt was about to smash into the mountain, it suddenly began to collapse for no apparent reason. As it did, it split into hundreds of smaller lightning bolts, which then screamed toward the trembling evil spirits.

It seemed these evil spirits were also something that attracted the attention of the Heavenly Tribulation, causing it to split apart and seek to destroy them.

That was the reason for the strange looks on the faces of the parrot and meat jelly. Actually, it was a lucky break that the Pill Tribulation appeared at the exact same moment that the spell formation fell apart.

Explosions filled the air and the ground quaked. The hundreds of evil spirits screamed miserably as over half were instantly smashed into nothing. The other half began to slowly dissipate, intent on leaving.

Not a single spark of lightning headed toward Meng Hao’s pill furnace inside the Immortal’s cave. The golden glow shone up from the pill furnace, spreading out in all directions, piercing out through the Immortal’s cave, penetrating up through the mountain and the soil.

Suddenly, a blinding golden light appeared outside of the short mountain. In addition, bands of golden light seeped up from within the earth.

The evil spirits who had escaped the Tribulation Lightning and were dissipating, saw the golden light and then began to scream and disappear with even greater haste.

A fathomless golden light!

It shot out from the center of the mountain, as if a sun were buried deep within!

It seemed as if this sun wished to rise up out of hell and charge into battle with the Heavens!

The meat jelly and the parrot had long since flown off. However, the parrot felt bad for the Cultivators who had formed the spell formation, so before leaving, it and the meat jelly carried them off to hide some distance away.

Within the blink of an eye, the mountain was no longer visible; the only thing one could see was the boundless glowing light.

The light pierced up into the clouds above, causing them to churn violently. The lightning danced back and forth, and a second bolt began to form. It shot down toward the center of the golden light, the short mountain which was the nexus of it all.

It moved with incredible speed, and was soon almost directly on top of the mountain.

However, even as that happened….

A popping sound rang out within the Immortal's cave. The lid flew off of the pill furnace, and an unprecedentedly bright golden light emanated out, eclipsing the light from before. Something that had the appearance of a sun flew out, emanating scorchingly hot rays of golden light. Meng Hao's Immortal's cave seemed as if it would ignite, along with the entire mountain!

What actually was… it began to melt. The stones, the restrictive spells, all the objects within, became ash in an instant. The only thing left behind was the piercing golden light which shone up into the Heavens. The light was impossible to cover up as it shot upward to slam into the lightning bolt.

When the light and the lightning bolt connected, a massive boom ripped out that violently shook Heaven and Earth. The Immortal's cave was gone; Meng Hao sat there cross-legged, bathed in goldenness. The ground beneath him was beginning to melt. The black soil was transforming into golden liquid, which spread out everywhere to form a lake!

A golden lake!

At the very center of the lake was Meng Hao, his hair flying about, his Violet Core spinning inside of him, the strange mark on his forehead glittering. His clothes rippled wildly, and his eyes shone with stubbornness.

There in his right hand… was a golden medicinal pill!

It might be more correct to say that what he held was not a medicinal pill, but a blazing golden sun!

This golden pill was the Perfect Gold Core Pill!

The Patriarchs from the three great Sects, along with the hundreds of other Cultivators, stood there with hearts pounding. The instant they saw the medicinal pill, the Dao Pillars of the Foundation Establishment Cultivators began to tremble, as if they were aware that the results of consuming this pill would be different from that of any other.

As for the Core Formation Cultivators, especially the three Patriarchs, their bodies trembled violently. They could sense intense hope emanating out from the Cores within their bodies. It seemed as if their Cores wanted to merge with this golden medicinal pill. It only took a moment for the three Cultivators to suddenly understand; were they able to consume this pill, then… they would be able to tread an unprecedented path of cultivation!

Only the three Patriarchs could control themselves; the remaining hundreds of Cultivators instantly went crazy and shot directly toward Meng Hao, intent on stealing the Perfect Gold Core Pill.

However, even as they approached, the sound of thunder filled the air as three lightning bolts congealed. Meng Hao’s hair whipped in the air as he used all the power he possessed to place the pill in his mouth and consume it!

Here begins the great Dao of the Gold Core!

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# Chapter 338: Perfect Immortal Body!

“No!!”

The sight of Meng Hao consuming the pill sent all of the Cultivators, even the Patriarchs of the three great Sects, into a frenzy. Their minds spun, and they couldn’t control themselves; they rushed madly toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao was calm as he placed the medicinal pill into his mouth. However, his eyes shone with an extraordinary light. His hair whipped in the air as the Heavenly Tribulation roiled above him. He sat straight and tall in the middle of the golden lake, filled with a sort of divine grace.

The pill did not dissolve, but instead instantly slid down into his abdomen. When that happened, the descending lightning bolt suddenly stopped in mid-air and exploded. Countless sparks of electricity showered out, forming into something that looked like a face.

The face’s eyes were closed, but it still seemed as if it could see everything in the world. And it appeared to be concentrating on Meng Hao.

The face faded away, and the Tribulation clouds in the sky seethed with unprecedented intensity. The clouds had been 50 kilometers in diameter, but now they grew with explosive speed. 250 kilometers. 500 kilometers. 1,500 kilometers…. It only took a moment for them to cover a radius of 5,000 kilometers.

For 5,000 kilometers in all directions, black clouds covered everything. Thunder boomed and lightning danced. Flashing light from the Heavens seemed to be preparing to sunder the Earth!

A few hundred kilometers away from Meng Hao, in the field of rubble, the sound of ragged panting could be heard. The old man who was sealed there was observing the proceedings from within his black mist. No one could see him, but as he looked up, he could see the lightning, and it made him laugh. His laughter was hearty and filled with excitement and pleasure.

“A Perfect Immortal Body!” laughed the old man. “One of the three great Immortal Bodies, the Perfect Immortal Body! This kid will reach Immortal Ascension soon!”

Meanwhile, Meng Hao’s body began to shake as the Perfect Gold Core Pill slid down into his abdomen. A fierce expression covered his face, and veins bulged out on his forehead. His body felt as if it were about to be violently ripped into pieces.

The pain was indescribable. After forming his Violet Core, his pupils had taken on a violet hue, but now, the violet was being replaced with gold.

Within him, his Violet Core shook, and cracking sounds could be heard as fissures spread out across its surface. It seemed to be on the verge of breaking into pieces.

At the same time, the hundreds of Cultivators in the area began to descend upon him, their eyes burning red. They seemed to have lost their minds; the only thing that remained was frenzy and greed. Meng Hao had consumed the golden pill, so they wanted to consume him!

It seemed the thought of even taking a single bite of his flesh was enough to drive them to infinite madness.

However, even as they neared him, Meng Hao lifted his head up toward the sky and roared. The sound of the roar slammed into the approaching Cultivators like a wave. Blood sprayed from their mouths as they tumbled backward.

Even the Patriarchs of the three great Sects were sent spinning away, bodies shaking and blood shooting from their mouths.

As they spun away, out of control, Meng Hao’s Violet Core shattered. The pain caused by its disintegration caused Meng Hao’s roar to become even more shocking. His pupils were now more than half gold, and a golden light filled his entire body.

Inside of him, where his Violet Core used to exist, a Gold Core suddenly appeared, whereupon it instantly swept up the shattered remnants of the Violet Core.

Massive amounts of golden light poured out from the Gold Core, spreading out through Meng Hao’s Qi passageways. His entire body was filled with the color of gold.

The pain was instantly replaced with a rapturous feeling. His hair whipped about him as he felt power surging through his body. His heart began to pound. Every rotation of his Cultivation base sent roaring booms in all directions.

His skin was a bit pale, and a bit of a demonic air seemed to seep into his features. He was more handsome, his body taller and straighter. He was surrounded by golden light.

Power! He felt something similar to what he had felt back near the Rebirth Cave, when he reached Core Formation. Back then, the difference between Foundation Establishment and Core Formation had been clear; that was the same feeling he had now.

His Spiritual Sense grew, his physical body became stronger, his bones tougher. Even his mental faculties were quicker than before. Everything about him changed, as if he were going through a massive transformation.

This transformation equated to stepping foot onto a great Dao.

The great Dao of the Golden Core!

Meng Hao’s eyes opened, and when they did, a dazzling golden glow shot out. Golden light shone through his green robe, making his entire person seem like some sort of Celestial warrior!

Off in the distance, the parrot and the meat jelly were cautiously observing. The parrot's eyes were wide and filled shock. It had been with Meng Hao for years, but most of that time had been spent in the copper mirror; Meng Hao actually had many secrets that it wasn't aware of.

As for the meat jelly, it really had no idea about Meng Hao's true level. It only knew that he seemed relatively strong.

Now, both of them watched as he underwent his transformation.

"How bizarre!" muttered the meat jelly. "It's a Perfect Immortal Body! I never noticed it before!"

"Inhuman!" said the parrot, sounding hurt. "What incredible good fortune! What amazing destiny! Only a Sublime Spirit Doyen can have a Perfect Immortal Body, and yet, he actually does! Only big shots like Lord Fifth should have a Perfect Immortal Body!

"Three Heavenly Scriptures: Sublime Spirit, Dao Divinity, Heaven Severing. Each scripture contains secrets of the Heavenly Mountains and Seas. Using them, the three great Immortal Bodies can be cultivated. From ancient times until now, only a Sublime Spirit Doyen and a Dao Divinity Doyen have appeared. A Heaven Severing Doyen has never been seen.

"This kid really has Heaven defying good fortune. A Perfect Immortal Body…. Ahhhhh, with a body like that, if he reaches Immortal Ascension, he could become a Legacy Apprentice of the Sublime Spirit Doyen.

"Ah, Doyens, truly powerful experts within the Nine Mountains and Seas, Cultivators who can oppose the Lords of the Nine Mountains and Seas. Sure, Lord Fifth doesn't care too much about them, but… Lord Fifth is in a weak position now, dammit, so he has to rely on their help."

The parrot was getting more and more animated. "And then there's that damned legend, which is the reason I've met such calamity…. According to the legend, if all three of those scriptures are collected and combined, they will form the Mountain and Sea Scripture! That scripture…." As it started to recall the terrifying Mountain and Sea Scripture of legend, it seemed on the verge of going crazy. 1

As for Meng Hao, he took a deep breath as he felt his Cultivation base rotating along with the Gold Core. Great waves of power washed through him, filling him with determination.

“So, is this the power of the Perfect Gold Core…?” he murmured, his eyes glowing with golden light. His entire person radiated dignity. He waved his right arm, and power exploded out of his Cultivation base.

As it did, a vortex of golden wind sprang into being around him, sweeping across everything.

The hundreds of Cultivators stared in shock. The frenzy was still visible on their faces, but they couldn’t stop themselves from backing up, pushed away by the invisible power of the golden wind generated by Meng Hao.

In the blink of an eye, the golden wind swirling around Meng Hao had turned into a screaming cyclone. As it spun through the air, a face appeared within the wind, that of Meng Hao.

“As of this moment,” Meng Hao said coolly, “I no longer need to hold back my Cultivation base. It is time to enter the mid stage of the Perfect Gold Core!” The Gold Core within him began to spin rapidly and Cultivation base power surged up. As it grew stronger, the cyclone caused the hundreds of surrounding Cultivators to be thrown backward.

Astonishment filled their faces, especially the Patriarchs of the three great Sects, whose eyes shone with disbelief. It felt to them as if Meng Hao could crush them at any time; the Cores inside of them were even beginning to show signs of instability.

The same question was spinning in the minds of everyone: “What… what pill did that guy just consume?!”

It was at this moment that Meng Hao’s Cultivation base reached the pinnacle of its climb, and a great roaring filled his mind. It seemed like his

Cultivation base had reached a bottleneck, and that at any moment, it would break through.

The golden storm winds surrounded Meng Hao for a radius of fifty kilometers. He felt himself suddenly break through from the early Gold Core stage to the mid Gold Core stage!

He felt his body grow tougher and his Spiritual Sense stronger. The Gold Core fused with him, forming what seemed like a second soul.

The Gold Core contained his memories, his soul, his life. It was as if his life force and very life itself existed inside of it. In fact it actually felt like a seed.

The seed of a Great Dao!

The instant he entered the mid Gold Core stage, the golden glow around Meng Hao intensified until it seemed like a golden sun hovered above his head, shining out across the land, turning everything the color of gold.

“It’s about time to form my Core Qi. I wonder what the essence of my Core Qi will be….” He closed his eyes as the golden cyclone whipped around him. In his mind appeared images… from when he was small until now: the Tower of Tang, Yunjie County, Mount Daqing, the Reliance Sect, the State of Zhao, the Southern Domain, the Violet Fate Sect… all the way to the events at the Rebirth Cave.

“Core Qi essence can be abstract or literal….” he thought. Suddenly, he recalled the starry sky he had seen just before he met Choumen Tai.

In that land… he had looked up and seen an ancient starry sky.

Meng Hao also remembered that Ji Hongdong’s Core Qi had taken the shape of a starry sky, except, that was the starry sky of the Ji Clan.

“The starry sky of ancient times, that is the essence of my Core Qi.” He opened his eyes, and as he did, the golden sun exploded. Massive amounts of golden Core Qi expanded out. At the same time, the golden tempest around him suddenly shrank inward. In the blink of an eye it melded into Meng Hao’s body, causing the golden glow which bathed the surroundings to disappear.

The only thing left was roiling Gold Core Qi which took the shape of… a starscape!

It was not a golden starscape, but a black one. However, within the blackness was a myriad of golden stars. Those stars were stars that few people could ever see… the starry sky of ancient times!

The blindingly bright starscape which floated above Meng Hao’s head immediately began to emanate an unprecedentedly shocking pressure. The surrounding hundreds of Cultivators were shaken, especially the Patriarchs of the three great Sects. The instant they saw it, they gasped in astonishment.

“His Core Qi… its essence… is a starscape!!”

“The power of Core Qi is manifested by the grandness of its essence. What could possibly be more grand than the stars?”

“From ancient times until now, only the truly Chosen of Heaven and Earth have manifested Core Qi as a starscape. This guy….” The three of them began panting, looks of fear on their faces as they slowly backed away.

1. The name of the “Mountain and Sea Scripture” is exactly the same as the actual historical Chinese text entitled “Classic of Mountains and Seas”

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# Chapter 339: Vengeance To Be Had!

Suddenly, thunderous booms could be heard from within the roiling black clouds that stretched out for 5,000 kilometers. A multitude of dancing lightning bolts could be seen within them. In addition, a terrifying aura suddenly appeared. It was an aura that wished to destroy everything, an aura that seemed to desire to wipe out all the people in Heaven and Earth.

Even if it meant destroying the land itself, everyone must die!

Meng Hao looked up at the vast, churning Tribulation clouds up above. It didn’t matter how strong he was, it seemed the Heavens would destroy and kill everything!

An intense golden light shone in Meng Hao’s eyes. There was something different about acquiring the Perfect Gold Core than the time he had acquired the Perfect Foundation. A change had occurred within him, as if a great Dao had opened up in front of him.

However, before anything else, he needed to transcend this Heavenly Tribulation!

“Dammit, Lord Fifth is gonna have to risk it all!” cried the parrot. “This master is different from the others and I can’t pull the wool over his eyes. His luck and fortune can’t possibly measure up to mine, but after all these years I haven’t seen anyone better! He’s the one. YOU’RE the one, kid! Lord Fifth is gonna go all out! Let’s delay this Heavenly Tribulation!” The parrot’s eyes turned red as it suddenly shot forward. At the same time, it lifted its claws up to tie a black band around its head, covering its right eye.

As the parrot flew out, the lightning up above began to coalesce. The sheer amount of it vastly surpassed that from the Pill Tribulation. Furthermore, this lightning was red in color.

Meng Hao's hair flew wildly around him, and his body shook violently. His eyes turned as crimson as if they had been ripped into pieces. The lake water beneath him boiled, rapidly transforming into myriad golden beads that slowly began to rise into the air.

"Parrot!" roared Meng Hao. At the same time, he began to use a technique the parrot had taught him to exercise control over his consciousness. In the blink of an eye, the golden light in his eyes vanished, as did all of the Qi he was emanating. His body suddenly seemed to wither, and his expression grew dull.

The parrot soared up into the air and let out a furious shout: "Deceive the Heavens!"

Along with the shout, its body exploded with countless multicolored beams of light. The nearby Cultivators trembled as wisps of Qi began to emerge from the tops of their heads. The strands of Qi floated up into the sky and merged together with the light to form a huge net.

In the middle of its descent, the red lightning suddenly hesitated, as if it couldn't locate Meng Hao's aura.

"Ultimate Vexation, get over and help, b*tch!" the parrot roared.

The meat jelly hesitated for only a moment. Then, a pop could be heard as its body suddenly transformed into a million illusory phantoms that shot up into the air to form a second net.

The Tribulation clouds in the sky seethed, and more lightning bolts writhed about, apparently searching for Meng Hao's aura.

"Luckily you're asleep, Heavens of Ji!" cried the parrot arrogantly. "Only a sliver of your will exists. Maybe I couldn't fool your true self, but you think I can't hoodwink a bit of your will? Lord Fifth is omniscient! Alright, all I have to do is hold on for three days, and this Tribulation can be delayed for sure!” As soon as the words were out of its mouth, the red lightning bolt descended. Being unable to find Meng Hao’s aura, it shot toward the first large net.

A boom could be heard as the illusory net shattered. The hundreds of Cultivators surrounding Meng Hao spat up blood and then, with the exception of the three Patriarchs, all of them… instantly exploded.

The three Patriarchs coughed up blood, and their bodies shrank and withered. Inside, cracks spread out across their Cores, as if they might collapse at any moment. After a moment, their eyes grew clear and their faces filled with astonishment and fear. They retreated at top speed, scalps numb. The only thing they could think about was running away!

“Bitch! Why don’t you keep searching for the correct will!” raged the parrot. “Instead, you’re just blowing random things up! You’re, you’re, you’re… you’re cheating! Fine, so can Lord Fifth! I’ll screw you to death! Tribulation schmibulation! Lord Fifth is gonna screw you to death! Ultimate Vexation, come help me, b*tch! Turn those clouds into my favorite Fluffy!” It seemed to feel its dignity had been severely challenged. With a howl of rage, it bit down on one of its own multicolored feathers, then whipped its head about and threw it down. Eyes brimming with insanity, its body suddenly grew larger and larger, and it shot up into the sky.

It flew at high speed directly into the Tribulation clouds!

At the same time, a beam of light shot out from the meat jelly net, seemingly a bit resentfully. It entered into the Tribulation clouds and spread out through all of them. Suddenly, the clouds began to twist and distort. Meng Hao gaped open mouthed as he saw the Tribulation clouds begin to change shape.

They changed into… a gargantuan, plump animal, covered with white fur.

The luxuriant furriness of this animal is difficult to describe. The fur draped off of the enormous creature which stretched out for thousands of kilometers in every direction, so large you couldn’t see from one end to the other.

As for the parrot, it gave an excited squawk as it dove into the fur. It emerged again in a moment, but showed no signs of being tired, instead diving enthusiastically back in from a different angle. This process repeated over and over again.

As Meng Hao watched on, his mind went blank. He could never have possibly imagined that the Tribulation clouds could be changed into this appearance….

What had previously been a very solemn and momentous occasion, had suddenly turned somewhat comical….

Meng Hao shook his head. Suddenly, the furry Tribulation cloud let out a massive boom. The countless lightning bolts dissipated in all directions. Within the cloud, the parrot was visible, its body dark, but still stubbornly persisting.

“Fluffy, I’m gonna screw you to death. Wench! I’m definitely gonna screw you to death!” The excited parrot didn’t seem to want to stop.

However, the masses of lightning in the area began to fall, accompanied by thunderous booms. They shot toward Meng Hao, seemingly without number, tens of thousands of them. Meng Hao’s scalp went numb. The Heavenly Tribulation when he had acquired his Perfect Foundation had seemed solemn and imposing in its desire to destroy all living things.

But this… the seemingly endless amount of lightning gave off an aura that made Meng Hao feel uneasy. It seemed that this Tribulation sent against his Perfect Gold Core had somehow changed, thanks to the interference of the parrot.

As the lightning descended toward Meng Hao, the meat jelly net let out a disgruntled howl and moved to cover over Meng Hao. A massive boom sounded out, shaking the earth. The lightning slammed onto the meat jelly, causing Meng Hao to shake in trepidation.

A blinding light filled his eyes that made it impossible to see anything around him. After a very long time, the lightning and thunder gradually faded away. Meng Hao looked back up to find that the massive ball of fur in the sky was gone.

His eyes widened and he took a deep breath. Everything looked placid, but Meng Hao knew that such massive quantities of Tribulation clouds couldn’t possibly vanish like this. The sense of crisis he’d felt because of the Heavenly Tribulation had not departed.

The pitch-black parrot fell to the ground with a flopping sound. It struggled to its feet and then slapped itself roughly on the chest.

It was panting. Its expression was somewhat listless and its aura weak. However, its voice was as arrogant as ever as it said, “Is Lord Fifth badass or what? The Heavenly Tribulation has been delayed for you. Time to give your profound thanks. Without Lord Fifth, it wouldn’t matter if you had Ultimate Vexation here. The Heavenly Tribulation would just keep going on forever until he was smashed to pieces.

“Don’t get too excited, though. I went all out to delay the Heavenly Tribulation, but there’s no way to tell for how long. You need to get ahold of your Tribulation Transcending Life Form as quickly as possible. Alright, it’s time for Lord Fifth to rest up. Don’t be too moved. Oh, and don’t forget to find some more furry, feathered creatures.” With that, it fell flat onto its face. Its body transformed into gray ash which drifted away with the wind. However, along with the ash was a multicolored glow that flew into Meng Hao’s bag of holding.

Meng Hao’s mind and heart shook. He quickly checked the copper mirror inside the bag of holding. The parrot loved to brag, and wasn’t very reliable, but Meng Hao would never forget how much it had helped him just now.

Dispersing the Tribulation clouds had seemed simple, but seeing the parrot in the state it had been just now, Meng Hao knew that it had paid a high price for its actions.

“No need to check on it,” said the meat jelly languidly. Its body was tattered and listless. “It’s not going to die. After it rests for a few days it’ll be fine. Poor me, always struck by lightning. I like eating it, but sometimes I just get so full.” It transformed into a hat which settled onto Meng Hao’s head.

“You need to be careful,” it continued, its voice growing weaker. “That wicked parrot and I once helped a young girl delay Heavenly Tribulation. Later she got pissed off and tried to kill us. She chased us for years and years. Repaid kindness with enmity. I really hate people like that.” Eventually it trailed off into a muffled murmur, and then stopped talking.

Meng Hao sat there thinking for a long moment. He looked around, and then waved his hand, causing more than a hundred medicinal pills to fly out. They crumbled in mid-air as they shot toward the unconscious Cultivators that the parrot and the meat jelly had been protecting. After the medicine entered their bodies, the Cultivators trembled, and then slowly began to open their eyes.

After coming to their senses, they appeared somewhat confused. It didn’t take long for them to compose themselves and begin to look around.

The mountain, and everything around it, was gone. The medicinal cistern was gone, and the buildings they had constructed were now nothing but crumbled ruins. The lake that had formed was also gone; left behind was only a large crater.

They looked at it all silently, bitterness filling their hearts. They had gone to a lot of trouble to seek safety in this place, to find somewhere to practice cultivation in a convenient fashion. But now, everything was gone.

“The Immortal’s cave is gone,” said Meng Hao. “But I can find you another one!” The more than one hundred Cultivators lifted their heads up to look at him.

“The medicinal cistern is gone, but I can make you a new one!” This second sentence caused a bright glow to appear in their eyes. It seemed their resolve had been ignited.

“If you are willing,” said Meng Hao, his voice resonating loudly, “follow me! There is vengeance to be had! The time has come to kill!” He flicked his sleeve and shot up into the air. Behind him followed the more than one hundred Cultivators, their eyes flashing with intense killing intent. These were Black Lands Cultivators, and they understood what it meant to exact vengeance!

Meng Hao’s Spiritual Sense spread out to track down the fleeing Patriarchs from the three great Sects.

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# Chapter 340: One Aura, Three Bodies

Meng Hao was in the lead, followed by well over a hundred Cultivators. They whistled through the sky in formation; the sight of it was very imposing.

Meng Hao could clearly make out the three fleeing Patriarchs with his Spiritual Sense. They had chosen to flee in different directions. However, their speeds were all different; obviously they were using various secret techniques to go as fast as possible.

“Three directions….” Meng Hao gave a cold snort and then extended his hand to point down at the ground. Immediately a buzzing sound could be heard. No one else could see anything happen, but Meng Hao saw ghost images spring up everywhere, after which vast quantities of Demonic Qi appeared. It swirled up and rapidly began to coalesce in front of Meng Hao.

In the blink of an eye, it had transformed into two figures. They were indistinct, blurry. The only thing visible was the aura, gradually spreading out. As for everyone else, they saw nothing at all.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he waved his right hand, causing two Blood Clones to materialize in front of him. They moved forward to merge with the Demonic Qi, which was a shocking sight.

This was a technique Meng Hao had come up with earlier. By merging a Blood Clone with Demonic Qi, it would make it both easier to control his Etheric Incarnation as well as simpler to recall it if necessary.

The two Blood Clones' battle prowess was not equal to that of his true self, but the Blood Clone Demonic Qi combination could explode with incredible power.

If the Patriarchs of the three great Sects were at the peak of their power, they could easily defeat these Blood Clones. However, Meng Hao could see that, with the exception of Patriarch Big-head, they had all sustained internal injuries as well as Cultivation base reduction. Even more importantly, their minds had been shaken. Combine this with their lowered Cultivation base, and they couldn't be in a weaker position.

Meng Hao was confident that his Incarnations could definitely exterminate them!

Considering the level of his Spiritual Sense he could definitely control both of these Incarnations; if anything unexpected happened, there were other options he could employ to handle the situation. He sent his will into the two Blood Clone Demonic Qi Incarnations and then sent them shooting off in two different directions.

He also split the more than one hundred Cultivators into three groups, two of whom he sent to follow the Blood Clones off into the distance.

Then, he raised his head and locked his Spiritual Sense onto the only of the three great Sect Patriarchs who had a bag of holding: Patriarch Big-head. Followed by around fifty Cultivators, he headed directly in the man's direction.

"You followed me for days with murderous intent. You destroyed the spell formation of my Immortal's cave! Do you really think I would let you get away with that!?" Meng Hao's eyes flashed with killing intent. These people had been courting death, and Meng Hao wouldn't be softhearted with them.

Most importantly, they had seen something they shouldn't have! The consequences for them would be death!

Filled with killing intent, Meng Hao shot along at top speed.

Meanwhile, in another location, Patriarch Rubicund was zooming along, his face pale. Currently, he was only able to wield about forty to fifty percent of the power of his Cultivation base. Furthermore, his bag of holding was empty; he had no medicinal pills, no magical items, nothing which he could use to recover.

A feeling of desolation rose up in his heart, which then transformed into intense regret. And yet, how could he ever have imagined that the situation would have turned out so opposite to expectations?

“I have to get out of here. I need to go into secluded meditation and cultivate. After my Cultivation base is recovered, I’ll recruit some more Fellow Daoists to go kill that guy!” His eyes radiated vicious hatred. All he had to do was spread the word about a man who could concoct golden medicinal pills, and there would be plenty of Black Lands Cultivators willing to go after him.

In fact, there may even be some Nascent Soul eccentrics. If that were the case, it wouldn’t matter what superhuman powers the guy had, he would be dead without a doubt.

Suddenly the reflection of a bloody glow could be seen in the old man’s eyes. His heart lurched and an intense sensation of imminent crisis filled his mind and heart. He veered off to the side without hesitation.

The instant he shifted his momentum, a bloody beam of light whistled past him at high speed. Ripples emanated out through the air as it passed, causing Patriarch Rubicund’s face to flicker. His heart pounded; he knew that if he hadn’t evaded at the right time just now, his head would have exploded!

An intense, grim sound filled the air as the rippling passed the old man. As the sound emanated out, the red glow in the air exploded.

“SMASH!”

The ripples transformed into an intense attack. Booms filled the air as the old man, even in the middle of dodging and retreating, coughed up a mouthful of blood. His face pale, he turned around.

The first thing he saw was a blood-red figure. Its hair was red, its robe, even its skin. It approached slowly, and as it did, the old man could sense an invisible but powerful aura. It was bizarre, but as it emanated out, it transformed into an intense dread.

He couldn't see this thing's Cultivation base!

The bloody phantom's eyes seemed to be completely blank, and even more strange, the closer the old man looked, the more he realized it was impossible to tell whether it had cultivated some heretical technique, or was a puppet.

"Who are you, your excellency?" said the old man, sounding frustrated. Were his Cultivation base at the peak of its power, he wouldn't care, but at the moment, he was seriously injured, with an empty bag of holding. The circumstances couldn't be more inauspicious.

The Blood Clone's eyes suddenly flickered and seemed to come to life. The look in its eyes suddenly resembled that of Meng Hao's. "Did you really forget me so quickly?" it said. "Didn't you say you would chase me to the ends of the earth to kill me?"

Great waves of emotion suddenly flickered across Patriarch Rubicund's face. Without thinking about it, he backed up, his heart racing.

"It's him…. But… but how could he be using a puppet like this? Is it a puppet, or… could it be… an Etheric Incarnation?" When his thoughts reached this point, his mind began to spin, and the blood completely drained from his face. The technique to form Etheric Incarnations was not something Core Formation Cultivators could master. It was a divine ability that only Nascent Soul Cultivators could employ!

As the old man began to flee, he suddenly heard the sound of running. A black mist appeared as the fifty or more Cultivators arrived, running together according to the parrot's spell formation.

“Just who is this guy…?” Patriarch Rubicund’s scalp went numb, and his eyes filled with despair and frenzy.

Meanwhile, in another location and a different direction, Patriarch Pockmarks of the Han River Sect was speaking similar words, his face filled with bitterness.

He was surrounded by a red mist, outside of which were fifty Cultivators running in formation. In front of him was a figure dressed in a red robe, with indistinct facial features. The only thing he could make out were two blood-red eyes.

The eyes seemed to contain no emotions at all; they were completely merciless.

Patriarch Pockmark’s face was pale; his Cultivation base was actually the weakest of the three; he was of the late Core Formation stage, but his injuries were severe. Cracks covered his Core, and he could only wield roughly thirty percent of his power.

He hesitated for a moment then said, “Look, all of this is just a misunderstanding. Sir….” Suddenly, a boom filled the air, and the entire area was covered in mist.

Off in another direction, Meng Hao’s face was calm as he shot through mid-air in a band of light. Up ahead of him, Patriarch Big-head’s scalp was numb as he used everything he could muster to fly forward.

Occasionally he would spit up some blood; Meng Hao wasn’t sure what secret technique he was using, but it continued to rapidly boost his speed. Meng Hao followed, frowning. At the moment, he was pushing forward with all the speed he could muster, but was still unable to catch up. He could only maintain the current distance.

“Just what technique is he using to achieve such speed?” thought Meng Hao, his eyes flashing. He suddenly waved his right hand out and pointed with his index finger. “Demon Sealing, Eighth Hex!” His finger descended, and ghost images sprang up everywhere as a bizarre power shot toward Patriarch Big-head.

As it descended, the man's expression changed dramatically. However, just a moment later, to Meng Hao's shock, he spit up a mouthful of blood and used some method to seemingly unfetter his body and shoot forward in a flash.

Meng Hao was visibly shocked.

Patriarch Big-head's heart trembled. "Dammit! This guy just recently broke into mid Core Formation. He just cultivated Core Qi! How could he be so inhuman? And what technique was it that he just used? It forced me to use a forbidden legacy technique to get away!" His escape had seemed nonchalant to Meng Hao, but in truth, the forbidden legacy technique was self-destructive; his injuries were now even worse.

"I can't keep doing this," he thought. "At this rate, he won't even have to make a move. I'll eventually just die from my injuries!" Grinding his teeth, he suddenly stopped in mid-air and slapped his bag of holding to produce a grain of pure white rice. He threw it out in front of him.

Flashing incantations with both hands, he then pointed toward the grain of rice and said, "Luminous rice, transform into a Heavenly army!" His voice was accompanied by a roaring sound which echoed out. The grain of rice transformed into a raging torrent of blackness. Popping sounds filled the air as more than a hundred evil spirits appeared.

Patriarch Big-head's neck was purple, and his extremely large head was covered with cold sweat. His breathing was ragged as he utilized the technique. His injuries had apparently worsened even further; blood sprayed from his mouth and his eyes filled with viciousness.

At this point, he didn't hope to slay his opponent, but just to delay him.

Unfortunately, as soon as the hundred or so evil spirits appeared and shot screaming toward Meng Hao, Meng Hao calmly said: "Amateur!"

Suddenly, Core Qi exploded out above his head. The golden Qi transformed into a starscape filled with golden, glowing stars. The light from the stars shot out toward the incoming evil spirits.

A booming explosion echoed out; the evil spirits could do nothing to block Meng Hao. They dissipated along with miserable screams. Patriarch Big-head's face went pale as he continued to retreat. However, Meng Hao had already lifted up his hand.

Mania poured from the eyes of Patriarch Big-head. Seemingly risking everything, he performed an incantation with his left hand, simultaneously slapping his bag of holding with the other hand to produce a magical item. His heart filled with bitterness, but he knew that he would have to risk it all in this battle in order to have even the slightest chance of making it out alive.

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# Chapter 341: Chase Big-Head to the Death!

However… just as Patriarch Big-head was about to go all out, the bright, sunny sky was suddenly split by the appearance of a bolt of lightning. The Tribulation clouds were gone, but the lightning bolt shot down toward Meng Hao nonetheless.

It descended with incredible speed, landing directly onto the hat on Meng Hao’s head. A deafening boom filled the air.

Meng Hao wasn’t hurt, but wisps of greenish smoke rose up from the hat. Meng Hao gaped in shock. He looked up into the sky only to find it as beautiful as ever. The lightning bolt seemed to have been a fluke.

“That was the aura of Heavenly Tribulation….” thought Meng Hao with a frown. Thankfully, the lightning bolt hadn’t done any damage; it had been absorbed by the meat jelly hat.

The scene also shocked Patriarch Big-head, who looked up into the sky as well. However, he quickly recovered and began to flee with all the speed he could muster. He wanted to establish as much distance as possible between himself and Meng Hao.

Meng Hao frowned. He suddenly had a very bad feeling. The lightning bolt just now had been too sudden, without any warning whatsoever. The sky above was a deep, beautiful blue. Meng Hao’s gaze once again came to rest on the fleeing Patriarch Big-head.

Meng Hao gave a cold snort, then strode forward.

Mustering incredible speed, he shot off, disappearing in an instant.

Patriarch Big-head’s face was paler than ever as he fled. He had already been running for an entire day, and his bag of holding was now devoid of medicinal pills used for healing. His internal injuries were getting worse, and he could only employ forty percent of the power of his Cultivation base.

“Dammit, dammit….” His eyes were bloodshot and he gnashed his teeth. Meng Hao followed behind, stuck onto him like marrow onto bone.

Occasionally, a blast of Core Qi would whistle toward him, which would leave Patriarch Big-head scared witless. He couldn’t think of anything else to do other than to run away with all the power he could muster.

“Just how long is he gonna keep following me!?!?” Patriarch Big-head felt like he was about to collapse. He could sense nothing but ill tidings regarding Patriarch Rubicund and Patriarch Pockmarks. Of the hundreds of people who had begun this matter, he knew that he was the only one left alive. He was filled with regrets; the dogged pursuit he was enduring left him filled with despair and dread.

Suddenly, a Core Qi attack shot toward him. In response, Patriarch Big-head spit up a mouthful of blood. The air beneath his feet seethed as a cloud of spectres appeared, boosting his speed and instantly increasing the distance between him and Meng Hao.

A strange light shone from Meng Hao’s eyes. There had been multiple occasions throughout the day during which he was just about to catch up to his opponent; however, every time, Patriarch Big-head would use some method relating to evil spirits to add distance between them.

Meng Hao hadn’t encountered situations like these very often. Behind him, the more than one hundred Cultivators were also in pursuit. Their speed couldn’t compare to Meng Hao’s, but they had Meng Hao’s Blood Clones to lead them, so they were able to follow along nonetheless.

As dusk fell, it grew more difficult to see things clearly. Up ahead was a wide plain which was filled with residences organized in rings and surrounded with a stockade.

The stockade village was home to more than a hundred Cultivators, who had been meditating moments ago, but who had stood up and were now looking out toward Patriarch Big-head as he approached. Three old men flew out to meet him.

“It’s the Patriarch of the Talisman Sect from Dongluo City, Senior Ouyang!”

“It really is Senior Ouyang. But who is he fleeing from?”

The three old men’s faces flickered, and they hesitated for a moment. Patriarch Big-head neared, his eyes filled with a look of pleasant surprise.

“Fellow Daoists, please help me by stopping this hoodlum!” said Patriarch Big-head. There was no anxiety in his voice, only calmness, lending much credibility to his words. “I was in secluded meditation when he launched a shameful sneak attack. I was injured and my Cultivation base damaged. Fellow Daoists, if you can just delay him for a few moments, maybe enough time for half an incense stick to burn, then I can recover my Cultivation base. Fellow Daoists, after I slay him, I will definitely be in your debt. I’ll even help you to reach Core Formation!”

Without even waiting for a response, Patriarch Big-head shot off into the distance. As for whether these people would comply with his request, he didn’t stay around to find out. If they did, great; if they didn’t, there was nothing he could do about it.

The three Cultivators were in the late Foundation Establishment stage. After hearing Patriarch Big-head’s words, their hearts began to pound. There was little that could entice them more than the prospect of assistance in reaching Core Formation.

They hesitated for a moment. For someone to successfully launch a sneak attack against a Sect Patriarch meant that whoever was chasing him was no weakling. He would definitely be of the Core Formation stage. However, the prospective reward was too enticing; they exchanged glances as Meng Hao approached, followed by the more than one hundred Cultivators.

The sight immediately caused these late Foundation Establishment Cultivators to grow more nervous and hesitant. One of them finally gritted his teeth and flew forward, clasping hands and bowing to Meng Hao.

“Senior, please wait a moment, I….”

“Screw off!” said Meng Hao, his expression cold, flying directly past the man.

The bowing Foundation Establishment Cultivator’s face flickered and his scalp went numb. Meng Hao’s glance just now had caused his heart to tremble with fear. However, the reward promised by Patriarch Big-head nagged at his heart.

The other two Foundation Establishment Cultivators held him back, then clasped hands in salute to Meng Hao. They didn’t dare to do even the slightest thing to try to delay him. They, too, thirsted for the reward promised by Patriarch Big-head, but Meng Hao’s words and cold glance left their minds reeling and their Dao Pillars quivering.

Meng Hao didn’t slow down in the slightest. He whistled through the air, followed by the more than one hundred Cultivators who were still being led by the Blood Clones. They glanced at the local Cultivators with cold smiles as they passed, shooting through the air like meteors.

Some time after they were gone, the three late Foundation Establishment Cultivators let loose sighs of relief. Their faces were somewhat pale, because they knew that their greed just now had led them halfway to the grave.

“Who was that guy?” they thought, exchanging glances. “He managed to make Senior Ouyang take to flight….”

As he flew through the air, Meng Hao waved his hand out in front of him. The air rippled as arcs of golden light appeared. They shot toward Patriarch Big-head, but before they could get too close, the man spit up some more blood. The air around his feet grew blurry, and his speed increased, allowing him to evade Meng Hao's attack. In the blink of an eye, he was roughly three thousand meters away.

"So fast!" thought Meng Hao, giving a cold harrumph as he continued onward. Throughout the course of this chase, Meng Hao's interest in Patriarch Big-head's legacy techniques had certainly been aroused.

Patriarch Big-head's face was pale. He gritted his teeth and continued to flee, his heart pounding. A sensation of life-or-death danger floated in his heart. The only thing he could think to do was use every possible means to evade the pursuit and escape death.

Bitterness filled his heart. After reaching Core Formation, he had always been the one to chase and kill others. This was the first time he had been pursued like a stray dog.

"If I can make it out of this, then all of this humiliation will be paid back a hundredfold!" he thought, his eyes filling with madness. He increased his speed, traveling another three thousand meters in the blink of an eye.

After half a day of employing the ultimate speed possible within the Core Formation stage, Patriarch Big-head spotted some earthen walls off in the distance. This city was not as flourishing as one of the United Nine, but clearly a powerful group resided within.

As he neared, Patriarch Big-head cried out, "Fellow Daoist Chen!" Immediately, a beam of colorful light shot out from within the city. Inside was a muscular, bare-chested man of the mid Core Formation stage, with flowing black hair. When he saw Patriarch Big-head, he gaped in surprise.

"Big Bro Ouyang, what's going on…?"

"Fellow Daoist Chen, please stop the hoodlum that's chasing me!" he gushed as he shot past the muscular man. "You and I have similar

Cultivation bases, but I was ambushed while in secluded meditation. I’ve been poisoned and I need an incense stick’s worth of time to suppress the poison. I owe you!”

The muscular man’s eyes glittered as he saw Meng Hao approaching.

Meng Hao glanced at the earthen city wall, and the muscular man who hovered in mid-air.

“Another person who doesn’t know the difference between life and death,” said Meng Hao as he flew forward.

The muscular man hesitated for a moment, but after seeing Meng Hao, he got the impression that since Meng Hao’s Cultivation base was only at the mid Core Formation stage, he wasn’t someone to be too worried about. However, the golden glow surrounding Meng Hao, as well as the sense of danger that radiated out from him, caused the man to be cautious. “Fellow Daoist, please wait a moment. There’s no flying allowed in my city!”

As the words came out of his mouth, the more than two hundred Cultivators within the city flew out. Their aura billowed out, forming into a sealing power. They stood there glaring hatefully at Meng Hao.

These people had a variety of different Cultivation bases. Some were Core Formation, most were Foundation Establishment or Qi Condensation. However, all of them radiated dense killing intent. Obviously they had killed many people in the past.

Meng Hao didn’t care at all about people such as this who were clearly seeking to die. He continued forward without stopping, causing the muscular man’s expression to flicker. He lifted his right hand to perform an incantation, when suddenly he saw the look in Meng Hao’s eyes.

It was a coldness filled with killing intent. As the gaze passed over him, the muscular man’s heart began to pound. Cracking sounds could be heard coming from his Core, as if it might shatter into pieces. He was astonished, but before he could retreat, Meng Hao was upon him. Meng Hao slammed a fist into the man’s chest, and then shot past him. As Meng Hao passed, blood sprayed from the man's mouth; then he trembled and… directly exploded into bloody pieces.

His death caused looks of terror to fill the faces of the rest of the Cultivators from the city.

"Everyone here who pledges allegiance to me will live. Anyone who doesn't…." Meng Hao knew that in the Black Lands, one could not be softhearted. The only way to establish power and gain respect was through ruthlessness. As his voice rang out, his Blood Clones approached, along with the hundred or more Cultivators, whose killing intent billowed to the Heavens. They shot toward the city Cultivators, and immediately the sound of killing rose up, accompanied by miserable screams and cries.

Meng Hao glared at Patriarch Big-head, his eyes flashing with killing intent. "Let's see how many people you manage to get killed along the way!" He shot off again in pursuit.

This Cultivator was a strange one. No matter what powers Meng Hao employed, he was like a loach, slippery and difficult to lay hands on.

This was especially true considering his secret art of speed boosting. He had used it multiple times to put more distance between himself and Meng Hao. Even more bizarre was his fearsome ability to sense danger. Every time Meng Hao attacked, he seemed capable of predicting it and dodging out of the way.

"That damned no-good fool, he couldn't even hold the guy up for half a second!!" Patriarch Big-head gritted his teeth. Hair in disarray, clothing ragged, breathing heavily, he shot forward. He was exhausted, but Meng Hao was still chasing him. He lifted his head up to the sky and howled.

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# Chapter 342: Patriarch Golden Light!

Two days later, a black-robed figure flew out from a valley.

“Don’t worry, Big Brother Ouyang,” said the voice arrogantly. “I shall help you take care of this despicable fellow. It won’t be long before we can use his skull to drink alcohol together!” The figure shot through the air to meet an incoming beam of golden light.

This person possessed Core Qi in the form of an enormous mountain. The power of the Core Qi was joined by a howling totemic Giant Ape which smashed down toward Meng Hao.

Big-head was off in the distance looking on with an expression of appreciation. He’d finally found a friend willing to do something to help him.

The first thing he did was to turn and flee off into the distance as fast as possible.

However, before he had flown for the space of a few breaths, a blood-curdling scream rang out, which was cut off by a massive explosion.

Heart trembling, Big-head looked back to see the giant ape falling to pieces and the mountain crumbling. The Cultivator who had been attempting to block Meng Hao’s way exploded. All of that was the result of a single fist strike from Meng Hao.

The sight of Meng Hao’s right fist caused Big-head’s scalp to grow numb. Spitting out another mouthful of blood, he went all out to flee as quickly as possible.

“What a psycho! When did someone so inhuman show up in the Black Lands? And how come I had to provoke him…?” Heart filled with bitterness, he lowered his head and shot forward at top speed.

Four days later a dusk….

“Fear not, Brother Ouyang!” said a bald Cultivator, lifting up his glass. “We, the Black Mountain Nine Saints, might not measure up to you in terms of Cultivation base, but when it comes to our spell formation, we can trap anyone under the Nascent Soul stage for at least three days.”

Big-head, his face pale, reluctantly lifted up a glass of alcohol. However, his glance was drawn off into the distance, where eight figures were shooting toward an approaching beam of billowing, golden light.

“Brother Ouyang, you really don’t need to worry. Just don’t think about going back on your word about the Gilded Lizard totem you said you would give us.” The bald-headed Cultivator laughed, but within his gaze was an imperceptible trace of scorn.

According to the rumors he had heard, this Ouyang from the three great Sects of Dongluo City had offended a mid Core Formation Cultivator of the junior generation. The two had been involved in a deadly chase across half of the western region of the Black Lands.

Seeing the terrified state of Ouyang, the bald Cultivator couldn’t help but look down on him, and had come to the conclusion that the man’s previous reputation had been considerably inflated.

The bald Cultivator took a drink of alcohol and then said, “How come a trifling mid Core Formation Cultivator is being called Patriarch Golden Light? How laughable! We Black Mountain Nine… huh?” Before he could even finish speaking, a massive boom filled the air, and the ground trembled. Even more shocking to the man was that even though it was clearly midday, in the location where the fight was going on could be seen a starry sky!

Even as the bald Cultivator was shocked into silence, Ouyang's mind began to buzz. A forlorn expression appeared on his face as he tossed the glass of alcohol down. He slapped his chest, forcing some more blood out of his mouth to activate his secret technique. He shot off into the distance at high speed, something that had already become a force of habit. The bald Cultivator watched on with gaping mouth.

A mocking look appeared on the man's face. A moment later, while the look was still plastered there, the hair all over his body stood on end. An intense feeling of danger suddenly filled his mind. He spun as if he had been struck by lightning. There in front of him was a scholarly young man bathed in golden light. It was impossible to say when he had arrived. He picked up the flagon of alcohol and took a sip.

"You…." said the bald Cultivator. He turned to look off into the distance, where the bodies of his eight compatriots were still falling down from mid-air.

He gasped, and backed up. Everything began to go dark.

However, before everything went black, the bald Cultivator blurted out: "I'll pledge allegiance to Patriarch Golden Light!" Suddenly, his vision went back to normal.

The chase continued for seven more days!

Patriarch Big-head chose not to return to his Sect; he was a Patriarch, and had brought the Sect Elders with him on his excursion. The only people left back in the Sect were of the Foundation Establishment stage. There wasn't even a single Core Formation Cultivator.

Furthermore, in his current state, he would be incapable of operating the Sect's Grand Spell Formation. Also, he knew that if he stopped anywhere, he was dead for sure.

Therefore, he could do nothing other than flee, seeking out the powerful people he was familiar with in the area. Unfortunately, none of those people had sufficient Cultivation bases; not a single one was of the Nascent Soul stage.

Generally speaking, Nascent Soul Cultivators were the most powerful experts one would see in the Black Lands. Under other circumstances, he should have been able to go plead for help from some Rogue Nascent Soul Cultivators. Unfortunately… because of the chaos in the Black Lands, Nascent Soul Cultivators were now extremely valuable assets to the Alliance of United Nine Cities and the Black Lands Palace. Both forces were using everything they had at their disposal to recruit them; Big-head clearly couldn't compete with that.

So he fled from place to place in bitter struggle. He thought of going to Dongluo City, but he was well aware of the ruthlessness of Black Lands Cultivators. Considering his current condition, he wasn't worth anything to Dongluo City. They wouldn't do anything for his sake. If he had pledged himself to them earlier, it would have made things easier; they would have been forced to help him.

Unfortunately, in order to try to get the most out of the deal, he had told them he would consider their offer, but hadn't formalized an agreement. As such, it would be difficult to solicit their aid.

"Dammit! When did such an inhuman beast appear in the Black Lands!" he thought, cursing Meng Hao in his heart. Suddenly, he caught sight of a golden beam of light behind him. He spat up some more blood and fled. It felt as if he had spat up a lifetime's worth of blood recently. His face was pale white, and his injuries were even more severe, exacerbated by his blood loss.

However, he had no other options. He couldn't fight, so he had to run.

Behind him, Meng Hao whistled through the air surrounded by surging golden light. Following him were nearly four hundred Cultivators. These were people from the power groups that Big-head had tried to get help from. Faced with the prospect of death, they had chosen to side with Meng Hao.

One of them was the bald mid Core Formation Cultivator from Black Mountain. The entire group flew through the air, looking up ahead at Meng Hao and the golden light.

Strength came with numbers. During the past seven days, this group had gained quite a bit of fame in this western part of the Black Lands. Wherever they passed, their shadows darkened the land and blotted out the sky. When you added in Meng Hao and the golden light which he intentionally caused to shine out from his body, it was really a shocking sight.

It was hard to say who first called out the name Patriarch Golden Light, but word began to spread, and soon all the powers in the area knew of the name.

A day later, Big-head was exhausted to the extreme. Despite that, he gritted his teeth and flew ahead toward a tall mountain. The mountain was a sinister one, the base of which was surrounded by black waters. Five enormous vultures circled around its peak, occasionally calling out with shrill shrieks.

Sitting cross-legged at the very top were three old men. The one in the middle wore a seven-colored robe and was of the late Core Formation stage; the other two were of the mid Core Formation stage.

Unsightly expressions covered their faces. They sat there cross-legged, seemingly in meditation. However, their Cultivation bases were rotating, and they appeared to be on guard. Their eyes were fixed on the approaching big-headed Cultivator and massive golden glow that was following him.

“Dammit, it’s Patriarch Golden Light!”

“The past few days, everyone has been talking about how Patriarch Golden Light is trying to kill Ouyang. Anyone who helps out Ouyang ends up getting slaughtered!”

“I heard that more than ten Core Formation Cultivators have died at Patriarch Golden Light’s hands…. The weakest were of the mid Core Formation stage, and there were two of the late Core Formation stage!”

“Have you forgotten about the three great Sects of Dongluo City? Ouyang is on the run for his life, but the Patriarchs of the other two Sects haven’t appeared. They must have already met a dark end. If you add them in, it means that the number of Core Formation Cultivators who have fallen to Patriarch Golden Light is incredible!”

Their faces were incredibly unsightly by this point. They were friends with Big-head, but that friendship wasn’t enough to get them to stand up to Patriarch Golden Light. And yet, Big-head was clearly heading to them seeking refuge.

“Fellow Daoists, save me!” he cried, his voice filled with a pleading tone. Considering his status and the level of his Cultivation base, for him to cry out in such a manner showed what a wretched position he’d fallen into. His voice reached the mountain peak, and the ears of the three old men. They couldn’t help but feel a bit sympathetic.

Meng Hao approached, whistling through the air, surrounded by golden light. “Do the three of you want to get involved too?” he said coolly, his voice echoing out in all directions like thunder.

The faces of the three old men flickered. This was especially true of the two men with the weaker Cultivation bases. Their minds spun and their faces drained of blood. Their Cores quivered inside of them. All three men took in deep breaths.

They couldn’t help but think about the rumors that had been spreading regarding Patriarch Golden Light.

He ripped the Cores out of Cultivators and ate them raw! He massacred, leaving no survivors! His methods were cruel and vicious!

It wasn’t clear how such rumors had begun to spread about Meng Hao. He actually hadn’t killed very many people in the past few days; most of the deaths were caused by his hundreds of followers.

In any case, as soon as Meng Hao’s words fell upon the ears of the three men on the peak of the mountain, the old man with the highest Cultivation base, the one with the seven-colored robe, shot to his feet. A smile covered his face as he clasped hands and bowed.

“Greetings, Patriarch Golden Light. We will definitely not interfere in the matter between you two.” Having said that, he stamped his foot down, causing a glowing shield to rise up around the mountain. Big-head had absolutely no chance to enter.

Big-head let out a plaintive wail. He spit out some more blood to activate his secret technique and speed away. He was now emaciated and frail, which made his big head even more conspicuous. He flew along in the air, so weak he could barely even form a fist, his head drooping down.

Grief and indignation filled his face as he charged onward.

Two days passed. Big-head’s indignation continued to grow. No matter where he went, his friends all began to use their magic to block his way. It was like he had turned into some sort of plague.

In fact, there was one power group who had been slow in employing their spell formation. When he slipped in to beg for help, his friend had flipped out and attacked him. Apparently the man had been afraid of causing a misunderstanding with Patriarch Golden Light.

Big-head was now completely without hope. He floated in mid-air looking around in all directions. Unfortunately, there was no one he could turn to for help. He was out of power, and could flee no more. Face ashen, he turned and looked at the approaching Meng Hao.

After the space of about ten breaths, Meng Hao came to stop in front of him. “Done running?” he asked coolly.

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# Chapter 343: Rent by Lightning!

Big-head stared at Meng Hao, his heart filled with a feeling of powerlessness. The days on the run, the constant pursuit, the despair he felt after repeatedly begging for help, all of it had left him completely drained and exhausted. He was dog-tired, and the constant use of his forbidden technique had pushed his injuries to the point where they could no longer be fully healed. At the moment, he could only use about twenty to thirty percent of the power of his Cultivation base.

To use such limited power to fight against Meng Hao, who led a group of hundreds of Cultivators, and who had already killed so many of the people Big-head had recruited to help him… well it was simply impossible. He had no way to resist or fight back, not even in the slightest.

Big-head knew all of this, as soon as Meng Hao spoke, he let out a roar. This was not an attack, nor was it a self-detonation. It was a roar to release all of the pressure that had been pushing down on him. The sound of it echoed out.

“Even if I, Ouyang, die, I won’t bow my head to a villain like you! Even if I die today, I’ll be a Cultivator again in the future! Destroying my soul won’t keep me from the cycle of reincarnation. Maybe I can’t decide how I’ll be born, but I can decide how I die, you lightning-damned, evil….” Even as his words rang out, even as he gave vent to all his rancor, and seemed about to really lay it on thick, suddenly….

Without any warning, a lightning bolt appeared in the blue, cloudless sky. It shot down toward Meng Hao at incredible speed, seemingly giving no chance at all for a reaction. The lightning bolt slammed onto Meng Hao’s hat with a boom.

Sparks showered off of the hat, some of them landing on Meng Hao, which caused his hair to stand on end. A greenish smoke rose up off of the hat.

It almost looked like the Heavens viewed Meng Hao’s pursuit to be immoral. After all, the lightning had struck down right in the middle of Big-head’s speech….

Big-head gaped in astonishment at Meng Hao. This was the second time recently that he had seen lightning suddenly fall from the sky for no reason. The lightning appeared ordinary, but it actually had the power to eliminate an early Core Formation Cultivator.

“Retribution!” roared Big-head. “This is the retribution villains like you receive! To be rent in two by lightning!” Trembling, he began to laugh uproariously. As for Meng Hao, his face was a bit unsightly. He knew that Patriarch Big-head had already lost all of his will to fight, so his attention was now more focused up above.

“This is the second time,” he thought. The bad premonition in his heart only continued to grow more intense. Not even half a month had passed, and two bolts of lightning had already randomly come after him. Their speed was incredible, and they didn’t seem to be associated with any particular time or location. Furthermore, each of these bolts of lightning had emanated the aura of Heavenly Tribulation.

Others would have a hard time recognizing such an aura, but Meng Hao was familiar with Heavenly Tribulation. He was absolutely certain that this was none other than Tribulation Lightning.

“Why is it doing this?” he thought. “It happened twice already. Does that mean it will happen a third time? Perhaps more…?” Suddenly, he thought back to what the meat jelly hat had said shortly after the parrot went to sleep, and before it began to rest. It had said that it and the parrot had helped someone transcend Tribulation once, only for that person to end up trying to kill them.

“Don’t tell me… this is the aftermath of delaying the Tribulation? Lightning is going to constantly be falling down onto me?” Meng Hao’s face twisted as he looked back at Big-head and coolly asked, “Do you want to choose how you’ll die?”

The soil below churned as vicious vines exploded upward. They swayed about, not approaching; however, the mouths at the end of the vines were filled with razor sharp teeth that dripped with viscous fluid.

Their reddish color, their bizarre undulation, their fearsomeness, as well as the rotten smell that emanated out from them would cause anyone who saw them to feel shocked.

“I….” Big-head laughed coldly and gave Meng Hao a scornful look. His expression was one of pride as he lifted his hand up toward his forehead.

He had no intention of begging for his life. Considering the bloody path left behind by his pursuer, Big-head knew that he had little chance of escaping this calamity. Therefore, if he was going to die, he would die in robust fashion.

However, the instant his hand was about to press down onto his forehead, another bolt of lightning suddenly appeared out of the blue. It shot down toward Meng Hao with such speed that in the blink of an eye it was less than ten meters away from his head.

However, because of the previous two lightning bolts, Meng Hao had already begun to keep some of his attention focused on the sky. In almost the same instant that the lightning bolt began to fall, he slapped his bag of holding and pulled out a semi-transparent soul embodiment.

This soul embodiment was none other than the Li Clan Patriarch. A thin thread connected him to the blood-colored mask, making it so that even though he was now floating outside, he would be unable to flee. His life or death could be determined by a single thought from Meng Hao.

Suddenly being pulled out in this fashion caused the Li Clan Patriarch to look around in confusion. This was the first time in many years that he had ever seen the sky in the outside world. However, before he could heave any emotional sighs, he was flung up into the air by Meng Hao.

A boom rattled out as the lightning bolt slammed into the Li Clan Patriarch’s soul embodiment. A miserable shriek echoed out as the Li Clan Patriarch quivered. A roar of pain and rage bellowed out from him. His soul embodiment had nearly been shattered, giving him quite a scare. He rapidly did everything he could to solidify it.

If the soul embodiment dissipated, then he truly would turn into dust on the wind.

His confusion quickly vanished, forced away by the unfortunately circumstances. He roared, gnashing his teeth as he floated there in mid-air, looking down at Meng Hao. If hatred itself could kill, then he would rip Meng Hao to pieces mouthful by mouthful.

The lightning didn’t stop at three bolts, however. After a few breaths’ time, a fourth lightning bolt descended. Before it could fall, Meng Hao, his face expressionless, tossed up the Li Clan Patriarch.

The lightning slammed into him, causing the Li Clan Patriarch to let out a miserable cry. Thankfully, his soul embodiment was vigorous. After being subjected to the torment of the meat jelly, it was actually quite resilient, despite its weak appearance.

After the boom echoed out, the Li Clan Patriarch grew almost completely illusory. And yet, before he could even catch his breath, a fifth lightning bolt fell, and another miserable shriek echoed out. Big-head watched all of this with gaping eyes.

For the first time while standing in front of Meng Hao, he couldn’t hide the fear in his eyes. He sympathized with this soul embodiment. As far as he was concerned, Meng Hao was absolutely the most savage Cultivator in existence. It seemed he would shrink from no evil, and did not shirk from outraging men and gods alike.

“This soul embodiment is already in a wretched state, and yet he does this to it,” thought Big-head. “I wonder what great enmity exists between them…. That soul embodiment seems on the verge of dispersing completely." He sighed inwardly, his mind spinning because of Meng Hao's viciousness. His impression was now thoroughly settled.

"That guy must have just been too attached to life, and wasn't decisive enough. His soul got snatched up by this vicious Cultivator. I, however, have steady resolve. I won't end up like that. If he stole my soul, I would end up like this, tormented into dissolution." Having psyched himself up to this point, Big-head lifted his hand to strike his forehead, when suddenly his body began to shake, and his resolve shattered.

His eyes opened wide, filled with disbelief and intense dread. This was because just as the soul embodiment seemed about to be shattered by the lightning, a violet glow flickered in Meng Hao's eyes. He spit out a mouthful of golden Qi, which was filled with his own life force. There wasn't much, but after it merged with the Li Clan Patriarch's soul embodiment, all of his wounds began to recover.

Just when he was almost completely recovered, a sixth lightning bolt fell. A thunderclap rang out, accompanied by a miserable cry. Grief filled the eyes of the Li Clan Patriarch, along with despair. It was a hopelessness in which the desire for death exceeded the desire to live.

The sight caused Big-head's scalp to go numb and his face to turn pale white. He began to quiver. He had been preparing to say some grand words just now, but now he could only swallow with a gulp. The hand that had been moving toward his forehead fell to his side. The pride in his eyes had been replaced by hopelessness.

He suddenly realized that even if he managed to deliver a deadly blow to himself, he was a Cultivator. In the moments after his death, there were a variety of methods that could be used to extract his soul.

He could attempt to self detonate, but seeing how adept Meng Hao was with inflicting torment, Big-head could see that dying was not necessarily a way of escaping.

He didn't fear death, but what he did fear, was living a life worse than death.

Meng Hao was currently ignoring Big-head, and was instead focusing completely on the lightning, as well as the Li Clan Patriarch's soul.

What he noticed was that even as the soul embodiment was on the verge of collapsing, sparking remnants of the lightning were fusing into the soul. Thanks to the healing provided by Meng Hao's life force, the recovery of the Li Clan Patriarch's soul embodiment resulted in much more lightning residing within him.

"Refine a Soul of Lightning, huh…? It seems it requires a bit of a sacrifice to refine such a thing!" Meng Hao's eyes glittered as he looked around for more lightning. After enough time passed for half an incense stick to burn, a final bolt of lightning appeared. After the Li Clan Patriarch absorbed it, Meng Hao put him back into the blood-colored mask. He cursed Meng Hao vigorously the entire time. 1

Finally, Meng Hao looked thoughtfully back at Big-head. He lifted his hand up and was about to kill him and then let the vines consume him and pull out his special techniques.

After all, Big-head's attitude just now had been one of firm resolution, even willingness to die. No matter how much Meng Hao tormented him, there would be no way to know of if he was telling the truth about this techniques.

However, even as Meng Hao lifted his hand up, Big-head began to quiver and his face filled with intense dread.

"Fellow Daoist…. Fellow Daoist, listen to me," he gushed. "I happen to know the location of the secret Treasure Pavilions of all the three great Sects. There's lots of stuff hidden there! I'll give all the treasures of my Talisman Sect to you as a gift. I'll do anything you ask, I'll even face mountains of swords and seas of flames. I, Big-head, won't even frown!" Meng Hao's methods just now had left him trembling; he had no desire to have his soul tormented after he died.

Meng Hao gaped at Patriarch Big-head for a moment. This caused the man to begin to pant and get more nervous. He could hear the sound of his own heart pounding. However, a look of resolve appeared in his eyes. He swore a poison oath, and, gritting his teeth, even extracted some soul blood from his forehead which he offered to Meng Hao. With that, Meng Hao would be able to kill him at any time.

Big-head believed that it was only with such a resolution that he could truly evade calamity.

Meng Hao thought about it for a moment; it didn’t take him long to figure out what Big-head was thinking. He looked at the man for a moment and then a faint smile touching his face. Finally he reached out and accepted the soul blood.

“Now,” said Meng Hao coolly, “explain to me that bizarre legacy of yours.”

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# Chapter 344: The Great Church of the Golden Light!

Bitterness filled Big-head’s heart; however, in order to preserve his life, he put on a delighted expression and then obediently retrieved a small jar from his bag of holding.

It was about the size of a fist, and a handful of holes could be seen on its surface. When wind blew through the holes, they would emit a mournful whistling. There didn’t seem to be anything special about the sound, and looking at the jar, Meng Hao couldn’t see anything very unique about it. Even his Spiritual Sense didn’t reveal anything special.

In fact, had he slain this Patriarch Big-head, upon searching his bag of holding, even if Meng Hao happened to pick up the jar, he would most likely have taken it to be some sort of musical instrument and then paid it no more heed.

Apparently fearing some sort of misunderstanding, Patriarch Big-head quickly bit his left index finger, then dropped some blood into nine of the holes which covered the jug, doing so in some specific order.

It appeared as if it were some type of locking mechanism that Meng Hao had never seen before. Now that it had been opened by Big-head, the jar began to emit a black glow. There was clearly no wind in the area, and yet the jar continued to make the whimpering noises.

Suddenly, streams of magical symbols began to float up from the small jar. They circled around the area, along with a sinister aura.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. He lifted a finger on his right hand, causing the black jar to fly over to him. It landed on his palm, whereupon he examined it closely.

Gradually, Meng Hao began to get excited. The magical symbols were forming together to make the images of howling souls. Looking at it, he got the profound sense that this was indeed some sort of legacy.

“This is a treasure I stumbled upon in some ruins many years ago,” said Patriarch Big-head, choosing his words carefully, and not daring to leave anything out. “I discovered it on the body of a Demonic Cultivator that had two horns on its head. It also had a jade slip, which I read and then destroyed. Recorded within was the method for using this Evil Wind jar. It also said that the Demonic Cultivator came from some place called the Fourth Mountain, and that before dying, needed to pass on the legacy.”

If Patriarch Big-head hadn’t mentioned the Fourth Mountain, then Meng Hao might have continued to be suspicious. But after hearing the term, an imperceptible flicker ran through his eyes.

Matters regarding the Nine Mountains and Seas were not things that average Cultivators knew about. In Meng Hao’s estimation, people who were aware of such topics were definitely extremely scarce.

Without batting an eyelid, he gathered up the small jar and then looked at Patriarch Big-head.

The man immediately began to grow more nervous, and quickly said, “Fellow Daoist, when I’m around, the Treasure Pavilions of the three great Sects should be safe. But since the other two Sects know that their respective Patriarchs are dead, it won’t be long before their disciples start dividing up the treasures. Sir, don’t you think we should get there as quickly as possible?”

At the moment, hundreds of beams of light were approaching from off in the distance. The impressive sight of so many people made Big-head even more nervous.

His fear of Meng Hao couldn’t become any greater. His trepidation reached deep into his heart; if he could go back in time, he definitely wouldn’t ever provoke this inhuman creature.

Even if he did provoke him somehow, he definitely wouldn’t do anything to break the man’s spell formation. In fact, to save his own life, he would immediately kill the other Patriarchs from the other two great Sects.

Meng Hao could tell what he was thinking with a mere look. After a moment’s thought, he nodded.

Big-head let out a sigh of relief, but then suddenly became nervous once again. He really was worried that the disciples of the other two great Sects would divvy up the treasure. Moments later, he and Meng Hao became prismatic beams of light that shot back toward the region of Dongluo City.

A few days later, a glowing yellow shield could be seen covering a snowy white mountain which was some distance from Dongluo City. The whiteness of the mountain and the yellow glow mixed together to make a beautiful sight, albeit a bit incongruous.

Meng Hao hovered outside of the mountain. He hadn’t personally attacked. No, that had been left up to Big-head and the bald-headed Cultivator who had once been a member of the nine Cultivators from Black Mountain. They, along with the hundreds of other Cultivators following Meng Hao, filled the sky. Booming explosions rang out from all directions.

Big-head spared no effort whatsoever. His eyes were bloodshot; he feared that they would be unable to break through the shield to get inside. The bald Cultivator was thinking similar thoughts, and clearly wanted to ingratiate himself to Meng Hao. The two of them almost seemed to be competing as they went all out with various techniques.

Beneath the powerful attacks of two people like this, bolstered by hundreds of other Cultivators, this trifling great Sect was only able to hold out for the time it takes an incense stick to burn. Then, the shield collapsed into countless fragments of yellow light. As the shield disintegrated, the whiteness of the snowy mountain beneath became visible.

No massacre was necessary; after the shield broke, the nearly one hundred Cultivators of the Han River Sect immediately pledged allegiance to Meng Hao.

Furthermore, they respectfully handed over the wealth and treasures of their Sect. Meng Hao’s forces now numbered nearly six hundred as they headed toward another of the great Sects.

They moved with incredible speed, but this time, they met some resistance. It was a middle-aged man who had three totem tattoos on his body. He was quite tall, and his attacks were accompanied by the illusory image of a mountain and river as well as a writhing Poisonous Flood Dragon. Even as everyone else pledged their allegiance, this man launched a vicious sneak attack. He instantly killed several of the other disciples who had suggested to capitulate, and then attempted to flee.

Even as he attempted to break past the sealing spells to escape, Meng Hao’s eyes glittered coldly. He shot forward, and in the blink of an eye was in front of the man. He punched him lightly with one fist.

A boom filled the air, and blood sprayed from the man’s mouth. His eyes filled with venomous hatred, but before he could use any magical techniques, Meng Hao punched him again. He didn’t kill him, but instead took control of his Cultivation base and then knocked him out.

As for the final Sect, the Talisman Sect, there were no problems there. With Big-head present, there were no defenses to break through, and the hundred or so disciples of the Sect welcomed Meng Hao respectfully.

The main gate of the Talisman Sect was located in a wide basin surrounded by mountains. The Sect was quiet and tasteful, constructed in an orderly fashion. Upon seeing it, Meng Hao decided to occupy the place for the time being.

A few days later, the parrot and the meat jelly both regained their senses. The parrot was extremely excited to see the roughly seven hundred new followers. It flapped his wings, squawking out orders as it began to train the Cultivators.

As for the meat jelly, it lazily flew onto the head of someone who caught its eye, whereupon it continued to deride and criticize the parrot as usual.

Meng Hao asked them about the lightning randomly falling down from the sky. However, each time he brought it up, the parrot and meat jelly would glance around quickly and then suddenly disappear.

Finally Meng Hao intentionally provoked the parrot. Once its honor was challenged, it blurted out something that caused Meng Hao’s face to look unsightly: “So what!” it said. “Lord Fifth delayed the Heavenly Tribulation. Of course some lightning will slip through every once in a while. It’s not going to kill you, it’s only a bit of lightning!”

With that, the parrot flapped its wings and quickly flew off, leaving Meng Hao alone in the secluded meditation chamber that used to belong Big-head.

Time flashed by, and soon it was half a month later. During the half month, the name of Patriarch Golden Light had risen to complete prominence in this entire region of the Black Lands. Granted, the name hadn’t traveled too far, but all the local Cultivators knew the name.

According to the growing legend, Patriarch Golden Light loved killing Cultivators. He drank alcohol out of Dao Pillars, consumed Cores, and committed any imaginable evil. Such descriptions grew more and more exaggerated, until everyone who talked about him grew pale in the face from fear.

Patriarch Golden Light, a fierce Cultivator and leader of a generation. He was now thoroughly entrenched as a power in the area.

People in the Black Lands were becoming more anxious. Ten days before, one of the eight remaining Clans of what had once been the Alliance of United Nine Cities, was suddenly attacked by the Black Lands Palace. It was completely exterminated, and overnight, the city changed hands. Then, the Black Lands Palace issued a command throughout the entire Black Lands.

It said that the Black Lands Palace was now the only power within the Black Lands. As for the seven other Clans who made up the so-called United Nine, they were to be exterminated.

A great war had truly begun!

Amidst the chaos and general feeling of nervousness, Meng Hao’s power base suddenly became something of a safe haven. More and more Cultivators joined, including some of the Core Formation stage.

During the half month in which all of this happened, Dongluo City grew emptier and emptier. Suddenly, they began to look toward Meng Hao and his force of nearly a thousand people the same way that a tiger eyes its prey.

A few days later, the term ‘Church of the Golden Light’ began to spread. Other than the Dongluo Clan itself, it was now the most powerful force in the region of Dongluo City.

In this wartime situation, Meng Hao’s force of nearly one thousand men continued to grow. He was thoroughly in command in this area!

Actually, Meng Hao wasn’t really aware of a lot of the developments. The parrot and the meat jelly seemed incredibly interested in recruiting more Cultivators. The meat jelly felt that converting a thousand people at once was definitely something it had never done before, and would be an amazing accomplishment regardless of whether you were talking about past, present or future lives.

As far as the parrot was concerned, when it heard the voices of roughly a thousand people chanting the words regarding having faith in the Lord Fifth to gain eternal life, all of the feathers on its body would stand on end.

It seemed to have already forgotten about how every few days lightning would fall from the sky and shoot toward Meng Hao.

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# Chapter 345: Lotus Sword Formation!

Boom!

One early morning, a bolt of lightning appeared above the elegant basin, outside one of the buildings.

The roof of this building was long since gone, apparently destroyed. Black ash was visible everywhere. There were roughly a thousand Cultivators here now, and all of them were more or less used to the lightning.

As the parrot soared through the air, it looked up into the sky and gave a sympathetic sigh, then thought about how helpful it had been. After that, it wheeled off with determination to go train the Cultivators in the use of the Celestial spell formation.

“This formation uses people as its base! With hundreds, you can rock Core Formation. With thousands, you can strand Nascent Soul. With tens of thousands, Spirit Severing doesn’t count for a fart! With millions, you can shake Immortals! Back when Lord Fifth swept over the nine great Mountains and Seas, no one refused to bow to him!” A wistful look appeared in its eyes, and it sighed as it seemed to recall its past glory. Then, it redoubled its efforts to train the Cultivators.

Inside the building that had just been struck by lightning, Meng Hao’s face was unsightly. Even more unsightly, however, was the face of the Li Clan Patriarch, who looked as if he were on his last legs.

“You’re my ancestor!” he wailed, his soul embodiment trembling. He seemed to be on the verge of going crazy. “My ancestor, okay?! Just let me go…. I can’t hold on much longer. Just let the lightning rend me in half, okay…?”

Meng Hao didn’t say anything. He put the Li Clan Patriarch’s soul embodiment away, then looked back up at the sky. It seemed clear, completely devoid of any lightning. At this point, he wasn’t quite numb to the situation, but had gotten used to it.

After some practice, he had developed some methods to pull out the Li Clan Patriarch even more quickly. By now, it had developed into a sort of intuition; as soon as a bolt of lightning appeared, the Li Clan Patriarch would be called upon.

Currently, Meng Hao didn’t reach complete success at first. However, the dangerous training method worked, and soon he was able to use the technique almost perfectly each time.

Under these circumstances, Meng Hao’s intuition with the lightning gradually formed into a type of instinct.

At the moment, Meng Hao couldn’t quite keep his face completely calm; it still looked a bit pained, although not as much as the Li Clan Patriarch’s. Meng Hao looked over at the middle-aged man who lay in front of him, body trembling, face pale, seemingly locked in place and unable to move. This man was even worse off than the Li Clan Patriarch.

This Cultivator was not from the Black Lands, but rather the Western Desert. This was the man Meng Hao had knocked out earlier, the one who had three totem tattoos. Meng Hao had taken him here, sealed him to prevent him from moving, and began to study him.

Meng Hao loved studying. Back when he was a scholar, he would study books. After he entered the Cultivation world, he would study magical techniques or contemplate alchemy.

It didn’t matter when, as long as he had some time on his hands, he would take time to study something. This always led to further understanding on his part.

However, this was his first time studying a person.

Meng Hao had already been studying him for three days, inside and out. Whenever he encountered some area he didn’t understand, he would make some cuts and focus further until he understood.

Meng Hao had learned a lot in these three days, which left him very excited. As for the middle-aged man, however, it was a nightmare, as if he were residing in the depths of hell. The feeling was hard to describe. His coldness had turned into misery, cursing and insanity. Eventually, he just began to wail, and to truly believe that Meng Hao was the most fearsome person in the entire Cultivation world.

At the moment, Meng Hao was studying the Cultivator’s blood. He reached out toward the man’s arm, which was covered in wounds and scabs. Some of it was even missing pieces of flesh. Meng Hao made a long scratch and then collected some blood.

He placed the blood into a pill furnace and began to refine it.

The man’s face was ashen, his eyes listless and filled with despair. He didn’t know how much longer this treatment would go on, and his mind was on the verge of collapse. In fact, the previous night when Meng Hao was preparing to study his brain, the fear caused tears to leak out of his eyes.

At that point, Meng Hao had hesitated and then decided not to proceed.

Meng Hao had always been extremely interested in the totem tattoos of Western Desert Cultivators. After much analysis, he had come to the conclusion that they contained a power similar to medicinal pills, a power that came from outside the body of the Cultivator

For example, totems could be used to break through from Qi Condensation to Foundation Establishment, and then to Core Formation. This realization gave Meng Hao quite a bit of enlightenment.

Meng Hao had long since had the feeling that he could break through from the mid Perfect Core Formation stage to the late stage. The feeling only grew more intense. Eventually, he realized that in order to break through to late Core Formation, he would need to allow the Heavenly Tribulation to bear down on him in full. After transcending it, he would then be able to enter late Core Formation.

However, once that happened, he had little confidence regarding the Nascent Soul stage. The Nascent Soul stage was a huge step that few Cultivators were ever actually able to take.

Throughout the years, many Cultivators could reach the late Core Formation stage. However, few were able to break through to Nascent Soul. It might seem like there were a lot of Nascent Soul Cultivators, but that had more to do with their vastly extended lifespan. Few members of any particular generation would ever actually break through.

One of the most critical factors for Meng Hao was the fact that he was missing the section of the Sublime Spirit Scripture that had to do with the Gold Core. Without the proper technique, it would be difficult to achieve a Perfect Nascent Soul.

It wasn't very likely that he would be able to acquire the manual, either. He had no idea where it was. However, Meng Hao had the strong feeling that the totems of these Western Desert Cultivators would enable him to forge his own path toward the Perfect Nascent Soul.

Meng Hao focused on the blood in the pill furnace as it slowly transformed into a mist. Eventually it dissipated, whereupon a bright glow shone in his eyes. "Interesting. There is no totemic aura within the blood."

"Skin, muscle, bone and blood. Without exception, they are all completely ordinary!" Meng Hao sat in thought for a while and then looked back up at the man in front of him. The man's heart trembled, and he was about to open his mouth to beg for his life when Meng Hao's right hand descended onto the totem tattoo on the man's arm.

"This totem has faint traces of Demonic Qi, which is also the so-called Essence of the Ninth Mountain and Sea." As Meng Hao lifted his hand back up, the man let out a shrill wail. The totem tattoo slowly separated from his skin, pulling up until Meng Hao held what looked almost like a patch of skin in his hand. After separating, it rapidly faded away until it was completely gone.

“So once it leaves the body of the Cultivator, the totem vanishes.” He frowned. “Just what is a totem? The manifestation of some great Demon of Heaven and Earth?”

Meng Hao looked outside; it was already evening, and the sky was filling with clouds. A variety of thoughts spun through his head, but no answers.

After a while, Meng Hao waved his hand; the seals binding the middle-aged Cultivator vanished. He rose to his feet, trembling. He immediately clasped hands and bowed to Meng Hao, continuing to shake violently.

“You can go,” said Meng Hao coolly.

To the man, the words seemed like those of a Celestial being. His heart was filled with so much appreciation that he wanted to weep. He immediately left, speeding away as fast as possible to leave this land of nightmares.

More time passed. Meng Hao bowed his head and laughed. “I think I’m getting ahead of myself,” he murmured. “I have the power to bestow Demonic Qi, but to understand totems will require a lot more time. Full enlightenment can’t be gained in a short period of time.” However, determination gleamed in his eyes; he would not give up on his desire to understand totems.

He smacked his bag of holding to produce an earth-yellow band of soft, cloth-like paper with uneven edges.

This was none other than the object which had led to the rise of Patriarch Golden Light, the flag which the parrot had helped Meng Hao to steal from the auction. After waking up, the parrot had helped him to refine it.

“A talisman used by an Immortal, which can help me to gain enlightenment regarding the magical symbols in the Black Lands. This will definitely be a huge help.” He rubbed the paper as he thought about the vastly expanded area within which his followers could search for the Celestial soil now that he was Patriarch Golden Light. Obviously, it was much greater than before.

Vast quantities of Celestial soil were being delivered to him. Now, all he had to do was touch the soil to this talismanic paper, and it would immediately suck in the aura of the soil, leaving the soil completely ordinary in nature.

After sucking in the aura, magical symbols would appear on the paper, which were gradually forming into the shape of a seal.

Meng Hao was sure that after enough time had passed, and enough soil was collected, more magical symbols would appear on the paper. With further enlightenment of the symbols, he would definitely be able to employ some shocking divine ability.

It was in this way that he planned to have completely unique Celestial magic prepared for when he reached the Nascent Soul stage!

The next day at dawn, Meng Hao put away the talismanic paper and then took out the Wooden Time Sword and began to further refine it. He had consistently been working on this particular sword since arriving in the Black Lands, and as of now, it contained three sixty-year cycles of Time.

In addition, he had quite a quantity of Spring and Autumn trees in his bag of holding that contained two sixty-year cycles.

“It’s not very difficult to forge a Time treasure that contains a sixty-year cycle,” he thought. “It only takes a bit of effort. As for two sixty-year cycles, I only have a thirty percent chance of success. Failure means complete loss of all the resources. That’s not really a big deal, though. What’s truly scary is the Time treasures of three sixty-year cycles. There’s only half a percent chance of success. Without the copper mirror, I probably wouldn’t be able to forge even one in my entire life.” He looked at the sword in his hand, which emitted a blinding blue light. Its surface seemed to flow like flowing water, and waving the sword through the air caused ripples to spread out. The ripples caused the surrounding structures to immediately show signs of decay.

Meng Hao was just about to put the sword away when suddenly, he lifted his head up and looked at something far off in the distance. He frowned.

“So, the Dongluo Clan really just can’t hold themselves back,” he muttered. He sent his Spiritual Sense out to find the parrot and impart some instructions. Next, his body began to grow blurry, and ghost images sprang up. Moments later, a second Meng Hao appeared. One was sitting cross-legged, the other slowly sank down into the ground.

Meng Hao waved his right hand, whereupon ten Wooden Time Swords flew out from his subterranean chamber to circulate about in the air overhead.

The tips of the swords faced outward, and as they spun, they began to create a vortex in the shape of a lotus flower. The power emanated by the lotus-shaped sword formation caused the building Meng Hao was in to begin to decay. Soon, it was nothing more than ash. All of the aura in the area soon began to fill with ancientness and decay. The minds and hearts of the thousand Cultivators trembled. They immediately dispersed, looking back wide eyed at Meng Hao, who sat cross-legged, a giant lotus spinning above his head. Around him, everything in the basin was beginning to decay.

It was at this moment that the moon rose. Moonlight cascaded downward onto the swords, causing them to gleam with a silver glow. They looked like a blooming lotus, bizarre and beautiful…. Everyone who observed the spectacle would remember it for the rest of their lives.

As the lotus rippled, the Patriarch beneath it lifted his head and said in a cool, echoing voice: “This is my Time Sword Formation!”

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# Chapter 346: Who The Hell Are You?!

Meng Hao gazed at the Lotus Sword Formation. It came from the three-page booklet he'd acquired when conning the hundreds of Cultivators who were chasing him. As for who it had originally belonged to, he had no idea.

However, the small booklet had given Meng Hao a sense of great enlightenment. Before, he'd never realized that swords… could be organized into formations!

His research in recent days hadn't been limited to totems and the small jar that was a legacy from the Fourth Mountain. He'd also spent significant time studying sword formations. The three-page booklet had no text, only illustrations; if you understood it, you understood it. If you didn't, you never would.

Meng Hao didn't understand very much, but based on what he did, he could form the lotus that he had just now. Even still, the sword formation was able to emanate shocking, explosive power.

Creating a formation like a lotus enabled him to unleash the deadly power of Time!

He paid little attention to the surrounding thousand Cultivators, but they had no choice other than to pay close attention to him. Meng Hao was their Patriarch, the soul of the Church of Golden Light. The name of Patriarch Golden Light had long since been placed in the highest position in the area.

Everyone's hearts shook as they observed Meng Hao, the spinning lotus, and the decaying buildings in the basin. Big-head's face was pale and his breathing ragged. His eyes filled with intense fear. Before, he had assumed Meng Hao had used all the power he possessed to chase him; however, the sight of this sword formation caused him to tremble in terror.

“Who in the Core Formation stage could possibly stand up against a sword formation like that?” he thought, his heart and mind trembling uncontrollably.

The lotus spun and Time danced. Heaven and Earth were shaken, and everything in the area crumbled. It was impossible for Meng Hao not to be the center of attention.

The parrot looked on in shock, its eyes filled with an expression that rarely existed there. It stared fixedly at the Lotus Sword Formation, panting. Next to it, the meat jelly gaped with equally wide eyes.

The two of them hadn’t noticed the booklet, and had been focused on managing the thousand Cultivators. They hadn’t paid attention to Meng Hao and his research of sword formations. Without thinking about it, they exchanged a glance, whereupon they noticed the mutual look of shock in each other’s eyes.

“I’ve never heard of this Lotus Sword Formation,” said the parrot, blinking. “However… looking at it gives me the chills….”

“It’s too wicked,” said the meat jelly solemnly. “An evil sword formation like this is too domineering. The aura is too bizarre. It should be destroyed! Such a thing should not even exist!”

“Lord Fifth feels a certain lack of understanding regarding this particular Master….” murmured the parrot.

Meanwhile, a group of a few dozen Cultivators hovered in the air at the edge of the basin, looking at the Lotus Sword Formation. One of their number was an old man. He watched on with a look of concentration, his eyes shining with a brilliant light.

This was one of the three Nascent Soul Patriarchs of the Dongluo Clan who had infuriated the parrot back in Dongluo City. Behind him were none other than Dongluo Ling and Dongluo Han, as well as other Dongluo Clan Cultivators.

All of them watched on in silence. The Cultivators who were under the Nascent Soul stage saw the ripples emanating out from the sword formation, and were shaken. They saw the decaying power contained within; the mountains grew old and even the ground itself was becoming ancient.

It was at this moment that Meng Hao's eyes suddenly opened. They gleamed brightly as he waved his right hand. The Lotus Sword Formation streaked through the air toward the Dongluo Clan Cultivators.

The Nascent Soul Cultivator who floated in the lead position immediately waved his hand. A glowing shield appeared directly behind him and in front of the other Dongluo Clan members.

Meng Hao's expression never changed. His right hand flickered in an incantation gesture, and then he waved a finger toward the sword formation. A buzzing sound filled the air. The lotus no longer rotated; the ten Wooden Time Swords transformed into ten beams of light that shot toward the old Nascent Soul Cultivator.

The man's eyes glittered as he raised his right fist up into the air. Then, he slowly opened it and said, "Stabilize!"

As soon as the word left his mouth, the air seemed to collapse. A boom resonated out, and the land shook. The ten Time Swords suddenly stopped moving; they seemed incapable of flying forward even a teeny bit. However, the Nascent Soul Cultivator's face suddenly fell.

The shield behind him began to fall into pieces, as if it had been in existence for a very long time. As it collapsed, the man's face suddenly seemed to grow older.

It was as if his longevity were being sucked away. Even as his expression flickered, Meng Hao waved his right hand. The ten swords immediately flew back toward him and then disappeared.

Meng Hao rose to his feet. His black hair floated in the wind, and his long green robe gave him an elegant, erudite appearance. His refined features contained both the dignity of a scholar and the loftiness of a Cultivator. “I was working on my spell formations just now,” he said coolly, “and was a bit careless. Senior, I hope you can forgive me.”

It was only at this moment that the surrounding thousand Cultivators realized that dozens of Dongluo Clan Cultivators had appeared on the nearby mountain ridges. The eyes of the thousand Cultivators began to glow, and their power merged together to form a crushing weight that emanated out in all directions.

This land was their Sect, a place that outsiders were not permitted to enter without permission. Any visitor should announce themselves and make a formal request to pay a visit. However, the Dongluo Clan had showed up without any of the formalities.

Clearly, they came with ill intentions. This was even more apparent… because of the presence of the Nascent Soul Cultivator leading the group.

“Don’t worry about it,” said the Nascent Soul Cultivator with a laugh. “There’s no need to blame yourself, lad.” He advanced forward into the basin, followed by the dozens of Clan members. As he moved forward, his expression was normal, but his heart was filled with shock. The thousand Cultivators present all had different Cultivation bases, and yet the feeling they gave off was that they were integrated into a whole.

The feeling caused the heart of the Nascent Soul Cultivator to fill with amazement. Then he saw the decayed buildings in the area, and suddenly began to feel a bit of hesitation.

What caused him to hesitate was not Meng Hao’s Cultivation base, but rather the sword formation that he had just employed.

“This sword formation can absorb longevity….” The Nascent Soul Cultivator couldn’t shake the feeling that this place was completely bizarre. The two things that Nascent Soul Cultivators valued most were their lives and their longevity.

They had long lifespans, and because of that, any reduction to their longevity was very bothersome.

The original plan had been to travel to this place and force Meng Hao and his followers to join the Dongluo Clan. Should he refuse, the Dongluo Clan would resort to certain methods of force.

Meng Hao had grown a bit too powerful in the area, leading the Dongluo Clan to their current course of action.

However, it only took a moment for hesitation to fill the heart of the Nascent Soul Cultivator. He had just barely made contact with Meng Hao’s Lotus Sword Formation, but could tell that he had lost several months of longevity.

The next thing that happened was that he saw the parrot flying through the air. Suddenly, he sighed inwardly. At this point, he was quite certain that the parrot was the same as the muscular man he had encountered back in Dongluo City, transformed via some unknown technique.

All of these things, however, merely made him hesitate. They by no means made him abandon the plan laid out by the Dongluo Clan. He continued to advance until he was a bit more than thirty meters away from Meng Hao, whereupon he stopped. His eyes suddenly blazed with an aggressive aura as he stared at Meng Hao.

Hands clasped behind his back, he slowly said, “Unfortunately, lad, if word of your inadvertent actions spread, then it would have an adverse effect on my reputation.” He gave Meng Hao a meaningful look. “I assume you know why I’ve come here today. Please provide your response. What happens here today all depends on you.” His words were filled with an air of authority. Behind him, the dozens of Dongluo Clan members glared out in all directions.

It was only Dongluo Han who had an apologetic aura to him. Next to him, Dongluo Ling was the picture of loftiness; her expression was one of scorn as she stared at the hated Meng Hao, just waiting for him to bow his head in acquiescence.

As the old man's words rang out, one figure after another suddenly appeared in the region surrounding the basin. They simply stood there, not entering the basin, but slowly emanating crushing pressure which descended upon the thousand local Cultivators.

The parrot looked around proudly, even scornfully. The meat jelly was currently perched atop the head of Huang Daxian, who was trembling in fear. A look of dignity covered its face as it attempted to count how many people were surrounding them.

However, no matter how it counted, there only seemed to be three….

As for the thousand Cultivators, their faces were filled with anxiety. It was only Big-head who set his jaw and then muttered to himself, "These Dongluo City people can mess with anyone they want, and they choose to mess with this inhuman villain…."

Meng Hao looked calmly at the Nascent Soul Cultivator in front of him. His Cultivation base was at the early Nascent Soul stage. He stood there like some kind of mountain, exerting powerful pressure. He held himself like the Lord of this area, as if he were in charge of the thousand Cultivators, as if their lives or deaths could be determined by a mere thought on his part.

His expression the same as ever, Meng Hao asked, "How will joining the Dongluo Clan benefit me?" It was as if he hadn't even noticed the people standing on the surrounding mountain ridges.

"By becoming an auxiliary branch of the Dongluo Clan, you will have the right to occupy this position," said the Nascent Soul Cultivator, his voice calm. "You can also receive financial support from the Dongluo Clan. Of course, you will need to consume the Clan's medicinal supplements. When the appropriate time comes, we will of course dispel them." He was convinced that Meng Hao would capitulate; there was really only one option available. Meng Hao wasn’t powerful enough to make any other choice.

Actually, considering the current crisis in the Black Lands, the Dongluo Clan had little other choice than to do things in this way. Because of the chaos everywhere, few people would willingly join them. The results of their recruiting efforts lately had been abysmal. Meng Hao and his thousand followers looked like meek lambs. Furthermore, Meng Hao’s Cultivation base was not high enough to cause them any concern. Even if his military might was strong at the moment, exterminating him wouldn’t be very difficult.

“I shall give you three breaths of time to consider,” said the old man with the flick of a sleeve. “You’re a smart fellow, you should be able to figure out what the right decision is. Even if you don’t want to concede, you will!”

“Who the hell are you again?” replied Meng Hao coolly, his expression the same as ever. “Is the Dongluo Clan looking for a new boss?”

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# Chapter 347: The Magical Fog Becomes a Sea!

Meng Hao’s words boomed out like thunder.

It wasn’t just the Nascent Soul Cultivator who stared in shock after hearing them; all of the surrounding thousand Cultivators gaped.

When the words rang out, Big-head was off in the distance reveling in Meng Hao’s misfortune. He gasped. In his opinion, Meng Hao’s words were simply too pretentious.

Dongluo Ling’s eyes went wide; she had never imagined someone could be so wildly arrogant. Dongluo Han also stared in shock, along with all of the other Dongluo Clan members, who looked on in disbelief.

The Nascent Soul Cultivator started to laugh. His laughter grew louder, and the look on his face became grimmer. His killing intent had long since begun to emanate out.

“You stripling, you really don’t know the height of the Heavens and the depth of the Earth! Well, if you’re looking to die, I can fulfill your wish!” Even as he spoke, he began to stride toward Meng Hao.

Simultaneously, the Dongluo Clan members on the ridges around the basin transformed into prismatic beams of light and shot downward.

However, even as they sprang into action, the parrot, who was currently soaring through mid-air, suddenly cried out in its shrill voice: “Get into formation!”

The screeching voice slammed into the ears of the thousand onlookers. Immediately, the more than one hundred Cultivators who had been with Meng Hao from the beginning began to run, almost out of instinct. Their action spurred on the other Cultivators. They had been training for many days with the parrot, essentially developing this skill out of nothing. It was difficult, but they had already started to become familiar with the spell formation; working in unison with others made things much simpler.

At the same time that the Cultivators began running, the Nascent Soul Cultivator was closing in on Meng Hao. His right hand lifted up, forming a palm which he then closed into a fist. The air around Meng Hao collapsed, shrinking rapidly, crushing down onto Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered sharply. As the old man neared him, the Lotus Sword Formation suddenly appeared and shot forward. A booming rang out, and as it did, Meng Hao struck out his right hand with incredible power.

The old man frowned. He suddenly stopped moving forward and then disappeared, completely evading Meng Hao’s sword formation. Then, he reappeared behind Meng Hao, a snide look on his face. He reached out his left hand and closed it into a fist. “Shatter,” he said.

Another boom filled the air as the air around Meng Hao shattered, along with him, slicing his body into infinite pieces.

“Now you know the gap between the Core Formation stage and the Nascent Soul stage,” said the old man. “It doesn’t matter if you have an amazing sword formation or some bizarre power in your right fist. In the… huh?” Even in the middle of his diatribe, then old man’s face suddenly flickered and filled with shock.

This was because Meng Hao’s body had been shattered, not into pieces of bone and flesh, but rather, Qi.

“A clone!?!? How could a Core Formation Cultivator have a clone!?” His face twisting, he spun around. Even as he did, he saw a vast fog, within which massive figures nearly thirty meters tall could be seen, running to and fro.

The dozens of Clan members who had accompanied him here were nowhere to be seen.

“This….” The man’s face was unsightly. If he didn’t understand that he had been trapped, then he didn’t deserve to be a Nascent Soul Cultivator.

“This trifling spell formation can’t hold me,” he said with a cold harrumph. His body flickered, and he disappeared as he employed another minor teleportation. When he reappeared, his face was filled with thorough shock. This was because he had discovered that he was still surrounded by endless fog.

“So minor teleportation doesn’t work….” The old man slapped his bag of holding to produce a strip of bamboo. He rubbed its surface, causing it to ignite. A howl rang out from within the flames and smoke; it transformed into the phantom image of a vicious beast, which charged toward the fog.

“Break!” cried the old man.

As the boom resonated out, Dongluo Ling and the others looked around with fear at the fog. They had all been separated, and occasionally, miserable shrieks could be heard.

The Dongluo Clan members who had been charging down from the ridges above all looked shocked. Any of them who entered the fog instantly became lost. As for the Cultivators who didn’t enter the mist, they took deep breaths as they looked down at the basin. As of this moment, it looked as if it had become a lake of fog!

Fog had filled the entirety of the basin!

The fog roiled and churned with amazing power; within could be seen tall phantom figures running back and forth. The figures seemed to be chanting something, although it wasn’t clear. Their running caused the earth to quake; up above, the sky turned pale and clouds began to amass.

The Dongluo Clan members who had not been drawn into the fog were just about to retreat, when they suddenly found that, unbeknownst to them, a fog had appeared behind them! They were trapped! A fatal blow was about to be delivered!

The only people who knew about this spell formation of Meng Hao's were the hundreds of Cultivators who had tried to kill him. However, almost all of them were dead. Any of them who hadn't died were now part of Meng Hao's forces, and under the compulsion of poison. Of course, they wouldn't spread any information about it.

Therefore, this spell formation was Meng Hao's greatest trump card. No one knew about it, and with one thousand people to power it, it gave Meng Hao a shocking advantage.

At the moment, he sat cross-legged in a secret underground chamber, his true secluded meditation zone. As he looked up, his vision passed through the ground to see everything that was happening up above.

He saw the deaths of the Dongluo Clan members and other Cultivators they had brought. He also saw the old Nascent Soul expert frantically trying to break through the spell formation. Unfortunately for him, the power of the spell formation had already been unleashed. When it was completely in play, even a Nascent Soul Cultivator would be unable to break it.

"The Dongluo Clan came with vicious intent," thought Meng Hao. "You can't blame me for responding in kind." He pushed his right index finger down the ground. Immediately, Demonic Qi coalesced to form an illusory body. In the blink of an eye, it assumed the appearance of Meng Hao, then passed through all the dirt and soil to join the events in the outside world.

Meng Hao then stood up and left the secret chamber. When he appeared in the mist, a multicolored streak of light flew toward him; it was the parrot, who landed on his shoulder, its face filled with arrogance and complacency. It looked around with derision.

"Meng Hao, let's sack the city! Plunder that random Clan, whatever it was called. What's theirs shall be ours! With Lord Fifth's spell formation, we can screw those no-good sons of b*tches to death! Then I can go visit those cute birdies again. Hahaha! Lord Fifth is always the most badass! Birdies, just wait for Lord Fifth, alright? Lord Fifth has already decided that from now on, that Dongluo City is going to change its name to Peacock Screwing City!”

Meng Hao ignored the parrot. His body flickered as he shot forward. Because of the parrot’s help, the fog did absolutely nothing to Meng Hao. Traversing about within it was as easy as walking down a paved road.

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# Chapter 348: Assault on Dongluo City

“Are you sure your spell formation can hold a Nascent Soul Cultivator?” Meng Hao asked coolly as he walked through the fog.

“Of course, no problem,” replied the parrot. Slapping its chest with its wing, it said, “Lord Fifth’s human-powered Celestial spell formation is unique in all the Nine Mountains and Seas. It draws its power from people. Since we have more than a thousand, well, we might not be able to kill a Nascent Soul Cultivator, but we can definitely trap one inside. Child’s play.” Its tone was lofty, as if its actions were doubly efficient.

“Can the spell formation move?” asked Meng Hao, his eyes glittering. He stopped walking for a moment as he caught sight of a Dongluo Clan Cultivator of the early Core Formation stage off in the fog. The man was frantically attacking the mist around him, an expression of terror and despair on his face.

He couldn’t see Meng Hao, but Meng Hao could make him out quite clearly. Meng Hao shifted into motion again, and within a moment was at the man’s side. He waved his hand, and the fog coalesced, surrounding the Dongluo Clan Cultivator, enveloping him. When it dissipated, Meng Hao walked off. Behind him, the Dongluo Clan Cultivator had collapsed unconscious onto the ground.

“Of course it can move. As long as our men keep running, then Lord Fifth’s spell formation can go anywhere, and take the people inside along with it.” An expression of arrogant pride covered the parrot’s face.

Meng Hao nodded and continued to proceed forward. It wasn't long before he found Dongluo Han. The man's face was pale and filled with vigilance. He peered around at the fog; his Core Qi was in full play and he was on guard against any changes.

Meng Hao looked at him thoughtfully for the space of a few breaths, then shot over. The fog began to seethe, and Dongluo Han's face flickered. Before he could react, though, a hand shot out from the fog next to him and pushed down onto his back.

A great power shot through him, sealing his Cultivation base. He didn't even have the strength to turn his head now. Instead, he fell to the ground, unconscious.

Meng Hao walked out from within the fog and looked down at Dongluo Han. He didn't kill him; knocking him out was good enough for now.

Meng Hao turned and continued to walk off into the distance. Whenever he ran into Dongluo Clan members, he disabled them and rendered them unconscious.

Some of them, however, ended up in the paths of the running figures. These ones could only perish with miserable shrieks under the power of the spell formation.

After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, Meng Hao found Dongluo Ling within the fog. Her hair was in disarray, and her beautiful features were filled with hopelessness and anxiety. She had used every method she had at her disposal, but was unable to escape. How could she not feel despair?

She couldn't see her fellow Clan members; it was as if the entire world had turned into fog, and she was the only person left. When the massive phantoms went running by, they emitted a great pressure which filled her heart with fear.

How could she ever have imagined that the person who pissed her off so much would have such a fearsome spell formation? She didn't dare to approach the running phantoms; she had already seen a few of her fellow Clan members run into them and instantly be trampled to death.

In fact, she could smell the odor of fresh blood rising up in the air.

Meng Hao looked at her, his eyes cold. He lifted up his right hand, causing the fog to roil and rush toward her. It immediately enveloped her, then slowly dissipated. She was now unconscious on the ground, completely still.

In addition to the Dongluo Clan Nascent Soul Cultivator, there were over seventy Clan Members left in the fog. By now, Meng Hao had already incapacitated about half of them.

After enough time passed for half an incense stick to burn, Meng Hao slowly lifted his hand up from the middle of the back of yet another listless Dongluo Clan member. The man spit up a mouthful of blood and then collapsed unconscious.

“That’s the last one,” said Meng Hao. Turning, he looked off through the mist toward the stranded Nascent Soul expert. He was currently shooting divine abilities off constantly, as well as employing minor teleportation. In his mind, he was traveling forward slowly, but from Meng Hao’s perspective, he was merely going in circles.

Going in circles would not enable him to escape the fog.

“The Dongluo Clan came with malice,” said Meng Hao, “so let’s teach them a lesson. Move the spell formation.” Immediately, the parrot on his shoulder lifted its head up and let out a powerful squawking howl.

The fog around them immediately began to roil. The thousand running Cultivators within no longer ran in a circuitous path. Their eyes were closed, as if their wills were fused with that of the parrot. According to the parrot’s thoughts, the spell formation began to move toward Dongluo City.

Looking at the fog from outside, it was like a roiling sea within the basin. As it churned and seethed, it slowly began to move, climbing out of the basin, growing at the same time.

The fog sea was huge, tens of thousands of meters in diameter. As it passed along, it was as if an enormous beast made of fog consumed everything it touched.

The fog sea moved forward, and as it did, giant figures slowly became visible. Their roaring voices slowly became clearer.

“Have faith in the Lord Fifth, gain eternal life….”

The sound of it rolled out, growing louder and clearer. Eventually, it shook Heaven and Earth, drawing the attention of the Rogue Cultivators who resided in the region surrounding Dongluo City. They stared fixedly with wide eyes at the unbelievable sight of the roiling fog.

More and more people began to watch the mass of fog; it seemed to be moving slowly, but actually proceeded on with great speed. Some of the people flew along in mid-air to watch, panting, eyes wide.

Currently, the fog was about five hundred kilometers from Dongluo City, slowly moving forward. Onlookers had no idea what it was, but they could hear the indistinct voices emanating out from within. The sound of it left them shocked.

“What does it mean?”

“What a huge swathe of fog. It looks like there are people inside running around….”

“No, whatever things are inside are much bigger than people. It looks like they’re more than thirty meters tall! Just what is this fog?”

By now, there were several hundred Cultivators floating up in the air watching. These were all Rogue Cultivators who hadn’t joined any of the local power forces. They stared on with wide eyes, fearfully keeping their distance so that the fog wouldn’t envelop them.

The fog moved along, drawing closer and closer to Dongluo City. 500 kilometers, 400 kilometers, 250 kilometers, 150 kilometers….

The fog billowed up high into the sky, and as it moved along, it emitted a thunderous rumbling sound that shook the ground. Dust flew into the air, and an immense pressure emanated out. The Cultivators who were following along in mid-air retreated further away in fear.

Meanwhile, in Dongluo City everything was relatively desolate. Other than the Dongluo Clan members, the only other Cultivators in the city were a handful of Rogue Cultivators. As they all became aware of what was going on, their hearts began to fill with consternation.

They had no idea what the fog was; all they knew was that Dongluo City clearly lay directly in its path. Given the speed with which the fog was moving, it would arrive in the time it takes an incense stick to burn.

As it neared, the people inside Dongluo City began to shrink back in fear, as if they wanted to flee.

“What happened? Is it the Black Lands Palace?”

“Dammit, how come it’s moving so fast? Just what Black Lands Palace technique is this? This fog is so immense it’s frightening….”

Most of the Dongluo Clan members were gathered up in the second layer of the city. There were roughly five hundred of them, and all of their faces were filled with unsightly expressions. Standing in front of all of them were two old men with grim faces.

These two old men were the other of the three Nascent Soul Cultivators of the Dongluo Clan. Standing next to them was the current Dongluo Clan Chief. He was frowning, and his expression was one of anxiety.

Up above them, three Scarlet Peacocks circled about in the air looking uneasy. They emitted plaintive wails as they eyed the incoming fog.

An oppressive aura had come to rest over the entirety of Dongluo City.

One of the Nascent Soul Cultivators standing next to the Clan Chief, a middle-aged man, said, “According to my investigation, all of the forces that Third Elder took with him to the Church of the Golden Light have gone missing…. After that, the Church of the Golden Light was completely empty…. That’s when this bizarre fog appeared. Its target is clear: Dongluo City!” He paused for a moment, a look of bitterness, fear and reverence on his face. “I arranged for seven men to investigate the mist from various directions as it approached, but…. Regardless of the level of their Cultivation base, as soon as they touched the fog, they were sucked in. After that, we lost all contact.”

The Clan Chief sighed inwardly. He might be the Clan Chief, but even if his opinion differed from that of the Elders, he still had to comply with their wishes. His opinion regarding the Church of the Golden Light had been to cooperate with it and form an alliance.

However, the three Elders viewed the Church of the Golden Light as nothing more than a group of Rogue Cultivators. The Church’s founder, Patriarch Golden Light, was only a Core Formation Cultivator, and therefore not qualified to enter an alliance with the Dongluo Clan. He could either capitulate or be enslaved, those were his only options.

It was under these suppositions that Third Elder had set out.

Now, the Church of the Golden Light was obviously striking back at them, in a way that far surpassed the predictions of the Dongluo Clan. The Black Lands Palace hadn’t even come their way yet, but they were already facing a crisis.

The other Nascent Soul Elder coolly said, “Does a firefly dare to compete with the full moon? Employ the Clan’s Grand Spell Formation. If the Church of the Golden Light wants to attack us with fog, then the Dongluo Clan will break them with our spell formation!”

At this point, the fog was now about 25 kilometers away from the city.

Green beams of light began to emanate out from Dongluo City, transforming into sheets of leaves which covered over the city.

Within the fog, Meng Hao looked out at Dongluo City. His eyes glowed with coldness. Above his head spun the Lotus Sword Formation. Surrounding him were more than seventy Dongluo Clan Cultivators who had previously been unconscious. They were awake now, although, their eyes were filled with blankness. They seemed to have lost their senses, as if their bodies weren’t even under their own control.

Meng Hao had used the art of Righteous Bestowal to take control of them.

“Demon Sealers don’t usually exchange blows with others,” Meng Hao murmured. “The blows are delivered by means of Righteous Bestowal.” He lifted up his right hand and waved it out in front of him.

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# Chapter 349: Killing With Poison of Time!

The hundreds of Rogue Cultivators floating in mid-air didn’t leave; they wanted to stay and watch the battle.

Each and every one could tell that this fog was not the work of the Black Lands Palace. Many of these people had lived in the area for a long time. After making some inquiries, they came to find out that the fog belonged to none other that the burgeoning Church of the Golden Light.

They gazed with intense looks as the speed of the fog increased, drawing it ever closer to the defenses of Dongluo City.

15 kilometers, 10 kilometers, 5 kilometers, 2.5 kilometers….

All the way until a massive explosion shook the land and sent vibrations out through the air. When the fog slammed into Dongluo City, sky and earth turned pale. Dongluo City shook as the leaves surrounding it began to glow. The fog churned violently, and an intense rumbling emanated out from it.

Next, the onlookers stared raptly as the fog began to cover over the leaves, slowly enveloping the entirety of Dongluo City.

As of this moment, Dongluo City was no longer visible; the only thing that could be seen was an all-encompassing fog.

However, those who looked closely could see that even though the Dongluo City defensive spell formation was covered by the fog, it hadn’t been broken yet, and wouldn’t anytime soon. This was not a battle between Cultivators but a struggle between spell formations.

Booming sounds rang out one after another. Suddenly, a thousand enormous phantoms appeared within the fog, causing the hundreds of Cultivators watching on from mid-air to gasp. These phantoms were roughly thirty meters in height, and they ran with incredible speed, black smoke streaming off of their forms.

As they ran, the fog grew thicker, and rumbling booms filled the air.

Furthermore, the top of the fog layer began to churn, and a figure rose up. He wore a long green robe, and his black hair whipped about in the wind. Golden light emanated out from his body; this was none other than Meng Hao.

“Patriarch Golden Light!!”

“So this fog is the work of Patriarch Golden Light! Is he crazy? He’s only at the Core Formation stage, but he dares to pick a fight with the Dongluo Clan!”

“That spell formation might be strong, and the Dongluo Clan doesn’t have a Spirit Severing Patriarch. However, they do have three Nascent Soul Elders. That’s more than enough to hold a solid position in the entire area. Nobody around here dares to provoke the Dongluo Clan!”

Meanwhile, the fog-covered Dongluo City showed no signs of weakening. The countless leaves surrounded the city, within which were about a hundred Rogue Cultivators who had chosen to side with the Dongluo Clan. They were nervous, but having seen the effectiveness of the Dongluo City defenses, they were confident in their decision.

In the second level of the city, the Dongluo Clan Cultivators were breathing sighs of relief. The two Nascent Soul Elders’ eyes shone with cold light, and they let out cold harrumphs.

The fact that the city’s spell formation could resist this bizarre mist put them in an unassailable position. Even the Dongluo Clan Chief was feeling a bit more at ease.

One of the Nascent Soul Elders pulled out a jade slip. “I’m interested to see how formidable this guy’s spell formation really is,” he said, smashing the jade slip between his fingers. A green aura swirled up to form a light that shot out toward the city’s leaf defense.

In the blink of an eye, the leaf spell formation began to emit a buzzing sound as hundreds of toxic wasps flew out from within. Each toxic wasp emitted a dangerous aura as it flew out from within the spell formation. However, even as they charged forward, the more than seventy Dongluo Clan members in the fog who were under the control of Meng Hao’s Righteous Bestowal shot forward to meet them, their eyes glowing with a mysterious light.

“Dammit!” said the Dongluo Clan Nascent Soul Elder, his face falling. Obviously, he was observing the scene outside through the eyes of the toxic wasps. His right hand flickered with an incantation, causing the toxic wasps outside to veer away from the Clan members and search for Cultivators of the Church of the Golden Light.

Within the fog, the parrot let out a sharp squawk; immediately the running phantoms around him changed directions. Instantly, the fog transformed into a vortex, within which danced countless lightning bolts. The parrot’s colorful feathers all stood on end and its eyes filled with a feverish look. It pushed the spell formation to the limits of its power in order to break the city’s defenses.

“Lord Fifth swore an oath to screw this city!” it screeched, controlling the movements of the spell formation as if it were bewitched. “You just wait, Lord Fifth is coming!” The phantoms ran back and forth, trampling above the city, causing booms to fill the air, and the leaves to tremble.

As the two spell formations fought back and forth, Meng Hao floated in mid-air, looking down through the fog at Dongluo City within.

He lifted his right hand, flashed an incantation, and then pointed down toward the ground.

“Righteous Bestowal!” he said coolly. As his voice rang out, Meng Hao saw ghost images spring up everywhere. At the same time, strands of Qi rose up from all directions to circulate around him. He made a gesture toward the fog, and the Demonic Qi instantly began to coalesce and shoot toward it. It passed directly through the fog and then into Dongluo City’s spell formation.

A boom rang out, causing everything to shake violently. Meng Hao continued to make incantation gestures with his right hand. More Demonic Qi surged forth, passing through the fog to slam into the other spell formation.

Everything that was happening caused the observing Rogue Cultivators to shake in their boots. They suddenly realized that Patriarch Golden Light was not someone to be looked down upon in the slightest.

Suddenly, a cold snort rang out from beneath the fog, filled with pride and scorn. “Paltry Church of the Golden Light! Piddling Core Formation child! You dare to use some bizarre fog spell formation to trap my Dongluo Clan members!?” The voice caused the air to shudder, echoing out far beyond the region of the fog.

Another voice rang out, that of an old man. “You don’t know the height of the Heavens and the depth of the Earth, you little punk!” Suddenly, Dongluo City’s leaf defenses began to emanate a bright green glow, within which, the images of leaves could be seen. It swirled around, emanating a booming sound that caused the fog to vibrate. The running figures inside suddenly began to show signs of weakening.

The parrot let out a squawk, and the fog suddenly began to churn. Rumbling sounds emanated out as the attack on the Dongluo City defenses redoubled.

A proud voice rang out: “The Dongluo City spell formation has been at the top for years. It has never been broken! Even the Black Lands Palace would have to pay a heavy price to get through it, let alone some piddling Church of the Golden Light!

“Your spell formation might be incredible, but how long will it last? Once you can’t hold out any longer, I’ll personally rip the skin off your body and hang it in my bedroom!” The echoing voice rang out to be heard by the hundreds of observing Cultivators, causing their hearts and minds to tremble.

A coldness glittered in Meng Hao’s eyes. The reason he had chosen to use the spell formation to isolate Dongluo City and then use the Dongluo Clan members to attack, was because he knew that the general chaos in the Black Lands would prevent the Dongluo Clan from going all out.

He wanted to send a warning to the Dongluo Clan to not trifle with him. He and they were separate entities, and although blood had been spilled, not all issues needed to be solved with a massacre.

However, the arrogance of the Dongluo Clan showed no signs of lessening. In fact, it seemed to be growing more intense. A cold smile touched the corners of Meng Hao’s mouth.

“Well in that case, Meng Hao understands,” he thought. Slapping his bag of holding, he produced a black-colored medicinal pill.

As soon as it appeared, it began to emanate a mysterious glow that seemed capable of sucking in one’s consciousness.

This was a poison pill personally concocted by Meng Hao, one of the more powerful varieties. With the wave of a hand, crushing the pill into ashy powder. It flew down to be sucked into the spinning fog vortex. After a moment, it began to descend onto Dongluo City’s leaf defenses.

As the powder descended, the leaves began to contract and show signs of decay. They even emitted squealing sounds.

At the same time, Meng Hao pulled out another medicinal pill. He crushed this one as well, and as he sprinkled the resulting powder down, a Flame Sea sprang into being. The flames were mysterious and bizarre as they passed through the fog and down toward Dongluo City.

Next, Meng Hao produced a third pill, then a fourth and a fifth. He crushed them all into powder and sent them floating down, three deadly poisons that merged with the Flame Sea to become a five-colored hyper toxic poison.

The hyper toxic poison was something specially designed by Meng Hao using his skill in the Dao of alchemy. Poison pills that he created were not necessarily things that Nascent Soul Cultivators would fear, but anyone under that stage who were infected by them would be incapable of dispelling the poison without Meng Hao's assistance.

This fog was now a poison fog!

Multitudinous hissing noises rose up, and the fog seethed. In the space of an instant, Dongluo City went completely quiet. Everyone inside was looking up at the leaf shield, their faces flickering with various emotions.

The Dongluo Clan Cultivators all looked on with unsightly expressions. Even the two Nascent Soul Elders had looks of shock on their faces.

“This guy's also a poison expert!!”

“Dammit! How come no one uncovered such an important piece of information!?”

“Poison Cultivators are usually less powerful in direct combat, but in large-scale conflicts, their abilities can determine victory or defeat!”

The Dongluo Clan members were shocked, but the hundreds of observing Cultivators could do nothing more than gasp and looked at Meng Hao, their eyes filling with dread.

“Poison is only part one,” said Meng Hao, his eyes gleaming with a sharp light. He waved his right hand, and the Lotus Sword Formation flew out toward the fog. Within the fog, it began to spin rapidly, sending out vast ripples containing the power of Time.

As the ripples spread out, it carried fog with them, which in turn contained Time power. The combination of the ten swords was equal to the power of more than ten sixty-year cycles of time.

The poison alone could cause extreme damage. However, combined with the power of Time, it transformed into a sort of terrifying baptism. The ripples spread out, bolstered by the unimaginable power of the fog spell formation. Poison, the power of Time, the imprisoning power of the spell formation, all of these things caused the spell formation to surge with boundless power.

As the Time ripples spread out, a handful of observing Cultivators who were relatively close by could see the vegetation on the ground withering up. Even the soil itself seemed to fill with signs of decay; signs of it could even be seen in the air.

Before the Cultivators who saw this could flee, the ripples hit them, and their faces flickered. They then employed every method possible to get away as quickly as they could. Even still, they weren’t fast enough. All of them suddenly transformed from being middle-aged to being old. One of them even began to emanate a faint aura of death.

All of the observers gasped when they saw this, their faces filled with looks of unprecedented shock. Immediately, they began to fall back, fearful of coming into contact with the ripples.

“What magic is that?!?!”

“Time! That’s Time, the power of Time! It’s a divine ability that can cause you to age almost a whole lifetime in the blink of an eye!”

“Patriarch Golden Light is so powerful…. No wonder he dared to provoke the Dongluo Clan!”

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# Chapter 350: The Indomitability of Time

What is Time…?

Many years later, Dongluo Han would never be able to forget what he saw that day as he stood atop that bright green leaf. His eyes were blank, but his mind was awake. He saw his body beginning to grow old. He saw the green leaves around him growing decrepit and old. He saw the land around him becoming ancient.

As the Lotus Sword Formation spun, and its power emanated out, Meng Hao hovered above the fog looking down inside, observing the effects of the power of Time which he wielded.

On the one hand, it was something of ultimate flexibility within Heaven and Earth. On the other hand, it contained paramount indomitability.

No person, no living thing, no creature could stand up to that gentle onslaught which is Time. It didn't matter if you used spell formations or divine abilities, illusory or tangible items. All of it… would deteriorate under indomitable, smashing Time.

And this was a single Lotus Sword Formation formed with Time Swords. Only one of them contained three sixty-year cycles; the others were incomplete. If all the Time Swords contained three sixty-year cycles, then that combination would be a power of Time equal to one thousand eight hundred years. That was enough to shock the Heavens and rock the Earth.

This is Time!

In this moment, all of the surrounding Rogue Cultivators had lost the power to even breathe. They stared in shock at the land. It looked somewhat yellow, like an old painting which was slowly fading away into dust.

Within the fog, the Dongluo Clan members who were under Meng Hao’s control were coming to their senses. However, even as they did, they wished they hadn’t. This was because as they recovered, they found themselves on the verge of becoming ancient.

Dongluo Ling looked down at her hands; they were covered with wrinkles. Her body was withered. All she could do was stare out blankly.

The green shield of leaves surrounding Dongluo City was in the process of rotting. It started to show signs of breakage, and there were some areas where the shield couldn’t even cover the city. Fog started to pour inside, along with the power of Time, and the hyper toxic poison.

This all gave birth to intense dread within the city; all of the Dongluo Clan Cultivators felt their hearts and minds trembling.

Before they could even take any countermeasures, the fog began to seethe violently. The parrot suddenly shot out from within, flying up into the air and giving out a piercing cry.

Beneath it, the fog began to transform into columns of black smoke. The boundless fog, which was nearly five thousand meters in diameter, congealed into hundreds of bands of black smoke, which shot up to circulate around the parrot. Within them were the more than one thousand Cultivators of the Church of the Golden Light. Their eyes were closed, and they were surrounded by black smoke, as if they were part of the spell formation itself.

The trembling onlookers watched as the black smoke congealed rapidly to form into the shape of an enormous black raven!

The raven’s body emanated a black aura. It let out a piercing cry which seemed capable of causing the living to close their eyes and the dead to open theirs. It echoed out throughout Heaven and Earth, then slammed down onto Dongluo City like a meteor falling from the Heavens.

This spectacle was a familiar sight to some of the audience. They had seen something very similar that night some time ago in Dongluo City. 1 Here it was again; however, the amount of power they could sense was far, far greater than that from before.

They watched on in awe as the black raven screamed through the air directly toward the green leaf shield of Dongluo City.

An enormous, deafening boom filled the air. The defense shield had already been weakened. Now, it trembled, unable to stand up to the force which assailed it; it suddenly began to collapse.

As it exploded, vast quantities of trees within Dongluo City also began to fall apart. The leaves shattered. The shield… was completely gone!

At the same time, the black raven began to disperse; it transformed into vast quantities of fog, which once again dispersed out to cover Dongluo City.

Miserable shrieks filled the air, along with explosions. The hyper toxic poison, along with the power of Time, swept through the city. Outside the fog, everything was quiet. No one spoke. The hundreds of observing Cultivators watched on blankly, their minds spinning. Everything that was happening was being sealed onto their minds, never to be forgotten.

Within Dongluo City, the two Nascent Soul Elders stood pale-faced. The vast fog which surrounded them made it impossible to see their fellow Clan members. All they could hear were bloodcurdling screams echoing about.

They were Nascent Soul Cultivators. Compared to everyone else around them, they were at the pinnacle of power. However, within this spell formation, they weren’t even able to move. No matter what divine abilities they utilized, they could not escape, nor break through the fog.

Rage sprang into being in their minds, but even their rage was useless against the spell formation.

On the first day, they were still able to come up with ideas about how to break out. On the second day, it was the same. In fact, they maintained this optimism until the fifth day. After that, though, they no longer heard any bloodcurdling cries from their fellow Clan members. Hopelessness filled them, and their expressions filled with complete frenzy.

Their features had been assaulted by the power of Time for over five days. They were Nascent Soul Cultivators, but they were unable to fight the changes that resulted from such an onslaught.

On the sixth day, the fog covering Dongluo City suddenly began to lift. It left the city, no longer filling it, but surrounding it. Not a scrap of fog was left to be seen inside.

What was clearly visible inside of Dongluo city was decay. Trees, leaves, everything looked as if it had been rotting there for hundreds of years.

There were only three people left inside of the city. They were none other than the Dongluo Clan’s Nascent Soul Elders. The one who had been trapped inside the fog for the longest looked around in surprise as soon as it lifted. Immediately, his breathing grew ragged, and astonishment filled his eyes.

From beginning to end, he had assumed he was still in the basin of the Church of the Golden Light. Only now did he find out where the battle had actually been fought.

At the same time, he caught sight of the other two Nascent Soul Elders. They all exchanged glances, then looked up silently as Meng Hao strode out from within the fog.

The instant they saw him, the three of them began to grow blurry, as they prepared to use minor teleportation if necessary. Now that Meng Hao had made an appearance, they were determined to be prepared for anything.

Meng Hao looked at the three old men, then lifted his right hand. Immediately, hundreds of figures began to emerge from the surrounding fog. They were none other than all the other members of the Dongluo Clan, unconscious, dragged out by the fog itself.

The appearance of these people caused the three old men to give up any notions of using minor teleportation. With all of their Clan members here, they wouldn’t take the risk.

They stood there silently.

“Enough,” said Meng Hao. “You know, the fault is yours. If I hadn’t fought back, you would have assimilated me. Joining you wouldn’t be that bad, I guess, except you lack a bit in the sincerity department. I didn’t kill very many of your Clan members. They’re all here. I’ll trade them back to you for this broken down city of yours.” He looked at them, awaiting their answer.

The hearts of the three Nascent Soul Cultivators filled with bitterness. They exchanged glances, and then Second Elder gritted his teeth and nodded.

“Things being the way they are,” he said, “we agree with everything you’ve said. Except….” Before he finished speaking, he locked gazes with Meng Hao. It seemed as if he were engaged in a respectful interchange, but suddenly, the bodies of the three Elders vanished. Using minor teleportation, they reappeared off to the side, looking as if they were going to make a run for it.

Even as Meng Hao looked over at them, First Elder, who hadn’t spoken the entire time, suddenly grew blurry. As he did, killing intent filled his eyes. When he reappeared, he was standing behind Meng Hao. His hand shot out hatefully, slamming into Meng Hao.

A boom filled the air as the Meng Hao in front of First Elder exploded into pieces. However, what dissipated out was nothing more than vast quantities of Qi.

Next, Third Elder shot toward the mist. He wasn’t fleeing; no, his right hand flickered an incantation. His body began to emit a buzzing sound, and an enormous hand appeared behind him. It shot into the mist, where it grabbed someone.

The person it grabbed was none other than Meng Hao!

“Die!!” cried Third Elder. A boom rang out as the man clenched his fist. However… even as the boom filled the air, the Meng Hao within the fist suddenly dissipated into Qi.

The three Elders’ faces fell. First Elder, Second Elder, who had been speaking just now, and Third Elder, all felt their hearts begin to pound.

They had come up with their plan based on a few mutual glances. However, their plan had been defeated in an instant. Suddenly, roughly a dozen people walked out from within the fog. All of them were Meng Hao!

Their appearances were completely identical, and all of them glared coldly at the three Elders.

“Patriarch of the Church of the Golden Light,” said Third Elder of the Dongluo Clan, shamed into rage, “will you only rely on your spell formation? Or do you dare to fight one on one with any of us?!” The frustration he had felt over the past days exploded out. The power of his Nascent Soul Cultivation base also emanated out; his entire body brimmed with power.

One among the dozen of Meng Haos cleared his throat and said. “No, I don’t.” He looked a bit embarrassed.

Even as the words came out of his mouth, Second Elder appeared in front of him and launched an attack. Meng Hao’s body dissipated into black mist. But then… ten more Meng Haos walked out from the fog.

The three old Cultivators were now starting to be inundated with a feeling of helplessness.

“Elders, don’t you think your acting this way is a bit improper?” said one of the Meng Haos, looking a bit bashful. “I’m sincerely trying to discuss a way to resolve the situation. The Dongluo Clan is quite well known in the Black Lands. Your position in the United Nine might be weakening as of late, but if your entire Clan dies overnight, that would be really embarrassing for you. I would once again like to request that you three Elders agree to hand over the city to me. What do you say?”

Even as he spoke, the hundreds of Dongluo Clan Cultivators wrapped up in the fog started quivering as the fog began to wrap tightly around their necks.

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# Chapter 351: Peacock Screwing City

Dongluo City’s three Nascent Soul Elders stood there fuming, gnashing their teeth. The hundreds of Cultivators outside of the fog still hadn’t left, and were able to clearly see what was happening. Strange expressions covered their faces. Without any sort of consultation, they had all come to think the same thing: Meng Hao was someone to be intensely feared.

After a long moment, First Elder let out a long sigh and said, “Let all of our Clan members free and you can have the city, okay?!”

The dozens of Meng Haos all smiled. None of them spoke or moved; they simply looked at the three Nascent Soul Elders.

Not an ounce of respect for the Nascent Soul Cultivators could be seen in their gazes. Meng Hao didn’t need to respect them. During his battle outside the Rebirth Cave, he had fought against more than ten Nascent Soul experts. There was nothing about them that he found awe-inspiring.

Even more importantly, Meng Hao was supremely confident that if he put on the blood-colored mask, although he would still not match up to them completely, he would definitely be able to fight back.

The First Elder said nothing for a while, but then let out a bitter laugh. He lifted his hand up and then smacked it down hard onto his chest. His body trembled as he spit up three consecutive mouthfuls of blood. With each mouthful, his aura grew weaker. By the end of the process, his Cultivation base was reduced by half.

Even though he was still of the Nascent Soul stage, his actual battle prowess was now at almost exactly the same level as the great circle of Core Formation. It would take him months to recover fully from such a state.

After a moment’s silence, Second Elder sighed. He knew there was only one thing he could do; there were no other options available. He also delivered a palm strike to his own chest. After coughing up some blood, his face grew listless.

Third Elder glared venomously at Meng Hao for a moment, then took a deep breath. He also inflicted self-injuries. As he coughed up blood, his Cultivation base sank.

“Now do you trust us?” said First Elder coldly, wiping the blood from his mouth.

One of the dozens of Meng Haos gave a shy smile. Nodding, he tapped his bag of holding. Even as he did so, the First Elder’s eyes filled with a gleaming light; he suddenly opened his mouth and spit out a beam of light.

This was Nascent Soul Aura, similar to Core Qi. However, in terms of level, it was the Heavens and Core Qi was the Earth. This Nascent Soul Aura was red in color and was vastly more intense than any naturally occurring red glow in Heaven and Earth. It wasn’t very dense, but carried a brilliant luster. In an instant, it appeared in front of Meng Hao, then spread out to cover everything.

The glow disappeared in the blink of an eye. As it did, the Meng Hao who had been tapping his bag of holding, as well as all of the other Meng Haos in the area, were destroyed. However, what fell to the ground was not blood and flesh, but fog.

The sight caused the Nascent Soul Cultivators’ faces to grow even more unsightly. They had used every method at their disposal, but the prudence and deviousness of Patriarch Golden Light defeated them at every turn.

“Of course the one tapping the bag of holding wasn’t really me,” came a voice from the fog. The fog churned, and Meng Hao strode out. “Seniors, I know that my clones look transparent to your eyes. The fact that you mistook the clone for the real me is my fault, I guess. Oops.”

He waved his hand, causing hundreds of streams of medicinal elixir to fly out. They shot directly toward the bound Dongluo Clan members, fusing into their bodies through their foreheads.

“This poison is really harmless,” said Meng Hao with a smile. “It’s not fatal, nor will it affect the Cultivation base. Let’s just say it’s there as… insurance.” He stepped to the side, and a path opened up in the fog which led to the outside. The fog unwrapped from the hundreds of Dongluo Clan Cultivators, releasing them.

The three Nascent Soul Elders stood there with angry expressions on their faces, glaring at the single Meng Hao, unable to tell whether he was a clone or not.

After a long moment’s silence, they started walking. When they passed him, Meng Hao continued to smile just as before. Suddenly, they stopped and turned their heads to look at him.

“Don’t worry. The city is yours,” said the First Elder, his tone sincere. “The Dongluo Clan doesn’t want it anymore. The chaos of war grips the land, and the Dongluo Clan is now too weak to put up a fight. We will go into hiding. However, if any of our Clan members are harmed by your poison, then the three of us will exterminate you, even if we die in the process!” Having finished speaking, he flicked his sleeve and walked off.

Meng Hao continued to smile the entire time. He watched everyone leave, then suddenly lifted up his right hand. There in his palm was the Li Clan Patriarch. Almost at the exact same time that the Li Clan Patriarch appeared, a lightning bolt suddenly appeared in the blue sky above. It shot down, slamming onto the Li Clan Patriarch’s soul.

“Curse you, you goddamned….” Before the old man could continue with his cursing, Meng Hao put him back into the blood-colored mask.

Meng Hao's movements just now had been as smooth as floating clouds and flowing water; he was quite proficient now.

The three Nascent Soul Elders looked back. When they saw the lightning fall, and then Meng Hao's actions, their faces sank and they sighed inwardly.

It was now obvious that the Meng Hao they had just walked past was the real one.

The entire Dongluo Clan left, hundreds of people. They departed what had once been their Dongluo City, leaving it completely and thoroughly empty.

No one knew where they left to. It was only known that several days later, they issued a proclamation in the Black Lands announcing their secession from the United Nine.

The news spread through the Black Lands like storm winds. Furthermore, the name of Patriarch Golden Light rose to complete prominence thanks to their battle.

The Dongluo Clan having been replaced, Dongluo City was renamed Peacock Screwing City. This rocked the Black Lands, after which many parties made various investigations and inquiries. In the end, it didn't matter; the Church of the Golden Light was now firmly established as a power.

Local Cultivators rushed to live in Peacock Screwing City. Soon, the Church of the Golden Light was over 1,500 men strong. By now, they were more powerful than the Dongluo Clan had been, with the exception of the three Nascent Soul Cultivators.

The city itself was fully repaired. The style was different from what Dongluo City's had been, though. The renovated Peacock Screwing City radiated the style of the parrot; it was now bright and colorful!

Meng Hao handed everything over to the parrot as he prepared to go into secluded meditation. All aspects, the city walls, the protective spell formation, all began to resemble the gaudy colors of the parrot.

In regard to the burrowing vines, Meng Hao planted some here, whereupon they became one aspect of the city’s defense system.

Anyone who joined the Church of the Golden Light was allowed to live in the city. Of course, the Church of the Golden Light was not a Sect, so as more people arrived, the city was no longer truly a city, but rather, a temple!

Meng Hao channeled a spring from a local river, which he then transformed into a cistern. After adding some medicinal pills, it turned into another medicinal elixir cistern. This became the root of the entire Church.

The green leaf spell formation had been defiled by the parrot. After becoming the master of the city, the parrot didn’t get rid of it, though, but rather, came up with some methods to repair and upgrade it. Now the spell formation could emit crushing pressure.

Also, it was now… multicolored.

The interior of the city was arranged as before, into three levels. There was only one residence on the third level. That was where Meng Hao currently sat cross-legged in meditation. In front of him was the small black jar which he had acquired from Big-head, the legacy item from the League of Hellfire from the Fourth Mountain.

He had been studying the item for several days. He very much wanted to be able to use it with the same seemingly miraculous speed that Big-head had. The idea was very intriguing.

He rubbed the surface of the jar and then suddenly, information regarding a divine ability popped into his mind. “Bloodburst Flash…?” he said lightly. “Use the power of flowing blood to achieve dramatic speed increase.”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he lifted his hand to rub the roc scale on his forehead. No matter how he tried, he had been unable to employ its power a second time.

Several days later, just as Meng Hao had finished cultivating the art of the Bloodburst Flash, Big-head solemnly delivered a jade slip to him. He scanned it with Spiritual Sense, whereupon his eyes began to gleam.

Meng Hao had sent Big-head to make some inquiries throughout the Black Lands to find out where Frigid Snow Larvae existed. Such larvae were rare, but not mythical. Thankfully, it didn’t take long for Big-head to acquire the necessary information.

“Holy Snow City….” said Meng Hao with a soft sigh, gazing at the jade slip. A slight smile spread across his face.

There was only one place in all of the Black Lands where Frigid Snow Larvae could be found. It was none other than one of the cities of the United Nine, Holy Snow City!

The city belonged to the Frigid Snow Clan, a Clan that was much more powerful than the Dongluo Clan. Their Spirit Severing Patriarchs had ensured their continued existence for many years. In fact, in the past, they had even occupied the most prominent position within the United Nine, with three Spirit Severing Patriarchs!

Unfortunately, recent years had seen quite a decline in their power. They now only had one Spirit Severing Patriarch. According to rumor, this final Patriarch was reaching the end of his life, and rarely appeared. He was now the Dao Reserve of the Frigid Snow Clan.

Apparently, only direct blood descendants of the Clan could acquire a Frigid Snow Larva along with the method to raise it. Most importantly, the moment after coming to life, the Frigid Snow Larva would bond a master. That bond could never be altered. When the master died, the larva would also die.

Meng Hao put away the jade slip. The Frigid Snow Larva was related to his ability to transcend tribulation, and he definitely needed one. After some mental deliberation, he rose to his feet and left his residence. As he looked out at the riotously colorful city, he felt a bit dizzy.

The parrot soared excitedly through the air, followed by three listless Scarlet Peacocks. From below drifted up chanting regarding having faith in the Lord Fifth to gain eternal life.

As for the meat jelly, it was finally able to begin preaching to the thousands of members of the church. Currently, it was looking solemnly at a Foundation Establishment Cultivator, ignoring the trembling look of despair on his face as it enthusiastically described the beauty of a sunset from many years in the past.

Meng Hao watched on for a bit and then sighed. It looked to him like the Cultivators in the city were very different than they used to, thanks to the parrot and the meat jelly. After a moment's thought, he turned, transforming into a beam of light that shot off into the distance.

When the parrot saw him leaving, it suddenly got very excited.

"Taking off, eh? Hahaha! Lord Fifth will now enact a plan that has been a long time in the making. Come come, children. Lord Fifth will now teach you a second Celestial spell formation. This one is called the Immortal Execution Formation!" The parrot slapped its chest with its wing, its voice roaring out with excitement. "This formation can shake the Heavens and rock the Earth. Employing it isn't dangerous at all, and won't hurt you in the least bit. Lord Fifth was definitely not screwed over by my own spell formation nine times in the past! Therefore, you all have nothing to worry about!"

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# Chapter 352: Chaos in the Black Lands!

It was dusk in the Black Lands. Meng Hao whistled through the air at high speed, like a green shooting star that disappeared over the horizon.

This was his seventh day of travel after leaving the city. He had followed the course laid out on the map in the jade slip, flying without rest the entire time. It was uncommon to find long-range teleportation portals within the Black Lands. If you wanted to travel somewhere, you needed to make the journey with your own power.

Throughout the seven days, lightning would occasionally fall, to be accompanied by the miserable shrieks of the Li Clan Patriarch. Meng Hao wasn’t harmed at all. At the moment, he was flying over the smoking ruins of what had once been a town home to a small-scale power. Amidst the smouldering wreckage, Meng hao could make out quite a few corpses.

This was the fifth such scene Meng Hao had encountered during the past seven days. He looked down at it for a moment, and was about to fly past when suddenly he gave out a cold snort. His eyes glittered with coldness and he waved his right hand. A flying sword had just shot out toward him; now it came to a halt about thirty meters away.

A sinister cry suddenly rang out from within the ruins. “Attack!”

Eight beams of light appeared, shooting up toward Meng Hao. Among the eight people was one late Core Formation Cultivator. Two were of the mid Core Formation stage, and the rest were of the early Core Formation stage. Eight men squads like this were nothing to take lightly in any location. As they flew out, they emanated shocking power.

However, other than the late Core Formation Cultivator, all of the men had listless expressions in their eyes. Their Cultivation bases were powerful, but their movements were rigid, like those of puppets.

They bore down on Meng Hao, employing blazingly colorful magical items and techniques. Flying swords and magical bottles filled the air, seemingly moments away from slamming into Meng Hao. Meng Hao frowned, then utilized the Bloodburst Flash. Instantly, his body flickered, and he disappeared. When he reappeared, he was some distance away.

This was not minor teleportation. However, to move such a distance in such a short time was completely shocking.

Booms filled the air as the position he had just occupied exploded into a pillar of light, the result of the combined attack.

Meng Hao’s expression grew dark. The attack just now had been filled with killing intent; however, he was certain that he had never met these people before.

“So, the chaos in the Black Lands has already reached this level,” he thought with a frown. It was at this moment that the group of eight men realized that Meng Hao had disappeared. They turned around and caught sight of him. The late Core Formation Cultivator gave a cold snort, and a vicious look appeared in his eyes.

“Trifling early Core Formation Cultivator. It looks like you have some nice magical techniques. However, now that you’ve run into me, you have no choice but to be a good boy and become my puppet. The more puppets I have, the safer I’ll be.” The man lifted his right hand, and immediately, the seven other Cultivators charged toward Meng Hao, their faces wooden.

Meng Hao blinked several times in succession, focusing the power of his Cultivation base into his right eye. Instantly, his view of the world changed. Using the Celestial vision technique, Meng Hao was able to see vast quantities of gossamer threads attached to the bodies of the seven Cultivators. The threads stretched back into the fist of the late Core Formation Cultivator.

It seemed these people really were all puppets under his control.

As they sped toward him, Meng Hao lifted his hand. He sliced his fingertip, causing blood to flow out. His face grim, he pointed forward, and everything in his field of view turned the color of blood. A rumbling filled the air, along with a Blood Qi that transformed into an attack that shot out toward the incoming seven Cultivators.

The rumbling increased in intensity as the Blood Qi shook the air with power like that of a dragon. The seven Cultivators coughed up blood, and their bodies tottered backward. The face of the Late Core Formation Cultivator flickered. Meng Hao shot forward once again using the Bloodburst Flash. In the blink of an eye, he was directly in front of his opponent. Without hesitation or mercy, he lifted his blood-soaked finger and pressed down onto the man’s forehead.

Blood Qi poured into the Cultivator’s body, causing him to tremble. Veins bulged out on his skin, and lines of red appeared in his eyes. He twitched a few times, and then exploded.

Meng Hao flicked his sleeve, preventing any of the blood and gore from touching him. He had slaughtered the late Core Formation Cultivator smoothly and efficiently. After the death of the late Core Formation Cultivator, the other seven people began to tremble. Blood oozed from their eyes, nose and mouth as they slowly died.

Brow furrowed, Meng Hao collected their bags of holding. The entire battle had been a bit strange.

“It seems everyone in the Black Lands is living in fear. The weak wish to be strong, and will kill without compunction. Slaughtering opponents leads to increased strength.” He turned, disappearing off into the distance as he continued on toward Holy Snow City.

“I hope nothing too drastic has occurred to the Frigid Snow Clan of Holy Snow City. They are the only people who can raise Frigid Snow larvae, so if anything has changed, my plan will be ruined.” As of now, Meng Hao truly understood the level of chaos within the Black Lands. He continued forward at top speed.

Several days later, he was traveling through a chain of mountains when a boom suddenly echoed out. Meng Hao's eyes glowed with killing intent as a dozen or so Cultivators closed in on him. He continued on, and heads flew. After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, Meng Hao left, leaving only complete death in his wake.

The attack just now had stemmed from an incident a few days before when Meng Hao had consumed a medicinal pill to bolster his Cultivation base. The scene had been witnessed by a Cultivator, which led to an explosion of greed among other locals. Now, they were all dead.

Time passed by slowly. Half a month later, Meng Hao was still traveling along alone. He had faced quite a bit of dangerous situations along the way, but in the end, his grisly tactics left anyone who messed with him dead. Afterwards, he used a magical technique to cause their severed heads to float along behind him as he traveled. It was a road of death and severed heads.

In the end, the floating severed heads grew more and more numerous. There were dozens of them, most of them dried and withered, although some still dripped with blood.

This sight shocked the hearts of many local scoundrels, and enabled Meng Hao to travel a bit more safely. Fewer and fewer people were willing to provoke him.

Any Cultivator with brains who saw the macabre floating heads would immediately dispel any notions they had of messing with Meng Hao.

A few more days passed. More than a month had gone by since Meng Hao left the former Dongluo City. He had nearly crossed the entire Black Lands, and had personally witnessed the anarchy which reigned. There was no order. The forces of the Black Lands Palace and the armies of the United Nine engaged in countless battles which left the land swathed in the flames of war.

The pandemonium was like an even more explicit version of the law of the jungle. There was no need to conceal one’s actions, no need for misgivings. Only the strong survived. As for the weak, they were there to serve the strong.

Within a month’s time, of the nine cities that made up the United Nine, only four remained. The Clans in the other cities were either exterminated, seized by the Black Lands Palace, or forced to flee into hiding. It was simply too difficult for the United Nine to stand up to the combined forces of the Western Desert and the Black Lands Palace.

It was only the day before that Meng Hao heard that Holy Snow City had been besieged, which caused his heart to sink.

“I’d hoped there would be no obstructions on my way there,” he said, shaking his head. He shot forward as fast as possible. According to his estimation, his current rate of travel would get him to the vicinity of Holy Snow City in about two days.

Currently, he shot across the land underneath the evening sky. The ground below was no longer pitch black, but rather somewhat pale. It was not white soil, but rather, snow.

The air temperature was so low that Meng Hao could see his own breath.

The wind was bone-piercingly cold, and it had begun to snow.

It had been a very long time since he had seen snowfall. In fact, to his best recollection, the last time had been that snowy night in the State of Zhao when he’d shared the horse cart with the scholar and engaged in a lively discussion. 1

Snowflakes floated down from the sky, and Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he saw the snow piling up on the ground. Down below was a forest, although there were no leaves on any of the trees. Instead, their withered branches were piled up with accumulations of snow.

Meng Hao looked off into the distance, and suddenly his expression flickered. He dropped down to the ground and ceased flying. His green robe whipped in the wind as he walked through the forest.

Deeper within the forest were two Cultivators, blood spattered and pale-faced, standing protectively in front of a young woman in her late teens. She wore a white gown and was spectacularly beautiful. However, she seemed to be in a very miserable situation. Her face was also pale, and filled with a miserable expression. In her right hand she held a larva that appeared to be made of crystal. It was currently spinning silk, which transformed into a bright light that surrounded the group of three people. Unfortunately, the larva appeared to be somewhat listless, as if it were on the verge of death.

The group was currently surrounded by a pack of one hundred wolves, all of whom emanated black auras, and had bright red eyes. Behind the wolves was a Western Desert Cultivator, his body festooned with totem tattoos, who was staring greedily at the white-robed young woman.

The Cultivators protecting the young woman consisted of a man and a woman. The man gruffly cried out, “You despicable Western Desert Cultivator! Don’t you fear the power of our Frigid Snow Clan’s Spirit Severing Patriarch?!”

“There’s no need to discuss whether your Spirit Severing Patriarch is alive or not,” replied the Western Desert Cultivator in a hoarse voice. “If he’s alive, he’ll be paying attention to the battle of Holy Snow City. Right now… you’re just a regular old Frigid Snow Clan member. Your life or death won’t mean anything to him.”

The man waved his right arm, and the hundred black wolves pounced, slamming into the shield weaved by the larva. Booms rang out, and the Western Desert Cultivator’s eyes brimmed with avarice.

“Your Frigid Snow Clan switched out the character ‘blood’ in your name with the character ‘snow.’ But did you really think that would make the Western Desert forget about you?” The man laughed as he stared at the girl.

2. In Chinese, the character for “snow” and “blood” are pronounced the same. Well, the character for blood actually has a few pronunciation variations, and one of them is exactly the same as snow

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# Chapter 353: Grand Dragoneer!

The Western Desert Cultivator gave the young woman a vicious, greedy smile. “When neo-demons began to be raised in the Western Desert, the Frigid Blood Clan brought forth generation after generation of Grand Dragoneer. When I was small, I heard all of the legends about your clan.

“Grand Dragoneers wield power far greater than that of totems. They are the true pinnacle of the Western Desert. As for me… I’m a mere rank 3 Dragoneer. But, if I can seize the legacy of the Frigid Blood Clan… then I’ll have a chance to become a Grand Dragoneer! Hanxue Shan, what do you think of the neo-demons I’ve raised?” The Western Desert Cultivator laughed heartily as the black wolves in the area all lifted their heads up and howled. They seemed to bristle with ferocity. 1

The glowing shield surrounding the white-robed young woman was showing signs of breaking apart. Her face was pale, and blood oozed from her mouth. There was despair in her eyes but also determination.

Turning to the two Cultivators protecting her, she said, “Don’t worry about me, leave while you can!”

The two Cultivators looked nervous. They were about to say something when the young woman glared, indicating that they shouldn’t speak.

It was at this moment that the bodies of the howling black wolves suddenly began to expand, and they charged forward. They slammed into the shield, which was now more than half destroyed. From the look of things, one more attack would thoroughly shatter it.

The wolves were on the verge of attacking again, and the Western Desert Cultivator’s eyes were glowing with a bright light. At this exact moment, the sound of footsteps crunching on snow suddenly echoed out from within the forest.

The sound was extremely distinct. Mortals did not live in this area, so the instant the sound of the footsteps could be heard, it caused the white-robed young woman and her companion Cultivators to look toward where the sound was coming from. The Western Desert Cultivator also looked over with a frown.

What they saw was a young man wearing a long robe, with black hair flowing down past his shoulders. His features were refined, and he had a cultured air. This, of course, was Meng Hao; he walked out slowly, looking every bit like a scholar.

From his bearing, he seemed as if he were simply enjoying a midnight stroll in his own backyard, out to see the beautiful layers of snow that had fallen on his flower garden. He strolled out, carrying a scroll in one hand, which only lent further to his scholarly aura.

The Western Desert Cultivator's eyes narrowed, as if he disbelieved Meng Hao's profound aura were real. He waved his right hand, and immediately eight black wolves leaped toward Meng Hao, howling, their crimson eyes glowing brightly.

The white-robed young woman seemed to be upset at the sight of it, but all of her energy was focused on controlling the Frigid Snow Larva, leaving her powerless to provide any assistance. She could only watch silently.

"Excellent fur," said Meng Hao lightly, glancing at the wolves. "If the parrot were here, he would probably like them." These wolves were not illusory creations of magic, but flesh and blood creatures.

However, there was something different about them, as if totemic power also existed inside them. This was the first time Meng Hao had seen beasts like this. There were more than a hundred of them, and each one emanated a power similar to that of the late Foundation Establishment stage.

Back in the Southern Domain, this pack of black wolves would constitute quite a powerful force.

“Interesting,” said Meng Hao as he walked forward. He patted his bag of holding to produce a red medicinal pill. He quickly crushed it into powder, which he then dispersed into the air with the flick of a sleeve.

A wind picked up, spreading the powder toward the eight wolves that were charging toward him. As soon as they made contact with the powder, they began to howl miserably. A moment later, they exploded into a haze of blood and gore. The blood and gore instantly turned black, and then completely dissolved.

The powder continued to spread out, and more black wolves screamed and began to rot away, their bodies then exploding. The explosion of the bodies sent black blood flying about, staining the white snow and filling the air with the stench of decay. Any other wolves who touched the blood would immediately begin to squeal. Their bodies would shake, and it only took the space of a few breaths before they, too, collapsed.

It was a chain reaction. As Meng Hao walked forward, more and more wolves began to scream and collapse into death. Black blood sprayed about, floating through the air, spreading out like a dark mist, which rose up into the air to form a cloud.

It took only moments for half of the over one hundred wolves to be killed. The rest retreated, trembling, their tails between their legs. As they looked at Meng Hao, their eyes filled with unprecedented terror.

The white-robed young woman watched all of this with wide eyes. The two Cultivators next to her also gaped. Even the Western Desert Cultivator stared in shock.

“This…. You….” he stammered, his body trembling, his eyes looked like they might pop out of his head. “So, you’re looking to die, huh?!?!” He then let out a howl filled with ultimate fury. The veins on his face bulged out, and his eyes filled with savagery and blood.

He lifted his right hand, within which appeared a black stone. He crushed it, then waved his arm. A black smoke swirled out, which then transformed into a vortex.

“Rank 2 Reptodragon neo-demons, emerge!” Suddenly, roaring sounds poured out from within the vortex, followed by a bright red reptilian creature approximately three meters long. It was followed by another. Soon there were ten, then thirty!

Thirty red reptilian creatures appeared, emanating shocking power. Their roars caused everything around to tremble.

A strange light shone in Meng Hao’s eyes. He had long since noticed that there was something different about this particular Western Desert Cultivator. He had two totem tattoos on his body, one of a black wolf, the other, a reptilian creature. The totems didn’t appear to be any different from the type seen on other Western Desert Cultivators. However, Meng Hao sensed that there was indeed something strange about them.

“Senior, he’s a Western Desert Dragoneer!” said the white-robed young woman anxiously. She could tell that Meng Hao was unfamiliar with creatures such as these, and continued: “Dragoneers might not have high Cultivation bases, but they command neo-demons. Kill him, and the neo-demons will disperse!”

“After I exterminate this guy, I’m going after you, slut!” cried the Western Desert Cultivator viciously. He waved his hand toward Meng Hao, and the thirty crimson reptiles charged toward Meng Hao in a frenzy, their gaping red mouths emanating an odor of death.

Meng Hao took one more look at the crimson reptiles, then shook his head. He raised his right hand and extended a finger toward the black cloud which still hovered in mid-air. Immediately, vast quantities of black raindrops began to fall down. The rain sprayed over the crimson reptiles, and they began to howl miserably. Their bodies trembled and began to decay. Over the space of a few breaths, all of the reptiles underneath the three hundred meter wide black cloud had transformed into skeletons.

Meng Hao stood in the midst of the black rain. Not a single raindrop fell onto his green robe or his long black hair. The sight of it was shocking, causing the Western Desert Cultivator to gasp. His eyes filled with a look of disbelief.

“You’re… you’re a Grand Dragoneer!”

1. Hanxue Shan’s name in Chinese is hán xuě shān – Hanxue is the name of their Clan, which I’m translating as “Frigid Snow” in all cases other than the surnames of the Clan members. Shan is a character that’s almost always combined with other words such as “leisurely” or “lithe”

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# Chapter 354: Hanxue Shan

Being unfamiliar with the term, Meng Hao asked, “What’s a Grand Dragoneer?” He walked up to the Western Desert Cultivator, who was currently trembling as he stared with reverence and fear at Meng Hao.

The person to respond to Meng Hao’s question was not the shivering Western Desert Cultivator, but rather the white-robed young woman, Hanxue Shan. “Grand Dragoneer is the highest title achievable by Western Desert Dragoneers, similar to Totem God. Both are titles which represent extreme levels of power. One breeds rare creatures that are even more powerful than Earthly neo-demons. The other controls five or more totems. The battle prowess of the former is similar to that of the Spirit Severing stage, the latter, almost the same.”

The glowing shield surrounding the young woman had already dissipated, and she had put away the listless larva.

Meng Hao turned to look at her, whereupon she clasped hands and bowed.

“I am Hanxue Shan of the Frigid Snow Clan. I offer many thanks for your kindness in saving me, Senior.” The exhausted Cultivators next to her gave Meng Hao looks of gratitude. However, vigilance could still be seen in their eyes.

After all, the power he had manifested just now had frightened even the Western Desert Cultivator, let alone them.

With the wave of a sleeve, Meng Hao had killed countless wolves, transformed their blood into a mist which caused a rain to fall that desolated everything within a three hundred meter radius. Nothing alive was left in the entire area.

Such methods left them in complete shock. Furthermore, they couldn't see Meng Hao's Cultivation base; he emanated a mysterious force which left all of them incapable of showing him anything but respect.

"I'm not a Grand Dragoneer," said Meng Hao, shaking his head. "However, you do owe me some thanks." He pointed a finger toward the ground and at the same time, pressed down on the forehead of the Western Desert Cultivator.

The man's body instantly began to tremble, and his eyes filled with blankness, as if he had suddenly lost his thinking ability.

"His Cultivation base is only at the early Core Formation stage," thought Meng Hao, "and yet he can control so many beasts. So this… is a Western Desert Dragoneer?" Meng Hao now understood the situation, but he was still very curious regarding Dragoneers, so he looked back at the white-robed young woman. "I didn't save you for no reason," he said.

The eyes of the two Cultivators standing at her side glittered with even more intense vigilance. This was especially so after they saw Meng Hao press down on the forehead of the Western Desert Cultivator. Whatever method he had used to make the man suddenly look so blank was clearly some frightening technique and caused them to become even more nervous.

"Please do not hesitate to state what you desire, Senior," said Hanxue Shan, her voice light.

"I want a Frigid Snow Larva," he replied immediately.

The two Cultivators standing next to her frowned. At the same time, they tried to conceal the irritation toward Meng Hao that appeared in their eyes.

Hanxue Shan hesitated for a moment.

"Senior, Frigid Snow Larvae bond with a master when they are very young. According to everything I've been told, the Frigid Snow Clan currently does not possess any such young larvae. Of course, I might not be privy to all the information. If you come back with me to Holy Snow City, I can check into the matter thoroughly, and do my best to repay your kindness." She looked at Meng Hao with her exceedingly beautiful eyes. They didn't seem to contain any duplicity. She was thankful to Meng Hao for saving her life, however, she also feared him. Everything she had witnessed just now left her with a feeling of profound dread.

Her words did not sound forced, but they were. She had the feeling that if she didn't provide the correct response, this man's kindness would very likely turn into enmity.

Furthermore, she couldn't be certain if his appearance here and now was coincidental, or if he had prepared for this situation all along. In any case, he had definitely saved her life. After returning to Holy Snow City, she would try to repay him.

Meng Hao thought for a moment as he looked at the young woman, his eyes filled with abstruseness. Then, he gave a slight smile and nodded.

The white-robed young woman gave an inward sigh of relief. With a forced smile, she backed up a few steps. The other two Cultivators continued to observe Meng Hao with even more vigilance as they left the woods.

The Western Desert Dragoneer followed Meng Hao with a blank look on his face. He seemed to have lost control of himself, which, of course, filled Hanxue Shan and the others with even more shock.

Holy Snow City was in the northern part of the Black Lands. Although it was some distance from the Western Desert, it couldn't be considered extremely far. The land in the area was blanketed with ice and snow year round, making everything look white.

It was quite a distance from the location Meng Hao had recently occupied, the former Dongluo City. Despite the fact that both had been members of the United Nine, they actually had few dealings. After all, both Clans' position in the United Nine had been waning in recent years. Despite the recent decline in power of the Frigid Snow Clan, which had once been the leader of the alliance, they still maintained their pride and dignity.

Furthermore, there were still rumors of their Spirit Severing Patriarch, who continued to remain in secluded meditation. He hadn’t appeared for several hundred years, but no one was completely sure whether he was alive or dead.

Even the possibility of him being alive ensured that Holy Snow City would not suffer any sort of disaster.

Therefore, although Holy Snow City did not possess the glory it once had, it still shone with splendor.

Right now, though, everyone in Holy Snow City was filled with a certain somberness. A pressure weighed down on them, as if dark clouds filled the sky and pushed down onto the land. The ice-like, crystalline city walls were covered with Holy Snow City Cultivators, all of whom stared out vigilantly into the outside world.

The region outside of the city trembled. Currently, the sky was filled with countless pitch-black, winged Flood Dragons. They twisted about in the air, their crimson eyes glowing with viciousness. They emitted fierce howls that caused the hearts of the observing Cultivators to tremble.

At first glance, the winged Flood Dragons seemed innumerable, but actually, there were only fifty of them circling around Holy Snow City. Down on the ground could be seen seventy or eighty gigantic blue lions, each one twenty meters or so long. Wherever they walked, the ground beneath their feet turned into blue ice.

In addition to these beasts, there were approximately one thousand Cultivators, who stood behind the creatures, staring at Holy Snow City. They wore black clothing, and their faces were covered with masks. Most of them had Cultivation bases at the Foundation Establishment stage and wore white masks. Among the thousand Cultivators, only about thirty wore azure masks.

In the lead position was an old man with flowing white hair and a silver mask. Based on the aura of his Cultivation base, he was at the Nascent Soul stage.

Further off was a snow-covered mountain where several hundred tall men stood. Their faces were expressionless, and totem tattoos could be seen on their bodies, some more than others. Their auras were different from that of the other Cultivators, a bit more wild and bizarre.

These were Western Desert Cultivators.

Between the armies of Holy Snow City and the Black Lands Palace stretched a vast field filled with wind and snow, separating the two of them.

Even further back were tens of thousands of Black Lands Palace disciples, spread out to form a huge barrier around Holy Snow City, completely encircling it.

It seemed that a great battle was about to take place.

It was at this very moment that Meng Hao and the others appeared off in the distance and saw the scene spread out in front of them. Meng Hao's expression remained the same as ever, but the faces of Hanxue Shan and the two other Cultivators fell immediately.

They had been traveling for over a day, and during the entire time, Meng Hao had never asked her why she had left Holy Snow City. Nor had Hanxue Shan taken the initiative to provide any details.

However, based on some of the discussions he had heard between the other two Cultivators, he came to the realization that their party had set out with over thirty members. As of now, they were the only two guards left.

"It seems we won't be able to get into the city," said Meng Hao coolly. The forces of the Black Lands Palace were arrayed in such a fashion as to completely lock down Holy Snow City. At the moment, no military offensive had begun. Some people might not be able to tell, but considering that the strongest combatant present was of the Nascent Soul stage, it was clear that this was not intended to be a decisive battle, but rather an exploratory attack.

Hanxue Shan was about to say something when, suddenly, the sound of war bugles filled the air. The winged Flood Dragons shot toward Holy Snow City. The gigantic blue lions also sped forward, their bodies glowing with light such that they seemed like gigantic blue arrows.

As the bugles sounded out, the Black Lands Palace Cultivators flew up into the air in succession. Behind them, the ground shook as two giants appeared, each one roughly ninety meters tall. It wasn’t clear exactly where they had come from, but they strode forward accompanied by thunderous rumbling. Slung over the shoulder of each giant was a greatsword nearly three hundred meters long.

The swords seemed old, even ancient, but the power they emanated was astonishing.

If that was all there was to it, it would not be a big deal. But as the bugles sounded out, a black sea appeared. This black sea was comprised of several tens of thousands of black wolves which spread out across the land as they charged toward Holy Snow City.

The shield surrounding Holy Snow City sparkled as nearly a thousand Cultivators flew up from within the city. They employed a variety of magical techniques and magical items, the power of which shot through the shield to slice into the approaching beasts and Cultivators.

In addition, a massive beam of white, shining light shot up from within the city. Up above the city, five blinding, shining lights that looked like planets appeared, rotating about. With each rotation, they emanated a curving white light which swept out past the city walls.

Booming sounds shook Heaven and Earth, and everything trembled. Meng Hao had never witnessed a battle such as this between Cultivators.

As the battle began, Meng Hao also noticed a group of several dozen people fly out from within the city toward the glittering shield. The instant they passed through it, five flying planets appeared above them. They rotated, emanating an arcing white light which shot through the shrieking beasts in front of them, ripping them to pieces. Up above, the Flood Dragons dodged away, unable to get near them.

It wasn’t one such squad that appeared. More than ten groups charged out from within the city to engage in the battle with the Black Lands Palace forces outside the city walls. Explosions filled the air, along with miserable shrieks, and the fighting continued.

It was not that Meng Hao had never witnessed a large scale combat between Cultivators. However, this type of battle was something he had never seen before. The sight of it caused his heart to start pounding. He was no newcomer to the Cultivation world, though, so he quickly calmed himself down.

What drew his attention most were the two massive giants that strode across the battlefield. Their movements were slow, but every step they took caused the ground to shake. The enormous swords they wielded emanated thoroughly shocking swords auras.

Suddenly, one of the squads of Cultivators from the city changed directions to head toward Meng Hao and his group. He might have taken it to be coincidence, but when he saw the look of happiness glittering in the eyes of Hanxue Shan, he knew that these people were coming to take her back to the city.

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# Chapter 355: Flying Rain-Dragon Up Above!

It seemed like the approaching Cultivators were actually preparing to attack. Meng Hao blinked. “Looks like even though I saved her, no one will believe I did.” In the lead was a handsome young man who looked extremely nervous. His Cultivation base was at the late Core Formation stage.

Following him were a dozen or so other Cultivators, the weakest of whom was at the early Core Formation stage. Three were of the same level as the young man, the late Core Formation Stage.

At the front of their group were five rotating planets; the spell formation shone brightly and caused them to speed forward like the wind as they attacked.

Suddenly, Hanxue Shan shot forward. Her speed was incredible, causing Meng Hao’s eyes to flicker. Clearly, she had been concealing the true limits of her speed before. As she flew forward, a cloud of ice and snow appeared beneath her feet, propelling her forward. The other two Cultivators also shot forward, utilizing magical techniques and treasures to increase their speed.

They were obviously worried that Meng Hao would attack them, or do something else to hold them back. Apparently, their use of these techniques and items were a waste; Meng Hao did nothing more than watch them go, a faint, enigmatic smile on his face. He didn’t even take half a step forward; he just let them speed away.

This caused the two Cultivators to stare in shock. However, they had no time to think much about it; as vigilant as ever, they escorted Hanxue Shan as she flew down toward the battlefield, ready to defend her with their lives. As Hanxue Shan flew along, a silvery glow flew out from her person. Wherever the silver light went, the surrounding beasts would stop moving and being to tremble. This made it possible for them to quickly charge quite a distance.

When Hanxue Shan and her guards were several hundred meters away from Meng Hao, he saw them meet up with the other young Cultivator and his group. Both seemed quite excited, but obviously knew that this was not the time for any sort of discussion. The Cultivators from the young man's group fanned out to protect Hanxue Shan, and they headed back toward the city.

It was at this point that Hanxue Shan finally breathed a sigh of relief. She glanced back at Meng Hao off in the distance, a cunning, complacent gleam in her eyes.

However, just as the group set out, Flood Dragons, Black Lands Cultivators, as well as a huge group of black wolves, charged toward them in attack. Off in the distance were some Western Desert Cultivators who also approached, eight of them. The battlefield was in chaos, but Meng Hao was clearly able to see all of these developments.

"Don't think I'll forget so easily about the fact that I saved your life," murmured Meng Hao. By this time, even he could see that this was not any sort of decisive battle. Both sides had various misgivings and were holding back.

The most powerful combatant on the field was the Nascent Soul Cultivator from the Black Lands Palace, who hadn't even made an attack. The person who had been sent to escort Hanxue Shan was of the late Core Formation stage. Holy Snow City hadn't even deployed Nascent Soul Cultivators at all.

"They're holding back," thought Meng Hao, scanning the battlefield. "Neither side wants to reveal their true strength. This battle is just a way to feel each other out. I don't see much down there that could cause any problems for me." He began to stride forward, followed by the confused Western Desert Cultivator.

Suddenly, a flash of light appeared within Holy Snow City, a figure who shot out past the city walls. It was an old woman with gray hair. The silver-masked Nascent Soul Cultivator from the Black Lands Palace strode forward to meet her, his eyes gleaming. Neither spoke; instead, they immediately attacked with divine abilities.

A boom echoed out, and the sky above the battlefield suddenly grew dim.

At the same time, the slaughtering on the battlefield grew more intense. More Cultivators poured out of Holy Snow City to join the fighting.

As for Hanxue Shan, she was getting more nervous. Despite being surrounded by guards from Holy Snow City, she was still quite some distance from the city itself. Furthermore, the surrounding wolves, lions, Flood Dragons and Cultivators from the Black Lands Palace and Western Desert, were making it difficult to move at all. Out of their group of a dozen or so Holy Snow City Cultivators, three had already died.

The magical Five Planets device rotated rapidly, but even the bright beams of white light that shot out from it were incapable of completely extricating them from the danger they were in. Even more importantly, one of the enormous giants was approaching, brandishing its gigantic sword. In addition, a group of more than a dozen Flood Dragons was currently charging toward the Five Planets, clearly intent on destroying them.

If the magical Five Planets device was destroyed, then they would be in even more danger.

A roaring sound filled the air as the dozen or so Flood Dragons began to howl. Their bodies glowed with flickering light as they shot toward the Five Planets device. Booming sounds filled the air as it began to break apart. Moments later, it completely collapsed.

When the Five Planets device broke apart, four more of the Cultivators surrounding Hanxue Shan died. When she heard their agonized, dying screams, her face went pale. She watched as one of the Cultivators chose to self-detonate before being killed. The powerful explosion spread out, slamming into their enemies, buying them a bit more time.

The young man of the late Core Formation stage anxiously grabbed Hanxue Shan, his eyes bloodshot as he dragged her onward toward the city. He seemed worried that the nearby beasts and Cultivators might also use self-detonation.

The complacency Hanxue Shan had previously shown toward Meng Hao was now completely gone, replaced instead by grief. She could only bite her lip as she followed the young man in front of her.

It was at this time that Meng Hao entered the battlefield. Before he had moved too far, nearby black wolves charged toward him, radiating frenzied savagery. Meng Hao’s right hand shot out and grabbed one of them by the neck. Using his left hand, he forced a medicinal pill into its mouth, which caused it to begin to shake violently. Suddenly, the fur began to fall off of its body, which then began to swell. This entire process only took the space of a few breaths. As other wolves closed in, Meng Hao let go.

A boom filled the air as the hairless wolf let out a miserable shriek, and then exploded. There was no flesh and blood, but rather a black mist that spread out in all directions. As soon as the incoming wolves touched the mist, their bodies began to wither up, and they let out miserable shrieks as their bodies, too, transformed into mist. Very quickly, the area surrounding Meng Hao was filled with thick mist.

He proceeded forward, his expression as calm as usual. Of course, the scene which had just played out would cause any observer’s eyes to fill with astonishment.

As he walked on, the mist roiled out, killing any of the beasts who touched it. It didn’t take long before he was surrounded by mist for dozens of meters in each direction. By now, many people on the battlefield were looking over in his direction.

Hanxue Shan also saw what was happening. It was at this moment that a huge blue lion, over twenty meters long, pounced toward Meng Hao. Before it could get close, though, Meng Hao’s right hand stretched out as fast as lightning, clamping onto the neck of the lion. Once again, he used his left hand to force a medicinal pill into its mouth.

Everyone watched on in astonishment as the gigantic lion’s fur suddenly began to fall off. After that, it exploded, not into flesh and blood, but rather, a blue mist.

The blue mist spread out in the cold air, rapidly fusing with the black mist. The new mist expanded, and now, Meng Hao had no need to personally attack any of the blue lions. As soon as they touched the mist, their bloodcurdling howls would echo across the battlefield.

Gasps could be heard from the nearby Black Lands Palace Cultivators.

“Who is that?!”

“That’s… poison? That guy’s a poison expert!”

“That’s no ordinary poison. Look what it does to the Western Desert neo-demons! This poison… it….”

The Black Lands Palace Cultivators backed up, the faces beneath their masks filled with shock. Considering that even the Western Desert Cultivators’ Demonic beasts had no way to avoid Meng Hao’s poison, how could they?

Even more shocked than them were the Western Desert Cultivators, who all looked at Meng Hao with gazes of astonishment and terror.

Among the Western Desert forces were three people who were clearly not as tall as the others but were still sported totem tattoos. These were Western Desert Dragoneers, men capable of controlling neo-demons.

All of the Flood Dragons, black wolves and lions in the area were under their control. However, they seemed more frightened than anyone else on the battlefield. Their breathing came in ragged pants as they stared at the mist surrounding Meng Hao; their hearts were filled with astonishment.

“Dragoneer! He’s a Dragoneer….”

“Only a Dragoneer could understand neo-demons so well to be able to kill them like that….”

Meng Hao proceeded onward. Up above, fierce shrieks rang out as three Flood Dragons sped toward him. Meng Hao looked up, a strange light glowing in his eyes. There was no need to use poison in this situation. All he did was open his mouth in the direction of the Flood Dragons and suck in a deep breath.

As he did, the Flying Rain-Dragon Core that existed inside of his Golden Core suddenly trembled. Suddenly, the illusory image of a massive Flying Rain-Dragon appeared behind Meng Hao.

It was huge, several hundred meters in length, and it erupted with a domineering air of profound superiority. It was a sovereign of the sky! As Meng Hao breathed in, the Flying Rain-Dragon opened its mouth and charged toward the Flood Dragons. It seemed to be hungry, starving, as if it hadn’t eaten for tens of thousands of years.

The three Flood Dragons let out miserable, desperate shrieks. Now that they faced up against a Flying Rain-Dragon, they trembled, and their expressions were those of dread. They wanted to flee, but it was too late.

The Flying Rain-Dragon swallowed them up, a scene which caused everyone on the battlefield to reel. The Western Desert Cultivators stared with wide eyes, panting, their faces covered with shock.

“He… he consumed those neo-demons!!”

“Grand Dragoneer! He’s definitely a Grand Dragoneer!”

“That Flying Rain-Dragon phantom is his Heavenly neo-demon! It’s definitely a Heavenly neo-demon! The Heavenly neo-demon of a Grand Dragoneer!!”

The Black Lands Palace Cultivators, the Holy Snow City Cultivators, everyone was staring at the scene, their minds reeling. The Flying Rain-Dragon behind Meng Hao lifted its head toward the sky in a soundless roar, then shot toward more Flood Dragons.

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# Chapter 356: How Unforeseen….

Flood Dragons are food for ancient Flying Rain-Dragons, who will chomp them down merrily!

Meng Hao’s Flying Rain-Dragon phantom flew through the air, its massive illusory frame shaking everything.

Dozens of nearby Flood Dragons let out fierce shrieks that were filled with dread. Their bodies trembled, and they were about to flee in all directions when the illusory Flying Rain-Dragon let out another soundless roar. The wolves on the ground began to shake and then lie prone. The enormous blue lions also lowered their trembling heads and let out subservient grunts.

The Flood Dragons seemed to be filled with despair. However, they didn’t dare to move. Meng Hao’s Flying Rain-Dragon phantom swooped down and swallowed one of them up.

The battlefield was deathly quiet. Everyone gaped in shock at the scene which was playing out in the sky. The Flying Rain-Dragon swallowed one Flood Dragon after another.

Soon, each and every Flood Dragon had been swallowed up, after which, the Flying Rain-Dragon flew back to Meng Hao and then vanished.

Everything was as quiet as death.

Meng Hao cleared his throat, and then proceeded along toward Hanxue Shan. When he arrived in front of her, he saw her face covered with disbelief and dread, as was the face of the young man standing next to her.

“I saved your life,” he said, looking a bit embarrassed. “You still haven’t paid me back. Before you do, is it really appropriate to go running off?” He felt a little bit awkward saying words like this to a young woman.

Hanxue Shan quivered, her beautiful eyes brimming with terror. In her anxiety, she wasn’t sure how to respond.

It was at this moment, however, that her eyes suddenly went wide. It wasn’t just her. Everyone on the battlefield who had been paying attention to Meng Hao were now panting.

A roar echoed out behind Meng Hao as a ninety meter tall giant charged toward him, waving its enormous sword in the air.

This sword seemed capable of slashing a hole through the air itself. A piercing sound filled the air as it slashed down toward Meng Hao. It didn’t emanate ripples, but instead seemed to be sucking in the surrounding air. The mist surrounding Meng Hao began to churn.

All of this takes some time to describe, but actually happened in only a moment. By the time Meng Hao finished speaking, the enormous sword was only about thirty meters away from his head!

The sword in its entirety was around three hundred meters long. The giant was ninety meters tall, and bursting with immense power. Although it didn’t have a Cultivation base, it was clearly powerful enough to cause anyone to shake in fear.

The sword descended toward Meng Hao’s head, causing the mist surrounding him to roil out in all directions. This made Meng Hao even more conspicuous on the battlefield.

However, even as the sword was almost upon him, Meng Hao, without even lifting his head up, reached his right hand out and physically grabbed the sword. A huge boom echoed out.

A massive energy shot from the sword into Meng Hao, causing his bones to creak, and massive cracks to appear around him in the ground. The enormous amount of energy even caused his feet to sink about eight inches down into the soil.

Meng Hao’s expression never changed. He turned to look at the enormous giant.

“Time!” he said coolly, and ten Wooden Time Swords flew out from his bag of holding to form the Lotus Sword Formation. It rotated in the air, circling around the giant.

The giant howled and tried to wrench back its sword, but it was astonished to find that no matter how much power it used, the sword remained stuck in Meng Hao’s grip. There was no way to take it back.

The giant’s eyes glowed with a green light as it howled. It let go of the sword and then curled its hand into a fist which smashed down toward Meng Hao.

“Interesting,” said Meng Hao with a laugh. “It would be a real pity to kill you.” Tossing the greatsword to the side, he retrieved his Wooden Time Swords and then used the Bloodburst Flash to disappear right before the enormous fist slammed down. When he reappeared, he was on top of the giant’s head. He pointed down with the finger of his left hand.

“Righteous Bestowal!”

Immediately, Meng Hao saw ghost images spring up everywhere on the battlefield. Visible only to him were strand after strand of Qi which rushed to pour into the head of the giant.

The giant howled, reaching toward Meng Hao with both of its hands. However, the Bloodburst Flash flickered, and he evaded completely. No matter how many times the giant tried to grab him, it couldn’t, and he continued to use the art of Righteous Bestowal. This sight caused the eyes of all the onlookers to fill with shock.

“Receiving Righteous Bestowal is good fortune for you, if you keep resisting….” He pushed his hand down onto the top of the giant’s head, his eyes shining with a strange glow. He could sense the resistance of the giant’s will, but also, a desire for the Demonic Qi that he wielded. The twisting hesitation seemed to be causing it to hold back.

Meng Hao could also tell that this giant was not like a human, but more like a type of animal. It had an enormous physical body, but actually couldn’t speak out with language. Its sentience was quite limited and it couldn’t practice Cultivation.

However, when it attacked, its physical strength was as explosive as the great circle of the late Foundation Establishment stage. In some ways, such pure physical strength was actually much more frightening than Cultivation base power.

Therefore, Meng Hao had decided to test out his art of Righteous Bestowal. He wanted to see whether his speculations regarding its effects were correct…. As a Demon Sealer, he should be able to use Righteous Bestowal on any living creature in Heaven and Earth, give it his approval, and thusly, help it to become Demonic!

As the words came out of his mouth, the enormous giant began to shake. The glowing green light in its eyes was gone, as if suddenly, it could think. Its expression was no longer one of ferocity, but rather obedience. Now, it permitted the Demonic Qi to pour into its body.

The Black Lands Cultivators didn’t understand exactly what was happening, but the scene was completely shocking nonetheless, although it didn’t seem as incredible to them as what had happened moments ago with the Flying Rain-Dragon.

To the Western Desert Cultivators, though, what was happening caused their minds to reel uncontrollably.

This was especially true of the three Dragoneers. Their faces filled with unprecedented looks of disbelief, as if their minds had been completely overthrown. Their brains reeled to the point that they were complete blanks.

“A Wild Giant actually yielded…. That’s impossible! Wild Giants never yield! Not even Grand Dragoneers can do that. Even our Heavenly Wilds Tribe is only able to use them because of the special arrangement we have with the Wild Giant faction. Other than us, no one in the entire Western Desert can get a Wild Giant to yield!”

“It doesn’t have anything to do with Cultivation base. It’s like a rule of the Wild Giants. Their honor and their very blood won’t permit it. So… so, what’s going on…?”

The Western Desert Dragoneers were shocked as they saw Meng Hao standing on the head of the giant. He wasn’t paying attention at all to the chaos that his presence had given birth to on the battlefield, nor the shock with which people were looking at him. He didn’t even notice how the mist he had created had risen up into the air and had transformed into a rain of poison.

Instead, he was looking down toward the pale-faced Hanxue Shan.

“I’ve saved you twice now,” he said with a smile. “You need to think of a way to repay me. Come up here, I’ll take you home.” The giant suddenly reached down toward the ground, placing its hand down flat in front of Hanxue Shan.

Everyone around her watched on as she stood gaping up at Meng Hao. Not even sure why she was doing it, she suddenly lifted her foot and stepped up onto the giant’s palm. It lifted her up and placed her on top of its head, where she stood next to Meng Hao. Then, the giant howled and began to stride forward toward Holy Snow City.

Up above in the sky, the two Nascent Soul Cultivators who had been locked in battle were now staring at the strange scene which was playing out below. Meng Hao also noticed their attention.

The giant charged forward, kicking up a fierce wind and causing the ground to quake. Soon, it neared Holy Snow City’s protective shield. The Cultivators inside had seen everything that had happened, and were now at a complete loss, not sure whether to open the shield or keep it closed.

It was at this moment that war bugles suddenly sounded out. The Black Lands Palace and Western Desert Cultivators began to pull back. That included all of the forces surrounding the city, the neo-demons and wild beasts. After the time it takes an incense stick to burn, there were no enemy forces visible near Holy Snow City.

This initial probing battle had been intended to give both sides a taste of the other's prowess. The fighting had been limited to below the Nascent Soul stage. However, Meng Hao's appearance had thrown everything into chaos. The morale of the Black Lands Palace troops had been damaged, so it was without hesitation that they retreated.

A great clamor of joy rose up within Holy Snow City when the Black Lands Palace retreated, although many people understood that the battle had just begun.

As for the old Nascent Soul woman, she flew down to hover in front of Meng Hao. As she looked at him, silence reigned around them. The shield still had not opened. All eyes were on Meng Hao.

"What do you want?" asked the old woman.

"A Frigid Snow Larva," Meng Hao replied with a smile.

"What are you good at?" retorted the woman in an unhurried tone.

"I saved her," said Meng Hao, pointing at Hanxue Shan.

The old woman shook her head. "That's not enough."

"I saved her twice!" said Meng Hao, his voice serious.

"Still not enough." The old woman looked at Meng Hao calmly.

Meng Hao hesitated for a moment. "I think I might need to save her again a third time," he said.

"Even if you married her, it still wouldn't be enough," said the old woman coolly. "It takes a year to raise a Frigid Snow Larva all the way to the larva stage. Right now, we only have two pupae left in the Clan!"

Meng Hao thought for a moment. "I'm good with poison," he said.

The old woman gave him a deep look. "If you concoct poisons for the Frigid Snow Clan for a year, then I will see to it that you get a Frigid Snow

Larva. However, if I find out that you have some other motivations, then you’ll never leave the city alive.” With that, she gestured with her right hand, causing Hanxue Shan to fly over to her. Together, they flew back toward the shield.

Before passing through the shield, Hanxue Shan looked back at Meng Hao.

“Granny gave you her word!” she said. “If you have any evil designs, Heavenly lightning will exterminate your soul. You’d better watch out for yourself!”

Meng Hao smiled, and was about to say something when his face suddenly flickered. Without a moment’s pause, his hand lifted up into the air, within which could be seen the Li Clan Patriarch’s soul. A peal of thunder rang out, and a bolt of lightning shot down to slam into the soul embodiment. A miserable cry rang out, followed by vigorous cursing. Meng Hao quickly put the soul away.

He looked around to see everyone, even the old woman, staring at him in shock.

“Uh, that was weird,” he said with a slight cough, looking embarrassed. “How unforeseen.”

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To see Deathblade’s humorous sketch of the Wild Giant and its sword, check out this post on the forums.

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# Chapter 357: Proud Sir Zhou

Holy Snow City was much larger than Dongluo City, and was divided into an inner city and an outer city. The inner city belonged to the Frigid Snow Clan, whereas the outer city was for other Cultivators.

The cold climate led to frequent snowstorms. Because of this, the white, snowy scenery was something that you never saw in the southern reaches.

In the eastern section of the outer city was a row of mansions, each of which contained a Spirit Spring. Although the spiritual energy they emitted was not vast, in the Black Lands, such residences could be considered luxurious.

Each residence was self-contained, and was protected with spells to ensure that no unwanted visitors would be able to enter. Even more importantly, the protective spells were actually linked to the primary defensive spell formation of the entire Holy Snow City, making them incredibly powerful.

The people who occupied these mansions were guests of utmost importance. Of course, this was also where Meng Hao’s living quarters were arranged.

His mansion and its courtyard weren’t huge, but neither were they small. The Wild Giant currently was sitting like a small mountain, snoring gently. It would occasionally wake up, whereupon it would grab some meat from the big pile off to the side, pop it into its mouth, and swallow it down. If it ever woke up and found no meat around, it would open its eyes wide and roar.

“Meat…. Meat….” it would then say.

Whenever that happened, Meng Hao would grudgingly run out and find some meat. It didn’t take long for Meng Hao to start wondering which one of the two of them was the master….

In addition to the meat-loving Wild Giant, there was also a middle-aged man in the courtyard. A look of bitterness constantly covered his face, as if he had a bitter melon stuck in his mouth. After feeding the Wild Giant only two times, Meng Hao decided to pass on that holy task to this man.

He was none other than the Western Desert Dragoneer that Meng Hao had captured. Meng Hao had unsealed him, but had then forced him to consume a poison pill, preventing him from doing anything other than sighing and accepting his fate.

One of Meng Hao’s other requirements for the mansion had taken quite some time for Hanxue Shan to manage to comply with. Eventually, she had provided an assortment of lotus seeds, which Meng Hao catalyzed.

Now, the entire courtyard teemed with lotuses. Of course, ordinary lotuses could not grow here; these were snow lotuses.

Snow lotuses filled the courtyard with beauty. Oftentimes, Meng Hao would stare at the flowers for the entire day.

By observing their shape, he was able to sense their essence. By gaining enlightenment regarding the essence of the flower, he was able to improve his Lotus Sword Formation.

Such a life seemed strange to the Western Desert Dragoneer. However… Meng Hao eventually asked his name, as well as other information. He helped Meng Hao to understand what neo-demons were. And then, the heart of this middle-aged man named Gu La grew cold, and filled with despair.

That was because Meng Hao enjoyed studying. He liked to study blood, bones, flesh and totems. Each time he studied any of these things, it was like a nightmare for Gu La.

Meng Hao currently sat cross-legged in front of a lotus. As he studied it, information about Western Desert Dragoneers spun in his mind. “Dragoneers are split into nine ranks, with rank 9 being referred to as Grand Dragoneers. Neo-demons are also split into ranks, and they are simply bizarre creatures that lived within the Western Desert, which eventually came to be called neo-demons.

“After the ranks of 1-9 for neo-demons, is rank 10. Those are referred to as Earthly neo-demons. Rank 11 are Heavenly neo-demons, and rank 12 are… totems!” A strange light shone in Meng Hao’s eyes. Now that he had learned more about neo-demons, his understanding of the totems of the Western Desert was more complete. He was no longer completely ignorant.

According to the legends in the Western Desert, the totems of every tribe originated from rank 12 neo-demons, which could also be considered Heavenly neo-demons. Only neo-demons of such a high rank could become totems. After they did, then blood from their descendants could be used to draw totem tattoos. It was in this manner that totems were passed down from generation to generation.

A large tribe would have many totems. A small, weak tribe might only have one.

That was the origin of totems. You could say that all of the variety of different totems existed because way back somewhere in time, a rank 12 neo-demon had appeared.

“Just how powerful is a rank 12 neo-demon?” thought Meng Hao. There was no way for him to know, nor could Gu La explain clearly. He could only say that they were extremely powerful; as for the details, few people actually knew.

In the Western Desert, many Cultivators practiced totem cultivation. But the only people who could actually control neo-demons were Dragoneers!

In addition to studying totems, Meng Hao also continued to acrue enlightenment regarding the magical symbols in the Celestial soil. He almost did it by second nature. If he wasn’t engaged in some other research, he would spend his free time outside, trying to gain more enlightenment.

Soon, he had been in Holy Snow City for several days. However, the Frigid Snow Clan had not once mentioned the matter of the Frigid Snow Larva. In fact, they had also not mentioned anything about the concocting services he was supposed to perform. As the days passed, no one came to visit him. He was alone inside the mansion, almost as if they had forgotten him.

He wasn’t in a hurry. After his display of power in the battle several days ago, he was sure that the Frigid Snow Clan had plans to use him in some capacity. Someone would come to call on him eventually.

Furthermore, as the conflict escalated, especially when it reached the final stages, Meng Hao was sure that his poisons would only become more and more useful. He was the guest and they were the host, which would never change; however, as the guest became more powerful, the host would naturally be forced to yield some.

Therefore, Meng Hao enjoyed the flowers, studied totems, and gained enlightenment of Celestial soil.

Meanwhile, deep within the heart of the inner city of Holy Snow City, the old woman sat cross-legged with three others in the Frigid Snow Clan’s main temple hall. In front of them burned an oil lamp, which danced about in the cold wind, casting flickering shadows about the temple hall.

Those four people were the four Grand Elders of the Frigid Snow Clan. All had Nascent Soul Cultivation bases, and wielded much power in their capacity as administrators of the city.

One of the four was a gray-haired old man with a moon-shaped mark on his forehead. The mark glittered as he spoke. “I still disagree with Third Elder’s suggestion. Matters pertaining to Frigid Snow Larvae are very serious. Currently, there are only two that will be able to reach the larva stage. How could we possibly give one to an outsider!?”

These four had already been discussing the matter of Meng Hao for quite some time.

“I concur with Second Elder,” said a middle-aged man coldly. He had a grim expression on his face. “First of all, we don’t even know where that poison expert Cultivator is from. His Cultivation base is merely at the Core Formation stage, and yet he dares to boastingly demand a Frigid Snow Larva?! Most likely, he sees that Holy Snow City is teetering on the verge of collapse, so he figured he would come and try to extort things from us. In my opinion, we should just go kill him as a warning to others!”

“Look, we’ve been discussing this matter for a while now,” said the old woman. “Whatever this man’s objectives, for him to arrive at this particular time is obviously suspicious. However, in the battle a few days ago, he displayed powers that drew even my attention. Can we really shut the door in the face of such an ally? If we do, who else would dare come to our aid? Fourth Elder, you say that we don’t know where he’s from. But isn’t everyone in the Black Lands a Rogue Cultivator? How could he even prove where he came from?

“Furthermore, I already gave my word. I won’t go back on it. If his poisons aren’t effective, then it won’t matter. But if they help to assure victory, then the Frigid Snow Larva will be his!” Her voice was calm but powerful.

The main temple hall was silent for a while. The only Elder who hadn’t spoken so far was First Elder. He had white hair and ancient features. He was short and stooped, almost like a midget. Finally, he opened his eyes.

Immediately, they shone with a bright glow, causing the main temple hall to instantly grow brighter. It even seemed to suppress the light emanating from the oil lamp.

The instant he began to speak, all three of the other Elders, even the old woman, bowed their heads.

“Very well,” he said. “You three have been debating the subject for quite a while now. Before we make any decisions, let’s wait until Sir Zhou can identify the poison in that blood!”

Time passed by. Four hours later, footsteps could suddenly be heard in the temple hall. The four Elders lifted their heads to see an old man approaching. He wore a long black robe, and his face was filled with an expression of pride. As he walked toward them, he was followed cautiously by two young women. Their eyes glowed with fervent respect, as if a single word from this man could cause them to do anything.

As the old man entered the temple hall, Second, Third and Fourth Elders all rose to their feet, smiles filling their faces.

“Sir Zhou,” they said in greeting.

“Greetings, Fellow Daoists,” said Sir Zhou in a cool tone. His expression was haughty, as it usually was. His features were not ancient; instead, his face shone with a healthy glow. Arrogance seemed to radiate off of him. Obviously, he was used to occupying a lofty position, or at least, was used to people flattering him.

Were Meng Hao present, he would be incredibly shocked. He would recognize this old man. It was none other than East Pill Division Furnace Lord Zhou Dekun, who had been captured and taken to the Black Lands!

Despite their rocky start, Meng Hao had eventually developed a good relationship with old man Zhou, and the two of them eventually became good friends. He had taken Meng Hao to visit quite a few Cultivator Clans, where they had been waited upon hand and foot like royalty. The look on the man’s face right now was similar to how it had been back then.

His capture had worried Meng Hao, to the extent that after arriving in the Black Lands, he’d made some enquiries. However, no information had ever turned up. He had always assumed that Zhou Dekun was being tormented in some unknown location in the Black Lands….

However, it seemed that in all aspects, Zhou Dekun was even better off now than before. His aged appearance from before had been replaced by a ruddy glow. From the respectful, shy glances being given to him by the two young girls, it was clear that old man Zhou was like an old tree that had suddenly blossomed. Blossomed again and again….

“Sir Zhou, how goes the poison research?” said the First Elder with a smile. He remained seated cross-legged, but his expression was one of courtesy. He spoke to him as if he were an equal, despite the fact that Zhou Dekun was only of the late Foundation Establishment stage.

“Considering the level of my Dao of alchemy,” responded Zhou Dekun proudly, “there are only two people under Heaven who can exceed me. One is my Master, whom you all know of, Grandmaster Pill Demon! The other is my Junior Brother Fang Mu. Other than these two, I dare anyone to claim to be above me!” He waved his hand, wherein appeared a jade bottle.

“This poisoned blood you gave me is definitely extraordinary. It took several days of thorough research before I was able to completely understand it. In any other location, this person could be considered a Chosen of Heaven. However, in my view, he’s little more than a master alchemist. I could disintegrate his poison with a single breath! This man should know that the Dao of poison is not so simple of a subject. When it comes to the elite of the Dao of alchemy, there is only one person in the world whom I admire. That is none other than my Junior Brother Fang Mu. When his Bedevilment Pill appeared, the name of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron rose up. He could be considered the Patriarch of all poisons in existence!” He ended his speech with his jaw set proudly. Clearly, Zhou Dekun was implying that if his Junior Brother was so incredible, then his own power could only be imagined.

Serious and courteous expressions covered the faces of Elders, with the exception of the First Elder. Behind him, the two young girls gazed at him with looks of adoration.

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# Chapter 358: The Renown of Pill Cauldron

“I am fascinated by the illustrious Dao of alchemy of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron,” said the old man with the moon-shaped seal on his forehead. “Unfortunately, I have never been fortunate enough to be able to travel to the Southern Domain to pay him my respects.” His expression was sincere; obviously he had heard of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, but not the events which had occurred at the Rebirth Cave.

Fourth Elder smiled and politely said, “As a distinguished apprentice of Grandmaster Pill Demon, and Elder Brother of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, your Dao of alchemy can shake the Heavens and rock the Earth. I truly admire you, sir, truly! With you here, Grandmaster, Holy Snow City will never fall!”

Zhou Dekun laughed. Inwardly, he felt a bit emotional. Back in the Southern Domain, he could never have been so openly arrogant. But this was the backwater Black Lands, a place where continued existence was predicated by respect. Modesty was completely out of the question. Zhou Dekun had learned this lesson the hard way. So right now, he nodded proudly, indicating that the praise of him just now was absolutely correct.

In his heart, he sighed as he thought back to the despair he had felt after having been taken to the Black Lands. He thought of his bitterness at realizing he would never be able to return to his Sect. There had been no one to serve him, and no Cultivator Clans to give him gifts and take care of him. At that time, his life had seemed as gray as ash.

How could he ever have imagined that after the suffering would come happiness? He had managed to turn things around; he had been taken here because the people here viewed him almost like a treasure. After randomly concocting some medicinal pills, the locals had been shocked. He was provided with food and drink, and anything else he desired. He was even given two young female companions. His life was suddenly very comfortable, perhaps even more than back in the East Pill Division.

As he thought back on everything, Zhou Dekun sighed. He might never again be able to see his Sect, and yet, that wasn't such a horrible thing….

Thinking up to this point, he cleared his throat and then continued on with his lofty boasting.

"This crappy little poison is nothing," he said. "Just wait until I concoct some of my own poison. I guarantee that those Western Desert Cultivators will have no choice other than to give in." He spoke with an air of self-assured authority.

First Elder thought for a moment and then slowly said, "If Grandmaster Zhou is able to both dispel and concoct this same poison, then perhaps we should ask that other Cultivator to just leave."

Second and Fourth Elders nodded their heads at this, and were just about to voice their agreement when the old woman spoke.

"I disagree. Sir Zhou is clearly a Grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy. However, it took several days of research for him to determine the nature of the poison. Besides, I've seen the results of that poison myself! If we make the other Cultivator leave, then we should really determine exactly how effective the poison is. Why not have a little competition between Sir Zhou and this other Cultivator? That way the man's true self can be clearly seen." She looked at First Elder.

First Elder hesitated for a moment, then made a gesture to Second and Fourth Elders indicating that they should hold their tongues. He gazed at Zhou Dekun. "Grandmaster Zhou, what do you think?"

Zhou Dekun laughed proudly. "That's fine. I'm curious to lay eyes on this young mischief-maker and teach him a lesson. I'll help him to understand that the Dao of alchemy of the Southern Domain is boundless, and that alchemists of the Southern Domain are unsurpassable.”

As he listened, First Elder nodded and smiled. He happened to very much admire this Grandmaster Zhou. He had sampled the man’s medicinal pills, and was confident that he was definitely number one in all of the Black Lands.

Laughing, he rose to his feet with clasped hands, as did the old woman and the other Elders. Amidst all the smiles, the old woman sighed lightly. She had done everything she could and had put up a good fight. At least she had done her best to pay back Meng Hao’s kindness in saving Hanxue Shan.

Naturally, people were sent to notify Meng Hao. The date for the “Dao of alchemy consultation” was set for three days later.

News of the matter spread through Holy Snow City like a whirlwind. Everyone heard about it, both Frigid Snow Clan members and outside Cultivators. Excitement grew. Everyone knew the name of Zhou Dekun. After all, during recent years in Holy Snow City, the reputation of Grandmaster Zhou was like the sun in the noon sky.

In fact, it was because of Grandmaster Zhou that so many Rogue Cultivators had been gathering in Holy Snow City. Regardless of the price they had to pay, they wanted to sample his medicinal pills.

Whether openly or in the heart, all of them took Zhou Dekun to be the number one alchemist in the Black Lands. Actually, many Cultivators who consumed his medicinal pills were so shocked that they claimed Zhou Dekun to be the ultimate Grandmaster even in the Southern Domain.

Therefore, Zhou Dekun’s name only continued to grow more illustrious in Holy Snow City. Unfortunately, this place was so far from the former Dongluo City that Meng Hao had never received any information about it.

The news that Zhou Dekun planned to give a consultation regarding the Dao of alchemy caused quite a stir among the local Cultivators. All of them planned to personally go watch the event, not only to cheer on Grandmaster Zhou, but also to see how pill concocting worked.

This news was shocking enough. However, shortly thereafter word was issued from the temple in which Zhou Dekun resided. Based on recent battle achievements, he would choose ten individuals for whom he would personally concoct medicinal pills! This new bit of information immediately caused a huge sensation.

As the entire city simmered, Meng Hao sat cross-legged in his courtyard, surrounded by lotuses, looking at the invitation card in his hand. A strange expression covered his face, like a smile, and yet not. Standing across from him was Hanxue Shan, who was completely unable to discern his thoughts.

“Hey, what kind of expression is that?” she said, trying to suppress her nervousness. She wasn’t sure why, but ever since the day Meng Hao had looked down at her from his position atop the giant’s head, smiled, and spoken those words, after which she had walked up in a trance to join him, well… for some reason she kept thinking about him.

Actually, as soon as she had heard of the matter of Grandmaster Zhou, she had immediately run over to tell Meng Hao.

“Nothing,” he said with a slight smile. “I just think this Zhou Dekun is kind of funny.”

“You!” she cried, stamping her foot and glaring angrily at Meng Hao. “Zhou Dekun is at the pinnacle of the Dao of alchemy, the number one alchemist in the Black Lands! He’s even famous in the Southern Domain, the personal disciple of Grandmaster Pill Demon! He’s also the Elder Brother of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. Do you know who Grandmaster Pill Demon is? Have you even heard of him!?

“People such as them are like Chosen of Heaven, and you don’t even pay them any attention? All you can do is concoct poison! Aren’t you nervous?”

She was a pretty girl to begin with, but when she acted like this, it revealed another side of her beauty, as if she were vying with the surrounding lotuses. Meng Hao shook his head and smiled, a virtually imperceptible glitter in his eyes as he considered her words.

A perplexed look on his face, he asked, “I’ve heard of Grandmaster Pill Demon, ma’am, and I very much respect him. But who is this Grandmaster Pill Cauldron of whom you speak?”

“You don’t know who Grandmaster Pill Cauldron is?” she replied, her eyes wide and filled with disbelief. “I guess I shouldn’t be surprised. You’re just a Rogue Cultivator, so you don’t know much about the Southern Domain. I bet you don’t even know anyone who’s been to the Southern Domain! Your ignorance of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron is understandable.

“Well, let me tell you, Grandmaster Pill Cauldron is the number one Chosen in the Violet Fate Sect of the Southern Domain.” A look of adoration filled her eyes as she spoke. “His name is Fang Mu, and he’s Grandmaster Pill Demon’s Legacy Apprentice. His Dao of alchemy rocks everything under Heaven. He’s an amazing person who will be the stuff of legends in the future. He’s an expert in poisons, and has a unique understanding of the Dao of alchemy. There isn’t anyone in the United Nine of the Black Lands who doesn’t know about him. I have a dream that one day in the future, I’ll be able to go to the Southern Domain and pay him a visit. I’ll plead with him to concoct a medicinal pill for me.”

Meng Hao gave a dry cough. “You’re exaggerating,” he said without thinking. As soon as the words left his mouth, Hanxue Shan’s gaze turned dangerous.

“You don’t believe me? You’re not convinced?” She glared at him with wide eyes. After he had saved her twice, she suddenly found that she was less reserved in front of him, and more open. “You can disbelieve others, or remain unconvinced by their words. But, you are not allowed to disrespect Grandmaster Pill Cauldron! Fang Mu joined the Violet Fate Sect when he was seventeen years old. When he was just an apprentice alchemist, he utilized the Violet Fate Sect’s East Pill Division techniques to cause a shocking scene! He displayed unprecedented talent, and caused everyone to be shocked.

“In fact, one of the East Pill Division Elders personally endorsed him to participate in the trial by fire to become a master alchemist. He was the first person to ever do so after having joined the Sect for less than a year! The way he became number one in the Sect was something exceedingly rare from ancient times until now!

“Thanks to his absolute superiority, he was promoted to master alchemist, after which he created a Bedevilment Pill, which sent the entire Southern Domain into an uproar. Later, he competed with Grandmaster Eternal Mountain and produced a Myriad Strength Pill, which was impossible to crush. That’s when he became a Furnace Lord!” By this point in her tirade, she really seemed to be upset. Her words came out in a rush.

“After that he took place in an alchemy duel in the Black Sieve Sect. His Dao was shocking. Later, he received enlightenment at the Ancient Dao Geyser. He cowed the Dao Child of the Black Lands Palace and slaughtered an azure-masked Core Formation Cultivator, causing his name to ring out under all the Heavens! Later, in the Violet Fate Sect trial by fire for Violet Furnace Lords, he took first place in unprecedented fashion, suppressing Chosen to become a Violet Furnace Lord and the Legacy Apprentice of the East Pill Division!

“He did all that in only a few years. Do you really think you’re better than someone like that? You really think you can measure up?”

Meng Hao stared at her in shock, his face a bit red. He felt somewhat embarrassed.

To be praised and commended in such a way was something he wasn’t used to. He almost couldn’t believe that Hanxue Shan knew so much about him.

“Could it be that she specifically investigated me?” he thought. He cleared his throat again, feeling a bit complacent. He couldn’t help but give a faint smile as he looked at Hanxue Shan. The look on her face said that she would fight to the death if he didn’t show respect to Grandmaster Pill Cauldron.

“If this Grandmaster Pill Cauldron knew he had a devotee like you here in the Black Lands, I think he would be very happy.” He laughed jokingly.

“Hmph! Don’t mock my love for Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. So what if I love him? He’s my dream beloved!”

Meng Hao laughed. Now he knew for sure that for some reason, the incident at the Rebirth Cave was not known among the Cultivators in the Black Lands. Perhaps the news hadn’t spread, or… perhaps the fact that he had left the Violet Fate Sect and fled for his life… had been suppressed!

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# Chapter 359: Zhou Dekun and Meng Hao

Seeing Meng Hao’s expression, Hanxue Shan was about to open her mouth and say something, but then had a sudden thought. A look of pity appeared in her eyes.

Sighing to herself, she thought, “His smile seems normal, but he’s obviously covering up his jealousy of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. It’s so obvious!” Then she thought about how he had saved her twice, and how he wasn’t really very disagreeable in general. And of course there was the scene from the battlefield which kept playing out in her head.

Her heart suddenly softened.

She thought of Meng Hao’s words and bearing from moments ago, and then realized she had actually embarrassed him a bit, which was why he had reacted in the way he did. “There’s no need to feel frustrated,” she said comfortingly. “Grandmaster Pill Cauldron is a rare talent in the world. Ai, don’t let yourself feel discouraged.”

Meng Hao wasn’t sure whether to laugh or cry. There was no way he could tell this girl that the person sitting in front of her was the very one she adored to the extreme and wanted to marry, Grandmaster Pill Demon’s true Legacy Apprentice, possessor of the Everburning Flame, wielder of the Alchemy Dao Transmutation Incantation, and superstar of the Southern Domain, Grandmaster Pill Cauldron.

Hanxue Shan quickly changed the subject. She had suddenly thought of a problem. Frowning, she said, “What are you going to do? If you lose to Grandmaster Zhou, then there’s no way you’ll be able to get a Frigid Snow

Larva. Even granny won’t be able to do anything about it. Besides, there are only two young larvae that can be raised, and it will take a year. Otherwise, I would help you to get one. Except, I don’t know how to raise them….” She was about to continue when she saw the look on Meng Hao’s face, as if something was unacceptable and he wasn’t sure whether to laugh or cry.

The look immediately annoyed her. Looking flustered, she stamped her foot. “Fine, forget it,” she said. “If you aren’t anxious then what’s the point of me being anxious for you?”

Her attitude was something Meng Hao had never encountered before. Neither Xu Qing nor Chu Yuyan had been so impulsive. He couldn’t help but size her up again.

“What are you looking at?” she said, glaring at him again, her young heart beginning to race. Without realizing it, she stood up a bit straighter and put on a menacing expression.

“I’m looking at you, beautiful,” replied Meng Hao with a laugh, winking.

“You….” Her face suddenly flushed red, and her heart seized with panic. She backed up a few steps, holding her tongue for a long moment before bursting out, “You were just coming on to me!”

Meng Hao scratched his head, his smile growing wider. He suddenly realized that messing with this girl was quite amusing. He cleared his throat and was about to say something else when, suddenly, Hanxue Shan once again spoke, her tone earnest: “Granny told me that according to Clan rules, anyone who comes on to a member of the Frigid Snow Clan will be turned into an ice statue! The only other option is to commit yourself to me!”

Meng Hao gaped in astonishment. This was the first time he had ever heard of such a ridiculous rule.

“You remember that!” said Hanxue Shan obsequiously. “You owe me a commitment!” Her eyes flickered with craftiness as she stared at Meng Hao. Covering her smile with her hand, she spun around and walked off.

Her slender legs, lithe waist, and perky rear end only served to accentuate her youthfulness, and gave her a profound charm as she stalked off.

Meng Hao watched her leave, laughing to himself. He then looked back down at the invitation card in his hand, and Zhou Dekun’s name written on the top in flowing calligraphy. As he did, his smile grew even more brilliant.

“Very well. Three days from now I’ll go see this Grandmaster Zhou. We’ll see whether or not his Dao of alchemy has made any progress during his years in the Black Lands.” Smiling, he put away the invitation card, closed his eyes and sat cross-legged amidst the lotuses. He meditated on the shape of the lotus flowers and sought enlightenment regarding their essence.

The Wild Giant snored gently as it slept. Off to the side, poor Gu La was butchering some meat to feed it when it woke up.

A forlorn expression covered his face. He missed his life in the Western Desert, and yet, after hearing the conversation between Hanxue Shan and Meng Hao, he was suddenly filled with the desire to see this mysterious Grandmaster Pill Cauldron.

“If I have to be a slave,” he thought to himself, “it should be to a Chosen of the Dao of alchemy from the Southern Domain. That would be fitting for the likes of me, Gu La. Oh well. Such a pity….”

Time passed, and soon it was three days later. Hanxue Shan came twice to visit during the three days, but every time she caught sight of Meng Hao’s nonchalant attitude, she got mad. Her last visit came on the third day, the appointed day of the competition. Her face was dark as she stalked over, delivered a jade slip, and then left without another word.

The jade slip contained a pill formula, a simple one. Meng Hao could sense Zhou Dekun’s Dao of alchemy within the pill formula. Meng Hao wasn’t sure how Hanxue Shan had managed to get her hands on it, but obviously she wanted to give him a chance to study it so that he wouldn’t lose too badly.

“She really is a warmhearted girl,” he thought with a laugh. He studied the jade slip for a moment before transforming it into ash. Then he rose to his feet and flew up to stand on the head of the Wild Giant. “Alright, let’s go. Who knows, maybe I’ll end up giving some pointers to Zhou Dekun. It depends on how much his skill in the Dao of alchemy has regressed.” He shook his head as the Wild Giant suddenly opened its eyes. Looking a bit disconcerted, it rose to its feet. Its ninety-meter height made it look like a small mountain. It gave out a loud roar as it reached down, grabbed a big chunk of meat, and threw it into its mouth.

“Meat…. Meat….” it grumbled indistinctly. Then it strode forward, out of the courtyard.

Bells were sounding out within this region of Holy Snow City. As they heard the sound, nearby Cultivators suddenly remembered that today was the appointed day for Zhou Dekun to concoct medicinal pills. Immediately, excitement began to grow.

In recent days, Holy Snow City had produced large amounts of magical items and techniques, a variety of cultivation necessities, all for the purpose in bolstering the resistance against the Black Lands Palace invasion.

Such items were available based on achievements in battle. Because of their former status as one of the great Clans of the United Nine, the Frigid Snow Clan possessed deep reserves of such items.

Everyone knew that Zhou Dekun was going to concoct pills for ten people, based on their battle achievements. The news had caused quite a stir. Now that the bells were ringing out, large groups of Cultivators flocked toward Holy Snow Square, in the east of the city.

When Meng Hao appeared on the stomping Wild Giant, he was quite conspicuous. Even people some distance away could see the giant’s huge frame.

Murmuring filled the air as the Wild Giant strode forward at top speed. It didn’t need to fly, a single leap would propel it hundreds of meters forward.

Meng Hao sat cross-legged on top of the giant’s head, the wind whistling past his ears. Snowflakes danced about in the cold air. He paid no attention to all the onlookers; he simply transmitted some silent instructions to the Wild Giant, his eyes closed.

Within the space of about ten breaths, he opened his eyes to find the Wild Giant leaping over a frozen river that ran through the city. Then, they arrived at Holy Snow Square.

The square had long since filled with hundreds of Cultivators, packed densely in rings. The sight of the Wild Giant caused them to immediately clear a path. Anyone who saw a ninety meter tall giant running toward them like a charging mountain would fall back without even thinking about it.

The center of the square was empty. Considering his status in Holy Snow City, Zhou Dekun would obviously not sit around waiting for anyone.

As soon as the Wild Giant entered the square, Meng Hao’s body flashed as he flew forward. The surrounding hundreds of Cultivators’ eyes were fixed on him as he soared over them, his expression placid. It was amidst complete silence that he stepped foot into the middle of the square.

It was almost noon; however, snow drifted down from the sky like it always did, landing onto the bodies of the spectators and resting on their hair. Meng Hao looked out at them calmly as he waited.

“So that’s the poison expert who will exchange poison concocting services for a Frigid Snow Larva from the Frigid Snow Clan.”

“If that guy was in some other city, he might be able to make a big impression. Unfortunately for him, this is Holy Snow City, and we have Grandmaster Zhou Dekun.”

“On the day of the battle, Grandmaster Zhou had reached a critical point in his pill concocting, and couldn’t participate. That’s why he didn’t have a chance to show off the power of his poison like that other guy.”

The onlookers discussed matters for a short time before four prismatic beams of light appeared. Four people appeared in the square, followed by dozens of Frigid Snow Clan members.

One was Hanxue Shan, who looked over concernedly at Meng Hao.

As for the four people, they were none other than the four Grand Elders of the Frigid Snow Clan. First Elder stood there, as short as a midget, but emanating power from his Cultivation base that seemed to suppress the surrounding Cultivators. They instantly stared at him with intense looks of veneration.

Second and Fourth Elders, as well as the old woman, Third Elder, were all Nascent Soul experts. Their appearance instantly caused everyone to cease speaking.

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever. After the Elders arrived, about five breaths of time passed before Zhou Dekun appeared. He strode into the square, flanked by the beautiful young women, looking incredibly lofty.

All of the Cultivators in the audience looked at him with respectful expressions, smiled, and clasped hands in salute.

"Greetings, Grandmaster Zhou!"

"Many thanks for the medicinal elixir you provided, Grandmaster Zhou. I had somewhat of a breakthrough in my Cultivation base. Anything you need, I will provide as repayment!"

"Haha, it's been a few days since we last met, Grandmaster Zhou. You are even more elegant and graceful than before."

Words like these filled the air, causing Zhou Dekun to smile proudly. After entering the square, he greeted the four Grand Elders, and then looked superciliously over toward Meng Hao.

“What’s your name?” he said coolly, looking every bit a senior member of the Dao of alchemy.

“Fang Mu,” replied Meng Hao with a slight cough. Meng Hao looked at Zhou Dekun, and couldn’t help but sigh inwardly. He had been worried about the man for such a long time, but from the looks of it, he was definitely doing quite well.

Hearing the name Fang Mu caused Zhou Dekun to stare in shock.

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# Chapter 360: Zhou Dekun’s Treasured Pill

Zhou Dekun wasn’t the only one to stare in shock. Hanxue Shan also glared at Meng Hao angrily with wide eyes.

The surrounding Cultivators were struck speechless for a moment. Then, however, they burst out laughing.

“Fang Mu? Don’t tell me he’s talking about the famous Grandmaster Pill Cauldron from the Southern Domain?”

“Hilarious. This guy sure is insulting Grandmaster Zhou.”

“He really has some guts, and maybe some skills too. It’s too bad for him that he ran into Grandmaster Zhou. He’ll definitely be outdone.”

As the laughter continued to ring out, Grandmaster Zhou frowned and then gave Meng Hao a cold harrumph.

“Ignorant rapscallion,” said Zhou Dekun, flicking his sleeve. “It’s hard to believe you dare to even speak the name of Fang Mu. He’s my Junior brother, Grandmaster Pill Cauldron!” A proud look shone in his eyes; clearly he felt that his status as Grandmaster Pill Cauldron’s Elder Brother was a very prestigious one. “Originally I merely planned to teach you a thing or two about the Dao of alchemy. However, considering your blathering, you rascal, I will now help you to understand that the grandeur of the Dao of alchemy is not something to be blithely chattered about.” With that, he lifted up his hand to reveal a small bottle.

“Contained in this bottle is blood infected with the poison you used the other day,” he continued, his voice arrogant. “I’ve long since analyzed it, and I have to say, it seems very potent, but is in fact quite simple.” With that, he tossed the bottle over to Meng Hao.

“The first lesson I will teach you is regarding the liquified poison in that bottle. You….” Before he could finish speaking, his eyes went wide.

All of the surrounding Cultivators instantly went quiet, too, as their gazes locked onto Meng Hao. Even the four Grand Elders were watching him closely.

That was because the instant Meng Hao caught the bottle, it shattered. A putrid, black liquid emerged, along with a mist, which floated above Meng Hao’s hand.

A moment later, a burning tongue of flame appeared in his palm, which instantly caused the black mist to dissipate. The liquid began to writhe, and after the space of about two breaths, had transformed into a medicinal pill! Everyone watching could clearly see the entire process!

The black medicinal pill suddenly began to emit strands of red Qi, after which, the pill turned violet in color. It was no longer putrid; instead, a fragrant aroma wafted up from it which lifted the spirits of anyone who smelled it.

“Liquid Congealment Concoction!” thought Zhou Dekun, his heart thumping. He was shocked, but quickly began to rationalize in his head. “It has to be some kind of trick. This guy is simply too young. Liquid Congealment Concoction is something that only Violet Furnace Lords can do.”

Meng Hao coughed lightly, looking a bit embarrassed. He really didn’t want to cause problems for Zhou Dekun. In fact, he was quite happy to be able to see him here. Liquid Congealment Concoction wasn’t anything particularly astonishing to see. It was more of a method of extending greetings to another alchemist. Unfortunately, because of the situation with the Ji Clan, and Meng Hao's lack of certainty regarding all the circumstances involved, he didn't want to openly be involved with Zhou Dekun.

"As an alchemist, I won't denigrate your petty gimmick," said Zhou Dekun, sounding very much like a Grandmaster. In his best reprimanding tone, he continued, "However, in the process of researching that poison liquid, I imbued it with no small amount of medicinal plants. I never imagined you would dare to treacherously use them to make a medicinal pill! We'll ignore your Dao of alchemy for the moment. Such tricks are unacceptable!" The onlookers, including the four Grand Elders, suddenly weren't as shocked as they had been moments before. After all, they had very much faith in Zhou Dekun, from their outsider's view.

Zhou Dekun was actually somewhat alarmed inwardly. However, he knew that this was the Black Lands, and he was a Furnace Lord of the East Pill Division. Therefore, he was fully convinced that trickery had just been used just now to congeal the pill.

"Come," he said, setting his jaw. "Concoct a pill for me. Use all the skill you have." His tone was arrogant, but inwardly he had decided to use this opportunity to determine the true skill level of his opponent.

Meng Hao gave a slight smile. He glanced at Zhou Dekun, then shook his head and slapped his bag of holding to produce an ordinary pill furnace. Then, he produced some medicinal plants, which he tossed into the furnace. After a few moments, a green medicinal pill emerged. The fragrant medicinal aroma was thick. It was really just an ordinary medicinal pill, but it should have been enough to shock the audience.

However, upon the appearance of the medicinal pill, the observers didn't look surprised at all. In fact, some of them even laughed mockingly. The Four Grand Elders frowned, and the old woman sighed and shook her head.

Hanxue Shan also shook her head, then looked at him as if he had lost and she were trying to comfort him.

Meng Hao gaped at all of this. Something didn't seem right. The green medicinal pill seemed simple, but it emanated a strong medicinal aroma, and was actually an eighty percent medicinal strength pill for the Foundation Establishment stage.

“That’s your medicinal pill? Fine, I won’t go too hard on you. However, I will now be forced to convince you what a true medicinal pill is!” Zhou Dekun was actually heaving sighs of relief inwardly. Meng Hao’s Dao of alchemy had long since surpassed his by a vast margin. Furthermore, the medicinal pills Meng Hao created were not flamboyant. In fact, without holding the pill in hand, Zhou Dekun would have no way to tell its level. His expression was tranquil and composed as he smacked his bag of holding to produce a pill furnace.

This particular pill furnace was made from jade, and as soon as it appeared, it emanated spiritual energy. Meng Hao looked at it with surprise. Based on what he knew about pill furnaces, it only took a glance to tell that this one was beyond ordinary.

The surface of the jade pill furnace was carved with auspicious animals. These weren’t ordinary depictions, they appeared to be totemic, and obviously served some special function.

Seeing Meng Hao’s gaze caused a self-righteous look to appear on Zhou Dekun’s face. This pill furnace had been gifted to him by the Frigid Snow Clan, and he was quite pleased with it. Despite the fact that his Dao of alchemy was only average, he was still confident in being able to achieve victory because of his consistency. With the addition of this pill furnace, his chances increased even more. As of now, his success rate would be at ninety percent.

The pill furnace appeared along with a glowing red stone. After placing the pill furnace in position, flames leaped up from the stone to emanate out. Next, Zhou Dekun produced some medicinal plants which he catalyzed to various degrees and then tossed into the pill furnace.

The pill furnace began to glow, and Zhou Dekun himself began to shine with a light that gave him a Celestial appearance. He looked lofty, even holy. Anyone who looked at him would instantly be convinced of his grandeur.

At this point, he definitely emanated the aura of a transcendent being.

“No wonder he’s called Grandmaster Zhou. A single glance will tell you that he’s Grandmaster material!”

“This is the second time I’ve seen Grandmaster Zhou concoct pills. Every single time, I’m shocked and filled with admiration.”

The surrounding Cultivators discussed the sight, eyes filled with open veneration. The four Grand Elders looked on with slight smiles, nodding with respect toward Grandmaster Zhou.

A strange expression appeared on Meng Hao’s face. No one else could tell, but it only took a glance for him to see that while the pill Zhou Dekun was concocting was exceptional, what was even more exceptional was the technique the man was using to make his body glow brightly.

“No wonder he’s done so well for himself here,” thought Meng Hao. “That technique is really useful. If I remember correctly, he wasn’t able to do that back in the Southern Domain. He must have picked up this technique here in the Black Lands.”

A buzz of conversation filled the air as Zhou Dekun, his eyes shining brightly, slapped the pill furnace. Blinding rays of light shot out, along with a white medicinal pill.

Immediately, a dense medicinal aroma filled the air, spreading out for dozens of meters in all directions. All who smelled it were immediately energized, and felt their Cultivation bases leaping with power.

People continued to gush with conversation.

“Now that is a medicinal pill! You don’t even have to consume it to feel your Cultivation base jumping! That pill is incredible!”

“It’s definitely extraordinary. In fact it’s even more potent than the last set of pills Grandmaster Zhou concocted. Hahaha. It seems Grandmaster Zhou’s Dao of alchemy is even better than before.”

Even the Grand Elders were smiling and nodding, with the exception of the old woman.

Meng Hao gaped openly at the complacent Zhou Dekun. After a long moment passed, he smiled wryly, finally understanding why the audience had looked at him with such cynicism. Zhou Dekun’s medical pills had always been exceptional. After all, he was a Furnace Lord. However, his final movement in slapping the furnace had seemed to be filled with complacency, but in fact caused the medicinal essence of the pill to begin to emanate out.

After the pill appeared, it was inherently weak; less than half of its original medicinal strength remained. The other half was emanating out into the air.

The dense medicinal aroma caused everyone to feel energized, and even experience tiny leaps in their Cultivation bases. To them, it indicated that this medicinal pill was high quality. However, that just went to show how little Black Lands Cultivators understood about the Dao of alchemy.

Suddenly, Meng Hao came to understand that when dealing with people who didn’t understand the Dao of alchemy, you had to be adaptable.

Furthermore, he also realized that he himself had unwittingly made progress in his own Dao of alchemy. His medicinal pills were no longer as showy, but rather, subdued. This was a realm that exceeded that of ordinary alchemists, let alone ordinary Cultivators.

He put away the green medicinal pill, looked at the glorious Zhou Dekun and, hearing the excited conversations of the surrounding Cultivators, began to chuckle.

It was at this moment that the voice of the Frigid Snow Clan’s Second Elder rang out.

“Grandmaster Zhou, there’s no need to provide further instruction to this self-proclaimed Fang Mu,” he said coolly. “Any agreements previously made with this callow Cultivator are now invalid.” He looked at Meng Hao. “Because of the kindness you showed in saving Hanxue Shan, we will not look further into your trickery just now.” Before the echo of his words could die out, the sound of piercing laughter suddenly filled the entire city.

“So this is your Frigid Snow Clan’s alchemist? Wow, such an amazing Grandmaster. You’ve even outshone Pill Demon! Except, everyone’s laughing at you.”

Three colorful beams of light suddenly appeared in the sky, sending out ripples as they flew down.

Three people appeared, and just as they seemed about to smash into Holy Snow City’s protective spell formation shield, it suddenly opened. When the four Grand Elders of the Frigid Snow Clan saw who these three people were, their expressions immediately changed.

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# Chapter 361: A Tiny Favor

As soon as the voice filled the air, Zhou Dekun put his pill furnace away. The three approaching figures never saw it clearly, nor the medicinal pills.

The approach of these three people caused the four Grand Elders’ faces to fall.

One of them was a middle-aged man wearing a long white robe, with face like white jade. Though he was middle-aged, he stood tall and straight. His features were handsome and beyond ordinary, and a slight, amiable smile could be seen on his face. However, the more you looked at the smile the colder it seemed.

This man had no totemic Qi on him, but rather, a faint medicinal aroma.

The words he had spoken just now were still echoing around as he stepped foot into the square to stand between Zhou Dekun and Meng Hao.

He radiated loftiness, and his white robes were embroidered with glittering pill cauldrons. A condescending expression could now be seen on his face.

“Is this how the Southern Domain’s Dao of alchemy works? What a great letdown! I’m afraid I, Yan, will have to return to the Eastern Lands disappointed.” The man shook his head. He hadn’t actually seen Zhou Dekun and Meng Hao concocting pills; he had merely smelled the lingering medicinal aroma in the air, and seen Zhou Dekun putting away the pill furnace. All of that left him disappointed.

Zhou Dekun’s face was unsightly as he looked over the three new arrivals. In addition to the middle-aged man was an old man wearing an inky green robe, with eyes that flashed like lightning. His expression was cold and haughty. The emanations of his Cultivation base revealed him to be of the great circle of the late Nascent Soul stage.

Even the four Grand Elders of the Frigid Snow Clan couldn’t compare to such a Cultivation base.

However, there was a Qi on the man that was very different from the other Cultivators. It was thick, and did not emanate out, but was clearly visible, like a signal beacon in the dead of night.

On the back of the old man’s hand was a totem tattoo. As for any other tattoos, they were concealed by his voluminous robes, and were impossible to see.

The final person among the three was a young man. He didn’t seem to be very old, and yet, there was an ancientness to him. He strode forward, occasionally glancing around, a reminiscent look on his face, even the touch of a sigh. His body emanated a fusion of the fluctuations of a normal Cultivator, as well as totemic Qi.

There were many Cultivators like this young man in the Black Lands, who combined normal cultivation techniques with totem cultivation. There was nothing particularly extraordinary about that; however, there seemed to be something special about him, although it was difficult to say what.

When the Frigid Snow Clan Grand Elders caught sight of the young man, their faces flickered, especially that of First Elder. An anxious, doubtful expression could be seen, along with disbelief.

Meng Hao looked the three over and then glanced away.

The middle-aged man from the Eastern Lands shook his head in disappointment and was about to leave when suddenly he stopped in mid-stride and said, “Eee?” Suddenly, a brilliant glow appeared in his eyes, a shocked expression covered his face. “That’s… that’s….” He started panting as he lifted his right hand into the air with a grasping motion. Immediately, strands of Qi began to drift into his hand and then congeal. Moments later, an illusory mass of Qi appeared above his palm.

The mass of Qi was green in color, and looked like a medicinal pill. However, it was merely illusory, the work of this man’s magical technique.

When Meng Hao saw this, his eyes narrowed, and a faint glow flickered therein.

“Illusory Qi Distillation!” he thought, looking at the man. To be able to distill Qi into an illusory medicinal pill was an ability that not even all Violet Furnace Lords could employ.

It was a technique a level above the one used by Meng Hao just now to condense the liquid into a pill.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. “This guy’s Dao of alchemy is incredible.”

Zhou Dekun’s eyes went wide and radiated astonishment. However, he quickly concealed it. His bearing was still one of arrogance, but deep in his heart, great waves of astonishment crashed about.

“That was no gimmick,” thought Zhou Dekun, taking an unconscious step back. “That was real Illusory Qi Distillation. Dammit, this is the Black Lands. How could an alchemist like this suddenly appear. He’s… he’s at least at the same level as a Violet Furnace Lord, maybe even halfway to being a Grandmaster!” His heart pounded as he tried to figure out a way to get away. It was at this time when the man from the Eastern Lands suddenly looked up.

“This pill….” The man named Yan took a deep breath, and his eyes began to shine with an intense light. “So, such a pill does exist under Heaven. Furthermore, it appears to have been created somewhat frivolously. It seems to me that whoever concocted this pill did not do so in the spirit of an alchemy duel. It seems almost an afterthought, and yet, the result embodies the natural spirit of Heaven and Earth!

“This pill is designed for the mere Foundation Establishment stage. However, it contains a great Dao of alchemy. Even more shocking is that this glittering, translucent pill does not seep any medicinal aroma! Were it not for the special Sect technique I just used, it would have been impossible to distill the illusory pill.

“Even more inconceivable is that the medicinal strength of this pill is above eighty percent. It seems that this isn’t anything extraordinary for whoever concocted this pill, and yet, the pill was clearly concocted casually. However… to casually concoct a medicinal pill with eighty percent medicinal strength is… it’s….” Yan’s face was filled with excitement as he allowed the illusory pill to dissipate. When it was gone, he let out a long sigh.

“Now that is a medicinal pill! Truly an amazing pill of Heaven and Earth! Whoever concocted that pill is a true Grandmaster! The medicinal aroma it emits seems exceptional, but in fact, to compare it to that other vulgar medicinal pill is pure blasphemy! Pills like that are dog crap! Who would even compare the two!?” The man gave Meng Hao a level look, then turned to Zhou Dekun. Obviously he took the green pill to have been concocted by Zhou Dekun.

This was surely because before coming to this place, he had heard inhabitants of the Black Lands speaking of Grandmaster Zhou.

Meng Hao gaped, then shook his head with a wry smile.

It wasn’t just him who was gaping. The surrounding Cultivators stared wide-eyed. As for the four Grand Elders, they were completely shaken.

They didn’t understand very much about the Dao of alchemy, but the medicinal pill the in the man’s hand just now looked very much like the pill Meng Hao had just concocted.

Furthermore, the man’s words regarding a medicinal pill that was vulgar dog crap seemed to have been referring to the medicinal pill concocted by Zhou Dekun.

“Um….”

“Something seems off. Could it be that Grandmaster Zhou concocted two medicinal pills?”

“Well, in any case, Grandmaster Zhou is of noble character, and stands at the pinnacle of the Dao of alchemy. Nothing could possibly go wrong.”

As strange expressions flitted across the faces of the audience, Yan turned to face Zhou Dekun, his expression serious, as well as embarrassed. He clasped hands and bowed deeply.

“I spoke disrespectfully just now, Grandmaster Zhou, I hope you don’t take offense. I’m just obsessed with the Dao of alchemy and can’t bear to allow anyone to profane the Dao of alchemy. I was too impulsive now and allowed the trivial to overshadow my view. My eyes were covered by a single leaf, so to speak. Grandmaster Zhou, the East Pill Division commands my utmost admiration, and you truly deserve to be called the number one alchemist in the Black Lands. That single medicinal pill is enough to prove your skill in the Dao of alchemy. It has absolutely reached the pinnacle of perfection.” With that, he let out a long sigh, then once again clasped hands and bowed deeply, thoroughly convinced of his analysis.

Zhou Dekun wasn’t sure what to do. He subconsciously cleared his throat as his mind reeled. This sudden turn of events was difficult for him to accept, and he was feeling a bit weak at the knees. He suddenly looked over at Meng Hao.

Seeing the enigmatic smile on Meng Hao’s face made him feel even more apprehensive.

However, as the saying goes, when you ride a tiger, it’s hard to get off. That is exactly the situation Zhou Dekun found himself in. He obviously could not declare the man’s words to be untrue. Therefore, he cleared his throat and nodded, not daring to say a word.

After bowing once more, the man named Yan turned to look back at the young man with the ancient air. “Fellow Daoist Hanxue, there’s no need for any more analysis. To be able to lay eyes on a true Grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy like Grandmaster Zhou is enough. From the medicinal pill just now, I was able to confirm that Grandmaster Zhou's Dao of alchemy is incomparable. Of this I am certain."

The young man smiled. "Grandmaster Yan, there's no need to underestimate yourself in such a fashion. Although I don't understand much about the great path that is the Dao of alchemy, I do know that victories can only be determined by means of fighting. Furthermore, I haven't been back to this place for many years, and would love to reminisce a bit. Grandmaster Yan, why not engage in an alchemy duel with this Grandmaster Zhou?" He made no attempt to conceal the ancientness which emanated out of him. As he spoke, he looked around slowly, and by the time he finished, his gaze had come to rest in the direction of the four Grand Elders, whereupon he said, "Well, you've grown up."

The words caused the faces of everyone in the square to flicker. The appearance of these three people had been far too sudden, especially considering that the old man was clearly a Western Desert Cultivator. Holy Snow City had long since adjusted their invisible protective spell formation so that totem Cultivators could not enter.

And yet, these three people had approached with the greatest ease, in front of the eyes of the hundreds of Cultivators present.

That, in addition to the words of the man named Yan, caused strange expressions to appear on everyone's faces. These three people suddenly seemed to be veiled in even more mystery.

And then came the words of the young man. The Frigid Snow Clan Elders suddenly looked very serious, especially First Elder. The instant the young man had appeared, his expression had been strange, even anxious. His eyes shone with disbelief.

As for the other three Elders, they looked suspiciously at the young man. This was because they were able to sense some of the Qi of their Clan on him.

"You…." said First Elder, panting.

Meanwhile, the man named Yan shook his head. Obviously he didn’t agree with the young man’s suggestion. Ignoring the shock on the faces of the surrounding Cultivators regarding the young man, he once again clasped hands and bowed deeply to Zhou Dekun.

“Grandmaster Zhou, I believe that there is no reason for us to compete in alchemy. However, I do have a tiny favor to ask.” He clasped hands and bowed reverently. “Would you please produce that pill you just concocted and allow me to bask in its glory? What do you say?!”

Zhou Dekun’s heart was pounding. He kept a smile plastered on his face, but inside, he was on the verge of tears. “Uh… which pill are you talking about?”

Meng Hao coughed lightly, but didn’t say anything.

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# Chapter 362: Still Won’t Believe

Yan waited for a long time, but seeing Zhou Dekun’s lack of even a nod, he finally clasped hands and bowed once again. His voice filled with sincerity, he said, “Grandmaster Zhou, I’m aware that such a request is a bit boorish. However, considering our mutual affection for the great Dao of alchemy, I am willing to trade one of the pills I personally concocted, just to be able to gaze upon that pill of yours.”

His Cultivation base was at the Nascent Soul stage, so for him to bow to Zhou Dekun in such a way showed the depth of his sincerity, as well as his devotion to the Dao of alchemy.

Everyone watching was of the opinion that for Zhou Dekun to not produce the pill for the man to look at would be extremely egotistical. After all, the man had made a polite request, and only wished to look at the pill. He was even willing to offer up payment to be able to do so.

Zhou Dekun’s face was turning pale, and he was about to speak when Yan frowned.

“Grandmaster Zhou,” he said earnestly, “I merely wish to look at the pill. Will you really refuse such a simple request? Grandmaster Zhou, please, fear not. I would never go back on my word! I only wish to look at it!”

Meng Hao blinked, but didn’t say anything. A faint smile twitched at the corners of his mouth, and he looked a bit embarrassed.

Anyone else who was bowed to so many times would feel honored. However, with each bow, Zhou Dekun’s heart filled with more trepidation.

Gnashing his teeth, he decided to throw caution to the wind. Things had already proceeded to the point where he couldn’t control the matter any more. He smacked his bag of holding to produce the pill he had just concocted, which he then threw over to Yan.

Yan’s eyes flashed with excitement as he caught the pill with both hands. He looked down excitedly, filled with his love of the Dao of alchemy. He took a deep breath, closing his eyes to settle himself and place himself in the optimal state of mind. He looked as earnest as someone about to go on a holy pilgrimage.

At the same moment as he had gazed earnestly at the pill, the young man from their group of three, the one who had provoked such a nervous reaction from the Frigid Snow Clan’s four Grand Elders, glanced around musingly.

“I can still sense father’s aura,” he said with a smile. “It seems he’s not dead after all. Although, his aura couldn’t possibly be any weaker. It seems that my father is still asleep.”

Theses words didn’t provoke any reaction from First Elder, but the faces of the other three immediately changed. They suddenly remembered an event which had occurred a very long time ago, a subject which was taboo within the Clan.

“Hanxue Zong!” said First Elder gratingly, staring angrily at the young man. 1

His words echoed out, booming in the ears of the three other Elders and stabbing into the hearts of the other Clan members. They gaped in astonishment and disbelief, apparently all recalling some particular matter.

Suddenly a great commotion arose among the Frigid Snow Clan Cultivators.

“Hanxue Zong? That guy…. I remember! In the Clan histories there is a record of a Chosen of the Frigid Snow Clan from one thousand years ago. His name was Hanxue Zong!”

“There was such a person! According to the Clan histories, he was incomparably evil, even cannibalistic! He reached the Nascent Soul stage in less than one hundred years, and then began to absorb the life force and Cultivation base of his own father Hanxue Bao, who was one of the two Spirit Severing Patriarchs in the Clan at the time!”

“I remember that too. However, the Clan histories didn’t say what happened to Hanxue Zong after he was defeated. Didn’t Patriarch Hanxue Bao kill him?”

All the other Cultivators who were present heard and were shocked. Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. If what the Frigid Snow Clan members said was true, then the young man with the ancient voice was someone truly to be feared.

The young man laughed. “I’ve been away for so long, I never imagined the Clan would remember me.” His eyes glittered brightly as his gaze fell upon Zhou Dekun.

Zhou Dekun’s face was unsightly. He actually didn’t care a bit about the gaze of the young man; his heart was like a pile of ashes as he continuously sighed. The reason for this, of course, was because of the strange look on the face of the Yan Cultivator.

It started out as one of incredulity, then perplexity, and finally disbelief. His body began to tremble.

“I’m finished, finished….” thought Zhou Dekun bitterly. His heart was trembling.

The man name Yan suddenly took a deep breath and slowly looked back up at Zhou Dekun.

“That Pill….” began Zhou Dekun. Before he could continue, however, Yan once again clasped hands and bowed deeply.

“Grandmaster Zhou, sir, my Dao of alchemy does not compare to yours. However, there is really no need to produce some other medicinal pill with the intention of shaming me.” His tone was cool, but deep in his heart he was furious. “I know that you didn’t concoct this medicinal pill, Grandmaster Zhou. Why would you embarrass me with something so shoddy!?”

“I….” said Grandmaster Zhou, feeling even more anxious. He was about to try to explain, but was cut off.

“Grandmaster Zhou, I only want to take a look at that one medicinal pill. If you’re not willing to show it to me, then would you at least concoct a new pill for me to take a look at? Grandmaster Zhou, I plead with you to fulfill my wish!” He continued to suppress the anger he felt at heart. His desire to personally see such a medicinal pill caused him to once again clasp hands and bow.

In his heart, Zhou Dekun was cursing. He was filled with despair, and wanted to yell out, ‘that is the pill I concocted!’

However, everyone was looking at him, including the four Grand Elders. Even more importantly, the two young women behind him were also watching on.

In addition, the surrounding Cultivators were now starting to throw out words of encouragement.

“Grandmaster Zhou, why not let this outsider look at your medicinal pill? Let him know how awesome our Black Lands alchemists are!”

“Yeah, that’s right, Grandmaster Zhou! Teach this guy a lesson, show him that you’re a true Grandmaster!”

“Grandmaster Zhou, make this Eastern Lands Cultivator’s wish come true! Show him what it really means to be a Grandmaster!”

Once voice after another rang out. Normally, such words would cause Zhou Dekun to feel quite smug. Right now, however, they made him want to weep.

“I… I….” In his heart, Zhou Dekun was letting loose a torrent of curses, but on the outside, he was smiling. However, his smiling face looked much more unsightly than a crying one. When he looked over and saw Meng Hao gazing at him with a bashful smile, he felt like he couldn’t take it any more. It was then that he suddenly realized that Meng Hao’s embarrassed grin looked very familiar. However, because of his nervousness, he didn’t have time to consider the matter.

Gritting his teeth, Zhou Dekun slapped his bag of holding and retrieved the best pill he had ever concocted in the Southern Domain. He threw it over to the man named Yan.

Yan immediately caught it. After studying it for a moment he frowned. He was losing control of his rage, and it was now seeping onto his face. His body was also starting to tremble.

“Grandmaster Zhou, there’s no need to repeatedly insult me! Your Dao of alchemy may be incredible, but these second-rate pills you keep producing are nothing compared to the pill from earlier. Have you reached such a level that you refuse to produce pills that you yourself have concocted?! Do I, Yan, really not qualify to even look at your medicinal pills? Grandmaster Zhou, to be so overbearing is really going overboard!! I… I just want to look at that medicinal pill. Why can’t you just do me this one little favor!?”

Yan was extremely frustrated. The favor he had asked was not a very big one was it…? Finally, he suppressed his anger, and once again clasped hands and bowed. “Grandmaster Zhou, again, I plead with you to grant my wish. This is the last time I will ask.”

This last bow was the straw that broke the camel’s back. Zhou Dekun was on the verge of collapse. Panting, he suddenly exploded in a fury: “Favor! Favor!? All you want is a favor!? I’ve given you my medicinal pills. You can see that I concocted them myself! My Dao of alchemy is only average. What’s it to you?! That’s how I am. The pill you were looking at before wasn’t concocted by me! That guy concocted it!!” He pointed at Meng Hao. “That was his pill!! You think you’re pissed off? I’m even more pissed off than you!! You’re the one who made the mistake! If you want to look at that pill from before, then ask that guy!”

Zhou Dekun flicked his sleeve. His face was ashen and filled with rage as he turned to leave. His heart was pounding as he scrambled to come up with a way to salvage the situation.

The man named Yan stared in shock, then spun to look at Meng Hao.

It wasn’t just him. Everyone, including the four Grand Elders, and the hundreds of surrounding Cultivators, all slowly turned to look at Meng Hao. All eyes were now glued on him and him alone.

Most of the gazes were filled with shock and incredulity.

“Whether or not you concocted that pill doesn’t matter,” said Yan to Zhou Dekun. “Events today have reached the point that an alchemy duel is required in order to prove who is the alchemist that I so revere!” His glare shifted from Meng Hao to Zhou Dekun.

“Grandmaster Zhou,” he continued earnestly. “After I defeat this guy, I hope that you will no longer humiliate me, but will allow me to look at that pill.” Without looking at Meng Hao, he lifted his right hand up, and a pill furnace appeared.

Zhou Dekun was on the verge of tears. Even after everything that had happened, he didn’t understand why this man just wouldn’t believe him. Perhaps the act he had put on before had simply been too convincing. The man apparently really did believe that he was looking down on him.

Meng Hao cleared his throat and then hesitantly said, “Oh, I’m sorry, I’m not a local alchemist. I just lost a match to Grandmaster Zhou, and was told to leave the city. I’m afraid I can’t compete with you in alchemy.” He sighed, looking apologetic.

Hearing this, Zhou Dekun’s face immediately fell, and he began to howl inwardly with anguish. “You’re my ancestor, alright? My ancestor! Can you just not do this to me….”

Second Elder, the one who had previously demanded that Meng Hao leave the city, now looked angrily over toward Zhou Dekun. ‘Why can’t you just take out the medicinal pill, Grandmaster Zhou,’ he thought. ‘Why cause all this trouble?’

1. Hanxue Zong’s name in Chinese is hán xuě zòng – Hanxue is the name of the Clan, which means Frigid Snow. Zong means “vertical”

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# Chapter 363: A First Glimpse at the Five Elements

Inwardly, Zhou Dekun was constantly cursing, although he wasn’t sure exactly who he should be cursing. He was filled with consternation and regret.

The man named Yan frowned. He was starting to think that this Holy Snow City was really annoying. All he wanted to do was take a look at that medicinal pill. And yet after all this time, he hadn’t been able to lay eyes on it for even a second.

Face grim, he turned slowly to look at the young man.

Hanxue Zong had been watching everything that was happening. He gave a slight smile, and then his body flickered; a moment later, he was standing directly in front of Zhou Dekun.

First Elder suddenly said, “Hanxue Zong, I don’t know why you’re not dead yet, but….”

“But what?” he said with a laugh, cutting off First Elder. “The reason I’m not dead is because the old man was soft-hearted. However, his soft-heartedness hasn’t influenced my cultivation. I have nothing to do with the Frigid Snow Clan now. I’m a vassal of the Five Moons Tribe of the Western Desert, and I’m responsible for eradicating Holy Snow City! Furthermore, I’ve heard of this Grandmaster Zhou, and I’m interested in seeing for myself what his Dao of alchemy is like.”

The surrounding Cultivators immediately broke out into an uproar. The four Grand Elders’ faces were unsightly. After all, the old man among the group of three was at the great circle of the late Nascent Soul stage. His aura was threatening to the extreme, causing great pressure to bear down on everyone.

“Oh, don’t worry,” said Hanxue Zong with a slight smile. “Nobody understands Holy Snow City and its resources better than me. But I’m not here today to fight. I just want to see this Grandmaster Zhou in an alchemy duel! The stakes are a grand bit of good fortune! Or maybe you could say the difference between life and death. Whoever wins, I promise that the Western Desert Cultivators won’t attack the city for three months. That should give you plenty of time to prepare. Although, if you refuse, well….” It was at this point that shouts suddenly rang out from beyond the city walls. Prismatic beams of light shone in the air as a sea of wild animals appeared.

Spell formations glittered in the sky, surrounding everything with an intense pressure.

The Cultivators in the square were all shocked by the sight. Everyone in all of Holy Snow City looked up, minds reeling. The four Grand Elders’ faces were extremely unsightly.

Hanxue Zong’s appearance meant that all their previous preparations were now flawed. They would definitely need time to make adjustments. They weren’t sure why he was giving them three months’ time, but even if it was a trap, the Frigid Snow Clan had no choice but to leap into it. They needed those three months.

Hanxue Zong laughed as he looked at the Frigid Snow Clan Grand Elders. “However, it seems circumstances are a bit different now. Grandmaster Zhou isn’t willing to produce his medicinal pill. If Mr. Yan is willing, then why not first have a little competition with this youngster. That way, Grandmaster Zhou will be able to see if Mr. Yan’s Dao of alchemy can be taken seriously.”

First Elder looked a bit embarrassed, and was already quite irritated at Zhou Dekun. Second Elder was thinking the same thing. They had taken Zhou Dekun at face value, and determined that he was truly a Grandmaster. But now, it seemed he wasn't willing to show off any of his skill, and was instead pushing someone else to do so.

They weren't sure how to handle the situation.

First Elder frowned as he considered the situation. Finally, he sighed and looked over at Meng Hao. "Young friend, we would like to request that you concoct a pill. Regarding the matter of the Frigid Snow Larva, we can renegotiate after the current matter is settled. What do you say?"

Meng Hao smiled. He really didn't want to cause Zhou Dekun to lose face. But as far as anyone else was concerned, he wouldn't hesitate to humiliate anyone when it came to the Dao of alchemy, especially some self-proclaimed Eastern Lands alchemist.

So, he responded to First Elder with a nod.

Before he could even finish nodding, a flash of irritation could be seen on Yan's face. Obviously, he thought Grandmaster Zhou suspected his Dao of alchemy and wanted to use this method to probe him out.

With a cold harrumph, Yan glanced over Meng Hao and then looked back toward Zhou Dekun. With clasped hands, he said, "I am Yan Song, of Mount Alchemy in the Eastern Lands." This, of course, was the formal introduction before an alchemy duel. However, despite competing with Meng Hao, Yan Song obviously took it as a duel with Zhou Dekun. 1

Zhou Dekun gave a bitter laugh in his heart. He was even more nervous and perturbed now. As far as he was concerned, everything on this day was a huge misunderstanding. However, there was no way to resolve the issue now.

Meng Hao's expression was the same as usual. Seeing that this was an official alchemy duel, he took a deep breath and was about to introduce himself in the formal way when Yan Song flicked his wide sleeve.

"There's no need for you to speak," he said. "I'm not interested in your name or where you're from. Just make the best medicinal pill you can make, alright?”

The disregard made Meng Hao frown.

Yan Song lifted up his hand, hovering above which was a pill furnace. Suddenly a flame emerged from his palm. This was no ordinary flame, but rather Nascent Soul fire. Only Nascent Soul Cultivators with a Fire-type Nascent Soul can produce such a flame.

The flame was reddish-orange and sent ripples out through the air. It took only a moment for the pill furnace hovering above his palm to turn bright red. Yan Song slapped his bag of holding to produce several small white bags, each of which was filled with various powders.

He measured out various portions of powder and then fed them into the pill furnace. Meng Hao narrowed his eyes at the sight of this, and Zhou Dekun took a deep breath.

“He’s not concocting pills with plants….”

“In Mount Alchemy in the Eastern Lands, we don’t concoct pills with plants,” said Yan Song coolly. “We use the five elements as the foundation. By procuring objects which conform to the five elements, then reducing them to powder, we can use the power of the five elements to concoct pills. This is the true great path of the Dao of alchemy!” His pill furnace began to emit intense rumbling sounds. Suddenly, dark clouds began to gather in the sky above and peals of thunder rang out.

Zhou Dekun’s heart began to race with alarm. It was obvious that the clouds up above were Pill Tribulation!

The surrounding Cultivators were shocked, and the four Grand Elders were breathing raggedly. They didn’t understand much about the Dao of alchemy, but they had heard of Pill Tribulation. To see it with their own eyes caused their hearts to tremble.

Yan Song glanced up proudly at the Tribulation. “In the Eastern Lands, we don’t worry about Pill Tribulation. In fact, inducing Pill Tribulation lets us harness the power of lightning, allowing the full power of the five elements to be unleashed!” As he spoke, booming sounds filled the air as multiple bolts of lightning shot down toward the pill furnace. In the blink of an eye, the lightning bolts merged together into a massive sheet of lightning

Yan Song lifted his head up and howled. He slapped the pill furnace with his left hand, causing the lid to open. A six-colored medicinal pill flew out, which Yan Song grabbed. Immediately, the clouds up above dissipated. However, the lightning continued to fall downward, slamming into the ground around Yan Song, making him look completely shocking.

“Unfortunately, the process was a bit rushed,” said Yan Song, glancing over at Meng Hao. “The end result is not the best it could be.” He then looked at Zhou Dekun, his eyes flashing, as if he were throwing down the proverbial gauntlet.

Zhou Dekun maintained his noble visage, but his heart was trembling violently.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered in thought for a moment. Then, he waved his right hand to produce a pill furnace.

Yan Song glanced at Meng Hao’s pill furnace, and his previous tranquil expression began to fill with a proud aura. This was a look he hadn’t displayed when interacting with Zhou Dekun. Now that he was dealing with Meng Hao, however, he naturally acted differently.

However, after looking at the pill furnace for a moment, a look of surprise flitted across Yan Song’s face momentarily. This was the pill furnace Meng Hao had acquired in the Black Sieve Sect, the Ten Thousand Refinements furnace. 2

The instant Zhou Dekun saw the pill furnace, his mind began to spin. He had seen a Ten Thousand Refinements furnace before that looked almost exactly like the one Meng Hao currently held in his hand. When it came to pill furnaces, to find two that looked exactly the same, especially a Ten Thousand Refinements furnace, might not be a common occurrence, but wasn’t impossible.

Zhou Dekun hesitated for a moment and then suppressed his suspicions.

As for Meng Hao, his eyes glittered as he hefted the pill furnace in his right hand. Inside of him, the East Pill Everburning Flame kindled to life and then emerged to fill his palm. The flame itself was invisible, but the air around Meng Hao's hand twisted and distorted.

The sight of it caused Yan Song's eyes to narrow. For the first time, a look of doubt appeared on his face.

Based on an alchemist's concocting technique, it was possible to get a vague impression of his Dao of alchemy. Yan Song could instantly see that Meng Hao's techniques were beyond ordinary. That was especially true of the intangible flame which Meng Hao wielded. His heart filled with shock.

"That flame…." he thought. His heart filled with hesitation.

It was not the first time that Zhou Dekun saw Meng Hao's invisible flame, but this time, he examined it more closely than the before. After detailed examination, his heart began to flutter. However, his face was still plastered with the same enigmatic expression. He sported a slight smile, along with a look of commendation, as if watching someone of the junior generation concoct pills made him very happy.

The look on his face made everyone in the audience feel reassured that everything that was happening was all part of Zhou Dekun's plan, and that he really felt it beneath his dignity to let Yan Song look at his medicinal pill.

Inwardly, Zhou Dekun sighed. He felt bitter and nervous, and yet, also a bit proud. What he didn't notice was that Hanxue Zong was looking at him with an expression of intense interest.

Meanwhile, after a moment's thought, Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding to produce a medicinal plant. As soon as it appeared, he crushed it into a powder and fed it into the pill furnace.

For him to do so with only one medicinal plant was nothing special. However, Meng Hao subsequently pulled out one medicinal plant after another. Each one he crushed up into a powder before placing it into the pill furnace. This caused Yan Song to frown, and then smile coldly.

“So you want to imitate my five elements method of pill concoction,” said Yan Song coolly. “Well, I think you really overestimate your capabilities. You might be good at concocting pills, but when it comes to my five elements concoction method, unless your skill in the Dao of alchemy exceeds mine, then you will never succeed!” However, as soon as he looked at Zhou Dekun, his heart began to pound. Zhou Dekun’s expression was one of complete calm. His profoundly mysterious aura made Yan Song suddenly feel a bit uncertain.

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1. Yan Song’s name in Chinese is yán sōng – Yan is a surname that also means “strict” or “severe.” Song means “lofty” or “a high mountain.”

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# Chapter 364: The Last Main Ingredient!

Meng Hao’s expression was calm as he began to use the Alchemy Dao Transmutation Incantation 1. In the blink of an eye, the flame in his palm split into two sections. Deep inside of him, a vast array of various medicinal pill variations flitted about. He began to make adjustments, and as he did, the pill furnace slowly began to turn bright red.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he repeatedly performed various incantation gestures with his hand and then pushed onto the pill furnace. Every time he touched it, the pill furnace would rumble, and loud cracking sounds could be heard from within. Soon, a medicinal aroma began to emanate out. Strangest of all, almost as soon as the aroma emanated out, people tried to smell it, but couldn’t!

The aroma was right there in front of them, but they couldn’t smell it! This bizarre phenomenon caused all of the surrounding Cultivators’ expressions to change. The four Grand Elders stared with wide eyes.

“What’s going on? What pill is this guy concocting? You can sense that there’s a medicinal aroma, but it’s like it doesn’t exist at all!”

“What a bizarre pill. This alchemist may be young, but obviously can’t be looked down upon.”

“Ah, it’s not a big deal. It’s probably some kind of illusion magic. Just look at Grandmaster Zhou, he obviously knows what’s going on.”

Zhou Dekun was inwardly dumbstruck, but without even thinking about it, he smiled, as if all of this was part of his strategy. He seemed to be offering his praise to a member of the junior generation.

He had practiced this expression to the point where the proverbial furnace flame had grown green. It had reached the pinnacle of perfection. At this point, it was as if Mt. Tai was crumbling in front of his very eyes, but even as it did, he calmly let everyone know that it was his doing.

This was one of the reasons he had been able to rise to prominence in the Black Lands. By being able to display an expression like this without even thinking about it, he left all onlookers scared stiff.

Yan Song’s expression was one of extreme concentration as he gazed at Meng Hao’s pill furnace. Slowly, his eyes began to fill with disbelief.

“That’s… Self-Contained Pill Aroma! The pill is not yet complete, so the aroma of the pill is illusory. It emanates out for the purpose of absorbing the spiritual energy of Heaven and Earth! Everyone can sense it, but are unable to actually smell it! This is a realm of pill concocting that exists in legend! This guy….” The more Yan Song thought about it, the more shocked he became. He glanced over at Zhou Dekun. Seeing the man’s deep, unfathomable expression caused his heart to pound.

“Just how profound is this Zhou Dekun’s Dao of alchemy?” he thought.

As the onlookers continued to be overwhelmed with shock, Meng Hao waved his left hand to produce some more medicinal plants. This time, he did not crush them into powder, but rather, collected sap, twigs, and the like, which he then fed into the pill furnace. The red glow of the pill furnace grew even more intense. Soon, an hour had passed, whereupon Meng Hao finally slapped the pill furnace.

A booming sound filled the air, causing everyone to assume that the pill was finally fully concocted. It was at this time that the ground began to tremble, and suddenly, something like a screaming wind kicked up. However, it only took a moment for everyone to realize that this was no wind!

It was spiritual energy!

All of the spiritual energy in Holy Snow City began to rush in, forming something like a massive vortex.

The nucleus of this raging vortex of spiritual energy was none other than the pill furnace in Meng Hao's hand.

"This…." First Elder strode forward slowly, panting. He had never before heard of such an upheaval of spiritual energy occurring because of pill concoction.

The other Grand Elders watched on dumbstruck, filled with shock. The other Frigid Snow Clan members, including Hanxue Shan, all watched on with expressions of disbelief.

Everyone was equally shocked, including the hundreds of other Cultivators that made up the audience. Their breaths came in ragged pants, and soon, a buzz of conversation filled the air.

"Can pill concocting really cause such an influx in spiritual energy? What… what pill is this?"

"Just what pill is he concocting, exactly? This is almost completely unbelievable!"

As the conversations filled the air, Zhou Dekun continued to watch on proudly. He even lifted up his hand to slowly stroke his beard, exuding a look of admiration. It seemed as if the incredible goings-on were all meticulously planned by he himself.

Of course, inside, Zhou Dekun's heart wouldn't stop racing, and he was on the verge of screaming.

"Inhuman," he thought. "Bizarre! I never imagined that there could be someone besides Fang Mu who is such a freak when it comes to the Dao of alchemy. Just what exactly is he doing? What pill is he concocting…?" As his nervousness grew, his look of pride and complacency continued to emanate out.

When people saw his expression, Yan Song included, it only served to increase his standing in their eyes.

“There’s no Pill Tribulation,” thought Yan Song, looking up into the sky. “This medicinal pill seems shocking, but actually isn’t that amazing.” He felt a little bit better because of this.

It was at this point that Meng Hao casually said, “Ladies and Gentleman, I’m afraid you’ll have to wait just a little bit longer. This pill is still lacking the final important ingredient.” The pill furnace was bright crimson, and the air around it twisted and distorted. Vast amounts of spiritual energy continued to pour in from all directions, sucked into the pill furnace. It was so bright now that it looked like Meng Hao was holding a small sun in his hand.

As of this moment, Meng Hao looked wildly impressive.

The audience was instantly astonished.

“It’s missing the final main ingredient? What’s that supposed to mean? Why doesn’t he just put the final ingredient in right now?”

“Something seems off. Could it be that he’s waiting for someone to come deliver the final ingredient?”

The four Grand Elders frowned in confusion and then looked over at Zhou Dekun.

It wasn’t just them. Yan Song looked over at him with complete perplexity.

In addition, Hanxue Zong, as well as the late Nascent Soul stage Cultivator, who hadn’t spoken a single word so far, were both looking at Zhou Dekun.

Zhou Dekun gave an indifferent smile as he continued to stroke his beard. He looked calm and enigmatic, as if he were enjoying watching his plans play out. His ability to project this air of superiority really had been perfected to the limit.

Inside, though, he was nervously cursing everything including Heaven, Earth, and even the audience. Two alchemists had appeared, each one seemingly more inhuman than the other; and yet, everyone who was watching assumed that he was the strongest of all.

Only someone with quite a strong will would be able to prevent themselves from collapsing. Zhou Dekun cleared his throat. Everyone was looking at him, awaiting his explanation.

“Grandmaster Zhou, please clear things up for us.”

“Yeah! Grandmaster Zhou, what’s the final main ingredient that this guy needs for his concoction? Will it be here soon?”

Even Yan Song clasped hands toward Zhou Dekun and earnestly said, “Grandmaster Zhou, please clear up this confusion.”

“I’ll clear up your sister’s confusion! How the hell would I know what the final ingredient is!” Of course, this was merely what Zhou Dekun said in his heart. His face remained as proud as ever. He smiled slightly and looked up toward the sky.

“In my estimation,” he said, “the final ingredient is incredibly extraordinary in nature. It is simple, and yet mysterious. It is extraordinary in its ordinariness. The Dao of alchemy which requires such an ingredient is not something that the likes of you could understand. Since you can’t understand, why do you request an explanation?” Zhou Dekun maintained his air of superiority as he made this vague explanation. If everyone hadn’t already decided that he was an amazing Grandmaster, they would definitely take such an explanation to be poppycock.

However, because of their preconceptions, it actually seemed profound and enigmatic.

In fact, the reason Zhou Dekun looked up into the sky as he made his explanation was because he had the feeling whatever this final main ingredient was, if it was missing, that meant someone would have to deliver it. And if someone were to deliver it, they would definitely do so by flying over with it.

Even if it wasn’t delivered by someone via flight, he had another reason for looking up into the sky. Medicinal plants were a product of Heaven and Earth. Therefore, looking up toward the Heavens could not possibly be an incorrect strategy.

Meng Hao noticed what Zhou Dekun was doing, and suddenly got a strange feeling. All of a sudden he realized that Zhou Dekun was far more amusing in the Black Lands than he had been in the Violet Fate Sect.

Meng Hao also glanced up at the sky and then thought, “I’ve been here for about seven or eight days. According to my calculations, the time should be close. I shouldn’t have to wait much longer.” Even as he was thinking this, his expression suddenly changed. It was without hesitation that he slapped his bag of holding. The Li Clan Patriarch suddenly appeared, flung up high into the air.

A boom rang out as a lightning bolt shockingly appeared in the middle of the boundless blue sky. The deafening sound it made far exceeded that of the Pill Tribulation. It slammed down onto the Li Clan Patriarch, who instantly let out a miserable shriek. The lightning bolt immediately began to weaken, and before the Li Clan Patriarch could even begin to curse, Meng Hao put him back into his bag of holding. Then, he redirected the weakened lightning bolt directly into the pill furnace.

The final main ingredient Meng Hao had been waiting for was none other than Tribulation Lightning!

A boom echoed out of the pill furnace. The lightning danced, sending out shocking peals of deafening thunder. The pill furnace began to tremble, and then the lid flew off of it. A medicinal pill shot out, which was surrounded by lightning.

The instant the pill appeared, the sky filled with dense black clouds. These were not Tribulation clouds, but rather naturally occurring ones. It seemed as if this medicinal pill could attract natural thunder and lightning. Up above, the clouds roiled, causing the very earth to quake.

The medicinal aroma which had been emanating out suddenly roiled and was sucked into the medicinal pill, congealing therein. The pill instantly turned translucent and began to emanate blinding light. It was clearly far beyond ordinary.

At the same time, all of the spiritual energy in the area surged like tidewaters. The pill seemed to suddenly give birth to a huge vortex that sucked in all of the spiritual energy. The thunder from up above grew even louder.

Just as it seemed that the lightning was about to begin falling, Meng Hao reached out and grabbed the lightning-covered medicinal pill. He gave it a close look and then nodded.

This was the first time he had attempted to concoct something like this. After seeing Yan Song use his five elements concocting technique, he had been inspired to fuse that method with his own. Although he hadn’t completely succeeded, it had opened up a new branch of thought within his mind.

“Using this method to concoct pills actually leads to better results,” he thought. “Furthermore, the variations within the five elements make it possible to concoct pills according to the theory of creating something from nothing….” With a final glance at the pill, he looked calmly over at Yan Song.

Everyone in the audience was panting, including the four Grand Elders. They stared at the pill surrounded by lightning, as did all of the hundreds of Cultivators in the square.

Yan Song was watching on, stupefied. When Meng Hao had started his concocting, Yan Song had looked down on him. But as the process continued, his attitude gradually changed. When the illusory pill aroma appeared, astonishment took root in his heart. By the time the spiritual energy of Heaven and Earth began to surge toward it, he was thoroughly shaken. When the lightning appeared, he was positively, absolutely stunned.

His breathing was ragged and his eyes wide as he stared at the medicinal pill and realized that the technique used to create it was above and beyond his own five elements concocting technique. This new technique was a true fusion.

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# Chapter 365: A Grand Scam

“That’s impossible! How could it be…? This guy….” Yan Song glanced subconsciously over at Zhou Dekun. If he hadn’t already come to the conclusion that the man was truly a Grandmaster, then at the moment, he would definitely be thinking that the true Grandmaster was actually Meng Hao.

Despite his certainty, he was still shaken. After hearing Zhou Dekun’s words just now, it was hard to tell… whether he had planned all of this or whether it just happened because he had been embarrassed by Yan Song.

Yan Song wasn’t the only person looking at him in this light. The Cultivators in the audience, the four Grand Elders, and the former Frigid Snow Clan member Hanxue Zong were all inwardly moved by Zhou Dekun.

As they all looked over at him, what they saw was his cool, indifferent smile, and his expression of praise. He was clearly concerned about the member of the junior generation, which caused everyone to gape in astonishment.

His proud bearing, which exuded the air of a Grandmaster, caused everyone to muse about how Zhou Dekun truly was at the peak of the Dao of alchemy.

Even Yan Song was hesitating now. Zhou Dekun’s performance was really too perfect. In fact, it even caused Meng Hao to feel surprised. If he didn’t personally know Zhou Dekun, then even he would have been fooled.

Zhou Dekun’s tranquil smile actually covered up the quavering of his heart. Inwardly, he was filled with shock and astonishment. How could he ever have possibly imagined that what Meng Hao was waiting for was a bolt of lightning?

“He used lightning as his final main ingredient for the pill?” he thought. “He’s inhuman! A freak! He’s even more of an aberration than Fang Mu!” However, the more his heart trembled, the calmer his face was. This skill which he had been working on over the years in the Black Lands really had reached the acme. In fact, it was at such a level that sometimes he even convinced himself of his own marvelousness.

Most of the time, he was clearheaded about the matter, but right now, he was moaning inwardly. Because of his well-honed skill, he had gazed proudly up into the sky just now, an action which now caused the onlookers’ eyes to suddenly realize what had happened.

“So, Grandmaster Zhou was looking up into the sky just now because he knew all along that lightning was the main ingredient!”

“That’s right! I was wondering about that. Now it’s really obvious that Grandmaster Zhou is a true Grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy!”

Yan Song took a deep breath, and his face filled with a look of admiration. This was not to mention even the four Grand Elders, and Hanxue Zong of the Frigid Snow bloodline, who didn’t really know much about the Dao of alchemy, but made their judgment of Zhou Dekun based on Yan Song’s reaction.

“What pill is that?” asked Yan Song, a serious expression on his face. As of now, there was no look of contempt on his face. Meng Hao’s medicinal pill had thoroughly proven the level of his Dao of alchemy. Yan Song was now very much interested in him, and even placed him on a similar level as Zhou Dekun.

Meng Hao smiled. “Just a simple pill that should be able to release a Lightning Sea.” This was not the type of pill that you could consume, but rather more like a magic pill. Meng Hao had come to the realization that using the five elements concocting method was more effective when used to concoct magic pills.

Yan Song stood there thoughtfully for a moment. There was no need for him to examine the pill closely. Considering he had observed the concoction process as well as the final result, he was now able to tell without a doubt that Meng Hao’s words were true.

This pill was something he himself couldn’t concoct unless he got incredibly lucky and had lightning fall during the concoction process to provide as the main ingredient!

In the past, he had seen lightning used to make pills, but it was usually just a shortcut used to improve the effectiveness of the five elements. It was nothing like what Meng Hao had done, in which he actually used lightning as the main ingredient.

The difference between the two made the superior and inferior completely obvious.

Zhou Dekun cleared his throat and then somberly said, “Excellent. That pill concocting technique of yours is very interesting. Going forward, you should put more thought into it. Perhaps you can open up a new path on the Dao of alchemy. When traversing the great road of the Dao of alchemy, one can never be complacent. Alchemy is boundless, and the Dao is infinite. We must maintain an inquisitive heart in order validate the great Dao of alchemy of Heaven and Earth!” His face was filled with the arrogance of seniority, as if he were a great master giving some pointers.

A strange expression was written on Meng Hao’s face, like a smile, but not. Yan Song took a deep breath and then clasped hands and bowed to Zhou Dekun.

“Grandmaster Zhou, your words are the pinnacle of truth. I, Yan Song, am now thoroughly convinced. There is no need for me to look at that medicinal pill from before. I also understand why you are not willing to let me look at it. You feel that my Dao of alchemy is insufficient, and that looking at the pill would disturb my heart and mind. Grandmaster Zhou, I will remember your kindness for the rest of my life.” Once again, he bowed with utmost sincerity.

Zhou Dekun’s expression was as proud as ever as he smiled indifferently. This, in turn, caused the other onlookers to view him with even more admiration. The four Grand Elders now looked at Zhou Dekun with even more veneration.

All of this caused Meng Hao to stare in shock. He looked down at the pill in his hand, and then over at Zhou Dekun. He wasn’t sure whether to laugh or cry. The pill he had laboriously concocted was casually commented on by Zhou Dekun, and then everyone took his words at face value.

“Zhou Dekun really has mastered some new skills here in the Black Lands,” thought Meng Hao. As he gazed at the man, Zhou Dekun looked at him, and suddenly began to tremble inwardly. Then, he opened his mouth with the intention of offering some true praise toward Meng Hao.

However, it was at this moment that the late Nascent Soul Cultivator who stood next to Hanxue Zong suddenly shot toward Zhou Dekun.

The four Frigid Snow Grand Elders had been watching this man for some time now, so as soon as he made his move, they flew to intercept him.

They all slammed into each other, and a huge boom echoed out. Blood sprayed from the mouths of the four Grand Elders. The old man from the Western Desert trembled. Suddenly, he changed direction and shot toward Meng Hao.

The four Grand Elders fell back, flashing incantation gestures, after which they pointed toward Zhou Dekun. A glittering shield immediately surrounded him.

Zhou Dekun’s heart was quivering, and yet without even thinking about it consciously, he caused utter calm to remain on his face. He looked as supercilious as ever. Seeing this caused Hanxue Zong to feel even more excited. He also shot forward.

He moved with incredible speed, appearing instantaneously next to the shield protecting Zhou Dekun. He lifted his hand up and pressed gently down onto the shield; it instantly shattered into pieces. The four Grand

Elders howled, and were about to charge forward when Hanxue Zong waved his right hand and swept them away. At the same time, his left hand snaked out to grab ahold of Zhou Dekun.

Zhou Dekun's body suddenly trembled in fear, and he was about to scream.

"There's no need to be alarmed, Grandmaster Zhou," said Hanxue Zong. "I won't hurt you, sir. I just feel that leaving a Grandmaster as talented as you in a place like this is a true waste. Come with me to the Western Desert. The tasks you will face won't measure up to the requirements laid forth in this place. However, if you refuse, then I'll be forced to help you understand what it means to live a life worse than death!"

Having been grabbed in this fashion, Zhou Dekun was no longer able to keep up the charade. His face was pale white, his body shivered, and intense fear filled his heart.

"This is a mistake!" he blurted. "It's all a misunderstanding. My… my… my Dao of alchemy can't even compare to his!" He raised a trembling hand to point at Meng Hao. "If you want to take someone, take him! If you take me, you'll be losing out big time!"

A cold light appeared in Hanxue Zong's eyes. "Grandmaster Zhou, you could see the lack of lightning as the main ingredient in that pill. Don't think you can fool me with such words!"

"I'm… I'm really not that good!" shrieked Zhou Dekun, his heart sinking. "I swear! Look, everything I said was just empty talk, not some sort of absolute truth! Take him! He's the actual Grandmaster! He can compare with my Junior Brother Fang Mu…. He's exponentially more amazing than me!"

When Meng Hao saw the Nascent Soul Cultivator approaching, he used the Bloodburst Flash without hesitation, disappearing and then reappearing several dozen meters away.

"Eee?" said the Western Desert Cultivator. He was about to continue in pursuit when Hanxue Zong flew up into the air, clutching the trembling

Zhou Dekun in hand.

“There’s no need to cause trouble for him,” said Hanxue Zong coolly. “We came here to invite only the most outstanding Cultivator to join us. Now that we have Grandmaster Zhou, that other guy is unessential.”

“I’m not the most outstanding!” cried Zhou Dekun, his scalp going numb. “Dammit, I’m really not, okay!? This is a mistake! A misunderstanding! I was putting on an act just now. Really, it was an act! I’m not a Grandmaster, I’m just a regular old Furnace Lord from the East Pill division. That guy is the real Grandmaster. It’s true, he’s the Grandmaster. Take him, okay!?!?” He wished to weep, but no tears would come out. His deception had been too good and he had completely lost control of it.

He began to tremble and wail mournfully.

“There’s no need to act this way, Grandmaster Zhou,” said Hanxue Zong, laughing disapprovingly. “I was watching you this entire time, and couldn’t possibly be mistaken. Whatever method you used, you were able to spot the clues and identify the final main ingredient. That, is true skill! I, Hanxue Zong, could not possibly be mistaken. You are the true Grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy. The act you are putting on right now, unfortunately, is simply too fake!”

“Correct,” said Yan Song. “From the moment I arrived until now, Grandmaster Zhou has been tuned in to all of the fine details, and has grasped each key moment. Whether it be the pill aroma or the lightning as the main ingredient, Grandmaster Zhou consistently had an expression of praise for the junior generation. Enlightenment regarding the Dao of alchemy is something that cannot be faked. I do not possess such skill, nor do other alchemists. Only Grandmaster Zhou has this skill. There are few people I truly admire, but as of today, there is one more on my list: Grandmaster Zhou!” With that, he clasped hands politely and bowed.

By this point, Zhou Dekun was actually wailing. He felt as if he were the one who had been scammed, not by others, but by himself…. The tears were welling up in his eyes. He looked down at the beautiful girls, and he already missed them. He thought about the barrenness of the Western

Desert, and how frightening of a place it was, and he began to tremble and blabber more explanations.

“I’m really not a Grandmaster. I was in the wrong. Truly, in the wrong! I won’t pretend to be a Grandmaster anymore. Take him, okay! You should take him! Dammit! He’s the real Grandmaster….” Zhou Dekun’s heart grew dark and filled with regret. It didn’t matter what he said now, no one would believe him.

“Quit the act, Grandmaster Zhou,” said Hanxue Zong, laughing. “Even if he is a Grandmaster, you, Grandmaster Zhou, are the very person I have been waiting for!” Holding Zhou Dekun in hand, he flew up into the air.

The Western Desert Nascent Soul Cultivator gave Meng Hao a final cold glance, then turned and flew up into the sky. It was at this point that suddenly, a voice filled all of Holy Snow City.

“Screw off!” The words caused Heaven and Earth to shake. The protective spell formations outside of the city fell to pieces as if a massive wind had blown across them. Up in the sky, ripples could clearly be seen that were emanating out from the ground beneath Holy Snow City. As they passed the city walls, they turned into a cyclone that instantly shredded into pieces all of the beasts and Cultivators who were waiting there. In the blink of an eye, everything in the area thousands of kilometers around Holy Snow City was gone.

As the ground quaked, the minds of all of the Cultivators in the city reeled, and their faces filled with shock.

Hanxue Zong’s face fell. The Nascent Soul Cultivator’s body trembled as he coughed up a mouthful of blood. His face filled with astonishment. Yan Song also coughed up some blood before he hastily shot up into the air.

“Let’s get out of here!” said Hanxue Zong, his eyes flickering grimly and keeping a firm grip on Zhou Dekun, whose face was stained with tears. Then, glowing light surrounded the four of them, and their bodies began to grow blurry as a teleportation spell activated.

“This is really a mistake, okay? I was really faking, I’m really not a Grandmaster! He is! He….” Zhou Dekun’s plaintive cries echoed out in the air. Down below, the hundreds of Cultivators watched on with looks of fury and helplessness.

“Grandmaster Zhou!!”

“Dammit, they came for Grandmaster Zhou!”

The faces of the four Elders were unsightly, but they could do nothing but watch as Hanxue Zong and the others disappeared.

Zhou Dekun’s cries fell upon the ears of all the onlookers, causing their hearts to fill with sorrow.

“Who would ever have thought that at the critical Moment, Grandmaster Zhou would try to put on such an act,” they thought. “If we didn’t know him, we might have thought his words to be true.”

As for Meng Hao, he stared with wide eyes. Everything that had happened was completely beyond his powers of prediction.

“This time, I wasn’t trying to scam anyone,” he thought reflectively. “How could things have worked out this way? Maybe I’ve just scammed so many people, that I ended up scamming myself?”

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# Chapter 366: The Path of Five Colors

Gradually the land stopped shaking. The voice which had emanated from down below faded away, and silence fell upon Holy Snow City.

The crowds of people were gazing up into the sky at the spot where Zhou Dekun had disappeared. Everyone was taciturn, their moods low.

Grandmaster Zhou, the number one alchemist in the Black Lands, had been taken away as simply as that.

He would never return to the Holy Snow City that he loved so much. Perhaps he would end up in a new location, and would continue to build on his reputation as a Grandmaster….

This sudden event was something that no one present could ever have predicted.

Meng Hao looked thoughtfully up into the sky, contemplating what would have happened if he had prevailed in the alchemy duel with Zhou Dekun, or if Zhou Dekun had not acted so superior just now. Perhaps it wouldn’t have been Zhou Dekun who was taken away but…

Meng Hao himself.

He stood there thoughtfully.

Around him, the hundreds of other Cultivators were similarly thoughtful. Too much had occurred here today, and everyone seemed incapable of absorbing it all.

Surrounded by quietness, Meng Hao slowly shook his head and glanced at Hanxue Shan, who had a blank expression on her face, and then the old woman, Third Elder. He clasped hands and bowed to her, then turned and slowly made to leave this world of silence.

As he was about to walk off, the surrounding Cultivators seemed to come to their senses. One by one, they turned to look at him.

The four Grand Elders also turned to look at him. Second Elder held his tongue, but Fourth Elder took a hesitant step forward. The old woman said nothing.

First Elder, the midget, put a smile onto his face and strode forward. In a loud voice, he addressed Meng Hao: “Grandmaster, where are you going?”

Meng Hao stopped and looked back. “I’m surnamed Meng,” he said. “Earlier, someone said that I wasn’t welcome in Holy Snow City. Naturally, that means I need to leave.” He sighed, shook his head, and turned to leave.

The words immediately caused the surrounding hundreds of Cultivators to feel shock in their hearts. How could they not reacts to such words? Before, when Zhou Dekun was present, they all looked down on Meng Hao. But Zhou Dekun was nothing but history now. Suddenly, Meng Hao’s position was infinitely higher than before.

Without Zhou Dekun, there was no Grandmaster here. To Holy Snow City, such a loss was too vast!

First Elder glared angrily at Second Elder, then strode forward laughing to block Meng Hao’s way.

Immediately, the surrounding Cultivators began to cry out to Meng Hao.

“Grandmaster Meng, what happened earlier was a misunderstanding. The Frigid Snow Clan was inconsiderate in its treatments of you as a guest. There’s no need to bring it up again. Grandmaster, please in no way allow the misunderstanding to remain upon your heart.”

“Yeah! Grandmaster Meng, you are at the pinnacle of the Dao of alchemy. There’s no need for you to lower yourself to our level. This place is your home, Grandmaster Meng!”

“Grandmaster Meng, why not just stay? If you leave, your talent will never be noticed in the outside world. If you stay here, you can become even more famous!”

“Grandmaster Meng, we beg of you to stay!”

The voices of hundreds of Cultivators rose into the air, filled with sincerity and cordiality. Meng Hao immediately appeared moved. He stopped walking, looked around at the surrounding Cultivators, and then clasped hands and bowed deeply.

“I am indebted to your kindness, Fellow Daoists. Generally, I, Meng, could never refuse. However… there are people here who don’t like little old me. I’m afraid I have no choice but to leave.” His words caused Second Elder’s face to immediately fall; he looked around to find quite a few people staring at him. Gritting his teeth, he strode forward a few paces and then clasped hands and bowed deeply to Meng Hao.

“Grandmaster Meng, please forgive me. I was wrong earlier, and I beg for you to not take offense. In my heart, you are truly at the pinnacle of the Dao of alchemy, Grandmaster. When the Frigid Snow Clan was in dire straits, you thought nothing of the hardships and ignored the danger, immediately coming to our aid. I will never forget your kindness, even when my teeth fall out from old age!

“First Elder,” he continued solemnly. “I suggest that we give Grandmaster Meng a Frigid Snow Larva. That is the only way to properly express the depth of the gratitude of the Frigid Snow Clan.”

“One is not enough!” said Fourth Elder. He was a grim-faced man, but he wore a smile now as he took a few steps forward and bowed deeply to Meng Hao with clasped hands. “One is definitely not enough. We currently have two on the verge of completion. We should give both of them to Grandmaster Meng, that would be the best. First Elder, I hope that you can agree. This is the only way to express the gratitude of the Clan. As for the larvae, as long as the Clan exists, and time is sufficient, we can always raise more.”

First Elder felt a bit anxious as he looked at Meng Hao. With Zhou Dekun gone, the only person they had left was this Grandmaster Meng. He gritted his teeth and said, “You are absolutely correct! Grandmaster Meng, please, fear not. The Frigid Snow Larva will be delivered into your hands within a year’s time!”

Meng Hao was inwardly rejoicing, but on the outside he appeared to hesitate. This was something he had just learned to do from Zhou Dekun.

His hesitation caused the surrounding Cultivators to all call out, urging him to stay. Meng Hao continued to hesitate, and then started to shake his head. A second round of crying out then began, and finally he appeared to be vacillating.

“It’s not that I don’t want to stay,” he said with a sigh. “But this place is very dangerous. My Cultivation base is low, and I’m afraid I won’t be powerful enough to protect myself…. Furthermore, I can only stay here for about half a year. There’s simply no way I can stay an entire year.”

First Elder and the others exchanged glances. Finally, the old woman spoke up, looking at Meng Hao with a strange expression. “If the four of us work together, we can reduce the time by more than half. We can produce the Frigid Snow Larva in less than half a year.”

“After you have the Frigid Snow Larva, Grandmaster Meng, you can simply leave,” said First Elder. “We won’t do anything to stop you.”

Many of the Cultivators in the audience were continuing to call out to Meng Hao, urging him to stay. Considering that there were so many solemn requests, Meng Hao finally reluctantly agreed. This caused vast amounts of respectful words of thanks to ring out.

It was in this manner that Meng Hao ended up staying in Holy Snow City. It was also how he became famous there. Regardless of outside Cultivators or

Frigid Snow Clan members, the name of Grandmaster Meng resounded in their ears like thunder.

Were it not for Zhou Dekun's presence in the city earlier, it would not have been so easy for them to accept him, nor to view him with such importance.

Thankfully, Zhou Dekun had laid a strong foundation, and had caused everyone in the city to develop a healthy respect for the Dao of alchemy. The fanaticism with which the locals viewed alchemists made the Frigid Snow Clan members accept Meng Hao with complete courtesy.

It was only logical under such circumstances for Meng Hao to take the foundation Zhou Dekun had built up and make it completely his own.

If poor Zhou Dekun knew what was happening, he would surely cough up several mouthfuls of blood and be filled with endless regret. He would certainly sigh and think about how it's impossible to constantly put on an act. Sadly, what he had worked so painstakingly to create, now belonged to Meng Hao.

However, Meng Hao also felt somewhat wronged. After all, he hadn't set out to achieve this situation; it was the result of a series of lucky coincidences. Everything had landed directly in front of him, and there had been no way to avoid it. It had just smacked right into him.

In the following days, almost all the Cultivators in the city were talking about Grandmaster Zhou. Meng Hao's residence was under special guard by Frigid Snow Clan members.

During this time, quite a few powerful Cultivators came to pay him a formal visit. They were all extremely polite. The way that Meng Hao dealt with them was very different than the mysterious vagueness that had been the hallmark of Zhou Dekun. Meng Hao would smile and give them actual pointers regarding the Dao of alchemy. With only a few words, he was able to cause the local Cultivators to instantly be lost in thought.

Half a month later, Meng Hao had thoroughly cemented his place within Holy Snow City. His name was even beginning to spread throughout the world outside the city walls.

As for the ninety meter tall Wild Giant, people already viewed it as Meng Hao's personal mount. The Western Desert Dragoneer was viewed as Meng Hao's footman.

Many of the Cultivators who planned to request pill concoction services from Meng Hao found out that he liked lotus flowers. As such, they spared no cost in searching a variety of locations to find lotuses for him. Soon, Meng Hao's courtyard was thoroughly festooned with snow lotuses, the aroma of which covered everything.

Regarding the Black Lands Palace invasion, as Hanxue Zong had promised, they truly would not make any military incursions for three months. This gave the Frigid Snow Clan a bit of a buffer period. As the time slipped by, more protective spell formations were erected. All of the Cultivators in the city were mobilized by the Frigid Snow Clan as they strengthened the various districts of the city.

Only Meng Hao was relatively idle. Most of the time, he sat in meditation by the lotus plants. Occasionally he would take out some Celestial soil, and the magical symbols within, to study. Other times he would call Gu La over to examine his totem tattoos.

As far as the lightning which would occasionally fall down from the sky, Meng Hao was completely used to it. He now had a fearsome instinct when it came to sensing its approach. Of course, the Li Clan Patriarch was constantly shrieking and cursing. However, as time passed, his soul embodiment was gradually becoming more resistant to the lightning.

According to Meng Hao's analysis, the Li Clan Patriarch was already transforming into a Soul of Lightning.

In terms of everything, Meng Hao's greatest gain had to do with the Celestial soil symbols. He had been studying them from the moment he arrived in the Black Lands. It was finally at this point that he started to pick out some of the clues.

“These Celestial soil symbols are very similar to totems. I can determine with eighty percent certainty, that the so-called Celestial talisman… was actually a primordial totem!” Breathing heavily, he stared down at the Celestial talismanic paper in his hand, and his eyes began to glow.

“All of my research down to this moment points toward totems!” he thought, his eyes flickering. He closed his eyes for a long moment and then opened them. “The reason I’m so incredibly interested in totems is because after the Heavenly Tribulation, the main conundrum I will face is how to achieve the Perfect Nascent Soul!

“Nascent Souls are divided into the five elements and colors. Four equates to Flawless, five is Perfect… If I could acquire the Gold Core manual of the Sublime Spirit Scripture, then I would be able to see how to successfully step from a Four Color Nascent Soul into a Perfect Nascent Soul. Unfortunately, the Gold Core manual has long since been lost….” The glow in his eyes grew stronger.

“Other stages can’t even compare to the Nascent Soul stage. If you want to get Four Colors… it’s very difficult. Even I don’t know how to do so. However, the totems of the Western Desert, as well as the five elements pill concocting technique of Yan Song from the Eastern lands, have given me a new direction to explore.

“Whether or not I can succeed will be determined by further study and research. I need more Western Desert Cultivators so that I can study their totem tattoos. That’s the only way to reach a certain conclusion!” Meng Hao took a deep breath, and his eyes glittered with a cold aura.

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# Chapter 367: Meng, You Twerp, Do You Dare To Fight Me Or Not?!

Three months passed in a flash. During that time, Holy Snow City was a buzz of activity as everyone was mobilized in various preparations. Meanwhile, various momentous events occurred in the Black Lands. The name of the United Nine remained, but in reality, it no longer existed. Other than Holy Snow City, only one other remained: the City of Nets.

The City of Nets still survived because of its Spirit Severing Patriarch, as well as the favorable position they occupied. Furthermore, the city contained nearly ten thousand Cultivators. Because of its significant size, the Black Lands Palace focused most of its efforts there, leaving Holy Snow City alone for the time being.

Of course, Holy Snow City’s geographical position had a lot to do with that as well, considering its remoteness, and the snow that covered the area year-round.

The once illustrious United Nine now consisted only of Holy Snow City and the City of Nets. All others had either been destroyed or evacuated. The greater part of the Black Lands now belonged to the Black Lands Palace.

There was actually a third area in the Black Lands that offered hindrance to the Black Lands Palace. That was the location formerly known as Dongluo City, but was now the Church of the Golden Light.

The Church of the Golden Light had risen to fame in all of the Black Lands during these three months. It had five thousand members, along with a shocking spell formation. For the moment, the Black Lands Palace had no choice but to retreat and allow the Church of the Golden Light to stay there.

As for the mysterious, enigmatic Patriarch Golden Light, he was even more famous in the Black Lands, and the legends about him multiplied.

By the end of the three months, the situation in the Black Lands was volatile. It was at this time that the Black Lands Palace’s army of Cultivators once again appeared outside of Holy Snow City, along with Western Desert Cultivators. The whole force consisted of several thousand Cultivators and over thirty thousand beasts.

This was no mere probe; it was full-scale war. The land was dotted with utilitarian war chariots which rumbled across the earth, propelled by the power of magic. The chariots bristled with sharp spikes, and emanated a bizarre light, seeming to indicate that they could burst out with shocking magical powers.

As for the more than thirty thousand ferocious beasts, they covered the land and sky in all directions.

Among the Cultivators, the weakest Cultivation base to be seen was Foundation Establishment. As for Core Formation, there were roughly five hundred in the force.

Such an enormous power was enough to shock the entire Black Lands. However, even more shocking was the fact that there wasn’t one Nascent Soul Cultivator in the army, but four!

Obviously, the four Nascent Soul Cultivators were there to deal with the four Grand Elders of the Frigid Snow Clan. Two were from the Black Lands Palace, and wore silver masks, whereas two were from the Western Desert.

Spell shields surrounded Holy Snow City, formations that looked like screaming sheets of snow. There were also ten enormous star-shaped objects rotating in the sky high above the city, emanating countless strands of power.

Within the city, there were slightly more than a thousand Cultivators, including the members of the Frigid Snow Clan, a vast difference when compared to the outside forces. The Holy Snow City forces were split into four battle groups, tasked with guarding the city walls.

The faces of the Cultivators in the city were taut with anxiety. They felt nervous, but none of them fled. The four Grand Elders took charge of different areas of the cities. Their faces were also filled with anxiety.

Meng Hao left his courtyard and made his way to one of the city walls. He looked out at the dark mass that was the enemy force. He had observed large scale battles before, but this would be his first time seeing one from this position.

When it came to a grand war of Cultivators such as this, Meng Hao’s power, though it might be great, was not enough to assure victory or defeat. Only someone of the Spirit Severing stage could do so.

The battle was set to erupt at any moment!

Suddenly, the wails of war bugles could be heard echoing out in the air. As soon as they did, the mass of beasts flying in the air, as well as the neo-demons on the ground, howled and charged.

They were joined by the thousands of Cultivators and their war chariots as they launched their assault on Holy Snow City.

“Lightning Sea Pill!” cried Frigid Snow Clan’s First Elder. A booming sound filled the air, and everything went dim. The defensive tempest which surrounded Holy Snow City seemed as if it were splitting apart.

As soon as his words echoed out, four medicinal pills were tossed out from the city. One of them was instantly snapped up by a flying Flood Dragon; suddenly, its body began to tremble, and a boom filled the air as it exploded into pieces. From within the blood and gore, multiple lightning bolts shot out.

They spread out in all directions to form an enormous Lightning Sea, roughly three hundred meters wide.

Any flying beasts who were caught up in the Lightning Sea immediately began to let out shrill shrieks as they were torn into pieces!

The three Lightning Sea Pills which landed onto the ground caused the earth to tremble. Suddenly, three hundred meter wide Lightning Seas erupted up. Beasts and Cultivators alike let out miserable screams as they were shredded apart by the lightning.

At the same time, black clouds appeared in the sky overhead. Even more blazing lightning crackled down, slamming into the ground.

The shocking effects of these four Lightning Sea Pills were actually beyond what Meng Hao had anticipated. He had concocted them three months before and given them to the Frigid Snow Clan.

In his estimation, the pills should have produced Lightning Seas only several dozen meters wide, not hundreds. It only took him a moment to understand what had happened, though. This area was constantly swathed with snowstorms and tempests. The frozen ground and the howling wind were actually special spell formations of Holy Snow City. They amplified the effects of the Lightning Sea Pills, causing their power to increase exponentially.

“The amplification has limits,” thought Meng Hao. “Using it too much in this capacity will cause the spell formations to break on their own.”

Sounds of rejoicing could be heard throughout the city.

“Grandmaster Meng is amazing!!”

“That was a magic pill concocted by Grandmaster Meng. Such power is unprecedented! It shook Heaven and Earth!”

“Grandmaster Meng!!”

The cries drifted outside of the city walls, followed by groups of Cultivators. As they flew out, one of the star shapes above the city also flew out, slashing into the Black Lands Palace Cultivators and shredding them into pieces.

The ground quaked as death filled the battlefield. Explosions reverberated out, along with bloodcurdling shrieks. Blood showered down like rain. From his position on the city wall, Meng Hao watched all of this happening, his heart trembling.

Magical light emanated out from the war chariots, slamming into the city defenses. The ice on the ground began to crack, and the sky itself seemed about to be ripped apart.

It was at this time that a Western Desert Cultivator flew up into the air. He was in the late Core Formation stage and had three totem tattoos on his body. One was a Flood Dragon, another was a Mountain Spirit, and the third was a mighty river. As he flew up to hover in the air, he held a severed head in his hand, dripping blood. He looked up toward the city and laughed heartily.

“Grandmaster Meng, you dogfart, do you dare to come out and fight me!?!?” Behind the man, a Flood Dragon appeared, roaring as it flew up into the sky. Next to the Flood Dragon was an enormous Mountain Spirit, grinning viciously toward the city. Beneath the feet of the strapping Cultivator, an enormous, world-shaking river appeared.

“I am Ta Luo, three-totem Cultivator of the Thorn Tribe of the Western Desert. I challenge Grandmaster Meng of Holy Snow City to a duel! Do you dare to fight me? Don’t tell me the only thing you can do is concoct pills!? Meng, you twerp, do you dare to fight me or not?! You numbskull alchemist! All you can do is concoct pills in some dark room somewhere. Do you dare to come fight me in the open!?”

As his words echoed out, Meng Hao stood on the city wall, his expression the same as ever as he looked out at the hollering Cultivator and his totems.

“A Mountain Spirit totem,” thought Meng Hao. “It looks like both a mountain and a spirit. I definitely need to study it.” Suddenly, his eyes flickered as he looked up into the sky.

Next to him was Third Elder, the old woman. She frowned.

“He’s just trying to provoke you,” she said. “It’s obviously a trick, Grandmaster Meng, you….” Before she could finish speaking, Meng Hao’s body flickered and he shot off the city wall.

The old woman’s face flickered, and she shot into the air to follow him. Even as she did, however, one of the silver-masked Nascent Soul Cultivators from the Black Lands Palace laughed viciously, and then disappeared. When he reappeared, he was directly in front of the old woman, blocking her path.

The Western Desert Cultivator with the severed head hovered there watching Meng Hao approach. Laughing uproariously, he clenched his right hand, causing the severed head to explode and splatter his body with blood and gore. With a vicious smile, he shot toward Meng Hao.

They closed in on each other at top speed, which of course drew the attention of Cultivators from both sides of the battle. Those from Holy Snow City were all very nervous, and the other three Grand Elders tried to fly over to help, but were obstructed by the other Black Lands Palace and Western Desert Nascent Soul Cultivators.

“Meng, you twerp, I’m gonna help you understand how Western Desert Cultivators kill people!” The power of the huge man’s late Core Formation Cultivation base exploded out to shocking effect. The Flood Dragon behind him roared, the Mountain Spirit radiated ferocity, and the mighty river screamed through the air. All of it was very imposing.

This man had complete confidence that he would be able to kill this opponent. Once this Grandmaster Meng tangled with him, it would only take a moment or two to ensure that he died.

“Once he emerged from the city walls, his fate was sealed!” thought the Western Desert Cultivator, grinning viciously. In the blink of an eye, they were roughly thirty meters from each other. Meng Hao’s expression was the same as always; however, a bloody glow suddenly emanated out from his body. Suddenly, he disappeared. It was a Bloodburst Flash which suddenly placed him directly in front of the grinning Western Desert Cultivator.

The man’s eyes went wide, and without even thinking about it, he moved to retreat backward. However, Meng Hao’s hand shot out like lightning, grabbed his clothing and then lifted him up above his head. He pulled off this move smoothly, as if he had practiced it many times.

It was a bizarre move, and everyone who saw it gaped.

The moment in which Meng Hao grabbed the shocked Western Desert Cultivator and lifted him up, a lightning bolt suddenly appeared in the sky. This particular lightning bolt looked different from normal lightning.

That was because it was not ordinary lightning; this was Tribulation Lightning!

None of the onlookers even had an opportunity to react. The Heavenly Tribulation descended onto the body of the Western Desert Cultivator. The Flood Dragon shrieked as it shattered into pieces. The Mountain Spirit collapsed, and the river exploded. The Western Desert Cultivator didn’t even have time to shriek. The Heavenly Tribulation smashed into his body, turning it… completely black.

He was absolutely dead!!

He wasn’t Meng Hao, who was able to resist such lightning for various reasons. Obviously, this man was not equipped with any of those methods, and was killed.

“Too bad about that Mountain Spirit totem,” said Meng Hao, shaking his head. He loosened his grip, dropping the corpse. Everyone looked on, stunned, as Meng Hao Bloodburst Flashed away, returning to the city wall at incredible speed.

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# Chapter 368: Secret Dragoneer Technique

The battlefield was suddenly filled with silence….

There couldn’t be anything but silence. This was the first time that these people had ever seen a Cultivator exterminated by lightning. Lightning was powerful, but Cultivators were not weak. Being killed by lightning was something that was usually mentioned when insulting others, but something that few people actually saw happen….

In fact, few people were ever actually killed by lightning, much less legendary Heavenly Tribulation.

Not many people had ever even seen Heavenly Tribulation. The only time anyone did was because of the appearance of certain medicinal pills, or other Heavenly materials or Earthly treasures, and that was a Heavenly Tribulation that didn’t target people….

“Exterminated by lightning….”

“How could that be possible? What lightning was that?! It was terrifying!”

“What was terrifying wasn’t the lightning, but that Grandmaster Meng. Dammit, even lighting from the Heavens helps him? Or, was it some magical technique?”

The Black Lands Palace Cultivators were shocked. This extermination by lightning was incredibly terrifying to them.

Cultivators existed beneath the Heavens, whereas lightning was something of the Heavens. Therefore, it seemed to them that lightning was something that… could not be evaded!

Even the Nascent Soul Cultivators stared with shining eyes. Meng Hao's actions just now were completely beyond their powers of prediction. If it was a magical technique he had used, well that was shocking in and of itself. However… the way Meng Hao had lifted the man up into the air with seemingly practiced ease made it seem like it was something he frequently did.

In contrast with the Cultivators from the Black Lands Palace and the Western Desert, those in Holy Snow City had long since become accustomed to the fact that lightning would descend upon their Grandmaster Meng every few days.

Everybody knew about it. In fact, occasionally, when people went to request pill concocting services, they would even see the lighting.

Seeing the Western Desert Cultivator exterminated by the lightning caused complex thoughts to fill the minds of the people in Holy Snow City…. Their reverence for Meng Hao grew even stronger.

"Just what shocking things has Grandmaster Meng done to anger the Heavens? Over the past months, that lightning has constantly been trying to exterminate him."

"That Western Desert Cultivator was really unlucky. Of all the people to piss off, he pissed off Grandmaster Meng…. You know, over the past couple months, I happened on a few occasions to see a miserable soul embodiment lifted up by Grandmaster Meng…."

Meng Hao cleared his throat as he stood there on the city wall. He ignored the gazes that were all fixed upon him. He had long since become accustomed to the lightning, and by now had reached the point where he could predict it.

After a long moment passed, the fighting on the battlefield resumed. The slaughtering continued, but as it did, the Cultivators would occasionally look up into the sky. The booms were usually the result of magical techniques, but many of the Cultivators would dodge to the side nonetheless, clearly fearful that lighting would fall to exterminate them.

It took about three days before such behavior died out. During those three days, the Black Lands Palace Cultivators launched continuous assaults, which caused booms to fill the air, and shook the very ground. On the night of the third day, a huge explosion shook everything as one of Holy Snow City's tempest spell formations collapsed.

As the formation collapsed, vast quantities of Black Lands Palace Cultivators charged in, along with countless ferocious beasts. Western Desert Cultivators also joined them.

A rumbling filled the air as glowing strands shot out from the star-shaped objects in the sky. Although the night was dark, the battlefield was as brightly lit as if it were daytime.

Finally, a critical moment in the battle arrived. The four Grand Elders were there, battling fiercely in mid-air with the Black Lands Palace and Western Desert Cultivators.

Meng Hao's face was unsightly as he stood atop the city wall. Suddenly, he raised up his right hand. A flash of blood could be seen as a flying creature that had been charging toward him fell to the ground, dead.

"Three months," he thought. "If the city falls, then they will never finish with the Frigid Snow Larva." Whether or not Holy Snow City fell in the end had little to do with him. However, before the six month time period was up, it must not.

It was at this moment that the ground began to tremble as two Wild Giants appeared off in the distance. Following them were several thousand Cultivators from the Black Lands Palace and the Western Desert. Of course, a black mass of howling, beastly neo-demons accompanied them.

"Why hasn't the Spirit Severing Patriarch made an appearance?" thought Meng Hao. The day Zhou Dekun had been taken, Meng Hao heard the howl echoing up from underground. That simple howl had caused the deaths of countless beasts and Cultivators outside the city wall.

Now, even when the tempest spell formation had been broken, the Frigid Snow Clan's Spirit Severing Patriarch still hadn't come out.

"It seems Hanxue Zong was right, as were the rumors floating about outside. The Spirit Severing Patriarch is obviously dying. However, the Black Lands Palace is still scared of him. They seem ferocious in their attacks, but they are still probing to get information about the Spirit Severing Patriarch." Meng Hao's gaze flickered as he looked off into the distance at two Western Desert Cultivators who were shooting toward Hanxue Shan, their totems shining. The guards who surrounded Hanxue Shan coughed up blood, incapable of fighting back.

Meng Hao let out a cold snort as he shot forward with a Bloodburst Flash. In the blink of an eye, he was next to Hanxue Shan. He waved a finger, and the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex appeared, instantly suppressing the Cultivation base and life force of the Western Desert Cultivators. A sword aura appeared as a flying sword shot out from Meng Hao's bag of holding. It instantly decapitated the two men, then came back to circulate around Meng Hao.

Hanxue Shan's face was pale as she looked over at Meng Hao and smiled.

"You saved me again," she said.

Snow began to fall, and a whimpering sound filled the air as the snowflakes danced about in the wind. It sounded like a funeral song. Booms could be heard, along with the sound of intense fighting. The city shook as, one after another, the star-shaped objects up in the sky collapsed. The Western Desert and Black Lands Cultivators fought fiercely. The sky was filled with snow, but the ground was covered in blood.

Meng Hao didn't respond to Hanxue Shan. He stamped his foot onto the ground, causing countless strands of Demonic Qi to rise up, visible only to him. They congealed together behind him to form into an obscure mass that blocked a glowing beam of light that had just shot out from a nearby war chariot.

Rumbling filled the air. The Demonic Qi had blocked the incoming beam, but the power of the attack was still there, spreading out into the area. Meng Hao wrapped his arm around Hanxue Shan’s waist, then shot away toward the city wall to avoid the attack.

Hanxue Shan looked up at the star-shaped objects collapsing, the Western Desert Cultivators who were appearing on various sections of the city wall, and the glow of magical techniques that filled the sky. Her voice bitter, she said, “You should leave. They want to kill the Frigid Snow Clan, not you. With your Cultivation base, it would be easy for you to get out of here right now.”

Off in the distance, the old woman, Third Elder, coughed up a mouthful of blood, then gritted her teeth and continued to fight.

“It’s useless,” said Hanxue Shan, despair filling her eyes. “Even if I went all out and used the Frigid Snow Thorn Rampart, the Patriarch is withering away and barely conscious. There’s no way to use the secret Dragoneer technique to catalyze the thorns….” A rumbling sound filled the air as an entire section of the city wall collapsed, and a fierce-looking Western Desert Cultivator shot into the city.

“What Thorn Rampart?” asked Meng Hao, frowning.

“The Frigid Snow Thorn Rampart is indestructible, and could protect the city for an entire month,” she said softly, her voice filled with bitterness. “It’s a sacred relic that the Frigid Snow Clan brought with us many years ago when we moved here from the Western Desert. After all the years, it’s mostly withered. Only a special secret technique can be used to revive it.

“That technique is only known to Elders and certain others with the right bloodline to master it. Right now, no one can catalyze the thorns. Only the Patriarch has a Cultivation base sufficient enough to do so.” She slapped her bag of holding to produce a dried up seed.

“This is one of eight seeds. The Elders all have one, and the rest are with the Patriarch. None of us were ever able to succeed.”

“Catalyze?” said Meng Hao, his eyes glittering. He was about to continue when suddenly a boom filled the air, and the city wall shook. Meng Hao’s face flickered. He grabbed Hanxue Shan, retreating again. Off in the distance, a huge group of Black Lands Cultivators was approaching.

As the city wall crumbled, miserable screams filled the air. Meng Hao continued to retreat with Hanxue Shan in tow. His voice urgent, he said, “Tell me that catalysis technique. I’m an alchemist, and I already have my own catalysis techniques; perhaps because of that, I will be able to understand yours.”

Hanxue Shan gaped at him for a moment. Under normal circumstances, she would never reveal a secret Clan technique. Even Soul Search would be useless; the technique was a legacy magic that was branded into her very blood. However, after thinking for the space of a few breaths, she made her decision. When the Frigid Snow Clan had existed in the Western Desert, at the height of their power, this was the secret technique used by generations of their Grand Dragoneers! Her voice soft, she began to explain it to Meng Hao.

The secret technique was not very long, only about a thousand characters in length. As the words entered Meng Hao’s ears, his heart began to shake. It was as if all of the sights and sounds of the battle around him vanished. The only thing left were the thousand characters that made up the secret technique!

“….cause Time to sink, the ebb and flow of the moon, grasp the will of the shining sun, all living things contain the will of eternal life….” Hanxue Shan softly spoke the words that could cause a frenzied commotion if they were revealed in the Western Desert. In fact, when the rebel clan member Hanxue Zong was spared by his father, all memories of this secret technique were erased from his mind. That was one of his reasons for coming back to settle his old score and eradicate the Frigid Snow Clan. There was no way for him to reacquire the technique other than to have a Clan member personally tell him!

Meng Hao’s mind reeled. He closed his eyes, allowing the various passages of the technique to resonate in his head. He suddenly thought of the Violet Fate Sect’s catalysis arts, as well as the Time refining jade page from which he had been able to figure out the Time magic.

Of those two different mnemonics, the catalysis technique was the first layer. The secret Time magic was the second layer. And now… Meng Hao’s mind spun. After hearing the secret technique of the Frigid Snow Clan, he realized that it was the third layer!

Secret Dragoneer technique!

Any of the techniques alone could provide moderate success. But if anyone was able to acquire all three, then the knowledge could be used to mutually increase the effectiveness and power of the others by a vast amount.

Because he knew the secret catalysis method and also understood the secret Time magic, when he heard the Dragoneer technique, he understood it instantly, and it was branded onto his mind.

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# Chapter 369: Thorn Rampart

Meng Hao’s eyes snapped open. “Give me the Thorn Rampart seed!”

A strange light gleamed in his eyes, as if Time itself were buried within. Gradually, it turned into an indescribable power, like some sort of magical technique that made it so a single glance from him could cause a person to never be able to forget him.

Hanxue Shan’s heart shook. She had seen a gaze like this before, back when the Spirit Severing Patriarch had awoken once. His eyes had contained deep abstruseness, as if they contained Time. A single glance from him was something she wouldn’t be able to forget for countless years.

As her mind reeled, she seemed to lose any ability to resist him. Without thinking about it, she reached her hand out and handed over her Clan’s sacred relic, the Thorn Rampart seed.

The instant the seed touched his hand, Meng Hao gasped. His Cultivation base rotated rapidly, and a golden light instantly spread out. His secret catalysis art, the magic of Time, and the newly acquired secret Dragoneer technique were all unleashed inside of him.

The ability to catalyze all plants. The magic to unleash the power of Time. The Dragoneer ability to control all the beasts under Heaven. These three mysterious arts melded together inside Meng Hao, and as his Cultivation base rotated, the Thorn Rampart seed in his hand suddenly began to expand. It was no longer withered, and in fact, within moments, a sprout appeared, which turned into vegetation. Within the blink of an eye, it had grown to cover Meng Hao’s entire arm.

Meng Hao’s body was no longer shining with a golden light. Shockingly, a thick plant-like aura emanated out from him. This aura instantly caught the attention of the attacking Western Desert Cultivators. When they laid eyes on Meng Hao, they weren’t sure why, but their hearts began to tremble. Immediately, they shot toward him.

The only person near Meng Hao was Hanxue Shan. Everyone else had long since fled. The city wall was falling, and up above, the four Grand Elders had looks of despair written on their faces.

How could they have imagined that after the three month period, the Black Lands Palace and the Western Desert would launch a full-scale assault? There was no way that Holy Snow City could stand up to it.

Hanxue Shan smiled sadly as she watched the eight Western Desert Cultivators closing in on Meng Hao. There was nothing she could do to fight back against them. In a moment, they were thirty meters away from Meng Hao.

Meng Hao sat there cross-legged, clutching the Thorn Rampart seed. Green vegetation and leaves covered his right arm, and continued to grow, covering the rest of his body.

Thirty meters. Twenty-five meters. Fifteen meters!

When they were fifteen meters away, Meng Hao’s closed eyes suddenly snapped open. They glowed brightly as he reached his right hand out and pushed it down onto the ground.

As he did, the plant material on his body burrowed down into the soil. Suddenly, shocking rumbling sounds could be heard as a three meter long thorn stabbed out from the ground next to the city wall. The speed with which it moved was hard to describe, and made it impossible for anyone to evade it. In the blink of an eye, it stabbed through one of the Western Desert Cultivators.

Next, more thorns burst up around Meng Hao. Miserable screams filled the air as the rest of the seven Western Desert Cultivators were stabbed through with long thorns and lifted up into the air.

Even more shocking was that after stabbing through the Cultivators, the thorns twitched and trembled, as if they were absorbing the Cultivators' blood and Cultivation base. The eight men rapidly began to wither. Bloodcurdling shrieks filled the air that didn't even sound human, echoing out, causing all of the other surrounding Cultivators to feel extreme shock.

"What is that?" they thought, panting.

Before they had time to react, masses of small thorns exploded out from the shriveled bodies of the eight Cultivators to shoot out in all directions.

Some stabbed into the ground and disappeared. They reappeared moments later, in locations not too distant, where they stabbed into the bodies of more Cultivators.

Others directly shot into nearby Cultivators. Even as they screamed out, their bodies withered, whereupon more thorns would explode out.

Meng Hao was the center of it all as thorns began to stab out from the city walls themselves. This, of course, caused a great commotion. The thorns actually didn't distinguish between Holy Snow City Cultivators or those from the Black Lands Palace. They stabbed through all of them, absorbing their flesh, blood and life force, and then expanding. Within the space of a few breaths, the area surrounding Meng Hao for three thousand meters was a world filled with thorns.

This, of course, instantly affected the course of the battle. Vast numbers of Black Lands Palace Cultivators retreated backward in shock. Unfortunately, they were too slow and were still stabbed through by the thorns. Soon, the entire city was bristling with thorns, sharp, fierce and bright red. By this time, the thorns were already expanding outside the city as well.

Back inside the city, all of the Holy Snow City Cultivators stood with pale faces, not daring to move. Everything around them was surrounded by countless thorns. They looked out at the Black Lands Palace Cultivators and their beasts outside of the city. Howling in anguish, they retreated at top speed as thorns burst out from the ground around them.

The sky wasn't safe either. The thorns shot up into the air, stabbing into any living thing that flew about up above.

By now, everything seemed to be covered with thorns. Outside the city, only a few hundred of the Black Lands Palace and Western Desert Cultivators managed to flee without being affected. They stared back at the scene behind them with shock and astonishment.

Up above, the four Grand Elders and the Nascent Soul Cultivators from the Black Lands Palace and the Western Desert were no longer capable of fighting. They had split apart, and were constantly blocking the shooting thorns.

As of now, all eyes on the battlefield were fixed on Meng Hao. In front of him was a ferocious, gigantic thorn, rising straight up into the sky. It emanated a Blood Qi, and was covered by countless smaller thorns. It was thoroughly sinister.

Meng Hao seemed to be the very center of it all, and the only place that didn't have any thorns. He seemed to be the source of all the thorns, and as he slowly rose to his feet, countless gasps filled the air.

Around his right hand swirled innumerable leaves, each one of which was covered with thorns. Not a single person would disbelieve that Meng Hao was the source of all the thorns everywhere.

He took a deep breath. He'd never imagined that the Thorn Rampart seed would be so astonishing. The fact that it couldn't tell the difference between friend and foe was something he couldn't do anything about. It required his power of catalysis to grow, but when it came to sucking the life and blood out of Cultivators, Meng Hao could do nothing to control it, although he could sense it.

"Grandmaster Meng…." said a nearby Holy Snow City Cultivator. His left leg had been stabbed by a thorn. As soon as the word left his mouth, a thorn suddenly flew over, and he closed his mouth. The thorn stopped only an inch from his forehead, where it hovered like a snake for a moment before moving away.

Everything was quiet. All of the Cultivators in the area who had been stabbed by thorns, be they from the Western Desert or the Black Lands, stood stock still, not daring to utter a peep.

Up in mid-air, the faces of the Nascent Soul Cultivators flickered, and they also stopped moving, not daring to fly or speak. The reason for this was that they were surrounded by tens of thousands of thorns. From the looks of things, if they made even the slightest move, the thorns would instantly stab through them and kill them.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, and his eyes shone brightly.

On the city wall, and outside the city, were countless Cultivators and beasts who had been stabbed by thorns. Their faces were pale and filled with dread as they gazed over at Meng Hao.

The few hundred people who had managed to escape the danger looked at Meng Hao, as quiet as cicadas during the winter. At the moment, everyone on the battlefield suddenly realized that the outcome of the entire battle now lay in one person’s hand.

That person was none other than Meng Hao.

Meng Hao was the only person among them who knew that the decision actually wasn’t his to make. This Thorn Rampart was actually not responding to any of his commands….

He thought silently as he looked around. The thorns were still stabbed through the surrounding Cultivators, who could only stand there with looks of despair on their faces.

It was at this moment that suddenly, a voice entered Meng Hao’s ears that no one else could hear. It was an ancient voice, as weak as if it came from the mouth of someone about to die.

“The destructive Thorn Rampart can exterminate anything under the Spirit Severing stage. Once it takes root, it can’t be moved, and will live for one month…. It doesn’t matter how you woke it. Right now, you need to still your mind and extract a drop of blood from yourself that contains some of your will. Place it onto the Thorn Rampart trunk in front of you. Remember…. The drop of blood must contain your will. That will allow you to issue an order to the thorns.” The voice seemed to have come out from nowhere, but as soon as Meng Hao heard it, he suddenly recalled the voice he had heard three months ago when Zhou Dekun was taken.

The voice was one and the same.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he thought. According to the method just described to him, he sliced a cut onto his forehead. A drop of blood appeared, which contained some of Meng Hao’s Cultivation base and will. As it flew forward, Meng Hao felt a wave of weakness flow through him. He knew that in his entire life, he could produce no more than five such drops of blood!

Anything more than five would be far too much of a loss.

Surrounded by silence, Meng Hao clenched his jaw. The blood was extremely precious, but, for the sake of the Frigid Snow Larva… he caused the drop to fly forward and enter into the Thorn Rampart trunk. His eyes flashed.

Nothing obstructed its way; it merged into the Thorn Rampart trunk, which then began to tremble.

Instantly, the thorns stabbed into the Holy Snow City Cultivators faded from sight, and their wounds closed up. The thorns actually remained in their bodies, fuel with which to heal their wounds.

As the thorns disappeared, the Black Lands Palace and Western Desert Cultivators outside of the city let out bloodcurdling screams. Their bodies instantly began to wither completely. The sounds of explosions filled the air as some of the dying Cultivators chose to self-detonate.

The explosions caused Meng Hao's mind to feel as if it were shattering. It seemed as if he had become one with the Thorn Rampart trunk, and that all of the thorns spread about were extensions of his will.

With a mere thought, he could kill everyone.

At the same time, his Spiritual Sense felt as if it were wasting away. Meng Hao's Spiritual Sense was second only to that of a Nascent Soul Cultivator, far above that of anyone in the same stage as him. Were it not, then the strain would have completely dried it up.

Suddenly, Meng Hao's will sensed something new. Outside of the city, in a location stabbed through with a handful of thorns, someone spoke in a low voice.

"Grandmaster Meng, is that you?"

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# Chapter 370: Spirit Severing Pill

A voice transmitted into Meng Hao’s will. “Grandmaster Meng, this is Yan Song…. Fellow Daoist Meng, after we parted that day, I continued to think about everything that happened, and couldn’t help but feel that something was fishy about Zhou Dekun…. He’s already been sent to the Western Desert, though, so there’s nothing I can do to corroborate my theory. Fellow Daoist Meng, I actually came here today to look for you. This isn’t my actual body, it’s just a sliver of my will.

“Fellow Daoist, I very much admire your Dao of alchemy and, well… this is not the time for a long discussion. I’ll just say two more things. With your skill in the Dao of alchemy, we can talk about the Spirit Severing Pill! If you’re interested, then meet with me three days from now in the east of the city, and we can discuss it at length.”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as the voice suddenly disappeared. Outside the city, the miserable cries slowly began to fade away. Only a few Cultivators had managed to escape from the effects of the secret technique; most had been transformed into withered corpses.

Meng Hao slowly removed his will from the Thorn Rampart trunk, leaving behind only a tiny connection. He caused the rest of the thorns that filled the city to gradually shrink back. Now, the main trunk was even more prominently visible.

The wail of war bugles could be heard in the air; this particular Western Desert and Black Lands Palace attack group had no choice but to retreat. The war was not over. The forces of the Black Lands Palace and the Western Desert were reduced, however, off in the distance, the sky was filled with prismatic beams of light.

It was no longer night; morning was approaching. Everyone in the city was exhausted. Amidst the rare silence, Meng Hao rose to his feet as the four Grand Elders approached.

They looked haggard, and Third and Fourth Elders were injured. They stood in front of Meng Hao, looking him over with complex expressions.

After a long moment, First Elder slowly said, “The Thorn Rampart will live for one month. We should be safe during that time. The four of us will do the best we can to finish the Frigid Snow Larva.” He gave Meng Hao a deep look, then turned and left.

The other Elders looked at him without speaking and then walked off. The old woman looked back at Meng Hao as she departed, but held her tongue.

The surviving members of the Frigid Snow Clan dispersed to make repairs to the city and spell formations. They had a month of time in which there would be relative safety, but there were many things that needed to be repaired.

Everyone was exhausted. After injuries were tended to, there were still mental scars. Most of the Cultivators sat cross-legged in meditation, making the city very quiet.

The newly arrived force from the Western Desert bolstered the enemy forces into the thousands. However, they did not attack, but rather spread out, forming a complete blockade around Holy Snow City.

Meng Hao was also exhausted. As he walked through the city, the Cultivators he encountered all looked at him with expressions of awe. They would bow to him with lowered eyes, not even daring to meet his gaze.

The appearance of the Thorn Rampart caused everyone to view Meng Hao as a representation of terror. Despite his status as a Grandmaster, this fear was incapable of being dispelled.

The Frigid Snow Clan members also looked at him with looks of intense veneration. Essentially, Meng Hao had single-handedly secured victory in the battle. Without him there, Holy Snow City would be nothing but smoldering wreckage now.

Based on the various battle achievements secured in the fight against the Black Lands Palace, the Frigid Snow Clan distributed magical treasures to the forces within the city. Large amounts of Cultivators converged on a palace near the city center, where the records of battle achievements were kept and rewards distributed.

Meng Hao was tired, but seeing the palace on his way back to his courtyard, he changed course and headed over.

The area was quite bustling, with Cultivators coming in and out. The hundred or so people that Meng Hao saw made this place seem a lot more packed than the empty areas in the rest of the city.

As soon as Meng Hao entered, people spotted him, and soon everyone was looking at him, hearts trembling. Without even thinking about it, they bowed their heads and clasped hands, unable to cover up the awe on their faces.

“Grandmaster Meng….”

“Greetings, Grandmaster Meng!”

Meng Hao nodded, walking past the groups of people until he stood before a pillar of light in the middle of the main hall. The pillar was illusory, and inside could be seen lists of names. Next to each name was a number.

These were the battle achievements accrued during the defense of the city. The rewards one could receive depended on how many enemies they had slain.

Next to the pillar of light sat two members of the Frigid Snow Clan. When they saw Meng Hao, they immediately rose to their feet, clasped hands, and bowed deeply.

Everyone in the area grew very quiet.

Meng Hao said nothing. He simply examined the pillar of light and the list of names.

“Grandmaster Meng. Battle achievement of 97,542!”

The battle achievement of the person in second place didn’t even exceed two thousand. Muttering to himself, Meng Hao glanced over the reward list.

There were technique manuals, magical items, medicinal elixirs and special materials for concocting medicinal pills and forging weapons. There were some items which caused Meng Hao’s heart to begin to thump after he saw them.

Most importantly, the battle achievements required to acquire these items were almost nothing compared to what Meng Hao had accrued.

Just when Meng Hao was trying to decide whether or not take them all, four new items suddenly popped up on the rewards list.

These four items caused the surrounding Cultivators to break into an uproar.

“Thorn Rampart seed. 100,000 battle achievements!”

“Frigid Snow Clan Secret Dragoneer technique. 20,000 battle achievements!”

“Five Planets Snow Formation. 50,000 battle achievements!”

“Demon Nurturing Pill formula. 100,000 battle achievements!”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and the surrounding Cultivators were breathing heavily. They had no idea what the secret Dragoneer technique was, but they did recognize the Thorn Rampart seed. The fearsomeness of the Thorn Rampart in the previous battle was something they could never forget.

“And then there’s the Five Planets Snow Formation. That’s a special spell formation of the Frigid Snow Clan. You can create a Five Planets Magical Shield….”

As the Cultivators discussed the new items, Meng Hao stood there thoughtfully. The Thorn Rampart seed was an expendable item, but was incredibly powerful. The seed he had used before had been given to him by Hanxue Shan. If he wanted to use another one in the future, it most likely would not be very easy to acquire.

Even more eye-catching, though, was the Five Planets Snow Formation.

“Is that what those flying Five Planets items above the city were?” he thought. Then he glanced at the Demon Nurturing Pill formula.

“What pill is that?” Meng Hao smiled. It was obvious that these items had been intentionally put up by the Frigid Snow Clan to attract his attention. “It seems the Frigid Snow Clan really values me because of that battle,” he thought. Instead of taking any of the items, he looked at one of the Frigid Snow Clan members standing next to the pillar of light.

“Is it possible to acquire items on credit?” he asked, smiling. The surrounding Cultivators stared in shock at Meng Hao. They had never thought of doing such a thing.

The very concept of it seemed to cross the bottom line, especially considering the danger that Holy Snow City was in now. The surrounding Cultivators’ eyes began to gleam with a strange light.

The Frigid Snow Clan member who Meng Hao had directed his question to was a middle-aged woman. She gaped at him, somewhat at a loss. It was at this exact moment that suddenly, the battle achievement number next to Meng Hao’s name suddenly increased by one hundred thousand. Now his total was roughly 190,000.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he pointed out the items he wanted. The pillar of light sparkled, and two jade slips flew out. One was the Five Planets spell formation method and the other was the formula for the Demon Nurturing Pill.

After this, Meng Hao’s name was no longer in the first place position in the pillar of light, but rather, last. In fact, now his number was in the negative, to the amount of nearly 50,000.

Jade slips in hand, Meng Hao left the palace, under the envious gazes of the surrounding Cultivators. He walked back through the city to his courtyard.

He sat down cross-legged amidst the lotuses, then looked down at the jade slips. Time passed by. It was evening when he looked up again, and his eyes were gleaming.

“This spell formation seems pretty amazing. Too bad I don’t understand spell formations very well. If I meet someone who does, though, perhaps I can get some help in using it.

“This Demon Nurturing Pill is really interesting. It’s not for consumption by Cultivators, but rather, neo-demons and beasts.” Meng Hao put the jade slips away and then closed his eyes in meditation to restore energy.

A few days later, the late night was still and the moon shone brightly up above. The Thorn Rampart had become the final line of defense for the city. On multiple occasions, Black Lands Palace Cultivators had tried to break through but were thoroughly obstructed. Not many were killed or injured, but the effectiveness of the thorns was clear.

In his courtyard, Meng Hao sat cross-legged, meditating. Suddenly, his eyes opened and he pointed his right index finger toward the ground. Immediately, Demonic Qi began to congeal. It only took a moment for a figure to appear in front of him that resembled him in every aspect. After it turned into Meng Hao, it flickered and flew into the air.

In the east section of the city, there was a relatively remote street. It was completely deserted at the moment, until a figure appeared. It was of course none other than Meng Hao.

He strode down the winding street for the time it takes an incense stick to burn, until he reached an even more remote corner, where he stopped. He looked over his shoulder and said, “You’ve been following me for a while. How much longer?”

A grating voice could be heard. “Fellow Daoist Meng, you’re not only a Grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy, I think your Spiritual Sense is the most powerful I’ve seen in any Core Formation Cultivator. It’s almost comparable to my own.” One of the shadows behind Meng Hao twisted, turning into Yan Song. He looked at Meng Hao with a smile.

“I’ll give you three sentences to explain yourself,” said Meng Hao lightly. As he spoke, thorns suddenly emerged from the ground.

Without hesitation, Yan Song replied, “I happened upon a manual once that contained information regarding the method to concoct an ancient medicinal pill called the Spirit Severing Pill, which, if consumed when breaking through to the Spirit Severing Stage, can ensure success. After years of searching, I was able to discover the resting place of this legacy of the Dao of alchemy; it is located in the Western Desert, in a place I visited once. I can’t acquire the pill alone; however, with your skill in the Dao of alchemy, Fellow Daoist Meng, I’m sure we can succeed, whereupon we can share the pill formula.”

“Considering the level of my Cultivation base, such a pill doesn’t interest me very much,” replied Meng Hao lightly.

“Fellow Daoist Meng, please reconsider. Considering your skill in the Dao of alchemy, it won’t be difficult for you to break into the Nascent Soul stage. If you don’t begin to make preparations for the Spirit Severing stage now, the First of your Severings will be difficult. You can’t rely on simple enlightenment alone. Besides, the place I intend to go to contains not only the formula, but also a completed Spirit Severing Pill!” Yan Song waved his right hand, causing a wood slip to fly out. “This wood slip is one of the sections of the manual. Fellow Daoist Meng, feel free to confirm for yourself whether I’m telling the truth or not. If you change your mind, you can use the wood slip to contact me. The location in the Western Desert is located close to several Tribes. Without my help, you won’t be able to conceal your Cultivator’s Qi, and will be unable to enter the area.” With that, Yan Song gave Meng Hao a final look, then gradually faded and disappeared.

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# Chapter 371: Concocting a Nascent Soul like Concocting Pills!

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he watched Yan Song fade away. He reached out to take the wooden slip that hovered in front of him, then turned and left.

He didn’t quite trust the man, so he had used his Demonic Qi Clone to meet him.

Of course, Yan Song actually feared Meng Hao quite a bit thanks to the Thorn Rampart. As such, he had also used other means to meet, and hadn’t come in the form of his true self.

“Considering neither of us trust each other, why would he invite me to come along…?” thought Meng Hao as he walked back the way he came. “Of course, there’s no great enmity between us, so why would he go to the trouble of trying to trick me? Could it be that there is a bit of truth to everything he said?”

It was very late at night, and this eastern section of the city was very quiet. The hustle and bustle that had existed before the war started was now gone. Almost everything was in ruins.

He had barely walked three hundred meters, when suddenly he stopped and retreated three paces.

Even as he did, green ripples suddenly emanated out from the spot he had just been standing in. At the same time, the distorted image of a person became visible within the ripples. It was impossible to see the figure clearly; however, within the greenish glow, Meng Hao could sense the emanations of a totemic aura.

“Western Desert Cultivator!” he thought. “The Thorn Rampart isn’t complete in this area! So, Yan Song did have ulterior motives for inviting me here!” A cold light appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes. He shot backward, golden light shining out from his body. His right hand clenched into a fist as he struck out at the incoming green glow.

A boom filled the air. Meng Hao’s fist did not strike anything; however, a powerful attack shot out, toward the green glow. It seemed preparations had been made specifically for Meng Hao, though. Before his fist attack could strike the green glow, it split into multiple dots of light that spread out into the air. They then shot together, congealing into the image of a green whip that lashed out toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao grunted in surprise. This was the first time he’d encountered anything that could evade a strike from his right fist. True, the fist attack had been illusory, but for his opponent to dodge it showed that he was definitely beyond ordinary.

“This person didn’t come with Yan Song. Yan Song hid himself, and was clearly aware that I didn’t come in person. However, this Cultivator avoided my fist attack… in a way that made it obvious he wasn’t aware that it was an illusory strike. Therefore, he doesn’t know that this isn’t my true self! If that’s the case, then clearly running into him here was a coincidence…. The chances of randomly running into this guy here of all places in this big city, are not high. From that, I can deduce that however he got into the city… he must not be alone!” Meng Hao let out a cold snort as he allowed the whip to wrap around his body.

A boom filled the air as Meng Hao collapsed into countless Qi fragments that dissipated into the air.

A sound of surprise could be heard as the green whip retreated backward. A bad feeling suddenly welled up in the heart of the Western Desert Cultivator.

However, even as he began to back up, the fragmented Qi that had made up Meng Hao suddenly shot forward and formed back together into a new Meng Hao. His left hand stretched out to grab the whip, which he then pulled toward him.

“Get over here!”

A rumbling roar filled the air. The whip pulled tight, and as it did, the vague image of a fleeing person could be made out within the green ripples.

Meng Hao pulled hard on the green whip, and as he did, it began to whither, and then suddenly turned into flying ash.

Meng Hao watched the ripples disappear into the distance, and coldness flashed in his eyes. “It seems quite certain that it has nothing to do with Yan Song. However, no one can just attack Meng Hao and then run away!” His body grew blurry, then suddenly split into ten more Meng Haos. Immediately, they headed off into different directions in pursuit.

Meanwhile, back in Meng Hao’s courtyard, his true self sat looking at the lotus flowers. Everything here was quiet and peaceful, and he wasn’t paying very much attention to what was going on outside with his Demonic Qi clones.

After enough time passed for half an incense stick to burn, he rose to his feet, his expression the same as ever. He walked out slowly into the night, strolling down the street at a steady pace. Soon, he was about three hundred meters away from his courtyard.

It didn’t take long for him to reach a random remote street corner, where he stopped, apparently waiting for something. After the space of two breaths passed, a collection of ripples shot through the air toward him. Behind the ripples were ten figures that looked exactly like him, their faces cold as they pursued the ripples.

Wu Mu was scared witless. He was a member of the Crow Scout Tribe from the Western Desert, and a member of the forces participating in the Black Lands Palace’s great war 1. He was one of the several hundred Cultivators who had survived the Thorn Rampart earlier. Because he possessed wood type totems, he had been dispatched into the city this night on an assassination mission.

There were a dozen or so who came with him. He wasn’t too sure the level of their Cultivation bases, but he was in the late Core Formation stage. That, coupled with the secret techniques of his Tribe, and his wood type totems, made it so that even a Nascent Soul Cultivator would have a hard time piercing his concealment technique.

How could he ever have imagined that as soon as he entered the city, the first person he ran into would be none other than Grandmaster Meng, the person who had summoned the Thorn Rampart? He had assumed that because of his wood type totems, the Thorn Rampart wouldn’t be able to detect him, and as such, had chosen to attack.

In his view, if he was able to kill the mysterious Grandmaster Meng, it would count as an incredible battle achievement. After returning to his Tribe, he would definitely be well rewarded. Even if he wasn’t able to kill him, he could at least wound him. Either way, he was completely confident of the safety of making an attack.

How could he ever have guessed that what he attacked was not Grandmaster Meng’s true self, but rather a clone? That in itself caused him to gape in astonishment, and filled his heart with fear. He had fled at top speed, cursing Meng Hao for coming out in the middle of the night in clone form.

After that, his fear had grown even greater when suddenly ten clones of Grandmaster Meng appeared, all of whom chased him relentlessly, cutting him off at every turn. If it weren’t for his special techniques used for concealment and retreat, coupled with his wood type totems, he would have been captured already.

It was as he went all out to flee from the clones when he suddenly saw Meng Hao standing up ahead.

“Dammit,” he thought, “this Grandmaster Meng doesn’t just concoct pills, he also has a lightning technique AND is proficient with using clones. How could someone as inhuman as him exist in the world!?”

He cursed inwardly as he looked at Meng Hao, who stood there with a look of contempt in his eyes.

“Well, he might have some weird techniques, but he’s not good enough to capture me!” Wu Mu snorted coldly, his body flashing as he waved his sleeve, causing the ripples surrounding him to shoot out toward what he assumed was another clone. This was the same method he had used previously to disperse other clones.

As Wu Mu descended upon Meng Hao, he suddenly heard him speak. “There really is a lot to learn about the Dao of totems.”

Before Wu Mu could react to the words, he saw the Meng Hao in front of him lift up his hand and point toward him.

A boom resonated out as an invisible, tearing force surrounded Wu Mu. His heart filled with astonishment, and he was about to retreat when suddenly, a bloody glow filled the area. The glow permeated his body, ripping away the layers of invisibility around him, revealing him to the world.

“Not a clone!” he thought, his mind spinning. His face was ghastly pale, and he was about to employ another magical technique, when Meng Hao gazed into his eyes. His gaze seemed to contain the power of Time; Wu Mu’s mind reeled, as if he had lost the ability to even think. Everything suddenly seemed to slow down, as if the Time within his body had suddenly changed.

When he came to his senses, he saw Meng Hao’s right hand ripping through the air to latch around his throat. Everything went black as Wu Mu passed into unconsciousness.

Meng Hao held Wu Mu up in his hand. The entire time, his expression hadn’t changed. He slowly walked back down the street. Behind him, the ten Demonic Qi clones faded into nothing. At the same time, a wooden slip flew over, which Meng Hao took. He glanced at it, then walked off into the distance, carrying Wu Mu in one arm.

It was not a peaceful, quiet night in Holy Snow City. Over fifty assassinations occurred; even some members of the Frigid Snow Clan died.

Eventually the four Grand Elders unleashed the power of their Cultivation bases. Explosions rang out in the night sky, all the way until morning.

The chaos outside didn't affect Meng Hao in his courtyard. He extracted some blood from Wu Mu and also vivisected his totem tattoos to study them.

He wouldn't give up on his desire to understand totems. He had the feeling that they were the key to the path of the Perfect Nascent Soul.

"Wood-type totems… can evade the Thorn Rampart. It must have something to do with its wood characteristics." Meng Hao held a vial in his hand which contained some of Wu Mu's condensed life force. It emanated wood characteristics, which caused Meng Hao to look down at the man, and the green-colored leaf totem tattooed on his arm.

"Wood is one of the five elements," he thought, various thoughts congealing in his mind. "Metal, wood, water, fire, earth. Five elements, five colors. White, green, black, red, yellow. Perfection is a Five Colored Nascent Soul…. A wood Nascent Soul would be green. If I could acquire five totems of different properties, cultivated to the ultimate level, then it would be similar to using the five elements pill concoction technique! With five colors, I could concoct a Five Colored Nascent Soul!" This was the result of all the research he had done into totems.

He had come up with the basis of this idea some time ago, but after his recent research, he felt more confident.

"It's also in accord with my Dao of alchemy. My body is the furnace, my heart is the formula. I will concoct a grand pill of Heaven and Earth, a Five Colored Nascent Soul!" His eyes shone with a bright light. The idea of concocting a Nascent Soul in this fashion was something no one before him had ever done.

Other people used cultivation to produce a Nascent Soul. Meng Hao's decision, though, was to use pill concocting techniques to concoct a Nascent Soul!

"That is the only way to achieve Perfection!" he thought, his expression one of intense anticipation.

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1. The "Wu" in Wu Mu's name means "crow" and is the same character as the one in "Crow" Scout Tribe. Incidentally, this character also has the alternate meaning of "black." The "Mu" is the same as in Fang Mu, meaning "wood"

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# Chapter 372: Did You Forget?

Half a month isn’t a very long time. However, as far as Wu Mu was concerned, the fact that he had encountered a certain Cultivator entranced with the idea of studying totems made it an unprecedented period of suffering. From his blood to his bones, from his totem tattoos to his techniques, his entire body was under the complete control of Meng Hao.

The more deeply Meng Hao studied the matter, the more confident he grew regarding the matter of concocting a Nascent Soul. Wu Mu seemed to have been destined to help Meng Hao understand how to fuse the Dao of alchemy with his Cultivation base. At the end of the month, it got to the point where he wasn’t learning anything new from the man, so instead of causing further trouble for him, Meng Hao released him.

Before he left, Wu Mu looked at Meng Hao, trembling. He vowed to himself that he would never run into this man again, then fled as fast as he possibly could.

“I need more totems to corroborate my line of thinking,” thought Meng Hao as he watched Wu Mu leave. Rumbling could be heard from outside the city walls. During the past half month, reinforcements from the Black Lands Palace and the Western Desert had continued to arrive. Every day, it seemed hundreds came whistling through the air to join the force outside.

Currently, there were around five thousand Cultivators amassed outside the city. Holy Snow City was thoroughly isolated. Beasts attacked from the sky, and glowing chariots charged on the ground.

The Thorn Rampart, during the one month in which it would survive, was impervious to any attack laid against it. Eventually, though, under the relentless attacks and explosions, it began to show signs of falling apart. Clearly, it wouldn't last for very much longer.

A few days later, a contingent of nearly two thousand Black Lands Palace Cultivators appeared, whistling through the air. They were led by a Cultivator wearing a gold mask. It was none other than Black Lands Palace Dao Child Luo Chong! 1

His eyes were grim, and filled with a faintly discernable turbidness. His entire person exuded a strange aura. He had been a vile mood as of late. After being poisoned that year, he had returned to the Black Lands Palace and used every method he could think of to cure himself. Unfortunately, he was unable to dispel the poison. The situation filled his heart with dread; he had the feeling that his life or death all rested in the hands of the person who had poisoned him.

Not daring to publicly reveal that he had been poisoned, he had attempted every method possible to cure himself, all to no avail. After sensing the poison, his Master had even taken an interest in it.

He had invited an Eastern Lands alchemist to examine him. After doing so, a serious expression covered his face and he'd said, "This poison cannot be dispelled by Cultivators. It can only be diffused with medicinal plants."

The mysterious Demon Lord who had poisoned him became something like a nightmare to him. Every time he thought of the man, intense coldness would fill his heart.

Of course, he had been careful to strictly comply with the man's instructions, and did not step foot within three hundred kilometers of him.

In order to prevent any mishaps, he had holed up in the Black Lands Palace for quite some time. This was actually the first time he had left since being poisoned. In his estimation, though, there was no way he would possibly run into the fearsome Demon Lord in this backwater location.

He did the best he could to hide the depression in his heart, but some of it still managed to slip out.

“I heard this Frigid Snow Clan has a beauty named Hanxue Shan,” he thought, his eyes shining with debauchery.

Behind him was an old man wearing a silver mask, who emanated the shocking power of the Nascent Soul stage. His presence increased the number of Nascent Soul Cultivators in the battle force to five.

It was difficult to describe how much the addition of one more Nascent Soul Cultivator would change the circumstances of this conflict.

As Luo Chong and the others arrived, quite a few of the Black Lands Palace Cultivators flew up into the air to receive them.

Beneath his golden mask, Luo Chong’s face was filled with a proud look as he gazed at the Thorn Rampart and the heavily damaged Holy Snow City.

“Fellow Daoists of the Frigid Snow Clan. Ladies and Gentlemen of Holy Snow City. I am Luo Chong, Dao Child of the Black Lands Palace. I am not here today to join in the battle, but rather, to issue a challenge to all of the heroes under Heaven!” He strode forward until he was standing right in front of Holy Snow City.

“Anyone who is not of the Frigid Snow Clan that can hold their own against me, Dao Child Luo Chong, for the space of ten breaths, will be allowed to leave unharmed!” His words echoed about in the city.

He was surrounded by a group of Cultivators from the Black Lands Palace, as well as a few from the Western Desert, the most powerful ones present. The five Nascent Soul Cultivators were also there, a short distance away. Should the Nascent Soul Cultivators in Holy Snow City suddenly dare to attack, the five would be ready to deal with them.

“It is an historic moment!” continued Luo Chong, a lofty expression in his eyes. “Within half a month’s time, the Black Lands Palace will topple this city. The day that happens, anyone who remains inside will be buried along with the Frigid Snow Clan!”

Coming from him, a Dao Child, these words were powerful and impressive as they settled down over Holy Snow City.

“Therefore, tell me? Which of you dares to face off against me in honorable battle!?”

Some of the Cultivators at his side began to call out taunting provocations.

Inside the city, the faces of the several hundred Cultivators not of the Frigid Snow Clan were unsightly, although it was impossible for anyone to tell whether or not they were considering the offer.

The four Grand Elders and other Frigid Snow Clan members stood there thoughtfully. They obviously couldn’t hold anyone back from leaving; if they did, it would most likely lead to even greater repercussions. Furthermore, Luo Chong was a Dao Child of the Black Lands Palace, an incredibly high position. His Cultivation base was not at the Nascent Soul stage, but as a Dao Child, he directly represented the Black Lands Palace.

After a moment’s thought, First Elder sighed. In a hoarse voice, he said, “Fear not. To each his own. Our city is under threat, and anyone who does not have the will to stand and fight, should not stay. Any Fellow Daoist who wishes to leave will not be stopped. You have already shown great favor to the Frigid Snow Clan.”

Meng Hao stood in the crowd. He looked through the Thorn Rampart at Luo Chong floating there in mid-air, and a slight smile spread across his face. The poison in Luo Chong had not been dispelled. Meng hao had personally concocted it, and he was confident that few people in the world other than himself would be able to do so.

Silence filled Holy Snow City. Suddenly, someone shot forward. It was a middle-aged man, someone Meng Hao recognized. He had come before to request pill concocting services, and had a Cultivation base in the mid Core Formation stage. Among the Holy Snow City forces, he could be considered quite powerful. In the outside world, his Cultivation base would put him the position to be quite domineering.

Right now, his face was somewhat wan. The pressure he had come to feel in recent days had pushed him to the breaking point. He shot out through the Thorn Rampart, then let out a sigh.

“I’ve done everything I can,” he thought. “I’ve definitely paid back the Frigid Snow Clan for their magnanimity that year.” He shot forward, clasping hands toward Luo Chong and then said, “In accord with your will, Dao Child, I will battle you to save my life!”

The instant the man’s words left his mouth, a vicious light gleamed in Luo Chong’s eyes. At the same time, three Cultivators standing next to Luo Chong shot into the air at high speed. The approaching middle-aged Cultivator’s face twisted.

He immediately flashed an incantation gesture, and the gleam of a magical technique rose up. A rumbling filled the air as a black sword aura glittered into being. After the space of five breaths passed, the three men returned to Luo Chong’s side. Shockingly, one of them held the head of the middle-aged Cultivator in his hand, which he then presented to Luo Chong.

“What a pity. He didn’t last for ten breaths.” Luo Chong laughed, holding the head up high into the air and then crushing it.

“Is there anyone else who wants to give it a try? If not, then I’ll give you another option. Bring me the Frigid Snow Clan’s number one beauty Hanxue Shan. Whoever does so will not only be exempt from the death penalty, but will also receive a great reward!” He laughed again as he looked toward Holy Snow City. Inside, there was complete silence. All of the Cultivators had grim looks on their faces.

This was especially true of the Frigid Snow Clan members, and Hanxue Shan. Her phoenix-like eyes flashed with killing intent. She was a pretty girl, and the look on her face was instantly noticed by Luo Chong. His eyes flashed and he laughed. “The most beautiful woman in the land is here. It turns out my trip here wasn’t a waste!”

The Cultivators in Holy Snow City couldn’t hold back from crying out in ridicule.

“You’re a Dao Child from the Black Lands Palace! How could you be so despicable!?”

“You said you would fight a duel, but it was nothing more than a low-down trick. You people from the Black Lands Palace are all the same!”

As the voices drifted out from the city, Luo Chong continued to laugh, his eyes filled with arrogance. He didn’t give a whit about whether these people lived or died. He had just been toying with them. He knew that Holy Snow City wouldn’t mount any sort of offensive while the Thorn Rampart still existed, so he figured he would take advantage of the situation to have some fun.

“Alright, alright,” he laughed. “I won’t cause you any more trouble. How about this. Fellow Daoist Hanxue, why don’t you warm my bed this night. If you do, then I’ll take these two thousand Cultivators I came with and leave. That should take a bit of pressure off of Holy Snow City. What do you think?” His eyes gleamed as he looked over Hanxue Shan’s beautiful figure, and his heart burned.

Hanxue Shan was so angry she was trembling. She glared murderously at Luo Chong, but her heart was filled with sorrow. Some of her surrounding Clan Members were looking at her. None of them said anything, but she could see in their eyes what they were thinking, and it filled her heart with pain.

She smiled bitterly, and then, without even thinking about it, she looked at Meng Hao. It was as if she was wondering what he would do about the situation.

Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed as he looked at the three Cultivators who had just charged forward to fight. One was a Western Desert Cultivator. He was the one who had slain the middle-aged Cultivator, and the totem tattoo he had used was that of a sword!

It was a sword totem that created a magical manifestation of a sword, and emanated extraordinary power.

“I wonder if that’s a Metal-type totem?” he thought. Suddenly, he took a step forward and then shot up into the air, his gaze coming to rest on Luo Chong.

His appearance attracted quite a bit of attention. Cultivators quickly clustered around Luo Chong to impart to him information regarding Meng Hao. Luo Chong’s eyes shone, and a vicious smile appeared on his face beneath his mask.

“I’d heard about this Grandmaster Meng who has risen to fame in recent days,” thought Luo Chong, his eyes shining with killing intent. “Eliminating him will ensure that the city falls in a matter of days!” The gazes of the five Nascent Soul Cultivators came to rest on Meng Hao. Once he emerged from within the Thorn Rampart, they would instantly attack.

However, before Meng Hao passed outside of the city walls, he stopped. He hovered in mid-air, an enigmatic smile on his face as he looked at Luo Chong.

“Luo Chong,” he said. “I seem to remember I told you to stay at least three hundred kilometers away from me. Did you forget?”

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# Chapter 373: How Could It Be Him!?

No one in Holy Snow City understood what Meng Hao was talking about. They could tell that he must have some sort of history with the Black Lands Palace Dao Child, but they didn’t understand any of the details.

However, as soon as the words entered Luo Chong’s ears, his mind instantly began to reel. Beneath his mask, his face filled with a look of complete disbelief. There were two people he feared most in life, one was Fang Mu of the Southern Domain, the other was the Demon Lord of the Black Lands.

When he heard Meng Hao’s words, he instantly understood their meaning. His pupils constricted immediately.

“It’s him! It’s definitely him! He’s the only one who knows about that incident. Dammit, how could it be him!?” Luo Chong began to pant, and his eyes grew wide as he recalled the scene from that day. His heart trembled as he remembered the nightmare his life had become after he went back to the Black Lands Palace to try to dispel the poison.

Every month, there was a period of a few days in which his entire body felt like it was being stabbed all over. The pain was difficult to bear, and the only thing he could do was wail constantly in terror. Even his Master was powerless to help him, and all the Eastern Lands alchemist could do was sigh. All of that exploded out in Luo Chong’s mind, overwhelming him.

His mind buzzed, and went blank. Fear filled his eyes. Never could he possibly have imagined that after all his efforts to avoid the Demon Lord, the first time he went out to some remote location, he would run into that very nightmarish figure.

He stood there blankly, his heart filling with indescribable remorse. He wanted to roar out that he was innocent, he really didn't know that the Demon Lord was here. Had he known, he wouldn't have come even under the threat of being beaten to death.

Then he thought about all the things he had just said, as well as the instructions not to come within three hundred kilometers of the Demon Lord, and his entire body began to shake. An unspeakable dread rose up from his heart like a tempest.

He thought about the fearsomeness of the Demon Lord, the feeling the man gave off like that of the underworld, and how he could kill him with a thought. All of these things smashed down onto Luo Chong like endless gigantic mountains.

Black Lands Palace Dao Child? Honor and glory? Face? All of these things vanished from Luo Chong. The most important thing was his life. Because of that, Luo Chong felt the ultimate level of fear.

"Dammit, how could he be here?!"

As Luo Chong's mind spun, and the fear submerged him, he stood there with a blank look on his face.

The Cultivators next to him were astonished. Meng Hao's words were filled with an overbearing tone which caused some of the surrounding Cultivators to feel somewhat anxious. Suddenly, someone strode forward and said, "What gall! This is a Dao Child of the Black Lands Palace! The only people to flee three hundred kilometers are the people running away from him, you paltry alchemist! Do you truly dare to rave in such a manner?!"

The words hit Luo Chong like a lightning bolt. His body trembled, and he suddenly recovered his senses. His heart was still filled with terror, as well as an unspeakable fury. However, before he could give vent to his fury….

Another Cultivator hurried forward, exuding a loyal and devoted aura. Angrily, he said, "Just who the hell do you think you are? Dao Children occupy positions of incredible respect. Your words just now earn you the right to die!”

Their statements entered Luo Chong’s ears, causing him to tremble even more violently. His fury was now billowing to the heavens, and a feeling of infinite fear had completely overwhelmed him. That was because he could see the cold gleam in Meng Hao’s eyes.

His mind felt as if it were about to explode.

Another Cultivator stepped forward. “You….” Before he could finish speaking, Luo Chong raised his head to the sky and let out a shocking roar of fury.

“Shut up! Dammit, are you trying to get a Dao Child killed!!” He shot forward and unhesitatingly slapped the Cultivator who had been about to speak.

A boom rang out, and the Cultivator tumbled back like a kite with a broken string, blood spraying from his mouth and a confused look in his eyes. Fury written across his face beneath the mask, Luo Chong next spun and flashed an incantation gesture. Immediately the glow of starlight appeared, enveloping one of the other Cultivators who had just spoken up.

A miserable shriek could be heard. It was as if this man was Luo Chong’s enemy, and that he would do anything possible to kill him!

“You damned flunky!” roared Luo Chong. “You dare to plot against a Dao Child?! You’re dead!” Another boom filled the air as the Cultivator exploded into pieces, exterminated directly by Luo Chong.

“If you want to disrespect me, then fine. But to disrespect the great Demon Lord is the most heinous of crimes! You all deserve to die!! You can be disrespectful to anyone in the whole world except for the Demon Lord!!” With a roar, he charged toward the first person who had spoken. The man stared in shock, his face pale. He was about to try to explain himself, but, would Luo Chong really listen? All he wanted to do was kill the man in the hopes of avoiding any misunderstanding with Meng Hao.

He had quickly reached the decision to vent his hatred on the three. He hoped that the fearsome Demon Lord would understand that he took the words of the three as spoken with the intention of getting Luo Chong killed.

The sounds of explosions echoed out in the air as Luo Chong attacked with unprecedented might. He moved like lightning, instantly slaying the Cultivator who had been about to speak. His hair was in disarray, and his eyes red as he trembled and turned toward Meng Hao. He clasped hands and bowed deeply.

“Junior extends greetings, great Demon Lord,” he said, shaking. “Those flunkies just now were merely blabbering, junior has already exterminated them. Demon Lord I beg of you… please forgive me, Demon Lord.” He spoke quickly, but his voice was tremulous and filled with fear. Everyone in the area could hear it.

Complete silence filled the region both inside and outside the city.

The four Grand Elders stared in shock, as did Hanxue Shan and all of the other Cultivators in the city.

Outside, the Cultivators surrounding Luo Chong watched on blankly. Off in the distance, the Black Lands Palace Cultivators had strange expressions on their faces. They clearly weren’t sure how to react to the strange turn of events just now.

The five Nascent Soul Cultivators’ eyes were wide. Luo Chong was now acting in exactly the opposite way that he should have….

“Junior really did not know that you were in this place, great Demon Lord. Really, I really didn’t know. I… I….” Luo Chong trembled as a feeling of imminent death washed through him. He knew that no one could save him, not his Master, not the Eastern Lands alchemist, not even the five Nascent Soul Cultivators.

His heart filled with regret, complete and utter regret. He should never have left the Black Lands Palace….

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# Chapter 374: Spirit Severing Descends

Hanxue Shan stared, her phoenix-like eyes wide with intense astonishment. Feeling awe for the powerful was one of the laws of the land. After all of the things that had happened, Meng Hao’s visage was now even more intensely imprinted onto her heart.

That was even more the case considering that in her mind, what Meng Hao had done just now had been for her sake.

Suddenly, her face flushed, and the look in her eyes as she gazed at him was completely different than before.

The four Grand Elders of Holy Snow City all gasped when they saw the inestimably noble Black Lands Palace Dao Child Luo Chong virtually prostrating himself before Meng Hao. They suddenly realized that Meng Hao was even more enigmatic than they had imagined.

This mysterious aura gave the Grand Elders a completely different feeling than they’d had for Zhou Dekun. Meng Hao seemed… far more frightening!

Meng Hao’s Dao of alchemy, which they had personally witnessed, his catalyzing and awakening of the Thorn Rampart, and the fear he inspired in the Black Lands Palace Dao Child, all caused their esteem of Meng Hao to increase to an unprecedented level.

“Since you didn’t know I was here, I’ll forget the matter,” said Meng Hao coolly, looking at Luo Chong. “But only this one time. Don’t take this to be a precedent.” When he heard the words, Luo Chong felt as if he had been given a new lease on life. His body relaxed. Trembling and excited, he bowed deeply to Meng Hao.

He had felt wronged, but now that he saw Meng Hao's understanding, that feeling transformed into gratefulness. Of course, he had been poisoned by Meng Hao, so he really should hate him. Complex feelings filled him, and he swore to himself that in this life… he would never again come into this man's presence.

Of course, if he knew that Meng Hao was also Fang Mu, then he would no doubt swear with redoubled intensity.

"I like the look of that Western Desert Cultivator over there," said Meng Hao casually. "Could you lend him to me to study for a few days? I'll give him back afterward." Actually, this was his main purpose in stepping forward. His eyes glittered as he glanced at the Western Desert Cultivator's totem tattoos.

The young Western Desert Cultivator's face fell when he heard Meng Hao's words. Before he could retreat, Luo Chong glanced back at him. As far as Luo Chong was concerned, Meng Hao's words were orders to be followed without hesitation.

"Grab him!" he cried. The surrounding Cultivators didn't hesitate. Their hands shot out as they grabbed the Western Desert Cultivator. He struggled a bit, but it only took the space of a few breaths for them to succeed in capturing him.

The young man trembled, and fear filled his eyes.

"The great Demon Lord has taken a liking to you," said Luo Chong, his eyes brimming with viciousness. "That's good fortune for you! Don't struggle!" He didn't care that his actions might cause grudges or ill feelings with the Western Desert Cultivators. As far as he was concerned, Meng Hao's instructions were the most important.

"Great Demon Lord, you speak of lending, but please, allow me to give this person to you as a gift. I truly hope that you will accept, great Demon

Lord.” He indicated for the hesitant Cultivators behind him to deliver over the young Western Desert Cultivator. They immediately flew over toward the Thorn Rampart, threw the furious young man over, and then returned.

Having done these thing, Luo Chong glanced at Meng Hao, who was looking quite satisfied as he hoisted the young man over his shoulder and turned to head back into the city. At this point, Luo Chong finally heaved a sigh of relief. He clasped hands and bowed, then turned and shot off at high speed. The two thousand Cultivators who had come with him, including the old man with the silver mask, all left with him. Their masks hid their embarrassed expressions as they did.

As the group was making to leave, one of the two Nascent Soul Cultivators from the Western Desert said, “The Black Lands Palace had better give the Western Desert a good explanation for this.” His voice was cool, and did not contain fury, yet was filled with power.

Even as the old man’s words sounded out, and Luo Chong and the others were about to leave, suddenly, a cold snort rang out, filling the air. The snort shook Heaven and Earth, transforming into a rumble that made everything vibrate. Cracks appeared on the surface of the ground, and it seemed as if the very air would be ripped into pieces.

It appeared as if the land couldn’t sustain the power of the snort, and was about to fall to pieces.

The snort caused the Nascent Soul Cultivator from the Western Desert to stumble backward a few paces. At the same time, Luo Chong and the others felt their hearts shaking, and stopped moving. Luo Chong’s eyes narrowed, and he started to pant.

Down on the ground, the multitude of beasts dropped onto their stomachs, quivering and wailing. The flying beasts also began to shake, and stopped moving.

The thousands of Cultivators on the ground felt their minds buzzing, filled with the sound of the snort, making them incapable of even thinking.

The sky above changed color and the ground heaved.

The countless thorns which surrounded Holy Snow City began to break apart. Shrill cries rang out as the entire city shook and filled with an enormous roaring sound. The massive city walls of ice and snow began to fall, and the star-shaped devices above the city collapsed.

All of the city’s protective spell formations had previously been penetrated, but since repaired. Under the power of this snort, though, they began to shatter and transform into flying dust.

Within the city, countless residences caved in. The Cultivators on the city walls coughed up blood and their faces twisted. There were even about a hundred Foundation Establishment Cultivators whose bodies directly exploded.

If it weren’t for the four Grand Elders’ immediate actions to protect their Clan Members, the Clan would have sustained severe casualties. However, the price they paid for this caused them to cough up mouthfuls of blood. The old woman, Third Elder, who had already been injured, felt her Cultivation base suddenly drop. Her body grew weak, and she seemed to be even older than before.

Meng Hao’s face flickered as he shot backward, coughing up four or five mouthfuls of blood. He looked up into the sky, where he saw what appeared to be a sun approaching!

This sun was black, and existed in the sky along with the normal blazing sun. If you looked closely, however, this black sun was actually a Cultivator wearing a black robe!

He appeared to be about forty years of age; however, he radiated an air of ancientness that far belied his young appearance. He was surrounded by a black glow that seemed to suck in all of the light around it. It was this that caused him to look like a black sun.

Along with him came an indescribable pressure which descended down from the sky.

Behind the black-robed Cultivator was a young man whose face was filled with reverence, even fanaticism. This young man was none other than… Hanxue Zong!

“Spirit Severing!!” Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed and he began to breathe heavily.

It wasn’t just him. The hearts and minds of everyone present began to tremble.

“Greetings, Spirit Severing Patriarch!” said Luo Chong excitedly. He immediately began to bow in mid-air. All the Cultivators surrounding him also began to prostrate themselves in shock.

Down on the ground, the thousands of Black Lands Palace Cultivators also dropped to their knees.

“Greetings, Spirit Severing Patriarch!”

The expressions of the Western Desert Cultivators changed. However, they did not kowtow, but merely bowed their heads. The two Western Desert Nascent Soul Cultivators gasped and lowered their heads in greeting.

Meng Hao’s heart sank. The arrival of the black-robed man indicated that this was definitely no longer an opening battle. A Spirit Severing Cultivator had been dispatched to bring things to an end.

Meng Hao frowned. “There are still two more months left before the Frigid Snow Larva is completed….” He sighed as he pulled the good luck charm out of his bag of holding. “Forget it. It seems there’s no way I’ll be able to get a Frigid Snow Larva. I’ll just have to figure out some other way of transcending the Tribulation.” He sighed emotionally. With a Spirit Severing Cultivator here, the situation really was doomed to end in only one way.

“If the mastiff were awake, or if my Cultivation base was at the Nascent Soul stage….” Meng Hao looked up at the black-robed Cultivator, sighing inwardly. Actually, he knew that even if he were of the Nascent Soul stage, in front of a Spirit Severing Cultivator, he would be nothing more than an insect.

“Spirit Severing…. Gain enlightenment of the Dao, Sever the self three times….” The Spirit Severing stage was a legendary realm that could only be reached through fortune, and not through seeking. Throughout the world, there were many Core Formation Cultivators, and not a few of the Nascent Soul stage. However, Spirit Severing Cultivators were rare, even in the expansive Southern Domain. Often, they would exist only as the Dao Reserve of a great Sect.

When Meng Hao thought of Spirit Severing, he couldn’t help but think of Patriarch Reliance.

As the black-robed Cultivator floated down from up in the sky, Holy Snow City was blanketed with deathly silence. Despair filled every heart and mind, both the Frigid Snow Clan members and the other Cultivators. Each and every one abandoned all hope of fighting back.

A pleased expression filled the face of Hanxue Zong as he followed the black-robed Cultivator. His gaze swept over the Frigid Snow Clan members, and a callous look appeared in his eyes.

However, as the black-robed Cultivator was still about three thousand meters above the city, he suddenly stopped moving. A profound look appeared in his eyes, as if he were in a position of ultimate authority, as if the great Dao of the Heavens gave him the right to look down on all living things.

As he floated there, it seemed like the Heavens and the Earth were fused together, inseparable. And yet, at the same time, it was as if they were separated, congealed into his own Dao, making the will of Heaven impossible to expunge.

It was as if everything in the world existed because of his will. This was because he had long since reached the Spirit Severing stage, and his first Severing. As for what had been severed, only people of the same stage might be able to pick up on some of the clues.

“Fellow Daoist Hanxue, we haven’t seen each other for several hundred years. Still on your deathbed? Why don’t you let me see you on your way?” As his eyes swept across the land, it was as if none of the Cultivators there deserved to be within his line of sight. What he was looking at was located deep in a subterranean chamber. There, sitting cross-legged atop a star-shaped altar, was an old man. He was completely withered and looked like a corpse.

“Still sleeping?” continued the black-robed Cultivator in a grating voice. “It seems my attempts to determine whether you are still alive were nothing but a waste. Let’s end this farce.” He shook his hand and then waved his arm.

The land in all directions began to quake. A Heavenly Pit suddenly appeared in the ground, right in the middle of the city!

It was at this very moment that the same ancient voice he had heard before once again spoke into Meng Hao’s ear.

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# Chapter 375: Incredible Good Fortune!

The entire city began to cave in. Many people were sucked along; they wanted to fly away, but suddenly discovered that their Cultivation bases couldn’t be rotated at all, as if they didn’t even exist.

At the moment, Meng Hao’s hand was tightly clasped around the good luck charm. It still required a bit more than ten breaths of time to activate and was already emitting a glow. However, it was then that the ancient voice transmitted into his ear.

“Open your mind and connect with your Thorn Rampart. I am on the verge of death, but can bestow upon you an amazing bit of good fortune. Think of it as my way of thanking you for the kindness of protecting the bloodline of my Clan over these past months.”

The ancient, weak voice was the same one that had told Meng Hao how to control the Thorn Rampart. Meng Hao was well aware who this person was, but nonetheless, he hesitated.

With the good luck charm, he was absolutely confident of being able to leave this place safely. If he listened to the ancient voice, he would be facing up against a Spirit Severing eccentric. No matter how cautious and careful he was, it would still be a perilous situation.

“There’s no time,” continued the voice. “If I wanted to possess you, I wouldn’t have waited so long to do so. What are you hesitating for, lad? Do you really think your ancient good luck charm can help you escape from a Spirit Severing Cultivator?!”

“What good fortune is it that you plan to give me, senior?” transmitted Meng Hao, his eyes glittering. An intense power suddenly spread up from below. At the same time, miserable cries filled the air. Meng Hao didn’t need to look down; he knew that the city was rapidly sinking down into the Heavenly Pit.

Cultivation bases in the entire area were being restricted; however, Meng Hao’s Perfect Gold Core was not one of them. He could still flee of his own volition if he wished.

“I’m going to give you my Spirit Severing enlightenment. It will open a door for you in the future when you reach Spirit Severing. It will also create some hope for my Clan members….”

A huge rumbling interrupted the ancient voice. Holy Snow City was now more than half destroyed by the Heavenly Pit in the ground. Not too far off in the distance, in the area where the city was crumbling into, Meng Hao could see a pitch black abyss. It emanated a sinister aura, which turned black as it circulated around.

It was at this time that Meng Hao’s good luck charm finished preparing. Without hesitation, he pushed down to activate it. It was at this time that his face suddenly fell.

The good luck charm didn’t work!

A boom filled the air as the rest of the city began to fall to pieces. Miserable cries filled the air. Meng Hao could feel the gravitational force from within the enormous hole growing stronger. The countless strands of black Qi were trying to pull him in.

At this critical moment, a look of determination filled his eyes.

“Junior agrees!” The instant he spoke the words, he opened his mind. At the same time, he sent out his Spiritual Sense to reestablish contact with the remnants of the Thorn Rampart that still existed within the city.

As soon as his Spiritual Sense touched the Thorn Rampart, the withered figure who safely sat cross-legged in the subterranean chamber suddenly performed an incantation gesture, causing a sealing mark to appear.

As soon as the sealing mark appeared, Meng Hao could sense the thorns that existed within the crumbling city expanding. They extended down into the subterranean chamber, which was already beginning to break apart. As they expanded down, they sprouted out with even more thorns, heading directly toward the withered, corpse-like old man who had been sitting there for who knew how many years.

They pierced into him, instantly creating a sort of connection between him and Meng Hao. The two of them were suddenly sharing a single body!

An unspeakably powerful force exploded out into Meng Hao’s mind.

A booming sound filled his mind, and veins bulged out all over his body. His face distorted, and his eyes filled with veins of blood. He began to shake, and it felt as if his body were about to be ripped into pieces. Pain stabbed into his soul, and it felt as if his Spiritual Sense were about to shatter!

An intensely powerful aura suddenly surged through him.

This aura was not that of Core Formation or Nascent Soul, but rather… Spirit Severing!!

The instant the aura exploded out, Meng Hao’s mind reeled, and he heard a snarling roar.

“I am the Patriarch of the Frigid Snow Clan. I gained enlightenment of the Dao during a great tempest, and performed my First Severing a thousand years ago!”

As the voice echoed out in Meng Hao’s mind, an image coalesced. Within the image, Meng Hao saw a tempest that stretched as far as the eye could see, rising from the Earth all the way up to the Heavens. Lightning crackled everywhere, shaking everything. This was a tempest which could flay a

Nascent Soul Cultivator into pieces, and yet there in the middle of it all was a figure who exuded immense profundity.

It was a middle-aged man, tall, wearing a long robe. His head was raised toward the Heavens as he let out a powerful roar.

“Clan descendants, remember me! I am Hanxue Bao, sixth generation Patriarch of the Frigid Snow Clan. For my first Severing, I severed familial Love. However, I did not sever my love for my Clan! Severing Love and replacing it with the Dao, accomplished my first Spirit Severing, and incurred a half-Celestial Tempest!” [1]

The image faded, leaving Meng Hao’s mind spinning. Around him, a wind suddenly appeared. The wind screamed out from within the giant hole in the ground. The city was now no longer collapsing, and the Cultivators were no longer crying out. The vortex in the Heavenly Pit suddenly calmed. The howling wind filled the hole, pushing the crumbling city back out from within.

The wind was now a tempest, sweeping across everything. An astonishing roar filled the air. The wind seemed capable of crashing through any obstacle; the sky dimmed and the earth quaked.

The beasts that spread out across the land emitted miserable shrieks and fell prone, trembling. The Cultivators from the Black Lands Palace coughed up blood, looks of astonishment on their faces.

The Western Desert Cultivators’ faces filled with shock. As for Luo Chong and his group, their expressions also changed, and they began to pant as they looked at the raging tempest that swirled around Holy Snow City.

In contrast, the black-robed, Spirit Severing Cultivator up in the sky was laughing. As his laughter spread out, an unprecedented, black glow shone out from his eyes. At this moment, it really looked as if he were some type of black sun.

“Spirit Severing Will! Patriarch Hanxue Bao, I never realized you would display such courage and power on the verge of death! You transformed your Spirit Severing Will into a legacy brand which you then gave to a Cultivator who isn’t even of the Frigid Snow Clan! How sad! You severed Love with your first Severing, and yet, when your son betrayed you, you showed empathy, and didn’t kill him! You went against your own Dao, and destroyed yourself!

“Well, since none of your Clan members can accept the legacy of your Spirit Severing Will, it seems it will become good fortune for this member of the junior generation. Unfortunately, in the end, the good fortune will not belong to him. This brand, which contains successive generations of Frigid Snow Clan Grand Dragoneers, will be mine! Only someone as powerful as me would be able to connect with more than three generations. At the most, this infant could connect with one. Any more would kill him instantly!

“Disciple, spit up some of your blood! Watch as Master eradicates your kin for you. Your Dao will be completed, and the day of your Spirit Severing will finally come!” The black-robed Cultivator laughed loudly. Next to him, Hanxue Zong had a complex look on his face. However, without speaking a single word, he slapped his chest and spit up a mouthful of blood.

As soon as the blood shot out from his mouth, the black-robed Cultivator snatched it up. He squeezed it into his hand, whereupon it formed the bloody image of a teenager, a look of fear filling his face, as well as agitation.

It looked very similar to Hanxue Zong.

As soon as the teenager appeared, his eyes filled with hatred. A bloody glow emanated out from him, and he shot down toward the tempest surrounding Holy Snow City.

As it neared, Meng Hao lifted his head up and let out a roar of pain. His will still remained, and was still his, but the instant he saw the youth, his heart filled with agony. The pain was indescribable, filled with sorrow, fury and insanity.

He could sense that the tempest around him was beginning to collapse, and that it was happening because of the blood-colored teenager.

“Zong’er….” said the ancient voice in Meng Hao’s head. It echoed about inside him, filled with deep emotions that were impossible to state clearly. All of the tens of thousands of things that needed to be said, were all said in that single name.

As it echoed about inside Meng Hao, the tempest around him began to fill with raindrops. As the rain fell, Meng Hao realized that it was not truly rain, but rather, the tears of the sixth generation Patriarch of the Frigid Snow Clan.

“Regrets…? No, no regrets!” The echoes of the voice resonated in Meng Hao’s head as finally, the shocking tempest went mad. It began to collapse, and as it did, it tore everything in its path into shreds, including the blood-colored teenager.

As the teenager shattered into fragments, a new voice suddenly boomed out in Meng Hao’s mind.

“I am the fifth generation Patriarch of the Frigid Snow Clan, Grand Dragoneer Hanxue Ding! I grasped the meaning of Will of Heaven atop a snowy mountain and performed my First Severing in the Ten Thousand Dragons Pool!” This voice was clearly different from that of Hanxue Bao’s. It was somewhat less domineering, and yet a bit more dignified. As the voice reverberated through Meng Hao, his body filled with an unparalleled, intense pain. 2

It felt as if his soul were about to collapse, and his body were going to be ripped into pieces. Up above, the sky grew dim, as if it were about to disappear. Suddenly, the image of an immense body of deep water appeared up above.

Ripples moved across the surface of the water, spreading out in all directions. The sound of a multitude of roars could be heard as countless black dragons burst out from the deep waters, which seemed to hang upside down above everything. The roaring dragons caused all of the beasts on the ground to wail mournfully. As for the Cultivators, looks of astonishment filled their faces, and blood sprayed from their mouths.

This was especially true of the Western Desert Cultivators, whose bodies trembled violently. One of the two Nascent Soul Cultivators looked up, and spoke in a weak voice: “The Ten Thousand Dragons Pool! According to the legends, after the Greatfather of the great Frigid Snow Tribe became a Grand Dragoneer, he took the Ten Thousand Dragons Pool as his own. After that, it disappeared from the Western Desert!!”

Up above, the black-robed Cultivator’s face flickered. “So, this kid has managed to support a second legacy brand!!”

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1. The “Bao” in his name is the same character from the word “tempest”

2. The “Ding” in his name is the character for “cauldron”

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# Chapter 376: Brands!

The roars of ten thousand dragons emerged from the inverted black waters up above in the sky. The roars were shocking to the extreme, causing blood to spray from the mouths of the beasts on the ground. One by one, they began to bleed from their eyes, nose and mouth. Then, they simply dropped dead.

As for the Cultivators down below, they also coughed up blood. Their bodies grew listless, their minds reeled, the flow of their Qi and blood was suppressed, and their Cultivation bases hung on the verge of collapse.

A grim look appeared on the face of the black-robed Cultivator in mid-air. He began to perform an incantation with his right hand.

“This is definitely beyond what I anticipated. He can support two generations of legacies. Well, even that will not be enough!

“Life births destruction, Yellow Springs of the Three Worlds! Flowers birth fruit, reveal the Three Worlds!” The black-robed Cultivator’s hand turned into a blur, and in front of him, a black orb appeared. The orb began to expand and emanate a black glow in all directions as it transformed into a black sun. It burned as it shot up.

As it neared the ten thousand roaring dragons, the black sun suddenly exploded, shredding the air itself, destroying everything near it as it turned into an all-consuming black hole.

As soon as the black hole appeared, the dragons roared. A rumbling filled the air, and the ground quaked. The dragons didn’t seem capable of controlling their own bodies as they were sucked toward the black hole.

“If you really were the Frigid Snow Clan’s fifth generation Grand Dragoneer, then I would turn and leave. But you’re just a trifling legacy brand. You can’t stop me!” The black-robed Cultivator’s voice was cool as he flicked his sleeve. Down below, the Heavenly Pit that the tempest had filled in, once again shook and began to open.

Around Meng Hao in the city were several hundred people, the faces of whom were all pale white and filled with hopelessness. The war had reached the point that they weren’t even capable of participating in it. They were like dried out leaves in a windstorm, incapable of acting for themselves.

Beneath the Ten Thousand Dragon Pool, veins bulged out all over Meng Hao’s body. His face was twisted into a vicious expression as he struggled to control the pain inside of him. It surged against him like the tide, and he fought against the urge to simply fade into unconsciousness. Gritting his teeth, he held on.

The ancient, weak voice of Hanxue Bao spoke his dying words to Meng Hao: “You must not lose consciousness. When seizing the good fortune of Frigid Snow, one generation makes you a chosen son, two generations makes you a hero, and three generations makes you Chosen of Heaven. As for four, such a thing has never been seen!

“Each glorious brand consists of the most powerful expert of a generation. As the legacy joins your soul, the brand enters the world to accompany you. The more generations you acquire, the more brands. The day you enter Spirit Severing, all of these brands, these first turning points of us powerful Cultivators… will explode out to help you!

“Press on! If you are able to support the third generation legacy, then you may be able to avoid the calamity which bears down on you. This is as much assistance as I can provide. I truly hope that you succeed, and help my Clan to pass through this disaster!”

Meng Hao lifted his head up and roared. As he did, his clothing ripped into shreds. His hair whipped about, and everything around him seemed to shatter. The only thing left was his roar.

As he roared, the ten thousand dragons, regardless if they were being sucked in by the black hole or not, all joined him. A massive, glorious roar filled the air.

The black-robed Cultivator frowned, then flashed an incantation with his right hand. He then spread his hand out and pushed his palm down toward Meng Hao.

“Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. That which has passed away, shall pass. What remains, remains for eternity.” As the black-robed Cultivators words echoed out, the ten thousand dragons exploded into pieces one by one. Up above, the Ten Thousand Dragons Pool also collapsed.

It seemed as if everything was ending, just as the black-robed Cultivator had said.

However, it was at this moment that a tremor ran through Meng Hao’s body. Whereas his eyes had been scarlet moments ago, they were now pure white.

When the black-robed Cultivator saw this, his face flickered again, revealing an expression of disbelief.

“Impossible!”

Even as his mind was rocked, the voice of a third person could be heard in Meng Hao’s head. This voice was venerable and ancient, and filled all of Meng Hao’s consciousness.

“I am the fourth generation Patriarch of the Frigid Snow Clan, Hanxue Hui of the Yellow Springs. I awoke to myself in a land of ashen death. I gained enlightenment in a forest of bones. I conceived the concept of spawning the silent spirit. I cast away my body to become a Dao Spirit. This was my First Severing! I am Hanxue Hui, fourth generation Grand Dragoneer!” As the voice echoed out, an unprecedentedly strong death aura suddenly appeared in front of Meng Hao. It spread out, filling the area, causing both the sky and the land to turn gray. 1

Suddenly, countless roars could be heard in the gray sky. The roars soon took on shape; countless phantom souls appeared. They looked ancient, filled with rancor and madness.

On the ground, all of the beasts that had died just moments ago suddenly began to twitch and then rise to their feet. A gray light shone in their eyes as they lifted their heads up and howled. The ground trembled as all the dead bodies on the ground rose up, even those of the Cultivators, who stood with eyes blank and vacant.

Up above in the sky, a rumble filled the air as an enormous skeletal dragon roared into being. Down below, a gigantic skeletal snake burst up through the soil.

The entire world had become like a world of death. It was at this moment that behind Meng Hao, a yellow river suddenly appeared out of nowhere. If you looked closely at the surging waters, you would say that they were actually composed of… countless ghosts.

These were no yellow river waters. These were the Yellow Springs!

The Yellow Springs had appeared, something stupefying to the extreme.

Atop the Yellow Springs floated a pagoda composed of eighteen levels, just like the eighteen levels of hell!

The grayish death aura circulated around Meng Hao, causing his face to look pale. A death aura even began to radiate off of his body. Suddenly, he opened his eyes!

When he did, it was like a clap of thunder. A rumbling boom rose up to the Heavens as he stared out with his pure gray eyes.

“Yellow Springs Grand Dragoneer!!” All of the low-level Cultivators in the area suddenly went pale in the face. They looked as if they had lost their minds. Their bodies were stiff as if their life force were being obliterated.

It was the same with the Western Desert Cultivators. The two Western Desert Nascent Soul Cultivators stood there, bodies trembling as they looked at Meng Hao floating in mid-air. The looks of stupefaction on their faces exceeded those when the tempest and the Ten Thousand Dragons Pool appeared.

“Six thousand years ago,” said one of them, “the legendary Yellow Springs Grand Dragoneer single-handedly caused a foul wind and a rain of blood to pass over the Western Desert; it was a reign of terror! He enslaved millions of dead beasts and even raised a level 10 neo-demon!!

“According to the legend, the number of lives he took before he himself perished, was impossible to count!! He founded the Land of Bones…. He established the Gray Mountains…. He….” The minds of the two Nascent Soul Cultivators were filled with absolute disbelief.

“Dammit,” said the black-robed Cultivator. A look of concentration filled his eyes. Behind him, Hanxue Zong looked like he was about to go crazy. His heart filled with intense jealousy, and inwardly, he was screaming that all of this belonged to him!

“So, you can support three generations of brands!! Your piddling Core Formation Cultivation base does seem to have quite a bit of potential. How rare…. Too bad that still won’t be enough!” With that, the black-robed Cultivator flashed another incantation and then waved his hand out.

“I gained enlightenment of the Dao in the blackness of night, under the spinning Cosmos. For my First Severing, I severed Daytime!” His eyes gleamed as he raised his right hand and pointed toward the sky. A lightning bolt suddenly appeared in the grayness. A boom echoed out as the lightning bolt descended directly toward the right hand of the black-robed Cultivator.

This color of this lightning was pitch black!

The black-robed Cultivator snatched it, and as he did, it transformed into a twisted Lightning Blade which stretched all the way up into the sky. The black-robed Cultivator swung the Lightning Blade, seemingly intending to rend the gray sky in two!

A huge boom echoed out as the gigantic Lightning Blade slashed down. A massive breach appeared in the sky as the blade chopped down, directly eradicating the grayness of the world.

Meng Hao’s body shook as pain stabbed through him. Even as the Lightning Blade descended, Meng Hao subconsciously lifted his hands up into the air. As he did, all of the dead creatures began to float up to form a gigantic sphere of bones!

All of the gray Qi in the area shot toward the sphere of bones. In the blink of an eye, the sphere was infused with the grayness, and began to emanate a shocking power as it flew to meet the Lightning Blade.

A massive explosion ripped out that caused all of the Cultivators below the Nascent Soul stage to instantly pass out. Some of them even exploded.

As the sound of it continued to reverberate out, the sphere of bones collapsed into pieces, unable to stand up to the Lightning Blade.

Blood sprayed from Meng Hao’s mouth as he fell and slammed into the ground. Once more, the Heavenly Pit opened up beneath Holy Snow City. Again, the city began to collapse and fall. Meng Hao laughed bitterly. Three generations were his limit; even that was not enough to allow him to secure victory over a true Spirit Severing expert.

Up above, the black-robed Cultivator breathed in deeply. Blood oozed from the corners of his mouth as he looked down to where Meng Hao had fallen. A strange light gleamed in his eyes.

“The Frigid Snow Clan’s Six Generations of Legacy Brands certainly live up to their reputation. Once I get my hands on them, I’ll definitely be able to perform my Third Severing. Then I will complete the great circle of Spirit Severing.” His eyes radiated determination as he lifted his right hand. Just as he was about to reach down to grab Meng Hao, his face changed for a third time.

Complete shock filled him!!

Even as Meng Hao landed on the ground, a mark appeared on his right hand!!

1. The “Hui” in his name is the character for “ash” or “gray”

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# Chapter 377: Agarwood!!

This mark was not unfamiliar to Meng Hao. It was the same one that had appeared when he reached Foundation Establishment and Core Formation!

When the young woman from the Fang Clan saw the mark, her expression had changed. Instead of striking Meng Hao, she changed the direction of her blow.

Images from all of these scenes played out in Meng Hao’s mind.

And now… the mark had appeared again! 1

He felt an intense heat radiating out from the back of his hand. It turned into a stinging pain that spread throughout his body until he was completely submerged in it. Finally, he let out a roar.

At the same time, a sort of boundless life force seemed to be released from within the pain. It spread through him, healing his body. Furthermore, he could sense that it also gave him the chance to accept the fourth legacy.

Suddenly, an archaic voice sounded out in his mind. It was boundlessly ancient, transmitted from ten thousand years in the past. It did not come from the mark on his hand, but rather, the Frigid Snow Clan legacy!

“I am the third generation Grand Dragoneer of the Frigid Snow Clan. My name is Qi’nan Ning…. I accepted the legacy of the second generation in the frigid cold of midwinter. I gained enlightenment on Mount Agarwood. I severed my Dao on Midwinter Plain. Before me, the Clan was called Agarwood. After me, it was called Frigid Snow…. Clan members, engrave upon your minds: our power was fading, we could not support ourselves. Sadly, we were forced to leave the Western Desert.” 2

As the voice spoke, an image of a mountain appeared in the pupil of each of Meng Hao’s eyes!

This was Mount Agarwood. The same moment that the images of the mountains appeared, up above in the sky, the breach slashed by the Lightning Blade began to split open. An enormous mountain suddenly began to descend.

The size of this mountain was difficult to describe; the power it radiated was boundless and shocking.

Just barely visible on the mountain were two glowing characters that made up the word Agarwood. As the mountain descended, the ground shook and began to crack and sink.

The Heavenly Pit disappeared, and the Lightning Blade shattered. A massive sinkhole appeared on the battlefield, which turned into an enormous basin. The two Nascent Soul Cultivators from the Black Lands Palace coughed up blood. Their masks shattered, revealing the shocked faces of two old men. Immediately, they began to flee.

The two Nascent Soul Cultivators from the Western Desert also coughed up blood as they were tossed backward. The shock that filled their hearts was impossible to describe with words.

“Qi’nan Ning…. Ten thousand years ago, he was one of the three most powerful figures in the Western Desert. He… he was actually a member of the Frigid Snow Tribe?! How is that possible?! How come the ancient records never mentioned anything about this!?”

“Qi’nan Ning…..” The black-robed Cultivator’s face flickered. Behind him, Hanxue Zong stared mutely. He suddenly coughed up a mouthful of blood, a look of disbelief in his eyes. How could he ever have imagined that the Patriarch of his own bloodline was actually a member of the famous Agarwood Clan from ten thousand years ago!

“Why change the name of the Clan?” Hanxue Zong didn’t have any time to think about it further. The black-robed Cultivator, eyes glistening with concentration, lifted his right hand and was about to wave it when suddenly, his face flickered yet again.

“Dammit! How can this kid have so much latent talent? The legacy isn’t concluded yet….”

The ground rumbled as the enormous Mount Agarwood descended. Meng Hao floated there, his eyes shining with a bright light. As of this moment, he knew with absolute certainty this time, he really was experiencing an incredible amount of good fortune.

The Spirit Severing brands remained in his mind. He couldn’t employ them except during the branding process, but… when it came time for his own Spirit Severing, it would be vastly easier.

Furthermore, after he reached Spirit Severing, the power he would be able to wield would be unprecedented, and he would be able to use any of the brands that existed in his mind.

Such good fortune was normally something he would never have access to; only Spirit Severing Cultivators should be able to acquire such things.

However, due to chance occurrences, the good fortune fell upon him. As such, he would do everything within his power to acquire even more!

“The legacies of the sixth, fifth, fourth and third generations… are not enough,” thought Meng Hao. “I must acquire the second generation legacy. I will not squander such good fortune. I’ll use it to secure my future rise to prominence! I’m not sure why the mark appeared on the back of my hand again just now, but now I have hope. I possess all the requirements, so therefore, I will definitely open up the full potential of these legacies! It doesn’t matter if the second generation is Frigid Snow Clan or Agarwood Clan. Second generation legacy, come out!” Meng Hao lifted his head up and roared. Light shone up from his eyes as he floated there in mid-air, his hair whipping about. The sight of it was shocking and strangely beautiful!

Within his head, a ceaseless rumbling sound could be heard. This sound exceeded that of the sixth generation tempest, swept away the fifth generation ten thousand dragons, crushed the fourth generation Yellow Springs, and shattered the third generation Mount Agarwood. It transformed into eminently domineering, supreme noise.

The sound seemed to be echoing out in response to Meng Hao's expression of desire.

"I am Qi'nan Tian, second generation Grand Dragoneer of the Agarwood Clan. With the legacy power of the Patriarch, I controlled the power of the four seasons. I am not an Immortal, but by controlling the seasons, I silenced the Western Desert. I am… the Heaven of the Western Desert!" 3

The voice was common, but it echoed out with a soaring, overbearing aura. The domineering air emanated out from Meng Hao, changing everything. The patch of sky directly above Mount Agarwood suddenly looked bizarre in appearance.

Within this patch of sky could be seen resplendent Spring flowers, a light Summer rain, dancing, frost-covered Autumn leaves, and bitter Winter snow!

This patch of sky contained all four seasons, and its power spread out over everything, transforming the land, causing everything to tremble. The two Nascent Soul Cultivators from the Black Lands Palace coughed up blood, and their bodies began to wither as they slipped into unconsciousness.

Blank expressions covered the faces of the two Western Desert Nascent Soul Cultivators. They couldn't feel or sense anything; their life force was slipping away.

Hanxue Zong's body shook and his mind reeled; he coughed up a mouthful of blood as his body suddenly aged. Up ahead of him, the black-robed Cultivator's pupils constricted, and his eyes filled with terror and astonishment.

Without even thinking about it, he backed up, panting as he stared at the Four Seasons Sky above Mount Agarwood.

“That’s not a Spirit Severing brand, that’s… a Dao Seeking brand!! Dammit, the Frigid Snow Clan actually had a Dao Seeking expert! How is that possible? A Dao Seeking expert in the Western Desert…. Agarwood…. Agarwood….” The black-robed Cultivator’s face fell as he suddenly lost confidence in his ability to seize the legacy. “If I can’t seize this legacy now, then it will never belong to me. Even if I kill this punk later, I wouldn’t be able to take it. Dammit! How come this kid is so troublesome!?!?”

A twisted look of madness appeared in his eyes. He had been preparing for this day for a long time, and needed the good fortune of the Frigid Snow Clan legacy for his Third Severing. As such, he wasn’t willing to give up so easily.

“Five generations. So, you can support five legacy generations. Dammit, there’s only six in total. Don’t tell me he’s going to acquire them all! This kid’s greed is something rarely seen in the world! People as greedy as this deserve to die! I won’t let you continue!!” The black-robed Cultivator’s heart buzzed. As of now, he no longer looked down on Meng Hao, but rather, was convinced that Meng Hao would be able to acquire the full legacy. Even though it seemed unbelievable, he didn’t have time to think about the matter too much. Eyes glittering with killing intent, his body flashed. Drawing on the full power of his Spirit Severing Cultivation base, he shot in Meng Hao’s direction.

“I don’t care what price I have to pay, I will stop you!” Determination filled his eyes as he slammed into the Four Seasons Sky, and Mount Agarwood.

An indescribable pressure weighed down on his entire body, causing the black-robed Cultivator to shake, and his flesh to begin to evaporate.

“BREAK!” he roared. The evaporation of his body suddenly slowed. He gritted his teeth and shot forward toward Meng Hao. In the blink of an eye, he was three hundred meters away from him!

Those final three hundred meters would be extremely difficult to cross.

Actually, he knew that the best way to handle this situation would be to wait until Meng Hao couldn't hold on any longer, and self-detonated. As far as interfering with the branding process, the best would be to take some action while at a distance. The most stupid method was what he was doing right now, which was to personally approach Meng Hao.

Unfortunately, he had no other options. Interfering from outside did no good, and waiting for Meng Hao to self-detonate wasn't possible. Therefore, he had to move in as he was doing now.

As rumbling sounds continued to fill the air, Meng Hao completely ignored the incoming black-robed Cultivator. Breathing heavily, he looked up into the sky, his eyes radiating intense determination. He had accepted five generations of legacies from powerful experts. However, as this happened, and the increasing power was revealed, it only made Meng Hao's desire for the first generation legacy grow even stronger.

"Agarwood Clan, first generation legacy!!" he roared.

The sound echoed out into the ears of the black-robed Cultivator, causing his heart to begin to pound. An uneasy feeling filled his heart as he looked at Meng Hao, whose head was raised in determination. The black-robed Cultivator gritted his teeth, then raised his hand toward the blank-faced Hanxue Zong behind him.

"Blood and Will Liquefaction!" he cried, pointing at Hanxue Zong. Hanxue Zong's body began to shake, and he let out a blood-curdling shriek. His body rapidly withered, and in the blink of an eye, he had turned into a desiccated corpse. All of the blood in his body spurted out and shot toward the black-robed Cultivator. It circulated around his body for a moment; then he shot forward at incredible speed.

The three hundred meter distance began to close. However, the pressure of the five legacy brands pushing down on the black-robed Cultivator was rapidly eating away at the Frigid Snow Clan blood which gave him his speed. Once it completely disappeared, he would be in great danger.

“DIE!” he cried. He was now less than thirty meters away from Meng Hao. He lifted his hand up, and a billowing Lightning Blade slashed down toward Meng Hao.

Inside his mind, Meng Hao used Spiritual Sense to transmit a message out. “The bloodline of Agarwood comes from the Western Desert. Western Desert totems come from countless demons. As for me, I… I am the Ninth Demon Sealer. Agarwood Clan legacy, yield to me as you should!”

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2. Qi’nan is the transliteration of “Agarwood.” Ning means “peace” or “tranquility”

3. The “Tian” in his name means “Heaven” or “sky”

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# Chapter 378: Exterminate the Spirit!

“I am the Agarwood, a Spirit from the Ninth Sea. I fell to South Heaven and into the Western Desert…. I encountered a magical transformation, which reopened my consciousness. Righteous Bestowal made me Demonic. My bloodline remained in South Heaven and evolved into a Clan. My legacy was passed down from generation to generation, but few nowadays possess my bloodline.

“The Agarwood has two heads, the body of a dragon, and the tail of a phoenix. It never sheds tears; shedding tears ends its life. Now, I am gone. I left South Heaven to return home…. Other than the League of Demon Sealers, only my descendants can receive my legacy!” The ancient voice echoed out in Meng Hao’s head. Endless amounts of glorious light surrounded him. Suddenly, the illusory image of a creature appeared. It was shaped like a dragon, with two heads, and the tail of a phoenix, and was no less than three thousand meters long!

The instant the two-headed Agarwood appeared, the sky faded, and a roar filled all creation. Meng Hao could sense a bizarre, unspeakable power pouring into him from the Agarwood.

The descending Lightning Blade of the black-robed Cultivator shattered into pieces. His eyes filled with astonishment, and he immediately fell back, dumbstruck. He could sense an unprecedented aura of fear and terror emanating off of this two-headed beast.

“Run away!” This was the first thing that filled his mind. He had to get away from this place. His Cultivation base was at the Spirit Severing stage, but he was a cautious person. That was why he had done his research before coming here.

His prudence was why he didn’t care that he was a Spirit Severing Patriarch, nor that he was facing up against nothing more than a Core Formation stripling. Matters regarding face meant nothing to him at the moment. All he cared about was the acute sense of crisis that filled his heart.

As the black-robed Cultivator fled, a voice filled Meng Hao’s mind. The voice was familiar. It was none other than the sixth generation Patriarch, Hanxue Bao! “Kill him!”

Next, another voice could be heard, that of the fifth generation Grand Dragoneer! “Kill him!”

“Kill him!”

“Kill him!”

Voices filled his head. From the sixth generation all the way to the second, Qi’nan Tian. They rang out one after another, and as they did, Meng Hao’s eyes filled with a cold glow. He slowly lifted up his right hand.

The Agarwood which twisted about in the air around him suddenly blurred with speed. It transformed into beams of light that bored into Meng Hao’s body, fusing into him!

Meng Hao breathed in slowly, and then said, “Tempest!” Instantly, a black tempest sprang into being around Meng Hao. It spread out rapidly, making it seem as if the entire world were filled with its fury.

Within the tempest appeared the towering figure of Hanxue Bao. His appearance was somewhat indistinct, but his stature was indomitable. As soon as he appeared, his gaze fell upon the black-robed Cultivator.

The black-robed Cultivator’s scalp went numb, and a sensation like death swept over him. He suddenly had the urge to laugh out loud. He was a

Spirit Severing Patriarch, and yet here he was, feeling the approach of death in front of a Core Formation Cultivator.

Not only was it terrifying, it was supremely comical.

“Ten Thousand Dragons,” said Meng Hao, waving his right hand. The Ten Thousand Dragons Pool appeared again. Within it, ten thousand black dragons roared. Shockingly, behind them appeared the figure of an old man wearing a black robe, who gazed coldly at the Spirit Severing Cultivator.

This was none other than the fifth generation Patriarch!

“Yellow Springs!” said Meng Hao, the third in his string of statements. A roaring sound filled the air as the Yellow Springs suddenly appeared, along with the eighteen layers of hell. The world turned gray, and a thick death aura sprang up which transformed into the image of a man wearing a gray robe. He held a skull in one hand, and gray Qi rippled around him which transformed into the images of all manner of beasts.

This was the fourth generation Patriarch!

“Midwinter!” said Meng Hao. He felt power bursting around him, all coming from the brands in his mind. This was the bizarre power of the Agarwood that had poured into him!

The third patriarch appeared within a snowstorm, the coldness of which froze the very ground.

Suddenly, crackling sounds filled the air as Mount Agarwood appeared, surrounding by endless snowy winds and lightning. At the very peak of the mountain, surrounding by snow and wind, was an old man who looked down at the black-robed Cultivator.

The black-robed Cultivator’s face was pale white. He spit up a mouthful of blood, dramatically increasing his speed. He was trying to create a portal to teleport away, but couldn’t.

“Four Seasons!” Killing intent radiated out from Meng Hao’s eyes. As it did, the sky above changed as images of the four seasons appeared, covering everything.

“Agarwood!” This was the last of Meng Hao’s successive words. As he spoke them, his right hand descended, and he pointed directly at the fleeing black-robed Cultivator.

As he extended his finger, the black tempest congealed into the form of two enormous wings!

The ten thousand roaring dragons, along with the Dragons Pool itself, began the head of a dragon!

The Yellow Springs twisted, pulling the eighteen layers of hell along with it to form an enormous dragon-shaped body, nearly three thousand meters long.

Mount Agarwood collapsed, and the pieces formed into the tail and claws of a phoenix!

Finally… the Four Seasons Sky fused together to form a second head. All of these things congealed together to become what in ancient times had rebuked the Heavens… the Agarwood!

Stormy wings, dragons’ heads, a body formed from the Yellow Springs, a mountain for a tail, and the Four Seasons!

When the Agarwood appeared, it let out a roar that cracked the sky and shattered the land. It was a force that could annihilate everything, sweeping out in all directions. At this moment, the black-robed Cultivator sensed an unprecedented feeling of life-and-death danger. It was a force of destruction which he could simply not bear.

His pupils constricted, and both hands rapidly flashed an incantation. Magical treasures appeared, and finally a black glow that rose up to the heavens and took on the shape of a black sun.

“If the true self of any of you appeared, I would be dead. Instead, you’ve formed the Agarwood. Well, I’ve performed my Second Severing. You can’t destroy my reincarnation. The only thing you can do is stop my first body!

“Reincarnation exists, so I will always exist. My Karma cannot be annihilated! The Deification Altar of the Heavens of Ji has my name on it! You can’t hook my Karma! I’ll be resurrected!” The black-robed Cultivator raised his head up and howled. The black sun slammed into the Agarwood, and an enormous boom rose up. Everything shattered, destroying the land, killing all of the Cultivators directly below.

Luo Chong was lucky; around the time Meng Hao had received the brand of the fifth generation Frigid Snow Patriarch, he’d gotten a bad feeling and had fled. Because of his prudent action, he and a few hundred other Cultivators who went with him were spared.

The explosion rippled out, and the Agarwood slowly vanished.

The black sun also faded. As it did, an image could be seen within of the black-robed Cultivator, which then transformed into ash. The brightly glowing light which had surrounded them slowly sank into the earth, and they were gone.

The black-robed Cultivator was nowhere to be seen.

Meng Hao wasn’t sure if he was alive or dead. Slowly, everything around him started to return to normal. An unparalleled sense of weakness washed through him. His vision started to fade and he began to collapse into unconsciousness.

Before that could happen, though, he bit the tip of his tongue, using the last scrap of borrowed energy he possessed to do something he would normally be incapable of doing… he spit out some Divine Will which then shot off in the direction of the former Dongluo City.

That was his final action before everything faded into blackness and he fell down to the ground.

Holy Snow City was still there, although it was virtually in complete ruins. There were less than three hundred Cultivators left alive, including the Four Grand Elders. All of them stood there, their faces pale, looking at Meng Hao with expressions of deep veneration.

Meng Hao couldn’t see anything, but he could sense that someone was holding him. He also smelled a delicate fragrance. Within the blackness of his world, an ancient voice slowly echoed out in his mind.

“Successor, remember the Agarwood. I can project to you three times to help you avoid death.”

Meanwhile, far away from Holy Snow City, on the other side of the Black Lands, in the former Dongluo City, more than five thousand Cultivators were running and yelling.

“Have faith in the Lord Fifth, gain eternal life! When the Lord Fifth appears, who dares to cause strife!”

The more than five thousand Cultivators were dashing around the city in a circular pattern. The sight of it was quite astonishing. The ground shook as they ran, and a fog roiled around them, deep within which was what appeared to be a bright glow.

The glow bore the semblance of a sword, slowly gathering together. The glow didn’t spread out, although it did emanate a frightening aura. Nearby the glow was the parrot, who looked nervous. Its wings flapped as it flew around the bright glow.

“Ah, the Immortal Execution Formation, created by none other than myself, Lord Fifth. Dammit, this spell formation never screwed Lord Fifth over nine times. That never happened!” The parrot clenched its jaw as if it had just made a difficult decision. Just as it seemed to be on the verge of charging into the bright light, the Divine Will from Meng Hao arrived.

The parrot suddenly stopped moving. It stared in shock for a moment, then let out a shriek.

“Scared me to death! Just about completely broke my concentration. So, you’re in trouble, eh Meng Hao? Need me to rescue you? Alright, alright. We’ll have to see what furred and feathered things you can find for me in the future. I guess I’ll go save you.” With that, the parrot flapped its wings, flying up.

A roaring filled the air and the ground shook. More than five thousand Cultivators who had taken refuge in the Church of the Golden Light stared blankly up into the sky at the parrot as it spoke.

“Listen up, children! Your Patriarch Golden Light is in trouble. Let’s go save him! Come come. Start running in the way I taught you. Use the steps of the Immortal Execution Formation. Three circles to the left, three circles to the right. Shake those butts…. Go as fast as you can! Now, call it out with me….”

The Cultivators formed a long line and began running. A billowing fog sprang up that looked like dark clouds, which then whistled off into the distance.

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# Chapter 379: Offers

When Meng Hao woke up, he found himself staring at someone’s back.

It was a beautiful silhouette. Graceful curves accentuated beautiful shoulders. A supple waist descended into perfect roundness.

She wore a light pink blouse that Meng Hao almost didn’t notice when he looked at her.

Her hair was long and beautiful, and she emanated a delicate, youthful aroma. Suddenly, the overcast sky seemed to brighten a bit for Meng Hao.

It wasn’t that Meng Hao didn’t enjoy looking at beauty. However, as a Cultivator, the first thing he did when he opened his eyes was not gaze upon the beautiful figure in front of him; instead, he sent out his Spiritual Sense to check whether or not his belongings had been touched after he passed out.

He was surrounded by ruins. However, he could tell that he was still in Holy Snow City. Although, the city itself now consisted only of broken and shattered buildings. There was something strange about everything. A silver light covered the ground, clearly some kind of spell. However, this spell was clearly not complete; it was obviously just beginning to form.

Everything was quiet. The only thing that could be heard was the crackling which came from the bonfires in the area.

Off in the distance, he could see two of the four Grand Elders sitting there cross-legged. In addition, there were a little over a hundred Cultivators, all of them meditating, clearly exhausted.

Almost all of these people were members of the Frigid Snow Clan. There were only a few that didn't belong to the Clan. Meng Hao remembered glancing toward the ground before passing out and seeing about three hundred people.

The other two Frigid Snow Clan Grand Elders were concentrating on the spell, and were conversing in low tones. Their expressions were anxious, and they occasionally glanced up to look at the sky.

The moment Meng Hao woke up, the four Grand Elders looked over at him. This, in turn, attracted the attention of the other surrounding Cultivators. Soon, everyone had opened their eyes and was looking at Meng Hao. The beautiful figure in front of him was, of course, Hanxue Shan, who opened her eyes from meditation to turn and look at Meng Hao.

Happiness flickered within her gaze, as well as something else, the infatuation of a young girl, and adoration.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and then slowly sat up. Hanxue Shan approached and then supported him with her arm. He felt weak, but his Cultivation base was intact. He couldn't make himself refuse her assistance.

He could see the haggard expression on her face. It was filled with suffering because of the destruction of her city, the decline of her Clan, confusion regarding the future, helplessness, and concern for him.

All of that would not vanish just because Meng Hao woke up.

First Elder stood and then approached Meng Hao. He looked Meng Hao over, then clasped hands and bowed deeply. "Many thanks for your actions, Grandmaster Meng. The Frigid Snow Clan will never forget your kindness."

Second Elder, the old woman, and Fourth Elder were all injured. However, they too clasped hands and bowed deeply to Meng Hao.

It wasn't just them. All of the surrounding Cultivators rose to their feet and then bowed to Meng Hao.

Everything that had happened before Meng Hao passed out had been deeply imprinted onto their hearts. Without Meng Hao, they would be dead, transformed into a sea of blood.

Meng Hao had single-handedly saved everyone present here, and the Frigid Snow Clan itself.

Their bows to him were filled with complete and utter sincerity.

He nodded but didn't say anything. It was appropriate to accept their bows but would have been somewhat pugnacious to comment. After a moment passed, Meng Hao slowly asked, "How many days was I unconscious?"

"Seven days." The person who answered his question was not one of the surrounding Cultivators. The voice came from behind him. It was ancient, and caused looks of veneration to appear on the faces of all the surrounding Cultivators.

Meng Hao's mind suddenly trembled. He turned to see an old man approaching from within the ruins, accompanied by a dozen or so Frigid Snow Clan members. He was wizened, as if he had just crawled out from the grave. His clothing was simple, and his Cultivation base was not high. However, as he approaching, it felt as if a tempest were swirling around the area.

"Senior…." said Meng Hao, feeling shocked. At a glance, he could tell that this was the sixth generation Frigid Snow Clan Patriarch, Spirit Severing Cultivator Hanxue Bao. For this man to suddenly appear was quite a shock. Logically speaking, he should have perished.

He approached Meng Hao, and, seeing the serious look on his face, explained: "I've dispersed all my skills, and given up on trying to break through. I'm no longer of Spirit Severing. When you absorbed my legacy, I let go of the life force of the Thorn Rampart in exchange for ten years of longevity. In ten years, I will perish." The surrounding Cultivators, including the four Grand Elders, concealed the pain in their expressions, showing only respect.

“You did a good job,” said Hanxue Bao, sitting down in front of Meng Hao. An affable smile covered his face. “I think perhaps there is only one person on South Heaven in the entire Core Formation stage that could possibly accept all six legacies of our Clan. Obviously, that person is you.”

Meng Hao’s heart filled with gratitude. As of now, he understood that this man truly had no aspirations of possessing him. Meng Hao really had stumbled onto an incredible bit of good fortune.

He was about to speak when Hanxue Bao shook his head, cutting him off. Gazing at Meng Hao sincerely, he said, “If you join our Frigid Snow Clan, under my authority, you will be given Hanxue Shan as your beloved.”

Meng Hao gaped. Off to the side, Hanxue Shan’s face went red, and she bowed her head to cover up her embarrassment.

“Don’t worry, I won’t interfere with your love life. She can be one of many beloved. Become a member of the Frigid Snow Clan, and you will be the Patriarch of this generation!” Hanxue Bao’s eyes glowed with an air of solemnity.

“I will make it worth it for you to join, by offering you three blessings.

“I’ve dispersed my skills, and am no longer of the Spirit Severing stage. However, I have a lifetime of enlightenment. With my aid, you will have an eighty percent chance of reaching the Spirit Severing stage within five hundred years! That is the first blessing I will give you!

“The blood of the Frigid Snow Clan contains another secret Grand Dragoneer technique. It’s more powerful than any other magic you have ever acquired. By passing it on to you, all living creatures will be powerless to do anything but sleep in front of you. That is the second blessing!

“Third, although the Frigid Snow Clan is currently in decline, our Dao Reserve is still here. We cannot remain in this location, so we will travel to the Southern Domain. Long ago, I was friends with Grandmaster Pill Demon from the Violet Fate Sect. We will move our Clan into the Violet Fate Sect.

“Come with us from the Black Lands to the Southern Domain. My reputation can earn the patronage of Grandmaster Pill Demon. You have proved that your Dao of alchemy is strong. If I request it, Grandmaster Pill Demon will surely give me face and accept you as an apprentice.”

Hanxue Bao’s voice echoed into Meng Hao’s ears. He sat there thinking, smiling to himself wryly. Other than the Spirit Severing enlightenment, nothing that had been offered him was very appealing. The secret Dragoneer technique was surely powerful, but Meng Hao already possessed three great secret techniques. As for being Grandmaster Pill Demon’s apprentice, well it wasn’t that the idea of it was inherently unappealing. However, Meng Hao, even though he’d long since left the Violet Fate Sect, still considered Grandmaster Pill Demon to be his Master.

He had kowtowed three times to become an apprentice, and that first kowtow lasted for a lifetime.

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# Chapter 380: Eyeless Larva!

“You don’t agree?” asked Hanxue Bao, gazing at Meng Hao. His expression was gradually fading into one of disappointment. Based on his experiences throughout the years, he was able to see the slight hesitation visible in Meng Hao’s otherwise calm expression.

He sighed inwardly and then shook his head, laughing slightly.

“Senior….” said Meng Hao, feeling a bit guilty. He could sense the sincerity in Hanxue Bao, and even though it was all for the sake of his own Clan, Meng Hao knew that he truly was offering a new path to tread.

Unfortunately, Meng Hao couldn’t go back to the Southern Domain for now.

Hanxue Shan’s face was now pale white. She held her head up high and forced a smile onto her face, but her mood couldn’t be lower. She stood and curtsied to Meng Hao, then walked off into the distance, her head hanging. It seemed she couldn’t stay behind for fear of crying from the grief she felt.

“Well, never mind,” said Hanxue Bao, not wanting to force Meng Hao to explain. “I put you in an awkward position just now. You have your own path, and don’t need me to arrange things for you. That’s great.” He stood, eyeing the spell that was forming on the ground.

“The Frigid Snow Clan has a total of seven Nascent Soul Elders. You’ve met four already. The other three went to the Southern Domain last year, where they’ve been preparing a teleportation spell. Unfortunately, the spell has to penetrate the Black Lands Palace’s blockade spell, making the teleportation to the Southern Domain a bit difficult.

“It is only just recently that the teleportation spell was completed on their side. Within about five days, we should be able to activate it. Once that happens, we will leave this place.” Hanxue Bao slapped his bag of holding. Suddenly, everything got very cold, and snowflakes appeared in the air to drift down. Meng Hao’s eyes filled with a serious look as he looked at the object in Hanxue Bao’s hand.

There, in his palm, was a blue silkworm, about the size of his pinky finger. It was translucent, like crystal, and glowed with a blue light. The coldness in the area was emanating out from this very larva.

Meng Hao’s breathing immediately grew heavy.

“You were promised a Frigid Snow Larva. Given the Cultivation bases of the others, they would need half a year to complete it. But time is running out, so I will give you mine! This is a mutated Frigid Snow Larva, with a much more vigorous life force than an ordinary larva. Throughout all the years, our Frigid Snow Clan only ever produced six mutant Frigid Snow Larvae. This is the seventh.

“Because of its mutation, this type of Frigid Snow Larva can bond two masters. Feed it your blood, and it will become yours.” He waved his hand, and a blue light shot toward Meng Hao to hover in front of him. He took a deep breath as he gazed at the blue Frigid Snow Larva floating there before him. Then, he bit the tip of a finger and squeezed a drop of blood out onto the larva.

The instant the drop of blood vanished, Meng Hao could sense a connection between him and the Frigid Snow Larva. The larva’s body glittered as it descended slowly onto his hand. An immense coldness emanated out from it. It felt like he was holding a piece of freezing ice.

Meng Hao took a deep breath as he bowed deeply to Hanxue Bao. His entire purpose for coming to this place was now complete. He felt incredibly excited. Now the only thing he had left to do was transform the Frigid Snow Larva into an Eyeless Larva.

Once it became an Eyeless Larva, the larva could never be destroyed, and its thread could not be broken. The thread could not be broken, nor could the larva be destroyed! A miraculous bug like that was a remarkable treasure of Heaven and Earth, one of his most powerful methods for dealing with Heavenly Tribulation.

“Senior, I will be going into secluded meditation,” said Meng Hao, pushing down the excitement which bubbled up in his heart. He bowed again, then turned to walk off. He didn’t go too far, but rather climbed deep into a half-collapsed building nearby.

Hanxue Bao watched him walk off and sighed again in his heart. He really had taken a liking to Meng Hao, but he knew that he had his own plans and aspirations. Hanxue Bao then looked over toward Hanxue Shan and sighed yet again.

Within a room in the collapsed house, Meng Hao sat cross-legged, breathing deeply. He performed an incantation and then pointed toward the ground, causing Demonic Qi to noiselessly begin to gather. It circulated around him, forming a barrier. Although he was on good terms with the Frigid Snow Clan right now, he still needed to take measures to protect himself.

This was especially true considering that he had just turned down their offer. Covered by the Demonic Qi, Meng Hao produced some medicinal pills, then closed his eyes and began to meditate. After a few hours passed, he opened his eyes again, and they shone brightly. His body was now completely recovered from its weak state. His Spiritual Sense had grown, and his Cultivation base had made significant progress.

Meng Hao was confident that after he transcended the Heavenly Tribulation, he would pass directly into the late Core Formation stage.

With his preparations complete, Meng Hao took out the Frigid Snow Larva. Then, he took out a Mulberry Thunderclap Leaf and placed it in front of the larva. As soon as the leaf appeared, a tremor ran through the Frigid Snow Larva. It appeared to find the leaf incredibly enticing. In the blink of an eye, lightning surrounded the leaf, and it was completely consumed by the Frigid Snow Larva.

Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed as he produced the copper mirror and began to duplicate more Mulberry Thunderclap Leaves. Thankfully, he had quite a collection of Spirit Stones in his bag of holding. Although he hated to see them disappear as the price of duplication, the thought of acquiring the Eyeless Larva caused him to do so without hesitation.

One leaf, two leaves, one hundred leaves…. Meng Hao’s eyes began to grow wide with disbelief that this tiny little Frigid Snow Larva could consume so many Mulberry Thunderclap Leaves. It didn’t seem to show any signs whatsoever of stopping. It appeared capable of eating all of the Mulberry Thunderclap Leaves in existence.

Meng Hao’s heart began to sink a little bit. His information about the larva came from the Black Lands Cultivator he had met in the Southern Domain. After much analysis, he had taken most of the man’s words to be true. Now, however, he was starting to feel a bit of skepticism.

He muttered to himself, his eyes glittering as he decided to go all out. He used all the Spirit Stones available in his bag of holding to continue to duplicate Mulberry Thunderclap Leaves to feed the Frigid Snow Larva.

Time passed by. Soon, it was a day later. By afternoon, Meng Hao’s eyes were bloodshot as he continued to feed one leaf after another to the Frigid Snow Larva. From what he could tell, he had fed enough Mulberry Thunderclap Leaves to create a mountain forest.

And yet, the Frigid Snow Larva showed no signs of being full. However, it did appear to be changing! It was still blue, but now had several white circles on its surface!

The circles looked something like eyes, and if you looked at them, it seemed as if they had the power to suck in your mind. By this point in Meng Hao’s process of feeding the larva, it had accumulated five such circles on its body.

Meng Hao looked at his bag of holding, and his heart filled with pain. He had acquired quite a lot of Spirit Stones after becoming Patriarch Golden Light. However, as of now, they were half gone. Gritting his teeth, Meng Hao continued to feed the Frigid Snow Larva.

Leaf, after leaf, after leaf….

By morning of the third day, Meng Hao's eyes were completely filled with veins of blood. The Frigid Snow Larva in his hand now had eight circles. By the time the ninth appeared, Meng Hao's bag of holding would be virtually devoid of Spirit Stones.

Grief filled his face. A few days ago he'd had a vast accumulation of Spirit Stones that left him confident of being able to purchase whatever he wanted, wherever he was.

Now, he had the exact opposite feeling.

"If I can't create the Eyeless Larva…." Meng Hao clenched his fists and stopped thinking about the matter. He decided to risk it all. Having gone this far, he might as well continue on to the very end.

By night of the third day, Meng Hao's bag of holding was completely empty. As the Frigid Snow Larva consumed the very last Mulberry Thunder Leaf, a ninth circle finally appeared, causing Meng Hao to gape.

"Dammit, I'm out of Spirit Stones, and this thing still hasn't changed yet? Isn't it supposed to transform?" He stared in shock at the Frigid Snow Larva, which lay on his palm, unmoving. Within his mind, Meng Hao could sense that it wanted to continue to eat. Meng Hao was on the verge of collapsing.

"My millions of Spirit Stones…." As he looked down into his bag of holding, he realized that the only thing he had left were the ultra high-grade Spirit Stones. They were his final assets, life-saving objects that he could use at a critical moment to absorb spiritual energy.

He went back and forth about it for the time it takes an incense stick to burn. It seemed the Frigid Snow Larva realized there was no food left. It ceased transmitting its desire to eat and began to create silk.

Meng Hao watched as the Frigid Snow Larva continued to spit out the silk, which looked like snow. This was not the legendary silk of the Eyeless Larva. It took only a moment for the larva to completely cover itself. Soon, it had become a cocoon about the size of the fist of an infant.

Meng Hao frowned. Something seemed strange. After probing with his Spiritual Sense, his heart began to pound. He continued to examine it for a moment, then began to pant.

“I can sense another aura,” he said, his eyes gleaming. “It’s not the Frigid Snow Larva, it’s much, much more powerful…. There’s not even a way to compare the two!” He closed his eyes to think for a moment, and when they opened again, he was smiling.

“Two days, and it will emerge from the cocoon!” He put the precious cocoon away and dispelled the Demonic Qi in the area. It was currently late at night, and bright moonlight illuminated the land. Meng Hao took a deep breath as he walked out of his secluded meditation area.

People from the Frigid Snow Clan who were standing guard immediately saw Meng Hao. They clasped hands and bowed, faces filled with veneration.

These recent days had been very difficult for the Frigid Snow Clan. They weren’t sure when Cultivators from the Black Lands Palace would arrive. If they invaded a second time, it would be very difficult to fight back, considering the current situation of the Frigid Snow Clan. All they could do was maintain their vigilance and wait for the spell to activate.

Snowflakes danced about in the moonlight. It had been snowing for two days, and the ground was now covered with a thick layer of snow. Even though it was late at night, the moonlight reflected off of the white snow, making everything look silver.

Meng Hao breathed in the frigid air as his gaze flitted about. Finally, his gaze came to rest on the back of a familiar figure off in the distance.

It was Hanxue Shan. She sat atop a pile of rubble, looking off into the sky. It was impossible to tell what she was thinking.

Looking at her, Meng Hao sighed inwardly. Because of the matter of the Frigid Snow Larva, he had completely forgotten about how disappointed this young girl had looked after having been rejected by him.

Murmuring to himself, Meng Hao thought about the soft arms which had embraced him before he passed out earlier. He also recalled how the concern in her eyes had been replaced by joy when he regained consciousness. The falling snow brushed against his face as he walked toward her. She looked back. Amidst the snow and the moonlight, her pretty face looked even more beautiful. Tears could be seen in the corners of her eyes. She looked at Meng Hao, then bit her lip and turned her head away.

Meng Hao stood behind her for a moment, then cleared his throat.

“Hey, I heard you really admire Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. Would you like me to help introduce you to him?”

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# Chapter 381: Whenever It Snows, Think of Me!

“You know, I heard Grandmaster Pill Cauldron has no beloved,” said Meng Hao teasingly as he looked at Hanxue Shan. “You never know, you might have a chance!”

Hanxue Shan turned her head to look at Meng Hao. She had a slight smile on her young face, which she quickly covered up.

“Look, I’m pretty close with Grandmaster Pill Cauldron,” he continued, smiling as he crouched down next to her. “If I make the introduction for you, it will probably help quite a bit.” The cold wind blew across his face and caused his hair to lift up, revealing his distinct profile. Beneath the moon like this, the slight darkness of his skin was not visible. There was something distinctly handsome about him, and also something slightly strange.

Hanxue Shan couldn’t keep a straight face. She laughed, giving Meng Hao a sidelong glance. Her eyes shone in a way that seemed to indicate her mood was lifting, and the despondency which had filled her the past few days was passing.

“It’s not like YOU’RE Grandmaster Pill Cauldron!” she said with a laugh. Then, she intentionally straightened her face again, as if she were enduring great suffering. She continued, her tone not exactly polite: “You’ve never even been to the Southern Domain, how could you possibly be familiar with him?”

Meng Hao scratched his head, then laughed as he sat down next to her atop the pile of broken rocks. Ruins and rubble surrounded the two of them, and the snow fluttered down from above. The cold wind whimpered as it blew past.

Meng Hao cleared his throat and allowed an unfathomable expression to fill his face, something he'd picked up from Zhou Dekun. “You don't understand. Even though I've never met Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, we're both Grandmasters of the Dao of alchemy, and have long since been friends in spirit. After you get to the Violet Fate Sect, when you see Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, ask him if he remembers the person he saw in the snowstorm that year.” He looked up into the sky with a look of reminiscence. It would have looked very realistic if not for the fact that he was looking at Hanxue Shan out of the corner of his eye.

Hanxue Shan covered her smile with her hand, looking at Meng Hao with her beautiful eyes. Seeing his expression, she couldn't hold back her laughter any longer. When she laughed, it sounded like bells. The depression in her heart seemed to be dissolving.

“Alright, alright,” she said with a laugh. “After I get to the Violet Fate Sect, when I see Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, I'll ask him exactly that.” Then winked and continued in a crafty tone, “I think I should probably add some information, though. I'll remind him of something that person said in the snowstorm that year. He said, ‘Every time it snows, think of me.’”

“That sounds a little bit flirty….” said Meng Hao, coughing lightly. He laughed. “That's fine, though. Ordinary people can't understand the relationship between myself and Grandmaster Pill Cauldron.”

Hanxue Shan laughed again. “In Holy Snow City, that's what two people who care about each other say when they part.” She laughed again, then rubbed her chest and straightened up.

“Alright, then, I forgive you,” laughed Meng Hao. He gathered together some snow from the ground and held it in his hand, watching it as it melted. It seemed the melting of the snow caused memories to rise up within him; he suddenly thought back to the Violet Fate Sect. The images of all the people he knew there began to flit through his mind.

“I wonder if they’re all okay….” he thought, looking off in the direction of the Southern Domain.

Seeing the manner in which he had picked up the snow, Hanxue Shan continued in a low voice, “Actually, I only admire Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, that’s all. The things I told you before weren’t really true. All I really want is a pill that he personally concocted.” Seeing Meng Hao smiling, her eyes turned hard and she earnestly added, “Just one pill would leave me completely satisfied.”

Meng Hao shook his head with a smile. He looked at her, so delicate and innocent, and then muttered something to himself. Finally, he retrieved a medicinal pill from his bag of holding. It was a Foundation Establishment Day pill that he had concocted some time ago. The quality of the pill wasn’t bad; it contained more than eighty percent medicinal strength.

“I’d like to offer you this pill as a gift,” he said. After a moment’s thought, he used his fingernail to carve the character “Snow ” onto its surface. Then he handed it out to her. “This medicinal pill is more valuable than one concocted by Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. The reason is not because of the pill itself, but rather, because it was concocted by me.” He smiled.

Hanxue Shan thought for a moment and then took the pill. She held it in her hand and looked down at it. She was about to say something when Meng Hao suddenly stood up.

“If you run into any problems in the Violet Fate Sect,” he said, “you can use that medicinal pill to gain an audience with Grandmaster Pill Demon. After he sees it, he will resolve whatever situation you’re in.” Meng Hao smiled as he spoke, but his voice contained hints of melancholy. As for Hanxue Shan, her eyes went wide. His words gave her the unconscious feeling that he was being intentionally mysterious.

“If Grandmaster Pill Demon asks about me….” before he could finish, Hanxue Shan suddenly interrupted.

“I’ll tell him that whenever it snows, you think of him.”

Meng Hao was taken aback. He could only imagine the expression that would appear on his Master’s face were he to hear such words. He couldn’t help but laugh out loud, a laughter that contained happiness. There was something beautiful about it, although no one could possibly understand what it meant except he himself.

Continuing to laugh, Meng Hao descended from the pile of rubble and began to walk off.

However, before he could take three steps, his expression suddenly flickered. Immediately, he dashed back, grabbed Hanxue Shan, and then Bloodburst Flashed away.

The instant he disappeared, a noiseless beam of mysterious light shot through the night to land in the exact position they had just been standing in. An explosion ripped through the air, causing the ground to tremble. The pile of rubble where Meng Hao and Hanxue Shan had just been standing on was transformed into nothing but ash drifting on the wind.

Some distance away, Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed coldly as he looked at beam after beam of light approaching from far away. Without hesitation, he held Hanxue Shan in his arms and retreated backward.

The rest of the Frigid Snow Clan members were instantly roused from sleep. The four Grand Elders, Hanxue Bao, and the more than two hundred Cultivators all leaped out of their beds.

“So, you want to wipe out the Frigid Snow Clan to the last man!” said Hanxue Bao wrathfully. His Cultivation base had fallen, and he was no longer an eminently powerful expert of the Spirit Severing stage. Now, he could only wield the power of the late Nascent Soul stage. As he spoke, he stamped his foot down onto the ground.

The ground rumbled, and cracks spread out in all directions. The earth showered up as a Thorn Rampart shield emerged. The shocking thorns spread out in all direction, and a massive roaring sound filled the air.

As the Thorn Rampart appeared, nearly a thousand Cultivators came into view outside in the snow. Among this group of a thousand, there were eight who seemed far more shocking than the others. No snow touched their bodies; even as it neared them, it was destroyed.

These eight were Nascent Soul Cultivators. Six of them were from the Western Desert, the remaining two being from the Black Lands Palace. It seemed this deadly attack on the Frigid Snow Clan was being led by the Western Desert.

The exterminating power of a Spirit Severing Cultivator wasn’t a threat that faded from people’s minds after only a few days. These people obviously dared to attack the Frigid Snow Clan because they knew its true circumstances.

Booms filled the air. The thousand Cultivators along with the eight Nascent Soul Cultivators employed magical techniques and divine abilities, constantly attacking the Thorn Rampart.

The ground quaked, and the Frigid Snow Clan Cultivators’ faces flickered as they stood there silently.

“No wonder they came so quickly,” said Hanxue Bao, his cold gaze coming to rest somewhere off in the distance, upon something no one else could see. “They’re benefiting from the augury of the Western Desert’s Constellation Tribe!”

Meng Hao approached, holding Hanxue Shan protectively. As he did, he heard Hanxue Bao’s words, whereupon he looked out past the thorns into the snowstorm outside. A moment passed, and then he blinked his right eye seven times. Immediately his view of the world changed. Everything became black and white. At the same time, out in the snowstorm, Meng Hao caught sight of a figure that he hadn’t been able to see before.

It was a man wearing a white robe with a hood that obscured his face. Ripples were emanating out from his hands and floating in front of him was a black bowl, within which churned turbid waters. It seemed to be some sort of magic.

The instant that Meng Hao looked over, it seemed the white-robed man sensed it. He looked up and directly at Meng Hao. Meng Hao’s heart trembled. What he saw were eyes with two pupils.

He felt something clawing at his heart, whereupon he immediately ended the technique he had been using. His vision of the world went back to normal.

“Do you see him too?” said Hanxue Bao, looking over at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao nodded seriously.

“The Constellation Tribe is one of the three great Tribes of the Western Desert. They excel at augury, and believe that all the stars in the night sky are Demons.”

As soon as he finished speaking, a rumbling sound could be heard. Outside the Thorn Rampart, three giants appeared in the snowstorm. Each one was over one hundred and fifty meters tall, and caused the ground to shake as they moved. They held enormous cudgels in their hands as they charged forward.

Up above in the sky, piercing shrieks could be heard as multiple Flood Dragons appeared.

Further off in the distance, glowing war chariots could be seen charging forward. Magic swirled around the eight Nascent Soul Cultivators, along with magical items.

“Ignore the outside world! Focus on activating the spell!” As Hanxue Bao’s powerful voice echoed out, the four Frigid Snow Clan Grand Elders, as well as the other Clan members, lowered their heads to look at the spell beneath them.

The Thorn Rampart shook and began to crumble. It seemed it wouldn’t be able to stand up against a combined attack like this for very long.

A sigh escaped the mouth of Hanxue Bao. He waved his right hand, catalyzing another Thorn Rampart seed, which grew out to fortify their defenses.

“It’s too bad that Constellation Tribe member is here. He’s really suppressing the power of the Thorn Rampart.” Anxiety seeped onto Hanxue Bao’s face. However, it was at this moment that a bright glow suddenly emanated out from below.

“It’s activating! Patriarch, the spell is activating!!” Frantic, joyful cries rose up from the Frigid Snow Clan members.

Meng Hao looked back and saw the glow of the spell in the ground growing stronger and emitting a bright glow. From the look of it, it would fully activate in quite a short time.

The Frigid Snow Clan members were starting to get excited. However, it was at this time that suddenly a huge boom filled the air. Everyone’s attention was drawn off into the distance. All of the magical techniques and items of the enemy were being drawn together to form into a massive glow of extermination that resembled a star. It was with indescribable speed that it shot forward, slamming into the Thorn Rampart and smashing it into pieces.

Hanxue Bao let out a growling roar. He lifted his right hand into the air, causing the Thorn Rampart to reform once again. He shot forward, flashing an incantation signal and then waving his arm. A tempest shot forward, roaring toward the star of extermination, slamming into it and destroying it. Blood sprayed from Hanxue Bao’s mouth, and he staggered backward, his face listless.

“Patriarch!!” Grief and indignation appeared on the faces of the Frigid Snow Clan members. Hanxue Shan gnawed on her lower lip, her face pale. After everything she had experienced, she was no longer afraid, just concerned.

Meng Hao said nothing. He looked at the dawn light spreading out, and the Western Desert Cultivators. A strange glow appeared in his eyes as he looked off into the distance.

“If my calculations are correct, any moment now….” His heart began to thump as he saw a soaring fog appear off in the distance.

“Have faith in the Lord Fifth, gain eternal life…. Three circles to the left, then three to the right. Shake those butts!” When the faint voice drifted across the air, a strange smile broke out on Meng Hao’s face. It continued to grow stronger until he started laughing.

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# Chapter 382: Eyeless But Not Voiceless!

“Have faith in the Lord Fifth, gain eternal life! When the Lord Fifth appears, who dares to cause strife!

“Three circles to the left, three circles to the right! Shake those butts…. Gaze upon the Immortal Execution spell formation!”

A sound like the rumble of thunder slowly grew louder and louder. Off in the distance, a billowing fog could be seen that covered Heaven and Earth. Within the roiling fog were thousands of huge figures running back and forth, their bodies twisting into strange postures. The sound of it echoed about, and as they ran, it emanated out an indescribable power, such that anyone who laid eyes on the whole sight would be struck speechless.

More than five thousand people were running, causing everything to tremble and shake. The roiling fog seemed to affect everything around it, as if the sky and the land would be sundered. In front of the five thousand running men was a multicolored parrot. It blustered haughtily, its squawks ringing out into the air.

“Come come! Shout out a little louder for Lord Fifth!”

This whole scene completely shook the one thousand Western Desert Cultivators. The eight Nascent Soul experts stared in shock at the bizarre-looking men, and the bird.

As for the white-robed Cultivator from the Constellation Tribe, the bowl in front of him suddenly started to tremble. The turbid waters within began to spill as he stared up at the sight.

As for the Frigid Snow Clan members within the Thorn Rampart, the light from the spell beneath them continued to grow brighter. However, the more than two hundred Cultivators couldn’t help but gasp. Their scalps began to go numb at the shocking scene, and all they could do was stare numbly.

The four Grand Elders gaped, as did Hanxue Bao. Hanxue Shan stared with mouth wide opened, her face filled with disbelief.

Outside of the Thorn Rampart, some of the Black Lands Cultivators within the force from the Western Desert began to cry out in quavering voices.

“That’s… the spell formation of Lord Fifth from the Church of the Golden Light!!”

Immediately, this caused people to understand what exactly this bizarre scene was.

“The Church of the Golden Light!! Patriarch Golden Light!”

Within the Thorn Rampart, the Frigid Snow Clan members were breathing heavily as the voices from outside drifted into their ears. It didn’t take long for them to react. Suddenly, some of the Cultivators began to speak.

“They’re from the Church of the Golden Light?”

The name of the Church of the Golden Light had risen to thorough prominence in the Black Lands recently, and the stories told about Patriarch Golden Light were completely mysterious and fascinating. To see what they were seeing now caused their minds to fill with shock.

None of the Cultivators present were sure exactly why they were here. Meng Hao coughed lightly as he thought about the fame earned recently by the Church of the Golden Light. He looked at the approaching group of more than five thousand Cultivators, all of whom were said to be his own followers.

“Church of the Golden Light!” he cried out. “Hear my orders. Surround the enemy Cultivators outside the Thorn Rampart!” Suddenly, a blinding golden glow erupted out from him, which was none other than light from his Gold Core. It circulated around his body, bathing everything around him with golden light. Anyone who was nearby couldn’t help but see clearly.

As his voice echoed out, and the golden light began to shine, the Cultivators around him turned to stare at him.

The four Grand Elders’ eyes were wide, and even Hanxue Bao was looking at him with a deep expression.

Even as they stared at him, the five thousand Cultivators flew whistling closer. They heard Meng Hao’s voice, and saw the golden light, whereupon their voices combined with shocking power to cry:

“We shall follow the Patriarch’s commands to the death!!” Five thousand voices roared the words, which reverberated out. The roiling fog followed the five thousand Cultivators as they ran to surround the area. Shocking booming sounds accompanied their running; the sky above grew gray, and the earth quaked. Layers upon layers of fog rose up, within which could be seen towering, phantom figures that bore the appearance of Celestial warriors.

However… their postures were bizarre, and their rear ends shook in an odd fashion. It gave the whole image a very bizarre tone….

The sight of it thoroughly shocked the surrounding Western Desert Cultivators, as well as the Frigid Snow Clan cultivators. They stared in amazement at Meng Hao, their minds reeling. If by this point they didn’t realize who Meng Hao was, then they truly didn’t deserve to even be alive.

“You’re… you’re Patriarch Golden Light!” exclaimed First Elder with a gasp, his face filled with disbelief.

One by one, the Frigid Snow Clan Cultivators began to breathe heavily and utter hushed exclamations.

“Patriarch… Golden Light?!”

“Patriarch Golden Light!”

They knew that the Church of the Golden Light had surged up in recent days amidst the chaos of the Black Lands. It had occupied Dongluo City, and caused quite a headache for the Black Lands Palace. Patriarch Golden Light was a figure of complete mystery; his congregation numbered five thousand, and they could form a thoroughly shocking spell formation.

There was nobody in the Black Lands right now who hadn’t heard of the name of Patriarch Golden Light; he was completely famous.

To suddenly find out that Meng Hao was actually Patriarch Golden Light filled them with disbelief.

Hanxue Shan’s eyes were wide; just how many secrets did Meng Hao have? Whether it was his abilities as a Grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy, his power in catalyzing the Thorn Rampart, or his identity as Patriarch Golden Light, at the moment, he continued to reveal layer after layer of astonishment.

Hanxue Bao looked thoughtful as he stared deeply at Meng Hao, then clasped hands and bowed.

Seeing him bow, the four Grand Elders and the rest of the Frigid Snow Clan all immediately followed suit, bowing deeply to Meng Hao.

“Senior,” said Meng Hao, “there’s no need for that.” He understood the meaning of the bow; it was a means of thanking him for saving the Frigid Snow Clan.

Booms sounded out continuously from the roiling fog outside. The glow from the spell below continued to grow brighter. It seemed that they would be teleported away at any moment.

“The Frigid Snow Clan will forever remember your great kindness, Fellow Daoist,” said Hanxue Bao. “Neither myself nor the successive generations after me will ever forget you.” Gazing at Meng Hao, he lifted his right hand, whereupon a Thorn Rampart seed flew out. “There is really nothing the Frigid Snow Clan can do to repay you. When we reach the Violet Fate Sect, this seed will be of little use to us. However, on the perilous path which you tread, it might be able to provide you with a bit more protection.”

Meng Hao didn’t refuse. As far as he was concerned, this seed was very important. He was quite sure that he would be able to have his vines consume the seed, or perhaps use some other transformation technique on it. He nodded as he accepted it.

“Senior, and all other Fellow Daoists of the Frigid Snow Clan. Your spell is ready to activate. I will stay here to protect you as you leave. Once everyone has departed, I will destroy what remains of the spell portal. I sincerely wish that you all… have a safe journey!” He had been with the Frigid Snow Clan for around half a year and had experienced quite a bit with them. He had achieved his goals in coming here, so now he would do one last thing in repayment.

Explosions could be heard in the outside world. Countless figures could be seen within the fog, and the blood-curdling screams of the Western Desert Cultivators echoed about. All of this merged together to form into a sort of song of departure. Meng Hao looked over the Frigid Snow Clan members as the spell activated. As the Clan members disappeared, they looked back at Meng Hao, clasped hands and bowed deeply.

These people were no strangers; he recognized the faces of each and every one. Of course, he did not know all their names. But considering how he had defended the city together with them over these months, and had saved them on multiple occasions, it had given birth to a certain camaraderie.

“I will forever remember your kindness, Grandmaster Meng!”

“Grandmaster Meng, I hope that a day comes in the future when we can meet again!”

“Grandmaster Meng, please take care of yourself!”

One by one, the Frigid Snow Clan members disappeared into the teleportation spell. The four Grand Elders gazed at Meng Hao, giving him deep bows. Their expressions were somewhat wistful as they disappeared into the spell.

Hanxue Shan stood there; she did not bow, nor did she speak. She couldn’t prevent the tears from flowing down as she looked at him, and he looked back at her.

They stood looking at each other, separated by the spell, their figures slowly glowing blurry to each other’s eyes.

In the moment before the entire world faded into a blur, Hanxue Shan mustered her courage and spoke out to Meng Hao’s disappearing figure. “Every time it snows, you must think of me.”

Meng Hao knew that she couldn’t see him, but he smiled and nodded nonetheless.

A sigh welled up within Hanxue Bao’s heart, and he shook his head. He was now the only Frigid Snow Clan member left who hadn’t entered the teleportation spell. He looked around at the ruins around him, and then at the churning fog, from within which could be heard both howls of rage and shrieks of misery. All of it suddenly seemed very far away.

“Are you sure you won’t come with us to the Southern Domain?” he projected to Meng Hao.

“I can’t. Thank you for your kindness, senior. I wish you a safe journey.” With a slight smile, he clasped hands and bowed to the disappearing Hanxue Bao.

Hanxue Bao didn’t reply. He closed his eyes as he disappeared. Blinding lights of teleportation shot up into the air, transforming into ripples that emanated out and then vanished.

Meng Hao watched them as they disappeared. After a thoughtful moment, he waved his right hand toward the spell portal. A boom filled the air and the ground shook as the portal shattered, transforming into ash that would never be reformed.

He turned to look at the surrounding fog. Suddenly, a multicolored streak of light appeared. It was the parrot, which flew over to perch on Meng Hao’s shoulder. It was followed by the meat jelly, which was in the form of a hat.

The ground quaked as vines erupted up to surround them. At the moment, Meng Hao’s figure was thoroughly Demonic.

It was at this moment that cracking sounds could suddenly be heard from within his bag of holding. He slapped his right hand, whereupon the cocoon flew out. The cracks covering its surface suddenly collapsed, and a white larva emerged!

This larva was as white as winter snow. It was the size of a pinky finger, and its entire body was as translucent as crystal. It was not cold, but instead, emanated a strange, shocking power that seemed capable of shaking Heaven and Earth.

The Eyeless Larva!

Its empty eyes emanated a cold light, and as it crashed out from within the cocoon, it emitted a cry which caused everything to vibrate!

Larvae make no sound. But this Eyeless Larva did!

This was a sound which it would emit only once in its life!

As the Eyeless Larva cried out, shockingly, everything trembled. The Black Lands. The Southern Domain. The Western Desert. Even the Eastern Lands shook.

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# Chapter 383: An Eternal Breath

Larvae are living creatures which cannot produce sound. However, in this instant, the metamorphosed Eyeless Larva emitted sound. This was a sound which would only be heard once.

It was the voice of the Larva!

When the voice called out, Meng Hao’s ears buzzed.

In that instant, the entire world seemed to grow still…. The Eyeless Larva spoke only once, and when it did, it silenced the world!

During this space of one breath, everything around Meng Hao, the wind, the people, the sky, the land, everything… grew still….

The five thousand running Cultivators, the dust they kicked up, the ripples of the magical techniques, everything in the area. The effect spread out to cover all of the Black Lands.

It spread to the Western Desert, covered over the Southern Domain, swept across the Milky Way Sea to enter the Eastern Lands, even the Northern Desert. In this moment… everything grew still.

This was an absolute stillness. Nascent Soul, Spirit Severing, even Dao Seeking experts were all the same. In this moment, within this silence… one breath was stolen from all of them!

This theft was incredibly difficult to detect!

It was a manifestation of the frenzied and indescribable dominance that the Eyeless Larva manifested upon its appearance. The Eyeless Larva had no life force, therefore, it needed to steal it. It plundered life from all existence. All living things which existed in the flow of time… lost one breath.

Plants, animals, mortals, Cultivators… all living things. Everything grew still and motionless, and then lost one breath.

One breath was not much, but when you combine everything in the entire world, it adds up to a myriad of years!

In all of the Southern Domain, all of the Western Desert, all of the Eastern Lands, all of the Northern Desert, there was nothing in existence that sensed this breath being stolen. Even experts at the peak of the Dao Seeking stage had no way to sense the loss of the breath or the stillness in the world.

Only Immortals could!

Other than Immortals, no one had any clue!

Although they could not sense it, their life force now lacked one breath. Their time in the world slipped down; the higher the Cultivation base, the greater the loss.

That breath belonged to the Eyeless Larva, and Meng Hao!

During the stillness, ripples suddenly emanated out from the Rebirth Cave in the vast lands of the Southern Domain. They spread up into the air, and a figure appeared, formed from countless strands of Qi. It looked toward the Black Lands.

“The Eyeless Celestial Larva….”

In the vast Western Desert, in a profoundly mysterious location, was a stretch of ruins and rubble. Countless years ago, this place had a name which shook Heaven and rocked the Earth. It was called… the Bridge of Immortal Treading!

Now, it was nothing but rubble. Even still, it was one of the most profound and mysterious places in the Western Desert.

Currently, within the endless ruins, an incredibly ancient voice heaved a sigh.

“Has the Celestial Larva appeared…? It doesn’t seem like it, it seems too weak….”

In the Eastern Lands, the Northern Desert, the Milky Way Sea, it was the same. A faint aura appeared and then vanished.

During this moment of silence, a gargantuan face flashed across the sky above the Milky Way Sea.

On a forested mountain in the Western Desert, an old man sat there painting a picture of the distant mountains and rivers. During this moment of time, his paintbrush suddenly stopped moving and he lifted his head.

“The Celestial Larva… and that kid…. So, they’re bound by Karma. I guess I’ll help you once again.” Shaking his head, he waved his paintbrush, causing some ink to fly out and splash onto the ground.

This was Shui Dongliu. 1

A moment later, in the Eastern Lands, the old man from the Ji Clan who had battled with Pill Demon was holding his fishing rod out over the Pool of Heaven. Suddenly, a bang sounded out as the line snapped.

He coughed up a mouthful of blood, and astonishment filled on his face.

“What just happened…?”

In the Milky Way Sea, there was an island floating among the waves. An entire nation existed on this particular island. There were mountains, the North Sea, Yunjie County, and Cultivators. It was, of course, the State of Zhao.

And this was none other than Patriarch Reliance!

As the world returned to normal, the island trembled. At the far end of the island, a gigantic head suddenly emerged from the shell and looked up into the sky, shocked.

All across Planet South Heaven, things like this happened in various locations, although not many.

Back in the Black Lands, Meng Hao was panting as he stared blankly at the Eyeless Larva that rested on his palm. Earlier, when he had fed the Frigid Snow Larva, it had seemed completely normal. But all of a sudden, Meng Hao’s heart was filled with fear.

Granted, he had gotten the information regarding how to create the Eyeless Larva by means of interrogation. He knew that perhaps ninety percent was true and ten was false, although it was impossible to determine which parts were which.

Therefore, he had done things very carefully.

However, even the Black Lands Cultivator who had given him the information would have had no way to know how truly fearsome the Eyeless Larva would be when it appeared!

Actually, one of the bits of information that he had intentionally left out was the fact that in order to get the Eyeless Larva to appear, one needed an unimaginably vast amount of Mulberry Thunderclap Leaves. In fact, all the Mulberry Thunderclap Leaves on Planet South Heaven were probably not enough.

How could he possibly have imagined that Meng Hao would be so inhuman as to actually be able to metamorphose an Eyeless Larva?

It was actually something impossible to do!

The truth was, once a Frigid Snow Larva consumed a Mulberry Thunderclap Leaf, if it did not continue to feed until a certain point, then it would explode with shockingly destructive power. The force unleashed would be powerful enough to annihilate everything within a three hundred kilometer radius.

That was his true plan. He didn’t covet the legendary Eyeless Larva, but rather the fearsome, destructive power. It was a precious treasure that would give him incredible powers of threat.

Meng Hao took a deep breath as he sensed what the Eyeless Larva was doing. It lay there in his palm, unmoving. However, Meng Hao could sense a vast, strong power of life force, incredibly intense. He suddenly thought about that moment of silence.

This life force exceeded anything he had ever seen before. Not even the Blood Mastiff could compare to the Eyeless Larva in this respect. Even if he faced up against a Spirit Severing expert, that person would not be able to compare to the life force of the Eyeless Larva.

No outsider would be able to sense such an intense life force. Only Meng Hao could do that, because of the unbreakable bond that now existed between the two of them. It had begun with the Frigid Snow Larva. By the time it metamorphosed into the Eyeless Larva, though, the connection was deep-rooted, branded upon the very life of the thing.

Because the brand emerged at the same time as it metamorphosed, it was something that exceeded the imaginations of normal people, and the power of magic. You can say that there were very few powers under the Heavens which could extinguish the connection which now existed between Meng Hao and the Eyeless Larva. It was as if the larva was now a part of him. Because of this, Meng Hao could now sense the thick and fearsome life force which existed inside of it.

It was because of this life force that, after its metamorphosis, the Eyeless Larva could employ its shocking divine ability!

The larva would never be destroyed, and its thread could not be broken. The thread could not be broken, nor could the larva be destroyed!

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# Chapter 384: MY Gold Core Tribulation!

It was as if there was some inexplicable cycle that existed, within which appeared a type of rule. Because of this, the Eyeless Larva could never be killed, nor could its silk be destroyed. It was truly miraculous.

“This creature is a defiance of the Heavens….” After feeling the connection with the Eyeless Larva, Meng Hao’s eyes began to shine, and his heart pounded.

Lord Fifth looked crestfallen and filled with envy as it looked at Meng Hao, as if its heart was on the verge of exploding. It was something extraordinary and special, and was also able to sense what had just happened. Its gaze fell onto the Eyeless Larva, and after a long moment passed, it let out a sigh.

“Lord Fifth is so handsome and debonair,” it said, continuing to sigh, “esteemed in all Heaven and Earth, a unique, beautiful bird. During this life, I’ve never been able to have such a miraculous, heaven-defying creature. Why does Meng Hao suddenly get one…. It’s not fair, you dog-fart of a Heaven! It’s not fair!”

Meng Hao lifted his head up to look into the sky.

“Parrot, it’s time to remove whatever force you put on me to conceal me from the Heavenly Tribulation. The time has come to transcend my Gold Core Tribulation!” His eyes glittered with an unprecedented glow. It was the glow of self-confidence, as well as a virtually imperceptible look of disdain.

The parrot glanced at Meng Hao, then flapped its wings. A multicolored glow shot out from it to cover Meng Hao's entire body.

As the multicolored glow passed over him, an aura suddenly emanated out from him with great intensity. This was not an aura from his Cultivation base, but rather undulations placed upon him by the parrot to conceal him from the Heavenly Tribulation.

Now that the undulations had revealed him, intense rumbling sounds immediately filled the sky. Deafening thunder rang out, reverberating out in all directions, covering everything for thousands of kilometers in all directions, shaking the land.

The lightning seemed to be furious, as if it had been searching for Meng Hao for a long time, and now that it found him, was filled with an awe-inspiring desire to crush him out of existence.

The sound of thunder reverberated around in the air; as it did, immense black clouds filled the sky, covering over everything. Layer upon layer rose up, emanating shocking sounds of thunder. Lightning twisted and crackled amidst the layers of clouds. The sight of it was astonishing.

As for the Western Desert Cultivators trapped within the spell formation, expressions of astonishment covered their faces. The face of the white-robed man from the Constellation Tribe, also caught within the fog, immediately fell.

"That's… Heavenly Tribulation!"

Meng Hao looked up at the Tribulation clouds filling the skies, and the countless bands of silver lightning, twisting about like snakes. As the ear-splitting thunder sounded out, he coolly said, "Get the Cultivators of the Church of the Golden Light out of here! Retreat them to a position fifteen hundred kilometers away! The rest of you, get fifteen hundred kilometers away too. For this Tribulation… I will not need your assistance. This is MY Gold Core Tribulation!"

The parrot hesitated for a moment, then flew up into the air. The meat jelly hovered off to the side, looking at Meng Hao. “I hope you don’t get killed by the lightning….” it said solemnly. It put on an ancient and wizened appearance. “If you do, there will be one less evildoer in the world. Don’t worry, though, if the lightning does kill you, I won’t be too heartbroken. In fact, I….” Seemingly reveling in Meng Hao’s misfortune, it was just making to leave when Meng Hao grabbed it.

“Hey! What are you doing!?” it howled furiously.

“You don’t get to leave,” replied Meng Hao calmly. The vines surrounding Meng Hao instantly burrowed down into the ground and were gone in the blink of an eye. The parrot also shot away at top speed; within an instant, it was five hundred kilometers away.

At the same time, the parrot transmitted the information to the Cultivators of the Church of the Golden Light who were in the fog. They immediately began to scatter, fleeing as far away as possible. Soon, the only people around Meng Hao were the Western Desert Cultivators, emerging from the fog, expressions of shock on their faces.

During the same moment in which they caught sight of Meng Hao, massive thunderous booms sounded out from up above. The brutality of the sound itself threatened to cause everything around to collapse. Roughly thirty percent of the Western Desert Cultivators coughed up blood and then let out miserable shrieks as they realized they had been deafened.

Simultaneously, a bright red lightning bolt shot down toward Meng Hao from up above. As it descended, it attracted other nearby lightning toward it. By the time it was about to slam into Meng Hao, it was as thick as a human thigh.

The instant it was about to hit him, Meng Hao lifted his hand up with blinding speed. There in his hand was the meat jelly.

A boom echoed out, along with the miserable cry of the meat jelly, who instantly turned black. Meng Hao’s body quivered as massive amounts of red sparks danced down his arm and then covered his entire body. They then passed down his feet to crawl across the ground, turning the snowy ground three hundred meters in all directions into a red lake of lightning!

“So this is Heavenly Tribulation…” said Meng Hao, lifting his head up to laugh. “Bring it on!” His hair whipped around him, and his eyes filled with disdain as he laughed uproariously toward the Heavens.

“Dammit, he’s transcending the Tribulation! He’s actually doing it!” The nearby Western Desert Cultivators’ faces filled with shock. It was without hesitation that most of them retreated backward, their scalps numb. The only thing that they could think to do was flee.

However, some of them had a different idea. Killing intent flickered in their eyes as they shot toward Meng Hao.

“Kill him, and the Heavenly Tribulation will go away!” This was what they were thinking as they shot toward him as fast as possible, unleashing magical techniques to attack him.

“How naive!” said Meng Hao with a cold laugh, ignoring the incoming Cultivators. Even as they closed in on him, massive rumbling could be heard from the sky as another lightning bolt descended toward him.

This time, Meng Hao didn’t use the meat jelly. That was because this particular lightning bolt, when it was about three hundred meters away from him, suddenly broke apart. It transformed into a dozen or so smaller lightning bolts that fell like rain onto both him and the Western Desert Cultivators who were charging him.

BOOM!

“Ahh, that’s really scratching my itch,” said Meng Hao with a laugh. After all his time dealing with the Heavenly Tribulation attacking him at intervals over the past months, his skin had grown a lot tougher. A bolt of Heavenly Tribulation lighting that could easily kill a Western Desert Core Formation Cultivator wouldn’t so much as hurt Meng Hao.

He was used to it. Having experienced Heavenly Tribulation in a way that ordinary people could never even imagine, his body was now much more used to lightning.

As for these smaller lightning bolts, they really did feel like they were scratching an itch. When the lightning hit his body, all he felt was a little numbing sensation.

In fact, it was somewhat comfortable.

As for the dozen or so Western Desert Cultivators who had been trying to kill him, when the boom rang out, they were all instantly blackened into ash. Their magical techniques and treasures were destroyed like rotten wood.

Almost at the same time as Meng Hao's words rang out, their charred corpses toppled to the ground. Seeing this caused the other surrounding Western Desert Cultivators to gasp with shock.

Even the pupils of the eight Nascent Soul Cultivators constricted.

"Is he even human?"

"Dammit, it looks like he's actually enjoying the Heavenly Tribulation. This guy is inhuman!" The surrounding Cultivators were in an uproar. More were beginning to flee, wanting nothing more than to get out of the region of the Heavenly Tribulation. They could tell that only if they could get thousands of kilometers away would they be safe, and not attract the Heavenly Tribulation.

Suddenly, Meng Hao's voice echoed out, filled with coldness and killing intent. "Congregation of the Church of the Golden Light! Encircle the surrounding three thousand kilometer area with the spell formation. Trap these people here! Do not let them step half a foot outside!" Now that they were here with him, Meng Hao was disinclined to let them leave.

It didn't matter if they were Core Formation, Nascent Soul, or even the mysterious white-robed man from the Constellation Tribe. Meng Hao would keep them here to share in transcending the Tribulation!

“Abide by the holy commands of the Patriarch!” cried out the five thousand Cultivators. The sound of their voices turned into a powerful wave which fought back against the thunderous roars of the Heavens. It echoed out in all direction, filling the three thousand kilometer area. The five thousand Cultivators of the Church of the Golden light then began to run. As they did, a billowing fog suddenly rose up, and rumbling could be heard.

“People are always asking me if I dare to fight. Well today, I ask you, who is there… that dares to fight with Meng Hao!?” He flicked his sleeve and accompanied the echo of his own voice as he flew forward toward the other Cultivators.

As he charged toward them, the sky rumbled with furious, crackling lightning that seemed to contain the might of the Heavens. A red bolt of lightning, even thicker than before, began to fall. It was when this happened that Meng Hao arrived in front of a group of a dozen or so Cultivators.

Their faces twisted, and in their hearts filled with enough curses that if they had the time, they would give voice to them for three days and three nights. Booms echoed out everywhere as the Heavenly Tribulation lightning bolt split, slamming into everyone present. Instantly, Meng Hao was surrounded by corpses. His body vibrated as sparks flowed down past his feet and across the ground. Again, he was surrounded by a lake of lightning dozens of meters in every direction. Meng Hao’s laughter once again rang out.

“Who dares to fight me!?” he cried.

“Dammit, this guy is a supernova of evil!”

“Stay away! Stay away!”

More booms filled the air. Everywhere Meng Hao went, lightning roared. Anyone within three hundred meters of him all became selfless, bosom buddies of Meng Hao, there to help him transcend the Tribulation….

Just as a bolt of Heavenly Tribulation lightning was descending to slaughter a dozen or so more people, killing intent suddenly gleamed in the eyes of the eight Nascent Soul experts. The Heavenly Tribulation had thrown the Qi in the area into chaos, making it impossible for them to use minor teleportation. Therefore, they all flew toward Meng Hao from different directions.

They couldn't use minor teleportation, but their speed was incredible. It took only a moment for them to be right on top of Meng Hao. The eight of them combined their powers into a single attack all aimed at Meng Hao.

"DIE!!" they screamed. They hated him to the bones. First he had trapped them, then directed lightning against them. All of that was caused by someone of the trifling Core Formation stage. They were determined to shred him to pieces, to make him understand that regardless of any circumstances, Core Formation Cultivators were like insects compared to the Nascent Soul stage.

Seeing this, the white-robed Cultivator from the Constellation Tribe's face suddenly flickered. Immediately, he cried out, "Stop!" However, he was too late.

With a slight smile and a cool look, Meng Hao ignored the eight attackers and looked up into the sky.

"Just what is the might of the Heavens…?"

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# Chapter 385: Bring It On!

Thunderous roaring rose up as the divine abilities of eight Nascent Soul experts descended upon Meng Hao. Vicious expressions covered their faces, and their intense killing intent radiated out.

Each and every one could imagine the scene in a moment as Meng Hao’s weak body shattered like porcelain, exploding into countless pieces. After that, the Heavenly Tribulation would disperse, and this farce of a battle would be over.

Meng Hao’s gaze lowered from the Heavens to the approaching Cultivators. “The Heavens are not to be offended. Not to be provoked! Not to be superseded!! The Heavens are trying to slay me! Who do you think you people are? What qualifies you to try to replace the Heavens in an attempt to exterminate me?” He laughed proudly.

His laughter caused the faces of the Nascent Soul Cultivators to instantly fall. It was with great astonishment that they discovered their divine abilities had no effect whatsoever on Meng Hao. They disappeared like an ox tossed into the sea with rocks tied around its feet.

Simultaneously, an indescribable sense of danger suddenly appeared. Lightning began to amass in the sky, to a far greater extent than before. A roaring sound could be heard as a massive bolt of lightning three meters thick began to fall. It looked like an enormous pillar of light.

It immediately split into nine parts which descended downward.

Meng Hao lifted up his right hand, within which was the shrieking meat jelly. The eight Nascent Soul Cultivators’ scalps went numb; Meng Hao’s laughter had turned everything into a nightmare. They immediately retreated from the incoming Tribulation Lightning.

It didn't matter how quickly they evaded. The lightning descended, slamming into them with a huge boom. Blood sprayed from their mouths and their faces went white. They shot backward at high speed, staring at Meng Hao with immeasurable dread.

The white-robed Cultivator from the Constellation Tribe frowned, his face unsightly and pale. "The ancient records say that whoever is transcending Tribulation is an inauspicious life form of Heaven and Earth. Everything within five thousand kilometers of him will be turned into nothing but ash. However, until then, he is still an inauspicious life form! Anyone near him will be dead for sure!

"Furthermore, it will be impossible to kill him. The Heavens are difficult to fathom, especially in regards to dignity. The Heavens will exterminate this person, how could they possibly allow others to assist? Attempting to kill him now is making yourself an enemy of the Heavens!

"The instant he gets killed by the Tribulation Lightning, his body will explode into a ball of lightning…. According to the ancient records, when that explosion of lightning occurs, everything within the Tribulation transcendence zone will be reduced to nothing.

"The only hope of survival is to make sure that he transcends the Tribulation. Furthermore, you can't let the Lightning infect your body. If it does, and you don't die, then you are evoking Karma…. If you evoke such Karma, then the Tribulation Lightning won't stop until you're dead. You eight Nascent Soul Cultivators… are dead beyond the shadow of a doubt!"

Face grim, the white-robed Cultivator retreated at top speed.

The Heavenly Tribulation boomed as one lightning bolt after another shot down onto Meng Hao, who held the meat jelly upraised in his hand to defend himself. The lightning would subsequently disperse into the area around him. Any nearby Cultivators would let out bloodcurdling screams. Soon, the air filled with the sounds of cursing and reviling.

Meng Hao didn’t care. This was something he had learned from Patriarch Reliance. When you con someone and then end up getting cursed by them, you must maintain your cool. It was really a realm unto itself.

Throughout the years, Meng Hao had conned many people, and had refined that skill to the very pinnacle. Therefore, he continued to redirect the descending lightning to the various Cultivators in the three thousand kilometer region.

Wherever he went, he was surrounded by a lake of lightning, along with plaintive cursing. What he left behind was scorched corpses.

To the Cultivators here, it was nothing but a massacre, a slaughter in which no one could do anything to fight back. They couldn’t attack him, nor could they flee as… they were horrified to discover that Meng Hao’ speed was incredible, even if he was being struck by lightning!

Time passed, and the Heavenly Tribulation continued to fall, and nearly all of the surrounding Cultivators had been conned into death thanks to Meng Hao. There were roughly a hundred left, all of whom had split off toward different areas, their faces pale. If Meng Hao even looked their way, they would flee at top speed in the opposite direction.

Unfortunately… the lightning fell continuously, there were some people who couldn’t avoid it. That was especially true of those Cultivators who had at some point attacked Meng Hao. Meng Hao didn’t even have to get near them to attract the falling lightning.

The eight Nascent Soul Cultivators, for example, soon found that no matter where or how they fled, whenever lightning shot toward Meng Hao, they would also be struck.

Each lightning bolt contained incredible power. Even though they were of the Nascent Soul stage, if things kept up as they were, they wouldn’t be able to take it.

“Dammit, that Heaven-damned bastard is too sadistic! This is his Tribulation, we’re innocent….”

“I’m gonna kill him! Kill him!!”

“If he doesn’t die, then I swear that he will be the greatest archenemy in my entire life!!”

The roughly one hundred surviving Cultivators howled continuously amongst the roaring of the thunder. Whenever the lightning sought out Meng Hao, they, too experienced lightning.

Meng Hao coughed lightly as he lowered the meat jelly. It seemed to be full, almost bulging. It glared furiously at Meng Hao.

“You’re immoral, you’re too wicked….”

Boom!

“Aiiiiiii! You evil bastard….”

Boom!

“Let me go, okay, Master? You’re the best Master in the world. Forgive little old me, okay? I’m full. Really, I’m full. I can’t eat any more….”

Looking at the wretched condition the meat jelly was in, Meng Hao held it up to block one final lightning bolt, then flicked his sleeve. The meat jelly instantly turned into a prismatic beam of light that shot of toward the fog.

“Dammit Meng Hao,” it roared. “You just wait, you wicked, immoral bastard. I’ll definitely convert you in this life!” Feeling very wronged, it was continuing to curse when Meng Hao transmitted a single sentence to it.

“If nothing unexpected happens, then when I reach Nascent Soul, I’ll need your help with the Tribulation Lightning again.”

The meat jelly suddenly trembled, and an ingratiating expression appeared on its face. Not saying another word about the subject, it flew into the fog. It feared Meng Hao, feared him completely. It was worried that if it spent any more time talking back, it would be forced to get so full that it would explode.

Meng Hao looked around the three thousand kilometer area and didn’t see anyone else. The remaining hundred or so people had long since dispersed and found places to hide. If Meng Hao couldn’t find them, then it indicated that the Heavenly Tribulation couldn’t either.

He took a deep breath as a look of concentration filled his face. Now the true transcending of Tribulation was to begin. This was because the Tribulation Lightning was no longer pure red; now it contained, an additional color.

It could be described as abstruse, and pitch-black!

Abstruse, pitch-black lightning!

Each bolt now had doubly destructive power. As it roared down, Meng Hao could see that within the red and black was incredible power of annihilation. He lifted his right hand into the air, wherein appeared the Li Clan Patriarch.

The explosion echoed out, accompanied by a miserable shriek. The soul embodiment twisted, but did not disperse. After all the time Meng Hao had spent getting it used to lightning, while it wasn’t a complete Soul of Lightning, it was more than halfway there.

“Damn you Meng Hao, I’ll never let you get away with this!” The Li Clan Patriarch’s roars were shocking and filled with grief. During the last half year, he had experienced torment and pain like nothing he had experienced in his life. He had been born into a lofty status, and in the Li Clan was considered a Patriarch. However, with Meng Hao, he had experienced untold suffering.

At the moment, even as the grief welled up from his heart and he reviled Meng Hao, he was lifted up again. A boom filled the air, along with a miserable shriek.

In fact, he now felt that spending time with the meat jelly was much better than being with Meng Hao. Before, he used to consider the meat jelly to be the biggest nightmare in existence. He had long since changed his mind.

Now, the meat jelly actually seemed somewhat charming. Meng Hao was the true ultimate nightmare.

Booms rang out as one lightning bolt after another fell down. Even with the Li Clan Patriarch, and Meng Hao’s increased resistance to lightning, it was still difficult to take.

Meng Hao’s body trembled. The ground around him was thoroughly destroyed, and much of it had crystallized. It looked like blackish-red gems, horrible and fearsome in appearance.

When the lightning slammed into this new type of ground, it would ricochet off, inflicting even more injuries onto Meng Hao. As such, he needed to constantly change locations. The pressure bearing down on him was growing increasingly greater, as well as upon the hundred or so other people who were still in the fifteen hundred kilometer area.

As the lightning continued to rain down, occasionally, bloodcurdling screams would rise up. Just now, five hundred kilometers away, blood sprayed from the mouth of a man festooned with totem tattoos. Lightning smashed down onto him until he couldn’t take it any more and died. In the end, he’d had no choice other than to help Meng Hao transcend this tribulation.

After the man died, even more lightning fell from the Heavens.

Two hundred and fifty kilometers away, three Western Desert Cultivators were currently sitting cross-legged, converging their power, along with a total of nine glittering totems and dozens of magical items, to create a shimmering shield above their heads. Lightning bolts continued to fall down onto the shield. Suddenly….

Three successive bolts of black-red Tribulation Lightning smashed into the shield, shattering it to pieces. Their magical treasures collapsed into pieces, and the nine totems were split apart. The three Cultivators’ bodies spasmed and blood sprayed from their mouths. Moments later, they were nothing more than ash drifting in the wind.

A thousand kilometers away was a Western Desert Cultivator who had fled into a subterranean chamber. Above him hovered rings composed of thousands of human skulls, his attempt to conceal himself. It had worked up until now, when bolt after bolt of black-red lightning smashed the skulls into pieces, which were then transformed into ice crystals. Moments later, the man was nothing more than a collection of crystals fused with the ground.

After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, Meng Hou coughed up some blood, then lifted his head up and laughed. His hair whipped around, and his body was covered with lightning wounds. However, his maniacal laughter had not reduced even in the slightest.

Of the hundred or so people who had joined him in this transcending of Tribulation, only twenty or so still held out. The rest were dead.

After enough time passed for two incense sticks to burn, a boom rang out from Meng Hao’s body. The Li Clan Patriarch seemed on the verge of death. Having accomplished all he could with him, Meng Hao put him away. After this particular round of lightning, Meng Hao’s body felt as if it were on the verge of collapse. It was at this point that Violet Qi appeared in his eyes, and his body began to recover.

“Bring it on!!” he roared, holding his head back as he laughed and laughed. His laughter was shrill but filled with determination and even a touch of madness. As the laughter reached the ears of the five thousand running Cultivators of the Church of the Golden Light, it seemed completely brutal.

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# Chapter 386: Five Colored Sky, Cultivation Base Breakthrough!

The parrot stared blankly at Meng Hao as he stood there surrounded by Heavenly Tribulation. Within the three thousand kilometer region, the ground had been completely transformed into ice crystals. The sky was thick with black clouds, and lightning fell down like rain, shaking Heaven and Earth.

Meng Hao was in the middle of it all, head thrown back as the brutal sound of his laughter rose up into the face of the Heavens. The parrot was breathing heavily as it recalled a figure it had seen once, also laughing in the face of Heavenly Tribulation. The only difference was that Meng Hao was on the ground, and the person in its memory was in mid-air.

Apparently infuriated by Meng Hao’s laughter, the clouds in the Heaven seethed, and another color appeared in addition to the red and black.

Green!

Shocking green lightning mixed in with the red and black. Three-colored lightning descended upon Meng Hao, twenty bolts at the same time!

The eight Nascent Soul Cultivators had lost even the power to curse. They were doing everything to fight back against the lightning. Amidst the booms, Meng Hao’s laughter rang out as slender, white strands began to fly about in the air around him. The lightning was completely incapable of breaking these strands, not even a bit.

Of the Cultivators in the three thousand kilometer area, only the eight Nascent Soul Cultivators could resist the three-colored lightning, as well as… the white-robed Cultivator from the Constellation Tribe.

All of the other Cultivators who had lasted up to this point were now dead.

The white-robed Cultivator’s heart filled with alarm. He had exercised utmost caution up to this point, and yet in the end, had been infected by Karma. He was now sucked into being part of the Tribulation. His eyes filled with venomous hatred, but there was nothing he could do about it.

“Dammit, how could it be three-colored Tribulation Lightning? Just what did this guy do to offend the Heavens to invoke legendary Tribulation Lightning like this!?!?”

A roaring sound rose up again as bolts of three-colored lightning continued to fall relentlessly. Meng Hao’s body shook. Silk swirled around him continuously.

The silk thread spit out by the Eyeless Larva is neverending, and is impossible to break!

The thread could be long or short; at the moment it spun to surround Meng Hao, creating layer after layer. When the lightning fell from the Heavens to slam into it, giant booms filled the air. The lightning seemed to be split into pieces by the silk, which was not breaking. However, the resulting reverberations slammed into Meng Hao.

He coughed up a mouthful of blood as sparks danced through the air around him and then slammed into the ground, only to ricochet back up and hit Meng Hao. Cracking sounds could be heard from his legs as shattered bones suddenly poked out through his skin.

Meng Hao’s vision was starting to grow dim. Blood filled his mouth, but he simply spit it out and then started laughing again. His eyes were filled both with determination, and a violet glow. Using the power of the Violet Pupil Transformation, and borrowing from his longevity, he healed himself. In the blink of an eye, he was back to normal.

As of this point, there was no land within the three thousand kilometer region which had not been crystallized; this led only to further injury for Meng Hao.

Given this situation, there was no reason not to simply… fly straight up into the sky!

This action caused the parrot’s eyes to grow wide. As of now, he was having difficulty separating the previous image in its memory with that of Meng Hao’s.

“This is my Gold Core Tribulation, and I’m gonna last until the end! No more hiding! No more fear and awe! If fear and awe exist in the heart of the Cultivator, then how can any great Dao be cultivated!? How can self-confidence be cultivated!?

“When I reached Foundation Establishment, I ran away. When I reached Core Formation, I hesitated. Well now… I will retreat no further!” A roar echoed up from deep within Meng Hao, filled with his determination to become powerful.

“When this Tribulation is over, I will be even stronger!” He held his head back and roared as he floated there in mid-air. His black hair danced around him, and his back was straight. His appearance was that of lofty heroism. The silk of the Eyeless Larva swirled around him, unbreakable by anything under the Heavens.

As Meng Hao roared, more three-colored lightning fell, heading directly for him. He laughed, his eyes shining with confidence as he lifted his right hand, formed it into a fist, and directly punched the Heavenly Tribulation.

This was his first attempt to actually fight back!

Such resistance seemed simple, but few people would ever think to use this method to attempt to transcend Heavenly Tribulation. It was a rare thing for someone to attempt to actually destroy the Heavenly Tribulation.

Almost the same moment that Meng Hao's fist slammed into the lightning, it was as if some new part of him were suddenly ripped open. His will and heart moved in accord, and his Cultivation base mobilized. As soon as he put to action his intent to fight back against the Heavenly Tribulation, his Cultivation base suddenly exploded up!

He was no longer in the mid Gold Core stage. He had broken through into the late Gold Core stage. Granted, he was not at the peak, but had without any doubt stepped into the late stage. Such willingness to undertake actions that can lead to grave consequence, and the resulting instant breakthrough, were shocking to the extreme!

Seemingly endless amounts of golden light radiated out from his body. His eyes shone with a dazzling golden brilliance. Without hesitation, Meng Hao produced an ultra high-grade Spirit Stone. The instant it appeared in his hand, he absorbed the spiritual energy within, then crushed it into dust. He roared, drawing upon the new power of his Cultivation base, the energy within the Spirit Stone, and the bizarre force in his right hand, to shoot directly up toward the Heavenly Tribulation.

A roaring sound filled the air and Meng Hao coughed up blood as one, two, three… five bolts of Heavenly Tribulation slammed into him, shoving him downward. Silk spun madly around him, and Violet Qi exploded in his eyes. The injuries he was sustaining were constantly being healed. Among the eight Nascent Soul Cultivators who remained in the three thousand kilometer region, three of them suddenly coughed up blood and then were killed by the lightning.

They had no magical items with which to defend against the Heavenly Tribulation, nor any experience standing up to lightning. Neither did they possess wild, stubborn determination; the only path for them was the one that led to death!

Even Nascent Soul Cultivators could not flee this Heavenly Tribulation; their bodies exploded into pieces.

Meng Hao's body was shaking, and it seemed as if every inch of him was covered in blood. He shot down toward the ground, and yet even as he did, the Violet Pupil Transformation went to work. He quickly consumed a vast collection of medicinal pills; when he was a mere nine meters away from the ground, he suddenly stopped in mid-air. Shockingly, hoarse laughter once again filled the air.

Suddenly, the sky above went black. Ten lightning bolts shot down, carrying with them all the pretentious dignity of the Heavenly Tribulation. They descended directly toward Meng Hao, and as they did, the sky above suddenly burst into chaos. The massive clouds began to rotate to form a vortex. Shocking rumbling filled the air. If this scene could be painted onto a canvas, anyone who looked at it would never be able to forget it.

“Meng Hao is not the type of person to passively take a beating!” laughed Meng Hao. He lifted his hand up and pointed toward the sky. Suddenly, the power of the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex poured out from Meng Hao. Ghost images sprang up everywhere as the power shot up toward the Heavens.

“Demonic Qi! Art of Righteous Bestowal! Eighth Demon Sealing Hex!”

Heaven and Earth shook. An aura visible only to Meng Hao himself surged up from the crystalline ground and shot toward him. The countless strands immediately congealed together to form a churning mist.

This Demonic mist surged out to completely surround Meng Hao, as if he was calling upon the very essence of the land, and it was following his direction. It shot toward the incoming ten bolts of lightning.

A massive boom rocked everything above and below. The lightning descended, causing a shocking roar to fill the sky. It slammed into the Demonic Qi surrounding Meng Hao, causing it to shatter, layer by layer. As it did, the lightning slowly began to dissipate.

In the blink of an eye, only three of the ten Tribulation Lightning bolts remained. The Demonic Qi crumbled away, and the three remaining Tribulation Lightning bolts screamed toward Meng Hao. Immediately, the silk of the Eyeless Larva surrounded him, and yet, some of the lightning still managed to slip through.

A tremor shot through Meng Hao's body, and a vast quantity of blood sprayed out of his mouth. His body shot down toward the ground like a meteor. A huge boom could be heard as he slammed into the crystalline ground. The ground shattered, cracks spread out, and a crater was suddenly visible.

The Tribulation Clouds up above churned, lightning dancing about within. Suddenly, the lightning began to congeal together, its color changing once again. Now the lightning had four colors. Peals of thunder crackled out.

Within the three thousand kilometer region, the remaining five Nascent Soul Cultivators coughed up blood. Two of them directly exploded. Their weakened Nascent Souls attempted to flee, but were obliterated by lightning.

Begrudged screams could be heard before they died. Now, there were only three Nascent Soul experts left in the area. Their bodies trembled and their eyes filled with despair. Hatred for Meng Hao filled their hearts; unfortunately for them, there was nothing they could do about it.

It was at this time that the four-colored lightning began to descend from within the churning clouds. It sped toward the crater, and yet, even as it neared its destination, a fist suddenly flew out from within to slam directly into the lightning bolt.

A huge explosion filled the air and everything trembled. Meng Hao emerged, his body scorched black, blood everywhere. However, the violet glow continued to shine in his eyes, healing his body. He chuckled hoarsely and then, heart filled with valiance, flew up into the air.

"Gold Core Tribulation. You've already let loose around a hundred lightning bolts. Please, feel free to bring on some more!" As his voice echoed out, madness glowed within his eyes.

The Tribulation Clouds up above seethed, roaring with thunderous superciliousness and fury. Suddenly, everything up above turned bright red; simultaneously, countless bolts of red lightning fell like rain toward Meng Hao.

They slammed into him, transforming into endless sparks. And yet, Meng Hao remained floating in mid air, his grandeur only continuing to grow.

Suddenly, another color appeared up above. Black!

The sky was half black and half red! The rain of lightning now included black lightning. Thunderous roars filled the sky. Next, green appeared!

Red, black and green. Three colors interlocked in the sky, and the rain of lightning was now that of these three colors!

It wasn’t over, though. A fourth color appeared!

White!

Four colors now could be seen in the sky. White-colored lightning now descended from this sky of four colors. The ground shook as the lightning slammed into it.

Amidst this four-colored lightning, Meng Hao floated, the silk of the Eyeless Larva spinning around him. He rotated his Cultivation base as he fought back against the Heavenly Tribulation.

It was at this moment that everything shook, as if some invisible person was roaring. Suddenly… a fifth color appeared in the sky!

Yellow!

Red, Black, Green, White, Yellow!

A Five-Colored Sky, and Five-Colored Tribulation Lightning. This was the final Heavenly Tribulation Meng Hao would face in his Gold Core Tribulation. He suddenly had the intense feeling that if he could transcend this lightning of five colors, then this Heavenly Tribulation would end.

“So, the final Heavenly Tribulation!” His eyes glistened with intense determination.

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# Chapter 387: The Ninth Generation Demon Sealer’s First Sealing of the Heavens!

“Heavenly Tribulation has five colors, and the five elements have five colors…. I wonder if there’s some connection between the two.” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. Now was not the time to worry about such things. As soon as the five colors up above finished merging together, a five-colored bolt of Tribulation Lightning appeared and began to descend.

At first glance, this five-colored Tribulation Lightning bolt looked to Meng Hao almost like a gigantic tree falling down from the sky. However, it quickly changed into something that resembled a golden sword. It pierced through the air, changing again, this time into a massive sea that seemed poised to wipe away everything in sight.

After a brief moment, it changed another time. Now it was a Flame Sea that could burn away everything in existence, within the midst of which was an enormous bird formed from clay!

These five changes happened instantly, and then vanished. However, Meng Hao saw them all; instantly his heart trembled as he understood what was happening.

Boom!

The five-colored Tribulation Lightning bolt slammed into Meng Hao. He had the Eyeless Larva and its silk. He had the Violet Pupil Transformation. He had a Perfect Cultivation base, exploding intense power. He had the glove on his right hand, which even Heavenly Tribulation could not destroy.

A massive boom filled the ears of the five thousand running Cultivators, a boom that rose up all the way to the Heavens.

When the five-colored Tribulation Lightning descended, one among the remaining three Nascent Soul Experts in the three thousand kilometer region shook and then exploded into a cloud of flesh and blood, which then dissolved into ash. His Nascent Soul was also exterminated.

“Five-Colored Sky!” cried the white-robed Cultivator from the Constellation Tribe. “It’s the legendary Five-Colored Sky!!” By now, the man’s clothing hung in tatters on his body, and his ancient face was revealed. The most shocking thing was that his facial features were all deformed, and his ear was covered up with his own skin!

His eyes shone with a red glow, and his body was trembling as he looked up into the sky. A look of unprecedented fear and awe could be seen in his eyes.

Meng Hao’s body was also trembling. He clenched his jaw tightly as the five-colored lightning showered over him. It danced about, seemingly intent on ripping him to shreds and blotting out his soul. It wanted to bore into his flesh and smash his blood and Qi passageways.

But the Eyeless Larva fought on tenaciously, like an ultimate treasure of Heaven and Earth, sending out layer after layer of unbreakable silk to shatter the five-colored Heavenly Tribulation.

Thanks to the silk, the five-colored lightning gradually disappeared. Not a single lightning bolt could be seen anywhere. Meng Hao raised his head up and roared. Violet Qi surged, once again restoring his body. However, on his face, wrinkles of age were now visible.

“Five-colored Tribulation Lightning cannot break the will of Meng Hao!”

The Five-Colored Sky rumbled, and the seething clouds suddenly began to congeal together. As the clouds moved, it seemed as if Time itself were dancing within. Peals of thunder filled the Heavens as countless bolts of five-colored lightning appeared. All of them gradually began to merge.

At the same moment, an unspeakable pressure could be felt from up above. As the clouds contracted, it seemed as if they were now filling with an unprecedented lightning of annihilation.

“Hold on, Meng Hao!” squawked the parrot from its position outside the three thousand kilometer region. “This is the final bit of lightning!”

The lightning rumbled as the final collection of Heavenly Tribulation formed. Within the space of about ten breaths, no more Tribulation Clouds could be seen in the sky. The only thing visible now was the glow of the five colors!

This five-colored glow… was not lightning. Instead, it had taken the shape of a gigantic hand. Each finger of this hand was one color, making it a gigantic Five-Colored Palm. It was Heavenly, and of lightning; after all, it was formed out of five-colored lightning itself. Upon examination, this massive palm truly seemed incomparable.

Strangely, it had no palm print whatsoever!

Rumbling filled the air as the Five-Colored Palm began to fall down from the sky.

As it neared, the ground shook, shattering the land within the three thousand kilometer area. Everything collapsed. The remaining two Nascent Soul Cultivators who held on until now could do so no longer. With blood curdling shrieks, they exploded. Their Nascent Souls, along with every trace of their life force, were completely eradicated.

As for the white-robed member of the Constellation Tribe, he coughed up a mouthful of blood, his face filled with despair.

The palm descended, and Meng Hao could feel an unprecedented pressure. His body trembled, his face paled, and blood sprayed from his mouth. He hovered there in mid air, shaking, slowly being pushed down by the immense pressure.

The descended palm seemed capable of crushing a mountain into nothing; Meng Hao felt as if he couldn't take it. He would soon be squished flat.

"The final lightning," said Meng Hao, his body trembling as he was pushed down. "You wish to exterminate me? Well, how about I seal you!" He suddenly threw his hand out. He emanated viciousness and madness as he pointed down to the ground.

"Demonic Qi! Art of Righteous Bestowal!"

Demonic Qi once again poured up from the land in the three thousand kilometer area. What Meng Hao wasn't aware of, however, was that this time, there was simply not enough Demonic Qi. He continued to descend, until finally he landed directly onto the shattered earth.

"Not enough Demonic Qi!!" he exclaimed, his facial features twisted. With a cry, he produced the Demon Sealing Jade. A deafening roar filled the air, and the earth trembled. At the same time, the Demon Sealing Jade in Meng Hao's hand began to emanate ripples which extended out. Three thousand kilometers, five thousand kilometers….

Meng Hao's face twisted with savagery. Power poured out from the Frigid Snow Clan's Agarwood legacy, as well as Immortal Shows the Way, which he had received during the events near the Rebirth Cave. The power shot out of him and then into the Demon Sealing Jade.

Meng Hao's mind spun. The ripples from the Demon Sealing Jade spread out. Five thousand kilometers. Fifteen thousand kilometers….

A complete fifteen thousand kilometers!

Suddenly, Meng Hao could sense all of the vegetation that existed in this area. All living things existed within his will. Every change and fluctuation was under his control.

"Demonic Qi! Art of Righteous Bestowal!" He looked up at the enormous Five-Colored Palm that was descending onto him. As his voice echoed out, all of the Demonic Qi within the fifteen thousand kilometer region rushed madly toward him.

It congealed around Meng Hao, creating a vortex of Demonic Qi. It started out thirty meters wide, then three hundred, then three thousand, finally thirty thousand meters!

Meng Hao’s eyes glowed with brilliance and determination. He slowly lifted his right hand up and then extended it toward the massive palm up above.

As he did, the Demonic Qi vortex lifted up, forming into a hand that was visible to no one except Meng Hao.

This palm seemed capable of sealing anything in Heaven and Earth!

“I am the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer! I SHALL SEAL THE HEAVENS!”

He struck his right hand up toward the descending Five-Colored Palm.

His strike carried along with it his stubbornness, his dream of treading the path of Cultivation until he became a powerful expert, and in addition, his very life force!

After all, if he could not transcend this tribulation, then he would be dead without a doubt!

This strike also carried with it Meng Hao’s Immortal Shows the Way, the Agarwood legacy of the Frigid Snow Clan, and his own madness.

Such madness was required! This was not a battle of magic, but a sealing of the Heavens!

This strike was filled with the dignity of the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer, with the power to seal the Heavens, and the explosive power of all the Demonic Qi of the land within fifteen thousand kilometers!

In addition to all this, the Li Clan Patriarch emerged, along with the howling meat jelly. Every tool he had to fight back against the Heavenly Tribulation was now in play!

The parrot was clamouring excitedly, its eyes bloodshot. This was the moment it had been waiting for. It was only when the final lightning bolt descended that it could make a move, and lead in the five thousand Cultivators. This way, they would not be infected by the lightning.

The five thousand Cultivators shot toward Meng Hao, circling around him. Massive amounts of fog rose up to fight back against the final bolt of Heavenly Tribulation Lightning.

An immense roaring, louder than anything that had occurred up to this point, pressed down onto the five thousand Cultivators, covering over even their shouts. It was the only thing that could be heard… and it echoed five times!

This sound was none other than the sound of the two gigantic palms slamming into each other and shattering.

Upon the first echo, the five thousand Cultivators coughed up blood. They were thrown tumbling across the ground in all directions, and the fog dissipated. The white-robed man from the Constellation Tribe screamed as he was shredded into pieces, his body and spirit annihilated.

Upon the second echo, the sky and land shook. Everything on the surface of the land was transformed into ash and ruins. All the crystalline ground became a huge crater….

Upon the third echo, the meat jelly let out a plaintive howl, and the Li Clan Patriarch teetered on the verge of destruction.

Upon the fourth echo, the parrot let out a disconsolate shriek as all of the colorful feathers on its body were shattered. Everything visible was now a world of five colors.

Upon the fifth echo… Meng Hao saw his Demonic Heaven-Sealing Palm slam into the Five-Colored Palm. It looked as if a massive sealing mark were preparing to seal up the Heavenly Tribulation.

Amidst the roaring, the two palms collided. One was of the Five-Colored Sky. One was from a Demonic Sealer of the Heavens. One wished to destroy. One wished to seal the Heavens. The amount of power involved was impossible to describe. In this moment, the Heavens were not the Heavens, the Earth was not the Earth, and the Demonic was not Demonic!

The air itself shattered. As the roar filled everything, the five-colored world suddenly faded into complete blackness….

Within the blackness, Meng Hao's eyes shone with faith. He glared up at the black Heavens, and softly said, "So, you can seal the Heavens!"

With that, an incredible sense of weakness poured out from within his heart. Smiling, he closed his eyes, employing the Eyeless Larva's ultimate protective ability. Endless amounts of silk shot out, transforming into an enormous cocoon!

Meng Hao's body was completely encased inside the cocoon.

There was no sound. No Heavenly Tribulation. There within the crater, was a cocoon that seemed as if it would be there for an eternity.

Gradually, the sky regained its color. The Five-Colored Palm was gone. Meng Hao's Demonic Sealing Palm had transformed into ash. The only thing that remained was that which had formed the nucleus of the palm, the Demon Sealing Jade. It banged down onto the ground near Meng Hao's cocoon.

The pressure exerted by the Heavenly Tribulation was now gone. The area which the Tribulation had descended upon… was now completely soundless and motionless. The Tribulation had been transcended.

The parrot and the meat jelly, as well as the surrounding five thousand Cultivators, all looked weary and listless. They gathered around the cocoon to stand guard for Meng Hao and wait for him to break out.

Time passed. Soon, an aura of transformation emerged from the cocoon. Inside, Meng Hao was sleeping, but his body was gradually changing. He was now even more accustomed to lightning. In fact, occasionally, bolts of lightning would shoot out from his body to dance around the cocoon and then spread out into the region beyond.

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# Chapter 388: Breaking Out of The Cocoon

Meanwhile, the Frigid Snow Clan had long since teleported onto a high mountain peak in the Violet Fate Sect of the Southern Domain. The Violet Fate Sect had arranged for this mountain to be the new home for the Clan.

Because of her beauty, Hanxue Shan had already attracted quite a bit of attention from the alchemist Cultivators of the Violet Fate Sect. The Clan assimilated into the Violet Fate Sect, and Hanxue Shan chose to join the East Pill Division, and follow her dream of becoming an alchemist.

After arriving, she finally learned the news that Grandmaster Pill Cauldron had forsaken the Sect. It was difficult to describe how she felt about that. There was some amount of loss, but also tranquility.

If she hadn't met Meng Hao, perhaps she would have felt more loss. Now, though, whether or not she got to see Grandmaster Pill Cauldron wasn't very important.

Hanxue Shan stood atop the mountain, looking off toward the Black Lands, when suddenly, a voice interrupted her thoughts. "Little sis Shan, I heard from your fellow Clan members that you met a certain Grandmaster Meng back in Holy Snow City."

Hanxue Shan looked back to see an incredibly beautiful woman standing behind her, wearing a long blue gown. Her features were bright and alluring, so delicate it seemed like the slightest breeze could break them. It was as if Heaven and Earth had taken all favor and placed it upon her, as if she were something stepped out from a painting into the mortal world.

“Greetings, Senior Chu,” said Hanxue Shan, lowering her head and then bowing from the waist. Standing in front of her was none other than Chu Yuyan, the most beautiful woman she had seen since arriving at the Violet Fate Sect. Her beauty was such that Hanxue Shan sometimes found it somewhat distracting to look at her.

She had also heard some of the gossip about past events regarding Senior Chu and Grandmaster Pill Cauldron.

“Perhaps someone like her is really worthy of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron,” she thought. Seeing Chu Yuyan just now made Hanxue Shan’s thoughts suddenly shift to that of her own relationship with Meng Hao. His face suddenly appeared in her mind.

“Shan?” said Chu Yuyan softly, walking a bit closer.

Hanxue Shan’s face reddened, and she immediately bowed her head. Deep in her heart, she felt somewhat embarrassed, wondering why she was thinking about Meng Hao in this way. He was the kind of person who couldn’t take a hint at all when it came to love.

“Yes, I did meet Grandmaster Meng,” she replied quietly. “He is good at concocting pills. Without him, the Frigid Snow Clan would have been wiped out, and I wouldn’t be here.”

“Is this Grandmaster Meng a Black Lands Cultivator?” asked Chu Yuyan, gazing at Hanxue Shan.

“Yes, he’s a local Black Lands Cultivator known as Patriarch Golden Light.” As she spoke, her face continued to grow redder. “His Cultivation base is unfathomable. He was even able to catalyze our Thorn Rampart. The Dao Child of the Black Lands Palace was afraid of him…. Even Grandmaster Zhou couldn’t measure up to him when it came to pill concoction. Senior Chu, why is it that you ask about him?”

Chu Yuyan laughed. She looked at Hanxue Shan and could tell based on her own experience that this young girl had clearly fallen in love. Obviously, her heart was entangled with this Black Lands Cultivator, Grandmaster Meng.

“Oh nothing,” she responded with a slight smile, shaking her head. “It’s just that I’ve heard him mentioned quite often by your Fellow Clan members, and I’m interested in his Dao of alchemy. I’m curious what realm he has achieved. Unfortunately, he’s not here, so I figured I would ask around a bit.” Considering this Grandmaster Meng was a Black Lands Cultivator, he must not be the person she’d assumed. She was just about to turn and leave when Hanxue Shan continued speaking.

“Well, Grandmaster Meng isn’t too fond of the Southern Domain. However, I happen to have a medicinal pill he gave me. Senior Chu, do you think you could tell the level of his Dao of alchemy by looking at it?” Hope suddenly lit up her face. After arriving in the Violet Fate Sect and joining the East Pill Division, she now had a much better understanding of the ranking system for alchemists. Her curiosity regarding Meng Hao’s skill in alchemy had been piqued.

“Yes, I can help,” replied Chu Yuyan with a smile and a nod. “Let’s see what realm this Grandmaster Meng that you like so much is in.” Considering her status, she would normally never do something like this. However, Hanxue Shan reminded her of herself all those years ago. She sighed inwardly.

Hearing Chu Yuyan’s words caused Hanxue Shan to feel even more embarrassed. Head bowed, she immediately produced the medicinal pill given to her by Meng Hao. As soon as she handed it over to Chu Yuyan, she felt regret.

She recalled what Meng Hao had said regarding showing the pill to Grandmaster Pill Demon. “He was probably just bragging. To expose him in this way really isn’t the right thing to do….”

At the moment, she hadn’t noticed the incredible change in Chu Yuyan’s facial expression when she laid eyes on the medicinal pill. She began to breathe heavily, causing Hanxue Shan to raise her head in astonishment. Chu Yuyan staggered back slightly, a blank look on her face.

“Senior Chu….”

Chu Yuyan closed her eyes for a long moment before opening them again. She looked at the character “snow” scratched onto the side of the pill, and then back up at Hanxue Shan. For some reason, a wave of irritation rose up in her heart.

“What is his name?” she asked, gritting her beautiful teeth.

Hanxue Shan was suddenly a bit frightened. Her voice low, she said, “Meng… Meng Hao….”

“Damnable Meng Hao!” growled Chu Yuyan through clenched teeth, unable to control her reaction. Her voice was filled with a complicated tone, including both irritation but also gratification. Now she knew that Meng Hao was not only safe but also doing quite well.

This caused the irritation in her heart to grow even stronger.

Hanxue Shan looked at her. Chu Yuyan was far above her in terms of both Cultivation base and status in the Sect. However, the anger on Hanxue Shan’s face was clearly visible.

“Why are you getting mad for him?” said Chu Yuyan with a sigh. “Meng Hao IS Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. He and Fang Mu are one and the same!” Chu Yuyan gave Hanxue Shan a final look, then handed the medicinal pill back to her and left.

Hanxue Shan looked as if she had been struck by lightning. She stood there with a blank look on her face, her mind spinning.

“He is Grandmaster Pill Cauldron….”

At the same time that these events were occurring, far off in the Western Desert was a stretch of desert plagued year round by sandstorms. The wailing, sand-filled wind rolled over the land, making it dark both day and night.

Anything that entered this place instantly could tell that it was like some sort of forbidden danger zone.

In the depths of this stretch of the desert was an altar complex half-buried in sand. Located inside the altar complex was a box the size of a hand. Suddenly, the box began to glow with dazzling light. At the same time, the wind outside grew more intense as it swept across the land. The flickering light began to transform into something that looked like a black sun capable of sweeping in everything around it.

A roaring sound emanated out from within the altar as the box suddenly flew out from inside. It shattered into pieces, whereupon a writhing mass of blood emerged from inside. The blood slowly began to take the shape of a person. This person appeared to be very weak. Eventually, the facial features became clear.

This was none other than the black-robed Spirit Severing Cultivator who had been killed by the Frigid Snow Clan's Agarwood legacy!

He was not truly dead! His body had been killed, but his Dao remained. His essence was not exterminated, nor his life extinguished.

As time passed, the body finished growing. He lifted his right hand, causing a black robe to cover his frame. He slowly lifted up his head, and a look of grim rage could be seen in his eyes.

"A person who can accept the full branding of that legacy is not someone to be casually trifled with," he said. "But just wait until I extricate myself from this place…. We will meet again!"

The former Holy Snow City was now nothing but a deep crater. Snow drifted about in the air, covering the bodies of the five thousand Cultivators who were located in its depths.

Located in the middle of all these Cultivators was a cocoon roughly three meters long. A boundless, pulsating aura emanated off of it. Over the past several days, the aura had grown stronger and stronger.

Suddenly, cracking sounds could be heard. The surrounding Cultivators all looked over at the cocoon, which was now shrinking. It sounded as if a wind had suddenly kicked up; its whimpering cry echoed out in all directions.

If you looked closely, you would see that there was actually no wind. Instead, the silk strands which made up the cocoon were beginning to unravel from the inside out. Soon, the cocoon was very thin, and speed of the shrinking increased rapidly until it was no longer like a wind, but a whirlwhind.

It prevented the surrounding Cultivators from seeing anything, but it did not prevent the intense aura from emanating outward.

The Cultivators began to back up slowly, watching the process for the time it takes an incense stick to burn. Slowly, a person appeared within the whirlwind. Lightning danced around him, and beneath his feet was a lake of lightning. It appeared as if this person now understood the will of lightning and exercised command over it.

After emerging completely, the Cultivators could now clearly see this person’s face. It was, of course, Patriarch Golden Light… Meng Hao!

His long hair fluttered, and he wore a long green robe. His features were handsome. Beneath his feet was a crackling lake of lighting, and countless sparks writhed over his body, making it seem as if his green robe were a cloak of lightning.

Meng Hao had completely transcended the Heavenly Tribulation. His Cultivation base rotated; it was at the very peak of the late Gold Core stage. He was now only… a mere step away from the Nascent Soul stage.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. His Cultivation base was now completely different than it had been before. After transcending the Heavenly Tribulation, his Perfect Gold Core was now even more firmly condensed. The power emanating from his Cultivation base gave him an utter confidence of his place in the Core Formation stage.

Even more shocking was that having experienced the refinement of the eleventh level of Qi Condensation, the distillation of the Foundation Establishment, and now this baptism of Heavenly Tribulation, his physical body now far exceeded that of any ordinary Cultivator. In fact, not even the body of a Nascent Soul Cultivator could compare to his in terms of strength and durability.

All of this, however… was merely secondary!

What was most pleasing to Meng Hao was that after experiencing this Heavenly Tribulation, his body was now much more resistant to lightning, to an astonishing degree. In fact, lightning even existed inside of him, and his magical techniques contained the aura of Heavenly Tribulation.

This was truly luck for him, gained in the midst of Heavenly Tribulation. This was not the type of good fortune that anyone could acquire. It was the type that you got when you looked death in the face, and came out only by sacrificing some of your life force.

Meng Hao took a deep breath as he strode forward. The vortex faded away, and the Demon Sealing Jade flew up to disappear into his bag of holding. The Eyeless Larva drifted up and then transformed into a white ring which slipped onto Meng Hao’s finger.

He rubbed the ring, cognizant of the fact that without the Eyeless Larva, he would have been incapable of transcending the tribulation.

“From now on, my path is as boundless as the sea and the sky. With my Cultivation base, as long as I’m careful, I can go anywhere.”

As Meng Hao lifted his head, the surrounding five thousand Cultivators immediately dropped to their knees to kowtow.

“Congratulations Patriarch!”

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# Chapter 389: Appointment With Yan Song

Several days later, in the border region between the Black Lands and the Western Desert, green-robed Meng Hao sat cross-legged atop the Wild Giant, which roared as it sped forward.

In the Wild Giant's hand was a Western Desert Cultivator, his face awash with grief and indignation; this was none other than Gu La.

During the collapse of the city, he and the Wild Giant had been buried inside of the Heavenly Pit created by the magic of the black-robed Cultivator. The magic had disappeared, but the Wild Giant and Gu La had remained buried within.

If Meng Hao hadn't remembered them, he and the Wild Giant would never again have been able to see the light of day.

The parrot was perched on Meng Hao's shoulder, the meat jelly was, once again, attached to its ankle in the form of a bell. The parrot's face was as wildly arrogant as ever. It proudly looked up into the sky, occasionally sighing with emotion and regret.

What it regretted was that Meng Hao had left the five thousand Cultivators of the Church of the Golden Light back in the Black Lands, in the former Dongluo City.

Wrapped around the Wild Giant was a vine. The vine was somewhat listless, and thorns would occasionally protrude from its surface and then sink back in. According to his previous idea, Meng Hao had the vine consume the Thorn Rampart seed he had acquired. Unfortunately, that made it temporarily impossible to control. At the moment, it seemed to be on the verge of death. It would definitely need some time to recover and completely absorb the abilities of the Thorn Rampart.

“The Black Lands is in complete chaos,” he said softly. He had been sitting perched on the Wild Giant for several days now as they traveled through the Black Lands. He had made quite a few inquiries, and now knew that after the fall of Holy Snow City, the only remaining city in the former United Nine had finally capitulated and joined the Black Lands Palace.

After a few days of hesitation, Meng Hao had decided to arrange for the Church of the Golden Light to do the same. The general course of events had already been determined, and to struggle against it was useless. Doing so would only result in being crushed and destroyed.

On the surface, it seemed as if the Black Lands Palace had unified the Black Lands. However, the truth of the matter was that the true great turmoil was just beginning.

Seven powerful Tribes from the Western Desert had openly entered the Black Lands, and seemed intent on completely transforming the place. Everywhere they passed was left in ruins.

Meng Hao muttered to himself, and his facial expression flickered as he looked off into the distance. He immediately sent out his will, causing the Wild Giant to stop moving. In the blink of an eye, it began to glow with a yellowish-brown light as it transformed into what looked like a hill.

This shape-changing art was a natural ability of Wild Giants. Even a Nascent Soul Cultivator would have to spend some effort to identify it now.

After enough time passed for half an incense stick to burn, piercing cries could be heard from off in the distance. A patch of black clouds soared through the sky, in the middle of which were several condors. Their eyes were red, and they emitted a putrid odor. They were surrounded by a mist of decay as they flew through the air.

Down below, a veritable sea of beasts caused the ground to shake as they ran along. Behind the sea of beasts sped several thousand Western Desert Cultivators.

A huge banner whipped about in the air above. The banner was emblazoned with the mark of their Tribe, an image of a skull, pale white and emanating an aura of death. This was one of the Western Desert Tribes which was invading the Black Lands.

After the Tribe disappeared off into the distance, the hill shape began to slowly transform back into the Wild Giant and Meng Hao. Meng Hao looked off toward the horizon and frowned.

“That’s the fourth Tribe so far,” he thought. This was indeed the fourth Tribe he had encountered in the recent days. “Is it because the Black Lands is part of the Western Desert, and that’s why Tribes are coming to occupy the area?” Meng Hao’s frown deepened. Something didn’t seem right about the whole thing. The passing members of the Tribe had looks of relief on their faces, which made Meng Hao question the situation even more.

“Well, it doesn’t really matter if there’s something fishy with these Western Desert Tribes. At the moment, I can’t go back to the Southern Domain, and the Black Lands is simply too small and in too much chaos. It’s not suitable for cultivation right now. The only place I can go to for the moment is the Western Desert.” He lifted up his head and looked off in that direction.

“The Western Desert. That’s my destination!” Having declined the offer made by the Frigid Snow Clan, Meng Hao was now convinced of where he should go next. Only in the Western Desert would he be able to continue his research into totems, and finalize his theory regarding the five elements. He would use pill concocting techniques to concoct his own Five-Colored Nascent Soul.

No one had ever gone down such a path before!

“Metal, wood, water, fire, earth. I need five totems, one for each of the five elements. That will be the foundation, just like the medicinal plants you need to prepare before concocting a medicinal pill!

"Unfortunately, the difference between Western Desert and Southern Domain cultivation is too obvious. They use the power of totems, the resulting aura of which is completely different. One glance, and they will recognize me." A ponderous look appeared in Meng Hao's eyes. Some of the most important aspects of Western Desert cultivation would be very difficult for a Southern Domain Cultivator to uncover. If he wanted to research totems, the best way would be to infiltrate the Western Desert under the guise of a Western Desert Cultivator.

He consulted with the meat jelly about this, but after helping him transcend the Tribulation, it was completely worn out. According to its explanation, it needed to rest for some time before it could provide any more assistance to the wicked and immoral Meng Hao.

Meng Hao even played his trump card and mentioned three bullies, which caused the meat jelly to tremble with excitement. However, tears also covered its face, as if it had seen some precious treasure, only to have it taken away.

Meng Hao sat there silently as the Wild Giant proceeded forward. However, a moment later, his eyes suddenly glittered and filled with determination.

"It seems that I really do need to work with Yan Song after all. He said before that he had a way around this aura problem. If he really has been working on this matter for years, then presumably, he is trustworthy." His eyes flashed and filled with determination. 1

"With my current Cultivation base, along with the Bloodburst Flash and the Lotus Sword Formation, there is some distance between myself and the early Nascent Soul stage. However, if an early Nascent Soul stage Cultivator wanted to kill me, it wouldn't be an easy task. If you add in the blood-colored mask… then I can definitely battle the early Nascent Soul stage!" He produced Yan Song's wood slip and transmitted some Spiritual Sense into it. After that, he patted the Wild Giant on the head. It roared and then changed directions according to Meng Hao's instructions.

Several days later….

In the border region between the Black Lands and the Western Desert is a region with endless mountain chains. In the middle of a dense forest was a stream with flowing waters that let off a silver glow. During the nighttime, this glow was particularly conspicuous to anyone who was able to use a particular method of rotating the Cultivation base.

Currently, Yan Song sat next to the little stream, smiling at the two middle-aged men in front of him.

Both men had Cultivation bases at the early Nascent Soul stage. One wore a long blue robe, the other, a black gown. Along with Yan Song, they formed a triangle as they all sat there cross-legged.

“Fellow Daoist Yan, when will we begin?”

“No need to be anxious, Fellow Daoist Wang. There are still two other Fellow Daoists en route. Based on my calculations, they should be here within two days. When they arrive, we can begin.” 2

“Fellow Daoist Yan,” said the black-robed Cultivator in a cool voice, “you should consider this matter carefully. Every additional person will indeed increase the chances of success, but will also mean dividing the rewards even more.”

“Fellow Daoist Mo Li, don’t worry,” said Yan Song with a smile. “I’ve thoroughly researched our destination. I’m absolutely certain that the Spirit Severing Pill can be split between five people.

“I truly hope you are telling the truth, Fellow Daoist Yan,” said the Cultivator in the blue robe, the one named Wang. He laughed, but the threat in his words was clear.

Yan Song also laughed. His voice cool, he replied, “Fellow Daoist Wang, you saw the wood slip with your own eyes, and can make your own decisions. If you don’t trust me, then even if I tried to convince you, you wouldn’t stay.”

The Wang Cultivator gave a cold harrumph, but didn’t say anything in response.

The moon soon appeared, causing the three people to look up. Suddenly, off in the distance, a prismatic beam of light could be seen streaking through the darkness. Moments later, an old man appeared next to the three Cultivators.

This man’s Cultivation base was at the early Nascent Soul stage, and clearly at the peak, placing him above Yan Song and the others.

“Patriarch Transmutation, Li Tian!” said the Wang Cultivator, his eyes narrowing. A serious expression filled his eyes.

The black-robed Cultivator next to him, the one surnamed Mo, also had a grave look on his face as he narrowed his eyes.

The old man Li Tian calmly glanced over the two of them and then smiled. It was a sinister smile, filled with coldness.

“So Fellow Daoist Wang and Fellow Daoist Li are here. When we last parted, years ago, the both of you were already so intimate. Now it seems you’ve gotten even closer? When will I be able to toast you at your wedding feast?” His voice was grating, and his eyes radiated condescension.

When they heard his words, the two men’s faces didn’t change in the slightest. It seemed they were used to the man speaking in such a fashion.

“You have always paled in comparison to us, Fellow Daoist Li,” responded the Cultivator named Wang. “Throughout your years of Cultivation, it’s hard to say how many female disciples from various Sects you’ve ruined. You don’t even dare to step half a foot into the Southern Domain nowadays. You’re like a stray dog, constantly on the run. I guess you must enjoy that type of life, Fellow Daoist Li.” He feared Li Tian in his heart, but his words were incisive nonetheless.

Li Tian’s eyes glittered with coldness. He gave a gruff laugh but said nothing more.

Seeing that the three of them would speak no more, Yan Song cleared his throat.

“Fellow Daoist Li is a trustworthy person,” he said with a laugh, clasping hands. “On this journey into the Western Desert, all Fellow Daoists must work together.”

“Very well,” said Li Tian in a jarring voice that sounded like iron rubbing on stone.

Yan Song smiled and was about to say something else when suddenly, old man Li Tian’s face flickered and he turned his head.

“Who’s that?”

Even as his voice was sounding out, a beam of blood-colored light streaked through the forest toward them. Within an instant, it was a dozen or so meters away from the group.

The appearance of this newcomer was too sudden. Yan Song, Wang, and Mo didn’t even sense anything until Li Tian said something. It was at that point that suddenly they realized something was amiss.

Almost the same instant that the newcomer appeared, Li Tian gave a cold snort. He immediately lifted his right hand to perform an incantation. Black strands of Qi swirled out to form a black crane. Emitting a piercing cry, it shot directly toward the blood-colored figure.

“Without a face,” said the blood-colored figure, waving its right hand. Instantly, an enormous face appeared. The face was indistinct but emanated shocking power. When the black crane slammed into it, it suddenly looked angry, and a booming sound echoed out.

The roaring sound caused Li Tian’s face to twist. Coldness still radiated out of his eyes, but now, within that coldness existed fear.

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2. Just to be clear, the surname Wang here is , spoken with the first tone, different from the Wang of the Wang Clan

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# Chapter 390: The Five Tribes of the Crow Divinity

The blood-colored figure retreated a few paces and nonchalantly flicked a sleeve. The image of this person underneath the moonlight was instantly etched into the memories of all present.

The mask had two eyeholes, but no other features. Even the eyes themselves were bright red. However, they were not filled with madness, but rather ruthless coldness.

As the moonlight fell onto his green robe and long, black hair, he exuded a powerful air as well as something slightly Demonic.

This, of course, was none other than Meng Hao wearing his blood-colored mask!

“Your excellency, who are you?” said Li Tian in his grating voice. Next to him, the eyes of Wang and Mo narrowed as they looked at Meng Hao. Inwardly they were on full alert; they were unable to see the mask’s extraordinary abilities, but they could see that Meng Hao’s Cultivation base was only at the Core Formation stage. In contrast, the attack just now, while seemingly rather casual, had actually displayed ripples of power comparable to the Nascent Soul stage.

Therefore, everyone here was suddenly somewhat hesitant regarding Meng Hao’s Cultivation base.

Yan Song’s eyes flickered as he looked at him. There was something familiar about Meng Hao that caused shock to well up within his heart.

“Fellow Daoist Yan invited me here,” Meng Hao said coolly. “Is this how you receive guests?” Behind him, the Wild Giant slowly approached through the forest. As for Gu La, Meng Hao had rendered him unconscious earlier; the matter at hand was not something for his ears.

The Wild Giant was enormous, but nothing that the Nascent Soul Cultivators would care a whit about.

Yan Song’s eyes flickered with understanding as he recognized Meng Hao’s voice. “Fellow Daoist Meng!” he said. He took a deep breath. Deep inside, he suddenly realized that Meng Hao was much more mysterious than he had realized. His previous appraisal was that Meng Hao was of the Core Formation stage and a Grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy. But the scene from just now could not possibly have left him unmoved.

“Just what secrets is he hiding…?” thought Yan Song, realizing that there was much about Meng Hao that he didn’t know. Suddenly, he let out a loud laugh and then clasped hands and said, “I didn’t realize it was you, Fellow Daoist Meng. A simple misunderstanding, nothing more. Fellow Daoists Li, Wang, and Mo, allow me to introduce you to Fellow Daoist Meng. He is the last member of our party, a Grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy to whom even I cannot compare. With Fellow Daoist Meng here, our undertaking will have a much higher chance of succeeding.”

Li Tian and the others exchanged slight nods. There was much less hostility in the air than there had been moments before.

As far as Meng Hao joining the group, they might have looked down on him because of his Cultivation base was at the Core Formation stage. However, Nascent Soul Cultivators are generally an eccentric lot. Most knew that many of their fellow Nascent Soul Cultivators liked to conceal their true Cultivation base, and very much did not like it when others saw their true level.

Yan Song did not offer any further explanations regarding the matter as the party gathered next to the silver stream.

Meng Hao's expression was cool. He had chosen to wear the mask at the expense of some of his life force, the reason being his previous experience in a similar situation in the Southern Domain, in the Black Sieve Sect's ancient Blessed Land. Because his insufficient Cultivation base, he had been attacked. Although the matter had been resolved, it had led to some awkwardness and unfavourable situations. 1

This time, he figured he might as well lead off with a tough posture. After all, by donning the blood-colored mask, he was much stronger than normal.

"With Fellow Daoist Meng here," said the man named Wang, "all are accounted for. Fellow Daoist Yan, would you mind explaining in detail the matter regarding the Spirit Severing Pill?" He looked at Meng Hao, then glanced over at the black-robed Cultivator named Mo. When he did, his eyes flickered with irritation and killing intent.

He made no attempt to conceal his expression, which caused Li Tian to chuckle. Yan Song also noticed. He gave a wry smile, unsure of what to say.

Meng Hao was taken aback. The Wang Cultivator's killing intent seemed completely inexplicable, leaving Meng Hao astonished. It was then that he noticed that the Cultivator named Mo was looking at Meng Hao with a look of appreciation, even curiosity. The man was middle-aged, but his skin was as white as jade, and his features handsome, filled with a certain gentleness.

The gaze of the Mo Cultivator was surprising, but as soon as he heard the chuckle of Li Tian, he seemed to think of something which terrified him. He coughed lightly and stepped back to avoid Wang.

Yan Song shook his head. He could only smile wryly and clear his throat, then say, "Fellow Daoists, I'm indebted to the four of you for the trust you have shown me. Your arrival here has ensured that we can definitely accomplish our task in the Western Desert. However, I, Yan, will not attempt to pull the wool over your eyes. This undertaking will be very dangerous!" He looked around at the four others, noting their expressions, then continued.

“The ancient Dao of alchemy vastly exceeds that of modern times. Much has been lost, and currently, it is only common to find medicinal pills that are effective up to the Nascent Soul stage. Medicinal pills useful for the Spirit Severing stage are very rare. Nowadays, one can acquire medicinal pills that have survived since ancient times or even remote antiquity, then re-concoct them to make pills that are, at best, not even ten percent as effective as the original.

“The greatest dividing mark between the ancient Dao of alchemy and modern days, is none other than the Spirit Severing Pill. Upon consuming this pill, which is also known as Resurrection Day, the Cultivator will be submerged in an enlightenment of Heaven and Earth. He will be able to clearly understand himself and then accomplish his First Severing.

“You can review all of this information on the wood slip I gave to you all. Throughout the years, I, Yan, have traveled to many places, and finally confirmed that a location connected to the ancient Dao of alchemy exists in the Western Desert!

“Perhaps its existence is connected to the rise of the Crow Divinity Tribe. I’ve attempted to secretly enter their Sacred Mountain but was unable to even get near it. I could only observe from a distance. Even still, I could verify that it is connected to the ancient Dao of alchemy!”

As Yan Song slowly made his explanation, Meng Hao’s expression remained the same. However, deep in his heart, he was analyzing Yan Song’s words, trying to determine how much was true and how much was false.

“The Crow Divinity Tribe has long since fallen into decline and split apart. It now exists as five separate powers, each of which now exists as a Tribe in its own right. They are the Crow Soldier Tribe, the Crow Fighter Tribe, the Crow Scout Tribe, the Crow Flame Tribe and the Crow Gloom Tribe!”

Hearing this, Meng Hao’s expression remained the same as always. However, a tremor ran through his heart as he thought back to the man he had captured, Wu Mu, who was from the Crow Scout Tribe. 2

“What’s the point of all of this?” said Wang somberly, his face expressionless. “Just lead us to this Crow Divinity Mountain, and we can enter it together.”

“Fellow Daoist Wang, the matter is not that simple,” responded Yan Song, shaking his head. “The Crow Divinity Tribe might have split apart, but atop Crow Divinity Mountain is a Totem God, in other words, a Spirit Severing Patriarch. With him on Crow Divinity Mountain, do you really think we can just barge in?

“No, we must employ a different tactic. The Crow Divinity Tribe was split up into five sub-Tribes. Every so often, according to a predetermined schedule, the five tribes will enter their Sacred Mountain to pay obeisances to their ancestors, and to acquire totemic power.

“That is the only way to openly enter Crow Divinity Mountain. Therefore, our job is to infiltrate the Tribes and then make names for ourselves. We must gain their trust by joining their Tribes as vassals, and then acquire the right to enter Crow Divinity Mountain! After we get into the Mountain, we will reassemble and work together to acquire the pill of the ancient Dao of alchemy!” Yan Song’s eyes shone with a bright light. Clearly, he had been working on this plan for a long time in order to assure that it would go off smoothly.

Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed and Li Tian appeared to be lost in thought. Wang and Mo exchanged a glance; both seemed to approve of the plan.

Yan Song looked around at the ground and then laughed. “As for how to make a name and gain their trust, I’m sure all of you Fellow Daoists will have your own ways to do that!”

“How do we resolve the problem of our auras?” asked Meng Hao.

“For that matter, we will have to prevail upon Fellow Daoist Li. He has resided in the Western Desert for a hundred years, and all the way until now, no one has ever been able to determine which Tribe he is in, nor what he looks like. Clearly, he is quite skilled in this regard.” With that, Yan Song clasped hands and bowed to Li Tian.

“Absolutely no problem,” said Li Tian coolly. “Before coming here today, I used a secret art to create five rare treasures. These objects can alter your aura and conceal your Cultivation base for three years. Using this object will also enable you to manifest a totem tattoo that completely resembles that of Western Desert Cultivators.

“However, I will not blithely dole out such treasures. Yan Song, you are the leader of our party, so I will offer one to you with no questions asked. However, if the other three Fellow Daoists wish to acquire my treasure, you will explain to me what use you will be in this mission regarding the ancient Dao of alchemy.” Li Tian’s eyes glittered. The message was carefully worded, but it was obvious that he wanted to pry into the private details of the others.

The Wang Cultivator gave a cold snort and said, “The two of us can analyze and explain all of the complex spell formations in Crow Divinity Mountain. The rest of you won’t have to move a finger.”

Li Tian laughed, then waved his right hand. Three beams of white light shot out toward, two of them landing into the hands of Wang and Mo, the other flying to hover in front of Yan Song.

“What about you, Fellow Daoist Meng?” asked Li Tian, looking over at Meng Hao. All of the people present feared Meng Hao. His casual attack earlier had clearly impressed dread upon their hearts.

“I am a master of all Daos of alchemy,” said Meng Hao, his expression placid. His words caused Li Tian’s pupils to constrict. Wang and Mo suddenly looked very serious.

Yan Song smiled wordlessly. After a long moment passed, Li Tian waved his sleeve, sending a white light shooting toward Meng Hao.

“As for how to use the item, you all can figure it out on your own.”

“Very well,” said Yan Song. “Since we are all in agreement, we should now make our way toward the five Tribes. I will go to the Crow Flame Tribe.

“I choose the Crow Soldier Tribe,” said Wang.

“The Crow Scout Tribe!” said Meng Hao, his expression the same as always, not revealing even an ounce of anything.

“Then I shall select the Crow Fighter Tribe,” said Li Tian.

That left the Crow Gloom tribe for Mo. The assignments having been made, Yan Song produced an eight-sided Feng Shui Compass, which he placed onto the ground. The glow of teleportation magic immediately rose up.

“After entering the five Tribes, we will keep any communication to a minimum,” he said. “We will reassemble in Crow Divinity Mountain, using the wood slips to communicate.” He next produced jade slips which he handed over to the others. “Here is a detailed introduction of the five Tribes and the Western Desert. Incidentally, all five of the Tribes are currently recruiting large numbers of vassals. Infiltrating them should pose no difficulty.” With that, he stepped into the teleportation spell and disappeared.

Wang and Mo followed in succession. Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he carefully examined the teleportation spell. After hesitating for a moment, he summoned the Wild Giant, who was still holding Gu La in hand. He then entered the spell under the watchful eyes of Li Tian.

Colors blossomed in Meng Hao’s eyes as he was teleported away. He felt as if his body were being pulled apart, as if he were suddenly adrift in Time. He wasn’t sure how much time passed before a buzzing sound filled his head. He felt like he was being torn into pieces. Then, everything went back to normal. He reappeared in a stretch of barren, greenish mountains.

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# Chapter 391: Initial Entry into the Crow Scout Tribe

There was no one around, only silence. It was late at night, and as soon as Meng Hao emerged from the teleportation, his body flashed and he was gone. He reappeared atop a tree off in the distance, whereupon he examined his surroundings.

The Wild Giant and Gu La were nowhere to be seen, which caused Meng Hao to frown.

Muttering to itself, the parrot burrowed out from within Meng Hao’s robe. It flapped its wings and sniffed about, whereupon an intoxicated expression appeared on its face.

“There is an ancient aura here. Ahh, Lord Fifth likes this place. I suddenly feel like reciting some poetry….”

“You wicked, immoral, shameless bird! You think you’re gonna recite poetry!? More like recite crap!” Of course, the meat jelly bell wouldn’t miss out on any opportunity to attack the parrot. It continued to jabber on loudly.

Meng Hao swept the area with Spiritual Sense. After confirming that there was nothing dangerous nearby, he removed the blood-colored mask and took out the jade slip given to him by Yan Song. After looking at it closely, he found that it contained a map, as well as short introductions of the five Crow Divinity Tribes.

Meng Hao examined the map, then looked up and off into the distance.

“Some slight inconsistencies, but nothing too great. They seem intentional. It seems Yan Song doesn’t trust everyone that much after all.” Meng Hao laughed coldly, then produced the glowing ball of light from Li Tian. He examined it closely with several different methods before finally interrupting the parrot and meat jelly and asking their opinion.

That was the best method to get information regarding the thing. The parrot slapped its chest and then spit out a multicolored glob of light which it examined before waving it away.

“No problem. Don’t worry, when Lord Fifth takes action, one Lord Fifth is equivalent to two!”

“Two of you?” said the meat jelly complacently. “You have the skill to split into two? Humph. You should really say, ‘When Lord Third takes action, one Lord Third is equivalent to three!” Its body suddenly made a popping sound as it transformed into three bells, all attached to the parrot’s foot.

The parrot’s eyes narrowed with disdain.

“You know, the reason I’m called Lord Fifth is an allusion to the fact that I’m a parrot. Do you know what parrots are, huh? The last character in the word ‘parrot’ is the same pronunciation as ‘fifth.’ That’s why I’m Lord Fifth. What about you? Bitch!” 1

The meat jelly was furious. It truly felt as if it were being discriminated against. All three bells simultaneously let out furious shrieks.

“I’m called Lord Third, and that’s an allusion too, because I can count to three! That’s why I’m Lord Third! So what? You have a problem with that?!?!”

In this instance, the meat jelly really did seem to be quite bold and confident in its conviction, leading to a rare occurrence; the parrot gaped.

Meng Hao cleared his throat and ignored his clownish companions. He looked back at the ball of light in his hand and thought for a while. Next, he glanced at the ring on the finger of his right hand, which was, of course, the transformed Eyeless Larva. He quickly took it off and transformed it back into the Eyeless Larva, which he then combined with the glowing light.

The Eyeless Larva gradually disappeared. The glowing light transformed; moments later it was a totem, within which was the Eyeless Larva.

Meng Hao scanned it with Spiritual Sense, and after confirming that nothing was suppressing the Eyeless Larva, he lifted up his right hand and pressed it down onto the totem, which then covered the back of his right hand. It slowly sank into his skin, after which, a totem tattoo appeared.

As soon as the totem tattoo appeared, Meng Hao could sense his aura rapidly changing. It was no longer that of a normal Cultivator, but rather, the aura of totems.

It was exactly like that of a Western Desert Cultivator!

Upon closer examination, Meng Hao’s eyes filled with understanding. His Cultivation base was still there, but it was surrounded by a protective layer. Whatever magical technique this was, it was touched with totemic aura. Because of that, Meng Hao appeared to be, not a Southern Domain Cultivator, but a local from the Western Desert.

“This Li Tian really does have some skill,” thought Meng Hao. The more he thought about it, the more he realized this technique really was extraordinary.

A moment later, Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he transformed into a colorful beam of light that shot off into the distance. The parrot and the meat jelly hastened to follow, arguing the entire way. The parrot, of course, continued to come out on top.

However, the meat jelly would never admit defeat. It continued to clamor on that it would convert the parrot, and never lose.

Meng Hao examined the introduction to the Crow Scout Tribe from the jade slip. There wasn’t much to it. “The Crow Scout Tribe is not the most inferior of the five Tribes that originated in the Crow Divinity Tribe,” he mused. “However, they are not that particularly amazing. At best, they rank in at second from the bottom…. Considering such a situation, it was unavoidable for hidden struggles to break out between the various Tribes.

“Obviously, some of the larger Tribes wish to restore the former glory of the Crow Divinity Tribe. As such, there are internal struggles as the various Tribes attempted to swallow up the others. Such internal power struggles… are often at times more brutal and bloody than the wars on the outside.

“This particular Tribe focuses on Wood-type totems and is proficient in concealing arts…. So Wu Mu really was a member of this Tribe.” Meng Hao took a deep breath, and his eyes filled with anticipation. One of the primary reasons he had selected the Crow Scout Tribe was because of Wu Mu’s Wood-type totems.

“Wood-type totems are a good fit for me. If I can acquire a Wood-type totem here, then I will have taken my first step on the path to the Five-Colored Nascent Soul!” Meng Hao increased his speed as he shot off into the distance. As he did, he slowly pushed down his Cultivation base until it reached the mid Foundation Establishment stage.

This was the most appropriate level to use to enter the Tribe. As a vassal, it wouldn’t be good to have too high of a Cultivation base. Contrariwise, with too low of a Cultivation base, he would be looked down upon, and it would be difficult to be accepted.

At dawn, the first rays of light spread out across the land to push back the darkness. Night transformed into the warmth of day; the vegetation swayed in the wind, within which could be detected a fragrant aroma.

The Crow Scout Tribe was located in a basin below a mountain. The basin wasn’t very large, but was big enough to house roughly one thousand members of the Tribe. Smoke curled up into the air from the houses below. The sound of children playing could be heard in the peaceful morning air.

At first glance, it looked less like a Tribe and more like a village. There were no walls surrounding it, only some vines clumped together. However, the vines, though they seemed ordinary, were actually enough to entangle even someone of the Core Formation stage who tried to break through them.

At the very center of the Tribe was an enormous statue of a tree!

The tree was covered with countless leaves, each one of which glittered with magical symbols. Some had red strings tied around them, upon which were hung small bells and bottles. When the wind blew, the tree wouldn’t move, but the bells and bottles would clink out a melodious song.

Stone stairs could be seen snaking around the mountain located behind the basin. Apparently there was another area behind it which also belonged to the Crow Scout Tribe.

In front of the main gate was a pillar of light that shot up toward the Heavens. Even from a distance, it was possible to see that countless leaves swirled about within the light. A powerful pressure also emanated out from within.

Sitting cross-legged below the pillar of light was Wu Hai. Every year around this time was a ten day period in which the Tribe recruited vassals. Local Rogue Cultivators, or even travelers from further distances, could choose to join the Tribe. All of them had their various reasons for doing so.
2

As far as vassals were concerned, the Crow Scout Tribe had never been very keen on accepting them. However, in the past three years, they had expended quite a bit of resources in that regard, and had even issued special instructions regarding recruitment. Wu Hai wasn’t quite sure the reason for this.

“It’s really not necessary,” he thought with a sigh. “Unless there’s a war going on, what’s the point in recruiting so many vassals?” Every time he laid eyes on the ten or more new vassals who had joined the Tribe in recent years, he felt a bit irritated. That was especially the case because quite a few of the women in the Tribe seemed very interested in the vassals. Wu Hai really didn’t like that.

Even as Wu Hai was stewing in his discontent, he saw a beam of light approaching through the sunlight. As it whistled through the air, he saw a young man within, handsome, wearing a green robe and a bright smile.

“Hello Fellow Daoist, is this the Crow Scout Tribe?”

Wu Hai blinked as he glanced over the handsome young man. In his heart, he felt disdain; Western Desert Cultivators were usually tall, but not always. There were many who closely resembled Cultivators from the Southern Domain.

From the aesthetic point of view of the Western Desert, such Cultivators were not the type that women preferred. Therefore, although Meng Hao had pleasing features, there was nothing about him that Wu Hai found particularly threatening.

Wu Hai liked this type of vassal. What he hated were the ones who were taller than himself.

He rose to his feet, revealing his tall and sturdy frame. He had two totem tattoos; one was of a leaf, the other a vine. He emanated the Cultivation base aura of the late Foundation Establishment stage.

“That’s right,” he said. “This is the Crow Scout Tribe. Fellow Daoist, do you wish to become a vassal of the Crow Scout Tribe? Our legacies stretch back long into the past. We are descendants of the Crow Divinity Tribe, which was one of the four most respected Tribes in the Western Desert.

“There is no other Tribe which contains the resources of the Crow Scout Tribe. True, the Crow Divinity Tribe split up into several other Tribes, but that was because each of those Tribes excels in different types of totems. However, none of them can measure up to the Crow Scout Tribe.” Wu Hai slapped his chest, looking very proud to be a member of the Crow Scout Tribe.

Meng Hao smiled as he looked him over. Then, he turned his head to look at the Tribe, especially the tree statue; a look of concentration appeared on his face.

Seeing this, Wu Hai continued, “Becoming a vassal of the Crow Scout Tribe is the best decision you could possibly make, Fellow Daoist. As soon as you become a vassal, you’ll receive half a Spirit Crystal. After a half year probation, if you’re approved, you’ll become a full vassal, with access to Crow Scout Tribe totems and techniques.

“What do you say? There are a lot of benefits, right? Are you interested?” Wu Hai laughed heartily. The words he’d spoken had been from the heart. It had been many years since the Crow Scout Tribe had expended such thought and resources on recruiting vassals. It was just in the last two years that the stingy Greatfather and the others suddenly got so generous.

Meng Hao was a bit taken aback. Before coming here, he had thought about the matter from a variety of angles, and had prepared a whole series of explanations to ensure that he wouldn’t blow his cover. Only after doing all of that had he actually come to the Crow Scout Tribe.

Now, though, it seemed that all of those preparations were pointless. Becoming a vassal of the Tribe was so easy that Meng Hao almost couldn’t believe it.

It seemed all he had to do was nod, and he would become a vassal. It seemed almost too easy.

“Don’t tell me the Crow Scout Tribe isn’t worried that people might come with ill intent?” thought Meng Hao. “A half year probation, huh…. Well, that must be the key. Even still, it seems unbelievable.” His first reaction was to hesitate. As far as he was concerned, the matter just seemed too simple, so simple, in fact, that he felt uneasy.

1. This is a play on words that can’t be translated into English. In Chinese, parrot is yīng wǔ and the number five is wǔ. As you can see, the pronunciation of and is both wǔ

2. Wu Hai’s name in Chinese is wū hǎi. Wu means “crow” and is the same character from the name of the Tribe. Hai means “sea”

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# Chapter 392: The Great War of the Crow Divinity

This was completely different than what he had experienced in the Southern Domain and the Black Lands. It was almost like the people here… were somewhat naive.

“No way,” thought Meng Hao. “Aren’t the Western Desert Cultivators supposed to be cruel and ruthless? I thought that because the land is barren, everything existed in a state of chaos.” He really couldn’t figure it out. Even as he hesitated, he suddenly saw a streak of light off in the distance. It transformed into a middle-aged man who wore a haughty expression. He was tall and strapping, and after landing, he immediately expressed his desire to become a vassal.

Wu Hai seemed to have some apprehensions, but nonetheless, he handed the man a command medallion and then let him enter.

Seeing this happen caused even more disbelief to fill Meng Hao’s heart.

Seeing Meng Hao continuing to hesitate, Wu Hai laughed and then said, “Fellow Daoist, you still haven’t made up your mind? Come, join the Crow Scout Tribe! Glory awaits you!”

“Considering the level of my Cultivation base, what exactly will I have to do if I become a Crow Scout Tribe vassal?” asked Meng Hao, hesitation visible in his eyes.

“Fellow Daoist, your Cultivation base is excellent. Generally speaking, vassals of the Crow Scout Tribe have two options during their probationary period. The first is to become a Battle Cultivator and join the Vassal Corps.

If you serve the Tribe well in that capacity, your probationary period may even be shortened.

“The other option is to raise low-level neo-demons. I personally think that you are more suitable for the latter. What do you say? There’s no danger involved in being a Neo-Demon Kennelist. Furthermore, you also have the option of lessening the probation period if you do a good job raising the neo-demons. Besides, after officially becoming adults, all members of the Tribe need neo-demons, and will likely come to you for help.

“Brother,” he said loudly, slapping his chest, “listen to Wu Hai, and you can’t go wrong!”

An imperceptible flicker passed through Meng Hao’s eyes when he heard the word ‘neo-demon.’ He suddenly thought of the beasts and Dragoneers he had seen back in Holy Snow City. After a moment’s thought, he also recalled something from the jade slip with the introductions to the various Tribes.

In the Western Desert, the strength of a Tribe was determined by three factors. The first was its manpower, the second was the number of neo-demons it possessed, and the third was the level of Cultivation base of its powerful experts. Weakness in any of these areas would directly affect the overall power of the Tribe.

It also revealed the importance of neo-demons in the Western Desert.

After considering these points, Meng Hao made his decision. Regardless of how unbelievably easy it was to become a Crow Scout Tribe vassal, and even if there was some hidden secret lying therein, he was here. He had no real reason not to proceed.

Just as he was about to nod in agreement, a tremor ran through his mind and he looked up into the sky.

Simultaneously, four prismatic beams of light could be seen whistling toward them through the air. Inside were four Western Desert Cultivators who were all glaring at each other coldly, but were flying together nonetheless.

Wu Hai also saw the four beams of light, and his expression suddenly changed. His voice urgent, he said to Meng Hao, “What do you say, bro. You need to decide quickly whether or not you want to join the Crow Scout Tribe….” Before he could even finish speaking, the four beams of light had arrived.

“There’s no need to answer so quickly, Fellow Daoist! The Crow Soldier Tribe is the best decision for you!”

“Nonsense! The Crow Gloom Tribe is the most powerful!”

“Shut up, you two! The Crow Fighter Tribe is the true successor of the Crow Divinity Tribe!”

All four of the newly arrived Cultivators appeared to be roughly thirty years of age. Each one was in the Foundation Establishment stage, and they continued to talk incessantly.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. Smiling, he said nothing.

Wu Hai looked furiously at the four newcomers, his eyes beaming with ill will.

“Hey, do you want to start a Great War of the Crow Divinity today?” he said, taking a step forward and emanating power from his Cultivation base. The four newcomers laughed as they approached.

“Don’t blame me! The Crow Fighter Tribe found me first, and then we went around to the other Tribes. After making a big circle, we came around here.”

Wu Hai was furious, but there was nothing he could do. He had actually participated in similar affairs quite a few times recently. “Dammit,” he thought, “Whenever it comes time to recruit vassals, the Tribes will go to any lengths to snatch vassals away from the others. They’ll do anything, above board, sneaky, sometimes even both.”

One of the four once again spoke up. “Fellow Daoist, don’t listen to him. The Crow Flame Tribe is the most powerful of all the Tribes. If you become a vassal of the Crow Flame Tribe, you will receive much better compensation than you will get here.”

Based on his experiences, it was easy for Meng Hao to understand what was going on between the Tribes. With a slight smile on his face, he took two steps back, opting not to involve himself in the conversation.

“Fine,” said Wu Hai with a cold laugh. Emanating power from his Cultivation base, he slowly said, “So, you do want to use a Great War of the Crow Divinity to decide which Tribe this Fellow Daoist chooses!”

The other four exchanged glances, serious expressions filling their faces.

Quite a few members of the Crow Scout Tribe had noticed what was happening, and approached, forming a ring around them. No one made any moves, but rather, had expressions of interest on their faces. It seemed this situation was not only something they were used to, but something they found amusing.

“Great War of the Crow Divinity?” thought Meng Hao. “Great, I can use this chance to see how these five particular Tribes differ from each other.” He once again backed up a few steps, curious as to why all of the surrounding Tribe members had such relaxed expressions on their faces.

The Cultivator from the Crow Soldier Tribe stepped forward suddenly and said, “The Crow Soldier Tribe will go first this time. The Crow Soldier Tribe was the first Tribe to form after the dissolution of the great Crow Divinity Tribe. Our totem is a Demonic Soldier, and we are the inheritors of the Western Desert! In all the Western Desert, if the Crow Soldier Tribe can’t accomplish something, then who can!?”

The Tribe member from the Crow Fighter Tribe stepped forward, his face filled with both determination and a bit of madness. “The Crow Fighter

Tribe is the true successor of the great Crow Divinity Tribe!” he cried. “We hold the entire Western Desert in the palm of our hand! Who could possibly compete with us!”

Suddenly, some of the onlookers began to cry out curses.

“How brazen!”

“Too shameless! How could you possibly describe your Tribe in such terms!”

Meng Hao stood off to the side, his brow furrowed. It seemed this Great War of the Crow Divinity was not going at all how he had expected it would.

“Hmph! It doesn’t matter if you’re the true successors or not. All I know is that before the Crow Divinity Tribe even began its rise, only Crow Flame Tribe existed. Our ancestor set the entire Western Desert aflame for a hundred thousand years!”

“You people are all nothing! The only reason the Western Desert is even called the Western Desert is because of the existence of the Crow Gloom Tribe. It wouldn’t be here without us!”

As they continued to talk, Meng Hao’s expression continued to grow stranger. Then, he began to sigh inwardly. He finally realized that the reason everyone was gathered around was because this so-called Great War of the Crow Divinity was nothing more than a bragging contest!

There was no use of magical techniques or Cultivation base. It was all boasting.

Whichever Tribe managed to brag good enough in front of the vassal….

Meng Hao coughed slightly. He had never seen any sort of competition like this before.

“You people are nothing! The Crow Scout Tribe is the inheritor of the Western Desert. We understand the Cosmos. Our totem is a magnificent tree that supports the sky above the Western Desert!” Wu Hai finished with a roar. In terms of both his wording and his style, he was obviously not equal to the others. As soon as the words left his mouth, sneers appeared in the eyes of the others.

Inwardly, Meng Hao was shaking his head. Wu Hai’s words showed that he didn’t really understand the basic tenets of bragging. After Wu Hai finished speaking, Meng Hao cleared his throat, then clasped hands toward the group.

“Many thanks for the honor you have shown me, Fellow Daoists,” he said. “Unfortunately, my final decision is to join the Crow Scout Tribe.” He smiled and bowed to them.

Wu Hai’s expression instantly lifted. However, the faces of the other four were unsightly.

“Don’t tell me you despise the Crow Flame Tribe, Fellow Daoist!”

“Yeah, are you looking down on us? If we hadn’t started the Great War of the Crow Divinity, it wouldn’t matter. But now that we have, if you pick a Tribe, you have to state the reason why!”

All four of the others were now staring at Meng Hao, looking annoyed.

A slightly bashful look appeared on Meng Hao’s face. He now felt obliged to help these people to understand what bragging truly was.

Bragging was something that was eternally a part of Heaven and Earth. It had existed for as long as life itself. No person could escape its talons; no Cultivator alive could resist its enticement.

It was omniscient; after all, its existence was eternal.

Meng Hao cleared his throat. The bashfulness on his face was now covered with a layer of something that looked like holiness.

“The reason I picked the Crow Scout Tribe, is because it supports the sky above the Western Desert. The great tree totem that they control, is actually the Spring and Autumn tree, the ancient World Tree, that great ancient bridge between the Heavens and the Earth!

“In its eyes, the Western Desert is nothing more than a wrinkle in the great stream of Time. In its heart, the entire world is nothing more than a blink during one of the countless times that it awakens and opens its eyes.

“The Crow Scout Tribe has mastered the eternity of Time, and controls the four seasons of Heaven and Earth!” Meng Hao’s voice echoed back and forth. The four Western Desert Cultivators stared in shock. It felt as if some great power were shaking their hearts, causing their scalps to go numb. They were looking at Meng Hao as if he were some kind of ghost.

“Shameless!!”

“Too brazen! I’ve never seen someone so shameless. You’re not even a member of the Crow Scout Tribe, how could you possibly describe them in such an exaggerated way!!”

“Dammit, according to his description, the Crow Scout Tribe is even more grand and unfathomable than the Crow Divinity Tribe! Completely brazen!!”

As the four Cultivators cursed Meng Hao, Wu Hai looked at him with wide eyes. He suddenly started to feel a bit flushed. The surrounding members of the Crow Scout Tribe were all looking at him with expressions of disbelief.

His voice filled with emotion, Meng Hao continued, “The great tree of the Crow Scout Tribe has given birth to innumerable lives. The Great Tang in the Eastern Lands came into being because a spring was formed by a drop of water that fell off of a leaf of the great tree of the Crow Scout Tribe. The disconsolate call of the Qiang flute of the Northern Desert exists because of a single frowning glance from the great tree of the Crow Scout Tribe.

“All of the fertility in the Southern Domain is because the great tree of the Crow Scout Tribe bestowed it with a single grain of soil. And as for the Western Desert… it is the home of this great tree, and home of the Crow Scout Tribe!

“The Crow Scout Tribe is worthy of the greatest admiration, holy. It is the sky of the Western Desert, the clouds of the Southern Domain, the object of worship of the Northern Desert, and the saint of the Eastern Lands!” As Meng Hao’s voice echoed out, Wu Hai’s face grew red, and his expression somewhat blank. A single question filled his mind.

“Is he really talking about the Crow Scout Tribe?”

It wasn’t just him that was thinking this. It was all of the Crow Scout Tribe members. Each and every one had strange looks on their faces, and couldn’t help but feel a bit excited.

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# Chapter 393: The Path of the Dragoneer

Two old men stood at the peak of the mountain that belonged to the Crow Scout Tribe. They were currently looking down at the scene playing out below. Both had white hair, but radiated extraordinary vigour. Each had four glittering totem tattoos which stretched out over their bodies, to the point where even their faces were covered.

“Hahaha! What a genius! Well played, well played.”

“This kid really has a way with words. What a sharp tongue! After he becomes a vassal, we should give him the position of recruiting other vassals.”

The two old men exchanged a smile. Actually, Meng Hao’s performance wasn’t something they would remember deeply. Every year during vassal recruiting, members of the junior generation would participate in the so-called Great War of the Crow Divinity. Other Tribe members were always more than happy to observe the excitement.

Sometimes, listening to the members of the junior generation bragging and boasting was just pure entertainment.

Meanwhile, back down below….

“Too brazen!!” cried the Crow Flame Tribe member, unable to restrain himself. His words caused the onlookers to all suddenly look at him. Everyone else present was from the Crow Scout Tribe, and they didn’t look happy.

The Crow Flame Tribe member continued, “You claim that the Crow Scout Tribe’s tree of Heaven and Earth gave birth to the Eastern Lands, the Northern Desert, the Southern Domain and the Western Desert. Well, the Crow Flame Tribe is a flame of the Nine Heavens, a fire that can burn everything! It could turn all the lands into rubble, and transform all living things into ash!”

The Crow Gloom Tribe member didn’t seem to care that they were surrounding by a crowd. “The Crow Gloom Tribe is the moon of our world! Its light shines over all life. All flames and even the sun itself exist merely to serve as foils to the radiance of the moon that is the Crow Gloom Tribe!”

They had obviously been inspired by Meng Hao’s words. Their arguments now were much different than they had been before.

Off to the side, Wu Hai was furious. In his view, they were the acting with complete shamelessness to brag in this way. He wanted to offer up a retort, but wasn’t sure what to say. He looked over at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao was smiling, and his expression was one of coolness.

“It doesn’t matter if you’re talking about the Western Desert or the Eastern Lands,” he said, a pious expression on his face. “All are simply solitary fallen leaves. The grand tree of the Crow Scout Tribe contains millions upon millions of leaves. As for the flames of which you speak, and the moonlight, they, too, are simply leaves on the tree!

“The grand tree of the Crow Scout Tribe is an Immortal above all living things. It supervises Heaven and Earth, and oversees the millions upon millions of trees that exist in the entire world!

“It is our light when we are in the darkness.

“It is our strength when we feel weak.

“It is our comfort when we wish to grieve.

“It is our wisdom when we are perplexed.

“It is our hope when we feel despair.

“It is our shield when we face evil!

“It provides safety when we charge into war!”

Everything was quiet as all the onlookers stared blankly. Wu Hai, the surrounding Crow Scout Tribe members, as well as the four representatives from the other Tribes were all the same.

In fact, the two old men at the peak of the mountain were also stunned.

Everyone had strange expressions on their faces. The four Cultivators from the opposing Tribes felt their brains spinning, and couldn’t think of a single word to say.

Normally speaking, they counted themselves as experts in the Great War of the Crow Divinity. However, they were now astonished to discover that bragging… had realms beyond even them. They had been rendered utterly speechless.

“Therefore,” continued Meng Hao, “I choose to join the Crow Scout Tribe. I will bow to the Immortal who oversees millions upon millions of leaves. I will bathe in his light, and then spread that light to every corner of the Western Desert.

“Let all people in the world call him Immortal! Let the Great Tree come! His Will shall be done on Earth as it is in Heaven!”

Meng Hao took a deep breath as his words echoed back and forth amidst the silence of the Tribe. Everyone around had looks of complete disbelief covering their faces. Wu Hai was trembling; it seemed he had discovered the path he wished to tread in the future. He would memorize the words he had heard just now. From now on, whenever he participated in the Great War of the Crow Divinity, he would be invincible! No one would be his match! He could even look down on the Crow Divinity!

His expression filled with piety, Wu Hai called out in a loud voice: “Let all people in the world call him Immortal! Let the Great Tree come! His Will shall be done on Earth as it is in Heaven!”

The faces of the four other Cultivators were extremely unsightly. They exchanged grim glances and then sighed. With final hateful looks at Meng Hao and Wu Hai, they turned, transforming into colorful beams of light that shot off into the distance.

As they left, the surrounding Crow Scout Tribe members looked over at Meng Hao with strange expressions. After a long moment, they began to disperse. Wu Hai grabbed Meng Hao’s arm excitedly. This was the first time in his life that he had looked so excited.

“Brother, that was amazing. I think you were born to be a member of the Crow Scout Tribe. Listen, for now, forget about the Neo-Demon Kennelist thing. You need to come with me to some of the other Tribes. We’re going to start some Great Wars of the Crow Divinity. I truly believe that we can spread the Will of the Great Tree throughout all creation!” His eyes shone with an unprecedented glow, one of devoutness as well as indescribable stubbornness.

It actually bordered on madness.

Seeing this, Meng Hao felt incredibly strange. “He can’t possibly actually believe it, can he…?” he thought to himself.

It was only after a multitude of explanations, along with solemn usage of the phrases regarding the Great Tree being an Immortal, that Meng Hao was able to extricate himself from Wu Hai. He went with some other Tribe members to perform a series of formalities that were required for new vassals. Finally, he was given a stone tablet and escorted to the area behind the mountain.

This area was actually quite large and was divided into many districts, all of which were separated by fences formed from branches. Without the proper identification medallion, it would be difficult to pass from one district into another.

The district in which the low-level neo-demons were raised was actually relatively remote in comparison to the other areas. As soon as he arrived, Meng Hao smelled an odd odor.

It was a strange, acrid smell that seemed to be a mixture of excrement and sweat. The Crow Scout Tribe member next to him frowned and squeezed his nose shut as he led Meng Hao forward. Obviously, were it not for the admiration he felt toward Meng Hao because of his performance earlier, he would never have personally escorted him here.

He could have called for someone to lead Meng Hao, but instead did it himself; the difference between the two was clear.

As they walked along, a variety of howls and shrieks could be heard; this was obviously a location where large numbers of neo-demons were reared.

Eventually, they reached a very out-of-the-way location, and a crude courtyard. They stopped, and his escort called out. Moments later, the courtyard door opened and an old man emerged. He wore a long robe made of sackcloth and was somewhat dirty. As he looked them over, the Crow Scout Tribe member introduced Meng Hao. The old man nodded and eyed Meng Hao, noting that he had been personally escorted over.

Finally, it seemed the Crow Scout Tribe member couldn’t take the smell anymore; he turned and left.

“This used to be my courtyard for raising Greenwood Wolves,” said the old man lightly. “From now on, this place belongs to you. There are five wolves inside that you can take care of. In half a year, the results of your probation will be determined by how well you took care of them. Then you will become a full vassal.” With that, he tossed a command medallion to Meng Hao and began to stroll away. Just as he passed Meng Hao, he stopped, suddenly remembering that Meng Hao had been escorted here. Throughout the years, that was something that didn’t happen very often, which meant that Meng Hao must have some special connections.

With a lofty expression, he said, “I’m not sure if you have any experience raising neo-demons. Either way, don’t forget that if the Greenwood Wolves die, you’ll have to provide compensation. Also, the five Greenwood Wolves were just recently born. They can only eat fresh meat, which you can acquire from the beasts in the surrounding mountains. As for the water they drink, it can only be melted snow from the peaks of the snowy mountains outside.

“In addition, you must mix some Tree Nurturing Grass into their food. You can find that type of grass in the mountains also. Furthermore, you will need to give the Greenwood Wolves Tui Na massage treatment every day to help them grow. Finally, you are responsible for making sure they maintain their ferocity and don’t become too domesticated.”

With that, he paid Meng Hao no further heed and left.

Meng Hao looked at the courtyard. The place did have an odd odor, but it wasn’t something that Meng Hao couldn’t handle. Furthermore, its remote location meant that not many people would be around, which suited him nicely.

After entering, he immediately heard some threatening yipping sounds. Looking around, he saw a row of small wooden kennels, standing in front of which were five little, green wolves. Each one was only about as big as his hand. They stood there glaring at him maliciously.

As soon as he saw the little wolves, Meng Hao smiled. It was a warm smile, because as soon as he saw the little buggers, it instantly made him think of the Blood Mastiff when it was small.

Their furriness made them incredibly cute.

As soon as he smiled at them, they turned into green blurs as they charged over. Meng Hao laughed and waved his hand. The green blurs instantly dissolved into the images of the tiny wolves, which he now held by the scruffs of their necks. Being held in this position, they tried to bite him, but couldn’t. They only let out their threatening yips, which then turned into pleading whines.

Meng Hao tossed the little wolves back into their wooden kennels, and then examined his surroundings further. The echoing cries of various beasts could be heard in the air, but other than that, everything was relatively peaceful.

Within the courtyard were the wooden kennels as well as a simple wood cabin. He opened the door and, seeing the place was in quite a mess, waved his hand. A wind sprung up which cleansed everything in a matter of moments. Everything was gone; the only thing that remained was a wooden bed.

“The word ‘neo-demon’ is basically a general term that covers all the various beasts in the Western Desert,” he thought as he sat down cross-legged on the bed. “In any case, they are very important to Western Desert Cultivators.” It was midday now, and the sun shone brightly. However, this place was located in the deep mountains and surrounded by forest, which broke up the sunlight and made the whole area shady.

Meng Hao really liked the scenery. He took out a jade slip which contained Yan Song’s introduction to the Western Desert. He focused on the part regarding neo-demons and began to study it. Combined with the understanding he had gained in the Black Lands, it only took about half a day before he raised his head from the jade slip. He was now relatively familiar with neo-demons.

“Neo-demons are a very important part of Tribal culture in the Western Desert. The number of neo-demons a Tribe possesses determines how flourishing the Tribe is considered to be. To Western Desert Cultivators, neo-demons aren’t just partners in battle; they are used when transporting goods, when sealing agreements, or even when food is needed.” Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed with understanding.

If necessary, low-level neo-demons could even be used as food. That part Meng Hao understood immediately.

“Ordinary totem Cultivators can use totems to harness the power of neo-demons. However, when it comes to actually controlling neo-demons, that is something that can only be done by… Dragoneers! Only they can control large numbers of neo-demons. In fact, a low Cultivation base can be made up for in such a way. Of course, Dragoneers don't just fight with neo-demons, they raise them. In fact, they also use a variety of different techniques when it comes to training, and even killing them.

“So that's why the Western Desert Cultivators mistakenly thought that I was a Dragoneer when they saw my poison at work outside of Holy Snow City. Furthermore, they mistakenly took the illusory image of the Flying Rain-Dragon to be a Heavenly neo-demon!”

Meng Hao's eyes continued to glitter with enlightenment.

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# Chapter 394: The Demon Nurturing Pill Causes a Furor!

Meng Hao continued to peruse the jade slip.

“Neo-demons are very unique. They’re initially broken up into nine levels. The first three are equivalent to the Qi Condensation stage. The middle three are similar to Foundation Establishment, whereas the final three are like Core Formation…. Neo-demons which possess power equivalent to Nascent Soul Cultivators are Earthly neo-demons!

“Earthly neo-demons are relatively uncommon. However, even rarer are neo-demons that are as powerful as Spirit Severing Cultivators. Those are Heavenly neo-demons!” Meng Hao thought back to the Flying Rain-Dragon, and how people had assumed it was a Heavenly neo-demon. Now it made more sense.

“Above Heavenly neo-demons is a twelfth level, as rarely seen as phoenix feathers and qilin horns. Neo-demons like that are totems, and are as powerful as the Dao Seeking stage, only a step away from being Immortal!

“Do totems really come from Immortals?” thought Meng Hao. He thought back to all the totems he had seen and studied, and also of the great tree in the Crow Scout Tribe. Suddenly an image appeared in his head of an ancient totem composed of the magical symbols of the Celestial soil. He shook his head.

“Maybe that’s only where some totems come from. In any case, when it comes to totems, there are weak and strong ones.” He suddenly looked up from the jade slip toward the five little Greenwood Wolves, who sat sitting trembling in their wooden kennels.

“Newborn wolves who have level 1 power. These Greenwood Wolves have pretty good latent talent; beasts like these would be relatively rare in the Southern Domain. It seems the Western Desert really is a suitable place for neo-demons to exist.” He closed his eyes to sink into contemplative meditation.

Late in the night, Meng Hao suddenly began to hear various whimpering and crying sounds. They turned into howls that sounded almost like the tantrum of a child. They started out slowly, but by the time dawn lit the sky, the cries were continuous.

The sound of it was now mournful, as if filled with discontent at the most unjust thing in all Heaven and Earth which had occurred.

Meng Hao’s brow was furrowed as he opened his eyes. The sky above was hazy as he looked out at the kennels in the courtyard. The five little green-colored wolves were currently scratching frantically at the door of the kennel area. They were even gnawing at the wood, their eyes shining green. They were… hungry!

They let out continuous anguished howls, and their bodies shivered weakly. Most melodramatic of all was that the door was half gnawed away!

“Oh shut up!” said Meng Hao, glaring at them.

The five little wolves instantly shrank back, looking anxiously at him with their huge, glittering eyes. They appeared to feel wronged, and also starving. From the moment they had been born until now, they had never gone hungry for an entire day! The feeling of hunger filled them with fright.

Meng Hao’s scolding made them feel completely maltreated.

Five little wolves, and one person, looking at each other underneath the hazy sky.

After the space of about ten breaths had passed, however, the five little wolves once again began to let out mournful howls. They were being abused! They were hungry! They had never gone a day without eating before, and now they were being scolded by Meng Hao. Their high-pitched sobbing rose up into the sky, and their little bodies shivered as if with cold. Some of them even had wood chips on their mouths. Seeing this, Meng Hao rose to his feet and walked over. As he neared, the little Greenwood Wolves pressed up against the door to their kennel area, staring anxiously at Meng Hao and wailing as loud as they could.

Meng Hao reached out and grabbed one of the little wolves. The others suddenly seemed to get extremely nervous, and shrank back into the corners of the their kennels.

The little Greenwood Wolf that Meng Hao had grabbed had a white mark on its head. It wasn't very obvious at first, but if you looked closely, it was clearly visible.

After picking up the little wolf, it began to cry out miserably and tremble. Its wide eyes were filled with helplessness and fear.

"Still howling? I think you were howling the loudest just now." He glared commandingly down at the little wolf.

The little Greenwood Wolf with the white scar continued to let out victimized yips. Meng Hao could hear grumbling of its stomach. He reached out to touch it and found that its stomach really did seem to be completely empty.

He cleared his throat, abashedly. "It seems I forgot that they're not the Blood Mastiff. They actually need to eat…." It really had completely skipped his mind.

The Blood Mastiff didn't need to eat, and Meng Hao had long since reached the state where he abstained from food. The little wolf could sense that Meng Hao's attitude had changed, and instantly began to howl even louder. The pained expression in its eyes became even more obvious. Meng Hao suddenly felt a bit guilty.

"Okay, okay, stop crying," he said, stroking the little wolf's fur. "It's my fault, okay? Just hold on a bit, I'll get you something to eat." He put it back into the kennel and then immediately turned and hurried out of the courtyard. Recalling the words spoken by the old man as he left, he headed off toward the mountains.

He returned at midday, a forced smile on his face. After entering the courtyard, he saw the five little wolves laying there listlessly in their hunger. He hurried over, going from kennel to kennel. After prodding each little wolf awake, he picked up their wooden feeding bowls and then produced some of the food he'd acquired that morning and put it inside for them to eat.

As soon as the little wolves smelled the fresh meat, all the latent power in their bodies seemed to explode out as they charged forward and began to gulp it down.

Meng Hao stood off to the side watching. He basically hadn't accomplished anything the entire morning other than searching around to find some food. This was going to be a problem.

"I'm not sure how the other Cultivators raise their neo-demons, but if I have to keep doing this, it's going to be really inconvenient…." Meng Hao frowned. However, thinking back to the plaintive howls of the little wolves, he realized that he couldn't possibly allow them to starve to death.

He watched as the little wolves quickly consumed the food that he had spent the morning acquiring. Then, they started to howl again. Suddenly he felt a headache coming on.

"You guys are all little Patriarchs…." he said with a sigh. He quickly produced some water to give them. After lapping it up, their expressions were that of content. They immediately ignored Meng Hao and started to play.

Meng Hao looked up at the afternoon sky, then went back to his wood cabin, where he sat down cross-legged to think. After a moment, his eyes suddenly opened wide, and were filled with a bright glow.

“Even though they’re neo-demons, they still have Cultivation bases. Since they do… then I can start feeding them medicinal pills at any time! In the Western Desert, they view medicinal pills as precious treasures and don’t use them often. Of course they wouldn’t feed them to low-level neo-demons.” It was at this point that he thought of the Demon Nurturing Pill of the Frigid Snow Clan. 1

The pill formula for the Demon Nurturing Pill was very strange. In fact, medicinal plants only made up a small portion of the formula. The rest of the ingredients required refinement of the blood and flesh of various high-level neo-demons. Originally, Meng Hao had been a bit confused by this, but now it made sense.

“The Frigid Snow Clan used to be one of the most powerful Clans in the Western Desert. They produced generation after generation of Grand Dragoneer. The reason for that surely had to do with their secret Dragoneer technique along with some special medicinal pill formulas.

“The Demon Nurturing Pill uses the blood and flesh of various different neo-demons, and can actually be concocted to a variety of levels.” Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding to produce the enormous corpse of a Flood Dragon.

Back on the battlefield of Holy Snow City, Meng Hao had taken the opportunity to collect some bodies of various neo-demons with the intention of researching and using them in some way. This Flood Dragon had a cultivation base at the early Core Formation stage; according to the ranking system, that would make it level 7.

“Concoct some Demon Nurturing Pills and try out the secret Dragoneer technique on these little wolves, and they should be fine.” Meng Hao looked back at the kennels, and the little wolves play fighting with each other.

He waved his hand, and the Flood Dragon corpse began to shrink. A moment later, it had transformed into a collection of blood mist. At this point, Meng Hao produced his black pill furnace.

The face of the teenager that existed on the pill furnace looked listless. It glanced at Meng Hao, and this time, did not dare to display any rancor. It obediently faded away, allowing Meng Hao full use of the pill furnace and not obstructing him in any way. 2

He sent the blood into the pill furnace. As for the medicinal plants, he had quite a few, but not every single one that was required. If he was an ordinary alchemist, he would be at a loss. However, being a Grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy, he was able to extract medicinal properties from other medicinal plants that he combined together to meet the requirements of the formula.

Medicinal plants emerged, and Meng Hao continued to concoct until late in the night. He held the pill furnace in his right hand, heating it with the invisible Everburning Flame and staring into it as he made occasional adjustments.

This was his first time concocting a Demon Nurturing Pill, so time went by relatively slowly. The following morning at dawn, the five little wolves started to howl in hunger once again. Meng Hao's eyes glittered brightly as he slapped the pill furnace. It let out a booming sound, and then a red-colored medicinal pill shot out.

The instant it appeared, the image of a snarling Flood Dragon could also be seen inside it. It seemed as if the Flood Dragon wanted to take control of the medicinal pill and fly away with it. However, Meng Hao reached out and grabbed the pill. No matter how it struggled, it wasn't able to escape his grip.

"Eighty percent medicinal strength. There's still room for refinement!" Meng Hao tossed the pill back into the pill furnace and began to use the Alchemy Dao Transmutation Incantation to further refine it. After two hours passed, a deep red medicinal pill emerged that emitted no medicinal aroma.

However, as soon as it appeared, a smell began to waft out that Cultivators would not be able to detect, but that neo-demons could. They could clearly smell it, and as soon as the aroma appeared, the five little wolves stopped their howling and suddenly looked over. They pushed up against the kennel door, staring through the cracks at the pill in Meng Hao’s hand. Their bodies trembled and they seemed to be on the verge of going crazy. They started bashing against the door, as if they were willing to die to get ahold of the pill.

At the same time, in all the surrounding areas of the Crow Scout Tribe that were devoted to raising neo-demons, which included roughly one hundred courtyards, roars began to sound up. All of the neo-demons from level 1 to 6 began to go crazy. Their howls lifted up to shake Heaven and Earth. It seemed that the appearance of this medicinal pill was like some indescribable blessing in their eyes.

Hundreds of neo-demons were all roaring. The intensity of the sound immediately shocked all of the Neo-Demon Kennelists in the various courtyards. Looks of confusion appeared on their faces, and they began to cast various spells on the neo-demons in their unprecedented madness.

The old man who had acted so arrogantly to Meng Hao before was now panting, his eyes wide. He stared at the level 4 neo-demons he was raising, his face filled with astonishment at how crazy they were acting.

A multitude of voices rose up in the area.

“What’s going on…?”

“What happened?”

“Are the neo-demons rioting?”

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# Chapter 395: Really Set Something Off….

As the sound rose up into the air, Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. He could sense the mania that had arisen because of the Demon Nurturing Pill. He glanced down at the pill and then looked over at the five little green-colored wolves. Then, he reached out his left hand and pushed it down onto the ground.

As he did, an invisible shield sprang into being that covered the several dozen meter area around him. It immediately cut off the strange Qi that the neo-demons could sense but the Cultivators couldn’t.

However, his actions were a bit too late. Even as the shield appeared, seven or eight booms could be heard as nearly twenty different types of neo-demons suddenly appeared nearby, roaring. These were level 6 neo-demons, with power equivalent to the late Foundation Establishment stage. Their eyes were red and filled with madness as they flew back and forth in the sky.

However, they were unable to find the source of the Qi, which of course Meng Hao had covered over. In addition, the Neo-Demon Kennellist Cultivators immediately flew up to try to placate them. After a bit of time passed, things eventually grew quiet again.

By this time, it was getting late, and night had fallen over the land. Everything was growing dark. Meng Hao looked out at the calmness outside and then back at the little green-colored wolves in their kennels. Their eyes were bright red, and if the wooden door wasn’t sturdy enough, they would have broken through it.

It seemed this medicinal pill he had concocted was incredibly enticing to them.

“Interesting. The Frigid Snow Clan… or should I call it the Agarwood Clan, must have produced so many Grand Dragoneers not only because of their secret Dragoneer technique, but because of this medicinal pill!

“Neo-demons…. That time ago back in the Black Lands, I absorbed Demonic Qi using the art of Righteous Bestowal. That’s why that woman from the Western Desert thought I was a Demon Lord. Demonic Qi really is bizarre. There must be some connection between all of these things.” After thinking about the matter for a while, he duplicated some Demon Nurturing Pills and then suddenly pointed down toward the ground. 1

“Righteous Bestowal!” Immediately, invisible Demonic Qi seethed up, although not too much. Meng Hao only stirred the Demonic Qi in a roughly three hundred meter wide area.

The Demonic Qi rushed over to swirl around Meng Hao’s finger. He looked over to find strange expressions on the faces of the five little wolves. It almost seemed as if the enticement they felt because of the Demon Nurturing Pill had lessened. They were all staring dead at Meng Hao.

His eyes flickered. Muttering to himself for a moment, he put the medicinal pills away and then dispelled the invisible shield that surrounded him. He silently sent the Spiritual Sense of his peak Perfect Gold Core out in all directions. There was no neo-demon or Cultivator who could possibly sense this Spiritual Sense.

With his Spiritual Sense, he could see all of the hundreds of neo-demons in the area. They seemed restless, but not crazy like they had been before.

“Interesting….” Meng Hao thought for a moment, whereupon a completely audacious plan sprung into his mind. He set up the shield again, then produced a Demon Nurturing Pill. His eyes glinting, he took the Demonic Qi that was swirling around his finger and tapped it onto the medicinal pill.

Doing this required no pill furnace. His invisible alchemic flame gradually fused the Demonic Qi into the medicinal pill. As soon as that happened, the silence of the night was broken as the hundred Neo-Demon Kennelist courtyards all erupted with roars. This was despite the shield that Meng Hao had put up!

The level of the frenzy vastly exceeded that from before. Roaring echoed out, an indescribable howling that shook everything.

This was not just a handful of neo-demons roaring; it was all of them! In a split second, a shocking roar filled the entirety of the Crow Scout Tribe!

The sound of it vastly exceeded that of the riot caused by the first pill.

Wu Hai was there among his fellow Tribe members, a blank look on his face. He wasn’t sure what was happening, nor did anyone else around him. What could possibly make all the neo-demons act in this way?

Within the Crow Scout Tribe, one Tribe member after another woke up and was instantly shocked.

“All of the neo-demons are roaring. What happened?”

“What’s going on over in the Neo-Demon Kennelist district?”

“Something must have happened. This is impossible! This is.. hundreds of neo-demons all roaring together!”

However, even in the midst of their shock….

The tall mountain which separated the front area of the Tribe from the Neo-demon Kennelist district in the rear was suddenly split by one shockingly powerful roar after another.

In total there were five. The roars filled the air and echoed out as five beams of light shot up. Within each was a neo-demon dozens of meters long. Three were green wolves, one was a black turtle, and the last was a ferocious green-colored tiger.

The power emanating from these five neo-demons was shockingly equivalent to the late Core Formation stage; these were level 9 neo-demons! The roars they emitted mixed together with those of the hundreds of other neo-demons to create a massive sound that rose up to the Heavens.

If that were all there were to it, it wouldn’t be a big deal. However, as the shocking roar lifted up into the sky, within the thousands of members of the Crow Scout Tribe, many Tribe members’ faces suddenly filled with astonishment. At this very moment, the totem tattoos on their bodies began to burn. The neo-demons that had already been bonded to them suddenly magically appeared, roaring to the skies as they charged forward.

The sight of it was astonishing to the extreme. Nearly half of the thousands of Tribe members watched as their totem tattoos began to glow, and then neo-demons popped out, roaring.

“My Greenwood Wolf is out of control!!”

“Dammit, my Phoenix Hawk is going crazy!!”

“Just what is going on!? Is this a neo-demon revolt!?”

Buzzes of conversation filled the air. One by one, the Cultivators who had bonded neo-demons flew into the air.

As they did, a dozen or so powerful figures shot up from the mountain toward the neo-demons.

“It’s the Elders! Even they showed up!”

“The Elders are usually busy with Tribal affairs, they hardly ever come out. But here they are!”

The events of this night would be engraved in the hearts of the members of the Crow Scout Tribe for the rest of their lives. People began to cry out in alarm as a roaring sound suddenly emanated out from the top of the mountain, a sound which many of them hadn’t heard for a very, very long time.

As the roaring echoed out, the mountain shook and the earth around it quaked. Suddenly, a tree branch flew out; it was ancient and withered, and emanated a profoundly archaic Qi. The branch flew out, emanating a flickering green glow, which then transformed into a roughly nine-meter tall Treant!

The Treant's face was ancient, and its body was formed from an incredibly thick tree branch which was covered with a vast quantity of dried leaves. It seemed to be in the decline of power. It hovered there in mid-air and then let out a massive roar.

The instant the roaring began, the faces of all the Crow Scout Tribe members filled with astonishment and disbelief. Panting, they dropped to their knees.

In addition to all of this, three more figures suddenly flew out from the mountain. Each one had a Cultivation base at the Nascent Soul stage, and one was in the mid Nascent Soul stage. They immediately shot toward the Treant, and as they did, the Crow Scout Tribe members below recognized them. One was the Greatfather of the Tribe and the other two were High Priests!

Priests and Greatfathers were the pinnacle of power in any Tribe!

"Greetings, oh Ancestor Greenwood!" said the Greatfather, an old man. As for the two High Priests, they wore long, enveloping green robes that hid their features. However, all three of these people emanated powerful Qi, and yet, looks of apprehension and fear could be seen in their eyes. It had been roughly two sixty-year cycles since they had seen the Greenwood Ancestor. It was with shocked hearts that they clasped hands and bowed toward the Treant.

"Demon. I sense a Demon…." said the enormous Treant. It let out a roar which echoed out, instigating even more roaring from the Crow Scout Tribe's neo-demons.

The five Tribes that had once made up the Crow Divinity Tribe surrounded a restricted area in the centre of them all, almost like the five fingers of a hand. It was at this moment that in the next Tribe over, the Crow Soldier Tribe, all of the neo-demons lifted their heads up into a roar.

The Crow Soldier Tribe was a metal-type Tribe, so the vast majority of their neo-demons were also made from metal. Flying swords, magical treasures and even giant Metal Golems. All of them suddenly flew out of control, as did the other neo-demons that the Tribe members had branded to exercise control over. One by one, they flew up into the air.

Even more shocking, a golden light appeared at the top of the Crow Soldier Tribe's mountain. It transformed into a gigantic gold trident that blazed with brilliant golden glow, along with a shocking Qi.

"Demonic Qi… I sense Demonic Qi!!"

Qi exploded out simultaneously as the neo-demons of the Crow Fighter Tribe, Crow Flame Tribe and the Crow Gloom Tribe began to roar. In the Crow Fighter Tribe, Earth-type ripples appeared. Suddenly, mud fountained up like a volcano. It floated there in mid-air, a mud lake hundreds of meters in diameter.

Within the Crow Flame Tribe, a sea of flame shot through the air, within which was an enormous flaming black horse. It stared with scarlet eyes toward the Crow Scout Tribe.

Within the Crow Gloom Tribe, a vapor emanated out, turning into clouds and rain!

At this point, all of the Tribe members of the five Tribes, the Elders, Priests, Greatfathers, all stood there, their minds filled with unprecedented trembling. The Nascent Soul Patriarchs who had infiltrated these other Tribes also stood there in absolute shock, filled with various speculations about what was going on.

As the shock rippled through the various Tribes, Meng Hao's face was also surprised. He too had sensed how shocking the Qi was.

“Wow, I really set something off this time….” He had long since begun to attempt to seal the pill, but nothing was working. Not even putting it into his bag of holding did the trick. It was almost like the protective shield around him didn’t even exist. He could clearly sense that he had at the most twenty breaths worth of time before all the fearsome things in the outside would be able to determine his exact location.

It was at this time that an even greater development occurred. An incredible pressure suddenly appeared!

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# Chapter 396: A Real Demon Nurturing Pill!

ROOAAARRR!!

A new sound could be heard from deep within the endless, forested mountains. The roar drifted out, seemingly filled with the power to rip everything into shreds!

It sounded like bolts of lightning fighting each other, which then coalesced into a howl, and then, a voice.

“Outlander!” The voice sounded like countless other voices combined together. The strangest thing was that anyone who heard it could tell that this was not the roar of a Cultivator. No… this voice was not human!

The instant the voice appeared, it echoed out in all directions, causing all other sounds within the mountains and forests to instantly cease.

The hearts and minds of the members of the five Tribes were instantly shaken. Their faces immediately revealed astonishment.

“That’s….”

“That’s the Outlander Beast! The Outlander Beast with the roar of an Immortal!!”

“I can’t believe the Outlander Beast with an Immortal roar is in this area! It was born as a level 7 great neo-demon, and then grew up into a level 11! Was it branded by a human, or is it actually a Greater Demon?”

In the Western Desert, if a creature was branded and sealed by humans, it was referred to as a neo-demon. Those which were not were Greater Demons!

As the members of the five Tribes of the Crow Divinity were all discussing the matter, the peak level neo-demons were trembling. The roar just now only served to further fuel their own roars. It was as if they wanted to proclaim to this Outlander Beast that the region it was passing through belonged to them!

Suddenly, the ground began to quake and tremble violently. Something that seemed like a giant was speeding through the forest. Among the shocked members of the five Tribes, people began to employ secret magical techniques to view what was happening in the mountains around them. Within the rugged mountains was a vast sea of beasts, madly charging toward them.

The beasts were made up of a variety of levels, and all of them had eyes red and filled with madness as they ran. Up in the sky was a vast collection of strange flying creatures. They, too, were shrieking. From a distance, it seemed as if a huge wave of beasts was surging toward the five Tribes from all direction.

They filled the sky and land in all directions, with the five Tribes in the center. They would obviously be completely crushed.

For the five Tribes, this was a monumental disaster, a calamity that had sprung up so suddenly that they didn’t even have time to react.

Ripples spread out in the air as the flying beasts roared. The thunderous sound created an echo which suppressed everything as it neared.

All of this happened in the space of only fifteen breaths!

Meng Hao could feel the ground shaking, and could hear the roars from outside, including that of the Outlander Beast. Because of everything that was happening, it actually gave him a bit more time than before.

Shaking his head, he thought, “I never imagined that combining Demonic Qi with the Demon Nurturing Pill would cause such a shocking scene. This medicinal pill… will apparently drive any neo-demon completely crazy.” With a bitter smile, he looked over at the five little wolves, who were frantically trying to break through the wooden planks to get at him. Cracking sounds suddenly rang out as they succeeded.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he waved his right hand. The medicinal pill shot toward the wooden kennel. The five little wolves emitted cute howls as they charged toward it. In recent days they had played a lot with each other, but there was no affection in them now. They nipped and bit at each other violently as they ran.

It was at this point that the little Greenwood Wolf with the white scar on its head gave full vent to its power and ferocity. It slashed at the other little wolves and then transformed into a green beam of light that shot forward. It directly swallowed the medicinal pill.

As soon as it did, the crowds of beasts outside the five Tribes began to emit mournful howls. A collection of black clouds seethed up above in the sky, and then suddenly shot forward. As they did, the roar of the Outlander Beast shook everything.

All the Cultivators in the five Tribes had pale faces. That was because….

Located in the center of the five Tribes was their Holy Land, the former location of the Crow Divinity Tribe. Suddenly a beam of light shot out into the dark night from that very place!

It was a five-colored beam that spread out to cover over all five Tribes. From within the light emerged a black crow.

The crow raised its head and let out a shrill screech that was like a violent tempest. Ripples spread out in all directions, seemingly filled with the power to crush everything.

As the ripples seethed out, many of the huge trees in the forest were ripped up by the roots. The land heaved, and great boulders were ripped up from the earth. It was like an unspeakably powerful tempest had risen up around the five Tribes.

It quickly transformed into a vortex which swept across everything.

Meng Hao was panting as he looked off toward the former location of the Crow Divinity Tribe, and his eyes glowed brightly.

By this point, he wasn’t worried anymore. All traces of the medicinal pill that had instigated the disturbance had disappeared as soon as the little wolf consumed it. Meng Hao was quite sensitive to Demonic Qi, so he was able to confirm that this was the case.

Apparently, the Demonic Qi had already been absorbed by the little wolf with the white scar, who by this time had lapsed into unconsciousness.

Despite being unconscious, though, its life force was soaring up vigorously.

The tempest outside covered everything, making the only thing visible the five-colored light. The sight of it caused Meng Hao to think of his own Five-Colored Tribulation.

Two days ago, when Meng Hao had come to the Crow Scout Tribe, he’d sent the parrot and the meat jelly away. It was impossible to say what they were up to in the surrounding mountains.

Thinking of them being in the tempest caused Meng Hao to feel a bit nervous. However, after considering the parrot’s eccentricities and the meat jelly’s indestructibility, he realized he didn’t need to worry.

“Even if this entire place were completely destroyed, they would be happy and healthy.” Meng Hao was certain of this point.

The tempest lasted for about two hours. When it subsided, much of the surrounded forest was gone. Vast quantities of neo-demon corpses could be seen. As for the Outlander Beast, there was no sign of it.

The crow was gone, and the five-colored light had faded away. This was the first time Meng Hao had experienced the true mystery and power of

Western Desert Cultivators and their totems.

The members of the five Tribes gradually spread out around in their respective areas to collect the neo-demon corpses.

As for the Neo-Demon Kennelist district, it was searched several times with Divine Sense, but nothing out of the ordinary was found.

Meng Hao also came under investigation. However, the treasured magical item of Patriarch Transmutation Li Tian proved to be extremely useful. Nobody noticed anything even slightly unusual about Meng Hao.

For the five Tribes, the fact that they had narrowly escaped disaster meant that a simple investigation would most likely not uncover the truth of the matter. Secret probing continued for the next month. Whenever Meng Hao went out into the mountains, he would be questioned.

However, even after a month, no information had been uncovered. Gradually people began to come to the conclusion that some strange object had appeared that attracted the neo-demons and then the wave of beasts. As for who had finally acquired this object, no one knew for sure, but all the five Tribes were now suspicious of each other.

During the month, Meng Hao focused on taking good care of the little Greenwood Wolves. He mixed meat with Demon Nurturing Pills, which caused the little wolves to continuously grow bigger and stronger. However, Meng Hao was also careful to control their growth so that it wasn’t too fast.

As for the little wolf who had consumed the Demonic Qi Pill, externally he didn’t seem very different. However, he was now more fierce, and his eyes shone with a cold glow. He seemed more bloodthirsty, and the other little wolves clearly revered him. All he had to do was let out a growl, and the other little wolves would start to tremble.

The changes in him continued to manifest, and Meng Hao couldn’t come up with any method to suppress them. In any case, as the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer, Meng Hao’s ability to sense Demonic Qi was incomparable.

After the month passed, all of the investigations, both the public and the secret ones, ceased. Everything around Meng Hao once again grew calm, and he began to use his own methods to raise the neo-demons.

Time passed by. Soon, Meng Hao had been in the Crow Scout Tribe for five months.

Currently, he sat cross-legged in his courtyard. Suddenly, a threatening howl filled his ears, and he opened his eyes. There in the courtyard, one of the Greenwood Wolves was facing off against the other four. It looked somewhat thin and weak, but the threatening howl it emitted caused the other Greenwood Wolves to tremble in fear.

“Big Hairy,” said Meng Hao coolly. As soon as the words left his mouth, the weak-looking Greenwood Wolf turned to look at Meng Hao. There on its forehead, the white scar was clearly visible.

When it looked at Meng Hao, the coldness in its eyes vanished and turned into a charming expression of cleverness. It transformed into a green beam that shot like lightning over to Meng Hao. It lay down next to him, sticking its tongue out to lick Meng Hao’s leg, just like the mastiff used to do.

“Hairys #2, #3, #4, and #5, all of you come over here,” Meng Hao said with a laugh. The other four Greenwood Wolves cautiously trotted over.

Meng Hao’s Greenwood Wolves could now no longer be called little. Each of them was roughly two meters long and looked very intimidating. Their eyes glowed with cold savagery, and their bodies were covered with green fur. The speed with which they moved was like lightning, and their personalities exuded cold-bloodedness. Everything about them seemed incredibly powerful.

They were no longer level 1 neo-demons, but level 2. Despite that, they were strong enough to slaughter level 3 neo-demons, and even hold their own against level 4.

Most shocking was Big Hairy. Though he looked skinny and weak, and was only level 2, he was actually stronger than other level 4 Greenwood Wolves.

He could easily defeat any that he faced up against, and unless Meng Hao stopped him, would kill them.

With the exception of the big hubbub at the beginning, Meng Hao didn’t cause any problems in the Tribe. He didn’t have much contact with others, and few people other than Wu Hai had anything to do with him.

As for Wu Hai, he thoroughly admired Meng Hao, and would come often to ask him for advice. Each time, he left feeling enlightened. Gradually, a friendship formed between the two.

Wu Hai wasn’t sure exactly what techniques Meng Hao used to raise the Greenwood Wolves, but he could see that they were different from normal Greenwood Wolves. He didn’t understand, but in his eyes, it was amazing, and only served to cause him to further approve of Meng Hao.

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# Chapter 397: Wu Chen

Meng Hao learned a lot about the Crow Scout Tribe from Wu Hai. He now knew that the Tribe had a rank 7 Dragoneer, which was a very high and respected position. Even the Greatfather and the Priests were polite to him.

He also learned that the Crow Soldier Tribe had recently recruited a rank 7 Dragoneer who was accompanied by a Wild Giant. This new Dragoneer immediately occupied a position of extreme honor in the Tribe, and caused quite a sensation in the other Tribes.

When he heard this news, a strange expression appeared on Meng Hao’s face and he thought of Gu La, who had disappeared during the teleportation here.

It was in this way that the half year finally passed. Meng Hao felt quite at peace in the Crow Scout Tribe. It reminded him of back when he had first joined the Violet Fate Sect.

Similar to that time, no one bothered him and nothing extraordinary happened. His secrets were his own to keep, and he could pursue his own plans with no one the wiser.

Suddenly, Meng Hao laughed as he looked down at the five Greenwood Wolves. One of his greatest accomplishments in the past half year was that he had a much deeper understanding of what it meant to be a Demon Sealer.

This understanding came both from his personal perceptions and his experiences with sealing and Righteous Bestowal!

He knew that if he wanted to, he could seal Big Hairy in the blink of an eye. The Qi inside of Big Hairy was Demonic Qi, which lay within the realm of what he could seal.

Similarly, if he wanted to, he could cause the other Greenwood Wolves to be just like Big Hairy.

Regarding the art of Righteous Bestowal, Meng Hao thought a lot about it during the half year. By now, he was certain that as far as all neo-demons were concerned, Righteous Bestowal truly was a type of approval and good fortune.

It was almost like bestowing them with a title!

The higher the level of a neo-demon, the more it would thirst for Righteous Bestowal. Anything that did not crave Righteous Bestowal, was not truly a Demon!

In addition to gaining a deeper understanding of Demon Sealers during the half year, Meng Hao also managed to fill his courtyard with lotuses. Soon it became very much similar to his courtyard back in Holy Snow City.

Outsiders didn’t pay much attention to this. Cultivators in general command a certain level of freedom that others wouldn’t interfere with. In any case, no one had any idea the significance of lotuses to Meng Hao.

Of course, they were critical to his understanding and enlightenment regarding the Lotus Sword Formation. From the moment he had acquired the sword formation until now, he had constantly been studying how lotuses bloomed and withered. As of now, lotuses were firmly planted within Meng Hao’s mind.

The feeling he experienced because of this was hard to describe. If he closed his eyes, it was as if lotuses were blossoming inside his head. He hadn’t employed the sword formation since reaching this state, but he was convinced that if he did, the result would be very different than from before.

Meng Hao did no further research regarding totems. However, he continued to make more profound speculations about them.

At the moment, it was dark outside. Looking out, it was hard to tell whether it was night, or if the sky was just obscured by dark clouds. However, he could sense moisture in the air.

“It’s starting to rain again,” he murmured. Recently, it had been raining a lot. Sometimes it came down so hard that it pooled up on the ground and created streams and rivulets. The sound of the pouring rain made it seem as if it were fighting against Heaven and Earth.

Sometimes it hit the ground with so much force that the water shot back up into the air, as if it wished to return to the Heavens above. Instead, it simply turned into water vapor.

However, it seemed as if the mist retained the same stubbornness that the rain showed.

Meng Hao looked outside at the shattering raindrops and was able to faintly sense the unyielding will of the rain. Even after being turned into a mist, it still wished to fly back up into the Heavens.

“Entombed on the Earth, but desirous of a return to life in the Heavens….” Meng Hao looked up at the dark clouds which obscured the Heavens. After a long, long time passed, he closed his eyes.

“Perhaps that is also the path of a Demon Sealer,” he murmured. Having achieved the level of Cultivation base that he had, Meng Hao was now able to sense some of the truths that existed in Heaven and Earth. Each bit of enlightenment represented a development in his psyche. It became cognition that would later be power to be used in Spirit Severing.

“But which is better… sealing all the Demons under Heaven? Or approving them with Righteous Bestowal?” Meng Hao sat there lost in thought. His five Greenwood Wolves lay around him, silently accompanying him as he watched the rain.

It wasn’t until dawn that the rain finally began to lessen. At that early hour, the Neo-Demon Kennelist district was quiet. There were no cries of neo-demons; everything was silent.

It was at this time that footsteps rang out to break the silence. The sound of water splashing in the puddles could be heard, and an unfamiliar smell arrived that caused the silence to end.

It was a young man of a little over twenty years of age. He wore clothing that only elite members of the Tribe could wear, a long green leather robe, trimmed with what looked like silk or satin. It gleamed beneath the morning sunlight, causing the young man to look quite extraordinary despite his relatively low Cultivation base.

At the moment, he was frowning as he endured the unpleasant odor in the area. He held an umbrella in his hand as he hurried toward a distant courtyard.

“Wu Ali has gone too far this time. When my father was alive, people of his bloodline would always be completely courteous and respectful when they saw me. But now….” The young man clenched his jaw in fury as he walked along.

This was Wu Chen1 of the Crow Scout Tribe, a member of one of the Tribe’s three great bloodlines. The three great bloodlines were where the successive generations of Greatfathers came from. Barring unforeseen circumstances, the future Greatfathers would be selected from such descendants.

Wu Chen, of course, was just such a person. His father’s name had rocked the five Tribes of the Crow Divinity years ago. Unfortunately, he had died a few years ago while outside of the Tribe, and the resulting legal matters had still not been settled. As a result, his bloodline lost its position as the most powerful. As for Wu Chen, his previous prestige was now nothing but an illusion; it was impossible to conceal the sore straits he was in.

Because of the law of the jungle in the Cultivation world, any bloodlines without a powerful expert, no matter how prestigious, would become a target. This was the truth even in the Crow Scout Tribe.

Over the past years, Wu Chen had fallen far from his previously high position. This was something he couldn’t accept in his pride, but really, there was little he could do about it. He was forced to endure the scoffing of his rivals and the increasing level of disrespect shown to him by fellow Tribe members. There was no way for him to do anything about it except to follow the wishes of his older sister and lower his head.

However, he could not remain reconciled to such a situation. In his mind, his sister's choice was the wrong one. He had just made a breakthrough in his Cultivation base, and was now in the eighth level of Qi Condensation. He was now willing to pay any price to acquire a level 3 neo-demon, even secretly borrow large amounts of Spirit Crystals from other Tribes.

"With a level 3 neo-demon, all the members of my generation in the Tribe will have no choice but to pay attention to me. All the rest of them have rank 3s, I can't be left behind!" He clenched his jaw and ignored the pain in his heart. Choosing not to think about how he would possibly pay back his debt, he strode forward.

His plan was to find rank 3 Dragoneer Shui Mu, which was the only way he would be able to acquire a cheap, level 3 neo-demon.

All members of the Crow Scout Tribe would receive a level 1 neo-demon after reaching a certain level of Cultivation base and making a contribution to the Tribe. The higher one's Cultivation base, and the better the contribution, then the greater the compensation would be.

Members of the three great bloodlines were even more special. They could acquire a level 1 neo-demon at no cost. Furthermore, the higher their Cultivation base climbed, the better neo-demons they could get, all for free.

The key was to be powerful; there really was no limitation. However, if one wanted to acquire a very expensive neo-demon, then, of course, a contribution would have to be made.

As for Wu Chen, he could acquire level 2 neo-demons for free. If he wanted a level 3, he would have to pay some Spirit Crystals.

All of the Neo-Demon Kennelists, including Meng Hao, were part of the Crow Scout Tribe. Their job in the Tribe was to raise the neo-demons; that didn’t mean they actually owned them.

In principle, anyone could come with a command medallion and take the neo-demons away. That was just in principle, though. In actuality, there was an unwritten rule that prevented that from happening. Neo-Demon Kennelists were actually low-level Dragoneers whose rank was determined by the highest level neo-demon they could raise.

Because of that, and because of the respect for Dragoneers, who were not to be offended, all Tribes in the Western Desert ended up having the same custom. Dragoneers had the right to decide whether or not to give the neo-demons they raised to others.

Furthermore, Dragoneers also had the first right to buy any of the neo-demons they raised.

Grim-faced Wu Chen hurried along toward the courtyard that was his destination. The aroma that drifted about in the early morning air left him feeling uncomfortable. Because he had disturbed the peace by coming here just now, the howls of neo-demons began to rise up from the various courtyards in the area.

This caused Wu Chen to feel a bit annoyed. He hurried along through the area occupied mostly by level 1 and 2 neo-demons and then entered the area where many level 3 neo-demons could be found. It was at this point that he walked past the entrance of Meng Hao’s courtyard.

Just as he was about to continue on, Meng Hao’s Greenwood Wolves joined the other neo-demons in their howling.

The sound of it seemed ordinary, but as soon as Wu Chen heard it, his heart and mind trembled, and his facial expression changed to one of shock. The howling of the Greenwood Wolves wasn’t very high-pitched, but he was very close, and the sound of it sent his head spinning. He suddenly felt himself trembling, as if there were some great pressure weighing down on him.

He gasped, turning to look toward Meng Hao’s courtyard. He had heard the howls of level 2 neo-demons before, and never before had they shook him in such a way. Without hesitation, he pushed open the door and looked inside. He saw a gentle, scholarly youth sitting there cross-legged, looking back at him with eyes as clear as the night sky.

The youth was surrounded by five Greenwood Wolves who were also staring back at Wu Chen with eyes cold and filled with ferocity. There was one in particular who looked somewhat skinny; when he looked over, Wu Chen’s body began to tremble uncontrollably, and his face filled with shock. An intense pressure bore down on him, and he began to pant. His heart pounded as if he were about to die.

Wu Chen was almost incapable of handling the pressure exuded by the Greenwood Wolves in the courtyard. It felt like he was going to explode.

“How can I help you, Fellow Daoist?” asked Meng Hao, his tone cool.

As soon as his lightly spoken words rang out, the pressure suddenly vanished. Wu Chen felt his body go limp, and he almost fell down onto the ground. His face was pale, but he lifted his chin sanctimoniously, and an arrogant expression covered his face.

“I am Wu Chen, Tribe member of one of the three great bloodlines. Your level 2 Greenwood Wolf over there now belongs to me!” He was actually a bit nervous and excited. He’d already abandoned thoughts of level 3 neo-demons. He was going virtually wild with joy, because he could see that these Greenwood Wolves were far beyond ordinary. From what he could sense, they probably couldn’t match up to level 3, but were definitely the absolute highest quality of level 2.

He was just about to reach his hand out to point at skinny Big Hairy, but then hesitated for a moment and instead pointed to one of the other Greenwood Wolves that looked a bit more impressive.

1. Wu Chen’s name in Chinese is wū chén – Wu means “crow.” Chen means “dust” or “earth.”

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# Chapter 398: Branch of the Demon Sealers

Wu Chen pointed at Hairy #4.

Hairy #4 was conspicuously larger than the other Greenwood wolves by a little bit. This had been the case since the wolves were small. However, Meng Hao had named the wolves based on their strength, with #5 being the weakest.

Hairy #4 was neither the most nor the least powerful. Being pointed at by Wu Chen caused his eyes to shine with a fierce, cold glow, and he let out a threatening growl. In his limited consciousness, only his master could point at him in such a way. Nothing else in existence qualified to do so.

“Your Cultivation base isn’t sufficient,” said Meng Hao coolly. “You can’t control him. Go pick something from another courtyard.” He stroked Hairy #4’s furry head. Hairy #4 lowered his head obediently in a very charming fashion. If Meng Hao weren’t here right now, he would have immediately charged forward and ripped Wu Chen to pieces.

“You!” cried Wu Chen, his face twisted. Looking at Meng Hao, he had the feeling his Cultivation base was profound. However, he was a member of the Crow Scout Tribe, and a descendant of one of the three great bloodlines. Considering his identity, it didn’t matter if he was a bit down on his luck, he was still above virtually any vassal in the Tribe.

“I’m already in the eighth level of Qi Condensation! I can control any level 2 neo-demon. Greenwood Wolves are known for their speed, not for their close-quarters fighting. What the hell makes you think I couldn’t control it!” Wu Chen ground his teeth as he glared at Meng Hao.

Almost the moment he finished speaking, Hairy #4’s cold eyes flickered. Suddenly, a green blur appeared, and in the blink of an eye, Hairy #4 was standing directly in front of Wu Chen. His mouth was wide open, and right in front of Wu Chen’s nose, almost touching it. Wu Chen’s face instantly filled with shock; he let out a cry of alarm and backed up.

Cold sweat had broken out all over his body, and his face was as pale as death. Breathing ragged, pupils constricted, he stood there, his mind spinning. Just now he had felt an intense sensation of imminent death. It was a feeling he had never experienced before, and it caused his entire body to tremble. Lingering fear continued to fill him.

Meng Hao gave a reprimanding harumph, which Hairy #4 heard, causing him to immediately go limp. He lowered his head, unwilling to even look at Meng Hao.

Wu Chen took in a deep breath. A bright light shone in his eyes as he stared fixedly at Hairy #4. He was breathing even more heavily now. His heart began to thump as he looked at Hairy #4’s more than three meter long frame, his green fur and mighty disposition.

“I’ve seen a lot of level 2 Greenwood Wolves,” he thought to himself, “even ones belonging to other bloodline Clan members. None of them were even close to being this fast. This… is definitely a mutant Greenwood Wolf.

“It must be! The only way it could be so fast is if it were mutated! It could have killed me in the blink of an eye!!” At this point, he looked over at Meng Hao.

“According to the rules, this Greenwood Wolf belongs to the Crow Scout Tribe. I have the right to take it away!” His words sounded stalwart, but in reality, his heart was trembling. If it wasn’t for the fact that the wolf frightened him so much, he wouldn’t speak in such a way, quoting the Tribe rules to get his way.

Meng Hao laughed inwardly and shook his head. Considering the level of his Cultivation base, he wouldn’t stoop to arguing with a mere eigtht level Qi Condensation Cultivator.

“If you’re capable of taking him, go ahead,” he said, then closed his eyes and paid no more heed to the goings on.

“Fine, it was your suggestion!” replied Wu Chen, unable to conceal the wild joy which filled his heart. Other than being a descendant of the three great bloodlines Wu Chen wasn’t too extraordinary. However, his particular bloodline excelled in neo-demon branding techniques, which he had been studying since a young age. He actually had mastered dozens of various branding techniques.

Therefore, he was supremely confident that he could succeed even with level 3 neo-demons, not to mention level 2. Even though this was a mutant neo-demon, it was still only level 2, and Wu Chen didn’t have even the slightest doubt in his mind.

Laughing out loud, he slowly approached Hairy #4, anticipation gleaming in his eyes. He cautiously began to perform an incantation with his right hand, which created a bizarre branding mark that looked like a wolf’s head.

When the branding mark appeared, a look of confusion appeared in Hairy #4’s eyes. Seeing this caused Wu Chen to grow even more confident. The branding mark flickered and then transformed into a beam of light that shot toward Hairy #4.

In the blink of an eye, it disappeared into Hairy #4’s forehead.

“It worked!” cried Wu Chen exuberantly. The first part of the process was done, after which there was another procedure. When that was finished, this neo-demon would become his totem beast.

Meng Hao still had his eyes closed, and wasn’t paying attention at all to what was happening. He did nothing to stop Wu Chen from approaching Hairy #4. Wu Chen lifted his hand up to touch him, but even as he did, Hairy #4 suddenly lifted up his enormous head. His face was filled with ferocity, and his eyes glowed with a cold, cruel light.

His gaze instantly caused Wu Chen’s face to fall. His heart began to pound, and he immediately backed up, his eyes filled with disbelief.

“No way, how could it have failed…?” He immediately decided to switch branding techniques. Soon, an hour had passed. Wu Chen tried seven or eight different brands, but in the end, none were successful.

The ferocity in the eyes of Hairy #4 continued to grow thicker. Finally, Wu Chen sagged, his face pale and filled with disbelief. Hairy #4 let out a howl and then shot forward. His mouth opened wide, heading directly toward Wu Chen’s neck.

Intense killing intent and ferocious cruelty emanated out. He moved with such speed that Wu Chen had no way to dodge. A green glow filled his eyes, which then began to grow dark. There wasn’t even time for a sense of danger to well up in him.

In this critical moment, Meng Hao opened his eyes and said, “Get back here, Hairy #4.”

Hairy #4 let out a yelp and then began to tremble. The razor sharp teeth in his mouth had been just about to latch onto Wu Chen’s neck.

Instead, Hairy #4 moved backward, returning to lay down next to Meng Hao, his face cute and charming.

Wu Chen’s face was completely devoid of blood, his entire body was shaking, and his mind was in chaos. After coming to this terrifying courtyard, he had nearly died twice. Then he experienced the unthinkable situation of all his brands failing; the only thing he could do was stare at Meng Hao. As of this moment, Meng Hao had become completely unfathomable in his mind.

The image of Meng Hao sitting there, surrounded by his five Greenwood Wolves, was something that Wu Chen would never be able to forget. It was branded permanently into his brain.

“Senior…. I….” Wu Chen wasn’t sure what to say. He stared at Meng Hao and the Greenwood Wolves for a moment. Trembling, he clasped hands and bowed deeply, then hurried out of the courtyard. He closed the door on his way out, and then stood outside and bowed again a few times. Feeling both perturbed and amazed, he turned to leave.

“A master! A true master who can raise mutant neo-demons! He’s definitely a real Dragoneer!! There must be a reason why he’s hiding out here…. I can’t tell anybody. Maybe if I run into some real problems in the future, he’ll… give me some good advice!!” Having made his decision, Wu Chen took a deep breath and rushed off into the distance.

Meng Hao watched the young man leave, his expression the same as ever. It was impossible to hide the fantastic qualities of his Greenwood Wolves, nor did he plan to. In his opinion, being known as a Dragoneer wasn’t a bad thing.

Actually, Meng Hao’s methods of controlling the neo-demons actually far exceeded that of Dragoneers. That was because he was no Dragoneer, but actually… a Demon Sealer!

A Demon Sealer masquerading as a Dragoneer was like a Grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy pretending to be an average alchemist. They were two completely different levels that were vastly separated.

Of course it wasn’t very difficult to pull off something like that. Everything that Dragoneers could do, Demon Sealers could also do. However, it absolutely didn’t work the other way around.

“I’ve always thought there are a lot of similarities between Dragoneers and Demon sealers. The former are much lower, though.” His half a year of study regarding this matter left him even more certain of his conclusion.

“The secret techniques of Dragoneers allow them to rapidly raise neo-demons. They speed through youth and grow up very quickly. The average person would be amazed by such a thing. However, regardless of the method used to accomplish this, a neo-demon can only grow within the confines of its normal lifespan. That can’t be exceeded.

“However, Righteous Bestowal using Demonic Qi vastly exceeds Dragoneer arts. It can break through those normal confines. It can actually transmogrify the fundamental nature of a neo-demon.” Thinking about this, Meng Hao couldn’t help but smile.

The more he researched this matter, the more he got the feeling that Dragoneers were like Demon Sealers who were on a different path, and were doing their best to imitate true Demon Sealers.

“I wonder if back in the days of the Eighth Generation Demon Sealer, someone left behind some collateral legacy that spawned the Dragoneers?” It was an interesting idea. Unfortunately, there was a big gap between himself, the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer, and the Eighth Demon Sealer. He was missing a lot of legacies, and suffered from quite a lack of understanding of the previous Demon Sealers.

“I wonder if traces of the Demon Sealers can be found in the Western Desert….” His expression was tranquil as he considered this. “In any case, I need to take every chance I get to get noticed within the Crow Scout Tribe. I need to make sure I get into the Crow Divinity Tribe’s Holy Land.”

The Crow Scout Tribe had three Nascent Soul Cultivators, but Meng Hao was pretty sure that if he put on the blood-colored mask, only the Treant from the mountaintop could pose any threat to his life.

Therefore, he was being cautious about his actions, but wasn’t expending too much effort to conceal anything.

“In the past, whenever I encountered something that has to do with the Demon sealers, it would provoke a reaction from the Demon Sealing Jade. However, after entering the Western Desert, there was nothing whatsoever. Perhaps… I just haven’t been to the right places here.” He slapped his bag of holding and produced the Demon Sealing Jade. He held it in his hand and examined it closely.

It felt warm and smooth in his hand, as if it were actually a part of him. Looking at it made him feel calm, and he slowly slipped into a strange state.

After a long time passed, he put the ancient piece of jade away and closed his eyes to meditate.

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# Chapter 399: Senior, Save Me

Several days later….

On the mountain in the middle of the Crow Scout Tribe was a string of extravagant houses. Although they were constructed from wood, the wood came from Spirit Trees in the surrounding forests that had grown for hundreds of years. Eventually, they built up a certain amount of spiritual energy, and when they were used to build houses, could provide quite a few benefits when it came to practicing cultivation.

The only people who could live here were descendants of the three great bloodlines of the Tribe.

This, of course, was where Wu Chen resided. At the moment, he was lividly throwing a ceramic jar onto the ground, where it shattered into pieces. Wu Chen’s infuriated voice roared out throughout the house.

“Wu Ali, you’ve gone too far!!” Wu Chen’s hair was in disarray, and his eyes radiated venomous madness. His body was shaking and he oozed killing intent. He slammed his fist into the wooden wall next to him, causing the entire house to shake. Ripples of spiritual energy appeared, resisting the power of his Cultivation base and even rebounding back into him. Wu Chen’s hand was now injured and dripped blood.

Ignoring the blood, he clenched his fists and continued to vent: “That totem medallion was awarded to my father years ago because of his service to the Tribe. Why the hell are they giving it to you now!?”

Despite his venting, his heart filled with helplessness. A bitter smile appeared on his face as he looked at the sky outside. As far as he was concerned the entire world was filled with darkness.

It was at this point that the front door opened. Sunlight spilled in, piercing into his eyes. A woman entered, someone very familiar to Wu Chen.

“Sis….” he said, his voice filled with pain.

The woman was tall and had long black hair. The clothing she wore was utilitarian, but it was impossible to conceal her natural beauty. However, the constant furrow in her brow made it seem like she was in a state of perpetual thought.

“I’ve already arranged everything for you,” she said, her voice gentle. “You and Wu Ali will have a fair neo-demon duel. Whoever wins will receive the totem medallion.”

She looked down at the fragments of pottery on the ground and then back up at Wu Chen.

“WHAT?!?!” cried Wu Chen, his eyes bloodshot. “That medallion was given to father for his meritorious service!” His expression filled with savagery. His dissatisfaction with the Crow Scout Tribe couldn’t be greater. For the past few years, he had done everything his sister asked him to do. He had endured it all. But now, even his father’s totem medallion was being taken away. He truly valued the totem medallion, which made it much easier to congeal totems. It was actually a precious treasure that even had the ability to pass on some legacy power from the Tribal Ancestor.

Seeing Wu Chen in virtual hysterics, his sister soothingly said, “The whole matter was set by the Tribe Greatfather, so you have to comply. Listen, I’m going to go find Grandmaster Shui Mu, the rank 3 Dragoneer. I’ll buy a level 2 neo-demon for you, that way the duel will be fair.”

“Wu Ali’s neo-demon is a level 2 Flying Bat. It was personally raised by a rank 5 Dragoneer. An ordinary level 2 neo-demon couldn’t possibly beat it! Neo-demon duel…. Some ‘fair’ duel this is going to be!” Wu Chen felt like he just couldn’t accept it. It was at this point that an idea flashed like lightning in his head.

“Neo-demon duel…. Neo-demon…. Greenwood Wolves!” His eyes suddenly filled with an intense glow, as if suddenly he had risen from the depths of despair.

“If I beg that senior, maybe he’ll help me,” he thought. “Trifling Wu Ali will be defeated for sure! Then I can get the totem medallion that is rightfully mine, and begin my rise to prominence.” Wu Chen began to pant, and the glow in his eyes grew brighter. Filled with intense hope, he stood up and left, intent on seeking out that mysterious figure whom he found completely unfathomable. Of course, it was none other than the person he viewed as a master of the senior generation, Meng Hao.

Wu Chen’s sister frowned as she watched him walk off. She did nothing to stop him, but instead followed along behind him.

Wu Chen didn’t hesitate at all. Ignoring the fact that his sister was following him, he sped down the mountain toward the Neo-Demon Kennelist district. As he looked at the rows of courtyards, and smelled the strange odor in the air, his mind filled with worries regarding the potential losses and gains.

It didn’t take long for him to reach Meng Hao’s courtyard. He stood outside, his beautiful sister behind him, frowning. His sister didn’t understand why Wu Chen had suddenly rushed here as soon as she mentioned neo-demons.

“Wu Chen….” she said softly.

He completely ignored her as he looked at the closed door leading into the courtyard. Gritting his teeth, he stepped forward and, putting his most respectful expression on, clasped hands and bowed, making no move to open the door.

“Wu Chen is here to pay respects, senior,” he said.

His voice was loud, and echoed about. His sister’s eyes narrowed immediately. She knew her younger brother well, and was used to how aggressive he usually acted because of the grievances he felt. There were few people he would actually treat courteously.

She hadn't seen him act as respectfully as this in a long time. Actually… she could clearly see that the respect he was showing was not an act, but existed deep in his heart.

"This place…." She looked closely at the courtyard and the shut door.

A long moment passed. Wu Chen gritted his teeth and continued loudly, "Wu Chen of the junior generation pays respects to the senior generation. Senior, I would like to request an audience." His voice echoed out, immediately attracting the attention of other nearby Neo-Demon Kennelists. Quite a few opened the doors of their courtyards to look over.

When they saw Wu Chen and his beautiful sister, it only took a moment's thought to recognize who they were.

Wu Chen's sister was starting to feel a little irritated. From her perspective, Wu Chen was a descendant of the three great bloodlines. Vassals weren't even members of the Tribe, so there was no need to show them such veneration. And yet, Wu Chen had bowed twice in greeting to the owner of this courtyard. She frowned and let out a cold harumph. She was just about to push the door open to see how skilled this Cultivator was, who her brother showed such politeness to.

However, as soon as she stepped forward, her brother moved to block her, an imploring look on his face.

When she saw his expression, her heart softened. With an inward sigh, she stepped back. Deep in her heart, her irritation at whoever was in the courtyard continued to grow.

More Cultivators were looking at them now, and some of them were discussing the proceedings in low tones.

"Those are descendants of the three great bloodlines. I've heard of the two of them. Why would they possibly come here to pay respects to a mere

Neo-Demon Kennelist?”

“If they were going to pay respects to anyone, it should be Grandmaster Shui Mu. The Cultivator in that courtyard is surnamed Meng, and there’s nothing special at all about him.”

“Maybe Grandmaster Shui Mu isn’t as polite as he seems, and refused to part with a neo-demon. Then, they had no choice but to lower their standards. Even still, why would they pick a Neo-Demon Kennelist with absolutely no reputation?”

Wu Chen and his sister could hear what people were saying. As for Wu Chen, it didn’t change his mind at all. His sister, however, was looking grimmer and grimmer.

She had already endured about as much as she could when the courtyard door slowly opened without a sound. From within, a pleasant voice could be heard: “Enter.”

Wu Chen immediately got excited. He took a deep breath and then organized his garments. Bowing once more, he cautiously entered the courtyard. His sister followed, her face dark.

Meng Hao was sitting there cross-legged, surrounded by his five, napping Greenwood Wolves.

When she saw the wolves, Wu Chen’s sister’s eyes went wide. With the exception of one, the entire group seemed to be high quality level 2 neo-demons. Now, she understood why her brother was being so polite.

“But there are a lot of Cultivators in the Western Desert who are skilled in raising neo-demons,” she thought. “Wu Chen isn’t very experienced, so he mistakenly assumes that this guy is special. I wonder what this guy did to fool Wu Chen so well.” Her eyes glittered coldly, and in her heart she snorted coldly.

As soon as he entered the courtyard, Wu Chen dropped to his knees. “Senior, I beg of you to save me….”

This caused his sister to frown even more deeply.

Meng Hao opened his eyes. He looked over Wu Chen and his sister, taking note of her antagonistic bearing. Ignoring her, he focused on Wu Chen.

“You really aren’t capable of controlling these Greenwood Wolves,” he said calmly.

“Senior, I’m not here to request control of the Greenwood Wolves,” he said, his voice filled with cordiality and entreaty. “I need your help. Wu Ali is being an intolerable bully. I have to engage in a neo-demon duel with him. Senior, I have no neo-demons that are capable of standing up to him. Senior, please save me! I beg of you to stand at my side as a Dragoneer. I’ll do anything you want, even pledge my life to you!!”

“Wu Chen, get up!” said his sister, her voice harsh.

Wu Chen ignored her and continued to stare fixedly at Meng Hao, his eyes pleading.

Meng Hao looked at him silently for a moment, his eyes glittering.

“I want the totem branding technique of the Crow Scout Tribe,” he said.

Hearing his words, Wu Chen’s sister immediately replied, “Impossible! You’re just a vassal! Such a request is preposterous!” Two totem tattoos glittered on her, indicating that her Cultivation base was at the Foundation Establishment stage.

Meng Hao ignored her, continuing to look at Wu Chen as he waited for him to respond.

Wu Chen hesitated for a moment. A totem branding technique was a Conclave magic of a Tribe. It would normally be very difficult for a vassal to acquire such a technique. According to custom, Wu Chen shouldn’t reveal such a technique to an outsider. Unless he was willing, the technique could not be extracted from him even by Soul Search. Every Conclave

Tribe member was blessed with a totem, which was branded onto their very soul.

However, when he considered all the injustice he had experienced in the past years, Wu Chen gritted his teeth. A look of madness filled his face.

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# Chapter 400: Neo-Demon Duel

“I agree!” said Wu Chen, clenching his jaw.

Ignoring his sister, Wu Chen reached up to tap his forehead. Immediately, a glob of blood emerged from his mouth, which then transformed into a red leaf. The veins of the leaf were clearly visible and emitted a strange glow. Wood-type Qi emanated off it. As soon as Meng Hao saw it, his eyes flickered with a barely perceptible glittering.

“So, it has something to do with the bloodline….” he thought. “No, that’s not it. It’s that object. So it has to be fused with the body?” The leaf shot over from Wu Chen to Meng Hao.

Wu Chen’s sister’s face immediately darkened and she took a step forward.

“Sis, this is my decision!” said Wu Chen, setting his jaw.

His sister looked over at him. Seeing the expression on her younger brother’s face, she thought about all the hardships they had endured. Finally, she sighed inwardly and closed her eyes.

The leaf hovered in front of Meng Hao. He reached out and touched it, whereupon the leaf disappeared. It transformed into a red aura that merged into his hand and then appeared as an image in his mind.

The image contained the technique necessary to plant the leaf firmly within his body. The description was very detailed, and could be considered a secret magic. People not of the three great bloodlines would never be able to figure it out.

After a long moment passed, Meng Hao’s eyes began to shine, and he nodded. He rose to his feet.

“Okay, let’s go.”

Wu Chen took a deep breath, then rose to his feet and bowed deeply to Meng Hao. Giving over his Tribe’s secret magic had been a huge price to pay. Wu Chen didn’t even dare to think what would have happened if Meng Hao had suddenly refused to help him afterwards.

To Wu Chen, all of this was… a huge gamble!

Taking this risk required him to suppress everything and go all out!

“Senior, this is my older sister, Wu Ling.” Wu Chen actually didn’t even dare to look at her at the moment. 1

Wu Ling glared at Meng Hao and then, one word at a time, said, “It’s a violation of Tribe rules for Wu Chen to give you that secret magic. If you’re cheating him in any way, then I, Wu Ling, swear on the Tribe totem that I will not rest until you are dead!” She still believed Wu Chen to have been deceived, and radiated a strong killing intent toward Meng Hao.

In her opinion, Meng Hao’s evil intentions had been revealed the instant he mentioned his desire to have the secret magical technique. People like this couldn’t be allowed to live. Besides, if any news spread that he had acquired the technique from Wu Chen, it wouldn’t matter that Wu Chen was a descendant of the three great bloodlines, it would be impossible for him to escape punishment.

The reason she hadn’t prevented him from doing so just now was to protect his sense of self-respect. Secretly, though, she was thinking of various ways that she could kill Meng Hao to shut up him up.

“If you want to blame someone,” she thought, “blame yourself for being so greedy!” She gave him a deep look. In her mind, he was already dead.

Meng Hao gave a slight smile but didn’t respond. Clasping his hands behind his back, he strode off. As he did, his five Greenwood Wolves lazily got to their feet to follow.

Wu Chen led the way. As for Wu Ling, seeing how Meng Hao ignored her caused her to snort inwardly. Her eyes flashed with killing intent as she followed.

Eventually, they passed the courtyard of rank 3 Dragoneer Grandmaster Shui Mu. Wu Ling called out to Wu Chen, then entered the courtyard. Moments later she emerged, followed by an old man.

The old man wore a haughty expression; this was the same person who had instructed Meng Hao regarding how to raise neo-demons. He was quite famous in this stretch of courtyards, and was in charge of all the Neo-Demon Kennelist vassals. Of course, he was rank 3 Dragoneer Grandmaster Shui Mu.

A bright green snake rested on his shoulders. It almost looked like it was made of crystal; however, its forked tongue flicked in and out of its mouth, and its eyes shone with a cold glow.

“Many thanks, Grandmaster Shui Mu! I, Wu Ling, will never forget this kindness!” An expression of veneration filled Wu Ling’s face. Even though she was a descendant of one of the three great bloodlines, she still would not dare to do anything to offend a rank 3 Dragoneer. Furthermore, she had paid quite a high price to get his help, all for the sake of Wu Chen.

The arrogance was plain on the old man’s face as he responded, “Considering you came with a command medallion, and since I owe you a favor, I might as well help out. It will only be this one time, though. Don’t think it will happen again. Also, I make no guarantees regarding victory or defeat.”

Old man Shui Mu’s gaze suddenly came to rest on Meng Hao and he suddenly appeared to be annoyed. Then he looked at Meng Hao’s Greenwood Wolves, and his eyes glittered. This wasn’t his first time seeing them; he had noticed long ago they seemed extraordinary. However, they weren’t enough for him to truly care about.

Shui Mu looked over at Wu Ling and frowned. “What’s he doing here?”

Wu Ling hesitated. “He was invited by my younger brother,” she said softly. “Grandmaster Shui Mu….”

Shui Mu’s annoyed expression grew even more obvious and he let out a cold harumph. “Considering that you’ve invited others, then I’m afraid I won’t be participating.” His expression dark, he flicked his sleeve, turned, and walked back into his courtyard. In his mind, it was inconceivable that he, a Dragoneer, could possibly participate in any activity with a mere Neo-Demon Kennelist.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered slightly as he watched Shui Mu turning to stalk off. He said nothing, but rather waited to see how Wu Chen and Wu Ling would handle the situation.

Wu Ling was starting to get really nervous. She had spent a lot in her efforts to get help from Grandmaster Shui Mu. Glaring hatefully at Meng Hao, she followed after Shui Mu, her face filled with an expression of entreaty. She rattled off an endless stream of words as she tried to convince him to come back. Eventually, she gritted her beautiful teeth and offered even more compensation. Shui Mu eventually gave a begrudging nod, then returned, walking past Meng Hao without giving him a passing glance.

Wu Ling breathed a sigh of relief. However, the bitterness she felt in her heart only deepened. She gave Wu Chen a meaningful look, and then shook her head slowly. She was disappointed, she really did feel that it had been a big mistake on Wu Chen’s part not to listen to her advice from the beginning.

Sighing, Wu Ling followed behind Grandmaster Shui Mu as he walked off. Meng Hao smiled indifferently as he followed. As for Wu Chen, he looked thoughtful as he walked. The small group left the Neo-Demon Kennelist district and made their way up the mountain to an open square which was cut into the side of the mountain. Its surface was smooth granite.

Meng Hao looked around as they walked, whereas Wu Chen was lost in thought. Up ahead, Wu Ling took out a branch, which she waved out in front of her. A green beam of light appeared that shot up into the sky and then exploded.

The resulting boom seemed to shake Wu Chen out of his reverie. He took a deep breath and the looked up toward the explosion. Ten beams of light immediately shot out from ten different houses located on the mountain. Moments later, ten people emerged. In addition, various other Crow Scout Tribe members from down below the mountain began to make their way up. Wu Chen turned toward Meng Hao, a look of determination in his eyes. He clasped hands and bowed deeply.

“Grandmaster, please, help me.”

Meng Hao smiled and gave a slight nod. His impression of Wu Chen was growing. The young man was a bit impulsive, but his determination and perseverance were admirable.

People began to arrive, the first being from the group of ten.

One of their number was an old man dressed in a long white robe. His white hair floated in the wind, and his body was festooned with tattoos. One of the tattoos was that of a tree.

He seemed to be the most powerful in the group, the rest of whom emanated thick totemic power. Their Cultivation bases were extraordinary, most of them being around the early Core Formation stage.

As for the old man, he emanated power equivalent to the mid Nascent Soul stage.

Standing next to the old man was a smiling middle-aged man with grayish hair. His body was also festooned with totem tattoos, and emanated shocking power. He seemed to be slightly weaker than the old man; his power was analogous to the early Nascent Soul stage.

Wu Ling stepped forward and clasped hands toward the old man. “Wu Ling, descendant of the three great bloodlines, extends greetings to the Earth Priest. The command of the Greatfather stated that any time during this three day period, my younger brother Wu Chen could initiate his neo-demon duel with Wu Ali. The winner will receive the totem medallion!”

Shui Mu stood next to her looking proud as he clasped hands in greeting to the old man.

Wu Chen looked nervous as he stepped forward to stand next to Wu Ling, head bowed.

This old man of the mid Nascent Soul stage was none other than one of the two High Priests of the Crow Scout Tribe, who spent most of his time handling Tribal affairs. He looked Wu Ling over, glanced at Wu Chen, and then sighed inwardly. On an emotional level, he felt sorry for the two of them. However, whatever decisions were made by the Greatfather had to be complied with. The Earth Priest would never argue with him unless it was some matter of great importance. He gave them slight nods, then looked over at Meng Hao. As for the Greenwood Wolves that were gathered behind him, his eyes flickered as he studied them. However, he said nothing. Instead, he turned to Shui Mu.

“Thank you for your assistance, Dragoneer Shui Mu.”

Hearing this caused Shui Mu to suddenly feel a bit excited. He quickly clasped hands and bowed.

“To be able to assist descendants of the three great bloodlines is an incredible honor for someone as lowly as me.”

As these words were being exchanged, the rest of the ten people arrived. One of them was a young man wearing clothes very similar to those worn by Wu Chen. He was tall and strapping, with handsome features and a somewhat proud expression. As he neared, Meng Hao could sense coldness emanating from Wu Chen’s eyes.

The young newcomer gave a cold snort and then said, “Wu Chen, that totem medallion belongs to me, Wu Ali. However, since the Greatfather decreed it, I have no choice but to defeat you and settle the matter once and for all!” After this he clasped hands and bowed in greeting to the Earth Priest, as well as the middle-aged man standing next to him.

The middle-aged man smiled approvingly and nodded. He was the Grand Elder of the Crow Scout Tribe, a position below that of High Priest, but one of great power nonetheless. He was also a powerful expert of the same bloodline as Wu Ali. It was because of him that Wu Ali had become so aggressive recently, and attempted to take the totem medallion that belonged to Wu Chen.

It was at this point that a small crowd of other Crow Scout Tribe members arrived from below the mountain. There weren’t too many, so it didn’t take long for a group of close to one hundred people to surround the square.

Wu Chen was nervous. He took a deep breath as he stared over at Wu Ali. He was about to say something when Wu Ali gave a cold laugh and then waved his hand. A green light shot out to circle around in mid-air. Piercing cries rang out.

Suddenly, the light stopped moving and transformed into a little green-colored bat the size of a human hand. It had sharp fangs, and its eyes glowed with a cold light. All in all, it looked quite fierce, and caused the eyes of all the onlookers to glow.

“This is my level 2 neo-demon, a Greenwood Bat!” said Wu Ali arrogantly. “Wu Chen, produce your neo-demon. If you don’t have one, then go ahead and ask your Dragoneer to help you.

1. Wu Ling’s name in Chinese is wū líng. Her surname of course means “crow.” Ling means “spirit”

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# Chapter 401: Same Level Fatality!

Conversations immediately broke out.

“Greenwood Bat! Of the three Greenwood totems, none are technically stronger than the others. What’s most important is the Cultivator’s connection with the neo-demon. In my opinion, Wu Ali has more potential than anyone else in his generation. It’s said that his Greenwood Bat was raised personally by rank 5 Dragoneer Mo Fang!” 1

“I’ve got my eye on Wu Ali too. Normal Tribe members can acquire Greenleaf totems, but only the three great bloodlines have access to the special totems, the Greenwood Wolves, Greenwood Bats and Greenwood Snakes! The Greatfather and the Priests can combine all three totems into a totem of the Ancestor Tree. It seems to me that Wu Ali is definitely going to grow up to be a Chosen.”

“There’s no need to even mention Priests. They appear without any sign or indication. Whenever a Priest dies, his consciousness will return to Ancestor Greenwood Tree to be reincarnated. In any case, that Greenwood Bat sure does look extraordinary. Any neo-demon raised by rank 5 Dragoneer Mo Fang will definitely be the most powerful in its level. Probably the only thing that could be most powerful would be something raised by Mo Fang’s father. He’s the most powerful Dragoneer in the Tribe, level seven Grandmaster Mo Zi….” 2

Hearing all the discussions made Wu Chen feel as if all the blood in his body was rushing into his head. He took a step forward and was about to say something when Wu Ling suddenly called out.

“Grandmaster Shui Mu, your assistance is requested!”

Wu Ling truly did not believe Meng Hao to be capable of securing victory. In order to prevent any loss of face, she spoke before Wu Chen could. As soon as she did, all gazes fell upon old man Shui Mu.

Shui Mu gave a dry cough. Actually, this was his first time to engage in a neo-demon duel with someone of the three great bloodlines. Although he talked a big game, inwardly he was very focused on the opportunity present here. He had a chance now to increase his reputation, as well as gain other benefits, especially if he won.

He waved his right hand, causing the Greenwood Snake on his shoulder to fly into the air. It was like a green bolt of lightning that shot out to hover in front of the Greenwood Bat, its forked tongue flicking, its eyes radiating coldness.

The Greenwood Bat's expression didn't change at all, although the coldness in its eyes grew more intense.

"I am Shui Mu. Presumably you all are familiar with my name, Fellow Daoists. I have been raising this Greenwood Snake for an entire year. The reason it took so long with this particular neo-demon is that I tested out a special technique on it to bring forth some mutations!" Shui Mu pointed with his right hand, causing the Greenwood Snake to begin to tremble. Suddenly, a horn emerged from the middle of the snake's flat, glossy forehead.

This instantly caused a small commotion among the surrounding Cultivators, even the High Priest, who did a double take.

Meng Hao's eyes flashed as he examined the snake. Then, he began to laugh inwardly. Obviously, the horn was no mutation, but rather, a simple transplant. It was hard to say what beast it had been taken from, but it obviously had simply added it onto the snake. There were some people in the audience who realized this and paid the thing little heed. However, most of the onlookers appeared to be very interested in matter.

Seeing the looks of interest caused Shui Mu to get even more excited. It was at this point that the High Priest cleared his throat. "Very well. Let's begin," he said.

Immediately, Shui Mu waved his finger, causing the Greenwood Snake to fly at top speed toward the Greenwood Bat.

Wu Ali was feeling a bit nervous. Before, he had never paid the slightest attention to Shui Mu, but considering the man had raised a neo-demon that had a horn, it suddenly made him feel uneasy. Focusing his thoughts, he caused the Greenwood Bat's eyes to shine with coldness and then shoot forward.

In the blink of an eye, the two green beams of light slammed into each other. Booming sounds echoed out, along with a sharp shriek. Green-colored ripples spread out in all directions.

Wu Chen looked up, his face filled with anxiety, and his fists clenched tightly. He had been a bit irritated that his sister cut him off earlier, but now he had little time to consider it. His eyes were fixed on the two green beams of light in mid-air.

Wu Ling stood off to the side, feeling extremely anxious. Although she constantly told Wu Chen to endure the suffering silently, she was actually extremely furious. It was only to keep the both of them safe that she counselled him to show restraint. As for this neo-demon duel, she had fought hard to earn the right to have it. All her hope rested on Grandmaster Shui Mu. Hopefully, a victory here would ensure that the totem medallion stayed safely in their bloodline.

Meng Hao looked up at the Greenwood Snake and its horn. It was currently radiating reddish light that increased its speed. He nodded. "So it is somewhat useful after all."

It was at this time that a miserable shriek suddenly filled the air as one of the green beams of light suddenly split into two, and a shower of blood filled the air.

The green beam was none other than the Greenwood Snake. Part of its body fell toward the ground, which the Greenwood Bat snatched up and ripped into shreds with its sharp teeth. It then looked back up at the Greenwood Snake in the air above, which currently only had half a body left.

The Greenwood Bat let out a cry as it charged up. The Greenwood Snake tried to avoid it. Unfortunately, even with the aid of the glow emitted by the red horn on its head, it was unable to dodge. In the blink of an eye, the Greenwood Bat was right at its side. It bit into the snake, which let out a miserable shriek. Its body began to wither, and within the space of a few breaths, had turned into a shrivelled corpse, its essence absorbed by the Greenwood Bat.

Wu Chen's face fell, and he staggered backward as if the weight of an entire mountain had just slammed into him. He laughed bitterly.

Wu Ling's eyes filled with grief as she looked around helplessly.

Conversations immediately broke out among the audience.

"This defeat was destined to occur. There wasn't even a need to have a duel between Wu Chen and Wu Ali!"

"One is useless trash, the other is a Chosen! What's there to compare!?"

"Wu Ali controlled his neo-demon with as much skill as a Dragoneer, and took the upper hand. You can see from this that Wu Chen doesn't even have the confidence to control neo-demons."

Of course, all of these various conversations could be heard by Wu Chen and Wu Ling.

As for Grandmaster Shui Mu, his expression was calm. He shook his head and said, "It seems I still need to work on my Greenwood Snakes," he said coolly. "However, as you can all see, the changes I made to the snake increased its speed quite a bit. It may have been defeated by the Greenwood Bat, but the main reason would be that the Greenwood Bat was raised personally by rank 5 Dragoneer Mo Fang. How could my Greenwood Snake have possibly defeated it?" He smiled as looked around at the audience, many of whom still had looks of interest on their faces. He had accomplished his goal, and was now certain that it wouldn't be long before more people began to seek out his services.

Seeing the ashen look on Wu Chen's face tore at Wu Ling's heart. She turned toward Shui Mu and angrily said, "Grandmaster Shui Mu, you told me you were eighty percent certain you could achieve victory! If you had told me before what you said just now, then I wouldn't have gone to the Greatfather to beg for permission to hold this neo-demon duel!"

"So childish!" said Shui Mu with an annoyed flick of a sleeve. "Neo-demon duels are filled with countless unpredictability. Even if I said I was ninety percent certain, that's just my opinion based on my judgement. After all your years practicing Cultivation, do you really not understand something so simple?"

"You!!" she cried, glaring at Shui Mu. However, a bitter smile slowly appeared on her face. Shui Mu was a level 3 Dragoneer, and an official vassal. Despite her being a descendant of the three great bloodlines, she was currently in a very poor position. She knew she had been used, but there was really nothing she could do about the situation except laugh bitterly.

"Definitely a bit childish," said Meng Hao with a light cough.

As soon as his voice rang out, Shui Mu gave a cold harumph. Wu Chen's pale face suddenly flushed with blood as he looked over at Meng Hao. The look in his eyes was like that of a drowning man who suddenly saw a piece of wood floating in front of him.

Panting, Wu Chen walked forward. Bowing deeply, he said, "Grandmaster, I beg for your assistance!"

Wu Ling looked over at him, flames of rage dancing in her eyes. One word at a time, she said, "How certain are you that you can win?"

"About eighty," replied Meng Hao with a smile. He looked over at his Greenwood Wolves and then pointed at Hairy #5.

Hairy #5 suddenly looked up. His eyes radiating a cold glow, he shot forward. He performed no flashy moves, but instead transformed into a green beam of light that sped directly toward the Greenwood Bat.

Wu Ali’s eyes filled with scorn. Of the three great bloodline totems, Greenwood Wolves were the largest and also excelled in speed. However, in his mind, they couldn’t compare to Greenwood Bats at all, and he felt absolutely confident that his Greenwood Bat could sweep across all over level 2 totems. He sent his will out, already able to visualize the desiccated corpse of the wolf.

He laughed coldly. Moments before, he had been a bit nervous facing up against Grandmaster Shui Mu. However, Meng Hao was nothing but a random stranger who he didn’t care a bit about.

As he sent his will out, the Greenwood Bat let out a piercing cry and shot toward Hairy #5.

However, before it could barely even move, Hairy #5 increased his speed. This was not an increase of double or triple, but rather a multiple of ten!

He blurred into something that looked like a ghost, a speed which shouldn’t be possible for level 2 neo-demons. A screaming sound like that of a thunderstorm filled the air. Amidst the roaring, and before the Greenwood Bat could even react, Hairy #5 was directly in front of it. His eyes radiated coldness as he bit down.

A bloodcurdling shriek poured out of the mouth of the Greenwood Bat. The sound only lasted for a moment before suddenly stopped. Hairy #5 swallowed down the hand-sized bat in a single gulp.

There was a green blur, and then Hairy #5 was back at Meng Hao’s side. From the time he had left Meng Hao’s side until the time he returned, only a single breath of time had passed!

This was a complete fatality of the same level!!

Everything was deathly silent. The surrounding audience’s eyes were wide, and they looked like they couldn’t even breathe. Their minds spun with unprecedented shock.

Wu Chen stood there in a daze, and Wu Ling’s dainty mouth was wide open. Her expression was one of shock and blankness, as if she were dreaming.

Wu Ali stared blankly. The Greenwood Bat had died too quickly for him to even react.

Wu Hai was also in the crowd. Moments ago when he’d seen Meng Hao getting ready to make a move, he had been worried. Now, however, he was staring wide-eyed, his mind a complete blank.

Wu Ali and the rest of the members of his bloodline stared, stupefied, their minds spinning. Things had happened so quickly they didn’t even have a chance to tremble.

As for the Grand Elder, his eyes instantly filled with an unprecedented glow as he stared at Hairy #5. The Earth Priest took a deep breath and looked over at Meng Hao, his gaze glowing as brightly as the sun.

A long moment passed before a buzz filled the air.

“Instant… instant fatality? An instant fatality of the same level!!”

“That’s a mutated Greenwood Wolf! Heavens, that’s a mutated Greenwood Wolf!!”

“It was so fast! Its speed… is even greater than that of a level 3 neo-demon! This wasn’t a neo-demon duel, it was an absolute slaughter!!”

“The only people who can raise neo-demons like this… are high level Dragoneers!!”

It was at this moment during the reactions that all eyes came to rest… on Meng Hao.

1. Mo Fang’s name in Chinese is mò fāng – Mo is a surname which also means “black” or “ink.” Fang means “square”

2. Mo Zi’s name in Chinese is mò zǐ. This name is exactly the same as a famous Chinese philosopher

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# Chapter 402: You Predicted That Too?

Wu Chen had the sudden urge to cry out. Moments ago he had been the object of ridicule; a breath later it was the exact opposite. He couldn’t speak, and in fact, tears welled up in his eyes and began to flow down his face. He started to laugh. This laughter was a release of all the pressure that he had felt over the past years.

At the moment, he didn’t even care about the totem medallion. All he cared about was this feeling of finally rising up, the feeling of no longer being below others.

Disbelief filled the eyes of Wu Ling, and her brain felt as if it were being struck by a hundred thousand lightning bolts. What had happened just now didn’t seem possible, and all she could do was stare with wide eyes at Meng Hao.

Her mind was a complete blank; the only thing she could think about was how staunchly Wu Chen had insisted on asking Meng Hao for help.

Slowly, her face grew pale as she thought of all the things she had said. Then she thought about the things she hadn’t spoken out but only thought, and of her plans to kill Meng Hao.

All of these things filled her with complex emotions, as if everything she had said and done up to now was one big joke.

Conversations continued among the audience.

“The strangest thing is that Wu Ling asked for help from Grandmaster Shui Mu when there was a powerful expert like this in the Crow Scout Tribe.”

“Even more strange is how the brother and sister looked so hopeless after Grandmaster Shui Mu was defeated….”

Hearing these conversations caused Wu Ling’s beautiful face to begin to redden. It wasn’t a flush of bashfulness, but rather, deep shame.

She wasn’t sure what she should say. All her words and actions were exactly as Meng Hao had said, childish. There really was no other words that could describe them.

Wu Ali’s face was deathly pale, as if it didn’t contain even a single tiny drop of blood. He had been branded to the neo-demon at the time of its death, and it seemed he had been injured as a result. His Cultivation base was even unstable and on the verge of suffering injury.

The Crow Scout Tribe’s Grand Elder, the middle-aged man, gave a cold harumph. Immediately, other members of his bloodline stepped forward to settle the shaking of Wu Ali’s Cultivation base. All of them looked at Meng Hao with killing intent.

Off to the side, Shui Mu was panting, his eyes filled with disbelief. What had happened just now filled his mind with buzzing. Then he heard what people were saying around him, and it was as if a viper were inside of him biting into his heart. His eyes instantly became bloodshot.

Being defeated by the neo-demon of a rank 5 Dragoneer wasn’t too bad. In fact, it was almost an honor. But the fact that the neo-demon he had raised didn’t measure up at all to Meng Hao’s filled him with intense jealousy and hatred.

“That’s only one of the five neo-demons you’ve raised!” he said through gritted teeth. “I predicted such extraordinariness when they were young and I was raising them. Although I didn’t know it would mutate, and I could see that it was extraordinary!” His words caused the expressions of the surrounding Crow Scout Tribe members to change.

“Don’t tell me it was all just a coincidence?”

“That would certainly explain why this guy isn’t famous. He really just struck it lucky and got a mutated neo-demon.”

As the discussions continued, Wu Ali glared at Meng Hao. His voice hoarse, he said, “I refuse to admit defeat!! If you really have what it takes, then switch to another neo-demon and we’ll have another duel!”

As he spoke, he slapped his chest and then stretched out his hand. Immediately, a black skull appeared in his palm. He threw it out, whereupon it exploded with a boom, transforming into a black bone dust which spread out in all directions. The bone dust emitted a strange and unique aura.

As soon as the aura appeared, a roaring could be heard from further up on the mountain. Next, a black beam descended. It took only the space of a few breaths for it to arrive in the square. As it did, the black beam of light transformed into a black bat!

The bat was black, but green veins could be seen all over its body. A black aura pulsed off of it, and its eyes were bright red. It emanated a malevolent aura, and emanated the pressure of a level 3 neo-demon.

The appearance of the bat caused quite a commotion among the audience, which immediately buzzed with conversation.

“A level 3 Greenwood Bat!! And it’s mutated! If it weren’t, it wouldn’t be black!”

“I recognize that bat! It’s a venomous Greenwood Bat raised by Grandmaster Mo Fang! It’s actually only level 2, but because it’s mutated, it emanates the pressure of a level 3 neo-demon.”

“I remember some people offering an exorbitant price for that bat a few years ago, but Grandmaster Mo Fang wasn’t willing to give it up….”

The bat floated there in mid-air, gazing around with its crimson eyes, which came to rest on the five Greenwood Wolves next to Meng Hao. The bat opened its mouth to reveal a set of sharp black teeth. It let out a howl, then flickered as it shot toward Meng Hao.

The speed with which it approached seemed comparable to the Greenwood Wolf from moments ago.

“Hairy #4,” said Meng Hao coolly, standing there as if he didn’t even see the incoming black bat. Moments ago, Hairy #4 had been standing there looking bored, but as soon as he heard Meng Hao’s command, he suddenly lifted his head up and howled.

Immediately, ripples spread out in all directions. The instant the ripples touched the bat, it began to tremble. Whereas moments ago it had been speeding forward, it now involuntarily stopped.

As soon as it stopped moving, Hairy #4 shot forward with explosive speed that exceeded that of Hairy #5 by double. In the blink of an eye, it was upon the black bat, whereupon it slashed out with its claws.

A boom filled the air, along with a miserable shriek. Just now, everyone had taken this black bat to be beyond ordinary. It was even mutated! Now, though, it took only a moment for its entire body to explode. Under the claws of Hairy #4, it died in an instant.

The entire fight lasted for only the space of one breath.

This was another… instant fatality!

Hairy #4 turned into a green blur as he returned to Meng Hao’s side. The surrounding Crow Scout Tribe members were all breathing raggedly, and their eyes were wide. The scene just now left them in complete silence for a moment, after which a great commotion exploded out.

“That one’s also mutated!!”

“He… he has five Greenwood Wolves. Don’t tell me they’re all mutated!?!?”

“The way he’s raising those Greenwood Wolves… just what rank of Dragoneer is he?!?!”

Amidst the commotion, Wu Chen and Wu Ling stared in astonishment. Wu Ali’s face was pale white, and without even thinking about it, he backed up a few paces. These two neo-demon duels far exceeded his capacity for thought; they left his mind a spinning blank.

The Crow Scout Tribe Earth Priest once again gazed thoughtfully at Meng Hao. Next to him, the Grand Elder was frowning as he glared at Meng Hao.

As for old man Shui Mu, his jaw had dropped and he was staring blankly at Meng Hao’s Greenwood Wolves, his mind a complete blank. After a moment of mental struggle, he cried, “So, it wasn’t just one mutated Greenwood Wolf, but two. Just as predicted….” Inwardly he was gnashing his teeth, but on the surface, he put on a profound and mysterious air.

“You predicted that too?” said Meng Hao, a cold light gleaming in his eyes. He was starting to get annoyed at this old man’s arrogance.

“Hairy #3!” As soon as Hairy #3 heard Meng Hao’s voice, he lifted his head up and emitted an astonishing howl. As it echoed out, the faces of the Crow Scout Tribe members immediately filled with shock. In addition, all of the Tribe members of the Foundation Establishment stage or lower were shaken.

Beneath the power of Hairy #3’s howl, all Cultivation bases of Foundation Establishment and lower began to involuntarily rotate. The totems tattoos of those Cultivators began to shine brightly, and they felt an enormous pressure.

The power of the howl shook everything. In the blink of an eye, this scene, coupled with the actions of Hairys #4 and #5 just now, caused an even greater commotion.

“That’s… that’s another mutant!!”

“Three mutants! That guy has a total of three mutant Greenwood Wolves!”

“Each one is more powerful than the one before it! This Greenwood Wolf is even more powerful than the peak of a level 3. It’s almost the same as level 4!!”

As the commotion broke out, Shui Mu’s face flickered with various emotions. He felt as if someone were violently smashing at his heart with a hammer. He staggered back a few paces.

Before he could say anything, Meng Hao’s voice could be heard. “So, did you predict that too?” he asked coolly. Shui Mu felt his mind reeling. Gnashing his teeth, he was about to respond that he had, when Meng Hao patted Hairy #2 on the back.

Hairy #2 slowly looked up. He did not fly forward, nor howl. All he did was emit a green glow from his body. The glow turned into a pillar of light that shot up into the sky. Up above, it transformed into an illusory body that lifted its head up to howl….

This howl caused all of the level 3 neo-demons in the Crow Scout Tribe to tremble. They couldn’t stop themselves from prostrating and emitting simultaneous howls of reverence.

The sound caused everyone’s hearts to tremble violently. No one spoke even a single word!

People could accept one mutant. Two was shocking. But three…. It was almost impossible to believe. And four…. The members of the Crow Scout Tribe seemed to have lost their ability to even think. They stared blankly at the four Greenwood Wolves standing next to Meng Hao.

“Rank 3 Dragoneer Grandmaster Shui Mu, was this another thing that you predicted?” asked Meng Hao, his voice cold. His words caused all eyes to shift onto the old man.

Shui Mu’s face twisted and he coughed up a mouthful of blood. Then, he pitched over and fell unconscious onto the ground. There was nothing else he could do in response to Meng Hao’s incisive words. As shameless as he was, it was impossible for him to actually say that he had predicted that all four of the Greenwood Wolves would be so incredible.

The moment Shui Mu fell onto the ground, a cold voice suddenly drifted down from the lofty position high up on the mountain from which the black bat had flown from.

“Those four Greenwood Wolves will be given to me, Mo Fang.”

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Note from Er Gen: Today a huge hornet got into the house and my daughter screamed. Apparently she was thinking of a scene from a cartoon, because she immediately put on a Balala Fairy costume, grabbed a magic wand, and dragged me into battle with her. It took about half an hour, but the father-daughter team eventually won the battle against the evil hornet!

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# Chapter 403: My Pill….

As soon as the sound echoed out from the mountain peak, a figure could be seen descending. A middle-aged man strode forth, wearing a black robe. His features were handsome and filled with a certain grimness. He came to a stop next to Wu Ali, his hands clasped behind his back.

The surrounding Crow Scout Tribe members instantly recognized him.

“It’s Grandmaster Mo Fang!”

Wu Ali took a deep breath as he clasped hands and bowed deeply to the man. At the same time, the faces of the surrounding Crow Scout Tribe members filled with veneration as they also clasped hands in greeting.

A smile covered the face of the Earth Priest as he nodded slightly toward the black-robed man. Next to him, the smile on the face of the Grand Elder was even more exuberant.

This black-robed man was none other than the Crow Scout Tribe’s rank 5 Dragoneer Mo Fang, who occupied a very high position within the Tribe. He looked over at Meng Hao, then back at the Earth Priest and the Grand Elder.

“These four mutated Greenwood Wolves appear to be excellent. My horde currently lacks some good attack neo-demons. If I raise those Greenwood Wolves for a while, they should meet my requirements. Could I prevail upon the Earth Priest and the Grand Elder to fulfill my desire?”

The entire time he spoke, it was obvious that his words were not directed toward Meng Hao. The arrogance with which he spoke made it clear that he took no note whatsoever of Meng Hao. This was the disregard of a highly ranked Dragoneer.

It didn’t matter that it was Meng Hao who had raised the four mutated Greenwood Wolves. In his opinion, Meng Hao was nothing but an insect. Such an attitude was something Meng Hao had seen quite a bit of in the past. He gave a faint smile in response to Mo Fang’s disregard, an expression much similar to the one he had directed toward Wu Ling earlier.

The Crow Scout Tribe’s Grand Elder gave a slight smile in response to Mo Fang’s words, but didn’t say anything. He simply looked over at the Earth Priest.

The Earth Priest’s expression was thoughtful. According to Tribe rules, neo-demons were usually raised by only one person, unless they were taken by a Tribe member.

Mo Fang’s request put him in somewhat of a difficult position. Were it some other Dragoneer, he would tactfully decline the request. But Mo Fang was different. He was only rank 5, but his father was the number one vassal in the entire Tribe, rank 7 Dragoneer Mo Zi.

Because of that, the Earth Priest really had no choice but to make some sort of compromise.

But then he looked over at Meng Hao, and especially his right hand, and smiled.

“I’m not authorized to make such a decision. These four neo-demons were raised by this Grandmaster here. You’ll have to see if he’s willing.”

The words of the Earth Priest caused the Grand Elder’s eyes to flicker and narrow imperceptibly. He looked at Meng Hao. Mo Fang turned his head to truly look at Meng Hao for the first time, and his expression was one of shock.

The Earth Priest’s words caused the surrounding Cultivators to think a variety of things. Their eyes flickered as they all looked at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao smiled. “If you can get these Greenwood Wolves to follow you, then I won’t stop them. But if you can’t, then according to the rules, I, Meng Hao, will have to select a few neo-demons to take from your horde." As far as Meng Hao was concerned, this was his opportunity to make his mark in the Crow Scout Tribe. Mo Fang had appeared, looking to make a fool of himself; Meng Hao would naturally accommodate him.

Mo Fang glared superciliously at Meng Hao and said, "You'll never get a chance to select a single one of my neo-demons. As a Dragoneer, I will help you to understand the meaning of controlling neo-demons!"

With that, he flicked his sleeve and strode in Meng Hao's direction. Smiling, Meng Hao took a few steps back, allowing him full access to the Greenwood Wolves.

Mo Fang was getting excited. As a rank 5 Dragoneer, he had a variety of techniques to use to control neo-demons. This was especially true of his particular bloodline, which had produced a rank 9 Dragoneer in the past; that was one step away from Grand Dragoneer. In the end, he had perished, but before doing so, had passed down his secret techniques as a legacy for successive generations.

It might not compare to some of the other Western Desert Dragoneer legacies, but here in the five Crow Divinity Tribes, it was quite outstanding.

"Greenwood Wolves are Wood-type neo-demons that are born at level 1 and can grow to level 7. Within the lists of Western Desert neo-demons, they are in the 891st position. Their original ancestor was born beneath the ancient Greenwood Tree, thus the reason they are called Greenwood Wolves.

"They move with blinding speed and have sharp fangs. They also enjoy the fragrant smell of forest leaves. The thrice refined Green Incense of a rank 5 Dragoneer can cause all masterless Greenwood Wolves under level 5 to submit." The surrounding Cultivators' eyes were filled with looks of reverence as Mo Fang arrogantly explained himself.

Meng Hao's face was covered with his usual slight smile. He said nothing, but merely watched as Mo fang produced a green incense stick. The incense stick seemed to have been created using various plant and vegetation materials. As soon as it appeared, a faint, fragrant aroma drifted out.

However, the aroma seemed to have absolutely no effect on the five Greenwood Wolves. They continued to laze about on the ground, not paying it the slightest heed.

“Not bad,” said Mo Fang. “The fact that they can stand up to this high level Green Incense shows that these neo-demons are beyond ordinary. However, it will be a much different story after I light the incense with my secret Dragoneer kindling magic! Fellow Daoists, please observe!” Setting his chin, he suddenly flashed an incantation with his right hand. Soon, ripples of magic could be seen which spread out toward the Green Incense that he held in his other hand.

An intangible flame appeared, causing the Green Incense stick to begin to smolder. The aroma was immediately ten times thicker than before as it emanated out in all directions. All of the surrounding Cultivators who had Greenwood Wolf totem tattoos were shocked to find the totems within their bodies surging involuntarily. The Cultivators backed up away from the horrifying fragrance.

However, the five Greenwood Wolves who lay directly in the middle of the aroma didn’t react even the slightest bit, except for Hairy #5, who lifted his head and yawned lazily.

Everything was quiet. Quite a few people were looking at Mo Fang, whose face was flickering slightly. He’d never imagined that something like this could happen. With a cold snort, he suddenly snapped his fingers, causing the Green Incense to collapse. The aroma of the incense then grew several time stronger and thicker as it emanated out.

And yet… Big Hairy and Hairy #2 didn’t even bat an eyelid. As for Hairy #5, he actually nudged Hairy #4 playfully, completely ignoring Mo Fang.

Meng Hao coughed dryly. The aroma was completely ineffective because of their mutation; previous flaws that existed within ordinary Greenwood Wolves were now gone.

“Not bad,” said Mo Fang, clearing his throat. “These Greenwood Wolves are very good at resisting this incense. But that doesn’t matter. I, Mo Fang, have many techniques. If the simplest doesn’t work, who cares?” Suddenly, he waved his right hand, causing a red glow to appear in front of him, within which could be seen a huge lump of meat.

The fresh meat dripped with blood, the smell of which spread out to fill the area. Hairy #5 suddenly looked up. Hairys #4 and #3 also looked over. The surrounding audience members who had Greenwood Wolf totem tattoos backed up, their faces filled with fear. They could feel the Greenwood Wolf totems inside of them moving about in agitation. It seemed like they might go completely out of control and burst forth at any moment.

Mo Fang laughed. “The blood and meat of the Searchtree Deer is irresistible to Greenwood Wolves. That is especially true of this lump of meat, which I, Mo Fang, have been refining for eight months!” Hairy #5 had an odd expression on his face as he looked over. He sniffed the air a few times, then turned back to play with Hairy #4. Hairy #3 studied the lump of meat for a moment, then seemed to find it boring and looked away.

Meng Hao chuckled. During his training of these wolves, Meng Hao had only fed them meat like this once, that first time in the beginning. Afterward, he only fed them meat when he secretly took them out into the mountains and let them kill and eat live beasts. To them, it was somewhat of a habit. When it came to meat that wasn’t fresh, they wouldn’t find it interesting at all. The only reason Hairy #5 had looked over earlier was because of curiosity.

Mo Fang’s eyes went wide. However, the surrounding Crow Scout Tribe members were all looking at him, so he merely coughed and covered his face with an expression of praise.

“So, it seems I’ll actually have to use something really powerful!” he said through gritted teeth. He waved his hand, causing a green liquid to appear. This provoked no reaction from Big Hairy and the others.

Mo Fang was starting to get anxious. He quickly performed an incantation with both hands, employing a magical technique that caused glowing bands of light to shoot out toward the five Greenwood Wolves. The wolves, however, didn’t even so much as glance at the bands of light. They continued to play around, except for Big Hairy, who had closed his eyes to nap.

The surrounding Crow Scout Tribe members had strange expressions on their faces. They had seen Mo Fang use incense, meat, water and even magic. He was using so many methods that he had started to sweat…. However, none of them provoked any reaction at all on the part of the Greenwood Wolves. They continued to ignore him.

Wu Chen, Wu Ling and the others all watched on with odd expressions. Even the Grand Elder was frowning. As for the Earth Priest, a thoughtful smile could be seen on his face as he looked again at Meng Hao’s right hand.

“As of now, I think I can confirm his identity,” thought the Earth Priest. He was beginning to grow very happy.

Mo Fang glared at the five Greenwood Wolves, his eyes a bit bloodshot. Gritting his teeth, he slapped his bag of holding, which caused a bloody glow to emerge. It came to rest on his hand in the form of a blood-colored medicinal pill.

The instant the medicinal pill appeared, the surrounding Crow Scout Tribe members’ faces lit with shock. Their totem tattoos began to glow as one neo-demon after another appeared. They lifted their heads up to the sky and howled, then stared fixedly at the blood-colored pill in Mo Fang’s hand. If their masters weren’t holding them back, it seemed as if these neo-demons would charge forward in attack.

The Grand Elder’s eyes narrowed. “That’s….”

Even the Earth Priest narrowed his eyes.

Holding the pill out, Mo Fang arrogantly said, “I have been refining this pill from the day I became a rank 1 Dragoneer. This is a Demon Nurturing Pill!”

This was his trump card as a Dragoneer, a method specifically targeting neo-demons.

“Demon Nurturing Pill!!”

“So it’s a legendary Demon Nurturing Pill! It’s said that this type of pill has long since vanished from the face of the Earth. And yet Grandmaster Mo is holding one right there!”

Everyone was completely shocked.

His voice filled with pride, Mo Fang said, “Although this is not a real Demon Nurturing Pill of legend, it has been handed down from my ancestors. True, it might not measure up to the pill of the Frigid Snow Clan. However, their formula was actually flawed. My pill can definitely outdo any other pill in the Western Desert. It can cause all neo-demons within a three hundred meter area to go crazy!!”

As far as Mo Fang was concerned, now that he had produced this pill, there was nothing to worry about. If it wasn’t for the fact that he was in a bind, and everyone had watched him pull off a string of failures, he would never have dared to pull it out.

All of the neo-demons in the area were howling. Meng Hao’s Greenwood Wolves looked over at the pill, strange expressions in their eyes.

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# Chapter 404: Shamed Into Rage

Mo Fang held out the Demon Nurturing Pill, his expression aloof. As far as he was concerned, there was now nothing to worry about. He had never heard of any neo-demon capable of resisting a Demon Nurturing Pill.

However, it took only a moment for his expression to fill with shock. It wasn't just him; all of the surrounding members of the Crow Scout Tribe were all staring with wide eyes at the five Greenwood Wolves. They simply couldn't believe it.

Big Hairy hadn't even opened his eyes, and was still napping. Hairy #2 and the others had odd expressions on their faces. They sniffed the air and then looked with confusion over at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao didn't say anything. All of the wolves, except for Big Hairy, resumed their playing. As for Mo Fang and his Demon Nurturing Pill, they were completely ignored.

The neo-demons of the surrounding Tribe members were going crazy, whereas the Greenwood Wolves were completely calm. The sight of it caused Mo Fang's brain to be filled with what seemed like the explosion of thunder.

Nobody spoke. Nearly a hundred people all seemed as if they couldn't even breathe.

"Impossible…." said Mo Fang. "How could this be? This… this is a Demon Nurturing Pill. There's not a single neo-demon that could possibly resist it…." His face was pale; what was happening was a huge blow to him. He staggered backward, muttering to himself and staring at his most precious, treasured Demon Nurturing Pill. Then he looked back at the five Greenwood Wolves.

His felt his mind reeling, and a look of confusion filled his eyes. Suddenly, he began to doubt himself.

Meng Hao gave a dry cough. He felt a bit bad for Mo Fang. If the man had pulled out some other item, perhaps it could have attracted the attention of Big Hairy and the other wolves. But to the wolves, this supposedly precious Demon Nurturing Pill was absolutely valueless.

From the time they were small, they had been raised on the Frigid Snow Clan's Demon Nurturing Pill. Most importantly, even the Frigid Snow Clan couldn't concoct a Demon Nurturing Pill of the same quality as Meng Hao, unless they had a Grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy like him.

By way of analogy, it was as if these Greenwood Wolves had been raised on gold and silver, only to have someone pull out a chunk of copper or iron to try to get their attention. How could they possibly care about something like that…?

That was especially true of Big Hairy, who had eaten a real Demon Nurturing Pill!

Actually, the pill formula from the Frigid Snow Clan was not flawed. However, they were not capable of using it to create a true Demon Nurturing Pill, because they were not Demon Sealers!

Only Demon Sealers could use the Demonic Qi of Heaven and Earth, merge it into the medicinal pill, and thus, concoct a real Demon Nurturing Pill.

That was the type of pill that Big Hairy had consumed. The changes to him had been earth shattering, beyond that which exists in the mortal world.

"If Grandmaster Mo has no other methods to try out, then I think it's time for me to select some of his neo-demons. Earth Priest, could I bother you to bear witness?" Meng Hao smiled at Mo Fang, then turned to bow toward the Earth Priest with clasped hands.

How could Meng Hao not have noticed the man studying the totem tattoo on his right hand earlier? That had been his plan from the very beginning, and also the identity he had chosen to assume.

A descendant of the Frigid Snow Clan!

The totem tattoo on Meng Hao’s right hand was none other than the Eyeless Larva, which looked very similar to the Frigid Snow Larva. People who didn’t know the difference would naturally confuse the two. Of course, Tribes who uses larvae as totems were not very common in the Western Desert, but Meng Hao was sure that, if he showed off the talents of a Dragoneer, people would be able to put two and two together.

Earlier, this was exactly what had happened in the mind of the Earth Priest.

The Earth Priest thought for a moment and then looked over at Mo Fang. He didn’t need to actually say anything. Not just his gaze, but the gazes of all the surrounding Crow Scout Tribe members all fell onto Mo Fang. It is difficult to get off a tiger once you start riding it, and that is just the situation Mo Fang was in right now.

He glared over at Meng Hao. As of now, the hostility he felt had reached an incredible level. After a long moment, he ground his teeth. He couldn’t possibly violate Dragoneer custom in front of all these people. At the same time that he’d had received approval to attempt to take Meng Hao’s neo-demons, he had agreed to the possibility of Meng Hao taking his.

Mo Fang gave a cold harumph as he thought to himself, “His neo-demons are just too bizarre. However, even though I have no way to make them follow me, if he thinks he’s going to take my neo-demons away, he’ll be sadly mistaken!” Thinking of the strength of his own neo-demon horde, he felt quite confident. With that, he waved his right hand, causing a special bag of holding to appear. This bag of holding appeared to be constructed from the skin of beasts. It began to tremble, and suddenly multiple beams of light flew out, accompanied by powerful cries.

In total, there were 23 Greenwood Wolves, 19 Greenwood Snakes and 13 Greenwood Bats. They flew out to surround around him, emanating shocking power. The observing Crow Scout Tribe members all had looks of profound veneration on their faces.

That caused some of Mo Fang's embarrassment to lessen. His eyes glittered as he produced another bag of holding, which he waved in front of him. Three deafening cries suddenly shook everything as three thirty meter long neo-demons emerged. One was a burly Greenwood Python and another was an Greenwood Wolf whose body crackled with lightning.

The final of the three caused the entire horde of neo-demons to tremble. It was a gigantic bat!

This bat emanated an ancient aura, as if it had been alive for a very, very long time. Although it floated there in mid air, its wings were actually folded up, and it stood upright like a person. It glared about, its eyes cold and piercing. Anyone upon whom it gazed wouldn't be able to stop from trembling.

The surrounding Crow Scout Tribe members couldn't help but stare at Mo Fang with deep veneration.

"Three level 5 neo-demons! All three of them are mutated! And look at that Black Bat…. It's as strong as the late Foundation Establishment stage!"

"There are even a lot of level 4s, although most of them are level 3. Not a single one is level 2!"

In the Western Desert, a level 5 Dragoneer could be considered a powerful expert. For example, this Mo Fang actually only had a Cultivation base at the mid Foundation Establishment stage. However, when it came to his fighting prowess, he would be able to cause quite a headache even for someone of the late Foundation Establishment stage.

"This is my neo-demon horde! If you think you have the skill, just try to take them away!" Mo Fang's voice echoed about, filled with self-confidence. His expression was one of pride. He was sure that at the very most, Meng Hao would take away some of the weaker level 3 neo-demons. After acquiring these neo-demons, had expended virtually all of his resources to raise them. They had been with him for years, giving him supreme confidence that they would not capitulate to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao gave a slight smile. Considering his own Cultivation base and identity, he didn’t find it inappropriate to teach a lesson to this trifling little Cultivator. His gaze swept across the neo-demons.

“To become one of Meng Hao’s neo-demons can only be described as luck and good fortune. I’ll give you the space of three breaths to decide. If you want to follow me, come over here.” He spoke the words indifferently, but as he did, he caused Demonic Qi to begin to emanate out.

Even this small amount of Demonic Qi immediately caused a dozen or so of the neo-demons to begin to tremble and look over. It also caused the totemic neo-demons of the Crow Scout Tribe members to begin to howl. The sound of it filled the air as almost all of them left the sides of their masters to fly in the air, howling with hope.

The face of the Tribe’s Grand Elder fell as the totem tattoo on his body began to glow and then the Greenwood Snake within charged out, howling.

The face of the Earth Priest also fell as his own totem tattoo began to emit a glow. Gasping, he waved his hand, causing the power of his Cultivation base to explode out. Invisible shields suddenly sprang up everywhere, preventing the totemic neo-demons of the Tribe members from charging forward.

Mo Fang’s face was filled with thorough disbelief, and he was breathing rapidly. He stared at the neo-demon horde which had moments ago been obediently standing at his side. Now, they were howling crazily and charging toward Meng Hao. In the blink of an eye, only the three level 5 neo-demons were left behind struggling.

After the space of one breath passed, the Greenwood Wolf and the black Greenwood Snake shot over toward Meng Hao. Now, only the bat remained, staring fixedly at Meng Hao with its cold eyes. However, within those eyes could be seen both intelligence and shock.

“Come here,” said Meng Hao, staring back at the bat. He could tell that the bat was suffering from some hidden injury that others would find it difficult to be able to detect. Meng Hao was also able to sense a faint Demonic Qi emanating out from it.

The feel of it was very similar to that of Big Hairy.

However, the Demonic Qi was in disorder, which was why Meng Hao was able to detect the strange injury.

As soon as Meng Hao spoke to the bat, the gigantic creature’s eyes flashed with a glow of intelligence. Suddenly, its body shot into the air and it flew to stand next to Meng Hao.

“Impossible!” shouted Mo Fang, blood spraying from his mouth as he staggered backward several paces. He felt like he was on the verge of going insane.

All of this was simply impossible to accept. His eyes were bright red and his hair was completely disheveled. Even as he roared, his eyes filled with intense killing intent. How could he possibly accept that in front of all these people, some completely unknown Dragoneer would defeat him in this way? Killing intent flared in his eyes and he suddenly lifted up his right hand.

There on his wrist was a black bone bracelet. The bracelet shattered into pieces, which exploded out into a bone ash mist.

The bone ash mist then began to congeal. As it did, it started to glow brightly and emit the light of teleportation. Roaring sounds could suddenly be heard within the teleportation spell; at the same time, streams of ash-colored light appeared, which then transformed into a gray Giant Ape, roughly twenty-five meters long.

The ape’s eyes were bright red, and its fur was long and luxuriant. The instant it appeared, it let out a frightening roar, along with an aura equivalent to the Core Formation stage, that filled the area. The faces of the surrounding Crow Scout Tribe members were instantly filled with shock.

“A level 6 neo-demon!!”

“That’s a level 6 neo-demon!!”

His voice filled with rage, Mo Fang cried, “Kill all his neo-demons, and kill him!!”

Immediately, the Giant Ape rose up and let out a shocking roar. Then, it charged directly toward Meng Hao.

Its face was filled with ruthlessness, as if there was no living thing that it couldn’t rip to shreds.

Meng Hao’s eyes grew cold.

“Big Hairy,” he said coolly.

As soon as the words left his mouth, Big Hairy, who had been napping the entire time, lifted his head. His body looked skinny and weak, but then suddenly exploded with shocking power. His cold eyes filled with brutality and madness that soared to the Heavens.

His savagery was usually kept suppressed by Meng Hao. Without a direct command, it would never appear. Now, it exploded out, and as it did, a bloody aura swirled out from his body. It was in this moment that his green-colored fur suddenly…

Turned white!

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# Chapter 405: White Wolf!

A white streak of light shot forward at incredible, indescribable speed. In a split second, it was directly in front of the Giant Ape. A boom rattled out, shaking Heaven and Earth, and waves of ripples spread out in all directions, kicking up dust and causing a howling wind to sweep about.

A howl followed by a groan could be heard from the Giant Ape’s mouth. It was as if its enormous body had suddenly slammed directly into a mountain. It fell back, blood spraying from its mouth as its shrill cry echoed out around it. Its chest was now awash with blood; an enormous chunk of flesh had been violently ripped out of it.

The white light flickered, and Big Hairy was standing off to the side, holding the chunk of meat in his mouth. He swallowed the meat down and then licked the blood from his lips.

His expression was one of pride, coupled with cold ruthlessness. He looked at the Giant Ape for a moment, then raised his head to the sky and howled. Suddenly, a field of illusory shadows appeared around him, within which the image of an enormous tree could be seen.

The tree began to twist, its branches intertwining with each other to change into the image of a huge wolf’s head. As Big Hairy leaped forward, the Giant Ape looked terrified. Nonetheless, it let out a roar, causing its body to expand as it shot to meet him.

Big Hairy’s body flickered as he once again neared the Giant Ape. His ghastly mouth opened wide and then clamped down onto the ape’s neck. This time, the Giant Ape’s shrieks couldn’t be any more miserable.

A bloodcurdling scream echoed out, along with a cracking sound….

Blood shot out of the Giant Ape’s head as Big Hairy ripped it clean off the body. Holding the head in his mouth, he turned and flickered back to Meng Hao. Dropping the head to the ground, he licked some blood off of it and then looked around with coldness and savagery at the surrounding onlookers. Of course, he would only attack if Meng Hao uttered another command.

The other neo-demons surrounding Big Hairy backed away from him, trembling, not daring to be near him. Even Hairy #2 and the other Greenwood Wolves did so. As for the level 5 Lightning Greenwood Wolf and the python, they also slowly backed up, their expressions filled with vigilance and reverence.

It was only the enormous Black Bat that looked coldly at Big Hairy. Big Hairy looked back, savagery dancing in his eyes.

The two neo-demons faced off, sizing each other up.

Further away in the square, Mo Fang stood there with a blank look on his pale face, his body trembling.

The Giant Ape was now only a headless body. Blood surged out from the neck, filling the entire square with its smell.

After a long moment, people finally started to breathe again. Everyone’s eyes were glued onto Big Hairy; their expressions were that of astonishment, shock and excitement.

“White Wolf!!”

“It turns out that it’s a White Wolf! The Crow Scout Tribe’s ancient records mention a Crow Divinity White Wolf!! According to the legend, that’s the same color as the ancestor of all Greenwood Wolves. Don’t tell that this is… the reincarnation of the ancestor?”

“A mutated, reincarnated ancestor! That’s something you rarely see even in a hundred years! In ten thousand Greenwood Wolves, you might only find one!! The Crow Scout Tribe hasn’t had a White Wolf appear in ages!!”

The Crow Scout Tribe members were in an uproar. The minds of each and every person was filled with shock, to a level far exceeding that caused by anything that had happened earlier.

As for the Tribe’s Grand Elder, he was breathing heavily, and his eyes filled with a bright glow of greed that he couldn’t suppress.

The Earth Priest’s body trembled and his eyes glowed with astounding brightness as he stared at Big Hairy and the white fur that covered his body. He panted for a moment before recovering his composure.

“Earth Priest,” said Meng Hao coolly, “I asked you to bear witness, so I’m afraid I’ll need an explanation regarding this Giant Ape neo-demon. Otherwise, you can’t blame me for handling the matter myself.” He waved his hand, causing a handful of neo-demons to shoot forward, latch onto the Giant Ape’s corpse with their sharp teeth, and drag it back to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed, then, in front of all the surrounding Cultivators, turned and began to walk down the mountain. As he did, the Tribe members who stood in his way moved off to either side to make room, their faces filled with veneration. Quite a few even bowed their heads to him.

In the Cultivation world, respect is shown toward the powerful. Such was the case no matter where one went. In fact, in the vast lands of the Western Desert, this was even more the case.

As for old man Shui Mu, he had regained consciousness by this point. He looked at Meng Hao as he walked off, and the dozens of neo-demons that were following, and his eyes filled with awe. No longer was he jealous or envious. He knew that the difference between them was far too vast, to the point where he no longer felt any rancor. Instead, there was only fear inside him.

The Crow Scout Tribe Grand Elder watched Meng Hao leaving with all the neo-demons, and his eyes flickered coldly. “You’re going to leave just like that?” he said coolly.

As soon as the words left his mouth, ripples of pressure emanated out, enveloping the area Meng Hao stood in. The Grand Elder's body flickered, and a moment later, he was standing directly in front of Meng Hao, blocking his way. "That White Wolf is a sacred relic of ours. Leave it behind, and then you may depart." The Grand Elder's eyes flickered across Big Hairy, and his heart started to pound with eagerness. It was impossible to prevent some of that eagerness from showing on his face.

"I'm sorry, I didn't hear you clearly. Could you say that again?" As he spoke the words, Meng Hao's eyes looked the same as they usually did. However, there was just a hint of coldness as well. Immediately, killing intent from the surrounding neo-demons filled the air. This was especially true of Big Hairy, whose pupils suddenly turned completely white.

As for the Black Bat, it floated there in mid-air, its eyes red. It too was emanating killing intent.

If that was all there was to it, it wouldn't be a big deal. However, totemic light suddenly flashed up from the back of Meng Hao's right hand. The aura of the Eyeless Larva emanated out. The Eyeless Larva lived because it had plundered a breath from every living thing in the world. Its existence was shocking to the extreme, and the instant its aura emanated out, the Grand Elder's face fell.

Even more shocking to the Grand Elder was that he could sense two more hidden types of profound aura within Meng Hao. He wasn't sure which if any of them was Meng Hao's. One was a like a sea of blood that rose to the heavens. The other was like the disdain of a sovereign of the sky.

"High level Dragoneer!" thought the Grand Elder, his face flickering with emotion. "He has at least a few incredibly powerful, horrifying neo-demons!" He might be able to look down on Meng Hao himself, but could not look down on his status as a high-level Dragoneer.

Dragoneer Cultivators were not inherently strong, but their neo-demons were!

The Grand Elder was now hesitating inwardly. It was at this time that the Crow Scout Tribe’s Earth Priest suddenly coughed.

“Grandmaster Meng, please, stay here with us in the Crow Scout Tribe. Everything that happened just now was a misunderstanding. As for the matter of that ape, Grandmaster, I can offer you an explanation.”

The Earth Priest’s wording was polite, which instantly caused the Grand Elder’s eyes to narrow. It seemed to him that there was something fishy about the way the man had been acting today. Eyes flickering, the Grand Elder said nothing, and actually stepped to the side to make way.

Meng Hao turned to look back at the Earth Priest, then clasped hands and bowed. Then, he continued on his way down the mountain. Slowly, the crowd in the square dispersed, included ashen-faced Mo Fang. The Grand Elder could not settle the doubts he felt in his heart as he turned toward the Earth Priest.

“Fellow Daoist Wu Han, just now that Dragoneer named Meng was certainly extraordinary. However, Mo Fang is the son of Grandmaster Mo Zi. Weren’t our actions just now a bit inappropriate?”

“How were they inappropriate?” replied the Earth Priest indifferently. “You saw the totem tattoo on the back hand of Dragoneer Meng. Could you really not put two and two together?” He chuckled, looking at the Grand Elder.

“Totem tattoo? It was a larva….” The Grand Elder’s eyes glittered, then filled with a thoughtful expression. Suddenly, he looked toward the Earth Priest with an expression of disbelief.

“Don’t tell me….”

The Earth Priest smiled slightly. “If my speculations are correct, he is none other than a descendant of the Frigid Snow Clan. I received some news recently that Holy Snow City in the Black Lands has fallen, and the Frigid Snow Clan has left for the Southern Domain. From the look of things, some of the Clan members have instead decided to return to the Western Desert.

“This also explains why we have been unable to uncover any information about him during his six months as a vassal. He just recently fled the Black Lands, and is fearful of being followed. Therefore, he has been unusually cautious, and chose the Crow Scout Tribe as a place of refuge.”

“Well that’s just….” The Grand Elder was now palpitating with eagerness. He clearly remembered some rumors he had heard of a fearsome Dragoneer named Fang Mu in the Frigid Snow Clan.

“I’ll discuss the matter with the Greatfather,” said the Earth Priest. “However… even though the Crow Scout Tribe is small, I think we can still offer protection to a descendant of the Frigid Snow Clan! The main thing to worry about is not what enemies he might have, but rather, how to convince him to continue as a vassal of the Crow Scout Tribe. As a descendant of the Frigid Snow Clan, he possesses the innate skills of a Dragoneer. With enough resources and luck, it wouldn’t be impossible for him to become a level 9 Dragoneer!

“In fact, perhaps he will gain a chance to receive enlightenment from the Tree Ancestor. Grandmaster Mo Zi was the first to do so that year, which rose him to rank 6 Dragoneer.” His eyes thoughtful, the Earth Priest flicked his sleeve and then transformed into a beam of light that shot toward the top of the mountain.

Even as they were discussing Meng Hao’s identity, Meng Hao arrived back in his courtyard in the Neo-Demon Kennelist district behind the mountain. The entire way, he was followed by his scores of neo-demons, which of course caused quite a stir among all of the Cultivators in the area. They looked over with blank expressions of shock as Meng Hao walked past them.

When Meng Hao finally entered his courtyard, the shocked spectators began to discuss the matter in low tones. Soon, news of the neo-demon duel between Meng Hao and level 5 Dragoneer Mo Fang spread throughout the entire Tribe. Everyone learned that Meng Hao had five mutated Greenwood Wolves. Everyone gasped after hearing this, and their expressions were those of astonishment.

Back in his courtyard, Meng Hao ignored the neo-demon horde. Instead, his gaze came to focus on the Black Bat. His eyes flickered slightly as he closely examined the Demonic Qi within it.

Suddenly, Meng Hao’s heart began to tremble, and a strange look appeared in his eyes. As he looked closer, he gradually was able to make out something within the Black Bat’s body.

It was a wooden sword!

The instant he sensed the wooden sword, Meng Hao’s eyes began to glitter brightly. Shock welled up in his heart. Whereas he had been sitting there cross legged, he suddenly rose to his feet.

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Here is the picture of Big Hairy from the ISSTH mobile/web game:

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# Chapter 406: The Third Wooden Sword!

The instant he stood up, it was as if the whole world grew smaller. Everything was replaced by Meng Hao. His rising up caused a tempest to spring into being. His rise even caused thunderbolts to shoot up to the Heavens.

Meng Hao’s mind reeled and his heart shook. His aura immediately exploded out of him, enveloping the courtyard, causing the entire neo-demon horde to begin to shake and stare at him in fear. They began to whimper and prostrate themselves on the ground, not daring to move a muscle.

Even Big Hairy was shaking and his head was bowed. The Black Bat also shook as it hovered there in mid-air. There was definitely something extraordinary about it, but Meng Hao was in the late Gold Core stage and was also a Demon Sealer. Because of these two things, a simple thought from him could annihilate it and transform it into nothing but floating dust.

For the Black Bat, this made Meng Hao completely different than its previous master.

Currently, lightning was crackling in the air above the courtyard, multiple bolts which danced back and forth. The aura in the courtyard had been thrown into absolute chaos, as if the whole area had been carved away from the world, and now existed on its own, as part of Meng Hao.

Golden light began to emanate out from him. When this happened, there was absolutely no scholarly aura remaining in him, not even a scrap. It was instead replaced by the soaring will of a powerful expert of Heaven and

Earth. In this moment, he was no longer a scholar, but an almighty expert of the late Gold Core stage, someone who could stand toe to toe with a Nascent Soul Cultivator.

All of this… could not be seen from the outside world. On the outside, the breeze blew gently and the clouds floated about. Only on the inside of the courtyard, however, was the will of a powerful expert emanating out from Meng Hao.

He gazed fixedly at the trembling Black Bat for a moment, then closed his eyes. It lasted only a moment, though. Then his eyes snapped back open. The lightning disappeared without a trace, and the tempest was gone. Meng Hao's body returned to normal. No longer was he a stalwart, powerful expert. Instead, he once again looked like a gentle scholar.

"A wooden sword…." he breathed lightly. His right hand reached out into the air, and suddenly the Black Bat began to tremble, unable to resist. It shot toward Meng Hao, who then grabbed ahold of it.

Intense fear floated within the Black Bat, terror of Meng Hao emanating from its eyes. As far as it was concerned, the seemingly Heavenly might, along with Meng Hao's faint Demonic Qi, transformed into an unmatchable pressure that bore down onto it.

Meng Hao held onto the bat, his eyes thoughtful. After a moment passed, he lifted his left hand and then stabbed it into the body of the Black Bat. The wounded bat began to squirm; its life force was already beginning to slip away. However, at the same time, Demonic Qi began to pour from Meng Hao's left hand, restoring the very life that the Black Bat was losing as he ripped it apart.

His hand gradually shoved deeper into the bat's body. Eventually, deep within the blood and flesh, Meng Hao's hand closed around the hilt of a wooden sword. The instant it did, he wrenched the sword out of the bat's body.

Blood showered out, and the Black Bat let out a bloodcurdling shriek as it backed up and struggled to fly into the air. Instead, it flopped to the ground, panting, on the verge of death. At the same time, a look of gratitude appeared in its eyes. Although its body was trembling, its majestic life force was now soaring upward.

It seemed that the sword had actually been blocking its life force and obstructing the bat’s cultivation. Now that Meng Hao had removed it, its Cultivation base was immediately restored, and its life force exploded out. This, coupled with the Demonic Qi from Meng Hao, caused the bat’s life force to become even stronger.

It appeared weak at the moment. However, its wound was rapidly healing, and an increasingly powerful aura billowed up from it.

The gratefulness in its eyes gradually faded, replaced with coldness as it stared at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s expression was indifferent, and he completely ignored the bat. Apparently its sudden mightiness wasn’t of the least bit interest to him.

Instead, Meng Hao gazed at the wooden sword he had just pulled out from within the bat. He flicked it, causing the blood and gore that had covered it to disappear. The sword now looked as it normally did. It appeared ordinary, as if there were nothing unusual or special about it. However, the spiritual energy in the area suddenly began to suck in toward the sword. The sword quickly became what looked like a vortex of spiritual energy, all of which ended up being consumed by the sword itself.

Meng Hao looked at the sword, a strange expression on his face. He slapped his bag of holding, and instantly, two black beams shot out, which then transformed into two swords identical to the one he was holding in his hand.

Three wooden swords now hovered in front of Meng Hao. His eyes shone with a strange glow.

“I found a wooden sword in the body of the Flying Rain-Dragon all those years ago. Now, I find another wooden sword in the body of this Black Bat. These wooden swords must have some incredible origin….” His gaze passed over the three of them. Unless you knew that one was a duplicate, it would be impossible to tell them apart.

“It’s too bad I spent so many Spirit Stones making this duplicate. Although, if I had enough more, I could use them to create the first form of the Lotus Sword Formation!

“I wonder how powerful such a sword formation would be…. Probably not any weaker than the Time Sword Formation. After all, the wooden swords that absorb spiritual energy cost a vast amount of Spirit Stones to duplicate. This sword… is terrifying!”

His eyes glittered as he waved his right hand, causing the three wooden swords to fly back into his bag of holding. He looked back at the Black Bat.

The Black Bat’s wound was now mostly recovered. Its aura was also much more powerful than before. Now, it was no longer at the late Foundation Establishment stage, but rather the early Core Formation stage. It seemed clear that after some time passed, it would continue to recover and become even stronger.

“Beasts slain by wooden swords such as this couldn’t possibly be ordinary. Take the Flying Rain-Dragon for example…. Given that, one can only imagine how powerful this bat was…. Who knows how many years it was plagued by the sword until it finally fell to its current level. After it recovers and reaches its peak, how powerful will it be….” Meng Hao smiled. It didn’t really matter how powerful the bat became; as long as it had Demonic Qi, Meng Hao would be able to control it.

That was especially true considering… the Demonic Qi Meng Hao had just given it to absorb had been kept intentionally weak. After all, Demonic Qi was his primary method with which to control it.

As Meng Hao studied the Black Bat, it looked back at him with flickering eyes. After a moment, it lowered its head, signalling its compliance. It was impossible to tell how much of this was genuine and how much was false, but as of this moment, it had chosen to capitulate.

A few days passed. News of the Dragoneer duel between Meng Hao and Mo Fang had spread throughout the entire Crow Scout Tribe. In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao's name had risen to prominence. He was now completely famous within the Tribe.

On one particular evening, the Earth Priest personally came to Meng Hao to deliver him a command medallion. This indicated that Meng Hao was now an official vassal of the Crow Scout Tribe.

In addition to the command medallion, Meng Hao was also to be given a chance to gain enlightenment from the Crow Scout Tribe's sacred tree. This sacred tree had a name: the Greenwood Tree….

Meng Hao thought about this totemic life force which could create a magical force to protect the entire Tribe. He also thought about the enormous Treant he'd seen. He needed a Wood-type totem, and although any would do… when it came to the five totem tattoos relating to the five elements, obviously, the stronger the totems, the stronger he would be when it came time to concoct his Five-Colored Nascent Soul.

His chance at gaining enlightenment of the holy Greenwood Tree would come in seven days.

During those seven days, the Crow Scout Tribe carried out various grand ceremonies. They were not related to Meng Hao becoming a vassal, but rather, to offer sacrifices to the ancestors and to prepare a Greenwood brand. It was only in this manner that Meng Hao could enter into the enlightenment state.

To any Tribe member, such enlightenment was very important. Every adult Tribe member went through the process, which refined their very life force. Obviously, it was also considered luck for any vassal.

On the seventh day, a whole series of complicated rites were performed. Several thousand Crow Scout Tribe members gathered to sit cross-legged atop the mountain peak. They sat in concentric circles, softly chanting a strange incantation. The sound of it filled Heaven and Earth, and caused roiling layers of clouds to fill the previously clear skies. It felt as if Time itself were passing by. Meng Hao wore a long green robe as he walked up the stairs up the mountain leading to the altar.

The Earth Priest stood there, flanked by an old woman, who was the Crow Scout Tribe’s Sky Priest. They both smiled as Meng Hao approached.

“The Crow Scout Tribe treats people with sincerity,” said the Earth Priest, his voice soft. “In all matters, one must pay a price before receiving gain. Fellow Daoist Meng is not an ordinary person, and can surely sense the good faith of the Crow Scout Tribe.”

“Many thanks,” replied Meng Hao with clasped hands.

“Let’s begin!” said the Sky Priest. The old woman waved her arm; a rumbling sound filled the air and a rift opened up in the middle of the altar. Immediately, a green beam of light shot up into the air, from within which emanated dense Demonic Qi.

The appearance of this Demonic Qi instantly caused Meng Hao’s pupils to constrict. Also within the green light rose up an enormous Treant. Its color was an archaic green, and it stood several dozen meters tall. Wilted leaves covered its body, and it emanated a profound ancientness….

It was as if it had existed within the flow of time for very, very long time. It was as if traces of the passage of time could be seen within its eyes. As it floated up, its body radiated a boundless life force.

The intensity of its life force was such that all Wood-type life forms would instantly prostrate before it and call it ancestor. However… within the flourishing life force, Meng Hao could sense decline and decay. It was as if the life force was reaching the end of its path.

The Treant’s body was also covered with countless scars. It emanated a powerful aura that caused the color of Heaven and Earth to change, the clouds to seethe, and the surrounding forest to sigh.

Its eyes were filled with wisdom as it looked at Meng Hao.

The instant it appeared, the chanting of the surrounding thousands of Tribe Members grew louder, and they began to kneel and bow.

The Earth Priest and the Sky Priest clasped hands and bowed to the Treant.

Meng Hao was unable to take his eyes off of the enormous creature. His heart trembled; he was now certain that this Treant was a great Demon of Heaven and Earth. It was similar to the North Sea; a true Demon!

The giant Treant suddenly began to speak. “Foreigner…. Thou hast received the approval of the Tribe which I protect. Thus, I… shall bestow luck upon thee. I shall take thee to experience some of my memories, from an eternity ago….” The Treant slowly raised its right hand up and placed it in front of Meng Hao.

It held its hand there, waiting for Meng Hao to step into it. Even as this happened, the Demon Sealing Jade within Meng Hao’s bag of holding finally reacted, the first time it had done so in the Western Desert.

The archaic voice of the jade sounded out within Meng Hao’s mind.

“Ancient Dao; Tenacious Desire to Seal the Heavens; Benefaction for All in the Mountains; Inevitable Dao Tribulation of the Nine Mountains and Seas; Perennial Will!” 1

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# Chapter 407: Fifth Generation Demon Sealer!

“Ancient Dao; Tenacious Desire to Seal the Heavens; Benefaction for All in the Mountains; Inevitable Dao Tribulation of the Nine Mountains and Seas; Perennial Will!

“Ancient Dao; Study Demons of Myriad Variations; Tread not the Path of Immortals; Face the Tribulation of the Nine Mountains and Seas; My Dao is Eternal; The Masses Have Erred but My Dao is True; Perennial Will!

The ancient voice reverberated in Meng Hao’s mind like thunder, booming and echoing. Meng Hao’s eyes glittered and he took in a deep breath. He looked at the enormous Treant hand extended in front of him, and then his eyes filled with determination. He strode forward, directly onto the creature’s palm.

As soon as he stepped onto the hand, the Treant lifted its head up toward the sky and roared. The roar shook Heaven and Earth, causing the clouds which filled the sky to scatter and disperse. Blue sky appeared overhead, along with a vortex, where another world was visible.

Simultaneously, the Treant closed its hand in a way that did not hurt Meng Hao in the slightest. Next its body turned into a green beam of light that shot up into the sky. In the blink of an eye, it had entered the vortex. Its body began to expand. Meng Hao watched on as the gigantic Treant grew larger and larger. In the blink of an eye, it had transformed into a massive tree of Heaven and Earth.

The instant the tree appeared, Meng Hao’s mind filled with a rumbling sound. His consciousness seemed to expand; Time flowed and the Heavens shattered. The stars rushed toward him.

As he looked up, he saw that the sky was no longer the sky, but rather stars. Down below, he could see the vast lands of the Western Desert. However, they were not split from the Southern Domain. On the other side of the azure Milky Way Sea, the Eastern Lands were quaking, and a great tempest roiled between them and the Northern Desert.

These were the lands of Planet South Heaven, a scene from who knew how many years ago.

The vast lands below were not flat, but rather, spherical, a planet.

The echoing, archaic voice of the Treant suddenly filled his mind.

“This is… Planet South Heaven!

“Adjacent to the Ninth Mountain and Sea are four eternal planets. South Heaven. East Victory. North Reed. West Felicity. According to primordial will, they orbit eternally around the Ninth Mountain….

“As for me, I come from an island in the Ninth Sea called Lightgreen. I am Doyen of the Greenwood from Lightgreen Island!”

Meng Hao took a deep breath. As the Treant spoke, he saw the lands below shrinking into the form of a planet. At the same time, off in the starry distance, he saw….

An immeasurably immense, endlessly tall mountain!!

The size of this mountain vastly exceeded that of Planet South Heaven. It was like the difference between a giant and a bug! The instant Meng Hao saw it, his mind began to reel. It felt as if his consciousness were being ripped apart. Roaring filled his heart and mind.

Although he didn’t completely understand the Ninth Mountain and Sea, or Planet South Heaven, he wasn’t completely ignorant. At this moment, though, he was actually looking at… the majesty of the Ninth Mountain!

He gazed up at the Ninth Mountain, as well as the four planets that circled around it, including Plant South Heaven. On either side of the Ninth Mountain, stretching out seemingly forever into the stars, were… two enormous seas!

Perhaps these seas weren't made of seawater, but great waves were visible crashing on their surface, waves that seemed large enough to crush even the planets.

This scene caused Meng Hao's mind and heart to tremble with unprecedented intensity.

At the same time, he saw a green beam of light flying out from within one of the seas. Inside the green beam, he saw an enormous green tree that seemed capable of fighting against the Heavens themselves.

The tree shot out from the great sea, crossing through the firmament toward South Heaven. However, as it neared, a rumbling sound could be heard in Meng Hao's mind. Suddenly, an enormous face appeared upon Planet South Heaven.

The face bore the semblance of an old man with his eyes closed. It was as if Planet South Heaven was his body, whereas his head was illusory, and superimposed upon the planet. Suddenly, his mouth opened, and he said something to the incoming green tree. Meng Hao wasn't quite able to make out exactly what he said.

As soon as the word left his mouth, the Greenwood Tree within the beam of light began to crumble apart and disintegrate. The resulting fragments began to fall down toward Planet South Heaven.

Most of the pieces were transformed into ash as they neared. But one small piece survived. It shot through Meng Hao, causing his body to shatter. It then fused with him and they both fell down into the Western Desert. Next, a root appeared.

Meng Hao was a bit confused. He felt no pain; rather, he was filled with the sensation that he had turned into that tree. Countless years passed, and he eventually became a Greenwood Tree.

As the years came and went, a white wolf, a colorful snake, and a tiny bat all made their homes beneath the tree. Years passed. Finally, one rainy evening, a person approached.

It was a middle-aged man carrying an umbrella. He came to a stop in front of the tree and looked at it.

“So, yet another being come to South Heaven to confirm their Dao. Body and spirit destroyed, but a seed of the soul left behind, striving to prove itself on South Heaven….

“Very well. Since we’re in the Western Desert of South Heaven, I will use the power of my League to bless you all with the ability to pass down totems. Just like the Demonic Dao Pill of the Southern Domain…. The path of an ancient Dao, Perennial Will.” The man sighed, lifted his hand up, and placed it on the tree. After a long time had passed, he turned and walked off into the distance.

As he did, countless shimmering strands emanated out from him. They were dim and faint, but each one seemed to be connected to his body. They circled out and disappeared into the air. These strands seemed to be nothing other than Karma threads.

“I am the Fifth Generation of my League, the Fifth Generation Demon Sealing Daoist Master. My Dao is different from that of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. With different Daos, accords cannot be reached. Whether they are right or wrong doesn’t matter. My Dao will exist forever!

“I shall face the Tribulation of the Nine Mountains and Seas.” The man looked back and gazed at the Greenwood Tree. As he did, it seemed to Meng Hao almost as if he were looking directly at him. His mind suddenly began to buzz. The man continued, “To meet you before I depart… is fate. It seems our destinies shall become a point of enlightenment for one of my successors in the future.

“It’s not that the line of the League of Demon Sealers can’t be broken. If the younger generation can gain enlightenment, it will continue on. If not, then the Dao Tribulation of the Nine Mountains and Seas will arrive, and then the people will remember the will of the Demon Sealers.”

The buzzing in Meng Hao’s mind lasted for a long time. When it finally disappeared, everything that he had seen was fading.

He… was standing upon the palm of the Treant. The sky was filled with clouds as it had been before, and the air echoed with the chants of the Crow Scout Tribe members. Everything that he had just experienced seemed to have happened in only an instant. However, Meng Hao had experienced an eternity.

His eyes were filled with a blank expression. Tuning out everything around him, he stepped off of the Treant’s hand and then sat down cross-legged onto the altar. He closed his eyes.

A green glow gradually began to rise up from his body. Within the green glow, branches could be seen. They burrowed into the stone surface of the altar; Meng Hao almost looked as if he were becoming a Treant himself.

When the surrounding Crow Scout Tribe members saw this, their hearts and minds began to shake, and they stared mutely. The Earth Priest and the Sky Priest began to pant, and their eyes filled with disbelief.

It was at this point that a beam of light approached from off in the distance. It transformed into an ancient old man. The ripples of his Cultivation base placed him at the mid Nascent Soul stage. The instant the old man appeared, his gaze fell upon Meng Hao, and his expression flickered.

After a long moment passed, the old man said, “Ancestor Greenwood is bestowing a totem….” The two Crow Scout Tribe High Priests looked at the man. Serious expressions filled their faces, and they nodded.

“Considering that he is receiving a totem from Ancestor Greenwood, cancel all investigations into him. It doesn’t matter where he is from, nor how much of what he has said is true or false. He is now an eternal vassal of the Crow Scout Tribe!”

Time passed by slowly. By the time Meng Hao’s eyes opened again, it was seven days later.

He saw that the surrounding Crow Scout Tribe members had dispersed. It was evening, and not a single person was in sight. He was alone on the altar atop the mountain’s highest peak.

His eyes were filled with confusion. He looked down at his body and could see countless branches attached to it, spreading out in every direction, as if he was now a tree.

After a long moment, he took a deep breath. The tree branches slowly retracted, fusing back into his body. Eventually, he rose to his feet.

His expression was one of calm as he looked up into the sky and let out an absentminded sigh.

“There are 3,000 Daos. The Dao of Alchemy. The path of Demons. Totems. Various techniques and methods. All are great Daos. Be it totems or Demon sealing, even the Celestial talisman that made the Black Lands….

“It’s like the three pages of secret arts I acquired. The first is regarding catalyzing and the concocting of medicinal pills. The second, the crafting of Time treasures. The third, the Dragoneer arts, which can transform Demons. All three connect to each other on various levels, but in reality, they all stem from the same source!

“They all have something to do with the sealing of Demons!” Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a strange light. As he gained enlightenment, he realized that it didn’t matter if you were talking about the Southern Domain or the Western Desert, when it came to Heaven and Earth, it was all about Immortals and Demons!

If one wanted a clear example of Immortals, there could be none better than the supercilious Ji Clan of Planet South Heaven. If one wanted a good example of Demons… the best would be the mysterious and multifarious Demon Sealers!

“The unusual thing is, Demons are characterized by variations…. Therefore, in the great lands of South Heaven, they are represented by the Dao of alchemy in the Southern Domain. They are the talismanic symbols in the Black Lands, and totems in the Western Desert. Certainly the Eastern Lands and the Northern Desert have their own Demon variations.

“In the end, all are Demons!

“They are different from Immortals. Immortals have their dignity, but Demons have their variations. With Immortals there is only one path, any of the other myriad paths are Demonic!” Meng Hao’s mind buzzed as if lightning were striking around inside as he suddenly received this unprecedented enlightenment.

His thoughts having reached this point, although his body was on this mountain peak in the Crow Scout Tribe, his consciousness expanded out, soaring up to the highest Heavens. The thoughts which had begun to circulate in his mind when he first entered the Black Lands, suddenly coalesced into a single conclusion.

“Everything has to do with the Qi of the Nine Mountains and Seas. Immortals call this Qi the Essence. However, the League of Demon Sealers calls it Demonic Qi. In that case… perhaps the Ninth Mountain and Sea is in actuality an indescribably powerful, massive Demon of the Heavens!” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered brightly.

“If the Ninth Mountain and Sea are collectively a Demon, then its Qi would fill the planets which surround the Mountain. Regardless of the Ji Clan or some other powerful experts, all such Immortals would desire to acquire the Essence of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, and thus become its Lord.

“On the other side of the coin, Demon Sealing is just another path of cultivation, and has nothing to do with acquiring the Qi of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. If it’s a Demon, it can be sealed or approved based on my whim!”

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# Chapter 408: Greenwood Tree Totem!

“Or it could be that long, long ago people did not understand the the truth of the natural mechanisms of the Nine Mountains and Seas, of this entire starry realm. They thought that the Nine Mountains and Seas were the key to developing the body. After feeding upon the Mountains and Seas, they grew stronger, and stronger, and eventually broke through to the next level of life. Their lives fused with that of the Mountains and Seas, and they became Immortals!

“People who viewed matters in such a way eventually came to be the majority. However, there was always a small group who believed that the Nine Mountains and Seas were Heavenly Demons whom they could either seal or approve. Seal them as a path to power, or approve them and become their masters.

“That group of people were… the earliest Demon Sealers!

“These two groups of people had different philosophies, and strode different paths to power, but were not at odds.” Meng Hao took a deep breath as he gained this enlightenment.

After acquiring the Demon Sealing Jade and becoming the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer, Meng Hao’s path had always been one of confusion. This was especially true when it came to Demon Sealing. The puzzlement he had felt in the steady attempts to uncover the truth, finally led to understanding.

“I came to the Western Desert because of the Five-Colored Nascent Soul. I will fuse the five elements totems with my pill concocting technique. I will use my body as the pill furnace, and totems as the pill recipe. I will concoct my own Perfect Nascent Soul!

“This is my main purpose in coming to the Western Desert!

“My life has been one of treading the path of the multifarious Demons. The concept of myriad variations is the path of the Demon Sealer! The end of this path is that of sealing both the great Demons of Heaven, and Immortals!

“Similarly, it is a path of conferring Demonism upon the countless living things in creation as well as… Bestowing mortals so that they can achieve Immortal Ascension!”

Meng Hao’s mind buzzed. His Cultivation base seethed in accompaniment with this enlightenment. It rose up from the late Gold Core Stage into the great circle of the Gold Core.

He was now even closer to the Nascent Soul stage. If it weren’t for the fact that he pursued the Five-Colored Nascent Soul, he would already have begun his attempt to congeal a Nascent Soul. However, such a checkpoint was one that countless Cultivators had never stepped past.

Although Meng Hao had not experienced the difficulty of congealing a Nascent Soul, he had read about it in the ancient records of the Violet Fate Sect. He knew that only people who possessed immense luck and latent talent could be like the proverbial carp who leaped over the dragon’s gate, and step into that profound and refined stage.

Nascent Soul…. It was a stage vastly beyond that of Core Formation. Nascent Soul Cultivators possess magical techniques that far exceed the ordinary; their mastery of the principles of Heaven and Earth made them nearly divine abilities.

The most obvious example was their art of minor teleportation. This magical technique could even be referred to as almighty. Because of it, any Nascent Soul Cultivator who wished to retreat could easily do so. Unless they were restrained by a restrictive spell formation, it would be very difficult to surround or kill them.

Another key aspect was that after reaching the Nascent Soul stage, Cultivators could almost instinctively use a certain divine ability called… possession!

The Nascent Soul could emerge, because the body was only secondary. Cultivation was focused on the Nascent Soul itself; if the body perished, it could be abandoned, and a new body could be seized. Because of this, tangling with a Nascent Soul Cultivator was much more difficult than battling the Gold Core stage. In the Nascent Soul stage, confidence in being able to stay alive on the great path of the Dao was much more assured.

These were just some of the many advantages the divine abilities manifested in the Nascent Soul stage, the tip of the iceberg really. According to the popular understanding, only people who were actually in the Nascent Soul stage could possibly truly understand how powerful they were!

Meng Hao's eyes filled with bright glow that swept about. His body suddenly flickered and he transformed into a beam of light that shot off toward his courtyard behind the mountain. As he whistled through the air, several streams of Divine Sense emerged. After sensing Meng Hao, they stopped, and merely observed him leaving.

"It seems that this particular bit of enlightenment from Ancestor Greenwood Tree, and the resulting changes, put me in a somewhat special position here…." Meng Hao was able to speculate quite a bit after noticing that the streams of Divine Sense did nothing more than watch him leave. Although he couldn't be for sure, he was able to make quite a few correct guesses.

After arriving back in his courtyard, his neo-demon horde was fairly leaping with excitement. Big Hairy charged toward him and then ran around him in circles, howling happily. Meng Hao laughed and patted him on the head. After the neo-demon horde quieted down, he sat down cross-legged, his eyes glittering. After a moment of thoughtfulness, his eyes began to shine.

“When I woke up earlier, a vast collection of Wood-type branches were spreading out from my body….” Meng Hao closed his eyes and rotated his Cultivation base. After the space of a few breaths passed, his body began to shake. Veins bulged out of his skin and tiny, tentacle-like branches began to poke out. The branches twisted down to burrow into the ground, then spread out in all directions. As of this moment, Meng Hao was emanating a very dense Wood-type aura. He also shone with a bright green glow as if he himself were about to transform into the ancient Greenwood Tree.

All the neo-demons in the courtyard looked at Meng Hao in shock. Their eyes were also filled with confusion. However, all of a sudden, they had the feeling that this Master of theirs was now much more familiar than he had been before. They began to run in circles around this Greenwood Meng Hao, leaping and carousing playfully.

Time passed. On dawn of the second day, Meng Hao opened his eyes. It seemed as if he was awakening from some sort of trance. The instant he opened his eyes, the green glow surrounding him flickered and glowed with boundless radiance.

“According to the information given me by Wu Chen regarding Wood-type totem branding, it seems that I… have already passed the first critical juncture. I am now merged fully with Wood. There’s no separation….” Meng Hao looked at his Greenwood body; this was obviously the luck with which he had been gifted by the Treant, the personification of the ancient Greenwood Tree.

Perhaps this also had something to do with that Fifth Generation Demon Sealing Patriarch. In any case, Meng Hao was now fully focused on this matter, and this matter alone.

The main reason he had come to the Crow Scout Tribe was to acquire a Wood-type totem. Now, he had managed to acquire, not an ordinary Wood-type totem, but the ancient Greenwood Tree. To Meng Hao, this was an excellent first step on his path to the Five-Colored Nascent Soul.

He took a deep breath and closed his eyes. According to the steps and techniques in the information given to him by Wu Chen, he rotated his Cultivation base slowly and began to complete the last step with the Wood-type totem… the actual tattoo branding.

Time passed. An hour later, the green glow emanating out from Meng Hao began to flicker. As it did, his hands rose up to perform an incantation. He suddenly pushed his hands out, and his eyes snapped open, filled with a brilliant glow.

The moment he pushed his hands out, a rumbling sound filled him. Green light rose up to slowly congeal overhead; at the same time, the branches attached to him began to twitch and grow even longer. It was at this time that the ghost image of a tree appeared around Meng Hao. At the moment, what Meng Hao needed to do was to separate this illusory tree from himself.

First melt it, then separate it, finally, brand it. Different Tribes will use different methods, but the basic concept is the same throughout the Western Desert. Totem branding is always accomplished in this fashion.

As the green light slowly began to separate from Meng Hao’s body, the branches also began to disappear. As they did, the image of the tree began to coalesce within the green glow. It began to grow more and more tangible, as if an enormous green tree were actually coming into being.

Despite the fact that it was illusory, the tree emanated a thick Wood-type aura. It spread out in all directions, churning, causing all of the neo-demons in the area surrounding Meng Hao’s courtyard to grow silent. Simultaneously, the grass in the ground and the trees in the surrounding forest suddenly began to wriggle and grow. A thick, indescribable life force began to billow out from the illusory tree in front of Meng Hao.

This aura was enough to shake Heaven and Earth. Quite a few nearby Cultivators noticed and began to look around with serious expressions.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. Actually, even if everything around him started to shake even more violently, he wouldn’t pay it any heed. He was completely focused on the first step of his Five-Colored Nascent Soul, the Wood-type totem branding.

“Congeal!” His eyes glittered as both hands flashed incantation gestures. He then pointed toward the green tree in front of him; immediately, it began to shrink.

The shrinking process was very slow; it happened one inch at a time. At the same time, the shocking changes to the surrounding land grew even more intense. Soon the effect spread out even wider, until all the members of the Crow Scout Tribe noticed and were shocked.

They could clearly see the green glow rising up into the sky. At the same time, a huge, green tree had magically appeared, filled with dense life force that caused the surrounding vegetation to grow wildly.

It was at this moment that four beams of light shot down from the mountain. In the lead was none other than the Greatfather of the Crow Scout Tribe, the white-haired old man. His expression was serious as he rushed toward Meng Hao’s courtyard and then hovered in mid-air up above.

“Fellow Daoist Meng, please don’t get the wrong impression! I am the Crow Scout Greatfather, I will stay here to stand guard over you!”

Even as his words rang out, two of the incoming beams of light transformed into none other than the Earth Priest and the Sky Priest. They, too, hovered cross-legged in mid-air to stand guard over Meng Hao.

The final person was the Grand Elder. Although he was rather reluctant, he also hovered cross-legged, facing a fourth direction to stand guard while Meng Hao was completing his totem branding.

Actually, from the moment Meng Hao had acquired the Greenwood Tree totem, they had been preparing for the moment when he awoke and began the totem branding, whereupon they would stand guard.

The Greenwood Tree totem was no ordinary tree. A totem branding like this would surely cause a variety of shocking changes in Heaven and Earth. In fact, it would likely even cause various neo-demons to come investigate. As such, it was necessary to have people stand guard to ensure nothing would go wrong.

Meng Hao looked up at the four Crow Scout Tribe Nascent Soul Cultivators facing out in the four different directions. He was silent for a moment before letting out a soft sigh. Regardless of whether or not the Crow Scout Tribe had any hidden agendas, everything they had done in the past days showed an incredible amount of good faith. Meng Hao could clearly see this.

He took a deep breath. Ignoring everything up above, he focused completely on completing the branding of the Greenwood Tree totem tattoo. As his Cultivation base flickered, he continued to perform incantations. The enormous illusory tree in front of him continued to shrink, and as it did, the aura grew stronger. Soon, the Greenwood Tree was only about twenty or twenty-five meters tall. The life force it emanated was intense enough to shake everything around. By now, it had attracted the attention of the other Tribes in this mountain range.

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# Chapter 409: I Really Haven’t Tried This Before!

Several streams of Divine Sense suddenly rose up from within the Crow Flame Tribe. They gathered together in mid-air to observe the Crow Scout Tribe. “For a Greenwood Tree totem like that to appear in the Crow Scout Tribe means… perhaps someone is forming a totemic Nascent Soul?”

Similar scenes played out in the other Tribes. The Crow Soldier Tribe seemed to be especially affected; five beams of prismatic light shot out toward the Crow Scout Tribe.

Although these five tribes were all connected by blood, there were certain conflicts between them that were impossible to dispel. As it turned out, the Crow Soldier Tribe hated the Crow Scout Tribe more than any of the other Tribes.

The five beams of light from the Crow Soldier Tribe whistled through the air as they shot toward the Crow Scout Tribe. As they neared, even before they could be seen clearly, an enormous shield of light suddenly appeared from within the Crow Scout Tribe. It enveloped the entire Tribe, covering it over and blocking the Crow Soldier Tribe.

The awe-inspiring voice of the Crow Scout Tribe Greatfather rang out: “The Crow Scout Tribe is busy at the moment. Other Tribes are prohibited from entering. Any who does… will be shown no mercy.”

The Crow Soldier Tribe members outside the shield exchanged glances. There was nothing they could do but laugh coldly; passing through the shield was not an option.

Meng Hao was aware of everything that was happening on the outside. However, the majority of his energy was being spent on the totem branding and the Greenwood Tree in front of him, which was slowly growing smaller and smaller. Soon it was only three meters tall. Everything was shaking, and up above in the sky, lightning suddenly appeared, dancing back and forth. The life force emanating out caused the vegetation in and around Meng Hao's courtyard to burst out wildly.

In fact, it was even affecting the vegetation on the mountain, the front district of the Crow Scout Tribe, and the forest that surrounded them all. The plants and vegetation everywhere grew rapidly, which of course caused even more shock on the parts of the other Tribes. Black clouds churned up above, and howling sounds began to echo out within the forests. The surrounding neo-demons could sense the life force and were beginning to feel greedy.

It was at this moment that suddenly a thunderous roar sounded out that shook Heaven and Earth: "Outlander!"

The faces of the Crow Soldier Tribe members suddenly flickered. Without hesitation, they shot backward in retreat, gloating expressions filling their faces.

On the other side of the shield, the face of the Crow Scout Tribe Greatfather suddenly filled with anxiety. He looked up into the sky at a collection of black clouds that was heading toward them at high speed.

"Dammit, the Outlander Beast was injured by the Crow Divinity half a year ago, but it didn't actually leave. It's been hiding in the area this whole time!! Unless we join forces with the other four Tribes to summon the Crow Divinity ancestor, we can't possibly be a match for the Outlander Beast!

"This Grandmaster Meng's Greenwood Tree totem has reached an incredible level. Could it be that Ancestor Greenwood actually bestowed him with some of its essence?!?!"

The four powerful Crow Scout Tribe experts who hovered there in mid-air were all filled with shock.

The Grand Elder looked up at the approaching black clouds and said, “Greatfather, if the Outlander Beast is here for this vassal surnamed Meng, and we are incapable of fighting back against it, wouldn’t it be best to just hand him over and alleviate….”

Before he could finish speaking, the white-haired Greatfather interrupted him with a cold snort.

“Don’t mention anything like that ever again. This person was selected by Ancestor Greenwood. If we can’t protect him, how could we ever have the face to offer worship to the ancestor? Our Crow Scout Tribe might not be classified as a great Tribe, but we keep our promises. I already said that we would offer protection. Only if we are absolutely certain that we cannot resist it will I renege! Unleash the full power of the mountain protection spell formation!”

The Greatfather flicked his sleeve, causing a beam of green light to shoot out toward the mountain peak. The mountain trembled as a green light rose up to merge with the existing shield. The light rose up higher and higher into the sky, forming the image of a gargantuan tree!

The Crow Scout Tribe was contained inside of this tree, which would protect it from anything on the outside.

Meng Hao’s face was pale. He had never imagined that branding the Greenwood Tree totem would be so difficult. The Greenwood Tree in front of him was now about three meters tall. However, each time Meng Hao rotated his Cultivation base, it only shrank one inch.

“When it comes to branding totems, the optimal size is one inch….” Meng Hao wasn’t an expert when it came to totems, but he knew all the fundamentals. His eyes filled with determination. Golden light erupted out from him and he pointed his finger toward the ground, suddenly utilizing Righteous Bestowal. Imperceptible ripples flowed out across the ground as strands of Demonic Qi arose. They merged into Meng Hao, assisting in the branding of the Greenwood Tree.

Three meters. Two and a half meters…. Soon it was only two meters tall. Then one…. Meng Hao let out a roar, followed by a mouthful of blood. The blood contained Demonic Qi, and as soon as it splashed onto the Greenwood Tree, the tree trembled and then shrank down to the size of roughly half a meter.

Meng Hao was panting, and stubbornness radiated from his eyes. It was at this exact moment that the Crow Scout Tribe's shield shook under the force of a mighty blow. An enormous roaring sound filled the air. Meng Hao looked up to see a patch of black clouds slamming into the shield.

A roar sounded out from within the clouds: "Outlander!"

Heaven and Earth shook as ripples spread out. Cracking sounds could be heard as the clouds once again slammed into the shield.

The Greatfather, the High Priests and the Grand Elder all looked shocked. Their bodies shook, and they coughed up blood. They were the ones supporting the shield, and would bear the effect of any blows levelled against it.

Suddenly, the fearsome pressure of Spirit Severing spread out from within the clouds. This was the terrifying power of the Outlander Beast!

It takes some time to describe, but the black clouds moved with incredible speed as they struck again. An enormous roaring filled the air. Cracking sounds turned into the rumbling of an explosion as the enormous shield tree formed by the Crow Scout Tribe's defensive spell formation collapsed into pieces. As the spell dispersed, the Greatfather and the others coughed up blood and were sent tumbling backward, their faces unsightly.

The black cloud patch hovering in mid-air shot directly toward Meng Hao.

As it shot forward, two glowing, red eyes could be seen within. They were filled with avarice and insanity. As it shot through the air, the black clouds dissipated, revealing the Outlander Beast's luxuriantly furred body.

It was like a giant ball covered with thick, dense fur that draped off of it. As it shot forward, the fur rippled in the wind, almost like a tail. The whole image made the Outlander Beast look like a long, furry comet.

At a glance, it was obvious that no one would be able to move to block the thing. The Greatfather and the others could only watch wide-eyed as the Outlander Beast approached. The powerful experts from the other Tribes watched the scene playing out, clearly taking joy in the calamity that was befalling the Crow Scout Tribe.

Meanwhile, Meng Hao's body was shining with golden light. The Greenwood Tree in front of him was only half a foot tall. Even as the Outlander Beast approached, Meng Hao lifted his finger, congealing the invisible Demonic Qi in the area and then pushing down onto the Greenwood Tree.

"Shrink!" he bellowed. The congealed Demonic Qi exploded out with shocking pressure. In the blink of an eye, the Greenwood Tree shrank to the size of an inch. At this point, the Outlander Beast let out a fearsome roar. The Greenwood Tree shot toward Meng Hao's forehead, instantly branding onto him.

A Wood-type totem! The first of the colors of the five elements, a green tree!

The instant the branding formed, Meng Hao's Cultivation base began to rotate. It suddenly grew until it was only a hair's breadth from the Nascent Soul stage…. His life force abounded to a fearsome extent. In fact, it grew to the point that some of the injuries Meng Hao had sustained in the past from wasting his own life force were now completely recovered. Even more shocking, the incredible level of Meng Hao's life force made it so that no matter how ancient he grew in later years, he would always be able to maintain his current physical appearance.

Such terrifying life force also made Meng Hao's magical techniques even stronger than they had been before.

“This proves that my choice to tread the path of the five elements is the correct one. This path allows me to use an alternative method to create a Perfect Five-Colored Nascent Soul that belongs… solely to Meng Hao!”

Meng Hao turned, lifting his hand. Totemic power flashed as the Eyeless Larva appeared. Layers of silk suddenly began to spin around him, forming a shield roughly three meters large.

A massive boom shook everything as the Outlander Beast slammed into it. Meng Hao was shoved backward, and blood sprayed from his mouth. He looked up at the Outlander Beast, which hovered in front of him in mid-air, its eyes wide. It appeared shocked that the power of its attack was incapable of shattering the silk shield.

An ominous glint appeared in its eyes. It could sense two different fluctuations of power on Meng Hao, fluctuations that frightened even it. However, the life force emanating from the Greenwood Tree brand on Meng Hao’s forehead contained healing powers that caused greed to emanate up from within its heart.

Furthermore, the Demonic Qi on Meng Hao’s body was driving it crazy. Its eyes began to glow red and it howled as it once more charged toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao shot backward. As he did, he took note of the thick, luxuriant fur that covered the Outlander Beast, and suddenly, his eyes flickered.

Next, he let out an enormous shout which echoed out in all directions, filtering out into the surrounding mountainous forest: “Parrot, there’s a great furred beast here that you’ve definitely never tried out!!!”

Almost as soon as his voice echoed out, a squawk could be heard. This squawk caused the Outlander Beast to suddenly stop in its track. A look of vigilance appeared in its eyes as a multicolored streak shot toward them from off in the distance, moving with blinding speed.

Within the colorful streak, the parrot’s eyes emitted a bright glow, and its body quivered with excitement. A dubious expression covered its face as it looked over the Outlander Beast’s luxuriantly furred body. It shivered with anticipation.

“I haven’t tried out this before. I really haven’t! Ahhhhhhh! Lord Fifth is happy!” The parrot seemed on the verge of going crazy. It exploded forward, utilizing all the power it possessed to shoot toward the fearful, vigilant Outlander Beast.

Meng Hao had a strange expression on his face. A short distance away, he stopped moving as he watched the parrot approaching. Suddenly, he sighed inwardly.

“It seems certain unique indulgences really can release the ultimate potential power. It didn’t even notice that the Outlander Beast has a Cultivation base with power similar to Spirit Severing…”

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# Chapter 410: Naive Earth Priest

The members of the Crow Scout Tribe, including the Greatfather, the High Priests and the Grand Elder, all watched the multicolored light approaching at rapid speed. It closed in on the Outlander Beast, radiating frenzy and determination.

“That neo-demon certainly is loyal to its master….” said the Earth Priest with a soft sigh. He had seen many neo-demons, but few that would show such care for a master, that would display such madness and ignore everything else in order to protect him.

The parrot’s excitement actually appeared to others as determination. Furthermore, its joy at being able to try out a new furred beast made it seem as if it were loyally protecting its master.

It wasn’t just the Earth Priest that was thinking in this way. Many of the other Crow Scout Tribe members saw the scene that was playing out, and the parrot within the multicolored light, and were filled with admiration.

They watched as the multicolored beam of light that was the parrot shot toward the Outlander Beast, which roared as it approached. The parrot ignored everything, seemingly ignoring any potential threats to its life, willing to die together with the Outlander Beast. It whistled through the air, circling around behind the Outlander Beast, whereupon it charged in to attack.

“That parrot neo-demon is extraordinary!” said the Earth Priest, flabbergasted. “It actually knows that the Outlander Beast’s only weak spot is not its front but its back!” The admiration in his eyes grew stronger.

The Grand Elder’s eyes grew wide as he watched what was happening. He too was astonished by everything that was happening. The Greatfather’s face flickered, and his eyes grew wide. He glanced at the Earth Priest, and then at the parrot. He suddenly started to look a bit suspicious.

Off to the side, Meng Hao heard the Earth Priest’s words and coughed lightly. He looked over and could see that the Earth Priest really did deeply admire the parrot. Meng Hao sighed inwardly at the man’s simplicity, realizing that he himself really had changed quite a bit over the years.

Meanwhile, the determined parrot looked like it was about to fulfill its dream. Looking like the member of a suicide squad, its eyes red, trembling with excitement, it shot toward the Outlander Beast. However, at the critical moment, the Outlander Beast suddenly flickered and then disappeared. A moment later, it reappeared in a different location.

Apparently, it could sense the parrot’s motives. It’s eyes filled with fury and it roared: “Outlander!”

The roar completely disoriented the parrot, and sent it tumbling backward through the air. It couldn’t even get close; it looked like this Outlander Beast really was causing it some problems. However, the parrot wouldn’t let some slight setbacks knock it out of the game. It let out a shrill squawk, and its eyes glowed with anticipation. Its appearance was that of both excitement and lechery fused together. The combination made it look quite vulgar and lewd. Once again, it shot toward the Outlander Beast in a colorful glow.

“What a loyal neo-demon!” cried the Earth Priest, clearly moved. “A truly rare neo-demon of utmost loyalty! Look everyone, despite being injured, it persists, bravely defying death!”

Many of the surrounding Crow Scout Tribe members felt the same way.

“Grandmaster Meng sure is lucky to have a neo-demon as loyal as that!”

“That’s right. It looks a little bit ugly, but its moral character is definitely worthy of praise!”

They looked at the parrot with envy in their pure, simple hearts. They wished that they, too, could have such a devoted and faithful neo-demon.

However, even as the Earth Priest and the various envious Tribe members were watching the parrot and sighing emotionally….

“Don’t run, darling!” cried the parrot, speeding up. “Lord Fifth is here to vanquish you!”

As his words echoed out and entered the ears of the Crow Scout Tribe members, strange expressions appeared on their faces. Their mouths dropped open as they realized what the parrot meant by its words. They could scarcely believe it.

The Earth Priest looked shocked for a moment, but then a look of realization and then admiration appeared. “So, it can even employ strategy!” he said, and then let out a long sigh. “What a noble display of character to use such a tactic to prevent its master from being injured by the Outlander Beast!”

Although the conclusion reached by the Earth Priest didn’t seem very plausible, there were still some of the Crow Scout Tribe members who seemed to agree. However, most had strange looks on their faces. The Sky Priest looked over at the Earth Priest and was about to say something, then hesitated and simply smiled wryly.

The Grand Elder was looking in shock at the Earth Priest as if he didn’t even know the man.

As for the Greatfather, the expression on his face grew even more strange, and he also could do nothing more than smile wryly.

Meng Hao coughed lightly once more. The naiveté of the Earth Priest was something one didn’t see very often.

Up in mid-air, the parrot squawked as it shot toward the Outlander Beast, which roared and sent out an attack which manifested as terrifying ripples. They slammed into the charging parrot, making it impossible for it to near the Outlander Beast. However, its determination and excitement only continued to grow in the face of these setbacks. It seemed even more determined to try out this Outlander Beast.

“Heyyy, you really can put up a fight. Struggle if you wish, my darling. That just makes Lord Fifth more excited!” With a roar, the parrot charged again.

It shot forward with incredible speed. As it neared, a popping sound could suddenly be heard as hundreds of parrots appeared, all of which shot toward the Outlander Beast.

“Struggle away, my darling! Struggle and beg for mercy under Lord Fifth’s pounding!” The parrot roared with excitement as it neared the Outlander Beast, which howled back. The illusory parrots all exploded, but there was one parrot left which managed to successfully penetrate the Outlander Beast.

The instant the penetration occurred, the Outlander Beast’s body trembled, and a look of confusion filled its face. The look quickly turned into one of humiliation and unprecedented madness. It let out a howl that shook everything, louder than anything that had been heard up to this point. The loudness was such that it kicked up a violent tempest!

A popping sound could be heard as the parrot suddenly appeared in mid-air off to the side. It was trembling excitedly, and its eyes were glowing. “Scream, scream your throat out! No one will come to save you!”

By this point, the surrounding Crow Scout Tribe members were watching on dumbstruck. Many of the ones who had previously thought the parrot to be loyal and brave, now had faces completely pale. It was as if their whole world had been overturned. They stared blankly up into the air at the indescribably vulgar parrot.

The Earth Priest gaped again. However, it took only a moment before a bright glow began to shine in his eyes. It was a glow of admiration, and understanding.

“In order to provoke a reaction from the Outlander Beast, the parrot neo-demon is taunting it! What wisdom! What praiseworthy courage!” The Earth Priest sighed. “Fellow Daoist Meng, you truly have incredible luck to possess a neo-demon like that!”

The Crow Scout Tribe Greatfather couldn’t take it any longer and was about to say something. However, he then noticed the intense admiration in the eyes of the Earth Priest. The Greatfather sighed and held his tongue.

As for the Grand Elder, he stood there with wide eyes, staring in shock at the Earth Priest. The Sky Priest also had a very strange expression on her face. The two of them then exchanged a wry smile.

At the same time that the Earth Priest spoke, the parrot let out another squawk. It shot again toward the Outlander Beast, which let out another howl. Subsequently, the beast and the parrot engaged in a back and forth battle. The parrot, of course, did the giving and the Outlander Beast did the taking.

Howls continued to ring out until finally the parrot let out a roar. It was unclear what technique it used specifically. Ignoring any potential injuries, it smashed through, once again penetrating into the Outlander Beast. The Outlander Beast let out a shocking howl, accompanied by a look of terror. It hovered in mid-air, trembling. As of this moment, it was no longer paying attention to Meng Hao’s Demonic Qi. Instead, it turned and began to flee.

The parrot once again materialized, trembling and looking excited. It looked proud at its subjugation of a beast that it had never tried out before. It let out a squawk as it shot in pursuit of the Outlander Beast.

“Don’t run away, darling!” it shouted. “Come come, there are a few positions Lord Fifth hasn’t tried. Don’t run!” With that it turned into a prismatic beam of light that raced after the Outlander Beast.

The Crow Scout Tribe members witnessed this whole scene, as did the powerful experts from the other Tribes, via Divine Sense. All of them were left with trembling hearts and indescribably bizarre feelings.

To see the mysterious Outlander Beast flee instead of fight… was thoroughly shocking. Even more astonishing was the parrot, who apparently didn’t even fear death. Its method of attack was of course unimaginably bizarre.

Seeing the parrot heading off into the distance, Meng Hao let out a sigh of relief. Having called the parrot over, he had prepared himself for the worst. Looking around at the strange expressions on the Crow Scout Tribe members, and the look of admiration in the eyes of the Earth Priest, Meng Hao made a firm decision to never again call the parrot unless it was absolutely necessary….

As the crowds of people dispersed, the Greatfather gave Meng Hao a wry smile, and then forced out some words of praise regarding his totem tattoo. Then, shaking his head, he made his way off.

The Grand Elder looked over Meng Hao with a serious expression, then gave him a rare bow. After that, he and the equally conflicted Sky Priest left the district behind the mountain.

As for the Earth Priest, it looked like he wanted to say a few words to Meng Hao. However, when he noticed that Meng Hao didn’t seem concerned at all regarding the safety of the parrot, he simply gave him a stern and disapproving glare and then turned into a prismatic beam of light that shot off in the direction the parrot had disappeared.

Meng Hao smiled wryly, not sure of what to say. He simply watched the Earth Priest disappear.

“If that naive Earth Priest ever realizes what the parrot is really like, the man’s sky will no longer be blue, and he will no longer view life as beautiful….” Meng Hao thought about what that scene might look like, and then felt somewhat sorry for the Earth Priest. Finally, he turned and made his way back to his courtyard.

Two days passed. On evening of the second day, the Earth Priest returned. He looked somewhat distracted, and his face was pale as if he had been the subject of a vicious attack. After returning, he went directly into secluded meditation.

During the two days, Meng Hao found that whenever he went out, the Crow Scout Tribe members that caught sight of him looked at him with awe. Sometimes it even bordered on fear, as if they feared offending him, and didn’t dare to approach him. As soon as they saw him, sweat would break out on their foreheads and they would hurry off in the opposite direction.

At long last, the wickedness of the parrot was having an effect on Meng Hao. It didn’t take long before the entire Crow Scout Tribe knew about the events regarding Grandmaster Meng’s wicked neo-demon. The news rapidly began to spread to the other four Tribes.

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# Chapter 411: Rank 7 Mo Zi

The parrot never came back. Meng Hao wasn’t too concerned about this. Who knew how many long years the parrot had lived, and yet it inherently seemed to like courting death. Nonetheless, it still hadn’t died. Meng Hao was quite assured in its ability to survive.

Furthermore, the meat jelly bell was with the parrot. If anything, the one to worry about wasn’t the parrot, but the poor Outlander Beast.

Several days passed, during which Meng Hao spent most of his time in his courtyard, studying his Greenwood Tree totem tattoo. It flickered there on his forehead, radiating boundless life force throughout his body. Every time he closed his eyes to meditate, it seemed that even his heartbeat could create ripples throughout the land and sky around him.

“This is only one of the five elements, a Wood-type totem. It’s already propelled my Cultivation base much closer to the Nascent Soul stage….” When his eyes opened, they glittered brightly.

After carefully examining the totemic power within him, he had reached a new understanding.

“If I can acquire a second five elements totem, then my Cultivation base, despite being at the full circle of the Gold Core, will actually be strong enough to fight the peak of the early Nascent Soul stage, even without the blood-colored mask!

“In fact… by using the power of the totems, I should be able to employ some of the divine abilities that belong to the Nascent Soul stage!”

During the same period of time, Meng Hao also experimented a bit with the neo-demon horde he had acquired from Mo Fang. He fed them with Demon

Nurturing Pills, and also took them out to hunt. In a relatively short period of time, they began to grow fiercer and tougher. Of course, due to the restraints of time, there was still a large gap between them and Big Hairy and the other Greenwood Wolves.

However, if things kept progressing the way they were, although they might not compare to the five Greenwood Wolves, they would continue to transmogrify and grow stronger.

Finally one afternoon, Meng Hao was sitting cross-legged meditating when suddenly, an enormous roaring sound shook the rear mountain district of the Crow Scout Tribe. As the roaring echoed throughout the air, an enormous black python over twenty meters long shot toward Meng Hao in a beam of blackness.

The black snake emitted a powerful aura, filled with savagery. Its forked tongue flicked in and out of its mouth, and its mere presence sent the aura in the area into chaos. Furthermore, a black, churning mist with a Celestial appearance seethed around it as it flew.

Standing on top of the black snake was an old man in a black robe. His expression was grim, and his eyes were filled with arrogance and contempt as the black snake neared and then floated in the air above Meng Hao’s courtyard. The old man looked down with a condescending look at Meng Hao.

The old man’s Cultivation base was not extremely high, only at the mid Core Formation stage. However, his body was festooned with complex totem tattoos, which emanated shocking ripples. Because of them, the man actually emanated an aura similar to that of the Nascent Soul stage.

“So, you’re Meng Hao!” boomed a voice like that of rolling thunders. It didn’t sound like the voice of a human, but rather, like the combined roaring of countless beasts. The sound rolled out in all directions, causing all of the Cultivators in the rear mountain district to tremble in their hearts. All of the neo-demons began to tremble in fear.

There were people who immediately recognized the man who rode on the black snake.

“Rank 7 Dragoneer Grandmaster Mo Zi!!”

“It really is Grandmaster Mo Zi! So, he’s come looking for Grandmaster Meng!”

“Grandmaster Meng took away Mo Fang’s neo-demon horde. It won’t do any good even if the Greatfather and the others interfered now. This will be the Crow Scout Tribe’s first battle between Dragoneers. Grandmaster Mo versus Grandmaster Meng!”

Meng Hao sat cross-legged in his courtyard. He slowly opened his eyes, and they gleamed with coldness. He looked up indifferently at the black-robed old man who floated in mid-air atop the black snake.

He merely looked up; there was no shocking sharpness in his gaze, nor did he say any Heaven-shaking words. He just looked over. As his gaze passed over the wildly arrogant and fierce black snake, it suddenly began to tremble.

Terrifying waves of fear suddenly rose up in its simplistic mind. Meng Hao’s gaze had seemed relatively casual, nor could the old man see any clues as to what was going on. But the black neo-demon snake shook violently, and its mind and heart reeled. Fear and awe welled up from its very soul.

It almost seemed like pressure was bearing down on its life force. The fear and awe it felt in its soul… would most likely also be present even in the ancient ancestor which gave birth to this creature’s bloodline. It too would tremble in fear in front of Meng Hao. The unspeakable aura he emanated made the black snake hold him in as much awe as the Heavens.

It took only one look, and the black snake let out a shrill howl, then immediately retreated backward. The shocked old man in the black robe did everything he could, but the black snake was completely incapable of recovering.

It was only after Meng Hao looked away a moment later that the black snake managed to straighten itself up. If Meng Hao had looked at it any longer, it would probably have simply fallen down out of the sky.

No observer could see what had happened. However, Mo Zi's heart trembled, and he could barely prevent himself from gasping. His eyes were wide. He had come here in an overbearing fashion in order to punish Meng Hao and take back the neo-demon horde. Suddenly, all of his plans completely changed. He floated there in mid-air, glaring down at Meng Hao, a multitude of thoughts running through his head.

"Dammit," he thought, "no wonder the Greatfather, Grand Elder and others did nothing to stop me from coming here. It turns out this guy is a high level Dragoneer!! Just what rank is he….?"

"How can I help you?" asked Meng Hao coolly. His voice was calm, but his eyes were filled with coldness. He looked up at rank 7 Dragonner Mo Zi, and suddenly realized that the totems on the man's body were quite interesting.

"I am Mo Zi. Fellow Daoist Meng, my son is not a good student, but he spent half his life painstakingly collecting his neo-demon horde. I demand an explanation regarding this matter. However, we are both Dragoneers. In one month, the day will come in which the five Tribes of the Crow Divinity go to worship their Ancestor.

"At that time, the order of who enters the Ancestor's land will be determined by a competition between the five great Tribes! On that day, I hope to experience your secret Dragoneer arts!" Mo Zi didn't know what rank Dragoneer Meng Hao was; having come here, however, he couldn't just leave immediately. Therefore, he forced these words out, then turned and left with his black snake.

As he left, he made up his mind. "I must determine for sure what rank Dragoneer he is. I can't do anything rash. I'll use the five great Tribe's competition to determine how much of him is true and how much is false."

He arrived abruptly and left quickly. The surrounding onlookers saw everything that happened and could only watch on in shock.

Meng Hao also stared in surprise for a moment. It only took a moment’s thought to realize why rank 7 Dragoneer Mo Zi had come here. However, his motives in coming and going were quite contradictory. Meng Hao smiled coldly, and his eyes glittered.

“So, the awaited time has come; the five great Tribes will offer sacrifices to their Ancestor…. The only way to do that is to enter the Crow Divinity Holy Land. That is the prescribed rendezvous point with the others.

“However, now that I have my Wood-type totem, getting into the Holy Land isn’t that important. Furthermore, the Crow Scout Tribe has actually treated me quite well.” After a moment’s thought he closed his eyes to continue his research on his Greenwood Tree totem.

The next day at dawn, when light was just appearing in the sky, Meng Hao emerged from his trance. He looked around at his silent neo-demon horde. Currently, his dozens of neo-demons were organized into three groups. The first was the Greenwood Wolves, led by Big Hairy.

Another was the Greenwood Bats, led by the Black Bat. There was a big difference in the numbers populating the two groups. There were a few more Greenwood Wolves; however, the Greenwood Bats had more mid-level neo-demons. The two groups weren’t necessarily evenly matched, but there was a clear delineation between the two. They didn’t get along very well, and a bit of hostility existed.

The third group was comprised of Greenwood Snakes. Their numbers lay between those of the Greenwood Wolves and the Greenwood Bats. However, in terms of strength, they didn’t measure up to either of the others. Being the lowest position, they showed complete awe for Big Hairy and the Black Bat.

Meng Hao looked thoughtfully for a while at the three groups of neo-demons. Then, his body flickered as he left the courtyard. Behind him, Big Hairy looked up, then also turned into a blur as he followed, along with the rest of the Greenwood Wolf neo-demon horde. The Black Bat's eyes flickered, and it flew up into the air, bringing the Greenwood Bats with it.

The Greenwood Snakes took the flanking position as Meng Hao left the rear mountain district. The entire way, any of the Crow Scout Tribe members who saw Meng Hao would look at him in awe, then lower their heads and do their best to avoid him.

After leaving the Crow Scout Tribe, Meng Hao found himself in the surrounding mountain forest. As he usually did, he sent the various neo-demon hordes in different directions to hunt for food. As for himself, he sat down cross-legged underneath a tall tree to meditate.

Big Hairy didn't leave, but rather lay down next to Meng Hao. He looked lazy, but in truth, his eyes were filled with vigilance and coldness as he looked around.

Meng Hao had been in the Crow Scout Tribe for more than half a year now. During that time, he had often taken his Greenwood Wolves out to hunt; each time, Big Hairy would keep a close watch on Meng Hao. As for food, it was usually brought back to him by the other Greenwood Wolves. Unless Meng Hao ordered him, he would never leave his side.

Now, Meng Hao's neo-demon horde had grown much stronger and larger; nonetheless, Big Hairy continued to act the same as before.

Meng Hao petted Big Hairy's head. As he did, he thought of the mastiff. He suddenly sent his mind into the blood-colored mask. Sensing that the mastiff was still in a state of slumber, he sighed.

"When will you finally wake up?" he thought. He retracted his Spiritual Sense, then looked at the surrounding forest. A breeze wafted through the trees, giving rise to a rustling sound.

At first glance, it almost looked like the Southern Domain. However, there was also something unfamiliar about it; it didn't feel like home at all.

“After leaving the Black Lands, the power of the Celestial talisman that was interfering with the Ji Clan’s search for me must have vanished. From now on… I need to be ready at any time for the Ji Clan to come after me. Although, despite being away from the Black Lands, perhaps I have enough Celestial talisman power on my person to continue to provide interference.” He looked up into the sky, his heart filled with questions. During the past more than half year, he hadn’t seen a single person from the Ji Clan. Now he was starting to come to the conclusion that acquiring the Celestial talisman symbols and using them to gain enlightenment, must be one of the main reasons that the Ji Clan wasn’t coming after him.

“The Ji Clan….” he thought, his eyes filling with coldness. “One of these days, I will become strong…. Then the Ji Clan will be forced to acknowledge my superiority!” He took a deep breath, and determination filled his eyes.

It was at this moment that Meng Hao’s mind suddenly flickered. He turned his head to look off into the distance. In addition, a high-pitched voice suddenly drifted into his ears from off into the distance.

“It doesn’t matter if the first person to spot that Ironblack Snake was you or me. My Master is rank 7 Dragoneer Gu La. Do you really dare to contend with this Young Master!?” 1

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1. Gu La is the Western Desert Dragoneer who Meng Hao captured when he first arrived at Holy Snow City. Later, Gu La, along with the Wild Giant, disappeared when Meng Hao teleported to the region of the five Crow Divinity Tribes

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# Chapter 412: My Master is Gu La

The wooded mountain where Meng Hao was located wasn’t close to the Crow Scout Tribe. Actually, it was some distance away in the boundless mountain chain. In accord with his usual custom, Meng Hao took his neo-demon horde to increasingly remote areas. Hearing the voice, he didn’t move, but rather just listened for a while.

Usually, Meng Hao didn’t run into people out here. He was usually alone; therefore, after hearing the voice, Meng Hao sent out some Spiritual Sense to check out the situation.

Not far off, separated from Meng Hao by a medium sized mountain, was a group of seven or eight Crow Scout Tribe members. Currently, they were facing off wrathfully against a group of three others. From their clothing, it was obvious these others were Crow Soldier Tribe members.

In the middle position of these three people was a young man. His Cultivation base was at the early Foundation Establishment stage. The two people flanking him were a bit older, and their faces were covered with cold grins, as well as contempt, as they stared at the Crow Scout Tribe members.

Surprisingly, Wu Chen and Wu Ling were among the Crow Scout Tribe members. Wu Hai was also there, as well as a few others with whom Meng Hao was familiar. All were outstanding figures in the younger generation of the Crow Scout Tribe.

They were surrounded by neo-demons, all of whom radiated fierce auras and glared at the three Crow Soldier Tribe members.

Situated between the two groups was an indistinct, shimmering net. Laying unconscious and motionless within the net was a small, black snake.

Wu Ling gritted her beautiful teeth and said, “We found that Ironblack Snake! We paid a heavy price for it, too. We captured it, so what the hell gives you the right to take it!?”

The young man from the Crow Soldier Tribe laughed coldly, virtually ignoring the members of the Crow Scout Tribe. He walked toward the black net and then waved his hand, clearly intent on taking it away. Wu Ling clenched her jaw and then performed an incantation with her right hand. Instantly, the Greenwood Wolf next to her leaped forward. At the same time, totemic power billowed out from Wu Ling’s body.

When this happened, a look of disdain appeared in the eyes of the Crow Soldier Tribe youth. He waved his left hand, whereupon a pitch-black, decomposing Zombie Wolf materialized. It lifted its head up and roared as it shot toward Wu Ling.

The faces of all of the Crow Scout Tribe members instantly flickered, and they attacked simultaneously. A huge boom rang out, and the Crow Scout Tribe members staggered backward spitting up blood.

“Level 6 neo-demon….” cried Wu Hai bitterly.

Wu Chen’s face was ashen. Wu Ling looked like she knew what she was doing, but unfortunately, there was nothing they could actually do. The rotting Zombie Wolf stood there looking at them coldly.

“My Crow Soldier Tribe and your Crow Scout Tribe have the same roots. If it weren’t for that, all of you would die today for provoking me!” The young man looked scornfully over the Crow Scout Tribe members, then snatched up the black net. He turned to leave, then suddenly looked back. He had just caught sight of Hairy #5, who lay off in the forest, observing the goings on.

Hairy #5 was usually relatively high-spirited, and was deeply curious about all sorts of matters. Moments ago, he had been passing by, and his attention had been caught by the putrescent Zombie Wolf. He couldn’t help but look on with wide eyes.

“Whoah,” said the young man, his eyes suddenly brightening with pleasure as he looked at Hairy #5. “That wolf… is extraordinary! I can’t believe I ran into a Greenwood Wolf like that in this place. If I can take it back as a gift for Master, he’ll definitely be extremely pleased!” He laughed loudly. His two fellow Tribe Members next to him looked at Hairy #5 with expressions of pleasant surprise.

Hairy #5 was no longer small, and had quite a mighty bearing. They could instantly see that he was far from ordinary.

“Hairy #5!” said Wu Chen, recognizing him instantly. After staring in shock for a moment, his heart suddenly filled with joy. He looked around, and though he didn’t see anything in particular, he knew what it meant if Hairy #5 was in the area.

Wu Hai’s expression also filled with joy. It was only Wu Ling who had mixed feelings. As for the other Crow Scout Tribe members, they all recognized Hairy #5 as well, and were instantly filled with happiness.

Hearing them call out his name, Hairy #5 turned his head in surprise. He looked at them for a moment, then turned back with curiosity to stare at the Zombie Wolf.

A look of savagery appeared on the face of the young man. He couldn’t care less that the Crow Scout Tribe members recognized this Greenwood Wolf. As far as he was concerned, anything he looked at, especially things that he wanted to give as a gift to his Master, he could take. The entire Crow Soldier Tribe would definitely approve. As far as the other Tribes went, there was hardly anyone who could possibly contend with his Master.

“Get me that wolf! I want it alive!” As soon as the words left his mouth, the two people standing next to him sprang into action. Simultaneously, the rotting Wolf Zombie shot toward Hairy #5.

As the two Cultivators flew through the air, their totem tattoos shone brightly, transforming into an enormous net which flew to encircle Hairy #5.

Hairy #5’s eyes flashed with coldness, and then his body flickered, exploding forward in attack. His mouth opened wide as he bit toward the youth. His speed was such that the young man had no time to react. In the blink of an eye, he was directly in front of the young man. As this happened, a black light sprung out from the young man’s body.

The black light slammed into Hairy #5, who let out a miserable cry. Immediately, black aura began to emit from his body, and he quickly retreated. As he did, the putrefying Zombie Wolf closed in on him, its eyes glowing with grim coldness. It opened its mouth wide as it prepared to bite into Hairy #5.

It was at this moment that a howl suddenly could be heard from the nearby forest. A green beam of light shot out to slam into the body of the Zombie Wolf. It shook as it flew backward like a kite with its string cut. As it was thrown off to the side, Hairy #4 suddenly appeared to stand next to Hairy #5. He looked toward the three Crow Soldier Tribe members, snarling at them to reveal his sharp teeth.

“Two! Haha! There’s two!” cried the young man. “If I present them both to Master, he’ll definitely be thrilled!” The young man was actually shocked inwardly. The attack just now had been too fast for him to even react to. Were it not for the protective totem his Master had given him, he would have been torn in two just now. This only made him more desirous of Hairy #5. His eyes glowed with coldness.

He waved his right hand, causing a black bracelet to fly out. It suddenly let out a bang as it disintegrated in mid-air. It then transformed into a vortex, from within which multiple growling roars could be heard. Several black beams of light suddenly shot out, which transformed into more than twenty completely putrescent Zombie Wolves.

“Attack! I don’t care who lives or dies, just make sure the bodies of the Greenwood Wolves don’t get too torn up!” Vicious hatred emanated out from the young man’s eyes.

As soon as the Zombie Wolves appeared, a noxious reek billowed out. Furthermore, the forest floor in all directions began to wither and turn black. The faces of the Crow Scout Tribe members instantly fell.

“Hairy #4, Hairy #5, get out of here!!” cried Wu Chen urgently.

“DIE!” cried the young man, laughing as he pointed toward Wu Chen and the others. Immediately, four of the Zombie Wolves turned toward the Crow Scout Tribe members, then turned into black beams of light as they shot forward in attack.

The rest of the Zombie Wolves radiated savagery and madness as they charged toward Hairys #4 and #5.

Meng Hao frowned as watched all of this happen. Finally, he gave a cold snort. Big Hairy looked up and began to howl. Immediately the sound of the howl filled the forest. Hairys #2 and #3, as well as the rest of the Greenwood Wolves, were all in the area. Hearing the howl, they immediately charged in the direction of Hairys #4 and #5.

Their speed was such that it only took a blink of an eye for the young man as well as the Crow Scout Tribe members to see multiple beams of green light shooting toward them from within the surrounding forest. Suddenly, more than twenty Greenwood Wolves were there, each one beyond ordinary, emanating incredible might. This was especially true of two of their number, which were more than nine meters long and emanated flickering green glows. The savagery and coldness which shone in their eyes filled the entire area.

The young man’s face immediately fell. The rotting Zombie Wolves that were flying through the air sensed the sudden impending crisis, and immediately stopped and looked around vigilantly.

“Hairy #2! Hairy #3!” shouted Wu Chen excitedly.

The young man from the Crow Soldier Tribe looked shocked. The other two Tribe members next to him also looked around in surprise at the approaching Greenwood Wolves.

“I never thought my luck would look so good,” said the young man after a moment, laughing loudly. “So many excellent Greenwood Wolves to present to Master! In his heart, I will definitely surpass Second Elder Brother and First Elder Brother!”

However, even as his laughter rang out through the woods, a savage howl ripped through the air in the forest. It circled about in all directions, along with an arrogant aura which immediately caused the neo-demons in the area to begin to tremble. Even the Cultivators of the Crow Scout and Crow Soldier Tribes felt their minds trembling.

At the same time, a white blur appeared, shooting with such speed that nothing was visible but whiteness. The white blur slammed into seven or eight of the Zombie Wolves, whereupon booms echoed out along with bloodcurdling shrieks. The Zombie Wolves all exploded, sending a stinking black mist roiling out in all directions. The world-shaking white blur then transformed into a White Wolf who stood there with utmost grandeur, as if he could look down upon all Heaven and Earth.

The White Wolf’s body wasn’t very large, and even looked somewhat weak. But the instant he appeared, all of the other Greenwood Wolves immediately fell prone, emanating an air of allegiance.

The White Wolf raised its head up and howled, and as it did, the other Greenwood Wolves joined him. Within an instant, the entire wolf pack was howling in unison, causing everything in the area to shake. Even the trees were trembling. The Zombie Wolves began to quiver, and their listless eyes filled with veneration and submission.

“A White Wolf King!!” This was what each and every one of the observing Cultivators was thinking at the moment.

White Wolf King!

The young man’s facial expression immediately changed, and he began to breathe heavily. He stepped back a few paces, looking at the White Wolf King, his eyes filling with unprecedented madness and avarice.

“White Wolf King!! Who could have imagined that this place would have a Wolf King! Once Master finds out, he’s going to be delighted!! It doesn’t matter who this Wolf King belongs to, now that it has appeared, it belongs to me!” The young man roared as he suddenly stretched out his right hand, within which he held a jade slip. Using the fastest speed he could muster, he crushed it, which sent a message to his Master, Gu La.

Meng Hao, who was still observing the proceedings with Spiritual Sense, finally gave a cold snort and then strode forward.

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# Chapter 413: Chapter title located at the end of the chapter…

At the same time that the young man crushed the jade slip….

Not too far away in the same mountain chain were two peaks that seemed to wish to climb up into the highest heights of the clouds. They towered over the earth, looking out in all directions, two powerful magical warriors the sight of which would send shock into anyone’s heart.

Every day at noon, when the sunlight was densest, these two mountains would shine with a silver light. This light was the type that could split Heaven and Earth. It circulated around in the area, sending off powerful ripples.

This was none other than the home of the Crow Soldier Tribe!

On the second peak of the Crow Soldier Tribe was a limestone crag upon which sat seven or eight members of the Crow Soldier Tribe, all smiling respectfully. Sitting in their midst was a middle-aged man who joked and laughed with the surrounding Tribe members.

He wore a black robe, and was clearly beyond ordinary. His eyes contained the stars, and if you looked at them long enough, you could sense a certain sharpness. All of it made him like the sun; without even trying, he became the center of attention.

“… and that is just a fundamental quality of the magic of Dragoneers,” said the man coolly. “If you want your Dao of Dragoneering to live forever, and wish to experience progress, then the only option is to look for the answer within your own flesh and blood and bones. That is where you will find the path you must tread." He wore a smile on his face, although there was no kindness in it; rather, he emanated a lofty and proud air. If you looked closely, however, you would be able see a bit of an emotional sigh contained within them.

The people surrounding him were for the most part outstanding members of the Tribe. All had Cultivation bases at the Core Formation stage; each and every one wore thoughtful expressions.

"Grandmaster Gu, you truly deserve to be a rank 7 Dragoneer. Although we've never heard anything like this before, after some thought, it really makes sense!"

"That's right! Grandmaster Gu, it seems you've truly found your own path as a Dragoneer. You have limitless future potential. I think that in all of the five Tribes of the Crow Divinity, to find someone who could match you in terms of secret Dragoneer arts would be as difficult as finding phoenix feathers or qilin horns."

The proud, middle-aged man engaging in the lively discussion was none other than Gu La, with whom Meng Hao had lost contact during the teleportation to this region. At that time, Meng Hao had rendered Gu La unconscious during his meeting with the other Nascent Soul eccentrics regarding the five Tribes of the Crow Divinity. Therefore, Gu La was completely unaware of any of those matters. All he knew was that when he woke up, he was back in the Western Desert.

Most importantly, there was no sign of that terrifying, inhuman person who plagued him with fear during the day and roamed in his nightmares at night. At first, Gu La had stared in shock. Then he had searched around, filled with disbelief. However, the only thing he had found was the unconscious Wild Giant.

After repeated searches of the area without finding Meng Hao, his body had begun to tremble, and finally, he lifted his head up and let out a roar.

He had thought about all the torment and maltreatment he had endured in the past. He thought about how many times his flesh and blood had been studied. All of it caused tears to stream down Gu La’s face as he roared.

These were the tears of happiness seen on the face of someone who survived a great disaster. Strangely, he also found that for some reason, his skills in the Dragoneer arts had increased, and he was now rank 7.

In his belief, everything that he had endured had moved the Heavens. Finally, a conscience had appeared in that inhuman being, and the man had decided to let him go. Therefore, he left the mountains with the Wild Giant. Soon, he experienced a vast change in situation as he became a famous Dragoneer of the Crow Soldier Tribe.

As the surrounding Crow Soldier Tribe members continued to speak, Gu La laughed proudly and was about to continue speaking when suddenly his expression flickered. He slapped his bag of holding to produce a jade slip. The instant it appeared, cracking sounds could be heard. Everyone’s gaze came to focus on the jade slip as it collapsed into pieces.

“Oh?” said Gu La, a cold light shining within his eyes. His voice cool, he continued, “That would be one of my three apprentices. It looks like one of them has run into some trouble on the outside.” He waved his right hand, causing the remnants of the jade slip to transform into fragments. The resulting powder began to glow, and then turned into a faintly discernible image. Within, Big Hairy could be seen charging forward, emanating the elegant bearing of a Wolf King.

Seeing the image, the eyes of all the surrounding Crow Soldier Tribe members immediately went wide, as did Gu La’s. He stared fixedly at Big Hairy, then began to laugh loudly.

“It seems my Third apprentice really is ingenious. He truly is an outstanding member of the Crow Soldier Tribe. He’s even gone and found a Wolf King for me. Excellent, excellent!” Continuing to laugh, Gu La shot up into the air, followed by the chuckling Crow Soldier Tribe members.

“Congratulations, Grandmaster Gu! It looks like you’ve acquired another neo-demon Wolf King!”

“However, that particular Wolf King looks like a Greenwood Wolf. Could it possibly have something to do with the Crow Scout Tribe?”

“Even if it does, who cares? If Grandmaster Gu takes a fancy to something, even Mo Zi from the Crow Scout Tribe could do nothing but bow his head.”

Amidst the chatter and laughter surrounding him, Gu La laughed loudly and tilted his head up with an expression of pride.

“I, Gu La, will not blithely take a beast away from someone without paying. Whoever the master of that Wolf King is, I will obviously offer some compensation. In fact, if he’s talented enough, then I might even accept that person as an apprentice.” With that, Gu La, flicked his sleeve and shot off into the air.

The surrounding Crow Scout Tribe members’ faces filled with admiration as they clustered around Gu La and flew away with him in the direction indicated by the jade slip. All of them transformed into prismatic beams that shot off into the distance.

Meanwhile, back in the thick mountain forest, even as Meng Hao strode forward, and the White Wolf made its grand entrance, the young man from the Crow Soldier Tribe crushed the jade slip and then ripped open the front of his garment. Immediately, a black stone could be seen hanging around his neck. He grabbed it and threw it out in front of him.

“I summon Demon Doyen Flood Dragon!” cried the youth, his eyes filled with madness. At the same time, he bit down on the tip of his tongue, spitting out a mouthful of blood. Simultaneously, his fellow Tribe members next to him also spit up some blood. The blood from the three people was sucked into the black stone, which then exploded, transforming into ripples that spread out in all directions, along with a Heaven-shaking roar.

Within the roar, a Flood Dragon emerged. Its body was several dozen meters long, and its appearance caused everything in the surrounding mountainous forest to shake. A massive pressure rolled out, pushing down onto everything.

This particular dragon was actually not complete; portions of it were in a state of decay. In fact, bones were visible in quite a few areas. A rotten stench emanated out as it appeared, filling the area.

“Demon Doyen, exterminate these things!” The young man’s eyes radiated madness. This Flood Dragon was a life-saving neo-demon gifted to him by his master. It was not level 6, but rather level 7. It was incredibly powerful, and in the eyes of the young man, once this Demon Doyen appeared, he should be able to finish the battle before his Master arrived.

“That’s… level 7!”

“He actually has a level 7 neo-demon! Impossible!!”

The faces of the surrounding Crow Scout Tribe members immediately flickered, filling with disbelief. Even Mo Fang from the Crow Scout Tribe didn’t have a level 7 neo-demon. Such creatures were very difficult to control.

“My Master is Grandmaster Gu La. To him, nothing is impossible!” The young man laughed uproariously as the Flood Dragon roared and shot toward Big Hairy.

Meng Hao strode through the forest, using his Spiritual Sense to observe what was happening. Seeing everything happening, a strange expression appeared on his face. As soon as the rotting Zombie Wolf had appeared, Meng Hao was astonished at how different Gu La’s neo-demons were from everyone else’s.

Then the Flood Dragon appeared. Meng Hao recognized it instantly. It was, in fact, a Flood Dragon that he himself had killed and then given to Gu La as food for the Wild Giant.

Even as Meng Hao scanned the area with Spiritual Sense, Big Hairy let out a growling roar. His body flickered and he transformed into a white blur that shot toward the Flood Dragon. At the same time, the surrounding Greenwood Wolves instantly fell upon the putrefying Zombie Wolves, and a vicious, deadly battle erupted.

Booms rang out, accompanied by howls and roars as the Greenwood Wolves tangled with the Zombie Wolves. At the same time, Big Hairy and the Flood Dragon fought back and forth fiercely. Because of Big Hairy's fierceness and incredibly high life force, it didn't matter that the Flood Dragon was level 7. It couldn't do anything to even scratch Big Hairy.

In fact, it continued to retreat, until finally Big Hairy had had enough. He let out a tremendous roar, and began to shake. In the blink of an eye, his body expanded to a size of over thirty meters. He looked like a small, white mountain. His aura emanated up endlessly so that in an instant, he suddenly exerted tremendous pressure down onto the Flood Dragon.

Big Hairy's aura spread out in all directions, giving rise to a white-colored tempest that rose up to the Heavens. Accompanied by an Earth-shaking roar, Big Hairy charged toward the Flood Dragon, slamming into it and causing it to let out a miserable shriek. Its already damaged body began to collapse and fly about in all directions. Big Hairy's jaws latched onto the Flood Dragon's head, and he ripped it off with a howl.

Squeals filled the air as the Greenwood Wolves attacked relentlessly. It took only a moment for all of the rotting Zombie Wolves to be torn to pieces.

The Crow Scout Tribe members spirits were instantly lifted; Wu Chen clenched his fists, his face filled with excitement.

On the other hand, the face of young man from the Crow Soldier Tribe, as well as the faces of his two companions, instantly went deathly pale. Without thinking about it, they backed up, breathing heavily. Complete disbelief filled the eyes of Grandmaster Gu La's Third apprentice.

“That's… a level 8… level 8 Wolf King!”

It was at this exact moment, that a black streak of light appeared from off to the side. It shot toward Big Hairy, and then transformed into the shocking Black Bat, as well as a large group of other Greenwood Bats.

A horde of Greenwood Snakes also appeared, hissing loudly as they emerged from the forest.

“That’s… that’s a Bat King!!” said the young man, his face filled with dread as he continued to back up. How could he ever have imagined that he would manage to provoke such a horde of neo-demons?

“It doesn’t matter if there are two neo-demon Kings! You’ve run into me today, so now your lives belongs to me!” said the young man through clenched teeth. His eyes filled with venomous hatred as he slapped his bag of holding to produce a chunk of black-colored meat.

As soon as the meat appeared, a shocking sound rumbled out from the surrounding forest. It was a roar that sounded as if it could shred the Heavens.

“Meat….”

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# Chapter 414: Master, Save Me!

The roar rumbled out, shaking the Heavens and causing the land to tremble. The surrounding forest burst into chaos, as if a tempest had sprung into being and was preparing to shred all life into ash.

Within the roar contained a mighty pressure that all Cultivators could sense. It instantly caused the faces of the Crow Scout Tribe members to fall; blood sprayed from their mouths and their ears rang.

All of the white fur on Big Hairy’s body stood on end, and shockingly, he emanated an aura of vigilance. His eyes were filled with freezing coldness, and not even the slightest scrap of feeling could be detected therein, only killing intent.

He lowered his head and instinctively began to emit low-pitched, threatening growls.

The Black Bat next to him looked equally serious. It glared off toward where the growl came from, its eyes flickering mysteriously. It slowly opened its mouth, baring its sharp, vicious teeth.

They were the only neo-demons in the area who had such a reaction. The rest of them began trembling as soon as they heard the roar. One by one, they dropped prone to the ground, as because of the mighty pressure, they didn’t dare to move.

Even Hairy #2 and the others had to force themselves to even lift their heads up. Their eyes were filled with fear and struggle as they let out low-pitched howls.

As for the young man and the other two from the Crow Soldier Tribe, their faces flickered and they trembled. The young man quickly took the piece of meat he held in his hand and prepared to throw it out in front of him.

“You’re dead!” he cried. “Nobody can save you now!”

As the roar echoed toward them from off in the distance, Meng Hao finally emerged from the forest to stand in front of everyone.

The Crow Scout Tribe members looked over one by one, and their expressions were the same as if they had just seen a blood relative. They immediately began to clasp hands and excitedly bow to him.

“Grandmaster Meng!!”

“It’s Grandmaster Meng!”

“Greetings, Grandmaster Meng!”

This was especially true of Wu Chen. He was the first one to catch sight of Meng Hao, and his expression was one of extreme excitement. Catching sight of Meng Hao here filled him not just with simple respect, but something bordering on fanaticism.

Wu Hai gave a slight, inward sigh of relief. Next to him, Wu Ling had a complex expression and subconsciously lowered her head.

Meng Hao gave smiling nods to everyone. Then, his gaze shifted off into the distance. He could sense the pressure weighing down on everything, and as he did, he smiled. There was no need for him to even check with Spiritual Sense; he could tell that off in the distant forest was none other than a Wild Giant. It was striding toward them at top speed, most likely drooling at the same time.

As soon as Meng Hao appeared, it was as if all the pressure suddenly lifted from the neo-demons. One by one, they stood up, their dignity and might restored. Hairy #2 trotted over to Meng Hao, a happy expression in his eyes. It only took a moment for Meng Hao to be surrounded by neo-demons.

Big Hairy’s body flickered as he, too, returned to Meng Hao’s side. He no longer looked completely savage, but rather, clever and charming.

The Black Bat hesitated for a moment, then flew over to Meng Hao’s side. However, it continued to glance with cold eyes off into the distance.

“Grandmaster Meng?” said Gu La’s Third apprentice, his bearing arrogant and disdainful. “Since when did your Crow Scout Tribe get somebody named Grandmaster Meng?! Presumably this neo-demon horde belongs to you. Well, my Master is rank 7 Dragoneer Grandmaster Gu La of the Crow Soldier Tribe. If you’re smart, you’ll hand over the neo-demon horde to me immediately. If you don’t, you’ll have to face my Master, who’s on the way here right now. And guess what, there’s also a Wild Giant coming!”

Even as he spoke, the ground trembled, and another roar from off in the distance shook everything.

“Meat…. Meat….” The voice was like thunder, sweeping across everything. The Crow Scout Tribe members continued to appear to be at a loss as the ground heaved. The neo-demons next to Meng Hao, with the exception of Big Hairy and the Black Bat, all began to growl as they sensed a feeling of imminent crisis.

“Do you hear that?” said the young man excitedly. “That’s the roar of a Wild Giant! That’s none other than my Master’s Demonic Dharma Protector, an ancient neo-demon that he personally subjugated years ago. A Wild Giant!!” He laughed boisterously. “Wild Giants eat other neo-demons for lunch, and are rarely seen in the Western Desert. According to legend, they rarely bond masters. However, my Master was able to bond this one, and that’s why it follows his commands!”

The ground trembled once again, and the roar of the Wild Giant seemed even closer. The Crow Scout Tribe members began to back up, and the growling roars of the neo-demons grew louder. Meng Hao was the only one who just stood there smiling as he looked out into the forest.

“It seems Gu La really does have some talent,” thought Meng Hao. “After giving him the job of feeding the Wild Giant, he realized after we got split up that he could use food to control it.”

“Scared yet?!” cried the young man. “Once the Wild Giant appears all of you are dead!!” He lifted his head up and laughed uproariously as the ground shook beneath him. Off in the distance, an enormous figure could already be seen striding with great steps through the forest.

Its frame was gigantic, and it emanated a barbaric aura as it roared viciously. As of now everyone present could see it.

“Meat…. Meat….” Another roar filled the surroundings, circling around and echoing like thunder. At the same time, the Wild Giant suddenly leaped up into the air. It shot out of the forest, flying up until it obscured the sun with its enormous frame. Beneath, the Crow Scout Tribe members’ eyes were wide and filled with shock and amazement. They couldn’t even breathe as they looked up at the shocking Wild Giant.

Gu La’s Third apprentice stood there cool and composed. However, he was actually nervous inwardly. If it wasn’t for the fact that it was absolutely necessary, and also that he knew his Master was on the way, he would never have called the Wild Giant here.

The Wild Giant was an irascible neo-demon who only showed up because of food. Even his Master Gu La treated the Wild Giant very politely and was constantly feeding it. He would even scratch its back when it was preparing to sleep.

“Esteemed Wild Giant, they are your food!!” he cried, sounding very much like his Master. Body trembling, he let out a roar and then tossed the piece of meat he held directly toward Meng Hao.

At the same time, he retreated back. The other two Crow Soldier Tribe members made to follow, their faces pale and their bodies trembling.

However, they were a bit too late. The Wild Giant descended like a storm. Even while it was still in mid-air, its huge hand shot down toward the ground and snatched up one of the two Crow Soldier Tribe Cultivators. The man screamed as the Wild Giant tossed him into its mouth. Crunching sounds could be heard, and then the man was swallowed down.

“Meat! Meat!” roared the Wild Giant. In its eyes, it didn’t care at all about Cultivators or neo-demons. Its eyes were fixed on the chunk of small meat whistling through the air. Its hand shot out to snatch it up.

Seeing his fellow Tribe member grabbed and eaten caused the young apprentice’s heart to fill with alarm. Even stronger, though, was the cruelty that welled up within him. He saw the Wild Giant’s hand moving toward Meng Hao, and began to laugh wildly.

“The neo-demons that Young Master wanted are just about….” Before he could finish speaking, his eyes suddenly went wide and filled with disbelief. He stared, gaping, first confused and then struck dumb with amazement.

This was because Meng Hao suddenly spoke.

“All you think about all day is eating meat! Get your butt over here!”

Then the young man saw what Meng Hao did!

He reached out and grabbed the piece of meat and watched the Wild Giant nearing. Shockingly, as soon as the Wild Giant heard Meng Hao’s words, its entire body began to tremble.

It was as if to the Wild Giant, Meng Hao’s voice contained Heavenly pressure. It seemed as if no matter how hungry or wild it became, it would never be able to forget Meng Hao’s voice for its entire life.

The Wild Giant’s eyes went wide as it recalled the scene of the man standing on its head, rousing the Demonic Qi in the area, and asking it if it was willing to capitulate and pledge allegiance.

Its enormous hand suddenly came to a stop only a meter away from Meng Hao. It stared at Meng Hao for a moment, and as it did, the frenzy in its eyes faded. It turned instead into happiness, as well as a bit of frustration, as if it were nursing a grievance. It let out a massive roar.

The happiness was because of finally being able to find its Master. The frustration was because it was never able to eat until being full recently, and was depressed because it had been unable to find Meng Hao. All of these feelings leaked out into the massive roar.

“Shut up and get over here,” chided Meng Hao.

The enormous Wild Giant immediately quieted down and stepped over to Meng Hao’s side, as obedient as a kitten. It carefully avoided all of the other neo-demons and then squatted down next to Meng Hao.

Its face was filled with happiness as well as obedience. This caused the minds of everyone present to reel. Everything seemed to be happening opposite to expectation, and it caused their minds to be complete blanks.

Moments ago, the Wild Giant had been filled with incomparable mania. Now, however, it was clearly very obedient, and not the least bit ferocious. In fact, it really looked as if it had just found its master.

The ease with which it squatted down seemed to come from force of habit, as if it had done so many times in front of Meng Hao.

All of this caused a complete silence to fill the air. Wu Chen stared. Wu Hai panted. Wu Ling gaped.

As for Gu La’s Third apprentice, the young man, he simply was incapable of reconciling the image of the frenzied, man-eating Wild Giant that even his Master was careful around, with the obedient, puppy-like thing that he saw just now. His mind reeled, and he suddenly had the feeling that this Wild Giant… was not his Master’s after all, but instead belonged to this Grandmaster Meng whom he had never seen before.

“I let my Wild Giant roam free in this area, and you called it here to attack me?” said Meng Hao, looking at the young man with an expression that was a smile, and also not a smile.

The young man opened his mouth, but his brain was empty. He couldn’t think of anything to say. Everything that had happened had turned his mind and heart inside out. However, it was at this moment that seven or eight beams of prismatic light appeared off in the distance. In the lead was none other than Gu La, a look of dignity covering his face as he shot booming through the air. Immediately, the young man came to his senses. He looked up into the air with a look of excitement.

“Master, save me!!”

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# Chapter 415: Grandmaster Gu La

“What are you losing your head over? I’m here! Who is there that would dare to harm my apprentice!?” Gu La was wearing a luxurious robe, and his hair floated in the wind as he flew down from up in the air. His expression was one of pride and aloofness, as if he were the most esteemed person under Heaven.

This was especially true considering he stood atop a thirty-meter long Flood Dragon with violet scales. The Flood Dragon’s fierce eyes were pale white making it so that even though the dragon emitted a strong aura of death, it still looked divine and mighty, anything but ordinary. Its domineering aura was enough to cause anyone to take it very seriously.

Gu La stood there atop the Flood Dragon, emanating billowing aura. Next to him, the other Crow Soldier Tribe Cultivators all had Cultivation bases at the Core Formation stage. Clearly, none were ordinary Tribe members, but rather influential figures.

They clustered around Gu La as he shot down from the sky. Gu La glanced coolly over the situation, his expression one of authority. The first thing he saw, naturally, was the enormous figure of the Wild Giant.

However, because of the angle, he was unable to see Meng Hao standing on the other side of the Wild Giant. All he could see was the Wild Giant’s obedient posture, which seemed a bit odd.

Regardless of anything, however, he was incapable of connecting the Wild Giant’s obedient behaviour to Meng Hao. In his mind, this was the Western Desert, and that inhuman freak had forgotten about him long ago in the Black Lands. There was no way he would reappear.

Half a year ago, he would not have been so firm in his conviction. But after all this time had passed in comfort and safety, this way of thinking was deeply rooted in Gu La.

The second thing he noticed was Big Hairy and the Black Bat, as well as the rest of the neo-demon horde which stood beneath the shadow of the Wild Giant.

As for the Crow Scout Tribe members, Gu La completely ignored them.

“Those two neo-demon Kings are extraordinary! Having roamed the Western Desert for years, I can say that such neo-demons are rarely seen.” Gu La smiled, not paying too much attention to his pleading apprentice. Hands clasped behind his back, he stood there looking down at the scene.

As he spoke, Big Hairy looked up at him; cruel and cold killing intent shone in his eyes. Even his white fur seemed to emanate an icy desire to kill.

The Black Bat’s mysterious eyes narrowed. It could sense an intense pressure emanating from Gu La. It stared at him, baring a mouthful of sharp teeth.

As for the rest of the neo-demons, they trembled beneath the mighty pressure emitted by the Flood Dragon which floated above them.

As for Wu Chen and the others from the Crow Scout Tribe, their faces were pale. Seeing the group from the Crow Soldier Tribe arrive, as well as the terrifying Flood Dragon and Gu La, they all began to breathe heavily.

“That’s… that’s rank 7 Dragoneer Grandmaster Gu La from the Crow Soldier Tribe!!” blurted Wu Chen. He looked over at Meng Hao, and, seeing his calm expression, suddenly felt a bit better.

Meanwhile up in mid-air, the other Crow Soldier Tribe members started laughing in response to the words Gu La had just spoken.

“Those two neo-demons really do look extraordinary. Hahaha! Congratulations Grandmaster Gu, you’ve acquired two neo-demon Kings today. You’re going to be even more powerful than before.”

“Great! Your luck is astonishing, Grandmaster Gu. Those two are definitely rare neo-demons!”

From the pleasant laughter, it was clear that they meant what they said; these neo-demon Kings really were rare. Hearing their words and laughter, Gu La’s face filled with complacency and happiness. He was truly excited after having seen Big Hairy and the Black Bat.

“Apprentice offers greetings to Master!” said the young man down on the ground. Seeing Gu La arrive, he heaved an inward sigh of relief. Suddenly a feeling of arrogance and superiority rose up within him.

“Master,” he continued, backing up even as he shouted, “I accidentally happened upon these two neo-demon Kings. I was just attempting to capture them to give to you as a gift when this guy showed up. He even attacked me and tried to take them away! Master, please take charge of administering justice!” He glared at Meng Hao with venomous hatred the entire time, a cold smile covering his lips.

“I don’t care who you are in the Crow Scout Tribe,” he went on, unable to contain his pompous complacency. “You provoked Young Master and dared to lay in ambush to take the neo-demons Master took a liking to. You’re dead for sure!”

Gu La looked over at the Wild Giant and noted its strange obedience. However, his line of sight was blocked, and still couldn’t see Meng Hao. Then he thought about his status in the Crow Soldier Tribe, and cooly said, “This is a bit improper. Apprentice, these are Fellow Daoists from the Crow Scout Tribe. You really shouldn’t say such evil things about them.”

“I acknowledge my mistake, Master,” said the young man, lowering his head and putting on a victimized appearance. “However, this guy is really strong. If you hadn’t arrived in time, I would definitely have been a corpse already.”

Having heard what was being said, Meng Hao chuckled, then slowly took a step forward, emerging from the cover of the Wild Giant. Now, everyone up above could see him clearly. He looked up toward the proud, dignified Gu La.

Even as Meng Hao began to step out, Gu La heard his apprentice's words and began to respond, his expression dignified, his jaw lifted up. "Well then, let's see who exactly it was that would possibly dare to mess with Gu La's discip… uh? What?! URGHK!!"

Gu La's eyes went wide. The first part of the end of his sentence, "uh," represented shock.

The second part, "what?!" represented disbelief.

The third part "URGHK" … was an enormous gasp

Suddenly, he couldn't breath. His face instantly twisted as if he had suddenly caught sight of an evil spirit just arisen from the Yellow Springs. As he stared down, his mind filled with a roaring sound, as if thunder boomed about inside of it.

The roaring inside his mind was actually similar to that of ten thousand horses galloping about inside his skull. His consciousness was trampled, shattered, as he suddenly realized why the Wild Giant was acting so obediently.

"Damn you, Wild Giant," he thought, weeping inwardly. "I took care of you all this time in vain. You, you, you… you ran into that inhuman jinx first, why the hell didn't you at least tip me off?"

At the same time as this was happening, the surrounding Crow Soldier Tribe members saw Meng Hao. Their expressions were that of indifference as they began to call out.

"Fellow Daoist from the Crow Scout Tribe, your actions are beyond proper. Since Grandmaster Gu La's apprentice saw these neo-demons first, that means he had the right to capture them. For you to steal them in such a fashion is taking advantage of the Crow Soldier Tribe in an extreme way!”

“It turns out the trifling Crow Scout Tribe is full of bandits! I bet that guy is a Crow Scout Tribe vassal. Piddling vassal, do you really dare to be so aggressive? I’d love to see if you have the gall to try to kill any Crow Soldier Tribe members while we’re around?!”

Of course, the Cultivators who had accompanied Gu La had no idea who Meng Hao was. Although he had caused a stir in the Crow Scout Tribe, the Greatfather and other powerful members of the Tribe had interfered with the spread of news. This enabled Meng Hao’s identity to remain a mystery; no outsider knew any of the details.

Even news of his battle with Mo Fang had been suppressed on strict orders from the Tribe. Not a scrap of information had leaked out.

Trembling, Gu La suddenly said, “Hahaha! Actually, I’m pretty tired today. Take care everyone, I’ll take my leave.” He immediately began to back up, and was about to turn and transform into a beam of light and flee at top speed when he was blocked by some of the nearby Crow Soldier Tribe members.

“Grandmaster Gu, what’s wrong?”

“Yeah, what’s going on Grandmaster Gu? Those two neo-demon Kings are matchlessly divine and mighty. It’s impossible to be mistaken, completely impossible. They’re definitely neo-demon Kings!”

“Oh, it doesn’t matter,” gushed Gu La, his heart shaking. “I suddenly remembered that I forgot to feed one of my neo-demon hordes. That’s… um, see you….” He shoved off the restraining hands of the Crow Soldier Tribe members and was about to ignore everyone and leave.

However, his young apprentice, seeing Gu La about to leave, suddenly shot into the air to block his way. “Master, this guy didn’t just attack me, when I mentioned your name, he suddenly got all arrogant and bossy. He even insulted YOU, Master. This is intolerable!”

Meng Hao watched all of this with a smileless smile. Patting the Wild Giant next to him, he suddenly realized that this new version of Gu La was much more amusing than before.

Wu Chen and the others from the Crow Scout Tribe were all staring in shock as the scene unfolded. Confused expressions covered their faces. They couldn't understand why Grandmaster Gu La would arrive in such an impressive, overwhelming fashion, but then act like this. Without even thinking about it, they looked over at Meng Hao.

It wasn't just them. The group from the Crow Soldier Tribe also could tell that something fishy was going on.

"Screw off!!" roared Gu La. He lifted his hand and was just about to push the young man out of the way when Meng Hao's voice again could be heard.

"Since you're here," Meng Hao said with a laugh, "there's no need to rush off."

These words immediately caused Gu La to begin to quiver. He slowly turned, forcing a smile onto his face that made it look almost like he was crying. His body began to shake violently, and his mind roared. A roar of frustration and rage echoed out within his heart.

"How could it be…?" he thought. "This is the Western Desert…. It's not the Black Lands…. How could he be here…? I, I, I…." Images began to flicker through his mind. That of the first moment he had met Meng Hao, to all the research he had been subjected to, and finally his recent happy days. Now, however, the good times had evaporated into a nightmare that would never go away.

"How could it be…?" Gu La felt grief and indignation, but he had no choice but turn blinking to look at Meng Hao and pretend that he had just noticed him. His expression was one of happiness, although all ability to think or even speak had left him.

Before he had a chance to say anything to Meng Hao, Gu La’s Third apprentice noted the fact that his Master was turning around and then let out an inward sigh of relief. The he turned to glare viciously at Meng Hao.

“You’re dead! You provoked a rank 7 Dragoneer. Even if you are from the Crow Scout Tribe, they won’t protect you now!” The young man was growing even more aggressive. At the moment, he wasn’t paying any attention to the two neo-demons next to Meng Hao. In his mind, few people in the five Tribes of the Crow Divinity would possibly dare to enrage his Master.

Gu La’s expression changed, and his heart began to pound.

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# Chapter 416: Conning Master….

As the young man’s words echoed in Gu La’s ears, his eyes went wide. He suddenly thought of occasions in the past in which people had paid the price for offending Meng Hao.

His body began to tremble as he glared at his Third apprentice. He suddenly started wondering if this person… was his Third apprentice, or his enemy.

“Gu La, what do you think?” said Meng Hao, smiling as he looked up at Gu La. Gu La’s body was like a sieve, not just shaking, but also pouring out cold sweat. He was just about to open his mouth to reply when…

“What gall!” shouted the young man, once again cutting off his Master’s explanation. “You dare to call my Master by his personal name? What makes you think you’re qualified to do that?!”

“You!!” cried Gu La, his eyes red. He was especially frightened because Meng Hao had just frowned. His frown suddenly made Gu La feel like a hundred thousand lightning bolts were exploding around inside his heart and mind. His face completely changed as he let out a terrified howl. “SHUT UP!!”

His voice echoed around in the area, causing the faces of the surrounding Crow Soldier Tribe members to fall as they instinctively edged away from Gu La.

The young man stared mutely at Gu La for a moment before quickly saying, “Master, what’s wrong. This guy is arrogant to the extreme. Earlier, he was being endlessly sarcastic! Master…”

The rage in Gu La’s heart billowed to untold heights. Flames of fury seemed to be on the verge of exploding out of his eyes, and he looked like he wanted to swallow his apprentice alive. This was the first time he started wondering how his apprentice could be such an idiot. Couldn’t the kid see Gu La’s expression, and hear the words spoken by the inhuman freak?

“Master? Dog farts! When was I ever your Master? You damned punk, you’re not my apprentice! You’re my enemy!” At the same time that Gu La’s rage burned, he also felt a profound sense of deadly crisis. His entire body was tingling as he thought of how he had been cut into bloody pieces that year. A massive roar exploded out of his body as he struck out in front of him with his palm.

A slapping sound rang out as the young man flew backward with a miserable shriek. He coughed up a huge mouthful of blood as he slammed into the ground off in the distance, then passed out.

That wasn’t enough to ease Gu La’s anger. His body flickered toward the unconscious young man and began to trample him.

A cracking sound could be heard, and the young man suddenly regained consciousness. He let out another scream, then passed out a second time.

Seeing this happened caused the faces of the surrounding Crow Soldier Tribe members to immediately grow sharp even as they backed up again.

“Grandmaster Gu, what’s the meaning of this!?”

Gu La pretended not to hear them. He leaped into the air, flew over, then flopped onto his knees in front of Meng Hao. Tears streamed down his face, which was filled with an expression of boundless happiness.

“I’ve finally found you Young Master. Young Master… your old servant has been looking for you for the better part of a year…. I really thought that you had abandoned me. I… I….”

As soon as Gu La’s words filled the air, cries of astonishment could be heard. Whether it be Wu Chen and the others from the Crow Scout Tribe, or the group of Crow Soldier Tribe members up in mid-air, all of them could not possibly have anything other than expressions of complete astonishment when they heard Gu La’s words. They almost couldn’t believe it.

One by one, they started to breathe heavily as they looked at Gu La and Meng Hao.

Wu Chen and the others from the Crow Scout Tribe were staring with wide eyes.

“Just… just what is the relationship between them?”

“It turns out that Grandmaster Meng is actually Grandmaster Gu’s Master…. So it turns out Grandmaster Meng is even more prestigious than we thought!”

“No wonder Grandmaster Meng’s secret Dragoneer arts are so profound. He can even raise neo-demon Kings. If his servant is a rank 7 Dragoneer, then just what rank is he?”

However, even more shocked than the Crow Scout Tribe members were the influential people from the Crow Soldier Tribe who had accompanied Gu La here.

“Grandmaster Gu actually called that guy Young Master…. Just… just what exactly is going on here!?!?”

“Is it really true…? If that guy is Grandmaster Gu’s Young Master, well, considering how powerful Grandmaster Gu is, then what about his Master…?”

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he looked at Gu La with a mysterious smile. Obviously, Gu La was worried that Meng Hao would exact some sort of punishment on him. He clearly regretted everything that had happened before. Now, he kneeled there, looking anxiously at Meng Hao, his expression one of bereavement and pleading.

“You’ve taken good care of the Wild Giant,” said Meng Hao coolly. “When I need you, I’ll call for you.” He turned toward the Wild Giant and patted it.

Then, he flicked his sleeve and turned, walking off into the distance. The Wild Giant seemed reluctant to part with him.

Big Hairy, the Black Bat, and the rest of the neo-demon horde followed Meng Hao. As for Wu Chen and the rest of the Crow Scout Tribe members, they quickly followed along too, panting.

Gu La bowed respectfully toward Meng Hao, then loudly said, “Young Master, your old servant pledges to follow your orders to the death!”

With that, Gu La let out a sigh. His body was no longer trembling, but he had been nearly frightened to death just now. He watched Meng Hao leave before rising to his feet, the proud and lofty expression once again appearing on his face. Hands clasped behind his back, he turned toward the shocked, gaping Crow Soldier Tribe members.

“The young prince of our House is yet young, but as dignified as ever. I’ve never told you who I am. I am the Dao Protector of a mysterious Western Desert legacy. I have been tasked with protecting the young prince of our House. Half a year ago, we were separated when teleporting to this area.” Rolling his eyes at them, he patted the Wild Giant, then took it to head back toward the Crow Soldier Tribe. Although Gu La seemed to have recovered, the look in his eyes was the same as a person who had survived a great disaster. As for the Wild Giant, it continued to roar for meat.

“Dammit,” thought Gu La, “I can’t stay in this place for much longer. I have to flee in the night. Get as far away from that inhuman Meng Hao….” Countless ideas sprang into Gu La’s head, however, he then began to hesitate. He recalled the words Meng Hao had spoken just before he left, and he began to struggle inwardly. A moment later, he let out long sigh.

In the end, he just didn’t have the courage to flee secretly.

Meanwhile, Meng Hao proceeded along through the mountains, followed by his neo-demon horde. Wu Chen and the others from the Crow Scout Tribe followed cautiously. They couldn’t help but look at Meng Hao with respect, Wu Ling included. Of course, Wu Chen’s respect for Meng Hao had long since turned into fanaticism.

Everyone was quiet. Meng Hao didn’t speak, so neither did anyone else dare to make any noise. Eventually they emerged from the mountain forest; off in the distance, the Crow Scout Tribe was now visible.

Finally, Wu Chen couldn’t take it any more. After a moment’s hesitation, he hurried forward and said in lowered voice, “Grand… Grandmaster Meng…. Grandmaster Meng, sir, just what exactly is the relationship between you and Grandmaster Gu?”

Behind him, the eyes of the others began to shine. This was the same question all of them had been hesitating about the entire time.

Meng Hao didn’t pause for even a moment as he proceeded forward. Instead, he smiled.

“When I came to this place, I brought along a Wild Giant who happens to be addicted to meat. Feeding it was quite bothersome. Thankfully, I had an attendant in charge of taking care of the Wild Giant. He was none other than Gu La.” Having given this simple explanation, Meng Hao continued onward.

When Wu Chen heard the explanation, it resounded like thunderclaps in his ears. The others gasped, and they all looked at Meng Hao with expressions even more fanatical than before.

From what they could tell, the Wild Giant was a neo-demon, and a shocking one at that. But even more shocking was that Meng Hao had a rank 7 Dragoneer raising it for him!

All of this immediately turned into cloak of mystery that enveloped Meng Hao in their eyes.

As they neared the Crow Scout Tribe, Meng Hao turned back to look at Wu Chen and the others. With a smile, he said, “I don’t mind you all knowing about this matter, but please don’t spread the word to others.” Then he turned, transforming into a beam of light that shot off into the distance along with his neo-demon horde.

Wu Chen and the others clasped hands and bowed as he left. Each and every one decided in their hearts that since Grandmaster Meng did not wish the events which had occurred today to be spread about, they definitely wouldn't mention them to anyone.

Wu Chen and the others watched him until he disappeared. All of them had indescribable feelings within them; what they had experienced today was something far beyond anything they had experienced in many years.

Sighing emotionally, they continued onward toward the Tribe. In contrast to the fanaticism of Wu Chen, Wu Ling was thoughtful as she walked silently through the Tribe. She had a dark, torn look on her face, as well as a bit of hesitation. However, after glancing back at Wu Chen, her eyes filled with determination that added a certain special beauty to her looks.

After night fell, Wu Ling's figure turned into a beam of light that shot directly toward Meng Hao's courtyard.

She arrived quickly, whereupon she stood outside beneath the moonlight, beautiful enough to make anyone's heart pound.

Biting her lip, but eyes filled with determination, she stepped forward and then softly said, "Wu Ling requests an audience with Grandmaster Meng."

Meng Hao sat cross-legged in the courtyard. His eyes opened, and he scanned the area. When he caught sight of Wu Ling, his brow furrowed. However, he didn't refuse her. Without saying a word, he waved his hand, causing the courtyard door to open.

Wu Ling's beautiful silhouette could be seen hurrying in.

She stood there nervously, and, seeing Meng Hao's cold expression, quickly said, "Many thanks, for allowing Wu Ling to enter, Grandmaster Meng."

Meng Hao looked at her, expressionless.

"Last time, when Wu Chen came to ask for your help, Wu Ling did not understand matters, and made many improper remarks. Grandmaster Meng, please don’t take offense….” She was starting to get even more nervous, and was now unconsciously gripping the corner of her garment. She lowered her head.

Meng Hao frowned.

She was now panting a little bit. Her mind felt as if it were in chaos. All the words she had prepared before coming here just wouldn’t come out. “… Regarding the matter today, please don’t worry, Grandmaster Meng. I will make sure they understand not to spread the word.”

“Why are you here?” barked Meng Hao coldly, cutting her off.

Wu Ling was now completely nervous. Meng Hao’s loud words caused her heart to tremble. Gritting her teeth, she looked up.

As she did, her right hand reached up and unfastened her outer garment. The garment immediately fell to the ground, revealing her yellowish-pink underclothing. Beneath the moonlight, her beautiful curves suddenly seemed to emanate a soul-stirring air of seduction.

Her face was pale, but her eyes were determined. She stood there beneath the moon, trembling slightly, but staring at Meng Hao with gritted teeth.

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# Chapter 417: The Resurrection Lily Suddenly Makes a Move!

Meng Hao stared in shock. Without realizing it, his eyes gazed down at her body. He wasn't sure why, but for some reason, he suddenly found himself thinking about Chu Yuyan.

"Grandmaster Meng, I'm willing to do anything for my younger brother." Her body trembled, but she held her head high nonetheless. The moon accentuated her beauty, making her particularly enticing.

Meng Hao didn't say anything. Wu Ling's purpose was clear; she wanted to help her brother acquire a proper position and status within the Crow Scout Tribe. Accomplishing something like that wouldn't be difficult for Meng Hao. Be it in terms of his Cultivation base or his identity as a Dragoneer, if he threw his support behind someone from one of the three bloodlines, it would be enough.

After a long moment passed, Meng Hao looked back up and said, "I'm not very interested in your body." Having reached his current level of Cultivation base, he could ignore the changes wrought by time. Because of that, his interest in certain matters had cooled. He had never experienced the passionate love between a man and a woman, and as such was able to look down on such carnal temptations.

With a simple nod of his head, vast numbers of women with low Cultivation bases would throw themselves at him to acquire the protection of powerful expert of the great circle of the Gold Core, a person who could contend with the early Nascent Soul stage.

However, Meng Hao's heart was not focused on lust. His ambitions lay in the Eastern Lands and the Great Tang, in Immortal Ascension, in superseding the Ji Clan, in assuring that no one under Heaven could interfere with his plans, in preventing the Heavens from ever suppressing him.

These were his dreams. From the moment he had entered the Cultivation world, he had staunchly stuck to pursuing the path of his dreams.

In this life, he would not be an insect to others!

In pursuit of these dreams, he had entered the Southern Domain. In pursuit of these dreams, he had gone to the Black Lands. In pursuit of these dreams, he had traveled to the Western Desert to search for the path of his Five-Colored Nascent Soul.

With the passage of time, these things had become indelibly imprinted on his heart. This was his path.

Wu Ling's face was ashen, and she bit her lip. She could see Meng Hao's calmness, and could see that his gaze wasn't the bit affected by her body. She knew what he said to be true. He didn't care about her body.

The moonlight poured down onto her, and she clenched her jaw as she looked at him bitterly. It was at this point that Meng Hao's eyes narrowed and he suddenly looked directly at her chest.

Just now, moonlight had fallen on her neck, and a pendant which hung there, something he hadn't noticed before.

It was a silver pendant, which let off a gentle aura beneath the moonlight. The design was that of a flower with ten petals. A small, silver flower.

Almost the same instant that Meng Hao caught sight of the pendant, he suddenly sensed the imminent awakening of the Resurrection Lily, which Shui Dongliu had sealed such a long time ago.

The signs of awakening were sudden; in the blink of an eye, an intense pain suddenly filled his body, causing his face to immediately flicker.

Meng Hao’s Cultivation base back then couldn’t even compare to his current one. Despite the fact that the pain washed over him like floodwaters, the only thing that Wu Ling could see was a slight flicker before his expression returned to normal.

Meng Hao’s hand suddenly lifted up and made a snatching motion. The necklace which the pendant was attached to snapped, and it turned into a beam of silver light as it shot toward Meng Hao. He grabbed it out of the air.

“Where did you get this?” Even as he asked the question, his body filled with pain, and his Cultivation base trembled as it fought back and forth with the Resurrection Lily. One tried to shake off its seal, the other tried to push back with full strength. Despite all that was happening, not a trace of it could be seen on Meng Hao’s face.

Wu Ling stared in shock and unconsciously raised her hand up to her neck.

“My mother gave that to me….”

“You can leave now,” said Meng Hao. “As for the matter regarding Wu Chen, I will consider it.” With that, he closed his eyes. He didn’t return the pendant.

Wu Ling hesitated for a moment, then bowed her head and put her garments back on. Giving Meng Hao a slight curtsy, she turned and left, feeling disconsolate and frustrated.

It was about the same time that Wu Ling left the courtyard that Meng Hao finally couldn’t control himself anymore. His face instantly went pale, and sweat drops as big as beans began to pour down. It only took an instant for him to be completely soaked. He waved his left hand, causing the Greenwood Tree totem to magically appear on his forehead. The Eyeless Larva could be seen on his right hand, and the surrounding neo-demon horde suddenly looked extremely vigilant. A gently glowing shield appeared, with Meng Hao at its center. It completely surrounded the entire courtyard as Meng Hao trembled, then coughed up a mouthful of blood.

This blood was not red, but rather, was made of four colors. It transformed into a mist which hovered in mid-air before him, forming into a Resurrection Lily. It faced Meng Hao and let out a soundless shriek that was filled with ferocity and obstinacy.

Meng Hao's eyes glowed brightly. He began to rotate his Cultivation base with full power, and then closed his eyes. He did everything he could to suppress the Resurrection Lily. Soon, enough time had passed for an incense stick to burn, whereupon a tremor ran through his body.

"You wanna come out? Fine!" Meng Hao gave a cold harrumph, then slapped his bag of holding to produce a scroll painting. It floated in front of him and slowly unfurled, seemingly under the power of some invisible force that wanted to open the Resurrection Lily painting.

Meng Hao's eyes widened as he stared coldly at the painting. It trembled as a howl emerged from within that only Meng Hao could hear. They stared at each other, one man, one painting, for nearly an hour within the confines of the protective shield.

Eventually, the unyielding howl began to fade slowly away. Finally, the painting fell to the ground with a flop. Meng Hao let out a long sigh and closed his eyes. After a long moment passed, he opened them again and looked recovered. A grim look appeared in his eyes.

"So, it's actually been awake for a while!" An angry glint flickered in his eyes. The power exhibited by the Resurrection Lily in their struggle just now was extremely intense, and was obviously nothing like the power that would manifest had it just awakened. On the contrary, it seemed it had waited and built up its strength in an attempt to break through its seal in one fell swoop.

"And here I thought it was sealed and sleeping this entire time. Instead, it actually awakened for some reason, and then remained there motionless, waiting for the perfect critical moment, when I was least prepared, to fight with all its might….” Meng Hao took a deep breath, then looked down at the pendant in his hand.

“Is it possible that this thing provoked some instinctive reaction on the part of the Resurrection Lily? Once I noticed the signs of its awakening, it couldn’t hold back any more, and launched its fatal blow!?” Meng Hao sat in silent contemplation. He was well aware that if it weren’t for the chance occurrences today, if the Resurrection Lily had been given more time to grow strong, then there would have been a high likelihood that at the critical moment, his lack of preparation would have led to the Resurrection Lily casting off its seal and taking over his body!

Thinking of this caused lingering fear to spread throughout Meng Hao, despite the level of his Cultivation base and mental strength.

“What is this thing?” he thought, studying the pendant. “After hiding so carefully, the Resurrection Lily instinctively broke its cover because of it.” His eyes glittered, and he sent out his Spiritual Sense, only to come up with nothing.

After some thought, Meng Hao lifted his hand and pushed down onto his left eye. Because of the presence of Immortal Shows the Way inside of him, he was able to rotate the scrap of Immortal Qi within. It coalesced into his eye, which he then blinked several times in succession. Suddenly, it glowed with brilliant light as he examined the pendant.

Instantly, the pendant looked vastly different than it had a moment before. In fact, it was obviously not just a pendant; shockingly, it was a Resurrection Lily.

It now had seven petals, but all were the same color. Furthermore, it was emanating a faint death aura. Only a very faint bit of life force remained within.

It seemed to be in some sort of special state, as if that life force were struggling, and wished to truly live once again.

Meng Hao suddenly understood. “This… don’t tell me that this… is a Resurrection Lily seed!?”

His left eye flickered, then returned to normal. His face was pale white as his right hand clenched around the pendant.

He was breathing heavily now, and it took a long moment for him to recover his composure.

“Just what is this pendant? It actually provoked some instinctive change in Resurrection Lily even in the midst of its fear of being detected by me.” Coldness filled his eyes, and he was about to crush down on the seed with his fist to smash it, when suddenly, something flickered in his mind. After a moment’s deliberation, he lifted the seed up once more and examined it closely. His eyes then began to shine with a strange light.

“Crushing it would solve the main problem, but, that would be quite a pity. This seed is the best object of reference I have to study the Resurrection Lily and find its weakness.” His eyes glittered as he put the Resurrection Lily seed away.

“I owe a great debt to Wu Chen and his sister,” he thought. With that, he waved his hand, causing the protective shield to disappear. It was already early morning.

“In terms of the five elements, the Crow Scout Tribe’s totems attach importance to the Wood-type. All others are simply collateral branches. I’ve acquired the Greenwood Tree totem, and originally I didn’t plan to partake in any other matters relating to the Tribe. In fact, I wasn’t even going to enter the Crow Divinity Holy Land to meet Yan Song and the others. I was going to just leave. But now…. I think it might be good to stay a little bit longer. I can do some more research to find out how Wu Ling’s mother ended up with a Resurrection Lily seed! Plus, if I’m lucky, maybe I can get my hands on a Metal-type totem.”

When it came to matters relating to Wood-type and Fire-type, through Meng Hao’s more than half year of observation and enlightenment, his most important clue had come from the Golden Crow that flew out from the

Crow Divinity Holy Land the previous year. From what Meng Hao could tell, it emanated not a will of Fire, but rather, a shocking Wood-type will.

Having made up his mind, Meng Hao closed his eyes and began to meditate. He rotated his Cultivation base and began to examine himself inwardly. Finally, he took out the painting to study for a moment. Eventually, a cold smile turned up the corners of his lips, and he put the painting away.

He wasn't sure if the Resurrection Lily was actually sleeping at the moment, or just pretending. However, he was now prepared. Even if the Resurrection Lily sprang into action suddenly, he was confident that he could repress it a second time.

"In fact, I will suppress it to the point where, it won't be absorbing me; instead, I will force it to merge with me! When that happens, I will be the Resurrection Lily, but the Resurrection Lily will not be me!"

Meng Hao's face filled with determination as he muttered to himself.

"The day the Resurrection Lily blooms with seven colors, the flower falls, Immortal Ascension, one thousand years 1…. If I can fully master the secrets of this Resurrection Lily, then Immortal Ascension… might not be so far-fetched…." Meng Hao lifted his head to look up at the sky. He suddenly felt an intense desire to reach that stage of Immortal Ascension.

"It doesn't matter whether it has to do with Demon Sealing or Immortal Ascension, without reaching that stage… I'm nothing but an insect in Heaven and Earth." With that, he closed his eyes, covering up that growing hope which could be seen inside.

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# Chapter 418: Pool of Destiny

Time flashed by. Soon, it was half a month later. The day was swiftly approaching in which the five Tribes of the Crow Divinity would offer sacrifices to the Ancestor.

To the five Tribes, this day of sacrifices was an extremely important occasion. That was because in addition to being a day of ceremonies and rites, it was also the time when the Tribes determined their ranking in terms of strength.

The most important reason for the whole ceremony was because of the totem legacy within the Crow Divinity Holy Land. This legacy was not some imaginary thing, but rather something called the Pool of Destiny!

This pond was actually a deep cistern that would fill with clear waters every few years. The water was very strange. Any member of the Crow Divinity Tribes who entered the waters and meditated therein would experience incredible growth in totemic power.

The water in the pond was not of the five elements; however, it would change to become one of the five elements, depending on who entered it. In fact, throughout the years, the five Tribes of the Crow Divinity had experienced many situations in which Tribe members experienced Cultivation base breakthroughs thanks to the increase in their totemic power.

The Pool of Destiny was the most important object to the five Tribes of the Crow Divinity, and also one of the reasons so many vassals chose to join one of the five Tribes.

However… the waters of the Pool of Destiny were not infinite. The water was limited, even from the very beginning of the rite. Therefore, the first person to enter it would receive the greatest benefit. The benefits received by those who entered after would increasingly lessen.

Therefore, the so-called Ancestor Rite Competition was used to determined the order in which various members of the five great Tribes would enter and seize the fortune of the Pool of Destiny.

Currently, the voice of the Crow Scout Tribe's Greatfather rang out from the top of the mountain: "For three hundred years, the Crow Scout Tribe has always been the last to enter. During those three hundred years, it was always the Crow Soldier Tribe who entered first…."

Meng Hao stood down in the square along with rank 7 Dragoneer Mo Zi and his son Mo Fang. They were joined by the Crow Scout Tribe's Sky Priest and the Grand Elder.

As for the Earth Priest, he had been in secluded meditation the entire time since he had returned to the Tribe, and had still not emerged.

Additionally, there were several Western Desert Cultivators who, as could be seen from their clothing, were obviously not members of the Crow Scout Tribe. All had incredible Cultivation bases, and radiated killing intent. These people were similar to Meng Hao, vassals. Obviously, though, they were not Dragoneers, but Totem Cultivators.

There were several dozen members of the Crow Scout Tribe also present, including Wu Chen, Wu Ling, and Wu Ali. All of them looked both nervous and excited.

Wu Ling would cast frequent glances toward Meng Hao, whose expression was the same as ever as he stood there silently, with eyes closed. It seemed he didn't even notice her.

"The Ancestor Rite Competition will begin soon," continued the Greatfather. "According to the rules set forth by the Ancestor, spilling the blood of fellow Tribe members is prohibited in the Holy Land, as is killing.

Therefore, as has been the custom throughout the successive Ancestor Rite Competitions, it is you vassals who will participate in the contest, and earn the chance to step foot into the Pool of Destiny. I offer my profound thanks to all of you.” He looked over Meng Hao and the other vassals and then clasped hands and bowed deeply.

Next to him, the Sky Priest and the Grand Elder gave deep looks to everyone and then also clasped hands and bowed.

The rest of the Crow Scout Tribe members also bowed, looks of veneration covering their faces.

Mo Zi was not the first to respond, but rather, Mo Fang. “Fear not, Greatfather, with my father and I here, I dare not claim that we will take first place in the Dragoneer competition, but we will definitely not take last.” As he spoke, he cast a grim glare in Meng Hao’s direction.

As for Grandmaster Mo Zi, he gave an indifferent chuckle. “I, Mo, will do my best.” His grating voice was filled with obvious self-confidence.

Meng Hao’s eyes opened, and his expression was the same as usual. He did not respond to Mo Fang’s provocation, but rather, ignored him. He looked over the other vassals, taking note of one man in particular who was large, but rather unimposing in appearance. His Cultivation base appeared to be in the Core Formation stage, but there was something strange about him. Meng Hao could sense that there was something almost like a mist circling around him that could not be seen through.

When Meng Hao looked at him, the man looked back. Their gazes locked for a brief moment before the man looked away. However, it was at this point that Meng Hao’s eyes began to glitter.

“That guy has the aura of a neo-demon,” he thought. “It’s faint, but he definitely is not emanating the power of totems. It’s as if… he himself is emanating a neo-demon aura!”

Suddenly, the sound of bells and horns filled the air. It came from Crow Divinity Holy Land, which was located in the center of all the mountains.

The sound circled out in all directions, along with waves of ripples which kicked up massive winds. Soon everything up above and down below was shaking.

Next, ripples could be seen emanating out, as if everything was being sealed. Next, a golden light shot up from the Crow Divinity Holy Land. It shot up into the Heavens, spreading out and emitting massive pressure.

The Crow Scout Tribe Greatfather took a deep breath as he looked at the golden light. Determination filled his eyes as he said, “Let us depart!”

He flicked his sleeve and flew up into the air, transforming into a beam of light that shot off toward the area where the golden light was emanating from.

Everyone else flew up as well. Quite a few of the other vassals had bodies festooned with totems, that were now flickering and glowing. As for rank 7 Dragoneer Mo Zi, he flicked his sleeve, causing an enormous two-headed Flood Dragon to magically appear in mid-air. It lifted its heads up into the air and roared. Mo Zi stood on its back, and Mo Fang approached to do the same.

The two-headed Flood Dragon was clearly incredibly powerful. The instant it appeared, it attracted the shock and astonishment of the surrounding Cultivators. Quite a few people looked over at Meng Hao, curious as to what mount he would ride.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he slapped a green-colored bag of holding. A beam of white light instantly shot out, which transformed into Big Hairy. He seemed skinny and weak, but was over ten meters long. As Meng Hao hopped onto his back, he lifted his head up to the sky and howled.

The sound was extremely shocking as it drifted out in all directions. The surrounding Crow Scout Tribe members were filled with shock. Even the two-headed Flood Dragon backed up a bit.

Mo Zi gave a cold snort, patting the two-headed Flood Dragon, which transformed into a colorful beam as it shot off.

Meng Hao sat atop Big Hairy, his eyes focused on the golden glow off in the distance. He actually wasn't very interested in the Crow Divinity Holy Land, but figured that since he was here, he might as well investigate a bit.

As he proceeded onward, the dozens of Crow Scout Tribe members flew off from the mountaintop. Up in mid-air, Meng Hao could see groups of Cultivators flying out from the directions of the other four Tribes, all of them heading toward the central location.

There were several hundred members of the five Tribes in all, heading toward the golden glow at top speed.

Meng Hao also caught sight of Gu La, standing on top of the Wild Giant. His face was proud, as were the faces of the Crow Soldier Tribe members who surrounded him.

There were also Dragoneers from the other Tribe. Among the Dragoneers from the Crow Fighter Tribe, the most conspicuous was an old woman upon whose face could be seen dark greenish freckles. She wore a long robe, and was relatively ugly. However, she was riding a gigantic Cyclops Ape which emanated a fiendish aura.

The Crow Flame Tribe had three Dragoneers, one of whom was a white-robed old man who had the extraordinary bearing of a transcendent being. The neo-demon he rode was an enormous white crane, elegant and beautiful. It soared through the air as if it had just descended from the world of Immortals.

Last was the Crow Gloom Tribe. They only had two Dragoneers; one of them was dressed completely differently than the others. He wore a conical bamboo hat that hid his features, along with a woven rush raincoat that made him look like an old fisherman. Beneath his feet was a gigantic earthworm several dozen meters long, which was covered with a shocking, viscous liquid. As the earthworm whizzed through the air, it emitted a very peculiar smell.

“I doubt that Yan Song and the others are with the Dragoneers. They’re most likely with the totem vassals from the various Tribes.” As he sized the others up, he could see that they were looking over at him and Mo Zi. 1

Mo Zi looked over at the nearing Dragoneers and grimly said, “Grandmaster Meng, you’d better not disappoint me in the competition.” With that, the two-headed Flood Dragon shot forward toward the golden light.

Meng Hao frowned slightly and then sighed inwardly. Ever since coming to the Western Desert, he had very rarely taken the initiative in provoking others. However, as he slowly revealed more and more power, it was only natural for others to take note of him. Disputes would obviously rise up, although that was not Meng Hao’s intention.

“I’ll have to settle this dispute sooner or later,” he thought, a vicious look appearing in his eyes. Having practiced Cultivation up to his current point, he very well understood the law of the jungle. When decisiveness was required, Meng Hao would not be softhearted.

Soon, everyone was nearing the golden glow. There, a floating golden platform could be seen that looked almost like an arena. It was surrounded by swirling, golden shield.

Before long, all the members of the five great Tribes arrived to float around the golden platform. The various Greatfathers and Priests did not exchange many words. They looked at each other coldly, and without any hint of politeness, chose to let the fighting begin.

The Crow Scout Tribe Greatfather looked back at his vassals, and said, “There are two rounds of fighting, each of which could be considered a battle royal. One is for Totem Cultivators, the other is for Dragoneers! We must win both battles!

“During each battle royal, every Tribe can send three people into battle. If a Tribe wins in both battles, then they naturally will take first place. As for who takes second, that will be based on the performance of the vassals; there are a few who are still deciding on whether or not to attend.

“Throughout the history of these battles, there have been deaths. Vassals, I urge you, if you find yourself outmatched… please forfeit the match. The importance of victory or defeat cannot be overstated, however. I encourage you to work together with a sense of camaraderie.

“The first battle is for Totem Cultivators!” After the Greatfather finished speaking, three vassals emerged from the others. They clasped hands to the Greatfather and then shot toward the golden light.

One of the three was none other than the strange, unimposing man Meng Hao had noticed earlier. Meng Hao observed him as he shot forward, his eyes flickering. He circulated the Immortal Qi of Immortal Shows the Way, then blinked his right eye several times in succession.

This time when he looked at the man, his pupils constricted.

He could now clearly see that this man was no Western Desert Cultivator. A cloud-like mist covered his body, within which… was the Outlander Beast, which the parrot had chased after months before.

Even more astonishing, he could also see traces of the meat jelly on the Outlander Beast. With his Celestial Vision technique he could even see the aura of the parrot.

1. As a quick re-cap, the infiltration party consisted of Yan Song, the alchemist from the Eastern Lands that Meng Hao met in Holy Snow City. There was also Mo Li and a guy surnamed Wang; it was implied that they were a gay couple. Finally was Li Tao, the one who gave them all the ability to disguise themselves and their Southern Domain Cultivator aura

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# Chapter 419: Outtie

“The parrot never came back after it went chasing the Outlander Beast. It’s impossible to tell what happened between the two of them. In any case, it seems… they came to some sort of agreement?” He ended the Celestial Vision technique. He was astonished, of course, but considering the parrot’s personality, anything was possible.

All of a sudden, Meng Hao felt a bit sorry for all the people from the other tribes who were making their way onto the platform within the golden shield.

“I would imagine Yan Song and the others are in that group….” he thought, looking the group over. Of course, Yan Song and the others were wily old foxes who would obviously have taken precautions to prevent anyone from realizing who they were. After looking at the twelve vassals from the other Tribes, even Meng Hao couldn’t discern any clues.

This was a battle royal with fifteen Totem Cultivators from the five Tribes. As they stepped into the golden shield on the platform, they did not speak. Instead, booming sounds immediately filled the air as the fighting began.

Each group of three formed a unit, instantly become comrades-in-arms as they joined forces. At least, this was what happened with the other four Tribes. However… as for the three people from the Crow Scout Tribe, it was a different story.

The man-form Outlander Beast stepped onto the platform, lifted his head with a roar, and then charged forward. He didn’t even look at his two compatriots, which caused them to stare in astonishment. They had a mind to follow in the charge, but the ferocity emanating from the man-form

Outlander Beast seemed to indicate that he intended to fight solo. The two immediately backed up, trembling.

This development caused the Cultivators from the other Tribes to stare wide-eyed in surprise. In fact, many of them assumed that this was some sort of pre-planned tactic on the part of the Crow Scout Tribe.

However, the Greatfather and Priest of the Crow Scout Tribe, as well as other influential members, were all clearly stunned. The Tribe members from the other four Tribes looked on thoughtfully.

Rumbling filled the air, and Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. However, what he was looking at was not the man-form Outlander Beast, but rather the vassals from the other Tribes. He was still trying to figure out which ones were Yan Song and the others.

Suddenly, the man-form Outlander Beast howled, “You bunch of immoral bastards! I represent Outtie and my fifth kid bro! I’m here to convert all of you!”

The sound of it was like thunder. In the blink of an eye, the man was in front of one of the three-man units. Immediately, a boom could be heard, and magical totemic lights sprang out.

These three men were from the Crow Flame Tribe. They watched the man approached, then simultaneously attacked without hesitation. At once, an enormous boom rattled out as magical techniques collided.

“Waaaaaahhhhh!” shouted the man, sounding as if he felt wronged. “One, two, three… dammit! There’s three of you! THREE! Three against one is immoral!!” Hearing this caused strange expressions to appear on the faces of the surrounding Tribe members.

They watched on as the big man retreated. As he did, his expression suddenly changed; now it looked somewhat vile.

“Bitches!” cried the man. “It looks like you people lack screwing! Well you wait. You just wait!” He no longer looked hurt, but rather, wildly pompous and arrogant. This time, he headed toward a different group of three.

“I thrust!

“I screw!

“Hahaha. And I thrust again!” The large man’s voice was now piercing, and even more arrogant. It was with incredible speed that he shot back and forth among the various people. He seemed to be incredibly thick skinned; no matter how people struck him, it didn’t do anything. The vassals were growing more furious; this man’s attacks were completely despicable and shameless. All his divine abilities seemed to be focused on one finger.

And that finger… specialized in attacking rear ends.

Furthermore, he didn’t differentiate between Tribes. He attacked anyone in his field of vision, even the two people from the Crow Scout Tribe. They, too, were jabbed by the man, which caused them to burst forth with fury. After all, they were from the same Tribe and shouldn’t be attacking each other.

Because of this provocation, the battle royal immediately… was no longer a battle royal. Now, all of the members of the various Tribes were ganging up on this one, large man.

Subsequently, the faces of the Crow Scout Tribe members in the audience were quite unsightly. The Greatfather and the Priest, even the Grand Elder, all had extremely grim expressions on their faces.

Throughout all the years that this Ancestral Rite Competition had been held, nothing like this had ever happened. This was no battle royal; instead, it was a beat down.

Meng Hao gave a dry cough, and looked a little bit guilty. After all, if he hadn’t brought the parrot to this place, then this competition would not have turned out this way.

“The meat jelly can’t die…. The parrot’s twisted vices…. I’m afraid the savagery of the Outlander Beast is the next thing we will see. Heyyy… if nothing else out of the ordinary happens, the Crow Scout Tribe will most likely be the winner.” Even as Meng Hao was thinking these thoughts, a roar of rage could suddenly be heard from the platform as one of the other Crow Scout Tribe vassals charged in attack.

He couldn’t take it any longer. Having been jabbed three times in succession was too much of a humiliation. Roaring furiously, he charged the large man, completely ignoring the fact that they were fellow vassals from the same Tribe.

The other vassal next to him was about to block his way when suddenly, the large man flickered into being next to him. His finger jabbed out.

“Dammit, we’re together! You, you, you….” Infuriated, the vassal’s eyes turned red and he let out a furious shout. “Fine! To the death!”

Once again the scene of the battle taking place inside the golden shield on the platform changed. Now, everyone was bombarding the big man. This was not even to mention the Tribe members on the outside, who were also preparing to attack him. After all, his attacks were completely shameless, despicable to the extreme.

In their entire lives, none of them had ever seen someone as vulgar as this.

Immediately, the members of the other Tribes began to ridicule the Crow Scout Tribe members.

“This is the Ancestral Rite Competition! For the Crow Scout Tribe to have recruited a vassal like that, it’s… intentionally causing trouble!”

“Maybe the Crow Scout Tribe couldn’t find anyone else, and then this shameless fellow showed up!”

The faces of the Crow Scout Tribe members were extremely unsightly. They wanted to offer up retorts, but there was really nothing they could say.

The Greatfather’s eyes were filled with fury as he glared at the man up on the platform.

Meng Hao sighed inwardly, and felt even more guilty. However, he continued to study the members of the other Tribes up on the platform, hoping to see pick up on some clues as to the identities of Yan Song and the others.

Suddenly, his eyes flickered as they came to rest on a vassal standing with the Crow Gloom Tribe. It was a middle-aged man, tall and stalwart, his face filled with savagery. However, when the man-form Outlander Beast attacked him, his face looked different from that of the others. He looked a bit hesitant, even somewhat absentminded.

The look quickly disappeared, to be replaced with fury. However, even as the fury filled his face, one of the vassals from the Crow Soldier Tribe suddenly shot forward in pursuit of the Outlander Beast.

Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed. Based on this development, he could now tell who these two people were. “Mo Li and Eccentric Wang!”

The howling man-form Outlander Beast was now surrounded.

“Outtie, you wimp, it’s your turn!” Suddenly, a tremor ran through the man’s body. It was at this exact moment that the surrounding vassals all attacked.

A shocking boom echoed out. From the perspective of everyone watching, there was no way the man could possibly escape death. It was only Meng Hao that let out a sigh; he knew that the Outlander Beast was coming.

Within the booming sound, an astonishing roar suddenly lifted up.The intensity of the roar turned into an attack that rippled out in all directions on the platform. The sight of this attack caused the observing members of the five Tribes to stop breathing and stare in disbelief.

What they saw was all of the vassals who were attacking the large man suddenly tumbling backward, their faces filled with disbelief and shock.

The man who everyone had assumed would die stood there with an expression of savagery, his eyes bright red and his hair flying about. He lifted his head to the sky and roared with the madness of a neo-demon.

His body flickered, and he suddenly appeared in front of one of the other vassals, his face filled with cruelty. His hands reached out with a strange motion and grabbed ahold of the vassal, who had no chance to evade. Then, he ripped.

A bloodcurdling scream filled the air as the Cultivator’s body was torn completely in half. Blood showered everywhere, and the large man flickered again.

Miserable screams filled the air. The gory scene instantly caused the surrounding members of the five great Tribes to feel incredible shock. They began to pant, their eyes wide.

It took only a moment for three people to die. The big man was like an unmatchable Celestial warrior; to approach him was the same as approaching death.

“I forfeit!!” cried a vassal from the Crow Flame Tribe as he saw the man approaching him. Trembling, his body suddenly disappeared through the golden shield as he left the battlefield.

“I forfeit!!”

“I forfeit!!” The shouts rang out one after another, although some people were too late, and ended up getting ripped into pieces by the frenzied man.

“I for….” One vassal from the Crow Soldier Tribe was just beginning to speak when the man-form Outlander Beast appeared in front of him. The Outlander Beast opened his mouth wide and directly bit down onto the vassal’s neck, causing his words to instantly change into a bloodcurdling shriek.

It took only moments for the platform to be completely empty except for the big man. He stood there, looking around savagely and roaring.

“Crow Scout Tribe,” he cried, “I have secured victory for you! Now give me the Pool of Destiny!!”

The Crow Scout Tribe members’ minds were reeling. The Sky Priest was panting and the Grand Elder was staring with wide eyes. As for the Greatfather, his eyes flickered and he started to laugh.

“Exactly as it should be,” he said. “Fellow Daoist, you have secured yourself a spot in the Pool of Destiny!”

The man gazed at the Greatfather and then nodded. He took a step, and then his body flickered and he left the golden shield. When he reappeared, the surrounding Tribe members all backed up and made room for him. Their hearts trembled as they avoided him. As the man neared, he seemed to almost be attempting to avoid Meng Hao’s gaze.

Everything was quiet for the space of about ten breaths. Finally, a grim voice called out from the Crow Fighter Tribe.

“Second battle, Dragoneer Duel!”

Meng Hao looked up.

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# Chapter 420: Break those Fangs!

“What a pity,” thought Meng Hao. “I was only able to identify Mo Li and old devil Wang. There was no way to figure out who Yan Song and Li Tao are.”

“Grandmaster Meng,” said rank 7 Dragoneer Mo Zi coolly, “you need to be careful. This is a battle of life and death. When the time comes, hopefully you’ll have enough time to say the word ‘forfeit.’” He passed by Meng Hao, glaring at him with a sinister expression.

Next to him was Mo Fang, who looked at Meng Hao with a look of deep fury and the clear desire to kill.

As the father and son shot past him into the golden shield, Meng Hao’s expression was calm. Of course, that was the nature of Meng Hao’s personality; the calmer he looked, the more likely he was to kill.

Considering his opponents had bared their fangs, then as far as Meng Hao was concerned, it was time to break those fangs!

Wu Ling looked nervous as she watched Meng Hao. Wu Chen stood next to her, his eyes filled with fanaticism. He had ultimate confidence in Meng Hao, almost to the point of blind faith. In his heart, Meng Hao’s strength was incomparable.

Meng Hao’s body flickered as he and Big Hairy turned into a white beam that shot toward the golden shield. As they entered, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. The shield was like water passing over his skin. He could very clearly feel the Wood-type power within it. It seemed as if he could even utilize the power of the Greenwood Tree totem to exercise some simple level of control over it.

At the same time, there also appeared to be Metal-type power within the golden light, which caused Meng Hao no small bit of surprise.

Almost at the same time that Meng Hao stepped foot onto the platform, Dragoneers from the other four Tribes arrived in groups of threes. Gu La, the old woman, the old fisherman, and others. All of the Dragoneers who would be participating in the battle now stood on the platform. It was at this moment that….

Roars immediately shook Heaven and Earth as Gu La waved his hand, causing nearly a hundred neo-demons to appear around the howling Wild Giant. Among the shocking group were more than ten Flood Dragons as well as a gigantic Zombie Wolf which emanated a boundless death aura. This immediately set Gu La apart from the others in shocking fashion.

The continuous roars of the Wild Giant caused the observing members of the five great Tribes to be filled with shock.

Next was the old woman. The giant Cyclops Ape she rode let out a howl as she seemed to open up a door in the air itself. Instantly, a horde of apes appeared, every single one of them a Demonic Cyclops. There were nearly a hundred in total, the sight of which was just as shocking as that of Gu La.

After her was the white-haired old man with the demeanor of a transcendent being, who rode the mighty white crane. He waved his hand and was suddenly surrounded by a vast collection of tiny white snakes. The number of snakes he possessed vastly outnumbered that of the neo-demons of the other Dragoneers. There were hundreds of them, all of whom had forked tongues that flicked in and out. The aura of a hyper toxic venom drifted out from them.

Most shocking of all, however, was the old fisherman. The enormous earthworm he stood atop of let out a noiseless roar as massive amounts of silt magically appeared around the both of them. Within the silt burrowed countless vicious-looking earthworms that swayed back and forth, making the whole scene look like an illusion.

Then there was Mo Zi. As the roaring, two-headed Flood Dragon circled around him, distortions appeared in the air. A neo-demon horde emerged from within, a vast collection of howling Flood Dragons, none of which were small.

As for Meng Hao, he didn’t look quite as impressive as the others. His horde only contained a few dozen Greenwood Wolves and Bats, which was not enough to shock anyone when compared to the other five.

As of this moment, all the members of the five great Tribes outside of the golden shield were paying close attention. This was especially true of the Tribe Greatfathers and Priests. The Dragoneer Duel was much different than the battle of Totem Cultivators. Totems represented personal strength. However, in many aspects, Dragoneers could influence the Tribe as a whole.

Whichever way you looked at it, Dragoneers were in a far higher position than Totem Cultivators.

The first battle of the Ancestor Rite Competition could be ignored to some extent; the truly important part of the whole thing was the second battle!

Wu Ling looked extremely nervous. Wu Chen looked excited and passionate. The rest of the members of the five great Tribes exchanged anxious glances….

It was at this point that the battle royal began!

In the past, Meng Hao had always waited for others to take the initiative in battle. But after coming to the Western Desert, things were different. He would be the first one out of the gate. And when he attacked… it was with the intent to kill!

His first attack was actually not levelled against any of the Dragoneers from the four other Tribes, but instead, toward Mo Zi.

Bear your teeth? Then you’re looking to die!

That was Meng Hao. If you attack, you must do so with decisiveness and killing intent.

He waved his sleeve, and immediately, Big Hairy howled as his body began to expand. The wolfpack next to him, as well as the Black Bat, all transformed into beams of light that shot toward Mo Zi and his neo-demon horde.

Meng Hao's attack caught Mo Zi completely by surprise. He had never imagined that Meng Hao would be the first one to make a move, let alone against him. His plan all along had been to launch a sneak attack against Meng Hao during the thick of battle, so that he would have a good excuse in case anyone called him out on the matter.

Meng Hao's attack had thus caught him completely unawares.

"Are you looking to die!?" he roared. Flood Dragons from the horde next to him roared and shot toward Meng Hao's neo-demons. Off to the side, Mo Fang's face filled with intense rage as he glared at Meng Hao. Then a cold smile twisted his face.

"You're dead!" he said.

Rumbling sounds immediately rose up into the sky.

Meng Hao's attack filled the other Dragoneer vassals with shock. Everyone outside of the golden shield also watched on, eyes flickering with astonishment.

"What's going on with the Crow Scout Tribe…?"

"They have another turncoat? Don't tell me that this guy is just like that guy from before, so powerful that he can beat everyone else?"

"No way! Dragoneer Tian Qi is too powerful, and could never be defeated by that guy."

The shocked members of the other Tribes slowly looked over to the members of the Crow Scout Tribe. What they saw was the Crow Scout

Tribe members in complete astonishment. This was especially true of the Greatfather and the Priest, whose expressions were very similar to their expressions during the first battle.

This prompted further discussions.

“Dammit, something’s wrong here. Look at their expressions!”

“The first time was understandable, but for the same thing to happen again means it has to be some kind of trick on their part!!”

“But…. What trick exactly is it? To kill each other first?”

As the discussion continued on the outside, inside the golden shield Mo Zi was laughing uproariously.

“Meng, you twerp, since you’re looking to die, don’t blame me for accommodating you. We’re both vassals of the same Tribe, but considering how you’re attacking me, you must be a double agent! In that case… I’m going to kill you even if you do try to forfeit!” Mo Zi had sent half of his Flood Dragons, as well as the two-headed Flood Dragon, charging forward in attack.

A huge boom resonated up into the sky. Big Hairy was a blinding white beam of light, filled with savagery. The Black Bat flickered forward. Its sharp teeth glinted, and the body of one of the Flood Dragons immediately shrivelled up. It died with a miserable shriek.

Mo Zi’s face immediately fell. He had predicted that Meng Hao would be strong, but he never imagined that the White Wolf and Black Bat would be so shocking. In fact, he almost couldn’t believe that this was the same bat that used to belong to him. In his recollection, its latent talent didn’t match up to the Flood Dragons, which was why he had eventually given it to his son to protect him.

How could he ever have imagined that under Meng Hao’s control, the Black Bat would exhibit such astonishing power!?

“Things are just beginning,” he then said with a cold laugh. “I’d originally planned to use this next trick on an outsider, but I guess you’ll do nicely.” With that, he slapped his bag of holding. Immediately, hundreds of howling Flood Dragons emerged, ten of whom were two-headed.

When the other Dragoneers saw the aura emanating from these Flood Dragons, it filled their faces with shock. Of course, those on the outside of the shield were even more surprised.

Meng Hao looked indifferently at the Flood Dragons and then said, “Wrong. Things aren’t beginning, they’re ending.”

His hand flashed an incantation gesture, and then pushed down onto his dantian region. Immediately, his Gold Core trembled as a roar emanated out from the ancient Flying Rain-Dragon Core.

In accompaniment with the roar, the illusory image of a three hundred meter long Flying Rain-Dragon appeared above his head. It had a long tail, wings with sharp tips, and blood-red eyes. Immediately, a shocking aura emanated out.

Even the golden shield began to ripple and distort. The surrounding Dragoneers stared in shock.

“That’s….”

“A level 11 neo-demon! Heavens, that’s… the illusory spirit projection of a level 11 neo-demon!!”

“Such pressure…. This guy… don’t tell me he’s a Grand Dragoneer!?!?”

All of the other Dragoneers on the platform were shocked. They and their neo-demons were all trembling with intense fear as they looked at the Flying Rain-Dragon.

The intense pressure emanated by something vastly above them suddenly filled the area.

This intangible pressure covered everything within the golden shield on the platform. The instant the Flying Rain-Dragon appeared, the Flood Dragons around Mo Zi began to shake and emit plaintive shrieks. They seemed to be shrieks of fear bordering on phobia.

They all shrank back, shaking, as if they couldn’t stand up to the pressure weighing down on them. Their miserable shrieks were such that it seemed as if their bodies might begin to collapse.

Meng Hao’s face was cold as he waved his right hand. Immediately, the Flying Rain-Dragon let out a shocking howl which caused the golden shield to shake, and the sky outside of the shield to grow dim. The ancient Flying Rain-Dragon was a sovereign of the sky, and its pride and dignity were now on full display as it charged toward the trembling Flood Dragons.

When it passed, there were no miserable shrieks. The Flood Dragons did nothing to prevent the Flying Rain-Dragon from swallowing them up. Regardless of whether they had two heads or one, in front of the Flying Rain-Dragon, they were so weak that they couldn’t do anything to resist. Within the space of a few breaths, they had all been completely consumed.

Mo Zi cried out in alarm and disbelief. His face was pale white as he staggered backward. As the Flying Rain-Dragon neared him, his eyes filled with frenzy. His eyes radiating with manic desire to continue living, he suddenly grabbed Mo Fang, and shoved him out in front.

“I, Mo Zi, have submerged myself in the Dao of Dragoneering for many years. I have expended my heart’s blood in my pursuits, in my research in how to produce shocking neo-demons. Meng, you twerp, I refuse to give in!” Roaring, he performed an incantation with his left hand as the Flying Rain-Dragon neared. Then he pushed his hand down onto the head of his son Mo Fang. A look of disbelief and confusion could be seen on Mo Fang’s face as blood sprayed from his mouth. Suddenly, his head exploded.

“Take my son to give birth to a new neo-demon! Use my son’s soul to bring forth the Mo Clan’s Dragoneer Legacy, the eight-headed Mo Flood Dragon!”

Roaring could be heard as Mo Fang’s body shook. Suddenly, the black head of a Flood Dragon emerged from within. It flew out into the air.

One. Two. Three…. It took only a split second for eight heads to burst out from within Mo Fang’s body.

—

P.S. The image in the sneak peak is promotional art of a Flying Rain-Dragon from the Beseech the Devil computer game. Beseech the Devil is one of Er Gen’s other 3 major novels, so I would assume the basic appearance jives between the two….

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# Chapter 421: THAT Fishing Line!

Mo Fang’s body exploded into pieces. However, his flesh and blood did not disappear, but rather congealed together. In the blink of an eye, it formed eight Flood Dragon heads. Another moment later, a three hundred meter long, eight-headed Flood Dragon was there in front of Mo Zi.

Mo Zi’s eyes were bright red as he lifted his head back and howled. The Flood Dragon in front of him let out a roar as it sped toward the incoming Flying Rain-Dragon.

“Kill them!” cried Mo Zi frenziedly.

The eight-headed Flood Dragon was much different than an ordinary Flood Dragon and was just barely able to stand up to the pressure exerted by the Flying Rain-Dragon. It charged forward with a howl, then slammed into the Flying Rain-Dragon.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he watched on coldly. The surrounding Dragoneers observed the scene with shock. Outside of the golden shield, the members of the five great Tribes were panting. All of them were paying close attention to this battle of dragons!

A boom rose up into the sky, along with a miserable shriek. Three out of eight of the Flood Dragon’s heads transformed into clouds of blood and gore as the Flying Rain-Dragon swallowed them up. The remaining five heads let out frantic cries and tried to bite the Flying Rain-Dragon. The Flying Rain-Dragon lifted its head up to the sky and roared. It sounded as if its dignity had been encroached upon! Its body began to grow larger until it was several hundred meters larger. Then it slammed once again into the Flood Dragon.

Everything shook as a massive explosion rippled out. The rest of the Flood Dragon’s five heads let out shrieks, and its entire body trembled. Looks of terror appeared on its faces, and it was just beginning to retreat when a huge boom could be heard. The entire Flood Dragon began to explode into blood and flesh. In response, the Flying Rain-Dragon sucked all of it in and swallowed it in one huge gulp.

Mo Zi was scared out of his mind. His brain spun as he backed up.

“I forfeit!!” he cried, completely overcome by his terror. It was at this moment of crisis that a golden light swirled out toward him from the golden shield, preparing to pull him out of the platform.

The Flying Rain-Dragon roared again. Suddenly flames appeared, as if its body were about to burn up. The flames rose up into the sky as the Flying Rain-Dragon shot toward Mo Zi. The instant Mo Zi was about to be pulled out from within the golden shield, the Flying Rain-Dragon slammed into the golden light, blocking it.

“When Meng Hao wants to kill someone, nobody can interfere!” said Meng Hao coolly. He slowly lifted his right finger. Immediately the image of a Greenwood Tree became visible on his forehead. Wood-type power emanated out, following the direction of Meng Hao’s finger to shoot toward the golden shield.

Because the golden shield was made up of Wood- and Metal-type energy, the power of the Greenwood Tree caused it to begin to ripple and distort. The Flying Rain-Dragon stretched its head out. Just when Mo Zi was heaving a sigh of relief as he thought he was about to escape, everything went black.

That was because the Flying Rain-Dragon’s mouth had latched onto him.

A miserable shriek could be heard from Mo Zi, which was cut off by crunching sounds. The top half of Mo Zi’s body was swallowed down by the Flying Rain-Dragon.

This was what it meant to break the fangs!

The Flying Rain-Dragon slowly dissipated. The shocking scene immediately caused a huge commotion among the members of the five Crow Divinity Tribes outside of the golden shield.

“He’s… he’s a Grand Dragoneer!!”

“That dragon…. What kind of dragon is it? I’ve never seen a neo-demon like that before!!”

“Even the ancestral shield was powerless. Mo Zi obviously forfeited, but still got killed!”

Slowly, the eyes of all the Tribe members came to rest on Meng Hao.

The Greatfather of the Crow Scout Tribe stared in shock, panting. The Sky Priest quickly looked over at the Greatfather, who looked back. Both of them could see the astonishment in each other’s eyes.

Both were thinking exactly the same thing: “Grand Dragoneer! He must have been injured in the past, and that’s why his neo-demon could only appear in illusory form. He’s currently incapable of summoning its true form!”

They weren’t the only ones thinking along these lines. Apparently the Greatfathers and Priests from the other Tribes were all coming to the same conclusion.

The Grand Elder of the Crow Scout Tribe took a deep breath as he looked at Meng Hao. No longer were his eyes filled with hostility and contempt. Instead, he now looked at Meng Hao as if he were looking at someone of similar status to himself.

Wu Ling was panting, her face flushed with excitement and hands clenched into fists. She was once again reminded that Grandmaster Meng was the most powerful person she could rely on in her attempts to raise herself and Wu Chen to prominence within the Tribe.

As for Wu Chen, his eyes were filled with zeal. In his eyes, Meng Hao wielded the might of the Heavens; there was no one whom he had esteemed more in his entire life.

As for the man-form Outlander Beast, he stood there with wide eyes, muttering to himself.

Everyone else had similar reactions. This was not to mention all of the people inside of the golden shield. Gu La took a deep breath, and his eyes filled with pain. At long last, he had resigned himself to his fate. A figure as powerful as Meng Hao was not someone who he could afford to provoke. There was really no other option than to just accept his lot. At the same time, he was actually somewhat happy.

“The Young Master has grown even stronger. It seems following him won’t be such a bad choice.” His eyes turned to the side thoughtfully as he considered how to perform some meritorious deed that would propel him up from being little more than Meng Hao’s zookeeper.

It was at this moment, when everyone was still in the throes of shock, that the old woman, the white-haired old man, and the Dragoneer dressed like a fisherman all made a move at the same time. Their neo-demons roared as they shot toward Meng Hao, who was now without his illusory Flying Rain-Dragon.

Looks of greed could be seen in their eyes. As Dragoneers, they were able to read between the eyes; they knew that something was wrong with Meng Hao’s illusory dragon neo-demon. It couldn’t exist for very long before disappearing. If they could kill Meng Hao, then they would be able to seize the rest of his neo-demons.

“He’s an injured Grand Dragoneer! He wields the might of a Grand Dragoneer, however… he is not like the true legendary Grand Dragoneers who are impossible to kill!”

“To run into an injured Grand Dragoneer like this is actually good fortune for me!”

The three people who attacked did so in unison, clearly having reached a common understanding. As for Gu La, he had only been a part of the five Crow Divinity Tribes for a short time. The other Dragoneer vassals were not very familiar with him, and therefore, did not include him in their decision.

As they attacked, Meng Hao turned, cold, killing intent radiating from his eyes. He waved his right hand, causing the Eyeless Larva totem tattoo to spring into action. Strands of silk flew out to surround him.

Meng Hao didn’t move at all as the attacking neo-demons from the other three Dragoneers screamed toward him.

“Shameless!!” shouted Wu Ling furiously, her expression one of anxiety. The others from the Crow Scout Tribe looked completely indignant. The Greatfather and the Sky Priest, even the Grand Elder, all flew up in the air to go rescue Meng Hao. Unfortunately, they were immediately obstructed by the Greatfathers and Priests from the other Tribes.

Meanwhile, up on the platform, Gu La watched as all of this was happening. His face flickered, and without hesitation, he sent his neo-demon horde whistling through the air toward the other three Dragoneers.

At this critical juncture, a massive roaring sound ripped out through the air from the direction of Meng Hao. The source of this sound was none other than the strands of silk from the Eyeless Larva, which spun rapidly through the air. Suddenly, they shot outward in all directions, slashing through the incoming neo-demons and turning them into a cloud of blood.

Moments later, Meng Hao strolled out from within the sea of blood. Silk continued to spin around him as he looked coldly at the three who had just attacked him. As for them, their faces flickered and they began to step backward.

It was at this point that the old woman’s eyes flickered with anger. Suddenly, the giant Cyclops Ape which she had held in reserve charged in attack toward Meng Hao.

“Wild Giant?” said Meng Hao, his voice indifferent. Immediately, the Wild Giant roared and dashed forward. It directly picked up the giant Cyclops Ape and then viciously bit into the creature, sending blood spraying everywhere. As the Cyclops Ape screamed, the old woman’s face twisted. She was about to try to retreat when a white flash of light appeared. Suddenly, Big Hairy was standing behind her, his eyes cold and grim. Without hesitation, he savagely bit down onto the woman’s neck.

She wanted to struggle, but then the Black Bat appeared. Its fangs sank into her, and she let out a bloodcurdling scream as her life force was sucked away. In the blink of an eye, she was turned into a withered corpse.

Even as this was happening, the transcendent, white-haired old man atop the white crane shot toward the golden shield in an obvious attempt to flee the platform. As soon as he appeared outside, he looked back at Meng Hao, his face pale. He then let out a sigh of relief.

Back atop the platform, Meng Hao ignored the man and began to walk toward the old fisherman. However, at the same time, he said, “Parrot?”

Immediately, the large man who was standing among the Crow Scout Tribe members outside the shield let out a roar and charged toward the old man who had just emerged from the shield. The man’s cry of alarm turned into a miserable shriek as he was torn to pieces. As for the white crane, its cries were even more bloodcurdling.

Back on the platform, the other weaker Dragoneers were all fleeing. The only ones who remained were Meng Hao, Gu La and the old fisherman.

The old fisherman’s face was ashen and filled with astonishment as Meng Hao strode toward him. It was as if Meng Hao’s feet were trampling upon his heart and mind. He felt an increasingly intense pressure, and was well aware that he could not flee in this situation. He also knew that even if Meng Hao was an injured Grand Dragoneer, he still was not someone who could be provoked.

However, the fisherman also knew that this was a critical life-or-death moment. The fight to survive lit his eyes. He waved his right hand, causing his enormous earthworm to let out a vicious shriek. At the same time, the countless earthworms within the magical silt suddenly flew up and attached themselves onto the giant earthworm. Now they were tentacles, making the giant earthworm look even more ferocious.

At the same time, the old fisherman spit up a mouthful of blood and then began to perform an incantation with both hands.

“Occult Karma Magic!” he cried. Immediately, the enormous earthworm lowered its head, opened its mouth and did something that came as a complete shock to all the onlookers…. It swallowed the old fisherman whole. After that, the top of the earthworm’s head began to bulge, and suddenly the face of the old fisherman appeared there.

“I can’t hope to fight back against a Grand Dragoneer,” he cried. “But this Occult Karma Magic that I acquired years ago allows me to merge my body with a neo-demon and become a new life form! Even if you are a Grand Dragoneer, you can’t fight me now!”

Meng Hao’s expression flickered, and he immediately retreated, an expression of unprecedented seriousness filling his face. His Cultivation base was now in full rotation, and his eyes shone with a bright gleam. What he was looking at was, not the old man, but something else in up in the air!

What had caught his attention was actually… the Occult Karma Magic!

Within this Occult Magic, Meng Hao could sense the aura of the Ji Clan!

Suddenly, a gigantic vortex appeared up in the sky, within which a silver string appeared that looked very much like a fishing line. It shot down toward the old man who had merged with the earthworm. [1]

Instantly, everything went silent. Meng Hao noticed with astonishment that everything, including the Greatfathers, were all completely motionless. It was as if everything in the entire world had been frozen in place!!

It was like everyone in the world had become fishes on the chopping block, just waiting for that fishing line to hook them and take them away.

Apparently, he was the only person in the world capable of seeing this silver thread.

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# Chapter 422: Karmic Severing 1

The world was silent. Nothing moved. Even the golden shield seemed to have become part of this perpetuity; the rays of light shining out from it also stopped moving.

The members of the five great Tribes in the area were all like clay statues, absolutely motionless.

Even the old man who had used the Occult Karma Magic to merge into the gigantic earthworm was frozen in mid-air like a statue, a maniacal laugh plastered onto his face.

The only things that could move were Meng Hao and the silver line in the air!

A profound sense of danger appeared in Meng Hao's mind. One of the main reasons he had been forced to flee the Southern Domain and go into hiding was the Ji Clan. And yet here again they appeared in the sky above the Western Desert.

Silver light floated lazily off of the line as it whistled down from up above. Ripples emanated out that seemed capable of ripping apart the very air. As it turned out, Meng Hao was not the target. Instead, the line hooked up the old earthworm man. This all happened in front of everyone present, although it seemed they weren't able to see it happening.

Meng Hao started to breath heavily. He didn't dare to move. He stood in place, watching, trying to look exactly like everyone else. He remained completely motionless, attempting to not even think.

He could see that at the end of the silver line was a hook. The hook was currently stabbing effortlessly through the body of the earthworm, piercing all the way through. It was almost like the old earthworm man was now bait on the hook….

Meng Hao's mind spun and his heart was pounding.

"It's not a thread, it's a fishing line, the same type you would use to go fishing!!" Meng Hao remained motionless, but was able to clearly see everything happening. After the old earthworm man was completely stabbed through by the hook, he was suddenly wrenched up into the sky.

Suddenly, an archaic voice could be heard from up above, where the fishing line originated from. In a leisurely tone, it said, "So, it turns out there are Cultivators in the Western Desert who practice Occult Karma Magic. Turned your body into bait, huh? I guess I can use you to go fishing. Maybe I can snag a big fish from the Western Desert. Since you're fish bait now, you have no need for Karma."

As the voice echoed out, Meng Hao was astonished to find that he could suddenly see threads attached to the bodies of everyone present. They were faint, indistinct and flickering, and seemed to contain fate itself. If you looked closely, all of the threads seemed to be connected to each other.

Regardless of neo-demon or Cultivator, even the mountains and rivers, all things in the world, were filled with vast quantities of these threads. They spread out, connected together, even to the earthworm man up in the air. Everything and everyone was connected together into something like an enormous, living web.

Anything seen or remembered caused a merging of Karma strings, connecting everything.

"Henceforth, let your Karma be extinguished," said the ancient voice in the sky. Suddenly, Meng Hao could see that the threads attached to the earthworm up in the sky were suddenly beginning to collapse and be destroyed!

As these threads of fate were being eliminated, it caused a huge chain reaction. All of the other threads connected to everything else—mountains, rivers, the land, the neo-demons, the Cultivators—began to tremble.

Even more shocking to Meng Hao was that the surrounding Cultivators were all trembling, and their faces were pale. The threads attached from them to the earthworm began to shatter into pieces. It wasn’t all the threads attached to everything; rather, any connection or memory they had regarding the existence of the old earthworm man, was collapsing.

Now it seemed as if the balance of Karma had been disturbed. By forcibly erasing the Karma that had been sown, it affected the rest of Karma in all creation.

It was at this moment that Meng Hao’s mind began to tremble; he had just noticed that the threads attached to his own body were trembling and seemed to be on the verge of collapsing. An unspeakable power seemed to be spreading out through the world. It seemed any vestige or memory of the old earthworm man was being completely wiped out.

Even as his mind reeled, the Demon Sealing Jade suddenly began to vibrate inside his bag of holding. A warm, gentle power emanated out from it to envelop Meng Hao’s entire person. It appeared as if the threads attached to Meng Hao were collapsing, but in truth, as that massive power washed over him, the memories of the old earthworm man were not wiped away.

Suddenly, the earthworm man up above transformed into a beam of light that shot up into the sky and then disappeared.

Finally, the previously still world once again began to move.

As things returned to normal… everyone shuddered.

The golden light once again emanated up around the platform. Gu La had a look of confusion on his face, which was quickly replaced with happiness. With a loud shout, he proclaimed his forfeiture, after which he was enveloped by golden light and pulled off of the platform.

Nothing existed in his memories regarding the old fisherman. He only remembered Meng Hao’s fabulous victory over the other Dragoneers.

Outside of the golden shield, the Greatfathers of the five great Tribes were completely recovered. All of them had different expressions as their gazes came to focus on Meng Hao. Their memories did not contain anything regarding the old fisherman either. It was as if the old fisherman… had never even existed.

“The Crow Scout Tribe has recruited a Grand Dragoneer!”

“The Crow Scout Tribe must have paid a hefty price in preparation for this Ancestor Rite Competition. Otherwise, they would never have been able to convince a Grand Dragoneer to work for them!”

As the buzz of conversation rose up from the members of the five great Tribes, Meng Hao stood on the platform, his face ashen. Nobody that he could see looked even a little bit different than from before. In fact, it seemed as if… none of them were even aware that everything had stopped moving moments ago.

Furthermore, they had no reaction whatsoever to the sudden disappearance of the old earthworm man. Apparently, his life did not exist at all within their memories.

It seemed as if all the causes and effects of the old man’s Karma had been completely severed from everything, the neo-demons, the mountains, the rivers and even the land. Not a trace remained of him in any consciousness whatsoever.

Meng Hao looked around, panting, face pale. An unprecedented feeling of fear filled him. “Now that is death… true death. To be erased from the memory of anyone you ever met, as if you had never existed in the world…. So that… that is the Karma Line of the Ji Clan!”

Suddenly, Meng Hao recalled the fishing rod in his bag of holding, the one he had acquired when he slayed one of the sons of Ji. Now he understood the function of that rod.

He also realized that if that fishing line had come for him, and hooked him instead, then perhaps all traces of his own existence would have been erased from the world.

“The Ji Clan….” Meng Hao’s face was pale. He waved his right hand to collect up his neo-demon horde, then strode off of the platform. The Wild Giant accompanied him as he left.

Meng Hao paid no attention to the gazes and words directed toward him. Instead, he looked up into the sky, his face unsightly. Of course, no one could understand what he was feeling. Even the parrot seemed unaware of what had just happened.

Perhaps this wasn’t because the parrot wasn’t powerful enough, but rather because it didn’t care enough about the old earthworm man to notice. Perhaps it had even been willing to allow it to happen.

Maybe it would have been different if the Karmic Severing was directed at someone important to it.

Finally Meng Hao looked back at the members of the five Crow Divinity Tribes who stood around him. As of now, everyone had to admit that the Crow Scout Tribe had clearly won the right to be the first to enter into the Crow Divinity Holy Land.

Using their bloodline powers along with a special technique, the five Tribes of the Crow Divinity fully opened the Crow Divinity Holy Land.

The Crow Scout Tribe members cheered as the Greatfather and the Sky Priest politely clasped hands and offered thanks to Meng Hao.

After that, all of the Crow Scout Tribe members, along with Meng Hao, turned into colorful beams as they shot toward the golden light. Up ahead, the tall platform was fading away, replaced by two massive doors that were slowly opening.

In front of the doors, the Greatfather clasped hands to Meng Hao and the man-form Outlander Beast. “Many thanks, Grandmaster Meng and Fellow Daoist Out. In accord with our promise, you may follow the Tribe members to enter the Pool of Destiny!”

Meng Hao nodded distractedly as he looked at the opening doors.

“The Karma Line of the Ji Clan is so powerful. Being destroyed by it actually erases every trace of your existence. Wow….” Meng Hao was lost in thought as the massive doors opened within the golden light. When they were about half opened, Meng Hao suddenly felt a tremor running through him. He couldn’t stop his face from flickering.

That was because he had suddenly been struck with a new realization.

“Oh no! The Karma Line severs Karma, completely erasing it. It prohibits anything from remembering what was severed. That is a complete erasure. However… if someone happens to remember something about the person who was erased, that would mean that the technique was incomplete, not perfect. Essentially, it means the technique failed…. Not good!”

Having reached this point in his train of thought, Meng Hao’s face completely fell. He could imagine a situation in which whoever it was that employed the technique detected the fact that it had in fact failed. He had little time to continue thinking about the matter. His body flickered as he shot toward the huge doors.

Almost the instant he flew forward, the entire world suddenly grew still. Suddenly, the fishing line which had so recently disappeared… could be seen again up in the sky. This time, it was shooting down toward Meng Hao!

“So a little fish slipped through the net,” said the archaic voice, chuckling. “You dare to spoil my Karmic Severing? Thankfully, you left some clues behind that I noticed, nor are you capable of causing my technique to backfire against me. The Heavens are large and the Earth is wide, but do you really think you can escape me?”

Around Meng Hao, everything was silent and unmoving!

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# Chapter 423: A Fortunate Chance

Meng Hao had practiced Cultivation for many years. From the day his journey began on Mount Daqing all the way until now, he had experienced many deadly situations. However, this particular crisis was the greatest he had ever experienced by far!

The consequences of killing one of the sons of Ji had been enormous. Recently, he had sensed signs that the Mastiff might be beginning to awaken, which gave him a bit of confidence. Except now….

Having seen the old earthworm man’s death, Meng Hao knew that there was absolutely no way for him to fight back against this unheard of Karmic Severing!

His face was pale as he realized that everything around him was once again completely still. The members of the five great Tribes, the neo-demons, even the clouds in the sky were completely motionless. Only the fishing line and Meng Hao could move.

He shot as quickly as possible through the golden light, passing through the massive doors with all the speed he could muster. He exploded with the power of the great circle of the Gold Core, vanishing inside.

However, even as Meng Hao entered the doors, the fishing line came in after him. The speed with which it moved was incredible as it followed him.

This door was no teleportation device, but rather a passageway. When Meng Hao emerged from the other side, he saw that he was surrounded by mountains.

These mountains were a murky golden color, and a faintly discernible pressure could be felt from them. In the distance in front of him were a collection of mountains that had no peaks, but rather, gaping holes at the top. What appeared to be scorching heat billowed out from the holes; these were volcanoes!

In total, there were seven of them, all linked together. This place… was the Crow Divinity Tribes' Holy Land, and also the domain of the Golden Crow.

After entering, Meng Hao didn't pause for even a moment. However, even as he shot forward, the air around him started to fill with what looked like cracks.

The cracks emanated a fearsome Qi. Meng Hao got the feeling that if he ran into one of them, his body would most likely be torn into pieces.

Meng Hao could actually sense a strange Qi filling this entire volcanic realm. It was strange and multifarious, as if countless neo-demons were present.

As Meng Hao flew forward, he suddenly caught sight of a black wind off in the distance. It seemed as if it sensed his encroachment into this area, and was flying to intercept him. This black wind was actually composed of countless black crows. There were more than a thousand of them, blotting out the sky as they flew. Their speed was incredible, and as they neared, Meng Hao could see that their eyes were bright red and filled with frenzy.

In fact, from the Cultivation base ripples emanating out from the more than one thousand crows, Meng Hao could tell that they were level 7, comparable to the early Core Formation stage. There were even ten of them who were level 9!

Meng Hao's face flickered. However, it was at this point that the silver fishing line shot out into the Crow Divinity Holy Land. It emanated an intense rumbling that spread out with the power of stillness. Soon, everything within the Crow Divinity Holy Land… began to grow quiet and still.

The grass stopped swaying, and the cracks appearing in the air suddenly seemed to have been slowed to a standstill. As for the approaching flock of black crows, it stopped moving completely. Even the waves of heat erupting from the volcanoes ceased moving.

However… up ahead, in the centermost of the seven volcanoes, was a location that seemed to be a point of freedom within all the stillness!

“There’s life force there!” thought Meng Hao, his eyes glittering. He immediately began to fly in that direction.

Behind him, the silver line pursued at incredible speed. At its end could just barely be seen the glint of what must be a hook!

This takes some time to describe, but happened extremely quickly. Meng Hao exploded forward with all the power of his Cultivation base. He used the Bloodburst Flash without hesitation, causing him to flicker in and out of the air as he move. He moved in jumps of hundreds of meters, not holding anything back in this moment of grave crisis.

In the blink of an eye, he was directly next to the flock of motionless black crows. He was just about to continue on his way, when suddenly he felt a tremor in his heart.

“Because of the presence of the fishing line, everything has stopped moving, even these neo-demons. You could say that this is the kind of opportunity that comes around only once in a thousand years. In the entire time that the Crow Divinity Holy Land has existed, something like this has most likely never occurred…. It would really be far too much of a shame to let this opportunity slip by. It’s a risk… that I’m willing to take!”

His eyes shone with a bright light that transformed into determination. Immediately, he waved his right hand toward the motionless crows. They had absolutely no control of themselves as they turned into beams of blackness that shot into his bag of the Cosmos.

That having been accomplished, he once again proceeded forward.

Behind him, the fishing line neared!

Panting, Meng Hao bit the tip of his tongue and then sprayed some blood out of his mouth. His body flickered as the Bloodburst Flash activated, propelling him off into the distance. His face was pale, but he didn't hesitate at all. In an instant, he had reached an area that grew thick with grass. There, he could see a group of seven or eight poisonous wasps hovering motionless in mid-air. Behind them was a gigantic wasp nest which was surrounded by dozens more wasps.

Seeing them, Meng Hao gritted his teeth, then waved his right hand. Immediately, the wasps and the wasp nest were gathered up. Then, he Bloodburst Flashed again.

"This is an extremely rare opportunity, I have to take advantage of it!!" Meng Hao was shouting inwardly, but at the same time, somewhat conflicted. This was a moment of extreme, grave danger, perhaps the most critical he had experienced since he had begun practicing Cultivation. However… this moment of crisis had transformed this Crow Divinity Holy Land into an unprecedented bit of good fortune!

This good fortune had caused everything in the area to become motionless, allowing Meng Hao free access to a variety of neo-demons. Such an opportunity caused even Meng Hao's heart to begin to pound.

That was especially true… when he happened to look into the mouth of one of the motionless volcanoes. There he could see an enormous lizard, half emerged from the volcano. It was dozens of meters long. Meng Hao was now even more conflicted.

"Put everything on the line!" he roared. His body flickered as he shot toward the lizard. With the wave of a right hand, he collected it into his bag of the Cosmos. Then, he spit some more blood out of his mouth to shoot away at incredible speed. At this moment, it was almost like Meng Hao had forgotten about the danger to his life. Whenever he saw a neo-demon he would shoot toward it and collect it up.

One neo-demon horde and super-powerful neo-demon after another, things which had existed for countless years within the Crow Divinity Holy Land, creatures which no one had ever been able to collect even throughout all the years in which the five Tribes had offered sacrifices to the Ancestor, dangerous beasts which normally could only be avoided with special techniques… were all completely motionless, making it extremely convenient for Meng Hao to seize them.

A group of more than one thousand green mosquitos were sitting stock still within the mouth of a volcano, apparently just on their way inside to fight a gigantic crocodile that was half submerged in the lava inside.

The mouthparts of the mosquitos emitted a mysterious glow, and their bodies were ferocious looking, covered with countless fur-like spikes. They were completely shocking in appearance.

As for the crocodile, it was bright red, with two pitch-black eyes. It lay half-submerged in the lava, emanating shocking ripples.

“How… how many neo-demon hordes are in this place?!?!” thought Meng Hao, his eyes widening. The twisted feeling inside of him could not be any more intense. Behind him, the silver line whistled toward him with increasing speed. It was no less than a hundred and fifty meters away.

“Dammit!” Meng Hao’s eyes were red as he once again utilized the Bloodburst Flash. He reappeared at the mouth of the volcano, where he waved his right hand. Immediately, the mosquitos and the shocking red crocodile were sucked into his bag of the Cosmos.

His body flickered once again as he fled away. By now, the silver line was about a hundred meters away from him, and moving even faster through the air.

The sense of grave crisis was incredibly intense. Meng Hao’s eyes were completely bloodshot, and he now had no time to consider any surrounding neo-demons. Instead, he continued to head forward toward the apparently active volcano which was his goal.

Except… even as he neared it, he noticed that up ahead was, shockingly, a burial mound!

The burial mound was covered in cracks, making the coffin inside clearly visible. Inside the coffin was a corpse which was half human and half beast, completely bizarre in appearance.

What set Meng Hao panting, however, was that laying on top of the corpse’s chest was a wooden sword!!

The instant he saw the wooden sword, his eyes went wide. Meng Hao could tell that this corpse was not in fact dead. In fact, its eyes were open. Also, despite the stillness everywhere, he could still sense a threatening aura coming from it, and a powerful pressure similar to the Spirit Severing stage.

“A third wooden sword!” he thought, breathing heavily. Having seen the sword, he knew that he must have it. Including his duplicate sword, it would increase the number of wooden swords he had to four.

As for the origin of this sword, Meng Hao wasn’t sure. But his intuition told him that considering it cost two thousand ultra high-grade Spirit Stones to duplicate, it was obviously beyond ordinary. As for why it hadn’t manifested its true majesty, perhaps it was because he hadn’t acquired enough of them yet.

Meng Hao had the intense sensation that if he did not take advantage of this peculiar situation, then he would never again have a chance to snatch the wooden sword from this bizarre corpse.

Feeling both miserable and happy, he bit down viciously on his tongue, changing directions and shooting toward the corpse. As soon as he neared the burial mound, his hand shot in through one of the cracks and grabbed the wooden sword. As he wrenched it out, he could faintly hear a snarl of profound rage coming from the corpse.

There was no time for any further examination. Meng Hao’s body flickered as he shot toward the volcano in the very center. Almost in the exact moment that he entered it, the pursuing silver line did the same.

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# Chapter 424: Severing Meng Hao’s Karma

The archaic voice boomed out from the sky to echo about within the volcano.

“Flee to the remotest corners of the Earth and you will still be incapable of evading me!”

Meng Hao was only about ten meters ahead of the silver line, his face pale.

It really seemed as if what the voice said was true. Meng Hao… was incapable of evasion!

There was lava inside this volcano, as well as one location deep within that appeared to be a cistern. The rock surrounding the cistern had been chiseled into stone steps, which in turn formed a pool of water.

Meng Hao neared, he passed through multiple restrictive spells. These restrictive spells were set up to prevent anyone not of the Crow Divinity Tribe from nearing. Any outsider who attempted to approach without the help of a Crow Divinity Tribe member would be killed.

However… Meng Hao was being followed by the fishing line. As it neared, it caused everything to cease moving, even all of the bizarre and fantastic things inside of the volcano.

The restrictive spells were also static now, and any hindering power was rendered useless. Meng Hao shot forward with all of the speed he could muster. From ancient times until now, he was the first outsider to ever come to this place alone!

This event was unprecedented. As Meng Hao neared the Pool of Destiny, waves and ripples could be seen on its surface. However, Meng Hao had nothing to be happy about. His eyes radiated despair. Earlier, he had hoped that there would be something here he could use to fight back against the silver line, which was why he had headed in this direction.

Unfortunately, it seemed that the pond was the only thing here.

“Nowhere to go….” His gaze flickered about, and he sent his Spiritual Sense billowing out. After confirming that there really was nothing else in the area besides the Pool of Destiny, he gave a wan smile.

“The Pool of Destiny…. It seems I have nowhere to go and no other options. Well, if I’m really going to perish, then I’ll go out fighting. And I’ll do it in this Pool of Destiny!” His eyes shining with vicious determination, his body flickered and he stepped foot into the Pool of Destiny.

The very moment that he did, the silver line finally reached him. It wrapped him up immediately, binding him tightly!

As soon as the line touched him, Meng Hao’s mind filled with a roaring sound, and he felt as if his soul was about to fly out of his body. It was as if his mind and his body were completely split apart. A sensation of icy coldness appeared within his soul. He suddenly had the sense that a deadly crisis was imminent.

“As I said, you’re not strong enough to hide from me. Do you really think you can measure up to the people in the past who tried to evade my grasp? When I’ve hooked your Karma, everything is over!

“Eee? Hold on… you already have traces of Karma from the Ji Clan? It’s faint, and it looks like you’re almost on the verge of completely erasing it. Since it’s still here, though, I think I’ll just take a look and see who you are. Let’s see…. Meng Hao…. Killed one of the sons of Ji…. Wanted by the Ji Clan. Oh, so it’s you…. I guess it’s just your destiny to run into me here. I might as well settle the Karma you have with the Ji Clan.

“I am Ji Nineteen. I shall bequeath thee with… the Ji Clan’s Karmic Severing!” Meng Hao’s body was trembling. He felt as if his consciousness and his body were being ripped apart. His soul felt as if it were in fetters as if some massive force were preparing to wrench it out of his body. 1

He was filled with confusion, and his Cultivation base vanished. Even his Demon Sealing powers disappeared. It was as if he was nothing more than a mortal, so weak that he could do absolutely nothing to fight back.

The only thing he was aware of were the words spoken by the archaic voice, which echoed about in his head.

“Karmic Severing….”

He could vaguely see a vast assortment of faint, flickering threads connected to his body. These threads were his fate and Karma, massed together and stretching out into the air, connected to who knew what.

Suddenly, Meng Hao could see that deep within him, a power was spreading out to these threads, and to his very life force….

“SEVER!” said the archaic voice. The instant the word came out of his mouth, the world shook as if it were being struck with lightning.

Meng Hao’s body trembled violently as he watched the threads connected to his body beginning to collapse, as if some intangible blade were beginning to chop through them. They shattered, causing a chain reaction which destroyed even more of the threads. It was impossible to say whose memories these threads connected to, but in this instant, they were falling into pieces.

It didn’t matter how much distance was involved, the threads were destroyed. The effect began to spread about throughout all the lands of South Heaven.

In the Western Desert, outside the golden light, everything was completely still. All the members of the five great Crow Divinity Tribes suddenly shivered. Their faces went pale and filled with blankness. Within their memories, any trace of Meng Hao was erased, almost as if it were completely severed away.

Wu Ling, Wu Chen, Wu Hai, all of the Tribe members from the five great Tribes suddenly had not even a scrap of a memory of Meng Hao within their minds.

Mo Li and old devil Wang, even Yan Song and Eccentric Li Tao all trembled as the Karma threads connecting them to Meng Hao were destroyed.

It was like a gigantic invisible blade was slashing down. As it headed toward the man-form Outlander Beast, it met up against a powerful force that struggled back against it. The man’s body shook, but in the end… the blade descended nonetheless.

The voice of the parrot suddenly came out of the man’s mouth in a faint roar: “Ji Clan Immortal, this time Lord Fifth will not forget!!”

The blade swept past, slicing across Gu La, erasing Meng Hao’s existence. It spread out toward the Black Lands. As for the stillness, it did not touch the Black Lands; it was limited to the area in the Western Desert surrounding the Crow Divinity Tribes. At the moment, Black Lands Palace Dao Child Luo Chong was sitting cross-legged in meditation. His body suddenly shook, and he coughed up a mouthful of blood. He looked up, an expression of confusion on his face.

In the Church of the Golden Light, the members of the congregation all began to tremble and cough up blood. Perplexed looks appeared on their faces, as if they had forgotten something, but weren’t sure what.

The invisible blade swept across the Black Lands, erasing any vestige that Meng Hao had ever been there. It continued on toward the Southern Domain.

Currently, Fatty was contentedly filing away at his teeth and holding a pretty girl in his arm. He was murmuring something to her when suddenly his body trembled and his face flickered. He then coughed up seven or eight mouthfuls of blood. His face was ashen as he looked around in confusion.

“What’s wrong?” asked the girl, looking alarmed as she rubbed him gently.

“Nothing…. It seems like… like I just forgot someone…. Weird.”

During this moment, it wasn’t just Fatty who was affected. Chen Fan and all the other people within whose memories existed the image of Meng Hao, suddenly coughed up blood and then looked around in confusion.

As of this moment, all traces of Meng Hao that existed within their memories were blotted out. All Karma threads of theirs which were entangled with Meng Hao were crushed.

As of now, their lives did not contain anyone who went by the name of Meng Hao, or of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron.

“Dammit, just how famous is this guy in the Southern Domain!?” said the archaic voice, sounding shocked. “There are so many people connected to him by Karma!” He sounded flustered and disbelieving. The art of Karmic Severing is a magic which consumes energy in correlation to the amount of connections that are severed. It was definitely an astonishing technique, but one needed to be careful when using it.

Xu Qing sat meditating in her Immortal’s cave in the Black Sieve Sect. It was evening outside. Suddenly she opened her eyes and let out a soft sigh. Her hand reached into her robe, where a small pill bottle was stored, within which was a Cosmetic Cultivation Pill.

It was at this moment that a tremor ran through her and she coughed up not one, but a total of nine mouthfuls of blood. Her face was pale, and she was shaking violently.

She could feel the existence of Meng Hao within her memories beginning to shake and collapse, forcibly being erased.

“NO!!” she cried. Her hair was instantly thrown into disarray, and she began to flash an incantation gesture to fight back. The only result was more coughing up of blood.

“Meng Hao…. Meng Hao….” Her Cultivation base began to rotate rapidly, as she prepared to use all the strength she could summon to resist.

However, even as her Cultivation base began to move, she said, “Meng Hao…. Who’s that?”

She sat there mutely, a blank expression on her face. She tried to remember who Meng Hao was, and why she was rotating her Cultivation base. She could tell that her heart was in the process of breaking, and unconsciously reached up to her face. She felt tears.

“Why do I hurt so much?” she thought. “Why am I crying?”

Throughout the Southern Domain an invisible Karmic storm raged. The raging tempest was strongest in the Violet Fate Sect. Everyone in the entire Sect trembled and coughed up blood.

Chu Yuyan’s face was pale, and her fists were clenched tightly. She laughed bitterly as she felt her memories changing; Meng Hao was being completely wiped away. She quickly lifted her hand up and then bit her tongue. Spitting the blood onto her finger, she began to write two characters onto the wall next to her: Meng Hao.

However, after she wrote the character Meng… her hand stopped moving and a look of bewilderment appeared on her face.

“What was I writing?”

Pill Demon sat in his short mountain, looking off into the sky. It wasn’t clear what he was thinking, but as the invisible blade neared him, he sat there and sighed.

“So, this day has finally come, has it…?” He shook his head bitterly, but a brilliant light shone in his eyes. He lifted his right hand, within which appeared a medicinal pill. The pill emanated an archaic Qi, and was clearly incredibly old.

“If you sever my apprentice’s Karma,” he thought, “then I will absolutely never give in and become an Immortal of the Ji Clan!” With that, he closed his eyes and watched in anguish as everything within his memories that existed regarding Meng Hao was turned into nothing but ash.

The pill in his hand emanated shocking aura, which caused these drifting pieces of memory ash to suddenly be reformed a new, unaffected.

“Dammit, he has something like that as his Master!!” echoed the archaic voice. It sounded furious. “It’s a pity my Cultivation base isn’t sufficient. If it were, then everything would be wiped out!”

The blade continued to sweep across the Southern Domain. However, when it reached the Rebirth Cave, the cold voice of a woman could be heard.

“A false Immortal from the Ji Clan. Do you truly dare to try to wipe out my memories? Screw off!”

The sound echoed out into the air. The archaic voice, filled with disbelief and alarm, weakly responded. “He’s even connected to that figure in the Rebirth Cave! Dammit! Dammit! Who else does this guy know? How come his Karma is so hard to sever!?”

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# Chapter 425: The Severing Cannot Continue!

Out on the Milky Way Sea floated an island. If you looked at the island from up above in the sky, it had the appearance of a turtle. This island had been quite a mystery in the Milky Way Sea during past years. It floated about here and there, surrounded by mists.

Suddenly the floating island stopped, and an astonishing bellow of rage could be heard from within.

“SCREW OFF!! Bastard! I just fell asleep, and now you come bothering me? You think I want those memories of that twerp Meng Hao? Dammit! SCREW OFF!!”

Patriarch Reliance’s thunderous voice echoed out, kicking up huge waves on the Milky Way Sea.

The archaic voice anxiously said, “How could something like that even exist!?!? How do I accomplish this severing? How?!?!”

He sounded completely flustered and exasperated, shaking because of Meng Hao’s very existence. On another island in the Milky Way Sea was a stooped old man who was currently standing in front of an artist’s easel, painting a picture of the tall, strapping man who stood in front of him.

In the middle of making a brushstroke, the old man suddenly frowned and looked up into the sky. A profound glow suddenly appeared.

“People who exist in my memory cannot have their Karma severed by the Heavens of Ji,” he said softly. He lifted his right hand into the air and then waved his paintbrush. A drop of ink flew out which then merged into the air.

Suddenly, the entire sky in the region turned completely black.

A miserable shriek could be heard echoing out from the void. The voice was none other than that of ancient Ji Nineteen.

As the shriek filled the air, all of the Cultivators who were affected by the destruction of the Karma threads suddenly shook. The threads connecting them to Meng Hao, suddenly began to recover. They returned from absolute destruction to form once again. In fact, because they were being reformed out of destruction, they were even stronger and more tenacious than before.

Chu Yuyan’s face was pale white. Her closed eyes opened, and she looked silently at the character ‘Meng’ written on the wall. She slowly lifted her hand up and wrote the character ‘Hao.’

Pill Demon put away the medicinal pill and looked wordlessly off into the distance. However, his eyes were filled with staunchness and determination.

Fatty rubbed his head as he thought confusedly about past events. Suddenly, his body trembled and he gasped. There were now many more memories of the past. His face flickered as he recalled Meng Hao.

Chen Fan was the same, as was the entirety of the lands of the Southern Domain. In the Black Lands and the Western Desert, all of the Cultivators whose Karma threads had been affected, were suddenly recovered.

Xu Qing gnawed at her lip silently. She looked at the pill bottle in her hand, and her eyes filled with deep anxiety. She now remembered everything that had happened, and was filled with coldness. She could only imagine the loneliness she would experience if Meng Hao’s image did not exist within her memories.

Within her silence, she clenched her teeth. She knew that power was the only way to truly resolve problems. She was now more determined than ever to fully fuse with the memories of Matriarch Phoenix, and increase the level of her Cultivation base.

Back in the Western Desert, in the Crow Divinity Holy Land, within the depths of the volcano, Meng Hao stood trembling in the Pool of Destiny. He, too, heard the miserable shriek. As it echoed about, he opened his eyes to see the silver fishing line turning black. The blackness spread, and as it did, the line turned into smoke and ashes. The ash and smoke spread out amidst the shriek.

The sound of the shriek caused Meng Hao's eyes to glow with coldness. He hadn't been able to see what had happened just now, but he had witnessed the severing of the Karma of the old earthworm man. He could only imagine the death he had just experienced.

Killing intent radiated out from his eyes as he caught sight of an indistinct figure in front of him. It was the image of a Cultivator surrounded by black flames, screaming as he struggled to disappear from this place.

The indistinct figure was repeatedly calling out a name. "Shui Dongliu, it's Shui Dongliu…."

Meng Hao's eyes glittered. His left hand raised up and placed the blood-colored mask onto his face. Massive, frenzied power exploded from his Cultivation base. Blood Qi emanated out in waves as he charged forward.

Blood Finger. Blood Palm. Blood Death World!

They all appeared, causing massive roaring to fill the air as they descended upon the illusory figure. Meng Hao's killing intent soared as he waved his hand again. The Lotus Sword Formation appeared; as it rotated, the power of Time rippled out.

"DIE!" shouted Meng Hao, his voice ice cold. His hand flickered an incantation and he pointed forward.

The Violet Qi Guillotine, Violet Qi Garrote, Violet Gibbous Moon exploded out with a roar, causing violet light to billow up.

"Without a face, a single word, the flames of war unify!" Meng Hao lifted up his left hand and pressed down onto the mask. Immediately, a gigantic face appeared. It opened its mouth and spoke a voiceless word. A roaring sound filled the air as it shot toward the illusory figure.

As the miserable screaming continued, Meng Hao charged forward, slipping on the Fang Clan glove. He punched, and a massive rumbling could be heard. Meng Hao’s killing intent soared as he punched over and over again, more than a hundred times.

Each of these fists contained incredible power. Rumbling sounded out without end, and the illusory figure seemed to be on the verge of bursting into pieces. It appeared to have been sealed, rendering it incapable of making any moves whatsoever; even its Cultivation base was weak beyond compare. It was still trying to disappear and escape, but Meng Hao performed another incantation, and the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex appeared.

As the figure suddenly stopped moving, Meng Hao’s face distorted with the desire to kill. None of his magical arts seemed to have any effect on this figure. And yet, Meng Hao was not willing to let him escape.

He had killed one of the sons of Ji, and he wasn’t afraid to kill this Ji Nineteen. That was especially true considering that if he didn’t kill him right now, when he was at his weakest, then the man would no doubt cause endless troubles in the future.

Gritting his teeth, Meng Hao pressed down again onto the blood-colored mask.

“Flag of three streamers!” he growled. This was the most powerful magical item he possessed!

Considering the current level of his Cultivation base, he could, with effort, wield one streamer. This time, it didn’t appear in illusory form, either. As soon as the words left his mouth, power filled the area as a long, blood-colored streamer appeared. As soon as it left Meng Hao’s hand, Heaven and Earth shook. It shot forward, wrapping around the figure of Ji Nineteen, dragging him.

Ji Nineteen let out a horrified scream filled with shock, fear, and disbelief.

“This… this is… the Mountain and Sea Emperor’s Banner!” He cried out in alarm as roaring shook his body. Suddenly, what had been illusory, only partly in the same world as Meng Hao, was now forcibly dragged out. There, standing directly in front of Meng Hao, was an old man.

He was clearly in very sore straits; his face was covered with a burning, black ink, and his aura was in absolute chaos. Currently, it seemed he was being forcibly repressed, and was now only able to wield the power of Core Formation.

His face was filled with astonishment. He could scarcely believe that he had actually been pulled into this world.

“Impossible! It can’t be the Emperor’s Banner. The legendary Emperor’s Banner was destroyed….”

“What Emperor’s Banner, b*tch!?” said Meng Hao, his face contorted with fury as he thought about how he had just basically died. Then he recalled what Shui Dongliu had said years ago, that people he remembered could not have their Karma severed by the Ji Clan. He was certain that without Shui Dongliu, he would most likely be dead.

In his fury, he unthinkingly imitated the parrot’s wording. With that, he clenched his hand into a fist and punched. A boom filled the air, and the old man let out a cry.

“You trifling mortal, do you dare to injure me? You….”

BOOM!

“Do you dare to kill me!?!?”

BOOM!

Meng Hao struck out repeatedly with his incredibly powerful fist, pummelling the old man until his body was on the verge of exploding.

However, the man’s Cultivation base was fundamentally intrepid. Despite being attacked in such a way, his body was recovering rapidly.

“Puny mortal, you injured me and dragged me out from the world of Ji. But just wait until I’m fully recovered. I’ll kill you with my bare hands!”

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with coldness, and retracted his right hand. He glared coldly at the old man, which caused the old man to stare in shock. Then, the old man began to laugh coldly.

The instant he began to laugh, however, Meng Hao’s right hand flickered an incantation and then he pushed down onto the old man’s forehead.

“It would be a pity to kill you. However, your blood, along with the blood of that son of Ji that I killed, can help me to create my Blood Spirit!”

“My recovery will quickly outpace whatever tiny injuries you inflict on me,” said the old man, his tone vicious. Suddenly, Meng Hao waved his hand, and the Lotus Sword Formation appeared. Rippling power of Time flowed out, relentlessly pounding against the old man.

The old man’s face fell, but he let out a cold snort nonetheless.

“If it were twice as powerful, maybe it could affect me. But that level of Time power is simply not enough!”

“Not enough?” asked Meng Hao, his eyes flickering icily. He instantly produced his four wooden swords and stabbed them into the man’s body to hinder his recovery.

The old man was inherently tyrannical and haughty, but the instant he saw the four wooden swords, and especially when they stabbed into him, he had no choice but to scream miserably.

“Dammit! Dammit! Those are… Immortal Murdering Swords!! You, you, you… just who are you?! How can you have so many!! Although they’re not completely unsealed… they really are Immortal Murdering Swords!!” His injuries suddenly worsened, and his recovery slowed down to a crawl.

Thanks to Meng Hao's many forms of torment, Ji Nineteen was in an incredibly wretched predicament.

"There's still more time to cause you suffering!" said Meng Hao, coldness flickering within his gaze.

Meanwhile….

In the Great Tang in the Eastern Lands exists a luxurious mansion. Sitting inside was the girl with the explosive temper that Meng Hao had met that year, Fang Yu. She was currently wiping some blood off of her mouth; how could Ji Nineteen ever have imagined that the effects of his Karmic Severing would reach all the way to the Great Tang in the Eastern Lands, and Fang Yu? 1

Fang Yu's face filled with fury, and she rose to her feet. She was about to walk out the door when suddenly a woman's voice could be heard, shocking and furious to the extreme. It came from the restricted area in the back of the mansion.

"JI CLAN!!"

When she heard the voice, Fang Yu's face flickered. She saw someone flying out from the restricted area toward her. It was an elegantly dressed middle-aged woman. Her face was beautiful, but grim. As soon as she appeared, everything grew dim, and the air itself began to vibrate. The land quaked, and cracks appeared on the surfaces of the nearby buildings, despite the restrictive spells that protected them.

"Mom…." said Fang Yu, trembling. She feared no one in the world more than she did her mother.

"You, come with me!" said the woman. This woman was none other than the woman who had appeared in the Song Clan back in the Southern Domain. Her eyes radiated killing intent as she turned toward the Ji Clan mansion which existed in the Great Tang of the Eastern Lands. 2

"Mom, don't do anything rash. Dad said before that…."

“Don’t talk to me about your dad. Are you coming or not?!” The woman’s phoenix-like eyes radiated intense killing intent.

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# Chapter 426: Just This Once!

Moments later, a massive roaring sound filled this luxurious mansion in the Great Tang of the Eastern Lands. The entire mansion shook, and then began to crumble into pieces. Large groups of people quickly emerged, although they seemed quite calm. In fact, some were even having pleasant conversations in low tones. Some held books, and there was even one man who had an abacus, and was walking and making calculations at the same time.

Everyone seemed completely unperturbed. There was only one conclusion that could be reached…. This mansion often experienced such thunderous collapse….

As the mansion fell apart, the beautiful woman and Fang Yu transformed into beams of light that shot off in the direction of the Ji Clan Ancestral Mansion.

A sigh could be heard from within the collapsing mansion as a middle-aged man in scholar’s clothing emerged, shaking his head. He looked at his wife and daughter disappearing in the distance and then sighed again, but did nothing to hinder them.

As she flew through the air, the beautiful woman’s face was filled with killing intent. She moved with shocking speed. Next to her, Fang Yu looked nervous, but she was actually quite excited inwardly.

After a bit of time, the two of them neared a sprawling walled city, the entirety of which was pitch black. It was square in shape, like a giant seal that had been pressed down into the land.

Located within the city was an imperial palace, which from a distance, looked magnificent. Palatial structures sprawled around it, and in front was a large square in which could be seen eighteen dragon statues that emanated shocking auras.

This imperial palace had only one main gate, which was completely gold. Protruding from the surface of this gate were 3,927 golden nails. Each of these nails was completely out of the ordinary, and obviously could be considered a precious treasure.

The gate was also carved with soaring clouds and auspicious beasts. Everything was gold, making it look like some sort of Celestial gate.

This was the number one ancestral mansion of the Ji Clan in all of the Great Tang of the Eastern Lands. In total, they had nearly one hundred, each one of which looked like an imperial palace, although it wasn’t. After being erected, these palaces stood mightily for years, never weakening. They were like a figurative shield for the entire Clan.

In any case, surrounding this imperial palace, the Ji Clan members had also erected an enormous wall.

The approach of Fang Yu and her mother send out shocking ripples through the air, as well as a screaming wind. Immediately, the Cultivators within the Ji Clan noticed this.

“Halt immediately!”

“If you take a step further you will be executed without hesitation!”

Fang Yu looked over at her mother anxiously. “Mom, don’t do anything rash….”

Even as the words left her mouth, the beautiful woman lifted up her right foot and violently kicked the city gate. Immediately, a roaring sound echoed out in all directions as the entire city shook. The gate immediately collapsed into pieces, crumbling downward into dust. A gale force wind swept out, carrying the rubble with it.

“What gall! You dare to make a move against the Ji Clan!?!?”

As the gate collapsed, howls could be heard within the city and crowds of people appeared, shooting through the air toward the gate. “Are you looking to die!?!?”

“Mom, don’t be rash, you must not under any circumstances be impulsive….”

“Shut up!” cried the beautiful woman, glaring at Fang Yu. She clenched her right hand into a fist and then slammed it into the ground, which rippled like seawaters as a massive boom echoed out. Cracks spread out in all direction, ripping the ground apart in shocking fashion.

The woman, radiating killing intent, shot toward the incoming Cultivators. All it took was a single punch from her, and they went flying off one by one like kites with their strings cut. They tumbled through the air, crying out miserably.

The woman was like an explosively violent dragon. Everywhere she went, everything shook. It was like a whirlwind that none of the nearly thousand approaching Cultivators could do anything to stop.

Fang Yu stood off to the side. She continued to call out to her mother to not do anything rash but her face radiated a killing intent quite similar to her mother’s, along with excitement. It got to the point where she ran over and, anyone who her mom had already taken care of, she would take care of again.

After the space of a few breaths passed, the sky suddenly grew dim. The city wall seemed on the verge of being completely destroyed, and the land itself was covered with countless cracks. Finally, the city wall collapsed into dust. The beautiful woman transformed into a whirlwind that swept out toward the imperial palace.

In the blink of an eye, she reached the Celestial gate of the imperial palace, and the enormous plaque which glowed with golden light and was covered with the more than three thousand nails, as well as auspicious animals.

Suddenly, a roar could be heard from within the city as dozens of figures shot out. Their Cultivation bases emanated shocking power as they emerged.

“Madam Fang, are you here as a representative of the Fang Clan to declare war on the Ji Clan!?” One of the approaching figures was a white-haired old man who spoke with a grim voice. Next to him was none other than Ji Eleven, whose face was written with astonishment. He stared in shock at the mother-daughter pair as they approached. 1

“I’m not here representing the Fang Clan. I’m here as a mother, representing myself!” The beautiful woman’s jaw was set, and her phoenix-like eyes radiated killing intent. She punctuated her words by once again slamming her fist down onto the ground.

Heaven and Earth filled with roaring, and it seemed like the air would collapse. A black wind spread out in all directions, slamming into the approaching group of dozens of Ji Clan members.

Their expressions immediately flickered. At the same time, Fang Yu urgently said, “Mom, don’t do…”

Before she could finish, the beautiful woman charged toward the Celestial gate of the imperial palace and punched it directly with her fist.

When the blow landed, a shocking boom rang out that shook nearly half of the entire Eastern Lands. This Celestial Gate of the Ji Clan had stood here in its majesty for who knew how many years. But now, cracking sounds rang out as, layer by layer, it began to completely disintegrate. As it transformed into crumbling fragments, the more than three thousand golden nails shot toward the imperial palace, to slam into the eighteen dragon statues which were actually in the process of coming to life.

Rumbling filled the air, and the eighteen dragons let out miserable shrieks. Their bodies were unable to withstand the attack, and they exploded. By this point, half of the palace was a wreck, and the entire city was in an uproar.

"… anything rash…." finished Fang Yu. She stared mutely at her mother, and the destroyed golden gate.

"Meng Li!! Are you crazy!?!?" 2

Howls of rage could be heard from the approaching group of a dozen or so old men. Their eyes radiated killing intent and fury, but also a bit of helplessness.

"You dare to harm my son?! I will dismantle this entire Ji Clan Ancestral Mansion and cut down your South Heaven Gate! Others fear you Ji Clan people, but not me!" The killing intent boiling in the woman's eyes seemed to have no end. She had suppressed it for a long time, but could do so no longer. She strode directly in through the crumbling main gate.

Fang Yu hurried after her. The mother-daughter team passed through the Celestial gate, and suddenly they were in a different world.

In front of them, a mountain range spread out, completely white in color. From a distance, they looked like they were covered with snow, but if you looked more closely, you would see that they were in fact made from jade.

The entire mountain range was the same, and at its very highest point was a simple house. The house was encircled by palatial structures, and half way down from the house could be seen an enormous gate-like bridge. It was richly ornamented with jade and marble, and on its surface, three characters were carved in flowing script that made the words look like flying dragons and dancing phoenixes.

"South Heaven Gate!"

Steps were carved into the jade mountain that led under this bridge, all the way down to the bottom of the mountain where a lake existed. The reflection of the imperial palace above could be seen on the surface of the lake. No waves existed on its surface, making the reflection very realistic. If you didn't look very closely, you might not even be able to tell the difference between the two. The mountain and the reflection of the mountain in the lake were almost identical.

“Mom….” said Fang Yu as soon as they entered. Normally, she was quite audacious, but as of this moment, she was a bit taken aback. Everything that had happened up to now was incredibly shocking. She looked at her mom, almost in a daze.

The beautiful woman gave a cold snort as she looked up at the white jade mountains. At this point, a bit of dread could be seen even in her eyes. However, the dread quickly vanished, wiped away by fury and killing intent. She took a deep breath, during which time, a terrifying, frenzied power suddenly rose up within her.

Her hair whipped about, and her eyes glowed brightly. Everything around her changed, and even the sky grew blurry as a massive pressure radiated out. Shockingly, she now had a sword in her hand!

And this sword… was a wooden sword!

It was not the same as the four wooden swords that Meng Hao had acquired. Instead, it was covered with characters written in an ancient style.

Sunder!

Gripping the sword tightly in hand, the beautiful woman swung it toward the South Heaven Gate up on the mountain. The sword strike caused the sky above to turn black, and the ground to turn into nothingness. It was as if all of the power in the world were being sucked into this one sword and transformed into cascading Sword Qi. This shocking Qi whistled through the air directly toward the South Heaven Gate.

It was at this exact moment that the dozen old men neared. They were filled with fury, but as soon as they saw the sword, their faces filled with shock.

“Dammit! Immortal Sundering Sword!!”

“You crazy Meng! You, you, you… you dare to wield that Immortal Sundering Sword here on Planet South Heaven!?!?”

The speed of the Sword Qi was such that it arrived at South Heaven Gate in the blink of an eye. However, at some unknown time, directly next to South Heaven Gate, a young man had appeared. Based on his appearance, he was not very old; however, his body radiated an intangible ancientness.

He looked at the incoming Sword Qi, and then at the beautiful woman. Shaking his head, he did nothing to block it. The Sword Qi slammed into South Heaven Gate, causing the entire structure to shake and then collapse into pieces.

The South Heaven Gate had stood from the moment the Ji Clan arrived on Planet South Heaven, and represented their position of rulership. This was the first time it had ever collapsed.

The young man looked at the collapsing gate and then coolly said, “For the sake of your father, Senior Meng, I won’t go too hard on you. Go ahead and vent your anger. But… it will only be just this once!”

The young man waved his sleeve, and everything in the world began to grow blurry, and everyone began to disappear.

Before she completely disappeared, the beautiful woman’s voice rang out throughout the entire world, filled with determination and staunchness.

“I will issue a warning too,” she said, “and it had BETTER be just this once!”

2. Earlier she was called “Madam Fang” and here she is called Meng Li. In Chinese culture, women don’t change their name upon marriage. However, they can be addressed with their husband’s surname if used with the right title. In Chinese, her name is mèng lì – Meng is a surname, the same as Meng Hao’s. Li means “beautiful”

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# Chapter 427: Greenwood Tree Ancestor Awakening!

“It doesn’t matter whether we’re talking about family love or one’s temper,” the young man said lightly. He smiled slightly. “Everything is Karma. Sooner or later, everything becomes empty after it has been severed and annihilated.” With that, he waved his right hand. Time almost seemed to flow in reverse as the crumbled South Heaven Gate instantly reformed, as good as new.

Of course, the young man knew that although the gate itself could be repaired, its collapse earlier had caused harm to the Cultivation bases of all living Ji Clan Cultivators connected to it. Such losses would not be easily recovered.

That was the true importance of this gate; it allowed all Cultivators who were part of the Ji Clan to utilize power of the Heavens of Ji to achieve Cultivation base breakthroughs.

Meanwhile, back in the Western Desert, outside of the Crow Divinity Holy Land, the stillness which had gripped the world was gone. Because of the failure of the Karmic Severed, the members of the five great Tribes once again had their memories of Meng Hao.

However, they were left with no sense whatsoever regarding the stillness. The last thing they remembered was Meng Hao suddenly flying up through the shining golden doors.

The Crow Scout Tribe Greatfather shook his head and laughed heartily. “Grandmaster Meng is being a bit hasty, but there’s no harm in that. Let’s go meet up.” With that, his body flickered and he entered the glowing golden doors. He was followed by the Priest, the Grand Elder and the others, including the man-form Outlander Beast. The large man’s face was grim, and his eyes flickered with rage and humiliation.

At the moment, the parrot was the dominant one. It remembered everything that had happened, and understood the truth. This caused its fury to billow up as it urgently entered into the golden light.

As for the rest of the Tribes, they didn’t care a bit whether Grandmaster Meng barged in, nor did they say anything. In fact, were they in the place of the Crow Scout Tribe, they would do nothing about the matter. After all… Grandmaster Meng had displayed the power of a Grand Dragoneer. A person like that would be treated like an esteemed guest in any Tribe.

The members of the Crow Scout Tribe passed through the golden doors and entered the Holy Land with the seven volcanoes. By this time, Meng Hao had Ji Nineteen thoroughly bound up. The four wooden swords were continuously crippling his Cultivation base, making it impossible for him to recover.

In fact, out of fear that his Cultivation base would rise too high, Meng Hao decided to use some additional methods. From within his bag of holding, he retrieved a large collection of poison pills that he had concocted. The power of these poisons was terrifying, not to mention any possible interactions they might have later. Meng Hao knew that even he himself would have a difficult time dispelling them. Without hesitation, he fed them to Ji Nineteen.

Ji Nineteen’s eyes went wide as he was forced to consume the vast quantities of poison pills. His face turned purple, and seven tremors ran through his body. With each tremor, he withered a bit, until his very aura seemed to ooze with poison. His eyes were green, and filled with terror.

“You…. Dammit! How many poison pills do you have? How many did you give me!?!?”

Meng Hao snorted coldly.

“We will end your torment for today. Once the poisons are fully fused into your body, I’ll concoct some more for you.” With that, Meng Hao waved his hand, wrapping Ji Nineteen up in the flag of three streamers and sucking him into the blood-colored mask.

Only binding him in such a way allowed Meng Hao to set his mind at ease. Otherwise, how could he feel safe, considering Ji Nineteen’s incredible power?

“Once he’s weak enough, I can use his blood to make a Blood Spirit. Also, I can use his soul to make a Soul of Lightning, just like the Li Clan Patriarch. If I can use some special methods, I can turn his body into a puppet. A high level expert like him is a treasure through and through. I can’t waste any part of him. The sad thing is, he didn’t have a bag of holding….” After a long moment of consideration, he came to the conclusion that he truly hadn’t wasted any opportunities. Finally, he nodded in satisfaction.

It was a good thing Ji Nineteen didn’t hear the conclusions he had reached, otherwise blood would spray from his mouth as he realized that being killed by Shui Dongliu would have been much better.

“This time I really did profit from misfortune.” He looked down at his bag of the Cosmos, and his heart began to twitch with excitement. On the way here, he had taken advantage of the power of the fishing line to collect a huge assortment of ferocious neo-demons. There were some that, normally speaking, he would have had great difficulty in acquiring on his own.

That was especially true regarding some of the hordes he had acquired. In his opinion, he really had profited wildly.

“And then there’s the sword!” He started breathing heavily as he thought of his fourth sword, which was currently stuck into Ji Nineteen. Technically speaking it was the third he had found.

Meng Hao now knew that the swords must contain some incredible mystery. If he could somehow acquire more of them, he would probably be able to solve the puzzle.

“Immortal Murdering Sword, huh? And then there’s the flag of three streamers. Ji Nineteen called it a much different name than the meat jelly did. The Mountain and Sea Emperor’s Banner.” After more thought, Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding to produce a green fishing pole. Hefting it in his hand, his eyes began to shine with a bright glow.

“When Ji Nineteen launched his Karmic Severing, he used a fishing line. I’m guessing that the fishing pole he used was the same type as this one!” He looked thoughtfully at the fishing pole. All of a sudden, the same cacophony of life he had heard before, once again began to sound out in his mind. There were babies crying, old people gasping for breath, men and women laughing and arguing.

He quickly released his grip on the fishing pole. His eyes flickered as he muttered to himself for a moment, then put the fishing pole back into his bag of holding.

“I wonder how you use the thing? Maybe I can get the answer from Ji Nineteen.” Meng Hao glanced at the mouth of the volcano and then looked at the Pool of Destiny.

His heart suddenly quivered. Earlier, he had stepped into the pool because of the Karma Line. As such, he hadn’t noticed anything too extraordinary about it. Now, his eyes glittered as he once again shot back to enter the pool. Once inside, he closed his eyes for a long moment. When they opened, they were filled with excitement.

“So, it contains totemic transmogrification powers…. If I cultivate here, my Greenwood Tree totem will grow even stronger. With enough power, I should even be able to transmogrify the totem itself! It should even provide benefits to the Eyeless Larva. It should be able to make it into something like a true totem. I won’t need Li Tao’s magic to cover it up!” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered brightly. The Wood-type Greenwood Tree totem was a legacy handed down to him from Ancestor Greenwood of the Crow Scout Tribe. Meng Hao wasn’t sure what it would turn into if he transmogrified it further.

He stood there thoughtfully for a moment, his eyes filling with determination. Then he sat down cross-legged in the waters to meditate. When he closed his eyes, the Greenwood Tree totem tattoo on his forehead and the Eyeless Larva totem tattoo on his hand immediately appeared.

The waters in the pool began to seethe as if they were boiling. A whirlpool formed, with Meng Hao at the center and the water rushing around him.

Within the pool waters surged totemic power. As it circled around him, it fused into Meng Hao’s body and then, into the Greenwood Tree totem and the Eyeless Larva totem.

After the fusion began, the pool waters were clearly lessening. Moments later, mist began to rise up from the seething water. The mist rose up to surround Meng Hao and then fill the entire inner part of the volcano.

At the same time that Meng Hao was performing the fusion, the group from the Crow Scout Tribe was cautiously making its way through the region outside.

The Greatfather, the Sky Priest, and the Grand Elder all looked suspicious as they traveled through the Holy Land. Things weren’t exactly the way they remembered from previous occasions. Everything seemed much emptier.

“How strange. I remember last time there was a flock of crow neo-demons in this area. By using a special method, there was a high chance of acquiring a few of them.”

“Yeah, that’s right. And I remember that over there was a group of green mosquito neo-demons, completely fearsome in appearance. That year, the group I was leading happened to see someone from the Crow Fighter Tribe accidentally provoke them. He was drained up and turned into a withered corpse in the blink of an eye.”

“Weird, it’s much quieter than usual in here this time….”

They encountered almost no neo-demons during their entire way, nor did they need to use any of the ancestral techniques. They simply flew directly toward the centermost of the seven volcanoes.

According to the Tribe records, the center volcano housed the primary pool. If the water in the Pool of Destiny in the center volcano was reduced, then the water in pools in the other volcanos would also be reduced.

As soon as the Crow Scout Tribe members neared the volcano mouth, they saw the mist within in. They also heard a growling roar coming from within.

It was none other than the voice of Meng Hao. His long cry echoed out as the image of an enormous Greenwood Tree suddenly emerged from within the mist.

At the same time, the mist in the volcano began to shrink down, absorbed. Soon, the image of Meng Hao became visible, seated cross-legged within the pool, sucking in all of the mist.

The image of the Greenwood Tree existed directly above him.

“It’s Grandmaster Meng!” cried the members of the Crow Scout Tribe, instantly recognizing him. Their hearts trembled as Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly opened. He took a deep breath, and the waters around him lessened further. Wisps of white Qi rose up to be absorbed by Meng Hao and the Greenwood Tree image, causing the tree to become even more lifelike as if it really existed there.

It was at this point that rumbling sounds could be heard from the other six volcanos. White Qi rose up from them and shot toward the region of the Crow Scout Tribe members. It shot into the volcano mouth and directly toward Meng Hao.

The Greenwood Tree above him suddenly began to shake, and it expanded outward. Its bark began to look older and older, as if years were passing. It seemed as if at this moment, the tree was growing so high it could reach the Heavens.

In fact, to anyone observing, it seemed… the tree wasn’t just growing. The ancient scars and marks on the tree’s surface seemed to be naturally occurring. This indicated that the Greenwood Tree….

The Sky Priest gasped. “Ancestral Awakening!” she said faintly. “Grandmaster Meng’s Greenwood Tree totem is experiencing an Ancestral Awakening!!”

“Greenwood Tree Ancestral Awakening!” cried the Greatfather, shocked. He began panting, his eyes wide.

Down inside the pool waters, Meng Hao’s eyes snapped open again. Even he had never imagined that by absorbing the totemic power of the pool and fusing it into the Greenwood Tree totem would actually give birth to… the power of Ancestral Awakening!

Meng Hao was astonished. “What will be awakened in the end? An ancient Greenwood Tree?”

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# Chapter 428: A World that Supersedes

“Or perhaps it will turn into the tree that emerged from within the Ninth Sea all those years ago and crossed the stars to Planet South Heaven… the supreme Greenwood Tree!” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as the Qi continued to rush into him. Outside, the other six volcanoes were rumbling as white mist continued to shoot out toward Meng Hao.

The more Qi he absorbed, the brighter his eyes grew.

He looked up at the enormous Greenwood Tree floating in mid-air above him, which emanated a boundless green glow. It dyed the sky, covered the land, filling everything with the aura of the Greenwood Tree. Throughout the Crow Divinity Holy Land, all of the plants and vegetation were writhing.

The members of the Crow Scout Tribe panted as they stared at the scene. Meanwhile, outside of the Holy Land, back in the region of the Crow Scout Tribe, the enormous Treant looked over at the green glow rising up to the Heavens.

“Wood….” it said softly.

Even the members of the other four Tribes who were waiting outside of the golden doors were filled with shock. Although they couldn’t see clearly everything that was happening inside, they were filled with a sense of baffling wonderment. Each and every one had faces filled with shock.

At the same time, the various totemic Sacred Ancients atop the mountains of the other four Tribes appeared. They stared toward the Crow Divinity

Holy Land, and one by one all uttered the same word.

“Wood….”

Even as this word filled the air, the plants and vegetation in the surrounding mountain ranges were whipping about wildly, despite the fact that there was no wind. They flickered, emitting rustling sounds that seemed to form voices of submission. It was as if they were offering obeisance to the sovereign of all Wood-type entities!

The four bizarre life forms from the other four Tribes slowly bowed as if in salute to the miracle which was occurring.

As they were saluting, the members of the Crow Scout Tribe back in the Crow Divinity Holy Land actually stopped breathing momentarily. They watched as the gigantic Greenwood Tree rapidly began to shrink in size. The smaller it got, the more intense was the green light it emitted.

By the time it shrank to three hundred meters in height, it was like a green sun, filling everything around it with intense green light. Meng Hao breathed deeply as he watched the Greenwood Tree shrinking. Three hundred meters, one hundred fifty, one hundred… until it was thirty meters!

Fifteen, ten, three… half a meter, one third… three inches, two inches….

It seemed to be shrinking in correlation to the reduction of water in the pool. Massive amounts of mist were absorbed by Meng Hao; in the blink of an eye, the Greenwood Tree was only one inch tall!

The light it emitted was so bright that it penetrated out of the Crow Divinity Holy Land. The plants and vegetation outside which were grovelling in reverence, the five saluting life forms, and all of the Cultivators who had Wood-type totems, felt a profound impulse to prostrate themselves in worship.

Back within the Crow Divinity Holy Land, the one inch tall, brightly glowing Greenwood Tree in front of Meng Hao shot toward him, branding onto his forehead. A massive roaring noise filled the air, and green light shot out in all directions. As soon as everyone was able to see again, they looked at Meng Hao's forehead and saw… a type of totem that no one had ever seen before!

This totem tattoo was of a single ancient character!

Wood! 1

There was no green tree, no picture, no resplendent glow. It was smooth and ordinary. A single ancient character. Wood!

However, this character Wood represented everything Wood-type under Heaven. Because of this, it didn't need some picture representation of a plant or tree, because it… was the essence of Wood!

All Wood-types in Heaven and Earth!

Everything shook as all plants and vegetation bowed in worship. All such living things paid respect.

"Wood…." Meng Hao floated up out from within the Pool of Destiny, the Wood character on his forehead glittering with green light. He suddenly had the sensation that he could communicate with all plant forms in the world. He had the intense feeling that by merely exercising his will, he could magically manifest any type of wood.

He also felt a type of calling from the Pool of Destiny beneath him. The pool had always born the semblance of a pool, but when Meng Hao looked down at it, what he saw was a path.

The call originated from the end of the path, where Meng Hao had the strange sensation that there existed… a Heavenly Wood character.

His eyes flickered thoughtfully, and then his body flashed. The Crow Scout Tribe watched panting as he suddenly shot back down toward the Pool of Destiny, toward the path. Then, he completely disappeared.

It wasn't until Meng Hao disappeared that the Crow Scout Tribe members finally reacted. In fact, it was the man-form Outlander Beast who did so first. Eyes wide, he looked at the scant amount of water left in the Pool of Destiny, and then let out a roar and charged toward the water.

The Greatfather’s face flickered. He waved his hand, indicating for the others to follow as he headed toward the Pool of Destiny. There was already very little water left, but even absorbing a bit would be very beneficial.

Almost at the same time that the Crow Scout Tribe members were charging toward the Pool of Destiny, the faces of the members of the four Tribes on the outside flickered. This was especially so when they noticed that the golden doors were growing dim. The four Greatfathers and the Priests looked shocked.

“How could it be happening so quickly?! Dammit! The Pool of Destiny is going to disappear!”

“The golden light is fading! That means the waters in the Pool of Destiny are already running out!” As of now, the Greatfathers and Priests of the four Tribes did not feel it necessary to abide by the previous agreement. They immediately began to lead their various Tribe members toward the golden light. In an instant, more than one hundred colorful beams of light shot through the doors.

Within the Crow Divinity Holy Land, the members of the four Tribes scattered, heading in the direction of the various volcanoes.

Everything was quite chaotic. However, amidst the chaos, there were four people who happened to have a special means of communication. Suddenly, they all began to whistle through the air toward the seventh volcano.

These four people were none other than Yan Song and the other Nascent Soul Eccentrics. They moved with great speed, but cautiously, so as not to make themselves stand out. They entered the volcano and looked around, killing intent flickering in their eyes as they immediately attacked the other Tribe members who had entered the volcano at the same time.

Considering the level of their Cultivation bases, and the fact that the Tribe members were caught unawares, it only took the space of a few breaths before they wiped them out. There wasn't even time for miserable cries to ring out.

Now that they didn't have to conceal their identities anymore, the four of them revealed their true appearances.

The reek of blood filled the air, but Li Tian waved his hand, causing it to disappear instantly. At the same time, Mo Li and old devil Wang performed double-handed incantations. In the blink of an eye, a magical shield covered over everything, making it impossible for anyone else to enter the volcano.

"I have the feeling that Grandmaster Meng is none other than our Fellow Daoist Meng," said Yan Song coolly, looking at the others.

"He was the first to enter this place," said Li Tian, frowning. "He must definitely have picked up on some clues already. We need to move faster."

"According to my understanding," said Yan Song, "this seventh volcano has the weakest restrictive spells. May I prevail upon you Fellow Daoists to break the spells? Then we will be able to enter the location of the ancient Dao of alchemy."

The four exchanged glances, then rushed down to the bottom of the volcano. According to the previous arrangement, Mo and Wang began to use their magical techniques to break down the restrictive spells.

As the party of four got to work, the rest of the five Tribes were struggling over the Pools of Destiny. Even as the man-form version of the Outlander Beast, parrot and meat jelly was absorbing the waters, Meng Hao magically appeared in a world that seemed to supercede anything that even remotely resembled it.

The instant he appeared, he looked around, stunned. His eyes began to shine.

Shockingly, he was… in exactly the same place he had been before. He was in the same volcano he had just left. The water beneath his feet was none other than that of the Pool of Destiny. However, the waters were murky, and impossible to absorb. Everything around him seemed tinged with gray, as if that were the only color that existed in this world.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he loped around for a moment and then flew up toward the mouth of the volcano. Outside, everything looked the same; there were still seven volcanoes. The land and the forests, everything looked just exactly the same as the Crow Divinity Holy Land. Except… located in the middle of the seven volcanoes was a gigantic tree.

This enormous, ancient tree towered up so high that it seemed as if it were supporting the very Heaven. And it was golden!

If you looked closely, the tree was not made from wood, but rather, metal. At the very top of the tree was a gigantic Golden Crow, standing there, staring at Meng Hao. 2

At the bottom of the tree was a corpse, leaning up against the tree and facing a decrepit pill furnace.

There was no one and nothing else in the area, only the great tree and the Golden Crow. No lives were present, nor any life force… nor any presence of death.

Everything was quiet, so quiet that many people would find it terrifying.

Meng Hao focused on the great tree and the Golden Crow. Then he looked at the corpse and the pill furnace. Were it not for the corpse and the pill furnace, Meng Hao would have come to the conclusion that everything Yan Song said was incorrect.

Thoughtfully, Meng Hao flew forward toward the great golden tree.

As he neared, the Golden Crow atop the tree suddenly moved its head. A golden gleam could be seen in its eyes.

Meng Hao stopped and stood stock still. He could sense that it was the golden tree upon which the Golden Crow stood that was calling him.

The Golden Crow glanced at Meng Hao, then closed its eyes. Meng Hao clasped hands in a bow, and then neared it.

He didn’t examine the great tree first. Instead, he looked down at the corpse. There in the corpse’s hand was a jade slip.

Meng Hao picked it up and scanned it with Spiritual Sense. Three characters suddenly appeared in his head.

“Spirit Severing Pill!”

His eyes glittered as he looked down at the pill furnace. As soon as he did, a strange expression could be seen on his face. There on the back of the furnace was a large hole.

Within the pill furnace, no medicinal pill could be seen. However, even though countless years had passed, as a Grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy, Meng Hao could tell from the residue left behind that before being destroyed, there had indeed been a medicinal pill inside.

Looking at the hole, he suddenly had the sense that whatever pill had been concocted inside in ancient times, had burst out of its own accord. “It definitely is of the ancient Dao of alchemy, something from primordial times. But… where did the pill go?

1. As you might be aware, Chinese characters go back for thousands of years. According to my research, the type of “ancient character” mentioned to by Er Gen here refer to the most ancient of Chinese characters. The ancient character for wood looks like this:

ancient wood

It’s quite a bit different from the modern version, which looks like this:

2. The Golden Crow is a Chinese mythological creature related to the sun. You can see some various artistic depictions here

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# Chapter 429: The Golden Crow and the Great Tree

Meng Hao looked around, muttering to himself. He then scanned the area with Spiritual sense. However, other than the golden tree and the Golden Crow, there was no trace of anything else.

“Could it have left this place entirely?” thought Meng Hao. As a Grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy, he had concocted sentient medicinal pills before, the kind that attempted to wrest away good fortune from Heaven and Earth, the type that the Heavens attempted to destroy with Tribulation.

Lost in thought, Meng Hao considered how most such ancient medicinal pills had withered up long ago, and were no doubt nothing more than dust. “Most likely it already shrivelled away into ashes.”

Meng Hao couldn’t imagine how a pill that could break out of the furnace in such a manner could possibly still exist after so many years had passed. He put the matter aside and turned his head to look at the great tree.

After a long moment, he reached out his hand and placed it softly on the surface of the tree.

The instant he touched it, it began to vibrate and slowly emit a golden light. At the same time, the Wood totem tattoo on Meng Hao’s forehead began to emit a green light.

There was no communication or interaction. Instead, there was a sliver of will that had existed for who knew how long in this great tree that, at this moment, was set free. It had encountered something similar to itself that it approved of, and had decided to say its final goodbyes.

Meng Hao looked at the tree and could see that it no longer had any life force left in it. The only thing that remained were the traces of the passage of time.

After a long moment passed, Meng Hao sighed.

“So, this is the place that Yan Song and the others are dying to get to…. No medicinal pill, only a corpse and the remains of a great tree. Even the pill formula in the jade slip is of ancient times. Nowadays, you wouldn’t even be able to find the right medicinal plants. The only thing here worth looking at is that Golden Crow.” Meng Hao looked up at the bird sitting on top of the tree overhead.

Finally, he shook his head and was about to pull back his hand, when suddenly a tremor ran through his body. The previously closed eyes of the Golden Crow snapped open. Powerful life force streamed out, entering into the great tree. Suddenly, power seemed to emanate out from the tree, as if it was… still alive.

Because Meng Hao’s hand was touching the tree, he was able to sense the power of the life force. In that instant, his eyes went wide with disbelief. He looked up again at the Golden Crow, his mind blank. It was an ancient sacred relic of the Crow Divinity Tribe, something that had existed for many years, and was powerful enough to give birth to an entire Tribe.

Nowadays, that once powerful Tribe was fading away and had already begun to split apart.

“This life force….” Meng Hao was struck dumbfounded for a long moment. Finally, he took a deep breath. As a Grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy, he was very familiar with medicinal pills. Just now, he could tell that the life force emanating from the Golden Crow actually contained… the aura of a medicinal pill!

It was not emanating life force, but rather, the power of a medicinal pill!

“Is it because it consumed the medicinal pill, or… is IT the medicinal pill?!” The possibility of the latter sent Meng Hao’s mind and heart reeling. Before coming to this place, he could never have imagined that the Golden Crow of this once powerful Tribe… originated from what had started out as a medicinal pill.

He was a Grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy, and as such, could accept that lakes and mountains could become Demons. However, perhaps his own deep knowledge of alchemy covered over his own eyes in a way that made it impossible for him to conceive of the same thing happening with medicinal pills.

He began to breathe heavily. He was now almost certain that of the two different possibilities he had just considered, it was virtually impossible for the first one to be correct. After consuming a medicinal pill, its aura could not exist for a very long time.

The only correct conclusion was that the medicinal pill had turned into a Demon, which then could exist forever!

Panting, Meng Hao looked up at the Golden Crow and the great tree. Suddenly, an image appeared in his mind. Within the image was an ancient Grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy, sitting beneath a Greenwood Tree, preparing to pass away in meditation. As death neared, he produced the most glorious pill he had ever concocted.

Unfortunately, by the time the pill emerged, the Grandmaster had already breathed his last breath.

Years later, when the sentience of the pill reached a certain point, it suddenly broke out of the pill furnace. It seemed as if this action might even have had something to do with the Greenwood Tree. From the moment it appeared in the world, its only friend and partner was none other than the Greenwood Tree.

Year after year passed. After the passage of an innumerable amount of time, when the pill had matured and risen to prominence, it founded the Crow

Divinity Tribe. Many more years passed. Eventually, the Greenwood Tree's life began to waste away, and it died.

The medicinal pill could not accept that the tree had perished. It used its powers to transform its color, and every so often, it would sacrifice some of its own life force to feed the tree.

However… the tree truly had perished. Regardless of what was done, the only thing that could be brought back was something empty, lifelike though it might seem.

Even still… although the medicinal pill understood this, it refused to give up.

Meng Hao considered all of this for a long moment, and then let out a soft sigh. His hand dropped to his side as he stepped back a few paces. He clasped his hands and bowed deeply to the great tree and the Golden Crow.

He could see that the Golden Crow was currently growing weaker and weaker. Soon, its life force would be exhausted, and it would transform into dust on the wind. When that happened, the great tree would have nothing to support its empty but lifelike existence, and it too would transform into dust.

Perhaps both of them were simply waiting for that moment when they both turned into dust together, and could drift up into the empty sky.

Meng Hao looked at the Golden Crow and the great tree. He wasn't sure why, but for some reason the look in the eyes of the Golden Crow reminded him of certain aspects of Grandmaster Pill Demon. The crow stood atop the great tree; Pill Demon stood on his short mountain. The crow gazed upon the tree; Pill Demon gazed upon the statue of Violet East.

It was a strange feeling that caused Meng Hao to stand there thoughtfully for a moment before sighing.

"Since I'm here, I might as well employ some of my power…." He lifted his right hand into the air and performed an incantation. Then, he took a deep breath and pointed at the tree.

“By my command as the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer, I bequeath you with Righteous Bestowal!” Immediately, a tremor ran through Meng Hao’s body, and he spat out a mouthful of blood. When it landed on the tree, a strange light began to glow in the Golden Crow’s eyes, and it stared at Meng Hao.

“Righteous Bestowal causes your path to become that of a Demon!

“Righteous Bestowal causes your Dao to become unceasing!

“Righteous Bestowal causes your spirit to return from emptiness to become a Demon!

“My approval represents the approval of the League of Demon Sealers…. This is Righteous Bestowal, a true blessing.”

Such was the true usage of Righteous Bestowal. After being enlightened regarding it, Meng Hao had never truly used its full power on any Demon. At the most, he had used only some of its bestowing power.

Righteous Bestowal was a type of approval. Any Demon of Heaven and Earth that received the approval of a Demon Sealer would be able to temporarily absorb some of the essence of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Even if that Demon were dead, its soul would not disperse.

This Golden Crow had not done any favors for Meng Hao. However, its emotions and thoughts had stirred Meng Hao. They touched him in a way that made him believe that providing assistance with Righteous Bestowal… was the right thing to do.

After the power of Righteous Bestowal was manifested, Meng Hao took a deep breath. He looked at the great tree and the Golden Crow and then turned to leave. It was at this point that the Golden Crow suddenly emitted a sound. This was the first sound it had made since Meng Hao entered this place, a shrill cry.

This cry sounded something like the grating of metal against metal. Meng Hao looked back to see the Golden Crow shaking. As it shook, ghost images sprung up, and a golden light surged out. The light slammed into Meng Hao’s torso, transforming into a gold-colored brand.

It was a totem tattoo that was somewhat similar to his previous totem tattoo of the Greenwood Tree, an image of a Golden Crow. This was a Metal-type totem, which, if Meng Hao was lucky and could accomplish an Ancestral Awakening, might eventually turn into the ancient character for metal!

After sending out the totem, the Golden Crow seemed to have been weakened by at least half. Its body shook on the verge of collapse for a moment before it collected itself and then looked at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao opened his mouth to say something, although he wasn’t sure what. However, it was at this exact moment that, within this world of grayness, a boom echoed out from the mouth of the seventh volcano. Four figures suddenly became visible.

“Hahaha! We’re here!”

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# Chapter 430: Battling the Nascent Soul Stage

The booming sound echoed out through the air as four figures shot out from the mouth of the seventh volcano. In the lead was a man wearing a long white robe. His hair whipped about him, and his eyes flickered as if with lightning. His expression was one of excitement. This was none other than Yan Song.

Behind Yan Song was Li Tian, whose eyes shone brightly with vigilance. He whistled through the air like a Black Dragon, his black robe flapping in the wind. He really did look like a dragon; the sight was incredibly imposing.

Behind him were Mo Li and Eccentric Wang.

When the four of them appeared, they were instantly filled with interest regarding this gray world. The next thing they saw was the great tree, plus Meng Hao and the corpse beneath it!

What caught their attention more than anything else, though, was the pill furnace!

“So, it is here!” said Yan Song, his eyes flickering with coldness. Next to him, Li Tian’s eyes were grim as he hovered in mid-air and stared at Meng Hao.

Mo and Wang also floated in mid-air, glancing around with flickering eyes. After seeing that Meng Hao was the only person present here, their eyes filled with a strange light.

“Fellow Daoist Meng, you’re so fast,” said Li Tian, laughing mirthlessly. “You’re not wearing your mask today, but we’re all old friends, right? There’s no need for any disguises. You beat us here, which is well and good, but according to our previous agreement, please produce whatever treasures you’ve acquired. It’s time to split our shares.” As he spoke, he moved forward toward Meng Hao. Yan Song, Mo and Wang also neared, surrounding Meng Hao.

Meng Hao frowned as he looked at the approaching Nascent Soul eccentrics. His face grew dark and he let out a cold harrumph, then suddenly kicked out with his right foot, sending the pill furnace flying into the air.

The instant his foot began to move, Li Tian’s right hand shot up and he pointed at Meng Hao.

“Fellow Daoist Meng, what are you doing?!” A black blur shot out from his finger. As it flew out into the air, it transformed into a rotating black flower with five petals. Each petal of the flower looked like a sinister face. They emitted mournful cries as they shot toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao waved his right hand. A bloody light erupted up as the air in front of him turned the color of blood and a massive hand appeared. It instantly shot toward the black flower, slamming into it. A massive explosion ensued.

As the sound of the explosion rippled out, Meng Hao retreated backward. Yan Song and the others continued to approach. It was at this time that Meng Hao finally spoke.

“Fellow Daoist Li, I would like to ask YOU a question. What exactly are YOU doing? Why don’t the lot of you go look at that pill furnace!”

He flicked his sleeve, his expression grim. Having heard his words, Yan Song and the others suddenly stopped moving. Li Tian’s eyes narrowed and came to fall on the pill furnace. The others looked over as well, and instantly saw the hole in it.

The hole was obviously not recently made. Yan Song and the others were all wily old foxes, and it only took a glance for them to realize that the hole had been created long, long ago, not recently.

“This is….”

The four of them frowned and breathed with seeming difficulty.

Meng Hao’s expression was one of extreme displeasure, even rage. “I haven’t been here for long. After coming to this tree, I saw only this corpse and that damaged pill furnace!”

He had noticed earlier that the weakened Golden Crow had long since concealed itself atop the tree. Even if you looked closely, you wouldn’t be able to see it.

“If I said I didn’t find anything, you wouldn’t believe me. Well, I did find something!” Laughing coldly, he lifted his right hand up to reveal a jade slip. As everyone watched, he took out another jade slip, a white one, and then branded the information from the first one onto it. After that, he threw the first jade slip out in front of him.

Yan Song caught it, then looked at it with furrowed brow. He then handed it to Li Tian and the others, who also examined it and began to frown.

They should be able to tell at a glance whether the jade slip was real or a fake. But even Yan Song, an expert in the Dao of alchemy, was unfamiliar with most of the ancient medicinal plants listed therein.

Meng Hao’s face was dark, even filled with rage. His wording sharp, he said, “You want to cause a big fuss over a single jade slip? How disappointing! I’ll take my leave now. From now on, my path is not connected to any of you!”

His awe-inspiring display and sharp words left Yan Song and the others incapable of offering any sort of response.

Meng Hao gave a cold snort. Then, his body flickered as he turned into a beam of colorful light and shot off into the distance.

Before he could get very far, Li Tian suddenly disappeared. When he reappeared, he was directly in front of Meng Hao.

“Fellow Daoist Meng, why are you in such a hurry to leave? Exactly what else did you acquire? Don’t expect that a few trite words will convince us that you didn’t take the medicinal pill that burst out of that pill furnace.”

Meng Hao stopped. Now, his expression was no longer grim, but calm. His eyes were ice cold as he looked at Li Tian.

“Well, Fellow Daoist Li, what brilliant opinion do you have?”

“I won’t dare to use the word brilliant, Fellow Daoist Meng,” he replied slowly, staring Meng Hao in the eye. “But since you got here before us, it will be difficult for you to avoid suspicions. Just hand over your bag of holding and let us search it, that should be enough.”

Meng Hao looked back at him, then started to chuckle. His chuckle turned into uproarious laughter, that eventually began ripples that shook everything in the area. Li Tian’s face flickered; Yan Song and the others suddenly looked very serious.

“You want to search my bag of holding? Li Tian, have you suddenly reached the Spirit Severing stage?!” Killing intent blazed within Meng Hao’s eyes. He began to lift his right hand, but even as he did, Li Tian flashed an incantation gesture with both hands and then shoved them forward.

As he shoved his hands forward, a black mist surged up, which then transformed into a long black spear. Rumbling filled the air as the spear shot toward Meng Hao. It moved with incredible speed, but even as it neared Meng Hao, the Wood totem tattoo on his forehead glittered. Suddenly, an enormous Wood character appeared in front of him.

Simultaneously, boundless Wood-type aura erupted out. Instantly, the approaching spear began to shake.

Rumbling filled the air as Meng Hao's body shot backward at high speed. His left hand slapped his bag of holding, and Wooden Time Swords flew out to form the Lotus Sword Formation. The formation rotated in mid-air, its appearance like that of an enormous lotus!

This formation embodied both the shape and the will of a lotus. In addition, it contained the natural properties of intelligence embodied by a lotus, something that Meng Hao had come to gain enlightenment regarding throughout his years of observing lotuses.

Propelled by the power of the Wooden Time Swords, the glowing, ten-meter wide lotus shot through the air toward Li Tian, rumbling the entire way.

"Time!" said Meng Hao softly, his expression cold.

Immediately, the shocking power of Time emanated out toward Li Tian. Li Tian's face fell as he suddenly sensed his body growing older. Everything within the region of the lotus experienced the passing of time. Everything seemed to be moving faster than the world around it; in the blink of an eye, an entire sixty-year cycle was gone.

Li Tian had never encountered any magical technique like this before. His face flickered, and he flashed an incantation gesture with his right hand. As he waved his hand, black light poured out from his body to resist the Wooden Time Swords. He performed a minor teleportation, reappearing several hundred meters away.

Even as he tried to flee, Meng Hao's eyes flashed with killing intent. He took a step forward and then utilized the Bloodburst Flash. Moving such a short distance made it seem almost like he had used minor teleportation, and he was suddenly directly in front of Li Tian. His right hand clenched into a fist and he punched out.

A boom echoed out. Li Tian's face fell and he spit out a mouthful of Nascent Soul aura. The brightly colorful aura transformed in mid-air into the image of a small person that looked exactly like Li Tian. The figure let out a sharp cry as it shot toward Meng Hao.

BOOM!

Meng Hao's body trembled as he retreated seven or eight paces, his face ashen. As for Li Tian, he retreated about four paces, his face flickering. His expression was one of ferocity, but fear glimmered within his eyes.

"Fellow Daoists Yan, Mo and Wang," he said. "What are you standing there watching for!? If you're really willing to let this guy leave, then I'll hold back."

Before Yan Song and the others could even react to Li Tian's words, Meng Hao laughed coldly and once again shot forward.

"It's too late to hold back now!" Five figures appeared around Meng Hao that looked identical to him. These were none other than Meng Hao's Blood Clones, each of which could wield an untold amount of Meng Hao's.

Simultaneously, a golden glow sprang into being around Meng Hao. The full power of the great circle of the Gold Core exploded out. Up above Meng Hao's head appeared an ancient starry sky. Within this starfield magically appeared a shocking great Greenwood Tree.

Meng Hao's Cultivation base was at the great circle of the Gold Core stage. However, even with only the Wood-type power he possessed, he could fight back against the early Nascent Soul stage. Now that he had acquired Metal-type power as well, there was very little difference at all between him and the early Nascent Soul stage, although there were some divine abilities he could not employ.

Moving forward rapidly, Meng Hao pointed out with his right index finger. The Blood Finger, Blood Palm and Blood Death World, along with his starfield Core Qi and Wood-type totem, all fuelled the Lotus Sword Formation. In the blink of an eye, its power was increased exponentially.

It droned as it rotated through the air. At the same time, Meng Hao cried out, “Time!”

“This magic again!?” Li Tian’s face flickered. Although his Cultivation base was higher than Meng Hao’s, and he had more divine abilities at his disposal, there was little he could do when facing up against the magic of Time. He didn’t even dare to near it. His longevity was already nearing its end as it was. To him, this art was like Death itself. Feeling his aura being ruined, he had no choice but to retreat.

Seeing the rotating Lotus Sword Formation about to fall, Yan Song and the others finally took action. They shot forward to appear near Li Tian. The mighty pressure of the Cultivation bases of four Nascent Soul Cultivators emanated out like a flash flood.

“Fellow Daoist Li, Fellow Daoist Meng, please let me say a word!” said Yan Song, looking directly at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s expression was as calm as ever, but inwardly he heaved a sigh of relief. Even if he put on the blood-colored mask, he was no match for four Nascent Soul Cultivators all at the same time. However, based on the current situation, he had no choice but to fill the others with misgivings by putting on the air of someone who others did not dare to provoke.

“There’s no harm in speaking your mind, Fellow Daoist Yan,” he said, his voice cold.

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# Chapter 431: Prelude to a Funeral

“I believe what you said to be true,” Yan Song said quickly. His words caused Li Tian to frown. The eyes of Mo and Wang flickered. “That’s because the treasure is in fact here! It hasn’t gone anywhere!”

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever, but his heart filled with vigilance.

“If you’re talking about the Spirit Severing Pill,” said Li Tian grimly, “then where exactly is it?!”

“It will appear on its own,” said Yan Song. He suddenly turned, his eyes glowing with avarice. He was looking in the direction of the great tree. He suddenly lifted his right hand up, within which appeared a jade bottle. He crushed it, causing a black liquid to emerge from within, along with a rotting stench.

Within the black liquid could be seen a maggot-like bug roughly the size of a finger. Its segmented body was wriggling, and as soon as it appeared, it lifted its head up and let out a shrill cry. Its body turned into a black streak that shot toward the top of the tree.

The sight of the thing shooting toward the treetop caused Meng Hao’s face to flicker.

Suddenly, a sound could be heard like that of metal scraping against metal. It drifted out from the top of the tree along with a billowing golden light. The weakened Golden Crow suddenly flew out to meet the black bug and prevent it from getting near the great tree. A rumbling sound filled the air as the Golden Crow opened its mouth. A golden glow appeared that surrounded the black bug. It shrieked as it was submerged and then crushed into ash.

The Golden Crow's body was now flickering, clearly weakened further. However, its eyes were filled with sharpness and dignity as it glared around at everyone. Behind it was the great tree, which it apparently would sacrifice anything to protect.

“The legendary Golden Crow Pill is real!” said Yan Song, laughing. “After it was created that year, it acquired a spirit and transformed into a Golden Crow. At one time it had the chance to achieve Immortal Ascension, but in the end it chose to grow weak. Instead, it used its life force to protect a great, dead tree!” His eyes glittered with greed as he stared at the Golden Crow.

Li Tian's eyes also glittered, and by now, he was completely ignoring Meng Hao. His breathing came in pants as he stared at the Golden Crow. In his mind, he was looking at a Spirit Severing Pill from ancient times, something that could arouse a wild frenzy among countless Cultivators.

The eyes of Mo and Wang were also shining brightly.

“It's been weakened to the point that it resembles little more than the Nascent Soul stage,” said Li Tian. In a meaningful tone that lacked his previous hostility, he continued, “Fellow Daoists, this is good fortune for us. Let's catch it quickly and then discuss how to divide it up. Don't let it get away!” Laughing loudly, he strode forward.

Yan Song chuckled. “The pill won't flee, not with the tree here. Even though it's dead, the pill won't leave it.” He, too, began to walk forward. Mo and Wang transformed into beams of light as well. All four began to converge on the Golden Crow.

At this point, none of them were paying any attention at all to Meng Hao. He remained off in the distance, a complex expression on his face. He could leave now, and no one would stop him. However… he was currently hesitating.

Booming sounds filled the air as the four ganged up on the Golden Crow. It let out a metallic cry which turned into a golden shield that enveloped the area around itself and the great tree.

The booming sounds were coming from the attacks the four levelled against the golden shield. Blow after blow was causing the shield to slowly shrink. A look of exhaustion filled the eyes of the Golden Crow. Its life force was simply too faint. It looked back at the great tree, a look of profound longing in its eyes.

More booms could be heard, and the shield shrank even further, forcing the Golden Crow to back up. Even the tree seemed to be decaying; its illusory life force was fading, and it was now starting to look more and more like nothing but a dead, dried-up tree.

“Look!” called Yan Song. “The only thing it can do is protect the tree. Be careful, though. Logically speaking, the Golden Crow can’t possibly be THIS weak. Something strange is going on….” Booms continued to echo out.

However, the four attackers all had various thoughts running through their heads. Also, they were clearly not attacking with full strength, but were rather being guarded in their moves. They seemed to fear this Golden Crow. Such a bizarre spirit would no doubt attack back before it died, most likely with ferocity that could leave them dead.

The Golden Crow looked at the withering tree and seemed to sigh. It flew up to perch at its top, trying once again to use its life force to restore the tree. Unfortunately, it just didn’t have enough life force at its disposal. Its actions caused the golden shield to grow even weaker and weaker. Its body trembled.

Meng Hao’s hands clenched into fists, and veins of blood appeared in his eyes.

“It’s weak because of me,” he thought. “Otherwise Yan Song and the others could never force it down to this degree. If I leave, I’ll be safe. But if I did that, I would be letting myself down!” He looked at the bird. It was in a grave situation and was about to perish, but it was still watching the great tree. Meng Hao saw its medicinal pill aura waning, and once again thought of his Master.

He wasn't sure why he suddenly thought of Master a second time, but as of this moment, his eyes filled with determination.

"There are some things that rationally speaking you shouldn't do, but you still do them anyway…." He lifted his head up and then slapped his bag of holding. The blood-colored mask appeared. He placed it onto his face and immediately a bloody aura billowed out. A blood-colored mist roiled into being around Meng Hao, turning into red sea. As the seawaters undulated, a shocking killing intent exploded out of Meng Hao.

"Without a face, a single word, flames of war unify!" As Meng Hao strode forward, he lifted his right hand. Behind him, an enormous face appeared. Its closed eyes snapped open, along with its mouth, as it uttered a soundless song of mourning. It then shot toward Yan Song and the three others.

Almost the instant the face began to fly forward, Yan Song and the others looked back.

Considering that the shield was just about to burst, Li Tian's eyes instantly filled with coldness and killing intent. "Are you looking to die!?"

The group of four exchanged glances and then began to unleash divine abilities toward Meng Hao.

As soon as the divine abilities shot forward, the face collapsed into pieces. It was incapable of resisting the power of four Nascent Soul Cultivators. However, it was at this moment that Meng Hao wave his right hand. The flag of three streamers temporarily unraveled from around the body of Ji Nineteen. It unfurled behind Meng Hao, long and black. Immediately, one of the streamers spread out. It was old and dilapidated, but it transformed into a massive black canopy that swept out.

The overwhelming aura caused the faces of Yan Song and the others to flicker. Li Tian's pupils constricted. Mo and Wang began to pant in shock.

All three of them could instantly feel a sudden, intense sensation of deadly crisis.

A massive rumbling filled the air as the black streamer shot forward. Blood sprayed from Yan Song’s mouth as he was sent tumbling backward, his face filled with astonishment.

Li Tian’s right arm was instantly torn into shreds. Blood spouted from his mouth as he shot backward in retreat, face pale and filled with disbelief.

Blood-curdling shrieks could be heard from Mo and Wang; blood shot out from their torsos as they were slammed into each other. Their wounds immediately healed, but their faces were devoid of blood. They shot backward in retreat, staring at Meng Hao with shock.

Thanks to the blood-colored mask, Meng Hao’s Cultivation base had climbed up much higher. Now he could fully utilize the power of the first of the flag’s three streamers. Although he had not been able to slay any of his four opponents with the attack, it was stunning enough to shake Heaven and Earth.

It came at a price, though; Meng Hao’s hair was once again white. However, because of the boundless life force of his Wood character totem, he was not injured on a fundamental level. His face was pale, and blood seeped out of the corners of his mouth. Despite the injuries, after his attack swept Yan Song and the others away, Meng Hao stood with his back to the tree.

Li Tian gritted his teeth against the pain of his lost arm. Wiping the blood from his mouth, he grimly said, “Fellow Daoist Meng, you certainly have some wild ambitions. You want to kill the four of us and then take the medicinal pill for yourself.” Just now, he had attempted to directly stand up to the attack, and had thus received this serious injury.

“Fellow Daoist Meng, you’re going against our agreement,” growled old devil Wang, his eyes thick with killing intent.

Yan Song looked thoughtfully at Meng Hao for a long moment before finally saying, “Fellow Daoist Meng, why are you doing this?”

“This pill has already achieved Demonic Ascension, and yearns for the great tree,” said Meng Hao calmly. “Even if you consume it, it will do you no good. It has no medicinal strength left, because… it’s not a medicinal pill anymore.”

“Pills are pills,” said Yan Song gruffly. “And what’s this talk of Demons? At the most, it has a spirit. Fellow Daoist Meng, you’re a Grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy and have concocted many pills and consumed even more. Don’t you understand? Pills will forever be nothing more than pills!”

Meng Hao was silent as he thought about Grandmaster Pill Demon for a third time. The feeling he got from the Golden Crow continued to seem more and more like… the same feeling he got from Pill Demon.

“There are some things I hesitate to do, but after I do them, I feel no regret.” Meng Hao said these words in a somewhat hoarse voice. As they echoed about, he offered no explanation as to their meaning.

What Meng Hao didn’t notice was that behind him, a strange light had appeared in the eyes of the Golden Crow. A soft, warm look could be seen in its eyes. It was no longer as cold and emotionless as it had been earlier. There was a warmth present that hadn’t been there even when it gave Meng Hao the Metal-type totem as repayment for his Righteous Bestowal.

That act had been one of exchange; the Golden Crow did not want any Karma to exist between itself and anything else other than the great tree. As of this moment, the warm glow in its eyes was very different.

Suddenly, it spoke. Its voice was that of a woman, ancient and gentle. “I can sense upon you the aura of a life force the same as mine….

“As for you and me, we have seen very different lives…. Thank you for using Righteous Bestowal on the Greenwood Tree, and for standing up for us.

“When I was born, the Greenwood Tree was here to keep me company. When I was happy, he was here. When I was confused, he was here. It doesn’t matter if he dies, I will always be by his side, this life, or in the next life. When living, when dying… we will be together.

“That is my Dao. I will never become a false Immortal who shall exist as long as the Heavens exist. I will walk my own path…. I will be myself….

“In a thousand years, no one would be here to witness our funeral. Because of you, our time together has been reduced by a thousand years. However… the Greenwood Tree and I are deeply grateful to have you here to observe our death. As for these other people, they can accompany us in death!

“As means of repayment, I will give you my Golden Life Tattoo!”

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# Chapter 432: Because of Meeting You….

As the voice of the Golden Crow echoed out, an intense glow began to emanate from its body. It was so bright that it made it seem like the only thing in this entire world of gray, was this one beam of golden light.

At the same time that Meng Hao turned around in response to the voice of the Golden Crow, the beam of light fused into the Metal-type totem tattoo on his chest.

As it did so, Meng Hao’s body trembled, and he was locked in place, looking backward. A roaring sound filled his head as boundless, indescribable Metal-type power burst into him.

Now, the Metal-type totem tattoo on his chest was experiencing the same type of transmogrification that the Wood-type totem had!

“This is my Golden Life Tattoo,” said the Golden Crow in its soft voice. “With it, you will forever be able to wield the complete power of Metal.”

Yan Song and the others watched in astonishment as the transmogrification occurred. Suddenly, an unprecedented feeling of crisis exploded out within them.

Li Tian was panting, and his pupils were tiny dots. He had spent most of his life on the run, and had keen intuition. Heart pounding, he instantly burst into motion. He did not move forward, but rather, began to flee in the direction of the seventh volcano.

Yan Song hesitated for a moment. Next to him, Mo and Wang exchanged a glance and then began to retreat.

Right at this moment, a sigh suddenly came from atop the golden tree from the Golden Crow. At the same moment, the golden glow that could be seen with the naked eye suddenly vanished, as though all of it had suddenly been retracted away, starting from the roots of the tree and condensing at its crown.

As the golden light flowed upward, the original color of the tree was slowly revealed. It was a grayish color, the grayness of death.

Soon, all of the golden light from the tree had coalesced onto the body of the Golden Crow. Now, the Golden Crow emanated a shocking golden glow.

Within the glowing goldenness, the body of the crow began to change. Soon, it was a young woman wearing a long, golden robe. Despite her young appearance, she emanated an aura of ancientness. She stood there at the crown of the tree, looking down with an expression of grief.

“Ashes to ashes, dust to dust….” she murmured. Then she stepped forward. As she moved, ripples spread out through the air. Each move she made caused change. Everything began to turn to gold; even the sky seemed to become solid. The whole place was turning into a world of metallic gold.

As of this moment, every part of this world–every life, all existence–became a part of this golden metal.

Currently, Li Tian was fleeing at top speed, and had almost reached the mouth of the seventh volcano. It was at this point that his face suddenly filled with complete terror and astonishment. Despite the fact that the woman-form Golden Crow didn’t seem to be moving very quickly, she suddenly appeared directly in front of him.

“You….” Li Tian began to pant, and his pupils constricted. A sudden, intense feeling of grave crisis swept over him like floodwaters. Without a moment’s hesitation, he began to flash an incantation sign. A vast quantity of magical items burst forth from his bag of holding. He shoved his hands out, using all the power he could muster to summon a black fog that emanated terrifying ripples.

“If you’re gonna die, then just die! You’re not taking me with you!” he roared. However, even as his divine ability manifested and a shocking aura emanated out, a golden hand shot through the air. It pierced through the black mist, distorting the ripples. The hand was then right in front of Li Tian. A finger tapped down lightly on the top of his head.

The woman turned to look at Meng Hao. Her voice soft, she said, “Remember, this is the first wyrd of my Golden Life Tattoo. Convergence Wyrd. Any life that I touch will turn into gold.”

Li Tian’s entire body shook in response to her touch. Suddenly, a golden light began to emanate from his forehead. His eyes went wide as the light covered his entire body. His face distorted with terror and then, his entire body turned into a statue of gold.

Even his Nascent Soul had no time to escape, and was sealed within him. The Metal-type power flowed into it, and it was transformed into a Gold Soul.

All of this happened in the space of an instant. The speed was so shocking that no one had a chance to react. In the blink of an eye, an awe-inspiring Nascent Soul eccentric, a person who could shake the outside world wherever he went, a top-notch expert….

Disperse the aura, exterminate the Qi, eliminate the body!

A clattering sound could be heard as the golden statue of Li Tian fell to the ground. It was completely incapable of movement, and the look of shock on its face was permanent as it stared off toward the withered great tree.

This turn of events made Yan Song, Mo, and Wang feel as if thunderbolts were slamming around inside their hearts. Their faces immediately fell. Yan Song, his mind spinning, immediately shot backward. His right hand slapped his bag of holding to produce a command medallion which he then crushed.

As for Mo and Wang, the glow of a spell appeared around them, wrapping around them with layer after layer of brilliant light. It seemed to invoke some sort of pulling power that instantly caused ghost images to spring up around them. It looked like they would shoot up into the sky at any moment.

The entire time, Meng Hao stood there motionless as the Metal-type power continued to roar into him. Within the golden light around him appeared a massive, life-like Golden Crow.

As the golden light continued to flicker and the Metal-type power flowed into him, Meng Hao could sense the transmogrification, as well as the increase of his Cultivation base.

Then he saw Li Tian die, and watched as Yan Song and the others made to flee. Silently, Meng Hao looked up into the sky.

Up in mid-air, the woman’s body looked blurry, as if she might disappear at any moment. The golden glow around her was fading, and she wasn’t looking at Yan Song and the others as they fled. Instead, she gazed at Meng Hao.

“Next, my Golden Life Tattoo’s second wyrd. I call it Net of Heaven.” With that, the woman extended her right hand and pushed it down toward the ground. Immediately, the golden ground began to quake, and cracks spread out. As the land began to crack and break, countless fragments flew up into the air, each and every one made of pure gold. It transformed into a rain of gold that shot toward Mo and Wang.

At the same time, this entire world, with the exception of the area occupied by Meng Hao and the great tree, began to collapse. All of the rocks, plants… everything fell into pieces. These tiny chunks of gold then coalesced into countless oddly-shaped blades that began to spin around to form a towering tempest.

Caught within the tempest, the faces of Mo and Wang filled with despair. The golden tempest seemed to have them trapped, motionless and ready to collapse.

The two of them roared as they went all out in their attempt to activate their spell, causing a rumbling sound to fill the air. However, no matter how they fought back with their spell or the power of their Cultivation bases, they were incapable of resisting this massive golden tempest formed from the land itself!

The giant golden tempest swept over them, and the golden rain formed something like a massive net that no one could break through. When the net finally dissipated, nothing was left of Mo and Wang except two skeletons.

Not far away from their bodies, their Nascent Souls were attempting to flee. However, they couldn't get far enough away, and were also destroyed by the tempest.

Turn the world gold and collapse the land into a tempest. Use this power to form the Net of Heaven, which can exterminate all wills.

"There is a third wyrd, called… If Not a Pill." The woman was now very faint and blurry as if she were about to disappear. In unison with the softly spoken words, her graceful hand pointed at Yan Song, whose body was almost transparent as he utilized the power of a jade slip to escape.

He screamed as something like a giant invisible hand wrenched him back out from the void he was disappearing into. His previously transparent body instantly became clear as he was pulled back into the golden world.

His face was pale, and his eyes were filled with madness.

"If I'm going to die!" he howled, "I will choose the way I perish!" Suddenly, his body burst into flames and the power of self-detonation appeared.

The self-detonation of a Nascent Soul Cultivator unleashes intense, indescribable power.

However, the instant in which he seemed about to self-detonate, the woman-form Golden Crow softly said, “If Not a Pill….”

At the same time, she waved her hand, causing the golden shrapnel tempest to shoot toward Yan Song, where, shockingly, it formed into… a gigantic pill furnace, with Yan Song inside!

Caught within the pill furnace, the force of Yan Song’s self-detonation was not only blocked, but turned into transformative power!

Meng Hao began to pant with shock.

He could clearly see that within the pill furnace, the force of Yan Song’s exploding body was turned into a vortex that spun rapidly within the pill furnace. Incredibly… it was transformed into a single, blood-colored medicinal pill!

Concoct a person into a pill, be nostalgic of one’s past. If Not a Pill.

The pill furnace vanished, and the blood-colored medicinal pill flew over to land on the woman’s hand. She looked down at it, then crushed it into ash.

By this point, her body was clearly about to dissipate. She turned, not even looking at Meng Hao, but rather gazing at the withered, dead great tree as she walked toward it.

As she neared, her body continued to fade away. With each step, more of her life force disappeared. As for the great tree, it began to rot away and turn into dust.

“Live together, die together,” the woman murmured as her body disappeared.

The tree had completely rotted into floating ash.

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust….

In that instant, everything in front of Meng Hao grew blurry. He was no longer locked in place, but could move once again. Suddenly, in the void in front of him, he saw a man wearing a long green robe. Next to him was a golden woman. They were smiling and laughing as they stepped out into the nothingness.

You are a pill and I am a tree. The year you appeared before me… my life became more than just greenness.

I am a pill and you are a tree. The year I opened my eyes for the first time, I saw you and… my life was no longer lonely.

Sometimes, the meaning of an entire life can be only because of a chance meeting.

His expression serious, Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed deeply toward the two departing figures.

As he bowed, the golden light around him shrank down, and the golden world around him began to collapse. At the same time, the Metal-type totem tattoo on his chest transformed into a character.

Metal![1]

——-

Note from Er Gen: Regardless of whether or not you're talking about love or friendship, many things in life happen because of a chance meeting.

I have been very lucky in my path of writing to meet all of you.

Thank you for your support and thank you for willingness to meet me.

Note from Deathblade: Isn't Er Gen awesome?

[1] In Chinese, the character used for "metal" in the five elements is the same as the character for "gold"

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# Chapter 433: Enemies Approach

When the Metal-type totem tattoo reached its zenith, the ancient character for “metal” appeared! 1

The character was branded onto Meng Hao’s chest, right over his heart. In fact, his heartbeat caused it to undulate. It let out a golden glow similar to that emitted by his Gold Core. In this instant, his Cultivation base suddenly exploded up. He was still in the great circle of the Gold Core, but his true battle prowess had now climbed up until it was truly analogous to the Nascent Soul stage.

When it came to the path of concocting a Five-Colored Nascent Soul, if you considered it to have five stages, then as of now, Meng Hao had completed two!

He took a deep breath as he looked up. The crumbling world of gold was now gone. He was back in the Crow Divinity Holy Land. Everything around him was colorful again; however, the entire place was now showing signs of collapse.

Rumbling sounds echoed out in the air, and the seven volcanoes were beginning to break apart. The powerful neo-demons that still existed in the area were roaring and out of control. The shocked members of the five great Tribes were now doing everything they could to flee.

Meng Hao’s sudden appearance didn’t attract any attention. All of the Cultivators present were flying at top speed toward the exit.

Meng Hao joined the crowds, his eyes glittering. Booms echoed out constantly as the land began to crumble and the mountains began to fall. Suddenly, lava erupted out from the seven volcanoes and black smoke filled the sky. Everything around was now choked with dust. The ground quaked and the neo-demons roared.

Meng Hao flew at top speed along with the crowd. The Crow Divinity Holy Land seemed on the verge of complete destruction. When he reached the exit, his body grew blurry, and then he was outside of the great golden doors.

The members of the five great Tribes all wore looks of astonishment. The Crow Scout Tribe Greatfather caught sight of Meng Hao. Sighing inwardly, he flew over.

Rumbling sounds could now be heard from within the golden glow as the great doors shattered into small pieces. At the same time, the golden light winked out.

The members of the five great Tribes were all crying out in alarm. This sudden turn of events had completely shocked them. They were pale-faced and panic-stricken.

“The Holy Land…. The Holy Land collapsed!”

“The Holy Land is gone! Our Crow Divinity Holy Land has fallen. Could it be some inauspicious portent!?”

The Greatfathers and Priests of the Five Tribes had grim expressions on their faces, and their hearts were filled with uneasy feelings. The Crow Scout Tribe Greatfather’s expression fell, and he ceased his approach toward Meng Hao and instead went to confer with the other Greatfathers and Priests.

Meng Hao floated in mid-air, staring thoughtfully at the fading golden glow. He thought of the Crow Divinity Holy Land concealed within the mountain range. He also thought of the Golden Crow and the great tree, and after a long moment, he sighed.

As he sighed, the voice of the parrot suddenly sounded out next to him as the man-form Outlander beast appeared.

“Dammit. That Ji Clan guy tried to wipe out my memories again. Lord Fifth won’t stand for it!! I’m going to screw the Heavens of Ji! Screw the Heavens!” From his tone of voice it seemed like this had become his new purpose in life.

Meng Hao turned to look at the big man and frowned. “Who exactly are you? The parrot, the meat jelly or the Outlander Beast?”

“Obviously I’m Lord Fifth, b*tch!” said the man, a conceited expression appearing on his face. “Listen, Meng Hao, I’m issuing you a staunch warning. From now on, you’re not allowed to call Outtie the ‘Outlander Beast.’ She’s become my beloved concubine. From now on you have to call her Lady Fifth!”

Seeing the look on the big man’s face, Meng Hao glared at him and said, “Screw off!”

“You, you, you… I can’t believe you dare to disrespect Lord Fifth!! Even worse, you disrespect Lord Fifth’s beloved concubine, your Lady Fifth! Don’t tell me… don’t tell me you want to steal Lady Fifth away from Lord Fifth!” Having suddenly reached this conclusion, the parrot was furious.

Even as the parrot’s ire was provoked, the Greatfathers and Priests of the five great Tribes split apart, their expressions serious. They made their way back toward their respective Tribes, followed by the other Tribe members.

The Crow Scout Tribe Greatfather and Sky Priest approached Meng Hao, bitter smiles on their faces.

It was the Greatfather who spoke first. “The Crow Divinity Holy Land has collapsed and the protection of the Ancestor has disappeared. Such an event is impossible to cover up. It won’t be long now before other Tribes in the region find out.”

The Sky Priest then continued, “There are large and powerful Tribes that have had their eyes on us for a while, but were frightened off by the Holy Land. They will certainly be itching to cause trouble. For us five Tribes, this is a huge catastrophe. If we can’t hold out against them, our Tribes will be completely wiped out.

“You two are the most powerful vassals in the Crow Scout Tribe. At this moment of crisis for our Tribe, I truly hope that you will be kind enough to provide assistance. The Crow Scout Tribe will definitely provide liberal compensation.”

With that, the two of them clasped hands and bowed to Meng Hao and the man-form Outlander Beast.

Meng Hao said nothing in response. Instead, he transformed into a beam of light and followed the other Crow Scout Tribe members as they returned to their Tribe. After reaching the rear mountain district, he entered his courtyard.

As soon as he did, he slapped his bag of the Cosmos, causing Big Hairy and the rest of his neo-demon horde to fly out. Then he looked down into the bag at the collection of other neo-demons inside.

They included the black crows, the group of fierce mosquitos, the crimson crocodile and the enormous lizard, all the other neo-demons he had acquired in the Crow Divinity Holy Land.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he examined them.

“If I can really absorb all of these neo-demons into my collection, then my status in the Western Desert as a Grand Dragoneer will be much more valid.” Having reached this conclusion, he slapped the bag, causing a black crow to fly out. Eyes glittering, he pointed his finger out.

Immediately, the Demonic Qi in the area congealed onto his finger, transforming into pressure that weighed down onto the black crow.

Time slipped by. Meng Hao sent some of his neo-demon horde outside to prevent anyone from interfering with his seclusion. A month passed.

During that month, everyone in the five Tribes of the Crow Divinity were all on edge. The strife and struggle that had existed previously between the Tribes had vanished. The Greatfathers and Priests had frequent talks behind closed doors. In the end, they chose to stand together and form an alliance.

At the same time, the vassals from the various Tribes came to the realization that the collapse of the Crow Divinity Holy Land was going to lead to all sorts of trouble. Gradually, they began to leave.

They were only vassals, not true Tribe members. Faced with imminent disaster, it was only natural that they would be unwilling to stay behind. In less than half a month, more than half of the vassals were gone.

However, the alliance between the five Tribes had restored some of the former grandeur of the Crow Divinity Tribe. Furthermore, although many vassals had departed, the Tribes still had many powerful experts, and their overall power actually increased. As for the leadership of the five great Tribes, including the Greatfather of the Crow Scout Tribe, their attention was now focused primarily on Meng Hao.

As a Grand Dragoneer, Meng Hao had already astonished them. A Grand Dragoneer might not personally be very strong, but the power he wielded in battle was very important.

To the Five Tribes, although Meng Hao was an injured Grand Dragoneer and didn’t have a large quantity of neo-demons, it didn’t really matter. If necessary, they could vastly increase the size of Meng Hao’s neo-demon horde, which could in turn win them a victory in battle.

As of now, the entire region behind the mountain now belonged to Meng Hao. Even Tribe members were prohibited from entering; the entire district had become like a restricted area. This applied to the Crow Scout Tribe as well as the other tribes in the alliance.

Because of Meng Hao’s standing, he didn’t need to take the initiative to ask for this. The five great Tribes took the initiative to offer it up willingly. Even more respectful of Meng Hao was Gu La. He had moved over to the Crow Scout Tribe, and now sat cross-legged outside of Meng Hao’s district behind the mountain. It was as if he was standing guard. The Wild Giant was there too, and it would occasionally let out shocking roars that shook Heaven and Earth.

As for the big man who was actually the parrot and the others, he stuck around at first, but after awhile ended up venturing out, to return only occasionally. After some time passed, the Wild Giant, who found it hard to stay in one place for a long time, would join Big Hairy and the others when they went out into the mountains.

Another half month passed, and Meng Hao was still in seclusion. It was at this point that a long beam of light flew through the air in the sky outside of the mountain range occupied by the Five Tribe Alliance.

Within this beam of light were 32 gigantic spiders. Each one was hundreds of meters long, and completely fierce in appearance. They were brightly colored, making it obvious that they were extremely poisonous. At first it looked like they were flying, but actually, an enormous web filled the sky wherever they went.

The web glowed with a mysterious light that made it stand out in contrast to the blue skies and white clouds. Seated cross-legged atop the 32 gigantic spiders was a group of people wearing identical robes, whose bodies were festooned with totem tattoos.

Behind the 32 spiders was a massive round, stony meteorite. A hole had been excavated in the middle of the gigantic rock, revealing an interior of crystal that looked like agate. It glowed with a violet light, and even seemed to have liquid circulating about inside.

Slouching there was a middle-aged man in a long white robe. He was surrounded by several coquettish women who were currently massaging his shoulders.

This man’s features were handsome, but he had a large black mark on his face that completely changed his appearance.

Lines of silk attached the gigantic meteorite to the 32 spiders, who were pulling it through the air. Behind them all, the sky was darkened with a vast quantity of spider neo-demons.

On the back of one of the giant spiders up ahead was a young man. Looking back at the agate meteorite, he clasped hands and bowed toward the white-robed man. In a loud voice, he said, “Your excellency Dragoneer, up ahead are the ruins of the Crow Divinity. It is currently occupied by the five lesser Tribes.”

“The old fogeys back in the Tribe are being too cautious,” said the man languidly, his expression proud and aloof. “These trifling Five Tribes only managed to gasp their way until now because of the protection of the Crow Divinity. The Priests figured out that the Crow Divinity is gone now, so what’s the point in mobilizing such a big force to destroy them!? And how come I got sent to probe them out!?

“Whatever. Since I’m here, I’ll handle things like I usually do. Before they die, I’ll offer them a little bit of hope, and then crush it! My Demonspiders love to eat the flesh of depressed humans. Spider Apprentice, bring forth the Crimson War Declaration!” It seemed that to this white-robed man, considering his identity, being dispatched to this place was somewhat of a humiliation.

The man’s voice echoed out to the Western Desert Cultivators who sat on top of the 32 giant spiders. When they heard the Crimson War Declaration mentioned, their vicious faces filled with the thirst for blood. They licked their lips.

The eyes of the youth who had spoken moments before turned red, and his lips twisted into a vicious smile. The Crimson War Declaration had only one purpose.

It meant that the entire Tribe, including Tribe members and vassals, would have three chances to fight. If they were defeated three times in a row, the result was a slaughter and the complete destruction of the entire Tribe!

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1. The ancient character for metal in China looked like this:

metal

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# Chapter 434: Eyes Open!

The sky overhead was instantly filled with bright colors, as well as wailing cries. The faces of the members of the five Tribes flickered as they looked up.

The Greatfathers, Priests, and Grand Elders of the five Tribes made up quite a group of Nascent Soul experts, more than twenty in total. In the Southern Domain, they would count as a mid-sized Sect. Of course… without a Spirit Severing Cultivator, they couldn’t be considered a great Sect.

In the Western Desert, the Five Tribe Alliance could be considered a powerful force, equivalent to a mid-sized Tribe. However… all of the powerful experts were looking up at the enormous spiders in the sky, and their faces grew dark.

“That’s… the great Five Poisons Tribe!”

“To be able to control such a large number of spiders, that guy must be… Zhou Ye, rank 9 Dragoneer from the Spider Branch!”

“I’ve heard that he’s haughty to the extreme. His Cultivation base is only in the mid Core Formation stage, but as a rank 9 Dragoneer, he controls a vast amount of neo-demons, plus 32 level 10 giant neo-demons who are comparable to the Nascent Soul stage! In recent years, he single-handedly exterminated quite a few Tribes!”

At the same time that the faces of the members of the Five Tribes fell, and the Nascent Soul experts’ hearts sank, the cries from up above grew even more intense. Tens of thousands of ferocious spiders poured down from above to hover in mid-air. The savage aura that emanated from this black mass spread out to cover the entire mountain range.

At the same time, the 32 level 10 neo-demons, each of them hundreds of meters long, whistled through the air emanating a powerful aura similar to a Nascent Soul Cultivation base. The explosive power of it shook everything.

In addition to the 32 level 10 spiders, there was the gigantic meteorite that flew along behind them. It was about three hundred meters up in the air, its exterior pitch black, but its interior lit with a violet glow that made it seem as if the man sitting inside was completely violet.

Powerful pressure emanated out, causing the members of the five great Tribes to grow pale as they looked up into the sky. Wu Ling, Wu Chen and the others began to breathe heavily, and their faces filled with fear.

The young man atop the huge spider who had spoken earlier, suddenly called out in a sharp voice: “My Lord, the exalted Dragoneer Zhou Ye of the Five Poison Tribe’s Spider Branch, desires to battle any Cultivator in the world! You have three chances to win. If you fail, your five Tribes will be washed clean with blood!” His expression was one of arrogance as his voice echoed out in all directions. He waved his right hand, causing a red jade slip to shoot down toward the ground. It suddenly exploded and transformed into a red mist that billowed out to form a red battle platform three thousand meters wide.

“You have the space of twenty breaths. If no one steps forward to fight, it will be taken as a forfeiture, and the cleansing by blood will begin!” The young man licked his lips, and a bloodthirsty glint appeared in his eyes. Around him, the 32 gigantic spiders with Cultivation bases similar to the Nascent Soul stage had cold-blooded expressions and emitted vicious auras.

The Five Tribes were silent. The twenty or so Nascent Soul Cultivators, including the Crow Scout Tribe Greatfather, all exchanged glances.

Considering the combined might of the Five Tribe Alliance, it would be impossible for trifling Zhou Ye to exterminate them, even with his 32 level 10 neo-demons. Whether in terms of the five Tribes’ defensive spell formations or their Sacred Ancients, they were more than enough to handle this one crisis.

However… what they truly were worried about was the fact that Zhou Ye represented… the Five Poisons Tribe.

Considering these Nascent Soul eccentrics were all Greatfathers, Priests, and Grand Elders, it was obvious that they were wily old foxes. They could immediately tell what was going on. “They’re probing us out!”

“The Crow Divinity Holy Land just collapsed, so the Five Poisons Tribe is a bit hesitant in coming here. Therefore, they decided to feel us out!”

“That’s right. If we fight and win, then perhaps we can frighten them. Then we’ll have a bit more time. Even better would be if we won and killed him. That would be perfect. Alternatively… we could just not fight; we could immediately activate the protective spell formation and let them attack us. The latter has various advantages and disadvantages. The former would be the most direct route.”

The Nascent Soul Cultivators were silent for a moment. Glances were exchanged, and many of their gazes came to fall on the Crow Scout Tribe Greatfather. Since Meng Hao was a Grand Dragoneer, that put the Crow Scout Tribe in a high position within the Five Tribe Alliance.

“Constantly running away from conflict reveals your weakness to the enemy,” he said. “The great Five Poisons Tribe isn’t stupid, and will be able to see the true situation. Then, when the true conflict begins, we would really be weak. This battle… must be fought! Furthermore, that man must be killed. If we strike like lightning and exterminate him, it will give rise to fear!”

A gleam of ruthlessness appeared in the eyes of the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather. “Fight!”

Just when the Five Tribes Alliance was preparing to attack, a howl could be heard from the mountainous forest off in the distance. Big Hairy suddenly shot out carrying a small, dead animal in his mouth. In the blink of an eye, he was in the area locked down by the myriad of spiders overhead.

Behind Big Hairy were the rest of the Greenwood Wolves, all of whom were dashing along at top speed carrying animals in their mouths. They often went hunting for food, and after having fun for a while would return to rest outside the courtyard where Meng Hao was currently in seclusion. At this exact moment, they were returning from such a jaunt.

Their appearance was quite sudden, and immediately caused a disturbance among the spiders. As for the 32 giant spiders, their auras suddenly retracted, and cold looks appeared in their eyes.

“Eee!” said Zhou Ye, a look of surprise on his face as he sat up straight inside his meteorite, his eyes glittering as he looked at Big Hairy.

“That’s… a Wolf King! Furthermore, it’s been mutated! Excellent, excellent. I never imagined that I would find a neo-demon like that in this place. The ones behind it aren’t as good, but still not bad.” Even as Zhou Ye was muttering to himself, the ground suddenly shook and a roar could be heard from within the forest. Then, the Wild Giant appeared, crashing out from the trees.

Its enormous frame was shocking to the extreme, and the instant it appeared, the surrounding spiders emitted strange calls. Even the 32 giant spiders were shrieking and assumed vigilant and threatening postures.

“That’s… a Wild Giant!!” said Zhou Ye, his eyes going wide. “There’s actually a Wild Giant here!” He stood up, a look of disbelief on his face. His eyes shone with fervor and greed as he stared at the Wild Giant.

“According to legend, the blood of a Wild Giant can increase the bizarre power of secret Dragoneer arts. Furthermore, when mixed with neo-demon food, it can have an amazing effect on their progress! Even more important, if I can subjugate a Wild Giant, then my status and position in the Tribe will be completely different!”

Zhou Ye started laughing uproariously. Eyes shining, he pointed at the Wild Giant.

“Bring me that Wild Giant and those Greenwood Wolves immediately!” By now, he had completely forgotten about the Crimson War Declaration. As soon as his words rang out, the surrounding spiders shot through the air toward Big Hairy and the others.

Shocking, ferocious power emanated out from the 32 giant spiders as they shot spiderwebs out toward the Wild Giant. In addition, the Five Poisons Tribe members on their back flew forward in attack.

As for Zhou Ye, he immediately sent his meteorite flying forward, completely ignoring the members of the Five Tribe Alliance.

When this happened, the Five Tribe Alliance members all stared in shock. The Crow Scout Tribe Greatfather and the others exchanged delighted glances.

“Of all the people to provoke, this Zhou Ye picks Grandmaster Meng!”

“It seems we won’t have to do a thing today. This Zhou Ye will definitely be thwarted!”

Big Hairy swallowed the animal he held in his jaws and then howled. His body suddenly expanded, and his eyes filled with savagery as he charged toward the incoming spiders. Hairy #2 and the others also let off successive howls. The Wild Giant’s eyes went wide as it roared and attacked.

Instantly, roaring sounds echoed out in all directions. Facing an onslaught from so many spiders, which included the 32 terrifying giant spiders, Big Hairy, the Greenwood Wolves and the Wild Giant were all in great peril.

Huge webs descended onto Hairy #2 and the other Greenwood Wolves, making it impossible for them to even struggle. No matter how they howled, they couldn’t shake off the webs.

Big Hairy lifted his head up and let out a powerful howl. Now, the level 10 spiders turned their attention to the Wild Giant. After being covered with hundreds of huge webs, it let out a cry of pain. As for Big Hairy, his eyes were red as he glared at Zhou Ye sitting there in his flying meteorite. Big

Hairy’s body flickered as he dodged one of the giant webs. Then, he turned into a beam of white light that shot directly toward Zhou Ye.

Zhou Ye stood in his meteorite, laughing as Big Hairy approached. He raised his right hand and gestured forward.

“Secret Dragoneer art, Burst the Void!”

Immediately, the indistinct image of a huge spider magically appeared in the air in front of Zhou Ye and then slammed into Big Hairy.

Big Hairy let out a miserable shriek as all of the white fur on his body suddenly burst into flames. These flames were not red, but rather black, and seemed to be poisonous in nature. Big Hairy’s body shook and blood sprayed out of his mouth. Looking suddenly dispirited, he spun around and then transformed into a beam of light that shot off into the distance.

“You seem quite intelligent, but now that you’ve been poisoned by my secret Dragoneer art, where do you think you’re going to flee to? Based on neo-demon behavior, you’ll most likely go looking for your master. Very well, I’ll kill him and use his blood to sever the connection between the two of you.” Laughing, Zhou Ye flicked his sleeve, causing the countless spiders to fly with him in pursuit of Big Hairy.

The sight of it was quite impressive as they took up the chase.

Big Hairy’s expression was dismal as a black aura emanated off of his body. Had he not consumed a real Demon Nurturing Pill, then he would have already been transformed into a pool of blood. Right now, his body was trembling and he let of growling howls as he shot through the air. After circling around the mountain, he neared the area that had been surrounded by mist for the entire past month.

Gu La was also sitting there cross-legged. Suddenly, his eyes opened and he saw what was happening. His face immediately fell.

Big Hairy, his eyes filled with grief and sorrow, howled disconsolately as the massive spider horde closed in on him.

The instant the shocking howl echoed out, deep within the mist, Meng Hao, who sat cross-legged in his courtyard, suddenly opened his eyes.

At the same time, thousands of other pairs of eyes within the mist suddenly opened as well.

There were more than ten pairs among that group which emanated shocking auras!

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# Chapter 435: Big Hairy Tattles!

“Is this where your Master lives?” asked Zhou Ye, smiling calmly within his meteorite. His expression was one of extreme aloofness, as all living things were nothing more than insects in his eyes, and few things existed that could catch his interest.

His eyes then flickered over toward Gu La.

“A rank 7 Dragoneer? Presumably this is your Master.” With a smile, Zhou Ye neared the seemingly weak and dying White Wolf, and then shook his head.

He was surrounded by more than ten thousand spiders, all circulating around his body and even blotting out the sky. A shocking aura spread out, especially from the 32 giant spiders who continued to emanate ripples comparable to the early Nascent Soul stage that caused the auras in the area to change.

Gu La began to breathe heavily as he stared at the scene. When his eyes came to rest on Zhou Ye, he gasped. It wasn’t too difficult to identify the man. Based on the power emanating from him, if he wasn’t a Grand Dragoneer, then he was definitely a rank 9 Dragoneer.

“Sticking with a rank 7 Dragoneer like that can’t compare to following me,” said Zhou Ye, his eyes flickering with contempt. He waved his right hand, and instantly one of the three hundred meter large spiders flew toward Gu La, emanating killing intent as it neared him.

“First I’ll exterminate your Master,” Zhou Ye said coolly, “and then use his blood to sever your bond. From now on, you’re going to be with me.”

As the words left his mouth, the three hundred meter large spider descended upon Gu La. As it did….

A cold snort suddenly echoed out from within the mist. It started out very faint, but in the blink of an eye it transformed into something like thunder. It then began invisible waves that shot toward the incoming spider.

This giant spider, whose power was similar to the early Nascent Soul stage, instantly began to tremble. It let out a miserable shriek and then, astonishingly, retreated. Before it could move more than a few meters, however, it began to shake so violently that its body exploded into bits.

A simple sound caused a three hundred meter large spider to collapse into pieces. Zhou Ye's facial expression completely changed, filling with grave astonishment.

At the same time, Meng Hao's figure slowly became visible as he walked out from within the roiling mists. His pace was slow, but as he walked, the mists seethed, making it seem almost like he was cloaked in the stuff. His powerful aura soared up into the Heavens.

After acquiring two totem tattoos, Meng Hao's Cultivation base was powerful enough to tangle with the early Nascent Soul stage, but certainly not so strong that he could kill an early Nascent Soul Cultivator with a single snort. Unfortunately for the spider, it was a neo-demon, not a Cultivator!

As a Demon Sealer, Meng Hao was innately capable of emitting pressure upon neo-demons. This was a technique he had come to master during the past month in which he took command over all the neo-demons in his bag of holding.

Meng Hao had come to call it… Demonic Pressure!

Now that he could use Demonic Pressure, Meng Hao was a Grand Dragoneer in more than just name only!

As he strolled out, Zhou Ye's face flickered again. Without even realizing it, he backed up a few paces. The more than ten thousand spiders around him began to tremble. It was as if to them, Meng Hao was the most powerful neo-demon in the world. In addition to trembling, some of them even let out miserable shrieks.

"Grand Dragoneer!!" Zhou Ye was panting as he looked at the reaction of the neo-demons around him. A buzzing sound filled his mind, a feeling that he had experienced before only when meeting Grand Dragoneers in his Tribe.

Despite his change in facial expression, Zhou Ye abruptly said, "Well, so what if you're a Grand Dragonner? How many neo-demons do you have, you…."

Before he could finish his statement, droning sounds could be heard from the black mist behind Meng Hao as nearly a thousand green mosquitos appeared.

Each of the mosquitos was about three meters long and had long, sharp mouthparts. Their bodies were covered with bristly fur, and they looked matchlessly malevolent as they blotted out the sky.

"Demonsquitos!!" gasped Zhou Ye, his eyes growing wide. Such creatures were rare in the Western Desert. In fact, in his entire life, Zhou Ye had only ever seen ten in total. Not only did they have the fearsome ability to drain the blood of the bodies of creatures vastly larger than them, but even more shocking, they were extremely poisonous!

Actually, in some aspects their poison wasn't really a poison, but a plague!

These Demonsquitos were incredibly divine and mighty, and the shocking fact that there were over a thousand of them caused Zhou Ye to breath deeply.

Simultaneously, the ten thousand spiders in the area began to shriek, and some of them even fell prone on the ground, not daring to move.

Behind the thousand Demonsquitos, a black light appeared. Within the black light were countless black crows flying through the air. Their eyes emanated a shocking, bright red glow.

“Those are… Demoncrows!” Zhou Ye’s brain was once again filled with a buzzing sound. Crows such as these were not often seen in the Western Desert. Most frightening of all were the legends told about them. Supposedly, these Demoncrows had some connection with the dead! According to the stories… they could bring dead people back to life!

Some of the spiders next to Zhou Ye were now completely ignoring any of his commands. They prostrated themselves on the ground, not daring to move even a muscle.

Next, even more neo-demons appeared behind Meng Hao. Each one that did caused Zhou Ye’s expression to flicker. When the red crocodile appeared, Zhou Ye gasped and his face filled with unprecedented astonishment.

“Searing Demondile! That’s… a neo-demon from ancient times, a Searing Demondile! They’re born at level 8, within the depths of volcanoes!”

After that, the giant lizard crawled out. As soon as it appeared, it let out a bellowing roar that caused the surrounding black mist to congeal and be sucked into its mouth.

“That’s… that’s… another ancient neo-demon! Heaven Slaughtering Lizard!!” Zhou Ye’s entire body was shaking. By this point, each and every one of his spiders were frightened to death. Even the three hundred meter large spiders were trembling and prostrating themselves, not daring to move.

“Who… just who exactly did I manage to provoke…? A Grand Dragoneer with so many fearsome neo-demons…. Dammit, even the Grand Dragoneers back in the Tribe don’t have neo-demons that can compare to these!”

Zhou Ye’s face was ashen as he said, “Sir….”

Before he could finish, Meng Hao, his face expressionless, flickered forward with incredible speed to appear next to Big Hairy.

Completely ignoring Zhou Ye, Meng Hao squatted down and gently petted Big Hairy's back. As he did, the poison completely vanished from within him. After the space of a few breaths, Big Hairy was completely back to normal. He rose to his feet and let out some yipping sounds as he rubbed Meng Hao with his huge head.

"I understand," said Meng Hao, nodding his head. He then pointed out with his finger, causing one of the nearby three hundred meter long spiders to instantly explode. Then he pointed at another one. It too exploded.

One after another, Meng Hao exterminated six of the three hundred meter large spiders. Those were the ones who had injured Big Hairy. Now they were nothing more than ash floating in the wind.

"Any more?" asked Meng Hao, looking at Big Hairy. Big Hairy nodded and let out a few more yips.

Seeing this, Zhou Ye's scalp went numb. He was now scared out of his mind.

"I'm from the Five Poisons Tribe, I…." Even as he began to speak, Meng Hao suddenly looked over at him.

Meng Hao stepped forward, and in the blink of an eye was directly in front of Zhou Ye's meteorite. He reached out and slapped it lightly.

The slap caused a roaring sound to fill the air. The meteorite tumbled backward, emanating cracking sounds as it did. Huge fissures covered its surface. Although it didn't break into pieces, a deep palm print was now clearly visible on its surface.

"Hmph," said Meng Hao, his eyes glittering.

Zhou Ye's mind and heart were reeling, and blood sprayed from his mouth. His eyes were filled with disbelief and complete astonishment. This meteorite was a precious treasure of the Dragoneers in his Tribe. Dragoneers of the Western Desert seem powerful because they can control large quantities of neo-demons; however, they have a fatal weakness.

That weakness is the fact that Dragoneers generally lack a powerful Cultivation base!

Because of that weakness, they can be easily killed. That is why Dragoneers in the Western Desert take special care to protect themselves. This meteorite was exactly such a precious treasure, capable of withstanding a blow from the early Nascent Soul stage without being harmed.

However… just now Zhou Ye could clearly sense that his precious treasure had been cracked. That could only mean one thing. This Grand Dragoneer had a Nascent Soul Cultivation base!

“The Grand Dragoneers in my Tribe are only of the great circle of Core Formation. Grand Dragoneers who have Nascent Soul Cultivation bases, are… almost completely invincible!! They are rare in the Western Desert and their secret Dragoneer arts are capable of summoning Spirit Severing neo-demons!!” Zhou Ye was so scared that his whole body was shaking. He let out a shriek as he pushed his meteorite to go even faster. Clearly, he was planning to flee.

By this time, the members of the Five Tribe Alliance, including the Nascent Soul eccentrics, had arrived on the scene. Seeing everything that had happened caused them to gasp. They knew Meng Hao was strong, and had assumed that if they all joined forces they would be able to suppress him if necessary. Now, their faces fell and their hearts filled with foreboding as they realized that their lack of action before had led to the White Wolf and the Wild Giant being injured.

Before they could even begin to think of how to make up for their actions, Meng Hao’s body shot forward toward Zhou Ye. His right hand formed a fist, which punched out. A boom filled the air, and more cracks appeared on the meteorite.

“Senior, please spare me! Sir, everything just now was an accident, a misunderstanding….”

Shocking roars filled the air as Meng Hao punched out three times in succession. Finally, a splintering sound could be heard as the meteorite disintegrated into pieces. Zhou Ye was pale faced and incapable of fleeing. Meng Hao reached out and grabbed him by the neck.

He then looked back at Big Hairy. “Was it this arm?” he asked.

Big Hairy nodded, letting out some more yips as he recalled the humiliation he had endured.

Meng Hao nodded and grabbed hold of Zhou Ye, who let out a bloodcurdling scream as his arm was directly ripped off of his body and transformed into a haze of blood and gore. Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he hovered there in mid-air. He was just about to release Zhou Ye, when he suddenly noticed the Wild Giant, Hairy #2 and the others who were currently bound up and injured within the spider webs.

Seeing this, a cold light appeared in his eyes. He suddenly clenched his fist. A cracking sound could be heard as Zhou Ye’s neck was instantly crushed. His eyes went wide, and he was dead.

Meng Hao released Zhou Ye and then turned to face the Nascent Soul eccentrics of the Five Tribe Alliance.

“Well, hello,” he said.

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# Chapter 436: Good Faith

Even as Meng Hao spoke, he waved his right hand, causing a gale force wind to sweep across the land. It only took a moment for the wind to sweep the spider webs off of the Wild Giant, Hairy #2 and the others. The webs became nothing but ash. Having been freed, the Wild Giant lifted its head up and roared.

In turn, all of the neo-demons that belonged to Meng Hao began roaring. The spiders who remained in the rear mountain district all continued to remain prone on the ground, not daring to even lift their heads.

At this moment, Meng Hao's might billowed to the Heavens as he hovered there in mid-air glaring coldly at the Five Tribe alliance.

Facing up against his power, and hearing his words, the Greatfathers, Priests, and Grand Elders of the Five Tribe alliance felt shaken inwardly. Their breathing became ragged in pants. The strength of this Grandmaster Meng vastly exceeded their expectations. Furthermore, they had no idea when he had unexpectedly acquired so many neo-demons.

Not only was this group of neo-demons large in number, but they all looked very familiar. Upon closer inspection, they were shocked to find that these were neo-demons from the Crow Divinity Holy Land.

"Grandmaster Meng…." said the Crow Scout Tribe Greatfather with a wry smile. Before he could finish, Meng Hao pointed toward the ground, causing invisible Demonic Qi to rise up from the earth below.

The appearance of the Demonic Qi caused the surrounding neo-demon hordes to roar with even more intensity. That was even more true of the more than ten thousand spiders. Now, they were no longer suppressed.

Instead, Meng Hao's Demonic Qi exerted incredible attractive force on them. Following the lead of the twenty or more three hundred meter large spiders, they filled the sky as they flew over to Meng Hao, circling around him with expressions of submission on their faces.

Meng Hao floated in mid-air, surrounded by a mixed neo-demon horde nearly twenty thousand in number. Their aura billowed to the heavens as they let out unceasing roars. Meng Hao didn't look angry, and yet radiated power. Some of his Grand Dragoneer aura suddenly exploded out, causing everything nearby to shake.

The Crow Scout Tribe Greatfather gasped, incapable of continuing to speak. The faces of the other Nascent Soul Cultivators from the Five Tribes fell. As of this moment, Meng Hao was vastly more powerful to them than Zhou Ye had been!

"Fellow Daoists," said Meng Hao flatly. "Ever since I arrived in your Tribe, I have abided by your rules. Never have I offended anyone or violated any laws. Therefore, I don't understand why, when my neo-demons were being captured, not only did you do nothing to stop it, you even facilitated the matter…. I require an explanation within three days. If I don't get it, then my close relationship with the Five Tribes of the Crow Divinity will end, and I will leave this place." With that, he and his twenty thousand strong neo-demon horde whistled through the air as they left. The black mist once again appeared, billowing up into the sky like a hurricane. It was visible even from a great distance away as it stretched up above.

Seeing Meng Hao leave did not cause the pressure weighing down on the Five Tribes to lessen. Rather, it grew even stronger. The Greatfathers and Priests exchanged glances. Bitter smiles appeared on their faces as they began to confer with each other using Divine Sense.

They had no desire whatsoever to offend Meng Hao or cause him to leave. A Grand Dragoneer with so many high-level neo demons among his horde of twenty thousand, was indescribably important to the Five Tribes.

It wasn't just their Tribes that would feel this way. Any tribe would place great importance onto a Grand Dragoneer like this. Even a great Tribe would feel this way.

It must be known that for a Tribe to be classified as a great Tribe, they not only had to have a sufficient population and number of neo-demons, but another critical factor was that they had to have a Grand Dragoneer.

The Five Tribes discussed the matter until dawn of the next day. Then, the Nascent Soul Cultivators all went to stand outside the black mist in the rear mountain district. They clasped hands and bowed deeply.

“We humbly request an audience with the Grand Dragoneer, Grandmaster Meng.”

They stood there listening to the sound of their voices echoing into the roiling black mist. After a moment passed, Gu La strolled out, his jaw set with pride and condescension, his hands folded behind his back.

He was followed by the roaring Wild Giant, as well as a vast collection of spiders, which flew out to surround the Greatfathers, Priests, and others.

The indistinct shape of some gigantic spiders became visible, their power comparable to a Nascent Soul Cultivation base. There was also the red crocodile, which emanated viciousness as it crawled out. Further back, black crows whistled through the air followed by the green mosquitos.

The sight of all this caused the faces of the Greatfathers and Priests to fill with serious expressions.

“The Young Master is currently practicing cultivation. Before going into seclusion, he made it clear that if the Five Tribes came without sufficient intention for reconciliation, then when he emerged from seclusion, he would depart this place and sever all ties with you!” Gu La looked them over, feeling extremely excited and complacent. The feeling was much greater than the feeling he’d gotten after acquiring power on his own. This surpassed that by far.

As of this moment, he was quite happy to be a follower of Meng Hao.

The Crow Scout Tribe Greatfather smiled wryly, but gave an inward sigh of relief. He was well aware that their actions yesterday had in fact been a way of forcing Meng Hao's hand. After exchanging glances with the others, the Crow Scout Tribe Greatfather stepped forward.

"First of all," he said with a slight smile, "we would like to congratulate Grandmaster Meng on recovering all of his powers as a mighty Grand Dragoneer. Regarding the slaying of Zhou Ye, we Five Tribes will stand as witnesses of the event. Furthermore, each of our Tribes would like to offer you a congratulatory gift of two thousand neo-demons, a mix of levels 3 to 7."

Hearing this caused Gu La's heart to begin to beat wildly.

Two thousand neo-demons wouldn't count for much to a great Tribe, but to a small Tribe, it was an incredible show of good faith. After all, neo-demons were the most important thing for Dragoneers.

Dragoneer cultivation was not based on personal strength, but rather, controlling neo-demons. Neo-demons were the basis of power, and for each of these Tribes to give two thousand meant that it was a total of ten thousand. Such a vast number caused Gu La to begin to breathe heavily.

"Well…." said Gu La, hesitating for a moment.

"Grandmaster Meng is a Grand Dragoneer, and we feel very honored that he picked our Five Tribe Alliance. We know that the position of Grand Dragoneer is an esteemed one, so each Tribe is also willing offer him 300,000 Spirit Stones in order to help facilitate his daily cultivation. That will only be the first payment! From now on, the Five Tribe alliance will provide him with an equal sum every three months as compensation for his assistance." With that, the Crow Scout Tribe Greatfather once again clasped hands and bowed deeply.

Obviously, he wasn't bowing to Gu La, but toward the churning black mist.

Gu La's eyes were wide, and he couldn't stop himself from panting in nervousness. His eyes began to glow, and his mind was reeling, filled with nothing but the thought of Spirit Stones. If each Tribe provided 300,000 Spirit Stones every three months, that was a total of 1,500,000. Essentially, that meant that every month Meng Hao stayed in the Five Tribes Alliance, he would get 500,000 Spirit Stones.

That was a vast number that Gu La had a hard time even imagining. Of course, he had no way of knowing that if it wasn’t for the imminent danger facing the Five Tribe Alliance, they would never possibly offer up such an unimaginable number.

“This matter….” Gu La’s mouth and tongue were almost too dry to speak, and he didn’t know what to say. Despite the fact that he had actually come prepared to strike out with deadly force against these people, he could never have predicted that before he even struck a threatening pose, such incredible gifts would be offered.

“Furthermore,” continued the Crow Scout Tribe Greatfather, “considering that Grandmaster Meng is a Grand Dragoneer and vassal of the Crow Scout Tribe, we would like to earnestly request that he assume the position of Grand Elder of the Five Tribe Alliance, a position equal to that of us Greatfathers!”

Gu La was panting and his mind was shaking. A position like that, equal to that of the Greatfathers of the Five Tribes, was incredibly high and vastly meaningful.

Suddenly, the Greatfather of the Crow Scout spoke again: “All of the resources of the Five Tribes Alliance will be poured into fulfilling Grandmaster Meng’s needs. Furthermore any spoils of war will be split six ways, with one part of that belonging to Grandmaster Meng.”

These words only served to add to the roaring that filled Gu La’s head until it was on the verge of exploding.

This last benefit seemed almost unreal. In fact, though, it was real, and vastly exceeded anything from before. This truly was good faith on the part of the Five Tribes Alliance, to split all future spoils with him.

At the same time, it would also tightly bind Meng Hao to the Five Tribes.

“In addition,” said the Crow Scout Tribe Greatfather, continuing on with the last item the Five Tribes had agreed to offer, “if Grandmaster Meng becomes the Grand Elder, then the Five Tribes agree to provide food for all of his thirty thousand neo-demons!”

Gu La didn’t know what to say. Thirty thousand neo-demons could eat a small mountain of beasts in a very short time. That amount of food was no small number, and when you added it all together, could easily drain a small fortune.

That was why Grand Dragoneers usually attached themselves to a great Tribe; both benefited from such an arrangement.

Gu La subconsciously looked back toward the black mist. The Greatfathers and Priests of the Five Tribes also looked toward the black mist, awaiting Meng Hao’s response.

“Lastly, as a show of good faith, if Grandmaster Meng agrees to all of this, and the Five Tribe Alliance survives for the next year, then we are willing to allow Grandmaster Meng to be our sole representative to enter the Bridge of Immortal Treading!” The person who uttered these words was not the Greatfather of the Crow Scout Tribe, but rather that of the Crow Soldier Tribe. He was the only of their number to have a Cultivation base at the mid Nascent Soul stage, and was their most powerful expert.

Almost the same moment that he finished speaking, the mist began to seethe, and then shrink back. The surrounding neo-demons quickly retreated along with it. In the space of time of a few breaths, the mist had completely vanished, along with neo-demon horde.

Now, all eyes were focused completely on the person slowly walking toward them.

It was Meng Hao, wearing a long black robe. His hair fluttered in the wind, and his eyes were cold. On his skin could be seen a dense, endless amount of totem tattoos. They even existed on his face. Each and every one of these totem tattoos depicted neo-demons.

20,000 neo-demons, all transformed into totem tattoos, branded onto Meng Hao's body. His aura was thoroughly Demonic at this point, filled with a barbaric savagery that drifted slowly out from his body.

If the people in the Southern Domain who were familiar with Meng Hao were to see him now, it would be difficult for them to recognize him. As of this moment, anyone who looked at him would take him to be a powerful Western Desert Cultivator!

Such power, although it wasn't of the Nascent Soul stage, was enough to slaughter anyone of the early Nascent Soul stage!

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# Chapter 437: Bridge of Immortal Treading!

“The first kindness shown to me by the Crow Scout Tribe was the Greenwood Tree totem,” said Meng Hao as he strolled out. His voice contained a certain bizarreness, as if it were filled with the indistinct sound of countless beasts roaring in unison. “The second was the water of destiny of the Crow Divinity Tribe, which raised me to the full circle of Wood-type power. Within the Holy Land, I encountered the Crow Divinity and acquired a Metal-type totem tattoo. That was the third kindness.

“Meng Hao clearly distinguishes between gratitude and grudges in taking action. You tested me out and even allowed enemies to attack me. However, it was all for the safety of your Tribe, and you had no choice. That, I can understand.

“I don’t want your Spirit Stones. As for your neo-demons, they will definitely be much more powerful if they are under my control. However, if the Five Tribes still exist after the fighting is over, then I will return them to you.

“Regardless of splitting spoils, or anything else, I, Meng Hao, will stand by your sides during this war, Fellow Daoists. The reason I shall do so… is because of those three kindnesses. Therefore, please, no more investigations and no more incidents like that which happened yesterday. Otherwise, I will truly sever the relationship forged through those kindnesses.”

Having finished speaking, he clasped hands and bowed deeply to the various members of the Five Tribes.

They looked back at him in stunned silence for a moment. Then their faces filled with shame. At this point, it was impossible for them to not realize that all of this had been a warning, not a request for payment. The only thing Meng Hao wanted was the proper attitude.

I will help you in order to pay a debt of gratitude. The only price I demand… is respect!

That was what Meng Hao wanted, and also the reason why he had not appeared, but rather sent Gu La out to meet them.

“In addition,” Meng Hao continued, “I would like to hear more about this Bridge of Immortal Treading that the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather referred to.”

Meng Hao’s body was covered in totem tattoos, and he had the aura of a powerful expert. Having heard his sincere words, the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather slowly said, “The Bridge of Immortal Treading is a stretch of ruins. According to legend, there used to be nine bridges in the great lands of the Western Desert. As for who built them, it is impossible determine. Some people say that they formed naturally from soil that came from the stars.

“As for these bridges, they were used for Immortal Ascension. By treading on three of them, you could form an Immortal Body. By treading on six of them, you could form an Immortal Soul. By treading on nine of them, you could achieve Immortal Ascension.

“Allegedly, these bridges were connected to the stars, and were located next to a mountain and a sea…. Unfortunately, these bridges met with great Tribulation. The Heavens were not pleased, and destroyed them with lightning. The roaring lasted for 937 years before the bridges finally collapsed and transformed into a world. Later generations called that world… the Realm of the Bridge Ruins!

“Within the Realm of the Bridge Ruins is the wreckage of the Bridge of Immortal Treading. There is also Celestial soil which contains Immortal Qi. To us Cultivators, such Immortal Qi is like a rare tonic, far superior to all medicinal pills. Also available in the Realm of the Bridge Ruins are high-grade Spirit Stones, to which nothing on the outside can compare.

“Furthermore within the wreckage of the Bridge of Immortal Treading that exists in the Realm of the Bridge Ruins can be found countless Celestial magics and divine abilities. There are even creatures which have been extinct in the outside world since ancient times. The Realm of the Bridge Ruins is one of the most precious treasures of the Western Desert!”

Up to this point, Meng Hao’s expression hadn’t changed, and he continued to listen calmly.

“The Realm of the Bridge Ruins opens every thousand years. When it does, people from the Southern Domain, the Eastern Lands and the Northern Desert cannot enter it! Only Western Desert Cultivators with totems are capable of entering this world and seizing the good fortune therein!

“However, not every Western Desert Cultivator can enter. According to information in the ancient records, throughout the generations, there have only ever been twenty three spots. That is because in ancient times, there were twenty three Tribes which were officially recognized as great Tribes. Though they have long since fallen into decline, their bloodlines still survive!

“When the time comes for the Realm of the Bridge Ruins to open, an Immortality Bridgestone will descend to each of those great Tribes, which thus allows them to enter!

“The Crow Divinity Tribe was once one of the approved great Tribes of the Western Desert. Therefore, we have always had a spot to be able to enter the Realm of the Bridge Ruins.

“As long as the blood of our Tribe continues to exist, that spot will also be. It is also another reason why the Five Poisons Tribe stirred into action when the Crow Divinity Holy Land collapsed.

“If they can enslave us, consume our totems, and imprison our Tribe members, then… they will be able to secure the Crow Divinity Tribe’s spot in the Realm of the Bridge Ruins.” The Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather made no attempt to conceal any of the facts. He was telling Meng Hao everything, including secret matters known only to them.

As Meng Hao listened to the explanation, his eyes began to shine brightly. He could tell that what the man was saying was most likely true. Furthermore, the mention of Celestial soil had definitely sparked his interest.

“Based on our calculations, there is about one year left until the Realm of the Bridge Ruins opens. Before that happens, an Immortality Bridgestone will fall down to us. If you help us, Grandmaster Meng, then we will deliver that stone to you in one year!” With that, the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather clasped hands and gave Meng Hao a deep bow.

Meng Hao was silent for a moment as he pondered the so-called Celestial soil. He already had a collection of Black Lands Celestial Talisman soil.

“In terms of my five elements totems,” he thought, “I’m currently missing Water, Fire and Earth. I need them to reach the level in which they manifest an ancient character; then I can concoct my Five-Colored Nascent Soul. I wonder if the Celestial soil in this Realm of the Bridge Ruins… could be used for one of my totem tattoos?”

Meanwhile….

If you left the mountain range containing the five Crow Divinity Tribes and flew about a month’s time, you would reach an area that was still considered the Western Desert North region, but was actually nearing its Central region.

There were no mountains here, only a vast plain called the Blood Wastes. The reason for the name was that the soil of this plain was red in color.

Within the red soil grew tens of thousands of varieties of poisonous grasses. During the rainy season, poisonous mists would fill the sky, turning the area into a sort of prohibited zone for Cultivators.

There were also vast quantities of enormous, poisonous neo-demons here, which made this plain somewhat like a pit of poison.

It was difficult for Cultivators to exist in a place like this. That is, except for… the largest of the Western Desert North region’s two great Tribes, the great Five Poisons Tribe!

It was a huge Tribe divided into five branches, each one named after a different poisonous creature. They were like an enormous black flower with five petals, spread out in terrifying fashion over the plain.

Each of these branches were equivalent in size to a medium sized Tribe. Together, they formed the great Five Poisons Tribe, whose name rocked the entire Western Desert North region.

They were very different from the five Crow Divinity Tribes. These Five Poisons Tribes were not fractured. Rather, because of the different totems they possessed, they were organized into five different auxiliary Tribes called branches. In the central-most location in the plain was a Sacrificial Rites Assembly Hall, where fifteen High Priests would make decisions regarding important matters to the Five Poisons Tribe.

The branches themselves did not have Chieftains, only Priests. As far as Chieftains went… there was only one in the entire Five Poisons Tribe.

In past times, the Western Desert North regions had three great Tribes, the Crow Divinity, the Five Poisons, and the Scorching Ice. After all these years, the Five Poisons and Scorching Ice still existed; in contrast, the Crow Divinity was in decline. After having been split into the five sub-Tribes, they were much weaker and reduced to an inferior position.

Were it not for the existence of the Crow Divinity Holy Land, they would long since have been picked apart, their totemic power stolen, and the Tribes themselves forced to become auxiliary branches of other stronger Tribes.

Unfortunately, the Crow Divinity Holy Land had fallen. There was no need for word to be spread about this. Totemic Sacred Ancients could sense each other; therefore, the Poison Patriarchs that the Five Poisons Tribe had worshiped for the past ten thousand years immediately sent their will out to inform members of the Tribe that the Crow Divinity Holy Land was destroyed. The Crow Divinity… was dead!

Despite that, one of the reasons the Five Poisons Tribe had survived for such a long time was because of their cautious nature. They didn’t immediately just go to war, but rather decided to feel out the Crow Divinity Tribes first. That was why they had dispatched rank 9 Dragoneer Zhou Ye from the Spider Branch.

The instant Zhou Ye died, his Lifesoul jade slip shattered. The Spider Branch immediately sensed this; roars of rage filled the air to echo about in all directions. The Five Poisons Tribe immediately called a Sacrificial Rites Assembly.

During their meeting, the fifteen High Priests from the five Branches decided to dispatch the Spider Branch to declare war on the five Tribes of the Crow Divinity.

After three days, the official resolution was issued, and the entire Spider Branch began to make preparations for war. More than three thousand Totem Cultivators, three rank 9 Dragoneers, and a vast quantity of neo-demons entered a teleportation portal in the Blood Wastes and headed toward the Crow Divinity Mountains.

By using a teleportation portal, they were able to save quite a bit of time. The month-long journey was now reduced to only seven days.

That was how the war began!

Of course, this war attracted the attention of other Tribes within the Western Desert North region. Many eyes turned to observe. Wars between tribes were common in the North, but… the five Tribes of the Crow Divinity had once been a great Tribe. As such, this particular war was of much more interest than normal.

This was especially true when it came to the other great Tribe in the area, the Scorching Ice Tribe. They were paying very close attention. Were it not for the fact that they were much farther away than the Five Poisons Tribe, they too would have participated. Others might have thought such actions would be taken in an effort to grow their own Tribe. However, the Scorching Ice Tribe knew that the main purpose the Five Poisons Tribe had for going to war… was for the spot in the Realm of the Bridge Ruins.

Seven days later, war loomed over the five Tribes of the Crow Divinity.

On that day, Meng Hao sat cross-legged in his courtyard behind the mountain. In front of him were three flickering totems. One was a Flame Thrush, the other a Water Drop, the third a Stone Golem.

These totems came from the Crow Flame, Crow Gloom and Crow Fighter Tribes respectively.

Comparatively speaking, they didn’t match up at all to the Greenwood Tree that Meng Hao had acquired before. Nor were they even comparable to the earliest seed of the Metal-type totem that the Golden Crow had given him. That was why Meng Hao was hesitating about whether to fuse with them.

The seed would determine what type of transmogrification the totem could manifest later. In making his selections, how could Meng Hao not be careful?

After a long moment, his eyes filled with determination. He gathered up the totem seeds and put them away. If he really couldn’t get any better totems in the future, then he would have no other choice but to use them.

After putting the totem seeds away, his eyes flickered and he lifted his head. He could see that a seething mist was suddenly beginning to spread out through the previously clear and boundless sky. The mist was enormous, covering everything, and rapidly approaching as it expanded out.

From a distance, it was still possible to see that, shockingly, this boundless mist was actually made up of incomparably fierce spiders.

At the same time, a rumbling sound filled the sky, shaking Heaven and Earth, causing even the mountains to tremble. Any vegetation that the mist touched instantly withered and died.

“Well, they arrived quickly!” thought Meng Hao, his eyes glittering coldly.

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# Chapter 438: Zhao Youlan 1

Almost at the exact same time as the mist neared, five beams of light shot out from five different directions within the mountain. All of them were different colours; these were none other than the totemic Sacred Ancients that resided in the tallest peaks of the mountains of the Five Tribes.

Simultaneously, five protective shields sprang up, covering the entirety of the Five Tribes, cutting them off completely.

Next, the members of the Five Tribes unleashed the power of their various totems. Their eyes were bloodshot and filled with vigilance; clearly these people were prepared to die for their Tribe. The Greatfathers, Priests, and Grand Elders from the Five Tribes, all of them Nascent Soul Cultivators, emanated intense killing intent. Their faces were grim as they looked out at the churning black mist.

It was at this point that the black mist slammed into the protective shield. Booming sounds filled the air, and the ground quaked. The once emerald forests in the areas withered and turned black.

Miserable shrieks could be heard from the various beasts that lived in the area. Their bodies began to rot and they turned into pools of black liquid.

It only took a few moments for the entirety of the Crow Divinity Mountains to be filled with a death aura.

Suddenly, a sinister voice echoed out from within the churning black mist. “Five Tribes of the Crow Divinity, we are the Five Poisons Clan Spider Branch. You may surrender… or die!” The voice rolled out in all directions, transforming into a thunderous roar. A powerful, domineering will could be sensed within this voice; this was the power of a mid Nascent Soul

Cultivation base. It echoed into the ears of the members of the Five Tribes, causing the blood to drain from the faces of many. Even with the protective shield in place, it still caused blood to ooze out of their mouths.

“To the death!” cried the Crow Gloom High Priest. He was a middle-aged man with a look of keen wit shining in his eyes. His words rang out, filled with determination. This was all the answer they needed to provide to the Five Poisons Clan.

“To the death!!” All the members of the Five Tribes joined their voices into a powerful roar.

“TO THE DEATH!!” the shocking sound transformed into grim, cold determination. It rose up into the sky and charged into the black mist, and the ears of each and every Cultivator of Spider Branch of the Five Poisons Tribe.

Among the three thousand Cultivators of the Spider Branch, twenty were Grand Elders and one was a green-robed High Priest. All of these people were currently looking at a young woman who was surrounded protectively by more than ten cold-faced Cultivators, all of whom had green totem tattoos on their faces.

The woman appeared to be a little more than twenty, with long, beautiful hair and a bright red robe. She was beautiful, and her red robe could not hide the voluptuous curves beneath. Her beauty almost seemed demonic; her eyes were cold and seemed completely ruthless. This ruthlessness was quite a contrast to her beauty, causing her to be even more sexually attractive.

On her forehead was a white spider totem tattoo; as it glittered, the spider it depicted almost seemed to be moving.

This woman was one of the five Holy Daughters of the great Five Poisons Clan, Zhao Youlan of the Spider Branch.

The white spider on her forehead was called Wisdom Spider; only natural born Holy Daughters could acquire it.

“Revered Priest,” she said lightly, “commence with the attack! First, deal with the shield. Call forth the totemic Sacred Ancient!” Just like her name, her voice was like an orchid, beautiful but cold.

This particular High Priest of the Spider Branch was an old man in a long green robe who held a black, wooden wand in his hand. Having heard Zhao Youlan’s words, he nodded and then pointed the wand out. Instantly, the surrounding mist began to roil and then transformed into a gigantic spider that shot toward the shield.

A boom filled the air, and the shield rippled. However, it did not fall. The High Priest frowned, and then flashed an incantation with his right hand. The gigantic spider dissipated and then reformed into five black spears, each of them three hundred meters long. He waved his wand, causing the five spears to scream through the air toward the five beams of light shooting up from the five mountains in the area.

“Five Tribes totemic Sacred Ancients, please appear!” cried the Crow Gloom Tribe Priest. A jade slip appeared in his hand, which he crushed. Immediately, roaring sounds could be heard from the five mountains. The Sacred Ancients immediately emerged: the Crow Scout Tribe’s Treant, the Flame Sea of the Crow Flame Tribe, as well as the others. However, the instant they appeared….

Spider Branch Holy Daughter Zhao Youlan, behind her ring of guards, looked at the Crow Gloom Tribe Priest, her phoenix-like eyes glittering. Their gazes locked, and it was clear that both were aware of the identity of the other. These were the two in charge of this battle.

“Summon the Spider Sacred Ancient!”

A thunderous roaring sound filled the air as the clouds up above began to roil, and a massive crack appeared in mid-air. Five colossal spider legs, each one several thousand meters long, suddenly emerged from within the crack. It was impossible to see what existed past the crack; in any case, as soon as the legs appeared, they shot toward the five mountain peaks. In the blink of an eye, massive explosions could be heard as the spell formations cracked. The earth quaked and the mountains shook.

All of the totemic Sacred Ancients of the five Tribes roared and flew directly up into the sky. Then, up high in the sky, a shocking, bright red spider shot forward to slam into them.

“Spider Branch Battle Cultivators,” said Zhao Youlan softly, “there’s no need for battle formations. Use the totemic Demonspider webs to seal this entire area!”

“The Holy Daughter’s commands shall be followed!” cried the three thousand Spider Branch Cultivators, their eyes shining with savagery. They lifted their heads up to the sky and roared as the radiance of their totems exploded out. Immediately, illusory Demonspiders appeared, and the air filled with countless strands of silk that flew out in all directions. Hissing sounds filled the air as they shot toward the glowing shield; it seemed these threads also contained poison.

“Elders, please join forces to destroy the spell formation,” said Zhao Youlan, toying with her hair. “Get the Greatfathers of these Five Tribes to show their faces!”

“The Holy Daughter’s commands shall be followed!” Immediately, a dozen or so old men shot out from within the Spider Branch forces. The totems on their body glowed brightly, exploding with the power of the Nascent Soul stage. The ripples merged together to form a strange pattern, a spell formation that then shot directly toward the Five Tribes’ protective shield.

Just as it was about to impact, the Crow Gloom Priest’s eyes flickered.

“Greatfathers of the Crow Scout and Crow Flame Tribes, please lead the Priests and Grand Elders of the other three Tribes into battle!”

Immediately, the Crow Scout Tribe Greatfather roared and charged forward. He was followed by more than ten Priests and Grand Elders, as well as the Crow Flame Greatfather. They shot forth to intercept the incoming Cultivators, intent on preventing them from collapsing the protective shield.

It was at this point that the Crow Gloom Priest suddenly began to bark orders: “Members of the Five Tribes. According to our pre-war strategy, form into fifty-man squads. Five squads will form a company. Five companies will form a battalion! 1st Battalion will defend the northwest, 2nd Battalion the northeast, 3rd Battalion due north! Slay them with extreme prejudice!

“Remember, do not fight to the death! If you are injured, return immediately to the area behind the shield for healing.

“4th Battalion, 5th Battalion, please rotate in and out of the battle as needed. 6th Battalion, stand guard within the shield! This battle will not be concluded quickly. Tribe members, we fight for the Crow Divinity!” Immediately, thousands of Five Tribes Cultivators shot out of the shield, their eyes bloodshot.

“FOR THE CROW DIVINITY!” the roared as they charged to meet the incoming three thousand Cultivators from the Spider Branch.

The flames of war instantly raged into the Heavens. Magical techniques flared up everywhere. High up in the sky, the Five totemic Sacred Ancients were locked in battle with the Spider Branch’s Sacred Spider. That battle was something that far exceeded the Nascent Soul stage. Ripples spread out to cover the entire scene, making it impossible for anyone down below to see how the battle was faring.

Below them, the Nascent Soul Cultivators were locked in vicious combat. Mist spread out in all directions, making it difficult to see anything other than shadows. However, there was no doubt that the fighting was deadly.

Even further below, outside of the shield, thousands of Cultivators from both sides had created a rain of blood. To the Spider Branch, this was a battle to defend their pride as undefeated conquerors. They must win!

For the members of the Five Tribes, though, they were fighting for their home and their people. They could not retreat, and could not lose. If they did have to die, they would fight to the bitter end. That was because… behind them, beneath the protection of the shield, their fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters, and other relatives were all watching.

“Fight!!”

“To the death!!”

“For the Crow Divinity and for our Tribes!” Fierce cries echoed out. This lowest level of the battle was the fiercest. Bloodcurdling screams and blood flew about in all directions.

Inside the shield, the rest of the members of the Five Tribes were watching with clenched fists. Children were crying out in fear, and girls were weeping. Mothers’ hearts were breaking, and tears rolled down the faces of fathers.

Much further outside the shield, within the Spider Branch forces, Zhao Youlan gave a soft sigh. For a moment she looked disturbed. However, the negative emotions drifted away with her sigh. The right and wrong of war all depended on your perspective.

“Dragoneers! You are aware of the mysterious Dragoneer described in our top secret documents, the one who slaughtered Zhou Ye. The time has come to draw him out from within the Five Tribes!”

Among the Spider Branch Cultivators were three Dragoneers, located at the back of the battle group. They wore black robes and emanated gruesome auras. Furthermore, all of them were surrounded by various protective items that would shield them from any deadly attacks in battle.

Having heard Zhao Youlan’s words, the three smiled and flicked their sleeves. Immediately, the roar of neo-demons filled the air and beam after beam of light appeared. Roaring filled the air as a horde of nearly ten thousand neo-demons appeared next to each of these people.

When the Crow Gloom Tribe Priest saw this his face began to flicker. Something about the rhythm of this battle seemed off, but he really had no other choice at the moment. Turning toward the rear mountain district, he clasped hands and bowed deeply. “Grandmaster Meng, your assistance is requested!”

Meng Hao was sitting cross-legged in his courtyard, observing the battle. He had seen everything happening in the sky overhead, as well as the storm of blood on the battlefield. It made him think of the battle of Holy Snow City back in the Black Lands.

Then he thought about the Golden Crow and the great tree.

After a long moment, he sighed.

“Because of your kindness… I will do my best to ensure that the Tribe you created continues on into the future.” Sighing softly, he rose to his feet and walked out of his courtyard. He was followed by the Wild Giant, who lifted its head to the sky and roared, a bloodthirsty look in its eyes. Battles like these were exactly where Wild Giants liked to be!

1. Zhao Youlan’s name in Chinese is zhào yōu lán – Zhao is a surname. Youlan means “orchid.”

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# Chapter 439: Exotic Heartdevil Flower!

Outside of the shield, the three rank 9 Dragoneers from the Spider Branch began to attack. Vast numbers of neo-demons blotted out the sky and land. There was something very special about these Dragoneers; their neo-demon hordes all consisted of a single type of neo-demon.

One of them possessed a huge flock of vicious gray seabirds that whistled through the air. Bizarrely, each of these birds had three claws and the image of a human face on its chest.

Astonishingly, another of the Dragoneers was surrounded by multiple giant ants. The largest of these ants were roughly six meters long; as for the small ones, there were too many to even count. They looked savage as they swarmed forward, blanketing over everything.

The final Dragoneer was an old man with a proud expression on his face. Nine wasp nests floated in the air around him, and he was surrounded by a cloud of poisonous wasps. The shocking sound of their buzz was enough to cause anyone’s scalp to go numb.

Uniform neo-demon hordes were the standard for orthodox Dragoneers. These were the types of Dragoneers who each benefited from a legacy. Many such legacies had been passed down through various Dragoneer bloodlines for generations.

Considering that they could summon vast hordes of uniform neo-demons, it was very easy to see the difference between them, and Rogue Dragoneers, most of whom had mixed neo-demon hordes.

After seeing these three Dragoneers appear, Meng Hao's face was calm as he stood atop the Wild Giant's enormous frame. It howled as it charged forward, instantly attracting the attention of everyone outside of the shield.

His appearance immediately caused Zhao Youlan's expression to flicker. She examined Meng Hao closely for a moment and then frowned.

At the same time, the three rank 9 Dragoneers from the Spider Branch looked over at Meng Hao, then exchanged glittering glances. They all began to flicker incantation gestures, causing several thousand neo-demons from each of their hordes to suddenly shoot directly toward the shield.

These three groups of three different types of neo-demons formed together to make a neo-demon horde nearly ten thousand in number. Their shocking roars lifted up to the Heavens as they advanced. Meng Hao gave a cold snort. The howling Wild Giant suddenly leaped up into the air, shooting out through the shield, its eyes filling with the thirst for blood as it charged toward the incoming neo-demon horde.

In mid-air, Meng Hao's right hand waved, causing the totem tattoos on his right arm to begin to glow. Suddenly, intense light shot out, flickering into a flock of black crows.

The instant the black crows appeared, they let out piercing cries. Suddenly, all the corpses on the battlefield began to emanate a pulsing black aura, which was then sucked upward toward the black crows. It was like a black mist that swirled around the crows and then shot toward the incoming neo-demons.

Simultaneously, a green light began to flicker around Meng Hao. Big Hairy and the rest of the Greenwood Wolfpack appeared, along with the Black Bat. They too shot out in attack.

As for the Black Bat, it almost appeared like Meng Hao didn't care about it; in reality, he attached a lot of importance to the creature. It was a neo-demon that had been suppressed by a wooden sword. He was quite certain that the power it was revealing now was not the full extent of what it was capable of. Either it was intentionally holding back, or needed more time to recover from the serious injury.

If it was the latter, then that meant it was very weak right now. Even still, its weakness allowed it to employ a Cultivation base of roughly level 7.

Shocking booms filled the air as the two neo-demon hordes slammed into each other and then dissolved into fierce fighting.

Meng Hao himself had attracted quite a bit of attention on the battlefield. Dragoneer battles were large in scope, and gave rise to powerful auras. Within the blink of an eye, this Dragoneer showdown had turned into the fourth of the great battles occurring.

One of the three Spider Branch Dragoneers let out a cold laugh and then said, “You trifling Rogue Dragoneer. You killed Zhou Ye by a fluke! Your mixed neo-demon horde might have some fantastic neo-demons in it, but you don’t stand a chance against the three of us!”

Meng Hao was their only enemy, and their only mission was to draw him out and kill him.

Seeing him fighting back against them, the three exchanged another glance, then all began to flash incantation gestures. Immediately, the rest of the neo-demons around them lifted their heads up and roared, then charged forward.

The impressive sight and the thunderous roaring caused many of the surrounding combatants to suddenly look over to watch this part of the battle.

Laughing coldly, the three Spider Branch Dragoneers performed more incantations, causing the totems on their bodies to begin to shine. Suddenly several hundred level 10 neo-demons magically appeared in the air around them. In unison, they charged toward Meng Hao.

“We will help you to understand the truly crushing power of Dragoneers!” Even as the words left their mouths, their neo-demon hordes, nearly thirty thousand in number, closed in on Meng Hao. It truly seemed as if Meng Hao's own neo-demon horde would have difficulty fighting back. They would surely be completely consumed.

His face as calm as ever, Meng Hao's cold eyes glanced over the incoming neo-demons. With that, he casually shook his arms and legs. Immediately, totemic light began to emanate out from him. Within the glowing light were several thousand howling Greenwood Wolves, as well as Flame Thrushes and Stone Golems. There was also an innumerable group of neo-demons whose bodies were surrounded by rippling shields of water.

A shocking roar then filled the air as the savage red crocodile crawled out onto the battlefield.

Then, a shriek could be heard as black mists billowed up. Within the black mist crawled a black lizard that looked like it had just emerged from the yellow springs of the underworld. Its appearance immediately caused the air to vibrate.

Next, a droning sound could be heard as the fierce, green Demonsquitos appeared around Meng Hao.

As one neo-demon horde after another appeared, the faces of the three Spider Branch Dragoneers instantly fell. At the same time, Meng Hao began to stride forward. As he did, the air around him rippled as twenty of the three hundred meter large spiders appeared, along with over ten thousand smaller spiders. They whistled throughout the air, a vast horde of nearly thirty thousand neo-demons that caused everything to shake. They instantly charged toward the three Dragoneers.

As soon as Meng Hao's neo-demons slammed into the hordes from the Spider Branch, miserable cries filled the air. The three Dragoneers' hordes were completely incapable of blocking Meng Hao's. Facing the slaughter and injury, they tried to fall back. Unfortunately for them, Meng Hao's neo-demons quickly surrounded them.

The three Dragoneers' faces fell and grew ashen. At the same time, Zhao Youlan's eyes went wide and filled with an expression of disbelief. Then, her soft voice could once again be heard.

“High Priest, it seems that if we wish to kill this man, we will first need to draw out their most powerful expert, the Greatfather of the Crow Soldier Tribe. Only when he is also present can I execute our plan to completely exterminate these Five Tribes. High Priest, please take action!”

The Spider Branch High Priest, the old man in the green robe, smiled in response to her words. He waved his wooden wand, and then employed minor teleportation. When he reappeared, he was directly in front of Meng Hao. As soon as he arrived, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. Having sensed the man’s imminent arrival, Meng Hao was ready. He shot backward, his eyes cold.

Back inside the shield, the Crow Gloom Priest could tell that something fishy was going on, but he wasn’t sure exactly what. Unfortunately, there was no time to analyze the situation to try to figure out the source of his strange feeling.

Gritting his teeth, he said, “Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather, please intercept that High Priest to buy some time for Grandmaster Meng!”

Next to him, the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather’s eyes glimmered with coldness. His body disappeared in a minor teleportation. When he reappeared, he was blocking the Spider Branch High Priest, preventing him from nearing Meng Hao. The two looked at each other, and, without a word, instantly employed divine abilities. Booming sounds filled the air as the fifth major encounter began on the battlefield.

As for Meng Hao, he also could tell that something strange was going on. He had participated in a similar Cultivator war back in the Black Lands. Based on how that war went, it could be said that such wars were usually not finished in a short period of time. Usually, protracted battles went on for days before the situation began to favor one side or the other.

Unless one side was clearly in a position of superiority in terms of power, allowing them to crush the other side, then the only option was to try to slowly weaken the other side.

However, despite clearly not being in the position to crush the Five Tribes, the Spider Branch, after not even a single day of battle, was using this strange tactic to try to force the Five Tribes to play their trump cards.

It appeared as if the Spider Branch were going all out, regardless of being assured of victory. Such impulsive attacks must surely be a part of some greater plan.

“There must be some deadly gambit waiting to be sprung. If I were them, what would be my tactic?” Meng Hao controlled the neo-demons surrounding the hordes of the three Dragoneers and simultaneously glanced around the battlefield. The first thing he took note of was the rippling scene up above. That was where the Five Tribes’ Sacred Ancients were locked in battle with the fearsome Demonspider that was attempting to emerge.

“It most likely won’t involve them…. The totemic Sacred Ancients are not Cultivators, but rather powerful neo-demons who can spawn totems. Their battle exceeds my understanding.” Frowning, Meng Hao looked at the thousands of battling Cultivators, then back at the shield. Finally, he looked up at the battling Nascent Soul Cultivators.

“Then there’s me. I count as one of the major parts of the battle. However, if they wanted to kill me specifically, they would do so with decisiveness. If you look at it that way….” Meng Hao’s face suddenly flickered. Without hesitation, he shot backward, both hands flickering an incantation. Flickering protective shields immediately appeared around him.

Almost at the exact moment that Meng Hao began to retreat, Zhao Youlan’s eyes began to glow with a cold light. She took a deep breath as she carefully lifted up her right hand to reveal a wooden box.

When she opened the box, a black glow instantly emanated out. At the same time, a tremor ran through Zhao Youlan’s body. She bit her tongue with her beautiful teeth and then kneeled down on one knee, holding the box up above her head with both hands.

As soon as she lifted the box up, the black glow spread out in shocking fashion. A painful radiance appeared which seemed capable of consuming and replacing all other light.

The Spider Branch Cultivators all suddenly produced black, pasty medicinal pills which they then consumed. After they did, their eyes suddenly turned completely black.

The Cultivators from the Five Tribes suddenly felt something pulling at them, causing them to involuntarily look over.

The instant that they did, their hearts all began to tremble.

The faces of the Tribe members within the shield flickered. They could feel nothing; only those outside the shield could sense the pulling power of the black glow. However, it was this very fact that made the Crow Gloom Priest's face suddenly go pale white.

His voice hoarse, he said, "Exotic Heartdevil Flower!!"

Meng Hao's pupils constricted. However, he was already on guard. A bloody glow surrounded him as he directly employed the Blood Death World to defend against the calling of the black glow.

It was at this point that Meng Hao's face flickered. This was because it was at this very moment… that the Resurrection Lily chose to explode out with power.

Meng Hao instantly sent his will out to call all of his neo-demons. They immediately began to rush back toward him.

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# Chapter 440: Tragic!

Inside the shield, the Crow Gloom Priest’s face went pale and he began to murmur. “Exotic Heartdevil Flower!!

“The Five Poisons Tribe wants to exterminate the five Crow Divinity Tribes so bad they’re using the Exotic Heartdevil Flower! It must not be looked at! Looking at it causes a Heartdevil to rise up, which then transforms into a devilish will that burns you away….”

How could he not understand that he had been defeated from the very beginning…! Played and defeated. He had known something was off, but hadn’t been able to put the pieces of the puzzle together.

Exotic Heartdevil Flowers were rare. During Spirit Severing, if a Cultivator had such a flower, the chances of success were greatly increased, which made it an extremely precious treasure.

Furthermore, the flower itself was extremely brutal. Anyone under the Spirit Severing stage who looked at it would lose virtually all life force and then be burned alive by a devilish will. The end result was always death.

In some ways, though, the flower was weak. Although it was difficult for a person to defend against it, the Tribe’s protective shield was enough to keep its power on the outside. None of the Tribe members inside would be affected.

However, as soon as the Exotic Heartdevil Flower appeared outside, everyone on the battlefield suddenly stopped moving, with the exception of the totemic Sacred Ancients and the Sacred Spider.

After consuming the special medicinal pill, the Spider Branch Cultivators were temporarily safe from the effects of the flower. However, they were forced to first sit cross-legged in meditation. The members of the Five Tribes, on the other hand, began to scream in pain.

Almost immediately, more than three hundred members of the Five Tribes began to tremble. Blood oozed from their eyes, nose, and mouth as something like an invisible fire raged in their bodies, withering them up. It took only a moment for their life force to be extinguished, and their bodies transformed into desiccated corpses. In the last moment before death, they let out tragic, blood-curdling shrieks.

After that, more and more of the Tribe members began to scream and die. It was a massacre. No enemy made a single attack, and yet the ruthlessness of scene exceeded the previous fighting by a hundredfold.

The members of the Five Tribes within the shield looked out at their fellow Tribesmen dying, and could only tremble. Their eyes turned bloodshot, and they howled in anguish. Unfortunately… they could not charge out to provide aid.

As soon as they left the shield, they too would die. Not only would they be incapable of helping their fellow Tribe members, but they would be charging to their death!

The Grand Elder of the Crow Scout Tribe was shaking, and he coughed up blood as his body withered up. Even Nascent Soul Cultivators were incapable evading. In front of him, he saw a shapeless form, laughing ruthlessly as it sucked away his life force and consumed it.

As the members of the Five Tribes died, the black light emanating out from Zhao Youlan’s wooden box grew even more intense. It seemed that after consuming enough blood, it was turning violet.

Everything was going according to Zhao Youlan’s plan. The slaughtering, the attack on the shield, all of it had been a ruse to draw out the powerful experts. Once they were out of the shield… she would exterminate them with the Exotic Heartdevil Flower.

At the moment, Zhao Youlan's face was pale as she held aloft the Exotic Heartdevil Flower. A strange look appeared on her face as she spit out a mouthful of blood. As the blood flew out, it transformed into strands of Blood Qi, which spread out toward all of the Spider Branch Cultivators who sat cross-legged meditating on the battlefield.

"Nascent Soul seniors," said Zhao Youlan softly, "I cannot exempt you from the effects of the Exotic Heartdevil Flower. However, all other ordinary Cultivators, my mouthful of Heartdevil Blood can temporarily allow you to move about freely."

With the exception of the Nascent Soul Cultivators, all of the other Tribe members whom the Blood Qi entered suddenly shook. They opened their eyes, and the lucidity therein instantly transformed into savagery. They leaped up roaring, and began to slaughter the surrounding Five Tribes members, who were now powerless to fight back.

Now the true massacre had begun.

Mournful cries instantly could be heard from within the shield.

"NOOO!!"

"Five Poisons Tribe, you are now the arch nemesis of the Crow Divinity Tribe! We two cannot exist under the same sky!!"

The surviving Five Tribes members within the shield were trembling, and their eyes were bloodshot as they felt their hearts tearing apart. They could do nothing but watch on helplessly as the Tribe members outside the shield were being slaughtered. The tearing pain within them caused their voices to be filled with indescribable grief.

In the blink of an eye, hundreds of Five Tribes Cultivators were viciously cut down by the Spider Branch. As for Meng Hao, he immediately attracted the attention of the Spider Branch Cultivators. However, the vast quantity of neo-demons surrounding him caused them to hesitate.

It was at this moment that the three Dragoneers opened their eyes from meditation. When they saw Meng Hao's current position, they went wild with joy and immediately sent forth all of their neo-demon hordes to slaughter his.

It was in this fashion that the cruel Spider Branch Cultivators descended upon Meng Hao.

Meng Hao was sitting there meditating, his eyes closed tightly and his body trembling.

His thirty thousand neo-demons were situated around him on the battlefield. All of them began to roar. The Exotic Heartdevil Flower had little effect on them. Therefore, they immediately began to fight back against the enemy Cultivators and neo-demons.

Instantly, booming sounds filled the air, although Meng Hao was incapable of paying any attention to it. At the moment, his body was shaking as the Resurrection Lily unleashed all of its power against him in its attempt to take over his body. In return, Meng Hao was using all the strength he could muster to suppress it.

The inward struggle raged on. By this point, eighty to ninety percent of the Five Tribes Cultivators had been massacred. Blood soaked the ground, which was littered with corpses. The reek of blood rose up into the sky. The Five Tribes within the shield felt their hatred for the Five Poisons Tribe growing to an indescribable level.

It was at this point that the Crow Scout Tribe Greatfather coughed up a mouthful of blood. He laughed bitterly as his body withered up. Facing up against an Exotic Heartdevil Flower without making advanced preparations, even Nascent Soul Cultivators would find it difficult to resist it. They wouldn't even be able to self-detonate. They could only stand there and be consumed by the flower.

In the moment before he died, the Crow Scout Tribe Greatfather bit the tip of his tongue. A green light began to shine out from all of the totems on his body. Fatally damaging his own body and spirit, he sent some of his life force shooting back toward the Crow Scout Tribe Priest.

“We can’t… all perish here!” cried the Greatfather. He continued to laugh bitterly as his body withered up completely. He was unable to extricate himself, but what he was able to do was impart some of his boundless life force to his fellow Tribe member. The stream of life force entered the person behind him. Unfortunately, he was not able to extricate himself from the power of the Exotic Heartdevil Flower either. Merging his own life force with that of the Crow Scout Tribe Greatfather, he sent it out to the next person. And so it went on….

The Crow Flame Greatfather, Priest and Grand Elder and other Nascent Soul Cultivators outside of the shield all perished, more than ten in total.

They died laughing bitterly, and hearts filled with rancor. Before withering away in death, the last person in line took all of the combined life force and passed it on to the most powerful expert of the Five Tribes, the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather.

The life force fused into the body of the gray-haired Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather, who was currently fighting back against the Exotic Heartdevil Flower. It was a final gift from his fellow Tribesmen upon their death. Within the life force was also their combined hatred of the Five Poisons Tribe. It combined together to form one word.

“REVENGE!!”

The Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather lifted his head to the sky and roared. His eyes were completely bloodshot, but at this moment, the power of restoration flowed through him. He shook off the glow of the Exotic Heartdevil Flower. Coughing up a mouthful of blood, he unhesitatingly fell back at top speed. Even as the power of the flower once again attempted to envelop him, he shot back through the shield, and then immediately sat down cross-legged to heal himself. His expression was one of extreme malevolence, but in fact, his heart felt as if it were breaking.

Beneath the dim light cast out by the Exotic Heartdevil Flower, all of the Five Tribes members had perished except for Meng Hao. The tragic turn of events caused the hearts of the Tribe members inside the shield to fill with thoughts of despair. The shadow of genocide loomed over them, and they began to weep.

As of now, the Five Tribes only had seven Nascent Soul Cultivators left inside the shield. They immediately went to stand guard around the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather. They said nothing, but within their bitterness, hatred boiled up into the sky. The Crow Gloom Tribe Priest laughed woefully and then muttered to himself, “Defeated… thoroughly defeated….”

Back outside the shield, Zhao Youlan opened her eyes and looked out at the blood-soaked, corpse-filled battlefield. When she saw that the Crow Soldier Greatfather had escaped with his life, she let out a soft sigh. A sliver of pity appeared in her eyes, but she quickly shook her head and it disappeared. Then her phoenix-like eyes fell upon Meng Hao, who was still sitting cross-legged in meditation.

“Spider Branch Cultivators, hold nothing back! Cooperate with our three esteemed Dragoneers to slaughter the Five Tribes’ Dragoneer!”

In response to her words, the more than three thousand Spider Branch Cultivators shot toward Meng Hao. As for the Grand Elders and High Priest, they simply sat there with legs crossed. Considering their status, they completely ignored Meng Hao, and instead looked with glittering eyes at the Five Tribes’ protective shield.

“Seniors,” said Zhao Youlan in her soft voice, “please exert full power to destroy the shield. We will allow the glow of the Exotic Heartdevil Flower to shine inside, whereupon today’s battle shall be concluded. The Spider Branch has suffered few losses, and secured victory. My trial by fire is over, and the Tribe can be notified.”

Booms filled the air as the powerful experts of the Spider Branch, including the High Priest, levelled attacks against the shield. Meng Hao’s neo-demons fought fiercely against the three Dragoneers and the rest of the three thousand Cultivators who surrounded them.

The injuries they were sustaining grew more severe, and the tide was turning against them. Without Meng Hao and his Demonic Qi, their battle prowess was significantly lessened.

The Five Tribes’ shield was rumbling and showing signs of breaking. At this point, Big Hairy let out a sad howl and coughed up some blood.

Just when it seemed everything was going to go wrong, Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly opened. They were completely bloodshot and radiated intense killing intent. Despite the Resurrection Lily’s fierce struggles, Meng Hao had once again managed to suppress it.

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# Chapter 441: Execution!

As soon as Meng Hao suppressed the Resurrection Lily, the Exotic Heartdevil Flower suddenly had no effect on him whatsoever. Perhaps this had something to do with the Resurrection Lily itself, although it was impossible to say for sure.

The instant Meng Hao opened his eyes, his neo-demons all let out powerful roars. The eyes of the three Dragoneers narrowed, and the hearts of the surrounding three thousand enemy Cultivators trembled. However, they continued to attack as relentlessly as before.

Meng Hao looked around thoughtfully. He saw the thousands of corpses of the Five Tribes members, and also noted that the shield was about to collapse. Of his original group of thirty thousand neo-demons, more than half were dead.

Although he had witnessed the desperate war in Holy Snow City, seeing this scene caused his heart to fill with the same grief as the rest of the Five Tribes.

“Considering that the battle has reached this point, I should really leave,” he murmured softly. “However… I have no desire to do any fleeing today!” He lifted his right hand and pushed down onto the ground.

“Demonic Qi, art of Righteous Bestowal!” Immediately, endless amounts of Demonic Qi erupted up in all directions. He waved his hand, causing the invisible Qi to immediately fuse with the more than ten thousand neo-demons of his that remained.

The neo-demons’ bodies all began to tremble. The Demonsquitos swelled to several times their original size and emitted a shocking aura. In addition to emanating Demonic Qi, an aura of transmogrification suddenly appeared.

Under the power of this aura, the Demonsquitos suddenly grew an extra pair of wings. In addition, the tails of the mosquitos sprouted green spikes!

The sight of it was incredibly fearsome!

As for the black crows, they trembled and then emitted fierce cries. They glowed with a black light, and the fierceness of their auras grew exponentially. Not only did their bodies grow larger, but ghost images sprang up around the Demoncrows, forming what looked like mirror images behind each one.

This ghost image was a result of the transmogrification, a sort of evolution. With the ghost image there, it was like each crow had two life forces.

Big Hairy howled into the sky as his body grew to three hundred meters in size. He already had Demonic Qi within him, but this addition didn’t just cause him to grow larger; his blood began to pump harder and the image of a floating moon appeared above his head. Beneath the light of this moon, his coat of white fur suddenly turned silver. He was now a Silver Wolf!

As for the spiders, they let out fierce cries as their bodies grew more powerful and their appearances even more savage. On their rear torsos, the images of human faces could suddenly be seen. Their fangs grew even longer until they looked like giant pincers!

The red crocodile’s scales grew bigger, and its head began to change shape to look more like a dragon. The flesh on its back began to bulge out and then suddenly, two wings appeared. It flew into the air, no longer a crocodile, but rather, something like a red Flying Rain-Dragon!

Although it didn’t form the spitting image of a Flying Rain-Dragon, its aura was extremely similar.

Roaring, the lizard’s body grew until it was the size of a small mountain. Black smoke poured out from its mouth, as though fire burned in its belly, just ready to be shot out.

It now looked completely different than it had before; its aura was vastly more powerful.

The Wild Giant let out an intense roar as its body grew even burlier. It lifted its hand into the air, and shockingly, a bolt of lightning descended from the sky. As the Wild Giant grabbed it, it transformed into a lightning whip, shocking to the extreme.

All of the neo-demons experienced transmogrification. Such changes were things that since ancient times had happened only occasionally in the Western Desert. To see all of these transmogrifications occurring simultaneously was unprecedented.

The scene immediately caused the neo-demons of the three Dragoneers to be shaken. Looks of fear appeared in their eyes and they didn’t dare to move forward.

The three thousand Spider Branch Cultivators’ minds were filled with a buzzing sound. To suddenly see more than ten thousand neo-demons experience transmogrifications that turned them into a mutated horde filled them with incredible fear.

Zhao Youlan’s eyes were wide and filled with a bright glow. Meng Hao’s sudden explosion of power left her shocked.

It wasn’t just her. The Spider Branch High Priest and Grand Elders, who were currently attacking the shield, suddenly looked back. When they saw Meng Hao and his neo-demons, their hearts and minds trembled.

The faces of the Spider Branch’s three Dragoneers filled with disbelief, and they began to pant. Shock completely filled their hearts and they gave out hoarse cries of alarm.

“Grand… Grand Dragoneer!”

“He’s a Grand Dragoneer! Only Grand Dragoneers could wield such a fearsome secret Dragoneer art!”

Suddenly, Meng Hao’s eyes swept over them, and their faces went deathly pale. Scalps numb, they retreated at top speed.

Even as they began to fall back, Meng Hao’s neo-demons let out shocking roars and then fell upon the Cultivators and neo-demons who surrounded them.

Amidst the thunderous roaring, Meng Hao also moved forward with incredible speed, using a Bloodburst Flash. His body seemed to disappear. As it did, all of the neo-demons and Cultivators between him and the nearest of the three Dragoneers suddenly exploded into a cloud of blood and flesh. Meng Hao reappeared directly in front of the Dragoneer.

The speed with which this happened was incredibly shocking. It wasn’t a minor teleportation, but rather, an explosive burst of speed over a short distance, leaving behind a path of destruction and death.

“You….” The Dragoneer’s face fell, and his mind filled with a buzzing sound. He was just about to shoot back when Meng Hao’s hand snapped out and latched onto his throat. A cracking sound rang out as Meng Hao, his face completely expressionless, crushed the man’s neck.

When he dropped the Dragoneer, a thorn-covered vine suddenly snaked out from the Wild Giant. In one giant gulp, it swallowed the body of the Dragoneer. The ferocious vine then began to spin around Meng Hao, turning into what looked like a gigantic sphere of thorns that swept about in all directions.

This single kill instantly shook the entire battlefield. The faces of two of the Spider Branch Nascent Soul Elders who were attacking the shield, flickered. Without hesitation, they performed minor teleportations to suddenly reappear near Meng Hao.

The instant they reappeared, a group of Demonsquitos screamed through the air to defend Meng Hao. The two Nascent Soul Elders combined forces to attack, which instantly defeated the Demonsquitos. However, by this time, a bloody glow had appeared around Meng Hao and he once again Bloodburst Flashed. This time, he appeared next to the second fleeing

Dragoneer. He waved his hand, causing a golden light to surge forward. The man screamed as the golden light completely surrounded his body. After the space of a few breaths passed, the light faded, revealing that the man had been completely turned into gold. He slowly fell down out of the sky.

The last Dragoneer was an old man who was currently scared witless by Meng Hao’s unprecedented ferocity. He immediately began to tremble violently.

“Save me!!” he cried, shooting as fast as he could toward Zhao Youlan.

“What incredible guts!” cried one of the two Nascent Soul Cultivators. The fact that Meng Hao had killed another rank 9 Dragoneer right in front of them, filled them with fury. Their bodies flickered as they once again shot toward Meng Hao, their killing intent billowing out. Even before they neared him, divine abilities were magically appearing.

“My guts are actually pretty ordinary….” said Meng Hao lightly. As the Nascent Soul Elders neared, he lifted his right hand and pointed toward the two. The Eighth Demon Sealing Hex was immediately unleashed. Invisible strands of Demonic Qi shot toward the two men, instantly binding them.

The two Nascent Soul experts’ faces fell. Although it wouldn’t take long for the explosive power of their Cultivation bases to free them, their brief moment of shock allowed Meng Hao to once again use the Bloodburst Flash. A bloody glow surrounded him as he shot toward the final Dragoneer.

“How dare you!” cried another of the Nascent Soul Elders. He immediately teleported away from the shield to appear next to the old Dragoneer. Roaring, he performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, causing a colorful glow to spread out toward Meng Hao.

“No one can save someone that I want to kill,” said Meng Hao calmly. Without a scrap of hesitation, he clenched his right hand into a fist and struck out toward the Nascent Soul expert.

A boom filled the air. Meng Hao's body trembled and he fell back three paces. The Nascent Soul Expert's face fell and blood sprayed from his mouth. He fell back seven or eight paces, disbelief shining in his eyes. He watched in shock as Meng Hao approached the Dragoneer. Before the Dragoneer could do anything at all, Meng Hao grabbed his neck and crushed it.

Completely surrounded by an army of thousands, Meng Hao slaughtered three Dragoneers. Not even three Nascent Soul Elders could do a thing to stop him. In fact, one of the Dragoneers had been slain directly in front of one of the Nascent Soul Elders. This scene caused everyone to be filled with shock, not just the Spider Branch Cultivators, but also the members of the Five Tribes within the shield. All of a sudden their blood began to boil as their despair turned into hope!

“Grandmaster Meng!!”

“Grandmaster Meng!!!”

Cries rang out from within the shield, carrying with them the hope and excitement of the surviving members of the Five Tribes.

Zhao Youlan was panting as she looked at Meng Hao. His actions completely exceeded her anticipations, and as of now, he was turning into a critical factor in the battle.

“Grand Dragoneer…. One who can directly shake a Nascent Soul Cultivator…. This man has to die!” Even as killing intent sprang into her eyes, her heart trembled and a feeling of grave danger filled her. That was because she had just seen Meng Hao's eyes!

In this moment, Meng Hao's gaze passed over the battlefield, soaring over the vast gulf created between him and her by the three thousand Cultivators.

His gaze was filled with killing intent. And it was directed at her!

“He wants to kill me? Those three Dragoneers were too close to him, making them easy targets. He's much too far away from me, plus there are three thousand Cultivators between us. I have more than ten bodyguards, plus the High Priest and the Elders. How exactly… does he plan to kill me!?”

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# Chapter 442: A Figure Leaping, Sailing Over Three Thousand Cultivators!

“There’s no need to even think about it,” continued Zhao Youlan. “With a barrier of three thousand Cultivators, he’ll get tangled up before he can even get close to me. Unless he can perform minor teleportation, it won’t do him any good. Even relying on that Blood Qi art won’t get him across such a distance!

“If he flew, it would require incredible speed to break through three thousand Cultivators. Having seen his speed just now, I can tell it’s not sufficient.” It was at this point in her train of thought that Zhao Youlan saw Meng Hao lift his head up and let out a long cry.

In response to the cry, the Wild Giant came running. It roared as its muscles swelled and its body grew to the height of three hundred meters. The muscles on its right arm began to writhe, as if all the blood in its entire body was being collected there. The arm continued to grow in a bizarre and exaggerated way; soon it comprised more than half of the Wild Giant’s entire body!

The arm was completely out of proportion to the rest of its body. Blue veins popped up all over the surface of the arm, and it looked like it was almost about to explode. There appeared to be terrifying physical power filling the arm. The sight of it was completely shocking. The Wild Giant snatched up Meng Hao with its arm and hurled him into the air in the direction of Zhao Youlan.

All of the fearsome power contained in the body of the Wild Giant was now transferred to Meng Hao, causing him to shoot through the air like a lightning bolt. As he sped through the air, the power of the Wild Giant bolstered his innate speed, causing his figure to rip through the air… like a blazing sun!

At the same time, a cloud of Demonsquitos circled around him, transforming into a vortex. Black crows also approached, turning into a mist. The red crocodile also approached, becoming a giant wing. The enormous lizard transformed into a body, and the Black Bat became another wing. Meng Hao’s speed once again increased explosively as the neo-demon horde pushed him forward.

A shocking drone spread out in all directions as Meng Hao shot through the sky surrounded by his vast neo-demon horde. He sailed over the three thousand Cultivators, who stared up, their minds spinning, too shocked to react. It was at this time that…

Meng Hao’s neo-demon horde transformed into a long, sharp arrow, with Meng Hao as the arrowhead. They shot forward, filled with the desire to kill and emanating fierce killing intent. It was with explosive speed that they shot through the sky toward Zhao Youlan, seemingly capable of ripping open the Heavens.

In this moment, the members of the Five Tribes within the shield couldn’t even breathe. The Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather, now recovered from his injuries, stared with wide, bloodshot eyes. The other seven Nascent Soul Cultivators next to him were panting.

In this moment, three thousand Spider Branch Cultivators watched on with red eyes that were filled with shock.

In this moment, the expressions of the Nascent Soul Elders outside of the shield, as well as of the High Priest, completely changed!

Zhao Youlan’s phoenix like eyes went wide and she began to pant as she stared at Meng Hao. In this moment, Meng Hao’s figure could be seen reflected in her eyes as it was burned deeply into her mind and heart.

A figure leaping, sailing over three thousand Cultivators,

A demonic arrow, shooting directly toward Zhao Youlan!

The incredible speed made the over one thousand meter distance between the two of them suddenly less than three hundred! The Cultivators with the green tattoos who surrounded Zhao Youlan braced themselves to contend with this formidable foe. Killing intent could be seen in their eyes.

Zhao Youlan held the Exotic Heartdevil Flower up above her head. As she stared at Meng Hao, her expression grew calm, and her eyes filled with coldness. At the moment, she couldn’t move. If she did, it would cause the power of the Exotic Heartdevil Flower to dissipate. Once that happened, the remaining Five Tribes Cultivators within the shield would charge out. Including the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather, that would be eight Nascent Soul Cultivators, more than enough to entangle the Spider Branch Elders.

Such a circumstance would put them in truly grave danger.

“I bet… he won’t make it!” thought Zhao Youlan, her heart filling with decisiveness.

The rest of the Spider Branch Elders now abandoned their attempts to destroy the shield and exterminate the Five Tribes. More important to them was their Branch’s Holy Daughter.

Three of the nine Elders immediately teleported toward Meng Hao, their bodies exploding with power. The other six began to fly forward without hesitation.

The three Elders suddenly appeared next to Meng Hao’s shocking figure. They immediately began to perform incantation gestures, causing totemic light to spring out from their bodies. It transformed into a massive, illusive figure which shot toward Meng Hao.

“Back off, you!” The growling roar of the three Nascent Soul Cultivators was like thunder.

“Screw off!” replied Meng Hao, accompanied by a howl that sounded like the combination of the howling of all the neo-demons that surrounded him. The sound of it shook Heaven and Earth, and pressed down onto the three Nascent Soul Cultivators. Suddenly, the flock of black crows, the cloud of Demonsquitos, as well as the red crocodile all changed direction and shot toward the three.

Amidst the thunderous roaring, Meng Hao continued onward, not pausing even a tiny bit. The neo-demon horde obstructed the path of the three Nascent Soul Cultivators, allowing Meng Hao to pass by them unhindered.

He was now only about two hundred meters from Zhao Youlan!

Furious roars could now be heard as the other six Nascent Soul Elders appeared near Meng Hao. They employed the full power of their Cultivation bases, causing totemic divine abilities to manifest. Roaring filled the air as the power of these six men combined to create an enormous golden bell that shot toward Meng Hao, preparing to crush him.

As the golden bell flew forward, massive pressure filled the air, along with an ear-splitting rumble. Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he suddenly waved out with both hands. Big Hairy and the gigantic lizard, as well as all of the other neo-demons, shot through the air toward the incoming golden bell.

From a distance, Meng Hao’s neo-demon horde appeared to transform into something like a black wind that swept out from his body. Now Meng Hao was completely visible there in mid-air.

Without hesitation, he lifted his right hand up, within which appeared a blood-colored mask. He slipped it onto his face, and a rumbling sound could be heard as a shapeless Blood Qi exploded out from his body. It shot out in all directions, completely shocking all the onlookers.

The Blood Qi billowed out, transforming into an enormous red vortex with Meng Hao in the middle, flashing an incantation gesture. Suddenly, the rapidly spinning vortex changed into the image of a face.

The face shot out from behind the neo-demon horde, directly toward the golden bell and the six Nascent Soul Cultivators.

A massive, shocking boom shook everything. The neo-demon horde scattered and the golden bell shattered. The faces of six men immediately turned pale with astonishment as they retreated backward.

Meng Hao spat some blood out of his mouth; his speed now increased as he Bloodburst Flashed away from the six Nascent Soul Cultivators to appear only a hundred meters away from Zhao Youlan. The two of them could see each other very clearly, even down to the threads in their clothing.

Zhao Youlan’s expression was the same as ever, and her eyes were filled with coldness. Even Meng Hao had to admire such a mental state. However, his killing intent grew even thicker as he flickered toward her through the air.

The more than ten Cultivators with green totem tattoos immediately shot forward, transforming into a green light that charged toward Meng Hao.

Zhao Youlan’s expression didn’t change in the least as she looked at Meng Hao approaching her. She saw his mask, his green robe rippling in the wind, and his white hair whipping in the wind. But her eyes were like deep, still waters, filled with coldness.

Surrounded by an army of thousands, he had come alone. Nine Nascent Soul Elders were incapable of hindering him in the slightest. The image of a person like this would forever be imprinted in Zhao Youlan’s heart.

You could say that in terms of this great battle between Tribes, Zhao Youlan had calculated all possibilities. The only thing she hadn’t calculated… was Meng Hao.

Meng Hao raised a fist and slammed it into the chest of one of the green-faced Cultivators. The man’s Cultivation base was immediately suppressed. His body didn’t explode immediately. Instead he was thrown backward, where he slammed into the person behind him and they both exploded into a cloud of blood and gore.

Meng Hao’s body flickered, and he reappeared behind another of the Cultivators. He didn’t strike out. Instead, he flashed an incantation gesture, and sounds rang out like the crunching of bones. A golden light appeared, and three of the people were instantly transformed into statues of gold.

Efficient, clean extermination, without any messiness. Having accomplished this, Meng Hao took a deep breath and increased his speed, passing through the surviving five Cultivators as he closed in on Zhao Youlan.

The surviving green-faced Cultivators let out successive roars, their eyes filling with determination as they opted to… self-detonate!

Booms filled the air as five Cultivators of the great circle of Core Formation exploded. Such power would cause even Meng Hao to be shocked if it hit him. However, his expression didn’t change in the least bit. Even as the power of the self-detonation swept toward him, layers of silk threads appeared around him. This was… Eyeless Larva silk!

The silk whistled through the air as it surrounded Meng Hao. The silk was indestructible, therefore, Meng Hao sustained no injuries. He shot onward like lightning, bursting out from within the self-detonation explosions. He was now only thirty meters away from Zhao Youlan.

By this point, everyone in the area was completely astonished!

It was at this moment that a tall figure suddenly appeared in front of him. Something like a green boulder and a black wooden branch seemed to step out from the void. A wand pointed toward Meng Hao.

“Begone!” The voice was archaic and booming, and belonged to none other than the High Priest of the Spider Branch. He glared at Meng Hao, gripping a wand in his hand that contained power seemingly sufficient to crush mountains. Meng Hao was incapable of dodging, and the power of the wand slammed into the silk of the Eyeless Larva.

His eyes flickered as the nine Nascent Soul Elders behind him managed to shake off the neo-demon hordes and close in on him with murder in their

eyes.

When Zhao Youlan saw the High Priest appear, she heaved a sigh of relief. The fact that Meng Hao had made it within thirty meters of her had filled her with an unprecedented sense of crisis.

A boom filled the air and Meng Hao’s body trembled as the silk of the Eyeless Larva continuously fought back against the explosive power of the mid Nascent Soul Cultivation base power from the High Priest. Blood seeped out of the corners of Meng Hao’s mouth and he was forced to retreat several paces.

However, that was the extent of it; a bit of blood seeping out, and a retreat of a few steps. This was all that happened in the face of an onslaught from the full power of a mid Nascent Soul stage attack.

The Spider Branch High Priest’s pupils constricted.

“Just what magical item is that!? Well, it doesn’t matter how powerful your magical item is, if you think you can get past me, you’re dreaming!”

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# Chapter 443: Soul-stirring!

“Mid Nascent Soul stage!” thought Meng Hao, his eyes narrowing. Of the Cultivators he had personally battled with, the highest Cultivation base he had faced was that of Eccentric Li Tian. Even Li Tian had only been at the peak of the early Nascent Soul stage. There was a vast difference between that and the mid Nascent Soul stage.

The difference between the various levels of the Nascent Soul stage was far greater than the difference of the various levels of the Foundation Establishment or Core Formation stage. Meng Hao possessed two totems and was wearing the blood-colored mask, which enabled him to slay early Nascent Soul stage Cultivators; however, battling the mid Nascent Soul stage would be very difficult.

However, considering that he had chosen to attack Zhao Youlan, how could he not have been on guard against the Spider Branch’s High Priest? At the same time that he backed up, both hands flickered in an incantation gesture, and then he pointed forward.

“Eyeless Larva!” he said coldly. Immediately, the Eyeless Larva silk surrounding him opened up, and the Eyeless Larva itself appeared in front of Meng Hao. It flickered, then shot toward the High Priest. As it did, massive amounts of silk appeared, wrapping around the High Priest, entangling him.

“You’re right, I can’t beat the mid Nascent Soul Stage,” said Meng Hao coolly. “But that doesn’t mean I can’t tie you up!” The High Priest frowned, and he prepared to perform a minor teleportation. But then, Meng Hao waved his hand.

“Eighth Demon Sealing Hex!” he cried. Immediately, Demonic Qi covered over everything, rumbling as it shot toward the High Priest. The High Priest’s face fell; although he could shake off the effects of the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex rather quickly, the slight delay was all the time the Eyeless Larva needed to wrap him up in layer after layer of silk. Soon, he was almost completely covered.

Booming sounds could be heard as the High Priest employed divine abilities. However, the Eyeless Larva was incredibly powerful, and its silk was indestructible. The silk whipped around faster and faster, completely covering the High Priest.

Meng Hao coughed up a mouthful of blood; this was the power of the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex backfiring on him because of exceeding the limits of his Cultivation base. However, Meng Hao ignored it, shooting past the High Priest even as the nine other Nascent Soul Elders closed in on him from behind. He was now directly approaching Zhao Youlan.

Zhao Youlan’s face finally flickered, and she began to breath heavily. Now that Meng Hao was almost upon her, she finally moved, shooting backward. She continued to hold the Exotic Heartdevil Flower above her head so that it could emit the power of its blooming.

She was well aware that she could not allow the glow of the flower to fade; if that happened, she would truly be on the path to death. Her current situation seemed dangerous, but she knew that all she had to do was hold out for the space of a few breaths. Once the nine Nascent Soul Elders caught up, the situation would be resolved.

As she retreated, she began to speak the words of some bizarre spell.

The spell caused the air in front of her to distort and turn into ripples that spread out in all directions. These ripples suddenly caused a dozen or so different images of her to appear in front of Meng Hao. It was almost impossible to tell the difference between any of them.

Meng Hao gave a cold snort. Not pausing for even a moment, he lifted his right hand. At the same time, golden light erupted out from the Metal-type tattoo on his chest, which caused his entire right hand to turn into the color of gold. He pointed toward the ripples, sending out a will of gold which infected the ripples, dyeing them the color of gold.

The golden color rapidly spread out to the dozen or so retreating images of Zhao Youlan. Each time the gold completely covered a figure, it would shatter.

In the blink of an eye, the figures disappeared. Then, the distorted ripples popped like a bubble, revealing a shocked Zhao Youlan. She coughed up a mouthful of blood.

Meng Hao's body flickered as he shot forward. He was now about ten meters away from Zhao Youlan. The incredible pressure and feeling of imminent death felt by Zhao Youlan was greater than any she had experienced in her life. Her face was pale and her lips quivered. Suddenly, a white glow emanated out from her, transforming into a protective shield that began to surround her….

Meng Hao snorted coldly, pulled his right arm back, and then unleashed a punch. A massive boom filled the air as the white shield collapsed into fragments. Some of the pieces shot backward, slashing across Zhao Youlan's body and leaving behind bloody cuts.

When the shield shattered, more blood sprayed out of Zhao Youlan's mouth. However, she continued to hold up the Exotic Heartdevil Flower. As Meng Hao closed in, she flickered an incantation with her right hand. Then, her phoenix-like eyes flickered with killing intent as the white spider totem tattoo on her forehead began to emit a white glow.

As the glow emanated out, a spider magically appeared. It imitated a shrill call which transformed into a raging wind that swept across everything. Meng Hao's body trembled, and it felt like his soul was about to be ripped out of his body by the wind.

However, it only took a moment for Meng Hao to suppress the feeling. He was capable of suppressing the Resurrection Lily, so some trifling Soul Extermination wind was like nothing. Had Meng Hao not dealt with suppressing the Resurrection Lily in the past, or if the wind was created by someone with a higher Cultivation base, it might have been a different story. His soul would immediately have been absorbed, and he would have been left in a trance.

However, because of the various factors in play, this totemic divine ability, which only a Holy Daughter of the Spider Branch could gain enlightenment of, was incapable of shaking Meng Hao in the least.

He flicked his wide sleeve, causing Wood-type totemic power to manifest. A green glow shot toward the white spider, slamming into it. The white spider let out a miserable shriek and then turned into a white beam of light that returned to Zhao Youlan's forehead. Once again, Zhao Youlan coughed up some blood. For the first time, despair appeared in her eyes.

It quickly vanished, though. She bit the tip of her tongue to spit out a glob of blood. The blood instantly began to emanate a thick odor of gore. Zhao Youlan suddenly looked older than before. She watched listlessly as a bloody aura rose up into the sky.

Meng Hao suddenly felt an intense feeling of crisis. Behind him, the nine Nascent Soul Elders were howling as they began to teleport toward him. Then, they stopped all of a sudden, shocking Meng Hao. However, it was at this time that, up in the sky, a huge roar could be heard from the area where the totemic Sacred Ancients of the Five Tribes were locked in battle with the Holy Spider.

In concurrence with the roar, an enormous black shadow suddenly appeared as something began to descend from the sky toward the area Meng Hao was in. If you looked closely, you could see that it was nothing other than a spider leg!

It moved with incredible speed as it approached. Meng Hao sensed grave danger, and could feel everything shaking. An aura of death filled the area fifteen hundred meters in every direction.

It was at this same moment that Zhao Youlan took her chance. Utilizing the power of the blood she had spit out, she rapidly increased her speed as she retreated. Considering how fast she was moving, she would be able to escape the danger zone in the blink of an eye.

Her body began to grow blurry, as if she were being stretched out. Meng Hao now had two choices. The first choice was to abandon his pursuit and dodge the attack of the fearsome Holy Spider. The other choice… was to continue to try to kill her.

The situation was urgent, and there was no time to sit around thinking. Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed with coldness and he suddenly shot forward. He lifted his hand and grabbed onto Zhao Youlan’s slender arm, the one that held aloft the Exotic Heartdevil Flower.

Her arm was as graceful and smooth, but also so ice-cold that touching her was shocking. Nonetheless, killing intent glittered in Meng Hao’s eyes.

“Get back here!” he said, wrenching her arm violently and at the same time flooding it with power so strong it could crush Cultivation bases.

Up above, the sky seemed to fill with dark clouds as the leg of the Holy Spider descended like a gigantic sickle. It moved with incredible speed, and seemed as if it were cutting open the very air.

Zhao Youlan’s face flickered in surprise. However, this was a critical moment, and her eyes filled with vicious determination. She suddenly lifted her left hand, within which appeared a flying sword. She knew that she was no match for Meng Hao, so when she chopped down, she did not target him, but rather, her own arm, which he was holding. It was already numb, and filled with terrifying power that threatened her entire being.

The sword fell and blood sprayed everywhere. The instant the exterminating power from Meng Hao appeared, Zhao Youlan had made the difficult decision to sever her own right arm. Her body suddenly shot away at incredible speed. Soon, she was fifteen hundred meters away, where she coughed up eight mouthfuls of blood. Her face was pale, and the flesh and blood contracted around the stump of her severed arm. Her aura was weak and her Cultivation base in decline. This was the most severe injury she had ever received in her entire life; she had narrowly escaped death!

Her hair was in disarray; her entire person in extremely poor straits. Her beauty was now twisted because of the pain of having her arm severed; it was almost enough to render her unconscious. She lifted her head and glared at Meng Hao, her entire body shaking.

“I will pay you back ten times over for this!”

The nine Nascent Soul Elders teleported into being next to her to protect her as she retreated. All of them were staring at Meng Hao with intense killing intent in their eyes.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. He knew that as of this moment, it was highly unlikely that he would be able to kill her. Her determination made an intense impression on him; from the time he had begun to practice Cultivation until now, he had not run into many people who could show such decisiveness at a key moment.

If she had hesitated for even a moment longer, or reacted slightly slower, then the only thing she would have found was death.

Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed as he gestured with his right arm, causing Zhao Youlan’s severed arm to fly over. She obviously had a very high position in the Five Poisons Tribe; perhaps he would be able to benefit from studying the totemic power contained within the arm.

Now that enmity existed between the two of them, he would no doubt need to figure out how to kill not just her, but her entire Tribe. In the Cultivation world, the law of the jungle prevails. When fighting against Heaven and Earth, when forcing one’s will upon the masses, soft-heartedness gets you nowhere.

It was without hesitation that, in addition to the severed arm, Meng Hao also collected up the box containing the Exotic Heartdevil Flower. He immediately closed it, causing the glow of the flower to cease. This instantly affected the entire battlefield. Without hesitation, he put the destructive precious treasure into his bag of holding.

Precious treasures like that were not frequently seen in the world. As a Grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy, Meng Hao would no doubt make significant progress by studying it. Perhaps he could even concoct medicinal pills with similar properties. There was no way he would pass up such an opportunity.

Meng Hao looked up at the gigantic black shadow descending toward him and at the same time pointed toward the bound up High Priest.

The Eyeless Larva silk suddenly dissipated, revealing the shocked High Priest. He had used virtually every method he could think of but had been astonished to find that he wasn’t able to even make a mark on the silk.

The silk rapidly shot back toward Meng Hao and began to wrap around him. He stood there, his hands clasped behind his back as the black shadow loomed over him. He flicked his sleeve, and his eyes filled with coldness.

“My Eyeless Larva can stand up to Tribulation Lightning. I don’t care how profound your Demonspider’s Cultivation base is, do you really think it can measure up to Tribulation Lightning?”

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# Chapter 444: Funeral Dirge

Up above, the sky looked like it was filled with black clouds as an enormous spider leg descended upon this fifteen hundred meter area.

The ground trembled as massive pressure bore down in all directions. All life forms within the fifteen hundred meter area were completely incapable of evasion. Everything was crushed into nothing more than ash beneath the shocking power.

“He’ll die for sure!” thought Zhao Youlan. She was surrounded by the nine Nascent Soul Elders, but her face was completely white. Suddenly, she frowned.

Her frown was because of the pain of her severed arm. The pain not only caused her face to pale, but affected her mentally. It took all the effort she could muster to ignore the pain of her lost arm and focus on analyzing Meng Hao.

“That silk of his can bind up even the High Priest, which shows how powerful it is. All of his hope rests on that silk, and he probably knows exactly how powerful it is. Therefore, he’s actually most likely NOT going to die!

“His Cultivation base is profound, he’s as clever as a fox, and is extremely decisive too. He’s the type of person who is calculating and vicious. As a Grand Dragoneer, any Tribe should be wary of provoking him….” Zhao Youlan sighed lightly. Had she known that the five Tribes of the Crow Divinity had the backing of someone as powerful as Grandmaster Meng, then she would have adjusted her plans.

“Actually, it doesn’t really matter if he lives or dies. The blood I spat out just now will notify the Tribe that my trial by fire has failed. The main forces from the Tribe will be arriving soon.”

Even as she mused regarding these things, the spider leg arrived at Meng Hao, slamming into the tightly sealed silk cocoon surrounding him. From a distance, the leg looked like an enormous black sickle.

However, when it was about ten meters away from Meng Hao, it was suddenly obstructed by the Eyeless Larva silk. A massive boom echoed out, transforming into a shockwave which swept out across everything. A massive wind kicked up, battering into the surrounding Cultivators and forcing them backward.

Meng Hao’s body trembled and he coughed up blood. The black sickle pushed down from the ten meter position, slowly nearing Meng Hao. Despite its slowness, it still emanated intense, destructive pressure that pushed down onto Meng Hao.

His body trembled as the sickle reached the five meter mark.

Four meters, three meters, two meters, one meter, half a meter….

Meng Hao looked up at the sickle as it approached, his eyes radiating coldness. Although his body shook as he gazed up, when you compared this pressure with that of Heavenly Tribulation, it was simply…

“Too weak!” said Meng Hao coolly. The sickle was now only three inches away from the top of his head.

That three inch gap was like the difference between Heaven and Earth. It was an unbridgeable gap! The Eyeless Larva silk was wrapped too tightly. Nothing in Heaven or Earth could destroy it!

No matter how the sickle tried to break it, it couldn’t. Soon the sickle began to tremble. In the blink of an eye, all of its power was gone, and it transformed into ash, right there, three inches away from Meng Hao.

A howl drifted down from up above in the sky. Everything grew dim and the clouds seethed as a gigantic spider with legs like sickles magically appeared up above. It seemed to rip itself out from the void, followed by the roaring totemic Sacred Ancients of the Five Tribes, who were pestering it in a way that made it impossible for the thing to descend any further.

The instant that the black sickle disappeared, the members of the Five Tribes within the shield let out powerful roars. There were seven Nascent Soul Cultivators, as well as all the other surviving Tribe members.

The archaic Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather, who had the combined desire for revenge of more than ten fellow Nascent Soul Tribe members imprinted on his heart lifted his head up, his eyes bloodshot, and roared:

“Revenge!”

All of the members of the Five Tribes who charged into battle screamed with rage and sadness.

“Revenge!!”

“REVENGE!!!”

Led by the Greatfather, the rest of the Tribe members charged out of from behind the shield.

Their world was now a world ruled by revenge as they charged toward the three thousand Spider Branch Cultivators. Their bodies exploded with a madness that made it clear they would bring the Spider Branch to ruin even if it meant they died in the process.

A moment later, the close-quarter fighting began. Unfortunately, the deaths of the three Dragoneers had been quite a blow to the morale of the Spider Branch.

Meng Hao’s intrepidness had also left a deep impression on their hearts. He had slaughtered his way through thousands, then soared overhead above the crowds to pursue the Holy Daughter. Nine Nascent Soul Cultivators were incapable of stopping him, and even the High Priest had been captured. People could only watch on wide-eyed, as their lofty, sacred Holy Daughter's face filled with despair and her arm was severed, after which she fled in a panic.

All of it had been a huge blow to the Spider Branch Cultivators. Meng Hao was now not simply burned into their mind, but indelibly fused there!

If that was all there was to it, it wouldn't be a very big deal. However, even the fearsome attack of the Holy Spider, which they assumed would surely destroy Meng Hao, did nothing. They had seen with their own eyes that the Holy Spider was incapable of exterminating him.

As of now, Meng Hao was like a nightmare to them. An unbeatable, invincible nightmare!

Now, just when their confidence and morale was lowest, the members of the Five Tribes fought back with full force. Their hatred and killing intent boiled up to the sky. Earlier, they had watched with wide eyes as their fellow Tribe members were slaughtered. The dead included children, parents, and other relatives. Right now, the eyes of the surviving Tribe members were bloodshot, and they seemed on the verge of weeping. Within the redness of their eyes, living fury could be seen. That was because… the time for revenge had arrived!

When the two sides slammed into each other, there was no leadership, nor any tricks. It was mutual slaughter.

A boom suddenly filled the air. One of the Five Tribes members slaughtered one of the enemy, but was mortally wounded in the process. Laughing madly, he chose to self-detonate. Even as his body exploded, a vicious smile twisted his face as he saw that his self-detonation would kill three of the enemy in front of him.

Booms continued to sound out in the air as one member of the Five Tribes after another, after having reached their final moment in battle, chose to use self-detonation. This was their way of sending a message to the Spider

Branch: observe the staunch vengeance of the Five Tribes of the Crow Divinity!

One of the Five Tribes members lost his legs, and an arm. Even his dantian region was damaged beyond repair, making it impossible for him to self-detonate. But he still had teeth. Soon, his entire body was destroyed, and yet, his teeth were still clenched viciously into the throat of the enemy. Regardless of anything, mutual destruction would be achieved!

In a very short period of time, the Spider Branch had already lost over a hundred members. The viciousness of the scene, the explosive madness of the members of the Five Tribes to get revenge even in defiance of death, thoroughly shook the hearts of the Spider Branch Cultivators.

They were scared witless, and began panting. Facing the savagery of the Five Tribes suddenly filled them with feelings of cowardice!

They began to retreat. Off in the distance, the nine Elders watched on with wide eyes. They too were moved, but before they could even think about the situation, the seven Nascent Soul Cultivators from the Five Tribes were shooting toward them.

The High Priests, the Greatfather of the Crow Soldier Tribe, and the others, all had eyes filled with blood as they whistled through the air. This… was truly a war between two Tribes. It was different than the killing before. This… was a deadly massacre.

Meng Hao looked around at everything that was happening. He saw the Five Tribes rise up, and saw their determination to exact vengeance. It was at this time that an undulating sound could be heard. This was not the sound of war bugles, but rather, the voices of all members of the Five Tribes who had stayed behind within the protection of the shield. There were less than a thousand of them, but their voices joined together and drifted out onto the battlefield.

Most of this group of nearly a thousand people were children. The rest were the elderly. The majority of them did not have Cultivation bases; they were simple, ordinary Tribe members. However… considering all the sacrifices that had been made by the five Crow Divinity Tribes, they were hope. They were the hope of the Tribe.

Nearly a thousand people began to weep. As they wept, their feet stamped the ground and they began to sing. This song was the Tribe’s funeral dirge, the song sung to accompany the soul of any Tribe member into death.

A thousand voices joined together, filled with the sound of youth, filled with tears.

“Perhaps you are still here. Perhaps you are watching your family. Perhaps you will return….

“We hope that the Heavens will not obstruct your path. Let the land guide your way. The living, golden light of the Crow Divinity will cause your glorious bloodlines to remain in the world….

“We hope to prevent you from being buried by the sands of Time, to prevent the devils from snatching you away, to prevent the Demons from frightening you, to prevent any living thing from disturbing your rest….

“You are the warriors of the Crow Divinity! You are the pride of the Crow Divinity! You will exist forever in the lands of the Crow Divinity… we… will await your return!”

The song echoed out across the battlefield, and as it did, Meng Hao could almost make out the image of countless souls appearing. They seemed to be slowly looking back at their home, their Tribe.

As the sound of the funeral dirge rose into the air, the members of the Five Tribes who were locked in battle found that tears were flowing down their faces. They began to laugh madly and slaughter with even more savagery. Their laughter and their tears caused the faces of their enemies, the Cultivators of the Spider Branch, to fill with dread. In the past, they had slaughtered Tribes, but never before had they seen the type of explosive insanity that they were seeing now.

Now, they were scared.

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# Chapter 445: A Drop of Violet Rain!

“For the Crow Divinity!” This was the end of the funeral dirge sung by the nearly one thousand Tribe members within the shield. Outside the shield, their fellow Tribe members roared as they fought on, laughing madly.

“For the Crow Divinity!” murmured Meng Hao. He lifted his right hand, and a cold glow appeared in his eyes. He suddenly looked at Zhao Youlan, who was still fleeing under the protection of the Nascent Soul Elders.

Her face was extremely pale, and the Nascent Soul Elders around her had looks of extreme vigilance.

Meng Hao looked at her coolly, then looked away. It seemed she would be able to escape calamity this day. He did not have the same advantages from earlier; therefore, it would be too difficult to slay her right now.

Meng Hao’s body flickered as he shot into the force of nearly three thousand enemy Cultivators. The Lotus Sword Formation rotated next to him, sending out the power of Time. Everywhere he went, time seemed to flow by, and all Spider Branch Cultivators caught within the range of the formation suddenly grew older. Their faces instantly filled with astonishment.

This time, Meng Hao truly did cause a massacre. He donned the blood-colored mask, then waved his hand, sending the Time Sword Formation toward a group of seven or eight Core Formation Cultivators. They instantly grew old, and their eyes faded. It was like a wind had blown over to extinguish the flame of their life.

Meng Hao waved his hand again, and the shocking light of the Blood Finger could be seen. Anyone who touched it felt their blood decaying, and then they exploded into death.

Meng Hao took a few more steps forward, then pointed out with his left finger, stabbing it into the forehead of a rampaging Spider Branch Cultivator.

He killed neatly and efficiently. With the wave of a sleeve, he summoned what remained of his neo-demon horde. Ten thousand neo-demons roared out to join the chaotic battle. They fought side by side with the members of the Five Tribes. As the sound of the funeral dirge continued to echo out, they fought to the death with the Spider Branch!

The Black Bat did not exhibit any of the strangeness it had in the previous battle. Its eyes glowed coldly as it disappeared in a flicker, to reappear behind a Spider Branch Cultivator. It wrapped its wings around the man, who struggled with astonishment. Two sharp fangs plunged into the Cultivator’s neck, and the man’s flesh instantly withered up.

Every time it did this, a bloody glow would appear in the eyes of the Black Bat, and its strange aura would grow a bit stronger. In the beginning it sought out the weakest Cultivators, but gradually, its gaze began to fall on early Core Formation Cultivators.

When Meng Hao occasionally looked over at it, it would suddenly restrain itself, and not reveal any hints about what it was doing. However, it didn’t take long before Meng Hao caught onto the vigilance being shown by the Black Bat in this regard.

“There’s definitely some big mystery regarding this creature!” thought Meng Hao. Now was not the time to think about such matters though. After confirming that the brand connecting him to the bat was still intact, he continued on with his extermination of the Spider Branch Cultivators.

Within this chaotic battle, it wasn’t just the Black Bat who fought dazzlingly. Big Hairy, his fur shining like silver, descended into the fighting like a silver moon. The cloud of Demonsquitos spread out, their vicious mouthparts guzzling fresh blood.

The red crocodile who was now the shape of a Flying Rain-Dragon, as well as the gigantic lizard, and all of Meng Hao’s neo-demons experienced a sort of baptism by means of the fighting. Every one who survived only continued to grow stronger.

Fueled by the madness and ferocity of the Five Tribes members, a stunning massacre was underway. The Spider Branch Cultivators’ morale plummeted. Once Meng Hao joined the battle, the tide clearly turned in the favor of the Five Tribes.

When the neo-demons appeared, the Spider Branch experienced an unprecedented feeling of devastation. It didn’t take long before only one thousand were left from the original force of three thousand. Blood soaked the ground, and the reek of gore filled the air.

It was then that a miserable shriek could be heard from up above. Except for the two Nascent Soul Cultivators protecting Zhao Youlan, the rest of the Spider Branch’s Elders were now locked in deadly combat with the Five Tribe’s seven Nascent Soul Cultivators. Just now, the cry had come from one of the Spider Branch Elders.

He was a middle aged man whose face was currently ashen. His pupils constricted as he retreated backward, a massive wound on his chest, within which his beating heart was actually visible. Directly in front of him was the Crow Gloom Grand Elder, his hair disheveled, his body covered with serious injuries. His shocking expression was one of madness, like that of a wild beast.

A boom filled the air as the Crow Gloom Grand Elder’s body suddenly exploded as another of the Spider Branch Elders took advantage of the situation to exterminate him. However, before he died, he lifted up his right hand, within which was the severed head of the middle-aged Nascent Soul Cultivator.

This was the first of the Spider Branch Nascent Soul Cultivators to die in the battle. His death immediately caught the attention of the remaining thousand Cultivators down below. As of this moment, it seemed that any remaining will to fight was now completely gone. All of them began to do everything in their power to flee.

It was like tide waters. Their faces filled with panic as they gave up attacking and focused completely on defense and full-speed flight. Even the remaining Nascent Soul Cultivators up above seemed to have lost their will to do battle, and were about to flee.

Although the Five Tribes now had the upper hand in the battle, the price they had paid was an incredibly heavy one, far more than what could be made up for by capturing the Spider Branch.

Therefore… how could they possibly allow the Spider Branch to flee?!

“Kill them!”

“Kill them!!”

Their eyes red and filled with both frenzy and the comfort of revenge, the Five Tribes shot in pursuit. Many of the Tribe members still had tears streaming down their faces.

All the Tribe members, both the ordinary Cultivators and the Nascent Soul experts, joined in the chase. Meng Hao had no way to understand the pain they felt from of the loss of their friends and family. However, what he could feel, was the desire for revenge. For some reason, this also made him think of the Ji Clan!

Suddenly, another of the Spider Branch’s Nascent Soul Cultivators died. Hundreds of other Cultivators were being slaughtered by Meng Hao’s neo-demons and the other Five Tribes Cultivators.

They were like an avalanche, completely unstoppable!

It was at this moment that all of a sudden, a raindrop fell onto Meng Hao with a light plopping sound. The color of this raindrop was somewhat strange. It was violet, and as soon as it landed on him, it stained his garment, soaking through to touch his skin.

As soon as the raindrop hit him, he stopped in his tracks. The place where the raindrop had hit him felt cold. The cold aura seemed as if it had the power to exterminate life force. However, it was only one drop, so as far as Meng Hao was concerned, it was harmless.

“Violet rain?” he thought, frowning. He looked up into the sky to see some random raindrops falling down from up above.

“Don’t tell me that because so many people have died here that the aura of blood and hatred has merged together and transformed into clouds? Is that where this violet rain is coming from?” After a moment of thought, he suppressed his doubts. Looking around, he saw that scattered raindrops were falling, not just on him, but on the bodies of others. Even some of the Spider Branch Cultivators were getting hit.

It didn’t seem to be anything out of the ordinary, but for some reason, Meng Hao couldn’t shake the feeling that the rain had the power to exterminate life force. The thought of it swirled in the back of his mind.

Zhao Youlan also noticed the rain.

Earlier, she had been biting her lip as she watched her fellow Tribe members dying. There was nothing she could do, unfortunately. No order from her could secure victory in this battle.

The fighting had descended into chaos. Then the funeral dirge began, and Zhao Youlan understood. The Spider Branch… was suffering a complete defeat.

She felt as if her heart were tearing apart. What stuck out most in her mind though, the figure which had shocked her more than anything in her life, which had caused her trial by fire to become a complete failure, and had almost killed her… was of course Meng Hao.

However, it was then that a drop of violet rain landed on her face and then slowly flowed down her cheek. It felt cold, and caused a tremor to run through her body. Without thinking, she reached up to wipe away the raindrop. When she looked down at the water on her hand, she frowned and suddenly looked even more anxious.

“Violet rain?” She gaped in shock.

The violet rain was very light, and was quickly forgotten by everyone except for Zhao Youlan and Meng Hao. Zhao Youlan had the same feeling that he did. Something about this rain… seemed strange. All of a sudden, their gazes met across the vast battlefield, and they could see the vigilance in each other’s eyes.

“It’s not him.”

“It’s not her.” Meng Hao and Zhao Youlan could both sense each other hesitating. Their gazes separated, and it was in that instant that….

Suddenly, sharp sounds could be heard coming from off in the distance. This was not the sound of a funeral dirge, but rather, war bugles. The sound instantly lifted the spirits of the Spider Branch Cultivators. Their will to fight suddenly surged up again, and they lifted their heads to the sky and roared.

Even the Spider Branch Nascent Soul Elders up above could not conceal their excitement. The two Elders next to Zhao Youlan heaved sighs of relief. Only Zhao Youlan seemed taciturn as she looked up at the sky.

Off in the distance could be seen a black streak that looked like seawaters as it whistled through the sky toward them. Up above, seemingly standing within the black seawaters, was an enormous red scorpion, emitting a shocking cry.

“The Scorpion Branch!” cried the High Priest, who was currently locked in battle with the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather. When the Greatfather saw what was happening, his pupils constricted and he gasped. His expression was now filled with profound grief. If it weren’t for the Exotic Heartdevil

Flower, the Five Tribes might have been powerful enough to hold out through this war. But, now….

In mid-air, the members of the Five Tribes ceased their pursuit and began to group together. Their faces filled with madness as they look off into the distance at the approaching scorpion!

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# Chapter 446: Totem Perishing!

As the black streak beneath the scorpion neared, it became clear that it was not a black sea. Instead, it was a group of roughly five thousand Cultivators, all of them wearing long black robes, organized in formation. An army of blackness.

They blotted out the sky as they arrived, accompanied by the sound of war bugles, which drifted out in all directions. In addition, the Cultivators shouted out intense roars, the sound of which caused the gigantic illusory scorpion above them to suddenly let out an incredible shriek.

As it shrieked, it suddenly shot through the air with incredible speed toward where the Holy Spider and totemic Sacred Ancients were battling it out, the area that was distorted and impossible for anyone to see into.

Booms filled Heaven and Earth. The scorpion was of the same level as the Holy Spider, which meant that the battle with the Sacred Ancients was instantly thrown out of balance.

In years past, the totems of the Five Tribes had also been of the same level as the scorpion and the Holy Spider. But after the passage of time, the Crow Divinity began to fade and the Tribes grew smaller. Thus, they were now much weaker, which was why it took five of them just to fight the Holy Spider.

And now, things were even more different than before!

No one could see them battling. The only thing outsiders could see was the scorpion charging into the area of distortion up in the air. After the space of about ten breaths passed, before the Cultivators of the Scorpion Branch could even arrive, a deep sigh could be heard from up above. Then, an enormous Stone Golem suddenly shot out from within the distortion.

Its body began to collapse, and black strands could be seen emanating off of it. There was a gigantic hole in the middle of its chest. This was the Crow Fighter Tribe’s totemic Sacred Ancient. And as of this moment… its body was surrounded by an intense aura of death.

With a sigh, it shot out from within the distortion. Before it could get very far, the shocked members of the Five Tribes watched as a black shadow emerged after it from within the distortion. It transformed into a scorpion tail which then slammed into the Stone Golem. Poison shot into the Stone Golem’s body, and an explosion could be heard as cracks spread out over its entire body, from within which an earthy yellow glow could be seen. The glow transformed into an earth-colored totem, which then filled with cracks and then exploded with a bang.

“The Crow Fighter Tribe’s totemic Sacred Ancient!”

“It… perished.…” The blow this dealt to the members of the Five Tribes was no less than what they had experienced when forced to watch their fellow Tribe Members slaughtered beneath the power of the Exotic Heartdevil Flower. This was because the totems of the Tribe were legacies from the totemic Sacred Ancient. The connection between the two was deep and profound!!

Right now, the members of the Crow Fighter Tribe were all trembling. They felt as if their faith was crumbling. Blood sprayed from their mouths as their Stone Golem totem tattoos from the Sacred Ancient began to fade away.

As the totem tattoos faded, their Cultivation bases immediately dropped an entire stage. Nascent Soul became Core Formation. Core Formation became Foundation Establishment. Foundation Establishment… dropped directly to Qi Condensation.

The entire Crow Fighter Tribe dropped, which of course immediately affected the entire battle!

It was at this moment that disconsolate howl could be heard. At the same time, clouds of vapor suddenly could be seen expanding out from the area of distortion up above, which then dissipated into the surroundings.

At the same time, every member of the Crow Gloom Tribe began to cough up blood. Their bodies sagged as their Water-type totem tattoos faded. All of them experienced an immediate Cultivation base drop of a full level.

The Crow Gloom Priest's face was pale as he coughed up blood and staggered backward. A sad smile could be seen on his face as he felt his Nascent Soul power rapidly vanishing and weakness spread throughout his body.

All of the members of the Five Tribes knew what this meant as soon as they saw it…. The Crow Gloom totemic Sacred Ancient… had perished!

All of this takes quite a bit of time to explain, but actually happened in the space of a few dozen breaths. As the events occurred, the Scorpion Branch Cultivators whistled through the air, growing closer and closer. Meng Hao looked toward the five thousand incoming Cultivators and noticed that one of their number was a young man wearing a red robe.

The young man's clothes and bearing made him seem completely different from the other Cultivators. Meng Hao suddenly sensed something about him that seemed very much like Zhao Youlan.

"He's the Holy Son of the Five Poison Tribe's Scorpion Branch?" Meng Hao's eyes glittered. He knew that Zhao Youlan was a Holy Daughter, so it was easy for him to come to the determination who this handsome, extraordinary, and somewhat sinister-looking young man must be.

As the Scorpion Branch neared, the Holy Son waved his right hand, immediately causing four thousand of the Cultivators to shoot toward the battlefield. Meng Hao's eyes flickered, and in response to his will, the neo-demon horde began to roar.

As the roaring shook Heaven and Earth, the Scorpion Branch Holy Son ignored the bitter fighting and approached Zhao Youlan, a slight smile on his face.

As he neared her, he said, “The Tribe gave the honor of this trial by fire to the most talented Holy Daughter, Zhao Youlan. In the end, all you got was a lost arm. Soon everyone in the Tribe will know about it. Zhao Youlan, I actually feel sorry for you. I’m afraid that even after we take this trifling five Crow Divinity Tribe’s spot in the Realm of the Bridge Ruins, there still won’t be space for you.”

Zhao Youlan’s expression was cold as she looked over the Holy Son.

“Who was it that cut your arm off?” he continued with a smile. “You even requested the use of the Exotic Heartdevil Flower, and yet still failed. Such a pity, such a pity.”

“Are you done, Zhao Chunmu?” said Zhao Youlan coolly. “My victory or defeat is no concern of yours. If you can subjugate these five Crow Divinity Tribes, then I will offer you my congratulations.” 1

“The two of us look at things very differently,” said Holy Son Zhao Chunmu. “If this battle had been led by me and the Scorpion Branch, then we would have long since secured victory. I wouldn’t even have to use a precious Exotic Heartdevil Flower. Just destroy their totems, and everything will be over! Why go to the trouble of doing anything else? Zhao Youlan, your soft-heartedness is your biggest weakness!” He gave a sinister laugh.

The sound of bitter fighting rose up into the air as the four thousand Scorpion Branch Cultivators dove into battle. They had hideous grins and sinister looks in their eyes. Totemic light shone out from their bodies, and they attacked with even more viciousness and cruelty than the Spider Branch.

Were it not for the resistance provided by Meng Hao’s neo-demons, the members of the Five Tribes would have instantly sustained heavy casualties. Meng Hao looked around to see that despite the fact that only two Sacred Ancients had died, causing two Tribes to be weakened, the members of the other three Tribes had ashen faces filled with despair. If things went on the way they were, their defeat was inevitable.

Suddenly, Meng Hao spoke, his voice as powerful as thunder.

“You don’t need to fight for the Crow Divinity!” As soon as they heard his words, the members of the Five Tribes looked over at Meng Hao.

“Look down at the blood and corpses that litter the land. Those are your friends and your fellow Tribe members. Fight for them!

“Look back at the elderly and the young behind that shield! They are your family and blood. Fight for them!

“Hold your heads high as you look at those Five Poisons Cultivators. Fight for your friends! Fight for your family! You are the last line of defense. If you give up, then your families will be completely exterminated!

“The time has come to go all out! We might not win, but if you don’t take the risk, then your defeat is assured. Fight for them…. All of you, will you really hold back now!?!?” Meng Hao lifted his head up and roared, a roar that entered into the ears of the Five Tribes and shook their hearts and minds.

Madness once again burned in their eyes. Their exhaustion, their hopelessness, and all of their negative emotions did not disappear. Instead it transformed into an explosive, mortiferous despair!

“TO BATTLE!!”

“KILL THEM!!”

The remaining two thousand members of the Five Tribes roared. Their madness blazing to the point that they no longer feared death, they charged toward the Scorpion Branch.

Meng Hao led the charge, surrounded by his neo-demons. Roaring filled the air and the intent to slaughter spread out everywhere. You could definitely say that without Meng Hao, the Five Tribes would have long since been defeated!

Without Meng Hao, they would have been ruthlessly slaughtered on a mass scale. The only ones who would have survived would have been the ones enslaved by the Five Poisons Tribe.

By this point, Zhao Chunmu had taken notice of Meng Hao. He looked at him for a moment and then began to chuckle.

“Ah, so he’s a Dragoneer,” said Zhao Chunmu. “You, of course, would hesitate about whether or not to kill him. That’s why he’s still alive. As for me, there is only one course of action that I would take. Strike like lightning and exterminate him immediately!” Killing intent glittered in Zhao Chunmu’s eyes as he lifted his right hand and pointed toward Meng Hao out on the battlefield.

“18 Stealth Guards, you have the space of ten breaths to kill that man!”

Zhao Youlan’s face was the same as ever, but she backed up a bit nonetheless, seemingly wanting to put some space between herself and Zhao Chunmu. The two Nascent Soul Elders standing next to her hesitated for a moment. However, after looking at her, they didn’t say anything.

When Zhao Chunmu pointed his finger out, Meng Hao sensed something, and looked over with cold eyes. He waved his right hand, and a Blood Qi emanated out, enveloping two Scorpion Branch Cultivators. Immediately, they began to scream as their bodies withered up.

“I let Zhao Youlan scurry away, but I can’t believe that this newly arrived Holy Son will be able to do the same!” Killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes as he came up with a plan for how to kill Zhao Chunmu. Suddenly, his pupils constricted, and his body disappeared as he used the Bloodburst Flash. When he reappeared, he was about ten meters away.

The moment he appeared, the place he had just been standing was suddenly filled with sixteen glowing bands of light that looked like needles. If he had been standing there just now, the sixteen black needles would definitely have pierced through him.

Meng Hao’s eyes glowed coldly as he lifted his right hand to punch out into the air. Surprisingly, the air in front him seemed to sink inward as the figure of one of the assassins was forced to appear. It was at this point that Meng Hao’s fist landed. The figure was actually that of a woman, her appearance sweet and charming. Surprise filled her eyes as his fist slammed into her and her body exploded into pieces.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as always. After making the kill, he shot backward to avoid another black needle which whistled through the air. He gave a cold snort and lifted his left hand, which was surrounded by a bloody glow. He shoved his hand out in front of him, whereupon another miserable shriek could be heard. Another woman appeared, whose head Meng Hao now held in his hand. Suddenly, Meng Hao moved forward, rapidly lifting his leg to slam his knee into her head.

There was a bang, and another person was dead.

“Here to assassinate me, eh?” said Meng Hao, a cold smile twisting his lips.

1. Zhao Chunmu’s name in Chinese is zhào chūn mù – Zhao is a surname, the same surname as Zhao Youlan’s. Chun means “spring.” Mu means “wood.”

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# Chapter 447: New Totem!!

Two people had been killed quickly and efficiently, causing Zhao Chunmu's eyes to flicker slightly. However, his expression was the same as before.

It was at this moment that Meng Hao released the head he held in his hand. Eyes flickering, he lifted his right hand up and then gestured toward the ground. Immediately, a blinding bloody light shone out from Meng Hao's body, rotating to cover the area for dozens of meters in each direction. Within this Blood Death World, fifteen figures were instantly made visible.

As soon as they appeared, Meng Hao stepped forward. With two fingers of his left hand emanating a will of blood, he tapped onto the forehead of one of the figures. A boom could be heard as, at the same time, he punched another of the figures with his right hand.

Blood showered out everywhere, accompanied by one bloodcurdling scream after another. Meng Hao's entire figure had turned the color of blood. He flicked his right sleeve as he reached out to grab another of the women. His left hand slapped his bag of holding to produce a medicinal pill, which he shoved into the mouth of the terrified woman.

After the space of a few breaths, the woman's body began to swell until it exploded, sending blood out for a dozen or so meters in every direction. Blood landed on four or five nearby assassins, causing the women to emit miserable shrieks as their bodies dissolved into pools of blood.

"Poison Cultivator!!" cried the remaining four women. They were tall, slender and beautiful. As of this moment, though, their faces were completely filled with astonishment at seeing Meng Hao's ruthless slaughter.

Their faces were pale, and they immediately began to retreat. No longer were they attempting any sort of assassination, but instead were trying to flee what they now viewed as the most terrifying figure in existence.

“Want to run?” said Meng Hao, his face expressionless. These women had bizarre forms; if it wasn’t for the Blood Death World and Meng Hao’s faint Demonic Qi, he might not have been able to prevent them from getting close to him.

Even as his words rang out, Meng Hao moved forward. As he neared them, the faces of the four women filled with despair. However, the hopelessness quickly changed into viciousness. Just when they were about to attack, Meng Hao smiled. Suddenly, the Blood Death World began to shrink. In the blink of an eye, it was as if a gigantic hand were clenching down viciously on the four women.

A rumbling sound could be heard as the fist crushed them to death. Meng Hao floated in mid-air; the area for dozens of meters surrounding him was completely empty. No other person could be seen. The Scorpion Branch Cultivators off in the distance looked over at him, fear written across their faces.

As for the members of the Five Tribes, they were starting to get excited, and continued on with their slaughter.

Zhao Chunmu chuckled and coolly said, “It’s not over y….”

Before he could finish speaking, his face suddenly filled with astonishment.

Just now, a dark figure had appeared directly behind Meng Hao. It made no noise and let off no ripples, and was completely bizarre in appearance, like a ghost. It shot toward Meng Hao at incredible speed that almost looked like minor teleportation. However, just as the figure was almost upon Meng Hao, it let out a bloodcurdling scream. Its right hand, with which it had just been preparing to stab into Meng Hao’s back, was suddenly shredded to pieces as if by some massive rotating blade.

Meng Hao’s right hand shot back and grabbed hold of the throat of this final, wounded assassin. Dragging her in front of him, he clenched his fist, and then looked over at Zhao Chunmu, his eyes filled with killing intent.

When Zhao Chunmu saw the killing intent his heart was filled with coldness. Meng Hao had just killed eighteen Stealth Guards, which left Zhao Chunmu completely shaken. What he didn’t notice was that off to the side, on Zhao Youlan’s face, a sneer could be seen.

He also didn’t notice that Zhao Youlan had quickly backed up even more, putting more distance between the two of them.

“9 Grand Elders! Supreme Priest! Spare nothing. Kill that man!”

In response to Zhao Chunmu’s words, ten figures immediately teleported toward Meng Hao. Nine of them were of the early Nascent Soul stage, one was of the mid Nascent Soul stage. The combined attack of this ten people was enough to shake Heaven and Earth.

However, it was at this moment that suddenly, a bitter sigh could be heard echoing out from up above.

“Tribe, I have protected you for many years, but unfortunately, I can accompany you no more…. Before I return to the dust, I will give you a final chance to live….” A rumbling sound echoed out that caused Meng Hao’s entire body to shake. He looked up to see that now, just like the Earth and Water totems of the Five Tribes, the Crow Scout Tribe’s Treant was breaking apart into death.

As it died, vast quantities of life force turned into an aura which shot down toward the Five Tribes, fusing into their bodies and transforming into healing power.

What was unavoidable, however, was that because of the death of the Treant, the totem tattoos on the members of the Crow Scout Tribe began to fade away. As they did, the Cultivation bases of the Crow Scout Tribe members began to show signs of dropping.

Before that could happen, though, the Wood character totem tattoo on Meng Hao's forehead began to emanate a mighty, glowing light. Suddenly, the illusory image of a massive tree magically appeared above his head.

Close up, it looked like a great tree. But from a distance, it actually looked like the character 'Wood.'

Now, the Crow Scout Tribe members' totem tattoos were no longer disappearing, but rather, transforming. In the space of a few breaths, the entire force of Crow Scout Tribe members felt their totems becoming stable. However, what they had were no longer Greenwood totems, but… the Wood totem that belonged to Meng Hao!

This strange scene was something that even Meng Hao would never have imagined could happen. As soon as the Wood character totems appeared, a tremor ran through him as he suddenly realized he could sense all of the Crow Scout Tribe members. He could feel their zeal and passion. Furthermore, it seemed as if there was a continuous flow of life force being transmitted into his own body. At this moment, his aura suddenly expanded rapidly.

His Wood-type totem tattoo emitted boundless, shocking light. Not only were the Five Tribes stunned, the Cultivators of the Scorpion Branch were shocked and in disbelief.

Zhao Youlan's eyes went wide, and she began to pant. Zhao Chunmu stared blankly, his eyes filled with incredulity.

As Western Desert Cultivators, they all knew that totems… could only arise from neo-demons. Cultivators… practice Cultivation, and could never produce totemic power!

What was happening exceeded anything they could ever imagine. What they were seeing could only indicate one thing: Meng Hao had become the Crow Scout Tribe's totemic Sacred Ancient!

His totem was now the Crow Scout Tribe's totem! The explosive growth of his aura meant that… just like the magical totemic neo-demons, he could absorb the power of worship directed toward him by the Tribe members!

It was mainly because of this incredible power that such neo-demons could bestow totems.

Up above in the sky, where the battle of totems was taking place, a sigh could be heard. Down below, people began to express their shock.

“Since he has become a totem, his totem is now the Sacred Ancient of the Tribe. He… can absorb our power!!”

“Could it be that he’s not a Cultivator but actually a neo-demon?!?!”

This shocking scene sent the entire battlefield into a completely commotion. One moment ago, the Crow Scout Tribe members were losing their Cultivation bases because of the death of their Sacred Ancient, the Treant. Now, their Cultivation bases were no longer disappearing. They were a bit weaker than before, but had not slipped down an entire stage.

As of now, there was an indescribable connection between them and Meng Hao. They looked at him, their hearts filling with incredible zeal and reverence.

“Sacred Ancient!”

“We members of the Crow Scout Tribe offer our respect, Sacred Ancient!!”

One by one, the members of the Crow Scout Tribe began to shout out, roaring. Instantly, they began to fight with increased ferocity.

Meng Hao was panting, and his mind reeled. But then, everything became clear. His eyes flickered as he took advantage in the sudden increase in his aura to point his hand up into the air.

“Without a face!”

An enormous face suddenly appeared, its eyes closed. A bloody glow rose up and spread out in all directions, transforming into attacking power that slammed into the nine Nascent Soul Cultivators who were charging toward him.

Their faces flickered, and they immediately backed up in retreat.

“A single word!” Meng Hao suddenly felt an unimaginable power welling up within him. He could sense that this power did not come from him, nor was it something he could store up or fuse with his Cultivation base.

It was as if doing that would break some sort of rule, making it impossible to accomplish. This power was something he could only use, or perhaps borrow. It came from the members of the Crow Scout Tribe. There weren’t very many of them, only a few hundred, but their zeal made the power potent to a shocking degree.

This borrowed power could sustain him and enable him to unleash the second form of the Blood Immortal divine ability that previously had sucked away at his life force!

Meng Hao’s Spiritual Sense was also increased dramatically. He caused it to spread out, pointing out in front of him. Suddenly, the giant face that was currently beginning to break up, became clear. The eyes that had been closed before, opened, along with the mouth.

It was like a sound came out, a strange sound that entered the ears of the people in the area. Each person heard exactly the same thing as Meng Hao pointed down toward the ground. The air there began to ripple. The face of the Scorpion Branch mid Nascent Soul stage Supreme Priest filled with disbelief.

He suddenly began to tremble, as if he were being injured by some invisible force. He immediately began to back up, but before he could get farther than a few paces, blood sprayed from his mouth. Panting, his eyes filled with fear, and he hoarsely said, “Joss Flame! He can actually wield the power of Joss Flame! Only totem neo-demons can do that!!”

The Supreme Priest wasn’t the only one to cough up blood. The faces of the other nine Nascent Soul Elders from the Scorpion Branch filled with shock and terror as they coughed up three successive mouthfuls.

Meng Hao floated there, his hair whipping about, his clothes flapping. A strange glow shone in his eyes. With every breath he took, he could sense the power from the zealous Crow Scout Tribe members pouring into him.

“Joss Flame, huh….” murmured Meng Hao. He closed his eyes for a moment, then opened them. They were filled with a fierce glow.

“Flames of war unify….”

Without a face, a single word, flames of war unify! These were three Blood Immortal divine ability forms. Thanks to the power of the Joss Flame, Meng Hao… was now able to truly unleash the third form. Flames of war unify!

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# Chapter 448: East Pill Everburning Flame!

These three Blood Immortal divine ability forms immediately caused black smoke to appear on the bodies of the nine Nascent Soul Elders. It rolled off of them up into the sky, seemingly completely beyond their control. Seeing this caused their faces to fall immediately.

It took only a moment for them to realize that this smoke was caused by an invisible burning of their own life force. Their life force was the fuel and this black smoke was the result!

The sight of it caused the nine men to be filled with shock. They immediately began to utilize various techniques and divine abilities, but to their horror… they were completely incapable of preventing their life forces from being burned up. The black smoke continued to billow off them.

Within the black smoke was vast quantities of thick aura of death, making the smoke a mass of inky blackness. From a distance, it really did look like the flames of war were burning in the area. The sight was shocking to the extreme.

As for the Supreme Priest, even he had black smoke coming off of him. The ten Nascent Soul Cultivators’ faces were filled with shock at this strange divine ability which apparently couldn’t be evaded. Then their faces filled with hatred, and they once again used minor teleportation to charge toward Meng Hao.

Ten people closed in on Meng Hao from ten different directions.

Meng Hao closed his eyes. He had noticed something familiar within the black smoke from the burning life forces. He had seen something just like that after his glimpse at the world above the Tower of Tang in the State of Zhao, when he had been infected by the death aura from the fallen Immortal whom he later encountered outside the Rebirth Cave.

“There must be some similarity between the two….” A cold glint appeared in his eyes as he performed an incantation gesture with both hands and then waved his hands out. Flames of war shot up into the sky. The power he had absorbed from the hundreds of Crow Scout Tribe members poured through the mask, causing rumbling sounds to fill the air as the flames exploded up to shocking effect.

The ten Nascent Soul Cultivators immediately coughed up blood. The closer they approached in their charge toward Meng Hao, the more life force they wasted.

It was as if Meng Hao had turned into some destructive force that could consume all life forces.

Unfortunately, they had no choice but to continue to charge toward him. Retreat was not an option. The only chance they had was to kill Meng Hao.

Even as they roared and charged forward, Meng Hao closed his eyes and sensed the boundless, so-called Joss Flame power within him. Suddenly, the enormous face once again magically appeared. This time… the face was different. This time, it bore the semblance of Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly opened, and so did the face’s eyes. Its lips quivered, and just as it seems more flames of war would rise up, a single word was uttered.

“Collapse!”

The instant Meng Hao’s voice could be heard, rumbling sounds filled the air. In that instant, the black smoke coming off of the ten Nascent Soul Cultivators roared with an earth shaking sound as it exploded with intensity.

This was an explosion of their life forces, as if they were being harmed by their own power!

Surrounded by roaring sounds, nine of the Nascent Soul Cultivators coughed up blood as their bodies tumbled backward violently like kites whose strings had been cut. They were thrown three hundred meters away, and their bodies were listless, older. Their life forces were now dim; they had lost nearly half of their longevity.

When they finally came to a stop, their faces were unsightly. Their hearts trembled; fear for Meng Hao had already taken root inside of them. It seemed to them that they weren't fighting a Cultivator, but rather… a totemic Sacred Ancient!

Furthermore, the power of Joss Flame was incongruous with their own Cultivation base power, which came from the totems of their Tribe. This, combined with Meng Hao's Blood Immortal divine abilities, allowed him to thoroughly shake these ten Nascent Soul Cultivators.

As for the Supreme Priest, blood sprayed from his mouth. He was obviously stronger than the other nine, but he too had been severely injured.

All of them were thoroughly shaken inwardly.

Meng Hao gave an inward sigh of disappointment. Just now, he had attacked with the full force of the Joss Flame power. Even that was only enough to injure his opponents. After all, these were ten Nascent Soul Cultivators. If he were only fighting one or two, Meng Hao was confident that with his borrowed power, he would be able to slay them.

However, as soon as all of them came to a stop, the killing intent in their eyes grew even stronger. Their bodies flickered as they approached him once more!

It was at this point that suddenly, a massive sea of flame exploded out from within the distorted ripples that blocked the view of the battle of totemic Sacred Ancients up above. It spread out to cover half of the sky. The massive flames lit up the faces of everyone down below on the battlefield, astonishing everyone.

Astonishingly, within the massive spread of flames a figure could be seen, reclining there in mid-air. A golden light rose up, and it was impossible to see what was inside, but it was clear that the golden light was melting and dissipating.

That golden light was the Metal-type totemic Sacred Ancient of the Crow Soldier Tribe. The Flame Sea was the Crow Flame Tribe's Fire-type Sacred Ancient. It was impossible for everyone down below on the battlefield to not look at the scene up above.

An archaic voice suddenly echoed out from up above. “I cannot continue to protect you of the five Crow Divinity Tribes. However the Flame Totem and I… will fight to put you in a good position. As such, our ten thousand years of Karma must be dispersed…. We wish you… peace and safety.”

The sea of flames rapidly began to contract. It shot toward the golden light at incredible speed. In the blink of an eye, it completely surrounded the golden light, wrapping it up, transforming into… a gigantic sun!

A death aura swirled within the sun. Down below on the ground, the members of the Crow Soldier Tribe were trembling, as were the members of the Crow Flame Tribe. Their totems were rapidly beginning to dissipate. Intense feelings of grief and sorrow welled up in their hearts.

“Sacred Ancient!”

“Sacred Ancient!!”

Wails of grief rose up into the sky. Unfortunately, neither the Metal-type nor the Fire-type totems could hear them.

Even as the members of the Five Tribes cried out in grief, golden light and the glow of flames combined within the burning sun up above. Soon, everything was illuminated by its billowing light. Shockingly, just barely visible within the enormous sun was… a Golden Crow!

The instant the Golden Crow appeared, Meng Hao’s eyes went wide. He was able to sense a somewhat familiar aura on it, and yet, most of it was unfamiliar.

“It’s not her,” he murmured with a soft sigh. “It’s only a tiny sliver of consciousness left behind in the world. Gold and Fire ended their own lives to transform.”

The Golden Crow lifted its head to the sky and roared as it shot out from within the sun. It closed in on the spider and the scorpion, which in turn shot toward it, intent on destroying it.

Such a totemic battle was something that Cultivators couldn’t interfere with. The instant the three of them slammed into each other, the Golden Crow’s body burst into flames. Golden light and the glow of flames spread out. The Golden Crow began to expand. In the blink of an eye, it was three hundred meters, three thousand, thirty thousand meters!!

It filled the sky and covered over the land, completely enveloping the spider and the scorpion!

“Totems, I call upon the vestiges of the power of the Crow Divinity to seal you and the root of your totemic power! Totemic Demons of the Five Poisons Tribe, be sealed!!” The archaic voice was filled with weakness as it used the last of its power to speak. The gigantic Golden Crow was now completely enveloping the spider and the scorpion. It transformed into an enormous golden shield almost like a bubble. The frantic spider and the scorpion were trapped inside, and were madly attacking in all directions as they tried to escape.

“SEAL!” The enormous golden bubble glittered as if with flames as it shot away with the spider and the scorpion. All the onlookers were breathing heavily as it flew out of the mountains, carrying the Sacred Ancients of two branches with it!

Its destination? The plains which housed the Five Poisons Tribe, where it would use the last bits of its power to interfere with the other three totemic Sacred Ancients.

This was the final price paid by the great totems of the Crow Divinity, a final protection for the members of the Five Tribes!

This seal would last for half of a sixty-year cycle. They had burned their own life forces to create this seal. However, their deaths, and the burning of their life force which had unleashed such incredible power, had caught the attention of the Golden Crow’s sliver of will, which would exist for half of a sixty-year cycle.

As for the Sacred Ancients from the other three branches of the Five Poisons Tribe, they would meet similar fates as the other two. Even if the Five Poisons Tribe made another move, they would not be able to employ the strength of their Sacred Ancients.

Zhao Youlan coughed up a mouthful of blood. It wasn’t just her; all of the surviving Cultivators from the Spider Branch did the same as their Cultivation bases instantly dropped an entire stage.

When the Sacred Ancients were sealed, their auras were also sealed as if in death, and were incapable of bestowing any of their power. This was the cause of this instant Cultivation base drop.

Zhao Chunmu also coughed up a mouthful of blood, along with the rest of the Scorpion Branch Cultivators. Their expressions were that of shock as their Cultivation bases also fell.

The faces of the ten Nascent Soul Cultivators who Meng Hao was facing up against instantly fell. They began to pant as their Cultivation bases began to weaken and fall. It wouldn’t be long before they were no longer of the Nascent Soul stage!

That was a unique feature of Western Desert Cultivators. They could borrow the power of totems, but if a Sacred Ancient died, then they would lose a totem tattoo, which would result in Cultivation base loss. In contrast, the Cultivation base of Southern Domain Cultivators belonged only to them. That was why practicing Cultivation was much more difficult there than in the Western Desert.

Of course, the Crow Divinity Tribe was in the exact same situation because of the deaths of the Metal-type and Fire-type totems. The Crow Soldier Tribe members' totem tattoos began to vanish; however, at this exact moment, when their Cultivation bases were beginning to fall, a golden light suddenly sprang out from Meng Hao.

It was as if a previous generation had died, so a new one arrived to replace it. Golden light radiated out of Meng Hao from his Metal-type totem tattoo, the ancient character 'metal' which existed on his chest!

The instant the light appeared, the Crow Soldier Tribe members' bodies began to tremble. Although their previous Metal-type totem tattoos were disappearing, a new one appeared. It looked different than the previous totems; it resembled Meng Hao's in every aspect. This was the ancient character for metal!

Immediately, boundless and intense Joss Flame power erupted from the members of the Crow Soldier Tribe to shoot toward Meng Hao. It covered his golden body, causing his aura to rise up even higher.

His hair whipped about wildly, and brilliant beams of green and gold light swirled around him. In front of him, two massive characters appeared, wood and metal. They emanated shocking power.

Filled with excitement, the Crow Soldier Tribe members clasped hands and bowed deeply to Meng Hao. The roar of their voices filled the air.

"Sacred Ancient!"

"Greetings, Sacred Ancient!!"

It was at this moment when Meng Hao's Wood- and Metal-type power was displayed in spectacular fashion that… the power of the Joss Flame around him grew thicker and suddenly… a flame appeared within him!

This was not Joss Flame, but rather something that had been inside of him this entire time… the East Pill Everburning Flame!

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# Chapter 449: Nascent Soul Slaying!

The East Pill Everburning Flame had been inside of Meng Hao all along. It was a flame gifted to him by his Master Pill Demon, for use in pill concocting. He had observed the flame for quite some time that year, and had eventually fused the seed of the flame with his Core. After igniting it fully, it became an everburning fire inside of him.

When he finally became convinced to tread the path of the Five-Colored Nascent Soul, it didn’t seem to have anything to do with the Everburning Flame. Meng Hao hadn’t thought much about it. Meng Hao had assumed that in his pursuit of the five elements, he would need to find different types of totems. However… in the blink of an eye, this flame suddenly exploded out, causing Meng Hao to be completely shaken mentally.

He suddenly realized that he had made a mistake. The Five-Colored path, and the attributes of the five elements, weren’t necessarily limited to totems. Any blessing in Heaven and Earth had the possibility of becoming part of his Five-Colored path.

The Everburning Flame, drawn out by the power of the Joss Flame, and because of his two great totems of Metal and Wood, burned out in all directions. It melted the air itself as it raged around Meng Hao.

Suddenly, the character for fire appeared near his dantian region. The instant it appeared, the flames around him rose up into the sky. Suddenly, the Fire-type totem seed given to him by the five Crow Divinity Tribes flew out from from within his bag of holding. The tiny tongue of flame had already dissipated by more than half by now. Meng Hao instantly began to rotate the Everburning Flame, causing it to envelop the tiny seed and then assimilate it.

The moment Meng Hao absorbed the Fire-type totem seed, the Crow Flame Tribe members all looked at him, trembling.

The Fire-type totem tattoos that had been disappearing from their bodies moments ago, were suddenly changed! Now, they looked exactly like Meng Hao’s Fire character!

Immediately, Joss Flame power shot out from their bodies toward Meng Hao.

The Crow Flame Tribe members were shaking with excitement. Their voices came out in loud shouts as they dropped to their knees to kowtow to Meng Hao.

“Sacred Ancient!”

“Greetings, Sacred Ancient!!”

Meng Hao’s entire body was filled with roaring sound. His aura was shocking as his body floated there in mid-air. The Joss Flame power from the more than 1,000 members of the Crow Scout, Crow Soldier and Crow Flame Tribes coalesced together and shot toward Meng Hao’s Flame-type totem tattoo.

The ancient fire character suddenly grew even clearer. Within the space of a few breaths, it was sharp and bright and sent out a sea of flames that surrounded Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s aura once again climbed upward. Three characters floated around him. Metal. Wood. Fire. Three totems that emanated blinding light. The moment the Fire-type totem began to emit light, Meng Hao’s Cultivation base rose up explosively.

As this happened, the view in front of Meng Hao began to grow blurry. It only took a moment for the blurriness to pass, though. Meng Hao suddenly noticed that the world around him was filled with what looked like countless streaks, as well as nodes like sparks of electricity. It seemed that, if he wished, he could… make himself appear at any of these glowing nodes!

“Minor teleportation….” Meng Hao’s mind spun as he looked around with intensely glowing eyes. Excitement filled his heart, and he took a deep breath. He didn’t test it out right away, but he was sure that if he wished, he could merge himself into the air. He knew that he… now possessed a divine ability that only the Nascent Soul stage could employ. Minor teleportation!

With this divine ability, he effectively increased his life force. If he faced up against a powerful enemy, he could rely on this ability to evade.

“My decision to pick the path of the Five-Colored Nascent Soul was the correct one. This path will let me forge my own Dao!” He took a deep breath, and his eyes filled with a bright glow of confidence!

What Cultivators cultivate is… confidence!

Meng Hao breathed deeply as he sensed the power of the three great totems circling around him. He lifted his right hand and waved it forward, causing the sea of flames to spread out. He merged Wood-type power into it, causing it… to rage even higher. Any Scorpion Branch Cultivator that it touched let out a bloodcurdling scream and then shot backward in astonishment.

As for the ten Nascent Soul Cultivators, they had long since fled. Their Cultivation bases were unstable, and they didn’t dare to fight Meng Hao at the peak of his power.

Meng Hao’s left hand flickered an incantation and he pointed out, fueling the flames with Metal-type power. They congealed together, filled with golden liquid that suddenly shot out like a golden rain. Everywhere it went, the will of Metal followed.

The appearance of these divine abilities instantly changed the circumstances of the battle. Although there were more than three thousand Scorpion Branch Cultivators, their hearts were filled with fear. Much the same as the

Spider Branch Cultivators before them, they suddenly lost their will to fight.

By this point, it wasn’t just the Crow Scout, Crow Soldier, and Crow Flame Tribe members who were bowing deeply to Meng Hao. The other two of the five Crow Divinity Tribes saw what was happening and felt deep approval for Meng Hao. They also turned toward him and bowed.

The Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather and the remaining five Nascent Soul Cultivators all looked at Meng Hao with deep respect. They didn’t want to put too much thought into the matter; at the moment, they were able to force their Cultivation bases to remain at the Nascent Soul stage, but in reality, once the battle was over, only three of them would be able to continue to do so. The Cultivation bases of the Crow Gloom and Crow Fighter Nascent Soul Cultivators would soon fall down, and they would no longer be of the Nascent Soul stage.

“Sacred Ancient….” Zhao Youlan watched on silently with her phoenix-like eyes. Next to her, Zhao Chunmu’s face was pale, and the other Five Poisons Tribe members around him were starting to back up in retreat.

Meanwhile, some distance away, an old man was watching the scene that was playing out on something that looked like a giant mirror. This old man stood at the lead of an army of nearly twenty thousand Cultivators.

“A change in Sacred Ancients. A Dragoneer turning into an Ancestor. If… if we could research this matter and figure out how this person accomplished such a feat, it would be an unprecedented windfall for the Five Poisons Tribe!

“Pass the order down,” the old man continued coolly, a strange light gleaming in his eyes. “Spare no cost! Employ teleportation! I WILL lay eyes on this man in the time it takes an incense stick to burn!” As his voice echoed out, the Tribe members at his side immediately began to spread the word throughout the Tribe. Roaring sounds filled the air along with the glow of teleportation. Even as all of them began to disappear, a violet raindrop landed on the old man’s body.

“Violet rain?” said the old man. He looked at it in shock for a moment, then frowned as his body vanished.

Violet rain once again began to fall. It wasn’t just in a small area this time. All of the mountains and even the plains that were home to the Five Poisons Tribe, experienced the rainfall.

It contained an exterminating coldness, the will of extinction, although it wasn’t very intense, but rather, scattered in fragments.

The rain splashed down onto the ground in front of Meng Hao, mixing with the blood there. Currently, few people noticed it. It was only Meng Hao and a few others who, after seeing it, suddenly hesitated. However, considering that a battle was going on, Meng Hao didn’t have much time to think. Floating there in mid-air, his gaze slowly turned cold as he looked across the battlefield toward Zhao Chunmu.

When this happened, Zhao Youlan’s pupils constricted. She had been slowly and unobtrusively edging away from Zhao Chunmu this entire time. However, when she saw Meng Hao look at him, her face flickered. Not caring if her actions were obvious, she immediately shot backward, putting a greater distance between her and Zhao Chunmu.

Zhao Chunmu also noticed Meng Hao’s gaze, and his heart trembled. When he saw Zhao Youlan falling back, his heart and mind filled with a roaring sound, as he suddenly realized that the person who cut off Zhao Youlan’s arm… was probably this new Sacred Ancient of the five Crow Divinity Tribes.

“He wants to kill me!!” he thought, his scalp growing numb. Everything that had just happened with Meng Hao caused his heart to tremble. Meng Hao had slaughtered his eighteen Stealth Guards. Even nine Nascent Soul Elders along with the Supreme Priest hadn’t been able to shake him. All of this caused Zhao Chunmu to begin to pant, and he immediately backed up.

“Nine Grand Elders, Supreme Priest, save me!”

However, almost in the exact same instant that Meng Hao looked at Zhao Chunmu, he began to move forward. He shot through the air like an arrow. The nine Elders and the Supreme Priest from the Scorpion Branch hesitated. It only lasted for a moment, however. Gritting their teeth, they shot once again toward Meng Hao.

A cold smile twisted the corners of Meng Hao’s lips. The main reason he had not employed minor teleportation right away was to attract these people over. Zhao Chunmu was nothing more than bait. Unlike Zhao Youlan, he wasn’t important enough at the moment that Meng Hao needed to kill him. The people Meng Hao wanted to kill were none other than… the nine early Nascent Soul stage Cultivators and the one that was of the mid stage.

As they neared him, killing intent flickered in his eyes. All of a sudden, he teleported. When he vanished, the faces of everyone who was watching instantly filled with shock. This was especially true of the ten Nascent Soul Cultivators, as they realized that what Meng Hao had just done was not the Bloodburst Flash but rather… true minor teleportation.

“Not good!” said the Supreme Priest, his face flickering. He looked over at the nine Elders to see Meng Hao suddenly appearing directly behind one of them. His right hand lifted up and then smashed out with the power to destroy a Nascent Soul Cultivator.

That Nascent Soul Cultivator’s face fell. His body immediately began to grow blurry as he attempted to flee via minor teleportation. At the same time, he spit out a colorful beam of light which transformed into talisman paper that shot toward Meng Hao. However, at the same time, Meng Hao’s fist, filled with exterminating power, landed.

A boom filled the air along with a miserable cry. The talisman paper collapsed, giving the Nascent Soul Cultivator just enough time to finish his teleportation. As he disappeared, Meng Hao let out a cold snort. He moved forward and then performed his own teleportation. The two figures grew blurry, and in the blink of an eye Meng Hao had caught up. Once again, his fist descended.

Another boom could be heard. The Nascent Soul Cultivator spit out a mouthful of Nascent Soul aura. Within were eight magical items, all of which began to explode. Even his body exploded, as he used self-detonation to attempt to kill Meng Hao. A flying sword swept up his Nascent Soul, which borrowed the momentum of the self-detonation to flee away at top speed, clearly weakened.

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# Chapter 450: Downpour of Violet Rain!

The power of self-detonation was useless against Meng Hao because of the Eyeless Larva. After the explosion dissipated, Meng Hao looked at the panic-stricken, fleeing Nascent Soul, and then waved his right hand. Eyeless Larva silk whistled out through the air to surround it. The Nascent Soul's face filled with despair, and its hands flashed an incantation. Immediately, brilliant light surrounded it as it tried to fight back. However, the instant it touched the Eyeless Larva silk, the light shattered. The Eyeless Larva silk wrapped crushingly around the Nascent Soul, strangling it into death.

A miserable shriek could be heard as this Scorpion Branch Elder first lost his physical body, and then experienced complete death as his Nascent Soul was crushed into tiny pieces.

His death caused the minds of all onlookers to reel. The viciousness of Meng Hao's tactics, and his cold-blooded attacks, made it clear that he desired to exterminate them all. When you added in the fact that he could teleport, that meant that he was firmly in the position to be able to battle with Nascent Soul Cultivators.

The surrounding Nascent Soul Cultivators had already sustained injuries. Furthermore, the sealing of their scorpion, cutting it off from the outside world, made their Nascent Souls unstable. The Supreme Priest's face flickered with hatred, but he retreated unhesitatingly, no longer willing to be entangled with Meng Hao.

The other eight Nascent Soul Cultivators were scared witless. Were their Cultivation bases at the peak of their power, they could join hands to fight

Meng Hao. But now, they had sustained severe internal injuries, and were no longer willing to fight. They began to back up, vigilantly putting as much distance as possible between themselves and Meng Hao.

Seeing this, Meng Hao inwardly gave a sigh of relief. Just now, he had known that he must either kill with extreme speed or kill more than one person. These were Nascent Soul Cultivators, each of whom had risen up to supersede countless contemporaries. They were crafty and scheming, and difficult to kill.

He had pulled a fast one just now to quickly exterminate one of their number. As a result, they didn't wish to continue to fight. If they did, it would be difficult to continue killing them.

"So they don't want to keep fighting? Fine," thought Meng Hao. "The seed has been planted in their minds. If I ever face them again, it will be even easier to kill them!" He took a deep breath, confidence shining in his eyes. This was the first time that he alone had killed a Nascent Soul Cultivator. As of this moment, his feet were truly planted firmly in the Cultivation world.

Before acquiring the Metal-type totem, Meng Hao could have killed a single early Nascent Soul stage Cultivator. However, he would not have been able to do so very easily. With the addition of the Fire-type totem, he now had three totems. Even though he was still of the great circle of Core Formation, in terms of battle prowess, he had already bridged the gap between Core Formation and Nascent Soul, that supposedly uncrossable divide!

Meng Hao once again disappeared. When he reappeared, he was standing next to Zhao Chunmu. Zhao Chunmu screamed, and his pale face was filled with terror.

"Well, since I can't catch any of the big fish, then I guess there's no need for the bait anymore," said Meng Hao coolly. He slowly raised his right hand. Zhao Chunmu could do nothing to resist him as he tapped his forehead.

The slight tap turned into a roar as Zhao Chunmu’s head exploded. His body fell to the ground, twitching.

Meanwhile, back on the battlefield, the fighting was growing more intense between the five Crow Divinity Tribes and the Scorpion Branch. After successfully killing a Nascent Soul Cultivator, none of the other Nascent Soul Elders were willing to get near him. Then, he slew the Scorpion Branch Holy Son. The Scorpion Branch’s will to fight was now completely shattered. As they slowly began to retreat, the five Crow Divinity Tribes began to gain the upper hand. The sound of slaughter rose up as they seemed to forget their exhaustion. As of this moment, there were less than a thousand of them left, but they continued to attack with wild abandon.

Meng Hao’s neo-demon horde was a critical factor in the battle. Without his remaining seven thousand or so neo-demons, the five Crow Divinity Tribes would not be able to continue on with the fight.

Meng Hao stood on the battlefield, looking around until his gaze came to fall on Zhao Youlan. Instantly, her face paled. The two Nascent Soul Elders who stood next to her, as well as the High Priest, who had long since approached to protect her, started looking nervous.

Meng Hao’s valiance had shaken them to the core.

Suddenly, thunder could be heard from up above. The sound of it was very unique; it almost seemed to be like the sound of countless people wailing. It was so shocking that it even caused the soul to begin to tremble.

After the thunder rumbled out, rain began to fall. The rain was violet in color, and this time it didn’t fall in just scattered bits like before. This time the rain began to pour down heavily, splashing all over the ground.

The rain contained a cold, destructive will, as if it wished for all life to become extinct. The rainwater fell down and spread out on the ground, and suddenly, it turned into an omen.

Meng Hao suddenly felt a sense of crisis. He looked up at the falling violet rain, and frowned.

“This rain… there’s something not right about it.”

Almost at the same time that the rain began to fall, a blinding light appeared up in the sky not far away. Countless figures began to emerge at top speed. These people were none other than members of the Five Poisons Tribe.

Their appearance instantly caused the looks of despair on the faces of the Scorpion Branch Cultivators to vanish.

Meng Hao’s pupil’s constricted, and he shot backward with the flick of a sleeve.

“Members of the five Crow Divinity Tribes, fall back to the area behind the shield!” His voice caught the attention of the all the five Crow Divinity Tribes on the battlefield. One by one, they silently looked up into the sky, and then began to retreat. Suddenly, a huge gap appeared on the battlefield between the two forces.

The twenty thousand Five Poisons Tribe Cultivators whistled through the air toward the battlefied, smiling coldly, eyes filled with the desire to kill. Their numbers seemed to blot out the sky.

The group included quite a few Dragoneers, each one of whom possessed thousands of neo-demons, and in the case of a few, even tens of thousands. The neo-demons flew behind the Cultivators like a gigantic sea.

Among the group were more than thirty Nascent Soul Cultivators, including six Priests. Even more impressive, one of their number was an old man in a white robe. His skin was dark brown, and his eyes shone with a threatening light. Shockingly, this man was of the late Nascent Soul stage!

This man was the leader of all the Priests in the Five Poisons Tribe. He was the High Priest of the entire Five Poisons Tribe, a position similar to Greatfather.

“Greetings, High Priest!”

“We offer you our respects, High Priest!”

It didn't matter if they were from the Spider Branch or the Scorpion Branch, all of the remaining Cultivators on the battlefield dropped to their knees and kowtowed to the old man.

So did Zhao Youlan.

The Crow Divinity Tribes were clearly not capable of fighting back against someone so powerful. Furthermore, the source of their shield was already gone, and the shield itself was growing thin. From the look of it, it would only last another four hours.

Meng Hao stood there outside of the shield. Next to him were the remaining Nascent Soul Cultivators of the Five Tribes, including the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather. All of them had extremely unsightly faces.

Under Meng Hao's command, the remaining seven thousand or so neo-demons in his horde were positioned protectively around the shield. Everything was very quiet, making the battlefield seem almost like a graveyard. The violet rain began to fall even harder.

Amidst this deathly silence, the Five Poisons Tribe's High Priest, the brown-skinned old man, coolly said, "Leave none alive!"

All of the Five Poisons Tribe's twenty thousand Cultivators and their neo-demons roared. As they did, they surged forward like seawaters toward Meng Hao and the others.

As the enemy neared, Meng Hao took a deep breath, and his eyes filled with coldness. He did not summon the Agarwood. That was something he could only use to protect himself, and was not a tool for a battle like this.

From beginning to end, Meng Hao had been filled with confidence regarding this battle. That was because, the entire time, he had kept one card up his sleeve. One trump card, yet to be played.

Suddenly, Meng Hao's voice echoed out:

“Vines! Thorn Rampart!” As soon as the words filled the air, a howling noise could be heard coming from the body of the Wild Giant. There was a blood-colored vine wrapped around it that suddenly shot out. Instantly, thorns sprang out from its body as it burrowed into the ground.

The moment the vine burrowed into the ground, the earth in front of the attacking Five Poisons Tribe army exploded up as countless thorns exploded out. The shortest of the thorns were roughly twenty five meters long. The largest were over three hundred. They shot out in waves to protectively surround the Crow Divinity Tribes!

Even more bizarre, each of these thorns quickly began to bristle with even smaller thorns. Even as the Five Poisons Tribe charged, these vines formed a protective barrier, completely covering over the Crow Divinity Tribes!

These thorns were a sacred relic of the Frigid Snow Clan. Upon leaving Holy Snow City, the Patriarch of the Frigid Snow Clan granted them to Meng Hao as a reward. Later, Meng Hao fed them to his vine. After the passage of much time, the vines absorbed the thorns, and then mutated. 1

The appearance of the Thorn Rampart caused the face of the Five Poisons Tribe High Priest to fill with shock. “That’s the Annihilation Thorn Rampart of the Frigid Snow Clan! Supposedly, nothing under the Spirit Severing stage can break through it…. Well, let’s see if that legend is true or false!” With a cold snort, he waved his right hand. Immediately, the surrounding Cultivators and neo-demon hordes proceeded to attack the Thorn Rampart.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and then sat down cross-legged. He coagulated a drop of life blood which he then fused into the Thorn Rampart. Once his Spiritual Sense merged with it, he used this method to fight against the Five Poisons Tribe.

Roaring filled the air outside as the neo-demon horde slammed into the Thorn Rampart Shield. Rumbling rose up, along with the miserable cries of the neo-demons.

With the Thorn Rampart in place, nothing under the Spirit Severing stage could step even half a pace beyond it.

Outside, booms filled the air, along with the light of magical treasures and the glows of totems. Everything shook violently, and even the mountains seemed on the verge of collapse. The Thorn Rampart vibrated, and some cracks even appeared, but it did not fall!

At the same time, thorn shot out from the vines. In a relatively short period of time, a vast number of neo-demons had been killed. Of the twenty thousand Cultivators, more than three thousand had been stabbed through with thorns. They could only let out bloodcurdling shrieks as their life force was sucked away and they were transformed into desiccated corpses.

It seemed the battle would not stop until one side had been exterminated. However, it was at this time that suddenly more thunder filled the sky. It sounded like countless people weeping. The violet rain grew even harder. A bit of the rain was absorbed into the earth, but most began to pool up on the ground. Now, puddles were forming in some of the lower areas.

This caught the attention of Meng Hao as well as Zhao Youlan. The Nascent Soul Cultivators of the Five Poisons Tribe also noticed, as did the High Priest. He stared in shock for a long moment at the rainwater, and then suddenly… his face fell!

Thoroughly and completely fell!

“This… this is….” The High Priest’s body began to tremble. Considering his intelligence and the level of his Cultivation base, even something that could lead to the destruction of his Tribe would not cause him to lose control of his facial expression in such a way. The only thing that could… would be something shocking that far exceeded the destruction of a Tribe!

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# Chapter 451: Western Desert Apocalypse!!

There was a legend in the great lands of the Western Desert, the source of which was impossible to determine. In any case, over the years, this legend came to exist in the minds of all Tribes in the Western Desert. It was even recorded in the ancient records of the Tribes and passed down from generation to generation.

But then, even more time passed. Eventually, people began to forget about the legend. It wasn’t that there was no knowledge about it at all, just, most people didn’t remember….

According to the legend, at a time many, many years in the past, the Western Desert was not a continent, but rather, a sea. The sea existed for thirty thousand years before vanishing to reveal the continent beneath. During that time, the Western Desert… was not called the Western Desert, but rather a different name. The Western Sea.

This sea was not the same color as the Milky Way Sea. Rather, it was violet, and its waters had the power to cause all life to become extinct. It even cut off spiritual energy, making the area a prohibited zone for living things.

There was an area of division between the Milky Way Sea and this Sea, as if they intentionally did not want to mix.

According to the legend, the Western Sea was not completely without any land mass. There was one area with land, a part that was connected to the Southern Domain. That was none other than… the Black Lands.

In terms of elevation, the Black Lands were relatively high. Such high elevation was something that Cultivators wouldn’t pay too much attention to. However, the Black Lands were actually the highest place in the entire continent, including the Western Desert and the Southern Domain. It was so high that even after the Western Desert became a sea… it still existed.

The legend said that long before the Western Desert, and even before the Western Sea, the entire land was filled with abundant resources and dense spiritual energy. However, it eventually experienced a fall of violet rain that lasted many years. The rainwater did not soak into the earth, but rather began to collect on its surface.

Gradually the waters turned into streams, which then formed lakes, and eventually turned into a sea.

The violet rain had the power to destroy the life force of any living thing it touched, and could even cut off spiritual energy. All spell formations ceased to function, and it became difficult for Cultivators to survive there. Everything was plunged into destruction.

Countless varieties of vegetation died, and an innumerable amount of animals became nothing more than skeletons. Multitudinous life forms… reached the end of their path. This was a catastrophe that affected the lives of all Tribes in the Western Desert, an Apocalypse of Heaven and Earth!

This was the legend that existed within each and every Tribe.

Right now, the body of the Five Poisons Tribe High Priest was trembling, and his face was pale. He slowly reached his hand out to catch some violet raindrops. He stared blankly; it felt as if this rain was causing his Cultivation base to slowly fade away.

He was now shaking, and his eyes filled with dread. He looked down as the rainwater collected on the ground, mixing together with the blood. There were some places in which cracks existed in the ground where the water drained into. However… most of the water appeared to be just floating there, mixing with the blood.

The High Priest’s face was completely ashen, and he was panting.

“This is… this is impossible….” he murmured. There were some of the Five Poison Tribe’s Nascent Soul Cultivators who also seemed to be reaching the same conclusion as the High Priest. Their faces began to flicker as they looked at the violet rain.

Zhao Youlan suddenly staggered backward a few steps, staring blankly at the rain. Clearly, she too had just come to a certain realization.

At the same time, inside the Thorn Rampart, the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather was staring at the rain in stupefaction. His face completely fell as a despair filled him even that was even more terrible than that which could be caused by the destruction of his Tribe.

“Apocalypse….”

“The Western Desert Apocalypse….”

“According to the legends, an Apocalypse will come that will exterminate all life and change the Western Desert into the Western Sea!!”

The Five Poisons Tribe High Priest backed up a few steps. At that moment, the war, the spot in the Realm of the Bridge Ruins, the spoils… none of them were important.

Without hesitation, he began to activate the teleportation spell again as a means to test whether or not the stories about the violet rain were true. Before, the teleportation spell had worked, but now… no matter what he tried, he couldn’t get it to work. It was as if something were blocking its power, making it completely useless.

The sight of this turned into a roaring sound that filled the minds of the Five Poisons Tribe High Priest.

“Migrate. The Tribe must migrate!” he murmured to himself. “The Western Desert North is the lowest place in the whole Western Desert. This is the first place where the sea will rise up! The Tribe must migrate, migrate to south. We… must go to the Black Lands near the Southern Domain!!” The rain continued to grow heavier. Already, the Cultivators were beginning to sense that the spiritual energy of Heaven and Earth was becoming thinner. This immediately caused the faces of the Five Poisons Tribe members to fall.

“The Black Lands… the Black Lands!! Now I understand!” A tremor ran through the High Priest; his eyes went wide and filled with even more urgency. “It makes sense. All those years ago, the three great Tribes with Spirit Severing Patriarchs made an alliance and invaded the Black Lands. They even joined forces with some of the powers in the Black Lands.

“They were careful not to offend the Southern Domain in their war! After the war, many of the other Tribes connected to them also migrated to the Black Lands!

“They knew! They carved out an area for themselves in the Black Lands, making it even easier to have dealings with the Southern Domain. Or, maybe they had some other purposes.

“In any case, it all makes sense now!”

The High Priest’s panting grew even more intense as he murmured to himself.

“Those three enormous great Tribes knew all along that the Apocalypse was coming. They occupied the Black Lands. Now, anyone who wants to go to the Black Lands will only be able to do so with their approval!!

“Without spilling a drop of blood, they wrested control over all the powers in the Western Desert! They will be able to control the fate of thousands of Tribes during the Apocalypse!”

The High Priest’s eyes filled with anxiety.

“The Black Lands is small. There’s no way it can hold all of the Tribes of the Western Desert. But any who don’t go there… will be exterminated without a doubt. The Five Poisons Tribe is in the north. So far away….”

He suddenly raised his voice loudly. “All Five Poisons Tribe members, hear my orders. We must leave this place immediately. Whatever the cost, employ the greatest speed possible to return to the Tribe!” This was a critical moment in which every bit of time was important. The war with the broken remnants of the Crow Divinity Tribes was now inconsequential. In fact, now he felt regret over having gone to war in the first place!

The members of the Five Poisons Tribe heard his words and gaped in astonishment. However, based on the ashen expressions of the various Elders, they had guessed that something was going on. Without hesitation, they followed orders and flew up into the air.

Soon, not a single member of the Five Poisons Tribe was fighting. Nearly twenty thousand Cultivators and tens of thousands of neo-demons all roared through the air to disappear off in the distance. Zhao Youlan was amongst them. However, as she flew off, she looked back at the Crow Divinity Tribes and the protective Thorn Rampart, and her eyes filled with a sharp glow.

“You will pay tenfold for severing my arm!” she thought. Then she turned and followed the rest of the Five Poisons Tribe members off into the distance.

After the Five Poisons Tribe left, the Thorn Rampart slowly began to retract and disappear. Meng Hao rose up from his cross-legged position and looked off at the horizon. Behind him, the more than two thousand surviving Tribe members let out cries of relief at their sudden new lease on life.

However, their happiness could not dispel the shadow that lingered over Meng Hao’s heart. Next to him, the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather had a bitter look on his face.

“Is it true?” said Meng Hao slowly.

“For the Five Poisons Tribe to make such a hasty exit indicates that the legendary Apocalypse is mostly likely coming. Spell formations will become inoperable and the spiritual energy of Heaven and Earth will be extinguished. All life will be destroyed…. The only hope….

“The only hope is to migrate to the south,” said the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather, his voice low. “Head south and keep going all the way to the Black Lands.”

“The Black Lands….” Meng Hao’s body suddenly shook. Like the Five Poisons Tribe High Priest, Meng Hao also thought of the war that the Western Desert had participated in back in the Black Lands. He thought about the Western Desert Tribes he’d seen entering the Black Lands during his departure.

“So, this is the reason for all of it!” he thought. Finally, he understood something that for so long had been a point of confusion.

This was why war had broken out in the Black Lands. This was why the Western Desert had participated with such gusto. And this was why the Southern Domain did nothing to stop it. They allowed the Western Desert to occupy the Black Lands. A great Apocalypse of Heaven and Earth was coming. If the Southern Domain attempted to obstruct the Western Desert, a full scale war would have broken out. That was something the Southern Domain wouldn’t want.

Meng Hao looked up at the increasingly heavy rain. A gleam suddenly appeared in his eyes.

“The spiritual energy of Heaven and Earth is being extinguished. All living things will be destroyed. The continent will turn into a sea…. For me, it’s not that bad. After the experience of using the East Pill Everburning Flame to form my Fire-type totem tattoo, I know… that all things in Heaven and Earth exist on the path of the five elements, and have the potential to give enlightenment.

“What better type of water could you use than a sea!? And what better sea could there be than one referred to as the Western Desert Apocalypse!?

“As for the spiritual energy of Heaven and Earth being extinguished… with the exception of the ultra high-grade Spirit Stones, I’ve already gone for many years without absorbing it. That’s why I’ve supported myself by consuming medicinal pills. Every time I attack, I must very carefully control the spiritual energy I use. Furthermore, I’ve constantly been improving my pill concocting skills.

“For the same reason, I was always inclined toward being a Dragoneer. Only Dragoneers can grow strong without wasting very much spiritual power!

“The main thing I need to be careful of is that the rain can exterminate life force…. In any case, I am definitely the most suitable person to exist within the Western Desert Apocalypse!” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered for a moment. However, he then looked at the rejoicing members of the Five Tribes. They didn’t know about this Apocalypse. Seeing the happiness of the children caused him to think for a long moment.

“Golden Crow,” he said, closing his eyes. “I have accepted your legacy. Your Tribe calls me their Sacred Ancient, and I am connected to them through totems. Is this… is this the protection you wish me to give them…?”

As of this moment, all sky and land of the Western Desert North regions was filled with violet-colored rain. No sun could be seen in the sky, and everything was dark. This was a dusk that would last a very, very long time….

Down on the ground, the water slowly began to pool up. More and more puddles could be seen.

It wasn’t just in the North region of the Western Desert. In the East, West and South, it was just the same. Violet rain began to fall, and as it did, more and more cries of alarm could be heard. Hearts shook.

The Western Desert Apocalypse was nigh!

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# Chapter 452: Hope

Migration.

Throughout the lands of the Western Desert, it took only a short period of time for a multitude of Tribes to all reach the same bitter decision!

To make such a decision was easier said than done. However, as far as the Crow Divinity Tribes were concerned, migrating… was the same as death!

Throughout the Western Desert, teleportation spells rapidly ceased to function. This was especially true of the low-lying Western Desert North, where vast amounts of violet rainwater was collecting. One could easily imagine how the rain which fell in the West, South and East would flow down and accumulate within the North.

The Western Desert North was definitely the first place that the sea would begin to rise!

Had the five Crow Divinity Tribes not experienced the war with the Five Poisons Tribe, then they would surely have been powerful enough to migrate. Unfortunately… even including all the young children and elderly Tribe members, their total population was now around two thousand.

Considering that they used to have more than ten thousand Tribe members, their overall power had been critically reduced. As of this moment, they only counted as a small Tribe when compared to the rest of the Western Desert.

Furthermore… because teleportation portals were no longer functional, and more than half of the Tribe members were ordinary people with no Cultivation bases, there was no way for the Tribe to fly. They would be forced to travel on foot.

The Greatfather stood next to Meng Hao, his hair gray and his expression one of exhaustion. He smiled bitterly and said, “We can’t travel on foot to the Black Lands…. We’re simply too far away. Even a Nascent Soul Cultivator who flew continuously without sleep or rest would need at least ten years to get there. If we went on foot… it would take more than a thousand. More than a thousand years to migrate. Would the Crow Divinity Tribes even still be around by that time?”

He looked even older than he had before. He turned his head back to look at the Tribe members behind him who were erecting wooden shelters, and continued, “The violet rain will continuously extinguish the spiritual energy. Eventually we would all become mortals. The will of extermination in the rain would corrode our bodies, weakening us to the point of death.

“That’s not even to mention what the rain would do to the children and the other ordinary Tribe members. They… would be the first to die. After that… the deaths would only continue to increase. The entire Tribe would eventually be wiped out during the course of the migration.

“In addition, virtually all of the other Tribes in the Western Desert will be migrating at the same time. Because of food, resources and other reasons, the road will be filled with chaotic battles! Tribes will be constantly contending with each other in order to ensure their own existence. Right now, the Crow Divinity Tribes… simply could not survive such an ordeal.

“Also, even if we managed to travel for more than a thousand years, even if by some fluke we weren’t swallowed up by some other Tribe, then… once we got to the Black Lands… what would qualify us to enter? There is limited space in there. How could we get in?

“How could we possibly distinguish ourselves… amongst so many great Tribes and mid-sized Tribes. With so many big shot Tribes controlling the Black Lands, how could we get them to accept us?”

Meng Hao stood there silently. He had already seen some of the children who were physically weak to begin with growing even weaker after being touched by the rainwater. This violet rain was going to exterminate everything.

“It is because of all of this, exalted Sacred Ancient, that I urge you… to leave!” The Greatfather’s voice was so decisive that it could sever nails and chop iron. “Leave this place and leave the Crow Divinity Tribes. Sacred Ancient, given your Cultivation base and your status as a Grand Dragoneer, any Tribe would be happy to accept you during this critical time and bring you with them to the Black Lands.

“Exalted Sacred Ancient, this is your only hope. As for us….” The Greatfather once again looked back at the Five Tribes members building huts to shelter themselves from the rainwater. Their eyes were filled with sorrow and grief.

“We will not leave our homeland. If we are doomed to be exterminated, then we will die together and be buried here with our forefathers and fellow Tribe members. At least this way, maybe some of those children will have a chance to grow up.” The Greatfather looked even older now, as if his life force were slowly flowing away.

Meng Hao continued to stand there quietly, unsure of what to say. He looked over his shoulder at the silent Five Tribes members. Wu Chen was there, as was Wu Ling. There were sleeping children, who occasionally called out for their mothers. Tears were being shed. There were elderly ones longing for loved ones. As Meng Hao looked at them all, he realized that there were many, many familiar faces.

Right now, he had only two choices. Go… or stay!

If he did leave, then he was essentially the most likely person to be able to survive within the violet rain, considering all of his special abilities.

But if he stayed….

Meng Hao let out a soft sigh. He said nothing, but rather, turned and walked over to where the Tribe members were gathered. As he neared, they all looked toward him, eyes hot with zeal. With a slight smile, Meng Hao continued around to the back of the mountain, and his courtyard.

Here, the rain was falling heavily. He sat down beneath the eaves, surrounded by his neo-demon horde. Big Hairy lay on the ground next to him, letting out light yips. He was wounded, but not fatally.

Meng Hao now had only six thousand neo-demons left in his horde. All were wounded, and were currently healing naturally.

Gu La braved the rainwater to bustle about, giving them food and treating some of their minor injuries. The sky above was dim, and the rain… only continued to fall harder and harder.

The vast sky and land gradually transformed into a depression that weighed down on the hearts of both Meng Hao and the Crow Divinity Tribe members.

“Perhaps I should wait for the parrot to return… and then leave. Leaving really is the best decision. However….” He lapsed into silence again. During his entire time in the Western Desert, he had lived amongst the five Crow Divinity Tribes. He had achieved his goals, and yet, the ones to pay the price had been them.

Objectively speaking, everything that was happening was not Meng Hao’s fault. However, when it came to his heart, Meng Hao found it hard shake off the deep emotions that he felt.

The Crow Soldier Greatfather’s words made sense. The five Crow Divinity Tribes had no ability to migrate, and even if they did… they would never be able to enter the Black Lands.

When he thought of the Black Lands, Meng Hao recalled the war he had seen there, and the Western Desert Cultivators who had fought in them.

“What an incredible plan,” Meng Hao thought, his eyes flashing. “Because of this Apocalypse, the eyes of the entire Western Desert will be focused on the Black Lands. It seems that the time will soon come for those great Tribes who control the Black Lands… to bare their fangs.”

Time passed by slowly. Two months were gone, and the violet rain never ceased to fall. It only grew harder. Meng Hao could no longer stay behind the mountain, because… it had already turned into a small stream as deep as one’s knees.

The five Crow Divinity Tribes had moved to the top of the mountain peak. There, they built huts to shelter themselves from the rain. More than two thousand people lived their lives silently inside these huts.

Already, there were Tribe members who were visibly weakening….

Meng Hao sat cross-legged on the mountain peak, looking at the mountains off in the distance. They had once been green and verdant, but now they were a deathly dark gray. All of the vegetation had withered up and died.

Every day, it was possible to see neo-demons running or flying away from within the deep mountains. It wasn’t just Cultivators who were migrating during this Apocalypse, but neo-demons as well.

The land in many areas around had already turned violet. Streams flowed together to form rivers. It was easy to imagine how, after some bit of time passed, the rivers would merge together to form lakes. Eventually, the lakes would turn into… a sea.

“If I can’t take you with me,” said Meng Hao, “then I will stay with you here. We will await death together. I will not allow the violet rain to bury you. The tombstone of the five Crow Divinity Tribes should have all of your names carved on its surface.” Meng Hao felt deeply melancholy, but he really could not think of any other options. The five Crow Divinity Tribes really had no hope to hold in front of them anymore.

The Black Lands might count as hope. However, it was an intangible hope, a stagnant hope. Besides, the path to the Black Lands would be rife with countless other Tribes all charging toward the same destination. The five Crow Divinity Tribes would have much difficulty fighting for a place amongst all those other Tribes.

“Maybe there is some other hope to be had!” murmured Meng Hao, lifting his head up to look at the violet rain.

More time passed. A month later, hope suddenly appeared one day…. It appeared, not just for Meng Hao, but for all the members of the five Crow Divinity Tribes.

That hope came in the form of a voice!

The voice echoed out throughout the entire Western Desert, from North to South, East to West. It was impossible to say if it was a magical technique or divine ability, nor was it possible to determine the profundity of the speaker’s Cultivation base. The voice was archaic and ancient as it echoed out.

“To all fellow countrymen in the Western Desert, greetings….

“We are the Heavenly Court Alliance of the Black Lands, formed by the great Heavenly Pursuit Tribe, great Wild Flame Tribe, and great Demon Butterfly Tribe. This is our first public announcement to all Cultivators in the Western Desert….”

Meng Hao looked up. The Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather suddenly opened his eyes from meditation. All of the Tribe members gazed out at the sky.

At this moment, all Tribes in the Western Desert stopped what they were doing. Some were like the great Scorching Ice Tribe, currently on the road in the midst of migration. Others were camped out, resting. Others, like the five Crow Divinity Tribes, had decided to return to the dust in their homeland. All Cultivators in the Western Desert began to tremble as they looked up to the sky.

Everyone, even the Five Poisons Tribe. Everywhere, West, East, North and South. All members of all Tribes… looked up.

“The violet rain has come, and the Western Sea Apocalypse is here. This violet rain will exterminate all life, and extinguish all spiritual energy. At the moment, roughly ninety percent of teleportation portals in the great lands of the Western Desert are not functional.

“There is only one hope for life amidst this great Apocalypse, and that is the Black Lands. Thankfully, many years ago, the Heavenly Court Alliance enacted plans to carve out a suitable place for Western Desert Tribes to survive within the Black Lands!

“Naturally, the space is limited, and not all Tribes will be permitted to enter. Furthermore, we do not have the right to decide who is most qualified to do so. Therefore… we will give all of you a chance… to find a Demon Spirit!

“According to information gleaned from the augury of the Heavenly Court Alliance, as well as details recorded in countless ancient records, we know that whenever the Western Desert turns into a sea, Heaven and Earth experience changes. Demon Spirits emerge in the great lands of the Western Desert, no more than ten of them.

“Any Tribe who appears outside of the Black Lands with a Demon Spirit, will be qualified to enter the Black Lands. We will only accept… Demon Spirits!”

The voice stopped speaking, but the sound of it continued to echo out throughout the Western Desert. The countless people who heard the voice all began to breathe heavily, and their eyes instantly grew bloodshot.

Meng Hao’s eyes began to shine brightly.

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# Chapter 453: Bridge of Immortality!

“Now that’s hope!” thought Meng Hao, his eyes glittering brightly. He didn’t care why this Heavenly Court Alliance in the Black Lands needed these so-called Demon Spirit. He only knew that they were required to enter the Black Lands!

Whoever could get one, would have a chance to live through this Apocalypse and evade destruction.

One could only imagine how short a period of time would pass before the Demon Spirit were surrounded, and great wars would engulf the Western Desert.

Meng Hao stood up, and then turned his head back to look at the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather. An unprecedented glow appeared in his eyes as he gazed at Meng Hao.

After they looked at each other for a moment, the Greatfather stood up and approached Meng Hao to stand at the mountain’s peak.

“I’m not sure where the Demon Spirits will appear in the great lands of the Western Desert,” said the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather, breathing heavily, “nor have I even heard the term ‘Demon Spirit’ before. However, I do know that if the words of this so-called Heavenly Court Alliance are true, then there is a place that is eighty percent or more likely to have them!

“The Realm of the Bridge Ruins!”

Meng Hao nodded, and his eyes glittered as he stood there thoughtfully for a moment.

“Except….” started the Greatfather, and then stopped. He could tell what Meng Hao was thinking. However, he knew that if he himself had reached this conclusion, then many of the other Tribes in the Western Desert would also be able to.

As such, this particular foray into the Realm of the Bridge Ruins would be fraught with even more danger than usual, danger not from that world itself, but rather, the other Cultivators who entered it.

“I’ve made my mind up already,” said Meng Hao slowly, looking at the old man. “If I can’t acquire a Demon Spirit, then I will accompany you to the end of the road, and I will carve your names onto your tombstones.

“But, if I can get a Demon Spirit, then I, Meng Hao… will lead you in migration. Regardless of whether or not the migration is successful, I will not disappoint you by leaving you!”

The Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather listened. He looked quietly over at Meng Hao, his eyes shining with an indescribable brightness. Next, he flicked his sleeve and, disregarding his own mid Nascent Soul Cultivation base, and the difference in age between himself and Meng Hao, dropped to his knee, clasped hands and bowed deeply!

“For generation after generation to come, the five Crow Divinity Tribes will never forget your kindness, Sacred Ancient. For generation after generation to come, we will offer worship to your statue. If my words are not true, let the five Crow Divinity Tribes be destroyed by fire!”

There were two other Nascent Soul Cultivators in the Tribe, as well as two whose Cultivation bases had dropped to the great circle of Core Formation. They, too, heard the words spoken by the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather.

It wasn’t just them, but all of the Tribe members. They all were watching on, listening to the conversation between the two.

No one said a word. It was hard to say who did it first, but one by one, they all began to drop to their knees to kowtow. Soon, the entire Tribe was on their knees.

All the Cultivators of the Tribe, including the Core Formation and Nascent Soul Cultivators, had dropped to their knees in worship.

No one spoke a word, they simply kneeled to him. There were, in fact, no words that could express the appreciation that existed in their hearts. They could only use a kowtow, along with the glistening teardrops in their eyes, to show Meng Hao… how deeply thankful they were.

As Meng Hao looked out at them, thunder rumbled in the sky, and the violet rain continued to plotter platter down from up above.

“What Cultivators truly cultivate, is self-confidence, and even more importantly, self-awareness. I have to say that … I, Meng Hao, do not dare to call myself a straightforward and upright person. Nor am I a gentleman, or a man of honor. But I always repay the kindnesses shown to me!” With that, Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed deeply to the members of the five Crow Divinity Tribes.

Time trickled by. Three months passed. The streams down below were already beginning to merge together to form rivers. Looking down at it all from the top of the mountain, there were already seven or eight such large rivers that could be seen.

The river water churned, lifeless. In some places a thick aura of death rose up.

The spiritual energy in the area was already very scant. The will of extermination was even more obvious. The world was becoming desolate….

Three more months went by. Of the two thousand Tribe members, there were already a hundred who were gravely weakened, and could do nothing but lay there in bed. Even their power to simply breathe seemed on the verge of disappearing.

Because of their relationship with Meng Hao, Wu Chen and Wu Ling now had a distinguished position in the Tribe. They were the new blazing suns who presided over all matters relating to the Crow Scout Tribe. They were also taken in as disciples by the two other Nascent Soul Cultivators.

After Meng Hao asked the Crow Soldier Tribe about Wu Ling's necklace, he finally understood its origin. It did not come from the Crow Divinity Holy Land. Rather it was a treasure acquired thousands of years ago from the Realm of the Bridge Ruins, back when the Crow Divinity Tribe had been at the peak of its power.

Having learned this, the Realm of the Bridge Ruins became even more mysterious in Meng Hao's mind. Meng Hao also learned something very strange from the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather. When people returned from the Realm of the Bridge Ruins, they could remember everything that happened inside. However, regarding what happened on the way there, and on the way back, no one ever remembered anything clearly. It was as if something interfered with, or even erased, those memories.

"A Resurrection Lily seed, so-called Demon Spirits, and even a legendary Bridge of Immortal Treading from ancient times…. The whole place is ruins. Regardless of what special functions might be contained within the stones that formed the Immortality Bridge, if they contain the Earth of the five elements, then I might have the fortune to obtain the Earth-type elements I need." Meng Hao's eyes shone brightly. His anticipation regarding Realm of the Bridge Ruins continued to grow even stronger.

The parrot finally returned during this time. However, it only took a few days before it went back out, full of enthusiasm. Meng Hao wasn't sure how it was amusing itself, but the violet rain didn't seem to stop it.

One afternoon, half a month later, a shocking rumbling sound filled the sky. Silver-colored lightning appeared up above, crackling with such intensity that it seemed it would rip the sky apart. All the Tribe members looked up with shock as the violet rain which had fallen for months on end… suddenly stopped!

When the rain stopped, everyone was filled with shock. Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he looked up. What he saw caused his entire body to tremble, and he began to breathe heavily.

There in the sky was a bridge!

The bridge seemed to fill the entire sky, with neither the beginning nor the end visible. Inexhaustible light shone out from the bridge; it was this light that broke up the rain. On this day, no rain fell within the Western Desert.

If you looked closely at the booming lightning, you would be able to see that it existed only within the bridge. None of it was on the outside. In fact, the lightning actually seemed like countless cracks that existed on this enormous bridge.

“The Bridge of Immortal Treading!” thought Meng Hao as he looked up at the boundless structure. Although it was actually illusory, it seemed incredibly realistic.

Countless magical symbols glittered on the surface of the bridge. Each one seemed to contain rippling power capable of exterminating even a Nascent Soul Cultivator. An incredibly archaic aura emanated out from the bridge, an aura that contained the feeling of Time itself. This aura was different from spiritual energy; it seemed more rich and full, as though even a tiny bit of it was the same as a large amount of the spiritual energy that existed in the outside world.

Meng Hao could tell that this aura far outmatched the aura of the spiritual energy of Heaven and Earth, and would shock any Cultivator who absorbed it. Even more shocking… he himself could absorb it as well!

This caused Meng Hao’s mind and heart to reel with incredible intensity. The shocking light cast by the bridge expanded out for tens of thousands of meters in all direction. It spread out over the entire sky, making it seem almost as if a curtain was opening up to reveal… a starry sky!

Meng Hao panted as he looked up at the stars. He was certain that this starry sky was the true world that existed outside of South Heaven.

It was at this moment that an indistinct figure suddenly appeared on top of the bridge. It was a woman wearing a long robe. Her features weren’t clearly distinguishable, and her body shone with a brilliant glow.

She looked down at the lands below her, then lifted up her slender hand. A strangely shaped stone appeared in her hand which seemed ordinary, lacking any special features. The woman tossed the stone out in front of her, where it floated in the air.

The Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather stood next to Meng Hao. “To step onto the bridge, seize the Immortality Bridgestone,” he said urgently. “Then, you may enter the Realm of the Bridge Ruins. To return, you must also use the same stone.”

As for how to enter and leave the bridge, Meng Hao had learned the details earlier from the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather. Meng Hao looked up into the sky with glittering eyes. He waved his right hand, and suddenly the Thorn Rampart vine appeared. It circled around the Crow Divinity Tribes, piercing into the rocky mountainside. With it in place, the Crow Divinity Tribes would be protected in the days after Meng Hao left. No migrating Tribes would be able to raid or attack them.

Meng Hao was aware that ordinary Dragoneers were not able to enter the Realm of the Bridge Ruins. The reason for that was because neo-demons were incapable of existing there.

This point had only been revealed to him apologetically later on by the Crow Soldier Greatfather.

The instant that Meng Hao saw the Bridge of Immortal Treading, he could sense an aura that repelled neo-demons. It was as if the bridge was designed for the Immortal Ascension of Cultivators only, and not Immortal Demons. Although it had been destroyed, its primary laws still remained.

As such, Meng Hao left his neo-demon horde behind within the five Crow Divinity Tribes. He took a deep breath and then flew up into the sky. He transformed into a beam of light that shot up toward the Bridge of Immortal

Treading. Below, the more than two thousand Tribe members watched him go.

Meanwhile, across the rest of the Western Desert, people flew up into the air from the other twenty or more Tribes qualified to enter the Realm of the Bridge Ruins. The representative from the Five Poisons Tribe was there too. It was none other than… Zhao Youlan.

Her right arm had been restored, and she wore a white robe. She looked incredibly beautiful as she flew up toward the Bridge of Immortal Treading.

Although it appeared as if there were only one bridge, in fact, identical bridges appeared above each and every qualified Tribe. None of the participants could see any of the others. The only thing they could see was the woman on top of the bridge, and the Immortality Bridgestone in front of her.

In different areas, different people all shot up into the sky. Meng Hao suddenly appeared directly in front of the woman. He reached out and took hold of the Immortality Bridgestone.

The instant he did, a buzzing sound filled him. It felt as if something had grabbed his body, and he was suddenly shooting forward at incredibly high speed.

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# Chapter 454: Demoness Zhixiang

Meng Hao wasn’t the only one experiencing such a thing. The exact same thing happened to everyone from all the other Tribes. The woman in front of them did not seem to be a Cultivator, but rather, something more like a puppet. As for the bridge, it had turned into something like a flying shuttle, carrying them off to some other location.

No life force whatsoever could be detected coming from the woman. In fact, if you observed how she moved, it seemed stiff. In Meng Hao’s estimation, she must not be a real person, but a puppet, another mysterious aspect of the Bridge of Immortal Treading.

As he whistled through the air, Meng Hao saw twenty or more figures appearing around him.

These figures were the representatives from the other qualified Tribes. However, because of the incredible speed with which they were moving, their features could not be seen clearly.

The world flashed by as they shot through the air and clouds. The speed with which they moved was incredible. Soon, Meng Hao couldn’t even breathe. His mind was spinning as he looked down at the lands beneath them. They rapidly shrank, until the Crow Divinity Tribes were only a small dot.

Soon, he could see about half of the entire Western Desert!

Such indescribable speed filled Meng Hao with a sense of grave danger. He had the feeling that if he wasn’t able to keep a firm grip on the Immortality Bridgestone, his body would be crushed into smithereens.

Even as this thought entered his mind, he saw a nearby figure suddenly lose contact with the Immortality Bridgestone. Instantly, a fountain of blood appeared. There wasn't even time for a bloodcurdling scream. Death came in an instant.

This caused Meng Hao's mind to tremble. He kept a tight grip on his Immortality Bridgestone, his eyes glowing brightly.

The temperature was dropping rapidly. The coldness stabbed into his bones; were these people not Cultivators, they would barely even be able to move their bodies at this point.

By now, it wasn't just Meng Hao that was looking at the scene down below. Everyone was gazing at the lands beneath them. By now, Meng Hao could see all of the Western Desert, plus the Black Lands and even the Southern Domain. He was also able to see the Milky Way Sea!

There were a multitude of islands on the Milky Way Sea, but Meng Hao's gaze happened to come to rest on one particular island. By now, it was only a small dot, but Meng Hao was shocked to realize with a certainty that this island was none other than the very unreliable Patriarch Reliance!

His gaze flickered back to the Southern Domain, and the region of the Violet Fate Sect. Although he couldn't see the Violet Fate Sect clearly, his eyes were fixed on that particular area.

The Southern Domain continued to grow smaller and smaller. Meng Hao was now able to see that in addition to the Southern Domain and the Western Desert, there was another continent!

As soon as he laid eyes on it, his heart trembled. A host of indescribable thoughts filled his mind, to the point where he almost forgot to keep a firm grip on the Immortality Bridgestone. He could only stare blankly.

He was looking at… the Eastern Lands!

"So, at long last… I get to look at the Eastern Lands," he murmured inwardly. That had always been his dream as a child, and his dream when taking the imperial examinations. In fact, it was still his dream.

The Eastern Lands, the Great Tang!

He thought about his father and mother who had gone missing that day, and he thought about the violet wind. He also recalled the stories his mother had told him about the Eastern Lands, and the legends of the Great Tang.

“Dad, mom… is that where you are…?” He watched the Eastern Lands grow smaller and smaller until the entire continent looked like a small arc-like shape. It was at this point that suddenly a booming sound filled his body, and he felt as if he had just slammed into an invisible wall. The intensity of the blow caused his mouth to fill with blood. Instead of coughing it out, however, he swallowed it back down.

His vision grew blurry as everything around him became unclear. It was impossible to even send out Spiritual Sense. Everything was violently suppressed. The only thing he could do was hold on tightly to the Immortality Bridgestone and not allow his grip to loosen in the slightest.

This process in which everything grew blurry lasted for an indeterminable period of time. Eventually, a roaring sound began to echo out, and Meng Hao coughed up some blood. Gradually, the blurriness faded away. When Meng Hao’s vision returned to normal, all he could do was gape.

The blood he had just coughed up floating in front of him, and was speeding along with him.

Everything around him was black, blackness dotted with countless stars. The starlight was resplendent, shining out within the pitch black, allowing Meng Hao to see something far off in the distance.

He saw… a bridge!

A ruined bridge!

It was immeasurably large, and throbbed with an ancient will. It was as if it contained countless years of time. The bridge was made of stone, and spread out into vast depths of the blackness and the stars, making it impossible to see where it ended.

The bridge was not complete, but rather, had long since been reduced to countless chunks of rubble. The chunks of rubble had not been scattered about, though. Instead, they retained the original shape of the structure, making the bridge seem almost like a complete one if you looked at it from a distance.

The closer one came, however, the more easy it was to see the gaps between the various chunks. The gaps looked small, but upon nearing, it became clear that they were actually incredibly wide.

Countless fragments of dust drifted about in the gaps between the various chunks. They glowed brightly, causing the entire bridge itself to also glow.

“The Bridge of Immortal Treading….” murmured Meng Hao inwardly. Even as he neared the bridge, something shocking suddenly neared his field of vision.

Eight dark, blurry figures suddenly appeared up ahead, surrounding the puppet-like woman. As soon as they did, their Cultivation bases began to emanate ripples. The ripples far exceeded anything that Meng Hao could ever have imagined, and gave him the same feeling he’d gotten from the Immortal who had fallen out of the Heavens that year.

These eight figures were Immortals!

As these eight Immortals appeared up ahead, surrounding the woman, they all began to attack. Everything around them trembled as a blinding light appeared, filled with an indescribable feeling of extermination.

Meng Hao had originally assumed that the stiff woman who did not seem to be a Cultivator wouldn’t even move. However, it was at this point that countless ripples suddenly emanated off of her body, spreading out to slam into the divine abilities of the other eight. As a booming sound echoed out, Meng Hao and all the other Cultivators who were holding stones in their hands, coughed up blood. Although they couldn’t see each other clearly, it was possible to sense the shock and injury being experienced by the others.

“She’s not a puppet?” thought Meng Hao, shock filling his heart. At the same time that the boom echoed out, something like a fierce gale swept across everything. Meng Hao’s body did not feel stable, almost as if he were not capable of holding onto the Immortality Bridgestone anymore. The glow in the area began to flicker, and darkened by about half.

“Dammit, dammit….” thought Meng Hao, his fury burning. This was all he could do, however; rage inwardly and hold on tightly to the Immortality Bridgestone.

The booming caused the eight to be sent tumbling backward. In the blink of an eye, the woman proceeded forward with Meng Hao and the others, shooting off into the distance. However, it only took a moment for the eight to return. This time, their bodies were surrounded by bright glows. They looked like eight suns as they charged toward the woman.

The woman’s expression suddenly flickered. Her body disappeared, then reappeared off in the distance, whereupon she transformed into a beam of prismatic light that shot off at high speed.

One of the eight suddenly spoke, his voice cold: “Demoness Zhixiang of the Immortal Demon Sect, you were able to con Young Master out of his precious treasure. We’ve been chasing you for a whole sixty year cycle, and it turns out you were hiding here, pretending to be a puppet of the Bridge of Immortal Treading. Your little ruse fooled us before, but let’s see how exactly you plan to elude us this time!” 1

With that, the eight of them completely ignored Meng Hao and the others as they sped off in pursuit of the woman.

“She’s a Cultivator who was masquerading as a puppet to avoid pursuit? Immortal Demon Sect? What Sect is that…?” Meng Hao watched them disappear off into the distance, his mind and heart reeling. The Immortality Bridgestone in his hand had not ceased moving. It continued to carry the group of Cultivators toward the Bridge of Immortal Treading. They flew closer and closer, at a speed that Meng Hao had a hard time wrapping his mind around.

It was at this moment that suddenly, a furious roar could be heard from off in the distance. Behind them, eight colorful beams of light could be seen racing toward them. Their speed was such that they would obviously be able to catch up in a short time.

Meng Hao looked back and his pupils constricted. “Just what divine ability is that? The speed they can achieve while flying amongst the stars is….” He watched as the eight figures would move an incredible distance seemingly in a single movement.

It was almost as if the space beneath their feet was being shrunken.

“Shrunken… shrunken….” murmured Meng Hao. He suddenly thought back to when he had left Planet South Heaven and how the land had seemed to shrink. Ignoring the true size of his body, it made it seem as if with a single step he could cross a huge divide.

Even as the eight people sped in pursuit, Meng Hao suddenly felt a tremor run through his body. Roaring sounds could be heard as some massive, invisible force seemed to emanate out from the Immortality Bridgestone in his hand and then suck Meng Hao inside.

The same thing happened to the others. All of the Western Desert Cultivators from Planet South Heaven suddenly vanished as they entered the true Bridge of Immortal Treading.

As for the eight Immortals, when they arrived, they found nothing but empty space. They looked around at the rubble, but dared not enter.

“So, she got away again. This Demoness’s craftiness knows no bounds. This time, however, she abandoned her physical body and paid a heavy price to fuse her soul into the body of one of those ants from South Heaven.”

“The Bridge of Immortal Treading was destroyed by Ancestor Ji long ago. However a mighty force protects it and reforms it every one thousand years. The starry sky cannot go against it and Ji Immortals cannot enter it. We cannot go in, but, she will be forced to come out eventually. When she does, we’ll be waiting for her!” The eight Immortals gave a final look at the Bridge of Immortal Treading before turning and disappearing.

1. In Chinese, Zhixiang is zhǐ xiāng – Zhi is a type of plant root. Xiang means “fragrant” or “incense”. Madam Deathblade also humorously pointed out that in Chinese, her name is a homophone for “paper box.”

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# Chapter 455: Step on the Stone, Enter the Void

Meng Hao’s vision blurred. As soon as everything became clear again, he sent out his Spiritual Sense as he looked around vigilantly.

“Is this the Realm of the Bridge Ruins?” He hesitated for a moment as he looked down at the Immortality Bridgestone he held in his hand. It was this object that had brought him to his current location.

He was surrounded by destruction. A variety of colors could be seen in the sky which was sometimes red and occasionally pitch black. Lightning danced about up above, leaving behind what seemed like cracks.

The land was in complete ruins. There were corpses lying about which had been there for who knew how many years. Vestiges of the passage of time could be seen everywhere. Where he stood now was apparently once a city.

An aura of death filled the air; this world seemed to be like a cage, a place where, if you got stuck too long, you would end up being entombed there just like the death aura.

Meng Hao frowned slightly as he put away the Immortality Bridgestone. He looked around as he carefully reviewed the events which had led up to him arriving here. After a long moment, his eyes glittered as he recalled the scene outside when the eight Immortals left, only to suddenly return.

Muttering to himself for a moment, Meng Hao proceeded forward carefully. This place seemed to make his Spiritual Sense much weaker. It was difficult to see very far in any direction. In fact, his range now seemed to be limited to about fifteen hundred meters. Looking up at the lightning in the sky, Meng Hao dispelled any notions of flying up.

Time passed. Soon it was a month later. During that time, Meng Hao had been able to explore about half of the entire location. He encountered no other life forms, including any of the other Cultivators from the Western Desert.

This world was very small, and did not seem to have a regular shape. Its borders were formed by jagged edges, beyond which was nothingness. Meng Hao currently was standing on one such border.

In front of him was pitch blackness, gloomy and cold. It seemed capable of swallowing up anything and everything as it surrounded this region. Muttering, Meng Hao lifted up his hand and made a grasping motion. A nearby rock immediately flew up into the air and landed into his hand. He tossed it out toward the blackness. As soon as it touched the blackness, it bounced back to land in Meng Hao’s hand. He looked down at the rock and noticed that the part that had touched the blackness looked as if it had been sliced with a knife. It was completely flat and smooth.

Meng Hao’s frown deepened as he slowly backed up. This black void gave him a sense of incredible danger. He could only imagine what would happen to his body if he happened to run into the blackness.

“Something’s not right. If this is the Realm of the Bridge Ruins, then why am I the only person here? Besides… this place seems too small. Furthermore, there is none of the Celestial Soil that the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather mentioned!

“Other than the ruins of that city, I haven’t seen any of the remains of the Bridge of Immortal Treading!” Meng Hao turned to once again continue his careful explorations of this world.

By the time another half month went by, Meng Hao’s face was grim. He stood in the very center of the world, looking at a stone stele.

The stele was cracked, but not broken apart. It was in relatively good condition, and on its surface could vaguely be made out some rather large characters.

“Harmony City….” said Meng Hao softly. A ponderous look appeared in his eyes. He suddenly thought back to the eight Immortals he had seen on his way here, as well as the woman, Demoness Zhixiang.

“Immortal Demon Sect. Masquerading as a puppet. Demoness Zhixiang, trying to evade a deadly chase….” Sinking into thought, Meng Hao sat down, crossing his legs.

“That Demoness Zhixiang comes from a Sect called the Immortal Demon Sect. She conned the Young Master of those eight Immortals out of his treasure. Then she turned herself into a puppet to evade their pursuit.

“After she fled, why would the eight of them pursue us again, looking flustered and exasperated…?” Suddenly, a look of concentration filled his eyes.

“Actually, she didn’t flee! She used some other method to trick her eight pursuers and lead them away. They quickly realized something fishy was going on and returned as quickly as they could. Although, if you look at it from that perspective… well, perhaps she did something completely different that I couldn’t possibly imagine. Or perhaps she came to the Realm of the Bridge Ruins on her own power, to explore it. The final possibility… is that she is actually among us Cultivators who came from the Western Desert!” Meng Hao sat there silent and unmoving. This Demoness was someone who was being chased by eight Immortals, and clearly had a sublime Cultivation base.

A person like this was someone that Meng Hao had no desire to provoke. There was little need for further analysis. Meng Hao determined he would need to be vigilant and on the lookout. Although the Western Desert Cultivators seemed to have been scattered, he had the feeling that his third guess was the most likely one to be true.

“Who is she hiding with….” thought Meng Hao. Suddenly, he looked up into the sky to see a dark figure approaching at high speed. This dark figure was not a Cultivator, but rather, an enormous rock!

The rock was no less than two thousand meters wide. It whistled down from up above, causing lightning to spring up wherever it passed, and shattered the air. It seemed as if some incredible crushing force were descending.

It moved with incredible speed as it bore down. A huge pressure formed, causing the land to shake. Meng Hao’s pupils constricted, and he was just about to retreat when he suddenly sensed that this two thousand meter wide rock was actually not going to strike into the world he was in. Actually, it became an arc, changing directions and shooting off into another area of the sky.

Meng Hao stared in shock before taking a deep breath as he watched the enormous rock slam into the blackness that lay at the border of this world.

As it did, the void of the blackness seemed to shatter, and a huge gap became visible. The rock sailed through it and then disappeared.

All of this happened in the short amount of time it takes for an incense stick to burn. Meng Hao had little time to think about the matter. When the rock disappeared into the black void, his pupils constricted and his mind felt as if lightning were crashing around inside of it. He suddenly thought back to when he had been approaching the Bridge of Immortal Treading, and had seen the gaps between the various bridge stones, and the dust therein.

“That three thousand meter rock was one of the countless pieces of dust that I saw earlier. They are constantly flying about in the gaps between the stones which make up the Bridge of Immortal Treading!

“In that case, I am definitely on the Bridge of Immortal Treading. The year it collapsed, it broke apart into countless fragments. If I want to leave here, then the only way… will be with the aid of that dust!” His mind reeled as he came to this new understanding. He took a deep breath as he sat down cross-legged to wait quietly.

Time went by. According to Meng Hao’s understanding, time passed differently in this place than in the outside world. If months or years actually passed on the outside, that would be something that the Cultivators who entered this place could not hide. Furthermore, the Crow Soldier Greatfather wouldn’t have left that part out.

Three months passed, during which time, Meng Hao saw six huge rocks come and go. He did not act rashly, but rather, carefully observed what happened to the rocks after they slammed into the black void. Finally one day, a rock suddenly neared that was roughly two thousand meters wide.

When this particular rock appeared, Meng Hao took a deep breath. His body suddenly vanished. When it reappeared, he was in mid-air, stepping down onto the rock that was shooting through the air.

The instant he set foot onto it, Meng Hao suddenly felt as if there were some terrifying force getting ready to pull his body apart. He rotated his Cultivation base and the glow of three totems emerged. In this manner, he was able to force himself into a state of stability. He immediately sat down cross-legged and stared out straight ahead.

The rock moved with incredible speed. In the blink of an eye, it passed over the land. In the space of about ten breaths, it reached the black void. Meng Hao’s heart beat nervously. This endeavor was a gamble; however, having observed what happened with all the other rocks, he was confident.

In the blink of an eye, the rock was upon the black void. It slammed into it, causing a rip in the blackness, a gap which it then passed through. As it shot through, Meng Hao settled his Qi and concentrated. Sitting there cross-legged atop the rock seemed frightening, but was actually not dangerous. He was now out in the black void.

The moment he entered the void, Meng Hao suddenly felt coldness. The intensity of this coldness was such that it could freeze the soul. Meng Hao quickly rotated his Cultivation base to fight back against the cold.

His eyes were wide as he looked around. The blackness seemed endless. However, he was able to see beams of colorful light flying about here and there.

Each of these beams was an enormous rock!

“This method should work great. This Realm of the Bridge Ruins contains the remains of the Bridge of Immortal Treading. The people who come here move about between the remnants of the Bridge of Immortal Treading by means of these rocks!” His body began to quiver because of the cold. He rotated his Cultivation base, but that alone did not suffice. His body was starting to grow stiff. Eyes glittering, he circulated the power of his fire totem, forcing his body to not be stiff with cold. Despite this, a layer of frost appeared on his skin. It looked almost like he was turning into a statue of ice.

“With this method, I should be able to hold out for quite a bit longer. Thankfully I have the Everburning Flame. Otherwise, without preparing cold-repelling items ahead of time, it would be difficult to survive here.” The cold continued to grow more intense around him. Meng Hao sat there motionless, ensuring that none of the heat left his body, and his life force continued to remain.

Time passed by. Meng Hao wasn’t sure how long the rock had carried him through this world of blackness. Suddenly, a rock nearly one thousand meters large appeared off in the distance. From the way it whistled toward him, it seemed it would brush past Meng Hao and his rock.

As the two rocks got closer and closer, a light “eee!?” noise suddenly could be heard.

“So I’ve run into someone who didn’t come with a cold-repelling treasure! What good fortune! Hahaha!” This voice belonged to a man, and as the other rock neared, Meng Hao could sense that a middle-aged man sat cross-legged in meditation upon it.

His Cultivation base was at the early Nascent Soul stage, and his body glittered with totem tattoos. On his forehead was a golden totem tattoo that looked like a lion. He was surrounded by five white stones which emitted a shield, enveloping the man and fighting back against the cold.

As the man’s words rang out, he licked his lips. His eyes filled with a sharp glow, and as his rock neared Meng Hao’s, the man suddenly stood up. He vanished, and when he reappeared, he was standing on Meng Hao’s rock. He lifted his hand, and a golden lion magically appeared. It roared as it pounced toward Meng Hao.

“I’ll kill you to put you out of your misery, and then I, Xue, will have one less person to compete with, and a greater chance at success!”

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# Chapter 456: Changes of the Lotus!

The golden lion roared as it neared. Suddenly, Meng Hao’s eyes snapped open. They had been closed the entire time in his efforts to not waste even a scrap of energy. It was in this manner that he could use the power of the Everburning Flame to fight back against the bitter coldness of the void, and prevent his life force from being exterminated. After all, he had not come prepared with any cold-resisting magical items.

When he saw the middle-aged man and felt his killing intent, Meng Hao had maintained his motionlessness.

He was waiting; waiting for the man to near him. That way, he could conserve the most amount of energy when killing him. The man wanted to rob Meng Hao of his life; how could Meng Hao not prepare to take the man’s cold-resisting treasure after that?

Almost the same moment that Meng Hao opened his eyes, he sprang into motion. His body immediately disappeared, then reappeared next to the man. The man’s face filled with surprise as he realized that his previous assessment of the situation was incorrect; Meng Hao’s sudden movement proved this.

“His soul hasn’t been frozen by the cold!” the man thought, his scalp growing numb. “The ice on his body isn’t fake. Neither is the cold emanating off of him; that’s impossible to fake. In that case… he really doesn’t have a cold-resisting magical item. But, without that, how could he possibly stay alive?!” The man instantly shot backward, trying to put some distance between himself and Meng Hao.

Meng Hao gave a cold snort. He suddenly shook his body, causing layer after layer of ice to crumble off of him. The Everburning Flame exploded with power, expelling massive amounts of coldness out of his body. It merged with the chunks of ice around him to transform into a frigid ice tempest that shot toward his opponent.

The man’s face flickered as the tempest slammed into his golden lion. A boom could be heard, and blood began to ooze out of the corners of the man’s mouth. His face turned green as coldness entered his body.

He continued to fall back with urgency, using minor teleportation to return to his own rock. However, even as he reappeared, Meng Hao also popped into being on the same rock. He lifted his right hand, causing the Lotus Sword Formation to appear.

The power of Time rotated out explosively. As it neared the man, his face fell and he slapped his bag of holding. A black statue of a closed-eyed monkey appeared. It immediately began to emanate a black glow; at the same time, the man began to mutter an incantation. Suddenly, the statue opened its eyes to reveal a bloodthirsty gleam.

The man’s expression became savage and he said, “Statue, kill this… huh?”

Suddenly, his expression changed and his body began to tremble. His hair immediately turned white, and his skin began to dry up and whither. It was as if countless years had passed by in an instant.

“This….” The man was panting as he once again retreated. Without hesitation, he spit out some heart blood and used its power to try to get out of range of the power of the Lotus Sword Formation. Unfortunately, he failed, and his body continued to wither. During this critical moment, his eyes filled with despair. He suddenly lifted his hand up and levelled a blow against his own head. A boom could be heard as his Nascent Soul suddenly emerged. It used a minor teleportation to attempt to get out of range of the Lotus Sword Formation.

“What magical item is this!?!?” he said, his voice shrill and filled with an unprecedented level of terror. His Nascent Soul began to shake violently; it wouldn’t be able to survive very long in the bitter cold.

As for his physical body, it died in the blink of an eye, transformed into nothing more than ash, obliterated by Time itself.

All of this takes some time to describe, but actually happened faster than the spark flying off of a piece of flint. The power of the Lotus Sword Formation was vastly increased in this place. Not even Meng Hao had been aware that something like this would happen. He stared in shock.

It took him only a moment to come to his senses, though. With a cold snort, he moved forward and grabbed the man’s bag of holding, including the monkey statue, which the man had only half activated. He also collected up the five small, white rocks. Then he flashed an incantation gesture with his left hand, causing the Lotus Sword Formation to return.

After that, his body flickered as he returned to his two thousand meter wide rock. He looked back at the middle-aged man’s Nascent Soul, and the killing intent in his eyes faded.

“Fellow Daoist, save me…” he said, his voice shrill with fear. “I’m from a sub-Tribe of the Western Desert’s great Goldenroar Tribe. What happened just now was a misunderstanding, you….” The man’s Nascent Soul trembled; cracking sounds could be heard as ice began to form on its surface.

The two rocks were only temporarily near each other. As of this moment, they were now moving apart, each one heading off in a different direction. Meng Hao realized that taking the time to kill the man completely would be a waste, and as such, had returned to his own large rock.

The man now only had his Nascent Soul left, and no cold-resisting treasure. He would die for certain.

Therefore, Meng Hao did nothing. He sat down cross-legged on his large rock. He then took out the five small rocks and studied them for a moment. He was about to erase the branding seal on them, when it suddenly began to fade away on its own. Meng Hao looked thoughtfully back toward the smaller rock which was disappearing into the void. The middle-aged man’s Nascent Soul was now completely frozen solid.

“The cold in this void is shocking,” thought Meng Hao, quickly branding the small stones to himself. Immediately, a glow appeared, surrounding Meng Hao and reducing the cold by more than half. Meng Hao let out a sigh of relief. Now, his confidence in being able to proceed through the void on this large rock was even greater.

Sitting there cross-legged, he produced the man’s bag of holding, opened it, and glanced over the contents. There were quite a bit of Spirit Stones and a random collection of odds and ends. There were quite a few magical items, but Meng Hao ignored them, searching instead for jade slips.

He found a total of eight. After glancing them over, he selected one, which he began to study closely. After a moment, he lifted his head up, and a bright glow appeared in his eyes.

“So, the great Tribes really are well-equipped to come to this place. They even have maps!” The jade slip he held in his hand contained a simple map. The map depicted four locations in which the fragments of the bridge formed large land masses. One of them was the place that Meng Hao had just come from.

“It seems this guy was heading toward Harmony City. However, I explored the place thoroughly and didn’t find anything unusual.” Meng Hao frowned. He continued to look through the bag of holding, eventually pulling out a jade box.

The box emitted a soft glow. Meng Hao didn’t open it immediately, but studied it closely to make sure there wasn’t anything dangerous about. Finally, he opened it, whereupon a dense Qi sprang out. The Qi contained a medicinal aura that seemed capable of moving his spirit. In addition, it gave him an indescribable feeling that was similar to ultra high-grade Spirit Stones, except, even stronger.

After taking only a single breath, Meng Hao’s spirit was shaken, and his skin went tight.

Inside of the box was a finger sized clump of black soil which was where the powerful Qi was emanating out from. After examining it closely, two characters sprang up in Meng Hao’s mind.

“Celestial soil!” His eyes glittered as he examined it. After doing so, he was now certain that this soil did contain the power of the five elements.

“Too bad there’s so little. If I had a lot more, I could use the same method I used with the Fire-type power to make my own Earth-type totem!” Meng Hao’s heart was beating as he closed the box and then put it away.

“If I want to get more Celestial soil, it will require robbing others. Well… then rob I shall!” His eyes filled with determination. To Meng Hao, the matter of forming his Earth-type totem was just as important of a reason for coming to the Realm of the Bridge Ruins as was acquiring a Demon Spirit. He looked out into the void and began to recall the shocking power of the Lotus Sword Formation earlier.

“The power just now far exceeded the ordinary power of Time. It was able to cause a Nascent Soul Cultivator to abandon his physical body in the blink of an eye. It made time pass so quickly that even minor teleportation wouldn’t work. The only way for him to get away was to cause his Nascent Soul to emerge. Just now, the Lotus Sword Formation emitted Time power equivalent to one thousand years!”

Meng Hao began to pant as he took out his Wooden Time Swords to look at.

No matter how he studied them, however, they appeared normal. Meng Hao couldn’t find any signs of change whatsoever.

“Could it have something to do with this void?” he thought. “Or is it because, as I speculated, time flows differently in the Realm of the Bridge Ruins than outside in the Western Desert?” After thinking about the matter for some time, Meng Hao couldn’t come up with any more clues. Nonetheless, his eyes flickered with a bright glow. If he could figure out the true reason for the increase in power, then maybe he would be able to cause the Lotus Time Formation to permanently increase its power.

“In any case, even if it only has this effect in the Realm of the Bridge Ruins, it’s still an incredible advantage for me!”

Meng Hao put away the Wooden Time Swords and look out into the black void. Up ahead, a large land mass was approaching. The rock he was on was tiny when compared to this immense, unmoving mass.

“I’m here!” said Meng Hao, rising to his feet. The jade slip he had acquired from the man had a description of the location up ahead. Just like the place Meng Hao had come from, this was… one of the broken remnants of the Bridge of Immortal Treading.

Of course, the Bridge of Immortal Treading was incredibly massive, so each of the tens of thousands of fragments were so large they were like continents.

Meng Hao’s two thousand meter wide rock shot rapidly through the void toward the giant land mass, emitting a piercing shriek. Meng Hao once again sat down. He collected the cold-resisting magical item, once again igniting the Everburning Flame to battle against the suppressive cold.

Closer…. Closer….

A massive boom could suddenly be heard. Meng Hao felt the rock shaking beneath him, a tremor which ran up into his own body. The rock shredded through the void; as it burst through, a bright light suddenly became visible.

Meng Hao instantly sent his Spiritual Sense out. Lightning filled the sky in this world, permeating it with cracks. However, as he looked around calmly, he realized that this world seemed more stable than the one he had been in before.

Mountains rose and fell off into the distance. There were even lakes and rivers. The whole place was very large. From his vantage point up in mid-air, it seemed this land mass was probably about ten times bigger than the previous one.

As the rock whistled through the air, Meng Hao stood up and examined his surroundings. Suddenly, a look of concentration filled his eyes, and he frowned.

Off in the distance, he could see seven beams of light twisting through the air, locked in battle.

Of the seven people within the beams of light, the two highest Cultivation bases were of the mid Nascent Soul stage. Those two were fighting back and forth, causing rumbling booms to fill the air. As for the other five, they were obviously allies of the two who were fighting.

The two mid Nascent Soul stage Cultivators were both men. One wore a violet robe, the other a white one. Both were handsome, and had extraordinary bearings. They continuously unleashed various divine abilities as they attempted to prevent the other from snatching… a white glow that floated in the air not too far away from them!

Within the glow, Meng Hao could see a finger-sized clump of Celestial soil.

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# Chapter 457: Yi Chenzi

At the same moment in which Meng Hao caught sight of this group of people, they also looked up into the sky at the two thousand meter rock whistling through the air. They saw Meng Hao standing there atop of the rock, his hair whipping about, his face expressionless.

His eyes shone with a bright light as he suddenly teleported from atop the rock to reappear about thirty meters away from the group.

Meng Hao made a slight noise of surprise. He had originally intended to teleport directly next to the clump of glowing Celestial soil. His appearance in this location seemed to indicate that something had interfered with his minor teleportation.

Almost the same instant that Meng Hao reappeared, one of the seven, a ruddy-faced old man, gave a cold harrumph. He waved his right hand, causing a red sea to magically appear. It shot up into the air and then began to descend as a red rain which roared toward Meng Hao.

“Since I can’t teleport, well….” A bloody glow suddenly rose up around Meng Hao. It flickered, and then Meng Hao disappeared. Shockingly, when he reappeared, he was directly in front of the ruddy-faced old man. The speed with which he moved was astonishing, causing the old man’s pupils to constrict. He fell back, raising his right hand up to summon another red sea. It almost looked like a sea of blood as it roiled around him.

A booming sound filled the air as Meng Hao shot forward. Eyeless Larva silk whizzed around him, emanating a silver glow. It sliced into the incoming red sea, blocking it completely.

The ruddy-faced old man's face flickered and he continued to back up. Unfortunately, he was too slow. Meng Hao's hand formed into a fist which slammed out into the air. The motion caused a violent windstorm to rise up and sweep out in all directions. Facing up against this attack, the old man's hands flickered in an incantation, causing his totem tattoos to begin to glow as he attempted to defend himself.

The sound of an explosion ripped out, and blood sprayed from the mouth of the old man. His expression was one of astonishment as he continued to retreat, obviously incapable of blocking Meng Hao.

Meng Hao ignored the man and instead headed back toward the group of people, obviously intent on taking the Celestial soil.

At the moment, none of these people were capable of ignoring Meng Hao. Everything that had happened just now had occurred with incredible speed. The fact that Meng Hao had just forced a Nascent Soul Cultivator to retreat left them filled with shock.

Even the two mid Nascent Soul stage Cultivators were frowning. Unfortunately, they were at a critical point in the battle. The clump of Celestial soil was right next to them, and neither was able to snatch it away.

“Kill that man!”

“Exterminate him!”

The men actually yelled out at exactly the same time, simultaneously unleashing divine abilities on each other. One of them summoned a violet crocodile. As for the other, a white crane materialized next to him. The two continued to fight.

As for the four others who were fighting around them, they didn't hesitate for a moment. They all suddenly changed directions and shot toward Meng Hao.

As the four neared, the Wood character on Meng Hao's forehead flickered. Suddenly, an enormous tree appeared around him, which in turn was covered with shapeless flames that shot up into the sky.

“Disseminate!” Meng Hao’s hands flashed an incantation, then jerked his arms out wide. A flame sea roared into being, with Meng Hao at its center. It roiled out in all directions, setting everything aflame. Within the manifestations of Meng Hao’s Wood- and Fire-type totems, golden droplets suddenly became visible. The flame sea continued to spread out, filled with the shocking power of Metal-, Wood-, and Fire-type totems.

His four opponents’ faces flickered, and they used various methods in response. Next to one, an enormous Xuanwu turtle appeared. Another waved his hand, causing a red gigantic centipede to roar into being next him.

As for the other two, each of them caused a howling Cyclops to magically appear to fight the flame sea.

The flame sea was like an enormous mouth, waiting to sweep over the four and consume them, and the roaring it caused was shocking. It swept over the Xuanwu turtle, which let out a miserable shriek as its body was ripped into pieces. The Nascent Soul Cultivator controlling it tumbled backward, blood spraying from his mouth.

As for the gigantic centipede, it was actually fire-resistant. However, when the golden droplets hit it, it was transformed into a golden statue, which was then melted by the flames. The Cultivator controlling it was astonished to find that his entire arm had turned the color of gold. An immense pressure weighed down on him that seemed capable of turning his body to gold in an instant.

As for the two Cyclopses, their screams were the most wretched of all as their bodies were torn to shreds. The fragments were then transformed into gold, which then evaporated into the air.

This was the first time Meng Hao had truly unleashed the full power of his three great totems. As soon as the magic spread out, the four Nascent Soul Cultivators were forced to retreat, coughing up blood the entire time.

Meng Hao’s body turned into a long beam that whistled through the air amidst the flame sea. The fire stretched out behind him almost like a cloak. The golden droplets and the flaming tree seemed like decorations on the cloak.

If you could paint a picture of the scene, Meng Hao’s imposing manner would be shocking to the extreme!

The scene shook the two mid Nascent Soul stage Cultivators. They glanced at each other, and simultaneously stopped fighting. Instead, they unleashed their divine abilities in the direction of Meng Hao.

These two mid Nascent Soul stage Cultivators were beyond the compare of the early Nascent Stage Cultivators from moments ago. Both the fearsome totemic crocodile and the gigantic white crane instantly shot toward Meng Hao, emanating ferocious auras that mixed with the crushing weight of the mid Nascent Soul Stage to descend onto Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. Moments ago, he had been watching these people fighting over the Celestial soil while he flew along on top of the two thousand meter large rock. During that time, he had already formulated a plan for how to achieve his objective, which was not to kill these people, but to snatch the Celestial soil!

Even as the two mid Nascent Soul stage Cultivators neared, Meng Hao waved his right hand, causing ripples to suddenly emanate out. They instantly turned black in color, and then solidified into the first streamer of the flag of three streamers. Ji Nineteen was temporarily unbound as the streamer shot out.

The flag of three streamers was the most powerful magical item that Meng Hao possessed. When it appeared, the sky grew dim. The violet-robed man’s face fell, and he immediately retreated. Unfortunately, despite flashing incantations, employing various divine abilities and producing magical items, he was incapable of fighting back against the sweeping blackness which shot toward him.

A boom echoed out, and blood sprayed from the man's mouth. Killing intent, but also shock, filled his eyes as he was flung backward several hundred meters before finally being able to come to a stop.

At the same time, Meng Hao continued forward at top speed. Lifting his hand toward the white-robed Cultivator, he suddenly pointed out.

"Demon Sealing, Eighth Hex!"

As soon as the Demon Sealing Hex appeared, the white-robed man's expression flickered. Countless strands rose up that only Meng Hao could see. They immediately bound the man up, completely sealing him down.

Of course, the sealing would not last for very long, only the space of a single breath. However… that was all the time Meng Hao needed.

As he shot forward toward the Celestial Soil, the surrounding seven Nascent Soul Cultivators all watched on, eyes filled with killing intent and even more so, anxiety.

However, it was at this exact moment that ripples suddenly appeared in the middle of the air not too far off. A figure appeared, a young man wearing a long black robe. His head was unusually small and completely out of proportion with the rest of his body. He looked somewhat like a rat; his expression was somber, and his eyes glowed with bloodthirstiness. Laughing evilly, he shot forward with speed that exceeded Meng Hao's, heading directly toward the Celestial soil.

He had been using some special technique to remain hidden in the area, undetectable. He had originally planned to wait until the two fighting parties were at a deadlock, and then suddenly make a move and wipe them all out.

But then Meng Hao showed up. The way he swept the people aside was shocking, but also opened up a chance for this young man. Without hesitation, he made a decisive move.

“Many thanks, Fellow Daoist!” cried the small-headed Cultivator. “It would be impolite for Yi Chenzi to turn down a gift like this Celestial soil!” As he reached out to grab ahold of it, killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes. The Eyeless Larva suddenly flew out. Its silk began to wrap around the clump of Celestial soil at the exact same time that the Cultivator Yi Chenzi grabbed onto it.

A bang could be heard as the finger-sized clump of Celestial soil suddenly split into two pieces. One was dragged back toward Meng Hao by the Eyeless Larva, the other was grabbed by Yi Chenzi, who immediately turned and shot off in the other direction.

When the seven Nascent Soul Cultivators saw the small-headed Yi Chenzi, their expressions immediately filled with shock.

“Yi Chenzi!” 1

“That’s Yi Chenzi, the guy who betrayed and then slaughtered the entire Gryphon Tribe!”

“Dammit! He’s evil to the core! I heard he made living sacrifices of his own Clan to further his cultivation!”

Meng Hao grabbed the Celestial soil and then slapped his bag of holding to produce the blood-colored mask. He immediately put it on, causing his Cultivation base to explode with power, and a Blood Qi to rise up. His aura spread out in all directions, causing the Cultivators to feel complete astonishment. The pupils of the two mid Nascent Soul stage Cultivators constricted. As of this moment, they had no desire whatsoever to participate in the conflict between Yi Chenzi and Meng Hao.

“Nobody owns the Celestial soil,” said Meng Hao, “so it belongs to whoever manages to snatch it! If you have the skill to escape with it, then it will belong to you!” With that, he shot forward with incredible speed. The distance between the two immediately lessened. Meng Hao waved his right hand, causing a blood-colored face to appear. Rumbling filled the air as it shot toward the fleeing Yi Chenzi, whose face immediately fell. He quickly performed an incantation with his left hand, causing a glistening fish scale to appear in his palm. He threw it out behind him, where it instantly began to expand until it was about ten meters tall.

A boom rattled out as the power of Meng Hao’s Blood Immortal face slammed into its blocking force. Yi Chenzi coughed up some blood, then suddenly vanished. When he reappeared, he was already three thousand meters away. He turned back, a sinister smile on his face.

“Draconic Vulture Transformation!” he cried. Immediately, the fish scale exploded out in size. Black Qi boiled up into the sky, transforming into an enormous vulture. The vulture’s eyes were bright red as it charged toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s face was completely expressionless as he said, “A single word.”

Instantly, the face once again appeared. Its lips began to move as amorphous ripples began to spread out. The seemingly horrifying vulture suddenly began to tremble, then suddenly collapsed into pieces. Meng Hao, moving as fast as lightning, shot through the collapsing pieces of the vulture.

This caused Yi Chenzi’s face to fall. He immediately spun around and once again began to flee.

“Dammit, how come that bastard has so many divine abilities. He has three totems, Metal, Fire and Wood. And what magical item was that mask just now?”

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he employed a minor teleportation as he shot in pursuit of Yi Chenzi.

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1. Yi Chenzi’s name in Chinese is yī chén zǐ. It’s a really weird name. Yi means “one.” Chen means “dust.” Zi means “son” or “child”

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# Chapter 458: A Faint Sound!

Two people, one chasing the other through the air at top speed.

Meng Hao wore the blood-colored mask, and his eyes glowed with coldness. Eyeless Larva silk circulated around his body, emitting a droning sound. Occasionally he would employ minor teleportation to get closer to Yi Chenzi.

As for Yi Chenzi, he shot forward with all the speed he could muster. His Cultivation base was at the mid Nascent Soul stage, and he possesed extraordinary divine abilities. He had a vicious personality, and was actually quite infamous throughout the Western Desert.

He was once a member of the Gryphon Tribe. Through a chance bit of good fortune, he had acquired an evil magic. In order to cultivate this evil magic, he had secretly begun to sacrifice members of his own Tribe to the totems on his body. The enticement of this secret technique was impossible to resist. When the matter was discovered, he confessed his guilt and managed to acquire the forgiveness of his fellow Tribe members. However, he then secretly used a ruthless method to kill the Greatfather of the Gryphon Tribe, who was none other than his own father!

After that, he cold-bloodedly slaughtered the rest of the Tribe. Regardless of young or old, they were all cut down and sacrificed to mutate his totems. It was in this fashion that he was able to acquire an early Nascent Soul stage Cultivation base.

When all of those things happened, a full sixty-year cycle previous, it had caused a huge sensation throughout the Western Desert. The Gryphon Tribe was a small Tribe, but such matters of Tribe betrayal were appalling to the extreme. Because of that, Yi Chenzi immediately became infamous throughout the Western Desert.

During the following sixty-year cycle, he appeared three more times in the Western Desert. Each time, he slaughtered a Tribe. The first two times had been small Tribes, but the third time was a mid-sized Tribe. It was that occasion which allowed him to step into the mid Nascent Soul stage. After that, he disappeared without a trace.

As he shot through the air like lightning, Yi Chenzi thought to himself, “If I get enough Celestial soil, I can use it with my secret technique to stimulate the power of my totems. After that, I’ll need a hundred thousand blood sacrifices! That will give me the chance to enter the late Nascent Soul stage!” Each time Meng Hao used a minor teleportation, so did he.

As time progressed, he was able to maintain the distance between himself and Meng Hao, making it impossible for Meng Hao to catch up to him!

The giant face around Meng Hao suddenly expanded to an even larger size and then shot forward, radiating attack energy. Yi Chenzi’s face flickered, but he didn’t slow down in the least. Instead, he actually started to go faster.

“Dammit, how can this guy be so fast!?” he thought. Howling inwardly, Yi Chenzi continued to flee. It had been a long time since he had gone all out like this.

“Want to catch me? You’re still not qualified!” Yi Chenzi gave a cold harrumph and then employed the pride of his divine abilities to increase his speed once more.

At the same time, however, Meng Hao suddenly lifted his hand to employ the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex. The instant it appeared, Yi Chenzi suddenly stopped in mid-air. This sudden stop scared him out of his wits. Although he quickly recovered, by the time he did, the rippling power of Meng Hao’s Without a Face had arrived.

A boom filled the air as blood sprayed out from Yi Chenzi’s mouth. However, five fish scales suddenly appeared, which then exploded, giving him a burst of speed that allowed him to escape once more.

“Dammit, what divine ability was that?!?!” thought Yi Chenzi, his face pale. Lowering his head in determination, he continued to move along at the fastest speed he could muster.

Time passed by, and soon it was a day later.

Meng Hao was frowning. He looked up ahead at Yi Chenzi, who moved with increasingly greater speed. The killing intent in Meng Hao’s eyes grew even stronger. This Yi Chenzi was one of the fastest Cultivators that he had ever encountered. He also seemed to excel in one particular escape art which allowed him to merge into the air. When coupled with minor teleportation, its power was even further increased.

Seeing the distance between them once again grow greater, Meng Hao caused a bloody glow to surround him. A Bloodburst Flash caused his speed to increase dramatically. His body blurred until it looked like a ghost, and then he used a minor teleportation to close the distance again.

Unfortunately, as soon as he neared the man, Yi Chenzi would once again disappear, transforming into a green smoke that moved a hundred times faster than before.

In the midst of this incredible increase in speed, he used teleportation, causing the effect to be even greater.

“That art again!” thought Meng Hao. Now the distance between them was once again increased. Meng Hao was shocked, and his killing intent grew even greater. He continued to alternate between Bloodburst Flash and minor teleportation. He was now around three thousand meters away from Yi Chenzi, who was just about to use his escape art.

Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding to produce a series of magical items. Many of these he had acquired after coming to the Western Desert. Some were from the Five Poison Tribe’s war of invasion, and quite a few were from the Goldenroar Tribe Cultivator.

He waved his arm, causing the items to turn into beams of light that shot forward.

“Boom!” growled Meng Hao, his eyes flickering coldly. Instantly, the dozens of magical items began to tremble and then explode. Meng Hao hated to lose such valuable items. However, now was not the time to sit around thinking about such things. As the magical items exploded, a roaring sound rose up and intense ripples spread out in all directions.

As the power of the explosion spread out, Meng Hao caused the Lotus Sword Formation to appear. Spinning Wooden Time Swords transformed into a beam of light that shot forward.

Meng Hao could have borrowed the momentum of the exploding magical items to increase his speed. If he did, he would instantly have been propelled hundreds of meters closer to Yi Chenzi.

However, even using that method, he would not have been able to catch up. Therefore, Meng Hao did not use the blast to increase his own speed, but rather… the speed of the Lotus Sword Formation.

The Wooden Time Swords within the formation were already fast. However, with the additional momentum from the explosive attack, the three thousand meter distance was closed in the blink of an eye. Even as Yi Chenzi was utilizing his escape art, the sword formation appeared behind him, rotating out with the explosive power of Time.

The power of Time caused ripples to spread out in the air. Then Meng Hao frowned. Yi Chenzi’s escape art was truly bizarre; even the power of the Time Sword Formation could do nothing to prevent Yi Chenzi from turning into a green stream of smoke that began to shoot off into the distance. That was when the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex suddenly activated.

In the sudden pause it caused, a miserable shriek could be heard. However, the green smoke continued off into the distance nonetheless, whereupon it transformed back into Yi Chenzi.

As soon as he appeared, he coughed up a huge mouthful of blood. His face was ashen, and his hair had suddenly turned white. His body was clearly older, and shock covered his face. He trembled violently, his eyes filled with dread.

“That bizarre divine ability again!” he said, his scalp going numb. “And… another magical item!!” He had just suffered a loss of three hundred years to his longevity. This fact left him completely terrified, scared out of his mind. He coughed up another mouthful of blood and then surged again in retreat.

“Dammit, dammit! This is only half a piece of Celestial soil. Is it worth it? Well, is it?!?!” Yi Chenzi ground his teeth as he whistled through the air.

Meng Hao’s eyes were cold and hard as he frowned.

“The power of the Lotus Sword Formation is indeed much greater here than in the outside world, but not as much as it is in the void. It’s about seventy percent weaker.

“Could it be that the Time power in the sword formation will only reach the terrifying amount of one thousand years when it’s out in the void?” Meng Hao was lost in thought as he once again continued in pursuit of Yi Chenzi.

Time passed; another day went by.

“How come it’s not here yet,” thought Yi Chenzi. “According to my calculations, it should be right here, right now!” Yi Chenzi looked haggard. That was especially so considering that Meng Hao was continuously consuming medicinal pills. Yi Chenzi had an mixed feeling; however, when he stole something, he would die before giving it back. That was his rule. Gritting his teeth at Meng Hao’s continuous pursuit, he once again used his escape art.

It was at this moment that off in the distant sky, a beam of light appeared. This shooting beam of light was no Cultivator, but rather, a one thousand meter wide rock. This rock was moving at high speed along its orbit. From the look of it, it was near the edge of this particular land mass.

“It’s here!” thought Yi Chenzi, his eyes filling with delight. Even as Meng Hao frowned, Yi Chenzi suddenly leaped up into the air. Meng Hao watched as he performed an incantation gesture, preparing to employ who knew what magical technique. Suddenly, the flying rock off in the distance changed direction and shot toward him.

“So, he can control the rocks in this place!” thought Meng Hao, his pupils constricting. Seeing Yi Chenzi heading toward the rock, Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly filled with a bright glow. At this critical moment, it was without hesitation that he pointed out with his finger and, just as Yi Chenzi was about to land on the rock, employed the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex.

It happened just as Yi Chenzi was about to transform into green smoke. Yi Chenzi had long since guessed that his opponent would most likely use this bizarre divine ability. Therefore, he transformed into the green smoke and then reappeared on the surface of the rock.

“Hope to see you again someday, Fellow Daoist!” he cried, laughing uproariously. However, it was at this moment that his expression suddenly filled with shock as he noticed that the rock beneath his feet… had suddenly stopped moving.

Meng Hao’s Eighth Hex had not been aimed at Yi Chenzi at all, but rather, the enormous rock.

The moment the rock stopped moving, Eyeless Larva silk suddenly began to spin, binding up the rock. A moment later, the rock recovered its momentum and shot forward. As it did, it pulled Meng Hao in tow.

Being pulled at the same speed as the rock, Meng Hao instantly landed on its surface. He lifted up his right hand and punched out with an explosive fist. Yi Chenzi’s face flickered and he clenched his jaw as he prepared to fight back.

A boom filled the air. Yi Chenzi was sent tumbling off of the rock, blood spraying from his mouth. The Eyeless Larva silk loosened, and Meng Hao teleported off of the rock. When he reappeared, he was directly next to Yi Chenzi. His right hand snaked out to exterminate the man.

However, it was at this moment that the entire sky suddenly turned gray, and a gray mist rolled out to cover the land. Everything became a sea of gray.

At the same time, Meng Hao was astonished to discover that his entire body… was completely incapable of moving. Yi Chenzi was in exactly the same situation.

It was as if everything in the entire world had suddenly been rendered motionless.

At the same time, a crowd of figures could be seen moving through the mist. They had blank looks on their faces, and they carried chunks of Immortality Bridgestones on their shoulders as they trudged through the mist.

Faint, odd voices could suddenly be heard echoing throughout the world. “When will the Bridge of Immortality reappear like new…? Sir, on what day will we again lay eyes on you…?”

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# Chapter 459: Eccentric Bloodface

All of these figures were somewhat blurry, nor did they seem to have Cultivation bases. There were old people and young people, men and women. All of them seemed frustrated as they hauled along the chunks of Immortality Bridgestones. They trudged through the mist like specters.

As Meng Hao watched the spectacle, a sense of intense danger rose up within him. It made him feel as if he had encountered a dangerous predator. He had the feeling that if these bizarre figures ran into him, he would be dead for sure!

“What are they…?” he thought as he looked at the ghostly figures. There were more than a hundred of them walking through the mists. As they neared and then passed Meng Hao, he felt an intense coldness, similar to what he had felt out in the void.

Next, Meng Hao saw one of the strange figures within the group pass through the giant rock that was floating there in mid-air. When it came out the other side, it was carrying an illusory rock on its shoulders that was completely identical to the gigantic rock.

It was as if it were carrying the soul of that rock as it made its way off into the distance.

Although the one thousand meter wide Immortality Bridgestone still hung there in the air, Meng Hao could sense that it was somehow dead, as if it had lost its power to travel through the void.

As the figures moved off into the distance, their voices continued to echo out.

“When will the Bridge of Immortality reappear like new…? Sir, on what day will we again lay eyes on you…?”

The voices gradually faded away. The churning mist suddenly transformed into storm winds. The storm caused the gray cracks in the sky to begin to spin together, sucking in Yi Chenzi, Meng Hao and even the one thousand meter Immortality Bridgestone.

In fact, many of the ruins and objects within the area were also swept up into the tempest.

There was no resisting it; everything was sucked up. Then, the storm suddenly collapsed, sending everything inside shooting out in all directions.

Meng Hao got the same sensation he had all those years ago when he had been swept up by the wings of the roc. Wind tore at his body, threatening to rip it to pieces as the storm sent him shooting off into the distance.

Were he an ordinary Core Formation Cultivator, he would have been killed beyond the shadow of a doubt. However, Meng Hao had three totems of the five elements, which pushed him across the gap that existed between Core Formation and Nascent Soul. He gritted his teeth and rotated his Cultivation base to dispel the effects of the wild wind.

After about two hours passed, Meng Hao was able to suppress the force of the wind. He performed a minor teleportation to escape from within its devastating power.

When he finally removed himself from the region affected by the wind, blood sprayed from his mouth and his face turned ashen. He had teleported into a mountain range, where he quickly excavated an Immortal’s Cave and sat down cross-legged to meditate.

A few days later, the wind gradually died down. Meng Hao left the Immortal’s Cave and flew up into the air. He floated there, looking at the chaotic scene left behind by the wind. The wind had swept across the entire land, causing even many mountaintops to crumble.

“Just what exactly are those specters…?” Meng Hao frowned. He had a strange feeling about this mysterious Realm of the Bridge Ruins.

He could find no traces of Yi Chenzi. Considering the level of the man’s Cultivation base, he was likely capable of escaping from the wild wind. Furthermore, since he was so fearful of Meng Hao, it was highly likely that he had left this land mass as quickly as possible.

Muttering to himself, Meng Hao looked off into the distance. He was suddenly shocked to find that not too far off, a glowing mass could be seen. Within the glow were some granules of dirt. It was Celestial soil!

His body flickered as he shot toward it. He quickly collected it up, his heart beating wildly. Next, he sent Spiritual Sense out in all directions. Shockingly, he found three more locations in which Celestial soil was floating in mid-air.

Although they were only granules, they were still Celestial soil nonetheless.

“Now I get it,” he thought. “That wind kicked up the Celestial soil that was concealed in the area…. In that case, there must be quite a bit of Celestial soil in the air right now!” His eyes gleamed with joy. Without hesitation he teleported away. It didn’t take long for him to collect the three pieces of Celestial soil, after which he shot off into the distance.

After some time, Meng Hao began to breathe heavily. It had only taken a short while for him to collect together enough Celestial soil to form a clump the size of a fist.

During this time, he saw other Cultivators who were also madly rushing around looking for Celestial soil kicked up by the wind. Some of them were even fighting, although it was never more than a blow or two. After all, time was better spent searching than fighting.

“Celestial soil is critical to forming my Earth-type totem!” thought Meng Hao, his eyes bloodshot as he snatched up every bit of Celestial soil that he could find. If anyone tried to compete with him, he would attack explosively without hesitation.

Two hours later.

Meng Hao’s fist descended onto a Cultivator of the early Nascent Soul stage, sending him flying backward. Meng Hao grabbed the Celestial soil in front of him and then proceeded on his way.

The Nascent Soul Cultivator looked at Meng Hao as he left, and his eyes filled with fear. The blow just now had rattled his Nascent Soul and filled him with shock.

“Who is that…?”

Six hours later.

Three figures were locked in combat in mid-air. Meng Hao was one of them. He flashed an incantation gesture with both hands, causing a flame sea to roar up. It shot out in all directions, forcing his two opponents to fall back. Meng Hao flicked his sleeve, collecting up the Celestial soil and then shooting off into the distance.

The other two Cultivators gritted their teeth. Their hearts were filled with dread, and they didn’t dare to take up chase. The only thing they could do was stamp their feet and then head off in another direction to search for Celestial soil.

Time want by. A day later, Meng Hao’s eyes were completely bloodshot. He had snatched enough Celestial soil to form a clump the size of a baby’s head. All of it was in his bag of holding. He continued to fly through the air, searching for more. However, it had been almost four hours since he had seen any at all. It seemed all of it had been collected.

“Others collected it up? No problem!” he thought, killing intent filling his eyes. In the Cultivation world, the law of the jungle prevails. Robbing Cultivation resources was common, and something that Meng Hao had long since gotten used to. His eyes shining with killing intent, he shot off to search for other Cultivators.

A day later, the sound of explosions filled the air. An enormous face could be seen collapsing in mid-air. As it did, a middle-aged Cultivator coughed up blood, his face pale and his eyes filled with astonishment. Without hesitation, he pulled a handful of Celestial soil out of his bag of holding and threw it out in front of him, then turned heel and fled.

Meng Hao emerged from roiling mists to snatch it up. Without a moment's pause, he sped off in another direction to search for more Cultivators.

Two days later, a ruddy-faced old man, flanked by two Nascent Soul Cultivators, savagely slaughtered another Cultivator to snatch up his Celestial soil. The moment they joyfully collected up his bag of holding, a red mist suddenly appeared off in the distance. From within the mist, an enormous face suddenly appeared.

As soon as the ruddy-faced old man saw the face, his heart and mind filled with a roaring sound, and his scalp went numb. He recognized this face. It had appeared days before when he was involved in the 7-person battle, and then met that fearsome Cultivator who had nearly crushed them all.

The two Nascent Soul Cultivators next to the ruddy-faced old man saw the roiling mist. Voices hoarse, they exclaimed, “It's Eccentric Bloodface!”

Their faces immediately fell, and they turned around to flee.

During recent days, the name ‘Eccentric Bloodface’ had been spread about quite a bit. According to the rumors, he was a fearsome Cultivator who wore a blood-colored mask. His Cultivation base was astonishing, and he robbed people of their Celestial soil. Victims of his robbery were numerous, making it so that few people were willing to stay in this region.

Any who did were extremely vigilant. As soon as they saw the blood-colored mask, they would flee.

The three men from just now immediately began to flee in three different directions. Booming sounds filled the air, and two of the men coughed up blood. Without hesitation, they retrieved the Celestial soil from their bags of holding and threw it out. They knew what Eccentric Bloodface wanted:

Celestial soil! If you gave it up to him, he wouldn't kill you. However, if you fought back, then your death was assured.

"Dammit…. If I had known this would happen I would have left with what I acquired earlier. Damn you, Eccentric Bloodface!" The two fleeing Cultivators were panting, and had hearts filled with frustration. However, there was nothing they could do about the situation except consider leaving this area.

A few days later, there were no Cultivators left in the area, only Meng Hao. He had robbed the majority of the Cultivators, and now had a clump of Celestial soil the size of a human head, as well as a fearsome reputation.

After attempting to gain enlightenment regarding the soil, Meng Hao realized that he still had not collected enough!

Unfortunately, all the other Cultivators had fled, and further searching turned up nothing. It was at this point that a three hundred meter wide rock came whistling toward him. He immediately teleported onto the rock and sat down cross-legged to meditate. The rock shot out into the void as it proceeded on toward the next land mass.

Meng Hao didn't know that the fleeing Cultivators had taken the name 'Eccentric Bloodface' with them and spread it to other regions. It was only a matter of time before almost all of the Western Desert Cultivators heard about him.

As the rock shot through the void, everything turned black. Meng Hao sat there cross-legged, his eyes glittering.

"I ran into a lot of people, but I didn't see that Demoness Zhixiang with any of them…. Although, I didn't see Zhao Youlan either. I wonder where she is." Lost in thought, Meng Hao pulled out the jade slip map and looked it over to confirm his destination. He was currently heading toward the largest of the Immortality Bridgestones in the whole area.

"The Realm of the Bridge Ruins is huge. Every Immortality Bridgestone is a whole world, and there are probably tens of thousands of such worlds.

However, the Western Desert Cultivators are only able to explore a few dozen of them.”

A few days later, the void was growing even colder. Even with his cold-repelling treasure, Meng Hao was forced to continuously ignite his Everburning Flame to stay conscious. As he looked out into the blackness of the void, his eyes suddenly went wide.

Off in the blackness, he saw a man moving through the void. He wore a long azure robe, and had a sword strapped to his back. He held a flagon of alcohol in one hand as he strolled directly through the void. He took occasional sips of alcohol, his expression morose and filled with melancholy.

The coldness of the void seemed to be reduced to nothing more than a crisp breeze around him. It blew his hair, and did nothing to cause his stride to falter. He was simply walking along as if everything were normal. The void around him seemed to ripple and distort, and the coldness didn’t seem willing to near him, but rather, avoided him of its own volition.

Meng Hao’s mind was reeling, and his expression was one of astonishment.

He looked at the man, and the man looked back.

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# Chapter 460: Azure-robed Han Shan!

The instant their gazes met, Meng Hao suddenly couldn’t see the azure-robed man anymore. When he reappeared, he was standing next to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s scalp went numb; it was impossible to see the level of the man’s Cultivation base. Trying to do so gave Meng Hao the same feeling you might get when looking into a deep ocean.

He immediately stood up and bowed deeply toward the azure-robed man. “Meng Hao of the junior generation greets senior.”

The man looked over at Meng Hao, then sat down off to the side. He took a sip of alcohol, and, his face as disconsolate as ever, said, “Are you on your way to Sealbreaking Continent?”

“Sealbreaking Continent?” replied Meng Hao, a blank expression on his face. He thought back to the jade slip map, and the description of the place he was headed to. Finally, he nodded.

“So, we happen to be heading in the same direction,” said the man with a slight nod. After that he said nothing more. Leaning up against a protruding rock, he drank and looked off into the blackness of the void.

Meng Hao looked at the man hesitantly for a moment, then made his way some distance off and sat down cross-legged. Unfortunately, he couldn’t slip into a meditative trance. All he could do was sit there as time passed.

One day, two days, three days…. In the blink of an eye half a month had passed.

During that time, the azure-robed man continued to recline there, drinking. It seemed the alcohol in his flagon was endless. He drank and drank, looking out into the blackness, his expression morose. His bleakness continued to grow more and more apparent.

The stubble of a beard could be seen on his face; it seemed as if it had been a very long time since he was inclined to clean up. His robes were wrinkled, and although the man should have cut a sorry figure in his state of disarray, his aura was filled with an indescribable charm. As such, he seemed… lonely, but not a mess.

The alcohol flagon he held in hand was crafted from wood, and the woodgrain was even visible on its surface. It was impossible to determine how much he drank during the half month.

He did not speak, nor did Meng Hao. It seemed that this azure-robed man really was just heading in the same direction and didn't feel like walking. Therefore, he had decided to share the rock with Meng Hao.

They maintained their mutual silence for another month as they proceeded onward.

Meng Hao was finally able to slip into meditation. However, he left a sliver of will on the outside. He knew that doing so was essentially pointless, but he was used to the practice and it wasn't something he would stop doing.

One day as the three hundred meter wide rock flew forward, the previously listless and melancholy azure-robed man suddenly sat up and looked off into the distance.

The movement immediately caused Meng Hao to open his eyes. He looked out into the blackness, but saw nothing. The azure-robed man, however, seemed very intent, as if he was completely focused on looking off into the distance.

Meng Hao was puzzled, but didn’t show it, and instead continued to look out into the void. Time passed, three days in which the azure-robed man and Meng Hao both looked out into the blackness.

It was on that third day that the world of blackness around them suddenly turned gray. At the same time, the three hundred meter wide rock they were on suddenly stopped moving. Meng Hao’s mind trembled as a thick mist began to spread out in all directions. Soon, everything was like a sea of mist.

Meng Hao’s scalp prickled as he realized that he couldn’t move a muscle. How could he not understand what was happening? Off in the mists, a group of figures could be seen, shouldering rocks as they marched forward.

They looked frustrated, confused as they approached. Soft voices could be heard echoing out in the mists.

“When will the Bridge of Immortality reappear like new…? Sir, on what day will we again lay eyes on you…?”

Surrounded by the echoing sound, the figures floated through the mist. Men and women, elderly and young, all looked confused. As they neared Meng Hao, he felt a coldness that seemed capable of freezing the soul.

Meng Hao gradually grew colder, until it seemed as if his very life force were about to be extinguished. It was at this point that Meng Hao noticed that this group of people was not the same group that he had encountered on the last land mass, when he was chasing Yi Chenzi.

Next to him, the azure-robed man continued to sit there, occasionally sipping alcohol. As he looked at the group of people, the melancholy in his eyes grew deeper, and the corners of his mouth twisted with bitterness.

He examined them closely, as if he were looking for something. He examined each figure closely, and when he reached the last one, his loneliness seemed to grow deeper. He frowned and took another drink.

The figures moved toward the rock Meng Hao was on, and as they grew close, they suddenly stopped. The blankness and confusion in their faces suddenly turned into viciousness. They looked over at the rock, and the azure-robed man.

The man looked back at them, and then waved his hand. As he did, the figures continued to float on by. They moved off into the distance, their confusion once again restored. Faint voices were again heard.

“When will the Bridge of Immortality reappear like new…? Sir, on what day will we again lay eyes on you…?”

The sound faded off into the distance, and the grayness in the void disappeared. There was no tempest like before. The silence was restored.

As everything returned to normal, the three hundred meter wide rock that Meng Hao was on once again began to move forward at top speed.

Meng Hao’s body trembled as he recovered. His heart shook because of this second encounter with these bizarre figures. Without thinking about it, he turned to the azure-robed man and asked, “What are they…?”

After asking the question, Meng Hao realized that, considering the man’s Cultivation base, and the days of silence, it was likely that he might not get an answer to the question.

“Bridge Slaves,” said the azure-robed man, his voice soft.

“After the Bridge of Immortal Treading was destroyed by Ancestor Ji, the surviving will of the bridge settled in this spot. People who coveted eternity and sought to extend their lives found their wills dissolved, and they became Bridge Slaves.

“They achieved the eternal life they sought, but the price… was that they became slaves of the bridge. Day and night, throughout their eternal lives, they slave away to rebuild the Bridge of Immortal Treading, which of course, can never be rebuilt.”

Hearing this explanation caused Meng Hao's mind to spin. He turned to look in the direction the figures had departed in, but all he could see was blackness, as if an enormous screen of darkness were covering over everything.

The man began to mutter bitterly, "Everything in the world comes with a price… a price…." He held the alcohol flagon in front of him, gripping it tightly.

Time passed. Meng Hao asked no further questions, nor did the man say anything further. He reclined there in his silence, staring off into the void, disconsolately drinking his alcohol.

Meng Hao sat there thoughtfully. The term Bridge Slave certainly seemed appropriate. They acquired eternity, but the price they paid was a great one. When he thought of this, it caused Meng Hao to recall the Bridge Slaves' faint voices.

Two more months passed. Up ahead in the void appeared an enormous rock. This was another Immortality Bridgestone, its vastness virtually indescribable. It appeared to be about ten times larger than the land mass he had just come from.

An incredible pressure radiated out from it, enveloping everything in the area as it floated there in the void. Its edges were irregularly shaped, causing Meng Hao to think of the image of the enormous, broken bridge he had seen stretching boundlessly out in the starry sky.

It was at this moment that the azure-robed man suddenly stood up.

"Would you like a drink?" he asked, turning his head to look at Meng Hao. His eyes were clear and filled with a profundity like that of the stars in the sky. This was the second time the man had taken the initiative to speak. The first time was when he had arrived. Considering this was the second time, Meng Hao understood… that he was about to leave.

Meng Hao stood up, clasped hands and bowed deeply. He looked at the azure-robed man, his eyes glittering. After a moment's hesitation, he nodded.

The man smiled, then waved his hand, causing the alcohol flagon to fly over to Meng Hao. Meng Hao grabbed it and, without hesitation, drank a mouthful.

As the alcohol flowed down his throat, a burning sensation exploded out. It felt like fire, and caused Meng Hao’s Cultivation base to rotate wildly.

“A bit greedy, aren’t we, boy? Well, it doesn’t matter. I’ll just consider it to be traveling expenses.” The man pointed a finger at Meng Hao, causing his body to tremble. The mouthful of alcohol inside of him instantly formed into something similar to his Gold Core. Strands of Alcohol Qi began to emanate out from it, fusing it with his Perfect Gold Core. He did not experience any growth in Cultivation base, however, he could tell that something inside of him was now different.

“The Alcohol Core within you will enable you to twice wield my Dancing Sword Qi. It can slay anything under the Immortal stage.”

With that, the flagon flew back into the man’s hand. He turned and stepped off of the three hundred meter wide rock, walking toward the enormous land mass formed by the Immortality Bridgestone.

As he stepped into the void, he sighed and said, “You ask when will you lay eyes upon me again…? I’ve searched for you for three thousand years….”

The voice echoed out with unspeakable melancholy and an indescribable loneliness.

Meng Hao’s mind reeled. All of a sudden, he could sense a sword skill within his mind. It was branded onto him in the form of a magical symbol. He didn’t understand it, but he could tell that he could rotate his Cultivation base to unleash the Alcohol Qi within his Gold Core. He could do this twice to cause the brand to explode out.

As the man headed off into the distance, Meng Hao suddenly cried out: “Senior, may I respectfully ask your name?!”

“Han Shan.” 1

His voice echoed out, filled with pensiveness. The man sighed and then disappeared into the void. Meng Hao stood there, bowing deeply in his direction.

After a long time passed, Meng Hao straightened back up. The three hundred meter wide rock he was on slammed through the barrier to enter the enormous land mass formed by the Immortality Bridgestone. There in front of Meng Hao was an enormous world.

1. Han Shan’s name in Chinese is hán shān – Han is a surname. Shan means “mountain”

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# Chapter 461: Encountering Zhao Youlan Again!

Of all the worlds formed by Immortality Bridgestones in this area, this was the largest one listed on Meng Hao’s jade slip map. Meng Hao stood on his three hundred meter wide rock and glanced around the area.

The sky above seemed extremely stable; there were only a few cracks visible. Mountain ranges rose and fell, and ancient ruins could be seen all over.

As the rock shot through the air, Meng Hao looked down at the ground. Suddenly, his gaze flickered as he noticed that the mountains down below did not seem to have been formed naturally. They were connected together in what appeared to be a pattern.

This wasn’t the first time Meng Hao had noticed something like this. The previous worlds he had explored also contained similar sights. However, those worlds had been far too small, so the phenomenon was much less obvious.

This world, however, was much larger. As he continued to look down at the mountains from up in mid-air, the more he got the feeling there was something very strange about them.

“They look like magical symbols.” That was what made the most sense. He thought back to when he had first come to the Realm of the Bridge Ruins and seen the countless rocks which formed the shape of an archaic bridge that stretched through the stars. He had also seen magical symbols at that time.

Obviously, the mountains that made up this mountain range were nothing other than magical symbols. Because of the vast size of this world, Meng Hao was able to see them clearly.

“The Bridge of Immortal Treading was covered with magical symbols, each of which was most likely a Celestial talisman.” Within Meng Hao’s body, the Qi of Immortal Shows the Way rotated, and he rapidly blinked his left eye several times as he employed the Celestial Vision technique imparted to him by the parrot. 1

As soon as he employed the technique, his body trembled. Using his left eye to look down at the land below, what he saw was not a collection of mountains, but rather multiple black dragons, lifting their heads up to the sky to roar.

Many of the dragons were broken, but some were mostly intact. Their roaring was shocking to the extreme.

Meng Hao’s entire body trembled, and he began to pant. He felt as if an invisible mountain were crushing down onto his body. Suddenly, the Celestial Vision technique was ended.

However, just before it did, Meng Hao managed to catch a glimpse of something off in the distance that was obviously not a black dragon, but shockingly, a black-colored butterfly. The butterfly was indistinct and invisible to any onlooker. Every time it flapped its wings, nearby black dragons would be sucked toward it and be consumed.

Inside the body of the black butterfly was a large area that was made up of… Celestial soil!

As the image disappeared, beads of sweat broke out on Meng Hao’s forehead. He had never imagined that using the Celestial Vision technique would allow him to see such a shocking scene.

As his vision returned to normal, he looked around the land to find that it was just the same as before. The mountains were mountains, and not roaring black dragons. The area off in the distance where he had seen the black butterfly consisted of nothing more than ordinary mountains.

The only unusual thing about that particular area was that it was a point of convergence for several mountain ranges.

“Bridge Slaves, black dragons, butterflies…. this Realm of the Bridge Ruins is so full of mysteries.” Meng Hao stood thoughtfully atop the large rock as it whistled through the air. As it began to veer off in a different direction, he looked back toward the area where he’d seen the butterfly.

“What I saw just now was most likely Celestial soil. I couldn’t possibly be mistaken about that…. If I could get a chunk of Celestial soil that big, then I maybe I can form my Earth-type totem!” The area he had seen with the Celestial Vision left his heart shaken and excited.

“Rewards come only when you take risks. If you want to rise above others, you have to pay the price!” His eyes filling with determination, he transformed into a prismatic beam that shot off at top speed toward the area where he had seen the butterfly.

According to Meng Hao’s analysis, of the more than twenty people who had come to this place from the Western Desert, it was unlikely someone else had Immortal Shows the Way and a Celestial Vision technique. Therefore, it was most likely that he was the only one able to see the butterfly.

As such, the chances were relatively small that he would have to fight over the Celestial soil.

Since that was the case, Meng Hao would of course not be willing to give up this opportunity. Without the slightest hesitation, he continued on forward. Time passed by, and soon seven days had passed.

During that time, Meng Hao never stopped moving. On two occasions, he employed the Celestial Vision technique to once again observe the black butterfly consuming the black dragons. He could sense the boundlessness of the butterfly’s aura. It was on the eighth day that he finally arrived.

It was a place where ten different mountain ranges all converged together. There in the middle was an enormous basin, which was filled with roiling white mist. It prevented Spiritual Sense from extending out very far, and seemed to be imbued with a spirit that could conquer mountains and rivers.

Meng Hao flew around it once, and then began to frown. He observed the flowing mist with flickering eyes. Finally, he produced a flying sword which he flung out, causing it to whistle through the air toward the mist.

The instant it entered the mist, Meng Hao sat cross-legged on the border of the basin. He closed his eyes and sent out a fine thread of Spiritual Sense to connect to the flying sword as it shot down through the mist.

The mist was dense, and the flying sword continued on through it for the time it takes an incense stick to burn. Finally, it emerged into the basin below. Meng Hao could see a dazzling glow. Stretched out below him was a shocking scene; buildings constructed entirely of Celestial soil. Suddenly a figure loomed up within his Spiritual Sense. A booming sound could be heard as the flying sword exploded. A force of extermination then began to shoot back through the Spiritual Sense toward Meng Hao.

His face flickered, but he was prepared. Almost the same instant in which the flying sword was destroyed, he severed his connection, preventing the exterminating force from reaching him.

Having cut off the Spiritual Sense himself, Meng Hao’s face went pale.

“Buildings constructed completely from Celestial soil…. Just what place is this exactly!?” Meng Hao was breathing heavily, and his eyes glittered. Although he had only been able to glimpse the area beyond the mist for a brief moment, it was enough to completely shock Meng Hao.

“After the Bridge of Immortal Treading was destroyed, it transformed into the Realm of the Bridge Ruins. After all these years, who knows how many times Western Desert Cultivators have come here….

“I can’t believe that after all these years, no one found this place. And yet, here it is. For there to be much Celestial soil shows how dangerous this place must be! Anyone who tried to enter in the past must have died!”

When Meng Hao’s train of thought reached this point, his heart suddenly quivered. He waved his hand, and he suddenly vanished.

Not very long after he vanished, a beam of light appeared off in the distance. It was a woman wearing a long black garment. Her features were beautiful and her skin was like jade. It was none other than… Zhao Youlan!

She made her way along with caution. After arriving in this place, she did the same thing Meng Hao had done; she flew around in a circle, then found a place to sit near the edge. She was just about to employ a technique to scout out the mist when suddenly her phoenix-like eyes flickered. She waved a beautiful hand, causing a white spider to shoot out in a beam of whiteness and head toward the mist.

Just when it seemed on the verge of running into the mist, it suddenly jerked into a different direction and shot… directly toward the spot where Meng Hao had vanished from.

“Don’t dare to show your face?” she said coldly. “Get out here!” The white beam of light shot toward the seeming emptiness. Just as it was about to reach it, ripples appeared, from within which stretched out a finger.

The finger tapped onto the beam of whiteness, and a miserable shriek could be heard. The light faded away. Meng Hao emerged, his eyes filled with hard coldness.

“It’s you!” said Zhao Youlan; her pupils constricted and her eyes filling with cold killing intent. Her arm had long since been restored, but her expression still radiated stabbing hatred.

Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed. For Zhao Youlan to show up here caused many questions to fill his mind. The fact that she was being so cautious indicated that she knew about the bizarreness of this location.

Even more importantly, when he’d met her before, her Cultivation base had been merely at the great circle of Core Formation. Now, however… it was in the mid Nascent Soul stage. From the ripples of her Cultivation base, he could tell that she was at the peak of that stage, on the verge of stepping into the late Nascent Soul stage.

In less than a year of time, she had experienced incredible progress. Meng Hao was well aware that such a feat was something rarely seen in the world!

“Well, that leaves only one possibility,” thought Meng Hao, his eyes flickering.

As for Zhao Youlan, killing intent flickered within her eyes. She actually admired Meng Hao, but that only served to fuel her desire to kill. The instant she saw him, she leaped up into the air. A three hundred meter wide white glow surrounded her, and an enormous white spider magically appeared. She immediately shot toward Meng Hao.

Obviously, the influence of the sealing of the Spider Branch’s totemic Sacred Ancient was now gone.

As Zhao Youlan shot toward him, Meng Hao donned the blood-colored mask. An enormous face appeared, sending out ripples in all directions.

A roaring sound filled the air, but then Meng Hao vanished. When he reappeared, he was directly next to Zhao Youlan. His fist descended, but even as it did, Zhao Youlan grew blurry and disappeared. She reappeared behind him, and raised her hand. Her thumb and forefinger were touching, and the other three fingers were raised. Killing intent radiated out from her eyes as she tapped down toward Meng Hao’s back.

He gave a cold snort. Looking down, his body flickered as blood colored ripples spread out in all directions beneath him. A bloody glow rose up into the sky as five figures became visible, none other than Meng Hao’s Blood Clones.

Rumbling sounds filled the air, and Zhao Youlan’s face flickered. She once again disappeared.

The two of them teleported back and forth in mid-air as they fought. Booming sounds echoed out in all directions as a dance of divine abilities played out.

Moments later, Zhao Youlan disappeared in the midst of an explosion to reappear three hundred meters away. She lifted her delicate hand, on which could be seen, shockingly, a drop of blood.

She tossed out the blood drop, and a sound like the shrill cry of a bird filled the air. The blood drop expanded, transforming into a red phoenix. It spread its wings, and flames leaped up everywhere. Surrounded by fire, the phoenix let out a powerful cry and then shot toward Meng Hao.

As it passed through the air, an astonishing, scorching heat roiled out in all directions. Meng Hao’s face was grim as he fell back. Eyeless Larva thread spun around him even as the Flame Phoenix engulfed him.

As soon as the flames engulfed him, killing intent appeared in his eyes. His cold voice echoed out in all directions.

“Fire? I have that too!”

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# Chapter 462: Demoness Zhixiang!

As soon as the words left Meng Hao's mouth, the Flame Phoenix enveloped him. Suddenly, his Fire-type totem tattoo caused shocking flames to erupt off of Meng Hao.

Using fire to defeat fire!

The fire exploded out, instantly encircling the Flame Phoenix. Meng Hao stood there in the midst of the sea of flames, looking like some sort of devilish divinity. He waved his hand, causing the enormous image of a tree to magically appear around him. It melded into the flame sea, causing the intensity of the flames to increase rapidly. Meng Hao flicked his sleeve, sending the flames shooting toward Zhao Youlan.

It moved with incredible speed, and in the blink of an eye, was closing in on Zhao Youlan. Her delicate brow furrowed, and she waved her hand to cause a small white shield to appear.

The shield immediately began to expand, spreading out in an instant to completely cover her. The flame sea slammed into it, but was completely blocked.

Meng Hao's eyes glittered coldly. With a cold harrumph, he caused his Metal-type totem to appear, melding it into the flame sea. Golden droplets appeared which shot toward Zhao Youlan. She once again used the white shield to defend herself. However, the golden droplets began to spread out and merge with each other outside of the white shield.

In the blink of an eye, while the white shield expanded out to completely cover her body, she was, in turn, completely surrounded by the golden droplets, which formed something like a sphere. All of this happened before Zhao Youlan could do anything.

“You….” she said, her face flickering.

Moving at incredible speed, Meng Hao shot out from within the sea of flames, appearing directly beneath the white sphere. He lifted his hand up, causing the golden sphere to begin to vibrate. He roared as he used all the strength he could muster to heave the golden sphere in the direction of the mist.

“Since you like to hide in the protection of that shield, well, I’ll add another layer of protection for you!” he said as the golden sphere whistled throughout the air toward the mist, with Zhao Youlan inside.

All of this takes quite a bit of time to describe, but actually happened in an instant. In the battle between the two, neither had been able to acquire the upper hand. However, Meng Hao’s quick thinking prevailed; as soon as the golden sphere touched the mist, the mist began to churn violently. Suddenly, a sharp cry could be heard coming from inside the golden sphere.

The sound of it was shocking, causing much of the mist to roil away. In fact, now the buildings down below were somewhat visible.

Cracks spread out over the surface of the golden sphere, and within the space of a single breath, it shattered. The sound of the cry entered Meng Hao’s ears and caused his mind to tremble. It was like a sharp blade was stabbing into his brain, causing blood to seep out of his eyes, nose and mouth. His mind became a blank.

It only lasted a moment before fading away. As soon as the sound was gone, Meng Hao’s body returned to normal. Zhao Youlan emanated fierce killing intent as she appeared in front of him. Her delicate hand rose up and pushed down onto the Eyeless Larva silk which was surrounding him.

A bang sounded out and Meng Hao tumbled backward, blood spraying from his mouth. Before he could fall backward very far, Zhao Youlan teleported toward him. A white glow rose up from her hand as she pointed her finger out. For some reason, the Eyeless Larva suddenly stopped moving momentarily.

As the finger attack descended on Meng Hao, a bloody hole appeared on Meng Hao’s chest, and strands of black Qi began to spread out through his flesh.

Meng Hao’s mind was spinning. He was sure that her finger hadn’t actually touched him. However, it had injured him, and in a bizarre way at that. The black threads burrowed into his flesh, rapidly sucking away at his life force.

Meng Hao’s face fell. From the time he had left the Southern Domain, be it during his time in the Black Lands or in the Western Desert, he had never been injured like this. Blood sprayed from his mouth as the Eyeless Larva rapidly continued to spin silk. Were it not for the Eyeless Larva, Meng Hao would surely be dead by this point.

Even still, her divine ability just now was something he couldn’t fight back against. He needed a buffer, time with which to retrieve a magical item from within his bag of holding, or perhaps perform an incantation.

However, time was not something that Zhao Youlan would give him. Blood sprayed from Meng Hao’s mouth as she continued to press closer to him, once again raising a finger.

This time, it did not touch him, but he coughed up blood nonetheless. The bones in his left arm shattered, and the black strands continued to spread out through his body. Vast amounts of life force were vanishing, and his hair had turned white. Death Qi filled him.

Zhao Youlan got even closer, her killing intent extremely intense. For a third time, she raised her delicate hand. A sense of deadly crisis washed over Meng Hao like floodwaters. His eyes suddenly glowed with a bright light.

With all the strength he could muster, he roared: “Are you Zhao Youlan, or Demoness Zhixiang!?”

At this moment, Zhao Youlan’s hand suddenly stopped moving.

Taking advantage of this sudden pause, Meng Hao ignored the wounds to his body. He knew that this was a critical moment, and that his best option now was to teleport away. He needed to heal his injuries, otherwise his life would be in danger. However… he did not choose to do that.

When it came to lifesaving measures, he had the Agarwood as well as the Alcohol Core and the Dancing Sword Qi. However, Meng Hao had experienced many things throughout his years of practicing cultivation. As far as this particular deadly crisis was concerned, it had not reached the point where he needed to use those lifesaving methods.

Instead, he chose to use this precious instant of time to slap his bag of holding. The Lotus Sword Formation appeared, rotating rapidly and exploding with the power of Time.

Even Zhao Youlan could never have predicted that during the short moment in which she paused, Meng Hao would actually choose not to flee. Instead, laughing in the face of death, he actually chose to attack.

This caused her to hesitate in surprise. She and Meng Hao were relatively evenly matched. The only reason she had been able to dominate him so easily just now was because she had managed to get the upper hand by taking him by surprise.

Killing intent flickered in her phoenix-like eyes. She was just about to make an attack, when suddenly her face fell. As of this moment, she could feel her longevity slipping away. Her face flickered as she abandoned any thoughts of attack and suddenly shot backward.

Despite that, her moment of hesitation just now had caused three hundred years of longevity to disappear. As she fell back, face flickering, a look of savagery appeared on Meng Hao’s face. He quickly produced a medicinal pill which he popped into his mouth, and then shot forward.

“Now, it’s my turn!” he said. Followed by the Lotus Sword Formation, he appeared in front of Zhao Youlan. He pulled his fist back and then punched her in the pit of the stomach.

A boom rang out. Zhao Youlan was able to avoid being hit in a vital spot. However, blood sprayed from her mouth as she was flung backward. Meng Hao continued to move forward, once again attacking her with the Lotus Sword Formation. Another three hundred years of longevity vanished. Zhao Youlan's face was deathly pale as she continued to retreat.

“Allow me to help you retreat,” he said. His fist slammed into her belly, causing blood to shower out of her mouth. She tumbled backward, now in much the same position Meng Hao had been in moments ago. She had lost her position of superiority and couldn't even fight back. Now she was being dominated.

Meng Hao's body flickered, and he appeared in front of her once again. Intense killing intent roiled out as Eyeless Larva silk shot out toward Zhao Youlan. It was at this point that she let out a disconsolate wail. At the same time, an indistinct figure appeared on her shoulder. It was very small, about the size of a hand. It looked like a small person, a woman. However, it was not Zhao Youlan.

She wore an anxious expression, and as soon as she appeared, she let out a scream. The scream caused Meng Hao's mind to reel once more. Blood sprayed out of his mouth as he backed up. He employed the full power of his Cultivation base to send the Eyeless Larva silk out to strangle Zhao Youlan.

Seeing the Eyeless Larva silk nearing, the eyes of the tiny person on Zhao Youlan's shoulder filled with a fierce look.

“You insect, do you really dare to mess with an Immortal!?” A mysterious glow appeared in the little person's eyes. Suddenly, a bizarre red flower appeared in front of Zhao Youlan. Faces could be seen on the petals of the flower… Meng Hao's face!

The flower… suddenly shattered. As it did, Meng Hao's mind reeled. It felt as if his soul were about to shatter.

“Immortal? So what?!” he responded. It was at this moment that Meng Hao suddenly caused the Alcohol Core within him to begin to rotate. Using the method that was fused into his mind, he spit out a mouthful of Alcohol Qi. Instantly, it began to transform into the shocking will of a sword. Rumbling sounds immediately emanated off of Meng Hao.

The sword will roiled up, instantly filling the entire continent he was on. All of the Cultivators here felt their hearts shaking and trembling.

The face of the tiny person on Zhao Youlan’s shoulder instantly filled with fear and disbelief.

“That’s Sword Immortal Han Shan’s Dancing Sword Qi!”

The Alcohol Qi swept about outside of Meng Hao. Within him, Sword Qi began to condense. At the exact moment in which the Sword Qi was about to explode out… the sky suddenly turned gray, and a mist began to rise up.

“Dammit! The Bridge Slaves again!” Meng Hao’s entire body was suddenly stuck in place. However, this time, he wasn’t completely incapable of motion. The Alcohol Qi spread out, and the Sword Qi continued to condense inside of him. He could still move, but it felt as if he were trudging through mud.

Zhao Youlan’s face instantly fell. The little person on her shoulder vanished. Suddenly, Zhao Youlan, like Meng Hao, was capable of slow, simple movements.

Alarm filled her eyes.

At the same time that this was happening, a group of figures appeared within the mist in the basin. Faint voices could be heard as the Bridge Slaves walked past Meng Hao and Zhao Youlan to head off into the distance.

“Don’t tell me this place is where the Bridge Slaves reside?” thought Meng Hao as he watched the Bridge Slaves walking out from within the basin. His mind and heart reeled. It was at this point that he noticed the last Bridge

Slave in line. It was a young girl, about fifteen or sixteen years old. As she walked, she suddenly turned and looked at Meng Hao and Zhao Youlan. Her expression shifted from one of frustration and confusion, to viciousness. Her body flashed as she shot toward them.

An intense coldness instantly pressed down onto Meng Hao, filling him with shock.

Zhao Youlan suddenly began to speak, her voice filled with unprecedented fear. “Meng Hao, we need to join forces. Otherwise we will both die this day!”

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# Chapter 463: Little Darling

Meng Hao’s pupils constricted. He was in front of Zhao Youlan, and the person the Bridge Slave girl was charging toward was none other than him.

As the words came out of Zhao Youlan’s mouth, the tiny person magically appeared once again on her shoulder. The little figure’s expression was one of anxiety as it performed an incantation with both hands and then pointed forward.

Instantly, a red flower materialized in front of Meng Hao. Shockingly, on each petal of the flower could be seen the face of the girl. As soon as it appeared, the flower began to disintegrate.

At this point, Zhao Youlan coughed up a mouthful of blood. The body of the tiny person on her shoulder flickered and grew even more blurry; it seemed to be extremely exhausted.

At the same time, the charging girl’s body suddenly stopped in place. An expression of pain filled her face and she let out a soundless scream. Then, her face grew even more vicious, and a fearsome aura exploded out of her. Everything in the area suddenly flickered, and the surrounding mist seethed.

“Quickly… use your Dancing Sword Qi to cut her down!! Don’t let her get near us….”

At this critical moment, Meng Hao’s eyes filled with resolve. He caused the Alcohol Qi to surge out, and then caused the congealed Sword Qi to emanate out as well. The two of them merged together into a shocking sword-shaped amalgamation of Alcohol Qi. It shot through the air toward the girl’s head, then passed directly through it.

Her body trembled, and the mist around her churned. Suddenly, she stopped. The vicious expression on her face disappeared to be replaced by a look of catharsis.

“Daddy, mother….” she said softly. “Are you still here…? Where are you…? Why did you leave me alone here…? It’s been so long… so long….” The girl no longer seemed evil, but rather, lonely and helpless. Murmuring the entire time, her body slowly disappeared.

In the spot where the girl had disappeared, a slender strand slowly took shape.

Meng Hao was touched by the girl’s words, and suddenly thought back to Han Shan’s story regarding the Bridge Slaves. Sighing, he reached out and grabbed the slender strand.

The other Bridge Slaves off in the distance didn’t seem to have noticed anything, and continued to move off into the distance.

After they were gone, the grayness disappeared, as did the mist. Strangely, there was no tempest this time.

After the colors returned to normal, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. He clenched his fist and once again punched out. Simultaneously, Zhao Youlan’s lips opened and a beam of white light shot out of her mouth toward Meng Hao.

The two magics slammed into each other and a huge boom rattled out. Both parties fell back. The tiny figure on Zhao Youlan’s shoulder performed an incantation with both hands, preparing to once again materialize the power of her bizarre flower.

It was at this moment, however, that the Alcohol Qi once again began to roil within Meng Hao.

Immediately, the tiny figure stopped moving and stared at Meng Hao. As of now, Meng Hao could see that this figure was shaped like a woman. She was extremely beautiful; not even Zhao Youlan could compare.

She sat on Zhao Youlan’s shoulder, looking very much like a Nascent Soul. However, she was far more limber than a Nascent soul, plus, her body emanated a pleasant aura very much like Celestial soil.

There was a thin, transparent line connecting her hand to Zhao Youlan’s body. It appeared that Zhao Youlan currently had no mind of her own, but rather, was being controlled as a puppet.

As of this moment, Meng Hao felt rather confused. He wasn’t sure exactly what was going on between Demoness Zhixiang and Zhao Youlan.

Zhixiang suddenly smiled and then spoke in a charming, melodious voice: “Little bro, your Dancing Sword Qi could definitely hurt me. In fact, there’s a seventy percent chance that it could slay my Immortal Divinity. However… in the end, your Cultivation base just isn’t strong enough to evade my final counterattack before dying.

“In that case, what’s the point of us fighting? This place is one of the locations where the Bridge Slaves live. Instead of one of us dying, why don’t we explore the place together? What do you say?”

He looked over at the tiny Demoness Zhixiang. For her to call him ‘little bro,’ didn’t seem very appropriate. However, he had to admit that what she said made sense.

“Just now, her actions against the Bridge Slave weren’t fake,” he thought. “I was closer, but she still took action to protect herself. She thought I simply had one strand of Sword Qi, but when she found out that wasn’t the case, she changed her mind.” He glanced over at the mist in the basin. When it came to the bizarreness of the mist, regardless of whether it was in terms of experience or technique, he simply wasn’t powerful enough to handle it on his own. Joining forces with her wasn’t necessarily out of the question.

As he was considering the matter, Zhao Youlan looked at him and frowned. Inwardly, she said: “Big sis Zhixiang, this guy is endlessly crafty. Plus, he’s cruel and merciless, completely cold-blooded. Also his decisiveness is incredible. If you work with him, you have to be very cautious.”

Zhixiang's reply echoed out inside of Zhao Youlan's mind. "Well, now I know that you really do love your big sis, my precious darling."

Zhao Youlan blushed.

Sensing that her face was growing red, Zhixiang laughed, causing Zhao Youlan's blush to deepen.

"Little bro, what do you think? There are plenty of treasures here. Big sis isn't greedy. I just want half. You can have the rest. What do you say?" With that, the tiny figure on Zhao Youlan's shoulder laughed lightly. She lifted a hand and pointed toward the mist. A strand of Qi shot toward the mist, causing it to seethe and then slowly grow thin. Zhao Youlan's body shot down into the mist.

"If you agree, then come on over. Big sis is waiting for you!" Demoness Zhixiang's voice carried with it a touch of allure, causing Meng Hao to frown again. Then, his eyes glittered. Filled with caution, and keeping the Sword Qi prepared, he followed down into the mist.

They flew down in single file, piercing through the mist. Eventually they were able to make out the basin, and the luxurious buildings. Each of these buildings was completely constructed from Celestial soil, filling the basin with a thick aura of Celestial soil.

"Immortals used to live in this place," said Zhixiang from her position on Zhao Youlan's shoulder. "It's one of the palaces used by the ninety-nine preeminent Immortals as a guard garrison for the Bridge of Immortality. After the bridge was destroyed, the ninety-nine Immortals died and merged into the Bridge of Immortality. They wished to restore the bridge and its position in the world. When they came back to life, they had no physical bodies. However, their palaces remained, filled with treasure." As they neared the palaces, a glimmering shield suddenly appeared, blocking their way. A powerful aura radiated out, emitting thick pressure along with magical shadows.

Zhao Youlan spit out a mouthful of blood, and Demoness Zhixiang lifted her right hand and waved it toward the blood.

“Congeal!”

Immediately the blood turned into a red mist which then formed into a gigantic red flower. The flower floated forward and touched the shield. As soon as it did, it sank into the shield, merging into it.

The entire shield began to distort. In the blink of an eye, veins seemed to spread out through the shield. It began to flicker rapidly and then, dissipated. The power that blasted out upon its dissipation caused Meng Hao to narrow his eyes. He would not have been able to break this shield unless he used the Dancing Sword Qi.

“I’ve suppressed the defences,” said Zhixiang, “but it will only last for four hours. All of the palace structures here should have garrison treasures. Little bro, as you can see, there is a main hall in the center, with palace buildings stretched out on either side. You take one side, and we’ll meet in the middle.

“As for how many treasures you can acquire, that will depend on your own skill.” Zhixiang laughed, and Zhao Youlan gave Meng Hao a cold glance. Then, they headed directly for the palace buildings on the right side.

Meng Hao looked at the suppressed shield and the giant red flower floating there in mid-air. It was this flower which was suppressing the power of the shield, allowing them to enter.

“Four hours? I can’t trust her on that point. At most, it will probably last for two hours.” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. After a moment of observation, decisiveness filled his eyes and, without hesitation, he shot forward toward the group of palace buildings on the left.

“With my Cultivation base, I would normally never be able to get into a place like this. Whatever treasures are in the buildings, they are not things I could take. If I get too greedy, then I might end up paying a horrific price.

“Therefore, I will stick to my original plan. I don’t need treasures, I just need Celestial soil!” Eyes shining brightly, his body flickered and he appeared in front of one of the palace buildings. After looking it over carefully, he saw that the main door was shut tight with the power of some type of sealing.

Meng Hao did not spend time thinking about how to open the door. A flying sword appeared in his hand and he knelt down. Rotating his Cultivation base, he used the flying sword to try to pry up one of the floor tiles. Unfortunately, a cracking sound could be heard as the flying sword snapped in two.

Frowning, Meng Hao’s body flickered as he flew up to the roof and began to try to pull up one of the roof tiles. Unfortunately, the roof tile was extremely tough, and no matter what he did, he couldn’t pull it up.

“This stuff is really sturdy,” he thought, his eyes flickering with sharpness. He rotated his Cultivation base with full power, causing the Time Sword Formation to appear and unleash its power on the tile. A moment later, he pulled up on the tile. Crack! The tile was pulled up successfully by Meng Hao.

His heart pounded with excitement. The tile was only the size of a hand, but the entire thing was made from Celestial soil. He put it away and immediately began to use the same method to continue dismantling the building.

Very quickly, all of the tiles on the palace building’s roof had been collected up by Meng Hao. Next, he went to work on the floor tiles. It didn’t take long before they were all placed into his bag of holding.

“Rich! I’ve really struck it rich!” Panting, eyes gleaming, Meng Hao’s eyes next moved to the palace building’s guardian lions. Having successfully collected them up, he next looked over at the building’s eaves.

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# Chapter 464: Pinkie Finger!

Soon, the eaves were gone. Next, Meng Hao’s gaze came to fall upon the steps leading up to the palace building. After that were the columns. Next, the wall coverings.

It didn’t take long for a previously extravagant palace building to be completely blank and clean. The main structure was there, but now, it looked completely different, to a very shocking degree.

Every single thing that could be taken off of the outside surface, was gone….

Were it not for the restrictive spells and seals protecting the inside of the palace building, Meng Hao would tear down the entire structure. Trying to contain his excitement, he looked over at the next palace building. Filled with excitement, he leaped toward that building and began to dismantle it.

As for the Immortals who built these palace buildings, before their consciousnesses merged into the bridge, they placed the restrictive spells and seals in place because they were well aware that people might be interested in the items within. However, they had never imagined that someone like Meng Hao would happen to make his way into this place. He wasn’t interested in the treasures inside, but rather, wanted to plunder the construction materials….

Time passed by. With bustling industriousness, Meng Hao proceeded along from one palace building to the next, completely dismantling their exteriors, leaving them stark and bare…. The only thing left behind were the bare palace structures; anything that could be pried up was taken by Meng Hao.

Even the grass on the ground seemed to have absorbed some of the Celestial Soil Qi. Seeing how extraordinary it was, he collected it up without hesitation.

“If I don’t keep grabbing stuff until my hands cramp, then my name isn’t Meng Hao!” he said, his eyes gleaming as he wrenched up a floor tile. If any of Meng Hao’s acquaintances saw him now, they might think they were looking at a stranger. The look in his eyes was completely different than the coldness that usually resided there.

This was a part of his personality that he kept buried deep within, the part of him that lusted after anything valuable.

Despite having reached his current level of Cultivation base, one cannot forget about the matter in which he owed Steward Zhou three pieces of silver 1. Of course, after beginning to practice cultivation, the fervor he had shown toward that silver had shifted to cultivation resources.

For example, Celestial soil. At the moment, there was nothing he was more passionate about than Celestial soil.

After all… aspirations are a good thing. With aspirations, Meng Hao could be happy despite being tired or in pain. Right now, he was like a locust in human form. Every extravagant palace building that he encountered would be seemingly engulfed in a storm. After the storm passed by, the building would be completely bare.

Gradually ten buildings, twenty buildings, thirty buildings… after two hours had passed, more than seventy palace buildings had been completely dismantled by Meng Hao.

His expression was one of excitement, and he was breathing heavily. At the moment, there weren’t even thirty buildings left. Meng Hao was just getting ready to go at the rest of the buildings with a final spurt of energy, when Zhao Youlan suddenly staggered out from a large palace building on the opposite side of the basin.

After she emerged, the entire palace building collapsed with a rumbling sound. Zhao Youlan looked excited. The tiny Zhixiang perched on her shoulder appeared even more excited. Shockingly, she held a small green flask in her hand.

“It took two hours to get this one item,” said Zhixiang excitedly. “However, this small flask is a treasure that once belonged to one of the nine most preeminent of the Immortals. Two hours is a long time, but it was worth it. Precious darling, we must quickly go to the next… uh…? Huh? What?” When her gaze fell upon Meng Hao, her eyes went wide and she gaped. She even rubbed vigorously at her eyes, not daring to believe what she was seeing.

When Zhao Youlan saw the strange scene, her eyes also went wide as they filled with astonishment and shock.

Both of them… could do nothing other than be completely shocked. The tableau that faced them now was completely different from that which they had seen before entering the palace building earlier.

The previously lush and verdant grass in the area was completely gone. Only bare, uneven ground remained….

The Celestial tiles were nowhere to be seen. The floors were completely barren….

The auspicious beasts protecting the palace buildings, so imposing and extraordinary, had vanished….

The columns, carved with dragons and phoenixes, were now missing….

The matchlessly extravagant wall decorations, which had once covered the outside of the palace buildings, were as bare as if they had been swept over by a fierce tempest….

There were thirty or so palace buildings which retained their original appearance. However, the other seventy or more had become nothing more than empty frames…..

Completely clean; spick-and-span.

Demoness Zhixiang stared in shock, and began to murmur to herself subconsciously, “Is the Heavenly Hound from Planet East Victory here? Or the Locust Immortal of Planet North Reed?”

Everything was too bare, as if it had been licked clean by a dog, or swept over by an army of locusts.

Even as Zhao Youlan and Zhixiang were struck motionless from shock, they saw Meng Hao standing in front of an intact palace building, viciously prying up a floor tile with a flying sword. The sword was broken and twisted, and seemed to emit shrieks of humiliation.

A bang could be heard as the floor tile popped up. Meng Hao waved his sleeve to collect it up. Licking his lips, he used the same techniques he had picked up while dismantling the other seventy buildings to continue his work. The floor tiles were sturdy, but once you got one up, collecting the rest was simple.

Meng Hao had long since caught sight of Zhao Youlan and Zhixiang. However, he didn’t spend any effort paying attention to them. He was immersed in his work of prying up the floor tiles. The two women watched on, stupefied.

Zhao Youlan was breathing heavily, her phoenix-like eyes filled with disbelief. It was as if this was her first time ever seeing Meng Hao. How could she ever have imagined that the cold, astute, vicious, and merciless Meng Hao, would do something like this?

“This guy really might have some Heavenly Hound blood in him. Or maybe he really has practiced some of the cultivation of the Locust Immortal. Dammit, he doesn’t even leave the floor tiles behind.” Zhixiang was panting. She could see the concentration in Meng Hao’s eyes, which caused her to feel a bit suspicious. “Isn’t he afraid of the curse?”

Zhao Youlan stared at the strange scene and suddenly started to think that this new Meng Hao was actually more terrifying than the usual Meng Hao.

The fervor with which he was dismantling the palace buildings was beyond her comprehension. Because of that, she found the situation even more horrifying.

This was even more the case when Meng Hao finished with the floor tiles and then took away the guardian lions. After that, he cut down the pillars and then started to pull off the wall decorations. Zhao Youlan took a deep breath.

She almost couldn’t believe it. In fact, she was certain that if Meng Hao somehow found his way to the Five Poisons Tribe, something completely terrifying would occur. It would probably only take a few hours for the entire Tribe to be uprooted and wiped clean.

Zhixiang was filled with misgivings and hesitated for a moment. Finally, she called out, “Um, hey… Fellow Daoist….”

“Stop bothering me!” said Meng Hao, not even turning his head. He ripped a wall decoration off, then pulled out a flying sword to continue his work.

“You know,” replied Zhixiang immediately, “the big main hall in the center is made from even better material. That Celestial soil is even more refined.”

Her words caused Meng Hao to suddenly pause in the middle of pulling off a wall decoration. He turned to look over at Zhao Youlan and Zhixiang.

Zhixiang immediately continued, “Compared to the main hall, all the other materials in this place are like trash. The Celestial soil over there… um, the floor tiles over there are worth a hundred times more than the ones over here!

“Fellow Daoist, you’re clearly innately skilled and beyond ordinary. You have unique hobbies and are obviously a great man, an amazing hero! I think we really need to cooperate one more time, what do you think?

“You dismantle the main hall, and I’ll open the restrictive spells. That way, your dismantling work will go even faster. Then, we can split the treasures inside fifty-fifty. What do you say?”

When Zhao Youlan heard Zhixiang’s words, her face grew taciturn. There was no way she could associate the terms ‘great man’ and ‘amazing hero,’ with Meng Hao. The only thing she could see was a monster of dismantling.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and he said nothing for the space of a few breaths, and then said, “Just wait a moment.”

“No problem,” replied Zhixiang excitedly. “Fellow Daoist, I understand that you need to meditate for a moment to rest yourself. No problem at all. As for me I can….” Suddenly, her eyes went wide with disbelief. As soon as Meng Hao finished speaking, he went back to ripping the wall decorations off. Only, this time, he went at it even faster than before.

Zhixiang was breathing heavily as she watched Meng Hao sweep over the palace building, and then moved onto the next one. In the following hour, the rest of the thirty or so remaining palace buildings were completely swept clean. Finally, he looked over at the nearly hundred palaces in the area Zhao Youlan and Zhixiang had come from, and a look of regret appeared on his face.

He looked back toward the majestic palace building in the center. “Is that the main hall you mentioned?” he asked.

The palace building was surrounded by walls, inside were four majestic structures that were completely beyond ordinary. Meng Hao’s professional eyes swept the place over and noticed that the floor tiles were nearly two square meters and shined like gold. The Celestial Soil Qi that they emitted was thick to the extreme.

Then he noticed the columns, which were thick and solid. The wall decorations were transparent like jade, shocking to the extreme. He glanced at the palace building’s main door and could tell that the Celestial Soil Qi that it emitted was incredibly dense.

Under Meng Hao’s professional gaze, the places on the walls that were appropriate to begin deconstructing were apparent. As for the floor tiles, he quickly identified the best one to start with. He also took note of which roof tiles to take without disturbing the restrictive spells.

His sharp gaze fell upon Zhao Youlan, causing her to take a deep breath; she suddenly felt as if her clothes were being stripped away. Noticing that Zhixiang wasn't paying attention, she casually lifted up her hand and held up her pinky finger. When she was sure that Meng Hao saw it, she slowly lowered her pinky finger.

Off to the side, Zhixiang had an expression of admiration on her face.

"So, it turns out this guy has a specialty. His name is Meng? He seems to be a Grandmaster of dismantling ancient Immortal palaces without touching the restrictive spells."

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# Chapter 465: A Demon Spirit Appears!

Zhixiang suddenly looked very serious. “Grandmaster Meng, this Bridge of Immortal Treading was built by the Immortal Demon Sect many years ago. The place we are in now is the lowest of the three worlds that compose the Bridge of Immortality, the residence palace of the 99 Immortal Demons. This most majestic of the palace buildings is a local spell locus, and most likely one of the hubs of the Bridge of Immortality.

“There are 3,600 such hubs here. There are precious treasures sealed inside, used in past years to provide a constant supply of the power of the Essence of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

“The restrictive spells here are the most powerful. Even if I were here with my physical body, opening this building would be quite difficult. However… with your assistance, Grandmaster Meng, it should be much simpler.

“Grandmaster Meng, would you please tell me which parts of the outer wall would be the easiest to remove?” This was the first time she had acted so politely toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao had noticed Zhao Youlan’s obscure gesture with her pinky finger, but his expression didn’t change at all. He looked at Zhixiang, thinking for a moment about why she was calling him Grandmaster Meng. It only took a moment for him to realize that it must be because the ease with which he had dismantled the buildings earlier left her shaken.

He cleared his throat and then once more looked regretfully back at the other section of buildings. Then, he returned his attention to the main hall, studying it for a moment. Finally he pointed toward a certain section.

“Right side, row seventy-three, ninth piece from the top!” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered with sharpness as he looked at the particular piece he had just referred to. Based on his previous experience, that was definitely the best place to start.

Hearing this, Zhixiang looked over silently for a moment before her eyes filled with determination. She quickly began to perform an incantation. Zhao Youlan took a deep breath and also began to incant. The two of them pushed their arms out at the same time, causing two beams of light, one white and one red, to shoot through the air toward that particular piece.

In the blink of an eye, they landed, causing the entire wall to glow brightly.

“Left side, row thirty-three, seventh piece from the bottom!” said Meng Hao. Once again, Zhao Youlan and Zhixiang released attacks.

“Right side, row one hundred fifteen, second piece from the top!” This, of course, was all based on Meng Hao’s previous experiences. The wall glowed and began to shake.

Suddenly a booming sound rang out. Finally, a section of the wall exploded, causing the wall’s spell formation to crack, flicker, and then disappear.

Zhixiang took a deep breath and looked somewhat tired out. However, her face quickly filled with enthusiasm. Zhao Youlan hurried over, with Meng Hao following close behind. Without the slightest hint of anxiety, Meng Hao began to collect up the pieces. Zhao Youlan and Zhixiang waited just outside the main hall, watching as the perimeter wall surrounding the palace building disappeared rapidly. After collecting up the final piece, Meng Hao contentedly walked over and began to examine the floor tiles, completely ignoring Zhixiang and Zhao Youlan.

The two women watched on, not daring to interfere. After a moment, Meng Hao stood above one particular floor tile, then squatted down to examine it closer. He took a few steps back toward where there was a small crack on the border of the tiled area. He looked up.

"I'm not sure how to break the spell formations in this place, but as far as the floor tiles go, I have to say that this is the place to target with your divine abilities. Hitting it there will send a crack out that will loosen all the tiles in the area." Having said this, Meng Hao took a few steps back.

Zhixiang's eyes glittered. She flickered an incantation, causing a beam of light to fly out toward the cracked tile. A boom filled the air. At first, it didn't seem like anything had happened. Zhixiang frowned, and a sharp look appeared in her eyes. Both hands flickered in an incantation, and she spit out a mouthful of Qi.

Zhao Youlan instantly reacted to this. Trembling, she spit out a mouthful of blood, which fused with the Qi to transform into the image of a finger.

The finger obviously was filled with shocking power. The instant it appeared, Meng Hao's pupils constricted, and the Dancing Sword Qi within him began to circulate. Meng Hao's reaction seemed casual, but in fact he was constantly considering ways in which to cause his opponents to drain their Cultivation bases. Throughout this situation, he had constantly been on guard; even though they were working together, it was all because of mutual profit, not because of some impregnable alliance.

The finger seemed to be filled with power that could harm even the Heavens; as soon as it appeared, the sky dimmed and an incredible pressure weighed down on the area. It shot toward the crack, slamming into it, and causing everything to tremble. Cracking sounds echoed out as the floor tile filled with cracks. One of the cracks spread out in just the way Meng Hao had described. More intense roaring sounds filled the air.

The shaking was so intense that the other floor tiles of this palace building filled with three more gigantic cracks.

A moment later, the shaking stopped. As of this moment, all of the restrictive spells outside of the palace building were gone. Zhixiang's face was pale, and she was breathing heavily.

"You need to go faster," she urged Meng Hao. "My technique to suppress the shield won't last for much longer. We need to get into the main hall as quickly as possible.”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. Feeling somewhat anxious, he quickly produced a flying sword and began prying up the floor tiles. Without the restrictive spells in place, there was nothing protecting the floor tiles. With Meng Hao’s professional technique, the floor tiles quickly began to disappear into his bag of holding. However, it was at this moment that his eyes suddenly narrowed.

The earth beneath the floor tiles was not smooth. Instead, complex magical symbols became visible as he collected up the tiles. The symbols bore the appearance of a sealing mark, a seal that looked like a butterfly.

Zhixiang looked down at the butterfly seal and then casually remarked: “That seal is the restrictive spell covering this area. However, I’ve disabled it; it doesn’t function anymore.”

Meng Hao nodded, then pried up the final floor tile. Suddenly, he looked up and then performed a Bloodburst Flash and then a minor teleportation. In the blink of an eye, he was far off in the distance.

Once he was away from the main hall, he blinked his left eye several times in succession, pouring the Qi of Immortal Shows the Way into his left eye. Immediately, his view of the world changed.

The majestic palace hall was now a mass of black mist, the source of which was the butterfly seal in the hall’s square. An enormous black butterfly was visible, struggling against the silver strands which were wrapped around its body. It looked like the strands were on the verge of collapsing.

It seemed that the floor tiles in this place had been suppressing the butterfly’s true form. Now that the tiles were gone and the restrictive spell broken, it was in the process of freeing itself.

At the same time, countless roaring black dragons were flying toward the butterfly, intent on consuming it. However, as they neared, the bizarre butterfly sucked them in, using them as power to assist in freeing itself.

Standing next to the butterfly was Zhao Youlan, who for some reason had a bitter smile on her face, and grief in her eyes. A despair existed therein that was no longer possible to cover up.

Shockingly, with his Celestial vision, Meng Hao could see that Zhixiang, perched on Zhao Youlan’s shoulder, had a red thread coming out of her to wrap around the butterfly, as if she were attempting to make some sort of connection with it.

Meng Hao immediately began to fly away. There were still a handful of floor tiles that he hadn’t collected up. As for Zhixiang, her face flickered, and when she looked up and saw Meng Hao, she laughed coldly.

Her face was grim, and she obviously knew that Meng Hao had some clues as to what was happening.

“This guy is profoundly astute!” she thought. “However, there’s something unique about him. He’s capable of taking away the Celestial soil that the Immortal Demon Sect cursed for all time. From ancient times until now, he must be the first person who came here unprotected and not only evaded death, but also took away the Celestial soil!”

Zhixiang frowned. It was for this very reason that she had opted to enlist Meng Hao’s help in disabling the restrictive spells. However, at the most critical moment she had been found out by him and he seemed to be leaving. Although he had taken most of the floor tiles, there were a few left that, while seemingly random, were actually cleverly positioned.

“Grandmaster Meng, what is the meaning of this?” asked Zhixiang lightly. Her voice seemed sweet, but also filled with allure.

“There’s no special meaning,” he called back. “It’s just that my bag of holding is full.” He quickly flew out of the palace building area.

He had acquired enough Celestial soil for now and did not wish to participate in any more of Demoness Zhixiang’s scheming. As for Zhao Youlan, he now understood what was going on. Earlier, outside the basin, he had had his doubts.

Granted, there was some rancor between him and Zhao Youlan. However, it hadn't reached the point where he felt he needed to attack her to resolve the situation.

After all, the war between the Five Poisons Tribe and the Crow Divinity Tribes had started because of an invasion. He had tried to kill her that time, but only once, not twice.

Despite that, Zhao Youlan had immediately attacked him earlier. At first glance it might seem that she had plenty of reasons to do so, but upon careful analysis, her actual motives were unclear.

In fact, now that he thought about it, perhaps the gesture she had made earlier with her pinky finger had been an intentional distress signal.

In any case, Meng Hao had no intention of staying behind in this place in some attempt to rescue Zhao Youlan.

A sharp look appeared in Zhixiang's eyes and she gritted her beautiful teeth.

"Well, considering the situation, it looks like I have no choice, right…?" she said with a sigh. "What a pity. Youlan, precious darling, it goes without saying that I'm going to have to possess you." She suddenly flew off of Zhao Youlan's shoulder. Zhao Youlan began to tremble. It only took a few breaths worth of time for her aura to completely change. She was no longer cool and elegant, but rather bewitching and charming.

Her body flickered as she reached out and pushed down five times onto the ground. Booms rang out as five floor tiles suddenly cracked into pieces. At the same time, the silver strands holding down the black butterfly suddenly dissipated. The butterfly flew into the air!

As it did, flames erupted on its body. It was now no longer invisible; thanks to the burning, it was now colorful in appearance and visible to anyone who looked its way. It had now transformed into a colorful, hand-sized butterfly, completely eye-catching in all aspects.

In the instant that the butterfly appeared, it flapped its wings, causing an enormous windstorm to sweep across the entire land mass. Simultaneously, an incredibly intense Demonic Qi rolled off of it.

It had Demonic Qi and possessed consciousness. Even as he retreated, Meng Hao saw the black butterfly transform into a colorful one, and it caused his mind and heart to shake. Suddenly, two words appeared in his mind.

“Demon Spirit!”

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# Chapter 466: The Agarwood Appears Again to Wrest Away the Demon Spirit!

There was no other term which could be used to describe this colorful butterfly which floated in mid-air. It had transformed from blackness, almost as if it had been reborn from within death. No intense feeling of danger emanated off of the colorful butterfly. The only thing it radiated was intense, natural beauty.

As it fluttered its wings, a thin, colorful dust could be seen floating around it, as well as a bright glow. The butterfly immediately began to fly up into the air.

Zhao Youlan… or perhaps it would be better to say Demoness Zhixiang, flew up in pursuit, her eyes glittering. The main reason she had come to the Realm of the Bridge Ruins was for this very Demon Spirit!

“With it, I will be qualified to enter the Primordial Immortal Demon Plane. As a disciple of the current generation of the Immortal Demon Sect, I will definitely be able to snatch some good fortune once I get into that ancient plane!” Zhixiang performed a minor teleportation, and in the blink of an eye was next to the butterfly.

Meng Hao’s eyes shone brightly. As of this instant, he gave up any notions of fleeing. As far as he was concerned, this thing… was exactly what he had come to the Realm of the Bridge Ruins to acquire.

With a Demon Spirit, the two thousand members of the Crow Divinity Tribes would be qualified to enter the Black Lands, and would thus have a chance to survive the Apocalypse.

There was no time to think. Meng Hao’s body flickered as he Bloodburst Flashed and then teleported. All the Blood Qi in his body rose up as he shot toward the butterfly Demon Spirit.

As he sprang into action, he circulated the Alcohol Qi within him, preparing to use the Dancing Sword Qi.

Killing intent flickered within Zhixiang’s eyes. However, in the exact moment in which both of them shot up into the air after the colorful butterfly, the butterfly shot forward, its body becoming a blur. A moment later, it was a few hundred kilometers away. Were it not for the intense, glowing light that emanated off of it, it would have been able to disappear without a trace.

Meng Hao’s face flickered as he teleported once again; Zhixiang pulled back the divine ability she had been about to use. Both ceased thoughts of attacking as they shot in pursuit of the Demon Spirit.

They moved with incredible speed, although Zhixiang was a bit faster than Meng Hao. However, her merging with Zhao Youlan was not complete. Furthermore, Zhao Youlan was actually still only at the Core Formation stage; Zhixiang had been able to force her Cultivation base up to the Nascent Soul stage. Even still, it was impossible for Zhixiang, an Immortal, to employ her full level of power using this body.

Even if she could push Zhao Youlan to Spirit Severing, it wouldn’t match up to her speed in Immortal Divinity form. If she pushed the body too far, it was very likely that it would shred to pieces in mid-air.

Every time the butterfly Demon Spirit shot forward, it moved a few hundred kilometers. In fact, in one particularly stunning moment, it traveled over five hundred kilometers in one shot.

Fortunately, the colorful glow it emitted was like a bright lamp on a dark night, clearly pointing it out. Were it not for that, Meng Hao would have been incapable of tracking it down.

Unfortunately, the butterfly Demon Spirit’s frantic flight did not go unnoticed for very long. Soon, it began to attract the attention of other Western Desert Cultivators in the area.

As the Cultivators became aware of the butterfly, they immediately came to think of Demon Spirits. All of them had come to the Realm of the Bridge Ruins with one of their goals being to search out the Demon Spirits that came to being here.

Instantly, the eyes of these Cultivators turned red. This Demon Spirit represented a chance for survival for their respective Tribes. It only took one glance for any Cultivator in the area to cause the full power of their Cultivation bases to explode as they shot toward the butterfly.

On this land mass, the colorful butterfly instantly gave rise to a storm of fighting.

Meng Hao frowned. Seeing this happening, he decided to hold back from joining in the fray. However, he did not lessen his speed at all as he continued in pursuit.

As far as Zhixiang went, she had long since disappeared. Meng Hao knew that she was definitely in the area of the Demon Spirit, waiting for the perfect moment to make her move, most likely when the butterfly slowed down a bit.

At a certain point, an area of distortion suddenly appeared in front of the butterfly Demon Spirit, and a man appeared. His body was festooned with totems, most noticeably his forehead, upon which could be seen a black dragon. The aura and ripples coming off of this man made him seem thoroughly frightening.

Furthermore, his Cultivation base was at the late Nascent Soul stage!

This was the first person of the late Nascent Soul stage that Meng Hao had seen in the Realm of the Bridge Ruins. He was tall and strapping, his features somewhat crude, with thick, bushy eyebrows and large eyes. As soon as he appeared, he let out a roar and lifted both of his arms up. His body suddenly began to expand; green veins bulged out on his skin, and an enormous, lifelike black dragon suddenly exploded out from behind him.

The butterfly Demon Spirit was only the size of a hand, and had no Cultivation base. It obviously couldn’t count as something powerful. Anyone could grab it and take it away. However, its speed was indescribable, giving it an incredible power. As soon as the man appeared in front of it, it shot forward, slamming into him. An incredible boom filled the air.

Amidst the booming, the burly man’s body trembled. All of his totem tattoos flickered. The black dragon lifted its head into the air. The man lifted his head up and roared as he shot back a full three thousand meters before coming to a halt.

However, he still held the butterfly firmly with both hands.

There were more than ten people in the area who had been attracted by the butterfly Demon Spirit. All of them recognized this man and were thrown into a commotion.

“That’s Xu Bai of the great Black Dragon Tribe!”

“The great Black Dragon Tribe is from the Western Desert East region, and has a Spirit Severing Patriarch, a true great Tribe!”

“Great Tribes with Spirit Severing Patriarchs do not need a Demon Spirit to be qualified to enter the Black Lands. Xu Bai is a powerful expert of the great Black Dragon Tribe. Word has it that he is the next Tribe member likely to rise to Spirit Severing. Why does he want to snatch a Demon Spirit!?”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. The scene just now had shaken him inwardly. This burly man named Xu Bai had already made quite an impression on him. It seemed that the majority of his Cultivation base power was focused on his physical body, which was something very unique.

However, as soon as Xu Bai took control of the Demon Spirit, a soft laugh could be heard coming from seemingly nowhere. Ripples suddenly flickered, and a red glow could be seen. Within the red glow was a man wearing a long red robe. He was thin and possessed a feminine air. The instant he appeared, magical symbols appeared all around him, all of which were unique, and emanated a bizarre glow. Actually, upon closer inspection, each of these magical symbols seemed to be a life force.

Even more bizarre, there was no totem tattoo on the man’s forehead. Furthermore, in the places of his body not covered by his robe, a vast assortment of magical symbols could be seen.

As he laughed softly, his femininity seemed to increase. In concurrence with his appearance, he lifted his right arm and waved it gently in front of him. Instantly, a vast array of magical symbols appeared and began to converge together. As they did, they transformed into a gigantic hand made of magical symbols. It immediately shot at top speed in the direction of Xu Bai.

As it neared, it seemed to be closing in on the butterfly Demon Spirit, as if to snatch it.

“Chen Mo!!” roared Xu Bai.

As his voice echoed out, the other surrounding Cultivators’ faces were instantly filled with astonishment.

“Chen Mo? That’s Chen Mo from the great Demon Talisman Tribe. He reached the late Nascent Soul stage two hundred years ago!”

As the rumbling echoed out, Xu Bai’s face filled with ferocity. He loosened his grip, and the butterfly flapped its wings, extricating itself and dodging away from the gigantic hand formed from magical symbols.

It was at this exact moment in which the butterfly freed itself that suddenly, Zhixiang’s figure appeared. She reached out her delicate hand and grabbed the butterfly, then flickered and disappeared.

The speed with which she moved made it so that nobody could detect her beforehand. The faces of Xu Bai and Chen Mo instantly filled with shock. To have the Demon Spirit snatched away in front of their very noses left both of the men feeling completely humiliated.

However, the moment in which Zhixiang disappeared, Meng Hao’s eyes filled with a cold glow.

“Drop it,” he said coolly, Alcohol Qi spreading out from within him. Zhixiang’s cold laugh could be heard echoing out in the air.

“If you hadn’t used the Dancing Sword Qi before, then using it now all of a sudden would have worked on me quite well. Unfortun….” Before she could even finish speaking, she stopped. That was because the Alcohol Qi had ceased spreading out of his body; not even a scrap could be detected. Despite that, shocking ripples were suddenly emanating off of Meng Hao.

The ripples filled the entire area for fifteen thousand meters in every direction. The sky dimmed and all of the surrounding Cultivators’ faces fell. As for Chen Mo and Xu Bai, their pupils constricted as they felt an intense sense of crisis.

It was in this shocking moment that a three thousand meter long beast appeared in front of Meng Hao.

Its body was that of a dragon, while its tail was that of a phoenix, and it had two dragon’s heads. The shocking, three thousand meter long creature instantly emanated a horrifying aura that pressed down on everything within fifteen thousand meters.

This was none other than the Agarwood!

Meng Hao possessed the Agarwood legacy and could use it three times to avoid death. When the Agarwood appeared, its body flickered and it began to roar. Its body actually disappeared at this point, but its power transformed into an attack that shot forward, causing everything around it to shake.

The air for fifteen thousand meters in every direction seemed about to collapse. Zhixiang’s body was instantly forced to reappear in mid-air. Blood sprayed from her mouth and her face was covered in shock.

“Agar… wood…” she thought, her expression one of complete disbelief. She had long since ceased to look down on Meng Hao. His usage of the Dancing Sword Qi caused her to be vigilant. Then there was the fact that he wasn’t affected by the Immortal Demon curse. That had filled her with suspicion, and caused her to change her plans. But now…. In the short time in which she had known Meng Hao, everything she had seen and experienced, including Meng Hao’s scheming and his fighting, caused him to occupy a place of extreme importance in her heart.

Blood continued to spray from her mouth as she shot backward involuntarily. The attack just now caused her to lose her grip on the butterfly. Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed brightly as he shot forward, flicked his sleeve and collected up the butterfly.

Xu Bai’s face flickered as he tried to retreat. However, the power of the attack caught him up too, and he was sent tumbling backward like a kite with its string cut. He ended up several hundred kilometers away, where he coughed up eight mouthfuls of blood.

Chen Mo met a similar fate. Despite retreating and trying to use a magical technique to protect himself, he ended up several hundred kilometers away, coughing up blood.

Considering that this happened to the two of them, there is no need to go into detail regarding the other ten people present.

All of them felt rumbling throughout their entire bodies. The bodies of three or four directly exploded and their Nascent Souls fled. The others sustained severe internal injuries. All of them immediately pulled out the Immortality Bridgestones that had brought them to this place and crushed them. As they did, their bodies began to disappear.

This was not a minor teleportation, but rather, greater teleportation. It was a way of leaving this place, the only method of returning to the Western

Desert. Any Cultivator in the Realm of the Bridge Ruins could use this method to escape at any time. However, once they left they could not return. In essence, it was a way of giving up.

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# Chapter 467: Soil Vortex!

As soon as Meng Hao laid hands on the Demon Spirit, he placed it into his bag of holding. Then he turned, transforming into a beam of colorful light. Moving as fast as lightning, he shot past the group of people who had been forced to fall back by the Agarwood attack.

There were only three people present who could pose a threat to Meng Hao: Zhixiang, Xu Bai, and Chen Mo.

At the moment, though, Xu Bai and Chen Mo were coughing up blood. Their retreat had momentarily cost them the chance to give chase. However, considering they had Cultivation bases at the late Nascent Soul, it wouldn’t be long before they could collect themselves and begin to pursue him.

As for Zhixiang, she was definitely a most formidable adversary, difficult to contend with and worthy of being called Demoness by others.

If all three of them worked together, he would be forced to use the Agarwood and the Dancing Sword Qi. Otherwise, it would be difficult to escape with his life.

Even still, in Meng Hao’s analysis, the end result of such a situation would be mutual loss for everyone.

At the moment, there seemed to be one more possible choice in front of him. That was to take out his Immortality Bridgestone and use it to teleport out of this place.

That option, though, was something he would pick only as a last resort. He had obtained a lot of Celestial soil, but right now it was impossible to tell if he had enough to create his Earth-type totem.

Once he opted to leave, there would be no way to return, and he would have lost this fortunate chance.

Therefore, he whistled off into the distance at top speed, brow furrowed.

Behind him, the eyes of Xu Bai and Chen Mo glittered as they took in deep breaths. After the Agarwood attack and Meng Hao’s sudden departure, they had no time or inclination to heal their wounds. Instead, they unleashed minor teleportation as they began to chase Meng Hao.

They were determined to acquire that Demon Spirit!

As the two of them began to give chase, Zhixiang transformed into a beam of light. Three people, one in the lead, and two bringing up the rear, all shot off with incredible speed in the direction of Meng Hao.

Meng Hao frowned. Right now he had to decide what to do. He could keep ahold of the Demon Spirit for the sake of the Crow Divinity Tribes. The price he would pay would be that he might not have enough Celestial soil. His other choice would be to think about himself first, and abandon the Demon Spirit.

After the space of a few breaths passed, his eyes began to shine with determination. To make his Earth-type totem become a reality didn’t necessarily require the use of Celestial soil. A multitude of different types of soil existed in Heaven and Earth. However, right now there was only one Demon Spirit!

The instant he made his decision, he slapped his bag of holding. Immediately, the Immortality Bridgestone appeared. He was just about to crush it when, suddenly, Zhixiang’s voice transmitted into his head.

“Meng Hao, even if you have some more clever moves, considering you’re being pursued by me and two late Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators, then the only way to keep your hands on that Demon Spirit is to leave the Realm of the Bridge Ruins. You have no other options.

“However, I can tell that you have some other reasons for coming here. That’s why you don’t want to leave, right?

“Therefore, I have a proposal. Why don’t we team up? I know that our last cooperation didn’t go very well, and that no matter what I say to you right now, you won’t trust me. Therefore, let me present you with a show of good faith!” The instant Zhixiang finished transmitting her words, her body suddenly stopped. She spun in place and then began to perform an incantation with both hands. Two red flowers instantly materialized in front of her.

The two flowers floated toward Xu Bai and Chen Mo. The petals of these two flowers resembled the faces of none other than those two men.

Then, the flowers began to collapse into pieces. In the space of a single breath, the pieces transformed into gray ashes. Immediately, blood sprayed from Xu Bai’s mouth, and his body sagged. Next to him, Chen Mo trembled and coughed up blood. The two of them immediately stopped in their tracks, their faces filled with both viciousness and astonishment.

Zhixiang wasn’t finished. Her phoenix-like eyes glittered as the two men stopped in place. She lifted her right hand and pointed toward them. Immediately, both Xu Bai and Chen Mo coughed up blood. Looking even more flabbergasted, they began to retreat.

They had realized that even as she had raised her hand, they had already been injured. It was as if they had fallen into a bizarre reality with a new set of rules.

“Injure first, attack second?”

“Everything’s been turned around. It’s a divine ability that bends the rules of reality? That’s a Spirit Severing technique!” Their faces immediately filled with shock, and their minds spun. Without hesitation, they fled at top speed.

Zhixiang lowered her hand and watched indifferently as the two left. Then she turned and shot back toward Meng Hao.

With his Spiritual Sense, Meng Hao could detect some of the things that had just happened. However, he did not stop moving, and kept his Immortality Bridgestone held tightly in hand, ready to crush it at any moment.

“That was my show of good faith,” said Zhixiang. “They won’t be able to heal their wounds in a short period of time, and surely won’t have the gall to continue to pursue further.

“Meng Hao, this time, I sincerely wish to cooperate you. Last time, I truly made some mistakes. This time… why don’t we truly work together in the spirit of cooperation?

“You don’t need to respond, nor tell me your decision. In the easternmost region of this land mass is a mountain crag that juts out. I will wait for you there for one month. If you come, then we can work together, and you can acquire a lot more Celestial soil. If you don’t wish to come, then I won’t force the matter.” Zhixiang didn’t pursue him. Having finished her transmission, she stopped and watched Meng Hao shoot off into the distance. It was impossible to tell what she was thinking. After a long moment passed, she turned and headed toward the east.

Meng Hao frowned. He was having a hard time analyzing Demoness Zhixiang’s words and actions. She was just too changeable. One minute they were fighting each other, the next she was acting like this.

Although he was hesitating, he didn’t reduce his speed at all. He proceeded onward for eight days, until he was absolutely certain that no one was pursuing him. It was only then that he stopped to rest.

Three more days passed, and then he proceeded onward. Six days later, he stopped again. By this point, he was about eighty percent certain that Zhixiang was in fact not following him.

“Could it be that she really changed her mind?” he thought with a cold laugh. He was currently sitting cross-legged in an Immortal’s cave that he had carved out. As far as leaving the Realm of the Bridge Ruins, he really wasn’t willing to do so. Eyes glittering thoughtfully, he produced some

Celestial soil and sent his consciousness into it, slowly attempting to gain enlightenment.

He used the same method he had used to study the fire. He closed his eyes, and the structure of the Celestial soil appeared in his mind. When the structure was complete, he would be able to use the Earth-type totem seed given to him by the Crow Divinity Tribes to fully congeal his Earth-type totem tattoo. That was the method he planned to use.

Time passed. During the following ten days, everything around Meng Hao was quiet and peaceful. No one disturbed him. On the outside, many of the other Western Desert Cultivators had already left this place.

Finally, Meng Hao opened his eyes, and they shone with a bright light. In his mind, he had already completely outlined the basic structure of what could be referred to as a grit formed from Celestial soil.

“Not bad….” he thought, taking in a deep breath. From within his bag of holding, he produced the weak Earth-type totem seed that he had acquired from the Crow Divinity Tribes. It was flickering, and about to fade away; he had been carefully protecting it this entire time. Clenching his teeth, he branded it onto his right arm.

The instant the Earth-type totem seed was branded onto his arm, Meng Hao’s will caused the Celestial soil grit in his mind to merge with the five Crow Divinity Tribes’ Earth-type totem seed.

All of this was controlled by Meng Hao’s will, but even he wasn’t sure if he would succeed. All he knew was that he had used this method with the Fire-type totem, and based on his analysis, it should work similarly with the Celestial soil.

The merging process took a few days. Shockingly, when it was complete, something that looked like an indistinct vortex appeared on his right arm. It was yellowish-brown in color, and as soon as it appeared, an incredible gravitational force emanated out from it.

This gravitational force didn’t attract spiritual energy, but rather, the Celestial soil in front of Meng Hao. Instantly, the Celestial soil was sucked into the vortex and consumed.

Meng Hao’s mind shook. He immediately began to produce more clumps and chunks of Celestial soil. As soon as they appeared, they were sucked into the vortex. A few more days passed. Meng Hao had produced every bit of Celestial soil in his bag of holding, and all of it had been sucked into the vortex. Afterwards… the gravitational force was still there!

Furthermore, the force had not lessened, but rather, become stronger, as if it were transmogrifying.

Meng Hao had the intense feeling that if he’d had enough Celestial soil, he could cause this vortex to transmogrify into a totem tattoo. It would be the fourth of the five elements totem tattoos, the Earth-type.

When that happened, his Cultivation base would shoot up again, allowing him to easily crush the early Nascent Soul Stage, and surely defeat the mid Nascent Soul stage. As for the late Nascent Soul stage, he would at least be able to hold his own in a fight.

As of now, he was a truly powerful expert of the Gold Core stage. He was absolutely powerful enough to ignore the divide between the stages. From ancient times until now, he was the only Core Formation Cultivator who could ever do something so shocking.

In order to reach this point, a Perfect Gold Core was required, and the five elements needed to be refined to their ultimate form. Enlightenment based on being a Grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy was also required, not to mention that being a Demon Sealer was a prerequisite!

The only person who could possibly tread this path was Meng Hao. He now had a peak Perfect Gold Core that could battle the Nascent Soul stage!

One could imagine that one day, when he possessed all five elements, and his Cultivation base was at the Perfect Five-Colored Nascent Soul stage, he would be in a realm that completely defied the Heavens. He would absolutely be the most powerful person on South Heaven who was underneath the Spirit Severing stage.

Chosen from all the great Sects, and all the Clans, could be crushed beneath his feet.

Meng Hao's Nascent Soul path was that of the Five-Colored Nascent Soul, a path forged by himself, a path of Perfection!

"I need more Celestial soil!" he thought. He covered the vortex with his sleeve, but the gravitational force was still there, and growing stronger. Meng Hao's eyes glittered as he walked out of his Immortal's cave and transformed into a colorful beam of light that shot through mid-air.

Several days later, he returned to the basin. He stood on the edge, frowning. There was no longer any mist there. All of the palace buildings below had been reduced to ash and wreckage.

Frowning, he walked down into the wreckage, whereupon bits of Celestial soil floated up into the air and then shot toward Meng Hao's arm. However, the place had been destroyed, and there was not much Celestial soil remaining. After the vortex sucked it all up, its gravitational force grew even more terrifying.

He stood there silently, his face filling with determination.

"When practicing cultivation, Cultivators must not allow dread into their hearts. They must always proceed forward! That Demoness Zhixiang is an Immortal… but for the moment, she's fallen into the mortal world. There's no reason not to cooperate with her one more time."

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# Chapter 468: Thirty Thousand Worlds

Days later, in the eastern part of this landmass, was an area with a mountain crag that jutted out, forming a platform. The long, thin platform stretched out past the border of the landmass into the void beyond.

When you stood on this platform, you were surrounded on all sides by blackness.

A woman sat cross-legged at the far end of the platform. She was beautiful and had a look of indifference on her face. This was none other than Zhixiang, who had been sitting here meditating for more than a month.

After ceasing her pursuit of Meng Hao, she’d come here to wait in the peace and quiet.

After an entire month passed, she’d continued to wait, confident that Meng Hao would come. Although they hadn’t known each other for long, Meng Hao had left an incredibly deep impression on her.

Suddenly, Zhixiang opened her eyes and looked off into the distant sky. A slight smile appeared on her mouth when she saw a beam of colorful light shooting toward her.

Within the beam was Meng Hao. His green robe and long black hair danced about in the wind as he flew, making him look less like a Cultivator and more like a scholar. However, his grave, stern face and cold eyes also made Meng Hao seem as if he were like a sharp, unsheathed sword.

She saw him, and he saw her.

It must be said that Zhao Youlan had been beautiful, but not consummately beautiful. However, after being possessed for a while, Zhixiang’s Immortal Divinity began to meld more firmly with her. Slight changes could be seen within Zhao Youlan’s body. Most were changes in disposition. In any case, these changes made this mixture of Zhao Youlan and Zhixiang show signs that in the future, she might reach that level of consummate beauty that Zhao Youlan never had.

One could imagine that in the future, this combination of Zhixiang and Zhao Youlan would change, and become completely different.

Meng Hao looked at Zhixiang and thought about Zhao Youlan, and the ruthlessness that existed in the Cultivation world. Zhao Youlan had tried to get him to save her. However, their relationship was not such that Meng Hao would risk death to attempt to rescue her. It was out of the question.

In the Cultivation world, the law of the jungle prevails. Meng Hao would do nothing.

Looking around, his expression was the same as ever. He strode forward across the jutting platform, nearing the Zhixiang-possessed Zhao Youlan.

“I knew you would come,” said Zhixiang with a slight smile that contained a mysterious allure.

Meng Hao came to a stop next to her. His expression cool, he calmly said, “How could you be so sure?”

“Because you and me, we’re the same type of person,” she said, turning to look at him. Within her eyes could be seen a rare gleam of admiration. “When people try to kill us, we run. When facing death, we possess the will to live. In the midst of our struggles, we seize good fortune. In order to further our cultivation, we charge into the most dangerous of situations. We achieve our goals by fair means or foul!”

Meng Hao declined to comment.

Zhixiang spoke again, her voice soft and pleasant like a beautiful bird. “I know that you need vast quantities of Celestial soil. Unfortunately, the records maintained by you Planet South Heaven Cultivators only have information about a few of the Immortality Bridgestone worlds. The Bridge of Immortal Treading contains tens of thousands of worlds. Comparatively speaking, what you know of counts for little. Even the expression ‘a single hair out of nine ox hides,’ does not suffice to describe it.

“Throughout all the years that the Western Desert Cultivators from South Heaven have been exploring the Realm of the Bridge Ruins, they have only been to those few places. The Celestial soil that remains is negligible.

“The only way to get your hands on the amount that you need is to leave this landmass. Don’t confine yourself to this one area; go to places further away, places that the Planet South Heaven Cultivators have never been to.

“That is where you will find great quantities of Celestial soil. In fact, there is one landmass which is completely constructed entirely of Celestial soil.” When Zhixiang spoke, her expression was not one of flattery. Instead, her eyes were bright and glittering, like deep impenetrable pools of limpid autumn waters.

“It’s not that the Planet South Heaven Cultivators who have come to this place do not wish to explore more regions. Rather, those areas unknown to them are full of danger and peril. That, coupled with the fact that they are unaware of the paths leading to them, ensure that they never go there.” Zhixiang smiled faintly. She couldn’t actually see Meng Hao from where she was sitting, nor could she see that he was listening intently. The breeze caught her hair, causing it to dance about. She reached up and twirled a strand of hair around her fingers. Other strands of hair fell to partially cover her face, making her look even more charming than before.

Meng Hao glanced over at her, but said nothing.

“The correct paths cannot be traveled by riding randomly on the dust rocks that flit about the void. That is because the dust rocks which lead to those worlds do not appear in a set place or time. They can only be located by means of a special augury technique.

“That special technique requires constant adjustments, and is something that Planet South Heaven Cultivators have no ability to master. Luckily, I happen to know of one such path. Although it does not lead to the deepest areas of the Bridge of Immortality, it does go twenty thousand worlds deep.

“This is my second expression of good faith, and proves that I don’t care about you acquiring that particular Demon Spirit. Actually, I hope that you can help me to get a second one!

“In return, I’ll take you into the depths of the Realm of the Bridge Ruins to get more Celestial soil.” She turned and looked at Meng Hao, her expression one of sincerity. It seemed as if this partnership was, as she said, very different than the first.

Meng Hao smiled slightly. How could he possibly trust this Demoness Zhixiang at the drop of a hat? Trust was a difficult thing to exist between Cultivators. Most of the time, partnerships were forged out of necessity.

“What good is a Demon Spirit to you?” asked Meng Hao suddenly.

Zhixiang hesitated, then looked at him one more time. Finally, she seemed to reach a decision.

“This partnership will be a manifestation of our mutual good will. If it ends happily, then we can enter into a yet another partnership… and I can once again manifest my good will. Very well, I will tell you why I need the Demon Spirit.

“Demon Spirits are good for only one thing. They are keys which can be used to enter the Primordial Immortal Demon Plane. Anyone who possesses a true Demon Spirit is qualified to return two hundred years after the opening of the Realm of the Bridge Ruins. At that time, the truly blessed location can be entered, the Primordial Immortal Demon Plane!”

“The Primordial Immortal Demon Plane….” said Meng Hao thoughtfully. Her words seemed quite plausible, and would also explain why the Heavenly Court Alliance of the Black Lands wanted Demon Spirits.

“The Bridge of Immortal Treading was created many years ago by the ancient Immortal Demon Sect. The purpose was to lead the branches of the Sect which existed on the four great planets toward Immortal Ascension. However, in the war with the Ji Clan, the bridge was destroyed. Members of the ancient Immortal Demon Sect set up an all-powerful spell formation, sacrificing their own lives to ensure that the Bridge of Immortality would manifest once every thousand years. It also ensured that the Primordial Immortal Demon Plane would remain intact…. After the war, the surviving Cultivators, after experiencing the vicissitudes of time, founded a new Immortal Demon Sect.

“I… am disciple of that Sect.”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and his expression flickered slightly.

“Because of the life sacrifices made for the Primordial Immortal Demon Plane, a curse was left behind. Any Cultivator who touches items from the Primordial Immortal Demon Plane would die a horrible death. However, you… dismantled a spell locus on the third level of the bridge. Unexpectedly, the curse did nothing to you. That is why I think we should work together.

“Even the Ji Clan fears the curse, and as such, permits the Realm of the Bridge Ruins to exist, and to manifest every thousand years.” Having said all this, Zhixiang looked over at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao kept silent for a moment, then indifferently said, “It opens once every thousand years. Countless years have passed. I wonder, how many times has it manifested so far?”

“The Primordial Immortal Demon Plane truly does only open every one thousand years,” Zhixiang explained slowly, “and can only be entered with a Demon Spirit. However, a Demon Spirit is born only once every thirty thousand years. So, for all intents and purposes… this is actually only the third time it has opened.

“As for Demon Spirits, they don’t exist only within the Realm of the Bridge Ruins; they can also be born on the outside. It is possible for them to appear in any place that contains vestiges of the ancient Immortal Demon Sect.

“Therefore… in two hundred years, there will no doubt be quite a few people who go to the Primordial Immortal Demon Plane. In fact, people will most likely come from all the four great planets. Even some of the secretive great Sects from the Ninth Mountain and Sea will probably appear.

“After all, long ago, the ancient Immortal Demon Sect… was the number one Sect of the Ninth Mountain and Sea! One of its members was the Lord of the Ninth Mountain. At that time, the Ji Clan was under its command. Later, the Lord of the Ninth Mountain and Sea went missing. That was when the Li Clan was covered over by the Heavens 1. The Ji Clan occupied the Mountain, seized its Essence and forged the Immortality Bestowal Dais. Within the Ninth Mountain and Sea, anyone who wishes to practice Cultivation must tread the path of the Ji and become an Immortal of the Ji Clan. Anyone who refuses to follow their path is a renegade Immortal.

“Such matters do not have much to do with you. That you are aware of them is enough. If you ever have the chance to reach Immortal Ascension, then you will be forced to make a choice at that time.

“However, based on my observations, sooner or later, you will be an Immortal among these stars!”

She concluded her speech very calmly. However, Meng Hao’s heart and mind were trembling. As he thoughtfully considered everything she said, he realized that it didn’t matter whether or not he believed her. He had put a lot of thought into the matter before making the decision to come here. He turned to look at Zhixiang.

“When do we set out?”

Zhixiang’s eyes filled with a bright light. She realized that for some reason, her admiration for Meng Hao only continued to grow. Such decisiveness and lack of hesitation was only possible for people who were extremely stupid and narcissistic, or… extremely confident in their path of cultivation.

“So,” she said to herself smiling, “he’s not afraid of schemes and intrigues. In any case, I’m an Immortal…. This arrangement is good. We’ll work together, and I won’t hide anything more from him. Our partnership should work well this time!”

“I’d planned to wait for you for three more days before leaving.”

“Three more days?” he said, looking at her. “Very well.” With that he walked off to the side and sat down cross-legged to meditate, declining to comment further.

Three days passed in a flash. It was at this point that far off in the sky, a meteor could be seen. It moved with incredible speed toward them.

“That’s the rock!” said Zhixiang as it neared. She suddenly sprang into action, shooting toward the giant rock. Almost at the same time, Meng Hao teleported.

The two of them appeared on the rock and exchanged a glance. Immediately, the rock tore a hole into the border of the world and shot out into the void.

Out in the boundless blackness, one man and one woman rode the huge rock off into the distance.

Meanwhile, far out ahead of Meng Hao and Zhixiang, an azure-robed Cultivator with a sword strapped to his back strode out through the void. He held an alcohol flagon in his hand from which he occasionally drank. He looked lonely and bleak.

“You ask when you will gaze upon me again…? I’ve been looking for you for three thousand years…. Where are you? Thirty thousand worlds, countless Bridge Slaves. I’ve already been to twenty thousand worlds, and I’ve encountered countless Bridge Slaves. But you… where are you?

“Xue’er, answer me! I will take you away from this place. It doesn’t matter who tries to stop me. It doesn’t matter if I die the cruelest death. It doesn’t matter if my body and spirit are annihilated. I will… take you away!!”

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# Chapter 469: The Depths of the Bridge Ruins

In the blackness of the void, there exists an indescribable coldness. This was a coldness that could, in the briefest of moments, freeze the body of a Nascent Soul Cultivator until it cracked into pieces.

Anyone who possessed a physical body but no cold-resisting treasures would be destroyed.

Only someone who cultivated a divine ability related to fire, and also had a fitting magical item, would be able to survive for long here.

At the moment, Zhixiang was sitting cross-legged on the large rock. She looked over at Meng Hao with her phoenix-like eyes. This was their tenth day traveling through the void. During that entire time, they hadn’t spoken to each other at all. Each sat on one end of the rock, some distance away from each other.

A glittering shield surrounded Meng Hao, preventing the cold on the outside from entering. At first, it had been quite stable, but as the rock continued further into the depths of the void, the shield formed by the five small white stones was gradually beginning to flicker. The further they went, the more it seemed as if it might collapse.

On previous occasions in which Meng Hao had ventured into the void, he had always spent more than ten days in the darkness. This time, however, was different than those previous times.

The cold here was many times stronger than before. Furthermore, the deeper they traveled into the void, the more shocking the cold became. It was so fearsome that even with the protective treasures, it was getting to the point that it was becoming unbearable.

Meng Hao had long since noticed that the rock he was sitting on had actually turned white. The frost which covered everything was growing thicker and had turned into thick ice.

Zhixiang didn't seem to be having any problems dealing with the cold. She was sitting there cross-legged, surrounded by the freezing cold, looking the same as ever. She had nothing to protect her; she simply rotated her Cultivation base, seemingly sucking in and absorbing any of the coldness that neared her.

This caused Meng Hao to feel even more vigilance than before regarding her.

He could sense that she had looked at him just now. His eyes opened and their gazes met. Cracking sounds could suddenly be heard from Meng Hao's protective shield. Fissures appeared on its surface, spreading out and growing in quantity. Soon, they covered the entire thing. The shield did not collapse, but it obviously would in a short period of time.

Once it shattered, the coldness would instantly rush in toward Meng Hao.

A contemplative look appeared in Zhixiang's eyes as she thought to herself, "Perhaps I thought too much of him. I overlooked the problem of the cold; if he can't get across the void on his own power, then I guess we'll need to change the terms of our partnership. After all… power is the foundation of any cooperation, and also the basis of respect." Despite this, she smiled.

Zhixiang's eyes glittered as she looked at Meng Hao and his shield, which was clearly about to shatter. It really had never occurred to her that he might not be equipped to cross the void in this way. "Fellow Daoist Meng, the coldness here is not something that ordinary Nascent Soul Cultivators can resist. You may have a strange Cultivation base, but I'm afraid you won't be able to survive either. Why don't you come over here by me? Anything within ten meters of me will be kept safe."

Even as the words came out of her mouth, cracks spread out like a spiderweb over his shield. It didn't seem as if it would last much longer. It was at this point that Meng Hao spoke coldly: "There's no need."

His voice was calm and yet powerfully shocking. It seemed to carry an unspeakable confidence as well as grim feeling. When Zhixiang heard his response, her eyes filled with a look of concentration.

She watched as Meng Hao slowly reached his hand out and pushed against the shield. A boom could be heard as the shield trembled and then collapsed. As it did, the five white rocks around Meng Hao all exploded.

The shield disappeared, causing Zhixiang's eyes to go wide. Meng Hao's actions completely exceeded her powers of anticipation. How could she have guessed that Meng Hao would dare to personally destroy his own protective shield in such a way?

The instant that the shield collapsed, the surrounding cold from the void rushed in toward Meng Hao. In the blink of an eye, it completely covered him.

However, he continued to sit there cross-legged just as before, his expression placid. He lowered his right hand and closed his eyes to meditate quietly. It was as if he didn't feel the surrounding cold whatsoever.

Zhixiang looked at him for a long time, having been completely shaken by Meng Hao. She was an Immortal, so she could ignore the cold. But Meng Hao had decisively destroyed his own useless shield, and then relied on only himself to fight back against the cold.

She looked over at him, once again filled with the same admiration as before, if not more. "Ordinary Cultivators, faced with a disintegrating shield, would all take the chance and hope that the shield held. However, this guy did no such thing. He is thoroughly decisive!"

She took him even more seriously now that she could see how he resisted the cold. It seemed that at the moment, he was not out of sorts in any way.

As she sat there thoughtfully, Meng Hao closed his eyes. They didn’t speak any more, but rather sat in silence as the rock continued to fly onward. Half a month passed, and the fearsomeness of the cold continued to grow.

At one point, Zhixiang opened her eyes and performed an incantation with her right hand. As she did, Meng Hao looked over and watched. In recent days, Meng Hao looked the same as he usually did, but actually, being in this cold was like training in a type of cultivation.

His Fire-type totem tattoo was fused with his Everburning Flame. The words Everburning represented life. In the icy cold of this void, an eternal fire burned inside of him, igniting his spirit, making his own will everburning.

Although the cold pressed down upon him, his spirit burned with eternal flame. All he had to do was exercise a thought, and his body would restore itself. This was what qualified him to cross this void.

He continued to watch Zhixiang’s fingers flash in an incantation. Her eyes shone with a glimmer that indicated she was performing augury. Suddenly, she stretched out her left hand and then pushed it down toward the rock. Before it could touch the surface, Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. Immediately, Alcohol Qi spread out through his body, and the shocking Dancing Sword Qi appeared. It seemed that if Zhixiang touched the rock, then the Dancing Sword Qi would explode out.

Seeing this caused Zhixiang to pause and turn her beautiful head to look at him.

“Fellow Daoist Meng, what is the meaning of this?”

“Why don’t you tell me, Fellow Daoist Zhixiang?”

After thinking for a moment, Zhixiang slowly replied, “Based on my augury, I can tell that we have arrived at an unfixed intersection node. I must cause this one thousand meter dust rock to stop temporarily. Then, we will wait in this position for seven days.”

“How exactly can you persuade me to trust you about this?” said Meng Hao coolly, his expression the same as ever.

Zhixiang frowned, then gave him a deep, thoughtful look. Finally she laughed.

“Fellow Daoist Meng, if you want to learn my augury technique, you can just say so, there’s no need to go about it this way.” Despite her words, she still sat there thoughtfully for a moment. She knew that Meng Hao was endlessly crafty and viciously decisive. He was not a person who could be easily fooled. After a bit of thought, Zhixiang decided that what was most important was that their partnership proceed smoothly. The fact that he was not affected by the curse was something that would prove very helpful to her later. She clenched her jaw and then made a grasping motion toward the void. Immediately, the coldness in the area rushed toward her palm, then coagulated into a crystalline jade slip.

She branded it with some information, then tossed it over toward Meng Hao. Meng Hao grabbed it and scanned it with Spiritual Sense. It contained information about how to use augury to find one’s position within the void. It also contained a large map which now floated in his mind.

His expression was the same as ever as he crushed the jade slip, then performed an augury incantation, which gave him the same information Zhixiang had just referred to. After this, he closed his eyes.

“He looks young,” thought Zhixiang, “but is astute and acts with foresight. He’s as wise as a Demon! A person like this who reaches Immortal Ascension will be completely inhuman!” Resigning herself to this fact, she snorted internally and then pressed her right hand down onto the big rock.

A rumbling sound could be heard. The ice on the rock shattered as layers of power surrounded the rock, causing its speed to suddenly reduce. After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, it was completely motionless within the void.

Seven days later, a white beam of light approached from off within the distance. Another dust rock was now shooting toward them. When it neared, both Meng Hao and Zhixiang performed minor teleportations. After they appeared on the surface of the new dust rock, it changed directions and headed off into the distance.

It was in this manner that the following five months passed. The two of them switched rocks at least ten times, proceeding through void.

Unfortunately, at one point they failed to encounter a passing dust rock at an intersection, and as such were unable to proceed along in the way they had originally intended. After performing various auguries, Zhixiang and Meng Hao changed their path. Eventually, an enormous landmass appeared in front of them.

The borders of this landmass were red, like some bizarre shield. It was huge, containing mountains and ruins. The whole place was very peaceful; it seemed to have been a very long time since anyone had been here.

“The paths of the dust rocks of the Realm of the Bridge Ruins are not eternally fixed,” said Zhixiang calmly. “Even though we suffered a setback, with both of us performing augury, I’m eighty percent confident that we can find a dust rock in this place that will allow us to proceed. I’ve never been to this particular landmass before, but from the look of it, few people have been here in the past tens of thousands of years. After all, we are now approaching the twenty thousand worlds area.”

Meng Hao nodded. They stood on their rock, allowing it to shoot toward the red shield. In the instant it passed through, a rumbling filled the sky. The echoing sound caused Meng Hao’s expression to suddenly change.

It wasn’t just him. Upon entering this strange new world, Zhixiang’s eyes went wide with astonishment.

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# Chapter 470: Violent Changes!

“Do you wish to attain eternal life?”

“Are you qualified to defy the Heavens and live forever?”

“Do you want to have a type of life that is unique in all Heaven?”

Meng Hao’s mind buzzed. As soon as he entered this world, three sentences entered his ears. They were not spoken by the same person, and they resounded like thunder into his mind and heart.

At the same time, he saw that the sky of this world was a familiar gray color. No gray mist covered the ground, but Meng Hao could see hundreds of thousands of figures, all of them Bridge Slaves, moving at high speed in the direction that he and Zhixiang were standing in.

They moved with incredible speed. In the blink of an eye, these hundreds of thousands of Bridge Slaves neared. However, they did not even glance at Meng Hao and Zhixiang. Their expressions were frustrated, even anxious, as if they had just received a summons. They charged past Meng Hao and Zhixiang, pouring out through the border of the world and into the void.

In the space of about ten breaths, hundreds of thousands of Bridge Slaves had all charged out into the void. After they were gone, the only thing that remained were the faint echoes of their voices.

“When will the Bridge of Immortality reappear like new…? Sir, on what day will we again lay eyes on you…?”

To have so many Bridge Slaves whistling through the air directly next to him caused Meng Hao’s scalp to go numb. He panted as the rock he stood on suddenly stopped moving. Zhixiang looked over at Meng Hao, obviously shaken by the huge number of Bridge Slaves in this world.

Both Meng Hao and Zhixiang heard the voices of the Bridge Slaves, although the voices didn’t seem to be directed just toward the two of them. The words uttered by the hundreds of thousands of Bridge Slaves seemed to be a collective expression of their heartfelt wishes.

Meng Hao and Zhixiang remained motionless as the Bridge Slaves swept past them like spectres. As they left, the world returned to normal. The grayness disappeared, and normal color returned. Meng Hao found that he was completely soaked with cold sweat.

As for Zhixiang, her expression was still one of fear. Even for her, her first thing she thought upon seeing so many Bridge Slaves was that she was going to die.

“According to my understanding,” she said, “it is only because of their hellish destiny that the Bridge Slaves of the Realm of the Bridge Ruins instinctively gather together in groups of a few hundred. But there were so many just now. Could it be that this place… is some immense historical remnant of the ancient Immortal Demon Sect?

“Is that why there were so many of them gathered here? If my speculations are correct, then why would they all leave so suddenly? Their expressions looked anxious. Such emotion should be impossible. Unless….” Suddenly, her eyes filled with terror.

“Unless they were summoned?” said Meng Hao slowly, his eyes glittering as he gave voice to his own speculation.

The two of them stood there silently. As they did, the restored world around them all of a sudden began to tremble violently. Everything shook as the previously clear sky suddenly filled with fissures. The fissures grew bright as a piercing shriek suddenly filled the air.

The ground was quaking so hard that it seemed it might collapse. This entire Immortality Bridgestone landmass seemed to be emitting a shocking howl which echoed into Meng Hao’s ears, shaking him and causing him to cough up a mouthful of blood.

He lost control of his body. It felt as if some incredibly powerful force had slammed into his face. He was tossed backward with a bang, slamming into the border of the void with a bang.

Fortunately, this part of the border had been ripped open, and wasn’t completely restored. Meng Hao flew like a kite with its string cut, directly out into the void.

Simultaneously, blood also sprayed from Zhixiang’s mouth. Several tremors ran through her and it seemed she was incapable of standing up to the force. However, she was apparently still in control of her body as she tumbled backward out through the gap, into the void.

Meng Hao’s face was pale and his mind spun. The coldness of the void surrounded him completely, and his body instantly began to grow stiff. Even worse, his torso was mangled bloodily; numerous bones were broken. Blood spurted out of countless wounds.

It was a critical moment. As for Zhixiang, she was tumbling backward, but clearly wasn’t seriously injured. A violet light appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes as the Violet Pupil Transformation took effect. By sacrificing some of his life force, he was able to heal some of his serious injuries.

The faster the healing went, the more life force was drained away.

Meng Hao’s chest quickly recovered, and all of his injuries vanished. Even his Cultivation base was at the peak of its power. However, the price had paid… was the loss of a sixty-year cycle’s worth of life.

Meng Hao’s instant recovery caused Zhixiang’s eyes to flicker. She could tell that whatever technique he had used to force such a quick recovery would have come at some great cost. As the two of them continued to fall back, they exchanged a glance and then looked back toward the enormous, trembling landmass.

The only thing they could see was the gigantic landmass shaking. Occasional roars could be heard, which grew stronger and stronger until finally, a gray mist rose up from within the landmass.

The gray mist looked like a gigantic mushroom cloud. As it exploded out, it churned and seethed, transforming into an enormous beast. It looked like a qilin, completely formed out of mist. However, if you looked closely, it was clearly… a Bridge Slave.

Except, this enormous qilin was vastly more powerful than an ordinary Bridge Slave.

After it appeared, the mist-qilin lifted its head up and roared. It suddenly charged forward, its expression anxious, as though it had been summoned.

Meng Hao and Zhixiang were extremely close. Even if they used minor teleportation, even if Zhixiang relied on her incredible speed, there was no time to evade. They could only stare blankly as the gigantic qilin beast shot toward them. In the blink of an eye, its mist had enveloped them.

Roaring sounds filled the air. More blood sprayed from Meng Hao’s mouth. He quickly summoned the Lotus Sword Formation to rotate around him rapidly. The power of Time radiated out in waves.

By the time Meng Hao had coughed up four mouthfuls of blood, the Lotus Sword Formation radiated the fearsome power of a thousand years of time, which managed to melt all the mist its range — thirty meters in every direction. Of course, compared to the entire massive frame of the qilin beast, that was a paltry size.

The result was that Meng Hao was carried along with the beast as it shot forward.

At the same time, Zhixiang coughed up several mouthfuls of blood. Then, she employed one of her own Immortal Divinity techniques to resist the mist. Just like Meng Hao, she cut out a space for herself within the body of the enormous qilin beast.

They exchanged a mutual glance, and could see the somber look in each other’s eyes. They had been put into this situation involuntarily. However, there was no need to discuss how to extricate themselves. At the moment, that would leave them out in the void, directionless, exiled. If that happened, it would mean being lost forever, with no choice but to use an Immortality Bridgestone to give up and leave.

“Why do that when I can just hitch a ride on this qilin beast?” thought Meng Hao, his eyes glittering. “Let’s see what sort of thing it is that can summon Bridge Slaves!” Although the situation seemed to have taken a turn for the worse, he didn’t really have any other options. Since he still had his Immortality Bridgestone, if anything went truly bad, he could leave in an instant.

It was impossible to say what Zhixiang was planning. Most likely, after possessing Zhao Youlan, she too could use the Immortality Bridgestone to leave.

The two exchanged no words, but simply went along with the roaring qilin beast as it flew onward.

The coldness of the void was incapable of penetrating the mist. The blackness outside almost seemed like black waters as the qilin shot forward with fearsome speed.

The qilin beast moved far, far faster than the dust rocks. It was incredibly huge in size, making Zhixiang and Meng Hao seem like nothing more than mosquitos within it.

It carried Meng Hao and Zhixiang with it as it sped deeper and deeper into the Realm of the Bridge Ruins.

Time passed. After seven days, they had traveled further than they could have traveled in a month on a dust rock.

A month later, Meng Hao’s mind trembled. Up ahead in the void, he had just caught sight of a matchlessly huge giant waving its arms. Its body was made of mist, and it bore the semblance of a Bridge Slave. Furthermore, it was charging… in the exact same direction as the qilin!

At the same time, Meng Hao saw a vast army of spectre-like Bridge Slaves, hundreds of thousands of them, all flying at top speed in the same direction.

As they continued to travel, he saw more and more scenes like this. It seemed almost as if all the Bridge Slaves in the entire Realm of the Bridge Ruins, big ones, small ones, were all appearing and heading toward the same place.

Meng Hao wasn’t the only one who was shocked by this. Zhixiang was panting. Her understanding of this place was even greater, and her speculations gave rise to a gripping fear inside her heart.

“Don’t tell me… that they’re going… to Bridgesoul Mountain!?”

Even as Zhixiang’s heart trembled, a mountain appeared off in the distance.

The mountain let off a mysterious glow as it hung there in the middle of the void. There were no Immortality Bridgestones near it. There was only the gigantic, enormous mountain!

Countless names were written onto the mountain, each one of which let out a mysterious glow. They looked like magical symbols, covering the entire mountain. It was hard to say, but it appeared as if there were several million names written there.

Every time the names pulsed with light, the faces of the Bridge Slaves who were nearing the mountain would grow more anxious, and they would fly forward with greater speed.

At the top of the mountain was a palace that brimmed with an aura of archaic rot. Within the palace was blackness, and silence.

In another location near the mountain was a person. He stood there, an azure sword swirling through the air around his body, and alcohol flagon in his hand. He wore a long, azure robe, and his hair danced in the air. His eyes gleamed with a fierce glow.

This was none other than… Han Shan!

He suddenly spoke, his voice filled with an icy cold that made the coldness of the void seem warm. “I’ll say it one more time. I want my wife… returned to me this instant!”

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# Chapter 471: Frost Soil Demon Emperor

His voice echoed out within the void, slamming into the incoming millions of Bridge Slaves. However, it didn’t hurt them, but rather bounced off of them, turning into countless echoes. It was as if millions upon millions of voices were responding to Han Shan.

Because of the way he spoke, his aura exploded out in a way that the word ‘monstrous’ couldn’t even begin to describe. Even the greatest heroes could only accomplish half of what was currently occurring!

Meng Hao’s mind reeled when he saw Han Shan and the result of his one sentence. He also saw that the Bridge Slaves were not capable of defending themselves against the power of Han Shan. Rather… Han Shan wasn’t willing to hurt them.

Or you might even say that he feared accidentally injuring them!

He feared accidentally injuring the person he sought!

Meng Hao thought back to when he had first caught sight of Han Shan, and the expression in the man’s eyes when he looked at the Bridge Slaves. It was a searching look, a disconsolate look; it seemed as if he was seeking for the only woman in his life.

It was a woman named Xue’er, his wife.

His lonely search had lasted for three thousand years….

Even as Han Shan’s voice echoed about, he suddenly lifted his hand. A grim glow appeared in his eyes as he suddenly made a chopping motion toward the mountain. Instantly, Alcohol Qi roared up.

Meng Hao also had Dancing Sword Qi, but if you compared it to the amount Han Shan wielded, it was like comparing a firefly to the brilliant moon!

Alcohol Qi spread out, filling Heaven and Earth. Inside, figures could be seen, all of them resembling Han Shan. As the Qi continued to multiply, more and more figures appeared, until there were no less than a hundred thousand!

These hundred thousand figures of Han Shan all began to spit out Alcohol Qi. As they did, a vague image started to become visible.

The vague image was a depiction of a world. It was a complete world, with a sky, land, living people. All of it was very realistic, as if this world belonged to Han Shan.

An azure sword suddenly appeared in Han Shan’s hand. It chopped down, emitting a monstrous Sword Qi, which spread out and transformed into the image of an azure dragon. Its roar ripped into the void and it began to congeal the Alcohol Qi and absorb the image of Han Shan’s world. Then, it shot urgently toward the palace at the top of the mountain.

Deadly ripples spread out as it moved. It focused its power, something that far exceeded the divine abilities of normal Cultivators.

In the blink of an eye, the roaring azure dragon shot through the void shattering everything. At the same time….

A cold snort could be heard from within the palace. The instant the snort echoed, the coldness out in the void increased to a terrifying level.

The azure dragon stopped in mid-air, its body already pure white. In the space of a single breath, it was turned into a statue of ice.

Next, the void began to fill with a sheet of whiteness. The whiteness was frost which appeared out of nowhere. The frost began to merge together into a shapeless mass which spread out in the void. It seemed to stretch as far as the eye could see, with no end, filling the void to create a huge landmass.

A landmass of Frost soil!

The landmass of Frost soil was not ice, but rather, a specific type of soil. It contained dense Immortal Qi, several times more so than Celestial soil.

“Frost Soil Demon Emperor!!” said Zhixiang, her voice hoarse, her face filled with shock and disbelief. She immediately produced an Immortality Bridgestone and crushed it.

However, once she did, her face immediately fell. The teleportation power of the Immortality Bridgestone did not manifest.

Zhixiang’s face drained of blood.

“The Frost Soil Demon Emperor could not possibly be alive! Didn’t he die in battle against the Ji Ancestor?!?!

“His corpse was taken away and transformed into one of the Immortality Bestowal Daises on one of the four great planets, Planet South Heaven! His Immortal Divinity was ripped out and refined into one of the Ji Clan’s Nine Treasures, the Frost Lamp!

“All of his disciples and his entire bloodline were taken by the Ji Clan and refined into the Frigid River, which flows through the main gate of the Ji Clan and can never freeze over!”

Zhixiang’s face grew even paler as she murmured these words. Even though her words were soft, they echoed out within the misty body of the qilin beast and drifted over to Meng Hao, who was relatively close to her.

At the same time, a voice echoed out from within the palace. When it did, the Frost soil landmass quaked, and the faces of the surrounding Bridge Slaves were no longer filled with frustration. Instead, they brimmed with viciousness. Their eyes turned red and began to emanate crazed killing intent.

A cold voice could be heard: “Enter my Immortal Demon world, and life or death no longer rests in the hands of the Heavens. With eternal life, what is the point of fate?” As it stopped speaking, it gave a light sigh.

Next, the masses of Bridge Slaves in the area began to charge toward Han Shan. The qilin beast in which Meng Hao and Zhixiang sat roared, along with the dozens of other beasts similar to it that were present, and charged toward Han Shan.

Han Shan gave a dour, bitter laugh filled with grief. It grew louder and louder until it seemed to be the only sound in Heaven and Earth.

“Enter the Celestial Demon world and sever all mortal fate…. I have no such faith!” Han Shan lifted his flagon up to take a drink of alcohol, then turned and shot toward the mountain. As he did, he made another chopping motion.

The movement of his hand caused everything to shake. A massive fissure opened up ahead of him which then transformed into a sword aura that shot toward the mountaintop. As it got closer, it transformed from something amorphous into something with a shape. However, it quickly became white and, like the azure dragon, exploded into pieces.

At this moment, the Bridge Slaves were closing in on Han Shan, millions of them. Han Shan’s eyes were red as he turned to face them. He waved his arm, causing a blast of Alcohol Wind to sweep out across them.

“I don’t want to hurt you. Just bring out my wife…. All of you, don’t force my hand!” He turned and sent more prismatic bands of Sword Qi flying out. In quick succession, nine swords appeared.

The first band of Sword Qi was three thousand meters long!

The second band of Sword Qi was thirty thousand!

By the time the ninth sword appeared, the vast, boundless Sword Qi permeated the entire world of the void. The nine bands of Sword Qi then combined, transferring into an enormous azure Sword Soul which stabbed toward the mountain.

As the Sword Soul neared, it began to turn white. Cracking sounds could be heard as it got closer and closer. It began to turn dim, and frost appeared on its surface, which cracked and collapsed. This exterminated eight bands of Sword Qi, leaving only one behind. This one slashed down toward the palace.

Roaring sounds filled the sky. Everything shook, and the palace twisted as an ancient hand appeared from within its depths. The forefinger of the hand pointed out, and the Sword Qi collapsed.

Han Shan coughed up some blood. He looked up toward the palace, a savage look on his face as he roared: “Bring her out!!”

Meng Hao’s mind was reeling, and his breath came in ragged pants. He could only watch the scene, his face blank. Everything that was happening far exceeded the comprehension level of a Gold Core stage Cultivator.

Even Zhixiang was like a cicada in winter, cautious and solemn. She did understand what was happening, but this only served to fill her with more fear. “Sword Immortal Han Shan, a new almighty force who rose up in the Ninth Mountain during the past several thousand years…. And that old man…. He… he looks like the image which hangs in the ancestral shrine of the Sect. He looks exactly like the Frost Soil Demon Emperor….

It was an old man who had shattered the Sword Qi. He now stood there outside of the palace, wearing a white robe, looking like a transcendent being. His expression was cold, and a mysterious fire burned within his eyes. He gazed coolly down at Han Shan.

“I will give you a single chance. If you can kill all the Bridge Slaves in the space of one hundred breaths, then your wife will appear for you to see. Furthermore, I can guarantee that your wife is not among the Bridge Slaves outside this mountain.”

Han Shan glared up at the old man. It was in this moment that the eyes of the Bridge Slaves grew bright red and their faces filled with madness, as if they wished to devour Han Shan alive. It was also in this moment that the first of the Bridge Slaves actually reached him.

“Screw off!” cried Han Shan, his killing intent billowing up to the Heavens. The sword in his hand swept out, causing a prismatic Sword Qi to appear, along with billowing Alcohol Qi. Everywhere it passed, thousands of Bridge Slaves would explode.

His killing will had erupted, and Han Shan was going mad. His guilt, his three thousand years of torment, overwhelmed him with madness. He shot toward the Bridge Slaves.

At some point, a boy had appeared next to the old man. He stood there, smiling and counting aloud, “One, two, three….”

Booms echoed out as Han Shan’s slaughter reached a pinnacle. It was as if he possessed no powers of reasoning. Everywhere he went, the only thing that existed was a man and a sword. Vast quantities of Bridge Slaves were being slaughtered.

Sword Qi rocketed up, and a gigantic python was slashed. Mist collapsed, dispersing everywhere.

However, no matter how Han Shan went about the killing, exterminating millions of Bridge Slaves was not easy to do in the space of one hundred breaths. By the time the boy had counted to thirty-seven, there were still many more left.

Han Shan roared as he lifted up his right hand and tilted the alcohol flagon over. Alcohol flew out, transforming in mid-air into multiple flying swords. Apparently, this alcohol flagon did not contain alcohol, but rather, a sword.

One hundred thousand swords appeared. Behind each of these swords was a figure that looked exactly like Han Shan. Each and every one lifted up their swords, and their eyes filled with madness. They scattered, one hundred thousand people slaughtering millions of Bridge Slaves.

Roaring filled the air as massive numbers of Bridge Slaves died. Gigantic beasts were felled and collapsed into pieces. Eventually, the giant qilin beast that Meng Hao was in was slain by one of Han Shan’s clones. It was at this point that Meng Hao personally experienced the fearsomeness of the Sword Qi.

It instantly cut the qilin into two pieces. A boom resounded out and blood sprayed from Meng Hao’s mouth. He watched as the Sword Qi neared him. He immediately lost all power to fight or struggle. However, just before the Sword Qi hit him, it stopped for a moment, then went around him.

Meng Hao’s face was pale. Although the Sword Qi was gone, he was now surrounded by bitter cold. It enveloped him in an an instant, and he lost control of his own movements. He fell down onto the surface of the Frost Soil landmass. In that instant, his body… was instantly covered in frost.

A sense of deadly crisis swept over him. He didn’t have any time to think; he immediately ignited the Everburning Flame. The power of his Fire-type totem set his Wood-type totem ablaze, adding to the conflagration.

However, even as the Everburning Flame roared into being, the Earth-type totem vortex on his arm suddenly began to suck in the Frost soil!

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# Chapter 472: The Soul of the Bridge of Immortal Treading!

Despite that, Meng Hao’s body was still transformed into a statue of ice. He stood there motionless within the layers of ice; the only thing he was capable of focusing on was ensuring that his mind was not exterminated. However, the vortex on his right arm suddenly exploded with intensity.

Meng Hao could feel the force of the Earth-type power rising up within the vortex. The gravitational force seemed inexhaustible; in fact, you could even say that it approached the point where it could exterminate the power of the Frost soil.

As for Zhixiang, she was an Immortal Divinity who had possessed a physical body. However, at this moment her level of weakness was not much different than Meng Hao’s. The Sword Qi avoided her, but she too fell down and instantly became an ice statue. The main difference was that she could hold out for much longer than Meng Hao.

Up above, the boy standing next to the old man smiled and said: “…. one hundred.”

In the exact instant that his voice rang out, Han Shan’s one hundred thousand clones finished exterminating all the Bridge Slaves in the area.

However, it was at this moment that suddenly, within the aura of bitter cold, one figure after another began to appear. These figures were none other than the Bridge Slaves that Han Shan had just slain. They… reappeared with no injuries at all. Not a single was dead.

In fact, when Meng Hao looked out from within the ice statue at the Bridge Slaves, there was one girl who looked familiar.

“So, do you understand?” said the old man coolly.

Han Shan stood there, taciturn. With a bitter look on his face, he lifted up the alcohol flagon and took a drink.

The next person to speak was not the old man, but rather, the boy. “In my world, if you exercise faith in me, you will never die, can never be slain. Isn’t that a good thing? Eternal life. Indestructibility. The only requirement is that you rebuild me.”

More voices rang out, not those of the boy, but rather, from the surrounding Bridge Slaves, all in unison. It was almost as if all of these Bridge Slaves were one person.

“Exercise faith in me, and you can life forever!

“Exercise faith in me, and you can never be destroyed!

“Exercise faith in me, and you can exist with Heaven and Earth!

“Exercise faith in me, understand my Dao. My Dao is your Dao….”

Next, the old man, the boy and the Bridge Slaves all spoke together.

“I am the spirit of the Bridge of Immortal Treading. You came here three thousand years ago to prostrate yourself before me. You made a promise to me. You wanted everlasting life, limitless life force so that you could cultivate your Solitary Sword Song.

“At that time, you had only ten years of longevity left. My response to you was that you should exercise faith in me…. However, you… went back on your word!” The last three words came out in a roar of endless fury, filled with madness.

“You clearly consented, then went back on your word, all because of the woman who was with you. She begged and pleaded with you to change your mind. Her persuasion distracted you, and then what she did… made you go back on your promise!

“I never imagined that in order to ensure that you would never exercise faith in me, she suddenly would shout out those very words, right in front of you. She became a Bridge Slave….

“That was what woke you up….”

The voice thundered up to the Heavens, roaring and echoing out in all directions. Han Shan’s face was pale and he coughed up a mouthful of blood. This blood was not because of an injury he received; rather, it was from the intense, violent pain he felt in his heart. His memories suddenly opened up. He saw an image of his wife at his side, begging and pleading, grabbing ahold of his robe as she tried to persuade him.

But he was obsessed. He wanted eternal life. It wasn’t until he saw her walking away in front of him, that he… became clear-headed.

“I’ve thought about it a lot for the past three thousand years….” sighed Han Shan. He lifted his head, and his eyes were filled with decisiveness and determination. He began to walk forward.

The instant he began to walk, the Bridge Slaves around him began to roar, and once again charged toward him. As they did, Han Shan took a deep breath. His azure sword roared, and of the one hundred thousand clones around him, ten thousand disappeared.

His sword swept about, causing the Frost aura in the area to rise up. In an instant, millions of Bridge Slaves were frozen in place.

When this happened, much of Han Shan’s hair suddenly turned white and he grew older. This sword move was the Solitary Sword Song which he had created himself. This song was not something that anyone except him could hear. It was sung in his heart, something only he could enjoy, only he could hear.

The song could only be sung once in a lifetime. That one song did not burn of life force, but rather, took life force and merged it into the song, creating a solo of life!

“My choice that year was a complicated one, and in many ways irrational. It was as if I was bedevilled….” As he strode forward, Han Shan waved his sword again. Ten thousand more clones disappeared and more Bridge Slaves became statues of ice. As of now, his hair was completely white.

At the same time, Han Shan’s aura exploded up. Because of his solo of life, his Cultivation base and his life force, all exploded up.

Meng Hao had no idea what realm Han Shan’s Cultivation base was in, but as of this moment, his level of power completely exceeded anything that Meng Hao could comprehend.

Life… is simply about how time flows.

Life… is summed up in ten sword blows!

“Later, I wanted to understand if it was really because of your summons….” Han Shan said lightly, walking toward the mountain. He waved his sword a third time. It whistled out, and the frost was unable to block it. It slammed into the mountain, causing the entire thing to shake. The faces of the old man and the boy suddenly flickered.

As for Han Shan, his hair was beginning to fall out, and his body was old and decrepit. He was now far from being middle-aged; he was an old man, his skin sagging and covered with wrinkles. He was no longer majestic and heroic in appearance. However, his eyes and his will were more resolute than ever. They were filled with stubbornness and a lack of regrets…. Even if it meant walking to his death, he would rescue his wife!

“I regret ever bringing Xue’er here…. I originally came with her so that both of us could acquire everlasting life….” His voice was soft as a fourth sword swept out. The names on the mountain were growing dim; the palace on the mountain top was quaking, and cracks appeared on its surface.

“Han Shan, what are you doing?!” cried the old man, his expression bursting with fury and viciousness. Next to him, the boy also wore a savage expression as he glared at Han Shan.

Meng Hao watched on silently from within the ice statue. The vortex on his right arm was madly sucking in the Frost soil. His majestic Cultivation base was slowly beginning to rise up. As this happened, he looked at Han Shan and saw what could only be described as a persistence that would shock Heaven and Earth.

Such persistence was like faith.

“What is my persistence like?” thought Meng Hao.

“I will never forget what happened that day…” said Han Shan. His fifth sword swept out with power to rend the Earth. When it landed on the peak of the mountain, a roar filled the air and the boy was slain.

The boy was filled with disbelief as he transformed into ice. The last thing he heard before his consciousness disappeared was a voice that, despite seeming on the verge of death, was calm and terrifying.

“I also pondered why you called me here,” said Han Shan. “Back when I completed my Solitary Sword Song, it started to snow. My whole world was frozen over. Everywhere my sword touched, became ice. Then I understood. Then, some old memories came to me….

“I am the Frost Soil Demon Emperor!” A sixth sword blasted out. The boy’s head was completely lopped off, and the palace exploded. Cracks appeared on the mountain top. By now, Han Shan looked ancient; he was surrounded by a thick death aura, and his entire body was withered.

“More accurately, I am his clone. Countless years ago, I was able to evade the pursuit of the Ji Ancestor. I lived in the world of mortals for countless generations until I finally understood it.” His seventh sword descended and the mountains peak began to shatter into pieces. The old man was shaking, and his eyes filled with dread.

It was at this moment, when the mountaintop shattered, that two butterfly Demon Spirits flew out from within, seemingly birthed from the destruction of the mountain. They fluttered in the air as they shot off into the distance.

No one paid any attention to the butterfly Demon Spirits. Han Shan didn't, the old man didn't. Not even Meng Hao paid them any attention. Only Zhixiang noticed, but she was locked in ice, and could do nothing but watch as they sped off into the distance.

"I don't care what your goal is. I only want my wife back." An eighth sword descended, chopping into the mountain, slashing toward the old man's body.

The old man seemed to have no inclination to block or fight back against the sword. However, as the sword neared him, the space in front of him suddenly began to grow blurry, and a woman appeared to stand in front of him. She looked up at the sword, and then at Han Shan.

Han Shan suddenly stopped in his tracks. The sword ceased moving. Everything seemed to disappear; the only thing he was looking at was this woman.

She was not consummately beautiful, but rather, exceedingly gentle. She gazed down at Han Shan.

"I won't go with you," she said softly. "Nor can I go. I am a Bridge Slave. Starting that year, I became a Bridge Slave for all eternity…." She looked somewhat confused.

"When will the Bridge of Immortality reappear like new…? Sir, on what day will we again lay eyes on you…?" As the woman's murmuring voice echoed out, the old man began to vanish. As he did, he looked calmly at Han Shan.

"I am the soul of the Bridge of Immortality," he said. "All of the Bridge Slaves are a part of me. If I give up my memories of this time, then when I die, your wife will become the new Bridge Soul.

“There is no enmity between me and you. All of this was part of our mission, to restore the Bridge of Immortal Treading. Originally, you should have been the Bridge Soul. That is why the esteemed Demon Emperor hid you all those years ago. Now, however, the task will fall to your wife.

“My mission is complete, although not perfectly. My task was to find you and bring you back. This was the final command of the esteemed Demon Emperor before his death: find you, and make you a Bridge Slave.” With that, he faded away.

The instant he disappeared, the confusion in the woman’s eyes faded away. Her eyes were now clear. She saw Han Shan, and recalled her old memories. This was perhaps the first time since she had chosen to become a Bridge Slave, the first time in her everlasting life, that she suddenly saw everything clearly.

With a bitter smile, she looked at Han Shan.

“Kill me, allow me to be released….”

Her words echoed out. When Meng Hao heard them, and saw what was happening, he sighed.

The clearness only lasted a moment. In the moment when a Bridge Slave becomes the Bridge Soul, the Bridge Slave would have one moment of clearness. After that moment, the Bridge Slave would be awake and conscious, but would no longer be the same person they were before.

That person would be the new soul of the Bridge of Immortal Treading.

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# Chapter 473: Frost Soil Success!

At the moment, the vortex on Meng Hao’s right arm was absorbing the power of the Frost soil in the area. This Frost soil, which seemed to be filled with the power to exterminate anything, caused the vortex to gradually begin to coagulate. A glowing white character for Earth was now starting to appear.

When the ancient character for earth became clearer, Meng Hao’s Cultivation base began to roar as a new power began to make Meng Hao suddenly… even stronger!

Every beat of his heart sent blood coursing through his veins. A boundary had been reached, and now his Cultivation base grew mower powerful; his Gold Core was even stronger than before.

“It’s still not enough…. The aura of this Frost soil is actually much more intense than that of the Celestial soil.” His eyes glittered with determination as he rotated his Cultivation base. He focused all his energy on absorbing more power from the Frost soil.

“I’ve really struck it lucky here to be able to absorb this Frost soil…. If I can use it to form my Earth-type totem tattoo, who knows how much more powerful it will be than a Celestial soil totem…?” His eyes filled with anticipation.

Roaring filled his body. Despite being stuck in the ice statue, the Frost soil in the area continued to be sucked in, causing it to grow thinner and thinner. However, the effect wasn’t too noticeable; after all, the landmass formed by the Frost soil was enormous.

Zhixiang wasn’t too far away in another ice statue. At this point, she couldn’t help but look from Han Shan and the woman over toward Meng Hao.

“What’s he doing?!” she thought. Because of the shocking scene that had been playing out just now, she hadn’t notice Meng Hao’s aura earlier. However, now she did.

She stared with wide, disbelieving eyes, shaken by Meng Hao’s audacity.

“He’s absorbing… the Frost soil!!

“Frost soil is unique in all the Ninth Mountain. According to the legend, long, long ago, even before Cultivators existed, a land mass was born that was completely white and infinitely cold.

“Eventually, countless years ago, when Cultivators were just beginning to appear in the Ninth Mountain, it gained consciousness. However, as the land of Frost soil expanded, it eventually… turned into a person.

“He swept over the Ninth Mountain and Sea for countless years, and was known as… the Frost Soil Demon! Eventually, he came to be called an Emperor…. The Frost Soil Demon Emperor!

“Now, Meng Hao is actually absorbing the power of the Frost soil! Although this particular area of Frost Soil was created by the Bridge Soul of the Bridge of Immortal Treading, clearly, this whole area is the work of the Frost Soil Demon Emperor! If it wasn’t, then the Frost soil could not possibly appear!

“What Meng Hao is absorbing is not true Frost soil, but rather an ornamental version of it. However, it still far, far exceeds Celestial soil. There’s really not even any way to compare the two.

“According to the ancient records in the Sect, not including Lord Li, there were three Greater Demons in the ancient Immortal Demon Sect. They were the ones who built… the Bridge of Immortal Treading!

“Isn’t he worried he’s going to take it too far and die?!?!” Zhixiang had really never imagined that the day would come in which she would be envious of a mere Core Formation Cultivator. True, he could slay Nascent Soul Cultivators, but to see him absorbing Frost Soil was shockingly extraordinary, enough to arouse the jealousy of an Immortal.

Even as Meng Hao absorbed the power of the Frost soil, Han Shan’s soft sigh could be heard.

He was looking at his wife, his expression one of warmth. He had heard her words just now, and could also see that her expression was no longer clear, but rather, frustrated again. Deep in her eyes burned a mysterious fire, similar to that which had burned in the eyes of the old man.

“Come be with me, okay?” said the woman softly. There was something very strange in her voice as she looked at Han Shan.

Han Shan closed his eyes and was silent for a moment. Then he smiled, a smile filled with warmth. He knew that the person in front of him was no longer his wife. She had truly become the soul of the Bridge of Immortal Treading.

He knew that the only thing he could do was to kill his own wife. It would be a release; she would no longer be the Bridge Soul, and she would no longer have everlasting life. She would finally be herself.

Han Shan sighed. He was old now, and his face was filled with wrinkles. His aura was no longer how it had been. He was an old man, seemingly on the verge of death.

Perhaps his azure robe could conceal the loneliness he had felt for so long, but it could not conceal his ancientness, nor his exhaustion.

He had searched for three thousand years, had felt guilty for three thousand years. However, when he finally found what he was looking for, it was like this….

Shaking his head, Han Shan waved his hand. Instantly, the ice surrounding Meng Hao and Zhixiang shattered. Zhixiang immediately retreated backward, blood seeping out of her mouth.

With each step she took, her face grew more pale; the coldness was once again pressing down oppressively onto her.

The instant Meng Hao's ice statue shattered, the Frost soil in the area began to shoot toward him. It transformed into an enormous white vortex that surrounded him.

As the vortex spun, the Frost Soil in the area began to disappear as it was sucked into Meng Hao's body. The coldness was oppressive, and an Earth-type aura rose up to the sky.

The sight of this caused Han Shan's wife, the new Bridge Soul, to glance over at Meng Hao.

Han Shan turned his head to look. When he saw Meng Hao, he suddenly laughed.

"It is what it is," he said. "It seems the two of us are bound by Karma…. Let me bestow a bit more good fortune upon you." With that, he lifted his right hand and then pushed it down toward the Frost Soil land mass. Han Shan's body immediately began to tremble as a white and blue aura began to emanate out from his body and rush down toward the land mass.

As the aura spread out, Han Shan weakened even further, as if his Essence were being drained. He became even older.

The blue and white aura merged into the land mass and instantly, the Frost Soil began to change.

It was no longer just white, but glowed with a blue light. Its aura was completely shocking, and the coldness of it exploded up. The entire landmass began to tremble because of this ancient, archaic aura. It seemed to have existed for a very, very long time.

It had seen countless forms of life, and knew the warmth and coldness of the world. It had experienced life and death, and had existed throughout the ages. It seemed as if… this Frost Soil land mass which had previously not been true Frost soil, suddenly had transformed into that unique, true Frost soil which had once existed in the Ninth Mountain!

The white and blue aura was none other than the true power of the essence of Frost Soil Demon Emperor’s clone. Now that he had sent out this power, the land mass below truly was the real Frost soil.

The land shook as it suddenly began to crumble in on itself and grow smaller. As it did, it quickly became more refined and pure. If you were able to stand far up above the Bridge of Immortal Treading, you would be able to see this process happening.

The Frost soil which had once stretched out to cover the entirety of the Bridge of Immortal Treading, shrank down in the space of a few breaths. In one moment, Meng Hao could see the edges of the land mass.

After the space of a single breath passed, it shrank down to a mass of blue soil only three hundred meters wide!

The whiteness was gone; it was now pure blue. This was the true Frost soil which had given birth to the Demon Emperor in the Ninth Mountain!

In the blink of an eye, three hundred meters became thirty meters. Thirty meters became three meters. Finally… the three meter wide clump of dark blue Frost soil shot directly toward the vortex on Meng Hao’s right arm, merging into it.

Roaring filled Meng Hao’s mind as his body slowly floated up into the air. His hair whipped about, and an increasingly intense aura rose up from him.

Zhixiang backed up, her expression one of shock. Considering that she knew Meng Hao was now absorbing true Frost soil, she was thoroughly astonished.

It was at this point that the vortex on Meng Hao's arm completely solidified into a blue Earth character. As soon as it appeared, an enormous land mass of Frost soil magically appeared behind Meng Hao.

Upon the land mass was a huge tree, which blazed with raging fire. Above the tree was a great metallic, golden river. This was a depiction of Metal, Wood, Earth and Fire!

Meng Hao's Cultivation base soared. By now, it had completely sloughed off the Gold core. Meng Hao's aura merged with the magical image behind him as immense power roared through him. As of now, if Xu Bai and Chen Mo, those two late Nascent Soul Cultivators, battled Meng Hao, it was easy to imagine how difficult it would be to determine who would live and who would die!

"Take my legacy, take my sword, and take my flagon," said Han Shan. "Leave this place. If ever the day comes in which you can shake this bridge with your Cultivation base, then don't forget to repay my kindness. If my wife and I are still here when you return, then I hope you can rescue us." With that, Han Shan laughed. He was aged and decrepit now, but his will once again surged, a will which despised Heaven and Earth. He flicked his sleeve, causing an azure sword to appear. This sword had never left his side during the past three thousand years. But now, it turned into an azure beam of light that shot toward Meng Hao.

He flicked his sleeve again, and the alcohol flagon, seemingly filled with boundless sword will, also flew into Meng Hao's hands. Meng Hao felt his heart stirring. He looked up at Han Shan, somewhat in a daze.

What he saw was Han Shan's back. It looked very much the way it had when Meng Hao first saw him. Lonely, bleak, and desolate….

Han Shan waved his hand, and a cold wind sprang into being. It picked up Meng Hao and the shocked Zhixiang, and carried them off into the distance.

The cold wind was incredibly strong. Neither Meng Hao nor Zhixiang could do anything to resist the power of the wind as it began to carry them off into the distance. Despite the force of the wind, Meng Hao managed to turn his head around for one last look.

Han Shan’s gentle voice could just barely be heard.

“Three thousand years ago, it was because of you that I refused to become a Bridge Slave. Three thousand years later, it is because of you that I make the opposite choice. I will accompany you in such a life. What harm is there in that…?

“I will lose my consciousness. I will lose any chance to return. However, as long as I can be with you, neither life nor death are of any consequence….

“During these three thousand years, I thought a lot. Legacies and Cultivation bases don’t really matter. What matters, are dreams…. Without you by my side, I have no world.

“You are my everything.

“I’m willing. I am perfectly happy… to exercise faith.”

When Han Shan opened his eyes, they shone only with confusion. All of his loneliness and bleakness were gone.

His wife stood next to him. The two of them turned and made their way off into the distance. They were followed by millions of Bridge Slaves, an army of specters… moving further and further away.

“When will the Bridge of Immortality reappear like new…? Sir, on what day will we again lay eyes on you…?”

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# Chapter 474: Therefore, You Picked the North

“Senior Han Shan….” murmured Meng Hao. He had Han Shan’s sword, Han Shan’s flagon, and on his right arm was a totem tattoo made from Han Shan’s Frigid soil. These were all physical things. However, deep in Meng Hao’s heart existed the image of Han Shan and his wife.

That image was not desolate or lonely. There was no confusion, only… a husband and a wife, accompanying each other as they walked off into the distance.

“I, Meng Hao, solemnly swear a vow here in the Realm of the Bridge Ruins. If in this life the day arrives in which I can shake this Bridge of Immortal Treading, then I will without fail repay this kindness!” Within the bitterly cold wind, Meng Hao clasped hands, looked back toward the Bridge Slave specters, and bowed deeply.

To Meng Hao, his principles demanded that he repay kindness. Kindnesses shown could never be forgotten!

Meng Hao continued to meet people who showed kindness to him in life. If he forgot them, then he did not deserve to be a Cultivator. It was the same with enmities…. Enmities must be repaid many times over.

I will do everything in my power to repay my benefactors!

I will bring tenfold vengeance upon my enemies!

If people do not attack me, I will not attack them. But if someone does attack me, that person shall die!

This was Meng Hao.

In Confucianism, there is a concept of a path of justice that contains two parts. One part involves being kind and tolerating others. The other involves taking action when necessary. After entering the Cultivation world, Meng Hao also had his own path.

This path had nothing to do with Cultivation, but rather, personal principles. Meng Hao’s principles also contained the concept of justice, a justice with two parts. One was the law of repaying kindnesses. The other was bringing death in response to attacks!

Cultivation is about developing confidence.

Cultivation is about learning how to conduct oneself!

Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed for a long, long moment. Next to him, Zhixiang suddenly flew away at top speed, emerging from the cold wind and moving off into the distance. She lifted her right hand, causing a red flower to suddenly appear. She was not attacking Meng Hao; instead, her flower transformed into a sea of flowers that enveloped… a butterfly Demon Spirit that happened to be flying in this area!

Everything happened in the blink of an eye. She laughed as she collected up the butterfly Demon Spirit, her eyes filled with excitement. Suddenly, another butterfly Demon Spirit appeared not too far off in the distance. As soon as it realized it had been noticed, it seemed to suddenly be frightened. It flitted its wings and flew off.

Zhixiang’s eyes glittered as she shot pursuit for a moment, but then stopped. This was because Meng Hao had suddenly exploded with Dancing Sword Qi. The threat of the Sword Qi caused Zhixiang to feel quite annoyed. She looked over at Meng Hao. This was not the first time he had done something like this.

She frowned, then suddenly laughed and sped off into the distance away from the butterfly. As she did, her voice drifted back to Meng Hao.

“Meng Hao, although our cooperation has come to an end, based on what you now know, if you’re interested, then we can come back to this place in two hundred years to enter the Primordial Immortal Demon Plane!

“Perhaps you might even learn of a way to rescue senior Han Shan while you’re there. As for that Demon Spirit, if you want it, I won’t fight you over it.” Her body flickered and then transformed into a red beam of light that disappeared off into the void.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he watched Zhixiang leave. He did nothing to stop her, nor did he respond. Instead, he himself shot out into the void toward the Demon Spirit.

Far off in the distance, Zhixiang performed a minor teleportation, reappearing in the void far away from Meng Hao’s location. Suddenly, she coughed up a mouthful of blood. Her body began to tremble slightly, and suddenly a ghost image of her own face appeared. Shockingly, this image was Zhao Youlan’s soul, struggling to get free!

“I have no intention of merging with your soul, precious darling. However, you need to abide by our agreement. I’ll borrow your body for only two hundred years. Two hundred years later, I’ll give it back to you.

“Furthermore, I won’t borrow your body without offering repayment. I will ensure that you stay at the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage.” With that she jabbed her finger down onto her forehead.

This movement caused Zhao Youlan’s soul to suddenly grow weaker. A look of fear appeared, and it began to shrink back. Eventually it disappeared; there was no ghost image any more.

“I was injured by Frost soil, and twice had bitter cold enter my body. Just now, I even circulated quite a bit of my Immortal Essence in my attempt to get that Demon Spirit. This Meng Hao is as crafty as a fox and diabolically cruel.

“If I didn’t get out of there, there’s no saying that that the kid wouldn’t actually attack.” Zhixiang’s eyes glittered. She wasn’t sure when, but at some point she had actually come to view Meng Hao as a worthy opponent.

“However, the fact that the curse doesn’t affect him will be a great advantage if he helps in the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane two hundred years from now. My plan to acquire a Demon Immortal Body will be much more likely to succeed.” With that, Zhixiang slapped her bag of holding to produce the Five Poisons Tribe Immortality Bridgestone. She crushed it, and instantly, her body began to grow blurry. Before long, she was completely gone.

Further back in the void, Meng Hao proceeded along alone. The frigid wind had disappeared completely, and the coldness of the void crushed down onto him. However, to Meng Hao, that coldness actually felt warm.

His Earth-type totem was the unparalleled Frost soil. Compared to that, the surrounding coldness could be regarded as boiling hot.

After his huge success in acquiring the Earth-type totem tattoo, Meng Hao’s Cultivation base had skyrocketed. His speed was now much faster than before. Furthermore, the void could do nothing to impede him; he was quite used to it now.

He chased the butterfly for about an hour before catching it and putting it into his bag of holding. With that, he stopped and began to think.

“Two Demon Spirits. One can be used to get the Crow Divinity Tribes into the Black Lands. As for the second… I can decide what do to do with that one in two hundred years when the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane opens!” With that, his eyes filled with determination, and he proceeded onward.

As he moved, he pulled out Han Shan’s sword. The sword seemed commonplace, completely ordinary. But Meng Hao had seen this sword slice open Heaven and Earth, chop through the void, and unleash the shocking aura of the spirit of a mountain.

“This is an Immortal’s Sword!” He ran his left hand across the smooth blade, causing a drone to echo out. The drone contained feelings of grief, farewell, and the hope to reunite.

Hearing the drone caused Meng Hao to think about Han Shan. He sighed.

“Compared to senior Han Shan, I am tiny and weak. Right now, I can’t wield you. However, you were gifted to me by him. From now on, you… are my sword!

“I promised senior Han Shan that I would save him in the future. Now, I promise you that when I do save him, I will bring you with me. The day that I succeed in rescuing him, I will return you to senior Han Shan.”

The droning faded away. The azure sword slowly grew quiet. Then, it transformed into an azure beam of light that flew into the air and shot back toward Meng Hao. He did nothing to stop it. The azure glow hit him, causing a drop of blood to appear on his forehead.

The drop of blood touched the azure sword, and instantly Meng Hao could sense a clear connection between the two of them. His eyes glittered and he extended his right hand. Instantly, the azure sword’s aura rose up to the Heavens as it shot off into the distance.

It moved so quickly that Meng Hao couldn’t see it clearly. It shot directly toward a three thousand meter wide rock that was approaching. In the blink of an eye, it shattered the rock into pieces. A boom echoed out, and even before the shattered pieces could explode outward, the sword shot back to hover in front of Meng Hao.

Meng Hao stared in shock and extended his right hand. The sword slowly began to shrink down until it was about the size of a fingernail. Meng Hao swallowed it, causing the sword it to merge into him. This was now one of Meng Hao’s trump cards, something that, if kept in his bag of holding, would strip it of the element of surprise when being used.

Even as the shattered remnants of the thousand meter rock shot toward him, Meng Hao pulled out his chunk of Immortality Bridgestone, the one that had transported him here to the Realm of the Bridge Ruins. He crushed it in his hand, and instantly, he faded and disappeared.

The North region of the great lands of the Western Desert were rapidly turning into a vast body of water. In the most low-lying of the areas, violet lakes could be seen. The violet rain continued to pour down in buckets. It only continued to grow heavier.

The sky was dark, and no sunlight was visible whatsoever, making it seem like dusk. The whole scene turned into an oppressive weight. A coldness spread out everywhere, a coldness that could exterminate life.

The mountains were all deathly silent. No signs of life could be seen anywhere. The entire Western Desert North region was now devoid of spiritual energy. Rotting corpses of beasts could be seen scattered about in the rainwater.

Off in the distance, a group of people could be seen moving rapidly through the air. This was a group of about four or five thousand people, all in the process of migration. They were silent, their faces sallow. In recent days, migrating groups like this were a common sight in the Western Desert North region.

However, it was at this moment that a bright beam of light could be seen off in the distance, along with an oppressive aura. It moved at high speed through the air, causing a loud booming sound. It seemed matchless aggressive.

The beam moved with incredible speed toward the group of migrating Tribe members, instantly catching their attention. All of them looked up toward the figure within the beam. The Five Nascent Soul Cultivators of the Tribe instantly looked shocked.

“Yi Chenzi!!”

“He completely slaughtered seven or eight Tribes in the area recently! He uses the people he kills as blood sacrifices to further his cultivation!”

“If Heaven wishes to exterminate our Tribe, then all we can do is be cautious. How come we have to run into this damned Yi Chenzi!”

This approaching beam of light was none other than Yi Chenzi, who Meng Hao had chased in the Realm of the Bridge Ruins. In the midst of the chase, the Bridge Slaves showed up, giving rise to a huge tempest. Otherwise, the man would have been killed by Meng Hao.

His head was very small, but he was quite tall and looked like a rat. His appearance made it so that others could recognize him instantly. He flew through mid-air, a vicious expression on his face.

Half a month earlier, he had returned from the Realm of the Bridge Ruins. When he reappeared, he found himself in the same place where he had left, which was on the border of the Western Desert North region. He was not pleased with his journey into the Realm of the Bridge Ruins, and had been left with a thorough fear of Meng Hao.

That was actually the reason he'd come back so early; he could only sigh at his misfortune in running into Meng Hao. Back in the Western Desert, he kept trying to figure out where Meng Hao came from, fearful of running into him again.

After much thought, he came to the conclusion that there was no way Meng Hao could possibly be from the North region. After all, the Cultivation base of the Tribes in the North region was the weakest of all. It had been years since someone had appeared who could be considered Chosen of Heaven. Yi Chenzi also figured that the North region would be most severely affected by the Apocalypse, and would have the greatest collection of migrating Tribes. It was quite suitable for him.

Therefore, he came to the north.

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# Chapter 475: Return

Booming sounds echoed out as the group scattered. It took only about two hours for vicious looking Yi Chenzi to hold up five severed heads and then begin his blood sacrifice of the rest of the Tribe down below.

The blood sacrifice lasted for two days, after which Yi Chenzi waved his hand to collect up all the spoils. After performing the blood sacrifice, his Cultivation base was creeping toward a breakthrough.

“All I have to do is kill a couple dozen thousand more people, and I can have my breakthrough and reach the late Nascent Soul stage! I don’t know the name of this particular Tribe, but they sure were vicious. Of the four or five thousand people, all of them turned out to have Cultivation bases. They must have left the ordinary Tribe members behind to let nature run its course.” Yi Chenzi’s eyes flickered as he pulled out a jade slip. Inside was a map which depicted the Western Desert North region and described it in detail.

“I can’t afford to provoke the great Five Poisons Tribe, or the great Scorching Ice Tribe. Without a late Nascent Soul Cultivation base, gaining a victory against them would waste too much of my Cultivation base.

“Damn this violet rain. If it weren’t for the blood sacrifices combined with a bit of Celestial soil, I would have run out of spiritual energy and then died.” Mumbling to himself, Yi Chenzi licked his lips and then looked over the jade slip again.

“Five Crow Divinity Tribes? They used to be the great Crow Divinity Tribe, which means they should have sent a representative to the Realm of the Bridge Ruins. They just went to war against the great Five Poisons Tribe.

“This is the Tribe! It’s hard to say how many people they have left, but they used to be a great Tribe. And since they were able to fight back against the Five Poisons Tribe, they must have a lot of resources at their disposal. Most important is that if their representative to the Realm of the Bridge Ruins didn’t die there, then he probably came back with some Celestial soil. Maybe I can get a bit more Celestial soil for myself.” Eyes glittering with a ruthless glow, he was just about to go through with his plan to travel to the five Crow Divinity Tribes when a tremor ran through his body.

“The person the five Crow Divinity Tribes sent to the Realm of the Bridge Ruins couldn’t possibly be that damnable bastard Meng Hao, could it? I couldn’t possibly be that unlucky, could I?” After thinking about it for a moment, he suddenly laughed at how overly cautious he was being. Twenty three people went to the Realm of the Bridge Ruins. Not counting himself, there were twenty two, all scattered about throughout the whole of the Western Desert. The chances of running into Meng Hao again were extremely small.

Having reaching this point in his train of thought, Yi Chenzi’s eyes filled with cruelty. His body flickered as he shot off into the distance. During his traveling, he would occasionally run into other Tribes which he instantly slaughtered. His entire path was one of blood sacrifices.

Along the way, his Cultivation base grew stronger and stronger. At the same time, his temperament grew more and more ruthless. This was even more the case as he felt himself getting closer to the point of breakthrough. His massacres grew even more savage.

He also moved with greater and greater speed. Soon, he was getting very close to the five Crow Divinity Tribes.

“I can already smell the odor of flesh and blood….” said Yi Chenzi, licking his lips as he whistled through the air. Suddenly, a mountain appeared up ahead.

The mountain was bare, and beneath it could be seen a body of water. It wasn’t extremely large, more a large lake than a sea.

The mountain stuck up out of the middle of the huge lake. At its peaks, a large group of huts had been erected to provide protection against the rainwater. This was the location of the Crow Divinity Tribes. It was now a full five months since Meng Hao had left.

Of the two thousand Tribe members, there were only a bit more than a thousand left. Several hundred Tribe members had died in the past five months, their life forces exterminated. They had been buried in the mountain, accompanied by weeping, and the funeral dirges of their fellow Clan members. Everyone knew that it wouldn't be long before the entire mountain… existed at the bottom of the sea.

Every day, a Tribe member was sent down the mountain with the specific task of measuring how much the water had risen. This way, they could calculate roughly how much time was left.

"The water has risen less than a meter since yesterday," said the Crow Gloom Tribe Grand Elder. He sat in a hut next to the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather.

The Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather's hair was gray, his face sallow, and his body emaciated. He sat there silently, looking out at the seemingly endless violet rain. When he spoke, his voice was bitter but low, in order to prevent many people from hearing his words. "Five months. Perhaps the exalted Sacred Ancient has already left us. The power of the Thorn Rampart vine is fading…. If he left, that's fine. However, he promised he would return to us with hope." The man's voice was hoarse, and his expression blank.

"Hope…." said the Crow Gloom Tribe Grand Elder. He looked around at the other Tribe members in the huts. They were silent and gloomy. Their eyes were open, but didn't seem to look very different than if they were closed. Many of them had bodies as thin as firewood.

None of them had any hope at all.

As the spiritual energy of Heaven and Earth faded, as the violet rain fell harder, life was exterminated. This made it difficult for the ordinary Tribe members to survive. Even the Cultivators felt their Cultivation bases withering, making it difficult to maintain their place in their current stage.

“He’ll come back,” said the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather softly. He didn’t speak very loudly, but his voice was filled with passion. He believed what Meng Hao said, and he trusted that Meng Hao would definitely return.

The Crow Gloom Tribe Grand Elder let out a soft sigh and was about to say something more when suddenly his expression flickered. He looked up into the air. At almost the exact same moment, the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather suddenly lifted his head up. Within his withered body, his Cultivation base once again began to rotate. His dismal eyes suddenly began to shine with an aggressive glow.

It wasn’t just these two. Behind them were two other Tribe members whose Cultivation bases exploded out threateningly as they looked up into the sky.

During these five months, they were always on guard, always filled with extreme vigilance. Three groups of people had come to attack them, and two had been repelled by the Thorn Rampart vine. As time passed, though, the Thorn Rampart vine began to weaken. In the end, it was submerged by the lake and disappeared.

By the time the third group came, the Crow Divinity Tribes were forced to fight. During the battle, the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather wasted much of his Cultivation base to kill an opponent of the early Nascent Soul stage. His action had ended the conflict.

After all, in this Apocalypse of Heaven and Earth, mutual loss, and death were equivalent.

In the blink of an eye it seemed, a fourth group had come against them. This time, it was only one person; however, in the current circumstances, one person was even more dangerous!

This one person approached in a beam of light, emanating a shocking aura. Booming sounds echoed out which carried the power of the peak of the mid

Nascent Soul stage. Obviously, this person was just a hair away from the late Nascent Soul stage.

When the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather sensed this Cultivation base, his face flickered with shock. Next to him, the Crow Gloom Tribe Grand Elder was even more astonished.

The faces of the two behind them instantly turned ashen.

Considering their level of power, even if the five Crow Divinity Tribes went all out, they would still be unable to protect themselves.

When Yi Chenzi saw the more than thousand remaining members of the five Crow Divinity Tribes on the mountain peak, he frowned.

“How could there be so few?” he said with a cold harrumph. Such a small number of people left him feeling that this trip had been somewhat of a waste. Nonetheless, he continued on toward the Tribes.

“Not many people, but there’s no need to waste,” he said, his eyes glinting with cruelty. As he neared, he stretched out his hand and pointed a finger.

Immediately, ripples spread out, transforming into a gigantic hand made of black mist. It shot directly toward the mountain.

Seeing the black hand approaching, the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather immediately shot forward at top speed. In the blink of an eye, he was up in mid-air. Roaring, he waved his right hand, causing explosive totemic power to explode out.

His Metal-type totem roared with power as it shot toward the black mist.

A boom rattled out, and the black mist hand collapsed. The Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather coughed up a mouthful of blood as he tumbled backward. When he reached the mountain peak, more blood came out of his mouth, and his body withered. His Spiritual Energy was almost completely dried up. As he laughed bitterly, the rest of the members of the Crow Divinity Tribes rose to their feet, looks of despair filling their eyes.

“Don’t tell me your Cultivation bases are all withered?” said Yi Chenzi arrogantly. “Well, even if they were normal, killing you would be a simple thing for me. I can’t believe the great Crow Divinity Tribe is so weak! Where are your totemic Sacred Ancients? Where are your magical weapons? You’re so weak you can’t even handle a single blow. A Tribe like this doesn’t even deserve to exist. However, dying in the Apocalypse isn’t as good as being a blood sacrifice to advance my cultivation!” Yi Chenzi actually had a special method for dealing with totemic Sacred Ancients, which was one reason he had been able to sweep across the Western Desert and exterminate so many Tribes.

Wu Chen stood among the crowds. His body trembling, he shouted, “When the exalted Sacred Ancient returns, he will definitely not let you go! If you dare to raise a hand against the Crow Divinity Tribes, then you will face the wrath of the Sacred Ancient!!”

His echoing words immediately caused the fire of hope to burn within the eyes of the members of the Crow Divinity Tribes.

“The Sacred Ancient will definitely return!”

“The Sacred Ancient will come back carrying hope!!”

Yi Chenzi laughed scornfully. “Your Sacred Ancient is going to come back? So, even your Sacred Ancient abandoned you. Even if it does come back, I can seal it and make it watch as I sacrifice all of you.” He raised his hand again.

This time, ripples spread out in four directions to transform into four black mist hands. They linked together into something that looked like a black dragon bursting with killing intent. They immediately shot toward Crow Divinity Mountain.

Just as despair filled the faces of the members of the Crow Divinity Tribes, just when the hand was almost upon them, four tentacles suddenly erupted out from the water below. They moved with incredible speed toward the four hands. At the same time, thorns suddenly spread out around the mountain, completely encircling it.

Unfortunately, the weakness and exhaustion of the vines and the thorns was readily apparent.

It was at this moment that, about four hundred kilometers away from the five Crow Divinity Tribes' mountain, up above a rushing river, an area of distortion suddenly appeared. It was like a tear in the very air that opened up into a hole.

From within the hole, a figure emerged. He wore a green robe and had long black hair that whipped about in the wind. He was handsome and had an energetic demeanor. This was… Meng Hao!

He had returned in much the same manner as he had left, having been teleported back some distance from where he left. Generally speaking, this was normal. The return spot was usually within about five hundred kilometers of the point of departure.

Meng Hao rubbed the bridge of his nose as he looked around. Having confirmed his position, he sent his Spiritual Sense out. He immediately sensed the vine, and through it, could see in image of what was happening currently in the Crow Divinity Tribes.

Meng Hao's eyes immediately filled with with an unspeakable, raging anger. When he spoke, his voice was like like a freezing wind. His Cultivation base exploded out, immediately causing much of the rain in the vicinity to turn into ice!

"Yi Chenzi!!!"

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# Chapter 476: How Could You Be Here!?

Outside of the Crow Divinity Tribes' mountain, explosions filled the air. The Thorn Rampart spread around the mountain, forming a protective layer. Vines shot out to fight against Yi Chenzi.

Amidst the booms, the four black mist hands collapsed. Yi Chenzi's eyes suddenly glittered, filling with ruthlessness.

"So, you have a protective treasure like this! You're truly worthy of being a former great Tribe," he said with a laugh. "Unfortunately, in this violet rain, your vines are like a lamp that's running low on oil…. If I add it to the blood sacrifice, the results will be even better." It was at this point that a black moon suddenly appeared behind him.

This moon radiated darkness, and was instantly surrounded by a seething mist. The sight of it made Yi Chenzi seem like some sort of devil. His aura roared up into the sky as he shot at high speed toward one of the vines. As the vine swept toward him, Yi Chenzi licked his lips and then pointed out with his finger.

Suddenly, a black moon magically appeared on his fingertip. When it touched the vine, a roaring sound filled Heaven and Earth. The vine trembled, and then exploded. Massive amounts of viscous fluid sprayed about in all directions. The rest of the vines let out sad and shrill calls.

Yi Chenzi laughed a loud, arrogant laugh. Emanating potency, his expression one of contempt, he neared the mountain's peak. As he closed in, the other vines, ignoring their injured state, once again move to defend.

The vine was a simple life form. Even after fusing with the Thorn Rampart, it was not very intelligent. However, it never forgot the mission assigned to it by Meng Hao before he left.

Protect the Crow Divinity Tribes….

In its primitive mind, it knew that it would accomplish its mission even if it meant dying the cruelest death in the process!

Several vines whistled through the air toward Yi Chenzi, who let out a cold snort and flicked his sleeve. The black moon appeared in front of him, emanating a black glow which spread out rapidly in all directions. As soon as the vines touched the black glow, they began to melt. Anguished screams could be heard, causing the more than one thousand remaining members of the Crow Divinity Tribes to clench their fists tightly. Grief and indignation filled their eyes.

They knew that the only reason the vines were dying in battle was to protect them.

As the vines were melted by the black glow, and the miserable shrieks echoed out, suddenly, a black beam of light shot out from the violet lake beneath the mountain. It moved with such incredible speed that, in the blink of an eye, it pierced through Yi Chenzi’s black glow and shot directly toward his forehead.

Yi Chenzi’s expression flickered as a profound sense of deadly crisis filled him. Eyes wide, he let out a roar, the waves of which turned into an attack that battered against the beam.

Then, the black moon once again magically appeared in front of Yi Chenzi. It shot toward the black beam of light, and when they hit each other, a huge boom filled the air. The black moon collapsed, and the black beam of light continued on toward Yi Chenzi.

This black beam was a sharp thorn. This thorn was different from the others; it emanated a strong life force. Actually, this was the main life force essence formed by the amalgamation of the vine and the Thorn Rampart.

Unfortunately, the exterminating power of the violet rain had weakened the vines to a tremendous degree. The same was true of this life force thorn. The fact that it had been blocked twice gave Yi Chenzi enough time to prepare. Even as the thorn shot toward him, he dodged to the side. The sharp thorn cut his cheek as it shot past. Yi Chenzi suffered a flesh wound, but nothing serious.

His eyes turned red as a savagery appeared that hadn’t been present before. A bloodthirsty glow radiated out as he licked some blood out of the corner of his mouth. His entire expression radiated killing intent.

“Any living thing that harms me gets turned into a blood sacrifice….” His eyes flickered with a cold glow as he waved his hand toward the violet lake below. A booming sound could be heard as water exploded up. Ripples radiated out as a thirty meter long vine trunk was wrenched up out of the water by Yi Chenzi.

“So it’s you…. Well, time to die!” He licked his lips, and cruelty glowed in his eyes. He raised his left hand, causing a black moon to magically appear.

He was just about to send it chopping down toward the vine trunk when the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather and the other powerful experts of the Crow Divinity Tribes teleported out to block Yi Chenzi.

“Screw off!” cried Yi Chenzi haughtily. He waved his right hand immediately causing the Greatfather and the others to tumble backward, blood spraying from their mouths, bodies shaking.

Just when the looks of despair appeared on their faces as they realized that they were powerless to fight back, the howl of a wolf rose up. Big Hairy, Hairy #2, and the rest of the Greenwood Wolves shot out from a cave in the mountain. Their expressions were listless, but they flew through the air toward Yi Chenzi.

There was also a red, winged crocodile and an enormous lizard, joined by a flock of black crows and a cloud of green mosquitos. All of them looked downcast, and their auras were weak. Under the continuous onslaught of the violet rain, with its life force of extermination and weakening of spiritual energy, they had been quite seriously injured.

Even still, it was without hesitation that they shot out, filling the sky. The sight was shocking, even to Yi Chenzi, whose pupils constricted.

However, it only took a moment for him to sense the aura of the neo-demons. Then, his expression filled with scorn and cruelty.

“Shrimp soldiers and crab generals,” he said. “Useless troops!” Filled with haughtiness and cruelty, Yi Chenzi waved his left hand to pull the vine trunk up into the air. Then he shot forward, flashing an incantation with his right hand. Multiple black moons magically appeared and shot forward.

Roaring filled the air, echoing out. Blood sprayed out of Big Hairy’s mouth, and his body was sent tumbling backward. Hairy #2 and the other Greenwood Wolves let out miserable cries as they shot backward like kites with their strings cut.

The black crows and the mosquitos were instantly sealed by a misty wind. Were they at their peak it might have been a different story. Now, however, no matter how they struggled, they weren’t able to free themselves from the mist wind.

The winged crocodile and the lizard also let out mournful cries. The power of this black moon divine ability sent them tumbling backward, their bodies on the verge of falling apart.

Yi Chenzi’s laughter filled the air. None of the neo-demons, none of the Cultivators, were capable of resisting him even the slightest bit. They couldn’t even get close to him. The vine trunk, which was floating there in mid-air, was snatched up by Yi Chenzi. It was now only a hair’s breadth away from death.

All of the members of the Crow Divinity Tribes up on the mountaintop had looks of despair and misery on their faces. The Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather wiped the blood off of his mouth and give long, bitter sigh.

His expression filled with arrogance, Yi Chenzi said, “When Yi Chenzi wants to exterminate a Tribe, no one can escape being part of the blood sacrifice!” Looking scornfully at the neo-demons and the Tribe members, his mouth twisted into a cruel smile. He lifted his left hand up and slowly clenched it into a fist.

The vine trunk struggled, but as Yi Chenzi clenched his fist, all it could do was writhe. It was clearly moments away from exploding.

“Die!” cried Yi Chenzi, laughing heartily. However, it was at this moment that a piercing sound suddenly could be heard from off in the distance.

“You die, b*tch! You little rat! Are you trying to get me in trouble with Meng Hao, b*tch!?!? Dammit, Lord Fifth just went out to get some lunch! You think that means you can wipe this place out?” As the shrill cry echoed in the air, a multicolored streak whistled through the air toward Yi Chenzi’s rear end. As it neared, the sound of a ringing bell also could be heard.

Yi Chenzi at first stared in shock. Then his face fell. Having no time to continue to crush the vine, he dropped it, allowing it to fly away.

An incredible sense of deadly crisis appeared once again. Yi Chenzi’s body flickered as he fell back. As he did, a multicolored blur shot through the air in the position he had occupied moments before.

Cold sweat broke out on Yi Chenzi’s forehead and his heart filled with doubt and dread. He could clearly see that if he hadn’t dodged away, the multicolored streak would have charged directly into where his rear end had just been.

Thinking about what the horrific result would have been caused even ruthless Yi Chenzi to gasp.

“Dammit, what is that thing?”

The multicolored glow materialized into the parrot, who glared threateningly at Yi Chenzi.

“Bitch, you dare to try to get me in trouble?! I’ll screw you! Screw you to death!” A bizarre glow appeared in the parrot’s eyes as it squawked at Yi Chenzi. Its expression and its voice, coupled with its actions moments before, caused Yi Chenzi’s scalp to grow numb.

Shouting, the parrot charged forward at incredible speed toward Yi Chenzi. Yi Chenzi gasped and fell back in retreat, flashing an incantation gesture with both hands. Immediately, a black moon magically appeared in front of him as he attempted to defend himself.

A boom filled the air as the parrot slammed through the black moon. In the blink of an eye, it appeared in front of Yi Chenzi. As it neared, Yi Chenzi could see that it was actually turning through the air… to shoot directly toward his rear end!

“What is it trying to do!?!?” Yi Chenzi was scared witless. At this critical juncture, his body suddenly transformed into a mist that shot off to reappear three thousand meters away in the distance. Once again, the parrot’s attack met with no results. Immediately, it grew furious.

“Haiyaaa! You dare to dodge me!? Lord Fifth is definitely going to screw you!!”

The parrot’s appearance, and its actions, caused all of the members of the Crow Divinity Tribes to stare up in shock.

Yi Chenzi wiped the sweat from his brow. As of this point, he realized that there was more to this Tribe than met the eye. It seemed weak, but it had vines and neo-demons and then this fearsome thing that apparently liked to attack rear ends.

Even as Yi Chenzi was filled with shock, the Parrot, enraged by its two fruitless attacks, suddenly let out a mighty, squawking howl. “Beloved concubine!!”

As soon as the two words rang out, a cloud mass shot toward them from the sky off in the distance. It moved with incredible speed as it neared. Within this cloud mass was none other than the enormous Outlander Beast.

“Outlander!!”

The roar of the Outlander Beast shook Heaven and Earth. Yi Chenzi’s eyes went wide, filling with astonishment and fear. He was instantly send tumbling backward, his eyes shining with disbelief.

“Dammit, there’s an Outlander Beast here. Just… just what Tribe is this? They even raise Outlander Beasts! I can’t stay here. Dammit! If I had known about all of this I would never have come here. The don’t have many people, but they’re incredibly difficult to exterminate.” Yi Chenzi’s scalp was numb as he unhesitatingly fell back. He immediately transformed into a wisp of green smoke as he utilized his escape art to shot thousands of meters away in the blink of an eye.

The instant his body reappeared, a cold snort could be heard off to the side. It was at this point that Meng Hao suddenly appeared, having just employed minor teleportation.

When Yi Chenzi saw Meng Hao, his face immediately filled with shock and then, he screamed. Since returning from the Realm of the Bridge Ruins, he had never screamed like this. It was filled with terror and dread, fuelled by the massive trembling of his own soul.

“You…. How could you be here!?!?”

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# Chapter 477: Moon….

The instant Meng Hao appeared, everyone on the mountain saw him. Immediately, the Crow Soldier Greatfather began to tremble, and a look of excitement shone in his eyes.

The other powerful experts next to him were the same. To them, Meng Hao's appearance finally gave them some bit of hope.

If these men acted in such a way, there is no need to even describe how the despair in the hearts of the other Tribe members was suddenly swept away by excitement.

"Sacred Ancient!"

"The exalted Sacred Ancient has returned!!"

"Exalted Sacred Ancient, we offer you respect upon your safe return!!"

The voices of more than a thousand people called out, seemingly unburdening themselves of the great pressure that had been weighing down on them. It turned into a huge roar like that which you might hear coming from a crowd of ten thousand. They were joined by Big Hairy and all the other neo-demons, who after seeing Meng Hao lifted their heads up to the sky and howled with excitement. The sound of it all shook Heaven and Earth.

Yi Chenzi's face was instantly devoid of color. He stared blankly at Meng Hao, his mind buzzing. Then he screamed as he backed up. He didn't even notice the parrot approaching with a look of disdain.

When the parrot slammed into his rear end, a blood-curdling shriek filled the air. He felt pain… intense pain that he had never experienced before in his life, unspeakable, unforgettable…. In addition to the pain was a feeling of humiliation that caused Yi Chenzi to lift his head up and shriek.

Even as his voice echoed out, the parrot excitedly shot back for another round. Scared out of his mind, Yi Chenzi immediately transformed into a green smoke as he prepared to flee at top speed.

It was impossible to describe how much he regretted having come to this place. It was a deep, utter regret. How could he have ever imagined that a tiny Tribe like this, would actually… be full of crouching tigers and hidden dragons!?

“Dammit, dammit…. this place has a wicked vine, tons of neo-demons, a perverted parrot, that shocking Outlander Beast, and most ridiculous of all, that Patriarch Bloodface!” His heart was filled with sorrow to the point that he was about to cry. He had already decided that he would flee this place and never again in his life ever step even half a pace into the Western Desert North region.

However, even as his body turned into the green smoke, just when he was about to flee, Meng Hao lifted his right hand. Instantly, a freezing wind blew out which contained the power of Frigid soil. In that instant, Yi Chenzi in his green smoke was instantly frozen in place in mid-air.

His body was then forced out of the smoke. The astonishment and disbelief on his face was apparent as he wondered how his opponent could have become so much more powerful in such a short time. He could even nullify the effects of his escape art.

As his body was forced out of the smoke, Meng Hao’s cold face radiated icy killing intent. He shot forward, clenched his hand into a fist and punched Yi Chenzi directly in the chest.

Yi Chenzi had no way to avoid the blow. Blood sprayed from his mouth, and the sound of cracking bones could be heard coming from his chest. With a miserable shriek, he was sent tumbling backward.

“How could he be so powerful?!?!” Yi Chenzi was scared out of his mind. A droning sound filled his body as Meng Hao’s cold voice suddenly rang out.

“Before, you dared to steal things that belong to me. I let you get away once, how could I possibly let you do so again today?” He immediately charged Yi Chenzi again and punched him a second time.

A boom could be heard. Yi Chenzi coughed up more blood, and his face went pale. Before he could even say anything, Meng Hao’s fist once again slammed into him, injuring not just his physical body, but also his Nascent Soul. Even his totem tattoos seemed on the verge of collapse.

At this critical moment, Yi Chenzi let out a piercing howl. His Spiritual Sense suddenly emanated out, and the evil magic in his body began to circulate. Suddenly, a black moon appeared on his forehead. As soon as this happened, all of his Spiritual Sense converged onto the black moon, causing it to begin to rotate. Shockingly, a reflection of the black moon appeared on Meng Hao’s forehead as well.

Yi Chenzi coughed some blood out of his mouth then shouted, “Sense Slaying!”

The moment the words left his mouth, the inverted image of the moon on Meng Hao’s forehead shattered, and an intense power surged into Meng Hao’s mind. In response, Meng Hao let out a cold snort. The power was fierce, and was obviously Yi Chenzi’s trump card. If Meng Hao hadn’t already formed his Earth-type totem tattoo, then his mind would be reeling right now.

Instead, he quickly recovered. His own Spiritual Sense was far more powerful than Yi Chenzi’s. Backed by the power of four of the five elements, the effect of Yi Chenzi’s attack was easy to dispel.

Another fist descended, and Yi Chenzi’s body exploded with blood and gore. His shocked Nascent Soul flew out, surrounded by the protection of the black moon.

“How could he be so powerful! Why? Why?! Dammit, he must have seized some blessing in the Realm of the Bridge Ruins.” Even as his terrified Nascent soul tried to retreat at top speed, Meng Hao snatched Yi Chenzi’s corpse and put it into his bag of holding.

As Yi Chenzi’s Nascent Soul tried to flee, suddenly, the Outlander Beast arrived. A boom filled the air as it struck out. Yi Chenzi’s Nascent Soul screamed and then spit out a mouthful of Nascent Soul life Qi. The Nascent Soul itself grew fuzzy and extremely weak. The black moon shield collapsed, and the other protective treasures that he had pulled out moments ago also were destroyed.

“Despicable!” shrieked Yi Chenzi. “You people are despicable! I demand a one-on-one duel!!” His face twisted with fear as he was surrounded on three sides by the Outlander Beast, the parrot and Meng Hao.

“One-on-one duel? Yeah right, b*tch! Lord Fifth always wins by outnumbering the enemy. Who’s gonna duel you, b*tch! How could you be so naive?” The parrot squawked as it charged once again in attack. The Outlander Beast roared and struck out. As for Meng Hao, he did nothing except for seal off Yi Chenzi’s escape route with freezing wind every time he tried to flee.

It was at this point that the meat jelly suddenly let out an excited shout. “Don’t kill him! I have to convert him! I’ve been looking for someone as evil as this for years! I’ve always wanted a challenge like this!” The meat jelly’s eyes glowed and filled with excitement.

“What’s your name? Fear not! Come come. Tell Lord Third your name.”

A boom filled the air as the Outlander Beast struck out again. Yi Chenzi’s Nascent Soul was injured again. More life Qi sprayed from his mouth. The Nascent Soul was incredibly weak at this point, and his eyes were filled with desperation. With an angry cry, he tried to perform a minor teleportation, but even as he did, the air around him froze like ice, blocking the minor teleportation. Next, the parrot charged toward him.

A miserable scream rose up into the sky. The scene was tragic beyond compare. Even the members of the Crow Divinity Tribes were shocked.

“Let me go, I was in the wrong! Let me go….”

Boom! The Outlander slapped out playfully.

“Give me a chance, I will… aaiiiii….”

The parrot, manly and vigorous, pierced him through.

“I….”

“What’s your name? Eee? You’re not answering me! So, you look down on me, eh? Despise me? You, you, you, you are simply too evil! You are too immoral! I must convert you! I will convert you. Why won’t you say anything…?” The meat jelly continued to blabber on continuously.

Within the space of about ten breaths, Yi Chenzi’s Nascent Soul continuously let out miserable shrieks of despair. The parrot and its concubine, and the meat jelly, were tormenting him until he was about to collapse.

In the end, Yi Chenzi let out a furious roar and chose to self-detonate. However, in the moment before he did, the Outlander Beast opened its mouth and swallowed him down. A faint explosion could be heard, after which the Outlander Beast opened its mouth and burped out some mist.

This was the way in which Yi Chenzi was ultimately killed. He was not cut down by Meng Hao, but rather toyed to death by the parrot, Outlander Beast, and meat jelly.

“Ahh? He died?” The parrot seemed to think that it was a pity.

“Ai. I can’t believe he died before I was able to convert him.” The meat jelly had a pained expression on its face as it sighed.

The Outlander Beast wore a strange expression as it looked back and forth between the meat jelly and the parrot. It said nothing.

Meng Hao turned and headed back toward the mountain, surrounded by his neo-demon horde. He waved his hand and instantly, totemic life force flowed out in all directions, fusing into the neo-beasts as well as the vine trunk.

They immediately began to recover. As they did, Meng Hao produced a large collection of medicinal pills to treat not only the wounds of the neo-demons, but also strengthen the weakened Crow Divinity Tribe members, who instantly looked much more energetic.

“Greetings exalted Sacred Ancient!” The more than one thousand Tribe members all began to kneel and kowtow to Meng Hao. Even the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather got to his knees to kowtow. When they lifted their heads back up, their faces were filled with anticipation. They were aware of Meng Hao’s goal in going to the Realm of the Bridge Ruins, and now, they all looked at him with anxiety.

“I’ve brought back hope,” he said, looking around at them. “We will migrate… to the Black Lands!” The surrounding Tribe members gasped and began to tremble. Tears streamed down their faces and they cried out in joy from the bottoms of their hearts.

A few days later, the Crow Divinity Tribe’s life-saving migration began.

With the fall of the violet rain, life force was exterminated and teleportation portals stopped working. Spiritual energy was scant, which made it so that the Crow Divinity Tribes had to travel on foot. There was no way for them to fly through the air.

Furthermore, there were still ordinary Tribe members with no Cultivation bases. That made it impossible to travel at any high rate of speed.

For a Cultivator to fly from the Western Desert North region to the Black Lands in the South region would take many years. To walk… would take a thousand. There was no time for that. The only way migrate successfully…. would be to acquire a flying machine that could carry one thousand people.

They needed a flying machine that could be powered by Spirit Stones, not the spiritual power of Heaven and Earth. Only a large flying machine like that could facilitate their migration and make it a reality.

Before departing, Meng Hao looked back at the mountains. After having returned, he hadn’t seen the Black Bat. From what Gu La had told him, it had disappeared only a few days after he left for the Realm of the Bridge Ruins. As to where it went, nobody knew.

“You fled without my permission. Well, I can find you if I wish.” Meng Hao look at the mountains, his eyes glittering. Then he turned and walked off into the distance with the Crow Divinity Tribes.

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# Chapter 478: Soul Search

Most Rogue Cultivators would not have a large reserve of Spirit Stones. But to the five Tribes that once made up the great Crow Divinity Tribe, a Tribe which had passed down legacies for many years, well, Spirit Stones…

Were something they had a lot of!

They might not have enough to keep a large flying machine going for many years, but it would at least get them half way. After the arrival of the violet rain, the spiritual energy grew scarce to the point where it virtually didn’t exist. Therefore, Spirit Stones, which were in fact an expendable resources, became the only way to replenish spiritual energy. Therefore, some were wasted in this way.

Thankfully, the fact that there were not many Cultivators in the Crow Divinity Tribes meant that the consumption was reduced by quite a bit. At the moment, there were plenty remaining. Currently, the main problem was how to acquire a large flying machine that wasn’t powered by the spiritual energy of Cultivators.

Meng Hao looked around thoughtfully at members of the Crow Divinity Tribes as they trudged along. “Right now, many Tribes are migrating through the Western Desert North region. A treasure like that… would certainly be incredibly expensive if it were to be purchased!”

It was already the tenth day of the Crow Divinity Tribes’ migration. These mountains were where the Tribes had lived from generation to generation. Other than occasional Tribe members who went out to travel in the great lands of the Western Desert and never came back, or a few random other members, most members of the Crow Divinity Tribes never left the mountains.

The rain continued to fall heavily. Everyone, both Cultivator and ordinary Tribe member alike, had to do everything possible to prevent the rainwater from touching them. Otherwise, their life force would slowly be burned away.

Even the neo-demons were the same, although they were able to hold out much longer. Anything that was alive, though, would slowly die if exposed to the rain.

When the thorns were broken off of the vines, they became something like bark, which were then used to make articles of clothing that resembled woven, rush raincoats. These coats became an essential item to the Tribe members.

The migration included not just the thousand members of the Crow Divinity Tribes, but also Meng Hao’s neo-demon horde. Thankfully, the neo-demons could survive inside Meng Hao’s bag of holding, which made things much easier.

That was a special trait of neo-demons. Unfortunately, Cultivators could not survive inside of a bag of holding. Therefore, the road they had to travel along during the migration was difficult and packed with frustrations.

The sky above was dark and filled with the sound of falling rain. They moved in silence along a road that seemed to have no end.

A month later, they entered the borders of the mountains. Meng Hao led the way, wearing a woven rush raincoat like everyone else. It draped about him like a cloak, covering his entire body. He also wore a wide, conical hat, which made his appearance very bleak.

The Wild Giant panted as it walked along behind Meng Hao. It’s massive frame was too big to fit inside a bag of holding, so it was forced to walk along in the outside world. Gu La walked next to the Wild Giant, coughing, his face pale. His life force was dimming, but luckily, it showed no signs that it would sputter out.

However, in this violet rain, he, like the other Cultivators, were gradually becoming like mortals.

One could imagine, that before too long, they would be Cultivators who could not perform any magic whatsoever. At that time, they… truly would be mortals.

A black crow suddenly appeared. It flew through the air, shrinking in size until it was small enough to land on Gu La’s shoulder.

Gu La looked at the bird for a moment, and then said, “There’s a Tribe that’s been following us for three days….

The Crow Scout Tribe Greatfather turned to look behind them. Frowning, he said, “It’s most likely a local Tribe called the Grand Fusion Tribe. They are a mid-sized Tribe….”

The Outlander beast, the parrot, and the meat jelly had once again fused into one body. At the moment, it was the voice of the parrot which said, “Do you want Lord Fifth to go screw them?”

Meng Hao didn’t reply. He continued to walk, pulling out a jade slip. The jade slip was simple and unsophisticated; it was something he had acquired from Yi Chenzi’s bag of holding, a description of the blood sacrifice magic that Yi Chenzi had cultivated.

It also described the method to cultivate the black moon totem, as well as his escape art. In addition, it detailed a vicious magic known as the Blood Sacrifice Soul Search, a brutal and ruthless technique that left the victim alive but crippled.

Meng Hao had been studying it thoughtfully during the traveling, and now understood it quite well.

When the others saw Meng Hao acting like this, they didn’t say anything more. The group of a thousand continued to walk for seven or eight days until they reached what looked like a sea.

More precisely, it was an enormous lake. This was the very edge of the mountains, and before the rain had come, was actually an enormous basin that led out of the mountains. Before, it had been filled with neo-demons as well as lush vegetation. Now, it was nothing more than waters stretching out as far as the eye could see.

Meng Hao looked out at the lake for a moment, then turned. “They’re here,” he said coolly. The other turned with vigilant eyes to stare back in the direction they had just come from.

The members of the Crow Divinity Tribes scattered out, creating a wide, open space. Their eyes flickered with displeasure, especially the members of the Crow Fighter Tribe. After Meng Hao’s return, he had branded them with his Frost soil totem, causing their Cultivation bases to advance, returning them to where they had been before.

Not too much time passed before footsteps could be heard, mixed with the sound of grunts and growls.

A tribe of roughly three thousand people appeared, many of whom were mounted on fierce beasts that looked somewhat like lions. They charged across the ground as they approached.

Among their numbers were five Nascent Soul Cultivators, one of whom was in the mid Nascent Soul stage. All five of them were covered with totem tattoos, although their faces were somewhat wan and thin. Nonetheless, they radiated fierceness as they approached. The thousands of Cultivators all came to a stop about three hundred meters away to stare darkly at the Crow Divinity Tribes.

The Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather stepped forward, his eyes gleaming coldly. He had been nearing death before, but after returning, Meng Hao had give him some medicinal pills to restore his life force. His voice was cold as he said, “You must be the Grand Fusion Tribe. We are the Crow Divinity Tribe. You’ve been following us for some time. If you just happen to be traveling in the same direction, then please be on your way.”

Given that his Cultivation base was at the mid Nascent Soul stage, the sound of it echoed out completely clearly.

No one responded to the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather's words. Of their five Nascent Soul Cultivators, the one with the mid Nascent Soul stage Cultivation base was an old man wearing a black robe, who carried a Feng Shui compass in his hand. After glancing at the compass, he suddenly looked up at the crowd of people in front of him. Eventually, his gaze came to rest on Meng Hao, whose Cultivation base was obscured. In this man's estimation, the person who was the greatest threat to him personally was the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather. After a moment's thought, he clenched his jaw. Killing intent and greed instantly shone in his eyes.

"That guy has it! As for everyone else, do not leave a single one alive!"

In conjunction with his words, the Tribe members at his side roared as they pulled out Spirit Stones from which they quickly absorbed spiritual energy. The neo-demons they rode also roared, and then the entire group of three thousand people charged toward Meng Hao. The five Nascent Soul Cultivators flew forward, using power from their Cultivation bases that they were normally reluctant to part with.

Meng Hao's eyes flickered as he gave a cold snort. He waved his right hand, instantly causing the power of Frost soil to magically appear. A frigid wind blasted out along with Frost soil. He instantly moved forward with a minor teleportation, reappearing directly next to one of the early Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators. He waved a hand, causing the power of his Fire-type totem tattoo to boil out. Attacked with both freezing cold and burning hot, the early Nascent Soul stage Cultivator's body instantly exploded.

The sight immediately shocked the entire Grand Fusion Tribe, causing their expressions to fill with astonishment. This was something that they couldn't possibly have predicted would happen. Meng Hao's attack had exterminated one of their Priests!

The black-robed old man gasped, and his heart started to pound. However, he had little time for consideration. He burst into action, heading directly toward Meng Hao.

The Cultivators of the Crow Divinity Tribes chose this moment to launch their assault.

Meng Hao attacked swiftly and violently. He teleported, reappearing directly in front of the black-robed old man. His right hand lifted up, and a flame sea roared up. Then he lowered his hand, and the golden rain of this Metal-type tattoo appeared. As it shot forward, the black-robed old man performed an incantation with two hands. Shockingly, a nine-headed liger suddenly appeared in front of him, roaring as it shot toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao gave another cold snort and punched out with his right hand. A boom echoed through the air as the nine-headed liger exploded into pieces. A cold wind gusted out as Meng Hao appeared again in front of the black-robed old man. The old man's face immediately fell. He pulled out a Spirit Stone to replenish his spiritual energy, shooting backward at the same time. Meng Hao's eyes flickered and he pointed out with his finger. The black-robed man's face filled with astonishment as he realized that his body and even his Cultivation base had been sealed. Meng Hao approached calmly and took the Feng Shui compass out of the man's hand. He looked it over, whereupon his face grew dark.

On the Feng Shui compass was a bright dot, indicating Meng Hao's location.

"Where did you get this thing?" asked Meng Hao coolly.

The black-robed old man had recovered control of his body. Panting, but not speaking a word, he backed up.

"Not going to tell me? Well, I'll just keep it." With that, he slapped his bag of holding. Instantly, his neo-demon horde emerged. "Other than the neo-demons, leave none of them alive."

Thousands of neo-demons blotted out the sky and shot forward, whereupon miserable shrieks began to fill the air.

During this great migration in the Western Desert, it was a situation of "if you don't die, then I don't live." There was no room for benevolence. If they showed mercy, the Crow Divinity Tribes would be destroyed.

In the moment when Meng Hao had decided to protect the Crow Divinity Tribes, his heart had grown cold regarding any enemy who attacked them. Since they had chosen to attack, they would die.

As he strode forward, his body suddenly turned into a green smoke as he used Yi Chenzi’s escape art. He immediately appeared in front of the black-robed old man. His lifted his hand and the Lotus Sword Formation appeared.

After returning from the Realm of the Bridge Ruins, the power of Time had returned to its normal level. However, the world was now one in which the power of extermination and the lack of spiritual energy were constantly making almost undetectable attacks on the life force of Cultivators. The power of the Lotus Sword Formation spread out, instantly causing a sixty-year cycle worth of time to fade away from the black-robed old man.

“This is….” his face immediately fell, and his mind reeled. His life force was already weak enough as it was. For a sixty-year cycle worth of time to vanish made him even older than he had been before. He was also shocked to discover that while the amount of spiritual energy he consumed when employing divine abilities could not be replenished fast enough via Spirit Stones, this young man against whom he was matched hadn’t used even a single Spirit Stone at all.

It was with incredible speed that Meng Hao neared him. His right hand lifted up and suddenly a strange, mysterious glow appeared that resembled a black moon. Even as the old man’s life force was vanishing, the moon came to rest on the top of his head.

“Soul Search!”

A bloodcurdling scream could be heard coming from the old man’s mouth. His body shook violently, and just as he was trying to struggle, the Lotus Sword Formation once again spun, sucking away yet another sixty-year cycle of life. The old man’s eyes went wide as he felt his memories slipping away like flowing water as Meng Hao looked them over.

Meng Hao’s face suddenly grew dark and icy.

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# Chapter 479: Seeking to Perish

Within the memories of the black-robed old man, Meng Hao saw many complicated things. They were his recollections of his life. Even as the man screamed and trembled, a death aura slowly spreading out from him, Meng Hao found what he was looking for.

The Feng Shui compass was one of many distributed throughout the Western Desert by the Heavenly Court Alliance. Because the Crow Divinity Tribes had not left their mountains during the Apocalypse, they were not up to date on everything that was happening in the outside world, and were unaware of this aspect.

Actually, more than half of the Tribes in the Western Desert had such a Feng Shui compass.

It served only one purpose; it would reveal the location of any Demon Spirits within the area.

Because Meng Hao had two Demon Spirits in his bag of holding, his position was visible on the compass.

Having detected a Demon Spirit, the Grand Fusion Tribe came with killing intent, hoping to slaughter them and take the Demon Spirit.

Meng Hao’s face was grim. He flicked his sleeve, and the Lotus Sword Formation rotated. A shrill scream could be heard as the old man’s body grew ancient. He wanted to evade, but after the Soul Searching, his mind had been severely damaged. Even his Nascent Soul was weak and on the verge of collapse.

As Meng Hao turned to walk off, a banging sound could be heard as the man’s body turned directly into ash. Body and spirit were destroyed underneath the Time power of the Lotus Sword Formation.

The battle didn’t last for very long. With Meng Hao’s powerful Cultivation base, it didn’t matter that the Grand Fusion Tribe had Spirit Stones to counter the effects of the waning spiritual energy. Their three thousand Tribe members quickly turned the ground into a river of blood.

Meng Hao felt no sympathy for them whatsoever. He knew that if his own Cultivation base were not strong enough, then the members of the Crow Divinity Tribes, including himself, would be the ones to form a river of blood.

The bags of holding and other resources of the Grand Fusion Tribe became fuel to keep the Crow Divinity Tribes going for longer. As for the thousands of neo-demons, thanks to Meng Hao’s Demonic Qi, they capitulated and became part of his neo-demon horde.

After assigning more than a thousand of the neo-demons to be mounts for the Tribe members, they crossed the huge lake and once again continued with their migration.

However, dark clouds filled Meng Hao’s heart. Because of the matter of the Feng Shui compasses, he knew that their migration would now be even more difficult. No matter how he tried to hide or seal the Demon Spirits, he was incapable of preventing the compass from detecting them.

Thankfully, the memories of the black-robed old man had revealed to Meng Hao the various announcements made by the Black Lands Heavenly Court Alliance during the time that he was in the Realm of the Bridge Ruins.

For example, he knew that as for the great Tribes with Spirit Severing experts, they were welcomed into the Black Lands with no stipulations whatsoever.

Because of that, most great Tribes naturally didn’t care too much about Demon Spirits. Even those that did care somewhat, did not care so much that they would spare no price to get one.

“The Tribes that need the Demon Spirits the most are the mid-sized Tribes. Or Tribes like the Five Poisons Tribe, who don’t have a Spirit Severing expert.” Meng Hao was lost in thought regarding these matters as they crossed the lake and then continued onward.

Time flowed by. Three months later, the Crow Divinity Tribes were now far from the mountains that had been their home. Meng Hao’s neo-demon horde once again numbered 20,000.

In Meng Hao’s estimation, the neo-demon horde was one of the biggest factors in his ability to protect the Crow Divinity Tribes. Right now, the Crow Divinity Tribes were not capable of engaging in battle with the powerful mid-sized Tribes on their own. When it came to dealing with the great Tribes, their biggest advantage was that Meng Hao was a Demon Sealer, a status which placed him above even a Grand Dragoneer.

Demonic Qi allowed him to attract and control more neo-demons; this often made his ability to change the course of a battle even stronger.

The three months of travel were anything but peaceful. After the Grand Fusion Tribe, they encountered three more mid-sized Tribes. Without exception, all of those tribes came after them with bloodshot eyes and killing intent, determined to seize a Demon Spirit.

After three battles, three Tribes were exterminated.

Meng Hao’s neo-demon horde reached 20,000 in number, and the Crow Divinity Tribes did not lose a single member. In each of the three battles, it was Meng Hao and the neo-demons who did the fighting.

“Grow strong through battle,” said Meng Hao, looking back at the mountains far behind.

They were now in a wide plain.

“By continuous battle, we acquire more resources and more neo-demons. If one day I can build my horde up to 100,000 neo-demons, then we would be able to shake even great Tribes.” His eyes glittered with determination.

The Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather, the Crow Gloom Grand Elder, Gu La, and the others all saw Meng Hao's decisiveness, and it caused them to sigh with relief.

To them, Meng Hao was not just a Sacred Ancient, but also, the sole hope of the Crow Divinity Tribes.

"Esteemed Sacred Ancient," said the Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather with an anxious frown, "if we continue on this path, it will only be a few months before we reach the lands of the mid-sized Eternal Universe Tribe. Their totem is a blue-faced Ghoul, and their Tribe members are cruel and savage. There is no way to know if they are still there. If we want to avoid them, we can make a detour, but that will take us into the lands of the Five Poisons Tribe."

"There's no need for detours," said Meng Hao coolly. His eyes shone with killing intent. "If the Eternal Universe Tribe is still there and has malicious intentions, well, I still need more neo-demons, and can use them to bolster my horde."

On this road of migration, Meng Hao had long since grown used to killing.

"So…." said the Crow Gloom Grand Elder, his eyes shining with a fierce glow.

"Proceed onward!" replied Meng Hao calmly. His decisions were the decisions of the Tribe. Originally, there had been more than a thousand members of the five Crow Divinity Tribes. However, during recent battles, hundreds of enemies had surrendered, opting to become slaves in order to save their own lives. The Tribe, which now numbered nearly two thousand members, continued onward in formation.

Time passed. Two months later, they faced a river of violet rainwater. Further off in what had once been a flat plain was a crudely constructed city.

The city wasn't extremely large, but seemed capable of housing over 10,000 people. It was made from rocks and dirt which were covered with fading magical symbols. In the very middle of the city were nine enormous statues. The statues, all clustered together, had vicious-looking faces, like Ghouls.

This was none other than the Eternal Universe Tribe. They were a mid-sized Tribe, but this was the Western Desert North region. The Tribe had experienced quite a few internal conflicts as they tried to decide whether or not to migrate. In the end, they had chosen to send a vanguard up ahead, leaving some members of the Tribe behind to decide later whether or not to migrate.

At the moment, the Eternal Universe Tribe's Greatfather, High Priest, Grand Elder, and other important members were standing on the city wall, staring excitedly off into the distance.

"Are you sure?" growled the Greatfather.

"Absolutely sure," replied the High Priest, who held a Feng Shui compass in his hand. A bright dot could be seen on its surface. "They're very close. This migrating Tribe is most likely the Crow Divinity Tribe, and they have a Demon Spirit!"

"According to the scouts, they are about two thousand strong. Some of that number includes ordinary Tribe members. They also have about one thousand neo-demons.

"They have one mid Nascent Soul Cultivator and two of the early Nascent Soul stage. The rest are Core Formation or lower. According to the intelligence we gathered regarding their war with the Five Poisons Tribe, they lost all of their totemic Sacred Ancients, which is why they are in such a state of deep decline.

"Considering that the spiritual energy has become so scarce, their road will end here in death!"

The Greatfather's eyes shone with a bright light. "Heaven will not exterminate our Eternal Universe Tribe! Such a fine gift has been delivered right up to us. Notify the rest of the Tribe. We attack in full force. After we get that Demon Spirit, we will leave this place no matter the cost. We will meet up with the vanguard force and go to the Black Lands!” The Priest and the others around him all looked very excited.

The nearly 10,000 members of the Eternal Universe Tribe emerged out onto the plain, filled with the desire to slay Meng Hao and the Crow Divinity Tribes and take their Demon Spirit.

Meanwhile, across the plain was a bleak area which at one time had been filled with poison. These were the lands of the Five Poisons Tribe, a place where outsiders never entered.

The Five Poisons Tribe had long since chosen to migrate. However, it was not the entire Tribe that did so. Only four of the branches of the Tribe had left; the Scorpion Branch had chosen to stay behind.

At this moment, the Scorpion Branch’s High Priest held a Feng Shui compass in his hand. For a long moment, he silently looked at the dot representing a Demon Spirit.

“We need to think of a way to notify the migrating branches that a Demon Spirit has appeared. If they can come up with a way to rob it, excellent. Unfortunately, our Scorpion Branch….” He shook his head. “So, the Crow Divinity Tribes left their mountains after the war, and even managed to get a Demon Spirit…. It doesn’t matter who choses to tangle with them. Our Scorpion Branch has already decided to die here in their ancestral land. There’s no need to step into turbid waters.”

Meng Hao and the Crow Divinity Tribes traveled on for seven days. Suddenly, Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. His expression was calm as he slapped his bag of holding. Immediately, the vine trunk appeared and burrowed down into the ground. Moments later, thorns shot up from the soil, completely encircling the two thousand members of the Crow Divinity Tribes. They spread out to connect up above, forming a dome.

It was like an upside down bowl, completely protecting the Tribe inside.

All of it took only a moment to accomplish as, up ahead, a black cloud mass could be seen. Within the cloud were tens of thousands of neo-demons. Bright beams of light were thousands of Cultivators. The ground shook as thousands of Cultivators rode neo-demons to follow.

Everything trembled and the sky grew dark. The whole time, the violet rain continued to fall!

No words were exchanged. The incoming eight thousand Cultivators whistled through the air. The tens of thousands of neo-demons let out roars that spread out in all directions.

“He thinks he alone can hinder our army of tens of thousands? He overestimates his power! Eternal Universe Tribe Cultivators, hear my command. Slaughter all of these people! Do not leave a single one alive!”

Roaring filled the sky as the army charged into battle. Four Nascent Soul Cultivators shot toward Meng Hao at top speed, filled with killing intent.

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# Chapter 480: A Massive Defeat for the Eternal Universe Tribe!

Meng Hao’s expression was as calm as ever as he faced up against nearly ten thousand Cultivators and tens of thousands of neo-demons. Behind him, the Thorn Rampart covered the two thousand members of the Crow Divinity Tribes like a dome. He took a deep breath and then pointed his hand toward the ground.

“I’ve been waiting for you for a while now,” he said coolly. “Righteous Bestowal!” Instantly, this land which was cut off from spiritual energy, suddenly seethed with Demonic Qi. As Meng Hao waved his hand, the Demonic Qi exploded out.

The Demonic Qi instantly caused the approaching neo-demons to begin to tremble. Their expressions were that of fear as they suddenly stopped moving and began to emit plaintive shrieks.

The sudden change caused the expressions of the aggressive, violent members of the Eternal Universe Tribe to immediately change.

This was the first time that Meng Hao had unhesitatingly unleashed all the power of the Demonic Qi he had at his disposal. This was a power that did not belong to Grand Dragoneers, but to Demon Sealers. This was a truly momentous Heavenly power!

Cultivators could not sense this Qi, but to the neo-demons, it couldn’t be clearer.

What they saw was Meng Hao, seething with shocking Demonic Qi. The Qi soared up into the sky; even the violet rain seemed to be distorted by it.

Meng Hao was the center of a storm of Demonic Qi that burst out in all directions.

In the world that only the neo-demons could see, Demonic Qi roared up from Meng Hao, transforming into a massive figure. This was a figure composed completely of Demonic Qi, and it looked like… Meng Hao.

As of this moment, Meng Hao did not appear to them to be a Cultivator, but rather a Greater Demon of Heaven and Earth!

This Demon could shake the world, and had monstrous Demonic Qi. It was like a king who arrived and made any land he stepped on part of his domain.

The neo-demons in the horde were shaking so badly that even their souls trembled. Suddenly, memories within their blood were awakened. The neo-demons suddenly began to cry out. The sounds of their cries were filled with reverence and allegiance.

They submitted before the master of the neo-demons, before an aura of a Greater Demon, an aura that was just like that of their own ancestors!

The tens of thousands of neo-demons of the Eternal Universe Tribe, regardless of their level, were all roaring continuously, their expressions filled with veneration and respect. They were no longer charging across the ground, but rather prostrating themselves on it! The neo-demons who had been flying in the sky also fell to the ground.

Regardless of how their Masters tried to control them, they all acknowledged their allegiance to Meng Hao, without exception.

This scene caused the members of the Eternal Universe Tribe to pant with shock. Before they even had time to react, Meng Hao waved his hand, causing the shocking Demonic Qi to surge toward each and every one of the neo-demons.

As the Demonic Qi entered their bodies, their roars grew frenzied and their bodies grew larger and fiercer. Their auras were now many times more powerful than before. All of them even began to show signs of Ancestral Awakening!

One of the neo-demons in the horde was a blue-faced Ghoul neo-demon. It lifted its head to the sky to roar; as of this moment, it no longer walked along on all fours, but rather stood up on two legs. Its blue, hairless body emanated shocking ripples. Its eyes became bright red, and it grew nearly ten meters taller. Even more shocking, a horn suddenly grew out of its forehead.

The spiraling horn crackled with arcing sparks of lightning, and it emanated an astonishing aura. The appearance of this neo-demon very closely resembled the nine statues back in the Eternal Universe Tribe's city.

Its appearance immediately caused the members of the Eternal Universe Tribe to be filled with shock. Their hearts trembled and cries of astonishment filled the air.

"Sacred Ancient! It… it looks exactly like the Sacred Ancient!!"

"Who is this person? He causes our neo-demons to mutate and go out of control…."

Amidst the commotion, Meng Hao's calm, bizarre voice echoed out: "From now on, you follow me. To battle!" In response, the tens of thousands of neo-demons roared, shaking themselves loose from their masters and turning on them with vicious expressions. It seemed… they really were switching sides.

At the same time, Meng Hao waved his arm, causing his own 20,000 neo-demons to suddenly appear, howling to the sky. They instantly shot toward the Eternal Universe Tribe members.

Nearly 60,000 neo-demons all absorbed Demonic Qi, which caused a variety of mutations. They quickly surrounded the eight thousand trembling Cultivators, all of whom had completely lost their will to fight. One can well imagine the end result of the battle.

Meng Hao’s face was calm as he watched the savage slaughter erupt. Booms and screams filled the air. At the same time, the five Nascent Soul Cultivators shot toward him, emanating killing intent.

These people were all of the early Nascent Soul stage; to deal with people like that, Meng Hao didn’t even need to don the Blood Immortal mask any more. His hand flashed with an incantation gesture and he pointed forward. Instantly, the power of Frost soil shot out, followed by a raging sea of flames, a gigantic tree and a golden rain. Totems of four of the five elements exploded out as he pointed.

Before the five approaching Nascent Soul Cultivators could even get near to Meng Hao, their bodies trembled under the attack of his four great totems.

Blood sprayed from their mouths and their faces filled with astonishment. It was at this point that two roaring figures suddenly shot through the air toward Meng Hao, sending out ripples in all directions. Any neo-demon that got in their way was transformed into a cloud of blood; none were capable of even causing pause for these two figures.

It was two old men, filled with intense killing intent as they closed in on Meng Hao.

“He’s a Grand Dragoneer! Kill him and the neo-demon horde will disperse!”

As they neared, Meng Hao slipped on the Blood Immortal mask. Instantly, Blood Qi exploded up, completely changing his aura. Radiating killing intent, his body flickered as he turned into a black moon. A wisp of smoke could be seen as he suddenly appeared directly in front of the two old men.

For him to appear in this way was bizarre and shocking. They almost couldn’t believe what they were seeing with their own eyes, and their hearts filled with foreboding.

As the faces of the old men fell, Meng Hao casually clenched his right hand into a fist and then launched a blow!

Boom!

One of the old men was sent tumbling backward. He quickly summoned seven or eight magical treasures to try to defend himself, but they were crushed, the fragments of which slammed into his chest. Blood sprayed from his mouth and the totem tattoos on his body flickered.

At the same time, Meng Hao turned. Black moons flashed within his eyes and suddenly, a black moon like an eye magically appeared on his forehead as he looked at the other old man. This old man urgently employed divine abilities, and was instantly surrounded by Ghouls. This was actually the Greatfather of the Eternal Universe Tribe; the man Meng Hao had struck moments ago was the High Priest.

When the Greathfather's eyes met Meng Hao's, his expression flickered and his mind filled with roaring as suddenly, the reflection of a black moon appeared on his own face. He felt stabbing pain in his Sea of Perception, as if a great invisible blade were stabbing into it.

He let out a miserable scream. Unable to attack, mind filled with buzzing as he shot backward in retreat.

This black moon eye was none other than Yi Chenzi's life saving treasure. However, in Meng Hao's hands its might far exceeded what it had in the hands of Yi Chenzi. Although Meng Hao did not cultivate the blood sacrifice magic, after putting on the Blood Immortal mask, the power of his Blood Qi far exceeded that of Yi Chenzi's.

He needed no blood sacrifices. Everytime he killed a person, the redness of the mask would grow deeper.

Bloodcurdling screams could be heard continuously as 60,000 neo-demons ruthlessly attacked and killed the besieged Eternal Universe Tribe.

What shocked the Eternal Universe Tribe most was that within the neo-demon horde was a flock of extremely bizarre black crows. They didn't attack anyone, but rather flew around, seemingly absorbing something.

However, it didn't take long before the corpses on the ground began to twitch and rise to their feet.

The dead came back to life and stood up. Within the eyes of each corpse could be seen the image of a crow. Immediately, the corpses charged toward their former Tribe members in attack.

Most astonishing of all was that these corpses… still had Cultivation bases!

Although they could only use their Cultivation bases instinctively, these corpses did not fear death. Even if all they had left was a head, they would still try to bite their opponent. The battlefield instantly grew even more brutal.

The situation quickly grew hopeless, causing some of the Eternal Universe Tribe members to bite their tongues and spit out blood. After performing quick incantations, they pointed up to the sky.

"Exalted Sacred Ancient, help us!"

The High Priest, the five nascent Soul Cultivators, and the rest of the Tribe members all bit their tongues and spit out blood. One by one the roared up into the sky: "Exalted Sacred Ancient, help us!"

The voices of thousands of Tribe members joined together, transforming into a thunderous sound that rolled out in waves, shaking Heaven and Earth. Suddenly, a roar could be heard from the sky off in the distance.

It was a black cloud, within which was a living Ghoul!

Its skin was blue, and it was fully three hundred meters in length. It had a spiraling horn, and its body was covered with scales. This neo-demon Sacred Ancient's aura shot out explosively, and when it appeared, it stared toward Meng Hao with its red eyes.

"You an aura similar to mine…." The creature roared, and then shot its claw-like hand directly toward Meng Hao.

At the same time that the Ghoul roared, another roar could be heard. “Outlander!”

It was none other than the Outlander Beast. It suddenly shot through the air to slam into the Ghoul.

Amidst the resulting boom, the parrot flapped its wings and let out a shriek. Its eyes glowed with a look of disgust and detestation.

“Dammit! No fur or feathers! You, you, you…. Why don’t you have any fur or feathers!?!? Beloved concubine, put it to death! This damned bastard has no fur or feathers, that’s the most heinous of crimes! Show no mercy! AAHHHHH! You dare to not have fur or feathers!”

In response to being slammed into by the Outlander Beast, the Ghoul roared and fell back. The Outlander Beast whistled through the air to slam into it again. The parrot was off to the side, continuing to call out excitedly.

On the ground, Meng Hao chuckled. He had been waiting for quite some time for the Eternal Universe Tribe to come. How could he not have made certain preparations? He lifted his right hand to perform an incantation gesture and suddenly, a blood-colored face magically appeared around him. It spread out and then shot forward in attack.

The attack instantly slammed into the several Nascent Soul Cultivators, causing blood to spray from their mouths. They retreated, faces filled with astonishment. It was at this point that the thorns suddenly began to spread apart. From within, the members of the Crow Divinity Tribes as well as the several hundred slaves, all emerged, shouting battle cries.

At this point, Meng Hao knew that the Eternal Universe Tribe was completely defeated.

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# Chapter 481: An Old Enemy

The battle lasted for several long hours. The Eternal Universe Tribe Greatfather perished and the High Priest was destroyed. Of the remaining five Nascent Soul Cultivators, three died and two attempted to flee.

They didn’t get very far before Meng Hao caught up with them and exterminated them.

He had no other choice. The only chance they had to live was to surrender, change totems, and exercize faith in Meng Hao by becoming a slave member of the Crow Divinity Tribes. Meng Hao could well imagine that if he didn’t kill those who chose instead to flee, news of the matter of the Demon Spirit would quickly travel far and wide.

They were in a bad enough situation as it was, if news spread even farther, then it would be even more difficult to successfully migrate.

Only about two thousand members of the Eternal Universe Tribe remained from the original force of seven or eight thousand. These members chose to surrender and pay allegiance to Meng Hao, becoming slave members of the Crow Divinity Tribes.

Of the 60,000 neo-demons, 50,000 survived the battle. They blotted out the sky as they surrounded Meng Hao, who stood there, hair whipping about, his faced filled with killing intent. He truly looked bizarre in these circumstances.

Several days later, the Crow Divinity Tribes, now four thousand members strong, arrived at the city formerly controlled by the Eternal Universe Tribe. They stripped the city of anything useful and then proceeded on their way.

They headed south, following a path that would eventually lead them out of the Western Desert North region.

The violet rain only continued to fall harder and harder…. The corrosive properties of the rain, its ability to exterminate life force, also increased. More and more lakes could be seen covering the land. From the look of it, it wouldn’t be long before the lakes joined together to become a sea.

Time flashed by. Two years passed. During the two years, the Crow Divinity Tribes continued on relentlessly toward the south. They crossed huge lakes and made their way through mountain ranges. During the journey, they faced battle seven times.

These seven battles caused the Crow Divinity Tribes to completely rise to prominence. Their numbers grew from four thousand to over 10,000. Only a thousand of those were original members of the five Crow Divinity Tribes. The other Cultivators were captured in battle and then chose to pledge allegiance to the Crow Divinity, to exercise faith in Meng Hao, and to become slaves.

Their totems were forcibly changed. Prostrating in worship to Meng Hao, they received either a Metal, Wood, Fire or Earth totem, and called Meng Hao Sacred Ancient.

Through the successive battles, Meng Hao’s neo-demon horde gradually increased in size. It now numbered 80,000.

As far as Nascent Soul Cultivators went, before they had only three. Now, there were seven, an increase of four. They were Cultivators from other Tribes who had chosen to surrender. To these Cultivators who chose to join the Crow Divinity Tribes, it was actually a chance to survive through the Apocalypse.

If the Crow Divinity Tribes managed to make it to the Black Lands, then they too would be able to enter and survive.

The shocking sight of the neo-demon horde soaring through the sky made it so that the glory of the Crow Divinity Tribes had now been restored to the level it had been back in the days of the Five Tribes. Now that more people were joining, and resources were more plentiful, Meng Hao began to concoct medicinal pills. Because his medicinal pills could restore spiritual energy, they became an essential part of life in the Crow Divinity Tribes.

It was also the reason that the more than 10,000 Cultivators could continue to endure the violet rain. After all… despite their abundance of resources, they still had not been able to acquire a flying machine.

Large-scale flying magical items were considerably expensive, and not something that mid-sized Tribes would possess. Only great Tribes would have such magical items.

Meng Hao was hopeful of being able to acquire a flying machine. However, during the two years, his face only continued to grow grimmer and grimmer. He was well aware that because of the Apocalypse, many Tribes in the Western Desert North were in the process of migrating. That was why they had run into the seven other Tribes that they battled with.

However, as they continued to travel, they would eventually leave the North region. When that happened, they would be facing up against even more Tribes, many of whom would have Feng Shui compasses. Once the Demon Spirit showed up on a Feng Shui compass, it would give rise to shocking violence.

The only way to resolve situations like that was by killing!

Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a cold light. During the two years, he had become completely accustomed to carrying out massacres.

“If the Crow Divinity Tribes cannot make it all the way to the Black Lands, it will be because I have done everything in my power, but failed. At that point, my debt to the Golden Crow will be paid. I will prove myself worthy of the blessings I have received from the Crow Divinity Tribes.” Meng Hao was already doing everything he could to fulfill his moral obligations. Regardless of whether or not he was able to achieve the pinnacle of his goal, there was now little more that he could do.

During the two years in which Meng Hao observed the violet rain falling, he was slowly beginning to attain bits of enlightenment. He was able to use the Everburning Flame to give birth to his Fire-type totem, and the framework of the Frost soil to create his Earth-type totem. As for his Water-type totem… perhaps he really could use the violet rain to acquire it!

After all, the violet rain contained the power of an Apocalypse. Such Water-type power could exterminate life and cut off spiritual energy. It was extraordinary to the extreme. If he could control that power and use it to create a Water-type totem tattoo, then Meng Hao would not only have completed the great circle of the five elements, but would have done so with five elements that could shake Heaven and Earth!

Metal came from the Golden Crow, a medicinal pill from ancient times that became a Demon, something exceedingly rare in Heaven and Earth!

Wood came from a powerful expert from the Ninth Sea, who collapsed upon reaching South Heaven. Its consciousness was reborn in the form of a tree, the Greenwood Tree!

Fire came from the East Pill Everburning Flame. It was a fire that could never be extinguished, that would exist eternally. Its origin was a mystery, such that even Meng Hao wasn’t sure where it came from!

Earth came from the power of the Frost soil and the Frost Soil Demon Emperor, a legendary soil which, according to the legends in the Ninth Mountain, was magically birthed from a patch of dirt, and eventually became unique and unmatched.

“Water…. The violet rain Apocalypse exterminates life and cuts off spiritual energy, leaving everything desolate!” Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a strange light.

10,000 Cultivators of the Tribe followed him in this Apocalyptic migration. The speed with which they traveled was significantly faster than two years before. After all, all of the people who surrendered and offered allegiance were Cultivators, not ordinary Tribe members. As for the original group of one thousand Crow Divinity Tribe members, the few hundred ordinary

Tribe members were assisted by others, and didn't influence the general speed of the migration.

Not many people noticed the rise of the Crow Divinity Tribes. After all, everyone was anxious to carry out their own migrations, and didn't pay too much attention to what was happening elsewhere. Furthermore, because of the chaos of the Apocalypse, all Tribes were very vigilant when it came to dealing with outsiders.

However, there was one Tribe that did notice the five Crow Divinity Tribes. That Tribe was none other than the old enemy of the Crow Divinity Tribes, the Five Poisons Tribe!

On the border of the Western Desert North region, the Five Poisons Tribe had set up temporary shelters. In the central pavilion sat the Tribe's Priests, who numbered thirteen in total. In the center position were two old men.

The first was the Greatfather of the Five Poisons Tribe. The other… was the man who had led the great army in an attempt to exterminate the five Crow Divinity Tribes. The High Priest.

He broke the silence in the tent with his raspy voice: "We are certain that the Crow Divinity Tribes have a Demon Spirit."

Conversations immediately broke out within the central pavilion.

"We have already contacted the great Cloud Sky Tribe. They have a Spirit Severing Patriarch, which qualifies them to enter the Black Lands. If we choose to join them, then… from now on, we will lose the right to govern ourselves, and will become an auxiliary branch of their Tribe. The exalted Sacred Ancients are reluctant to agree to such an arrangement."

"If we choose not to join the great Cloud Sky Tribe, then the only hope we have to survive is to exterminate the Crow Divinity Tribes and seize their Demon Spirit. Furthermore, our only chance is to do so… before news of this Demon Spirit spreads to other areas outside the Western Desert North region!"

“That’s right. Once the words spreads out, it will reach the Central region, where large quantities of Tribes are congregating. The further south one goes, the more Tribes there are to be found. Once the Crow Divinity Tribes enter the Central region, the fact that they have a Demon Spirit will be impossible to hide.”

“If we acquire the Demon Spirit, we could use it to make a deal with the great Cloud Sky Tribe. We could offer it to them in exchange for the chance of autonomy if we join them.”

As the conversations continued, the Greatfather sat there taciturnly.

“In accord with our previous agreement, the emissary from the Cloud Sky Tribe will be here in two months.”

“However, according to our secret inquiries, the Crow Divinity Tribes are now over 10,000 in number. They also have tens of thousands of neo-demons. Furthermore, their Grand Dragoneer Meng Hao is worth a thousand regular Cultivators! Such a war will be no simple thing.”

“They’re nothing but a disorderly mob. If we attack with all our might, we can definitely wipe out the Crow Divinity Tribes within three days, and seize the Demon Spirit before anyone else can!”

Finally, the Greatfather cleared his throat, instantly causing the pavilion to grow quiet. All gazes shifted to fall upon him.

“The Sacred Ancients are not willing to join another great Tribe. Neither are we…. Therefore, prepare for war! We will fight the Crow Divinity Tribes and seize their Demon Spirit. That Demon Spirit is the key to our future survival!” His eyes filled with determination as he spoke. Afterwards, all of the Priests kowtowed deeply to him.

“As for that Grand Dragoneer Meng Hao… the Tribe still has a drop of Heavenly Blood. Use the blood to fuse the spirits of the tens of thousands of Tribe members, and slay Meng Hao!”

The High Priest stared in shock and said, “Heavenly Blood. That’s….”

“I’ve already made up my mind. The Crow Divinity Tribes’ Grand Dragoneer Meng Hao will die as soon as we make our assault!” The Greatfather’s voice was resolute. The others sat there silently for a moment, then began to nod.

Soon thereafter, the Five Poisons Tribe’s temporary residence area buzzed as 50,000 Tribe members prostrated themselves around five statues. If you could look at the scene from up above, the Five Poisons Tribe looked like a giant petal with five flowers. In the very center were the Greatfather and the others. Suddenly, a drop of blood appeared in the hand of the Greatfather, which he flung up into the sky.

At the same time, the tens of thousands of prostrating Tribe Members began to chant an incantation. The sound of it was extremely bizarre as it floated up into the air. The sky dimmed, and the violet rain in the area seemed to begin to undulate.

“Spirit Fusion!” cried the Greatfather. Immediately, 50,000 Cultivators bit their tongues and spat out a mouthful of blood. The blood immediately shot up into the air to fuse together with the violet drop of blood which had been thrown up earlier. The mass of blood grew larger and larger; in the blink of an eye it was a few dozen meters wide. Then it began to shrink down until it was barely two meters tall, and bore the semblance of a human.

Soon a face appeared. Its eyes opened, and a bloody glow rose up into the sky. It looked around and, seemingly sensing the will of the surrounding 50,000 Cultivators, turned its head and then shot off into the distance.

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# Chapter 482: Blood of the Ji Clan!

After the figure of blood shot off into the distance, the members of the great Five Poisons Tribe rose to their feet. The Tribe happened to have a gigantic magical item capable of flight. It was a colossal, extremely life-like viper.

It was roughly three thousand meters long and emanated pressure in all directions. This flying magical item was actually the transmogrified corpse of a Sacred Ancient which had perished many years in the past. The Five Poisons Tribe paid an exorbitant price to the great Heaven's Work Tribe to use their skill to transform the corpse into the flying magical item.

Normally speaking, its capacity was several thousand people. However, in their fervor to slaughter the Crow Divinity Tribes, the Five Poisons Tribe spared no amount of Spirit Stones, and even ignored any possible damage it might cause, to overload it with more than 30,000 Cultivators. They, along with the Greatfather and nine Priests, immediately headed in the direction they knew Meng Hao to be.

Among their number was Zhixiang. After returning from the Realm of the Bridge Ruins, she had maintained a low profile and concealed her Cultivation base. No one had picked up on anything out of the ordinary. At the moment, she stood there, eyes glittering, her brow slightly furrowed.

“I never imagined that this Five Poisons Tribe would have a drop of blood of the Ji Clan. The Blood Qi is viscous; it seems to be from a powerful expert of the Ji Clan from ancient times. It has grown weak over the years, to the point where the power of the bloodline won’t even spread out. That must be why the Ji Clan is unaware that some of their ancestral blood is on the loose.

“Even still, it is still Immortal blood…. Well, it still won’t be sufficient to kill Meng Hao.” Eyes flickering, she maintained her silence.

The giant viper flew through the air for a few days. Eventually, it reached a lake, which it quickly crossed.

The Five Poisons Tribe Greatfather sat there cross-legged atop the giant viper. “I can sense that the Heavenly Blood is already nearing its target,” he said. “It will go in for the kill tonight! Since the Crow Divinity Tribes’ Grand Dragoneer will die, we must make top speed and arrive in less than a day!” With that, he closed his eyes.

That night, the sky was dark and there was no moon. Everything was pitch black. The Crow Divinity Tribes were resting, having erected simple tents which were organized in concentric rings.

Regarding the miscellaneous affairs of the Tribe, the Greatfather of the Crow Soldier Tribe had recently been elected to serve as the Crow Divinity Tribe Greatfather. Various rituals were performed which the other Nascent Soul Cultivators also attended. During the past two years, the Crow Divinity Tribe had become a well-oiled machine.

At the moment, Meng Hao sat cross-legged in his own tent, which was located in the very center of the encampment, an indication of the venerated position he occupied. Outside of the tent, Crow Divinity Tribe Cultivators stood guard day and night.

Currently, his eyes were closed, and he held an alcohol flagon in his right hand. Throughout the two years, he had kept Han Shan’s flagon close at hand. Inside was an unending supply of alcohol. Although drinking it did not give him any Dancing Sword Qi, it left him with a warm feeling inside that kept him quite comfortable despite the violet rain.

He couldn’t drink too much, though. At the most, he would drink three small mouthfuls per day.

He sat there cross-legged, his eyes closed. His attention was currently focused inside the blood-colored mask, on Ji Nineteen, who was still bound by the flag of three streamers. Whenever he had time these past years, Meng Hao would take the time to study him. The four deadly wooden swords were kept stabbed into him the entire time. Despite Ji Nineteen's raving and cursing, his Cultivation base was incapable of restoring itself. It was completely restricted by Meng Hao's wooden swords.

Next to Ji Nineteen was the Li Clan Patriarch, who sat there rubbing his hands together excitedly. His body was covered with crackling lightning that danced back and forth. After experiencing the Heavenly Tribulation those years ago, he was almost completely transformed into a Soul of Lightning.

In compliance with Meng Hao's requirements, he had turned into a sort of jailer, responsible for keeping an eye on Ji Nineteen. Every time Meng Hao came to torment Ji Nineteen, the Li Clan Patriarch would get extremely excited. He would even offer bits of advice to Meng Hao to help him transform Ji Nineteen into a Soul of Lightning.

As far as Ji Nineteen was concerned, all of that was not the worst of the situation. The worst was that during the two years, the meat jelly had taken a strong interest in him. Every few days it would come in and try to convert him. Ji Nineteen was on the verge of collapse. Every time the meat jelly came to try to convert him, the Li Clan Patriarch would get even more excited, and his face would be covered with a sinister smile.

“Tell me, how does one use the Karma of the Ji Clan? If you tell me, I'll keep the meat jelly away for an entire month. What do you say?” Meng Hao spoke slowly and methodically, but all he got in return from Ji Nineteen was raving and cursing.

Meng Hao's face began to grow colder. His Cultivation base was not weak like it had been all those years ago. He had already reached the point that he was strong enough to kill this weakened Ji Nineteen. Right now, his eyes flickered with coldness for a moment before turning calm again. He was just about to go call for the meat jelly when suddenly, his body completely disappeared. Simultaneously, back in the tent, a fissure suddenly opened up in the air in front of seated Meng Hao.

As soon as the fissure opened, a blood-colored hand stretched out from within, completely silent and undetectable by anyone. This hand was very strange looking; it had no prints on the fingers or palm, and in the very center of the palm, tens of thousands of magical faces could be seen. This bizarre hand immediately shot toward Meng Hao, extending its finger to in an attempt to tap him on the forehead.

When the blood-colored hand was only about seven inches away from Meng Hao's forehead, his eyes snapped open. A profound sense of deadly crisis filled him, wrapping up his mind. He instantly moved backward, but the blood-colored finger followed at the same speed. As it did, a blood-colored arm and then a body emerged from the fissure.

As Meng Hao retreated, he hit the wall of the tent. His eyes flickered as Metal-, Wood-, Water-, and Earth-type totems magically appeared in front of him, slamming into the blood-colored finger.

A boom rang out, shaking everything and echoing out into the silent night. The tent instantly exploded into bits as Meng Hao shot out from within. The more than 10,000 shocked members of the Crow Divinity Tribe all began to emerge from their tents. When they looked over, they saw their Sacred Ancient, Meng Hao, shooting through the air in retreat.

Pursuing him was a blood-colored figure which emanated a bloody glow. Its finger was only seven inches away from Meng Hao, blocked by four great totems, which prevented it from moving any closer.

Meng Hao's face flickered as he retreated. The blood-colored mask instantly appeared; when he donned the mask, a bloody glow shot out of Meng Hao to rise up into the air. A gigantic face appeared which shot toward the blood-colored figure.

A rumbling boom could be heard as the blood-colored figure pierced directly through the face. Now, it was not seven inches away from Meng Hao, but five.

"What is this thing!?" thought Meng Hao, his pupils constricting. At this crucial moment, an azure glow suddenly appeared in his eyes. He opened his mouth, causing an azure Immortal's Sword to fly out. It shot like lightning to slam into the blood-colored figure.

A boom could be heard as the speeding sword slashed into the figure. Suddenly a sound could be heard that resembled tens of thousands voices all screaming at the same time. The blood-colored figure instantly exploded into countless fragments. Meng Hao saw tens of thousands of magical faces twisting and shattering.

As the boom echoed out, the Crow Divinity Tribe members down below looked up with anxious expressions. When they saw the blood-colored figure finally collapse, they heaved sighs of relief.

Meng Hao floated there, his expression grim.

"That thing showed up far too unexpectedly. So strange. It wanted to kill me, which would then cause the Cultivation bases of the entire Crow Divinity Tribe to fall…

"Ah?! Wait, something else must be going on. No matter what Tribe it is that wanted me dead, they would not pass up an opportunity to attack after my death. They would definitely follow up in attack! That means the Crow Divinity Tribe is still in danger!" Having reached this conclusion, Meng Hao's face flickered. He looked off into the night sky and was just about to summon his neo-demon horde when the grave danger he had predicted appeared. His eyes narrowed as his body transformed into a black moon, which then shot forward in a wisp of green smoke.

Right behind him in mid-air, countless dots of blood suddenly began to form back together into a blood-colored figure.The bloody glow was a bit weaker this time, but the feeling Meng Hao got was that it was purer. The sense of deadly crisis he felt was even stronger now!

The blood-colored flickered as it suddenly shrank down into a single, dark drop of blood. The drop of blood instantly caused Meng Hao to begin to breathe heavily.

"Soul Blood! That's a drop of Soul Blood!!"

The Soul Blood turned into a streaking line as it shot toward Meng Hao with indescribable speed. As it did, an incredible, overwhelming aura emanated out. At the same time, the feeling of Karma could also be sensed within the blood.

It was in this instant that inside the blood-colored mask, the flag of three streamers suddenly began to tremble. It emanated a feeling of hope, and an aura that suggested it had suddenly encountered its archenemy!

As for Ji Nineteen, a roaring filled his body, and his face filled with disbelief.

“Ancestral aura? It’s ancient, extremely ancient, maybe even more ancient than the Ji Clan itself…. This is impossible. What generation does this patriarchal blood come from? Whose blood is it?!?!”

“Ji Clan blood!” thought Meng Hao. His eyes went wide as he realized that all his divine abilities, all his magical techniques, and all his totems were useless against this blood. Even using the green smoke escape art, he wasn’t fast enough to evade it. In the blink of an eye, it was upon him.

Meng Hao didn’t even have time to use the Dancing Sword Qi.

The only thing he had time to do, in the moment just before the blood reached him, was wave his hand. Immediately 80,000 neo-demons emerged. Upon Meng Hao’s order, they shot down to protect the Crow Divinity Tribe.

He just had time to accomplish this. Then, the blood hit his forehead, filling him with roaring pain.

It was at this time that Meng Hao roared: “Agarwood!”

Instantly the power of the Agarwood exploded out from within Meng Hao, fighting back against the power of the blood drop. It was unclear exactly what was happening, but the blood was incapable of killing Meng Hao. After hitting him, the boundless might of the Agarwood expanded out, enveloping Meng Hao.

It was in this exact moment that the Five Poison Tribe’s gigantic viper could be seen up in the sky, whistling through the air. Tens of thousands of Five Poisons Tribe Cultivators transformed into beams of colorful light that shot down toward the ground.

They were joined by tens of thousands of neo-demons which were under the control of a handful of Five Poisons Tribe Dragoneers. In addition, powerful Nascent Soul Cultivators teleported down, filled with determination to eradicate the Crow Divinity Tribe.

Off in the distance, the air rippled as the Five Poisons Tribes totemic Sacred Ancients, with the exception of the spider and scorpion, appeared.

In the blink of an eye, the one thousand Crow Divinity Conclave Tribe members recognized who these people were. The Five Poisons Tribe. Instantly, their eyes turned red.

When you face up against your archenemy, you won’t rest until they are dead!

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# Chapter 483: I Shall Seal Death!

“Kill them!”

The more than one thousand Crow Divinity Conclave Tribe members’ eyes were red. The former Crow Soldier Tribe Greatfather, who was now the Greatfather of the entire Crow Divinity Tribe, as well as Wu Chen, Wu Ling, and all the other Tribe members who had participated in the bloody war, all let out unbridled roars of fury.

Killing intent sprang out from their eyes as all the enmity from the past exploded out within them. They shot forward, totems magically materializing. Immediately, booms filled the air.

Behind them, the rest of the more than ten thousand members of the Crow Divinity Tribe all joined them as they charged into battle.

The Crow Divinity Tribe members had experienced many battles in their two years of migration. In the beginning, they had been small and weak. Over time, they had grown stronger and more powerful in their rise to prominence. It wasn’t just the physical strength of the Crow Divinity Tribe which had grown, but also the strength of their hearts!

As for the Tribe members who had surrendered to the Crow Divinity Tribe and exercised faith in Meng Hao, his totems not only caused their Cultivation bases to soar up, they also benefited from his medicinal pills. This caused their faith in the Crow Divinity Tribe as a whole to grow strong.

Most importantly, after joining the Crow Divinity Tribe, they had hope. This was especially so considering that their former Tribes did not exist any more. As of now, the Crow Divinity Tribe was their only hope.

They looked forward to the day when the Crow Divinity Tribe would enter the Black Lands. After two years of constant victories in battle, their hope was incredibly strong.

In the blink of an eye, the battle began…. The Crow Divinity Tribe did not shrink back in the slightest. Even as the Five Poisons Tribe was still nearing, the more than ten thousand Crow Divinity Tribe Cultivators, joined by 80,000 neo-demons, instantly charged into battle. That was when the slaughter began!

No words were exchanged. The Five Poisons Tribe and the Crow Divinity Tribe were long-standing enemies. The enmity which existed between the two had been interrupted by the arrival of the violet rain Apocalypse.

Were it not for that war, the Crow Divinity Tribe would never have sunken into such decline and would already have been able to migrate out of the Western Desert North region. As far as the Five Poisons Tribe went, it was because of the war that the Scorpion Branch split off, and their Sacred Ancients now lacked a spider and a scorpion!

Of the Five Poisons, two were gone. To the Five Poisons Tribe, this was a catastrophic blow. At any other time, it wouldn’t have been too much of a problem. With time, they could have recovered. But at that critical juncture, the violet rain arrived, forcing the Five Poisons Tribe to migrate. Their overall level of power was reduced, causing further complications for their migration.

This was why the desire to destroy the Crow Divinity Tribe was so strong in the hearts of the Five Poisons Tribe.

Shocking booms filled the air. Heavy casualties were immediately inflicted in the initial fighting. There were even members of Crow Divinity Tribe who chose to self-detonate, causing the Five Poisons Tribe to recall the frenzied fighting from years ago.

However, the Five Poisons Tribe also fought with madness. The war years ago had been one of invasion; this battle, however, was one in which they were fighting for their own survival as a Tribe. Even some Five Poisons Tribe Cultivators began to self-detonate.

The Crow Divinity Tribe only had seven Nascent Soul Cultivators, whereas the Five Poisons Tribe had more than ten Priests. However, the Crow Divinity Tribe’s advantage was not in the number of Cultivators they possessed, but rather, their neo-demons.

They had powerful neo-demons. 80,000 of them. There were even high-level neo-demons in the horde who could compare to Nascent Soul Cultivators. As of this moment, the two Tribes were relatively evenly matched.

The Crow Divinity Tribe Greatfather faced off against the Five Poisons Tribe High Priest. Their battling shook Heaven and Earth. The Greatfather was actually not a match in terms of his Cultivation base. However, he had long since chosen to burn his Cultivation base and life force, all of himself, to temporarily increase his level of power. Only by doing so could he hold his own against the High Priest.

In truth, what he was trying to do was hold up the High Priest and prevent him from attacking anyone else.

As for the Five Poisons Tribe’s totemic Sacred Ancients, they were missing a spider and a scorpion. However, their viper, toad, and centipede still emanated explosive pressure.

Before the Apocalypse, their presence would have been astonishing. However… because of the years of violet rain, as well as the totemic sealing of the Crow Divinity Tribe years ago, they were much weaker than before.

Right now, their level of power exceeded that of the Nascent Soul stage, and they were incredibly poerful. The ones to match up against them were the Outlander Beast, the parrot, and the meat jelly. As the battle began, it became apparent that, whether it be it in terms of their top fighters, or even the ordinary Tribe members, the Crow Divinity Tribe was slightly at a disadvantage. Although it couldn’t be said that they were being crushed, it was quite close to that. Thankfully, Meng Hao's 80,000 neo-demons were there, allowing them to just barely hold on.

However, it was clear that they would only be able to hold on for a short period of time!

In the middle of the battlefield was a bizarre area that no one could enter. It was an empty area roughly three hundred meters across.

In the very middle of the three hundred meter area was an enormous, rippling sphere of blood. Roaring sounds could be heard emanating out from it, as if someone inside were struggling, trying to break out.

This blood sphere was formed by none other than the Ji Clan blood. Because of the power of the Agarwood, it had changed forms in this way. Instead of recklessly trying to kill Meng Hao, it was now acting like a seal, trapping him inside.

"Kill them!" roared the Crow Divinity Tribe members.

"Press on! The Sacred Ancient will definitely break out!" To the Crow Divinity Tribe members, Meng Hao was their Sacred Ancient, almost like a god.

With Meng Hao there, all dangers and all catastrophes could be overcome!

They had staunch faith in Meng Hao. They truly believed that all they had to do was endure; their Sacred Ancient would break free from the blood sphere. Once he appeared, he would lead them into victory over the Five Poisons Tribe!

The Five Poisons Tribe Greatfather's eyes glittered. His Cultivation base was at the late Nascent Soul stage. With a cold snort, he charged into the battle. Wherever he went, death followed. Any Crow Divinity Tribe member who tried to block his way exploded into death.

His body turned into a beam of light as he shot directly toward the three hundred meter wide area. No one could stop him. As he neared, he flashed an incantation with both hands, sending an attack to roar toward the blood sphere.

This was a special technique, a divine ability which could actually pass inside of the blood sphere. He wanted to kill Meng Hao and acquire the Demon Spirit!

Moments ago….

Roaring echoed out. Within the blood-colored sphere, Meng Hao’s face was grim. He looked around him at the rippling, bloody light that surrounded him like a wall. It was like a gigantic seal, with him locked in the middle, unable to emerge.

Meng Hao’s hands flickered as one magical technique and divine ability after another slammed into the blood-colored wall. The sound of it all was deafening, but the blood-colored wall wasn’t harmed in the slightest.

He also had no way to know what was happening outside. Just before being sealed inside, he saw the Five Poisons Tribe approaching. It was in that moment that he knew that this battle… was a disaster for the Crow Divinity Tribe!

Meng Hao was worried and anxious. It wouldn’t matter if he was stuck inside this place for a short period of time. But if too much time passed, he knew that the Crow Divinity Tribe would not be able to hold out against the Five Poisons Tribe.

The Five Poisons Tribe had obviously planned things out well. Their goal was obvious; eradicate the Crow Divinity Tribe and snatch their Demon Spirit. You could say that in the past two years of battle, they had never faced a situation as dangerous as this.

Even as Meng Hao was frowning in thought, the blood-colored wall suddenly contracted, and then moments later, expanded outward. During this period of contraction and then expansion, three strands suddenly bored through the wall. As soon as they entered, they transformed into a gigantic viper, centipede and toad. Three of the five poisons magically appeared. Instantly, they let out piercing cries and shot toward Meng Hao.

On the bodies of each of these three creatures, Meng Hao could see the image of an old man.

That old man was none other than the Five Poisons Tribe Greatfather, who was outside of the blood-colored seal.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he waved his hand. Instantly, his Cultivation base exploded out with the power of four of the five elements. A ferocious, gale-force wind swept across the three poisons. The viper instantly broke apart and disappeared.

Meng Hao let out a cold snort. Cracking sounds could be heard from within his body as he moved forward like a fiend. A fist descended, and the toad let out a miserable shriek as it exploded into pieces.

At the same time, the centipede’s body twisted as it shot like lightning toward Meng Hao. Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he spit out a mouthful of Alcohol Qi.

The Alcohol Qi was like a mist that instantly enveloped the centipede. Its body began to wither, and it let out a shriek. It was at this point that a mark like a black moon appeared on Meng Hao’s forehead.

Employing the evil magic, the moon flickered as it branded down onto the body of the centipede, using it as a conduit with which to attack the Five Poisons Tribe Greatfather to whom it was currently connected. The black moon Spiritual Sense attack bubbled forth rapidly.

Moments ago, the Five Poisons Tribe Greatfather was outside of the blood-colored seal, flashing an incantation with both hands, his expression vicious and filled with killing intent. However, his face suddenly flickered as the viper was killed!

Without thinking about it, he backed up a bit. Before he could barely move a single pace, his expression suddenly filled with shock. That was the moment that Meng Hao’s fist slammed into the toad, causing it to explode.

Then, his eyes suddenly widened.

“Not good!” Without hesitating, he made to retreat. His hand moved as he prepared to sever his magical connection to the centipede. Before he could complete his action, the image of a black moon suddenly appeared on his forehead.

The instant the seal appeared on his forehead, violent, explosive pain like lightning filled the Five Poison Tribe Greatfather. It felt like an invisible blade were stabbing into his Sea of Perception. Blood sprayed from his mouth, and he tumbled backward, face filled with astonishment. He instantly severed the connection between himself and the centipede.

After the connection was severed, the Greatfather coughed up another mouthful of blood. His face was pale and filled with intense shock.

“His Cultivation base is so powerful!” he thought, panting. It was at this point that intense ferocity emanated from within his eyes.

“It’s a good thing that in my planning I told the Heavenly Blood to seal him if it couldn’t kill him. If he weren’t sealed right now, then we would have to pay a heavy price to win this battle!

“He must absolutely not be allowed out of that seal! The Demon Spirit is most likely on his person; therefore, we must keep him sealed while we slaughter the Crow Divinity Tribe. Afterward, we will use all of the power of the Tribe to destroy him, body and soul!” A vicious smile twisted the lips of the Five Poisons Tribe Greatfather. He no longer made any attempts to attack through the blood-colored seal. Instead, he began to add further seals on top of the original seal, determined to keep Meng Hao thoroughly trapped inside.

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# Chapter 484: Fuse the Blood of Ji!

As the battle between the Crow Divinity Tribe and the Five Poisons Tribe continued, it slowly became more evident who was in the losing position. The casualties amongst the Crow Divinity Tribe increased, including the neo-demons.

Of course, the Five Poisons Tribe paid a heavy price, but not as much as the Crow Divinity Tribe. Because of the fierce pressure of the battle, the Crow Divinity Tribe forces were now showing signs that they might fall apart.

Meanwhile, Meng Hao was still stuck within the blood-colored seal. Unfortunately, no matter what ideas he came up with for how to escape, nothing worked. Minor teleportation and magical items, even the flag of three streamers could not even temporarily put a dent into the seal.

He tried everything, the Lotus Time Formation, the three strange wooden swords. He even tried Han Shan's Immortal's Sword, but based on his observations, it would take three days for it to break through the seal.

There seemed to be only one option left; that was the Dancing Sword Qi. Meng Hao's eyes turned red as he began to condense Alcohol Qi outside of his body.

"This blood contains the power of Karma. It must be the some blood from a Ji Clan Patriarch of an ancient generation. If this drop contains such power after all these years, just how strong was this person when he was alive?" Meng Hao's mind trembled as the Alcohol Qi swept out and the Dancing Sword Qi began to congeal inside of him.

He could think of no other method other than using the Dancing Sword Qi, which was somewhat of a pity. He actually didn't know if even the Dancing

Sword Qi would enable him to break out; however, he did know that the Crow Divinity Tribe could not hold out for much longer.

He took a deep breath and was just about to cause the power of the Dancing Sword Qi to explode out, when suddenly he looked at the wall created by the blood-colored seal. He looked at the rippling blood and then suddenly felt a tremor run through his body.

“Blood… blood….” In this moment it felt as if lightning were coursing through his head. An audacious and perhaps even insane idea had suddenly risen up in his mind.

The idea caused him to suddenly begin to pant, and hesitate regarding using the Dancing Sword Qi.

“Soul Blood. This is Ji Clan Soul Blood. I already have Soul Blood from that Ji Clan Quasi-Array Cultivator 1. If I add this blood, that’s two drops!

“I have Ji Nineteen sealed up inside the blood-colored mask. If I extract some Soul Blood from him, that means I have three generations of Ji Clan blood. Using the Blood Immortal magic, I can form a Blood Clone!

“Three generations of blood can form a Blood Clone. Nine Generations can make a Blood Divinity. A Blood Divinity… should possesses the power of Ancestral Awakening. The manifestation of powerful Ji Clan experts could once again appear! I would be able to wield some of the strength of one of their Immortals!”

Meng Hao began to pant. The idea continued to develop in his head, quickly filling his entire brain. All of a sudden, he realized that his current situation was a golden opportunity!

If he missed this chance, it would most likely be very difficult to acquire more Ji blood. Furthermore, this particular drop of Ji blood was not ordinary; it clearly had an incredible background.

“I don’t necessarily need to break open the blood seal; instead I can choose… to use it to make myself a Ji Clan Blood Clone!” Panting, a bright light began to shine in Meng Hao’s eyes.

“What I need right now, then, is some blood from Ji Nineteen!” After a moment of deliberation, decisiveness filled his eyes.

He lifted his hand and pushed it down onto blood-coloured mask. He sent his Spiritual Sense inside, causing himself to instantly appearing directly in front of Ji Nineteen.

Ji Nineteen looked incredibly weak, but his eyes shone with a strange glow. He could sense the aura on the outside world and knew that the will of a Ji Clan ancestor was there.

“Who is it…?” he wondered to himself. “It’s impossible. It’s so ancient! How could the blood of such an ancient ancestor exist…. It exceeds the history of the Clan itself. Just who could it be?”

Ji Nineteen was so shaken that he didn’t even notice that Meng Hao had arrived. Meng Hao materialized in the world of the mask, a vicious expression on his face. He reached out his right hand and unhesitatingly pushed down onto Ji Nineteen’s forehead.

A ferocious expression suddenly appeared on Ji Nineteen’s face. Before he could even begin to struggle, the aura of the Lotus Sword Formation emanated out from Meng Hao, entering the blood-colored mask and approaching Ji Nineteen.

“You can struggle and fight back if you want,” said Meng Hao grimly. “Right now, I don’t care if I can’t get any more information about the Ji Clan from you. I want a drop of Soul Blood. Struggle, refuse, fight back… all such actions will be futile.

“If you cooperate, then I’ll take the blood and leave. Resist me, then I will exterminate your soul and take a drop of Soul Blood by force!” With that, he closed his eyes and rotated his Cultivation base. Four great totems magically appeared. He focused all the power of the great Blood Immortal magic. Everything was focused on extracting Soul Blood from Ji Nineteen.

The aura of the Lotus Sword Formation neared, and the power of Time suddenly began to rotate. To ensure his success in the matter, Meng Hao even called out to the sleeping Blood Mastiff!

The mastiff was sleeping, but as the years had passed, Meng Hao could sense that… it would soon awaken!

Ji Nineteen's face fell. He could hear the killing intent and coldness in Meng Hao's voice, and could tell that Meng Hao without a doubt was speaking the truth to him.

His mind trembled. Maybe he wouldn't struggle, but how could he be willing to comply? However, the power of Time neared, causing his face to flicker. The flag of three streamers tightened around him, causing him to pant. Finally, the aura of the mastiff neared, filled with the power of Spirit Severing. Ji Nineteen could sense Meng Hao's decisiveness, and suddenly was filled with an intense sense of grave crisis.

He suddenly realized that Meng Hao wasn't necessarily incapable of killing him. He just didn't want to at the moment. Ji Nineteen knew that going against Meng Hao in this moment meant that he would most likely die in the blink of an eye.

Sensing Meng Hao's determination, he suddenly began to waver.

Even as Meng Hao forced the Soul Blood out of Ji Nineteen, the battle between the Crow Divinity Tribe and the Five Poisons Tribe was reaching a climax.

The Outlander Beast was not a match for the all three of the totemic Sacred Ancients. Even with the parrot and the meat jelly, it was still injured. Its body trembled and its aura was growing weak. However, it still roared as it fought back against the Sacred Ancients, preventing them from passing it.

In mid-air, the Nascent Soul Elders of the Crow Divinity Tribe were pale-faced. They coughed up blood as they sustained serious injuries. They were like lamps that were running out of oil.

The rest of the Tribe members were locked in bitter combat. Casualties were heavy as both sides killed back and forth. The booming of self-detonation could be heard everywhere. Even the neo-demons were in sore straits. Big Hairy was severely injured and the Wild Giant was coughing up blood. Gu La’s face was pale, and his aura was nothing more than a slender strand.

As for the Greatfather, he had burned his life force almost to the limit. His body emanated a strong aura of death. However, he still went all out to restrain the High Priest.

“Exalted Sacred Ancient…. We can’t hold on for very much longer….”

“Exalted Sacred Ancient, please, break through that seal!”

“Exalted Sacred Ancient….”

These words were not spoken out loud. Instead, they were the prayers of the Tribe members, words spoken in their hearts, containing their will. They merged together, to form a power of will.

As the power of their will reverberated out, Meng Hao, inside the blood-colored seal, suddenly opened his eyes. A drop of Soul Blood flew out from inside the blood-colored mask to land in his palm.

Meng Hao’s face was pale. It had not been easy extracting the Soul Blood from Ji Nineteen. Had he not become so much stronger than when he first captured Ji Nineteen, it would have been virtually impossible. Even still, he was as exhausted as if he had been battling for days against a powerful opponent.

Now was not the time for rest, though. He waved his right hand, and immediately, another drop of Soul Blood appeared next to Ji Nineteen’s. This was the blood he had acquired that year from the Ji Clan Quasi-Array Chosen outside of the Rebirth Cave.

In addition to the blood in the blood-colored seal, he now had three drops in total!

Meng Hao took a deep breath and then began to perform an incantation gesture with both hands as he employed the great Blood Immortal magic to form a Blood Clone!

“Merge!” he growled. Instantly, the two blood drops fused together and then shot into the blood-colored wall in front of him.

All of these drops of blood had a common origin. The instant they fused together, Meng Hao crossed his legs and closed his eyes. As he performed continuous incantation gestures, drops of sweat as large as beans began to pour down his face. His hands moved faster and faster, causing streams of sealing marks to float out. At the same, the blood-colored seal around him began to shrink.

As the bizarre shrinking process began, shocking, indistinct screams of rage began to emanate out from the blood-colored seal. Instantly, the battlefield was shaken. The faces of the Five Poisons Tribe Cultivators instantly fell. Even the three totemic Sacred Ancients looked astonished.

When the Crow Divinity Tribe members heard the sound of it, they were instantly invigorated.

Tens of thousands of people watched as the surface of the blood-colored sphere was covered with bizarre ripples. As the Five Poisons Tribe Greatfather watched on, his heart filled with inexplicable fear and trembling. He suddenly had a very, very bad feeling.

With a roar, he performed a two-handed incantation gesture as he continued to reinforce the seal.

Despite that, a roaring sound filled the air as the blood sphere rapidly shrank from thirty meters wide to only fifteen. As it did, 20,000 distorted faces suddenly appeared on the surface of the sphere. These faces were the spirits that the Five Poisons Tribe members had merged with their drop of Heavenly Blood, as a means to control the its will.

Rumbling filled the air as 10,000 of the faces were expelled. The blood sphere shrank again. Now it was only about ten meters wide. A sense of shocking purity suddenly appeared within it.

At the same time, a horrifying aura blasted out from inside. This aura vastly exceeded that which had resulted from Meng Hao’s previous Blood Clones. This aura shook Heaven and Earth, and caused the entire sky to turn red, as if something completely inhuman were about to come into existence!

The intensity of the aura exceeded that of the Spirit Severing stage, reaching an indescribable level that caused the faces of everyone present to fill with astonishment. The powerful experts of the Five Poisons Tribe gasped in stupefaction.

They knew now exactly what was happening. The spirits of the Five Poisons Tribe Cultivators were being expelled from the blood sphere. That meant that the blood was no longer under the control of the Five Poisons Clan!

A roaring sound like thunder rolled out in all directions, shaking all of the Cultivators on the battlefield, as well as the neo-demons and the Five Poison Clan’s totemic Sacred Ancients.

Even as faces flickered in astonishment, another roar sounded out as another 10,000 of the Five Poisons Tribe spirits were expelled from the blood.

A fearsome aura rose up into the sky!! Everything grew dim, and the clouds were swept away. The entire world became a blood-colored hell!

“He must not be allowed to emerge!” roared the Five Poisons Tribe Greatfather. He shot forward, going all out to prevent Meng Hao from breaking free. Blood sprayed from the mouth of the High Priest as he managed to extricate himself from the Crow Divinity Greatfather. Face filled with fear, he too shot forward to assist.

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# Chapter 485: Blood Clone is Born!

An aura which shocked even the three totemic Sacred Ancients of the Five Poisons Clan danced out madly from the blood sphere. Astonished, they went all out, using all the faith power they could muster, sparing no effort as they broke past the seal that was the Outlander Beast. They too began to strengthen the blood sphere seal.

“We must not allow him to come out! Do not let him out!”

The rest of the Five Poisons Tribe’s Priests also sustained injuries as they shot toward the shrinking blood sphere. Five of them broke through and, filled with astonishment and fear, began to bolster the sealing.

The combined force of seven Nascent Soul Cultivators and three totemic Sacred Ancients all poured into the sealing power of the blood sphere.

The surrounding Crow Divinity Tribe members were in a frenzy as they also tried to break through. The Five Poisons Tribe members desperately fought back. The intensity of the battle instantly increased.

However, despite the fact that peak of the Five Poisons Tribe’s power was focused on the blood sphere seal, it continued to shrink. Soon, it was only three meters wide. By this time, virtually all of the Five Poisons Tribe spirits had been forced out. The magical faces had expressions of torment as they dissipated into the area.

Even more shocking, a horrifying aura exploded out from the blood sphere, the strength of which instantly started to suffocate the seven Nascent Soul Cultivators. Their faces were pale as the aura slammed into them, causing a roaring sound to fill their minds as they coughed up blood.

The faces of the three totemic Sacred Ancients filled with an unprecedented level of fear and shock, to the extent that… their bodies even began to tremble!

There were now absolutely no spirits of the Five Poisons Tribe on the blood sphere; in the blink of an eye, all consciousness within it disappeared, replaced by the magic of the Blood Immortal. At the same time, it shrank down into the form of a person!

That person bore the semblance of Meng Hao!

“Kill him!” roared the Five Poisons Tribe Greatfather at the top of his lungs, seemingly on the verge of going mad. He had now abandoned any attempts at sealing, and instead unleashed deadly divine abilities against the blood-colored figure.

The others did the same. Booms echoed out as the three totemic Sacred Ancients attacked. However, the blood-colored figure didn’t even react. That in itself caused the face of the Five Poisons Tribe Greatfather to fill with astonishment.

“This Meng Hao refined the Heavenly Blood! He… he’s actually refining it into a creature of blood!!”

“That’s impossible! That Heavenly Blood was acquired by one of the ancestors by a fluke. The power it contains is fearsome to the extreme. How could a Cultivator possibly fuse it…? Throughout the years, all those in the Tribe who tried to fuse it died! The best we could do was come up with magic to control it!”

The Greatfather and the others felt their minds reeling, and their expressions were that of shock.

Even more bitterly painful was that their Tribe’s prized treasure, their secret weapon to destroy the enemy, had been refined successfully. It was almost as if they had handed over their precious treasure as a gift. This thought caused them to feel incredible vexation.

This was a critical moment for Meng Hao in the refinement process of the Blood Clone. He suddenly had an intense feeling that this Blood Clone was completely different from the other Blood Clones he had created in the past. They were like fireflies and this was like the bright moon!

“So, this Ji Clan Blood Clone turns out to be THIS powerful….” Such an incredible level of power far exceeded Meng Hao’s imagination. Right now, he could detect faint signs that as he continued with the refinement, the will of the blood was slowly awakening.

This was one of the functions of the Blood Immortal magic. Based on some factors which Meng Hao didn’t fully comprehend, it was able to force out the bloodline power concealed within the blood!

The more ancient the blood, and the purer the bloodline power, then the more powerful the Blood Clone would be!

Meng Hao took a deep breath. He knew that what he needed to do now was find something to act as the core of the clone. If that core was indestructible, then the clone was indestructible!

The Blood Clones Meng Hao had created in the past looked crude, and had been refined using the meat jelly skin. However, their usefulness to Meng Hao had been significant.

The successful refinement of this particular Blood Clone, and its fearsome level of power, was something that even the information about the Blood Immortal magic did not discuss. Even the Blood Immortal had never anticipated that something like this could happen. Even the Blood immortal had never created a clone like this particular… Ji Clan Blood Clone.

After all, the Blood Immortal completely looked down on ordinary Ji Clan members. The main goal was to refine the blood of direct descendants of the Ji Clan. Even Blood Clones created from the blood of direct descendants, however, would pale in comparison to the Ji Clan Clone which was about to appear!

That was because one of the drops of blood that made this clone was from a Chosen of the Ji Clan. Another was from the ancient Ji Nineteen. The final drop, the drop that determined exactly how fearsomely powerful the Blood Clone would be… had an origin that even Ji Nineteen couldn't ascertain. The only thing he could tell was that this drop of blood came from primordial times, and was as powerful as the blood of an original ancestor!

It was that final drop of blood that made this Blood Clone completely different. In fact, if Meng Hao was able to get six more drops of blood in the future, and fuse them into this blood Clone, then he could form a complete Blood Divinity. In that case, the power of Ancestral Awakening would be unleashed, and that mysterious Ji Clan ancestor would appear!

When that time came, it might be possible to recognize this person… and determine his true identity!

Echoes filled the air as the peak of the Five Poisons Tribe's power was unleashed in attack. The blood-colored figure which surrounded Meng Hao was writhing in a bizarre fashion. However, it didn't matter what divine ability was leveled against it, nothing could stop the figure from fully forming.

The blood figure slowly became more refined; Meng Hao's features slowly became clearer. In the blink of an eye, a bloody glow suddenly began to extend like water out from the figure.

The face of the Five Poisons Tribe Greatfather fell. He could sense a shocking aura that was currently being held back by the blood-colored figure that surrounded Meng Hao.

"Don't hold anything back. Exterminate him!" bellowed the Five Poisons Tribe Greatfather. He flashed an incantation with both hands and then spit out a mouthful of blood. His body instantly withered a bit, but in exchange, a five-colored mist suddenly appeared that roiled toward Meng Hao.

The High Priest's face flickered as he flashed an incantation with his right hand. The totems on his body magically manifested into a creature that was the amalgamation of all of the five poison creatures. It instantly charged toward Meng Hao.

The rest of the other five Nascent Soul Cultivators all unleashed their most powerful divine abilities.

As for the three totemic Sacred Ancients, their bodies suddenly began to shrink until they were each no more than a meter or two long. This meant that their bodies were now refined and pure. They charged toward Meng Hao, fully able to sense that the bloody glow coming off of him was something so shockingly powerful that it could constrain and crush even them. Such constraining force was shocking to them, and they instinctively knew that they needed to destroy it before it fully appeared. It was a premonition that arose from within their souls and their blood. Once the bloody glow fully took shape, it wouldn’t matter that the three of them were totemic Sacred Ancients. In front of such attacking power, they would be crushed like dried reeds or rotten wood.

It was an instinctive premonition, a fearsome intuition!

However, even as their divine abilities and magical techniques descended, the bloody glow which surrounded Meng Hao suddenly shrank down to form a red dot on his forehead. Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly snapped open.

The instant his eyes opened, the glowing bloody dot on his forehead flew out. It emitted a shocking, high-pitched howl that sent sound waves roaring out. Banging sounds could be heard in all directions as all the seals which had been in place were shattered.

The glowing, bloody dot instantly transformed into a bloody beam of light that shot toward the viper totemic Sacred Ancient. The viper Sacred Ancient immediately recoiled, a look of astonishment and despair written on its face. A trembling shook it which arose from its very soul, washing over it like floodwaters. Faced up against this bloody beam of light, it was as if it had lost all its power to fight back, as if it in its awe, it lost all confidence!

The bloody beam of light moved with indescribable speed as it slammed into and then passed directly through the viper Sacred Ancient.

The viper Sacred Ancient’s entire body turned pale white as its essence, its life force, its blood, everything was instantly sucked away by the bloody figure.

This level of potency was like Heavenly might. If it wanted you dead, then you had no choice but to die. This Blood Clone was a Ji Clan Blood Clone, and the Ji Clan was the Heavens of the Ninth Mountain and Sea!

If it wanted to take everything away from you, then any resistance you offered would be futile. To the Ji Clan, any person who was not of Ji, was a heretic!

For example, this totemic Sacred Ancient, which originated from the ancient Immortal Demon Sect, a Sect that… the Ji Clan had been forced to eradicate!

The death of the totemic Sacred Ancient instantly turned into a clap of thunder that shook the hearts of the Five Poisons Clan Cultivators! The faces of the Greatfather and the High Priest and the others all fell!

“Impossible!!”

“Sacred Ancient…. The exalted Sacred Ancient was absorbed….”

“This is… this is….” Even as the corpse of the viper Sacred Ancient began to fall to the ground, there were around ten thousand of the Five Poisons Tribe members who coughed up blood and began to wail. The totems on their bodies began to fade and their Cultivation bases began to drop.

There were even several among the more than ten Priests who coughed up blood and began to tremble, their faces filled with disbelief.

“The Sacred Ancient… perished!!”

As the bloody beam of light swept through the air, a strange, shocking sound rang out that sounded like something was being swallowed. The echoing sound caused everyone, even the other two Sacred Ancients, to instantly cease any attack and immediately fall into retreat. A blood-coloured face suddenly appeared around Meng Hao. Rumbling could be heard. He fell back a few paces, then used minor teleportation to suddenly appear off in the distance, where he charged into the besieging Five Poisons Tribe.

“Blood Clone…” he said coolly. “You may continue to feed.” Killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes. The bloody beam of light emitted a shout, then suddenly materialized into a figure.

It looked exactly like Meng Hao, except that it emanated a bloody glow and had bright red eyes. Its body flickered as it shot at incredible speed toward the other two totemic Sacred Ancients.

The two Sacred Ancients fell back almost instinctively, moving as fast as possible. Unfortunately, even if they moved faster than that, they would be unable to go faster than the Ji Clan Blood Clone.

“Neo-demons…” cried Meng Hao, his voice echoing out. “I am your Demon Patriarch. Today, you may slaughter to your heart’s content!” 40,000 neo-demons remained in his horde. Nearly half had been killed. At this moment, however, those remaining 40,000 neo-demons lifted their heads up and roared a roar that shook the Heavens. Boundless Demonic Qi suddenly rushed toward Meng Hao and then spread out to be absorbed by the neo-demons. In addition, the neo-demons of the Five Poisons Tribe suddenly began to tremble and emit subservient whines.

Under this sudden counterattack, the Five Poisons Tribe Cultivators were thrown into complete chaos!

“Exercise faith in me! Tribe members who offer worship to me, I am your totemic Sacred Ancient. Those who show faith in me, have my totems…. The Five Poisons Tribe is our archenemy. It is time to settle our differences once and for all!” He waved his sleeve causing a Greenwood Tree to magically appear. A sea of flames roared up into the sky. A golden rain spread out. Frigid soil began to freeze everything!

The thousands of Tribe members who remained of the Crow Divinity Tribe had bright red eyes. It was with complete madness that they charged the terrified Five Poisons Tribe members!

Meng Hao’s eyes glinted with harshness, and his voice echoed out like thunder, causing Heaven and Earth to split: “Kill them!”

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# Chapter 486: Leave None Alive!

The Ji Clan Blood Clone shot in pursuit of the two great totemic Sacred Ancients. The Sacred Ancients cut sorry figures as they frantically fled. The morale of the Five Poisons Tribe had been severely damaged.

At the same time, Meng Hao’s 40,000 neo-demons roared as they absorbed the thick Demonic Qi coming from Meng Hao. All of them began to mutate, growing fiercer as they screamed through the air toward the Five Poisons Tribe Cultivators.

Suddenly, more than a thousand corpses on the ground suddenly rose to their feet. Upon the head of each of these corpses, an illusory crow could be seen. These crow automatons’ eyes glowed with gray light as they suddenly flew up into the battle.

Booms echoed out as a deadly battle ensued between the two groups of neo-demons. The battle was once again being fought at a fever pitch.

The vast majority of the thousands of Crow Divinity Tribe members were wounded, but it didn’t matter. Eyes red, they charged forward with madness. Regardless of whether they were original members of the five Crow Divinity Tribes, or new members who had pledged allegiance in the past two years,each and every one exerted all the Cultivation base power they could muster. They knew… whichever side lost this battle would have no survivors!

There would be no opportunity for surrender in this fight. Regardless of Five Poisons Tribe or Crow Divinity Tribe, both were destined to be arch enemies. Whichever of these two Tribes lost the battle… would be completely wiped out!

This was an extermination!

Complete and utter extermination!

As the slaughter continued, Meng Hao went into action. The killing intent in his heart ran deep. The seal that had been placed in just now would have been incredibly difficult to break out of unless he just so happened to have the Blood Immortal magic and the two drops of Ji Clan Soul Blood. The Five Poisons Tribe had planned to wipe out the Crow Divinity Tribe, and as such, the desire to kill that Meng Hao felt right now had reached a pinnacle.

Leave none alive!

Accept no surrender!

His eyes glinted with a cold glow as he shot forward toward the peak level fighters of the Five Poisons Tribe, the Nascent Soul Priests. His speed was incredible as he transformed into a black moon and then a green smoke.

The Five Poisons Tribe Greatfather's face was pale white. The fact that Meng Hao had extricated himself had slammed into his heart and mind like an iron hammer. Then, there was the terrifying appearance of the blood-colored figure, which had in a scant moment sucked dry one of the Five Poisons Tribe's totemic Sacred Ancients. All of these things were stupefying, and transformed into an intense figurative attack that caused all of the Five Poisons Tribe Cultivators to grow pale in the face.

"Today… will decide if the Tribe survives or perishes…." The Greatfather gave a bitter laugh. Then, his eyes filled with reckless abandon. He glared at Meng Hao and then ignited his Cultivation base. The intrepid aura of a late Nascent Soul Cultivation base exploded out as he charged toward Meng Hao.

The High Priest's eyes flickered with coldness as he joined the Greatfather to attack Meng Hao.

A massive roaring could be heard as the three people prepared to slam into each other. Meng Hao, in the shape of a black moon, shot forward in a green smoke, passing directly between the Greatfather and the High Priest. He moved so fast that the two other Cultivators' faces filled with shock.

"So fast!!" Their eyes went wide as they suddenly looked over their shoulders. Bloodcurdling screams could be heard from not too far away. It was one of the Five Poisons Tribe's ordinary Priests. With his Cultivation base at the early Nascent Soul stage, he would normally be able to lord it over others. However, Meng Hao only needed to use the first form of the Blood Immortal divine abilities to cause the man to explode, killing him instantly.

"That was the first!" Meng Hao said coolly. He waved his arm, causing the fragments of blood and gore in front of him to fly away. He gave a cold look toward the Greatfather and High Priest, who glared back. They instantly pointed out toward Meng Hao, causing a five-colored mist to fly toward Meng Hao and surround him.

A mocking smile appeared on Meng Hao's mouth as the mist enveloped him. Suddenly, a miserable scream could be heard. Meng Hao had suddenly disappeared and then reappeared in front of another of the Priests. His hand currently gripped the man's neck. He lifted him up and then crushed his throat.

A boom could be heard as flesh and blood flew out in all directions. Meng Hao disappeared, but just before he did, his cold voice echoed out.

"That was the second!"

The Five Poisons Tribe High Priest lifted his head and howled. His face distorted as he performed a double-handed incantation and then gestured forward. A five-colored glow to spread out in all directions. Suddenly, ripples began to emanate out from Meng Hao, who was just about to disappear into the air.

"There won't be a third!" cried the High Priest, intense killing intent emanating out from him as he shot forward toward Meng Hao.

It was at this point that suddenly, a shocking roar of despair filled the sky. The voice belonged to none other than one of the Five Poisons Tribe’s Sacred Ancients.

The sound of the cry was miserable; it contained the fear and astonishment felt by the totemic Sacred ancient in the moments before death. Onlookers could just barely make out the figure of an enormous toad in the midst of a red light. Its body withered as all of its life force was sucked away.

Simultaneously, a large number of Five Poisons Tribe members suddenly began to tremble and cough up blood. Hopelessness shone in their eyes.

Despairing cries rose up from the Five Poisons Tribe Cultivators.

“The toad Sacred Ancient… perished….”

“Of the five Sacred Ancients of the Five Poisons Tribe, two were sealed and two have perished. Only the centipede Sacred Ancient is left…. But it is currently being pursued….”

“Could it be that the Heavens wish for the Five Poisons Tribe to be destroyed…?”

The fighting did not stop. However, the weakened position of the Five Poisons Tribe grew even more severe.

The Priests near Meng Hao were all coughing up blood, and were unable to continue to prevent their Cultivation bases from falling. As for the High Priest who was charging Meng Hao, his body trembled, and he too coughed up blood.

Even as he was coughing up blood, Meng Hao suddenly appeared directly behind him, eyes glittering with killing intent. He formed a fist and punched.

A boom rattled out as at this critical moment, the High Priest’s body twisted, and a black mist shot out to cover him. Meng Hao’s fist slammed into the black mist, not shattering it, but causing cracks to appear on its surface. It quickly reformed, condensing down into the image of the High Priest, his face pale. He coughed up another mouthful of blood, and his eyes filled with fury.

“Meng Hao!!” he roared. Even as he did, the eyes of the Five Poisons Tribe Greatfather went completely bloodshot. Filled with madness, he exploded toward Meng Hao with all the power he could muster.

Meng Hao gave a cold snort. He ceased pursuing the High Priest, transforming into a black moon and a green smoke as he suddenly shot off into the distance.

His speed was such that neither the Greatfather nor the High Priest could possibly match up. Hearts boiling with rage, they followed after him. However, it was at this point that a third bloodcurdling scream filled the air. Then a fourth, a fifth, and a sixth.

The surrounding early Nascent Soul stage Priests were simply not a match for Meng Hao. They didn’t even qualify to try to fight back against him as he slaughtered them. In a moment, he had destroyed them as easily as crushing dried weeds or rotten branches.

“The third!”

“The fourth!”

“The fifth and the sixth!” Every time he killed a Priest, Meng Hao’s cold voice could be heard echoing across the battlefield. The Cultivators of the Five Poisons Tribe had faces completely drained of blood and filled with increasingly intense despair. Many of them were even beginning to flee. On the other hand, every time Meng Hao called out, the Crow Divinity Tribe Cultivators grew more inspired. The slaughter was monstrous.

“Meng Hao!!” roared the High Priest. “You’re a Grand Dragoneer, how can your Cultivation base be so profound!?” In his anxiousness, the High Priest didn’t even take the time to think about what he was saying. “As the Sacred Ancient of the Crow Divinity Tribe, you have a high status. Don’t you think that killing early Nascent Soul stage Priests is a huge loss of face for you!?”

“Nope,” replied Meng Hao. His body flickered and he suddenly appeared next to another Nascent Soul Priest. The shocked man actually decided to self-detonate, but before he could, the first two fingers of Meng Hao’s right hand pointed out as he used the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex. Its power instantly sealed the man’s Cultivation base and preventing him from self-detonating. Meng Hao’s fingers stabbed into the man’s forehead, instantly smashing the man’s Cultivation base.

“Meng Hao!” shouted the Five Poisons Tribe Greatfather. “Do you dare to fight one-on-one with me!?!?” The man’s heart was filled with anxiety, but Meng Hao’s speed was such that he was completely incapable of catching up.

The rest of the Nascent Soul Priests were currently fleeing, but their speed couldn’t possibly match up to Meng Hao’s. He was already fast to begin with, but now that he possessed Yi Chenzi’s escape art, his speed was increased to a terrifying level.

It was at this moment that, off in the distance, another bloodcurdling scream could be heard echoing out, shaking everything. Suddenly, an enormous centipede could be seen writhing up above in the midst of a red glow. A red light passed through the creature’s body, sucking away all of its life force. The centipede’s body went stiff and its scream was suddenly cut off.

The Five Poisons Tribe’s centipede Sacred Ancient, the last of the totems, had been destroyed!

All of the Five Poisons Tribe’s totems disappeared as if they had been directly erased. There… was not even one left!

“Sacred Ancient!!”

“My Cultivation base…. The exalted Sacred Ancients are all dead. The Five Poisons Tribe is dying….”

All of the Five Poisons Tribe Cultivators coughed up blood. Their bodies sagged as all of their Cultivation bases sank downward. Core Formation became Foundation Establishment! Foundation Establishment became Qi Condensation!

They let out howls of despair. What they felt now was a feeling that the original Crow Divinity Tribe members were deeply familiar with. However, back when that happened, Meng Hao was there, and became their new totemic Sacred Ancient. Right now, the Five Poisons Tribe… had nothing like that to rely on.

The remaining five or six Nascent Soul Priests were locked in combat with the Crow Divinity Nascent Soul Elders. Their faces were pale; they could do nothing to prevent their Cultivation bases from wasting away. In the blink of an eye, they were no longer of the Nascent Soul stage, but rather, had become Core Formation Cultivators.

The instant their Cultivation bases dropped to Core Formation… in the blink of an eye, their bodies shook. If it wasn't a head lopped off, it was a body exploded. All of them were slaughtered in an instant by the Crow Divinity Tribe Nascent Soul Elders.

The massacre continued as the Five Poisons Tribe Cultivators' Cultivation bases shot downward.

As of now, the only Nascent Soul Cultivators that remained in the Five Poisons Tribe were the High Priest and the Greatfather. However, even they were forced to pay a steep price because of the death of the totemic Sacred Ancients.

Their Cultivation bases declined; they were no longer in the late Nascent Soul stage, but rather the mid stage. From the look of the situation, they wouldn't be able to stay there long. The decline would continue until they reached the early Nascent Soul stage.

The green smoke suddenly congealed into Meng Hao. He put on the blood-colored mask and then turned around to face the Five Poisons Tribe Greatfather and High Priest.

“Did you just say you wanted to fight me?” he asked coolly.

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# Chapter 487: Five Poisons Tribe Extermination

“Despicable!!” said the Five Poisons Tribe High Priest, his face flickering as he stared at Meng Hao. He ground his teeth as he subconsciously edged backward. He was now no longer of the late Nascent Soul stage, so facing up against Meng Hao caused his heart to be half filled with fear.

Even as the words left his mouth, a whistling sound could be heard from off in the distance. It was none other than the Blood Clone. Having slaughtered the two great totemic Sacred Ancients, it was returning, its lust for blood unsated.

All of a sudden, Meng Hao realized that he couldn’t sense a connection to the Clone. In the blink of an eye, the bloody figure was pouncing on the Five Poisons Tribe High Priest.

This was the same man who had stood lofty and proud outside of the Crow Divinity Tribes those years ago. Now his face filled with shock and he cried out in alarm. Power exploded from his Cultivation base as divine abilities and magical items appeared. He held back nothing in an attempt to block the Blood Clone. However, the Blood Clone charged directly through all the divine abilities and magical items to pounce onto the man. In that instant, time seemed to slow down for a moment.

When the Blood Clone left the High Priest, the man’s body was withered. His life force had been sucked away; even his Nascent Soul was dried up and dead. His body was now nothing more than a desiccated corpse, completely drained of every drop of blood.

The dried up corpse fell to the ground; the expression on its face was the same expression it had worn before dying, one of dread, shock, and deep regret.

The Blood Clone shot through mid-air toward the battling Tribe members, slamming into the Five Poisons Tribe Cultivators. It passed through the battleground like a sea of blood, leaving behind only desiccated corpses.

The Five Poisons Tribe Greatfather watched what was happening, and his aged figure seemed to emanate even more Death Qi. He seemed so old that he might fall into a grave at any moment.

“The Five Poisons Tribe has lost this battle,” he said, as the miserable screams continued to echo out. Pain filled his heart as he turned to Meng Hao, clasped hands, and bowed deeply. “I would like to earnestly request that the Crow Divinity Tribe totemic Sacred Ancient leave a bit of hope for the Five Poisons Tribe….”

Meng Hao looked back at him silently. More and more bloodcurdling screams filled the air. After a long moment, Meng Hao calmly replied, “If the Crow Divinity Tribe were the loser, and I made such a request, would you comply?”

The Five Poisons Tribe Greatfather was filled with bitterness. He knew that such a thing would never happen. If the victor in the battle had been the Five Poisons Tribe, then the Crow Divinity Tribe would have been completely wiped out, including the old, the young and the ordinary Tribe members. The entire Tribe would have been completely eradicated, wiped clean off the face of the earth.

This was not a personal vendetta; it was a war between Tribes. There would be no mercy, no pity. There was only life… and death!

“I understand. In that case…. You and I shall fight!” He took a deep breath as he lifted his head up. His eyes filled with the will to go to battle. However, deep within that will to fight was actually a desire for death.

“To be killed by the hand of the Crow Divinity Tribe totemic Sacred Ancient is a worthy death,” the Greatfather continued lightly. “As the Greatfather of the Five Poison Tribe, I curse you and the Crow Divinity Tribe…. On the other hand, despite having met death on this path to the Black Lands, we are both Cultivators of the Western Desert…. I hope that in the coming days, the Crow Divinity Tribe… will surpass even its former glory. After all, we are all Western Desert Cultivators!” With that, his body flickered as he shot toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao saw the Five Poisons Tribe Greatfather’s desire to die, and inwardly, he sighed with regret. However, this caused no sloppiness in his actions. His eyes glittered coldly as he strode forward.

The two met in mid-air, causing booms to echo across the battlefield. The Greatfather unleashed one divine ability after another, like a flower who had reached the point of death and wanted to shine with as much life as possible.

Amidst the booming, magical techniques slammed into each other and divine abilities exploded. Five Poisons Tribe Cultivators were dying everywhere on the battlefield. However, the miserable screams were now growing more faint, weaker, and fewer.

After the space of ten breaths passed, the Five Poisons Tribe Greatfather coughed up a mouthful of blood. Laughing uproariously, he once again charged toward Meng Hao.

After twenty breaths, he had lost one of his arms. Still laughing toward the Heavens, he stubbornly charged Meng Hao again.

Thirty breaths later, a deafening roar filled the air as a gigantic mist rose up into the air. Meng Hao slowly slipped off the blood-colored mask, turned, and walked off. Behind him, the Five Poisons Tribe Greatfather exploded into countless chunks. In the moment before his death, confusion filled his eyes. Within that confusion, was a release from worldly cares.

He was dead, body and spirit!

It was impossible to say whether it was by some previous plan, but the instant that the Five Poisons Tribe Greatfather died was the same moment in which the Blood Clone sucked the life and blood out of the very last Five Poisons Tribe Cultivator on the battlefield.

The battle with the Five Poisons Tribe was now completely over.

However, even as Meng Hao heaved a sigh of relief, his pupils suddenly constricted. His body suddenly flickered to reappear in front of one of the members of the Crow Divinity Tribe. He lifted his hand up and pushed it out in front of him.

“Screw off!” he said, his expression vicious. The sound of his voice was like thunder, shaking everything and echoing out in all directions. His gesture just now seemed to cause the air to rip; ripples spread out to reveal something shooting through the air that Meng Hao had just blocked… the Blood Clone!

This was a Ji Clan Blood Clone which looked like Meng Hao in all aspects except for the bloody glow which emanated off of it. When it appeared, it stood there in front of Meng Hao, its eyes shining with displeasure and struggle. Its lust for blood after killing the final member of the Five Poisons Tribe had caused it to instinctually seek to consume the nearest living thing to it.

As of this moment, the Crow Divinity Tribe members began to let out sighs of relief. As the frenzy of battle wore off, they quickly fell back, taking the neo-demons with them.

It took only a short moment for all of the Tribe members and neo-demons to be behind Meng Hao. Even the Outlander Beast retreated, panting, instinctively fearful of the Blood Clone.

Only the meat jelly and the parrot dared to stand, one on each of Meng Hao’s shoulders, arrogantly looking at the Ji Clan Blood Clone who stood up ahead.

“This bastard is too ugly,” said the parrot appraisingly. “No hair at all, not even one! How could something like this even exist? Although, why does his aura seem so familiar? I just can’t seem to place it….”

The meat jelly gave the Blood Clone strange, measuring look, and then greeted it in a very amicable fashion. “Heyyy. Hi there! Hello! I’m Lord Third. Let me tell you something, do you know how high I can count? I can count to three….”

The Blood Clone stared at Meng Hao, completely ignoring the parrot and the meat jelly. There was an innate haughtiness within the thing that seemed to be at odds with the seal connecting it to Meng Hao. That conflict caused its face to twist and the suddenly let out a howl toward Meng Hao.

Its Cultivation base was special. It was impossible to sense anything like Core Formation, Nascent Soul or Spirit Severing. It was as if it didn’t even have a Cultivation base. All it had was an aura, a fearsome aura that exceeded a Cultivation base. This aura made it seem as if it were a horrible enemy to anything in which life existed.

Furthermore, it seemed that absorbing the blood and life force of powerful experts caused its aura to grow even stronger. Meng Hao had the feeling that even though he had created it, were it not for the legacy magic of the Blood Immortal as well as various other control techniques, it would be taking instinctive, terrifying actions.

Looking at the Ji Clan Blood Clone growling there, his heart sank a bit. From the records of the Blood Immortal legacy, he knew that there was always a chance of a revolt occurring when using blood to refine spirits. Generally speaking, that would happen when a Blood Divinity emerged. It rarely happened with Blood Spirits. The chances of it happening with a Blood Clone were virtually nonexistent.

However, this Ji Clan Blood Clone, which although definitely only in the Blood Clone phase, was suddenly showing signs of revolt. This was no doubt a situation that the Blood Immortal had never anticipated.

This situation instantly caused Meng Hao to think about that mysterious drop of Ji blood.

It was at this moment that the Ji Clan Blood Clone's red eyes flickered. It howled and charged directly toward Meng Hao. However, in that instant, Meng Hao's eyes shone with a red light. His pupils turned bright red and magical symbols appeared within them.

This instantly caused the Blood Clone to scream and back away from Meng Hao.

Meng Hao gave a cold snort. Lifting up his right hand, he performed an incantation, without the slightest hesitation, using a Blood Immortal legacy technique. All of his power poured into a restrictive seal that he had placed inside the body of the clone during its refinement.

The Blood Clone screamed miserably and began to tremble. After enough time passed for half an incense stick to burn, it's body suddenly collapsed, transforming into a drop of blood. Meng Hao waved his hand to collect the seal, then picked up the drop of blood.

As soon as the blood touched his palm, it transformed into a strand of silk. This was a strand of Eyeless Larva silk, which was what Meng Hao had used to form the core of the Ji Clan Blood Clone.

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever as he took care of the Blood Clone. However, his heart was filled with somberness. This was the first time that the Blood Clone had shown any signs of revolt, causing Meng Hao to unleash the full power of the restrictive seal. If it happened again, Meng Hao feared that using the same restrictive seal as before would be ineffective.

His eyes flickered in his thoughtfulness.

"If I refined the Blood Clone using the conjuring method for Blood Spirits, then the effectiveness of the restrictive seal should increase quite a bit." His mind settled, Meng Hao led the Crow Divinity Tribe and the neo-demon horde off of the battlefield. He collected the corpses of the totemic Sacred

Ancients, as well as the Five Poisons Tribe’s flying machine, and slowly moved off.

After they left, a ripple appeared in the air atop a mountain not far away from the battlefield, an area that was nearly completely submerged in violet rainwater. Zhixiang magically appeared. She chuckled as looked off in the direction of the departing Crow Divinity Tribe.

“It seems I’ve underestimated him again…. I assumed that he would have to pay a higher price to achieve victory, perhaps waste some Dancing Sword Qi. I never imagined that all he would have to do was use the power of the Agarwood.

“Just how many times can he summon the Agarwood. And how much of the Sword Qi does he have?” Lost in thought, Zhixiang stood there for a while, her brow furrowed. Finally she smiled.

“It doesn’t matter. What’s the point of trying to figure those things out? There are still many years to go before the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane opens again. I might as well enjoy myself in South Heaven.” Laughing, her body flickered and she disappeared.

The moment she disappeared, Meng Hao, who was leading the Crow Divinity Tribe groups, suddenly glanced over his shoulder, his eyes shining brightly.

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# Chapter 488: Entering the Central Region

Having experienced the battle with their archenemy, it could be said that the Crow Divinity Tribe had won a great victory. They had exterminated the Five Poisons Tribe. Unfortunately, that victory had come at a heavy price.

Of their force of ten thousand Cultivators, they now only had a bit more than three thousand left. However, those who remained had undergone a sort of baptism. Whether in terms of Cultivation base or in just the impression they left on others, they were now as sharp as swords… deadly, unsheathed swords!

All the battles they had fought made it so that even death meant little to them. Amidst the blood and the killing, even what it meant to be a Cultivator changed in their hearts.

The Crow Divinity Tribe had experience tumultuous change. These more three thousand survivors could all be considered to be a match for the most powerful members of the five Crow Divinity Tribes years ago.

War can wipe out a Tribe. At the same time, it can also cause a Tribe to rise to prominence! It can kill people. At the same time, it can give birth to new life!

In the blink of an eye, the Crow Divinity Tribe had been reborn. As of now, it was possible to predict that if they carried on this way, by the time they reached the Black Lands, they would be a great Tribe, risen to prominence within the Western Desert Apocalypse. Based on their battle prowess and decisiveness, they would become a Tribe that even other great Tribes would come to fear.

At the same time, Meng Hao's personal strength continued to grow. Every time he fought through a desperate crisis, it caused wild faith to grow in the hearts of the members of the Crow Divinity Tribes. It turned into a piety, a faith power that constantly circulated around Meng Hao and fused into his body.

Although he could not actually absorb it, its continued existence inside of him cause his life force to flourish and the power of his divine abilities and magical techniques to increase dramatically.

Meng Hao could tell that the faith of the Crow Divinity Tribe members had the potential to increase his power. At the same time, his own might caused the Crow Divinity Tribe members' Cultivation bases to rise.

"The amalgamation of the five elements will give rise to a mighty leap up for the Crow Divinity Tribes!" thought Meng Hao. Currently, he sat on the head of the flying viper. The wind beat against his face as he looked out at the lands below.

After the battle, Meng Hao had absorbed the remainder of the Five Poisons Tribe's neo-demons. Although many of them had died, his horde now contained a total of around 50,000.

In addition, they had acquired quite a bit of resources from the Five Poison Tribes. Most importantly… was this precious treasure, a flying machine that could hold thousands of people!

This gigantic viper whistled through the air, carrying all of the Crow Divinity Tribe members as they continued on their journey.

The incredible speed with which it moved filled the Crow Divinity Tribe members with hope, and allowed them to put aside about the horrific brutality of the battle they had just fought.

It had taken them two years to walk out from within the depths of the Western Desert North region. They had experienced many battles, and in the end, had fought it out with the Five Poisons Tribe. Now, it was as if a door had opened for them.

After passing through this door, the glory of the Crow Divinity Tribe would once again be known in the Western Lands.

The giant viper shot through the air for many days. They passed over quite a few Tribes who had no flying machines, and soon had gone farther than they could have traveled in ten years on foot.

The further south they flew, the fewer lakes they saw, and the more rivers. The reason for this was because the further south one got, the higher the elevation. Contrariwise, many areas in the lands in the north were already becoming seas.

Several days later, a mountain range became visible up ahead. It was black, and stretched out seemingly endlessly.

Sitting next to Meng Hao was the Crow Divinity Tribe Greatfather. His face was pale, and his body aged. As he looked off into the distance, he coughed, and then slowly said, “This is the true demarcation between the Western Desert North region and the Central region, the Ink Qilin Mountain Range….”

During the battle, the Greatfather had chosen to burn his own life force in order to delay the enemy High Priest. Despite months of treatment by consuming medicinal pills concocted by Meng Hao, as well as healing power from his Wood-type totem, he had harmed his foundation. He knew that the time of his death drew close. He only had about half of a sixty-year cycle left.

He felt no regrets. Half of a sixty-year cycle was enough that he might be able to watch with his own eyes as the Crow Divinity Tribe entered the Black Lands. He might even be able to spend some time living with the Tribe after they got there.

To him, that was enough. During the few months of travel, he had not practiced Cultivation, but rather, lived like an ordinary person. He would sleep, and sometimes dream, something he hadn’t experienced in many years. Within his dreams he saw images of himself and the other Greatfathers with whom he had fought and schemed against for so many years. In his dreams, they were smiling and beckoning to him, inviting him to leave with them.

They had fought for a lifetime, but now, he was the only one left. He would wake up from his dreams feeling lonely and alone.

“After we pass these mountains,” he continued, his voice low, “we will be in the Western Desert Central region. Right now, that is probably where the largest groups of Cultivators are gathered.” After that, he coughed a few more times.

“Our stockpile of Spirit Stones is sufficient,” he went on. “Unfortunately, this Five Poisons Tribe flying treasure probably won’t be able to keep going for a very long time. Because it was overloaded earlier, it was damaged. I’m afraid it won’t be able to sustain flight for more than half a year. After that, it will stop working.” The Greatfather frowned anxiously.

Meng Hao nodded, but did not respond. As the flying viper treasure shot over the Ink Qilin Mountains, a vast tableau opened up in front of Meng Hao’s eyes. It was an enormous plain that was completely different from the lands in the north.

Although the violet rain fell here, there was still greenery visible, areas where the violet rain had not exterminated all the vegetation.

As they proceeded further south, the previously extinguished spiritual energy suddenly began to sparkle to life. This caused the Crow Divinity Tribe members to instantly be enlivened.

Meng Hao frowned. Because the spiritual energy had not been completely cut off in the Western Desert Central region, and because not all life had been exterminated, it meant that there would be more Tribes here.

“Now that we’re here, we need to be more cautious,” he said. With that, he sent the flying viper forward to search for a place in the plains where the Tribe could rest and reorganize.

At the same time, he waved his hand, causing a large group of black crows to appear and fly toward the west, south and east. They shot off into the air and quickly disappeared.

Time passed by. Half a month later, they still had not run into any local Cultivators. Nonetheless, the Crow Divinity Tribe remained vigilant, constantly keeping watch in all directions.

One afternoon, Meng Hao sat there cross-legged as a black beam of light appeared up in the sky. It shot toward their flying magical treasure, and then appeared in front of Meng Hao in the form of a black crow. It hovered in the air in front of him, emitting a soundless call.

Meng Hao looked at the crow, and then his eyes began to glow. A moment later, he lifted up his hand. The crow landed on his palm and then disappeared.

Another half month went by. Similar events occurred over and over again as the black crows that Meng Hao had sent out returned at high speed with reports from the surrounding areas.

Meng Hao was also able to see the surrounding lands through the eyes of the crows. Using their bodies, he was essentially able to increase the range of his Spiritual Sense.

Several days later, when all the crows had returned, Meng Hao was now as familiar with the area as he was the back of his own hand.

He waved his hand, causing a screen to appear in front of him upon which was sketched a map. “There are seven Tribes in the area, all mid-sized Tribes. The smallest of them number in the thousands, the largest is 20,000 strong….”

The Greatfather and the other Nascent Soul Cultivators of the Crow Divinity Tribe were seated around Meng Hao. They looked with interest at the map.

“Right now, these two Tribes are the closest to us,” Meng Hao continued. “They no doubt are already aware that we have a Demon Spirit. However, Tribes who have managed to migrate this far into the Central region will have experienced many hardships. They won’t make a move lightly, and will certainly attempt to scout us out.

“In recent days,” he said calmly, “I have sensed at least two waves of Divine Sense sweep over us, which are assuredly from the totemic Sacred Ancients of those two Tribes.” None of the surrounding Cultivators said anything.

“What interests me most in this area is this place,” said Meng Hao, pointing to a spot on the map. It was a relatively large location about two weeks away via flight, which Meng Hao had circled on the map.

“This place seems very strange, and is occupied by seven or eight Tribes. Based on the observations of my neo-demons, it seems they have constructed something of a trade outpost.” He frowned.

“They must have formed an alliance!” said one of the Nascent Soul Cultivators. He was a middle aged man, not one of the original members of the Crow Divinity Tribe, but a more recent addition.

“Because of the Apocalypse,” he continued, “and the increasing heaviness of the violet rainfall, there will definitely be some Tribes who choose to form alliances instead of fighting with each other. The members of such alliances will be stronger as a whole, and will have a better chance of surviving.

“The group the exalted Sacred Ancient referred to is surely just such an alliance. As for the trade outpost… that seems simple enough to explain. I’ve passed through this part of the Central region before in the past. The Tribes in this area tend to form mobile trade outposts. In fact, some Tribes are nothing more than such trade outposts.”

“Elder Sun is correct,” said the Crow Gloom Tribe Grand Elder. “I’ve also heard of this matter. After these particular Tribes formed their alliance, they constructed a trade outpost to engage in resource trade. They all have their various needs and desires, but together, they are more confident of making it to the Black Lands.” The Crow Gloom Tribe Grand Elder had already switched totem tattoos. He now had Meng Hao’s Wood-type totem. This had caused his Cultivation base to climb back up into the early Nascent Soul stage.

“Logically speaking,” said Elder Sun, “a trade outpost created by an alliance like that won’t stay in place for too long. They’ll continue moving forward, growing stronger and more powerful, continuously engaging in business with people they encounter.

“That is exactly the type of place we need to go to. We might even be able to purchase a long range flying magical treasure. There may be some other items we can acquire that will be useful for our migration.

“I’ve even heard that in the trading outposts of some of the great Tribes, you can purchase Sacred Ancients from Tribes that have been wiped out….

“The main question is, do we engage in trade with this alliance? Or… do we rob them!?” His words caused everyone’s eyes to begin to shine brightly and then look toward Meng Hao to await his decision.

Meng Hao was quiet for a while before coolly saying, “If the alliance chooses to trade with us, then we trade. If they want to go to war with us, then we will bring them war!”

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# Chapter 489: Eight Branch Alliance

Meng Hao’s words caused the surrounding Nascent Soul Cultivators of the Crow Divinity Tribe to sit thoughtfully for a moment before cold glows appeared in their eyes, and then killing intent. This was especially true of Elder Sun, who licked his lips, his eyes glinting viciously.

Meng Hao closed his eyes and then pointed his finger down towards the ground. Instantly, Demonic Qi shot up from the plain, swirling around to form a figure. This was none other than Meng Hao’s Demonic Incarnation.

The illusory figure contained Meng Hao’s Spiritual Sense. It flickered as a black cloak suddenly wrapped around it, turning it into a black-cloaked man.

The black-cloaked man floated there in the air, his facial features indistinguishable. Meng Hao’s voice suddenly spoke out from within the hood: “The Tribe as a whole, as well as my true self, will not move. I’ll send this clone ahead to that alliance.”

The surrounding Nascent Soul Cultivators nodded. Regarding Meng Hao’s bizarre divine abilities, they were already used to them. To them, it was simply how things should be.

The black-cloaked figure turned to Elder Sun. “You’ve traveled through this area before, Elder Sun. Why don’t you accompany me on this little expedition?”

Elder Sun took a deep breath as he rose to his feet and then bowed.

The Greatfather of the Crow Divinity Tribe also rose to his feet. He produced a bag of holding which he handed over to Meng Hao. This bag of holding contained a portion of the Tribe’s Spirit Stones and other resources.

Meng Hao’s black-cloaked Demonic Incarnation turned and flew off into the sky, followed by Elder Sun. In the blink of an eye, they turned into beams of colorful light that shot off into the distance.

After the Demonic Incarnation left, Meng Hao, who was still seated there cross-legged, opened his eyes.

“We’ll rest and reorganize here for a few days,” said Meng Hao coolly. “Afterwards, whether we engage in business or war will depend on the will of the Tribe.” Considering his position within the Tribe, his words actually counted as the voice of the Tribe.

The surrounding Nascent Soul Cultivators nodded, and the Crow Divinity Tribe began to station themselves in the area. This would be their first period of prolonged rest during the entire migration.

Meanwhile, Meng Hao’s black-cloaked Demonic Incarnation flew through the air of the Western Desert Central region, along with Elder Sun.

They moved at high speed, occasionally employing minor teleportation as they headed directly toward the alliance of Tribes.

A few days later, Meng Hao asked, “Elder Sun, do you have any former acquaintances in this area?” He’d come to find that Elder Sun seemed very familiar with the region. Occasionally the man would look around at the scenery with what appeared to be a wistful expression.

Elder Sun chuckled. “To be honest with you, exalted Sacred Ancient, I actually made a few enemies in this area some years ago. They chased me around, trying to kill me, which is how I came to be more familiar with the area.” Elder Sun was skinny and wizened, and had a mustache shaped like the character . On the left side of his face was a scar that stretched all the way down to his neck, making his appearance especially sinister.

Meng Hao nodded, and declined to make further inquiries. The two of them continued to fly through the air in beams of colorful light.

Time flashed by. They were able to move with incredible speed, traveling in ten days what it would take the flying machine one month.

Actually, it took that long because of Elder Sun. Were Meng Hao traveling alone using his Demonic Incarnation, it would only take five days.

One day, an area appeared up ahead on the plain. More than ten thousand tents were arranged in concentric rings around a city. They were densely packed in special patterns that made it look like a spell formation with protective powers.

The more than ten thousand tents were organized into groups that made up eight different patterns like sealing marks, which of course represented the eight different Tribes which formed the alliance.

The city was located in the very center. From his position up in the air, Meng Hao could see quite a few Cultivators coming and going. The whole scene was quite lively.

When Meng Hao and Elder Sun were about three thousand meters away, the voice of an old man suddenly called out from the direction of the allied Tribes.

“Welcome to the Eight Branch Alliance. We are an alliance formed by eight different Tribes, and are camping in this area for five months. During that time, flying is prohibited for three thousand meters in all directions. Fellow Daoists, if you have come to do business, then you are welcome here.”

Even as the words could be heard, an old man suddenly appeared in front of Meng Hao and Elder Sun. On his face could be seen some blotchy, brown marks. He looked over Meng Hao and Elder Sun and then continued, “I am Ou Yunzi. Fellow Daoists, you don’t look familiar. I’m curious as to where you might have come from.” After examining Elder Sun, his eyes came to rest on Meng Hao, whereupon his pupils constricted.

Ou Yunzi was at the early Nascent Soul stage, so the fact that he could not see the Cultivation base of this black-cloaked man caused his heart to fill with vigilance.

Seeing that Meng Hao did not plan to speak, Elder Sun laughingly clasped hands and said, “I am Sun Dahai. Our Tribe is migrating from the Western Desert North region, and are passing through the area. We heard that the Eight Branch Alliance built a city in the area, and thus decided to come trade for a few necessary items.” 1

Ou Yunzi’s eyes shifted away from Sun Dahai to look behind him and Meng Hao, where of course there was nothing. His expression ordinary, he suddenly smiled.

“The Eight Branch Alliance welcomes all Fellow Daoists who wish to engage in business. Welcome, both of you!” With a laugh, he turned and gestured welcomingly. The three of them descended to the ground and began to walk toward the Eight Branch Alliance.

“That fact that you managed to migrate from the Western Desert North region all the way to here indicates that your Tribe is definitely extraordinary, Fellow Daoist Sun.”

“Ai, there were many twists and turns along the way, and we experienced many things. But, let’s not talk about that. Fellow Daoist Ou, from the look of things, your Eight Branch Alliance seems highly likely to be able to enter the Black Lands. I offer you my congratulations.”

“Thank you for your auspicious words, Fellow Daoist Sun. May I inquire, what sort of items are you looking to acquire?”

“Oh, nothing special. Just some odds and ends, although if there are any neo-demon hordes for sale, that would be excellent.”

Laughing and smiling, Sun Dahai continued to chat vaguely with Ou Yunzi as they walked along.

The entire time, Meng Hao remained silent, allowing Sun Dahai and Ou Yunzi to feel each other out.

When they reached the border of the allied Tribes, Ou Yunzi smiled and clasped hands and watched as Sun Dahai and Meng Hao entered the city. Afterwards, a dour look appeared on his face.

Suddenly, a man’s voice could be heard: “Brother Ou, is there something fishy about those two?”

The air rippled next to Ou Yunzi as a man and a woman appeared. Both were middle-aged. The man wore a long scholar’s robe and the woman was dressed in a Lady’s gown. 2

Ou Yunzi glanced over at the two and then slowly said, “They say that they came from the North region. I didn’t notice anything out of the ordinary about that Cultivator named Sun. As for the black-cloaked man next to him, I couldn’t see the level of his Cultivation base. Furthermore, his aura was cold and dark.

“In order to forestall any mishaps, I suggest we allow them to be on their way of their own accord and…” Before Ou Yunzi could finish, he was interrupted rather impolitely.

“There’s nothing to worry about,” said the woman in the Lady’s gown. “He couldn’t possibly be a Spirit Severing Patriarch. Even if he’s of the late Nascent Soul stage, he’s only one person. The net has already been cast out. When it comes time to draw it in, no mishaps will occur. Fellow Daoist Ou, there’s no need to worry.”

The scholarly looking man laughed, and his eyes flickered coldly. “He’s only one trifling person. Brother Ou, there’s no need to take him to heart. We will let the net remain cast a few more days, and then, according to the agreement reached by the Elders, we will draw it in. If those two really came from the North region, along with their Tribe, then we’ll be able to catch quite a big fish!”

The man laughed, and the woman continued, “When the time comes to draw in the net, their Tribe will be revealed, and will become resources for our Eight Branch Alliance. Then, our months of rest here will not have been in vain.

“All of it will just count as bad fortune for them! They won’t be able to blame anyone but themselves!” With that, the man and woman departed.

Ou Yunzi frowned. After a long moment, he shook his head. “Maybe I really am just thinking too much into it.” With that, he turned and disappeared.

After entering the city, Meng Hao and Sun Dahai split up. Sun Dahai had practiced Cultivation for many years, and was experienced and astute. He was adept in making discreet inquiries and collecting news, so Meng Hao decided to stroll about the city alone. When he saw all the people, and the proliferation of various shops and stores, he was astonished.

This place was quite large, and although you couldn’t say that it had everything, there was quite a variety of things to purchase, from neo-demon hordes, to powerful solitary neo-demons, even a quite a bit of rather shoddy medicinal pills. There were even flying magical items.

Unfortunately, there were no prices listed, only indications that these items could be purchased through auction. Even still, Meng Hao was able to get a feel for the majesty of the city. There were many Cultivators; it seemed the city could hold nearly ten thousand people, making the place quite bustling.

As he walked, Meng Hao’s pupils suddenly constricted as he noticed what appeared at first to be a simple structure, but was actually a luxurious shop. This shop happened to specialize in totems!

Different Tribes had different totem branding methods, and this place happened to sell a variety of such methods for a variety of prices. This shop instantly caught Meng Hao’s attention.

After careful examination, he found that most were relatively cheap, and were only designed for functionality, not for providing Cultivation base breakthrough.

After looking around for a while, he felt that he understood the city a lot better. About two hours later, he had managed to stroll through about half of the city, when suddenly, he stopped in place.

He had just sensed a bit of Demonic Qi coming from a shop nearby. After looking over, he was able to identify which shop; it was a place that sold totemic Sacred Ancients!

Perhaps a better way to say it was that these were incredibly powerful neo-demons that could be turned into totems!

Meng Hao's eyes glittered, and he was just about to enter the shop when suddenly a man appeared in front of him. He was dressed like a scholar; this was none other than the man who had been speaking with Ou Yunzi earlier.

The man laughed and blocked Meng Hao's way.

"Fellow Daoist, the things in this shop will be up for auction in seven days. If you want them, you can purchase them at that time."

Meng Hao looked at the man with cold, glittering eyes. Without a word, he turned and walked away.

The middle-aged scholar's pupils constricted. When Meng Hao had looked at him, the man had used Divine Sense to try to feel Meng Hao out. However, all the Divine Sense could make out regarding the black-cloaked man was rippling nothingness. It couldn't pierce inside, not even the slightest bit.

"That man is very strange…" said the scholar, his eyes narrowing.

Meng Hao's expression didn't change as he walked through the city. However, deep within his cloak, his eyes gleamed with coldness.

"This place is pretty interesting. It seems almost everything is purchasable only at the auction…. Everything seems ordinary, but if you think about it carefully…."

1. Sun Dahai’s name in Chinese is – sūn dà hǎi. Sun is a surname. Dahai means “ocean.”

2. Specifically, she is described as wearing the kind of casual garment that royal concubines or princesses would wear. Here are some pictures

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# Chapter 490: Underground!

As evening fell, the violet rain fell down onto the tents in the area that had been set up specifically for visiting Cultivators.

After spending a few Spirit Stones, Meng Hao and Sun Dahai had been able to acquire a tent, within which they now sat cross-legged.

“Exalted Sacred Ancient,” said Sun Dahai in a low voice, as he reported his findings to Meng Hao, “I made a lot of inquiries earlier today. The Eight Branch Alliance has been in this spot for four months now. During the last few days of each of those months, they have hosted an auction.

“They’ve already held four such auctions. When popular items appear, deaths sometimes occur. However, none of the deaths are connected to the Eight Branch Alliance.

“Such deaths are usually caused because of personal disputes and thefts. Generally speaking, it seems that the Eight Branch Alliance is really just interested in business, and has no malicious intentions.

“The final auction will be held ten days from now. When it concludes, the Eight Branch Alliance will move on. As such, many local Tribes will be attending the final auction, and many valuable treasures will be up for purchase.”

Meng Hao sat there cross-legged, his face concealed within this black cloak. After listening to Sun Dahai’s report, he said, “You think there’s nothing unusual about this place?”

Sun Dahai’s eyes flickered. “There doesn’t seem to be anything particularly unusual. However, we do need to be on guard. It’s possible the Eight

Branch Alliance is spreading bait to attract some big fish, which they can then collect together in one fell swoop.

“The surrounding Tribes couldn’t possibly be that off-guard,” he continued. “If the Eight Branch Alliance wanted to swallow them up, it would be difficult to accomplish. Besides, to survive in this Apocalypse, Tribes have to experience war and battles. Such Tribes wouldn’t possibly fall for something so stupid. Even if they sent people here to trade, they wouldn’t send too many Spirit Stones or other resources with them. If I were a local Greatfather, I would send a large group so that there would be safety in numbers. As for Spirit Stones, they would be secondary.

“Furthermore, if the Eight Branch Alliance truly had the power to swallow up an entire Tribe, then what is the point of the city? Why not just sweep over the surrounding tribes and plunder them dry? That would certainly save a lot of effort.” Sun Dahai looked puzzled.

“That’s why I think that there’s a seventy percent likelihood that they are actually focused on doing business, and not on maliciously robbing people.” He looked over at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao was silent for a short time before giving a hoarse laugh.

“If you came to this conclusion, then likely other Tribes will too. It is because of that understanding that this city houses over ten thousand outsiders. Most are members of the other seven Tribes that exist in this region, as well as some Cultivators from even more distant regions.

“However, did it ever occur to you that the true goal of the Eight Branch Alliance, is neither business, nor robbing Spirit Stones and other resources?” Cold, glowing eyes looked out at Sun Dahai from within the black cloak.

Sun Dahai was taken aback, and sat there lost in thought.

At the same time, several dozen days of travel away where the Crow Divinity Tribe was resting, Meng Hao’s true self sat cross-legged. Suddenly, his eyes opened to reveal a brilliant glow, and he rose to his feet.

“Members of the Crow Divinity Tribe, after enough time passes for a single incense stick to burn, we will mount our flying treasure and move at top speed toward the Eight Branch Alliance!” Immediately, all the Tribe members emerged from their meditative trances. Without asking any questions whatsoever, they rose to their feet. In the short amount of time it takes for an incense stick to burn, the thousands of Tribe members stepped onto the gigantic viper. A piercing cry rose up as the flying viper treasure shot through the air. Spirit Stones were used unhesitatingly, causing the viper to speed as fast as possible toward the Eight Branch Alliance.

As the Crow Divinity Tribe made their way toward the Eight Branch Alliance, time passed by slowly for Meng Hao and Sun Dahai. Casting aside their previous prudence, they made their way throughout the Eight Branch Alliance city and began to make purchases.

Within the space of a few days, they had spent quite a bit of Spirit Stones to purchase various supplies that would be needed for the migration. The Eight Branch Alliance was constantly announcing the auction to take place in a few days. In fact, each day, various shops and stores would put on display some of the items which were to be auctioned.

Meng Hao saw three flying machines, one of which was a 25,000-meter treasure shaped like an actual ship, that could hold around ten thousand people.

It was protected by a glittering shield, and was capable of astonishing speed. Although a terrifying amount of Spirit Stones was required to operate it, it was essentially the only type of item that the Western Desert Tribes could use at the moment. Anything that normally operated on spell formations that absorbed the spiritual energy of Heaven and Earth, was now inoperable.

There were a few special totem branding techniques that were the topic of heated debate within the city. However, what caught Meng Hao’s eyes the most were the neo-demons.

The Eight Branch Alliance had over a hundred thousand neo-demons of all varieties. The mere sight of them was shocking.

In fact… there were three totemic Sacred Ancients that the Eight Branch Alliance had on display. One was a three-headed Xuanwu turtle. Another was a three hundred meter long golden eagle. The final one was a blind crow. This crow was very similar to Meng Hao's other black crows; however, its aura was vastly, vastly more powerful.

Unfortunately, these three totemic Sacred Ancients seemed extremely weak and listless. Clearly, the Tribes and Tribe members who had exercised faith in them had been slaughtered. Therefore, the faith power they had stored up was thoroughly exhausted, and had not been replenished.

In addition, they were bound by fine, silver chains that pierced through their bodies. Their previous aloofness and haughtiness had changed. Now they were items for sale that anyone could glance upon casually.

Every day, a voice would ring out through the entire city, filled with sincerity. It didn't seem to contain even a scrap of hypocrisy, and sounded completely credible.

"Greetings, Fellow Daoists. The Eight Branch Alliance will be holding our final auction in six days. After the auction, we will be leaving this area. During this final auction, we will be selling all of the items that you have had a chance to look over recently. Some of these items belong to the Eight Branch Alliance, but the majority have been entrusted to us by other parties to sell.

"In some cases, these items will not be sold for Spirit Stones, but rather other special items that we require. After all, it is such items that we will prepare to auction off in the next location we travel to."

Considering the reputation built up by the Eight Branch Alliance, as well as the extremely attractive items up that were to be put up for auction, more and more Cultivators arrived each day.

These people didn't just come from the neighboring seven Tribes, but even Tribes from further south. Of course, for safety's sake, large groups of Cultivators had been dispatched, all well-known figures. The leaders of all of these groups were of the Nascent Soul stage.

Three days before the auction was set to begin, the foreign population of the city had already swelled to twenty thousand. The city was packed, and the atmosphere extremely lively and out of the ordinary. In fact, some Tribes had already begun doing business secretly.

Sun Dahai was as happy as a fish in water; he immediately began to interact with the other Tribes as he attempted to gather together all the supplies they needed. As of the day before the auction, Meng Hao had already spent all the Spirit Stones he had brought in order to acquire the various items they needed.

The more people arrived, the more Sun Dahai seemed to think the area was safe. As for Meng Hao, he felt exactly the opposite. During the past seven or eight days, he had not actually engaged in any of the purchasing. Instead, he walked around the city, observing and studying it. In the end, he was convinced that under the surface of this entire area was a huge spell formation!

The spell formation was very complex. Even with many people working at it, it would take months to set up. Considering how long the Eight Branch Alliance had been in this area, Meng Hao was certain that the spell formation… had been put together by none other than them!

Most curious of all, this spell formation seemed to be able to stir and congeal Demonic Qi!!

The spell formation was so well hidden that even a Nascent Soul Cultivator would be incapable of detecting it. The only reason Meng Hao could sense it was because of the Demonic Qi that was congealed inside. Obviously, the body Meng Hao was using was illusory, materialized from Demonic Qi; naturally, he was extremely sensitive to Demonic Qi.

Demonic Qi was shapeless, which Meng Hao well knew. No one could see it, nor feel it. Only neo-demons or totemic Sacred Ancients would be able to sense it. However, considering the weakness of the Demonic Qi in the spell formation, it would probably be difficult even for Sacred Ancients.

Unfortunately, it could not escape detection of Meng Hao, Demon Sealer.

"A spell formation that attracts Demonic Qi is not the type of formation that an ordinary Cultivator would set up. The actual skill used in creating the formation is secondary to the mere fact that it contains Demonic Qi. Whoever made it has some level of understanding of Demonic Qi." Meng Hao thought about it for eight days as he walked about observing the city. It seemed as if he were examining the items which were being sold, but in truth, he was carefully observing the spell formation.

The more he observed it, the more interested he got.

At the moment, it was now one day before the auction. Meng Hao was standing in the center of the city, where there were no shops, but rather, an altar. The altar appeared ordinary. Placed on top of the altar was a huge statue that depicted a Cultivator with outstretched wings on his backs.

This was the totem statue of of one of the eight Tribes that made up the Eight Branch Alliance. Similar statues could be seen throughout the city, each one of which represented one of the eight Tribes.

As soon as he neared the altar, Meng Hao could sense at least ten streams of Divine Sense fall onto his body. It was impossible to tell what type of cultivation was practiced by the owners of these streams of Divine Sense. It was too deeply hidden. The level of the Cultivators was also impossible to determine. There was even a strand of Demonic Qi present, which stuck out to Meng Hao. Inwardly, he gave a cold laugh. He knew that if he did anything out of the ordinary, this place would instantly be filled with at least ten Nascent Soul Cultivators.

He looked up at the statue with glittering eyes as he walked past casually. He didn't stop. However, what he did do was secretly merge his Spiritual Sense in the Demonic Qi down below. It slowly spread out underground, undetectable. Based on his several days of study and observation, Meng Hao was now certain that this altar was the center of the spell formation.

As the Spiritual Sense spread out, Meng Hao could see the majestic spell formation. Furthermore, at the center of the spell formation was a pulsing black mist. Whatever was inside that black mist was impossible to see.

It was at this moment that a tremor ran through his mind, the source of which was inside his bag of holding. It was an archaic voice that he had not heard for a long time during his time in the Western Desert. It echoed out to fill his mind.

“Third Generation Demon Sealer blood refinement, Demon Weapon Lonelytomb!

“The League of Demon Sealers! The First Generation is the Ancestor. The Second Generation is the Inheritor. The Third Generation is the most powerful. After the Fourth Generation, the successive generations grow weaker…. But the Ninth Generation is the ultimate! If the Ninth Generation is not slain, it is the pinnacle!”

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# Chapter 491: A Familiar Vortex

The voice did not just echo out in the mind of Meng Hao’s Demonic Incarnation in the Eight Branch Alliance, but also in the mind of his true self, which was currently speeding through the air in exactly that direction.

Meng Hao’s mind in the Demonic Incarnation trembled, but his expression did not change in the slightest. He turned and walked off slowly. His inspection of the spell formation, and his sudden shock, was not noticed by any observers. As he walked off into the distance, the Divine Sense which had latched onto him slowly vanished.

Deep in the night, Meng Hao sat quietly in the tent, eyes closed.

Sun Dahai was already in a meditative trance. Although he was not one hundred percent at ease with this place, he felt it to be fundamentally safe. He was eighty percent sure that the Eight Branch Alliance was only interested in doing business.

Meanwhile, the fact that the Crow Divinity Tribe had a Demon Spirit was not possible to conceal from the other seven Tribes that made their home in this part of the Western Desert Central region. They all became aware of it.

“That’s….”

“A Demon Spirit!! It’s a Demon Spirit!”

“A Demon Spirit has actually appeared! We have to get it!!”

Two of the Tribes sensed the Demon Spirit first. The other five took longer but were equally shocked. Of the seven, five immediately dispatched people toward the place indicated on the Feng Shui compass.

In a very short period of time, the entire region was sent into a turbulent commotion.

The glowing dots on the Feng Shui compasses held by the High Priests of the various Tribes caused their hearts to fill with astonishment. Even as they dispatched their forces, the Eight Branch Alliance called a parliament of the Greatfathers and High Priests of the eight Tribes. Instantly, a heated debate discussion.

“Dammit! Why did a Demon Spirit have to appear at this time!?”

“According to our scouts, the surrounding Tribes have already taken action. Furthermore, the Demon Spirit is heading directly toward our Eight Branch Alliance! If nothing unexpected happens, the Demon Spirit will be on top of us in two days, which is exactly when the forces of the other Tribes will arrive! There will definitely be fighting and robbing!”

“Should we delay the bringing in of the net…? After all, our plan is extremely important, but a Demon Spirit… is equally important!”

“The ideal situation would be one in which we successfully bring in the net AND acquire a Demon Spirit….”

As the discussion continued, an old man sat in the seat of honour. He wore a red robe and had his eyes closed. After a while, he suddenly opened his eyes.

“Enough!” he said, his voice ringing out like a clap of thunder. All of the other individuals in the tent instantly went silent.

“Demon Spirits are well and good. However, to the Eight Branch Alliance, what is most important is restoring the power of the Sacred Ancient. In the Western Desert East region, our Eight Branch Alliance’s strength was significantly damaged. All of you received serious injuries. Even more importantly, we must not be rash when it comes to our Cultivation bases. If our totems are damaged, it could put us in danger of Cultivation base loss.

“That’s also the reason why we are resting in this location; exterminating the other tribes in the area is not something easy to do.

“Have you forgotten the main point of the plan? We attract more and more Cultivators to this area, and then use the power of the spell formation to carry out a blood offering. That will restore the glory of our totems! Actually, for the Demon Spirit to come is a good thing!

“In fact, there actually couldn’t be a better way to get more people to come here!” By the time the man finished speaking, his eyes were glowing with a cold light.

The other Cultivators of the Eight Branch Alliance began to nod silently.

Final preparations were made. Two days later at dawn, the Eight Branch Alliance began the auction.

A huge crowd of people was present, more than twenty thousand. As such, there was no special location for the auction; instead, it took place throughout the entire city.

Early in the morning, all of the buildings and shops in the city disappeared without a trace. What was left behind was a vast, empty square. Eight Branch Alliance Cultivators emerged from the surrounding tents to maintain order.

Everyone who was to participate in the auction held a jade slip in hand. These jade slips had been distributed a few days before, one for each person, including Meng Hao and Sun Daihai.

“It’s going to begin!” said Sun Dahai excitedly. Despite being a Nascent Soul Cultivator, he had never participated in an auction before.

Meng Hao, on the other hand, was quite used to such affairs. The pill auction back in the Violet Fate Sect had been attended by a hundred thousand Cultivators. That auction was above and beyond this one in both terms of scale and grandeur.

A glowing screen appeared up above, from within which appeared a man. His handsome face was as white as jade. Smiling, he clasped hands and bowed to the thousands of Cultivators below.

“We meet again, Fellow Daoists! I am Dong Hanzi, with whom which many of you are already acquainted, since I presided over the previous four auctions.

“Today’s auction is the final auction to be held by the Eight Branch Alliance. The rules are the same as ever. All of you have a jade slip, which you can brand with a value. That value will appear up here.

“There’s no need to prattle on. Our first lot for the day….” As Dong Hanzi’s voice rang out, the auction officially began. The first lot instantly caused quite a commotion. Prices branded onto jade slips immediately began to appear on the illusory screen up in the air. The prices instantly began to climb higher and higher.

Sun Dahai’s eyes went wide as he stared at the prices on the screen. As for Meng Hao, he didn’t pay much attention to the auction. Instead he was looking around the area thoughtfully.

Time went by and the excitement in the auction continued to grow. After four hours had passed, when it was almost high noon, Dong Hanzi offered up a totemic Sacred Ancient for auction. It was at this point that the auction seemed to reach its peak.

Regardless if it was in terms of values being called out verbally or branded on the jade slips, the price continued to rise shockingly. It seemed relatively chaotic, but order was actually being maintained. By this point Sun Dahai was thoroughly wrapped up in his excitement; he held his jade slip in hand as he participated in making bids.

All of the twenty thousand people in the area seemed to be going crazy. Only Meng Hao, his face hidden within the depths of his black cloak, seemed to remain calm.

“This Demonic Qi spell formation really is something!” he thought, his eyes glittering coldly. Earlier in the morning, when the auction had just started, he saw the spell formation beginning to operate. By now, it was rotating rapidly, congealing large amounts of Demonic Qi, then sending it undulating out invisibly to influence the emotions of the Cultivators in the area.

These undulations were causing the twenty thousand participants to slowly act like lunatics.

In complete contrast, the Cultivators of the Eight Branch Alliance, who had recently been the shopkeepers and other shop workers, were circulating in the area, cold, mocking smiles on their faces.

Suddenly, Meng Hao caught sight of a boundless mist approaching from off in the distance. It impossible to say when it appeared, but it spread out to cover the area. Furthermore, there were sixteen Cultivators floating up in the air, looking down coldly at the crowds.

Of these sixteen people, half were of the early Nascent Soul stage, and four were of the mid-Nascent Soul Stage. Shockingly, two were of the late Nascent Soul stage.

One of them was Ou Yunzi, another was the man dressed like a scholar, and a third was the woman dressed in a Lady’s robe.

The power of the Cultivation bases of these sixteen people began to spread out. However, Meng Hao could tell that all of the Cultivation bases were unstable, as if they were being held together with great difficulty. A few of these people actually emanated a faint Demonic Qi.

Meng Hao’s expression was cold after glancing over them and then looking back at Sun Dahai. He suddenly spoke out Sun Dahai’s name. As soon as the man heard his name being called out, a tremor ran through his body. The crazed look faded from his eyes and turned into confusion, then astonishment. He knew that there was something wrong with his behaviour just now.

Panting, he looked around, his heart filled with caution. When he saw the crazed look on the faces around him, and the prices climbing rapidly, cold sweat broke out on his forehead.

He subconsciously turned to look at Meng Hao and then said, “Sacred An….”

“Come with me,” said Meng Hao calmly. Sun Dahai immediately followed Meng Hao as he worked his way through the crowd. They didn’t draw much attention, and very quickly reached a certain location where Meng Hao came to a stop.

“This position is safe. If something unexpected happens, don’t forget to sit down here and meditate. Don’t take a single step away.”

Sun Dahai was a shrewd and astute person. Earlier, he had been under the influence of the spell formation, but now that he had come to his senses, he could sense the strangeness in the area. Having heard Meng Hao’s words, he nodded in agreement. He had already decided that no matter what happened, he would not move away from this spot.

At the same time, his admiration for Meng Hao grew to even greater heights. He looked at Meng Hao, and although he couldn’t see his face within the blackness of his cloak, he could sense Meng Hao’s eyes looking toward the center of the trade outpost city.

Meng Hao merged his Spiritual Sense with Demonic Qi and sent it out into the ground. He watched the spell formation rotating faster and faster; at the same time, the mist in the area continued to grow thicker.

“High noon is when the earth is aligned directly with the sun. At this moment of extremes… Yin is at its hardest and Yang as at its softest!

“Demonic Qi, or whatever kind of Qi it is, regardless of whether it is hard or soft, will appear at noon!” Meng Hao quickly calculated the current time.

“Only three more breaths of time…. Three, two, one….” A bright light shone in Meng Hao’s eyes as he watched the wildly rotating spell formation cause the mist in the area to churn. At the same time, the ground below began to change color. Now it was red, like fresh blood.

Strands of Demonic Qi began to float up to fill the air. Shockingly, the Demonic Qi started rotating, transforming into a huge vortex that filled the sky.

Of course, Sun Dahai couldn’t see any of this. To him, everything seemed normal. The sky was still the sky and nothing was different.

To Meng Hao, however, what he was seeing was shocking to the extreme.

As for the sixteen Cultivators in mid-air, they were performing incantation gestures. Then, they began to let out growling roars as sixteen streams of magical symbols suddenly began to spread out toward the vortex up in the sky.

No one could see the gigantic vortex, only Meng Hao. The sight of it was actually somewhat familiar, as if he had seen something similar before in another place.

As the vortex spun rapidly, a black hole suddenly appeared in its middle. Within that black hole… another world suddenly became visible!

As the world became visible, Meng Hao’s heart filled with astonishment, and an expression of disbelief appeared on his face. He suddenly realized what that place was!

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# Chapter 492: I’ll Be Back!

The Tower of Tang in the State of Zhao!

The year that Meng Hao left the Reliance Sect, he went to the capital city of the State of Zhao. There, he had stood atop the Tower of Tang, fulfilling his lifelong dream of looking out from its enormous height toward the Great Tang in the Eastern Land.

After that, when he was preparing to leave, the sovereign of the State of Zhao and the others prostrated themselves in worship to the Tower of Tang. As he left, he had inadvertently looked over his shoulder to see an enormous vortex appear in the sky. It was something that no one could see but him!

Within that vortex was another world, a battlefield filled with countless corpses, as well as a gigantic black coffin. The whole scene was incredibly shocking. Sitting next to the coffin, a shrivelled figure sat crosslegged. Meng Hao could never forget how as soon as he looked at the withered corpse, it suddenly opened its eyes.

That one look had caused a burning of his life force which lasted for months. Meng Hao now knew the purpose of that magic. It was a seal, locking onto his position. 1

Later, outside the Rebirth Cave, Meng Hao came to understand everything. He knew that the corpse’s name was Choumen Tai. He had acquired Immortal Shows the Way from Choumen Tai, and knew that the world in that vortex was actually an ancient battlefield.

That war had been fought because of the previous Lord of the Ninth Mountain, of the Li Clan, as well as the current Lord of the Ninth Mountain who was of the Ji Clan. It was in the Realm of the Bridge Ruins that Meng Hao put even more pieces together, learning that the war of supremacy regarding the Lordship of the Ninth Mountain also had to do with the Immortal Demon Sect!

As he looked up at the vortex, his mind filled with astonishment as he realized that the world he was looking at was, shockingly… the exact same world he had seen when in the State of Zhao!

However, this time, the ancient battlefield did not contain a coffin, but rather a sea of corpses….

In the very center of the sea of corpses was a huge altar, which was filled with a black mist. The mist made it impossible to see what was inside, but mournful shrieks could be heard coming from the mist. Soon, faces became faintly visible on its surface. It seemed as if they wanted to fly out from the mist, but were unable to. It seemed as if they had been stuck with the mist for countless years, unable to do anything except mourn and cry out.

Among the faces in the mist were Cultivators as well as neo-demons!

Meng Hao’s mind filled with a roaring sound, and something like a powerful call suddenly welled up from his heart. It was actually impossible for him to tell whether this feeling was the black mist calling him, or if it was him calling the black mist!

It didn’t matter at the moment. Meng Hao’s heart and mind trembled as he thought back to the black mist he had seen in the center of the spell formation earlier, as well as what relationship it had with the vortex.

It was at this moment that looks of fanaticism filled the faces of the surrounding Cultivators of the Eight Branch Alliance. All of them kneeled down and began to bow toward the vortex up in the sky.

Even the sixteen Nascent Soul Cultivators up in mid-air also began to prostrate themselves.

At the same time, the redness that filled the ground began to spread out. The mist roiled as it enveloped everyone in the area, including Meng Hao. Vast amounts of Demonic Qi suddenly began to pour out from within the spell formation.

The instant the Demonic Qi appeared, it poured into all of the Cultivators in the area. They continued to act completely crazy, as if they had sunk into some dreamland from which they were unable to emerge. As the Demonic Qi filled them, their faces twisted and distorted.

The Demonic Qi poured into them, causing their bodies to tremble, and their expressions to turn vicious. Meng Hao's eyes glittered; after closer observation, he could see that the Demonic Qi was actually fusing with the life force of the Cultivators.

Next, all of these people lifted their heads up toward the vortex. At the same time, the sixteen Cultivators in mid air used their incantations to cause the life force fused with Demonic Qi, to shoot toward the whirlpool. It was instantly sucked in and headed toward the black mist inside. The faces in the mist suddenly looked excited, and began to consume it rapidly.

Meng Hao could clearly see all of this happening. He turned to look at Sun Dahai, who remained sitting cross-legged in that particular position. His eyes were closed and he was meditating; his position was one of a few in the area that had no Demonic Qi in it. That location was one of the nexus points of the spell formation; Demonic Qi would not enter it, making him temporarily safe.

"Just what exactly is that mist…?" thought Meng Hao. "Why do I have this feeling of calling? I can tell that it's not the mist calling me. But rather… somehow I am inadvertently calling the mist." He looked around as the Demonic Qi continued to pour into the surrounding tens of thousands of Cultivators. It merged with their life force and then shot up into the vortex.

At the same time, the surrounding tens of thousands of Cultivators of the Eight Branch Alliance began to speak in a bizarre language. The sound of it rose into the air, merging together to transform into sound waves that rolled out in all directions.

As their voices sounded out, the mist in the area churned even more violently. More Demonic Qi shot up into the vortex, causing the faces on the black mist to emit excited roars.

The whole scene was incredibly bizarre. That was especially so as the sixteen Nascent Soul Cultivators up in the air shouted out excitedly and performed double-handed incantations to produce sealing marks which flew out.

Even more shocking, totem tattoos suddenly began to appear on the foreheads of the sixteen Cultivators. These totems looked like… faces!

They were the same twisted faces that existed on the black mist in the vortex!

Similar totem tattoos could suddenly be seen appearing on the foreheads of all the tens of thousands of Eight Branch Alliance Cultivators. Each face was different. Some were old, some were young. Some were Cultivators, some were neo-demons.

“Those faces are their totems!” thought Meng Hao, his heart filling with shock. He would never have imagined that the faces filling the black mist in the vortex could be totems.

“This Eight Branch Alliance is incredibly bizarre. Not only do they have a spell formation that can absorb Demonic Qi, as well as Cultivators who actually have Demonic Qi in their bodies, but their totems are connected to things inside the world of that vortex.

“Even stranger… that black mist has something to do with Demon Sealers!” His eyes filled with a strange light.

It was at this moment that the Demonic Qi in the area suddenly began to cover the spell formation nexuses, and Sun Dahai suddenly began to tremble. Demonic Qi was already beginning to bore into his body.

Meng Hao frowned. He lifted his hand, and immediately the Demonic Qi spread away from Sun Dahai. Although it only caused a slight change to the dense Demonic Qi in the area, there were suddenly seven streams of Divine Sense that shot over.

“What?”

“That guy is still conscious!”

“It’s him….”

Almost at the same time that the seven streams of Divine Sense flew over, three of the sixteen Nascent Soul Cultivators up above flickered and began to fly down. It took only a brief moment for them to near Meng Hao.

Of the three, one was the man dressed as a scholar. Killing intent flickered in his eyes.

Meng Hao gave a cold snort. Waving his hand, he caused the Demonic Qi in the area to shoot toward himself. It transformed into an invisible attack which swept toward the incoming three Cultivators.

Amidst echoing booms, the three Nascent Soul Cultivators’ faces filled with shock, and they were forced to stop moving.

“Demonic Qi! That guy can manipulate Demonic Qi!!” Immediately, the astonished Nascent Soul Cultivators began to perform incantations. Illusory faces suddenly appeared in front of them. They pushed out with their hands, causing the three faces to twist with fury. Savage laughter erupted from the mouths of the faces as they shot toward Meng Hao.

The Demonic Qi wielded by Meng Hao had little effect on these three bizarre faces. They even consumed the Demonic Qi as they approached. Even by increasing the power of the Demonic Qi attack, Meng Hao was only able to make one of the three faces grow a bit blurry and fade away. The other two continued to shoot toward him.

A bang could be heard, and ripples spread out in all directions as Meng Hao’s Demonic Incarnation suddenly shot backward. He snatched up Sun Dahai and then continued to fly back.

The faces of the three Nascent Soul Cultivators were grim as they flew in pursuit of Meng Hao.

“Your Cultivation base is definitely extraordinary, but do you really think you can escape from the Eight Branch Alliance!?”

“It might be strange that you can manipulate Demonic Qi. But we’ll catch you and sacrifice you to the Sacred Ancient! The Sacred Ancient will definitely be very happy!”

It was with vigilance that the three Cultivators shot after Meng Hao. At the same time, another from the group up above shot down toward Meng Hao. It was Ou Yunzi, turning the group that was pursuing Meng Hao into a group of four.

Using minor teleportation, the four worked together to employ Divine Abilities. Ferocious, magical faces appeared, shooting toward Meng Hao and devouring Demonic Qi at the same time.

Meng Hao said nothing, nor did he even pay attention to his four pursuers. He held Sun Dahai in one hand and performed an incantation with the other, causing a host of sealing marks to appear on Sun Dahai’s body.

At the same time, he flew away like a specter, completely avoiding the four Nascent Soul Cultivators.

After about ten breaths worth of time passed, Meng Hao placed his hand onto the top of Sun Dahai’s head. Suddenly, a shield appeared around him, whereupon Meng Hao loosened his grip, allowing Sun Dahai to fall into the mist below.

With the shield in place, Sun Dahai would not be affected by the attacks of the Demonic Qi. Next, Meng Hao turned and waves his hand toward his four pursuers. Instantly, Demonic Qi appeared to attack them.

The five of them flitted back and forth with minor teleportations, unleashing endless magical techniques, divine abilities, magical faces, and Demonic Qi. Ou Yunzi and the others were quickly filled with shock. Meng

Hao danced back and forth, his attacks bizarre, causing them to feel more and more frustrated.

“Where did this guy come from? How could he be so weird?”

Even as the four of them were beginning to feel more and more frustrated, two more Nascent Soul Cultivators frowned and teleported down from the remaining group of twelve up above. Now, a combined force of six people was attacking Meng Hao. Six enormous faces appeared and then began to merge together. This killing move, combining the power of all six of them, caused a massive rumbling to fill Heaven and Earth. The sky dimmed and the clouds up above seethed. Meng Hao stopped moving as his black cloak was shredded into pieces. For the first time, his body beneath was revealed to the outside world.

It… was not actually a body! It was a mass of Demonic Qi, congealed into the shape of a body. It was a human-shaped body of Demonic Qi that looked like mist!

When the onlookers saw the body of mist, their minds trembled. The eyes of the six attackers, as well as the ten people up in air, went wide. Their expressions filled with astonishment.

“A Mist Clone!!”

“Impossible! What we’ve been working so hard to kill is actually a Mist Clone!!”

“If a mere Mist Clone is so powerful, then what about his true self… He must be completely fearsome!!”

Sixteen Nascent Soul Cultivators’ faces completely fell. This was especially true of Ou Yunzi, whose face went pale when he thought back to his earlier premonition.

Meng Hao’s misty body began to fade away, but his face was filled with derision and coldness.

“I’ll be back!”

“I’m already here!”

The first sentence was uttered by the disappearing misty figure. The second echoed out from far off in the distance, causing a rumbling that shook everything.

To the people who heard it, it sounded like thunder exploding up into the Heavens.

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# Chapter 493: I Will Give You War!

The sound echoed out like thunder throughout Heaven and Earth. As it did, a three thousand meter long gigantic viper appeared flying through the air!

Standing on top of the viper were several thousand Cultivators. Their eyes flickered with cold glows. This was the Crow Divinity Tribe who, after years of warfare, had been forged into cold-blooded warriors.

None of them spoke a single word. From the elderly to the children, all of them wore grim expressions, ruthless and bloodthirsty. They stared out coldly at the Cultivators of the Eight Branch Alliance….

It was obvious that there were only a few thousand of them. But when the Cultivators of the Eight Branch Alliance looked at them, they seemed like an army of tens of thousands. The closer they came, the more obvious it was that the Crow Divinity Tribe was surrounded by a killing intent that could rock Heaven and Earth!

This intense killing intent was an invisible aura that could manifest after countless enemies had been killed. The fire and blood that had been experienced by the Crow Divinity Tribe had lit a burning madness in them that seemed on the verge of shaking the entire Western Desert.

“Who are they? What Tribe is that?!”

“For a whole Tribe to look like that is something that will never last long in the Western Desert, not even in the Central region. Such character is difficult to forge!”

“They… could it be… don’t tell me it’s caused by the Demon Spirit!?!?”

The sixteen Nascent Soul Cultivators looked over, faces filled with shock. The Crow Divinity Tribe obviously only had a few thousand Cultivators, but their aura was incredibly intense. The killing intent they emanated was too strong, making the Eight Branch Alliance Cultivators feel as if they were being suffocated.

This… was the Crow Divinity Tribe!

They had experienced the fires of war, had been bathed by the flames into a rebirth! A new Crow Divinity Tribe!

The viper flew through the air at top speed. Originally, they should have taken one day longer before arriving. However, the Crow Divinity Tribe had pushed with full force to increase their speed and arrive a day earlier. In the blink of an eye, they were suddenly here!

A man stood on the head of the enormous viper, in front of the Crow Divinity Cultivators. When the Eight Branch Alliance Cultivators saw him, in their hearts, they felt as if they were looking at a god of death.

He wore a green robe, and more than a few white hairs could be seen in his black, floating hair. He emanated the air of a scholar, and yet, his eyes were sharp and cold. His face was as cold as ice, making his aura bizarre to the extreme. It almost seemed as if his entire body was filled with the cold of winter.

His mere presence could cause everything to freeze over. This man was the well-spring of the Crow Divinity Tribe’s killing intent. If you likened the Crow Divinity tribe to the blood which stains a sharp blade, then this man… would be the sharp tip of that blade!

This… was Meng Hao!

His appearance instantly caused the sixteen Nascent Soul Cultivators to begin to pant. Their eyes went wide, and their hearts filled with an instinctual fear. They felt as if they were being submerged by floodwaters as they realized that they recognized his face! His face looked exactly the same as the Mist Clone that they had just killed!

The scene instantly caused the minds of the sixteen Nascent Soul Cultivators to explode with roaring.

The faces of eight Greatfathers instantly fell. Eight High Priests began to pant. Among their number, Ou Yunzai’s pupils constricted. Next to him, the man who looked like a scholar was filled with trepidation. As for the woman in the Lady’s garment, her face was filled with disbelief.

“Who are you people?!” These words were uttered by one of the two most powerful of the sixteen Nascent Soul Cultivators. They echoed out with thunderous power, along with a powerful aura. However, the pressure of this aura could do nothing to suppress the billowing killing intent of the Crow Divinity Tribe.

“We are the Crow Divinity Tribe!” The voices of thousands of members of the Crow Divinity Tribe joined together to roar back in response. The sound of their roar turned into a sound wave even more powerful than thunder and lightning. It shot out from the gigantic viper as they descended upon the Eight Branch Alliance. It echoed out in all directions, shaking the Heavens with such loudness that nothing could compare!

It was as if some shocking giant had let out an enormous shout. A gale force wind sprang up, transforming into an attack which rippled out and sent the mist in the area into chaos.

Even as the roar of the Crow Divinity Tribe rang out, the gigantic viper emitted a cry. The thousands of Crow Divinity Tribe members instantly turned into beams of colourful light that spread out in the air. From down on the ground, the sight of it would make one think of the expression “the Celestial Beauty Scattering Flowers.” Except, these flowers were the color of blood, making it seem as if what was being scattered were spattered drops of blood! 1

Boom!

A massacre started instantly as the thousands of Crow Divinity Tribe members shot down into battle. They had long since grown used to war, to blood, and to slaughter.

In war, there is no speaking. There is no cursing. There are no faceoffs. There is only… fighting!

As the Crow Divinity Tribe members charged into battle, Meng Hao whistled through the air like a meteor as he lead the Crow Divinity Tribe's six Nascent Soul Cultivators to stab directly into the midst of the sixteen Nascent Soul Cultivators of the Eight Branch Alliance.

One of late Nascent Soul Cultivators among the sixteen, an old man, grimly said, "A trifling few thousand. Even if you have some extraordinary qualities, the fact that you dare to come here shows that you truly overestimate your…"

Before he could finish speaking, Meng Hao, looking all the bit a shooting star, waved his right hand, causing all of the Nascent Soul Cultivators, as well as their fellow Tribe members below, to gasp.

60,000 roaring neo-demons spread out to blot out the sky. Big Hairy, the lizard, the red crocodile, the black crows, the green mosquitos, as well as a vast collection of Five Poisons neo-demons, shook the Heavens.

Furthermore, the furiously howling Outlander Beast appeared. A shrill, frenzied squawk could be heard which was the parrot, emanating his haughty air. A garrulous chatter could also be heard coming from somewhere within the neo-demon horde, which was the meat jelly.

The shocking neo-demon horde shot through the air like a tide of beasts, sweeping over everything.

The scene was like a sledgehammer that slammed into the hearts of the Eight Branch Alliance.

"Life or death is on the line. Eight Branches, COUNTERATTACK!" These words were uttered by the red-robed late Nascent Soul stage Cultivator who had just spoken. His face flickered, and his heart filled with regret. However, there was nothing else to be done. He could only let out a furious roar as he shot toward Meng Hao.

The sixteen Nascent Soul Cultivators immediately began to perform incantation gestures as they teleported toward Meng Hao. The glow of magical items rose up around them, as well as savage magical faces. The faces howled as they shot toward Meng Hao.

However, even as they neared, Meng Hao waved his hand. A blood-colored mask suddenly appeared, which he quickly slipped onto his face. He waved his hand again, and an enormous face suddenly materialized around him.

The giant face bore the semblance of none other than Meng Hao himself!

The instant the face appeared, Meng Hao took a step forward. That step caused everything to tremble; the giant Blood Immortal face that now looked like Meng Hao rumbled forward, transforming into a massive attack. Everything shook; of the sixteen Nascent Soul Cultivators, ten could only watch as their magical items shattered into pieces and their divine abilities were crushed. Blood sprayed from their mouths as they were tossed back like kites with their strings cut.

“The great circle of the Nascent Soul stage!!” Shock filled the faces of these ten people, and they didn’t even have the wherewithal to wipe the blood from their mouths.

“You are the ones… who killed my clone!” said Meng Hao coolly. He continued forward, taking a second step. As he did, the gigantic face appeared again. Its closed eyes suddenly opened, and it seemed to be speaking a single, soundless word!

As soon as the word appeared, the other six Nascent Soul Cultivators who remained felt blood pouring out of their mouths. Their minds reeled as if a sharp blade were being stabbed into their brains. The soundless sound wave passed through their minds, causing their entire bodies to shake. Life force essence was even squeezed out of their Nascent Souls.

“He’s halfway to Spirit Severing!” Four of them coughed up blood as they were sent tumbling backward, bodies shaking. Dread washed over them, and intense astonishment filled their eyes.

“If you want to do business, Meng Hao will do business with you. If you want war… then I will give you war!” Meng Hao’s voice was cold as he took a third step. This third step caused flames to spring up on the bodies of the ten Nascent Soul Cultivators who had been thrown backward moments ago. Writhing black smoke began to emanate off of their bodies. The flames of war were now burning away at their life forces.

Even the most powerful of the Eight Branch Alliance, the two old men with the late Nascent Soul Cultivation base, felt their ears ringing. Although they were not sent tumbling back, their minds were filled with waves of roaring, and flames of war appeared on their bodies too.

“Flames of war unify!” The instant Meng Hao spoke the words, a sound like thunder exploding into pieces suddenly rose up. The ten people who were farthest away emit bloodcurdling screams as their bodies exploded. Their Nascent Souls emerged, fearfully trying to flee at the highest speed they could muster. However, before they could barely move at all, they fell to pieces as if they had been crushed.

A cold wind swept over them, and they disappeared.

Ou Yunzi, the man dressed like the scholar, and the woman in the Lady’s robe all felt their bodies collapsing in a cloud of blood and gore. Their Nascent Souls managed to flee off into the distance, where they looked back toward Meng Hao, shaking with fear, their eyes filled with despair.

The two old men of the late Nascent Soul stage had the highest Cultivation bases, but even they coughed up blood and fell backward, bodies shaking as they did their best to prevent from exploding.

Their tens of thousands of fellow Tribe members had originally occupied a position of superiority. But facing up against 60,000 neo-demons caused them to immediately begin to suffer defeat after defeat in the fighting. They had their own neo-demons of course. However, like Meng Hao’s Crow Divinity Tribe, his neo-demons had experienced figurative foul winds and rains of blood. Furthermore, they had been bolstered by Meng Hao’s Demonic Qi on multiple occasions. The neo-demons of the Eight Branch Alliance simply couldn’t compare.

Mournful cries filled the air constantly. The land was soaked with blood. Facing up against the Crow Divinity Tribe, the Eight Branch Alliance despairingly found… that they were incapable of fighting back.

Regardless if it was terms of aura or Cultivation base, they were weaker. When it came to the coldness and bloodthirstiness of the Crow Divinity Tribe, that was something that only the elite members of great Tribes would have. And yet, every single member of the Crow Divinity Tribe was like that.

It was something the Cultivators of the Eight Branch Alliance had never seen or even heard of. They couldn't even imagine that in the great lands of the Western Desert, a Tribe like this could possibly exist!

"This is… a Battle Tribe!"

It was in this moment that Meng Hao's words from moments ago once again echoed out within the minds of the Eight Branch Alliance Cultivators.

"If you want war, I'll give you war!"

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1. This is a Chinese idiom that comes from a Buddhist story of a Celestial/Immortal woman who throws out flower petals to test the moral character of Buddhists. Later it came to be used to describe things floating in the air. There is some really cool wordplay here because the word for "spattered drops of blood" is literally "blood flowers." There are lots of artistic depictions which you can see here

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# Chapter 494: I am Lonelytomb

In the very moment that the slaughter began, when ten of the sixteen Nascent Soul Cultivators were killed, two of the remaining six, the retreating late Nascent Soul old men, exchanged a glance. Their eyes were bloodshot, and they could see the frenzy in each other’s eyes.

They both performed incantations, spit out blood, and the pointed down toward the ground, their expressions savage.

“Activate the spell formation!”

Instantly, a deafening roar could be heard coming from the ground. The mist roiled, and the twenty thousand auction participants surrounded by the mist began to wither rapidly. Their life force was still being congealed into the Demonic Qi. Suddenly, bands of bright light started to appear on the ground.

The bands bent and twisted and then suddenly connected together to reveal an enormous spell formation!

It was exactly the same spell formation Meng Hao had observed earlier, although previously, it had been formed only of Demonic Qi. As it became visible, a column of black mist suddenly shot up in the exact center.

One of the Eight Branch Alliance’s late Nascent Soul Cultivators shouted, “Crow Divinity Tribes, since you’re looking to die, then the Eight Branch Alliance will help you achieve your aim! Henceforth, there will be no Crow Divinity Tribe in the Western Desert! All of you… will be destroyed in spirit and body! You will be expunged!”

A roaring sound filled the air as the black column shrank in on itself and transformed into a black figure.

“Sacred Ancient,” said the second late Nascent Soul Cultivator, his face covered with a vicious expression, “please exterminate these people! Expunge this Tribe!” At the same time, totem tattoos depicting faces appeared on the foreheads of all the Eight Branch Alliance Cultivators on the ground. There was one expression that covered each and every one of those faces.

Awe!

All the totemic faces were filled with intense awe, as well as enmity. Clearly, though, no matter how much hatred they felt, they were incapable of not feeling deep awe for the figure which had coalesced out of the black column of mist.

Tens of thousands of voices suddenly caused Heaven and Earth to shake: “Sacred Ancient, please, let your projection come to exterminate these people! Expunge this Tribe!”

The figure that had congealed out of the mist floated in mid-air. At first it looked blurry, but its features quickly clarified into that of a middle-aged man wearing a black robe. His face was expressionless, and he exuded an archaic aura. After having appeared, he flickered back and forth between being clear and being blurry. Sometimes he would even momentarily disappear before becoming clear again.

This flickering back and forth caused all the Cultivators who looked at him to have a very strange feeling. Their hearts were filled with disorder, and their eyes felt stabbing pain.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. As of this moment, the calling inside of him grew incredibly strong. Furthermore, the Demon Sealing Jade inside of his bag of holding was beginning to shake.

Meng Hao was well aware that this figure was what had been concealed in the center of the spell formation, and was also what had elicited the reaction from the Demon Sealing Jade.

The black-robed man turned his head, and his eyes came to fall upon Meng Hao. Instantly, Meng Hao’s mind filled with a roaring sound, and his vision swam. He no longer saw the Western Desert. Instead, he stood in a world with a red sky. He was in the middle of a battlefield, surrounded by wailing and shouting. He saw a black spear, shooting with incredible speed directly toward him.

His mind and heart trembled, and he had the sudden sensation that they were shattering. Suddenly, his eyes went wide as a finger appeared directly in front of him. The finger belonged to the black-robed man.

Boom!

In the moment of ultimate crisis, Eyeless Larva spun around him rapidly. The incoming finger attack slammed into it, and, in the resulting boom, Meng Hao tumbled backward several hundred meters, blood spraying from his mouth. He came to a stop and then looked up. His eyes narrowed, and a cold glow erupted out from within them.

At the same, up in the invisible vortex, in the world filled with corpses, the black mist on top of the high altar suddenly began to churn. An anxious, indignant howl suddenly echoed out from it.

As the howling echoed out, the expressions on the countless faces of Cultivators and neo-demons in the mist suddenly changed. They distorted and twisted, as if some unknown force was suppressing the howling within the mist.

Simultaneously, the expression on the face of the black-robed man who stood up ahead from Meng Hao also flickered. He looked up toward the vortex, his eyes flashing. Then he looked back toward Meng Hao, and a strange glow could be seen in his eyes.

It appeared to be a look of disbelief. Even more than disbelief, there was apparently an unprecedented excitement and greed.

At the same time, one of the remaining six Nascent Soul Cultivators up in mid-air, an old man of the mid Nascent Soul stage, having seen Meng Hao forced back by the black-robed man’s finger attack, excitedly shouted, “Sacred Ancient, please exterminate this vicious, cruel Cultiva….”

Before he could finish speaking, the black-robed man’s right hand suddenly shot up to form a claw, which he pointed toward the mid Nascent Soul stage Cultivator. The old man suddenly disappeared. When he reappeared, he was shocked to find that the black-robed man’s hand was wrapped around his neck.

“Pipe down,” said the Black Robed man, his voice cool. He squeezed his hand, and a cracking sound could be heard. The mid Nascent Soul stage Cultivator’s eyes went wide as his body instantly withered up. His life force was sucked out by the black-robed man, and in the blink of an eye, he was transformed into nothing more than a desiccated corpse. His eyes were wide open the entire time, and filled with confusion. In the end, a poof could be heard as his body transformed into black ash. He was completely dead, in both body and spirit.

“He… is not someone you qualify to dishonor with your words,” said the black-robed man, his voice soft as he looked at Meng Hao.

Everything suddenly became quiet. The Crow Divinity Tribe members and neo-demons all began to back up. The Eight Branch Alliance Cultivators were stupefied. Suddenly sapped of their will to fight, they edged backward. All eyes were now upon Meng Hao and the black-robed man, both of whom floated there in mid-air.

The remaining five Nascent Soul Cultivators of the Eight Branch Alliance had pale faces. In their recollection, the Sacred Ancient never seemed to possess consciousness. His incisive attacks were almost like that of a puppet. He also never spoke. But today… not only did he speak, but his expression had changed, and he even seemed to be showing emotion. This was beyond anything they had ever imagined, completely unprecedented. They were scared witless, and couldn’t help but back up.

The black-robed man smiled and continued, “Isn’t that right, exalted Demon Sealer?”

His smile was filled with savagery, as well as excitement. The excitement apparently made the flickering of his body even more intense, causing him to look even more bizarre.

The black mist on the altar within the vortex once again churned. The howling sound grew more furious, as if something wished to burst out from within the mist. Despite that, the faces still seemed capable of suppressing it.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever, but inside, he was trembling, as if great waves were slamming against his heart. What was the most shocking of all to him was that he had finally run into someone who instantly recognized that he was a Demon Sealer.

“Who are you?” asked Meng Hao, staring at the man.

“Who am I? You’re asking me who I am?” The black-robed man stared in shock for a moment, and then suddenly laughed. It was an uproarious laughter filled with excitement, as well as a greed that even the Cultivators of the Eight Branch Alliance could also see.

“You’re actually asking who I am?” he asked, continuing to laugh. “You don’t recognize me? Don’t tell me the First Generation Demon Sealer severed the legacy? Don’t tell me….” Suddenly, an arrogant squawk could be heard from behind him.

“Don’t tell me nothin’, bitch!” A multicolored blur suddenly appeared, which headed straight toward the rear end of the black-robed man and… shot directly through.

A pop could be heard as the parrot suddenly appeared on Meng Hao’s shoulder. It glared fiercely at the black-robed man.

“You’re just a Devil Construct, bitch! Dammit! Bitch! Lord Fifth hates Devil Constructs!”

Not willing to be outdone by the parrot, the meat jelly, who was still in the shape of a bell attached to the parrot’s foot, suddenly cried, “Lord Third also hates Devil Constructs! All Devil Constructs should be converted!”

The black-robed man stared in shock. He looked down at his misty body, and then looked back up, his eyes filled with the desire to kill.

It was at this point that another furious cry could be heard from behind the black-robed man: “Outlander!”

The enormous Outlander Beast, in a fair imitation of the parrot, shot directly toward the black-robed man.

Even as it closed in, however, the black-robed man waved his arm behind him and coldly said, “Demonic Shattering.”

He only spoke two words, but in response, massive amounts of invisible Demonic Qi from the surrounding area shot toward him and congealed in front of his right hand. Then, it shattered.

The Outlander Beast let out a miserable shriek as nearly half of its body was shredded into a haze of blood and gore. It appeared to be on the verge of being completely wiped out.

“Beloved concubine!” cried the parrot, its eyes bright red. It suddenly shot forward, its body expanding until it was several dozen meters long. It shot toward the black-robed man, then passed through him, picking up the Outlander Beast flying rapidly off into the distance in retreat.

The black-robed man did not counterattack. Instead, he looked coldly at Meng Hao, smiling as he began to move forward.

“I never imagined that I would meet the current generation of the Demon Sealers…. After I consume you, who else could possibly suppress me!?”

Meng Hao’s heart trembled. His opponent’s aura was monstrous, and emanated shocking ripples. Meng Hao could feel an intense pressure weighing down on him. Panting, he stared at the black-robed man. Just now, everyone else had seen the black-robed man simply lift his hand to cause the Outlander Beast to suddenly shatter into a mass of blood and gore.

Only Meng Hao clearly saw what really happened. This was a new way to use Demonic Qi that he had never seen before!

“So Demonic Qi… can actually be used like that!” It felt like lightning was crashing around inside of his head. It seemed as if the black-robed man’s divine ability had suddenly opened up the door to a new Dao belonging to Demon Sealers.

Meng Hao suddenly began to retreat. At the same time, the black-robed man increased his speed, his expression of viciousness and greed more visible than ever.

“A Demon Sealer separated from his legacy! You would do well to remember my name…. I am Lonelytomb!” The instant the man spoke out his name, the mist in the vortex suddenly emitted a furious shriek. It seemed that it was struggling to burst out; nonetheless, the faces seemed willing to be destroyed to prevent it from escaping.

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# Chapter 495: An Ancient Scripture Seals a Devil!

The black-robed man’s dark, sinister words rang out, carrying a bizarre, devilish power that seemed capable of causing anyone who heard it to be shaken inwardly. All of the Cultivators in the area had blank looks on their faces. Their minds suddenly seemed to be filled with a whirlwind; their memories were thrown into chaos. It was as if they heard what the black-robed man said, but couldn’t remember it.

A feeling of contradiction filled them, as if fantasy and reality were being mixed. All the surrounding Cultivators’ faces paled.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he sensed the fearsomeness of his opponent. He knew that this was a power that he could not fight against. He fell back. The power of his opponent’s words did not affect him too much, but his mind still shook. The reason for this was that the man’s voice was bolstered with Demonic Qi, and transformed into complex magical symbols that spread out in all directions.

“The way I’ve been using Demonic Qi is far too simplistic….” thought Meng Hao, panting. “I never thought it could be used that way!” His eyes glowing brightly, he shot backward, even as the black-robed man flew like lightning toward him.

Suddenly, the black-robed man lifted his hand and pointed at Meng Hao.

Instantly, surrounding Demonic Qi rushed to congeal around the finger. In the blink of an eye, it turned into a spear which screamed through the air toward Meng Hao.

No one else could see this happening. What they saw was the black-robed man pointing at Meng Hao. However, Meng Hao could very clearly see everything. A sudden, intense feeling of grave danger swept over him. However, even as that happened, Meng Hao looked at the black-robed man and suddenly thought of Patriarch Reliance.

“Demon Weapon Lonelytomb, refined from blood by the Third Generation Demon Sealer…. Patriarch Reliance, a Demon sealed by past generations for me, to be my Dao Protector…. I am the Ninth Generation….

“Things didn’t work out well with Patriarch Reliance, but he still wouldn’t kill me. All he could do was run away. This Demon Weapon refined by the Third Generation Demon Sealer wants to consume me so that he can live forever. This situation seems different than that of Patriarch Reliance, but actually, it’s fundamentally very similar!”

Meng Hao took a deep breath and then began to speak.

“Ancient Dao; Tenacious Desire to Seal the Heavens; Benefaction for All in the Mountains; Inevitable Dao Tribulation of the Nine Mountains and Seas; Perennial Will!” He uttered the words of the scripture with a strange, Demonic cadence that gave birth to bizarre ripples. Every word seemed like a unique magical sealing symbol that connected with the Heavens and the starry sky!

As he spoke the words, a look of astonishment and disbelief appeared on the face of the black-robed man. His body trembled and massive amounts of black mist began to fall away from him. A miserable scream emanated from his mouth.

“Demon Sealing Scripture!?” howled the black-robed man. “Impossible! Haven’t you lost your legacy?! How could you know that damned Demon Sealing Scripture!!” He reached toward the vortex in the sky and made a grasping motion. Suddenly, on the altar in the vortex, the faces began to howl and push down onto the mist. For some reason, the black-robed man’s body was no longer in a state of distortion, but rather, stable.

Despite that, his aura was weaker than before, by more than half.

“You’re dead!!” he said, glaring murderously at Meng Hao, well aware that his time was running out. As of now, he could only temporarily suppress the power of the Demon Sealing Scripture. His right hand suddenly lifted up and he pointed again toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as his opponent suppressed the power of the scripture. He gave a cold snort. Before, the man was at the peak of his power, and was able to shatter the Outlander Beast with a single blow. At that time, Meng Hao was no match for him. But now, he was weakened. This Demon Weapon Lonelytomb… was now someone Meng Hao could fight!

“I am a Demon Sealer,” thought Meng Hao, “sensitive to Demonic Qi and able to use it. I should be able to exceed this so-called Demon Weapon Lonelytomb. If he can use the Demonic Qi in that way, then so can I!” He took a deep breath and lifted his hand. He thought back to the scene in which the Outlander Beast had been defeated, and that great door that had suddenly opened in his mind. Instantly, the Demonic Qi in the area rushed toward him and began to congeal. A rumbling sound could be heard as it suddenly slammed into the Demonic Qi spear that was closing in on him.

As the explosion rang out, Meng Hao was sent tumbling backward, blood spraying from his mouth. After he came to a stop, he coughed up three mouthfuls of blood. His face was pale, but he was laughing.

Although his ability to control Demonic Qi was not as refined as that of his opponent, he had now achieved a new understanding.

“Bring it on!” he said, his eyes shining brightly. As he floated there in mid-air, he lifted his right hand, causing more Demonic Qi to rush toward him. It surrounded him, transforming into a gigantic vortex of Demonic Qi.

The black-robed man’s eyes flickered, and inwardly he was shocked. He never imagined that his opponent would be able to learn something new and then make so much progress in such a short period of time. The difference in rudimentary knowledge of Demonic Qi and the ability to use it as it had been just now, was not that of a single step, but more like the huge gap between Heaven and Earth.

“With powers of insight like that, you deserve to be called a Demon Sealer. But if you want to learn how to control Demonic Qi from me…. Too bad! I won’t give you the chance! I don’t have to use Demonic Qi to kill you. I can slay you with only three forms of my divine ability!” The black-robed man made a grasping motion, and a long, black spear magically appeared in his hand.

“First Form, Butcher the Shocked Immortal!” As the man spoke the words, he suddenly waved the spear. It instantly transformed into a black dragon which roared, baring its fangs and brandishing its claws as it twisted majestically in the air. It emanated Demonic Qi as it shot toward Meng Hao. Even as it flew through the air, it flickered, multiplying into nine separate dragons!

Nine deadly dragons shook Heaven and Earth as they shot toward Meng Hao.

The sky dimmed and the cloud seethed as nine black dragons screamed through the air. Visible in their claws were corpses, all of whom emitted mournful wails and screams of agony.

The sound of it pierced Meng Hao’s mind, causing him to think of the slaughter of a battlefield. His eyes glowed brightly as a feeling of unease swept over him. He waved his right hand, and instantly Wooden Time Swords flew out to form the Lotus Sword Formation. A droning sound could be heard as it rotated, sending out the explosive power of Time.

Meng Hao had been using this Time Sword Formation for a long time, and was very familiar with it. The instant it appeared, the air was distorted and twisted. Time changed. As the nine dragons closed in, Meng Hao performed an incantation with both hands and then pointed forward.

The Lotus Time Formation blossomed into the image of a lotus which shot toward the nine dragons.

A huge boom could be heard!

“Time Termination!” he cried, biting his tongue and spitting out some blood. He waved his hand, causing the blood to transform into a blood mist which shot toward the Lotus Time Formation. This heart blood caused the Time power of the sword formation to instantly explode out. At the same time, Meng Hao slipped on the blood-coloured mask, causing a red glow to flicker into being. Next, four wooden swords flew out.

These were the swords that Ji Nineteen had referred to as Immortal Murdering Swords!

The four wooden swords shot forward, merging into the Lotus Sword Formation; instantly a powerful killing intent radiated out…. These dragons must die!

A rumbling sound filled the entire sky and Meng Hao’s body trembled as he retreated backward. The Lotus Sword Formation fell about and the four wooden words were sent spinning. However, the nine dragons also exploded, shattering into countless pieces.

“Second Form, Reincarnation Extermination!” A mysterious glow appeared in the eyes of the black-robed man. His body shot back as he waved his right hand. The black spear instantly transformed into a black beam of light which shot at incredible speed toward Meng Hao.

As it neared, it seemed as if it were shattering the various layers of air that it was shooting through. The deadly spear neared, seemingly capable of shattering everything.

If that were all there were to it, it wouldn’t be a very big deal. However, as the spear got closer, shattering through the successive layers of air, images began to appear. Each of these images seemed to be from a different time. However, in all of the images, Meng Hao could be seen! Different versions of Meng Hao from different times periods, as if these were various reincarnations of him throughout the ages!

His past life, the life before that, all past lives! It was impossible to tell if the images were real or fake, but they certainly looked incredibly realistic!

Meng Hao’s mind trembled as he looked at what appeared to be thousands of past lives. At the same time, he had the feeling that he wasn’t looking at anything. A profound sense of deadly crisis rose up in him, as if any ability to dodge or flee had been sealed off. It was as if this spear was going to destroy all of his thousands of past lives!

He watched the black spear approach, and an enormous pressure weighed down on him, weakening his Cultivation base.

Suddenly, his forehead began to glow. All of the great totem tattoos on his body erupted out. Metal, Wood, Fire, Earth. A sea of flames appeared, along with an enormous tree, a rain of gold, and archaic Frost soil.

As the Reincarnation Extermination spear attack neared, Meng Hao opened his mouth; an azure blur shot out which transformed into an Immortal’s Sword which smashed through the air, emanating shocking Sword Qi. This was not the Dancing Sword Qi, but rather the sword will which was embodied within the sword itself.

“Instead of you severing my reincarnation,” said Meng Hao, “how about I do it myself!” He waved his hand, and a glow of determination appeared in his eyes.

The sword will merged with the power of his four great totems, and then began to emit a shocking azure light. The sword shot forward in the blink of an eye, faster than the black spear, to slice through the reincarnations!

A massive boom lifted up from the Reincarnation Extermination, shaking everything.

The azure Immortal’s Sword was sent flying backward. It transformed into an azure glow that returned into Meng Hao’s mouth. His body trembled and he fell backward, coughing up a huge mouthful of blood. When he looked back up, his gaze was cold as he stared at the black-robed man.

The black-robed man’s heart and mind shook as he glared back at Meng Hao. He also retreated backward, the long, black spear in his hand crumbling into pieces.

“Dammit, first he used that scripture to weaken me. Then, my Demonic Qi attacks, which have fearsome exterminating power on just about anyone, are virtually useless against him because he’s a Demon Sealer. If it weren’t for that, this fight wouldn’t be so troublesome!” The man suddenly reached up to push his hand down on his forehead. His body became blurry, almost illusory. At the same time, another black spear magically appeared in his hand.

The spear was just as black as before, and seemed to be connected to the mist that formed his body, as if they were the same thing.

“Third form….” Before the black-robed man could finish speaking, the killing intent in Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly flared.

“What third form, bitch!?” Meng Hao had already come to notice that in both speech and action, he had been influenced quite profoundly by the parrot…. For example, the words he had just spoken had actually come out quite naturally.

Even as he spoke them, he moved forward, pushing down onto the blood-colored mask. Then he extended his arm, and everything began to turn black. It was as if a massive flag were covering over the sky and the land!

This was Meng Hao’s most powerful magical item, the flag of three streamers!

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# Chapter 496: Dost Thou Dare!?!?

The flag rumbled out, sweeping over everything, distorting the air, causing the sky to shake, rocking the land. In the blink of an eye, the astonishing flag… shot toward the black-robed man.

His face instantly filled with disbelief as he was sent tumbling backward. He was fast, but not fast enough to avoid the flag of three streamers. Booms filled the air as the flag wrapped around his body and began to strangle him to death!

Popping sounds filled the air as the black spear the man held was shattered into pieces. However, after that happened, the man suddenly coalesced out of the air again off in the distance. This time, he was even more illusory and flickered even more. He was clearly much weaker.

“That flag… that flag….” His eyes were wide as he stared at the flag circulating around Meng Hao.

The man’s body had been exploded by the flag, and weakened greatly. Meng Hao strode forward and once again recited the scripture which he had used against Patriarch Reliance, that tool of the Demon Sealers to make death tremble, the Demon Sealing Scripture:

“Ancient Dao; Tenacious Desire to Seal the Heavens; Benefaction for All in the Mountains; Inevitable Dao Tribulation of the Nine Mountains and Seas; Perennial Will!”

The instant the scripture was uttered, the black-robed man once more retreated backward and let out a miserable howl.

“Dammit! Dammit! You’re too despicable!!” he roared. At this point, how could he not understand that Meng Hao’s purpose in using the flag was to distract him from suppressing the scripture? It had been a very, very long time since he had felt frustration such as this. He had originally stood in a position of ultimate superiority, but in the blink of an eye had been severely weakened. His body had been shattered, and before he could even reform himself, he had been suppressed with the scripture as this damned, despicable bastard once again recited the Demon Sealing Scripture.

Almost at the exact same time as the black-robed man began to retreat, Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly flickered. Take advantage of weakness; take the opponent’s life! That was Meng Hao’s doctrine of fighting. Without hesitation, his right hand waved through the air, causing a band of blood-colored light to shoot toward the black-robed man with incredible speed.

Shockingly, within this bloody beam of light was a Blood Clone!

Ji Clan Blood Clone!

As soon as it appeared, everything in the area was stained with a crimson glow. The black-robed man was suppressed by the scripture; his body trembled as the Blood Clone pounced onto him.

His face completely fell; there was a bang, and his body exploded into pieces. Massive amounts of black mist that made up his devilish will and life force, were absorbed by the Blood Clone.

“I won’t accept this!!” Off in the distance, the black-robed man once again appeared, this time, even weaker than before. He raised his head up and howled. He really couldn’t accept the situation. In his former peak of power, he could easily fight back against even this Blood Clone. But now, he had been weakened even further.

Instantly, a feeling of imminent death flared up in his mind. He could never have possibly imagined that a day would come in which he would actually be slain.

As the Blood Clone closed in on him again, madness filled his eyes. He suddenly raised his hand and pointed toward the vortex up in the sky.

“Lonelytomb!” he howled.

As the words echoed out, his body flashed. At the same time, the mist on the altar up in the vortex began to roil. It seemed to be struggling with the faces that existed on its surface. However, the faces suppressed it with the same insanity as before.

As they suppressed the mist, massive amounts of life force and Demonic Qi began to emanate out from the tens of thousands of people that had been surrounded by the mist of the Eight Branch Alliance. All of these Cultivators who had come to participate in the auction began to tremble. Their bodies withered and they aged rapidly. Their life force oozed out from their orifices to merge with Demonic Qi, which then shot toward the whirlpool.

The life force of tens of thousands of people transformed into countless bands of Qi which shot into the whirlpool. After it was madly consumed by the faces; suddenly, nearly half of the faces suddenly shot out from within the mist. They… charged out from within the vortex, shooting through the sky toward the black-robed man.

As they left the vortex, the mist on the altar began to emit intense howls. It was as if there was something inside struggling madly to break out from being sealed.

In the blink of an eye, the faces reached the black-robed man and began to circulate around him. They were filled with cruelty, madness and a thirst for blood as they fused into the black-robed man. As they did, his aura rose up, increasing with shocking intensity.

A billowing black aura roiled, filled with massive amounts of vicious faces. Each one of these faces was a totem toward which the Eight Branch Alliance Cultivators exercised faith.

“I am Lonelytomb, I am a Devil Construct…. I am Demon Weapon Lonelytomb, formed from the grievances of the lives I have exterminated throughout the countless years, a Devil Construct!

“Lonelytomb destroys, the Devil Construct rises!” A strange light shone in the eyes of the black-robed man. His aura suddenly exploded out, and black Qi filled the area. The Ji Clan Blood Clone suddenly stopped in its tracks, staring at the black-robed man. It seemed to have sensed something threatening.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, and a look of unprecedented concentration appeared on his face.

It was at this moment that suddenly, beam after beam of colourful light appeared off in the distance. Suddenly, tens of thousands of Cultivators suddenly appeared.

These were the Cultivators from the local Tribes that were after the Crow Divinity Tribe to rob its Demon Spirit. After they appeared, their killing intent soared to new heights. However, when they saw the condition of the battlefield, they couldn’t help but gasp and suddenly grow silent.

Their eyes were instantly fixed on Meng Hao and the black robed man who was billowing with a massive black aura.

“DIE!” cried the black-robed man, taking a step forward. He lifted his right hand, causing the black Qi to seethe and then transform into an enormous, ferocious face which shot toward Meng Hao.

At the same time, more black Qi swirled out and shot toward the Blood Clone.

Meng Hao slipped the blood-colored mask back on. A glint of determination could be seen as he took a deep breath, flashed an incantation gesture with this right hand, and then pointed out.

“Without a face!”

An equally large face suddenly appeared, which was none other than the Blood Immortal divine ability. It was Meng Hao’s own face which shot through the air toward the face of black Qi, which was formed from countless smaller vicious faces.

Shocking rumbling filled the air as Meng Hao spoke again.

“A single word!” Instantly, the lips of the face he had summoned began to move. Sound waves rippled out.

“Flames of war unify!” He lifted both hands up and then pushed them toward the ground. Immediately smoke rose up in all directions, along with something that looked like the flames of war. This was the third form of the Blood Immortal legacy.

Amidst the booming sounds, Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a brilliant light.

“I need… your faith power!” he cried out. One by one, the members of the Crow Divinity Tribe began to kowtow. The totem tattoos on their body, which were part of Meng Hao, began to glow with light.

“Sundered clouds….” Boundless faith power poured into Meng Hao from all directions. It exploded in intensity, allowing Meng Hao to utilize something he had never used before, the fourth form of the Blood Immortal legacy!

The sundered clouds from “sundered clouds, a bloody rain, seas that cover the sky!”

Sundered clouds! Clouds that were once whole but then sundered. The power of these sundered clouds would give rise to a wind of sundered clouds that could crush Heaven and Earth. This power clearly vastly exceeded that of the first three forms of the Blood Immortal legacy. The shocking intensity of the power caused countless layers of clouds to suddenly spring out around Meng Hao. They spread out, causing a thick fog to fill the entire area.

This fog, was actually made of clouds.

The power of sundered clouds came from… the breaking of clouds!

Rumbling echoed out as the cloud fog in the area suddenly looked as if it were being ripped apart by giant, invisible hands. They shattered, and in that instant of shattering, the face that had been magically summoned by the black-robed man’s divine ability, suddenly fell to pieces.

The black-robed man staggered back, still unable to accept the situation. He was now only able to wield thirty percent of the power of his Cultivation base. The rest had been constantly weakened during the course of the battle.

When he saw his magic once again being shattered, he lifted his head up and howled. Both hands performed an incantation gesture, and once again, roughly half of the faces on the mist in the vortex flew out and fused into his body. Yet again, his aura exploded out.

His face suddenly grew incredibly vicious, and he pointed down toward the tens of thousands of auction participants down on the ground.

Desolate shrieks resulted as all of the Cultivators, with the exception of Sun Dahai who was protected by Meng Hao’s shield, had their life forces completely sucked out of their bodies and fused into the Demonic Qi. The Demonic Qi, and even the mist that surrounded the Cultivators, all shot toward the black-robed man.

As the mist was sucked away, it revealed tens of thousands of desiccated corpses lying about everywhere!

The black-robed man howled as the mists fused into his body, causing his Cultivation base to begin to recover. He lifted his hand and made a snatching gesture toward Meng Hao.

In response to this snatching gesture, black mist exploded out from his body to transform into an enormous hand three thousand meters wide that shot toward Meng Hao.

“A bloody rain!” said Meng Hao, performing a double-handed incantation gesture. At this critical moment, he employed the fifth form of the Blood Immortal divine ability. Under Meng Hao’s control, the Blood Clone exploded, transforming into countless beams of bloody light that shot toward Meng Hao. They fused with the bloody rain that Meng Hao had just summoned, causing the entire area to actually… rain with blood.

Every single drop in this monstrous rain of blood was filled with the power of the Blood Immortal divine ability. It all shot through the air toward the mist hand summoned by the black-robed man.

The sight of it caused everyone in the area to be shocked to the core. A boom rang out that could be heard for tens of thousand of kilometers in every direction. Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth as he was sent tumbling backward. His divine ability collapsed. The bloody rain flew out in all directions. The Blood Clone was now listless. The black-robed man’s body trembled as he was yet again weakened to the point that it seemed it might disappear at any moment. Because he had been weakened by the scripture, this battle was turning out to be quite challenging. However, victory was in sight. His face twisted savagely, he went all out, causing another black mist hand to shoot toward Meng Hao.

“Die, Demon Sealer!!”

It was at this exact moment that….

“Devil Construct, dost thou dare!?!?” An enraged voice echoed out like thunder, seemingly containing the might of the Heavens. It came from within the world of the vortex, like a raging torrent emerging from within the black mist on the altar.

As the voice exploded out, the remaining faces that were trying to suppress the black mist suddenly emitted miserable shrieks. They instantly collapsed into pieces, causing the mist to suddenly spread out in all directions to reveal… a pale white spear that was stabbed into the middle of the altar.

This spear was… the true Demon Weapon Lonelytomb!!

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# Chapter 497: Devil Weapon!

The spear stabbed into the altar was roughly ten meters long!

Its name was Lonelytomb!

Demon Weapon Lonelytomb!

Refined from blood by the Third Generation Demon Sealer, it was impossible to say how many Cultivators and how many ancient Demons had been transformed into a sea of blood by this spear!

The length of ordinary spears could not compare to the length of this spear. It was completely pale white, as if it were constructed from bones. There were no decorative patterns on its surface, no magical symbols. The only thing that could be seen were faint marks that looked like blood vessels, making its appearance very bizarre.

An indescribable aura emanated out from the long spear, shaking Heaven and Earth. It caused the mist in the world of the vortex to tremble. The aura emanated out from the vortex in to the Western Desert.

Amidst the rumbling drone, the spear did not move. It seemed as though it could not leave the world of the vortex. However a beam of pale white light shot out from it, as fast as lightning. In the blink of an eye, it shot out from within the world of the vortex.

In that instant, the black-robed man’s face fell. His body trembled violently as countless faces burrowed out from within him. All of these faces wore unprecedented expressions of awe and terror.

Countless screeches could be heard, rising up into the sky.

The pale white light neared with indescribable speed, piercing through the black hand that was shooting toward Meng Hao. In that instant, the shocking, powerful hand of black mist acted as if it had just been slammed into by fire. It dissolved in an instant, causing the countless black faces within to screech, their expressions that of terror and unprecedented hopelessness.

In life, they had been killed by this spear. After death, they had congealed into a Devil Construct, but were still in complete fear of the spear.

Having been killed by the spear, they would never be reincarnated. All generations were imprisoned inside it. There was not a more fearsome punishment that could be inflicted upon them!

A boom echoed out as the huge mist hand was pierced and destroyed by the beam of pale white light. After, the pale white light shot over toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s mind was filled with roaring. Moments ago, his body had been on the verge of exploding with Alcohol Qi. His last bit of Dancing Sword Qi had been fermenting for some time, a trump card which exceeded the life-saving power of the Agarwood!

However, there was no need for him to do a thing. The pale white light appeared, Demon Weapon Lonelytomb personified. Heaven and Earth shook with rumbling roars!

Meng Hao looked at the beam of white light in front of him and felt a powerful calling. The calling felt familiar as it filled his mind. He was calling this spear, and the spear was calling him!

With this sudden appearance of good fortune, Meng Hao was now thinking clearly. He lifted his hand up and took hold of the pale white light. Instantly, it transformed into an illusory, but extremely realistic… pale white spear!

As he gripped the pale white Lonelytomb, a rumbling suddenly filled his mind.

“Regardless of which generation Demon Sealer you are,” said an archaic voice. “I am Demon Weapon Lonelytomb, refined from blood by the Third Generation Demon Sealer, sealed in the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane. My will sleeps, and thus, the Devil Construct was born….

“The Devil Construct is also me. As for my life, from the moment I was forged, it was determined that I would have a total of nine Masters. From the First Generation Demon Sealer to the Ninth, these were to be my Masters!

“Whichever generation you are, come to the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane. I’m waiting for you here…. The Third Generation Demon Sealer completed his ancient Dao and broke through the Nine Mountains and Seas. However, in that moment, he was buried in the starry sky. As for his death… there are clues that have been left behind that relate to a shocking secret. His legacy is here with me…. I can’t hold on for very long. You… must come here!

“At the moment, I am only capable of sending out this small bit of my life will. In a moment, I will return to my slumber and conserve my will. I will wait for you or other Demon Sealers to come. Exalted Demon Sealer, grasp my life will, recite the ancient Demon Sealing Scripture, and subdue this Demon Construct.

“It will be… your way of communicating with me in the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane! If you are unable to come to the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane in this life, then pass this spear down as a legacy, all the way to the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer!

“Before the Third Generation Demon Sealer died, he said… that the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer, if he is not killed, will be the pinnacle! He will have the chance to defy the Heavens and change fate, he will be the last ray of hope for the great Nine Mountains and Seas!” The voice sounded weak as it echoed out in his mind. Within his bag of holding, the Demon Sealing Jade began to shudder, as if it could feel the death of the Third Generation Demon Sealer. A sense of grief suddenly emanated out from it.

As the sound faded away from Meng Hao’s mind, he slowly looked up.

“I… am the Ninth Generation.”

As he spoke the words, his eyes shone with a strange light as he looked over at the black-robed man, who was retreating in astonishment.

“Ancient Dao; Tenacious Desire to Seal the Heavens; Benefaction for All in the Mountains; Inevitable Dao Tribulation of the Nine Mountains and Seas….” He spoke the words slowly, and as he did, he raised up the pale white spear. A white glow surged out of it which stabbed toward the black-robed man.

Meng Hao’s voice was filled with strange power. Others could not sense it or hear it, but to the black-robed man, or even Patriarch Reliance, it was like a magical curse!

The black-robed man let out a miserable shriek as his body began to collapse into pieces. Black mist spread out in all directions.

He raised his head and let out a mad howl toward the sky.

“Shut up! Shut up! Stop reciting it!!” he cried. His eyes were bright red as he shot toward Meng Hao in an attempt to kill him. However, before he could even get within three hundred meters of Meng Hao, he let out a horrible shriek, and his body rapidly began to dissipate.

He was struck through and through with fear and astonishment. He suddenly turned to flee off into the distance, no longer harboring any thoughts of killing Meng Hao. The only thought that was in his mind was the same thought that rose up in the mind of Patriarch Reliance that year. He must flee, and never lay eyes on Meng Hao again.

“…. Perennial Will!” Meng Hao completed reciting the ancient Demon Sealing Scripture almost in the same moment that the man made to flee. As he spoke the final words, the black-robed man let out a miserable shriek, filled with complete mournfulness. His body continued to collapse. He was so weak that he couldn’t evade now. His eyes filled with shock and desperation, and he completely lost control of himself. It was as if an enormous, irresistible gravitational force had sprung into being from the long spear in Meng Hao’s hand. The black-robed man could not stop himself from being pulled relentlessly toward Meng Hao.

“You damnable League of Demon Sealers! The Nine Mountains and Seas cannot tolerate you! You all deserve to meet horrible deaths!”

As the man shrieked, Meng Hao looked at him with ice-cold eyes. Then, he slowly began to recite the second verse of the Demon Sealing Scripture.

“Ancient Dao; Study Demons of Myriad Variations; Tread not the Path of Immortals; Face the Tribulation of the Nine Mountains and Seas….”

Even more black mist poured out from the black-robed man’s body. His miserable shrieks sounded out as he tumbled toward Meng Hao, completely unable to control his movements. There were now 3,000 meters between the two of them.

2,500. 2,000. 1,500….

The black-robed man howled as his body collapsed more. Suddenly, massive amounts of faces could be seen within his body. Each of the faces was filled with savagery and also fear as the emanated out and attempted to pull the man’s body away.

“… My Dao is Eternal; The Masses Have Erred but My Dao is True….”

The words echoed out like words from the Heavens. When they reached the black-robed man, the faces around him shrieked and twisted, as if they were about to be blotted out. The black-robed man was pulled closer.

1,200 meters. 1,000 meters…. 300 meters!!

The black-robed man was thoroughly mad, filled with a sense of deadly crisis. He roared, causing the tens of thousands of Eight Branch Alliance Cultivators in the area to begin to tremble. Suddenly, the totems on the bodies of over a thousand of them suddenly began to suck away at their life force. In the blink of an eye, they were transformed into withered, dried up corpses. Their totems flew out, transforming into blood-colored faces that shot toward the black-robed man.

More and more Eight Branch Alliance Cultivators were affected in this way. Popping sounds filled the air along with bloodcurdling screams. In the blink of an eye, more than ten thousand Cultivators died miserable deaths as they were transformed into desiccated corpses.

Their life forces, their very lives themselves, were sucked dry by the totems, which then flew out toward the black-robed man. They circulated around him, transforming into a power that resisted the force which was pulling him toward Meng Hao.

“Exalted Sacred Ancient….” The remaining five Nascent Soul Cultivators of the Eight Branch Alliance all wore expressions of grief. They could sense the totems in their bodies sucking away at their life force. The saw their fellow Tribe members dying. In the space of just a few breaths, more than ten thousand Tribe members became dried up corpses.

This feeling of grief, the feeling caused by a Sacred Ancient exterminating its own Tribe, caused the foundation of the entire Eight Branch Alliance to collapse.

What was happening completely exceeded the imaginations of the other Cultivators who were watching on. That was especially true when it came to the black-robed man. His mighty existence caused them to feel as if they were suffocating. However, despite his incredible power, he had been forced down into his current situation. All of a sudden, these tribes felt complete astonishment regarding the owner of the Demon Spirit, Meng Hao.

Rumbling filled the air. By this point, more than ninety percent of the Eight Branch Alliance Cultivators were dead. Massive amounts of their totems circulated around the black-robed man, causing his body to suddenly have the power to resist, and stop moving.

Just as the black-robed man was heaving a sigh of relief, and gathering his power to make a final attempt to flee, Meng Hao’s eyes glittered with killing intent and he uttered the final part of the second line of the Demon Sealing Scripture.

"… Perennial Will!"

Something like a thunderclap exploded out within the black-robed man. It transformed into a bloodcurdling scream. The faces surrounding him all began to collapse. His body flew through the air like a shooting star.

300 meters. 150 meters. 30 meters…. In the blink of an eye, the black-robed Devil Construct let out a roar of despair as its body slammed into the pale white spear. He was turned completely into a black mist which was then absorbed into the spear.

The color of the pale white spear began to change. Soon, it was completely black. Furthermore, it was no longer illusory, but real!

As of now, it was no longer Demon Weapon Lonelytomb, but rather, a Devil Weapon!

Sealing marks with the power to obliterate will exploded out within the spear. The black-robed man's will was erased. This Devil Construct was now not a construct. Only a Devil was left behind!

As Meng Hao hefted the spear, a rumbling sound filled the area. A black wind suddenly kicked up, causing his hair to whip about. His green robe now looked completely black because of the black wind.

With the Devil Spear in hand, the black wind transformed into a black mist that spread out in all directions. Within the mist could be seen thousands upon thousands of faces, twisted with pain and roaring out. They were fearsome, but also filled with an unprecedented awe of Meng Hao.

Whoever held the spear would have control of the countless vengeful ghosts of those slain by Lonelytomb!

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# Chapter 498: Absorbing the Eight Branches

Thousands upon thousands of faces shot out in all directions. They had no choice other than to submit to Meng Hao, which of course caused the remaining thousands of members of the Eight Branch Alliance to begin to tremble as the totems in their bodies forced them to kneel down and bow to Meng Hao.

The five Nascent Soul Cultivators, including the two of the late Nascent Soul Stage, were also shaking, unable to control themselves as they began to kowtow to Meng Hao.

Totems are the source of incredible power to Western Desert Cultivators, and also the reason why there are so many more high level Cultivators there than in the Southern Domain. At the same time, though… they are also a deadly weakness!

When a totem dies, any Cultivators who exercise faith in it will experience a drop in Cultivation base. Furthermore, when a totem surrenders, so will the Tribe members connected to it. This is a condition, perhaps even a restriction.

In some ways, Western Desert Cultivators are actually slaves of their totems!

Were it not for that, the Western Desert, given its vast population, would have long since expanded out of their lands and overrun the Southern Domain.

A perfect example was this situation; now that Meng Hao had the Devil Spear, he was in control of the totemic faces. You could say in some ways that Meng Hao was now the Sacred Ancient of the Eight Branch Alliance!

“Sacred Ancient!” cried the members of the Crow Divinity Tribe. Expressions of excitement could be seen on their faces as they kowtowed to him. The surrounding tens of thousands of neo-demons roared, causing the ground to shake and their aura to shine brightly.

The other Tribes who had come for the Demon Spirit were shaken, and their faces flickered with various expressions of fear and astonishment. They had personally witnessed Meng Hao’s battle right now, and also saw the Eight Branch Alliance capitulate. Considering all of that, they no longer felt themselves to be in any position of superiority.

Meng Hao floated in mid-air, clutching the Devil Spear in hand. He looked at the vortex up in the sky as it slowly shrank down and then disappeared. In the moment that it winked out, an archaic voice filled his mind.

“I am waiting for you in the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane….”

The winds and clouds up above tumbled and turned, and the vortex was gone. Everything was returned to normal. The invisible vortex that no one except for Meng Hao could see, was now thoroughly vanished.

Meng Hao looked around thoughtfully, his eyes shining brightly, the Devil Spear gripped tightly in his hand.

“Ladies and Gentlemen who have come for the Demon Spirits, shall we fight, or not?” His cool voice echoed out, causing the Crow Divinity Tribe members’ killing intent to radiate out visibly. The neo-demon horde roared. They were like a crossbow, cocked and ready to fire!

The Greatfathers from the other Tribes felt their hearts pounding. Meng Hao’s power seemed sharper than a needle, and they didn’t possibly dare to try to fight back against him. They exchanged glances, and then one of their number quickly said, “You misunderstood, we actually came here to exterminate the Eight Branch Alliance…. However, they seem to have been absorbed by you, Fellow Daoist, so we'll take our leave now."

After he finished speaking, the others voiced their agreement. The Tribe members were surreptitiously edging backward. From the look of things, there would be no more fighting, although it was impossible to tell for sure.

Meng Hao looked around at the Tribes, and then slowly said. "Each Tribe will leave behind ten thousand neo-demons, then you may leave." Instantly, a black mist began to spread out from the Devil Spear.

When the Greatfathers heard his words, they frowned and hesitated. Finally, a cold snort could be heard from one of the Greatfathers off in the distance.

"Are you kidding? If my Radiance Sifting Tribe wants to leave, nobody can stop us!" The Greatfather of the Radiance Sifting Tribe was actually an old woman, making her a Greatmother. Having spoken, she flicked her sleeve and began to fly away with her thousands of Tribe members.

She truly was confident that if she left with her Tribe, there was no one that could do anything to stop them. Even though Meng Hao had the Devil Spear, and was clearly mighty, he had just experienced a difficult battle. It was impossible for him not to have sustained injuries; obviously, he was just posturing.

Believing herself to have seen through his ruse, the idea of giving up ten thousand neo-demons seemed like a joke. Not only would she not hand them over, she would leave to spread news about the Demon Spirit to some of the great Tribes, who would no doubt compensate her.

Seeing the reaction of the Radiance Sifting Tribe, Meng Hao began to move forward, his expression completely the same as usual. He hefted the Devil Spear and then tossed it straight out ahead of him. Instantly, a shocking screaming sound could be heard as it shot through the air. Black mist roiled out from inside, which in the blink of an eye, transformed into a black cloud.

Inside the black cloud were countless savage faces, howling as they shot toward the retreating Tribe. The Greatmother's face flickered, and her eyes went wide. However, she merely let out a cold harrumph as, together with the Tribe's five Nascent Soul Priests, she shot to meet the black mist.

Power exploded from the Cultivation bases of all six people as they combined forces to attack the black mist.

“Break!” cried the Greatmother.

A massive boom could be heard which shook everything. The black mist spread out and slammed into the six. The five Priests' faces fell, and blood shot out of their mouths. Their bodies tumbled back like kites with their strings cut. However, before they could fall back too far, the mist had surrounded them. Vast quantities of savage faces pounced onto their bodies. The sound of biting and chewing mixed with blood-curdling screams, creating a ghastly scene.

Within the space of a few breaths, the five Priests had been completely consumed. The old woman coughed up blood as she retreated back toward her other Tribe members. When she reached them, she lifted her head up to the sky and howled as she slapped her bag of holding to produce a tortoise shell.

She tossed it out and spit a mouthful of blood onto it. Instantly, it began to spin and expand, growing to the size of several thousand meters. An ancient, simplistic aura emanated out from it, along with countless streams of glowing magical symbols, as it spread out to surround her and the members of the Radiance Sifting Tribe.

“Let's see you break through this!” she said hoarsely, a ferocious expression on her face.

Seeing this tortoise shell caused the surrounding Greatfathers from the other Tribes to look on with serious expressions. They recognized the tortoise shell, and were instantly shocked.

“It has a totemic aura…. That’s the corpse of a totemic Sacred Ancient, refined into a protective treasure. Once it’s activated, nothing can break through it. With that, they should be able to leave this place with ease!”

“No wonder the Radiance Sifting Tribe dared to defy that fearsome Cultivator. It turns out they have a….”

Even as the surrounding experts recognized the tortoise shell, the Devil Spear shot toward it. The black mist arrived first, slamming into the tortoise shell, causing a massive rumbling to fill the sky. The tortoise shell immediately began to radiate bright light, but it didn’t collapse. The black mist began to spread out and cover the tortoise shell.

When the members of the Radiance Sifting Tribe saw this, they were shocked, especially the Greatmother.

“This enemy of the Radiance Sifting Tribe….” Before she could even finish speaking, the Devil Spear within the black mist arrived. In the blink of an eye, it reached the tortoise shell.

A massive boom rose up to the Heavens, causing the wind and clouds to churn and the sky to dim. A shock wave rumbled out from the tortoise shell, and cracking sounds could be heard as fissures spread out from the area the spear had slammed into. This continued for the space of three breaths, after which a huge roar could be heard as the tortoise shell exploded into countless pieces.

The Devil Spear continued on its way, radiating killing intent and black mist. It shot in… stabbing directly through the disbelieving Greatmother and heading toward the other Tribe members behind her. Black mist spread out, enveloping the thousands of Radiance Sifting Tribe members. Countless excited faces appeared, spreading out in all directions, clearly thirsting for blood. Just when they were about to begin feeding, some invisible force seemed to hold them back.

Meng Hao looked at the remaining thousands of Radiance Sifting Tribe members within the shattered tortoise shell. “Surrender?” he said slowly, “Or be buried alive with the rest of the dead?”

After a moment of brief silence, the thousands of Radiance Sifting Tribe members chose to surrender. They wiped out their totem tattoos, exercised faith in Meng Hao, and became an auxiliary branch of the Crow Divinity Tribe.

The Greatfathers of the rest of the Tribes, fearful that Meng Hao would change his mind, immediately began to hand over hordes of ten thousand neo-demons. Then, they left as quickly as possible. Considering they had abided by his demands, Meng Hao did nothing to block their way.

The path to this point had been one of killing. Even though Meng Hao had developed a cruel and cold heart, he was now extremely tired.

As the other Tribes made their way off into the distance, the members of the Eight Branch Alliance stood there quietly as they too became a sub-Tribe of the Crow Divinity Tribe. As of this moment, the Crow Divinity Tribe was now over 10,000 strong.

At the same time, Meng Hao’s neo-demon horde was bolstered up. He now had 150,000 neo-demons!

It was a huge neo-demon horde, but in reality, many of them were low-level neo-demons. Even by absorbing Demonic Qi, there was no way for them to experience incredible growth in a short period of time. 150,000 neo-demons required a terrifying amount of food to sustain. The actual number that could fight in battle was only about 100,000. The rest became food.

Everything that had belonged to the Eight Branch Alliance now belonged to the Crow Divinity Tribe. They had three enormous flying magical items as well as vast quantities of resources. All of this only served to cause the Crow Divinity Tribe to be even more powerful.

Several days later, all members of the Crow Divinity Tribe mounted onto the enormous ship-shaped flying magical item. It whistled through the air, streaking through the clouds as it headed south at top speed.

The current power of the Crow Divinity Tribe far exceeded that of the previous five Tribes of the Crow Divinity. Although it could not currently compare to the great Tribes, they could now be considered to be at the peak of the mid-sized Tribe range.

As far as their migration went, they had now traveled about a third of the way to their destination. The rest of their path would take them through the Central Region of the Western Desert, to the South Region. The end of the path would of course be the Black Lands!

The parrot, in compliance with Meng Hao's request, began to pass on to the Crow Divinity Tribe the same spell formation that it had taught to the Church of the Golden Light!

Of course, the parrot completely agreed with the idea. In fact, because of the fact that Meng Hao wasn't paying attention, it had actually already started to teach the spell formation. Now that Meng Hao directly brought up the notion, it immediately got very excited.

"Little Haowie, don't you worry," it said, eyes shining brightly. "My dream is that, upon entering the Black Lands, there will be people there shouting the name of Lord Fifth. Then, my two great armies will join together to become like my wings!"

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# Chapter 499: An Old Friend

The violet rain fell harder.

Half a year later, the lakes in the Western Desert North region all connected, transforming into a great, Violet Sea. The great sea exterminated all life and cut off all spiritual energy.

The North region… was now completely devoid of any neo-demons. There was nothing alive. Any Tribes which had chosen not to migrate were now buried at the bottom of the sea.

The entire Western Desert North region was covered with a surging, Violet Sea, beneath the surface of which, mountain peaks were just barely visible.

Now that the North region had become a sea, the Western Desert Apocalypse exploded out with its first true display of shocking power. Massive, powerful waves rolled across the sea, spreading out to smash into and collapse the mountains separating the Central region from the North region. As the mountains fell, the Violet Sea expanded out into the East, West and Central regions.

As the Violet Sea expanded, the lakes in the East, West, and Central regions began to combine. The seawaters gradually grew more majestic, and rose with increasing speed.

The shaping and expanding of the sea was like a whip, lashing at the backs of the migrating Tribes. They had to move faster, and plunder more.

The number of dead and wounded… was impossible to count.

The effect of the spiritual energy being cut off spread throughout the Central region, as well as into the East and West regions. With the exception of the South Region, spiritual energy everywhere grew rarer and rarer.

Because of the lack of spiritual energy, the Cultivation base of Cultivators fell and led to deaths. Such deaths caused the totemic Sacred Ancients of the various Tribes to begin to weaken.

The weakening of the Sacred Ancients in turn caused the Tribe members to weaken. As such, any deaths caused a vicious cycle that was impossible to break out of.

During the half-year period, the Crow Divinity rode its flying magical item through the Western Desert Central region. They experienced dozens of battles, during each of which, their opponents came at them with the full power of an entire Tribe.

A defeat in any of these battles represented the destruction of an entire Tribe. And yet, the battles could not be avoided.

That was because the Crow Divinity Tribe had a flying magical item, which other Tribes wanted. They also possessed a Demon Spirit. As soon as a Demon Spirit appeared, other Tribes would go mad with greed. Even Meng Hao was worried about this phenomenon.

During the half year, Meng Hao’s neo-demon horde shrank to 70,000, and that was even after bolstering them up along the way. That having been said, these 70,000 neo-demons were incredibly powerful.

As for Tribe members, there were 8,000. However, those 8,000 Tribe members were now veterans of countless battles!

Meng Hao ended up getting seriously injured twice during the half year period. However, with deliberate effort, he was able to cause his totemic power to grow more refined. Furthermore, his control of Demonic Qi reached a completely new realm.

It is only in that fine divide between life and death that battle prowess can be elevated. In addition, it was during this time that Meng Hao continued along on his path of enlightenment regarding the Violet Rain. Although his progress was slow, he was gradually getting more and more results.

Because the violet rain cut off the spiritual energy of Heaven and Earth, Meng Hao's superiority grew even more obvious. That was why it was so easy for him to slaughter a late Nascent Soul stage Cultivator.

The thinning of the spiritual energy actually allowed Meng Hao to gradually increase his own power.

Meng Hao currently stood at the prow of the magical flying ship. His face was pale, and his body somewhat thin. The years of campaigning had truly changed him. He looked off into the distance and then sighed, "The day when there is no spiritual energy left at all in the Western Desert, is the day when I will truly make my rise."

During the half-year period, three other momentous events occurred. Three Demon Spirits appeared in the great lands of the Western Desert. It instantly drew the attention of various tribes, and resulted in plundering and fighting.

Meng Hao was well aware of what happened when a Demon Spirit suddenly appeared; that was exactly what had led to his two serious injuries along the campaign trail.

However, these other Demon Spirits relieved some of the pressure placed on Meng Hao and the Crow Divinity Tribe. No longer were they being attacked from all sides. They only continued to grow stronger and stronger.

Meanwhile, about half a month's journey up ahead of Meng Hao, three black flying machines that looked like swords were shooting through the air.

They were pitch black, and emanated pulsing, cold auras. Each of these sword-shaped magical ships were several thousands meters long, and were covered with black-robed Cultivators, all seated cross-legged.

Their faces were expressionless and their eyes closed as they sat in meditation. Occasionally, some of them would open their eyes, and a bright flashing could be seen.

Shockingly, these Cultivators’ totem tattoos were all swords!

Huge black flying swords and totem tattoos depicting weapons were not things frequently seen in the Western Desert. In fact, in all of the great lands of the Western Desert, there was only one tribe had had black sword totems…. This Tribe was obviously the great Cloud Sky Tribe.

They had a Spirit Severing Patriarch, and were the most powerful Tribe in the Western Desert Central region. The Five Poisons Tribe had acquired the opportunity to become an auxiliary branch of this Tribe, but before the emissary could even reach them, they had been wiped out by the Crow Divinity Tribe.

Of the three black sword magical items, one flew in the lead position. Sitting cross-legged at the very tip of the sword was an old man. Unlike the other Tribe members, his robe was white. He had the bearing of a transcendent being, and proud expression covered his face. Sitting on either side of him were two middle-aged men who wore cautious, obsequious smiles on their faces.

“How much longer?” asked the transcendent-looking, white-robed old man, his voice cool. In both his facial expression and temperament, this man manifested an aloof proudness. It was as if years of being in a position similar to royalty had ingrained itself onto his very personality.

This was especially true of his transcendent aura. Each and every one of the members of the great Cloud Sky Tribe had looks of awe on their faces when they looked at him.

One of the middle-aged men sitting next to him replied, “Grandmaster Zhou, I’m happy to report that in approximately five days, we will reach that despicable Crow Divinity Tribe. Grandmaster Zhou, it is truly an honor for the Main Tribe to send you to direct the military operations of the Battle Branch.”

The Cloud Sky Tribe was a great Tribe, and commanded thirteen auxiliary Tribes. The Cultivators on these three black swords belonged to one of those thirteen Tribes, a Battle Tribe. As for this transcendent-looking old man, if Meng Hao were here, he would definitely have a strange expression on his face. He would instantly recognize the man to be Zhou Dekun.

Zhou Dekun, Furnace Lord of the Violet Fate Sect's East Pill Division. Zhou Dekun… had lived quite an odd life. He had drifted from place to place, and had experienced things that other Furnace Lords would find hair-raising.

He had been captured and taken to the Black Lands, where he eventually ended up being taken in by the Frigid Snow Clan as an esteemed guest. He became Frigid Snow City's Grandmaster of the Dao of Alchemy, surrounded by a host of concubines. His reputation grew until he became known as the greatest alchemist in all the Black Lands.

After that… he was taken prisoner again. He passed through many hands in the Western Desert. After all these years, it was impossible to know what exactly he had experienced. However, as of this moment, it was obvious that he was a member of the great Cloud Sky Tribe. Clearly, he occupied an extremely high position.

Obviously, it didn't matter where you went in the wide world, possessing pill-concocting skills could lead you into miracles….

A haughty expression filled Zhou Dekun's face as he nodded in response. Actually, it was of his own accord that he requested to lead this expedition. In recent years, life in the Tribe had become somewhat tedious. He wanted to get out and stretch his legs. Thankfully, the great Cloud Sky Tribe had arranged a mission for the Battle Tribe to go exterminate the Crow Divinity Tribe. One reason was because of the fact that the great Cloud Sky Tribe had made an agreement with the Five Poisons Tribe, only to learn that they were exterminated on the way by the Crow Divinity Tribe. In order to preserve their ability to intimidate others militarily, they had to wipe out the Crow Divinity Tribe. Another aspect, of course, had to do with the Demon Spirit.

Therefore, Zhou Dekun took on the mission. He would represent the Main Tribe to direct the military operations. That was why he was here. Because of his position, and the might of the great Cloud Sky, he was actually quite safe within the current Apocalpyse.

He was well aware of that fact, as were the Greatfather and the High Priest of the Battle Tribe, who sat on either side of him. They knew that their mission here was actually secondary. The main purpose of the outing was to please Zhou Dekun, who occupied such a high position within the Tribe.

As for the Demon Spirits, even Meng Hao knew about the other three that had appeared in the past half years. However, the great Tribes with Spirit Severing Patriarchs actually had even more accurate information. They knew that it was not just three that had appeared in the last half year, but rather, five!

The Heavenly Court Alliance in the Black Lands did nothing about the five Demon Spirits. Instead, vast amounts of Tribes fought and plundered over them. In the end, three of them were actually acquired by Tribes with Spirit Severing Patriarchs, after which, those Tribes entered into negotiations with the Heavenly Court Alliance.

The great Cloud Sky Tribe was one of the Tribes who had acquired a Demon Spirit. The other two were acquired by other great Tribes which did not have Spirit Severing Patriarchs. Other Tribes sent spies to get information about them, but because they were great Tribes and incredibly powerful, no one dared to try to do anything.

For Tribes with Spirit Severing Patriarchs, acquiring a Demon Spirit wasn’t incredibly important. Such Tribes would be able to get into the Black Lands whether they had one or not. Therefore, it wasn’t worth paying a heavy price to get one.

In the end, this was how two great Tribes with no Spirit Severing Patriarchs were able to keep ahold of the Spirit Demons they had acquired, and earn the right to enter the Black Lands.

“Grandmaster Zhou,” said one of the middle-aged men next to him, speaking very cautiously, “if there is anything you require during the journey, please don’t hesitate to speak up. We will spare no effort in meeting your needs.”

“That’s right, Grandmaster Zhou. The battles in the Apocalypse have been chaotic. With so many Tribes migrating, many treasures are out in the open. If you see anything you like, we can get it for you.”

Zhou Dekun laughed heartily, his expression one of complacency. In recent years, he had often sighed emotionally when he thought about his journey of life and how miraculous it had been.

“If there’s something I really need, then I won’t hold back from telling the two of you. Very well, let’s push forward with as much speed as we can muster. I’m very interested in that Demon Spirit that the Crow Divinity Tribe has.” With that, Zhou Dekun closed his eyes.

The two men next to him said nothing more. The three black swords shot forward at incredible speed, growing ever closer to Meng Hao and the Crow Divinity Tribe.

Time passed, and soon five days had gone by. On this day, the violet rain poured down the same as ever. Down below, rivers and lakes could be seen. The spiritual energy of Heaven and Earth was thin. It was around dusk when the Crow Divinity Tribe and the great Cloud Sky Tribe… finally caught sight of each other in the air above the Western Desert Central region!

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# Chapter 500: The Sky is Dark!

The three black swords moved with incredible speed, using a method that was beyond the comprehension of the Crow Divinity Tribe. They pierced through the air, appearing directly in the path of the Crow Divinity Tribe's magical airship.

The Crow Divinity Tribe's massive airship suddenly stopped in place. Thousands of sharp gazes came to fall upon the three black swords. The two sides faced off against each other, not moving a muscle.

The violet rain fell around them, and a wind blew that carried with it the power of extermination. A bitter cold pressed down on everyone; however, this coldness paled in comparison to the killing intent of both of these Tribes.

The eyes of the Crow Divinity Tribe members had gone wide when they saw the three black swords. Nearly ten thousand people had all risen to their feet simultaneously. They had experienced many, many battles, so death was something they had become accustomed to. Killing intent exploded out, along with countless ice-cold gazes.

No one spoke. There was no calling out. There was only a deathly silence and killing intent that seemed capable of affecting even the clouds and wind!

For such a shocking scene to arise, it was clear that neither of these two Tribes had any kind intentions!

The instant the killing intent of the Crow Divinity Tribe members rose up, bright glows appeared in the eyes the eight thousand Cultivators of the

Cloud Sky Tribe on the three black swords. These people looked like sharp, unsheathed swords, their desire to kill rising up to the Heavens.

The wind and clouds seethed and the air rippled as the killing intent of these eight thousand sharp, unsheathed swords exploded out. It was in this moment that, shockingly, on the forehead of each and every person a black sword appeared. The black swords flickered brightly; obviously they possessed some unique totemic power.

In terms of their bearing, these two Tribes seemed to be evenly matched.

One was a famous Battle Tribe from a great Western Desert Tribe with a Spirit Severing Patriarch. It was only an auxiliary Tribe of the great Cloud Sky Tribe. However, in terms of battle prowess, even the Main Tribe completely repsected them.

The other Tribe had fought countless battles, and had experienced life and death. They had undergone constant transformation, existing in a state of perpetual war that had turned their blood into iron!

In this moment, the two Tribes could sense each other’s valiance and power. The eight thousand members of the Cloud Sky’s auxiliary Battle Tribe comprised about eighty percent of their entire Tribe. Right now, they could clearly see a will to fight emanating from the bodies of the Crow Divinity Tribe members. It was something they didn’t see often.

When the two middle-aged men sitting by Zhou Dekun saw the Crow Divinity Tribe and sensed their valiance, intense looks appeared on their faces.

“The entire Crow Divinity Tribe has the same will! It’s a killing intent that has been distilled into pure essence!”

“You usually only see something like this in the elite members of great Tribes! Who could ever have imagined that the Crow Divinity Tribe would have an aura like this!”

It wasn’t just them. The rest of the Tribe members all had a similar reaction.

Both the Crow Divinity Tribe and the Battle Tribe could be described with the same words. Taciturn! Cold-blooded! Ruthless!

At the same time, when the Battle Tribe appeared in front of the Crow Divinity Tribe, they could instantly see that they were vastly different from any other enemies faced up against in the past. The pressure that emanated out from them caused an intense desire for battle to gleam in the eyes of the Crow Divinity Tribe members.

There were now thirteen Nascent Soul Cultivators in the Crow Divinity Tribe. In addition to Ou Yunzi and the other of the five from the Eight Branch Alliance, during the past year of war, the Crow Divinity had picked up a few more.

Of the thirteen Nascent Soul Cultivators, two were of the late Nascent Soul stage, five were of the mid Nascent Soul stage and six were of the early Nascent Soul stage. A force such as this put the Crow Divinity Tribe on the border between a mid-sized Tribe and a great Tribe that lacked a Spirit Severing Patriarch.

The Battle Tribe saw all of this. The power of the Crow Divinity Tribe far exceeded what they had anticipated. They knew that this battle… would be extremely violent and bitter.

A deathly silence filled the air as the two parties faced off against each other. The killing intent from both sides slammed together, causing the aura in the entire area to be thrown into chaos. In this moment of imminent crisis between the two parties… a strange expression suddenly appeared on Meng Hao’s face as he caught sight of Zhou Dekun sitting there right in the middle of everything on the black sword.

Zhou Dekun’s eyes went wide when he saw Meng Hao.

The two of them were separated by several hundred meters, but their gazes instantly locked. It only took a moment for wry smiles to appear on their faces.

The Battle Tribe High Priest had of course not noticed that Zhou Dekun and Meng Hao were looking at each other. The oppressive atmosphere had reached a peak. He suddenly opened his mouth and broke the deathly silence: “KILL THEM!”

However, even as the Battle Tribe members behind him, as well as the Crow Divinity Tribe members, were about to roar and charge into battle, Zhou Dekun suddenly leaped up and slapped the Battle Tribe High Priest across the top of his head.

“Shut up!” cried Zhou Dekun, flying into a rage. “Did I tell you to start fighting?! Everybody, stay your hand! Dammit! The orders from the Main Tribe were to do everything possible to induce them to surrender! I haven’t said a single word and you’re already trying to kill them!?” The Battle Tribe members all stared over at him with cold eyes. In this critical moment in which their killing intent was exploding out violently, their gazes seemed sharp enough to rip everything to pieces. Instantly, Zhou Dekun felt his mind trembling. However, it only took a moment for his eyes to widen.

“Disobeying orders?” he asked, his voice as cold as ice.

The Battle Tribe High Priest looked up, seemingly on the verge of being shamed into rage. Although the slap just now had not contained any force, it had happened in front of all the members of the Tribe, and was a huge humiliation. However, when he thought about Zhou Dekun’s status, he did nothing. The Battle Tribe Greatfather took a step forward and glared out at the other Tribe members. He gave a cold snort, causing them all to fall back silently.

Although the Battle Tribe Greatfather was secretly infuriated, he didn’t let it show on his face. At least not too much. His expression somewhat unsightly, he said, “Grandmaster Zhou, please, what are your orders?”

At the same time that the Battle Tribe had been on the verge of charging into the battle, many members of the Crow Divinity Tribe were also on the verge of exploding out with the power they had built up. However, unlike the Battle Tribe, as soon as Meng Hao gave the word, they instantly backed down.

This caught the attention of the Greatfather and High Priest of the Battle Tribe, and instantly shook them. They exchanged glances and could see the thoughtful look in each other’s eyes.

They knew that a Battle Tribe like the Crow Divinity Tribe had reached a shocking level of power.

Meng Hao stood, and then his body flickered as he moved out. This instantly caused the Battle Tribe to be filled with vigilance. Zhou Dekun gave a cold harrumph. His expression one of haughtiness, he moved off of the huge black sword to head toward Meng Hao.

The two of them flew up into the air, quickly becoming two tiny dots up above.

The two Tribes down below stared at each other with killing intent, but made no moves.

Up above, Meng Hao and Zhou Dekun were tiny specks in the air, and it was impossible for the Tribe members below to hear anything they were saying. Meng Hao gave a wry smile as he looked at Zhou Dekun. He clasped hands and bowed.

“Elder Brother Zhou,” he said teasingly, “it’s been many years, but you look as graceful as ever,”

Zhou Dekun cleared his throat, looking a bit embarrassed, and even more emotional, as he gazed back at Meng Hao. “I never imagined that we two fellow disciples would meet here after parting ways all those years ago in the Southern Domain.” He sighed, his expression one of reminiscence.

Meng Hao sighed softly. He couldn’t help but recall past events. He thought about the return trip from the Black Sieve Sect, when he and Zhou Dekun ran into the Black Lands Cultivators and been forced to separate. He had never imagined that after that separation, they would meet again in the Black Lands and then again in the Western Desert.

“So, that alchemist in the Black Lands really was you?” asked Zhou Dekun with a wry smile. After the event had occurred, he had realized that the only person who could possibly have been so powerful in pill concocting was of course the person in front of him right now.

When Zhou Dekun thought back to how Meng Hao had consistently backed down in Holy Snow city in the Black Lands, allowing him to maintain his reputation, it actually caused him to be filled with gratitude. Over the years, that gratitude had fused with his previous feelings of friendship to form a warmth that had endured for years and years.

You could say that in all the Western Desert, Meng Hao was actually Zhou Dekun’s only family.

When Meng Hao looked at Zhou Dekun, he thought about the Southern Domain. He thought about his Master, Chu Yuyan, and all the people back in the Violet Fate Sect. He thought about all his other close friends in the Southern Domain, about Fatty and Chen Fan.

And… Xu Qing.

Their faces floated in his mind, clear and not blurry at all. As he saw their faces in his mind’s eye, he realized that he… missed home.

Except, his home was in the State of Zhao, which had long since disappeared from the Southern Domain.

Meng Hao and Zhou Dekun sighed and began to chat. Sometimes they smiled and laughed, sometimes they got excited and passionate. As they recalled past years, Meng Hao felt was awash with feelings that he rarely experienced. It was the same with Zhou Dekun.

When Meng Hao recounted some of the bitter difficulties he had faced, Zhou Dekun was shocked. To Zhou Dekun, Meng Hao’s life was like an exhilarating adventure. As for Meng Hao, when he heard about Zhou Dekun’s experiences, they seemed almost as miraculous as his own.

After hearing Zhou Dekun’s story, Meng Hao smiled and said, “So, you are the Cloud Sky Main Tribe Elder of the Dao of Alchemy… a position comparable to High Priest. In the great Cloud Sky Tribe, you definitely wield much power and influence…. Elder Brother Zhou, I can’t help but admire you, truly.”

Zhou Dekun laughed, sounding quite pleased with himself.

Without even realized it, they had allowed four hours to passed. While the two reminisced about past times, the two Tribes down below simply had to wait.

The Crow Divinity Tribe seemed to take the situation in stride. Meng Hao was their totemic Sacred Ancient, and they were fanatically loyal to him. Even if they had to wait longer, they wouldn’t mind.

The Battle Tribe was a bit different. They stood there, taciturn. The Greatfather and the Grand Priest exchanged suspicious glances. They looked up at the black dots up in the air that were Zhou Dekun and Meng Hao. They couldn’t understand why Zhou Dekun had already taken four hours trying to convince the enemy to surrender. By now, the sky was growing dark….

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# Chapter 501: I’ll Escort You 500 Kilometers, Sir

Zhou Dekun looked up and then frowned. “It’s getting dark, Meng Hao…. Enough chit-chat. You’ve gotten yourself into some big trouble here. The great Cloud Sky Tribe dispatched their Battle Tribe to wipe you out because of the incident with the Five Poisons Tribe that year, and also your Demon Spirit.”

When he heard the words “great Cloud Sky Tribe,” it caused a cold glow to suddenly appear in Meng Hao’s eyes. He said nothing.

“Thankfully, I happen to be the leader of this group, so you don’t have to worry. I won’t let anything happen to my Junior Brother.” He slapped his chest vigorously. Zhou Dekun was not young, but because of the twists and turns of life, he had lived quite comfortably, and actually looked much younger than he was.

“How many concubines do you have now?” laughed Meng Hao.

“Not many, not many. Last month I accepted an eighth.” Zhou Dekun’s face glowed a healthy red color and he coughed dryly. “There’s no need to talk about that, though. Look, Junior Brother. The two of us are going to put on a little act….” He lowered his head and began to explain things to Meng Hao. Meng Hao’s eyes went wide, and he put on a forced smile.

“Is that… really a good idea?” he said, hesitating.

“Don’t worry about it! You listen to your Elder Brother!” Zhou Dekun looked very serious, so Meng Hao could do nothing but mutter and nod his head.

A few moments later….

“So, it turns out that you are the Crow Divinity Tribe, who crushed over a thousand Tribes to rise to prominence! You are the most powerful force in the Western Desert North, a force that strikes fear into the hearts of even great Tribes!

“My heart holds nothing but admiration for you! If we battle each other, there will surely be deaths and injuries. I, Zhou Dekun do not like to see blood. Also, the De character in my name means ‘virtue.’ Therefore, I will use virtue to make you surrender!

“I will give you ten years, during which time I, Zhou Dekun, will use virtue to make you surrender!” Zhou Dekun’s shouting echoed out in all directions to be heard by both Tribes. The Crow Divinity Tribe reacted better than the Battle Tribe, who all stared in shock.

Although they didn’t know Zhou Dekun very well, they were members of a great Tribe, and had heard many stories. No matter which way you looked at him, he did not seem to be the type of person who won others over with virtue.

The Battle Tribe’s Greatfather and High Priest had eyes wider than anyone. They were completely stupefied, and had no clue what Zhou Dekun was trying to accomplish.

After flying down from their position up above, Zhou Dekun and Meng Hao separated. Meng Hao suppressed the awkwardness he felt inside to clasp hands and bow to Zhou Dekun.

“So, it turns out that you are from the great Cloud Sky Tribe, the illustrious Grandmaster Zhou Dekun, invincible in the Dao of alchemy and possessor of eight concubines. I truly admire you, sir. Very well, I accept your wager. I will give you ten years to try to use virtue to make me surrender.” The more he spoke, the more awkward Meng Hao felt. Coughing dryly, he headed back to his airship.

The words he had just spoken caused the eyes of the Crow Divinity Tribe members to widen. It felt very strange to hear such words coming out of the mouth of their totemic Sacred Ancient. To them, their Sacred Ancient was someone who could kill without batting an eyelid. How could he possibly say something like he just had?

“Excellent!” cried Zhou Dekun vigorously as he stepped back onto the black sword. He flicked his sleeve and continued in a determined voice: “Unfortunately, there must be a clear winner and loser between the two of us. If it weren’t for that, we could drink and chat merrily, and would surely become friends for life….” His emotional expression made it seem that he truly felt it to be a pity.

“I truly admire you,” he continued loftily. “It turns out you want to see exactly how I plan to win you over with virtue. Very well, please proceed on your way. Three days from now, I’ll catch up with you. This is my promise, and my first step in the process of using virtue to make you surrender.” Next to him, the faces of the Greatfather and High Priest instantly flickered.

“Grandmaster Zhou, we can’t do that. If we let them go, who knows where we will have to go to find them!?”

“Are you trying to prevent me from using virtue to make them surrender!?” said Zhou Dekun, glaring.

Meng Hao cleared his throat and looked at Zhou Dekun with a strange expression. He recalled the lines Zhou Dekun had give him to speak, but after thinking about them, he just couldn’t make himself say them. He cleared his throat again and then said nothing more. The Crow Divinity’s airship immediately shot off into the distance.

“Grandmaster Zhou!!” cried the Battle Tribe Greatfather anxiously. As the Crow Divinity Tribe flew off, Zhou Dekun’s expression was one of loftiness. The Greatfather had no choice but to stand there and refuse to allow the Battle Tribe to pursue.

“You need to have faith in the great Cloud Sky Tribe. We WILL use virtue to make them surrender!” Zhou Dekun was sighing inwardly. He had prepared even more words for himself to say in response to Meng Hao just now.

“But the mission we accepted was to destroy the Tribe….” said the High Priest furiously.

“Could it be that you have no faith in the great Cloud Sky Tribe?” replied Zhou Dekun solemnly. “Or is it me you have no faith in? Hmm?” Regardless be it in terms of status or position, he was much higher than anyone present, and also the general of this force. Were the Greatfather to take unilateral action, Zhou Dekun could report him, and then the entire Tribe would be in trouble.

Zhou Dekun’s simple response caused the Battle Tribe Greatfather and High Priest to say nothing further. That was how three days of time was bought.

Three days later, the black swords once again whistled through the air.

A few days later, the three black swords were shooting at top speed toward Meng Hao. Zhou Dekun roared out: “So, we meet again! Crow Divinity Tribe, do you surrender or not?”

Killing intent instantly boiled out from the Crow Divinity Tribe. Clearly they felt the battle would begin at any moment.

The Battle Tribe was the same. They suppressed their irritation at the situation, and allowed their killing intent to roar up to the sky.

Meng Hao smiled wryly. He took a deep breath and then responded the way Zhou Dekun had indicted he should.

“We don’t surrender….”

“Hahaha! I guessed you wouldn’t. If you had, I would have assumed something fishy was going on. Very well. This time I’ll give you seven days before I start chasing you again. This is how you use virtue to get someone to surrender!” In response to Zhou Dekun’s lofty words, Meng Hao turned around with a wry smile. The airship once again shot off into the distance.

The Greatfather and the High Priest were enraged. There were even some Battle Tribe members who howled and charged forward to block the way of the Crow Divinity Tribe.

“Hold your hands!” roared Zhou Dekun. “Are you really planning to rebel against the Tribe!?”

Zhou Dekun’s shocking roar caused the Battle Tribe members to instantly stop in place. The eyes of the Greatfather and the High Priest were bloodshot as they turned back to glare at Zhou Dekun.

Zhou Dekun gave a cold snort and then set his chin. His expression said, “What do you think you can do to me?” He slowly pulled open his robe to reveal the command medallion of a Tribe Elder. After seeing it, the Greatfather and the High Priest could do nothing more than suppress their rage and lower their heads.

It was in this manner that three months slowly passed by.

“Do you surrender?!”

“You’re still not ready to surrender?”

“There’s no need to say it. I know that you won’t surrender. It doesn’t matter….”

During the three months, every time the Battle Tribe caught up, Zhou Dekun would come up with a vast array of excuses and reasons to let the Crow Divinity Tribe leave. Soon, the three black swords, despite being dispatched from a great Tribe, were beginning to run out of resources. Their speed was slowly being reduced to the point where soon, they wouldn’t be able to catch up with the Crow Divinity Tribe.

As the months went by, the Crow Divinity Tribe became used to the situation. Every time the Battle Tribe caught up, they would watch on curiously. By now, they could see that this old man named Zhou was actually a good person….

In fact, on one occasion, the Crow Divinity Tribe ended up being surrounded by another mid-sized Tribe. At the critical moment, the Battle Tribe appeared. Zhou Dekun roared and, using the pretext of using virtue to get the Crow Divinity Tribe to surrender, forced the Battle Tribe to attack. Finally, they were able to vent their recent frustrations on that mid-sized Tribe.

In the end, Zhou Dekun allowed the Crow Divinity Tribe to end the battle. Citing the desire to use virtue to make them surrender, he let the Crow Divinity Tribe take all the spoils of war. Their eyes gleaming with a strange light, they then made their ways off into the distance.

Another month passed. The Battle Tribe Greatfather and the High priest were no longer so upset. It wasn’t that Zhou Dekun wouldn’t let them fight. What he wouldn’t allow was a full-scale battle. Duels were permitted….

Therefore, during the following months, the two Tribes traveled almost one on top of the other. Occasionally, solitary Cultivators would fly out to engage to duels.

Each duel consisted of two fighters, no more….

Furthermore, as soon as the battle reached a critical, dangerous moment, Zhou Dekun would immediately end the fight….

As time passed, the Battle Tribe grew numb to the situation. They had long since figured out that Zhou Dekun and Meng Hao knew each other, and clearly, had a deep relationship. Even the Greatfather and the High Priest eventually gave tacit approval to the situation.

They knew that in terms of position and status, they were inferior to Zhou Dekun. Furthermore, he was the general. Therefore, all of the responsibility for the mission would naturally fall onto his shoulders.

Therefore, they gave up on their desire to exterminate the Crow Divinity Tribe. Whatever orders Zhou Dekun gave, they followed.

Eventually, it got to the point that Zhou Dekun and Meng Hao felt no need for any pretense. They would often set up a table in mid-air to chat and drink together. Slowly but surely, the members of the two Tribes came to acknowledge each other.

Soon, they even came to exist in harmony with each other….

What caused the Greatfather and the High Priest to be even more speechless was the fact that over the months of interaction, there were even members of both Tribes who ended up becoming friends. There would often be visitors from either Tribe who dropped by the other to exchange views regarding cultivation. The Greatfather and High Priest could only smile wryly.

After all, both of these Tribes possessed strong killing intent. They had experienced countless battles, and therefore took each other very seriously. They were worthy adversaries, and on top of that, in addition to being veterans of many battles, they were all Cultivators. To be able to experience half a year of peace and calm like this was very rare.

Everything was harmonious….

Whenever they met enemies, there was no need for Zhou Dekun to say anything. Instantly, the Battle Tribe and the Crow Divinity Tribe would join forces to go into battle. The Greatfather and High Priest knew that their mission was a failure, so they did their best to ingratiate themselves with Zhou Dekun. That way, they might be able to build up more good will with the Main Tribe.

It was in this way that time went by. The Battle Tribe and the Crow Divinity Tribe put on a strange show with their close interaction and occasional pretense of fighting. By now, the Crow Divinity Tribe had passed through most of the Western Desert Central region, and were approaching the border of the South region….

One day, a succession of three jade slips arrived to the Battle Tribe. They contained wrathful messages from the Cloud Sky Main Tribe demanding an explanation and ordering the Battle Tribe and Zhou Dekun to return immediately.

The mission to destroy the Crow Divinity Tribe was now given to another auxiliary Tribe. Zhou Dekun sighed. He knew that he would not be able to escort Meng Hao any further than this.

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# Chapter 502: Flying Locust Tribe

When it came time to leave, it wasn't just Meng Hao and Zhou Dekun who were reluctant to part. The members of the two Tribes stared at each other silently. Neither harbored any further desire to fight each other anymore. Instead, they respected and appreciated each other.

As far as the Battle Tribe went, they were in somewhat of a better situation. They knew that soon, the Crow Divinity Tribe would be facing up against another auxiliary branch of the great Cloud Sky Tribe, and after that, the fearsome South region.

Each and every one of the Tribes who managed to slaughter their way into the South from the East, West, North and Central regions, were incredibly valiant. The ones that did not have Demon Spirits roamed the area near the Black Lands, hoping for other Tribes to arrive that did. It was just like the saying, "waiting by the tree stump, waiting for more rabbits to come and dash themselves against it."

That was the only hope for survival for such Tribes.

The Greatfather of the Battle Tribe had recently gotten to know the two late Nascent Soul Cultivators of the Crow Divinity Tribe. Now that the time had come to part, he sighed emotionally in his heart.

No one could possibly have predicted that these two Tribes would form such a strange relationship over the course of half a year.

The members of the Battle Tribe clasped hands. "Take care!"

The members of the Crow Divinity Tribe clasped hands and bowed in response.

Zhou Dekun was quiet for a moment as he looked at Meng Hao. Finally, he sighed. “Junior Brother, if you ever make it back to the Southern Domain, please find Master and kowtow to him for me. The year he came to the Black Lands, he accepted me as an apprentice. He told me that my path is not in the Southern Domain, but out in the rest of the world….

“I really want to go back to the Southern Domain. One day, if I don’t perish, then I, Zhou Dekun, will definitely return there, and return to the East Pill Division….

“Junior Brother, you must take care of yourself on your journey. I can only escort you to this point. In three days, the Flying Locust Tribe will arrive. Their mission is to exterminate you….

“Junior Brother, the time has come to part. I have nothing that I can offer to you as a gift except for this….” Eyes glittering, Zhou Dekun waved his right hand, causing 10,000 neo-demons to fly out from within his bag of holding. Each one possessed incredible Cultivation bases. They instantly flew out into the air, roaring, their auras clearly extraordinary.

“This is my personal neo-demon horde, although I can’t control them. In the Western Desert, neo-demons are valuable resources, so I will give them to you!” As soon as they appeared, they began to dissolve into chaos. Meng Hao glanced them over, and then caused Demonic Qi to emanate out from his body. The neo-demons instantly began to quiver as they looked over at Meng Hao. They roared, but they were no longer in a state of disturbance.

Zhou Dekun looked over at the Battle Tribe. “Battle Tribe Greatfather and High Priest, I will never forget the spirit of cooperation you have shown these days. I will take all responsibility for this mission.

“However, at the moment, I would like to ask you to lend me some neo-demons. When we get back to the Tribe, I will think of a way to repay you!”

Eight thousand Battle Tribe members stood there silently. Slowly, each and every one produced two or three neo-demons. In total, 20,000 were delivered over.

They had no Dragoneer, only personal neo-demons, each of which was not low level. The sight of the 20,000 neo-demons caused Meng Hao to be visibly moved. To any Western Desert Tribe, this represented a vast amount of wealth. Meng Hao looked at Zhou Dekun.

Zhou Dekun looked back. He took a deep breath and then began to speak in a tone that you would use with family, “There’s no need to refuse, Junior Brother. This is the only way I have to help you. Meng Hao… take care!” Deep warmth filled his heart. They looked at each other for a moment, and then Zhou Dekun gave Meng Hao a firm embrace.

“Take care….” Zhou Dekun turned and flicked his sleeve. The members of the Battle Tribe gave the Crow Divinity Tribe one last deep glance before the black swords whistled off into the distance to disappear over the horizon.

Now, only the Crow Divinity Tribe was left floating there in midair along with 30,000 neo-demons. Meng Hao watched Zhou Dekun leave. After a long moment passed, he took a deep breath and then turned. He slowly wiped the emotion from his face, causing it to once again become ice cold.

He waved his hand, sucking the 30,000 neo-demons into his bag of holding. During the past half year, he had lost 50,000 neo-demons, including ones that had been consumed as food. With this replenishment, his horde now numbered 150,000!

When a horde of 150,000 neo-demons spread out, it was enough to shake the entire Western Desert. Such a vast number exceeded that which even great Tribes like the Five Poisons Tribe would have. If Meng Hao had possessed a neo-demon horde this large, then in the battle that year with the Five Poisons Tribe, he would have completely crushed them!

In the vast lands of the Western Desert, only great Tribes with Spirit Severing Patriarchs could sustain such a large accumulation of neo-demons like this.

Despite that, there was no Dragoneer who could possibly control 150,000 neo-demons at once. Even the legendary Grand Dragoneers would not be able to do so.

Meng Hao, however, could control that and even more.

150,000 neo-demons didn’t count for much as far as he was concerned. He wasn’t using his Cultivation base to control them, but rather, Demonic Qi. He could control 150,000, or 300,000, even 500,000.

Right now, Meng Hao and the Crow Divinity Tribe had reached a point on their campaign trail in which they had completely risen to prominence from within the flames of battle. They could now thoroughly rock even great Tribes.

“We are more than halfway to our destination….” said Meng Hao. “Once we leave the Western Desert Central region, the only thing in front of us will be the Western Desert South region. Beyond that… are the Black Lands!” Meng Hao flicked his wide sleeve, and a gleam of determination appeared in the eyes of the Crow Divinity Tribe members. Their airship whistled into motion.

A rumbling sound could be heard as it transformed into a beam of colorful light.

Three days later, Meng Hao looked off into the far distance toward the area that was the border between the Western Desert Central and South regions. In recent days, the Western Desert North region had completely been turned into a sea. Of course, the East, West, and Central regions had no way to escape the disaster. The seawater flowed into those areas as well; the lakes were joining together and rising up.

No plains were visible. Mountainous valleys had long since been turned into underwater graves. The violet rain continued to pound down, inundating the land. The seawater grew deeper and deeper…. Everywhere was turning into a sea.

In some areas were places that resembled islands. However, the extermination of life force caused a thick aura of death to rise up everywhere. As for spiritual energy….

It was no longer extremely thin, but rather… not there.

The only hope lay in the South. The South region had the highest elevation, and was the only place that wasn't being run over with seawater. However, Meng Hao could only imagine how many Tribes must be gathered there. Although it might not be correct to say it was overrun, but probably close.

Now, though, the Crow Divinity Tribe were not the weaklings they had once been. They were fierce and intrepid. They were the type of Tribe that others took seriously, even feared.

"We're now on the final home stretch of our journey…." Meng Hao took a deep breath as the airship shot through the air. Even as they neared the border, Meng Hao's eyes suddenly glittered with killing intent. He turned back to look off into the sky.

A yellowish glow could be seen shooting toward them from off in the distance. Before it even got close, buzzing sounds could be heard echoing out. It was now possible to see that the yellow glow was actually made up for countless winged locusts. Each one was about the size of a hand, and they were extremely fierce in appearance. There were tens of thousands of them, seemingly enough to blot out the sky.

Scattered about among the locusts were more than seven thousand Cultivators. All of them had expressions of disdain on their faces as they shot with the locusts toward the Crow Divinity Tribe.

Among the seven thousand Cultivators were twelve old men with cold, arrogant expressions. One of them suddenly said, "We are the Flying Locust Tribe of the great Cloud Sky Tribe! Crow Divinity Tribe, hand over your Demon Spirit. We will give you the space of three breaths to convince us why we shouldn't exterminate your entire Tribe!"

Almost as soon as the words left his mouth, someone began to speak: "One, two…."

Before the third word could be uttered, the killing intent of the Crow Divinity Tribe exploded out. At the same time, Meng Hao, his expression the same as ever, waved his right hand.

As he did, 10,000 and then 30,000 neo-demons appeared, roaring.

“Small Tribes are small Tribes,” said another of the twelve old men. “If you dare to attack the great Cloud Sky Tribe with a trifling horde of 30,000 neo-demons then….” Before he could finish speaking, his eyes went wide with disbelief.

That was because the neo-demons didn’t stop at 30,000. Instead, their numbers grew to… 40,000. 50,000. 60,000.

By the time 60,000 neo-demons appeared, half of the group of twelve old men had serious expressions on their faces. Nearly half of the Cultivators they led were also panting. They could tell that if they wished to win a great victory in the coming battle, they would have to pay a steep price.

The man who appeared to be the leader among the group of twelve old men had a calm expression as he coolly said, “60,000 neo-demons. It seems the Main Tribe underestimate this Crow Divinity Tribe. Even still, we….” Before he could finish speaking, the faces of all twelve men completely fell. Even the man who had just been speaking couldn’t stop from gasping and opening his eyes wide in disbelief.

70,000. 80,000. 90,000. 100,000!

The sight of 100,000 neo-demons caused Heaven and Earth to shake. Their roars filled the sky, causing the sky to dim and a strong wind to kick up. The more than seven thousand Cultivators’ faces went pale and filled with astonishment. Even the twelve old men were panting and could feel their hearts pounding in their chests.

“100,000 neo-demons…. They’re all level six and above. This… this….”

“They have a neo-demon horde of 100,000! Dammit! How do we fight that!?!?”

“This is impossible. Even a Grand Dragoneer can’t control a 100,000 strong neo-demon horde. How can that guy pull this off?!?!”

Even as the members of the Flying Locust Tribe, including the Greatfather and Elders, panted in shock, their minds were then blown by the next thing that they saw. It was as if an invisible arrow had been shot directly into their brains. They were filled with shock and astonishment.

110,000. 120,000. 130,000…. Finally, all 150,000 neo-demons filled the sky. There is literally no way to describe the situation except with the expression “blot out the sky and cover up the earth.”

The members of the Flying Locust Tribe were struck completely speechless. They stared in shock, in stupefaction. A long moment passed before they began to breathe again.

The twelve Nascent Soul Cultivators of the Flying Locust Tribe felt their scalps going numb as feelings of despair washed over them. Moments ago, they felt as if they were far above anyone else. To them, exterminating this Tribe was a trivial matter. In the blink of an eye, they suddenly found that the fierceness of this opponent made the entire situation the opposite of what they had thought. The truly trivial matter was how easily their opponent could exterminate them. Instantly, the entire Flying Locust Tribe began to tremble in their boots.

The vast difference between the two Tribes made it so that the Flying Locust Tribe Members could not muster even an ounce of fighting spirit. Their faces were completely devoid of blood.

Meng Hao’s cold voice echoed out: “Flying Locust Tribe, I’ll give you the space of three breaths to convince me why I shouldn’t exterminate your entire Tribe!” The 150,000 neo-demons began to roar.

The roar transformed into sound waves that battered across the Flying Locust Tribe members. Their locusts let out plaintive howls and fell backward. The clothing of the Tribe members whipped about under the force of the roar and they retreated back. Their minds reeled, and they felt as if they were being suffocated.

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# Chapter 503: Choices

The faces of the seven thousand members of the Flying Locust Tribe were pale white, and they were shaking in fear. They almost couldn’t believe their eyes as they stared at the neo-demons blotting out the sky.

150,000 neo-demons. A force this powerful could sweep over any mid-sized Tribe. Even some great Tribes that lacked Spirit Severing Patriarchs would be routed by such a force.

No Tribe would willingly go into battle against such a fierce neo-demon horde. It didn’t matter that they were one of the thirteen auxiliary Tribes of the great Cloud Sky Tribe, nor that they had more than seven thousand Cultivators and tens of thousands of locusts.

There was no deadly Karma that existed between them and the Crow Divinity Tribe. They said that they were here because of the Five Poisons Clan. But the Five Poisons Clan had been exterminated long ago. Even the Flying Locust Clan didn’t quite approve of such logic.

Clearly, the great Cloud Sky Tribe had simply made up a reason to attack, all for the purpose of saving face. And obviously, it made sense to take the Demon Spirit while they were at it.

If the matter were truly important to them, they could dispatch a Spirit Severing Patriarch to finish the matter quickly.

“One, two, three!” said Meng Hao, his voice cool as he stared icily at the members of the Flying Locust Tribe. When he finished speaking, he lifted his hand and pointed at them. The 150,000 roaring neo-demons were just about to charge the petrified Flying Locust Tribe when one of the twelve Nascent Soul Cultivators suddenly cried out.

“Fellow Daoist from the Crow Divinity Tribe, please wait a moment!!” This was the Flying Locust Tribe Greatfather, the one in the lead position.

Meng Hao’s hand stopped moving, and his eyes flashed with coldness.

“This is all just a misunderstanding,” said the Greatfather with a bitter smile. “Fellow Daoist from the Crow Divinity Tribe, please give just a moment. I’ll contact the Main Tribe and ask them to offer you an explanation. As for this battle… there’s no need to actually fight. What do you say, Fellow Daoist…?” He sighed inwardly. If he had known that this opponent possessed such a fearsome neo-demon horde, then no amount of persuasion would have convinced him to accept the mission.

“Don’t forget,” he continued, “you could attack and wipe out the Flying Locust Tribe. However, if one of the great Cloud Sky Tribe’s thirteen auxiliary tribes is destroyed, the enmity created… would never be wiped clean.” The Greatfather produced a jade slip and then rotated his Cultivation based, sending power into it.

Meng Hao didn’t interfere. In truth, Meng Hao was well aware that the best way to resolve the situation was to intimidate them, not engage in battle.

The Cloud Sky Tribe was a great Tribe after all, and had a Spirit Severing Patriarch. Meng Hao knew that, considering the level of his Cultivation base and the state of the Crow Divinity Tribe, even 150,000 neo-demons did not make him a match for the almighty Spirit Severing stage.

Not unless… the mastiff woke up!

Although signs had appeared recently that the mastiff would awaken, it was not fully awake.

Therefore, showing off some power to intimidate this opponent was the best choice. All actions taken by the Tribe would be decided based on the resulting cost or benefit. Meng Hao knew from Zhou Dekun that the great Cloud Sky Tribe wasn’t extremely interested in Demon Spirits. They could do with one or without.

As such, if they could acquire a Demon Spirit without paying too much of a price, they would. But after considering, if they found that acquiring one would come at a heavy price, according to Meng Hao's analysis, they would most likely give up on the Demon Spirit.

After all, there was no true enmity between the two Tribes. Furthermore, the Apocalypse was reaching a critical juncture. Even great Tribes were in danger of being consumed by it; obviously they would not want to suffer damage for no good reason.

All of this was what gave Meng Hao his current confidence.

The jade slip that the Greatfather held suddenly began to glow with a green light. The light expanded out, quickly becoming blinding. Gradually, it began to form into the shape of an illusory figure.

The Greatfather and High Priest of the Flying Locust Tribe, along with all the other Tribe members, immediately dropped to their knees in worship.

"We offer respectful greetings, exalted Emissary!"

As their voices echoed out, the green light congealed together. Suddenly, a man appeared. He appeared to be a bit over thirty, with handsome features and long, thin eyes that glowed with coldness. Although his body was illusory, his Cultivation base still rippled out with fearsome power that enveloped everything in the area.

His body glittered with a green light as he looked over Meng Hao and the 150,000 neo-demons. His pupils constricted, after which he then looked at the Crow Divinity Tribe members. He could sense their killing intent, and was clearly surprised.

A neo-demon horde like this left him shocked, and a Tribe like the Crow Divinity Tribe truly left him with the feeling that he was looking at a Battle Tribe.

Finally, his gaze came to rest on Meng Hao, and his eyes narrowed.

“Eccentric Bloodface!” he said slowly, using the title that people in the Realm of the Bridge Ruins had given him.

Actually, the rise of the Crow Divinity Tribe had not gone unnoticed in recent years. Of course, during that process, with more and more people paying attention, how could Meng Hao’s identity not have been revealed? After all, a blood-colored mask was something quite unique.

Of course, the origin of Meng Hao’s Demon Spirit had also been uncovered.

“It’s too bad that during the last appearance of the Realm of the Bridge Ruins, I, Zhao, was in secluded meditation. Therefore, I didn’t go. However, I heard of the matter afterward from Xu Bai of the great Black Dragon Tribe and Chen Mo of the great Demon Talisman Tribe. They were never able to forget the fact that you were able to snatch that Demon Spirit away, leaving them capable of only gnashing their teeth.” 1

Meng Hao’s expression was cold as he looked at the illusory image of the green-robed man. He said nothing. However, the coldness in his eyes seemed to grow deeper.

“You may choose to exterminate this Flying Lotus Tribe that you see in front of you,” continued the man slowly. “However, the price you will pay is that the Cloud Sky Tribe will employ all of its forces to completely wipe you clean off the map.

“On the other hand, you could chose to come over and pledge allegiance to us, thus becoming an auxiliary branch of the great Cloud Sky Tribe. You have two paths to chose from. I await your response.” The man looked over, smiling.

The killing intent of the Crow Divinity Tribes grew even more apparent. They stood there silently, as did Meng Hao. When it came to the two options presented to them by the great Cloud Sky Tribe, the only one which allowed them to continued to exist involved surrendering.

As one could imagine, if they surrendered and pledged allegiance, then it would secure them a spot in the Black Lands, as well as safe passage there. However, what they would lose, would be freedom. For generations to come, there would be no freedom.

Meng Hao did not have the right to make such a decision. He looked over his shoulder to look at the ten thousand members of the Crow Divinity Tribe. There were less than a thousand who were original Cultivators of the five Crow Divinity Tribes. Wu Chen was there, as well as Wu Ling. They had experienced the fires of war, and had long since grown up.

As for all the other new members of the Tribe, on this long road of war, they had come to rely on the Crow Divinity Tribe. At first, it seemed as if they had lost their freedom; in truth, they had long since become an integral part of the Tribe.

Meng Hao's gaze swept over them. What he saw was reticence. It was a reticence filled with pride. It said, "I would rather die than live without my freedom."

That was their decision.

The 150,000 neo-beasts let out agitated howls as they hovered there, filling the sky. Their eyes glowed with the thirst for blood.

Meng Hao looked back at the green-robed man. When he spoke, his voice echoed out in all directions.

"The Crow Divinity Tribe will not choose to become an auxiliary Tribe…. If the Cloud Sky Tribe wishes to fight, then the Crow Divinity Tribe will fight!" As he spoke, the killing intent of the Crow Divinity Tribe exploded up.

All the members of the Flying Locust Tribe began to pant nervously, their faces pale. In terms of strength, they really did not measure up, which meant that they were in a hopeless situation. The green-robed man's eyes narrowed. He looked at Meng Hao for a long moment before suddenly laughing.

“My intentions were good in making my offer,” he said. “However, if you and the Crow Divinity Tribe do not wish to become an auxiliary Tribe, Fellow Daoist, then let’s just drop the matter. It seems there really have been too many misunderstandings here. Fellow Daoist, I wish you and the Crow Divinity Tribe good fortune. Please be on your way to the Black Lands.” The green-robed man smiled once again, and then slowly vanished. After seeing the Crow Divinity Tribe and the 150,000 neo-demons, he knew that a war with them… was not something that the great Cloud Sky Tribe would pursue.

The power of the Crow Divinity Tribe had grown to the point where it now truly was qualified to possess a Demon Spirit. The great Cloud Sky Tribe was not willing to pay such a heavy price only for a Demon Spirit. The end result would be that the great Cloud Sky Tribe would lose multiple auxiliary Tribes. Even many members of the Main Tribe would also surely perish.

Recently, there had been many strange developments in the Black Lands. Everything seemed peaceful, but in fact, there were a lot of secret struggles going on. The great Cloud Sky Tribe couldn’t afford too many losses at this point. In fact, the Spirit Severing Patriarchs currently in the Black Lands couldn’t afford to step foot back out into the Western Desert. If they did, with the spiritual energy cut off, there was a high likelihood they could encounter other hostile Spirit Severing experts from great Tribes, which would result in deadly slaughter.

In such a time of momentous change, caution and prudence were the foundation of a great Tribe’s ability to survive and thrive.

The Flying Locust Tribe Greatfather was finally able to let out a sigh of relief. He suddenly had a much better understanding of why the Battle Tribe hadn’t been willing to go fight earlier. In his opinion, opting not to fight was definitely the sensible choice. Anyone who ran into a Tribe as fearsome as the Crow Divinity Tribe would surely feel their scalp go numb immediately.

He looked at Meng Hao, clasped hands and bowed. Then, he retreated at top speed, taking his seven thousand Tribe Members and tens of thousands of locusts with him. They transformed into a yellow cloud that shot off into the distance. In a short moment, there was no trace of them at all.

Meng Hao waved his hand, not to collect the neo-demons, but rather, causing them to fly in formation around the airship. The airship then began to speed through the air, accompanied by 150,000 neo-demons as it headed forward. Finally, it shot out from the Western Desert Central region into…

The Western Desert South region!

From this point, it was only half a year to the Black Lands.

As the Black Lands grew nearer and nearer, Meng Hao's eyes began to grow brighter and brighter. The members of the Crow Divinity Tribe were filled with excitement and anticipation, and their killing intent even more intimidating.

Each and every member knew that the difficulty of this last leg of the journey would vastly exceed anything from before.

Right now, the Crow Divinity Tribe was completely different than it had been before; it had completely risen to prominence. This Tribe could cow great Tribes with Spirit Severing Patriarchs. It could sweep over mid-sized Tribes. As for great Tribes that had no Spirit Severing Patriarch, if they dared to block their path, then the Crow Divinity Tribe would fight!

They would not shrink back. They continued ever forward, their killing intent shocking. They were like a sharp, unsheathed sword. 150,000 neo-demons roared and howled, shaking everything around them, like a Heavenly sea of beasts. Standing atop their battleship, the members of the Crow Divinity Tribe proceeded onward, ready to brave any wind or waves that battered against them.

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# Chapter 504: South Cleaving Pass

Three months had passed.

They were now deep into the Western Desert South region. Originally, the members of the Crow Divinity Tribe had assumed that they would experience an unprecedented campaign of constant battles. During the three months though, they only saw a few dozen Tribes. Two of them were great Tribes with no Spirit Severing Patriarch.

However… not a single battle resulted.

The reason for this was that the sight of Meng Hao and the Crow Divinity Tribe was simply too fierce. Their savagery had reached the point that when people saw them, they gasped. It didn’t matter that the Crow Divinity Tribe had a Demon Spirit, no one dared to recklessly attack them.

The tribe numbered over ten thousand, with killing intent that reached to the Heavens. They had experienced a baptism in the fires of war; each and every member seemed equivalent to the elite experts of great Tribes. It was enough to intimidate anyone who looked at them. That was not even to mention… the 150,000 neo-demons. The sight of them was enough… to cause anyone to go numb, to send their mind spinning and their hearts to fill with astonishment.

Such an enormous neo-demon horde was large enough to trample any Tribe in the area. It was huge enough to determine whether or not a Tribe lived or died. Such power was something that no other Tribe would dare attack.

Because of all the battles, the name of the Crow Divinity Tribe had long since spread throughout the land. As of now, they were completely famous in all the Western Desert.

Virtually all Tribes knew of this group that had started out only one thousand strong. It had emerged from the Western Desert North region and traveled a path of war, slaughtering countless other Tribes. They fought for years, winning again and again, growing stronger and stronger. Now, they had reached a terrifying level of power.

Such fame and influence made it so that after the Crow Divinity Tribe reached the Western Desert South region, no one dared to even get in their way during the entire three months!

In fact, many Western Desert Cultivators now viewed the most powerful Tribes without Spirit Severing Cultivators to be the Crow Divinity Tribe, the Black Dragon Tribe and the Heavenly Wind Tribe.

Coincidentally, it was well known that all three of these Tribes possessed Demon Spirits.

One was from the East, one was from the West, and one was from the North. These three shocking Tribes had slaughtered their way out from three different directions.

The Crow Divinity's fame was astonishing, and their rise to prominence was already a legend!

As for the Black Dragon Tribe, years ago, they actually did have a Spirit Severing Patriarch. Unfortunately, his longevity had reached its end, and he was barely able to force himself to remain among the living. When the violet rain came with its power to exterminate life force and cut of spiritual energy, this previously all-powerful figure, a Spirit Severing expert, passed away and returned to the dust.

His death caused the Black Dragon Tribe to lose their qualification to enter the Black Lands. Despite that, they were still able to snatch a Demon Spirit. Now, they once again were the focus of attention.

When it came to the Heavenly Wind Tribe, they were a mysterious lot. They came from the east, and little information was known about their campaign of battles. It wasn’t until they managed to snatch a Demon Spirit up that they suddenly rose to prominence.

Currently, these three great Tribes were generally acknowledged to be the most powerful.

During the three months of travel, nothing shocking happened, and they didn’t stop to rest. Right now, they stood atop their airship, finally having arrived at a shocking stretch of mountains which rose up in front of them.

This mountain range stretched out as far as the eye could see in both directions. Lightning fell from up above down onto the mountain in constant waves, sending crashing booms out in all directions. It made the entire thing seem like the wall of a prison, completely sealed tight.

This was the location of South Cleaving Pass!

These mountains split the entire Western Desert South region into two parts. One part was considered completely part of the Western Desert. The other part was adjacent to the Black Lands. As such, you could not get to the Black Lands without going through this pass.

The fact that this mountain range swept across the land in both directions this way was because it was not a naturally occurring mountain range. Tens of thousands of years ago, when Southern Domain Cultivators made counter incursions into the Western Desert, they slaughtered their way to this point. It was then that all the Tribes of the Western Desert, and all of their powerful experts, spent several hundred years to raise up this mountain range.

It contained ancient spell formations that caused the lightning to exist permanently. In fact, what appeared to be lightning, was really a collection of countless sealing spells created by divine abilities and magical techniques. This place completely sealed off the rest of the continent; it was a door that, once shut, was impossible to break through.

Because of that, the great army of the Southern Domain was stopped outside, and eventually choose to leave.

This pass which led to the Black Lands became famous, and was kept in place after its initial creation. There was only one way in and out, and in that key spot, an enormous city was built.

That city was named South Cleaving City.

Any Tribe or group who wished to step foot into the Black Lands would have to pass through this city. Therefore, it became a very strategic point, and was naturally under heavy guard.

Currently, it was guarded by a great Tribe of the Western Desert, the Sea Demon Tribe. 1

This great Tribe had no Spirit Severing Patriarch, but in terms of overall power, they were intrepid and valiant. Because they were in the South all along, they had experienced few losses. Furthermore, they occupied the city, which enabled them to grow only more and more powerful.

During the years in which it occupied the city, the great Sea Demon Tribe had eventually made a rule. That rule was that any Tribe who wished to travel through the pass had to pay them one half of all their resources, including Spirit Stones and neo-demons.

Only in this way would they be permitted to travel through.

Any Tribes who were inferior to the Sea Demon Tribe and chose not to travel through the pass, would camp in the area in the hope that the higher elevation in the area would prevent the seawater from spreading to them.

Any Tribes who chose to travel through the pass could only patiently bear the exploitation of the Sea Demon Tribe.

As for Tribes who were powerful enough to threaten the great Sea Demon Tribe, the only thing they could do was begrudgingly pay the price. They knew that in front of them was the Sea Demon Tribe, and behind them were powerful bandit Tribes who were encamped in the area.

Only someone incredibly stupid or egotistical would dare not to pay the price.

According to the rumors, behind the great Sea Demon Tribe lurked the shadow of one of the three leaders of the Heavenly Court Alliance, the great Heavenly Pursuit Tribe.

On this particular day, the Crow Divinity's battleship shot through the air, parting the clouds as it entered South Cleaving Pass. They were accompanied by 150,000 neo-demons. Below, many of the scattered Tribes camped at the bottom of the pass looked up with shock as the Crow Divinity Tribe approached.

Tens of thousands of Cultivators were camped out down below, all of them from various different Tribes. As they looked up, discussions instantly broke out.

"That's the Crow Divinity Tribe…."

"That guy in the front must be Eccentric Bloodface. According to the legends, he's vicious and merciless. He's not even a Cultivator! He was incarnated from a neo-demon, the totemic Sacred Ancient of the Crow Divinity Tribe!"

"Three months ago, when the Heavenly Wind Tribe faced up against the Sea Demon Tribe, they had no choice but to give up half of their valuables in order to be able to travel through. I wonder what the Crow Divinity Tribe will chose to do?"

Meanwhile, within South Cleaving City, the members of the great Sea Demon Tribe were looking out with expressions of scorn and disdain as they pointed toward the Crow Divinity Tribe. The Elders of the Tribe looked out coldly from their position on the city wall, contempt clearly written on their faces.

As for the Greatfather and the High Priest, they didn't even appear. To them, the Crow Divinity wasn't worthy of their presence.

“Halt!” As the Crow Divinity Tribe neared, one Sea Demon Tribe Elders appeared, an early Nascent Soul stage Cultivator. His expression was one of haughtiness, as if everything he saw was beneath him. The sight of 150,000 neo-demons shocked him, but he didn’t lose any of his lofty pride.

As his voice echoed out, the Crow Divinity Tribe’s airship came to a stop. Meng Hao stood on the prow, looking at South Cleaving Pass with a frown.

“If you wish to travel through the pass,” said the Elder coolly, “produce all of your valuables. After a thorough check, we will take half as payment. Then you may travel through the pass. The same goes for your neo-demon horde.” As his voice rang out, the Cultivators from all the other Tribes grew silent. Their eyes glowed brightly as they looked at the Crow Divinity Tribes.

Of course, they didn’t dare to tangle with the Crow Divinity Tribe. However, if the neo-demon horde of the Crow Divinity Tribe were reduced by half, effectively diminishing their power by a huge amount, then… they might have the guts to attack.

It was not a minority who thought in this way. A black cloud formed on the other side of the pass as three Tribes appeared, each one numbering over 10,000, with tens of thousands of neo-demons. Their desire to slaughter was quite evident as the hovered about in the air near South Cleaving City. They looked like rapacious plunderers, just waiting for a Tribe to emerge from the pass. Their gazes locked onto the Crow Divinity Tribe, the greed in their eyes growing more and more intense.

Meng Hao saw them, and his frown deepened. The coldness in his eyes grew sharper. As for the members of the Crow Divinity Tribe, they stood there silently, their killing intent spreading out.

On the other side of the pass, the Greatfathers of the three bandit Tribes exchanged glances and then looked at Meng Hao with cold, mocking smiles.

“After all these months, we finally hooked a big fish….”

“That’s right. Three months ago, some of the other Tribes tried to rob the Heavenly Wind Tribe. Although they let them go in the end, they still managed to snatch up some good loot.”

“The richer they are, the more powerful they are. Even if they don’t have Demon Spirits, that doesn’t mean they can’t get a chance to enter the Black Lands…. Although, in this case, the Crow Divinity Tribe actually does have a Demon Spirit.” The Priests and Elders of these tribes were now panting, and their eyes shone with a bloodthirsty glow.

They were confident that the Crow Divinity Tribe would not dare to defy the rules of South Cleaving Pass. After all, according to the stories, the Heavenly Court Alliance itself supported the arrangement.

“The Crow Divinity Tribe has a Demon Spirit. They’ll definitely travel through the pass… and sooner rather than later. After all, even more bandit Tribes are gathering behind them.”

“When they emerge from the pass, they will have lost half of their resources and neo-demons. Faced up against three bandit Tribes, the fighting will be fierce. However, they are flanked by even more bandit Tribes, so the result would be the same. I wonder what they’ll choose?”

The Tribes within the pass who had no option of traveling through to the other side, or perhaps were hesitating about whether to do so, could see the black cloud on the other side, and the three Tribes radiating killing intent. This caused their faces to flicker, and their minds to fill with a droning sound.

The entire Crow Divinity Tribe was silent, including Meng Hao. Up above on the walls of South Cleaving City, the members of the Sea Demon Tribe were all chatting and laughing as they looked contemptuously out at the scene playing out within the pass.

The solitary Sea Demon Tribe Elder was beginning to look impatient. His voice cold, he said, “You’re the Crow Divinity Tribe, right? If you’re not going to go through the pass, then screw off this instant!”

Meng Hao slowly lifted his head. When he spoke, it was calm, although the sound of his voice was like thunder. It echoed about, creating massive sound waves. “Would you pipe down?”

1. Sea Demon could also be translated “siren”

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# Chapter 505: Do You Dare to Attack?!

As soon as his voice echoed out into the ears of the Crow Divinity Tribe, the heads of the more than ten thousand Tribe members all suddenly snapped up. Their eyes radiated killing intent. Meng Hao's gaze was icy cold as his hand stretched out. Suddenly, a long, black spear appeared in his hand.

This was the the spear given to him by Demon Weapon Lonelytomb, refined from the Devil Construct, and filled with ten percent of its power… the Devil Spear!

As soon as the spear appeared, the clouds in the area began to roil, and shocking killing intent appeared.

The response of the Crow Divinity Tribe, and the appearance of Meng Hao's Devil Spear, instantly attracted the attention of the three great Tribes on the other side of the pass. Smiles appeared on their faces as they looked at Meng Hao. Although they hoped the Crow Divinity Tribe would fight with the Sea Demon Tribe, deep inside, they felt this to be impossible. The Crow Divinity Tribe would only dare to attack… if they were crazy.

Their smiles were noticed by the tens of thousands of Cultivators inside of the pass. In this moment when anything could happen, those tens of thousands of people instantly began to discuss the matter anxiously.

"Those Tribes on the other side of the pass have no way of getting into the Black Lands. They roam about in the area outside of it, plundering and killing. Their main goal is to rob the Tribes that have just emerged from the pass…."

“A lot of Tribes have been destroyed in such a way. It looks like those people really do believe the rumor that people have been talking about. Who knows who started it….”

“We believe the rumor too. Supposedly, in the final moments of the Apocalypse, when the lands are on the verge of being submerged, whichever Tribe survives the final chaotic battle will have a chance to enter the Black Lands! As long as the three leaders in the Black Lands approve of that Tribe’s power, they will be pulled in as an auxiliary Tribe!”

This rumor had been spreading throughout the past few years, and was now deeply ingrained in the hearts of the local Cultivators. Many of the Tribes who were here without Demon Spirits had come to truly believe in the rumor.

As the discussions continued, Meng Hao stood on the prow of the battleship, Devil Spear in hand. Instantly, black mist began to roil and seethe around him. Within the mist could be seen countless faces, each and every one was vicious and savage. Ear-piercing laughter could be heard that sounded like the cries of nightbirds. It sounded almost like skulls being grated together, cold and hair-raising.

The Crow Divinity members behind Meng Hao all began to stand up. Killing intent roiled off their bodies, and their bloodshot eyes began to burn as if with fire. Their desire to kill was intense, but their hearts were exceedingly calm.

As of this moment, each and every one looked like a heroic veteran of hundreds of battles!

“What do you think you’re doing?” said the Sea Demon Tribe Elder who stood there in the middle of South Cleaving City. He gave a cold, disdainful snort.

“You want to attack the Sea Demon Tribe of South Cleaving Pass?” he said arrogantly. “You’ve got guts, but if you dare to make even a single attack, or spill even a drop of Sea Demon Tribe blood, then your entire Tribe will be exterminated within three days!” He was convinced that the Crow

Divinity Tribe would not dare to attack. All of this was just posturing in an attempt to reduce the price that would have to be paid to go through the pass.

He had seen a lot of Tribes like this. Up to this point, not a single one had dared to actually make a move. All had ended up bowing their heads in compliance.

It wasn’t just him who thought in this way. The members of the Sea Demon Tribe up on the walls of South Cleaving City were all laughing coldly, their scorn and disdain clearly visible.

At the same time, the tens of thousands of other Cultivators within the pass were all panting as they stared at the Crow Divinity Tribe and Meng Hao.

“Will the Crow Divinity Tribe actually dare to attack? I just don’t believe it!”

“Ever since the Apocalypse began and the Sea Demon Tribe took over the South Cleaving Pass, there has never been a single Tribe who attempted to attack and storm the pass…. I think the Crow Divinity Tribe is just doing some saber-rattling.”

Even as the sound of the discussions echoed out, the atmosphere up above in mid-air couldn’t be more tense. Suddenly, coldness sprang out from Meng Hao’s eyes.

The Sea Demon Tribe, his arrogance at its zenith, suddenly said, “Why haven’t you attacked yet? I’m waiting for you, you trifling Northern Tribe. You dare to act ferocious, but I’m waiting to see if you’ll actually have the gall to attack!

“In fact, as of now, I forbid you from saying that you won’t attack. Even if you get on your knees and beg, you can forget about paying only half of your resources to get through South Cleaving Pass. You will pay ALL of your resources and ALL of your neo-demons….”

It was at this moment that Meng Hao suddenly flung out the Devil Spear. The pitch black spear shot like lightning through the air. Rumbling filled the air.

A shrill, screaming sound could be heard, and a sound like something being ripped through, as if the air were being torn to pieces. The Cultivators down below saw a black beam ripping through the air, emanating a shocking aura as it shot directly toward South Cleaving Pass.

Black mist surrounded the Devil Spear, within which were maliciously laughing faces. The sound of the laughter echoed out, causing all hearts to tremble. In the blink of an eye, the Devil Spear crossed the distance between Meng Hao and the Sea Demon Tribe Elder. The Elder's face filled with shock as the spear appeared directly in front of him.

His heart trembled as a fierce wind blasted against his face, as well as a sharpness that caused his chest to fill with stabbing pain. His clothing whipped about, his hair was thrown into disarray, and he felt as if he were being strangled. Without even thinking about it, he retreated. Even in his wildest dreams, he would never have imagined that… the Crow Divinity Tribe would actually dare to attack!

Waves of astonishment filled his mind, along with countless questions, making it impossible for him to have the time to dodge. At this point, he couldn't dodge even if he wanted to.

"They actually attacked?"

"They did! They attacked!"

The Sea Demon Tribe Elder's eyes went wide and his pupils constricted. His vision was suddenly filled by a black mist. All the onlookers watched wide-eyed as the long, black spear stabbed directly into his chest, tearing apart his clothes, shredding his flesh and blood. It stabbed through his heart, piercing him through, carrying him with it as it continued to scream through the air.

Blood sprayed from the old man’s mouth. He looked down in disbelief at the Devil Spear vibrating in his chest as it carried him through the air.

“How is this possible….” He still almost couldn’t believe what was happening.

At the same time, massive amounts of mist poured out from the spear. It looked like countless black snakes as it poured into the Elder’s eyes, ears, nose and mouth. It even burrowed into the pores on his skin. As the mist sank into him, countless bloodthirsty faces pounced. The sound of chewing echoed out, accompanied by the bloodcurdling screams of the old man.

Those screams were filled with indescribable pain. One could only imagine the unprecedented brutality that would cause an early Nascent Soul Cultivator to scream in such a way.

BAM!

The Devil Spear slammed into the city wall of South Cleaving City. Cracking sounds could be heard and fissures spread out across the wall as the Sea Demon Tribe Elder was impaled directly onto its surface.

Looking at the scene, however, the only thing that could be seen was a black mist. As for the horrific screaming, it had long since ceased.

Everything was deathly quiet. Meng Hao’s expressions was the same as ever as he lifted up his hand and made a grasping gesture. Instantly, a droning sound could be heard as the spear dissipated. A black mist of countless vicious faces dispersed and then shot back toward Meng Hao, seemingly eager to report their success.

At the same time, it was revealed that in the middle of the mist… was no body! There was only a skeleton!

The bones of the skeleton were covered in bite marks, as if they had been chewed upon. Some were even completely crushed. Without the Devil Spear to hold it in place, the skeleton crumbled apart and fell to the ground.

Only a few pieces were left, stuck in the cracks in the city wall. The sight was thoroughly astonishing.

The Sea Demon Tribe members were instantly shaken. The tens of thousands of Cultivators down below in the pass stared with wide eyes and open mouths.

The three bandit Tribes on the other side of the pass had similar reactions. The scene was completely shocking, causing them to pant and look on with disbelief.

Not a single person could have predicted that the Crow Divinity Tribe would actually dare to make a move, and that Meng Hao… would be so audacious as to slay an Elder of the Sea Demon Tribe.

Everyone who saw it happen felt as if their heads were about to explode. Each and every one was thinking the exact same thing.

“The Crow Divinity Tribe… did the unthinkable!!”

The tens of thousands of Cultivators within the pass stood as still as if they were dead. Only panting could be heard as they looked at Meng Hao and the Crow Divinity Tribe. It was as if this was their first time seeing them. They were overwhelmed with shock. Meng Hao’s decisiveness, the awe-inspiring Devil Spear, the shocking attack, all of these things transformed into something like lightning that crashed around inside their minds. The scene just now was something that they would never be able to forget.

The three Tribes on the other side of the pass, who moments ago had been greedily eyeing the Crow Divinity Tribe, even laughing at them, now felt thunderstruck. Ordinary Tribe members, Priests, and even the Greatfathers were breathing heavily and had looks of amazement plastered on their faces.

How could they ever have imagined that the Crow Divinity Tribe… would really dare to make a move!! Furthermore, they didn’t just simply attack. They actually killed someone!

Such decisiveness, such killing intent, such a desire to exterminate, caused the hearts of the members of these three Tribes to fill with madness. The confidence they had felt moments ago regarding their ability to defeat this opponent, was instantly shaken with grave intensity. Fear suddenly blossomed in their hearts.

The most shaken of all was the Sea Demon Tribe. Every Tribe member who saw what happened was unable to even react. From the very beginning, they had been literally incapable of believing that the scene they had just witnessed could possibly unfold. They just didn't believe that someone would actually dare to attack the Sea Demon Tribe….

After a long moment of deathly silence, enraged cries could suddenly be heard from within South Cleaving City. More than a dozen figures emerged to charge forward, followed by tens of thousands of neo-demons and twenty thousand Tribe members!

Among their number was a red-haired old man, the Greatfather of the Sea Demon Tribe. His face was filled with shock, but also fury. He was clearly flustered and discomfited.

Before he could even say anything, Meng Hao's black mist returned to him and formed once again into the Devil Spear. He pointed it forward and cried, "Fight!"

No more words were necessary. Only one word…. Instantly, the eyes of the more than ten thousand Crow Divinity Tribe members turned red, and they began to shout.

"Kill them!" As the shocking sound rose up, the entire Crow Divinity Tribe shot forward. They looked like a group of fiends and monsters who had fought and survived hundreds of battles. Their charge was accompanied by dense killing intent which caused even the sky to dim. Clouds amassed up above, making it seem as if they were surging out from the depths of the yellow springs as they charged toward South Cleaving City!

Even more shocking, it was at this moment that 150,000 neo-demons appeared, bloodthirsty and furious. They blotted out the entire sky as they charged South Cleaving Pass!

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# Chapter 506: South Cleaving Sentinel!

Booms shook the sky and explosions caused the earth to quake. The entirety of South Cleaving Pass seemed to be trembling. The sound of close-quarters fighting could be heard echoing about.

The more than ten thousand members of the Crow Divinity Tribe had bloodshot eyes as they fought with frenzied madness. Magical techniques were employed, as well as the explosive power of the five elements totem tattoos. Instantly, an indescribably shocking aura rose up.

In the blink of an eye, a massacre began.

Wu Chen was no longer a youth. He looked like a grown man. However, this was not a change that happened because of the passage of time. Instead, it was the result of a baptism in the fires of war, a tempering that occurred within blood and gore. He looked far more mature than before, his face grave and stern. His eyes were filled with veins of blood and his body radiated killing intent and grim coldness.

He attacked, Wood-type totems magically appeared. Glowing light rose up, surrounding his hands as he lifted the severed head of a Sea Demon Tribe Cultivator high up into the air. Blood dripped down his arm as he looked up to the sky and howled.

Around him, similar scenes played out with other Crow Divinity Tribe members. Whenever they killed someone, they would hold a severed head up to the sky. The auras they emanated were shocking.

To them, war was like breathing. Well, perhaps that is a bit of an exaggeration. In any case, they were long since accustomed to it. Years of campaigning and countless deaths made it so that all the members of the Crow Divinity Tribe did not pay too much attention to the difference between life and death. However, their determination to enter the Black Lands only continued to grow stronger.

Such determination caused them to be filled with the mad desire to slaughter anything that stood in their way.

Their attacks were neat and tidy. They killed in the blink of an eye. The sight of blood spraying about did not cause them to tremble, but rather fueled their bloodthirsty desire to kill.

“Kill them!” It was hard to say who shouted it first. But soon, the voices of more than ten thousand Crow Divinity Tribe members joined together. The shocking roar of their shouts, filled with killing intents, rose up to the Heavens. The hearts of the Sea Demon Tribe Cultivators were instantly shaken. All of them felt their faces grow pale and their bravery drizzle away. The only thing they could do was fall back.

Such a massacre, such a show by each and every member of the Crow Divinity Tribe, made it seem as if their Tribe were a tempest of slaughter, ready to sweep across South Cleaving Pass. After being engaged in a battle for only the space of a few breaths, the members of the Sea Demon Tribe had already lost several thousand Cultivators.

They were incapable of withstanding even a single attack!

“This cannot be a Tribe from the North!!”

“The North region doesn’t have any Tribes like this! Only great Tribes with Spirit Severing Patriarchs have Battle Tribes like this!!” Thoughts of disbelief filled the hearts and minds of the members of the Sea Demon Tribe. Such feelings turned into wellsprings of fear. They could not control the trembling they felt inside.

Miserable screams could be heard, filled with despair and terror. Actually, for all of the members of the Sea Demon Tribe… it had been a very, very long time since they had experienced war. In the past, they had had their glories, but after the arrival of the Apocalypse, they had only encountered Tribes which would submit to them. This was the first time they had run into a Tribe which unexpectedly attacked with such savagery and fierceness.

The Sea Demon Tribe had started out furious, but now, that fury had turned into dread. Dread, and screams that echoed out in all directions. The tens of thousands of other Tribe members down in the pass below watched on with wide eyes and gaping mouths. They panted, staring blankly at everything that was happening. The sounds of slaughter filled their ears, and any bit of courage in their hearts was washed away by the wailing and screaming.

All of this made them feel as if what they were watching wasn't even real. However, soon, all of the blood, all of the ruthlessness and slaughter on the battlefield, became incredibly clear.

"This is… the Crow Divinity Tribe?"

"The Crow Divinity Tribe… has become so powerful! In front of them, the Sea Demon Tribe is like dried up weeds and rotten wood, easily crushable!"

The observing tens of thousands of Cultivators could only breath heavily, their hearts filled with intense shock.

From a distance, the members of the Crow Divinity Tribe seemed like sharp arrows that could slash through anything that obstructed their way. They stabbed into South Cleaving Pass; there was not a Sea Demon Tribe Member they encountered who was capable of offering the least bit of resistance.

Throughout the course of their long campaign, the number of Nascent Soul Cultivators in the Crow Divinity Tribe had reached fourteen. Two were of the late Nascent Soul stage, five of the mid stage, and seven of the early stage. These fourteen Cultivators whistled through the air, slaughtering their way toward the Sea Demon Tribe’s Nascent soul Cultivators. The two forces slammed into each other with a bang, and deadly fighting broke out.

Booms echoed out, shaking the mountain peaks. The sound of the slaughter shook Heaven and Earth. As for Meng Hao, he floated in mid-air, looking around coldly. He did not need to attack; instead, his 150,000 neo-demons swept forth with crushing will. Any resistance was like trampling weeds and smashing rotten wood.

The neo-demons of the Sea Demon Tribe were instantly ripped into shreds, transformed into food. Meng Hao did nothing to gather them into his horde; after all… his neo-demons had been starving for months….

At the moment, Meng Hao’s neo-demon horde was enjoying a sumptuous feast.

He held the Devil Spear in hand as his eyes swept over the battlefield. The air rippled as two old men appeared in front of him, having slipped past all obstructions.

The Cultivation bases of these two old men were not weak. Flames of fury raged in their eyes as divine abilities magically appeared. Totemic power exploded out like an ocean, transforming into the image of a Sea Demon that immediately shot toward Meng Hao, exuding massive pressure that weighed down on him.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever. He didn’t move other than to lift up the Devil Spear and stretch it out. Like a long dragon crossing a sea, devilish mist exploded out. Countless misty faces shot toward the two old men.

Meng Hao used none of his own power; this was purely the might of the Devil Spear. As of this moment, Meng Hao could sense that this spear would not last forever. After all, it was refined from a Devil Construct, and as time passed, the Devilish will inside would fade away. Before too much time passed, it would dissipate completely.

It had nothing to do with whether or not Meng Hao used it. It would fade away either way.

Booming filled the air as the two old men shot backward, blood spraying from their mouths, faces filled with astonishment. Strands of Devilish mist bored into them, and ferocious mouths began to bite into them. The old men's faces fell as they shot back. No longer did they harbor thoughts of attacking; unfortunately, they were immediately blocked by the Crow divinity Nascent Soul Cultivators who had been chasing them.

It was at this point that ferocious roaring could suddenly be heard from within South Cleaving Pass. Suddenly, blue ripples appeared, shooting up into the air to form an expansive sea.

The tens of thousands of Cultivators down below were panting. Some of them immediately recognized what these ripples were.

"Sea Demon totem!!"

The roaring and the spreading ripples seemed to cause the Sea Demon Tribe members, who were in the middle of being routed, to suddenly find hope within their despair. Their eyes instantly began to glow with wild joy.

At the same time, the ground rumbled as an area within South Cleaving city suddenly collapsed. A blue beam of light shot up into the air. Ripples spread out like sea waves as it shot toward Meng Hao.

A creature appeared. Blue scales covered its body, giving it a bizarre appearance. It was shaped like a human, except that it had the tail of a fish, and four arms. Each of its four hands brandished a trident.

Four tridents all danced with lightning. The instant this creature appeared, a shocking aura exploded out. With a roar of fury, it shot toward Meng Hao.

Before it could get close, a gust of wind blew through the air as the Outlander Beast appeared. As it slammed into the creature, the parrot also appeared, flapping its wings as it squawked:

“No fur or feathers! Dammit! You also have no fur or feathers!! Beloved concubine, put it to death!” Amidst its high-pitched squawks, the parrot suddenly transformed into a spearhead which shot toward the totemic Sea Demon.

Huge booms filled the air as vast quantities of Sea Demon Tribe members died. Blood rained down onto South Cleaving Pass. Even their souls were destroyed. The entire battlefield was a mass of redness.

It seemed as if the Sea Demon Tribe was about to be completely exterminated. However, it was at this point that the Sea Demon Tribe Greatfather let out a miserable howl.

“Main Tribe, save me!!” As his voice echoed out, South Cleaving Pass began to shake. Multiple fissures appeared on the surface of South Cleaving City and began to spread out rapidly, almost like lightning bolts. Many of the buildings within the city simply collapsed, causing dust to billow up into the air. A strange murmuring suddenly could be heard. It seemed as if this strange murmuring was a calling, a call to an enormous, ancient statue which existed beneath South Cleaving City. The statue slowly began to break out of the ground and rise up.

It was pitch black and had eight arms. At first, it seemed similar to the Sea Demon totem, however, the feeling it gave was one of complete ancientness. There also seemed to be some type of evil within the aura that emanated out from it. As it rose up, its closed eyes suddenly opened.

It seemed to be just a statue, however, in the blink of an eye, some sealing was apparently shattered and its soul suddenly awoke. Instantly, the power of this ancient statue’s soul exploded out.

The moment its eyes opened, a tremor ran through Meng Hao’s body and a sense of profound deadly crisis filled him. Although his eyes went wide, he did not retreat in the slightest. His right hand lifted up and he hurled the Devil Spear toward the statue.

BZZZZZZ!

The Devil Spear split the air, transforming into a beam of blackness that shot forward.

“South Cleaving Sentinel!!”

“I… I read about that once in the ancient records! A total of one hundred were created in the Western Desert to defend against the great army of Southern Domain Cultivators. That’s a South Cleaving Sentinel!”

“A Black-Armored Sentinel!!”

“No wonder the Sea Demon Tribe could take over this area. Their totem is similar to this Black-Armored Sentinel. Don’t tell me… the Sea Demon Tribe is actually descended from this thing!!”

Even as the tens of thousands of Cultivators below discussed the matter, the Devil Spear shredded through the air. In the blink of an eye, it was directly in front of the statue, heading toward its forehead, carrying with it a Devilish mist filled with countless vicious faces.

However, the statue completely ignored the Devil Spear. Its eyes glowed with a strange light as it stared at Meng Hao. In the exact moment that the Devil spear reached its head, its lips moved and it spoke a word.

“Psyche.”

It was only one word, but Meng Hao’s body trembled and blood sprayed from his mouth. He tumbled backward, face pale. It was as if his soul were about to be ripped into shreds. An intense pain suddenly stabbed out throughout his entire body.

It was as if this one word carried the power to cause anything the statue looked at to be destroyed!

Meanwhile, the three bandit Tribes on the other side of the pass exchanged glances. Suddenly, the three Greatfathers stepped forward.

“They dared to attack the guardians of the pass, the Sea Demon Tribe!” they cried. “This is an opportunity we can’t pass up. We can’t just stand by and watch!” Hearing the voices of their Greatfathers, the members of the three bandit Tribes instantly shot toward South Cleaving Pass.

Obviously, they saw that Meng Hao had been injured, which changed the tide of the battle. Now was their chance to slaughter and plunder!

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# Chapter 507: Black Dragon Tribe!

Almost at the same moment in which the three bandit Tribes charged forward, further off back in the pass, a black dragon roared. This black dragon was several thousand meters long; atop it stood over ten thousand Cultivators. Around the wrist of each one of these Cultivators was a black cord.

Killing intent pulsed out from within the black cords. The garments worn by the ten thousand Cultivators were simple, and hard looks could be seen on their faces. Their gazes were cold, and at first glance, looked very similar to the expressions of the Crow Divinity Tribe.

The main difference between the two was that, shockingly, on their foreheads could be seen the mark of a black dragon.

This was… the great Black Dragon Tribe!

Before, they had a Spirit Severing Patriarch, and had shined gloriously for a thousand years. Unfortunately, their Spirit Severing Patriarch had perished. After that, they had relied on their own strength to plunder a Demon Spirit, and had then slaughtered their way out from within the Western Desert East region. Now they had finally arrived at South Cleaving Pass!

During their journey, their Tribe of close to one hundred thousand had been reduced to only about ten thousand. More than seventy percent of their Tribe had perished. Even still, this was the great Black Dragon Tribe. This was still that Tribe that was strong enough to strike fear into the hearts of Western Desert Cultivators.

Behind the Black Dragon was a rope that was festooned with… skulls!

More than one hundred thousand skulls were threaded onto the black rope which was woven together to form something almost like a cape. It fluttered in the air as the black dragon flew, casting a shadow over the land beneath.

An aura of death surrounded it, and it was even possible to hear the sound of mourning souls that were sealed within the skulls, struggling to free themselves.

These were the skulls of enemies killed by the Black Dragon Clan in the battles on their journey. They were trophies of war, used to shock the surrounded thieves and robbers!

On the head of the black dragon were eight Cultivators. Most were old men with cold eyes, who made the Tribe as a whole seem like a sharp, unsheathed blade.

Among the eight men was a younger man who stuck out from the rest. He was extremely muscular and very tall, about a head taller than the average Western Desert Cultivator. He wore a simple black garment, and a fierce black dragon totem tattoo could be seen on his forehead. He looked rugged, and his eyes shone with a bright light.

Around his right wrist was wrapped a black cord. It seemed ordinary, and didn’t appear to have any unusual characteristics, as if it were just a traditional ornamentation of the Black Dragon Tribe.

This person was none other than Xu Bai! 1

Years ago in the Realm of the Bridge Ruins, he and Chen Mo of the great Demon Talisman Tribe had attempted to snatch a Demon Spirit only to have it grabbed by Zhixiang. In the end, the three of them had watched wide-eyed as Meng Hao attacked, and then managed to grab the Demon Spirit for himself.

They gave chase, but Meng Hao was too fast. Then, Zhixiang interfered, forcing Xu Bai and Chen Mo to give up. It was with great regret that Xu Bai left the Realm of the Bridge Ruins. At the same time, he was left with a deep impression of Meng Hao and Zhixiang.

As the Black Dragon Tribe neared, it instantly attracted the attention of the tens of thousands of Cultivators who were watching the battle between the Crow Divinity Tribe and the Sea Demon Tribe. As soon as they looked over, they recognized the Black Dragon Tribe. Instantly, their faces began to flicker as they wondered what the Tribe would choose to do.

Xu Bai looked at the battle unfolding in South Cleaving Pass, and lightning seemed to dance in his eyes. He saw Meng Hao retreating from the bizarre statue, blood oozing out of his mouth.

Xu Bai saw Meng Hao, he saw the Sea Demon Tribe, he saw the strange, eight-armed statue, and he saw the three bandit Tribes whistling toward them from the other side of the pass.

He was quiet for the space of about three breaths, after which he lifted his head back and laughed.

“Eccentric Bloodface, Meng Hao…. I’ve heard your name mentioned a lot recently. I’ve been following the rumors with quite some interest…. You led the Crow Divinity Tribe out from the Western Desert North region all the way to here. You… have really caused me to admire you!” His laughter was bright and crisp, without any feeling of insincerity. He truly did feel incredible admiration for Meng Hao. After all, stories about the Crow Divinity Tribe, Meng Hao and the events in the Realm of the Bridge Ruins, had long since spread far and wide.

In some ways, his feelings toward Meng Hao could be summed up in the expression, “those who have the same illness sympathize with each other,” or maybe even, “people of talent appreciate one another.” The Black Dragon Tribe and the Crow Divinity Tribe started out in much the same situation, although the Black Dragon Tribe was a bit better off. After the Apocalypse began, their Spirit Severing Patriarch perished and they lost their qualification to enter the Black Lands. The Tribe members abandoned themselves to hopelessness and despair. In addition to that, old enemies besieged and attacked them. However, the Patriarch had made certain preparations before death, and then Xu Bai rose to prominence, leading the Tribe on a path of slaughter that caused their faith to once again grow strong. At that point… the great Black Dragon Tribe was firmly entrenched in the history books.

This was how they were similar to the Crow Divinity Tribe, and also the reason why Xu Bai next lifted his hand and pointed.

“I, Xu Bai, detest those who interfere in the battles of others. Crow Divinity Tribe, allow my Black Dragon Tribe to obstruct the path of these three bandit Tribes!” Instantly, the black dragon roared, and the ten thousand members of the great Black Dragon Tribe poured forth, transforming into black beams of light as they charged. They were accompanied by a sizable number of neo-demons. They shot into the battlefield, but didn’t stop. They continued onward, directly toward the incoming three bandit Tribes.

The Greatfathers of the three other Tribes instantly shouted out.

“Xu Bai, what are you doing?! There are no ill-feelings between us…. We didn’t attack you either! We’re only helping South Cleaving Pass! Don’t tell me that you’re also trying to break through the pass like the Crow Divinity Tribe!?”

“Great Black Dragon Tribe, you need to think things through clearly! If you start fighting us, then it means you’re declaring war on all the bandit Tribes! Once you leave the pass, you won’t be able to move a single step!”

“I’ve already thought things through clearly,” replied Xu Bai, his voice cool. Rumbling killing intent spread out from the members of the Black Dragon Tribe. The faces of the members of the three bandit Tribes fell as intense fighting suddenly began!

Xu Bai laughed coldly. He truly had thought things through clearly. Even if the situation hadn’t played out this way, he knew that after traveling through the pass, he would be surrounded by bandits. He also really did admire Meng Hao and the Crow Divinity Tribe. The fact that they dared to defy the South Cleaving Pass was something even he would not have been able to do.

In fact, before coming here, he had already grudgingly made the decision to hand over half of the Tribe’s belongings.

But now, an opportunity existed that Xu Bai naturally could not pass up. He would never attack the Crow Divinity Tribe. That was because fundamentally speaking, in this Apocalypse, the Black Dragon Tribe and the Crow Divinity Tribe… were the two most suitable Tribes to form an alliance!

Xu Bai had thought the matter through thoroughly. “Divided, we fall. Forming an alliance is the best decision. If we can find the Heavenly Wind Tribe, and form a three-Tribe alliance, then we could fight directly back against those damned bandit Tribes outside of the Black Lands!” He was certain that the Crow Divinity Tribe and the Heavenly Wind Tribe were also thinking the same thing.

The slaughter began. Booms filled the air. Meng Hao wiped the blood from his mouth as he ground to a halt. He didn’t pay any attention to the great Black Dragon Tribe. That was because at the moment, he had to devote complete attention to this bizarre statue that he was up against.

His Devil Spear had stabbed into the statue’s forehead, causing its head to crumble half apart. Furthermore, three of its arms had been shattered.

However, as the Devil Spear circled back around and then stabbed through the statue again, it didn’t seem to inflict any damage. It was as if it had suddenly lost some of its effectiveness.

This caused Meng Hao’s heart to tremble. The statue’s remaining eye glittered coldly as it once again looked at him. Without hesitation, Meng Hao produced the blood-colored mask and put it on. Instantly, a bloody aura billowed up around him.

“Ji Clan Blood Clone!” Meng Hao’s eyes flashed and a bright red glow of blood shined out from his forehead. At the same time, a long, blood-colored strand appeared which turned into a drop of blood. It wriggled as it suddenly expanded, transforming into a Blood Clone that looked exactly like Meng Hao. The statue’s mouth was open as if it were about to speak again, when suddenly the Blood Clone shot toward it.

Instantly, the statue closed its mouth. It allowed the Blood Clone to pounce, and yet strangely, no injury was inflicted, not even the slightest. Meng Hao found this difficult to believe. The Blood Clone, having passed through the statue, was taken aback, as if it didn’t understand.

It was at this point that the multi-armed statue’s ghastly voice once again could be heard. “Destruction!”

A thunderous roar filled Meng Hao. Suddenly, his mind exploded with a burst of power that was a full three times stronger than his own five elements type power that he had used previously. It felt as if a sword were tearing through his brain, stabbing into his mind, ripping everything apart. Blood sprayed from his mouth and his face went pale. He suddenly felt incredibly weak.

This statue’s divine ability was extremely bizarre, and Meng Hao was powerless to block it. He bit the tip of his tongue, using the pain to clear his head. His eyes were bloodshot as he, instead of retreating, turned into a beam of light that shot directly toward the statue.

“The Blood Clone doesn’t work….” he thought as his speed increased. He transformed into a green smoke and a black moon. As he neared, he lifted his right hand up. Suddenly, Blood Immortal divine abilities manifested. Booms filled the air as he unleashed them all. However, just as was the case with the Devil Spear, none of them hurt the statue even the least bit.

This caused Meng Hao’s face to fall. He waved his hand and the Lotus Time Formation appeared. It spun rapidly, rumbling as it unleashed the power of Time. It was not effective either.

“Divine abilities are useless. Magical items are useless. The Devil Spear only worked once…. Just what exactly is this statue made of!?!?” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with killing intent as he endured the splitting pain in his head.

“Why did the Devil Spear work once…? When the Blood Clone neared, it was obviously about to speak, but then shut its mouth!” Hundreds of ideas and possibilities flickered through Meng Hao’s mind. Suddenly, his eyes narrowed.

“Don’t tell me….” He gritted his teeth and then, without hesitation, shot toward the statue, mentally preparing himself.

The statue’s expression was as cold as ever. The remaining eye on its half-destroyed head gleamed with mysterious coldness as it once again spoke, a third time: “Incantation!”

Psyche Destruction Incantation!

As soon as the third word began to leave its mouth, Meng Hao lifted his hand and employed the power of the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex. His finger pointed toward the Statue’s open mouth. Even as the sound was coming out, and it suddenly stopped moving, Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding. Four wooden swords appeared, which instantly transformed into prismatic beams that shot toward the statue.

Simultaneously, in response to Meng Hao’s advanced preparation just now, the Blood Clone pounced. Screaming sounds could be heard as the Devil Spear shot forward in attack. The Time Sword Formation rotated. The Blood Immortal divine abilities were unleashed. As soon as the word “incantation” left its mouth, booming could be heard!

A massive rumble shook everything as the entire statue began to tremble. The four wooden swords caused it to lose any power to resist. Boom! It began to collapse as the Devil Spear slammed into it. The Blood Clone absorbed its life force. The Time Sword Formation transformed it into ash. Meng Hao’s Blood Immortal divine abilities then destroyed the ash!

At the same time, Meng Hao was coughing up blood. After the statue spoke the final word, a power three times more powerful than before exploded out inside of his body. Thankfully, it only lasted a brief instant. The statue was destroyed, making the pain last for only a short moment. Even still, blood oozed from Meng Hao’s eyes, nose, ears and mouth. Even as he tumbled backward, he produced handfuls of medicinal pills, which he instantly consumed.

He looked up at the disappearing ash, and his eyes gleamed with coldness.

“When its mouth was closed, it couldn’t be hurt. When its mouth opened, it revealed its weakness!”

1. Xu Bai’s name in Chinese is Xǔ bái. Xu is a common surname. Bai means “white”

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# Chapter 508: A Bet

The destruction of the eight-armed statue was like a death knell, ringing out to declare what the future of the Sea Demon Tribe would be. The ten thousand Crow Divinity Tribe members fought fiercely. 150,000 neo-demons screamed through the air. This was not a battle between two Tribes; this was a slaughter.

Miserable shrieks filled the air, the cries of the dying. A strange mixture of violet rain and fresh blood showered down onto the ground, pouring down through South Cleaving Pass, seemingly mixing with all the blood of previous battles in the area….

Meng Hao floated in mid-air, his eyes shut as he rotated his Cultivation base with full force to absorb the power of the medicinal pills and heal himself. His mind was still filled with a pain that felt like countless stabbing needles. The eight-armed statue had been powerful. If Meng Hao hadn’t noticed its weakness, and it opened its mouth a fourth time, even though he was at the great circle of four of the five different elements, he still would have been powerless to resist. His soul would have been ripped apart, his mind exploded. His body might not have been destroyed, but his soul would have.

Thinking back, Meng Hao was actually shocked. He suddenly realized that he had to be vigilant in regard to the Western Desert and all the bizarre things which existed therein. Gone was the arrogance he had felt because of his powerful Cultivation base.

His eyes were closed as he went about healing himself. Around him, a shocking massacre played out. The powerful experts of the Sea Demon Tribe were trying to break through to interfere with Meng Hao’s healing.

Before they could even get near, they were intercepted and prevented from getting even within three hundred meters of him.

Bloodcurdling screams echoed out as the Sea Demon Tribe members were beaten back and killed ruthlessly. As of this moment, there were less than one thousand Tribe members left. Despair washed over them as they realized that… the moment of complete Tribal extermination was approaching.

There was nothing they could do. The valiance and brutality of the Crow Divinity exceeded their imaginations over and over again. This Tribe was possessed with a madness that caused them to self-detonate rather than be slain, something that few members of the Sea Demon Tribe could make themselves do.

Overall there were too few who chose to self-detonate, and it did little good. Within the space of a few breaths, rumbling sounds filled the battlefield as all of the Sea Demon Tribe members, except for the dozen or so Nascent Soul Cultivators, were exterminated!!

The Sea Demon Tribe’s neo-demons had long since been wiped clean away, having been viciously consumed by Meng Hao’s neo-demons, who hadn’t eaten in months. Even the bones were not left behind, but were crushed and eaten.

The sight of this shook the minds of the tens of thousands of Cultivators down below in the pass. They panted and watched on in a daze, completely shocked by the Crow Divinity Tribe.

What they were witnessing was something that would be branded into their minds for the rest of their lives. It was a feeling that told them that the Crow Divinity Tribe would never, ever be defeated.

As these tens of thousands of Cultivators panted, the members of the Crow Divinity Tribe rushed over to plunder South Cleaving City. Meanwhile, on the other side of the pass, the Black Dragon Tribe was locked in combat with the three bandit Tribes, whose minds were spinning from what they had just seen. They were astonished to find that the Crow Divinity Tribe members were like gods of war. An intense fear and shock rumbled in their minds as they started to retreat.

It was at this moment that Meng Hao’s eyes opened. In that instant, he transformed into a green smoke, within which was a visible green moon. In the blink of an eye, he appeared behind a Sea Demon Tribe mid Nascent Soul stage Elder who was in the midst of fighting Ou Yunzi.

As soon as Meng Hao appeared, the Elder’s face fell. Just as he was about to dodge to the side, the Devil Spear in Meng Hao’s hand shot forward. It pierced through all the Elder’s defenses and plunged into his chest, stabbing directly through his heart.

Devilish mist exploded out, along with countless excited, savage faces that swarmed around the man. Within the space of a few breaths, Meng Hao pulled the devil spear back. He disappeared, leaving behind only a skeleton which fell down to the ground.

Ou Yunzi took a deep breath, then shot off to find other fellow Tribe members to assist.

When Meng Hao reappeared, he was next to another Sea Demon Tribe Elder. The man’s face fell and he instantly began to retreat. However, before he could get very far, a bloody flash of light appeared in front of Meng Hao as the Blood Clone appeared. Considering the Blood Clone’s speed, the old man was incapable of evasion. In the blink of an eye, the Blood Clone pounced on him. It departed a moment later, taking all of the old man’s life force along with it.

Meng Hao attacked like lightning. Wherever he went, powerful experts of the Sea Demon Tribe perished screaming. In a short period of time, three defiant howls could be heard. The Sea Demon Tribe Greatfather, High Priest and Grand Elder all shot backward in retreat, each one moving in a different direction as they attempted to escape.

The moment they began to flee, though, a despairing, plaintive roar echoed out. This roar came from none other than the Sea Demon Tribe totemic Sacred Ancient!

Because of the death of all the Tribe members, the totemic Sacred Ancient's strength suddenly decreased rapidly. Furthermore, the Blood Clone had long since cast its eyes toward it. Taking advantage of another of the Outlander Beast's attacks, the Blood Clone finally pounced, sucking away its life force and essence. In the blink of an eye, the Sea Demon Tribe totemic Sacred Ancient let out the miserable shriek just now.

As the Sea Demon Tribe totem was destroyed, blood shot out of the mouths of the Greatfather and the others, who were in the midst of fleeing. Their faces were pale, and their expressions desolate as they let out bitter laughs. Even as they fled, Meng Hao flung the Devil Spear out in front of him, causing it to fly through the air with a rumbling sound.

Off to the side, the Blood Clone licked the blood off of its lips and then began to pursue. In addition, the two late Nascent Soul Cultivators from the Eight Branch Alliance shot in pursuit, their eyes glittering.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Three massive bangs could be heard, and three dying screams ragn out. The Devil Spear stabbed through the Greatfather. The High Priest became food for the Blood Clone. As for the Grand Elder, his Cultivation base was falling, and he was instantly killed by the combined attack of the Eight Branch Alliance Greatfather and High Priest.

It was in this manner the the entire Sea Demon Tribe was thoroughly exterminated. Not a single person remained!

The tens of thousands of Cultivators within the pass were left completely shocked. Their gazes were filled with awe as they looked toward the Crow Divinity Tribe.

Meanwhile, Meng Hao turned his head to look toward the other side of the pass, where the four tribes were fighting each other.

The three bandit Tribes were currently in a state of retreat, trying to leave the battlefield. However, the might of the great Black Dragon Tribe had them pinned down.

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed with killing intent. He had just exterminated the Sea Demon Tribe, so he would naturally show no softheartedness toward these three Tribes who had planned to take advantage of the situation.

Meng Hao didn’t even need to say anything. He lifted his hand and made a clutching motion, causing the Devil Spear to materialize. He pointed forward, and the members of the Crow Divinity Tribe instantly charged forward into the battlefield outside the pass, their eyes red with death.

Meng Hao strode forward, instantly picking up speed as he transformed into a beam of light that passed through South Cleaving City and South Cleaving Pass. As he neared the battlefield, he saw that the great Black Dragon Tribe was primarily battling one of the three Tribes. The other two were simply pinned down and couldn’t leave.

He glanced over the battlefield, whereupon his gaze came to rest on Xu Bai. Xu Bai saw him, and instantly, both of their eyes began to shine brightly.

Meng Hao narrowed his eyes and then gave a slight smile. His body turned into a beam of light as he shot toward the Tribe that was engaged in fierce battle with the Black Dragon Tribe. Following the lead of Meng Hao, the thousands of members of the Crow Divinity Tribe also flew in the same direction.

Xu Bai laughed heartily, and the glow in his eyes grew more intense. He fell back two paces. Following his lead, so did other members of the great Black Dragon Tribe. They stepped aside to create a path so that Meng Hao and the Crow Divinity Tribe, like a long dragon, could thread through them.

There was no need for any words to be exchanged between the Black Dragon Tribe and the Crow Divinity Tribe. There was no prior consultation or discussion. Instead, both Tribes instantly began to inflict fatal blows upon the bandit Tribe.

The sound of the slaughter echoed about. Black Dragons circulated around Xu Bai as he made extremely vicious attacks. As for Meng Hao, with the Devil Spear in hand, every place he went echoed out with bloodcurdling screams.

Either of these two Tribes were incredibly powerful and valiant. When they joined forces, they were like two sharp sabers, stabbing directly into the bandit Tribe.

In the blink of an eye, screams of pain rose up. The faces of the Greatfathers of the other two bandit Tribes instantly filled with fear. Without hesitation, they took advantage of what was happening to try to retreat from the battlefield with their Tribes.

“Dammit! The great Black Dragon Tribe and the Crow Divinity Tribe actually have the gall to be so domineering!! But it doesn’t matter; they’ll inevitably be outmaneuvered later by other Tribes!”

“We don’t need to do anything! The path ahead of them is filled with other bandit Tribes that will look at them like tigers eyeing prey!”

The two bandit Tribes retreated as fast as they could. However, the instant they left the battlefield was the same instant in which the final members of the first bandit Tribe were surrounded by the Crow Divinity and Black Dragons Tribe, and killed.

The entire bandit Tribe was completely eradicated!

This development slammed like a lightning bolt into the hearts of the Greatfathers and other Tribe members of the other two Tribes. They began to flee even faster.

The moment the first Tribe was exterminated, Xu Bai laughed and said, “Brother Meng, why don’t we have a little competition!?”

“That’s just what I was thinking!” replied Meng Hao coolly.

“Great! These remaining two Tribes are about equivalent in power. Let’s see which of the two of our Tribes can wipe one out first!” Xu Bai’s eyes glowed brightly. He could tell that Meng Hao also harbored thoughts of forming an alliance. However, in such an alliance, one of the two of them would be in the lead position, the other would be in the secondary position.

This competition would choose which of them would be the leader, and which would be secondary!

The instant Xu Bai’s words left his mouth, he pointed out with his right hand. In response, the members of the great Black Dragon Tribe shot forward with killing intent toward one of the bandit Tribes.

Meng Hao smiled faintly. The killing intent of the Crow Divinity Tribe rose to unprecedented heights as they roared toward the other fleeing bandit Tribes.

As for Meng Hao and Xu Bai, they floated there in mid-air, refraining from attacking.

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# Chapter 509: Laying Eyes on the Black Lands!

“Brother Meng, I often think about what happened that year in the Realm of the Bridge Ruins,” said Xu Bai with a laugh. He looked over at Meng Hao.

Even as he spoke, the great Black Dragon Tribe began to slaughter its respective bandit Tribe.

Meng Hao looked back at Xu Bai and chuckled. His voice as calm as the breeze, he replied, “Oh, that was just a fluke. Brother Xu, you were able to singlehandedly stop that Demon Spirit from moving. I truly admire you for that.”

The rumbling of intense combat rose up from either side of them. At the moment, the great Black Dragon Tribe was going all out in their massacre.

The Crow Divinity Tribe was the same. They had no desire to come in second to the great Black Dragon Tribe and cause their totemic Sacred Ancient to lose all face. That was especially true of the Nascent Soul Cultivators. They were all crafty and cunning, and as soon as they saw what was happening in this critical moment, they understood that this simple battlefield bet… was in reality a foreshadowing of an alliance, and would decide who held the dominant position.

Therefore, it was without hesitation that they used the full power of their Cultivation bases to wrest away the lead position of the alliance.

Both sides attacked with gusto on this battlefield-cum-gambling hall. The bandit Tribes let out grievous cries; they were forced to fight, and yet, were capable of doing nothing but being defeated.

Meng Hao’s 150,000 neo-demons obfuscated the sky. In an instant, the Crow Divinity Tribe took the lead. However, moments later, the great Black Dragon Tribe’s totemic Sacred Ancient, as well as the two bandit Tribes’ Sacred Ancients, suddenly appeared on the battlefield, and the Crow Divinity Tribe began to fall behind.

But then, three beams of light suddenly appeared within the Crow Divinity Tribe. These were three beams of colorful light that had not appeared in the previous battle with the Sea Demon Tribe. Instantly, powerful cries rose up to the Heavens as… three totemic Sacred Ancients appeared!

These were three totemic Sacred Ancients that Meng Hao had absorbed into his force that year along with the Eight Branch Alliance. Instantly, the intensity of the slaughter ratcheted up.

“Brother Meng,” said Xu Bai, his voice cool, “you and your Crow Divinity Tribe fought your way down here all the way from the north. I’ve heard many stories. However… this last leg of the journey will be the most difficult.

“In the end, all the most powerful Tribes will gather together. Whether they want to or not, if they have no Demon Spirit, they all will become bandit Tribes in the end.

“They will all attempt to snatch a Demon Spirit and rob the resources of other Tribes, slaughtering their way into being noticed by either the Heavenly Court Alliance, or other great Tribes who have resources capable of surviving in the Black Lands. Any of them would chose to become auxiliary Tribes in exchange for the chance to survive.” The fierce fighting had now reached a critical juncture. The Crow Divinity Tribe was gaining an even greater lead, and if nothing went wrong, it seemed the great Black Dragon Tribe would fall clearly behind.

“The only option for us is to form an alliance,” continued Xu Bai slowly. “The Crow Divinity Tribe and the Black Dragon Tribe need to find the Heavenly Wind Tribe to from a three-Tribe alliance. If we push forward together, then after reaching the Black Lands, our Tribes can continue on forever. That is the only way that we can ensure our ability not only to get to the Black Lands, but to stay there safely. I’m sure you understand all of this already, Brother Meng. I don’t even really need to bring it up.”

Booming sounds could suddenly be heard from the direction of the Crow Divinity Tribe. By now, eighty percent of the enemy were dead. The remainder were scattered and attempting to flee for their lives.

Obviously, it wouldn’t be very long before the entire bandit Tribe was exterminated.

As for the great Black Dragon Tribe, they had only destroyed about fifty percent of the bandit Tribe they were fighting; they were clearly going a bit slower.

Xu Bai frowned. Inwardly, he was shocked, and his respect for the Crow Divinity Tribe grew. Even as Meng Hao mulled over the things he had just said, he cleared his throat and looked deeply at the members of the Black Dragon Tribe.

This look caused the eyes of the members of the great Black Dragon Tribe to turn red. It was as if they felt ashamed, as if some great pressure had been put onto them. All of the Tribe members instantly unraveled the black cords that were tied around their wrists. In that moment, they lifted their heads to the sky and roared; their Cultivation bases exploded up by nearly fifty percent. It was with explosive madness that they continued to battle against the fleeing bandit Tribe.

The rampage of the great Black Dragon Tribe suddenly reversed their situation. The casualties among the bandit Tribe soared, shocking them completely. The surviving members of the bandit Tribe were filled with despair and terror, and began to retreat in chaos.

“Kill them!!” roared the members of the great Black Dragon Tribe as they continued the massacre. The Crow Divinity tribe also advanced. After enough time passed for half an incense stick to burn, the two Tribes completed the slaughter at about the same time. Still burning with killing intent, both Tribes returned to stand behind Xu Bai and Meng Hao.

The two Tribes faced off; it seemed neither was willing to give in to the other.

Xu Bai looked at the Crow Divinity Tribe and took a deep breath. Deep inside, he was shocked. He knew that it was only by unsealing the black ropes that the great Black Dragon Tribe had been able to secure a draw. However, he was still of the opinion that if they had opened the seal in the beginning of the battle, the Crow Divinity Tribe would not have been able to measure up.

But then he glanced at the neo-demon hordes. It was at this point that he noticed that the Crow Divinity neo-demon horde was no longer 150,000 in number. It was now larger by 20,000 which caused him to gasp. His heart trembled and he began to breath heavily.

“No wonder the rumors say that the Crow Divinity Tribe… feeds off of battle!” he thought. “Every battle makes them stronger! Furthermore… their most powerful totemic Sacred Ancient, Meng Hao, didn’t even make a move! This Crow Divinity Tribe is far more powerful than I ever imagined.”

As for Meng Hao, he had already put a lot of thought into what happened after the Black Dragon Tribe remove the seals. This caused his admiration for the Black Dragon Tribe to grow even stronger.

Xu Bai’s hearty laughter echoed about. It was genuine sincerity that he looked at Meng Hao and said, “Brother Meng, let’s form an alliance. What do you say?!”

“I say yes!” replied Meng Hao without hesitation. The benefits of such an alliance far, far outweighed the drawbacks. Besides, Meng Hao knew that after reaching the Black Lands, the Crow Divinity Tribe could merge with the Church of the Golden Light. At that time, he would actually not go with them, but would part ways.

Therefore, in the end, adding another ally would only provide further safety for the Crow Divinity Tribe.

“Men, make preparations for a sacrifice and a blood oath!” cried Xu Bai. To the Black Dragon Tribe, an alliance was very important. Even as the words were leaving Xu Bai’s moth, the Elders and Priests of the Black Dragon Tribe approached. As for the Greatfather of the great Black Dragon Tribe… that was none other than Xu Bai.

On Meng Hao’s side, all the Nascent Soul Cultivators of the Crow Divinity Tribe approached. The sacrifice was made, and an oath was sworn by smearing blood on the lips. An alliance was formed just like that which existed in the legends of the Western Desert. The neo-demon ancestors and the totemic Sacred Ancients swore oaths, and a bilateral alliance was formed with no primary and secondary party!

The next day was a day of rest and reorganization. The two parties redistributed their resources evenly. As for Meng Hao, at the moment of truth, it was revealed that he could in fact control the 70,000 strong neo-demon horde of the Black Dragon Tribe. As such, when the time came for battle, Meng Hao’s neo-demon horde would number 240,000!

A black dragon and a battleship shot through the sky toward the south.

The final leg of the journey would only take three months to complete. However, those three months would without a doubt be the most difficult military campaign that the great Black Dragon Tribe and the Crow Divinity Tribe had ever carried out!

In the first month, they went into battle seven times, against nine different Tribes. Roughly every three to five days, they ran into bandit Tribes. Despite all the warfare the Crow Divinity Tribe had experienced, such frequency of battle was unheard of.

It was the same for the great Black Dragon Tribe. Were it not for the fact that the two Tribes were allied, they would surely have experienced significant losses, perhaps even more than half. It might not have been as bad for the Crow Divinity Tribe, because of their neo-demons. The great Black Dragon Tribe, however, would have found the situation much more difficult.

However, because of their two-Tribe alliance, the month of campaigning left them exhausted, but prevented significant losses.

There were three occasions in which the course of the battle was changed because of Meng Hao's neo-demons, which now included the neo-demon horde of the great Black Dragon Tribe.

The fearsome power he was able to wield caused the members of the Black Dragon Tribe to be filled with shock, and even more so, excitement. Even Xu Bai was astonished by Meng Hao. He had never heard of any Dragoneer who could do what Meng Hao did.

During that first month, even though both Tribes sustained some losses, Meng Hao was able to grow his neo-demon horde even larger. Because of this, the great Black Dragon Tribe cooperated in an arrangement of not attacking enemy neo-demons. In the end, Meng Hao's neo-demon horde reached 300,000 in number!

When such a vast number of neo-demons appeared, Heaven was shaken and the Earth trembled!

In the second month, they experienced more than twenty battles. On two occasions, they encountered bandit Tribe alliances. However, faced up against Meng Hao's terrifying neo-demon horde, the bandit Tribes were crushed like dried weeds.

By the end of the second month, Meng Hao's neo-demon horde numbered… a shocking 400,000!

400,000 neo-demons was something never before seen or heard of in the Western Desert. Even a great Tribe with a Spirit Severing Patriarch could never have such a large neo-demon horde. It was simply impossible for a Dragoneer to brand so many neo-demons. In fact… the food required to sustain 400,000 neo-demons was enough to cause even a great Tribe to go completely broke in a very short period of time.

When Meng Hao's neo-demon horde reached 400,000, battles… became simple. During the last month, they encountered virtually no hostile

Cultivators. They sped across the land unimpeded as they headed toward the Black Lands.

In fact, it seemed there were to be no repercussions for the extermination of the Sea Demon Tribe in South Cleaving Pass.

Nonetheless, Meng Hao couldn’t shake the feeling of impending crisis that continued to float within his heart. Even Xu Bai frowned continuously. Something didn’t seem right. The other Nascent Soul Cultivators also had similar reactions.

At the end of the third month after leaving South Cleaving Pass, the great Black Dragon Tribe and the Crow Divinity Tribe finally… laid eyes on the Black Lands!!

The instant they did, the faces of Meng Hao and Xu Bai, as well as all the members of their Clans, instantly became extremely unsightly.

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# Chapter 510: The Last Battle!

The Black Lands was like a plateau, shoved high into the sky seemingly by geological forces. Far down below was the Western Desert.

This was Meng Hao’s first time seeing the border between the Black Lands and the Western Desert. Years ago when he left the Black Lands, he had not traveled through this area, but rather, had been teleported through an ancient portal to the Western Desert North region.

Seeing the lay of the land for the first time caused Meng Hao’s eyes to subconsciously widen slightly. Now, he finally understood why the Black Lands was the only place where one could escape from the Western Desert Apocalypse.

The Western Desert South region was much, much higher in elevation than the northern parts. That was why right now, the West, North, and East regions had already been completely submerged and transformed into a Violet Sea. In those areas, it even smelled like a salty sea. Here in the south, however, rivers had not yet even formed.

All of the falling rain continued to flow down toward the north.

The Western Desert South region was high enough as it was, but the Black Lands… were even higher. They jutted up thousands of meters into the sky, cliff-like, as if formed by an earthquake.

Needless to say, endless mountain ranges existed along the edge of the Black Lands. Those mountains seemed to connect to the sky itself, preventing the violet-colored tempest up above, along with any other living thing, from entering.

Those mountains made the Black Lands’ total elevation reach a shocking height. It could prevent the spread of the Violet Sea, and furthermore, there was only one way in….

Blackgate Fort!

It was eighty thousand meters wide, right in the middle of all the mountains. It stood there, tall, straight, enormous. All the Cultivators who saw it would gasp.

Blackgate Fort was the color of night, and its gate shut tight. Atop the eighty thousand meter wide fort stretched a battlement, upon which could be seen tens of thousands of Cultivators, bunched together in groups. They were chatting and laughing, as they looked out over the battlement, occasionally pointing down below.

What caused Meng Hao’s pupils to constrict was that the violet rain which he had grown so accustomed to over the years did not fall on Blackgate Fort. Outside, it continued to pour down, but not a drop fell onto Blackgate Fort or that enormous battlement.

Outside of Blackgate Fort, the land was filled with fog and mist, and was hazy. In fact, it had been years since Meng Hao even caught a glimpse of the sun. And yet there, within Blackgate Fort, a majestic blue sky could be seen, even fluffy white clouds.

Blackgate Fort was like a division between two different worlds.

What caused Meng Hao and Xu Bai’s faces to become extremely unsightly was that between Blackgate Fort and their two Tribes could be seen… more than twenty bandit Tribes positioned in formation across the land. These Tribes were currently looking at the Crow Divinity and great Black Dragon Tribes with avarice, ridicule and killing intent.

Twenty bandit Tribes, with a total of 200,000 Cultivators and 400,000 neo-demons. They were positioned in front of the fort, and it was clear that they intended to prevent anyone from entering the Black Lands.

Within their eyes, Meng Hao could see greed, savagery, and also a message.

“If we can’t get in, then you can forget about going in yourself! If we will die… then you will die with us!”

Meng Hao stood there silently. Then he noticed something located in front of these more than twenty Tribes. Tens of thousands of bamboo poles had been erected and were swaying slightly in the wind. All of these poles were covered with dried blood that had already turned black.

Atop each bamboo pole was a head. This was an entire Tribe, including old people and children. Further up could even be seen an enormous neo-demon head, which was obviously… this Tribe’s totemic Sacred Ancient.

All dead.

This was none other than the Heavenly Wind Tribe.

Even closer to Meng Hao and Xu Bai were more than 20,000 bamboo poles stuck into the ground, completely bare. The significance of these poles was obvious… they were there for the heads of the Crow Divinity and Black Dragon Tribes.

The battlefield in front of them was deathly silent. No one spoke. Only the soft whimpering of the wind could be heard. Hundreds of thousands of Cultivators began to breathe heavily, and their killing intent rose up into the sky.

Blackgate Fort… was not easy to enter!

Another sound could be heard. It came from the tall battlement on the Black Lands. Tens of thousands of Cultivators were there watching the proceedings as if it were some sort of play.

To the people atop the battlement, the members of the Crow Divinity Tribe, the Black Dragon Tribe and the more than twenty bandit Tribes were nothing more than actors on a stage, putting on a performance for their enjoyment.

Some of them were members of the Heavenly Court Alliance. Others were members of Western Desert great Sects with Spirit Severing Patriarchs. Naturally, they could stand apart from the masses and watch down at the life or death game playing out in front of them.

Zhou Dekun was on the battlement, fists clenched tightly, expression sorrowful. There was nothing he could do to change anything about what was happening. He could only watch Meng Hao in silence.

Standing next to Zhou Dekun was the young man from the Cloud Sky Tribe named, who had appeared to Meng Hao in illusory form to parlay in front of the Locust Tribe. He sighed as he looked over the lands down below, as well as Meng Hao and the Crow Divinity Tribe.

“What a pity,” he said, shaking his head.

On another section of the battlement stood a woman who was surrounded by powerful experts. Clearly, she occupied a very high position. This was none other than… the woman who by chance had met Meng Hao in the Black Lands and had been frightened away by him. This was a Chosen of the great Demon Butterfly Tribe, one of the three forces that made up the Heavenly Court Alliance. Goddess Duo Lan! 1

She was currently frowning as she looked over the lands below. Her gaze eventually came to fall on Meng Hao.

“Duo Lan, why are you frowning? Don’t tell me this person offended you?” The gentle voice came from a young man standing next to her. He was big and tall, with handsome features and long hair. With his long, spotless white robe and charming smile, he was the spitting image of a Chosen.

He was surrounded by three old men who had profound Cultivation bases. Clearly this young man had an illustrious status.

This was the Chosen from the great Heavenly Pursuit Tribe, another of the leaders of the Heavenly Court Alliance. Zhang Wenzu!

“Oh nothing,” replied Duo Lan coolly. “He just seems familiar. I feel like I’ve seen him somewhere before, but can’t seem to remember where.”

Zhang Wenzu smiled as he stood there next to Duo Lan, looking at Meng Hao.

“A trifling insect,” he said, looking back at Duo Lan with a brilliant smile. “If you can’t remember, there’s no need to even think about it. It’s meaningless.”

Duo Lan didn’t seem to be used to him being so close to her. Without thinking about, she took a few steps back. What she didn’t notice was off in the distance in the crowd on the battlement, someone’s gaze shifted from her to Zhang Wenzu. That person’s gaze was filled with hatred.

The hatred quickly vanished without a trace. The gaze belonged to none other than former Black Lands Dao Child Luo Chong. He stood there in the crowds, his expression the same as ever, but inwardly gnashing his teeth. His former Sect had become an auxiliary branch of the Heavenly Court Alliance, and he had lost his former position. Although he was of the Core Formation stage, such a Cultivation Base was nothing outstanding. 2

“Slut!” he thought to himself. “And you, damnable Zhang Wenzu! You dare to touch the woman I’ve taken a liking to? One of those days I’ll see you dead!!” It was at this point that suddenly he stared in stupefaction out at the lands below. He rubbed his eyes vigorously as he looked at Meng Hao. Then, he began to pant.

“It’s… it’s him? How is it possible….”

Meanwhile, back in the Black Lands, in the area controlled by the Heavenly Court Alliance, was a completely unremarkable Sect. Its name was Church of the Golden Light.

Currently, the Church of the Golden Light had around seven or eight thousand disciples. All of them had excited expressions on their faces as they ran to and fro through mid-air. A bright glow gradually began to spread out, along with a shocking aura.

“A message from Lord Fifth has arrived! The Patriarch has returned!! Let’s go receive the Patriarch and Lord Fifth!”

“Have faith in the Lord Fifth, gain eternal life! When the Lord Fifth appears, who dares to cause strife!”

Back on the border between the Black Lands and the Western Desert, outside the enormous Blackgate Fort, Meng Hao and Xu Bai stood amidst the deathly silence.

Meng Hao looked over at Xu Bai and slowly said, “The last battle.”

Xu Bai was silent for a moment, then laughed. It was clear and bright laugh, filled with stubbornness. He looked back at Meng Hao and nodded.

“The last battle! Victory means we can enter the Black Lands. The announcement was made promising entrance into the Black lands for anyone who brought a Demon Spirit. There is no need for any regrets on our part. If we lose….

“Meng Hao, if I end up dying, will you allow the great Black Dragon Tribe to become a part of your Crow Divinity Tribe? What do you say?” Xu Bai’s expression was pure sincerity as he looked at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao looked back at Xu Bai and then nodded deeply.

“In that case, what need is there to fear death?! This is going to be one delightful battle!” Laughing heartily, Xu Bai leaped off of the black dragon. A thunderous sound could be heard as muscles bulged and his frame grew larger, revealing the shocking power of his physical body.

“Black Dragon Tribe!!” he cried, looking back at the members of his Tribe. All of them lifted their heads to look back at him. “Remove the seals. Fight!!”

The entire Black Dragon Tribe responded: “FIGHT!!”

The members of the Black Dragon Tribe followed Xu Bai as he charge forward. They untied the black cords tied around their wrists, causing an incredible aura to roar out. All of them instantly began to grow larger. This seal held back the true power of the great Black Dragon Tribe's physical body training method. After opening the seal, the Tribe members' bodies grew a full head taller. They looked like fierce, black dragons as they shot forward.

As for Meng Hao, he took a deep breath. He lifted his right hand up, within which appeared the Devil Spear. He looked back at the members of the Crow Divinity Tribe, and beyond, toward the Western Desert North region. That was the home of the Crow Divinity Tribe. He thought of the Golden Crow and the great tree. He thought about his promise to them, and about the long road upon which he had led the Crow Divinity Tribe, all the way to here.

Many images flitted in his mind, eventually transforming into the current moment. This was… the last battle!

"FIGHT!" This one word spoken by Meng Hao boomed out like thunder. The members of the Crow Divinity tribe felt their blood burning with righteous indignation. Killing intent boiled up, flared out. The Tribe knew… that this was the final moment which would decide the difference between life and death.

400,000 neo-demons filled the sky, emitting Heaven-shaking roars. Big Hairy was there. By now, he was a level 10 neo-demon. Hairys #2, #3 and the others weren't quite a match for him, but they were intrepid nonetheless. The Wild Giant could also be seen. Gu La, as a true Dragoneer, had been of much assistance to Meng Hao throughout the journey. Right now, his eyes were bright red.

400,000 neo-demons charged roaring into battle.

The parrot's shrill squawk suddenly rang out.

"Get into formation! Remember, get into formation…."

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# Chapter 511: The Spell Formation is Seen Again!

20,000 people versus 200,000!

This was a battle in which the difference between the two forces was immense. To many onlookers, it seemed as if it would be nothing more than a crushing.

Even though the Black Dragon and Crow Divinity Tribes were veterans of hundreds of battles, to face ten times as many bandit Tribes as their own number made the odds of victory too small. It appeared that the only thing they could do was work hard to kill as many of the bandit Tribe members as possible before being killed themselves.

That seems to be the only option.

But… as far as the Crow Divinity and Black Dragon Tribes were concerned, there was still another option…. Meng Hao, the totemic Sacred Ancient of the Crow Divinity Tribe, had an amazing ability to control and attract neo-demons. The Crow Divinity Tribe had started out with only a thousand members, but had grown to its current valiant state because in each battle, Meng Hao's neo-demons would become the linchpin to victory.

400,000 neo-demons, a power that no other Tribe could possibly possess, would without a doubt be a deciding factor in this battle.

A shocking roar filled the air as slaughter broke out between the two sides on the battlefield. In the blink of an eye, the Crow Divinity Tribe and the Black Dragon Tribe were like sharp blades that slashed into this alliance of twenty bandit Tribes.

The sound of the fighting rocked Heaven and Earth. The Crow Divinity Tribe’s battle tactics seemed different during this battle than from previous battles. They would occasionally stagger their positioning, as if they were fighting in a unique battle formation.

The wind whistled and the sky dimmed. Broken patches of clouds drifted to and fro. It seemed as if some great change was occurring in the Heavens.

The ground quaked and the mountains trembled. The sound of shouting caused the sky to tremble. The violet rain fell down onto a scene of a ruthless slaughter!

The great Black Dragon Tribe seemed crazy. More than 10,000 Tribe members exploded out violently. Not a single bandit Tribe member could do anything to stand up against them.

As for the members of the Crow Divinity Tribe, their killing intent rose to the Heavens. Their eyes were shot with blood. This was the last battle, which would decide whether they lived or died. If they didn’t live… then what did it matter if they died!?!?

Their only chance was to enter through the Blackgate Fort up ahead. Otherwise, their spiritual energy would waste away in the violet rain and they would wither up like mortals. Therefore they exploded out with all the scorching fire their life force could muster. Even dying, they laughed uproariously.

Booming sounds could be heard as magical techniques exploded out. Growling roars filled the air. All of it mixed together to form a joyous song of battle. There was no music, only the majestic sound of fighting. There were no lyrics, only shaking and rumbling.

Xu Bai lifted his head up to the sky and laughed heartily as he shot forward through the battlefield. He was unstoppable, and spattered with blood. Some of the blood was his own, but most belonged to enemies. His laughter contained some sadness, but also stubborn hopefulness. It also said, “If I can’t survive, then I will die in battle!”

Meng Hao looked over the scene, and his heart trembled. The blood in his veins boiled and veins of blood appeared in his eyes. This was the last battle, and it had his life force boiling.

“What happens in front of Blackgate Fort is like a play…. All the people on top of the battlement are the audience members, looking down at a play. He looked at the twenty Tribes of killers, hundreds of thousands of Cultivators, so thickly gathered that you could hardly see their end. They were like tidewaters of extermination, boiling with killing intent as they roared into battle.

Violet rain fell down endlessly, spattering onto the bodies of everyone present.

“It doesn’t matter if you’re watching the play or in the play…. It’s still nothing more than a battle.” Killing intent exploded out of Meng Hao’s eyes. He waved his arm and 400,000 roaring neo-demons shot toward the bandit Tribes.

In total, there were more than a hundred Dragoneers among the bandit Tribes. They floated in mid-air under heavy protection, using all their power to control their own force of 400,000 neo-demons to fight back against Meng Hao’s.

It was at this point that the Nascent Soul Cultivators of the twenty bandit Tribes all began to fly out. They radiated ruthlessness as they shot toward the Black Dragon and Crow Divinity Tribes.

They moved with such speed that they were nothing more than blurs. Almost as soon as they appeared, they were in the middle of the battle. The sound of slaughter rose up, along with the booms of divine abilities and magical techniques. The Nascent Soul Cultivators of the Crow Divinity and Black Dragon Tribes did not even number thirty in total. Compared to the number of Nascent Soul Cultivators from these twenty bandit Tribes, they were at a serious disadvantage.

However… Meng Hao’s neo-demon horde was large enough that he could afford to send some extremely powerful neo-demons to join that battle.

Instantly, they began to cause havoc on the battlefield.

Next, the totemic Sacred Ancients from the twenty bandit Tribes whistled into battle. They were of a variety of appearances, but they all emanated shocking auras. As they arrived, the totemic Sacred Ancients of the Black Dragon Tribe and Crow Divinity Tribe both appeared. Along with the Outlander Beast, they charged to fight back.

The battle had just begun, and already, it was shocking to the extreme.

Four totemic Sacred Ancients and twenty Nascent Soul Cultivators suddenly appeared to lock down Meng Hao and Xu Bai. This was especially true of Meng Hao; three of the totemic Sacred Ancients and seven of the Nascent Soul Cultivators targeted him specifically. They knew who he was and also knew that if they killed him, his neo-demon horde would disperse. If that happened… the battle could be won easily.

As they closed in on him, Meng Hao’s eyes glittered with killing intent. He waved his right hand and a flicker of lightning could be seen as the soul of the Li Clan Patriarch suddenly was unleashed by Meng Hao.

As soon as the soul emerged, red lightning crackled about with the Li Clan Patriarch at its center. Boundless lightning shot out in all directions, instantly enveloping everything for hundreds of meters in every direction, creating a lake of lightning.

Within the lightning, the seven Nascent Soul Cultivators who had been so intent on killing Meng Hao, as well as the four totemic Sacred Ancients, all trembled violently. This was not ordinary lightning, this was Tribulation Lightning that had been absorbed by the Li Clan Patriarch as a Soul of Lightning.

Rumbling could be heard as the bodies of Meng Hao’s enemies shook. Instantly, he transformed into a green smoke and a black moon. He shot with incredible speed towards a nearby early Nascent Soul stage Cultivator in the forces of the bandit Tribes. He was upon him in the blink of an eye. The Devil Spear appeared in his hand, and a seething devilish mist rolled out, filled with countless savage faces.

Miserable screams echoed out as the Devil Spear stabbed through the chest of the early Nascent Soul stage Cultivator. Mist enveloped him and savage, laughing faces began to consume him. Meng Hao disappeared again.

A howl could be heard as the seven late Nascent Soul stage Cultivators along with the four totemic Sacred Ancients charged toward Meng Hao.

As they closed in on Meng Hao for a second time, a blood-colored face magically appeared next to Meng Hao. As the Blood Immortal divine ability roared out, a rain of blood filled the area. The two sides clashed, and Meng Hao's body trembled. Blood sprayed from his mouth and he tumbled backward, coming to a stop and coughing up more blood. His host of opponents instantly stopped in place, their faces pale. A moment later, they continued forward in pursuit.

Meng Hao's eyes glittered. He had no time to even wipe the blood from his mouth. His body transformed into a green smoke, and he even added on the Bloodburst Flash. When he reappeared, he was behind an early Nascent Soul Cultivator. His right hand clenched into a fist which slammed into the man. The Cultivator's body shook and all of his defenses crumbled as Meng Hao's fist plunged directly into his body and smashed his Nascent Soul.

"Meng Hao!!" roared one of the late Nascent Soul Cultivators that was chasing him, his eyes brimming with killing intent. "Do you dare to fight with us?!"

"I'm not an idiot," replied Meng Hao, a bit of disdain flickering within his eyes. "Seven late Nascent Soul Stage Cultivators versus only one me? And you ask if I dare to fight you? Why don't you first see if you can do anything to stop me?" He once again used the Bloodburst Flash and disappeared.

At the same time that he disappeared, two more totemic Sacred Ancients suddenly appeared in the same spot. Even as Meng Hao fled, they joined the group of other totemic Sacred Ancients to pursue him.

In just a few moments, Meng Hao danced back and forth across the battlefield, evading one deadly attack after another. Although he was hit a few times, after coughing up some blood, he would consume some medicinal pills. His speed didn’t reduce in the least bit.

Any feeble early Nascent Soul stage enemies that he saw were doomed to die.

Slowly, more and more late Nascent Soul stage Cultivators joined the group which were trying to kill Meng Hao. Currently, there were nineteen of them, as well as nine totemic Sacred Ancients. They charged Meng Hao from all directions. Further off in the distance, one of the most powerful of the enemy Cultivators also began to approach with killing intent.

A scornful smile could be seen on Meng Hao’s face. He flickered away, reappearing next to one of the bandit Tribes’ early Nascent Soul stage Cultivators. That person’s face fell, and before he could do anything, Meng Hao waved his hand, causing the flag of three streamers to appear. It instantly wrapped the man up and began to hurl him away.

Even as the flag unfurled, the man’s body exploded into pieces!

Such provocation on Meng Hao’s part, especially the appearance of his 400,000 neo-demons, instantly had a huge effect on the battlefield. More and more Cultivators joined the force that was trying to slay him.

At the same time, because the most powerful members of the enemy force were focused on him, much of the pressure was taken off of the Crow Divinity Tribe and the great Black Dragon Tribe. In the initial clash just now, both Tribes had sustained losses of more than thirty percent. There were even Nascent Soul Elders who perished.

Similarly, the bandit Tribe alliance had paid a heavy price, having lost nearly 30,000 Tribe members in death.

As of this moment, it was becoming more obvious that the Crow Divinity Tribe members were setting up a formation. In fact, it was now possible to see a fog forming within their ranks!

“Meng Hao, don’t tell me the only thing you can do is run away!? If you keep fleeing and killing our Tribe members, then we’ll have to go slaughter some of the ordinary Cultivators of your Crow Divinity Tribe!”

“That’s right! We can slaughter people just as well as you!”

Meng Hao completely ignored the cries of the people chasing him. His body continued to flicker at top speed.

Meanwhile, back on the battlement of Blackgate Fort, the Cultivators of the Heavenly Court Alliance and the other great Tribes were laughing and chatting.

“That guy can control 400,000 neo-demons! What a talent! However, it’s also completely idiotic to have only one person controlling so many.”

“He will definitely die sooner or later.”

As such conversations proceeded, Luo Chong stood there with his fists clenched. He had very complicated feelings regarding Meng Hao….

Duo Lan frowned, but said nothing. Next to her, Zhang Wenzu was smiling just as he had been the entire time. The people engaged in battle down below were nothing more than ants to him.

Meanwhile, down on the battlefield, the late Nascent Soul stage experts realized that Meng Hao was ignoring them. Enraged, they were on the verge of splitting up to go slaughter the regular members of the Crow Divinity Tribe, in order to force Meng Hao to fight them.

Currently, the seven thousand remaining members of the Crow Divinity Tribe had finished preparations for the spell formation. No longer were they emanating killing intent. Instead, they began to run. As they did, fog rose up to roil out in all directions.

At this moment, the parrot shot up to soar through the sky. Its face radiated arrogance and complacency as it squawked:

“Come, come. Recite along with Lord Fifth. Have faith in the Lord Fifth, gain eternal life! When the Lord Fifth appears, who dares to cause strife!”

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# Chapter 512: 800,000 neo-demons!

Voices joined together to instantly shake the surrounding Cultivators of the alliance of twenty bandit Tribes. They stared in shock, along with the members of the Black Dragon Tribe. Everyone was flabbergasted.

At the same time, the seething fog began to grow thicker and emanate a shocking aura. The surrounded members of the bandit Tribes had no choice but to fall back. Some who didn’t move fast enough were sucked into the fog. Instantly, bloodcurdling screams could be heard as they were trampled to death.

It wasn’t just the Cultivators of the twenty bandit Tribes that gasped. The members of the Black Dragon Tribe were the same, and even the Cultivators of the Heavenly Court Alliance and other great Tribes who were on Blackgate Fort. Everyone was completely shaken.

“What are they yelling?”

“Who is Lord Fifth?”

“How come I feel like I’ve heard this before…?”

As of this moment, Meng Hao was now the only member of the Crow Divinity Tribe who was on the outside. His body was a wisp of green smoke that flickered back and forth, taking advantage of this opportunity to slay more of the early Nascent Soul Elders.

Even as miserable cries rang out, countless bloodshot gazes suddenly came to rest on Meng Hao as all of the Nascent Soul Cultivators suddenly turned to look at Meng Hao.

Given that they could no longer attack the Crow Divinity Tribe, Meng Hao was suddenly a glowing target. Instantly all of the bandit Tribes' Nascent Soul Cultivators shot toward Meng Hao, along with more than ten totemic Sacred Ancients. They radiated killing intent as they neared him.

These powerful experts were a force that could cause anyone under the Spirit Severing stage to be dumbstruck. Even Meng Hao would not be able to stand up to their combined attack. In fact… if they managed to attack him from all sides, then he would certainly be torn to pieces and completely exterminated.

The forces aligned against him were far more than he could handle. However… that was exactly what Meng Hao wanted.

Roughly seventy percent of the bandit Tribes' most powerful experts and totemic Sacred Ancients were now closing in on Meng Hao, filled with killing intent, their eyes shining with the desire to slay him. It was at this point that Meng Hao suddenly stopped moving. For the first time, he hovered there in mid-air, not moving even an inch.

The fact that he had stopped instantly attracted countless looks from the majority of the members of the twenty allied Bandit tribes. Virtually all of their most powerful experts looked at Meng Hao with vicious killing intent, and then shot toward him. Instantly, he was being charged from all directions.

"DIE!!" came the grim cries as the people came closer and closer. In the blink of an eye, they had surrounded Meng Hao. It was at this point that Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding with his right hand. Instantly, a wooden box appeared which he held high up into the air. His expression was dark as he slowly opened its lid.

Within the wooden box was a blooming flower.

Exotic Heartdevil Flower!! 1

In this instant, all eyes subconsciously looked over at the flower. When that happened, an intense rumbling filled the minds of all onlookers. Instantly, the whole battlefield turned deathly silent.

Within that deathly silence, the Exotic Heartdevil flower began to wilt. This flower was extremely powerful, but there were simply too many Cultivators present. The vast number of people in the area was causing the flower to begin to wither.

Of course, Meng Hao had long since predicted that this would happen. After acquiring the flower, he had studied it and come to understand it. All he wanted was this one brief moment.

During that moment, the only people who weren’t affected were the members of the Heavenly Court Alliance and the members of the great Tribes up on the battlement of Blackgate Fort. It was as if they were in a different world.

However, their expressions were filled with shock. Absolute silence reigned. They looked down at the Exotic Heartdevil Flower, and the deathly still that covered the battlefield.

“Exotic Heartdevil Flower….”

“Who could ever have imagined that the Crow Divinity Tribe would still have that flower!?”

“It’s a rare flower, but actually somewhat weak. However, if you use it cleverly it can be considered a precious treasure!”

Duo Lan was breathing heavily as she looked down at the scene. The sense of deja vu she was experiencing continued to grow stronger. However, she still could not figure out who exactly Meng Hao was.

Next to her, Zhang Wenzu seemed to be paying attention to the scene below, although only slightly.

As for Luo Chong, he was panting as he looked down at Meng Hao. Within his complicated feelings was a touch of admiration.

Zhou Dekun was blinking. He had never imagined that Meng Hao would have a treasure such as this.

Even as everyone up on the battlement of Blackgate Fort was shocked, down on the battlefield, the Nascent Soul Cultivators who had been chasing Meng Hao, as well as the totemic Sacred Ancients, were all trembling, motionless. It was at this point that Meng Hao made his move.

A Blood Clone appeared. Its expression was one of greed, as if it thirsted to drink up lives. As it shot toward the group of more than ten totemic Sacred Ancients, Meng Hao stepped forward and hurled the Devil Spear out. A towering devilish mist rose up, filled with countless faces, to shoot toward the crowds of people.

Next, Meng Hao took a deep breath as his Wood-type totem tattoo magically appeared on his forehead. A sea of flames roared into being and freezing Frost soil spread out. The all-conquering power of the his Metal-type totem tattoo was fused in as well. Four of the five elements instantly exploded out.

The sea of flames burned everything. The gigantic tree extinguished lives. The power of metal slashed through the air. The Frost soil kicked up a frigid wind that froze the sky.

Booming filled the air as all of these things happened in the exact same moment. There were no bloodcurdling cries. However, one totemic Sacred Ancient after another withered up. One Nascent Soul Cultivator after another felt their bodies exploding.

All of it happened in the space of only eight breaths. During those eight breaths, Meng Hao was able to completely reverse the situation on the battlefield.

For four breaths of time, the power of Meng Hao’s four elements totems swept out explosively in all directions. The power transformed into an attack which slammed into the Nascent Soul Cultivators.

One bandit Tribe Elder after another felt their Cultivation base burn under the power of the Exotic Heartdevil Flower. Their bodies were not under their own control, and their wills were lost. Any power they had to resist Meng Hao's divine abilities and magical techniques was completely weakened to the point where they could not withstand even a single blow.

Massive booms echoed out across the battlefield as the ordinary Cultivators of the bandit Tribes trembled, their faces filled with confusion. They felt as if they were experiencing an out of body experience, as if their bodies were mere husks.

Meng Hao knew that the entire battlefield would belong to him for the space of time of eight breaths.

At the same time, discussions broke out on the battlement of Blackgate Fort.

"This guy is completely cruel and diabolical!!"

"He intentionally caught the attention of all the powerful experts, then took advantage of the situation to take out the Exotic Heartdevil Flower. He's not just vicious, he's adept at scheming. However, if he thinks he can turn the tide of the entire battle with only that flower, then he's a bit naive!"

"That flower has it limits. At the most it will probably last for the space of ten breaths before vanishing. Maybe he can kill some people during that time, but, exactly how many? For example, those late Nascent Soul stage experts are fundamentally powerful enough to last for even sixteen breaths under the influence of an Exotic Heartdevil Flower."

By this time, five breaths of time had passed. The Exotic Heartdevil Flower was half withered, and its power was beginning to wane. The late Nascent Soul stage Cultivators were showing signs of intense struggle; it seemed it wouldn't be long before they were able to shake off the effects of the flower. Meng Hao's eyes flickered. He did not continue with any slaughtering, but instead began to perform an incantation. He pointed his finger down toward the ground, causing boundless Demonic Qi to instantly rise up. A vortex appeared that only he could see as it then began to rotate soundlessly. Meng Hao became the center of a raging tower of Demonic Qi.

Under the crushing pressure of this Demonic Qi, the 400,000 enemy neo-demons, who were no longer under the control of their Dragoneers, and were also being affected by the Exotic Heartdevil Flower, also began to tremble.

In their eyes, Meng Hao was like some sort of Demon Emperor. Because of the Demonic Qi, they had no choice but to yield to the pressure. As the last of the eight breaths ran out, one neo-demon after another lowered their heads and began to approach Meng Hao.

The Exotic Heartdevil Flower was fully wilted; it transformed into ash which then drifted away with the wind.

Everyone on the battlefield seemed to wake up as if from sleep. Their bodies trembled as they looked out in confusion. It took only a moment for the members of the bandit Tribes to suddenly gasp. Their expression instantly filled with complete disbelief.

The moment that they woke up, the Blood Clone finished consuming a fifth totemic Sacred Ancient. At the same time, thirteen of the Nascent Soul Elders who had been surrounding Meng Hao, exploded into showers of blood under the power of Meng Hao’s four elements totems.

If that were the extent of it, it wouldn’t count for much. However, before the Cultivators of the bandit Tribes alliance could even recover from their shock, they saw Meng Hao floating there in mid-air, surrounded by 400,000 neo-demons.

At the same time, shocking roars could be heard as the bandit Tribes’ own 400,000 neo-demons shot toward Meng Hao. This was not an attack, but rather, they joined to circulate around him, emitting subservient cries.

As of this moment, 800,000 neo-demons were completely shaking Heaven and Earth!!

From ancient times until now, there had never been a person who could control an 800,000 strong neo-demon horde. To everyone watching, this was virtually inconceivable.

Nonetheless, the sky outside of Blackgate Fort was now filled with 800,000 roaring neo-demons. The sky shook, and everyone on the battlement of was thoroughly astonished. Within Blackgate Fort itself, the Heavenly Court Alliance was startled. As for the powerful experts of the great Tribes with Spirit Severing Patriarchs, their minds were all filled with profound trembling.

In fact… four streams of indescribably powerful Divine Sense suddenly spread out from within the Black Lands. These were… streams of Divine Sense belonging to Spirit Severing Patriarchs!

These streams of Divine Sense were filled with intrepid, savage power. They passed through Blackgate Fort to sweep across the lands of the Western Desert, eventually coming to rest on Meng Hao and his horde of 800,000 neo-demons.

As of this moment, the tide of the battle truly had turned!

Everyone who stood atop Blackgate Fort was panting and staring in shock. It was in this moment that a tremor ran through Duo Lan. She suddenly realized why Meng Hao seemed so familiar.

“He’s….” Her face filled with an expression of complete disbelief.

Next to her, Zhang Wenzu’s face was now filled with concentration. As he looked at the 800,000 neo-demons, his scalp went numb.

As of now, the Crow Divinity Tribe didn’t even need to attack. Nor did the Black Dragon Tribe need to fight. Meng Hao waved his hand, causing the 800,000 neo-demons to charge toward the allied bandit Tribes. The land trembled and the sky shook. The clouds in the sky roiled as the sounds of slaughter began to spread out.

Miserable shrieks rang through the air one after another as the bandit Cultivators, as well as their totemic Sacred Ancients, Greatfathers, and other powerful experts, were instantly stupefied.

They wanted to kill Meng Hao, but he was now hidden behind 800,000 neo-demons. How could they possibly kill him!?

They wanted to slaughter the members of the Crow Divinity and great Black Dragon Tribe, to cause Meng Hao to show his face. However, the fog of the Crow Divinity Tribe’s spell formation towered up, within which could be seen the shadows of running figures. The members of the great Black Dragon Tribe were quickly absorbed into the fog of the spell formation, concealing them completely.

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# Chapter 513: Blood Totem!

When he had first laid eyes on these twenty allied bandit Tribes, Meng Hao knew that in this last battle, despite the unsurpassable battle prowess of the Crow Divinity and great Black Dragon Tribes, they would be defeated in the end.

There were just too many Cultivators in the bandit Tribes.

Even if by some miracle the more than ten thousands members of the Crow Divinity Tribe did not die, and a few hundred managed to enter into the Black Lands, by that time, they would no longer be the Crow Divinity Tribe.

On the other hand, if the Crow Divinity Tribe was able to continue on with majority of its strength, after it entered the Black Lands, it could combine with the Church of the Golden Light. Then, they would be a powerful force, and would thus be able maintain their self respect and continue on.

That was exactly the outcome Meng Hao hoped for. And there was only one way to make that happen…. That method had nothing to do with strength or weakness of Cultivation base. It had nothing to do with strength in numbers. No, Meng Hao knew that in the Western Desert… there was only one thing that was considered the source of true power.

His greatest strength did not lie in the five elements totems, nor in the power of his Cultivation base or his magical items. People who exceeded him in terms of such aspects were not rare. Even his position as a totemic Sacred Ancient did not count for much.

His Blood Clone was strong, but how could it possibly stand up to 200,000 Cultivators?

The Devil Spear was domineering, but he only had one!

Meng Hao knew that his most powerful asset, the greatest strength he had to rely on, was his identity as a Demon Sealer. In the great lands of the Western Desert, the fact that Meng Hao was a Demon Sealer meant that he could congeal and manipulate boundless Demonic Qi.

He could cause great changes in neo-demons, make them even more powerful than himself. He could control them and use them to accomplish things that he alone could not accomplish.

That was his greatest asset. It was also why the Crow Divinity Tribe had been able to leave the Western Desert North region and travel all the way to here.

Therefore… the Exotic Heartdevil Flower had appeared. Slaying totemic Sacred Ancients and Nascent Soul Elders was secondary to his true goal. While everyone was paying attention to him, he needed a brief pause in the battle, only four or fives breaths of time while he was being surrounded.

That brief amount of time was crucial. To ensure success, he needed to make sure that the hundred or so Dragoneers of the allied bandit Tribes lost control of their neo-demons. It was in that way that Meng Hao could perfectly pull off his plan.

That was the entire reason why he had pulled out the Exotic Heartdevil Flower!

His goal was not to cause confusion for the ordinary Cultivators, nor was it to bewilder the Nascent Soul experts. Instead… he had been targeting the one hundred Dragoneers, who were hidden within their neo-demon hordes. These were the Cultivators who, seemingly from the beginning, had been completely ignored by Meng Hao, as if he didn’t care about them one bit.

As of this moment, he had accomplished his goal.

800,000 neo-demons shook heaven and earth, completely rocking the battlefield. The Heavenly Court Alliance was shocked, as were all of the other Western Desert Cultivators who were watching.

The neo-demons instantly charged towards the well over 100,000 shocked bandit Tribe members.

This last battle was destined to be filled with foul winds and rains of blood. It was something the likes of which had never occurred in the history of the Western Desert. Everyone atop Blackgate Fort watched on in silence, even the four streams of Divine Sense from the Spirit Severing Patriarchs.

As the 800,000 neo-demons closed in, the eyes of the 100,000 bandit Tribe members went red. they also charged forward, howling: “Kill them!!”

At the same time, all of the totemic Sacred Ancients and all of the Nascent Soul Cultivators shot forward, transforming into something like a sharp arrow, piercing through the neo-demon horde toward Meng Hao.

“Kill Meng Hao and the neo-demon horde will collapse!!” In this critical moment, the Greatfathers of the twenty bandit Tribes roared, congealing the peak power that existed on the battlefield as they shot toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao was there within the neo-demon horde, looking around with cold eyes as neo-demons circulated around him. Miserable shrieks sounded out constantly as Cultivators were ripped to shreds by neo-demons.

As of this moment, Meng Hao could sense the intense ruthlessness of warfare. It was no exaggeration to say that the world in front of him was awash in redness.

That redness was blood. The blood of neo-demons and the blood of Cultivators. The land turned red, so red that even the violet rain that fell could not wash it away.

This was a true massacre!

The vast amount of neo-demons in the horde made it so that even though neo-demons were constantly dying, there were always more to attack the bandit Tribe Cultivators. Bloodcurdling screams filled the air as the deaths intensified. Right now, it was like the yellow springs of the underworld had turned completely red.

“Blood….” thought Meng Hao as he looked down at the ground. Suddenly, he reached a bit of new enlightenment. Blood… was also water, correct? It was a type of water that contained life; it was in fact the source of life force.

Having blood didn’t necessarily mean you were alive, but without it, you would certainly not be.

“It seems that I’m bound to blood by Karma. The Blood Immortal legacy, all the slaughtering that resulted from my practice of cultivation…. Blood, is also a kind of totem.

“Besides, what are totems anyway? Totems… are not a manifestation of my own will and enlightenment. No, they are a force of power of the Nine Mountains and Seas. They are a seed of power!!”

Muttering to himself, he closed his eyes, ignoring the powerful experts of the bandit alliance who were going all out to try to reach him and kill him. As they neared, neo-demons attempted to block their way, resulting in even more blood showering about.

It was at this moment that suddenly, the members of the Crow Divinity Tribe moved forward along with the spell formation. Fog churned, and the sound of running echoed about. Massive golden figures could be seen within, charging into the battle.

As soon as the fog reached the members of the bandit Tribes, miserable shrieks could be heard.

A howl could be heard as the excited parrot suddenly appeared in mid-air. In a squawk that the entire battlefield could hear, it said, “Come come. Shout out with me! Have faith in the Lord Fifth, gain eternal life! When the Lord Fifth appears, who dares to cause strife….”

As soon as the voices began to echo out from within the spell formation fog, another batch of roiling, cloudy fog could be seen within the Black

Lands. It was exactly the same in appearance, and loud, clear voices rang out from within. They were filled with excitement and determination.

“Have faith in the Lord Fifth, gain eternal life! When the Lord Fifth appears, who dares to cause strife! Lord Fifth, we welcome you back with respectful hearts!! Patriarch, we welcome you back with respectful hearts!!” These resounding voices caused the observers on the battlement of Blackgate Fort to stare in shock. When they looked over, they could see that within the approaching fog were seven or eight thousand enormous figures. They charged through mid-air, passing out from the Black Lands to enter the Western Desert and charge down toward the battlefield.

“That’s….”

“The Church of the Golden Light!!”

“The spell formation of the Crow Divinity Tribe is exactly the same as that of the Church of the Golden Light!!”

When the Church of the Golden Light appeared, it was like a sharp blade that stabbed into the already scattered and battered bandit alliance. Together with the Crow Divinity Tribe, they began a slaughter of spell formations that hit the enemy from two directions at the same time.

The members of the great Black Dragon Tribe also charged out from within the center of the Crow Divinity Spell Formation, engaging in bloody slaughter down to the very end.

The battle was now completely one-sided. Any position of superiority the bandit Tribes had was completely lost because of the 800,000 neo-demons. Hopelessness and terror filled their hearts and minds. Miserable screams filled the air as they completely lost any will to fight.

The slaughter continued nonetheless!

150,000. 130,000. 100,000… 80,000… 50,000!!

It did not take long for the bandit Tribes' numbers to be reduced to only 50,000 Cultivators. The other 150,000 were nothing more that corpses. Their blood flowed out, causing the area outside of Blackgate Fort to become a lake of blood!

The reek of gore filled the air. As for the top experts and totemic Sacred Ancients of the bandit alliance, they were seriously injured and virtually going mad as they slaughtered their way through the neo-demons to grow closer and closer to Meng Hao.

The slaughter down below wasn't actually drawing much attention. The eyes of the Cultivators on the battlement of Blackgate Fort were all drawn toward the neo-demons that were protecting Meng Hao, who floated there in mid-air.

Meng Hao was the key to everything. If he died… then the bandit Tribes could still secure victory in the battle!

Booming filled the air as dozens of Nascent Soul Cultivators and more than ten rapidly weakening totemic Sacred Ancients mowed their way through the crowds of neo-demons. They carved out a bloody path as the neo-demons, giving no thoughts to their own lives, threw themselves in front of the enemy. The enemy had no choice but to continue the slaughter as they tried to near Meng Hao.

The distance between the two was still several hundred meters, packed close with crazed neo-demons. Unfortunately the enemy Cultivators weren't able to get to Meng Hao. There were just too many neo-demons. The Demonic Qi of a horde of 800,000 neo-demons was something that the Nascent Soul Cultivators couldn't see. However, they could sense that there was some unspeakable pressure in the area that made minor teleportation impossible.

All they could do was charge physically and try to kill their way to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao's closed eyes suddenly snapped open. When they did, his pupils glowed with a red will of blood that seemed to be a reflection of the lake of blood down below. It was the same color as his mask, as if it was in fact, merged with the mask.

“Blood is water…. As it turns out, I had the totem with me all the time, I just never realized it…. It has aways been here.” His skin was now completely the color of blood. It almost seemed as if the Blood Immortal mask had disappeared. Meng Hao’s entire body was the same color as the blood-colored mask. It was no longer a mask, but rather, Meng Hao’s true face.

In this moment, his long robe had also turned red. Even his hair was crimson. Right now you could actually say that he looked… exactly like a Blood Clone.

“Not quite there,” he murmured. “Unfortunately… this blood totem will belong to the Blood Immortal, not me….” He raised his right hand, causing the Ji Clan Blood Clone, which was off in the distance pouncing toward another Cultivator, to suddenly tremble. It seemed unwilling to respond, but also unable to control itself. It disappeared, and when it reappeared, it was directly in front of Meng Hao.

Meng Hao pointed at the Blood Clone, and instantly, it transformed into a beam of light that fused into Meng Hao’s finger. Shockingly, a totem tattoo suddenly appeared on Meng Hao’s finger in that same spot!

A red totem tattoo. A blood totem!

As soon as the totem appeared, Meng Hao’s Cultivation base exploded up. It was as if it had been restrained for too long, and now it was finally able to climb high. In the blink of an eye, it exploded out in a way that caused the approaching bandit alliance experts and totemic Sacred Ancients to be filled with stupefied astonishment.

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# Chapter 514: Five Elements Temporarily Combine!

Meng Hao’s hair whipped about his head despite the lack of wind. His eyes glowed with a profound light. Everything around him was bright red. The lake of blood below began to boil and rise up into the air.

If that were all there was to it, the true fearsomeness of the blood tattoo would not have been made manifest. However, all of the cultivators in the area suddenly felt that the blood inside their bodies was suddenly out of control, as if it were about to burst out from within them!

The bandit Tribe members felt this way, as did the Cultivators atop Blackgate Fort!

Everyone was instantly shocked by this development.

Everything dimmed; up above, winds blew and clouds roiled. A fountain of blood could be seen in mid-air within the neo-demon horde, focused on Meng Hao’s index finger!

At the same time, in the Southern Domain, some distance from the border of the Black Lands….

A bloody glow rose up into the sky from the Ancient Temple of Doom. This glow instantly caused the great Sects and Clans of the Southern Domain to stir into action.

All of the deity statues within the Ancient Temple of Doom began to weep tears of blood. It was a bizarre sight which shook the entire Southern Domain.

It almost seemed that these statues were commemorating the power of the Blood Immortal as it returned into the world!!

Meanwhile, back in the great lands of the Western Desert, outside Blackgate Fort.

Meng Hao slowly looked up at the shocked peak experts of the bandit alliance.

“With the Ji Clan Blood Clone, I can congeal a blood totem. It can’t compare to the violet rain, so I don’t want it to be permanent. However, to temporarily reach the full circle of the five elements will do nicely. Or perhaps… I can use the blood totem as the foundation and fuse it with the violet rain. Then I can reach the great circle of the Water-type totem!” Eyes filled with anticipation, Meng Hao lifted his hand up and pressed his index finger onto his forehead.

“Five elements…. temporarily combine!”

The power birthed of the spirit of the Golden Crow! Metal!

The boundless life force of the Greenwood Tree! Wood!

The Frost soil which gave birth to the Frost Soil Demon Emperor! Earth!

The Everburning Flame! Fire!

And now, the legacy power of the Blood Immortal, transformed into blood. Water!

In this instant, the five elements reached their great circle. I might only be a temporary great circle, but it caused Meng Hao’s Cultivation base to soar up nonetheless. His Perfect Gold Core emanated with limitless golden light. A transformation began during which it seemed… a Nascent Soul became visible!

At the same time, the five elements began to combine!

Metal. Wood. Water. Earth. Fire. Five elements fused together, both promoting and restraining each other as they united to form a primeval Chaotic will. Within this primeval Chaos appeared a single strand of light!

This light was golden in color, the same gold as the metal of the five elements, and the same color as the Metal-type totem tattoo. It also was the same color as Meng Hao’s Perfect Gold Core. As soon as the golden light appeared, Meng Hao’s Cultivation base roared up.

It climbed up ceaselessly. In the blink of an eye… he broke out from the Gold Core stage and into the early Nascent Soul stage!

His Perfect Gold Core began to melt, from within which emerged a Nascent Soul that belonged uniquely to Meng Hao!!

As of now, Meng Hao could slay the early Nascent Soul stage, shock the mid Nascent Soul stage, and hold his own against the late Nascent Soul stage. It was hard to say if he would be able to come out victorious against the latter. In any case, this was a power that the Core Formation stage simply could not possess. The power of Meng Hao’s Five-Colored Nascent Soul had been completed one step at a time as the various totem tattoos appeared. As of now, he possessed a battle prowess that was completely unprecedented and thoroughly frightening in the Cultivation world.

Surprisingly, in the view of the Divine Sense of outsiders, Meng Hao actually appeared to be of the great circle of Core Formation. However, no one could deny that he was of the Nascent Soul stage. Many people actually assumed that Meng Hao was deliberately putting on a front to make it look as if he was of the Core Formation stage.

Currently… in the moment that Meng Hao’s Cultivation base exploded upward, causing him to enter the early Nascent Soul Sage, a Nascent Soul was formed within his Gold Core. The faces of all the Cultivators who were watching instantly filled with disbelief, and they gasped.

“He… had a Cultivation base breakthrough? He’s in the Nascent Soul stage?”

“How… how is this possible? He reached the Nascent Soul stage? Don’t tell me that before, he really was just a Core Formation Cultivator!?!?”

“That’s impossible! Perhaps he was already a Nascent Soul Cultivator before, but because of some unforeseen circumstances, experienced a Cultivation base drop, and only now is faintly able to recover?” Astonished conversations spread out on the battlefield as well as among the audience up on the battlement of Blackgate Fort, and even among the groups of bandit Tribe peak experts who were trying to fight their way through the neo-demon horde.

Even as they were locked the throes of astonishment, a second beam of light rose up from Meng Hao, in addition to the golden light.

Green!

Flickering green light interlocked with the golden light. Meng Hao’s hair whipped about as boundless life force suddenly began to emanate out from him. In this moment, his Cultivation base soared even higher. As of now… he was at the peak of the early Nascent Soul stage, only a step away from the mid Nascent Soul stage!

This sudden explosion instantly shook the minds of everyone who was watching. Even as Meng Hao lifted up his head and roared, three colors appeared behind him, a three-colored sky!

Gold, green, plus the color which represented his Water-type blood totem, red!!

The three colors of the sky that appeared behind Meng Hao were reflected in the firmament up above as Meng Hao’s Cultivation base once again leaped higher. It climbed up ceaselessly, breaking through from the early Nascent Soul stage to the mid Nascent Soul stage.

As of this moment the faces of each and every person observing were filled with disbelief. Duo Lan’s eyes were wide, as if she was seeing something unimaginable. Even Zhang Wenzu’s eyes were flickering with deeper and deeper concentration.

Next, a fourth, world-shaking color suddenly appeared. Yellow!

Behind Meng Hao, a four-colored sky could be seen. His Cultivation base did not stop climbing, but rather, continued to rocket up. It was as if all the methodical preparations he had made were now being unleashed with explosive results.

His energy exploded out and his aura grew vastly more intrepid as behind him, five beams of light interlocked to form a Five-Colored Sky!

That fifth color was… black!

Five elements, five colors. In this moment, they transformed into a Five-Colored Sky that circulated around Meng Hao. His clothes rippled, and his hair was in chaos. His eyes glowed with a bizarre, brilliant light.

Meng Hao floated there, his body emanating radiant five-colored light, a Five-Colored Sky behind him. As of this moment, there were no totem tattoos visible on his body. All he possessed… was the Five-Colored Sky and an indescribably fearsome aura!

These five colors stemmed from Meng Hao's five elements. Gold came from the Metal-type tattoo. Green came from the Wood-type. The Water-type blood made red. The soil of Frost was black!

Finally came fire. It was not red, but yellow, a raging flame that rose up into the sky.

His Cultivation base rocketed up a final time. His aura exploded out with incredible intensity, profoundly affecting all the Cultivators who were watching. Deep in their hearts, it caused all onlookers to feel fear and trembling.

Finally, he reached the peak of the mid Nascent Soul stage. His distance from the late Nascent Soul stage was… only a sliver. At last, the rocketing climb of his Cultivation base came to a stop. Everyone on the battlefield was shaken as they looked at Meng Hao.

This explosive Cultivation base growth came after years of suppressing his Gold Core. In this instant, he experienced meteoric growth into the peak of the mid Nascent Soul stage as he unleashed all that had been pent up before.

Earlier, he could battle with the late Nascent Soul stage. As of now… Meng Hao was powerful enough that, although he might not be able to shake the Spirit Severing stage, he could crush any Cultivator under that stage like dry weeds or rotten wood. He would be able to cut through any of them like a hot knife cutting through butter!

Despite all that, Meng Hao let out a sigh.

“If I can understand this violet rain, then I could merge it into the blood totem and create a great circle Water-type totem. When that happens, my Cultivation base will definitely be able to break through from the mid Nascent Soul Stage!” Meng Hao knew that his current Cultivation base was not truly of the great circle of the five elements and thus, could not propel him past the mid Nascent Soul stage.

That was not what he truly wanted. The water of these five elements contained part of the blood of the Blood Immortal. What he wanted was the violet rain of the Western Desert Apocalypse.

That was his choice.

At present, his five elements Cultivation base was only a temporary fusion. In fact, his Nascent Soul was actually illusory, and the five elements were not fully combined. He had not concocted his Five-Colored Nascent Soul. Once he did, then his Cultivation base would be completely stable.

Suddenly, a bizarre light shone in his eyes. He looked off into the distance at the countless neo-demons and the astonished experts and totemic Sacred Ancients of the bandit tribes.

“I think it’s time to test out the battle prowess of this temporary combination of the five elements!” Even as he murmured to himself, the neo-demons roared and pounced onto the bandit Tribe experts, forcing them to defend themselves. Suddenly, one of the Nascent Soul experts was separated from the others by the neo-demons. A wide-open space was then cleared, an empty lane providing a clear line of sight from him to Meng Hao, who was a few hundred meters away.

The old man and Meng Hao looked at each other for a moment, and then Meng Hao coolly said, “Bring it on.”

“Such arrogance and conceit!!” roared the old man, who happened to be a High Priest. His eyes flickered coldly as he used minor teleportation to shoot toward Meng Hao.

The rest of the members of his Tribe, including the Elders and the Greatfather, had been killed because of the Exotic Heartdevil Flower. As of now, he was the only peak level expert left from his Tribe. He shot forward, his eyes flickering with intense killing intent. As he neared, his totem magically appeared above his head. It was an immense star which then transformed into a gigantic boulder three thousand meters wide. Rumbling sounded out as it shot through the air toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao hovered there, his expression tranquil. He waved his right hand, causing the Five-Colored Sky to flicker. A swooshing sound could be heard as a five-colored light expanded out and then disappeared. A moment later, the incoming boulder shook and then disintegrated.

The sight of this caused everyone watching to be shocked, especially the charging High Priest. His face filled with disbelief. It was at this point that Meng Hao distractedly waved his hand and pointed forward.

As he pointed, the Five-Colored Sky rippled and then disappeared. When it reappeared, it had congealed onto Meng Hao’s finger. Then his finger descended, and blinding five-colored light shot toward the old man.

He was a High Priest, but his face flickered nonetheless. He roared as he unleashed divine abilities and magical items. He shot backward, using several minor teleportations to suddenly disappear and then reappear off in the distance.

He reacted quickly and moved with incredible speed. It seemed as if no matter how swift and fierce the five-colored beam of light was, it wouldn’t be able to touch him. However… suddenly he found that his entire body was trembling. He coughed up a mouthful of blood as a five-colored glow appeared on his chest. He stared down in disbelief, unable to do anything except gape.

“How is this possible…?”

“As you can see,” said Meng Hao softly, his eyes shining with enlightenment, “you cannot evade the power of the five elements.”

The old man said nothing, but a bitter smile appeared on his face. Suddenly, his entire body turned red as all the blood inside exploded out. Popping sounds could be heard as it was transformed into a bloody mist. At the same time, a golden light flew out from within him, transforming his entire body, from inside to out, into a statue made of gold. However, he still wasn’t dead. The fact that he theoretically had a chance to survive was like a bitter torment as he fell toward the ground. But then, a sea of flames erupted out from inside of him, burning him dead, body and soul.

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# Chapter 515: An Initial Understanding of Karma

“Different combinations of five elements will have different manifestations….” thought Meng Hao, having gained new enlightenment. He looked up at the pale-faced bandit Tribe experts and totemic Sacred Ancients. They wanted to kill him, but were now surrounded and cut off by countless neo-demons, and were severely weakened.

They really had no way to get to him. They were surrounded by hundreds of thousands of neo-demons. They couldn’t even reach Meng Hao, let alone… kill him.

“We’re defeated….” said one of the old experts bitterly. As of now, they knew they had lost and knew that Meng Hao fundamentally could not be killed.

Meng Hao was not an impulsive person, and despite his sudden increase in battle prowess, he would still act cautiously. They knew that he would only allow one of them to attack at a time, and would not presumptuously try to take them all on at the same time.

Facing up against an enemy like this caused these bandit alliance experts to be filled with a sensation of powerlessness.

As soon as the old man’s words echoed out, the scattered bandit Tribe members down below on the ground slowly began to give up. They ceased fighting back, and stood there silently.

Of the original 200,000 Tribe members, not even twenty percent remained. This battle had not been won single-handedly by Meng Hao. Rather, the unstoppable crushing power of the 800,000 neo-demons he wielded was a force capable of causing any enemy force to be moved.

Now that he had defeated the bandit alliance, Meng Hao did not continue to contain or slaughter them. He allowed the broken remnants of the Tribes to leave the battlefield. As they disappeared off into the surrounding plains, Meng Hao led the Crow Divinity Tribe, the Church of the Golden Light, the great Black Dragon Tribe and 800,000 neo-demons forward to stand in front of Blackgate Fort. He lifted his head up to look at the battlement up above.

“The Crow Divinity Tribe has arrived with a Demon Spirit!” he said slowly, his voice echoing out into the Black Lands!

Xu Bai stood next to Meng Hao. He looked up at the enormous gate leading into the Black Lands, took a deep breath, and said, “The great Black Dragon Tribe has arrived with a Demon Spirit!”

There was a brief moment of silence, after which…

An enormous rumbling could be heard as Blackgate Fort’s huge gate… slowly began to open!

As the gate opened, the crowds on top of the battlement looked down. Virtually all of the gazes swept over the people down below and came to rest on Meng Hao.

Conversations immediately began to spread out.

“It seems that from now on, the Black Lands is going to be a bit more lively than before.”

“This Meng Hao has an extraordinary Cultivation base and bizarre divine abilities. His totems are even more shocking. He can even slay late Nascent Soul stage Cultivators. He will definitely rise to even more prominence in the future here in the Black Lands!”

“The Western Desert Apocalypse has reached its culmination. It won’t be long before we will be able to see the sea from Blackgate Fort…. The Crow Divinity Tribe and the great Black Dragon Tribe slaughtered their way here from the Western Desert. They are the only two Tribes that actually gained entrance to the Black Lands this way with a Demon Spirit. Very unusual….”

Hearing their conversations caused Luo Chong to roll his eyes. He occasionally looked back down into the crowd of people below at Meng Hao. As for what he was thinking, it was impossible to tell.

Zhou Dekun’s expression was one of excitement as he looked down at Meng Hao, a wide smile splitting his face.

Duo Lan was frowning at first, but quickly caused her face to relax. She continued to look deeply at Meng Hao.

Next to her, Zhang Wenzu was smiling. Shaking his head, he said, “Five elements totems, combined together…. An interesting idea. Unfortunately, it’s only temporary. It won’t be long before it floats away like a rootless lily pad. He’s definitely not Chosen material.

“When I meet him in the future here in the Black Lands, I’ll have to help him understand why combining the five elements is nothing more than a joke.” He smiled.

At the moment, the massive rumbling continued to sound out as the gate finished opening completely to reveal an opening that looked like a door, roughly three hundred meters wide. Sunlight poured out from within. On the other side was the Black Lands. It was as if this door was the separating point between two worlds.

Xu Bai took a deep breath and then turned to Meng Hao. Clasping hands, he bowed deeply. “Brother Meng,” he said, “words cannot express the depth of my gratitude for your kindness. The alliance between the two of us will never change! For now, I, Xu Bai, will lead my Tribe into the Black Lands. After we have time to reorganize, then the two of us can find some time to chat!”

Meng Hao laughed and nodded in response, but didn’t say anything.

With that, Xu Bai led the thousands of members of his great Tribe toward Blackgate Fort. They quickly disappeared inside and entered into the Black Lands.

As the Black Dragon Tribe made their way in, Meng Hao looked back at the members of the Crow Divinity Tribe behind him.

After a long moment, his gaze finally came to rest on the members who had once been part of the Five Tribes. There were only a few hundred left. Wu Chen and Wu Ling were among them.

There was also the Greatfather who had burned his life force all those years ago. He was now very old, with not much longevity left.

Meng Hao looked at them. They looked back. No words were exchanged. After all the years spent together, they knew Meng Hao quite well. Within the silence was a deep melancholy.

After a long moment, Meng Hao smiled.

He looked at the few hundred former members of the five Crow Divinity Tribes, as well as the other Tribe members they had picked up along their journey. His voice warm and amiable, he said, “At long last I have led you here. Now, I deliver your hope to you.”

He had traveled with these people for many years, had fought by their side to reach this point. At long last, they had reached their destination, the great gate which led into the Black Lands.

The gate had been opened, and was just waiting for them to walk through it.

“You may continue to practice cultivation with my totems,” he continued. “In addition, I have branded the other totemic Sacred Ancients that we acquired so that the Crow Divinity Tribe may form totems from them.

“My vines… have recovered. I will give them to you as a protector and guard.” He waved his hand, causing a Thorn Rampart Vine seed to appear.

He quickly branded it with a mission.

Protect the Crow Divinity Tribe!

After that, he gave the vine seed to the Crow Divinity Tribe Greatfather. The old man looked silently at Meng Hao and thought back to all the scenes from years past, and to what Meng Hao had said about giving hope to the Tribe.

All of the things that had happened flashed through his mind, causing his vision to blur somewhat as he looked at Meng Hao.

“Starting today,” said Meng Hao softly, “the Church of the Golden Light will be part of the Crow Divinity Tribe. From now on… the Tribe will not be called Crow Divinity, but rather, the Golden Crow Clan!” The members of the Crow Divinity Tribe began to tremble. It was hard to say who did it first, but they all began to drop to their knees and kowtow to Meng Hao.

No one spoke. However, the tears in their eyes and the looks on their familiar faces made clear their deep respect, fanaticism, and gratitude for Meng Hao.

Meng Hao looked at them and smiled. It was a smile that said, “The time has come to part.”

He turned and looked at Gu La. “Gu La…. Henceforth, you are free. Before releasing you, though, I must say that I truly hope you remain as a member of the Golden Crow Clan, to be their Dragoneer.”

Gu La trembled as he dropped to his knees and stared at Meng Hao in a daze. On the long road of travel, his past grievances had long since vanished. He wore a strange expression at the moment, one filled with reluctance to part ways. After a moment, he lowered his head and voiced his agreement.

“I give you the Wild Giant,” continued Meng Hao. “Treat it well.” Meng Hao looked over at the Wild Giant. Throughout the years, it had been injured over and over again, and its body was now covered with scars.

Despite that, it was mighty. It looked at Meng Hao with a blank expression, as if it didn't quite understand everything that was going on.

"As for these 800,000 neo-demons, I will not take any of them with me. I give them to all of you, to form the backbone of the Golden Crow Clan's battle prowess. I will personally brand all of them so that you don't need to control them. They will be here to protect the Golden Crow Clan." With that, he waved his right hand. Immediately, 800,000 neo-demons roared a shocking roar. Each one of them looked at Meng Hao, as if they were communicating with him….

Grievous whines could be heard from Big Hairy and the others, as if they were unwilling to separate.

Meng Hao looked at the Greenwood Wolves with a soft smile. He thought back to all the years ago when he had joined the five Crow Divinity Tribes, and had first laid eyes on the five Greenwood Wolf pups.

He could still remember their plaintive yips after going hungry for a whole night.

He thought about how he ran out into the mountain forest to find food for them.

"You've grown up now," he said softly. "You don't need to follow me any more…. Where I'm going… the five of you can't go."

Their mournful howls seemed to cause the surrounding members of the Golden Crow Clan to be roused from their prostration. They raised their heads to look at Meng Hao with expressions of grief.

"Exalted Sacred Ancient, please, do not leave the Golden Crow Clan…."

"Exalted Sacred Ancient, can't you stay with us in the Black Lands?"

"Without you, exalted Sacred Ancient, we would have long since perished on the way here. Sacred Ancient, the Golden Crow Clan will forever remember your kindness!"

Hearing the all their words caused Meng Hao to stand there silently for a long moment. Finally, he shook his head and looked at them earnestly.

“There is no need for you to thank me,” he said quietly. “Everything I did was to pay a debt of gratitude to the Golden Crow and the great tree. It was also my way of making an apology. Perhaps… this is Karma.” He waved his hand, causing one of the Demon Spirits he had sealed to fly over into the hands of the Greatfather.

“Take it and enter in the Black Lands!” He gave a deep look to the Golden Crow Clan, then glanced at the Black Lands. He knew that the remaining Demon Spirit he possessed would soon lead to conflicts. Deciding not to remain behind any longer, he turned his back on the Black Lands and strode off. Taking advantage of the temporary five elements combination, he quickly shot off into the distance and disappeared.

“Beloved concubine,” said the parrot, in a fair imitation of Meng Hao, “You stay behind here to recover from your wounds. Please take care of the Church of the Golden Light for me. Lord Fifth… will come back for you.” Looking both sad and arrogant, it flapped its wings as it shot off into the distance to follow Meng Hao.

“Haha! Freedom, bitches! My beloved concubine is too protective. I can’t deal with that. Finally I’m free…. Ah, the smell of freedom! How lovely!”

“Exalted Sacred Ancient!” As Meng Hao left, all of the members of the Golden Crow Clan turned and once again prostrated themselves toward him. After a long time passed, they slowly rose to their feet. Filled with melancholy, unsure of the future, they took their 800,000 neo-demons and entered the Black Lands.

Meng Hao’s departure caused the faces of crowds on the battlement above to be filled with shock. Zhang Wenzu’s pupils constricted. He suddenly realized that his judgement of Meng Hao had been completely off.

“Where is he going…?”

Duo Lan was shocked. Zhou Dekun stared with wide eyes.

Far off in the distance, Meng Hao proceeded onward. His expression was calm, his entire bearing completely different than it had been before.

“If I hadn’t chosen to go to the five Crow Divinity Tribes that year, the Golden Crow could have lived for another thousand years. My arrival was the sowing of Karma. The reaping of that Karma was the death of the Golden Crow. However, that reaping was another sowing. Because the Golden Crow perished, the Crow Divinity Tribes declined, and narrowly escaped being exterminated. They were nearly wiped away in the Apocalypse. That was a reaping of Karma.

“Sowing contains reaping, reaping contains sowing. Everything that happened before was all sowing. Karma was reaped after I led the Crow Divinity Tribe out of the north all the way to the Black Lands.

“It is similar to repaying kindnesses. The kindness is the sowing of Karma, and the repayment is the reaping of it!

“Karma is about cause and effect. I… understand now.” As he traveled along, his eyes began to glow with enlightenment. It was as if he could see the faint Karma threads attached to all living things!

Laughing, Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding to produce the Ji Clan fishing rod. As he cast it out, within his heart floated the sense of the Karma of all living things.

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# Chapter 516: Without Severing the Spirit, How Could You Live Past 1,000?

Starting in the north and then extending to the east and west, the great lands of the Western Desert slowly became a violet-colored sea. The sea spread out to eventually cover the south as well. It stopped outside Blackgate Fort. At this point, it was truly a boundless sea.

Blackgate Fort was eventually submerged by the water. Ten thousand years later, after the seawater vanished, a new land would be revealed.

That would be the true end of the Western Desert Apocalypse. The seawaters would disappear, and the Western Desert would once again appear.

Perhaps by that time, the land would be unfamiliar to the Western Desert Cultivators residing in the Black Lands. However, there would definitely be people who would go to search for the roots of their Tribes from ten thousand years before.

Right now, Blackgate Fort’s gate was closing, signifying an official end to the migration….

Meng Hao’s laughter rang out as he gained enlightenment regarding Karma. He saw the Karma threads. By casting out the fishing line, he could control the treasure just like a member of the Ji Clan. To Meng Hao, this was an extra, unexpected benefit.

“So Karma has been with me all along….” He shot through the air, the parrot perched on his shoulder. The meat jelly was attached to the parrot’s foot like always. One man, one parrot, and one meat jelly shot through the downpour of violet rain. They were surrounded by the power of extermination. Spiritual energy was completely cut off.

After parting ways with the Golden Crow Clan, Meng Hao chose not to enter the Black Lands. He made a different choice. He would stay behind within the Violet Rain Apocalypse in order to form his Water-type totem.

As for the blood totem, that was not Meng Hao’s choice of totems. He would place himself within the Violet Rain Apocalypse in order to to gain enlightenment and understand the true meaning of the Violet Sea.

As he shot through the air, his eyes suddenly glittered.

“Now that I’ve left the plains outside the Black Lands,” he murmured, “the pursuit should be catching up….” He suddenly stopped in mid-air, turning to look behind him.

“I’m probably being chased, not by the Nascent Soul stage, but… Spirit Severing!!” His eyes glowed brightly as he looked around, and he smiled.

A long moment passed before his gaze came to be fixed at a spot not too far off.

“It will most likely be Spirit Severing. After my display back at Blackgate Fort, no ordinary Nascent Soul Cultivator would be willing to try to interfere with me.” As Meng Hao thought about the Spirit Severing stage, his eyes suddenly filled with a burning passion.

Spirit Severing… was an indescribably powerful stage!

It was something that Cultivators sought after with passion secondary only to Immortal Ascension!

The mysteries of Spirit Severing had nothing to do with variations in divine abilities, but rather the manifestation of the Domain. Each of the three

Severings were an instance of the use of the Domain.

Only within the Spirit Severing stage was it possible to have the qualification to call one’s cultivation… a Dao!

In the cultivation of the Spirit Severing stage, medicinal pills were secondary. The most important thing was… enlightenment regarding the Domain.

Every Spirit Severing Patriarch had a different Domain. Based on their different experiences in life, the Dao of the Domain chosen by the Cultivator transformed into a blade of Severing. The first Severing was the early stage, the second Severing was the mid, the third Severing was the late!

Each of these Severings would cause the Cultivation base to rise to a new realm. When all three Severings were completed, the great circle of Spirit Severing was complete. After that, there was only one path to follow… and that was Dao Seeking.

The reason why it was called Dao Seeking was that the body of the Cultivator contained a Dao. Within the three Severings of the Spirit Severing stage, one’s Dao was discovered, then questions arose…. Once the Dao was solidified, then one was qualified for Immortal Ascension.

Unless… doubts arose during Dao Seeking. Then the Dao vanished and the body perished. Everything became emptiness.

There is a saying that once enlightened, one can die happy. That is how one could describe the Dao Seeking stage. Once enlightenment was gained, and one’s own Dao was solidified, then one could smile even in death.

Spirit Severing, Dao Seeking, Immortal Ascension!

Those were the ultimate pursuits of the Cultivators in the great lands of South Heaven. Three stages, each one of which could lead to death. However, when the final goal of Immortal Ascension was reached, the Cultivator would then be qualified to leave South Heaven and travel among the stars. There, one’s personal Dao could become even more strong, and blossom like a resplendent flower!

When such a beautiful flower blossomed, one could die laughing at the Heavens, having lived a life not in vain!

That was the path of Immortal Ascension!

Meng Hao’s path. Xu Qing’s path. Chu Yuyan’s path. Chen Fan, Fatty and all the others all were treading such a path….

Objectively speaking, though, whether you looked at the Western Desert or the Southern Domain, Dao Seeking experts were as rare as phoenix feathers and qilin horns…. Even Spirit Severing experts were not common. Generally speaking, even great Tribes in the Western Desert would have only one Spirit Severing Patriarch, which was the reason why they could sustain their legacies throughout the years and become truly powerful.

It was similar in the Southern Domain. Spirit Severing experts were not common. Furthermore, the majority… remained within the First Severing. Those who reached the Second were less common and as for the Third… they were even rarer.

That was because… each Severing could be fatal. Lack of success… meant certain death. In fact, many Cultivators who became Spirit Severing Patriarchs… chose not to continue on with further Severings.

Failure… meant death!

The power of the Spirit Severing stage lay in the Domain. It could influence divine abilities, could change the laws of nature, could accomplish whatever the heart desired. From the perspective of Nascent Soul Cultivators, it could do things that seemed impossible.

Take for example Patriarch Reliance. The fact that he could carry away the State of Zhao with him had something to do with this Cultivation base. However, that action was actually a manifestation of Spirit Severing!

Another example was the Patriarch of the Frigid Snow Clan. Of his own power, he could shake everything in the area. However, once his Cultivation base fell, it instigated an attack.

If one wished to enter the Spirit Severing Stage, the initial step was the first Severing, which could not be avoided.

It was an enormous obstacle that had to be passed by any Cultivator who wished to proceed beyond the Nascent Soul stage. In fact, it was an obstacle that many Nascent Soul Cultivators could not pass. Because of that, they ended up staying within the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage until their longevity expired, whereupon they became skeletons and returned to the dust.

If one could not live past one thousand years, and could not defy the heavens, how could one be of the Spirit Severing stage?

The longevity of the Nascent Soul stage was roughly one thousand years. Even with the use of shocking medicinal pills that could increase longevity, it was impossible to exceed one thousand years of life. That was one of the laws of Heaven and Earth. One thousand years was the absolute limit to the longevity of a Cultivator.

However, with the First Severing of Spirit Severing, five hundred to a thousand years of longevity could be hewn out. As to exactly how much, that depended on the person as well as the Domain…. In any case, the longevity would definitely exceed one thousand years!

Passing beyond one thousand was a defiance of the Heavens!

That was why reaching Spirit Severing was so difficult. It was difficult… to an ultimate degree!

Meng Hao took a deep breath, taking the stubbornness and desire that shone in his eyes and concealing it deep within his heart. He would continue down this path to Immortal Ascension… in a way that had never been done before. That was the determination in Meng Hao’s heart.

The Five-Colored Nascent Soul was only the first step!

Meng Hao looked out into the air, but could only see the downpour of violet rain. Everything was deserted, with no one visible except for him. Meng Hao was quiet for a long moment, ten breaths of time to be exact. Suddenly, a translucent figure slowly began to appear in mid-air several thousand meters in front of Meng Hao.

As the figure became visible, a strange, invisible power seemed to affect the violet rain in the area. It was pushed aside, ensuring that not even a single drop landed on the figure.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever, as if nothing out of the ordinary was going on. However, it was at this moment that the parrot opened its eyes wide. All of the multicolored feathers on its body stood on end. The meat jelly bell on its foot began to tremble, causing tinkling bell sounds to ring out.

“Dammit, Spirit Severing!!” said the parrot, gaping. It was impossible to tell exactly what it was thinking. It looked down ruthlessly at the meat jelly bell and said, “Shut up! Quit shaking! Your shaking is really annoying Lord Fifth!” In response, the meat jelly’s shaking grew even more intense.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever. He had long since predicted that after the Crow Divinity Tribe entered the Black Lands and handed over the Demon Spirit, the fact that there was a second Demon Spirit would quickly be discovered.

Considering that the Heavenly Court Alliance wanted Demon Spirits, it was possible that other great Tribes with Spirit Severing Patriarchs would grow greedy. That meant there was a high possibility that they… would try to catch and kill him.

Such circumstances would have been even more difficult to avoid if he had entered the Black Lands himself. Furthermore, it would have implicated the Crow Divinity Tribe. His only option was to leave…. Even leaving, though, would likely result in people coming after him.

However, it now had nothing to do with the Crow Divinity Tribe. The scene of Meng Hao leaving Blackgate Fort had been witnessed by too many people. From that moment on, it was tantamount to Meng Hao severing his Karma with the Crow Divinity Tribe.

“Do you know why I’m here?” asked the transparent figure, slowly opening its eyes. The opening of its eyes caused everything in the vicinity to suddenly change. It was as if some indescribable, invisible force of law had enveloped the entire area. The figure did not open its mouth to speak. Instead, its voice resonated in Meng Hao’s mind like thunder.

An intense aura caused Meng Hao to feel as if he were about to suffocate. A mere thought on the part of this figure caused the violet rain in the area to stop moving. It paused, motionless in mid-air. The sight of the drops of water floating there motionless in midair was truly shocking.

This was something that no Nascent Soul Cultivator could do. This was not a divine ability, but rather but a command of laws. This was… a Domain!

Only Spirit Severing experts were possessed with Domain!

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he looked at the translucent figure. “So, I have been pursued, not by a Nascent Soul Cultivator, but someone of the Spirit Severing stage!”

“Hand over that Demon Spirit,” said the translucent figure, staring at Meng Hao. “Then you can be on your way.” Its expression was one of neither happiness nor anger. It continued to stand there, its mouth closed but its voice echoing in Meng Hao’s mind.

“Hold on a second!” squawked the parrot. It suddenly flew up into the air. At the same time, the meat jelly bell on its foot continued to chatter.

Flapping its wings rapidly, the parrot continued, “Heh heh. Look, big brother. Lord Fifth is not on the same side as this kid. Aiya. Now that I think about it, my beloved concubine is back at home waiting for me. See you later!”

“Big brother,” gushed the meat jelly, “Lord Third is not on the same side as this kid….”

Meng Hao’s expression was unsightly as he glared at the parrot and meat jelly. “That is the Demon Spirit!” he suddenly said, pointing at the parrot.

Suddenly, the semi-transparent figure looked over at the parrot.

“Meng Hao, we’re on the same side, bitch! You, you, you….” The parrot began trembling, having been instantly sent into a fluster.

“This is wrong,” howled the meat jelly. “This is immoral! This is going to provoke Heavenly Tribulation. You….”

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# Chapter 517: Valiant Zhixiang

At the same time that the parrot and the meat jelly were howling, the translucent figure suddenly opened its mouth in a cold harrumph.

This time, it was not a sound that echoed out only in the mind. It really did open its mouth to emit a sound. The sound reverberated out like magic, shaking everything!

The parrot and meat jelly were instantly silenced.

Everything in the area was completely still and silent. Meng Hao seemed incapable of even breathing. This was not the first time Meng Hao had faced a Spirit Severing Cultivator. However, this was the first time… that he truly faced up against one completely on his own. It was his first time relying only on himself to stand up to the crushing pressure of the Spirit Severing stage.

Years ago when he faced Patriarch Reliance, Meng Hao did it as a Demon Sealer. The only thing Patriarch Reliance did in the end was flee in frustration.

Later in Holy Snow city, the legacies of the Frigid Snow Clan enabled Meng Hao to fight against a Spirit Severing Patriarch. In reality, though, that battle was not fought by Meng Hao, but by the legacies of the Frigid Snow, and the Agarwood!

This was the first time doing it while truly alone.

The intensity of the pressure felt to Meng Hao like Heavenly might. His Cultivation base was rotating rapidly and five-colored light glittered out of his body, a manifestation of the power of the five elements. However, despite this, his eyes were instantly shot with blood.

“A five elements totem. Nice idea,” said the semi-transparent figure, its voice cool. “If you could stabilize it, it might be considered stunning and peerless. Unfortunately, you can’t. With your current combination, you could sweep across the Nascent Soul stage, but you wouldn’t be able to stand up to a single blow from me. Very childish.” Its tone was not one of arrogance, but rather one of unquestionable strength. It was a strength that spread out into the area and caused cracking sounds to ring out as fissures split the air in all directions.

“These two trashy neo-demons are in no way Demon Spirits. If you don’t hand it over willingly, then I’ll just take it. Although, I do have to say that this physical body of yours is pretty good….” Except for the cold harrumph from earlier, the translucent figure hadn’t opened its mouth again. Its voice continued to echo in Meng Hao’s mind. As it finished speaking, it casually lifted up its hand and pointed toward Meng Hao.

The finger instantly caused a cold, emotionless feeling to fill the area. A tremor ran through Meng Hao’s body, along with an icy coldness.

At first, the coldness seemed to be something that affected his physical body. But actually, it was a coldness that filled his heart and soul. It was a coldness that affected the seven emotions and six pleasures. This coldness seemed to affect all of Meng Hao’s feelings, freezing them over, transforming him into a state of true cold-blooded unfeeling.

This transformation almost seemed to be putting him to some sort of special state, a state which was suitable for possession.

“Enough, enough!” squawked the parrot. “Spirit Severing my ass! This isn’t Spirit Severing, bitches! Meng Hao, even though you tried to con me, if you say the word, I’ll run off to find someone to get revenge for you….” At the same time, the meat jelly was howling out some complaints.

Meng Hao ignored them. His face was calm as he suddenly understood the meaning of the coldness inside of him.

“So this is the Domain?” He took a deep breath, and then his eyes began to fill with a bright light. “Zhixiang, if you don’t do something, then you’ll have to go by yourself to the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane.” As soon as his voice echoed out, the eyes of the translucent figure flickered, but its hand did not stop moving. Meng Hao’s body continued to fill with coldness; his heart slowly stopped beating, and his emotions turned as cold as ice.

This was not a divine ability or a magical technique, but merely the pointing of single finger. Everything seemed calm, but incredible changes were occurring, changes that influenced the laws of reality. Meng Hao felt as if he were bound up, incapable of resisting. It was as if his Cultivation base existed in name only, and was incapable whatsoever of resisting this surprise onslaught from the Domain.

The only thing he could do to fight against it would be to employ the Agarwood for the final time to escape death, or his final bit of Dancing Sword Qi. However, Meng Hao would not act rashly. Besides, it wasn’t absolutely necessary for him to use his trump cards when facing up against the Spirit Severing stage.

That was because he had Zhixiang!

He wasn’t nervous at all. He knew that before going the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane, there was someone who was very interested in whether he lived or died.

Besides, even if his guess about the situation was wrong, he was still prepared to take other action. The will of the Agarwood was currently swirling in his mind, ready to awaken.

That was another reason why he had been so casual, first about leaving, then about waiting in this spot.

At the same time, his eyes slowly started to turn blue. However, in that moment, an annoyed, cutesy snort suddenly filled the air. At the same time, a blooming white lotus appeared in front of Meng Hao. The translucent figure’s face fell.

Cracking sounds echoed out as fissures filled the air around Meng Hao. They spread out with a boom, transforming into countless fragments which then exploded.

Strangest of all, the explosions were actually illusory. This collapse was not a true collapse, but rather ghost images. Even as everything shattered, it faded away.

Meng Hao took a deep breath as his body returned to its normal state. The coldness, however, remained behind. It seemed that Zhixiang, annoyed as she was, wasn’t willing to help him dispel it.

Meng Hao didn’t care. He smiled as the color of his eyes returned to normal. Even as his body returned to normal, he retreated backward. Suddenly, he turned into a green smoke and a black moon. He even employed minor teleportation as he fled off into the distance!

The translucent figure frowned, and was just moving forward to pursue, when it stopped in place. That was because it suddenly found that a grim-faced woman was directly ahead, floating in mid-air.

The woman was incredibly beautiful. She wore a light green gown, the sleeves of which were embroidered with light blue peonies, and was hemmed with silver thread in the shape of auspicious clouds. The front of the garment was covered with light yellow brocade. She floated gracefully in the air, her garment swirling around her, like a willow tree fluttering in the wind.

Any man who looked at her would surely feel his heart pounding with desire and would be virtually intoxicated with her beauty. Her skin seemed delicate enough to be punctured by even a slight wind. Her face was immaculately beautiful, as if all other beautiful things in the world would be like dirt in front of her. Her beauty was the kind that caused her to be the focus of all gazes, wherever she went.

However, at the moment, she was grinding her teeth in apparent anger…. Her beauty seemed to contain the desire to kill, and her face was serious. She did not seem coquettish and seductive; her face was nearly half filled with coldness.

As she moved forward, the area around her swirled with countless flower petals which swirled like a vortex. They danced about her, some of them coming to fall on her shoulders; the entire scene was incredibly picturesque.

This was none other than Zhixiang!

After the Five Poisons Tribe was exterminated, it seemed as if she had gone off on her own. In actuality, for this the entire time, she had been keeping tabs on Meng Hao’s Tribe from off in the distance. She didn’t want him to reach an untimely end. If that happened, she would be much less confident about her chances of success in the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane.

She had watched Meng Hao deliver the Crow Divinity Tribe to the Black Lands, and had also sensed the Spirit Severing Cultivator’s Divine Clone pursuing him. At that point, Zhixiang knew that she had no choice but to take action.

She didn’t really want to, but considering that Meng Hao had called her out, her hand had been forced. She had no choice but to reveal herself. Despite her irritation at Meng Hao, she had no other options.

“Your excellency, who might you be?” asked the translucent figure with narrowed eyes. This was the second time it had actually opened its mouth. Its voice was ancient and archaic.

“I’m the badass bitch who’s gonna kick your ass!” she said. Her voice sounded like the singing of a lark. Unfortunately, her wording… was quite the opposite.

The eyes of the translucent figure flickered coldly. It took a step forward and then raised its right hand and pointed its finger.

“You trifling clone!” spat Zhixiang grumpily. “You see a badass bitch and you don’t hightail your ass out of here immediately?!” Even though she was cursing, it was the kind that didn’t make one mad, but actually was somewhat enjoyable.

Even as she spoke, she waved her sleeve, causing the flower petals circulating around her to suddenly fly toward the semi-transparent figure.

Off in the distance, Meng Hao was flying through the air in a wisp of green smoke. He suddenly heard an enormous boom coming from behind him. At the same time, Zhixiang’s voice suddenly echoed in his ear.

“I spent a lot of effort building up this little bit of Immortal power, you bastard. Now it’s all wasted! Meng Hao… if you stand me up on the day that the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane opens, then you’re dead!”

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as usual, almost as if he hadn’t heard anything. He utilized the Bloodburst Flash to suddenly shoot off into the distance.

He didn’t care how Zhixiang did it. Even if another Spirit Severing Patriarch emerged from the Black Lands and she had to pay a further price, she would still have to stop that person to give him a chance to flee. Once he escaped from the Southern region and disappeared into the Apocalypse and the boundless sea, finding him would be like looking for a needle in a haystack.

Any Spirit Severing Patriarch would think twice about coming out after him alone; after all, once they left the Black Lands, the disputes and fighting that could break out in their absence would be too much of a cause for hesitation.

Meng Hao had thought through all of this thoroughly. He employed all the speed he could muster to shoot off into the distance.

Time passed by. Meng Hao wasn’t sure what Zhixiang did to intercept any enemies. However, for an entire month, he didn’t encounter any pursuit. By this point, having employed the fastest speed he could manage, he had already crossed half of the Southern region.

Even more violet rain fell. At this point, no sea was visible, but the aroma of seawater could be detected. The violet rain was causing everything to erode. No plants could be seen on the ground below. Life force was being exterminated and spiritual energy had faded; not a bit was left.

Occasionally, he saw bandit Tribes below. Eventually, Meng Hao caught sight of South Cleaving Pass.

He stopped there for a moment, looking at the pass with a soft sigh. He didn't stay for very long, and during that time, the Cultivators that remained in the region didn't even notice him.

His body flickered as he shot off toward the north at top speed.

During his traveling, his Cultivation base continued to weaken. The Five-Colored Sky was faded. He was now no longer at the peak of the mid Nascent Soul stage, but rather, the early Nascent Soul stage.

According to Meng Hao's calculations , it wouldn't be long before the five elements dissipated, whereupon his Cultivation base would return to the Perfect Gold Core stage.

What he needed to do next was to gain enlightenment regarding the sea of violet rain, and how to fuse it with the blood totem. Then, he would have his own Water-type totem, and would be able to tread… the path of the Five-Colored Nascent Soul!

At that time, he would truly be able to make a meteoric rise!

Meng Hao took a deep breath, hunching over as he shot forward at top speed. Three months passed. His Cultivation base was now completely back to the Perfect Cold Core stage. He finally left the Western Desert South region and was in the Central Region. Here, the only thing visible in all directions, was a boundless, endless…

Violet Sea!

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# Chapter 518: Sinking to the Heart of the Violet Sea

The sky was dark, and violet rain fell in buckets. The only thing Meng Hao could see in all directions was a vast sea.

Waves undulated across its surface, pushed along by a cold wind. His hair drifted up and his clothes rippled as he floated in mid-air looking out soundlessly at the sea.

It seemed as if all life in the entire world was completely gone and buried. The only thing left behind was his loneliness. It floated in his heart for a moment before he shook his head, causing it to fade away.

He proceeded on at top speed. The parrot followed, occasionally letting out an arrogant squawk.

“La lala la la, I’m a seagull…!” The parrot suddenly dove into the water, only to shoot up into the air again off into the distance. It seemed extremely happy.

The vast sea seemed endless. Meng Hao continued on for a few more months until he was deep into what had once been the Western Desert Central region. Here, he could see the very tips of what had once been tall mountains, but were now islands.

There were no Cultivators and no neo-demons. There were only… occasional floating corpses.

Everything was deathly still.

Another seven days passed. Up ahead of Meng Hao appeared a rather familiar-looking mountain peak that was now an island. Meng Hao stopped in mid-air. After examining it for a long moment, he realized that he recognized this particular mountain.

He had passed it when traveling with the Crow Divinity Tribe. As of now, the mountain itself was buried under the sea. All that was visible now was about sixty meters of its top which made up the island.

“This place should do.” He didn’t proceed any further north. Continuing on would only mean fewer islands, and deeper waters. The current water level was what had been mid-air in the past.

He landed on the mountain-island and sat down cross-legged. He took a deep breath and looked out at the sea around him. As far as he was concerned, this was the perfect place to practice secluded meditation. It was very safe.

Because of the exterminating power of the violet rain, it was an Apocalypse to Western Desert Cultivators. To Meng Hao, though, it offered no inconvenience. In fact, once he gained enlightenment and produced a violet rain totem, this place would be like his own personal sea.

After some time passed, Meng Hao closed his eyes. There was no longer any five-colored glow about him. He was completely of the great circle of the Gold Core stage. His five elements tattoos glittered brightly as he began to meditate.

The parrot flew around, occasionally flying off into the distance, occasionally returning. No matter where it went, it seemed capable of finding things to amuse and entertain itself.

At the moment, it was pretending to be a seagull, squawking and crying out in delight. The meat jelly wasn’t willing to be outdone. A pop rang out as it also turned into a seagull and then rolled its eyes superciliously at the parrot.

It was at this point that the two buffoons began to have a contest….

Time passed. Months went by. Meng Hao’s Cultivation base continued to remain at its peak. Suddenly, his eyes opened, and a brilliant glow could be seen within his pupils.

He looked down at the blood totem tattoo on his right index finger, and as he did, an expression of determination appeared on his face.

“My final totem!

“Blood represents life, and fights back against all forms of death. This is the part of the Water-type totem tattoo which exemplifies life.

“The violet rain represents death, and destroys all life. This is the part of the Water-type totem tattoo which exemplifies death.

“Life and death oppose each other but also exist in a cycle. Without life, how could there be death? And without death… what could serve as a contrast to life!?

“The fusion of life and death. The blending of blood and the violet rain. That will be Meng Hao’s… great circle Water-type totem!”

As he murmured to himself, his eyes radiated an incredible light. It was currently night, and the rain was falling as usual. However, as he sat there in the rain, his eyes glowed with a light like that of lightning.

“If I truly want to gain enlightenment regarding the violet rain totem that represents death, then I can’t just sit here looking at the sea. I need to immerse myself in it, so that I can personally experience…

“What death is!

“In that way, when there is no distinction between myself and the Violet Sea, when our wills are congruous, then I will have the chance to understand it. When I can control its power, then I can brand myself with a totem tattoo classified as part of the Violet Sea!” Having reached this point in his train of thought, Meng Hao felt absolutely no hesitation. That was

Meng Hao’s personality. When he made a decision, he would not easily change his mind.

That was especially true after beginning his path of cultivation. He had never looked back, but instead, continued forward at all times. If one gets in a rut, or hesitates to make a decision, then death is not far off.

Eyes glittering, Meng Hao stood up and looked at the competing parrot and meat jelly. Then he strode forward and jumped directly into the Violet Sea.

As soon as his body touched the violet seawater, an intense aura of death completely surrounded him.

Meng Hao’s body trembled as he managed to cross his legs. After sinking down more than thirty meters, he opened his eyes and stopped moving.

He had already reached the limit of what he could endure. If he sank any further, the death will would become too intense. To this sea, he was something alive, and therefore something it was diametrically opposed to.

Meng Hao was incapable of fighting against the entire Violet Sea.

Even sinking down thirty meters was something that if others heard about they would react to with complete disbelief. The Violet Sea was a place that Cultivators simply couldn’t enter. Even sinking six meters into the sea for a short period would be like plunging into flames of destruction, let alone thirty meters.

To an ordinary Cultivator who sank down thirty meters, it would only take about ten breaths of time before their life force vanished. The aura of death here was qualified to destroy all life.

As for Meng Hao, the fact that he could sit there cross-legged for much longer than ten breaths worth of time had a lot to do with his Perfection. The realm of Perfection made it so that he did not absorb power from Heaven and Earth. He was his own cycle. His ability to survive far exceeded that of others.

Even still, after twenty breaths worth of time, Meng Hao’s body began to shake. The will of death congealed around him, growing thicker and thicker. This collision between life and death turned into an extermination, a power that would thoroughly extinguish and bury him.

It was like ice water being poured onto a red-hot branding iron. The two were incompatible. Ice and fire opposed to each other created a force… either the ice water would turn into steam, or the branding iron would experience a complete end.

This was extermination!

After thirty breaths of time, the power of extermination was so intense that Meng Hao was forced to open his eyes and shoot up out of the sea. After flying up into the air, he returned to the mountain-island, his face pale. He coughed up a mouthful of blood. The collision between his life force and the death aura had transformed into an extermination that Meng Hao found difficult to endure.

However, his eyes were now shining brightly.

“Now I understand. The Violet Sea Apocalypse does not inherently contain the power of extermination. Its primary will is that of death. When it encounters life force, extermination erupts. That extermination is not inherently created by the Violet Sea, but rather when it is combined with life force.

“The opposition of life and death transform into the power of extermination…. That will be the true power that the great circle of the Water-type totem will be able to unleash when it is completed!

“It requires time for life and death to create such extermination.

“The life within my blood totem tattoo needs to coexist with the death of the violet rainwater, not extermination. To truly gain enlightenment, I need to negate the power of extermination. In that way, I can truly understand the will of death!”

Meng Hao took a deep breath and then sat back down cross-legged. After three days, he was fully recovered. When he opened his eyes, they shone brightly. After sitting in contemplation for a moment, he once again strode forward and dropped into the seawater. He returned to the same position thirty meters down where he crossed his legs and experienced the extermination that came with the seawater.

Time passed. A year went by in the blink of an eye.

During that year, Meng Hao did not see any Cultivators or any other form of life. It felt as if he was the only person alive in the world.

Negating the power of extermination was not easy. Even being sustained because of the realm of Perfection, it was very difficult for him. He would not use his blood totem unless it was absolutely necessary. If he did, then the gap between life and death within the Violet Sea would swell, allowing the power of extermination to rush in and threaten to wipe him away.

“I cannot use life to be enlightened regarding death. In order to understand death, I must truly die!” Meng Hao could now descend almost one hundred meters into the Violet Sea, and stay there for the space of 170 breaths before speeding back up to the surface.

He had made a lot of progress during this year, but he was still far from thoroughly understanding the Violet Rain.

“This death is not just some blind perishing, though. I have to go about it methodically. I need to slowly decrease my life force under the power of the extermination. Then, make a complete turnabout. By surviving only my own aura of death, and thus not being influenced by the exterminating will, then I can truly experience the Violet Sea’s death aura.” After having reached this new enlightenment, Meng Hao rested for a few days, then once again entered into the Violet Sea to meditate cross-legged.

More time passed. One year. Two years. Three years….

Ten years.

Meng Hao was now cross-legged more than six hundred meters beneath the surface of the Violet Sea, completely motionless, as if he were dead. An aura of death circulated around him. Occasionally, the power of extermination would explode out, but it was quite subdued, obviously much, much weaker than it had been ten years ago.

A month passed. Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly opened. The power of extermination around him suddenly grew incredibly intense. Before it could explode out, he shot up out of the Violet Sea.

“Still not enough….” he murmured. “When I’m able to sit on the seafloor permanently, then I will be able to begin to comprehend the truth of the Violet Sea!” During the ten year period, his Cultivation base had not experienced much change at all. However, his whole body and aura had experienced earthshaking transformation.

He was more tall and slender, and within his scholarly disposition was a bit more of something Demonic and bit less Confucian. His life force was reduced, and his deathly aura increased.

His skin was bright and clear, his features were more handsome, even Demonic.

After ten years, the violet rain was still falling, but the sea had not grown much deeper. The islands still existed…. By this time, the Western Desert South region had also become part of the sea. The entirety of the great lands of the Western Desert were now covered by seawater. Any Cultivators who had been unable to enter the Black Lands, were now nothing more than skeletons buried by the Violet Sea.

As of now, they were much like the Bridge Slaves in the Realm of the Bridge Ruins. They were like specters who would occasionally appear on the surface of the waters. Occasionally entire Tribes would appear, floating about, taking away any life force. They were like emissaries of the Violet Sea.

Meng Hao had encountered such specters several times throughout the ten years.

In fact, this moment in which he burst out from within the Violet Sea, he saw a group of several hundred specters off in the distance, drifting across the surface of the sea with vacant looks on their faces. As soon as Meng Hao appeared, they suddenly stopped moving and looked over.

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# Chapter 519: Within the Sea, Time is Forgotten

The specters looked at Meng Hao, and he looked back. They appeared to hesitate, as if they were confused about something.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as normal. However, he looked closely at the specters, paying attention to see how they would react.

After a moment, a towering death aura rose up from them. Their bodies flashed into motion as they shot toward Meng Hao.

He frowned, then sighed lightly. As the specters neared, he pointed out with his right hand, causing a bloody light to explode out. Within this bloody light was an intense life force which shot forward. In the blink of an eye, it slammed into the specters.

When that happened, an exterminating will exploded out that caused everything to shake. A sound like a thunderclap echoed out as the specters’ bodies collapsed into pieces. They were now dead in soul as in body.

This exterminating will was created when the will of life touched an aura of death.

Ten years ago, Meng Hao could never have done this. Now, though, after ten years of enlightenment, although he could not completely reverse his own life force into an aura of death, he did understand the method with which to produce extermination.

“If these Violet Sea specters can sense my life force, then there’s no need to even mention the sea itself.” He shook his head. During the past ten years, along with his increase in enlightenment, he had also come to find that when encountering these specters, they always looked puzzled for a moment. It showed that he was at least making progress.

“Such a phenomenon also seems to indicate that I’ve indeed picked the correct path.” He looked up into the sky, lost in thought. He had no idea where the parrot and meat jelly had gone off to. In the past ten years they had frolicked and played to their hearts content.

They would often disappear without a trace for half a year or more. Considering their usual vices, Meng Hao wasn’t worried for their safety. There was nothing in the area that had fur or feathers, so no matter what stories they made up, they actually couldn’t accomplish much.

Meng Hao rested for a few more days before once again sinking down into the Violet Sea.

It turned out Meng Hao was so focused on his cultivation that he actually miscalculated regarding the parrot and meat jelly….

While it was true that there was nothing in the area that had fur or feathers, well, the Black Lands was another story…. The parrot and meat jelly had gotten tired of the ocean years ago, and had secretly left and flown back to the Black Lands.

After entering, they immediately caused a violent commotion that eventually became a legend.

Time passed, another ten years.

Meng Hao had already spent more than twenty years trying to understand the violet rain. By now, he could submerge nearly three thousand meters and sit there cross-legged for several months.

His life force was currently incredibly weak. Were it anyone else, such a lack of life force would mean they weren’t alive at all. Meng Hao was different, though. Although his life force was weak, his thick death aura actually became something like a different type of life.

Such life was similar to that of the specters, except that it possessed a fleshly body, and a soul.

The reason Meng Hao could endure for so long underneath the sea was that as his life force grew weaker, the power of extermination in the seawater was reduced. The will to expel him from his position within the water was also weakened.

Another ten years passed. When Meng Hao had spent an entire half of a sixty-year cycle trying to gain enlightenment of the violet rain. At long last, he could sink all the way to the very bottom of the sea.

He could now step foot onto what had once been… the great lands of the Western Desert!

On the seafloor, Meng Hao could feel pervasive, indescribable auras of death surrounding him in all directions. The auras were incredibly thick, and were even accompanied by numerous specters.

When these specters saw Meng Hao, though, they completely ignored him, and would simply pass on, sometimes drifting directly through his body.

The life force in Meng Hao’s body had already been suppressed almost completely. The only thing left was a tiny sliver upon which his entire life hung. His body was now filled with an abundant aura of death, causing his skin to turn an ashen white, almost the exact same color as a corpse.

He sat cross-legged on the seafloor, on what had once been the surface of the Western Desert. This time, year after year passed.

To understand the violet rain, one must become the violet rain. Only in such a manner could enlightenment be gained. After thirty years of attempts, Meng Hao was finally able to achieve some success.

That sliver of life force that sustained the fire of his life was now surrounded by an aura of death. However, it was not exterminated. The surrounding will of extermination was now incredibly weak.

Meng Hao was now finally able to understand what it felt like to die within the violet rain.

He did not move. He sat there cross-legged, making no attempt to leave the Violet Sea. Another ten years passed.

Meng Hao’s process of understanding how to form his Water-type totem had already lasted forty years. To a mortal, forty years is half a lifetime. To Cultivators, though, forty years… could not be considered short… but neither could it be considered very long.

After forty years, the rainfall in the Western Desert was no longer a downpour. It was now showing signs of letting up. The rain itself would not last for ten thousand years. According to the records kept in the Western Desert, the rain would last for a hundred years at the most.

Unfortunately, even though the rain would cease to fall after a hundred years, the spiritual energy would not be restored. The Violet Sea would still be like a restricted area for Cultivators. It would be possible to fly in mid-air above the waters, but… it was impossible to step a single foot into the sea.

Furthermore, because of the death of the vast numbers of Western Desert Cultivators who hadn’t been able to enter the Black Lands, there were countless specters that filled the Violet Sea. As they flew about, any living thing they encountered would cause them to feel extreme grievance. They would instantly attack in an effort to exterminate the life force.

Even still, these specters were actually something that Cultivators could use. Because they were congealed out of an aura of death, they could be sealed. Some of the more powerful of the specters could even be refined into Death Aura Crystals. Such crystals could be used when practicing cultivation to stimulate the latent power of the body.

During that forty year period, many great upheavals rocked the Black Lands. The one thing that didn’t change, however, was that the Heavenly Court Alliance still held sway as the most powerful force in the Black Lands.

In addition to the Heavenly Court Alliance, six other powerful forces gradually rose up. These were of course the great Tribes who had Spirit Severing Patriarchs.

Actually, one of them, the sixth, did not have a Spirit Severing Patriarch. The name of this force was the Golden Crow Black Dragon Clan.

This Clan was a combination of the Crow Divinity Tribe and the Black Dragon Tribe. In terms of the power structure, the Golden Crow Clan was the primary power, the Black Dragon Tribe the secondary, and the Church of the Golden light was tertiary. Together, they formed a powerful Clan.

Although they had no Spirit Severing Patriarch, they did have 800,000 neo-demons. As such, the Golden Crow Black Dragon Clan possessed such fearsome power that no one dared to look down upon them.

That was especially the case when it came to their spell formation. Over the course of forty years, many people spied upon them, but all were forced to dispel of any thoughts of trying to take the Clan out.

The Clan also had the Thorn Rampart vine. Any enemy under the Spirit Severing stage would be completely incapable of doing anything against it.

If a Spirit Severing expert arrived, it might be able to handle the Thorn Rampart, but 800,000 frenzied neo-demons was something that no Tribe would dare to test out.

Because of this, there was a balance in the Black Lands…. Because of that balance, the Golden Crow Black Dragon Clan was able to not only exist, but rise to a position of power.

There is probably no need to even mention how their totemic Sacred Ancients grew. With the Outlander Beast acting as a guard, the Golden Crow Black Dragon Clan was a force that everyone was forced to take seriously.

This was even more the case when some of the neo-demons from the horde of 800,000 gradually grew to the point of becoming totemic Sacred

Ancients!

Thirty years ago, Big Hairy reached level 11 and became a totemic Sacred Ancient! On that day, all neo-demons in the Black Lands could sense a powerful Demonic Qi which spread out thickly in all directions from the Golden Crow Clan.

After another ten years, the red crocodile and the enormous lizard successively became totemic Sacred Ancients.

As for the crows, mosquitos and some of the various other neo-demons, they grew like bamboo shoots after a spring rain. All of them reached level 11 and became totemic Sacred Ancients!

Under their guardianship, the Golden Crow Black Dragon Clan truly was worthy to be called powerful. They became one of the six greatest powers in the Black Lands underneath the Heavenly Court Alliance!

Ten years ago, the parrot and the meat jelly used some unknown method to escape the detection of Spirit Severing Divine Sense and re-enter the Black Lands. They instantly began to sow chaos. Vast numbers of neo-demons met with disaster. With the exception of the Golden Crow Black Dragon Clan, neo-demons from any Tribe who sensed the aura of the parrot and meat jelly would instantly wail mournfully and then flee in the opposite direction.

No matter what any Dragoneer did to try to control them, they were powerless to block them in any way. Their neo-demons would quickly flee, and the lonely Dragoneer would be left hovering alone in mid-air, trembling.

“The Bane of Dragoneers” was a name that quickly rose to prominence in the Black Lands.

During that forty year period of time, the Southern Domain remained on guard against the Black Lands. However, disciples often came from the various Sects of the Southern Domain to have dealings with the six great powers. On the surface, things seemed peaceful. In reality, both sides were being vigilant regarding the other.

The Sect with whom the Golden Crow Black Dragon Clan had the most dealings with… was the Violet Fate Sect!

The reason for this was that legends began to spread of what had happened forty years ago. The Western Desert Cultivators soon learned that the totemic Sacred Ancient who led the Crow Divinity Tribe out of the North, Meng Hao… was once a disciple of the Violet Fate Sect!

He was Grandmaster Pill Cauldron of the Southern Domain, a person completely illustrious and famous.

As soon as word of this began to spread, it caused a huge stir. After all, everyone who had seen Meng Hao combine the five elements outside Blackgate Fort had been thoroughly shaken.

However, as time passed, the stories about Meng Hao soon came to be legends of the past. No one had seen or heard from Meng Hao for forty years. All they knew was that he had disappeared into the depths of what had once been the Western Desert. As the Violet Sea spread because of the violet rain, many people came to believe that Meng Hao had already perished.

As for the reason why he did not enter the Black Lands, but instead chose to travel out into the Violet Sea, it gradually came to be accepted that it was because of the Ji Clan from the Eastern Lands!

The enmity between Meng Hao and the Ji Clan quickly became common knowledge.

During the forty years, the lands of South Heaven changed quite a bit. The Meng Hao who so many people were beginning to forget, was currently sitting at the bottom of the Violet Sea, attempting to gain enlightenment regarding the will of death. Meanwhile, also at the bottom of the sea, far away from Meng Hao in what had once been the Western Desert North region, in the location of what had once been the home of the Crow

Divinity Tribe, another young man in a black robe sat cross-legged on the ocean floor. Occasionally he would open his eyes, and they would glow with a red light.

If you looked closely at this young man, you would see that his appearance… was very similar to that of Meng Hao's. The difference was that he seemed much, much more cold and sinister.

He wore a black robe, and on his forehead could be seen a mark that looked like a bat. As he sat there cross-legged, he actually looked very much… like a black-colored bat!

"Seven spirits managed to slip through to the holy barriers of the Heavens. They transformed into seven ancient true spirits…. After tens of thousands of years passed, their spirit wills ascended, and their spirit bodies transformed into seven Immortal Murdering Swords. Meng Hao, by what right of virtue do you possess four of them!?!?

"The true spirits are not visible in the world. We discarnate spirits are the real power. By recapturing the spirit bodies, we can then have the ability to tread the path of the true spirit!" The eyes of the black-robed youth glittered. His left eye actually had no eyeball, but instead, was a vortex. Within the vortex was a corpse which was half human and half beast. This was the exact same bizarre corpse from which Meng Hao had acquired the Immortal Murdering Sword years ago within the Crow Divinity Tribe's Holy Land.

As of now, that corpse had become nothing more than nourishment for this black-robed youth. Perhaps it was by consuming that corpse… that the Black Bat was able to transmogrify and change its shape!

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# Chapter 520: Endless Cold Knows No Years

40 years flashed by. There were still people who remembered Meng Hao, but most people only recalled a scene in which someone brought 800,000 neo-demons through Blackgate Fort.

As far as what Meng Hao looked like, most people barely remembered.

As time passed, Meng Hao was slowly being forgotten.

In truth, it was the same even with him. Not even his shadow was seen upon the Western Desert Violet Sea. He had been submerged at the bottom of the sea for years now.

He sat cross-legged on what had once been the land of the Western Desert. This time, it lasted for a very long time.

He didn't move, nor did he breathe. There seemed to be no signs of life coming from him whatsoever. He sat in the darkness of the bottom of the sea, secluded in meditation.

The surrounding will of extermination was increasingly reduced. Even if you looked for it closely, it was difficult to detect its existence. At the same time, the scant life force remaining in Meng Hao's body slowly lessened. There was only one tiny strand that kept his life from being snuffed out.

It was in exactly this fashion that twenty more years passed.

From the time Meng Hao had begun his attempt to understand the Violet Sea, a full sixty year cycle had passed. More and more people in the outside world were forgetting about him. Even in the Golden Crow Black Dragon

Clan, many people who joined the Clan or were born during that time took the stories of Meng Hao to be nothing but exaggerated legends. The exception were the people who had actually associated with Meng Hao years ago.

Slowly, friction began to develop between the members of the Black Dragon Tribe and the Golden Crow Tribe. However, Xu Bai was able to forcefully suppress this trend, and smooth out the conflicts.

It was understandable considering that the two Tribes did not have a common origin. They had been forced together because of the pressures of the outside world. The Golden Crow Tribe occupied a position of leadership above the Black Dragon Tribe. Although things seemed as peaceful as the waters of a windless sea, in reality, the wild hearts of the Black Dragon Tribe were awakening.

More years passed. One day, Meng Hao sat there cross-legged and motionless in the depths of the seas. Suddenly, his eyes snapped open.

As soon as they did, they began to shine with a brilliant light. After a long time, his expression began to weaken.

“So many years….” he murmured softly to himself, looking around at the world of the pitch black seafloor.

“Unfortunately I… still haven’t thoroughly grasped the meaning of the Violet Sea’s death will. The will of extermination is weak, but still there. Until it completely vanishes, I will be separated from the Violet Sea, incapable of fusing together with it.

“Although there is only a tiny bit of life force left in me, it is still there. As such, the extermination power will not disappear.

“Don’t tell me, that I really… have to die?!” He shook his head as he looked out thoughtfully at the blackness around him. Occasionally, specters would appear. During the more than sixty years that had passed, more and more specters had begun to awaken and roam about in the seawater.

They would float past Meng Hao without making even the slightest hint of an attack against him. It was as if they couldn’t see him, or perhaps, in their judgment, Meng Hao was like them, completely lacking any life force whatsoever.

As Meng Hao looked at the black sea water, an image coalesced in his mind. It was the vague image of his father and mother from when he was a child. He saw himself as a boy, reading books in front of the window. He felt the disappointment of failing over and over again in the preliminary rounds of the imperial examinations. And then there was the point on Mount Daqing where his entire life changed.

The Reliance Sect. The Blood Immortal Legacy. The Violet Fate Sect. The Black Lands… all the way down to the great lands of the Western Desert. All of these things flashed through Meng Hao’s mind. It was endless. Endless unforgettable memories. It was now almost one hundred years since he had encountered Xu Qing on Mount Daqing.

A hundred years of time had flowed by. It had passed by so quickly that Meng Hao barely had time to recall all the memories. Just like that, the entire life of a mortal passed gone by.

Gradually, Meng Hao’s life seemed to coalesce in front of him. He saw many figures. It didn’t matter whether they were enemies or friends, the Karma threads which invisibly connected him to all these people started to become visible.

After a while, Meng Hao smiled. Within that smile, determination suddenly shined out.

He had picked this path, and would unflinchingly continue on down it to the end. When risks are taken, the results can be death, or incredible rewards!

Meng Hao closed his eyes. In that instant, he unhesitatingly crushed that last tiny strand of life force.

There can be no growth without destruction! Without death, how can there be new life?!

When the strand of life force vanished, Meng Hao's body seemed to fill with a soundless roar. His life force disappeared, completely gone. The flame of life inside of him had been snuffed out. As of now, he was completely… dead!

This was true death, a state of existence without any life force, without any consciousness, without any aura or ability to perceive anything. It was as if he were buried deep in the bottom of the Violet Sea.

The instant in which death occurred, the will of extermination which had been blocking him from fusing with the Violet Sea, suddenly vanished. It completely disappeared without a trace.

The removal of this blockage seemed to indicate that he had received approval. He… was just like the Violet Sea, a will of death.

Without the extermination cutting him off, Meng Hao's body was enveloped by the dense death aura of the Western Desert Violet Sea. It poured into him, swirling around within him, boring through him. It began to circulate, moving about in cyclical fashion.

Meng Hao possessed no consciousness. It was as if he had been cleanly severed away from the world, as if he had nothing to do with the world any more. He had forgotten it; it had forgotten him.

The only thing that remembered Meng Hao was the dense death will of the Violet Sea. It continued to congeal around him, to pour into his body. Finally one day, his pale flesh became completely gray and filled with an aura of death. He was now… one with the Violet Sea.

His internal organs, his body parts, all of it was fused with the Violet Sea.

He had become the Violet Sea.

However, the Violet Sea had not become him yet.

Time passed.

One year. Five years. Ten years…. Eventually thirty years passed. As of now, around ninety years had passed since Meng Hao began to seek enlightenment of the violet rain.

Recently in the skies above the Western Desert, the violet rain which had fallen unceasingly for nearly a hundred years now seemed to be on the verge of ceasing. The signs grew more and more apparent. A year passed and the Violet Rain… finally stopped.

The sky was still overcast, but the rainwater ceased to fall. It was not a complete end; occasionally some rain would fall here and there. Generally speaking, though, the violet rainfall had passed.

When the violet rain stopped falling, there was something different about the Violet Sea of the Western Desert. In that moment, all of the specters which had been floating about above and below the sea suddenly stopped. Everything became silent. Their faces became even more blank than before, as if they were listening respectfully to something.

That period of listening lasted for three months.

After the three months, everything returned to normal. However, there was something… different about this Violet Sea, something that no one could sense.

It was as if within the sea, each swell of the waves contained a will.

That will belonged to Meng Hao!

Meng Hao, however, was not aware of it. He was not sure of when exactly he had awoken. He didn’t remember who he was, nor did he possess any of his memories. All he remembered was that he had awoken, and become the Violet Sea.

He was the Violet Sea.

The Violet Sea… was also him.

Confused, he looked around. He didn’t remember any time having passed. He saw the rain stop falling, until not even a drop could be seen. He also saw a young, black-robed man sitting cross-legged in the depths of the sea.

The instant he saw the young man, the young man also sensed Meng Hao, and a look of disbelief and astonishment filled his face. His body began to tremble as if from cold. Although Meng Hao didn’t understand why, the young man suddenly transformed into a black colored bat and then began to flee in terror.

Every time Meng Hao shifted his attention to him, he would tremble with indescribable terror and flee at top speed.

Meng Hao truly did not understand. He looked away and began to examine the world around him again, somewhat in a daze. Soon, Cultivators began to appear above the sea, arrived to hunt the specters.

Meng Hao saw all of this very clearly. He also saw some of the Cultivators fall into the sea, whereupon they lost their lives.

Meng Hao watched everything with confusion. More and more Cultivators arrived. They were careful not to touch the seawater. By using their divine abilities and magical techniques, they were able to find some of the mountain-islands that had not been completely submerged. They began to construct cities around the peaks, above the seawater.

They called them cities, but they were really more like outposts.

Soon, a total of ten such outposts were constructed above the Western Desert Violet Sea.

Meng Hao observed them. At one point, a strand of will rose up, and huge waves rolled across the surface of the sea to suddenly submerge one of the outposts that was being constructed.

The rise of the outposts caused even more Cultivators to come to the great Western Desert Sea to carefully hunt specters….

After observation, Meng Hao gradually came to feel bored. He grew silent, and time once again began to pass… although he didn't know how much.

With no one disturbing him, and no unforeseen occurrences, Meng Hao could exist like this for ten thousand years. Then the Violet Sea would vanish, and his consciousness would return to his body. Finally he would be reborn.

Meng Hao didn't know that what he was experiencing, although it seemed as if it were enlightenment, was actually something that in ancient times was called… Demonic Transmigration!

The fleshly body was abandoned, as well as the Cultivation base. Consciousness was shattered and then reawakened in a new form of life. Everything was forgotten as one became a Greater Demon of Heaven and Earth.

Everything about the past was completely cleaved away.

Within the sea, time is forgotten. Endless coldness, knows no years.

Meng Hao saw many people. One of them was an old man wearing a long white robe. His body emanated a medicinal aroma, and he had the bearing of a transcendent being. On one day of one particular year, he appeared above the Violet Sea.

He stared down blankly at the waters, and Meng Hao stared blankly up at him. There was something familiar about this man….

He floated there silently in mid-air, looking down at the sea. Three months passed. Finally, the man let out a soft sigh.

"Apprentice, you… are in the midst of Demonic Transmigration…." He shook his head, then turned and left, clearly filled with complex emotions.

Meng Hao's corpse sat on the sea floor, cross-legged. In that moment, he trembled a bit. He now felt even more confused.

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# Chapter 521: When the Tear Fell Into the Sea

After that, Meng Hao saw many familiar people appear, none of whom could he quite seem to remember.

Xu Bai came, as did Chen Fan and Fatty. Even… Big Hairy.

By now, Big Hairy was a totemic Sacred Ancient. However, he was only level 11 not level 12. Nor had his Cultivation base reached that legendary realm of Heavenly Neo-demons similar to the Spirit Severing stage.

Instead, he was at the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage. In the great lands of the Western Desert, there are a total of 12 levels of neo-demon growth. According to historical records, the peak was generally considered to be level 11 neo-demons who were similar to the Spirit Severing stage. Level 12 neo-demons, also called totems, were comparable to the Dao Seeking stage. Neo-demons like that had only existed during the golden age of the Western Desert. The true power of a totemic Sacred Ancient had almost everything to do with the faith that was exercised in it.

However, what goes up must come down. That was all in the past. After the Apocalypse hit the Western Desert, even great Tribes with Spirit Severing Patriarchs could not compare to how they had been before, during the heyday of the Western Desert. Therefore, level 11 Heavenly Neo-demons were similar to the great circle of the Nascent Soul Stage. Level 12 were similar to Spirit Severing, and possessed the power to bestow totems. Most Western Desert Cultivators were not even aware of this; only Tribal Greatfathers and High Priests understood the matter thoroughly.

It was the same with Meng Hao in his role as totemic Sacred Ancient. With more Tribe members, there was more faith power, which allowed him to grow stronger.

When the Western Desert Apocalypse came, life force was exterminated. Neo-demons were affected, and even more so, totemic Sacred Ancients. All totemic Sacred Ancients were weakened severely. Thankfully, Meng Hao had nourished Big Hairy and the others using Demonic Qi. Because of this, Big Hairy and the other totemic Sacred Ancients of the Golden Crow Black Dragon Clan developed the ability to bestow totems earlier than usual.

They were able to do so at level 11!

Big Hairy stayed for quite some time in the Violet Sea. He let out yips and calls as he looked for Meng Hao. He ended up with nothing, and left sadly.

One day, another old man came. His face was grim, and his Cultivation base was not clear. Meng Hao could see that he was surrounded by incredible killing intent as well as an ancient, archaic aura. The intensity of it caused Meng Hao’s Cultivation base to tremble.

The man looked at the sea for a long time before frowning. In the end, he gave a cold laugh and then left.

That man was none other than the tenth patriarch of the Wang Clan!

Many people came. One day it was a woman in a red garment. Although she was incredibly beautiful, her face was filled with a frown. Her gaze swept about and then she looked down at the Violet Sea. She happened to be directly above the position in which Meng Hao was sitting cross-legged at the bottom of the sea.

“I’ve been waiting for you for years only to find out that you’re here, in the midst of Demonic Transmigration!?!? Instead of working hard at being a Cultivator you decide to become a Demon? What the hell?

“Are you crazy, you moron?! Are you a man or not? First you take advantage of me, and then just go on your merry way? How irresponsible could you be? I, I, I… What the hell am I gonna do in ten years? What the hell is a lone badass bitch gonna do by herself in the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane!?!?” There was nothing the red-robed woman could do other than grind her teeth. A few days later, she left angrily, clearly incredibly frustrated.

A few more days passed, whereupon a woman came who wore a long green garment. She was pretty, and emanated a medicinal aura. She hovered in mid-air for a long time as she looked out at the sea.

“Meng Hao, where are you exactly…?” she said softly. A very long time passed, she sighed and prepared to leave.

Before making her way off into the distance, she looked at the Violet Sea and then threw a medicinal pill down into the waters. This was a medicinal pill that she had personally concocted, and it represented her personal Dao of Alchemy, which had reached its peak.

The medicinal pill fell into the water and dissolved.

Suddenly, Meng Hao felt something tugging at his heart. A tremor ran through his corpse, which was still sitting cross-legged on the seafloor.

Another dim morning, a white-robed woman flew out across the sea from the direction of the Black Lands. She seemed neither angry nor happy, but rather, cold. She hovered quietly in mid-air, looking around at the sea. After a long moment passed, she slowly looked down at the violet seawater.

What she didn’t know was that she was actually looking at Meng Hao himself.

Meng Hao couldn’t quite grasp that the woman he was looking at was… Xu Qing.

Being separated from someone is not the most helpless feeling in the world. Even worse is when you are directly in front of the person you miss, but can’t actually see them.

For the first time, Meng Hao's emotions trembled. That tremor ran through the entire Violet Sea. Moments ago it had been calm, but now, huge waves rolled across its surface.

Xu Qing stared blankly down at the sea. For an entire year.

During that year, she did not leave, but instead passed the time on a mountain-island. Every day, she looked out at the sea. Every day, Meng Hao looked back at her.

During that year, Meng Hao continuously tried to remember who she was….

Xu Qing wasn't aware of it, but in order to prevent her from being disturbed, Meng Hao made the area surrounding the island a zone in which life was not permitted. No Western Desert Cultivator could step foot into that area.

It became a world that belonged only to Meng Hao and Xu Qing.

A year later, a jade slip that Xu Qing possessed began to glow brightly. It seemed to be a summons. The glow flickered with increasing frequency, causing her to rise to her feet. She looked quietly out at the sea before turning to leave.

The instant that she turned, a single teardrop rolled out from the corner of her eye and fell down into the sea.

The teardrop merged into the seawater.

Chu Yuyan left behind a medicinal pill.

Xu Qing left behind a single teardrop.

The medicinal pill caused Meng Hao to tremble. The tear, however, dropped into the sea and then caused the Western Desert Violet Sea to suddenly explode with unprecedented tsunami waves.

“Who was she…?” Meng Hao asked himself. As he asked himself this question, the tsunami waves grew even more shocking. They rolled across the entire Western Desert Violet Sea, causing all the Cultivators in the Black lands to tremble.

“Why am I in such pain…?

“What have I forgotten…?

“Who was that woman…?

“Who were all those people…?” As Meng Hao murmured to himself, storm winds raged and huge waves battered the surface of the sea. Roaring filled the air.

Even as he asked himself these questions, Meng Hao let out a soundless, frenzied roar. As the teardrop moved down, the seawater parted to make way for it, creating something almost like a path.

The teardrop proceeded unobstructed. It was as if it were being guided down into the depths of the Violet Sea. It continued down into the blackness toward where Meng Hao’s corpse sat cross-legged.

The teardrop neared Meng Hao and then landed onto his pale, bloodless lips. Then, it seeped into his mouth and transformed into a deep bitterness.

The bitter tear spread out within Meng Hao’s mouth, causing his corpse to suddenly move. An indescribable aura suddenly exploded out from him.

As it did, the tsunami waves on the sea grew even more astonishing!

After a long, long time passed, Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly… opened!

When his eyes opened, a roaring sound filled his mind. Countless memories, countless images, poured out, filling his mind, restoring him.

“Death is not the end of life, but rather, the beginning…. I am Meng Hao!” After a long moment passed, he looked quietly out at the black seafloor.

However, what he saw with his eyes was actually the sky above the surface of the ocean.

He was awake! He was enlightened!

In the instant of his enlightenment, he realized that ten years had passed since that teardrop fell. As for how much time had passed since he began his process of understanding the Violet Sea, a full… one hundred and fifty years had passed!

Without that teardrop, Meng Hao would not have awakened. He would have continued his Demonic Transmigration. Ten thousand years later, he would have awoken. When that happened, the world would have had one less Cultivator. The legacy of the Demon Sealers would have been severed. At the same time, a new Greater Demon of Heaven and Earth would have appeared!

The instant he woke up, the great waves on the surface of the Violet Sea calmed. All of the specters sank down into the seawater, vanishing from the world above.

The entire Violet Sea became deathly quiet.

Down in the depths of the Violet Sea, Meng Hao’s life force once again burned vigorously. After a few days passed, he had already surpassed his previous pinnacle. Before, such intense life force would have provoked an incredible reaction from the will of extermination in the violet Sea. He would have been completely and thoroughly exterminated.

But now, the Violet Sea did nothing to get rid of him.

That was because Meng Hao was the Violet Sea. And in many ways, the Violet Sea… was Meng Hao!

He slowly lifted up his right hand. As he did, the entire Violet Sea quietly sank down a full thirty meters.

The majestic Western Desert Violet Sea sank down thirty meters, making more of the island-mountains visible.

This scene caused all of the Cultivators in the Black Lands to be completely shocked. One group of people after another came out to investigate. However no one could figure out or even guess why the sea had suddenly sunk by thirty meters.

The real reason was because that was how much seawater was needed to congeal a violet character for water on the back of Meng Hao's hand.

This mark signified that Meng Hao could control the power of death of the Violet Sea. This was his… Water-type totem tattoo!

As he looked down at his hand, Meng Hao waved it, causing the seawater that surrounded him to part, creating an opening three hundred meters wide. Within that opening, no water existed.

At the same time, a bloody light sparkled on his index finger. This light represented the life force of the blood totem as it magically made its appearance.

Under Meng Hao's control, a ghost image of the blood totem slowly appeared on the back of his right hand. Slowly it began to fuse with the Violet Sea totem, which represented death.

As they fused, as the ghost images sprang up, Meng Hao's body suddenly shook.

"Blood represents life!

"The Violet Sea represents death!

"When life and death collide, that is extermination. When life and death mix together, it is the source of all life…. This is my fifth element Water!

"It represents life, and also represents death. It is a source of extermination, and also a source of life!

“My Water-type totem will form my first Nascent Soul. Its color is a combination of violet and blood. It… is my fifth element, Water, my Blood-Violet Nascent Soul!” His eyes shone with a strange light as he suddenly clenched his right fist. The Water-type totem tattoo disappeared. It didn’t dissipate, but rather sank down into Meng Hao’s body, branding itself onto his Perfect Gold Core.

At the same time, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with determination. As of this moment, he suddenly looked, not like a Cultivator, but like an alchemist!

As of this moment, he was Grandmaster Pill Cauldron!

“My body is the pill furnace….” he murmured. His blood began to circulate rapidly. Tremors ran through his flesh, making it seem as if he truly had become a great furnace of Heaven and Earth.

Inside of him, there was no flame, but rather… his life force!

Using his life to concoct pills, and using alchemy to concoct a Nascent Soul, he would create his own Five Colored Nascent Soul!

“My heart is the pill formula!” He placed his hands onto his knees and closed his eyes. Within his heart existed a method that had never been used before, and probably never would again, to begin his Cultivation base breakthrough. This was a way to acquire a Perfect Nascent Soul even though he had never been told the true method for forming such a Nascent Soul.

This was Meng Hao’s pill formula!

“Concoct a Five-Colored Nascent Soul! The first step is to make not one but five Nascent Souls!” Meng Hao’s body filled with a roaring sound as he used pill concocting techniques to begin to refine his own body.

After fusing the Water-type totem onto his Perfect Gold Core, Meng Hao used his own body as the pill furnace and his heart as the pill formula, to be able to concoct a Nascent Soul.

This was something that had never occurred in the Cultivation world before Meng Hao. It was his own path, his own way of practicing cultivation. It was a road that would reach the peak of perfection!

Time passed. Suddenly, cracking sounds could be heard from his Perfect Gold Core. Fissures appeared. Moments later, his Perfect Gold Core suddenly exploded, transforming into a primordial Qi vortex.

Suddenly, a Blood Violet glow could be seen!

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# Chapter 522: Five-Colored Nascent Soul

Within the Qi vortex, Meng Hao’s body radiated Blood-Violet light. The light spread out of the vortex and then began to congeal together. Soon, a vague outline became visible.

The shape of the outline swirled continuously. The Violet Sea surged around Meng Hao, also turning into a vortex, which grew larger and larger until the entire Western Desert Violet Sea was affected! Roaring filled the air!

All of the Cultivators who happened to be on the Violet Sea, regardless of where they were, were instantly filled with astonishment. In their shock, they had no way to even guess what was causing this phenomenon.

Meng Hao’s eyes were closed at the moment. The Blood-Violet light continued to radiate out intensely. The interlocking beams of light that were forming the outline, began to grow more and more clear. Soon it was obvious that the outline….

Astonishingly, it was congealing into the shape of a small person.

This person looked exactly like Meng Hao, only much, much smaller. It was about seven inches tall, its body completely transparent and emanating a Blood-Violet glow! An incredible aura was also detectable!

The intensity of this aura far exceeded that possessed by virtually any other Nascent Soul Cultivator. It was even comparable to the Flawless Nascent Souls of Cultivators from great Sects!

Upon its appearance, the Nascent Soul’s expression was one of confusion. However, it quickly came to its senses and stretched out its arms and legs. Meng Hao’s heart began to pound as the power of an early Nascent Soul Cultivation base suddenly exploded out within him!!

Back at Blackgate Fort, he had temporarily possessed a similar, but unstable, Cultivation base. This time, it was permanent, and completely of his own!

Furthermore, although this was still the early Nascent Soul stage, in terms of aura, the power was even more intense!

This was a Blood-Violet Nascent Soul!!

As soon as the Nascent Soul appeared, it flew out from Meng Hao’s body to float in the air in front of him. Its eyes glittered as it sat cross-legged in mid-air, its body radiating Blood-Violet light up into the sky.

When looking at the Cultivation world of South Heaven as a whole, all Nascent Soul Cultivators generally cultivated a single Nascent Soul. That single Nascent Soul would become the focus of their path of cultivation.

Only a few almighty practitioners possessed special techniques or incredible Cultivation bases that made a single Nascent Soul insufficient, and would therefore refine a second Nascent Soul.

People like that were the strongest among the strong. Each and every one of them were people who left indelible marks on the pages of history.

As of this moment, Meng Hao was taking his first steps down just such a path!

The appearance of his Blood-Violet Nascent Soul caused a red glow to suddenly appear in Meng Hao’s eyes. He took a deep breath, then closed his eyes. By now, his Perfect Gold Core was completely shattered and had turned into a vortex that spun constantly and emanated a primordial aura.

Suddenly, Meng Hao’s Metal-type totem tattoo began to flicker and then slowly fade away. It sunk down into his body, transforming into a golden light which then fused into the primordial vortex.

“Metal-type power from the spirit of the Golden Crow, an unbreakable metal,” murmured Meng Hao, “Using my pill concocting methods, I will use this to concoct Meng Hao’s… second Nascent Soul!” Using his body as the pill furnace and his heart as the pill formula, he once again began to concoct a Nascent Soul.

Moments later, a rumbling sound emanated out from his body. Thankfully, Meng Hao was at the bottom of a sea. Were he not, the sound would have echoed out far into the distance. Despite being on the seafloor, it still caused huge waves to suddenly explode out in all directions.

At the same time, the primordial vortex within Meng Hao emanated an intense golden light, which radiated out through his skin, making him look like a statue of gold.

Next, an outline became visible within that golden light. It grew clearer and clearer as it transformed into a small person that looked exactly like the Blood-Violet Nascent Soul!

It was seven inches tall, completely transparent, and had a blank expression on its face. It looked exactly like the Blood-Violet Nascent Soul, except that this second Nascent Soul emanated a golden glow!

Its bearing was one of righteousness and utter holiness. After the space of a few breaths, the tiny golden figure’s eyes suddenly flashed with clearness. It stretched its body, causing golden light to explode out along with incredible power. Meng Hao’s Cultivation base suddenly exploded with power.

It shot upward, climbing up to the peak of the early Nascent Soul stage, just a tiny step away from the mid Nascent Soul stage!

The tiny golden figure was the second of Meng Hao’s Nascent Souls, a five elements Metal Nascent Soul!

The Nascent Soul flickered as it shot out from within Meng Hao. It flew out just like the Blood-Violet Nascent Soul, except in a different direction, where it then stopped and then faced the first Nascent Soul.

An incredible aura rippled out in all directions. Meng Hao's Cultivation base undulated with incredible intensity. He closed his eyes and took a deep breath as the Wood-type totem tattoo on his forehead began to fade away.

"Metal and Water have been concocted into Nascent Souls," he murmured to himself. "Now it's time for Wood…. The Greenwood Tree from the Ninth Sea will become my third Nascent Soul…. Wood Nascent Soul! With this Nascent Soul, my progress down the path of the Five-Colored Nascent Soul will be almost complete!" Meng Hao focused all of his mind and heart on the Qi vortex inside of him. Using his Spiritual Sense like his own hands, he again began to concoct a Nascent Soul.

It only took moments before the primordial Qi vortex within him to begin to shine with a green light!

It seemed as if lightning were dancing about within it. Incredible roaring sounds emanated out that seemed to contain life itself within them. It became life force, an overwhelming life force that seemed to stem from the beginning of all creation. At the same time… a beam of green light shot out from within the primordial vortex.

The beam of light swirled around to form an outline of four limbs and a head. Facial features emerged. The eyes suddenly snapped open and began to shine with a blinding green light!

Meng Hao's Wood Nascent Soul suddenly appeared!

The moment that the Wood Nascent Soul appeared, Meng Hao's Cultivation base shot up, breaking out from the early Nascent Soul Stage and entering fully into the mid Nascent Soul stage!

Three Nascent Souls. If any outsider could look upon this scene, that person would definitely be flabbergasted, filled with incredible disbelief. From ancient times until now, Cultivators who possessed three Nascent Souls were as rare as phoenix feathers and qilin horns. Perhaps only ten people had ever done so, and that was ten thousand years in the past.

Right now, Meng Hao had successfully concocted a third Nascent Soul. However… in terms of the path of concocting a Five-Colored Nascent Soul, the first step wasn’t even fully complete! From this, it could be seen that Meng Hao’s Nascent Soul concocting method was truly something completely new!

All of this, with the exception of Meng Hao’s acquisition of the various five elements totem tattoos, was almost completely because of his position as a Grandmaster of the Dao of Alchemy. Only with such an identity could he be qualified to use pill concocting techniques to concoct a Nascent Soul!

Most importantly… was Meng Hao’s overall base. He had reached the great circle of Qi Condensation. He had ten Perfect Dao Pillars. He had completed the great circle of the Perfect Gold Core. With a base like that, he was completely unique in all the lands of South Heaven.

Such a base was the reason that a primordial vortex spun about inside of him. It sustained him as he concocted one Nascent soul after another. Were anyone else in this situation, without such a foundation, they would be completely incapable of doing this.

He was now about to enter a place that throughout the history of the great lands of South Heaven, only a few Nascent Soul experts had ever entered. Throughout countless years and among endless Chosen and heroes, this was the most Nascent Souls anyone had ever possessed. Four Nascent Souls.

Throughout innumerable years, only three people had ever possessed four Nascent Souls!

As of now, that number would be increased to four!

“East Pill Everburning Flame,” murmured Meng Hao, “which is just like the eternity of my Dao of alchemy and my everburning heart. I will congeal the fire of the five elements of Heaven and Earth. This fire represents my Dao of alchemy, and the determination with which I practice cultivation!

“This fire will be used to concoct my fourth Nascent Soul. Fire Nascent Soul!” His voice was soft, but filled with unhesitating decisiveness that could chop nails and sever iron. At the same time as he had spoken, the Wood Nascent Soul flew out to sit cross-legged in the air with the Water and Metal Nascent Souls. Three Nascent Souls circled through the air around Meng Hao.

Suddenly, a yellow light began to shine out from Meng Hao’s Fire-type totem tattoo as it slowly vanished. It also merged into the primordial vortex.

A sea of fire appeared within Meng Hao, completely enveloping the primordial vortex. It spread out from within him to fill the entire area.

He was completely surrounded by a sea of fire. Within the flames, the Qi vortex spun as a band of fire shot out. It quickly transformed into a small person, seven inches tall. This was Meng Hao’s five elements Fire Nascent Soul.

As soon as it appeared, the flames in the area fell in on themselves, rippling back into Meng Hao and congealing onto the body of the Fire Nascent Soul. It was at this point that the Nascent Soul’s eyes opened.

When that happened, Meng Hao’s Cultivation base exploded upward, climbing all the way to the peak of the mid Nascent Soul stage.

Back at Blackgate Fort, when he first combined the five elements, his Cultivation base had climbed up to the peak of the mid Nascent Soul stage. Now, with only four Nascent Souls, he had already reached the same level he had before when combining the five elements.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. His eyes glittered as the Fire Nascent Soul flew out to join the other three Nascent Souls that floated around his head. They were now formed into a four-sided spell formation.

The exact center of that spell formation was none other than Meng Hao.

“The essence of the power of the Frost Soil Demon Emperor was the Frost soil, which existed even before primordial times, at the beginning of everything. That essence… will form my fifth Nascent Soul. Earth Nascent Soul!” He took a deep breath. Filled with unprecedented confidence, he closed his eyes once more. His final totem tattoo vanished and then merged into the Qi vortex within him.

Time passed. Moments later, an intensely cold aura began to emanate out from Meng Hao to fill the area. Cracking sounds could be heard as the Violet Sea around him was frozen!

Meng Hao’s Cultivation base exploded up again. Now, he was no longer at the peak of the mid Nascent Soul stage, but rather, had broken through into… the late Nascent Soul stage.

His hair whipped about and his clothing rippled. At the same time, a intense howling sound could be heard coming from within him. A seven-inch-tall person floated up out of the top of his head. Its expression was one of solemnity, and it radiated a frigid aura, just like that of Frost soil.

This was… Meng Hao’s five elements Earth Nascent Soul!!

The five elements Earth Nascent Soul floated out. As of now, Meng Hao was surrounded by five Nascent Souls. Metal. Wood. Water. Fire. Earth. His five elements Nascent Souls were finally complete!

The first step of the Five-Colored Nascent Soul was now finished.

As of this moment, Meng Hao had reached an unprecedented point along the path of the Nascent Soul stage in the lands of South Heaven.

There was no one more powerful than him!

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# Chapter 523: Sixth Nascent Soul!

His Spiritual Sense increased several times over. 300 meters. 3,000 meters. 15,000 meters…. Soon, it was 27,000 meters! However, if he focused all of the Divine Sense into one line, instead of spreading it out in all directions, that distance would be multiplied by ten! 1

This was no longer Spiritual Sense. No Spiritual Sense could reach this point. The only thing that could was… Divine Sense!

This was a speciality of Nascent Soul Cultivators. Divine Sense!

An ordinary Cultivator of the late Nascent Soul stage possessed Divine Sense that had a limit of 21,000 meters. The line of demarcation with the Spirit Severing Stage was 30,000.

Only Spirit Severing Cultivators had Divine Sense with a range of 30,000!

Right now, though, Meng Hao's Divine Sense already could reach 27,000 meters!

Meng Hao looked up at the five Nascent Souls hovering around his head. Right now, the primordial Qi vortex formed from his Perfect Gold Core was greatly reduced. However, from the look of it, it seemed sufficient to actually concoct a sixth Nascent Soul!

Meng Hao looked thoughtfully at the five elements Nascent Souls, and felt the boundlessness of his late Nascent Soul stage Cultivation base. He took a deep breath. He had practiced cultivation for less than two hundred years. He had started out as an insignificant Cultivator in the State of Zhao. The path which he had traveled led down to this very moment in which he was a late Nascent Soul stage expert. All of the memories along the way seemed almost like a fantasy.

His five elements Nascent Souls were assembled. The first step was complete. Now, the second step was about to be taken. That second step was combining the five elements!

Once combined, he would be a Five-Colored Paragon!

However, a flash of hesitation appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes, and he frowned.

“The thirteen level of Qi Condensation formed a great circle. My Perfect Foundation, my Perfect Gold Core, my entire path… consisted of reaching the pinnacle of each stage. All of that made it so that I could exceed anyone else in the same stage!

“Therefore, I now have my five elements Nascent Souls!

“Nascent Souls of the five elements and five colors can be broken down as follows. Three elements are Cracked. Four elements are Flawless. Five elements are Perfect…. Logically speaking, I should be in the realm of Perfection.

“Divine Sense with a range of 27,000 meters seems to exceed other Nascent Soul eccentrics by far. However, I wonder what the true range of the Divine Sense of a Perfect Nascent Soul really is?” This was what was causing Meng Hao to hesitate. He looked at the five elements Nascent Souls, lost in thought.

The fact that his five elements Nascent Souls were successfully concocted caused him to be both extremely happy, but at the same time, thoughtful. Divine sense with a range of 27,000 already proved that his choice of paths was correct. Correct, and yet… there seemed to be some difference between this path, and the Perfect Nascent Soul of legend.

Meng Hao didn’t know exactly how powerful the legendary Perfect Nascent Soul was, but considering he was familiar with the Perfect Foundation and Perfect Gold Core, it was possible to come up with a general, theoretical answer to the question.

“A Perfect Nascent Soul requires all of the five elements. The result is one Nascent Soul with five elements and five colors. I, however, chose to concoct five different Nascent Souls based off of the different totems. When I combine the five elements, I should be able to achieve a Perfect Nascent Soul!

“However… I still have the feeling….

“I can’t know for sure, but bet the true range of a Perfect Nascent Soul is 29,999 meters!” Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a strange light. The method he had created to concoct a Nascent Soul became the path of the five elements Nascent Soul. This method did not become a new technique for creating a Perfect Nascent Soul. Actually, it appeared to exceed that path.

“My Divine Sense has reached 27,000 meters after successfully producing the five elements Nascent Souls, which is still slightly less than a Perfect Nascent Soul. Well then… I’ll just have to add another Nascent Soul to close the gap!” Meng Hao’s eyes shone with determination as he sat there cross-legged on the seafloor. He lifted his right hand up, within which appeared, shockingly, a medicinal pill!

This medicinal pill was something he had acquired from the bag of holding of the member of the Ji Clan he had killed all those years ago…. It was one of the three great medicinal pills, a One Color Soul Procurement Pill!! 2

This pill was incredibly rare, something miraculous from ancient times. After consuming it, there was a high likelihood to increase the quality of a Nascent Soul. By adding an extra color, it was like adding an extra level of power to the five elements.

“I already have all of the five elements. Perhaps consuming this pill will do nothing. On the other hand, perhaps a sixth element will appear that I’m unaware of!” Meng Hao was silent for a moment before his expression filled with determination. He had to try at least once. Not trying wasn’t an alternative he could accept.

Without hesitation, he produced the copper mirror. He had a lot of Spirit Stones in his bag of holding, wealth he had accumulated over the years of leading the Crow Divinity Tribe.

With no trace of irresoluteness, he duplicated the medicinal pills. It took a vast amount of Spirit Stones to produce only a single copy. Now he had two One Color Soul Procurement Pills, one of which he immediately popped into his mouth.

The moment it entered his mouth, a roaring filled his body. The medicinal pill dissolved, instantly transforming into something that seemed like a unique type of Divine Sense. It swept through him as if it were searching for something.

Moments later, the power of the medicinal pill vanished along with that unique Divine Sense. Apparently it hadn’t found what it was looking for.

Meng Hao frowned and opened his eyes, lost in thought. The pill’s ineffectiveness showed that his five elements really were of the great circle. There was no base for the pill to be able to randomly create a new element.

“The three great ancient miraculous pills couldn’t possibly be so useless, could they?” he thought. Disregarding the loss of Spirit Stones, he produced another duplicate and then consumed it. He experienced the same feeling as before, but in the end, nothing happened. However, the power of the bizarre Divine Sense seemed to overlap with the power from before, making it even more powerful.

Meng Hao consumed another One Color Soul Procurement Pill, just to make sure that wasn’t passing up an opportunity that he would regret later. He had already decided that he would consume at least ten of the pills. If he didn’t succeed at that point, then he would give up and combine the five elements he already had.

It was merely a guess on his part that Divine Sense with a range of 27,000 meters was a different from the Divine Sense of a Perfect Nascent Soul. For all he knew, a Perfect Nascent Soul really did have Divine Sense with a range of only 27,000 meters.

Based on this line of reasoning, he continued to consume One Color Soul Procurement Pills. After consuming the ninth pill, the strange Divine Sense once again appeared. It was at this point that Meng Hao suddenly felt a stab of pain on his forehead.

The pain came suddenly, as if it had been hiding within his body all along, undetectable. After consuming the ninth One Color Soul Procurement Pill, the overlapping layers of fearsome Divine sense were finally able to detect it.

When the stab of pain appeared, Meng Hao's mind trembled. As soon as he felt the pain, he immediately duplicated another One Color Soul Procurement Pill. Even in ancient times, few people would ever have been able to possess so many of these kind of medicinal pills.

In fact throughout history down until this day, no one ever had!

Only Meng Hao would be able to consume them in such a manner. Of course, it also indicated that his accumulation of Spirit Stones in his bag of holding was rapidly growing smaller and smaller.

It wouldn't be long before Meng Hao was flat broke.

Although that pained Meng Hao, he didn't care too much. The pain he felt in his forehead gave him hope that the One Color Soul Procurement Pill had found the traces of the sixth element it was looking for.

The instant in which he consumed the tenth One Color Soul Procurement Pill, the combined power all ten pills congealed into a terrifying Divine Sense. It swept throughout Meng Hao's body until finally… it found the power of a sixth element that it needed, right there on his forehead.

Meng Hao's own Divine Sense focused on the same spot where the power of the One Color Soul Procurement Pills was focused. A rumbling sound filled Meng Hao's mind.

What he was looking at was none other than… a roc!!

Perhaps it was more correct to say that it was a strand of wind. A wind shaped like a roc, white in color, clearly visible within Meng Hao’s Divine Sense. Suddenly, he thought back to what happened that year outside of the Rebirth Cave in the Southern Domain. A woman in the Rebirth Cave had given Meng Hao the power of a roc. 3

After that, Meng Hao had never been able to find that bit of roc power, no matter how he checked. But now, under the overlapping power of ten One Color Soul Procurement Pills, the wind of the roc suddenly was revealed.

“This roc wind is my Wind-type totem! It will be my sixth Nascent Soul, the Wind Nascent Soul!” He instantly rotated his Cultivation base. The five Nascent Souls rotating around his head began to perform incantation gestures. Fueled by the power of the five elements, Meng Hao’s body became the pill furnace as he suddenly began to concoct a Nascent Soul!

The Qi vortex formed from his Perfect Gold Core swirled rapidly and began to emit a gravitational force. Along with the power of the Soul Procurement Pill and the conjuring power of the five elements Nascent Souls, the power of the roc in Meng Hao’s forehead, the power that had been concealed there for years and years, was finally forced out and sucked toward his dantian region.

The moment the roc wind entered his dantian, a rumbling roar filled Meng Hao’s body. The Qi vortex there roared as it spun faster and faster.

“Time to concoct my Wind Nascent Soul!” Meng Hao’s eyes snapped open. A pounding sound filled his body as the Qi vortex suddenly shrunk down on itself and transformed in a white, seven-inch-tall person!

It looked exactly like Meng Hao. This was Meng Hao’s sixth Nascent Soul… Wind Nascent Soul!

As soon as it appeared, Meng Hao’s Cultivation base suddenly rocketed up, pushing him from the late Nascent Soul stage higher and higher until he was now at the peak of the stage. His distance from the great circle was…

Only a single step!!

At the same time, Meng Hao’s Divine Sense expanded madly. 27,300 meters. 27,900 meters. 28,000 meters….

Finally, when it reached 29,700 meters, it began to slow down. Eventually, it stopped at… 29,999 meters!

Meng Hao lifted his head and stood. As he rose to his feet, the Wind Nascent Soul emerged from the top of his head to join the other Nascent Souls. Light shone out from them to form a star with six points!

Perfect Nascent Soul!

Meng Hao was bursting with excitement from having created his own path of the perfect Nascent Soul, of being the first person from ancient times until now who possessed six Nascent Souls. He was the first person… to create his own path of the Perfect Nascent Soul, to combine six Nascent Souls together. Even at this very moment, however, Meng Hao’s face suddenly flickered.

It was at this point that suddenly, the effects of Time within his body were multiplied by six. Time disappeared, causing his longevity to rapidly disappear. He suddenly realized that his longevity would run out in only one hundred years!

“This….” A bright glow began to shine in his eyes.

“Because I have six Nascent Souls, it’s like I have six lives, six animas…. Therefore, my longevity must be divided into six parts…. As such, one year for me is like six years!

“That is the price of the Perfect Nascent Soul!”

It was also at this same moment that the Resurrection Lily inside of Meng Hao seemed to think that now was the perfect opportunity to make a move. It suddenly rose up with unyielding explosiveness.

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1. A relatively lengthy explanation is needed here. Er Gen uses ancient Chinese measurements that you have probably read about in other translations. He uses “zhang” which is about 3.3 meters and “li” which is half a kilometer. I convert these units to meters and kilometers and then round them to the nearest appropriate unit to make the distances easier to picture. I know that some of the “ancient Chinese flavor” is lost because of that, but honestly speaking, I think it leads to a better, smoother and faster reading experience. In this particular passage, Er Gen actually switches between the two, and ALSO switches between talking about distance and what is essentially the area of a circle. He actually describes the “area” of Meng Hao’s Divine sense, based on the range of 9,000 “zhang,” as being 70 “li,” assumably 70 square li. Honestly, the math is confusing, especially when you throw in the vagueness of Chinese and then the conversion between the two units. I know there may be some discrepancies with previous descriptions of the range of Spiritual Sense. That may have to do with the fact that the word Er Gen used for “area” is kind of vague and could be interpreted in different ways. Later, I will go back to check the raws and clarify those areas.

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# Chapter 524: Title below or here!

In this moment, the clouds in the sky above the Violet Sea were churning. There was no more violet rain, but the sky was still dark and overcast. Suddenly, bolts of lightning could be seen approaching from off in the distance.

As the lighting neared, astonishingly, countless Tribulation clouds began to roil into being. More and more Tribulation clouds could be seen, which caused the Violet Sea to be whipped into a frenzy. A massive aura of death began to emanate off of it.

The aura seemed as if it were preparing to fight back against the Tribulation Lightning. Instantly, an archaic madness seemed to be rising up!

The Cultivators in the ten outposts that had been built up over the past years all looked up into the sky with expressions of astonishment.

“Is that… Tribulation Lightning?”

“Don’t tell me someone is transcending Tribulation? How could that be possible? Only Immortals can transcend Tribulation. How could there be someone in the great Western desert who could transcend Tribulation?!”

“This isn’t someone transcending Tribulation. Obviously a precious treasure is appearing in the world!!”

Such scenes played out in all of the ten outposts. However… the Tribulation Lightning over the Violet Sea was actually only detectable by the people actually in the area of the Violet Sea. Cultivators in the Black Lands seemed to be cut off and unable to detect it, even Spirit Severing Cultivators.

It was at this moment that in the second outpost, inside of a lofty building, a bare-chested, middle-aged man was embracing a beautiful female Cultivator. As they chatted and laughed, he occasionally caressed her body with his hands. Her coy reaction caused his desire to grow stronger and stronger.

Behind the man, seven old men sat cross-legged. Their eyes were closed and they did not speak, as if they didn’t even notice the obscene sounds that could be heard in the room. The seven old men had incredible Cultivation bases. Four were in the mid-Nascent Soul stage, two were in the late Nascent Soul stage, and one was of the great circle!

Cultivators like these were the most powerful you could find under the Spirit Severing stage. This was especially so in an age when it was not a simple thing to reach the Spirit Severing Stage; Cultivators of the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage could completely rock the world.

Right now, though, it was clear that these seven men were nothing more than a retinue!

There was only one type of person who could make Cultivators of the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage to act as a retinue. That would be… a Spirit Severing Patriarch! The middle-aged man’s Cultivation base was only at the early Nascent Soul stage, not the Spirit Severing stage. That meant that this man’s status was shockingly high!

This man was the son of Spirit Severing Patriarch Huyan Yunming of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe, one of the three powers of the Heavenly Court Alliance! Huyan Qing! He had left the Black Lands three months ago to go sightseeing in the ten outposts and chase after women. 1

Just as Huyan Qing was about to throw himself on the female Cultivator, a bolt of red lightning suddenly shot through the air and then headed off into the distance. Before it disappeared, an enormous, intense pressure could be felt. Instantly, the seven old men all opened their eyes. The red-robed old man of the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage slowly lifted his head and looked off into the distance, frowning.

A tremor ran through Huyan Qing and he suddenly looked up.

“Miracle Lightning? Don’t tell me some precious treasure has suddenly appeared? Or maybe some neo-demon is transforming?” Huyan Qing laughed heartily. Suddenly, he leaped up into the air, holding the shocked woman in one arm as he flicked his sleeve with the other. Instantly, four black-robed bodyguards appeared bearing a luxurious sedan chair on their shoulders.

Huyan Qing immediately entered the sedan chair, taking the woman with him.

“Sir Wu, let’s go take a look, alright?” His laughter mixed with the gasp of the female Cultivator as she saw the sumptuous interior of the sedan chair.

The man who Huyan Qing referred to as Sir Wu was the old man of the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage. He frowned and let out a quiet sigh. Slowly, he stood up and, along with the other six old men, escorted the sedan chair off.

Huyan Qing’s procession headed off in the direction the lightning had flown, which was of course the location where Meng Hao stood at the bottom of the sea. Currently, Meng Hao’s expression was grim as he looked at the six Nascent Souls flying around the level of his head. He frowned.

“Longevity of one hundred years…. Not even two hundred. Well, I’m already at the peak of the late Nascent Soul stage. I guess I have to reach Spirit Severing within a hundred years!

“Now, as for this Resurrection Lily….” A cold smile suddenly twisted his lips. He had long since predicted that the Resurrection Lily would not let a crucial moment in his cultivation pass without trying to make a move.

He knew that it would appear!

Originally he thought it would attempt to possess him when the Heavenly Tribulation hit. However, apparently it thought right now was the best opportunity.

“For you to appear right now is actually quite convenient! If Heavenly Tribulation really does come, you could cause me quite a bit of frustration.” Smiling coldly, he sat down cross-legged. Ignoring the Resurrection Lily’s explosive rise, he lifted his hand and pointed at one of the Nascent Souls.

Immediately, the Metal Nascent Soul floated down. Its face was covered with a cold smile just like Meng Hao’s as it sank down into the top of his head. It sank down to appear in the empty space in his dantian region that his Gold Core had previously occupied.

“This time, I’ll give you a chance to… have a full on fight!” As Meng Hao closed his eyes, majestic Cultivation base power exploded out from the Metal Nascent Soul to crush down onto the Resurrection Lily.

The Resurrection Lily seemed to go mad and it let out a soundless roar. Shockingly, directly behind Meng Hao appeared the image of a blindingly bright four-colored Resurrection Lily, swaying back and forth ferociously.

It was in this moment that the Resurrection Lily seized control of Meng Hao’s legs. Meng Hao lost all feeling in them as the struggle for control over his body erupted. The feeling quickly spread into his arms.

The four-colored Resurrection Lily swayed back and forth in a very bizarre fashion. It seemed as if it had been preparing for many years to make this counterattack against Meng Hao. When it made its move, it would attack with complete ruthlessness.

“I have to give you some credit,” said Meng Hao coolly. “You’re much better this time than you were before.” After all this time, he was very familiar with the Resurrection Lily, and knew that it was sentient.

Even as he spoke, the Wood Nascent Soul began to emanate a green light as it sank into the top of Meng Hao’s head. It quickly reached his dantian region, whereupon Meng Hao unhesitatingly superimposed it over the Metal Nascent Soul. The two… combined into one!

As soon as the two Nascent Souls combined into one, a roaring sound filled Meng Hao’s mind. He instantly felt his Cultivation base… rising up rapidly!!

He was still in the late Nascent Soul stage. Despite not having made a breakthrough, he could sense that his battle prowess…. had exploded upward by double or more!

At the moment, Meng Hao wasn’t surprised. That was because… this was the power of a Perfect Nascent Soul, a power that placed him above anyone else in the same stage!

However, in unison with his sudden increase in battle prowess, Meng Hao could tell that the corrosive effect on his longevity, which previously was limited to a multiple of six, was now even greater.

The Resurrection Lily let out another soundless roar as its struggling increased in intensity. Whereas before, it had occupied a position of incredible superiority, it was now forced to defend relentlessly against Meng Hao. It did not want to allow Meng Hao to retake the parts of his body that it had already possessed.

“This is merely a combination of two Nascent Souls….” said Meng Hao, his eyes glittering. Suddenly, the Water Nascent Soul floated down, emanating a red glow as it sank into the top of his head. Moments later it appeared in his dantian region where it superimposed over the Metal and Wood Nascent Souls. They fused together, three Nascent Souls combining into one.

BOOOMMM!!!

Meng Hao could clearly sense his battle prowess climbing up with incredible intensity from the foundation of the early combination of two Nascent Souls.

Originally, he had possessed the power equivalent to only a single Nascent Soul. As of this moment, though, his power was equivalent to four peak late stage Nascent Souls! In addition, the wasting away of his longevity was also increased.

This was not an increase in Cultivation base, but rather, battle prowess. It was natural strength, arisen from the ability to use spiritual power. This increase could be likened to water in a bottle. The bottle might not get bigger, but more water could be forced inside, creating a pressure that exceeded anything normal!

The Resurrection Lily was emitting a piercing howl. The sound of it could not be heard by any outsider, only Meng Hao, who could hear it quite clearly. The Resurrection Lily was completely incapable of standing up to the power of Meng Hao's three combined elements. It instantly lost control of Meng Hao's arms, and was forced to retreat back to its position within Meng Hao's possessed legs.

"I don't need to expend much effort to suppress you," said Meng Hao coolly. "After all, this is a direct conflict, and you aren't even close to being a match for me! What makes you think you're qualified to even TRY to possess me!?

"You are me, but I… am not you!" A sea of flames erupted from the Fire Nascent Soul as it floated down and merged into his body. It then appeared in his dantian region, where it overlapped and then combined with the Metal, Wood, and Water Nascent Souls.

Shocking rumbling sounds caused Meng Hao's entire body to shake. Blue veins popped up all over as blood rushed through them at high speed. His body suddenly began to expand. It appeared as if he were taller. Although he was still slender, it seemed as if every bit of his flesh and blood was virtually bursting with terrifying power.

His battle prowess… doubled once again!!

In this moment, he now possessed the same power as eight Nascent Souls at the peak of the late stage. The power of four combined elements exploded out, causing the Resurrection Lily to writhe and let out a miserable shriek. It was easily pushed back once again by suppressive power, losing control over Meng Hao's legs and being forced into his most remote extremities.

However, even in the moment in which it retreated back as far as it could, an aura rose up from the Resurrection Lily that caused Meng Hao's pupils to constrict.

The aura grew more and more powerful, and even seemed to contain some remnants of the One Color Soul Procurement Pill. Suddenly, the four-colored Resurrection Lily which Meng Hao had suppressed to the limit began to glow… and then develop…

A fifth color!!

When the fifth color appeared, Meng Hao's mind and heart trembled. But then, his eyes glowed with pleasant surprise. He knew that this Resurrection Lily was incomplete, and could never grow to the point where it could bloom with seven colors and reach Immortal Ascension. Three colors was its limit. It had acquired four colors by means of a miracle. But now… it actually developed a fifth color. 2

This fifth color obviously had something to do with Meng Hao's Nascent Soul concocting and the One Color Soul Procurement Pill, as well as his place in the realm of Perfection. Because of all of these different things, the Resurrection Lily was suddenly able to make a meteoric rise.

When the fifth flower petal appeared on the Resurrection Lily, it let out a fierce howl and then erupted out from its position of retreat. It expanded out, clearly wanting to take control of Meng Hao's entire body in possession. It wanted to control Meng Hao and make him a true host that it could control!

Meng Hao could feel the madness of the Resurrection Lily, and it caused him to smile. He wanted it to grow more powerful, because he had long since decided to use this Resurrection Lily at the critical moment when his time came in the future to reach Immortal Ascension!

Even as the Resurrection Lily exploded out with power, Meng Hao lifted his head up. The Earth Nascent Soul suddenly erupted with shocking coldness. It merged in through Meng Hao's forehead, appearing moments later in his dantian region. Five elements overlapped. Five elements… combined!

1. Huyan Yunming’s name in Chinese is hū yán yún míng. Huyan is a surname. Yun means cloud. Ming means “carve” or “inscription.” Huyan Qing’s name in Chinese is Hūyán qìng. Qing means “celebrate”

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# Chapter 525: Heavenly Tribulation, I Haven’t Seen You For Ages!

The moment in which the five elements combined, Meng Hao’s Cultivation base did not change, but his battle prowess instantly doubled again. At first, he started with power equivalent to one peak late Nascent Soul. Now, he had power equivalent to sixteen!

Such terrifying battle prowess far exceeded the scope of the late Nascent Soul stage. Even someone of the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage would crumble like dried weeds before Meng Hao’s power of sixteen peak late Nascent Souls.

That was the fearsomeness and incredible power of the realm of Perfection!

However, for Meng Hao, such terrifying power came at the price of longevity. To maintain his grip on such power meant that his longevity was no longer one hundred years, but rather, six!

After all, he was not truly in possession of a Perfect Nascent Soul. He had acquired it by alternative methods…. But actually, not even a true Perfect Nascent Soul could come close to this unbelievably fearsome power.

On this new path of the Nascent Soul that Meng Hao had forged, he possessed Perfect battle prowess that far exceeded even the extraordinary power of the Perfect Nascent Soul. Because he had been operating only on speculation and not research, he hadn’t been clear about what the end result would be. But having sensed the battle prowess that existed within him, he now realized that his path was incredibly astonishing.

Battle power erupted out and his aura was swift and fierce as he fought back against the five-petaled Resurrection Lily. His body was the battlefield upon which the two forces slammed into each other.

As soon as they collided, the Resurrection Lily let out a miserable howl. It didn’t matter that it had suddenly sprouted a fifth petal. Under the power of Meng Hao’s fearsome battle prowess, it was… incapable of withstanding even a single blow.

Intangible explosions rippled out as the Resurrection Lily collapsed under Meng Hao’s attack. It had been beaten back repeatedly, and had retreated completely from its former position of superiority. Now, all it could do was hide in Meng Hao’s extremities, give up any notions of rising up, and hope Meng Hao did not attack any further.

Meng Hao took a deep breath as he looked up at the sixth Nascent Soul hovering near his head, the Wind Nascent Soul.

After a moment, his eyes gleamed with determination.

“Since I decided to be powerful, I might as well acquire the pinnacle of power!” Without hesitation, he lifted his right hand up and pointed at the Wind Nascent Soul. Instantly, it flickered and moved with incredible speed. It wasn’t minor teleportation; it actually exceeded that. It immediately appeared inside of Meng Hao where it fused with the other Nascent Souls.

BOOMMMM!!!

The great circle of six elements! Six-Colored Nascent Soul!

Incredible battle prowess rocketed up, once again double. A fearsome aura equivalent to thirty-two peak late Nascent Souls emanated out, causing the Violet Sea to tremble. Everything shook. This was… Six-Colored Paragon!

Meng Hao could sweep across all Nascent Soul Cultivators. He was only a short way away from the Spirit Severing stage, and yet in all the lands of South Heaven, he was definitely… the number one person under the Spirit Severing stage!

If his Cultivation base could break through the late Nascent Soul stage to the great circle, then with his battle prowess of thirty-two times normal, then facing up against Spirit Severing Cultivators… he would not be so weak. He could be considered powerful enough to defend himself.

That might seem of little note, but Spirit Severing… was a stage of Cultivation that could be considered a major area of demarcation. Qi Condensation, Foundation Establishment, Core Formation, Nascent Soul. These stages were actually still called the stages of… mortals!

By using incredible power, momentum was built up… all for the purpose of breaking through to a new type of life. Spirit Severing!

Spirit Severing, Dao Seeking, and Immortal Ascension were three stages that were called the stages of… Immortals!

The difference between mortals and Immortals was such that for someone in the mortal realm to actually be able to fight back against an almighty member of the Immortal realm would cause an incredible commotion in the entirety of South Heaven if word of it were to spread.

Normally something like that would only be possible with the aid of precious treasures. Only relying on one's body would make it impossible!

As of this moment, it was possible for Meng Hao.

When he reached the Six-Colored great circle, the Resurrection Lily inside of him began to tremble. Before it could tremble for too long, though, Meng Hao battered at it with all of the battle prowess of his Cultivation base.

Indescribable, shocking booming filled Meng Hao, like towers of thunder. The Resurrection Lily let out an unprecedented scream. All its defenses crumbled, incapable of standing up against Meng Hao's battle prowess and Divine Sense, which bore down into its very core.

It screamed and trembled, terrified. It possessed consciousness of its own, and in its memory, it couldn't recall ever feeling this hopeless. Originally, it should have been in a position above all other living things. Meng Hao was nothing but a host body for it. As of now, though, it was actually being possessed. It… was becoming a part of Meng Hao.

There was nothing it could do. Meng Hao’s battle prowess of thirty-two peak late Nascent Souls made it so that the Resurrection Lily could only watch in shock as Divine Sense was driven into its core. At this moment, its life or death was completely in Meng Hao’s hands.

Meng Hao did not exterminate the Resurrection Lily, though. Instead, he branded its consciousness with a seal of his own.

“This seal is not indelible. A hundred years from now, if I can’t figure out a way to make a sixth petal appear, then I’ll exterminate you.

“If a sixth petal does appear, the seal will dissipate, and then you’ll have another chance to try to possess me. Then, you will be qualified… to try to fight me again!” Meng Hao’s cold words echoed out within the seal that he had placed on the Resurrection Lily’s consciousness. It trembled, in awe of Meng Hao but also filled with fierceness and lack of reconciliation. Suppressing its wild heart, it slowly calmed down.

Actually, what Meng Hao wanted was just that: the Resurrection Lily’s wild heart.

Having suppressed the Resurrection Lily, Meng Hao sat down cross-legged to study his expanding Cultivation base. As of now, he could clearly sense that his longevity, if it remained as it was now, would only last for three more years, perhaps a bit more.

“It’s too bad I don’t have a seventh Nascent Soul. It would leave me with only one year of longevity, but with a seventh Nascent Soul, I wonder… if I would be able to battle the Spirit Severing stage?” A bright gleam appeared in his eyes.

Suddenly, he slapped his bag of holding to produce a wooden box.

Looking at the box made him think of his Master, Pill Demon. The box had been given to him by Pill Demon, and it contained a medicinal pill which could not only suppress the the Resurrection Lily, but also help him achieve Cultivation base breakthroughs. It could also add to his longevity.

Throughout all the years, Meng Hao had never consumed even one. Now, however, he unhesitatingly took the pill out, made some copies, and put one in his mouth. He sat there cross-legged, meditating as the medicinal pill dissolved. His Cultivation base grew more stable, and his life force more vigorous. The power of growth appeared, fusing into his Six-Colored Nascent Soul, causing his longevity to instantly be replenished.

Moments later, after the pill had been fully absorbed, he made some more copies and then began to consume them. Several days passed, after which, he opened his eyes from meditation. They glowed with a shocking brightness; his life force was now restored to what appeared to be roughly half of a sixty-year cycle.

His bag of holding was now devoid of Spirit Stones, and he had consumed many medicinal pills. However, he had actually managed to add almost one thousand years to his longevity. Unfortunately, the effectiveness of the medicinal pills was growing continuously weaker. In the end, they stopped working at all. That was generally how such longevity-increasing medicinal pills worked.

After all, life could not go past one thousand years. That rule could never be changed, and mortal power could never fight against it!

“It might seem like thirty years, but if I keep the six Nascent Souls dispersed under normal situations and only combine them under special circumstances, then my problem with the longevity will be resolved.” Now that Meng Hao didn’t have to worry about the longevity, he gave a long sigh. If only he had a seventh Nascent Soul… that would be far better.

Meng Hao stood up. As he did, popping sounds could be heard coming from within his body. He was now a full three heads taller than before. His shoulders were wider, but his body was even more slender.

His muscles hadn’t grown, but he was now clearly stronger and tougher. All of his blood and flesh was filled with shocking power. Blue veins bulged out, and every beat of his heart sent hot blood pumping throughout his body.

His physical body had also experienced an unprecedented increase in its toughness.

At the moment, he looked strange and bizarre, radiating an indescribably imposing bearing and force of attraction. He looked like something beyond the mortal world, something unprecedentedly mighty.

Suddenly, cracking sounds could be heard coming from his right hand. Meng Hao looked down to see the diaphanous Fang Clan glove exploding into tiny pieces.

The power of Meng Hao’s own fist now exceeded that of the glove.

He quickly gathered up the pieces of the glove and put them into his bag of holding.

“Well then, this will now count as one my Divine Abilities. Six Animas Soul Transformations! Under normal circumstances, I will only reveal the power of the First Anima!” His eyes glittered, and the Six-Colored Nascent Soul within him trembled. Ghost images appeared; within the space of a few breaths, they broke apart, transforming once again into six different Nascent Souls. They sat cross-legged in Meng Hao’s dantian region, meditating and cultivating.

Meng Hao’s aura suddenly dropped down. His Cultivation base was once again at the peak of the late Nascent Soul stage. His body also changed. He was no longer so tall and mighty. He returned to his previous height, and the power in his flesh and blood returned to normal. His entire person now emanated the scholarly aura that it usually did.

After studying his Cultivation base for a moment to ensure that his method was correct and that the problem with the longevity had been solved, he looked up at the Violet Sea. There was no need for him to send out Divine Sense; the entire Violet Sea was his eyes. He could see the tempest growing in the sky above the Violet Sea. Lightning danced and Tribulation clouds surged.

His body flickered. Sounds like explosions could be heard in all directions as the Violet Sea around him turned into a huge vortex around. His body transformed into a beam of light that shot up from the depths of the Violet Sea toward the surface.

As he moved up, the vortex grew larger, causing the surface of the sea to roll with massive waves. It was as if the entire Violet Sea were letting out a cry that rose to the Heavens, welcoming Meng Hao as he rose up!

This was the first time in the more than one hundred years since Meng Hao descended to the depths of the seafloor… that he finally emerged in the outside world!

BOOM!

The Violet Sea roared as massive waves rolled out in all directions. Meng Hao stood there on the surface of the water, looking up at the Tribulation clouds up in the sky.

Boundless lightning crackled and boomed. It was as if upon finding Meng Hao, the Heavenly Tribulation was roaring at him.

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever as he coolly said, "Heavenly Tribulation… I haven't seen you for ages!"

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# Chapter 526: The Sixth Anima Rocks Heavenly Tribulation

“Up to this point, my life consisted of two parts,” Meng Hao murmured.

“The first part was beneath Mount Daqing, along the path of the Imperial examinations…. When I stood on top of Mount Daqing, wrote down my dream and stuffed it into that gourd bottle, then tossed it into the river below, I had no idea…

“That that very moment represented the beginning of the second part of my life.

“That second part was cultivation!” Meng Hao stood on the surface of the Violet Sea, wearing a spotless green robe. He did not sink down even a bit into the seawater. Instead, he looked up at the boundless lightning dancing about up above like red serpents. They interlocked, forming Tribulation Clouds.

“This past hundred years or more of cultivation allowed me to experience death and escape. I have experienced things that the old me would never have been able to experience, walked paths that before, I could never have walked to the end of.

“As for Heavenly Tribulation… I’ve experienced that too, more than once.

“This time, I will not be nervous like I was when I experienced the Heavenly Tribulation of the Perfect Foundation. I won’t take it as seriously as the year I faced the Perfect Gold Core Heavenly Tribulation. I’ve been waiting for today’s Heavenly Tribulation… for a long time.” A slight smile suddenly broke out on his face. Even as he murmured the words, a massive rumbling sound roared out from within the Tribulation clouds. At the same time, a red lightning bolt shot down toward Meng Hao.

As it neared, even more lightning bolts fused into it. By the time it was about thirty or so meters from Meng Hao's head, it was as wide as a person's arm. As it roared toward him, it carried with it the awe-inspiring power of Heavenly Tribulation, a detached desire to destroy.

Meng Hao looked up at the incoming Tribulation Lightning. Then, he lifted his right arm and waved it toward the sky. Instantly, life force collided with death will, transforming into a power of extermination that shot toward the lightning bolt.

A shocking boom filled the Heaven and the sea. The arm's-width sized lightning bolt instantly collapsed into countless arcs of electricity that scattered about into the air above Meng Hao.

"Before, Heavenly Tribulation like this would have destroyed me in both body and soul. Now, however… it doesn't even qualify to make me enter my Second Anima." Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever as he stood there motionless. He then… looked back up at the Heavenly Tribulation.

Meng Hao's behavior seemed to infuriate the Heavenly Tribulation. The lightning and thunder crashed about in the sky. One red lightning bolt after another began to form together and then fall down. This time, there were four bolts that descended. An earsplitting roar filled the air as the area for thirty meters around Meng Hao was transformed into a lake of lightning.

Each of the four red beams of lighnting contained enough power to eradicate some of the late Nascent Soul stage. As they fell down, Meng Hao simply stood there and waved his sleeve, allowing the four lightning bolts to strike.

Red lightning danced around Meng Hao, spreading out across the Violet Sea, filling everything for several hundred meters in each direction.

As for Meng Hao, he simply stood there in the middle of the lightning, his entire body glowing with electrical light. The light quickly faded. In the space of only a few breaths it was completely gone. Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever, without even the slightest bit of change.

Currently, he was in the First Anima of the Six Animas Soul Transformations, with the full power of a peak late Nascent soul. Meng Hao had long since decided that this would be his normal state.

Although the lightning surrounding him was incredibly powerful and out of the ordinary, it still was incapable of hurting him, despite the fact that he was only in the First Anima.

Meng Hao gently shook his arms and legs, feeling the power of lightning that had fused into his physical body. He had experienced this feeling in previous encounters with Heavenly Tribulation, so he wasn’t surprised. He looked up, his eyes shining with a bright light.

Simultaneously, an enormous sound like an enraged roar filled the sky. Eight lightning bolts merged together in the air up above. The Tribulation Clouds seethed and then began to pull back. Thunder boomed as the eight lightning bolts began to fall.

These eight lightning bolts were bright red, almost like blood. Then fell down with intense destructive power, causing enormous pressure to bear down on Meng Hao. The pressure didn’t cause Meng Hao to fall back, though. Instead, he began to laugh. A Demonic-looking glow radiated from his eyes.

“Now it’s getting interesting. Second Anima!”

Of the six Nascent Souls inside Meng Hao, two overlapped and fused together. In the same moment, popping sounds could be heard from within Meng Hao as it swelled out. He grew half a head taller, and in the blink of an eye, he looked bigger than before.

His majestic aura exploded out, doubling. Now he possessed the battle prowess of two peak late Nascent Souls. Waves kicked up in the Violet Sea around him, sweeping out in all directions. It was as if a whirlwind had erupted out because of Meng Hao entering his Second Anima.

Laughing, Meng Hao did not retreat, but actually shot up into the air to attack the eight lightning bolts!

This was not passively reacting to the enemy, but taking the initiative to attack head on!

A huge boom echoed out as the eight lightning bolts slammed into him. An explosion of lightning burst out for hundreds of meters in every direction. Meng Hao was the center of it all, meeting the full force of the Tribulation lightning head on. He rocketed forward, completely unharmed by the eight lightning bolts. They didn’t even qualify to cause blood to ooze out from his mouth.

The Heavenly Tribulation seemed as if it possessed intelligence, and was currently furious. The sound of thunder filled the air. This time, eighteen red lightning bolts appeared. They looked like eighteen ferocious red dragons as they crackled through the air toward Meng Hao.

“Third Anima!” Meng Hao’s eyes were now surging with an intense desire to fight.

His body grew again. He was now more than a full head taller and his body more cut and rough. Only a scrap of the aura of a scholar was left, and now, his aura was much more Demonic .

He flew up, performing an incantation gesture with his right hand as the eighteen lightning bolts fell. Suddenly, a multicolored light spread out, distorting the air as it slammed into the eighteen lightning bolts.

A huge boom caused everything to shake. Meng Hao laughed as the area for nearly three thousand meters became a maelstrom of lighnting. However, it was powerless to obstruct his path. He continued to shoot upwards, his voice echoing out: “Fourth Anima!”

Instantly, roaring filled his body as it expanded again. He was now even more brutally powerful, two heads taller than before, his shoulders wide, his frame slender. The scholar’s aura was completely gone, and the Demonic air was growing more intense.

He gave off the feeling of a Demonic monster; even though he was currently smiling, Meng Hao now looked evil.

Four Nascent Souls were overlapped and combined, equipping Meng Hao with the power of eight peak late Nascent Souls. He continued to shoot through mid-air toward the Tribulation clouds in the sky.

Even as Meng Hao increased his speed, the Tribulation clouds roiled. More than twenty bolts of lightning shot down, causing everything to shake, even the sea below. They continuously slammed into Meng Hao, but were incapable of affecting him in any way. His right hand suddenly made a grasping motion in front of him, and an azure Immortal’s Sword appeared there. His left hand slapped his bag of holding, and an alcohol flagon appeared.

He took a drink, then waved the sword, causing an azure beam of light to flicker out. Bolts of Tribulation Lightning exploded as they hit Meng Hao, causing countless sparks of electricity to fly about flickering into the air. More than a few fused into Meng Hao’s body. Gradually, a will of lightning was building up inside of him.

Suddenly, the Tribulation Lightning being formed was no longer just red. More colors were added, a total of seven. They formed into a Seven-Colored Tribulation Lightning. It was one single bolt that seemed capable of ripping the air into pieces, a fierce Seven-Colored Dragon that pounced toward Meng Hao.

“Fifth Anima!”

Shocking popping sounds rang out from his body. He was now two and a half heads taller. His body was far more powerful, and the aura of his battle prowess exploded up. He now possessed power equivalent to sixteen peak late Nascent Souls. The sky and land dimmed, and the clouds seethed.

Meng Hao’s body brimmed with incredible power. His hair whipped about and his eyes shone with a strange glow. As the Seven-Colored Heavenly lightning neared, the azure Immortal’s Sword in his hand suddenly shot forward into it.

The Devil Spear magically appeared in his hand like a fierce dragon. Majestic black mist burst out, along with countless ferocious faces. It followed the azure Immortal’s Sword toward the seven-colored Tribulation Lightning.

When the two forces slammed into each other, a huge boom could be heard. The seven-colored Tribulation Lightning exploded. The azure Immortal’s Sword was sent spinning. The Devil Spear in Meng Hao’s hand trembled and then exploded with a bang, transforming into a mist that surged out. The mist seethed, then formed back again into the Devil Spear.

The shattered remnants of the seven colored Tribulation lightning became a seven-colored rain of lightning. It fell down in all directions, many of which fused into Meng Hao’s body. The lightning that was building up inside of him was growing thicker and thicker.

A tremor ran through him, and blood oozed out of his mouth. He hovered there in mid-air, looking up. Suddenly, the Tribulation clouds began to shrink in on themselves. Seven-colored light spread out as the clouds rapidly began to transform into seven-colored clouds. Furthermore, from within the Tribulation clouds suddenly emerged a…

Gigantic finger formed from seven-colored lightning!!

The enormous finger was fully three thousand meters long and completely composed of flickering, seven-colored lightning. Anyone who saw it would be completely astonished. As soon as it appeared, the enormous finger emitted a destructive pressure that bore down on Meng Hao as if it wished to squash him like an insect.

Even as the finger neared, Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed and he cried, “Sixth Anima!”

All six Nascent Souls within him were now overlapped and combined. Six colors combined!

Boom!

He instantly grew taller, and his body more valiant. His shoulders were wide, his frame slender. There was now no scholar’s aura whatsoever. The only thing he possessed… was breathtaking Demonic evil!

Beneath him, the Violet Sea roared. The vortex spun, sending crashing waves out. In his Sixth Anima, Meng Hao possessed more over thirty times the power of a peak late Nascent Soul. He now fully deserved to be referred to as the most powerful person under Spirit Severing in the lands of South Heaven!

Meng Hao kicked down violently into the air. A bang rang out as ripples appeared, and he shot up straight toward the seven-colored finger.

His right hand clenched violently into a fist. As the finger neared, a fierce glow appeared in his eyes. Then, he…

Punched!

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# Chapter 527: Seventh Anima!!

It wasn't even worth describing how Meng Hao compared to the enormous finger if you looked at them from off in the distance. He really did look like a bug.

But who would care about that!?

When Meng Hao's fist struck the finger, an enormous boom shook the Heavens and the Violet Sea. Giant waves rolled out across the surface of the waters. Of course, only Meng Hao was there to see it; if anyone else did, it would probably be the most shocking thing they would ever see in their life.

As the explosive bang rang out, blood sprayed from Meng Hao's mouth. Although he was sent shooting backward, his laughter continued to echo in the area.

As he laughed, he looked up at the seven-colored finger and watched as it collapsed into countless pieces. A seven-colored lake of lightning was formed, composed of endless seven-colored arcs of electricity. Many of them bored into Meng Hao's body. Even as Meng Hao laughed, the Tribulation lightning…

Was completely destroyed!

Amidst the lingering echo, the Tribulation clouds up above were thinning, and seemed to be on the verge of dissipating. Apparently, this Heavenly Tribulation was quite simple for Meng Hao to overcome.

In truth, it was not. It was actually much more intense than the previous Tribulations. However, Meng Hao's feeling regarding it… was influenced by the fact that his more than one hundred years of secluded meditation ended with him rising to what was virtually the peak of the mortal realm in South Heaven!

Meng Hao wiped the blood from his mouth. In the Sixth Anima, he was at his strongest. He hovered for a moment in mid-air and then once again kicked down with his foot. A bang could be heard as he flew up toward the dissipating Tribulation clouds.

Meng Hao knew that when the Tribulation clouds were spreading out like this, their destructive power was actually growing stronger. They seemed to be dissipating but actually…. if he wasn't careful, he would surely perish.

In the moment in which Meng Hao charged in attack, a roaring sound suddenly could be heard from the thin Tribulation clouds. Suddenly, all the clouds rapidly contracted to form… a shocking, enormous fist!

The fist was formed completely of Tribulation clouds, within which swirled innumerable lightning bolts. Seven colors swirled about. This was no longer just lightning… it was the direct power of Tribulation clouds!!

All the Tribulation clouds had formed together into a Heavenly Tribulation, here to exterminate everything in existence.

Meng Hao rocketed through mid air, looking at the seething Tribulation clouds that had formed into an enormous fist. He could clearly sense the complete will of destruction therein.

His eyes glowed brightly as his left hand suddenly gestured down toward the sea beneath him.

“Violet Sea!”

The Violet Sea was him, and he was the Violet Sea!

Even as the words left his mouth, the entirety of the Violet Sea that was the Western Desert Apocalypse suddenly began to move. A huge vortex spun, causing massive waves to surge across the surface of the waters.

In the center of the vortex, which was directly beneath Meng Hao, a gigantic column of water suddenly rose up. It was thousands of meters wide and surrounded Meng Hao, making him its center as it shot into the air.

As the column of water shot into the air, the rest of the surface of the Violet Sea sank down. At the same time, the index finger of Meng Hao’s right hand pointed down.

“Specters!”

The specters of all the neo-demons and Cultivators who had died in the Apocalypse now existed parasitically within the Violet Sea. Right now, they responded to Meng Hao’s summons, instantly surging in from all directions. They shot into the column of seawater, filling it, forming a soul of the column!

Except, that soul was fragmented. The true soul… was Meng Hao!

Boom!

The column of seawater, thousands of meters wide, shot out past Meng Hao, magically transforming into a gigantic arm!

Further up in the direction of the sky, the arm ended in a fist.

A violet fist and a violet arm. This was like… the arm of the Violet Sea!

If there had been any eyewitnesses observing from a distance, they would have felt an unprecedented level of shock, and would have had the image forever engraved in their minds.

What they would have seen was Tribulation clouds transformed into a fist, representing the Will of Heaven. Another fist stretched out from within the sea, representing the heart of the Apocalypse. One of these two enormous fists was descending from up above. The other rose up from the middle of the sea. There in mid-air… they slammed into each other.

The boom rang out in all directions, shaking Heaven and Earth, causing the Violet Sea to vibrate. This scene was indescribably shocking, so monstrous it was impossible to describe.

Transcending Tribulation in this fashion was unprecedented!

Before Meng Hao, no one had ever done anything like this, and after this day there would not likely be someone else who did!

The will of the Violet Sea had transformed into an arm that exterminated Heavenly Tribulation. The arm contained the pinnacle of the power of extermination, a power like that belonging to an enormous Greater Demon. If Meng Hao had not engaged in Demonic Transmigration before, he would never have been able to do this.

Suddenly, the Tribulation Clouds emitted shocking, explosive claps of thunder. The lightning inside of the clouds exploded out, transforming into a roar that could be heard clearly even in the ten outpost cities on the surface of the sea.

Countless lightning bolts slammed into the power of extermination, and were then transformed into innumerable sparks of electricity. The electricity merged into the Violet Sea, causing large numbers of specters to vanish. Some of the electricity also merged into Meng Hao’s body and spread out to fill it.

Finally, after the last bit of lightning dissipated, no more fist was visible. The lightning vanished. Since it was incapable of destroying Meng Hao, it seemed the Heavenly Tribulation chose to retreat.

As for the Violet Sea arm that Meng Hao was in, it lost its spirit, lost its will, and collapsed back down into the sea. A huge boom could be heard as the water spread back out into the sea, causing it to rise up once again.

Meng Hao hovered in mid-air, lightning sparking constantly through his body. He coughed up a big mouthful of blood and then shot back down toward the sea. Just when he was about to splash directly into the waters, he stopped to stand on its surface. Lightning danced about on his body. His face was pale as he looked up into the sky; the disappearing Tribulation clouds suddenly stopped in place.

It seemed that the Heavenly Tribulation had a bit of power left after all, and wanted to make one final strike of lightning!

Meng Hao's eyes narrowed and his Cultivation base began to rotate. Sharp pains stabbed out in his body and he coughed up some more blood. However, when he coughed up the blood, his mind suddenly trembled.

The reason was that within the blood he had just coughed up could be seen vast quantities of electric sparks. He could only imagine that right now he must look almost like a… human-shaped lightning bolt.

"Thunder. Lightning…." Meng Hao's mind shook, ignoring the Tribulation clouds overhead, and everything else. His mind suddenly seemed to be filled with primordial chaos as an incredible, even astonishing, idea took form.

"Lightning is a manifestation of power, something that could form a totem tattoo…. In that case… it could also make… a Nascent Soul!! My seventh Nascent Soul…. Lightning Nascent Soul!

"If I can really form a seventh Nascent Soul, then when I entered the Seventh Anima, I would be able to wield battle prowess equivalent to sixty-four peak late Nascent Souls!

"No, that's not right. It wouldn't be a peak late Nascent Soul, it would be of the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage!" Meng Hao was panting. Without hesitation, he produced all his remaining One Color Soul Procurement Pills from his bag of holding. Leaving only one as a backup, he placed the remainder into his mouth.

The instant the medicinal pills entered his mouth, he felt that special Divine Sense sweeping through his body. Suddenly, he experienced pain everywhere in his body.

As the pain appeared, strands of lightning were forced out of him. This lightning contained the power of Heavenly Tribulation both from the current Tribulation, as well as remnants left behind from the Perfect Gold

Core and Perfect Foundation Tribulations. All of the lightning was forced out and then sucked into his dantian region.

In the blink of an eye, all of the sparks of electricity began to merge together. Meng Hao immediately sat down cross-legged on the surface of the sea. He ignored the Tribulation clouds up above and focused completely on meditation. More and more lightning sparks began to coalesce in his dantian.

All of the lightning in the entire area stopped moving and then was sucked toward Meng Hao. Lightning in both the air and the sea writhed and glowed as it bore into Meng Hao's body and came to his dantian.

Using his body as the pill furnace, his will as the pill formula, and his life as the flame, he began to concoct!

The process was quick. In the blink of an eye, a roaring sound filled Meng Hao's mind as the lightning in his dantian region coalesced into a gigantic ball. The ball began to writhe and then shattered into pieces. A small, seven-inch tall person appeared!

The person looked exactly like Meng Hao in all respects. This was Meng Hao's seventh Nascent Soul, that by a random chance he had been able to concoct…. Lightning Nascent Soul!

As soon as the tiny person appeared, Meng Hao's Cultivation base exploded upward. This was no longer the peak of the late Nascent Soul stage. He had now broken through into… the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage!

His hair whipped about him as he rose up to the pinnacle of Nascent Soul power!

At the same time, the thin Tribulation Clouds up in the sky seemed to have been thoroughly provoked. No one ever dared to have a Cultivation base breakthrough in the middle of Heavenly Tribulation! On top of that, who had ever dared to absorb the power of the Tribulation itself!?

All of this caused the Tribulation clouds to disperse and then transform… into a human-shaped lightning bolt!

The lightning bolt wasn’t complete, and was in fact a bit blurry, its features unclear. However, it still emanated a terrifying and shocking pressure. Instantly, it shot toward Meng Hao.

“Seventh Anima!” Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a destructive light as the Lightning Nascent Soul overlapped and then combined with the other Nascent Souls to push Meng Hao into the Seventh Anima.

Boom!!

Meng Hao’s body was already incredibly powerful. But now, it changed again. He was again taller, even more valiant. He was now not Demonically evil, but rather, more like an Immortal Devil!

His long hair whipped about and his body radiated a fearsome aura of destruction. Now that he had entered the Seventh Anima, he exploded with… the power of sixty four great circle Nascent Souls.

As of this moment, Meng Hao… was not just the number one figure under the Spirit Severing stage. Right now, if he ran into a Spirit Severing Cultivator… he might lose in the end, but he could still offer up a fight!

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# Chapter 528: I Saw the Nightmare

In the Seventh Anima, Meng Hao's power was completely unprecedented. His body was mighty, fearsome, and shocking. With wide shoulders and slender frame, he was almost three meters tall. It made him look completely like an Immortal Devil.

A fearsome aura erupted out from him, transforming into an invisible whirlpool that swept about, shaking everything. The Violet Sea churned and the sky dimmed.

The Tribulation clouds disappeared, having given birth to the human-shaped lightning bolt, which shot through mid-air toward Meng Hao. Meng Hao looked up at it, his hair whipping about. His appearance seemed to contain a force of attraction that no living thing could resist. He suddenly stamped his foot.

Boom!

The entire Violet Sea jumped up as a huge crater appeared in the water beneath Meng Hao, nearly three thousand meters wide. Seawater surged out in all directions as Meng Hao shot up.

His expression was cold, his eyes icy. In this moment, he was experiencing a completely unheard type of power as the battle prowess of sixty four great circle Nascent Souls coursed through him.

Such power could not even be compared to sixty four peak late Nascent Souls. As of now, he was thoroughly up above everything else… definitely rated as… the number one person under the Spirit Severing stage, among all Sects, all Clans, and all Chosen in the great lands of South Heaven.

In fact… you could say that he was halfway to Spirit Severing!

“Seven Animas combined. Seven Nascent Souls combined….” His expression was cold as he shot forward in attack. As he closed in on the human-shaped lightning bolt, he did not employ any Divine Abilities nor any magical techniques. It seemed as if every movement he made was with a deliberate and calculated. As they neared each other, Meng Hao lifted his hand and pointed a finger.

The pointing of the finger caused a huge roaring sound to be heard. The human-shaped lightning bolt looked as if it were being slammed by an incredible force. It was sent tumbling backward twenty or twenty-five meters, where it then exploded. Moments later, it reformed about thirty meters away, even more blurry than before.

At the same time, countless lightning bolts exploded on Meng Hao’s body, writhing about on his skin. Meng Hao suddenly laughed.

“That’s all you’ve got?” he said, killing intent glittering in his eyes. In the Seventh Anima, he had the power of sixty four great circle Nascent Souls; he was so powerful that this type of electricity couldn’t possibly hurt him.

Even as he spoke, the human-shaped lightning bolt reappeared off in the distance. Meng Hao began to move forward, and a rumbling sound could be heard as his body disappeared. When it reappeared, it was directly in front of the human-shaped lightning bolt. The speed with which he moved was incredible; it happened literally in the blink of an eye.

Meng Hao’s eyes were cold as he clenched his right hand into a fist and then slammed into into the chest of the human-shaped figure.

BAM!

The human-shaped lightning bolt’s body began began to explode. Before it completely shattered into pieces, however, its hand shot out claw-like to scrape viciously at Meng Hao’s chest.

The sound that was emitted sounded like metal crashing against metal. Meng Hao’s clothing was torn to shreds, and the claw ripped his skin.

However, it couldn’t penetrate any further than that. All it could do was scratch him.

The human-shaped lightning bolt stared in shock. A booming could be heard as it completely exploded. Innumerable flashes of lightning roiled out. Thirty meters away, they once again congealed together.

Meng Hao didn’t even glance at this injury. To him, such a flesh wound was inconsequential. His body flickered and then disappeared. Moments later, he reappeared in the air above the human-shaped lightning bolt.

“Time to end this!” he said coolly as he hovered there in mid-air. He raised his hand up and then chopped it down.

Violet Qi Guillotine!

This was a simple magical technique which coalesced Violet Qi into an enormous curved blade, hundreds of meters long. As it chopped down, the human-shaped lightning bolt felt a sense of deadly crisis. Instantly, its body exploded out with the glow of lightning. The light then coalesced into an enormous lightning globe.

The instant the lightning globe appeared, the Violet Qi Guillotine sliced into it. In that moment, popping sounds could be heard from the lightning sphere, seemingly the roar of countless bolts of lightning. However… it was incapable of preventing itself from being chopped apart.

During the space of a few breaths, rumbling booms filled the air as the gigantic lightning sphere collapsed into pieces. Within was revealed the human-shaped lightning bolt, which was now so blurry it was almost transparent. Before it could even move, the Violet Qi Guillotine was upon it, slashing onto its body. A boom could be heard as the figure was cut directly in half!

Rumbling sounds echoed about as the human-shaped lightning bolt, having been cut in half, collapsed into pieces, transforming into a lightning-like glow that spread out in all directions and then faded.

By the time the human-shaped lightning bolt vanished, the Tribulation clouds up had long since dissipated, and the sky was now back to normal.

Meng Hao now returned from the Seventh Anima back to the First Anima. His face was a bit pale, and he looked extremely tired.

“The Seventh Anima really does a number on my body and longevity. I can’t stay in it for too long without injuring myself.” He descended down to the surface of the Violet Sea where he sat cross-legged to breathe deeply and restore his body.

“Compared to the Seventh Anima, the Sixth Anima is a bit less draining. The less Nascent Souls I combine, the less waste there is, and the more I can ignore it.

“So, these are my Seven Animas Soul Transformations!” His eyes shined with a bright light. Everything that had happened, the struggle with the Resurrection Lily, the battle against the Heavenly Tribulation, the creation of the Seven Animas Soul Transformations, were all testimony to the fact that he had stepped foot onto the path of a truly powerful expert.

“From now on, my travels in the great lands of South Heaven will be as boundless as the sea and sky. Meng Hao can go… anywhere he wants!” He looked up and toward the East, the direction of the Eastern Lands and the Great Tang.

His dream in the past had always been to travel to the Great Tang of the Eastern Lands, and he had never forgotten that.

At the moment, he was finally qualified to cross the Milky Way Sea and visit that very place.

Meng Hao’s heart suddenly quivered. His Divine Sense sank into the blood-colored mask and coalesced near the mastiff. He was pleasantly surprised to find that along with his own rise in Cultivation base, the mastiff was almost awake.

In fact, Meng Hao could tell that it wouldn’t be long before it would be able to leave the world of the blood-colored mask, and exist in the lands of South Heaven.

Meng Hao retracted his Divine Sense. Smiling, he took a deep breath and then closed his eyes to continue adjusting his Cultivation base. During the process of pacifying the Heavenly Tribulation, he actually had sustained some internal injuries.

For the past hundred years or more, the skies above the Western Desert had been dark and overcast. Now, perhaps because of the Heavenly Tribulation, they were now sunny and bright, for the first time in a very long time.

Light pierced through the clouds to fall onto the Violet Sea and down into its waters. The result was a scene of indescribable beauty. Meng Hao sat in the middle of all of it on the surface of the sea. His body was no longer fearsomely powerful. Instead, the air of a scholar once again emanated out from him. He sat there peacefully, his eyes closed.

In this moment, the entire world seemed beautiful and calm. Only the gently undulating waves could be seen moving….

Unfortunately, a few days later, some uninvited guests disturbed the tranquility.

There was a sedan chair carried by four black-robed men who looked somewhat distorted, as if they existed halfway between being illusory and real. The sedan chair’s curtains had long since been opened, and within could be seen a middle-aged man dressed in expensive clothing.

He was currently drinking some fine alcohol. Laying next to him was a withered corpse. The corpse was naked and looked old, as if it had just been dug out of a grave. If you looked closely, though, you could see that the desiccated corpse had once been a beautiful woman.

As of now, her life force had long since vanished. A fatal wound could be seen, a dark bruise on her neck. Her neck itself was twisted at an odd angle, making the entire picture a ghastly sight.

The person who had killed her was currently leaning up against her corpse, drinking fine alcohol and gently caressing her.

“How strange,” said the man. “The Miracle Lightning was obviously gathering in this area. It’s gone now, though, as of a few days ago. How come there doesn’t seem to be anything at all in the area?” This middle-aged man was none other than the man who had left the second outpost city that day, Huyan Qing. He was the only son of Spirit Severing Patriarch Huyan Yunming of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe, one of the three major powers of the Heavenly Court Alliance!

Surrounding the sedan chair were seven old men, who followed along silently. Among the seven, the strongest was an old man named Wu, who was shockingly of the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage. A Cultivation base like that would make him an incredible power in any area. Even Spirit Severing Patriarchs would pay close attention to such a figure, and spare no effort to enlist their services.

Having heard the Huyan Qing’s words, the old men instantly began to chuckle and offer up words of encouragement.

“Young Master, there’s no need to be anxious. There are no living people in this part of the sea. If a precious treasure really did appear in the area, then it will belong to nobody except you.”

“That’s right. Besides, when we arrived, we checked the area and even set up spell formations. We could tell from a distance that the undulations of the Tribulation Lightning had vanished, and that was when we entered. We are certainly the first people to enter the area to investigate.”

The only person who didn’t speak was Sir Wu. He frowned as he looked around. He wasn’t sure why, but after entering this area, he seemed to have the jitters. It was as if this was an area of grave danger, as if some terrifying presence were lurking about.

The feeling was indistinct and mysterious. However, Sir Wu couldn’t stop thinking about it. Even as the group was proceeding along as normal, they all suddenly stopped.

All eyes came to fall on a young man off in the distance. He wore a green robe, and was sitting cross-legged on the surface of the water, meditating.

He looked like the type of person who would bring harm to neither humans nor animals. He seemed clean and peaceful, and exuded the air of a scholar as he sat there cross-legged and unmoving.

It was impossible to clearly see the level of his Cultivation base. At first glance it was of the early Nascent Soul stage, but upon closer inspection it seemed to be of the mid Nascent Soul stage. After that, it jumped to the late Nascent Soul stage; for a moment it even seemed as if it might be at the great circle!

The sight of it instantly caused Sir Wu to be on guard. In fact, looking at Meng Hao caused him to feel as if a needle were pricking the back of his neck. The feeling caused his eyes to glow.

For some reason, he had the feeling that there was something not quite right about this person.

The other six Nascent Soul Cultivators were all surprised and wore serious expressions. For a strange Cultivator to suddenly appear in a bizarre place like this was something that would obviously cause them to be cautious.

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The name of that movie was I Saw the Devil.

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# Chapter 529: Seeking Death Repeatedly

Despite their caution, their end judgement was that even if this person had a high Cultivation base, they were seven in number, one of whom was of the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage, two were of the late Nascent Soul stage, and four were of the mid stage. Such a force could be referred to as ultimately powerful.

If that weren't the case, why else would Huyan Yunming send them to escort his only son in the outside world?

Even still, all of them felt as if something were off, although they couldn't place the reason.

"Hey hey, so there's someone out here meditating!" said Huyan Qing with a scornful laugh. He leaned up against the corpse of the woman as he looked out at Meng Hao. "Look up at me and tell me your name. Also, take out your bag of holding. Presumably, whatever precious treasure caused the Miracle Lightning will be on your person!"

He couldn't see Meng Hao's Cultivation base, but in his entire life, he never actually looked at anyone's Cultivation base. That was because he didn't need to. It wasn't necessary. His father was a Spirit Severing Patriarch. That was enough in and of itself.

Throughout his life, it didn't matter who he was dealing with, he never cared about that person's Cultivation base. Because of the stage his father was in, anyone who dared to provoke him would end up dead in body and spirit.

That point had been proven countless times. It also caused Huyan Qing to grow quite comfortable with such lofty arrogance.

However, even as the words left his mouth, Sir Wu's face flickered and his body quivered. He suddenly realized why he had such an odd feeling.

"This young man… is sitting cross-legged on the Violet Sea itself!!"

Sir Wu gasped, and his mind trembled. Earlier, he had felt something was off, but had overlooked the Violet Sea. Now, all of a sudden, he realized that this man was sitting directly on top of a thick aura of death. Even he himself feared touching the sea and would not continue to do so for any length of time.

At the same time, the faces of the other six Nascent Soul Cultivators also fell. Their eyes went wide as they realized how fearsome and bizarre Meng Hao was.

In the same moment in which the seven of them came to the same realization, Meng Hao's eyes snapped open. He looked over the group of people, his gaze eventually coming to fall upon Huyan Qing.

With the exception of Sir Wu, the seven Nascent Soul Cultivators all felt their minds shaking. Meng Hao's gaze was like a stabbing sword that pierced into their minds and transformed into roaring.

Even Sir Wu had a look of intense concentration.

"The great circle of the Nascent Soul Stage!"

"He's of the great circle!" All of the other six Nascent Soul Cultivators had the same reaction when they realized the level of Meng Hao's Cultivation base. Deep in their hearts they all breathed sighs of relief.

The intrepidness of the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage… was something that they didn't fear. Sir Wu was also of the great circle. Furthermore, they were backed by the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe and Patriarch Huyan.

As soon as Meng Hao's gaze fell onto Huyan Qing, a roaring filled the man's brain, and his body began to tremble. The wine cup in his hand dropped to the floor, spilling alcohol all over him in the process. The hand that had been stroking the corpse suddenly began to shake.

Meng Hao retracted his gaze, ignoring the group. He coolly said one sentence: "What you're looking for isn't here. Go away."

Meng Hao had sensed this group long before they had arrived. Their goal in coming was clear, and the piercing gaze he had given them moments ago was merely a threat and a warning. Having finished speaking, Meng Hao closed his eyes again.

Now that Meng Hao had retracted his gaze, Huyan Qing came to his senses. He took a deep breath, and after a final quiver, his eyes went wide and he glared hatefully at Meng Hao. "Such gall!!" he cried.

Facing an intimidating threat like Meng Hao, some people would retreat to avoid any difficulties. Others, however, due to their background, would be unable to accept such a threat being levied against them. People like that, with low Cultivation bases but incredible arrogance and haughtiness, would only have their pride wounded.

Huyan Qing was just such a person. The shame just now was fueling his anger. He could not accept being threatened to the extent that he actually felt fear. He was the only son of Patriarch Huyan. He was a noble Chosen of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe. Virtually no one in the entire Black Lands would dare to provoke him. No matter where he went, he was a blazing sun that everyone respected.

And yet here today, in this place, he had been threatened by the gaze of a Cultivator. Huyan Qing's dignity had been threatened!

From the time he was small until now, there had never been even one Cultivator who dared to act aggressively toward him. Meng Hao's actions might seem normal to any other person, but to Huyan Qing, it was wild arrogance!

For years, he had existed in a position far above others. No one had ever dared to level such a gaze against him, nor to cause his mind to tremble. In his mind, he had just been humiliated in a way that he couldn't accept.

"Kill him! Kill him for me this instant!" he roared, rising to his feet, his face twisted with rage as he glared at Meng Hao. "No one has ever dared to act in such a way in front of me. You're DEAD!"

Sir Wu's face sank, and inwardly, he was cursing. He had known all along that Huyan Qing never thought things through, and on top of that, was arrogant and despotic. However, he had never imagined that he could possibly be this idiotic.

There was really no good reason for Huyan Qing to make such a demand. Just now, this man had merely looked at them and then spoken some non-threatening words. Considering he was of the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage, his vague words were not out of the ordinary.

Sir Wu was just about to speak up when, suddenly, the eyes of the four black-robed men near Huyan Qing suddenly filled with killing intent. Instantly, the men vanished. When they reappeared, they had Meng Hao surrounded. Within the hand of each black-robed man was a gleaming flying sword. Filled with killing intent, the men charged at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao sighed softly. He hadn't desired to do any killing today. He was like a tree who wanted peace, except the wind wouldn't stop blowing.

"Well in that case, I guess you won't be leaving," said Meng Hao coolly. His eyes opened, although he completely ignoring the incoming flying swords.

The moment his eyes opened, and indescribable killing intent rose up to the Heavens. It exploded out with shocking intensity, causing the clouds to churn and everything to dim. He was like some sort of primordial beast, climbing up out from the depths.

The killing intent was thick, and invisible, but as it emanated out, the faces of the four black-robed instantly fell. They were vicious Cultivators who would kill without batting an eyelid. Over the years, they had killed many, many people. Normally speaking, they were cold and detached. However, facing such indescribable killing intent such as Meng Hao's caused their faces to fall.

Compared to Meng Hao, their tiny collections of killing intent were like fireflies, whereas Meng Hao… was the bright moon!

What they didn't know was that this was actually only ten percent of Meng Hao's killing intent.

Bang!

Four flying swords exploded into fragments that then transformed into ash. The bodies of the black-robed men began to shake, and then blood sprayed from their mouths. Their minds felt like paste, as if some massive power were crushing down onto them. They tumbled backward, but before they could fall back more than thirty meters, their heads suddenly exploded.

Their mangled bodies fell down into the Violet Sea, sinking down beneath the waves, never to be seen again.

A deathly silence filled the air. Huyan Qing's eyes went wide and filled with disbelief. The seven Nascent Soul Cultivators' faces were filled with unprecedentedly serious looks. Swishing sounds could be heard as six of them instantly moved to surround Huyan Qing. Sir Wu appeared in front of all of them, his face grim as he looked at Meng Hao.

"Fellow Daoist," said Sir Wu, clasping his hands, "we are from the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe of the Heavenly Court Alliance in the Black Lands. Everything before was a misunderstanding, Fellow Daoist. Please forgive us."

Meng Hao looked at him coldly, then looked at the people behind him. Having heard that they were from the Heavenly Court Alliance in the Black Lands, he suddenly thought of the Golden Crow Clan. He then slowly nodded his head. "Since it was just a misunderstanding, we can let the matter drop. Please take your leave posthaste."

Sir Wu heaved an inward sigh of relief. Even though he was of the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage, the pressure he felt pressing down from Meng Hao was incredible. He had no desire whatsoever to fight him.

However, even as Sir Wu was about to clasp hands and fall back, Huyan Qing's eyes suddenly filled with a savage light.

"So, it turns out this guy puts on a strong front but is actually a weakling!" Huyan Qing had been incredibly shocked and even filled with fear when Meng Hao killed his four black-robed guards. However, seeing that he was willing to compromise after hearing that they were from the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe, his heart filled with evil thoughts.

"I said before to kill him!" he said, his voice grim. "All of you, get out there and kill him!" He laughed coldly. "Sir Wu, you promised my father that you would keep me safe during our journeys. You even promised to help me with my cultivation. This guy's Cultivation base is obviously incredible, and I've taken a liking to it. Kill him for me, and before he dies, I'll consume it!"

His eyes radiated an intense light as he lifted his hand and held out a command medallion. "I order all of you. Kill him!"

Meng Hao's expression never changed. He watched calmly as the scene unfolded. After the medallion appeared, the faces of Sir Wu and the six other old men instantly fell. Moments later, four of the group performed minor teleportations as they approached him. They figured that it didn't matter that they weren't a match for Meng Hao. All they had to do was pin him down. The person to do the actual killing would naturally be Sir Wu.

"Oh well," sighed Sir Wu. "I guess this guy is just unlucky!" Clenching his teeth, he turned toward Meng Hao. Suddenly, his great circle Nascent Soul Cultivation base exploded with power.

"You're dead!!" Huyan Qing began to laugh maniacally.

As the four mid Nascent Soul Cultivators neared, Meng Hao's eyes glittered with the desire to kill. The killing intent that exploded out from him this time was thirty percent! His voice cool, he said, “Looking to die?”

The killing intent roared out, causing the faces of the four mid Nascent Soul stage old men to fill with astonishment. Suddenly, Meng Hao vanished like a ghost. When he reappeared, he was behind one of the mid Nascent Soul stage Cultivators. His expression was cool, and his hair whipped about as he lifted up his right hand and tapped the man.

Death aura and life force mingled, transforming into a fearsome power of extermination. The Nascent Soul Cultivator was absolutely powerless to resist, and instantly exploded.

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# Chapter 530: Slaughter!

From the very beginning, Meng Hao had kept his Cultivation base in the First Anima, which possessed the battle prowess of one great circle Nascent Soul. However, because of his incredible foundation, his battle prowess actually far exceeded anyone in the same stage as him.

His attack exploded with the power of extermination.

The exterminating power stemmed from Meng Hao’s Violet Sea and blood totems. They combined to form a powerful Water-type totem that contained both life and death. In Meng Hao’s hands, it formed an essence that could send a life back to the dust.

The mid Nascent Soul Cultivator’s death happened incredibly quickly, literally in the blink of an eye. Everyone watching was instantly shaken mentally. Even Huyan Qing just stood there with that wicked smile of his plastered on his face.

Sir Wu took a deep breath. As he thought about, he realized that although he could kill a mid Nascent Soul stage Cultivator, it wouldn’t be possible for him to do so as casually as Meng Hao just had.

“Now that we’ve attacked, we have to kill him!” thought Sir Wu, sighing inwardly. His eyes glittered with killing intent as he went on the attack, shooting toward Meng Hao. As he neared, his right hand lifted up in a clawing gesture. Instantly, the air around him transformed into a yellow river filled with roaring waters and yellow sand. It looked like a yellow dragon as it swept out in all directions. In the blink of an eye, it had enveloped the entire area. Shockingly, it then became a spell formation.

Within the spell formation, yellow sand roared up into the air. A raging wind screamed, transforming into a vortex. It was like a Wind Dragon and a Yellow Dragon, interlocked, pinning Meng Hao down inside.

At the same time, killing intent radiated out of Sir Wu's eyes. His body flickered as he entered the spell formation, his right hand flashing an incantation gesture. Countless green leaves magically appeared, each one of which contained destructive power. They swirled around, congealing together rapidly to form one sharp sword after another.

Almost in the same moment that the spell formation finished forming, Sir Wu was closing in on Meng Hao. At this point, Meng Hao suddenly disappeared again. When he reappeared, he was next to another of the mid Nascent Soul stage Cultivators. He reached out in a seemingly leisurely fashion toward the shocked man, then tapped on his forehead.

BAM!

The power of extermination once again appeared. The old mid Nascent Soul stage Cultivator's body instantly exploded.

As he died, another Nascent Soul Cultivator suddenly appeared behind Meng Hao. Around his body rotated nine spinning awls which send out pulsing whimpers and were surrounded by a pulsating green aura that seemed to be filled with extremely toxic poison. The green aura blasted against Meng Hao's face.

Meng Hao's expression was calm as he completely ignored the poison weapons. He simply raised his hand and pointed.

Demon Sealing, Eighth Hex.

The single finger cast a powerful hex which caused the late Nascent Soul Cultivator's body to shake. He suddenly stopped moving, and was stuck there in midair. Having lost his connection to his magical items, they then fell down into the Violet Sea. The man's body hovered in the air motionless. Shock filled his face as he realized that even his Cultivation base was completely sealed.

“This….” He couldn’t feel shocked for long, because Meng Hao passed him and flicked his sleeve. Roaring waves suddenly surged up from the Violet Sea below, completely submerging the old man.

Meanwhile, Sir Wu was closing in. Meng Hao turned, completely ignoring him. He waved his arm, causing a bloody glow to rise up into the sky. Shockingly, an enormous blood-colored face suddenly appeared.

This was the Blood Immortal divine ability. As of now, Meng Hao didn’t need to wear the mask to unleash it. As of this point, the mask… could be done without.

The battle power of the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage gathered within the blood-colored mask. Sir Wu’s face filled with shock as the face slammed into him with an enormous boom. The leaves surrounding him shattered into pieces, and he was sent tumbling backward, blood spraying from his mouth. Before he could emerge from within the sandstorm spell formation, Meng Hao teleported behind him, then lifted up his right hand and pointed.

Boom!

A jade slip appeared in front of Sir Wu. It emanated a soft glow which resisted Meng Hao’s finger. However, it only lasted for the space of three breaths before it collapsed.

Sir Wu coughed up more blood. However, he used the three breaths worth of time to employ a blood escape technique to speed away. Even as the blood escape technique was unleashed, Meng Hao’s cold voice could be heard in his ear.

“Blood?”

It was only a single word, but it caused a roaring to fill Sir Wu’s body. Even in the midst of using his magical escape technique, he was injured again. His face fell. Disregarding the pain, he quickly retrieved a second jade slip from his bag of holding which he violently crushed between his fingers.

Another protective shield spread out to surround him and defend against Meng Hao's second finger attack.

A popping sound rang out as the second shield shattered. Sir Wu was finally able to flee outside of the sandstorm spell formation. In that instant, he lifted his head up and roared. Hair disheveled, he performed a double-handed incantation gesture, causing the spell formation's sandstorm to whip about and block the area between him and Meng Hao.

As soon as the sandstorm touched Meng Hao, he stopped moving, unable to continue forward. He looked up and saw Sir Wu on the other side, wiping the blood from the corner of his mouth and staring back tenaciously at him.

Sir Wu was filled with shock. Just now, their brief encounter in the spell formation caused him to realize just how valiant and fearsome Meng Hao was. If it weren't for the two life-saving jade slips bestowed upon him by Patriarch Huyan, he would certainly have perished just now.

"Guard the spell formation with all your power," he said through clenched teeth. "This man must die!"

The faces of the remaining three Nascent Soul Cultivators were pale. The scene they had just witnessed had left them completely shaken. Huyan Qing's eyes were wide with disbelief.

The sandstorm was filled with shocking killing intent as it closed in around Meng Hao. On the outside, Sir Wu's eyes filled with a strange glow. He flashed a double-handed incantation, causing the sandstorm to tighten around Meng Hao. The other three Nascent Soul Cultivators went all out with the power of their Cultivation bases to assist.

Meng Hao began to move forward. Booming sounds filled the air as the Wind Dragon and the Yellow Dragon inside of the spell formation roared and interlocked. Meng Hao's body trembled and he was forced backwards a few paces, his eyes shining with a strange light.

"Interesting," he said coolly. "It has some impressive sealing power." Outside the spell formation, Sir Wu smiled coldly. He performed an incantation with his right hand and then pointed forward.

“Eight Dragons Defense Expulsion!” Suddenly, a second Wind Dragon appeared within the spell formation, then a third, then a fourth. Three more Yellow Dragons also appeared.

In total, there were eight dragons cycling about. Their appearance caused the spell formation to be even more shocking than before. Each grain of sand in the storm was equipped with the power of an early Nascent Soul stage Cultivation base. The dense masses of sand suddenly began to congeal together, rapidly transforming into more than ten figures. More sand began to congeal, and more figures appeared.

This spell formation was Sir Wu’s trump card. Considering how seriously he took Meng Hao, he didn’t hesitate to use the spell formation’s true power.

This aspect was not actually a formation, but rather, the magical manifestation of a divine ability. In the past, he had relied on its intense power to kill three powerful experts of the same level as himself.

Seeing that Meng Hao was incapable of escaping from within the spell formation, Huyan Qing breathed a sigh of relief. He stood there in the sedan chair, laughing.

“Let’s see how you charge out now! Sir Wu’s Sandstorm Noose has been praised even by my father. You’re dead! No one has ever dared to provoke me. Since you did, since you dared to threaten me, you’re going to die!”

Meng Hao smiled a cold smile. As the spell formation rotated around him, four of the dragons emitted roars of shocking power. There were now over twenty congealed sand figures as well. Each of the figures possessed a Cultivation base of the mid Nascent Soul stage. Harboring no fear of death whatsoever, they immediately charged directly toward Meng Hao. They did not unleash divine abilities, but rather….

“BURST!” howled Sir Wu. This was the deadly function of the spell formation, the self-detonation of the divine ability!

Every detonation was completely equivalent to the self-detonation of a mid Nascent Soul stage Cultivator. The power of twenty mid Nascent Soul stage self-detonations was something that would strike fear into the heart of even someone of the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage.

By relying on the power of this spell formation’s divine ability, Sir Wu had earned a high reputation in the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe. Throughout all the Black Lands, he was ranked as one of the most powerful experts under the Spirit Severing stage. Were that not the case, Patriarch Huyan would not have assigned him the job of protecting his only son.

Right now, his expression was calm and his heart proud as he looked coldly at Meng Hao within the spell formation.

“It doesn’t matter how shocking your Cultivation base is. Within my eight dragons spell formation, you can only curse your own bad fortune. There is no one else to blame.”

The other three old men outside the spell formation wore expressions of pleasant surprise, along with vicious, murderous intent. They smiled coldly as they looked at Meng Hao, who seemed to be trapped like a cornered beast within the spell formation.

Huyan Qing’s laughter became ear-splitting.

Within the spell formation, Meng Hao watched on as the twenty mid Nascent Soul figures began to self-detonate, then coolly said, “Interesting. I never imagined that after coming out of secluded meditation that I would run into someone so strong. It looks like you have the qualifications to make me enter my…

“Second Anima!”

Boom!

Meng Hao’s body instantly grew more powerful. He grew half a head taller, and his shoulders widened. His physical body grew stronger as he was filled with the battle prowess of two great circle Nascent Souls. When he looked up, his eyes shone brightly. Popping sounds could be heard coming from within his body as his aura climbed up. Instantly, the faces of the Cultivators outside of the spell formation filled with intense shock.

It was at this moment that the more than twenty mid Nascent Soul self-detonations exploded out. The power unleashed was shocking, but Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever. He moved forward through the explosions, which didn't even cause him to tremble in the slightest. The sight caused Sir Wu to gasp. His pupils constricted; he was stupefied.

As for the three other old men, they were even more astonished and filled with disbelief.

"Just… just what level Cultivation base does he have?!?!"

Even as shock caused the four men's hearts to tremble, Meng Hao shot up into the air. He flew with incredible speed toward Sir Wu. A boom could be heard as he burst out from within the spell formation. The eight dragons roared and tried to encircle him, but Meng Hao waved his hand toward them. Instantly… eight enormous blood-red faces appeared. As soon as they appeared, they exploded, transforming into an attack that swept out in all directions.

Eight bloodcurdling howls could be heard as the dragons were shredded into pieces. The sandstorm spell formation shuddered three times, and then collapsed into fragments. Everyone on the outside of the spell formation was filled with shock. Meng Hao suddenly disappeared, then reappeared directly in front of shocked Sir Wu.

The collapse of the spell formation caused Sir Wu to cough up a mouthful of blood. However, he was an old hand at close-quarters combat. Without hesitation, he fell back, both hands flashing in an incantation gesture. Instantly, wind and sand surrounded him, forming a shield, along with a third jade slip, adding even more protective power.

Unfortunately… as soon as Meng Hao appeared, he pointed with his finger. The shield of wind and sand was ripped apart. The light from the jade slip lasted only for the space of a single breath before collapsing. Sir Wu let out a miserable, despairing cry as Meng Hao’s finger tapped onto his forehead.

All it took was one tap.

Bam!

The power of extermination exploded out within Sir Wu. His body exploded out in all directions. It didn’t matter that he was of the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage. Meng Hao was currently equipped with twice that level of power. As for Sir Wu… how could he possibly fight back?!

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# Chapter 531: Karma Threads!

As of this moment, the three old men off to the side were shaking, and their faces were filled with dumbstruck despair. Fear inundated their hearts; this shadow of death which lurked over them far exceeded the mission they had been given by Patriarch Huyan.

Without the slightest hesitation, the three Nascent Soul Cultivators turned and used their most powerful escape arts to flee at top speed. They went all out. One of them, of the mid Nascent Soul stage, crushed a violet-colored jade slip between his fingers, causing a violet glow to surround his body and then propel him away with explosive speed.

Another mid Nascent Soul Cultivator, having witnessed the failure of Sir Wu’s blood escape art, and how he was even injured by using it, didn’t dare to use the same technique. Instead, he drew upon the life power of his own Nascent Soul, ignoring the fact that it began to wither as a result. He shot away at incredible speed off into the distance.

The final Cultivator had the highest Cultivation base of all, the late Nascent Soul stage. As he fled, he produced a crude Feng Shui compass from his bag of holding which he tossed out in front of him. It immediately emanated three glowing bands of light which stabbed into the air up ahead and then… ripped open a fissure!

Without looking back, he dove into the fissure, the only thing on his mind being escape.

He was already completely shaken and filled with ultimate dread by Meng Hao.

As for Huyan Qing, he was completely stunned by everything that had just happened. His body was shaking and his breath came in ragged pants. His scalp was numb, and his heart was filled with intense regret.

Seeing Sir Wu explode caused his face to drain of blood, and cold sweat to break out all over.

Meng Hao flicked his sleeve, sweeping away the gore that was all that remained of Sir Wu. At the same time, he pointed out with his right index finger. Instantly, several drops of blood flew toward him from the mass of gore that was flying in the opposite direction. It congealed on his fingertip into a glittering drop of blood.

This blood was heart blood produced by the death of a great circle Nascent Soul Cultivator. Meng Hao looked at the blood for a moment and then flung his hand, causing it to split into three parts that shot toward the fleeing Cultivator who was surrounded by the Violet Qi.

The drop of blood transformed into a streak of red as it shot through the air.

At the same time, Meng Hao made a grasping motion with his hand. The Devil Spear appeared along with an excited howling sound. Instantly, black mist roiled out, filled with ferocious faces. Strangely, once the faces saw Meng Hao standing there, they began to tremble and suddenly grew very quiet.

Meng Hao hefted the spear and then tossed it out into the air. Instantly, the ferocious faces within the mist once again began to howl as they shot toward the the Cultivator who was burning his Nascent Soul in order to flee.

Having done these things, Meng Hao looked over at the late Nascent Soul Cultivator who was now already halfway through the fissure in the air. The fissure itself seemed to be on the verge of closing. Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding, causing an emerald glow to appear. Suddenly, a very ordinary looking fishing rod appeared in his hands.

As soon as he held the fishing rod, Meng Hao's entire aura changed. It grew blurry, as if his body were somehow merging into the air around him. When Huyan Qing looked at him, he got a cold feeling, as if he were looking at some sort of predator that he was helpless to resist.

Except, this was not a predator. This was a crushing power from a life force that was levels above him, something that could wrest away his life at any moment.

It was impossible to perfectly describe the feeling in Huyan Qing's heart. He was panting, and his body was trembling. The fear he was experiencing now far exceeded any fear he had felt before in his life.

It wasn't just him who was feeling such fear. The two fleeing mid Nascent Soul stage old men were also trembling, and could sense a pressure bearing down on them that far exceeded their own level. It quickly enveloped their entire hearts and minds.

Their bodies trembled, and their souls shook. Their Karma… was suddenly visible!

"What is this…?"

Most frightened of all was the late Nascent Soul Cultivator who had just passed through the fissure. Although he was on the other side of the fissure from nightmarish Meng Hao, in a different world, the trembling of his soul had reached an intense peak. It was as if some incredible, irresistible coldness were blasting across his body.

"What is this…?"

Meng Hao's expression was calm as he gripped the fishing rod. The world suddenly looked different, colorless. However, bright, colorful lights were visible on top of the heads of the people in front of him.

Meng Hao looked at Huyan Qing. On top of the man's head was a mass of bright, colorful threads, all grouped together. Shockingly, one of the threads was bright red, and incredibly thick. It was clearly different than the other threads.

At the moment, Huyan Qing’s body was trembling violently. Meng Hao’s gaze and aura were thousands of times more terrifying than they had been before. His look earlier had merely been a threat, but this time, Huyan Qing felt as if his soul were growing cold. It was as if his entire life, all his secrets, were clearly visible to Meng Hao.

It seemed to him that all Meng Hao had to do was wish it, and he would instantly die. He could also tell that such a death would not be an ordinary death, which filled him with indescribable fear.

It was as if… death was frightening enough as it was, but dying at Meng Hao’s hands would be infinitely more miserable and horrifying.

When Meng Hao looked at the other two fleeing mid Nascent Soul Cultivators, they experienced the exact same feeling as Huyan Qing.

Meng Hao could clearly see the brightly colorful threads attached to the tops of their heads. They too had an incredibly thick, red thread that was different from the others.

Those thick threads caused Meng Hao’s face to flicker almost undetectably.

“So these are Karma threads,” murmured Meng Hao. He looked at the trembling old man on the other side of the disappearing fissure.

He had even more threads attached to his head.

“What a pity,” said Meng Hao, shaking his head. “Based on my understanding of Karma, I can’t do what Ji Nineteen did, and sever the Karma…. However….” His eyes glinting fiercely, he waved the fishing rod out in front of him.

Instantly, a fishing line flew out. It moved so fast that it didn’t seem to move at all. It instantly appeared in front of the trembling old late Nascent Soul Cultivator. The old man suddenly felt something infinitely terrifying.

Others could not hear the bloodcurdling scream that came out from his mouth, but Meng Hao could.

Meng Hao saw the line wrap around the old man. When he pulled back on the line, the man’s soul was ripped out of his body. His Nascent Soul rapidly withered, and his body turned pale white as he died.

As the fishing line returned to Meng Hao, he reached out and grabbed the soul, then crushed it!

As the soul dissipated, Meng Hao’s mind filled with a roaring sound. All of a sudden, he realized that he had a much deeper comprehension of Karma now, although he wasn’t sure he could explain exactly how.

When Huyan Qing saw everything that was happening, he could only scream with intense terror. The other two mid Nascent Soul Cultivators were shaking as they fled madly.

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It’s really cold today here in Mudangjiang prefecture. It snowed heavily and is… -3 celsius!

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# Chapter 532: The Death of Huyan Qing!

Next, however, the pursuing drops of blood caught up with their target. They stabbed through the Cultivator, then exploded along with the man's body.

As for the other Cultivator, despite the incredible speed with which he moved, he could not move faster than the Devil Spear. It whistled through the air and then stabbed into him. Instantly, black mist enveloped him. Excited, ferocious faces pounced, and a bloodcurdling scream filled the air. When it finally faded away, only a skeleton remained.

All of this takes some time to describe, but actually, from the time the three men began to flee until the moment they were all dead only took the space of about ten breaths.

Meng Hao put the fishing rod away, and then turned to look at Huyan Qing.

When Meng Hao's gaze fell onto him, Huyan Qing fell backward, trembling. He quickly bumped up against the back of the sedan chair.

"Early Nascent Soul Cultivation base," said Meng Hao coolly. "What a pity." This was actually the weakest early Nascent Soul Cultivation base that he had ever seen. "Alright, who's your father?" he continued, his expression the same as ever. He had long since matured to the point where he did not act impulsively. Naturally, he could tell that for this man to have such intrepid guards meant that he had a background beyond the ordinary.

Furthermore, the thick, red threads attached to the heads of these people led to a lot of questions. Furthermore, earlier, the man had made a comment indicating that his father had praised the spell formation of that great circle Nascent Soul Cultivator. He had revealed the information inadvertently in the midst of bragging arrogantly. However, Meng Hao easily put the pieces of information together. How could he not understand the underlying meaning?

Huyan Qing stared in shock. Originally, he had planned to roar out the information about his father in an attempt to shock Meng Hao. Who could ever have imagined that Meng Hao would actually ask for the information of his own initiative?

“My….” Huyan Qing was perturbed and trembling. However, he still shouted out anyway: “My father is Huyan Yunming, Spirit Severing Patriarch of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe, from the Heavenly Court Alliance in the Black Lands! If you dare to kill me, my father won’t let you go! It doesn’t matter where you’re from, or who you are, if you dare to hurt me, you’re dead beyond the shadow of a doubt!!” As he blathered on, the words came more smoothly. This was what he had originally planned to say to Meng Hao. The fact that Meng Hao had asked for the information of his own initiative had thrown his rhythm into a bit of chaos.

“I have no plans to kill you,” said Meng Hao with a chuckle. “You may leave.” Killing a few Nascent Soul Cultivators was a small matter, and as for this man, Meng Hao had no feud with him. It wouldn’t be worth it to kill him.

Besides, he was the heir of a Spirit Severing Patriarch. He would definitely be equipped with life-saving magical items. If Meng Hao really did try to kill him, it would not only be troublesome, but his own identity would also surely be detected. It was not as if Meng Hao had just entered the Cultivation world. He well knew that if Huyan Qing died, then Patriarch Huyan would track him down to kill him. Although he might be able to evade Patriarch Huyan, his identity could not be kept concealed.

When that happened, the whole Golden Crow Clan’s safety would be in danger, and Meng Hao could not allow that to happen.

That was the original reason why he had chosen to allow Sir Wu and the others to leave. Unfortunately, Huyan Qing didn't know what was best for his own good and took advantage of his powerful bodyguards to attack Meng Hao. Meng Hao quickly slaughtered them, and now that Huyan Qing was left on his own, he would presumably be a bit more cool-headed.

Even he knew that some people were not to be provoked.

Meng Hao came to the conclusion that since he hadn't killed the man, he wouldn't harbor further resentment. Huyan Qing had obviously been completely shaken by the scene from earlier.

In addition, Meng Hao left a strand of Divine Sense on Huyan Qing. Once he returned to his father, Patriarch Huyan, the divine sense would be discovered and provide a complete explanation.

Only people of extraordinary intelligence can reach the point of becoming Spirit Severing Patriarchs. Meng Hao was confident that the man would accept the matter silently and not fly into a rage.

“You're not going to kill me?” asked Huyan Qing, staring in shock. All of a sudden, he got the feeling that the reason this person wasn't going to kill him had nothing to do with fear of his father, although he had no idea what the real reason was. Without hesitation, he clenched his teeth and shot away at top speed. As he did, he produced a jade slip which he quickly used to send a summons to other Heavenly Pursuit Tribe members in the area.

Meng Hao ignored Huyan Qing's departure. He once again crossed his legs and began to meditate quietly. He had already decided to wait here quietly before meeting up with Zhixiang to go to the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane.

As he meditated and inspected his seven Nascent Souls, a daring idea suddenly began to form in his mind.

“Right now I have seven Nascent Souls, and a Divine Sense with a range of 29,999 meters. 30,000 meters is the range of Spirit Severing…. I wonder if the possibility exists to form an eighth Nascent Soul? What about nine…? If that happened, and I had a breakthrough in Divine Sense, I would be comparable to the Spirit Severing stage…. Could it be possible that doing so would aid in my understanding of Spirit Severing?” Having reached this point in his train of thought, Meng Hao began to pant a little. His eyes suddenly began to shine brightly. After a moment, though, he realized that such a possibility wasn’t very realistic.

“I really need to think about the matter more closely. After I give it a try, I’ll have a much better idea of how feasible it is. The One Color Soul Procurement Pill is quite interesting. Based on my understanding of the legends, it’s only supposed to be effective once. However, it clearly worked twice for me.” He had thought about this matter earlier, and had thought of a few possible explanations.

Actually, the foundation he had built up would most likely be a rare thing even in ancient times. He had reached the thirteenth level of Qi Condensation, had formed a perfect Foundation with ten Dao Pillars, reached the great circle of the Perfect Gold Core, and had successfully combined the five elements. Although you couldn’t say it was completely unprecedented, it wasn’t far off.

“Furthermore, the three great miraculous medicines are also rare. Even in ancient times, few people would have the chance to consume even one of them. As far as the One Color Soul Procurement Pill goes, consuming two wouldn’t really be very much different than consuming one. Only by consuming a large number would the cumulative effects be seen. Ancient Cultivators would have no way to be so wasteful, so would naturally assume that it would only be effective if consumed once. That would of course be their understanding. Thus, the rise of the legends.” Meng Hao continued to sit there, lost in thought.

Huyan Qing fled for several days without stopping. By now, he had received replies from several Heavenly Pursuit Tribe members, who were now speeding toward him. They should arrive within the amount of time it takes an incense stick to burn.

As of this point, Huyan Qing could finally breathe a sigh of relief. Now that he knew Meng Hao really was going to let him go, he thought back to

Meng Hao’s fearsomeness, and laughed bitterly. The grave terror that he had experienced had enlightened him quite a bit. He felt a touch of resentment, but recalling the terror that was Meng Hao, he breathed a sigh of relief.

“Might as well forget about it,” he thought. “To tell the truth, it was me who provoked him. He might be willing to let me go, but if I keep acting the way I did before, eventually I will run into someone who WILL kill me. Even if my father gets revenge afterwards, that wouldn’t help me at all…. This whole experience is going to be a major turning point in the life of Huyan Qing! From now on, I won’t be like that ever again. I’m going to rise to prominence!”

His eyes filled with a stubborn glow as he made his decision. After he got back to the Tribe, he would immediately go into secluded meditation. He would change his arrogant personality, and would focus everything on increasing his Cultivation base. He would never allow himself to experience such terror again in the future.

However, even as Huyan Qing was murmuring to himself and making his decision, a cold laugh suddenly rang out from behind him.

His face flickered as he spun around. What he saw behind him was a black-robed youth. The instant Huyan Qing saw his face, and the killing intent in his eyes, he could only hoarsely stammer: “You… you said you were going to let me go!”

As soon as the words left his mouth, the black-robe youth grabbed Huayan Qing’s neck and then crushed down viciously.

A cracking sound could be heard. Huyan Qing’s eyes went wide and filled with an unyielding regret, as well as confusion. He didn’t understand why he had been told he would be set free, only to be then tracked down and attacked like this.

He didn’t understand why the life-saving treasures his father had given him didn’t activate….

As his eyes grew dim, death neared and the lights began to fade. He suddenly realized that this person in front of him was different than the fearsome Cultivator from before.

He looked the same, but in truth, there were differences.

However, he could not give voice to any of those thoughts. A boom rang out as his body exploded into a haze of blood.

The black-robed youth smiled, and his eyes filled with a red glow. Just when he was about to make his way off, the Violet Sea beneath him suddenly surged with massive waves. He heard a distant roar of fury coming from within the seawater.

“Dammit, this far away and he can still sense things!? So, he was in the midst of Demonic Transmigration earlier!” The youth’s face fell, and his heart began to pound. His body suddenly disappeared. However, in that moment in which he disappeared, three day’s journey away, Meng Hao sat cross-legged on the surface of the sea, his fury burning. He suddenly shot into the air, the power of a roc exploding out within him. He flew forward at incredible speed. Sonic booms split the air as he shot toward the black-robed youth.

“You dare to try to frame me!?!?”

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# Chapter 533: Chase and Kill!

Meng Hao’s voice seemed to ring out from the Violet Sea itself. It roared like shocking thunder, causing the face of the black-robed youth to instantly fall. He turned and transformed into a streak of black that shot off into the distance.

“If I’d known he could detect me, I would have held off for longer,” said the black-robed youth through gritted teeth. “Dammit… I wasted an opportunity! Now he knows about me earlier than expected!” His face flickered as he pushed forward with all possible speed.

This was none other than the human-form Black Bat Cultivator!

Years ago, he had been astonished by the will of Meng Hao’s Demonic Transmigration and had fled. Later, after sensing that Meng Hao had returned, it cleverly did nothing to attract his attention.

It knew that relying only on its own power to wrest the true spirit sword away from Meng Hao would be difficult. Therefore, it had decided to make use of one person to get rid of another. The result was the death of Huyan Qing.

“Even though he detected me… my plan still worked. Patriarch Huyan will certainly sense his son’s death!” The black-robed youth’s eyes glittered as he pushed forward even faster.

Even as he fled, Meng Hao’s face grew incredibly grim. The power of a roc exploded out around him, transforming into incredible speed. Sonic booms continued to echo out as he shot forward toward the location of the black-robed youth.

The reason why he was able to lock down such a specific location had to do with the Violet Sea, as well as… the strand of divine sense that he had left on Huyan Qing. It didn't matter that the black-robed youth was quite a distance away; he was still directly within Meng Hao's line of sight.

"Who is this person?" thought Meng Hao, his face dark. "Why does he look so much like me? It doesn't seem as if he's in disguise. That seems to be his true appearance…." Meng Hao spent some more time to analyze the young man using the power of his locating technique. After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, his eyes widened.

"The Black Bat!"

Although the Black Bat had changed a lot from before, there was still a faint branding on it, placed there by Meng Hao years ago, and impossible to wipe away.

Meng Hao's eyes glittered with killing intent. Killing Huyan Qing was obviously a bald-faced attempt to frame him, and would be difficult to explain. It would all come down to how Patriarch Huyan chose to react.

Meng Hao's face darkened, and his eyes filled with determination. He chose not to spend any more effort thinking about the situation with Huyan Qing. Instead, he focused all his killing intent on the black-robed youth.

The distance between the two of them grew shorter. Meng Hao's speed seemed without limit. The black-robed youth was also incredibly fast, although he couldn't possibly compare to Meng Hao.

"I'm going to have to change my plan…." he thought. "I can't stay in the Western Desert any more. In any case, even though he discovered my plan to frame him, he still won't be able to catch up to me for another day, no matter how fast he is. One day from now, I won't be in the Western Desert any more!" In the middle of speeding along, the black-robed youth suddenly stopped in place. He looked around, a cold smile on his face as he calculated something on his right hand.

“It should be near here. I discovered the teleportation rift leading to the Milky Way Sea in this area all those years ago. Even if it moved a bit, it can’t be too far away.” His body turned into a flash as he began to search the surroundings.

After enough time passed for two incense sticks to burn, his eyes filled with a happy expression. He stopped in mid air to perform a double-handed incantation, then pointed straight out. Instantly, the air in front of him filled with ripples which spread out in layers to reveal a dim, gray rift.

The rift didn’t seem to be anything remarkable. It was apparently sealed; despite being visible, it flickered as if it were unstable.

“Dammit, the rift is on the verge of dissipating. I need some time to stabilize it before entering…. If I remember correctly, there are three teleportation rifts like this in the Western Desert. The next closest one is about seven days away. There’s not enough time….” The black-robed youth’s face flickered and he ground his teeth. According to his calculations, Meng Hao wouldn’t be able to catch up to him within a day. To repair this rift would take about ten hours.

His eyes flickering, the black-robed youth immediately sat cross-legged next to the rift. He spit out some blue-colored blood which he used to brand the rift. The blood transformed into magical symbols, which, when they landed on the rift, fused into it and began to repair it.

Meng Hao sped along above the surface of the Violet Sea. As soon as he sensed that his target had stopped moving, he couldn’t help but frown.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he realized that the area around the black-robed youth contained the power of teleportation. Unless something happened, a teleportation portal would open up in the area very soon.

“Second Anima!”

Boom!

Two of Meng Hao’s Nascent Souls merged together, causing his battle prowess to leap up, and his body to grow stronger. The power of two great circle Nascent Souls caused his speed to double.

Such speed, combined with the wind power of the roc, caused Meng Hao to move with dramatic speed.

“Third Anima!

“Fourth Anima!

“Fifth Anima!” Meng Hao roared through the air with shocking speed. He went faster, his body grew stronger, and his battle prowess neared its peak.

The combination of the five elements made so that the previous distance of three days between him and the black-robed youth was now reduced to only fourteen hours.

That wasn’t good enough for Meng Hao, though. Every moment that passed was a moment in which his quarry might flee. Meng Hao’s eyes glinted coldly with killing intent as he entered the Sixth Anima.

Roaring could be heard as Meng Hao’s body expanded again. The battle prowess of thirty-two great circle Nascent Souls surged through him, and his speed exploded, doubling yet again.

Cracking could be heard as the air around him shattered. The speed with which he was moving was indescribable. In the blink of an eye, he was tens of thousands of meters away. As of now, he was only about six hours away from his target.

“I can still go faster! Seventh Anima!” With the wave of an arm, he entered the Seventh Anima. Instantly, his appearance became that of an Immortal Devil. He now possessed the battle prowess of sixty-four great circle Nascent Souls. Yet again, his speed increased explosively.

The speed of the Seventh Anima neared that of the Spirit Severing stage. After only two hours passed, Meng Hao seemed to almost teleport across the Western Desert’s Violet Sea. Suddenly, he appeared in the region of the black-robed youth.

By the time he arrived, the black-robed youth had only completed about twenty percent of the necessary repairs on the teleportation rift. Suddenly, he sensed something like a screaming wind. The Violet Sea down below roared and began to swirl into a vortex. An intense sense of deadly crisis suddenly filled the young man, and his heart began to race with fear. Not taking the time to even look behind him, he vanished as he shot off into the distance.

“Who’s chasing me? Don’t tell me it’s Patriarch Huyan! Impossible! When I killed Huyan Qing, I used an ancient time restriction technique. Patriarch Huyan won’t detect his son’s death for another two days.”

The black-robed youth’s heart trembled and his face fell. A gale-force wind screamed toward him from behind with shocking speed. Rumbling filled Heaven and Earth. Within the wind was a tall figure that looked like an Immortal Devil. He moved with shocking speed, and was on top of the black-robed youth in the blink of an eye. The hair on the body of the black-robed youth all stood on end as he looked over his shoulder. His eyes widened, and a grim face could be seen reflected in his pupils, along with an incoming fist.

Having seen Meng Hao’s face, the black-robed youth screeched: “Impossible!!”

BAM!!

Meng Hao’s fist slammed into the young man’s belly. It was a punch delivered when in the Seventh Anima, backed by the battle prowess of sixty-four great circle Nascent Souls. The power exploded out through the body of the black-robed youth.

A massive roar lifted up into the air. Blood sprayed from the young man’s mouth, and his body began to fall apart. His stomach completely caved in, transforming into a mass of mangled, bloody flesh. His entire person shot backward, and continuously coughed up multiple mouthfuls of blood. His expression was one of astonishment and utter disbelief, and his face was pale white.

The power he sensed in Meng Hao was one that could annihilate anything. It was an indescribably fearsome aura that caused him to tremble with incredible fear.

“What’s impossible, bitch?!” said Meng Hao, his body flickering to appear in front of the black-robed youth. “You dare to frame me?!” His right hand clenched into a fist again.

BANG!

The black-robed youth let out a bloodcurdling shriek as he was once again sent tumbling backward. This time, his abdomen literally exploded, ripping off the bottom half of his body, wiping it away in a haze of blood.

The only thing left was his upper torso. Suddenly, his back ripped open, and two huge bat wings unfurled. They virtually blurred as he shot away at high speed.

“Wanna run?” snorted Meng Hao, his eyes flickering with intense killing intent as he continued to stay within the Seventh Anima. The sound of the snort caused the Black Bat turned black-robed youth to cough up more blood. Suddenly, Meng Hao disappeared, only to directly appear behind him. His heart trembled as Meng Hao reached out to grab onto him.

The black-robed youth let out a miserable shriek. He didn’t turn, but rather contracted his wings in an attempt to block Meng Hao’s hand. Killing intent glittered in Meng Hao’s eyes as he casually grabbed both the wings and then pulled hard.

A bloodcurdling scream could be heard as the two wings were completely ripped off of his body. Blood showered from the young man’s mouth. He suddenly flashed, reappearing off in the distance. The bottom half of his body had been ripped off, along with his wings. He was in a dire situation. However, it was at this point that within his left eye suddenly appeared the image of a corpse.

“How can you be so powerful?” he said, his face pale. “This is impossible!!” Even as he spoke, he performed incantation gestures. Suddenly, a ghost image sprang up around him.

Meng Hao flicked his hand to toss away the two wings, then looked coldly at the black-robed youth.

“You backstabbing bastard,” said Meng Hao. “I helped you unseal yourself that year, giving you the power to recover. Despite all that, you still try to secretly harm me?!” With that, Meng Hao blasted forward. He moved so fast that you couldn’t even see him. The only thing that was visible was the black-robed youth tumbling backward again.

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# Chapter 534: Who’s the Fisherman Now?!

It didn’t matter that the Black Bat was something from ancient times. In front of Meng Hao’s Seventh Anima, it was completely incapable of making a counterattack. As it retreated, its body suddenly broke up into countless pieces, transforming into thousands of bats.

The bats instantly scattered in all directions in retreat.

Meng Hao was currently consumed with the desire to kill. He gave a cold snort and then waved his right hand. The Devil Spear appeared in front of him. He slapped it, sending power from his Cultivation base exploding inside. The spear instantly exploded.

The resulting black mist expanded out, filled with innumerable vicious faces that shot toward the fleeing bats and began to consume them.

In the blink of an eye, countless miserable shrieks filled the air. After only a few breaths of time, there were only a few hundred bats left from the original group of thousands.

The remaining bats quickly reformed. A pop rang out as they transformed back into a physical form. This time, it did not look like the black-robed youth, but rather, the enormous Black Bat.

The Black Bat’s eyes were filled with terror. The instant in which it appeared, it tried to flee, but Meng Hao shot forward, appeared directly in front of it. The Black Bat gave a cry of despair as Meng Hao lifted his hand up and pushed a finger down into its forehead. The power of extermination exploded out. It was like layered ripples of destruction that swept through the body of the Black Bat.

Booms rang out ceaselessly as the Black Bat screamed. Its body directly exploded into a haze of blood which spread out in all direction. Only the head remained, which Meng Hao grabbed and put into his bag of holding.

After the death occurred, the surroundings slowly grew quiet and peaceful.

Meanwhile, nearly a year’s travel away in the Western Desert North region, far down at the bottom of the sea, a corpse sat cross-legged.

Half of its body was human, the other half, beastly. This was the creature from which Meng Hao had acquired the third wooden sword in the Crow Divinity Holy Land all those years ago. It was also the same creature that the black-robed youth had absorbed into his left eye and then suppressed.

Now, however, the corpse looked different than before; it had conspicuous bat wings sticking out from its back. It sat there motionless on the seafloor, lifeless, filled with an aura of death that was much like the Violet Sea around it.

Suddenly, the empty eyes of the corpse began to glow with light. The glow grew more and more obvious as an aura of life suddenly rose up within its body. Cracking sounds could be heard as it suddenly moved its neck.

Its rotten lips suddenly curved into a cold smile.

“Petty Cultivator,” said the corpse in a grating voice. “He thinks he’s clever and shrewd, but compared to a spirit like me, he’s nothing. In the moment he was congratulating himself on his victory, I managed to slip out like a cicada shedding its skin.

“He’s definitely powerful, though. Thankfully, I was doubly prepared with an extremely realistic second body. Even the will of that body actually wasn’t aware that my true self was doubly prepared. Too bad it really was killed.

“However, that’s also a good thing. Because he thinks that I’ve perished, I can watch on secretly to see what conflicts develop between him and Patriarch Huyan.

“When the crane and the clam fight, it’s the fisherman who benefits. And I… am the fisherman!” The corpse’s smile grew even colder and grimmer.

This corpse was the true Black Bat. Even as it sat there at the bottom of the sea, Meng Hao was back at the location in which he had killed the black-robed youth, frowning.

Everything had happened too smoothly, almost like water being poured down a gutter. It was like nothing had even happened at all. The profundity of Meng Hao’s Cultivation base made everything incredibly simple.

However, Meng Hao still felt as if something weren’t right.

Muttering to himself, his eyes flickered as he pulled out the Ji Clan fishing rod. The instant he touched the rod, a strange light flickered in his eyes. He watched as the bits of flesh and blood which were scattered around, the remains of the Black Bat, suddenly stopped moving.

On each piece of flesh or blood, Karma threads could be seen. Shockingly, almost all of the Karma threads were heading in the same direction.

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed in concentration. His will began to follow the Karma threads through the air until they sank into the Violet Sea. They continued onward north, to the seafloor, where he finally saw the corpse with its grim smile.

As soon as his gaze fell upon the corpse, its face flickered and it looked up in disbelief.

At the same time, Meng Hao’s will vanished from the Karma threads. He returned to his normal state and put the fishing rod away, his face extremely dark.

“So, something WAS going on!” he said, looking toward the Western Desert North region, killing intent flickering in his eyes.

Back in north, the Black Bat’s eyes shone with a mysterious light, and its expression was one of fear, then suspicious. Finally, it grew even grimmer than before.

“I musn’t underestimate this guy. Just what method did he use to find me so easily? It gives me a very strange feeling.” It rose to its feet thoughtfully, then shot up out from within the Violet Sea.

“It doesn’t matter. I can’t stay here any more. I need to go hide in the Milky Way Sea. This Meng Hao… is too bizarre!” Its body flickered as it flew off into the distance.

A year’s travel away, Meng Hao took a deep breath and then slowly sank back down into the Violet Sea. He sat down cross-legged on the seafloor, his eyes shining with an intense desire to kill.

“I might be far away, but… I still have ways to kill you!” He closed his eyes. In that instant, he sent his will out to combine with the Violet Sea.

As of now, Meng Hao was being incarnated into the Violet Sea in a way much similar to what had occurred when he was in the midst of Demonic Transmigration. This time, he was fundamentally awake, so he would not lose himself.

Because of that, however, he would be incapable of wielding the complete power of the Violet Sea.

The instant in which Meng Hao’s will fused with the Violet Sea, the entire sea instantly churned with enormous waves, and roaring filled the air. In the Western Desert North region, the corpse was speeding along. All of a sudden, streaks of blood appeared on its body. Down below, the Violet Sea roared and transformed into a whirlpool. The corpse’s face instantly fell.

At the same time, a powerful roaring voice could be heard coming from within the whirlpool.

“You want to frame Meng Hao and get away scot free? I don’t think so.” The voice became a roar like that of thunder, causing the corpse’s face to fall even further. It took a deep breath. After pausing for a brief moment, it shot off as fast as possible.

As it fled, the water on the surface of the Violet Sea in the Western Desert North region began to congeal together. A gigantic hand suddenly began to stretch up out from the deep waters. The hand shot up toward the fleeing corpse.

The instant that the hand touched the corpse, the corpse opened its mouth to speak strange, complex words. The words transformed into a power that seemed to be of a different world, filled with ancient archaicness.

BOOM!

The explosive power of the words caused ripples to surround the corpse. Within the ripples could be seen reflections of an ancient world that had existed an indefinite amount of years in the past. The view was indistinct, but a roaring sound filled the air nonetheless.

The Violet Sea hand collapsed. However, the corpse’s aura had clearly been weakened.

Without hesitation, it shot away at top speed. However, even as it did, eight more enormous hands suddenly began to rise up out of the sea, stretching out toward the fleeing corpse to reach toward it.

Booms rose up into the sky and echoed out across the sea waters. The corpse, its face filled with astonishment, spit out some life Qi. It performed a double-handed incantation, causing an undulating power to appear, some type of magical technique Meng Hao had never seen before.

It was formed of numerous bizarre magical symbols, each one of which seemed to pulse with a unique power that the Violet Sea was incapable of resisting.

Down in the Violet Sea, Meng Hao gave a cold snort. Even as the Black Bat corpse, grew weaker and weaker, an enormous face suddenly began to bulge out of the surface of the sea.

The face was none other than Meng Hao’s!

Meng Hao might have been submerged on the bottom of the seafloor, but his will was engaged in fierce battle with the Black Bat corpse.

Meanwhile, back in the Black Lands, in a mountain valley filled with peach blossoms, was the enormous temple gate of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe.

The valley was filled with birdsongs and the lovely fragrance of flowers. It was like a realm of Immortals. In one particular pavilion were two middle-aged men.

One was sitting in meditation, the other was standing. One wore a black robe, the other a white one.

However, their facial features were exactly alike.

The white-robed man sat cross-legged in meditation, unmoving. It seemed as if his will were eternally fused into the world. Unless some shocking event occurred that rocked the entire Heavenly Pursuit Tribe, he would remain there, unwaking.

He was completely immersed in secluded meditation, having spent years stabilizing himself after Severing his first Spirit and recovering the damage to his body.

Generally speaking, daily affairs were handled by his Divine Clone, who was of course the black-robed man who stood there across from him.

The black-robed man’s face was extremely grim as he looked down at the shattered jade slip he held in his hand. His eyes radiated grief, and then… a towering viciousness.

“Someone dared to slay my only son…. He was a bit arrogant, and often handled himself poorly. But… he was my only son, the only son of Huyan

Yunming! It doesn’t matter what he did, no one is qualified to chide him, much less kill him!”

The white-robed man who sat there in meditation was none other than Huyan Qing’s father, the only Spirit Severing Cultivator of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe, Patriarch Huyan.

The black-robed man, the Divine Clone, was also the translucent figure that Huyan Yunming had sent after Meng Hao that year to rob him of the Demon Spirit.

“If someone cuts off the line of Huyan Yunming, then I will exterminate his entire Clan!” The black-robed man flicked his sleeve and disappeared. When he reappeared, he was in mid-air above the Black Lands. His body flickered, and he was then outside of Blackgate Fort. Shockingly, he used greater teleportation again, and was now in mid-air above the Violet Sea

His Divine Sense shot out, sweeping about the area, looking for the location where Huyan Qing had been killed, as well as the person who killed him.

A few hours later, he found the location. As he floated there thoughtfully in mid-air, his face grew grimmer and grimmer. He waved his hand, causing Huyan Qing’s life slip to transform into ash. As the bits of ash floated out to fill the area, they began to glow.

The softly glowing lights began to interlock, transforming into a screen. Visible on the screen was none other than the black-robed youth!

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# Chapter 535: Will of a True Spirit!

Patriarch Huyan looked down at the screen which was formed from the dust of the jade slip, and his eyes began to shine brightly. There was something about the person depicted that seemed familiar. He studied the face for a moment, whereupon his aura suddenly grew dark and cold.

“It’s him…. The totemic Sacred Ancient of the Golden Crow Tribe. He had a second Demon Spirit which I went after, only to be stopped by that strange woman. She left me with no choice but to flee.”

He thought for a moment before his eyes suddenly glittered and he suppressed the grief in his heart. He had suddenly noticed a few odd things.

“Before Qing’er died, none of the lifesaving treasures that I gave him activated. That’s the first strange thing.

“Furthermore, he clearly died a day ago. However, something was deliberately preventing me from detecting the death until now.

“This image is very clear, almost as if this person were deliberately making sure that Qing’er would remember his face.” After thinking for a moment, Patriarch Huyan began to perform an incantation with his right hand. After a long moment passed, he looked up and then vanished.

It wasn’t long before he reappeared in the location where Meng Hao had destroyed Sir Wu and the others. He looked around carefully for a while before his eyes began to glow with killing intent.

“Wu Huai died here, as well as the others… Clearly, they were killed by a Cultivator of the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage. His battle prowess is beyond ordinary.

“However, Qing’er was killed in a different location.” Patriarch Huyan had lived for many years, and was as crafty as a fox. Were he not incredibly intelligent, he would never have been able to achieve the illustrious position of Tribal Patriarch. Based on the clues, he was immediately able to piece together what really happened.

It was obvious to him that the great circle Nascent Soul Cultivator had only killed the men in this location. Afterward, he had allowed Huyan Qing to leave.

“Let’s check the appearance of the person who killed Wu Huai and the others, and everything will be made completely clear.” Patriarch Huyan waved his sleeve, causing the air to ripple. Moments later, another screen appeared, upon which was visible the image of Meng Hao killing Wu Huai.

Although the image was not incredibly clear, Patriarch Huyan recognized Meng Hao at a glance. At the same time, he could see some differences between Meng Hao and the black-robed youth.

“So, it wasn’t the totemic Sacred Ancient of the Golden Crow Clan who killed Qing’er.” Now that he understood this, Patriarch Huyan turned and sent his Divine Sense shooting out in all directions across the Violet Sea.

Unfortunately, he was incapable of sensing Meng Hao down at the bottom of the sea, nor could he detect the fighting that was occurring a year’s travel away in the Western Desert North region. After searching the immediate area, Patriarch Huyan gave up. Face grim, he began to fly back to the Black Lands.

“Although this Meng Hao wasn’t the actual perpetrator, the fact that he was being framed by that strange person shows that the two of them have some sort of connection.

“If I can’t track down the true killer, then I need to find Meng Hao. I’ll use Soul Search on him to discover the identity of the killer. That is how to solve this problem!

“As for Meng Hao, there’s no need to go looking for him. I can force him to be a good boy and come out! Whether or not he lives through the Soul Search has nothing to do with me. He can only blame… his own bad fortune!” Patriarch Huyan’s eyes flickered with killing intent. His plan to force Meng Hao to show his face was simple; he would simply put some pressure on the Golden Crow Clan.

With a cold harrumph, Patriarch Huyan turned; his body flickered as he shot toward the Black Lands.

Meanwhile, booming roars filled air in the Western Desert North Region. Meng Hao’s face rose up from the water. His eyes glowed with a bright light as he stared fixedly at the corpse which hovered in mid-air.

Soon, the somewhat indistinct face had completely emerged from the water. Beneath it was an enormous column of water that surged up toward the corpse, which was incapable of avoiding it. The column of water instantly enveloped the corpse.

There was a boom, and then popping sounds could be heard from inside the body. The corpse’s eyes flickered brightly. It suddenly used some unknown technique to cause its body to shockingly be surrounded by eight glittering magical symbols that resisted the manifestation of the Violet Sea.

After the space of four or five breaths, the water cascaded back down into the sea. Trembling, the corpse spit out a large mouthful of life Qi. Its body was beginning to fall apart. One of its legs directly transformed into ash. Its expression was ferocious as it turned and shot off into the distance.

Meng Hao’s will was locked onto the corpse. Were his true self here, then the corpse would have no hope whatsoever of getting away. At the moment, his will was fused with the Violet Sea. However, because he had not completed the Demonic Transmigration which would have resulted in him losing himself in the process, then the battle prowess he could wield was not sufficient to restrain the corpse.

“If you want to get away, you’ll have to pay the price!” Meng Hao’s face once again appeared on the surface of the water. The eyes of the face flickered, then closed, and suddenly the entire face disappeared. At the same time, drops of violet seawater began to rise up into the air.

Meng Hao’s voice then rang out, filled with killing intent: “Blood Rising!”

Massive amounts of water shot up, covering the sky as it shot toward the corpse.

The corpse’s eyes widened and it immediately began to perform an incantation gesture. Magical symbols poured out of its body, swirling out to meet the incoming seawater. Incredible booming echoed out. The corpse fell back, spitting out mouthfuls of life Qi. In the end, the seawater dispersed, and the corpse heaved a huge sigh. It was just about to continue fleeing off into the distance when suddenly, a gigantic fist shot out from within the sea. The previous mass of water had concealed its presence, so as it moved with incredible speed, the corpse was instantly overwhelmed.

Cracking sounds could be heard, and the corpse emitted a miserable shriek. As it tumbled backward, its other leg exploded, forcing it to flee with only half of a body.

Unfortunately, even as it made to leave, a huge wave appeared in front of it. The seawater then congealed together into an enormous head. The facial features of this head belonged to none other than Meng Hao. This was not just a face, but a full head, fully three thousand meters wide. It rose up out of the depths of the sea to block the path of the Black Bat corpse.

“Dammit!!” The heart of the Black Bat corpse was completely shaken, and its scalp was numb. It began to tremble as it turned and changed directions. It was now thoroughly in fear of Meng Hao. Back when it had planned to frame him, how could it possibly have imagined that even being doubly prepared, it would still be powerless to prevent Meng Hao from killing it.

In fact, Meng Hao wasn’t even here in person. By merely fusing his will into the Violet Sea, he was still able to push the Black Bat into this difficult situation. Because of this, it felt incredible fear of Meng Hao.

Before it could even employ any divine abilities, a roaring sound could be heard as the sea suddenly began to churn. Two gigantic arms composed of vast quantities of seawater rose up from within a boundless whirlpool. The two arms moved with astonishing speed as they suddenly clapped their hands toward the Black Bat corpse.

Each of these speeding hands was several hundred meters long, and kicked up a huge wind, along with mighty waves. It was as if the entire area was sealed. The Black Bat corpse was terror-stricken. The shadow of death seemed to loom up within its heart.

In this moment of grave crisis, the Black Bat corpse suddenly lifted its head back and let out a mournful shriek. “Bat Asura True Spirit!!”

Suddenly, a black beam shot out of its forehead.

As soon as the beam appeared, everything began to tremble. The Violet Sea shook, and something like a ghost image of the entire world suddenly appeared. A power that seemed to stem from an otherworldly aura instantly shot out from the forehead of the Black Bat corpse.

Meanwhile… in the starry sky outside of Planet South Heaven was an enormous altar. The altar had been circling around South Heaven for innumerable years. This was Planet South Heaven’s most mysterious…

Immortality Bestowal Dais! 1

The vast collection of names carved into the Immortality Bestowal Dais suddenly began to flicker with glowing light. An archaic aura was awakening!

The rumble of an ancient voice, filled with countless years, suddenly could be heard. “The will of a true spirit. An actualized body in South Heaven…. So, a true spirit Immortal Murdering Sword must have appeared in the world! As to whether or not I am a false Immortal, I should be able to find out after receiving a stab from that sword!”

Meanwhile, back in the Western Desert, the Black Bat was letting out a miserable howl. The black beam emanating from its forehead gradually expanded, enveloping its entire head, seemingly growing weaker as it did.

At the same time the two arms of seawater grew closer. Two gigantic hands slapped down onto the Black Bat corpse.

A huge boom could be heard. An intense aftershock spread out, causing the two hands to collapse into pieces, along with the arms. The water cascaded back down into the sea. The head of Meng Hao, which appeared almost to be bleeding from its orifices, also shattered.

Simultaneously, the Black Bat corpse completely exploded, with the exception of its head. Its head continued to emit a black glow as it shot off like a meteor. A shrill, hateful shriek could be heard as it disappeared.

The instant it disappeared, the huge waves on the surface of the sea died down. Everything returned to normal. Meng Hao retracted his will from the Violet Sea. Back in the location where his true self sat cross-legged in meditation, a tremor suddenly ran through his body. His face was pale white as he retreated from the Seventh Anima to the First. His eyes snapped open.

“It’s too bad I couldn’t completely destroy that Demonic thing. If my true self had been there it would have been a different story…. That having been said, it was seriously injured. It’s going to take it quite a bit of time to recover. Next time we meet, I’ll definitely kill it!” His eyes shone with a bright light, and his jaw was set with determination.

“Just what power was it that it used at the end…. It was very strange.” Lost in thought, he looked down at his bag of holding. As of this moment, he could clearly sense that one of his Immortal Murdering Swords was filled with an intense, trembling yearning.

“Perhaps I can get some answers about these wooden swords from that Black Bat.” Meng Hao shot up and was about to emerge from the sea when suddenly, his eyes widened and he sank back down. Without hesitation, he fused his will into the Violet Sea, concealing himself.

It was at this moment that an ancient Divine Sense from far up in the Heavens suddenly began to sweep across the Western Desert. It seemed to be looking for something, but was thankfully obstructed by the Violet Sea. Because Meng Hao was currently merged with the Violet Sea and also concealed inside of it, the intrepid Divine Sense passed by and didn’t detect him. Instead, it began to move in the direction the Black Bat had fled in.

The power of the Divine Sense reminded Meng Hao of the eight Immortals he had seen outside the Realm of the Bridge Ruins that year!

“What was it looking for?” he thought, his eyes glittering. He did not leave, but rather, sat there for several more days. During that time, the Divine Sense appeared three more times; clearly it was looking for something. However, after several more days passed, it completely vanished.

Meng Hao waited even longer. When he was sure that the Divine Sense was truly gone, he shot up out of the sea to stand on its surface. By this point, he had a vague sense that the Divine Sense from up in the Heavens had been looking for the Immortal Murdering Sword!

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# Chapter 536: Everything had Changed!

Meng Hao slowly reached up to slap his bag of holding. Instantly, a head appeared in his hand. This was the head of the black-robed youth form of the Black Bat.

Although, at this point it actually didn't look much like a human, but rather, more like a bat. Its eyes were blank, but there was still a bit of terror and despair visible within them. Anyone who looked at it would definitely have an indescribable, violent reaction.

Meng Hao had intentionally kept the head for the purpose of resolving any unnecessary disputes. Huyan Qing's death had been perpetrated by the Black Bat with the specific intention of framing him. Meng Hao had no idea of knowing whether Patriarch Huyan would be able to sort through the clues. Therefore, he kept the head to be able to answer any questions.

His body turned, flickering as he headed toward one of the Western Desert Violet Sea's ten outpost cities that he had become aware of when his consciousness was merged with the sea.

The nearest one was the seventh outpost.

"All of the outposts are guarded by Black Lands Cultivators. Obviously, the only people who would have the resources to build such towering outposts as these would be backed by the Heavenly Court Alliance.

"I'll deliver the head up there. There will certainly be people who can then send it to Patriarch Huyan." Meng Hao moved along at top speed for three days. It was at that point that off in the distance he noticed a collection of what looked like airships floating above the water, roped together to form a crude outpost.

There were quite a few wooden structures built on top of them, and what appeared to be over a thousand Cultivators. The hubbub of voices and conversations echoed out across the waters, making the whole scene very lively.

There were a handful of Cultivators patrolling the perimeter with cold expressions. They wore black robes embroidered with decorations of butterflies flying within layers of clouds. These were of course the city guards.

Cultivators often engaged in trade here. The powers in the Black Lands planned to use these outposts as a foundation to build hundreds more such locations in the coming years.

There were of course spell formations protecting the outpost from Divine Sense. Unless Meng Hao went past the First Anima, he would have difficulty extending his Divine Sense inside.

Meng Hao neared the city at around noontime. His approach instantly attracted the attention of the Cultivators in the outpost, especially the city guards, whose eyes went wide. Meng Hao’s great circle Nascent Soul Cultivation base instantly put them on guard. They did nothing to block his way, instead allowing him to enter the city unobstructed.

As soon as he entered the city, Meng Hao could feel the power of a spell formation sweep over him, much like Divine Sense. It covered his entire body, then suddenly paused, as if it were preparing to lock him down in place so that he couldn’t move.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever. He had come for the Heavenly Court Alliance. If the people here were looking for him specifically, then it meant that in response to Huyan Qing’s death, Patriarch Huyan had made advanced preparations. It would also mean that he knew Meng Hao’s identity.

If nobody was specifically seeking him out, then that would provide some additional food for thought.

Even as Meng Hao arrived, two old men sat meditating in a particularly luxurious airship among the numerous airships that made up the outpost.

One of the men wore a long red robe, and was of the late Nascent Soul stage. The other old man next to him wore a black black gown, and had some brightly colored totem tattoos on his face. His eyes were closed, and he emanated the fluctuations of a Nascent Soul Cultivation base that was nearing the great circle, but was still some distance away.

These two men were the most powerful experts dispatched to this location by the Heavenly Court Alliance.

As soon as Meng Hao stepped foot into the outpost, a flickering, glowing screen suddenly appeared in front of the two old men.

They both opened their eyes to look at the screen, whereupon they saw Meng Hao.

On the screen, Meng Hao was surrounded by pulsing red lights. The lights were not coming from Meng Hao, but rather, the outpost's spell formation. They were marking out his location!

"Level red on the wanted list…. This person…."

"It's him! That's the guy that Patriarch Huyan personally put onto the wanted list a few days ago." The eyes of the two old men widened as they looked at each other. Both of them had expressions of concentration and thoughtfulness.

"I remember that according to the information on the wanted list, if you notify Patriarch Huyan, you can acquire a magical item personally created by him! And if you capture this man alive, then Patriarch Huyan will owe a personal debt!"

The fires of anticipation burned within the eyes of the two men. They were clearly both thinking the same thing.

They looked at each other for a moment, and their faces filled with determination. As Cultivators, they did not fear danger. What they feared was lacking the courage to face danger. After all, great rewards… come only from facing great danger!

Earning a personal debt from a Spirit Severing Patriarch was definitely worth facing danger in this situation. Even though this Cultivator seemed to have a strange Cultivation base that was at the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage, they had the cooperation of other Nascent Soul Cultivators, plus the spell formation. It was not an impossible task.

“Activate the spell formation!”

“All Nascent Soul Cultivators, the time has come to make our move!”

Almost at the same moment in which all the Nascent Soul Cultivators in the seventh outpost were receiving the message of the two old men, Meng Hao was walking through the crowds in the middle of the outpost. He looked around at all the hustle and bustle, somewhat in a trance. Now that he thought about it, he had just emerged from more than a hundred years of secluded meditation.

“More than a hundred years….” He sighed softly. Memories slowly flooded up like the tide. Suddenly, he recalled all the familiar faces he had seen when he was fused with the Violet Sea.

He thought about that teardrop.

Filled with melancholy, he walked through the outpost until he was nearing its far edge. It was at this point that he suddenly stopped in place and looked up. For the first time in more than a hundred years… a tremor of anger ran through his body.

Up ahead of him, hanging from a rack… were more than fifty people.

More than fifty people. Many were gasping and on the verge of death. Half, though, were actually dead. Their corpses hung there, exposed to the elements, surrounded by an aura of death.

Their bodies were covered with scars and bruises. It was impossible to say how much torment they had endured. Those who hadn’t died wore vacant expressions, as if they were looking at something far, far away.

None of them emitted any wails or screams. All of them maintained silence.

One of the people was an old woman. Her face was wrinkled, her body withered and covered with lash marks, her hair pure white. She was clearly in very sore straits. However, if you looked closely, you could tell that when this woman had been young, she had been beautiful.

She gazed off into the distance, her eyes filled with despair. It was hard to tell what she was thinking. However, her heart clearly burned with an ever burning life force. It was as if her heart raged with incredible hatred.

A roaring sound filled Meng Hao’s mind, and an intense, unprecedented coldness filled his face, the likes of which hadn’t appeared for more than a hundred years. Even when facing the Black Bat, Meng Hao’s fury was nothing compared to the feeling he was experiencing now.

His body trembled as his rage began to reach a pinnacle, a place where he could not control it. Coldness began to radiate off him in pulses. Ice appeared on the wooden planks beneath his feet, and enormous waves began to roll across the surface of the Violet Sea outside the outpost.

His brain suddenly filled with memories of the past.

“Senior, this is my older sister, Wu Ling.”

“If you dare to deceive my little brother, then I won’t rest until you’re dead!”

“Senior, I, Wu Ling, am willing to do anything for my younger brother, anything! I can even be your….” The echoing voice in his mind seemed to transform into the old woman in front of him.

She had once been nothing but a young girl. The passage of time, however, had transformed her beauty into ancientness.

Meng Hao was just barely able to recognize this old woman as none other than… Wu Ling!

As for the other people who were hanging on the racks, Meng Hao recognized four or five of them. They were none other than… members of the Golden Crow Tribe!

As Meng Hao looked at the members of the Golden Crow Tribe, some of the surrounding Cultivators watched on and sighed. They glanced at the hanging Golden Crow Tribe members and talked about them in low voices.

“There are members of the Golden Crow Black Dragon Clan hanging in all of the ten outposts. They shouldn’t have provoked the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe and Patriarch Huyan.”

“The real one to blame is their former totemic Sacred Ancient. He actually killed Patriarch Huyan’s only son. That’s simply too much of a provocation. All of the powers in the Black Lands were completely astonished when it happened.”

“Heh heh. This collection of corpses and half-dead Cultivators is all to force the old Golden Grow Tribe totemic Sacred Ancient to show his face. If I remember correctly, his name is Meng Hao, right?”

“I even heard that the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe made an announcement that for every day Meng Hao doesn’t show up, the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe will kill one hundred members of the Golden Crow Tribe.”

The words stabbed into Meng Hao’s heart like sharp knives. His heart felt as if it were being ripped open. His face was pale white, and the ice beneath his feet grew even thicker.

His breath came in sharp stabs, and his eyes filled with veins of blood and a glow of red.

He had never imagined that Patriarch Huyan would actually… do something so heartless. Such deeds showed that he completely disregarded Meng Hao. This was the action of someone who felt himself to be in a position of vast superiority. Even though he knew that the crime had not been committed by Meng Hao, he still dragged him into the issue.

“Golden Crow Tribe….” The roaring of the Violet Sea grew even more intense. Quite a few of the Cultivators were looking out in astonishment. There were also some who had noticed that something seemed a little bit off about Meng Hao.

Among the group of fifty hanging on the racks, Wu Ling suddenly seemed to sense something. With great effort, she turned her head and… looked at Meng Hao.

The instant she saw him, an expression of shock filled her face.

Slowly, a smile spread out. Meng Hao looked at her, his expression one of guilt, but mostly, of unsurpassable fury.

As of this moment, the hushed conversations in the area had been interrupted by the churning of the Violet Sea. There were two sentences, however, which rung out into Meng Hao’s ears.

“The Golden Crow Black Dragon Clan actually split because of this matter. The Black Dragon Tribe took the opportunity to once again stand on their own. The Golden Crow Tribe barely managed to escape complete calamity. I heard that the the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe actually went to war with them, and that the war is still raging even as we speak. There is no clear winner right now, but recently, the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe managed to capture about five hundred members of the Golden Crow Tribe.”

“The Golden Crow Tribe is still amazing, though. They are even more powerful than the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe anticipated. The Heavenly Pursuit

Tribe has suffered quite a few casualties, and finally mobilized their entire Tribe to go to war.”

After hearing these words, the roaring Violet Sea outside the outpost suddenly exploded up. The coldness beneath Meng Hao’s feet swept out in all directions, covering the entire outpost.

Everything had changed!

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# Chapter 537: Awaken, Mastiff!

Meng Hao’s body trembled and his mind filled with roaring. Intense fury exploded out from within his heart.

“Heavenly Pursuit Tribe!!

“Huyan Yunming, you cretin!!”

The Violet Sea roared and coldness spread out in all directions, causing something that appeared like snowflakes to appear in the air. Within the outpost, all of the Cultivators were incapable of preventing a shudder from passing through their bodies. As for the ones near Meng Hao, they started to shake as they looked over at Meng Hao.

Figures appeared, surrounding Meng Hao, nine Nascent Soul Cultivators. The two old experts who were in charge of the outpost also appeared, floating in mid-air.

Next, the spell formation in the outpost activated completely. Roaring sounds echoed about as the entire area was enveloped with an enormous pressure that constantly pushed down on Meng Hao.

“Meng Hao,” said the black-robed old man, “you ruthlessly slaughtered Conclave members of the Heavenly Court Alliance. Now you dare to show your face in this outpost? We have come here today to take your head!” Even as his voice echoed about the city, dozens of Alliance members appeared in the area. They sat there cross-legged, maintaining the rotation of the spell formation.

Meng Hao’s eyes were bright red, and his heart dripped with blood. He did not kill Huyan Qing; in fact, in an attempt to prevent any misunderstandings, he annihilated the Black Bat and brought its head to offer explanation.

He simply didn't believe that Patriarch Huyan, with his level of Cultivation base and powers of insight, would not be able to read the clues surrounding Huyan Qing's death. Now he could see clearly that the damnable Huyan had no intention of discussing matters rationally.

"Patriarch Huyan, since you're so dead set on dragging me into the matter, then… go ahead and consider Huyan Qing to have been killed by Meng Hao!" Setting his jaw with determination, he slapped his bag of holding to produce the head of the Black Bat. Before, he had viewed the head as all the proof needed to explain things clearly. Now, he simply waved his hand, causing it to explode into ash.

As the head transformed into ash, the killing intent in Meng Hao's eyes exploded to incredible heights. His aura suddenly became icy to a shocking extent.

"Heavenly Pursuit Tribe, as long as I, Meng Hao, am alive on this earth, I will wipe out your Tribe and all your bloodlines!" With that, Meng Hao waved his sleeve, causing a powerful wind to kick up. It swept the dozens of Golden Crow Tribe members up off the racks and then deposited them on the ground.

After that, the wind transformed into life force, which nourished Wu Ling and the others, restoring them to health. As for the dead Tribe members, there was nothing that could be done for them now.

Including Wu Ling, there were four or five original Crow Divinity Tribe members who had traveled the long campaign trail with Meng Hao. When they saw Meng Hao, their bodies trembled and their eyes filled with intense excitement and determination. They immediately knelt and kowtowed to Meng Hao.

In the loudest voices they could possibly muster, they shouted out, releasing all the pressure and hope that existed within their hearts.

"Greetings, Sacred Ancient!!"

The other Tribe members were people who had been born in the past hundred years. They had never seen Meng Hao before, but they had seen his statue. Now that they were able to personally lay eyes on this most senior member of the Tribe, they began to tremble. Their faces pale, they ignored the weakened state of their body to drop to their knees and kowtow. They too shouted:

"Greetings, Sacred Ancient!!"

Their voices echoed out in all directions. When you added the words spoken by the black-robed old man, whose tone made it sound as if he were facing a mortal enemy, the rest of the Cultivators in the seventh outpost felt their hearts shaking. Their eyes went wide as they looked at Meng Hao. Now that they thought about it, all of them had heard legends about Meng Hao during the past hundred years.

Without a single exception, the legends spoke of how Meng Hao had single-handedly led his Tribe out from the Western Desert North region.

"That really is Meng Hao!!"

"The totemic Sacred Ancient of the Golden Crow Tribe! So, that's him!"

As Meng Hao's aura billowed up, and the surrounding Cultivators recognized who he was, cries of alarm could be heard. The faces of the nine Nascent Soul Cultivators from the Heavenly Court Alliance, as well as the two old men, instantly changed. They clenched their teeth and attacked, shooting directly toward Meng Hao.

At the same time, the roaring power of the spell formation descended onto Meng Hao. It was like some sort of intense pressure that caused his Cultivation base to weaken, limiting him to the mid Nascent Soul stage.

This was the full power of a spell formation that had been constructed by a Spirit Severing Patriarch of the Heavenly Court Alliance. Its power was extraordinary. Were it not, it wouldn’t have been set up as the ultimate weapon of the great outpost.

Even someone of the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage would be severely weakened by the intense pressure from the spell formation. It was also this incredible power that caused the two old men stationed here to be so confident in being able to fight Meng Hao!

At the same time that the power of the spell formation descended, eleven Nascent Soul Cultivators appeared near Meng Hao, filled with killing intent. A blast of brilliant color could be seen as magical items, divine abilities, magical techniques, and totems were all unleashed in attack.

“You might be a totemic Sacred Ancient, but once you enter our outpost’s spell formation, your fate is sealed…. You’re dead for sure!” Cold laughter rang out, only to be interrupted by a shocking roar that exploded out from none other than Meng Hao.

As the sound roared out, Meng Hao’s voice could be heard, filled with sinister coldness and killing intent: “Third Anima!”

His voice could be heard almost at the same time that the attacks of the incoming eleven Nascent Soul Cultivators appeared. These men were clearly going all out against Meng Hao. It was also then that all of their faces instantly flickered, and their hearts filled with an unprecedented feeling of terror. The feeling was such that they had no choice but to instantly retreat.

As they retreated, the light caused by the various divine abilities and magical items dissipated to reveal, right there in the middle of the spell formation, a man who looked like somewhat like an Immortal Devil. Meng Hao!

His hair whipped about his head. Now that he was in the Third Anima, he was filled with the power of four great circle Nascent Soul Cultivators. The spell formation which enveloped him, while previously invisible, could now be seen in the form of a large net.

The net glittered brightly and emitted groaning sounds as if it were under great strain. Popping sounds rang out, and fissures appeared. As the fissures spread out, Meng Hao's aura exploded out fearsomely. The aura caused all of the Cultivators in the city to be completely astonished.

That was especially true of the eleven Nascent Soul Cultivators. Their faces immediately filled with looks of disbelief, and they gasped. They couldn't imagine how a Nascent Soul Cultivator could possibly fight back so strongly against the spell formation. From the look of it… the spell formation would be able to pin him down for only a very short period of time.

Unfortunately for them… their guesses were incorrect. Even as their faces fell and they speculated that Meng Hao wouldn't be held in the spell formation for very long, the gigantic web suddenly collapsed into pieces and vanished.

As the spell formation vanished, the entire outpost suddenly shook. Blood sprayed from the mouths of the ten Alliance Tribe members who had been maintaining the spell formation. A moment later, their bodies directly exploded, transforming into hazes of blood and gore.

The spell formation was simply not qualified to hold out against Meng Hao. In the blink of an eye, it was completely destroyed.

The moment the spell formation was wiped out, Meng Hao strode forward and waved his arm toward the astonished eleven Nascent Soul Cultivators.

The waving of his arm caused four times the battle prowess of a great circle Nascent Soul to explode out. It fused into the raging wind and exploded out. Bloodcurdling screams drifted out as nine of the eleven Nascent Soul Cultivators… were incapable of avoiding a force like that of crushing mountain. They could not dodge, nor could they resist. The wind cleaved the flesh from their bones and wiped away their screaming Nascent Souls.

Nine people… dead in an instant!!

Blood sprayed from the mouths of the most powerful Cultivators, the two old men, as they tumbled backward.

“Just what kind of Cultivator is he!?!?”

“That’s not an ordinary great circle Nascent Soul Cultivation base…. That’s halfway to Spirit Severing!”

As they tumbled backward, their physical bodies were shredded into pieces, leaving behind only their Nascent Souls. Letting out unprecedented shrieks of regret, they spared nothing in their attempts to flee at top speed, their hearts filled with ultimate terror.

The scene caused the rest of the Cultivators in the city to be filled with shock. They began trembling, their gazes filled with intense alarm and astonishment as they looked at Meng Hao.

He stood there, tall, hair flying about, his aura shocking to the extreme. The berserk aura of an Immortal Demon rose up, filled with killing intent. All of his fury had transformed into the desire to kill. All of that killing intent was focused on one thing…

Wiping out the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe!

If you kill one of my people, I’ll kill a hundred of yours. You kill a hundred of mine, I will wipe out all of yours!

I didn’t want to fight. I wanted to resolve the issue. I even came to this place with the head of the Black Bat for that very purpose. But, you place yourself on a pedestal. You believe yourself to be invincible. You saw no reason to talk reasonably with me. Well then, I might as well go to war!

Meng Hao’s body suddenly flew up into the air. His eyes were red as he looked toward the two fleeing old men. He did not pursue them. Instead, he closed his eyes. His fury, his desire to kill, his determination, all transformed into an intense stimulation. It was a stimulation like tidewaters which poured into the blood-colored mask that rested inside his bag of holding. It reached inside and touched… the Blood Mastiff which had been asleep for nearly two hundred years!

It had now slept until the point that it was ready to awaken. The sensation had continued to grow stronger to Meng Hao after the Heavenly Tribulation. At that time, he felt that even without outside stimulation, the Mastiff would awaken within a few months.

“I need you, my mastiff….

“Awaken, my Blood Mastiff…. Together, we will bring war to the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe!

“Mastiff… AWAKEN!”

In that moment, the blood-colored mask inside his bag of holding began to shudder. The mastiff could sense Meng Hao’s wrath. It could feel how much he desired to slaughter the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe. It could tell that Meng Hao needed it.

In that moment, a tremor ran through the mastiff’s body. The blood-colored eyes which it had not opened for nearly two hundred years, suddenly… completely opened!

The mastiff had awakened!

As soon as it opened its eyes, a boundless bloody glow erupted out from Meng Hao. It filled the sky in all directions, rapidly covering the entire area.

Before the two fleeing Nascent Souls could get very far, they were covered over by the bloody light. Piercing screams could be heard as the Nascent Souls melted into nothingness.

There is a phrase that goes like this: “rewards come only with risk.” However, there is a second line to the phrase: “Risk can also bring death!”

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# Chapter 538: Blood Mastiff Dao Protector!

Even as the two Nascent Souls died, the red glow, which filled the surrounding tens of thousands of meters, transformed into a red mist. The mist churned and seethed, rising up into the air in shocking fashion.

It changed; no longer was it wide and flat, but rather, spherical. In fact, from a distance, it looked like… an enormous red eyeball!

Anyone who looked at the eye would feel extreme fear and shock, and would even lose the ability to think clearly. The sight would cause the brain to fill with roaring, as if one were in the middle of a sea of blood, incapable of freeing oneself.

It seemed as if in this instant, all lives became the color of blood.

The eye was incredibly realistic, and was filled with a strange, demonic air. Red mist seethed, as if the eye were blinking. It was frightening to the extreme. In the very center of the gigantic eyeball appeared a vortex. It spun rapidly, transforming into a black hole.

The black hole seemed capable of consuming anything and everything. As soon as it appeared, the air in the area distorted, as if all the light in the area were being sucked in. Anyone who could see the scene would be horrified.

As the vortex spun, the black hole grew larger. 30 meters. 150 meters. 300 meters… 900 meters. In the end, it expanded outward until it was no less than 3,000 meters.

A red eye 30,000 meters wide. A black hole 3,000 wide, like a pupil. The vortex was the border between the pupil and the eye.

All of this completely shocked everyone who was in the outpost. The local Cultivators were trembling, their expressions that of utter astonishment and disbelief.

“What is that?!?!”

“The Nascent Soul Cultivators are all dead, and it only took a moment! This Meng Hao… he’s… just what level Cultivation base does he have?!”

“Just what horrifying thing is he summoning?!”

Cold sweat began to drip down the foreheads of everyone present, and their breath came in ragged pants. A profound sense of deadly crisis filled their hearts. As of this moment, they were filled with an indescribable dread of Meng Hao. It was like they were in a nightmare from which they couldn’t awaken, something that would be forever branded in their souls.

The surrounding Violet Sea was covered with huge waves. From within the black hole in the enormous eye, a roar could suddenly be heard.

AAAOOOOO!

The roar sounded like the howl of some type of beast. Everything shook and the air vibrated. The pupil within the gigantic red eye seemed to contract and then rapidly expand. Everything distorted, and the crowds of people in the outpost felt their hearts shaken.

It was a single roar, but it was as shocking as thunder. As it echoed out in the world, half of the people within the outpost began to bleed from their eyes, nose, mouth and ears, and then passed out, unconscious.

They were simply incapable of resisting the roar, which contained a Cultivation base power capable of filling the heart and mind with shock. One sound was filled with such intense pressure that it rendered people unconscious.

Cracking sounds could be heard coming from the airships and wooden planks that made up the outpost. The entire structure began to sink down. The surrounding Violet Sea churned violently, as if it, too, were roaring in response to the the howl coming from the red eye.

The remaining Cultivators who had not been rendered unconscious all had extraordinary Cultivation bases. However, their faces were pale as they expended incredible effort to endure. Their Cultivation bases rotated and they panted as they stared at the scene up above.

The instant the roar could be heard, a gigantic paw began to stretch out from the black hole. It had razor-sharp claws and luxuriant, long fur. The paw continued to stretch out revealing an entire limb.

The long hair flowed loosely and was filled with a barbaric, wild air, and the claws seemed capable of ripping the air open. Another ear-splitting roar could suddenly be heard from within the black hole.

A second paw appeared from within the black hole, and then a gigantic head. The roar shook everything.

The head was… incredibly large!

Red fur, ferocious fangs, and a savage, barbaric aura that exploded out.

The head was clearly that of a dog!

It waved back and forth, as if it were using all the power it could muster to emerge from the black hole. It surged forward, emerging in full, accompanied by a Heaven-shaking roar.

All that could be seen was a beam of red light that shot out violently from within the black hole. A vast, red mist rose up, and then just as quickly, disappeared. When it did, an enormous red figure could be seen standing there, straight and mighty.

It was huge, covered with loose, red fur. Bone spurs stuck out all over its body, making its appearance even more ferocious. Its gaze was filled with bloodthirstiness, like a Qilin or a Bloodlion. The level of incredible fierceness that it emanated was difficult to describe!

This was… the Blood Mastiff!

As soon as it appeared, an aura similar to the Spirit Severing stage exploded out from its body, and even emanated the feeling of a Domain. Meng Hao knew that this Domain was not inherently the mastiff’s, but rather, branded to it by the Blood Immortal as part of its bloodline, and the Blood Immortal legacy.

Such a brand existed in all Blood Spirits. However, because of the unprecedented fusion it had experienced, it was able to completely manifest it. It was for the same reason that the mastiff had fallen asleep for nearly two hundred years. Now, though, it was fully awakened.

The mastiff lifted its head and roared, a sound which shook Heaven and Earth. The sky dimmed and everything trembled. The Violet Sea seethed. All of the Cultivators who remained conscious in the outpost passed out.

Meng Hao looked at the mastiff, at its enormous frame, its fierce appearance, and its intrepid Cultivation base. However, even if the mastiff grew more fierce in appearance, to Meng Hao, it was the same, fluffy little puppy that had run along at his side all those years ago.

It was still his partner, the partner who had fought with him in the Blood Immortal legacy tournament, and had refused to leave his side.

It was the same mastiff who had stood guard over him atop that lonely mountain in the Blood Immortal legacy tournament. No matter how exhausted or injured it grew, even when it was on the verge of death, it refused to leave. It put its own life on the line to protect Meng Hao. Even when exhausted and nearing the point of death, all it wanted was for Meng Hao to lift his hand and pet its head.

Meng Hao would never forget all of that. He had watched as the mastiff, its body broken and nearly destroyed, crawled over to him and then exerted all the effort it could muster just to lick his hand.

Then he thought about how it had saved him during the encounter with the Li Clan Patriarch, using all its power to fling him out of the portal. Innumerable hands had stretched out to grab it, and it was pulled down into the sludge. Just before it disappeared, it had stuck its tongue out, as if in a final attempt to lick its master.

How could Meng Hao… possibly forget such things?!

“Blood Mastiff,” he said softly, looking at the gigantic, ferocious mastiff. He saw the shocking spurs, and the astonishing aura it emanated.

His voice was soft, but the instant it left his mouth, the mastiff suddenly trembled. It turned its head and looked in confusion toward Meng Hao. But then, its expression turned gentle, even happy. It slowly lowered its head, allowing Meng Hao to rub its nose. It carefully extended its tongue to lick Meng Hao’s hand.

As Meng Hao rubbed its nose, it emitted a contented growl, just like it had when it was tiny.

Meng Hao smiled as he gently pet the mastiff. He thought about that time outside the Rebirth Cave when the mastiff, despite being asleep, had exerted all the power it could to extend a single paw.

“Hey buddy, I haven’t seen you for more than a hundred years….” he said softly. “Let’s go wipe out that damned Heavenly Pursuit Tribe!” His killing intent suddenly boiled up. At the same time, the mastiff’s killing intent exploded to the sky. It roared, the sound of which was like thunder. Meng Hao leaped up into the air, flying up to stand on the mastiff’s head. He waved his right hand, causing a massive wave to sweep out and pick up the Golden Crow Tribe members, as well as the bodies of their dead.

Under Meng Hao’s control, the Violet Sea’s power of extermination was restricted, ensuring that the Golden Crow Tribe members would not be harmed in any way.

Meng Hao looked at Wu Ling and the others. “We’re going together. There’s a debt of blood that can only be paid back… with blood!”

As soon as the words left his mouth, the mastiff roared again and then shot up into the sky, taking Meng Hao with it. Wu Ling and the other old-timers felt their blood beginning to grow hot, just like it had in the old days. They and the other Tribe members shot forward within the wave.

They did not leave for the Black Lands. Instead, they went to the nearest outpost, the ninth.

Under the orders of Patriarch Huyan, the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe had gone to war with the Golden Crow Tribe in order to force Meng Hao out. It had cost them quite a bit, but in the first battle, they had managed to capture five hundred prisoners. Those captives had been subjected to endless forms of torture. Their Cultivation bases had been ruined, and they were then sent to the ten outposts in the Western Desert Sea to be strung up!

They were hung out in the open, exposed to the elements. The entire purpose… was so that Meng Hao would see it. In Patriarch Huyan's estimation, once Meng Hao saw, he would be forced to appear.

If he didn't, then his totems would be severely weakened and he would lose his faith power. In actuality, Meng Hao had long since reached the point where he didn't need either of those. He had successfully formed his Nascent Soul. As such, he was both a totemic Sacred Ancient, and… wasn't.

In any case, Patriarch Huyan had severely miscalculated. Meng Hao… would definitely appear.

However, the reason was because of sentiment, and because of the Golden Crow Tribe!

"Our slaughter… will begin with the ten outposts on the Violet Sea!"

The mastiff roared as it shot forward with the incredible speed of Spirit Severing. Meng Hao stood on top of its head, the wind whipping his clothes about. The killing intent in his eyes only continued to grow thicker, and his determination to exterminate the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe grew even stronger.

BOOM!

The second outpost soon became visible. After consulting with the former members of the Crow Divinity Tribe, he now knew that although the tenth outpost belonged to the Heavenly Court Alliance, it was mostly controlled by the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe.

The second, fifth, and ninth outposts were all the same. As for the seventh outpost which Meng Hao had already destroyed, the blame for that could be placed squarely on the shoulders of the two old men who had tried to kill him.

“I don’t care what Tribe they belong to,” said Meng Hao, his eyes glowing coldly, “anyone who dares to string up my Golden Crow Tribe members… deserves to die!”

There was no need for an order from Meng Hao. The Blood Mastiff’s eyes glowed with red light as it neared the second outpost.

AAAAOOOOOOOO!!

The sound of the roar created a sonic boom which sent mad, invisible power sweeping out. As it slammed into the outpost, a spell formation activated. However, it could only stand up to the roar for the space of a single breath before it collapsed into pieces.

At the same time, the Cultivators of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe within the outpost began to fly into the air, looks of shock on their faces. Before they could even react, a gale force wind swept toward them. Each and every Cultivator was instantly shredded into pieces, completely destroyed in body and soul.

An off-kilter roar of despair rose up from within the outpost. It belonged to a Cultivator who was at the peak of the late Nascent Soul stage. His body was trembling, and he was surrounded by the reek of blood. To see so many people slaughtered in front of his eyes was like something from a nightmare.

He knew that for a single roar to do that could only mean that he was facing… Spirit Severing!

“Your Excellency, who are you? We are Cultivators from the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe of the Heavenly Court Alliance!”

“I am the totemic Sacred Ancient of the Golden Crow Tribe, Meng Hao. I’m here to save my people and to eradicate the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe!”

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# Chapter 539: Slaughtering the Outposts!

Meng Hao’s voice was like a cold wind that blasted out in all directions. He pointed with the index finger of his right hand, causing a massive collection of Violet Qi to amass up ahead and form into the shape of a blade. It shot forward directly toward the peak late Nascent Soul Cultivator who had just spoken.

The Cultivator’s face fell as he heard Meng Hao’s cold, echoing words. His scalp went numb and he shot backward in astonishment, both hands performing an incantation gesture. Vast quantities of magical items appeared as he attempted to fight back.

When all of his defenses met Meng Hao’s Violet Qi Guillotine, it was clear that they were so weak they couldn’t stand up to a single attack. One after another, they shattered into pieces. Booms could be heard as the Violet Qi Guillotine sliced through the body of the Cultivator.

Blood exploded out into the air. The Heavenly Pursuit Tribe Cultivator trembled and looked down to see that his body had been completely cut in two. Even his Nascent Soul was destroyed.

The corpse splashed down into the Violet Sea and the mastiff let out another astonishing roar. The Heavenly Pursuit Tribe city guards in the outpost began to bleed from their eyes, ear, nose and mouth. One by one, regardless of the level of their Cultivation base, they dropped dead.

Regarding the other Cultivators in the city, Meng Hao didn’t kill them.

He strode down from off of the mastiff until he stood in front of the fifty Golden Crow Tribe members strung up within the outpost.

More than twenty of them were already dead. The rest slowly opened their listless, sallow eyes. When they saw Meng Hao in front of them, they gaped.

Among the group were two old ones whose bodies began to tremble. Their eyes filled with unprecedented emotion.

“Exalted… exalted Sacred Ancient!!”

“Senior, it’s you….”

These two old ones had accompanied Meng Hao during the long migration and campaign of war of the Crow Divinity Tribe. They almost didn’t dare to believe what they were seeing. They had never imagined that it might be possible see their Sacred Ancient once again during their lives.

Meng Hao looked back at them, and his expression softened. “It’s me. I’ve… returned.”

He waved his right hand, sweeping up all the Golden Crow Tribe members into a wind that gently placed them onto the ground. The wind carried life force which nourished them. Wu Ling and the others who were being carried along by the wave instantly rushed over.

Excited shouts instantly could be heard from the members of the Golden Crow Tribe. Many of these people had never seen Meng Hao before, only his statue. However, as soon as they heard his words, indescribable emotions filled the hearts of everyone present. “Exalted Sacred Ancient… we offer our sincerest greetings!”

As for the old people, it suddenly caused them to recall all the struggles of the past years.

Meng Hao looked at them with similar thoughts. However, when he saw the corpses of the Tribe Members who had not survived, his heart filled with stabs of pain. His rage toward the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe grew only more intense.

“I’ve returned to take you with me… to collect a blood debt!” He turned and flew back up into the air. The Violet Sea roared as it swept up the Tribe members. Together, they moved onward.

Shortly thereafter….

The Blood Mastiff roared toward the first outpost. Massive paws rose up to attack the spell formation. A boom could be heard as it shattered into pieces. The Heavenly Court Alliance Cultivators who were maintaining it instantly exploded, destroyed in body and spirit.

As soon as Meng Hao arrived, the slaughter began. It didn’t matter the Cultivation base involved. Core Formation. Nascent Soul. Any member of the Heavenly Court Alliance in the ten outposts who had dared to string up the Golden Crow Tribe members… were swept over by Meng Hao and exterminated.

The Tribe in control of the first outpost was the Wild Flame Tribe of the Heavenly Court Alliance. They watched the slaughter in shock. Two middle-aged men with the highest Cultivation bases recognized who Meng Hao was, and knew of his hatred and desire for revenge against the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe. It was without hesitation that they instantly turned and fled.

However, before they could get very far, two enormous arms suddenly stretched up from within the Violet Sea. The men were grabbed and then violently crushed. Bloodcurdling screams rang out, but were quickly cut off.

The wooden planks of the outpost ran with blood, which then flowed down into the Violet Sea.

After rescuing the Golden Crow Tribe members, Meng Hao led them all to the third outpost. Then the fourth, and the fifth….

Everywhere he went, the slaughter rose up to the sky. However… no amount of killing appeared capable of lessening Meng Hao's fury. Instead, he began to grow even more berserk.

The reason was because each outpost he went to, he found more and more corpses of the Golden Crow Tribe, and fewer survivors. In fact, at the eighth outpost, of the group of fifty, all had passed away. The corpses had even begun to rot.

The sight of it caused Meng Hao's body to tremble. He felt as if his entire person were on fire. Among the dead Tribe members were five whose faces he recognized. They had died with their eyes open, and within those eyes could be seen an enmity and desire for revenge that could not be wiped away even by death.

They would not close their eyes, nor would Meng Hao force them to. He would allow these dead Golden Crow Tribe members to watch with their own eyes as the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe was eradicated.

Only then… could they close their eyes in death and be content.

Meng Hao flicked his sleeve and then headed toward the ninth outpost.

By now, several days had passed. Meng Hao was sure that his appearance had been noticed by certain parties. If his suppositions were correct, Patriarch Huyan would be arriving soon.

And that was exactly what Meng Hao was waiting for! Patriarch Huyan was of the Spirit Severing stage, but…. So what!?

With the mastiff here, and Meng Hao being the master of the Violet Sea, he could battle with the Spirit Severing stage. Not fighting was something he couldn't comprehend. Not fighting would leave his heart unsettled. Not fighting… was something he refused to do!

You want to drag me into the matter? Well, since there is no way to avoid a fight, then all of my explanations are useless. Fine, then… let's fight!

Patriarch Huyan, I am in the Violet Sea, waiting for you!

To Meng Hao, the Violet Sea was the most advantageous location to do battle. That was why he he had exterminated the members of the Heavenly Court Alliance in the outposts. He wanted the battle to be fought in the Violet Sea, not the Black Lands.

“You’ve forced me to fight, Patriarch Huyan. Well then, I will force you to fight on my home ground!” Despite the fact that his fury boiled up into the Heavens, Meng Hao was as calm as ever. He knew that his current actions would quickly be relayed to Patriarch Huyan, who would personally come, and soon.

The Devil Spear appeared in Meng Hao’s hand. He hurled it out, causing a towering mist to appear as it shot toward the ninth outpost. By this point, Meng Hao had possessed the Devil Spear for more than a hundred years. Despite the fact that he had been in secluded meditation most of that time, the spear had continued to fade away.

Even still, after a hundred years had passed, it had not faded away completely.

The power of the spear slammed into the spell formation, inside of which were the Heavenly Court Alliance Cultivators of the ninth outpost, all ready to do battle.

It was impossible to tell exactly how the Heavenly Court Alliance had pulled it off, but there were even Cultivators inside who were not of the alliance, staring out at Meng Hao with intense killing intent. Within their eyes was also greed. There were seven hundred people in total, all of them brimming with the desire to slay Meng Hao.

Obviously, they had been promised of an enticing reward by the Heavenly Court Alliance if Meng Hao were to be killed.

As the Devil Spear neared, an arrogant voice rang out from within the outpost.

“Pour full power into the spell formation! Patriarch Huyan knows that this villain is here, and is on his way!!”

BANG!!

Even as the voice echoed out within the spell formation, the sound of an explosion rang out, interrupting the words. The spell formation shook violently; at the same time, vast quantities of black mist spread out, causing the spell formation to erode. Countless vicious faces could be seen consuming everything.

In only the space of a few breaths, the spell formation grew incredibly weak because of the corrosion of the Devil Spear. The faces, filled with excitement and persistence, suddenly burst through and shot toward the seven hundred Cultivators. Miserable screams suddenly lifted up into the air.

The area of the spell formation that the Devil Spear had struck corroded away until there was a huge hole. The black mist suddenly congealed together into the form of a face, exactly the same face that had belonged to the Devil Construct from years ago.

The face, filled with a greedy thirst for blood, transformed into a devilish mist that spread out to cover the entire ninth outpost. The only safe place was the location where the Golden Crow Tribe members were.

Meng Hao floated in mid-air. This was the first time he had completely wiped out the population of an entire outpost. In this case, these Cultivators had made their own choice to deliver themselves up to death.

The black Devil Spear mist roiled and churned. Intense, bloodcurdling screams could be heard for a few moments. Suddenly, seven or eight figures shot out from inside. Even as they did, Meng Hao waved his hand, causing them to scream and then explode into pieces.

The surrounding Violet Sea surged up with huge waves that submerged the outpost. The black mist shrank down to surround the Golden Crow Tribe members and bring them to Meng Hao.

There were only eight Tribe members who were still alive. As Meng Hao treated their injuries, his killing intent grew even more intense.

He turned, returning to stand on the mastiff's head. A great wave rose up in the Violet Sea to take the Golden Crow Tribe members as they headed toward the last of the outposts.

Almost in the same moment in which Meng Hao headed off, a black beam suddenly appeared near the Black Lands. It employed speed that far exceeded the Nascent Soul stage, even employed greater teleportation as it moved.

Within the black beam was a man wearing a black robe. This was apparently nothing more that Patriarch Huyan's clone!

His face was grim, and he did not speak. His body flickered as he teleported, growing ever nearer to the tenth outpost.

"Qing'er," he murmured, "today, father will achieve only half of the vengeance you deserve. Soon, I will find the person who actually killed you, and that person will die the most cruel death imaginable.

"Qing'er, no one in the world is qualified to kill you. Only me… Only I have that right." His eyes were filled with kindness. For some reason, however, the kindness was bizarre. Anyone who saw it would feel cold, and their hair would stand on end in terror.

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# Chapter 540: Patriarch Huyan!

The tenth outpost was waiting, its spell formation fully activated in preparation to meet this deadly foe.

It was night now, and the light of the spell formation was not soft, but rather, resplendent. It shone out onto the waters of the sea with brilliant colors. The radiance of the light emanated a mighty aura which made it clear that this spell formation was far more powerful than the formations from the other outposts.

In fact, there was no way to compare them. The spell formation of the tenth outpost seemed so incredibly powerful that it would surely make it very difficult for Meng Hao to break through it.

In the middle of the spell formation, the Cultivators waited vigilantly, their Qi settled and their minds calm.

There were sixteen Nascent Soul Cultivators present who sat cross-legged, meditating. Three were at the peak of the late Nascent Soul stage. Those three sat in three different directions, each sharing a portion of the recoil caused by the spell formation.

There were even more Cultivators maintaining the general operation of the spell formation. The entire outpost was completely silent.

They knew of the destruction of the other nine outposts, and of the slaughter carried out by Meng Hao. They knew that they were about to face up against something completely terrifying.

However, they weren’t very afraid. They knew that Patriarch Huyan was coming, and so had made up their minds to not leave the spell formation.

They had quite a bit of trust in its strength, and believed that as long as they stuck together, Meng Hao would not be able to quickly break through.

As long as they could hold out until Patriarch Huyan arrived, then the sky would become clear after the storm, so to speak, and everything would return to normal. Meng Hao would assuredly be killed!

Virtually everyone in the tenth outpost felt the same way. Also within the spell formation was a tall rack, upon which hung the corpses of fifty members of the Golden Crow Tribe. Not a single one remained alive. They were all dead….

They had died days before, actually. Especially noteworthy was that one of the dead tribe members had no body, only the head, that of an old man. His Cultivation base had clearly been destroyed before he died, rendering him nothing but a mortal.

Also within the spell formation were two enormous war chariots shaped like crossbows. They glowed with a black radiance, and had an indistinct, fierce aura. Cultivators were mounted on the chariots, ready to use them at a moment’s notice.

Time passed. Soon, the deepest hour of night approached. The sky was pitch black. The only sound that could be heard was the gentle rise and fall of the waves. All of a sudden, a beam of bright light appeared in the sky. It instantly caught the attention of all the Cultivators.

“He’s here!”

“This Meng Hao has really got some guts. However, it doesn’t matter that he dares to attack us. He’ll never be able to break through the spell formation!” Quite a few people were looking up with cold smiles on their faces. However, even as they looked up at the red glow….

The Violet Sea around the tenth outpost suddenly surged into a huge whirlpool. The whirlpool spun faster and faster, causing the faces of everyone in the outpost to flicker. The water seethed and the airships bobbed up and down. Booming filled the air.

Next, the bright beam of light in the air neared, and the mastiff’s enormous frame became visible. The crowds could also see Meng Hao standing on its head. He wore a long green robe, and his face was extremely grim and dark. An astonishing killing aura rose up around him.

Meng Hao’s eyes swept across the tenth outpost, then suddenly came to a stop. His pupils constricted as he stared at the corpses of the Golden Crow Tribe members hanging from the rack, and the head.

When he saw the head, his heart filled with stabs of pain.

It was Gu La!

“Patriarch Huyan….” he murmured. “Heavenly Pursuit Tribe.” The killing aura in his eyes changed, becoming ruthlessly dense. He looked down at the tenth outpost and pointed his finger.

Instantly, the Violet Sea roared as the whirlpool that surrounded the tenth outpost suddenly rose up into the air.

A massive pillar of seawater, three thousand meters in area, completely enveloped the outpost. Roaring filled the air. It was like the eruption of a geyser. The outpost’s spell formation was utterly incapable of standing up to such power. It immediately exploded.

At the same time, the vast collection of airships began to shatter into pieces. The crowds of Cultivators in the outpost were screaming miserably. They couldn’t even control their own bodies as they were swept into the seawater. As soon as they touched it, the death will in the seawater collided with their life forces, causing the power of extermination to erupt.

In the blink of an eye, before any of the Cultivators could even use a divine ability, their bodies burst. The could not fight back, or block, or evade!

All of their power had been focused in defending against attacks from above. All their plans had been based on the reports regarding Meng Hao’s Cultivation base and the fearsomeness of the mastiff. They hadn’t prepared for… an explosive attack by the Violet Sea!

How could they ever have imagined that someone could actually control… the Western Desert's Apocalyptic Violet Sea!?

It was impossible to believe that someone could even enter into the Violet Sea. Therefore, the outpost's seemingly fierce and powerful spell formation had a fatal flaw: it had no bottom!

Roaring filled the air as the entire tenth outpost was completely scattered and smashed. All the advanced preparations that had been made were crushed like dry weeds under the power of the Apocalyptic Violet Sea. The two war chariots weren't even able to make a single attack before they were crushed by the seawater and destroyed.

Crowds of people died without Meng Hao having to make a single attack of his own. A mere thought on his part caused the Violet Sea to explode out, completely burying the tenth outpost.

This was his home ground!

The Western Desert Violet Sea!

The corpses sank down, and the wreckage floated about. Not a single person in the tenth outpost was capable of existing within the exterminating power of the Violet Sea. All of them… were dead!

Death is oftentimes quite simple.

Life is oftentimes quite fragile.

People who have never witnessed death might not understand these two statements. Sometimes, only after witnessing many deaths can one truly understand life.

Meng Hao hovered in mid-air looking down at the death below him. He said nothing. The waters of the Violet Sea that had shot up into the air now transformed into a violet rain that slowly fell back down onto the wreckage below.

Meng Hao slowly lifted his head to gaze off into the distant sky.

In the gigantic wave on the Violet Sea, there were now more than a hundred living members of the Golden Crow Tribe. The rest… were all corpses.

The living members were only there because Meng Hao had saved them. Had only a few more days passed, all of them would have been dead.

This number of deaths was actually somewhat trivial when compared to how many people had died during the migration. However, these deaths were fundamentally avoidable. Furthermore, the entire matter actually had nothing to do with the Golden Crow Tribe.

Even Meng Hao was a victim in this case. By now, Meng Hao was certain that Patriarch Huyan knew the truth of what had happened.

He stood there silently atop the mastiff, glancing around coldly.

He was waiting. Waiting for Patriarch Huyan to arrive!

Before too much time passed, a black beam appeared in the sky that was even blacker than the night. As it approached it kicked up a shocking windstorm.

Within the windstorm was a middle-aged man dressed in a black robe. His hands were clasped behind his back as he strode through the air.

His long hair whipped about in the wind, and his eyes were piercingly bright. The aura that he emitted made him seem as if he were fused with Heaven and Earth. It seemed to contain its own law of nature that, in the blink of an eye, made the man suddenly translucent.

Suddenly, a Domain which exterminated emotion began to interfere with Heaven and Earth, enveloping everything. Around Meng Hao, black snowflakes suddenly began to flutter down.

This was Patriarch Huyan!

“Meng Hao!” he said coldly as he strode through the air. Cracking sounds could suddenly be heard from the Violet Sea beneath him as layers of ice formed.

Even the surrounding air began to freeze as a black snowstorm surrounded Patriarch Huyan. Another sound rang out, something that was like tens of thousands of voices all calling out Meng Hao’s name.

A power Meng Hao had never encountered before suddenly descended. It was like a natural law within the area. It appeared in Meng Hao’s mind and then transformed into an unprecedentedly loud noise that exceeded that of thunder and lightning.

It was as if it were calling out to deceased souls, trying to collect together the broken spirits. Actually, Patriarch Huyan’s divine ability could better be described as…

A shocking call of broken souls!

The coldness in the area seemed to be filled with emotionlessness 1. The coldness of the voices seemed to contain a heavenly might based on the lack of emotion. The sounds fused together, transforming into something like a rule of law… that could not be ignored!

This was the Spirit Severing stage. A simple sound was enough to exterminate all Nascent Soul Cultivators. Even someone of the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage was puny to the extreme in front of a Spirit Severing Cultivator.

Boom!

Meng Hao’s mind trembled, and his soul felt as if it were going to shatter and explode out of his body. The flame of his life flickered, as if it were about to be snuffed out. However… he was not an ordinary Nascent Soul Cultivator. He had a Perfect Nascent Soul Cultivation base with Divine Sense that had a range of 29,999 meters.

His seven Nascent Souls sat cross-legged in his dantian region, eyes closed, almost as if sleeping. Suddenly, all of their eyes snapped open.

In that instant, the power of Meng Hao’s Divine Sense exploded up within him, fighting back against the power of law that was being levied against him.

Roaring filled the air as Meng Hao retreated backward. He lifted his head up, and his eyes were bright and clear.

“So, you’re Patriarch Huyan!” he said slowly, looking at the approaching middle-aged man. Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a fierce glow. He had seen this man before, of course. It was the same person who had tried to kill him when he left the Black Lands.

Even as he spoke, Meng Hao’s expression began to radiate killing intent. He remembered hearing Zhixiang say that this man… was merely a clone!

Patriarch Huyan’s eyes glittered, as if he found it very strange that Meng Hao was able to recover from his power of law. He continued forward nonetheless, not stopping for a moment as he approached Meng Hao.

Such action had a lot to do with his personality, and Huyan Yunming’s special fighting style. Any time he fought someone, he would push down on them with an intense pressure.

As he neared Meng Hao, it seemed as if his aura grew even stronger, fusing together with the surroundings, becoming inseparable.

The might of Spirit Severing was impossible to overlook. The surroundings seemed to be changing only because of him.

Patriarch Huyan didn’t even look at the wreckage floating on the surface of the Violet Sea, as if he didn’t care about it at all. “Answer me. Who killed my only son, Huyan Qing?”

He suddenly stopped in mid-air. His voice echoed out, and his expression was calm, even cool. He glanced over Meng Hao, and then the mastiff. At that point, his pupils constricted.

1. What I’m translating as “emotionless” could also be translated as merciless, ruthless, apathetic and cold

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# Chapter 541: Battle!

After hearing Patriarch Huyan's words, Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever. That was his personality. The more he wanted to kill someone, the less he spoke. From the words Patriarch Huyan had spoken just now, it was obvious that he was well aware of what had actually happened.

"What's the point in more talk?" said Meng Hao coolly. "You want to fight? Let's fight." As he spoke, he lifted up his right hand and made a snatching motion. Instantly, the black Devil Spear appeared in his hand. He hurled it out, causing a boom to ring out as the spear shot forward at an incredible speed.

As it screamed through the air, roaring sounds could be heard coming from the spear as boundless black mist appeared. Within the mist were innumerable vicious faces. Their bloodthirsty smiles were filled with greed.

In some indistinct way, the mist actually seemed to be forming into an enormous head. It was the head… of the Devil Construct!

The Devil Spear had now completely unleashed the explosive power of Demon Weapon Lonelytomb's Devil Construct. It shot through the air with a droning sound.

The spear had nothing to do with Meng Hao's Cultivation base. Its mightiness was completely self-contained. However, it was still nothing but a strand of a Devil Construct that couldn't even compare to the real Demon Weapon Lonelytomb.

Even still, when the Devil Spear exploded out, it was powerful enough to slay any Nascent Soul Cultivator. As for Spirit Severing… Meng Hao wasn’t sure. Therefore, he had decided to test it out.

“Area,” said Patriarch Huyan, his voice calm and his expression unchanging. He lifted his right hand and then gestured forward. Instantly, everything within three hundred meters turned into his own Area world!

This divine ability was little different than natural law. It was a magical ability belonging to the Spirit Severing stage. The Area was not large, only three hundred meters. A three hundred meter Area which was a world only his own. Within that world, Patriarch Huyan had ultimate power. No divine abilities or magical techniques would be capable of breaking open the Area to harm him in any way.

This is what sets Spirit Severing completely above Nascent Soul. In the Spirit Severing stage, divine abilities become natural laws!

Nothing within the three hundred meter Area seemed unusual. However, in that instant, Meng Hao could sense that Patriarch Huyan had turned the space surrounding him into his own world.

A boom could be heard. As soon as the Devil Spear entered the three hundred meter region, it was defeated and transformed into a black mist. The mist spread out as if it were trying to infect the area, but Meng Hao could tell that it was actually fighting back against the world around it.

Such formidableness, such usage of natural law, was the first time that Meng Hao personally experienced the mightiness of Spirit Severing. Patriarch Reliance ran away without fighting. At Holy Snow City, he had been fused with the Agarwood legacy.

Outside of Blackgate Fort, Zhixiang had stepped in.

This was the first time Meng Hao was truly facing up against a Spirit Severing expert.

“Childish,” said Patriarch Huyan. He moved forward, causing the sense of pressure to grow even more intense. He didn’t even attack; he simply advanced. As he did, the three hundred meter Space went along with him.

The mist that was the Devil Spear seemed to be completely suppressed by the world around it. Popping sounds could be heard from inside as it shrank down on itself. The countless faces sucked inward, transforming into the head of the Devil Construct.

The expression on its face was one of unprecedented seriousness. Underneath the suppressive pressure, it began to howl. It then started to back up, dissipating the entire time, as if it were on the verge of being destroyed. Patriarch Huyan neared it, and it was at this moment that the Devil Construct exploded into action. Suddenly, Demonic Qi began to shot toward it from all directions, transforming into ripples that fought against the Area world and enabled the Devil Construct to successfully escape.

It fled, surrounding by roaring sounds, to return to Meng Hao. The black mist was now extremely faint, as if it were on the verge of dissipating completely. Meng Hao collected it up grimly. As of this point, Patriarch Huyan was about three hundred meters away from Meng Hao.

Meng Hao backed up. Even at this distance of three hundred meters, he could clearly sense the fearsomeness of a Spirit Severing expert.

“There’s no need to feel resentment,” Patriarch Huyan said calmly as he looked at Meng Hao. “I understand how Karma works. If you want to blame something, blame your own bad fortune.”

At this moment, the mastiff lifted its head up and howled, the sound of which caused everything to shake. Suddenly, power exploded out, revealing its Spirit Severing aura.

As soon as the aura appeared, Patriarch Huyan’s pupils constricted. He looked over at the mastiff with a serious look.

At the same time, a bloody glow began to shine out from the mastiff’s eyes. It suddenly shot forward, entering into Patriarch Huyan’s three hundred meter Area. As soon as it entered, the Area began to distort.

It roared again, causing red-colored ripples to emanate out from its body. They spread out in all directions, coming into contact with Patriarch

Huyan’s Area. Patriarch Huyan’s face went pale, as if all the blood in his body were suddenly flowing in reverse.

A fierce glow shone up from his eyes. This entire time, he had been moving forward, but now, he stopped.

He gave the mastiff a closer look and then slowly said, “One moment of contact, and it cost me ten percent of my Essence Blood. This Immortal Beast isn’t bad at all. It clearly has gained enlightenment from a Spirit Severing legacy, but isn’t of Spirit Severing itself. Still… such a will of undeath is truly rare.”

A tremor ran through the mastiff’s body as it was suddenly pushed back several paces. It let out a threatening growl as it stared fixedly at Patriarch Huyan.

The Blood Mastiff’s Domain was exactly as Patriarch Huyan had said. It was acquired via a legacy, and had not been gained from personal enlightenment. However, the legacy Domain of the Blood Immortal was no trivial matter; it was a will of undeath!

The First Severing had been a Severing of blood! All the blood in the body, Severed!

Blood represents life. Therefore, Severing blood is equivalent to severing life! Life without death is… undeath!

Therefore, this Domain of undeath could affect natural laws, and create a world in which blood was prohibited!

Almost in the same moment in which the invisible struggle between the Blood Mastiff and Patriarch Huyan unfolded, Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. Having tested out Patriarch Huyan’s strength, he was now able to form somewhat of an image in his mind, clarifying the differences between himself and Spirit Severing.

“I… CAN fight it!” He strode forward two paces. With those two steps, roaring filled his body as he entered the Second Anima. The power of two great circle Nascent Souls exploded out in his body.

His aura radiated out like a whirlwind. His body grew taller and more intrepid. He took a third step, and instantly, entered the Third Anima of his Seven Animas Soul Transformations. The combination of three Nascent Souls caused his body to explode with battle prowess equivalent to four great circle Nascent Souls. He grew taller and even more powerful.

“Even if you do possess some temporary way to magically power up,” said Patriarch Huyan coolly, “it is still… thinking far too much of yourself!” He waved his sleeve, causing the three hundred meter Area to distort in ripples toward the mastiff. The mastiff let out a growling roar as bloody light exploded up from its body. It also manifested an Area world to fight back, although it was only about 250 meters.

Battles of Spirit Severing were different from those of Nascent Soul Cultivators. All Spirit Severing Cultivators have Area worlds. Without breaking the Area world, the Spirit Severing Cultivator is incapable of being harmed.

Between the Mastiff and Patriarch Huyan, the Area worlds opposed each other. Meng Hao’s wind whipped about, and his aura shot up. He took a fourth step forward.

Four Nascent Souls combined. Popping sounds rang out in waves as Meng Hao’s body grew even taller and stronger. The aura of a scholar was now gone, replaced instead by the evil sense of an Immortal Devil. The battle prowess of eight full circle Nascent Souls exploded out.

Such battle prowess, such energy, caused the wind in the area to scream into a vortex that swirled around Meng Hao. His clothes danced in the wind, and his eyes shone with a blinding light. At this point, even Patriarch Huyan couldn’t help but be visibly affected by such power.

Patriarch Huyan had never encountered another great circle Nascent Soul Cultivator as powerful or shocking as Meng Hao. Such fearsome strength would enable him to sweep across the entire Nascent Soul stage.

“You have an excellent temporary power up magic….” said thoughtfully, his eyes narrowing.

It was at this point that Meng Hao took a fifth step, his eyes fixed dead on Patriarch Huyan. As of this point, he had now entered Patriarch Huyan’s three hundred meter Area.

The instant it happened, Meng Hao felt an incredible sense of pressure weighing down on him from the Area world. It felt like a mountain had suddenly been dropped onto his body, to crush it into a pulp. As soon as that incredible pressure weighed down on him, however, Meng Hao’s body emitted a roar as five colors united and he entered the Fifth Anima!

With the Fifth Anima came sixteen times the battle prowess of a great circle Nascent Soul. Such explosive power fought back against the enormous pressure exerted by the three hundred meter Area, causing distortions to ripple out.

The sight of it made Patriarch Huyan to feel thorough astonishment.

The three hundred meter Area was something that would make the heads of any Nascent Soul Cultivator bow, even one of the great circle. All Patriarch Huyan would have to do is exercise a thought, and that person would be crushed into pieces.

Meng Hao, however, was using some astonishing technique to make himself terrifyingly powerful and fight back against his three hundred meter Area.

“I can’t let him live,” thought Patriarch Huyan. “He’s only at the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage, and already has such terrifying power. If he ever Severs his Spirit….”

It was the first time he seemed to be taking the situation seriously. His killing intent grew, and he let out a cold harrumph. He immediately took a portion of the three hundred meter Area which was resisting the Blood Mastiff, and sent it crushing down onto Meng Hao.

“You’ll be reaching your limit any second now, won’t you!? In front of Spirit Severing… it doesn’t matter how powerful your Nascent Soul, you’re nothing but an insect!”

Even as Patriarch Huyan sent the Area pressure bearing down onto Meng Hao, Meng Hao set his jaw. A tremor ran through his body, and his eyes shone with a cold, fierce light.

“Sixth Anima!”

Boom!

Six colors combined. Meng Hao grew taller, and looked just like an Immortal Devil. An indescribably aura of valiance skyrocketed up. He now possessed a Cultivation base equivalent to thirty-two great circle Nascent Souls. This was a level of Nascent Soul power that had never been seen before in the Cultivation world!

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# Chapter 542: Clever Mastiff!

As he faced up against the pressure from the three hundred meter Area, Meng Hao focused all the power of his Sixth Anima Cultivation base into his hands. He lifted them up and then made a ripping motion.

In response, the air in front of him distorted, and a snapping sound could be heard. It was as if some shapeless obstacle had suddenly been torn. Meng Hao's body suddenly grew more relaxed, as if the invisible pressure had suddenly been removed.

"Mastiff!" said Meng Hao, charging forward. The mastiff howled, causing its two hundred fifty meter Area to focus around Meng Hao, following him as he shot toward Patriarch Huyan.

For the second time, Patriarch Huyan's expression changed because of Meng Hao.

He gave a cold harrumph. As Meng Hao and the Mastiff neared, he lifted his right hand and flicked his sleeve out in front of him. No magical item appeared, nor any divine ability. The sleeve was flicked casually. However, for a Spirit Severing Patriarch, the simple flick of a sleeve would explode out with incredible power.

The three hundred meter Area shrunk down to only one hundred fifty meters, causing its strength to double in intensity. The Area pushed down on everything with an incredible pressure that could suppress all divine abilities. Roaring filled the air as it slammed into Meng Hao and the mastiff and the one hundred fifty meter mark.

Booming sounds rose up into the sky. Meng Hao's right hand clenched into a fist and punched down. Roaring filled his body, as if this fist was capable of causing mountains to tremble. Blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth, but his eyes glittered with a cold light. Thanks to this battle, he was now forming a much better understanding of Spirit Severing.

The mastiff’s entire body trembled as it exploded with increased ferocity. The bloody light emanating from it pierced into the one hundred fifty meter Area. It also surrounded Meng Hao, forming a mighty power, allowing him to push forward with irresistible force.

Meng Hao shot directly toward Patriarch Huyan. He stabbed clean through the one hundred fifty meter Area until he actually made contact with Patriarch Huyan!

BAM!

Blood flowed out from Patriarch Huyan’s mouth, and he was forced to retreat several paces. The bright glow in his eyes grew more intense. His one hundred fifty meter Area suddenly shrunk under the power of the attacks against it. It rebounded into a seventy-five meter Area before finally counterbalancing the attacks from Meng Hao and the mastiff.

“This Immortal Beast is incredibly devious! It was actually concealing its true power!!” Patriarch Huyan’s eyes glittered with killing intent. His expression gradually became tranquil again. However, despite the calm look, he was shaken inwardly. To encounter a Nascent Soul Cultivator who could shake his Spirit Severing Area in such a way caused his desire to kill Meng Hao to grow even stronger. Before Meng Hao could back up, Patriarch Huyan advanced toward him along with his seventy-five meter Area.

“After I kill you, I’ll skin this Immortal Beast and then debone it!” he said, his voice calm. Although his words contained no ripples of power, the killing intent they contained was incredibly obvious.

The seventy-five meter Area was like a restricted zone; entering it would result in immediate injury. As it moved forward, the air vibrated. Seeing that it was about to reach Meng Hao, the mastiff howled, and its eyes filled with a fierce glow. It had grown up with Meng Hao, so in terms of conning people, you could say that it had inherited the ability from its master.

Its own Area shrank and then shot forward. Its paws lifted into the air as it charged in a vicious attack.

Its claws were incredibly sharp. They slashed through the air toward Patriarch Huyan's advancing Area. Booms filled the air, and Patriarch Huyan's entire body shook. He suddenly stopped moving. At the same time, the Blood Mastiff trembled and coughed up a mouthful of life Qi. Then, without even the slightest fear of death, it charged again.

This time, it didn't attack with its claws. It did not use its teeth either. Instead, it butted viciously with its head. This was Meng Hao's mastiff, and even if it died, it would protect Meng Hao and kill his enemies!

BANG!

More blood oozed out of Patriarch Huyan's mouth, and he was forced backward again. He looked at the fierce and increasingly vicious mastiff, and his killing intent soared to the Heavens. He now felt an unprecedented jealousy regarding Meng Hao.

"Damnable Immortal Beast!! It… it was hiding even more power than it revealed before!! Immortal Beasts as treacherous as this are hard to come by!"

Even as Patriarch Huyan defended himself yet again, Meng Hao's cold voice suddenly rang out.

"Seventh Anima!"

Boom!

Meng Hao's body grew rapidly once again. A violent, raging tempest sprang up around him. The sky dimmed and everything shook. His fleshly body grew even more powerful, to an astonishing degree. He now had far more power than thirty-two great circle Nascent Souls. Now he had… sixty-four!

A Nascent Soul Cultivator like this was unparalleled in history. Most likely, there would never be someone similar in the future, either. Meng Hao's hair whipped about. He was incredibly tall now, like an Immortal Demon. The strength of his fleshly body, his majestic battle prowess, and his incredible aura could shake the Heavens and Earth.

As of this moment, he was the most powerful of Nascent Soul Cultivators, someone who could fight the Spirit Severing stage!

He was now over half a meter taller than his original height. His shoulders were broad, his posture ramrod straight. He looked like a Devil Divinity, emanating an aura that would cause anyone to pant. His eyes were cold and sharp in such a way that made it seem as if everything in the area would surely freeze.

“Impossible!” Patriarch Huyan's face fell. As of this moment, Meng Hao was emanating an unprecedented pressure, something that Patriarch Huyan would only expect to see when facing up against someone of the same stage as himself!

At the same moment in which Patriarch Huyan's seventy-five meter Area neared Meng Hao, Meng Hao unhesitatingly shot forward. Relying only on the strength of his fleshly body, he charged directly into the seventy-five meter Area.

BANG!

Distorted ripples spread out through the seventy-five meter Area. It shrank down, turning into a thirty meter Area. Meng Hao, the spitting image of a Devil Divinity, immediately appeared thirty meters away from the shocked Patriarch Huyan. He clenched his fist and punched.

This was not a divine ability, or a magical technique. There was no magical item involved. This was just the terrifying power of his fleshly body. The battle prowess of sixty-four great circle Nascent Souls, fused together. It formed… a shocking punch that had never before been seen in the Nascent Soul stage of the Cultivation world!

BOOMMMMM!

Meng Hao’s punch completely shattered the thirty meter Area, breaking it up into countless pieces that exploded out in all directions. A Spirit Severing Area, shattered!

In the same moment, the mastiff howled and shot forward like lightning. Even as the Spirit Severing Area collapsed, it charged Patriarch Huyan, its sharp, awe-inspiring fangs savagely biting down.

BAM!

Patriarch Huyan waved both hands forward to block. His body shook violently, and he was sent tumbling backward, his face filling with an expression of utter disbelief and shock. He could never have possibly imagined that his Spirit Severing Area would be broken to pieces by a Nascent Soul Cultivator.

Even as it was happening, he could scarcely believe it. As of now, his desire to kill Meng Hao had reached a pinnacle. In fact, deep in his heart, he had begun to regret provoking Meng Hao.

A powerful expert like this, someone from the Nascent Soul stage who could battle against the Spirit Severing stage, was like a nightmare to any Cultivator. If he were not killed, it would likely result in the calamitous extermination of an entire Tribe.

“You WILL die this day!” howled Patriarch Huyan. His eyes narrowed as he looked at Meng Hao, who was currently behind the mastiff. Meng Hao’s intrepid fleshly body caused Patriarch Huyan to pause momentarily as feelings of jealousy rose up within him. He suddenly performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, causing the image of an enormous wheel to suddenly appear in front of him.

It was in this moment that Meng Hao shot forward through the air with another punch.

In the blink of an eye, he was closing in on Patriarch Huyan….

“Wheel of Time, Universal Death! First Rotation, Time Destruction!” He performed a final incantation and then pushed his hand forward. The illusory image in front of him suddenly became clear. It was a black chariot wheel!

It emanated the archaic feeling of time, and was branded with countless magical symbols. The magical symbols flickered with light as the wheel suddenly began to rotate.

Meng Hao’s fist descended, and was just about the slam into the wheel, when suddenly an intense feeling filled his mind. The mastiff sensed it a bit faster; it suddenly grabbed him with his mouth and shot backward with him in retreat.

At the same time, boundless Time power exploded out from the wheel. This type of power was different than than the type that Meng Hao wielded. This power was that of reversal. Meng Hao was astonished to see that even as he retreated, the Area which he had shattered was being restored. After having retreated more than sixty meters, Meng Hao’s Seventh Anima was beginning to dissolve.

Patriarch Huyan smiled coldly, and his eyes shone with a cold disdain. He suddenly vanished, then shockingly reappeared right behind Meng Hao. He reached out and then gestured forward with his finger. The mastiff howled, and red light expanded as it shot forward to block the finger attack.

Patriarch Huyan frowned and cursed inwardly as he forced the attack to complete. Booms could be heard as the red light shattered. Ignoring the incoming Blood Mastiff and its gaping mouth, Patriarch Huyan continued to stab his finger toward Meng Hao’s back.

The finger attack landed, and a roaring could be heard. However, what it hit was layers of Eyeless Larva silk! The silk prevented ninety percent of the force of the blow from hitting Meng Hao.

The remaining ten percent slammed into Meng Hao, causing blood to spray from his mouth. As he tumbled forward, Patriarch Huyan was just about to pursue when the mastiff bit down. Patriarch Huyan trembled violently and blood sprayed from his mouth. He was forced to retreat backward several paces and abandon pursuit of Meng Hao.

“Tough little bastard!” said Patriarch Huyan through gritted teeth. He could only watch as Meng Hao sped away from him, while he was held up by the frenzied, crimson mastiff. Unable to pursue, he could only let out a cold harrumph. He knew that the power of Time was still going to envelop Meng Hao, and that there was nothing he could to do escape it.

“Since that’s the case,” said Patriarch Huyan, performing an incantation gesture, “I’ll just slaughter this little animal of yours!” Booming filled the air and the mastiff howled as its Area was shattered. However, the red glow coming off of its body suddenly transformed into countless red spikes that shot toward Patriarch Huyan. The battle between the two instantly exploded out. At the same time, Patriarch Huyan’s eyes flickered as he continuously sought an opportunity to kill Meng Hao.

All of these things happened in the time it takes a spark to fly up off of a piece of flint. The blood that had sprayed from Meng Hao’s mouth as he was sent tumbling suddenly seemed as if it was about to return into his mouth.

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# Chapter 543: Seizing Treasures!

This power of Time gave Meng Hao an intense sense of grave crisis. As the blood moved backward toward him, violet light suddenly flickered in his eyes. The East Pill Division catalysis technique, the Time magic from Han Bei of the Black Sieve Sect, and the technique he had learned from the jade page, all combined into a branding mark that Meng Hao placed onto the mouthful of blood.

This was also a power of Time. However, instead of causing Time to flow backward, it did the opposite. The power exploded out, fighting back at the power from the Wheel of Time. Roaring rose up into the air. At the same time, Patriarch Huyan was incapable of avoiding the mastiff, which teleported in to once again wound him with its slashing claws. Meng Hao's body was currently recovering. He suddenly transformed into a green smoke and a black moon, disappearing in the blink of an eye.

Patriarch Huyan made a slight, "Eee?" sound. By this point, Meng Hao had already reappeared in mid-air, blood seeping out of the corners of his mouth. There was no time to wipe it away. He looked over at Patriarch Huyan, his eyes glittered with killing intent.

"Blood Mastiff!" bellowed Meng Hao. He shot up into the air, performing an incantation and then waving his arm. Instantly, an enormous face appeared. Simultaneously, the mastiff began to glow with a bright, bloody light that merged into the blood-colored face.

Combining the Blood Immortal divine ability with the power of the Blood Mastiff resulted in… a true Blood Immortal magic!

Before the mastiff had awakened, what Meng Hao could utilize could be counted as skills lacking true magic. Now, however, he was using true magic, a true divine ability!

The fact that Meng Hao was able to evade the Wheel of Time left Patriarch Huyan amazed yet again. That was especially so because the method he had used to escape the Time reversal technique… was also Time!

“Your name isn’t Meng! It’s Han!” said Patriarch Huyan. This caused Meng Hao’s pupils to constrict, and gave birth to a new idea. He did not respond to the words. Instead, he caused the battle prowess of sixty-four Nascent Souls to explode out. Instantly, the blood-colored face transformed into sixty-four separate faces, which transformed into ghost images that then superimposed over each other. Then they combined and shot toward Patriarch Huyan.

As the blood-colored faces whizzed forward through the air, Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding to produce his Wooden Time Swords. He did not employ their power of Time, but rather treated them as ordinary flying swords. They stabbed through the blood-colored face and then shot toward Patriarch Huyan.

Patriarch Huyan frowned. He had a sneaky suspicion about what was going on. His right hand lifted up as he flashed an incantation gesture then pointed toward the Wheel of Time. Instantly, the ancient, black chariot wheel began to spin again. The power of Time then exploded out.

A massive roaring sound could be heard. Ripples caused the Violet Sea down below to seethe. Meng Hao’s Blood Immortal divine ability face suddenly began to whither. In the blink of an eye it transformed into gray ash.

It was at this point that the Time Sword Formation appeared. The formation trembled as it shot out. For some reason, the formation seemed somewhat different than it had in the past.

It was as if encountering this new power of Time had somehow changed the Time Sword Formation.

At the same time, Patriarch Huyan's Wheel of Time suddenly stopped moving and seemed to fade. The Time power inside of it was as boundless as ever, though. Patriarch Huyan performed an incantation and pointed, causing the black wheel to fly screaming through the air toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao continued to shoot backward in retreat. He spit out a mouthful of blood and then produced a medicinal pill which he immediately consumed. He then made a grasping motion with his right hand, causing the Devil Spear to appear. Although it appeared to be much more faint than before, there were still countless vicious, howling faces within its mist.

Without hesitation, Meng Hao shot backward, hurling the Devil Spear out. It buzzed through the air as it headed toward the black chariot wheel.

Next, Meng Hao's eyes began to shine with a strange light. He flicked his right sleeve, and at the same time, sent his Divine Sense into the Blood Immortal mask. Considering that he was currently in the Seventh Anima, as soon as his Divine Sense touched the flag of three streamers, he was able to fully employ the true power of the first streamer of the flag.

The air around him vibrated and distorted as a streamer as red as the color of blood suddenly appeared in Meng Hao's hand. It rippled in the air as Meng Hao waved it, causing a blood-like wind to suddenly rise up!

This was different from the times Meng Hao had wielded the flag of three streamers on previous occasions. This was the true manifestation of the first streamer, and was not illusory like before. The blood-colored tempest that the treasure gave rise to caused Patriarch Huyan's face to fill with astonishment.

"That flag…. Dammit! How could you have an Immortal treasure like that!?" Even as Patriarch Huyan was expressing his disbelief, the flag unfurled, transforming into a red banner that stretched out in front of Meng Hao toward the Wheel of Time.

Although it takes some time to describe, the Devil Spear and the flag of three streamers instantly shot toward the black chariot wheel. There was no hesitation on Patriarch Huyan’s part as he performed a double-handed incantation in an attempt to control the wheel treasure.

However, even in the middle of the incantation, the mastiff suddenly pounced toward him. It had reached a frenzied state, as if it didn’t fear death at all. As it neared, the bloody light shining off of it flickered in intensity and transformed into countless threads that slashed toward Patriarch Huyan.

Patriarch Huyan was cursing inwardly. His hatred for the mastiff had already sunk deep into his bones. Yet again, he realized that if it weren’t for the damnable Immortal Beast, the battle would have gone much more smoothly.

While Patriarch Huyan was being pinned down by the mastiff, Meng Hao’s eyes glittered with a red light. His aura exploded up into the heavens. He was utilizing sixty-four times the battle prowess of a great circle Nascent Soul, and Divine Sense with a range of 29,999 meters. Together, they formed into… a divine ability!

“Demon Sealing, Eighth Hex!” His hair whipped about and his Cultivation base rotated rapidly. Demonic Qi in the area seethed as he lifted his hand up and pointed his index finger straight out ahead of him toward Patriarch Huyan.

As he pointed, blood oozed out of Meng Hao’s nose, ears and eyes. Popping sounds could be heard within him, and his brain and body filled with a roaring sound.

Meng Hao’s eyes were awash with madness. However, beneath that madness was utter calm. He was sealing a powerful Spirit Severing expert, so he would of course have to pay… a heavy price.

But, why did that matter?

A tremor ran through Patriarch Huyan’s body. The Demonic Qi in the area was boundless and majestic, and formed into something like a sea. In the blink of an eye, it wrapped around Patriarch Huyan, transforming into a seal. His Cultivation base was suppressed and he suddenly… ceased all movement.

“What divine ability is this!?!?” Patriarch Huyan was completely shocked. The mastiff seized this opportunity to strike out with its paw. Roaring could be heard, and blood sprayed from Patriarch Huyan’s mouth. His expression was one of savageness.

However, the brief pause imposed upon him damaged his connection to the Wheel of Time, almost as if his Divine Sense had been severed. Only a tiny connection remained. However, it was at this moment that the Devil Spear bore down onto the wheel. It stabbed directly into it, causing a massive explosion to ring out. Even though the spear was greatly weakened, vast quantities of mist still poured out of it, causing the wheel to tremble violently and then move about a third of a meter to the side.

It was a small movement, but it instantly weakened the final scrap of Divine Sense which connected the Wheel of Time and Patriarch Huyan. This caused Patriarch Huyan’s face to flicker once again. It was in this moment that the flag of three streamers hit the wheel. A boom rose up into the air. Meng Hao shouted, and the flag…

Completely wrapped around the wheel, then heaved it to the side. Booms could be heard. The wheel turned into a black, trembling beam of light that moved a full thirty meters off to the side. The movement caused any remaining connection with Patriarch Huyan to be completely destroyed!

All of this took place in the amount of time it takes for a spark to fly up into the air. The effect of the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex was already vanishing from Patriarch Huyan. Blood sprayed from Meng Hao’s mouth as he once again used the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex, ignoring any injuries he would receive in the process.

Just when Patriarch Huyan recovered use of his Cultivation base, it was once again sealed! At the same time, the Blood Mastiff, in response to Meng Hao’s Divine Sense, roared. Bloody light shot up, and the power of its Spirit Severing Cultivation base rocketed out as it charged again toward Patriarch Huyan.

As of now, Meng Hao was completely ignoring Patriarch Huyan. Instead, he shot directly toward the Wheel of Time. The single flag streamer teleported to join him.

A fierce light gleamed in Patriarch Huyan’s eyes. In this critical moment of the battle, the power of his Cultivation base suddenly exploded out. He raised his head up and howled as the Demonic Qi seal surrounding him collapsed. He had extricated himself and restored his Cultivation base. But now, the mastiff was upon him, and he was forced to fight.

Temporarily, Patriarch Huyan was incapable of completely freeing himself. His fury burned like raging fires, consuming him as he howled in rage.

As for Meng Hao, he was just now slamming into the Wheel of Time.

He flicked his sleeve, causing the single streamer to wrap up the Wheel of Time, which Patriarch Huyan had lost control of…. Then, he collected up the streamer and… put it into his bag of holding!

He… shockingly captured Patriarch Huyan’s precious treasure!

Earlier, when Patriarch Huyan had claimed that his surname was actually Han, it instantly made him think of Han Bei. He also thought about that Patriarch of the Han Clan who could control the power of Time.

All of the various threads of information formed together to give Meng Hao the audacious idea of stealing Patriarch Huyan’s treasure!

All of his actions up to this point had been aimed at snatching away the treasure! He even allowed himself to be injured in the process! The benefits of acquiring such an item were indescribable!

“Meng Hao!!” roared Patriarch Huyan, his eyes filling with veins of blood along with killing intent. He wanted to pursue Meng Hao, but the howling Blood Mastiff then attacked him once again. Pinned down, Patriarch Huyan could do nothing but be consumed by his indescribable rage. This mastiff, which seemingly didn’t fear death in the least, had the power of Spirit Severing. Patriarch Huyan wasn’t capable of killing it, nor even sealing it.

He could only watch helplessly as his treasure was stolen away by a great circle Nascent Soul Cultivator. The shame and rage that he felt were virtually driving him insane.

In all the years he had practiced cultivation, he had almost never been put into such a difficult position. His rage could not grow any more.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with killing intent. He had made a lot of preparations with the intent of facing Patriarch Huyan. As of this moment, his preparations had been used by about half. He still had more tricks up his sleeves. His trump card of fusing with the Violet Sea, had not been brought into play yet.

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# Chapter 544: The Dao of Emotion Severing

Meng Hao’s expression was calm. He had no time to personally do anything about the effects of the Wheel of Time. He let the flag of three streamers suppress it, then turned and lifted up his hand. The tip of his finger turned bright red.

It then transformed into a red colored totem tattoo. This was the Ji Clan Blood Clone aspect of his Water-type totem. After absorbing it and gaining enlightenment regarding the Blood-type totem, it hadn’t disappeared. Rather, Meng Hao had completely suppressed it inside of his own body.

It was now that, without hesitation, he released the Blood Clone. A bloody light shone out from his finger, flying out into mid-air to transform into the Ji Clan Blood Clone. As soon as it appeared, its body exploded with bloody light that shot up into the sky. It turned its head to look at Meng Hao, as if it planned to attack him. In that moment, Meng Hao gave a cold snort.

The sound of it sent rippling tremors through the body of the Blood Clone, as if it weren’t stable. Actually, when Meng Hao suppressed the clone within his body, he had also branded it with vast amounts of restrictive spells.

An expression of struggle appeared on the Blood Clone’s face for a moment. Then it turned, howling as it shot toward Patriarch Huyan. It seemed it planned to vent its frustration with Meng Hao onto Patriarch Huyan.

The instant the Blood Clone appeared, Patriarch Huyan once again looked shocked. He could not help but tremble inwardly at Meng Hao’s continuous succession of shocking methods. First was his astonishing Seven Animas Soul Transformations, then his Time Sword Formation and the flag of three streamers, and finally this Blood Clone. All of it left Patriarch Huyan thoroughly shaken inwardly.

The Blood Clone shouted as it neared. Together with the Blood Mastiff, it had Patriarch Huyan essentially flanked on both sides. Patriarch Huyan’s face fell. He raised up his right hand and pointed out in front of him. Instantly, the Blood Clone exploded, only to reform a moment later.

“Dammit! It also has a will of undeath!!” Patriarch Huyan’s face flickered as the Blood Mastiff pounced toward him from behind. He was not in a position to evade; the mastiff’s razor sharp fangs sank into his body, ripping open a wound from which blood sprayed out unimpeded.

At the same time, Meng Hao made his move. As he neared, a divine ability suddenly manifested.

“Without a face, a single word, flames of war unify!” More than sixty enormous faces appeared. They superimposed over each other, transforming into a divine ability backed by the power of sixty-four great circle Nascent Souls, a power that could rock Spirit Severing.

The face’s eyes opened, and its mouth moved. Roaring sounds pulsed out within Patriarch Huyan’s mind. Streams of black smoke suddenly rose up from his body, sixty-four in total. They billowed up into the air as Meng Hao’s divine ability closed in.

One man, one clone, one dog, battling Spirit Severing!

Booms continued to explode out. Patriarch Huyan’s aura expanded out to transform into an enormous vortex which slammed into Meng Hao, the mastiff and the clone.

Roaring filled the area and kicked up huge waves on the surface of the sea. The air itself seemed to be on the verge of splitting open. Patriarch Huyan was infuriated. Never since reaching the Spirit Severing stage, had he ever been in such a bad position. His Spirit Severing Area had been shattered, his

Wheel of Time stolen. And to top it all off, his opponent… was only a great circle Nascent Soul Cultivator. Even though he had a Spirit Severing Immortal Beast, even though he had a strange Blood Clone, this was all a complete humiliation to Patriarch Huyan!

“My Dao….” said Patriarch Huyan. He took a deep breath, causing all of his emotions to disappear. He became completely calm.

“My Dao of severing emotions…

“When speaking of human emotions, love for one’s family is the most powerful. By Severing family love, one can sever the Dao of a lifetime.” A freezing, emotionless cold suddenly rose up from Patriarch Huyan. This coldness was unfeeling, almost like it was… a funeral for the seven emotions and six pleasures.

“My parents died when I was young,” murmured Patriarch Huyan, “so there was no way to Sever them. My feelings for my beloved are dispensable as far as I am concerned, so that Severing would have been useless…. Only my feelings for my sons would conform to my Dao of severing emotions.

“My First Severing was of that Dao of feelings. It is common knowledge that I have an only son. What is not common knowledge is that I actually had nine sons in total. I killed the first eight with my own hands in order to create my Dao of extinguishing emotions!

“I placed all my hopes in my final son, Huyan Qing, and did everything for him. I concentrated all my fatherly love on him. When that love reached its pinnacle, I would kill him, and the resulting pain would be intense to the extreme. Only by experiencing such pain and grief could I… complete my first Severing and become… totally emotionless!

“By killing my son, you have ruined my Dao! Nothing could possibly compare to the towering hatred which I feel toward you!

“My Dao… is a Severing of emotion!” Patriarch Huyan’s aura suddenly exploded out.

His Spirit Severing Domain, his first Severing, was of emotion!

That emotion was not romantic love, nor friendship. Instead, it was the most powerful of all emotions, the love for blood relatives!

Before Spirit Severing, Patriarch Huyan had been an emotional and loving person. Afterwards… he chose to slaughter his own sons for the sake of his Dao. The only one that remained was Huyan Qing.

His choice for this Spirit Severing Dao was actually very similar to that of Patriarch Hanxue of the Frigid Snow Clan. However, in the end Patriarch Hanxue chose not to continue with the Severing. Patriarch Huyan, on the other hand, was more resolute.

He concentrated all of his fatherly love onto his son, Huyan Qing, holding none in reserve. It was like he took all of the family love that existed within his person and focused it solely on Huyan Qing.

As far as Huyan Qing was concerned, Patiarch Huyan had indulged him in every way, tolerated anything. It had been a boundless fatherly love.

Only in that way could he sever pain, sever his heart, and truly complete his first Severing. By extinguishing family love, he could form… his Dao of extinguishing emotions!

But now, Huyan Qing was dead, killed by another. Because Patriarch Huyan hadn't killed him, it meant that Patriarch Huyan's First Severing could not be completed perfectly unless he spent much time reversing the setback.

The easiest method would be to slay the person who had killed Huyan Qing, to get revenge.

But that wasn't enough. What he needed… was a rain of blood that would allow him to express all of his fatherly love… and release himself from worldly cares.

“Severing emotions,” he said, his voice low. Instantly, everything in the area became extremely cold. An emotionless Domain erupted out from him.

This was a unique divine ability of the Spirit Severing stage, the Domain!

Patriarch Huyan’s Domain was one in which the only thing that could exist was an extinguishing of emotions. Any scrap of emotion or passion would be extinguished inside, dispersed. As the Domain spread out, the Blood Clone trembled. It recovered a moment later, not having been affected very much. That was because it… was innately an emotionless creature.

As for the mastiff, however, it began to shake violently. The bloody light which surrounded it began to flicker. The will of undeath which filled it fought back fiercely, but was clearly not a match. It began to tremble more and more violently, and emit fierce howls.

The one to be affected the most, though, was Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s mind filled with roaring. Blood oozed out of his eyes, ears, nose and mouth. His eyes shone with confusion. Suddenly, his mind began to fill with images. His childhood and his parents. His friendship with Fatty and the others. The blur that existed between Xu Qing and Chu Yuyan. The emotional connection between apprentice and Master that he felt for Pill Demon.

All of these things completely filled his mind, transforming into a blade that hung there within his mind.

An archaic voice suddenly filled his mind.

“Sever your emotions, and you can exist….

“Emotions are a hindrance, they burn away at your flame of life….

“Sever them….

“Sever them….”

The voice seemed to carry some mysterious power. It caused Meng Hao’s entire body to tremble. He felt as if his soul were about to be shredded into pieces. He couldn’t help but let out a scream of anguish.

At the same time, all the images in his mind, all the people, began to distort. They transformed into black flames that set Meng Hao’s mind on fire. He felt pain…. the kind of pain that comes from watching your parents dying and being helpless to save them!

It was the pain that comes from watching your beloved coldly turn away into the embrace of another!

It was the pain of watching your best friend smile maliciously while plunging a knife into your back!

It was a pain formed from all of those various emotions, rising to the pinnacle!

The pain transformed into black flames which burned at Meng Hao’s very soul.

“Sever them…. Sever the emotions, and you can exist. Refuse… and your soul will be destroyed.” The voice echoed out in Meng Hao’s body as he trembled. It seemed as if he were existing in an illusion, but was unable to distinguish the difference between the illusion and reality.

Confusion filled his eyes. Blood oozed out of his mouth. He lost control and fell down, down into the Violet Sea.

This was Patriarch Huyan’s emotionless Domain, which severed both emotions and pain. It severed the emotions of the enemy, smashed the soul, crushed the fleshly body. Facing Patriarch Huyan with emotions led only to death.

Giving in to the demands of the Domain led to becoming a puppet. Refusing to give in, led to death in body and spirit.

Meng Hao sank down into the Violet Sea. As he did, his mind’s eye was filled with various images from his life. The joys, the sorrows, the partings, the reunions. Pain. Betrayal. They all seemed to swirl into a cycle of pain.

When Meng Hao’s body suddenly hit the seafloor, his eyes opened. As of this moment, they were clear. However, it was a clearness filled with exhaustion.

“Emotions… are not a hindrance,” he murmured. “Emotions… are what make life complete.” He closed his eyes. In the instant that he did, the Violet Sea began to roar, and its surface roiled. The mastiff was trembling in mid-air, its eyes bright red. The Blood Clone was actually not impeded at all. However, as it neared Patriarch Huyan, confusion suddenly filled its eyes.

Patriarch Huyan hovered there in mid-air, his Domain spreading out, filling the entire area. It was at this moment that the Violet Sea began to roar, causing Patriarch Huyan’s brow to furrow.

As he frowned, the waters of the Violet Sea began to collect together. An enormous head suddenly began to emerge, then a body, then two legs. In the shocking blink of an eye, an enormous giant made of seawater rose up from within the Violet Sea.

The giant looked like Meng Hao in every way. Its closed eyes suddenly snapped open. They emanated a bright glow as it lifted up its right hand. The gigantic hand, formed of massive quantities of water, formed into a fist and then punched out toward Patriarch Huyan.

A massive boom echoed out across the waters. Patriarch Huyan’s face fell and he instantly retreated. He managed to avoid the fist, but his Domain was completely shattered.

“Emotionless? You actually transformed into something emotionless…. No! This isn’t you! This is the Violet Sea!! He actually… actually fused with the Violet Sea. This… this….” Patriarch Huyan’s eyes went wide and filled with disbelief. Only emotionless beings could exist within his domain. This

Violet Sea Giant, was just such an emotionless creature. After all, the Violet Sea was fundamentally death.

In death, what dies is not just the body, but also emotion.

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# Chapter 545: The Most Powerful!

Currently, far up above in the air, three streams of powerful Divine Sense were paying very close attention to battle down below.

These streams of Divine Sense far exceeded the Nascent Soul stage. Each one seemed to contain different natural laws and different Domains. Shockingly, these were… three streams of Divine Sense belonging to Spirit Severing Patriarchs.

All three were from the Black Lands. Two were from the great Wild Flame Tribe and great Demon Butterfly Tribe respectively. The other was a patriarch from the great Cloud Sky Tribe, the Tribe Zhou Dekun was a member of.

The streams of Divine Sense hovered there in mid-air, staring down at the battle with both concentration and shock.

“Patriarch Huyan’s clone is going all out.”

“This kid has really got some extraordinary battle prowess! Patriarch Huyan’s clone is different from our clones. Our clones only possess thirty percent of the battle prowess of our true selves. Patriarch Huyan’s clone, however… possesses its own Nascent Divinity Spirit Immortal! It’s a Divine Clone with seventy percent of the battle prowess of his true self! It’s like a second life for Patriarch Huyan. It required years of refinement to create something he can exchange his life with!”

“Seven superimpositions. A Spirit Severing Immortal Beast. The will of the Violet Sea. This kid is incredible!”

As the three streams of Divine Sense discussed the goings on, they only continued to grow more serious.

Down on the surface of the sea, booms echoed out into the air. Meng Hao, in the form of the Violet Sea Giant, clenched his hand into a fist again. He punched out into the air, which kicked up a violent tempest that swept out in all directions, with the power to destroy all Domains in the area.

The mastiff howled, and bloody light exploded up from its body, transforming into eighteen sharp fangs which then shot directly toward Patriarch Huyan, seemingly capable of ripping holes in the air.

A boom could be heard and blood sprayed from the mouth of Patriarch Huyan. He fell back once again. Even as he did, the giant-form Meng Hao slapped his hands together in exactly the same way he had when he killed the Black Bat.

Next, another giant began to rise up from within the Violet Sea. Then a third, followed by a fourth, a fifth and then a sixth….

In total, seven giants towered above the Violet Sea, each one of them thousands of meters tall and shocking to the extreme.

Each of the giants looked exactly like Meng Hao. As soon as they appeared, they charged toward Patriarch Huyan. This was… a divine ability that Meng Hao could employ after fusing with the Violet Sea.

Seven giants roared. The mastiff's Cultivation base exploded out with all its power. The Blood Clone trembled, then exploded with killing intent. All of them charged directly toward Patriarch Huyan.

As they approached, destructive power exploded up. The power of extermination raged. Patriarch Huyan's Domain was no longer effective, having been shattered by Meng Hao using the Violet Sea. Patriarch Huyan's eyes were red and his hair was in disarray. He looked completely out of sorts as he suddenly howled.

Instantly, a divine ability magically manifested. It coalesced into a three thousand meter long Heaven Saber. As the blade chopped down, it caused roaring sounds to fill the air. Of the seven giants, four exploded. Of the fangs shooting toward Patriarch Huyan from the mastiff, five were shattered. All the rest continued on to slam into Patriarch Huyan.

Patriarch Huyan’s entire body shook violently, and he coughed up a huge mouthful of blood. He tumbled backward in astonishment, his hair flying around, his eyes filled with madness.

“You’re good, Meng Hao, I’ll give you that…. To be able to fight back against me to this extent shows that you are truly powerful.

“However… you are not of the Spirit Severing stage! Not yet! You have no Nascent Divinity Spirit Immortal. You are doomed…. You cannot slay me. Instead… you have assured your own death!

“Spirit Severing!” Patriarch Huyan lifted his head up and roared. Along with the sound of the roar, his aura exploded up, revealing the power of his Spirit Severing Cultivation base. As this happened, his body began to wither. In the blink of an eye, it withered up and he began to disappear.

Instantly, his body completely turned into ashes and was gone. However, as his fleshly body disappeared, what appeared in its places was a Spirit Body!

It was like a Nascent Soul, but fundamentally different. It was translucent, and possessed Immortal Will!

This was the Spirit Immortal of Patriarch Huyan’s clone!

Spirit Severing can also be referred to as Mortality Severing. Everything beneath Spirit Severing is mortal. However, Spirit Severing and above can be considered Immortal. After severing Mortality, the Nascent Soul disappears, and is transformed into a Nascent Divinity. This can also be referred to as a Spirit Immortal!

This Nascent Divinity Spirit Immortal is not something that is easily revealed. Only by casting off the fleshly body would it be able to appear. Actually, a Nascent Divinity Spirit Immortal can only truly connect properly with one’s true physical body, not a clone.

Therefore, by casting off the clone’s physical body, the Nascent Divinity Spirit Immortal would be able to truly employ Spirit Severing divine abilities!

Bright glows appeared in the eyes of giant-form Meng Hao. He stared at Patriarch Huyan’s Nascent Divinity Spirit Immortal. Meng Hao had actually gained quite a bit throughout the course of this battle; his understanding regarding Spirit Severing was now much deeper.

“So, there is no Nascent Soul in Spirit Severing, but rather, a Nascent Divinity Spirit Immortal is formed!” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as his enlightenment deepened. Thanks to this battle, the path of Spirit Severing was now much clearer in his mind.

Patriarch Huyan’s Nascent Divinity Spirit Immortal began to perform an incantation gesture, touching its left thumb with its right forefinger, and vice versa. This formed a rectangle which it used to surround Meng Hao’s image. “Spirit Severing Banishment!” it shouted.

As the words left its mouth, rumbling filled Heaven and Earth, and the sky dimmed. Giant-form Meng Hao began to shake, as if explosive power from Heaven and Earth were forming to expel him.

Such an expulsion made it seem as if the entire world, as if all the lands of South Heaven, viewed Meng Hao as an enemy. It was as if in this moment, all living things, even the plants and animals, all existence, were filled with an intense desire to expel Meng Hao.

All of a sudden, a sound like countless murmuring voices suddenly joined together to form an echoing shout.

“Begone!”

The sound was such that it seemed as if the will of the entire world was focused on expelling and banishing Meng Hao!

Meng Hao’s giant-form exploded into countless pieces, as did the other remaining giants in the area. The mastiff whined as roaring also filled its body and its life force rapidly began to drain away. It, however, did not explode. After all… it was of the Spirit Severing stage!

Such a banishment could only be resisted by the Spirit Severing stage!

Anything beneath Spirit Severing would be killed by this banishment. That was the power of a Nascent Divinity Spirit Immortal.

The Blood Clone also exploded, although it quickly reformed, only to explode once more. The Violet Sea churned. Deep beneath the surface, blood sprayed from Meng Hao’s mouth. Roaring filled his mind as he heard all living things roaring.

“BEGONE!!”

More blood exploded from his mouth. Popping sounds rang out from his body as he shot up from within the waters. The voices continued to echo in his ears.

“BEEGOOONNEEE!!

“Begone from this place! Begone from these lands! Begone from South Heaven…!” An indescribable power of expulsion caused Meng Hao to retreat at full speed. He coughed up blood continuously. The magic of this divine ability was incredibly powerful, far beyond anything Meng Hao could have imagined.

The power of expulsion continued to grow more intense, causing an enormous vortex to appear in midair. The gravitation force of the vortex latched onto Meng Hao, as if it intended to completely banish him from the lands of South Heaven.

“I live in the lands of South Heaven,” said Meng Hao. “This is my home! You trifling Spirit Severing Cultivator! What gives you the right to banish me!” A look of determination filled his eyes as he slapped his bag of holding to produce the blood-colored mask.

After entering the Seventh Anima, Meng Hao didn’t actually need the mask. However, now that the mastiff had awakened, Meng Hao could actually sense that within the mask… was a shocking divine ability!

Originally, Meng Hao had planned to keep this divine ability as a trump card, but now he had no other options.

Without hesitation, he placed the mask onto his face. When that happened, his green robe instantly turned the color of blood, as did his hair. In the blink of an eye, a glow of blood rose up from him.

“Blood Mastiff, my Blood Immortal Spirit…. My Dao Protector…. Use the primordial Blood Immortal law to merge with this mask. Make your Cultivation base… my Cultivation base!

“Let the Domain change! Let the primordial transform! Let the image of the Blood Immortal… come!” As Meng Hao spoke, his voice seemed to carry an archaic will. The mastiff trembled, and a strange glow appeared in its eyes. Without hesitation, it shot toward Meng Hao. As it did, its body transformed into a red glow. It shot like lightning toward Meng Hao and then… merged directly into the mask.

As soon as the mastiff merged into the mask a tremor ran through Meng Hao’s body. His aura suddenly expanded out, and his hair whipped about him. His robe fluttered madly.

His Divine Sense… suddenly was no longer 29,999 meters, but rather… 30,000!

It was only an increase in one meter , but that meter… made all the difference compared to the previous 29,999 meters. That one meter gap represented the difference between mortality and Immortality!

Meng Hao’s Cultivation base suddenly exploded up. Shockingly, a blood-colored figure suddenly appeared behind him. It was a figure seated on a throne of bones, wearing a mask, hair floating in the air. Also, it was a woman!

The woman was none other than… the Blood Immortal of the Doom Clan!!

In this moment, Meng Hao was fused with the Cultivation base of the Blood Mastiff. On top of his great Circle Nascent Soul Cultivation base appeared another Cultivation base that did not belong to him. It fused with his, causing thunderous roars to fill his body. His aura exploded out… with the power of Spirit Severing!

In this moment, it seemed as if Meng Hao suddenly came to a new realization. He looked up into the sky, but then just as quickly retracted his gaze.

At the same time, the three streams of Divine Sense belonging to the Spirit Severing Cultivators emanated powerful ripples, caused by the shock of realizing that they had been spotted by Meng Hao.

“He saw us! I would never have imagined that he could actually borrow the power of Spirit Severing!!”

“It seems Patriarch Huyan’s Divine Clone is going to perish!”

“This kid… well, perhaps we shouldn’t call him that. This Fellow Daoist Meng Hao might not know us personally, but he is qualified to sit as equals with us at the same table.”

The three were now paying rapt attention to Meng Hao.

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# Chapter 546: The Patriarch Goes All Out!

Ripples of Spirit Severing Power expanded out in all directions. Meng Hao's hair whipped about as his Cultivation base roared upward.

The Spirit Severing power did not belong to him; he could only possess it temporarily. Even the Domain was not his, but rather, that of the Blood Immortal.

After the Spirit Severing Cultivation base growth, shockingly, an Area world appeared around Meng Hao. Within his mind, he could also faintly sense the Domain of the Blood Immortal.

However, he could not utilize them. All he could do was vaguely sense them…. The Domain actually had nothing to do with blood. Strangely, it contained a sense of waiting, as well as of glorious pursuit. It was like a blooming, blood-colored flower….

In the moment that Meng Hao borrowed the Spirit Severing power, the expulsion power around him instantly grew weaker by more than half. The vortex in mid-air vanished without a trace.

An expression of disbelief appeared on the face of Patriarch Huyan. Never could he possibly have imagined that the battle would go the way it had, or that he would end up being so shaken by Meng Hao.

"How is this possible?! How can he be so terrifying!? Don't tell me that he's… a Dao Seeking reincarnation!? Or maybe… he's an Immortal's Soul in a mortal body!?!?" Even as Patriarch Huyan was reeling in shock, Meng Hao looked up. He could sense the undefinable power that was surging within him. He couldn’t sustain such power for long, only about the space of twelve breaths.

Therefore, he didn’t hesitate. The glow of blood surged up around him as he lifted his right hand up and performed an incantation gesture, then pointed forward.

“Sundered clouds, a bloody rain, seas that cover the sky!”

Three forms of the Blood Immortal legacy divine ability. The body of the Blood Immortal. A Spirit Severing Cultivation base. In this moment, the power of all of these things exploded out.

The sky was now the color of blood!

Beneath the red glow, the Violet Sea turned black.

From a distance, all that could be seen was a black sea and a red sky, with just a glimmer of violet in between the two. Even an expert artist would have a hard time depicting such a scene.

There were clouds in the sky, sundered clouds.

There was rain as well, a rain of blood!

A sea of blood roared with huge waves that seemed to wish to fly up to the heavens. The sea of blood merged with the Violet Sea, transforming into black blood!

Sundered clouds, a bloody rain, seas that cover the sky. These three things were Blood Immortal divine abilities, majestic and shocking.

The sundered clouds surged into motion, causing vapor to instantly rise up around Patriarch Huyan’s Nascent Divinity Spirit Immortal. From within the thick clouds emerged… sundering!

A boom could be heard as the sundering mist exploded. Patriarch Huyan’s Nascent Divinity Spirit Immortal emitted a shrill cry. It was shocked to discover that it couldn’t evade and was powerless to fight back! The natural law in the world seemed to have completely changed.

These rules did not belong to him, but rather, to Meng Hao. Or perhaps… to the woman who sat behind Meng Hao on the throne of bones.

The sundered clouds surged endlessly. That was because they were propelled by a wind of sundering. Roaring filled the air as, within the short space of time of a few breaths, Patriarch Huyan’s Nascent Divinity Spirit Immortal was battered dozens of times. He was forced backward several hundred meters. Explosions and booms echoed out; it seemed as if the Nascent Divinity Spirit Immortal was on the verge of being destroyed.

He was shocked, filled with disbelief as well as an intense sense of deadly crisis.

In this moment, a rain of blood appeared in the midst of the sundered clouds. It carried with it a shocking power, seemingly another expulsion power. The raindrops fell down from all directions toward Patriarch Huyan.

A bloodcurdling scream could be heard. Patriarch Huyan was flabbergasted and shaking with fear. Booming could be heard as his body began to fall apart. He quickly pulled it back together, only to have more blood rain whistle toward him. As of this moment, the entire world, everything in the area, was transformed into a world of blood rain.

Within that world, all life would be submerged, buried in the blood rain!

But… this was not the greatest danger. The greatest danger… was within the black sea!

The sea roared up into the sky. The sky roared down into the sea. The blackness of the once violet-colored sea, merged with the blood rain, turning it black!

The black sea rose up into the sky, making it impossible to determine what was the sky and what was the sea. It was as if everything had been turned upside down, as if everything had been twisted about.

Within all the booming and roaring, the sundered clouds, the blood rain, the black sea, became… Blood Death!

Patriarch Huyan was filled with a sense of grave danger. He had the intense premonition that if he didn’t do something immediately, then he… would definitely die!!

If someone had told him before that he would die at Meng Hao’s hands, he would have mocked and ridiculed that person to no end. But now… such a scene was playing out in front of his own eyes. As of this moment, though, there was no time for shock and astonishment. Heart pounding, he suddenly looked up into the sky and roared.

“Fellow Daoists, the three of you must help me slay this man! Regardless of whether you succeed or not, I vow to present you with precious treasures as gifts in return!”

Hearing this caused the streams of Divine Sense to instantly reveal intense glows. They immediately began to discuss the matter.

“There’s really no need to continue watching the battle,” said the Spirit Severing Patriarch from the great Cloud Sky Tribe. “The clone is doomed to perish. This Meng Hao has fused his will with the Violet Sea. He’s not someone to be provoked lightly.” His words contained deeper meaning, which was obvious.

“Fellow Daoist Yunlian, don’t worry. True, we’re allies, and therefore can’t go back on our word to help each other. However, the best thing to do would be to leave with the promise of treasure from Patriarch Huyan, and at the same time get Meng Hao to owe us a favor. Sowing some good Karma would be the best outcome!”

“That’s right. It was of his own accord that Patriarch Huyan provoked a powerful foe. He can’t blame anyone else. If the Heavenly Court Alliance loses the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe, but then gains the great Cloud Sky Tribe, it will still be a Heavenly Court.”

After discussing the matter, the three streams of Divine Sense began to chuckle. Three forms began to take shape out of nothing. In the blink of an eye, three figures could be seen.

One was a white-haired old man. Another was a middle-aged man with a luxuriant beard. The third was a young boy in a red robe.

As soon as they appeared, they exchanged smiling glances. These were all clones, the likes of which most Spirit Severing Cultivators possessed. They were different from Patriarch Huyan’s clone, which was a type that was rarely seen.

Moments later, the three figures appeared in front of Patriarch Huyan’s Nascent Divinity. Without even a pause, they charged Meng Hao.

Each of these clones possessed roughly thirty percent of the power of the Cultivation base of their true selves. However, even thirty percent should be enough to crush someone of the Nascent Soul stage. They instantly turned into three fierce beams of light that shot toward Meng Hao’s three great Blood Immortal divine abilities.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered in response to the attack. For these three people to make a move wasn’t something unforeseen. He waved his sleeve. The sundered clouds roared, the blood rain howled, and the black sea screamed. The three forces slammed into the three clones.

“This guy is incredible! Now that I’m experiencing his power, it’s obvious that he’s far stronger than I imagined after simply observing him fight!”

“If our clones met him by themselves, and he unleashed his full power, it would only take a few moves for him to completely eradicate us!”

The three exchanged another glance, then performed incantation gesture, causing their own divine abilities to blast into Meng Hao’s Blood Immortal divine abilities. During the space of a few breaths, booms filled the air. The three clones exploded, completely destroyed.

Before they completely vanished, all of them cast meaningful glances toward Meng Hao.

Patriarch Huyan stared in shock, and then began to tremble. He lifted his head up and howled. How could he not see through the plan the three crafty old foxes had just carried out?

The three clones weren't as strong as Patriarch Huyan's clone, so if they were fighting solo, they might be destroyed relatively quickly. But how could it be possible for them to be defeated so quickly while fighting together?

The only explanation was that all three had actually been unwilling to attack. Everything they had done was just an excuse to get their hands on the treasure that he had promised.

Patriarch Huyan's expression was one of livid fury.

"If I'm going to die, there's no way I'll die by his hand!" he roared.

"Totems combine…." he cried. Suddenly, five and a half totems appeared within this Nascent Divinity and then suddenly flew out. Within the half totem could be seen several souls that bore an eerie resemblance to Patriarch Huyan. They formed together to… form the eight sons that had been personally slain by Patriarch Huyan.

Unfortunately, because Huyan Qing had died in the way he did, the totem was incomplete.

With the appearance of these totems, Patriarch Huyan's expression was suddenly one of complete resolve.

"Ancestral Awakening, commence!" As Patriarch Huyan roared, the five totems shattered, transforming into countless fragments that instantly fused into the Nascent Divinity Spirit Immortal. Patriarch Huyan's roar turned into a wail as the Nascent Divinity began to turn blurry, and then suddenly exploded.

The exploding pieces almost looked like human flesh. They shot out, but then just as quickly began to form back together. In the blink of an eye, an indescribably gruesome aura suddenly spread out to fill the area.

At the same time, Patriarch Huyan's Nascent Divinity was reforming, turning into a body formed out of countless chunks of flesh.

It looked like innumerable patches of flesh were sewn together, as if the body were covered with countless centipedes. It was thoroughly savage in appearance, especially the forehead, where three golden scales could be seen that emanated blinding golden light.

The bizarre, gruesome aura completely matched the bizarre, gruesome body. This was Patriarch Huyan's Ancestral Awakening body, the result of the most powerful divine ability that his clone could employ.

The head had no facial features, only the three golden scales which were almost like eyes. They glowed with golden, flickering light that transformed into an enormous vortex.

The vortex spun, seemingly powerful enough to shatter the air. As it expanded out, everything for thousands of meters around instantly began to shatter.

The sundered clouds shattered, the blood rain dissipated and the black sea was destroyed. Meng Hao's three Blood Immortal divine abilities were completely dispelled.

Patriarch Huyan was burning his life force. His Cultivation base was blurry, and his appearance bizarre in this Ancestral Awakening form, which could explode out with power to destroy anything and everything.

After the Blood Immortal divine abilities were destroyed, Patriarch Huyan's strange body disappeared. When he reappeared, he was directly in front of Meng Hao. He lifted up his hand and pushed out.

Meng Hao's eyes flickered. Without hesitation he waved his sleeve, borrowing explosive Spirit Severing power to shoot backward.

“I only have about seven more breaths worth of time before I run out of Spirit Severing power!”

His eyes glowed with coldness. Setting his jaw, he stared at Patriarch Huyan. From the look of it, this version of Patriarch Huyan was not sentient, but rather, was acting on instinct. The strange divine ability would only last for a certain period of time before it ran out of life force power to burn.

“Going all out?” said Meng Hao with a cold laugh. “Unfortunately for you, I still have a lot of tricks up my sleeve.”

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# Chapter 547: Sealing Spirit Severing!

Seeing that Patriarch Huyan was going all out caused killing intent to flicker within Meng Hao’s eyes. Patriarch Huyan was in a state of mindless madness, but his battle prowess had leaped up, and was now completely beyond what it had been before!

Considering that Patriarch Huyan had entered such a state, Meng Hao had the option of simply dodging his attacks, then waiting for enough time to go by for this version of Patriarch Huyan to dissipate naturally. However, the desire for battle was thick in Meng Hao’s eyes. This was a fight to prove the power of his Cultivation base and achieve mastery of his divine abilities and magical arts through actual use.

To Meng Hao, this battle was a way to gain understanding and control over himself, to grow more perfect. Now that he was facing Patriarch Huyan’s most powerful divine ability, Meng Hao… had absolutely no desire whatsoever to flinch away. He would fight!

Even as the desire to engage in battle overflowed from Meng Hao’s eyes, Patriarch Huyan’s body flashed in yet another charge. Meng Hao’s lips turned up in a vicious smile as he did not retreat, but rather, counterattacked!

They slammed into each other, making continuous attacks that sent shocking booms to fill the area. The Violet Sea churned violently, and the air rippled with distortions. As the battle continued, popping sounds rang out from within Meng Hao’s body. He was suddenly sent tumbling backward. His borrowed Spirit Severing power was now growing unstable.

According to his calculations, he had only three breaths of time left before it was gone.

In the final critical moment, Meng Hao suddenly rocketed up into the air. He looked down toward Patriarch Huyan, who was shooting toward him from the surface of the Violet Sea.

“I’ve gained a lot from this battle. Therefore, I think I’ll use the trump card that I recently mastered… to bury you!” A strange light burned in Meng Hao’s eyes as he spoke the words. In the final moment in which his borrowed Spirit Severing power was about to disappear, he took a deep breath. The image of a magical symbol suddenly flickered within his eyes.

It seemed as if his entire person had slipped into some indistinct state. He lifted his right hand, causing an enormous illusory image to appear behind him. That image was… a magical symbol!

It was blurry, but in the instant it appeared, the Violet Sea roared as it was pushed away. It was as if some shapeless pressure was pushing it away, forming a huge crater down below.

The air all around twisted with distortions. It was as if in the entire world, nothing existed except for this magical symbol.

The symbol’s origin was Meng Hao’s eyes, and his heart. This was none other than the magical symbol that Meng Hao had been trying to gain enlightenment regarding for years and years, the magical symbol from… the Black Lands Celestial soil!

Its true origin was the talisman from the Heavens that was destroyed, falling onto the Black Lands, where it transformed into black magical symbols.

Meng Hao still had not gained complete enlightenment. Therefore, to employ it required forceful use of his Cultivation base. However, with the borrowed power of the mastiff, he was able to do just that.

His expression was blank, as if he had lost use of his faculties. Within Meng Hao’s mind’s eye, he suddenly saw an image of a boundless starscape. In the middle of it all was an indistinct figure who bore the semblance of a transcendent being.

The figure stood there above Planet South Heaven, waving its finger to summon talismanic paper. It began to write on the paper and then, with indescribable hatred, waved its sleeve, causing the talisman to shoot toward South Heaven.

As soon as the talisman began its descent, an aura appeared from some unknown location in South Heaven. The two slammed into each other, causing vibrations to ripple out through space, filling Planet South Heaven with an enormous roaring sound.

Along with the roaring, the talisman began to burn into pieces, which then became ash. The ash fell down, transforming into the Black Lands. Within the remnants of the ash was the will of a Celestial talisman!

As Meng Hao hovered there in mid-air, he waved his right hand down. The magical symbol behind him turned black, then passed through Meng Hao’s body as it shot down toward Patriarch Huyan.

In that moment, Meng Hao seemed to have turned into the Immortal from all those years ago. As his hand descended, the magical symbol roared. At the same time, the blood-colored mask fell off of his face. The mastiff flew out, and Meng Hao’s Cultivation base fell down from the Spirit Severing stage to return to its previous level.

Patriarch Huyan’s body trembled. The three scales on his forehead flickered. It was as if his consciousness had been restored a bit in the face of this imminent crisis.

However, even as he recovered his faculties, the magical symbol closed in on him, emitting shocking roars. It slammed into Patriarch Huyan, causing the sound of an enormous explosion to lift up into the sky. An intense howl of despair could be heard from Patriarch Huyan as the magical symbol shoved him down into the Violet Sea.

The water seethed as it surged out in all directions. The magical symbol descended, shooting through the water until it slammed onto the seafloor.

Everything shook. Patriarch Huyan’s aura was nothing but a thread, and his body was virtually completely shattered, sealed tightly onto the bottom of the Violet Sea.

His Ancestral Awakening body was disappearing. As it did, his Nascent Divinity slowly became visible. Struggling, it began to transform into glittering dots of light that slowly dissipated out into the Violet Sea.

However, even as the Nascent Divinity Spirit Immortal was about to disappear, Meng Hao made a grasping motion toward the Violet Sea. A power of sealing appeared. It branded down onto Patriarch Huyan’s Nascent Divinity before it could die, instantly sealing it within the blood-colored mask.

“Want to die? It’s not that easy,” said Meng Hao coolly as he sealed it. “It would be too much of a pity to let a Nascent Divinity Spirit Immortal like this disappear. I think I’ll turn it into my third Soul of Lightning.”

Next, he produced some medicinal pills which he immediately consumed. He then closed his eyes for a moment and hovered there in mid-air. After some time passed, his eyes snapped open, and they glowed with a brilliant light. He suddenly slapped his hand onto the blood-colored mask.

The flag of three streamers appeared in Meng Hao’s hand, as well as a glowing black wheel that resembled a chariot’s wheel.

As the surroundings returned to their normal appearance, Meng Hao inspected the wheel with glittering eyes. Then, he sent his Divine Sense inside it, branding it with multiple layers, to make it completely his own.

It was an extraordinary treasure. Despite having its connection to Patriarch Huyan severed, Meng Hao still encountered some resistance when he was trying to brand it. He gave a cold snort, causing the Time Sword Formation to appear and emanate intense pressure. He also entered the Seventh Anima, causing its Divine Sense with a range just a hair away from 30,000 meters to bore into the Wheel of Time.

Meng Hao took a deep breath as the power of the successive brands caused the Wheel of Time to shrink down. It turned into a black glow that Meng Hao then swallowed. It sank down into his dantian region, suppressed by the seven Nascent Souls there.

Meanwhile back in the Black Lands…

The same moment in which Meng Hao sealed Patriarch Huyan's Nascent Divinity Spirit Immortal, Patriarch Huyan's white-robed true self was sitting cross-legged in meditation. Suddenly, a tremor ran through his body.

His face grew red, and although his eyes did not open, he coughed up a huge mouthful of blood.

As he coughed up the blood, his features changed. Before, he looked like a middle-aged man. Now, he seemed older. His hair was gray, and his skin wrinkled. An aura of decay suddenly emanated out from his body.

The aura was intense, and seemed to cause the flame of Patriarch Huyan's life force to darken by quite a bit.

For his clone to be sealed, and its connection to him severed, had caused severe internal injuries to Patriarch Huyan. Were it an ordinary clone, it wouldn't matter. Clones such as that were dispensable. But this Divine Clone was different. It was like a second life for him. As of this moment, his longevity was reduced, and his Cultivation base sank. It was no longer at the peak it had been before, and he could no longer wield the same level of power as earlier.

His face was pale. His body trembled as he took a deep breath. Even as he was about to begin treating his injuries, another tremor ran through him, and his eyes snapped open.

This was the first time he had opened his eyes during his secluded meditation of a hundred years. They did not open to shine with an expression of success. The entire hundred years of secluded meditation had been wasted, causing something that seemed like a tempest to appear in his eyes as soon as he opened them.

He glared at the space in front of him where three figures were materializing. One was an old person, another sported a luxuriant beard, and the third was a young boy in a red robe.

“So, Fellow Daoist Huyan, where are the precious treasures?” asked the red-robed boy, smiling at Patriarch Huyan.

Patriarch Huyan took a deep breath and suppressed his fury. These three people had obviously joined forces; that was the only way they could have gotten past the Tribe’s defenses. If Patriarch Huyan hadn’t decisively given up on his secluded meditation by opening his eyes, who knew what other machinations they might have attempted….

After all, despite being fellow Spirit Severing Cultivators who seemed to be on good terms with him, everything in such an arrangement had to do with mutual benefit. His Divine Clone had been destroyed, and his Cultivation base had just slipped from its peak. Although they might not have come here to outright attack him, they would definitely think of some ways to extort him to their benefit.

Patriarch Huyan’s face was grim as he waved his right hand. Instantly, three glowing beams of light shot out toward the three. One was a sword, the other a tree branch, and the third, a medicinal pill bottle.

The red-robed boy was the one to receive the pill bottle. It emanated a rippling aura, and was clearly very different from the other two.

As he tossed out the magical items, Patriarch Huyan coolly said, “As of this day, the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe secedes from the Heavenly Court Alliance. However… are the three of you really so sure that I will perish by the hand of that Meng Hao?”

The red-robed boy’s eyes glittered. The other two exchanged a glance and smiled. No one said anything. The three of them turned and left, vanishing, leaving behind nothing but ripples in the air.

After they disappeared, Patriarch Huyan coughed up a mouthful of blood, the price paid for forcefully ending his secluded meditation. His body suddenly grew blurry for a moment, and he aged even more. His eyes began to shine with a cold hardness.

“Considering how devious they are, they could obviously tell that I was willing to remove myself from the Alliance in order to prevent the Patriarch of the Cloud Sky Tribe from attacking me to get his way in. Furthermore, those three treasures were to ensure that the Wild Flame and Demon Butterfly Tribes don’t support that thieving Meng Hao!” Patriarch Huyan was shrewd and astute. During his battle with Meng Hao, he had seen that he might not necessarily be a match if he fought alone. He also could tell that Meng Hao would definitely come to the Black Lands looking for him. His main goal all along had been to come up with a reason to give out the three treasures, and thus ensure that the other three did not side against him.

Of course, everyone realized this. There was no need to point it out directly.

“Meng Hao!” growled Patriarch Huyan, grinding his teeth. He took a deep breath as he closed his eyes once more. He needed to restore his power to its peak so that he could battle with Meng Hao.

As of now, not only did he hate Meng Hao down to his bones. He also felt… unprecedented fear!

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# Chapter 548: Return to the Black Lands

Naturally, the Li Clan Patriarch was the first to receive the honor of becoming one of Meng Hao’s Souls of Lightning. He had long since enjoyed quite a bit of freedom, and was quite comfortable in the Blood Immortal mask. As long as he wasn’t being struck by lightning, or tormented by the meat jelly, he was actually quite happy.

He had long since abandoned any expectations of Li Clan members coming to rescue him. He felt numb toward any such hopes. Recently, his greatest enjoyment came from tormenting Ji Nineteen.

Being able to take the pain he had suffered and inflict it exponentially on someone else made the Li Clan Patriarch more happy than he had ever been.

Of course, Ji Nineteen was fated to become Meng Hao’s second Soul of Lightning, although not voluntarily. In fact, it had taken quite a bit of pleading on the part of the Li Clan Patriarch to convince Meng Hao to bestow such an honor upon Ji Nineteen….

The third Soul of Lightning was of course Patriarch Huyan, who had just been pulled into the blood-colored mask, completely out of sorts and on the verge of dissipating completely.

As soon as he saw Patriarch Huyan, the Li Clan Patriarch grew extremely excited, and his body started to crackle with lightning.… Once the torment began, it naturally couldn’t be minimized in any way.

Meng Hao retracted his Divine Sense from his dantian region, having finished his observations of his seven Nascent Souls refining the glowing Wheel of time. He floated there in mid air, the Blood Mastiff next to him, licking its wounds. A brutal expression filled its eyes. It could sense that Meng Hao's killing intent had not faded, but instead, had grown more powerful as they carried out their slaughter.

Meng Hao's gaze swept across the Violet Sea. Patriarch Huyan's clone had not possessed a bag of holding. At first, Meng Hao did not understand why that was. However, after borrowing the power of Spirit Severing, he suddenly understood.

Some Spirit Severing experts might use bags of holding, but most of them opened up a space in their Nascent Divinity. This was another difference between the mortal and the Immortal.

However, Meng Hao had destroyed ten outposts, and killed many Cultivators. Within the bags of holding he had collected were a host of items, which helped make up for everything he had wasted to acquire his seventh Nascent Soul.

Voices could be heard as the members of the Golden Crow Tribe approached. They looked at Meng Hao with excited expressions. They had stayed off in the distance for the course of the battle, and hadn't been able to see what was happening. However, they could sense the shocking nature of the magical battle.

"I'm not sure what percentage of true Cultivation base was possessed by Patriarch Huyan's clone…." Meng Hao mused to himself. "However, this clone was clearly different from the average clone." He smiled. It didn't really matter what percent power the clone had, or how much Patriarch Huyan's true self possessed. Meng Hao would not shrink back from a fight just because his opponent was powerful.

"Those other three Spirit Severing experts sure were interesting. Patriarch Huyan seemed to have some ulterior motive in asking them to attack. It seems all Spirit Severing experts are filled with schemes and foresights. I definitely cannot look down on them." After a moment's thought, he looked down toward the Golden Crow Clan members down below, and his eyes glittered brightly.

“Let us return… to the Black Lands!” he said. He waved his right hand, causing the entire Violet Sea to fill with a rumbling sound. An enormous Violet Sea Giant suddenly rose up. Water poured off of its surface, crashing down onto the surface of the sea below. Next, a second, then a third Violet Sea Giant appeared.

In the blink of an eye, there were seven. Seven towering Violet Sea Giants, each one three thousand meters tall. Although their facial features were somewhat indistinct, it was obvious that they resembled Meng Hao.

“Let’s go!”

Meng Hao sat cross-legged on the mastiff as it flew through the air. The Violet Sea Giants began to run, kicking up huge waves, which swept the members of the Golden Crow Tribe along with them as they headed toward the Black Lands.

From a distance, it was also possible to observe the Violet Sea seethe as Meng Hao sent his will expanding out.

A wave sped out across the Violet Sea, causing countless specters appear on the surface of the waters. By the time the wave reached Blackgate Fort, their numbers had grown into the hundreds of thousands.

Some of the specters began to congregate around the seven Violet Sea Giants as they all charged toward the Black Lands.

They proceeded forward with the power to crush anything. Nothing could possibly obstruct their path. Roaring echoed out constantly, to the point that the Black Lands were now on high alert. All the powers therein were sent into a commotion.

When the seven Violet Sea Giants appeared off in the distance, the tens of thousands of Cultivators gathered atop Blackgate Fort could only watch out as if they were facing an incredible foe. Down below, massive waves surged across the surface of the sea.

It was in this moment that one particular enormous, furious wave smashed into Blackgate Fort. The resulting boom rose up to the sky, and Blackgate Fort itself shook. The surrounding mountains trembled, and massive rockslides occurred. The people gathered atop Blackgate Fort were astonished.

At the same time, the Blood Mastiff screamed through the air, Meng Hao seated cross-legged atop it. A few dozen Cultivators flew out to block the way.

However, in the instant that they appeared, the Blood Mastiff let out a huge roar. A Spirit Severing aura appeared, along with an Area. Booms could be heard as the dozens of Nascent Soul Cultivators were sent tumbling back, blood spraying from their mouths, their faces filled with astonishment. Their disbelief and terror couldn't be greater.

“A Spirit Severing neo-demon!!”

“That's… a Spirit Severing Beast!!”

Even at the same time that the Nascent Soul Cultivators were retreating, the mastiff roared again and shot through the great gate of Blackgate Fort and into the Black Lands. Simultaneously, seven Violet Sea Giants leaped out from within the waves, also passing through the gate into the Black Lands.

“What… what are those? They're giants made from the Violet Sea?!?!”

“He… he can actually control the Violet Sea!!”

“That's impossible! How could someone control the Violet Sea! Hey, I recognize him! That's the totemic Sacred Ancient of the Golden Crow Tribe….”

When the seven Violet Sea Giants stepped foot onto the Black Lands, everything quaked. Even as the Black Lands Cultivators atop Blackgate

Fort were sent into an astonished commotion, Meng Hao’s voice could be heard echoing out.

“I am the totemic Sacred Ancient of the Golden Crow Tribe. The Heavenly Pursuit Tribe wants to eradicate my Golden Crow Tribe. That is the only reason I have come to the Black Lands this day. I will wipe out the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe!

“I’ve already exterminated Patriarch Huyan’s clone. If any Tribes here stand in my way, I will see to it that the ruthless Violet Sea spreads throughout all the Black Lands!” In response to his words, enormous waves rose up on the Violet Sea outside Blackgate Fort. At the same time, hundreds of thousands of specters whistled through the air to enter the Black Lands.

Even as Meng Hao’s words rang out, the seven Violet Sea Giants took booming strides forward. Hundreds of thousands of specters screamed through the air, obscuring the sky above. All of this caused the tens of thousands of Cultivators to gasp. Not a single one of them made any move to stop Meng Hao.

They were simply… incapable of doing so. Whether it was in terms of the seven Violet Sea Giants, the hundreds of thousands of specters, the Spirit Severing Beast or the roaring Violet Sea outside of Blackgate Fort, all of it… was far beyond anything that they could do anything to resist.

That was especially true considering what Meng Hao had just said. The fact that he had slaughtered Patriarch Huyan’s clone transformed into a roaring that filled their minds and hearts. In fact, many of them… simply couldn’t believe it.

Regardless, none of them could block Meng Hao’s way. It was without hesitation that tens of thousands of Cultivators immediately began to send news of what was happening back to their respective organizations. As to how each individual Tribe would respond, that would be up to the leadership of the Tribe.

What happened next astonished everyone. Without exception, all of the Tribes immediately responded to the messages with strict orders not to participate in any way in the conflict between the Golden Crow Tribe and the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe.

As he moved on, Meng Hao did not meet any interference. All the Black Lands Tribes made way for him. Booming echoed out as the seven Violet Sea Giants stomped through the land.

Hundreds of thousands of specters obfuscated the sky as they flew along. As for Meng Hao's Blood Mastiff, wherever it passed, a matchless aura would spread about. On this day… Meng Hao's name thoroughly shook the entirety of the Black Lands.

With Wu Ling providing directions, Meng Hao headed directly toward the area of the Golden Crow Tribe, where the war was still underway.

The Black Dragon Tribe had left, reducing by thirty percent the force that had once been the Golden Crow Black Dragon Clan. The Golden Crow Tribe's battle power had been significantly reduced. Furthermore, they had already been fighting for more than half a month.

It left the Golden Crow Tribe with roughly 50,000 members, almost all of whom had been mobilized. Vast amounts of neo-demons fought viciously. Big Hairy and the other totemic Sacred Ancients fought like mad, seemingly unaware of their own exhaustion.

As for the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe, they had mobilized nearly all of their forces. There were more than 100,000 Cultivators, along with massive hordes of neo-demons, along with totemic Sacred Ancients. As the two sides battled back and forth over the days, heavy casualties had been inflicted on both sides.

Originally, the Golden Crow Tribe would not have been a match. However, the Thorn Rampart vine had continued to follow the mission it had been entrusted with by Meng Hao all those years ago. It surrounded the Golden Crow Tribe, causing thorns to spread out. Over and over again it had blocked the deadly attacks of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe.

Blood soaked the ground as the war between the two parties slowly raged into a fever pitch. Booming echoed about as people died left and right.

The spell formation of the Church of the Golden Light was another reason that the Golden Crow Tribe had been able to hold their ground for so long. The attacks of the parrot, meat jelly and Outlander Beast also turned the battlefield with the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe into a sea of blood.

Both sides fought with bloodshot eyes. Neo-demons flew about in mid-air massacring each other.

However, as time had passed, the situation for the Golden Crow Tribe continued to grow more critical.

Currently, more than a hundred Nascent Soul Cultivators of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe flew about in mid-air, emitting truly crushing pressure. There were also more than twenty totemic Sacred Ancients, who, although were not of the Spirit Severing stage, only the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage, were still astonishingly powerful.

When you added in the ordinary Cultivators and the roaring neo-demons, it caused the sky to dim.

The Heavenly Pursuit Tribe was a great Tribe after all, with deep, powerful resources. Considering that the entire Tribe had been mobilized, the Golden Crow Tribe fundamentally weren’t a match for them. They had no choice but to slowly fall back into the perimeter of the Thorn Rampart. All the neo-demons and Cultivators were deeply exhausted, but not in despair.

Within the confines of the Tribe, the Tribe members gathered around Meng Hao’s statue and called out the name of their Sacred Ancient. It was at this point that they began to feel their blood burn with righteousness. They felt just the way they imagined the old-timers, who were now the leadership of the Tribe, must have felt during the days of the migration.

However, the situation continued to decline. The protective Thorn Rampart began to show signs of collapse, although… it continued to hold on.

Big Hairy and the Wild Giant continued to fight on, absolutely no fear of death within their hearts. They fought with madness, with determination, also incapable of forgetting the mission Meng Hao had entrusted them with. Even if they died, they would continue to protect the Golden Crow Tribe.

Big Hairy, covered in blood, howled as he fought. The Wild Giant lost an eye, but was still as fierce as ever.

Meanwhile, within the forces of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe, Zhang Wenzu looked coldly out across the battlefield. 1. He then waved his right hand, snatching up a member of the Golden Crow Tribe by the neck. He squeezed down violently. Cracking sounds could be heard as the neck was crushed.

He suddenly cried out: “Tower Toppling Tribe, Cloud Mountain Tribe, Nine Crystals Tribe. The three of you, attack the right flank!

“Flying Cloud Tribe, Vast Mountain Tribe, Peng Lai Tribe, attack the left flank!

“This battle is about to end! Members of the main Heavenly Pursuit Tribe, attack the center…. Crush the Golden Crow Tribe. Men, women, elderly, children… don’t leave a single one alive!” Killing intent flickered in Zhang Wenzu’s eyes. He, of course, was the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe Chosen who was taking the lead in the battle.

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# Chapter 549: I’ve Returned!

Up in mid-air, the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe’s Greatfather and High Priest looked down coldly at the battlefield. They were exhausted, but their killing intent filled the air. They very much approved of Zhang Wenzu’s plans….

“This battle will be over soon,” said the Greatfather.

In accord with the orders issued by Zhang Wenzu, the Tribe slashed into the Golden Crow Tribe from three directions. The sounds of slaughter immediately intensified.

War chariots constructed from magical treasures pulsated with prismatic light as they crushed anything in their path, instantly putting the Golden Crow Tribe in grave danger.

The peak level battle prowess of the more than one hundred Nascent Soul Cultivators and twenty totemic Sacred Ancients emitted crushing pressure that weighed down on everything. It was a force that would be equivalent even to a great Sect from the Southern Domain.

As the brutal battle raged, the Golden Crow Tribe was forced to shrink back. The Thorn Rampart vines were in a frenzy, and the brilliant glow of magical techniques and divine abilities rose up into the sky.

The parrot soared through midair, its eyes red. As more and more members of the Golden Crow Tribe perished, the parrot felt worse and worse. Everything that was happening made it think of a painful memory from the past.

The meat jelly trembled as it looked around. Although its body was indestructible, when it saw the Cultivators dying all around, it felt grief similar to the parrot’s.

“Hey old bird, why the hell haven’t you opened the seal and gotten rid of these enemies?!”

“I can’t open it, bitch! It won’t open!” shouted the parrot, charging in attack.

The Golden Crow Tribe fell back again. Booming roars rose up into the sky. They had long since given up on the thought of advancing. Everything was focused on defense. They were completely surrounded by the forces of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe. The combined power of more than twenty totemic Sacred Ancients and over one hundred Nascent Soul Cultivators caused the Thorn Rampart vines to begin to collapse. From the look of things it wouldn’t be long before they died completely.

It was at this moment that suddenly, a roaring sound could be heard from off in the distance. Thirteen Heavenly Pursuit Tribe Cultivators came into view, carrying with them a black-colored pillar that even five people couldn’t encircle with their arms.

The pillar was carved with countless ferocious beasts, and emanated a primitive, archaic aura that made it seem as if it had existed for countless years. The thirteen Cultivators slowly proceeded forward with the pillar, their faces red and dripping with sweat. Apparently the pillar was incredibly heavy, and even with their combined strength, it was difficult to bear it on their shoulders for very long.

As it turned out, there wasn’t just one column heading toward the battlefield. There were three!

They slowly approached the Golden Crow Tribe from three directions, each one roughly three hundred meters in length.

From up above, the three black pillars looked like three gigantic spikes, pulsing with a black aura. They seemed to be filled with the rancor of countless ferocious beasts.

Up in mid-air, Zhang Wenzu’s eyes glittered and he suddenly cried out, “Crush them!”

In response, all of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe members instantly began to cry out strange incantations. The sounds of their voices shook everything, creating a roar that turned into a sound wave.

As it echoed out, the three gigantic black spikes responded to the power of the incantation. They suddenly flew up of their own accord to drift in mid-air.

The Greatfather and High Priest of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe lifted their hands to press down hard on their foreheads. Their bodies trembled and blood sprayed from their mouths. Their faces twisted bizarrely as they uttered the final, awkward-sounding words of the incantation: “Hongmosan!”

The incantation sucked in some of their life forces. The sound of it filled the entire battlefield, causing anyone who heard it to suddenly feel bedazzled, as if their souls were being tugged at.

Next, the three enormous black spikes suddenly shot downward. A rumbling bang could be heard as they stabbed into the ground.

Instantly, a black field of light sprang up between the black spikes, connecting them and completely enveloping the Golden Crow Tribe.

In that instant, all of the members of the Golden Crow Tribe, men and women, the elderly and children, even the neo-demons, all felt signs of withering within their bodies.

Meanwhile, the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe’s Nascent Soul Cultivators and totemic Sacred Ancients split into three groups, each one of which moved into the direction of one of the black spikes. After arriving, they unleashed the full power of their Cultivation bases to slam into the spikes.

Each successive blast sent the three spikes further into the ground by several meters. The black field of light grew stronger, and countless bolts of lightning appeared. The Golden Crow Tribe was completely enveloped, and the signs of withering grew stronger. The Tribe members’ faces filled with despair. It seemed as if what the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe said was true; they really were going to eradicate the entire Tribe and leave not a single person alive.

“Three Lives Spirit Extermination Spikes….” said the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe’s Greatfather. “They are precious treasures of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe. Were it not for the fact that the Golden Crow Tribe has fought back the entire time and not given in a bit, we would never have used them.”

“Hopefully the life forces of this Tribe will be of some use to the Patriarch,” said the High Priest.

The two of them let out soft sighs. The war had gone on for roughly half a month, but now it was finally going to conclude.

They weren’t the only ones who heaved sighs of relief. Most of the surrounding Heavenly Pursuit Tribe members were the same, with the exception of Zhang Wenzu, whose expression was cold. The desire to kill still flickered in his eyes.

“They really are tenacious. However, the more they struggle, the more quickly their life forces will be drained, and the sooner they will die.”

Roaring filled the air as the spikes were driven deeper into the ground. The Golden Crow Tribe members were wasting away, even the Outlander Beast and Big Hairy. There were no exceptions.

There was despair, but as they struggled, their eyes were filled enmity and frenzy. They fused together to form a hatred that could only be washed away with the blood of their enemies. All their enemies.

“There’s no need to struggle,” said the High Priest coolly.

“If you want to blame someone,” said the Greatfather, “blame that totemic Sacred Ancient of yours. He killed someone he shouldn’t have killed, and provoked someone he shouldn’t have provoked, the Patriarch of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe. In fact, he’s most likely already dead at the hands of Patriarch Huyan’s clone.” He smiled, his expression one of arrogance and scorn as he looked down at the Golden Crow Tribe.

The parrot flew in mid-air beneath within the field of light. “Who’s dead, bitch? If anyone died, he wouldn’t… uh… eee?” In the middle of its cursing, the parrot suddenly stared in shock. It immediately stopped speaking and looked off into the distance.

Even as the Golden Crow Tribe was struggling on the verge of collapse, even as the parrot stared in shock, suddenly, the ground began to shake. The shaking was not caused by the spikes being driven down. No, this shaking was much more intense, much more large in scale. It was as if the entire world was being turned upside down!

Off in the distance, huge forms could be seen, running with enormous strides that caused the entire land to quake.

Soon, the aroma of saltwater blasted against the faces of everyone present. A wild wind sprang up that caused dust to fly up all over the place. A towering killing intent spread out in all directions.

The Heavenly Pursuit Tribe Cultivators sensed the shaking almost immediately. One after another, the more than one hundred Nascent Soul Cultivators and twenty totemic Sacred Ancients in mid-air looked up.

What they saw… was a gale force wind sweeping through the air!

The wind was dark and sinister as it screamed toward them, and within it could be seen hundreds of thousands of specters!

When they saw the specters, the Nascent Soul Cultivators and totemic Sacred Ancients gasped. The rest of the surrounding Heavenly Pursuit Tribe members were also shocked.

At the same time… the shaking grew more intense. Finally, the crowds could clearly see the seven giants leaping through the air. Every step they took slammed into the ground and caused it to quake. These were the three thousand meter tall Violet Sea Giants!

The aroma of saltwater grew stronger. The appearance of these seven Violet Sea Giants caused all of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe members to gasp.

“What are they…?” Zheng Wenzu was dumbstruck, his eyes wide and filled with astonishment. Then his mind began to fill with a roaring sound as he realized what the giants were made from.

The Heavenly Pursuit Tribe High Priest, his voice hoarse and filled with disbelief, said, “The Violet Sea…. They’re giants made from the waters of the Violet Sea!”

“Violet Sea Giants…. And the one in the lead position is holding something in its hand. It’s….” The Heavenly Pursuit Tribe Greatfather’s eyes narrowed as he looked off into the distance.

It was at this point that the High Priest and all the Nascent Soul Cultivators also looked closely in the same direction. In that instant, they suddenly stopped breathing for a moment.

“Golden Crow Tribe members!!”

“Those are the ones we captured and sent to the ten outposts!!”

Even as the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe members felt complete and utter astonishment, an enormous red shape appeared in the approaching wind. It moved with incredible speed and emitted intense killing intent. The sky dimmed and the clouds were thrown into upheaval. An intense, hair-raising pressure radiated out toward the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe.

The intensity of the pressure felt to them like the strength of the Heavens.

It was an enormous, blood-colored mastiff. Standing on its head was a man in a green robe. His hair whipped about in the wind, and his eyes were as cold as ice. His expression was grim, and he suddenly exploded with seemingly infinite killing intent.

“Meng Hao!” Zhang Wenzu’s breath came in ragged pants. He recognized Meng Hao from that day outside Blackgate Fort. Meng Hao had left a deep impression on him at that time.

The Heavenly Pursuit Tribe Greatfather and High Priest also recognized Meng Hao, as well as some of the Nascent Soul Cultivators. As soon as they saw Meng Hao, their minds filled with roaring.

They were well aware that the Patriarch’s Clone had gone to kill Meng Hao. However… here was Meng Hao now. There was only one thing that meant, and everyone knew it.

It was in this moment that among the trembling Golden Crow Tribe members caught in the black field of light, older members of the Tribe finally caught sight of Meng Hao, standing there atop the mastiff. These were old-timers who had accompanied Meng Hao during the long migration years ago.

He looked almost completely the same as he had a hundred years ago. Immediately, the old-timers began to tremble with excitement.

“Exalted Sacred Ancient, we welcome you back with deep respect!”

The other Golden Crow Tribe members who had been born in the past hundred years, or perhaps had joined the Tribe, all gaped in astonishment. The instant they saw Meng Hao, they connected his visage to that the of the statue in the middle of the Tribe. They too were filled with excitement.

“Exalted Sacred Ancient, we welcome you back with deep respect!!”

“Exalted Sacred Ancient, we welcome you back with deep respect!!” Their voices roared out in all directions, filled with hope and frenzy. As the sound echoed about, Meng Hao’s voice could be heard.

“I’ve returned.”

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# Chapter 550: Breaking the Formation!

The two simple words rang out from Meng Hao’s mouth to fill the entire battlefield. When the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe heard the words, the sound of countless gasps could be heard. As for the Golden Crow Tribe members, their hearts filled with wild excitement.

The two words contained guilt as well as killing intent directed toward the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe. Even as his words continued to echo about, Meng Hao’s eyes fell upon the bedraggled, listless Big Hairy.

Then he saw the trembling Wild Giant, and many other faces within the crowd that he recognized from the migration.

He saw Wu Chen. He saw the remnants of his neo-demon horde. He saw the members of the Church of the Golden Light. Many images shone brightly inside his mind. More than a hundred years of separation hadn’t seemed like a long time to Meng Hao, but for the Golden Crow Tribe, it had been like an eternity.

“I’ve… returned,” he murmured. The Karma that existed between him and the Golden Crow Tribe could not be broken. When he saw their sorry state, the killing intent visible on his face grew even more intense.

At the same time, among the panting members of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe, the Greatfather’s eyes glimmered with the desire to kill.

“So, you were able to evade the Patriarch,” said the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe High Priest. “You’ve clearly got some skill! However, since you’ve delivered yourself up, today will be the day you die!

“Heavenly Pursuit Tribe Cultivators, kill this man! Eradicate the Golden Crow Tribe!” As soon as they heard his words, the members of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe roared.

Zhang Wenzu’s eyes gleamed with the desire to do battle.

“So, you appear again! This time… we will fight!” Zhang Wenzu had been left with a deep impression of Meng Hao that year. Right now, his will to fight exploded out.

Killing intent roared up from the more than one hundred Nascent Soul Cultivators and twenty totemic Sacred Ancients. They were just about to charge into battle when suddenly, the mastiff gave them a look of disdain and then let out a roar.

The roar was backed by the mastiff’s Spirit Severing aura. As it exploded out, an invisible tempest sprung up with the mastiff at its center. All the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe members that the aura touched, including the Nascent Soul Cultivators and totemic Sacred Ancients, were filled with astonishment. Their faces fell; they almost couldn’t believe that it was true!

“Spirit Severing!!”

“That’s… that’s a Spirit Severing neo-demon!!”

At the same time, the seven huge Violet Sea Giants finally reached the battlefield, striding forward at top speed, the ground quaking beneath them.

The hundreds of thousands of specters also neared, emanating grimness. The entire battlefield was suddenly filled with extreme coldness.

As the mastiff sped forward, it turned into a beam of crimson light that shot toward the black field of light that was enveloping the Golden Crow Tribe.

Meng Hao’s body flickered as he transformed into a green smoke and a black moon. Moments later, he appeared directly next to one of the black spikes. At the same time, he entered the Third Anima.

The parrot and the meat jelly instantly flew out at top speed to perch on Meng Hao's shoulder. They seemed as if they had suddenly found their backbones. They looked around the battlefield, their expressions triumphant and arrogant.

"Come on, bitches! Well, what are you doing?!?! Who's the tough one now? You dare to provoke Lord Fifth, bitches? Little Haowie, get out there and screw them!"

"Humph! Lord Third isn't going to convert you! Lord Third is gonna beat you to death! Little Haowie, get out there and screw them!"

Meng Hao's face was grim as he ignored the parrot and meat jelly. Now that he had entered the Third Anima, the power of four great circle Nascent Souls rose up within him, causing ripples to emanate out in all directions.

BANG!

As his Cultivation base exploded out, he waved his index finger through the air. It looked like an ordinary movement, but suddenly, violet Qi boiled up. This was none other than Meng Hao's Violet Qi Guillotine.

The blade descended onto the body of one of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe Nascent Soul Cultivators. His eyes went wide and a booming sound rang out as his body was cleaved entirely in half.

"Screw 'em!! SCREW THEM!!" squawked the parrot excitedly, finally able to vent a bit after all this time.

Meng Hao shot forward with a boom. At the same time, within the red glow surrounding the mastiff, countless bright red hairs suddenly appeared in the air. They began to rotate around the mastiff, shockingly transforming into a red tornado. It moved forward unimpeded, crushing anything that got in its way as easily as if it were dried weeds. It didn't matter if it was a Sacred Ancient or a Nascent Soul Cultivator, anything that it touched screamed and then exploded, destroyed in both body and soul.

This was not a battle. This was a massacre!

As for the hundreds of thousands of specters, they were grim and emotionless as they pounced on the ordinary Cultivators of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe. They could do nothing but tremble as their life force was exterminated.

Most shocking of all were the seven Violet Sea Giants. After arriving on the battlefield, they sprang into motion. When their fists descended onto the surface of the ground, enormous craters appeared. Even more astonishing was the power of extermination that existed within them. Any living thing they touched was exterminated.

The battlefield was instantly thrown into complete chaos!

The sudden change caused the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe Greatfather and High Priest to gasp with disbelief. Zhang Wenzu’s eyes were wide as he stared, his mind a complete blank. Originally, he wanted to duel with Meng Hao, but now he could only watch as Meng Hao faced up against the Nascent Soul Cultivators. Not one could last for more than a single breath against him. At the moment, he watched as one of the illustrious Tribe Elders, who was in the late Nascent Soul stage, was so weak that he exploded under a single finger attack. As the man’s bloodcurdling shriek echoed in Zhang Wenzu’s ears, he began to tremble, and abandoned all thoughts of fighting a duel with Meng Hao.

“Stop them from pulling up the Spirit Extermination Spikes!!” he cried.

Despite their shock and widened eyes, the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe Cultivators howled and charged toward Meng Hao. Currently, Meng Hao was surrounded by thirty Nascent Soul Cultivators and seven or eight totemic Sacred Ancients, all of whom were attempting to prevent him from nearing the black spike.

“Screw off!” he cried. The killing intent in his eyes boiled as he waved his hand, causing a wild wind to spring up that was filled with the power of four great circle Nascent Souls. It shot out, causing eight or so Nascent Soul Cultivators in front of him to tumble backward, blood spraying out of their mouths. Two of them even screamed and then directly exploded.

At the same time, Meng Hao made a grasping motion. The Devil Spear appeared in his hand, and he tossed it backward. It instantly became a black mist filled with vicious faces which began to consume eight or so incoming opponents.

Meng Hao didn’t pause for even a moment. He next appeared in front of one of the totemic Sacred Ancients, which bore the semblance of a rhinoceros. The killing intent in his eyes sparkled as his right fist descended.

BAM!

The totemic Sacred Ancient’s face was filled with disbelief in the moment before it exploded into a haze of blood and gore that Meng Hao passed directly through. Gasps could be heard from the other eight or so Nascent Soul Cultivators who had been attempting to block Meng Hao. They were filled with intense shock and their minds reeled. They suddenly stopped in their tracks, not daring to get in Meng Hao’s way.

Meng Hao proceeded forward as if he were walking through a field of dry weeds. In the blink of an eye, he was directly above the black Spirit Extermination Spike. He reached down and grabbed ahold of it, then wrenched up.

The spike let out an intense rumbling sound as it slowly moved upward. However, it was at this point that the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe Greatfather approached. Intense killing intent filled his eyes. He knew that he must under no circumstance let the Spirit Extermination Spike be pulled up. If he did, then the Golden Crow Tribe would be able to charge out, which would be like adding snow onto frost, disaster upon disaster.

“Do not hold anything back! Stop him!” roared the Greatfather. The surrounding Nascent Soul Cultivators gritted their teeth, and, joined by eight or so totemic Sacred Ancients, charged toward Meng Hao.

In the blink of an eye, they were bearing down on him. However, Meng Hao’s mouth curved in a cold smile.

“Fourth Anima!”

Roaring filled the air as he entered the Fourth Anima. Battle power equivalent to eight great circle Nascent Souls exploded out within Meng Hao. As his enemies neared, they were blasted by the explosive aura.

Blood sprayed out of the mouths of all of the surrounding Nascent Soul Cultivators and totemic Sacred Ancients. Even the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe’s Greatfather coughed up blood and was sent tumbling backward, his face written with shock.

He watched with wide eyes as Meng Hao heaved up again. A booming sound reverberated through the air as the spike was wrenched completely up out of the ground. As it emerged, it began to shrink rapidly, until it fit completely in Meng Hao’s palm.

Now that one of the three spikes was gone, the black field of light which enveloped the Golden Crow Tribe rippled and distorted. Some of the life force that the black field had stolen now began to descend back down toward the excited members of the Golden Crow Tribe.

The sight of it caused the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe to be filled with shock.

“This man… just what level is his Cultivation base?!?!”

“This isn’t the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage, this is… halfway to Spirit Severing!!”

Even as everyone expressed their shock, another booming sound could be heard from the direction of the second of the Spirit Extermination Spikes. The ground quaked as the mastiff completely destroyed all the Nascent Soul Cultivators and totemic Sacred Ancients who defended it. Then, the mastiff smacked the spike violently with its paw. The blow was filled with such power that the spike was torn out the ground and sent flying, leaving behind a massive fissure.

Having lost two of the spikes, the black field of light was now covered in distortions. It was no longer sucking away life force, but restoring it!! It took only moments for all of the life force it had stolen to be returned.

As the black spike whizzed through the air, Meng Hao’s body flashed and he waved his right index finger into the air. Immediately, the enormous black spike trembled and began to shrink. In the blink of an eye, it landed on Meng Hao’s palm.

Without pausing for a second, Meng Hao continued toward the third black spike. Anyone who tried to block his way would suddenly notice a red glow speeding toward them. The mastiff would appear and bat them away with its paw.

Of course, anyone who received a blow from the paw of the mastiff ended up being transformed completely into a haze of blood and gore!

BOOM!

Meng Hao’s hand slammed down onto the surface of the third black spike. Rumbling filled the air, along with a popping sound, as he heaved it out of the ground.

The black field of light completely shattered, and the Golden Crow Tribe members, their bodies fully recovered, charged out, killing intent rising to the Heavens.

“KILL THEM!!”

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# Chapter 551: Dead end!

The massacre intensified!

The members of the Golden Crow Tribe emerged with excited roars. This was especially true of the old-timers who had accompanied Meng Hao through the migration. Their veins burned with passion as they recalled the blood and fire they had experienced on that long road years ago. Ah, the glory of life!

As for the new members of the Tribe who had appeared throughout the last hundred years, they too felt their blood boiling. It was almost like the stories that they had heard from the elder generation were suddenly playing out right in front of them. Except, it was all real!

They were no longer the Five Crow Divinity Tribes that needed the protection of Meng Hao’s neo-demon horde to survive. Even the great Heavenly Pursuit Tribe needed to exert all their power to destroy them.

Once they charged out in attack, their killing intent soaring up, and that old intrepid madness that existed deep in their bones once again exploded out.

Tens of thousands of Golden Crow Tribe Cultivators charged directly into battle, joined by the neo-demon horde, Big Hairy, the Wild Giant, their Nascent Soul experts, and totemic Sacred Ancients. They instantly slaughtered their way into the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe.

Booming roars filled the air. It was an awe-inspiring massacre.

Meng Hao hovered in mid air, looking down for a moment at the third black spike as it landed onto his palm. He put it away, and then looked around, his eyes glinting with a cold glow.

The Blood Mastiff roared, and then suddenly vanished. It didn't kill anyone, but rather, transformed into a blinding red light that spread out like a gigantic blanket to cover the entire area.

The Heavenly Pursuit Tribe's path of retreat was now completely sealed off!

The only strange thing was that before the mastiff transformed into the red seal, the parrot suddenly looked at it with gleaming eyes. It stared open-mouthed at the mastiff, its body trembling. A burning excitement suddenly appeared in its eyes.

Meanwhile, the seven Violet Sea Giants continued to crash their way across the battlefield. Reddish glows emanated out from them as, everywhere they went, Cultivators around them were exterminated. The hundreds of thousands of specters flew about, surrounded by icy coldness. Every place they visited on the battlefield, lives were extinguished.

This was a complete and utter bloodbath!

The members of the Golden Crow Tribe became a blade of butchery that savagely attacked with complete determination to secure revenge.

Meng Hao's body flickered and he suddenly reappeared next to a Nascent Soul Cultivator. It was an old woman wearing a long, emerald robe. Her face was pale with shock because of everything that had happened. Meng Hao's sudden arrival to the battle had left her completely shaken. She looked around at the slaughter going on, and her scalp went numb. She had been just about to flee when Meng Hao appeared next to her.

Her pupils constricted and she instantly bit down on her tongue and then spit out some blood. She slapped her bag of holding, causing ten magical items to appear in front of her. In this moment of critical danger, the old woman did not hold anything back. Along with the appearance of her magical items, all the power of her totems magically manifested, transforming into a variety of totems. At the same time, her body grew even more withered as she burned a large portion of her life force.

Rumbling surrounded the two of them. The old woman’s face grew fierce, whereas Meng Hao’s expression was cold. He did nothing to evade her attack, but simply strode forward and lifted his right hand into the air. The Devil Spear instantly shot forward.

The spear roared through the air, shattering the magical items, destroying the old woman’s totems. It stabbed into her forehead, passing completely through to the other side.

The old woman’s eyes went wide and she stared blankly at Meng Hao. Suddenly, her body exploded as her weakened Nascent Soul shot away in flight. Meng Hao reached out quickly with his left hand to grab it and crush it to pieces.

The sight of all this caused three totemic Sacred Ancients who had just been planning to launch a sneak attack, to gasp. Then they fell back in astonishment. Meng Hao turned his head, and his eyes flashed as if with electricity.

“Lightning,” he said. Considering the massacre being carried out on the battlefield around him, it seemed at first as if Meng Hao’s voice was not loud enough. However, in response, seven enormous lightning bolts suddenly appeared out of nowhere.

These were seven red-colored lightning bolts which were filled with the will of Heavenly Tribulation. At the same time, they also contained Meng Hao’s will. The lightning bolts shot toward the three totemic Sacred Ancients, filling the three neo-demons with astonishment. Without hesitation, they employed their various divine abilities, causing layers of multicolored lights to appear in the form of a shield. Demonic Qi also swept out.

However… in the blink of an eye, the three neo-demons let out miserable shrieks as the red lightning smashed through all of their magic. It didn’t matter if it was divine abilities or magical techniques; all were crushed like rotten wood. The three totemic Sacred Ancients were not able to avoid the seven bolts of red lightning, and were instantly inundated.

The sound of crashing thunder caused everything to shake. Everyone on the entire battlefield could see what was happening, and all of them gasped, faces filled with astonishment. 1

This was especially true of the members of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe, most especially the Nascent Soul Cultivators and the totemic Sacred Ancients. Their faces fell and were filled with terror. Some of them even began to flee the battlefield. However, as soon as they slammed into the red barrier, they screamed, and their bodies dissolved.

This place… had long since turned into a complete dead end for them!

The High Priest of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe was an archaic old man with the bearing of a transcendent being. He held an enormous wooden staff in his hand and wore a long, gray gown. Right now, though, he was trembling in his boots, and his eyes overflowed with despair. However, that despair quickly vanished, replaced with determination.

“Members of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe, hold on just a little longer! The Patriarch will definitely come to save us!”

As his words drifted out across the battlefield, the members of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe who had been so stricken with fear of Meng Hao, suddenly felt flickers of hope burning within their hearts.

“The Patriarch is currently on his way here!” cried the Greatfather. “He will eradicate this villain and destroy his Tribe. The Heavenly Pursuit Tribe will not fall!” The Greatfather was an ancient man who wore a long violet robe and whose eyes shone with a fierce light. His Cultivation base was similar to a totemic Sacred Ancient, and he was in the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage.

Zhang Wenzu took a deep breath. The words of the Greatfather and the High Priest caused his heart to calm a bit. His face grim, his eyes suddenly shone with derision as he looked across the battlefield toward Meng Hao.

“The Patriarch will definitely come,” he thought. “Then what will he do? We are one of the three great Tribes of the Heavenly Court Alliance. Meng

Hao hasn’t picked a fight with just the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe, but the entire alliance!

“We have three Spirit Severing Patriarchs. This guy… is definitely going to die!”

Meng Hao’s body vanished. When he reappeared, his hand snaked out to latch around the neck of a totemic Sacred Ancient. This was a human-shaped neo-demon, which, after Meng Hao grabbed it, struggled fiercely. However, Meng Hao’s “Fire ” character glowed faintly, causing the thing to burst into black flames that burned with an indescribable temperature, causing it to emit a blood-curdling scream. In the blink of an eye, the neo-demon was turned into nothing more than ash drifting in the wind.

Meng Hao didn’t even look at it. Having heard the words of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe Greatfather and High Priest, his mouth twisted into a smile.

“You’re waiting for that cretin Patriarch Huyan…?” he said, looking across the crowded battlefield at the Greatfather, who was several hundred meters away.

The instant his gaze fell upon the violet-robed Greatfather, all the hair on the man’s body stood on end, and his heart filled with a sense of deadly crisis.

As he looked at Meng Hao, his mind trembled and filled with an ominous sense of foreboding. His action of looking over at Meng Hao was actually completely subconscious, but as soon as their gazes locked, the Heavenly Pursuit Greatfather’s brain filled with an intense pain. It was as if Meng Hao’s eyes were sharp knives that stabbed through his eyes into his brain, preparing to eradicate him.

Blood began to ooze out of the Greatfather’s eyes, ears, nose and mouth. He started backing up, his eyes widening.

Meng Hao took a step forward and said, “I have no idea whether or not that patsy Huyan will be coming. But you won’t be here to find out, of that I’m certain.”

“Protect the Greatfather!” cried the surrounding Tribe members. Alarmed, they formed a protective circle around the Greatfather. Many of the group were Nascent Soul Cultivators and totemic Sacred Ancients.

Meng Hao smiled as he moved forward toward the Greatfather.

His path was one of explosions and annihilation. No one who stood in his way was able to impede him for even a moment. His finger reached out to tap on the forehead of a Nascent Soul Cultivator. Blood poured from the man’s mouth and he was sent tumbling backward. By the time he exploded, Meng Hao had already moved more than three hundred meters. He flicked his sleeve, and the character “Wind ” appeared, transforming into a screaming wind that instantly became a cyclone. It raged out around Meng Hao, slamming into seven or eight nearby Nascent Soul Cultivators and totemic Sacred Ancients. Blood sprayed from their mouths and they were sent flying back.

There was not a single person on the battlefield who could do anything to stop Meng Hao. He proceeded forward another three hundred meters. He gestured off into the distance, and immediately, a frosty soil appeared. It spread out rapidly toward the nearby Cultivators. Booming sounds could be heard as their bodies quivered and then completely froze!

Meng Hao moved a third time, another three hundred meters. By this time, he was directly in front of the rapidly retreating Greatfather. Even as the people surrounding him instantly charged in attack, the blank look on the Greatfather’s face was replaced with despair. Meng Hao lifted his hand up and pushed forward.

“Metal !”

In response to this single word, a golden light exploded up around Meng Hao’s right hand. The glow of it filled the battlefield, and, in the blink of an eye, the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe Greatfather was completely transformed into a statue of gold.

A bang rang out as the statue slammed into the ground below, where it came to rest, unmoving. The look of despair was still clear on the man’s face….

The sight of it caused all of the remaining Heavenly Pursuit Tribe members to gape. Their bodies trembled and were filled with icy coldness.

The Golden Crow Tribe members, on the other hand, were growing even more excited.

“Sacred Ancient!!”

“Sacred Ancient!!”

Their roars echoed out in all directions, filled with anger and indignation, as well as their determination to eradicate the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe.

You want to wipe out our Tribe? Allow us to wipe out YOURS!

Such enmity could not be reconciled. It was simply impossible to do so. The only option was for the bloodlines of one of these Tribes to be completely removed from the lands of South Heaven!

1. For some reason I really wanted to add a line here that said. “You could even say that they were… thunderstruck!”

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# Chapter 552: Why Haven’t You Come!?

“The Patriarch is on his way!”

“The Patriarch will come to save us!”

“Hold on just a bit longer!”

The death of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe Greatfather filled the other Tribe members’ hearts with despair. The only thing that kept them from completely collapsing was the hope that Patriarch Huyan would come to save them.

They truly believed that Patriarch Huyan would come to save them!

Huyan Yunming was THEIR Patriarch!

The slaughter intensified yet again. The sound of killing rose up to the Heavens. Meng Hao was the peak power on the battlefield. Not a single Heavenly Pursuit Cultivator dared to get close to him. No totemic Sacred Ancient had the gall to attack him. Wherever he went, enemy Cultivators scattered immediately.

Finally, Meng Hao’s gaze came to fall upon Zhang Wenzu. In that instant, Zhang Wenzu began to tremble, and without pausing for a moment, he fled backward. His mind was reeling with shock, and yet, even as he began to flee, Meng Hao turned into a green smoke and then appeared directly next to him.

“I surrender to the Golden Crow Tribe!!” cried Zhang Wenzu, his face flickering. The pressure bearing down on him from Meng Hao was too intense, filling him with a sense of deadly crisis. Fearing that Meng Hao wouldn’t believe him, he actually dropped all of his defenses.

“I surrender!” he gushed anxiously. “I’m the Chosen of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe. If I join the Golden Crow Tribe then I can give you….” Before he could finish, Meng Hao’s hand flashed out like lightning to grab his neck with an iron grip.

“I remember you,” said Meng Hao. “You were there that year at Blackgate Fort.”

Zhang Wenzu’s body trembled, and his face filled with fear. It felt as if an enormous vice were clamped down onto his neck. In response to Meng Hao’s words, he instantly nodded.

“Unfortunately,” said Meng Hao, “the Golden Crow Tribe doesn’t need turncoats.” With that, he tightened his grip. Zhang Wenzu was the Chosen of this generation of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe. He had practiced cultivation for two hundred years to reach the early Nascent Soul stage. Right now, a tremor ran through his body as his Nascent Soul was crushed and he died in both body and spirit.

Meng Hao loosened his grip and turned. Currently, only ten thousands members remained of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe. Of the previous force of one hundred Nascent Soul Cultivators, only twenty were left.

As far as totemic Sacred Ancients went, only five remained.

The Heavenly Pursuit Tribe could already be considered destroyed. However, with Patriarch Huyan still around, they could still count as a great Tribe!

Under the leadership of the High Priest, the members of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe had all formed together. In fact, they were now in much the same position that the Golden Crow Tribe had been in before. They were surrounded by enemy Tribe members, hundreds of thousands of specters, and seven Violet Sea Giants.

In the very middle of the group from the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe was the High Priest. His face filled with grief, he held his staff aloft and then plunged it down into the ground. Blood sprayed from his mouth as he sat down cross-legged.

His voice shrill, he cried, “Patriarch, why haven’t you come!?!?”

“The Heavenly Pursuit Tribe is about to be destroyed… Of 80,000 Tribe members, only 10,000 are left! Patriarch, why… why haven’t you come!?!?”

Even as he howled up to the Heavens, the staff in front of him began to glow with a white light that then shot up into the sky. As soon as it slammed into the red light of the mastiff, it vanished. However, despite the fact that it vanished, it was still able to use a special bloodline method to pierce out into the outside world. It shot toward the location of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe directly into the mind of Patriarch Huyan, who sat there cross-legged.

Meanwhile, Meng Hao hovered there in mid-air, looking out over the scene. His eyes glittering, he waved his right hand, causing the three Spirit Extermination Spikes to appear. He sent his Divine Sense into the spikes, then, borrowing the power of the Mastiff, wiped the brands off of them and replaced them with his own.

“What you did to the Golden Crow Tribe,” he said coolly. “Meng Hao will do to you. It’s only fair.” With that, he tossed one of the black spikes out into the air, where it rapidly increased in size. Roaring could be heard as Meng Hao waved his hand, causing the spike to be stabbed half-way down into the ground.

Instantly, a black field of light sprang up to envelop the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe.

Next, a second spike flew out in a different direction to then stab down into the ground. The black field of light grew stronger, and the members of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe began to tremble and whither.

A third spike stabbed down. The Spirit Extermination Spike spell formation having been fully activated, all of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe members were now in the same position the Golden Crow Tribe members had been. Their flesh withered, and their life force drained away at a rapid pace.

They stood there shaking, expressions of despair appeared on their faces as they looked toward the High Priest. In turn, the High Priest looked up into the sky. As his body wasted away, his voice once again raised out, filled with hopelessness.

“Patriarch… save your people….

“Patriarch, why haven’t you come…? Have you forsaken us…?”

Meng Hao looked at the spectacle from up above, but said nothing. He looked off into the distance, a thoughtful expression on his face.

The surrounding Golden Crow Tribe members watched on silently. They were not inherently fond of killing, but when they saw the hopelessness on the faces of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe Cultivators, they couldn’t help but think of their own situation earlier.

If Meng Hao had not returned, then perhaps they would have begun to cry out just like the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe.

Time passed. Within the black field of light, the life forces of the withering members of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe were beginning to wink out. They turned into corpses which toppled to the ground. As they died, their life forces were completely absorbed by the spell formation, causing a white cyclone to gradually appear.

As more Tribe members became shriveled corpses, the High Priest continued to waste away. He now looked like a body just climbed up out of a grave, emanating a strong aura of death. Despite that, he continued to gaze up listlessly into the sky. His voice echoed out continuously.

“Patriarch… Did we make a mistake…?

“Patriarch, please respond. Did we err? Why haven’t you come…?”

1,000. 3,000. 5,000. Finally, all 10,000 Tribe members became desiccated corpses and toppled to the ground. Soon, only the Nascent Soul Cultivators and the totemic Sacred Ancients were left. They trembled and cried out helplessly, and the High Priest began to laugh bitterly.

The laughter became sadder until it was filled with resentment.

“Patriarch, why haven’t you come for us!?!?” Even as his resentful words rang out, the remaining Nascent Soul Cultivators lifted their heads up to release the last howl they would release in their entire lives.

“Why… haven’t you come?!?!”

Boom!

The Nascent Soul Cultivators in the field of light were now dried up corpses. The totemic Sacred Ancients were all dead. The only person left was the High Priest. He continued to chuckle hatefully as the flame of his life force was finally extinguished.

After they were all dead, the white cyclone floating within the black field of light transformed into a white pearl. Meng Hao had assumed the pearl would disappear, but it did not. It remained there, floating in the air until members of the Golden Crow Tribe approached to take it away.

The scene caused Meng Hao to frown and look off into the distance.

“Just what are you planning, Patriarch Huyan….” he thought. After a moment, a tremor ran through his body. He looked down into his bag of holding at the Demon Spirit he had acquired all those years ago in the Realm of the Bridge Ruins. It was now shining with a brilliant light.

It grew more and more intense, and began to emanate a gravitational force.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. After calculating the days, he realized that the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane would be opening soon.

“Patriarch Huyan, I don’t care what you’re planning. The fight between the two of us cannot be avoided!”

He looked over the Golden Crow Tribe. Big Hairy was there, and the Wild Giant too. Finally, he waved his hand, causing the glowing red shield to shrink back down and transform back into the mastiff.

He stood on the mastiff’s head and looked off into the distance.

Eventually he looked back at the members of the Golden Crow Clan, and they looked back with expressions of fervent ardor. Meng Hao could clearly sense the intense faith power in the area. “I’m going to the Heavenly Pursuit Sect. As for all of you… there’s no need for you to come along.”

Faith power circled around Meng Hao, transforming into ghost images that superimposed with his body. It slowly fused into his Cultivation base in such a way that no magical technique could cause it to diffuse.

Meng Hao looked over at Big Hairy, who floated there in mid-air, and gave him an encouraging look. Big Hairy let out a few yips in response.

The Thorn Rampart vines swayed back and forth in the air, seemingly looking up into the air as Meng Hao prepared to leave.

Meng Hao turned and opened up his bag of the Cosmos to suck in all the bodies of the members of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe. Then he and the mastiff flashed and shot up into the air.

Behind him, all the members of the Tribe clasped hands and bowed. Wu Chen and Wu Ling were there. They watched Meng Hao, their hearts filled with dolorousness. It was Wu Chen who finally spoke. The gratefulness in his heart toward Meng Hao was different than the others.

“Sacred Ancient, sir… will you return to us?”

“… Yes!” was the soft reply.

The old-timers who had accompanied Meng Hao during the migration felt deeply melancholy. They knew that it would be years before any of them would have a chance to see him again. They themselves might not even be alive at that time.

As Meng Hao sped off into the distance, the parrot and the meat jelly looked back from their position on his shoulder toward the Outlander Beast, who stood there amongst the Golden Crow Tribe members.

They had the sudden premonition that it would be hundreds of years before they met again, or perhaps even longer…. However, it was at this point that the parrot suddenly looked at the mastiff, and its eyes began to shine with burning passion. When the meat jelly sensed this, it shuddered.

The mastiff seemed to sense it as well, and gave the parrot a look. The parrot suddenly struck a graceful pose and smiled benevolently toward the mastiff. Subconsciously it looked back at the Outlander Beast. The Outlander Beast's emotional expression caused the parrot to let out a sigh.

Meanwhile, far, far away a fissure suddenly opened up in mid-air above the Western Desert Violet Sea. A beautiful woman dressed in a flowing pink gown emerged. She looked irritated..

"The Primordial Demon Immortal Plane is opening and the teleportation power is strong. Everyone with Demon Spirits will be entering." This was none other than Zhixiang. She ground her teeth as she looked down at the Violet Sea.

"Meng Hao, there is one badass bitch who hasn't forgotten about you! Eee? You stopped the Demonic Transmigration?" She stared in shock for a moment, and then raised her eyebrows happily.

"So you do have some conscience after all. You still owe me, don't forget it." With a snort, she picked a mountain-island and sat down cross-legged to wait for the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane to completely open.

Back in the Black Lands, there were other forces who noticed the teleportation power, and were similarly waiting.

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# Chapter 553: Lord Fifth Lives for a Dream of Love!

At the same time that the members of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe met their grievous end within the field of black light, back in the main temple of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe, Patriarch Huyan sat cross-legged, shielded off in a restricted area. When the last Tribe member died, his eyes opened.

A cold, emotionless glow could be seen therein.

Around him, souls formed from grief began to appear. These were discarnate souls; their main souls had already been destroyed. These were only bits of will left behind in the temple.

As the maltreated souls floated around Patriarch Huyan, they let out voiceless cries. Patriarch Huyan's looked calmly at the maltreated souls. His voice was cool as he murmured, "Your deaths are not meaningless. In fact, they were very important to me.

"Don't look at it as me not going to save you. Rather… you needed to die. The more miserable your deaths, the more emotionless I can be. The more grief you felt in dying… the stronger my Dao becomes!

"Qing'er's death made it so that my Dao cannot be completed perfectly. The only thing I can do now is to find someone to replace Qing'er. You 80,000 members of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe… are none other than that replacement.

"I watched you die, capable of saving you, yet choosing not to. I watched you die, watched you clamoring for help, and it filled my heart with stabs of pain. However, the deeper those stabs of pain, the more emotion can be obliterated.

“You will not have died in vain. You will make my Dao… reach the peak of the First Severing!

“As far as the Tribe goes… as long as I am alive, there will always be a Tribe.” Patriarch Huyan closed his eyes.

Meanwhile, booms rang out with every step the seven Violet Sea Giants took as they ran through the Black Lands. From off in the distance it almost looked like the churning Violet Sea itself, radiating boundless energy. Meng Hao stood on the mastiff, which shot through the air, surrounded by a crimson glow.

Their destination was none other than the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe’s temple in the Black Lands!

Meng Hao’s face was incredibly grim as they made their way forward. His eyes twitched, and subconsciously, his hands clenched into fists and emanated cracking sounds. The reason for all of this actually had nothing to do with Patriarch Huyan, but rather… the parrot.

“Heyyy. Hi there! You can call me Lord Fifth. Let’s get to know each other, okay?” The parrot was flying in front of the mastiff, trying to look very graceful and gentlemanly. However, no matter how you looked at it, it looked perverted. Currently, it was peering tenderheartedly at the mastiff.

The mastiff had a strange expression in its eyes as it looked back at the parrot, puzzled.

When its gaze fell upon the parrot, the parrot suddenly seemed as if it couldn’t control itself any more. It clutched its talons to its chest and let out an impassioned cry.

“This is it! This is the true love I’ve been waiting for my entire life!! Look at the fur! So tempting! Look at that expression! So pure! Look at that figure! So enchanting!

“This is the true love of my life!” Tears appeared in the parrot’s eyes as it looked at the Blood Mastiff with an expression of fanatical infatuation.

“Beautiful little darling, please allow me to introduce myself again,” it said loudly, its eyes shining brightly. “You can call me Lord Fifth. From now on, you’re my little girl. From now on, you…”

It was at this point that Meng Hao’s grim voice could be heard through clenched teeth.

“SCREW OFF!!”

The sound caused the parrot to fall back with a squawk. However, it quickly flew back, glaring angrily at Meng Hao. From out of nowhere, a black cloth appeared in its claws, which it quickly tied around one of its eyes. Its aura suddenly exploded up.

“You want to duel with me?!?!” the parrot raved. “Little Haowie, let’s do this, right now! Duel with Lord Fifth. This beautiful little darling will belong to whoever wins!” The frenzied parrot’s appearance was one of ultimate arrogance. It appeared to have gone crazy for love. It truly believed that by challenging Meng Hao, it could attract the attention of what it referred to as the beautiful little darling.

Meng Hao felt his temples pulsing. The headache he was experiencing was almost too much to take. He had to admit that he had forgotten about the parrot’s unique addiction. After looking at the mastiff, he also had to admit that to the parrot, it must be incredibly alluring.

“It’s male,” he explained with a forced smile.

The parrot looked hurt. “Male, female, it doesn’t matter. Lord Fifth lives for true love!” it roared. Its multicolored feathers stood on end, making it look almost like a gamecock. In truth, it was feeling very pleased with itself. In its estimation, it looked extremely handsome and dashing at the moment. It couldn’t help but glance at the mastiff out of the corner of its eye to see the expression on its face.

Meng Hao said nothing. The pain in his head only continued to grow. As far as he was concerned, the parrot needed a good spanking. He waved his right hand, causing a gale force wind to sweep out and surround it.

Within the whipping wind, the parrot struggled and then roared, “This is true love! True love is invincible!”

“Screw off!” cried Meng Hao, waving his sleeve again and trying to ignore the pain in his head. The wind screamed, but the parrot’s persistent voice once again rang out.

“Meng Hao, you’re shameless! You wanna be the third wheel! You wanna break us up!!”

Meng Hao’s face grew even darker. Finally, he shrugged and punched out. The response was a frenzied roar from the parrot.

“Lord Fifth’s love will never change! Lord Fifth’s love will last forever!!” The parrot held nothing back as it roared at the top of its lungs to vindicate itself. Then, it let out a pained cry as it fell back a few paces, after which it looked passionately at the mastiff and yelled, “Little darling, Lord Fifth will travel to the ends of the earth for love! Let’s elope! What do you say?” Its eyes burned with passion.

The Blood Mastiff’s Cultivation base was at the Spirit Severing stage, and it was quite intelligent. At first, it was confused about what was going on. Now, though, this intrepid Blood Mastiff trembled as it looked at the parrot. Suddenly, its rage exploded up to the Heavens. It appeared to feel provoked, humiliated, as if it had been taken to be a female. Such intense provocation immediately caused the mastiff to fly into a rage.

It roared and shot forward toward the parrot, then batted it with a huge paw.

With a bang, the parrot was sent flying backward. Moments later, it flew back persistently.

“I will go to the ends of the earth for love! I live for my dream of love!! I am the mighty, the passionate, the one and only Lord Fifth!!”

Even as the parrot declared loudly everything it would do for love, the mastiff disappeared. It reappeared directly in front of the parrot. It grabbed the parrot in its paw, forcibly shutting it up, and then opened its gigantic mouth to let out a threatening roar. Compared to the mastiff’s giant head, the tiny parrot was so tiny that it could be considered negligible.

The parrot was about to struggle, but the crushing Spirit Severing pressure instantly caused it to settle down. Its eyes opened wide as the mastiff’s huge face grew close. As for the parrot, it almost looked intoxicated. Seemingly incapable of controlling its passion, it stretched out with its pointed beak and… gently kissed the mastiff.

The mastiff gaped in astonishment. Meng Hao stared in shock. Even the meat jelly was dumbfounded.

Everything was deathly quiet.

The parrot’s eyes glowed with an intense light as it looked at the mastiff. “Lord Fifth loves your power, little darling,” it said loudly. “The more powerful you are, the more you fight back, the more Lord Fifth loves you.”

The mastiff lifted its head up and roared. Its fury had reached a pinnacle. Its eyes radiated fierceness as it bit down, ripping the parrot into pieces. Moments later, though, the parrot reformed and shamelessly began to once again shout out:

“I will go to the ends of the earth for love!” it declared. “I live for my dream of love!! Even if you kill Lord Fifth a thousand times, it’s like tempering steel! My love for you… is eternal!”

The mastiff roared, charging once again to tear parrot into pieces. And then, it all began again….

Meng Hao rubbed the bridge of his nose, and chuckled bitterly. At some point, the meat jelly had taken up a position on his shoulder. Similar to Meng Hao, a hand appeared, and it too rubbed the bridge of its nose. Its expression was exactly the same as Meng Hao’s.

“Now do you see why it takes Lord Third an entire lifetime to convert it?” said the meat jelly somberly. It looked at Meng Hao with an enigmatic expression that said, ‘you know what I mean….’

“Yes, I get it now,” replied Meng Hao, sighing. In that moment, a tremor ran through his body as he suddenly realized that he had just made a massive mistake. He had actually… started a conversation with the meat jelly!

The meat jelly’s eyes lit up, its desire to chat suddenly aroused.

“You get it? You really get it? Heavens! You really do get it! You understand me now! Okay, then, let’s talk about something that happened 30,000 years ago. It was just too much. Infuriating! Oh, wait. Before that, let’s talk about the weather from 70,000 years ago….”

The meat jelly trembled with excitement as it began to chatter. It turned into a droning sound in Meng Hao’s ears. He watched the mastiff and the parrot battling, and listened to the garrulous meat jelly.

Suddenly, a feeling rose up in Meng Hao’s heart that gave him the sensation that he was about to go insane. Any normal person who spent a lot of time with the parrot and meat jelly would definitely become abnormal.

All of a sudden, he felt a twinge of sympathy for the Li Clan Patriarch.

Meng Hao sighed and obediently maintained his silence. He said nothing, but rather, allowed the meat jelly to talk endlessly, allowed the parrot to continue to be battered around by the mastiff. Every time the parrot was smacked away, it would return and say all kinds of things that Meng Hao could not help but hear. Soon, he started to go numb.

And that was how time passed by oh so slowly…

Half a day later, even as the parrot continued to pay court to the mastiff, who continued to violently refuse it, the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe’s temple appeared up ahead.

The temple itself was an enormous mountain shaped like a bottle gourd. It looked like a gigantic stone bottle gourd placed directly onto the surface of the land. The mountains that surrounded it were bare and infertile. The only entrance was at the very top of the mountain, at the mouth of the gourd.

Seeing the bottle gourd mountain caused Meng Hao to feel an indescribable sense of release. He shot directly toward the mouth of the gourd, and as he neared, he could sense an incredibly powerful restrictive spell.

The mouth of the gourd was like that of a volcano, and was roughly three hundred meters wide.

An enormous magical symbol could be seen stretching across the opening, floating there in mid-air, preventing anything from entering, be it a person or a stream of Divine Sense. Shockingly, just barely visible beyond the illusory mouth of the gourd, Meng Hao could see another world.

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Note from Er Gen: Heyyy, let me tell you a personal story from back when I had just started college. One time our dorm had a party with the girl's dorm and I took a liking to one of the girls… unfortunately, in the end I was turned down. (As for her name, well, I still remember it down to this day.)

At that time, chat software was just starting to get popular, so I started a QQ account. As for whether it was five numbers long or six, I can't remember. 1 Anyway, for whatever reason, the first online username I ever picked was "Live for a Dream of Love."

As I recall it now, it seems both corny and also somewhat unthinkable. At the same time, it reminds me of how wonderful youth can be.

Alright, enough of that. When I have a chance, I'll tell all of you about three love letters I received in college, as well as the one I received after I started working. Every once in a while, I remember them and take them out. They make me both sigh and smile. The paper is yellow, and old, and makes me think about past times…. (to be continued….)

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1. QQ numbers nowadays are 8 or 9 numbers long, so this shows how old school he is

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# Chapter 554: Huyan’s True Self!

He saw a vast number of houses, exquisitely ornamented palace buildings, countless temples, and one Tribal district after another….

There were nearly 10,000 people sitting cross-legged atop the houses. It seemed as if all the power of their Cultivation bases was emanating out. Their bodies were withered, to the point where they seemed fused with the houses. Apparently, these people were sparing no cost, giving up even their life force, to maintain the operation of the restrictive spell.

Meng Hao wasn’t able to make out any more concrete details.

Almost the same moment in which Meng Hao arrived at the mouth of the gourd, he was shocked to discover that in the air around him were multiple streams of Divine Sense.

There were even streams of Divine Sense that didn’t belong to Spirit Severing, but were valiant nonetheless. Apparently these were the result of magical items that could allow Cultivators from various Tribes to lock onto this position from a distance, and thus observe the proceedings.

Meng Hao ignored them. The fact that no one had interfered during the battle against the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe revealed the attitudes of the others.

Right now, the appearance of these streams of Divine Sense made that attitude even more obvious. These people were here to see… exactly what would happen in the end between him and Patriarch Huyan!

Some people clearly had a vested interest in what was going on, although Meng Hao didn’t want to know why.

The mastiff, having just endured the aggravation of the parrot the entire way here, needed no orders from Meng Hao. A bright red glow emanated from its body as its Spirit Severing aura exploded out. It swiped out with its paw, slamming at the magical symbol restrictive spell.

A boom echoed out. Cracking sounds could be heard as the magical symbol collapsed into fragments. However, even as it disintegrated, another restrictive spell became visible. The mastiff's fiendish will expanded out. It roared and swiped out its paw again. And then again. The entire gourd mountain shook for the space of ten breaths as the mastiff destroyed hundreds of layers of restrictive spells. However… by this point, they had only proceeded about a hundred and fifty meters down into the mouth of the gourd.

Shockingly, the entire gourd… was completely filled with restrictive spell formations!

The mastiff was about to continue destroying them, but Meng Hao calmly prevented it. He hovered outside of the mouth of the gourd and looked down inside. Then, his eyes filled with a cold light. He waved his right hand, and instantly, one of the seven Violet Sea Giants moved forward. In the blink of an eye it entered the mouth of the gourd and then transformed into a majestic Violet Sea that began to drain down into the gourd.

"If the people die," Meng Hao said calmly, "the restrictive spells will shatter on their own." In the Southern Domain, Meng Hao had not mastered the art of cruelty. However, his experiences in the Black Lands and the Western Desert, and especially the migration with the Crow Divinity Tribes, had forced him to shed his former naivety. Because of his surroundings and his experiences, he had slowly, almost imperceptibly, changed. He now truly acted like a Cultivator.

When dealing with enemies, any tactic is acceptable! When dealing with benefactors, debts of gratitude must be repaid, regardless of the cost!

Even as the word left his mouth, the Violet Sea poured down into the gourd. The power of extermination exploded out, transforming into what sounded like rumbling voices. The entire gourd mountain began to tremble violently.

Life and death collided, and the power of extermination roared out. Even if the restrictive spells of the gourd bottle were powerful, they would still contain life force. It might not be something that the restrictive spell innately possessed, however, as the Violet Sea sank down into the gourd, the life forces of the 10,000 Heavenly Pursuit Tribe members became explosive linchpins.

Roaring could be heard from within the world of the gourd. The Cultivators sitting cross-legged on top of the houses trembled and began to visibly break into pieces.

Massive explosions echoed about as the successive layers of restrictive spells were destroyed. At the same time, the second of the Violet Sea Giants neared, transformed into seawater and then poured into the gourd's mouth.

After that, it was a third, then a fourth. In the end, five of the Violet Sea Giants became seawater and poured down into the mouth of the gourd. Rumbling sounds completely filled the world inside the gourd.

The restrictive spells were now completely defeated and dispersed. Seawater completely filled the first level of the world of the gourd. Everything, all life, all Cultivators, were submerged within the Violet Sea and wiped out by the power of extermination.

Hundreds of thousands of specters now charged into the Violet Sea to sweep about the world of the gourd.

Gradually, an enormous spell formation began to emerge.

It could be called a spell formation, or perhaps, a door.

It was a door that led to the second level of this world.

It was a simple, unsophisticated door, and it was closed tightly. Outside the mouth of the gourd, Meng Hao waved his hand toward the seawater within. Instantly, it swirled into a whirlpool, which rotated faster and faster. The water, along with the hundreds of thousands of specters, roared as they transformed into a massive cyclonic power that shot toward the door leading to the second level.

The cyclonic power erupted with massive power as it slammed against the door. A boom could be heard as the door was smashed into countless pieces. All the seals and all the restrictive spells were completely destroyed.

When the door collapsed, fierce howls could be heard coming from within the second level of the world. Shockingly, two thousand Heavenly Pursuit Tribe members could be seen within. There were even several Nascent Soul Cultivators and totemic Sacred Ancients. However, as they charged out in attack, the Violet Sea poured in. The power of extermination exploded out, whereupon bloodcurdling screams could be heard.

The cries echoed out for a moment within the gourd, and then faded away. Soon the entire mountain was completely quiet.

The Heavenly Pursuit Tribe had been completely eradicated.

Even still, Patriarch Huyan was nowhere to be seen within the world of the gourd.

Meng Hao frowned, then gave a cold snort. He waved his hand toward the gourd mountain, causing the Violet Sea within to seethe. It rapidly transformed back into the Violet Sea Giants, which then began to strike at the mountain with their fists.

The ground quaked as more restrictive spells were destroyed. After the amount of time it takes half an incense stick to burn, the entire mountain began to fall apart and collapse. A huge roaring sound could be heard as it crumbled into ruin.

As of this moment, the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe’s temple had been completely destroyed!

The collapse of the mountain caused dust to fly out in all directions. As Meng Hao hovered up above in mid-air, he slapped his bag of holding, causing massive amounts of corpses to appear. Shockingly, they all fell down onto the destroyed temple, collecting together into something like a small mountain.

A mountain of corpses!

The corpses of the members of the Heavenly Pursuit Sect all piled together to form a mountain that rose up over the land.

“Leaves return to the ground to become nourishment for roots. Rest in peace. Although you said you would not rest until the Golden Crow Tribe was dead, as of this moment, your Tribe has been exterminated. All enmity is vanished.

“This place was your temple, now, your corpses will be buried here.” Meng Hao waved his sleeve, causing several huge chunks of the gourd mountain to fly up into air. He stacked them up around the corpses, transforming the area into… a tomb!

Heavenly Pursuit Tomb!

This tomb would stand here to time indefinite, a witness to all the Black Lands. For years and years, this place and this tomb would strike terror into the hearts all the inhabitants of the Black Lands.

It also bore witness to the rise of the Golden Crow Tribe.

The instant the tomb came into being, the surrounding streams of Divine Sense became even more serious than before. Meng Hao was fairly certain that the scene playing out here was probably being observed by more than half the Tribes in the Black Lands.

Actually, it was exactly as Meng Hao imagined. In almost all of the Tribes in the Black Lands, all Cultivators of the Core Formation stage or higher were using various precious treasures to watch Meng Hao.

As of this moment, Meng Hao’s return to the Black Lands caused him to become thoroughly famous in the hearts of all Cultivators of the Western Desert and the Black Lands. He had long since risen to prominence; to them, he was no longer a mere Nascent Soul Cultivator in terms of seniority. No, he was a Patriarch.

How could the Black Lands not pay extra attention to him?!

Meng Hao looked at the tomb for a long moment before turning to stare off into the sky. There, off in the distance, was a black cloud, approaching with indescribable speed.

As the cloud neared, the previously bright sky instantly began to turn as black as night. Clouds covered the sky, as if the night was consuming the daylight!

“Meng… Hao….” As the night consumed the day, a deep voice rang, filled with a rancor that seemed to be etched upon the very bones of the speaker. It rang out like thunder from within the black night.

Meng Hao looked up calmly at the rapidly approaching darkness. A fierce glow appeared in his eyes, and the desire to battle raged up within him.

“Patriarch Huyan,” he said calmly, directly entering the Seventh Anima.

BOOM!

As the seven Nascent Souls combined, he grew taller by several heads. His body became stronger, his shoulders wider. His frame was slender, his long hair bizarre and Demonic. He radiated the air of an Immortal Devil, shocking and audacious.

The strength of his fleshly body caused the surrounding air to ripple and distort. It was as if the area around him was not compatible with the rest of the world

This intrepid fleshly body contained the battle prowess of sixty-four great circle Nascent Souls. Since ancient times, there had never been someone like this, and in the future, there likely never would. It was a path Meng Hao had forged, something unique and one of a kind in all the lands of South Heaven.

This was not a Perfect Nascent Soul, but was virtually exactly the same!

By now the sky was completely black. A cloud shot directly toward Meng Hao, who did not flinch back in the slightest. In fact, he stepped forward, performing an incantation with his right hand, and then pointing forward.

“Wind!” he said.

As he spoke, an unspeakable gale-force wind sprung up around him. It raged into spinning winds that seemed to stretch from the ground all the way up to the Heavens. From a distance, it looked like an enormous tornado raging around Meng Hao.

The spinning winds shook everything and caused a huge roaring to rise up. It picked up countless huge boulders and endless amounts of dust which instantly shot toward the incoming cloud.

During his battle with Patriarch Huyan’s clone, he had used magical items as well as the Blood Immortal divine abilities. However, he had not used his own creation, the magic of his seven Nascent Soul totems.

In some respects, the power unleashed as Meng Hao used them right now was much more appropriate for him than the Blood Immortal divine abilities.

That was especially so now that he was in the Seventh Anima. His power was thoroughly shocking in all respects.

Massive roaring spread throughout half of the Black Lands, shaking fully seventy percent of the Tribes, filling the hearts of the Cultivators with astonishment.

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# Chapter 555: Who is HE?

A glowing screen magically appeared on an altar in the great Demon Butterfly Tribe. Visible on the screen was Meng Hao fighting Patriarch Huyan's true self!

Duo Lan sat there, calmly watching everything that was happening. Her eyes glowed with a bright light as she focused especially on Meng Hao.

At the same time, in the great Wild Flame Tribe, a similar screen could be seen. It was the same in the great Cloud Sky Tribe, where Zhou Dekun and others were watching the proceedings.

Throughout the Black Lands, roughly seventy percent of the experts from the various Tribes were all paying close attention to the fight.

Virtually all of the Spirit Severing Patriarchs had sent out Divine Sense to circle around the region of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe to observe the battle. What they were most closely focused on were the various divine abilities and magical techniques being used, especially those of Meng Hao.

The sounds of booms rose up into the air. When Meng Hao's enormous tornado stretched high enough to touch the clouds of Patriarch Huyan's night, a huge explosion rattled out. The black clouds were torn apart, and the tornado collapsed.

In that instant, Patriarch Huyan suddenly appeared in mid-air. His face appeared ancient, filled with a sensation of age that was vastly different from the appearance of his middle-aged clone.

His clothes were white, seemingly spotlessly clean. As he looked at Meng Hao, the aura of a Spirit Severing expert exploded out from him.

Meng Hao glanced back at Patriarch Huyan. During the slaughter of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe earlier, Meng Hao had secretly collected some blood from various Tribe members. The blood was enough to cover five generations, which was enough for Meng Hao to conjure a Blood Clone. Were he able to collect some blood from Patriarch Huyan, then he would have enough to form a six generation Heavenly Pursuit bloodline Blood Clone.

Although the Ji Clan Blood Clone was mighty, the opportunity he had now was not one that he would come by often. Naturally, Meng Hao would take advantage of the situation. His eyes flickered as he exploded out with the power of the Seventh Anima and sixty four great circle Nascent Souls. As he closed in on Patriarch Huyan, he waved his right hand and said:

“Metal!”

As the word left his mouth, a blinding golden light appeared within the night’s darkness. The area around Meng Hao was filled with a golden glow that spread out with intense Metal-type power. It instantly honed in on Patriarch Huyan.

Patriarch Huyan didn’t say a single word. His face was grim, and a cold, emotionless glow could be seen in his eyes as he raised his hand and then chopped it out toward the golden glow.

In response to the chopping motion, the air in front of him was filled with intense coldness. It seemed to be a coldness that could extinguish will and sever emotions. This attack was none other than Patriarch Huyan’s emotion severing!

Meng Hao’s eyes remained calm. However, the seven Violet Sea Giants around him lifted their heads up and roared. Instantly, their bodies collapsed and transformed into a Violet Sea, which then surged toward Meng Hao. It instantly enveloped him, then shrank down and stuck to his skin, forming into compressed water shield that formed a barrier against the emotion severing Domain.

At the same time, the black night consumed Meng Hao's golden light, which vanished without a trace. Meng Hao raised his right hand and pointed again.

"Water!"

As the word left his mouth, blood and seawater, life and death, the will of extermination circulated around him. Patriarch Huyan snorted, then lifted his hand and performed an incantation. He touched the forefinger of each hand to the thumb of the other forming a rectangle, then gestured forward.

Immediately, an intense power of expulsion shot out.

"BEGONE!"

The power of worldly expulsion echoed out, transforming into an attack that headed directly toward Meng Hao. It slammed into him, forcing him backward. Booms filled the air and he coughed up a huge mouthful of blood. When he finally looked up, his eyes were shining with a bright light.

He could tell that Patriarch Huyan's true self was quite a bit more powerful than his clone. Divine abilities and magical techniques that the clone needed time to prepare, could be casually employed by his true self.

"However, I have power that I didn't use in the fight with your clone!" thought Meng Hao as he retreated, his eyes shining with a strange light. He quickly performed a double-handed incantation gesture and then pushed his hands out forward.

"Metal. Wood. Water. Fire. Earth. Five elements totems! Wind. Lightning. Activate! Seven totems!" As he spoke, a huge green-colored tree appeared in the air, along with a reddish-violet sea, a myriad of golden weapons, a raging sea of flames, and a stretch of frozen Frost soil!

Next, a roc magically appeared, surrounded by raging winds. Up in the darkness above, countless snake-like bolts of silver lightning could be seen. The lightning bolts instantly transformed from silver into red as they congregated in mid-air.

This was the divine ability most suited to Meng Hao, what he himself had created, the Seven Souls Totem Transformations!

They were perfectly suited to his Seventh Anima. Having fully unleashed all of them, Meng Hao waved his hand forward, causing them to transform into seven bright beams of light that shot toward Patriarch Huyan.

Patriarch Huyan's face flickered, and he suddenly stopped in his tracks. His eyes flickered as he performed an incantation in which he drew a large circle in the air in front of him.

"Seven emotions and six pleasures. Dao of Thirteen Transmigrations!

"Happiness. Anger. Sorrow. Consideration. Sadness. Fear. Shock. Dao of Seven Emotions Transmigrations!" When the circle was completely traced in front of Patriarch Huyan, it shattered, becoming seven parts.

Each part was a different color, and radiated bright light as it floated through the air. Patriarch Huyan pointed forward, causing the Seven Emotions Circle to shoot directly toward Meng Hao's Seven Souls Totems.

Meng Hao's pupils constricted. This was a divine ability that Patriarch Huyan's clone hadn't used. However, Meng Hao wasn't surprised. Patriarch Huyan was a cunning fox, and had held back moves in much the same way Meng Hao had. He was obviously well-prepared.

Seven Souls Totem Transformations. Dao of Seven Emotions Transmigrations. These two very different divine abilities shot toward each other in mid-air. Fundamentally speaking, the Seven Souls Totem Transformation could be considered the most ultimate powerful art of the Nascent Soul stage. That was especially so considering that the transformations were fueled by the power of sixty-four great circle Nascent Souls. Because of that, Spirit Severing power could even be sensed within it.

As for the Seven Emotions Transmigrations Dao, it was a Spirit Severing divine ability. It goes without saying that when the two slammed into each other, roaring filled the air and the ground shook. The black night was ripped apart and Meng Hao coughed up blood. Next, Meng Hao looked up and performed a double-handed incantation, then pointed forward.

“Seven totems combine!”

The seven totems merged together, magically transforming into one, a totem that was a mass of primordial chaos. It had no pattern, but if you looked closely, it almost looked as if it were formed from countless other patterns.

Meng Hao knew that the seven fused totems was most suitable for his use in his Seventh Anima, when he combined seven Nascent Souls!

Inside of him were seven fused Nascent Souls. Outside were seven combined totems. As a result, a state could be achieved in which the interior and the exterior were in unison. As of now, the true battle prowess of his sixty-four great circle Nascent Souls could thoroughly explode out.

Other than his final use of the Agarwood or Dancing Sword Qi, this was Meng Hao’s most powerful trump card.

This was also his first time unleashing the magic. He had rehearsed mentally in the past, but now that it was truly being employed, a roaring sound rose up into the Heavens. One totem, seven characteristics!

It was at this point that Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly went wide as he noticed that the seven totem combination was somewhat unstable.

“Although this is my first time utilizing this art, I’ve employed it mentally on several occasions. Furthermore, considering that my seven Nascent Souls are merged, there’s no reason for the totem combination to be unstable.” His eyes flickered as he realized that although his five elements were at the great circle level, when he added in the wind and lightning, the combination was not at the great circle. That was the source of the instability and incompatibility.

When Meng Hao mentally practice with the Seventh Anima, he hadn’t noticed this point. Now that the totem combination had truly appeared, though, it was immediately obvious.

Next, contrary to expectations, the wind and lightning suddenly changed. They stabilized, which caused Meng Hao’s mind to fill with shock. Apparently the transformations in the five elements totems had been provoked by the wind and lightning.

This made it so that the combination of seven totems produced a completely unexpected transformation, a transformation that would shock the entire world!

Meng Hao’s mind suddenly filled with sharp stabs of pain that instantly inundated him. His mind reeled and, even in the middle of this battle with Patriarch Huyan, a blank look suddenly appeared in his eyes.

All of a sudden, he saw a battlefield in front of him, littered with countless corpses, the ground soaked with blood. It was impossible to tell how many years of battle had been fought in this place, but the corpses seemed endless.

Dead bodies filled the ground for as far as the eye could see.

The only thing that was different was directly in front of him; a gigantic coffin. It was fully thirty thousand or more meters long, and pitch black. Meng Hao was familiar with this coffin; it was exactly the same one that he had seen in the sky above the Tower of Tang in the State of Zhao!

Most shocking of all, he could now see that carved onto the surface of the coffin… were nine butterflies!

Nine butterfly carvings which were indescribably beautiful.

The instant in which Meng Hao saw the butterflies, a roaring sound filled his mind, and the vision disappeared.

At the same time, the black sky above seemed to be ripped apart. Throughout all the lands of South Heaven, including the Eastern Lands, the

Southern Domain, the Western Desert, and the Northern Desert, a bizarre power seemed to be stirred into action by Meng Hao’s Seven Souls Totems.

Outside of Planet South Heaven, the carved names on the Immortality Bestowal Dais began to flicker with shining light. Murmuring voices pulsated out and echoed around the Immortality Bestowal Dais.

“The five elements are fundamental. There is no sixth element in the world. Regardless of wind or lightning, both will turn the five elements upside down…. Except, this wind…. What is this wind? This is not a wind of the five elements, this is wind from the outside world!

“And what lightning is this? It is not lightning of the Nine Mountains and Seas. It comes from outside the Mountains and Seas!

“How could this be? What is happening…? Could it be that a life form from outside the Nine Mountains and Seas has descended, bringing this wind and lightning with it!?!?”

The trembling of the Immortality Bestowal Dais affected all the regions of South Heaven.

A woman walked out of the Rebirth Cave in the Southern Domain and looked off into the distance.

In the Milky Way Sea was an ancient boat that had been floating there for tens of thousands of years. On the prow of the boat was a corpse wearing a set of decaying armor. Suddenly, its eyes opened.

In the Great Tang of the Eastern Lands, in the ancestral mansion of the Ji Clan was a young man with skin like jade, the same young man who had blocked the path of Meng Hao’s mother all those years ago, sitting on an altar made from a cauldron. His eyes opened slowly, and within could be seen hesitation and confusion as he looked off into the distance.

Throughout all the lands, as everything shook mysteriously. Back in the Southern Domain, deep within the Rebirth Cave, was an area that even the woman-form roc would not be able to reach. Laying there in the pitch-black darkness was a corpse.

This corpse… was none other than he who had gifted Meng Hao with Immortal Shows the Way. Choumen Tai! 1

He had been dead, but in this moment, his eyes suddenly opened. Within them was a sharp, glowing light that seemed capable of causing the starry sky to shake, and even crush the lands of South Heaven.

As of this moment, there seemed to be no weakness about him whatsoever; clearly he was at the peak of power.

“Well, I woke up quickly,” he said. “I came to this world to spread the Dao. I sent out millions of seeds of the Dao, and in two hundred years, only this person awoke!

“Perhaps, this kid really is the one I’ve been waiting for all these years… to bring HIM back to life!” The instant in which Choumen Tai said the word ‘him,’ his expression filled with a look of recollection, as he recalled the image of a man looking at him and smiling.

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# Chapter 556: Shaking Huyan!

When it came to the incredible changes happening throughout the lands of South Heaven because of Meng Hao’s Seven Souls Totem combination, Meng Hao noticed, but Patriarch Huyan didn’t.

However, in the moment that Meng Hao regained consciousness, he looked at the combination of seven totems, the solitary primordial chaos totem, and a strange light appeared in his eyes. He could tell that some undetectable transformation had occurred to his seven Nascent Souls and seven totems.

As to whether the transformation was good or bad, it was impossible for him to tell. However, he had the faint sensation that it had caused him to take a first step down the true path of seven Nascent Souls.

Actually, up to now, whenever he entered the Seventh Anima, the seven Nascent Souls in his body appeared to be unhampered by anything. Obviously, he could enter the Seventh Anima and explode out with the power of sixty-four great circle Nascen Souls.

In truth, though, he had to force them to fuse together, which he could accomplish only because of his profound foundation. The instability of the combination of the seven totems caused Meng Hao to become aware of his oversight. However, a strange, unfamiliar aura had emerged from his seven Nascent Soul totems, causing them to bind together. Now the solitary totem was stable.

Somehow, Meng Hao was able to solve this problem that, in the future, would surely have led to great danger.

Right now, though, he was in the middle of fighting Patriarch Huyan, and had little time to think about the matter. He put the matter to rest in his heart and then performed a double-handed incantation. Instantly, the solitary totem in front of him began to pulsate with a shocking aura.

The totem had no shape, and was constantly changing. Sometimes it was big, sometimes small. The primordial chaos inside of it looked almost like droplets of water, but also like a sea of flames. It was blurry, and impossible to see clearly.

However, the aura spreading out from within the blurriness only continued to grow more powerful.

Patriarch Huyan was astonished, as were the streams of Divine Sense from the Patriarchs of the other Tribes.

The instant the seven Nascent Soul totems combined, Patriarch Huyan’s eyes flickered with shock. He once again drew circles in front of him, and then gestured forward sharply.

“The seven emotions are needed by the heart. But within the soul, there are only three types of emotion. Family love, friendship and romantic love. I severed family love, extinguished friendship, and cut off romantic love. From then on I was… emotionless!” With that, the seven circles of emotion shattered, transforming into a blade.

The blade was illusory, but was capable of extinguishing all types of life. Suddenly, the blade lifted high up into the air, and then descended down onto the solitary combination totem.

The chopping blow was imbued with an aura that could conquer mountains and rivers. This blade… was a blade of emotionlessness! All of the cultivation that Patriarch Huyan had practiced in his entire life transformed into a Spirit Severing blade that could shake Heaven and Earth. The entire world seemed to disappear in the face of the resplendently glowing blade that shot toward Meng Hao’s combination totem.

The blade hit the totem. In the instant that they struck each other, an indistinct, unclear aura erupted out from the solitary totem. The aura caused all the wind and clouds in the area to stop moving. Everything up above and down below grew still.

A strange, otherworldly feeling spread out with incredible intensity.

When Patriarch Huyan sensed it, his heart filled with shock. This aura made him feel as if an incredible pressure was weighing down on him. His heart began to pound.

The feeling came so quickly that he had no time to do anything. Nor was he prepared for it; his mind filled with roaring, and blood oozed out of his mouth.

At the same time, cracks began to spread out across the blade that had chopped down onto the solitary totem. The cracks eventually joined together, and then a popping sound could be heard as the blade shattered into seven pieces that shot out in all directions.

The seven pieces represented the seven emotions, and their shattering caused a tremor to run through Patriarch Huyan's body. He coughed up a huge mouthful of blood, and his face went pale. He staggered backward more than thirty meters, whereupon he looked up with a face full of shock and disbelief.

He had long since ceased to look down upon Meng Hao. However, it was only at this moment that he suddenly realized that he himself… still didn't fully understand Meng Hao. The sight of Meng Hao combining seven totems into one, and the resulting aura that erupted out, left Patriarch Huyan profoundly shocked.

"What totem is that?! What is that aura?!"

It wasn't just Patriarch Huyan who felt his heart trembling. Equally shaken were the other Spirit Severing Patriarchs who had gathered to watch the battle.

One of those patriarchs was the red-robed boy from the great Cloud Sky Sect. His eyes shone with a strange light, and his stream of Divine Sense quivered. “Where did this guy come from?” he thought. “Even I would be shaken by that aura.”

The Spirit Severing Patriarchs from the great Wild Flame Tribe and the great Demon Butterfly Tribe made an undetectable mutual communication. As of now, they dispelled any notion of joining forces to make a sneak attack.

The aura of Meng Hao’s solitary totem was shocking, and they were unable to see through it.

At the moment, Patriarch Huyan was in full retreat. Meng Hao’s solitary totem gradually faded away. It wasn’t destroyed by Patriarch Huyan; in fact, his blade hadn’t hurt it even in the least.

The reason it was fading was because, even in the Seventh Anima, Meng Hao was incapable of sustaining it for very long. At the most, it could last for the space of a handful of breaths. That was, in fact, a bit different from what he had estimated before actually combining the totems during this battle.

“Only three breaths of time!” he sighed, his eyes shining.

“Internally, seven Nascent Souls combine, allowing me to enter the Seventh Anima. Externally, seven totems combine to form primordial chaos, my solitary totem!

“Alone, either the internal or the external change can be sustained for a long period of time. However… when both the internal and the external reach a peak simultaneously, it can only last for three breaths of time!

“During those three breaths, my battle prowess….” Meng Hao was panting as he thought back to what he had experienced moments ago. However, just as quickly, he looked back at Patriarch Huyan.

Patriarch Huyan was breathing deeply. As he shot backward, he tapped his right foot down into the air. A boom rattled out as he stopped in place, finally diffusing some of the recoil power in his body. He looked at Meng Hao and smiled.

“A Nascent Soul Cultivation base that can shake the Spirit Severing stage. If you had enough time, who knows, you might actually be able to achieve Immortal Ascension in South Heaven.

“But I will use all the power I possess to smash you to death. Regardless of whether or not I succeed, the process will give birth to Dao Fruit. I can enjoy that flavor even in the yellow springs.” Patriarch Huyan laughed and slapped his chest.

Boom!

The slap caused Patriarch Huyan’s aura to explode out, growing more and more intense. His hair was no longer white, but black. His skin were no longer old, but rather sleek and smooth.

He was now not an old man any more, but middle-aged, his countenance dignified. Then, his aura continued to become even more shocking. Now, he looked like a young man.

His robe was black, his eyebrows sharp and slanted, and his eyes shone as brightly as the stars. As of this moment, Patriarch Huyan seemed to have recovered his youth. His aura was intense, capable of shaking the Heavens, causing everything to dim and a huge wind to kick up.

Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed as this indescribable, formless aura exploded out from Patriarch Huyan.

The handful streams of Spirit Severing Divine Sense were now all looking at Patriarch Huyan.

“The great circle of the First Severing!” said the Spirit Severing Patriarch from the Wild Flame Tribe. He was a tall, stalwart old man, within whose eyes could be seen an expression of intense concentration.

“Patriarch Huyan never reached the great circle before….” said the red-robed boy from the great Cloud Sky Tribe. “Oh, I understand. He used the eradication of his Tribe to complete the great circle. How cold-blooded, this Huyan Yunming!” Shocked, the boy looked at Patriarch Huyan with a frown.

Meanwhile, in the other Tribes in the Black Lands who were observing the goings-on, most of the Cultivators weren’t able to tell the exact extent to which Patriarch Huyan’s aura had grown. However, it was shocking to them nonetheless.

In the great Cloud Sky Tribe, Zhou Dekun’s eyes went wide and his heart began to beat nervously. After learning that Meng Hao had returned, he had felt happiness, but even more so, worry.

In the great Demon Butterfly Tribe, Duo Lan sat quietly off to the side, gazing at Meng Hao. A stubborn gleam could be seen in her eyes. During the past more than one hundred years, she had learned a lot about Meng Hao. She was a Chosen, and although she hated to admit it, the distance between the two of them was vast.

The moment in which Patriarch Huyan’s Cultivation base exploded up to the great circle of the First Severing, everyone who was watching, be they Spirit Severing Patriarchs or Cultivators from other Tribes in the Black Lands, were thoroughly shaken.

Within Meng Hao’s eyes, a strong desire to battle was suddenly ignited.

A moment later, though, he frowned.

Deep within his bag of holding, he could sense the Demon Spirit emanating an intense teleportation power. It seemed that it could teleport him away at any moment.

Meng Hao couldn’t do anything about, but neither could he ignore it. He slapped his bag of holding, producing the blood-colored mask, which he slipped on his face. At the same time, the mastiff lifted its head up and howled. It transformed into a red beam of light which shot toward Meng Hao.

The red light fused into the mask, causing Meng Hao’s robes to whip about and his hair to float up. His aura instantly burst out violently.

Such eruption instantly caught the attention of the Spirit Severing Patriarchs, as well as all the observers from the other Tribes in the Black Lands.

Amidst the roaring sound, Meng Hao’s robes became blood red, as did his hair. A glow of blood surrounded him, and behind him, a red throne appeared. Seated there was a woman wearing a mask identical to Meng Hao’s. As she became visible, she sat down coldly onto the throne.

The Blood Immortal!

In this moment the entire world was crimson. Even people who were merely watching the scene on a screen suddenly felt as if all the blood in their bodies wished to burst out.

Meng Hao looked up, and an oppressive glow could be seen in his eyes.

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# Chapter 557: Seizing More Spirit Severing Treasures

When Meng Hao looked up, the eyes of this youthful version of Patriarch Huyan glinted with killing intent. However, at the same time, hesitation could be seen.

That was because Patriarch Huyan had a Demon Spirit in his bag of holding as well. As of this moment, he also could sense the power of teleportation pulsing out. It instantly caused him to hesitate as to whether or not to continue fighting.

After all, now that he had reached the great circle of the First Severing of Spirit Severing, it meant that there were some incredibly important things for him to do in the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane.

There was little time to consider the matter, though. Meng Hao’s aura was incredibly shocking. Their gazes locked and they both began to move.

Rumbling filled the air as they unhesitatingly slammed into each other.

Area fought Area.

Domain fought Domain!

Divine abilities fought divine abilities!

This was nothing like the fighting from before. This was Spirit Severing carnage! That was especially true of Meng Hao’s Blood Immortal divine abilities. He had almost been able to slaughter Patriarch Huyan’s clone with them. As of now, he instantly employed them. Deadly sundered clouds roiled out in all directions, filling the sky with rumbling sounds.

A blood rain fell, and a Violet Sea raged.

Even more shocking to Patriarch Huyan was that Meng Hao's battle prowess was actually greater than when he had fought his clone.

Furthermore, in the middle of all his mightiness, Patriarch Huyan could, for the first time sense… faith power!

It was at this point that he recalled that the person in front of him was a Cultivator, but at the same time… a totemic Sacred Ancient who could absorb faith power!

This faith power made Meng Hao's battle prowess even more explosive, absurdly powerful. It was powerful enough that it could fight back against the First Severing.

"Dammit, I forgot that he's a totemic Sacred Ancient who can absorb faith power," thought Patriarch Huyan. "This time, he's much closer to his Tribe, not far, far away like last time. That means the faith power is much stronger!

"Before, in the Violet Sea, the great distance made the faith power incredibly weak!!

"The best place to kill him would be a place where he can't absorb faith power…." Even as he mused in shock over these matters, they continued to fight back and forth. Patriarch Huyan relentlessly employed divine abilities, used emotion severing, his Spirit Immortal, and various magical techniques.

At the same time, the Spirit Severing spectators could also sense the faith power in Meng Hao, which caused them to gasp. Their minds could not help but be shaken.

"Even I overlooked Meng Hao's other identity," said the red-robed boy, a strange look gleaming in his eyes. "He's a totemic Sacred Ancient!" He suddenly had an idea. A person like Meng Hao was someone he should make friends with. The best thing to do would be to send charcoal during snowy weather, so to speak, and provide some timely help. That would be the best way to forge deeper ties.

All of the Spirit Severing experts in the area were having similar thoughts. In fact, all of the Cultivators in the seventy percent of the Black Lands Tribes who were watching were nervously thinking the same thing.

Xu Bai of the Black Dragon Tribe was now an old man. After the Black Dragon Tribe broke away from the Golden Crow Tribe, they joined the great Demon Talisman Tribe. As of this moment, the majority of the Demon Talisman Tribe was gathered in their public square, watching the proceedings on a large screen. Xu Bai sighed inwardly.

Standing next to him was an effeminate man, a male Cultivator who was gentle and soft, but also cold. This was none other than that Chen Mo of the great Demon Talisman Tribe, who was one of the ones who fought over the Demon Spirit that year in the Realm of the Bridge Ruins.

“Having second thoughts?” he asked. “This Meng Hao…. He truly supersedes all of us.”

Xu Bai was silent for a moment. Finally, he nodded his head and said, “Perhaps. As I look back, I don’t think I made the right decision.”

In the great Demon Butterfly Tribe, Duo Lan’s wide eyes were fixed on Meng Hao.

In the great Cloud Sky Tribe, Zhou Dekun was panting. Next to him was Zhao Fang, another member of the great Cloud Sky Tribe. He had a similar expression to Zhou Dekun.

Roaring filled the air as the raging fight continued.

Even as the two of them fought back and forth fiercely, each of them could sense the other’s Demon Spirit. In fact, whenever they got closer to each other, the power of teleportation grew stronger.

Patriarch Huyan’s eyes flashed with killing intent. The power of teleportation was pulsating out of his Demon Spirit with increased frequency, almost as if it were urging him to finish the fight more quickly. The desire in his heart to kill Meng Hao had reached its pinnacle. He suddenly raised his right hand up into the air and pointed to the sky.

“Heavenly Pursuit!” he roared. As the words echoed out, a crackling like that of thunder could be heard in the sky.

“Heavenly Pursuit!!” he roared a second time. Shocking claps of thunder could be heard, and his body grew slightly indistinct. A savage and unmatchably brutal aura roared out of him.

“HEAVENLY PURSUIT!!!” he shouted a third time. The sky up above suddenly seemed to rip apart as a colossal three-headed anaconda bored out from within the void.

The anaconda was fully thirty thousand meters long and was violet in color. The three heads radiated cruelty and had forked tongues that flicked in and out. Furthermore, each head sported a long horn.

The instant it appeared, intense pressure bore down onto the Black Lands.

This was not a Spirit Severing aura. Nor was it the aura of Dao Seeking. This was… the aura of an Immortal!!

This violet-colored, three-headed beast was shockingly equipped with Immortal will!!

Its appearance instantly filled the land with thunderous roaring.

Conversations instantly broke out.

“Heavenly Pursuit Dragonsnake!”

“That’s the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe’s bloodline ancestor, the Heavenly Pursuit Dragonsnake!”

“According to the legends, every Western Desert Tribe has a bloodline that traces back to an Immortal. As the legacies get passed down through the generations, there is always a small chance to set off the bloodline and be able to summon the ancestor!”

The surrounding Spirit Severing experts were not shocked by this development, but when the Cultivators from the other cities in the Black Lands saw, most were completely astonished.

As roaring filled the Black Lands, Patriarch Huyan began to bleed from his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. The summoning he had just performed had put quite a strain on him.

It was as if this world did not consent to the appearance of such a beast as this. As the three-headed anaconda approached, an enormous illusory net appeared around it. This net appeared to be some sort of natural law, something seemingly unbreakable and unblockable!

The Heavenly Pursuit Dragonsnake roared and struggled, and blood sprayed from Patriarch Huyan’s mouth. Finally, for a fourth time, he shouted:

“Heavenly Pursuit!”

BOOM!

The six eyes of the Heavenly Pursuit Dragonsnake glittered. With a mere glance, they sent Meng Hao’s mind completely reeling. At the same time, the centermost head suddenly bit down on its own tail and then ripped it off.

The severed tail suddenly began to blaze with fire. In the blink of an eye, the burning power broke through the enormous illusory net. Even as the giant net tightened around the Heavenly Pursuit Dragonsnake, it flung its tail directly toward Patriarch Huyan.

It burned as it flew through the air, scorching away the flesh and blood, purifying the tail until it was only bones. By the time it reached Patriarch Huyan, shockingly, it had transformed into… a violet-colored bone whip!!

It floated there in mid-air, just waiting for Patriarch Huyan to take control of it. It undulated slowly, sending out ripples into the air along with cracking sounds. The air around the whip continuously shattered in successive layers. A terrifying, almost infinitely powerful aura instantly exploded out from the snake tail.

All of this takes quite some time to describe, but actually only five breaths of time had passed during the fight between Meng Hao and Patriarch Huyan.

Patriarch Huyan reached out excitedly toward the floating whip to grab it.

The whip was obviously a precious treasure. Meng Hao and the surrounding Spirit Severing experts in Divine Sense form could all sense this. The streams of Divine Sense undulated greedily.

However, their greed quickly vanished, to be replaced with pity. This particular precious treasure might be mighty, but it was a bloodline treasure. Objects such as that could only be used by members of the Heavenly Pursuit bloodline.

Furthermore, even ordinary bloodline members would be unable to use it. Only people in whose veins the blood ran thick and pure would be able to, and that was only after reaching the Spirit Severing stage. Anyone else who attempted to do so would receive grievous injury.

With so many restrictions on the snake bone whip, the precious treasure became an object of little value to spectators, as valuable as chicken ribs.

However…. When Meng Hao saw it, his eyes shone with a strange light. While others might view it as nothing more valuable than chicken ribs, that was not the case with him. Meng Hao had not just eradicated the entire Heavenly Pursuit Tribe. During the slaughter, he had retrieved some blood samples.

That blood contained five successive generations of Heavenly Pursuit Tribe members. If he could get some blood from Patriarch Huyan, then he would have six generations of blood, and could create a six generation Blood

Clone. Furthermore, it wouldn’t be an ordinary Blood Clone but, rather, a Blood Spirit. If he could get nine generations of blood, it would be a Blood Divinity with the potential for Ancestral Awakening.

Whatever happened, if he made such a Blood Clone, then it would be able to wield the snake bone whip!

After all these thoughts passed through his head, he finally said, “I have to risk it!”

As Patriarch Huyan reached out to grab the snake bone whip, Meng Hao’s eyes began to glow with a light that would make anyone who saw it feel a sense of danger. He took a step forward and raised his hand. Filled with determination, he pointed at Patriarch Huyan.

“Demon Sealing, Eighth Hex!”

When the divine ability appeared, it caused Patriarch Huyan to be entwined with invisible Demonic Qi. Instantly, a tremor ran through him.

“This move again!” said Patriarch Huyan, his face growing dark. He had considered many methods for dealing with the strange divine ability, but none were truly capable of standing up against it. The only thing he could do was to be on the lookout for it. At the moment, he was sealed, but it would only last for half a breath. Then, the strands of Demonic Qi would began to fall apart.

Blood sprayed from Meng Hao’s mouth. In half a breath’s worth of time, he was only able to get within a few dozen meters of the snake bone whip. Patriarch Huyan, on the other hand, was only about seven inches away, well within reach!

The surrounding Spirit Severing experts as well as the other observing Cultivators were watching closely as Patriarch Huyan seemed about to lay his hand onto the snake bone whip,. There were many who had already guessed what Meng Hao was trying to do. Some still hadn’t figured it out, and were slightly confused.

It was in this exact moment that Meng Hao suddenly opened his mouth. A black light flew out at incredible speed, kicking up a powerful wind. The black light immediately transformed into a black colored wheel.

This was… the Wheel of Time.

At the same time, Meng Hao’s Wooden Time Swords appeared and began to rotate around the wheel. Rumbling sounds could be heard as the Wheel of Time began to spin.

Instantly the power of Time reversal erupted out. A tremor ran through Patriarch Huyan’s mind. His face twisted, and he was about to struggle against it when suddenly his body, completely beyond his own control, began to move backward.

It was as if time were reversing. Even as Patriarch Huyan fought back against the power, Meng Hao once again used his Demon Sealing powers, injuring himself in the process.

BANG!

Patriarch Huyan’s body trembled as he suddenly lost his Cultivation base. It was only for a moment, but that, combined with the time reversal, pushed him half a meter away from the snake bone whip.

As for Meng Hao, he transformed into a green smoke. Coughing up blood the whole time, he appeared in front of the snake bone whip. Eyes filled with determination, he reached out and grabbed it!

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# Chapter 558: In One Thousand Years, One Person Can Reach Immortal Ascension

“How dare you!!” roared Patriarch Huyan. His body flickered as he shook off the power of the time reversal and then shattered Meng Hao’s Eighth Demon Sealing Hex.

Patriarch Huyan’s eyes were filled with scorn. He actually wasn’t worried about the snake bone whip being taken away. It had been refined from a bloodline ancestor of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe. Other than people of that particular bloodline, no one could use it.

Even back in the time before the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe had been eradicated, Patriarch Huyan would still have been the only one qualified to activate the bloodline power to use the precious treasure.

There was no need to even mention the current circumstances.

Therefore, Patriarch Huyan wasn’t anxious at all. In fact, he acted a bit playfully, ignoring the snake bone whip and instead raising his right hand to summon a divine ability which then shot directly toward Meng Hao.

Backlash from the Wheel of Time and the Eighth Hex slammed into Meng Hao, causing blood to spray from his mouth. His face was pale as his Blood Immortal Spirit Severing state vanished. The blood-colored mask fell off of his face, and the weakened mastiff appeared. Meng Hao’s Cultivation base dropped from Spirit Severing back into the Seventh Anima.

However, the expression of determination and resolve on his face did not lessen, but rather, grew more intense. He closed in on the snake bone whip and then grabbed it, the first person to have ever done so.

The instant he touched it, his heart trembled. An intense tremor ran through his body, the source being the snake bone whip. Having examined him and found that he didn't possess the requisite bloodline to control it, it seemed to feel as if it were tainted. The entire whip filled with a shocking, explosive power of destruction.

"Looking to kill yourself, huh?" said Patriarch Huyan, his scorn deepening. His divine ability spread out, clearly on the verge of slamming into Meng Hao.

The surrounding Spirit Severing experts were all confused. When the Cultivators observing throughout the Black Lands saw what was happening, expressions of disbelief appeared on their faces.

"What is he doing?" thought Duo Lan. "Why would he possibly decide to do that?!"

Zhou Dekun was growing increasingly nervous, and was almost unable to restrain himself from shouting out. "Junior Brother, what's wrong with you? Aiiiii, how could you be so insensible! Of what use is that whip to you?"

Xu Bai's eyes were wide and Chen Mo's pupils constricted. They exchanged a glance, and could instantly see the confusion in each other's eyes.

"From what I know of him," said Xu Bai in a resolute voice that could sever nails and chop iron, "he never takes action unless he's confident of success!"

A tremor ran through Chen Mo's heart. "Don't tell me… he actually has a way to use the Heavenly Pursuit snake bone whip!?" Such a possibility seemed inconceivable. "Even if he does, how could he possibly evade Patriarch Huyan's current deadly counterattack?"

Even as everyone was shocked, even as the backlash from the snake bone whip surged, even as Patriarch Huyan's divine ability closed in… Meng Hao suddenly slapped his bag of holding to produce his Demon Spirit.

He violently crushed it, causing the Demon Spirit to explode into innumerable dots of glittering light that spread out to cover his body. As for the parrot and meat jelly, they had disappeared into the copper mirror as soon as the fight began, so the light also covered them as well.

It spread out to the mastiff too, and they all began to turn transparent.

The backlash from the snake bone whip pierced through the air, passing completely through Meng Hao. Patriarch Huyan's divine ability actually reached him, but by that time, he was illusory, so it passed directly through.

The surrounding streams of Spirit Severing Divine Sense were thoroughly shaken. They watched as Meng Hao rapidly vanished, along with the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe's precious treasure.

The experts from the other Black Lands Tribes who were watching on various screens all gasped. Strange light shone from their eyes. All of a sudden, they were struck even more deeply than before by Meng Hao's methods.

"So, that was his plan!" said Chen Mo, his eyes narrowing. Inwardly, he had to admit that Meng Hao's tactics were excellently planned.

Xu Bai said nothing, but inwardly, he mused, "Maybe he simply wanted the whip. Or, more likely, since he knew the battle was about to end, he took it as a means of ensuring the safety of the Golden Crow Tribe."

Zhou Dekun breathed a sigh of relief. As for Zhao Fang of the great Cloud Sky Tribe, he was mentally shaken and his expression flickered. He looked down at his bag of holding as his own Demon Spirit flew out. It transformed into dots of flickering light which began to surround his body.

A Demon Spirit also flew out in front of Duo Lan. The glittering lights slowly spread out over her body, causing her to fade away. The power of teleportation emanated out all around her.

Meanwhile, back where Meng Hao and Patriarch Huyan were fighting….

As Meng Hao slowly disappeared, he looked at Patriarch Huyan and calmly said, “Patriarch Huyan, it would be impolite of me to refuse your gift. You also have a Demon Spirit. I’ll be waiting for you in the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane to continue our battle!”

Patriarch Huyan glared at him with bloodshot eyes. His desire to kill grew even more intense. The Heavenly Pursuit snake bone whip was a precious treasure of the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe, and had been intended as a trump card for use in the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane.

In fact, one of his main goals in the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane had been to find a similar article that could be used alonside the whip. Together, those two items would help him to begin looking for clues regarding his Second Severing.

By now, Patriarch Huyan’s fury was at a pinnacle, and his hatred had seeped into his bones. Not only had Meng Hao stolen the Wheel of Time from his clone, but had also stolen this precious treasure from his true self.

For these things to happen to a Spirit Severing Cultivator, and in front of all those other Cultivators from the Black Lands, was a galling shame and a deep humiliation.

He suppressed his rage and coldly said, “Taking my treasure? I’ll eradicate your Golden Crow Tribe!”

“Too late,” replied Meng Hao coolly. Patriarch Huyan’s face flickered as, of its own volition, his Demon Spirit flew out of his bag of holding, radiating rapid pulses of light. It transformed into countless dots of glittering light which enveloped Patriarch Huyan and caused him to begin to fade away.

“By the way,” continued Meng Hao, “contact with the Demon Spirit makes the teleportation power activate faster.”

Patriarch Huyan breathed in deeply, his expression calm as he stared deeply at Meng Hao. Without another word, his body flickered as more power of teleportation surged. Then, in the blink of an eye, he activated the teleportation, transforming into a beam of light that shot upward and then disappeared amidst a surge of teleportation ripples that spread out in all directions.

The look he gave Meng Hao before disappearing caused Meng Hao’s brow to furrow.

It was at this point that a voice transmitted by Divine Will could be heard in Meng Hao’s mind. It came from the direction of the streams of Spirit Severing Divine Sense, and belonged to none other than the red-robed boy from the great Cloud Sky Tribe.

“Fellow Daoist Meng, please proceed without worry. I will watch over the Golden Crow Tribe for the time being.”

By this point, Meng Hao’s body was more than half faded. He was unable to control the speed with which he moved upward, so he was forced to look down toward the collection of Spirit Severing Divine Sense streams.

“I’ve grown old,” said the voice, “and I’ve long since given up on the thought of performing my Second Severing. I just hope that the great Cloud Sky Tribe will continue on as long as I live, and that I will have the chance to see someone else reach the Second Severing.

“I’ll help you by taking care of the Golden Crow Tribe. With me around, no one will dare to provoke them. However, you must promise me that while you are in the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane, you will take care of my… Holy Son Zhao Fang!

Meng Hao was silent for a moment. Then, just before rocketing up into the Heavens, he responded via Divine Will: “I will take no responsibility for his death if the situation exceeds my capabilities!”

“Just take care of him as best you can,” responded the red-robed boy, his tone casual. “I trust that you will keep your word.”

Meng Hao didn’t respond. He would by no means refuse such an offer. A rumbling sound could be heard as he was propelled up at high speed into the boundless sky. In the last moment before he disappeared, he looked back down at the lands beneath.

He could see the Black Lands, including the area occupied by the Golden Crow Tribe. At the same time, he could also see four bright beams of light shooting up into the air at high speed.

One of those beams of light contained Zhao Fang of the great Cloud Sky Tribe. Another was Duo Lan of the Demon Butterfly Tribe, with whom Meng Hao was somewhat familiar. The third was an old man.

There didn’t seem to be anything special about the old man, but, shockingly, he was of the Spirit Severing stage. Strangest of all, he was not flying up from the Black Lands, but rather, a position in the Southern Domain where it bordered the Black Lands!

The fourth beam of light came up from some distance away in the Western Desert Violet Sea. Meng Hao couldn’t see who was inside, but in his estimation, it was most likely Zhixiang.

He looked away. It was at this moment, just before he disappeared, that a tremor ran through his mind as he looked toward the Southern Domain.

From that direction, Meng Hao could see a fifth beam of light. However, it was so far away, that he was unable to see clearly who was inside.

However, he had the faint sense that there was not just one beam of teleportation light rising up from the Southern Domain. There were more.

“I wonder who from the Southern Domain will be going to the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane….” Meng Hao was curious, even excited at the prospect of encountering some of his old friends. It was at this moment that he completely vanished.

Although Meng Hao couldn’t sense it, people were teleporting from more regions than just the Southern Domain and the Black Lands. In the vast

Eastern Lands, beams of light were also visible, shooting up into the sky.

Three came from… the Fang Clan!

In the beams of light shooting up from the Fang Clan were two men and one woman. The woman was none other than the one who had left a deep impression on Meng Hao. It was violent-tempered, overbearing… Fang Yu! 1

In the Ji Clan ancestral mansion, an illusory youth stood atop the highest point of the main temple, looking down at a group of nine people, five men and four women, all of whom wore expressions of deep respect. A sparkling Demon Spirit glow was currently beginning to surround them. The power of teleportation rumbled loudly, but the gaze of the illusory youth prevented them from moving upward even a bit.

“The Primordial Demon Immortal Plane opens once every thousand years,” he said. “Because of the Western Desert Violet Sea, only Cultivators from the lands of South Heaven can participate, not anyone from the other three planets. The opening of this ancient plane also indicates that the millennial struggle for Immortality has begun.

“According to the rules of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, on each planet, every one thousand years, one person is permitted to achieve Immortal Ascension!

“When the struggle for Immortality begins, the Immortality Bestowal Dais will slowly awaken. It will automatically suppress the various Dao Seeking experts, using the threat of death to prevent them from engaging in battle for the path to Immortality. Of course, there are always bound to be fish who slip through the net, people who risk their lives to fight for their goal.

“Although the path to Immortality exists in front of all of you, you will face opponents. Those opponents are not just fellow Cultivators of your own generation. There will also be members of the older generation, Spirit Severing and Dao Seeking experts. All of them wished to tread the path of Immortal Ascension during these thousand years.

“The coming millennium will be very interesting. Many people will fight. All will fail except for one. That one person will achieve Immortal Ascension!

“Those who gain fortune in the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane will be a step ahead of the others on the path to Immortality. It is my hope that during this thousand years, the person to achieve Immortal Ascension will be from the Ji Clan!” With that, the youth waved his hands. The bodies of the nine others trembled as power of teleportation exploded out, and they surged up into the sky.

All of the members of the Ji Clan who were on their way to the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane were Chosen. However, these were not Clan members like the one Meng Hao had killed that year, of the Quasi-Array. Rather, these were full Array Chosen.

Teleportation beams could also be seen above the Northern Desert.

Obviously, the opening of the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane was not exclusive to the Western Desert. It was a matter of extreme importance to all the lands of South Heaven. It was a grand gathering of Chosen from the Southern Domain, Western Desert, Eastern Lands, and Northern Reaches! 2

This indicated that as of this moment, the path to Immortality had opened!

2. I’m imagine there will be questions about this so I will answer right now. From this point forward, what was previously referred to as the Northern Desert will be changed to Northern Reaches. Er Gen changes the term in Chinese, with no apparent explanation for the time being

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# Chapter 559: So We Meet Again…. Ah, Karma!

Multiple beams of teleportation light shot up from the great lands of South Heaven, causing ripples to spread about in all directions. The sky trembled. Light of teleportation spread out, filling the firmament with brightness and causing the clouds to churn.

For three full days in South Heaven… there was no night!

For three days in the Southern Domain, Black Lands, Northern Reaches, and Eastern Lands, even in the Milky Way Sea, Patriarchs in various Sects and Clans all looked up into the sky.

All of them knew full well that as of this moment, the path of the struggle for Immortality… had fully opened.

After the three bright days passed with no night, many people could sense that the spiritual energy in the lands of South Heaven was suddenly stronger. With the exception of the Western Desert, the spiritual energy in almost all locations increased by triple!

There were even some places which experienced an explosive tenfold increase in spiritual energy, and other extremely special locations where the increase approached the level of being terrifying. The lands of South Heaven were now vastly different than they had been before. The strength of the spiritual energy made cultivation easier. In fact, throughout the land, more than a hundred Spirit Springs were restored from states of being dried up to that of explosive abundance.

The strengthening of spiritual energy wasn’t the only thing that happened. The natural law of Heaven and Earth seemed to have been diluted to the point where it almost seemed as if it could be rewritten. Although reaching such enlightenment would be very difficult for Cultivators, the change made it so that it was easier to personally brand such shapeless laws.

Most shocking of all was that when the night returned, the starry sky up above had changed slightly. Stars were in different positions, almost as if the starfield up above was a different one than before. When people looked up at it, they had the feeling they were back in ancient times.

This was the true starry sky, and its appearance seemed to indicate that some sort of seal had been removed. As of now… Immortals could appear in the lands of South Heaven!

All of these various changes caused a huge stir among the Cultivators of South Heaven. Most of them were either confused or pleasantly surprised. It was only in the eyes of some of the most powerful of experts that intense stubbornness suddenly shone forth.

It was important to them too, that this path to the struggle for Immortality had opened. All of them had lived longer than a thousand years, and had experienced the previous struggle for Immortality a thousand years ago. After failing, they had no choice but to continue to wait until this day.

There were even some among them who had lived, not for a thousand years, but for thousands!

Those people weren’t anxious. Having lived for so long, they knew that after the path to the struggle for Immortality opened, the natural laws of Heaven and Earth would only continue to grow weaker as the end neared. Immortals would appear, and chances of success would grow greater.

Therefore, although they were filled with expectation, they were not anxious!

The great lands of South Heaven were thoroughly shaken!

While all those things were happening down below, up in the boundless starry sky was a great river. The river was composed of innumerable, resplendent stars that surged through the sky.

The stars that made up this great river were actually made up of uncountable motes and fragments. Within those motes and fragments were an assortment of a few dozen who were… Cultivators being teleported from the lands of South Heaven.

Meng Hao was one of them. However, his eyes were closed, and he wasn't moving. All of the other people in the river of stars were in exactly the same state.

None of them could see each other, and therefore didn't know… who exactly made up the group that would enter the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane.

An unknown period of time passed. The starry sky was calm and quiet. There was no aura, only the flowing river of stars. The group of people left Planet South Heaven and gradually grew near to a place where Meng Hao had been before, the Bridge of Immortal Treading.

This collapsed Bridge of Immortality hung there among the stars just as it always had. It did nothing as the river of stars neared it, then began to pass it by.

However, as the river of stars passed, suddenly… countless dots of light appeared on the surface of the Bridge of Immortality. They spread out throughout all the areas of the bridge, growing thick and dense, seemingly without end. However, their flickering seemed to be in accord with some pattern. Somewhere deep within the Bridge of Immortality, on a chunk of broken rock that no one could see, were two particular shining lights among the masses of others that bore the semblance of eyes.

Imagine that you could solidify all of this into a physical picture, and then zoom in on the Bridge of Immortality. What you would notice is that the vast chunks of rock were actually something like continents or land masses. If you zoomed in again, then you would see that in the very center of it all was a mountain. On top of that mountain were two dots of light that looked almost like electricity. Shockingly… they were two people!

A man and a woman!

The man was scholarly and refined. He wore a green robe, and his expression was, for the most part, indifferent and blank, although it would occasionally shine with clarity of mind. The woman stood with her arms wrapped around the man. The blankness in her eyes was occasionally dispelled by a faint smile.

This man was none other than Han Shan!

Reborn Demon Emperor Han Shan!

In this moment, his eyes suddenly became clear. He looked up into the sky, and apparently, could see that within the river of stars drifting past, among all the countless fragments of light that it contained, was a familiar face.

“So we meet again,” he said, his voice both light and hoarse. “Ah, Karma!” Although there was no loneliness to him any more, he was just as bleak and desolate as before. Yet, when he looked down at the woman next to him, the bleakness would transform into tenderness and… a lack of regret.

Han Shan lifted up his right hand and waved it toward the sky above. Instantly, all of the Bridge Slaves in the entire Bridge of Immortality lifted their heads up and roared a soundless roar.

No outsider could hear the sound of their roars. Nonetheless, the sound shaped together into something completely shocking. It shot out from the Realm of the Bridge ruins, out of the Bridge of Immortality, and up toward the river of stars.

It pierced into the river, shooting through the countless fragments of light and motes of dust until it found… Meng Hao!

“Wake up!”

“Wake up!!”

“WAKE UP!!!”

The roaring of the innumerable Bridge Slaves echoed about in Meng Hao’s mind, transforming into thunderous roar capable of splitting Heaven and Earth. It filled his mind, his heart, to the point of explosion.

The explosion originated in the sound created by the countless Bridge slaves. It transformed into vast amounts of sharp thorns that pierced all of Meng Hao’s body. The provocation filled his brain and caused tremors to run through his body. After eight such tremors, Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly snapped open.

At first, his eyes were lit with confusion. The voices of the Bridge Slaves had been cut off without a trace.

As of this moment, Meng Hao was the only person who was awake within the river of stars. He looked around in confusion for the space of three breaths before his gaze shone with clarity.

In the moment he gained clarity, Meng Hao realized that he couldn’t move. It was as if he had been awakened with only enough power to open his eyes. His Divine Sense was being suppressed intensely, and was restricted to a space about thirty meters.

Even paralyzed, he could still see the stars, and the countless fragments of light and dust speeding along. Then he noticed someone off in the distance, floating there with his eyes closed. It was none other than Zhao Fang, who the Spirit Severing Patriarch of the great Cloud Sky Tribe had entrusted him with protecting.

“Am I the only one awake? But… why…?” Meng Hao suddenly caught sight of the Bridge of Immortality. When that happened, the image of Han Shan suddenly flashed through his mind.

Meanwhile, back on the Bridge of Immortality, the countless dots of light were beginning to fade away. The lights that represented Han Shan and his wife gradually disappeared.

Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed with understanding as he realized that the reason he had awoken was most likely… because of Han Shan.

Although he couldn’t be absolutely certain what had led to this state of clarity, Meng Hao couldn’t help but ponder how it might be useful to him in the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane. In any case… there couldn’t be a downside. In fact, now that he was clear-headed, he was sure that there must be a way to use this opportunity to get an advantage.

“If I can seize some unique opportunity, I might be able to get ahead. Perhaps this simple awakening of mind with have a big influence on other matters.” Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed as the river of stars passed the Bridge of Immortality and then shot out into the star-studded sky behind it.

As it passed into this region of the starry sky, an intense roaring sound echoed out. Meng Hao’s body shook, completely beyond his control, and the entire river of stars trembled. He slammed into countless motes of dust, although none of them harmed him in the slightest.

Ignoring the fact that he couldn’t control his own body, Meng Hao fixed his eyes up ahead.

He could just barely make out what was happening. Apparently, as it entered this particular area, the river of stars had slammed into an invisible barrier, causing everything to shake as if it were sustaining an attack.

At the same time, Meng Hao could sense that the river of stars… had actually slammed through the barrier, almost as if it had entered into another world.

When that happened, Meng Hao noticed that all of the dust motes around him suddenly stopped moving. Even he was suddenly motionless. Outside of the river of stars, a variety of bright colors could be seen shining.

What was strangest of all to him, while he was stuck in this state of motionlessness, a woman had appeared off to the right, although he had no idea when exactly it had happened.

She wore a long, blue gown, and was quite pretty. Her eyes were closed, and her features were so delicate it seemed as if a gentle breeze could shatter her. In addition, she seemed to be filled with a certain coldness.

This woman was unfamiliar. Meng Hao looked at her for a moment, then glanced away toward the colorful lights outside. Time passed. The river of stars was motionless, and yet somehow, Meng Hao felt the sensation of movement.

He pondered this point for a while as he looked around at this world of silence. After a bit of time passed, he suddenly came to an understanding. The river of stars wasn't moving. What was moving… was Time!

Time was moving. Not forward, but rather, in reverse! Time… was moving backward!

This discovery caused Meng Hao's mind to tremble. As he looked at the brightly colored lights, he suddenly had the intense premonition that if he could gain enlightenment regarding this strange place, he would have a much more profound understanding of Time, as well as matters relating to the usage and branding of Time treasures.

He also knew that such an opportunity… was exceedingly rare.

After much time passed, Meng Hao's mind grew blank as he immersed himself in enlightenment regarding the reversal of Time. By combining this new information with what he had observed regarding the changes to Time in the Realm of the Bridge Ruins, his understanding grew deeper.

Suddenly, the river of stars shook again. Again it felt as if it had struck up against some invisible obstacle. After passing through, Meng Hao suddenly caught sight of a shocking world!

In the same instant in which he caught sight of the world, all the dust motes and fragments of light within the river of stars trembled. The movement suddenly caused the closed-eyed woman off to the right to bump into Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s head, his face, was suddenly touching something very soft….
A delicate aroma washed over his face.

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# Chapter 560: Ancient Demon Immortal Sect!

Meng Hao felt a bit awkward.

However, the matter was completely out of his control. The woman had floated over and bumped into him, and there was nothing he could do about it. Most vile of all was that she was blocking his view.

Now, he couldn’t see even a bit of the world outside.

She smelled wonderful, and her body was supple and lithe. Meng Hao’s face slowly pressed down into softness, which almost completely buried him.

His eyes went wide as he realized that, just barely visible when he looked down, was an exquisite sight that he rarely had a chance to gaze upon. And yet, the only thing that existed in Meng Hao’s mind was fury.

What he wanted to look at was not this woman, but the world behind her. Being able to observe that world ahead of time was the entire source of his advantage. However as of this moment, his advantage… was being ruined.

“This is ridiculous!” Meng Hao grumbled to himself. Then, he took a deep breath of the wonderful fragrance surrounding his face.

“Extremely ridiculous!” He wanted to lift his head up, but was incapable of moving his body at all. All he could do was breathe in that fragrant aroma. Meng Hao now existed in a world, not of a starry sky, but of this delicate fragrance that, regardless of whether he wanted it to or not, was permeating deep into his soul.

Meng Hao had no other option than to do his best to commit to memory the image of the outside world that he had seen briefly. Gradually, a picture appeared within his mind.

The picture was all based on his memories. It depicted a mountain range that stretched farther than the eye could see. Mountains rose and fell, actually growing taller in height as they stretched off into the distance.

It seemed as if this mountain range was actually an entire world. If he remembered correctly, there were actually seven mountain peaks. The last of them seemed high enough to connect Heaven and Earth.

The tallest mountains Meng Hao had ever seen in the lands of South Heaven were tens of thousands of meters high. However, even the smallest of these seven mountain peaks were so much grander that the two things could not be compared.

Cultivators could be seen on the mountains; they looked as small as ants.

Between each of the seven mountain peaks stretched staircases that connected the countless luxuriously decorated buildings. Innumerable pagodas and temples could be seen. All of it was filled with a deeply archaic atmosphere. It was completely silent, deathly still, as if it was a tomb.

There was no life.

This was the image that floated in Meng Hao’s mind, based on his single glance. This was his opportunity.

Even as he grumbled, the river of stars once again trembled. The trembling caused Meng Hao to suddenly regain some control over his body. His heart filling with joy, Meng Hao used his head to push against the softness in front of him.

What ended up happening was that his face merely sank further into the softness. However, the softness seemed to have a shocking bounciness, causing the woman to finally move away from him. It was hard to tell whether it was because of the force of Meng Hao’s action, or the shocking bounciness, but… the woman seemed to frown as if in pain.

Meng Hao cleared his throat and then quickly looked out at the outside world. Ancient mountains rose and fell. Mountain peaks stretched up loftily. The image of the seven mountains was not very much different than what had existed in his memory. Meng Hao looked out again, and this time, he noticed that there was not a scrap of vegetation in the entire mountain range. They were completely bare, and emanated a strong aura of death that pervaded all of the mountains….

Everything was in ruins. Buildings were collapsed. The elegant structures were decrepit. There were no weeds present; clearly, the passage of time ensured that they turned into nothing more than dust, along with all other life.

The entire place was in complete ruins. The ruins of a Sect!

The sight of it caused Meng Hao to take a deep breath. It took some effort, but he managed to lift his head, whereupon he noticed that, carved onto the first mountain were three characters!

These three characters were red, as if they had literally been painted with blood.

Demon Immortal Sect!

The moment Meng Hao saw those characters, his heart and mind trembled. Although he had long since speculated regarding the final destination, he could now be certain…. This place was the Demon Immortal Sect. Or, more accurately speaking… the ancient Demon Immortal Sect.

And this place was naturally the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane!

A whole Sect. An entire world!

Unfortunately, the Sect had been completely destroyed. This once majestic Sect of the Ninth Mountain and Sea had long since disappeared into the river of history, a Sect that at one time had been occupied by more than a million disciples!

Meng Hao began to pant as he noticed that atop the first mountain peak could be seen the corpse of a Flying Rain-Dragon. However, this dragon was far, far bigger than the one he had seen back in the Reliance Sect. It was nearly ten thousand meters in length, and was incomparably shocking in appearance.

Meng Hao had a special affinity for Flying Rain-Dragons. As he looked at this one, he felt somewhat at a loss for a moment before recovering and looking at the second mountain peak.

When he looked at the second peak, his mind trembled, and he once again began to breathe heavily. Earlier when he had glanced over the mountain peaks, he hadn’t studied them carefully. Now, he noticed that there was an enormous corpse on this mountain as well.

This corpse was human-shaped. However, its frame was enormous, and on its back… were wings!!

It was impossible to see what color the wings were, because the corpse was directly facing Meng Hao. The facial features of the corpse were not clear. However, in that instant, the image of the Black Bat suddenly rose up in Meng Hao’s mind!

On the third mountain peak were three corpses, which for some reason seemed familiar to Meng Hao. Suddenly, his mind reeled. These corpses were half human and half beast, and looked exactly like the creature he had taken the third wooden sword from in the Golden Crow Holy Land!

On the fourth mountain peak was… an enormous dragon, fully thirty thousand meters long!

The dragon was nothing more than a corpse, but it was still thoroughly shocking.

Dragons were legendary creatures, even in the Cultivation world. Meng Hao had seen them in the form of magical techniques or divine abilities. However, as for an actual dragon, he had never seen one with his own eyes.

The fifth mountain peak was quite a distance away from Meng Hao, so he couldn’t clearly see the corpse which lay atop it. However, the shock he felt even from just seeing the first four mountains was completely and utterly unprecedented.

He suddenly had the feeling that he had some very strong connections to this Primordial Demon Immortal Plane!

“Three wooden swords. Don’t tell me… they all came from here?” Having seen this enormous Demon Immortal Sect, Meng Hao could only imagine how intrepid it must have been in ancient times.

Even as his heart and mind trembled, his pupils suddenly constricted. That was because… he had just caught sight of a person on the fourth mountain!

It was a middle-aged man whose back was turned to Meng Hao. He seemed to be filled with infinite ancientness, as well as deep loneliness. Meng Hao was sure that the man was standing there on the peak of the fourth mountain, but when he blinked, the man was gone. This caused Meng Hao’s eyes to glow brightly.

Suddenly, this once intrepid Demon Immortal Sect, which was now nothing more than ruins, began to grow blurry. It was as if a vast mist had begun to cover over the entire world.

Even Meng Hao and the river of stars also began to grow blurry. Meng Hao’s heart began to pound.

He now had the feeling that the most critical point in the journey to the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane had arrived.

His eyes were fixed on the world up ahead as he rotated his Cultivation base. However, everything was just as blurry as before. Meng Hao clenched his jaw as he then employed the Celestial Vision technique that the parrot had taught him.

Suddenly, he could see!

What he saw caused his mind to be filled with shock. What existed beyond the blurriness was still the Demon Immortal Sect. However… it was no longer in ruins, but rather… bustling with activity!

Countless figures could be seen flying back and forth within the mountains. There were innumerable Cultivators practicing cultivation on the mountains, and the glow of magical techniques spread out in all directions. In the azure sky, countless elegant Immortal Beasts could be seen flying about.

The Flying Rain-Dragon on the first peak lifted its head up and roared. It suddenly moved, causing a huge gale-force wind to spring up. However, to this Flying Rain-Dragon, all it had done was stretch its neck.

When he saw the second mountain peak, Meng Hao had thought of the Black Bat. Sure enough, there was an enormous black-colored bat there now. It was shocking in appearance, and emanated an intense aura. As soon as Meng Hao saw it, he was shaken to the core.

The entire world, the entire Sect, contained not even a scrap of an aura of death. Everything was bursting with life. Off on the fifth mountain, voices rose and fell, as if sermons were being given regarding scriptures.

A bridge-like rainbow spanned the sky, glowing radiantly. People sat cross-legged in all locations, listening to scriptures being recited or gaining enlightenment of the Dao.

These Cultivators all had different appearances. Some were people, but others… were Demons!

Even as Meng Hao reeled with shock, he suddenly looked over at the fourth mountain peak. Yet again, he saw the same man, standing with his back toward him. He radiated ancientness, and caused Meng Hao to begin to breathe heavily.

It seemed almost as if the man could sense Meng Hao looking at him. He slowly turned to look at Meng Hao.

He couldn’t clearly see what the man looked like, but Meng Hao’s brain filled with roaring nonetheless. Suddenly, the world he was looking at began to shatter, layer by layer. It quickly vanished, like smoke into thin air. Instead of the flourishing Sect of ancient times, everything was now wreckage and ruins.

At the same time, the river of stars flowed toward the ruins of the ancient Demon Immortal Sect. As it swept across the ruins, all of the dust motes spread out and then began to descend down onto the enormous Sect.

Meng Hao was among the falling dots, as were the several dozen Cultivators from the great lands of South Heaven. All of them were scattered into different locations.

Meng Hao, of course, was the only one among their number who was awake. His mind spun as his body, completely out of his own control, shot down toward the ruins at incredible speed. The mountains in front of him grew larger and larger. An aura of death and rot blasted against his face, and then, he was shooting toward the second mountain peak. A roaring sound could then be heard, and it was in this instant that Meng Hao suddenly regained control of this body. The power of his Cultivation base exploded out, and he lifted up his right hand.

He landed onto the ground on one knee. Dust shot away from him in all directions, and his hair whipped about. When he looked up, his eyes were gleaming.

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# Chapter 561: The Old Friend He Least Wanted to Run Into

Meng Hao knew that all of the others had not awakened the way he had. As of the state they were in now, it was impossible to tell. Without hesitation, Meng Hao sent out his Divine Sense sense to scan the area.

Moments later, his face grew grim. In the outside world, his Divine Sense had a range of 29,999 meters. Here, however, it was only 299 meters. It had been reduced down by a full one hundred times.

“The Primordial Demon Immortal Plane opens once every thousand years. The Chosen from other Sects will no doubt have inside information, and therefore understand the area quite a bit better than me. My understanding, on the other hand, will be significantly less in comparison.

“Right now, I need to do everything possible to understand the situation as it is. Then I can go look for some fortune.” His eyes glittered as he looked up into the air. After a moment of careful consideration, he did not rashly fly up into the air, but rather proceeded forward on foot.

The ground in the area was covered with crack-filled limestone. Ancient bloodstains could be seen that had clearly been there for countless years. There were also corpses lying about, the sight of which left Meng Hao shocked.

There were collapsed buildings, broken pillars, and occasionally, deep craters. At first, it seemed as if this place were relatively close to the second peak, but soon, Meng Hao realized that he was actually quite some distance away.

In a short period of roughly two hours, Meng Hao saw thousands of corpses. Some were large, some were small. Some were complete, some were not. Some were Cultivators, some were Demons.

As far as bags of holding were concerned, he saw several dozen. However, when he scanned them with Divine Sense, they instantly turned into ash. Clearly, they had long since decayed during the years that had passed since primordial times. The items inside those bags of holding became ash as well.

“That these bags of holding turned into ash shows what an incredible amount of time has passed since the ancient Demon Immortal Sect still existed. However, these corpses, although merely broken remains, are still here. I wonder if there is something special about them?” He squatted thoughtfully down next to one particular corpse that was half human, half beast. Although this Cultivator had been dead for ages, Meng Hao was still able to sense incredible power within its fleshly body.

Muttering to himself, he reached out with his right hand to grab the corpse’s arm. He exerted a bit of pressure, then more, until he was using all the power he possessed within in the First Anima. Despite that, he could not move or damage the corpse’s arm in any way.

This left Meng Hao visibly shaken. His eyes flickered as he jumped directly into the Fourth Anima. He twisted on the arm again, and the result was only a tiny crack.

Meng Hao left the Fourth Anima and stood up thoughtfully. Then he quickly headed off. As he proceeded, he would stop to inspect every corpse he came across.

By the time he had inspected roughly a thousand, he finally sighed, and his eyes shone with a strange light.

“For one corpse to possess an incredible fleshly body is one thing. Maybe you could take it to be unique. But all one thousand of these corpses are the same! There wasn’t a single exception.

“The cultivation practiced by this ancient Sect is clearly very different than the cultivation practiced today. They didn’t just practice internal cultivation, but also cultivation of the fleshly body. Even after being dead for such a long time, these corpses can even cause problems for my Fourth Anima. There were even a few that I think could resist my Sixth Anima without being damaged.

“If they were alive… I wouldn’t be a match for them even in the Seventh Anima. Such incredible power! And there are thousands just like this, perhaps even tens of thousands. Or hundreds of thousands….” Meng Hao smiled somewhat bitterly as he finally realized just how fearsome the disciples of this ancient Sect were.

Most relevant of all, these people had died during a vicious attack that had actually caused many of the bodies to be split up into pieces. From the look of them, these were not Inner Sect Disciples. Most of them were… ordinary disciples.

Meng Hao’s eyes began to shine brightly, and his interest in the ancient Demon Immortal Sect continued to increase rapidly. Originally, he had chosen to come here because of Zhixiang, and Demon Weapon Lonelytomb.

Now, though, there was something else that drew him to this place. He wanted to know what technique these Demon Immortal Sect disciples cultivated, and whether related legacies still existed.

“If I could acquire a legacy from ancient times….” Meng Hao’s heart was palpitating with eagerness. His eyes flashed as he continued onward at top speed. Time passed. When Meng Hao had arrived here, it was around noon. By now, evening was falling.

Looking up, Meng Hao was unable to see any similarities between this sky and the sky of South Heaven. It really seemed as if he were in a different world, a world that belonged solely to the ancient Demon Immortal Sect.

As he walked along, Meng Hao would occasionally look up at the darkening evening sky, or around at his surroundings. “The entire Sect is a world. I wonder how many majestic Sects like this exist in Heaven and Earth, or out in the starry skies….”

Perhaps because the ancient Demon Immortal Sect was so incredibly large, or maybe for other reasons, Meng Hao did not encounter any other South Heaven Cultivators. The only thing he saw was collapsed temples and corpses.

The richly ornamented buildings were long gone. The once luxurious and elegant halls were now nothing more than ruins. There were some locations that clearly were covered by restrictive spells. Although many years had passed, the power of those spells was still shocking enough to give Meng Hao pause.

According to his speculations, even someone as powerful as Patriarch Huyan… would be instantly killed beyond the shadow of a doubt if he touched those spells.

“The Demon Immortal Sect… has the character Immortal in it. Don’t tell me that all the members of the Sect… were actually Immortals?!?!” The mere thought of that possibility shook Meng Hao. His eyes glittered as he proceeded on cautiously. He continued to see more and more restrictive spells. Some were more powerful, some were weaker. However, even the weakest were enough that Meng Hao had no chance against them.

At one point he caught sight of an Immortal’s cave that seemed to be completely intact. However, the sense he got from the incredible restrictive spell was similar to that he had sensed from the eight Immortals he had encountered when going to the Realm of the Bridge Ruins.

Evening was fading into the darkness of night when Meng Hao suddenly stopped in place. He looked off into the distance, toward a crumbled palace. Shockingly, on opposite sides of the palace ruins, two women could be seen.

One of them was the exact same blue-robed woman within whose bosom Meng Hao’s face had encountered such incredible softness. Even when her eyes were closed, she had seemed cold. Now that her eyes were opened, they flashed with killing intent.

When Meng Hao saw the woman next to her, he frowned. Other than Zhixiang, there was no woman in existence whom he would rather see less.

Fang Yu!

This exceedingly violent young woman had left a deep impression on Meng Hao that year. The quaking and craters left behind by her punch, the intense desire to do battle which shone in her eyes, all caused Meng Hao to feel as if a frigid air was washing over him.

This was not only the most violent woman he had ever met, but also the person he least wanted to run into again in his entire life!

Meng Hao cleared his throat, and subconsciously began to back away. He didn’t want to face either of these women. One had blocked his line of sight like some tall mountain, the other was a Cultivator who, without speaking even a single word, could transform into an explosive dragon.

However, in the exact same moment in which Meng Hao caught sight of them, they both turned to look at him.

The icy woman in the blue gown glanced him over. Seeing that he was at the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage, she looked away disdainfully to stare once again at Fang Yu.

In her opinion, the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage was definitely beyond ordinary. However, in the Ji Clan, a Cultivation base like that, although it could get you into the Array, would put you in one of the lowest positions possible. This woman, although she was not truly of the Spirit Severing stage, had performed half of a Severing. She was one of the nine people in the Ji Clan in the last thousand years who had the most hope of breaking through into the Immortal realm.

Her main competition, other than the other eight members of her own Clan, was the Chosen of the Fang Clan, against whom she faced this moment.

When Fang Yu caught sight of Meng Hao, she gaped in shock. Regardless of anything, she would never have possibly guessed that she would run into Meng Hao in this place.

As soon as she saw that he was backing up, she quickly called out, “Don’t go anywhere!”

If she hadn’t said anything, he wouldn’t have left. However, as soon as she spoke, he turned on his heel and began to flee.

“You really dare to disobey me!?” she cried, her eyes wide with anger. She was just about to offer pursuit, when the icy-cold woman, who had just been watching in shock, gave a cold laugh and then vanished. When she reappeared, she was blocking Fang Yu’s way.

“Ji Xiaoxiao, you slut, why don’t you go screw off!” Fang Yu pulled her arm back and then slammed a fist down into the ground. A shocking boom rattled out, causing the ground to shatter in successive layers. A shockwave attack proceeded to blast out in all directions. 1

As Meng Hao fled, he felt the explosive discharge of energy coming from behind him, and he instantly increased his speed. He had no desire whatsoever to exchange blows with this explosive dragon, and it had nothing to do with a question of who was strong and who was weak. There was no enmity between the two of them, and if they started fighting, it would be of no benefit to Meng Hao or his plans in this place.

Roaring echoed about as the attack spread out. The land in the area was destroyed, and as ripples of power spread out in all directions, the cold woman waved her hand to block. As for Fang Yu, she glanced at fleeing Meng Hao for a moment and then got even angrier. Gritting her teeth, she instantly produced a glove from her bag of holding which she slipped onto her hand. She then viciously smashed her fist out toward the other woman.

She shot forward, punching the entire time. The air filled with a red glow, and the cold woman’s face instantly fell. She dashed backward, waving her hand to resist the power of seven or eight punches before finally vanishing. She reappeared some distance off, blood oozing from her mouth.

“Fang Yu, are you insane? We might not like each other much and I did steal your jade pendant back in Chang’an. But that doesn’t mean you have to go all out the instant you see me!”

“SCREW OFF!” roared Fang Yu, her anger raging as she shot off to chase Meng Hao. Apparently she didn’t care at all about Ji Xiaoxiao.

Ji Xiaoxiao gaped in astonishment as she looked off in the direction which Meng Hao had fled. Suddenly, she smiled. When she did, her icy prettiness seemed to blossom into shocking beauty.

“Fang Yu has always been proud and arrogant. She has a bad temper, but I don’t think I’ve ever seen her so mad at a man. I wonder what sort of relationship she has with him….

“Hmph. Ever since we were small, it’s been the same. Whatever the two of us see, we end up fighting over it. Well this time, it’s no different!” Ji Xiaoxiao’s eyes were like crescent moons that shone with radiant beauty. Her slender frame flickered as she shot off in pursuit.

1. Ji Xiaoxiao’s name in Chinese is jì xiào xiào – Ji of course is the surname Ji from the Ji Clan, which literally means “season.” Both of the xiao characters in her name mean “smile” or “laugh”

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# Chapter 562: Call Me Big Sis!

Meng Hao fled at top speed, sighing inwardly at his own bad luck. The fact that the cold woman had completely disregarded him was actually somewhat excessive. However, he was used to such things. Under normal circumstances, he would have just dealt with the situation; it wasn’t really that bad.

After all, it wasn’t intentional on her part. Therefore, it could be forgiven.

Meng Hao knew that as a scholarly person, he should be magnanimous and tolerant.

However, how could he have imagined that he would actually run into Fang Yu? When he thought of her violent disposition, he took a deep breath and pushed himself even faster.

Behind him, he heard a whistling sound nearing him. A mighty whirlwind was approaching, and in the middle of it was the furious Fang Yu.

Fundamentally speaking, Fang Yu had a beautiful voice. To Meng Hao, though, she currently sounded more like an evil poltergeist. “Meng Hao, you stop this instant! Do you really dare to disobey me!? I’m gonna beat you to death, do you hear me!”

Boom!

The ground off to the side suddenly exploded, smashed by a fist blow from Fang Yu. The explosion turned into an attack of its own which instantly slammed into Meng Hao. Without hesitation, he entered the Second Anima, increasing his speed dramatically.

He sighed. “Stop chasing me. There is neither gratitude nor grudge between us. Why are you acting like this? Besides, there’s no guarantee that you could win out over me.”

“What did you just say?!?!” she roared. She suddenly slapped her bag of holding to produce a bottle of medicinal pills. She popped one into her mouth, and her body erupted in flames. At the same time, her speed increased dramatically. Yet again, her fist descended. Although she was furious, this strike was not a deadly one. It slammed through the air in an attempt to get Meng Hao to stop.

However, even as the power of the fist strike descended, Meng Hao entered the Third Anima. As his speed exploded, he transformed into a green smoke and shot off into the distance. Fang Yu’s fist attack struck nothing. She stared for a moment, then suddenly chuckled.

“You little bum. In all the years I haven’t seen you, it seems you really have developed some skill.”

Even as she spoke, she continued to pursue him. They moved with incredible speed. Every time Fang Yu got close, Meng Hao would explode out with even greater speed. It made it impossible for her to actually catch up to him.

However, it also served to allow her temper to cool down. Eventually a happy smile appeared on her face. She would throw out occasional punches, and, seeing Meng Hao increase his speed even more, she finally started laughing.

Fang Yu laughed happily. Meng Hao smiled bitterly.

“Why did I have to end up pissing off a girl like this?” thought Meng Hao. “A hundred years have passed and she’s actually… almost in the Spirit Severing stage!” As far as Meng Hao was concerned, it just didn’t seem fair. He had spent a hundred difficult years in secluded meditation, had transmigrated into the Violet Sea, had formed seven Nascent Souls, had experienced multiple Heavenly Tribulations, and had slowly achieved Perfection.

Even despite all of that, he was still only halfway to Spirit Severing. And yet, Fang Yu… was the same as him.

“Chosen of the great Clans are all like this,” he sighed. Then he realized that even when he saw her more than a hundred years ago, her level of power had been incredible, and things seemed a bit more balanced.

Even as the two of them proceeded along, one pursuing, one fleeing, they began to near the second peak. Suddenly, a beam of green light appeared in mid-air and shot toward Fang Yu.

The speed with which it moved caused Fang Yu’s face to flicker. She immediately turned and punched out with her right hand.

A bang could be heard, and then Fang Yu retreated backward several paces. The green beam of light was sent spinning backward, during which time it transformed into a whip. Simultaneously, a man appeared out of thin air. He was tall and thin, with long hair and a handsome face. A long mark could be seen on his forehead that glittered brightly. It almost looked like lightning.

He wore a green-colored robe, and upon his shoulder perched a crow. The crow was bizarre in appearance; it had three eyes, all of which were staring coldly at Fang Yu.

In addition to the crow, a white-colored wolf stood next to the man, emanating a piercing aura as it stared around coldly.

The instant the man appeared, eight pillars of light suddenly rose around Fang Yu. They shot up with incredible speed, causing the entire sky to fill with colorful lights.

“Eight Point Illumination!” the green-robed man said, his voice cool. The eight pillars of light immediately transformed into a seal, which firmly locked Fang Yu in place.

“Ji Mingfeng!” said Fang Yu, her face falling. A cold snort could be heard from behind her. It was none other than Ji Xiaoxiao, who approached slowly, her phoenix-like eyes flickering with killing intent. 1

“Don’t tell me your Fang Clan ancestors neglected to tell you that you can’t simply run around wildly in the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane?” said Ji Xiaoxiao. “Fang Yu, did you really forget that Ji Clan Dao Children are adept at augury arts?

“The fact that we ran into each other was coincidental. If you had left immediately, then I couldn’t have done anything. Instead, though, you gave me a chance to notify Mingfeng. With his skill in augury, pinpointing your position was no problem!”

Meng Hao had stopped moving already, and was observing coldly from off in the distance. Seeing that Fang Yu had been ambushed and sealed, he frowned.

“Do you really dare to hurt me?” replied Fang Yu calmly. There was no anger visible in her eyes; rather, a fearsome aura emanated out from her which continued to grow more and more intense.

“Hurt you? Why?” said Ji Xiaoxiao with a slight smile. “The Fang Clan might be all alone here in the lands of South Heaven, but on Planet East Victory, they are the most illustrious, number one Clan. We don’t need to hurt you, just trap you for three days. Then your path back into ancient times will be cut off. Preventing you from finding a host body is good enough.”

Off to the side, Ji Mingfeng was also smiling. He said nothing, but even from his position off in the distance, Meng Hao could tell that he was much more dangerous than Ji Xiaoxiao.

In fact, when looking at Ji Mingfeng, Meng Hao felt as if there was a needle poking into his back.

Ji Xiaoxiao looked at Fang Yu for another moment and then turned to look at Meng Hao. She smiled broadly and said, “Many thanks, Fellow Daoist. It seems we were fated to meet this day. Unfortunately, there’s no time to properly entertain you today, but if Karma wills it, we will meet again one day.”

Ji Mingfeng glanced over at Meng Hao, smiled and nodded. However, Meng Hao could clearly see the scorn in his gaze.

Fang Yu also looked over at Meng Hao.

He stood there silently for a moment before turning to leave. He had no desire to participate in what was happening. Fang Yu's being sealed didn't put her life in danger. Considering she was neither kith nor kin, it would not be worthwhile for him to take any action.

Besides, he wasn't completely confident in being able to take on two members of the Ji Clan at the same time. That was especially so considering that Ji Mingfeng gave Meng Hao the same sense of danger that Patriarch Huyan had.

As he turned around, the smile on Ji Xiaoxiao's face grew even wider. Her smile right now made her seem vastly different than the cold version from earlier. When she saw the complex emotions in Fang Yu's eyes, the despair and the pain, she grew even happier. She looked at Meng Hao walking away, and admiration could be seen in her eyes.

The thought suddenly popped into her mind that in the future, she could use him to continue to provoke Fang Yu.

Meng Hao took three steps, then suddenly looked back at Fang Yu.

He saw the despair and complex emotions in her eyes, as well as the pain. There was nothing romantic about the pain; actually it seemed to be more the type of pain one might feel when being abandoned by a family member. The look caused Meng Hao's mind to suddenly tremble.

He said nothing, but his eyes suddenly began to shine brightly. For some reason, he couldn't just brush aside the pain he saw in her eyes. He wasn't sure why, but in that instant he made a decision. The killing intent inside of him instantly shot up.

Ji Xiaoxiao frowned. Next to her, Ji Mingfeng's lips turned up in a cold smile.

It was in this moment that Meng Hao entered the Seventh Anima.

BOOM!!

His body instantly swelled. His hair grew longer and his aura rocketed up. Two times, eight times, sixteen times… all the way until his battle prowess was equivalent to sixty-four great circle Nascent Souls. A brief instant was all it took for the explosive power to cause a whirlwind to scream into existence, filling the entire area with clouds of dust.

Meng Hao was now several heads taller. He was taller, and his demeanor was thoroughly that of an Devil Immortal.

Ji Xiaoxiao’s face fell, and Ji Mingfeng’s pupils constricted.

Fang Yu’s eyes began to glow brightly.

A roaring sound exploded out from Meng Hao as he shot forward with all the speed he could muster.

He was upon them in the blink of an eye. Ji Xiaoxiao lifted up her hand and pointed forward, causing an enormous bubble to appear in front of her. It instantly shattered in Meng Hao’s face.

BAM!

The shattering of the bubble caused Meng Hao to tremble, but it didn’t cause him to pause even the least bit. As he pressed forward, Ji Mingfeng casually pointed out, causing the white wolf to lift its head up and howl. As it pounced toward Meng Hao, the mastiff turned into a beam of red light that suddenly appeared at Meng Hao’s side. It lashed out toward the white wolf, which instantly started quivering. Before the wolf could do anything in reaction, crunching sounds could be heard as the mastiff chomped it up into its mouth.

Everything happened so fast that Ji Mingfeng could only gape in astonishment. Next, intense killing intent appeared in his eyes.

Ji Xiaoxiao was flabbergasted; the mastiff's Spirit Severing aura caused her face to fall immediately.

At the same time, Meng Hao reached the seal which was holding Fang Yu. He glanced at her, and she back at him, and they almost seemed to be communicating. Fang Yu clenched her hand into a fist, and then her aura exploded up as she punched directly toward the seal.

Meng Hao's fist also slammed down. Their fists simultaneously punched down onto the exact same pillar of light, in exactly the same position!

The pillar immediately began to shake. Cracking sounds echoed out, and in the blink of an eye, the pillar exploded.

In response to the explosion of the first pillar, the other seven pillars began to automatically reinforce themselves. Fang Yu, filled with rage, instantly shot out from within.

She charged toward Ji Xiaoxiao, punching her before she could even react. Ji Xiaoxiao fell back, blood spraying from her mouth. Ji Mingfeng gave Meng Hao a deep glance, then smiled and turned, taking Ji Xiaoxiao with him as he headed off into the distance.

Fang Yu was about to give chase when Meng Hao blocked her way.

She turned to look at him and, her tone one of rebuke, said, "What are you holding me back for?! You have no respect for your elders! And don't you know that showing off your full power so early will lose you any advantage you have!?"

Meng Hao shook his head and smiled wryly. "Fine, Fellow Daoist Fang. If you want to chase after them, I won't stop you."

"Don't take that tone with me!" she said, glaring at him. "And what kind of address is that!? Call me big sis!"

Meng Hao gave another wry smile. He suddenly had the feeling that rescuing her had been a mistake.

“Not gonna call me big sis?” she said. Her hands clenched into fists, and cracking sounds could be heard. A dangerous glow could be seen coming from her face, as if she might turn into an explosive dragon at any moment.

“Big sis!!” he said with a sigh, backing up a few steps. “Happy…?”

“That’s better. Doesn’t hurt, does it?” As she spoke, her eyes slowly began to fill with gentleness, although her tone of voice still seemed angry. Meng Hao had no idea where that anger came from. “Alright,” she continued, “forget about that for now. How did you end up here? Did you decide which host body you’re going to pick?”

1. Ji Mingfeng’s name in Chinese is jì míng fēng – Ji is of course the Ji of the Ji Clan. Ming means “bright” or “clear.” Feng means “wind”

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# Chapter 563: The Extraordinary Ancient Demon Immortal Sect!

“Host body?” said Meng Hao, gaping. It was the second time he had heard such a term, the first being when Ji Xiaoxiao said it. His eyes glittered as he suddenly thought of the Resurrection Lily’s parasitic existence.

Unfortunately, he wasn’t sure if that had anything to do with the term ‘host body’ mentioned by Fang Yu. He intentionally made his expression one of confusion, but inwardly, he was extremely vigilant.

Seeing his expression, Fang Yu frowned for a moment. Then she reached her hand up as if to smack him on the head. The movement seemed incredibly practiced, as if it was something she did all the time. Without even thinking about it, Meng Hao backed up a few steps. Fang Yu glared at him, but eventually lowered her hand.

“You don’t know anything,” she said angrily, “and yet dare to come to the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane? You….” After a moment, she finally started to explain to him what she meant by ‘host body.’

As he listened to her explanation, his eyes slowly began to glow brightly.

According to her description, every time the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane opened, it meant fortune for those who entered. However, the extent of that good fortune depended on how far any given participant was able to get into the various planes.

“When the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane opens,” Fang Yu explained, “there are initially two different planes. The First Plane is where we are now, the ruins of the ancient Demon Immortal Sect. Here, virtually all the locations which contain good fortune are protected by restrictive spells. This plane will only remain open for seventy-two hours!

“In the First Plane, none of the participants will find any techniques or legacies. Nor will they find even the tiniest treasure. Well, that’s not a hard and fast rule, but basically, considering how many times the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane has opened, anything that could have been taken away has long since disappeared into the hands of people in the past.

“The only thing we can do here is related to the fundamental purpose of the First Plane. And that is… we have to find a proper host body. Such host bodies are none other than the corpses you see around you! Each and every one of these corpses could be a host body!

“Seventy-two hours is all the time we Cultivators have to find a proper host body!

“After the seventy-two hours, the Second Plane will automatically open, and we will be able to recall ancient times!” Seeing that Meng Hao seemed to be paying rapt attention to her, Fang Yu couldn’t help but smile. She continued on to explain in further details, not concealing anything at all from Meng Hao.

What she didn’t know was that Meng Hao was actually only half paying attention to her. The other half of his attention was focused on Fang Yu herself, as he tried to determine why exactly she was expending such special effort to help him.

“Uhhh… she couldn’t possibly have fallen in love with me, could she?” he thought. He suddenly felt an icy feeling tingling up his spine. The more he thought about it though, the less likely it seemed. Nonetheless, he couldn’t help but subconsciously rub his right hand as he thought about the first time the two of them had met.

“The Second Plane is sort of like a hallucination that we will all experience at the same time,” Fang Yu continued. “However, it’s incredibly realistic. During that time, we will enter the once flourishing Demon Immortal Sect. As for which specific era we visit, that cannot be determined.

“It will be almost as if we have actually returned to ancient times. Furthermore, when inside the ancient Demon Immortal Sect, we will not be ourselves. Instead, we will assume the identity of whichever body we have chosen as a host. Using that person’s identity, we can search for good fortune in the chimerical version of ancient times.” Fang Yu’s eyes began to gleam with anticipation.

“Therefore, one’s choice of host body is extremely important. If the host body’s status is high, then naturally you will be presented with better opportunities, maybe even Heaven-defying ones! The host body is the key to it all! With the right status, the good fortune you can acquire defies imagination!” By this point, the anticipation in her eyes was incredibly strong.

Having heard the explanation up to this point, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. “An ancient dreamland?” he said. “If it’s just a dreamland, then can there really be so much good fortune?”

“The fact that it is a dreamland has been confirmed by those who entered in the past,” Fang Yu said earnestly. “Also, once inside… anything is possible!”

“The existence of the Demon Immortal Sect spanned many years,” replied Meng Hao. “Also, there is a vast different between the ages of the various disciples. Some might have just joined the Sect at the time of their death, others might have been around for ten thousand years. Since that’s the case, how could it be possible for everyone to enter the same era?”

Hearing this question caused Fang Yu’s eyes to gleam with admiration. She was obviously quite pleased to hear such a question.

“It all depends on your luck. In past generations, people who got unlucky ended up selecting host bodies of disciples that didn’t exist in ancient times. Unfortunately for them, they were unable to enter the Second Plane, and were cast out early.

“Therefore, it doesn’t matter whether you are worried about your chances of seizing good fortune, or even just the opportunity to enter the Second Plane, you have to find a corpse that had been around a long time before dying.”

Meng Hao thought about this for a moment.

“It’s just like I said before,” Fang Yu went on, “selecting a host body is incredibly important. You might as well forget about getting a host body of a Sect Elder or Priest, or one of the seven incredible Elite Apprentices. That likelihood is incredibly small.

“It’s even rare to find a Conclave disciple; even if you went looking, you wouldn’t be able to find one except by chance. The best thing to do is to fight for one of the Inner Sect disciples.

“Throughout the years in which the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane has opened, the Ji Clan has come to occupy the best position. They have located the corpses of five Inner Sect disciples, and one Conclave disciple.

“As for the Fang Clan, we have only been able to locate four Inner Sect disciples.

“Most of the rest of the Sects in South Heaven,” she said calmly, “only have records of one or two Inner Sect disciples.”

Meng Hao took a deep breath. Now he fully understood the importance of the host body. A host body with a high status meant better chances for good fortune in the Second Plane. Some ancient legacies and techniques would only be available to people with special positions.

“Furthermore,” said Fang Yu, “upon entering the Second Plane, all of us will temporarily lose all of our memories. For a short period time, we will believe ourselves to be whoever the host body is. However, based on the skill and ability of each individual, we will awaken within a matter of hours or days.

“That period of time is the most dangerous!” When she reached this point, Fang Yu’s voice was very serious. “The reason is because if you wake up too slowly, you lose out on certain opportunities. Furthermore, your life will be in danger because of others who wake up before you!

“The Second Plane is where the true dangers of the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane begin. However, the benefits to be gained are enormous. According to the legends, the ancient Demon Immortal Sect has one thousand types of Daoist magic, one thousand orthodoxies, and one thousand heterodoxies. In total, there are three thousand great Daos. Each one of these divine abilities and Daoist magics are a legacy.

“Throughout the years, the greatest legacy ever acquired was when a Ji Clan member acquired the identity of a Conclave disciple and thus, the Underworld Seance Magic. By gaining enlightenment, he was able to take the technique out with him. Such a divine ability is well suited to the Ji Clan Dao of Karma.

“In the ranking system of the 3,000 great Daos of the Demon Immortal Sect, the Underworld Seance Magic is listed as number 408. That means there are four hundred even more powerful divine abilities. That is especially true of the top ten, each of which can be described as a great Dao!

“According to the legends, the top ten are powerful enough to rock the Heavens and shake the Earth.”

When Meng Hao heard this, his expression was the same as ever, but his heart pounded wildly. He looked at Fang Yu and asked another question. “You’re talking about the Ji Clan of South Heaven?”

Fang Yu hesitated for a moment and muttered to herself. Finally, she replied, “In the Ninth Mountain and Sea, the Ji Clan has five branches. The branch on South Heaven is not the main branch, but rather, one of the subsidiary branches.”

“Okay,” said Meng Hao. Seeing that Fang Yu apparently didn’t want to talk about the Ji Clan, he decided to ask a question about something else he was curious about. “So, about those top ten divine abilities and Daoist magics. What exactly are they?”

“I’m not sure,” replied Fang Yu, shaking her head. “I just know that the number one position is occupied by… the Mountain and Sea Scripture!” As soon as she spoke the words ‘Mountain and Sea Scripture,’ her eyes began to glow with a brilliant light. “However, even if you had some Heaven-defying good luck, it would be impossible to achieve enlightenment regarding it and then take it out. By the way, if you don’t achieve enlightenment regarding a given Daoist magic, then it’s impossible to brand it, and therefore impossible to remember. Once you leave the dreamland, you would completely forget it.”

When Meng Hao heard her mention the Mountain and Sea Scripture, he recalled what the parrot had spoken of. According to the parrot, the origin of the three classic scriptures was none other than something called the Mountain and Sea Scripture.1

At this point, Meng Hao asked yet another question. “You’ve mentioned a First Plane and a Second Plane. Could it be that there is also a Third Plane?”

“Yes. However, according to the Clan records, the most probable likelihood is that we will not be able to meet the requirements to open the Third Plane. At a certain point in the Second Plane, the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane will close, we will all be teleported back to the lands of South Heaven.

“Throughout history, there have only been five occasions in which the requirements were met and the Third Plane appeared!”

Meng Hao watched her closely as she continued her explanation.

“The Third Plane occurs after awakening from the Second Plane. All of the restrictive spells throughout the ancient Demon Immortal Sect will become unstable and even disappear. During that time, anyone can enter those previously sealed areas to acquire treasure left over from the ancient Demon Immortal Sect!

“When entering the Third Plane, the previous identity of the host body will vanish. However, according to the various legacies and techniques learned in the Second Plane, it would be possible to remove some of the restrictive spells from places that still have them, and acquire shocking good fortune.”

Meng Hao took a deep breath. He was now much clearer about the various matters regarding the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane. The First Plane was about preparation. The Second Plane was a place to acquire the good fortune of immaterial techniques and legacies.

The Third Plane was a place to take advantage of the good fortune and preparation from the first two Planes to acquire physical treasures.

Everything was connected!

“So, now you understand what will happen in not so many hours. Right now, time is limited. During the seventy-two hours that the First Plane is open, people will be using information from the secret records of their Sect or Clan to find various corpses.

“You come with me. I’ll take you to one of the Inner Sect Disciples that the Fang Clan knows about. You hide yourself there and wait for the Second Plane to open.” With a final look at Meng Hao, Fang Yu turned and sped off.

Meng Hao stood there thoughtfully for a moment. Based on his analysis, about eighty percent of what Fang Yu had told him was probably true. He was still a cautious person, and was aware that gullibility was a weakness. However, in the end, he chose not to refuse her offer.

The two of them sped off toward the second mountain peak.

Time passed, and the sky grew darker. Meng Hao continued to glance around cautiously, but the ancient Demon Immortal Sect was simply too big. They didn’t run into anyone else. At this point, Meng Hao started to think about who else might have come to the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane from… the Southern Domain.

“Xu Qing. Elder Brother. Fatty. Chu Yuyan. And then there are the Dao Children from the three great Clans, as well as the other Chosen from the Sects. I wonder who I might run into here.” He thought about these things as he and Fang Yu continued to speed along until dawn of the following morning. By this time, they had traversed about thirty percent of the path between the second and third peaks.

Everywhere they passed, they saw wreckage and corpses, as well as areas with restrictive spells that glowed brightly in the darkness. The dangerous, flickering auras of the restrictive spells were things that even Fang Yu would not be immune to.

At one point, Fang Yu said something that caused Meng Hao’s eyes to go wide.

“Ever since we were small, Ji Xiaoxiao was always trying to compete with me. That’s why I yelled out to you earlier, to get her to notice you. If my plan works, she’ll definitely take a liking to you.

“Heh heh. Little bro, you have to help me turn the tables on her and screw her over royally. Of course, if you don’t want to, I won’t force you.”

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# Chapter 564: Where Good Fortune Lays

Meng Hao felt as if a cold wind had just gusted down his throat. He coughed dryly a few times and looked up ahead at Fang Yu. Inwardly, he felt even more assured that this woman was someone he should not provoke in the future.

She might be overbearing and have a fiery temper, but those things didn’t matter. Just now, she… had set up a huge con for Ji Xiaoxiao to fall into, all without letting out a single hint or clue. It immediately caused Meng Hao’s back to feel ice cold.

Throughout his years of Cultivation, Meng Hao had conned people left and right, starting from the very beginning in the Reliance Sect. Of course, he actually had no idea how many people would gnash their teeth in hatred whenever they thought of him and how he had conned them.

What was even more frightening was that Meng Hao’s lack of awareness regarding this point meant that he didn’t really think of himself as conning people. To him, conning people had become a habit, and then that habit had turned into instinct.

For such an instinct to appear led to a fearsome outcome… as soon as he encountered an opportunity to con someone, he would immediately begin to do so….

“That’s… uh, big sis, that’s probably not a good idea,” he said, clearing his throat.

“No need to be bashful,” she said with an enigmatic smile. “Do you really think your big sis didn’t notice what part of Ji Xiaoxiao you looked at when you saw her for the first time?” Meng Hao almost felt as if he were being stabbed by her words.

He wanted to explain himself, but he knew that the more he tried to explain matters, the more it would make them worse. He finally just gave a wry smile.

“You help me con her,” she said, her eyes shining more brightly than ever, “and you won’t be sorry. Ji Xiaoxiao may be a shameless, narrow-minded, devious, vicious tart, but… she’s still quite pretty and also self-respecting. She would make a good concubine for you. I have to admit that I approve.” She really seemed to think her plan was a good one. Then she noticed Meng Hao’s wry smile, and her eyes went wide. “Fine, it’s settled, we’re doing it!”

“I….” Meng Hao was about to respond when Fang Yu shot off up ahead, leaving Meng Hao behind in the dust. A complacent smile could be seen on her face, and her eyes shone brightly. The more she thought about it, the more she felt that she truly was shrewd and intelligent. She really had set up that damnable Ji Xiaoxiao to be viciously conned….

Meng Hao continued to smile wryly and pretend that he hadn’t heard what she said in the end. He sped along after her, his expression amiable, but inwardly on guard. After all, he had long since learned to hide his true state. Instead, he usually kept a light smile on his face to prevent others from knowing what he was truly thinking.

“She truly isn’t on guard against me at all,” he thought. “Or is that just an act?” A thoughtful look appeared in his eyes as he thought back to the scene from outside the Rebirth Cave that year.

Again, he subconsciously looked down at the back of his right hand. More uncertainties bubbled up in his heart.

“Maybe everything will be made clear once we arrive at this corpse. I can make my final decision then.” An imperceptible gleam flickered within

Meng Hao’s eyes.

Dawn had fully broken, and the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane was no longer dark. Rays of sunshine climbed up into the sky as Meng Hao and Fang Yu reached a stretch of ruins that existed in the middle of the second and third peaks.

The damage to the place was considerable. Corpses lay about everywhere, and a pervasive sensation of ancientness filled the air, along with an aura of decay that seemed unwilling to depart.

The limestone that covered the ground had long since been crushed into countless pieces. The richly ornamented buildings looked as if they had been shattered by some giant palm slamming down from up above. The force had completely shattered the buildings, and then turned into a shockwave which caused everything for tens of thousands of meters in all directions to be destroyed.

“Okay, we’re here,” said Fang Yu. “Only three members of the Fang Clan came this time. I’ll notify the other two not to select this place. This is the corpse of an Inner Sect disciple with a relatively high position. Although it’s not a Conclave Disciple, the previous generations of Fang Clan Cultivators who came here said that this person had a lot of friends. If you play your cards right, you should be able to find some good fortune.” With that, she took out a jade slip and handed it over.

“Recorded in this jade slip are seven paths taken by various members of the previous generations of the Fang Clan. Everything they did and said is inside. Because the time period we’re traveling to is not set, the contents will most likely not relate directly to you. However, you might want to study it nonetheless.”

With that, Fang Yu looked around, studying the area before proceeding forward. As they moved, Fang Yu explained everything in detail.

“Pay attention to the path I take. For example, see there? That’s a protective spell formation which is very difficult to penetrate. It should actually keep you safe.

“Oh, don’t touch that! There’s a hidden restrictive spell in there!

“Don’t touch this either.

“You have to wait here for the amount of time it takes an incense stick to burn. Pay attention to the shadows on the ground.”

Meng Hao nodded in response to her explanations. Inwardly, his suspicions continued to increase as he realized that Fang Yu really wasn’t concealing anything from him.

They took a circuitous route into the center of the ruins. A few hours later, when it was afternoon, Meng Hao suddenly stopped in place and looked off into the distance. There, in the middle of some wreckage, was a jade slip that emanated a bright blue light. It was floating above the ground, surrounding by countless streams of magical symbols.

At first glance, it was extremely beautiful.

Surrounding it for dozens of meters in all directions was the glow of a restrictive spell.

“Don’t even think about it,” said Fang Yu. “From the Fang Clan’s very first records of the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane down until now no one has been able to get past that restrictive spell. If you pay attention closely, you can sense that the Daoist magic contained in that jade slip is definitely in the top one thousand legacies and divine abilities.” She sounded as if she viewed this to be quite a pity.

“See all the corpses around the glowing light? Quite a few of those are people from past generations who got greedy and tried to break through the restrictive spell….” When Meng Hao heard this, he nodded calmly. He had long since noticed that some of the corpses in the area looked different than the corpses of the members of the Demon Immortal Sect.

“How many times has the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane opened?” he asked suddenly. “Is it possible that there are still members of the Sect left alive in here?”

“Impossible,” replied Fang Yu, shaking her head. “Everyone is dead. Other than a few people who managed to escape before the calamity struck, everyone died. Although everything happened long, long ago, the ancient records offer clear proof that the entire Sect was wiped out.”

“If it opens every thousand years, isn’t it possible that people returned and then stayed?” he followed up, his eyes flickering.

Fang Yu didn’t seem to be the least bit fazed by Meng Hao’s question. “The only people who can stay behind are the dead. Anyone else who enters gets expelled when the plane closes. It’s no coincidence that I happen to know this. I was curious about the very same thing, and the person who answered my question happened to be the only remaining elderly member of the Clan who had been to this place.”

Meng Hao asked no more questions. He turned back and followed Fang Yu as she proceeded forward. This time, they walked for about two hours before they finally reached one particular house that was only half collapsed. After looking around for a moment, Fang Yu produced a jade slip which she then crushed. Immediately, a blurriness surrounded the house. When the blurriness faded into clarity, the house was gone. In its place was an enormous crater.

This didn’t surprise Meng Hao at all. During the course of their journey, he had watched Fang Yu do this same thing about seven or eight times. She had also done other things to ensure that they weren’t being followed.

In the middle of the crater was a corpse. Upon nearing, it became clear that the muscles and blood had long since faded away. What remained was essentially a mummified corpse, with its head turned to look up into the air. It seemed that before it died, it had been looking up into the sky. Despite the long passage of time, the look of fear and aloneness on its face was still clear to Meng Hao.

“His name was Xu Long, and he was a member of the Demon Immortal Sect for a long time. He started in the Outer Sect to eventually be promoted to the Inner Sect. He ended up sacrificing his life during the calamity.

“Were it not for the calamity, he may have eventually become a Conclave disciple.” Fang Yu held out her hand, in which could be seen eight jade slips, all of which contained information regarding the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane. One by one, she handed them over to Meng Hao.

“It won’t be much longer now,” she said. “You should be safe here. I’m going to go find a corpse in a different location.” Fang Yu gave Meng Hao a deep look, making no attempt to hide the thoughtfulness in her eyes.

Meng Hao looked at the jade slips and then watched as Fang Yu turned and made her way off.

After a long moment, he took some time to examine his surroundings. Clearly… there were no real dangers in the immediate vicinity. Obviously, this was a place that few people came to in search of a host body.

“Don’t tell me that she really didn’t have any ill intentions,” he murmured softly. He turned to look at the corpse, then walked over thoughtfully and squatted down to examine it closely.

Gradually, his expression changed, and it was clear that he was moved inwardly. This corpse was actually far, far more powerful than any of the ones he had seen before. Even after entering the Seventh Anima, he couldn’t even put the tiniest crack in its skull.

This caused his mind to reel. He was even able to sense a slight pressure emanating off of the corpse, which caused his hair to stand on end. His entire body felt as if it were filled with coldness, and an indescribable weight pushed down onto his heart.

After a long moment, he awoke from his reverie and stepped back a few paces, cold sweat dripping down his face. He looked down at the corpse, his face grim.

“So this is an Inner Sect disciple of the ancient Demon Immortal Sect…. It’s completely different than the other corpses I inspected. It’s far, far more powerful! That must mean that all the corpses I saw on the way here were nothing more than Outer Sect disciples.” He took a deep breath as he sat down cross-legged.

“Fang Yu really didn’t have any evil designs. Interesting. Well, as of now, there are only about forty hours left. If I stay here, then there is a high likelihood that I will be able to get into the Second Plane. However….” His eyes glittered as he looked in the direction of the third and fourth peaks.

There was no way that he could forget everything he had seen after awaking in the river of stars as it made its way here to the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane, especially the man he had seen on the peak of the fourth mountain.

He wasn’t sure how many times the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane had opened in the past, nor how many Cultivators had entered it through the generations. Among those people, had anyone ever woken up in the manner that he had? If there were, it would certainly have been an incredibly rare occurrence. After all, he was very much convinced that he had only awoken because of the help of Han Shan.

Furthermore, even if there really were people who had awoken in the past, it didn’t necessarily mean that they would have seen the same man that he had.

It was entirely possible that Meng Hao himself was the only person to have ever stayed awake and then seen the man.

“That is my advantage, the place where my unique opportunity lies. If I wait here, I might be out of danger, but that means I’ll be giving up my chance to seize a unique chance.” He felt hesitant.

“That person on the fourth peak… Who was he…?” After a long moment’s thought, Meng Hao’s eyes filled with the glow of determination.

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# Chapter 565: Meeting an Old Friend

Meng Hao stood up and looked at the corpse of Inner Sect Disciple Xu Long for a moment. Then, he didn’t hesitate any longer. He turned and, following the same path he had to get to this location, sped away.

He just could not resign himself to ignoring that strange person.

The Primordial Demon Immortal Plane might be a dangerous place, but he was here. Picking a path of danger was well in line with the expression, ‘rewards come only with risk.’ The only way to continue to maintain an advantage in the Second Plane was to make a difficult choice such as this right now.

If he was more concerned with safety, and unwilling to take risks, why had he come to this place to begin with? To stare at a mountain of treasure while wringing one’s hands would cause even mortals to sigh in regret, let alone Cultivators!

Meng Hao would much rather go all out in risk than worry about safety, especially when he had a chance to fight for good fortune!

Who could possibly settle for mediocrity? Members of the Fang Clan had long since experimented with the identity of Inner Sect Disciple Xu Long, and of course acquired good fortune, although they had not done so perfectly.

Regarding the potential different time periods, and the seven paths taken with Xu Long as a host body, all of that information was recorded in the jade slip. After glancing it over, Meng Hao wasn’t certain that he could do any better than the others had. Therefore, if he chose to go with this Inner Sect disciple's identity, all he might acquire was Daoist magic that the Fang Clan had long since already acquired.

Anything else would be very difficult. Many times, one's starting point will determine one's final destination.

The successive generations of the Fang Clan were clearly intelligent, and had already done all that could be done. Any further gain would come only from good luck. As far as that was concerned, Meng Hao would rather rely on his own luck to gain his own opportunity.

Therefore, he chose to abandon the path of Inner Sect Disciple Xu Long. There wasn't a single scrap of hesitation as he used Fang Yu's method to safely leave the area. It took him about four hours before he was finally clear. Without even looking back, he headed toward the fourth peak.

After calculating the time, he thought to himself. "I still have thirty-four hours left." Employing all the speed that was possible, he cautiously made his way through the various ruins and corpses.

Time passed. Ten hours later, he was at the third peak. He didn't see anyone the entire time, which didn't cause him any pause for thought. More than half of the seventy-two hour period had passed, and presumably, most of the other had already found the host bodies they were looking for, and were waiting there.

"Twenty-four hours left," he thought, looking toward the fourth peak far off in the distance. He pushed himself faster.

Ten more hours went by, and he had already passed the halfway point between the third peak and the fourth peak. Suddenly, a rumbling broke the silence. Based on how faint it was, it was obviously coming from quite some distance away. However, Meng Hao could feel it instantly.

Mixed in with the sound were pulsating ripples of divine abilities and magical techniques. By the time they reached Meng Hao, they were very weak, but he was still able to to sense a familiar aura within them.

He stopped in his tracks for a moment and then frowned. After examining the aura further, his frown deepened. He knew who this aura belonged to.

“Zhao Fang of the great Cloud Sky Tribe.” He looked off in the distance, a thoughtful look in his eye. Currently there were only fourteen hours left until the First Plane closed.

He could tell that he needed ten hours just to get from his current location to the fourth mountain. That meant he only would only have four hours to get to the top of peak. Time was tight, and he couldn’t afford to waste it.

He proceeded forward. However, after going about three hundred meters, he suddenly turned and headed in the direction of Zhao Fang’s aura, his expression extremely cold. He had made a promise to Patriarch Cloud Sky, and they had a deal. The extent to which he followed up on his promise was the extent to which the other party would respect the agreement.

There was no one around to police the arrangement, but it existed in his heart.

Conducting oneself properly often amounts to maintaining a clear conscience.

He shot through the air at top speed for the amount of time it takes half an incense stick to burn. Soon he caught sight of two Cultivators locked in battle in the ruins up ahead.

One of them was Zhao Fang. He was clearly in a very poor position. His expression was one of fury. His clothes were stained with blood and his face was pale. Clearly, he had been injured.

He was fighting a man who wore a white robe and had long, voluminous hair. He was slender and handsome, and was clearly the type of man whom any woman would cast glances at. Three flying spikes circulated around him, leaving behind trails of colorful lights as they flew through the air. They also emanated a penetrating aura that made the white-robed man seem even more elegant.

Actually there weren’t just two people up ahead. About thirty meters or so behind the white-robed man was a woman in a violet garment. She was beautiful, with a shrewd smile and an intelligent air to her. Anyone who looked at her would instantly be able to tell that she was cunning and resourceful.

She watched the magical combat with a smile on her face. She made no move to attack, but when she looked at the white-robed man, a profound look occasionally flickered within her eyes. It was not romantic admiration, but… something else.

“This host body belongs to the great Cloud Sky Tribe!” Cried Zhao Fang. “You want to steal it from me? Despotic!”

Another boom could be heard; Zhao Fang coughed up a mouthful of blood and staggered backward. He glared at the man in the white robe, killing intent flickering in his eyes. As he had said, the great Cloud Sky Tribe had discovered this location. However, almost as soon as he had arrived, this man and woman appeared and attacked him.

Obviously, they wanted to take control of the location. If it weren’t for the fact that the woman had ceased hostilities after her initial sneak attack, he would surely have been dead already.

“Nobody owns anything in the Demon Immortal Sect,” said the white-robed man coolly, looking at Zhao Fang with a look of coldness and disdain. “If you insist that I, Wang, am stealing it, then so be it. Why don’t you just screw off? If you attack me one more time, I’ll kill you.”

Zhao Fang had the most latent talent of anyone in the great Cloud Sky Tribe. Although luck was important in the ancient Demon Immortal Sect, so was latent talent. The greater the latent talent, the easier it would be to gain enlightenment regarding various techniques and legacies.

Before being sent here, Zhao Fang was in the mid Nascent Soul stage. Just before leaving, though, the Patriarch had personally used various magical techniques to temporarily raise him to the peak of the late Nascent Soul stage, a state which would last for three months.

The corpse that he was defending was no ordinary Inner Sect disciple. It was much rarer, a disciple who was half way into the Conclave status. The reason was that this particular disciple had a relative of the elder generation who was already a Conclave disciple.

The information regarding that relationship was something the great Cloud Sky Tribe had expended much effort to acquire.

Zhao Fang's eyes were bloodshot. Unfortunately, the man he faced up against currently really was of the late Nascent Soul stage, whereas he himself had reached that level only by the use of force. He could fight back, but his opponent had too many magical items, and he knew that he wasn't a match.

That was not even to mention the woman. Although she was only at the early Nascent Soul stage, Zhao Fang sensed something even more threatening about her than the man. It was a strange feeling that filled him with shock.

Just as Zhao Fang was gritting his teeth and angrily resigning himself to the fact that he would have to leave, a popping sound could suddenly be heard. Dust was kicked up in all directions, followed by a pulsating pressure that caused the white-robed man's face to fall and his eyes to widen.

The violet-robed woman's beautiful face was also filled with a look of shock. She cocked her head to look of into the distance.

Zhao Fang gaped as a green smoke shot through the air, within which was a black moon. It moved with incredible speed as it approached.

As soon as he caught sight of the black moon, Zhao Fang nearly went wild with joy. In the last moments before leaving for the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane, Patriarch Cloud Sky had transmitted information to him regarding Meng Hao's agreement to help.

"Elder Brother Meng, please help me!"

Almost in the same moment that his words rang out, the green smoke and black moon arrived. The moon vanished and the smoke dissipated to reveal Meng Hao, wearing a green robe. He stood there looking around coldly at the three people present.

When the violet-robed woman saw Meng Hao, her eyes went as wide as saucers. A look of astonishment and disbelief appeared on her face, as well as something that rarely could be seen on her features; intense emotion and confusion.

“Meng… Meng Hao?” she said, her voice hoarse. Her mind filled with great waves of roaring.

When the white-robed man saw Meng Hao, he also stared blankly. Apparently he found Meng Hao’s features to be familiar, but couldn’t place where he had seen him before. However, when he heard what the woman said, he suddenly realized who Meng Hao was.

Zhao Fang’s heart was pounding, not having expected these two to be familiar with Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s expression was one of indifference as he looked over at the violet-robed woman. After a moment, he smiled.

“Long time no see, Fellow Daoist Han Bei. You look as graceful as ever.” 1

This violet-robed woman was none other than the bizarre Han Bei of the Black Sieve Sect. She stood there breathing heavily, a look of disbelief on her face when she heard Meng Hao’s words.

“Is it really you?” she said. She had been left with a profound impression of Meng Hao all those years ago. In her memory, he had brought about one miracle after the next. First, there were the events inside the square cauldron in the Black Sieve Sect’s Blessed Land, then his activities within the Black Sieve Sect itself as Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, and finally what happened outside the Rebirth Cave when he killed the Li Clan Dao Child and the Quasi-Array member of the Ji Clan. All of these things caused great waves of change to sweep across the Southern Domain.

Each one of those events had left Han Bei completely in shock. Although many years had passed, the impression left was still deep and intense. Of course, much of that had to do with the warnings and analysis of the soul of the Han Clan Patriarch.

“Your… your Cultivation base!!” she said, her mind spinning. The shock she felt after sensing the level of his Cultivation base was even more intense than before. Meng Hao was actually of the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage!

She well knew that of the current generation of Dao Children in the Sects and Clans of the Southern Domain, most were of in the early Nascent Soul stage. A few were in the mid Nascent Soul Stage, and only Wang Clan Dao Child Wang Lihai was of the late Nascent Soul stage, although he concealed that fact most of the time, and had revealed it only in the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane.

Once word spread into the Southern Domain, Wang Lihai’s status would be propelled to the number one person of his generation.

And yet, here stood Meng Hao. Han Bei was shaken and could scarcely believe her eyes.

Meng Hao looked over at the white-robed man, who looked just as shocked as Han Bei. Considering how much this man’s face resembled that of Wang Tengfei, Meng Hao instantly knew who he was.

This was Wang Tengfei’s older brother, Wang Clan Dao Child, the person who had feigned death in the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament!

Wang Lihai! 2

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# Chapter 566: That is… Xu Qing!

Meng Hao was no longer a novice in the Cultivation world. He now understood a lot more about the Dao Children and Chosen of the Sects and Clans. Although his understanding wasn't absolutely correct in terms of every single detail, he now had a general understanding of what a Dao Child was and what a Chosen was.

Actually, 'Dao Child' and 'Chosen' were merely titles, an indication of approval and status. Such approval was evidence of that person's ability to maintain their strength within the Sect. It was also proof to the outside world as to the future good prospects of the Sect itself.

If a Sect had many Chosen, it would be possible to predict that it would experience incredible growth in the future.

Regarding Dao Children, that was a title given to the most illustrious of any given stage of Cultivation within a Sect or Clan. They would represent the Sect or Clan when it came to dealing with most affairs on the outside.

Every Sect and Clan would have three Dao Children and no more; a Foundation Establishment Dao Child, a Core Formation Dao Child, and a Nascent Soul Dao Child.

There could only be one Dao Child in any given stage, and because of their special status, Sects and Clans would usually dispatch powerful Dao Protectors along with such individuals when they ventured outside.

In the outside world, Dao Children were incredibly impressive, even famous. They had a status that would cause all other Cultivators to be endlessly envious.

However, when a Dao Child entered a new stage, then it meant two Dao Children existed, which would result in brutal competition. Generally speaking, unless the original Dao Child of that particular stage ceded their position, it would be difficult for the newcomer to maintain their status. Because of this reality, Dao Children were proud and arrogant when in the outside world. However, within the Sect or Clan, they had to tread as carefully as if they were walking on thin ice.

If a Dao Child wanted to maintain their status, they would constantly be forced to take advantage of Cultivation resources from other Cultivators. They might even need to rely on the power and influence of other experts within the Sect to improve their Cultivation base and become more powerful. That was the only way to maintain their position above other members of their generation, and perhaps even exceed their predecessors.

Regarding Chosen, the competition was even more ruthless. The grandeur of their status in the outside world was second only to that of Dao Children, and they received more and better resources from their Clan or Sect. At the same time, they had to deal with the possibility of being stripped of their title due to falling behind in the rankings or not advancing fast enough in their Cultivation. Also, they had to compete with other experts of the same stage for resources.

Because of all of that, Chosen also found themselves treading on thin ice, and had no other choice but to work as hard as possible to grow more powerful.

Naturally, all Sects and Clans had different rules. However, the general situation was always one of competition. Of course, killing was strictly prohibited.

Wang Lihai was, of course, a Dao Child of one of the three great Clans of the Southern Domain, the Wang Clan. He was a patient person, and didn’t make a practice of showing off in his cultivation. Back when rumors of his demise were circulating in the Southern Domain, he was the Foundation Establishment Dao Child of the Wang Clan. Upon reaching Core Formation, he actually lost his status. However, after patiently waiting for many years, he suddenly made his comeback, defeating the Wang Clan’s

Nascent Soul Dao Child in a single blow. When he reclaimed the position of Dao Child, it caused quite a commotion in the Southern Domain.

Currently, Meng Hao held a jade slip in his hand. The moment he had decided to intervene in the situation, he had pulled out this very jade slip to make a record of everything that was happening. He looked over Wang Lihai and thought back to the events outside the ancient Dao Geyser, when he had challenged this very same Wang Clan Dao Child. He actually looked much the same as he had back then, except that the feeling of time on his body was much stronger.

When Meng Hao looked at him, Wang Lihai's mind trembled, and he felt jittery with fear. Were it not for his iron will, he would have already lost control of himself.

His pupils constricted as he stared at Meng Hao. His heart felt anything but calm. He now recognized who Meng Hao was, and he also thought back to their battle all those years ago. A battle he had lost.

Of the three times in his life that he had lost a fight, that was the first. It was also one of the reasons he had been so persistent in his practice of cultivation over the years. Before, he had viewed himself as powerful enough to sweep over anyone in the same stage as him. He thought that he was at the pinnacle, above even the other Dao Children in the Southern Domain, the number one person.

But now that he saw Meng Hao, and felt the power of his Cultivation base, Wang Lihai's mind began to spin.

His pride crumbled. His self-confidence felt as if it were being crushed. He took a deep breath, then clasped hands and bowed to Meng Hao.

"It's been years, Elder Brother Meng. You look as dignified as ever."

Off to the side, Han Bei, although she had regained some of her composure, was still breathing heavily. Images of past encounters with Meng Hao floated in her mind. Their initial encounter, their meeting in the Song Clan when they had almost touched faces. There were other things too, all of which made it impossible for her to stay completely calm.

Meng Hao stood there, his long, green robes rippling like water. His expression was one of indifference as he looked at Wang Lihai, and then nodded.

“Since we’re old friends, I’ll allow you to take your leave,” he said calmly.

Han Bei breathed in deeply. She clasped hands, bowed, and then looked Meng Hao deep in the eyes. Her expression was one of shrewdness, and her eyes flickered with beauty.

“Elder Brother Meng, we’ve just met and you’re already sending us away?” she placed her hand over her mouth as she chuckled. “You really don’t want to chat about old times with me? Very well, then. I’ll take my leave.” Completely ignoring Zhao Fang and Wang Lihai, she turned and flew up into the air like a beautiful swallow.

“Elder Brother Meng, the news about Fellow Daoist Zhao’s Tribe finding the location of this corpse had already spread far and wide. Even if the two of us leave, it’s hard to say whether or not others will come.” The softness of her voice seemed to indicate that she had completely recovered from her shock from earlier. As she began to fly off into the distance, she added another thought.

“One more thing, Elder Brother Meng,” she said, her voice filled with a strange tone. “I have a final gift I’d like to give you. I’m not too sure who else came here from the Southern Domain. However, there was one person who came with me. That is… Xu Qing.” Chuckling, she disappeared off into the distance.

Meng Hao seemed surprised, but didn’t say anything. He looked back at Wang Lihai.

Wang Lihai stared at Meng Hao, and as their gazes met, Wang Lihai’s eyes suddenly flickered with the desire to do battle.

He took a step forward, and his aura exploded up. He looked at Meng Hao, clasped hands and bowed. “Elder Brother Meng, considering your words, I naturally rescind any claim on this place. However, multiple sixty-year cycles have passed since our match that year. Since we happen to have run into each other again here, Elder Brother Meng, I hope you can give me some pointers!” With that, his aura shot up with even more intensity.

Meng Hao frowned. Time was limited, and he didn’t have much to spare. Almost the same moment in which Wang Lihai expressed himself, Meng Hao flicked his wide sleeve and took a step forward. The incredible pressure of the great cycle of the Nascent Soul stage instantly shoved down onto Wang Lihai.

Boom!

Wang Lihai instantly fell back seven or eight steps, his face pale. With a final deep look at Meng Hao, he turned and left.

Meng Hao watched Wang Lihai leave. The man had left quite an impression on him, this Wang Clan Dao Child.

“My First Anima puts me an entire phase above someone in the late Nascent Soul stage,” mused Meng Hao thoughtfully. “His face paled, that was it. No blood. It seems Wang Lihai’s battle prowess is actually equivalent to someone of the great circle.” Finally he turned to look at Zhao Fang.

Zhao Fang immediately began to get nervous. He knew how fearsome Meng Hao was; after all, he could hold his own against Patriarch Huyan. Could it be possible that the tiger, having driven away the wolf, would now eat the man?

Stepping back a few paces, Zhao Fang began to speak, choosing his words carefully. “Senior Meng, many thanks for your kindness in saving me. I of the younger generation will definitely report this matter to the Patriarch. He will assuredly reward you handsomely, senior.” Of course he didn’t dare to refer to Meng Hao as ‘Elder Brother,’ and thus chose a more respectful form of address.

Meng Hao understood the meaning behind Zhao Fang's words. However, considering that Meng Hao had abandoned the Inner Sect disciple provided to him by Fang Yu, he certainly wouldn't be interested in the corpse here, even if it was slightly higher in status. "I promised Patriarch Cloud Sky to take care of you as best I could. It seems I've already accomplished that task. This place isn't safe. If you chose to stay here, you need to prepare to defend your own life."

Zhao Fang hesitated for a moment, and then steeled himself. "Many thanks for your concern, senior. I know my limits, and the Patriarch also helped me to make some special preparations…."

Meng Hao look at Zhao Fang for a moment, which made Zhao Fang feel even more nervous.

Meng Hao finally nodded. "I can't stay here. If that's your decision, then do your best to take care of yourself." With that, he put away the jade slip. Within was a complete record of everything that had happened, which he would provide later to Patriarch Cloud Sky as proof of what had occurred.

Paying no more attention to Zhao Fang, Meng Hao turned and made his way off.

Seeing that Meng Hao had truly left, Zhao Fang breathed a sigh of relief. He looked around the area cautiously, and a bit hesitantly. Finally, he clenched his jaw and decided not to leave. He would stick to his original plan and methods to conceal himself near the corpse and wait nervously for time to pass.

Meng Hao continued on without pause toward the fourth peak. Han Bei's words continued to echo out in his head. A warm light suddenly appeared in his eyes.

"Is Xu Qing really here too…?" Meng Hao looked around thoughtfully at the Demon Immortal Sect and then increased his speed.

Several hours later, the third day was almost gone. There were now only four hours left until the First Plane closed. It was at this point that Meng

Hao reached the foot of the fourth mountain.

He looked up toward the towering mountain in front of him. It was huge, so big that he couldn’t see the top. He was like a tiny insect, completely insignificant. However a brilliant light glowed in his eyes. He took a deep breath and then began to ascend the mountain.

Most of the locations within the First Plane of the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane contained restrictive spells. Simply touching one would give birth to deadly danger. As he ascended the mountain, Meng Hao encountered many such an area, forcing him to take a meandering route. More than two hours later, he finally caught sight of the peak of the mountain.

“I still have one hour left….” he said. He was currently standing on a crag that jut out from the side of the mountain, looking up at the peak. He suddenly felt a bit of hesitation. Time was almost up, and as of now, he wasn’t sure if he had made the right choice.

If it was the wrong choice, everything was for naught. Before leaving the corpse of Xu Long, he had attempted to physically bring the corpse with him. However, he had quickly discovered that the corpse was apparently locked in place permanently. Nothing he did could move it even a bit.

“What’s mine is mine completely. I won’t accept things from others even if begged. At the very least, I won’t have any regrets.” He let out a casual laugh, and then stopped worrying about matters of gain or loss. He used his last hour to continue on toward the top of the mountain. As he moved, he looked around at the ruins, taking in all the former grandeur of the Demon Immortal Sect.

Because he wasn’t worried about winning or losing, he no longer felt nervous, and took his time. By the time he reached the top of the fourth peak, there were only one hundred breaths of time left!

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Please send any typos or mistakes to issth-deathblade@yahoo.com

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# Chapter 567: Ke Jiusi

He stepped onto the stone dais located at the top of the fourth peak. From a distance, this part of the mountain looked sharp and pointed, but in actuality, it was flat.

It was like a large square, surrounded by nine huge cauldrons, all covered with fissures. In the direct center of it all was a wooden coffin. The coffin was lidless, and was carved, not with magical symbols, but with ancient depictions of auspicious clouds and beasts. There were also mountains and rivers, even a vast starry sky.

At first glance, the carvings seemed very complicated, but after closer inspection one could find simplicity within the complexity.

It gave one an indescribable feeling of both contradiction and harmony.

Meng Hao approached the coffin and, nearing the side of, looked down inside. It was empty. There was no corpse. No remains. Nothing.

There was no host body here.

As of this moment, only eighty breaths of time remained until the opening of the Second Plane. Meng Hao stood next to the coffin and looked down silently at the emptiness. Then he sighed.

It would be impossible for him to say that he wasn’t disappointed. He had abandoned the Inner Sect disciple host body provided by Fang Yu. He had stuck with his own ideas, and the brutal reality made it so that he could only sigh and stand there with complex emotions filling his heart.

Silently, he turned his gaze to the scene below the mountain. There were now only seventy breaths of time left. There was no way he would be able to find another suitable corpse now. On his way here, he found that about halfway up the mountain, there were absolutely no corpses to be seen.

From his vantage point atop the mountain, he could now see that the entire mountain was covered with dense restrictive spells. They were so tightly packed that it almost seemed as if the entire mountain were covered with one gigantic restrictive spell that would prevent anyone from reaching the top.

Any one of the various restrictive spells would have completely destroyed Meng Hao had he even touched them. The sight of the densely packed spells caused Meng Hao to feel somewhat confused.

“How did I actually make it up here?” It was the first time he had considered the question. During the journey up the mountain he hadn’t really paid attention. The four hour trip up from the foot of the mountain had seemed relatively easy.

Now that he looked back down, though, the entire mountain seemed like a forbidden zone that no one could even enter.

He could see that it would take astonishing luck to be able to traverse a path successfully and not trigger even a single restrictive spell.

“Unless there was someone that allowed me to come here….” he thought, his eyes glittering. As of this moment, only thirty breaths of time remained. Meng Hao looked away from the fourth peak toward the temple on top of the distant first peak.

According to what he remembered after waking up, he was now standing in the same position as the man he had seen. He looked off in the distance, his hair and robes fluttering gently in the wind.

When only ten breaths of time remained, determination appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes.

“You let me see you,” he said, “and you… allowed me to successfully reach the top of this mountain. Perhaps your identity isn’t even important at this point.” Five breaths of time remained. He turned and strode over to the coffin. After taking a deep breath, he crawled in calmly, laid down, and closed his eyes.

Three breaths. Two breaths. One breath….

RUMBLE!!!

A massive rumbling sound suddenly filled the air of the ancient Demon Immortal Sect. It far exceeded the sound of thunder as it rolled about the entire world. Ripples suddenly spread out from the sky, covering everything as far as the eye could see.

With the exception of Meng Hao, everyone else who had come to this world sat closed-eyed and cross-legged next to the various host bodies they had selected. When the ripples reached them, the corpses began to glow. Ghost images of both the host bodies and the Cultivators sprang up and then began to superimpose and merge together.

As for Meng Hao, he lay there with his eyes closed. As the rumbling filled the sky, he lost consciousness. The ripples that spread out throughout the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane did not seem to affect him at all.

However, it was at this moment that a white-robed man appeared, standing in exactly the same spot Meng Hao had just been standing, which was also the same spot Meng Hao had noticed when he awoke in the river of stars.

The man’s hair was disheveled, and his long white robe was spattered with bloodstains. His hair covered his face, making it was impossible to see his facial features. The only thing that was possible to distinguish was that he was not a woman.

As the wind blew, his hair lifted up a bit, revealing two ancient eyes filled with both perplexity and regret.

The aura of decay that rose up from him seemed to fuse with that of the entire Primordial Demon Immortal Plane, making it impossible to distinguish between the two.

The man looked over in the direction of the fifth peak. His eyes awash with memories of the past, he softly said, “Night… let him in, okay?”

As the words left his mouth, the entire ancient Demon Immortal Sect trembled.

A droning voice suddenly echoed out. It sounded almost as if it weren’t awake, like the words were spoken by someone who was dreaming. “That does not conform with the rules.”

“He is the only person to see me after all these years. Perhaps it is some destined Karma. Allow him… to represent me in the past. Allow him to speak those words to the old man… the words that I didn’t understand how to say back then.” The white-robed man’s voice was hoarse, and his eyes were warm. However, within that warmth was an ancient thoughtfulness, a yearning and deep regret that he clearly could not free himself from.

“I’ve been keeping those words buried in my heart for ninety thousand years already,” the old man said softly.

The entire world was quiet for a very long moment. Finally, the droning voice could be heard once again. The sound of the voice rose and fell like the waves of the ocean. “He has no identity.”

“Give him my identity,” replied the white-robed man.

The world once again went silent.

“Make time pass back into that year….” The white-robed man closed his eyes, covering over the pain that lay inside. Unfortunately, he was not able to cover the sorrow and longing within in his heart.

RUMBLE!!!

Each bit of light in the world suddenly came from all directions to pour into Meng Hao. He gradually grew transparent, and then disappeared. In that instant, a huge sound, like endless thunder, echoed about.

At the same time, a warm glow spread out to fill the entire ancient Demon Immortal Sect. Suddenly, a new world became visible within the glow, a world that was a memory of ancient times!

The manner in which Meng Hao vanished was entirely different from that of the other Cultivators from the lands of South Heaven. All of them fused with host bodies whereas Meng Hao… actually entered the Second Plane with his own body!

The others were merely borrowing the identity of someone else. As for Meng Hao… he was not borrowing another identity. He was acquiring it!

Borrowing and acquiring are two very different things.

As the light spread out to fill the ancient Demon Immortal Sect, the white-haired man stood in place, back toward the first peak, just like before. What he saw in his mind's eye was an old man, looking at him with a smile on his face.

I can see in your eyes that you will forgive me of anything, forgive for any mistakes I make. It's as if you are always watching over me, waiting to silently correct all of my blunders.

Back then, if I made a mistake, one word of criticism from you would send me into a rage.

Back then, I ran amok with the silkpants and acted tyrannically. I never saw the wrinkles in the corners of your eyes, nor the look of disappointment in your gaze. 1

Back then, I unhesitatingly gave a precious Sect treasure to a woman, but didn't notice that your once proud head was now bowed in shame toward the rest of the Sect.

Back then, I would polish my sword to flaunt my identity. I never noticed that you had suddenly grown old.

Finally one day, you passed away in meditation. Your body turned into ash. I cried. My heart broke. My world was gone. Heaven and Earth were no more. Father… you were gone.

I can see your aged face, and I can see how you doted upon me. I can see that throughout all the years, it didn’t matter what mistakes I made, you always forgave me. I realize now that… I have always owed you a certain commitment. I have always owed you… some special words.

Those words, have been waiting with me for ninety thousand years.

….

The sky in ancient times was blue.

When Meng Hao opened his eyes, the first thing he saw was that blue sky. Then he saw white cranes flying about. Auspicious beasts circled about in the air. A din of conversation and activity could be heard everywhere, echoing about.

He saw countless enormous pillars of light rising up into the sky. Everything was bright and colorful.

Beams of light shot through the air in all directions.

Off in the distance was a mountain. It was green and full of life and vigor. It was at this point that Meng Hao suddenly heard an ancient voice ringing out to fill the world.

“I give a sermon regarding the Dao every ten thousand years. This time, I will speak to you of a legend. The legend tells of a true spirit whose name is Night. When he closes his eyes to sleep, the world is his dream. When he opens his eyes, he awakens from the dream. Heaven and Earth are boundless….”

The ancient voice slowly grew softer. It seemed as if it was only a murmuring in the ear, but at the same time, echoing throughout the world.

“Time is like a dream. It’s impossible to tell what is true and what is false. When you dream, you see others. Perhaps in the world of others, the dream version of you appears.

“Or perhaps our lives are like an invisible bubble that could pop at any time, and cause us to awaken. Who dreams of you, and who you dream of… this is truly a difficult riddle to explain….”

The voice of a young woman could suddenly be heard in Meng Hao’s ears. “Eldest Brother?”

The voice sounded both astonished and anxious. “Eldest Brother!”

A tremor ran through Meng Hao’s body, as if his soul were suddenly returning from outside. When it slammed into him, he felt as if he were being torn apart. Pain pulsed through him, and ghost images sprang up everywhere.

He panted as the sensation went on for the space of several breaths. When it vanished, the sky was blue again, and the world… once again appeared.

“Eldest Brother, what are you doing?!” In front of Meng Hao stood a young woman wearing a long, pink garment. Her eyes were wide and filled with confusion. She appeared to be both puzzled and also furious as she looked at Meng Hao.

He looked down at himself. He was wearing a white robe and had long hair, and was seated cross-legged on top of an altar that was located at the peak of a mountain. He was surrounded by nine cauldrons, from which green smoke slowly ascended.

This was the very top of the Fourth Peak!

Meng Hao’s mind trembled. Although his head was filled with splitting pain, his eyes shone brightly. As of this moment he knew that he… had entered the Second Plane. What caused him the most shock, however, was that he actually… had not lost his memories the way Fang Yu said would happen.

Furthermore, a voice suddenly rang out in his mind, announcing his identity as clear as day.

“Ke Jiusi… of the Fourth Peak… one of the seven Elite Apprentices of the Demon Immortal Sect!” [2]

1. “Silkpants” is a term in Chinese similar to “silver spoon” in English. It refers to spoiled rich kids

2. Ke Jiusi’s name in Chinese is kē jiǔ sī. Ke is a surname which also means “stem.” Jiu means “nine” and Si means “to think.” Literally it could be interpreted as “Ke Nine Thoughts” or “Ke Think Nine Times.”

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# Chapter 568: Think Three Times Before You Act….

Meng Hao sat cross-legged at the top of the Fourth Peak, wearing a long white robe. He rubbed the bridge of his nose for a moment. It felt as if extra memories were suddenly available inside his head. The memories were not his, and were rather obscure. The addition of these new memories caused Meng Hao's head to ache and be filled with an intense muddle-headedness.

A gentle breeze pulled at his hair and caused his robes to ripple. However, he was unable to dispel the incredible shock that filled him, nor the absent-mindedness he felt because of this new identity.

One of the seven great Elite Apprentices!

He remembered from what Fang Yu had told him that acquiring an identity like this was virtually impossible. In the Demon Immortal Sect, a person with a status like this could summon wind and rain, so to speak, and stir up a lot of trouble. They were above other disciples in all ways, and even wielded the power over life and death!

From the very beginning of the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane until now, no one had ever acquired such a fearsome identity. Regardless of who its was in the past, the very highest identity ever acquired was that of a Conclave disciple.

However, in the face of the identity Meng Hao currently possessed, Conclave disciples… were like insects!

Such an identity only existed in legend, and really was impossible to acquire. The Demon Immortal Sect had Legacy Apprentices, which were also referred to as Elite Apprentices, seven of them in total.

Elite Apprentices actually outranked Sect Elders, and were second only to eminently respected Grand Elders and Sect Priest Paragons of the various peaks!

Meng Hao’s heart trembled. He truly had never imagined that he would be able to acquire fortune such as this. He now possessed an identity that was fearsome to the extreme, had never been acquired before in the past, and most likely never would be again in the future. It was absolutely one-of-a-kind!

Elite Apprentice of the Fourth Peak, Ke Jiusi!

“Apparently, that person I saw before was none other than… Ke Jiusi!

“Even after the Demon Immortal Sect was destroyed, he didn’t die. He gave me his identity, but for what purpose I wonder…?” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered and his throat felt tight.

“Ellldeesstt Broootherrrrr!!!!!!!!!!” Based on her tone of voice, the woman seemed extremely irritated. She was almost screaming by the time she finally interrupted Meng Hao’s train of thought. He raised his head to look at her.

Seemingly completely dissatisfied with his reaction, the woman stamped her foot and then turned to leave.

Her leaving didn’t faze Meng Hao at all. He was still in shock regarding his identity. After a long moment passed, he sighed and looked around.

The mountain peak was beautiful, covered with lush vegetation. The blue sky up above looked almost like lakewater. The air was filled with thick spiritual energy, and countless disciples could be seen, meditating, dueling, and chatting. The entire place was buzzing with activity.

Up in the sky, an enormous, resplendent Flying Rain-Dragon flew back and forth. Everywhere it passed, wind gusted. There were all sorts of Immortal

Beasts that soared about. It truly looked like a place of Immortals.

Far off in the distance an old man was visible, floating cross-legged in the air above the Third Peak. He was giving a sermon regarding the Dao, and speaking of truths of various scriptures.

It all looked exactly like the blurry scene he had witnessed earlier when entered the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane. The only difference was… Meng Hao's pupils suddenly constricted.

He had just noticed that high up in the sky, shockingly… three inverted mountains could be seen!

Each of these three mountains almost seemed bigger than all the lands beneath. Unless you looked at them from a distance, you wouldn't be able to take in the entire sight. Green vines hung down from them, and each of them seemed like three worlds unto themselves.

"This is…." He had seen nothing similar to them in the First Plane. Upon first glance, all he could do was gape in astonishment.

Of the three mountains, one appeared to be an ice mountain covered with frost. Another looked like a lava-filled volcano. The third mountain… was crimson, almost as if it were a mountain of blood!

Meng Hao once again kneaded the bridge of his nose. The three mountains were bizarre, and his memories were fuzzy and mixed. He couldn't quite get himself to think straight at the moment. Muttering to himself, he looked away.

"The Demon Immortal Sect…. I wonder what unforeseen things might happen because of my status as a Demon Sealer…? Also, I wonder if Demon Weapon Lonelytomb exists in this era." A mysterious glow flickered deep within Meng Hao's eyes.

"Eldest Brother, what's wrong? Have you thought back to what you did?" Apparently, the young woman who had left earlier had returned. She stood in front of him, seeming to be a bit unwilling to be there.

Meng Hao took a deep breath to collect his thoughts. With a smile, he said, “Thought back to what I did? Uh, I’m not really sure. I think I was dreaming just now.”

“Dreaming? Of what?” she responded, sounding even more curious.

“Now that I’ve woken up, I can’t remember,” he said. Seeing that the woman was about to ask more questions, Meng Hao looked at her with a solemn expression and said, “You are about to reach a critical point in your cultivation. I think you need to go meditate.”

Hearing his words caused the woman’s eyes to go wide. “You dare to lecture me?! Humph! You’ve got yourself into a lot of trouble this time. The Sect Priest sent me here to ask you if you’ll admit your mistake!”

With that, the woman gave him a wink, then turned to leave.

Seeing the woman making her way off, Meng Hao frowned. He actually understood her deeper meaning.

“Fang Yu said that when people enter the Second Plane, they don’t awaken for a few hours at the soonest, and sometimes even a few days.

“In the time before everyone else wakes up, my advantage is virtually limitless!” He rubbed the bridge of his nose as he thought no more regarding what the woman had said just now, and instead thought about this ancient, illusory world.

“Considering my status, none of the others are even close to being a match for me. If I find any of them, I could see them dead with a mere thought!” A cold glow appeared in his eyes. Regarding the exact rights enjoyed by an Elite Apprentice, the chaos of his memories made it impossible for him to recall all the details clearly. However, he had a general sense.

“Unfortunately, I’m not sure what host bodies were selected by the others. Although, I do know that the best one would be that of the Ji Clan, the Conclave disciple. In that case… I’ll go find that one, and bring that person to ruin!” With that Meng Hao stood up. However, in the instant he rose to his feet, thunderclaps filled the sky as eight lightning bolts shot down toward him. Instantly, they slammed into him.

The lighting fell too quickly, causing his entire body to tremble as he coughed up a mouthful of blood. He instantly fell down onto the ground, a look of shock on his face. The intense power of the lightning was fearsome. Despite the fact that this world was illusory, he still felt a sense of deadly crisis that caused him to gasp.

“What’s going on?!” he thought. He quickly looked up into the sky. It was as blue as ever, except… the area surrounding him was filled with various disciples of the Demon Immortal Sect. Some were human, other had the bodies of Demons. All of them wore strange expressions.

Some of them even appeared to be gloating in his misfortune. Those ones also appeared to be stifling rage, although they apparently hoped that he wouldn’t notice. They quickly put looks of indifference on their faces and then departed.

Meng Hao gaped. Something didn’t seem to be right. After hesitating for a moment, he gritted his teeth and then quickly rose to his feet. Instantly, the surrounding nine cauldrons began to emit a buzzing sound. Nine chains of lightning appeared, quickly binding Meng Hao and then raising him up into the air.

Meng Hao’s scalp went numb. Up in mid-air, eight lightning bolts boomed down to slam onto him. Blood sprayed from his mouth and his face went pale. It was at this point that he noticed all of the Demon Immortal Disciples in the area staring at him.

Each one wore a strange expression. Some seemed to be enjoying themselves. Others appeared to be venting their anger. All of them seemed quite happy to watch him be struck with lightning. Some even looked like they were on the verge of bursting into applause.

“Dammit! What the hell is going on?!?! Aren’t I an Elite Apprentice? What’s happening?!” By this pointing Meng Hao was really starting to get scared. The power of the second round of lightning was such that his body felt as if it were on the verge of exploding.

Suddenly, he recalled what the woman had said earlier about thinking back to something he did. She had also mentioned he’d gotten himself in a lot of trouble. At the moment, he really did seem to be in a lot of trouble. In fact, it seemed quite apparent that he was being punished!

At the moment, quite a few Cultivators were now approaching the Fourth Peak at top speed.

Hundreds of people arrived, all of them looking quite nervous, even pained. When they saw Meng Hao, they all began to talk.

“Eldest Brother, don’t fight back. You’re really in a lot of trouble this time. You… you still won’t admit it, huh…?”

“Yeah, Eldest Brother. The Sect Priest is really furious this time. Ai, you really should not have gone through with it. I can’t believe you dared to steal the precious treasure of the Sixth Peak to give to that Demoness of the Zhao Clan!”

“Nonsense! Eldest Brother was obviously seduced into wrongdoing by that Demoness. The person in the wrong isn’t Eldest Brother, it’s the damned Demoness!”

As their voices drifted out, Meng Hao’s mind spun. All of a sudden, memories began to awaken in his mind. Now that the memories were clear, Meng Hao understood that originally, Ke Jiusi of the Fourth Peak didn’t always have that name.

Some people think three times before they act 1. However, Ke Jiusi’s father, in his fury, had changed his son’s name to Jiusi, which meant ‘think nine times.’ He had hoped that changing the name would remind his son to thoroughly consider all matters before taking action.

Clearly, though… a change of name did not have any effect whatsoever on Ke Jiusi. In the Demon Immortal Sect he was an arrogant silkpants who ran amok at will. Even if you changed his name to Ke Jiubaisi, ‘think nine hundred times,’ it still wouldn’t do any good.

Yes, he was an Elite Apprentice. However, he had the lowest Cultivation base of all the Elite Apprentices. Furthermore, of all the Elite Apprentices, he was the one who embraced his silkpants lifestyle the most. There wasn’t a single person in the entire Demon Immortal Sect who didn’t know that he had a violent temper, got into fights easily, acted tyrannically, and was known as the number one Demon Immortal Sect bully.

He had earned such a reputation that his name alone was enough to cause any Outer Sect disciple to drop to the ground and kowtow. Even Inner Sect disciples became terror-stricken when hearing of him, and Conclave disciples would tremble. The other Elite Apprentices frowned because of him, and all the Elders in the Sects, as well as the seven great Sect Priests, all felt headaches coming on whenever they heard his name mentioned.

His life up to now had been filled with countless preposterous events. The things he did forced his father, Ke Yunhai, Sect Priest and Paragon of the Fourth Peak, to constantly be remedying his blunders. All of the disputes caused by him ended up being mediated by his father.

A few days ago, he had stolen a precious treasure from the Sixth Peak, and given it to an outsider. The matter could be considering poking the Heavens in the eye. Even his father had been unable to do anything but let go of his pride to smooth the matter over.

Meng Hao could only smile bitterly as the lightning chains once again pulled him back down to the center of the platform. After a moment, the chains vanished. However, Meng Hao knew that if he dared to stand up again, the movement would cause more lightning to fall.

“Little Patriarch, Eldest Brother, just admit your fault. Don’t butt heads with the Sect Priest….” The other disciples neared, looking at Meng Hao with expressions of pain on their faces. Although Ke Jiusi ran wild on the outside as a silkpants, in the Fourth Peak, he was viewed almost like a child. Everyone held deep feelings for him.

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1. There is a common Chinese saying that goes just this way: “think three times before you act”

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# Chapter 569: Ke Yunhai

More and more disciples were rushing toward the Fourth Peak to try to convince Meng Hao of what to do.

His face was pale, and he suddenly felt deeply depressed. How could he ever have imagined that things would end up in this way?

“You think you can convince me to say I’m wrong? Forget about it!” But then, Meng Hao’s eyes filled with determination. He quickly took a deep breath, and then hurriedly continued, “Jiusi was wrong! This time, Jiusi really was wrong!”

The words instantly caused everything to go quiet. Everyone’s eyes went wide as they stared in disbelief at Meng Hao. Although they had all been trying to convince him to admit his fault, they were well aware of the Little Patriarch’s temperament. He would rather die before admitting he was wrong.

And yet, he just had.

It wasn’t just them who were staring in shock. Suddenly, a violent wind whipped down from mid-air in the shape of a gigantic illusory hand. The hand reached down to grab the shocked Meng Hao, wrenching him up toward an Immortal’s cave on the Fourth Mountain.

At the same time, an ancient voice, filled with wrath and even pain, echoed out throughout the Demon Immortal Sect.

“Old Sixth, my son admitted his fault. From now on, if anyone breathes even half a word of this matter, don’t blame me for flipping out!”

The voice was filled with an intensely domineering air as it rumbled out in all directions. The gigantic wind hand dragged Meng Hao into a spacious Immortal’s cave, then slammed him violently onto the ground. When he landed, however, the power dissipated so that, although he tumbled a bit, he wasn’t hurt at all.

His eyes rolled around, and his brain spun in circles. Inwardly, he was worried that his cover might be blown. However, after reminding himself that this was an illusory world, he felt a bit more at ease. Dusting himself off, he stood up and looked around.

The Immortal’s cave was so simple that it couldn’t possibly be any more simple. It was large, but only contained a single stone bed. Sitting cross-legged on top of the bed was a middle-aged man.

This was the Lord of the Fourth Peak of the Demon Immortal Sect. He was one of the Paragons of the First Heaven, a person famous in all the Ninth Mountain. Ke Yunhai. 1

Next to him was an oil lamp that flickered brightly, completely illuminating the entire Immortal’s cave. If you looked closely, you would be able to see that the wick of the lamp was, shockingly, a phoenix, shrunken down so small that it was roughly the size of a finger!

The oil lamp was not crafted from bronze, but rather, was made of a shrunken down golden dragon. This was a real golden dragon, its mouth open, its whiskers undulating. The entire dragon had been transformed into an oil lamp!

With a dragon as the lamp and a phoenix as the wick, were an object like this to be revealed in Meng Hao’s era, it would cause a huge commotion throughout all the lands of South Heaven. It might even cause shock among the starry skies.

The man sitting on the stone bed had handsome features. It was obvious that when he was young, he had been even more dashing. Right now, his expression was dignified, and he wore a long gray robe. Currently, he was frowning a bit helplessly at Meng Hao.

“Did it hurt?” he asked softly.

Meng Hao hesitated for a moment and then, with great caution, nodded his head.

Seeing Meng Hao’s response caused Ke Yunhe to give an exasperated chortle. “Do you know anything about fear? Isn’t there anyone you’re afraid of? Quit pulling this kind of crap with me!

“Fine. For the time being, don’t go near the Sixth Peak. And keep a low profile, too. Jiusi, stop fooling around so much! You’re not a kid any more. Soon, it will be time to find you a beloved and pass on the Daoist magic of mine that you’ve mastered. Got it?!?!” The more he spoke, the more angry he seemed. However, when he looked at his son, he couldn’t help but sigh. His gaze softened, and his anger passed.

“Very well,” he said, his tone warm. “I want you to demonstrate some of the Daoist magic I’ve passed on to you. Go ahead, show it off.”

Meng Hao swallowed hard. He was actually very nervous at the moment, so nervous that he couldn’t control himself. As far back as he could remember, he had never felt such nervousness. As he looked at the middle-aged man in front of him, he couldn’t help but think of his own father.

The memories were blurry, but still there.

“What’s wrong?” asked Ke Yunhe, frowning.

“I… I forgot,” replied Meng Hao, bracing himself. There was really nothing he could do. Ke Jiusi’s memories really did not contain any Daoist magic.

Ke Yunhai stared at Meng Hao for a very long time before sighing again. His eyes flickered with disappointment. However, seemingly worried that his expression would hurt Ke Jiusi, he caused a warm look to cover his face.

“Jiusi, you can’t be like this….” As he spoke, he waved his finger through the air, causing the spiritual energy in the area to condense together. It formed into countless magical symbols in front of him, which then transformed into a jade slip that came to hover in front of Meng Hao.

“This is the Soul Divergence Incantation. Go gain enlightenment regarding it. Go.” As Ke Yunhai stared at him, Meng Hao’s heart began to beat rapidly. He thought about his identity, and all the good fortune that was available within this ancient Demon Immortal Sect. How could he ever have imagined that he would receive some so quickly?

He took the jade slip, then bowed his head and clasped hands. When he turned to leave, Ke Yunhai’s voice could suddenly be heard again, filled with exhaustion and an indescribable feeling of age.

“Lord Li’s Heavenly decree dictates a limit on the longevity of living things. Your father… will not be able to accompany you for your whole life. You need start acting a bit more sensibly….” The love in his words was palpable. Clearly, he carried deep longing that his son succeed in life.

Meng Hao stopped in place. For some reason, he felt moved inwardly. He looked back at Ke Yunhai and suddenly noticed that just in this short period of time, some of the man’s hair had turned white.

“Go,” said Ke Yunhai with a smile. “I’m fine. Go find those friends of yours and have some fun.” He waved his hand dismissively. Meng Hao’s heart trembled, and he left silently.

After emerging from the Immortal’s cave, he looked off into the sky toward the temple of the First Peak. He suddenly had the feeling he understood why the man he had seen on the Fourth Peak of the ancient Demon Immortal Sect had allowed him to come here.

“Was it because of regret…?” he murmured. Moments later, a grim light flickered in his eyes that had nothing to do with Ke Yunhai or Ke Jiusi, but rather, the other South Heaven Cultivators.

“The world of the ancient Demon Immortal Sect is all about competition. Since I’ve acquired this identity, then I should do everything I can to anyone who might be a menace to me. Smother them before they have a chance to sprout.

“The only sad thing is that each one of the peaks has tens of thousands of Inner Sect disciples. It would be impossible to search all of them. However… the Ji Clan has a Conclave disciple, so I should be able to pick up on some clues.” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he recalled the brief scuffle involving Ji Mingfeng. Before leaving, he had smiled. However, apparently because Meng Hao had ruined his plans, a bit of killing intent had shone through in that smile.

“You want to kill me? Then you’d better hope I don’t find you first,” smiled Meng Hao. As he continued on his way, quite a few people came to ask about his well-being. Eventually, he was surrounded by a group of more than thirty.

Meng Hao was unable to see the Cultivation base of any of these people. However, what he could sense was unbelievable power. Some of them even had strong killing intent.

Many of them had Demonic Qi which swirled around them freely. Some of them appeared to be ordinary Cultivators, while others were Demonic Cultivators. Those ones had bodies covered with scales or fur, and looked extremely fierce.

“Let’s go around to all the peaks,” he said suddenly. “There’s a Conclave disciple who offended me, and then got away. We’re gonna find him!” The surrounded crowd smiled, as if they didn’t find this strange at all. Obviously, they were used to such things. Rumbling filled the air as Meng Hao and his Junior Brothers and Sisters grouped together and shot up into the air toward the Third Peak.

En route, quite a few people flew out from the Third Peak, all of whom had arrogant and despotic bearings. Clearly very familiar with Meng Hao, they looked toward him and offered greetings, then joined the group. Meng Hao then thought back to what Ke Yuhai had said about finding his friends and having some fun. It seemed these friends of his… were other silkpants from the Demon Immortal Sect.

A young man with a fish scale on his forehead seemed eager to get into action. “Jiusi, should we call some others? I heard there’s a Conclave disciple who offended you. Who the hell does that moronic fool think he is to dare to provoke you?”

Meng Hao immediately nodded in agreement. “Call everyone! Just now when I was getting struck by lightning, he was laughing the hardest!”

The Cultivator from the Third Peak instantly smiled and waved his hands. Immediately, an enormous white lotus appeared up above in the sky, radiating light.

As soon as the white lotus appeared, all of the disciples in the Demon Immortal Sect who saw it felt their hearts trembling. They immediately ducked their heads down as if they had important matters to attend to, and then headed back to their residences.

They understood that when the white lotus appeared, the silkpants fiends were about to appear….

Simultaneously, seven or eight beams of light appeared coming from each of the mountain peaks of the Demon Immortal Sect. There were men and women, all of whom wore luxurious garments. They were people with incredible status, each one of different appearance. Some had wings on their backs, others had enormous swishing tails, and some were incredibly beautiful or handsome Demons. Each and every one of them had ancestors who were powerful experts within the Sect.

When they saw the white lotus, smiles appeared on their faces and they headed in its direction.

Back on the Fourth Peak, Ke Yunhai sat cross-legged on his stone bed. He looked up, saw the white lotus, and shook his head. His expression grew a bit more weary, and his hair, a bit more white.

Not too much time passed before seventy or eighty people neared Meng Hao. He was shocked by this, but it didn’t last long. His eyes glistened as he looked over the people who were under the sway of his power. As of this point, he knew that he really did have the qualifications to sweep over the other South Heaven Cultivators who had come to this place.

“Here, with Ke Jiusi’s identity,” he thought, “even getting the Mountain and Sea Scripture… does not count as an impossibility!” He instantly started to breathe heavily, and his eyes glowed.

“However, the Demon Immortal Sect has three thousand Daoist magics. With the exception of the top 100, the rest can be acquired by performing meritorious service to the Sect. Deeds such as that… are not easy to accomplish.” All of this information resided within the memories of Ke Jiusi that existed within his head. He had quite a good understanding of the Demon Immortal Sect.

The Daoist magics he referred to were not weak, and thus required deeds of merit to acquire. Unfortunately, unless a war was going on, even a Conclave disciple who accumulated merit for years would perhaps be able to acquire two or three at the most.

As far as Inner Sect disciples, it didn’t matter how many meritorious deeds they accumulated, they would never be able to acquire anything other than fundamental techniques.

“If it’s difficult for me, then others will find it even harder,” he thought. “It seems the Second Plane of the Demon Immortal Sect all depends on meritorious service in order to get techniques and legacies.” He continued to think about the matter as he led the group closer to the Third Peak.

1. Ke Yunhai’s name in Chinese is kē yún hǎi – Ke is the same family name as Ke Jiusi. Yun means “cloud,” and Hai means “sea”

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# Chapter 570: Killing a Son of Ji

In the vast stretch of land between the Fourth and Third Peaks, there was an enormous pit in the ground that emanated pulsing coldness up into the air.

As he flew through mid-air, Meng Hao noticed it immediately. Even more eye-catching were the numerous green vines that could be seen near the pit. They glowed almost like treasures, each one as wide as a person and bursting with incredible power.

“What’s in that pit, I wonder…?” he thought. Meng Hao wasn’t sure why, but when he looked in the direction of the deep pit, he suddenly felt a sensation that made it seem like the entire world was blurry and overlapping on itself. Although his mind quickly returned to normal, he was still left completely shocked.

Gradually, because of his identity as a Demon Sealer, and his sensitivity to Demonic Qi, he came to realize that the entire Demon Immortal Sect was filled with shocking Demonic Qi. Furthermore, the Demonic Qi in the giant pit was even more astonishing.

“Back in the First Plane, when I went from the Third Peak to the Fourth, I didn’t see any bizarre pit like that.” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered when he realized that Ke Jiusi’s memories also did not contain any information regarding the pit.

Flying next to Meng Hao was a young girl as pretty as silk, with pointed ears. Her eyes glittered with a charm that seemed capable of seducing any soul into wrongdoing. When she saw Meng Hao looking at the pit, she said, “Jiusi, don’t attract the attention of the Demon Chasm….”

Next to the young woman was a handsome young man with two black wings that flapped silently as he flew. Sighing, he said, “Last time we went to the Demon Chasm, we wasted a lot of treasures, but only managed to get the vines to extend a few thousand meters. Who knows how deep it actually is.”

On the other side of Meng Hao was a young man whose fingers intermittently sprouted sharp claws. He shook his head and said, “According to legend, that pit is the dwelling place of the Demon Divinity who protects the First Heaven of the Demon Immortal Sect.

Meng Hao nodded thoughtfully. Everyone put thoughts of the Demon Chasm aside as they proceeded onward toward the Third Peak.

As they neared, the Third Peak silkpants immediately began to call out to the Conclave disciples. Regardless of whether or not they were willing, when the Sect’s number one bully showed up, they had to come out.

Meng Hao glanced over the several thousand people in front of him, frowning slightly. He didn’t recognize any of them as being the Ji Clan host body. Muttering to himself, he moved a bit closer. After looking them over one more time, he led his group on to the Second Peak.

Eventually, he reached the First Peak, but despite looking at thousands of Conclave disciples, he still had met no success, causing him to sigh inwardly. By this time, several hours had passed, and no doubt, many of the others were beginning to wake up.

Just in the moment when Meng Hao was about to make his way to the Fifth Peak, as he flew over the congregated Conclave disciples, suddenly, a weak rippling sensation appeared in Meng Hao’s mind. He was instantly shaken to the core, and stopped in his tracks. He looked down toward all of the Conclave disciples.

He inched closer to them, and his gaze fell onto the body of one particular young man. His features were handsome, and he stood there, expressionless. When Meng Hao looked at him, he gaped back, seemingly apprehensive.

“That’s the one!” cried Meng Hao. As he neared the young man, the faint feeling grew more noticeable. Although Meng Hao couldn’t be sure of the details, he was sure the feeling had something to do with host bodies.

The young man’s face was pale as he stammered, “Fourth Little Patriarch, I….”

Killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes. However, the shadow of his punishment earlier still loomed heavy around him. He didn’t want to kill anyone out in the open; after all, Sect rules strictly prohibited such an act. It would lead to a lot of problems.

The young man suddenly started trembling, and a look of confusion appeared in his eyes. At the same time, a unique aura that no one else could sense suddenly seemed to awaken within him.

Meng Hao could instantly see a vague, shadowy image appear behind the young man. The image was that of a handsome man with a crow perched on his shoulder. The unique aura of the Ji Clan emanated off of him.

Meng Hao instantly recognized him. “Ji Mingfeng!” he thought. The killing intent suddenly flickered in his eyes as he realized that the man was about to wake up.

“There’s no time,” thought Meng Hao, looking at the man. “Once he wakes up, too many unforeseen circumstances could unfold.

“When it comes to the Ji Clan, killing two is no different than killing one. Ji Clan Dao Child, huh? Ji Mingfeng, you will have no chance to awaken!” Meng Hao acted with complete decisiveness. His body flickered, and in the blink of an eye, he was directly in front of Ji Mingfeng. To the shock of everyone watching, he instantly slammed his palm into the young man’s chest.

Considering the level of Meng Hao’s Cultivation base, a palm strike like this was fundamentally not capable of harming the host body. However, the image of Ji Mingfeng, which only Meng Hao could see, was trembling, and visibly struggling to open his eyes.

This was the Demon Immortal Sect!

Sect rules were strict and rigid. In the past, Ke Jiusi, despite being a silkpants, would never go beyond fighting someone in public. Although he had killed people, it was always in secret. If he had conflicts with people, he would use his status to get them outside of the Sect, where he would then kill them.

Therefore, Meng Hao’s actions now led only to some cries of alarm. In fact, the over one hundred people who had followed him here were chatting and laughing, and did nothing to stop the goings-on. Even the other Conclave disciples of the First Peak simply frowned. They knew of Ke Jiusi’s dark reputation within the Sect, and that he was someone who should never be provoked.

After all, any large Sect like this would have people like Ke Jiusi. It was something unavoidable. All Sects were the same.

However, when Meng Hao’s palm landed on the Ji Mingfeng’s host body, the young man trembled violently and tumbled backward. The faces of all the surrounding Cultivators instantly flickered.

They could tell that the soul of this First Peak Conclave disciple was on the verge of being destroyed. Such a thing left everyone completely astonished.

Destruction of the soul is different than the death of the fleshly body. When the soul is destroyed, the only thing left behind is a living corpse. In many ways, it is more terrifying than true death.

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed with killing intent. He could see that Ji Mingfeng’s soul was trembling violently, and that he was on the verge of opening his eyes. Meng Hao gave a cold snort, approached him again, and then struck out with another palm.

Booming rose up as Ji Mingfeng’s host body once again shook violently. At first, it didn’t seem to cause him any cause for concern. However, the illusory image of Ji Mingfeng’s soul was now even more unstable. It trembled violently and let out soundless howls. It was apparently sparing no effort whatsoever in the attempt to wake up.

Meng Hao was about to strike out again when the other First Peak Conclave disciples moved to block his way. Even some of his own followers moved to hold him back.

“Jiusi, you can’t do this.”

“Jiusi, don’t attack again. We can find a chance another time to pin this guy down for good. Why kill him in front of all these people…?”

Meng Hao looked at the people trying to obstruct his way. The aura of Ji Mingfeng’s awakening soul was growing stronger and stronger. In fact, his eyes were beginning to glow with light.

Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed, and his voice grew cold. “This guy colluded with that Demoness to bewitch me! He tried to get me punished on purpose! I swear that I will not stop until he is dead. Today!”

The silkpants disciples behind him hesitated. After a moment, though, they ground their teeth and once again blocked his way.

As Meng Hao frowned at them, the dozen or so that were blocking his way transmitted messages via Divine Will.

“Are you sure he has to die?”

“He must die!” was Meng Hao’s resolute response.

“Fine. You just received punishment, but, regardless of why you need this guy dead, we’ll do it together!”

“It doesn’t matter if we get punished too. We’ll share the responsibility! That will be better than you taking all the blame yourself!” These dozen or so rogues were Meng Hao’s closest friends in the Sect. As soon as they made their decision, they turned and shot toward Ji Mingfeng.

Meng Hao gaped in astonishment for a moment and then moved to follow. They easily swept over the First Peak disciples who were blocking the way, and then appeared around Ji Mingfeng. The instant in which his soul's eyes finally snapped open, booming sounds echoed out.

Both Ji Mingfeng and his host body instantly were inundating with roaring sounds. As for Ji Mingfeng, the moment in which he opened his eyes, he let out a piercing cry that only Meng Hao could hear.

His soul grew blurry, and his expression was one of confusion and fear. He stared around wide-eyed for a moment until his eyes came to rest on Meng Hao. In that instant, his pupils constricted.

"It's you!!"

In that instant, roaring once again filled the air. The attacks slammed down like storm winds. Ji Mingfeng's host body exploded, transformed into nothing but ash by the astonishing divine abilities levied against it.

Ji Mingfeng's soul was being torn into shreds. The bloodcurdling scream which only Meng Hao could hear echoed about. Meng Hao's right hand snatched the soul and then crushed into into dust.

A popping sound could be heard as this Dao Child of the Ji Clan, a blazing sun of his generation, an Array member upon whom many hopes of the Clan rested, was thoroughly destroyed in this illusory ancient world, the Second Plane of the Primordial Demon Immortal Planes.

Death in this place, was true death of the soul!

In the moment in which Ji Mingfeng died, outside of the Demon Immortal Sect, back in the lands of South Heaven, in the ancestral mansion of the Ji Clan, was a tall altar. Sitting cross-legged on the altar was the First Patriarch of the South Heaven Ji Clan, the same youthful-looking Cultivator who had seen the Ji Clan members off to the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane. His closed eyes suddenly snapped open.

In that instant, bizarre clouds began to churn in the sky above the lands of all of South Heaven. Everything dimmed and changed color.

The young man slowly lifted his head up to look at the nine jade slips in front of him. He stretched his left hand out to grab the first one up, but before he could even touch it, cracking sounds could be heard, and the jade slip shattered.

The young man’s hand stopped moving.

His face instantly grew incredibly dark. At the same time, lightning crackled in the air above the Eastern Lands, the Southern Domain, and the Northern Reaches. It was as if the changes to the young man’s expression caused endless black clouds to roil up.

“Perished….” he murmured. His voice was hoarse, and his face slowly filled with disbelief. Considering his Cultivation base and position, such a change in facial expression was something that hadn’t happened for a very long time.

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# Chapter 571: Still Won’t Cry Out?!

“How could he… have perished?” The young man’s face grew even grimmer. As he looked off into the distance, lightning seemed to dance within his eyes, as if his body was filled with roaring thunder and electricity.

“The Primordial Demon Immortal Plane isn’t very dangerous,” thought the young man. “There may be disputes in the First Plane when it comes to selecting a host body, but who is there that would dare to provoke the Ji Clan?” Based on the look in his eyes, it was clear that he truly didn’t understand. Also visible in his eyes were deep pain and fury.

Ji Mingfeng was the best of the best in the younger generation. Many hopes had been placed in him. Who could ever have possibly imagined that he would die in the Demon Immortal Sect!?

“The Second Plane is an illusory realm. It might seem dangerous, but the chances of truly life-threatening situations are extremely small, and could only come about by chance or coincidence. Hmmm, if my calculations are correct, the Second Plane should have just opened. Considering Mingfeng’s latent talent, he should have been one of the first ones to awaken. How could he have perished?

“Throughout the tens of thousands of years in which the Ji Clan has sent our Cultivators into the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane… no one has ever died!

“Mingfeng… how could you have perished?” The young man sat there silently, his eyes radiating such icy coldness that snowflakes began to fall upon the entirety of South Heaven.

Without speaking a word, he stretched out his right hand, within which appeared a Feng Shui compass. In the center of the Feng Shui compass was black-colored sun, which caused the compass itself to emanate a black glow.

He stared down at the compass as he used his left hand to make various adjustments. The glow of augury appeared in his eyes. Within the space of a few breaths, his expression changed. A cracking sound could be heard from the Feng Shui compass as a huge fissure appeared on its surface.

The young man gasped, and a look of disbelief appeared in his eyes.

“An anomaly! The only thing I can determine is that in this particular instance of the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane… an anomaly has appeared which has never before existed within the last 90,000 years!

“This anomaly could possibly influence the passage of time! It might even affect events that have already occurred, and have flowed past in the great river of time!

“What could be the cause of this?!”

Meanwhile, back in the Demon Immortal Sect, in the Second Plane, on the First Peak….

Because of the death of Ji Mingfeng’s host body, everything was absolutely quiet. All of the First Peak’s Conclave disciples looked on silently, an icy glow rising up in their eyes. The people who had come with Meng Hao, but had not taken action just now, also looked on with expressions of shock, their minds spinning. Everything had happened far too quickly, such that they didn’t even have time to think about what consequences might result because of what happened.

Then, their minds began to reel as they realized that the death of a First Peak Conclave disciple… was nothing other than… a complete disaster.

Meng Hao hovered there in mid-air, looking around at the dozen or so others who had joined him in the attack. They were all silkpants from the various other peaks, and were about the same age as Meng Hao. They were his gang of scoundrels, and after all their ridiculous antics throughout the years, a strong friendship had developed between them.

Meng Hao looked at them, and they looked back. Then they started laughing.

An hour later, bells tolled throughout the Demon Immortal Sect. At the same time, an enormous screen appeared in mid-air upon within which could be seen a cage. In that cage were Meng Hao and the dozen or so of his friends who had joined him, all of them bound up tightly.

All of the disciples in the Sect were watching the proceedings. Floating there in mid-air, his eyes closed, was a burly, bare-chested man. After the bells tolled a fifth time, the burly man's eyes snapped open. They shone with an oppressive glow as he lifted his right hand up into the air and made a grasping motion. A black whip suddenly appeared out of nowhere. It was fully three thousand meters long, and as it undulated, the air itself was shattered. Lightning danced on its surface, and it emitted astonishing crackling sounds throughout the entirety of the Sect.

"According to Sect rules, the punishment for murdering a fellow disciple is death," said the burly man, his voice cool. "However, considering the services rendered to the Sect by your various ancestors… you will be spared death, but not punishment!

"According to the orders of the seven great Paragons, Ke Jiusi will be stripped of his title of Elite Apprentice. Xu Tianhai, Chen Mingyun… all the rest of you sub-Elite Apprentices will be demoted to the Inner Sect. Your positions will not be restored for ten thousand years!

"You will also receive three lashes from the Purgatory Whip. Each lash could be fatal. This is your punishment! As for Ke Jiusi, he will receive four lashes!

"If such a crime should be committed again in the future, you will compensate with your lives!" As his words echoed out through the Sect, those who heard were shocked. Such a punishment was incredibly severe.

Their titles were stripped for ten thousand years, although that could be considered secondary. Most severe of all was the Purgatory Whip; few people withstand more than two lashes from it!

In the memories of everyone present, a punishment of three lashes had not been doled out for a thousand years. As for Ke Jiusi's special punishment of four lashes, that type of punishment had not been seen… for at least three thousand years.

As of this moment, all of the disciples within the Sect were completely quiet. They looked up at the scene playing out in mid-air, especially those from the First Peak, within whose eyes hatred flickered.

When Meng Hao and the dozen or so others heard the burly man's words, their faces immediately fell.

"What the fudge! This is messed up. Three lashes…."

"Hah! I was the one who struck the first blow. Three lashes? Who cares!?!?"

"Sub-Elite Apprentice? Psshhh. If I want some techniques or legacies or even treasures, all I have to do is ask. I don't give a crap about what level of disciple I am!"

"Jiusi, we're brothers, so we'll accept the punishment together! Those old fogies can only hurt our flesh, they can't really kill us. Although, you still need to tell me, why exactly did we have to kill that First Peak Conclave disciple?"

Meng Hao looked around at his dozen or so friends. He knew that this world was illusory, but he was still moved nonetheless. He could tell that these were the kind of people who would stick with him through thick and thin. It almost made him want to forget that this place wasn't real, and that he wasn't really Ke Jiusi.

Except… he wasn't sure exactly how to respond to the question. After a moment's thought, he gritted his teeth.

“That punk seduced one of my Junior Sisters!”

Strange looks filled the faces of the others. After a moment passed, they all started laughing.

As their laughter rang out, the burly man coldly said, “First lash.”

With that, he raised his hand, and the whip flew out, causing distortions to ripple out in the air. A piercing crack rang out.

The sound of it was crisp and clear, and echoed back and forth at least ten times, accompanied by shocking rumbling like that of thunder.

One whip blow slashed across Meng Hao and the others.

Meng Hao’s entire body shook, and it felt as if his soul were about to explode out of his body. Indescribable pain surged through him, stabbing into his mind, causing his vision to swim. At the same time, miserable cries could be heard around him.

Meanwhile, off in the distance, seven figures could be seen standing on the Seventh Peak. They looked like seven blazing suns. One of their number was Ke Yunhai. His face was somber, and his fury burned to the Heavens. His gaze was fixed on Meng Hao, who was being whipped to the point that it seemed as if he wanted to die.

Standing near Ke Yunhai was a middle-aged woman. Her body emanated a beautiful glow, and as she stood there, it seemed as if she were fused with Heaven and Earth. She was the Paragon of the Sixth Peak. Her expression cool, she turned to Ke Yunhai and said, “Lord Li is sleeping now, but we are all still subject to his Heavenly will. The Dao Realm is sealed, and cut off from us. However, momentous events will soon occur. If you are too kind, Elder Brother Ke, then in the future, your son will definitely fall into great calamity.”

The Paragon of the Third Peak was an old man with a long face. His entire person radiated ancientness as he shook his head and said, “Elder Brother Ke, your son really is… well, if he wants to break Sect rules, that is his concern, but why does he have to get others in trouble too? I guess that's just his character…."

The Paragon of the First Peak was a handsome young man with long, narrow eyes. His body emanated a golden light that made it seem as if he were surrounded by countless swords that in turn transformed into a bright sun. His voice itself sounded like sharp, stabbing swords as he calmly said, "This kid is clearly a deviant at heart. For years now he's bullied his way around. There have been at least ten or more disciples who have died by his hand. The only reason we didn't go after him for those deaths was for your sake, Elder Brother Ke. For him to brazenly kill someone in the open, though, that is far too excessive!"

After the three other Paragons spoke, Ke Yunhai's enraged voice could be heard.

"Rebel!! REBEL!!

"The instant I let him go, he goes and does something completely devoid of conscience! I don't care if he gets whipped to death! At least I wouldn't have to deal with this only son of mine!

"If he doesn't die, then he'll drive me to my death eventually! Because of Lord Li's Heavenly decree, living creatures all have lifespan limitations. The Dao Realm cannot be tread. My longevity is withering away, and the time of my death approaches. Fellow Daoists, your patience regarding my deviant son has not been forgotten.

"Let him die. Because of the endless slaughtering which occurred in the nine wars of the Mountains and Seas, of my fifteen sons, only he is left. His entire life, he was spoiled, so it's no wonder he turned out to be a disaster.

"Forget it. Just forget it. Let him die!" Ke Yunhai turned away, and as he did, his entire body seemed to age. The death aura which spread out all around him grew even stronger.

The other six Paragons stood by silently. The Paragon of the Seventh Peak was an ancient, white-haired man with the bearing of a transcendent being.

He sighed softly as he looked off into the distance at the burly man with the whip.

The burly raised the whip up into the air and then paused for a moment. Then, he delivered the second lash.

The sound that rang out was intense and shocking to the extreme. However, it was clear that the blow had not been delivered with as much force as the previous one.

By the time the third lash fell, the skin of Meng Hao and the dozen or so others was completely torn and lacerated. Their expressions were haggard, and they could barely lift their heads. They bitterly looked over at Meng Hao, knowing that he was about to receive a fourth lash.

Meng Hao chuckled bitterly as the fourth blow descended. It slammed onto his body and his alone. At the same time, the furious words spoken by Ke Yunhai suddenly echoed into his ears.

“Still won’t cry out?!”

Meng Hao gaped for a moment before letting out a scream that was tragic beyond description. When his companions heard the sound, they were astonished….

The punishment was over, and people came from the various peaks to support Meng Hao and the others as they left. They were quickly taken away to have their wounds treated. Soon, Meng Hao was back at the Fourth Peak, where he heard Ke Yunhai’s voice echoing throughout the mountain.

“Don’t help him. Screw off, you rebel!”

The Fourth Peak disciples who were helping him hesitated for a moment. However, Meng Hao indicated to them that they should release him. He smiled bitterly, but inwardly, felt warm at heart. Sighing, he began walking up toward Ke Yunhai’s Immortal’s cave.

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# Chapter 572: The Legacy of Lord Li

Meng Hao felt as if this identity he had acquired did come with its advantages, but also a lot of pressure. As a silk-pants, he could act virtually without the slightest scruple. However, this was an enormous Sect, and Sect rules could not be blithely ignored.

“It’s too bad I couldn’t find Patriarch Huyan…. I won’t be able to track down any of the others any time soon either. In that case, there’s no need to work so hard to try to find them. I’ll just focus on acquiring Daoist magic legacies right here.”

When he entered the Immortal’s cave, Ke Yunhai was sitting cross-legged on his stone bed. He looked at Meng Hao and gave a cold harrumph.

“Do you know what your mistake was this time?” asked Ke Yunhai, his voice cold.

Meng Hao looked back at him but didn’t say anything.

“Your mistake was that you shouldn’t have brazenly killed a fellow disciple!” continued Ke Yunhai slowly.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered.

“Your mistake was that you should have picked some other time to attack!” Ke Yunhai waved his hand dismissively, clearly disappointed that Meng Hao was like iron who had failed to turn into steel, and had completely fallen below his expectations.

“Killing is nothing,” he continued. “I’ve killed countless people in my life. When we Cultivators practice cultivation, we must do so with a clear conscience. You surely had a good reason to kill him, that I know. You normally act with cleverness, but in this situation, were crude and rash. Did you need to get rid of him in fear that he would go into hiding?

“Well, whatever your enmity with him, considering your status, you can’t simply go killing people in broad daylight in front of a big crowd!”

As Meng Hao looked at Ke Yunhai, his heart trembled. The trembling originated from his very soul, and from the vague image of his own father that existed within his memories. Suddenly, he laughed.

Perhaps he had forgotten for a moment that he wasn’t really Ke Jiusi. Perhaps Ke Jiusi wanted to remind him that he wasn’t really a member of the Demon Immortal Sect.

After all… I am Meng Hao, and I am also Ke Jiusi.

He suddenly spoke. “I think my real mistake… was attacking with my own hand.”

“Eee?” said Ke Yunhai, looking at Meng Hao.

“I shouldn’t have killed him myself,” said Meng Hao softly. “I should have talked to you about it, sir. A word from you, and he would have been dead. Then things wouldn’t have been so problematic.”

Ke Yunhai stared at him with wide eyes. After a moment, he started chuckling. His chuckling grew louder and louder until it wasn’t clear whether he was furious, or actually laughing uproariously. He suddenly waved his hand, causing a gentle breeze to spring up that healed all of Meng Hao’s wounds.

After that, he sighed deeply, and then made a grasping motion toward that oil lamp that had the body of a dragon and the wick of a phoenix. Instantly, two glimmering streams of light shot out. At the same time, the power of Heaven and Earth in the area grew intense to the extreme. It began to converge, forming together in front of Ke Yunhai as if weapons were being constructed. Soon, two large stone statues could be seen.

Each of the two statues were as tall as a person, and pitch black. They held greatswords in hand, and looked like the type of soldiers buried with dead bodies in tombs. Banging sounds could be heard as they dropped down to slam onto the ground.

Their aura was enough to cause Meng Hao to begin to pant. He felt an incredible pressure weighing down on him that exceeded that from any powerful expert he had ever felt.

At the same time, Ke Yunhai pointed at Meng Hao. His forehead suddenly split, and two drops of blood flew out. They swirled through the air toward the two statues, then merged into them.

As soon as that happened, the eyes of the stone soldiers flickered, as if they now possessed consciousness. As Meng Hao looked at them, he got the feeling that with a mere thought on his part, he could control these two terrifying soldiers.

“These two stone soldiers have your soul blood inside of them,” he said, giving Meng Hao a deep look. “No matter how many tens of thousands of years pass, no matter how many difficult situations they go through, no matter how many Masters they have, when you stand in front of them, they will recognize you as their most supreme and ultimate Master!” Ke Yunhai’s face was a bit ruddy, and his hair seemed a bit more gray, even white.

“When the Ke Clan kills people, we don’t ask for help from outsiders. Now, get out of here. Do your best to gain enlightenment regarding the Soul Divergence Incantation. Oh, and… don’t cause any more problems for your old man, okay? You’re not a kid any more, try to act a bit more mature….” He sighed.

Meng Hao coughed dryly and nodded. His eyes were glowing with a strange light as he suddenly looked up at Ke Yunhai, a bashful expression on his face.

“Dad, do you have the Mountain and Sea Scripture?”

Ke Yunhai stared in shock, then slammed his palm down onto the stone bed.

“You little brat! The Mountain and Sea Scripture? Do you think I founded the Demon Immortal Sect?”

“Oh. Well, even just a bit of information about it would do,” Meng Hao replied quickly.

“You can’t even get the Mountain and Sea Scripture from the three great Demon Mountains of the Second Heaven, or the two Holy Lands of the Third Heaven!” he said angrily. “Do you really think that your dad, mere Lord of the Fourth Peak of the First Heaven, could really request the Mountain and Sea Scripture from the slumbering Lord Li in the Fourth Heaven?

“If you really want the Mountain and Sea Scripture, there’s only one way to get it, and that is to acquire the legacy of Lord Li that he left behind before going into slumber. Whoever can reach the Fourth Heaven and stand directly in front of Lord Li, can get that legacy!” With that he waved his hand dismissively.

“If you don’t have the Mountain and Sea Scripture, that’s okay,” said Meng Hao quickly. He didn’t mind settling for second best. “Dad, you know those 3,000 Daoist magics that you can only get through meritorious service to the Sect? Do you think you could use your influence… to get them for me?”

Ke Yunhai’s eyes widened and he stared in shock at Meng Hao.

“3,000 Daoist magics?” Ke Yunhai spluttered furiously. “Do you really, actually believe that the Demon Immortal Sect was founded by me?”

“2,999 would also be okay, but not any less than that,” replied Meng Hao, grinding his teeth.

“Screw off! I don’t have them!” roared Ke Yunhai, waving his right hand.

"If you give me enough techniques, then I can focus on calmly practicing cultivation on the Fourth Peak…." said Meng Hao, using his trump card. When he said this, Ke Yunhai's hand suddenly stopped moving. He hesitated for a moment as he looked at Meng Hao. Then he let out a long sigh.

"Considering my status, the best I can do is give you three hundred Daoist magics. If you can fully gain enlightenment of all of them, then I'll see what else I can do." Shaking his head, he made another grasping motion. His hand seemed to disappear into the air, and he closed his eyes for a moment. When he pulled his hand back, it was holding a jade slip. He tossed it toward Meng Hao, and then waved his wide sleeve, causing a raging wind to pick up Meng Hao and the two stone soldiers and send them out of the Immortal's cave.

In the middle section of the Fourth Peak was a luxurious area filled with glittering lights and exotic plants. The large door of the Immortal's cave there was imposing to the extreme. This was none other than Ke Jiusi's Immortal's cave.

Meng Hao's heart was beating with excitement as he carried the jade slip toward the Immortal's cave, as well as the two stone soldiers, which had shrunk down and now fit in his palm. There were about a dozen footmen waiting for him inside. Once they caught sight of him, they all smiled and clasped hands in greeting.

Meng Hao quickly found that no matter what he wanted to do inside his Immortal's cave, there would always be someone to help him.

He couldn't help but sigh emotionally. He had never experienced such luxury, not even when he was a Violet Furnace Lord back in the Violet Fate Sect. It was something he couldn't quite get used to. After a bit of time, he sent the footmen away.

Finally alone in his huge Immortal's cave, he sat down cross-legged to examine the stone soldiers and the jade slip.

Even after trying, he was not able to put any of them into his bag of holding. However, he was able to take items from within his bag of holding and bring them out.

At first he hadn’t noticed anything unusual about his bag of holding. However, after he thought about it, he realized that there was something odd about Ji Mingfeng. What was odd was that he had no bag of holding. In fact, Ji Mingfeng had been nothing but a soul.

His soul had fused with the host body, but was still nothing more than that; a soul fusion.

Muttering, Meng Hao thought about what Ke Yunhai had told him about Lord Li, the three great Demon Mountains, and the two Holy Lands…. The information regarding those things contained in Ke Jiusi’s memories were rather vague.

“I remember Zhixiang also told me a few things….” Eyes glittering, he committed the new information to memory to think about another time. As for Zhixiang, he was confident that she would come looking for him eventually. After all, Zhixiang… was a true disciple of the Demon Immortal Sect!

“When that time comes, I can get answers to everything!” He didn’t consider the matter any more. Currently, there were quite a few strange things going on with his body. His Cultivation base was only of the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage, which was actually quite weak in the Demon Immortal Sect. And yet, neither Ke Yunhai nor anyone else seemed to notice that. When they looked at him, they didn’t see anything out of the ordinary.

There were other strange things that Meng Hao could only attribute to the fact that this was the Second Plane of an ancient illusory world. This was all just a dream of the Demon Immortal Sect.

Although the dream seemed incredibly realistic, and was filled with limitless possibilities, a dream… was still just a dream, not reality.

A thought suddenly sprang into being in Meng Hao's mind. "What if it could be real…?

"What if all of this could be made real…?

"What if all of it could become true…. What if actual changes could be made to the great river that is the flow of time?" Then he looked at the stone soldiers, which clearly could not be put into his bag of holding, and he sighed. He knew that such an outcome was impossible. After all, this place was just a dreamland.

However, he couldn't help but feel a bit of pity regarding the two stone soldiers. If he could take them out with him after he left the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane, it would make him incredibly happy.

"Daoist magic legacies are the most important part of the Second Plane!" he thought, his eyes glowing with determination. Forgetting about the impractical matters, he took out the jade slip, closed his eyes, and began to attempt to gain enlightenment.

After a moment, his eyes opened, and they were filled with blankness.

"Lightning Spirit Incantation…. Borrow the will of Heavenly lightning, fuse it into the body to create a soul. Use the Soul of Lightning to refine a Spirit of Lightning. Transmogrify the fleshly body to form a bolt of lightning of Heaven and Earth, benefit from an eternally indestructible Divinity…." Muttering to himself, Meng Hao continued to study the jade slip.

His expression grew more and more serious, and he was breathing heavily. Occasionally, he would open his eyes, shocked by what he had learned of the various Daoist magics. He had never imagined that there would be such a variety of divine abilities and magical techniques in the world, and that they could be so unimaginable.

There was one magic that could take the rainbows which appear after the rain and transform them into a Seven-Colored Fish. With that fish, one could leap into the starry sky and swim about the Mountains and Seas as a greater Demon.

There was another that focused on observing the clouds and wind to perform augury within the Earth and the Yellow Springs. By using an Imperial will, one could understand the Will of Heaven. By understanding the Will of Heaven, the natural law of Heaven and Earth could be changed. Planets could be destroyed, and a mere thought could shatter even the most ancient of things.

There was an entire host of divine abilities and magical techniques.

One of them was called the Fish Roc Will. It was entirely based on the use of Divine Will. When the myriad of transformations were cultivated to the very peak, one’s body could become that of a roc!

The technique made him think of the strange roc in the Rebirth Cave.

Everything filled Meng Hao with an unimaginably fantastic feeling. As time passed, he gradually came to realize that of the techniques of the Demon Immortal Sect, more than half were actually… Demon magic!

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# Chapter 573: Her Name is Xu Qing

Cultivators could cultivate this so-called Demon magic. In fact, any living thing could. However, the end result was that one would become a Greater Demon.

Meng Hao was especially shaken after seeing the Mountain Consuming Incantation. It was a technique imbued with a spirit that could conquer mountains and rivers. It was no mere embellishment, but rather, a technique that could actually consume mountains and rivers! Success could lead to one’s own path to Immortality, and becoming a Human Immortal!

Many of the techniques relied on Qi of Heaven and Earth that was actually Demonic Qi. There was one technique in which refining Demonic Qi into the body allowed one to create a personal Heavenly Demon Transformation. There were nineteen levels of such transformations, each one resulted in becoming a Greater Demon that could shake Heaven and Earth.

Meng Hao studied the information, and soon, an entire night had passed. Dawn was breaking, but he was not even aware that so much time had passed by. The Daoist magics had left him completely shaken. He suddenly realized that within his world, his life, his everything… a door had suddenly been opened. Beyond that door, was the true Heaven and Earth.

Such good fortune was something that, in the tens of thousands of years that the Primordial Demon Immortal Plan had opened, no one else had acquired. He was the only one… and it was all because of his special identity. In this world of limitless possibilities, he was the first person to ever use such a technique to gain access to three hundred Daoist magics.

From ancient times until now, from now into the future, he was the first and the last!

If the others who had come with him to the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane found out that he had three hundred Daoist magics, they would surely go crazy. That would even be true for people who had come in past times.

Even a single one of these three hundred Daoist magics would be something most Cultivators from the great lands of South Heaven could only dream about. Even with the most incredible luck, most would have trouble acquiring one. And yet… Meng Hao had three hundred. Furthermore, he could tell that these were no ordinary techniques…. These techniques were definitely from the top 1,000 Daoist Magics out of the total of 3,000!

There were some that surely were in the top 500. As for the Mountain Consuming Incantation and the Heavenly Demon Transformation, they were definitely within the top 200.

Such divine abilities and Daoist magics would send anyone mad with jealousy. Legacies and good fortune like this were unheard throughout the past tens of thousands of years.

Others might acquire random techniques in this place, but even after exerting incredible power, they still might not be able to gain enlightenment. If that happened, then when they left, all memory of the technique would be wiped out, much as if it had just been a dream. After awakening, they would only be able to remember that the technique existed, but not the details.

It was the same with Daoist magics. Only by gaining full enlightenment could one truly possess them, and remember them after leaving.

Therefore, if one had no way to gain enlightenment, then any effort spent would be wasted. The only thing to be done would be to work hard to find an additional Daoist magic to study.

Of course, that would be incredibly difficult.

However, Meng Hao… didn’t have to worry about any of those problems. He had three hundred Daoist magics. If he couldn’t gain enlightenment with one, he could simply move on to the next. Within the three hundred, there were definitely magics that suited him, ones that he could master and gain enlightenment of.

It was afternoon before he finally looked up. Gripping the jade slip tightly, his eyes filled with a strange glow. He took a deep breath and rose to his feet.

“I’m going to try out this Mountain Consuming Incantation. The first step in the incantation is to observe a mountain!” With that, his body flickered and he sped out from within the Immortal’s cave. By this point, he had lost interest in seeking out the other South Heaven Cultivators. As of now, killing them was his last priority. The most important thing was to focus on his own good fortune.

Although, if he could find Patriarch Huyan, well, he wouldn’t violate Sect rules. He would instead seek out Ke Yunhai to have him eliminated.

“By this point, there should be a lot of people who are awake…” he thought. As he made his way through the paths of the Fourth Peak, all of the disciples he encountered smiled and nodded at him. He smiled back as he sped toward his destination. It didn’t take long before he finally just flew up to float in mid-air and look back at the Fourth Peak.

“Observe the mountain…. Observe the shape of the mountain. Feel its will. The mountain exists in the eyes, and is concealed in the heart. Therefore, the body can be incarnated into a mountain.

“That is the only way to reach the second stage, in which I am the mountain, and the mountain is me!”

A strange glow appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes as he looked at the Fourth Peak. The Mountain Consuming Incantation floated within his mind’s eye.

“After the second stage, the third stage can be reached and the mountain… can be consumed. The will of the mountain can shape my spirit, and the mountain can refine my body!

“A spirit that conquers mountains and rivers! When I turn away, the mountain may no longer be within my eye, but whether or not it exists in the eyes of others, has nothing to do with me!

“That much would be just a small achievement!” Meng Hao sat cross-legged in mid-air looking at the Fourth Peak. Several hours passed. He looked at the mountain, and the disciples there looked back at him.

More and more disciples of the Fourth Peak noticed him, this Little Patriarch of their mountain peak.

There were quite a few female disciples who would occasionally look over at him with flirty smiles.

“The Little Patriarch is actually practicing cultivation!”

“Oh, that only happens once every few years….”

“Don’t tell me that the Little Patriarch’s temperament has actually changed?”

All of the disciples found the scene quite odd. In fact, many continued to stop their own cultivation to glance over at him hovering there in mid-air.

It was evening at the moment, and there were currently a dozen or so Fourth Peak Outer Sect disciples making their way up a set of stone stairs that wound up the Fourth Peak. It was an arduous task for them, and they were obviously participating in an examination for promotion into the Inner Sect.

There were nine stages to the examination, and this particular stage, I Shall Climb to Soar in the Heavens, was the last of them all! Whether or not they ended up being promoted to be a Fourth Peak Inner Sect disciples was based on how long it took them to reach the very top of the mountain, as well as their performance in the previous stages.

One of the participants was a young woman wearing the long robe of an Outer Sect disciple. Her face was pale white, but she gritted her teeth, and despite her incredible exhaustion, pushed forward with unswerving determination. Her vision swam and her body trembled, but she continued on, one stone step at a time.

The exam might seem easy, but anyone who participated would understand the incredible pressure and difficulty.

There were Inner Sect Disciples overseeing the situation to ensure safety. If anyone gave up, they would quickly be escorted away.

The young woman with the pale face stepped up onto another stone step and then happened to look up into the air toward Meng Hao, who sat there cross-legged meditating.

Not too far away from her was an Inner Sect disciple charged with the safety of the Outer Sect disciples. Having noticed who she was looking at, he coolly said, “That’s the Little Patriarch of our Fourth Peak.”

“Little Patriarch….” replied the woman, staring. She hadn’t been a member of the Sect for very long, but how could she not have heard of the Little Patriarch? The difference between her status and his was incredible, like that between Heaven and Earth. She glanced at him for only a moment before lowering her head in exhaustion to continue on the path toward promotion.

This was the only path she could tread. To get this chance for promotion, she had pawned a precious family heirloom, a magical item. She had also borrowed a lot of Demon Stones to practice cultivation. If she failed now, it would take many years to pay everything back.

In fact, if she failed, those vicious and greedy Outer Sect disciples who had been pestering her would make her life a living hell. The only option she had was to pass the competition examination and become an Inner Sect disciple.

She took a deep breath and was about to continue climbing when suddenly, Meng Hao’s gaze… fell on her.

The young woman didn’t notice, and she wasn’t even looking up into the sky anymore.

However, Meng Hao’s eyes were fixed squarely on her. The instant he had noticed her, his heart had trembled.

He was no longer observing the mountain; his full attention was focused on her.

She wore the robe of an Outer Sect disciple, and had eyes filled with determination. Although she was pretty, she was not unmatchably beautiful. However, there was something about her that caused Meng Hao to be deeply drawn to her.

It was as if this young woman had a soul on her, a soul from a previous life that hadn’t awakened yet.

In that previous life, there were ties of Karma that affected the whole world.

Meng Hao didn’t need to examine it closely to know that he was looking… at Xu Qing.

Within Meng Hao’s heart was a teardrop. When he was transmigrating into the Violet Sea, that teardrop sank to the seafloor and then into his mouth. Then, Xu Qing’s teardrop had fused into his heart.

She was a simple young woman, who had a simple type of love. There was nothing about such love that could shake Heaven and Earth. There was no raging fire. Instead, it was like water, calm and tranquil as it passed through the years.

Meng Hao looked at the young woman there on the mountain, and it felt as if tidewaters were surging up within his heart. It was as if this woman’s appearance caused a huge stone to splash onto the surface of a calm lake. Ripples spread out, causing the calmness to be broken. At the moment, there was nothing he could do except to feel incredible shock.

That huge stone was like a catalyst that caused Meng Hao’s thoughts and mind to spin. Within his memory, an image appeared. He saw a woman standing on an island above the Violet Sea. As she looked off into the distance, a tear welled up in the corner of her eye and then fell down.

That one tear sent the entire Violet Sea boiling.

The teardrop contained pain, confusion, longing, recollection, as well as an unprecedented, unspoken, profound feeling of attachment.

It was the unforgettable look she gave him on Mount Daqing. It was when she suddenly caught sight of him from within the crowd of Black Sieve Sect disciples. It was the pain felt outside the Rebirth Cave, when they looked at each other and didn’t know when they would see each other again.

In the end, all of that transformed into a teardrop, which then turned into massive waves.

It was as if everything between them had been ordinary, and yet that ordinariness had at some point turned into a fundamental part of their lives. It was as if, without even realizing it, both of them had suddenly come to exist permanently as a part of each other’s hearts.

“It’s Xu Qing,” murmured Meng Hao. A smile broke out on his face. It was the smile caused by an imminent reunion after having been parted for more than a hundred years. His body suddenly flickered, and he disappeared from the sight of all the disciples present. When he reappeared, shockingly, he was standing on the stone step directly in front of the female Outer Sect disciple.

She almost bumped directly into him. His sudden appearance caused her to subconsciously edge backward a few steps.

The nearby Inner Sect disciple’s eyes went wide. His voice hoarse, he said, “Little Patriarch… you….”

He was so close to her that Meng Hao could feel his heart thumping. He looked at the yet still sleeping Xu Qing, and softly said, “From now on, you are a Conclave disciple of the Fourth Peak!”

The woman stared in shock, confusion, and panic. She was nervous, disbelieving, and frightened. She glanced at the Inner Sect disciple as if to ask for help.

The Inner Sect disciple took a deep breath and then immediately bowed his head in compliance. He immediately produced a jade slip and asked,

“What’s your name?”

Before the woman could respond, Meng Hao’s voice could be heard.

“Her name is Xu Qing. She’ll be practicing cultivation in my Immortal’s cave from now on.”

“Huh?” said the girl, her eyes wide. “My… my name is….”

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# Chapter 574: Our Agreement

In the Fourth Peak, Meng Hao’s status made it so that his words were like the will of Heaven. The Inner Sect disciple nodded, made a brand mark onto the jade slip, then clasped hands and left.

Everything happened so quickly that the young woman was left standing there at a loss. She didn’t even notice as Meng Hao grabbed her by the arm.

That seemed to wake her up.

“Hey… hey, what are you doing?!” she said, her eyes going wide. A look of terror appeared inside of them as she suddenly recalled who this person was, and the stories she had heard told about him within the Sect. She was about to struggle against him, when he wrapped his arms around her and flew up into the air.

As Meng Hao flew over the Fourth Peak, the disciples who looked up to see him holding the young woman had strange expressions on their faces. Many of them looked at each other in dismay.

“Who is the Little Patriarch holding…?”

“I’ve never seen her before. From her garments she seems to be an Outer Sect disciple.”

“No way! He was so peaceful earlier today. The sky isn’t even dark, and he’s already back to his old self?”

Meanwhile, up in mid-air above the Fourth Peak.

“Put me down!!” said the young woman, her face bright red. A look of rage had appeared in her phoenix-like eyes. She continued to struggle against

Meng Hao, but he seemed to have no intention of releasing her. She could only look at his face, inches away from her own, her fury growing more and more intense.

When the two of them finally landed outside of his Immortal’s cave, the woman opened her mouth and bit viciously down onto his arm. He looked at her for a moment, smiled, and released her.

“You’re going to practice cultivation here for a while,” he said with a smile, giving her a deep look. “It will only take a few days for you to realize who I am.”

“You’re the Eldest Brother of the Fourth Peak, Elite Apprentice of the Sect! Don’t tell me that gives you the right to arbitrarily humiliate other disciples!?” The woman backed up, staring at Meng Hao angrily.

“I was an Elite Apprentice yesterday, not today,” he said, laughing. With that, he sat down cross-legged and looked at the young woman.

That got her even angrier. But then, she thought of his status, and the stories she had heard, and she began to tremble. She backed up further, putting herself even more on guard.

She had heard far too many stories about this person. Any one of them was enough to cause an Outer Sect disciple like her to tremble with terror.

Time passed. Soon, it was evening, and then night. Bright stars twinkled into being up above. They were dim at first, but quickly grew clear and bright.

Perhaps it was because of the icy night wind, or the young woman’s panic-stricken state. In any case, she shrank into a corner against the stone wall, looking quite helpless.

Meng Hao looked at her and then stood up.

“Don’t you move!!” she cried, suddenly growing even more nervous. Ignoring her demands, Meng Hao walked over to her, retrieved a set of clothing from his bag of holding, and gently laid it over her.

The softness of his movement caused her to gape in surprise.

He smiled, returned to where he had been sitting before, and continued to meditate.

The woman looked at him silently, her expression one of confusion and doubt. Even more confused were the surrounding Fourth Peak disciples who had hidden themselves in the area to watch the proceedings.

They were all whispering to each other curiously about his compassionate action just now.

Another person who was completely confused was Ke Yunhai.

“Has the kid really had a change in personality?” he murmured in astonishment.

No words were exchanged through the entire night.

The young woman was incredibly nervous the entire time. She didn’t dare to meditate, nor close her eyes. She was too frightened of what she feared might happen if she did.

However, her nervousness, coupled with the exhaustion from climbing the mountain during the test earlier, caused her unwittingly fall asleep.

When the first rays of dawn light touched her face, her eyelashes flickered and she slowly opened her eyes. Then she began to tremble. She quickly rose to her feet, causing the two robes which had been placed on top of her to tumble to the ground.

The robes were thick, and were obviously quite warm.

One of them had been placed on her by Meng Hao when she was awake. As for the other, he had covered her with it after she fell asleep.

Just in front of her was a small ball of fire that emanated pulses of heat. The heat was filled with the power of Heaven and Earth, and relieved some of the exhaustion that had filled her body.

Seeing this, the woman stared in astonishment. She looked up at Meng Hao.

He was striding down some of the stone steps on the mountain, some fruit in hand. These were Spirit Fruits, something that Outer Sect disciples had no qualification to enjoy. Only Elite Apprentices could have access to them.

Meng Hao put one down in front of the young woman.

Her expression was complex. After having a night of rest, she seemed to have come to terms with her current situation. She still felt apprehensive, though, unsure of how she had attracted the attention of this Chosen of Heaven. She also wasn't sure why he had changed her entire fate with that single sentence.

"Try the Spirit Fruits," he said, popping one into his mouth. "The flavor is incredible." He handed another over to her.

She hesitated for a moment, then accepted and bit down onto one of the fruits. Suddenly, her eyes began to glow, and when she squinted, they looked like two crescent moons.

"Good?" asked Meng Hao with a smile.

The young woman's face flushed, and she nodded.

"The Outer Sect is pretty chaotic," he continued, looking up into the sky. "I'll help you pay back the debts you owe."

The young woman's hand stopped in mid-air, clutching at a Spirit Fruit. She bowed her head, saying nothing in response.

"Those Outer Sect disciples who have been treating you poorly have already been taken care of," he went on softly.

The young woman's body trembled slightly. After a long moment passed, she looked up at Meng Hao, almost in a daze.

"Why?" she asked. "Why are you treating me like this? I'm just an ordinary Outer Sect Disciple, and you're…. Why?"

Meng Hao shook his head but didn't say anything.

"Is it because of Xu Qing? Who is she?" the young woman asked. She rose to her feet and looked at him, her gaze filled with stubbornness. She wanted to know the answer.

Meng Hao was quiet for a moment. Today was the third day, and unless something unforeseen occurred, Xu Qing should be waking up soon. Then this young woman would disappear. After all… she had long since already perished.

Seeing the look in her eyes, Meng Hao's eyes slowly grew blank, as if he was recalling the past. In his mind's eye, he saw the events outside the Rebirth Cave, the killing of Ji Hongdong, and Xu Qing's tears. He saw himself raising his hand to wipe them away. He heard those voices from years ago.

"We're safe now. No one will know your secret."

"Meng Hao. Will we… see each other again?"

"Don't cry. There's a long road ahead. Who knows when it is that we will meet again."

Meng Hao still remembered how he had been about to turn around that day, when a warm, supple body embraced him from behind.

"I'll wait for you." 1

Xu Qing's voice, filled with determination, was strong enough to last through past, present, and future lives.

“You could think of Xu Qing as your next life,” Meng Hao said softly. “Regarding the two of us… we have an agreement to meet each other in the next life.”

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# Chapter 575: Long Time No See

The young woman seemed to understand the words themselves, but not their true meaning. She looked at Meng Hao silently, then lowered her gaze to the Spirit Fruit in her hand. After a long moment, she took a few steps back to lean up against the rock wall. She put the fruit in her mouth and ate it. A smile appeared on her face.

“I’m not sure what exactly you mean when you say ‘next life,’” she said with a light smile. “All I do know is that this Xu Qing of whom you speak is truly blessed.” The wind suddenly tousled her hair, which she tucked behind her ear.

Having finished speaking, she sat down and took a deep breath, then closed her eyes. Without any further words, she concealed within her eyes the enlightenment she didn’t wish anyone else to see.

She was an intelligent young woman, more intelligent than most other young women her age.

From the way Meng Hao spoke, she could tell that he was referring to something related to death.

“If you and Xu Qing have an agreement to meet here,” she murmured to herself, “if she is destined to awaken within my body. Well then… I am willing to let that happen. I am willing to let you reunite with her here.”

In this moment, in the Demon Immortal Sect, during that split second in which she, of her own initiative, expressed such willingness, a rare change suddenly occurred.

The Cultivators of South Heaven entered the Second Plane via host bodies. That was something that didn’t require the consent of the host bodies themselves. After all, they had long since perished, and were nothing more than corpses on the outside.

However… despite having been dead for so many years, the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane was special. Their spirits existed within the plane, and those spirits… if they were willing, could allow the outside Cultivators to completely take over their identity.

Normally speaking, the techniques cultivated by the host body that they had gained enlightenment regarding, would be available to the South Heaven Cultivators as vague memories. They could use them, but could not take them away.

It was like they were… outsiders.

Except now, something different was happening. A change was underway that would produce something more like… an insider.

The young woman’s eyes were closed hard, and did not reopen.

Everything was quiet. Meng Hao did not speak. He sat there cross-legged, looking up into the sky, waiting silently as time slipped by, waiting… for Xu Qing to wake up.

Under his protection, nothing would happen to her, and no one would be able to harm her in any way. Meng Hao did not cultivate any techniques. He simply watched as the sunlight grew brighter in the sky. He looked around at the world of the ancient Demon Immortal Sect. Within his heart, the feeling of being a part of this place only continued to grow stronger.

He suddenly felt very envious of Ke Jiusi.

He envied the family that Ke Jiusi had in this Sect. He envied all of his Brothers and Sisters. He envied the fact that Ke Jiusi had friends who would even kill for him. However, what he most envied was… that Ke Jiusi had such a good father.

Ke Jiusi had a father who would bend over backward for him. He would work hard behind the scenes to erase the scrawlings that were the errors committed by his son. He was a father whose tolerant heart could accept any errors on the part of his son.

And then, there was the white hair that filled his temples, and the death aura that he did his best to hide. Clearly, Ke Jiusi's father, Paragon of the Fourth Peak, was reaching the end of his life.

"This is all just a play… and I'm merely observing it," he thought. "But if that's true, then why do I want so much to become a part of the play, to become one of the people here?"

He thought of Ke Yunhai, and his stern gaze. Deep within that gaze, Meng Hao could sense a deep love that somehow made him lose his way. He thought back to Mount Daqing and Yunjie County. He thought back to his own childhood, and his own father and mother.

Back then, he had been very happy, completely without a care in the world. But then the violet wind swept through Yunjie County, and everything vanished.

"Who is my father…?" he thought. As he gazed off into the sky, his mood sank. "Is he still alive in the world? Does he know that his image still exists in my thoughts, in my memories?"

Submerged as he was in this sea of bitterness, Meng Hao produced a flagon of alcohol from his bag of holding. He lifted it to his lips and took a long drink.

"Dad. Mom. Do you know that I'm already starting to forget what you look like…? It's been too many years. The image of your faces is starting to fade away.

"I don't want it to be that way. It's just what happens when time passes. Sometimes I want to hold on to those images, but I can't…. I really envy Ke Jiusi…." Meng Hao took another long drink of alcohol. It burned as it slid down his throat and into his anxiety.

Meng Hao rarely slipped into a mood such as this. Starting the year his father and mother went missing, he’d had no choice but to learn to be independent and strong. In this moment, though, because of Xu Qing, he had started thinking of the past. The memories of the Southern Domain, of Mount Daqing, and the relationship between Ke Jiusi and Ke Yunhai, all struck a chord within him. He couldn’t help but think of Yunjie County, his happy childhood, and of his parents.

He suddenly felt as if he understood this tyrannical silkpants, Ke Jiusi. If Ke Jiusi really was still alive, then perhaps after all the tens of thousands of years, this dead ancient Demon Immortal Sect was the only place where he truly existed.

He had never left. He was here to protect the Sect, to protect the Fourth Peak. Year after year, for an eternity, he was here to protect that Pure Land which existed in his heart.

Most likely, the people around Meng Hao in the Demon Immortal Sect would never be able to imagine what Ke Jiusi would be like tens of thousands of years later.

“He saw his father die. He watched his Sect become desolate. He looked on as his friends perished. In the end, he bore witness to the absolute destruction of the Sect.

“If I were him, what would I do…?” Thoughtfully, Meng Hao took another long drink. Evening was falling. An entire day had slipped by while Meng Hao wallowed in his emotions.

“Ke Jiusi sent me back here, to the era in which his father was dying. I think I understand… what he wants me to do.” A look of enlightenment filled his eyes. He was just raising the alcohol flagon to take another drink when suddenly, a hand reached out from behind him to grasp his wrist lightly.

As he turned his head, he felt someone embracing him tightly from behind. It felt just like the embrace from back by the Rebirth Cave, that embrace which was filled with the fear of loss.

A smile broke out on Meng Hao’s face. He didn’t speak, but rather, allowed the beautiful woman behind him to embrace him. She pressed up against his back, as if she were trying to hear his heart beating.

It was as if the only way she could prove that everything that was happening was real… was to hear his heart beating. Perhaps everything around them was a dream, but within that dream, the two of them had each other.

I thought that when I saw you, I would have the world. I didn’t know that within your dreams, you already had me.

It was evening, and soft, orange light shone down onto the Fourth Peak, creating dark shadows on the opposite side of the mountain. Within those dark shadows were two people, embracing each other.

They seemed to wish that time could stop forever. Their longing, their promise, were no longer like sand floating in the wind.

A long time passed. Soon, the sky was dark. Meng Hao looked at the woman in front of him. The features he saw were different from Xu Qing’s, but the soul was the same ever.

“You’re awake,” he said.

Because her soul was different, her facial features suddenly seemed to change a bit. She grew colder, less timid and nervous. She grew more simple. Less a stranger.

She was Xu Qing.

She was not intelligent like Han Bei. She was not incredibly beautiful like Chu Yuyan. She was Xu Qing. Simple and cold, like her heart. When she loved someone, she didn’t need a reason. She only needed to know that somehow, that person was part of her.

She wore the robe of an Outer Sect disciple and had long, beautiful hair. Her features were delicate, and although they couldn’t be described as immaculately beautiful, they caused Meng Hao to think of that one person who was always in his heart… Elder Sister Xu.

Xu Qing looked at Meng Hao, and a smile broke out on her face. A warmth could be seen in her pupils, as well as longing, and over a hundred years of memories. She looked at Meng Hao, and recalled their past.

He carried the look of someone who had experienced great changes, and was no longer young and inexperienced.

She gazed at Meng Hao for a long time. She didn't ask why he was here, nor did she seem surprised to see him here as she woke up.

It was as if to Xu Qing, it didn't matter where she saw Meng Hao, or when. Any time she encountered him, she felt at ease, calm.

Surrounded by bustling crowds, you look at me, I look at you, and we smile at each other.

It was as if such a meeting had happened a million times for her already. It was as if from beginning to end, even that time in the Violet Sea, she had complete and utter faith that the two of them would in fact meet again one day.

“Not surprised?” said Meng Hao, smiling.

“Why would I be surprised?” she said, shaking her head and smiling. “You made a promise, and we had an agreement… to meet again.”

As Meng Hao looked at her, much of the bitterness in his heart faded away. His smile grew wider. This was Xu Qing. Plain and simple Xu Qing.

She believed that they would meet again. Because of their agreement with each other, it didn't matter when or where it was, she wouldn't be surprised. It was all because of her firm belief.

“It's been many years…. Have you been well?” she asked softly. To her, Meng Hao might be a few years younger than her. However, despite the fact that more than a hundred years had passed, his image never left her heart.

She could never forget that time she watched as he leaned out over the edge of the cliff, holding down a rope to Wang Youcai and the others, and at the same time, making fun of them.

She could never forget what he looked like in the ancient Blessed Land, when he stood protectively in front of her during her moment of helplessness.

Even more unforgettable was the time in the Black Sieve Sect when, after merging with Matriarch Phoenix, she had woken up. Meng Hao had been about to leave the Sect when he turned and smiled at her.

Never in her life would she be capable of forgetting what happened outside the Rebirth Cave.

If secrets could count as accumulated emotions between two people, then she and Meng Hao had many. There were many secrets that only the two of them could understand.

“I went to the Black Lands, and the Western Desert,” Meng Hao said with a smile. As the evening wind blew Xu Qing’s hair into disarray, Meng Hao reached up and grasped her wrist.

She lowered her head, a slight smile tugging at her lips.

“So did I,” she said, looking back up at him.

“I know,” he replied, grinning.

The soft moonlight shone down on the two of them, covering them like a layer of silver sand. The beautiful wind lifted up their long hair.

Xu Qing looked at Meng Hao, then suddenly gaped in astonishment as she realized something. Her eyes filled with a strange look.

“Wait…. Why… why do you look the same as before?”

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# Chapter 576: Limitless Possibilities!

Meng Hao was shocked by Xu Qing’s words. His eyes flickered, and then narrowed. He didn’t respond immediately.

He focused his attention on examining his physical appearance. His facial features really were his own. There was no change whatsoever.

It was at this moment that he realized he had completely overlooked this point!

Xu Qing, Ji Mingfeng, and most assuredly, the rest of the Cultivators from the lands of South Heaven, all looked completely different. In coming here, their souls had fused with another body.

But that was not the case with Meng Hao. He could open his bag of holding and remove items from within. Although he couldn’t take things from here and put them inside, he was still clearly in a completely different position than the others.

Earlier, he had hesitated a bit regarding this matter, but hadn’t given it too much thought. However, Xu Qing had just hit the nail on the head with her observation. Meng Hao’s heart and mind suddenly felt as if it were being struck by lightning.

He began to breathe heavily. Xu Qing looked at him and, seeing that he was lost in thought, did not ask any further questions. He was clearly thinking about some matter that was important enough to cause his countenance to change.

Meng Hao thought back to what had happened in the First Plane. After stepping onto the top of the Fourth Peak, he had found no corpse, only an empty coffin.

“Don’t tell me… that I actually came in person to this place?!?!” he thought.

“Others came by means of a host body, which means that their souls entered into a dream. But I have no host body, which means that I am actually here!” Meng Hao almost couldn’t believe it, and could think of no possible explanation.

“But that’s the only way to explain why I can open my bag of holding, and why my appearance hasn’t changed! Although… if my appearance didn’t change, then how much Ke Yunhai and the others didn’t notice…?” After a long moment of thought, an answer occurred to him.

“Because Ke Yunhai, and this place… are nothing more than an illusory version of ancient times.” He sighed lightly and kneaded the bridge of his nose. There were too many contradictions to be had in all the different aspects of the situation. The only thing he could do was come to this much of an understanding. Complete understanding was beyond him currently.

“If all of that is true, then when the others wake up, does that mean they will be able to tell who I am?” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with a cold light. The light faded away quickly, though, and he suddenly chuckled.

“Well, who cares if they do? Considering my status, even if they do recognize me, they’ll be the ones hiding from me, not the other way around.” Having reached this point in his train of thought, Meng Hao looked at Xu Qing and was about to say something when suddenly, an audacious, almost insane, thought occurred to him.

As the idea began to develop, Meng Hao realized that it was virtually unthinkable, almost delusional. However, he couldn’t stop thinking about it. The idea sank deeper and deeper into his mind, and his eyes began to flow with a fearsome glow.

Xu Qing looked at him and hesitated for a moment before softly saying, “You….”

“I’m fine,” Meng Hao said with a smile. The glow disappeared from his eyes, to be replaced by a profound expression.

“If you have something you want to do, go take care of it,” Xu Qing said. “You don’t need to worry about me.” She rose to her feet and then pointed toward the door of the Immortal’s cave. “I’ll need to use your Immortal’s cave,” she said.

Meng Hao nodded. He retrieved a jade slip from within his robe, the one that contained the three hundred Daoist magics from Ke Yunhai. He handed it to Xu Qing.

“Take a look at these Daoist magics and see which ones you can gain enlightenment regarding,” he said.

Xu Qing took the jade slip and scanned it with Divine Sense. Her eyes instantly went wide with disbelief. She stared blankly at Meng Hao, her mind spinning. She was well informed about the ancient Demon Immortal Sect, but that caused her to be even more shocked by the jade slip.

“These… these….”

“They are all Daoist magics of the Demon Immortal Sect,” said Meng Hao, chuckling.

Xu Qing looked at him for a long moment, then nodded. A strange expression could be seen on her face as she began to search through the fused memories of her host body. Finally, she found information regarding Meng Hao’s identity.

After becoming aware of who she was, Xu Qing realized that as far as Meng Hao was concerned, it wasn’t necessarily impossible for him to eventually acquire all three thousand Daoist magics….

As Xu Qing entered the Immortal’s cave, Meng Hao stood there staring out at the lands. A bizarre glow could be seen in his eyes as he rubbed his bag of holding.

“To everyone else, this is an ancient, illusory world, like a dream…. But I am actually here. Does that mean that it’s possible to make changes that could affect history?” Meng Hao knew that such a prospect was outrageous, and also paradoxical.

However, he couldn’t stop himself from thinking about the possibility.

“Although there is a 99% chance that I’m wrong, even that slight possibility….” He began to breathe heavily, and his eyes glowed.

“Even that slight possibility means that a gamble would be worth it!” With that, he left the area of his Immortal’s cave to search around the Fourth Peak for what he was looking for.

It didn’t take long before he ran into an Inner Sect disciple, floating through the air like a ghost as he patrolled the mountain. When he saw Meng Hao, he instantly stopped in place and clasped hands.

“Greetings, Little Patriarch,” he said.

Meng Hao may have been stripped of his status as Elite Apprentice, but in the Fourth Peak, being an Elite Apprentice was secondary to his eternal status as Little Patriarch.

“Do you have any medicinal pills?” asked Meng Hao, his eyes gleaming. The disciple seemed a bit confused, but immediately nodded his head and produced a medicinal pill bottle from his bag of holding, which he then handed over to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao nodded and departed, leaving the Inner Sect disciple behind, confused.

After returning to his Immortal’s cave, he sat down cross-legged and took a deep breath. He opened the medicinal pill bottle, within which were seven medicinal pills the size of longan fruits, that pulsed with a medicinal fragrance. After smelling them, Meng Hao realized that most of the ingredients were unfamiliar to him. However, he could still reach the general conclusion that these were pills which could increase Cultivation base.

The quality of the medicinal pills was incredible; they had at least eighty percent medicinal strength. Most importantly, these pills were no ordinary product. They were medicinal pills belonging to an Inner Sect disciple of the ancient Demon Immortal Sect. To Cultivators from the lands of South Heaven, they could be described as Immortal Pills.

In fact, if this pill bottle surfaced somewhere within the lands of South Heaven, it would cause a huge commotion even among the various great Sects.

Meng Hao hesitated for a moment, gritting his teeth before finally taking one of the pills and putting it into his mouth. Even before the pill could dissolve, a roaring sound filled Meng Hao’s mind. At the same time, and indescribable, boundless power completely inundated him. It was like an endless, furious sea, and he was a tiny, leaf-like boat, weak enough to be destroyed with a single blow.

Meng Hao immediately spit the pill out of his mouth. A few hours passed, and it was light outside, before he finally opened his eyes.

After opening his eyes, he checked his Cultivation base, and quickly frowned. It hadn’t increased even in the slightest. It was as if everything truly was illusory.

“Useless….” he said, sighing. Although he had assumed this would happen, he still couldn’t help but feel some regret. He stood and looked out at the rising sun, and suddenly, his heart trembled.

“Medicinal pills don’t work, and I can’t increase my Cultivation base. However, what about the various techniques and regions of the Demon Immortal Sect focused on cultivating the fleshly body?” It was not very likely that techniques existed that could quickly be learned and used to increase the power of the fleshly body. However, there were areas in the Sect specifically set aside for fleshly body cultivation. Meng Hao knew this from Ke Jiusi's memories.

One of them was none other than the Underworld Cave of the Fourth Peak.

Within the Underworld Cave was an inexhaustible supply of Underworld Death Sand, which came from the Underworld River. Any Cultivator who entered the Underworld Cave without a powerful body would have their skin shredded off, their blood and muscles ground into a paste, and their bones crushed.

At the same time, because the Underworld Death Sand was filled with the pinnacle of death, that meant it was also filled with the pinnacle of life. It contained the power to cause one's Qi and blood to develop with vigor. By practicing cultivation inside the Underworld Cave, it was possible to cause one's fleshly body to grow stronger and stronger.

Meng Hao's eyes glittered as he headed toward the cave. As soon as he arrived, the guards, two Fourth Peak Conclave Disciples, instantly stared in shock. In all the years they had stood guard here, they had never once seen the Little Patriarch step foot inside.

They immediately greeted him with clasped hands. After hearing his demands, the Conclave Disciples' foreheads began to drip with cold sweat. They immediately tried to advise him against such a course of action, but seeing that he was determined, could only brace themselves and begin to open the cave.

"Little Patriarch, it's very dangerous in there. You… you could always find some other places to temper your fleshly body, you know? You really shouldn't go inside…."

Meng Hao nodded in response. As the Conclave disciples opened the cave, a glowing light appeared in the stone wall. Meng Hao strode forward into the light.

As soon as he entered, everything went pitch black. Before he could see anything clearly, stabbing pain covered his entire body. It seemed as if an innumerable amount of gritty sand covered everything, surrounding his body. In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao's body was on the verge of collapse.

Enduring the pain, he instantly entered the Seventh Anima.

Boom!

His body grew larger as the battle prowess of sixty-four great circle Nascent Souls filled him. His fleshly body exploded with intense power. However, the pain that he felt only continued to grow stronger.

After ten breaths of time passed, blood spouted from his mouth and he tumbled backward. He shot out of the exit at top speed, leaving the terrifying world of flying sand.

As soon as he emerged, he sat down cross-legged to meditate. His entire body was a bloody mess, and looked shocking to the extreme. The Conclave disciples responsible for the Underworld Cave felt their hearts pounding with fear that he might unexpectedly pass away.

Four hours passed. Meng Hao's fleshly body was now completely recovered. He opened his eyes, and although he looked exhausted, he quickly checked his body. An intense light gleamed within his eyes, a look filled with excitement.

"My fleshly body… can be cultivated!" Although he wasn't sure he would be able to keep such a powerful fleshly body after he left this place, he did know that the feeling of power he was experiencing in his fleshly body seemed completely real.

"If I can combine some body refining techniques like the Mountain Consuming Incantation or the Demon Animas Nine Transformations… then my efficiency would be incredible!" His eyes shining with anticipation, he turned and headed back toward the Immortal's cave. The instant he stepped foot inside, Xu Qing opened her eyes and looked with excitement at Meng Hao. A warm smile appeared on her face.

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# Chapter 577: Silkpants Demon Entente

Time passed by. In the blink of an eye, more than ten days had gone by. The Fourth Peak disciples gradually came to notice that their Little Patriarch, the number one silkpants bully, had experienced a change of temperament recently. Unexpectedly, he hadn’t stepped foot out of the Fourth Peak at all recently.

He would spend all day gaining enlightenment of Daoist magic, or would temper his fleshly body in the Underworld Cave. It was actually so unusual that the Fourth Peak disciples were alarmed. Even Ke Yunhai could scarcely believe it. After observing Ke Jiusi a few times, a contented smile could be seen on Ke Yunhai’s face.

Meng Hao was thoroughly immersed in practicing cultivation. He completely ignored all outside matters, even the awakening of all the other South Heaven Cultivators.

The fleshly body tempering caused him to grow much stronger with each passing day. At the moment, he maintained his place in the First Anima, and yet, the strength of his fleshly body was equivalent to that when he entered the Second Anima.

Such an increase caused Meng Hao to realize which direction his path lay!

“If I could reach the point where my fleshly body in the First Anima was as strong as it normally is in the Seventh Anima, then even if I have no change in Cultivation base, my fleshly body might be able to reach the point of… Spirit Severing!” His heart beat rapidly. As of this point, he truly felt that the fleshly body cultivation of the Second Plane was just as important as mastering techniques.

It was an incredible opportunity available only to him. In the past, there had never been a Cultivator who could acquire such good fortune in the Second Plane.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, and a bright glow appeared in his eyes.

Recently, he and Xu Qing had been spending time gaining enlightenment of the three hundred Daoist magics. Of course, they each focused on different specific types of Daoist magic. When Meng Hao came to the conclusion that he couldn't gain enlightenment with one, then he would immediately switch to a another.

During the ten days, he managed to look through all three hundred. In the end, there were three that he chose to intially focus his attention on. One was the Mountain Consuming Incantation, the second was the Heavenly Demon Transformation, and the last was…

None other than Ke Jiusi's Soul Divergence Incantation!

"The Mountain Consuming Incantation is both an internal and external cultivation technique. However, the main focus is cultivation of the fleshly body. By practicing such cultivation to the pinnacle, one could become a Human Immortal!

"As for the Heavenly Demon Transformation, it is ranked 96…. It's terrifying, a magical technique that requires a Demon Soul. By fusing the Demon Soul into one's body, one can incarnate into a Greater Demon. There are nineteen levels, each of which can incarnate a different Greater Demon of Heaven and Earth!

"Regarding the Soul Divergence Incantation… it is an undying Dao!" Meng Hao's eyes glowed with a strange light. Of these three Daoist magics, the Soul Divergence Incantation was the most mysterious. It was actually not one of the Demon Immortal Sect's three thousand Daoist magics, but rather, something Ke Yunhai had acquired on his own by chance. Based on his own

Cultivation base and knowledge, he knew that it could be considered a precious treasure. However, it was not suitable for him in terms of cultivation, which was why he had recommended it to Ke Jiusi.

The Soul Divergence Incantation enabled one to cultivate an undying soul. The reincarnation of Heaven and Earth could do nothing to destroy such a soul. Even when one died, in a matter of years, a flesh and blood body would be reborn.

This art… defied Heaven!

The more Meng Hao understood these various techniques, the more he realized how magnificently shocking the Demon Immortal Sect was. During the ten days that passed, he took time to observe some of the other disciples of the Demon Immortal Sect as they practiced their cultivation. During that time, he was actually able to sense a totemic aura.

In fact, there were some of the three hundred Daoist magics that, when he examined them more closely, obviously required totem tattoos once a certain level of cultivation was reached.

This discovery validated some of Meng Hao speculations from years ago. It seemed that the totemic neo-demons of the Western Desert likely originated somehow from the Immortal Demon Sect.

Meng Hao’s shock only continued to grow as he learned more about the Demon Immortal Sect. He focused on cultivating the Mountain Consuming Incantation and the Heavenly Demon Transformation, although he placed the most emphasis on the former. As for the Heavenly Demon Transformation, he didn’t intend to thoroughly gain enlightenment of it, although he had noticed some similarities between it and his Seven Animas Soul Transformation.

As far as the Soul Divergence Incantation went, it was a shocking art, but something that he would be incapable of success when it came to enlightenment.

Time passed quickly. Soon, Meng Hao had been in the Second Plane for a whole month. During that time, Xu Qing did not leave the Immortal’s cave. She was fully immersed in gaining enlightenment of Daoist magic. Eventually, Meng Hao completely gave up on the Soul Divergence Incantation and the Heavenly Demon Transformation, and instead focused complete attention on cultivating the Mountain Consuming Incantation.

He would also take time to visit the Underworld Cave, where he continued to temper his fleshly body. By now, he could stay inside the Underworld Cave for a full thirty breaths of time. The strength of his fleshly body was now quite obvious.

In fact, when the other silk-pants who had been punished with Meng Hao came to visit him on the Fourth Peak, they were astonished by the huge change that had occurred in the past month.

“After getting punished, I thought of something,” said Meng Hao. “If my fleshly body was strong enough, then maybe that punishment wouldn’t have hurt so much.” When he saw the strange expressions of the faces of the other silkpants, he cleared his throat and then continued on honestly, “I have the feeling that one of these days, I might experience five lashes, maybe even six or more. If I don’t temper my fleshly body enough before that happens, I’ll have no choice but to be lashed into a pulp.” Hearing this, the other silkpants seemed lost in thought. Apparently, what Meng Hao was saying made sense to them.

A while after that, Meng Hao called Xu Qing. Together with the other silkpants, they left the Fourth Peak for the first time in a month. As soon as they appeared outside, a rumbling sound could be heard, and a white lotus appeared up in the air.

When other disciples on the various peaks saw the lotus, they lowered their heads vigilantly. They all knew that the Sect ruffians who had been quiet for the past month, were now going to make another appearance.

Meng Hao stood in the crowd, exchanging greetings with the various friends who approached. It didn’t take long before he was surrounded by over a hundred people. Together, they flew wildly through the Demon

Immortal Sect, the sound of their talking and laughing drifting out with the wind. When the others saw that Xu Qing was with Meng Hao, they exchanged understanding smiles, and did their best to pay special attention to her.

Soon, the group neared a squat mountain that was part of the Seventh Peak of the Demon Immortal Sect. This mountain was an unofficial restricted area within the Sect.

It was not officially a restricted area; it was actually a location that the Sect silkpants had taken over to serve as their headquarters. Afterwards, it became a restricted area as far as other disciples of the Demon Immortal Sect were concerned.

On top of the squat mountain was a luxurious temple. Meng Hao sat in the seat of honor, surrounded by a crowd of people. Some arranged themselves in places according to the ranking of their various Clan ancestors. Soon, there were roughly seventy or eighty people seated about. They laugh and chatted about gossip from within the Sect, or their interesting experiences on the outside.

Next to Meng Hao sat a handsome young man with black wings who was embracing a smiling female disciple. “Jiusi,” he said, “my kid brother knows a few Inner Sect disciples who want to join our Demon Entente. I told him to bring them here today for us to have a look at. If there aren’t any problems, we might as well let them in.”

Meng Hao was not unfamiliar with the Demon Entente. He knew from Ke Jiusi’s memories that it was nothing more than an alliance formed by the silkpants. All members who joined would enjoy the protection offered by other silkpants.

Of course, a price needed to be paid, considering that the operation was privately run by the silkpants.

The Demon Immortal Sect turned a blind eye to the matter, and would ignore them, unless they caused too much of a ruckus. After all, the Elders of this Demon Entente were all silkpants who had deep roots within the

Sect. Although they might do a lot of absurd things, when it came to loyalty, theirs was far greater than that of the ordinary disciples.

Meng Hao nodded his head in response to the young man’s word. He lifted up a glass of alcohol and took a drink. Sitting next to him was Xu Qing, who was looking around curiously at the crowds. She still almost couldn’t believe the identity Meng Hao had acquired.

Not too much time passed before the disciples who wished to join the Demon Entente arrived. They entered the temple trembling, looking nervously at the silkpants around them. After quickly handing over the gifts of entry they had brought, they clasped hands and bowed to everyone.

One group after another entered. After a bit of time past, Meng Hao caught sight of a group of three Cultivators, two men and a woman, all of whom seemed very nervous. However, from what Meng Hao could tell, the nervousness was an act. Deep in their eyes, it was possible to sense that they actually despised everyone they were looking at, and Meng Hao could see that.

As soon as he saw them, Meng Hao started laughing. It was at this point that the three people saw that sitting in the seat of highest authority among the silkpants was none other than Meng Hao.

When they saw him, the three Inner Sect disciples began to shake, and their eyes filled with disbelief.

They recognized Meng Hao, and Meng Hao recognized the aura of their souls.

The woman in the group of three was none other than Ji Xiaoxiao. One of them was a stranger to Meng Hao, but he gave of a similar feeling as Ji Mingfeng had. Meng Hao was certain that he was a member of the Ji Clan.

Meng Hao was a bit surprised to see the last person. He had to think for a moment before he realized who it was. Song Yunshu! 1

He was none other than the Dao Child of the Song Clan of the Southern Domain. During the Song Clan search for a son-in-law, Meng Hao had come in first place, and had actually become the husband of the beloved daughter of the Song Clan, Song Jia. Although he had never thought about the matter much, after seeing Song Yunshu here today, he recalled who the man was.

“Interesting,” said Meng Hao, his eyes shining coldly. “Who would have thought that I would meet the three of you here?!”

Next to Meng Hao, Xu Qing smiled as she looked at the group of three.

These three could never have imagined that they would run into Meng Hao in this place. Their faces instantly fell. Meng Hao’s identity also caused them to be thoroughly astonished. They were well aware of what it meant that Meng Hao was sitting in such a position as he was.

However, the more shocked they were, the more difficult they found it to believe. They also were completely astonished when they realized that Meng Hao’s appearance hadn’t changed.

“He… he actually acquired the identity of an Elite Apprentice!” thought Ji Xiaoxiao, her eyes widening. “Ke Jiusi! To get Ke Jiusi as a host body, that’s… that’s impossible! Elite Apprentice! That’s the kind of host body that exists only in legend!” She began to pant as her mind reeled.

Next to her was the other member of the Ji Clan. He didn’t know Meng Hao, but he knew that the person sitting in that position could only be the legendary number one bully of the Sect, Ke Jiusi. His heart trembled as he realized that Meng Hao was just like him, an outsider.

That in itself was enough to leave him flabbergasted. However, even more shocking was that he suddenly recalled that Ke Jiusi had killed a Conclave disciple of the First Peak nearly a month ago.

Instantly, he began to put the pieces of the puzzle together….

“He killed Ji Mingfeng!” he cried inwardly. “This is bad! If he knows that I know, he’ll kill me to shut me up!!” The Ji Clan member’s face fell. In actuality, he had wanted Ji Mingfeng dead more than anybody else, but nobody knew that.

Song Yunshu stood there in a daze. Although Meng Hao’s appearance hadn’t changed, he instantly began to suspect if what he was seeing was true. But then Meng Hao laughed. That expression caused Song Yunshu to recall the image from that year of the person who had become his brother-in-law, Meng Hao.

“Elite Apprentice…. He’s actually… an Elite Apprentice!!”

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# Chapter 578: Dad….

The young man with the black wings was named Yu Xinglong. He looked thoughtfully at the group of three for a moment, then turned to Meng Hao. “Jiusi, do you know them?”

The other surrounding silkpants naturally looked over at the strange scene, their eyes glittering. They were now no longer chatting.

Instantly, the entire temple hall grew silent. Within the silence, Ji Xiaoxiao and the other two felt an intense pressure, causing an unprecedented sense of deadly crisis to fill them.

“Cheater!” thought Ji Xiaoxiao. “He’s a cheater! Otherwise he could never become an Elite Apprentice!? How… how are other people supposed to acquire legacies here? How are other people supposed to survive!?!?” Her eyes were wide and sweat poured down her forehead. She looked like she was about to cry as she edged backward. However, the looks being given to her by the surrounding silkpants, who in her view were already dead, caused the sense of deadly crisis within her to climb to the pinnacle.

The male member of the Ji Clan was proud to the extreme, but at the moment… he couldn’t summon a scrap of pride. “This isn’t fair!” he thought. “How did he get his hands on such an identity…? How are the rest of us supposed to acquire any good fortune? Just from the look on his face you can tell that if he gets pissed off, he can say a word and… we’ll all be dead!! If our souls die in here, then we’re truly dead!”

“Of course I know them,” said Meng Hao, smiling and standing up. “Close the doors!”

As soon as the words left his mouth, the main doors of the temple hall slammed shut. Glowing lights enveloped the doors, and at the same time, virtually all of the silkpants in the hall rose to their feet.

This was the Demon Entente. This was their headquarters. If they killed people here… it wouldn’t be without repercussion, and there would certainly be punishments doled out. But they had plenty of measures to evade such punishment. If they wanted to, they could crush these three where they stood.

Meng Hao smiled and said, “I remember that the Third Peak has a Soul Scorching Cave. I can tell the three of us are bound by destiny. That doesn’t happen very often. Therefore, I’ll send you to the Soul Scorching Cave to train for a month.

“If you succeed, you’re into the Demon Entente. If you fail, then your death has nothing to do with us.” As his voice echoed out throughout the hall, the other silkpants burst out laughing.

The faces of the three South Heaven Cultivators instantly went pale. Song Yunshu reluctantly said, “Can we… think about it?”

“Think about it? Entering the Demon Entente temple clearly shows your intentions. If you back out now, then you’re directly humiliating the Demon Entente. Do you dare to humiliate the Demon Entente? Do you dare to humiliate US?!” Meng Hao’s voice grew louder and louder as he spoke, causing dark looks to appear in the eyes of all the other silkpants.

“Brothers from the Third Peak, please take them away. As for this one….” His eyes fell onto Song Yunshu, and it almost seemed as if he were looking at a dead person. “Forget about him.”

Song Yunshu heaved a sigh of relief. Only a short moment had passed, but his entire body was already soaked with sweat.

Laughter filled the air as a dozen or so Third Peak silkpants flew out. They grabbed Ji Xiaoxiao and the other person, and then started to fly off. In this moment of crisis, Ji Xiaoxiao gritted her teeth and then anxiously called out, “I know where Ji Mingfeng’s corpse is! He has a bag of holding with treasures in it. I can take you there!”

The other Ji Clan Cultivator’s face fell, and he also called out, “Ji Mingfeng was unlucky! He picked the wrong time and then died before he came here! Nobody killed him! He died naturally!! I witnessed it myself! Since I was there, I couldn’t possibly be mistaken!”

The words spoken by the two of them essentially meant the same thing; they were giving their dark vow to join this shady organization.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he pointed at the male Ji Clan Cultivator and said, “Take him away.”

The face of the Ji Clan member flickered, and he was about to offer more explanations when the dozen or so Third Peak silkpants, having already been roused into action, whisked the man off before he could do anything further.

Song Yunshu’s face was pale, and his mind was reeling.

Breathing raggedly, Ji Xiaoxiao pushed her hand down onto her forehead, causing a soul strand to fly toward Meng Hao. Meng Hao looked at her with an enigmatic smile and then accepted the soul strand.

“Welcome to the Demon Entente,” said Meng Hao with a smile. The doors of the temple slowly opened. The observing silkpants knew that not all was as it seemed. However, everything was a matter of perspective, and to them, Ke Jiusi was part of their group, whereas everyone else was an outsider.

Ji Xiaoxiao forced a smile, then clasped hands and bowed. Inwardly, she sighed. She understood that from now on, she would have to try to convince other members of the Ji Clan that Ji Mingfeng had died because of an error in selecting the time period. That was why he had been killed the instant he appeared.

If anyone didn’t believe her, then as soon as Meng Hao faced any trouble, she too would be in a bad situation. Having reached this conclusion, killing intent flickered in her eyes. Some of it was for Meng Hao, the other was for her fellow Clan members.

Outside, the sun was beginning to set. As everyone began to depart, Meng Hao noticed Song Yunshu's absentminded expression, and suddenly realized that, considering Ji Xiaoxiao's ruthlessness, this Song Clan Dao Child was surely heading for a catastrophe.

Meng Hao shook his head, then paid the matter no more heed as he headed back toward the Fourth Peak with Xu Qing.

More time passed.

Everything was peaceful. Each morning at dawn, Meng Hao would go to observe and study the Fourth Peak to gain enlightenment of the Mountain Consuming Incantation. Other times, he would go to the Underworld Cave to practice fleshly body tempering.

Another month passed. Meng Hao wasn't sure how the passage of time in the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane compared to that in the outside world. In any case, he had acquired quite a bit during these two months.

The Mountain Consuming Incantation was now in an embryonic form within him. He had succeeded in branding it into his mind. Furthermore, his fleshly body tempering had also succeeded to quite a degree. By now, his normal body was as tough as it had been in the Third Anima.

"It's too bad the Soul Divergence Incantation… seems like a normal technique, but actually requires a very special environment." Meng Hao felt it to be somewhat of a pity. He was starting to get the feeling that if he could master the technique, he would be able to make shocking gains within the Demon Immortal Sect.

In fact, he was now beginning to suspect that the Soul Divergence Incantation was the reason Ke Jiusi was still alive within the First Plane.

"The cultivation of this art is filled with profound mysteries. An undying soul…."

As for Xu Qing, she was completely submerged in the three hundred Daoist magics. Meng Hao did not disturb her. After all, gaining enlightenment of such Daoist magic was the most important thing for her and the others.

Meng Hao could tell that Xu Qing was extraordinarily qualified to seek enlightenment of the Daoist magic. Some of it had to do with the latent talent of her own soul, and some of it had to do with her host body.

Several days later, Meng Hao was floating cross-legged in mid-air, studying the Fourth Peak. All of a sudden, Ke Yunhai's voice could be heard in his ears.

"Come see me," said the low voice. Meng Hao's eyes instantly snapped open.

Without hesitation, his body flashed as he headed toward Ke Yunhai's Immortal's cave. It didn't take him long to arrive, and when he entered and saw Ke Yunhai, his face fell.

Ke Yunhai now looked nothing like the middle-aged man he had been two months ago. He was much older, thoroughly ancient, his head full of white hair.

He sat cross-legged on the stone bed, just like he had before. However, the oil lamp next to him was much dimmer than before.

When he saw the look on Meng Hao's face, Ke Yunhai said, "Don't worry, your dad isn't dead yet." He smiled, his eyes filled with kindness and expectation, and even more so, a reluctance to part.

Meng Hao wasn't sure why he felt the emotions that he did. He had known all along that something like this would happen; but to see Ke Yunhai change into a white-haired old man in front of his own eyes, to see the aura of death around him grow stronger and stronger… it filled his heart with emptiness.

Not much time had passed, but the fatherly love from Ke Yunhai that Meng Hao felt made him think of his own father. At the moment, all he could do was stand there silently.

“You’ve done well recently,” said Ke Yunhai. “You haven’t brought about any more disasters for me to deal with. Since you’ve decided to focus on body tempering, then let me tell you about one of the three thousand Daoist magics that should be especially useful to you. It’s called the Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal. It’s a Daoist magic that fuses magical items into your fleshly body, turning it into a treasure. By combining it with the Mountain Consuming Incantation, you can make your body into something like a mountain.

“In the rankings of the three thousand Daoist magics, it is number 9!” His voice was very dignified by the time he finished speaking.

“There is another art called Fleshly Sanctification! It is extremely extraordinary. It would be better to call it a technique than a secret art. If you can master it, then your fleshly body can grow exponentially powerful in the blink of an eye, and stay that way forever.

“Such a mysterious art is extremely rare. In my entire life, I’ve only heard of two such arts. As far the specific details of how much it can strengthen your body, father doesn’t know. What I do know is that among the three thousand Daoist magics, it is ranked… number 7!

“Regarding the top ten Daoist magics among the three thousand, even I have no way to acquire them, not even with further service to the Sect. Lord Li has set rules regarding the top ten. All of them, with the exception of the legacy of the Mountain and Sea Scripture, can only be acquired by entering the Demon Immortal Pagoda.

“It is not easy to open the pagoda. The seven great Sect Priests must all join hands to do so. The pagoda has 99 levels. Every ten levels, there is a chance to acquire a Daoist magic.

“I’ve paid a heavy price to convince the other six Sect Priests to agree to open the pagoda for you two times. You need to seize these two chances, and fight to acquire the Daoist magic that you need!” Ke Yunhai spoke all these words casually. However, from the fluctuations on his ancient face, Meng Hao could guess that despite his light tone, he really had paid an incredible price.

If he hadn't, the other six Sect Priests would never have agreed to open the Demon Immortal Pagoda.

"Furthermore," continued Ke Yunhai, "although both instances of the Demon Immortal Pagoda opening have been arranged specifically for you, in order to cut down on gossip, others will also be allowed to enter.

"You don't need to worry. Although the difficulty level within the pagoda is extreme, father has prepared quite a few magical items for you. I spared no cost to give you your chance to get the special body tempering Daoist magics." As he spoke, a reddish glow appeared in Ke Yunhai's face. The glow was not ordinary, and almost looked like the last glow of light before sunset. He waved his hand, and a beastskin bag flew out in front of Meng Hao.

"Inside you will find 5,000 magical items, 30,000 Demon Weapons, 150,000 talismanic seals, and 1,000,000 Demon Stones. Take them. Even if you have to force your way through, then do it! Get to the top for me! Get those Daoist magics that you need!" From the way he looked at Meng Hao as he spoke, it was clear how much he doted upon him. Meng Hao's heart began to tremble as he looked at the beastskin bag. He took it in his hand and then scanned it with Divine Sense. His entire body shook.

It was clear that virtually all of the items inside emanated a fresh, new aura. Within that aura could be sensed a bit of Ke Yunhai.

Shockingly, all of these items… had been personally forged by Ke Yunhai during the past two months.

Even as his allocated lifespan reached its end, he had spared no effort to refine all of these objects for his son. Embodied here was the love of a father for his child; after all, of the items had been refined with his own life force.

When Meng Hao spoke, his voice was not carefully controlled like it had been before. As of this moment, he had forgotten about Ke Jiusi. This time… the words came up from the depths of his heart. He was so moved by Ke Yunhai, so envious of this life, felt so many complex thoughts and emotions, that all he could do was look up and softly murmur, “Dad….”

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# Chapter 579: To Get the Mountain and Sea Scripture, You Must Have a Demon Immortal Body!

“Stop acting like a little kid,” said Ke Yunhai, the love in his eyes growing even deeper. “Concentrate wholeheartedly on your cultivation. It’s a good thing! I just wish… that you had started acting like this a bit sooner.

“Alright, go. The Demon Immortal Pagoda opens in three days. If you can get some of what you want, then it won’t have been in vain that I got them to open it for you.” He gave Meng Hao a deep look.

Meng Hao bowed his head, then clasped his hands. Clutching the beastskin bag in his hand, he left, taking his melancholy and other complex emotions with him.

As he watched Meng Hao leave, Ke Yunhai’s face was no longer ruddy, but pale white. More wrinkles appeared, and the death aura surrounding him grew stronger. It seemed as if his flame of life could be snuffed out at any moment.

“Jiusi, your father can’t be with you forever. Soon… you’ll have only yourself to rely on…. I hope that you can learn to be a bit more sensible….” Ke Yunhai only continued to grow older. Originally, his Cultivation base had nearly limitless longevity. However, Lord Li had returned the Heavenly mandate to the masses. In the end, life would wither and die. As for Ke Yunhai, he had existed for a very, very long time. Currently, he was running out of energy to continue existing.

Actually, he should have withered up and died many years ago. However, because of his concern for Ke Jiusi, he continued to endure. Eventually, though he found that, no matter how much he wanted to continue on, he wouldn’t be able to do so for much longer.

“Lord Li, I will respect your decision. However… are you sure it is the correct one? If we powerful experts do not have limitless life, then what we are cultivating is not longevity. In that case, what is the end purpose of it all?” Ke Yunhai sighed and closed his eyes. However, only a moment passed before they opened again. Exhaustion could be seen within, but also, a bright glow, like the last flickering of a bright fire before it went out.

“Now is not the time for me to close my eyes. Before returning to the dust, I need to finish refining that true lifesaving treasure for Jiusi. I’ve been working on it for years, and only have a bit more work left…. Once it’s complete, then even if he hasn’t successfully refined the Soul Divergence Incantation, even nine Tribulations couldn’t kill him. In fact, it might even help him to finish cultivating the Soul Divergence Incantation!”

After returning to his own Immortal’s cave, Meng Hao saw that Xu Qing was still sitting there meditating, silently focusing on cultivating enlightenment. Meng Hao sat down and glanced around at the extravagant decorations on the walls of the Immortal’s cave.

After a long time passed, he looked down at the beastskin bag. It actually wasn’t very heavy, but for some reason, in Meng Hao’s hands, it felt very heavy indeed. What truly filled the bag wasn’t actually magical items, but rather, a father’s love for his son.

It contained his very life, and the truest of his feelings.

Finally, Meng Hao sighed. He closed his eyes and thought once again about his own father and mother, and the vague images of them that still existed within his memories.

Time passed. Three days were gone in the blink of an eye.

The echoing of bell tolls could be heard throughout the entire Demon Immortal Sect. Countless disciples, awoken from their sleep, flew out of their residences. All of them were astonished, and wanted to know what was going on. What they found was that in mid-air above the Demon Immortal Sect, pulsating, multicolored lights had suddenly appeared.

Rays of light spread out in all directions, covering the sky. The light made the three inverted mountains which hung up above to be even clearer.

As the light grew more intense, innumerable Cultivators appeared on the seven peaks of the Demon Immortal Sect. All of them were shaken inwardly. Some were old veterans of the Sect, whose expressions slowly began to change, as if they had suddenly recalled something. Their eyes filled with disbelief.

The bright glow lasted for a full quarter of an hour. Then, in the very center of the glow appeared an enormous fissure. It looked like a huge mouth with no beginning or end. The instant it appeared, a shocking rumbling sound echoed out as a glowing, bronze pagoda slowly emerged from within the fissure.

Each level of the pagoda had four iron chains stretching out into the air. There were a total of 99 levels, and therefore, nearly four hundred iron chains. Anyone who laid eyes on such a shocking scene would definitely be left astonished.

In the blink of an eye, the enormous pagoda had emerged. Rumbling echoed out in all directions and the ground quaked. The bronze pagoda slowly lowered down from the sky, growing larger and larger, until it seemed to blot out the sky above. Even though it was early morning, it almost seemed like the dead of night.

Finally, the enormous pagoda descended toward a spot between the Fourth and Third Peaks, directly above… the deep pit, which according to legend, housed the great Demon Divinity that protected the entire Sect.

It did not touch down onto the land, but rather, hovered up above. A huge shadow filled the sky above the Demon Immortal Sect. The pagoda appeared to be above the deep pit, but that was actually only the center location. In reality… if you looked at it from a distance, the pagoda seemed to cover the entire Demon Immortal Sect.

Beneath the darkness of the pagoda was not just the deep pit, but all seven peaks and the lands around them!

All of the Demon Immortal Sect disciples were panting and staring numbly.

Shockingly, on the 1st level of the pagoda was a huge bronze door covered with carvings of countless auspicious beasts, which emanated an archaic and primordial will.

The gigantic pagoda was shocking to the extreme. Compared to its huge size, the Cultivators below were nothing more than ants. Even the seven peaks looked like children in comparison.

It was at this point that seven suns, each one a different color, flew out from the seven peaks. As they slowly flew up into the air, the disciples in the Demon Immortal Sect all dropped to their knees to kowtow.

Within these seven suns sat seven cross-legged figures. They… were the seven Paragons of the seven peaks!

Within the fourth sun was none other than Ke Yunhai.

As the seven Paragons flew up into the sky, each one raised a hand and pointed toward the bronze pagoda. Instantly, a roaring sound could be heard as the huge bronze door on the 1st level suddenly… opened slightly!

Although the door only opened a crack, this pagoda was enormous. What appeared to be only a tiny sliver was actually three hundred meters wide!

The deep voice of the Seventh Peak Paragon suddenly rang out, “The Demon Immortal Pagoda has opened. In total, there are 99 levels. There is a chance on every level to acquire one of the 3,000 Daoist magics. Every ten levels, there is a chance to get one of the top 100. In the higher levels, there is even a chance to acquire Daoist magics from the top 10! The 70th, 80th, and 90th levels all provide that chance!

“If you pass the 99th level… you may select any of the top 10 Daoist magics, with the exception of the Mountain and Sea Scripture!

“Every time the pagoda is opened, it requires a vast consumption of Sect resources. Today, all of you will have a chance. Whichever of you has good luck, will be able to acquire good fortune.” The voice echoed throughout the entire Demon Immortal Sect. As it faded away, a deathly silence spread out among the million disciples of the Demon Immortal Sect.

It only took a moment, though, before an incredible commotion exploded out.

“The Demon Immortal Pagoda…. Is that the Demon Immortal Pagoda? Heavens! It’s… it’s huge!”

“That’s the most important pagoda in the First Heaven of the Demon Immortal Sect. It’s a precious treasure of the same level as the Mountain and Sea Scripture!”

Amidst the rise and fall of conversation, there was a female Cultivator who stood on the Fifth Peak, her fists clenched tightly. It was none other than Fang Yu, her eyes shining with determination and wild joy.

“I never thought that there would be such good fortune this time!” she thought. “The Demon Immortal Pagoda has actually appeared in this period of time!” Her eyes glowed with stubbornness.

At the same time, a middle-aged man stood at the foot of the Seventh Peak. He was an Inner Sect disciple honor guard in charge of Outer Sect disciples. He stood, looking up at the enormous Demon Immortal Pagoda up in the sky, his hands clasped behind his back and a strange light gleaming in his eyes.

“I thought my good fortune would be restricted to the gains in the Seventh Peak, and that it would be difficult to acquire at that. But now that the

Demon Immortal Pagoda has appeared, my chances have improved quite a bit!” This middle-aged man was the same person Meng Hao had been looking for: Patriarch Huyan.

Throughout the Demon Immortal Sect, Wang Lihai, Han Bei, and the other South Heaven Cultivators were all shaken. It didn’t matter if they were from the Eastern Lands, the Northern Reaches, the Southern Domain, or the Black Lands. All of them were astonished.

Amongst their number was an Inner Sect disciple from the Third Peak. He was a young man who up until this moment had spent his time bowing obsequiously to everyone around him. However, in the blink of an eye, he suddenly stood ramrod straight. Within his eyes flickered a bright glow, and an aura that almost seemed to contain the will of a monarch flickered out from his body.

This young man was from the Northern Reaches, and was of the Imperial Bloodline Clan!

He was not the only such blazing sun within the Demon Immortal Sect. There were others, all of whom suddenly rose up with lofty wills.

One of them was on the Sixth Peak. It was a young woman who shockingly wore the robes of a Conclave disciple. Other than Meng Hao, she had a higher position than anyone else from the Southern Domain.

She blinked a few times as she looked over toward the Fourth Peak and the Demon Immortal Pagoda. Then she smiled.

“Meng Hao really does have some pretty good luck. He found the corpse of one of the Elite Disciples, and in the few months before Ke Yunhai passed away in meditation at that.

“For the Demon Immortal Pagoda to appear in this Second Plane of limitless possibilities is nothing strange. It’s just like the real world. After all, with the Night Demon in existence, Heaven and Earth can create something from nothing. Even the traitorous Lord Ji was rather frightened.”

Naturally, this woman was Zhixiang.

“The Demon Immortal Pagoda has been opened!” As the archaic voice of the Seventh Peak Paragon sounded out, thousands of figures instantly flew up into the air toward the pagoda.

Meng Hao and Xu Qing walked out of the Immortal Cave and looked up at the towering pagoda. Xu Qing’s eyes filled with a glow of determination. She looked down at the jade slip in her hand and chuckled silently.

“I won’t be going,” she said. “These three hundred Daoist magics are good enough.”

Meng Hao nodded. He knew Xu Qing’s disposition, so he did nothing to try to persuade her to change her mind. He took a deep breath and looked up toward Ke Yunhai’s sun up in the sky. He could see the silhouette of the ancient man he had spoken with only three days before. After a moment of silent contemplation, his eyes flickered with decisiveness.

“Whether it’s for me or for Ke Yunhai, I’m going to go absolutely all out!” His body flickered as he flew up into the air toward the Demon Immortal Pagoda that had been opened especially for him. Up above, the figures in the seven suns, the seven Paragons, all looked at Meng Hao.

Within Ke Yunhai’s eyes could be seen hope as he watched Meng Hao disappear into the pagoda.

At the same time, more and more figures flew up and entered. In a very short period of time, more than 100,000 people had entered the 1st level of the Demon Immortal Pagoda.

Down below were even more people who chose just to watch. Since they only had this one chance, they decided to first observe for a while to see if they could derive any benefits.

“Back in the Sect, there’s a detailed description of the Demon Immortal Pagoda,” thought Zhixiang. “The pagoda doesn’t test the level of one’s

Cultivation base, nor the quality of one’s latent talent. What it tests is a person’s overall battle prowess.

“The level of difficulty is the same for every person, regardless of the level of their Cultivation base. A Cultivator in the Qi Condensation stage and an Immortal would both have the same chance. Each participant will face different opponents, based on their own strength.

“I’m curious how far that brat Meng Hao will get. What level will he reach?” Zhixiang didn’t immediately enter the pagoda. As far as she was concerned, while it was shocking enough to shake Heaven and Earth, at the same time, it wasn’t something very important to her.

Her main purpose here was not to seek out Daoist magic. No, she was here… for the number one battle body of the Demon Immortal Sect, that which could shake the Ninth Mountain and Sea… the Demon Immortal Body!

Regardless of past times or present, the Demon Immortal Body was incredible and illustrious. In fact, Lord Li possessed such a body in the past. According to hearsay, if one wished to acquire the Mountain and Sea Scripture, one had to possess the Demon Immortal Body!

Zhixiang made her decision. “When the matter with the pagoda is over, I’ll go find that brat!”

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# Chapter 580: The Path of Good Fortune

Outside the Demon Immortal Pagoda, a million Cultivators scattered to the area outside of the various mountain peaks. That was the only place where they could view its exterior.

A million disciples formed a ring around the pagoda, which they all stared at fixedly.

What they saw was nearly a 100,000 bright dots of light appear on the 1st level of the pagoda. They were densely packed together, and each one represented a disciple of the Demon Immortal Sect.

“I wonder what it’s like inside?” murmured a Conclave disciple from the First Peak as he looked at the dots of light.

Similar questions were going through the minds of all the disciples who were watching the Demon Immortal Pagoda.

However, before they could put much thought to it, roughly half of the 100,000 dots of light suddenly vanished. A moment later, tens of thousands of Cultivators were ejected out into the air, blood spraying from their mouths as they tumbled backward.

There were even some who were knocked completely unconscious.

The sight immediately caused everyone to gasp. However, at the same time, a dot of light appeared on the previously dark 2nd level!

“Someone made it past the 1st level!”

"How much time has passed? Someone already made it past the 1st level!" The buzz of conversation filled the air.

Fang Yu's pupils constricted as she watched on silently.

Wang Lihai was also in the crowds of people, frowning.

The young man from the Northern Reaches stood there, his eyes glittering brightly. Generally speaking, South Heaven Cultivators would not be the first ones to rush into the Demon Immortal Pagoda. Most would wait on the outside to observe.

After the first person made it to the 2nd level, gradually, more lights began to appear. All of the observers settled their Qi and calmed their minds as they focused completely on the proceedings.

Some, feeling confident in their ability and experience, decided to enter the pagoda.

When Meng Hao entered the 1st level of the pagoda, the first thing he saw was a land covered in blackness. The reek of blood wafted through the air, as if he were standing on some ancient battlefield.

Looking around, he suddenly noticed that the air up ahead was rippling. Ten figures appeared, all of them blurry and unclear. However, their Cultivation bases were all at the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage.

The ten figures emanated a raging killing intent as they charged toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao's eyes flickered, and suddenly he laughed as he realized what was being tested in the Demon Immortal Pagoda. As the ten figures neared, he did not retreat, but instead shot forward to meet them.

Rumbling echoed out as Meng Hao transformed into a green smoke. All it took was a fist or a finger attack. The ten great circle Nascent Soul figures were incapable of fighting back. In the blink of an eye, they were destroyed.

All of it lasted only the space of five breaths, and ten opponents were slaughtered.

Next, however, black smoke began to rise up from their bodies. It seethed and churned, forming together into one single pitch-black figure. He wore a long black robe, and a black mask. His black hair floated up into the air, and an aura emanated out from him that caused Meng Hao’s pupils to constrict.

Even more shocking was that although this man also had a Cultivation base at the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage, it was completely different than those of the figures from before. If you likened those figures to fierce dogs, this man was a lone wolf.

He eyed Meng Hao coldly, then suddenly raised his hand up. Shockingly, a mountain appeared above his hand.

The instant the mountain appeared, Meng Hao recognized it. This was the Mountain Consuming Incantation!

Next, the mountain vanished, and the man appeared directly in front Meng Hao. A palm strike descended. Meng Hao’s eyes flickered; it was as if he saw a mountain rushing directly toward him.

“A great circle Nascent Soul expert from ancient times!” Meng Hao’s eyes shone with the desire to do battle. Any of the items inside the beastskin bag he carried could instantly wipe out this expert. However, Meng Hao just couldn’t make himself use the items given to him by Ke Yunhai on the 1st level.

Without even entering the Second Anima, he struck out with his fist. He wanted to use this opportunity to test out exactly how strong or weak he was compared to a person of the same stage as himself, except from ancient times.

A booming rang out as the two of them fought back and forth. Divine abilities and magical techniques caused multicolored light to explode out shockingly in all directions!

A moment later, the black-robed figure turned and then made a strange writhing movement to appear directly in front of Meng Hao. Meng Hao laughed, not retreating, but rather, punching out with full force.

The two of them fought back and forth within the 1st level of the Demon Immortal Pagoda. After enough time had passed for an incense stick to burn, an explosion could be heard. The black-robed figure shook and then collapsed into pieces. It transformed into a stream of magical symbols that quickly surrounded Meng Hao.

Meng Hao panted a bit, and his eyes glinted as if they contained lightning. The battle hadn’t lasted for too long, only the time it takes an incense stick to burn. However, during that short time in which he had battled with the illusory figure, he had gone all out with his magical techniques before finally shaking his opponent and eventually destroying him.

Most importantly, Meng Hao’s body was currently as strong as it normally would be in the Third Anima. Were it not for that, he would never have been able to achieve victory while only in the First Anima.

“A powerful Nascent Soul expert from ancient times. Incredible!” Meng Hao took a deep breath as he looked at the magical symbols floating around him.

There were thousand of them, flickering between lightness and darkness, emanating fearsome pressure. In the blink of an eye, one of the magical symbols rushed toward Meng Hao.

It was as if the symbol had chosen him; eyes flickering, Meng Hao did nothing to evade the incoming symbol, but rather, allowed it to fuse into his body. Gradually, it transformed into a Daoist magic.

“Demonfire?” Meng Hao took some time to feel it out. This art was not one of the three thousand Daoist magics, but rather, a simple, miscellaneous technique.

Well, it could be called simple as far as the Demon Immortal Sect was concerned. However, if you revealed such a magical technique to the Sects of the lands of South Heaven, even this simple Demonfire would be incredible and extraordinary.

A strange glow appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes. He closed them thoughtfully for a moment, and when they opened, they shone with enlightenment. It was an enlightenment that had nothing to do with the Demonfire technique, but rather, this examination as a whole.

“This examination is different for every person, based on the level of their Cultivation base. The difficulty will be the same for everybody!”

“If I were in the Dao Seeking stage, then I would have faced ten Dao Seeking experts…. Actually, my true prize from the 1st level is not the Demonfire technique, but rather… a look into how the Mountain Consuming Incantation is used!

“I never realized that the incantation could be utilized in such a way.” With that, his body flashed as he headed toward the 2nd level.

Even as Meng Hao stepped into the 2nd level, the disciples surrounding the Demon Immortal Pagoda were all observing with rapt attention. All of them had looks of determination in their eyes.

In order to acquire the good fortune that lay within the Demon Immortal Pagoda, what was required had nothing to do with Cultivation base, but actually, destiny!

By now, everyone could see that more than half of the remaining dots of light from the 1st level had already vanished and reappeared on the 2nd level. There were even few that had reached the 3rd level.

The greatest cause for envy among the Demon Immortal Sect disciples, however, was that there were more than ten dots of light on the 5th level.

The scene caused the hearts of the observers to seethe with excitement. Quite a few finally decided to enter the pagoda themselves.

The young man from the Imperial Clan of the Northern Reaches watched on, a flicker of disdain in his eyes.

“All these illusory people are actually dead. They don’t even know that they don’t exist. Yet even in an illusory world, their greed can be aroused. How amusing!

“Unfortunately, even if somebody does manage to reach the 99th level, only those of us with living souls can actually acquire good fortune for ourselves!” A bright light glittered in his eyes as he flew up into the air. An air of scorn emanated off of him as he shot toward the Demon Immortal Pagoda.

Wang Lihai, Han Bei, and Fang Yu all watched with flickering eyes. They didn’t fly out toward the pagoda. As for the rest of the Cultivators from South Heaven, some hesitated, some had looks of decisiveness on their faces.

Zhao Fang’s face was pale, and his eyes glowed with an intense light. The identity he had acquired was not that of the Inner Sect disciple he had originally been watching over, but rather, an Outer Sect disciple.

Even the corpse of this Outer Sect disciple had been difficult to come by when the critical moment arrived. Although Meng Hao had scared off Wang Lihai, in the end, a Cultivator from the Northern Reaches had come to snatch it away.

“The hope of my Tribe rests on me! I WILL acquire some Daoist magic!” Gritting his teeth, Zhao Fang flew up into the air toward the Demon Immortal Pagoda.

At almost every moment, more disciples flew up from the Demon Immortal Sect to charge toward the pagoda. As everyone else watched the dots of light on the various levels, Meng Hao finally ascended to the 2nd.

As soon as he entered the 2nd level, he instantly found himself surrounded by a huge sea. Massive waves rolled across its surface. Crashing sounds could be heard as ten statues rose up from within the waters.

Shockingly, each statue seemed as powerful as the black-robed expert he had just faced up against. Apparently, the difficulty level had just increased by a factor of ten!

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, exploding with an overflowing will to fight. What he needed right now was an unrestrained, massive battle. He would refine his Cultivation base with fire, temper his fleshly body, making it so that the two worked together in perfect harmony.

As soon as the statues appeared, their eyes opened. An incredible aura blasted out as they shot toward Meng Hao.

“Second Anima!”

BANG!

Meng Hao’s body expanded and his Cultivation base exploded out. His battle prowess rocketed up, revealing the power of two great circle Nascent Souls. As for his fleshly body, it also exploded up in power. Now that he was in the Second Anima, its strength was comparable to that of the Fourth Anima. He directly shot toward the incoming statues.

The ten statues were incredibly realistic; Demonic Qi roiled out from them, just barely discernible on their foreheads were totem tattoos.

Roaring sounds exploded out across the sea as the battle raged. It lasted for a little less than an hour. One statue after another was crushed by Meng Hao’s Second Anima attacks. Their magical techniques landed onto a body that was comparable to the Fourth Anima, and were completely blocked.

When the last statue exploded into pieces, the seawater which had formed them rose up into the air and formed together into a shocking, enormous mountain peak!

The mountain was the color of the sea. This was a sea mountain, and when it appeared, it shone with brilliant, colorful light as it smashed down toward Meng Hao.

The mountain neared and the wind raged. A crater-like depression appeared in the seawater below. Meng Hao’s hair whipped about, along with his robes. He looked at the descending sea mountain, and his eyes filled with a strange light.

“The Mountain Consuming Incantation again?”

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# Chapter 581: Seed of Daoist Magic

Circulating cross-legged in the air around the Demon Immortal Pagoda was the Paragon of the Fourth Peak of the Demon Immortal Sect's First Heaven, Ke Yunhai. White hair swirled around him, and his eyes shone with a radiant glow.

He seemed to be in high spirits; however, far back within the recesses of his eyes was an imperceptible exhaustion and ancientness. No aura of death emanated out from him; however, deep within his heart existed a sea of death.

Outsiders could not observe what was happening within the Demon Immortal Pagoda. Even the seven Paragons couldn't sense the ripples of what was happening. However, all of them were well aware of why the Demon Immortal Pagoda had been opened this time.

Their gazes swept over the pagoda, and, although they could not see what was happening inside, based on the aura coming from the dots of light, it was possible for them to determine who was who.

Ke Yunhai was watching the 2nd level, and his eyes shone with determination.

“Jiusi, your father can only do this much for you….”

In addition to the seven Paragons, the rest of the disciples in the Demon Immortal Sect's First Heaven were all congregated around the pagoda. One by one, the disciples flew up to enter the pagoda. Everything was in a great commotion. A few moments later, a dot of light appeared on the 7th level, leading to an outburst of discussions.

Meng Hao had no way to know about any of this. He was still on the 2nd level, looking at the enormous mountain formed of seawater that was hovering in mid-air. A bright glow shone from his eyes as the mountain shot toward him. He leaped upward, not in evasion, but rather, relying completely on the Second Anima, he charged in attack.

A massive boom rose up into the air. Meng Hao didn't destroy the mountain, but rather pierced inside of it.

Rumbling filled the seawater mountain, and countless ripples spread out, as if to seal Meng Hao inside. As the ripples surrounded him, he suddenly closed his eyes.

Then he waved both arms out in front of him. A boom filled the sea mountain as it exploded apart. Meng Hao shot out from within, his face pale, but his eyes shining with a strange light.

"Mountain Consuming Incantation…." he said, panting a little. By this point, Meng Hao could tell that if you looked at the enlightenment of the Mountain Consuming Incantation in terms of percentage, then he had mastered roughly five percent.

As the sea mountain fell apart, no magical technique appeared. Meng Hao looked up as a beam of soft light appeared up in the air in front of him. A mere glance and he understood that this dazzling light was the entrance to the 3rd level.

As the light neared, he shot up into the air. He entered the void, and when everything became clear, he was in the 3rd level.

The moment he appeared, a towering sea of flames could be seen, as well as ten enormous figures. Meng Hao shot out from within the flames, his eyes glittering.

"Third Anima!"

BOOM!

His fleshly body expanded and his Cultivation base began to transform. The power of four great circle Nascent Souls instantly exploded out from within him. Fearsome and intense power roared up from him, especially from his fleshly body, as he strode forward.

4th level. 5th level. 6th level….

Without hesitation, Meng Hao charged up all the way to the 7th level. By this time, he was in the Fourth Anima.

In the outside world, there were simply too many people participating in the event, so few people noticed Meng Hao’s dot of light moving up. Most were focused on the 10th level.

There was only one dot of light there, attempting to break through.

At the moment, just about all of the disciples’ eyes were focused there. Their eyes shone brightly as they watched to see what transformations might occur if the 10th level were passed.

After all, the Demon Immortal Pagoda had 99 levels, and every 10th level gave a chance at one of the top 100 Daoist magics. Any one of those could be considered a shocking magical technique, enough to cause anyone’s heart to pound.

That was especially true for the Cultivators from South Heaven. They were completely focused on the 10th level, even more so than the other disciples from the Demon Immortal Sect. Han Bei and Wang Lihai, the Ji Clan, the Fang Clan, the Cultivators from the Eastern Lands and the Northern Reaches, all those who had not entered the Pagoda were observing closely.

Time passed. Apparently, the 10th level was quite difficult. The Cultivator who was there still had not broken through. With the exception of Ke Yunhai and Fang Yu, few people had noticed that there was one particular dot of light that had just disappeared from the 7th level and then appeared in the 8th. Then it was in the 9th.

Finally… everyone gaped, and their stares focused even more intently on the 10th level, because…. Suddenly, another dot of light had appeared there!

A second dot of light was now in the 10th level!

Of course, it was Meng Hao.

“Who’s that…?”

“Who could that be? Whoever it was that just entered the 10th level, no one was paying much attention to him before!”

As the buzz of conversation filled the air, all gazes focused on the dot of light that represented Meng Hao.

Meanwhile, back in the 10th level, a golden glow filled the area. The sky was gold, the land was gold. Everything was the color of gold. Ten swords sped toward Meng Hao from all directions, filled with shocking power.

These ten swords exploded with the power of Spirit Severing. They were matchlessly brutal, and their killing intent rose to the Heavens.

In the moment before the ten swords reached him, Meng Hao’s pupils constricted and he unhesitatingly cried, “Sixth Anima!”

BOOM!

His Cultivation base shot up and his fleshly body exploded with power. His battle prowess was now equivalent to thirty-two great circle Nascent Souls. As for his body, it was now more powerful than the Seventh Anima. According to Meng Hao’s speculations, the level of power it now reached was equivalent to an Eighth Anima!

Such shocking power, especially when it was all synthesized together, made it so that Meng Hao could now attack with roaring power equivalent to the Seventh Anima.

Meng Hao unleashed divine abilities, one of which made a small, illusory mountain appear above his hand. The golden world he was in seemed to transform into a sea of rage, churning and seething.

A moment later, ghost images sprang up from the ten swords. The golden glow that filled the world swept toward them, changing the ghost images into something like a black hole that seemed capable of swallowing all light. All the light in the world was sucked in, leaving behind only the swords themselves. Surrounded by a shapeless glow, they slashed down toward Meng Hao.

Furthermore, they even began to emanate the ripples of a Domain!

Meng Hao’s pupils constricted. The instant the swords began to near him, he unhesitatingly entered the Seventh Anima!

BOOM!

The Seventh Anima exploded out, filling him with sixty-four shocking levels of power. Sounds like cracks of thunder exploded out from Meng Hao’s fleshly body, which did not grow any larger, but rather, more tight. The feeling of an Immortal Devil grew even more intense. In Meng Hao’s judgement, he currently had a fleshly body that was equivalent to a Ninth Anima.

He was only a tiny step away from having a fleshly body that was actually of the Spirit Severing stage!

Meng Hao moved toward the descending swords and punched.

A huge explosion filled the air, causing everything to tremble and shake. Meng Hao coughed up some blood as he shot backward. Everything up ahead of him shattered into pieces; at the same time, countless magical symbols flickered out. Three thousand great Daos. Three thousand magical symbols. They swirled around Meng Hao for a moment before one of them sparkled and shot toward him.

The mark had the appearance of a small mountain. Meng Hao recognized it as soon as he saw it; this was none other than the Mountain Consuming Incantation which he already had partly gained enlightenment of.

His eyes glittered, and he did nothing to dodge the magical symbol. It neared him and then fused into his body, filling his mind with a roaring sound. Something like the shapes of countless mountain peaks filled his mind. It felt as if he was currently personally observing and emulating hundreds of millions of mountains.

At the same time, the glow of enlightenment filled his eyes. He sat down cross-legged for an hour before opening his eyes. Shockingly, the image of a mountain could now be seen in Meng Hao’s pupils!

His aura also changed. All of the images and memories regarding the Mountain Consuming Incantation merged together into his mind to form a brand mark that was like a seed.

This was a seed of Daoist magic that he could take with him when he left the Demon Immortal Sect’s Second Plane!

The appearance of this seed proved that Meng Hao had achieved initial enlightenment of this art!

“Consume the soul of the mountain, emulate the soul of the mountain; seize the body of the mountain, refine my own body!” Meng Hao stood up and waved his right hand. Instantly, the illusory shape of a mountain peak burst into being above it. A strange light appeared in his eyes as he looked up and then shot toward a glowing screen up above.

As soon as he touched it, a roaring sound echoed out within his body. He felt as if he were trying to move forward through water, as if there were something pushing back against him. The feeling lasted for the space of a few breaths before he pierced out of his current world. Everything in front of him grew clear, and shockingly, he could see an entire new world in front of him.

This world was an ancient battlefield. The instant he appeared, many of the figures on the battlefield suddenly turned and looked directly at him.

There were several dozen of them, each one a Cultivator. When he saw them, Meng Hao's pupils constricted. They instantly began to near him, whereupon, without hesitation, he slapped his bag of holding to produce a large amulet which he flung out in front of him.

Booming sounds echoed out, and half of the lands of this entire world quaked. Massive fissures appeared, with Meng Hao at the center. As they spread out, thundering booms could be heard, and countless bolts of lightning rained down. It was as if the entire world had turned into an armageddon.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. Although he had anticipated that the amulets given him by Ke Yunhai would be powerful, now that he could see one in action, he was shaken. The entire world of the 11th level vanished, completely toppled and destroyed. Everything was wreckage; the figures on the battlefield had been transformed into nothing but drifting pieces of ash.

Only Meng Hao remained behind.

"Force my way to the top?" Meng Hao blinked, and then a shy expression appeared on his face as he shot toward the 12th level.

12th level. 13th level. 14th level…. Meng Hao was surrounded by explosions as he proceeded onward. Everywhere he went, he shook Heaven and Earth, and was surrounded by the boundless glow of magical items. Even from the perspective of those on the outside world… it was starting to become obvious what was happening.

All of the disciples of the Demon Immortal Sect watched with wide eyes as, within the space of only a few breaths, a glowing dot rose from the 11th level all the way to the 15th level. Everyone gaped in astonishment.

That was especially true when a glowing aura appeared in the area around the dot, along with the clear, rippling aura of magical items.

“How many… how many magic items does that guy have?”

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# Chapter 582: and 583

Amidst the deathly silence, a complaining voice suddenly cried out. It was from none other than the Cultivator from the Northern Reaches: “Who is he? Don’t tell me he’s one of those Elite Apprentices? But, even if he is an Elite Apprentice, he… he still shouldn’t be able to squander magical items like that.

“Just… just how many magical items has he actually used? Cheater! He’s cheating!”

What happened next caused everyone to watch on in a daze. The glowing dot on the 15th level, surrounded by a powerful glow of magical items, flickered up to the 16th level.

Next was the 17th level, the 18th level, the 19th level. Incredible amounts of jealousy filled the hearts of the onlookers as the glowing dot finally reached the 20th level before finally stopping. Apparently this level was incredibly hard.

Seeing this, the audience finally breathed sighs of relief. All of them had very conflicting emotions as the sounds of their discussion began to spread out.

“Hey, I said it, didn’t I? There’s nobody that could last like that for too long. Even if that guy has more magical items, he won’t be able to break past the 20th level!”

“Thank goodness he finally stopped. Otherwise how could any of the rest of us measure up to him?!”

Han Bei and Wang Lihai also secretly sighed in relief. The scene they had just witnessed caused them to be jumpy with fear. It wasn’t just them; the others from the lands of South Heaven felt the same.

And yet, even as everyone was still in the midst of discussing the matter, before they could get to the third sentence in their conversations, a booming sound could be heard from the 20th level. It was so powerful that it echoed outside of the pagoda.

As the roaring sound echoed out, nearly thirty percent of the 20th level was covered with a magical glow that surrounded Meng Hao’s dot of light. From a distance, the glow seemed boundless!

The scene instantly caused everyone in the area to gasp as a roaring sound filled their minds. All of them seemed to be wondering about the exact same thing.

Just exactly… how many magical items had been detonated to create a glow that encompassed thirty percent of the entire level?

Fang Yu’s eyes were wide and her expression was one of complete envy. “It’s only because of that awesome dad of his!!” she thought.

Ke Yunhai sat cross-legged in mid-air, a complacent smile on his face as he completely ignored the strange looks on the faces of the other six Paragons.

“Attaboy, Jiusi! Force your way up to the top. Get to the 90th level for your old man!” Ke Yunhai almost shouted this out. Even if everyone else knew that cheating was involved, as a father, he couldn’t help but be happy as he watched the scene playing out.

In the 20th level, Meng Hao, tattered and bedraggled, shot backward at high speed. He was surrounded by an enormous shield that glowed with incredible brightness. A host of vicious Heavenly dragons charged him constantly, any one of which was enough to shock Meng Hao to the core. All of them, though, were blocked by the huge shield.

Unfortunately, the shield was rapidly fading. Meng Hao’s left hand clutched a bag that happened to be filled with Demon Stones. They were similar to

Spirit Stones, and were what Meng Hao was using to sustain the magical treasures and talismans that he was wielding.

Just now he had slipped up, which caused him to almost be buried in a divine ability. Currently, he was in full retreat, at the same time pulling out vast quantities of talismans that he was slapping onto his body.

Boom!

The fading shield once again surged with strength. Immediately, hundreds of layers burst out, then superimposed over each other to block all of the divine abilities that were shooting against him.

Meng Hao let out a sigh. This shield was the main reason he had been able to charge into this place. Furthermore, of all the magical items and talismans that Ke Yunhai had refined, this type of shield was what he had created the most of. He has used his own life force to refine such shields; they contained his Qi, blood, and aura. It was as if he himself were here, protecting Meng Hao with his magical arts.

Because of this shield, Meng Hao was able to proceed from one level to next as easily as walking down a level path.

This really was just as the people on the outside has said; cheating. And it was not a small cheat either, but rather, major cheating.

Meng Hao looked around at the Cultivation bases of the figures around him, and was shocked. He immediately produced a vast quantity of talismans from another bag, which he then tossed forward.

Booming sounds rolled out, and thousands of huge hands appeared in the air, each one of which was thoroughly shocking. They instantly descended downward, sweeping across everything.

The glow of magical items spread out to fill nearly half of the entire 20th level.

As Meng Hao shoved aside everything, the glowing light of the 21st level began to spread out. At the same time, the magical symbols of the three thousand Daoist magics once again appeared. They swirled around Meng Hao, after which, a red symbol shot toward Meng Hao.

As soon as it touched his forehead, his mind filled with a roaring sound. An ancient voice filled his mind.

“Daylight Incantation!”

The voice didn’t just echo in Meng Hao’s mind, but rather spread out from within the 20th level of the Demon Immortal Pagoda to fill the entire Sect. The sound echoed out so that all disciples could hear, filling their minds with shock. Quite a few people began to pant, and their eyes filled with avarice and greed.

“Daylight… Daylight Incantation!!”

“Dammit! DAMMIT! He actually got the Daylight Incantation in the 20th level!!”

“In the rankings of the 3,000 Daoist magics, the Daylight Incantation is number 31! It’s said that if you gain enlightenment, that when you use it, all you have to do is turn your hand over, and the sky will turn dark. Flip your hand back, and it becomes day! He actually got the Daylight Incantation. I can’t accept this!”

All of the disciples of the Demon Immortal Sect were completely in a frenzy. Most crazy were those who had arrived from South Heaven. Han Bei, Wang Lihai, the Cultivators from the Eastern Lands, the Southern Domain, and the Northern Reaches, all of them were filled with intense longing. None of them were willing to wait any longer. Their bodies flickered as they shot toward the Demon Immortal Pagoda.

The Ji Clan, the Fang Clan, including Fang Yu, all of them shot up into the air.

It wasn’t just them. Many other disciples of the Demon Immortal Sect were no longer willing to just observe. They charged forward, clearly unable to take the intense stimulation caused by Meng Hao’s acquisition.

In the blink of an eye, more than 100,000 people rushed into the Demon Immortal Pagoda. At the same time, Meng Hao sat there in the 20th level. Suddenly, a tremor ran through his body, and his eyes opened. The Daylight Incantation was now there in his mind. However, despite being an excellent incantation, it wasn’t the Daoist magic that he really wanted.

After a moment of considering, he gave up trying to gain enlightenment. His body flickered as he shot toward the 21st level.

22nd level. 23rd level…. In the amount of time it takes an incense stick to burn, Meng Hao shot with incredible speed all the way to the 29th level. Everyone watched, hearts burning, hands clenched tightly into fists. Their fury continued to rise, and cries of disbelief began to join together to form an uproar.

“This is definitely cheating!”

“How could he have so many magical items!? How could he move so quickly!? It’s almost like he has an endless supply of treasures for each level!!”

“This isn’t fair!!” By now, almost all of the disciples were shouting out. Even more began to charge toward the pagoda. However, people continued to be ejected out from within. There were at least ten empty levels between Meng Hao and his nearest competition.

One of the Cultivators from the Eastern Lands, who had met with failure on the 7th level, was filled with frustration and shouted, “Let’s go break open the pagoda and drag that guy out! The Demon Immortal Pagoda is for everyone! We demand fairness!”

However, even as the fury of the crowd raged, the light of magical items completely covered the 29th level, where Meng Hao was currently. Most outrageous was that the glow of treasures directly reappeared on the 30th level.

Then, after the space of only seven or eight breaths. The 30th level… was passed!

The sky in the 30th level suddenly took on a bizarre appearance. Seven enormous statues appeared, each of which had three heads and six arms. They were completely ferocious in appearance. A voice that seemed to echo out from the netherworld with Heavenly might suddenly filled the entire land.

“Our Daoist magic, Dao of Seven Bodhisattvas!”

As soon as the voice echoed out, the eyes of the disciples outside of the Demon Immortal Pagoda went completely red as their madness increased. The Dao of Seven Bodhisattvas was a divine ability ranked number 67 in the 3,000 Daoist magics of the Demon Immortal Sect.

It was an art completely and thoroughly shocking. Anyone who gained enlightenment could advance by leaps and bounds and move beyond the bounds of mortality.

“This isn’t fair!!” cried the Cultivator from the Northern Reaches. More and more people were becoming enraged.

“This is incredibly unfair!!”

“The Demon Immortal Sect is fair and upright! Kick that guy out!!”

However, even as their voices rose up, Ke Yunhai looked coolly down at them and gave a light snort. The sound descended, turning into what sounded like Heavenly Thunder. Blood sprayed from the mouths of everyone present, especially that Cultivator from the Northern Reaches. His soul shuddered on the verge of collapse, and his face filled with astonishment. He suddenly looked up toward the seven Paragons in mid-air.

Ke Yunhai’s archaic voice echoed coldly throughout the Sect: “If anyone else talks crap, they’ll be kicked out of the Sect.”

Everything went completely silent. When a Paragon spoke, no one would dare to offer retort. However, everyone was still suspicious as to why Ke Yunhai, who usually paid little attention to outside matters, would suddenly open his mouth now.

Time passed. The 10th level of the Demon Immortal Pagoda seemed to be a line of demarcation that ninety percent of participants couldn’t pass. Of the few who were actually able to pass it, the 20th level was the second line of demarcation. Only 15 people had managed to force their way past that point.

As for the 30th level, currently… only Meng Hao had made it that far.

As time passed, the majority of the Cultivators from South Heaven experienced defeat. Wang Lihai was stopped at the 9th level, after which he emerged, pale faced and wounded.

In his attempt to pass the 9th level, he had employed all of the hidden techniques he possessed, and yet had still failed. Now, he could only grudgingly admit the vast difference between himself and the Cultivators from ancient times.

As for Zhao Fang, he wasn’t even able to get past the 5th level.

Han Bei was one of the few who made it to the 10th level before meeting defeat, unable to acquire the good fortune of one of the top 100 Daoist magics.

Among the group from South Heaven, including those from the Ji and Fang Clans, only three people were able to make it past the 10th level.

One was Fang Yu, the second was Patriarch Huyan and the third was the young man from the Imperial Bloodline Clan of the Northern Reaches. These three managed to make it past the 10th level, but were stopped at the 11th.

Unable to proceed, they were forced to accept defeat and leave.

At the moment, Meng Hao's dot of light went onward, surrounded by the glow of magical treasures, all the way to the 40th level.

When he reached the 40th level, an archaic voice could be heard. The crowds outside of the Demon Immortal Pagoda were now jealous to the extreme and filled with incredible discontent. However, none of them dared to give voice to vent their feelings.

If looks could kill, though, then the 40th level would have long since been reduced to nothing but wreckage.

By this point, all of them could hardly wait to find out who this person was, this damnable cheater who had relied on an inexhaustible supply of magical items to get to the 40th level. It wasn't just the disciples of the Demon Immortal Sect who wondered about this; all of the South Heaven Cultivators were also dying to find out.

Although some people had already guessed that it was Ke Jiusi, there was no way to confirm that. In addition, they didn't dare to give voice to their suspicions.

Right now, regardless of whether the crowds admitted it or were willing to accept it, and despite how many people had entered the Demon Immortal Pagoda this time, it was now the battlefield of a single individual.

That person's existence caused their gums to itch. On the one hand, they hated him down to their bones, but on the other hand, they envied him to death.

If things went on like this, then perhaps in the end, when they found out that the glowing light was Meng Hao, there might be an "unforeseen occurrence." Although, at the moment, Meng Hao had already run into an unforeseen situation on the 40th level.

1,000,000 Demon Stones was gradually proving to be insufficient. After all, Meng Hao wasn't really Ke Jiusi. These Demon Stones were only here for him to borrow; he couldn’t absorb them. Therefore, he had no qualms about wasting them.

“This isn’t gonna work,” he thought anxiously. “I’m going to need a few more Demon Stones….”

Currently, his supply was down to only about thirty percent. After reducing the 40th level to ruins, Meng Hao thought about it from a hundred different directions, and yet couldn’t come up with any ideas except for one. He decided to give it a shot. Employing the power of his Cultivation base, he tossed out vast quantities of magical items. Using their glow, he arranged them all to form a string of words.

Close up, you wouldn’t be able to make out much. However, from outside the pagoda, the glow of the magical items filled nearly half of the 40th level. Gradually, a string of twelve words became visible.

“Dad, I don’t have enough Demon Stones. Please send a few more.”

As soon as the words became visible, the disciples outside of the Demon Immortal Pagoda gaped in astonishment, especially the Cultivators from South Heaven.

In the blink of an eye, the entire world was filled with deathly silence.

When everyone finally realized the meaning of the words, they were filled with complete astonishment.

“This is beyond belief! Ridiculous!!”

“This is bald-faced cheating! He’s not even trying to hide it any more! It’s infuriating!!”

“So someone’s going to send more Demon Stones in?! Damned bastard! Who does he think he is? Does he really think that that this instance of the Demon Immortal Pagoda is entirely for him!?”

The Demon Immortal Sect disciples were panting, and their fury had reached a boiling point.

Most furious of all were the Cultivators from the lands of South Heaven. Their rage was filled with frustration and vexation. However, they had to admit that they had obviously lost to the people of this long dead, illusory world.

Furthermore, they had lost in a fashion that was virtually impossible to accept.

Fang Yu was the exception. She stood off in the distance covering her mouth to conceal her chuckles. She was almost shaking from laughter, and her eyes had turned into beautiful crescent moons that glowed with beauty.

As for the other six Paragons, they appeared to be a bit embarrassed as they looked over at Ke Yunhai, wry smiles on their faces.

Ke Yunhai sat cross-legged in mid-air, staring blankly at the string of words. His expression flickered a few times, and he muttered to himself. Then his body flickered. Under the shocked gaze of hundreds of thousands of Demon Immortal Sect disciples, he flew toward the pagoda.

“Paragon Yunhai, what are you….” said one of the other Paragons.

“He’s definitely going to punish that guy!” said someone in the crowd. “For someone to cheat so brazenly is something that he can’t accept!”

“I’m not sure. All of a sudden I started thinking about Ke Jiusi….”

As the crowds of disciples hesitated, Ke Yunhai neared the Demon Immortal Pagoda. He stopped outside the 40th level, then calmly pulled a bag of holding out from within his robe. Everyone gaped in astonishment as he pushed the bag up against the surface of the pagoda. Then he pulled out his Paragon’s medallion.

Instantly, the bag of holding sank into the pagoda.

“Keep it up, son,” he said with a laugh. “Force your way up to the 90th level for your old man!” With that, he returned to sit cross-legged up in mid-air, completely ignoring all the crowds who were watching him.

After a moment of silence, a huge commotion exploded out.

“It’s Ke Jiusi! Dammit! I knew there was something going on behind the scenes!”

“Not fair! This is brazen cheating! I can’t accept this!!”

“So, it was Ke Jiusi all along!” said a First Peak Conclave disciple, gnashing his teeth. “That guy!!”

“Only he could have so many magic items,” said a Second Peak Inner Sect disciple, his heart filled with madness and jealousy. “He forced his way to the 40th level. This is… it’s just….”

“Cheating is one thing,” said another disciple. “But how could you be so unabashed about it? He’s actually refilling Demon Stones in the middle? Ridiculous!!”

The disciples were in an uproar. As for the South Heaven Cultivators, their hearts were pounding. Quite a few of them had gotten the feeling recently that something fishy was going on with Ke Jiusi.

That was especially true of those who knew Meng Hao. Most of those people could tell at a glance that something strange was happening. After all, the matter of Meng Hao becoming Ke Jiusi was not a secret among the group from South Heaven.

Even the people from the Ji Clan knew. However, for some reason, perhaps because of Ji Xiaoxiao, the people from the Ji Clan did not have any excessive amount of killing intent toward Meng Hao.

Han Bei could only smile wryly and try to control her ragged breathing. She couldn’t think of anything to say. However, her admiration for Meng Hao had reached the pinnacle.

Wang Lihai’s face twisted, filled once with frustration, then fury, and finally, helplessness.

Patriarch Huyan’s pupils constricted. He had long since found out that Meng Hao was Ke Jiusi, and had intentionally avoided him. Although his own identity hadn’t been revealed, his jealousy toward Meng Hao had reached a pinnacle, and transformed into flames of rage.

As for Fang Yu, she had a strange expression on her face as she looked at the 40th level. It was impossible to tell what she was thinking.

The feeling which prevailed in the hearts of the Cultivators from the Eastern Lands, Northern Reaches, Southern Domain, and Black Lands was… helplessness. Facing up against a cheater like this, there was really nothing else that they could feel.

Although many of the Demon Immortal Sect disciples were furious, there were quite a few who spoke out for Meng Hao. These were the Sect silkpants, and the members of the Demon Entente. Their support for Meng Hao caused the uproar to grow even more tumultuous.

Amidst the clamor, the Paragon of the Seventh Peak, the old man with the transcendent demeanor, slowly cracked open an eye, let out a cold snort, and then said, “PIPE DOWN!”

The shocking sound caused everything to shake.

Immediately, the disciples of the Sect closed their mouths. Their minds trembled violently.

“The Demon Immortal Pagoda shouldn’t even be opened in this age,” continued the old man. “It was arranged today especially for Ke Jiusi.”

There was no further explanation, only this direct statement of fact. However, the minds of everyone present were sent spinning. At the same time, they all were thinking of the same question.

Why did no Elders or even Elite Apprentices appear to enter the pagoda?

Obviously, the pagoda had been opened specifically for Ke Jiusi. There were clearly people in the Sect who already knew that, and thus opted not to participate. Regardless of Elite Apprentice or Elder, if they participated, then they would owe a huge favor to the Fourth Peak.

Everyone watched on silently as the glow of magical items surrounded Meng Hao on the 40th level. Magical items and talismans were unleashed freely as Meng Hao shot out from the 40th level.

Another one of the top 100 Daoist magics appeared, causing the crowds outside to smile bitterly. They could only watch Meng Hao, unable to say anything.

They looked on as the glow of magical items within the Demon Immortal Sect went from the 40th level to the 41st. Then the 42nd, 43rd… it only took a brief moment for it to appear on the 50th level.

Then the 60th….

The entire way, the glow of magical items lit the sky. As everyone watched, they gradually began to grow numb. The exception was at every ten levels, when the Daoist magic was announced, and their hearts filled with madness and envy.

Cheating. And replenishing along the way. What could compare to chicanery like that…?

As for anger, once the Seventh Paragon openly said that the Demon Immortal Pagoda had been opened specifically for Ke Jiusi, then who present qualified to be angry…?

Moments later, though, people simply couldn’t control themselves, and began to discuss the matter amongst themselves.

“Humph. Even if the Paragons do help each other, cheating to obtain good fortune isn’t as good as making progress yourself one step at a time!”

“That’s right! Besides, who’s to say whether or not he’ll be able to get past the 70th level!”

The most frustrated of all were the Cultivators from South Heaven. They were by far the most jealous and also the most angry.

In truth, the South Heaven Cultivators were all cheating. They were like people who went to take a test, but knew what the questions would be ahead of time. But then, they entered the exam room only to discover that someone else had a teacher standing off to the side to help. Well… that sort of feeling was difficult to describe.

The young man from the Imperial Bloodline Clan of the Northern Reaches ground his teeth. “I curse you to die in there!” he thought.

Also in the group from South Heaven was a young woman. Her face was calm, but her eyes shone with a bright light as she looked at the Demon Immortal Pagoda.

“My Master told me there was something special about him….” she murmured to herself. “In fact, before coming here, he especially entrusted me to keep my eyes on him. Meng Hao, what is it about you that’s so special my Master would show so much interest in you?” This young woman was none other than the Dao Child of the Blood Demon Sect of South Heaven, Li Shiqi! [1]

61st level. 68th level. 69th level!

Meng Hao was scared out of his mind the entire time. The opponents he faced now were no longer Cultivators, but rather, bizarrely shaped Greater Demons. Some of them were enormous, big enough to squash him to death with a single swipe.

Without his shield, Meng Hao would have been dead many times over. It was amidst massive roaring sounds that he finally stepped into the 70th level.

Starting with this level, he was guaranteed one of the top 10 Daoist magics if he passed!

The top 10 Daoist magics were shocking in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, even in ancient times. In the modern Cultivation world, they were legends among legends!

As soon as he entered the 70th level, Meng Hao, before his vision even became clear, he suddenly heard a proud, lofty voice.

As soon as he heard the voice, Meng Hao gaped. The reason was because this particular voice filled him with a sensation of incredible unreliability.

“Hello, child. You want to pass through here? My Daoist name is Patriarch Reliance. Come, come. Allow the Patriarch to bestow you with some good fortune….”

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# Chapter 584: Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao

As the familiar voice echoed in Meng Hao’s ears, he felt as if a gentle wind were blowing him back to those wonderful days in the vicious Reliance Sect.

Within that Sect was a wicked, wretched, duplicitous, unreliable old turtle….

Meng Hao’s eyes widened as he saw a dark shadow appear up ahead. At the same time, the sky darkened, and snapping sounds could be heard.

The shield surrounding Meng Hao began to collapse, and nearly exploded. Then, a screech of pain could be heard, and the area up ahead of Meng Hao became light once again, revealing… a huge, fierce turtle, retreating at top speed.

The turtle was fully several thousand meters wide, with an anxious expression on its huge face. It then glared fiercely at Meng Hao.

Shocked, Meng Hao fell back a few paces as his cracked shield quickly repaired itself. As of this moment, he realized that without the shield, he would currently be crushed inside of that damnable Patriarch Reliance’s mouth.

The Patriarch Reliance in his memory was far larger than this turtle in front of him. However, the unreliable appearance, his sneak attack method, and his tone of voice were all exactly the same as the Patriarch Reliance that Meng Hao knew.

A strange expression appeared on Meng Hao’s face as he looked at this Patriarch Reliance. New hatred piled up in his heart. He thought back to the untold trials and tribulations he had gone through to help Patriarch Reliance, only to be ripped off in the end by the stingy old turtle.

In the end, Patriarch Reliance even tried to eat him! It was only because of the reminder from Guyiding Tri-Rain, and his recitation of the Demon Sealing Scripture, that unreliable Patriarch Reliance was sent running.

“How strange,” said Patriarch Reliance, glaring at him. “Something about your expression seems a bit off. Don’t tell me you recognize this old Patriarch?” His expression was strange as he looked at Meng Hao and the shield surrounding him. He gritted his jaw, looking inexplicably hateful.

“The Patriarch hates cheating children more than anything else, and you’re obviously a cheater! You, you, you… you dare to try to pass through here with a shield! Bamboozler!!”

Meng Hao backed up a few steps. Looking Patriarch Reliance over carefully, he suddenly said, “Ancient Dao; tenacious desire to seal the heavens….”

After speaking a few words, there was no reaction whatsoever from Patriarch Reliance. In fact, he seemed even more astonished, confused, and curious.

“What the fudge! What are you doing, cursing me?”

Meng Hao backed up a few more steps, abandoning the Demon Sealing Scripture. After another look at Patriarch Reliance, he suddenly laughed.

The laugh contained a bit of bashfulness; at the same time, a strange light could be seen shining in his eyes. The entire expression caused Patriarch Reliance to tremble with astonishment.

“What the fudge! What gives? What the hell! What kind of fishy thing is going here? Kid, there’s something wrong with your expression….”

“Listen, bitch!” cried Meng Hao, “I’m not just gonna curse you, I’m gonna beat the crap out of you!” Roaring, he leaped up into the air and slapped his bag of holding, causing a vast quantity of talismans to appear.

Every single talisman emanated shocking power, blinding light, and incredible pressure. Patriarch Reliance’s eyes went wide.

“Too vicious!!!” cried Patriarch Reliance, retreating backward at top speed. The feeling he got from the talismans caused his heart to race with fear. Before he could retreat too far, Meng Hao waved his hand, causing the talismans to ignite. An immense, red glow could be seen, from within which exploded countless Thunder Dragons. Their roars filled the air as they shot toward Patriarch Reliance.

Amidst the echoing booms, Patriarch Reliance shrieked and hollered, dodging back and forth. His rage billowed up, and he was about to say something when Meng Hao waved his hand again, causing seventy or eighty more talismans to fly out. As they exploded chaotically, the air shook and the ground was torn to pieces. Patriarch Reliance howled and charged toward Meng Hao’s shield.

Meng Hao clearly had no intention of evading or dodging. He allowed the old turtle to slam into his shield, after which a huge explosion could be heard along with a miserable shriek. Patriarch Reliance immediately tumbled backward, during which time Meng Hao waved his arm, causing more than a thousand talismans to be hurled out.

These were all talismans personally created by Ke Yunhai. They needed no direction from Meng Hao. All he had to do was throw them out, and they would voluntarily transform into divine abilities and Daoist magic. Up above in the air, more than a thousand statues suddenly appeared, all of which instantly dove down toward Patriarch Reliance.

This barrage of attacks had Patriarch Reliance knocked into a daze. He shot backward relentlessly, his shell on the verge of being shattered, his heart filled with astonishment, as howls of rage emitted from his mouth.

“I surrender! The Patriarch surrenders! … Fudge, you’re such a cheat! I never cheat like this!!”

“I don’t accept surrender!” growled Meng Hao. No matter what was said, he would have his revenge. He waved his hand again, causing another thousand talismans to appear. Bloodcurdling shrieks continued to echo out. Patriarch Reliance trembled as he attempted to flee this way and that. The feeling of frustration in his heart had reached a pinnacle.

“Dammit, DAMMIT!” howled Patriarch Reliance, “Is there a grudge between us?!”

BAM!

Meng Hao produced several hundred more talismans.

“What did I do to piss you off? Huh? Come on, tell me!!” Patriarch Reliance was on the verge of tears. He was incapable of evasion, and could do nothing more than retract his trembling limbs and head into his shell. “I was just born recently, I haven’t even grown up yet. How could I have pissed you off?!?!”

“You haven’t pissed me off,” said Meng Hao. “But that doesn’t mean you won’t piss me off in the future!” He waved his hand again, causing more miserable shrieks to come from Patriarch Reliance.

“Stick your head out of your shell,” commanded Meng Hao, producing another large amassment of talismans and staring at Patriarch Reliance.

“I won’t stick my head out even if you beat me to death! You’re just a big bully! You’re incomparable! You… you’re impossible!!”

“If I don’t bully you now, then you’ll bully me in the future!” said Meng Hao coldly. He produced even more talismans, which he continuously tossed out. Booming filled the air, along with Patriarch Reliance’s miserable shrieks. He retreated more, weeping.

His shell was now almost half destroyed, and his body quivered as if from coldness. His head was pulled back tight inside, as if he really refused to stick it out even if he died.

Meng Hao looked at him, then leaped up onto his shell. He slapped his bag of holding to produce another magical item that Ke Yunhai had made for him. It was a small blade, seemingly dull, but in fact equipped with a fiercely sharp coldness. Meng Hao hefted the blade then squatted down and began to carve some words into Patriarch Reliance's shell.

"Meng Hao's turtle!"

After carving the three words, Meng Hao patted the turtle shell, then smiled complacently.

"We'll call it quits today. It might be difficult for you, but I hope that in the future you'll remember that you're MY turtle!"

Patriarch Reliance glared at him, clenching his jaw. He knew that Meng Hao had carved something onto his back, and had long since made an inward determination to pay back this insult.

Meng Hao stamped his foot and flew up into the air, preparing to move on to the 71st level. However, as soon as he flew into the air, he suddenly seemed to think of something. He looked down just in the moment in which Patriarch Reliance stuck his head out of his shell.

Meng Hao suddenly smiled, then subconsciously pulled out a talisman. Frightened, Patriarch Reliance retracted his head as fast as lightning, then howled, "Didn't you say that we would call it quits today?! You, you, you… you tricked me!!"

Meng Hao's body flashed and he suddenly appeared directly in front of Patriarch Reliance, who was retracted in his shell. His powerful shield made it so that he wasn't afraid at all of any sort of sneak attack by the turtle.

"I'll let you off this time," said Meng Hao earnestly, "but I'm still trying to decide whether or not to destroy you to get the reward for this level."

Patriarch Reliance trembled within his turtle shell. He then opened his mouth to spit out golden beam of light that shot toward Meng Hao. It pierced through the shield, transforming into a magical symbol.

The magical symbol was something that looked like a seed, which emanated colorful light as well as an indescribable pressure. It gave off a feeling of splendor, which instantly caused the rest of the world to grow dark, as if the sky itself had dimmed.

Because it contained a Dao of Heaven and Earth, existing in a place above the natural laws of the world, anyone who cultivated it would have a great Dao!

This was one of the top 10 Daoist magics of the 3,000!

Even in the Demon Immortal Sect, this was truly an incredible and shocking magical technique. Its origin was unclear, and even in ancient times few people understood it clearly.

Meng Hao took a deep breath as he examined the magic. His heart began to beat out of control. Other than the Soul Divergence Incantation, this was the most powerful Daoist Magic that he had seen in the entire time he had been in this ancient world of the Demon Immortal Sect.

“I wonder what Daoist magic this is?!” he thought.

He took a deep breath and raised his hand to push his finger down into the magical symbol. Instantly, his brain filled with a roaring sound.

The mark required no enlightenment. As soon as his finger touched it, it rushed into his body to his heart, where it transformed into a seed.

This… was the seed of a great Dao, one of the top 10 Daoist magics. It required no enlightenment. In fact, enlightenment was useless. This seed would only sprout in the mind of someone destined to receive it!

If destiny existed between him and this seed, it would always be there. Were there no destiny, then forcing it would be useless!

The illusory seed rapidly transformed into nine parts, seven of which rushed toward his seven nascent souls.

The other two remained in his heart.

The instant the seven seeds made contact with his Nascent Souls, they began to tremble. Shockingly, they rapidly began to solidify from something illusory into something real. It seemed… that Meng Hao had acquired their approval, and that they had chosen to sprout within him!

Meanwhile, in the outside world, the eyes of all the Demon Immortal Sect disciples were fixed on the glow of magical light on the 70th level of the pagoda. This was especially true of the Cultivators from South Heaven.

Even Ke Yunhai's expression was one of increased anticipation. As for the other Paragons, they were watching closely as well. All of them knew that this was a chance to get one of the top 10 Daoist magics.

In this moment, the sky above the Demon Immortal Sect suddenly filled with roiling clouds. A red glow filled the lands, and a beam of bright light shot down. As soon as the beam of light appeared, the Seventh Peak Paragon suddenly opened his eyes, which glowed brightly.

"This is…."

The light fell, turning blurry, and then splitting into three parts.

The meaning of such a sign was something that most people wouldn't understand. However, the Paragons present all watched on with serious looks.

Ke Yunhai began to pant slightly. Any other matter that occurred would not have left him so visibly shaken. However, since it affected Ke Jiusi, he couldn't help but be moved. His eyes shone with a strange light, and he almost couldn't bring himself to believe that what was happening was true.

The three beams of light split again, turning into nine beams of light. In the blink of an eye, those nine beams of light… shockingly merged together into the form of an enormous figure.

It was a somewhat indistinct figure, but it was still possible to see that it was Meng Hao’s face!

It was like a gigantic, magical image, shocking enough to cause Heaven and Earth to tremble.

Next, the magical image opened its mouth and began to speak with an archaic voice that filled the entire Demon Immortal Sect.

“One bloodline, transformed into three souls. Three souls tempered into nine divinities. Nine divinities refined into my true self. I am… Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao!”

In this same instant, for some apparently unfathomable reason, one of the three inverted Demon Mountains hanging up above the Demon Immortal Sect, the mountain which seemed to formed of molten stone… suddenly trembled!

Everyone, including the Seven Paragons and all the disciples, were completely shaken.

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# Chapter 585: The Voice of Lord Li

Three inverted Demon Mountains. One was completely formed of ice and frost, containing boundless coldness. The second was crimson red like blood, almost like an immense pile of corpses. Between those two was a mountain of molten rock, like fire, that brimmed with the most supreme dignity.

The mountain that was currently trembling was none other than the Demon Mountain of molten stone.

It trembled only slightly, but the incredible rumbling shook the minds and hearts of everyone within the Demon Immortal Sect. The seven Paragons, including Ke Yunhai, could not be taking the matter more seriously. All of them actually rose to their feet to look at the Demon Mountain.

The rest of the disciples didn’t quite understand what was happening, but what they did know was that considering the Demon Mountain was trembling, obviously… whatever was happening inside the Demon Immortal Pagoda involved Heaven-defying good fortune.

The faces of the Cultivators from South Heaven all changed dramatically. Most were filled with mad jealousy, as well as the wish that they could become Ke Jiusi.

Fang Yu took a deep breath. Although she had been somewhat unsure regarding Meng Hao’s identity, now that she saw the enormous magical sign in the sky, she suddenly realized that he was indeed Ke Jiusi.

“That little brat….” she thought, a smile brightening her eyes.

Off on the distant mountain peak, Zhixiang was panting as she looked up at the Demon mountain of molten rock. Her eyes widened.

“Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao… so it’s that art. Just what sort of Heaven-defying lucky opportunity has Meng Hao come across? He’s actually acquired a Daoist magic that has a deep connection to Molten Rock Demon Mountain!”

Everyone had different thoughts and reactions. The one similar thing shared by everyone was intense jealousy and frustration regarding Meng Hao.

In the moment that the Molten Rock Demon Mountain trembled, a muffled voice spoke out from within it, seemingly from within a seal. Its cadence was odd, and the sound of it echoed out everywhere.

“The Withering Flame Demon Magic once again appears under Heaven. We sealed the unresolved Karma, and cultivated the True Self Dao. Finally, everything will… eee?” The voice suddenly stopped talking in mid-sentence.

After a long moment, a light sigh could be heard from within the Molten Rock Demon Mountain. “Night….”

The sound echoed out throughout this world, causing everyone to feel shocked. Within the Demon Immortal Pagoda, Meng Hao’s eyes snapped open, and they were filled with a strange light. In his mind, the seed of the Daoist magic was solidified, and would never fade.

This Daoist magic seed was separated into seven strands which were connected to his seven Nascent Souls. Although his Cultivation base had not changed, Meng Hao felt as if there were something different about it.

Muttering to himself, he rose to his feet and looked down at Patriarch Reliance, who was still tucked away cautiously in his shell, looking out at Meng Hao. Meng Hao chuckled.

“Old turtle Reliance, we’ll be meeting again in the future. See you later.” With a laugh, he shot up toward the descending beam of light.

Just when Meng Hao was about to touch the beam of light, Patriarch Reliance stuck his head out of his shell and arrogantly shouted, “You’re the old turtle! Your whole family are all turtles! Come on! BRING IT! I'll give you some good fortune! Since you came you … AHH!?!?"

Even in the midst of his self-righteous rant, just when he thought he was able to earn some face back, before he could even finish speaking, Meng Hao, who was just about to fuse with the glowing light, stopped in place and turned to glance back at him.

That glance caused Patriarch Reliance to start shaking all over. A whizzing sound could be heard as he retracted his neck and head at top speed.

"You damned, perverted cheater!" he grumbled within his shell. "Get outta here…! One of these days, I'm gonna grow up, and then, I'll get my revenge!"

Meng Hao looked thoughtfully at the several thousand meter wide turtle Reliance, and his eyes lit up.

"The previous generations of Demon Sealers captured this unreliable old turtle to be my Dao Protector. That basically means that they prepared a mount for me. However, after all these years, I still haven't gotten a real mount….

"I wonder what it would feel like to have an old turtle as a mount?" Having reached this point in his train of thoughts, he suddenly began to palpitate with eagerness. After all, he knew that once he got back to the lands of South Heaven, it would be impossible to further punish the old turtle.

With that, Meng Hao moved out from within the light and shot back down to stand on Patriarch Reliance's back. The instant that happened, Patriarch Reliance quivered. Inwardly, he was filled with intense regret, and was scared witless. He had no idea what Meng Hao was planning to do.

"Alright, spit it out," said Meng Hao with a smile. "Do you admit it or not? You're my turtle!"

Patriarch Reliance remained in his shell, gnashing his teeth. After a long moment of thought, he suddenly realized that this Meng Hao had suddenly begun to emit an enormous and terrifying aura. It was obvious that he had produced another vast quantity of talismans.

On the verge of going mad, Patriarch Reliance, feeling even more in the wrong, shouted, “I admit it! I admit it, alright? You big bully! I’m… I’m just a tiny little turtle, that’s all! You’ll, you’ll, you’ll… you’ll get what’s coming to you!”

“As long as you admit it, then I’m happy,” said Meng Hao, finding a comfortable position and sitting down. He still held all of the talismans in his hand. “Now, let’s go. Take me out of the 70th level!”

Patriarch Reliance stood stock still, stunned. No matter what he had imagined, he could never have predicted that Meng Hao would make such a demand. Even as he stood there stupefied, Meng Hao tossed out the talismans.

When they landed on Patriarch Reliance, a huge booming echoed out. Divine abilities and magical techniques shook everything. The sky above was rent, and Patriarch Reliance let out a miserable shriek and instantly began to move at top speed.

“Yeahhhh, that’s the right attitude,” laughed Meng Hao. “Come, come. Fly up into the air!” He held talismans in his hand like a whip. Beneath him, the turtle was like a little pony, completely under his control. Patriarch Reliance was on the verge of tears as he carried Meng Hao up toward the bright light.

He felt intense regret. He regretted his own courting of death. Just when his opponent had been about to leave, he had to shout out those last few words. The result… was that the damned, inhuman creature had returned for him.

Filled with a feeling of maltreatment, Patriarch Reliance let out a venting roar as they fused into the light. In the blink of an eye, both of them vanished.

When they reappeared, they were in the 71st level.

On the outside world, everyone, including Ke Yunhai and even Zhixiang, stared, dumbfounded at the 71st level.

In addition to the glowing dot which represented Meng Hao, they could also see an additional, massive glow that looked like… the outline of a turtle.

Soon, it became apparent that Meng Hao was riding the turtle.

The Demon Immortal Sect disciples seemed to be on the verge of going insane.

“How could there be a turtle in there?”

“That turtle is huge! It must be several thousand meters wide! Dammit! DAMMIT! Ke Jiusi has gone way overboard. He’s a cheater? Fine. He has an incredible dad? Okay. But, but, but… but how could he cheat even more WITHIN his cheating!?!?”

“What exactly does he think he’s going to accomplish with such a gigantic turtle?!?!”

Even more in a frenzy were the Cultivators from South Heaven. Their organs almost seemed to be on the verge of exploding out of their bodies, and their expressions filled with intense envy and jealousy. The jealousy even turned into hatred, filling them with very complex feelings.

“Patriarch Crow Divinity sure lives up to his reputation….” thought Zhao Fang with a bitter smile. He looked at the 71st level and sighed.

Wang Lihai’s hands were clenched tightly into fists, and his eyes brimmed with frustration and, even more so, helplessness.

Han Bei could only blink, completely at a loss for words regarding Meng Hao. His current actions overlapped with the deep impression he had left on her years ago; it suddenly gave her the intense premonition that, in the future, he would have limitless possibilities.

“Relying on his status and the power of his Clan? Could he piss me off any more?” said the young man from the Imperial Bloodline clan of the

Northern Reaches. “Even more brazen, he is riding such an enormous turtle as a mount! That’s only because the identity he got has a great dad! Dammit!” Usually, it was other people in the Northern Reaches who had such thoughts about him. This was the first time in his life that he had ever felt jealous of another person.

However, at the moment, he had no choice but to admit that he felt intense jealousy toward Meng Hao, and even felt as if what was happening was unfair.

Ke Yunhai cleared his throat and looked at the other six Paragons. He made no attempt to explain, and was in fact also somewhat puzzled. At the same time, though, he was quite happy.

Even as everyone watched on with complicated emotions, Meng Hao and the giant turtle were surrounded by the glow of magical items. They rose up from the 71st level to the 72nd. Then the 73rd, and the 74th….

When they reached the 80th level, all of the disciples in the Demon Immortal Sect, including the Cultivators from South Heaven, felt their hearts tightening. What they were thinking about wasn’t whether or not Meng Hao would be able to pass this level. Instead, they were wondering about what good fortune he would seize as he did.

To watch with their own eyes as someone seized all of the good fortune that they had dreamed about for their entire lives was truly driving them mad.

If Meng Hao were doing by means of his own skill, then it would be one thing. In that case, at least they could console themselves in some way. But instead, he relied on his identity, and cheating, to the extent that they almost coughed up blood.

“I refuse to accept this!” said one of the Ji Clan members through gritted teeth, his hands clenched tightly at his sides.

Similar reactions could be seen in both the Ji and Fang Clans, with the exception of Fang Yu. The sizable group of Cultivators from other areas in the Eastern Lands were the same. In the end, it didn’t matter what they were thinking, though. They could do nothing to prevent the blinding glow they currently saw on the 80th level.

Inundated by that glow of magical items, the 80th level seemed to be on the verge of collapse. Everyone could just barely make out the image of the turtle charging around violently. A moment later, a boundless glow shone out from the 80th level, along with an incredible roaring sound. An ancient, undulating voice began to speak, its cadence odd, its pace neither quick nor slow.

“Since you have passed the 80th level of the Demon Immortal Pagoda, you shall be bestowed with one of the top 10 Daoist magics… Nine Heavens Destruction.”

This voice caused everyone to stare blankly, not because of the ancientness of the voice, but rather, because of the voice’s manner of speaking.

Zhixiang’s eyes went wide, and she began to pant, a look of disbelief written on her face.

“That’s….”

The seven Paragons, including Ke Yunhai, all stood up. Their expressions all changed, even more so than they had when the previous Demon Mountain had been shaken.

The suns around them trembled and distorted. Clearly, they had been thoroughly shaken by the appearance of this voice.

“That’s….”

“That’s the voice of Lord Li!!”

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# Chapter 586: I’ll Take You the Rest of the Way

The Seven Paragons instantly began to grow even more shocked.

“The voice of Lord Li!!”

“Impossible! Lord Li is sleeping! If he had woken up, then the three Demon Mountains would immediately shine for tens of millions of meters in all directions, and the two Holy Lands would be unsealed. Everyone would know, and all the experts in the Ninth Mountain and Sea would come to offer their respects!”

“This isn’t Lord Li, but it’s definitely his voice? But why?”

“Something about the voice seems off… as if it’s weak?”

As everyone in the outside world was astonished, in the 80th level of the Demon Immortal Pagoda, everything was collapsing. Meng Hao sat cross-legged on top of Patriarch Reliance. Up ahead of him was a violet-colored mark that flickered with violet light.

As the light spread out, the collapsing world grew silent, and everything stopped moving.

The voice echoing about in the outside world could also be heard around Meng Hao, and its source… was none other than the violet mark in front of him.

The top 10 Daoist magics didn’t require enlightenment, just good luck. After acquiring one of them, if destiny called for it, it would become a seed of Daoist magic. If there was no connection, no amount of pleading would do any good.

Meng Hao raised up his right hand silently. As soon as it touched the violet mark, a tremor ran through his body. The violet mark fused through his finger into his body. Then, it magically appeared in his mind, transforming into an illusory scene.

Within that scene, he could see a vague figure lifting its hand up. As it lifted its hand up, a first Heaven arose. Another wave of a hand caused it to split into two, forming two Heavens.

In the end, there were nine. Nine Heavens Destruction. All things become ancient.

“You have a destiny that is connected to this magic. I deliver this Dao to you…. It complements the Withering Flame Demon Magic…. I’ve been waiting a long time. Could it be that you’re the one I’ve been waiting for? Come. Pass the 99 levels. Pass the three mountains. Pass the two lands. If you can come to stand in front of me… if you can win my approval… then you… are my successor.” When Meng Hao opened his eyes, the voice seemed to continue to echo in his ears. His eyes were filled with blankness, but they quickly grew clear.

Within his mind, the violet symbol transformed into the seed of a great Dao. However, it was rough, unrefined. Meng Hao would need to continue to contemplate it before being able to unleash it fully.

As he opened his eyes, the world in front of him resumed its collapse. As it did, the 81st level neared.

“That voice….” thought Meng Hao, his eyes filled with a touch of perplexity. “Something seemed odd about the voice. His status was definitely different than the average person. The way he spoke was the same. He… who was he?” He took a deep breath and looked at the bag of holding given him by Ke Yunhai. The Demon Stones, talismans, and magical items therein were already running low. However, the two Daoist magics that he most wanted to acquire hadn’t appeared.

“The Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal, and the secret technique of Fleshly Sanctification….” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. Without hesitation, he slapped his hand down onto Patriarch Reliance. The turtle, feeling as wronged as ever, shot toward the 81st level.

As soon as they entered it, roaring filled the area and rose up into the sky. Meng Hao’s protective shield was surrounded by the vast quantities of talismans and magical items that he tossed out into the air. Wailing and shrieking, Patriarch Reliance used all his evasion abilities as they roared along.

81st level. 82nd level….

Meng Hao charged forward, forcing his way up. He used the magical items and talismans given him by Ke Yunhai to force his way through every barrier. As he proceeded onward, the disciples of the Demon Immortal Sect panted. As of now, they had to admit that… Meng Hao was obviously about to reach the pinnacle!

83rd!

84th!

85th!

The glow of magical items seeped out from within the pagoda, shining on everything in the area. By the time Meng Hao reached the 87th level, the entire area was filled with a bright glow. He was using up even more Demon Stones, as well as vast quantities of talismans. More than half of his magical items had been destroyed.

Using this unsightly method in which no cost was spared, he finally forced his way to the 89th level.

As soon as he entered, the view around him changed. What appeared in front of him was, shockingly, an ancient battlefield. Countless Cultivators could be seen in all directions, all of them engaged in fierce warfare.

As soon as Meng Hao appeared in the middle of the battlefield, the Daoist magics of all the surrounding countless Cultivators roared directly toward Meng Hao’s shield, instantly causing it to almost be destroyed.

The level of difficulty here was unprecedented as far as Meng Hao was concerned. Heaven and Earth shook; all he could do was throw out more and more talismans, and destroy more and more magical items.

Despite everything, the 89th level was difficult beyond compare.

He was currently positioned in the exact center of the battlefield, the ends of which were not visible. Besieged on all sides, this was a position the he was fundamentally incapable of reaching on his own. Even with all the talismans and magical items forged with Ke Yunhai’s life force, it was still difficult for him to make even the slightest progress.

Countless Cultivators and innumerable divine abilities seemed to be on the verge of completely overwhelming him.

His face was pale white, and Patriarch Reliance appeared to be on the verge of gasping his last breath. As it turned out, he actually had no hatred for Meng Hao. During their path of battle up to this point, they had even come to form something almost like a friendship.

“At the most, I can hold out for twelve more breaths….” thought Meng Hao, his face flickering. He would quickly run out of Demon Stones, talismans, and magical items. In twelve breaths of time, he would no longer be able to fight back, and he would be teleported out in defeat.

“Don’t tell me I’m really going to have to wait for that second chance….” he thought, breathing in deeply. He didn’t want to have a second chance. He wanted to get everything he needed in one shot. If he was forced to try a second time, it would mean Ke Yunhai would have to forge even more magic items for him. Meng Hao wasn’t willing to see that happen.

In this critical moment, the Demon Immortal Sect disciples on the outside were watching with rapt attention. Everyone was thinking different things;

however, virtually, all of the Cultivators from South Heaven were hoping beyond hope that Meng Hao would fail.

They desired nothing more than Meng Hao to falter here. It was a case of ‘if I can’t have it, then nobody else can have it either.’ Almost as if their negative thoughts were actually effective in some way, Meng Hao had already wasted nearly an hour in the 89th level.

From the perspective of the onlookers, the glow of magical items was beginning to shrink and grow dim. This caused the South Heaven Cultivators to start to get a bit excited.

One of the Array Cultivators from the Eastern Lands Ji Clan was usually quite proud of the fame of his name. However, he apparently forgot that momentarily and suddenly said, “He’s gonna fail!! Hahaha! He opened the devil’s gate and strode a crooked path with his corrupt methods! But in the end, he has no way to achieve victory. He definitely won’t be able to get past this level!

“Heaven and Earth are deep and profound; the wind is vast and mighty. Cultivators like us must rely on our own power! How could we possibly rely on the power of others? This guy has had an unfair advantage today, so he will certainly meet defeat in the end!”

Even as everyone railed against Meng Hao, as everyone hoped that he would fail, the glow of his magical items continued to shrink down and get darker.

However… it was at this moment that Ke Yunhai’s eyes filled with determination. He suddenly sprang into motion, moving with incredible speed to appear outside the 89th level. He lifted his hand, within which appeared his Paragon’s medallion. His expression was solemn, and his hair whipped about him as he raised the medallion up to push it against the surface of the tower.

The other six paragons saw what he was doing and instantly began to speak to attempt to stop him.

“Yunhai, you can’t!”

The Seventh Paragon, the old man with the transcendent demeanor, seemed especially moved. He directly appeared next to Ke Yunhai and said, “Yunhai, think three times before you do this!”

Ke Yunhai was silent for a moment. Looking at the Seventh Paragon, he said, “My limit has been reached. I won’t live more than a few more months.”

The old man hesitated, looking at Ke Yunhai for a long moment before finally sighing. “If you do this, I’m afraid you won’t even last that long.”

“Old Seventh, you have lived your life for the Dao, and have no children. You don’t understand the responsibility of being a father. Right now, I only have one child, Jiusi. It doesn’t matter when exactly I return to the dust. I just hope that after I leave, he can be as happy as before.

“Jiusi has always been a silkpants, and I’ve never been able to rest at ease because of that….” Ke Yunhai sighed and glanced at the other Paragons. “But now, he’s chosen the path of body tempering. Since that’s the case, I will spare no effort to help him acquire the Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal and… the mysterious art of Fleshly Sanctification.” Without any further hesitation, he shoved his Paragon’s medallion up against the outside of the pagoda.

When they touched together, Ke Yunhai’s body suddenly trembled. He was old to begin with, but now he grew even older. His aura instantly grew weaker.

It was at this same time that, Meng Hao, within the 89th level, ran out of talismans. His magical items were exhausted, and his protective shield was virtually completely faded. Booming sounds could be heard as it began to explode.

“It’s over….” he sighed. He watched as the shield exploded, and countless magical techniques threatened to overwhelm him. However, it was at this moment that a towering figure suddenly appeared to stand in front of him.

The figure’s face was the same one that Meng Hao had seen when he first arrived in this world…. Ke Yunhai.

Ke Yunhai stood by Meng Hao, as if he were his entire world. He was like a tree, protecting Meng Hao from the wind, blocking all of the countless divine abilities shooting toward him.

The divine abilities, Daoist magics, and countless figures, all suddenly came to a standstill. Everything grew still; the entire world became quiet.

When Meng Hao saw the figure, he trembled. His heart seized as he realized that he recognized the figure as…. Ke Yunhai.

Ke Yunhai smiled at Meng Hao, then reached out and tousled his hair. A doting smile appeared on his face. A look appeared in his eyes that seemed to say that no matter the occasion, the person there in front of him was his young boy, still not yet grown up.

“Jiusi, don’t be afraid. Daddy’s here to take you the rest of the way.”

It was a simple sentence, but as soon as Meng Hao heard it, it caused uncontrollable emotions to swell up within him. He thought of his own father, but at the same time, the image of his own father that existed in his mind seemed to overlap with Ke Yunhai. In this moment, he actually forgot that he wasn’t really Ke Jiusi!

“Dad….” he said, gaping at Ke Yunhai. One breath earlier, he had been on the verge of failure. The next breath, he had hope. The intensity of the reversal was such that the image of Ke Yunhai was branded onto his heart…. It was the image of… a father.

“Don’t worry,” laughed Ke Yunhai. “Your dad isn’t dead yet. We’re going to get through this battle together. Our dad and son team is going to pass this level together!” With that, he turned and waved his hand. Heaven and Earth began to collapse, and a terrifying, indescribable power transformed into a roaring whirlpool that began to sweep about. As it expanded, everything it touched, collapsed. The sky grew blurry, and all the figures in the area were transformed into flying ash.

Next to Ke Yunhai suddenly appeared a floating oil lamp. The wick of the lamp was a phoenix and its body was a dragon!

Meng Hao took a deep breath, and his heart filled with incredible enthusiasm. He nodded his head, then stood up by Ke Yunhai, by his father, and proceeded forward.

One in front, one behind. One father and one son!

Patriarch Reliance’s eyes went wide as he stared at Ke Yunhai. His mind trembled, and his expression filled with fear. His head shrank back into his shell as the gleam of realization filled his eyes. Now he understood Meng Hao’s background.

“Dammit. His dad’s a Paragon! No wonder he’s so crazy. No wonder he can bully me so easily!”

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# Chapter 587: Why Are You Doing This?

Ke Yunhai took up the lead. As of now, he seemed to have returned to the way he was in the prime of his life. His Cultivation base was at its peak, although Meng Hao had no way to comprehend what realm it was in.

“Jiusi, in the great Nine Mountains and Seas, the path of cultivation is comprised of Spirit, Immortal, Ancient, and Dao!” He waved his hand, and the world collapsed. The 89th level, which had been so difficult for Meng Hao, was destroyed in an instant.

As the 90th level neared, another battlefield spread out in front of Meng Hao. It was boundless, such that in the sky above, nine suns could be seen. The land was ancient and archaic. Meng Hao could see countless giants on the battlefield, and even giant Demons!

It seemed as if this battlefield were even more ancient than the Demon Immortal Sect.

“This place is a reflection of the Archean world. It is neither real nor false. It exists within a thought…. According to legend, the Archean world is the origin of the Nine Mountains and Seas.” Ke Yunhai moved forward, waving his hand. Countless incoming roaring figures instantly turned into ash.

Meng Hao stood behind Ke Yunhai, his expression one of excitement.

“It is said that the Nine Lords of the great Nine Mountains and Seas actually come from the Archean world. They are not spirits of the Nine Mountains and Seas. That includes our Lord Li of the Ninth Mountain and Sea!

“Of course legends are just legends. They might be true, they might be false. Either way, you should know the story.” Ke Yunhai stamped his foot down, and a roaring sound filled the air. Ripples expanded out in all directions. Everything that existed for tens of thousands of meters in all directions began to shake, and then directly exploded into pieces.

“Your father is at the peak of the Ancient Realm, half a step into the Dao Realm. Originally speaking, I should have limitless longevity and be able to… enjoy a life as long as that of the Nine Mountains and Seas.” He proceeded forward, and the land beneath his feet began to shrink. He pulled Meng Hao along by his arm, striding forward with seemingly boundless steps.

Patriarch Reliance watched them from far off in the distance, and his heart suddenly trembled. He plastered himself down onto the ground, praying that Meng Hao had already forgotten about him.

Meng Hao moved along with Ke Yunhai, having completely forgotten about Patriarch Reliance. In a single moment, they were now in a completely different location on the boundless battlefield.

“However, Lord Li returned the mandate of Heaven to the masses,” he said softly. “He believes that for Cultivators to cultivate eternal life is an injustice to Heaven and Earth. He buried the path to the next life, sealed the Dao Realm so that it cannot be tread. In the end, we must forfeit our lives. That is how… the limit on longevity began.”

He stood there, his long hair draped around him, looking very much like a Paragon.

Or, you might say that… he truly was a Paragon. He pushed his hand down toward the ground. Instantly, it began to rumble, shattering into multiple layers, which then collapsed into each other.

“This level… is now passed,” he said. He lifted his hand, and the entire world was shattered into fragments. All the lives on the battlefield were destroyed, and a huge crater spread out on down below. There, in the deepest part of the crater, a coffin could be seen.

When Meng Hao saw the coffin, his entire person filled with rumbling. The surface of the coffin was carved with nine butterflies.

“According to legend,” Ke Yunhai said coolly, “a coffin existed in the Archean world. Although it existed for countless years, no one ever knew who rested inside of the coffin, nor did anyone know where it came from.” The entire world around them vanished. At the same time, a seal appeared, flying out to float in front of Ke Yunhai.

Ke Yunhai looked at it, and smiled. He turned, waving his sleeve to cause the seal to shoot toward Meng Hao.

“Assimilate this seal. Father will stand guard over you.”

As soon as the seal touched his forehead, it vanished. Meng Hao’s body trembled, and, shockingly, five huge characters appeared in his mind.

Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal!

This was exactly what Meng Hao had wanted to acquire, one of the top 10 Daoist magics specifically focused on body tempering!

The seal spun in a circle in Meng Hao’s mind, surging up with a power of expulsion. It almost seemed as if this Daoist magic was not destined to be with Meng Hao, as if it was not something he could gain enlightenment of to turn into a great Dao seed.

Seeing the Daoist magic suddenly beginning to grow faint, Meng Hao’s mind shook. It was in this moment, however, that a warm hand clasped down onto his shoulder.

“Don’t worry, father will help you subjugate the magic!” As soon as the gentle voice entered Meng Hao’s mind, he grew calm. At the same time, an indescribable pressure exploded out from Ke Yunhai. As it bore down on Meng Hao, he did nothing to interfere with it. However, the seal in his mind began to tremble and struggle in frustration.

In response to the struggling, Ke Yunhai let out a cold snort. All struggling was destroyed, completely shattered. The seal lost any will of its own. It remained in Meng Hao’s mind, slowly fusing in, transforming into the seed of a great Dao.

“I erased its will,” said Ke Yunhai with a smile. “Although the Dao will is gone, it still does not conform to your spirit. You won’t be able to cultivate it right away. Since it insisted on disobeying you, I had no choice but to destroy it.

“Okay, let’s go. On to the next level!” With that, he turned and headed forward. Meng Hao took a deep breath and followed in his tracks.

The two of them passed the 91st level, the 92nd level, and the 93rd level….

Meng Hao didn’t need to do anything the entire time. Everything was handled by Ke Yunhai. He was cool and unhuried, waving his hand to destroy worlds. The sight of it left Meng Hao completely shaken.

If Ke Yunhai could do this here, there was no need to even mention what he could accomplish in the outside world.

Earlier….

The Demon Immortal Sect disciples outside watched Ke Yunhai push his hand against the surface of the pagoda and then close his eyes in meditation. As soon as he closed his eyes, shockingly, a second dot of light appeared on the 89th level.

In addition to Meng Hao, there were now two glowing dots. This dot, however, was incredibly shocking. It might even be better to call it a sun than a dot of light.

“That’s… that’s Paragon Yunhai? It’s… it’s really him! This is too… too…”

“That’s definitely Paragon Yunhai….”

Everyone could do a little more than stare in complete stupefaction. Never could they ever have imagined that cheating… could possibly be carried out to this shocking extent.

Almost as soon as the sun appeared on the 89th level, the level collapsed. Meng Hao and the sun then proceeded on to the 90th level. Within a few breaths of time, a brilliant glow filled the sky as the 90th level was passed!

At the same time, countless beautiful flowers descended down in the area around the Demon Immortal Pagoda. They merged together to form one gigantic lotus.

Many people instantly recognized what this was. This was one of the top 10 Daoist magics. It didn’t count as a secret technique; this was the one and only body tempering Daoist magic known as the Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal.

Even as an unprecedented surge of jealousy filled the hearts of the onlookers, suddenly, the beautiful flower began to show signs of instability. Immediately, the hearts of all the onlookers quivered.

“Incompatible! It’s incompatible! Hahaha! Ke Jiusi has no way to gain enlightenment of this particular Daoist magic!”

“The will of Heaven! This is definitely the will of Heaven!!”

Yet, even as their hearts raced, suddenly, pressure from Ke Yunhai spread out. Everyone watched dumbfounded as the pressure exerted by a Paragon caused the will of the previously unstable flower to be erased, and it was forced into submission.

The scene instantly caused the Demon Immortal disciples to stare with wide eyes. The ones who had just spoken instantly revealed expressions of incredible frustration.

Odd looks filled their eyes, and the exact same question spun through all of their minds.

“Dammit! Why couldn’t I have such an awesome dad!?!?!?”

A second question then filled the minds of some of the onlookers.

“How come my dad isn’t a Paragon…?”

By this point, they had no energy left to cry out about things being unfair. Ke Yunhai’s actions had obliterated any such arguments to the point of being dust and ash. It didn’t matter what anybody cried out, this father and son team would battle together….

It didn’t matter if you were talking about the Fang Clan or the Ji Clan, the Eastern Lands, the Northern Reaches, the Southern Domain, or the Black Lands. Everyone watched in a daze at the Demon Immortal Pagoda floating there in the sky.

They watched as Ke Yunhai, Paragon, escorted Ke Jiusi through the levels.

Fang Yu blinked, her heart feeling a bit unsettled.

“I can’t let dad find out about this….” she thought.

Zhixiang’s eyes were wide and she was panting. At the moment, even she was filled with intense jealousy toward Meng Hao.

Everyone was filled with complicated feelings as they watched the bright, sun-like dot of light on the outside of the Demon Immortal Pagoda. It charged through the levels. 94th. 95th. 96th….

Finally, it reached the 99th!

All of the observing Demon Immortal Sect disciples who were watching began to pant. It was as if they had forgotten about everything else except for this highest level of the pagoda.

The 99th level exceeded anything Meng Hao could have imagined. There was no danger here, no battlefield. There was only a valley. Within the valley was a lake, next to which was a house. Sitting cross-legged outside of the house was an old man.

The old man was fishing, and as Ke Yunhai and Meng Hao approached, he paid them no attention.

Meng Hao stood silently behind Ke Yunhai. Ke Yunhai came to a stop by the old man, and likewise said nothing.

After a long moment passed, the old man finally spoke.

“This does not conform with the rules.”

“I don’t have much life left in me,” replied Ke Yunhai coolly. Hearing this caused Meng Hao’s heart to tremble.

“It still doesn’t conform with the rules,” said the old man. He sighed.

“I’ve made many sacrifices for the Demon Immortal Sect. I’ve carried out Lord Li’s commands without hesitation. That’s not enough?” He turned his head to look off into the distance.

The old man said nothing at first. After a long moment, he sighed, then made a grasping motion with his right hand. Instantly, a seal appeared in the palm of his hand. It seemed to be formed of countless magical symbols, and contained a sense of shattered beauty.

“Fleshly Sanctification,” said the old man. “It is a secret art, not really a Daoist magic.” He looked at Meng Hao for a moment, and Meng Hao’s mind shook. That single glance was enough to pierce completely through him.

“Interesting,” said the old man, a serious look filling his eyes. He waved his hand, causing the seal to shoot toward Meng Hao and enter into his forehead.

“Night would have difficulty creating a copy of this art. However, since I approve, then after you leave this place, as long as I still exist, you can fully activate it. If I’ve already perished….” The old man shook his head, but said no more.

As for Ke Yunhai, he didn’t ask any questions about what had just been said. He turned to leave with Meng Hao.

As they made their way off, the old man suddenly looked up at Meng Hao once more. His eyes seemed to be filled with both understanding, and sorrow.

“Yunhai,” he thought, “considering you know the truth of it all, why are you doing this…?”

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# Chapter 588: This Life Will Do

Ke Yunhai took up the lead and Meng Hao followed. The two of them left the valley and headed off into the void.

Meng Hao felt a bit uneasy. Considering his personality and ability to concentrate, it shouldn’t be this way. After all, everything here was illusory. Furthermore, he hadn’t attempted to deceive Ke Yunhai. Therefore, there was nothing to feel uneasy about.

And yet, he was still somewhat nervous. He feared losing this identity. You might say that his original goal had been good fortune; now that he had acquired it, there was no reason for such uneasiness.

But the feeling didn’t go away. He feared waking up from this dream. He feared that after Ke Yunhai discovered that he was not Ke Jiusi, he wouldn’t look at him with that thoughtful, loving expression ever again.

In one breath, I can call you father. With the next breath, I can’t even open my mouth.

This was the feeling that caused Meng Hao to feel such uneasiness.

He feared losing what he had acquired.

Fatherly love. In Meng Hao’s memory, the image of his father was already blurry. During his time spent in this illusion, he continued to be distracted to the point that he was forgetting that he wasn’t Ke Jiusi.

“Dad….” he said softly. His heart was filled with bitterness as he saw Ke Yunhai moving forward, getting further and further away from him.

Ke Yunhai stopped and turned back, his eyes filled with a smile, and that same old doting expression. He softly tousled Meng Hao’s hair.

“Don’t let your imagination run wild,” he said.

Meng Hao stared back, somewhat in a daze. His eyes felt moist, and at the moment, he didn’t want to think about whether or not Ke Yunhai knew the truth about everything. He didn’t want to consider all of that. There was only one thing he wanted to consider.

If there really is such a thing as destiny that caused us to become father and son in this place, then… I really am your son.

If this illusory world can count as my previous life, then you are my father from my previous incarnation.

Perhaps I am doomed to leave this ancient, illusory world, doomed to no longer have you as my father, doomed to no longer be your son. In that case, let the feelings we have between father and son that exist in this illusion… be something that I never forget.

Sir, you are my father.

I, sir, am your son.

Meng Hao nodded his head.

With a smile, Ke Yunhai clasped his shoulder and then the two of them flickered, disappearing from the 99th level and appearing outside of the Demon Immortal Pagoda.

As soon as they appeared, they became the focus of attention of all of the Demon Immortal Sect disciples. The gazes were filled with envy, jealousy, internal conflict and helplessness.

As soon as Ke Yunhai and Meng Hao left the Demon Immortal Pagoda, it began to shrink down, eventually transforming into a beam of light that shot up into the fissure up in the sky. As it did, the fissure rapidly began to mend itself; in the blink of an eye, there was no fissure at all left behind.

There was only….

A transparent staircase. It was hard to say when it appeared, but it stretched down from the heavens all the way to the ground, floating there above the pit between the Third and Fourth Peaks of the Demon Immortal Sect.

The light of the staircase did not emanate out, but rather, seemed to circulate about inside. It rose up far into the heavens, and if you looked closely, you could just barely make out a huge vortex at the top.

When he saw the staircase, Meng Hao gasped in shock. However, he quickly realized that the other Demon Immortal Sect Cultivators seemed completely indifferent to its appearance, almost as if… they couldn't see it!

However, as Meng Hao glanced out at the crowds, he suddenly saw Ji Xiaoxiao. From her expression, he could guess that she had seen the staircase.

"Could it be that only outsiders can see it?" he thought.

Now that Meng Hao had appeared, the South Heaven Cultivators were now concealing themselves within the crowds of other Demon Immortal Sect disciples.

They had no choice but to hide from and avoid Meng Hao. Although they had been going wild with jealousy moments ago, and despite the fact that this was an illusory version of ancient times, considering that Meng Hao had the identity of Ke Jiusi, if they tried to fight him, they would lose, even if they had a hundred lives.

They could only avoid him with great care. If they revealed their identities, they put themselves in critical danger. In contrast, of course, Meng Hao had no qualms about revealing himself.

That was because… with their identities, none of the South Heaven Cultivators could do anything to threaten him even the slightest bit.

Even still, despite how they were all concealing themselves, they could all see the staircase stretching up into the sky above the mountain peaks, and it caused their minds and hearts to tremble.

“That’s….” The young man from the Imperial Bloodline Clan of the Northern Reaches once again lowered his head and hunched his back. However, he was now panting, and his eyes glowed with a bright light.

“Could that be…?” Fang Yu’s pupils constricted. After a moment’s thought, her eyes went wide.

“The critical element needed to open the Third Plane!” thought Zhixiang. She stood off in the distance, breathing heavily, her hands clenched into fists and her eyes shining with excitement.

Even further off in the distance was Patriarch Huyan, who had left quietly much earlier. He was also starting to get very excited.

Even as everyone was thinking their various thoughts, Ke Yunhai led Meng Hao away. The ripples from the Demon Immortal Pagoda faded. There were others who had acquire some smatterings of Daoist magic. However, the Demon Immortal Pagoda had been opened specifically for Meng Hao, and he was the only one to have acquired the indescribable good fortune that he had.

Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao, Nine Heavens Destruction, Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal, and finally, the secret technique of Fleshly Sanctification. These were Meng Hao’s shocking acquisitions.

That was not even mentioning how he’d gotten the chance to punish Patriarch Reliance, as well as many other subtle matters. To Meng Hao, the Demon Immortal Pagoda had been nothing less than Heavenly destiny.

He returned to the Fourth Peak without stopping anywhere along the way. When he got back to his Immortal’s Cave, Xu Qing was there meditating, her body surrounded by swirling light. A slight smile could be seen on her face; clearly she was immersed in gaining enlightenment of Daoist magic.

He didn’t disturb her, but rather, sat down cross-legged to study the seeds of Daoist Magic which existed inside of him.

There was one that looked like a crimson flame, which was none other than the Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao!

As for the Nine Heavens Destruction, the Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal, and the last one… the secret art of Fleshly Sanctification, these arts existed in Meng Hao’s mind, and could be seen, but not felt.

Meng Hao had the feeling that these three great Daoist magics would require continued contemplation before he could employ them. Thankfully, he would not forget them after he left this ancient, illusory world.

Having reaching this point in his train of thoughts, Meng Hao started to get excited. That was because in addition to all of that, there was one more thing he had acquired… the Mountain Consuming Incantation!

As of now, Meng Hao had fundamental control over the technique. Although he could only employ it up to the first level, according to the introductory information, that was enough to incarnate the body of a mountain outside of his fleshly body.

That in and of itself would make the power of his fleshly body exponentially higher.

“By cultivating it to the peak, I can extract the souls of mountains and then incarnate their wills, and cause the power of myriads of mountains to descend!” Meng Hao’s eyes filled with a look of satisfaction. It was truly possible to say that his journey into the Demon Immortal Pagoda had pushed his good fortune to the pinnacle.

There were other magical techniques, restrictive spells, and other miscellaneous methods that he had picked up. Currently, they all existed in his mind. However, unless he actively gained enlightenment, then once he left this place, they would disappear.

He tried to brand the information onto a jade slip, but experienced no success and eventually gave up.

“The Mountain Sea Scripture… is most likely impossible to acquire,” he thought. A bright glow appeared in his eyes as he contemplated the matter for a moment. In the end he put it aside. However, within his mind, he could remember that voice he had heard in the 80th level.

Time passed, half a month. Meng Hao sat in meditation in his Immortal’s cave for the entire period of time, gaining enlightenment of the Daoist magic.

Xu Qing emerged from meditation a few times. They would simply look at each other and smile. They knew that their time here was limited, and that they needed to take advantage of every moment possible to be enlightened regarding Daoist magic. There was little time for idle chatting.

Finally one morning, Meng Hao sat cross-legged outside of his Immortal’s cave, studying the Fourth Peak. Within him, the enlightenment of the Mountain Consuming Incantation had already been branded on his mind. The first level of the incantation was almost completely cultivated when someone arrived, who, although he hadn’t been expecting, did not surprise him.

It was a female Conclave disciple from another of the peaks. She was pretty, with bright, flickering eyes. She carried herself with a graceful bearing, and as she neared Meng Hao, she attracted quite a bit of attention from the other Fourth Peak disciples.

What they saw was a young woman, blushing, apparently finally have overcome her shyness and mustered some courage. She came to a stop before Meng Hao and bashfully said, “Big bro Jiusi, I have a few questions about cultivation that I was hoping you could help me with.”

Her features, her voice, and her figure transformed into something shockingly alluring. Anyone who looked at her would feel their heart pumping with eagerness. Quite a few of the Fourth Peak disciples were looking at her, and all of them seemed to view her as being so amazing that she was nearly god-like.

Her face was beautiful, as was her body. Her skin was so delicate it seemed the wind could break it. She had a pure expression that was at the same time naturally charming. All of it made it so that the term ‘extraordinary beauty’ couldn’t even be used to describe her.

Meng Hao recognized her instantly. His entire body covered with goosebumps when he heard her speak. “I don’t have the time,” he replied.

She looked delicate and charming, as if she might fall over from the slightest blow. She bit her lip, seemingly mustering her courage. Anyone watching on would surely feel that it was a crime to refuse this young woman.

Meng Hao was about to do just that when he suddenly noticed a flicker of ill intent in the young woman’s eyes. Clearing his throat, he rose to his feet and then proceeded forward.

The young woman was none other than Zhixiang. She lowered her head and followed Meng Hao off into the distance, surrounded by the envious murmuring of the other Fourth Peak disciples.

As they proceeded along, all of the Demon Immortal Sect disciples who saw the two of them stared with wide eyes, their hearts filled with fury.

“Another female disciple has fallen into his hands!”

“Dammit! How many has it been so far? When will it be my turn for something like that to happen?!”

Eventually they reached the vicinity of the Second Peak, whereupon Meng Hao turned impatiently to look at Zhixiang.

“Alright,” he said, “tell me how I can help you.”

“Straight to the point, I see,” she said with a smile. “Well, you’re a man, and you know that you owe me. However, what I’m most curious about is, what exactly did you encounter in the 80th level to cause the voice of Lord Li to bestow you with Daoist magic!?” Although she spoke with a smile, she clearly took her words very seriously.

When Meng Hao heard this, his pupils constricted. He looked at Zhixiang, his heart thumping.

“That was… the voice of Lord Li?” he thought.

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# Chapter 589: An Ancient Tale

Although inwardly his mind was racing, his expression didn’t show any trace of that. He simply looked at Zhixiang with an enigmatic smile.

She blinked. Considering Meng Hao’s expression, it was impossible to determine what he was thinking, and she could only inwardly curse his craftiness.

“Fine, if you don’t want to tell me then just forget about it,” she continued with a laugh. “Let’s change the subject. The two of us had an agreement, and you owe me some help.” A shrewd look appeared on her beautiful face.

“Actually,” replied Meng Hao with a casual laugh, “the truth of the matter is that we don’t have any formal agreement with each other. However, considering how you’ve helped me out throughout the years, I don’t mind returning the favor. I can help you out a little, but regarding anything too complicated, my hands are tied.”

“Don’t be in such a hurry to refuse,” Zhixiang said carefully. “If you help me, you’ll also benefit. Considering your personality, I know that you’ll require a thorough explanation before you make your decision.” Meng Hao did nothing to prevent her from continuing.

“Let me tell you the current facts of the matter. Afterward, you can make you own determination about whether or not to help me. Either way is fine with me.” A sudden breeze caused Zhixiang’s hair to suddenly spread across her face, making her look indescribably seductive.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever. He didn’t speak, but instead waited to hear what she had to say.

“We first encountered each other in the Bridge of Immortal Treading. I assume you’re already aware that the bridge was created by one of the three Demon Emperors of the Demon Immortal Sect!

“Those three Greater Demons were the Frost Soil Demon Emperor, the Withering Flame Demon Emperor and the Blood Coral Demon Emperor. All you have to do is look up and you can see the dwelling places of those three Greater Demons here within this illusory ancient world.” In accompaniment with her shocking words, she pointed up into the sky.

Meng Hao’s mind reeled. He had never expected Zhixiang to reveal such shocking matters. He looked up at the three inverted Demon Mountains up above. The first time he had caught sight of the Demon Mountains, he had had his own speculations. Now that he heard Zhixiang’s explanation, he could combine it with what he already knew to be relatively certain that she was not lying!

Of the three Greater Demons of the Demon Immortal Sect, the one who created the Bridge of Immortal Treading was none other than Frost Soil Demon Emperor Han Shan!

Meng Hao’s pupils constricted. He looked up at the distant mountain of frost, and got the feeling of some type of separation, as if it had sealed itself away from the world.

“A long time ago in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, the Demon Immortal Sect was the number one great Sect. That was because it had Lord Li, who was in fact the person who founded the entire Sect!

“He was the Lord of the Ninth Mountain before the Ji Clan…. Among Lord Li’s subordinates were two great generals who supported the Heavens, and three Greater Demons to act as Dharma Protectors! Of course, one of those generals was none other than the later Lord Ji.” Zhixiang spoke all of these words calmly, but they caused Meng Hao’s mind and heart to tremble.

He kept his expression solemn as he looked back from the three Greater Demon Mountains up above. As he returned his gaze to Zhixiang, he realized that he was suddenly much more curious regarding her goals and motives here in the Demon Immortal Sect.

“I am a disciple of the Demon Immortal Sect,” she went on. “So, I know quite a bit about all these matters. The Demon Immortal Sect has a total of four Heavens. The First Heaven is comprised of the Seven Peaks. The Second Heaven is comprised of the three Greater Demon Mountains. The Third Heaven is made up of two Holy Lands…. As for the Fourth Heaven, that is where… Lord Li is!

“That is the Demon Immortal Sect, which was once… the number one Sect in the Ninth Mountain and Sea!” By this point, Zhixiang’s eyes shone with a strange light that seemed to contain pride and dignity.

“Assumably, you have already made some speculations about the two so-called two Holy Lands. They are actually the lands of the two great generals, and their Clans. Because of their extraordinary service, Lord Li eventually bequeathed their lands with the word ‘Holy.’

“Therefore… those two lands are two great Holy Lands of the Ninth Mountain and Sea!

“As for the names of these two great Holy Lands, one is Fang, and the other… is a name that cannot be spoken out in the world without incurring great calamity. As of now, we can only say Ji!” As Zhixiang’s words filtered into Meng Hao’s ears, his mind filled with a roaring sound. At long last he understood this most ancient of stories!

He had long since become aware of the matter of the Ji Clan seizing the Ninth Mountain and Sea, and becoming its new Lord. However, this was his first time hearing that the other of Lord Li’s generals came from a Clan named Fang! Meng Hao’s mind was spinning.

He immediately thought of Fang Yu, and of the Fang Clan in the Eastern Lands!

For some reason, he had the feeling that this Fang Clan was the same Fang as the name of that great general, as well as the Holy Land. How could he ever have imagined that the Fang Clan would have such an astonishing origin! 1

“Considering how astonishing the two generals’ Clans were, and how shocking the three Greater Demon Emperors were, then… since they were in subservient positions to Lord Li, I can’t help but wonder just how powerful Lord Li must have been!?” All of a sudden, he recalled the words he had heard within the 80th level of the Demon Immortal Pagoda.

“When Lord Li achieved his Dao, he decided to no longer monopolize the mandate of Heaven, but returned that mandate to the masses. He caused the Dao Realm to become invisible, and imposed restrictions on longevity. He sealed the path one could tread to see him, and no longer appeared in the flesh. The two Holy Lands were forced to seal themselves!

“After that, the three Greater Demon Mountains were also sealed!

“Later, Lord Li fell. Some people say he went missing, others say he died in battle. There are many legends. Eventually, war was waged over the two Holy Lands. That war affected all of the Ninth Mountain, and in the end… the Heavens were placed on top of Li, and the Ji Clan gained victory!

“The Demon Immortal Sect was part of that war, and as a result, it was destroyed…. The Bridge of Immortal Treading was also shattered. The three Greater Demon Mountains collapsed, and the three Greater Demons perished. The Ji became the new Lord, and the Fang Clan was out.

“As the Demon Immortal Sect reached its end, a handful of survivors managed to flee, sticking together to form the modern-day Demon Immortal Sect.

“That war was like a foul wind and a bloody rain of carnage for the Ninth Mountain and Sea…. Obviously, I didn’t experience it, but the records within the Sect contain clear descriptions.” At this point, Zhixiang stopped speaking.

Meng Hao stood there silently for a moment, breathing somewhat raggedly. Great waves surged through his heart. Based on everything he knew, it seemed to him that the things Zhixiang was telling him, although perhaps not completely accurate, were at least seventy to eighty percent true.

“That is the story of the Demon Immortal Sect!” continued Zhixiang.

“Within the Demon Immortal Sect, there are two great legacies. One is that which was shockingly famous throughout the Ninth Mountain and Sea, the great… Mountain and Sea Scripture. According to legend, the scripture is formed of nine manuals, any one of which gives you the right to be a Mountain and Sea Lord!

“Years ago, Lord Li possessed the ninth manual!

“Unfortunately, the only way to acquire the Mountain and Sea Scripture is by means of a special method prescribed by Lord Li. After he fell, the legacy dissipated. Even the current Lord Ji only possesses a smattering of knowledge of the Mountain and Sea Scripture, not the true scripture itself.

“That is why among the nine Lords of the great Nine Mountains and Seas, Lord Ji is the weakest!

“As for the other legacy of the Demon Immortal Sect, many restrictions were placed on it. Nowadays, it is rare to find anyone who can meet all the requirements. Although… I do meet the requirements! That is why I am here to acquire… the Demon Immortal Body!” Although she was speaking softly, by the time she reached the final three words, her eyes glowed with a strange light.

Hearing all of this caused Meng Hao’s eyes to glitter.

“Long ago,” continued Zhixiang slowly, “Lord Li used his own body to form a type of physique cultivation called the Demon Immortal Body. Those who possess such a body will find it much easier to practice Demon magic cultivation. In fact, one can return to a truly natural state, incarnate a spirit of a Demon, and then transform into a matchless Greater Demon!

“In this manner, the Demonic Qi of the Ninth Mountain and Sea can be consumed, and good fortune can be split with the Ji Clan!

“What I want to accomplish can’t be done alone. In order to get this one chance, I have the backing of the full power of everyone in the Demon Immortal Sect. Therefore, if you help, you won’t just be helping me, but rather, the entire Demon Immortal Sect.

“When it becomes necessary, later on after you achieve Immortal Ascension, we can offer you shelter in the outside world. In fact, we might even recruit you to join us!”

Meng Hao looked at her for a moment. “Why me?” he asked.

“I don’t need much help from you here in the Second Plane. However, in the Third Plane, if you’re willing to assist, you can help me increase my chances of success significantly.

“Actually, I’m not too certain of exactly what you can do. Perhaps, the fact that you have Ke Jiusi’s identity shows that you have some mysterious destiny connecting you to the Demon Immortal Sect…. Perhaps that is why the curse power in the Bridge of Immortal Treading didn’t affect you!

“That curse power is nothing other than the rancor of those who died in the Demon Immortal Sect that year. They feel rancor toward Lord Li, Lord Ji, and toward everything living. Such feelings have fermented for ninety thousand years, eventually transforming into a curse.

“Because of that curse, anyone who touches objects of the ancient Demon Immortal Sect at the wrong time, will disturb the dead souls and die instantly!

“It is only when the Third Plane opens that good fortune can be acquired. During that time, the curse is the weakest.

“Even still… there are some core areas in which the curse power will not be reduced at all, no matter what. So, I need your help… to forge a path to the place I need to go in the Third Plane!”

“Third Plane?” said Meng Hao, his eyes glinting sharply.

Zhixiang gave a cool laugh, apparently not fazed at all by the question. Her expression the same as ever, she replied, “The first two Planes of the ancient Demon Immortal Sect are guaranteed to open. However, the Third Plane depends on destiny or luck. To enter that Plane requires a lucky coincidence. However, all it takes is for one person to enter, and then the path will be opened to everyone who is within the Second Plane.

“For example, after you barged your way through the Demon Immortal Pagoda, a ladder appeared that we could all see, stretching up into the Heavens. That is destiny, and the entrance into the Third Plane. However, that entrance is only for you. You are the only one who can use it to enter the Third Plane.

“Once you enter the Third Plane, then the illusion around us will fade away. Everyone will appear along with you in the Third Plane.”

Having heard this, Meng Hao chuckled, but didn’t say anything. However, Zhixiang responded with a beautiful light laugh of her own.

“Don’t worry,” she said, “I don’t need your help getting into the Third Plane. The ones who need your help for that are all the other people from South Heaven. The Demon Immortal Sect has been preparing for this for a long time, and finally have uncovered a method to get me into the Third Plane on my own. Although, as soon as I enter successfully, so will all the others.”

Meng Hao thought for a moment. “Not many upsides for me,” he said.

Zhixiang looked at him for a moment. Actually, his words just now had caused her heart to start beating with excitement. She didn’t fear requirements being made on his part; it was only by mutual benefit could they work together smoothly.

“Within the Demon Immortal Sect is the Demon Immortal Cistern. That cistern is the key to the legends. I plan to go there while in the Second Plane, in order to secure the qualification to enter it later. Only by a bit of deception can I go to the true location of the Demon Immortal Cistern in the

Third Plane…. That is where I can acquire the good fortune to transform my body into the Demon Immortal Body!

“If you help me, then you’ll be helping yourself. We can share the Demon Immortal Cistern. By bathing within, even if you don’t qualify to get the Demon Immortal Body, you can still experience incredible strengthening of your fleshly body!

“In other words, this good fortune can be acquired by both of us!” Having made her greatest expression of good faith, she looked at Meng Hao expectantly.

Meng Hao was silent for a moment as he analyzed how much he could trust everything Zhixiang had said. After a long moment, his eyes filled with determination.

“I have one condition,” he said. For some reason, a somewhat bashful expression appeared on his face. People who didn’t know him very well might think it made him look very charming. However, to those who truly knew him, such an expression was enough to fill one with abhorrence….

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1. The Fang character for both the Holy Land and the name of Fang Yu’s Clan is the same,

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# Chapter 590: He Definitely….

“What condition?” replied Zhixiang, gaping. When she saw the bashful look on Meng Hao’s face, she suddenly smiled seductively, and her eyes glittered with a charming light.

“You sly fox!” she laughed. “So young and yet quite the ladies’ man already.” Suddenly, her expression turned solemn. “However, I warn you. I may speak a bit frivolously, but I know how to maintain my chastity. I’ve long since sworn myself to live for the Dao. I won’t even talk about matters of illicit love.

“Therefore, you might as well get rid of those dirty thoughts of yours, kid! I won’t agree!”

Meng Hao gaped in astonishment at Zhixiang.

“What are you talking about?”

“Don’t try to cover it up. Do you really think I couldn’t see that look in your eye? Humphh! I’ve encountered many similar situations before in my life.” She seemed to hesitate for a moment, then gritted her teeth and continued, “Fine, fine. Since there’s obviously some destiny between us, then I suppose I can promise to hold hands with you. However, that’s my bottom line!” It seemed that to her that this was a great price to pay. Without even waiting for Meng Hao to respond, she reached out and clasped his hand.

She just as quickly released it and then stepped back a few paces, her face somewhat flushed.

“Okay?” she asked.

“Huh?” It was only after a moment that Meng Hao finally put all the pieces together. He suddenly laughed bitterly. That wasn’t at all what he was interested in….

“I don’t really have any feeling toward older women….” he said with a dry cough.

When Zhixiang heard this, her eyes went wide, and a cold air suddenly began to spread out around her. Meng Hao blinked, then leaned forward and, said in a low voice, “My condition is that I want to be the first one to step into the Third Plane.”

Zhixiang frowned, then gave Meng Hao a look.

“Do you mean…? Oh!” It took Zhixiang only a moment to react. She smiled mysteriously at him.

Looking a bit embarrassed, Meng Hao said, “I’ve been running a bit low on Spirit Stones recently.”

Zhixiang placed her hand in front of her mouth to cover up a smile. Such a condition was no trouble for her whatsoever, so she had no reason to refuse. As far as she was concerned, as long as Meng Hao agreed to help, it would be easy to comply with.

She went on, “The Demon Immortal Cistern is an important place in the Demon Immortal Sect. Because of the help of my Sect, I’m one hundred percent confident that within a few months, I can acquire qualifications for you to enter.

“The only thing you need to do is just need to come with me. If we familiarize ourselves with the place now, then when the Third Plane opens we can go back.

“How about this? Give me a month. I’ll do my best to acquire an identity that can get you into where we need to go, then….” Before she could finish her sentence, Meng Hao interrupted her.

“In the First Heaven of the Demon Immortal Sect,” he said coolly, his voice dripping with a domineering air, “I can go anywhere other than the Immortal’s Caves of the other six Paragons. I don’t need any identity from you.”

Zhixiang’s eyes widened as she stared at Meng Hao. Gradually, a look of envy and jealousy appeared. Even she couldn’t help but feel indignant at the situation. She’d already forgotten that the person in front of her had a Paragon for a father.

Then she thought of her own identity, and how the Sect had prepared for years, how they had expended vast resources and personal wealth, just to give her these few months of time in which to succeed.

However, compared to Meng Hao and his identity, all of that counted for almost nothing….

“In the ancient records of the Sect,” she said, “there is information regarding certain people in the Sect. One of the entries is about Ke Jiusi. You were an overbearing silkpants who commited countless unimaginable misdeeds. Anywhere you went within the Sect, chaos followed. You oppressed the people, both men and women alike. According to the estimates, by the time the Sect fell, you had over four hundred beloved, and more than three thousand children!

“You were definitely a….” She didn’t finish this particular sentence.

“For the most part, your life was a joke,” she continued calmly, “something no one would keep a record of. However, in the final war, you went all out, even expending your longevity. You didn’t fear death in battle, and ended up making illustrious achievements in the fighting. All of your beloved died, and you buried them in the First Peak.

“Your sons all died too, and you personally buried them in the Second Peak. As for the Fourth Peak, that is location of your father’s tomb. You ended up deciding to bury yourself there too.

"The day the Sect was destroyed, you and a few others chose to perish along with the Sect. You slaughtered many Ji Clan Immortals, and as death loomed over you, Lord Ji himself personally arrived. Because he prized your valiant heart, he offered you a way to keep on living. All you had to do was bow your head, something you had done many times in the past.

"But you didn't bow your head. Instead, you lifted it up and laughed to the Heavens, then charged into battle once again. When the moment of your death arrived, you fell from above and landed into your coffin. In the last moment before you died, you uttered one final sentence."

As he listened to all this, Meng Hao's expression grew more and more complex. In the end, it almost looked as if he felt all of the things she was describing had happened to him. He said nothing.

Zhixiang continued. "You said… 'Father, are you proud of me?'"

When he heard this, Meng Hao's mind felt as if it were exploding. He closed his eyes for a long, long time before opening them. For some reason, tears were streaming down his face.

They were tears that did not belong to him, but rather, came from another life.

"You can stop now," he said. His mood was dark as he suddenly spun and walked off into the distance, filled with sentiment.

Suddenly, Zhixiang regretted upsetting him. She was about to say something when she heard his voice drifting back.

"We'll meet back here in three days to go to the Demon Immortal Cistern."

Meng Hao returned to the Fourth Peak. He stood outside his Immortal's cave and looked up at the darkening sky. Evening was falling, and the sun was setting. Within his mind, Meng Hao saw the images of everything that had happened with Ke Yunhai after he came here.

“He is my father in this life….” murmured Meng Hao. He thought again about how Ke Jiusi must have felt. It was a complexity that no outsider could possibly understand. In this world, in this Heaven and Earth, from ancient times until modern, only Ke Jiusi could possibly have understood. Except now… there was one more person who could.

Only the two of them could have such a sympathetic resonance. Only they had experienced such similar things, and such similar complex emotions.

“A son wants to care for his parents, but they aren’t there any more….” Meng Hao closed his eyes. If he didn’t understand the Soul Divergence Incantation, he would believe Ke Jiusi to be dead. However, now that he did understand it, and heard Zhixiang’s story, Meng Hao suddenly had a strange feeling.

He could imagine how Ke Jiusi’s flesh and bones had faded as the years passed. The Demon Immortal Sect became nothing more than corpse-filled ruins. Finally one day, Ke Jiusi’s body slowly formed back together from nothing inside that coffin. He opened his eyes.

He finally saw the sky again, and his Sect. He looked around at all the things that had once been so familiar, only to realize that everything was now different. He was the only person left. He missed his father, and regretted his silkpants lifestyle. That regret then transformed into tears.

He had most assuredly wept for a long time atop the Fourth Peak.

He had most assuredly looked out at everything and felt as if he were living a life filled with pain.

He had most assuredly drunk alcohol in front of his father’s tomb, blabbering like an idiot and knocking his head against the ground as he kowtowed.

He had most assuredly visited all the grounds of the Demon Immortal Sect. He had seen all the corpses, including those belonging to his relatives and friends, the people he had hated and the people he had liked. All of those people had become corpses, and their thoughts were nothing more than wisps on the wind.

After returning to the Fourth Peak and looking out at everything, he had realized that he was the only protector of this world.

Perhaps the most correct thing to say was not that he was the protector of the Demon Immortal Sect, but rather, the protector of his beautiful memories, especially the memories of his father.

As of this moment, Meng Hao understood. He understood Ke Jiusi’s heart, and what he was thinking.

“You’re definitely next to me,” thought Meng Hao, “or perhaps within my soul. You’re watching me live this version of your life, treading a different path than you. Every time I look at father, you are most assuredly using my eyes to look at him too.”

Meng Hao glanced up again at the evening sky for a moment, then closed his eyes again.

Two days later, it was the appointed time to meet Zhixiang. Meng Hao left the Fourth Peak and traveled with her toward the Seventh Peak!

This was the final peak in the First Heaven, and also the most important one.

Behind the Seventh Peak was a vast, hazy forbidden zone. Disciples without the proper authorization were not permitted to step even half a pace inside. In fact, few people actually knew what lay inside the haziness.

After entering it, nothing would be visible. One could only use a command medallion to find one’s way through the mists to the destination.

Zhixiang had such a command medallion, but Meng Hao didn’t.

When the two of them reached the indistinctness, they caught sight of two enormous stone statues that looked like Demons. They had eight arms and four heads, and were fully three hundred meters tall. They glared out fiercely in all directions.

Each of the two statues held a gigantic stone greatsword in hand. They were criss-crossed, stabbed down into the earth to form a door of swords.

The enormous door didn’t seem to offer any hindrance to any who wished to pass through it. However, if anyone attempted to do so without the proper qualifications, they would be instantly killed.

Zhixiang’s face was covered with an expression of piety and awe. She kneeled in front of the statues and used both hands to hold aloft a purple-black jade slip. It was a command medallion that emanated a warm glow as it floated up into the air toward the right-hand statue. As it landed in one of the statue’s hands, the statue’s eyes suddenly flickered and opened. It slowly pulled its sword up out of the ground, revealing a path.

A powerful, rumbling voice filled the air. “Third class qualifications. Where do you intend to go?”

“The Demon Immortal Cistern!” replied Zhixiang immediately.

“According to the regulations,” said the awe-inspiring voice, “you may travel thirty percent of the paths in this place, and may stay for no more than 38 hours.”

Zhixiang took a deep breath as she tried to stifle her excitement. It had taken quite a bit of power from the Sect, plus a special technique as well as a hefty price, to be able to bring this command medallion with her into the Second Plane.

It was a command medallion which provided third class qualifications. Even that was something rare, and was one of the reasons she was convinced she would be able to acquire great rewards in this place.

As she stood up, the command medallion flew back to her. She carefully reached out to take it; after all, it represented third class qualifications, which made it incredibly valuable. After putting it away, she bowed deeply to the two statues. Then she walked forward to step onto the path between the two swords. She looked back at Meng Hao with a bit of a snide look. As far as she was concerned, the Ke Jiusi from this time period would most likely only be able to acquire fourth class qualifications.

Meng Hao looked up silently at the statues for a long moment before walking forward. As he neared the door of swords, the sword belonging to the right-hand statue suddenly began to rumble.

A blinding light shot out from the eyes of the statue as it looked down at Meng Hao, its gaze filled with seeming intelligence.

After only a glance, it seemed to be able to examine him inside and out. It slowly lifted up the stone sword to reveal a path.

“Paragon’s qualifications. You may go anywhere you wish, and stay inside indefinitely.”

Zhixiang’s eyes went wide, and her brain filled with a roaring sound. She stared blankly at Meng Hao, madness rising up in her heart.

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# Chapter 591: Demon Immortal Cistern

“How can you have Paragon’s qualifications?!” asked Zhixiang angrily, glaring at Meng Hao as he strolled up to her through the door of swords.

As soon as she asked the question, though, she instantly felt stupid. How could she have asked such a nonsensical question…?

The fact that he really did have Paragon’s qualifications no longer left her feeling shocked, but rather, humiliated. It wasn’t just a personal humiliation, either, but a humiliation of her entire Sect.

All of the power of her Sect had been utilized, vast resources had been wasted, all to get her a third class qualification command medallion. However, in the blink of an eye, someone had appeared in front of her who had qualifications that vastly exceeded her own; Paragon’s qualifications.

Anyone who faced such a situation would go crazy and be filled with jealousy and envy. Who wouldn’t feel that the situation was frustrating and unfair? Zhixiang was now feeling exactly what everyone else had felt outside the Demon Immortal Pagoda not so long ago.

“I just asked my dad,” said Meng Hao casually.

The more he acted in this way, the more Zhixiang felt repulsed. She gritted her teeth and clenched her hands tightly into fists.

“The most annoying people I’ve ever met in my life are silkpants like you,” she said with disdain. “So what if you have Ke Jiusi’s identity? So what if you have a Paragon for a dad…?” By the time she reached this point in her tirade, even Zhixiang could sense the acrid tone in her words.

Meng Hao chuckled, but said nothing. Zhixiang watched fuming as he walked forward through the mist looking like he didn’t have a care in the world. Finally, she had no choice but to suppress her anger and follow him.

After only a few steps, though, Meng Hao suddenly stopped in place and looked at Zhixiang.

“You lead the way,” he said. “I can go anywhere I want, but your path is limited to the Demon Immortal Cistern. I’ll follow you.”

Zhixiang had just managed to suppress her indignation, only to have it explode out again. She took a deep breath, trying to console herself by looking at the bigger picture. She angrily nodded her head and walked forward.

Meng Hao followed, watching Zhixiang’s lithe figure as she made her way through the mist. There was something strange and beautiful to the scene.

As the two of them hurried forward, the mists parted ways for them, revealing a twisting path. Zhixiang took the lead position and Meng Hao followed. They proceeded onward for the time it takes an incense stick to burn. Eventually, the mists once again began to spread out, revealing an area roughly three thousand meters wide.

A mountain was visible, although it wasn’t very tall.

A waterfall fell down the side of the mountain into a pool of undulating water. Upon first laying eyes on the scene, there was no sound whatsoever. However, moments later, Meng Hao could hear the sound of rippling water.

The water poured into the pond, the sounds of birds drifted about, and the fragrance of flowers filled the air. Everything was overwhelming to the senses; there even seemed to be an aura of Immortal Spirits in the air, fragrant and sweet. Meng Hao took a deep breath, and all the Qi and blood in his body surged.

“So this is the Demon Immortal Cistern?” he asked. He glanced around, his gaze eventually coming to rest on the waters themselves. They were clear, making it possible to see all the way to the bottom. A faint, strange kind of mist rose up from the surface, making the entire scene look like a multicolored illusion.

Ancient, ornamental rock formations were scattered about, many of them carved with Demonic creatures that seemed to be imbued with Demon Spirits. The entire scene seemed like something celestial.

“If it’s not the Demon Immortal Cistern, then what is it?” said Zhixiang grumpily. “Your backyard fishing pond?” The complex jealousy and envy she felt had only dissipated by about half.

Ignoring Meng Hao, she walked forward, looking somewhat excitedly at the Demon Immortal Cistern. She raised her right hand to brush against some of the ornamental rocks, a look of piety filling her face.

“It all seems so simplistic, doesn’t it?” asked Meng Hao.

“Simplistic?!” Zhixiang shot back, spinning to glare at him angrily. She looked quite provoked. “It might be simplistic to you, but my Sect spent countless years preparing, and expended vast resources to get me here! This is the culmination of generations of hard work and persistence. All the hopes and dreams of an entire Sect all come down to this place.

“My Sect paid a steep price for this ‘simplicity,’ and many people even died!

“You say this place is simplistic, but that’s only because of your identity. Anyone else but you would be completely destroyed by the mists, even Immortals. The restrictive spells here would even cause people in the Dao Realm to frown.

“In the past, those two sword-wielding statues outside slew no less than ten Dao Realm Paragons!”

Meng Hao frowned, looking at Zhixiang with cold eyes.

“Watch your tongue,” he said. “You’re the one who invited me here.”

Zhixiang took a deep breath. After a moment of silence, she bowed to Meng Hao.

“I forgot my manners,” she said. “I’ll make it up to you.”

With that, she bowed again, then turned and pushed her hand up against one of the ancient rocks. Meng Hao watched as she sent her mind inside of it. Then, he approached the edge of the cistern, squatted down, and looked into the waters, a strange light shining in his eyes.

“So this water can alter the makeup of your body?” he thought. “If a person is qualified, it can transform their body into a Demon Immortal Body? Presumably, such qualifications are not the same as the qualifications needed to enter this place, but rather, possessing some strange body type.” Thoughtfully, he dipped his right hand into the water.

As soon as he touched it, a tremor ran through him. He felt something like a cold current surging in through his fingers into the rest of his body.

Zhixiang opened her eyes. “The both of us came to this ancient time in soul only,” she said coolly, apparently having recovered her composure. “Everything here looks real, but is in fact false. As such, there is no need to test out the waters. You can’t absorb anything. It’s useless.

“Alright, I’ve left my mark, now I need to familiarize myself with the area so that we can return here after we reach the Third Plane. You also need to leave a mark here. That way, your aura will be here in the Third Plane, and you can come back.” With that, Zhixiang began to make her way around, observing the area, studying it. It seemed as if she wanted to commit everything about the area into memory.

Meng Hao ignored her. Eyes glittering, he suddenly walked into the cistern waters.

Soon, he was floating chest-deep in the water, whereupon he closed his eyes. Around him, he could sense a pulsating coldness within the water that surged toward him and entered his body.

With a frown, he left the pond, water vapor pouring off of him.

“It really is useless,” he said coolly. “It seems this cistern is designed specifically for the fleshly body, and is useless to souls.” Following Zhixiang’s directions, he left a mark in the corner of one of the nearby stones, then turned to leave.

Zhixiang didn’t seemed to have any suspicions at all about his behavior. In fact, if he hadn’t tried out the cistern, she would have found it to be odd. To test out the water personally was only natural.

The two of them didn’t speak as they made their way back and then eventually parted. Earlier, Meng Hao had never thought that the casual words he had spoken would cause Zhixiang to be so upset.

After leaving the hazy world, Meng Hao returned to the Fourth Peak where he meditated for a few days. Then one evening, he quietly returned, entering the mists with a strange look in his eyes. Retracing his steps from earlier, he hurried back.

It didn’t take long for him to once again reach the Demon Immortal Cistern.

“There are definitely things about the Demon Immortal Cistern that Zhixiang is hiding from me. I can’t believe that such an important cistern can be entered so simply.

“There definitely must be some mysterious aspects to the waters.

“In any case, the cistern waters can temper the fleshly body, and in a much gentler way than the Underworld Cave. This really does suit my needs as far as strengthening my fleshly body!” With that, he took a deep breath and strode directly into the cistern waters. Only his head floated above the surface as he closed his eyes and felt the massive cold current around him.

It felt as if strings of ice were boring into his body. In the blink of an eye he was shaking; his Qi and blood surged. Gradually, he began to absorb the coldness.

His fleshly body was already strong; he had experienced the tempering of the Underworld Cave, and had come to master the Mountain Consuming Incantation. However, for quite some time he had not been able to break past a certain point. No matter how hard he tried, when he was in the First Anima, the most power his fleshly body could wield was that of the Third Anima.

“Maybe this place can make me even stronger,” he thought. As his Qi and blood raced, mist began to rise up on the surface of the water. The mist formed into streams that poured into his mouth and nose until it looked almost like he was breathing smoke.

His physical body gradually began to grow stronger. Every strand of coldness that burrowed into his flesh and blood exerted stimulating power that seemed to temper his body from the inside out.

This was a completely different method than that of the Underworld Cave.

Time passed. Meng Hao wasn’t sure how long it was before he opened his eyes. A rumbling sound filled his body as the bottleneck he had previously been stuck at suddenly burst. Finally, he could achieve a fleshly body strength equal to the Fourth Anima, while he was only in the First Anima!

Pulses of power filled Meng Hao. He could sense that with the terrifying, explosive power within him, he could destroy metal or stone with a single punch.

“The further down I go, the more cold it gets,” he thought, his eyes filling with determination. He had long since decided that he needed to take advantage of his time in this ancient world to strengthen his fleshly body as much as possible. In his analysis, his fleshly body was the most important thing other than Dao magic enlightenment that he could take out from this place.

Taking a deep breath, he sank down further, until he was at the midway point in the waters. His body trembled, and cracking sounds could be heard from within. Something about his body seemed irregular as the cold currents pressed down onto him.

The cold was boundless, majestic, and mad as it poured into him. He didn’t even need to make an effort to absorb it. The cold streams found him, as if they thirsted to become a part of him.

Meng Hao trembled as he caused his Qi and blood to continue to flow.

What Meng Hao didn’t know was that although the Demon Immortal Sect of this time period was not at its most flourishing point, it was in a much better state than it would be later, during its period of decline. Right now, it was filled with abundant resources, for example, this cistern. Its state of accumulation during the past tens of thousands of years had led to its current state of boundlessness.

The accumulation of coldness here… was terrifying. Similarly, the nourishing power it provided to the fleshly body was incredibly shocking.

Meng Hao’s body had reached a fearful state, and only continued to grow stronger and stronger.

“If I could keep this up, then eventually, I could have a fleshly body equivalent to the Seventh Anima while only in the First Anima! Wouldn’t that mean that… I would have… a Spirit Severing fleshly body!?!?” Within the cistern waters, Meng Hao’s eyes opened to reveal a bright, hair-raising glow.

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# Chapter 592: Slaying Immortals Wouldn’t Be Difficult

Meng Hao closed his eyes again as he floated there. Coldness poured into him, burrowing inside, fusing with his Qi and blood, circulating through him. He could sense his fleshly body growing stronger.

There seemed to be something strange in these waters, some Heavenly power that could use gentleness to cause the fleshly body to be remolded. There was no pain, but the coldness from the cold currents gradually caused Meng Hao’s body to grow stiff. After fifteen or twenty hours, even his soul was showing signs of growing hard.

It was at that point that Meng Hao, floating there in the middle section of the pond, suddenly opened his eyes. Without hesitation he shot up, bursting out from the surface of the water to appear outside. His body quivered, and white mist floated up off of him. Cracking sounds could be heard from the ground beneath his feet as ice began to stretch out in all directions, with him at the center.

He sat down cross-legged to meditate. A few days passed before he opened his eyes. Within them could be seen a bluish glow, which came from the poisonous coldness inside him that he still hadn’t dispelled.

“This place is excellent for tempering the fleshly body. However, it also contains a poisonous coldness, which takes time to dispel from within. If I don’t dispel it, it would eventually cause grave danger to my life.” Frowning, he sighed and then looked at his bag of holding.

“It’s too bad this is an illusory world, so consuming the medicinal pills from here doesn’t do any good. The only thing of value are the places here for training and cultivating the fleshly body.

“If I was able to consume the medicinal pills here, well, considering the Dao of alchemy in this age, my results would be exponentially better.” After a few more moments of thought, he rose to his feet and left. He planned to return to the Fourth Peak to rest and wait for the poisonous cold to be completely expelled. Then he would return again to immerse himself in the cistern waters.

As he passed back through the mists, Meng Hao was filled with a feeling like that when you can see a great treasure right in front of you, but have no way to take it. He was a bit depressed.

Gradually, he left the hazy area. As he passed the two statues and the door of swords, he suddenly stopped in place. A brilliant glow could now be seen in his eyes.

His eyes sparkled and his mind raced as a new idea suddenly began to form.

“The medicinal pills here are illusory, and therefore useless to me…. However, there is an endless supply of medicinal plants, even types that are extinct in my time, but are common here.

“In that case… what if I concoct my own pills?” He began to pant with eagerness.

“Illusory medicinal plants can be used to create real medicinal pills. In fact… I’ve done that before!!” He took a deep breath, and his eyes seemed to shine as brightly as if they contained suns. His heart trembled from the shock of this new idea. The more he thought about it, the more it seemed like he could do it.

If he did, Meng Hao wasn’t sure if he could… actually influence the fundamental structure of this ancient, illusory world!

“Back in the Violet Fate Sect, I made something from nothing! During my Violet Furnace Lord promotion, I used an illusory item to concoct… a medicinal pill made from nothing!! 1

“I wonder if I can use a similar method here to concoct… a similar pill made from nothing, that conforms to the nature of this place!?” Meng Hao’s fists clenched and his body trembled. This idea seemed almost like lunacy and he wasn’t sure if he could succeed. Speaking purely in terms of the Dao of alchemy, though, it was possible!

“It is difficult to create something from nothing even just once, and even with my skill in the Dao of alchemy. A lot depends on destiny and luck!”

He closed his eyes for a moment. When he opened them, they shone with determination. His body flickered as he shot toward the Fourth Peak. As he sped along, those who caught sight of him felt jealously pricking at their hearts. Because of what had happened at the Demon Immortal Pagoda, Meng Hao’s reputation as a Demon Immortal Sect silkpants had grown even beyond what it was before.

After returning to the Fourth Peak, he found that Xu Qing was still sitting there meditating. Compared to Meng Hao, Xu Qing possessed a level of diligence that he could never attempt to overtake.

However, every person’s destiny and fortune is different. Techniques that suited Xu Qing might not necessarily suit Meng Hao. The opposite was also true.

Several days later, all of the disciples in the Fourth Peak knew that their young Lord had apparently gone crazy. He unexpectedly had begun concocting pills, which caused a huge stir on the Fourth Peak. Eventually, word spread to the other peaks, and soon everyone knew about it.

It didn’t take long for all sorts of thoughtless gossip to begin to spread. Of course, no one dared to say anything openly; after all, the silkpants members of the Demon Entente were all very supportive of the matter.

When Meng Hao mentioned his desire for mass quantities of medicinal plants, the Demon Entente sprang into action. Once the huge amounts of medicinal plants began to roll in, Meng Hao’s entire life consisted of four things.

Daoist magic enlightenment, medicinal pill concocting, body tempering in the Demon Immortal Cistern, and dispelling the poisonous coldness.

When it came to concocting medicinal pills, he used the Fourth Peak’s pill concocting workshop, which belonged to Ke Yunhai. Once Meng Hao took it over, the entire Fourth Peak began to fill with the sound of exploding medicinal pills.

The sounds might echo out in the dark of night or in the middle of day. Whenever they were heard, everyone knew that the young Lord had once again failed to concoct a batch of medicinal pills.

Meng Hao was a bit ashen-faced; this was not the outcome he had hoped for. His Dao of alchemy came from a time tens of thousands of years in the future. The current Dao of alchemy was different, and he needed time to adjust before he could unleash his full potential.

Worst of all, Meng Hao found that so far, he could only concoct illusory pills, and was unable to truly create something from nothing. Perhaps it was because of the illusory nature of the world he was in.

It almost seemed as if there was some force interfering with him, making it so that the medicinal pills here were eternally categorized in a different way. Unfortunately, Meng Hao’s concoctions were outside of that scope, and were thus not permitted to appear.

However, he didn’t allow himself to become dejected, nor did he give up. He continued to experiment, trying to find that same feeling he had experienced back in the Violet Fate Sect. Time went by, and soon an entire month had passed.

By the end of that month, there wasn’t a single person in the Seven Peaks of the Demon Immortal Sect that didn’t know Meng Hao was concocting pills. The rumblings coming from the Fourth Peak became just another one of the sounds of the First Heaven of the Demon Immortal Sect.

Considering how many countless times he had failed, and the unthinkable amount of medicinal plants he had wasted, it was good that the Demon

Immortal Sect had such vast resources. Such wastage would cause even most mid-sized Sects to groan in complaint.

That was especially so considering that… he was using medicinal plants which were considered precious even in this age. Every failure of his caused other disciples to secretly feel stabs of pain in their hearts.

Although he hadn't succeeded yet, Meng Hao had actually gained quite a bit. His Dao of alchemy was gradually assimilating into ancient times. Slowly, a new path appeared in the Dao of alchemy that consisted solely of Meng Hao. Furthermore, he had attempted so many concoctions that his proficiency with the process actually vastly improved.

Also during that month, he gained complete enlightenment of the first level of the Mountain Consuming Incantation. It was firmly branded in his mind, and could be taken away when he left the Second Plane.

As for the poisonous coldness within him, it was now more than half expelled from his body. If it weren't for his continued immersions within the cistern, it would have long since completely vanished.

Actually, his control over the poisonous coldness had reached the point that as long as he didn't have contact with the cistern water, it would naturally dissipate.

During the month, Meng Hao's fleshly body experienced incredible changes. Even he was shocked by the outcome. The bizarreness of the Demon Immortal Cistern was thoroughly shocking. Right now, even when in the First Anima, his fleshly body had the power of the Fifth Anima.

According to his estimation, if he could reach a level of fleshly body strength equal to the Seventh Anima while in the First Anima, then when he actually entered the Seventh Anima… his fleshly body would truly be that of Spirit Severing.

If he encountered Patriarch Huyan in such a state, Meng Hao was confident that the battle would not be as difficult as before, and he would be able to destroy the man in soul and body.

“Unfortunately, to reach the level of the Sixth anima with my fleshly body would involve sinking down to the very bottom of the cistern… after which I would need a month to recover from the poisonous coldness.

“Furthermore, if my calculations are correct, I would need to go through that process at least ten times. Essentially, that’s almost a year of time.” Meng Hao continued to think about the matter as he walked through the various districts of the Demon Immortal Sect.

As he was walking, he suddenly stopped in place. In that instant, ghost images sprang up from everything around him, the sky, the land and the world. It lasted only for the space of a few breaths, and then everything went back to normal.

“That’s the third time this month,” Meng Hao thought with a frown. He could sense that the Second Plane was reaching the point of dissipation. When it vanished, all of the people from South Heaven would leave, and their journey into the Demon Immortal Sect would reach its conclusion.

“If it comes quickly, it will be within days. At the slowest, it might last two more months.” Meng Hao felt a bit of regret. There simply wasn’t enough time for him to reach the incredible strength of the Sixth Anima.

His body flickered, and he reappeared on the outskirts of the Demon Immortal Sect. It was a relatively remote location, deserted and quiet, a place where few people ever came.

He looked down at the ground, then glanced around the area again. Finally, he slapped his bag of holding to produce a Wooden Time Sword. This particular sword was branded with multiple seals that he had used in recent days to reinforce it.

He looked at the sword, and then the ground. A gleam of decisiveness filled his eyes.

“If I don’t give it a shot, then I’ll always regret it. Although I’m eighty to ninety percent sure it won’t work, there’s always that slight possibility….”

With that, he waved his right hand, causing the Wooden Time Sword to stab down into the ground. In the blink of an eye, it was buried deep down.

“Of all the magical items I possess, only the Wooden Time Swords need to be immersed within the power of Time. Even the slight chance of success would mean….

“When I return to reality, I might be able to have a sword with tens of thousands of years of Time! With the power of such a sword, a single slash could cut away tens of thousands of years! Even slaying Immortals wouldn’t be difficult!

“A treasure like that is worth a bit of a gamble!”

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# Chapter 593: Meeting South Heaven!

Meng Hao's eyes flickered. He turned and made his way off into the distance. In the end, he picked three other similar places in the Demon Immortal Sect where he concealed Wooden Time Swords in the ground.

Currently, he had a total of ten Wooden Time Swords, which he could use to unleash the first form of the Lotus Sword Formation.

To bet four of the swords on a possibility that was most likely impossible was a huge gamble for him.

"Each one of these Wooden Time Swords represents a vast collection of Spirit Stones…." he thought. Enduring the pain of it, he hid one sword after another. Every time he did, he buried his dreams and hopes along with it.

Meng Hao selected the four locations very carefully. In fact, the four different locations were places that, according to his memories of the First Plane, were still relatively intact.

That way, just in case the swords really did appear in the Third Plane… then they would be easy for him to recover.

As night fell, Meng Hao hovered in mid-air, looking out across the lands. He glanced at the four places where he had buried the swords, and the anticipation in his eyes grew stronger.

"If I succeed, then my path of cultivation can continue even more smoothly. If I don't succeed… then at least I will have no regrets." He made one more final look to ensure that he had committed the various locations to memory. Then, he made his way to the Fourth Peak.

More time passed by. Another half month was gone. The ghost images continued to occur with increasing frequency. The interval between the occurrences was shorter, and every time they occurred, they lasted for several breaths of time.

In fact, on one occasion a few days ago, Meng Hao had been concocting pills when the ghost images sprang for a few dozen breaths of time. During that time, he almost had the feeling that he had left the illusory ancient world.

He hadn’t seen Ke Yunhai recently. Even when he went to pay his respects and wish Ke Yunhai good health, it was only through the closed door of the Immortal’s cave. When Ke Yunhai spoke to him from inside, his voice seemed somewhat tired.

He wasn’t sure what Ke Yunhai was doing, but whenever he heard the man’s voice, he felt calmer. Ke Yunhai was his father in this life, and as far as Meng Hao was concerned, the most valuable thing he had acquired in this illusory world.

Xu Qing still had not finished with her secluded meditation. However, she had clearly experienced success in her enlightenment. Every time Meng Hao looked at her, she was experiencing different transformations of the soul.

She seemed completely immersed in Daoist magic. Although she was not consummately beautiful, there was now a vague air to her that was both unforgettable and fascinating.

“It should be any moment now,” murmured Meng Hao as he sat there cross-legged in the Immortal’s cave. “The ghost images are growing more intense and more frequent. Everybody must be getting very antsy by now.” He looked out at the evening sky and the dark clouds that were gathering up above.

Recently, he had not of his own initiative sought out any of the other South Heaven Cultivators. He had kept to himself, trying to concoct his medicinal pill from nothing, or achieve enlightenment of the Daoist magics.

Of course, all of the Cultivators from South Heaven were extraordinary individuals. Each one had inside information from their various Sects or Clans, as well as methods to evade Meng Hao. He was well aware of that. He could either mobilize the entire Sect to try to find them, or just not look for them at all. He preferred the latter.

Meng Hao was confident that they… would come looking for him.

When they did, it would be the whole group, except perhaps for Patriarch Huyan, who Meng Hao would kill at first sight.

Sheets of rain began to descend onto the Demon Immortal Sect. The entire world turned hazy, and as Meng Hao looked out at it, he had a strange feeling. He wasn’t sure if the world he was in was hazy, or if the rain was hazy… or if it was both.

It was much like how he viewed the future.

The rain fell until the third night watch before it started to lighten up. The land was covered with coldness that transformed into fog. When the sun rose, the fog slowly began to grow thin and then dissipate, transforming the haziness into clarity. Everything looked like a beautiful oil painting.

At dawn, a sword came!

It was impossible to say where the sword came from, but it shot directly toward Meng Hao. None of the protective spell formations on the Fourth Mountain did anything to stop it; apparently there was something special about this sword.

The sword came to a stop a meter or two in front of Meng Hao, where it hovered in the air. A mottled glow emanated up from its surface. Just barely discernible on the sword were the traces of a mark made by a soul.

It was one character.

Fang.

Meng Hao smiled. The people he had been waiting for were finally showing their faces.

He made a grasping motion with his right hand, causing the sword to fall into his hand. He sent out his Divine Sense to sweep it over, and immediately, a message transmitted into his mind.

After hearing the message, his smile grew even wider. After a long moment, he closed his eyes.

Noon passed, and evening was approaching by the time he opened his eyes again. His body flickered, transforming into a beam of light that shot past the First Peak and out of the mountainous region toward an area near the main part of the Sect where the Outer Sect disciples resided.

When Meng Hao finally arrived, no one was out and about. Everything was quiet as he headed toward a set of three connected residence buildings. As he neared a location between the second and third residence buildings, he waved his hand, causing a door to open up. Without hesitation, he entered.

Instantly, dozens of gazes fell upon him.

The residence was large and filled with dozens of waiting people. As Meng Hao looked around, he could see that they were separated into various groups.

Even within those groups, there were various subdivisions based on whichever area the people were from. After all, even though some of them might wish to kill others, they knew that they had to look at the bigger picture, and the trouble that it would cause if something like that happened.

The largest group of all, shockingly, was the Ji Clan. They had seven people, all of whom were Inner Sect disciples. Their eyes shone brightly, and although they didn’t speak, they made no effort conceal their extraordinary demeanors, nor their arrogance and pride.

Of the group of seven, three were women and four were men. There were two among them who were the most conspicuous. One was Ji Xiaoxiao, the other was a young man who had the glittering mark of a trident on his forehead. He emanated a sense of danger, and reminded Meng Hao a lot of the Ji Clan member he had killed most recently, Ji Mingfeng.

This young man was none other than Ji Clan Array member, Ji Mingkong!

However, of the seven Ji Clan members, the one that drew Meng Hao’s attention the most was neither Ji Xiaoxiao nor Ji Mingkong. Instead, it was an ordinary looking youth of short stature who stood behind them, smiling.

The youth seemed ordinary, but after looking at the seven Ji Clan members, that youth was the only one who caused him to feel a sense of danger.

It was merely a sense of danger, though. Meng Hao could not detect any bone-deep hatred from any of them, the type that said they wouldn’t rest until he was dead. Apparently, they did not have any idea at all that Meng Hao was connected to the death of Ji Mingfeng.

He glanced at Ji Xiaoxiao. She looked back at him silently.

In addition to the seven members of the Ji Clan, there was also the Fang Clan. Fang Yu looked at Meng Hao with a slight, enigmatic smile. Behind her were two men whose eyes glistened with displeasure as they coldly measured up Meng Hao.

Meng Hao recalled what Fang Yu had told him about three members of the Fang Clan coming to the Demon Immortal Sect. Obviously, these were the other two from the Fang Clan.

What was most intriguing to Meng Hao was that, although the right hands of these two men seemed ordinary, he could tell that they were not. He was familiar with the usage of the diaphanous Fang Clan glove. A single glance and he could tell that they were wearing just such gloves.

In addition to the Ji and Fang Clans, there were four or five others from the Eastern Lands. Most of them were grouped near the Ji or Fang Clans, but were eclipsed by those blazing suns of that part of the world. They didn't look very extraordinary at all in comparison.

However, their Cultivation bases were clearly beyond ordinary. As Meng Hao looked them over, his gaze came to rest on a tall, slender man who stood next to Fang Yu. He was smiling, but within the gentleness of his look was a viciousness buried deep down. Inside, he was obviously an ambitious and ruthless person.

As for who he was, Meng Hao wasn't quite sure. However, considering where he was standing, he could formulate some guesses.

"Don't tell me this guy is chasing after the explosive dragon?" he thought. He suddenly felt a bit of admiration for the man's bravery.

In another direction were the people from the Northern Reaches. From what Meng Hao understood, the Northern Reaches was a savage and uncivilized region. In some ways, it might be better than the Western Desert, but it was vastly different from the Southern Domain or Eastern Lands.

Actually, Meng Hao knew that the so-called Northern Reaches were actually a land of exile. The Cultivators there were mostly people that other locations couldn't tolerate, who eventually sought their fortune in the Northern Reaches.

Of course, what the Northern Reaches proclaimed to have was freedom. Complete and ultimate freedom.

Most of the Sects there were rebel Sects from other areas. The Clans were usually formed from scattered remnants of other Clans. One example was the so-called Imperial Bloodline Clan.

According to rumor, that clan had previously given rise to several Immortals. Because of that, descendants had a strong foundation and were able to expand and grow. Eventually the group split. One half perished and the other half traveled to the Northern Reaches where they became this new Clan.

There were a total of eight Cultivators from the Northern Reaches. All of them looked very bizarre, and none of them grouped together. Each one remained isolated.

The tyrannical and haughty air that they emanated was readily apparent. Of the eight of them, three were women and five were men. Each one seemed like a viper, cold and grim. There was one of them, a young man, who stuck out more than the others. He had the eyes of a phoenix, and beautiful features. He appeared to be smiling, but it was a cold smile that made one feel as if a frigid wind was blowing through you.

This was none other than the member of the Imperial Bloodline Clan.

There was another young man who had a strange birthmark that almost didn’t appear to be a part of his body at all. It seemed to be slowly wriggling across his face, a shocking image that would make anyone who glanced at it look twice.

Next to that group were the people from the Southern Domain.

As he laid eyes upon them, Meng Hao’s eyes softened a bit. The Southern Domain… was his home. Most accurately speaking, he was someone from the Southern Domain.

There were a total of seven people from the Southern Domain. From the way they were organized, Meng Hao could quickly see which alliances now existed between various Sects and Clans.

Wang Lihai and Han Bei were together, which meant that the Wang Clan and the Black Sieve Sect were in cooperation.

Song Yunshu was nowhere to be seen. If Meng Hao’s guesses were correct, Song Yunshu had most likely met his fate at the hands of Ji Xiaoxiao. She surely had killed him to remove him as a witness.

Eventually, Meng Hao’s gaze came to fall on one of the women from the Southern Domain. Although her physical features were unfamiliar, as soon as their eyes met, Meng Hao gaped.

“It’s her….”

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# Chapter 594: Pain in the Whole Body

Meng Hao’s memories of her were somewhat vague. He had actually not interacted with her much at all. In fact, if he recalled matters correctly, they hadn’t even met each other.

There was only one thing connecting them, and that was the Song Clan’s search for a son-in-law. In the end, although they were clearly strangers, they were still connected together.

Most accurately speaking, this was… Meng Hao’s beloved from the Song Clan.

Because she was a daughter of the Song Clan, it was impossible for her to have a second beloved, not after the search for a son-in-law. Her reputation and the face of the Song Clan could not permit that.

After Meng Hao fled, the Song Clan did not speak of the matter to outsiders. However, to the young woman, the entire matter came as quite a blow.

She had always been a tender and delicate girl. Although she had outstanding latent talent, her heart was weak. That made it hard for her to be strong. She was like a flower in a greenhouse, who feared the rain of the outside world.

That was how Meng Hao remembered Song Jia. She was beautiful and had gentle eyes, with a tender weakness deep within her expression. 1

Now, however, a hundred years had passed. Song Jia had changed. Her eyes were filled with strength, and the weakness that she had concealed deep in her heart all those years ago had been shed. She had grown up.

She had been left with no choice other than to grow up. After the matter with Meng Hao, she had no chance to choose a new beloved. Strangely, the Song Clan Patriarch made no extra demands of her, and in fact treated her quite politely. It made her feel almost like she was an outsider.

She hadn’t understood it back then, but many years later she came to realize that none of it had anything to do with her. Starting with that search for a son-in-law… everything had changed.

She had come to understand that in addition to her identity as a member of the Song Clan, she had acquired some other mysterious background. The power of that background made it so that everyone in the Song Clan trembled like cicadas in winter when they faced her. It was as if they didn’t know what to do with her.

All the resources of the Clan came to be at her disposal. In fact, it came to the point where she seemed to be even more important than her older brother, Song Yunshu. All her demands were complied with, which led to increasingly intense jealousy on the part of her older brother. The more he pushed against her, the more she had backed down. However, by the time the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane arrived, Song Yunshu had only become more aggressive than before.

In fact, in the First Plane, were it not for her being completely on guard, she might very well have died at his hands. That matter had filled her heart with intense pain.

She immediately recognized Meng Hao. The complicated feelings in her heart had been knotting up there for more than a hundred years. When their gazes met, she gave him a slight nod.

Meng Hao gazed back silently for a moment and then looked away.

When he saw Li Shiqi, he instantly thought of Wang Youcai, who joined the Reliance Sect along with Meng Hao that year. He also thought of Little Tiger, who he hadn’t seen after leaving the State of Zhao. Perhaps he had left along with old turtle Reliance. 2

Before he realized what was happening, the feeling of the passage of time appeared in Meng Hao’s heart. He sighed inwardly. Sometimes, it is only when encountering old friends that such a feeling will give rise to sighing and sobbing.

Li Shiqi smiled slightly, looking very cool and collected. Meng Hao nodded, then glanced over the other Cultivators from the Southern Domain. The rest were people he didn’t recognize.

However, one of them gave him a feeling that reminded him of the Li Clan Dao Child who had died at his hands, Li Daoyi. 3

This new man was tall and strapping, with a gaze like a blade. He stood there like a sheathed sword, ready to burst into action and split apart Heaven and Earth.

This was the current generation Dao Child of the Li Clan, Li Tiandao!

There was another Cultivator who didn’t look very impressive. It was an old, gaunt man who appeared to be all smiles, but whose expression was one of envy as he looked at Meng Hao. Meng Hao didn’t recognize him, but as he stood there among the other Southern Domain Cultivators, he caused a feeling of loathing to rise up within Meng Hao.

He didn’t see anyone from the Violet Fate Sect, the Solitary Sword Sect, or any disciples from the other Sects. He was a bit puzzled by that, but this was not the time to make inquiries.

Finally there were Cultivators from the Western Desert, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say the Black Lands.

There was Zhao Fang and Duo Lan, as well as two others that he didn’t recognize. He didn’t see Patriarch Huyan anywhere. 4

There were quite a few people he didn’t know here; in contrast, everyone here seemed to know exactly who he was.

He was Ke Jiusi, son of a Paragon, the number one silkpants in the Demon Immortal Sect, one of the Masters of the Demon Entente. He was famous, which of course filled everyone here with envy.

That was especially so after the shocking events of the Demon Immortal Pagoda. The envy in some of these people was rooted deep in their hearts, and had transformed into deep jealousy.

To these people, Meng Hao was the Chosen of the illusory ancient Second Plane, brilliant and splendorous.

Glancing over them all, he grinned and leaned up against the doorframe. With a smile, he said, “Hello, Fellow Daoists. What matter is it that you wished to discuss here with humble old me?”

He truly looked like a silkpants now, especially the way he leaned up against the doorframe. He seemed at ease, which caused everyone present to frown.

However, there was nothing they could do about it. They were Inner Sect disciples, and the difference between their status and Meng Hao’s was like the difference between Heaven and Earth. In fact, many of them would never even dare to meet Meng Hao in person.

If it weren’t for the fact that they were being forced by urgent circumstances, and faced with the potential of incredible profit that they couldn’t simply abandon, then they would never be willing to allow Meng Hao to see them in such a position as they were.

Some of them had even considering trying to hide their faces, or use other methods to attend this meeting. However, as soon as they got near to Meng Hao, he would be able to sense who they were, so any attempts at concealment would be useless.

The only way to be completely safe was to stay far away from him. However, this meeting was far too important. They need to show the spirit of good faith, otherwise, there wouldn't even be the slightest chance of success.

That was why the Fang Clan and the Ji Clan had joined forces along with all the others. Their alliance had only one adversary, Meng Hao. They would combine all their power and then bring it to bear in the negotiations to come.

That was the only way they all would dare to meet with Meng Hao in person.

Such frustration was something that blazing suns like them would find difficult to accept in the outside world.

As Meng Hao's words echoed out, everyone was silent. Nobody responded. All of them began to exchange glances, until finally, the gazes began to fall onto the Ji and Fang Clans.

As for the Ji Clan, they maintained their silence and looked over at the Fang Clan.

Fang Yu cleared her throat and looked at Meng Hao.

“There's something we would like to ask you to go the trouble of helping us with,” she said. “Of course there will be compensation, and a lot of it!” It wasn't clear how Fang Yu seemed to understand Meng Hao so well, but as soon as the words came out of her mouth, his interest seemed to be sparked.

“It's actually quite a simple thing,” she continued. “You've surely seen the staircase floating above the pit between the Third and Fourth Peaks. All you have to do is climb that staircase to the top, and then leave this place. That's all.

“In exchange, each of us here will give you 100,000 Spirit Stones as compensation. Look… there are dozens of people here. Therefore, we're talking about millions of Spirit Stones. That's quite a bit of profit for very little work, don’t you think? You really need to listen to your big sis here.” She winked at him, after which he began to perform some calculations.

“Hmm. I don’t think so, big sis. I’ve been getting a lot of headaches lately…. Also my shoulder got twisted while I was practicing cultivation. And my legs. I think it might be that I just can’t acclimate myself to this place. Every day they ache constantly.” He rolled his eyes, pulling a long face.

As soon as he said this, unsightly expressions appeared on the faces of the others present. Although no one spoke, they were murmuring to themselves. A Cultivator getting a headache? Who would possibly believe that?

A twisted shoulder because of cultivation? It’s not like he was practicing the Spider and Toad Skill. How could he possibly twist his shoulder…?

And then there was the expression ‘can’t acclimate.’ This made them want to curse him. None of them had experienced anything like that, and yet Meng Hao had?

Furthermore… all of them had entered here in soul only. Who had ever heard of a soul that ‘couldn’t acclimate.’

“Look here, at my neck. It hurts really bad, right here.” Massaging the spot, he sighed and continued, “I think I need to go back to my Immortal’s cave and lay down for a bit. I’ll have my dad call some of the Junior Sisters over to do some massage and other blood-flow invigoration techniques. As for this favor of yours, I’m afraid I really can’t help out.”

Everyone else was on the verge of going crazy, but had no choice other than to suppress their fury. From their perspective, Meng Hao was brazenly showing off his own identity and the fact that he had a Paragon as a dad.

He was going to call some Junior Sisters to massage him and stimulate his blood flow…? This caused all of the male cultivators to clench their jaws tightly.

Next, Meng Hao said something that arose even more fury. “Well then, it’s starting to get dark out. Dad’s waiting for me to eat dinner, so I should go. See you!” Yawning, he turned to leave.

“ENOUGH!” roared Fang Yu, clenching her fists tightly. “You’re constant yapping about ‘my dad this’ and ‘my dad that.’ Is Ke Yunhai really your dad?!” As soon as the words left her mouth, Fang Yu regretted speaking them.

Meng Hao stopped in place. He turned to look at her coldly. “Even though I don’t actually know who my father is,” he said, “that doesn’t have anything to do with you.”

Fang Yu truly wished to enter the Third Plane. However, she also was looking out for Meng Hao’s best interests. The words she had spoken just now had only come out in the heat of anger.

“Look….” she continued quickly, “all we want you to do is climb a staircase. Then you can lead us out of the Second Plane and into the Third Plane. It’s a simple thing for you! Besides, you can acquire a lot of good fortune in the Third Plane. In addition, it will put you on good terms with everyone here. When you get back to South Heaven later on, then your path….”

Meng Hao understood all of that. Furthermore, he felt no ill will at all coming from Fang Yu, and as such, also felt no hostility toward her. His expression softened a bit.

“I can take you all into the Third Plane,” he said coolly.

“However, 100,000 Spirit Stones isn’t enough. I want half of what you acquire within the Third Plane!

“If all of you agree, then we can conclude this bargain now. All of you can swear an oath from your heart; if you break it, you will become one with the Dao. We Cultivators place a lot of importance on oaths, especially ones that have to do with cultivation. You don’t want to cause entanglements that will hinder progress in your Cultivation base and eventually cause you to be destroyed in body and soul.

“If you don’t agree, then I’ll consider the matter ended, and we can just wait peacefully for the Second Plane to collapse.

“Whatever choice you make, make it quickly.” With that, Meng Hao turned to leave.

“Don’t you want to go to the Third Plane?” called out Wang Lihai.

Without even looking back, Meng Hao said, “What I’ve acquired in the Second Plane is already sufficient. It doesn’t matter at all whether I go to the Third Plane or not.” With that, he made his way off into the distance.

4. Zhao Fang is the guy Meng Hao offered to watch out for in exchange for protection for the Golden Crow Tribe. Duo Lan is the Chosen from the Butterfly Demon Sect

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# Chapter 595: The Love of a Father is Like a Mountain!

Everyone left behind stood there silently, wrestling with their thoughts and emotions. Their fury toward Meng Hao might be raging to the Heavens, but they were also left with no other alternatives. The staircase had appeared because of Meng Hao, and he was the only one who could climb it.

They had tried, of course, all of them. But all they could do was see it, not touch it.

A few days later, they all met again. Everyone stood in front of Meng Hao and swore an oath promising that after the Third Plane ended, they would give him the share that he had demanded initially.

Oaths were made and witnessed, all based on the Dao. In the future, it didn’t matter what these South Heaven Cultivators acquired in the Third Plane, they would have no basis for complaint. If they broke their promise, the oath would still stand. Any hesitation on their part could influence their Cultivation base.

If it was just some words, or an ordinary oath, it wouldn’t be anything extraordinary. However, when the time came to speak the oath, Meng Hao unexpectedly produced a seemingly simple, and yet also dangerous and vicious Daoist magic.

It was something that anyone at the Foundation Establishment stage or higher could cultivate, called Dao Certification.

A few days ago outside Ke Yunhai’s Immortal’s cave, Meng Hao had requested to have this very Daoist magic. It was specifically used in this ancient age to bind agreements using Daoist magic.

With it in place, if the agreement was broken, the soul would be shredded, great Daos would be unattainable, and the Cultivation base would decline.

There was nothing anyone could do. In order to get into the Third Plane, they had to cautiously swear their oaths, using the Dao Certification as a pledge, and then complete the agreement. There were some people who refused at first, but Meng Hao didn’t need to do anything. All it took was some pressure from the others, and they finally gritted their teeth and accepted.

After all, nobody was willing to be the one to pay a heavy price while others paid nothing.

There was one thing nobody seemed to notice. Although everyone assumed that everyone else was present, Zhixiang and Patriarch Huyan were missing.

Meng Hao also swore an oath. According to their requirements, he would climb the mighty staircase. However, he would pick the exact time. He also promised that in the coming days here in the Second Plane, he would not use his power and influence to exert pressure on them. They would no longer need to be so cautious and do everything from within the shadows.

They had been waiting for such a promise for a long time. Many wondered if anyone from their Sect or Clan who had come here in the past had ever deal with anything as frustrating as this.

Up to now, they hadn’t dared to make any public appearances, or go anywhere near the Fourth Peak. In fact, whenever they saw any silkpants flying through the air, they would duck their heads for fear of Meng Hao showing up.

Their days had passed in this manner for months now, and they had endured as long as they could. At long last they could relax a bit and enjoy sunlight of this ancient time….

After the agreements were all formalized, Meng Hao realized that the time to leave this place was fast approaching. He would depart from this ancient, illusory world, and return to reality.

In truth, none of the things here were things he couldn’t part with. The silkpants lifestyle, his identity, all of it was merely a dream. When waking up from the dream, it could all be forgotten.

However, there was one thing that he wasn’t willing to forget; his father from this life, Ke Yunhai.

The fatherly love that he displayed made Meng Hao want to be immersed here and never wake up. He didn’t want the dream to end, and didn’t want to forget Ke Yunhai. In this illusory ancient world, he had finally experienced what it felt like to have a father at his side.

That feeling made up for some of the sorrow that had lurked in his heart for so long.

He gave up on Dao magic enlightenment. Other than concocting pills, he spent most of his time sitting cross-legged outside of Ke Yunhai’s Immortal’s cave. Although Ke Yunhai never opened the door, Meng Hao stayed, occasionally saying one thing or another.

That was how life went on, peacefully and quietly. There were no shocking events. Everything was ordinary. Xu Qing was still in secluded meditation, never having opened her eyes even once. Meng Hao was used to such a lifestyle by now. In fact, on more than one occasion, he thought to himself that if things continued on this way forever, it wouldn’t be so bad.

Half a month later, the ghost images were appearing just about every day. Meng Hao knew that he needed to leave. The unwillingness to part, and the complicated, embarrassing thoughts, all sent him into a melancholy state of mind.

He looked up at the sky. He looked out at the lands around him. He looked at the Seven Peaks of the First Heaven. He looked at the Fourth Peak. He looked at Ke Yunhai’s Immortal’s cave. Then he closed his eyes and thought about all the things that had occurred here.

In the very beginning, he had admitted that he was wrong. Later, he was whipped. After that, inside the Demon Immortal Pagoda, he was doted upon by Ke Yunhai, his father in this life. All of these things were unforgettable memories for Meng Hao.

He suddenly had the strong desire to offer thanks to Ke Jiusi. He wanted to thank him for sending him to this place. He wanted to help Ke Jiusi achieve his aim, and do the same for himself.

“The love of a father is like a mountain….” Perhaps this new line of thinking influenced his Dao of alchemy.

That night would be the last night he concocted pills in the Second Plane.

As for what medicinal plants he used to concoct the batch of pills, Meng Hao didn’t even remember. He was submerged in his respect for Ke Yunhai, in the beauty he had experienced in the past days, and in the emotions that existed between father and son. That was what he was thinking about as he placed the ingredients into the pill furnace.

The flavor and aroma of these medicinal plants represented various shades of Meng Hao’s heart. They mixed together as he began to concoct, and he completely disregarded any thoughts of success or failure. There were only memories. Memories of everything that had happened in his place. Memories of Ke Yunhai and his fatherly love. Memories of his own childhood, and the vague image of his own father.

No moon hung in the night sky.

Meng Hao concocted without even thinking about it. Soon, the pill furnace began to thrum with an indescribable sound. It sounded like a song of Immortals, like a funeral dirge, sometimes cheerful, sometimes melancholy.

The song contained reluctance to part as it slowly drifted out. It echoed about the Fourth Peak, causing everyone to suddenly lift up their heads and look toward the location atop the mountain from which the song originated.

It was like a wind that swept over the hearts of everyone present. It caused ripples to appear that nudged the memories in their hearts, making them recall their past.

Within the depths of their own memories, everyone was different.

Some were like children who had just grown up. Such ones looked at the stooped figure of their father and realized that he was already an old man, and then… they felt pain in the depths of their heart.

Others remembered how they used to be when they were young. When their father was strict, rebellious thoughts would bubble up in their hearts and they would grumble inwardly: “Would you just stop blabbering!?”

However, after many years passed, when they faced their white-haired father as he lay sick in bed, they would clasp his emaciated hand. Tears would stream down their face, and they would moan to themselves, “Father… please, just talk to me a little bit more, okay?”

There were many people who subconsciously ceased to practice cultivation. As they recalled the past, they stared up at the mountain peak and began to weep silently.

Xu Qing opened her eyes. As she looked around blankly, pain rose up within her. She thought about her home, and the vague image of her long dead parents.

“I want to go home….” she murmured.

The song echoed out from within the pill furnace to fill the entire Fourth Peak. Meng Hao didn’t know it, because he was completely lost in thought. Concocting pills is like making music, or carving wood. One can take inexpressible thoughts and feelings and pour them inside the creation.

The sound of the medicinal pills being concocted had started out ordinary and mediocre. But now, it contained emotion. It contained Meng Hao’s thoughts and feelings, almost as if it had a life of its own, a spirit. The music of it exceeded all the sounds that nature could produce.

After all, the most moving thing of all is love…. And although romantic love is beautiful, it pales in comparison to the selflessness of family love.

Gradually, the disciples on the Third Peak and the Fifth Peak heard the song of the pills being concocted. The song needed no explanation; as soon as they heard it, they stopped cultivating and stood there mutely. Everyone began to think of their father.

More and more disciples grew silent as the song washed over them, various images rising up from their memories to fill their minds.

Father is right there, a pipe in his mouth, his face covered with wrinkles. As he turns his head, he smiles in a way that calms me. Then he tousles my hair.

The sun is shining and I'm sitting on father's shoulders, high up in the air, laughing happily. Back then, I didn't know that my laughter was my father's happiness.

I don't want to see his strong, steady hands slowly grow thin and wrinkled….

Wang Lihai heard the song and immediately stopped meditating. He looked off into the darkness of the night, and then thought back to his own strict father.

Han Bei sat there silently, and her heart suddenly felt as if it were tearing into pieces. She lowered her head as she thought of her father, and how he had limped as they strolled together through the Black Sieve Sect all those years ago.

Soon, people in the Second and Sixth Peaks also heard the song. It was filled with the love of a father, fierce and incapable of being dispersed. Even the most evil person in Heaven and Earth would begin to reminisce when they heard this song.

I remember when you raised your hand at me, sir, and I glared back furiously. I fought back, then left and slammed the door. I never saw your trembling body, and the look of disappointment in your eyes.

One rainy evening, I was sick in bed. I opened my blurry eyes to see you, your hair white, prostrating in front of the statues of the gods, praying for me to be restored to health. You bustled about, you sold everything, all to make sure that I recovered properly.

When I saw that, my hands started to shake, and my heart tore. I wanted to open my mouth and say… father, I was wrong.

The song of the pills being concocted gradually reached the First Peak and the Seventh Peak. All of the regions of the Demon Immortal Sect's First Heaven could hear it. Everyone was listening, including Outer Sect disciples, Inner Sect disciples, Conclave disciples, Elders… everyone. Even the most powerful people in this world, the Immortals, were affected by the song, and began to reminisce.

A resonance was created, and memories floated up. In this instant, the entire Demon Immortal Sect was completely silent, except for the song…. Everyone was listening to it, and thinking of the past.

The Paragons of the First, Second, Third, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Peaks… six Paragons, all heard the song. They looked up toward the Fourth Peak, their expressions mournful. They could see Meng Hao concocting pills, and they could hear Meng Hao's voice within.

Even the Paragon who hated Ke Jiusi the most, could do nothing more than sigh.

"He's… finally grown up. Brother Yunhai… I wish you… good luck on your journey."

It was in this moment that another sound rose up within the Demon Immortal Sect. It was the sound of bells… a death knell….

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# Chapter 596: The Oil was Exhausted and the Lamp was Dry

On the Second Peak, Song Jia leaned up against a pine tree, staring blankly in the direction of the Fourth Peak. At some point, perplexity had filled her eyes, and tears had begun to stream down her face.

The song of the medicinal pills echoed within her ears, giving rise to layer after layer of ripples within her heart. One scene after another rose up from her memories.

She saw images of her father, and images of herself….

Some people call a daughter a 'pearl in the palm.' From what Song Jia remembered, she… was the pearl in her father's palm.

The song of the medicinal pills echoed out, rising and falling, floating throughout the First Heaven. A million people heard it and were affected, even Fang Yu. She sat there silently, complex emotions filling her. She felt both agitated and reminiscent. She reminisced of her father, scholarly, seemingly gentle but also very strict. She also reminisced about her childhood, along with all the soft and sweet things that had happened.

What made her most agitated was that within the song coming from the Fourth Peak, she could clearly sense a family love coming from Meng Hao toward someone that wasn't actually his father.

"Dad," she murmured, "did you really make the right choice back then?" At some point, her eyes had filled with tears. She thought back to when she was small, how she would often see her mother weeping, while her father stood at the window, looking off into the distance, a profound, complex look in his eyes.

Within that look was a type of love that Fang Yu didn’t understand back then. After growing up, when she thought back to it, she realized that it was love. It was not love for her, but love for someone far, far away, someone who existed in some unknown place.

The love of a father and the love of a mother are completely different. The love of a father is more reserved, more silent, like a mountain. When you are a child, your father is your guardian angel. When you are a teenager, things change. He becomes an obstacle. After that, you come to view yourself as the superior, with him beneath you.

Once you reach middle age, though, you look at that mountain and you suddenly realize that he has been there all along, watching you proudly. However arrogant you were, however selfish and narrow-minded, he would forgive you. Forgive you without even saying a word.

You will feel forlorn, and will suddenly come to a realization. That… is the love of a father.

When you have it, you might not feel it deeply. However, once you lose it, you lose the Heaven of your heart!

When a child wishes to care for a parent, only to find that the parent is no longer there, well… that is a sorrow that gives rise to the most profound of weeping.

As Meng Hao concocted, the song of the medicinal pills echoed throughout the First Heaven. Throughout the seven great mountain peaks, a million disciples were immersed in silence. Even the Paragons were lost in thought.

They listened to the song and recalled images of the past….

In the past, I viewed myself as incredible. Sir, you said many things back then. You tried to involve yourself in my affairs, but at that time, I felt that you had changed from before. I felt that I was capable of flying on my own.

But then, my wings were broken, and I became very exhausted. After flying for a long time, I suddenly looked back and thought of you, sir, and about all the things you told me. By the time I looked back, however, all I could see was your tomb. I stood in front of your tomb and wept. I wanted to say: “Father… I was wrong.”

In the past, I looked down at you, then turned away, leaving you to prove myself. Years later, after I conquered the world, I came back to you in all my glory to look at your shocked face. Instead, what I saw was how proud you were of me, sir. Pain filled my heart. By that time, your hair had long since become white. I embraced my aged father, and whispered:

“Father, I’m back.”

Tears rolled down Ji Xiaoxiao’s face as she immersed herself in her memories. She thought of many things….

Within Li Shiqi’s mind floated the image of her Master. She didn’t know who her father really was. When she had opened her eyes for the first time, the first person she saw wasn’t her Master, but someone else.

However, at some point in her life, she had come to view her Master like a father.

She called him Master, but in her heart, she called him father.

She was adopted, having lost her parents when she was still wearing swaddling clothes. As she grew up, she became beautiful. However, from a young age, she had been cursed with a strange deformity. It was only because of her Master’s efforts over the years that she was able to live a normal life.

Without her Master, there would be no Li Shiqi.

Once, long ago, he had taken her to look for clues about her hometown. After much searching, Li Shiqi finally spoke up, her voice soft. “Master, there’s no need to search any more. In this life, you are my Master. I hope that in the next life, you can be my father.”

The song of the pills being concocted continued to echo out. Every single person was moved emotionally; everyone was affected, influenced….

Meng Hao’s expression was blank. These medicinal pills, this batch, this pill furnace and its song, were all filled with reluctance to part from Ke Yunhai, as well as Meng Hao’s desire for that love of a father.

He was completely unaware that at some point, a white-robed figure had appeared behind him. The figure had long hair, and was emaciated. His entire person emanated an aura of time, and archaic ancientness.

It was none other than Ke Jiusi.

He stood behind Meng Hao, staring at the pill furnace as if he could see into eternity.

The medicinal pills were being concocted by Meng Hao. The song of the pills, though, contained the voices of both Meng Hao and Ke Jiusi.

Then, the death knell began to toll. The sound rang out again, and again, and again….

A death knell was not rung upon the passing away of every disciple. Even Conclave disciples did not qualify for something like that, nor Elite Apprentices.

Only people who had rendered incredible services to the Sect would qualify to receive the death knell of the Demon Immortal Sect, as a means of protection on the way to the underworld.

Other than such people… only when a Paragon perished would the ringing of the death knell be heard in the Sect….

When the ninth bell tolled, Meng Hao suddenly trembled. He slowly lifted up his head, as did Ke Jiusi.

“Bells….” he murmured. Fear filled his heart, and suddenly he didn’t care about anything. He didn’t care about the pill concocting, or the illusion, or the ancient times. He didn’t even care if this batch of pills really were Celestial Pills, nor whether or not he succeeded in concocting them.

His body shook, and a realization as dark as night swept over him. Trembling, he rose to his feet.

In that instant a roaring sound could be heard from the pill furnace. The medicinal pills and the furnace itself suddenly exploded; their connection to Meng Hao was broken, and blood sprayed out of his mouth. The blood spattered down onto the exploded remnants of the medicinal pills; this was blood filled with his indescribable thoughts, thoughts that carried his unceasing love for a father.

“Dad….” Without hesitation, Meng Hao rushed outside.

He left the pill concocting workshop, completely unaware that within the shattered remnants of the pill furnace were nine destroyed pills. However, the batch had been a batch of ten. All of the medicinal strength of the nine destroyed pills had merged into the tenth pill.

That tenth medicinal pill appeared, glittering brightly as it began to transform from something illusory into something real!

The pill also absorbed Meng Hao’s blood, which contained his true feelings and emotions. Because of that, the pill… began to thoroughly transmogrify. This was creating something from nothing!

However, it didn’t matter that the medicinal pill was something from nothing, nor that it met all the qualifications that Meng Hao had dreamed of. Within his mind, there was no medicinal pill. There was only his anxiety, an anxiety so intense that he forgot who he was….

He rushed out of the pill concocting workshop, out of the Immortal’s cave, out of the entire area he was in. He transformed into a beam of light that shot with incredible speed toward Ke Yunhai’s Immortal’s cave.

The death knell sounded out throughout the seven great mountain peaks of the First Heaven…. DONG…. DONG…. When the thirteenth toll was reached, Meng Hao arrived at Ke Yunhai’s Immortal’s cave.

Seeing that the door was sealed shut tightly, tears began to pour down Meng Hao’s face. He kneeled in front of the door.

“Father!” His voice wasn’t very loud, but it filled the entire Fourth Mountain. His eyes were wet. He wasn’t sure when, but at some point, he had thoroughly immersed himself into this ancient, illusory world. Ke Yunhai had appeared to fill a void of fatherly love that had existed in his heart since he was young.

That void was something that Meng Hao usually kept carefully hidden away. He did not want anyone to touch it, not even himself.

But then, Ke Yunhai had appeared in this ancient illusion, and that void… had been filled.

Meng Hao’s heart was being ripped into pieces. To him, Heaven and Earth had lost all color. An indescribable feeling surged over him; he felt like his body had been turned into a black hole that was consuming his soul and his life. His everything.

“Father….” Tears streamed down his face as he looked at the door of the Immortal’s cave. The death knell continued to echo about. It had now tolled nineteen times. Every bell toll caused a green beam of light to surround the Fourth Peak. Currently, nineteen glowing rings of light surrounded the mountain.

As the tears rolled down Meng Hao’s face to drop to the ground, the door to the Immortal’s cave began to open silently. Ke Yunhai’s exhausted voice could suddenly be heard from within.

“Don’t cry.”

Meng Hao’s head shot up immediately, and his body began to tremble. Without any hesitation, he rushed inside. The Immortal’s cave was dark, but he could still see Ke Yunhai sitting there cross-legged on his stone bed.

Ke Yunhai was even more ancient than before. He seemed to emanate an aura of complete decay. White nodes of light pulsated out from him; it seemed his body was currently in the processes of passing away into meditation.

As for the lamp next to him… the oil was exhausted and the lamp was dry. Its light was weak, as if the slightest wind could blow it out.

An enormous coffin rested off to the side, its surface carved with auspicious beasts. It seemed ordinary, but if you looked closely, you would be able to see how incredible it was.

“Jiusi, don’t cry….” he said hoarsely, looked at Meng Hao with a tender expression. “You’ve grown up. Daddy can’t stay with you forever. From now on, you’ll need to rely on yourself…. However, there is one last thing I can do for you. Before I pass away into meditation, I will give you the precious treasure of a lifetime, forged personally by me!”

The death knell outside had reached the fifty-seventh toll. When it reached ninety-nine, the soul would disperse. Along with the ninety-nine rings of light created by the bell tolls, it would return to Heaven and Earth, and enter the underworld….

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Note from Er Gen: The love of a father is like a mountain. For many years, I didn’t understand this. I truly came to understand what it means to be a father eight years ago, when I became a father. Then I understood how the love of a father and mother are different. When I was young, I read an essay by Zhu Ziqing, called Retreating Figure. I didn’t understand it then, but many years later it came to mind. Every time I read it, I understand it more, and the meaning becomes more profound. Every time I read it, I understand more about what it means to be a father.

Today, I won’t ask for any monthly vote tickets. Instead, I wish a safe journey through life to all fathers. (Brothers and Sisters, please spend more time with your father. Take more opportunities to wish him well. It wasn’t until I had my own child that I realized how difficult it is for a father and mother to raise a child.)

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# Chapter 597: I’ll Make You Proud, Sir

“With the Soul Divergence Incantation, you can cultivate an undying soul. Unfortunately, the difficulty level is too high for you…. However, this coffin can help you to cultivate the art. With it, even should great calamity arise, you… can continue to live!”

He only spoke a few sentences, but even that left Ke Yunhai gasping for breath. His face was pale, and the white nodes of light flying around him grew more dense. They circulated around his body, making it look almost like a glowing halo surrounded him.

He looked kindly at Meng Hao, his gaze filled with doting kindness and the reluctance to part. And love…. He feared the child he left behind might be bullied, might be lonely or taciturn.

Meng Hao bit his lip as he kneeled wordlessly in front of Ke Yunhai, tears flowing.

“There’s no need to cry,” said Ke Yunhai. “If men cry too much in our day and age, then their Dao becomes unstable. Come here, kid….” He raised a shaky hand, and Meng Hao, tears dripping, walked forward to stand in front of him.

Ke Yunhai’s hand, covered with so many wrinkles, gently patted Meng Hao’s head.

“You’ve grown up….”

“Dad….” Meng Hao looked at the pervasive death aura, and withered Ke Yunhai, and his heart felt as if it were tearing into pieces. His body trembled as his heart suddenly filled with the intense sensation that his father was about to leave him.

He… had long since taken Ke Yunhai to be his own father.

“Everyone dies eventually, that is something we can’t change. Lord Li returned the mandate to the masses. I am a Paragon of the First Heaven, I must respect that decision….”

“Why?” murmured Meng Hao, the tears pouring down. “Why do you have to respect it!? We Cultivators practice cultivation to gain eternal life, don’t we? What’s the point in abandoning eternal life?!”

Ke Yunhai was silent for a moment before raising his head. His gaze seemed to penetrate out of the Immortal’s cave to some distant place in the future. The death knell outside had reached the sixty-ninth toll. The sound of it echoed out endlessly.

“We Cultivators don’t just practice cultivation to gain eternal life. No, we pursue the Dao…. For those who strive after the Dao, life is a morning and death is an evening. For those who seek the Dao, when evening comes, of what use is longing…?” Ke Yunhai lowered his head to look at Meng Hao.

“Death and life are not important to me. Without Lord Li, your father would have long since died countless times over…. I do not fear death. The only thing I am uneasy about… is you….” Ke Yunhai tousled Meng Hao’s hair. He was already running very low on energy, but his eyes were filled with kindness, and an increasingly strong doting indulgence.

“I should have perished many years ago,” he continued. “But I was worried about you, so I put things off until today. If it were possible, I would accompany you a bit further, just like in the Demon Immortal Pagoda, me in the lead, you following… off into the distance.” He smiled, but his face was pale. More and more white nodes floated around him, making his smile seem somewhat distant.

“Dad….” said Meng Hao, pulling at Ke Yunhai’s hand.

“All of your brothers and sisters have already gone. Now that I’m leaving, you won’t have any relatives left in the world…. I hope that in the future… you will learn to be a bit more sensible.” As Ke Yunhai gazed at Meng Hao, the kindness in his eyes grew stronger, as did the reluctance to part. It was exactly as he said; what he was concerned most about in his life, was the child who kneeled in front of him now.

If there were even a little bit of hope to buy more time, he would seize it, and watch Ke Jiusi truly grow up.

Meng Hao wasn’t able to give voice to what he was feeling deep in his heart. He felt stabs of pain, as if his world were falling apart. It was as if there were a vortex inside of him, sucking in all of his thoughts.

He could only clasp Ke Yunhai’s hand tightly with his own. He could only cry. He opened his mouth, but no words came out, not even one.

“Don’t be sad. Your brothers and sisters are waiting for me. I’m their father too. I need to spend some time with them, also…. Jiusi, daddy hopes that one day, when I’m in the underworld, you’ll make me proud….”

Outside, the bells had tolled eighty-nine times. Ke Yunhai’s body was now completely surrounded by spinning white nodes of light. The hand that Meng Hao held began to grow faint. The only thing that was clear now, was Ke Yunhai’s kind smile.

His eyes had begun to fade. During the last ten tolls of the death knell, they would lose all of their brightness. They would transform into countless dots of light that would then vanish into the air.

Meng Hao’s heart felt as if it were being torn into pieces. His body quivered as he attempted to hold tight to Ke Yunhai’s disappearing hand.

“Dad……..”

Suddenly, Ke Yunhai’s fading eyes once again seemed to focus, as if he were using all the last bits of his life force to look at Meng Hao. He looked almost as if he were in a daze.

There in front of him, he saw a figure slowly materializing behind Meng Hao. It was a man in a white robe, whose features looked completely different than Meng Hao’s. He had long hair, and looked young, but also seemed to be filled with an endless ancientness.

This was none other than… Ke Jiusi!

Ke Jiusi looked at his father with tears in his eyes. He slowly kneeled down, his body superimposing with Meng Hao’s.

A smile appeared on Ke Yunhai’s face. He had long since put all the pieces of the puzzle together. He nodded, and slowly reached his hand out to touch Meng Hao’s forehead. Or… perhaps he was touching Ke Jiusi’s forehead.

In that instant, images appeared in Ke Yunhai’s mind. He saw the destruction of the Demon Immortal Sect and Ke Jiusi’s shocking final battle. He saw how Ke Jiusi returned to life and watched over the Demon Immortal Sect alone for tens of thousands of years.

Ke Jiusi looked at Ke Yunhai. Tears streamed down his face as he softly said: “Dad…. I learned to be a bit more sensible…. I’m sorry for everything before…. I’m sorry. Father… everything was my fault….”

At long last, he was able to see his father again. At long last, he was able to say those words to his Father.

The words were Ke Jiusi’s, and they were also Meng Hao’s. Two people, one set of words. It was hard to tell if Ke Jiusi was borrowing Meng Hao’s mouth, or Meng Hao was borrowing Ke Jiusi’s soul.

“Dad…. I’ve grown up. You can stop worrying, sir. I will always make you proud….”

Ke Yunhai looked at Meng Hao and Ke Jiusi for a long moment. His face filled with a kind smile, a smile filled with admiration, and even more so, deep content.

“Thank you,” said Ke Yunhai, his voice hoarse. “You, also, are my son. We are father and son in this life.” He gave Meng Hao a profound look, and within that gaze could be seen doting indulgence and kindness. It was in that moment that the innumerable white nodes of light completely surrounded his body.

Meng Hao trembled as he realized that the hand which had been holding Ke Yunhai, was now holding nothing. The final lick of flame in the oil lamp, was extinguished.

“DAD!!” Tears rained down Meng Hao’s face as he watched Ke Yunhai fade away. Outside, the ninety-ninth bell toll of the death knell could be heard!

One less than a hundred. Perfection was not permitted. The death knell protected the path, guarded the way. It could not have one too many, or one too less. Ninety-nine paths to the underworld.

That is the death knell which tolls when a Paragon perishes.

The sound of the death knell continued to echo about throughout the seven great mountain peaks of the First Heaven. In that moment, the million Cultivators in the Seven Peaks were kowtowing toward the Fourth Peak. Everyone, including the other Paragons, bowed deeply.

On the Fourth Peak, the sounds of weeping rose up. All of the disciples turned toward the direction of Ke Yunhai’s Immortal’s cave and began to kowtow on bended knees.

Ke Yunhai had perished.

As Meng Hao watched Ke Yunhai vanish completely, the sound of wailing drifted in from outside. He knelt there silently for a very long time before finally rising to his feet. Clutching his chest, he walked out of the

Immortal’s cave. Outside, he saw that all of the Fourth Peak disciples were present, looking in his direction. As he looked back at them, an expression of profound grief filled his face.

He looked up into the sky, and the sunlight poured into his eyes. For a moment, he thought he could see Ke Yunhai’s shadow. Ninety-nine beams of light swirled around him, escorting him away. As Ke Yunhai made his way off into the distance, he turned his head slightly to glance at the lands below, and at Meng Hao.

As the sunlight poured down onto Meng Hao, he saw the image of himself when he first arrived in this illusory world. He remembered the first time he saw Ke Yunhai, and the kindness he had seen in his eyes, a kindness that could forgive anything.

After he killed Ji Mingfeng, he was whipped. He remembered hearing Ke Yunhai’s voice transmitted into his ear, asking why he hadn’t cried out yet. His heart had trembled.

Then, there were the magical items and talismans personally forged with Ke Yunhai’s life force. In the Immortal Demon Pagoda, Meng Hao reached the point where he was sure he was defeated. It was then that a figure appeared in front of him, tousled his hair, and then kindly said, “I’ll take you the rest of the way.”

Meng Hao saw all of these things, and they transformed into a final image of parting….

Now, he finally realized that Ke Yunhai knew all along that he wasn’t Ke Jiusi.

In the end, he had even thanked him. That proved everything. Then he had said that Meng Hao was also his son. He approved of Meng Hao….

All of it seemed like a dream. But it was a dream that Meng Hao wanted!

“The old man… is gone,” he murmured. The light in his eyes turned into darkness, superseding everything else in the world. He coughed up a mouthful of blood, and then collapsed onto the ground.

Meng Hao was in a coma for two days. When he finally awakened, he saw Xu Qing watching over him anxiously. He didn’t say anything. Xu Qing accompanied him to Ke Yunhai’s funeral. The tomb was in a valley in the Seventh Peak, a tomb that contained no corpse, only an extinguished oil lamp.

Meng Hao was no longer an ordinary disciple. Nor was he an Elite Apprentice. He was now the Lord of the Fourth Peak, although he was a Lord who was not a Paragon.

He did not concoct any more pills, nor did he seek enlightenment of Daoist magic. He sat outside his Immortal’s cave looking out into the darkness of night, and the bright sky of day. He wasn’t sure what he was looking at. He just stared.

Several days later, the ghost images were appearing multiple times per day in the ancient, illusory world. Meng Hao knew that this place… was about to vanish.

“Living and dying. It can be a departure, but also a beginning.” Meng Hao felt as if he had experienced a flash of insight. He closed his eyes and did not open them for a long time. When he did, he decided to head to the great staircase that led up into the sky. Before leaving, he happened to notice the medicinal pill which had been created from nothing. It brought him no joy. He gazed at it blankly for a moment, then carefully put it into his bag of holding.

As he stood before the great staircase, he looked back at the Fourth Peak one more time. In that glance he placed the image of the Fourth Peak firmly in place in his memories.

Then he turned and stepped onto that staircase which none of the other disciples of the Sect could see. He began to walk up, one step at a time. As he did, all the Cultivators from the great lands of South Heaven watched him.

They were waiting. Waiting for Meng Hao to reach the very top of the staircase. Then the Second Plane would reach its conclusion, and the Third Plane… would open.

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# Chapter 598: The Third Plane

Meng Hao walked slowly, higher and higher. Soon he was high up in the sky, and almost at the top. He stopped just before he reached the final stair, looking down at the mountain peaks of the Demon Immortal Plane. He closed his eyes for a moment, and when he opened them, they were filled with resolve.

“Dad, I’m leaving now….” he said softly. Then he strode forward onto the final stair. A shocking rumbling sound filled the air, and the entire world began to shake.

Meng Hao could see and feel the shaking, but all of the Demon Immortal Sect disciples who weren’t from South Heaven had no clue at all that such things were occurring.

The South Heaven Cultivators could feel it, of course, and their faces began to fill with excitement and intense anticipation at the prospect of seeing the Third Plane with their own eyes!

When it came to the Demon Immortal Sect, the first two Planes always appeared. The Third Plane, however, had only appeared a few times throughout all history. It required great destiny or good fortune to make it open.

To be able to personally see the opening of the Third Plane made their hearts burst with passion.

Of course, the only one who could most truly witness the disappearance of the Second Plane and the opening of the Third Plane, was Meng Hao.

As of this moment, he was the only person who stood up in mid-air, looking down at all the people in the world below. When he reached the pinnacle of the great staircase, he looked down at everything, at the increasingly intense shaking, and the ghost images.

The ghost images would only appear for a moment before disappearing.

An invisible, imperceptible, illusory wind sprang up from nowhere. It did not cause anyone’s hair to lift up. Instead, it stimulated time.

Meng Hao watched all Seven Peaks of the First Heaven pass through ten thousand years in the blink of an eye. The lush vegetation on the mountain peaks withered and then bloomed again, completely changing in appearance.

He saw more extravagant buildings erected on the peaks, and he saw countless lives, people being born, growing old, dying. Ten thousand years.

Then he saw everything go pitch black. An enormous hand appeared, covering over the entire world. Within that hand, he could just make out an old man in a gold robe. He waved his sleeve, and the Heavens changed. The land was bathed in redness, and the stars tumbled about.

The ground shook. Meng Hao couldn’t see much within the darkness, but he could see the two Holy Lands collapsing. The three Greater Demon Mountains shattered. The Seven Peaks of the Demon Immortal Sect’s First Heaven split and cracked. Although the mountains were still in place, many parts were destroyed.

Buildings fell to pieces and disciples died. Meng Hao witnessed a great war that shook all of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. The war was fought in the pitch black, so he could not see things clearly, he could only sense them.

Soon everything faded away. After a long time, Meng Hao caught sight of a coffin on the Fourth Peak. A man emerged from within the coffin; he had long black hair and wore a white robe.

He stood silently on the Fourth Peak, as if he were watching over the lands below him, for an eternity.

All of this was tens of thousand of years of history, all passed in the blink of an eye. Meng Hao eventually closed his eyes, and when he opened them, reality had been restored to the world. There were corpses everywhere, just like before, and ruins.

Everything… was back to normal.

Meng Hao quietly closed his eyes again for a while. When he opened them, he was no longer up in the air, but rather, reclining in the coffin on the Fourth Peak, looking up at the sky.

The sky was broken, just like he remembered it had been when he first lay down into the coffin.

It was like everything had been a dream, and now… he was waking up from the dream. Quietly, he recalled the images of everything that had happened in the ancient, illusory world. Eventually, tears began to seep out of the corners of his eyes.

“Was it really all just a dream?” He wasn’t sure how to tell. He slowly sat up and then crawled out of the coffin. As he began to walk away, he suddenly looked back, his mind trembling.

The coffin was familiar to him. It was the exact same coffin that Ke Yunhai had made for him back in the illusory ancient times…. Perhaps it was more accurate to say that he made it for Ke Jiusi, the precious treasure to be able to cultivate the Soul Divergence Incantation.

Meng Hao looked a bit absent minded as he stood there. After a long time passed, he turned and looked over the Fourth Peak. As far as what the place had looked like when he first arrived, he couldn’t quite remember clearly.

Now, though, even though everything was in ruins, it was all familiar to him. Every little thing was something that existed in his memories, unforgettable.

He silently walked to the edge of the top portion of the Fourth Peak, to the place where he had first seen Ke Jiusi. He stood in the same place, his back to the First Peak, and gazed toward the Seventh Peak.

It wasn’t the first time he had stood here. Back in the First Plane, he had wondered what Ke Jiusi was looking at. Now that he stood here looking out in the same direction once again, he knew all too well.

“You were looking at Father Ke’s tomb.” In the Seventh Peak was a mountain valley where one of the most powerful experts in the history of the Demon Immortal Sect had been buried after he perished. It was none other than… Ke Yunhai.

Meng Hao looked away, and then began to walk down the Fourth Peak. All the various details weren’t exactly the same as they had been that year, but even still, Meng Hao was able to find places that he was familiar with.

As he walked, his face flickered with an expression of reminiscence. His heart felt heavy. He was like someone who had just awoken from a dream, a bit distracted, somewhat unsure of what was real and what was not.

The Fourth Peak was filled with ruins, and there were many areas that still had the restrictive spells from before. Just such a place suddenly appeared in front of Meng Hao. Gentle, warm light drifted out. It didn’t look like much, but if he ignored it, or tried to enter it without using the proper method, then it wouldn’t matter how powerful his fleshly body was, he would perish without a doubt.

The restrictive spell blocked Meng Hao’s path. On the other side was a narrow mountain path filled with corpses. Meng Hao was very familiar with this path; it was none other than the way that led to his Immortal’s cave on the Fourth Peak.

He stood outside the restrictive spell, his expression growing more complex. After a long moment, he closed his eyes. When he opened them, he lifted his right hand up and performed an ancient sealing incantation. Ghost images appeared, and he pressed out lightly up ahead of him.

There was no sound. The light of the seemingly eternal restrictive spell suddenly began to flicker rapidly. Gradually it grew thin, until finally, an opening appeared.

Meng Hao sighed, and stepped inside. A melancholy expression appeared on his face as he looked around at the corpses that littered the path. At the end of the path was the Immortal’s cave in which he had lived for so many months in the Second Plane.

The door to the Immortal’s cave was collapsed. The inside of the cave was empty, filled with dust. The Wooden Soldiers that Ke Yunhai had given him in the Second Plane were nowhere to be seen.

“Perhaps they don’t even exist anymore,” he thought to himself as he sat there in the Immortal’s cave. This was the spot he usually meditated in the Second Plane. From here he could see the sky and the lands. He sat there for a long time.

He knew that the other South Heaven Cultivators were using every method at their disposal, including methods gained in the Second Plane, to dig up treasures that remained in the Third Plane.

You could say that the Third Plane was like a Treasure Pavilion that had been broken open. Anyone who came here would be certain to have chances to acquire good fortune.

After a long time passed, Meng Hao finally stood up. He left what had once been his Immortal’s cave, and began to walk toward… Ke Yunhai’s Immortal’s cave.

There were now no restrictive spells here. All of them had been destroyed in the great war. In fact, the door of the Immortal’s cave hung in fragments. Except… the sight of the interior of the Immortal’s cave left Meng Hao gaping.

The layout of the Immortal’s cave looked exactly the same as he remembered it being from the Second Plane….

However, the entire place was untainted by even a speck of dust, as if someone came frequently to clean it.

Meng Hao stood there looking at the Immortal’s cave for a long time, almost as if he wasn’t even aware that time was passing by, and he had forgotten that this wasn’t the illusory Second Plane. Three days later, he finally clasped hands and bowed deeply.

He bowed for the dream. He bowed for the father during that lifetime. He bowed for having fully awoken from the dream.

The feelings for his father during that life were ingrained in the depths of his heart, and were now a part of him. They could not be cut away, or lost.

He rose to his feet, his eyes filled with determination as he walked down the Fourth Peak.

After leaving the mountain, he took a deep breath and then flew into the air. His heart had now recovered by more than half from the experience in the illusion. His eyes glittered as he shot off into the distance.

Rumbling echoed out as he increased his speed. Then, when he was far, far off, he suddenly stopped in place. He looked down at himself, for the first time sparing a moment to examine his body.

“So, the results of the fleshly body cultivation in the ancient illusion… are still there!” His eyes flickered with a bright light. His time spent cultivating his physical body had not been wasted. As of now… even in the First Anima, he had a fleshly body that was as powerful as the Fifth Anima.

“I gained the most in the First Plane. In the Second Plane, I also exceeded everyone else, leading to my superiority and advantage.

“Well then. I think that in the Third Plane… I also need to be the biggest winner!” With that, his body flickered, and a screaming sound filled the air. Before it could emanate out very far, Meng Hao was already nowhere to be seen.

“If my fleshly body cultivation remained in place, then….” He shot forward, his gaze coming to rest at stop off in the distance. He didn’t realize it, but a bright glow had appeared in his eyes. Within his gaze could be seen anticipation, as well as a bit of nervousness.

“Well, I wonder if my plan of burying the Wooden Time Swords… has succeeded!?!?” He took a deep breath. If his plan had succeeded, then the rewards he could acquire would definitely be a defiance of Heaven.

Daoist magics and fleshly body cultivation were all good, and in fact, Meng Hao was quite content. However, what he looked forward to even more were the Wooden Time Swords. If he had succeeded, the he would be in possession of a precious treasure that could slay Immortals.

If he had succeeded with the swords, then Meng Hao would have a much deeper understanding of everything that had occurred within the ancient, illusory world. He would then be able to determine whether or not… he really could change the future.

Although he was aware that the possibility of success was small, he was still filled with expectation. His body flashed as he shot off into the distance at top speed. It didn’t take long for him to find one of the four locations where he had buried a Wooden Time Sword.

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# Chapter 599: Sword Tip!

The locations he had selected were all remote corners of the Demon Immortal Sect, places he had noticed in the First Plane, which he was sure would survive.

As he neared the first location, he began to grow more nervous. Moments later, he arrived. He looked over the ruins in the area, and then took a deep breath and descended downward.

After looking around for a while, he looked down at the ground beneath him. He lifted a foot up into the air and then stamped down, again and again. Booming could be heard as the surface of the ground was destroyed. Countless bits of dirt and rock exploded up into the air as a huge crater appeared beneath Meng Hao.

Unfortunately, nothing could be seen within the crater….

Meng Hao’s face was unsightly as he turned and began to search the entire area. It didn’t take long before he had turned virtually everything upside down, and yet still hadn’t found a single thing.

It appeared as if from the very beginning there had not been any sort of Wooden Time Sword buried here.

“I failed…?” he thought, his eyes flashing with an unyielding glint. He flew up into the air and shot toward the second location where he had buried one of the other swords.

After arriving, he searched the area thoroughly, but the result was the same. No matter how he searched, he could not find any trace of a Wooden Time Sword.

Next he went to the third area, but the result was the same.

His heart had now sunk down into his chest, and a bitter smile could be seen on his face. He was now very much certain that the idea he had come up with in the ancient illusory world, had failed.

Sighing, he headed to the last of the areas where he had buried a sword. It was an area relatively close to the Seventh Peak. Back in the illusory world, the path to this place had been easy to follow, but now things were different. Danger lurked in all directions, even for Meng Hao. It took him several days to reach the Seventh Peak and the place where he had buried the fourth Wooden Time Sword.

At one time, it had been a mountainous forest. However, the forest had long since been burned into ash. After searching the ruined remnants of the forest for some time, Meng Hao finally found the place where he had hidden the sword.

After overturning the area, he found nothing but an empty pit. He let out a long sigh, and finally gave up all hope. He knew that this time, he had thoroughly failed.

He suddenly frowned. “Well, if I failed, then where are my Wooden Time Swords?” He opened his bag of holding and, sure enough, there were only six Wooden Time Swords inside. The four swords that he had buried were definitely gone.

There was something very strange about the whole matter, something that exceeded his imagination. There were many possible explanations, but the one that made the most sense was that although he had succeeded in burying the four Wooden Time Swords, someone else had come along and taken them before him.

He shook his head and was about to leave when suddenly, his gaze was drawn to the very edge of the deep pit he had just made. He saw something there that instantly caused a tremor to run through his body. He immediately began to breathe heavily as he stared at what appeared to be an ordinary, finger-nail sized fragment of wood sticking out of the mud.

That fragment of wood appeared to be rotten from the passage of time. It looked completely ordinary, stabbed as it was into the mud….

“That’s….” Meng Hao panted as he suppressed the excitement in his heart. Exercising great caution, he picked up the wood fragment. It was irregularly shaped, but the tip was actually sharp.

It was almost like a sword tip!!

“This is a Spring and Autumn tree! This is the tip of a wooden sword!” His breathing grew more ragged, and his mind roared chaotically. Although he desired nothing more than to succeed, he wasn’t even sure how to tell if he had.

Right now, his mind was spinning as he closely examined the sword tip resting there on his palm.

“Eee? No… it looks like… this isn’t the wooden sword I originally buried here?” As he examined the sword tip, he realized that shockingly, it contained 30,000 years of Time power.

However, the wooden fragment was too small, making the power of Time unstable. Meng Hao could tell that if he tried to wield it, it would gradually fade away.

“If I had succeeded with my wooden swords, they would have been buried here for almost 100,000 years. However, this wooden fragment only has 30,000 years. Also, the physical appearance seems a bit different.” Meng Hao wasn’t quite able to determine exactly what was going on. Now he suddenly wasn’t as certain that he had failed in his attempt.

Without being able to look at the entirety of the sword, there would be no way to make a final determination. However, he did know that there was absolutely no sensation of the brand he left on his own wooden swords.

He carefully put the tiny wooden fragment away. It was impossible to determine if the fragment was part of the sword he had left here to pass through the years. However, considering that there were 30,000 years of

Time power collected inside the tiny fragment, it could still be regarded as a precious treasure.

“If I truly failed, then all I lost were four Wooden Time Swords. By spending a few Spirit Stones, I can make more copies. If I succeed, though, then even if someone else took the swords away before I could, they were still personally created by me. If I ever run into them again, I’ll know, no matter how many times other people try to refine them.

“The heart of the swords contains my Time power. I will always be the original master of those swords.” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. Although he still didn’t understand exactly what had happened, he didn’t want to spend any more time thinking about it. Looking up, he saw the Seventh Peak, and a sentimental look appeared in his eyes.

“That’s where Father Ke’s tomb is.” With that, he transformed into a beam of colorful light that shot off toward the burial location of the powerful experts of the various generations of the Demon Immortal Sect.

Along the way, he heard the sounds of explosions coming from various districts within the Demon Immortal Sect, as well as the occasional din of battle.

To the South Heaven Cultivators, the Third Plane was like a storehouse of treasures. There was good fortune to be acquired everywhere. However, that good fortune was not the same for everyone. It depended on how well prepared each individual was in the Second Plane, who had the greater understanding, and who had mastered more techniques to open restrictive spells.

Those were the keys to success. However, considering treasures were involved, it would be difficult to avoid friction and fighting. Therefore, fierce battles were to be expected.

Meng Hao ignored all of that. He didn’t actually need to do anything. Thanks to the oath-enforced agreement, whatever the others acquired in here, he would acquire far, far more.

As he proceeded forward, the sky gradually began to grow dark. Outside of the Seventh Peak was the Demon Immortal Sect’s graveyard. As he neared, a bright beam of light shot out from the middle of the Seventh Peak. At first, it wasn’t heading toward Meng Hao. However, at some point it seemed to realize who he was, then changed directions and headed toward him.

Meng Hao stopped in mid-air, his expression normal as he coldly watched on.

The beam of light moved with incredible speed, and emanated a potent aura. It screamed through the air toward him, and as it neared, a young man became visible inside. It was none other than the Cultivator from the Imperial Bloodline Clan of the Northern Reaches.

His eyes flashed like lightning, and his face was filled with an expression of ferocity and coldness. He shot toward Meng Hao and was upon him in the blink of an eye. He flashed an incantation gesture, causing six illusory black dragons to suddenly shoot forth. Their shocking roars filled the air as they intertwined with each other. A terrifying pressure emanated out, slamming down toward Meng Hao.

Each of these six black dragons exceeded the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage. When they merged together, the pressure they emanated was similar to a Cultivation base half a step into Spirit Severing. This young Imperial Bloodline Clan Cultivator clearly had an incredible Cultivation base.

In the blink of an eye, the six dragons neared, filling up the entire world in front of Meng Hao. Each of the dragons was hundreds of meters long. Rumbling filled the air as their combined power shot toward him.

He gave a cold snort, and did nothing to dodge them or retreat. Instead, he strode forward and lifted his right hand up. His fleshly body seemed ordinary, but suddenly it exploded with a power equivalent to the Fifth Anima. Such strength was also the same as being a half step into Spirit Severing.

A fist descended, and a thunderous boom filled the air. The roaring of the six black dragons suddenly ceased as the shocking explosion rolled over them. Meng Hao’s fist seemed to have kicked up a tempest capable of ripping them into shreds.

In addition, within Meng Hao’s fist could be seen an illusory mountain. This was none other than manifested power of the first level of the Mountain Consuming Incantation that Meng Hao had gained enlightenment of. The fist shot out, a tempest raged, and a mountain descended.

BOOOOMMMMM!

The six black dragons were ripped into pieces. The face of the Imperial Bloodline Clan Cultivator from the Northern Reaches instantly fell. His eyes glowed with astonishment. He obviously had never even considered that Meng Hao could possibly be so powerful.

His original plan had been to kill Meng Hao in one decisive attack. If he failed, at least he would be able to feel Meng Hao out. Currently, though, when he saw Meng Hao’s Cultivation base, his heart sank.

He immediately fell back in retreat.

“Elder Brother Meng, this was just a misunderstanding….” he said, his eyes flickering.

“First Anima,” said Meng Hao coolly. His body roared as it exploded with the fearsome power of the First Anima. His fleshly body was now similar to the Sixth Anima. In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao’s battle prowess exploded by double.

He took a step forward, then transformed into a green mist, within which was a black moon. He appeared directly in front of the young man, who he then punched without hesitation.

A boom could be heard. The young man from the Northern Reaches tried to block with both hands, and a black glow appeared around him. However, the black glow immediately collapsed, and he was sent tumbling backward, blood spraying from his mouth and a look of astonishment filling his face.

“You doubled your power in an instant!?!?” This young man from the Imperial Bloodline Clan of the Northern Reaches was named Liu Zichuan. Normally, he was wildly haughty, but at the moment, he was shocked to the core. Not a scrap of arrogance could be found in him. 1

Coughing up more blood, he forced himself to a halt. His eyes filled with ferocity as he wiped the blood from his mouth and glared at Meng Hao.

“Whatever,” he said. “You’re most likely already at your limit. To explode with double battle power is pretty incredible. You qualify to be my opponent. Well then, allow me to introduce you to something that’s called the Imperial Body….” Before Liu Zichuan could finish his lofty speech, Meng Hao coolly interrupted him.

“Second Anima!”

BOOM!

Meng Hao’s body instantly became even more shocking. His fleshly body was now equivalent to the fearsomeness of the Seventh Anima. His explosive battle prowess caused the sky to dim, and a fierce wind to spring up.

Liu Zichuan’s eyebrows shot up, and a roaring filled his heart. His mouth went dry, his mind spun, and his eyes went wide. He looked at Meng Hao with complete disbelief, his scalp completely numb.

“Dammit, dammit, this guy’s Cultivation base is freakish! This is definitely some Daoist magic from the Second Plane. It might even be one of the top 10!” Shocked, Liu Zichuan retreated without hesitation.

He fell back quickly, but Meng Hao was even quicker. He took a step forward and then waved a finger. Instantly the image of a mountain appeared, to shoot rumbling toward Liu Zichuan.

Liu Zichuan coughed up some blood, and his body nearly exploded. A profound sense of deadly crisis filled him. He was scared witless. He pushed his hand viciously down onto his chest, causing a pearl to be vomited up. The pearl transformed into a wide net that quickly enveloped Liu Zichuan. There almost seemed to be some power of the underworld fueling the net as it wrapped around him and shot off into the distance.

Because of that, Meng Hao's illusory mountain only grazed past, and didn't completely smash into him. Even still, Liu Zichuan coughed up some more blood. His heart was in chaos, and filled with terror as he shot away.

Meng Hao didn't pursue him. Instead he stood where he was and coolly said, "You now owe me eighty percent of your gains. If you disagree, I'll kill you…."

1. Liu Zichuan's name in Chinese is liǔ zǐ chuān – Liu means "willow." Zi means "child" or "son." Chuan means "river"

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# Chapter 600: True Spirit——Night!

As Liu Zichuan fled off into the distance, he heard what Meng Hao said. If Meng Hao hadn’t made a move against him just now, he surely would have laughed coldly with disdain. Right now, though, he could unquestionably sense Meng Hao’s killing intent deep in his bones.

It didn’t matter what type of identity he had, if Meng Hao said he was going to kill someone, he would kill them!

The words Meng Hao had spoken just now were filled with the intent to slaughter, and left Liu Zichuan’s mind trembling. All of a sudden, he regretted trying to feel out Meng Hao.

“Dammit,” he thought, suddenly depressed. “It’s not like I’m the only person he made an agreement with. Everyone did! Why did I have to pick him to test out?” He did not dare to do anything to cause Meng Hao to question him. Here in the Demon Immortal Sect, if he dared to disrespect Meng Hao, he would be dead for sure.

“What if I could form an alliance with him…?” thought Liu Zichuan. His eyes glittered for a moment, but then grew dark. He suddenly realized, based on the short battle just now… there was no way for him to know Meng Hao’s true strength.

He knew that Meng Hao was unfathomable, and had not unleashed his full potential. As for how much of it he had revealed, it was impossible to guess.

“The smartest thing to do is never provoke someone like him.”

As Liu Zichuan fled into the distance, Meng Hao retracted his gaze and left the Third Anima, returning to the First. He closed his eyes for a moment, then opened them; they shone with the brilliant glow of a powerful expert.

“It’s difficult to judge how weak or powerful I am exactly. However, if I could achieve the fleshly body strength of the Seventh Anima while only in the First Anima, then when I entered the Seventh Anima, I would definitely have a Spirit Severing fleshly body!

“That would be a complete and thorough Spirit Severing fleshly body, compatible with my Cultivation base…. I could definitely slaughter someone of the First Severing!” His eyes flickered and he took a deep breath. With that, he continued to fly on toward the graveyard.

It didn’t take much time before he arrived at a large stretch of ruins. This was the graveyard. There were corpses laying about everywhere, and the tombs of many of the past experts had been transformed into nothing but pits.

Funerary objects had long since been disturbed and taken away. There were few restrictive spells here now.

As Meng Hao looked around, his heart throbbed with pain. He continued on forward until he caught sight of a familiar location up ahead. The glow of a restrictive spell could be seen glittering, and Meng Hao’s heart calmed down a bit.

It was the tomb of Ke Yunhai!

The tomb of a paragon. Inside was no corpse, only a small bronze lamp, long since extinguished.

Outside of the tomb were layer after layer of restrictive spells. They filled the entire area with flickering light, and would prevent any outsider from entering.

Meng Hao landed just outside the restrictive spells and looked at Ke Yunhai’s tomb silently. An indeterminable amount of time passed. Tears rolled down his face.

After a long time, he kneeled down and gently knocked his head against the ground three times as he kowtowed to Ke Yunhai’s tomb.

Then he looked up and murmured, “Thank you, sir. You’re not really my father, but in that ancient illusion, you allowed me to feel the love of a father. You allowed me to be your son during that life.” Finally, he stood up and turned around. He no longer felt melancholy, but rather, his face glowed with the unswerving determination of a Cultivator.

As of this moment, Meng Hao was now fully awakened from the dream!

“Come on out,” he said lightly. “You’ve been waiting for a while now. If you don’t reveal yourself, then I’ll just leave.”

As his voice echoed about, a completely ordinary area not too far off suddenly began to ripple and distort. A woman appeared. She was… incredibly beautiful, with bright eyes, and a way of moving that exuded feminine charm. It was none other than Zhixiang.

“I guessed that you would come here to offer your respects to Ke Yunhai,” she said with a smile. “Waiting here saved me a bit of effort in tracking you down.”

Meng Hao didn’t respond, but looked toward the area behind the Seventh Peak. Past the graveyard was the area that previously had been enveloped by boundless mists. Now, though, there was no mist to be seen whatsoever.

The two enormous statues were also gone. The only thing visible was an enormous bright shield that shot up from within the ground and emanated an imperceptible glow.

This was a restrictive spell that covered a massive area. It might seem ordinary, but it was powerful enough to eradicate Immortals!

The area it protected was so important that the restrictive spell was fearsomely powerful even down to this day. In fact… throughout all the years in which the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane had been opened, no one had ever been able to enter the area beyond.

That was a truly forbidden area! No one was allowed to enter inside. Anyone who tried to do so ended up dead.

“Let’s go,” said Meng Hao coolly. As he began to move forward, Zhixiang smiled and then sped off into the air with him.

As they shot forward, Zhixiang felt a bit proud of herself. Back in the Second Plane, when they traveled this same path, she had been filled with incredible excitement. Now that they were in the Third Plane, she was sure that she wasn’t the only one to be feeling excited.

Thinking about this caused Zhixiang to smile. She increased her speed, passing up Meng Hao. He watched her as she passed, but didn’t say anything.

The two of them proceeded on in that way, moving at top speed until they reached the glowing restrictive spell shield. This was actually the same location where the statues and the door of swords had been located previously.

Zhixiang’s face was solemn. She took a deep breath as she pulled out her third class qualification command medallion from within her robe. She cautiously extended the command medallion forward until it touched the glowing shield. Suddenly, the shield in front of her began to flicker. Ripples spread out which then turned into waves that spread out across the entire restrictive spell.

A droning sound could be heard, echoing out in all directions. At the same time, a faint, low-pitched voice could be heard, filled with weakness and exhaustion.

“Third class qualifications. Where do you intend to go?” The rumbling voice sounded incredibly weak, and yet still awe-inspiring.

“The Demon Immortal Cistern!” replied Zhixiang immediately, taking in a deep breath.

“According to the regulations, you may travel thirty percent of the paths in this place, and may stay for no more than 38 hours.”

The wording was exactly the same as before. Zhixiang was nearly exploding with excitement as a wide fissure appeared in the shield in front of her. She took a deep breath and then looked over at Meng Hao with a look of complacency.

In accordance with his agreement with her, Meng Hao followed her into the fissure, his expression the same as ever. His expression was normal, but inwardly, he was on guard, unsure of whether the method being used by Zhixiang would actually work.

As soon as she reached the fissure, Zhixiang passed through effortlessly. However, as for Meng Hao, a beam of light from the restrictive spell shot toward him. It instantly enveloped him, almost like a bubble, locking his feet in place.

He was stuck inside the light, incapable of moving, but able to speak. His eyes cold, he said, “Zhixiang, what is the meaning of this!?”

Zhixiang turned back suddenly, her expression one of shock and worry.

“Impossible,” she said. “You left a mark inside, plus I have third-class qualifications. I should be able to take an extra person inside, especially one who left a mark. Could it be… that your mark was somehow erased?”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. It was at this exact moment that the weak voice suddenly could be heard again.

“Paragon’s qualifications. You may go anywhere you wish, and stay inside indefinitely.”

As soon as the voice could be heard, the bubble popped. His body returned to normal, and he walked forward through the restrictive spell as easily as if he were walking down a level path.

Zhixiang stared, her eyes wide with disbelief. She took a few steps back and looked blankly at Meng Hao.

“This is impossible! We’re in reality now, not the ancient illusion. In the ancient illusion, you had the identity of Ke Jiusi, but here in the Third Plane, you’re you! How could you be a Paragon?!”

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever, but inside, he was filled with great waves of shock and confusion. It was exactly as Zhixiang said, and yet, what had happened just now really had happened!

He was silent for a moment before slowly saying, “We were able to leave marks here. Apparently, leaving vestiges of an identity isn’t that hard either. It’s just something special that you can do in the Second Plane, right?”

“But this is different,” said Zhixiang, her eyes wide. “The ancient illusion is Night…. It’s… it’s illusory. The marks are like memories. Hmm….” Suddenly she gasped and looked at Meng Hao with a complicated expression. “I understand. It’s Night! Night remembers you!”

“Night?” asked Meng Hao, his eyes glittering. He had long since come to the conclusion that Zhixiang knew a lot more about the Demon Immortal Sect than what she had told him.

For example, Night.

Meng Hao thought back to when he had first entered the Second Plane. He had heard someone on one of the mountain peaks giving a sermon about the Dao. He had mentioned a true spirit whose name was Night! 1

“It’s not that I was trying to hide something from you,” she said. “According to Sect rules, we aren’t allowed to divulge such information to outsiders. However, since Night remembers you, then it doesn’t really matter if I tell you. In Heaven and Earth, there are true spirits. As to how many exactly there are, I’m not sure.

“I only know that they are very, very uncommon. In fact, there are only ten or less!

“True spirits are completely unique in all Heaven and Earth!

“There is one whose name is Night. According to the legends, when it closes it eyes, the world is a dream. When it opens its eyes, the dream is shattered, and everything returns to the void.

“There is some destiny that exists between it and the Demon Immortal Sect. Therefore, it took up residence within the Sect, and became its true Demon guardian.

Meng Hao was shaken inwardly. After a moment’s hesitation, he asked, “Where is it…?”

“It is beneath our feet, within the lands of the First Heaven. As for what it looks like, I don’t know. All I know is that according to the stories that have been passed down from ancient times, true spirits are inauspicious. Some people have even said that the reason the Demon Immortal Sect fell was because of it. When the Sect was destroyed, no one could kill it, not even Lord Ji. Although, even if he had the power to do it, killing a true spirit is an extreme taboo.

“Therefore, Night has been in the Demon Immortal Sect all this time. Occasionally, it will reminisce, and that is the origin of the ancient illusion of the Second Plane….”

Great waves of shock roared through Meng Hao. He began to breathe heavily as he looked at Zhixiang.

“You’re telling me that the ancient illusion we experienced was simply Night’s dream?”

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# Chapter 601: Generous Zhixiang!

Zhixiang looked at Meng Hao thoughtfully for a moment, then nodded. It seemed that at that point, she suddenly thought of something else. She hesitated for a moment.

“It’s all legend,” she continued. “No one really knows if it’s true or not. Maybe it is, maybe it isn’t…. Furthermore, true spirit Night’s bizarreness can actually appear during any time.

“In the original Demon Immortal Sect, countless Chosen disciples attempted to research it. In their belief, Night possessed an ability like teleportation. However, it teleported, not through the physical realm, but through time.

“Therefore, many people staunchly believed that Night’s dream was no dream, but an actual teleportation through time. There was even much evidence collected to support that view.”

Meng Hao stood there thoughtfully for a moment, then closed his eyes. A long time passed before he opened them again. No trace could be seen of any change in his thinking.

“Whether it was an illusion or real doesn’t matter,” he murmured inwardly. “As long as I believe it was real, and is still connected to me, then Karma exists in my heart. Regardless of the facts, that is the most important.” Just now, he had felt somewhat confused, but after closing his eyes for a moment, he felt enlightened.

“Let’s go,” he said coolly. “The Demon Immortal Cistern awaits.”

Zhixiang looked at him for a moment and then nodded. They walked onward in single file, following the same path from before as they headed toward the Demon Immortal Cistern.

Before much time passed, they reached the location of the same cistern they had visited within the Second Plane.

The area was damaged and worn. Cracks could be seen everywhere, and many parts had completely fallen apart. Many of the stones had been crushed, quite a few of which hovered about in mid-air. All of it made it seem as if it would be very difficult to approach the pond waters. Even the waters themselves were not as clear as they had been in the Second Plane; there appeared to be silt built up in some parts.

Most relevant of all, the waters were much shallower….

At first glance, the cistern looked like a huge pit. Before, it had been filled with water, but now, only a bit was left at the bottom, perhaps only ten percent of what had been there in the Second Plane.

When she saw that remaining ten percent of water, though, Zhixiang’s eyes filled with excitement, and she let out a huge sigh. What she had feared most was coming here with the proper qualifications only to find that because of the passage of time, the cistern waters were completely gone.

Were that to have been the case, it would have meant she had completely wasted all of her effort. All of the preparations made by her Sect would have been completely for naught.

Everything had been a gamble, in which success could lead to a meteoric rise. However, failure, and the losses thus incurred, would have led to the decline of her Sect.

Zhixiang suppressed her excitement as she looked around the area. When she caught sight of the rock upon which she had left the mark in the Second Plane, she began to quiver and breathe heavily. She had to work hard to try to suppress her excitement.

Everything had worked out perfectly, even more smoothly than she could have possibly imagined. The key to it all was the stone with her mark on it.

To enter this area, one needed the qualifications. To enter the Demon Immortal Cistern itself, one needed a second qualification.

That second qualification could only be acquired within the Second Plane, but not used there. Instead, the qualification could be retrieved in the Third Plane, and then cultivated.

If there was no Second Plane, and one went directly to the Third Plane, at first, there wouldn’t seem to be much difference. Zhixiang and her Sect, however, had used augury to ascertain with relative certainty that, because of the passage of time, and the great catastrophe, the restrictive spells in the area were thoroughly sealed, and would not approve of any intruder.

The only method of success was to get qualifications in ancient times!

Zhixiang took a deep breath, then turned toward Meng Hao, clasped hands, and bowed deeply.

“Fellow Daoist Meng, many thanks for all your assistance. I would now like to once again ask for your expertise in opening up a path. Please remove the curse power from the area and allow me to… succeed in entering the cistern waters!” She bowed to him once again.

Meng Hao understood that this was the extent of the help she needed from him. The entire area was broken and in ruins. It all seemed quite messy and chaotic, and even quite dangerous. Zhixiang was nervous because of the same thing that had made her nervous back in the Bridge of Immortal Treading; invisible curses.

The further one went along, the more terrifying the curses became. Anything that touched them would receive an intense jolt of backlash.

“Let me try,” he said with a nod. He had given Zhixiang his promise, and would not go back on his word unless he came across something that was truly beyond his control.

Thinking back to his experience in the Bridge of Immortal Treading, he had some speculations as to the reason why he was not affected by the curses;

perhaps it had something to do with him being a Demon Sealer. His eyes glittering, he walked forward, waving his right hand to cause some of the stones that were blocking their way to lift up into the air. The stones did not appear to be equipped with any sort of curse; it seemed to take almost no effort to lift them up and move them over.

Meng Hao continued forward, taking care of all the stones, even the ones that floated in mid-air. soon a path emerged, leading directly up to the cistern waters.

“Like that?” he asked, looking back at Zhixiang.

She gaped in astonishment, suddenly uncertain about whether or not the curses actually existed. If there were no curses… then it mean that bringing along Meng Hao for help was actually just giving him good fortune for free.

When this occurred to her, she felt distress in her heart. After all, she had promised Meng Hao that he could immerse himself in the waters with her. And yet, the water was quite low now…..

“There couldn’t possibly be NO curses, could there?” she thought. “Don’t tell me that if I got the proper qualifications, and my identity was acknowledged, then the curses wouldn’t target me?” With that, she ground her teeth and began to walk forward.

However, before she could take three steps, her face suddenly flickered. The color of her skin suddenly turned black; blood sprayed from her mouth and she retreated backward quickly.

She fell back four or five steps and then sat down cross-legged. She waved her right arm, causing a hundred golden needles to appear, which then stabbed into her body from various directions. Vast quantities of black blood oozed out, emanating a foul, rotten stench. Zhixiang’s face was as pale as death as she produced a small clay pellet. Enduring the pain of losing such an item, she crushed it, causing an amber-colored medicinal pill to fly out, which she immediately consumed.

A long moment later, she still felt incredibly weak, but the black color was fading away from her skin. When it finally disappeared, and her injuries were recovered, she looked up with an expression of fear toward Meng Hao. There was only about thirty meters or so between the two of them, but to her, it was a shocking distance.

Just now, she had neared a curse that hadn’t fallen. If she had truly entered into it fully, she would long since have been transforming into pool of black liquid.

Having seen what just happened to Zhixiang, Meng Hao began to think. He felt a little bit bad. He quickly began to inspect the area, but couldn’t see anything particularly strange about it. It was as if the area really was a forbidden zone, except, the effects didn’t apply to him at all.

“What do we do now?” asked Zhixiang. She was more than thirty meters away, her expression anxious, her eyes wide. Success was only a short distance away, and yet that distance seemed like the vast gully between Heaven and Earth, impossible to cross.

In fact, she hadn’t even noticed yet that her clothing had already begun to rot. A wind blew past, causing some of it transform into ash and reveal the skin beneath.

Meng Hao wasn’t any surer than her what to do at this point. He looked at the brackish water in the cistern and then glanced back at Zhixiang. “What if you hold onto me and I try leading you in?” he asked.

Zhixiang was silent for a moment. What had happened just now had left her completely shocked, and without any ideas of what to do. Even asking Meng Hao to bring the water to her would have been useless; to acquire the Demon Immortal Body required that she meditate within the cistern itself.

She clenched her teeth, and determination appeared in her eyes. The Sect had made far too many preparations to reach this point. All hope was placed in her. She would rather die in here than simply give up.

She took a deep breath, then nodded her head with an expression that meant she was ready to go for broke. She looked toward Meng Hao and then clasped hands once again and bowed.

“Many thanks for your assistance, Elder Brother Meng. Zhixiang will remember your kindness for the rest of her life!” The way she bowed caused the previously partially covered skin to be even more revealed to Meng Hao. All of a sudden, he caught sight of a thoroughly soul-stirring sight.

Suddenly becoming aware of this, Zhixiang’s face reddened. She straightened up and then coolly said, “It’s just a little bit of skin. If you like it, Elder Brother Meng, I can offer it to you as a gift.”

The ‘generousness’ of Zhixiang’s words caused Meng Hao to cough dryly a few times, and a strange look appeared on his face. He calmed himself inwardly. From the very moment he had met Zhixiang, he had felt her to have somewhat of a changeable disposition. Every time he ran into her, it was like she had had a different personality.

She was flirty at first, then licentious. Sometimes candid, and now… almost like a man in the way she spoke.

“No, forget about it….” he replied, clearing his throat. He walked toward Zhixiang, and as he neared, she raised her hand and clasped his arm. Then she took a deep breath, and a look of decisiveness filled her eyes.

He glanced at her again, then, without another word, turned and led her forward one step. Then two steps. Three steps….

Her body was trembling, and by the time they reached the place where her expression had changed the last time, she was incredibly nervous. However, this time she could not sense the curse like she could before. Although, her clothes were now rapidly disappearing….

By the time they had taken seven or eight steps, they were completely within the cursed area. Zhixiang’s clothes were now totally gone, revealing a beautiful body that would cause any man to begin to pant.

It was curvaceous and beautiful beyond compare.

Meng Hao glanced her over and saw everything. In his recollection, this was his second time to see a woman’s body. The first time had been when he saw Chu Yuyan’s. Right now, though, the feeling he experienced was completely different.

As he compared the two, he occasionally smiled and nodded, occasionally frowned, and occasionally revealed an expression of wonderment.

Zhixiang looked at him, clenched her teeth, and then said out of the corner of her mouth. “What part do you like? I’ll give it to you.”

Meng Hao smiled and pointed.

Zhixiang’s eyebrows raised up. She suddenly formed her right hand into the shape of a blade which then shot toward the part on her chest that he had pointed to.

Meng Hao’s eyes went wide and he quickly stopped her. “Fine, you win. I don’t need it, even if you keep chopping.”

Zhixiang glared hatefully at him for a moment but didn’t say anything else. She held on to him as they proceeded forward toward the cistern waters. Soon they entered the waters themselves, proceeding into the very center.

Although the waters were clearly brackish, something strange happened. A delicate fragrance began to emanate out of Zhixiang. As it spread about, it fused into the waters, causing them to churn. In the blink of an eye, they were no longer brackish, but instead, perfectly clear. In fact they even began to emanate their own delicate fragrance.

If analyzed it carefully, you would realize that the fragrance was the same as Zhixiang’s.

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# Chapter 602: Good Fortune!

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as Zhixiang dragged him into the waters and then sat down cross-legged. There was not much water, only enough to reach Zhixiang’s supple waist.

She pulled him to sit down cross-legged in the waters across from her. When his gaze fell onto her body, he cleared his throat.

“While I absorb the power of the Demon Immortal Cistern,” she said lightly, “you can also temper your body. As it happens, I have a special type of physique; during the process of transforming my body into a Demon Immortal Body, I will emit a unique fragrance.

“That fragrance can be considered something like Heavenly materials or Earthly treasures when you fuse it into your fleshly body. Therefore… you can build up a lot of synergy with your best body tempering magics when you use them here.

“It would be much better for you to absorb the fragrance than simply let it go to waste.

“In addition, please do not disturb me during the process. As for the curses, according to the research of the Sect, once I begin the transformation process, they won’t affect me.

“If you finish before me, you can wait for me outside. I’m not sure how long the process will take, so I hope you can stand guard over me until I finish.” With a final look at Meng Hao, she closed her eyes.

The instant she did, a strong fragrance suddenly emanated out from her. It fused into the waters, causing a white mist to rise up. The mist, too, was quite strong, and in the blink of an eye, had covered the entire cistern, completely concealing both Meng Hao and Zhixiang.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he looked around. He quickly realized that while the pulsating coldness in the water had originally been somewhat weak, after the mist rose up, the coldness was increased by more than ten times.

From the look of it, that coldness was only continuing to increase. Meng Hao knew from his time immersing himself in the waters back in the Second Plane that the more intense the coldness, the better the results he would experience. He took a deep breath as he rotated his Cultivation base. A moment later, he realized something else. It seemed as if the mist in the area was adding nourishment to his fleshly body. As it poured into him, his fleshly body began to experience a shocking transformation, slowly becoming more powerful.

“Zhixiang wasn’t lying,” he thought, his eyes shining with a bright light. Both the mist and the cistern waters were extremely beneficial to his fleshly body. He hadn’t even employed any magical techniques, and yet was already receiving incredible gain.

Although it didn’t seem likely that he would be able to achieve a Seventh Anima fleshly body while only in the First Anima, it did seem possible to reach the Sixth Anima.

According to his speculations, reaching the level of the Seventh Anima would be simply too difficult….

“I wonder if Fleshly Sanctification… can be cultivated in this place. It can only be cultivated once, but when it is, it will cause a one-time increase in fleshly body power that is astonishing to the extreme…. Furthermore, the atmosphere in this place is extremely well-suited to fleshly body tempering. This truly seems the best time to use it!” His eyes flickered with a bright light. After all, when it came to Fleshly Sanctification, the stronger one’s body, the more power would result.

Furthermore, Meng Hao had the feeling that regardless of whether it was a Daoist magic or a secret technique, since it had been acquired in the Demon Immortal Sect, it needed to be cultivated here. Trying to do so in the outside world would be useless.

Considering that, there was no reason to hesitate. Now was the time to use it!

Beams of light were shooting out of Meng Hao’s eyes as he closed them. Within his mind, he unleashed the secret art of Fleshly Sanctification!

RUMBLE!

Meng Hao’s mind thundered as the secret art spread out. His body instantly began to shake, and the mist around him churned. Instantly, an enormous vortex sprung up around Meng Hao, like clouds kicked into motion by the wind.

The cistern waters also surged into a vast whirlpool.

Zhixiang was immersed in her own body transformation, but she could still sense what was happening on the outside, and was shocked. Her mind filled with a similar roaring, and her entire body began to emit vast quantities of Demonic Qi. As the Demonic Qi was unleashed, it caused the mist to grow thicker. Zhixiang felt an indescribable sense of stimulation throughout her body because of the transformation she was about to experience.

Time passed. Meng Hao forgot about everything, as did Zhixiang. They sat cross-legged in the cistern waters, surrounded by mist. Nothing was clearly visible, not even their own bodies. They could only sense themselves growing more powerful.

Meng Hao’s fleshly body continued to grow larger. When it reached a pinnacle, it would then rapidly shrink back down. This continued to happen back and forth, creating a cycle. When each revolution of the cycle was completed, his fleshly body would exude terrifying fluctuations.

His fleshly body continued to grow more and more powerful!

Innumerable illusory magical symbols began to wink in and out around him. There were many; all of them apparently born from the void, pulsating with an ancient aura as they circulated around him. The entire scene made Meng Hao look completely strange and bizarre.

In contrast to Meng Hao, Zhixiang’s body radiated pulses of Demonic Qi. They were incredibly dense, and as they condensed together, seemed to take the shape of numerous living creatures.

These living creatures all had differing appearances, but each of them had existed for countless years. These Greater Demons of Heaven and Earth had all fallen by now, but they were still remembered by the heavens of the Nine Mountains and Seas.

As they appeared, they shrank down in size, then sat cross-legged around Zhixiang, performing incantations gestures that caused indistinct beams of light to shoot out and fuse into Zhixiang’s body.

As for Meng Hao, he was sitting quite close to Zhixiang. As a result, he was also located within the region of light cast by the Greater Demons of Heaven and Earth. Many of the indistinct beams also hit his body.

Even as he trembled, the magical symbols swirled around him rapidly, then shot toward him and fused into his body.

As the light and the magical symbols merged into him, Meng Hao’s mind continued to shake. His aura grew stronger, and his fleshly body emanated terrifying fluctuations.

Sometimes, he would grow large and strong to a shocking degree, and sometimes, he would shrink down into something completely unremarkable. His clothes had long since been shredded into pieces during the growth stages. As of this moment, he wore no clothes whatsoever, and like Zhixiang, he sat there completely naked.

The first thing to be strengthened was his skeletal system. It was a special kind of change that made the skeletal system incredibly tough and resilient, to the point where it could be considered something similar to a magical item.

The constant nourishment pouring into his body made Meng Hao’s bones increasingly terrifying. However… he was still very close to Zhixiang. The illusory Greater Demons sitting cross-legged around her continued to emanate the indistinct light that was actually in direct opposition to the magical symbols surrounding Meng Hao.

The light was not nourishing, but rather destructive. The essence of the Demon Immortal Body was to stimulate potential by means of destruction, and thus, mold out the most powerful fleshly body.

The secret art of Fleshly Sanctification was based on nourishment. The stimulation of potential was accomplished by nourishing the body, making the strong stronger, until the ultimately powerful fleshly body was consolidated.

They were two completely different methods that, from ancient times until modern, had never been simultaneously cultivated. It is not that no one wanted to try, but rather, had no way to practice such cultivation.

At the moment, though, Meng Hao, by lucky coincidence, had achieved a strange balance. The light from the illusory Greater Demons continued to destroy his skeletal system, causing his bones to be slowly shattered.

However, that did not conform with Fleshly Sanctification. Therefore… the art that normally should only have required a few magical symbols, suddenly began to pour out more magical symbol seals. They shot into Meng Hao to repair and perfect his skeletal system.

This process of destruction and replenishment caused Meng Hao to feel indescribable pain. At the same time, the benefits he received were completely without precedent!

It was hard to say how much time passed. However, because of the constant cycle, Meng Hao’s skeletal system became thoroughly stable and firm.

Roaring filled his fleshly body as he broke through into the power of the Sixth Anima.

As of this moment, Meng Hao didn’t even need a Cultivation base. His body itself was shockingly powerful. He was not tall and thin like before, but rather thick and bulky, and looked almost like a small mountain.

It was at this moment that the tempering of his fleshly body expanded out from his bones into his flesh and blood!

Bones, blood and flesh, veins and arteries. All three of these areas experienced tempering. By combining them together, it led to explosive strength of the Qi and blood!

Meng Hao’s entire person shook. The light from the Greater Demons of Heaven and Earth caused his whole body to wither to the extreme, until he seemed like nothing more than a bag of bones. But in the next breath, the incredible power from the magical symbols poured into him, causing his body to be completely restored.

As the cycle continued, the magical symbols around Meng Hao began to lessen. Soon there weren’t very many left. However, at the same time, an enormous fissure suddenly appeared in the sky above the Seven Peaks of the Demon Immortal Sect.

As the fissure ripped open, an incredible booming sound could be heard that caused everything in the Demon Immortal Sect to shake. All of the Cultivators from the lands of South Heaven looked up, their expressions that of astonishment.

Each of them could clearly see that within the fissure up above was something enormous. As it neared… they could see a gigantic, indescribably large pagoda!

It was… the Demon Immortal Pagoda!!

All of them had seen the pagoda in the Second Plane, but this time, there was something different about it. The pagoda… was struggling to keep itself whole. There were some areas that were destroyed and collapsed. There were even some parts where the only thing holding it together was stretches of glowing light.

The entire pagoda was in ruins. Apparently, it had been almost completely destroyed during the ancient war.

However, the pagoda… still continued to exist. As it neared, it let out a boundless, invisible pressure that caused everyone beneath to be shaken inwardly and wonder what was happening.

As the Demon Immortal Pagoda neared, suddenly, a great beam of light appeared from inside that was made up of magical symbols!!

The countless magical symbol seals turned into a river of stars that swept throughout the air, like a shocking bolt of unfurling white silk. It flew toward the Seventh Peak and the Demon Immortal Cistern. It roared through the air, shooting toward the area which none of them could see, surrounding the Demon Immortal Cistern and then pouring into Meng Hao's body!

Fleshly Sanctification was a secret art that came from the Demon Immortal Pagoda. The Demon Immortal Body was a physical body created by Lord Li. As for which of the two was more powerful, it would be difficult to say clearly.

At the moment, an unprecedented battle seemed to be taking place, with Meng Hao's body being the battlefield. The secret art versus the Demon Immortal body; the two fought back and forth.

Would destruction win out over nourishment, or was nourishment incapable of being destroyed? It was like a paradox!

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# Chapter 603: Eighth Nascent Soul!

Meng Hao’s flesh and blood expanded, then withered. The cyclical process gave birth to an indescribable pain that caused Meng Hao to tremble and sweat profusely.

However, his eyes were filled with unprecedented staunchness. He clenched his jaw and persisted on. Refusing to lapse into unconsciousness, he immersed himself in the sensation. His fleshly body constantly withered and then expanded, giving rise to a terrifying power.

Boom!

The indistinct light from the Greater Demons of Heaven and Earth drained his body to the point of collapse and destruction. His hair fell out, and he looked like an oilless lamp, like a withered corpse.

Boom!

The secret art of Fleshly Sanctification and the magical symbols from the Demon Immortal Pagoda swirled into his body, causing it to expand and grow until he looked like a giant.

The paradoxical transformation was something that had never been seen from ancient times until modern times, an unprecedented molding of the fleshly body. As the cycle continued, Meng Hao continued to grow more and more powerful!!

Zhixiang’s body was also trembling. She did not have any secret art of Fleshly Sanctification. She only had the pure transformation of the Demon Immortal Body. At the moment, her body was withered, but within the withering was shocking Demonic Qi.

The two of them each practiced their own type of cultivation, constantly growing more powerful. As for the waters of the Demon Immortal Cistern, they were slowly shrinking down.

After some period of time passed, a rumbling sound could be heard, echoing out in all directions. Meng Hao suddenly raised his head, although his eyes were closed. Right now, his body was no longer expanding dramatically, nor was it withering to the point of death. Instead, he was tall and thin.

He currently looked almost like he didn’t have any power at all in his body. However, deep inside was hidden a fearsome and indescribable strength that far exceeded the previous limits of his fleshly body.

He was now in possession of an extraordinary, enchanting power. Every single scrap of muscle was filled with shocking, explosive power. His bones were solid to an indescribable degree. As Meng Hao lifted his head, his entire body erupted with an intense aura.

The wind whipped about as the vortex screamed. Shockingly, Meng Hao’s aura… had the fleshly body power of the Seventh Anima!!

However he had not entered the Seventh Anima, but rather remained within the First Anima.

The mist around him seethed, and the vortex rotated around and around. In the middle of it all, Meng Hao inhaled deeply and took a moment to sense the power within him. Although his Cultivation base was still the same as ever, his fleshly body power and his battle prowess were now completely different than before.

His eyes glittered as he entered the Second Anima.

Boom!

Third Anima, Fourth Anima…. As he sat there cross-legged, it was without hesitation that he went all the way to the most powerful state in which he could exist, the Seventh Anima!

His body shook as the same power as before surged through him, that of sixty-four great circle Nascent Souls. However… his fleshly body instantly reached an incredible, unprecedented state.

His fleshly body, his skeletal system, his physical frame, were now thick and strong in a way that did not conform to any rules. He was far taller than before, to the point where even sitting cross-legged as he was, he was still taller than previously.

The fearsomeness of his physical body made him seem to be, not a Cultivator, but something Demonic!

His facial features were vicious. Countless veins popped up all over his body, and his hair was even longer than before. When he looked up, his eyes radiated a ferocious will. It looked like a single punch… could shatter the earth.

Meng Hao wasn’t sure exactly how to describe the current state of his fleshly body. He clenched his fists as the explosive, terrifying feeling of power exploded out from inside of him. He could tell that his current state of power far, far exceeded that from before.

“However…” he thought, “a fleshly body as powerful as this is still not Spirit Severing….” Although his fleshly body was terrifyingly powerful, he still had the feeling that for some reason, he had reached a bottleneck.

The appearance of the bottleneck did not cause him to be disheartened, but instead filled his eyes with excitement. He knew that the bottleneck could only be one thing….

The bottleneck of… acquiring a Spirit Severing fleshly body!

Once he broke through the bottleneck, he would have a complete Spirit Severing fleshly body, and would truly be able to fight back against First Severing Cultivators. He would truly be within the Spirit Severing stage!

Although his Cultivation base would be different, his fleshly body would definitely have that terrifying power.

“I should be able to break through!” he thought, his eyes glittering. After taking a deep breath, he closed his eyes. The Greater Demons of Heaven and Earth once again unleashed their indistinct light.

One beam of light after another passed into Meng Hao’s body. This time, they did not stir his skeletal system, nor whither his flesh and blood. Instead, they wreaked fatal havoc onto his Qi and blood vessels.

Meng Hao wasn’t Zhixiang, who possessed a special physique and constitution. She could turn the fatal transformations into something not fatal, and thus acquire something like a rebirth in the form of the Demon Immortal Body.

However, Meng Hao had something even more special and shocking than Zhixiang when it came to his physique. He had a secret art that was completely incompatible with the Demon Immortal Body, and was even something like an enemy to it!

That secret art was something that Ke Yunhai had described as being extremely rare in Heaven and Earth, with an origin veiled in mystery.

Even as Meng Hao’s blood and Qi passageways were being destroyed, the inexhaustible supply of magical symbols around him poured into his body. In the blink of an eye, his blood and Qi passageways were thoroughly restored.

The cyclical paradox once again exploded out inside of his body. Meng Hao had gotten used to the destruction of his skeletal system and the rending of his flesh and blood. Therefore, this feeling was something he could handle.

The only thing that happened was that he trembled a bit; his expression didn’t change in the least.

Rumbling filled his entire body as his blood and Qi passageways were destroyed and then restored and strengthened. He became stronger, causing his fleshly body to experience yet another meteoric rise.

This rise grew stronger and more stable, transforming into an explosive power that could break through a bottleneck.

Boom!

His body trembled and blood oozed out of his mouth. The bottleneck was like an enormous battlement. As he bashed against it, cracks appeared, but it didn’t collapse.

“One more time!” he said, his eyes glittering. He focused all the power he could muster, combining it together. The magical symbols in the area were few, and as Meng Hao gathered his power, the Demon Immortal Pagoda on the outside began to shake and erupt with even more magical symbols. The tower itself was beginning to grow dark and faded.

The magical symbols joined together to form a silver river that shot toward Meng Hao, pouring into his body, causing it to shake. The light from the Greater Demons destroyed his blood and Qi passageways; the secret art and the magical symbols poured into him to reforge them. He surged with more power, and then once again lashed out against the bottleneck.

BOOM!!

The bottleneck trembled violently, and the cracks spread out even thicker. Just when it seemed on the verge of collapsing, more light from the Greater Demons poured into Meng Hao, along with boundless magical symbols.

Roaring filled Meng Hao’s body. He lifted his head up and let out a soundless howl. As of this moment, his body was no longer expanding dramatically, but rather, shrinking at high speed. He now seemed completely weak and thin.

At the same time, the blood and Qi vessels within him were completely restored.

The light from the Greater Demons was incapable of any further destruction, and the increasingly scant numbers of magical symbols could offer no further assistance.

His blood and Qi vessels having been completely restored, the bottleneck within him… directly shattered into pieces!

As the bottleneck vanished, Meng Hao’s fleshly body experienced an incredible, shocking rise. He grew more and more powerful, to a world-shaking degree!

However, what caused Meng Hao to frown was that after breaking through the bottleneck, he didn’t get any sensation that he was in a Spirit Severing state. That caused him to feel a bit confused.

However, even as he frowned, a completely unpredictable sensation suddenly rose up within him. Meng Hao suddenly noticed a transformation occurring that caused the sky to fade, the wind and clouds to seethe, the surrounding mist to shoot up into the air, and the vortex surrounding him to suddenly stop in place.

The transformation was caused by the increase in the three aspects of his fleshly body; his skeletal system, his flesh and blood, and his veins and arteries. He had the special aspects of the Demon Immortal Body, but also Qi and blood of a fleshly body forged from Fleshly Sanctification.

This was a never-before-seen combination that was essentially a paradox. It created… a shocking transformation that had never been seen before Meng Hao, nor would ever be seen again.

This transformation was not one of his fleshly body. Instead, it occurred within his dantian region. Next to his seven Nascent Souls, shockingly… a thick coagulation of Qi and blood appeared, shaped like a person.

Because his fleshly body had reached such an incredible pinnacle of power, he had formed… a Qi and Blood Nascent Soul!!

When the Nascent Soul appeared, Meng Hao’s Cultivation base immediately began to emanate ripples. His hair whipped about, and his Cultivation base exploded with power. In this instant, Meng Hao… could sense the fluctuations of an eighth Nascent Soul!!

“Spirit Severing is within… the Eighth Anima!” he thought, panting as he gained enlightenment.

Meanwhile….

An old man sped along beneath the Seventh Peak, nearing the forbidden area where Meng Hao and Zhixiang were.

The old man came to a stop and looked up, his eyes gleaming coldly.

This man was none other than Patriarch Huyan.

“I can sense that little bastard Meng Hao inside there,” he thought. “He has my precious treasure…. However, it belongs to the Heavenly Pursuit Tribe, so even though he stole it away, he won’t be able to use it.

“When I was in the Second Plane, I was able to acquire the information I sought regarding its secrets….” He smiled coldly as he took a few steps back. Lifting his right hand, he quickly began to set up restrictive spells on the ground around him.

“Meng Hao, I’m going to bury you in this place. I’ll wait here for you to come out, and when you do, I’ll splatter your blood everywhere!” Smiling coldly, he finished setting up the spells, then took a deep breath and sat down cross-legged.

“Not even of Spirit Severing, yet you dare to fight with me!? In the Third Plane, the Demon Immortal Sect seals all personal items. Your mastiff won’t be able to appear, so you won’t be able to fuse with it to borrow the power of Spirit Severing.

“Well then, you shall die.” Intense killing intent appeared in Patriarch Huyan’s eyes.

“I’ll kill you, then I’ll go back and wipe out that Golden Crow Tribe of yours to join you in burial!”

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# Chapter 604: Like Splitting Bamboo

Meng Hao closed his eyes, then opened them again moments later. A strange glow could be seen within them as he looked over at Zhixiang, who sat there pale-faced and trembling.

It was clear that she had reached a critical juncture.

Meng Hao looked away and then stood up. He walked out of the pond, through the mists, and to the outside world.

As he left, the pressure bearing down on Zhixiang increased. Earlier, the shapeless light of the Greater Demons had been shared between her and Meng Hao, but now all of it was focusing on her.

Actually, she was incredibly lucky to have encountered Meng Hao. Without him there to share the burden, she might not have been able to handle it alone. Not only would she have failed to acquired the Demon Immortal Body, but she would have faced grave danger to her life.

That hadn’t been part of her plan regarding Meng Hao; she could never have predicted that things would turn out the way they did. After all, she came from the Demon Immortal Sect which was started by people who escaped death all those years ago. Their understanding regarding the forbidden areas of the ancient Demon Immortal Sect wasn’t absolutely complete. When you added in the passage of time, and all the changes that had occurred, it was impossible to know everything.

Meng Hao left the cistern waters and stood in the outside world. He was tall and slender, and his skin was no longer dark like it had been all those years ago. It was white and clear, causing him to look completely refined and cultured. His scholarly air was even more obvious and intense than ever.

He slapped his bag of holding to produce a long, green robe, which he quickly donned. Now, he looked absolutely different than before.

He was even more handsome, more naturally graceful, more youthful. However, deep within his eyes flickered a dim ancientness.

After a long moment, he closed his eyes and focused on his dantian region, and his eighth Nascent Soul.

Qi and Blood Nascent Soul!

After a moment, his eyes opened, and he slowly merged the eight Nascent Souls together. This was just a test, but even still, his mind shook as if lightning were smashing about inside. An indescribably powerful Cultivation base, and a terrifyingly strong fleshly body appeared.

Furthermore… his Divine Sense also increased, spreading out to cover the entire area.

“Eee?” said Meng Hao. The first thing he noticed was that deep within the forbidden zone was something emanated strange ripples. As soon as his Divine Sense touched the ripples, a backlash spread out that caused his Divine Sense to collapse.

As for everywhere else, they were all areas that had been destroyed during the war.

At the same time, Meng Hao’s Divine Sense noticed a person outside of the forbidden zone…. As soon as he caught sight of him, killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes.

Sitting there cross-legged and meditating was Patriarch Huyan, wearing a cold smile on his face!

“Laying in wait to ambush me, huh?” thought Meng Hao. His eyes glittered, and a smile appeared on his face. The smile was one of ridicule, and was filled with coldness and killing intent that was impossible to cover over.

The killing intent still flickering, Meng Hao turned to look back at Zhixiang. The area was safe, and Zhixiang was in the midst of transmogrification. No one would be coming around to disturb her. Meng Hao swept the area with his Divine Sense one more time, then turned to head toward Patriarch Huyan. It was time to resolve the Karma between the two of them. However, it was at this point that he suddenly paused in mid stride, and looked back into the depths of the forbidden zone.

He had swept the place twice with Divine Sense, and it was in exactly the same location both times that his Divine Sense had collapsed apart. It made it impossible to even get some clues about what existed in that particular area. The only thing he could see was blurriness, and what appeared to be a corpse.

His eyes flickered, and he temporarily did not continue on toward his battle with Patriarch Huyan. Instead, he turned and headed deeper into the forbidden area. After all, he had promised Zhixiang to stand guard over her; therefore, he needed to ensure that the area really was safe.

It didn’t take too long before Meng Hao reached the place that had caused his Divine Sense to collapse. There was a boulder here, and beneath the boulder lay a corpse. Clearly, it was a woman.

In her hands, the woman held a wooden sword.

The sword emanated a faint glow, which was the source of the collapse of his Divine Sense. In fact, it might be less proper to say that it collapsed, but rather, was consumed.

As soon as Meng Hao laid eyes on the wooden sword, a tremor ran through him. It was not one of his Spring and Autumn tree Wooden Time Swords, but rather… one of those other swords, the ones he always found next to a corpse… an Immortal Murdering Sword!!

Currently, he had four Immortal Murdering, and was now looking at a fifth.

His eyes glittered, he stared at the corpse for a very long moment. However, it was decayed beyond recognition, making it impossible to tell who it belonged to.

Meng Hao silently made a grasping motion with his right hand, causing the wooden sword to fly out to hover in front of him. He waved his sleeve to collect it up, then stamped his foot onto the ground, causing a deep pit to appear.

After placing the woman’s corpse inside and laying her to rest, Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed deeply toward the tomb. Then he turned, sending his Divine Sense out once more. This time, he didn’t notice anything out of the ordinary. His body flashed as he transformed into a beam of light that shot out of the forbidden zone.

“Patriarch Huyan, the time has come to settle matters between us!” he thought, his eyes flickering with killing intent as he shot forward at top speed. “I’m going to use him to prove whether or not my Eighth Anima can exterminate the Spirit Severing stage!”

He shot through the air like a lightning bolt. Even in the First Anima, his fleshly body was even more fearsome than it had been in the Seventh Anima. As he shot forward, the air collapsed, and roaring sounds filled with air.

The roaring grew stronger until it seemed powerful enough to shake Heaven and Earth. When it reached the region outside of the forbidden zone, Patriarch Huyan heard it, and his eyes went wide. It was at this point that he saw Meng Hao appear.

“Meng Hao!” he said, with a vicious smile. Without hesitation, he performed an incantation gesture and then pointed forward.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he proceeded forward. He pierced directly into Patriarch Huyan’s spell formation, instantly causing multiple black-colored figures to rise up and pounce toward him.

Within each of these figures could be sensed a faint, shocking power. However, as they neared Meng Hao, his expression didn’t change in the least bit. He continued forward, giving rise to an intense roaring. As soon as the figures touched him, the intense backlash from his fleshly body instantly destroyed them.

Exploding figures surrounded him as he proceeded forward.

The sight of it caused Patriarch Huyan’s eyes to narrow slightly. He was shocked inwardly, but then recalled Meng Hao’s identity in the Second Plane, and suddenly felt at ease. A cold smile appeared on his face.

“You’re stuck in my net now,” he said. “I don’t even need to attack. I can just watch while you slowly march to your death.”

“Oh really,” replied Meng Hao coolly. As he moved forward, the area around him rumbled as countless illusory blades appeared. Their sharp tips whistled through the air as they slashed directly toward Meng Hao.

Up in mid-air, countless bolts of lightning appeared. They looked like silver snakes as they lashed out toward him.

As the rumbling booms filled the air, Meng Hao continued on without even pausing. As he walked forward, all of the restrictive spells within the spell formation collapsed as soon as they touched him, completely incapable of impeding his progress.

This caused Patriarch Huyan’s face to flicker. However, before he could do anything in response, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered and his speed increased rapidly. He transformed into a beam of light that sped across the ground toward Patriarch Huyan.

Booming sounds rose up into the sky. The restrictive spells and the spell formation seemed to be howling in anguish, as though a blade were slicing through them. They then exploded into pieces, and Meng Hao was standing in front of Patriarch Huyan.

“I thought I was going to have to track you down,” said Meng Hao. “I never imagined that you would come to me of your own volition. This battle is going to last for eight finger attacks.” With that he lifted his hand and waved a finger.

An illusory mountain appeared on Meng Hao’s fingertip. Although this was only the power of a single finger, that power was like the might of a mountain.

BOOM!

Patriarch Huyan’s face fell. He waved his left hand to block, and when the attack slammed into him, he was sent flying backward, his face pale. Killing intent flickered in his eyes as he waved his right hand in front of him.

“Area!”

“Second Anima!”

Patriarch Huyan’s Area seemed to cause everything in the area to be confined as if with shackles. An intense pressure weighed down, and everything slowed; it almost felt as if everything were underwater. However, it was in that same instant that Meng Hao erupted with the power of the Second Anima. The increase in his Cultivation base was secondary to the intense strength of his fleshly body, which was the most important part.

Meng Hao broke through the confinement of the Area. A crisp sound rang out like the shattering of a mirror as the Area was completely defeated.

This defeat was something Patriarch Huyan almost couldn’t believe. He remembered that Meng Hao had been powerless to face up against his Area before, but now, it had simply shattered.

One breath of time later, Meng Hao was directly in front of Patriarch Huyan.

“Here’s the second finger attack,” he said. Backed by the power of the Second Anima, he waved his finger down. Patriarch Huyan’s face flickered, and he performed an incantation with his right hand. Instantly, a black mist appeared on his body, which formed together into a black shield that he used to defend against Meng Hao’s finger attack.

A popping sound rang out as the shield collapsed. Meng Hao’s finger landed directly onto Patriarch Huyan’s chest.

Patriarch Huyan’s face filled with shock as he tumbled backward. His mind reeled, but deep down, he knew that this was not the time for contemplation. He began to perform another incantation, his hair whipping about. He lifted his head up and shouted:

“Seven Emotions and Six Pleasures. Thirteen Transmigrations Dao. Seven Emotions! Seven Daos!” Instantly, a prismatic beam of light shot out from his body up into mid-air. There, it split apart into seven different streams of light, like unfurling bolts of silk. They shot toward Meng Hao, radiating killing intent.

If you looked closely, you would be able to see that within each of the seven beams of light could be seen, shockingly, an evil spirit that looked almost like a Nascent Soul. Each of these figures resembled each other, almost as if they were related in some way.

“Third Anima,” said Meng Hao coolly, shaking his head. Instantly, his Cultivation base exploded up. However, the power of his fleshly body exceeded that of his Cultivation base. It did not expand and grow like in the past; instead, it sent out terrifying ripples of incomparable power.

Meng Hao took another step forward. He watched the incoming seven beams of light, allowing them to slam into his body. In that instant, a roaring sound exploded up into the sky. The seven beams of light collapsed into pieces and the evil spirits inside let out miserable shrieks as they were sent tumbling backward. With another step, Meng Hao… once again appeared directly in front of Patriarch Huyan.

“Third finger attack,” he said, waving a finger.

Patriarch Huyan’s eyes went wide. He raised up both hands, causing a glowing shield to appear to resist Meng Hao. A boom could be heard as the shield exploded. Patriarch Huyan tumbled backward like a kite with its string cut, blood oozing out of his mouth. His face was filled with astonishment.

“What… what type of Cultivation base do you have?!?!”

“The type that can kill you,” responded Meng Hao calmly. He took another leisurely step forward.

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# Chapter 605: Momentum Like a Beam of Light

“Kill me? You overestimate yourself!” despite his words, Patriarch Huyan was actually inwardly shocked. His face was grimmer than ever as he retreated. Then his Cultivation base exploded with full power as he prepared to unleash a divine ability.

“Overestimate myself? Fine, I’ll show you what it’s like when I overestimate myself!” His voice calm, Meng Hao said, “Fourth Anima!”

A rumbling sound could be heard from his body as he entered the Fourth Anima. His Cultivation base was that of eight great circle Nascent Souls. As for his fleshly body, it had a terrifying power that exceeded that of his original Seventh Anima.

As Meng Hao charged in attack, ghost images sprang up around him. In the blink of an eye, he was in front of Patriarch Huyan. He waved his right index finger, causing it to stab onto Patriarch Huyan’s upraised right hand. His left hand reached out to push into Patriarch Huyan’s chest.

A boom could be heard. Patriarch Huyan fell backward head over heels, blood overflowing from his mouth. His expression was one of astonishment and complete disbelief. What he feared was not Meng Hao’s Cultivation base, but the power of his fleshly body.

Such a frightening fleshly body was something that vastly exceeded his imagination, and was something he had never even heard of before!

Even as the power of the finger attack caused Patriarch Huyan to tumble back, Meng Hao strode forward again.

“Fifth Anima!”

He now had a Cultivation base equivalent to sixteen great Nascent Souls, and an even more shockingly powerful fleshly body. He was surrounded by a rumbling roar, and although there were no physical changes to his appearance, distortions and ripples appeared in the air around him.

This was a fleshly body that could cause anyone to be completely shocked. Combined with his Cultivation base, it made it so that Meng Hao’s steps could shatter the air. He appeared again in front of Patriarch Huyan, lifting his right hand up to make a fifth finger attack.

Patriarch Huyan raised his head up and howled as a sense of grave crisis swept over him. He bit violently down onto his tongue, causing blood to spray out of his mouth and then transform into magical symbols that spread out in all directions.

“Seven Emotions and Six Pleasures. Thirteen Transmigrations Dao turns into Thirteen Killing Forms. Consolidate into… Emotion Severing Extermination!” The blood magical symbols in front of Patriarch Huyan shockingly began to form together into the shape of a Heavenly saber. Instantly, it slashed down toward Meng Hao!

In the following moment, Meng Hao’s finger slammed into the blood-colored Heavenly saber, and a huge boom rolled out. The blade shook for a moment and then exploded into countless pieces, completely destroyed. As for Meng Hao’s finger, it continued to descend until it tapped onto Patriarch Huyan’s chest.

Blood sprayed from Patriarch Huyan’s mouth, and his chest turned into a bloody mass. Roaring filled his body as he shot backward at top speed. His face was pale white as he gave up all thoughts of fighting and focused completely on fleeing as fast as possible.

He was in absolute fear of Meng Hao’s fleshly body. It turned into an intense dread as he realized that such a fleshly body was shocking to the extreme. His own divine abilities and magical techniques were incapable of even causing it to tremble.

In the same instant that Patriarch Huyan decided to flee, Meng Hao's voice once again drifted through the air.

"Sixth Anima!"

Boom!

The instant Meng Hao entered the Sixth Anima, his body trembled. He lifted up his head and roared. To him, Patriarch Huyan could be killed any time he wanted. What he desired to do was to test out the Eighth Anima which he had created.

As he entered the Sixth Anima, the power of thirty-two great circle Nascent Souls counted for almost nothing. What was truly shocking was his fleshly body. In the Sixth Anima, his power was now truly exploding out, as of this moment, a Spirit Severing aura was gradually beginning to seep out of him.

The air around him filled with distortions, and the soil in the area was jumping up and down. A vortex began to form, like a mad tempest. The mad tempest could do nothing to cause even a single of Meng Hao's hair to rise up, though. Within the tempest, he was the only thing that wasn't moving!

As soon as Patriarch Huyan saw this, despite his Cultivation base, his age, and his powers of concentration, he couldn't help but shout out in alarm. "Fleshly body Spirit Severing!!! This is impossible!!!"

As far as he could remember, a Spirit Severing fleshly body was a legendary stage that only existed in ancient times. It was both Spirit Severing and, not Spirit Severing, because it did not have a Domain. And yet, even without a Domain, such a fleshly body could compare to the peak of anyone in the Spirit Severing stage.

Were he to also possess a Spirit Severing Cultivation base, then, any other Spirit Severing Cultivator would surely view him to be nothing less than… a nightmare!

“Body cultivation is not a focus in the current generation. Such a thing has long since become a thing of the past. Don’t tell me that this guy… acquired some type of body tempering good fortune in the Demon Immortal Sect!?!?” Patriarch Huyan’s scalp was numb, and he was scared out of his mind as he fled at top speed. He was already well aware that Meng Hao’s magic had a Seventh Anima.

As of this moment, Meng Hao’s Sixth Anima was already shocking enough. If he changed to the Seventh Anima….

Patriarch Huyan wasn’t willing to risk his life and go all out here. He had more things to accomplish, so he ignored all matters of face and fled at top speed. However, no matter how fast he went, Meng Hao… was faster!

Boom!

In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao appeared ahead of Patriarch Huyan. In addition to blocking his path, he lifted up his right hand and waved his finger again.

“We’re not finished here yet,” he said. “What are you getting so anxious for?”

Patriarch Huyan’s face fell. Without hesitation, he performed a double-handed incantation, connecting the forefinger of each hand with the thumb of the other, with his palms facing away from each other. He immediately stretched his hands out toward Meng Hao.

A four-sided collection of lines sprang into being, which was in accord with the Domain he cultivated. A power of expulsion rose up, with one side being Heaven and Earth, the other side being a person, to be expelled.

The four-sided lines flickered as they shot forward, shooting against the wind as they expanded out to surround Meng Hao.

At the same time, a shockingly intense power of expulsion seemed to fill the four-sided lines. This power of expulsion was intense enough to crush Meng Hao into pieces.

“BEGONNEEEE….”

The bizarre voice seemed to come from nowhere, and echoed out like thunder within Meng Hao’s ears. The sound caused the shocking power of expulsion to seem to grow even stronger.

This was not Meng Hao’s first time to encounter this magical technique of Patriarch Huyan’s.

Currently, he was in the Sixth Anima, and had terrifying fleshly body power. His eyes suddenly glittered. He opened his mouth and let out a roar toward the incoming four-sided lines.

“Screw off!”

The sound created something like waves that instantly suppressed all of the lightning up above. It rolled out, causing fissures to appear in the air, and rumbling sounds to be heard in all directions. The incoming four-sided line shape directly exploded into fragments.

Its power of expulsion, having faced someone who it couldn’t possibly shake, was now nothing more than a joke!

It was like a tiny stream that wanted to become as powerful as a mountain. How could it possibly succeed!?

As the four-sided line shape collapsed, Meng Hao’s finger once again tapped onto Patriarch Huyan’s chest. A boom could be heard. Blood sprayed from Patriarch Huyan’s mouth, and his chest caved in bloodily. Even his back was a bloody mess as he staggered backward. He looked at Meng Hao, his face twisted with savagery.

“I feel like leaving,” he growled. “You won’t let me? Seems you actually think I’m scared of you!” With that, Patriarch Huyan performed another incantation with his right hand. He pushed down onto his forehead, then opened his mouth to spit out a small, black-colored blade.

As soon as the blade appeared, everything dimmed. It began to spin faster and faster in his palm, then grow rapidly in size. Shockingly, it transformed into a huge greatsword, upon which was carved the severed head of a dragon!

Patriarch Huyan waved his right arm. His face was covered with a savage expression that seemed to say he was willing to go all out, even risk death, as he shot toward Meng Hao.

“DIE!!” The power of Patriarch Huyan’s Cultivation base exploded out. In fact… the level of power he wielded now was multiple times greater than before. The area around him filled with ripples of ancientness that even seemed to contain natural law!!

Natural laws of the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane!

These natural laws contained a power of expulsion that had nothing to do with the four-sided line shape. This was a true power of expulsion from the world of the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane.

The blade descended, shocking Heaven and Earth!

“You will fear me,” said Meng Hao coolly as he entered… the Seventh Anima!!

The power of sixty-four great circle Nascent Souls exploded out within him. His fleshly body unleashed even more Spirit Severing aura. Together, they caused the air around Meng Hao to begin to collapse. Roaring could be heard around him, almost as if this body of his was something that didn’t belong in this broken Demon Immortal Sect.

It was as if there were invisible restrictions in this place, and any Cultivation base or battle prowess that exceeded those limitations were not permitted at all.

With the battle prowess he was now displaying, Meng Hao had already touched that world limitation.

“So, I don’t actually need to enter the Eighth Anima,” thought Meng Hao. “I’ve already reached fleshly body Spirit Severing!” As he took a moment to experience the sensation, he came to the realization that he…

Was already in the Spirit Severing stage!

Although he had no Domain, he was still of Spirit Severing!! In fact, he was even stronger than when he had borrowed the power of the mastiff, put on the Blood Immortal mask, and used the power of the Blood Immortal.

He faced up against Patrairch Huyan’s descending blade, lifting his right hand without hesitation and pushing out with his finger.

In this moment, everything suddenly seemed to freeze. The roaring sound that filled the air seemed to cease for a moment. And then, everything returned.

Crashing booms echoed out one after another into the silence. They filled the entire Demon Immortal Sect, to be heard by each and every one of the Cultivators from South Heaven.

Patriarch Huyan coughed up blood and tumbled backward. The huge black-colored blade in his hand broke up into fragments. His face was pale, and, ignoring any possible ramification that might give rise to expulsion, he employed the full power of his Cultivation base… to destroy his opponent!

“You’re already at your limit with your Seventh Anima!” he said, his eyes filling with a streak of madness. “This is the strongest you can get!” He was panting now, the killing intent in his eyes strong. “Since that’s the case, let me escort you the rest of the way down your path!”

Patriarch Huyan lifted his right hand up and pushed it down onto his chest. When he lifted it up, a red glow appeared, seemingly pulled out from his body itself.

It was a red-colored whip, completely illusory and capable of lashing the soul. It looked exactly the same as the whip Meng Hao had stolen earlier from Patriarch Huyan, except that its color was different!

As soon as the whip appeared, Patriarch Huyan’s fleshly body began to wither rapidly, as if all of his life force were being collected together in the whip. By now, his killing intent had reached a peak.

Meng Hao stood motionlessly in the same place as before, the wind and dirt whipping around him, his hair flying about.

In the space of a few breaths, the sand and wind around him dissipated….

“DIE!!” howled Patriarch Huyan. His withered frame flickered, and a bizarre sound could be heard coming from the whip. It lashed down toward Meng Hao, filled with a bloodthirsty and terrifying aura.

Meng Hao looked up. Not a tiny bit of sentiment could be seen in his eyes, only calmness as he observed the incoming soul whip and Patriarch Huyan, who emanated terrifying ripples. Meng Hao had tested out his new magical techniques; what he needed to do now was see… exactly how powerful he was!

Closing his eyes, he coolly said, “Eighth Anima!”

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# Chapter 606: Eighth Anima!

As soon as Meng Hao spoke the words, a roaring filled his head. His body shook, and the air around him twisted and filled with fissures. Everything dimmed, and an invisible whirlpool instantly sprang up around him. As it rotated, it gave rise to an enormous hurricane.

As soon as the illusory whip snapped onto the hurricane vortex, it whipped backward. Down beneath the vortex, all of the sand and dirt floated up into the air and began to sweep around. As for Patriarch Huyan, his face thoroughly fell, and he staggered out of control several paces backward.

His eyes were filled with astonishment and shock, and his mind was reeling.

“Impossible! This magical technique has Seven Animas. How could… an Eighth Anima appear!?!?”

Even as Patriarch Huyan reeled with shocked, Meng Hao’s body was seemingly filled with distortions. Intense, pulsing pain overwhelmed him. He had never imagined that the Eighth Anima would be… so painful!

His body felt as if it were being ripped apart. Wave after wave of power surged through him at indescribable speed, rapidly increasing in intensity.

His eight Nascent Souls were fully superimposed, and now burst forth with a power that vastly exceeded the terrifying Cultivation base power of the Seventh Anima.

In the Seventh Anima just now, Meng Hao had unleashed the power of 64 great circle Nascent Souls. That had been the previous limit, something that couldn’t be exceeded. But now, even as the combination had just fused, that previous limitation was completely toppled.

65, 66…. In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao's body possessed the power of 70 boundless great circle Nascent Soul Cultivation bases. That power continued to grow. The feeling of intense power, as well as a terrifying aura, spread out through Meng Hao. As his Cultivation base and fleshly body continued to transform, the power exploded out.

Everything around him was twisted and distorted. The wind and clouds were in fluctuation, and the hurricane that surrounded Meng Hao seemed to stretch from the ground up into the sky. Endless booms echoed out, exploding with incredible intensity.

He trembled, and blood began to seep out of his eyes, nose, ears, and mouth. His visage was ferocious to the extreme, and his long hair whipped about madly. He could clearly sense his Cultivation base climbing upward. In the blink of an eye it had the power of 93 great circle Nascent Souls.

And it was still climbing!

Every level of power which was added caused booming sounds to fill him, and more pressure would weigh down on him. The energy which he could employ was even more shocking. At the same time, the wastage to his longevity increased rapidly.

However, none of that could do anything to supersede the wildly intense rise he was experiencing. It gave him an incredible confidence which caused him to lift his head up and roar.

ROARRR!!

The sound of it seemed to cause all of the pain that wracked him to be diffused out into the Demon Immortal Sect. As his body trembled, his Cultivation base rose up from the previous level of 93 great circle Nascent Souls to… 99.

The color of Meng Hao's hair began to change. It was no longer black, but now gray. His facial features were no longer that of a youth, but rather, ancient. His stature was tall and thin as before, but his aura was now completely different.

99, 100!

The full power of one hundred great circle Nascent Souls Cultivation bases exploded out within him. As Meng Hao roared, his hair grew longer and longer, soon reaching his lower back. The tempest around him grew in intensity, causing Meng Hao to slowly float up within the midst of the hurricane.

Lightning and thunder fell down to circulate around him, causing the hurricane to turn into a lightning storm, shocking to Heaven and Earth.

The sight of it caused Patriarch Huyan to pant rapidly. His eyes went wide and filled with a look of disbelief. His mind filled with roaring.

“How could this be…? He… he….”

In the midst of Patriarch Huyan’s astonishment, more roaring exploded out from Meng Hao as his Cultivation base rose again!

101, 102, 103… all the way to 115!

Meng Hao’s hair now stretched to his knees as his shocking roar echoed about in all directions. The tempest around him continued to expand until it was three hundred meters wide. It was at this point that the Heavenly expulsion force suddenly appeared.

The air around Meng Hao was continuously shattered. The fearsome aura surrounding him continued to rise up, almost as if some primordial wild beast was awakening.

116, 117…. In the blink of an eye, the power of 128 great circle Nascent Soul Cultivation bases exploded up. His roar was now the roar of Spirit Severing.

His power was that of Spirit Severing!

The aura around him was now an aura of Spirit Severing!!

The tempest was now nearly a thousand meters wide. Lightning had transformed the area into a sea of electricity. His hair was longer and his frame taller. His gray hair floated about, and his visage was one of ancientness. His eyes suddenly focused, and within them seemed to circulate a power to exterminate life.

As soon as Patriarch Huyan saw those eyes, his mind trembled, almost as if he had just been subjected to a powerful attack. His body began to shake, and he fell back several paces, blood spewing from his mouth. Within the astonishment on his face could now be seen a trace of dread.

“You….” he said hoarsely, his body shaking.

“I’m not finished yet,” said Meng Hao, whose eyes were still closed as he experienced the shocking Cultivation base power of 128 great circle Nascent Souls. This power far exceeded the absolute pinnacle of the Nascent Soul stage. This was… the power of Spirit Severing!!

It was a situation in which quantity changed into quality. With enough Nascent Soul Cultivation base built up, he was able to leap into a realm that was previously only occupied by true Spirit Severing.

However, even as Meng Hao had said, his Eighth Anima wasn’t finished yet. Just now, his growth had been in Cultivation base only. His fleshly body was still growing, rapidly flying toward a true Spirit Severing fleshly body.

Fleshly body Spirit severing was a stage for ancient Cultivators. In modern times, there were few people who could temper their body to the stage of Spirit Severing. In fact, you could say that it was virtually impossible, the difficulty level being just too high.

For Meng Hao, it was only by a series of lucky coincidences that he could reach this legendary stage. As of this moment, his fleshly body appeared to be normal, but in actuality, every strand of muscle was being shredded. Every inch of bone was being crushed. Every vein and artery was collapsing.

However, no matter how they were shredded, crushed, or collapsed, it didn’t cause any problems for Meng Hao. In fact, all of that destruction caused his body to reform, making his Qi and blood reach astonishing levels!!

Within the space of time of a few breaths, the thumping of a heartbeat could be heard, like thunder rattling out in all directions. It caused Patriarch Huyan to stop and look at Meng Hao. As of this moment, it appeared as if there were a shocking Qi and blood fighting back against the natural law of Heaven and Earth!

Qi and blood exploded up shockingly!!

As of this moment, every beat of Meng Hao’s heart caused the tempest around him to pause, caused the air to vibrate, caused the land in the area to quake.

Along with his Qi and blood, his body broke through some invisible barrier. As he truly entered the Spirit Severing stage, Meng Hao’s Spirit Severing aura exploded into the sky!

He took a deep breath as he realized that his view of the world was now completely different.

He could see innumerable dust motes dancing about in the air. He could hear countless sounds around him in the world, like the whisperings of innumerable deceased souls. He could feel all of the indescribable sorrow that filled the Demon Immortal Sect.

Most importantly… he could hear the sound… of breathing.

It was the breathing of something asleep, coming from deep, deep within the ground. It was faint, as if there were some enormous creature far beneath the surface of the earth, sleeping. Every breath it took echoed about.

All of these things take quite a long time to describe. However, it was a very short period of time from the moment in which Meng Hao entered the

Eighth Anima until he could sense everything.

128 great circle Nascent Souls pushed Meng Hao’s Cultivation base into a state which could be considered the world of Spirit Severing!

Because of the endless good fortune that had tempered his fleshly body, now that he had entered the Eighth Anima, his body truly had reached the legendary… Fleshly Sanctification. Figuratively speaking, that sanctification was none other than the Spirit Severing of his body!

“I am not in the Spirit Severing stage,” he murmured. “But I possess the power of Spirit Severing.” His power now vastly exceeded that which he had experienced before, when he had merged with the mastiff.

“Now, the time has come to have a little test. Let’s see… exactly how powerful I am!” With that, his eyes began to glow with a cold light. He glanced at Patriarch Huyan, whose mind began to tremble. At that point, Meng Hao vanished.

Patriarch Huyan’s scalp numbed, and he was scared witless. He retreated rapidly, waving his arm to cause the whip to flail about in all directions. However, it was at this point that a reflection appeared in his pupils as Meng Hao appeared directly in front of him.

Meng Hao’s left hand lifted up, forming a claw that snatched ahold of the whip. The whip let out a whimpering sound, but could not extricate itself.

“You… are too weak,” said Meng Hao, his voice cool. He lifted his right hand up and tapped down lightly on Patriarch Huyan’s forehead.

Patriarch Huyan’s body trembled as he was suddenly lifted up into the air and soared in the direction of the forbidden zone. Before he even began to fall to the ground, his head directly exploded. Blood and gore formed a haze that spread to his chest, and then his limbs, and finally his entire torso.

All of that was accomplished by a mere tap from Meng Hao in his Eighth Anima. Patriarch Huyan was ripped into shreds before he could even scream, and his fleshly body was completely destroyed.

His half-transparent Nascent Divinity fled out, a large hole visible on its forehead. Life force and aura trickled out of the hole, beyond its control. It was incredibly weak as it retreated backward. Its death was only a matter of time; within the space of ten breaths, it would certainly perish!

It was with astonishment and indescribable fear and despair that the Nascent Divinity let out a miserable scream. Although it knew fleeing was useless, it still attempted to run away.

However, it was in this moment that, from within the forbidden zone, what appeared to be a consummately beautiful jade-like hand suddenly reached out with incredible dexterity. The delicate hand stretched out through the air…

To grab ahold of Patriarch Huyan's Nascent Divinity.

“My Cultivation base suffered damage. With this Nascent Divinity, I can concoct some pills to help with that. Do you mind?” A woman walked out from within the forbidden zone. She had Zhixiang's voice, but her appearance was nothing like the woman Meng Hao remembered from before.

She was as pretty as a flower, bewitchingly charming, matchlessly beautiful, unrivaled in elegance and demeanor. She… was the new Demoness Zhixiang!

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# Chapter 607: You’re All Here, Huh?

To use the expression “indescribably beautiful and striking” to describe Zhixiang would only be enough to portray part of her. Meng Hao had no choice but to admit that in his entire life… he had never seen a more beautiful woman.

This was not a situation of her being “one of the most” beautiful women. Any other woman placed next to her would pale in comparison, and could do no more than play a supporting role.

She wore a light red gown, along with a wide smile. Her each and every move was dazzling, and her body let off a unique aura, resembling both the air of a Demon and a spirit.

The feeling Meng Hao got was that her body had become something like Heavenly materials or a Earthly treasures. It was something that completely stood out from the masses, and the aura she emitted seemed to fill the entire area.

Her current body did not belong to anyone except herself…. This was the true Zhixiang.

Because of her earlier fall in Cultivation base and the various plans to be carried out by her on behalf of the Demon Immortal Sect, her Immortal Realm Cultivation base had been degenerated back to the edge of Spirit Severing. In fact, most of the time, she only revealed the power of the Nascent Soul stage. Right now, though, it was obvious that she had succeeded with the Demon Immortal Body.

Because of her success, her Cultivation base had now begun to restore itself. In a very short period of time, she would once again have… the power of an Immortal!

When the time came, the others would return to the lands of South Heaven, but she… would leave by a different route. She would return to the Demon Immortal Sect of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

There was even a high likelihood that the Cultivators of the Demon Immortal Sect were already gathering at some unknown location to prepare to receive her.

Upon hearing Zhixiang’s request, Meng Hao’s expression did not change at all. He nodded slowly.

She gently bit her lip and smiled, then took Patriarch Huyan’s rapidly fading Nascent Divinity and crushed it. A popping sound could be heard. Patriarch Huyan, a Spirit Severing Patriarch in his generation, had his Nascent Divinity crushed into tiny pieces. They transformed into dots of shining light that Zhixiang then slowly absorbed in through her forehead.

Zhixiang’s countenance became a bit more beautiful, enough to cause anyone who looked at her to be shocked and feel their heart palpitating with eagerness.

“Thank you,” she said. She lifted her hand up to place a veil over her face, covering over the features that would cause anyone to be infatuated with her at first sight. Her eyes flickered with a bizarre light as she looked at Meng Hao.

“Allow me to introduce myself. I’m Zhou Zhixiang. The ‘zhi’ character is from the expression ‘that which is noble and lofty.’ The ‘xiang’ character is from the expression ‘a woman of ethereal color and celestial fragrance.’ I am Zhixiang, Holy Daughter of the Demon Immortal Sect. However, I prefer it when people call me Demoness.” With a smile, she gave a curtsied bow to Meng Hao.

Her words were simple, as were the movements she made. However, an indescribable energy wafted off of her, forming together into an incredible pressure, which weighed down on the entire area.

“You owe me,” said Meng Hao coolly. “And not just a simple favor.”

“Don’t worry, Fellow Daoist Meng. I acknowledge it, as does the New Demon Immortal Sect of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. We will absolutely never forget it.” She cocked her beautiful head as she looked at him. Then her beautiful hand waved, causing a jade slip to fly out.

The jade slip was ancient and crude; on one side could be seen the character ‘Demon,’ and on the other side the character ‘Immortal.’

“This is the command medallion of a Demon Immortal Sect Elder. Whoever holds this medallion is a vassal Elder. Fellow Daoist Meng, if you need assistance in the future, you may come to the Demon Immortal Sect at any time.”

Meng Hao accepted the command medallion, looked it over, and then put it into his bag of holding. He nodded toward Zhixiang, then, without another word, turned to leave.

“I would like to thank you in a more personal way, Fellow Daoist Meng,” said Zhixiang with a smile. “Therefore, I’ll give you a bit of information. The pit located between the Third and Fourth Peaks is critical to entering the Fourth Plane.”

Meng Hao stopped in place and turned to look back at her.

“Most likely, the other Sects and Clans have this information already. In fact, the Fourth Plane will never close. Anyone in the Third Plane who has the requisite skill can enter it.

“Without the skill, one can only gaze at the figurative ocean and lament one’s inadequacy.” Zhixiang chuckled, once again bowing to Meng Hao. Then she turned and disappeared.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. He could sense Zhixiang’s power, and he knew that she was completely different than before. A thoughtful look appeared as he looked down at his bag of holding, and thought back to all his previous contact with Zhixiang.

In his heart, he was eighty percent certain that the small bit of assistance he had provided here would later result in receiving help from Zhixiang and the Demon Immortal Sect, although it was impossible to predict whether that help would be of great use or not.

A relaxed smile appeared on his face. He had long since come to realize that in the Cultivation world, one must rely on oneself. One could not expect too much help from outsiders. Therefore, whether the New Demon Immortal Sect provided him with a lot of help, or just a little, it didn’t really matter to him.

His greatest acquisition in this affair was not the promise of Zhixiang and the New Demon Immortal Sect. Instead, it was his Eighth Nascent Soul, and his incredibly powerful fleshly body.

He took a deep breath as he examined his body, as well as the fearsome damage done to his longevity while in the Eighth Anima 1. As for the power of worldly expulsion that he had felt, he wasn’t sure when, but it had vanished. That caused his eyes to glitter brightly as he looked over at the Fourth Peak.

After a moment, he looked away, and his body flickered as he left the Eighth Anima state and returned to the First Anima.

Then he took a step forward. Before speeding off into the distance, he collected up the soul whip. From what Meng Hao could tell, it looked as if it was meant to be part of Patriarch Huyan’s other whip.

At the moment, though, he would not allow them to fuse together. Instead, after he left this place, he would take some time to thoroughly study both of them.

Right now, he wanted to see if he could find any more of good fortune within the Third Plane. He whistled through the air as he passed the Seventh Peak and then the Sixth Peak.

As he neared the Fifth Peak, his eyes suddenly glittered, and the corners of his mouth turned up into a smile. He changed directions to speed directly toward the Fifth Peak. Not much time passed before, shockingly, the light of a restrictive spell appeared up ahead of him.

The restrictive spell had three layers. The outer layer was dim, the light of the mid layer was flowing smoothly, and the inner layer was completely solid.

The three-layer restrictive spell covered an area of about three hundred meters. Clearly visible underneath it was a house, leaning up against the wall of which was a corpse.

The corpse was different than most of the corpses on the outside. It was not completely dried up, but rather, retained some life-like qualities.

It was an old man, who had been looking regretfully off into the distance when he died. As for what he was thinking, it was impossible to tell, but in his hand he held a bamboo flute. The flute was no magical item, but rather, completely ordinary. It even seemed to be a bit shriveled.

In front of the old man was another object, a drum about the size of a person’s head. It was completely violet-colored, and emanated a faint glow. Just barely audible was a pulsating thrum from the drum that echoed about the entire area.

Outside of the restrictive spell were eight or so frowning Cultivators from the lands of South Heaven. A few of their number were currently trying to break through the restrictive spell.

Among their number were four members of the Ji Clan, including Ji Xiaoxiao. Also present was Liu Zichuan from the Imperial Bloodline Clan of the Northern Reaches, who Meng Hao had frightened earlier.

The others were from the Eastern Lands or Northern Reaches, and all were frowning as they looked at the violet drum inside of the restrictive spells. Their expressions were that of desire.

Meng Hao’s arrival in a beam of multicolored light instantly disturbed the quiet in the area. The group of people immediately went on guard and began to look around. However, once they saw that it was Meng Hao, their faces filled with unsightly expressions.

The way Meng Hao had extorted them in the Second Plane had caused all of them to gnash their teeth. Liu Zichuan was the only one who immediately backed up a few steps, trembling.

“You’re all here, huh?” said Meng Hao, laughing heartily as he approached. “I haven’t seen you in quite a few days, but I missed you! I hope you’ve all acquired a lot of items here in the Third Plane!” Meng Hao’s expression was sincere; in fact, he really did sincerely want for everyone to acquire a lot.

However, the more he expressed himself in such a way, the more unsightly were the expressions on the faces of the others. They stared at Meng Hao, faces filled with displeasure. Some even seemed to be contemplating trying to attack and kill him, to solve all troubles in one fell swoop.

Meng Hao didn’t seem to notice this. He was all smiles as he sighed and then said, “Eee? How come you’re all ignoring me? Well, it doesn’t matter. Fellow Daoists, I, Meng Hao, truly desire for all of you to make great acquisitions here. In that way, I will also benefit a bit more.”

By now, killing intent was flickering in the eyes of the others, and a few people stepped forward, their tempers seemingly on the verge of exploding.

Meng Hao still didn’t seem to notice this point. He had a bashful smile on his face, and even looked a bit emotional. However, from the point of view of the others, he was clearly showing off, and was in the need of a bit of punishment. His expression might even be one of courting death.

Only Liu Zichuan felt his heart pounding nervously, and was crying out inwardly:

“Contemptible! Far too brazen! This bastard… this bastard is somebody I absolutely cannot afford to provoke. He has obviously grown powerful to the point of Spirit Severing, and yet he only shows off this level of power….

“He’s obviously… obviously provoking the others into attacking him!! How shameless!!” At this point, Liu Zichuan couldn’t help but think back to his own grievous situation earlier. He could only imagine that if some of these people attacked Meng Hao right now, they would quickly find themselves in exactly such a miserable state.

As he looked at Meng Hao’s smile, he only found it more and more horrifying. Yet, at the same time, he somehow was looking forward to seeing these other people meet a similar fate as he had….

“Brothers,” continued Meng Hao, “I know that I displeased you in the Second Realm. Please, don’t take it to heart. Now that we’re in the Third Plane, I hope that we can all work together toward a common purpose. Brothers, whether or not I can find sufficient good fortune here, depends all on you.”

After he finished speaking, Meng Hao, looking incredibly appreciative, and even clasped hands to bowed to them.

The bow caused everyone including Ji Xiaoxiao to clench their teeth. As for Liu Zichuan, his face merely twitched, but everyone else seemed to be on the verge of exploding into a rage.

“Oh, there’s also….” Meng Hao had straightened up and was about to smilingly continue when one of the Cultivators from the Northern Reaches couldn’t hold back any longer. His temper flared and, with a howl, he shot forward.

“Shut up, bastard! So, you admit that you displeased us in the Second Plane?”

As soon as the Northern Reaches Cultivator went on the attack, Liu Zichuan’s eyes went wide and filled with a look of anticipation.

“Take him out! Drop him dead!” he thought excitedly.

The Northern Reaches Cultivator closed in on Meng Hao, his face twisted viciously. His right hand lifted up to perform an incantation gesture and then pushed out toward Meng Hao.

At the same time, another of the Northern Reaches Cultivators shot forward, as well as a member of the Ji Clan. Eyes flashing, they fell upon Meng Hao.

Another bashful look appeared on Meng Hao’s face.

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1. I’ve seen a lot of comments/questions/confusion about the issue of his longevity in the Animas. Although the explanation wasn’t extremely clear, it was implied that Meng Hao can restore any damage to his longevity using medicinal pills. As long as he doesn’t run out of longevity within the Eighth Anima, any damage is inconsequential. Think of his “longevity” as a health bar, the total capacity of which slowly reduces over time, but can also be drained or re-filled by various means. The total capacity might be reduced while he’s in the Eighth Anima, but once he leaves, it returns to normal, and any “missing” years of life can be made up for with medicinal pills. As for Meng Hao’s current “normal” longevity, it doesn’t really matter too much. He can freely duplicate longevity-increasing pills. That having been said, he still is confined by the limit of 1,000 years. It doesn’t matter how many pills you take or what you do, you can’t live past 1,000 without reaching Spirit Severing

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# Chapter 608: You Hurt Me

Even as the bashful expression appeared on his face, his right palm flew up into the air. It moved with such incredible speed that the burly man from the Northern Reaches had no time to react before it slapped him across the face.

A boom could be heard, and the burly man felt as if an entire mountain had collided with the side of his head. His mind was reeling.

Originally, the blow should have sent him flying, but at the last moment, Meng Hao caused his hand to move back down. He grabbed the man’s head and directly slammed it into the ground.

The burly man first shot up into the air and then struck the ground, causing a rumbling sound to echo out. The bashful expression still on his face, Meng Hao lifted his right foot up into the air and then began to trample on the burly man.

Even as the sound of the beating echoed out, the burly man began to struggle furiously. His Cultivation base exploded with power as he attempted to fight back. However, in the blink of an eye, the fearsome power of Meng Hao’s fleshly body caused him to begin to scream miserably. He shrank back down, shrieking in shocking fashion.

Meng Hao grabbed the man’s head and bashed it into the ground, causing blood to spray from the man’s mouth.

“Ready to be reasonable!?” said Meng Hao angrily. He bashed the man’s head into the ground again.

“I was congratulating the lot of you. Congratulating you! And in return, you want to kill me!?” Meng Hao slammed his head into the ground again. The burly man’s shrieks were sad and shrill, and his body was trembling. An expression of shock covered his face, and his heart was in turmoil as he was beaten senseless.

“That’s wrong!” said Meng Hao. “That’s immoral!” He jumped up into the air and then began to stamp down onto the burly man, leaving footprints with each stamp of his foot.

The burly man covered his head with both hands, screaming beneath Meng Hao’s anger.

“You don’t even know what’s good for you! Is that the right way to act? I congratulate you and then you repay my kindness with enmity!?” The scene of Meng Hao viciously trampling the man caused Liu Zichuan’s eyes to gleam with excitement. His heart was trembling, but with excitement. After all, it felt a lot better to be unlucky with a group of people than to be unlucky alone.

Most afraid out of everyone was the other Northern Reaches Cultivator who had also stepped forward just now, as well as the Ji Clan member. Although they had both charged in attack, watching the scene playing out in front of them caused their scalps to go numb.

They were just about to back up when Meng hao looked up at them, an expression of pain on his face.

“Do people really hate me that much?” he said. “I was clearly wishing you all well! If this guy was the only one to be ungrateful, it wouldn’t matter. But it seems… you two also don’t appreciate my kindness!” He appeared to be more and more torn by grief. The two Cultivators’ scalps became even more numb as they backed up. However, it was in that moment that Meng Hao lifted up his right hand and made a grasping motion.

“You need to explain yourself clearly, otherwise, you’re not going anywhere.” The two were shocked to find that Meng Hao’s grasping motion immediately caused their bodies to go out of control. They were pulled up to Meng Hao, where upon he slapped them with full strength. After they slammed down into the ground, he continued to rain blows down onto them.

“WHY?!?!” howled Meng Hao, sounding grieved. He grabbed the Ji Clan member and slammed him seven or eight times down into the ground. The Ji Clan Cultivator was furious, but it didn’t matter how much Cultivation base power or how many magical items he tried to use, a few slaps from Meng Hao would cause everything to collapse. The Ji Clan member was now panting from astonishment.

Even in the midst of his astonishment, Meng Hao grabbed his head and slammed his face into the ground again.

The other Northern Reaches Cultivator shrieked. He watched wide-eyed as the Ji Clan member and the other Northern Reaches Cultivator were like nothing more than baby chickens in Meng Hao’s hands, completely powerless to strike back at all. The man was so scared that he began to beg for mercy.

However, he could not escape Meng Hao’s punishment. Every time Meng Hao leaped up, the three men would let out miserable screams, and blood would spatter about the area….

“You hurt me and then just smiled it off!!” cried Meng Hao. “That’s unforgivable! I was being sincere!!” The sight of Meng Hao punching and kicking caused those looking on to be thoroughly shaken. The other Ji Clan members, as well as the other two Northern Reaches Cultivators, were all panting. Expressions of extreme shock could be seen on their faces.

They were also rejoicing at their luck in having not made a move earlier. That was especially true of the ones who had almost stepped forward just now. They felt as if they had just evaded a huge disaster.

Their eyes were filled with unprecedented levels of fear as they looked at Meng Hao. It was a fear that made them feel even more grievous than they had in the Second Plane. That was because they had suddenly discovered that… they could be bullied here in the Third Plane too!

Ji Xiaoxiao’s eyes were wide and she was panting with shock. As she stared at Meng Hao, she suddenly had the sensation that she was looking at a madman.

As the sensation appeared, it was coupled with fear. It was as if the Meng Hao that she remembered from the Second Plane had been perfectly extended down here into the Third Plane.

Liu Zichuan stood in the group, his expression one of excitement. Inwardly, he shouted, “Take him out! Drop him dead!”

His face filled with grief and indignation, Meng Hao continued to mop up the three. The two Ji Clan members other than Ji Xiaoxiao, hesitated. One of them was an older man who gritted his teeth and said, “Elder Brother Meng… they were definitely in the wrong, but… considering it was their first offense….”

“Yeah,” said one of the other Northern Reaches Cultivators. “Elder Brother Meng, if you keep beating them, they’re going to die….”

It was just as the man said. The three offenders lay next to Meng Hao, soaked in blood, gasping as more breath came out than went in. Despite being Cultivators, they had just been literally beaten to the verge of death.

“Do you also wish to repay kindness with enmity?” asked Meng Hao, looking up at the Ji Clan Cultivator who had spoken first.

That look caused the old Ji Clan member to begin to tremble. He quickly backed up a few steps, then angrily cried, “These people went way too far! What I hate most in life is people who repay kindness with enmity! Elder Brother Meng, feel free to continue, just ignore me.”

As for the other Northern Reaches Cultivator, the one who had spoken up second, he was now even more nervous. He began to fill with panic as he watched Meng Hao slowly look over toward him. Immediately, the man yelled, “Elder Brother Meng! Get rid of the rascals and protect the good folk! I couldn’t be more pleased. I truly wish I could be more like you, with such incredibly lofty sentiments!”

Off to the side, Liu Zichuan’s heart filled with disdain. He still felt himself to be far more powerful than these other people.

The bashful look appeared on Meng Hao's face once more. His right foot was up in the air, just about to descend again. Down below, the Ji Clan member, who was covering his head with his hands, suddenly felt as if his moment of good fortune had arrived.

"Fellow Daoist Meng, listen, my… my acquisitions, you can have sixty percent!"

As soon as Meng Hao heard this, his foot stopped moving. Apparently convinced by the man's words, he bent over at the waist and shyly patted the man's shoulder.

"Brother, oh, good Brother," he said. "I really hate to say this but, you know, I have my principles. How about eighty percent? No? Well never mind…."

"Huh?" The Ji Clan member's face was covered with both blood and a look of shock. He was just about to say something when one of the Northern Reaches Cultivators shouted out.

"Eighty percent! Elder Brother Meng, eighty percent of my acquisitions are yours!"

Hearing this, Meng Hao instantly shoved the Ji Clan member back to the ground and then helped the Northern Reaches Cultivator to his feet. His now looked even more bashful, and somewhat apologetic.

"I feel a bit guilty for such kindness, Brother," said Meng Hao. "Very well, since you trust me so much, then I truly wish you well. Please acquire many many things here in the Third Plane…."

The Northern Desert Cultivator wanted to cry, but had no tears to shed. He looked at Meng Hao and nodded vigorously.

The Ji Clan member who had just been shoved back down suddenly yelled out: "Eighty percent! I'll give eighty percent, too!"

The other of the three also gritted his teeth and yelled out similarly.

Meng Hao looked visibly moved as he helped them all to their feet.

“Fellow Daoists, I am truly indebted to your kindness,” he said with an emotional sigh. “I feel a bit guilty. However, since all of you insist, then, fine, fine, I accept.” From the look in his eye, it seemed Meng Hao felt that good people truly did exist everywhere under Heaven.

The three Cultivators stood there unsteadily, looking at Meng Hao. Although inwardly they might be cursing him to the pinnacle, they did not dare to allow it to show on their faces. As of this moment, they were in complete dread of Meng Hao.

Everyone else had merely watched the proceedings, but these three had experienced it personally. Every blow from Meng Hao contained not the slightest ripple of a magical technique. All of it was completely from the power of his fleshly body.

He had used only the power of his fleshly body to put them in a position where they didn’t even have a single chance to fight back. Even stranger, his fists and feet were actually capable of completely scattering their magical techniques.

Such a fearsome fleshly body was enough to cause anyone to feel hopelessness. The bashful look that they saw on Meng Hao’s face right now would become the source of their most profound nightmares in the future.

The three had no choice but to clasp hands in respect to Meng Hao. Then, supported by the various members of their groups, hobbled their way back to their original position. Meng Hao glanced at Ji Xiaoxiao with a profound expression. A tremor ran through her, and she suddenly grew even more nervous. No one else would understand, but Ji Xiaoxiao was well aware that Meng Hao had just reminded her of her promise to take him to Ji Mingfeng’s corpse.

Everything was silent. Everyone stood there quietly, having completely lost interest in the restrictive spell off to the side. All of them looked nervously at Meng Hao.

As for Meng Hao, he looked at the restrictive spell for a while. Then he examined the house, and the well preserved corpse. All of a sudden, he realized that the corpse looked familiar.

He was silent for a moment as he looked at it. Then he recognized who it was, and his face grew a bit melancholy. This old man existed in Meng Hao’s memory as a youth. Back in the Second Plane, he was one of Meng Hao’s silkpants friends, a Demon Immortal Sect disciple with two wings on his back.

Meng Hao remembered that his name was Yi Xuanzi.

After a moment of silent thought, Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed deeply toward the corpse. “Fellow Daoist Yi Xuanxi,” he said, “perhaps you don’t recognize me, but in my memories, we are friends…. If your spirit is in the underworld, please open the restrictive spell. I would like to bury you so that you can rest in peace.”

As of this moment, he wasn’t thinking about any magical items. He spoke the truth. He wanted to bury his friend from the Second Plane, so that he could rest peacefully.

After a long moment, Meng Hao rose to his feet. He didn’t check to see if the restrictive spell had changed in any way. Without a word, he turned to leave. However, it was in this moment that behind him, the restrictive spell suddenly began to glitter and shine. A riot of colors could be seen as a rift appeared, which opened up soundlessly!

It opened for Meng Hao!

A tremor ran through his body as he looked back.

Everyone watched on, eyes wide and minds filled with unprecedented shock and disbelief.

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# Chapter 609: Three-eyed Concubine

“The restrictive spell… is actually opening on its own!!”

“Could it be that Meng Hao was right about the spirit in the underworld?”

“If that’s what’s really happening, then wouldn’t it mean that we could use the personal relationships we forged in the Second Plane to open other restrictive spells!?”

Everyone was shocked and almost couldn’t believe what was happening.

This matter exceeded their imaginations, and in fact, their comprehension. The whole matter didn’t seem complicated, and yet, if you analyzed it deeply, there was clearly some incredibly complex cycle of Karma at work.

After all, the Second Plane… was illusory!

And yet, things that had occurred in the Second Plane, and people met there, had apparently created a resonance with reality. It was bizarre to the extreme!

Even as everyone stood there in their fear and shock, Meng Hao looked back at the rift in the restrictive spell. After a moment of thought, a look of decisiveness appeared in his eyes. As everyone watched, panting, he strode forward toward the restrictive spell. His body almost flickered as he… entered inside of it.

The instant he entered, the rift twisted and then rapidly closed up. As for Meng Hao, he now stood there inside of the restrictive spell.

He was now fully separated from the outside world, and the onlookers.

Completely ignoring how shocked everyone was, he looked at Yi Xuanzi’s corpse, then silently approached it. He stood there for a moment, then clasped hands and bowed deeply. Then he began to dig a hole next to the house.

He carefully placed Yi Xuanzi’s corpse into the deep hole. As for the flute and the drum, he did not take them for himself, but instead, placed them in the pit next to the body.

“Yi Xuanzi, whether or not you recognize me, in my memories, we are friends…. I hope that you can rest in peace. If there is a reincarnation… I hope that we can meet again.” He looked at the corpse in the deep hole, and his eyes filled with a look of reminiscence. He thought back to the Second Plane, his silkpants friends from the other mountain peaks, and how they had all been whipped together.

After a long moment, he let out a soft sigh. Just as he was about to begin filling the hole up with dirt, the violet-colored drum suddenly let out a thump. The sound was like that of a heartbeat, clear and distinct as it echoed around.

Meng Hao’s brows furrowed in concentration. He watched as the violet drum, which was emanating a slight violet-colored glow, slowly floated up out of the hole to hover in front of him.

The drum was about the size of a head. The drum head itself was black, and the sides were violet. Just barely visible were countless faint magical symbols rising up from the drum head. Also visible on the the drum head was a totem.

The totem was that of a black toad with a vicious appearance. Its long tongue was sticking out of its mouth to wrap around a black dragon!

The black dragon was struggling, but apparently it was powerless to fight back against the toad.

It was obviously a totem, but when he looked at it, Meng Hao felt almost as if it were moving. On the other side of the drum head was another totem.

This totem was an enormous crocodile with vicious looking scales. Its appearance was ferocious to the extreme, and its mouth was open to emit a soundless roar….

This drum was extremely extraordinary!

Meng Hao was silent for a long moment before reaching out his hand. The violet drum flickered a few times, then slowly landed onto his palm.

As soon as it touched him, he heard a buzzing sound in his mind. It was like the call of a toad, the shriek of a black dragon, and the coldness of the crocodile.

A moment passed, and then everything went back to normal. However, as everything faded away, Meng Hao realized that the method of how to use the drum now existed in his mind.

When everyone on the outside saw what was happening, their eyes went wide with astonishment. Although they were completely envious and jealous, they didn't allow it to show on their faces.

The fearsomeness Meng Hao had just displayed was now indelibly branded onto their minds. The impression he had left was something that was deeply imprinted within them, and could never be wiped away.

Meng Hao quietly put away the violet-colored drum. Then he looked at the corpse, and once more clasped hands and bowed.

“Many thanks for your help, Fellow Daoist,” he said. “I will not allow anything unworthy to occur to this object.” As he spoke, a warm wind seemed to blow through the area. Meng Hao's hair lifted up, and it almost seemed like a murmuring voice could be heard within the wind.

Finally, he buried the corpse. He piled together a small grave mound, then waved his hand, causing a wooden plank to fly over. He used his finger to carve the wood, instantly transforming it into a grave marker which he pushed down deeply into the grave mound.

Here lies Yi Xuanzi.

“Fellow Daoist, I wish you a safe journey,” he said quietly. Then he turned and began to walk toward the restrictive spell. He did not disturb anything else in the area, nor did he search it. He had entered this place because of Yi Xuanzi, and because of the memories. He had no other purpose than to bury his friend.

As Meng Hao neared, the restrictive spell flickered and the rift appeared again. After he walked out, the rift disappeared again. Everyone looked at Meng Hao with odd expressions.

Deep in their hearts, they couldn’t help but feel that Meng Hao was truly enigmatic.

Ignoring everyone else, Meng Hao continued to walk along. Suddenly, he stopped and looked back at Ji Xiaoxiao.

As soon as he looked at her, her heart trembled. Silently, she gritted her beautiful teeth, then turned to speak to the other Ji Clan members in hushed tones. Then, to the shock of all them, her body flashed as she moved to join Meng Hao.

Meng Hao laughed as he flew up into the air. Ji Xiaoxiao followed, and in the blink of an eye, the two of them disappeared off in the distance. Everyone left behind exchanged speechless glances. The intense impression left upon them by Meng Hao was deep and profound.

Meng Hao flew in the lead position and Ji Xiaoxiao followed. After disappearing off into the distance, where no one would be watching them, Meng Hao looked back and gave Ji Xiaoxiao an enigmatic smile.

He still remembered the scene from the river of stars, before coming to the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane, when he had been stuck up against her body.

Seeing his smile caused Ji Xiaoxiao to feel goosebumps. She quickly began to explain. “Ji Mingfeng’s host body was a Conclave disciple from the First Peak. However, his body is not located at the First Peak, but rather, beneath the Third Peak.”

“Lead the way,” replied Meng Hao coolly. Actually, he didn’t really care at all about Ji Mingfeng’s corpse. He was merely using this method to thoroughly bind Ji Xiaoxiao to him.

In this way, he was essentially inserting a mole into the Ji Clan. If any mishaps occurred, Ji Xiaoxiao would not be able to escape unharmed. Because she was an actual member of the Clan, if she betrayed the Clan, the results would be even more miserable.

As for Ji Xiaoxiao, how could she not understand this? However, she had little room to maneuver. Originally, she took her actions in the Second Plane to be a temporary stopgap that she could adjust in the Third Plane. But when she discovered how fearsomely powerful Meng Hao’s Cultivation base was, she truly understood that… she had no way to fight back against him.

Therefore, since she couldn’t fight back, there was no need to struggle.

They sped along together, Ji Xiaoxiao compliant, Meng Hao using his Divine Sense to avoid anyone else. Soon, they neared the Third Peak.

Although Ji Xiaoxiao didn’t detect what Meng Hao was doing, she did notice that they didn’t run into anybody whatsoever. As such, she could only assume it had something to do with Meng Hao, which of course filled her with even more dread.

As for Meng Hao, his brow was furrowed. As they moved along, he had actually sensed a total of six or seven others. All were alone, and all of them seemed to be moving in the same direction; they were headed toward a place somewhere between the Third and Fourth Peaks.

Meng Hao thought back to what Zhixiang had told him, about true spirit Night, and the pit between the Third and Fourth Peaks. That pit led to the entrance of the Fourth Plane.

His eyes glittered, and a cold smile appeared on his face.

“Considering that they aren’t looking for any more good fortune in the Third Realm,” he thought, “but are instead hurrying toward the Fourth Realm, it shows that they must have acquired quite a bit already.

“In that case, it’s just about time for me to go make them live up to their agreement.”

Up ahead, Ji Xiaoxiao stopped. “We’re here,” she said, looking back at Meng Hao. “This is the place. There are restrictive spells in place, so follow me.”

Meng Hao suddenly lifted his right hand and flicked his finger. A red medicinal pill flew out at top speed to appear in front of Ji Xiaoxiao. Her face flickered.

There was still time for her to dodge out of the way, but when she saw the cold streak in Meng Hao’s eyes, her heart seized. She did nothing to evade, instead allowing the medicinal pill to enter her mouth. As it dissolved, an acrid liquid spread out through her body.

“Let’s go,” said Meng Hao with a smile and a nod. He looked around at the ruins and the countless flickering restrictive spells.

Ji Xiaoxiao’s face was extremely unsightly. She said nothing, but merely turned and proceeded forward. As she did, the curves of her body made a scene of soul-stirring beauty.

She proceeded on through a specific route for about the time it takes an incense stick to burn. Soon, a well appeared up ahead of Meng Hao. Shockingly, two corpses could be seen together at the bottom of the well.

One was Ji Mingfeng, the other was the host body.

A three-eyed crow was perched atop Ji Mingfeng’s body. In almost the same instant in which Meng Hao looked down at the crow, the crow turned to look at him.

Ji Mingfeng also had two bags of holding. One was white, the other was black. Even as Meng Hao looked at the black bag of holding, Ji Xiaoxiao spoke up.

“The black bag of holding has Ji Mingfeng’s collection of Demon beasts. As for that three-eyed crow, it long since gained sentience. When Ji Mingfeng was only three years old, it flew in from the outside, and accompanied him ever since.

“You got lucky in killing Ji Mingfeng. If we were in the outside world, even if you were of the Spirit Severing stage, it would still be very difficult. He… is actually the Nascent Soul stage Dao Child of the Ji Clan.

“He even had a Patriarch’s brand on him, although sadly, it’s faded since he died.”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. Suddenly, the crow flew up into the air, transforming into a black beam of light that shot toward Meng Hao.

Before Meng Hao could react, an excited voice could be heard coming from the copper mirror inside his bag of holding.

“Bitches! Lord Fifth is awake, little bitches! Hey, I see a lovely three-eyed concubine here!”

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# Chapter 610: Injured Lord Fifth

Apparently, the three-eyed crow knew the parrot….

Otherwise, it wouldn’t have flown out it in such an overbearing fashion, only to, upon hearing the voice of the parrot, begin shaking, the feathers on its body standing on end. Apparently something had gotten it quite worked up. It let out a miserable shriek, then suddenly turned around in mid-air and then fled in the opposite direction.

At the same time, the parrot flew out from inside of Meng Hao’s bag of holding. It seemed to be in high spirits, as arrogant as ever to once again be on the scene.

Its eyes glittered with an excited glow as it raised its head up and squawked a few times. Then it shot forward toward the three-eyed crow.

“Long time no see! What are you running away for? If you keep running, Lord Fifth is going to screw you!!

“Beloved concubine, don’t run away!” it continued excitedly, “Husband and wife for a day means mutual benefactors for endless days to come! Although we couldn’t remain as husband and wife for a long time back then, that doesn’t mean you need to flee! Every time I think of you, I can’t help but wallow in my memories!”

The parrot seemed to be on the verge of overtaking the crow. Suddenly, though, tears appeared in the crow’s eyes. It seemed ready to die rather than be violated. In this instant, it used some unknown magical technique to cause all of its black feathers to suddenly fall off of its body….

In the blink of an eye, there was no longer a black crow in front of Lord Fifth and Meng Hao. Instead, it was a… flesh-colored, completely bald bird.

The sight of the completely featherless bird was appalling and almost too horrible to look at.

However, the miserable shriek which rang through the air next did not come from the three-eyed crow, but rather the parrot. The bloodcurdling scream seemed to emanate from a deep, deep pain. The parrot stopped in mid air, staring at the feathers that were fluttering down to the ground, and then let out another miserable cry.

“Wh-wh-wh… why did you do that!?!?” The parrot didn’t seem to be able to accept it. One breath of time before, the crow had been its true love, completely in line with his sense of beauty. The next breath, everything was turned completely around in a completely upsetting fashion.

Its entire body was shaking, even its nerves. What had happened just now was something too intensely upsetting.

Taking advantage of the parrot’s sudden loss of spirit, the three-eyed crow used some other method to disappear into mid-air. It vanished without a trace.

The parrot seemed on the verge of going insane. It raised its head up to the sky and let out a roar.

“DAMNATION! Lord Fifth will not let you off the hook!”

Meng Hao suddenly felt a bit of sympathy for the parrot, especially considering how it had just changed its use of bad words. Clearly, the parrot was not just a little bit upset at the moment.

A face suddenly appeared on the bell attached to the parrot’s foot. The meat jelly’s voice could be heard, filled with a bit of a wicked tone. “Happy? According to Lord Third, that crow is actually quite honest and sincere. For example, what if it had used that move just now when you were in the middle of screwing it? What would you do then?”

Upon hearing this, Meng Hao could only stare blankly. The parrot trembled a few more times before a look of intense alarm appeared on its face.

Meng Hao had long since gotten used to the antics of the meat jelly and parrot. He had also put some thought into the matter of why the two of them hadn’t made an appearance in the First or Second Planes. He had assumed that there was something special about the Demon Immortal Sect that made it impossible for them to reveal themselves.

Based on the voice of the parrot just now, it seemed to Meng Hao that it had just woken up. However, even after trying, he couldn’t cause the mastiff to appear. Then he thought back to what Patriarch Huyan had said before, and realized that the origin of the meat jelly and the parrot really was unfathomable.

As for Ji Xiaoxiao, this was her first time seeing the parrot. Her eyes were wide, especially after she heard what the meat jelly said. Although she had always been a brazen person, she was still a young woman, and couldn’t help but flush a bit and make a reprimanding “pei” sound.

Yet, she continued to look down on Lord Fifth….

The instant she made the “pei” sound, the parrot turned its head to stare at Ji Xiaoxiao. A deadly gleam appeared in its eyes, as if it desired to vent its frustration and pain on her.

Panting, it looked her over.

“No fur or feathers! Dammit! Absolutely no fur or feathers! Dear Heavens, why do you punish me this way!!” The parrot howled and then clenched its jaw. Even the mere thought of the crow shedding its feathers caused it to feel profound pain.

Although Ji Xiaoxiao didn’t have the fur or feathers that the parrot liked, as far as she was concerned, the damnable things gaze was far too penetrating.

Meng Hao ignored the parrot. His right hand made a grasping motion, causing Ji Mingfeng’s two bags of holding to fly up out from within the well and into his hands. He glanced them over, opting not to open then at the moment. Instead, he put them away.

Then, eyes glittering, he snatched the wailing parrot and ignoring whether it wanted to or not, shoved it back into his bag of holding. Then he looked at Ji Xiaoxiao.

“It’s time for me to go collect some treasures,” he said. “If you have nothing else to do, you can come with me. My destination just so happens to be the entrance to the Fourth Plane.”

Ji Xiaoxiao hesitated for a moment, then nodded. She didn’t seem to be surprised at all to hear about the Fourth Plane, as if she had known about it all along.

As he gazed at her, Meng Hao thought about the resources of her Clan, and how information about the Fourth Plane wouldn’t be hard to come by. The two of them left, Meng Hao taking the lead as they shot toward the pit, which lay between the Third and Fourth Peaks. It wasn’t very far away. About two hours later, they arrived.

There were quite a few people already gathered together. There were a handful from the Ji Clan, one of whom was Ji Mingkong, who looked at Meng Hao with a strange glow in his eyes. Li Shiqi and Han Bei sat cross-legged not too far off, as did Wang Lihai. As soon as Meng Hao neared, their expressions flickered.

Meng Hao was all smiles as he waved to everyone in greeting.

“Hahaha! What a small world, huh! We meet again, Fellow Daoists. So, tell me, how did things go for you in the Third Plane? What did you acquire?” Behind him, Ji Xiaoxiao’s cheek twitched a little as she realized that Meng Hao… was about to con some more people.

“Meng Hao offers his most sincere well wishes to all of you Fellow Daoists,” he continued. “I hope that you can really profit well in the Third Plane. That way, I can also bask a bit in your glory, right? Thank you, Fellow Daoists. You are all truly good people.” Meng Hao seemed a bit emotional and even somewhat embarrassed. A bashful expression appeared as he looked over the increasingly grim-faced crowd, then clasped hands and bowed.

As for the group from the Southern Domain, their eyes flickered. That was especially true of Han Bei. When she saw Meng Hao's smile, a tremor ran through her body and she quickly lowered her head.

She knew all too well what Meng Hao's smile meant. It must be stated that it was quite well known in the Southern Domain that Meng Hao had conned many people with that bashful grin….

Although Wang Lihai had never seen Meng Hao's bashful side, he had heard of his conman's personality. When he saw the smile, and Han Bei's reaction, he instantly went on guard.

Li Shiqi put on a forced smile. She looked at Meng Hao but didn't say anything.

Song Jia was also there. She looked at Meng Hao with a complex expression. It didn't matter how Meng Hao smiled, to her, it was all the same.

As for the Dao Child from the Li Clan, Li Tiandao, he was the only Southern Domain Cultivator who didn't notice anything special about Meng Hao's smile. He frowned, and killing intent suddenly sprang up in his eyes.

In contrast, the members of the Ji Clan seemed to have received news about what happened earlier. Although all of them wore completely ordinary expressions, deep in their eyes, vigilance could be seen.

Meng Hao looked around at everyone, then suddenly seemed a bit discouraged. He was just thinking that it seemed his extortion attempt had failed when he noticed the look in the eye of the Li Clan Dao Child, Li Tiandao. Suddenly, he seemed a bit livened.

"Fellow Daoist," he said, "I don't think I recognize you." He quickly walked toward Li Tiandao, a smile on his face. "Tell me, did you acquire much in the Third Plane? Come, come, open your bag of holding so that Brother can select his share.”

“Screw off!” said Li Tiandao coldly.

A moment ago, Meng Hao had worn a sincere smile and a bashful expression. A moment later, his face completely changed. The instant Li Tiandao spoke, a ruthless expression appeared on Meng Hao’s face. His right palm instantly shot out toward Li Tiandao.

A cold light of derision flickered in Li Tiandao’s eyes. His Cultivation base was extraordinary. If you looked at the Southern Domain as a whole, it didn’t matter if you were talking about members of his current generation, or even Li Daoyi who had already passed away, Li Tiandao’s Cultivation base was extraordinary. He gave a cold snort and then made a grasping motion with his right hand. Instantly, a blade of white light appeared in his hand.

However, before he could even unleash the power of the blade, Meng Hao’s palm, moving with indescribable speed, slapped onto his face, letting out a huge bang.

One slap sent Li Tiandao completely senseless. He was furious, and wanted to struggle back. However, his fate was the same as the Cultivator earlier from the Northern Reaches. Meng Hao directly slammed him down onto the ground.

Punches and kicks rained down onto him, the sound of which echoed out in every direction. Li Tiandao let out miserable shrieks. He tried to fight back, and even tried to wield his blade against Meng Hao. However, all it took was a slap from Meng Hao to cause the Heavenly blade to shatter into pieces.

The sudden violence caused the eyes of all the spectators to grow wide.

“You actually dare to cuss at me!” cried Meng Hao, emphasizing his words with kicks. “I was sincerely wishing you well, and you respond with curses!? Ridiculous!” His expression grew more vicious and intense, causing all the onlookers to grow increasingly shaky with fear.

Li Tiandao was livid, but gradually, that lividity was replaced by terror. Soon, it turned into despair. Blood spouted from his mouth as the shadow of death loomed over him.

Finally, Han Bei blinked, cleared her throat and offered up a quick reminder. That finally provoked a reaction from Li Tiandao who, despite feeling wronged to the extreme, shouted out that he would pay a higher price.

After the matter was resolved, Meng Hao once again smiled sincerely and then took two of the total of three magical items that Li Tiandao had acquired.

Furthermore… those two items were the very best of all of them. Even as Li Tiandao felt pain in his heart, Meng Hao clasped his shoulder, then sighed and bashfully expressed his deep thanks.

After that, Meng Hao looked around at everyone else. Considering what had just happened to Li Tiandao, everyone else had no choice but to suppress their curses inwardly, open their bags of holding and produce the items that they had acquired. With their oaths in place, there was no way to go back on their words, and no way to hide things in violation of the agreement.

Despite their pain, they could only watch on in fear as Meng Hao carefully selected one incredible magic item after another.

“Wow, this looks amazing!

“Eee? It’s actually a scale shield! Excellent, excellent!

“This flower vase is incredible! With one glance you can tell it’s a precious treasure!

“Ooh, look at this clay figure! It’s missing an arm and a head, but I’ll just have to suck it up and take it. Yep.”

Meng Hao circled around, making acquisitions that would cause anyone to be shocked. Every person from whom he took treasures had faces filled with unsightly looks. If it weren’t for the fact that none of them felt capable of taking him on, they would surely attempt to attack him. The hatred they felt rose up to the Heavens, and their hearts dripped with blood.

To them, Meng Hao wasn’t just taking away magical items, but their most prized possessions….

Eventually he came to stand in front of Song Jia. He looked at the jade pendant she held out, as well as the complicated, cold look in her eyes. He stood there thoughtfully for a moment, then took out one of the magical items he had acquired and put it in her hand.

Song Jia frowned, and was about to say something when, all of a sudden, three prismatic beams of light whistled through the air toward them from off in the distance. The person in the lead position was none other than Fang Yu. Behind her were the two other men from the Fang Clan.

The two men wore excited expressions; clearly, whatever objects they had just acquired left them very happy.

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# Chapter 611: Fellow Daoists, Allow Me to Say Something

Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed and he turned. With a smile, he clasped hands and bowed to the three incoming members of the Fang Clan. “Well, if it isn’t the three Fellow Daoists from the Fang Clan. It seems these two Brothers can’t quite cover up the joy in their faces. They definitely must have acquired quite a bit in the Third Plane….”

Fang Yu’s face was a bit unsightly as she stared angrily at Meng Hao. The way he looked right now caused her fury to flare up.

“No, we didn’t!” she said, glaring at him.

“Oh, that’s not good,” replied Meng Hao with a wink.

“It doesn’t even count as not good!” said Fang Yu, clenching her teeth, an uncompromising expression appearing on her face. “Look at you, you acquired all kinds of things, but big sis put everything on the line and only got two items! You still want to take advantage of me?”

“Okay, how about this….” said Meng Hao, looking a bit embarrassed. However, before he could finish speaking, one of the two men from the Fang Clan who stood behind Fang Yu suddenly let out a cold laugh.

“We try to give you face, but you insist on acting shamelessly, huh? You think this is still the Second Plane? Screw off posthaste, you little bastard! Otherwise, you won’t be leaving the Third Plane alive!”

The other Fang Clan member stepped forward, an expression of scorn and disdain on his face as he said, “You really don’t know your own limitations.

Don’t you know that even the Ji Clan would think twice before trying to steal away the things acquired here by the Fang Clan? As for you… well, take out half of everything on your person and hand it over. Otherwise….”

As the two men spoke, Meng Hao’s gaze came to be fixed upon them.

However, before he could even get angry, Fang Yu’s face filled with fury. She spun to face the two fellow Clan members.

“You want him to screw off?” she said. Clenching her teeth, she vanished, to reappear directly next to one of the Fang Clan members. Suddenly, her fist descended.

Before the Fang Clan member could even say anything, a boom could be heard, and he tumbled backward, blood spraying from his mouth as he looked at Fang Yu in astonishment.

“Fang Yu, what are you doing!?!?”

“Shameless you say!?” she cried, fires of rage burning in her eyes. As of this moment, she truly looked like an explosive dragon. Her body flickered as she neared the man again. He was shaking, and was about to fight back when another boom echoed out and he was sent flying.

“You dare to threaten him!? You say he won’t leave the Third Plane alive?! Well then… I’ll make sure YOU don’t leave the Third Plane alive!” Killing intent flickered in Fang Yu’s eyes. Before the Fang Clan member even landed on the ground, she once again vanished to reappear directly next to him. Her fist smashed out again. This was no perfunctory blow, but rather, contained all of her explosive power.

A boom could be heard that rattled Heaven and Earth. Everyone watched on in shock as the blood sprayed from the mouth of the Fang Clan member, and then his entire body exploded into bloody pieces. His Nascent Soul emerged, fleeing and screaming at the same time.

“Fang Yu, you dare to slaughter a fellow Clan member!? You’re dead! You actually dare to kill me over an outsider!?!?”

“So what if I kill you?” said Fang Yu with a cold snort. She performed an incantation gesture, then waved her right hand. Instantly, an enormous square cauldron magically appeared. It instantly shot toward the fleeing Nascent Soul of the Fang Clan Cultivator. When they slammed together, a miserable shriek could be heard, and the Nascent Soul shattered.

At the same time, the man’s bag of holding flew out to be snatched by Fang Yu. She quickly erased the brand mark on it, and then tossed it over to Meng Hao.

The scene which had just played out in front of everyone left them completely shaken. That was especially true of the Ji Clan, whose eyes were wide and filled with disbelief. Killing a fellow Clan member was a high crime in any Clan!

They truly couldn’t understand why Fang Yu would respond so viciously to the handful of words that had just been spoken.

Fang Yu turned and looked at the other Fang Clan member.

The man trembled and took a few steps back. His heart pounded with nervousness and vigilance as he quickly said, “Elder Sister Fang Yu, this was all just a misunderstanding. I….”

“You said he doesn’t know his own limitations?” she said, her eyes flickering with killing intent. The Fang Clan Cultivator’s scalp was numb as he fell back nervously. Before he could get more than a few steps, Fang Yu was upon him, and her fist descended.

A boom could be heard; blood sprayed from the man’s mouth as he fell back.

“Elder Sister Fang Yu, I was in the wrong. Really, it was my mistake!!”

“Didn’t you tell him to take out half of his belongings and hand them over?” she said coldly. She performed an incantation with her right hand, causing the illusory square cauldron to fly toward the man. Under the incredible pressure, the Fang Clan Cultivator’s face fell. Even as he shot backward, he pulled out his bag of holding and threw it to Meng Hao.

“Elder Brother Meng, allow me to atone for my crime. Junior Brother admits his mistake!!”

Meng Hao grabbed the bag of holding with a frown. It was impossible to tell exactly what he was thinking.

“You’re clever,” said Fang Yu. “Therefore, you can avoid the death penalty. But that doesn’t mean you’re… exempt from punishment!” She glared at the Fang Clan Cultivator as the square cauldron descended. A boom could be heard as blood poured from the man’s mouth. He staggered backward, his face pale. Although he didn’t fear for his life now, he was still scared witless. He immediately clasped hands and bowed to Fang Yu.

Meng Hao gathered up the two bags of holding, then looked over at Fang Yu. She looked back at him.

“What was that for?” he asked.

“None of your concern,” replied Fang Yu. With a frown, she gritted her teeth and continued, “In any case, my things are mine, and I’m not going to give them to you. There’s no use in even thinking about it. It’s not gonna happen!”

Meng Hao looked at her deeply for a moment, but didn’t speak again about the matter. Everyone around were lost in various thoughts, and didn’t speak.

It was in this moment that the deep pit they stood next to suddenly emitted a shocking rumbling sound. It almost sounded as if something deep inside was roaring. The ground shook, and the countless vine-like objects that surrounded the area began to twitch and writhe in bizarre fashion.

The vines grew thicker and longer as they surrounded the area, looking almost like snakes. The Demonic Qi from the surrounding area surged in toward the pit, transforming into an enormous pillar of light that towered up into the sky.

As of this moment, the enormous pillar of light was visible from any position within the First Heaven of the Demon Immortal Sect. It was like a summons that echoed out in the hearts and minds of all the South Heaven Cultivators.

A message resounded out to everyone. It clearly told them… that the way to the Fourth Plane was now open!

The possibility now existed to enter the Fourth Plane!

Meng Hao’s mind trembled, and the Cultivators around him began to pant. Their eyes flickered, and yet, no one wanted to be the first one to make an attempt. Everyone stood watching, not willing to act rashly.

Time passed, and more people began to arrive, attracted by the column of light. Of course, not a one could evade Meng Hao’s extortion. Eventually Xu Qing arrived, which meant that the area was now filled with the majority of the Cultivators who were here in the Third Plane.

Their gazes flickered as they looked thoughtfully around at each other.

The first person to make a move was an unimposing, emaciated old man from the Southern Domain. He flew out to stand on one of the vines. After grasping ahold of it, he looked back at the crowd of onlookers and then smiled. Then he produced a magical item, a fan, which he pushed up against the surface of the vine.

Instantly, a green glow surrounded the fan, and it began to disintegrate. It transformed into dots of scintillating light, which then were absorbed into the vine. At the same time, the vine began to grow longer. It extended down into the pit, taking the old man with it.

Fang Yu looked over at Meng Hao and then spoke, her words directed not just at him, but at everyone around. “According to the Fang Clan’s understanding, one needs magical items to be able to enter the Fourth Plane. Magical items from the outside world aren’t quite as effective as items acquired in the Demon Immortal Sect. Offer them as sacrifices to the Demon vines, and, depending on their value, the vines will extend down.

"If you leave the vine and try to descend on your own, you will die without a doubt!"

With that, Fang Yu's body flashed, and she neared a vine. In much the same way as the old man moments before, she produced a magical item which she pushed up against the vine. The vine began to grow, extending down into the pit.

One by one, more people began to fly forward. The Ji Clan members, the Northern Reaches Cultivators, the group from the Southern Domain. One after another, they stepped onto the vines, produced treasures, and then sank down into the pit. As all of this happened, Meng Hao cleared his throat. Looking embarrassed and a bit bashful, he began to speak.

"Fellow Daoists, allow me to say something. Considering that you need to offer continual sacrifices to the vines, I must say that I actually have quite a few magical items. However, if I loan them out, if you take one, you'll have to repay me with two. I'm honest with all customers. It's a reasonable price.

"Now, who's to say what incredible acquisitions you will make in the Fourth Plane?" he continued. "Therefore, before going in, you should really think about this. Buy one, repay with two is definitely reasonable!" As soon as the others heard him, grim expressions could be seen on their faces.

"Buy one, repay with two is reasonable?"

"I've never seen extortion of this level!!"

"What a joke! Even if I have to give up half-way to the Fourth Plane, I swear I will never again get entangled with this black-hearted Meng!"

Glaring hatefully at Meng Hao, they completely ignored his offer and quickly grabbed onto the vines and then sank down into the pit.

Xu Qing stood next to Meng Hao, covering her smile with a hand. She remembered all of the things Meng Hao had done back in the Reliance Sect, and as she looked at him now, her smile only grew sweeter.

“They’re going to be sorry,” said Meng Hao, clearing his throat a few times. “I really did have good intentions just now.” He looked blinking at Xu Qing, and her smile grew wider. Shaking her head, she flew over to grab a vine, then sank down into the pit.

Meng Hao wasn’t the last person on the outside. Some of the people chose not to attempt to enter the Fourth Plane. Some decided to just give up where they were.

Seeing that no one else was going to enter the pit, Meng Hao walked around the edge of it, eventually decided on a position somewhat in the center. He reached out to grab a vine, then produced a magical item which he slowly pushed onto its surface. As it absorbed the item, the vine began to grow, taking him down at high speed into the pitch black of the pit.

As soon as he entered the pit, Meng Hao could sense coldness coming from all around him. At the same time, he saw that it was not completely pitch black. Glittering dots of glowing light could be seen in the walls, making everything in the area visible.

Around Meng Hao could be seen dozens of vines sinking downward, upon each one was a South Heaven Cultivator.

Far down below was completely pitch black, and it was impossible to see. Occasionally, a roaring sound could be heard, shooting up from down below like a wild wind. When that happened, everyone held tightly to their vines to stabilize their shaking bodies.

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# Chapter 612: The Gentleman Loves Money

A wind blew, as cold as the underworld. As it passed by, everyone’s hearts grew as cold as if they were stuck in the middle of winter. Even more shocking was that the frigid wind made the Cultivators almost like mortals. Everyone began to tremble as they clung to their vines.

Their breath turned into ice, which then cracked and shattered, causing everyone to feel extremely astonished.

Were it not for the vines, and the warmth which pulsed out from within them into the bodies of everyone present, then they wouldn’t be able to proceed downward for very long, not even if they had higher Cultivation bases.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he clutched the vine. He had long since come to the conclusion that these vines were a critical element in being able to reach the Fourth Plane. Many others had come to the same conclusion.

Although not everyone had chosen to attempt to enter the Fourth Plane, everyone who had come to the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane were outstanding figures from the lands of South Heaven. As for those who did chose to enter the Fourth Plane, they definitely wouldn’t just give up halfway.

As they produced more and more treasures to sacrifice to the vines, the vines twisted and writhed, extending downward at high speed.

Time passed by slowly. Meng Hao was the last in line. As he descended he glanced around to inspect the area. As far as he could tell, the pit seemed bottomless. It was impossible to tell how far they had gone down, and yet they still couldn’t see any end in sight. The frigid wind grew more intense, seemingly increasing the number of treasures required by the vines.

Not too far off from Meng Hao was Li Tiandao. His face was gradually filling with apprehension. Although he had come prepared with a good supply of magical items, he was finding it difficult to keep up with how much needed to be sacrificed. By this point, it didn’t seem to matter the quality of the magical items being sacrificed. Almost anything would do.

Even still, the miscellaneous collection of magical items in Li Tiandao’s bag of holding were not very plentiful. If things kept going with no bottom in sight, then he would soon have to begin sacrificing important magical items.

To him, it was something impossible to accept. He frowned and gritted his teeth, a look of determination gleaming in his eyes. He suddenly stopped, apparently preparing himself to start climbing back up. It seemed he planned to give up on his attempt to enter the Fourth Plane.

However, almost as soon as he began to climb up, before he had even gone more than a meter or so, his face flickered. The frigid wind around him suddenly grew ten times as powerful. His hair and his eyebrows became snow-white in the blink of an eye. Ice crystals even formed on his skin; clearly he was on the verge of being transformed into an ice statue.

The intense sense of grave crisis he felt caused Li Tiandao to immediately pull out one of his important magical treasures. It was a glowing blue sword that somewhat resembled a saber. A single glance was enough to tell that this was anything but an ordinary treasure.

Forcing down the pain he felt, Li Tiandao placed the sword onto the vine, whereupon it sank down inside. The coldness around Li Tiandao vanished and his body slowly returned to normal. However, his expression was one of astonishment.

“We’re only allowed to go down, not up?” he grumbled inwardly. “Or is it that going back up requires an even higher price?” Everyone around was aware of the strange event which had just occurred, and were shocked. They all began to think various thoughts.

It was at this point that Li Tiandao saw that his own vine was no longer moving down but retracting back upward.

This provoked a reaction from the others.

“That can’t be right. It’s not that you can’t go up. Once you enter this place, even if you want to quit, you still have to sacrifice treasures!”

“That must be the situation. It seems getting into the Fourth Plane isn’t so easy after all….”

Meng Hao had the best view of the situation. His eyes flickered thoughtfully, and he rubbed his bag of holding. Suddenly, a bashful smile appeared on his face. He said nothing, but simply allowed his vine to slowly continue on downward.

Li Tiandao hesitated thoughtfully for a moment. Right now, he had two options to pick from. Go up, or go down. Either way, he would have to spend all of his magical items.

After a moment of hesitation, Li Tiandao clenched his jaw.

“Since I have to waste the magical items, I might as well risk it all,” he thought. “If I don’t, then everything I already spent will have been a complete waste. However, if I succeed, I can make up for everything with gains in the Fourth Plane!”

Many of the other Cultivators were thinking the same thing as Li Tiandao. They clenched their jaws, eyes shining with determination. To them it was a gamble; however, if they gave up now, then they would definitely end up with nothing. By holding on for a bit longer, they would at least have a chance… to make up for what they had already spent.

Since that was the case, there was no reason not to gamble!

Time passed. A day later, the group was deep into the pit. However, they still couldn’t see the bottom. It really seemed as if there was no end at all. By this point, quite a few of their number had already used up their supply of random magical items. If they wanted to continue, then they would either have to use up the magical items they had discovered in the Demon Immortal Sect, or draw on their own store of important personal magical items.

The dilemma they faced caused the faces of quite a few of the Cultivators to look extremely unsightly. Before stepping foot into this place, all of them had believed themselves to be extremely well equipped with magical items. Now, though, they realized that they simply didn’t have enough.

Compared to them, Meng Hao really did have it very easy. He had vast amounts of magical items in his bag of holding. He casually produced treasures to sacrifice to the vines. Not only did they continue to move downward, Meng Hao actually caused his vine to change course occasionally to hand over magical items to Xu Qing.

This caused the eyes of everyone else present to burn with anger and extreme jealousy.

“Ai, I just have too many treasures,” said Meng Hao with a sigh. The sound of his voice echoed around, causing everyone’s gums to itch with hatred.

“Fellow Daoists,” he then announced, “if any of you are running low on treasures, all you have to do is speak up. We’re all in this together, through thick and thin. No matter what happens, I won’t ignore your plight while I am in a good position.

“If you need to borrow some magical items, I’ll lend them to you without hesitation!

“Don’t worry, my prices are reasonable, and I’m honest with all customers. Buy one, pay back three!” His voice echoed about loudly within in the pit. Everyone could hear, even the old man in the lead position. Their faces immediately twisted.

Fang Yu looked back with glaring eyes, and yet a smile could be seen on her face.

As for the Ji Clan members, their faces were unsightly. If they had such reactions, then there was no need to mention everyone else. When the crowds heard Meng Hao, their hearts filled with both hatred and helplessness.

“You crafty, shameless villain!” someone said. “Even if our magical items run even lower than now, there’s no way we’ll ask for your help!”

“That’s right!” said someone else. “Outside, it was buy one pay back two, now it’s buy one pay back three?! Raising prices like that is despicable to the extreme!”

“I’ll die before asking for your help!”

Meng Hao heard the furious reactions, and simply sighed. “You’re all wrong,” he said. “Each and every one of these magical items represents an important memory to me. I’m offering to lend you, not my magical items, but rather, the true love of my life.” He let out another emotional sigh.

“In all honesty,” he continued, “my intentions truly are good. Look at these magical items of mine! Their glow is so resplendent and entrancing! These are high quality products!

“Think about it, all of you. With some of my magical items, you can get into the Fourth Plane without a hitch! Once you’re there, you can acquire things so valuable that you can pay back what you owe me in the blink of an eye.

“It’s completely worth it!

“Brothers and Sisters, you have to look at things objectively. The price you will be paying now is nothing. The most important thing is to look at what you have to gain! Without paying a price, how can you gain anything, am I right?” Meng Hao was using all his skills to try to persuade everyone.

These, of course, were the same skills he had used in his shop back in the Reliance Sect. However, those who heard only continued to get more angry.

Xu Qing was off to the side, covering her smile with a hand. The gaze with which she looked at Meng Hao continued to grow warmer and warmer.

“Fellow Daoists, how can this tiny price possibly compare to the chance to step into the Fourth Plane?” Meng Hao’s final sentence was full of meaning. His words echoed about, filled with an air of good faith. Many of the various Cultivators were actually moved inwardly, and they suddenly felt conflicted.

Li Tiandao gritted his teeth. He currently only had four magical items left, and to sacrifice any of them would cause him incredible pain. His expression filled with determination and he said, “I’ll take three!!”

Hearing this, Meng Hao’s expression shook visibly. He immediately pulled out a magical item and placed onto the surface of his own vine, causing it to change directions and head toward Li Tiandao.

“Elder Brother Li, you are truly experienced and knowledgeable, talented and bold. Alright, listen. This is my first transaction of the day, so I’ll give you a bit of a discount. I’ll give you these three magical items, and you only need to pay me back with eight.

“These three magical items have a value of 30,000 Spirit Stones. In that case, you need to pay me back 80,000 Spirit Stones.” With that, he produced three ordinary-looking random magical items, as well as a promissory note. Then he used the same method he had used in the Second Plane, the Dao oath.

Li Tiandao gritted his teeth. After completing the formalities, he took the three treasures and then pressed one onto the surface of the vine. Instantly, it descended downward at rapid speed, alleviating his anxiety for the moment.

“Did you see that, everyone?” said Meng Hao, setting his head nobly. “Meng Hao is a gentleman. The gentleman loves money, and earns it righteously. I’m not forcing anybody, and am even willing to sell things on credit! That’s right! You don’t need to pay me back now. A simple promissory note can solve all your problems.

“You can simply pay me back after we leave this place. What a great deal!”

Everyone around couldn’t help but think that Meng Hao truly had reached the pinnacle of shamelessness. More time passed, over half a day. There was still no bottom in sight. By this time, Li Tiandao owed Meng Hao more than 400,000. It was at that point that… Wang Lihai couldn’t hold back from calling out.

“Give me ten!”

“I’ll take ten too!” said Li Shiqi, gritting her beautiful teeth.

“Ten for me too!” said Han Bei with a sigh.

Meng Hao immediately looked quite enlivened. He adroitly produced the magical items and promissory note, watched as the three swore their Dao oath, then smilingly handed over the magical items.

“When you purchase from me, you can rest your heart at ease. The quality of all products is guaranteed, and I deliver everything directly to you!”

The three collected up the magical items they had purchased and then completely ignored Meng Hao. They began to feed the items into the vines and descend down further.

Another day passed. Soon more people began to run out of treasures. Either that, or they weren’t willing to sacrifice the treasures they still possessed. No matter how much they hated Meng Hao, they had no choice but to call out to him.

“Buy one, pay back five! Fellow Daoists, I’m starting to run low on magical items, so I have no choice but to raise the price…. Furthermore, I have to announce that when I am down to only ten magical items, then I will have no other choice than to begin an unprecedented, never before seen in history, never again to be repeated… auction!” Although Meng Hao sighed, his eyes actually shone with a brilliant light.

As soon as the words left his mouth, it gave rise to furious complaints. Despite the anger, people gritted their teeth and spent the price of one to five to acquire large amounts of magical items.

“What a profit!” thought Meng Hao. “Hahaha! I never thought that the ancient Demon Immortal Sect would turn out to be my Blessed Land!” He hung onto his vine, clutching a thick stack of promissory notes. When he looked at the numbers written on them, his eyes glowed brightly. His addiction to making money existed deep in his bones, and had not been reduced in the slightest, regardless of his advances in Cultivation base.

“I’m rich!”

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# Chapter 613: Fourth Plane!

“Hopefully this pit goes even deeper,” thought Meng Hao, his eyes shining. “The best would be if we keep going for about nine or ten days.” His bag of holding didn’t have much else in it other than the vast, random assortment of magical items.

Many of them were things completely useless as far as Meng Hao was concerned. There were even treasures he had acquired when he was in the Qi Condensation stage, but hadn’t discarded even down to this day. He had kept them because… he just couldn’t bear to part with them.

Back in those days, when he was young, he had been completely impoverished, unwilling to even part with a single Spirit Stone. These magical items were each worth dozens of Spirit Stones, so how could he possibly have simply discarded them?

He had always been searching for a way to dispose of them. However, the Black Lands and the Western Desert were both poor and barren places. Therefore, such items had accumulated there within his bag of holding.

If an outsider could glimpse the inside of his bag of holding, they would be completely shocked. The inside was completely chaotic, filled with anything and everything. After all… these were all of Meng Hao’s belongings. Every time he ran out of Spirit Stones, he could still look inside the bag of holding and feel a little bit of contentment.

The opportunity he had now was something completely rare, and had him thoroughly excited. One Cultivator after another gritted their teeth and then called out to purchase magical items, and Meng Hao rushed to peddle them.

Meng Hao wasn’t worried that they would refuse to acknowledge their promissory notes. These people were all Dao Children and Chosen of great Clans and Sects. They didn’t lack Spirit Stones, plus, there was a Dao oath in place. They wouldn’t dare to not pay him back.

Next to Meng Hao was one of the Northern Reaches Cultivators. His eyes were bright red as he glared at Meng Hao, clutching a small, glittering sword in his hand. His voice filled with madness, he cried, “Dammit! Meng Hao!! This is a Qi Condensation magical item! You, you, you… you actually charged me 10,000 Spirit Stones for this! I wouldn’t pay ten Spirit Stones for this thing! You’re such a swindler!”

“Yeah, look at this! This is a magical item for a Foundation Establishment Cultivator. You charged me 20,000 Spirit Stones, and I have to pay back 100,000!”

“Look at this fan! What the hell! It’s broken! It might be a Core Formation magical item, but… you charged me 50,000 for this piece of crap!? Why don’t you just outright rob me!”

In response to the ire of the crowd, Meng Hao blinked.

“These things might be trash to you people,” he said coldly, “but I worked hard to collect them! I often went without food and water just to collect together these possessions!

“If you don’t want them, then you can return them. Then, you’ll go onto my list of unwelcome customers!”

The others were fuming with anger, but they could only gnash their teeth and eventually let out long sighs. Then they angrily shoved the magical items onto the surface of the vines, causing them to sink down further.

Eventually, even the Ji Clan members began to call out to Meng Hao. Soon, there were few within the crowd that didn’t owe Meng Hao huge amounts of Spirit Stones. As everyone proceeded on, they looked at Meng Hao with eyes that desired to cry but contained no tears.

They proceeded on impatiently for another day. Eventually, far down below, they caught sight of a glow of light. Finally, they glimpsed the bottom of the pit.

In that instant, those who owed Meng Hao vast quantities of Spirit Stones began to weep with excitement. Meng Hao was the only one who let out sighs of regret.

“How can this pit be so shallow?” he mused with a frown. “If only it were a bit deeper. I never got to start my auction.” He watched as everyone around him excitedly followed along with the vines as they continued on toward the bottom. It didn’t take very long for them to reach the end of the pit.

The bottom of the pit was actually far larger than anyone could have imagined. It seemed that the pit was actually a tunnel, beyond which was an enormous world!

The world seemed to have no end. Even Divine Sense was incapable of finding any borders to it. After everyone reached the bottom and stood there, their minds trembled.

Meng Hao’s pupils constricted, and he began to pant. Next to him, Xu Qing arrived, and her mind reeled.

Nobody spoke. Complete silence reigned. Everyone was completely and thoroughly astonished by what they saw.

A continent stretched out in all directions, sleek and smooth. Its surface was like that of a mirror, which was the source of the light that everyone had seen earlier.

If the continent could be described as a mirror, then the group from South Heaven could be described as standing outside of that mirror. Furthermore, when they looked at the mirror, what they saw was not their own reflection, but rather… an ancient battlefield!

Shockingly, an ancient world existed inside of the mirror. It was impossible to say whether or not it was an ancient world that existed before the time period of the Second Plane, or after. In any case, the group was now staring at boundless, majestic battlefield.

Countless Cultivators could be seen on the battlefield, all engaged in mutual slaughter. Heaven and Earth were filled with riotous colors, and booming echoed out through the sky. Cracks spread out through the land, and the fearsome glow of magical shields covered everything.

In the sky were innumerable war chariots flying about, as well as armored Cultivators who fought each other feverishly. Off in the distance, several gigantic dragons could be seen, as well as countless Demon beasts, hunkered into various positions throughout the land.

Many things could be seen.

A person could be seen waving a hand. A huge chunk of the earth collapsed, and then an enormous land mass flew out. It turned into a shooting star which smashed out into the air.

A person could be seen punching. Stars collapsed, and countless flames burned the world.

A person could be seen surrounded by millions of magical items. They formed a tempest that caused blood to splash about wherever it went. The tempest itself was the color of blood!

A person could be seen flashing an incantation gesture. A finger was pointed up into the sky, and countless characters appeared, glowing with a golden light. They formed together to into various ancient characters that radiated a shocking aura which led to endless slaughter.

A person could be seen holding tight to an evil spirit. The spirit’s body was three thousand meters long, and had countless faces that appeared and disappeared, howling and glancing around with disdain.

This was… a great battle between two different parties!

One side was made up of Cultivators. Countless, innumerable Cultivators, each one capable of employing destructive divine abilities, of summoning Dharma incarnations, and endless magical items that could shake the Heavens.

The other side was made of up of Demons. These were bizarre Greater Demons of Heaven and Earth, surrounded by sundered winds that rose up into the sky, creating a storm of blackness wherever they went….

Further off in the distance was, shockingly… an enormous coffin. The coffin appeared to have fallen down from the Heavens. Brilliant, multi-colored light swirled around it, within which was something astonishing. Nine butterflies could be seen floating about!

Countless figures could be seen in the area around the coffin. Incredible slaughter was being carried out, as if neither side was willing to allow the other to step even half a pace closer to the coffin!

The coffin was the main cause of the combat on the battlefield. All of the fighting and mad slaughter was because… that coffin needed to be seized!!

All of the South Heaven Cultivators, including Meng Hao, were floating up in mid-air, looking down blankly at the lands within the mirror. They looked down at the shocking battle, and the figures who could topple mountains and invert seas with the wave of a hand, who could crush stars and grab moons with their divine abilities. The hearts of the South Heaven Cultivators filled with shock.

There were three people on the battlefield who, no matter how grand the scale of the battle was, no matter how intense the slaughter, could not be eclipsed. The gaze of anyone who looked down at the battle would instantly be drawn to these three figures.

It was as if… they were the most powerful sovereigns of the battle. They were like venerated suns that everyone had to look up to!

One of them was a Cultivator wearing a Daoist robe, with a full head of white hair. His features were ancient, and when he lifted up his hands two rotating pearls could be seen, one of which was black, the other of which was white!

Behind the man was an illusory starry sky that he had apparently magically summoned. He stood in the middle of the sky, alone, capable of striking fear into the hearts of any within the Demon Tribes.

The second figure was within the Demon Tribes. It was a Greater Demon who looked like a winged bat. Its eyes were bright red, and seven globes of flame rotated around it. Each of the globes of flame was a different color, and, shockingly… a wooden sword could be seen inside of each one!

The Demon was surrounded by an astonishing aura. As it stood there, it seemed capable of making the Earth, the Heavens, and all life therein, prostrate in worship!

Meng Hao was unsure of the level of Cultivation base of these two, but his breathing was unprecedentedly ragged. He wasn't sure if he was perceiving things incorrectly or not, but when he saw the old Cultivator and the black and white pearls in his hands, he suddenly thought of something.

In his mind, he saw an image from back in the State of Zhao. He saw… the pearl in the hand of Little Tiger! 1

Little Tiger's pearl, and the white pearl in the old man's hand, looked… completely the same! The sensation that Meng Hao got when he looked at the pearl held by the old man… led him to believe that they were definitely one and the same!

Furthermore, the man-shaped bat looked very similar to the Demon that he had fought so long ago. Even more relevant were the wooden swords inside the seven globes of flame that surrounded it. When Meng Hao saw them, his mind shook. Those swords were clearly… the same as his Immortal Murdering Swords!

Right now he had five such swords, four originals and one copy!

What gave Meng Hao even more cause to pant was the third figure within the world of the mirror. That person caused his mind to reel and fill with a roaring sound.

That person… was a homely-looking middle-aged man. He wore a white robe, and his long hair was half black and half white. He did not emit any aura of a Cultivation base, but rather floated there in mid-air, looking almost like he was sealed. The air around him was completely calm and still.

When the Demon Tribes saw him, they trembled, and their Demonic Qi was thrown into chaos, as if it was completely out of control.

When the Cultivators saw him, their eyes filled with reverence. It was almost as if as soon as they looked at him, an intense pressure bore down on them, causing their Cultivation bases to decline!

He was not a member of either side in this battle. He floated there in mid-air, making it seem as if the battlefield were split into three parts, with him being one third!

Within the man’s hand was a long, silver spear that appeared to be covered with overlapping scales. The spear was not completely silver; occasionally the scales would turn black.

As soon as Meng Hao caught sight of the spear, a voice immediately echoed out in his mind.

“Demon Weapon… Lonelytomb!!” 2

Although Lonelytomb’s Devil Construct was on the verge of dissipating completely, Meng Hao still had it. It emanated a buzzing sound, like an intense summoning.

In that instant, Meng Hao suddenly realized who that middle-aged man was floating there in mid-air. Staring fixedly at him, Meng Hao thought, “Third Generation… Demon Sealer!!”

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# Chapter 614: Seal

It was in this moment that Meng Hao suddenly realized that the copper mirror in his bag of holding—the same copper mirror that had been with him since the Reliance Sect, that precious treasure which had provided him with such incredible help over the years—had begun vibrating.

The vibrating was not like what had happened in the presence of furred or feathered creatures. This vibration was intense, and seemed to encompass the entire mirror, starting from within.

Meng Hao was shocked, but his expression didn’t change. His gaze flashed as he looked at Demon Weapon Lonelytomb.

The first time he encountered Demon Weapon Lonelytomb, he had received the Devil Construct, incarnated into the Devil Spear. He had also learned how the real Demon Weapon Lonelytomb was sealed within an ancient battlefield.

Meng Hao also knew that the ancient battlefield had something to do with the Demon Immortal Sect. Once inside the Demon Immortal Sect, he should have been able to use the reaction of the Devil Construct to locate Lonelytomb!

However, throughout all his experiences in the First, Second and Third Plane, he hadn’t been able to find even the slightest trail to follow. And yet here… in the lands of the Fourth Plane… he finally had a trail!

The white-robed man with the black and white hair was none other than… the Third Generation Demon Sealer! And the spear in his hand was none other than… Demon Weapon Lonelytomb!

One man, one spear, hovering in mid-air, splitting everything under Heaven into three parts!

His energy shook the Demon Tribes and leveled immense pressure onto the Cultivators. It was as if in Heaven and Earth, although he might not be the ultimate supremacy, he was still esteemed and respected to the utmost degree.

Meng Hao's mind trembled as he looked at the Third Generation Demon Sealer, and he began to breathe heavily. This truly was… a Demon Sealer!

When he saw the Third Generation Demon Sealer's energy, Meng Hao suddenly felt intense anticipation regarding his own path as the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer. He suddenly wished to one day be able to hover in mid-air and split everything under Heaven!

Everything that was happening inside the mirror continent filled Meng Hao with shock, and also astonished all of the Cultivators from South Heaven, who were all breathing heavily. It was at this point that the eyes of the emaciated old man flickered. This was none other than the old man who had been first to enter the passageway from the Third Plane. He performed a minor teleportation as he headed toward the mirror below.

The movement immediately attracted the attention of the others. Meng Hao's eyes glittered as he watched him.

The emaciated old man moved with incredible speed. In the blink of an eye, he was standing on the surface of the mirror that made up this huge continent. Then he began to move forward. It almost looked as if he were about to enter the ancient battlefield. However, he actually was only moving across the surface of the mirror.

He abruptly came to a stop after a few breaths of time. He pushed his hand down onto the surface of the mirror, which seemed to stimulate it, causing distortions to appear. Suddenly, a middle-aged man appeared across from the old man, except within the ancient world. He wore a suit of battle armor, and when he lifted up his hand, a fireball appeared, within which could be seen a crimson bird.

Originally, everything visible existed only within the mirror. However, due to the stimulation provided by the old man, and some other unknown reasons, the crimson bird suddenly flew out from inside the mirror.

It seemed to have broken through some sort of seal to fly out from inside the mirror and then appear on the outside!

It was currently shrinking in size, and its flames were growing dim. It looked quite different than it had inside the mirror. And yet, as soon as it appeared on the outside, it emanated a powerful aura!

It wasn’t just the flame bird that appeared. Shockingly, a moment later, four beams of light shot out through the distortions. Within these beams of light could be seen two swords, a fan, and a loom shuttle.

The four items flew out explosively just behind the flame bird. As for the old man, he laughed and flew into the air, waving his sleeve toward the flame bird to capture it.

Everyone was shocked at what was happening, and yet, they didn’t hesitate. In the blink of an eye, dozens of people flew up into the air toward the four beams of light and the magical items within.

Meng Hao moved the quickest. Even as the old man was subduing the flame bird, Meng Hao passed everyone to lay hands on the green-colored loom shuttle.

It was shaped like an awl, and glittered with blinding light. The coldness which emanated off it was oppressive. As soon as Meng Hao touched it, he felt as if his body was filled with winter. Eyes glittering, he entered the Second Anima and held tightly to the loom shuttle.

His body flickered and he stretched out his left hand. A gale force wind screamed out, causing the Ji Clan members and Northern Desert Cultivators who were pursuing the fan to be sent tumbling backward. Even as they came to a stop, Meng Hao closed in and swept his arm to snatch the fan.

The moment he touched it, an indescribable heat exploded out within him. Meng Hao gave a cold snort and, without hesitation, entered the Fifth Anima!

His powerful fleshly body and shocking Cultivation base instantly suppressed the loom shuttle and the fan. They struggled, but couldn’t fly out of Meng Hao’s hand. He quickly put them into his bag of holding.

At the same time, the two flying swords were snatched up by others. Fang Yu managed to get one, Ji Mingkong the other. Everyone else could only watch on with unsightly expressions at the others who had acquired treasures. Then they looked over at the emaciated old man.

The old man finally put away the flame bird. His acquisition was clearly the best of all, which anyone could see. The flame bird was a precious treasure. As for the other items, although they were extraordinary, they couldn’t compare.

The old man laughed hoarsely, then glanced over the group from South Heaven. His gaze stopped for a moment on Meng Hao, whereupon it seemed to fill with dread. Finally, he looked back at the others.

“Fellow Daoists, there is quite a bit of good fortune to be had in this place. There’s no need to stare at me collecting things, don’t you think?” He chuckled, then backed up a few paces. He lifted up his right hand, and although the move seemed casual, pulsating rings of light could be seen within.

Ji Mingkong’s position amongst the Ji Clan members had been second only to the now deceased Ji Mingfeng. He looked at the old man and growled, “There may be more good fortune, but you seem to know a lot more about it than we do.”

His words caused the eyes of everyone present to begin to glitter brightly. Clearly, everyone was extremely interested in how the old man had extracted items from within the mirror.

The old man laughed, then slowly began to speak: “Well, it’s actually easy to explain. Any of you can do exactly as I did. This is the Fourth Plane, and not many people ever make it here. Therefore, few people in the outside world know much about what it’s like.

“The mirror-like continent beneath us is actually a seal. Sealed inside is a battlefield, or perhaps, an entire world.

“Within the seal, time is eternal. If you can stimulate it from the outside, and open a breach, then you can create a storm within the eternal time inside.

“It’s like causing a reverse black hole. The objects inside will be sucked out to scatter into the outside world. Of course, that process will cause said objects to be weakened.

“As for exactly how to do it, I don’t think you need me to go into a detailed explanation. The battlefield beneath us is enormous, and the potential acquisitions all depend on your own luck.” Having finished his explanation, the old man gave a final glance to the crowd of people, then flashed off into the distance at top speed.

Everyone else looked down at the mirror with flashing eyes. They all had their own judgements regarding what the old man had said. However, regardless of anything, it seemed that of what the man had told them, eighty to ninety percent was probably true.

In that case, this place… was a once-in-a-lifetime source of good fortune for all of them!

Everyone exchanged glances. Then the Ji Clan members scattered, flying in opposite directions. The Cultivators from the Northern Reaches, Southern Domain, and Western Desert also sped off in different directions. Meng Hao looked at Xu Qing.

“I’m fine by myself,” she said with a slight smile. She turned and flew off into the distance, looking for good fortune of her own.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. He looked down at the world within the mirror for a moment. Then his eyes flickered. He picked a direction and shot off at high speed.

He only had one objective, and that was the Third Generation Demon Sealer!

As for everything else, although it was interesting to him, when compared to the League of Demon Sealers, it was all secondary.

He proceeded onward for the time it takes half an incense stick to burn. His brow was furrowed as he considered how strange this place was, especially the three most powerful experts that he had seen. They hovered in mid-air in the world inside the mirror, clearly visible, but unapproachable!

Down below, the mirror continent seemed to be endless and without borders. However, it was possible to sense that far off in the distance, there was in fact an end to it all. However, once on the actual surface of the mirror continent, it truly seemed limitless. Even after moving forward for a long time, the Third Demon Sealer still seemed far, far away.

Meng Hao was muttering to himself about this when suddenly his eyes flashed. Not too far away he had caught sight of a magical battle taking place within the world of the mirror.

There were two Cultivators fighting with a mass of black fog. Magical techniques spread about in all directions and magical items slammed out in attack. When he caught sight of the magical items, Meng Hao’s eyes began to glitter.

One of the items was a golden leaf that he wouldn’t originally have paid much attention to. However, Meng Hao happened to have noticed that upon the surface of the golden leaf was a pattern that looked like a lotus.

It was a made up of ten swords, shaped together to look like a lotus!

It looked exactly like Meng Hao’s own Lotus Sword Formation. He couldn’t help but make an “eee?” sound as soon as he saw it. He looked at it closely for a moment, then lifted up his right hand and punched down. The punch caused the surface of the mirror to tremble. Distortions appeared, transforming into something that looked like a vortex. However, they quickly dissipated.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he entered the Fifth Anima. A boom could be heard from his fleshly body as he punched down again. The vortex instantly formed again, along with a black hole. An enormous gravitational force appeared inside of the mirror world, causing three magical items to suddenly be sucked in.

Next, those very three magical items flew out beneath Meng Hao’s feet. One of the items was cracked in the process and instantly exploded. The other two shot off in two different directions at top speed, apparently possessed of sentience.

Meng Hao performed a minor teleportation, then transformed into a green smoke and a black moon. He reappeared in mid-air, and snatched his hand out to grab the golden leaf. It emanated a buzzing sound as well as a blinding light, and apparently intended to cut Meng Hao’s hand in half.

Meng Hao let out a cold snort, then flicked his sleeve to collect up the golden leaf. He pushed two fingers down hard onto its surface, preventing it from struggling and flying away.

A look of happiness appeared in his eyes as he collected it up. But then he looked back down at the world in the mirror, and his mind trembled.

It was at this point that he noticed that the golden leaf he had just acquired, as well as the item which had exploded and the other item which had escaped, were… still inside the world of the mirror.

“Are they simply ghosts?” he thought. “Or are the items which flew out perhaps not real?” He frowned as he thought back to how the copper mirror had begun to vibrate earlier.

After some more thought, Meng Hao suddenly trembled and looked back down at the lands inside the mirror world.

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# Chapter 615: Speculation and Cooperation

“This continent is like a mirror, and within the mirror is a battlefield,” murmured Meng Hao. “The objects on the battlefield can emerge into the outside. However… those same objects still remain on the battlefield inside the mirror….

“This… this….” Meng Hao’s mind was filled with intense rumbling. He was starting to feel that he knew what was happening, but the explanation caused him to begin to pant, and his face to flicker.

“Strange, it’s so similar to the copper mirror and its duplication powers!” That was what caused him to be so agitated.

He was the only person who could make such a connection. No one else had his copper mirror, nor did they know of the mirror’s Heaven-defying qualities. Therefore, it would naturally be impossible for anyone to reach the same conclusion.

After all, everyone’s thinking is limited by the scope of what they know. Thinking outside of one’s own scope is something extremely difficult.

Meng Hao’s breathing grew heavier the more he thought about it. The situation just seemed to become more and more bizarre. His eyes flickered, and he suddenly leaped up into the air. He did not proceed along in the same direction he had been traveling, but rather, went straight up into the air.

As he rose up, his heart began to pound faster, and he grew more nervous. He had possessed the copper mirror for many years now, and in the past, he had often wondered where it came from. However, the meat jelly and parrot were always very enigmatic when it came to the subject. Every time he brought it up, they acted like it was some type of taboo. The parrot would even begin to fume with rage.

Meng Hao had tried to get information about it on numerous occasions, all to no avail. Eventually, he put the matter to rest inwardly. Now, however, he had the feeling that he suddenly had an opportunity to understand more about the copper mirror!

It was in such a mental state that he flew higher and higher. Moments later, he had reached the highest area possible. Down below, the continent stretched out in all directions. He took a deep breath as he lowered his head to look down.

As before, the continent looked completely endless. The surface was sleek and glossy, and it was impossible to see what the continent actually was shaped like.

“I could keep going and look for the border. Maybe I can find some answers there.

“Or, I could take out the copper mirror and shine it down. Perhaps… that would reveal some clues!” He thoughtfully rubbed his bag of holding, a profound look gleaming in his eyes.

He had the feeling that if he produced the copper mirror, but nothing happened, then it wouldn’t really matter. However, if any types of transformations did occur, then… they would certainly be enough to shake Heaven and Earth. In fact, considering how many people were here, it would be impossible to keep the matter of the copper mirror hidden unless he killed everyone.

“The copper mirror is the most mysterious object I possess. I can’t let anyone know that I possess it, otherwise it will lead to terrible calamity.

“‘The innocent man will be lead to disaster by possessing a treasured object!’” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. He had been intelligent even as a child, and had experienced the law of the jungle in the Cultivation world. The truth of what would happen should he reveal the copper mirror was something he knew all too well.

After some thought, Meng Hao's eyes flickered, and he turned to look off into the distance, a cold smile tugging at his lips.

Even as he smiled, distortions appeared in the air in the direction in which he was looking. An old man emerged. It was none other than the emaciated Cultivator from before. He had been approaching in secret, but as soon as he neared, had been detected by Meng Hao. Without waiting for Meng Hao to say anything, he revealed himself.

"Fellow Daoist Meng, your Cultivation base is extraordinary. It seems I've incurred your ridicule." The old man laughed and then clasped hands and bowed.

Seeing that Meng Hao wasn't going to say anything, the old man smiled and continued, "My name is Han Danzi 1, a rogue Cultivator from the Southern Domain. Your fame has resounded like thunder in my ears for many years, Fellow Daoist Meng. Grandmaster Pill Cauldron is an example for all Cultivators like myself. I can't tell you how happy I am to be able to meet you here in the ancient Demon Immortal Sect."

"Did you really secretly follow me just to say some fawning words?" said Meng Hao, a cold glint in his eyes. "State your purpose."

"Fellow Daoist Meng, you don't beat around the bush!" He laughed, apparently ignoring Meng Hao's tone of voice. "I could see you hesitating about what to do earlier. I'm not sure exactly what you were thinking about, but I was curious, so I followed you.

"However, now that you mention it, I actually do have something interesting to share with you.

"The greatest treasures hidden in this place are not the magical items of the Cultivators and the Demon Tribes, but rather… the objects held in the hands of those three Paragons. Whether it be the spear, the seven globes of fire and wood, or those two pearls, each and every one are shocking precious treasures.

“Any one of them would enable a Cultivator to murder an Immortal!” As Han Danzi spoke, he observed Meng Hao to see how he might react. However, Meng Hao’s expression did not reveal even the slightest bit of a change in his mood.

“This guy is smart and has a rock-hard will,” thought Han Danzi with an imperceptible frown. “I won’t be able to fool him easily….”

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he looked coldly at the old man. For some reason, the old man caused a feeling of vigilance rose up within him. He appeared to be at the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage, not very far from Spirit Severing.

However, what he had accomplished earlier with the flame bird was not something that a great circle Nascent Soul Cultivator should be able do. This man clearly was hiding something mysterious. Perhaps others might not be able to sense it, but as the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer, Meng Hao could tell that the man actually had two auras.

The first contained the ripples of a Cultivator’s Cultivation base. The other… was deeply hidden, and had… Demonic Qi!

This Demonic Qi was borderline vile!

Han Danzi looked at Meng Hao and said, “I can’t get the treasured items of those three Paragons by myself. That is why I hope to form a cooperation with you, Elder Brother Meng. After we acquire the treasures, we can split them evenly.”

“Which one do you want to acquire?” asked Meng Hao, his eyes glittering.

“The seven globes of fire belonging to the Demon Tribes Paragon, of course,” said Han Danzi with a smile. “At the very least, we can extract one for each of us. That way we won’t waste any energy.”

Meng Hao also smiled. He did not refuse, but instead, nodded in agreement.

Seeing Meng Hao agree so easily caused vigilance to rise up within Han Danzi. Previously, of all the people who came from South Heaven, he had paid closest attention to Patriarch Huyan.

However, he had recently been shocked to sense that Patriarch Huyan had been killed. Later, when laid eyes on Meng Hao, he understood that Patriarch Huyan was most likely killed by him.

When he thought about his own techniques and trump cards, Han Danzi felt at ease. With a hearty laugh, he and Meng Hao turned into colorful beams of light that shot off into the distance.

Meng Hao didn’t speak at all. He temporarily suppressed any notions of producing the copper mirror. Now was not the time. He needed to wait until the right critical juncture had arrived, then he would pull out the copper mirror to see if it provoked any transformations.

It seemed that Han Danzi was bringing him to just such a critical juncture.

Of course, Han Danzi was wrapped up in his own thoughts as the two of them proceeded onward. Before long, they reached what was actually the very center of the whole continent.

“The locations of the three Paragons are actually where the seal is strongest over this ancient battlefield,” said Han Danzi with a smile. “There are some special restrictive spells which prevent anyone from even getting close.

“However, I happen to know of a special technique. I tested it out earlier, and it seems possible to bypass the restrictive spells. However, it requires a certain level of Cultivation base. Elder Brother Meng, considering how extraordinary your Cultivation base is, I don’t think you will have any problems.” With that, he shot down toward the continent below. He quickly performed an incantation with his right hand, then pushed down onto the surface of the continent.

Instantly, the land shook, and Meng Hao could see a vortex forming inside the mirror. There was no black hole within it, though, and it maintained its shape. At the same time, Han Danzi took a deep breath and lifted his hand back up. Then he stood; the vortex remained within the mirror.

Han Danzi turned to look at Meng Hao.

“Elder Brother Meng, presumably, you know what to do. I’ll wait for you up ahead.” With that, his body flickered and he moved forward. As he moved, the vortex beneath his feet followed him.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he watched Han Danzi proceed onward for what appeared to be several hundred meters. However, he had actually not traveled for several hundred meters, but several hundred kilometers!

“Interesting,” murmured Meng Hao. He moved down toward the surface of the land, then landed on its surface. After that he lifted his foot up and slammed it down onto the ground. A boom could be heard, and then, shockingly, a vortex appeared beneath his feet inside the world of the mirror.

It maintained its vortex state, not forming into a black hole, but rather, connecting to Meng Hao’s Cultivation base. Then Meng Hao proceeded forward. For every meter he moved… he actually moved half a kilometer!

“What a technique!” he thought, his eyes flickering. He couldn’t help but think that if this technique could be used in the outside world, it would definitely be considering an incredibly powerful divine ability.

Using this technique, Meng Hao and Han Danzi moved what appeared to be several hundred meters, but was in fact hundreds of kilometers. They sped along at top speed within the center region of the mirror continent.

At the same time, the other Cultivators from South Heaven were in other locations, attempting to acquire their own bits of good fortune. They continued to stimulate the surface of the land, attempting to cause it to spit out magical items. However, most of the magical items ended up being destroyed in the process of emerging.

Few of the Cultivators were actually able to acquire anything.

Even still, the mirror-like land was like a huge treasure trove for everyone. All of the Cultivators who had come to this place were profoundly wise and intelligent, and soon, their glittering eyes came to be drawn to the center region of the land. That was clearly the location of the three most powerful experts who split everything under the Heavens.

In fact, there were more than a few people who were trying to make their way in that very direction.

Two hours passed. Shockingly, Meng Hao and Han Danzi had just appeared in the area near the Greater Demon with the seven rotating globes of fire.

A strange light appeared in Han Danzi’s eyes. He took a deep breath as he exchanged a glance with Meng Hao. At the same time, he began to rotate his Cultivation base. Meng Hao directly entered the Fifth Anima; his fleshly body was shocking, and his Cultivation base boundless. Han Danzi’s eyes flickered as he too unleashed his full power. The twisted Demonic Qi within him also began to circulate.

The two attacked the surface of the land together, causing an enormous rumbling to fill the air. The two vortexes beneath them in the world of the mirror suddenly touched each other. They merged, then suddenly ripped open an enormous black hole.

The gravitational force that suddenly surged out was impossible to describe. However… it was incapable of causing the seven globules of fire to even tremble in the slightest. In contrast, quite a few other magical items in the area were sucked into the vortex.

Ten magical items were sucked in, but only five flew out. They shot up into the air in beams of prismatic light. Han Danzi’s eyes flickered, but he did nothing to attempt to take them. Meng Hao’s eyes also flashed, yet he did not chase after the items either.

Both of the men were wrapped up in their own thoughts as they watched the five beams of light shoot like beautiful pearls up into the sky.

At the same time, the other Cultivators from South Heaven watched on in shock. The looked at the five beams of light, and could sense the intense ripples emanating out from within.

“Incredible treasure!!” That was the thought that ran through all of their minds. Their eyes shone brightly as they flew up into the air. In the blink of an eye, nearly all of the South Heaven Cultivators flew from all directions toward the five beams of light.

1. Han Danzi’s name in Chinese is hán dān zǐ. Han is a common family name, and yes, it is the same character as Han Bei. That doesn’t mean they are related, although the possibility couldn’t be precluded based on the name alone. Dan means “red” or “pellet.” Zi means “child” or “son”

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# Chapter 616: Demonic Qi Explodes to the Sky!

Rumbling echoed out in all directions. As the South Heaven Cultivators flew toward the five beams of light, fighting broke out. The sounds of magical techniques and divine abilities resounded through the air, mixed with growls and cold snorts. In the time it takes for a spark to fly off of a piece of flint, the five incredible treasures were divided up.

Han Danzi looked up into the air and then said, “Fellow Daoists, those five incredible treasures were released by the combined effort of Fellow Daoist Meng and myself. For you to act in such a way is somewhat improper….”

By now, the South Heaven Cultivators up above had taken notice of Meng Hao and Han Danzi down below.

“If you are interested, Fellow Daoists, we can all work together to open up the greatest treasures hidden in this place. We can release them together. What do you think, Fellow Daoists?” Han Danzi wore a smile on his face, but within his eyes was a strange, imperceptible glow. Out of the corner of his eyes, he watched Meng Hao carefully.

That was because he hadn’t consulted with Meng Hao before speaking, and his offer just now did not fall in line with his previous explanation. Clearly, what he needed was not just the help of Meng Hao alone, but rather, the combined assistance of almost all of the South Heaven Cultivators.

At the moment, Han Danzi was simply incapable of reading Meng Hao’s expression. From the very beginning until this moment, it hadn’t changed at all. The more Meng Hao acted in such a way, the more Han Danzi felt unsure of himself.

The main reason he had sought out Meng Hao was because of his Cultivation base. It wasn’t just him who looked at Meng Hao in such a way. Although no one would admit it, most of them had already taken Meng Hao to have the most powerful Cultivation base of the entire group.

Therefore, having Meng Hao at his side made Han Danzi’s words even more persuasive. After all, when an expert planned some sort of scheme, it would by no means be a small plan.

Up in mid-air, the eyes of the other Cultivators flickered, but no one spoke. Although these people had all been conned by Meng Hao earlier, that was because of the circumstances. It was impossible for them to not get excited right now. Of course, in the outside world, any one of the group could be considered extraordinarily intelligent. As such, they only believed about one third of what Han Danzi told them.

Fang Yu suddenly spoke up, “If some precious treasure appears, how do we split it up?”

“I will swear a Dao oath, I will vow on my heart of cultivation. It doesn’t matter how many precious treasures appear, I only want one fire globe!” Han Danzi spoke with decisiveness that could chop nails and slice iron.

“Besides,” he continued solemnly, his words ringing out like the peals of a golden bell, “if I violated my oath, if I went back on my word, not only would it sever my path of cultivation, but I would never be able to find safe haven in any of your various Sects and Clans back in the lands of South Heaven.”

The South Heaven Cultivators up in mid-air looked on thoughtfully. It was actually exactly as Han Danzi said. Although their Cultivation bases might not be incredibly high, they were all backed by Sects and Clans that could be considered major powers. Therefore, in some ways, they weren’t worried at all about Han Danzi reneging on his promise.

Everyone exchanged glances. All were thinking different things, but of course, they wouldn’t casually allow others to see that based on their facial expression. Gradually, all eyes came to fall on Meng Hao.

“I too simply require a pledge in the form of a Dao oath,” he said coolly.

At first everything was quiet, but after a moment, the Ji Clan members flew down toward the surface of the ground. After that was Fang Yu, and then the other Cultivators from the Southern Domain and the Northern Reaches. Their eyes flickered as they neared.

However, it wasn’t each and every South Heaven Cultivator that came. Xu Qing as well as some of the others weren’t present.

Han Danzi smiled and then began to explain to everyone how to approach the center district. As they waited for everyone to arrive, Han Danzi clasped hands and bowed apologetically to Meng Hao.

“Fellow Daoist Meng,” he said in a sincere tone, “it’s not that I changed my mind. As you can clearly see, by relying only on our power, it would be difficult to cause the precious treasures to appear. Only by combining power with the others will we be able to succeed.

“I hope you can forgive me.” He bowed deeply once more. Then he lifted up his right hand, within which could be seen a jade pendant shaped like a dragon.

“I acquired this pendant earlier which can be considered an excellent treasure. It can summon an enormous dragon which spits out a sea. Fellow Daoist Meng, please accept it as a token of my apology.” With that, he sent the pendant floating out toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s face was expressionless as he first looked over the pendant and then scanned it with Divine Sense. There didn’t seem to be anything suspicious about it, so he casually waved his sleeve to collect it up.

“Thank you, Fellow Daoist Han Danzi,” he said coolly.

Han Danzi watched calmly as Meng Hao accepted the pendant. Inwardly, he was a bit suspicious. Meng Hao’s completely expressionless demeanor made it difficult for him to keep his thoughts straight.

“Hmph,” he thought to himself. “He’s just some kid from the younger generation. Although he might be a profound schemer, he has his limits. Besides, I already made it clear to everyone that all I want is one globe of fire. I simply don’t believe that this Meng Hao will be able to create problems for me out of nothing.” He was laughing coldly on the inside, but on the outside, he was smiling from ear to ear.

The two of them sat down cross-legged to meditate. Two hours passed, after which the other South Heaven Cultivators arrived one after another. No one spoke. They focused their power together to stab into one particular spot on the surface of the ground. Intense rumbling resulted, and a gigantic whirlpool appeared inside the world of the mirror.

The vortex spun rapidly, and then transformed into a black hole. Immediately, an assortment of magical items were sucked in. Many were shattered in the process, but more than ten beams of light appeared in the outside to shoot up into the sky.

The light from the treasures was blinding, and instantly attracted the attention of the crowd. However, just as quickly, everyone, including Meng Hao, looked back at the world of the mirror. Inside, the vortex was still there, as was the gravitational force of the black hole. Unfortunately, it didn’t seem to be powerful enough to suck away the seven globes of fire surrounding the Greater Demon.

And yet… it was obvious that the two globes of fire nearest the black hole were beginning to ripple and distort. From the look of it, if the power of the black hole was increased, they might actually move.

“One more time!” snapped Han Danzi, staring fixedly at the globes of fire. The full power of his Cultivation base exploded out. As the power built up, the eyes of the others flickered, and they too began to unleash the power of their Cultivation bases.

Meng Hao closed his eyes for a moment. When he opened them, he was in the Sixth Anima.

BOOM!!

Everyone attacked again. This time, the intensity of the vibrations seemed enough to cause earthquakes and shatter mountains. A vortex appeared inside the world of the mirror that was even larger than before. The black hole that magically appeared afterward caused the two globes of fire nearest the black hole to begin to distort violently. Finally, they began to move.

As the globes moved, everything dimmed, and the majestic aura of a precious treasure poured into the black hole and was then released in the outside. A thunderous roar filled the air, and as they sensed the aura, everyone was completely shocked. The intensity of this aura was such that it seemed it could extinguish Immortals!

Meng Hao's pupils constricted. The aura he was sensing from the wooden swords in the seven globes of light far, far exceeded that of the wooden swords in his bag of holding. However, it was also clear that they were… one and the same!

There was no need for Han Danzi to say anything else. A gleam of longing appeared in the eyes of the South Heaven Cultivators as they once again unleashed the explosive power of their Cultivation bases, along with their most powerful divine abilities and magical techniques.

As for Han Danzi, he took a deep breath. The borderline evil Demonic Qi on him that only Meng Hao could sense suddenly superseded the fluctuations of a Cultivator that existed within him. It was as if he had just become a Demon!

Meng Hao entered the Seventh Anima, which meant that he had a Spirit Severing fleshly body. Along with the others, he continued to levy attacks against the surface of the ground.

The entire area was covered with cracks. Although they sealed back up almost immediately, a huge vortex nearly thirty meters wide exploded out inside the world of the mirror.

The edges of the vortex seemed to be just on the verge of actually touching the wooden swords within the globes of flame.

Everyone was panting, and their eyes were focused on the spinning vortex as it transformed into a shocking black hole!

When the black hole appeared, shockingly, three of the seven globes of fire that contained wooden swords, began to ripple and vibrate. Suddenly… they started moving!

The scene caused the gazes of the South Heaven Cultivators to grow as sharp as knives. Their Cultivation bases were in full rotation as they waited for the precious treasures to emerge, whereupon the fighting would begin.

Time passed. It was only the space of about ten breaths, but in the minds of everyone present, it seemed like an eternity. They watched the three globes of fire moving gradually closer to the black hole. They seemed to be struggling, but the power of the black hole caused them to slowly get closer and closer.

The power source of the black hole's gravitational force was not the South Heaven Cultivators, but rather, the interaction between the world outside of the mirror, and the world within. The function of the Cultivators was merely to release that power.

The gravitational force exerted by the black hole was so strong that it wasn't just the three globes of fire that were affected. Also affected was the extremely lifelike Greater Demon around whom the fire globes rotated.

Nearer…. Nearer….

In the blink of an eye, one of the wooden swords within the fire globule vanished into of the black hole. Everyone stopped breathing momentarily. In that instant, shockingly, a wooden sword shot out from beneath their feet. It burst up toward the sky in a beam of light that resembled an unrolling bolt of silk.

The Ji Clan members instantly shot up into the air to pursue the beam of light.

Next, two more swords shot out, their Sword Qi shining like a rainbow. Coldness radiated out, causing everyone to feel as if they were freezing. However, the burning within their hearts could not be frozen over. Fang Yu, the group from the Northern Reaches, and all the other Cultivators, instantly shot up into the air to pursue the treasured wooden swords.

In the instant in which they flew up in pursuit, the three wooden swords began to emanate an even more shocking energy. Boundless ripples shot out into the sky, which caused anything within fluctuations to suddenly move exponentially slower. It was as if the swords created their own area of time and space.

Meng Hao immediately shot up after the three wooden swords, and Han Danzi followed.

It appeared that the two would begin to fight over the wooden swords. However, it turned out that Han Danzi only appeared to have been moving up. He almost immediately sank back down. As everyone else shot after the precious treasures, he prostrated himself on the ground, biting his tongue to spit out a mouthful of blood. The blood instantly turned into a thin stream which extended out toward the black hole in the world of the mirror. It emerged from the black hole in the mirror world, and then neared the body of the Greater Demon which had been sucked toward the black hole.

“Ancestor Spirit, your posterity of the younger generation have not forgotten you! I have come today to welcome your power back into the world!!” As his words rang out, the eyes of the Greater Demon flickered with intelligence. It allowed the stream of blood to circle around its body, then tighten around it and begin to drag it toward the black hole.

Everything shook violently, and booming sounds filled the air. Suddenly, an enormous vortex appeared in front of Han Danzi, thousands of meters wide. A strange, demonic sound emerged from within the vortex; it sounded like people both weeping and laughing.

Suddenly, an enormous head, fully three hundred meters large… began to rise up from within the water-like surface of the world beneath!

Demonic Qi…

Exploded up into the sky!!!

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# Chapter 617: Land of the Three Saints

Scattered patches of hair could be seen on the enormous, three hundred meter large head, as well as three, pitch-black horns. It was as gray as death, and wrinkles covered its skin. The facial features somewhat resembled a man, but even more-so, a lion.

It emanated a fearsome, archaic aura that, as soon as it appeared, swept across the entire Fourth Plane, which began to shake violently.

An enormous vortex, tens of thousands of meters wide, circulated around the entire area. Amidst the rumbling, a wild wind swept through the entire area, shaking everything.

Han Danzi prostrated himself beneath the head, his expression one of excitement. His appearance was now changing, and he no longer looked human. Three black horns had sprouted from his head, and he looked very similar to the enormous head up above him.

“Your posterity of the younger generation welcomes the return of the power of the ancestry!!” cried Han Danzi excitedly. As his voice rang out, he seemed to form a connection with the enormous head. A shocking power began to fuse into his body!

His hair whipped about, his clothes flapped. He should have been tossed about like a leaf within the maelstrom, but instead, from his aura, it seemed that he was accepting some type of legacy.

The head appeared to be three hundred meters large, but in the blink of an eye it was suddenly far larger. It was now three thousand meters large. A breath of time later, it was back to three hundred meters. They were like ghost images, distorting the world. Rumbling rose up into the sky. All of the crowds up in mid-air who were chasing after the wooden swords didn’t even have a chance to begin fighting over the precious treasures before the scene unfolding caused them to be thoroughly astonished.

The wild wind raged, sweeping across everything. Everyone up above was sent spinning out of control, causing their faces to fill with unprecedented expressions of astonishment.

“What… what is that thing!?”

“Dammit! He’s actually trying to release a Greater Demon from inside the mirror!!”

“Isn’t that Demon one of three major powers inside the mirror world? Who is this guy!?!?”

Shocked, everyone began to fall back. The rest of the Cultivators in the land, the ones not participating in the events in the central region, including Xu Qing, were all incredibly shocked. They, too, were incapable of preventing themselves from being swept up. They transformed into beams of light that shot through the air.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he hovered in mid-air in the Seventh Anima, with a Spirit Severing fleshly body and a Cultivation base of sixty-four great circle Nascent Souls. Such power made it that, although he hovered unstably, he was still able to remain in place and balanced within the vortex and the tempest.

As he looked down at the surface of the land, and his eyes narrowed. He knew that Han Danzi had been plotting something, but he had never imagined that the plan would be so astonishing!

As of this moment, a deafening roar filled the enormous vortex, the source being none other than the enormous head emerging from within the world of the mirror. The sound echoed back and forth like thunder.

It caused everyone, even the Cultivators off in the distance, to cough up blood. Han Danzi was unaffected, and Meng Hao's face was only a bit pale. Other than the two them, everyone else felt their mind spinning, as if they were stuck in some interminable illusion.

By now, the head of the Greater Demon was more than seventy percent emerged. Its nose was visible, and its facial features were clearer. There was an enormous, ferocious-looking wound ripped into its face.

Anyone who even glanced at the Greater Demon would immediately feel as if their mind was being absorbed. Before they even realized it, pulses of terror would be racing through them.

Demonic Qi exploded up, filling the area, intrinsically potent. In the blink of an eye, all other power of Heaven and Earth was expelled from the world by this powerful Demonic Qi.

All of a sudden, the entire world became… a Demon world!

Han Danzi trembled, his face burning with passion. The physical changes to him continued at high speed. His aura exploded up, and his connection to the head grew even more complete.

At the same time, all of the power of Heaven and Earth that was not Demonic Qi rushed up to the top of the world, which was none other than deep tunnel everyone had traveled through to get to this place.

A rumbling sound could be heard as the energy successfully entered the tunnel. The countless vines inside withered in the blink of an eye. They vanished without a trace as the expelled power of Heaven and Earth shot out into the outside world.

If you could stand outside of that deep pit, what you would see would be an exploding pillar of Qi that shot up into the sky. Successive layers of ripples then emanated out in all directions, sweeping over everything.

Although the process had just begun inside the Fourth Plane… it is easy to imagine how quickly everything was changing because of the emergence of the Greater Demon from within the world of the mirror.

When the changes were complete… everyone else inside would either be dead, or would be transformed by the Demonic Qi. Their souls would be transformed, and their Cultivation bases would change on a fundamental level. They would no longer be Cultivators, but Demons!

Meng Hao’s face flickered as he looked up into the sky at all the people from South Heaven. The vortex was spinning faster, and as it did, everyone was lapsing into a stupor. Fang Yu, the Ji Clan, the Cultivators from the Northern Reaches and Southern Domain, Wang Lihai, Han Bei, Li Tiandao, Li Shiqi, and also Xu Qing….

Everyone seemed to be lapsing into an illusion. Their faces were twisted, and their teeth were clenched. Occasionally they let out cold laughs, other times their expressions were blank. It was bizarre to the extreme.

Demonic Qi was coalescing around their bodies, clearly beginning to make some illusory changes.

Han Danzi continued to prostrate himself on the ground. “Land of the Three Saints. The power of the ancestor returns, a legacy for me, Han Danzi. Everyone here are my sacrificial objects. Their bodies will be changed, their spirits will be assimilated. If they don’t die in the process, then they will no longer be Cultivators, but Demons!

“They will become my Demon horde, and will follow by my side as I use the power of the ancestor to battle with the Heavens!” He trembled as his words echoed out through the vortex.

At the same time, the vortex which spun around the head of the Greater Demon was no longer tens of thousands of meters wide. It expanded again until it was nearly three hundred thousand meters wide, shocking to the extreme. By this point, the top lip of the Great Demon was now visible.

It was now possible to see that the head did not just have one wound on it, but rather, three. One of the wounds appeared to be on its lips, making it so that the creature did not have two lips, but four!

Also visible… were sharp, black fangs! This Greater Demon’s physical appearance was savage to the extreme!

More Demonic Qi roiled about, and the rumbling sounds grew more intense.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. “This is the ancient Demon Immortal Sect. Ke Jiusi isn’t dead. He couldn’t possibly ignore what is happening here, could he? And what about Zhixiang? Her attitude is difficult to discern.

“So… why hasn’t Ke Jiusi made an appearance?

“It doesn’t matter. I can’t place all my hope in him….” Although he could afford not to care too much about the others, Xu Qing was here. Also, the others owed a lot of Spirit Stones. If a few died, he could handle it. However, if they all died… well, that was something Meng Hao just couldn’t agree to let happen.

His eyes filled with a bright glow and he took a deep breath. He closed his eyes for a moment, then reopened them.

The moment he opened his eyes, Meng Hao entered… the Eighth Anima!

BOOM!

In the Eighth Anima, his fleshly body grew even more powerful. In the Seventh Anima, it was of the Spirit Severing stage, but in the Eighth Anima, it reached an even more terrifying level. His Cultivation base exploded out, not with the power of sixty-four great circle Nascent Souls, but rather, one hundred twenty-eight!

Such incredible power caused profound changes. Meng Hao suddenly appeared in mid-air in the wild vortex, buffeted by the spinning winds. Roaring surrounded him as what appeared to be countless shapeless bolts of lightning exploded out.

His right hand formed into a fist that punched directly toward the passageway high up in the sky. The punch contained not just the full power of his Cultivation base, but also, the Mountain Consuming Incantation!

An enormous mountain peak appeared, which was none other than… the Fourth Peak! The image was somewhat indistinct, but as soon as it appeared, roaring sounds echoed out. It shot toward the passageway. As it flew through the air, parts of it disintegrated and fell apart, but by the time it reached its destination it was still half intact.

The mountain shot at top speed toward the passageway, and as it neared, Meng Hao uttered a single word:

“Collapse!”

As soon as the word left his mouth, the illusory mountain stopped in mid-air and exploded, sending out a sound like endless thunder. The volume exceeded the rumbling of the vortex, transforming into shocking sound waves that swept across the world.

Because of the sound, all of the others, including Xu Qing, were mentally shaken. The illusion which gripped them temporarily vanished, and their eyes grew clear. Then their faces filled with astonishment.

Meng Hao looked up at them and roared, “Why haven’t you left yet!?” He performed a double-handed incantation, and immediately tempest winds exploded out from him to fight back against the vortex. Instantly, the vortex was weakened.

Fang Yu gasped and looked down at Meng Hao. She looked anxious, but at the same time determined. Her body flickered as she neared Xu Qing. Even as Xu Qing was gazing at Meng Hao, Fang Yu grabbed her.

“Let’s go,” she said. “He won’t stop worrying until you’re out of here!”

Xu Qing hesitated, but didn’t struggle. She looked back at Meng Hao one more time, and an indescribable feeling welled up in her heart. She thought back to that year outside the Rebirth Cave. It was a scene just like this one, in which she… was no help at all to Meng Hao.

The South Heaven Cultivators were panting in astonishment at the terrifying scene playing out. One by one, they began to fly up toward the passageway over head. As they shot through the air and then entered into the passageway, they heard Meng Hao’s voice.

“I saved your lives, which means you owe me. If you dare to not pay me back, things won’t be finished between us!”

As everyone disappeared into the passageway, the expulsion power shoved them up, causing them shoot upward. It was in that same instant that the head of the Greater Demon completely emerged from within the mirror!

Off to the side, Han Danzi looked up at Meng Hao, and at everyone leaving through the passageway.

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# Chapter 618: Mountain and Sea Mirror!

“They can’t escape from within the Land of the Three Saints,” said Han Danzi. “Although this is only a Divine Clone of the ancestor, if I can unseal it, it will still be beneficial for the Demon Immortal Sect. The spirits of the Demon Immortal Sect won’t offer help, but won’t resist either. Not even true spirit Night will wake up because of this. Sleeping Night is intelligent, but awakened Night has no mind. It will not awaken, because it does not wish to awaken!

“This is the body of true spirit Night, where its brain exists. They won’t be able to escape, nor flee the Demon Immortal Sect. When the ancestor’s Divine Clone is fully fused with me, they will become my Demon horde!

“As for you, Meng Hao… you will be beneath the sacred ancestor and myself to act as Dharma protector!”

“Oh yeah?” replied Meng Hao, looking coldly at Han Danzi. He performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, then pointed down at the land. At the same time, the Demonic Qi in the area began to swirl around Meng Hao.

Whistling sounds could be heard intermittently. Meng Hao suddenly began to perform an incantation gesture which seemed to cause everything in the area to tremble.

In that instant, all of the Demonic Qi in the entire world began to rotate, as if it were being pulled. Every region began to distort, making the entire world seem as if it were being twisted.

The sight of it caused Han Danzi’s face to fill with a look of shock.

“You… you can actually affect Demonic Qi!!” he said hoarsely. “How can that be? You’re a Cultivator, you cultivate the power of Heaven and Earth. That’s different than Demonic Qi. They can’t be mixed! How can you manipulate Demonic Qi!?!?” He was thoroughly shaken, as this was his first time ever seeing Demonic Qi being manipulated by a Cultivator.

As far as he was concerned, it was inconceivable and unbelievable. Most importantly, it was clear that Meng Hao’s manipulation of the Demonic Qi was real, and not an illusion. It was in complete contrast to himself. Whereas his apparent manipulation of Demonic Qi was actually trickery, Meng Hao really was stirring all of the Demonic Qi in the entire world.

Even as Han Danzi was feeling shaken, Meng Hao took a deep breath. He could sense a resonance between himself and this world. In the outside world, he was incapable of absorbing the power of Heaven and Earth. However, in this place, it was as if a hole had been opened up, and all the Demonic Qi was rushing into it without the slightest impediment.

And yet, it didn’t cause any transformations within him whatsoever. Inside of him, it turned into pure power. It was not Demonic Qi, nor was it spiritual energy. It was a unique power that belonged only to Meng Hao.

That power circulated about within him, filling him with an indescribably pleasurable sensation. A bizarre light shone in his eyes as he looked down at Han Danzi and the giant head floating there in mid-air.

“Demon Sealing, Eighth Hex!” said Meng Hao slowly. It almost sounded as if he were issuing orders. The words echoed about like the peals of thunder.

Four words exploded like thunder. Four words… spoken by Meng Hao!

As the words sounded out like thunder, all of the Demonic Qi around Meng Hao began to coalesce together. In the blink of an eye, the enormous character for ‘seal’ appeared directly in front of him.

The character was fully three hundred meters tall, and it absorbed more and more Demonic Qi as it shot down toward the ground.

In this moment, within the Eighth Anima, Meng Hao was… the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer!

The speed with which the character moved was indescribable. Han Danzi's face filled with disbelief as he felt an unprecedented pressure weighing down on him, along with a sense of deadly crisis. All of a sudden, he realized that Meng Hao was his archenemy.

Or perhaps it could be said that he was the archenemy of all Greater Demons!

Han Danzi began to pant, and suddenly, he recalled a legend.

"According to legend, within the Nine Mountains and Seas, there are a people who can cultivate the Dao and can also fuse with Demons. No type of expulsion is effective on them. They call themselves… Demon Sealers!

"The character 'seal' has two meanings. One is to restrict, the other is to aid!" 1 Han Danzi's mind trembled as the 'seal' character formed of Demonic Qi descended. All of the Demonic Qi seemed to be affected, making it so that Han Danzi was incapable of dodging or evading. He could only try to fight back directly.

A huge boom lifted up into the sky. Blood sprayed from Han Danzi's mouth as, in the blink of an eye, he was surrounded by glowing hex light. From a distance, the hex light looked liked strands of silk, binding up Han Danzi.

It sealed his life force, sealed his Cultivation base, sealed all of him. It sealed him, and it sealed the enormous head.

Shockingly, the light of the Eighth Hex also thoroughly enveloped the enormous head. From a distance, it looked as if there were some enormous net covering over it.

The giant net was fused with the ground in the area, and pulled down viciously. Blood oozed out of Han Danzi's mouth, and he trembled. Unable to control his body, he kneeled down onto the ground, his expression vicious. It sounded like he wanted to roar with rage, but was incapable of making a single sound come out of his throat.

Beneath the power of the Eighth Hex's giant net, the head slowly stopped emerging out. In fact, it began to show signs of sinking back. Meng Hao hovered in mid-air, trembling slightly, his finger still pointing down at the ground. From the time he became a Demon Sealer until now, this was his first time… truly sealing a Demon.

The Demonic Qi in the area continued to rush toward him. He alone had shaken the world and used its power to push down a Demon.

Han Danzi was pushed down closer toward the ground, his face pale, his eyes filled with frenzy and an unyielding look. The giant head sank back, and soon, half of its mouth was back in the other world.

However it was then that… the Greater Demon in the world of the mirror suddenly looked up. Its gaze seemed to pierce out from the mirror into the outside world.

A strange look appeared in its eyes, and its mouth twisted into a smile.

"TAI!" it said. As the bizarre word echoed out, a change occurred to the giant head emerging from within the mirror world. The aura of death which had previously swirled around it, suddenly seemed to fill with the power of life. Although it did not open its eyes, it did open its mouth.

The voice which emerged was the exact same voice which had been heard moments ago.

"TAI!"

The sound turned into an attack which spread out in all directions, sweeping over everything. Heaven and Earth filled with roaring, and countless fissures spread out everywhere. The net of the Eighth Hex that covered the head began to shatter into small pieces. In the blink of an eye, it was destroyed and dissipated.

The Eight Hex which suppressed Han Danzi was also swept away, completely destroyed!

The Demonic Qi in the world began to roar like exploding thunder. Up in mid-air, Meng Hao coughed up a mouthful of blood and his face went white. He staggered back several paces.

“So, you’re a Demon Sealer!!” said Han Danzi. A strange light appeared in his eyes, and he lifted his head back to laugh, then shot up into the air.

“Who cares about Demon Sealers!? I’ll kill you, take your blood, absorb your soul, and make a Demon Sealing precious treasure!

“It’s just the will of Heaven!” Han Danzi seemed overjoyed as he shot up into the air. Demonic Qi surged toward Meng Hao, and at the same time, the head began to emerge again. All of a sudden, a neck and two shoulders could be seen!

“The will of Heaven, huh?” said Meng Hao, stabilizing himself. He looked coldly at approaching Han Danzi, and the gigantic Greater Demon that he apparently couldn’t prevent from emerging. “There was no enmity between us. Neither you absorbing the power of that Demon, nor the prospect of bringing it back to life, have anything to do with me.

“What I want isn’t you or that Demon, but rather… this entire place!” A bizarre light shone in Meng Hao’s eyes. The current situation now fit in perfectly with his requirements. There was nobody left, so he felt confident enough to… take out the copper mirror!

Even as Han Danzi closed in, Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding with his right hand. Instantly, the copper mirror appeared, the same mysterious copper mirror that he had acquired back in the Reliance Sect all those years ago, which had accompanied him all this time!

It didn’t look like anything special at all, and was even a bit rusted in places. It looked like a completely ordinary item.

“A crappy mirror?” laughed Han Danzi. “Don’t tell me that’s supposed to be some kind of precious treasure or something?!” He stopped in place, looking as if he didn’t care at all about Meng Hao and his mirror. However, inwardly, the fact that Meng Hao had retrieved this magical item in a critical moment left him worried in a way that was quite the opposite to the way he made it look.

As soon as the copper mirror appeared, the mirror continent below suddenly trembled. Ripples spread out, looking almost like waves on the surface of the mirror-like continent.

Within the world of the mirror, everything that was alive suddenly stopped moving.

Even the head which was emerging from inside stopped in place. However… it was in this moment that the eyes began to twitch, as if they were struggling to open and awake.

“What is that!?” gasped Han Danzi. He was just going to attempt to stop Meng Hao when Meng Hao pointed the mirror directly down toward the mirror continent.

The two mirrors shone on each other, and anyone who could see them would be able to spot an majestic black hole inside each one. Each black hole seemed endless, as if it contained truths inside that no one would ever be able to understand.

The great mirror land below began to rumble and shake. The ripples continued to spread out, thicker and more numerous. At the same time, the mirror Meng Hao held began to grow warm, as if it were thirsting for something, as if it… wanted to consume the entire mirror continent below

It was then that the mirror continent, which Meng Hao could not even see the ends of, suddenly began to shrink. It grew smaller rapidly, accompanied by a roaring sound that lifted up into the sky.

It shrank and shrank, and if you were able to stand in a position far far above, you would see that the lands below… shockingly, were actually shaped like a mirror! And as of this moment, the mirror… was shrinking down at a rapid rate.

As the mirror continent shrank, it was possible to see that the shape of the mirror was… absolutely identical to the copper mirror that Meng Hao held.

Han Danzi’s face fell. Even as he was about to charge at Meng Hao, his body began to be pulled back by the great mirror continent. His body was out of his own control, and he was incapable of nearing Meng Hao. Instead, a gravitational force pulled him down toward the lands below.

At the same time, the eyes of the Greater Demon head that was emerging from the mirror land suddenly… cracked open. An indistinct, growling voice echoed out, filled with ancientness.

“You… actually have… the Mountain and Sea Mirror….”

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1. In Chinese, the character can mean to ‘seal’ in the sense of sealing an envelope. It can also mean to ‘cover’ or ‘bestow.’ In Meng Hao’s Art of Righteous Bestowal, the ‘bestow’ word is this same character

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# Chapter 619: Night Awakens!

The sound seemed to echo out from ancient times. In fact, as Meng Hao looked over, what he really saw was not a head with eyes opened, but rather, a virtually dead Greater Demon.

It was almost as if everything from before had been an illusion!

However, the ground was still shaking and rapidly shrinking. That was no illusion. Meng Hao could see, and even detect with Divine Sense, that the mirror, which was the continent, had shrunk down to only several tens of thousands of meters wide.

From his vantage point, it was now possible to see that the land was rapidly… turning into an actual mirror!

It included all of the lives and magical items on the battlefield. All of them shrank down to become exponentially smaller along with the mirror.

The head of the Greater Demon could no longer emerge, but rather, sank back down, taking Han Danzi with it. His face was filled with terror and astonishment as he tried every method possible to break free. All were useless. He screamed miserably, hopelessly as he looked down at himself. It was at this point that he realized that… he was also… sinking into the mirror!

When his feet touched the land, they sank directly into the water-like surface until he was as far down as his ankles.

“No!” he cried out in alarm. “How can this be!? This is impossible!!” He howled and struggled, but it did absolutely no good.

Meng Hao trembled. The mirror was now incredibly hot, to the point where white steam was now pulsing off of his hand. He had no choice but to grip it with both hands.

By now, Meng Hao could sense the indescribable gravitational force being exerted by the mirror. It wasn’t targeting Han Danzi, but rather, the entire mirror land.

“It…. Don’t tell me it wants to suck in the entire mirror land of the Fourth Plane of the Demon Immortal Sect?” Having reached this conclusion, Meng Hao began to pant, and his mouth was parched and dry.

If that was really what was happening, then it would mean that he had gained a colossal amount of good fortune in the ancient Demon Immortal Sect! Such good fortune would be simply unimaginable to anyone else, completely beyond anticipation or expectation.

Meng Hao palpitated with eagerness as he clutched the copper mirror tightly in his hands and watched the mirror continent below shrinking. An unprecedentedly loud rumbling could be heard filling the entire world. Han Danzi let out a bloodcurdling shriek. He was already sunk halfway down into the surface of the mirror. Next to him, the head of the Greater Demon had sunk back down to the point where its nose was covered.

“How could this be happening! This is impossible! IMPOSSIBLE!!” Han Danzi had gone mad; his expression was one of terror. He shouted out toward Meng Hao, begging for mercy and help.

However, because of the intense rumbling, his voice was virtually undetectable; Meng Hao didn’t even notice it.

The Demonic Qi in the area churned. The shrinking of the land was like the lifting of a veil, revealing something beneath…. When Meng Hao looked down, he saw something that caused his mind to reel!!

There below… was a gigantic brain!

The brain seemed limitlessly huge, sleek and white, with black spots visible in various locations. There were also some areas where brightly colored lights flashed back and forth.

Every flash of light seemed to contain countless images, almost like memories!

The sight was completely shocking to Meng Hao. His breath came in ragged pants, and he glanced once again at the shrinking land. Suddenly, he recalled something Han Danzi had said.

“This mirror continent is placed on top of the brain of true spirit Night!” Meng Hao took a deep breath and looked down again at the boundless, colossally huge brain.

“Is this place really the head of true spirit Night? If so, what exactly is that passageway?” His scalp was numb and his body trembled as he looked around. The mirror-land seemed to be in the final process of shrinking.

It was now only about 30,000 meters wide, and looked almost exactly like the copper mirror he held, except much larger!

Han Danzi was almost completely sunk into the surface of the mirror. His face was pale, and he was no longer howling. Instead, he stared at Meng Hao with a venomous, insane look.

As for the head of the Greater Demon, it had sunk down past the eyes. Only the top of its head remained, along with the three black horns, which emanated a bizarre glow.

The entire world was shaking.

30,000 meters. 25,000 meter! 20,000 meters!!

By this point, sweat was pouring down Meng Hao’s forehead. His entire body shook as he clutched at the copper mirror. Were it not for his incredible fleshly body, it might not have been possible to prevent the mirror from slipping out of his hands.

And yet, even in the Eighth Anima, Meng Hao was incapable of holding on for very much longer.

It was at this point that suddenly, out of nowhere, a sound could be heard. It was like a baby crying, and it seemed to be coming from the outside world, and yet, at the same time, seemed to be coming from inside, all around him. It started out somewhat weak, and then grew stronger and stronger.

At the same time, Meng Hao's mind filled with a roaring. Simultaneously, the dancing flashes of electric light on the surface of the brain of true spirit Night suddenly increased by tenfold, as did the speed with which they moved!

An aura of awakening suddenly covered over everything. Meng Hao's face twitched.

"Hahaha! You're dead!" cried Han Danzi. "You shook the seals of the three Holy lands, and thus have awoken true spirit Night! When it awakens, it brings calamity!" He began to laugh maniacally.

Meanwhile, outside of the the Fourth Plane, in the Demon Immortal Sect, the ground was quaking and the mountains were shaking. Rumbling could be heard in all directions as huge cracks and fissures suddenly appeared to spread out across the surface of the land.

The huge cracks and fissures, the massive rumbling, all of it made it seem as if the Demon Immortal Sect was experiencing doomsday. Ruins toppled and dust flew up in all directions, covering everything and making it hazy.

Off in the distance, the South Heaven Cultivators fled in shock toward the Demon Immortal Sect's exit gate past the First Peak. They had no idea what was happening, but they could guess. Obviously, something incredible was happening in the Fourth Plane that was connected somehow to the goings on.

Everything grew dark and the sound of rumbling rose to the Heavens. As the land was shattered, a boundless aura seeped out to flood the entire area. Rifts even began to appear in the air, one after another!

A middle-aged man stood atop the Fourth Peak, wearing a long white robe. He looked around at everything that was happening, his expression complex. Occasionally, killing intent would fill him, sometimes gentleness could be seen. This was Ke Jiusi.

“If it was anyone else who awoke Night and caused the legacy of Lord Li to appear, I would be forced to kill him. Outsiders cannot acquire the legacy of Lord Li. But him….” Ke Jiusi thought back to what he had experienced in ancient times, when he had superimposed with Meng Hao.

In the end, his father had recognized Meng Hao, acknowledged that they were father and son in that life. The killing intent in Ke Jiusi’s eyes slowly dissipated, to be replaced by gentle warmth.

“If he was my father’s son in that life, then that means he… is my little brother. Maybe I can’t acquire the legacy of Lord Li, but if he can, it’s the will of Heaven.” Ke Jiusi sighed.

As everything shook, and even more rifts appeared up in the sky above the Demon Immortal Sect. Gradually, the shocking sight of the peaks of three inverted mountains became visible!

As they appeared to descend, an incredible pressure could be felt. The entire Demon Immortal Sect shook violently. The South Heaven Cultivators were arriving at the exit gate past the First Peak. In their shock, there were already quite a few who had chosen to use their Demon Spirit to leave.

However, that would take time. As the world shook more and more violently, the sound of a wailing infant suddenly filled the air. It sounded as if there was a baby sleeping deep, deep under the ground, its eyes closed. But then, as it began to awaken, it started to cry.

Once the sound could be heard, the destruction grew even more intense.

By now, the three inverted mountains were visible by more than half.

Meanwhile, back in the Fourth Plane, the great mirror continent had now shrunk down to only about 10,000 meters wide. Han Danzi was now completely submerged inside, gone.

As for the head of the Greater Demon, only a tiny bit was left visible; the rest had sunk back down into the mirror.

Meng Hao’s face was pale, and his body was slowly moving forward. He was not moving of his own volition, but rather, was being pulled by the copper mirror!

Closer and closer!

The mirror continent continued to shrink. 10,000 meters. 5,000 meters. 2,500 meters…. 1,500 meters…. 1,000 meters…. 300 meters!

The head of the Greater Demon had completely sunk back into the mirror. Back in the calm lands inside the mirror, that Greater Demon who split the Heaven into its third, continued to look up coldly at Meng Hao.

Its gaze seemed eternal, and as Meng Hao looked at it, his mind trembled. However, there was no time to think deeply about the matter right now. As of now, he was only about 100 meters away from the 300-meter-wide mirror.

As he got closer, it continued to shrink. 150 meters. 100 meters…. 30 meters!!

25 meters. 15 meters. 5 meters…. 3 meters!

When the mirror land reached a size of three meters, suddenly, it began to distort. Meng Hao watched as it twisted into what looked like strands of silk that then shot toward his own copper mirror.

The copper mirror seemed to consume them, bit by bit, until they were all sucked in. Within the space of only a few breaths, the entire continental mirror was sucked in by Meng Hao’s copper mirror!

It acted almost like a tonic for the mirror. After the consumption occurred, the copper mirror experienced an unprecedented transformation; all of the bits of rust on its surface completely disappeared!

The ancient decorative patterns on its surface grew deeper and more profound. Pulses of light could be seen circulating within, and murmuring sounds could be heard like the singing of Immortals.

Meng Hao’s mind trembled. As he looked closer at the mirror, he saw multiple cracks on its surface. They intersected with each other to form nine areas!

Right now, in the upper left part of the mirror, there was an area that looked completely different from the others. It… actually looked like the surface of a mirror. It glowed with the light of magical items, and within, a vortex could be seen, slowly rotating. That vortex seemed to contain the secret of the origin of the world!

Within the vortex, shockingly… was… the ancient battlefield!

At the same time, the Fourth Plane now had no land left in it at all. Instead, the brain was fully revealed. The electric light danced about on its surface a thousandfold more than before. A shocking sound could be heard that far exceeded the wailing of before.

Night, had been provoked… into awakening!

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# Chapter 620: Night’s Head!

By now, ten thousand times as many arcs of electric light were dancing back and forth on the brain of true spirit Night.

At the same time, the brain began to twitch. Bursting howls could be heard echoing in from outside, howls that shook the mind.

Meng Hao’s face flickered as an intense sensation of grave crisis appeared inside of him. He could sense terrifying fluctuations, and an aura that seemed capable of destroying him in a single explosive burst.

Numbness washed over his scalp as, without hesitation, he put the copper mirror away and then flew at the highest speed possible toward the exit passage.

The passage had once seemed to be a deep pit, but because of the aura of awakening Night, it had changed dramatically. It was moving, wriggling, as if the passageway was actually some part of the body of true spirit Night!

Meng Hao’s face fell, and he pushed himself to go even faster. He was now at the pinnacle of the Eighth Anima, and he moved even faster than lightning as he shot into the passageway. In the blink of an eye, he was speeding along inside.

ROAR!!!

A shocking roar echoed out from both below and above. Everything in the Demon Immortal Sect shook violently and began to fall into pieces.

The destruction was clearly visible to Meng Hao. He could see it with his own eyes, because the walls that surrounded him seemed to be covered with a partially transparent filament. Through that, Meng Hao could see the lands cracking and shattering by layers, then falling downward.

As he looked back through pit-like passageway, Meng Hao suddenly realized that it looked more like a tube!

It was a tube that ran to the brain of true spirit Night, and he was right in the middle of that tube, moving with unprecedented, maddening speed.

As he sped along, he began to pant. That was because he was astonished to find that the tube he was traveling through was actually lifting up into the air.

“It’s not just this passageway that’s lifting up into the air. Actually… this passageway… is part of the body of true spirit Night! When it moves, it will appear from within the land!” Meng Hao’s mind trembled as he looked through the semi-transparent walls of the passageway to see the land collapsed everywhere. He could also feel the sensation of the passageway moving upward.

After more than ten breaths of time passed, a blinding white light filled Meng Hao’s vision. A huge roar filled the passageway he was in as it was completely lifted up from the ground until it was in mid-air above the Demon Immortal Sect!

By this point, Meng Hao had traversed roughly seventy percent of the passageway, placing him thirty percent of the distance away from the exit. The passageway was now trembling violently, and Meng Hao’s face was pale white. Through the semi-transparent walls, he could see that outside…

Fissures covered all of the lands of the Demon Immortal Sect. Most of the various areas of the Sect were completely collapsed. In fact, most of the lands seemed to be caving in, as if some enormous creature were rising up.

Rocks tumbled down the sides of the seven mountain peaks, as if even they would not be able to survive this incredible catastrophe.

The first to collapse was the Third Peak!

As the lands around it collapsed and caved in, the mountain peak began to slant to the side and sink…. However, as he looked at it, Meng Hao got the strange feeling that… the Third Peak was not actually collapsing. Actually, there appeared to be some incredible force causing it to tilt to the side.

He couldn't quite be sure, but the sensation was intense.

Then, even as the semi-transparent passageway vibrated rapidly, Meng Hao suddenly saw something… that he would never be able to forget.

He saw an incredibly large head. It was so large that it was impossible to estimate exactly how large it was. And only half of it was visible!

It looked like a human head, except it had no hair, and was instead completely covered with pitch-black scales. Shockingly, this head… seemed to encompass all of the lands of the Demon Immortal Sect!

Meng Hao's scalp went numb and his mouth was completely dry. He was thoroughly incapable of determining how large this head was!

He also saw that the semi-transparent passageway he was in, was actually an enormous antenna attached to the top of the head! It was an tube-like antenna, apparently used for breathing!

What caused Meng Hao's mind to tremble with even more disbelief was that the previously tilting and toppling Third Peak… actually… had stopped after reaching a certain angle, and was no longer falling.

That was because… the Third Peak was not actually part of the land at all. It was connected to the head. More accurately, the Third Peak was actually an enormous horn growing out from the top of the Head!!

"This… this is… true spirit Night?" thought Meng Hao, staring with wide eyes.

He wasn't the only one seeing this. The other South Heaven Cultivators who were congregated outside of the First Peak watched on with pale faces. At the same time, the location where they stood began to collapse. A huge hole appeared, a passageway out to the starry sky that everyone unhesitatingly entered.

As they flew into the passageway, their bodies began to emit a white light. The light seemed to be separating them from the ancient Demon Immortal Sect. Their bodies began to grow transparent; apparently, it wouldn’t be long before they completely disappeared.

At the same time, bands of starlight descended from all directions, transforming into a river of stars. The appearance of the river of stars indicated that the return to South Heaven had begun. It was time to leave the good fortune of the Demon Immortal Sect.

“Meng Hao!!” cried Xu Qing inwardly. She bit down her lip as the soft light began to envelop her. Gradually she grew transparent, but her anxious eyes were focused in the direction of Meng Hao back in the Demon Immortal Sect.

Similarly anxious was Fang Yu. Her hands were clenched into fists as she watched the Demon Immortal Sect collapsing. “Hurry up, Meng Hao. Get out of there!”

As for the other South Heaven Cultivators, all of them were filled with complex emotions. They were overwhelmed with astonishment at the sudden drastic turn of events in the ancient Demon Immortal Sect. At the same time, they were also filled with unspeakable, conflicting thoughts regarding Meng Hao.

They wanted Meng Hao dead, so that their debts would be absolved. However, were it not for Meng Hao’s actions just now, all of them would be dead. That was a kindness on his part.

Various thoughts filled them as they watched on silently.

Meng Hao was scared out of his mind. As far as he could tell, he had really set something epic into motion….

“All I did was pull out a crappy mirror, right…?” he thought, clenching his jaw. He continued to speed along as fast as possible toward the exit of the semi-transparent passageway.

However, it was at this point that, surrounded by the collapsing lands, the head of true spirit Night slowly began to lift up. A reverberating wail even more shocking than before echoed out in all directions.

The Second Peak, the Fourth Peak, the First Peak, the Fifth Peak….

All shook violently and rose up into the air. Countless stones and boulders fell down, as four, shocking horns were revealed!

The antenna undulated, and at the same time, the exit appeared just up ahead of Meng Hao. Even as he was about to break free… Night, whose head was now half emerged from the collapsing lands, suddenly inhaled.

The breath caused an enormous sucking force to rush through the semi-transparent passageway. Meng Hao was completely incapable of controlling his body. His eyes went wide as he felt himself himself being sucked in.

Filled with shock, he unleashed the full power of his Cultivation base. His right hand reached out the side and grabbed hold of a vine….

How could Meng Hao not see that these vines were actually like hairs that existed within true spirit Night’s antenna…?

As soon as he grabbed ahold of it, he stopped moving. However, only a moment later, the vine snapped. Meng Hao’s eyes went wide as he was once again sucked back. All of these things happened in only the space of ten or so breaths. To Meng Hao, though, it seemed like an eternity.

“If this is the breathing of true spirit Night…” he thought. “Breathing involves inhaling and exhaling. If this is the inhaling, then it must be followed by exhaling! Time to gamble!” With that, his eyes filled with determination. There was little else he could do now except gamble.

He continued to grab onto vines, and continued to employ the full power of his Cultivation base to try to slow his movement. Ten breaths of time passed. Beneath him, Meng Hao could see the end of the passageway, and once again, the brain of true spirit Night. However, it was at this point that the inhaling ended. It was then followed by an intense, explosive force in the opposite direction.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. Roaring filled his body and blood sprayed from his mouth. Underneath the power of the force, he shot upward. His eyes filled with madness and his Cultivation base exploded, adding even more speed.

The entire process didn’t even take ten breaths of time. Meng Hao’s body rumbled as he suddenly… shot directly out from within the antenna.

By the time he flew out, the lands of the Demon Immortal Sect were completely collapsed and destroyed. The Sixth Peak and the Seventh Peak shook violently. Beneath them was revealed… a head that was as large as more than half the lands of the Demon Immortal Sect.

It had human features, but was covered with pitch-black scales. It had seven enormous horns, and a long antenna, the end of which glowed with a green light.

Its eyes were half open, and inside could be seen the blankness of awakening. There was also a shocking, indescribable energy pulsating off of its body.

This was… true spirit Night!

It had seven horns that could form mountains, and even though the head was only half emerged, its shocking aura was such that anyone who looked at it couldn’t help but feel their mind tremble.

Meng Hao shot back at top speed. He himself was nothing in comparison to true spirit Night. He couldn’t help but think back to the only thing which could possibly compare in size to true spirit Night, and that was Patriarch Reliance, with the State of Zhao on his back.

“All I did was take out a crappy mirror! Could that really stimulate this thing into awakening?!?!” Sweat poured down Meng Hao’s forehead as he shot toward the location of the other South Heaven Cultivators, all of whom were staring in astonishment at true spirit Night.

Their minds were filled with roaring, and they were incapable of even speaking half a sentence. At the same time, they were on the verge of becoming completely transparent, making them appear like shadows.

Meng Hao flew as fast as he could, using all of the power of his Cultivation base, the green smoke, the black moon. However, almost the same moment in which he reached the exit, behind him, true spirit Night uttered the first sound that was not a wail.

“NIGHT!!”

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# Chapter 621: He’s My Little Brother

In the same moment in which the voice of true spirit Night echoed out, the Cultivators from South Heaven were being surrounded by starlight. Within the starlight were countless motes and fragments, which mixed with the starlight to cover everything and transform it all into a river of stars.

The river of stars was like a beam filled with countless motes of light that gathered momentum as it unfurled, sweeping up all of the Cultivators in preparation to return to South Heaven. After all, they had been swept up and carried to this place by the river of stars, it was only natural that they would be taken away in the same method.

Upon seeing the river of stars, everyone felt a little bit more relaxed, although they wished it would finish forming up faster. Considering how quickly things were going out of control, they wanted to leave as soon as possible to get out of danger.

As of now, this was not the Fourth Plane of the ancient Demon Immortal Sect. This was… the hitherto unknown Fifth Plane!

The Fifth Plane, the awakening of true spirit Night!

As true spirit Night’s voice echoed out, the land and sky in all directions twisted, and ghost images seemed to appear. The entire world seemed to revert to ancient times. Countless figures flew about, and everything flourished. But then sometimes, everything would become ruins, filled with corpses. And then it would simply be Night, head raised, the Seven Peaks turned into horns!

Ghost images flickered over the entire world. True spirit Night… had now thoroughly lifted up its head from within the land.

When true spirit Night slept, the world was a dream. When true spirit Night awoke, calamity came to Heaven and Earth!

Meng Hao panted, and the South Heaven Cultivators watched on in alarm. Although the bodies of the crowd were half transparent, they couldn’t help but back up nervously and wish fervently that they could teleport away as soon as possible.

After letting out an incredible roar, the colossal head of true spirit Night suddenly… spoke, its voice indistinct: “Give my precious mirror… back to me!”

The voice echoed back and forth, causing Meng Hao’s mind to tremble as he coughed up a mouthful of blood. The South Heaven Cultivators mind’s felt as if they were being exploded by lightning; the sound of the voice was deafening.

A moment later, the South Heaven Cultivators all looked over at Meng Hao. One by one they began to express their astonishment.

“What treasure did Meng Hao take?!?!”

“Don’t tell me he stole a precious treasure from that Demon beast, causing it to awaken!?!?”

“Precious mirror… could it be… could it be that it’s talking about the continental mirror we saw in the Fourth Plane?”

As their voices rang out, their eyes began to fill with shock and amazement, as well as intense jealousy.

“Take out the continental mirror… and return it to me!” said true spirit Night. This time, its voice was clearer. As it spoke, massive amounts of lightning began to rise up around the seven mountain peaks.

Before Meng Hao could open his mouth to speak, the group from South Heaven began to pant as they understood the meaning of Night’s words.

The continental mirror of the Fourth Plane, which contained innumerable precious treasures, had actually… been taken away by Meng Hao!!

The eyes of virtually all of the South Heaven Cultivators instantly went red. Even Fang Yu was breathing heavily and looking at Meng Hao with an expression of disbelief.

Wang Lihai, Han Bei, Li Shiqi, and the others all appeared to be in complete disbelief, their minds shaken to the extreme.

They couldn’t even begin to imagine how Meng Hao had managed to take away the continental mirror.

The Ji Clan members’ eyes were wide. The Cultivators from the Northern Reaches and the Southern Domain were panting. Everyone was completely flabbergasted by this new information.

Xu Qing’s face was also filled with disbelief. She looked at Meng Hao, and then a smile broke out on her face.

Meng Hao frowned. Without saying a single world, he employed as much speed as he could to shoot out into the outside world. Most of his body was already starting to grow transparent, and he could clearly sense the power of teleportation.

At the same time, the river of stars was now almost completely materialized, seemingly endless and filled with innumerable motes of light. It began to sweep through the void, picking up the crowds of South Heaven Cultivators, including Meng Hao. It then spun and began to shoot off into the distance.

In the same moment in which Meng Hao and the others were swept up by the river of stars, the eyes of true spirit Night suddenly opened completely. Any sense of blankness within those eyes was completely wiped away, to be replaced with awareness. True spirit Night… was now fully awake!

The instant the complete awakening occurred, true spirit Night let out a roar that caused the entire world and even the void to instantly cease moving. Even the river of stars trembled and then stopped in place.

Meng Hao’s face fell, and the expressions of the South Heaven Cultivators were that of complete astonishment.

Suddenly, the land down below began to rumble and disintegrate as a gigantic arm slowly rose up. It was black and covered with scales, and only had four fingers. As it rose up from the ground, it left behind a gigantic pit. It was so long that it was almost impossible to see the entire arm, and as it stretched out, its palm was so large that it seemed big enough to cover up the entire sky.

The arm stretched out, snatching toward the river of stars.

“Get back here!” said true spirit Night, its voice rumbling up into the Heavens. Meng Hao’s body was completely out of his control as it flew out, pulled from the river of stars to shoot toward the giant hand.

In the blink of an eye, shockingly, he was standing on top of the giant hand. Meng Hao’s face was pale white, and his eyes shone with a sharp light. Now that Meng Hao had left the river of stars, it trembled once again, and then slowly began to move once again. The South Heaven Cultivators were now once more moving off into the distance.

“Meng Hao!” Xu Qing’s face fell, and she struggled to fly out, but was incapable of leaving the river of stars. Fang Yu’s face was also filled with anxiety. As for most of the others, they seemed to be rejoicing in the misfortune of the others.

“He’s dead! That Demon beast specifically kept him behind. He’s definitely going to die!”

“He stole that thing’s precious treasure! How could it possibly let him leave!?”

The Cultivators continued to watch as they moved off into the distance. True spirit Night retracted its palm, upon which Meng Hao stood, until Meng Hao was directly in front of it. His face was pale as he stood there on the palm, looking up at the colossal head, and true spirit Night’s two eyes.

Meng Hao’s right hand rested on his bag of holding, and a cold glow could be seen in his eyes. He knew he was no match for true spirit Night. Even a single breath from it could completely extinguish the flame of his life force. However, until the critical juncture of life or death arrived, Meng Hao would continue to go all out.

“You have no aura upon you which I find familiar….” said true spirit Night, looking over Meng Hao. Its right hand began to close into a fist. As it did, an indescribable pressure inundated Meng Hao. Cracking sounds could be heard, and blood sprayed from his mouth. His body seemed to be on the verge of completely collapsing; even his internal organs were on the verge of exploding.

However, there was still not even a scrap of fear in Meng Hao’s eyes. Instead, a touch of madness could be seen burning inside, which then turned into ferocity. Finally, he took a deep breath and prepared to pull out the copper mirror.

However, it was at this moment that a white-robed figure suddenly appeared in mid-air. He strode out step by step; in one moment he was far off in the distance; in the next moment, he stood in front of Meng Hao. His back was to him, and he stood there protectively, looking at true spirit Night.

He wore white robes and had long, dark grey hair. He was indescribably ancient and old. This was… Ke Jiusi!

“You may not harm him,” said Ke Jiusi calmly, staring up at true spirit Night, his voice filled with an incredible power. The energy caused Heaven and Earth to flicker with different colors, as if it was capable of fighting back against true spirit Night.

True spirit Night looked at Ke Jiusi. “I’ve awakened,” it said, its voice a drone. “There must be extermination of life.”

“He is a son approved by my father,” said Ke Jiusi quietly. Behind him, a tremor ran through Meng Hao. As he looked at Ke Jiusi, the warmth between him and Ke Yunhai in the Second Plane suddenly filled his heart.

“That was a dream!” said true spirit Night, its voice cold.

“Since my father approved of him, it doesn’t matter whether it was an illusion or not,” said Ke Jiusi slowly, a mysterious light flickering through his eyes. “He… is my little brother. With me here, nothing in existence, not even you, can harm him in the slightest bit, or even dare to try!”

As he spoke, an indescribable aura rose up.

Meng Hao stood there silently, looking at Ke Jiusi’s back. The hand that gripped his bag of holding slowly relaxed.

“I’ll… I’ll hand over the continental mirror….” said Meng Hao with a soft sigh. However, even as the words left his mouth, Ke Jiusi turned his head and gave Meng Hao a profound look.

This was the first time Meng Hao had ever seen Ke Jiusi’s face. In that moment, he almost thought that he was looking at Ke Yunhai. He gaped in shock at the familiar features.

However, it only took a moment for him to see that this was definitely not Ke Yunhai.

“You don’t need to hand it over,” said Ke Jiusi. He had watched moments ago as Meng Hao showed no fear in the face of death. And yet now, he was willing to hand over the continental mirror. Ke Jiusi understood, and it caused a gentleness to appear in the depths of his eyes. “Since you were able to take it away, it shows that you were destined for such good fortune. Besides… the awakening of true spirit Night doesn’t mean complete catastrophe.”

Ke Jiusi gazed at Meng Hao. “Do you trust me?”

Meng Hao looked at Ke Jiusi, at the features which so much resembled Ke Yunhai. Without hesitation, he replied, “I trust you!”

“In the past, Lord Li laid down orders that whoever awakened true spirit Night would be given two options.” With another deep look at Meng Hao, Ke Jiuisi turned to look back at true spirit Night. “Night, he is my little brother, so I will act on his behalf to make the decision. He will choose the second path!”

Night was silent for a long moment, its expression one of complexity. Finally, its gaze came to fall on Meng Hao.

Slowly, it began to explain. “Lord Li ordered that whichever life form wakes me up will be given two options. First option: return the continental mirror to me, and I will continue to sleep….

“Second option; do not return the mirror, and prepare yourself to acquire the qualifications to receive Lord Li’s legacy. Walk the three mountains, pass through the Holy Lands, ascend to the Fourth Heaven… acquire the legacy of Lord Li! If you fail… then you will stay behind as a guest in my dream.”

As its voice echoed out, it was audible to even the South Heaven Cultivators in the river of stars. When they heard the true spirit’s words, they gaped in shock. That was especially true of the Ji Clan members and the Cultivators from the Northern Reaches. They looked back at the distant Demon Immortal Sect, their eyes wide with disbelief, and more so, intense jealousy and madness.

“Just… just… just what kind of good fortune is this?!”

“Dammit! How is this possible? That’s not a catastrophe! Isn’t there supposed to be a catastrophe? Isn’t Meng Hao supposed to be exterminated? How could such good luck as this appear?!?! Lord Li’s legacy! Seriously? The legacy of Lord Li?!?!”

“It was so overbearing before, like it could destroy everything. How could things turn around and… become such good fortune!”

“The legacy of Lord Li?! I can’t accept this!!”

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# Chapter 622: Three Mountains, Nine Bows

The South Heaven Cultivators watched on with wide, disbelieving eyes. Their hearts were filled with complexity and jealousy. The emotions continued to ripple out until, eventually, they turned into avarice.

There were only a few people who were actually happy to see Meng Hao run into such good fortune. Most were just jealous to the point of hatred.

“Dammit! Why does it have to be him!?!? In the Second Plane he was an Elite Apprentice. In the Third Plane, he stole away all our treasures! In the Fourth Plane he acquired that precious treasure, the continental mirror. And now here in the Fifth Plane… he’s acquired the qualifications for the legacy of Lord Li!”

“Why does it have to be this way? By what right of virtue or ability does he fall into such good luck?! I can’t stand for this!”

“Worst of all is that we still owe him a huge debt! I myself owe 800,000 Spirit Stones….”

“I owe him 1,000,000 Spirit Stones! Dammit! Why can’t he just die here!”

Other than Xu Qing, Fang Yu, and few others, all the Cultivators from South Heaven gnashed their teeth, their jealousy of Meng Hao having risen to the pinnacle.

“He’ll be going back to the lands of South Heaven eventually!” said Ji Mingkong suddenly, his eyes flashing. As soon as he spoke, the eyes of the others began to flash.

“That’s right. He will be back in South Heaven eventually. And it doesn’t matter what he acquired, we will still have to report everything that happened when we get back to our Sects and Clans.”

“Look, all he did was acquire qualifications to get Lord Li’s legacy. As to whether or not he will actually acquire the legacy remains unknown!”

As the South Heaven Cultivators spoke among themselves, the river of stars which surrounded them made its way off into the distance. Gradually, they began to lose consciousness. Soon, all of their eyes were closed, and they were in a state of slumber, just as they had been when they arrived. The river of stars began to float back to the lands of South Heaven.

Meanwhile, back in the Demon Immortal Sect, Meng Hao stood on the palm of true spirit Night as it slowly lifted him up into the sky.

Ke Jiusi also stood on Night’s palm, looking at Meng Hao with an encouraging expression.

“This is your opportunity. As for how far you can get, that will depend on your personal good fortune.” With that, he flicked his sleeve and then stepped out and disappeared into mid-air.

Meng Hao’s heart shook. He could never have imagined that in the end, he could acquire qualifications to try to acquire Lord Li’s legacy. He panted as the enormous palm lifted him up into the sky. After that, shockingly… three inverted mountains appeared in front of him.

These were the three Greater Demon Mountains!

It was at this point that Night’s voice rumbled out.

“The first stage of the legacy is the approval of the Seven Peaks. You have already passed that stage.

“The second stage is to awaken me. You… already passed that stage too!

“The third stage involves bowing nine times to the three mountains. If you acquire the approval of all three mountains, then you can break through to the Second Heaven!

“For Jiusi’s sake, I will remind you… this stage can only be passed if you are destined to do so!”

“Destined….” thought Meng Hao, looking at the three inverted mountains up in the air. After a moment of silence, he closed his eyes, then opened them again. They shone with a brilliant light.

The first mountain was none other than the Frost Soil Demon Mountain. It was completely frozen over, and was filled inside with chaos, making it impossible to clearly see the whole mountain. However, Meng Hao could definitely sense the freezing pressure coming from the mountain.

This mountain seemed to be the coldest thing in Heaven and Earth, something even flames could do nothing to melt. It was if any other freezing cold thing in the world wouldn’t even dare to call itself cold while standing before this mountain!

If you looked closely at the decorations and patterns within the layers of ice, it almost looked as if they contained entire worlds. It was bizarre to the extreme!

Also visible on the mountain was a towering altar, upon which was a throne. Seated in the throne was what appeared to be a statue. The statue’s features were unclear, but its upraised right hand was held up into the air where apparently an ice flame had once burned!

By this point, Meng Hao was already panting. He shifted his gaze to look at the next mountain.

The second mountain was completely crimson, as if it overflowed with fresh, red blood. An indescribable, monstrous killing intent seemed to fill it, as if an uncountable number of lives were buried inside the mountain. The vast number of people who had died led to the overflow of fresh blood, thus turning the mountain completely red.

Killing intent circulated around, to the extent that even a single glance would cause one’s mind to fill with a mountain of corpses and a sea of blood.

There was also an altar on this mountain, upon which could be seen a blood-colored throne. A figure sat on this throne, its right hand raised up.

As soon as Meng Hao saw the figure, his mind trembled. A shocking scene appeared in his mind that was not exactly the same as this, but extremely similar.

“This is….” Meng Hao’s mind shook, and his breath came in ragged pants. After a moment, his eyes flickered as he suppressed his thoughts and emotions, then looked over at the third mountain.

Upon this mountain, flames raged. The flames were dim, but seemed incapable of burning out. Even stranger, upon looking at the mountain, ghost images would spring up in the mind, as if countless volcanoes existed. It made it impossible to tell which of the mountains was real, and which was false.

Eventually, the image of countless withered figures could be seen on the surface of the volcanic mountain. They looked like evil spirits, emitting noiseless howls as they climbed, struggling amongst each other to be the first to reach the peak of the mountain and then throw themselves into the pit of fire there.

There was no altar, no throne, no figure. This third mountain was completely different than the other two!

Three mountains, three Greater Demons of Heaven and Earth!

Of course, the three Greater Demons had long since perished. But even Lord Li would not have been capable of making their essences fade away. Therefore, the three mountains existed as before!

Panting, Meng Hao once again focused his gaze on the Frost Soil Demon Mountain. He then clasped hands and… bowed deeply!

First bow!

“I am connected by destiny to Han Shan,” he said. “I received his Immortal’s sword and his bronze flagon. Therefore, I should bow first to the Frost Soil Demon Mountain!” As his words rang out, the Frost Soil Demon Mountain suddenly trembled.

Cracking sounds could suddenly be heard from the entire mountain. Originally, ice spread out across the mountain, a power of sealing. But when Meng Hao bowed for the first time, that ice began to crack and split. More and more fissures spread out, creating a roaring sound that lifted up to the Heavens as Meng Hao straightened back up.

Down below, Ke Jiusi stood on the head of true spirit Night, on the Fourth Peak. When he saw what was happening, a strange light began to shine in his eyes. Even the eyes of true spirit Night began to glitter. “His first bow stirred up transformations in the Frost Soil Demon Mountain. He… truly is connected to the mountain by destiny. However, exactly how strong that destiny is remains to be seen. Can he ignite the Demonfire to illuminate the Third Heaven?!”

Meng Hao looked up at the Frost Soil Demon Mountain, then took a deep breath. He clasped hands and bowed again.

“My Earth-type totem is formed from Frost Soil. In the end, I created a Frost Soil Nascent Soul. This kindness, or destiny, leads me to bow again to the Demon Mountain!”

Second bow!

Boom!

As his voice rang out, a huge rumbling could be heard from the Frost Soil Demon Mountain. Even more cracks appeared on the layers of ice which covered the mountain. The cracks began to form together into something that looked like a face. The facial features were extremely lifelike; they were that of an old man, his face filled with ancientness as he looked at Meng Hao.

He seemed capable of seeing all of Meng Hao’s past with a single glance, as well as his future.

At the same time, something changed about the figure seated in the throne on the altar. The previously empty spot in its right hand suddenly flickered as blue sparks appeared. It looked as if a flame wished to ignite there!

When he saw this, Ke Jiusi’s eyes shone even brighter. As for true spirit Night, it said nothing, but a strange glow could be seen in its eyes.

Meng Hao looked up at the face of the old man in the layers of ice. He clasped his hands and bowed yet again, a look of determination in his eyes.

“I have an agreement with senior Han Shan. One day, when my Cultivation base is up to the task, I will return to the Realm of the Bridge Ruins to rescue him. That agreement is destiny, between myself and senior Han Shan. It is also destiny between myself and the Frost Soil Demon Mountain. Today, I repeat the same oath as before! 1

“Demon Mountain, please bear witness. This bow is evidence of the determination of Meng Hao of the junior generation!”

Not even the slightest sound could be heard from the Frost Soil Demon Mountain. It seemed to have no reaction whatsoever to Meng Hao’s third bow. Meng Hao felt his heart pounding; he knew that he had tried to pull a bit of a fast one with the third bow.

However, all of a sudden….

“Agreed!” said an ancient voice. It echoed out from the Frost Soil Demon Mountain, almost from within the depths of time itself. As the voice spread out through the area, it carried with it endless coldness which caused the world to distort and blur.

The word was spoken by the face of the old man. He looked deeply at Meng Hao for a moment, and then began to grow blurry. Cracking sounds could be heard as the cracks which made up the face spread out. They formed together to make a huge rift that spread from the top of the mountain to the bottom. It created a massive, scar-like mark, which stretched across the entirety of the mountain.

The mark stretched all the way to the altar, and the figure on the throne. A bang could be heard. The blue sparks which danced above the right hand of the figure suddenly began to form together, transforming into a blue flame.

As soon as the flame appeared, it illuminated the face of the figure. That face was exactly the same in all respects as Han Shan's!

The flame roared up, shining three portions of light into the sky up above.

Gradually, because of the light shone by the flame, two shocking, enormous objects became visible up in the sky. They floated high up above, looking even more majestic and shocking than the three Greater Demon Mountains.

A shocking, indescribable aura surround those two objects!

Meng Hao's mind trembled, and he closed his eyes. After calming himself, he opened his eyes again and then looked at the second mountain, the blood-colored Demon Mountain!

He clasped hands, looked at the Blood Demon Mountain, and then suddenly bowed. "I'm not sure if this mountain has anything to do with the ancient Temple of Doom. However, that is what this bow is for. If destiny exists, I implore the mountain to express itself!"

This was his fourth bow in total, and his first toward the Blood Demon Mountain!

——-

Thank you for your concern, everyone. Thank you. I'm fine. I just have a sore on my tongue, which makes it difficult to eat. I don't want to think about the past.

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# Chapter 623: Sky, ten. Meng Hao, seven!

The crimson Blood Demon Mountain was originally sealed as quietly as death. However, after Meng Hao's bow, an aura began to spread out from the figure on the throne…. It filled the entire Blood Demon Mountain, causing a bloody glow to shine up into the sky. In addition, an incredible rumbling sound could be heard.

Even as Meng Hao's heart trembled, his eyes began to shine with a strange light. Earlier, he had suspected that the Blood Demon Mountain had something to do with the Blood Immortal mask. After all, the figure on the throne looked very similar to the figure Meng Hao had seen in the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament all those years ago.

Most shocked of all, however, was true spirit Night. It looked up, its eyes seemingly filled with lightning, its expression one of disbelief. The fact that Meng Hao could acquire the approval of the Frost Soil Demon Mountain was shocking enough.

But now, it was obvious that he had a connection to the Blood Demon Mountain. The reaction of the Blood Demon Mountain caused true spirit Night to involuntarily tremble mentally.

"Three portions of light from the Frost Soil. One portion from the Blood Demon. Together, that is four portions! Could it be that he really is the person Lord Li has been waiting for?

"If he is, then how come I can't sense anything familiar about him?! He has no aura that I recognize, which does not conform with the requirements of Lord Li. That was why I didn't bestow him with the qualifications originally!” Night’s eyes glittered as it looked at Meng Hao. It could clearly examine all of Meng Hao’s person, but no matter how it looked through everything… it still felt that Meng Hao was full of mysteries.

“Are you, or are you not that person?” thought Night. “Regardless of whether you are or not, bowing nine times to the three mountains is not a simple matter. He still does not have enough approval. The approval in the beginning is only the first step.

“The approval of a Demon Mountain can give rise to three portions of light. The path to the Third Heaven depends on the approval of all three Demon Mountains. Three to nine portions of light make it possible for that path to appear!

“However… the path that appears with three portions of light is ordinary. Failure on that path will lead to the revoking of the qualifications. Only the path of six portions gives the participant three chances at the legacy, once every five hundred years!

“As for the path of nine portions of light… that is the legendary great circle. When it appears, failure still is followed by nine more chances, like a blessing from above. The path of nine portions is also called One Step to Immortality. If that person is already an Immortal, their Cultivation base can rise up to another realm. If they are not Immortal, they can achieve Immortal Ascension!

“I must see exactly how many portions of light this fellow will acquire!” Night’s eyes glittered as it looked at Meng Hao.

In contrast to true spirit Night, Ke Jiusi’s thoughts were not so complex. He watched on with an admiring smile, sincerely desiring that Meng Hao could acquire as many portions of light as possible.

Meng Hao took a deep breath as he looked at the quaking Blood Demon Mountain. Then he clasped hands and bowed for the fifth time.

At the same time, it was his second bow to the Blood Demon Mountain!

“Junior is connected by destiny to the ancient Temple of Doom. I formed a Blood Violet Nascent Soul. I gained enlightenment to realize that a boundless will of life exists within blood. Therefore, I bow to you, senior Demon Mountain.” Meng Hao’s bow was deep as he spoke these words.

Instantly, roaring could be heard from the Blood Demon Mountain. Bloody beams of light rose up into the air, interlocking to gradually form a blood-colored Demon flower. As soon as the flower appeared, a boundless radiance shone out. Crimson sparks suddenly appeared in the figure’s right hand.

This was the fifth portion of light. Two Demon Mountains, five portions of light. It caused the scene up above in the air to grow a bit clearer. As of now, it was possible to see two enormous land masses floating in the air far, far up above.

Each of these land masses were matchlessly majestic as they floated there up above, like two Holy Lands!

They were high, high up, as if they were looking down upon the entire world. They… really were Holy Lands. It didn’t matter if you were speaking of the Demon Immortal Sect or the Ninth Mountain and Sea as a whole, the Ji Clan and the Fang Clan Holy Lands were secondary only to the palace of Lord Li himself!

Even now as in the past, they were illustrious and famous throughout the Ninth Mountain and Sea, these enormous land masses that had continued on down throughout the ages.

Five portions of light filled Heaven and Earth. Suddenly, though, the fifth portion of light suddenly flickered again. Next, something happened that exceeded even the imaginations of true spirit Night and Ke Jiusi.

Even as the sparks appeared on the hand of the figure on the Blood Immortal Mountain, the figure’s eyes suddenly began to shine with a bizarre light. It stared at Meng Hao, then slowly lifted up its left hand and stretched it out, as if it were asking for something.

Meng Hao’s mind shook, and he lowered his hand to his bag of holding. Immediately, the Blood Immortal Mask appeared in his hand.

As soon as Meng Hao took out the Blood Immortal mask, the figure on the Blood Demon Mountain slowly withdrew its hand. A voice suddenly echoed out that seemed to come from countless years in the past.

“Put on my mask.”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he placed the Blood Immortal mask onto his face.

Boom!

Redness instantly spread out to cover Meng Hao’s entire body. His hair became red, his robe turned red, and in the blink of an eye, his entire body was surrounded by bands of blood-colored light. It looked almost like a sea of blood was raging around him.

In this instant, Meng Hao was the incarnation of the Blood Immortal.

Behind him, an image slowly came into being. An enormous throne was visible, seated upon which was a woman whose face could not be seen. Her hair swirled around her, and she seemed to be gazing off into the distance.

After the image appeared, the figure on the Blood Demon Mountain trembled. A huge roaring sound could be heard coming from inside it, and at the same time, a blazing tongue of Demonfire ignited. It instantly illuminated more of the sky above.

The entire sky was filled with the light of five portions of light, and now, close to six portions illuminated it even further. Within the light, an illusory staircase could be seen, leading up, up to the two Holy Lands and… the Third Heaven.

True spirit Night gasped. “He… he… he actually has destiny connecting him to the Blood Demon!!” Its face was a mass of disbelief. It could scarcely believe that Meng Hao would have destiny connected to both the

Frost Soil Demon Mountain and the Blood Demon Mountain. It was really shocking good fortune.

True spirit Night looked at Meng Hao, its mind spinning. “The Demon Mountains lift the seal. They have spoken of their own volition, which could never happen unless a certain level of destiny existed. Since such destiny has clearly reached the necessary level, it shows that Meng Hao is none other than a successor of the Blood Demon!

“He formed a Blood Demon Divine Clone, has a treasure made of the skin of the Blood Demon, and has even formed what is essentially a Demon Nascent Soul. Is this person… a Cultivator, or a Greater Demon of my generation!?

“Furthermore, he hasn’t even performed the sixth bow! And yet, the sixth portion of light has almost fully appeared already.”

Meng Hao clasped hands to perform his sixth bow, the third to the Blood Demon Mountain. “The kindness of the Blood Immortal legacy. The kindness of the Blood Mastiff in the way it escorted me. Junior will never forget these things for the rest of his life. Once again, senior, I bow to you, the essence of the mountain!”

After he bowed, the mountain rumbled. An endless echo could be heard, along with an ancient voice which slowly spoke out from within the Blood Demon Mountain.

“Agreed!” said the voice. A single word. However, as soon as that single word could be heard, the Demonfire towered up. This represented the complete and utter approval of the Blood Demon Mountain toward Meng Hao.

At the same time, light shone up into the sky. This was no longer six portions of light, but seven portions!

The sky had room for a total of ten portions, and now Meng Hao occupied seven!

The seven portions of light illuminated the majority of the boundless sky. The two Holy Lands were now even clearer. Gradually becoming visible were the restrictive spells which had sealed the Holy Lands for so many years. Also visible were countless vines hanging downward.

They looked as if they had been in confinement for far, far too long, and were finally being revealed at long last!

An unsightly expression appeared on the face of true spirit Night, and complex feelings arose in its heart. It knew that it was incapable of doing anything to revoke the qualifications of this person. Once six portions of light were revealed, a minimum of three chances were guaranteed.

Even if Meng Hao completely failed now, Night was incapable of harming him in the slightest, let alone demand the continental mirror be returned.

As long as Meng Hao had the qualifications, it was incapable of doing anything to him. It could only watch on helplessly as Meng Hao proceeded onward at will.

“Three mountains, nine bows. Already, six bows have been performed. The final three bows are for the Withering Flame Demon Mountain. That is the most difficult mountain of all. Even if he already has seven portions of light, it will still be impossible for him to get nine total!” Night’s eyes flickered as it looked at Meng Hao.

Ke Jiusi also looked at Meng Hao, a thoughtful expression in his eyes.

Meng Hao closed his eyes and calmed his heart. Then he looked up toward the last of the Demon Mountains. This was the mountain of raging flame, with a pit of fire at its peak that countless withered figures struggled to enter.

It almost seemed to be a location of reincarnation. By leaping into the pit, they could release themselves from worldly cares, find their true bodies, then leave and be reborn anew.

However, what Meng Hao saw was that every person who leaped into the fiery pit would once again be born as a withered figure, who would then again begin to climb. It seemed to be an endless cycle.

The more he watched, the more he realized that this was reincarnation.

Actually, this mountain’s true name was Reincarnation Demon Mountain. As for the name Withering Flame, it fit with its appearance, but not the meaning of the mountain. Of course, the Greater Demon which had given rise to this mountain had a technique called the Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao.

Therefore, the name Withering Flame was also not inappropriate.

Meng Hao looked silently at the Reincarnation Demon Mountain in front of him. He had been most confident regarding the Frost Soil, and secondarily, the Blood Demon. The only mountain he had no confidence in was this Reincarnation Demon Mountain.

If there was any destiny connecting him to this mountain, then at best it would be the technique he had acquired but not mastered in the Second Plane, the Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao.

Even as he hesitated, the Reincarnation Demon Mountain began to rumble of its own accord. Black smoke poured out from the fiery pit, rushing out to fill the sky, followed by endless flames.

Next, a voice spoke out from within, ancient and emotionless.

“Reincarnation Mountain needs no bows!

“Many years ago, there was a withered slave on this mountain who said that life is pain, and that he wished to free himself from the sea of bitterness. That sea is like an inescapable flame which can burn everything.

“Afterwards, he called this place Withering Flame, and made a solemn vow that he would eradicate the sea of bitterness. He would ensure that all living things no longer experience bitterness, but rather, freedom!

“If you were in his place, what would you do?!”

___

It snowed today, quite heavily. After coming back from the funeral procession, I cried for a long time.

I’ve never cried like that before, and I don’t know why I did this time.

I don’t feel like writing now, nor do I want to do anything. I just want to have some peace and quiet.

Brothers and Sisters, this will be my last day off. I’ll get back to work as usual tomorrow.

Thank you for your understanding. Thank you.

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# Chapter 624: Lofty Aspirations!

As the archaic voice from the Reincarnation Mountain echoed out, the entire mountain filled with a roaring sound. As the black smoke rose up into the air, an enormous, burning incense stick flew out from the mountain. It stood straight up in mid-air, surrounded by mist.

The incense burned slowly, emitting a smoke that fused with the mist around it so that few would be able to tell the difference between the two. It made it impossible to tell if the mist was concealed within the smoke, or the smoke gave rise to the mist.

The archaic voice once again echoed out into the silence. “If you have not provided an answer by the time the incense burns out, then the fire of the Reincarnation Mountain will not give up even half a portion of light.”

After that, the world was silent. Meng Hao stood in a daze, looking at the Reincarantion Mountain. He could see the black smoke and the dense flames spewing out of the mouth of the volcano. It made it seem as if the entire world was made of smoke and fire.

The sky had room for ten portions of light. He had acquired seven from the Frost Soil Demon Mountain and the Blood Demon Mountain. Right now, the remaining three portions were covered by the fire and smoke. Everything was dim and hazy….

Especially shocking was that the haziness affected the other seven portions of light up in the sky. At a glance, everything seemed to be covered with smoke. Trying to look up at the two Holy Lands was like trying to look at flowers in the fog, or at the moon in troubled waters.

“If I were in his place, what would I do?” thought Meng Hao. The Reincarnation Mountain did not require bowing, but rather, the heart and the mind. It required the essence of the person, something that could not be worn away by the passage of time.

Ke Jiusi watched on thoughtfully. Long ago, he had earned the same qualifications as Meng Hao. However, when facing the Reincarnation Mountain, he had only been able acquire two portions of light. That had left him with a sky filled with eight portions of light. In the end, he had failed to reach the Holy Lands.

As he watched Meng Hao now, he was reminded of himself all those years ago, when he had awoken to find the Demon Immortal Sect in ruins, and himself alone.

True spirit Night’s pupils constricted as it stared at Meng Hao. It knew that of the nine bows and three mountains of the Second Heaven, the Reincarnation Mountain was the most difficult! That was because… this mountain asked first regarding the heart, second regarding the Dao, and third regarding reincarnation!

“What will his answer be?” thought Night. According to its determination, Meng Hao was not the person it and Lord Li were waiting for. He was not destined to be the successor. However, Night was very curious as to what Meng Hao would say in response to the question from the Reincarnation Mountain.

As of this point, true spirit Night and Ke Jiusi had both noticed something, although they didn’t seem to care. Far off in the distance, a figure had appeared in the air, and was gazing at Meng Hao.

It was a woman, somewhat flirtatious in appearance, and extremely beautiful. It was, of course… Zhixiang!

Everyone from South Heaven had left. Only Meng Hao and Zhixiang remained behind!

In contrast to Meng Hao, the reason Zhixiang hadn't left was because she had no intention of returning to Planet South Heaven. Were it not for Meng Hao suddenly acquiring legacy qualifications, she would have long since left.

She looked over at Meng Hao and the third Demon Mountain, her expression one of both blankness and complex emotions.

"The augury of the almighty members of the Sect, which came at the expense of generations of accumulated skill, indicated that the successor of Lord Li would rise up from Planet East Victory. Only a few people within the Sect know of this.

"Meng Hao comes from Planet South Heaven. He is not the person decreed by fate to be the successor." Zhixiang let out a soft, inward sigh.

A moment later, Meng Hao's eyes glittered.

"There are many possible answers to the question posed by the Reincarnation Mountain," he thought. "Many theories could be proposed. If I assumed the identity of that slave of the Reincarnation Mountain, then I would have many choices in front of me." Hundreds of ideas flitted through Meng Hao's mind. After all, he was a scholar, and he still vividly remembered the Imperial Examinations he had attended in the State of Zhao, despite the fact that they had occurred hundreds of years ago.

Subconsciously, he analyzed the clues provided by the words given him.

After a few dozen breaths of time passed, his eyes began to glitter brightly. He opened his mouth to speak, but then was shocked to discover that he was incapable of speaking out the answer he had formulated.

It was as if as of this moment, his mouth had been sealed up, and he was a mute!

Meng Hao's mind trembled as he looked at the Reincarnation Mountain.

Ke Jiusi looked at Meng Hao and then slowly said, “Reincarnation Mountain asks three questions, and then seals your mouth. Any answer which does not conform to your soul, cannot be uttered. This first question is asked of your heart.

“Open your mind and heart. Search your soul. Find the true answer within you, and you will be able to speak it out. You are searching for your heart, your nature, your self.” A profound look flickered within Ke Jiusi’s eyes.

Meng Hao was silent for a bit longer. He looked at the incense stick, and saw that it was already one third burned out. His eyes filled with a complicated look, and then he closed them.

Everything was quiet….

“There was a withered slave on this mountain who said that life is pain,” thought Meng Hao. “He wished to free himself from the sea of bitterness. That sea is like an inescapable flame that can burn everything. Afterward, he called this place Withering Flame, and made a solemn vow that he would eradicate the sea of bitterness. He would ensure that all living things no longer experience bitterness, but rather, freedom!

“That was his choice. Perhaps that person was none other than one of the illustrious three Greater Demons of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, Withering Flame Demon!

“I don’t know how the other two Greater Demons of these Demon Mountains appeared, but as for Reincarnation Mountain, if even a single slave could become a Greater Demon… then this mountain is a defiance of the Heavens!” Meng Hao took a deep breath and then calmed himself inwardly.

“If I were him… facing the sea of bitterness, what would I do?” Meng Hao murmured. “Would I do the same as him, vow to eradicate the sea of bitterness? Or… would I make a different choice?” He gradually forgot that he was in the Demon Immortal Sect. He forgot everything as he immersed himself in his mind and heart, as he sank himself into his own soul.

He whispered to himself, seeking for the true answer within the depths of his own self.

Suddenly, a vision appeared to him. Within the vision, he was one of the slaves on Reincarnation Mountain. He climbed the mountain constantly, struggling to reach the summit and the pit of flames. Finally, he jumped in to be burned up by the flames and the molten rock inside.

When he opened his eyes again, he was at the bottom of the mountain, where he once again began to stride the same path as before. Over and over again, this happened, an endless cycle.

“He was right, but also wrong,” murmured Meng Hao.

“This could be viewed as a sea of bitterness, but also… not. If you believe everything to be bitterness, then it is. If you believe that everything is not bitterness, then it is not.

“Leaping into the pit of fire represents death. Reappearance at the bottom of the volcano represents birth. The climb up the mountain represents the process of life….

“I would not swear to eradicate this place. Nor would I sink myself into cowardliness. What I have… is the determination to set my foot where I wish to set it. I control my own fate. I may not be able to control my own birth, but I can decide how I die.

“And the final destination will definitely NOT be the pit at the top of the volcano.” Although he had been murmuring, Meng Hao’s voice actually echoed through the entire Demon Immortal Sect, even though he didn’t realize it.

As his voice echoed about, Meng Hao’s vision changed. His incarnation as a withered slave no longer conformed to the cycle. It did not leap into the fiery pit, but rather, stood outside of the volcano. Unlike the other withered slaves around him, he looked up into the sky, his expression no longer blank, but rather, awash with emotion.

It was as if… he had awakened. It was as if a black and white painting had suddenly been splashed with color.

He turned his back on the fiery pit and began to stride away from the mountain. He allowed himself to drop into the abyss, running counter to the fiery pit…. Finally, a smile appeared on his face.

“The path of life does not just run from the bottom of a mountain to its top….” he said lightly. In his mind, his incarnation as a withered slave fell off of Reincarnation Mountain. He did not turn to look back, but rather strode off into the distance.

Behind him, the countless other people on Reincarnation Mountain continued to repeat the same actions they did day after day. As for him, he drew further and further away from the mountain….

“If you believe it to be a sea of bitterness, then a sea of bitterness it is. If you believe it to simply be scenery on the path of life, then scenery it is…. The sea of bitterness never ends, but the scenery does.

“That is my answer.”

Meng Hao opened his eyes.

In that instant, he heard his own voice echoing out around him.

Ke Jiusi was shaken inwardly as he looked at Meng Hao. Meng Hao’s answer far exceeded what he could have anticipated. He had assumed Meng Hao would chose to eradicate the sea of bitterness, and then be reborn.

“If he does not die prematurely,” thought Ke Jiusi, “then the possibilities for his future are incalculable!” The shock in his eyes gradually turned into admiration. “His Cultivation base is nowhere close to mine, but his heart… is far bigger!”

Even more astonished was true spirit Night. It stared at Meng Hao, its mind roaring. Echoing in its mind were Meng Hao’s words: “The sea of bitterness never ends, but the scenery does.”

“Such a choice seems simple,” thought Night, “but if you analyze it carefully… his ambition far exceeds that of others! The makeup of his inner being is infinitely large!

“To him, the sea of bitterness can be likened to scenery on the path of life! The further he travels, the more scenery he will encounter!

“Reincarnation examines of the heart. It inquires of one’s essence, one’s nature and one’s self. His answer cannot be false. This man’s will… although spoken lightly, can shake the Heavens!”

Off in the distance, Zhixiang was breathing heavily. She had long since come to the conclusion that Meng Hao was beyond ordinary. But now that she had personally heard the expression of his heart, she suddenly realized that she had underestimated him.

“His choice represents his heart. It doesn’t matter if you talk about South Heaven or the Ninth Mountain and Sea, if he can survive, then all of this here will be a mere rest stop on his journey.

“As he strides forward, everything in existence will be forced to do nothing more than watch him walk off into the distance….”

As of now, no more mist or fire was visible coming out of Reincarnation Mountain. Even the incense stick had ceased burning. Everything was incredibly quiet.

Meng Hao looked at Reincarnation Mountain, and it seemed as if the mountain were looking back at him.

After the space of a few breaths, a shocking roaring sound could be heard that split Heaven and Earth. Everything began to quake and tremble.

“I shall bestow favor upon him with high aspirations!” said the grim, ancient voice. The voice words echoed out in all directions, a clear approval of Meng Hao.

At the same time, endless flames shot up into the sky, illuminating the firmament. Before, there were seven portions of light, but now, the light expanded as one more portion was added.

The entire sky was brightly lit by the eight portions of light which seemed to connect directly to the Third Heaven. The two Holy Lands were becoming increasingly clear.

There was also an incredible natural power that erupted from within the Reincarnation Mountain and then shot toward Meng Hao.

His body shook as his Cultivation base began to climb.

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# Chapter 625: I Am Still Searching!

His Cultivation base instantly began to rotate, and his hair rose up into the air around him. Power of Heaven and Earth came out of the Reincarnation Mountain, filled with a unique aura, to pour into Meng Hao's body. It entered through his pores, merging with him, causing his Cultivation base to spin more and more rapidly.

Meng Hao could hear his own heartbeat. Each thump gave rise to a rumbling that filled his body. Cracking sounds could be heard as his body gradually grew taller.

He became more slender, more charming, and as his hair danced around him, the Demonic air about him grew even more intense.

Meng Hao's Cultivation base was already half a step into Spirit Severing. In fact, when he entered the Eighth Anima, he could be considered true Spirit Severing; his battle with the Patriarch Huyan had thoroughly established how truly powerful he was.

If he wanted to, Meng Hao could simply close his eyes for a bit and attempt his first Severing. If he succeeded, he would have a Domain.

However, the matter of a Domain was far too important. Spirit Severing was a demarcation between Immortal and mortal, so that decision was not one that Meng Hao would make lightly. He needed enlightenment, from his life force, from his life in general. He needed to search for the path that led to understanding, then naturally, gain enlightenment of his own Domain. When he took that first step from being a mortal to being Immortal, that was the time for Spirit Severing!

In addition to those reasons, there was another reason. Meng Hao was very stubborn when it came to his Cultivation base. He did not want to use the Eighth Anima to enter Spirit Severing. He had a Perfect Foundation, as well as a Perfect Core. As for his Nascent Souls, he had used his own methods to acquire Perfection.

And yet, although merging his eight Nascent Souls into one seemed Perfect, that was not the limit!

“I need to form a ninth Nascent Soul!” A strange light gleamed in his eyes, and the ambition within him grew even stronger. He had started upon this path in his Cultivation, so he would do everything possible to acquire the pinnacle of good fortune.

Right now, his body rumbled as the power of Heaven and Earth from the Reincarnation Mountain’s aura surged into his body. His Cultivation base climbed up until it reached a certain point where it couldn’t go any higher. In accord with Meng Hao’s will, it settled and began to form together in his dantian region.

“My Five Elements Nascent Souls stem from my own enlightenment. Any outside power is auxiliary!” Within Meng Hao’s dantian region, the power of Heaven and Earth continued to surge in, slowly transforming into a vortex.

Surrounding the vortex were Meng Hao’s eight astonishing Nascent Souls!

“Wind power of the roc was gifted to me by the benefactor in the Rebirth Cave. It was hidden within my body for years, to eventually be refined into my sixth Nascent Soul!” A strange light shone in Meng Hao’s eyes. With every breath he took, more power of Heaven and Earth flowed into him.

“Lighting of Heavenly Tribulation. I experienced it on multiple occasions, starting with Foundation Establishment, all the way to the Nascent Soul stage. After enough accumulated within my body, I refined it into my seventh Nascent Soul!” Meng Hao’s insides rumbled as if with thunder, and the vortex in his dantian region spun faster and faster.

“Fleshly Sanctification allowed me to step foot into Spirit Severing. I congealed Qi and blood to form my eighth Nascent Soul!” The roaring grew more intense, causing Ke Jiusi to stare, and a strange gleam to appear in the eyes of true spirit Night.

A look of disbelief could be seen on Zhixiang’s face.

“This time, I will form a ninth Nascent Soul… purely with power from the outside.

“Now, if I want to make a ninth Nascent Soul purely from outside power,” thought Meng Hao, “well then… what I need to first do is reach… Qi Condensation, Foundation Establishment, Core Formation, and finally, concoct them into a Nascent Soul!”

Meng Hao’s hair whipped about in chaos, as if a wild gale was sweeping by. His clothes also fluttered madly. He was now thoroughly submerged in the power of Heaven and Earth from the aura of the Reincarnation Mountain, which surged around him in a vortex.

The vortex rapidly shrank, sucked in by Meng Hao. As that happened, his eyes grew increasingly radiant. Within his dantian region, a rumbling sound could be heard. The vortex was condensed to the maximum, to the level of the great circle of Qi Condensation. Then it began to form into Dao Pillars!

Dao Pillars indicated Foundation Establishment!

The sight of it caused Ke Jiusi to watch with even more concentration.

“He’s going to form another Nascent Soul. He’s cultivating… the Sublime Spirit Scripture!”

True spirit Night watched on silently, staring deeply at Meng Hao.

Most shocked of all was Zhixiang. Her eyes were wide as she watched Meng Hao absorbing the spiritual energy. She couldn’t help but clench her teeth, a pained expression on her face.

“That’s the aura of the Reincarnation Mountain. Meng Hao… is actually using that aura to form a Nascent Soul!! If I were able to absorb the aura, it would be incredibly beneficial to my Demon Immortal Body!”

Even as desperate pain filled Zhixiang’s heart, the rumbling vortex around Meng Hao completely disappeared, having been fully absorbed by him. Meng Hao was now a full head taller than he was before. An illusory aura surrounded him, making his entire person seem as if he were alternating between reality and illusion.

He took a deep breath, clasped hands and then bowed toward the Reincarnation Mountain.

The mountain did not need bows, but Meng Hao bowed anyway, because of the kindness of the mountain.

When he rose up, the Reincarnation Mountain rumbled again. Black smoke roiled out, and flames shot up into the air, filling the sky. The smoke gradually formed together into a figure.

It was a man, wearing a black robe, his features unclear. However, he emanated a feeling of indescribable age that spread out in all directions.

He seemed to be looking at Meng Hao. After a moment passed, a hoarse voice could be heard, filled with cold emotionlessness.

“When Withering Flame left the mountain, he wished to borrow a Demon heart from me. At that time, I asked him a question.

“‘What is the Dao!?’

“I have asked the same question of many people, and only three have given me answers worthy of remembering. One of them said that the Dao is a path. There are three thousand great Daos, and thus, three thousand paths. Different paths for different people, nothing more, nothing less. One should continue forward, regardless of whether or not there is a path beneath one’s feet! The person who provided that answer… became Lord Li!

“The second answer was that the Dao is eternal and unchangeable. It is the only truth in Heaven and Earth. It is possible to look at it, but never touch it… to understand it, but never be able to explain it. If you understand, you understand. If you don’t understand… then even spending your whole life searching will not gain you enlightenment. The person who spoke those words became Lord Ji.

“The third answer was provided by Withering Flame. He said that the Dao is the heart, and that the heart is obsession. His desire to eradicate the sea of bitterness was an obsession that took him over. It grew deeper and deeper. Were he to have truly eradicated the sea of bitterness, then his Dao… would be a natural law of Heaven and Earth!

“Eternity is always here. He may have perished, but the Dao exists forever.

“He said that all the rules and laws that exist in the world have their basis in the powerful experts that existed on the path, as well as the realization of their Daos!

“If a person’s Dao is the belief that the sky must be separated into periods of night and day, then the Heavens will provide such a cycle.

“Life can be extinguished, but the Dao exists forever. Life… is lived in order to leave a good name throughout the ages after one dies, to cause one’s Dao to remain, to transform into natural law, to be without regret.

“Because of his answer, he was able to borrow one of my three third-grade Demon Hearts.

“Now, you must answer me. In your belief, what is the Dao? You have the time it takes one incense stick to burn, and you may not refrain from answering.”

As Meng Hao listened to the words of the Reincarnation Mountain, his heart filled with great waves. He could identify with Lord Li’s answer. As for Lord Ji’s answer, it also contained truth.

As for the answer given by Greater Demon Withering Flame that year, it caused Meng Hao’s mind to tremble like a seething ocean. Perhaps that answer was also the truth.

“Is the reason that the Reincarnation Mountain can only remember these three answers, because those three answers fully explain the meaning of the character Dao ?” He stood there silently.

“What is the Dao?” he asked himself. A glow appeared in his eyes, but he couldn’t think of an answer. He had heard many people use this character, Dao, but down to this day it only felt as if he were groping about on the edges of its meaning.

Even as Meng Hao sank into thought, a second incense burner appeared from within the black smoke. The smoke churned, and the incense stick began to burn.

Everything was still and quiet. The incense stick burned slowly, and time passed. However, Meng Hao still did not provide an answer. His eyes were filled with a blank look.

Soon, the incense stick was reaching its end. Ninety percent had burned. Ke Jiusi sighed as he looked at Meng Hao, a look of pity in his eyes.

True spirit Night was silent, but it also sighed inwardly. “So, it turns out he is not the person Lord Li is waiting for….”

Zhixiang’s heart was filled with complex emotions. She looked at Meng Hao, and then the incense stick which was almost burned out. She shook her head.

It was at this moment that Meng Hao’s eyes began to shine brightly. The blankness from before vanished. He looked up at the Reincarnation Mountain and slowly began to speak.

“I don’t know what the answer is,” he murmured. “My Cultivation base won’t permit me to understand what the Dao is….

“To me, the Dao is very simple. It is talking, speaking, opening your mouth, and letting other people open their mouths. All of that is the Dao, speaking. Speaking the words from your heart, speaking out the thoughts you wish to express.

“It doesn’t require enlightenment, nor obsession. It doesn’t require a path beneath your feet. Perhaps it is the first voice of all living creatures, of everything under the Heavens.

“When that voice can be heard, it is the Dao, it is speaking!” Meng Hao had organized his thoughts and spoken out what he understood about the Dao, based upon his current realm.

He didn’t know if what he had said was true or correct. In fact, he hadn’t wanted to speak at all, but he had no choice but to ignore those feelings. All he could do was explain what he understood about the Dao.

By this time, the incense stick had burned down to the end. It flickered, on the verge of being completely extinguished. “At the same time,” he continued, “when that voice speaks, it represents a direction!

“The boundless Heavens and Earth are the final resting place of all living things. Life is like a journey, filled with various scenery, various paths.

“Sometimes, you might think there is only one path for you. Sometimes, your heart’s obsession creates a path.

“As for the Dao, it is a direction. That direction can guide you through your life. When you are faced with countless decisions, it can lead you down the paths you must tread. In the end… it can help you pick which path to take!

“It is formed after one experiences the vicissitudes of life, the cleansing of time, and the understanding which comes from experiencing the world. It can be hidden in any time, place, direction, or action….

“That is my understanding of the Dao. It points in a direction, and gives me the strength to proceed onward. Perhaps it doesn’t even exist, or perhaps it is everywhere.

“As for me, I am still searching for it….” He lifted his head up to look at the Reincarnation Mountain.

The Reincarnation Mountain was silent. Ke Jiusi was silent. True spirit Night was silent.

Zhixiang was also silent.

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# Chapter 626: Ninth Nascent Soul, Demon Nascent Soul!

The incense stick burned out!

An intense rumbling could be heard from within the Reincarnation Mountain, seemingly in approval of Meng Hao. The sound of it echoed about in all directions, causing Heaven and Earth to shake. The black smoke churned, and the flames within swept about in all directions. The light in the sky grew brighter to a shocking degree.

One and a half portions of light were added.

The sky had room for ten portions of light. As of now, the three Greater Demon Mountains were illuminated by nine portions.

The Heavens were filled with brightness, as if it were high noon. The two Holy Lands of the Third Heaven were now fully illuminated. The vegetation and buildings there were clearly distinguishable.

In fact, it was also possible to see that in one of the Holy Lands, an enormous pagoda rose up, upon which was carved a huge character.

Ji!

The character seemed ancient, although that was something that mortals would not be able to see. Even most Cultivators, unless they were sensitive to the power of Time, would have difficulty picking up any clues. However, to Meng Hao, that sensation was secondary to that of the Holy Lands themselves.

The Holy Lands had existed for tens upon tens of thousands of years before the Ji Character came to be.

That made sense according to the legends regarding Lord Ji. The Ji Clan originally did not have that surname. It was only after seizing Lordship of the Ninth Mountain and Sea that the name was changed, and the Heavens were placed onto top of the Li Clan.

An ancient voice spoke out from the Reincarnation Mountain. Although the voice was cold, it seemed to be filled with sentiment as it slowly reverberated out.

“The Dao is a direction…. The words of an innocent child.

“I will remember this answer.” Even as the voice spoke, the power of Heaven and Earth contained in the aura of the Reincarnation Mountain erupted out from the mouth of the volcano. It was so thick that it seemed as if it would take on corporeal form, as if it were actually a waterfall. The sheer amount exceeded that of the previous occasion exponentially as it shot toward Meng Hao.

It neared and then surrounded him, rumbling as it formed into a huge vortex with Meng Hao in the very middle. He took a deep breath, like a dragon inhaling, and the power of Heaven and Earth poured into his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, as well as all the pores in his body. It shot in and then began to accumulate in his dantian region.

It fused into the Dao Pillars, causing a surging power that pushed Meng Hao’s Cultivation base up. The Dao Pillars began to shine with endless light. At the same time, the Nascent Souls inside of him suddenly flew out one by one to float around him.

When the Eighth Nascent Soul appeared, it made a thoroughly astonishing scene.

As the eight Nascent Souls rotated around Meng Hao, shockingly, they too began to absorb the power of Heaven and Earth that contained the aura of the Reincarnation Mountain. It poured into Meng Hao's body and continued the transformation process that would end with… a ninth Nascent Soul!

Boom!

The endless light from the Dao Pillars exploded into pieces, which then began to form together into a glittering core the size of a grain of rice!

Early Core Formation!

As soon as the core appeared, the speed with which Meng Hao absorbed the power of Heaven and Earth increased by more than ten times. By adding in the eight Nascent Souls, it only took the space of a few dozen breaths for the boundless vortex surrounding him to rapidly shrink.

After it disappeared, Meng Hao's face flickered. He suddenly looked up, his eyes glowing. There in his dantian region was a core roughly the size of an infant's fist!

The Cultivation base of the core instantly shot upward. Mid Core Formation. Late Core Formation. All the way to… the great circle of Core Formation.

The core emanated colorful lights, and appeared to be a Mottled Core. However, inside of it was a unique aura…. As soon as Meng Hao sensed the aura, he recognized it.

It was… Demonic Qi!!

This was a… Demon Core!

The Reincarnation Mountain was the essence of a Greater Demon. One of the withered slaves on the mountain achieved his Dao, then became one of the three Greater Demons who could rebuke the Heavens. From this it could be seen how shocking the Reincarnation Mountain was.

As of now, Meng Hao could see that the power of Heaven and Earth that contained the aura of the Reincarnation Mountain, was actually Demonic

Qi. Since he had absorbed Demonic Qi for this cultivation, then naturally, he had produced a Demon Core.

That meant that his ninth Nascent Soul would obviously be… a Demon Nascent Soul.

Ninth Nascent Soul, Demon Nascent Soul!

“With one more round of this power of Heaven and Earth, I can cause my Demon Nascent Soul to appear.” His eyes shone with a bizarre light, and he looked up at the Reincarnation Mountain with a look of anticipation.

He could sense the Demon Core within him, at the great circle of Core Formation. He was just one step away from forming a Nascent Soul.

The rumbling from the Reincarnation Mountain gradually faded away, and the mountain returned to normal. Black smoke surged out and flames rose up into the sky. The ancient, cold voice once again sounded out.

“No more questions are required of you.

“As you said, your current realm and Cultivation base do not permit you to know what the Dao is….

“Asking you the third question would result in nothing more but empty talk. You would neither move my heart, nor yours.

“Therefore, not asking the question is the most appropriate course of action.

“However, I am very curious. If your Dao is a direction, and you are still searching, then… have you found any traces of it?” The last question asked by the ancient voice echoed out in all directions.

Meng Hao was silent for a moment. His eyes glowed with reminiscence, but after a long time, he clasped hands toward the Reincarnation Mountain and bowed. When he straightened up, his voice was soft as he began to speak. “Many years ago,” he murmured, “on a night when snow filled the world, I sat together with someone in a horse-drawn carriage.

“It was bitterly cold outside, but there was an oven inside the carriage, making it very warm. It was as if there were two different worlds, separated from each other. At that time, I had just stepped foot into the Cultivation world. I was no longer a mortal, but a Cultivator. When I looked outside at the snow, I felt that I was looking at myself.

“The snow can only exist during the dead of winter. It may yearn for summer days, and for warmth, but if it nears them, it will melt. I am much the same. After striding forward into the Cultivation world, I could not turn my head back, nor could I ever experience the peace and tranquility I once had.” Of course, Meng Hao was thinking back to that year in the State of Zhao, when he had spent some time in the carriage with scholar Zheng Yong. 1

“I was once a mere scholar…. I remember how when I finally left my hometown. It was raining…. 2

“My life is like snow. I can only exist within winter. I may wish to return to the sunny days of the mortal world, but that is no longer me….

“Life is like a journey, filled with countless different experiences. Perhaps it is best to say that different experience create different scenery on that journey. If you experience bitterly cold wind, you will become snow. If you experience the blazing sun, then you become rain….

“The type of life you experience determines what type of person you will be. That is what makes life wonderful.”

Ke Jiusi looked at Meng Hao, and many thoughts floated up in his mind. He thought of Ke Yunhai, and thought of his own life. What he saw was everything that had happened to him, and this world.

“I’ve already been here for a long time, filled with nostalgia….”

True spirit Night sighed. Meng Hao’s words did not contain some great Dao. However, the words had touched it nonetheless. Before this moment, it would never have believed that some tiny Cultivator who could not stand up to a single blow from it, would be qualified to move it emotionally.

Zhixiang looked at Meng Hao, once again experiencing how extraordinary Meng Hao was. It made her think back to all her own experiences in life.

“To me, the Dao is a direction,” continued Meng Hao. “I think… that such a belief sprouted during that time in the snow. It led me… led me to a place far away.

“Many years later,” he murmured, thinking back to Pill Demon, “I kowtowed to my Master in a world of illusory reincarnation. During that life, I kowtowed three times. The kowtow of Innocence, the kowtow of the Roaming, and the kowtow of Sunset Gazing. At that time, I was enlightened. 3

“In that moment, I understood that life is a journey. Every turn in the path leads to new scenery. My footprints exist on that path, and as to whether they are deep or shallow, it doesn’t matter. All the decisions were mine to make.

“Heaven and Earth are just resting places for the myriads of living creatures. Time represents the passage of hundreds of generations of passing travelers.” 4

Having spoken up to this point, Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly shone with a bright light. It seemed that as of this moment, there was something clearly different about him than before.

“That is the direction I chose. Although the way is a bit unclear, there are traces visible.

“Whether you speak of our time on earth, or reincarnation, life is a journey. The sea of bitterness is only one bit of scenery, that’s all. The most important thing is to leave our mark on the path that we have walked and experienced.

“As for me, I want to keep walking even further off into the distance!” With that, Meng Hao took a deep breath, clasped hands, and once again bowed deeply to the Reincarnation Mountain.

Laughter echoed out from within Reincarnation Mountain. The echoing laughter caused the black smoke to disperse, and the flames to die out, and the sky to be filled with ripples.

“The resting place for myriads of living creatures? Excellent. Hundreds of generations of passing travelers? Wonderful! And you want to walk further off into the distance? Well said!

“Well, you have answered my three questions. Allow me to provide you some assistance to walk further off into the distance!” As the voice faded away, the Reincarnation Mountain once again began to rumble. This time, the power of Heaven and Earth that exploded out of it was dozens of times stronger than before. It shot out from the mouth of the volcano, shooting through the air toward Meng Hao. It circulated around him and then transformed into a magnificent vortex.

The vortex spun rapidly and then began to pour into Meng Hao.

His mind rumbled, and the multi-colored Demon Core inside his dantian region instantly began to fill with cracks. They spread out, multiplying for the space of a handful of breaths. Finally, the core collapsed, and a tiny, illusory person appeared from within!

The person looked exactly the same as Meng Hao in every way. The only difference was that the Demonic air about it was more obvious. This was Meng Hao’s ninth Nascent Soul, the Demon Nascent Soul.

As soon as it appeared, it appeared weak. Its eyes were closed and incapable of being opened, and overall it was completely incapable of even comparing with Meng Hao’s eight other Nascent Souls. However, as more of the power of Heaven and Earth poured into it, it began to mature.

Peak of the early Nascent Soul stage!

Mid Nascent Soul stage!

Peak mid Nascent Soul stage!

Late Nascent Soul stage!

Meng Hao’s hair whipped about his head and he began to float up into the air. His eight Nascent Souls rotated around him, while the Demon Nascent Soul remained inside, the vortex surrounding it rapidly shrinking. Soon, all of the power of Heaven and Earth was pouring into Meng Hao’s body.

The Demon Nascent Soul sucked it all in. Suddenly, the aura of the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage radiated out. At the same time, the ninth Nascent Soul flew out from his dantian region to fly around him.

It joined the other Nascent Souls to float in a circle around Meng Hao. Finally, its eyes, which had been closed the entire time, suddenly opened.

Its pupils were green and completely demonic.

Ninth Nascent Soul… Demon Nascent Soul!

Meng Hao’s Cultivation base experienced an unprecedented explosion in power.

The wind whipped around him, and Heaven and Earth flashed with a riot of colors. As of this moment, Meng Hao was the focus of attention of the entire Demon Immortal Sect.

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# Chapter 627: A True Man!

“Agreed!” said the Reincarnation Mountain, its final word.

As the sound echoed out, a brilliant light surrounded the mountain. It pierced the sky, filling it with ten portions of light. Nine portions of light had already been bright.

As of now, the light was piercing, illuminating everything completely!

Light shone down from up above, filling the entire world with brightness, making the two Holy Lands completely clear.

Now, a tall pagoda was visible on the other Holy Land, upon which a large character could be seen.

Fang!

In the past, Lord Li had two great generals who were the basis of the two Holy Lands. In later generations, one of those generals came to be called Ji. The other was named Fang; had been, and always would be!

Meng Hao’s mind trembled and he took a deep breath. One by one, the nine great Nascent Souls that spun around him reentered his body to sit cross-legged in his dantian region. As they returned, Meng Hao’s Cultivation base climbed up again. He could sense that he now had the power to enter the Ninth Anima!

That would be fearsome power equal to 256 great circle Nascent Soul Cultivation bases, as well as an intense fleshly body power that could reach a shocking realm.

Meng Hao looked up. He saw the Reincarnation Mountain, and then, above all the three Greater Demon Mountains, the fully illuminated Third Heaven.

He could sense an enormous, terrifying pressure weighing down from the Third Heaven. Even with his nine Nascent Souls, it was something he couldn't possibly even touch.

“Even Spirit Severing would be incapable of breaking through,” thought Meng Hao, his eyes glittering. “Only a higher stage, higher than Dao Seeking, would have even a chance.”

The voice of true spirit Night suddenly could be heard echoing about, filled with complex emotions. “You acquired ten portions of light…. I never thought that could happen.

“If you acquired only six, I wouldn't stand in your way. That would especially be the case if you acquired nine. But you acquired ten.

“The sky has room for ten portions, and you occupied them all….

“Nine portions of light qualifies you to have nine chances. As for ten portions of light…. you are qualified to unlimited chances. As long as no one acquires the legacy of Lord Li before you do, then most likely, that legacy belongs to you.

“However, I advise you not to attempt to break through to the Third Heaven before Immortal Ascension.”

Meng Hao's eyes glittered as he looked up to see true spirit Night staring at him.

Ke Jiusi was silent for a moment, then looked at Meng Hao and quietly said, “Ten portions of light is the pinnacle. I also advise you not to attempt to break through this time. The Third Heaven is not a place for those who are not Immortals. Furthermore, the ten portions of light contain incredible good fortune that cannot be acquired unless you are Immortal.”

Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed to Ke Jiusi. As he rose, he looked at him and said, “I want to try.”

Ke Jiusi looked at Meng Hao. When he saw his staunchness, he held his tongue, and did nothing to block his way.

True spirit Night similarly said nothing.

Meng Hao took a breath and the flashed up into the sky, transforming into a beam of colorful light. He shot directly toward the Third Heaven, and the Fang Clan Holy Land.

As soon as he flew up into the air, everything began to shake. An enormous pressure descended, causing Meng Hao’s body to instantly stop in mid-air. It was as if all the bones in his body were making cracking sounds. His entire person felt as if it were being grabbed by a giant hand, and then crushed into pieces.

At the same time, something that seemed like a giant net wrapped him, causing his body to weaken rapidly.

All of this was when he had just started out! He was still far, far away from the Third Heaven!

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as, without hesitation, he entered directly into the Third Anima.

Three great Nascent Souls merged together. The fact that he had a Cultivation base equal to four great circle Nascent Souls was secondary; his fleshly body power was the key. Meng Hao lifted his head up and laughed.

Boom!

The pressure surrounding him quavered, and the force wrapping up his Cultivation base loosened a bit. Meng Hao once again flew upward, shooting up roughly 3,000 meters.

The sky was 30,000 meters high, which meant that Meng Hao had only forced his way ten percent of the way toward the Third Heaven.

In his position 3,000 meters up, Meng Hao began to pant. His body felt as if it were sinking into waters of weakness. The force wrapping around him emitted intense pressure, causing his body to distort.

“Fifth Anima!”

Boom!

Meng Hao’s body shook. He now had a Cultivation base equal to 16 great circle Nascent Souls, and his fleshly body was close to Spirit Severing. He was able to cast off the pressure surrounding him, once again forcing his way up. Soon, he had reached the 6,000 meter mark.

At that point, the pressure in the area bore down with overbearing aggression. It seemed ready to crush Meng Hao in an instant. His face flickered, but he didn’t hesitate.

“Seventh Anima!”

After entering the Seventh Anima, the power of 64 great circle Nascent Souls filled him, and his fleshly body was at the Spirit Severing stage. Meng Hao lifted his head up and roared, then forced himself up, fighting back against the pressure. Roaring echoed out as he faced directly against the increasingly intense pressure to fly up another 3,000 meters. He had now reached a total height of 9,000 meters.

By this point, Meng Hao was panting. The pressure here was such that it would instantly destroy any Cultivator who was under Spirit Severing, exterminating them in mind and spirit.

As for Meng Hao, if he didn’t have his incredibly powerful fleshly body, then he too would be destroyed. His face was now extremely unsightly.

However, a smile could also be seen on his face, and a wild determination appeared in his eyes.

“Eighth Anima!”

Boom!!

Meng Hao laughed toward the Heavens as his Cultivation base exploded up. His Cultivation base was risen up to a power equivalent to 128 great circle Nascent Souls. His hair whipped about and his clothes fluttered. His fleshly body grew even more intensely powerful. Cracking sounds could be heard as he seemed to grow taller. Within him, every inch of bone, flesh, and blood burst with endless power.

His fleshly body grew even more powerful than before!

The Eighth Anima was something that could imperil First Severing Cultivators!

Patriarch Huyan, who was of the great circle of the First Severing, couldn’t stand up to a single blow when Meng Hao was in the Eighth Anima!

The pressure surrounding Meng Hao shattered, and his body flew up again. The sight of it caused Ke Jiusi to be moved visibly. A profound look appeared in the eyes of true spirit Night.

To them, Meng Hao’s Cultivation base wasn’t even worth mentioning. However, Meng Hao’s will, his determination, and his decisiveness caused their minds to tremble.

Off in the distance, Zhixiang was staring fixedly at the scene. Her heart was also trembling, moved by Meng Hao’s persistence, perseverance, and tenacity.

Although Meng Hao’s Cultivation base was far from any of these people, he had already forced his way to the 12,000 meter position. Such a high position was nearly at the halfway point. The pressure was intense, and as Meng Hao neared, he coughed up a mouthful of blood.

His fleshly body was powerful, but underneath this pressure, it twisted and distorted, emitting groaning and creaking sounds. Even the Cultivation base power of 128 great circle Nascent Nascent Souls was defeated with a boom.

As of this moment, it seemed he had reached the end….

Meng Hao’s eyes filled with an intense light. He could accept that he couldn’t go further, but what he couldn’t accept was that he couldn’t reach the halfway point!

“Ninth Anima!”

As his voice rang out from the 12,000 meter level, his body suddenly shook.

White hair appeared on his head as his longevity was sucked away at a terrifyingly rapid rate. However, at the same time, his Cultivation base… began an unprecedentedly mad climb.

128, 151, 178, 193… all the way to 200!

Not too long ago, when he had acquired his eighth Nascent Soul, during the time when his Cultivation base climbed from the power of 64 great circle Nascent Souls to reach the power of 100, he had felt as if he were equivalent to Spirit Severing.

If 100 great circle Nascent Souls was similar to Spirit Severing, well, as of this moment, he had 200!

After reaching the Cultivation base power of 200 great circle Nascent Souls, Meng Hao’s energy changed in an earth-shaking way. The pressure around him once again collapsed, and was completely incapable of doing anything to stop him. Now, nothing prevented him from pushing onward, climbing up!

203, 210, 230… all the way to 256!

The power of 256 great circle Nascent Souls caused the sky and land to dim, and the wind to scream. Roaring echoed out, and Meng Hao’s entire body turned into something like a shooting star that charged upward.

His fleshly body also experienced incredible growth. It was tougher and more powerful. Furthermore, it was at this point that gradually, complex markings began to appear all over his body!

The marks glittered brightly, and seemed to contain laws of Heaven and Earth. They appeared to be branded on him from the void, causing his energy to once again shake everything.

13,000 meters. 13,500 meters. 14,500 meters… all the way to 15,000 meters!

15,000 meters in the air was the halfway point!

Meng Hao’s body trembled, and blood oozed from his mouth. His hair was now more than half white. His body was tall and slender, and his energy intense. As he hovered in the 15,000 meter position, he did not wipe the blood from his mouth, but instead lifted his head up and laughed.

Then, he raised his foot and… moved forward once again, by and entire three meters!

Meng Hao’s imposing manner, his demeanor, and his appearance in this moment caused Ke Jiusi, true spirit Night, and Zhixiang, to all be shaken.

When was a man most attractive?

In a moment like this!

When was a man the most righteous hero?

In a moment like this!

There is an expression that describes a person as being ‘indescribably beautiful and striking.’ That is usually used to describe women. There is another expression. ‘Who can do it except for me?’ That expression is used to describe a true man!

At any time or place, a true man who stands out from the crowd, a passionate, true man, is like a hero, a person just as attractive as the most beautiful woman!

Regardless of man or woman, anyone would be drawn to such passion and ardor!

Zhixiang’s heart shook. Even she didn’t notice that the image of Meng Hao was being burned deeply into her heart in an unprecedented way. This was not to say that it caused romantic love to appear, but rather, she would now be incapable of forgetting him.

“Pressing forward with indomitable will,” she murmured. “That… is a true man.” She looked at Meng Hao, and suddenly realized that this scene really was indelibly etched on her heart.

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Note from Er Gen: This book is nearing its conclusion, and I’m currently thinking of the name for the next book…. I welcome any guesses about the name!

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# Chapter 628: The Path of Spirit Severing!

As he hovered there at the 15,000 meter mark, Meng Hao took a deep breath. To him, the Ninth Anima was a state of rapid depletion. That was especially so considering the position he was in, halfway to the two Holy Lands and surrounded by incredible pressure. He could feel the terrifying pressure pushing against him from all sides.

That pressure weighed down on every strand of skin and muscle, on every bit of flesh and blood. Cracking sounds could be heard from within him, as if his bones were chafing together. Despite the incredible power of his current fleshly body, he was still incapable of moving forward even a pace.

The power of 256 great circle Nascent Souls continued to fight back explosively against the pressure; however, it continued to be defeated, and would clearly be extinguished soon.

The intensity of the pressure was such that, if Patriarch Huyan hadn’t died, and was suddenly next to Meng Hao here, he would be destroyed in an instant, his body completely exploded into countless pieces.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and looked up at the two Holy Lands 15,000 meters away. His eyes gleamed.

Based on his current Cultivation base, he was incapable of treading that path. That was what Ke Jiusi had said, as well as true spirit Night. However… Meng Hao’s personality was not the type to just accept what others said.

Although he trusted Ke Jiusi's opinion, he couldn't rest until he tried it out for himself. It didn't matter if the difficulty level was obviously high, he had to take a shot personally to see exactly how difficult it was.

"So this is the limit, huh?" he murmured hoarsely. Underneath the pressure, his eyes were now bloodshot, and veins bulged out all over his body. The blood in his veins circulated sluggishly, and his life force was showing signs failure.

He looked down silently at Ke Jiusi, true spirit Night, and Zhixiang, who he had long since already noticed. They were 15,000 meters below him. If he wanted to give up now, all he had to do was relax, and he would descend down into safety.

"But," he thought, his eyes glittering with determination, "I want to do one more test to see… if this is really my true limit!" With that, he looked up, and his energy exploded out. His half-white hair danced about him, and his clothes whipped in the wind. He lifted up his leg and, viciously forced himself higher by a large measure.

Another three meters!

Boom!

A tremor ran through him. His fleshly body emitted cracking sounds, and his Cultivation base was under enormous pressure. His Cultivation base of 256 great circle Nascent Souls was under so much pressure that it was about to disintegrate.

Meng Hao's face was pale. However, it was at this point that he noticed something. He noticed something that quickly caused his face to fill with excitement and joy!

He almost didn't dare to believe it. However, his eyes filled with determination and, underneath the intense pressure, coughed up a mouthful of blood and forced himself forward by another measure!

In total, Meng Hao had now moved nine meters away from the 15,000 meter mark!

A rumbling sound filled his body, and he swayed back and forth. Blood sprayed from his mouth, and his face was pale white. Marks of blood were now visible, tearing through his skin. It seemed that the incredible pressure was just on the verge of tearing him apart.

However, Meng Hao’s eyes were filled with wild joy nonetheless. His shocking discovery just now left him panting heavily.

“I never imagined… that there could be such a transformation!!” Inwardly, he still found it hard to accept. However, he was unable to think about the matter calmly. That was because he had found that underneath the incredible pressure, the power of the 256 great circle Nascent Souls was fusing together!

In any other place, such a thing could never happen. There wasn’t a place Meng Hao could think of that would produce results like this. Only in this place, right here, could something like this happen!

That was because the pressure here came from the three Greater Demon Mountains and the two Holy Lands. You could say that in all the Ninth Mountain and Sea, few places could display such overbearing power. And yet, at the same time, there was a gentleness within the pressure.

Perhaps there might be places more powerful than this, but they would not be suitable for anyone under the Immortal realm. This place, however, housed a legacy; therefore, there was a gentle side. To Meng Hao, a place like this was the perfect place to… fuse together his Cultivation base!

A Cultivation base of 256 Nascent Souls seemed terrifying, but by fusing them together, he could explode with… something that far, far exceeded the past level of power. That would be… true Spirit Severing power!

Meng Hao had considered this matter before. He had thought about Spirit Severing, and how one aspect involved enlightenment and another involved transmogrification of the Cultivation base. However, he had never been able to consolidate his thoughts. It had all been a waste of time, and he ended up slowly suppressing his Cultivation base until he could naturally arrive at a target transformation.

Right now, though, this pressure had an effect that Meng Hao simply couldn’t NOT be excited about. Instead of focusing on the legacy, he was focused on his path of cultivation, and that next, most important step!

If he succeeded, then he would be able to enter Spirit Severing even faster. It meant that he would be able to directly enter Spirit Severing without even having practiced cultivation for three hundred years.

“My fleshly body can also be tempered here!” he thought. Taking a deep breath, he sat down cross-legged in mid-air, using the pressure pushing against him to begin to compress his Cultivation base.

Zhixiang’s eyes went wide with disbelief. “He’s actually practicing cultivation!”

Ke Jiusi watched on seriously, although a smile quickly began to tug at the corners of his mouth.

Time passed slowly, enough for an incense stick to burn. Finally, a tremor ran through Meng Hao’s body, and his eyes snapped open. They were bloodshot, but they shone with a radiant light. He slowly stood up, and as he did, an incredibly intense energy exploded out from him.

As of now, he did not have the power of 256 great circle Nascent Souls. He had 10 less! And yet, despite the reduction, in terms of energy, he had much more than before.

“This is a Blessed Land for me!” His eyes shining strangely, he once again moved forward another measure.

Boom!

The pressure became more intense, and Meng Hao’s body shook. However, his Cultivation base was reduced by five Nascent Souls. Now, only the power of 241 remained.

It was a reduction of a mere five, but the intense fluctuations which emanated out of his Cultivation base supported him, allowing to move forward again!

Once, twice, three times….

His body trembled violently, as if he might explode at any moment. However, he continued onward relentlessly. As he did, his Cultivation base continue to shrink down and down.

236. 226…. All the way to 180! By this point, Meng Hao was now at the 16,000 meter mark!

If a Cultivator of the Second Severing reached this position relying only on Cultivation base as a protection, he would quickly become unstable and then be destroyed. Meng Hao felt like his body was exploding. The fleshly body exists outside of his cultivation, like a shell. In this aspect, Meng Hao was different from a Second Severing Cultivator. He was using his fleshly body to protect his Cultivation base.

Relying on the power of his fleshly body, he was using this place to pressure his Cultivation base into solidity. However, streaks of blood were appearing all over him as his skin split. He seemed to be on the verge of collapsing apart. Even the bloody flesh inside of him was becoming visible.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. Without hesitation, he slapped his bag of holding to produce vast quantities of medicinal pills. He consumed them to stem the wastage of his fleshly body. At the same time, he took longevity-increasing medicinal pills.

Of course, the main purpose had nothing to do with longevity. Instead, the life force contained within the medicinal pills nourished his fleshly body, causing it to be able to endure for even longer!

He took a deep breath and then once again proceeded forward. This advanced him to the 16,200 mark. A bloody haze exploded out around his body, and his trembling reached a pinnacle of intensity.

As of this moment, he had shrunk his Cultivation base down to only 163 Nascent Souls.

“This is going too slow….” thought Meng Hao. The struggle was clear on his face, although it was quickly replaced by determination.

“Rewards come only with risk. If I give up this chance, I won’t be likely to find another place that can exert such pressure on my Cultivation base. Next time I come here will be hundreds of years from now. I… can’t wait that long!” Without any further hesitation, Meng Hao began to rapidly rotate his Cultivation base. At the same time, he transformed into a green smoke, within which was a black moon. From his position at 16,200 meters, he instantly rocketed up.

The sight of it caused Ke Jiusi to be visibly moved. He instantly flew up into the air.

“Are you crazy!?” thought Zhixiang, her eyes wide. It was like watching a moth fly directly into a flame.

Meng Hao really was like a moth flying into a flame, although he was even crazier than that moth. As he sped upward, he began to burn. His fleshly body burned, his blood and muscles burned.

To him, it felt as if he was being hacked to pieces by tens of thousands of blades. Vast quantities of flesh and blood were destroyed. He looked like a shooting star made of blood. However, that bloody shooting star quickly advanced 1,800 meters. When Meng Hao reappeared, he was at the 18,000 meter mark.

He instantly coughed up a huge mouthful of blood. His body was mincemeat, and he was on the verge of completely falling apart.

“Violet Pupil Transformation!” In the instant in which his body was about to collapse, his eyes suddenly turned violet. His longevity was reduced, but in exchange, his shattering body was sustained for an extra breath of time! 1

During that breath of time, Meng Hao's Cultivation base shrank down at a shocking, wild speed.

Boom!

It went from 163 to 98. Then it dropped to 32. The speed with which this happened was shocking to the extreme.

Meng Hao's energy rocketed up, but even still, he had no way to prevent his fleshly body from nearing collapse.

"I can still hold on a bit longer!" he thought, once again employing the Violet Pupil Transformation. He sacrificed more longevity, causing his hair to turn white and his body to tremble, all to gain another breath of time.

Roaring filled his body. No outsider could hear it, but to Meng Hao it couldn't be clearer. The power of 32 Cultivation bases dropped to 16. More pressure bore down, and then, it was 8!

At this point, Meng Hao couldn't hold on any longer. His body began to grow limp, and he started to fall. From his position at 18,000 meters, he shot down at high speed. In the process of falling, the pressure lessened, and thus, his flesh and blood began to recover.

When he finally landed back down onto the hand of true spirit Night, he coughed up a mouthful of blood. However, he appeared to be completely restored to normal. The only difference was that the long hair which floated in the wind behind him was now gray.

As for his Cultivation base, its explosive growth caused the wind and clouds in the entire area to surge into motion, forming a twisting vortex around him.

As of this moment, Meng Hao was now far more powerful than before!

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End of Book 4: Five Color Paragon

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# Chapter 629: Return

Book 5: Nirvanic Rebirth. Blood Everywhere!

“First legacy trial by fire, failed,” said Night slowly, giving Meng Hao a deep look. Its voice echoed out throughout the entire Demon Immortal Sect.

Meng Hao smiled indifferently, apparently not concerned at all. Success or failure didn’t matter, as long as he got to try. What was the point of asking any questions? After all, he had eternal qualifications to participate in this legacy trial by fire.

This time he didn’t succeed, but the next time, a few hundred years from now… who was to say that he would fail again?

Most importantly, he had discovered his path to Spirit Severing. Meng Hao was sure that by shrinking his Cultivation base, by combining everything into one, Spirit Severing would be right in front of him.

“Your path to Spirit Severing has opened,” said Ke Jiusi to Meng Hao, his voice low. “When your Cultivation base is completely consolidated, then you can transform it into a Severing blade. You’ll either live, and sever out your Domain, or die, and sever your life.”

Meng Hao nodded. He had already come to understand this. That was definitely his path to Spirit Severing. Grind and polish his Cultivation base down until it became an illusory blade. After that blade appeared, he could begin the Severing.

The difference between life and death all lay in that blade!

“What Cultivators cultivate is both life and death,” said Meng Hao. “I’ve walked such a path for a long time. Living or dying doesn’t really matter.

Life’s a journey; the places you go, the things you see, those are the most important things. Live without regrets.” He laughed, his eyes shining brightly.

A look of admiration appeared in Ke Jiusi’s eyes, and he also laughed.

“You’ve already found your path,” he said. With that, he waved his arm, causing a green wind to spring up. It picked up Meng Hao and began to carry him out of the Demon Immortal Sect. “Time to leave. When father gave his approval of you, you became my little brother. I, too, was moved by your Dao. Perhaps one day in the future, the two of us will meet again in the starry sky!

“I hope that when that day arrives, you will have already reached Immortal Ascension!” Even as Ke Jiusi’s voice echoed about, Meng Hao was carried by the green wind far away from the Demon Immortal Sect.

At the same time, Ke Jiusi’s gaze came to fall upon Zhixiang, who still stood off in the distance.

Zhixiang immediately clasped hands and bowed.

“I am Zhou Zhixiang of the younger generation of the Demon Immortal Sect. Greetings, Patriarch Ke.”

“We’ll be old friends from now on,” said Ke Jiusi. “Demon Immortal Body…. With people like you, I can feel good about the Demon Immortal Sect.” As he looked at her, his eyes seemed to fill with reminiscence. It was impossible to tell who he was thinking about, but he sighed and then waved a sleeve. A jade slip flew out toward Zhixiang, which she quickly grabbed. Then, the green wind picked her up and, along with Meng Hao, she began to be carried away.

“Place that object in your Sect’s Ancestral Hall,” said Ke Jiusi coolly, “and have the disciples prostrate to it. It can stave off extermination for ten thousand years.”

Meng Hao and Zhixiang continued to speed away within the green wind.

Meng Hao looked back at Ke Jiusi, and couldn’t help but think back to all of the things that had happened since he arrived in the Demon Immortal Sect.

“Seal up the Demon Immortal Sect,” said Ke Jiusi, his voice echoing out. “Destiny has already been severed, now we adjourn for a few centuries….” Meng Hao watched him as he sat down gloomily cross-legged on the fourth of true spirit Night’s horns.

At the same time, true spirit Night gave Meng Hao a deep look. Then, its enormous head began to sink down. Its eyes slowly closed, and by the time the head sank down completely… the seven horns rose up above the land!

Endless amounts of dust flew about. It was almost like time was running in reverse. Everything returned to its original position. In the blink of an eye, the seven horns grew thick and bulky, and were soon seven mountain peaks once again!

There were corpses on the mountain peaks just like before, not one more or less than before. The restrictive spells were in place just like before. It was like nothing had changed at all. The lands below also returned to how they were before. In moments, everything looked exactly as it had when Meng Hao first arrived.

Ke Jiusi sat cross-legged atop the Fourth Peak. His back was to Meng Hao; he was facing an area just outside the Seventh Peak, the location of Ke Yunhai’s tomb….

Boom!

Meng Hao felt as if he had just slammed into an invisible wall. As he sank into it, everything went black. When he came to, he was outside the Demon Immortal Sect.

He glanced back, and the Demon Immortal Sect looked hazy. Just barely visible were countless illusory figures, hustling and bustling about.

Meng Hao said nothing. Zhixiang had emerged along with him, and when she looked back, her expression was one of pain and complex emotions as she looked at the illusory Demon Immortal Sect.

Countless tiny fragments of rock and stone suddenly flew out to surround Meng Hao and Zhixiang, quickly transforming into a new river of stars. Meng Hao was still gazing at the Demon Immortal Sect when a tremor ran through the whole river of stars, and it began to carry him and Zhixiang away. It rolled out like a bolt of white silk.

Meng Hao said nothing as the Demon Immortal Sect drew farther and farther away. Zhixiang likewise maintained her silence. They got farther and farther away until soon, the Bridge of Immortal Treading became visible among the stars.

“I need to go,” said Zhixiang suddenly. She looked at Meng Hao.

He turned to look at her. “Take care of yourself on your journey.”

Their eyes met, and Zhixiang gave a warm smile.

“Thank you. My promise to you hasn’t changed. I truly believe that one day in the future, we will meet again. I look forward to finding out where we will meet, under what circumstances, or, perhaps I should say… in what identity.” Although she smiled, a flicker of farewell could be seen in her eyes.

With a final deep look at him, Zhixiang slapped her bag of holding. A person flew out from inside. It was a woman, her features beautiful, obviously quite young. This was none other than the Holy Daughter of the Five Poisons Tribe, Zhao Youlan.

Her eyes were closed, and she wasn’t moving. There were still signs of life detectable, but she was obviously in a state of dormancy. From the ripples of her Cultivation base, it was obvious that she was… of the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage.

“This girl and I are connected by destiny,” said Zhixiang lightly. “I possessed her fleshly body that year, but I didn’t destroy her soul. I promised her that when it was time to part, I would bestow her with the good fortune of a great circle Nascent Soul Cultivation base. 1

“By the time I acquired the Demon Immortal Body, I had already returned her body to her. Would you mind taking her back to the lands of South Heaven with you?”

Meng Hao looked at Zhao Youlan, then back at Zhixiang. He nodded.

With a final look at Meng Hao, Zhixiang turned and then flew out from the river of stars. As she emerged out into the starry sky, a glow appeared beneath her feet that turned into a loom shuttle.

The loom shuttle was surrounded by swirling lights as it rapidly expanded to a size of nearly three hundred meters. Demonic Qi pulsed off of it in ripples, distorting the images of the stars and causing ghost images to spring up.

She turned to look back at him and said, “Okay little Meng Hao, I’m gonna take off now. Don’t miss me too much! Of course, if you really miss me, then once you have the ability to fly through the stars, then come to Planet East Victory. Who’s to say whether or not I might let you have some alone time with me?” She laughed. Right now, she seemed to have returned to the way she was when Meng Hao met her for the first time.

Seductive as silk, eyes charming and amorous, she smiled and then transformed into a beam of light which shot off into the distance.

Meng Hao smiled and shook his head. For the most part, he and Zhixiang were partners in cooperation. However, after everything that had happened in the Demon Immortal Sect, gradually they had become friends.

He looked away from her retreating figure and then sat down cross-legged on a nearby stone fragment. Zhao Youlan’s eyes were still closed as she lay next to him, slumbering. The two of them remained in the river of stars as it shot through the starry sky. Soon, everything became quiet.

Meng Hao stared out at the endless stars, and soon, a look of anticipation appeared in his eyes.

“Cultivation. Immortal Ascension. Flying among the stars…. It’s all a journey. If I can leave the lands of South Heaven and enter the starry sky, my journey would be even more wonderful.

“At that time, Planet South Heaven would only be a bit of scenery along my way.” Suddenly, Meng Hao smiled.

“My gains in the Demon Immortal Sect were tremendous!” he thought. He looked down at his bag of holding.

“Mountain Consuming Incantation, Nine Heavens Destruction, Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal…. Plus there’s the Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao. All of these divine abilities are there in my mind, as well as quite a few other minor arts.

“In addition, I have a good collection of lost treasures from the Demon Immortal Sect, as well as Ji Mingfeng’s bags of holding. Most important of all is the sword tip from that Wooden Time Sword!” When the thought of the sword tip, his heart palpitated with eagerness.

“That sword tip has 30,000 years of Time power. If I actually used it, it wouldn’t truly be 30,000 years, but it would still be shocking.” He rubbed his bag of holding, his eyes gleaming brightly.

“And then, there’s the precious treasure from the Fourth Plane, the continental mirror!! There are countless magical items stored inside, as well as Demon Weapon Lonelytomb, and the shadows of those three Paragons!

“The continental mirror is a precious treasure of true spirit Night. Taking it away was what awakened Night. Considering how valuable Night considered the treasure to be, well, it only serves to prove that my copper mirror has a mysterious origin.” When he thought about the transformation the copper mirror had experienced, he once again had the feeling that his gains in this adventure had been exceeding.

“All the acquisitions will surely attract quite a bit of prying. All the other remaining South Heaven Cultivators are cruel and unscrupulous, and definitely have ill intentions. Their Sects and Clans will quickly learn about everything that happened.” His eyes flickered.

“As for how much all those people owe me, if you add it together, it’s more than ten million Spirit Stones! Which means that, right now, the main thing I’m lacking… is Spirit Stones!” He gave a cold harumph, but then thought to the debt pledges he had, and a brilliant smile appeared on his face.

“The debtor must repay his debts; that is in line with the principles of Heaven and Earth! They can’t escape that fact! Although, to be the most safe, I can’t stay in the Black Lands or the Western Desert.” As he sat there thoughtfully, many thoughts raced through his head.

Time passed. Meng Hao sat there cross-legged, looking at the river of stars and the starry sky. Soon, he caught sight of a dot of light that was none other than Planet South Heaven.

At the same time, he saw that, revolving around planet South Heaven was a shocking altar.

As soon as he caught sight of the altar, he got a clear sense of a cold, gloomy aura. The aura swept toward him, but was blocked by the river of stars, and could not reach him.

As the river of stars neared Planet South Heaven, Meng Hao stood up. He stared at South Heaven as it rapidly neared. Soon, he could see the lands below. He saw the Milky Way Sea, the Southern Domain and the Western Desert.

As they shot downward, Zhao Youlan slowly began to regain consciousness. Before she could open her eyes, Meng Hao leaped up, shooting out from within the river of stars into the highest levels of the sky above South Heaven. Then, he transformed into a beam of light that shot off into the distance.

There was a lot of pressure at such high altitude, but Meng Hao had been able to deal with the pressure at the 18,000 meter mark in the trial by fire of Lord Li's legacy. This pressure was nothing he would care about. He moved at incredible speed and quickly disappeared.

The river of stars began to rumble as it carried the confused Zhao Youlan down toward the lands below. As Meng Hao sped off into the distance, a cold, hoarse voice suddenly could be heard, accompanied by a slight chuckle.

"The pup from all those years ago has already grown up! His realm of Perfection really is perfect. I've been waiting for a long time…. It wasn't in vain that I covered your tracks before to confuse the Ji Clan. Child, the time has come to present your Perfect stratum to me."

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# Chapter 630: 10th Patriarch of the Wang Clan 1

As soon as the voice rang out, the winds and clouds ceased moving. Not another sound could be heard!

The river of stars continued to rumble through the air, taking Zhao Youlan with it as it headed toward the land. Her eyes were wide open now, and just barely, she could make out the image of an old man wearing a long, white robe. He hovered in mid-air, his hair floating around him, his face ancient and filled with wrinkles. It was impossible to tell how old he was, but he looked as if he had just climbed out of a tomb.

A sense of putrefaction surrounded him, like the air that surrounded a person who had reached their end days but wasn't willing to take the final steps to the end. Instead, he would do something completely shocking.

However, he did not seem to be possessed of a flesh and blood body, but rather, was semi-transparent.

Even as Zhao Youlan noticed these things, she lost consciousness again, then disappeared along with the river of stars.

Meng Hao was currently speeding along, when suddenly his body began to shake. The air around him seemed to solidify, as if all of Heaven and Earth, the whole world, had transformed into a cage. He was like a cornered beast within that cage, struggling, but unable to extricate himself.

It was at this time that the cold voice rang out in his ears, filled with a sense of rot and decay. His face fell as a sense of grave crisis exploded out in him unlike anything he had experienced from the day he was born until now.

“This isn’t Spirit Severing!!” Rumbling filled his mind, and then spread out to the rest of his body. Cold sweat began to pour down him. Without hesitation, he directly entered the Ninth Anima!

Boom!

His Cultivation base exploded up. Although it only had eight portions of Cultivation base, each one of those portions had been compressed and refined to the pinnacle, which created a frightening aura.

Boom!

His hair floated up around him as his Cultivation base radiated out. His energy shot up to the sky, and the intense power of his fleshly body was unleashed to its very pinnacle.

Things weren’t over!

He performed an incantation gesture, causing the Mountain Consuming Incantation to appear. An enormous rumbling could be heard around him as the illusory image of an enormous mountain appeared. The illusion twisted and distorted as it suddenly expanded outward.

Next, he slapped his bag of holding, causing around ten magical items to appear. Each one of these items were incredible treasures that he had acquired in the Demon Immortal Sect. He valued them greatly, but in this moment of deadly crisis, he had no time to think about the pain of losing them. He produced them without hesitation and then roared.

“Detonate!!” It caused Meng Hao’s heart to bleed to say such a word, but he had no other choice.

All of this takes some time to describe, but actually happened in a very short moment.

An illusory hand appeared out of nowhere off in the distance. It was semi-transparent, and was filled with glowing lights. It seemed to contain a great Dao of Heaven and Earth that was in accord with natural law. As soon as the hand appeared, everything grew dark, making the hand the only focus of attention.

The hand neared, gently slapping toward Meng Hao!

As it got close, Meng Hao detonated the ten Demon Immortal Sect treasures. A boom rattled out that seemed capable of splitting Heaven and Earth. Everything shook, and distorted ripples appeared in all directions. It seemed almost as if the world couldn't handle the destructive force unleashed by the explosion.

Boom!

The cage around Meng Hao was now riddled with cracks. The explosion of the ten magical items also caused the incoming hand to pause slightly.

A cold "eee!" could be heard, and the hand passed by in a flash. The destructive force of the explosion dissipated, and it was in that brief moment that Meng Hao, stuck in this seemingly hopeless situation, grabbed at a chance for life.

"Dao Seeking! This is a Dao Seeking Cultivator!" Meng Hao's heart began to pound and fill with bitterness. A Dao Seeking expert was something higher than him by more than an entire stage. Dao Seeking experts were rare, almighty figures in the lands of South Heaven!

As far as Meng Hao could remember, he had never provoked anyone like that before. From what the voice had just said now, this person was clearly not a member of the Ji Clan!

"Who is he?!" Meng Hao knew that the greater the danger he was in, the more he needed to remain calm. Eyes glittering, he took advantage of the cracks appearing in the cage to employ the greatest speed he could muster. He instantly transformed into the wind of the roc, along with a green smoke that contained a black moon. In the blink of an eye, he bored out through one of the cracks and shot off into the distance. He moved so quickly that he didn't even have time to look back.

Even as he broke out from the cage, the giant hand shot in pursuit. It destroyed the cage, as well as the destructive powers of the ten valuable treasures he had detonated. Then it slammed into the illusory mountain.

BANG!!

The illusory mountain collapsed into pieces, which showered out in all directions. Blood sprayed from Meng Hao’s mouth, and cracking sounds could be heard. It seemed as if his body was on the verge of being destroyed.

The hand seemed almost leisurely in its strike. It smashed through the illusory mountain, and then casually headed toward Meng Hao’s back.

Even as the hand neared, Meng Hao lifted his head up and cried, “Agarwood!!”

Booming could be heard as an otherworldly power approached. However, for some reason, when it was about halfway, it seemed to hesitate. During that moment, the huge hand closed in.

Meng Hao did nothing to try to control the Agarwood. The blood-colored mask flew out of his bag of holding, rapidly growing larger until it covered his whole body, helping to block against the giant hand.

A howl could be heard from within the blood-colored mask, and a bloody glow rose up. The mastiff flew out, and as the hand neared, it, together with the mask, protected Meng Hao’s back. The mastiff didn’t even have time to turn around to look at its Master’s back.

Boom!

The instant the hand slammed into the mastiff, it exploded, transforming into countless red strands that shot back into the blood-colored mask.

A massive rumbling could be heard as the Blood Immortal mask was sent spinning backward. It merged into Meng Hao’s body, which trembled severely.

“Blood Mastiff!!” roared Meng Hao, his eyes bloodshot. In that instant, he could sense that the mastiff’s blood had formed back together inside the mask, turning into a much smaller Blood Mastiff.

The double protection temporarily resolved his crisis. However, blood still sprayed from his mouth, and his internal organs were shattered into pieces. His life aura was diminishing, and he tumbled off into the distance like a kite with its string cut.

His eyes were filled with dense veins of blood, and an unprecedented level of hatred suddenly rose up within him.

Severe pain coursed through him, and he had the intense sensation that he was being ripped into shreds. His skin was lacerated and torn in multiple locations; it made it seem as if in the following breath, his entire person would fall apart!

A second “eee?” sound could be heard, echoing out in Heaven and Earth. Suddenly, the parrot and the meat jelly flew out from inside Meng Hao’s bag of holding.

The parrot clutched onto Meng Hao’s shoulder, a look of unprecedented anxiety on its face. “Dammit, bitch! Dammit! This guy’s a step away from being a false Immortal! Even if he’s just a clone, he’s still at Dao Seeking. Meat jelly, you slut, why haven’t you saved Meng Hao yet!?!?” The meat jelly was trembling all over. However, it quickly spread out to cover Meng Hao, causing his collapsing flesh to solidify.

An ancient, hoarse voice could suddenly be heard coming from the void. “I am the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. Back when you were in Foundation Establishment, I decided to make you my Dao seed, to accomplish my Dao, to allow me experience what it was like for the great ancestor to steal a foundation.

“Do you… really think you can escape?” There was something else in the voice; it contained bizarre fluctuations that seemed to conform to the natural laws of Heaven and Earth.

As the voice spoke, the hand faded away. However, it became clear again only a breath later, and when it did, it was behind Meng Hao. The hand formed into a claw that swiped at Meng Hao from the back.

“I saved you out outside of the Rebirth Cave,” the voice said, speaking neither quickly nor slowly. “When the Ji Clan was after you, I helped. And then there was all the commotion you caused in the Demon Immortal Sect. After you returned, I took the liberty of wiping out traces of your aura so that no one would know that you have returned.

“All of that was because… a time would come for you to pay me back. And that time… is now.” As the voice continued to speak, the sense of putrefaction continued to grow clearer.

“Four Perfect stages. The Perfect Foundation… is the basis for Immortal Ascension. It would be a waste on you, so… it belongs to me.”

The hand continued to grab toward Meng Hao. No matter how the parrot and Meng Hao sped away, it was impossible to escape the gravitational force that they felt wrapping around them. Meng Hao’s body trembled, and then he clearly senses something on himself that caused the gravitational force to loosen. It almost seemed as if the force would leave him automatically!

In this critical moment, the parrot and meat jelly were going crazy. Meng Hao once again urgently said, “Agarwood! What about your promise to me!?”

As the words echoed out, everything grew quiet. Suddenly, a rumbling spread out as an otherworldly power neared.

Boom!

The power slammed into the hand that was grasping toward Meng Hao. The hand instantly shook, and any connection it had to Meng Hao was severed. Meng Hao coughed up a mouthful of blood, and yet instead of fleeing, he turned around, his eyes bright red.

Fleeing like that wasn’t something he was willing to do!

This was his first time to turn around during the entire encounter. He saw the hand that had been attacked by the power of the Agarwood. Rays of light circulated around, forming into the figure of a man who seemed to be stepping out of nothing. He wore a long white robe, and was very old.

Meng Hao had no recollection of ever seeing this man before, and was quite certain that they had never met.

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch had been enveloped by the mysterious power of the Agarwood. It was as if he had been imprisoned. His body floated there in mid air, alternating between blurry and semi-transparent. It was a very strange sight.

“Why do you have to resist?” he said hoarsely, looking at Meng Hao. He seemed as if he didn’t even notice the power of the Agarwood.

Meng Hao didn’t reply, but his right hand slapped his bag of holding to produce a bronze alcohol flagon. He raised his head up to take a large mouthful, then spit it out. Alcohol Qi spread out, and suddenly, an azure bronze Immortal’s sword appeared in his hand.

This sword was from Han Shan, and contained Sword Qi that was like a song!

Killing intent raged in Meng Hao’s eyes. He raised his right hand and, without hesitation, struck out with the sword.

The Sword Qi appeared, shaking Heaven and Earth, causing everything to shake. The sky dimmed as uncountable amounts of Sword Qi poured out of the azure bronze sword. As the sword descended, the Sword Qi rumbled, transforming into a three thousand meter waterfall which shot from up above down toward the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch.

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s pupils constricted, the first change in his facial expression!

Even the Agarwood hadn’t moved him. His eyes flickered, and as the Sword Qi neared, he suddenly spoke.

“The great ancestor once said that rain… is born in the Heavens and dies in the Earth. The passage between those two places is its entire life….” As the voice rang out, the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch waved his right hand softly out in front of him, as if he was sweeping away some rain.

“Call the wind, summon the rains….”

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# Chapter 631: False Immortals and True Immortals

“Whose entire life, bitch?” said Meng Hao, his killing intent boiling. The Sword Qi descended, slashing down toward the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, who was currently enveloped by the power of the Agarwood.

Rumbling climbed up into the sky as the Sword Qi neared. However, it was then that a black wind suddenly sprung up around the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. The wind rapidly condensed into a shocking black dragon.

The black dragon opened its mouth and a roaring wind emerged that fought back against the power of the Agarwood. The cage appeared to be instantly diffused; at the same time, drops of rain appeared out of nowhere. More and more appeared, transforming into a rain that filled the entire sky and then shot toward the Sword Qi.

A massive boom could be heard that shook everything. Blood poured out of Meng Hao’s mouth, and he fell back. Without looking back to see what had happened, he retrieved the teleportation jade slip that he had acquired from Patriarch Reliance that year, and squeezed it between his fingers.

The jade slip had been on the verge of shattering years ago. Strangely, though, after not having used it for so long, it had slowly repaired itself, and was now much more solid.

Glittering light spread out. Because of the current level of Meng Hao’s Cultivation base, the time needed to activate the teleportation power was much less. It only took the space of seven or eight breaths to succeed, and then he began to teleport away.

After Meng Hao disappeared, the roaring and booming in the area faded away. The Wang Clan Patriarch slowly moved forward, his body gradually becoming more blurry, and occasionally glittering with light. A huge gash could be seen stretching from his head all the way down through the rest of his body, splitting him entirely in half. He seemed to be forcing the two halves to remain together.

He didn’t seem to recognize any sort of pain as he watched Meng Hao disappearing. His eyes glittered with a mysterious light, and he smiled. Because his body had been split in two, however, the smile looked exceedingly savage and horrible.

“I underestimated you, child. It turns out you have a real precious treasure….

“However, you can’t evade me.” Even as he smiled that horrific smile, the Wang Clan Patriarch’s body grew completely blurry. Gradually, it turned into a wisp of aura, which then dissipated into the surroundings.

At the same time, in the mountains of the Wang Clan in the Southern Domain, the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s true self lay in a coffin in the tomb underneath the 10th mountain. His eyes opened.

A strange light glowed within as he looked up at the cliffs stretching up above him. He began to chuckle hoarsely.

“If it weren’t for the fact that I used the power of my true self to interfere with the Ji Clan to hide that child’s Perfect foundation, they definitely would have noticed. At some point throughout the years, they would definitely have discovered him and successfully stolen him away. If I had been able to use the power of my true self this time, I would have succeeded.

However, the Perfect Dao foundation has matured, and is ripe for the plucking. Even though I still can’t venture out with my true self, a clone will still do the trick. That Sword Qi was obviously gifted by an outsider. How many times can he use it? Perhaps he’s already reached the point where he can’t.” The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch shook his head and smiled.

A ghost image suddenly appeared over him. In the blink of an eye, an illusory body rose up to float in mid-air. As it grew clearer and clearer, it started to resemble the Wang Clan Patriarch in all respects.

The clone’s hand flickered in an incantation, and after a moment, he frowned.

“Near the Milky Way Sea….

“The Milky Way Sea is a restricted area for the Dao Seeking stage….” The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s Clone hesitated for a moment. Then his expression returned to normal. His eyes flashed as he slowly began to grow blurry.

On the edge of the Western Desert, between the Violet Sea and the Milky Way Sea, was a border region that stretched farther than the eye could see. That border region was actually nothing more than a wall-like mass of soil. On one side, the water was violet, the other side, the water was blue, making the difference between the Violet Sea and the Milky Way Sea clearcut!

In a particular area in that border region, a huge black vortex suddenly appeared in mid-air. Meng Hao staggered out from the middle of the vortex, blood spraying from his mouth.

The blood was pitch-black, and filled with rot. Meng Hao’s face was pale, and his entire body was covered by a thin membrane, which was nothing other than the meat jelly, helping him to prevent his body from completely exploding.

However, Meng Hao could still sense his body slowly decaying. The feeling of imminent death grew stronger and stronger.

“10th… Wang… Clan… PATRIARCH!!” Monstrous killing intent boiled in Meng Hao’s eyes. He gritted his teeth as more blood oozed out of his mouth. This was was virtually the worst injury he had ever sustained in all his years as a Cultivator.

“That bastard was just a step away from being a false Immortal,” squawked the parrot angrily, flapping its wings. “How could he be so shameless! Bitch! He actually attacked you, Meng Hao! Dammit! Lord Fifth was viciously sealed that year, otherwise, it wouldn’t matter that the bastard didn’t have fur or feathers, I would have popped him anyway!”

“What’s a false Immortal?” asked Meng Hao. His hand was pushed up against his chest as intense pain wracked his entire body. Gradually, a violet light appeared in his eyes as he drew upon his longevity to heal himself.

“False Immortals are low-lifes who can never experience the luck to reach Immortal Ascension!” raged the parrot. “They don’t have their own Dao, and yet, they refuse to die. In their unyieldingness, they conform themselves to the Dao of another, and use that to become Immortal. That’s a false Immortal!

“Some people would rather die than become a false Immortal who belongs to someone else. Others, in order to avoid death, will pay any price. The latter are basically betrayers of the Dao!

“In the Ninth Mountain and Sea, the greatest of the false Immortals are the Ji Clan. The Ji Clan changed the Heavens, and their Immortals are all false Immortals, and also the strongest of all the false Immortals!

“Next are all the various Clans and Sects. After gaining enlightenment of the Daos of their ancestors, they trod the path of the false Immortal!” This time, the parrot didn’t hold any information back.

Meng Hao silently considered all of this. He had come to find that the Violet Pupil Transformation was becoming less and less effective in healing himself, and didn’t heal as quickly as before. Although it still worked, it was far, far too slow. His heart sank.

“Some people with high aspirations, those who truly strive after the Dao, who live in the morning and die in the evening, would rather acquire their own personal Dao. Such people can face death willingly.

“When people like that succeed, they are true Immortals!

“However, after the Ji Clan changed the Heavens, true Immortals are seldom seen. Perhaps every thousand years, one might appear on any given planet. Only on the four great planets can the Dao be confirmed and Immortal Ascension achieved. Once someone reaches Immortal Ascension on a planet, then in the next thousand years, a second person may not. Therefore, to say that in ten thousand years in the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea, a few dozen true Immortals appear, would be an overstatement.

“When you add in True Immortal Tribulation, the number of true Immortals who can survive in the four great planets won’t exceed ten!” By this point in its speech, the parrot sounded grieved and indignant.

“True Immortal Tribulation?” asked Meng Hao. He sent his Divine Sense into the blood-colored mask. When he saw that the mastiff was there recovering, he breathed a sigh of relief.

“Those who wish to search for their own Dao and become true Immortals must face it. Succeed, and it is inconsequential. Fail, and they perish to become a natural law of Heaven and Earth.

“Success mean ascension to being a true Immortal. Afterwards, when any Immortal Tribulation falls, that person will rise to prominence. Other than another true Immortal, no one else could possibly be a match.” It was hard to tell what exactly the parrot was thinking, but all of a sudden, its tone was gloomy.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he looked at the parrot and then asked another question. “That 10th Wang Clan Patriarch said something about a Perfect Dao foundation. What did he mean?”

“You cultivate the Sublime Spirit Scripture. Although I don’t understand too much about it, I do know that it’s one of the three classic scriptures. If you cultivate it to completion, you will be a Sublime Spirit Doyen!

“However, the Perfect stratum lies only beneath Spirit Severing. That is, Qi Condensation, Foundation Establishment, Core Formation, and Nascent Soul, four stages. As for how to cultivate it after that, nobody knows except for past generations of Sublime Spirit Doyens.

“As for the Perfect Dao foundation, that is something that only those who cultivate the Sublime Spirit Scripture are qualified to have. Furthermore, anyone with such qualifications will have a much, much greater chance of reaching true Immortal Ascension.

“As far as false Immortals are concerned, if they can acquire your Dao foundation, then it means they would have another chance to make a choice! With enough experience and preparation, they might be able to change their path from that of false Immortal to the realm of the true Immortal!

“Most importantly, possessing a Perfect Dao foundation means that if you fail in true Immortal Ascension, then you won’t perish! You can shed your Dao foundation and escape death that one time!”

After hearing this explanation, Meng Hao now understood everything that the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch had said.

He also understood why the Ji Clan had virtually never come looking for him. Most likely, many threats that he didn’t even know about had been resolved in secret by the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch.

He was like a Dao Protector. Except, his purpose in protecting Meng Hao was to steal his Dao foundation!

“What happens if my Dao foundation gets taken away?” asked Meng Hao slowly, a profound gleam swirling deep in his eyes.

The parrot thought for a moment, then replied in a low voice, “If a tower has no foundation, what happens?”

“It collapses,” replied Meng Hao coolly. “It’s unstable and is destroyed.”

“The same would happen to you. If someone steals your Dao foundation, then you’ll die.”

“Meng Hao, get out of here!” cried the parrot anxiously. “That bastard definitely got away. From what he said, he set you up as a Dao seed long ago. Flee! Flee until you’ve grown up a bit more!

“As for your aura, the meat jelly can conceal it. If the Wang Patriarch finds you any time soon, it won’t be a good thing!”

Meng Hao stood there silently, indescribable emotions stirring him into a somewhat vicious mood. Gradually, his lips twisted into a cold smile.

He knew that compared to the Wang Clan Patriarch, he was nothing more than a bug. However, his heart still thumped with viciousness. Now that this matter had been raised, it would not fade away. Instead, it had turned into something like a seed.

It was like a seed that was buried deep in the recesses of his heart.

“I came to understand the law of the jungle a long time ago,” Meng Hao muttered to himself. “One day, I will achieve my Dao, and the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch will die. If the Wang Clan gets in my way, then when I have my own great Dao…

“I will ensure that the Southern Domain has no more Wang Clan, ever!” Filled with determination, the viciousness in his heart once again surged.

He took a deep breath and looked around. Then, he looked off in the direction of the Milky Way Sea, his eyes glittering. He began to fly at top speed, healing himself at the same time.

Eventually, he reached the invisible wall that completely separated the Violet Sea and the Milky Way Sea. He slammed into it, and then pierced directly through it. A fishy, sea aroma filled the air. This… was the Milky Way Sea!

A boundless sea surged in all directions. Off in the distance, the sun was setting. In the glow of twilight, all that could be seen were beautiful waves and a deep orange glow.

“I need to be cautious in all matters, prepared for all contingencies….” He lifted up his hand, within which was the teleportation jade slip. It was definitely on the verge of shattering now. After a moment’s hesitation, his eyes filled with determination and he pressed down. Based on his understanding from previous usage of the item, he could tell that the teleportation distance was determined by how much Cultivation base power was sent into it.

He pushed down hard and, a moment later, a black vortex appeared around him. He was sucked in, and then disappeared.

After he vanished, enough time passed for an incense stick to burn. Suddenly distortions appeared in the air in the position he had just left from. A moment later, the image of the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch emerged. He looked around and then frowned.

“Very crafty, child,” he said coolly. “Your aura disappears from here. However, I’ve already determined that you are in the Milky Way Sea.

“You can’t evade me. Your Perfect Dao foundation belongs to me. You may enjoy hiding yourself, but I will find you.” With that, his body flickered, and he vanished.

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# Chapter 632: The Milky Way Sea

The Milky Way Sea was located in the middle of the lands of South Heaven, splitting everything into two continents, one comprised of the Eastern Lands and the Northern Reaches, the other of the Southern Domain and the Western Desert.

The area taken up by the Milky Way Sea is huge, far greater than either of the two continents. If you compared it in size with the Southern Domain, the Milky Way Sea would be approximately five times as large.

Therefore, it was divided up into four sections called Rings. The part outside of the Four Rings was called the Outer Sea.

The boundless sea was constantly plagued with hurricanes that swept about, causing huge waves to spring up. Still, there were many islands to be found, some large, some small, which meant that there were Cultivators too.

Of course, sea beasts swam to and fro within the sea waters. Their flesh and blood were often prized by Cultivators, especially the sea beasts that were similar to Cultivators, and were called Sea Demons. Their Demon hearts were highly valuable. Even one Demon heart could emit spiritual energy similar to a mid-grade Spirit Stone.

For these and a variety of other reasons, the Milky Way Sea had been a destination for Cultivators for many years. People settled down, multiplied, expanded, and soon power structures emerged.

There were both strong and weak powers in the Milky Way Sea, and they were distributed amongst the various islands that dotted the surface of the waters. Most of the powers existed in the Fourth Ring. Only some very powerful Sects or Clans qualified to reside in the Third Ring.

Of course, there were many legends that passed from ear to ear in the Milky Way Sea. Many seemed unlikely, but at the same time, many people believed them to be true. It seemed that when anything changed in the Milky Way Sea, there were always people who would attribute it to something strange.

It was a vast sea that would never be peaceful and calm, but would always be brushed over by hurricanes. This… was the Milky Way Sea.

In the Outer Sea region of the Milky Way Sea, a ship approximately three hundred meters long was moving along at high speed.

At the prow of the ship, a middle-aged man was casually recounting some Milky Way Sea legends to some youngsters who were gathered around him.

“According to the legend, there is an ancient ship which can be seen in the Milky Way Sea. Anyone who sees that ship will receive great blessings…. They say that an old man sits cross-legged at its prow.

“He wears a dilapidated suit of armor, and his eyes are closed. He never moves….”

The youngsters looked very excited. Apparently, this was a story they could hear a hundred times, but never get tired of.

Water sprayed up from the surface of the sea, and high up above the ship, a silk flag snapped in the salty breeze. Embroidered on the flag was the character “Zhang ,” along with the representation of a flying sword. That indicated that this ship belonged to the Zhang Clan, a Cultivator Clan of the Milky Way Sea.

There were approximately fifty people on the ship, most of whom were fit and strong, but mortal. There were only a handful of Cultivators, all of whom sat cross-legged in meditation. The only one who didn’t was the middle-aged man at the prow of the ship, who was in the late Foundation Establishment stage. He was the one telling stories to the younger generation Clan members.

“Our Zhang Clan’s Patriarch saw that ship a few hundred years ago,” he continued in a low voice, taking advantage of the situation to subtly influence the younger generation of the clan. “He received a blessing just as the legends say; he had a Cultivation base breakthrough, and became a Core Formation expert.

“It was for that reason that he was able to occupy an island in the Outer Sea, and establish our Zhang Clan as a local power. All of you need to remember this!”

Among the group of youngsters was a strapping young boy who instantly spoke up. “We know that story, Uncle Hai Xin!” he said. His tone pleading, he said, “Tell us about Saint’s Island!”

As soon as the words left his mouth, some of the other children began to beg for the same thing.

The middle-aged man laughed silently, not quite sure of what to say. He was about to begin speaking, when suddenly he sensed something. He turned his head to look at the ship’s quarterdeck, and saw a beautiful young woman emerging 1. She wore a nautical silk jacket and skirt, and was naturally beautiful, radiant, and enchanting. A slight smile could be seen on her face as she stepped out of the quarterdeck. However, despite the smile, it was impossible to cover up the anxiety and unease in her eyes.

Holding her hand was a child of six or seven years old, a boy. He had plump cheeks, and looked quite adorable. As for the young woman, her Cultivation base was at the great circle of Foundation Establishment.

“Greetings, Clan Leader!” said the middle-aged man respectfully. He clasped hands and bowed deeply.

The other youngsters around him also bowed to her.

“We’re all fellow Clan members, there’s no need for such politeness,” said the young woman, laughing. “Nan’er wanted to see the sun setting over the ocean, so I brought him out to have a look.”

The boy next to the young woman looked at the middle-aged man with wide eyes and piped: “Uncle Hai Xin, did I just hear someone mention Saint’s Island?”

The middle-aged man laughed, and a doting gleam appeared in his eyes. To him, all the hope of the Clan rested on the future of this boy.

“Ah, Saint’s Island,” said the man, smiling. “It’s the number one island in the Fourth Ring, and its Footloose Sect is the number one Sect in the whole Fourth Ring!

“Saint’s Island is very large, almost like a continent! It’s far, far larger than our island. There is even a nation of mortals that exists there, called the State of Xiao.

“Because the Footloose Sect has a Spirit Severing Cultivator, it can strike awe into the hearts of all the other forces in the Fourth Ring. It has many Cultivators; Qi Condensation and Foundation Establishment Cultivators are everywhere. There are even dozens of Core Formation Cultivators! And when it comes to Nascent Soul experts… they have seven!

“In the entire Fourth Ring, there isn’t a single Sect or Clan who could possibly fight back against their power. The Footloose Sect is fully deserving to be regarded as the overlord of the Fourth Ring.

“You all know the reason we’re going there. Therefore, when we arrive, all of you need to be very respectful. Young Master Nan’er has the best latent talent of anyone born in recent years.

“The Footloose Sect is accepting disciples, which means that our Clan has an incredible opportunity!” As of this point, the man’s eyes shone with anticipation.

“If Young Master Nan’er can join the Footloose Sect, then with his latent talent, he’ll definitely be able to reach Foundation Establishment. There would even be the possibility that in the future, he could reach Core Formation! Then, he could be just as heroic as our Clan Patriarch, all those years ago!

“When that happens, our Zhang Clan will once again be able to rise to prominence in the Outer Sea!” The middle-aged man’s voice was filled with passion. The youngsters around him looked over with admiration and envy at the boy standing next to the young woman.

The young woman tousled his hair, and was about to say something when, suddenly, her expression flickered. In the same moment that she looked up, so did the middle-aged man.

From the middle of the ship, a man and a woman suddenly flew up into the air. Both of them looked to be about fifty years old, and had Cultivation bases in the late Foundation Establishment stage. They stood on flying swords, expressions of shock on their face as they looked up into the air.

Everything was quiet, and everyone on the boat looked on, stunned.

What they saw was a huge rift soundlessly open in mid-air. It rapidly turned into a pitch-black vortex, which rotated rapidly as it turned into a black hole.

A man staggered out, blood spraying from his mouth.

He had long gray hair, and wore a white, blood-stained robe. His aura was unstable, and his face was pale white. Of course, it was Meng Hao.

The parrot perched on his shoulder, and its disdainful gaze swept around the area.

As soon as Meng Hao appeared, his internal injuries once again exploded out, which was something he hadn’t anticipated. The second teleportation had actually ripped open the old wounds, causing the injuries to become even worse.

He hovered in mid-air, looking down at the people on the ship and the various expressions on their faces. It didn’t matter that he was currently injured, as soon as his gaze swept across them, their hearts began to tremble and pound. They felt as if they were being stared at by an ancient, wild beast.

“My injuries are too severe,” he thought, looking away. “I need to quickly find somewhere to begin healing.” Ignoring the people on the ship below, he took a deep breath, and was just about to force his Cultivation base to rotate so that he could move off into the distance.

On the ship, everyone stood around as mute as cicadas in winter. Except for the young woman.

“Senior, there’s no need to leave!” As soon as the words left her mouth, she felt regret. When Meng Hao looked back at her, she trembled, but then forced herself to clasp hands and bow deeply.

“Senior,” she went on, trembling, “you’re seriously injured. If you’re searching for a place to rest and heal, our ship has first-class cabins as well as some medicinal pills. If you’d like, you can always treat yourself here.” She clenched her teeth, and her heart pounded with nervousness.

When they heard her words, the faces of the surrounding Foundation Establishment Cultivators, including the middle-aged man, all fell. They couldn’t understand why the Clan Leader would do something like this. They wanted to do something to stop it, but didn’t dare to open their mouths.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he paused in mid-air to look at the young woman.

When he looked in her eyes, the young woman felt as if all Heaven and Earth were roaring, and she began to tremble even harder.

“What place are you going to?” he said, retracting his gaze.

“Our humble Clan is going to Saint’s Island in the Fourth Ring, so that my son can join the Footloose Sect.” The young woman didn’t dare to hide anything, and also spoke very respectfully. As of this point, the other three Foundation Establishment Cultivators had guessed what her purpose was. Although they continued to tremble inwardly, they also felt a bit of anticipation.

Meng Hao didn't know where exactly this Saint's Island was, nor did he understand the power structures and various regions of the Milky Way Sea. After a moment of thought, he nodded and then floated down onto the ship. The young woman respectfully guided him to a private cabin protected by a spell formation.

Meng Hao nodded, then sat down cross-legged. As he closed his eyes, the young woman respectfully made her exit.

As soon as she left, the parrot disapprovingly said, "Why did you pick this place? Don't tell me you've taken a liking to that young lady? She doesn't have much fur. I actually checked her out a few times earlier…."

"It doesn't matter where I hide in the Milky Way Sea, it's all the same," replied Meng Hao coolly. "Even if I'm at the bottom of the sea, once the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch detects my aura, he'll be able to find me. Since that's the case, I might as well hide here. Who knows, I might even gain some unexpected benefits." With that, he began to rotate his Cultivation base. Violet light gleamed underneath his eyelids as he began to treat his injuries.

Time passed by. On the morning of the second day, the young woman brought some local Milky Way Sea food products. She also gave him a jade slip that had information about Saint's Island, as well as a sea map of the surrounding areas.

The map was the most valuable thing to Meng Hao. Although it seemed simple, it had actually been produced by information gathered by successive generations of the Zhang Clan.

The young woman wasn't sure of Meng Hao's origins, but just to be safe, she gave him the map as a show of good faith.

Meng Hao took the jade slip, looked it over, and then smiled. The young woman instantly felt a bit more at ease. She reached up to pull a strand of hair back over her ear. Her features were naturally beautiful, but the mixture of anxiety and relief caused her to look even more entrancing. Suppressing her own excitement, she respectfully left.

Meng Hao watched her leave. Based on his experiences, the reason she had asked him to stay was because she had experienced grave danger in the past. Thus, she had taken the risk to call out to him.

He then focused his attention on the jade slip. “So the Milky Way Sea is divided into four Rings…. The area outside the Fourth Ring is called the Outer Sea.

“Saint’s Island. State of Xiao. Footloose Sect.” After a bit of time, he put the jade slip away and then continued to treat his injuries.

Time passed by slowly….

1. In Chinese, the word used to describe the young woman indicates that she either is or was married

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# Chapter 633: Honored Guest

In the blink of an eye, seven days passed.

Meng Hao spent the entire time with eyes closed in meditation, treating his injuries. During the seven days, the injures gradually healed by about thirty percent. Unfortunately, his fleshly body still couldn’t hold together without the help of the meat jelly. It still needed time to grow stable. However, the wounds were gradually fusing shut.

Every day, he would eat three meals of fruit, personally delivered by the young woman. She was always very respectful.

She even offered up some Spirit Stones. Whatever Meng Hao requested was provided in full, and all his questions about the Milky Way Sea were answered in detail.

In addition to healing himself, Meng Hao was able to gain quite an understanding about the area.

During the seven days, the surface of the Milky Way Sea was calm and quiet. The Zhang ship from the Outer Sea bravely proceeded onward as it had from the beginning. Of course, now that Meng Hao was on board, everyone was a bit more nervous than before. However, nothing untoward occurred.

As time passed and Meng Hao continued to stay in secluded meditation, the young woman gradually felt more at ease. Her previous cheerful and playful attitude returned. Occasionally, her laughter rang out, filled with a bit of childish naivety.

The other three Foundation Establishment Cultivators on the boat were as nervous as ever. They understood what the Clan Leader was thinking, but in their opinion, what she was doing was like asking a tiger for its own skin, expecting a bad person to act against his own interest. In their opinion, young people like her didn’t understand the ruthlessness of the Cultivation world. On the other hand, the three of them, having practiced cultivation up to the level of Foundation Establishment, and having maintained the position of the Clan on their island in the Outer Sea, had experienced many situations of deadly crisis.

They well knew that in the Cultivation world, the law of the jungle prevailed, and danger was the norm. One bad thing could lead to complete destruction, and could even affect an entire Clan.

Meng Hao had randomly appeared out of a bizarre black hole. Although he was weak and severely injured, the look he had given them seven days ago had caused them to feel as if they were frozen dead in the middle of winter.

They had the intense sensation that if Meng Hao wanted to kill them, then it wouldn’t matter if he was even more severely injured, they would all be destroyed.

Currently, all of three of them stood at the stern of the ship, frowning and giving voice to the same concerns.

“This matter with the Clan Leader… it’s not wise!”

“That man was severely injured, and arrived via teleportation. From the look of things, he must but the subject of pursuit. If his pursuers catch up with him, it could bring about the destruction of all of us!”

“Ai! I know what the Clan Leader is thinking. This journey to Saint’s Island is our last shot. If we succeed, we can strike some fear into the Liu Clan so that they don’t dare to act recklessly.”

“We can only hope that Nan’er will fight to excel. Hopefully he can stick out in the Footloose Sect’s competition for new disciples.”

The three of them exchanged glances and then sighed lightly.

The Patriarch of the Zhang Clan had founded their island in the Outer Sea. However, after he passed away in meditation, they had been forced to tread as carefully as if walking on thin ice. Another Core Formation Cultivator hadn't appeared in the Clan, which meant that the island they occupied soon came to be eyed greedily by surrounding neighbors.

Were it not for the spell formation left in place by the Patriarch before he passed away, as well as the magical items and social connections he had made, then they would have long since lost their island and become an auxiliary Clan.

They had managed to hold on for a while, until finally a crisis loomed. The Liu Clan, who occupied a nearby island, had long since begun to glare at them like a tiger eyeing its prey. Slaughter had been on the verge of breaking out.

During that moment of critical danger, the Zhang Clan Leader, which was none other than the beautiful young woman, had made a difficult decision. She took all of her people and left the island in secret to deliver her son to the Footloose Sect.

If he became a disciple of the Footloose Sect, then his identity would be enough to intimidate anyone in the Outer Sea. It would protect the Zhang Clan for at least around a hundred years.

The three Foundation Establishment Cultivators continued to discuss matters.

“This whole thing is going to be very difficult…. There's no need to even mention that after arriving at Saint's Island, it's impossible to know if Nan'er will be able to distinguish himself amongst the crowd and enter the Footloose Sect. Regardless of anything, our path is going to be one of extreme danger.”

“That's right. Rumors will have spread, and the news leaked. The Liu Clan won't be willing to accept this…. We can only hope that they react too slowly. Hopefully we left early enough to seize a superior position and evade their pursuit.”

“In addition to the Liu Clan, there are also the numerous sea beasts that roam between the Outer Sea and the Fourth Ring, not to mention the cruel rogue Cultivators. How could our path possibly be one of peace and security?”

“However, this really is our only chance….” The three once more sighed and then lapsed into silence. They understood what the Clan Leader was trying to do, and since she had already made her decision, there was no need to spend time worrying.

Who knew? Perhaps… inviting the wounded expert to stay with them might have some extraordinary outcome.

At the same time that the three of them were having their discussion, the Zhang Clan Leader, the young woman, stood at the prow of the boat, clasping her son’s hand. She looked off into the sky up above, unable to conceal her expression of anxiety and unease.

“Our voyage will continue for three more days before we reach the Fourth Ring,” she murmured. “After leaving the Outer Sea behind, then we really will have evaded the Liu Clan….” Although the Liu Clan was not weak, that was only when speaking in terms of the Outer Sea. In the Fourth Ring, they could be considered bugs. In the analysis of the young woman, once they entered the Fourth Ring, the Liu Clan would most likely give up any pursuit and not dare to follow.

After all, she and her Clan were at the end of their rope, whereas the Liu Clan wouldn’t dare to rashly put themselves in danger.

She looked down at her son and patted his head. “Nan’er, you need to remember, the Footloose Sect pays a lot of attention to seniority. After we arrive, you must not make any breaches of etiquette.”

The boy didn’t seem to understand what she meant, but he nodded his head obediently. Her eyes filled with a doting expression, and she was just about to lean over to pick him up when her expression flickered and she suddenly looked behind her.

At the same time, the three Foundation Establishment Cultivators in the stern also looked back.

What they saw was a pitch-black ship speeding toward them at top speed. The flag flying on the ship was clearly emblazoned with a huge character.

Liu  !

This was a ship from the Outer Seas Liu Clan. They had been in full pursuit for days, and had finally caught up. On the prow of the ship stood four people, three of whom wore extremely respectful expressions. The other was clearly different than them.

He was an old man with an aloof expression. His eyes flashed like lightning, and he held his hands clasped behind his back. His voluminous robe flapped in the wind, and his long, white hair made him look completely extraordinary.

His Cultivation base emanated the ripples of the early Core Formation stage. It was for this reason that the Liu Clan ship had been able to pursue at top speed for so many days.

As soon as the young woman caught sight of the old man, the blood drained from her face. She began to pant, and her hands clasped down tightly onto her son.

The other three Foundation Establishment Cultivators of the Zhang Clan also felt their hearts beginning to pound. Their faces paled, and their eyes filled with despair.

“Liu Clan… Patriarch!”

As the Liu Clan ship neared, the appearances of the old man and the other three who accompanied him grew clearer. Behind them appeared seven or eight Qi Condensation Clan members, all of whom wore expressions of disdain.

Standing next to the Liu Clan Patriarch was a middle-aged man. He smiled and said, “Zhang Wenfang, what’s your hurry? Now that you’ve abandoned your Zhang Clan island, where exactly do you think you’re going?”

1

Zhang Wenfang walked to the stern of the ship, took a deep breath and then said, “Junior offers greetings, senior Liu. Senior, we’ve abandoned our island, and would simply like to get as far away as possible. Our two Clans were friends in the past. Don’t tell me you won’t even give us a chance to survive?” The other Zhang Clan Cultivators gathered around her, their faces filled with extreme grief and indignation.

The young woman’s words were directed, not toward the man who had spoken, but toward the Liu Clan Patriarch. Despite matters having reached their current state, she still addressed him respectfully.

The Liu Clan Patriarch said nothing; he merely looked on with a proud expression. The Clan member standing next to him was the one to respond, his tone of voice filled with ridicule. “What a joke! Do you really take us to be three-year-old children? Do you really think we don’t know of your plan, Zhang Wenfang? You’re obviously journeying to the Footloose Clan!”

“Junior can abandon everything, even deliver our island to you, senior. I can also swear that we have no intention to encroach on what is not ours. I just beg of you to be a bit lenient….” Zhang Wenfang’s face was pale, but before she could finish speaking, the Liu Clan Patriarch frowned.

“Pipe down!” he said coolly, his voice echoing about like thunder in all directions. The seawater roiled, and the minds of the Zhang Wenfang and the other Clan members filled with a droning sound.

One sentence, two words. All of the Qi Condensation Clan members coughed up blood. Only Zhang Wenfang and the other Foundation Establishment Cultivators got by with only pale faces. Their expressions were filled with increasing hopelessness.

“Where do you come up with so much nonsense?” said the Liu Clan Patriarch, his voice cool. “Kill them all! Old people, children, don’t leave a single one alive!” With that, he waved his sleeve, and the surrounding Liu Clan members flew up into the air, vicious expressions on their faces.

Zhang Wenfang clenched her teeth and looked back at the ship’s quarterdeck. “Senior Liu!” she suddenly cried. “If you have a quarrel with the Zhang Clan, you can kill us, but do you really dare to trifle with our honored guest?!”

“Still making things up?” said the Liu Clan Patriarch with a cold snort. “You expect me to believe that the Zhang Clan has a Nascent Soul guest aboard? Or is it a Spirit Severing expert? Wouldn’t that be a bit more threatening?” He had already swept the ship with Spiritual Sense, and had detected only the Zhang Clan Cultivators and mortals on the ship, no one else.

By this point, the Liu Clan Cultivators were closing in. A glowing shield sprang up from the Zhang Clan ship, blocking their progress. However, it couldn’t do anything to stop the Liu Clan Patriarch. With a single palm strike, he caused a deafening boom to ring out. The ship sank down by more than half into the water, and the shield shattered into fragments.

The Liu Clan Cultivators proceeded onward with vicious grins. As soon as they reached the boat, Zhang Wenfang and the other three Foundation Establishment Cultivators unleashed magical items and flashed incantations to summon magical techniques. Booms instantly rang out.

The massacre had begun.

“The Patriarch has issued the orders! Eliminate them completely, root and branch. They can only blame their own name of Zhang.”

Some of the Liu Clan Qi Condensation Cultivators, with hideous grins on their faces, headed toward the pale-faced and terrified youngsters. Zhang Wenfang’s eyes turned red, and the Clan members next to her were on the verge of going crazy and risking everything.

The Liu Clan Patriarch hovered in mid-air, staring superciliously out of the corner of his eyes. To him, all of these people were clearly insects.

However, it was at this moment, a calm voice suddenly echoed out from within the Zhang Clan’s ship.

“Pipe down!”

It was only two words, but as the sound expanded out, it instantly suppressed all other sounds. It was louder than thunder, and gave rise to three echoes. It was also filled with intense pressure that weighed down on everything.

At the same time, within his cabin, Meng Hao’s eyes opened. His gaze seemed to pass through the ship, making everything outside visible.

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1. Zhang Wenfang’s name in Chinese is zhāng wén fāng – Zhang is a family name. Wen can mean “culture, language, gentle.” Fang means “fragrant”

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 634: Who’s Feeling Jumpy?

The instant his voice rang out, it gave rise to the first echo. Ripples appeared that headed toward the Liu Clan Qi Condensation disciples who were about to attack the youngsters. They began to tremble, then blood sprayed from their mouths as they were sent tumbling backward. Then, their bodies simply exploded in mid air, countless pieces flying about in all directions. At the same time, all the other Liu Clan Qi Condensation disciples suffered the same fate. They first watched on with blank expressions, then were shattered into chunks of blood and gore.

When the second echo rang out, the Liu Clan’s three Foundation Establishment Cultivators’ faces went pale white. They felt as if an enormous, invisible hand were bombarding them. They tumbled backward through mid-air, screaming miserably. In the blink of an eye, countless tears and rips could be seen in their bodies, and then, a moment later, they exploded into pieces.

The third echo caused the Liu Clan Patriarch, who was floating up above, to shake. His face instantly filled with an expression of disbelief and horror. Blood sprayed from his mouth as he retreated backward. He couldn’t prevent his body from beginning to rip apart.

“This… this….” His mind roared with a terror he had never known, and then he suddenly thought back to how Zhang Wenfang had mentioned an honored guest.

“Senior, spare me….” he screamed, his terror having reached the pinnacle. However, even as the words left his mouth, he suddenly burst into pieces, causing blood and flesh to rain down in all directions.

In that instant, everything went deathly silent….

Everyone who remained on the Liu Clan ship were all mortals, who were now watching on with pale faces, their bodies shaking.

As for the Zhang Clan members, including Zhang Wenfang, they all stared in shock, and were also shaking. That was especially true of the three Foundation Establishment Cultivators, whose faces were completely pale. They had no way to even imagine what kind of Cultivation base could destroy all their enemies with a single statement.

And that included an early Core Formation Cultivator, someone whose Cultivation base was the same as their own previous Patriarch!

“Nascent Soul eccentric!” That was what was now floating in the minds of the three.

Zhang Wenfang’s body trembled. She also had never imagined that the person she invited to stay on their ship would be so fearsome. Originally, she had taken him to be a Core Formation expert, but what she had just seen left her astonished to the extreme.

Had she known that Meng Hao possessed such a Cultivation base, she might not have had the courage to speak up and urge him to stay behind. However, she was the Clan Leader. Therefore, her first reaction was to instantly turn toward the ship’s quarterdeck, then drop to her knees and kowtow.

“Thank you, senior… for your action just now….” Her voice quavered as she spoke. At the same time, the other members of the Clan, their minds trembling, began to drop to their knees to kowtow.

“Come on, let’s keep going,” replied Meng Hao from within his cabin. Zhang Wenfang ignored the Liu Clan ship, and, her anxiety deepening, respectfully complied, having the mortal members of the Zhang Clan send their own ship forward.

Moments later, the Zhang Clan ship was moving on just as before. As for everyone on board, absolute silence reigned amongst them.

They remained in that state for three days, until finally the ship entered the Fourth Ring, and then everything finally changed.

However, everyone still acted extremely cautiously. Whenever any of them happened to pass Meng Hao’s cabin, they would stop outside to bow before proceeding on their way.

Half a month later, the ship was speeding along through the Fourth Ring, and they drew ever nearer to Saint’s Island. Although they weren’t sure why, they hadn’t encountered even a single sea beast or rogue Cultivator. Perhaps it was luck. That was not even to mention the pirate Cultivators who would cause anyone who discussed them to grow pale in the face.

Meng Hao had treated his injuries to the point where he was now sixty percent recovered. The meat jelly had finally sloughed off of him; his fleshly body was now recovered to complete stability. As long as he didn’t get involved with a magical battle of the Spirit Severing level, he would be fine.

“This injury was inflicted by the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, who has a Dao Seeking Cultivation base. That’s why the Violet Pupil Transformation has been so ineffective.” His eyes finally opened. After taking a moment to examine his Cultivation base, a smile appeared on his face for the first time in many days.

His Cultivation base, which had originally been compressed to 8 parts, now only consisted of 7 parts. The deadly pressure he had experienced in the magical battle with the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch had fused it together.

“My path to Spirit Severing is already opened. Soon… if I encounter anything that wishes to dominate me, I will have to be stronger than it and anything!” He rose to his feet and pushed open the door of his private cabin. For the first time in a month, he finally stepped foot outside.

The parrot had long since left for who knew where. Its personality was such that it couldn’t remain quietly in one place for days on end. Once the meat jelly removed itself from Meng Hao, the two of them flew off to have fun somewhere.

It was midday, and the sun shone brightly. When Meng Hao stepped out onto the deck, the warm sun fell onto his back, and it felt good. There were a few youngsters of the Zhang Clan playing nearby. One of them was the boy named Nan’er, and he was also the first to notice that Meng Hao had emerged. At first, his little face filled with hesitation. But then he remembered what his mother had said to him about being courteous. Ignoring his fear, he clasped hands and bowed to Meng Hao.

“Nan’er offers greetings, senior uncle.”

His words caused the other youngsters to notice Meng Hao. Instantly, their young faces went ghastly pale and filled with fear. The scene from half a month ago had been like something from a nightmare. All of them quickly began to bow.

Seeing the children caused a smile to break out on Meng Hao’s face. He liked children. Even back in Yunjie County when he was a scholar, he had been especially fond of kids.

After so many years had passed, after traveling the path of Cultivation and acquiring a longevity that far exceeded any mortal, there were many wonderful things about being mortal that seemed increasingly far away.

Seeing these children caused his eyes to grow soft and gentle. Glancing them over, he could see that their latent talent was all completely ordinary, except for the one called Nan’er. His was slightly above the others.

Meng Hao smiled and asked, “What are you guys playing?”

“We’re playing… hide-and-seek,” replied Nan’er a bit nervously. The other youngsters around him were even more nervous as they nodded their heads.

“He can hide really good….” said one of the other children bravely. He was a boy of about eleven or twelve years of age.

“Yeah, that’s right! Every time he hides, nobody can ever find him!” said another child. Soon, all of the kids starting talking, one after another, saying this and that. Meng Hao’s warm smile widened as he listened. Gradually, the nervousness they all felt began to dissipate.

“It’s not that I’m good at hiding,” said Nan’er, his voice strong and clear. “You guys are just stupid and can’t find me!” He glared around at the others.

When Meng Hao heard this, he laughed and looked at Nan’er.

“Where exactly do you hide?” he asked with a smile. Some of the other children cocked their ears, obviously quite curious.

Nan’er’s face went a little red as he looked at the other youngsters. He seemed to be considering whether or not say anything. After all, if he told everyone his hiding place, then where would he be able to hide in the future? Finally, he took a few steps forward, and Meng Hao scooped him up in his arms. Nan’er rested on his shoulder and then carefully whispered into his ear.

“Senior uncle, I always hide under my mother’s bed. I just go where nobody else can go, it’s simple, right?”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. It really was a simple truth. If you were playing hide-and-seek, you should hide where no one else can go. In that case, of course they would be incapable of finding you.

Now that he thought about it, he and the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch were essentially playing a game of hide-and-seek.

It was in this moment that Zhang Wenfang suddenly emerged from the quarterdeck. When she saw Meng Hao with the children, and especially the way that he was holding Nan’er, she immediately started panting, and grew incredibly nervous.

“Nan’er….” she said. She tried her best to remain outwardly calm, but her voice still quavered a bit.

When Meng Hao saw her looking over at them, he put the boy down and tousled his hair.

“Sly little fox,” he said with a smile. Nan’er blushed and then ran to hide behind his mother.

“Junior offers greetings, senior,” said Zhang Wenfang, breathing a sigh of relief as she bowed.

Meng Hao nodded, and was just about to say something when suddenly, his expression flickered. He looked off into the distance. There, within the range of his Divine Sense, an island had appeared. It was incredibly large, and just glancing at it, almost seemed like a continent.

Mountain ranges could be seen, as well as many areas swirling with mist that blocked his Divine Sense. He only examined the place for a moment before retracting his Divine Sense. According to the map in the jade slip he had been given, Meng Hao knew that their voyage was almost at an end.

“Senior, we have only half a day left. When evening falls, we will reach Saint’s Island. Many thanks for your assistance,” she continued, her voice sincere. “Our entire Clan will remember you from generation to generation, senior!” She gave Meng Hao a curtsying bow. She really was extremely appreciative; however, the awe and reverence she felt occupied the most of her heart.

By now, many of the others on the ship had gathered. They watched Meng Hao with heads bowed; they were so nervous that they didn’t even dare to look up.

Meng Hao glanced over at Nan’er and then casually said, “He’s going to join the Footloose Sect?”

“That’s right,” replied Zhang Wenfang quickly. “My son has the best latent talent in the Clan. The Footloose Sect is recruiting disciples right now, so if he can distinguish himself, he will put himself in a superior position, both for himself, and our entire Clan.

“The Footloose Sect is the most powerful Sect in the entire Fourth Ring. You could consider it the overlord, a force that nobody dares to provoke. They pay very close attention to seniority, and the Sect rules are very strict. In fact, they say that there is virtually no fighting between members.”

“The State of Xiao,” thought Meng Hao. “The State of Xiao.” He said nothing, instead opting to stare off into the distance.

Seeing him remain silent, the rest of the people around didn’t dare to speak. Time passed slowly, and Saint’s Island grew nearer and nearer. The sky was starting to grow dark. In the murkiness of evening, the island resembled some enormous creature lying there on the sea. From a distance, it looked very grand and magnificent.

At the same time that Meng Hao neared the island, an old man wearing a Daoist robe sat in a luxurious palace deep in the mountains.

He bore the semblance of a transcendent being, and was dignified in appearance as he sat on his white jade throne. Next to him was an incense burner, beside which stood a beautiful girl. The girl yawned as she lazily fanned the burning incense, causing the tendrils of incense smoke to spread out.

Originally, the palace was completely silent, but suddenly, the meditating old man opened his eyes. He trembled, and a perplexed look could be seen in his eyes.

“Strange,” he said, his eyelids twitching involuntarily. “Why do I feel so jumpy all of a sudden?”

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# Chapter 635: Destined To Meet Again

“Rainy, what do you think is going on?” murmured the old man toward the girl as she languidly fanned the incense. “Why does the Patriarch suddenly have this feeling that something huge is going to happen?” The old man was obviously ill at ease, and in no mood for meditation.

“Maybe you did too many bad things?” replied the girl, glancing over at him.

“No, not me! The Patriarch has spent these years cultivating life and spirituality. It’s been a long time since I even stepped outside.” The old man found that his eyelids were twitching even more rapidly, and for some reason, the unease he felt in his heart was growing more intense. He stepped down from his throne and began to pace back and forth inside the palace.

The uneasy feeling kept growing stronger, leading him to believe that something akin to a disaster was just around the corner.

If the other members of the Footloose Sect saw his current appearance, they would be truly shocked, as if the Heavens had fallen. They would all drop to their knees to kowtow immediately. That was because this old man was none other than the Patriarch of the Footloose Sect.

In the entire Footloose Sect, his position was the highest, and absolutely without compare. In fact, he was the founding Patriarch of the entire Sect.

The Footloose Sect paid special attention to seniority; it was actually a Sect rule that he had established. People with different levels of seniority were required to show proper respect to those above them, which made a clear distinction between everyone.

As for him, he was Patriarch Footloose, a position without compare. In all of Saint’s Island, he was the most supreme existence. A mere word from him could determine the existence or destruction of the entire island.

“Something fishy is going on! Something is definitely about to happen!

“I’m feeling more and more nervous, more and more jumpy!” The old man’s face flickered, and the girl suddenly looked a bit suspicious.

“Something big is definitely about to happen,” he said. “The Patriarch’s premonitions cannot be wrong!” With that he suddenly stopped in place and looked up. A glow appeared in his eyes that seemed capable of splitting Heaven and Earth.

At the same time, an indescribably majestic Divine Sense suddenly spread out from him. It swept out in all directions, the mountaintop palace being the point of origin.

In the blink of an eye, the Divine Sense had covered the entire island. Every inch of dirt, every scrap of rock, every district, every person, every life.

Whether it be flying creatures in the sky, or the plants or animals on the ground, everything on the island was scanned and examined carefully by the Divine Sense.

“Nothing out of the ordinary?” said the old man. Now he looked even more baffled. He scanned back and forth several times, but couldn’t detect anything that should make him anxious. Then, without even thinking about it, he caused the divine sense to expand out a bit further, to cover the sea area surrounding the island.

It was at this point that a tremor suddenly ran through the old man’s body. His eyes went wide, and he looked off in a certain direction, a look of disbelief on his face.

In that direction, he could see a ship with his Divine Sense, a ship currently on its way toward the island.

In the prow of the ship was a man with gray hair, a pale face, and a long white robe. As soon as the old man saw him, his heart was thrown into chaos.

Beads of cold sweat began to pour down his forehead, and he started panting in unprecedented fashion. He almost didn’t seem capable of believing what he was seeing. He rubbed his eyes vigorously a few times, just to make sure he wasn’t mistaken. Then, he let out a mournful wail.

“Dammit, dammit, dammit….”

Eyes filled with disbelief and blankness, he stared at the white-robed man. Although he looked different than before, the old man instantly recognized who he was.

“Meng Hao!!!” The old man gnashed his teeth, and a vicious expression appeared on his face. His entire body began to shake, as if he were infinitely furious.

“I hid here from you, and you, you, you… you actually tracked me down, you bastard!?!?

“You actually came from the Southern Domain looking for me?

“You, you, you….

“Won’t you ever give up?! The League of Demon Sealers is a bunch of bastards! Yeah, that’s right. All bastards! Stinking bastards!!”

This old man… was none other than Patriarch Reliance!

The so-called Saint’s Island was in fact the former State of Zhao. However, it had been transformed into something completely new by Patriarch Reliance, to the point where even the residents of the State of Zhao would never recognize it.

As for the State of Xiao, it was the new name for the old State of Zhao….

Regarding the Footloose Sect… it was nothing less than the old Reliance Sect. The Cultivators who made up the Sect were all previous members of the old Sects that had existed in the State of Zhao. After having fled the Southern Domain, the old turtle Patriarch Reliance had forced them into a corner, and they had joined the new Footloose Sect.

Hundreds of years had passed, so by now, they were all fully integrated into the Footloose Sect, and followed Patriarch Reliance’s orders without question. As for Patriarch Reliance, in his efforts to hide himself from Meng Hao, he had changed his name to Patriarch Footloose.

In his mind, he had been conned all those years ago, and had been given no choice but to become the Dao Protector of the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer. With the Demon Seal in place, he couldn’t fight back, and definitely couldn’t harm Meng Hao.

However, even though he couldn’t fight, what he could do, was hide. In his mind, hiding within the vast Milky Way Sea meant that he would most likely never meet Meng Hao again in his life. In that way, he could live a happy, footloose life. That was how he had come up with the new name Patriarch Footloose.

However, after seeing Meng Hao, everything changed in the blink of an eye.

“AAAARRGGGHHHHHHHH!” roared Patriarch Reliance. “The Patriarch’s life is filled with suffering! I hide out here, and… dammit, I hide out here and the bastard can still find me!?” All the lands trembled slightly, and the seawater surrounding the island began to churn. It almost seemed as if there were some enormous creature under the water, flailing about.

“How could I possibly end up running into that Heaven-damned little bastard again?! That year in my Immortal’s cave, he took away all of my treasures, all of my savings! He took my good luck charm, my Thunderclap Leaf, my Outlander Tree, my divine spirit plants, my Spirit Stone mountain!!” Patriarch Reliance was obviously stingy to the extreme; he still clearly remembered everything that Meng Hao had taken from him hundreds of years ago. 1

In response to Patriarch Reliance's angry ravings, the beautiful girl next to the incense burner suddenly looked up. A look of reminiscence appeared in her lovely eyes.

She thought back to all those years ago, to the vow made by the young man on the shore, who wanted to help the North Sea turn into a real sea.

"Meng Hao…." said the girl, covering her smile with a hand. She started to laugh, and then, without even looking at Patriarch Reliance, flew into the air. The instant she emerged from the palace, she saw an old boatman leaning up against the wall, looking at her with a doting expression.

"Boat Spirit! Meng Hao is back!" This girl was none other than Guyiding Tri-rain!

A look of concentration appeared in the old boatman's eyes, and then he laughed. The girl shouted out in excitement, and then the two of them began to make their way off into the distance.

Patriarch Reliance suddenly looked up and then roared: "You two aren't going anywhere!"

Suddenly, the entire mountain that the palace was located on completely vanished.

At least, that is what someone looking from the outside would see. From the perspective of the mountain, everything on the outside disappeared.

"Fudge! Do I need to flee again?! 2

"Dammit! I lived here footloose and carefree for hundreds of years. Hundreds of years!

"No. I need to get away before he finds me. I can't allow him to figure out that I'm here." Gnashing his teeth, Patriarch Reliance flicked his sleeve. He was just about to send his Divine Sense back into his true self and then flee before Meng Hao stepped foot on the island, when suddenly, his eyes turned up thoughtfully.

“Wait a second. From the look of things, the little bastard doesn’t know I’m here!” Patriarch Reliance’s eyes suddenly grew bright. As for Guyiding Tri-rain, she didn’t look very happy as she returned into the palace with the Boat Spirit. 3

“If he doesn’t know that I’m here, then that must mean that he’s not here to look for me, right? He just happens to be passing by!!

“If that’s the case, then what do I need to flee for? I don’t! I don’t need to flee! He doesn’t know I’m here, so all I need to do is make sure he leaves without a hitch. As long as he doesn’t detect me, then he won’t have any reason to suspect anything!

“Hahaha! It turns out the Patriarch is the cleverest as usual. This way, I can continue to live here footloose and fancy free without any further complications!” The more he continued to talk, the brighter Patriarch Reliance’s eyes glowed. As he paced back and forth within the palace, Guyiding Tri-rain watched on, her face growing increasingly unsightly.

“Didn’t you make a promise to the Patriarchs from his Sect?” she asked, unable to hold back. “Why back out? Being his Dao Protector doesn’t mean nothing good will come to you. Why do you have to constantly hide?”

“Silly little girl!” said Patriarch Reliance, glaring at her. “You don’t know a damn thing!

“Hmm. You know, it was just recently that I remembered something. I feel like a long, long time ago, I met another little bastard who had the same name as this bastard!

“That other bastard went way overboard. It was back when I was little, and he bullied and humiliated me to the extreme!!

“I almost forgot about it. It wasn’t until recently that it suddenly came to mind!” Patriarch Reliance’s eyes went wide with both humiliation and curiosity. He really had no idea why it was only recently that he had suddenly recalled the matter.

In fact, the clearness of the memory also contained haziness.

“Have you ever wondered why the Patriarch carries an entire continent on his back? You think I want to? It’s a humiliation!!” It wasn’t clear what Patriarch Reliance was thinking about exactly, but his face was filled with fury.

“He must just be here to handle some matter or another. After he takes care of his business, he’ll be gone. Once the little bastard is out of here, then everything will be fine!” Patriarch Reliance took a deep breath, and his eyes flashed like lightning. Having made his decision to get Meng Hao to leave as quickly as possible, he would now spare nothing to accomplish his goal.

Meanwhile, evening was approaching and the sky was growing dim. The seawater gurgled as the Zhang Clan ship neared Saint’s Island. Meng Hao stood at the prow, looking at the sandy beach up ahead, and the densely packed docks. Scattered Cultivators flew about above the island, and people bustled about busily on the beach.

For some reason, Meng Hao felt as if he weren’t in the Milky Way Sea, but rather, back in the Southern Domain.

In the following moment, Meng Hao noticed that the entire island seemed to tremble. His eyes narrowed. At the same time, the surrounding water surged with waves, causing the ship to rock up and down. Everyone on the ship cried out in alarm.

Meng Hao was astonished at the sudden appearance of the waves, however, in the space of just a few breaths, they calmed down. His brow furrowed, and he stood there thoughtfully for a moment before sending his Divine Sense out. Although he didn’t detect anything out of the ordinary, he remained vigilant inwardly.

Not much time passed before they entered the docks. After the ship was secured, they disembarked, and finally managed to step foot onto Saint’s

Island.

Meng Hao didn’t know it, but as soon as he stepped foot onto land, Patriarch Reliance’s heart trembled.

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2. Please note, “fudge” is not a censored version of “f*ck.” The word used in the original Chinese is a euphemism of the Chinese version of the F word

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 636: As Long As You Leave, Anything Is OK!

The docks were constructed into the beach, and seemed quite simple. However, the atmosphere was incredible. For one thing, there were countless uniformed disciples directing the boats here and there.

These disciples weren’t very old, and most of them had a Cultivation base at the Qi Condensation stage. Occasionally, a Foundation Establishment disciple would stroll past on patrol.

They didn’t wear haughty expressions, however, it was clear that deep in their bones, they held themselves high above the masses. The feeling wasn’t very intense, but it was there. Despite that, they treated all the guests very courteously.

On the far side of the docks, horse carriages were lined up in rows. The horses that pulled these carts looked very bizarre. They didn’t have four legs, but rather, six. Also, they had horns coming out of their heads. They looked like horses, but were also covered with tentacle-like feelers.

This was a unique wild beast in the Milky Way Sea that happened to be easy to tame. They were called Heavenly Horses.

Far off in the distance, three towering pagodas could be seen. Burning lights flickered inside, which would make them visible even from far off in the sea.

As Meng Hao looked at the three pagodas, he noticed that sitting within each of them was a cross-legged Cultivator. All were middle-aged; one had a Cultivation base at the mid Core Formation stage, the others at the early Core Formation stage.

Obviously, they were here to keep guard over the area and prevent any disorder from erupting.

The entire dock and beach could be considered a point of entry and exit of Saint’s Island. Everything proceeded in quite an orderly fashion, despite the relatively large number of people present. Therefore, even though evening was falling, a clamor of noise and voices filled the air.

Even as they docked, Meng Hao saw at least ten more ships arrive, to be directed by the locals into various locations in the harbor.

No one actually approached the docked ships to receive any of the outsiders. This was Saint’s Island, and the Footloose Sect was the greatest Sect in the entire area. Despite the stellar reputation of the enormous organization, they wouldn’t send disciples to personally receive tiny Clans from the Outer Sea.

Of course, that included the Zhang Clan. During the time period in which the Footloose Sect was recruiting new disciples, many, many Clans from the Outer Sea would come. In fact, right now there were literally hundreds of boats moored to the docks. And this was only one side of the island. If you counted the docks on the other sides of the islands, the number of boats would exceed a thousand.

In addition to the people coming to join the Footloose Sect, there were others who had arrived to do business. Saint’s Island was a huge place, and the Cultivator cities there were exceedingly famous.

In fact, there were some types of Cultivation resources that could be only be acquired in full on Saint’s Island.

Right now, the sky was getting dark, and the ocean breeze blew across their faces, bringing with it the pungent smell of saltwater and sea life. Meng Hao breathed in deeply as he stood there on the deck, looking at the shadows that were distant mountains of Saint’s Island.

The Zhang Clan members, under the leadership of Zhang Wenfang, were preparing to disembark. The group of youngsters looked around with both nervousness and curiosity. Deep in their eyes could also be seen anticipation.

Nan’er clasped his mother’s hand tightly as he looked around. He looked a little bit scared.

As the Zhang Clan Foundation Establishment Cultivators engaged in the proper formalities with the Footloose Sect disciples in charge of the docks, Zhang Wenfang turned to Meng Hao and gave him a curtseying bow. Her voice low, she respectfully said, “Senior, this is Saint’s Island. Anyone below the Core Formation stage is prohibited from flying here, so we will need to travel by horse carriage….”

Meng Hao nodded but didn’t say anything. It didn’t take long for the Zhang Clan members to finish up with the Footloose Sect disciples, who then led the group toward three horse carriages.

This was the first time for the children, including Nan’er, to see Heavenly Horses. They looked at them wide-eyed, desiring to near them, but also afraid. This was also Meng Hao’s first time seeing such beasts, and he couldn’t help but stare a bit.

It was at this point that some Cultivators walked off of the deck of a newly arrived boat off in the distance. They wore resplendent clothing, and were led by man of roughly thirty years of age. His appearance was beyond ordinary, and he had a Cultivation base at the great circle of Foundation Establishment. He was followed by a group of four or five Foundation Establishment Cultivators, who in turn led seven or eight children along with them. The whole group casually looked over Meng Hao and the others as they neared.

The thirty-year-old man in the lead position suddenly made an “eee?” sound. He stopped in place and looked at Zhang Wenfang. She saw him as well, and her face flickered.

“Wenfang!” the man said slowly, obviously recognizing her.

She pursed her lips, a complicated expression on her face as she curtseyed to him with clasped hands.

“Brother.”

Upon hearing her words, the rest of the Zhang Clan members’ faces also flickered. As for the Cultivators behind the thirty-year-old man, they all seemed to be thinking the same thing as they looked over.

The thirty-year-old man stood there silently, his gaze as sharp as a blade. When he saw Nan’er standing there holding Zhang Wenfang’s hand, he frowned.

Zhang Wenfang bit her lip, then finally lowered her head and said to her son, “Nan’er, this is your uncle.”

“Hello, uncle,” said Nan’er in his clear, crisp voice. A bit of fear could be seen on his face.

The thirty-year-old man snorted coldly.

“Wenfang,” he said coolly and in a very impolite tone, “Father and Mother are still furious about what happened all those years ago. If you have a heart, you’ll come home and let them talk to you. Don’t continue to lose face and make a fool of yourself among these outsiders!

“As for this child…. Don’t have him call me uncle. Did you really bring him here to try to get him into the Footloose Sect? You’ve overrated yourself from when you were young, and now you’re getting your own son to do the same. You’re just going to disappoint people.” The people behind him began to chuckle, especially the group of children, within whose eyes scorn could be seen.

Nan’er was shaking, and looked even more scared. Zhang Wenfang suddenly looked over to glare at her brother. Breathing heavily, she said, “I already cut off all ties with you people that year.”

“Xu Wenfang!” growled the man, his eyes growing wide.

“Xu Wende, I am Clan Leader Zhang Wenfang of the Zhang Clan,” she retorted coolly. “You aren’t even qualified to speak with me.” With that, she tugged her son’s arm to get into a horse carriage.

The other members of the Zhang Clan glared with hostility at the members of the Xu Clan, then began to enter the horse carriages. As for Meng Hao, his expression was the same the entire time, and he did not speak a word. In fact, he had long since taken a seat up front on the bench seat of one of the horse carriages.

No one dared to try to convince him to sit anywhere else. They all lowered their heads wordlessly as the horse carriages began to slowly make their way off.

“Slut!” said Xu Wende coldly, his voice loud enough for all the Zhang Clan members in the horse carriages to hear. “I offer to give you some face, and you reject it? Our Clan suffered shame because of you, and now you dare to bring that bastard son here to join the Footloose Sect!?

“Since you insist on bringing your little Zhang Clan bastard here to lose face, then I look forward to seeing just how far he can get through the competition!”

The Zhang Clan Cultivators clenched their fists, and Zhang Wenfang sat there in the horse carriage, her face pale and her arms wrapped around Nan’er. It was impossible to tell what she was thinking, but tears were streaming down her face.

“Don’t cry, mother,” said Nan’er, wiping the tears off of his mother’s face. “I’ll definitely get into the Footloose Sect!” he guaranteed, his voice soft.

Meng Hao sat on the bench seat of the horse carriage. As the Heavenly Horses sped along the well-maintained road, he looked up at the canopy of stars overhead. He also heard what Nan’er said inside the horse carriage.

“What a good kid,” he whispered, shaking his head. Based on his experiences, it was simple for him to understand the situation with the Zhang Clan. Obviously, there was an unapproved marriage, after which the husband died. The Clan then began to deteriorate, leaving the wife responsible for her husband’s role of leading the Clan.

The Heavenly Horses sped along through the night. At dawn the following morning, a city appeared up again. Even from a distance it appeared majestic and magnificent. Despite the early hour, the city was still like a seething cauldron of activity. People walked hither and thither, and a buzz of excitement filled the air.

Up in the air, colorful beams of light could occasionally be seen flying about. Those would be Core Formation Cultivators.

Meng Hao looked everything over, and suddenly got the feeling that there was something out of the ordinary with this Footloose Sect. He wasn’t sure what it was, but there was something about Saint’s Island that felt very familiar to him.

Upon close examination, he was sure he hadn’t seen any of these places before, but he still had an intense sensation of familiarity. However, after much thought, he wasn’t able to determinate what the source of that familiarity was. They entered the city through the east gate, and then eventually reached a tavern. Zhang Wenfang respectfully escorted Meng Hao to a luxury room, and then was about to go to arrange rooms for everyone else.

She wasn’t sure what Meng Hao was thinking, and wasn’t certain that he would continue to escort them. Before leaving, she hesitated for a moment, then lowered her head and asked, “Senior, there are still ten more days until the Footloose Sect begins the formalities of recruiting new disciples….”

Meng Hao nodded, but didn’t respond. Zhang Wenfang respectfully left.

It was currently early morning. Meng Hao opened his window and looked out at the people walking around on the street below. There were quite a few mortals mixed in with the Cultivators. The rays of the rising sun shone down to illuminate everything.

He took a deep breath, then sat down cross-legged and closed his eyes, surrounded by the sounds of the bustling city.

“Why does this place seem so familiar?” he thought once more.

Despite the fact that Meng Hao’s current Cultivation base allowed him to fight First Severing Cultivators, he still couldn’t detect the stream of Divine Sense that cautiously swirled beneath his feet.

The owner of the stream of Divine Sense was of course Patriarch Reliance, who sat in his palace, more jumpy than ever.

“Fudge! The little bastard is here. And it turns out he’s escorting some people who want to join the Footloose Sect!!” Patriarch Reliance was incredibly depressed. If he had known this was the situation, he would have simply canceled the Footloose Sect’s call for new disciples.

That way, he could have completely prevented Meng Hao from even coming.

“I can’t let this stand. With him here, the Patriarch can’t sleep well. I need to get him out of here as soon as possible…. Dammit, there’s still ten days before the recruiting begins? No, that won’t work. We’ll start tomorrow…. FUDGE! Let’s start now!!” with that he raised a hand, causing a jade slip to appear. Instantly, flames appeared on its surface and it flew into the air.

It transformed into a shocking beam of light which then sped directly toward the Footloose Sect.

The Footloose Sect was located in the east region of Saint’s Island, in a boundless stretch of wild mountains. There, nine great valleys could be seen, spread out in concentric rings. Although they looked majestic, there was also something strange about them. Inside of the nine valleys were countless richly ornamented palace buildings. Everything was luxurious and lavish.

The jade slip immediately entered the ninth valley, and a huge temple that lay therein. It came to stop in front of an old man who sat there cross-legged, somberly providing admonition to the group of people sitting in front of him.

As soon as he saw the jade slip, a tremor ran through the old man’s body. He quickly pinched the jade slip, then prostrated himself on the ground and lifted it high above his head. Instantly, the voice of Patriarch Reliance could be heard.

“Disciple recruitment begins immediately!”

It was only four words, but as they echoed out through the Footloose Sect, and the other deep valleys, colorful beams of light immediately shot out to gather in the main temple of the ninth valley.

These people were the Sect Leaders of the various auxiliary Sects from the other valleys. Their Cultivation bases were extraordinary, and some of them were Cultivators with whom Meng Hao had butted heads in the past.

Moments later, bells could be heard tolling throughout the Footloose Sect. Footloose Sect disciples flew out by the hundreds to head off in all directions. It was time to notify the visiting Clans that the disciple recruitment was beginning!

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# Chapter 637: The Zhang Clan is Here?!

Meng Hao was flabbergasted. And it wasn’t just him. The group from the Zhang Clan were also shocked. In fact, everyone who had come to Saint’s Island with the hope of joining the Footloose Clan were completely astonished.

The day for disciple recruitment was clearly ten days away, but then suddenly, the date was moved up. Many people began to feel nervous and alarmed, as if something incredible was about to happen.

An enormous event like disciple recruitment was no child’s game. As such, even if the date were moved up, it shouldn’t have been changed to earlier than the next day. There definitely should never have been a situation in which… it began that very day.

After all, it was already noontime….

Most importantly, there were many people who were still out at sea, hurrying on their way.

There were many speculations and inquiries, of course. Even the Footloose Sect disciples were complaining. They had no idea what major event was underway; all they could do was carry out matters according to the orders from the Sect.

Therefore, the Footloose Sect dispatched large numbers of disciples to begin to gather together all the prospective new disciples and bring them to the main gate of the Footloose Sect.

Before the Zhang Clan left the tavern, Zhang Wenfang hesitated, then invited Meng Hao to proceed along ahead with her. Meng Hao muttered inwardly for a moment, but then he saw the anticipation on Nan'er's face, and he couldn't refuse. He joined the Zhang Clan as they went to be teleported to the Footloose Sect.

When they arrived near the main gate, a hubbub of voices could be heard. Already, more than a thousand people could be seen, although only about three hundred were actually there to join the Footloose Sect. The rest were just along as escorts.

Among the crowd was the Xu Clan, who, when they caught sight of the Zhang Clan, gave cold, contemptuous laughs.

The Zhang Clan had arrived somewhat late, and so were forced to wait at the end of the very long line. In the Footloose Clan's disciple recruitment, there were three trials by fire, each one of which could only have three participants.

Of course, in addition to the members of the various Clans present, there were also quite a few Footloose Sect disciples, there to maintain order. They acted very courteously, but it was also impossible for them to hide the pride they felt in their bones.

In the crowds, everyone was talking about the goings on.

"Three trials by fire. The first tests willpower, the second tests latent talent, and the third tests powers of insight. In every stage, you can earn first, second, third, or fourth rate marks…. anyone who gets three first place marks is worthy of the title Chosen."

"Yeah, that's right. In all the years, I don't think anyone ever got three first place marks. At the most, there may have been some people who got two."

"Furthermore, the Footloose Sect is very strict in its requirements for recruiting disciples. You have to get at least full third rate marks to get into the Sect. Even one fourth rate mark means that you're out."

Back at the end of the very long line, Meng Hao yawned as he listened to the conversations around him. According to his calculations, it would take at least two or three days for the Zhang Clan to get to the front of the line.

Nan’er was extremely nervous. Zhang Wenfang stood next to him, offering quiet words of encouragement. Meng Hao looked around, and even sent out his Divine Sense to sweep over the Footloose Sect.

“This Sect is a bit odd,” he murmured to himself, his gaze flickering. “It’s made up of nine valleys.”

At the same time, Patriarch Reliance sat in his palace, wearing a worried face.

“This is taking too long…. The little bastard is escorting someone to join the Sect, but, hey, couldn’t you go to the front of the line, huh?! Why did you run to the back!? What do you think you’re doing?!” Patriarch Reliance clenched his teeth, then sent his Divine Sense out to cover over the whole Footloose Sect. Eventually, it came to rest on a disciple near Meng Hao and the others.

The disciple was currently looking coldly out at the crowds, inwardly confused about why the Sect suddenly moved up the date for recruiting disciples. Even in the midst of his contemplation, his body suddenly trembled, and then his eyes began to grow brightly.

As of this moment, he was no longer himself. Instead, he had become a clone of Patriarch Reliance. He began to walk forward, eyeing Meng Hao and shivering a bit. Then he turned toward the Zhang Wenfang and Nan’er.

“Are you the Zhang Clan from the Outer Sea?” asked the Patriarch Reliance-controlled Footloose Sect disciple. His voice was cheerful as he stepped forward to examine Zhang Wenfang and the other members of the Zhang Clan.

Zhang Wenfang was taken aback, as were the other Clan members around her. In fact, the members of other Clans that were lined up ahead of them couldn’t help but turn around to look.

“Yes, we’re the Zhang Clan,” replied Zhang Wenfang as quickly as she could.

“Wonderful, wonderful. The descendant of an old friend is here!”

The Footloose Sect disciple sighed emotionally. “Years ago, I used to be very close to your husband, and even owed him a favor. To be able to see all of you here today is nothing less than fate. Come, let me escort up to the front.” With that, he quickly grabbed Nan’er and began to walk forward.

Zhang Wenfang stared in shock, wracking her brain to try to remember what past incident the man must be referring to. The other Clan members were also astonished. Even after thinking for some time, they truly couldn’t recall their previous Clan Leader having a close relationship with any Footloose Sect disciples.

“This….” Zhang Wenfang hesitated for a moment, but seeing that the disciple had already begun to pull her son away, she quickly followed. The other members of the Zhang Clan also went along. Meng Hao watched everything happening, and then joined them.

The group made their way from the very back of the line toward the front, which instantly attracted the attention of everyone who was waiting. That was especially true of the Xu Clan, who watched on in astonishment as everything happened.

Immediately, people began to call out questions.

“Fellow Daoist of the Footloose Clan, dare I ask why they get to go from the back of the line to the front?”

“Yeah! They were in the back! They can’t just randomly cut in line! How come they can so brazenly go all the way to the front!?”

Now even more people were paying attention. As soon as they saw what was happening, they were shocked, and couldn’t understand why the Footloose Sect, which normally paid such close attention to rules and regulations, would allow something like this to happen.

Meanwhile, there were other Footloose Sect disciples who saw what was happening. One of them happened to be a Core Formation Cultivator who was in charge of maintaining order in the area. When he saw what was happening, he frowned.

“Zhao Han!” he shouted, a dignified expression on his face. That was the name of the Footloose Sect disciple who Patriarch Reliance was controlling with his Divine Sense. “What are you doing? It doesn’t matter if you’re longtime friends with these Zhang people, you…” Before the Core Formation Cultivator could finish speaking, Patriarch Reliance up in the palace gave a cold snort, and sent out more Divine Sense.

A virtually imperceptible tremor ran through the Core Formation Cultivator, and then his eyes glittered brightly.

“Wait, these guests are the Zhang Clan from the Outer Sea?” His expression one of excitement, he immediately stepped forward to glance over the group from the Zhang Clan.

This scene caused all the surrounding Footloose Sect disciples as well as the visiting Clan members to exchange astonished looks.

“The Heavens finally take notice, and allow me to see you members of the Zhang Clan!” said the Core Formation Cultivator, looking very excited. “The descendant of an old friend is here….

“Years ago, I was close friends with your Zhang Clan, and even benefited from a great kindness on the part of the Clan. Come come, I’ll take you to the first place in line!” With that, he took gaping Nan’er from Zhao Han without any further explanation, and headed off toward the front of the line.

Zhang Wenfang stared in astonishment once more. She felt as if her mind was spinning. She looked back at her other fellow Clan members, but they had looks as blank as hers. No matter how they wracked their memories, they couldn’t think of any time in which their Patriarch had any close friends at all.

The rest of the Clans who were here to join the Footloose Sect all watched on in astonishment, especially the Xu Clan. Their eyes were widest of all, and filled with disbelief.

It was in this manner that, under the leadership of the Core Formation Cultivator, the Zhang Clan continued on from the back of the line directly toward the front. The entire time, the Cultivators of the Zhang Clan almost couldn’t believe what was happening.

However, their expressions of confusion quickly turned into excitement.

Right now, more than half of the Outer Sea Cultivator Clans had come. There were even some Clans from the Fourth Ring. As of this moment, everyone now took note of the Zhang Clan, and many people began to discuss the matter in hushed tones. Many people glanced over at them with admiration and envy.

The Xu Clan members all had faces pale and filled with disbelief.

“This… this is impossible!!”

By the time Nan’er arrived in the very first place in line, Meng Hao’s shock at the sudden change of events caused him to feel that something fishy was going on.

Meanwhile, back in the Saint’s Island palace, Patriarch Reliance looked quite proud of himself.

“Humph. The Patriarch prevails again! The only thing to do is to get the little bastard out of here as quickly as possible. I don’t care what price I have to pay!

“Wait. No. I need to speed things up. The best thing would be to settle things within ten breaths of time. I need to make sure he has no reason at all to stay here. That way he’ll screw off as quickly as possible!” Again, Patriarch Reliance sent Divine Sense out to cover the Footloose Sect.

In the blink of an eye, the Divine Sense split into dozens of streams that all settled into different individuals.

And then…..

Suddenly, an old man flew out from within the Footloose Sect. He obviously had a Core Formation Cultivation base, and as soon as he appeared, he laid eyes on Zhan Wenfang. “The Zhang Clan is here?! The Zhang Clan from the Outer Sea?”

The Clan members in the line immediately gaped.

“That’s Honor Guard Han!”

“Honor Guard Han is one of the most powerful experts in the Footloose Sect. He has an incredibly high position!”

“Don’t tell me… that he also owes a favor to the Zhang Clan?”

The old man quickly approached. “So, it really is the Zhang Clan. Excellent, excellent! The descendant of an old friend is here! I will definitely take advantage of this day to pay back the favor I owe to the Zhang Clan!”

However, before he could even get close, before the crowds in line could digest what was happening, while the Zhang Clan members were all still in a daze, roaring shouts could be heard from within the Sect.

“The Zhang Clan is here?!”

“So, it really is the Zhang Clan! They actually made it to the Footloose Sect!”

“The benefactor is here! I, Tu Dahai, must go to pay my respects!”

Shockingly, ten figures appeared from within the Footloose Sect. Each and every one was of the late Core Formation stage, and they actually comprised more than half of all the Core Formation Cultivators in the Clan.

As they flew out, a buzz could be heard from within the crowds in line. All of the Cultivators from the Outer Sea Clans were trembling in astonishment. The Fourth Ring Cultivators were even more dumbstruck as their gazes followed those of the ten Core Formation Cultivators to fall onto the Zhang Clan.

Zhang Wenfang stood there dully, as did the other Zhang Clan Cultivators.

They were even starting to get a bit frightened. They had never heard anything about their deceased Patriarch having so many friends….

Meng Hao’s eyes were wide as he watched on. What was happening really was far too strange….

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# Chapter 638: Twists and Turns Enrage the Patriarch

“Heavens, it’s actually true! Those ten or more Footloose Sect Honor Guards are all figures who could shake the entire area with the stomp of a foot. And they all… actually owe a favor to the Zhang Clan!”

“The old Zhang Clan Patriarch was only at the early Core Formation stage. How could he get these people from the Footloose Sect to owe him a favor?”

The crowd was abuzz, and the Zhang Clan were standing there wide-eyed.

“Was the Patriarch… really so illustrious back in the day?” thought Zhang Wenfang. She looked a bit dazed. She had never heard such a matter spoken of back in the Clan. In her memory, before the Patriarch died, although he’d had a few friends, few were the sincere type. Besides, he had been dead for so long that any friendly sentiments had long since faded away.

Were that not the case, the Clan wouldn’t have been forced into the dead end they had been, with no choice but to give up their island and come to this place.

However, what was happening right now was very real, causing Zhang Wenfang to grow even more confused.

Intermittent gasps could be heard coming from the crowds in line, and their faces were filled with disbelief and astonishment. All eyes in the area were completely fixed on the members of the Zhang Clan.

Although most of them dared not allow their envy and jealousy to show on their faces, such feelings filled their hearts.

That was especially true of the Xu Clan, whose faces were pale white, and whose hearts had seized with terror. How could they ever have imagined that the people they had just looked down upon and even shamed, the down and out Zhang Clan, could have such a glorious past?

“No wonder little sis cut ties with the Clan to marry into the Zhang Clan,” thought the man from the Xu Clan. “I didn’t understand back then, but now….” Having gained this new understanding, he suddenly felt a bit different.

As for the other Outer Sea Clans who had conflicts with the Zhang Clan, they were now scared witless and panting heavily. Not only were their hearts filled with fear regarding what might happen later, they were also inundated with intense animosity.

“I can’t believe the Zhang Clan has such incredible connections…. Why didn’t they say something earlier? Nobody in the Outer Sea would have dared to pick on them.”

Zhang Wenfang subconsciously glanced at some of her fellow Clan Members. What they all saw was mutual shock regarding what was happening.

“Could it be because of me?” thought Meng Hao. He couldn’t help but think this, and as he did, his eyes glittered. He looked at the Honor Guards from the Footloose Sect, and although it was impossible to tell what they were thinking, his eyes narrowed.

“Descendants of our benefactor, please accept our salute!” With that the Footloose Sect Honor Guards excitedly clasped hands and began to bow. There were even a few of the elderly members who had tears streaming down their faces. The joy they felt seemed beyond description.

The Zhang Clan members were overwhelmed by the unexpected show of favor, and even tried to shrink back. Zhang Wenfang had no idea what she should say. However, her heart filled with joy that she simply couldn’t suppress. It was like the saying “when the bitterness ends, the sweetness begins.” Tears began to roll down her face.

From the day she had married into the Clan until now, she had never experienced anything like this. The proud and elated feeling and the looks on the faces of her Clan caused the excitement in her heart to be equal to that of the Footloose Sect members in front of her.

The ten Honor Guards all began to speak one after another.

“Does this child wish to join the Footloose Sect?”

“What need is there to wait in line? We’ve been waiting for the descendant of a benefactor to come join the Sect! We can accept you immediately! Inner Sect disciple!”

“That’s right! He’s an Inner Sect disciple!”

They reached their decision very quickly.

The scene caused all the other Outer Sea Clans who were waiting in line to be filled with envy. Any Clan would wish their child to be treated in such a way. Who wouldn’t want to be invited into the Clan, as opposed to have to pay respects to enter?

Meanwhile, in the palace of Saint’s Island, Patriarch Reliance’s face was covered with a complacent grin. He stood up and began to stroll back and forth, giving Guyiding Tri’rain no choice but to watch on helplessly.

“The Patriarch is the smartest yet again,” he said. “Hahaha! Now the little bastard has no reason whatsoever to stay behind. Get out of here immediately, kid! Screw off with no delay!” As Patriarch Reliance thought about how proud he was of himself, he began to laugh heartily.

However, in the midst of his laughing, his face suddenly fell, and he sent his Divine Sense out one more time.

Even as the Honor Guard members were excitedly discussing their decision to accept Nan'er as an Inner Sect disciple, a cold voice like that of a thunderclap suddenly filled the Footloose Sect. The voice immediately caused everyone's hearts to tremble.

“What's the commotion!?” The cold voice which echoed out from the mountains belonged to that of an old man. “Accepting new disciples is a great matter within the Sect, and yet you people are here causing a racket! What a travesty!”

As soon as the grim-faced old man appeared, the ripples of a Nascent Soul Cultivation base emanated out. Everyone immediately began incredibly nervous.

“That's… that's Lord of the Third Valley!”

“The Great Valley Lord came personally! Don't tell me he's also friends with the Zhang Clan?” The crowds in the line, as well as the other Footloose Sect disciples who were not affected by Patriarch Reliance's Divine Sense, were all making the same guesses inwardly.

“Even if you all are old friends with this Clan,” the old man said coolly, “the Sect still has its rules, and those rules won't change.” His expression was not one of anger, but power. His words instantly shook everyone present.

“In the Footloose Sect,” he continued, “there is nothing more important than rules. Anyone who wishes to join the Sect must do so according to the rules.” His ice-cold gaze fell onto the members of the Zhang Clan. “All of you, go back to your original position in line. After enough time passes, you will naturally reach this position.”

Immediately, the Cultivators from the other Clans in line felt roused. They had felt that what was happening was unfair, but didn't dare to give voice to such thoughts. Now that they saw a Valley Lord of the Footloose Sect administering justice, they felt that the rumors about the Sect were true; they really did strictly adhere to Sect rules.

Zhang Wenfang’s face was pale white. She immediately bowed her head and voiced compliance. The feeling caused by joy being reversed into the opposite filled her with complete shame. However, she feared causing problems for the Footloose Sect Honor Guards who were friends of the Clan, so she immediately acquiesced, grabbing Nan’er, who was trembling with fear, and began to make her way back to the end of the line with her other fellow Clan members.

The Xu Clan immediately went wild with joy when they saw this. They said nothing, but the looks of ridicule and disdain in their eyes were impossible to cover up.

“As for the lot of you,” continued the old man, his eyes cold, “you’re Honor Guard members of the Footloose Sect. Your actions just now were completely beyond the bounds of propriety! You will all be punished by being confined to your quarters for three months!” His words rang out, filled with an incredible feeling of might and dominance.

However, as soon as the old man spoke the words, he suddenly heard a furious voice echoing in his own ear: “I’ll punish your ass!”

The raging voice was like thunder, although no outsider could hear it, only the old man. As soon as the powerful sound echoed about in his head, his face fell.

Naturally, he knew exactly who it was who was speaking to him.

“All of this was by the order of the Patriarch!” raged Patriarch Reliance, sounding flustered. “Fudge! You completely ruined my big plan! I’ll skin you alive!” He seemed truly enraged.

Just when the goal he had worked so hard to reach was about to be accomplished, a bit of interference ruined everything. Of course, Patriarch Reliance was scared. He was scared that Meng Hao would figure out that something was going on. He was so furious that he wanted to slap this old man to death immediately.

When he sensed the Patriarch’s rage and killing intent, the Lord of the Third Valley instantly began to shake. Suddenly, he looked up at the Zhang Clan retreating toward the end of the line, and his mind became very clear.

“Wait!” he cried, immediately hurrying forward.

“Are you people from the Zhang Clan?” he then asked, his voice filled with excitement. Teardrops could be seen forming in the corners of his eyes. His voice caused the other Outer Sea Clan members in line to instantly gape in shock. They simply couldn’t wrap their minds about what was happening….

They weren’t the only astonished ones. The surrounding Footloose Sect disciples all had blank expressions on their faces. The events of the day were simply… too strange for them to understand.

As for the Zhang Clan members, they stopped in their tracks, then turned to look at the old man who was scurrying over.

Zhang Wenfang looked at him and hesitated for a moment before quietly responding, “Senior…. We… we are the Zhang Clan from the Outer Sea.”

“So it is the Zhang Clan after all!!” said the old man. He stamped his foot, causing the nearby mountain peaks to rumble, and the ground to quake.

“This is all my mistake,” he said. “Earlier I was inside, and when I sensed that something big was going on, I came out. However, I didn’t recognize you! Aiya! I have only myself to blame!” With that the old man laughed emotionally. From his expression, he seemed to be thinking about past times.

“I’ll never forget how your Zhang Clan Patriarch showed me such kindness that year. He even saved my life six times! If it weren’t for him, I would not be alive today. The descendant of an old friend is here. Ah, the descendant of an old friend is here.” He sighed again as his words echoed about. Everyone was instantly stunned.

That was most true of the Xu Clan, who watched on with wide eyes, breathing heavily, their minds trembling. They truly could never have imagined that the Zhang Clan would have such deep relationships, to the extent that one of the nine Valley Lords of the Footloose Sect owed them a great favor.

“Now that his descendant has come to the Footloose Sect, even if we have to bend the rules a bit, I will assume all the responsibility,” said the old man resolutely. “I will not allow a descendant of the Zhang Clan to suffer any shame here!” His gaze swept about, and all of the Outer Sea Clan members had no choice other than to bow their heads. Inwardly, they were completely shaken.

Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed, and a slight smile had appeared on his face. Although he could sense no familiar aura, considering his past experiences, how could he not see through the bizarreness of the goings on?

“Interesting,” he thought. “As far as I can recall, there’s only one old bastard who likes to handle things in such an unreliable fashion.”

Zhang Wenfang was currently trembling. The joy and surprise that had come her way was almost too much to handle. Currently, her blankness and confusion were almost at the pinnacle. She was just about to say something when suddenly, the Third Valley Lord took a few steps forward and then picked Nan’er up into his arms.

“They look alike!” he said. “They really look completely alike! A single glance at this child and I can’t help but think of the Zhang Clan Patriarch.

“Child, are you willing to accept me as your Master?”

At the moment, most nervous of all was Patriarch Reliance, who panted in his palace as he watched the scene down below. He was dying to hear Nan’er voicing his acceptance.

“Hurry up and agree, child!” he murmured. “Come on, hurry up! I beg you, just agree…. The Patriarch promises you, if you agree, then from now on, I will watch over you in the Reliance Sect, er, no, I mean the Footloose

Sect!” However, he didn’t dare to do anything to obvious, lest Meng Hao sense something amiss.

Nan’er was extremely nervous, and even scared. His face was pale, and without even thinking about it, he turned to look back at his mother, and then for some reason, Meng Hao.

Had he not looked at Meng Hao, then Meng Hao wouldn’t have inserted himself into the matter. However, considering how helpless the child looked in his inability to make a decision, Meng Hao couldn’t help but smile and then casually say, “No need to rush into things. Considering the child’s latent talent, I think he should have a bit better standing in the Sect.”

When Patriarch Reliance heard this, blood sprayed out of his mouth like a geyser. He lifted his head back and let out a howl of indignation.

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# Chapter 639: The Superiority of the Patriarch’s Intellect

“You little bastard! What do you want? What are you doing!?” Patriarch Reliance clenched his hand into a fist and then slammed it into the ground. A boom filed the palace, causing the entire mountain to shake. In fact, waves rolled out across the sea surrounding the island.

“You’re messing with me, aren’t you, you little bastard!” fumed Patriarch Reliance. “I’m acting with good will and good intentions! I helped you pull everything off smoothly, and then you refuse!?!?” His voice rolled back and forth within the palace, but did not echo outside. He was now agitated to the extreme, and on the verge of flying into a rage.

“Are you really trying to push the Patriarch into going insane! FUDGE! The Patriarch refuses to play your little game. I’ll just take the Footloose Sect and leave. The Patriarch can’t afford to provoke you, so he’ll just avoid you completely!” Patriarch Reliance was just about to follow through with his words, when suddenly he seemed to think of something.

“Wait. No!” A look of suspicion suddenly appeared on his face.

“That little bastard is crafty to the extreme. At the moment, he still doesn’t know that I’m here. If I appear, then the cat will be out of the bag. If he finds out I’ve been hiding in the Milky Way Sea….” Suddenly, Patriarch Reliance’s eyes flashed.

“Hmmpphh. The Patriarch is intelligent, divine and mighty. How can I possibly be fooled?” Patriarch Reliance’s voice dripped with disdain. “Clearly the little bastard is feeling out the situation. Therefore, I will not reveal myself, no matter what happens. I’ll just hold on…. So what if he takes a Master? That doesn’t count for crap! He won’t accept one Nascent Soul Master? How about a group then!? I can’t believe that he’ll refuse!” Once again, his Divine Sense spread out through the entirety of the Footloose Sect.

Meanwhile, outside the main gate of the Footloose Sect, Meng Hao’s words echoed out, causing Zhang Wenfang to gape in surprise. Nan’er looked at Meng Hao wide-eyed for a moment, then immediately spoke in his crisp, clear voice.

“I don’t accept….”

The Third Valley Lord’s heart immediately quivered, and he glared at Meng Hao hatefully. He was just about to say something when, all of a sudden, eight streams of Divine Sense shot toward them.

Eight figures became visible in mid-air. Although their faces were not clear, the ripples of a Nascent Soul Cultivation base were quite clear. The entire Footloose Sect trembled, and the sky flashed with a riot of colors. The wind and clouds were thrown into upheaval, and brilliant rays of light shone out in all directions.

It instantly caused countless disciples to approach the area; as for the Footloose Sect disciples who were already at the main gate, their faces flickered and they all began to drop to their knees to kowtow.

The Outer Sea Clan members in line began to pant. They watched the scene in shock, their minds trembling.

“The nine great Valley Lords are all here!”

“What exactly is going on? Don’t tell me… don’t tell me all of them are friends with the Zhang Clan?”

The Zhang Clan members stood there trembling, filled with blankness and also fear because of everything that was happening.

A deathly silence then filled the air. Meng Hao looked up, eyes glittering. Although all of these people were Nascent Soul Cultivators, there were odd ripples emanating from their bodies. With Meng Hao’s Cultivation base, he could sense them, but couldn’t see clearly exactly what they were.

Of course, considering they were Lords within the Sect, they would certainly possess some secrets to elevate their level of dignity, which Meng Hao understood.

“This child has destiny connecting him to the Footloose Sect!” said an archaic voice from within one of the eight streams of Divine Sense up in mid-air. The voice echoed out throughout the entire Footloose Sect.

“After discussion, we nine great Valley Lords all accept this child as an apprentice! He will join the Footloose Sect as a Conclave disciple!”

The voice reverberated out into the ears of everyone present. The other Clan members from the Outer Sea watched on, panting with unprecedented anxiety. Far too many unexpected turns of events had occurred, to the point that they would be unable to forget this day for the rest of their lives.

The disciples of the Footloose Sect were completely shocked, and they all began to look over at the young child held in the arms of the Third Valley Lord.

It must be stated that within the Footloose Sect, there were only three Conclave disciples! As of this moment, there were four!

Complete silence followed, after which an explosion of sound could be heard. That sound was caused by the voices of the crowds in line as they expressed their disbelief and utter shock.

The matter that had just occurred would soon spread out through the entire Outer Sea, as well as the Fourth Ring. Throughout all the years, such an event had never occurred in the Footloose Sect. The Nine Valley Lords had all accepted a single person as an apprentice! That person would quickly become completely famous.

As for the Zhang Clan, they would experience a meteoric rise because of the events of the day. Whether it be in the Outer Sea or the Fourth Ring, because of their relationship with the Footloose Sect, no one would ever dare to provoke them. It wouldn’t take very long for word of this matter to spread everywhere.

The Zhang Clan was destined to rise to fame.

Zhang Wenfang panted at this unexpected blessing. It was simply too amazing, causing her entire person to tremble, and tears to pour down her face. The Zhang Clan members around her were also excited to the extreme.

Meng Hao smiled. When he noticed Nan’er looking back at him again, he nodded.

Nan’er mustered his courage, and then clearly spoke out. “Nan’er accepts the senior grandpas as Masters!”

His voice wasn’t very loud, but as soon as it rang out, everyone, be they Footloose Sect disciples or Outer Sea Clan members, knew that as of this instant, this boy was… completely different from them!

With the nine great Valley Lords as his Masters, he would be the number one person in the entire Footloose Sect. In fact, as long as his latent talent wasn’t extremely poor, he would surely reach Core Formation!

From now on, the Zhang Clan would be like a blazing sun in the sky. Everyone who had ever looked down upon them would be forced to bow their heads in compliance. Anyone who had disputes with them in the past would only be able to writhe in fear and send gifts of apology in great numbers.

Anyone who had blood enmity with them would be forced to immediately flee the Outer Sea. Otherwise, they would never be able to find shelter anywhere.

The Zhang Clan was like the carp who leaped over the dragon gate and received the highest reward. That was the final assessment of everyone present.

Tears streamed down Zhang Wenfang’s face. The joy in her heart caused the most brilliant smile she had ever smiled to appear on her face. “Husband, is your spirit watching all of this from the underworld…?”

The other Zhang Clan members watched on with wild joy, as if they could see the countless possibilities that had now opened up for their future. They thought back to the past, and then considered the future, and seemed to have acquired new enlightenment. Their new understanding would keep them going as they reached out to a higher realm.

Most excited of all, however, was no member of the crowd, and no member of the Zhang Clan. Instead, it was Patriarch Reliance, up in his palace. He was so excited that his body trembled as he paced back and forth. He looked over at Guyiding Tri’rain with a scornful expression.

He, of course, didn’t care about what was happening with the Zhang Clan. Intense anticipation appeared in his eyes as he looked off at the Footloose Sect and Meng Hao. He hoped fervently that all of this was enough to cause Meng Hao to leave Saint’s Island.

“You have no reason to stay behind, you little bastard, so why don’t you go? Hahaha! Screw off at top speed! Do not under any circumstances allow me to see you again!” Patriarch Reliance thought about what it would be like if Meng Hao left with absolutely no suspicions. Then he would be able to openly live a footloose and fancy free life. When he thought about that, it filled him with excitement, almost as if he had gotten some sort of revenge. The more he thought about Meng Hao leaving, the more anticipation he felt.

Currently, the entire Footloose Sect was in an uproar. Meng Hao was laughing, and his eyes glittered. Then, his expression returned to normal as he looked over at Zhang Wenfang and the others.

From the look in his eye, it seemed that he was still worried about the Zhang Clan members, apparently concerned about their safety in the future.

Although others might not be able to read his expression, Patriarch Reliance was completely focused on Meng Hao, and immediately sensed it. Without hesitation, he sent his Divine Sense into the nine Valley Lords.

Almost as if they knew what Meng Hao was thinking, the nine Valley Lords instantly began to speak.

“The members of the Zhang Clan are close friends with the Footloose Sect. You will stay on Saint’s Island in your own area, which will belong to you in perpetuity.”

Instantly, waves of intense envy and jealousy filled the hearts of the various Clan members from the Outer Sea. After all, one of the reasons they hoped to join the Footloose Sect was to not just for the opportunity for a single member of the Clan, but for the entire Clan to have the chance to move to Saint’s Island.

It was an honor, and a very high position. After moving to Saint’s Island, the Clan would never again need to worry about its continued existence in the future. The Footloose Sect would be their biggest protector.

Now, everyone watched on as the previously down and out Zhang Clan received such incredibly good fortune. Various complex thoughts filled the hearts of everyone present. Everyone immediately made the decision that they would spare no effort or cost to become friends with the Zhang Clan.

As for the Xu Clan, their hearts began to pound with fear and intense terror. They worried that retaliation would come from the Zhang Clan, which would turn into a great catastrophe that they couldn’t withstand.

This particular phase of a disciple becoming apprentice to a Master was now concluded. The crowds of Clans waited to continue with the process of trying to join the Sect, while the Zhang Clan, to everyone’s envy, was led away respectfully by Footloose Sect disciples. As for Meng Hao, Patriarch Reliance watched with eager anticipation as he finally parted ways with the Zhang Clan.

Nan’er gave Meng Hao a deep look. He waved, his face filled with unwillingness to part.

Meng Hao reached out to tousle the boy’s hair. Then he muttered for a moment and slapped his bag of holding to produce a bottle of medicinal pills, along with a few magical items, all of which he gave to the boy.

“Focus on practicing cultivation,” said Meng Hao. “You never know, we might meet again someday in the future.” With that, he patted Nan’er’s shoulder and then turned to walk off into the distance.

Zhang Wenfang watched Meng Hao walking off, and then looked at the gifts he had given Nan’er. Her eyes filled with deep gratitude, she dropped to her knees and respectfully kowtowed to him.

Perhaps through all eternity, they would never know the real reason why Nan’er had been accepted as an apprentice.

Meng Hao made his way off.

Under Patriarch Reliance’s anticipatory gaze, he left the Footloose Sect mountains. As soon as this happened, Patriarch Reliance smiled, and was so excited that he almost let out a huge roar.

He couldn’t help but feeling happy at how superior he considered his intellect to be. Right now, it seemed like everything he looked at filled him with happiness. His eyes squinted with joy as he watched Meng Hao making his way further and further away.

However, in the midst of all his smiling, he suddenly gaped.

That was because even as Meng Hao turned into a beam of prismatic light that shot throughout the air, he suddenly stopped and looked down. There below him, not far away from the Footloose Sect, was one of the largest Cultivator cities on Saint’s Island!

“Uhh? Come on, get going!” said Patriarch Reliance, staring. “What are you waiting for, huh?”

Meng Hao hovered in mid-air, rubbing his chin. Although it was impossible to tell whether or not he was doing it on purpose… he began to mutter to himself.

“Before I leave, I really need to purchase some items. It probably won’t be easy to find a Cultivator city like this one out on the Milky Way Sea.

“Furthermore, these Footloose Sect Cultivators are good people. The prices here probably will be pretty low, and definitely not too high. If they were too high, then I might be forced to stay on Saint’s Island for even longer.” Clearing his throat, he flew toward the city.

Patriarch Reliance watched on blankly as Meng Hao descended upon the city. He wanted to cry, but had no tears, and was on the verge of going mad. He began to pant and walk in circles in the palace, gnashing his teeth.

“I’ve already mostly succeeded. If I have to keep on, then so be it! I’ll deal with it! No Spirit Stones! Fudge! I’ll give you some!

“As long as you leave, I’ll do anything!”

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# Chapter 640: I’ll Leave After I Finish Shopping

Meng Hao was in a good mood….

It was a warm, sunny day, and evening was approaching. The color of the sky and the scenery around him all looked incredibly beautiful. The more he looked at it, the better he felt.

His body flickered as he shot through mid-air toward the city. Almost in the same moment in which he was about to arrive, seven or eight streams of Divine Sense suddenly neared him. Almost as immediately, they dispersed in amazement.

Meng Hao had only revealed an early Nascent Soul stage Cultivation base. Even still, that caused quite a bit of shock amongst the people in the city. No one dared to block his way, and they allowed him to enter the city.

The Cultivator city was crowded and bustling with activity. All types of shops could be seen, and although most of the Cultivators were in the Qi Condensation stage, there were some Foundation Establishment and even the occasional Core Formation.

When it came to Nascent Soul Cultivators, Meng Hao saw a few. Clearly, they were not members of the Footloose Sect but rather, Cultivators come from the Fourth Ring to do business.

As soon as he entered the city and began to stroll about, he saw shops on both sides of the street filled with luxurious products; customers were constantly walking in and out. As for the streets themselves, they were paved with green limestone, making the whole place seem even richer.

As he walked, Meng Hao noticed a mid Core Formation stage Cultivator up ahead. He wore a light green robe, and looked quite mighty, even threatening despite his lack of angry expression.

He was walking up ahead of Meng Hao, and was just about to enter a shop off to the side, when suddenly a growl could be heard off in the distance, and a bright beam of light shot toward him at top speed.

“Zhou Jian, you traitor! So it turns out you hid here after daring to steal my Spirit Stones!? Well I, Sun, swear that you will be slain this very day!” A middle-aged Cultivator could be seen approaching. His Cultivation base was at the Core Formation stage, and his power seemed boundless. He performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, causing two flying swords to emerge with sharp glows. They instantly shot toward the Cultivator with the light green robe.

The man’s face fell, and he had no time to evade. Instantly, fighting broke out between the two of them. Attacks exploded out, forcing quite a few nearby onlookers to dodge out of the way.

They fought openly, surrounded by explosions that rose up into the sky. Magical items and divine abilities were unleashed, and both men coughed up blood and then fell back. Almost in the same instant that they fell back, the Footloose Sect disciples in charge of maintaining order rushed toward the scene. A cold snort filled the entire area.

“Magical fighting is prohibited in Saint’s Distance City! The two of you screw off immediately!”

The echoing voice caused the face of the Cultivator named Sun to flicker. As he looked up, the Cultivator named Zhou took advantage of the pause to retreat further. It was hard to tell whether or not it was intentional, but his movement brought him right next to Meng Hao’s side. Before any observer could see what happened, the man slipped a bag of holding to Meng Hao.

“Please watch over this for me, Fellow Daoist,” he said. “I’ll be back within three days at the least. If I haven’t come to get it within three days, then everything inside belongs to you.” With that, he flew up into the air. The

Cultivator named Sun let out a roar and then began to chase him. The two of them quickly vanished.

Meng Hao stood there blinking. The fight had started far too quickly, and ended even faster. Meng Hao looked down at the bag of holding, wiped away the brand mark without hesitation, and then scanned it with Divine Sense. Instantly, a strange expression appeared on his face.

There was nothing inside other than Spirit Stones…..

Furthermore, there were more than 30,000 of them.

Meng Hao cleared his throat, then calmly put the bag of holding away, his expression the same as ever. There really was nobody he knew so unreliable as to be able to pull off something like this which was so full of sloppy mistakes.

Upon first stepping foot onto Saint's Island, Meng Hao hadn't thought too much about why the place seemed so familiar. But then he realized that it looked so different from that familiar place in his memory that it seemed obvious someone had altered it, even moving mountains and rivers to make it different.

And then… everything went completely smoothly, especially all the matters to do with the Footloose Sect. Meng Hao couldn't help but start getting a bit suspicious. Considering everything, it was only natural that he realize what was happening.

"It's a good thing that when I went to the Bridge of Immortal Treading that year I got a bird's eye view of the Milky Way Sea, and realized that the old bugger was hiding there," he thought. "If it weren't for that, I might have had my suspicions, but I couldn't have been sure. 1

"The old bastard really is good at hiding. Even my Demon Sealing senses couldn't pick up on his aura." Meng Hao coughed lightly, then, without batting an eyelid, continued onward.

Meanwhile, back in the palace, Patriarch Reliance was nervously staring at Meng Hao. He watched him put away the bag of holding and then let out a sigh. Then, he started to complain regretfully.

“Oh, my Spirit Stones. Those are the Patriarch’s 30,000 Spirit Stones… gone, just like that. Everything here on Saint’s Island belongs to me, only to be gone, just like that….

“Dammit, you little bastard! Nothing good ever happens when I run into you!” Patriarch Reliance gnashed his teeth, but there was nothing else he could do. He could only silently pray that Meng Hao would leave as quickly as possible.

As for Meng Hao, he patted his collection of free Spirit Stones, and then glanced around. Soon he caught sight of a shop that specialized in magical items. His eyes narrowed as he strode toward it.

Even on the outside, the shop looked extremely luxurious. Upon entering, he could see that it had three floors, and that the glow of magical items was shocking. The products available started from the Qi Condensation stage and even went up all the way into the Nascent Soul stage. There were special and incredible items available for all stages.

Currently, there were about seven or eight Cultivators in the shop, looking through various treasures, followed by salespeople with radiant smiles. In the middle of the shop was an incense burner, from which wisps of smoke radiated out, filling the entire first floor with an elegant aura. As soon as someone entered, it was possible to calm the mind and simply enjoy the high-end atmosphere of the shop.

As soon as Meng Hao stepped foot inside, an old man wearing a long gown approached smilingly. He clasped hands and bowed deeply to Meng Hao.

“Fellow Daoist, welcome to one of the top ten shops in all of Saint’s Distance City. We guarantee quality, and are honest with all customers. You can set your mind at ease when you do business here.

“What exactly are you looking for?” The old man’s smiling words seemed somehow familiar to Meng Hao. After thinking about it for a moment, he realized that they were almost exactly the same words he had used in his own shop back in the Reliance Sect.

The old man had a passable Cultivation base of the early Foundation Establishment stage. His latent talent was ordinary, and he was not on the verge of any sort of breakthrough, which was why he maintained such a position in this shop. He quickly measured up Meng Hao. Although he couldn’t clearly see Meng Hao’s Cultivation base, based on the way he carried himself, the old man could see that he was full of money.

“You’re funded by the Footloose Sect?” asked Meng Hao, sounding a bit surprised.

The old man looked both proud and embarrassed as he laughed and nodded.

“Fellow Daoist,” he said, “is this really your first time to Saint’s Island? There are three Cultivator cities here, and many of the shops in those cities are the property of the Footloose Sect.

“Take a look here.” The old man pointed to a wooden plaque next to the door, upon the surface of which was clearly carved a design that looked like a turtle….

“That mark,” continued the old man, “indicates that this place is property of the Footloose Sect.”

Even as the old man made his explanation, Patriarch Reliance’s heart began to pound, and he started wailing in anguish.

“I’m finished, FINISHED!” he cried. “How could the Patriarch in all his intelligence forget about THAT!? Dammit! That design…. Please, DO NOT let it attract the attention of that little bastard!”

In his anxiety, Patriarch Reliance quickly sent his Divine Sense into the old man that Meng Hao was talking to. An imperceptible tremor ran through the old man, and his expression changed. As of this moment, he was no longer himself, but rather, an incarnation of Patriarch Reliance.

“Fellow Daoist, look over there!” he said quickly, stepping in front of Meng Hao to block his line of sight. “All of the treasures in this shop are very extraordinary, really!”

Inwardly, Meng Hao gave a cold laugh, but outwardly, he looked in the direction in which the old man was pointing. There was a flying saber, completely silver and radiating icy coldness. The price listed next to it was 1,500 Spirit Stones.

It was a magical item useful to the early Foundation Establishment stage. Meng Hao looked it over and then frowned.

“Too expensive!” he said, his voice serious.

The old man laughed on the outside, but inside, he was cursing Meng Hao’s stinginess. “The Patriarch just gave you 30,000 Spirit Stones, and now you’re saying it’s too expensive?!”

“Fellow Daoist, today is your lucky day! It just so happens to be our crazy, once-a-decade sale! All products in the entire shop are half off! You can have this item for only 750 Spirit Stones!”

Meng Hao didn’t look satisfied. “This thing is worth 30 Spirit Stones at the most. Forget it. I think I’ll go to some of the other shops in the city. Then I’ll probably go to some of the other Cultivator Cities as well.” With that, he turned to leave.

However, as soon as the words left his mouth, a tremor ran through Patriarch Reliance. When he heard that Meng Hao planned to stroll around the city, he began to grieve inwardly. Gritting his teeth, he decided to throw all caution to the wind.

“Fine. 30 Spirit Stones! It’s yours!”

Meng Hao spun back around and grabbed the little saber, his face awash with joy. Then he waved his finger at the hundreds of other magical items on display on the first floor of the store.

“I want all of them,” he said.

Patriarch Reliance stared in shock. However, in his desire to get Meng Hao away as quickly as possible, he could only grit his teeth and endure the drops of blood that were being squeezed out of his heart.

It was in this manner that, under the shocked gazes of the other customers, Meng Hao purchased everything on the first floor of the shop. Then, even as Patriarch Reliance was starting to get excited, Meng Hao didn’t leave, but rather made his way toward the second floor.

“Everyone says that the people from the Footloose Sect are good people. Although I’ve seen many things, I have to say that this is the most honest shop I have ever been into. Alright, I’m going to take a look at the second and third floors. Assuming I like what I see, I’ll take it all. 30,000 Spirit Stones should be enough for everything, right?” He swished his sleeve magnanimously.

Patriarch Reliance, in the form of the old man, almost coughed up an entire mouthful of blood. His eyes were bloodshot, and he was just about to howl out in rage, when Meng Hao continued to speak in a soft voice.

“I’ll leave after I finish shopping.”

The sentence caused Patriarch Reliance to gasp. He continued to remind himself that he just had to hang on a little bit longer. As he comforted himself in this way, he gave a smile that looked worse than a wailing grimace, and then escorted Meng Hao through the second and third floors. He moved as quickly as possible, and soon, Meng Hao had gathered up all of the magical items.

In the final calculation, there were several thousand items. Even at the price of only 30 spirit stones per item, he still needed over 100,000 Spirit Stones.

Patriarch Reliance felt as if his heart were being slashed by daggers. His face was pale as he stared helplessly at Meng Hao, seemingly on the verge of crying.

When it came time to settle the bill, Meng Hao rubbed his bag of holding, and a thoughtful look appeared in his eyes.

“I don’t think I have enough Spirit Stones,” he said a bit bashfully. When Patriarch Reliance heard this, he gaped in shock.

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# Chapter 641: Who Would Outdo….

“What… what are you trying to pull?!” cried Patriarch Reliance. The old man he was controlling trembled as he pointed at Meng Hao and nearly coughed up a mouthful of blood.

Back in the palace, Patriarch Reliance stamped his feet with fury and let loose a torrent of cursing. His fury surged to the Heavens, and he seemed on the verge of going insane.

“You little bastard! You, you, you… you have no money?! Then what are you doing!?

“You have no money and then try to buy so many things?! Dammit! You have no money?! The Patriarch just gave you 30,000 Spirit Stones!? 30,000!! 30,000 whole Spirit Stones!! The Patriarch lived a bitter, frugal life to save up all those Spirit Stones!” Years ago, Meng Hao had defied all sorts of difficulties and danger to attract all the Cultivators from the State of Zhao to the Reliance Sect to free Patriarch Reliance. At that time, Patriarch Reliance’s heart had filled with joy. However, he had only rewarded Meng Hao with a single low-grade Spirit Stone. From that could be seen the level of stinginess which had long since become a part of Patriarch Reliance’s very being.

“Furthermore, every item in that shop belongs to the Patriarch! You have no money and want to buy everything? Ridiculous!!”

Seeing Patriarch Reliance raving the way that he was caused Guyiding Tri’rain to purse her lips. However, her expression quickly returned to normal, except for the glint of shrewdness in her eyes.

“The old turtle really is looking for trouble,” she thought, feeling a bit sorry for Patriarch Reliance. “Meng Hao conned the entire State of Zhao back then. There are people who still remember that down to this day. And yet the old turtle is still trying to match wits with Meng Hao? He’s simply looking for trouble….

“Although, you can’t really blame the old turtle. He’s getting old, and his brain is somewhat addled. Perhaps it’s because he was beaten in the head when he was young?” The more she thought about the matter, and of all the things that had happened in the past years, the more she couldn’t help but feel a little sorry for Patriarch Reliance.

Of course, Meng Hao had no way to see or even know what was going on in the palace. He looked apologetically at the old man who stood in front of him.

“How about this,” he said, sounding a bit embarrassed. “How about I do some work for you? I’m sure that in a few dozen years, I can clear all of my debt! Yeah… I’m pretty good at concocting medicinal pills.”

Patriarch Reliance, in the form of the old man, stared fixedly at Meng Hao. He began to pant, and it almost seemed as if steam was rising from the top of his head…. Inside his mind, two people suddenly appeared. One of them was giving advice, and the other was venting angrily.

“Alright Patriarch, it’s time to risk it all!”

“No way! I’ve worked so hard, and almost pulled it off! I’m just about to succeed! I just have to hold on a little bit more! A little bit more is all! Then, I’ll finally be able to gaze upon hope!

“The sunshine always comes after the storm!!” Even as Patriarch Reliance was feeling conflicted, Meng Hao cleared his throat.

“Or, maybe I just shouldn’t buy these things,” he said. “I think I should go browse some of the other shops. I’ll try to finish going through them all within a year. After that I’ll head over to the other cities….”

These words were like a trump card that Patriarch Reliance couldn’t match.

“How much money do you have?” he asked through gritted teeth.

Meng Hao blushed. “I have 5,000 Spirit Stones in my bag of holding.”

“You….” Patriarch Reliance almost screamed out that he had just given Meng Hao 30,000 Spirit Stones. However, he suppressed his heart for a long moment; he felt as if he had just been stabbed through, and there was no blood left to ooze out….

“Ha ha….” he said through clenched teeth. However, to achieve his goal, he had no choice but to continue to endure. Even if it caused Meng Hao become somewhat suspicious, he had no choice. After forcing out his laugh, he said, “You’re… you’re really lucky!! Today is… our opening-day celebration! We have a huge… sale! 5,000 Spirit Stones gets you everything in the store!”

Eyes sparkling, Meng Hao quickly placed 5,000 Spirit Stones in front of the old man, then collected together all of the magical items into his bag of holding. Then he smiled and gave a light sigh.

“The people of Saint’s Island, and especially the members of the Footloose Sect, are all good people,” he said. With that, he spun and left, flying directly up into the air and shooting off into the distance.

When Patriarch Reliance saw this, his deeply injured spirit was finally able to recover a bit.

“As long as you leave, that’s all that matters…. Just go!” he said, gnashing his teeth. “You little bastard! I don’t ever want to see you ever again in my life!” He gradually calmed his mood, then stopped thinking about Spirit Stones and magical items. If he did, he was worried that he might not be able to take it and then explode with fury.

However, even as Patriarch Reliance struggled to improve his mood, Meng Hao suddenly stopped flying. He looked down as he noticed a second city down below.

When he saw this second city, a smile appeared on his face.

Currently, it was the middle of the night, and yet, the city was still filled with bright lights and activity. Even at this hour, the shops weren’t closed. The whole city was bustling, making the entire city seem like a bright, dazzling pearl.

Patriarch Reliance: “………”

He stared blankly, veins popping up on his forehead.

Then he saw Meng Hao shamelessly floating down toward the city, and he couldn’t take it any more. He finally exploded.

“Ridiculous!!! Shameless!!!” he bellowed, causing the entire palace to shake. He waved his right hand in front of him, causing countless streams of Divine Sense to shoot out. They sped toward the city and immediately entered the various shops.

Before Meng Hao could even get close, all of the shops in the entire city suddenly closed their doors and turned out the lights.

It was the middle of the night, so the previously brightly lit city was suddenly cast into darkness. Of course, everyone within the city noticed this and was instantly alarmed.

Up in mid-air, Meng Hao’s face twitched a bit.

“That damned old turtle,” he thought. “All I took was a few Spirit Stones and magical items. In total, it’s only worth a few tens of thousands of Spirit Stones!

“The old turtle is far too stingy. After all these years, he still hasn’t changed. I bet that right now, he’s in such pain that he wants to die.

“He wants me to leave, and is worried that I’ll plunder him even more, so he instantly caused all the shops to close. Shameless! Completely shameless!!” Meng Hao hovered indignantly up in the air, staring down at the city for a long moment. Then, he continued to fly.

Back in the palace, an unprecedentedly wide smile appeared on Patriarch Reliance's face, as well as a look of intense pride as he reveled in his superior intellect. Patriarch Reliance currently felt incredibly refreshed.

"Little bastard! No matter how crafty you are, you can't outsmart the Patriarch!

"As usual, the Patriarch is the most intelligent! How else could I come up with so many plans? Hahaha! Let's see what you try to do now!" By now, he had long since forgotten that he was trying to hide. Nor did he consider that such overt actions might cause Meng Hao to be suspicious.

His complacency had reached the pinnacle, and the feeling of finally being able to vent his frustrations gave him a bit of hope. Hope to see Meng Hao finally leave!

"No matter where you go, I'll just close all the shops! Let's see what other reason you could possibly come up with to stay here!" Patriarch Reliance's eyes sparkled as he glanced over at Guyiding Tri'rain.

"Well, what do you say? Is the Patriarch clever, or not?"

Guyiding Tri'rain blinked, then smiled. "The Patriarch is definitely brilliant."

Patriarch Reliance seemed more pleased than ever, and his smile grew even wider.

As for Meng Hao, he frowned as he flew through the air. About an hour later, he suddenly stopped in place, then looked down toward a mountain down below.

As soon as he even glanced at it, a rumbling sound suddenly filled the air as the entire mountain collapsed right in front of his eyes.

Meng Hao stared in shock. This time, it was true and utter shock.

"Patriarch Reliance!" he thought, "Aren't you being a bit too obvious, bitch? Can't you pretend even a little bit? Dammit! What do you want me to do? Pretend that I don’t notice? Pretend that I do?” Meng Hao was conflicted about exactly what course of action to take.

If he pretended not to notice anything suspicious, that would be too obvious….

But if he pretended to notice something fishy, then it would also tip off Patriarch Reliance. In Meng Hao’s opinion, Patriarch Reliance was so unreliable, there was no way to know how he might flip out if that happened.

“If I scare him too much,” Meng Hao thought, “he might just take this whole place with him and run away at top speed. This time, I have to make sure he doesn’t flee.” Meng Hao really was unsure of what to do. Inwardly, he cursed the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. How could a Dao Seeking Cultivator be so slow? Meng Hao had already let his aura begin to emanate out, and yet the old man still hadn’t come looking for him yet.

Meng Hao was consumed with the desire to beat the living daylights out of the old turtle. Currently, he just couldn’t think of how to deal with the unreliable Patriarch Reliance.

Even as he went back and forth in his mind, he continued to proceed forward. However, he quickly found that if he stopped for even a moment, nearby mountains would collapse; even the rivers would change their course.

Almost everywhere he went rapidly turned into flatlands.

“Could there possibly be anybody more unreliable…?” Meng Hao thought. “If things keep going on like this, even if I really did beat him in the head in the Demon Immortal Pagoda, he should be able to understand that I’ll notice things are obviously off.” Meng Hao hesitated for another moment before his eyes began to glitter. At this point, he completely ceased suppressing his internal injuries. He let out a blood-curdling scream and then coughed up a mouthful of blood.

His face immediately went pale.

“My injury is playing up again!” he cried loudly. Bowing his head, he sank down toward the ground, picking a random area to sit down cross-legged to meditate and treat his injuries.

His injuries truly were not completely healed. They were only healed by approximately seventy percent. The remaining thirty percent were filled with the power of Dao Seeking, which was very difficult to heal with the Violet Pupil Transformation.

According to his calculations, the final thirty percent would take years to completely heal using his current method. Therefore, he didn’t mind allowing the old turtle to see that the injuries and the blood were very real.

“In order to deal with this unreliable old turtle,” he thought, grinding his teeth, “I just have to be more shameless than him. In that case, you bastard, I’ll just stay here indefinitely!”

Now it was Patriarch Reliance’s turn to be stunned. He rubbed his eyes vigorously as he watched Meng Hao sit down cross-legged to meditate. Then his eyes began to shine brightly as he saw that Meng Hao truly did have serious internal injuries.

Patriarch Reliance began to pant. He stared for a long moment, then grabbed at his long hair and began to pull it hard. He paced back and forth within the palace, his face unsightly to the extreme, looking like a volcano that was about to explode.

“Dammit! Who was it that hurt him!? Why didn’t you just directly kill him?! Why leave an injury like that to flare up at a time like this?!

“What do I do? What is the Patriarch supposed to do…? That injury won’t be healed for years. After everything I’ve done so far, just when I was about to succeed, then this kind of thing has to happen!” Patriarch Reliance ground his teeth. Inwardly, his hatred toward whoever had injured Meng Hao continued to grow.

Guyiding Tri’rain almost couldn’t stop herself from bursting out laughing. Right now, she almost couldn’t take it any more. She had to know, which of these two unreliable fellows would outdo the other….

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# Chapter 642: The Patriarch Flies Into a Rage

“I’ll just sit here and wait for the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch to come,” thought Meng Hao complacently. “In the meantime, I’ll treat my injuries and just let time pass.” He sat there cross-legged in the remote mountain forest, surrounded by silence. The night was dark and charming; a soft breeze brushed gently against his face.

He rotated his Cultivation base as he slowly treated himself. Taking a deep breath, he closed his eyes. A few days passed.

The parrot and the meat jelly emerged during that time, then left to go play on the sea. It was impossible to tell what vices they had indulged in, but they came back smelling like seawater. They made quite the commotion as they returned to perch on Meng Hao’s shoulder.

“You are immoral!” cried the meat jelly, preparing to launch into a speech. “That white crane….”

“SHUT UP!” replied the Parrot, glaring. It was just about to continue speaking when suddenly it made an “eee?” sound and then looked around. Before it could say anything, Meng Hao’s eyes snapped open and he stuffed the parrot and the meat jelly into his bag of holding, then cleared his throat and continued to meditate.

At the moment, Patriarch Reliance was completely torn about what to do, so he didn’t notice what had just happened. He was utterly helpless in terms of Meng Hao; during the past few days, he had grown increasingly anxious. It was now clear based on Meng Hao’s actions that he planned to stay long term to restore himself to health.

“You little bastard, you just wait. The Patriarch is going to go all out!” Patriarch Reliance lifted his head up and roared. He had been in conflict over the past several days, and at this point, couldn’t wait any more. Clenching his teeth, he waved his sleeve, causing his body to grow transparent. It appeared as if he had separated some of his essence, which then began to swirl in the air above his hand, emanated a multicolored glow.

It rapidly turned into what appeared to be a Spirit Fruit, from which a delicate fragrance wafted out. Anyone who looked at it would instantly feel themselves palpitating with eagerness.

Off to the side, Guyiding Tri’rain’s eyes went wide and she began to breathe heavily. She recognized this object; it was a strand of essence from Patriarch Reliance’s clone form.

Clenching his teeth and enduring the distress of it all, Patriarch Reliance lifted his right foot and then stamped it down onto the surface of the palace. Instantly, a white crane appeared. As soon as it flew out, it began to change shape into a gray eagle, which then grabbed the Spirit Fruit with its talons. After that, it passed through the walls of the palace and shot off into the distance.

Patriarch Reliance watched anxiously as the gray eagle left. He felt distressed, and couldn’t stop from stamping his feet back and forth in nervousness.

“Screwed over. I’m screwed over big time…. However, as long as that little bastard leaves, the Patriarch can deal with it!”

The gray eagle shot through the sky with incredible speed toward Meng Hao’s location. In only the space of a few breaths, it appeared near him.

It kicked up a stiff wind that caused Meng Hao’s eyes to open. He looked up into the sky, and as soon as he caught sight of the gray eagle, his pupils constricted. Clearly, the most important part was the Spirit Fruit it held in its talons.

At a single glance, he could sense the ripples that emanated out from within the fruit, as well as the colorful glow which surrounded it. It almost looked like an Immortal Fruit. Even just glancing at the Immortal Fruit provoked a reaction from his internal injuries.

“This thing can really heal injuries….” thought Meng Hao. He hesitated for a moment, then smiled bitterly. Patriarch Reliance really had hit him in a soft spot with this particular move. He sighed inwardly.

“But it’s such a blatant move…. Well, he is Patriarch Reliance, after all, so I guess it’s not that strange.” It was with a wry smile and a conflicted heart that he watched the gray eagle start to fly in circles over his head. It seemed as if it was simply waiting for him to snatch the Spirit Fruit.

“Snatch it!” roared Patriarch Reliance. “Come on! Why aren’t you snatching it!?” At the moment, he wanted nothing more than to throttle Meng Hao.

After struggling back and forth for a while, Meng Hao took a deep breath. His eyes filled with determination. He simply couldn’t ignore such temptation. He had just made the decision, and was about to make a move, when suddenly, the gray eagle loosened its talons.

The Spirit Fruit slowly fell down from the sky with great accuracy to land directly in front of Meng Hao.

Patriarch Reliance burst out with hearty laughter, and he looked extremely proud of himself. Then he harrumphed to express the superiority of his intellect. Finally, he sent his Divine Sense into the gray eagle, causing it to let out a cheerful cry filled with complacent pride.

Because Meng Hao was staring in shock, he didn’t notice that at some point, the parrot had stuck its head out of the bag of holding and was looking intoxicatedly at the gray eagle. Suddenly, it transformed into a black streak of light that shot out at top speed.

Back in the palace, Patriarch Reliance’s Divine Sense was still in the gray eagle, controlling it as it flew off into the distance. “You little bastard! The

Patriarch has lived for years and years, and you want to try to compete with me? Let’s see what reason you can come up with to stay now! Hahaha! The Patriarch is… huh? Ahh? AAGGHHH!!” In the midst of his complacency and laughter, he suddenly shuddered, and his eyes went wide with disbelief.

He could clearly see the black beam of light shooting out from Meng Hao’s bag of holding. Then, the black shadow shot through the air to penetrate the rear end of the gray eagle.

“What… what is it doing?” said Patriarch Reliance, trembling.

The gray eagle shook. It was illusory, after all, so it twisted and then transformed into countless dots of glittering light that spread out in all directions.

A tremor ran through Patriarch Reliance and he stared blankly. Because his Divine Sense had been inside the gray eagle, everything that had happened just now… he had also experienced.

His face was filled with disbelief, but it only took a moment for him to react. His eyes went wide and were shot with blood as he lifted his head up and roared.

“You, you, you… you actually….

“Ridiculous! You actually….

“AAAAAGGGHHHHHHHHHH!” After understanding exactly what had happened, Patriarch Reliance was filled with unspeakable, unprecedented rage and madness.

All of the the lands of Saint’s Island shook, and enormous waves rolled out across the sea. The faces of all the Cultivators on the island flickered as they wonder what had just transpired.

Meng Hao was also a bit frightened. When he saw the parrot returning, that intoxicated look on its face, his scalp went numb.

“Damned bird,” he thought, taking a deep breath. “It… it actually did… it did Patriarch Reliance?” The parrot’s expression was one of deep emotion as it returned. Everything that had happened completely exceeded Meng Hao’s imagination.

The parrot still seemed to be savoring the aftertaste of what had just occurred. As it returned, Meng Hao could hear it muttering.

“Strange. How come it couldn’t handle being done? I barely started and it disappeared?”

Meng Hao grabbed the parrot and violently threw it into his bag of holding. Then he smiled wryly and collected up the Spirit Fruit. He quickly popped it into his mouth, then transformed into a beam of light and shot up into the air.

“What’s going on in this place!” he yelled loudly. “I can’t stay here!” He immediately shot off into the distance. Even as he did, the area he had just been in collapsed into a huge crater.

The ground trembled and shook, and huge waves surged across the sea. Patriarch Reliance was completely in a rage; his fury was burning to a shocking level. Although he couldn’t do anything to Meng Hao, he still couldn’t accept such humiliation. He was just on the verge of revealing his true self to swallow up the parrot, when Guyiding Tri’rain came running over. She grabbed Patriarch Reliance’s arm.

“Patriarch, calm down!” she said. “Think about what’s most important!”

“Go away! The Patriarch is gonna go all out with this guy!” Patriarch Reliance took a few steps forward. A rumbling sound filled the air as the palace opened up to reveal the lands of Saint’s Island stretching out below.

“Patriarch, think three times before you act!” urged Guyiding Tri’rain. “Meng Hao’s already gone! If you reveal yourself now, you’ll undo all your previous hard work!”

Patriarch Reliance stopped in place with his foot in the air. Veins bulged out on his face, and his entire person resembled a volcano that might erupt at any moment. His face twisted with struggle; on one hand, he was thinking about the happiness he could enjoy in the future. At the same time, he was thinking about the revenge that needed to be exacted for what the parrot had done to him.

In the midst of his struggle, he stomped his foot down. Forcing himself to endure everything, his body trembled and his head seemed about to explode. Clearly, his restraint had reached its very limits.

Patriarch Reliance could feel an indescribable fire burning inside of him. He felt as if he had to find someone to beat up to vent the rage and toxic anger that raged in his heart.

As he forced himself to continue to be patient, Saint’s Island ceased trembling, and the sea returned to calmness. Meng Hao transformed into a beam of light that shot through the air. His face was unsightly, but his internal injuries were now healing at a shockingly fast rate.

In the time it takes an incense stick to burn, all the pores on Meng Hao’s body seemed to have opened. The injuries inside of him were healed, and an intense coldness rushed out through his skin into the air, transforming into flakes of black snow that drifted in the air.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and increased his speed. His mind spun with countless ideas as he tried to come up with more reasons to stay on the island. However, he knew that Patriarch Reliance’s rage had been kindled to its peak, and the slightest mistake on his part could cause it to explode out.

If that happened, Patriarch Reliance would definitely run away again, and that did not fit in with Meng Hao’s plan.

“It’s all the fault of that bastard parrot. It ruined my big plan.” He sighed as he neared the border region of the island. He decided to slow down a bit, but when he did, the land beneath him would quake and the nearby mountains would collapse.

Meng Hao smiled bitterly and then continued to speed along. Soon, he saw the sea off in the distance, as well as the last Cultivator city of Saint's Island. Right now it was day, and the city should have been bustling with noise and excitement, but instead, all the shops were closed.

"Patriarch turtle, you've pushed me into a corner!" cursed Meng Hao inwardly. He clenched his teeth and then suddenly stopped in mid-air. His eyes began to glow with an intense light, and his expression was incredibly grim.

The look on his face caused Patriarch Reliance's fuming heart to suddenly begin to thump.

"I've been hiding in this ancient palace for years," he thought, "completely cut off from anything to do with the Demon Sealers. He shouldn't be able to sense me…. Not good, not good! Maybe what I did just now was too obvious! When you add in the fact that I couldn't control my temper, maybe the little bastard saw through it all!!"

Meng Hao looked around, his face grim. Finally, he spoke in a cold voice: "I'm not sure which member of the senior generation in this place doesn't want Meng Hao to stick around. Fine, I'm leaving!"

Complete silence was the only response.

When Patriarch Reliance heard Meng Hao's words, he immediately heaved a sigh of relief.

"So, he doesn't know I'm here. He actually thinks I'm someone else. Alright, that will do."

Meng Hao glanced around before his gaze finally came to rest on the city up ahead. He lifted his hand up and pointed at it.

"However, I'm lacking in Spirit Stones, and happen to have a random assortment of magical items in my bag of holding. I'll sell them in this city, and as soon as I'm finished, I'll leave this place!" With that, Meng Hao flicked his sleeve and headed toward the city.

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# Chapter 643: Plundering

Patriarch Reliance hesitated for a moment. Had Meng Hao not directly stated his intentions, he would never have allowed him to enter the city. However, Patriarch Reliance couldn’t help but glance at the sea, and then back at the city.

Finally, he violently clenched his teeth.

“This is the last time,” he said decisively. If Meng Hao tried to pull any more tricks after this, then he would go for broke and run away with the land on his back.

Meng Hao headed toward the city at top speed. Inside, the shops had all closed their doors, which left the Cultivators quite confused. Soon, quite a commotion could be heard.

Meng Hao’s arrival didn’t attract much attention. He picked a relatively open area where he then sat down cross-legged. Waving his sleeve, he caused a vast quantity of magical items to suddenly appear in front of him. They flew out into the surrounding area, causing a bright glow of light to spread out in all directions.

When thousands of magical items suddenly appeared all at once, glowing and shining resplendently, it instantly caught the attention of quite a few bystanders. When they saw the magical items, gasps could be heard.

The sounds of discussions soon filled the air.

“So many magical items!”

“How can that guy have so many magical items!? He has things from the Qi Condensation stage all the way to the Nascent Soul stage! He has everything!”

“Don’t tell me he sacked a shop somewhere?! All of those magical items are clearly new! Not a single one is used!”

Soon, people began to approach to examine the magical items that floated in the air around Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he quickly listed prices for each item, which were based on the original amount he had purchased them for, multiplied several times over. Then he closed his eyes and sat there silently.

More and more people crowded around, their eyes glittering as they occasionally glanced over at Meng Hao. Some people wanted to buy things, but the prices were clearly quite high. There were even some magical items whose price was several times greater than normal. Because of this, many people began to curse inwardly.

Time passed by, and soon quite a crowd had built up. Right now, all of the shops in the city were closed, so Meng Hao’s flagrant display quickly attracted the attention of the vast majority of Cultivators in the city.

Unfortunately, although there were a lot of people, few people were willing to buy at the exorbitant prices Meng Hao had listed.

Meng Hao didn’t feel anxious at all. In fact, he wanted to stretch time out as long as possible. Patriarch Reliance, on the other hand, was getting very nervous back in his palace as he watched the scene unfold. Soon, evening was falling. Of the thousands of magical items Meng Hao had for sale, he had only managed to get rid of a few. Patriarch Reliance was now incredibly worried.

“Well, this is the last time!” said Patriarch Reliance, stamping his foot. He sent his Divine Sense out into several people in the city.

Before long, seven or eight Cultivators approached Meng Hao’s vendor stall. They moved at top speed, causing quite a disturbance as they arrived in front of Meng Hao.

“I want 500 of these magical items!” said one of their number, an old man. He tossed out a bag of holding. Meng Hao’s eyes instantly opened. He looked at the man, then slowly opened the bag of holding. He then removed all of the Spirit Stones from inside and began to count them one by one. After checking the number thoroughly, he waved his sleeve, causing five hundred magical items to fly toward the old man.

The old man’s face twitched as he gathered up the items, then turned and walked off. After he left, another person approached, and, in exactly the same fashion as the man before, began to purchase magical items.

“That was the manager of the Auspicious Pavilion. He has a considerable social standing, and a close relationship with the Footloose Sect…. Why is he here buying magical items from this guy?”

“I’ve seen that guy before. That’s the shopkeeper from Chen Manor! He’s here too….”

The surrounding crowds watched on in astonishment as the seven or eight Cultivators wasted nearly two hours purchasing various items. Soon, all of Meng Hao’s magical items were gone.

Of course, the reason it took so long was that Meng Hao fastidiously counted every single Spirit Stone. Otherwise, he could have taken care of selling all the items in the space of a few breaths.

Considering how many Spirit Stones Meng Hao ended up taking, it was no surprise that the crowds eyed him greedily, like hungry wolves.

Meng Hao calmly secured all of the Spirit Stones into his bag of holding. In total, he had acquired several hundred thousand, making his trip to Saint’s Island somewhat profitable after all.

Finally, he rose slowly to his feet and sighed. Back in the palace, Patriarch Reliance’s patience could stretch no longer as Meng Hao transformed into a beam of light that shot up into the air.

As soon as that happened, four or five Cultivators down in the city took out jade slips that they then used to send voice transmissions.

Moments later, three Core Formation Cultivators flew out from a secret location. At the same time, an old man in a red robe sat cross-legged on a ship near the seashore. Suddenly, his eyes opened and began to glow with a brilliant light. The ripples of an early Nascent Soul Cultivation base emanated out from him.

He was the type of person who was threatening without showing anger. As soon as his eyes opened, he produced a brightly glowing jade slip. When he sent his Divine Sense into the slip, his eye narrowed.

“A Cultivator flying around with hundreds of thousands of Spirit Stones?” said the man coolly, rising to his feet.

“On Saint’s Island, only Core Formation Cultivators are permitted to fly….

“He sold a lot of items, most of them suitable for Qi Condensation and Foundation Establishment. However, his Cultivation base clearly wasn’t Nascent Soul. He must be a Core Formation Cultivator.

“Most likely, he’s at the great circle of Core Formation. In my hands, though, someone like that is a mere insect.” A slight smile appeared on the man’s lips.

“If I can get my hands on a few hundred thousand Spirit Stones, then this trip will have been no waste.” The man used minor teleportation to instantly vanish. When he reappeared, he was in mid-air above Saint’s Island. After confirming his exact position, he picked a direction and started flying.

Meng Hao frowned as he flew through mid-air. He really couldn’t think of another reason to stay behind, and it almost felt like he was being banished. It didn’t make him happy.

After all, the person doing the banishing was supposed to be his Dao Protector.

“If I’d known this was going to happen, I would have thrashed that little turtle a bit more back in the Demon Immortal Pagoda!” murmured Meng Hao angrily. He proceeded onward, watching the seashore get closer and closer.

By now, Patriarch Reliance was getting incredibly excited. Anticipation filled his eyes as he watched Meng Hao get further and further away.

“He’s leaving! The little bastard is finally leaving! Hahaha! What an excellent feeling!” The more Patriarch Reliance thought about it, the happier he felt. He even started to hum a little tune.

If Meng Hao were there, he would instantly recognize that tune. It was the very same tune Patriarch Reliance had hummed back in the Reliance Sect. 1

Currently, Meng Hao’s face was unsightly. The sea was clearly visible off in the distance, but he still couldn’t think of a reason to stay behind. Even as he was beginning to hesitate, a whistling sound could be heard from behind him.

When Meng Hao heard the sound, he was instantly both surprised and very happy. He quickly looked back to see three beams of light shooting toward him. An expression of joy appeared on his face.

In the same moment that Meng Hao turned to look back, a cold voice could be heard coming from one of the three pursuers. “Fellow Daoist, please slow down for a moment!”

The three pursuers were middle-aged men, one of whom was in the mid Core Formation stage, the other two were in the early Core Formation stage. They flew through the air very quickly, and arrived in the blink of an eye.

Back in his palace, Patriarch Reliance watched on in shock.

“What are you people doing!?” Meng Hao shouted, shrinking back.

The eyes of the three men glittered with killing intent. The mid Core Formation Cultivator looked Meng Hao over closely. Earlier, he had been somewhat hesitant because of not being able to clearly see Meng Hao's Cultivation base. Now, though, it was obvious to him that it was at the early Core Formation stage.

Furthermore, Meng Hao's words and expression seemed to be filled with alarm, which left the man feeling even more calm.

"The three of us would like to borrow something from you, Fellow Daoist," said the man with a false smile. "Hopefully you can help us achieve our aim." With that, the other two moved to surround Meng Hao.

The eyes of all three radiated ill intentions as they coldly stared at Meng Hao. The greed in their eyes couldn't be more apparent.

"What… what do you want to borrow?" Meng Hao replied hurriedly.

"Just some Spirit Stones, that's all," said the man with a smile. "Fellow Daoist, you have several hundred thousand Spirit Stones in your bag of holding. Do you mind loaning them to us?" As he spoke, killing intent glittered in his eyes. Just when he was reaching out to attack….

"Okay! I agree!" said Meng Hao. He slapped his bag of holding and instantly caused hundreds of thousands of Spirit Stones to fly out. The sight of so many Spirit Stones instantly caused the three Cultivators to stare, panting.

For the time it takes half an incense stick to burn, a sound almost like the gurgling of water could be heard as the Spirit Stones poured out onto the ground. Soon, they had formed together into something like a small mountain.

Even though it was evening, the Spirit Stones glittered and shone, causing the eyes of the three men to shine brightly.

However, as Meng Hao was backed up, the tip of one of the magical items from the Demon Immortal Sect suddenly appeared. Meng Hao's face fell, and he quickly covered it up.

“Hahaha!” said the middle-aged man, his eyes flashing. He was all smiles as he spoke, although he was working hard to control the excitement inside of him. “Fellow Daoist, you seem to be in such a good mood, so I hate to tell you that in addition to Spirit Stones, I also happen to need some magical items. I noticed just now that you have some inside your bag of holding. Hand it over now for me to take a look.”

The other two were palpating with eagerness at how rich they were about to become.

Meanwhile, back in the palace, Patriarch Reliance was panting, his eyes filling with rage as he clenched his fists tightly. He wanted nothing more than for Meng Hao to leave as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, these blind fools dared to intercept Meng Hao and delay him. This was enough to cause Patriarch Reliance to explode like lightning.

“Are they looking to die?!” roared Patriarch Reliance, waving his hand out. At the same time, the three people surrounding Meng Hao, in the very midst of their most ultimate excitement, suddenly began to tremble. The sound of someone roaring exploded out in their minds.

Then, in the blink of an eye, their eyes went wide and their bodies burst into pieces. A haze and blood and gore filled the air, which rapidly vanished into nothing.

Meng Hao smiled bitterly, then moved to collect up the Spirit Stones on the ground. However, it was at this point that he suddenly smiled excitedly once again. Off in the distance, a beam of light approached him at top speed from the direction of the ocean.

It was the early Nascent Soul stage old man.

“Take out your Spirit Stones and… huh?” Even as the old man’s cold voice rang out, he suddenly gasped. He had just seen the huge Spirit Stone mountain laying there on the ground.

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# Chapter 644: Patriarch, Save Me!

“Another one?” Patriarch Reliance’s rage once again flared up. He was incredibly indignant. After all the untold difficulties he had gone through to accomplish his goal of sending Meng Hao away, he had almost reached his goal.

And yet, at the critical moment, one blind fool after another came to stir up trouble. Patriarch Reliance was extremely nervous that Meng Hao would seize some new chance to stay behind on the island. Thus, his rage burned up into the sky. He was about to reach out and crush the newcomer with a palm, when suddenly, a tremor ran through his body. He looked up, and there wasn’t a trace of rage on his face. Gone was the easily changeable mood from when he was dealing with Meng Hao. Now, his expression was very serious.

He stared off into the depths of the sea.

Next to him, Guyiding Tri-rain also got a strange feeling seemingly from nowhere. She looked up, and her expression flickered. The Boat Spirit appeared soundlessly next to her, and also looked off into the distance.

Meanwhile, the overbearing old Nascent Soul Cultivator saw the huge pile of Spirit Stones, and it caused his heart to tremble. He glanced around the area, and, seeing nothing out of the ordinary, turned to look frowning at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao looked back at him, and as their gazes met, he laughed.

The scene caused the old Nascent Soul Cultivator to get a very strange sensation. He suddenly had the feeling that something fishy was going on, and immediately backed up a few paces.

He was just about to say something when Meng Hao's face suddenly flickered. He jerked his head to look off onto the distance. At the same time, his entire person erupted with an intensely fierce aura. He didn't grow any larger, but in the eyes of the old man, he suddenly seemed indescribably huge. The old man suddenly felt as if he were nothing more than a bug in front of Meng Hao.

The explosive aura that roiled off of Meng Hao caused the old man to tremble and pant. His eyes went wide with disbelief, and his mind filled with roaring.

"Great circle of the Nascent Soul stage!!" he thought, both his mind and body trembling. The blood drained from his face.

In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao's aura continued to rise, breaking through a certain barrier that suddenly caused the wind and clouds to surge, and the sky and land to dim. The crackle of thunder could be heard.

His energy swept over everything for thousands of kilometers in every direction, and a vortex appeared. The vortex spun rapidly, rising up to the point where it seemed to connect Heaven and Earth. Rifts appeared in the air, as if the world itself couldn't handle the explosive power of Meng Hao's Cultivation base.

"Spirit… Spirit Severing!!" Being in the middle of the tempest made the old man feel like he was a tiny leaf the midst of the raging sea, or a lone boat on the verge of being crushed into tiny pieces.

His mind buzzed and went completely blank, and his face completely drained of even the slightest bit of blood, until he looked almost dead. His body trembled like a screen, as he stared wide-eyed at the vortex, and Meng Hao, who looked almost like an Immortal.

"I… I actually tried to rob a Spirit Severing eccentric…." The man's trembling soon was completely replaced by astonishment and indescribable fear. The turn of events left him thoroughly discombobulated. In his estimation, he had just done the most insane thing he had ever done in his entire life.

As he trembled, he was suddenly incredibly glad that he hadn’t finished speaking earlier. Perhaps he still had time to turn around and leave.

“Senior…. Senior, I….” Even as he began to stammer an explanation, Meng Hao flicked his sleeve. Instantly, all of the Spirit Stones vanished. Completely ignoring the Nascent Soul Cultivator, he flew up into the air and looked off into the distance.

What he saw was a long beam of light shooting across the sky above the sea. It seemed capable of splitting Heaven and Earth as it shot toward him. Rumbling could be heard, and soon, the image of a white-robed Cultivator became visible within the beam. He didn’t look old, but rather, middle-aged. His hands were clasped behind his back as he strode through the air inside of the beam.

His hair floated around him, and everywhere he passed, distortions spread out. It seemed as if in every place that he passed, the natural laws of the world would change because of him. Waves surged in the sea down below, roaring and rumbling.

If you looked closely, you would be able to see that in that part of the sea, the waters were sunken down as if by some incredibly shocking pressure.

“He’s finally here!” thought Meng Hao. His eyes glittered brightly, and without hesitation, he entered the Ninth Anima!

Boom!

His body shook violently as an energy even more powerful than before was unleashed within him. He had a Spirit Severing fleshly body, and an energy capable of shaking everything.

Down below, the Nascent Soul Cultivator coughed up a mouthful of blood and sank down to the ground, quivering. To him, it was like the Heavens were crumbling.

Of course, the approaching figure was none other than the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch!

He strode forward, his expression cold, seemingly filled with infinite killing intent. He appeared capable of causing everything around him to collapse into destruction, and each step he took made everything rumble and shake.

“You dared to disseminate your aura to draw me here,” he said coolly, his voice crackling like thunder. “Who exactly are you relying on for help? Ask them out immediately.” His voice caused the entirety of Saint’s Island to shake. Mountains crumbled, and countless people on the island cried out in alarm.

In the Footloose Sect, dozens of beams of light flew up into the air, and the faces of everyone instantly began to flicker with various expressions.

Up in mid-air, the wind and clouds surged into an enormous, rumbling vortex. It looked almost like doomsday had arrived.

As the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch entered the airspace over Saint’s Island, waves raged in the surrounding sea, from within which could be heard something like desolate howls that echoed about in all directions.

“If you have nobody to rely on for help, well then, you simply won’t be able to escape this time.” The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s voice was calm, and did not seem to contain even a scrap of emotion. His eyes were cold as his gaze fell onto Meng Hao.

As soon as the gaze touched him, a rumbling sound surrounded Meng Hao. Inside of him, the power of seven Cultivation bases within him exploded out, and the strength of his fleshly body radiated out to slam into the pressure of the gaze.

Boom!

Rumbling filled Meng Hao’s body, and he felt an incredible pressure. This feeling was even more intense than the last time, causing his face to pale. Underneath the pressure, his Cultivation base suddenly condensed from seven parts into six!

It seemed as if the pressure from the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch was like a grindstone, and Meng Hao… was the blade!

At the same time, the intense power of his Cultivation base exploded out and fought back.

RUMBLE!

Blood oozed out of Meng Hao's mouth, and he was sent spinning backward. However, a bright light shone in his eyes as he relied only on his own power to resist the pressure of the gaze.

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch's eyes flickered as he gazed deeply at Meng Hao. This was not the same clone that had faced Meng Hao back in the Southern Domain. This was a flesh and blood body, a true clone.

It was far, far more powerful than the Divine Clone from last time. After all, the will within its gaze could kill a person.

Down below, the Nascent Soul Cultivator's astonishment had reached a pinnacle. He had no way to even imagine what level of Cultivation base could cause a Spirit Severing expert to be incapable of fighting back.

"This place is a nightmare…." He began to tremble violently, and wished he could simply lapse into unconsciousness.

Meanwhile, back in the palace, Patriarch Reliance's eyes were glittering as he silently observed what was happening.

A look of anxiety appeared in Guyiding Tri'rain's eyes.

Hovering in mid-air in the seaside region, Meng Hao wiped the blood from his mouth and backed up.

As for the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, he was now even more excited about Meng Hao's Dao foundation. "It truly is worthy of being called the Perfect Dao foundation…."

He took another step forward toward Meng Hao.

It was at this point that Meng Hao suddenly shouted out: “Patriarch, save me!!”

As soon as the words left his mouth, Patriarch Reliance’s face twitched. He pretended as if he hadn’t heard, but Guyiding Tri-rain, looking more anxious than ever, quickly turned to look at him.

Boom!

Even as he spoke the words, Meng Hao fled at top speed, his body flickering with a bloody glow. However, the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch instantly appeared in front of him.

“Patriarch Reliance,” said Meng Hao, using his Cultivation base to cause his words to echo out through all of Saint’s Island, “I’m the only remaining disciple of the Reliance Sect. Even in the Footloose Sect, considering my level of seniority, I should be considered a respected Elder. Can you really just watch on while I get killed?” Everyone in the Footloose Sect could clearly hear the words he had spoken. Meng Hao instantly tried to retreat again, but the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch waved his hand out. His shocking killing intent, which contained the will of Dao Seeking, transformed into a black beam that shot toward Meng Hao.

It moved with incredible speed, but Meng Hao was on guard. The Immortal’s sword appeared, which instantly caused the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s pupils to constrict.

In that instant, back in the palace, Guyiding Tri-rain gritted her teeth and then suddenly vanished. She transformed into a drop of rainwater, which then shot out of the palace. At the same time, the Boat Spirit also vanished.

When the raindrop reappeared, it was in front of Meng Hao. It instantly transformed into a sheet of falling rain, which blocked the incoming black beam of light.

Guyiding Tri-rains voice suddenly sounded out. “Your fleshly body is strong, but you can’t use it now. Rain is water. Water can become a lake, and that lake wishes to transform into sea. The surface of the sea can ripple; vibration can resist countless powers!”

As soon as Meng Hao heard her, his eyes went wide. Although he recognized the voice, there was no time to reminisce right now. The words seemed to bring him to his senses, and he began to vibrate his body.

All of this takes some time to describe, but actually happened in the blink of an eye.

The black beam neared, and as it passed through the rainwater, more than half of it dissipated. What remained slammed into Meng Hao, causing a boom to rattle out. The vibrations of Meng Hao’s body, however, transformed into a strange power that caused all the defensive power within his fleshly body to be consolidated into one location. Within the blink of an eye, a hundred vibrations occurred, fighting back against the black beam.

Meng Hao’s body shook, and blood sprayed out of his mouth. As he fell backward head over heels, the rainwater transformed into a young girl who caught him in her arms. The Boat Spirit appeared as well. He waved his sleeve, causing the air to ripple and distort in protection of Meng Hao as they retreated.

Although they had dispelled the black beam, the ripples that had been sent out as a result had completely destroyed the surrounding land. Everything had been crushed and destroyed, leaving behind a massive crater.

As Meng Hao retreated, an angry look appeared in his eyes.

“Old turtle Reliance, you’re my Dao protector! I can’t believe that the restrictive spells placed on you would allow you to just sit by and watch while I perish!” Even as he spoke, the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch neared. A look of derision appeared on his face, and he lifted his right hand up. The will of extermination appeared in his eyes as he struck out with his palm.

As soon as the palm began to move, everything grew dark, as if the the entire world now belonged to that palm. As it descended, Meng Hao, as well as everything in the entire area, began to topple and disintegrate.

Seeing what was happening, Patriarch Reliance lifted his head up and roared. Meng Hao’s words had stabbed him to the heart. He truly couldn’t just sit by complacently and watch him die.

“Fudge! Fine, the Patriarch is coming!”

When you added in the flames of fury which still raged inside of him, and the fact that the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch was destroying the entire land with his palm, it all made Patriarch Reliance howl and finally…

Leave the palace!

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# Chapter 645: Shameless Old Turtle!

As soon as Patriarch Reliance appeared on the outside, all of Saint’s Island trembled. He wore a long azure robe, and his hair swayed in the wind. He looked ancient, but his eyes glowed with a bright light, and veins bulged out on his forehead. The anger and fury within him had reached the point that they absolutely had to be vented.

In a single step, he crossed half of Saint’s Island to appear in front of Meng Hao, directly between him and the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch!

He lifted his right hand, and instantly, a sheet of steam rose up. It emanated shocking Demonic Qi, as well as prismatic light. Instantly, the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s palm slammed into it.

“I’m the Patriarch! Now screw off!” he raged, lifting his head up and roaring. His voice echoed out in all directions like thunder.

The mist and the palm slammed into each other, causing an enormous roaring to fill the air. Patriarch Reliance was sent tumbling backward, as if a raging wind had just swept over him. When he looked up, a vicious expression filled his eyes.

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch also trembled, and his eyes gleamed brightly. But then, he gave a cold laugh.

“A trifling Spirit Severing Cultivator?” he said coolly. “Child, this is the person you are relying on? Allow me to destroy him, and your hope along with him!” From the way he spoke, destroying Patriarch Reliance would be incredibly easy for him.

Actually, from his point of view, destroying a Spirit Severing Cultivator truly was a simple matter. In fact, normally speaking, Meng Hao could not have stood up to him for even half a moment. The only reason he could was that the 10th Wang patriarch needed to be very careful not to kill him. If he killed him, it would be impossible to steal his Dao foundation.

Truth be told, the Wang Patriarch had many Daoist magics that could easily destroy everything in sight.

“I am a Patriarch of the Wang Clan. An ancestor of the Clan invented three finger attacks, two of which have since become lost arts. However, the Extermination Finger is still being passed down via legacy.” With that, the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch waved his finger in the air. It seemed to possess the power of extermination; the life force of all living things instantly began to wither under the power of the finger attack.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he sensed his own life force rapidly fading. A cold light suddenly appeared in his eyes as he fell back yet again. Having just gained enlightenment regarding the vibration technique, a hundred vibrations instantly appeared within him, locking down his life force so that the withering effect was instantly slowed down.

“Now is not the time to leave,” thought Meng Hao, countless thoughts racing through his mind. “I need to wait a bit longer, until the fight between old turtle Reliance and the Wang Clan bastard reaches the peak. When the true flames of fury flare, that is the time to flee.” The entire reason he had stayed on Saint’s Island was to attack the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch here, and use Patriarch Reliance’s power to destroy him, thus giving himself a way out of his current crisis.

Guyiding Tri-rain stood next to him, a serious look on her face. As for the Boat Spirit, his eyes shone brightly as he stood protectively off to the side.

Because of the transformations occurring in Heaven and Earth, and the quaking of Saint’s Island, the experts of the Footloose Sect sped over as fast as possible. They knew that they were flying into danger, but the rules of the Footloose Sect were very strict. Seniority was the most important thing of all. If the Patriarch was in battle, then it didn’t matter that they couldn’t match up to him, unless he specifically ordered them away, they were required to come.

Most nervous of all was the Nascent Soul Cultivator down below, the one who had tried to rob Meng Hao. He was shaking violently, and his eyes were as wide as saucers. Everything that was happening caused him to breath rapidly. His mind spun, and he had lost the ability to even think. It didn't matter if it was Meng Hao, Patriarch Reliance, or the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, none of them were people that he could even come into contact with. To the Nascent Soul Cultivator, getting involved in this conflict was clearly the most unlucky thing that had ever happened to him in in his entire life.

Heaven and Earth were sinking into extermination. The finger attack of the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch caused the entire world to turn gray. The only thing that had color was the Wang Clan Patriarch himself.

The finger descended, and the world shook.

Patriarch Reliance's eyebrows shot up, and he performed an incantation with his right hand. Instantly, Demonic Qi swept out.

“What dog crap Extermination Finger are you talking about?!” he said. “The Patriarch has never heard of any such thing. Demonic Art, Heaven and Earth Cleaving!” Patriarch Reliance also waved a finger. From the look of it, his fingernail became the Heaven, and the flesh of the finger became the Earth. As for the tip of the finger, it transformed into something that looked like a sharp blade which could cleave both Heaven and Earth.

Both finger attacks slammed into each other in mid-air.

BOOM!

The massive explosion caused the Nascent Soul Cultivator down below to cough up blood as he was sent spinning backward. Meng Hao fell back, his eyes glittering as he saw the plants around him rapidly wilting and drying up. As for Patriarch Reliance, starting with his extended finger, his entire body began to shrivel.

In the blink of an eye, his hair had fallen off, and his entire body was emaciated. He almost looked like a desiccated corpse. Then, a pop could be heard as he exploded, transforming into countless dots of light that floated away.

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch's expression was the same as ever. He seemed to have utmost confidence in his finger attack just now.

"That's who you were relying on?" he asked coolly. He looked over at Meng Hao with eyes full of ridicule.

Meng Hao's expression was calm. Next to him, Guyiding Tri-rain's expression was similar. This caused the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch to gape in shock. He obviously could tell that something was not quite right. Just as he was about to take a step forward, a shocking roar suddenly filled the air.

"Dammit! This bastard actually dared to extinguish the Patriarch's clone!?" Instantly, a pulsing cloud of steam appeared out of nowhere, which gradually reformed back into the shape of Patriarch Reliance.

This new Patriarch Reliance's Cultivation base was a bit weaker than before. As soon as he appeared, his rage boiled up into the sky, and a demented gleam appeared in his eyes. He instantly shot forward.

"With me here," he roared, "nobody can kill that little bas… er, ahem, nobody can kill Meng Hao!"

If he hadn't spoken such words, then Meng Hao wouldn't have taken anything to be amiss. However, as soon as the words left his mouth, Meng Hao's heart started to pound with fear, and his face flickered. He absolutely did not believe that Patriarch Reliance would utter such words and truly mean them.

"Dammit, what technique has the old turtle come up with to get out of the Demon Seal…?

"It must have something to do with the words he just spoke. Don't tell me that whatever technique he's using can actually get out of having to fight here?” Meng Hao was no longer the unseasoned Cultivator he had been long ago. After everything he had experienced, he had long since honed his powers of reasoning. Based on Patriarch Reliance’s words just now, he could obviously pick up on some clues as to what was going on.

Even as Meng Hao’s mind was racing with countless thoughts, Patriarch Reliance neared and then stood between him and the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. He flicked his sleeve.

“Meng Hao, get out of here!” he said, then charged once more toward the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch.

Meng Hao shivered and then began to pant slightly. The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch gave a cold snort and took a step forward, then once again attacked with his Extermination Finger.

As before, the finger attack caused everything to turn gray, and all life to be destroyed. Patriarch Reliance lifted his head up and let out an indignant howl.

“Life is to be treasured! Promises are even more eternal! I am Patriarch Reliance, and I promised to be Meng Hao’s Dao Protector! Even if I am torn into a thousand pieces, I will abide by my promise!”

Seemingly completely unafraid of death, Patriarch Reliance charged forward. He seemed to prefer to die in battle to block the momentum of the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. As he charged forward, he performed an incantation gesture, unleashing a Demonic art as he fearlessly attacked.

Anyone who was watching would definitely feel the complete and utter valiance on display. Giving up one’s life to keep a promise; such were the actions of a true man!

However, Meng Hao understood Patriarch Reliance all too well. He knew that the damned old turtle would never act like this. Sweat began to pour down his forehead as a very bad feeling filled his heart.

Without hesitation, he cast aside his previous plan and began to flee in the opposite direction. Guyiding Tri’rain looked at fleeing Meng Hao, and then back at Patriarch Reliance as he seemed to face death unflinchingly. Then she sighed.

BANG!

Under the power of the Extermination Finger, Patriarch Reliance’s body withered rapidly and then collapsed into pieces.

However, at the same time, a roar suddenly could be heard. The mist formed together again, once more turning into Patriarch Reliance. Yet again, he risked death to block the way of the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch.

“I can die with no regrets, but Meng Hao… must not die!” cried Patriarch Reliance. “That is my promise from years ago!”

A strange glow appeared in the eyes of the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch as he looked at Patriarch Reliance.

“So, a promise truly can give rise to someone so brave as to use their own essence to come back to life in this way!” From the perspective of the Wang Clan Patriarch, Patriarch Reliance must be drawing on the essence of his true self to return to life.

To Cultivators of his realm, one’s essence was the most prized of all possessions. Wasting it could lead to severe injury that would be difficult to recover from. It truly was extremely precious.

A look of respect appeared in the eyes of the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. He suddenly realized that if this Patriarch Reliance were a member of his own Clan, then he would definitely make an excellent guard.

Meng Hao was cursing inwardly. By now, he had realized exactly what Patriarch Reliance was doing. Currently, Meng Hao employed all the speed he could muster to flee, although he wished he could move thousands of times faster.

“Hahaha!” thought Patriarch Reliance. “It turns out this method is working after all. The Patriarch is the most intelligent yet again! The Demon Seal only requires that I become a Dao Protector. Dao Protector, huh. That just means protecting! And the true meaning of Dao is to temper oneself. Therefore, the identity of a Dao Protector doesn’t mean I have to prevent the little bastard from dying. All I have to do is protect him a bit. If any accidents happen, as long as I’m trying hard, then it won’t matter.

“And I’m already trying hard! This might just be a clone, but I did have to expend some essence, right?! As for the Demon Seal, it shouldn’t be too much of a problem. Hahaha! The Patriarch is far too intelligent!

“This time, it won’t count as defying the Demon Seal!” Patriarch Reliance felt quite proud of himself. On the outside, though, he looked furious. He seemed to be going all out to block the way of the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. Once again, his body withered and then collapsed.

The next time he appeared, he was even weaker than before. By now, the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch was truly in admiration of Patriarch Reliance’s loyalty. This time, when Patriarch Reliance’s body withered away, the Wang Clan Patriarch didn’t wait for it to reform before shooting off to pursue Meng Hao.

When Patriarch Reliance reappeared, he was extremely weak. In fact, his body was so shapeless that the illusory image of his true self could actually be seen.

He now looked like a fearsome turtle, who stood there watching as the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch chased after Meng Hao.

His expression one of incredible grief and indignation, Patriarch Reliance shouted, “Don’t kill him! Kill me instead!” Inside, Patriarch was laughing up a storm, but on the outside, his eyes were bloodshot. He lifted his head up to roar, and then offered pursuit.

“Kill me, okay?! I have to keep my promise even if I die. Don’t kill him!! I’m not just his Dao Protector, I’m his Patriarch! He is the highest ranking disciple in the Footloose Sect next to me! He is my equal, the future and hope of the Footloose Sect. You are not permitted to kill him!”

“Shameless!!” growled Meng Hao through clenched teeth. Without hesitation, he pulled out the good luck charm and was about to press down on it hard, when suddenly…

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch turned his head. There, he saw Patriarch Reliance, looking both complacent and indignant. He was in turtle form now, and his eyes glowed with a strange light.

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch was moved. “I’ve seen many Demon beasts in my life, but this is definitely… the most loyal one I’ve ever encountered!”

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# Chapter 646: I’ll Give You Some Good Fortune!

In order to create the most realistic act, Patriarch Reliance filled his roars with incredible power. Everyone on the island, including the Cultivators of the Footloose Sect, could hear him clearly.

Their faces all flickered with various emotions. The people near the battlefield didn’t dare to get too close. Their expressions were that of shock, and they were panting.

“Meng Hao? Who’s that? It sounds like he’s really important in the Footloose Sect!”

“What kind of person would the Patriarch risk his life to protect? He must be the hope of the whole Footloose Sect! He can’t die!”

“Meng Hao? I remember! He was an Inner Sect disciple of the Reliance Sect! The Patriarch was right! He’s the highest ranking member of our Sect next to the Patriarch!” The astonished Cultivators immediately committed Patriarch Reliance’s words to heart, engraving them there to remember always.

Actually, Patriarch Reliance’s words were filled with such realistic emotion that even he was starting to believe them. Tears appeared in his eyes as he roared out. It was at this point that the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch stopped in mid-air, his eyes wide with shock.

“Why aren’t you chasing him?” said Patriarch Reliance, blinking. He was now far larger than the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, and had inserted himself between him and Meng Hao. He glared angrily. “Kill me, and then you can pass!”

Patriarch Reliance was now fully immersed in the game. To him, it was actually quite fun, and when he spoke, his voice burst with incredible power.

“With me here, nobody can hurt Meng Hao!” roared Patriarch Reliance. Of course, inwardly, he was laughing. He wanted the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch to strike him down as quickly as possible, and then go take care of the little bastard. Then he himself would finally be freed.

However, the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch didn’t seem to have any intention of chasing Meng Hao. From his perspective, there was no way for Meng Hao to truly escape; he would catch him sooner or later. However, the Demon beast in front of him was something quite rare.

In fact, it was rare enough that the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch couldn’t possibly let it go!

“What an incredible, loyal Demon beast,” he said slowly. “In all my life, I’ve never seen anything like it!” The admiration in his eyes grew stronger as he looked at Patriarch Reliance, nodding and smiling. “For a Demon beast like this to follow that child is a real pity. Demon turtle, I am the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. Are you willing to be my follower? If so, then from now on, you will be the Divine Beast Dao Protector of the Wang Clan!

“The day I achieve Immortal Ascension, I will bring you with me into the Heavens!”

Meng Hao was just about to press down on the good luck charm when he heard the words of the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. He stopped in place and looked back. When he saw the scene, and especially the trembling Patriarch Reliance, he wanted to laugh out loud.

He knew Patriarch Reliance, and that he most valued his freedom. In order to get rid of Meng Hao, Patriarch Reliance might be able to forget about some other matters, but as for his freedom… talking about that was one good way to really piss him off!

“I never imagined it would play out this way,” thought Meng Hao. “But I like it. Come on, be a bit more realistic, you old turtle. Keep up the act, I want to see more!”

Patriarch Reliance stared with wide eyes for a moment, and then his heart began to pound. He felt like he was about to explode; madness suddenly surged through his mind.

“What did you just say? What did you call me?” He almost couldn’t believe that someone would try to turn him into a guard beast. Actually, this was the second time such a humiliation had occurred to him since he grew up.

The first time had been at the hands of the League of Demon Sealers.

To Patriarch Reliance, the level of irritation this caused him exceeded anything else in the world. His body began to tremble and distort, and it was only because of the little bit of rationality left that he was able to suppress his rage.

“You’re not pleased, little Demon turtle?” said the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, his face sinking. He had offered this Demon turtle a rare, moving opportunity. Normally speaking, considering his temper, he would have just instantly killed it.

“Fudge! YOU’RE the Demon turtle!” roared Patriarch Reliance. “Everyone in your whole Wang Clan are all Demon turtles, and you’re the bastard son of a turtle! Do you really dare to try to make me your security guard!?!?!” Moments later, though, he inwardly urged himself to just hold on a little bit longer. All he had to do was hold on, and then great good fortune would come his way.

By this point, though, his body had grown incredibly blurry. Furthermore, his real body was actually trembling some, causing huge waves to surge out on the sea, along with echoing rumbling sounds.

“Well, it’s beyond your control,” said the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, his voice cool. “If you’re willing, good. If you’re not willing, it doesn’t matter. When I make a decision, nobody can change it. I’ll put some restrictive spells on you, and then from now on, you’ll be the Demon turtle of my Wang Clan!” Apparently, he felt his own words to be the will of Heaven, like laws and statutes that couldn’t be broken.

Meng Hao was going wild with joy, and almost started laughing out loud. He knew that currently, he could leave at any time he wished. Besides, if Patriarch Reliance couldn’t endure through all this, then Meng Hao didn’t mind facing a bit of danger just to be able to see that happen.

As the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch spoke, he raised his right hand and performed an incantation. Instantly, thousands of restrictive spell symbols appeared in mid-air. They circulated around in the area to form a huge net, which then shot toward the illusory, turtle-form Patriarch Reliance.

Patriarch Reliance’s body was blurry, but it was still possible to see how furious he was. His panting sounded like explosions, and his fury… finally reached the point of detonation!

His eyes were wide; earlier, he had done everything he could to hold back his rage. But now, he couldn’t suppress even a tiny bit of it. In the blink of an eye… his fury exploded!

Thunderous booming sounds echoed out in all directions as Patriarch Reliance lifted his head up and let out an unprecedented howl of rage!

“AAARRGGGHHHHHHHHHHH!!” In this moment, he didn’t care about Meng Hao or the Demon Sealing Sect. All he cared about was the towering rage he felt from being offended in such a way.

Such overt humiliation made him think back to how he had felt being restricted by the League of Demon Sealers. It was like an old wound had been ripped open. Patriarch Reliance’s rage filled his mind, and he roared again.

“Dammit! Dammit….

“The League of Demon Sealers is one thing, but you, tiny child, you actually dare to humiliate the Patriarch!?!?”

Patriarch Reliance was so immersed in his rage that he completely forgot about the act from before. His eyes were bright red, and the entirety of Saint’s Island was shaking violently. The land quaked, as if some enormous creature were waking up beneath it.

The surrounding seawater was covered with massive, roaring waves, as if the sea in the area was about to explode.

Far beneath Saint’s Island, deep in the blackness of the sea, something like two oil lamps suddenly appeared. They were bloodshot, and filled with madness, the madness instigated by old wounds being ripped open. It was a madness stemming from humiliation.

BOOM!

Huge fissures ripped open in the land. The sky grew dark, wild colors flashed about, and the sea raged. All of these sudden changes caused the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s face to fall.

However, before he could even make a single move, an aura exploded up from deep within the sea. The aura was filled with intense rage, and as soon as it appeared, it caused even the air to be shredded. It seemed as if Saint’s Island were being ripped out from the very world.

As soon as the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch sensed the aura, his face completely filled with shock. He immediately took a deep breath and then flew up into the air, his face pale.

“Immortal!!” he said, his voice faint.

“This is the aura of an Immortal!!

“Demonic Qi like an Immortal. This is the will of a Demon Immortal!”

A deep, growling voice could suddenly be heard from within the ground, causing the earth to shake and mountains to tremble. “You actually dare to call the Patriarch a Demon turtle? You actually dare try to make me your security guard!”

The voice came up from the ground and from within the sea. The seawater churned and seethed and began to spin around Saint’s Island until it transformed into a huge vortex.

“You actually dare to try to put restrictive spells on me! Are you… worthy?!”

BOOM!!

The sea exploded up, causing water to shower about in all directions. A huge force seemed to shoot up into the sky, and at the same time, a gargantuan head became visible within the sheets of water. It stretched out to blot out the entire sky. Its shadow was so huge that it could obstruct both the sun and the moon. It covered over everything!

It was the colossal head of a vicious turtle, its skin covered with wrinkles. It was pitch black and terrifying, and when it opened its mouth, sharp, yellow teeth could be seen. And then there were the eyes, which seemed blurry at first, but then clearly radiated intense fury and rage.

This was… the head of Patriarch Reliance’s real body!!

An indescribable energy pulsed out from Patriarch Reliance. His aura emanated out, causing all living things to tremble with fear. Up in mid-air, the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch slowly forced himself to turn around. Then he saw the indescribably gigantic head filling the entire sky.

He gaped, and his mind filled with a roaring sound. His eyes went wide, filled with an expression of astonished disbelief.

He suddenly understood why his opponent could so frivolously waste its essence. It was because, its essence… was incredibly, astonishingly vast….

“You….” stammered the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, his scalp going numb. For years, he had swept across Planet South Heaven, but he had never seen a shocking, terrifying Demon beast like this.

“You want the Patriarch to be your security guard?” raged Patriarch Reliance. The sound of his voice was like thunder, filled with madness. Countless mountains on Saint’s Island collapsed, and huge waves rolled out across the sea.

The Wang Clan Patriarch staggered backward several paces. Patriarch Reliance’s roar just now caused him to cough up a huge mouthful of blood. His face was pale white.

Panting, he thought back to what he had said about making his opponent a guard. Then he took a deep breath. Obviously, he had absolutely no qualifications whatsoever to try to make a Demon Immortal act as a guard.

“Senior, please calm your anger,” he said quickly, continuing to back up. “This is all just a big misunderstanding.”

“Misunderstanding my flipping ass!” roared Patriarch Reliance. The echo of his roar sounded back and forth, causing the sea itself to roar, making it sound like there were countless Patriarch Reliances all roaring at the same time. But then he said, “Allow the Patriarch to bestow you with some good fortune!”

This was the second time that Meng Hao had seen Patriarch Reliance’s real body. It was as shocking now as it had been before. Suddenly, he thought back to how he had vented his spleen on Patriarch Reliance in the Demon Immortal Pagoda, and he felt a little scared. But then he remembered that he could restrain Patriarch Reliance with the Demon Sealing Scripture, and he felt a bit calmer.

It was at this point that Meng Hao heard the words ‘good fortune,’ and his eyes began to shine brightly. He quickly began to back up; he knew that now was the time for him to make his exit.

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# Chapter 647: Patriarch Meng Hao

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch was momentarily stunned by the mention of ‘good fortune.’ Roaring, Patriarch Reliance’s gargantuan head shot toward him at incredible speed.

He moved so fast that ghost images sprang up, and the air itself cracked.

BANG!

Rage flared up in the eyes of the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and a glittering shield sprang up. However, cracking sounds echoed out, and it began to shatter into small pieces. His face went pale, and he started performing a double-handed incantation, calling the wind and summoning the rain. Instantly, magical power swirled around him, and an incredible magical art shot toward Patriarch Reliance. The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch coughed up more blood and sped backward, having narrowly escaped complete catastrophe.

His mind was overcome with terror; after reaching Spirit Severing, he had never encountered anything that he had feared. That was not to mention his position after reaching Dao Seeking. In all of the lands of South Heaven, he was afraid of nothing; even the idea of double-crossing the Ji Clan didn’t get him scared.

Now, though, he was afraid. He fled without even the slightest bit of hesitation, at the same time producing several dozen magical items. Each of these magical items could be considered a treasure of great value. He had spent years collecting them all. Unleashing them caused a bright light to shine out and swirl around his body as he fled.

However, Patriarch Reliance's eyes flashed with killing intent. His head shrank back, but then shot out again as fast as lightning.

A bloodcurdling scream echoed out from the mouth of the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. This time, he couldn't dodge. His precious treasures were destroyed, and a crunching sound could be heard as half of his body was crushed and ripped away by Patriarch Reliance.

His scream was matchlessly desolate. The Wang Patriarch continued to try to escape with the remaining half of his body. He was clearly in an unprecedentedly horrific and terrible situation.

Blood sprayed about in all directions, and Meng Hao's eyes glittered. Without stopping to even look back, he waved his arm, causing some of the blood to swirl over to him. Then he continued off into the distance.

Behind him, Patriarch Reliance wasn't finished venting. Even as his head shot once more toward the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, he sensed that Meng Hao was getting further and further away. However, his rage did not lessen. Instead, it boiled up from his insides. He instantly changed directions, moving like a bolt of lightning to suddenly appear right next to Meng Hao. His enormous mouth opened as if he were about to consume him.

In that instant of malice, though, layers of restrictive spells flared up around him. Countless magical symbols could be seen, connected together like chains that glittered with bright light. They covered Patriarch Reliance's entire body, no matter how he strained against them. Even his shell was affected; cracks spread out, as if he were about to be crushed alive.

The pain caused Patriarch Reliance to let out a miserable cry. His head shot back and he glared hatefully at Meng Hao.

"Nothing good ever happens when I run into you!" roared Patriarch Reliance.

"One of these days, Meng Hao's turtle is gonna beg for me to ride him!" Meng Hao shot back hatefully, looking over his shoulder coldly at Patriarch Reliance as he continued to shoot off into the distance.

Meng Hao’s words seemed to move Patriarch Reliance inwardly. His eyes turned bright red, and he slipped further into madness. However, he didn’t try to consume Meng Hao again. The glowing chains could still be seen on him, causing his entire body to be wracked with pain. The rage inside of him was impossible to describe. Being incapable of doing anything to kill Meng Hao, all he could do was flash back toward the the Wang Clan Patriarch to continue to vent his anger.

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch was scared out of his mind. Even in his wildest dreams, he could never have imagined that he would run into a Demon Immortal in this place. It completely exceeded his understanding of Planet South Heaven.

“This is impossible! How could there be a Demon Immortal in the lands of South Heaven?! Dammit! The Ji Clan is completely useless! How could they permit a Demon Immortal to hide in the Milky Way Sea!?” By this point, having lost half of his body, the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch knew deep inside that he was going to die. There was no way that he could flee a Demon Immortal.

“Damnable Meng Hao! First, the kid pulls out an Immortal’s sword to kill my clone, and now he has a Dao Protector like this! Just how lucky can one person be?!” The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch almost felt as if he couldn’t accept it. But then, he realized that perhaps it was because Meng Hao had such luck that he was able to form the Perfect Dao foundation.

“Thankfully, this is only a clone. Granted, it’s a flesh and blood clone, and I’ll sustain some damage when it dies. However, I don’t have any other options right now…. Well then, if I’m going to die, I’ll go out fighting this Demon Immortal!” A bright light appeared in his eyes as Patriarch Reliance’s head closed in on him. With a roar, the Wang Clan Patriarch spun around and began to perform an incantation.

Meng Hao was fleeing at high speed. He was going so fast that he barely had time to clasp hands and bow to Guyiding Tri’rain off in the distance. As of now, Meng Hao’s plan had succeeded, and now all that was on his mind was to get away.

Patriarch Reliance's head was now far away from Meng Hao. He was enraged, and also frustrated. Whenever he encountered Meng Hao, nothing good happened. The first time, he had been forced to leave with the State of Zhao. Now, he had been humiliated into taking action.

The feeling of vexation only served to kindle his fury. Patriarch Reliance felt the overwhelming desire to vent his rage, so it was with intense killing intent that he shot toward the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch.

Booming sounds echoed out along with miserable shrieks. Meng Hao didn't stop for even a moment. He shot forward at the highest possible speed, transforming into a beam of colorful light. It only took the space of a few dozen breaths for him to reach the border of the sea.

Up ahead were some disciples of the Footloose Sect. When they saw Meng Hao, they were instantly shaken inwardly. There were a couple Cultivators among their number who actually recognized Meng Hao from his time back in the State of Zhao.

"Greetings, Patriarch Meng Hao!" they said, clasping hands and bowing deeply.

Seeing their actions caused the others to realize that the person in front of them was none other than Meng Hao, the person their Patriarch was risking his life to protect. This was the person whose seniority was highest in the entire Sect, second only to the Patriarch himself. Of course, because their Cultivation bases were not high enough, they had no way to know about the matter of Patriarch Reliance trying to consume Meng Hao.

Furthermore, in the Footloose Sect, nothing was more important than matters of seniority. It was built into the Sect rules, and had long since been imprinted deeply in their hearts, and was something that no one would dare to defy. To see Meng Hao and not immediately bow would be far too excessive.

"Greetings, Patriarch Meng Hao!" said the group, all of them clasping hands and bowing. Meng Hao's eyes glittered, and a smile appeared on his face. He nodded to the group as he shot past them.

When Patriarch Reliance saw this happening, he very nearly coughed up a mouthful of blood, and his rage burned even higher than before. He felt as if he had just hoisted up a rock to crush Meng Hao, only to drop the rock on his own foot. His act from before had been completely convincing to all of the surrounding disciples, leaving them shocked and amazed. It only took a short time for Meng Hao's name to be spread around the entire area.

"Nothing good ever happens to me around Meng Hao! DAMMIT!!" His rage rocketing to unprecedented heights, Patriarch Reliance bit toward the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, to begin the torment.

Meng Hao had originally planned to leave, but then he stopped. He considered the act Patriarch Reliance had put on, the relationship between the two of them, as well as the two displays of killing intent just now. Then he decided to pull a quick little con. He turned back to the Footloose Sect disciples.

"Take out all your Spirit Stones and give them to me," he said. "Later, Patriarch Footloose will repay you a hundredfold! Don't worry, Patriarch Footloose is willing to give up his life for me, do you really think he cares about some trifling Spirit Stones?" As he spoke, he imbued his voice with his Cultivation base, causing his words to echo about throughout the entirety of Saint's Island.

When Patriarch Reliance heard the words, his anger burned even hotter. He looked at the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch in front of him, gasping on the verge of death, and had half a mind to go after Meng Hao once again and try to kill him. However, he knew that if he did that, he would be restrained by the restrictive spells. Furthermore, if he spoke up to contradict Meng Hao, then it would be a huge loss of face, and people would suspect his previous actions. Right now, Meng Hao's words were echoing in the ears of the Footloose Sect members throughout Saint's Island; it seemed that in the future, Patriarch Reliance would have no choice but to pay back the Spirit Stones for Meng Hao.

"Hmph!" he said, comforting himself. "How many Spirit Stones could a few trifling disciples have? Who cares if I have to pay them back a hundredfold! My spit is worth more than that!" With that, he jerked his head to the side. The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, who was currently clasped viciously in his jaw, let out a miserable shriek.

The group of Cultivators stared in shock at Meng Hao, then produced their bags of holding and gave him all the Spirit Stones therein. These were all Footloose Sect disciples with extraordinary Cultivation bases. They had quite a collection of Spirit Stones numbering in the tens of thousands. Meng Hao nodded happily as he collected them all together.

“I accept your 100,000 Spirit Stones!” said Meng Hao loudly, his voice echoing throughout Saint’s Island. “Make sure to keep ahold of this receipt!” He quickly tossed out a jade slip, then shot off into the distance.

The group gaped in astonishment. They had clearly handed over less than 50,000 Spirit Stones. How could it have suddenly turned into 100,000? After a moment, their eyes began to glitter as they realized that Meng Hao had blessed them with good fortune. Their hearts filed with joy, and they all bowed deeply to Meng Hao’s retreating figure.

“We bid you respectful adieu, Patriarch Meng Hao!”

Patriarch Reliance heard their words, and began to tremble. Then he let out an indignant bellow.

“MENG HAO!!!”

“Patriarch, there’s no need to escort me away!” cried back Meng Hao. “Disciple will take his leave now. Patriarch, you risked your life for me, leaving disciple very moved! I won’t put you to any more inconvenience!” By this point, he had flown off of Saint’s Island and was over the sea. Further back, the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s clone was a mass of blood and gore. He let out a final bloodcurdling screech, and then was shredded into pieces and then swallowed by Patriarch Reliance.

Patriarch Reliance’s head swiveled to glare hatefully at Meng Hao’s retreating figure. After a long moment, he lifted his head up and roared. Massive waves seethed on the sea, forming into huge vortex formed. It swept around Saint’s Island, and, to the shock and alarm of everyone, caused the entire island to speed away with incredible speed.

Wind swept about, and waves crashed. In the blink of an eye, not even a shadow of the island remained. The only thing remaining on the sea was Meng Hao, floating in mid-air.

Meanwhile, back in the Wang Clan in the Southern Domain….

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s true self lay in the coffin in his tomb underneath the mountains. He suddenly opened his eyes and then coughed up a mouthful of blood. He sat up, and as he did, his aged figure grew even older. He became more withered, and his aura was thrown into chaos and disorder.

His archaic, wrinkled face was pale as he grasped the side of the coffin. He looked up, and within his pupils appeared an intense, venomous hatred.

After a long moment passed, his eyes glittered.

“So, there is enmity between that Patriarch Reliance and Meng Hao. He attacked him twice… but was unable to destroy him because of the restrictive spells.

“The only reason he attacked me was because I accidentally offended him.

“In turn, that means that he won’t be helping Meng Hao a second time.

“Next time…. Next time I catch up with him, will be the day Meng Hao loses his Dao foundation!” The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch breathed heavily as a cold glow appeared in his eyes.

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# Chapter 648: Third Ring Stormwind Divide

The Milky Way Sea was split up into four rings, outside of which was the Outer Sea, and area mostly made up of small islands occupied by various Cultivator Clans. Among such Clans, the strongest Cultivators were of the Core Formation stage.

To them, the Fourth Ring was an incredibly dangerous place, populated not only by thieves and murderers, but also filled with ferocious sea beasts. In addition, there were powerful Sects and Clans.

Some of those Sects and Clans were led by Nascent Soul Cultivators, which made the whole place very dangerous. However, everyone knew that it was not impossible to scrape out some good fortune there, much like the Zhang Clan had.

Of course, to the Cultivators in the Fourth Ring, the Third Ring… was like a forbidden zone filled with both danger and opportunity!

Any who entered the Third Ring without being in the Nascent Soul stage did so at great risk to their lives. Even Nascent Soul Cultivators could die easily in the Third Ring if luck wasn’t with them. That was because the Third Ring was filled with inordinate amounts of sea beasts.

Despite that, there were still many Cultivators who attempted to get into the Third Ring. In fact, there were even some experts who made their home there.

What attracted Cultivators to such a place of profound danger was none other than the potential profits there!

The sea beasts there were known as Sea Demons, and their hearts were considered precious treasures. They were objects similar to Spirit Stones, and served a similar function. A single Demon heart was superior to a low-grade Spirit Stone, and in fact was more similar to a mid-grade Spirit Stone in terms of quality.

There were even some hearts from especially powerful Sea Demons that… could compare to high-grade Spirit Stones. Such things were valuable treasures that no Cultivator could afford to ignore.

After all, the Milky Way Sea had no Spirit Stone quarries, and thus, no way to even produce Spirit Stones. Considering how valuable Cultivators viewed Spirit Stones, it was no wonder that Demon hearts quickly became a trade item in the Milky Way Sea.

In fact, there were even some precious items that could only be acquired by purchasing them with Demon hearts!

In order to acquire Demon hearts, one had to enter the Third Ring and take some risks to earn a chance for good fortune. Of course, the powerful Sea Demons there had fierce and savage dispositions, and regarded all Cultivators with extreme hostility. The two were as incompatible as fire and water!

Even still, there was no way to prevent the thirst of Milky Way Sea Cultivators for Demon hearts!

Many, many tales were told in the Milky Way Sea about people who had struck it rich overnight in the Third Ring. Therefore, throughout the years, countless Cultivators had come to brave the almost certain death of the Third Ring.

Meng Hao was well aware of this, thanks to the information provided him in the jade slip from the Zhang Clan. Although it didn’t contain a wealth of details, there was enough of an introduction for Meng Hao to gain a basic understanding.

Currently, in a particular part of the Fourth Ring of the Milky Way Sea, a beam of light screamed through the air, causing the seawater below to seethe and churn.

A man could be seen, wearing a green robe, his long, gray hair whipping in the wind. He looked young, but also emanated a faint, archaic air.

His eyes were like stars, and his features were handsome. He looked somewhat like a scholar. This was of course, Meng Hao.

He was now a month away from Saint's Island. The entire time, he had sped along across the surface of the Milky Way Sea, during which time he had come to a much greater understanding of the entire area.

Currently, his eyes glittered brightly as he proceeded forward, thinking all the while.

"It might not have been the true self of the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch that died. It would be great if it was his true self, but if not… then I only have a temporary respite from danger. It won't be too long before I'm in another deadly crisis."

Meng Hao continued to think as he proceeded onward. The parrot flew nearby. Occasionally, it would dive down into the water and then shoot up again off in the distance. It was clearly having a lot of fun.

Meng Hao pulled out the jade slip given to him by Zhang Wenfang and closely examined it yet again.

"A never-ending tempest exists between the Fourth and Third Rings," he thought. "It's a windstorm that can shred anything alive. It's like a huge divide that prevents anyone from entering the Third Ring…." The map in the jade slip portrayed the sea, and not much else from the Fourth Ring. It was already relatively useless to Meng Hao.

His body flashed as he continued on into the deeper regions of the Milky Way Sea.

“Although I don’t have a map, the Milky Way Sea is arranged in ring-like areas. All I have to do is keep going deeper.” He increased his speed, and the parrot went faster to keep up.

Time continued to pass. Soon, it was two months later.

Meng Hao was shocked by how large the Fourth Ring was. He had been flying for three months, although he hadn’t gone nonstop. Occasionally, he would catch sight of islands populated by various Sects and Clans.

These were groups who had inhabited the Milky Way Sea for generations, and were quite knowledgeable about the area. Considering the level of Meng Hao’s Cultivation base, it was a simple matter for him to acquire maps from such groups. It didn’t take long before he had a thorough outline of the entire Fourth Ring area.

In addition, he also learned a bit about the Third Ring.

“There are three Saints in the Third Ring!

“The so-called Three Saints are three Spirit Severing Cultivators who lead three Sects. The Sea Divinity Sect, the Flying Immortal Sect, and the Sun Soul Society!

“Those three Sects determine who is allowed to enter the Third Ring. In addition, they built three Sea Cities in different locations surrounding the Third Ring, where people have to pass through on their way in and out. Anyone who wants to go in must pay a certain amount of Spirit Stones. Furthermore, anyone who leaves must also pay Spirit Stones, based on how long they stayed inside….” Meng Hao floated there in mid-air thinking about the information gleaned from the jade slip he held in his hand.

“Those three Sea Cities all possess a special method for bringing people in and out of the tempest safely.

“According to the rumors, there wasn’t always a tempest surrounding the Third Ring. Supposedly, the ancestors of the Three Saints joined forces to summon it. Then, successive generations of descendants were able to pass through it.

“The three Sects have vast resources, and tens of thousands of members. For unknown reasons, each Sect only produces a single Spirit Severing expert. However, because of their deep resources, even Dao Seeking Cultivators would think twice before tangling with them.”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he put the jade slip away. After some thought, he decided not to head toward one of the three Sea Cities. Instead, he would use the maps he had acquired to make his way directly through the hurricane.

“If the Wang Patriarch is truly not dead, then getting into the Third Ring via the Sea Cities would leave behind a trail that he could follow. The best method will be to force my way through on my own!

“That way, the three Sects won’t have any record of me. Even if the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch comes looking for me, with my altered aura, it will be difficult for him, at least temporarily.” Having made his decision, Meng Hao flared his aura and shot forward at top speed.

A few days later, a gray mass of storm winds appeared up ahead.

Rumbling sounds emanated out, and the closer he got, the more the storm winds resembled a huge wall that stretched up into the Heavens. It was ring-shaped, and seemed to have no end; it stretched off as far as the eye could see.

Fog pulsed in and out, along with howling, screaming sounds. It almost seemed as if devils and fiends lurked inside, waiting to stop any Cultivators who entered, and preventing any Sea Demons from charging out.

“According to the information from the jade slip, though, the Fourth Ring also has Sea Demons. That just goes to show that the storm winds might be powerful, but do contain weak spots.” He hovered outside of the storm winds, his hair flying around him, his clothes whipping violently.

Inside the storm winds, lightning crackled. As for the seawater in the area, it seemed to be divided. Although waves surged outside the tempest, they were incapable of entering inside. They could only crash on the outside, which caused the whole area to be filled with an almost permanent blanket of rain.

Meng Hao examined it for a moment, then looked down at the surface of the sea. His eyes glittered for a moment, and then he rotated his Cultivation base. Soon, the surface of the sea began to grow transparent to his eyes, allowing him to see into the world underneath.

What he saw was that the storm winds actually extended down into the sea. Although they didn’t appear to interfere with the flow of the water, when Meng Hao extended his Divine Sense deep down, he could vaguely sense that there were shocking things in the water that he didn’t dare to touch.

He pulled back his Divine Sense, then took a deep breath and closed his eyes. Currently, he fluctuated with only five portions of Cultivation base power inside of him. As time passed, he would slowly be able to fuse them together into one.

After adjusting his aura, Meng Hao’s eyes opened, and they glowed with a light that made it seem as if he was prepared to take Heaven and Earth by force. His aura exploded up, and he entered the Ninth Anima.

Meng Hao’s fleshly body hummed, and in the blink of an eye, reached the pinnacle of his power. A dreary expression of death covered his face, and the energy of his Cultivation base surged out with monstrous power. The air around him shattered and cracked, and any rain that fell near him was instantly pushed three hundred meters away.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. His body was like an arrow pulled tight against a bowstring. Suddenly, he shot forward; in the blink of an eye, he made contact with the storm winds. Without the slightest bit of hesitation, he entered in.

From a distance, the tempest looked like a vicious, primordial beast that opened its mouth and then swallowed up Meng Hao.

As soon as he entered the storm winds, he was battered by an intense force. Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever as he surged forward. Rumbling sounds could be heard as the fog up ahead seemed to be ripped apart. The sweeping wind also seemed to collapse.

They were completely incapable of doing anything to stop Meng Hao. His hair whipped around, but he didn't sustain even the slightest injury. Compared to the Underworld Wind he had experienced in the Demon Immortal Sect, this was almost nothing.

As he charged forward amidst the booming roars, the fog within the storm winds scattered and seethed. In a very short moment, Meng Hao had already traveled three thousand meters in.

He was surrounded by screaming winds and pitch blackness, interspersed with flashes of bright lightning. His face was expressionless as he proceeded forward relentlessly. His Spirit Severing fleshly body and terrifying Cultivation base made it possible for him to move further and further in.

Every time he breathed, countless bolts of lightning would shoot toward him. When they struck him, though, he would simply absorb them. If any outsider saw what was happening, they would surely be completely shocked

From ancient times to modern, few people had ever qualified to charge alone through these storm winds on the Milky Way Sea.

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# Chapter 649: Spirits Hide in the Divide

“There’s a trick to this Milky Way Sea Stormwind Divide,” Meng Hao murmured. The winds screamed around him, and lightning crackled. The winds could flay any Nascent Soul Cultivator alive, and the lightning could reduce them to powder.

However, all the wind could do to Meng Hao was blow against his face. It couldn’t shake him in the least. As for the lightning, it was like a tonic that helped his Cultivation base rotate a bit faster.

The parrot gripped his shoulder, also completely disdainful of the storm winds. Occasionally it would squawk and fly out into the winds with the meat jelly bell.

Anyone who saw this scene would certainly be astonished. In the entire Milky Way Sea, the only people who would dare to traverse the Stormwind Divide alone were Spirit Severing Cultivators.

And when it came to Spirit Severing Cultivators, there were only three in the Milky Way Sea.

Those were the Three Saints of the three Sects.

Other than those three, no one would dare to try to cross the Stormwind Divide.

The divide was actually huge. Meng Hao had proceeded forward with arms clasped behind his back for more than thirty thousand kilometers, and still had not emerged from the other side. As he continued onward, the winds raged, carrying whimpering sounds with them through the pitch black darkness. It sounded like countless demons and fiends were howling at him.

Lightning danced in sheets, sending rumbling booms out in all directions.

This was a place where Nascent Soul Cultivators fundamentally couldn’t exist. Their fleshly bodies would be destroyed, their Nascent Souls shattered. However, to Meng Hao, none of it counted for anything.

Two hours later, Meng Hao had proceeded along even further, although he wasn’t sure exactly how far. Within the darkness, the wind was like a sharp blade that forced him to slow down a bit. However, because of the strength of his fleshly body, he was still able to proceed onward.

He pushed through the storm winds for another day. They grew more and more astonishing, and lightning struck down everywhere. There were even flickering magical symbols that could be seen in the area. Meng Hao’s eyes flickered when he felt the pressure exuding out from the magical symbols.

At first they were scarce, but the following day, Meng Hao couldn’t help but frown and slow down. The magical symbols around him were no longer flickering, but rather, glowing brightly. Oftentimes, he would see ten or more magical symbols fused together to create spell formations.

At one point, he eyed one of the spell formation with flickering eyes. “This spell formation could cause Spirit Severing Cultivators to tremble!” He did nothing to avoid it, but rather, allowed the magical symbol spell formation to touch him.

A boom rattled out, and his body trembled a bit, but he didn’t retreat. A smile of confidence broke out on his face as the magical symbol spell formation collapsed into pieces right in front of him.

He brushed off his clothes and then continued onward. A few days later within the Stormwind Divide, Meng Hao’s expression flickered. He transformed into a green smoke and shot past a collection of magical symbols that had been shooting toward him.

Rumbling echoed out; the magical symbols seemed to be imbued with a will that could exterminate anything in Heaven and Earth. As they passed by, Meng Hao noticed that the fog in the area dissipated slightly because of the domineering air cast about by the ball of magical symbols.

As the ball made its way off into the distance, it encountered other scattered magical symbols and appeared to consume them, absorbing them into itself.

“That thing was made up of hundreds of magical symbols!” A serious look appeared in his eyes. The spell formation made from hundreds of magical symbols caused him to feel a clear sense of menace. He wasn’t even sure if he would be able to stand up to it were he hit.

“I really can’t afford to underestimate this Stormwind Divide,” he murmured. He sent his Divine Sense out as he proceeded forward.

Gradually, he saw more and more spell formations formed from hundreds of magical symbols. Eventually, they became commonplace, and soon, he caught sight of even bigger spell formations.

Those formations were formed from thousands of magical symbols, and no longer looked like simple spheres, but rather, were formed into the shape of magical items. He saw one that looked like a battle-ax sweeping about through the wind. Other spell formations made from hundreds of magical symbols avoided the battle-ax, and didn’t dare to get anywhere near it.

The battle-ax was dozens of meters tall, and glittered brightly. A bleak, killing will spread out from it, as if it constantly desired slaughter. Looking at it, it appeared completely beyond ordinary.

Meng Hao was able to sense a Spirit Severing aura on the battle-ax, which surprised him. A glow of interest could then be seen within his eyes.

“The magical symbols here are very intriguing. On an individual level, they aren’t very powerful, but in groups of ten, they emit powerful pressure. Hundreds together are something Spirit Severing Cultivators wouldn’t dare to touch, and when thousands coalesce….

“It emanates the aura of Spirit Severing, and is clearly like a Spirit Severing Treasure!” Meng Hao was moved. Based on what he knew of cultivation, after reaching Spirit Severing, in addition to acquiring enlightenment regarding the Domain, one could also create a Spirit Severing Treasure.

This was done by fusing the will of the First Severing blade into a magical item, using the Nascent Divinity to nourish it, and then transforming it into the Spirit Severing Treasure. Such a magical item was created with life force, making it incredibly powerful.

Furthermore, the weakness or strength of the magical item upon its creation would determine the weakness or strength of its later form.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and he did nothing to evade it. After measuring it up for a moment, he lifted his right hand up to perform an incantation. The image of a mountain appeared above his hand, after which he pointed forward. The mountain rumbled out, heading directly toward the battle-ax shaped collection of hundreds of magical symbols.

As the mountain neared, the battle-ax did nothing to avoid it. When the mountain slammed into it, a huge boom could be heard, and the mountain collapsed. There was absolutely no change whatsoever to the battle-ax. However, it suddenly stopped in place, almost as if it had a spirit that was now staring in shock.

It was as if it possessed its own will, and was currently thinking about how nothing in its memory had ever dared to attack it.

Meng Hao frowned. The battle-ax was far more powerful than he could have imagined. It was in this moment that the battle-ax finally reacted; it instantly shot toward Meng Hao, blade first.

Furthermore, a black mist rose up around it, within which two eyes were visible, staring dead at Meng Hao. A furious rumbling sound emanated out from within the battle-ax as it sped toward him.

“Interesting,” he said, smiling. His days spent traveling through the Stormwind Divide had actually been somewhat monotonous, so how could he shrink back from something intriguing like this?

Moments ago, he had just been testing it out. Now that the battle-ax was charging toward him, he suddenly lifted his right hand, causing the illusory image of a mountain thousands of meters tall to appear around him. He then waved both hands outward, causing the mountain to grow until it was 15,000 meters tall. Then, the battle-ax slammed into it.

A boom could be heard that resonated up into the sky. The fog in the area churned, and the sound echoed out into the far regions of the storm winds.

In fact, quite some distance away within the Stormwind Divide was a pitch-black ship that flew a pitch-black flag. As it proceeded through the storm winds, it emanated a bloody aura, as if the ship itself were filled with fresh blood.

Blood-colored magical symbols rose up from the blood, which, in combination with the sails of the ship, allowed it to proceed safely through the winds that would cause even Spirit Severing Cultivators to wince.

The wind could do nothing to the boat, and when the lightning neared it, it didn’t hit the ship, but actually avoided it. Even the balls of magical symbols seemed shaken when they saw the ship, and would sink into dormancy.

There were a dozen or so Cultivators on the ship, pale-faced and panting as they looked out at the terrifying scene outside. Most of them were Nascent Soul Cultivators, with only a couple being of the Core Formation stage.

In charge of the ship were three old men. They wore haughty expressions, and would occasionally glance over at the other passengers with looks of scorn.

“What’s all the fuss about?” said one of them. “We still have a long ways to go. There’s at least six months of travel before we reach our destination.”

“The Sun Soul Society ferry isn’t the fastest in the three Sects, but it’s the safest. Your Spirit Stones will not have been spent in vain.”

In response to the words of the old men, the passengers on the ship forced smiles onto their faces. They were already scared witless by everything they had seen on their journey. There were only two of their number who had calm expressions; it seemed they were already familiar with the frightening sights of the Stormwind Divide.

All of these people were Cultivators on their way to search for good fortune in the Third Ring. This ship was a special vessel to transport them there, for a certain amount of Spirit Stones of course.

In the Milky Way Sea, there was only one way to get into the Third Ring, and that was to go to one of the Sea Cities of the three Sects, pay the price, and then board one of these special ships.

Of course, Meng Hao's illegal method did not count as a valid method of entry.

The people on the ship had just squeezed out smiles onto their faces when, suddenly, muffled booms could be heard from off in the distance. Immediately, the storm winds in the area rippled, and the lightning twisted. Furthermore, many of the magical symbols twitched and then seemed to awaken from slumber.

The sight caused the faces of everyone on the ship to flicker as they wondered what had just happened.

As for the two people who previously had completely calm faces, they opened their eyes, and a strange light could be seen therein. They exchanged a glance, and then looked off into the distance.

The three old men from the Sun Soul Society who were piloting the boat also looked up. Strange looks could be seen in their eyes, but only for a moment. Then they began to laugh coldly, and expressions of derision could be seen clearly on their faces.

"Someone is trying to rely on their own power to illegally pass through."

“Whoever it is, they are paying for their unlawful travel with their life! Serves them right!”

“How could somebody possibly pass through the spell formation set up by the ancestors of the three Sects? That person is simply looking to die. Although, to cause such a reaction shows that his Cultivation base is definitely not weak.”

“Who cares? He most likely ran into a ten-symbol formation. If it was a hundred-symbol formation, then he’s definitely dead!”

When the other Cultivators heard the words of the three old men, they began to chuckle. Every year there were always Cultivators who tried to get through on their own power, in order to avoid paying the fee to take a ship. However, nobody ever succeeded; they always died inside.

The Cultivators on the ship had never imagined that they would encounter such a person on their own journey.

“It’s too bad we’re so far away,” said one of them. “Otherwise we could personally witness him dying. It must be a spectacular sight.”

“It’s already perilous enough trying to get into the Third Ring. To place oneself out in the Stormwind Divide is really stupid.”

“Now that I think about it, all those Spirit Stones I spent were really worth it.”

Everyone on board seemed to be a bit more relaxed now.

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# Chapter 650: How Happy You Are….

Cultivators were just people, so naturally, they also possessed the seven emotions and six pleasures, and tended to think of themselves as superior to others. Such a feeling of superiority would often turn into a type of happiness.

Oftentimes, that feeling of superiority really is… the source of happiness.

For example, the feeling that you are safe while someone else is not, can be happiness. Another example would be drinking a cup of water when you are thirsty, while someone else has nothing to drink except their own saliva. That can also be a kind of happiness.

The people in the boat were currently experiencing exactly that type of happiness.

Because of such happiness, they were not as nervous about the danger that surrounded them. Instead, they were laughing and chatting about the unlucky fool on the outside who had overestimated himself.

Of course, Meng Hao was the unlucky fool to whom they referred. Booming surrounded him as the mountain around him collapsed. At the same time, the gigantic battle-ax also started to collapse too.

The backlash rocked the battle-ax, causing it to be torn to pieces right in front of Meng Hao. However, the magical symbols that had formed it did not disperse; instead, they formed back together into a huge hand. Instantly, the hand grabbed toward Meng Hao, radiating intense ferocity and hatred.

Meng Hao’s expression was calm as he lifted his hand and pointed forward. Instantly, his finger turned the color of blood. This was the Blood Finger!

Next was a second finger, a third… and finally, five fingers stretched out, turning into the Blood Palm! It was fully thirty meters wide, seemingly illusory, but at the same time, incredibly realistic. Backed by the power of the Ninth Anima, it shot directly toward the ax-cum-hand.

A huge boom could be heard as both the Blood Palm and the huge hand formed of magical symbols both exploded into little pieces. Meng Hao didn’t hesitate for a moment; he instantly moved forward, performing an incantation gesture with his right hand and then waving his sleeve. A killing air immediately spread out. The glow of the Greenwood Tree could be seen, along with the extinction of the Violet Sea, raging flames, and the Frost Soil.

This was a five elements magical technique that instantly caused five characters to appear. They exuded vicious pressure down onto the dissipating magical symbols of the battle-ax.

A rumbling could be heard as the hundreds of magical symbols which had made up the battle-ax began to tremble. They seemed to be struggling to escape, but before they could, Meng Hao neared. His hand clenched into a fist, which then punched out, backed by the intense power of his fleshly body.

The air vibrated, and a gust from the surrounding storm winds bore down on him. It slashed into the magical symbols, instantly cause them to scatter and disperse.

This time, the magical symbols flashed, but did not re-form back together. Meng Hao gave a cold snort, then performed another incantation, simultaneously rotating his Cultivation base. Instantly, no less than a thousand tiny mountains appeared and then shot out.

This thousand mountains technique was formed by the Mountain Consuming Incantation, and as it descended, each mountain exerted intense pressure onto a magical symbol. Instantly, they were all suppressed. Meng Hao waved his hand, and the mountains crushed down onto them.

In the blink of an eye, the mountains began to consolidate together. Rumbling could be heard as a thousand-meter tall mountain appeared, sealed inside of which, shockingly, was a battle-ax.

It struggled, attempting to free itself, but Meng Hao waved his hand through the air and the mountain shot toward him. As it did, it grew smaller and smaller, until it could fit onto the palm of his hand.

The battle-ax inside was suppressed down, shrunken. It struggled more and more fiercely, until cracking and popping sounds could be heard. After the space of a few breaths of time, the battle-ax successfully destroyed the mountain, and then began to charge out from within.

Meng Hao’s face was calm as the index finger of his left hand pushed onto the mountain.

“Demon Sealing, Eighth Hex!”

His coolly spoken words caused a ‘hex’ character to appear and cover the mountain peak, sealing it. The battle-ax let out a mournful wail. It was completely incapable of extricating itself now.

Meng Hao felt a bit relieved, finally. He left behind a strand of Divine Sense, added a few more restrictive spells, and then finally smiled and put the mountain into his bag of holding.

“This will count as a treasure,” he thought, his eyes glittering brightly. Although it had seemed a simple matter to subjugate the item, it actually took all the power of his Cultivation base, as well as the support of his incredibly powerful fleshly body. Were it some other Spirit Severing Cultivator along the likes of Patriarch Huyan, they could by no means collect up the battle-ax in the relaxed manner which Meng Hao just had.

“The more spirit treasures I have like this the better,” he thought. “Who knows what kind of price I’ll be able to sell them for in the future.” Eyes shining brightly, he looked around until his gaze fell upon a group of one hundred magical symbols floating around off in the distance.

The collection of symbols seemed to possess a certain amount of sentience. Perhaps because he had been touched by the aura of the battle-ax, as soon as he looked at the one-hundred symbol spell formation, it instantly appeared to be shocked, and then attempted to flee.

“Since this entire area was planned out like a structure to block Sea Demons, it wouldn’t be very reasonable of me to take away all the spell formations. Besides, the one-hundred symbol formations can’t even form into anything specific, so it would be mostly useless to try to take them away.” Muttering to himself, Meng Hao turned and flew off into the distance, ignoring the one-hundred symbol spell formations.

Quite some distance away, the passengers on the pitch-black ship could hear the muffled booms off in the distance, and their smiles grew even happier.

“That guy must be dead already.”

“He overestimated his own ability, and didn’t even have enough Spirit Stones to pay to get on the ship. No wonder he wanted to risk it all in the Third Ring. What a pity he’s not very intelligent. Who does he think he is to try to charge through the Stormwind Divide? One of the Three Saints?”

As the others chatted and laughed, the two calm Cultivators closed their eyes and ignored the goings on. The three old men from the Sun Soul Society who were responsible for the boat looked more arrogant than ever. They had been running this boat for a full sixty-year cycle of time, and during that time had never heard of anyone successfully charging through the Stormwind Divide.

However, after a few days passed, the sense of happiness felt by everyone had lessened a bit. But then, more of the magical symbols in the area, as well as the lightning and even the gusts of wind, seemed to be under pressure, even nervous. More explosions could be heard from off in the distance.

The sounds caused the group to grow even more excited. This time, they didn’t need any explanation from the three old men. Everyone knew exactly what the sounds were, even if they couldn’t see the source. Soon, the sound of their conversation could be heard.

“Hahaha! Don’t tell me another person is trying to charge through?”

“Another person who doesn’t know their own limits? I never imagined that this trip to the Third Ring would be so fascinating.”

“What a pity. I truly wish I could watch with my own eyes.”

Everyone was excited, but the three old men were actually somewhat shocked. Just about every time they piloted the ship, they would hear explosions like this. However, it was very rare to hear such a series of explosions twice, like they had this time.

The three old men exchanged smiles, but didn’t think too much about it, and focused instead on piloting the ship forward.

The sounds didn’t last for very long, only as long as it takes an incense stick to burn. Then they faded away, and another round of talking and chuckling began on the ship.

However, about four days later, the sounds could be heard once again. The passengers on the ship were astonished.

“What’s going on? How could there possibly be three people all trying to cross the Stormwind Divide?”

“Something doesn’t seem right….”

“Everyone; do you think… that perhaps the person from the very beginning didn’t actually die?” These final words were spoken by the person with the weakest Cultivation base of the whole group, the young Core Formation Cultivator.

As soon as he spoke the words, everyone went quiet. The two Cultivators who had sat there calmly the entire time suddenly opened their eyes, seemingly astonished by the implication of the young man’s theory.

The three men in charge of the ship also looked shocked, but quickly recovered.

“No unfounded ravings allowed onboard!” growled one of them.

“This is the Stormwind Divide!” said another. “Other than the Three Saints of the Milky Way Sea, nobody can cross it!”

“Obviously what we’re hearing is an entire Sect trying to cross. It’s not the first time something like that has happened.” The rest of the passengers weren’t quite sure whether or not to believe the words of the old men. In any case, the happiness of their mood had clearly lessened by quite a bit.

Meanwhile, Meng Hao flew quickly through the storm wind gusts. Currently, he faced a 150 meter long whip. The whip was about three meters wide, and completely savage in appearance. However, it was surrounded by an enormous mountain, which was gradually suppressing it.

After enough time passed for half an incense stick to burn, it made an unyielding howl. Then the mountain descended, completely sealing it. It shrank down into Meng Hao’s hand, after which he put it into his bag of holding.

“Number four!” he said, eyes shining brightly. With a smile, he turned and proceeded to speed along his way.

Two more months passed by. During that time, the group on the ship heard one set of explosions after another. Soon, they had heard the sounds seven times. By now, their mood had changed from one of curiosity to shock.

By the time the thirteenth set of explosions rang out, they were filled with dread. Even the three old men were panting.

After the two months passed, and the twentieth set of explosions reached their ears. Everyone on the boat was now completely and utterly dumbfounded. That was especially so after they realized… that the sounds of the explosions were getting closer!

During the two months, Meng Hao ran into more magical symbols in the shape of treasures. Whenever he did, he would instantly attack and exert full power to subdue them.

By this point, he was in the very depths of the Stormwind Divide, and was getting much closer to the pitch-black ship.

As he got deeper in, his speed was continually reduced. The intensity of the wind was now hurting him, and was even causing his body to start to break apart.

Right now, he had to continuously disseminate power from his Cultivation base in order to hang on.

As for the lightning, it was now possible to see illusory figures within it that apparently possessed sentience. Meng Hao was shocked.

At one point, he suddenly caught sight of a bright white light in the otherwise pitch blackness. It seemed to be consuming lighting, which caused Meng Hao to take a deep breath and then change his course.

What he saw was a toad, gobbling up lightning. This was the first time he had seen magical symbols shaped into the form of a beast. The toad was at least three hundred meters long, and in Meng Hao’s estimation, was formed from around ten thousand magical symbols.

“I wonder how far away I am from the edge of this place….” he thought, avoiding the toad. The toad noticed him, but completely ignored him as it continued to consume lightning.

Meng Hao looked away, and was just about to speed off into the distance when suddenly he made a slight “eee?” sound. He turned his head and sent Divine Sense out. Sure enough, he could sense a ship, speeding along through the air.

“Perfect. I can jump onto this ship and rest a bit while I go the rest of the way.” His eyes glittering, he proceeded on toward it.

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# Chapter 651: My Dao Is Nigh!

That ship, of course, was the Sun Soul Society ship who had listened to the ruckus caused by Meng Hao this entire time. Whether it was the three old men, the two calm youths, or the rest of the passengers, all of them were bewildered and filled with dread. Everyone wanted the ship to emerge from within the Stormwind Divide as soon as possible.

During the past two months, they had heard the sounds of explosions more than twenty times. By now, they had all begun to speculate that it wasn’t a group of people trying to pass through the Stormwind Divide, but rather, a single individual!

That person must be incredibly powerful, fearsome to the extreme in order to be able to brave the spell formation and not be destroyed.

Most important of all was that the ship happened to have a Feng Shui compass that the three old men had pooled their power together to use a month previous.

The Feng Shui compass was something rarely used on the ship. It had only one function; it could send out invisible waves into the Stormwind Divide, which would then cause a map of the area to appear on the surface of the compass. The map would reveal the location of any powerful spirit creatures formed of magical symbols.

A month ago, they had used that function of the map to reveal the spirits, which were all represented in by white dots of light. The entire area around them was densely covered by such white dots. However, there in the middle of all of them… was a red dot!

That red dot caused everyone to be filled with horrified astonishment.

A red dot represented an outside Cultivator!

Furthermore, during the past month, the white dots in the area had been significantly reduced. It seemed to indicate that the magical symbol spirits were intentionally avoiding the area. In addition, the red dot that represented the outside Cultivator only continued to grow brighter and more resplendent, like fresh blood. Everyone looked on with wide eyes, panting.

That was even more the case when they realized… that the red dot was actually moving at high speed toward the yellow dot on the map. That yellow dot… represented the ship they were on! Panicked cries of alarm could be heard.

"He's coming!!"

"The Cultivator who's crossing the Stormwind Divide, he's… heading right toward us!" The more than ten Cultivators aboard the ship were all pale-faced. Some of them even rose to their feet in terror, their faces filled with fear and awe of the unknown.

The three old men in charge of the boat exchanged pale-faced glances. They could see the bitterness and complex emotions in each other's eyes. The three of them could never have imagined that they would ever witness such a shocking scene.

They didn't know who this outsider was, but the three of them did know with complete certainty that anyone who could survive in the depths of the Stormwind Divide would most definitely be of the Spirit Severing stage!

"Spirit Severing eccentrics have strange dispositions. If he kills all of us, the Sect wouldn't do anything. It wouldn't risk offending a Spirit Severing expert just for the likes of us three."

"Dammit! Why is this happening? If he wants to cross, fine, but why does he have to come after us…?"

They sat there, perturbed. It was at this point that everyone watched in astonishment as a huge gust of wind from the Stormwind Divide suddenly blasted against the right side of the boat, causing the bloody glow that emanated up from the ship to dim, as if it were being completely covered up.

Not a single sound could be heard onboard. Everyone sat there apprehensively, looking out in the direction of the gust of wind. The fog outside roiled, and a stifling pressure began to bear down on them.

Soon, a green figure could be seen, striding forward through the air. His salt and pepper hair floated about him as he laid eyes on the ship. It was, of course, Meng Hao.

Even as he caught sight of them, everyone on the ship looked at him.

As soon as the three old men saw him, they began to tremble. “Third generation disciples of the Sun Soul Society offer greetings to you, senior,” they said in unison. The intense pressure radiating from Meng Hao caused them all to breath raggedly. They even felt the Nascent Souls inside of them quivering under the pressure.

Intense terror began to build up inside of them, especially when Meng Hao looked directly at them. His gaze was like a sharp blade. It was almost like he could read their hearts and minds with a single glance. It was as if they were completely transparent in front of him. Without any hesitation, the three old men quickly clasped hands and bowed deeply

At the same time, the more than ten passengers on the ship also clasped hands and bowed to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s face was expressionless as he strode forward toward the ship. As he neared, a red shield suddenly sprang up, a defensive mechanism of the ship.

When the shield sprang up, the three old men felt their hearts starting to pound, and their faces completely fell. Inwardly, they felt intense regret, and were sure that a misunderstanding was about to occur. Obviously, the shield wouldn’t be able to do anything to hinder an expert who could survive out in the Stormwind Divide. At the most, it might slow him down for a moment, but in the end, the unlucky ones in the whole matter would be themselves.

They were about to try to lower the shield, but before they could, Meng Hao pushed directly into it. Zapping sounds could be heard, but his face was the same as usual as he walked through it.

Most of the others on the ship actually couldn't see what was happening, but the three old men couldn't help but gasp with shock. They had never imagined that their shield would be so ineffective in blocking Meng Hao.

What was happening completely exceeded their imaginations; they instantly dropped to their knees and kowtowed.

There were others who noticed the strangeness of the goings on. The two calm youths had been to the Third Ring before, on more than one occasion. Therefore, they understood quite a bit more about the ship than the others. Currently, their faces flickered, and their hearts began to pound.

Meng Hao said nothing. He boarded the ship, looked around, and then sat down cross-legged on the prow.

He didn't speak at first, and the rest of the people on the ship were as silent as cicadas during winter. The three old men didn't dare to rise to their feet. The entire ship was quiet.

After a bit of time passed, Meng Hao casually said, "Do you happen to have a map of the Third Ring?"

Without the slightest hesitation, the three old men produced jade slips from their bags of holding and respectfully offered them to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao accepted, glanced at the jade slips, and then eyed the Feng Shui compass off to the side. His eyes glittered, and he nodded.

"You're going to the Third Ring?" he asked.

"Senior," replied one of the three old men, "we are currently under orders to pilot this ship and deliver these passengers to the Seahold in the Third

Ring.”

“Would it be convenient for you to take me along?” asked Meng Hao coolly.

“Senior, you are most welcome aboard our ship. Many thanks for staying to watch out for us. We members of the junior generation can’t thank you enough.” The three old men were attempting to be as respectful as possible, and in their fear of offending Meng Hao, spoke in a borderline fawning tone.

“Well, let’s get moving,” said Meng Hao, closing his eyes.

The three old men immediately voiced their agreement, then carefully rose to their feet. Inwardly breathing sighs of relief, they sent the ship forward at the highest speed possible. As they proceeded onward, no one dared to speak. The ship was completely quiet.

The ship didn’t move as quickly as Meng Hao could move, but the advantage was the ease with which he could proceed. He sat there cross-legged, meditating for a few days. Then, he suddenly opened his eyes and looked over at the Feng Shui compass. There, he could clearly see that a thousand-symbol spirit was floating not too far off in the distance.

After enough time passed for half an incense stick to burn, the thousand-symbol spirit was close enough to see with the naked eye. It looked like an iron chain floating there in the storm winds. It completely ignored the ship, although it occasionally attempted to consume lightning as it drifted about.

Meng Hao suddenly stood up.

“Stop the ship. Wait for me!” With that, he strode out. The three old men and the other passengers were shocked. They watched on as Meng Hao left the ship. Immediately, the iron chain appeared to sense him. It whipped around in his direction, and an intensely bleak killing will rose up to the Heavens. Suddenly, the lightning in the area turned red and shot whistling through the air toward Meng Hao.

However, before the iron chain could even get near him, Meng Hao performed an incantation gesture. Instantly, the characters for metal, wood, water, fire, and earth appeared. As they surrounded the iron chain, Meng Hao stepped forward and punched.

The iron chain collapsed, sending a thousand magical symbols spreading out in all directions. He then performed another incantation gesture, and the Mountain Consuming Incantation caused a thousand mountains to appear. They covered the magical symbols, then merged together to form a huge mountain peak. Next, the mountain peak shrank down into Meng Hao’s palm, where he sealed it.

After putting it into his bag of holding, he spun around and returned to the ship.

The entire spectacle only took ten breaths of time. Meng Hao’s actions were as natural and unforced as floating clouds and flowing water. Everything was completely efficient, as if he was completely used to doing such things. Everyone who watched on was thoroughly shaken.

The people on the boat stared blankly, and the two Cultivators who had been to the Third Ring before were breathing heavily. They were well aware of how mighty a thousand-symbol spirit was, which caused their fear of Meng Hao reach a new peak.

By now, they were absolutely certain the reason they had heard explosions more than twenty times in the past. Back then, they could never have imagined that it was a terrifying Cultivator who could subdue and capture magical symbol spirits.

Most shocked of all were the three old men. They were disciples of the Sun Soul Society, and were far more knowledgeable about the Stormwind Divide than the others.

Although others were unaware that the magical symbol spirits could be subdued, they were well aware of the fact. Every few hundred years, powerful experts from the three Sects would enter the spell formation under the leadership of a Patriarch, with the sole purpose of collecting magical symbol spirits. Such spirits were useful to the Patriarchs.

Although no one knew exactly how the Patriarchs used them, it was known that the magical symbol spirits were the essence of the spell formation. That was especially true of the thousand-symbol spirits, which were comparable to Spirit Severing Cultivators. They were unpredictable and virtually indestructible; only the Three Saints were capable of subduing them.

“S-s-senior… sir… how many thousand-symbol spirits have you acquired during your journey?” asked one of the three old men, his face pale, his voice quavering.

“More than twenty,” replied Meng Hao from his position seated cross-legged on the prow. He glanced at the old man.

“More than twenty!!” The old man’s face completely fell, and he began to pant. He suddenly turned to look at the other two old men and then roared, “Get the ship moving again! Top speed!!”

They actually didn’t need any reminders. Having heard what Meng Hao said, they trembled, as if they had just thought of something even more terrifying than Meng Hao. They rotated their Cultivation bases at top speed to control the boat and push it forward as fast as it could.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he looked at the old man who had just spoken.

The man looked back with a wry smile, and a face full of anxiety.

“Senior, perhaps you are unaware that in a hundred year period, no more than five of the thousand-symbol spirits can be collected. That number can’t be exceeded, or else…. It will cause the yellow springs Underworld Ship to appear….

“The yellow springs emerge, the Underworld Ship appears, Dao Seeking forbidden zone!”

As soon as the old man spoke the words, the storm winds around them suddenly seemed to stop moving. The lightning stopped in mid-air, and the fog came to a standstill!

It seemed almost as if time, as if the very natural laws of the Heaven and Earth, had suddenly become completely motionless.

At the same time, an archaic voice could be heard. It was filled with an air of time; it sounded as if a veil of rot had been lifted. The hoarse voice echoed out from off in the distance.

“Long ago, you chose to continue onward to the end, until there was nothing of you left….

“Long ago, I chose to continue onward to the end, until only I was left….

“Who am I? Who are you…? Unfathomable bleached bones. The beginnings of eras. My Dao… is nigh.”

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# Chapter 652: Underworld Ship

As the voice echoed out, all of the hair on Meng Hao’s body stood on end. An indescribable feeling washed through him, and it felt as if some ancient, icy hand were gently caressing his neck.

An aura of putrefaction filled the area. As for the ship he was on… everything suddenly seemed to slow down. In one fleeting moment, it seemed as if thousands of years had passed.

Everyone on the ship went pale white and began to shiver. Unprecedented expressions of fear could be seen on their faces. Even those who didn’t know of the yellow springs Underworld Ship could tell from the current situation that they were in a situation of critical danger!

Terror filled the hearts of the three old men. They employed all of the power of their Cultivation base, and even consumed medicinal pills, to push the boat forward with all the speed possible.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and rotated his Cultivation base to dispel the intense coldness. One of the three old men who sat nearby yelled out in a hoarse voice: “Don’t look back! All of you, listen to me. Under no circumstances look back!

“One must not gaze upon the path to the yellow springs! If you turn your head, you’re done for!”

There were a few people on the ship who had been contemplating turning to look back. However, after hearing the old man’s words, they sat there trembling, not daring to turn their heads even a little bit.

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed. Behind him, he could hear sobbing sounds rising and falling. It sounded like the weeping of a crowd of countless people.

Gradually, everything around grew even colder. In the dim light, it was possible to make out strands of white fog that looked like hair, swirling about in the air.

“The end of my Dao… is nigh….” said the voice, filled with an aura of decay. It seemed to be getting closer.

A cold gleam gradually appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes as he stood there on the prow. Although he didn’t turn his head back, the energy in his body gradually grew more and more focused.

The ship picked up speed, but everything around it was motionless. Even if it moved much faster, it would still be incapable of escaping the white strands that filled the area and were continuing to grow more numerous.

It almost seemed as if the ship itself were mired within a painting, a painting in which everything was motionless. It didn’t matter if the three old men went all out with power, they still weren’t moving fast enough.

The aura of rot grew closer, as if the Underworld Ship that the old men had talked about was getting closer and closer.

Even though their own ship wasn’t moving, the passage of time on board seemed to be speeding up. Everyone trembled, as they sensed signs that their life force was beginning to drain away.

Despair welled up in the hearts of the three old men.

Meng Hao silently lifted up his right foot and then stamped it down softly onto the deck. Instantly, his Cultivation base rumbled, and power poured into the ship. Much of the deck directly shattered, but at the same time, the ship surged forward with incredible speed.

The speed was such that it seemed they would break free from the world of motionless within which they were stuck. The three old men gasped, and hope appeared in their faces as they assisted with all the power they could muster. It finally seemed that the ship would break free from the painting. Movement in their surroundings even became visible.

Eventually, they reached a speed that was capable of combating against whatever law it was in the area that caused everything to remain motionless. The air began to move, and the stillness seemed to be on the verge of shattering. It was at this point, when everything seemed to be just about to begin moving again, when Meng Hao heard a sigh in his ear.

Then he heard the voice of a man, a voice filled with boundless love. “Hao’er… have you been safe and sound all these years…? Back then, your mother didn’t agree, but as your father, I… I insisted that it must be this way. Don’t blame your mother….”

Meng Hao trembled. He recognized the voice. Bits and pieces of it actually remained in his memories. Even after so many years had passed, he recognized that this was the voice of his father!

He stood there silently. He didn’t look back as the ship sped forward. The motionlessness in the area was rapidly giving way to movement. The white strands that floated in the air were slowly moving backward, freeing the ship.

Just then, though, Meng Hao heard another voice.

“Hao’er… do you… still remember me? I’m your mother…. Look back, let me see your face. It’s been so many years…. We’ve missed you.”

Meng Hao’s entire body trembled, and his head moved slightly. A complex expression appeared in his eyes as he stood there breathing. He didn’t look back; instead, he focused all his energy on controlling the boat. A rumbling sound could be heard as the front of the boat finally pierced out of the painting of stillness.

Meng Hao could see the border of the still region just up ahead; they were almost out of the painting.

“Deep in your heart, is obsession.” This voice was not the voice of his parents that existed in his memory. It was the ancient, decaying voice.

The voice seemed confused, as if it it, too, were filled with infinite obsession.

“You are a living being that I have encountered on the path to the yellow springs. I can… help you to fulfill your obsession. Look back, and you will be able to see what your parents look like.”

Meng Hao’s Cultivation base suddenly stopped moving. He poured no more power into the ship, but instead stood there on the prow. Directly in front of him was the edge of the painting of motionlessness; after passing beyond that border, they would be free.

Meng Hao well knew that if he looked back, something untoward would likely happen. However, the words spoken to him just now had left him completely shaken.

No one else could hear the words spoken into his ear just now, not even the three old men. Everyone just sat there, trembling and in a daze. Meng Hao was the only lucid one among them all.

In his silence, Meng Hao suddenly smiled. It was an unrestrained smile, a smile filled with a will of purification.

He suddenly murmured, “What’s the harm in turning my head? In my life of cultivation, I cultivate my heart. My path is one of understanding and truth.

“If I don’t look back, how could I claim to cultivate my heart?” His eyes filled with a bright light as he casually turned to look behind him.

The first thing that caught his attention were the countless white strands that floated in the air, twisting and twining around the ship. The strands originated from an enormous battleship!

The ship was fully three thousand meters long, and radiated an archaic air, as if it had existed for countless ages. It was dilapidated in a way that suggested it had experienced the baptism of war.

At the prow of the battleship, a figure could be seen. It was an old man wearing a pitch-black suit of armor. It was impossible to see his features clearly, but his body looked like it had been rotting inside the armor for innumerable years. 1

As for the white strands, they were actually the man’s hair!

As soon as Meng Hao laid eyes on him, the old man seemed to take notice. His head lifted up, and he looked at Meng Hao.

As soon as their gazes met, Meng Hao’s mind filled with rumbling. Next, a vision appeared to him. He saw a coffin, its surface covered with carvings of nine butterflies.

The coffin rested on an ancient battlefield. The surroundings were devoid of any colors except for black and white.

The vision lasted for only a few breaths of time. Then it dissipated. Meng Hao panted as he regained consciousness.

“His… Dao seed….” said the armored figure softly, his voice hoarse as it echoed about. “In all the years, of all the living things I have encountered, I have seen countless Dao seeds…. You, however, are different than them.

“Go.” The old man sat there cross-legged in his armor. It looked like he would never, ever stand up. When he spoke, his voice seemed to be filled with reminiscence. Slowly, his hair pulled away from the ship Meng Hao was on. At the same time, the archaic, three thousand meter battleship slowly began to back away. At the same time, it started to fade, as if it were about to vanish into thin air.

The stillness in the area also began to slowly disappear.

As the ship began to vanish, Meng Hao suddenly opened his mouth to speak. “Senior, you still haven’t fulfilled your promise!” Immediately, the stillness returned. The old man on the battleship gave Meng Hao a profound gaze.

That gaze seemed to contain the transformations of the entire world. It contained the turnings of time as it poured into Meng Hao’s eyes. Instantly, a roaring sound filled his mind.

This time in his vision, he saw Mount Daqing!

Outside of Mount Daqing was a whistling violet wind. Fog roiled about, covering the entire mountain, and eventually, Yunjie County.

Within the city, the lamps inside the houses were instantly extinguished, except for one house…. Inside that house, the lights danced, illuminating a middle-aged man who stood next to the window. It was impossible to tell what he was thinking.

The sounds of weeping could be heard within the bedroom. Through the cracks in the door, the silhouette of a woman could be seen. She held a boy in her arms, and tears streamed down her face.

The boy had intelligent eyes, but right now, they were filled with confusion and puzzlement.

The violet wind blew the violet fog until it completely covered Yunjie County. Far up above in the black night sky, a violet sun suddenly became visible.

The violet sun caused an indescribable pressure to suddenly weigh down on Yunjie County.

It was in that moment that the man pushed open the front door and walked out into the violet fog. The woman wiped the tears from her eyes and looked back at the boy for a moment. Then she turned and walked away.

In that moment, Meng Hao was able to clearly see her face.

She was beautiful, gentle, and her tears seemed to be filled with infinite reluctance to part. However, she left the boy behind in the room, frightened, confused and helpless.

“Dad…. Mom….” cried the boy. He seemed to be growing more frightened. He ran out into the fog.

“Dad…. Mom…. Where are you? I’m scared….” The boy’s voice was young and tender, and quavered when he spoke. He seemed terrified. The wind around him was cold, and the fog was all-encompassing. However, it couldn’t do anything to suppress the boy’s cries, which echoed out into the fog.

His sobbing grew more and more shrill as he ran. He suddenly tripped and fell, scraping his knees and tearing his garment. His hair was in disarray, and tears streamed down his face to fall onto the ground. All he wanted was his dad and mom, but what he didn’t notice was that behind him, a black, spectral hand stretched out toward his head from within the fog.

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# Chapter 653: Demons Stir in the Third Ring

Meng Hao watched the scene playing out with the boy, who was obviously himself. And yet, as he searched through his mind, no memory such as this existed. He remembered that night, and he remembered the violet-colored wind, as well what seemed to be countless bizarre voices.

That was the night his dad and mom went missing. He remembered waking up fuzzily, not quite able to remember what had happened. The only thing he remembered… was that his garment had been torn.

When he saw what was happening in the vision, it felt like lightning was striking through his mind.

Then he saw the spectral hand reaching out toward the boy. In that moment, a man appeared behind the boy. He gave a cold snort as he gripped the spectral hand between his fingers and then snapped it off.

The spectral hand disintegrated into powder, and a bloodcurdling scream could be heard. A ghostly figure flew off into the violet fog.

The boy was alarmed, but then he turned his head, and a look of joy appeared on his face. Tears rolling down his cheeks, he rushed into the arms of the man.

“Dad… where did you go? I couldn’t find you. I…”

The man did not pursue the ghostly figure. He knelt in front of the boy, his face filled with both love and doubt. Gazing at the boy, he reached out and tousled his hair.

He was silent for a long moment before he spoke out in a soft voice, “Don’t cry, Hao’er. Mom and dad have to go away for a while. We’ll all see each other again one day.”

As soon as he heard the words, the boy reached out and grabbed the man’s robe tightly. “Where are you going? I don’t want you to go….”

The man didn’t say anything. He patted the boy’s head, and then, after another long moment passed, said, “The Eastern Lands.”

His expression was filled with intense love, and also pain. Then he reached out to touch the boy. His hand flickered with a glowing light, and the boy’s eyes closed and he fell asleep.

The man held the boy in his arms as he turned and walked back into the house. He gently placed the boy down onto the bed, then stood there watching him. Time passed, and he finally sighed.

Meng Hao was able to see the man’s profile, outlined by the lamplight. He was handsome and dignified, and looked both familiar and yet also strange. Looking at him caused Meng Hao’s heart to begin to pound.

After another long moment, the man leaned down and kissed the boy on the top of the head. When he raised back up, his expression was one of both pain and farewell. He left the house, and walked off into the violet wind and fog. He left Yunjie County, left Mount Daqing, and disappeared.

As the vision ended, a tremor ran through Meng Hao’s body and he regained clarity. He stood on the deck of the ship. The only thing around them was storm winds. There were no white strands of hair, no Underworld Ship. There was only the Stormwind Divide.

Everyone else on the boat was asleep.

The surroundings were quiet. Meng Hao looked around, then sat down cross-legged and stared off into the distance, somewhat in a daze.

After a bit of time, the three old men awoke. Then, one by one, so did the others. They looked at Meng Hao with a mixture of dread and gratefulness. Meng Hao didn’t speak, so of course, neither did they dare to say a single word.

It was in this manner that the ship continued on its voyage for several more months. Eventually, amidst the silence, it neared the end of the Stormwind Divide.

The entire time, Meng Hao never rose to his feet. When they encountered symbol spirits, he didn’t even look at them. He only stared out in front of the ship; no one had any idea what he was thinking.

After the months passed, and the boat reached the end of the Stormwind Divide, a dock could be seen through the darkness, their final destination.

Meng Hao stood up and sent his Divine Sense to spread over the entire ship, and the people on it. This was a minor magical technique that he had picked up in the Demon Immortal Pagoda, a Daoist magic that would erase any trace of him from the minds of these people. After that, he flew out to disappear into the storm winds.

About ten breaths of time after Meng Hao vanished, everyone on the ship regained their senses. They looked a bit confused, but after a moment, the ship reached the dock. At that point, they seemed to break through some invisible barrier. The previous blackness gave way to a sudden burst of intense light.

It was sunlight shining down onto the sea and the waves. The group on the boat inhaled the salt air, and they knew… that they were now in the Third Ring!

Even as exclamations of joy rang out from the ship, Meng Hao emerged alone from within the Stormwind Divide. He stood on the surface of the sea, looking up at the sun.

“Whether that vision was real or not, the Eastern Lands… are definitely where I need to go!

“After I resolve this crisis with the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, then I’ll definitely be heading to the Eastern Lands!

“I’ll visit the Great Tang, I’ll visit Chang’an, and I’ll fulfill my childhood dream….” He looked off toward the east, wishing that his Cultivation base was sufficient to be able to see the Eastern Lands right now, no matter how far away it was.

“Maybe I can find some clues about dad and mom, and what happened that year. What was the violet wind and violet fog, and what did it have to do with me…?

“And also…” He lowered his head and looked down at the back of his hand. Every time he had a Cultivation base breakthrough into a new stage, there was the symbol that appeared there.

That mark had been with him for a long time, and if he couldn’t come to understand what it meant, he would feel as if he had wasted all his years of cultivation.

“It’s not like I didn’t notice how strange Fang Yu was acting all those years ago…. Am I just unwilling to accept the truth?” In his thoughtfulness, a rare bit of weakness could be seen in his eyes. Finally, he sighed and pushed all the thoughts down into the bottom of his heart.

He suddenly felt very lonely. It was the type of loneliness where you look around and wonder where your home is. He had practiced cultivation for hundreds of years, but right now, had no friends to keep him company.

Such thinking caused the weakness in his eyes to grow a bit stronger.

“Is this cultivation? A path… that a person must stick to alone?” He closed his eyes for a long moment. When he opened them, no weakness was visible. Instead, there was the unswerving determination that usually resided therein.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and looked around, a sharp gleam in his eyes.

Everything around looked almost the same as the Fourth Ring. However, Meng Hao could sense that much more Demonic Qi flowed through the Third Ring.

No one else would be able to detect it, but as a Demon Sealer, Meng Hao could naturally sense it.

What Meng Hao didn’t know was that in this very moment, countless eyes suddenly opened on the seafloor of the Third Ring. All of them stared up in his direction.

In the deepest part of the sea, the undercurrents swirled, and it seemed as if a tempest were forming. Countless red eyes emanated intense desire, as if they had finally seen hope for the first time.

Up above on the surface of the waters, Meng Hao muttered to himself for a moment and then sped off. After flying for the time it takes an incense stick to burn, he suddenly frowned. The sea up ahead of him suddenly exploded up as a giant tentacle shot out from the water toward him.

It moved with such incredible speed that it looked like nothing more than a shadow. It almost looked like a flaming whip as it ripped through the air.

It was an attack that contained power similar to the Nascent Soul stage. Meng Hao gave a cold snort, then waved his hand toward the incoming tentacle and made a grasping motion. The tentacle stopped in mid-air just a few feet in front of him, almost as if it had been seized by some enormous, invisible hand.

The tentacle was completely black, and covered with countless suction disks. It squirmed and wriggled, seemingly struggling to free itself. It was sickening to look at, and if you followed it to its source, you could see what appeared to be an enormous creature in the churning waters below.

At the same time, whooshing sounds could be heard as more than ten additional tentacles burst out from the water toward Meng Hao. He watched on with a cold gleam in his eyes, then clutched out with his right hand and pulled.

Boom!

The sea exploded under the incredible power of Meng Hao’s hand as an enormous, three hundred meter long cuttlefish was wrenched up out of the waters to hover in mid-air.

Meng Hao relaxed his hand, and then took a step forward. He instantly disappeared, only to reappear directly in front of the cuttlefish. His right hand formed into a fist which he then struck out. A massive boom could be heard as the cuttlefish directly exploded into countless pieces that then rained down onto the surface of the sea.

Within the shredded meat and flesh was a bluish crystalline object about the size of a finger. As soon as Meng Hao saw it, he grabbed it. When it touched his palm, it let off a gentle glow, along with the ripples of spiritual power.

“This looks like a mid-grade Spirit Stone. It must be a Demon heart.” After examining it for a while, he put it away into his bag of holding, then began to make his way off. However, it was then that he frowned. He sent his Divine Sense out, and immediately, his face sank.

Within the range of his Divine Sense, he could sense more than twenty different kinds of Sea Demons in the area. All of them were speeding along through the sea in his direction.

Each one emitted violent auras, as well as intense avarice. They seemed to view themselves as hunters and him as the prey.

“Is this why the Third Ring is so dangerous?” he thought, his brow furrowed. With that, he waved his hand toward the sea down below. Instantly, the surface of the sea rumbled and sank down, forming into what looked like a crater, roughly three hundred meters wide. With another wave of his hand, Meng Hao caused the crater to begin to rotate.

The rotation caused a huge roaring sound to lift up into the sky. It almost looked like a black hole was forming in the water. Great waves surged about, revealing seven or eight vicious Sea Demons.

These Sea Demons didn’t have very high Cultivation bases; all were roughly at the early Nascent Soul stage, and a few even were in the Core Formation stage. They looked at Meng Hao with red eyes and vicious greed. It seemed that they couldn’t wait to consume Meng Hao, as if even taking a single bite of him would give them some type of enlightenment.

Their gazes caused Meng Hao to be filled with a sensation of disgust. He almost felt as if he were being looked at by the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch.

Coldness flickered in his eyes, and he made a cold snort as the fingers of his right hand slowly clenched into a fist.

At the same time, the vortex in the sea slowly constricted, tightening down and closing. The seawater instantly turned red with blood, and miserable howls could be heard. When Meng Hao opened his fist, the waters spread back out and the vortex resumed spinning.

A moment later, Meng Hao waved his sleeve, causing more than twenty Demon hearts to fly up from the reddened water. He put them into his bag of holding, then transformed into a beam of light that shot off into the distance.

The only thing that was left behind was the blood, which slowly dissolved into the seawater. Everything was calm and peaceful.

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# Chapter 654: Lily….

The Third Ring was very large and contained a great number of Cultivators. Most organized into groups of three or perhaps five to go hunting Sea Demons in various regions of the Third Ring. To encounter a Sea Demon was a lucky break in and of itself. Of course, there were some powerful Sea Demons who could also bring incredible disaster.

There were even some areas within the Third Ring that were specially noted in jade slip maps. Anyone who wanted to enter such areas had to prepare special items ahead of time.

Furthermore, there was one particular city in the Third Ring called Seahold that had been established jointly by the three Sects, which made it convenient for Cultivators to trade for supplies. The city was enormous, and towered up above the surface of the water like a huge fortress. It was covered with shocking spell formations that had protected it for countless years against the attacks of Sea Demons.

Within the city were garrisoned more than 10,000 Cultivators from the three Sects. In addition, there was always one of the three Saints in command of the city. They rotated every one hundred years.

For years, the three Sects had maintained an incredible reputation, to the point where even the powers in the Southern Domain, Eastern Lands, Western Desert, and Northern Reaches acknowledged them.

Several days later, Meng Hao flew in mid-air over the Third Ring. He lifted up his right hand, and lightning crackled. Instantly, a thirty-meter long Sea Demon comparable in power to a Foundation Establishment Cultivator, was destroyed.

This particular Sea Demon didn’t even have a Demon heart. However, for some reason, as soon as it detected Meng Hao’s aura, it had seemed to go crazy, and had attacked him with complete abandon. Meng Hao had run into seven or eight other Sea Demons just like this in his travels so far.

“Something’s not right!” he thought, frowning. It almost felt as if he were going around the Third Ring with a big target on his back. No matter where he went, Sea Demons would come for him.

His eyes flickered as he thought for a moment, then sent his Divine Sense out. After searching for about three days, he was able to find a group of Cultivators, five of them, who were cautiously hunting for Sea Demons.

He followed them from a distance, and they were unaware of his presence.

However, after only half a day, he sensed eight frenzied Sea Demons closing in. All of a sudden, they burst out from the water, howling. The faces of the five Cultivators instantly filled with shock.

“How could there be so many Sea Demons!!”

“Don’t tell me some sort of treasure is in the area!?” The five of them began to flee in alarm. Of course, the Sea Demons weren’t after them, so they were able to get away easily.

Meng Hao floated there in mid-air, his brow furrowed. Having observed what was happening, he now understood that it was he himself who was attracting the Sea Demons!

“Is there something special about me that drives them crazy?” he thought, his eyes flickering. Down below, the Sea Demons were charging across the surface of the water at top speed. Meng Hao let out a cold snort, then waved his right hand. Instantly, the sword tip with 30,000 years of Time power flew out. Under Meng Hao’s control, it turned into a black beam of light that shot directly toward one particular Sea Demon which looked like a crab.

When it shot through the Sea Demon, the creature instantly turned completely gray, as if had just passed through tens of thousands of years of time. In the blink of an eye, it turned into nothing more than ash.

The beam continued on to pierce through six more Sea Demons, all of whom, regardless of the level of their Cultivation base, instantly withered up and turned into nothing more than ash.

As for the final Sea Demon, it looked like a sea turtle. When it saw everything that happened, its eyes filled with terror. Despite that, it didn’t seem to be able to resist the urge to charge toward Meng Hao. It was like an instinct that it was unable to control. With a howl, it charged onward.

Meng Hao glanced coldly at the sea turtle, which was only a few dozen meters long. He put away the Time Sword tip, then performed an incantation. The Mountain Consuming Incantation appeared, and an enormous mountain peak descended. It smashed down onto the sea turtle, completely sealing it inside. Meng Hao waved his sleeve to collect up the mountain, as well as the other Demon hearts in the area. Then, he proceeded off into the distance.

Not too long later, Meng Hao materialized out of thin air to appear near an island. Instantly, roaring could be heard from the island. Meng Hao frowned somewhat grudgingly. He had no idea what type of ferocious beast or Sea Demon was there, but without waiting to find out, he sent a palm strike down. The entire island shook and trembled as the palm attack slammed into the area where the roaring came from.

The island trembled, and then was completely silent. Whatever creature was there had been killed with a single strike.

Meng Hao sat down cross-legged, then waved his right hand. Immediately, the mountain peak flew out from his bag of holding, within which was sealed the body of the sea turtle.

The first thing that Meng Hao thought about when he looked at the sea turtle was old turtle Reliance. He frowned for a moment, then waved a finger, causing the mountain peak to vanish. The sea turtle glared at him viciously with red eyes. Then it howled and charged in attack. Meng Hao’s right hand instantly waved down.

A boom rattle out as a huge, invisible palm crushed down onto the sea turtle. No matter how it struggled, it was incapable of freeing itself. It could only look at Meng Hao and roar.

“You want to eat me?” asked Meng Hao coolly. He sent out some of his Demon Sealer aura, but it didn’t seem to provoke any special reaction from the sea turtle. It continued to roar and snap at him as if it wanted to swallow him in a single bite.

“So, it’s not because I’m a Demon Sealer?” he thought. He retracted the aura and then started to remove all of the bags of holding he possessed and place them off to the side. What he discovered was that the sea turtle didn’t even glance at them. It continued to glare directly at him and him alone.

“It’s not anything in my bags of holding either. Could it really be me personally? Is it because of the Fleshly Sanctification?” After a good period of thought, he couldn’t come up with any better explanation.

After all, he did have some of the characteristics of the Demon Immortal Body. Meng Hao found it plausible that it could be attractive in some way to the Sea Demons.

After more thought, his eyes began to shine brightly. He raised his right hand, sliced a cut into the tip of his finger, and then squeezed out some blood. The sea turtle instantly went into a frenzy, howling and writhing as it attempted to charge forward and get at the blood.

“So that’s what’s going on,” thought Meng Hao. The wound on his finger instantly healed back up, and he rose to his feet. Then, he lifted up his hand to do away with the troublesome sea turtle. However, before he could complete the motion, his hand stopped.

“What if that isn’t the complete explanation…?” he thought. He glanced at the turtle again, and then closed his eyes to recall a divine ability he had picked up in the Demon Immortal Pagoda that was similar to the one he had used earlier to erase memories.

Based on his previous Cultivation base, using the ability would have resulted in a backlash. However, if he used it now, he could reduce the effects of the backlash to a minimum. His body flashed, and he appeared directly next to the sea turtle. Even as it eyed him hungrily, his hand pressed down onto the turtle's head.

"Spirit Searching!" It was only a light touch, but the sea turtle's body immediately went stiff.

White light emanated out from Meng Hao's eyes. In a scant moment, his senses entered into the mind of the sea turtle. He sensed brutality, madness, and desire.

There were also a random assortment of memories that flooded into Meng Hao's mind. Being his first time using this technique, Meng Hao felt a bit out of sorts. However, his powerful Cultivation base pushed down the ill feeling, and he began to search for an answer in the sea turtle's memory.

He searched for quite some time, until suddenly his concentration peaked. Within the intact memories inside the sea turtle, he had encountered a word.

"… lily …."

Meng Hao's face flickered and he pulled his right hand away. The sea turtle was now laying prone, gasping for breath. A Spirit Searching like the one he had just performed would leave it either dead or injured.

"Lily…." murmured Meng Hao. With that, he looked down at himself, then used his right hand to violently push down onto his belly. His entire body shook, and then began to grow weaker, both in terms of Cultivation base and in his Qi and blood.

As he grew weaker, he performed an incantation gesture. A seal appeared, which he placed onto himself, causing his energy to fade. Underneath the pressure, his Cultivation base sank to the Nascent Soul stage, then the Core Formation Stage, and then the Foundation Establishment stage….

Now that he had weakened himself to this extent, another bizarre aura silently appeared. This aura was none other than the aura of the Resurrection Lily!

Normally speaking, Meng Hao was too powerful, and kept the aura suppressed to the point where it wouldn’t be easily noticeable. Now, though, by intentionally weakening himself, he caused the aura of the Resurrection Lily to be revealed more openly.

As soon as the aura appeared, something happened that caused Meng Hao to be deeply shocked.

The sea turtle, which moments ago had been gasping on the verge of death, suddenly lifted its head up. Its eyes focused, it let out a shocking roar and then charged toward Meng Hao. Its body was being suppressed, but it didn’t seem to care. It roared and struggle until its shell began to crack and shatter. Its body began to fall apart, but its eyes were bright red and its head stretched out violently until it literally ripped off of the body. Blood spattered about as the dying head stretched out toward Meng Hao, its mouth gaping.

Meng Hao backed up a few paces. He could clearly see the desire and madness in the dying eyes. His face flickered as he looked out at the surrounding sea. Huge waves rolled across its surface, and countless shocking auras could be sensed charging from all directions, filled with madness.

Meng Hao immediately severed the aura and released the seal. His energy rapidly rose, and the Resurrection Lily’s aura was suppressed. The madness in the sea around him was reduced by a small measure.

Meng Hao instantly transformed into a green smoke and vanished.

When he reappeared, he was in mid-air off in the distance.

“So, the Resurrection Lily is what’s attracting the Sea Demons!

“Now that I think about it, Master told me about someone who came to him looking for medicine to help with the Resurrection Lily infection. As to whether he is alive or dead now, I have no idea. I just remember that he was from… the Milky Way Sea. 1

“If I can find him, maybe he could use his understanding of the Resurrection Lily to help me with mine.” After thinking for a moment, Meng Hao vanished again.

Meanwhile, far from the Third Ring, in the depths of the Second Ring….

The water in this area was black, and everything was quiet. Even the surface of the sea was calm, without any waves or even ripples. There was also a black island, upon which sat a cross-legged figure. He had the physical appearance of a Cultivator, except that a spiraling horn stuck out from his forehead. He was surrounded by vast quantities of bones, many of which were the bones of Cultivators.

His eyes suddenly opened, and within each eye, two pupils could be seen. A savage aura exploded out from him.

“Resurrection… Lily….”

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# Chapter 655: Hunting Sea Demons

A month flashed by.

During that time, Meng Hao swept freely across the Third Ring. Considering the level of his Cultivation base, there were no Sea Demons who could stand up to him. The instant any appeared and got close to him, he would destroy them.

Sometimes he didn’t actually even need to do anything personally. He would simply send the Wooden Time Sword tip flying out to circulate around him. A mere thought could send the tip speeding to the attack at any time.

Twenty-five days earlier, a group of adventuring Cultivators, roughly a dozen or more in number, had been speeding along, pursued by two roaring Sea Demons.

Even in the midst of their hopelessness, a black beam appeared. It shot through the two Sea Demons, transforming them into ash. The Demon hearts flew out, and then vanished into thin air.

Twenty days earlier, a haughty-faced man was fighting at close quarters with a Sea Demon, when a black beam suddenly appeared out of nowhere to transform the Sea Demon into ash.

Fifteen days earlier, ten days earlier, five days earlier, similar scenes played out in different areas in the Third Ring. In fact, almost every day such things occurred. Gradually, rumors began to spread about the black sword tip.

After a month of domination, Meng Hao had collected nearly a thousand Demon hearts. Most were low-grade, with only a few being mid-grade.

Meng Hao wasn’t very happy with the results, although anyone else would have been wild with joy.

“Chosen from the Sects and Clans of the Southern Domain, Northern Reaches, and Eastern Lands all owe me large quantities of Spirit Stones. My gains in the past month have been too negligible. This doesn’t compare at all to conning people.” He currently hovered in mid-air, looking out at the boundless sea, wondering how many Sea Demons existed underneath the waters.

“If I could get some high-grade Spirit Stones, or even… ultra high-grade Spirit Stones, then things would be worth it!” He had some ultra high-grade Spirit Stones in his bag of holding, but not many. They were incredibly valuable, and every time he thought about how he had wasted two thousand of them all those years ago, it made him sick.

“Short on money again…. If I had enough Spirit Stones, I could copy more Wooden Time Swords, or maybe even the Time Sword tip. Except, I would need, at the least, more than ten million Spirit Stones to do that.” He looked down at the surface of the sea, and clenched his jaw.

“If the Wang Clan Patriarch isn’t dead, then danger will be coming my way. The most important thing for me to do now is get stronger as fast as possible. I need to go all out!” Determination appeared in his eyes, and then he vanished into thin air.

Several days later, Meng Hao sat cross-legged on a certain large island within the Third Ring. The entire area around him had long since been cleared, and the Time Sword tip circulated around him. He looked down at his bag of holding as a small mountain flew out.

Sealed inside of the little mountain was a battle-ax, which was none other than the thousand-symbol spirit he had captured.

After looking at it for a moment, he lifted his right hand up into the air, causing the mountain to vanish. The battle-ax instantly began to emit a rumbling sound, and was just about to attack when Meng Hao waved his wide sleeve, causing a huge pressure to envelop the area. He reached out with his hand, but the battle-ax made a popping sound and transformed into over a thousand magical symbols. Meng Hao's hand grasped nothing but air.

The magical symbols cascaded about, seemingly quite proud of themselves. They swirled behind Meng Hao, where they once again formed into a battle-ax, which then chopped down toward Meng Hao.

"Hex!" said Meng Hao coolly. He didn't even turn his head to look; he simply pointed backward with his left index finger.

The thousand magical symbols trembled and struggled in mid-air. However, when Meng Hao punched out, the battle-ax collapsed into a mass of magical symbols. Then he performed an incantation, and the Mountain Consuming Incantation appeared in the form of a thousand mountains, which covered over all the magical symbols.

Meng Hao performed all these actions smoothly and spontaneously, as if he hadn't been troubled in the least bit. Then, his expression indifferent, he caused the magical symbols to approach him one by one. He imprinted them with Divine Sense, a process that took several hours to complete. After it was all done, his eyes glittered as he allowed the thousand mountains to loosen and free the magical symbols.

The symbols seemed as if they had lost their sentience. They simply floated there, flickering with light, but unmoving.

"Consolidate!" said Meng Hao coolly. Immediately, the symbols formed together into the shape of a battle-ax, which then rotated around him. After exercising control over it for a few moments, Meng Hao then used the same method on the more than twenty thousand-symbol spirits in his bag of holding. He finished a few days later, after which, more than 20,000 magical symbols all whistled through the air around him.

They turned into a vortex of storm winds that emanated an incredibly threatening pressure.

A strange light appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes. The incredible power of this treasure was second only to the symbol spirits he had seen in the Stormwind Divide that formed into enormous ferocious beasts.

“However, it wastes too much of my Cultivation base,” he thought after a moment. After consuming some medicinal pills, he sat down to meditate. It wasn’t until dawn of the following morning that he finally opened his eyes.

“The time has come!” he said. Taking a deep breath, he performed an incantation, placing multiple seals onto his body that caused his energy to rapidly weaken. Soon, the aura of the Resurrection Lily once again appeared.

Previously, Meng Hao had assumed that only he could sense the aura. However, after arriving in the Third Ring, he understood that to Sea Demons, the Resurrection Lily was like some hitherto unknown tonic that, if consumed, could provoke incredible transmogrification.

As soon as the aura spread out, the surrounding sea began to churn. Countless glowing red eyes snapped open in the depths of the sea in the Third Ring. In the blink of an eye, the Sea Demons shot with incredible speed in the direction of something they instinctively knew they had to consume.

Some distance away, a multicolored jellyfish was just under the surface of the water, stalking a group of Cultivators, waiting for the right opportunity to attack. However, just in the moment when it was about to make a move, it suddenly trembled and then shot away under the water.

In another location, a group of a few dozen Cultivators were locked in close combat with three Sea Demons. Suddenly, the Sea demons roared, dove down into the water, and vanished.

Scenes like this played out throughout various locations in the Third Ring. Quite a few Cultivators noticed the phenomenon. Some Cultivators up in mid-air were shocked to see waves sweeping across the sea, and the countless Sea Demons swimming through the water.

“Don’t tell me it’s a Beast Tide!!”

Even while so many people were shocked, Meng Hao sat calmly waiting on the island. After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, an enormous pincer suddenly shot out from the seawater toward him.

At the same time, multiple Sea Demons burst out from the water to charge toward Meng Hao.

His eyes glittered with coldness as he waved his right hand, causing a thousand-symbol battle-ax to fly out. It swept out, filling the area with the sounds of explosions as it destroyed the Sea Demons.

Even as they died, an additional hundred or more Sea Demons emerged from the water, their visages that of wildness and greed. It was almost like Meng Hao had turned into a whirlpool that caused desire to well up within all the Sea Demons of the Third Ring.

Meng Hao was calm and unhurried as he manipulated the magical symbols. With the wave of a finger, 1,000 magical symbols flew out, surrounding the island, making it impossible for any Sea Demon to get even more than three hundred meters onto the island.

Four explosion-filled hours passed. More than a thousand Sea Demons had charged out from within the shocking waves. They didn’t seem to even understand the difference between life and death; disregarding even their own lives, they charged forward relentlessly.

Booms rang out as Meng Hao’s hands moved even faster to control the 8,000 magical symbols, which whistled through the air. They formed into various magical items, including the battle-ax, and emanated incredible might.

Another four hours passed, during which time, Meng Hao consumed medicinal pills on three occasions to support the rotation of his Cultivation base. Currently, the island was surrounded by densely packed groups of Sea Demons. There were so many that he almost couldn’t see anything else.

The sight was enough to shock anyone who might see it, even Meng Hao. However, he wanted even more Sea Demons. The magical symbols were now 13,000 in number, whistling about to create a droning sound that filled the ears.

From afar, the island appeared to be surrounded by a vortex of storm winds, and a black fog. Outside of the storm winds were endless amounts of Sea Demons that charged forward in their attempts to get onto the island.

The roaring was astonishing, and blood showered about everywhere. Meng Hao was unsure of how many Sea Demons he had killed in the relatively short period of time. The only ones who knew were the parrot and meat jelly.

That was because they were flying around, boring their way in and out all over the place. As the Sea Demons died, they gleefully collected up the Demon hearts.

It was in this moment, however, that a howl split the air from off in the distance. This howl was unique; it sounded like a weeping girl, and it instantly caused Meng Hao to look up. His Divine Sense swept out, and off in the distance, he could see the Sea Demons all trembling and making way for an enormous seven-colored jellyfish which was slowly swimming forward.

On top of the head of the jellyfish, shockingly, was… a white flower!

It was a Whitebone Lily, a flower that looked like bleached bones. It swayed back and forth, causing all the color in the area to vanish and be replaced with only black and white.

As Meng Hao looked over, he suddenly felt the island shake beneath him, as if some enormous creature down below were attacking it.

His face flickered for the space of a few breaths, but he was powerless to support the island. Cracks spread out on its surface, and then the island simply collapsed into countless pieces.

Huge waves rolled out across the seawater as, in the blink of an eye, the entire island sank down into the water. As for Meng Hao, he was also pulled down into the sea.

In that instant, the Sea Demons in the area grew even more frenzied. The world underneath the surface of the waters was their domain, so it was with even more madness that they charged forward.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. The world underneath the surface might be the domain of the Sea Demons, but it was also his world!

He had formed the water character of the five elements totem, and had also practiced cultivation on the bottom of the Violet Sea for a hundred years. Why would he possibly care about the pressure exerted under the sea? His expression was cold as he lifted his right hand to cause 20,000 glittering magical symbols to circulate out. They transformed into twenty magical items which shot toward the Sea Demons and began to slaughter them.

The explosions did not pass out of the seawater, but they did give rise to enormous waves which swept out through the Third Ring. The Cultivators who saw them were shocked, and intrigued about what was happening.

Furthermore, some of the incredibly powerful Sea Demons of the Third Ring were now in motion, heading toward Meng Hao, filled with madness.

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# Chapter 656: The Resurrection Lily Makes a Move!

Meng Hao was under the water, surrounded by 20,000 magical symbols which swept around him in the form of a tempest. The water seethed, and the Sea Demons were unable to get within even three hundred meters of him.

Of course, the Sea Demons attacked with reckless abandon, impelled by instinct to fight even if they died. Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as the magical symbols surged around him, carrying out an incredible slaughter.

Waves surged out, affecting more than half of the Third Ring, and more and more Sea Demons arrived. Soon, even the Third Ring’s Seahold city was affected, causing even more Cultivators to look around in shock and wonder what was occurring.

In fact, the waves even crashed into Seahold, the city created by the joint efforts of the three Sects. The sounds of bugles filled the air, and the Cultivators garrisoned there armed themselves and entered battle formation, as if they were preparing to fight some incredible enemy.

The powerful experts within the city emerged one by one, their faces grim and filled with intense harshness. They looked off into the distance at the countless waves that surged toward them.

“Could it be that the Sea Devils of the Second Ring are on the attack?”

“Impossible! The Sea Devils of the Second Ring are few in number. They rarely appear, and almost never enter the Third Ring. To them, the Sea

Demons of the Third Ring are like common animals. They view themselves as the emperors and kings!”

“But if it’s not the Sea Devils, then what is causing these great transformations in the Third Ring?!”

Everyone was discussing the matter, and as soon as the Sea Devils were mentioned, faces filled with fear.

Outside the city, crashing sounds could be heard as the waves slammed into the city walls.

The sounds could be heard without cessation, and echoed throughout the city, causing the Cultivator’s faces to flicker with various expressions.

In the middle of Seahold was an enormous tower nearly three thousand meters tall. The areas surrounding the tower were a forbidden zone which no one could enter without being invited first.

This was a cultivation area set aside for the three Saints. At the highest level of the tower sat a middle-aged man wearing a voluminous red robe, who happened to be surnamed Lin. He had long black hair, and currently stood with his hands clasped behind his back, looking out a window. He was frowning, and it was impossible to tell exactly what he was thinking.

“The waves are higher by three meters, and seemingly for no reason,” he said coolly. “It seems something has provoked the Sea Demons. They’re all heading in the same direction. Are they going to pay respects, or have they been summoned? Or enticed?” His eyes shone with a brilliant light, and as he spoke, his words seemed to cause ripples to spread out in the air.

“In any case, the Sea Demons are not intelligent. It must be desire which is driving them!” He suddenly took a step forward, and then vanished. Shockingly, he reappeared outside of Seahold, far off in the distance. Waves surged beneath his feet as he clasped his hands behind his back and strode forward.

With a single step, he vanished and then reappeared far, far off. Then he repeated the process. It was with incredible speed that he moved, a speed that a Nascent Soul Cultivator could never achieve, not even by bringing harm to their own life.

At the same time that the red robed man proceeded forward, Meng Hao was surrounded by 20,000 surging magical symbols. Blood filled the water around him as countless Sea Demons were completely destroyed. He had no idea how many he had killed, but as he sank down deeper, the Sea Demons that surrounded him seemed endless.

It was at this point that a five-colored bolt of lightning suddenly appeared, shooting through the hordes of Sea Demons. Wherever it went, Sea Demons directly exploded. The lightning itself seemed to be filled with the power to destroy Heaven and Earth. In the blink of an eye, it slammed into the magical symbols that surrounded Meng Hao.

Boom!

A thousand of the 20,000 magical symbols instantly collapsed. It shot onward toward Meng Hao, who immediately looked up. When the island collapsed and began to sink to the sea floor, he had already noticed the approaching Whitebone Lily jellyfish.

However, after sinking down, despite being unhampered by the surroundings, he found himself in a different situation than when he had been in the Violet Sea. Here, his Divine Sense had limitations.

Of course, he was as vigilant as ever, so as the lightning bore down on him, he lifted his right hand and pointed forward with his index finger. The Blood Palm instantly appeared and shot forward.

A boom could be heard as the five-colored lightning bolt spread apart, surrounding the Blood Palm, as if it wished to bore directly into it.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and he let out a cold snort. He flicked his sleeve, performed an incantation, and then pointed forward. Immediately, a face appeared in front of him. It looked like Meng Hao’s face, although its eyes were closed as it shot forward. This, of course, was the first form of the Blood Immortal divine ability.

Booming filled the bottom of the sea. As the lightning collapsed, the face's eyes opened, and the lips began to speak with a soundless voice.

The soundless voice seemed to rip the jellyfish out into the open. Six ripple-like formless sound waves swept out in front of Meng Hao. The first of them caused thousands of Sea Demons to instantly explode. The second, third, and fourth sweeping ripples caused more than 10,000 Sea Demons to collapse.

The fourth and fifth ripples seemed to open a path that revealed the enormous jellyfish off in the distance. The Sea Demons in front of Meng Hao all scrambled clear as the sixth ripple shot directly toward the jellyfish. The water seethed and distorted to form the face of Meng Hao, which rumbled toward the jellyfish.

A brilliant, five-colored glow spread out from the jelly-fish, which transformed into a five-colored shield that shot out in defense. A huge boom could be heard, which transformed into an even more intense attack that spread out in all directions. Meng Hao gave a cold snort, and was just about to directly slay the bizarre jellyfish when suddenly, he sensed an incredible force shooting toward him. The intensity of the force caused him to tremble inwardly. The magical symbol tempest around him shuddered, and another thousand symbols instantly collapsed.

As the force neared Meng Hao, his eyes glittered. Giving up any plans to slay the jellyfish, he spun around. His right hand clenched into a fist, which then punched directly toward the incoming force.

A bang could be heard, and the seawater exploded out in all directions. It was as if two enormous, incredibly shocking fists had slammed into each other in the middle of the water.

A deep growl could be heard as an enormous figure retreated backward from the force of Meng Hao's punch.

It was at this point that Meng Hao could clearly see the Sea Demon that was the source of the powerful force from just now.

It was a giant!

A three thousand meter tall giant, with two heads and scale-covered skin that was completely blue. Its eyes, however, were bright red as it stared at Meng Hao.

This was what had caused the island to collapse!

Shockingly, located behind the giant could be seen a Whitebone Lily, swaying back and forth!

The Whitebone Lily was a ghastly white color, and looked completely shocking. That was especially true because, when he looked at it, Meng Hao could almost see a human face, staring back at him with a strange expression.

The gaze was filled with many emotions, with avarice and with… concentration, almost as if it were… staring at something like itself.

Meng Hao's eyes glittered. As of this point, he had seen two bizarre Sea Demons in the Milky Way Sea's Third Ring, both of whom had strange Whitebone Lilies on them.

In fact, when Meng Hao looked at the Whitebone Lily, he could clearly sense that the Resurrection Lily inside of him felt provoked, and even emanated the desire to attack.

Apparently, the pressure from Meng Hao, as well as the intensity of the current danger, had caused it to intentionally allow some of its aura to seep out into his blood vessels.

Meng Hao's mind trembled. He had been fighting with the Resurrection Lily for years, and although he always succeeded in suppressing it, he only did so with the use of force. This was the first time that the Resurrection

Lily had given up on any resistance, and merge its aura with Meng Hao of its own initiative.

As the aura merged into him, a bizarre light appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes. He did not resist, but rather, allowed the aura of the Resurrection Lily to spread out within him. Instantly… a five-colored Resurrection Lily appeared behind him!

The flower formed into a face that was split into two parts. One part looked like Meng Hao, as mild as jade; the other looked as vicious as a wicked spirit!

Two faces, five petals, five glowing colors. In the blink of an eye, the light spread out to fill the sea floor. As it did, Meng Hao’s mind suddenly trembled, and a strange glow appeared in his eyes. As of that moment, he could… sense the energy of Heaven and Earth!

This was not the first time he could sense the energy of Heaven and Earth, but this was the most direct connection he had ever felt. He almost felt… as if he were favored by Heaven and Earth, as if his existence was approved.

With every breath he took, the power of Heaven and Earth flowed into him. Regardless of whether it was spiritual energy or Demonic Qi, or other types, anything that could be of benefit to him flowed in.

The feeling was indescribable, as if Heaven and Earth would do anything for him.

The power was boundless!

It felt like his destiny grew deeper, as if the Heavens had opened their eyes to gaze upon him. It was like any living thing that wished to harm him would become an object of loathing to Heaven and Earth.

The indescribable feeling was like a mysterious premonition.

“The day the Resurrection Lily blooms with seven colors, flowers bloom and flowers descend, one thousand years…. Don’t tell me that it really is impossible to kill it!?” The realization hit Meng Hao, but he had no time for consideration at the moment.

Almost in the same moment that the five-colored Resurrection Lily appeared behind him, the hosts of Sea Demons around him went into a frenzy. Their eyes were red, and seal marks appeared on their bodies.

The seal resembled the face of a spirit, almost like the earliest version of the Resurrection Lily, except white. However, if you looked closely, you could see that it was not the Resurrection Lily, but, shockingly… a Whitebone Lily!

“This Whitebone Lily definitely has some direct connection with the Resurrection Lily. But why are there so many Whitebone Lilies in the Milky Way Sea!? It seems like almost every single Sea Demon has one!” His mind trembled as he looked around at all of the Whitebone Lily seals, and his scalp began to grow numb.

“I wonder if it has something to do with the Reverend Silverlamp of the Milky Way Sea that Master spoke of?!” Meng Hao’s face flickered as he once again looked around at the enormous giant and the jellyfish, and realized that they were different from the other Sea Demons.

What existed on them was not a mark of the Whitebone Lily, but an actual, living flower.

Currently, the two Whitebone Lilies were swaying back and forth, and looked as if they were about to bloom, each of them with three petals.

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# Chapter 657: Saint Sun Soul of the Three Sects

“I remember Master told me that Reverend Silverlamp came to him seven hundred years before, asking for help in solving the problem of the Resurrection Lily. Master was able to help a bit, but couldn’t truly solve the problem. Then, Reverend Silverlamp returned a few hundred years later, having dispelled the poison of the Resurrection Lily!

“Could it be… that these transformations in the Sea Demons in the Milky Way Sea have something to do with Reverend Silverlamp?”

Meng Hao’s mind trembled, and his eyes flickered. However, he knew that he could not let himself feel anxious, but rather, needed to allow time for the clues to appear. Right now, the constant slaying of Sea Demons, coupled with the level of his Cultivation base, had left him feeling quite exhausted. Considering how many Sea Demons there were in the area, even if he kept killing them for days, he still wouldn’t be able to kill them all.

Also, he knew that since the drastic changes in the sea would cause widespread repercussions, it wouldn’t be too long before outsiders came to investigate.

“Well, first I’ll just have to kill you!” he said, turning toward the enormous giant. If the giant hadn’t destroyed the island, then Meng Hao wouldn’t be in his current situation under the water.

He quickly exercised control of the magical symbols, sending them spreading out to clear a battlefield. The giant approached, roaring, surrounded by bubbles as it charged.

Meng Hao gave a cold snort and then clenched his right hand into a fist.

“First Heaven Destruction!” he said, his eyes glittering. An illusory image appeared on his hand; it almost looked as if two hands had appeared and merged together. This was a Daoist magic that Meng Hao had acquired in the Demon Immortal Pagoda, the Nine Heavens Destruction.

After leaving the Demon Immortal Sect, he had occasionally contemplated it inwardly. After that, when he met with Guyiding Tri-rain, he was enlightened regarding the matter of vibrations. That caused the seed to sprout in his mind, and he then thoroughly understood.

The Nine Heavens Destruction was vibration!

The fist descended and water exploded. The bubbles collapsed, and Meng Hao’s fist shot like lightning to slam directly into the giant.

Bam!

“Second Heaven!” Meng Hao punched again, and the water seethed, exploding out to create gigantic waves.

“Third Heaven!” Killing intent flickered in his eyes as the fist descended. The giant let out a bloodcurdling scream that echoed out despite its location on the seafloor. Meng Hao’s fist slammed into the giant’s chest, causing a huge hole to explode out.

Within the mangled flesh, a crystalline stone about the size of an infant’s hand could be seen. It almost looked like a heart. Meng Hao’s right hand stretched out to immediately grab the resplendent crystal, then wrench it away. The giant shook violently. At the same time, the illusory Resurrection Lily behind Meng Hao savagely enveloped the giant and then flickered as a ghost image appeared over the Whitebone Lily. It appeared as if some sort of invisible fight were taking place.

All of this happened in only the space of a few breaths. Meng Hao grabbed the Demon heart and then backed up. The Whitebone Lily trembled and then shattered into pieces, which the five-colored Resurrection Lily instantly consumed. The Resurrection Lily looked even more ferocious, as if it had been reborn; the five-colored petals all grew even more resplendent.

“Time to go!” Meng Hao growled. His voice instantly echoed out to the parrot, who had been silently going around collecting Demon hearts. It instantly flickered, returning to Meng Hao’s side. Meng Hao then transformed into a green smoke and a black moon, which shot up toward the surface of the water.

Hordes of Sea Demons tried to obstruct his path, and the jellyfish went into even more of a frenzy, shooting out countless lightning bolts. However, none of it was able to hinder Meng Hao even the slightest bit. He quickly performed an incantation, causing the more than 10,000 magical symbols to spin around him into a tempest that emanated black fog. Then, he directly shot out of the water.

In that instant, countless Sea Demons flew out as well. However, they were incapable of stopping him as he shot up into the air, transforming into a beam of light that shot off into the distance.

At the same time, he forcefully suppressed the aura of the Resurrection Lily. It didn’t matter whether the Resurrection Lily was willing or not, nor how much it struggled; it was completely pushed down by Meng Hao.

He moved with incredible speed until he was around 3,000 meters away. Finally, he was about to check how many Demon hearts he had acquired, when suddenly, his expression flickered as he noticed a red cloud speeding toward him from off in the distance.

Shockingly, within the red cloud could be seen a huge face. It rumbled as it shot toward Meng Hao, emanating an aura of Spirit Severing which seemed to cover everything.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered and he raised his hand, causing the magical symbols to shoot up into the air in the form of a tempest, which then moved directly to intercept the red cloud face.

A huge boom rattled out. The cloud dispersed, and Meng Hao's magical symbols collapsed. As they scattered about, Meng Hao shot backward, his face grim. He looked off into the distance to see a middle-aged man wearing a red robe, striding forward with an expressionless face.

He glanced coldly at Meng Hao, his gaze sharp. The Spirit Severing aura within Meng Hao could now be seen, his energy pulsing brightly.

The red-robed man's eyes narrowed slightly. Then he saw all of the tempest magical symbols, and he immediately understood that the person in front of him was not weak.

However, 'not weak' meant little to him.

"Your first offense was to cause chaos in the Milky Way Sea!" he said coolly. "I don't care where you got those symbol spirits, they belong to the three Sects. Outsiders are not permitted to possess them. That is your second offense.

"Two crimes. Allow me to explain your punishment…." The red-robed man waved his hand, employing some special technique that instantly caused all of the magical symbol spirits to tremble and then wrest themselves free from Meng Hao's control and shoot to the side of the red-robed man.

"I am a Saint, and these objects belong to me. Thus, I will take them back. Now, produce all of the Demon hearts you acquired and then get the hell out of the Milky Way Sea!

"I'll give you three days. If you're still in the Milky Way Sea at that time… well, I happen to be lacking a puppet mount." A cold gleam could be seen in the man's eyes, as well as a look of superciliousness. His aura was one that invoked profound reverence, and made it seem that his words were like the will of Heaven when spoken out on the Milky Way Sea.

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever. He had never seen this red-robed Cultivator before, but with a single glance at his Cultivation base, he could tell that he was different from Patriarch Huyan. This man was apparently at the Second Severing level.

In that case, the man’s identity was obvious.

“Can’t we talk this over?” asked Meng Hao.

“No. No talking it over,” replied the red-robed man calmly.

“But, I don’t want to hand over the Demon hearts,” said Meng Hao coolly, “nor the symbol spirits.”

The red-robed man responded with a cold snort and a cool detachment. He waved his right sleeve, causing more than 100,000 symbol spirits to rush out from within. In the blink of an eye, they blotted out the sky and cast everything into shadow.

“Well, then you can just stay behind. Whatever Sect or Clan you belong to can come to me and pay a ransom price to get you back.” With that, the 100,000 symbol spirits spread out into the air and shot toward Meng Hao.

As they neared, Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding, causing an enormous bronze wheel to fly out. It was covered with magical symbols which instantly glowed with brilliant light as it began to rotate.

At the same time, a sense of the power of Time appeared. It spread out to fill the area, causing the magical symbol spirits to suddenly reveal ancientness. They began to move slower, allowing Meng Hao to casually move forward through their midst.

“A Time treasure!” thought the red-robed man.

At the same time, Meng Hao performed an incantation and then pointed forward. Instantly, the Time Sword Formation appeared. As it rotated, it transformed into the shape of a lotus, which caused the raging power of Time to sweep out in all directions. It seemed to be working in unison with the Wheel of Time as Meng Hao flicked his sleeve, causing it to fly toward the red-robed Cultivator.

“A Time treasure….” the red-robed man said coolly. “It seems I underestimated you.” He waved his right hand through the air, causing a tremor to run through the 100,000 magical symbols. Instantly, 10,000 of them exploded, causing an immaterial explosion to rip through the power of Time. The rest of the symbols continued to shoot toward Meng Hao.

“Mountain Consuming Incantation!” Meng Hao proceeded forward, extending his right hand and then pushing it down toward the sea. Instantly, the seawater roiled, and from its depths rose up a trembling mountain. The mountain shattered into countless fragments which then shot out in front of Meng Hao, reforming together into the shape of a small mountain.

After coming to the Third Ring, this was Meng Hao’s first time using a real mountain to fight an enemy with the Mountain Consuming Incantation.

As soon as the art appeared, the massive collection of 90,000 magical symbols fought back against the mountain. Booming sounds could be heard, but Meng Hao continued to proceed forward. He was now roughly three hundred meters away from the red-robed man.

The man frowned, then performed an incantation with his right hand. He pointed up to the sky, causing the bright gleam of swords to shoot up into the sky from nearby Seahold.

Three swords flew through the air, emitting a droning sound. Their incredible speed was such that they rapidly became invisible.

Many of the Cultivators in the Sea City saw what was happening, and were completely shocked. Their faces flickered as they came to the conclusion that the Saint had encountered a formidable foe!

Almost simultaneously, the three swords appeared in front of the red-robed man. They didn’t pause for even a moment, but rather, shot directly toward Meng Hao.

The red-robed man’s voice was cool as he said: “These three swords of mine were forged with a Sky-Sun Bone, something rarely seen in the Milky Way Sea, even in ten thousand years. It borrows the power of the stars and refines it into an undying strength that can overcome any obstacle.”

As the three swords neared, Meng Hao waved his right sleeve, causing the Time Sword tip to fly out. It moved with incredible speed, piercing through the air, sending out ripples of Time power as it headed toward the red-robed man.

Shockingly, a strand of silk was connected to the the sword tip, flashing coldly in the sunlight.

“This sword tip of mine comes from a 70,000 year old Spring and Autumn Tree,” said Meng Hao coolly. “The rest of the sword was destroyed by an Immortal, but the tip is eternal. Time did not harm the sword tip, and I refined it into a treasure. It can kill and exterminate countless forms of life, and nothing can stand up to it without withering away.

“The silk behind it is something rarely seen in Heaven and Earth. If the silk remains unbroken, I cannot be killed.”

When the sword tip appeared, the red-robed man’s three swords seemed to hold back.

The red-robed man’s pupils constricted as he stared at the sword tip. He could sense the incredible power of Time emanating off of it. He felt that if he got too near it, he would begin to wither, and his life force and longevity would be reduced.

“You’re a Time Cultivator,” said the man, looking at Meng Hao.

“You’re Saint Sun Soul of the three Sects!” replied Meng Hao.

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# Chapter 658: Hometown Alcohol

The red-robed man was none other than one of the three Saints of the Milky Way Sea, Saint Sun Soul of the Sun Soul Society!

He was fond of red garments, and his three swords could shake Heaven and Earth. The last time the Demon Tide arrived to destroy Seahold, he single-handedly wielded his three swords in defense. The Sword Qi penetrated all the way to the Second Ring.

It was completely shocking, and frightened the Demon hordes into retreat.

Meng Hao had learned of these things before coming to the Third Ring. Therefore, when the red-robed man appeared, he easily guessed who exactly he was.

At the moment, Meng Hao’s Time Sword tip pressed on toward Saint Sun Soul, even as Saint Sun Soul’s three swords stopped 7 inches away from Meng Hao, emanating a frigid aura.

The two of them stared at each other as they carried out their invisible struggle. This was no battle of magical techniques, but rather, a contest of Divine Will. Any observer would not be able to see or hear anything. However, to the two of them, everything was rumbling violently, lightning crackled, and the world seemed on the verge of collapse as even the wind moved in reverse.

Red-robed Saint Sun Soul looked at Meng Hao, and his pupils slowly constricted. “You’re not a match for me.”

“And you can’t kill me,” replied Meng Hao calmly.

Saint Sun Soul looked back at Meng Hao silently. He had to admit that what Meng Hao said was true. He really had no way of killing him. Meng Hao's Cultivation base was very strange, and although he couldn't say exactly why, it gave him the feeling that Meng Hao could trample all of the Sea Cities in the Milky Way Sea.

It was as if… he had some indescribable, unknown connection to the whole place.

Saint Sun Soul suddenly raised his right hand and flicked his sleeve, causing the three swords to instantly vanish. When they reappeared, they were circulating around him.

Simultaneously, Meng Hao's eyes glittered, and the Time Sword tip flew back to rotate around him.

Saint Sun Soul looked at Meng Hao and then slowly said, "In the past, I swore an oath to never again kill a Cultivator. My sword will only kill the Outsiders!

"You may stay in the Milky Way Sea, but that aura of yours displeases me. If I discover you have anything to do with the Sea Devils of the Second Ring… well then, I will be forced to use the precious treasure of the Sun Soul Society ancestor and its Dao Seeking power to destroy you."

Meng Hao looked back at the red-robed man. Although it was only moments ago that they had drawn swords on each other, he didn't find him to be detestable. In fact, he could sense that the man was proud, and not the type to speak falsehoods.

People such as this, while simple, had unshakable principles.

"I'll do as I please," said Meng Hao coolly his eyes shining with a bright, cold light.

Saint Sun Soul's eyes gleamed with a similarly cold light. His face cold, he gave Meng Hao a final deep look, then turned to depart.

Before he could leave, Meng Hao quickly said, “It took a lot of effort for me to collect those magical symbol spirits.”

Saint Sun Soul stopped and looked back. “These symbols belong to the three Sects.”

Meng Hao didn’t respond immediately. Instead, he slapped his bag of holding to produce a bottle gourd with alcohol in it. He tossed it over.

Saint Sun Soul caught it. When he looked down to examine it, he stared in shock.

“That’s bit of alcohol from my hometown,” said Meng Hao unhurriedly. “I took some with me when I left.”

Saint Sun Soul looked at the alcohol flagon, then looked back at Meng Hao. He thought for a moment, his face expressionless. Then he turned to leave. As he did, he flicked his sleeve, causing the 10,000 magical symbol spirits he had taken to suddenly flicker as he severed his connection with them. Then, they flew back to swirl around Meng Hao.

Meng Hao looked away, then turned into a beam of colorful light that vanished in the blink of an eye.

Several days later, on a relatively small island in the Third Ring, Meng Hao sat cross-legged, the 10,000 magical symbol spirits circulating around him like a shield.

The parrot was in front of him, glaring at him angrily, as was the meat jelly, who stood next to the parrot.

The three had been facing off against each other like this for nearly ten breaths of time.

“Five creatures with fur or feathers. No discussions and no wiggle room. When Lord Fifth risks life and limb, it’s not for nothing!”

“Yeah. Lord Third wants three bullies! No discussions! When I say three, I mean three!”

Meng Hao was silent, and a pained expression could be seen on his face. After a long moment, and seemingly completely against his will, he forced himself to nod. Seeing Meng Hao like this caused the parrot to laugh proudly. Then it tossed out a feather, which flew off not too far into the distance, then exploded with a popping sound. Instantly, it transformed into a heaping mountain of Demon hearts.

The meat jelly also looked extremely proud of itself. It opened its mouth and spit out a multi-colored cascade of lights that transformed into a second mountain of Demon hearts.

Meng Hao laughed inwardly. He was all too familiar with these two nitwits. Their demands were simple, but Meng Hao knew that if he agreed too quickly, or gave them the feeling that he didn't care, then it would only lead to more trouble.

Therefore, he intentionally pretended to consider and struggle in order to please the two ninnies.

Having dealt with them, Meng Hao's eyes shifted to look at the two mountainous piles of Demon hearts. There were clearly well over 100,000 of them.

Furthermore, it seemed that nearly half were mid-grade Demon hearts. There were even some high-grade hearts, which vastly increased the value of the collection.

"I wonder if I can use Demon hearts to duplicate things with the copper mirror?" he thought, his eyes glittering. He lowered his head thoughtfully. Currently, the greatest danger he faced was the deadly threat of the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch.

"That old codger's Cultivation base is just too high, so I'm not a match for him at all. The only thing I can do… is figure out a way to escape from him next time I run into him." He looked over at the Time Sword tip.

"If I had ten or more sword tips, I could form them into the Lotus Sword Formation. With that, maybe I could take him by surprise…. Unfortunately, I don’t have enough Spirit Stones.” He frowned, but then his eyes began to shine with a bright light.

“I can duplicate Wooden Time Swords, though. Given the level of my Cultivation base now, I should be able to seal seven sixty-year cycles of Time into the sword. If I had over a hundred of them…

“Then I could unleash the third form of the Lotus Sword Formation. I wonder how powerful that would be.” Having reached this point in his train of thought, Meng Hao immediately produced a Wooden Time Sword. Then he took a deep breath and began to seal Time into it.

During the half month that followed, rumbling booms occasionally echoed out. Meng Hao’s brow was furrowed the entire time. On the last day, though, his frown disappeared. Floating there in front of him was now the only Wooden Time Sword that he possessed.

The veins of wood were clearly visible on it, and when the power of Time emanated out from within, it contained the ripples of seven sixty-year cycles of time. Meng Hao had no other magical item that possessed as much power of Time.

“All the other Wooden Time Swords were destroyed in the process. This is my only one left, but it was worth it…. It’s a good thing that in the end, I only need one instance of success!” With that, he pulled out the copper mirror and began to duplicate it.

Unfortunately, it required a vast amount of Spirit Stones to duplicate a Wooden Time Sword with seven sixty-year cycles of Time. This time, the pain Meng Hao felt in his heart was real. By the end, he used all of the Spirit Stones in his bag of holding to make ten copies.

Including the original sword, he now had a total of eleven.

After a moment’s thought, he tried to use the Demon hearts to duplicate some things. After putting seven or eight Demon hearts into the mirror and then observing the results, he stopped.

“They’re no different than Spirit Stones…” he thought with a frown. Originally, he had assumed that although the Demon hearts seemed very similar to Spirit Stones, they must have some other unique function.

After all, they were Demon hearts, not Spirit Stones.

“I’m able to attract large quantities of Sea Demons here in the Third Ring. But that’s unique. Other people would probably be able to save up a few hundred Demon Hearts at the most.

“People really come risk there lives here for a trifling few hundred Demon hearts?” A contemplative look appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes.

“That Saint Sun Soul also mentioned wanting Demon hearts. Considering the level of his Cultivation base, and his status, he wouldn’t care about a few million Spirit Stones, much less a few hundred Demon hearts…. Therefore, Demon hearts must have some use of which I’m unaware!” After further thought, Meng Hao was sure that there must be something he had overlooked. After a bit more consideration, he rose to his feet, his eyes glittering. He then waved his sleeve to collect up all the Demon hearts.

He remained on the island for a while thinking. Finally, his eyes flashed and flew up into the air, heading off into the distance at top speed.

“Since I don’t know,” he thought, “I guess I’ll need to find someone who does.”

As he flashed through the air, he changed his appearance and reduced his Cultivation base to the Nascent Soul stage. After speeding along for a few days, he suddenly stopped and looked off into the distance.

Not too far away, he spotted a several hundred meter wide whirlpool, within which was an enormous seahorse. It roared as pulses of coldness emanated out from it, causing everything around it to freeze.

Hovering in mid-air in front of the seahorse were two people, a man and a woman. The man was old and hunchbacked. He had a Cultivation base at the early Nascent Soul stage, and wizened features. His face was pale, and he clutched a pearl in his hand, which emanated pulses of flame power. It transformed into a rain of fire that filled the entire area, including the spot occupied by the seahorse.

Next to the old man was the woman, who wore a mask that made it impossible to see what her face looked like. However, from the rest of her skin that was visible, it was possible to determine that she wasn't very old.

Her Cultivation base was at the early Core Formation stage, and although she watched intently as the old man fought back against the Sea Demon, deep within her eyes flickered intense hatred.

Seeing the old man's pale face, she said, "Senior, let's just forget about it. Why don't we go find a weaker Sea Demon…."

"We've been out here for months," said the old man through gritted teeth. "This is the first Sea Demon we've found. How could we possibly let it go!?" He spit out a mouthful of blood, causing the pearl he held to turn bright red. Next, a sea of flames exploded out, causing steam to rise up from the seawater below. The seahorse, which was caught up in the flames, roared. Intense coldness exploded out from it as it charged forward into the fire. Immediately more than half of the sea of flames was extinguished.

The old man's face flickered, and he clenched his jaw. However, it was in this exact moment that suddenly, a bright beam of light approached from off in the distance.

Inside the beam, of course, was Meng Hao.

His sudden appearance shocked the old man. The face of the young woman next to him also flickered. As for the old man, when he saw that Meng Hao's Cultivation base was at the early Nascent Soul stage, he relaxed a bit, but at the same time, also frowned.

"Fellow Daoist," he said, "please keep your distance. I discovered this Demon, so according to the custom, it belongs to me."

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# Chapter 659: I Struck It Super Rich!

With a faint smile, Meng Hao stopped and didn’t get any closer.

The old man frowned and exchanged a look with the young woman. Then he focused his strength on controlling the magical items in front of him, and causing the sea of flames to descend once more.

The seahorse roared, and a blue light spread out from its body. It seemed to be going all out; the light exploded in all directions, and everywhere it passed turned into ice, even the sea of flames. The ice sealing caused the old man’s face to fill with shock. His pearl completely froze over, after which he shot backward at top speed. He grabbed the young woman and then made to leave. Unfortunately, he had been injured, and the blue light was too fast. At the moment, he seemed incapable of escaping….

An expression of struggle appeared in the old man’s eyes, but it lasted only for the time it takes a spark to fly off of a piece of flint. He looked at the young woman, preparing to throw her back into the blue light to block its way.

In that moment, Meng Hao lifted his hand up and pointed his finger out. The expanding blue light suddenly stopped moving, allowing the old man and the young woman to escape from the area.

At the same time, Meng Hao waved his hand again, causing a Wooden Time Sword to fly out. It shot like lightning toward the seahorse, and stabbed it through in the blink of an eye. It was only one sword with seven sixty-year cycles of Time power, but as soon as it pierced the seahorse, a bloodcurdling shriek could be heard, and the seahorse began to wither up.

Its eyes filled with terror, and it began to sink down into the water. However, even as it did, Meng Hao let a certain bit of aura seep out, which caused the seahorse’s eyes to go red. It instantly charged him again. The old man and the young woman watched on in astonishment as the Wooden Time Sword stabbed it through seven or eight more times.

The howls of the seahorse echoed out in all directions as its body rapidly withered. In a short moment, it was transformed into a desiccated corpse floating on the surface of the sea….

Meng Hao neared the corpse of the seahorse, then pushed down on it with his right hand. Immediately, a Demon heart flew into his hand. Up in midair, the old man and the young woman looked at Meng Hao with complex expressions. They looked as if they were on guard, especially when it came to the shocking sword he had used.

When Meng Hao looked up at them, the old man pulled the young woman into a position behind him, and also began to rotate his Cultivation base. He then clasped hands and bowed to Meng Hao.

“Many thanks for your assistance, Fellow Daoist,” he said, slowly backing up at the same time. He was obviously terrified of Meng Hao’s sword. “That mid-grade Demon heart is yours. If fate ever allows us to meet again, then I’ll definitely repay you.”

Meng Hao shook his head. “Don’t be in such a hurry to leave,” he said. Then he sent the Demon heart flying toward the shocked old man, who caught it without even thinking about it. He looked at the Demon heart and then looked back at Meng Hao, his heart filling with anxiety and doubt.

The young woman stared fixedly at the Demon heart in the old man’s hand and began to pant. The hatred deep in her eyes flickered again; she was obviously well aware of what the old man had almost done to her earlier.

“Fellow Daoist, you….” the old man said hesitatingly.

Choosing to not beat around the bush, Meng Hao said, “The two of you have pretty strong Cultivation bases. That Demon heart seems to be virtually the same as a mid-grade Spirit Stone. Why do you care so much about it?”

His words left the old man completely at a loss. The young woman also looked at Meng Hao with a quizzical expression.

The old man was quiet for a moment, then looked at Meng Hao and said, “Fellow Daoist… don’t tell me this is your first time in the Milky Way Sea?”

Meng Hao nodded.

The old man took a deep breath, then muttered a few things to himself as he put the Demon heart away.

“You’re right,” he then said. “The spiritual energy in this Demon heart is similar to a mid-grade Spirit Stone. However, one mid-grade Spirit Stone couldn’t buy you any Demon hearts at all!

“In the Three Sects’ Seahold, there are special locations that purchase Demon hearts.

“As for the exact value, it fluctuates. If I recall correctly, when I last left Seahold, one low-grade Demon Heart was worth 500 low-grade Spirit Stones!

“There were even some places that would pay 1000!”

When Meng Hao heard this, it didn’t matter that he had such a high Cultivation base, his mind filled with a roaring sound anyway. His bag of holding contained about 80-90,000 low-grade Demon hearts. If you calculated it out, they were worth… 80-90,000,000 low-grade Spirit Stones.

That number sent great waves crashing about inside of Meng Hao’s mind. His brain trembled, and he almost couldn’t believe it. During his entire life, he had never possessed so many Spirit Stones. He immediately began to breathe heavily.

“How much did you say?” he blurted without even thinking about it.

“Low-grade Demon Hearts range in value from several hundred to a thousand Spirit Stones….” said the old man. He didn’t seem to think anything about Meng Hao’s reaction was strange. Anyone who heard about the matter for the first time would be astonished.

“What about mid-grade Demon hearts?” Meng Hao followed up immediately.

The old man hesitated for a moment and rubbed his bag of holding, but continued on with his explanation: “Their value fluctuates too, but not too much. One mid-grade Demon heart is worth about 10,000 low-grade Spirit Stones!”

Meng Hao’s mouth went so dry that he couldn’t speak. Within his bag of holding were more than 30,000 mid-grade Demon hearts. After he calculated the number, his mind once again filled with roaring.

Now, he suddenly understood why people risked their lives to come here.

“I’m rich!” he thought. “I really am super rich!” Meng Hao couldn’t control the excitement that exploded out within him. The fact that his lifelong desire had suddenly been fulfilled caused his heart to begin to pound rapidly.

The old man looked at Meng Hao and continued, “Of course, there are even more rare Demon hearts, the high-grade variety. I’m actually not sure exactly how much they are worth, because they only appear in auctions.

“However, I do remember that at the last auction I attended, a high-grade Demon heart was sold for the incredible price of 670,000 Spirit Stones!”

When Meng Hao heard that, he went even more wild with joy. He had nearly 10,000 such high-grade Demon hearts in his bag of holding. All of a sudden, he felt as if an enormous golden ingot had fallen directly onto him.

Moments later, though, his face suddenly flickered when he remembered that among the seven or eight Demon hearts he had used to test out the duplication powers of the copper mirror, four had been high-grade Demon hearts.

He suddenly felt a twisting stab of pain in his heart.

“That means… I… yet again wasted more than 2,000,000 Spirit Stones? Fudge! That’s….” He had the sudden impulse to scream and curse. After taking a few deep breaths, he told himself that it wasn’t any worse than the matter with the 2,000 ultra high-grade Spirit Stones. After a bit of time, he calmed himself.

“Is there a type of Demon Heart even more precious than what you’ve already mentioned?” he asked. “Something similar to ultra high-grade Spirit Stones?” He happened to have exactly just such a Demon Heart in his bag of holding, the one he had acquired from the Whitebone Lily giant.

The man thought for a moment and then replied, “No such thing exists. Well, perhaps my Cultivation base isn’t high enough, or maybe I just have never encountered someone with access to such riches. However, in the Third Ring, there is something called a Whitebone Demon heart. They are incredibly rare precious treasures. Something like that would be priceless.”

Meng Hao’s heart trembled. He was almost certain that the Demon heart in his bag of holding, the one that was the size of an infant’s hand, was the Whitebone Demon heart that the old man had just mentioned.

“One more thing,” said the old man. “And probably the most important. In the Three Sects’ Seahold, most items can only be purchased with Demon hearts. That’s another reason why I value them so much.

“With this mid-grade Demon heart, I now have enough saved up to acquire Fortification Pill Powder. With that my… my apprentice can safely continue on through the Core Formation stage.” Having finished speaking, the old man backed up and bowed once again to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao gave a faint smile, and nodded. He was in an excellent mood now, and the only thing he could think about was going to Seahold to trade his Demon hearts for Spirit Stones.

“With so many Spirit Stones,” he thought, “I feel quite confident that I can… duplicate a hundred Wooden Time Swords that contain seven sixty-year cycles of Time. Then I can unleash the third form of the Lotus Sword Formation!” He took a deep breath and suppressed his excitement. He well knew that no one other than him would ever be able to possess one hundred Wooden Time Swords. Be it in the past, or in the future, it would be something completely rare, perhaps even absolutely unique.

It was only because of… the copper mirror, and its Heaven-defying duplication ability. Without that, it would be impossible to forge one hundred Wooden Time Swords. Every time he attempted to seal Time into the swords, a failure would leave the sword completely destroyed. Furthermore, the rate of failure was simply far too high.

“Actually, I might even be able to duplicate the Time Sword tip!” he thought, the brightness in his eyes growing even brighter. He was just about to turn and leave, when suddenly, the young woman gritted her teeth and then, seemingly throwing all caution to the wind, clasped hands and bowed toward Meng Hao.

“Senior,” she said, “please allow me to offer my respects.”

Meng Hao had already begun to leave when he heard the young woman’s words, and looked back.

Simultaneously, the old man’s face flickered, and he reached an arm out to hold back the young woman. A cold gleam of killing intent appeared in his eyes.

“Fellow Daoist, my apprentice is immature, please forgive her. Farewell!” With that, he grabbed the young woman and prepared to leave. He had already sealed her Cultivation base, making it impossible for her to speak. However, her eyes radiated despair, almost as if she wished she could die as the man pulled her away.

Meng Hao frowned. He had already realized that these two people were not apprentice and Master. In fact, based on his experiences, he had already formed some speculations about the old man’s true motivations.

Originally, he didn’t want to interfere, but after seeing the despair in the young woman’s eyes, he suddenly recalled the image of another woman.

“The look in her eye back in the Black Sieve Sect Blessed Land was exactly the same as this,” he thought. [1]

“Hold on a moment,” he said. Sighing to himself, he suddenly appeared directly in front of the old man.

The old man’s face flickered again. He hadn’t sensed anything at all just now. Moments ago, Meng Hao had clearly been behind him, but now, all of a sudden, here he was. The old man’s heart began to thump.

“Let her finish,” said Meng Hao. The old man had just given him some valuable information, so Meng Hao wasn’t willing to simply attack him.

The old man stood there silently for a moment, then loosened his grip.

A tremor ran through the young woman as her Cultivation base was restored. An unprecedentedly bright light appeared in her eyes, a light filled with hope. She once again gave Meng Hao a deep bow.

“Senior, it’s your first time to the Milky Way Sea. There are many things you don’t know, and the Three Sects’ Seahold has very strict rules. Regarding where to stay, outsiders would have a very hard time figuring out matters on their own.

“Senior, I grew up in Seahold, and know the place inside and out. If it would please you, I’m willing to act as your guide. I can save you a lot of time, if you’re willing.”

1. It was in the Black Sieve Sect Blessed Land that Meng Hao arrived just in time to prevent Xu Qing from being raped

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# Chapter 660: The Alcohol is Quite Strong

The woman’s words caused the old man’s face to grow very unsightly. He once again clasped hands to Meng Hao.

“Fellow Daoist, my apprentice doesn’t understand the way of things. Please, don’t take offense. Seahold might be large, but everything there is handled in an open and clear way. Once you go, Fellow Daoist, you will naturally understand.”

The young woman bit her lower lip, and said nothing more. She simply gazed at Meng Hao with a pleading look.

The old man was starting to get a bit worried. “Fellow Daoist,” he continued, “I answered all your questions without holding anything back. My apprentice is merely homesick. However, if we Cultivators wish to make progress, must step out of our comfort zones. That’s why I took her out into the world, to gain some experience.”

Meng Hao looked over the young woman and the old man, and then sighed inwardly.

“In the cultivation world, the law of the jungle prevails. I can’t do anything about that. However,” he said, shaking his head, “when it comes to our actions and decisions, there is an unwritten truth; habitual unjust behavior can prevent you from reaching Spirit Severing.”

“Many thanks for helping me achieve my aim!” said the old man, reaching out to grab the young woman.

“Senior!!” continued the young woman, “when you had a weak Cultivation base, didn’t you ever have a benefactor that was willing to help you…?” Before she could finish speaking, the old man’s hand latched onto her, and she immediately became like a puppet, capable only of shedding tears filled with despair and the desire to die.

When Meng Hao heard her words, he suddenly said, “Did I say you could leave?”

The words were simple, but as soon as the old man heard them, his mind trembled. The Nascent Soul inside of him began to tremble, and beads of sweat broke out on his forehead. He immediately stopped in place and slowly turned around, an expression of disbelief and shock on his face as he looked at Meng Hao.

It was in that instant that he realized that the Cultivation base of the person in front of him far, far exceeded his own.

Meng Hao’s voice was cool as he said, “This young woman has a unique physique suitable for certain dual-party cultivation techniques that extract the Yin to strengthen the Yang…. Your goal is nothing more than to use that power to break through a Cultivation base blockage.” With that, he lifted his right hand, causing ten mid-grade Demon hearts to fly toward the old man.

“Normally I wouldn’t interfere in such a matter,” he continued slowly, “but having encountered this young woman, it seems the two of us are connected by destiny. Thank you for answering my questions just now. Take these Demon hearts and leave.”

The old man struggled inwardly for a moment, but in the end, released the girl and collected up the Demon hearts. With a bitter smile, he clasped hands and bowed to Meng Hao, then hurried off into the distance.

Meng Hao’s Cultivation base was beyond his comprehension, and the gap between the two of them far too large. The old man didn’t even have the nerve to feel resentment, but rather, simply resigned himself to his fate.

As the old man made his way off into the distance, tears flowed ceaselessly down the young woman's cheeks, and she bowed over and over again to Meng Hao.

"Thank you for your kindness in rescuing me, Senior. I grew up on my own in Seahold, and will spare no effort to aid you." The gratitude she felt was clearly visible in her eyes. She had just evaded a huge calamity, and as a result, her voice quavered as she spoke. It seemed that all the courage she had shown just now completely vanished, and turned into weakness.

"What's your name?" asked Meng Hao, looking her over.

"Wei Li…. Junior's name is Wei Li," she replied softly, lowering her head to conceal the sorrow she felt because of her name. 1

Meng Hao nodded, but did not ask for any further details. Then, he flicked his sleeve, sweeping up the young woman to fly off into the direction of the Three Sects' Seahold, which was notated on the map he possessed.

Wei Li hesitated for a moment as she flew alongside Meng Hao. She looked around at the mist that surrounded them, and felt the incredible speed with which they were moving, something she had never experienced before. Her voice soft, she finally said, "Senior… are you… are you a rogue Cultivator?"

"Why do you ask that?" replied Meng Hao calmly.

"In the Third Ring, all the Nascent Soul Cultivators are either rogue Cultivators, or belong to Sects and Clans that provide special flight treasures. Such treasures make it possible to avoid a lot of trouble, and also allow you to meditate and practice cultivation while traveling."

Wei Li hesitated again, worried that she might somehow offend Meng Hao with her words. "Furthermore, upon entering Seahold, if you have such a flight treasure, you won't be interrogated."

"So that's how it is," said Meng Hao. After a moment's thought, he said, "Well, after I get to Seahold, I guess I'll just have to buy a few." He realized that he truly didn't have any sort of special flight treasure. Considering that it was possible to practice cultivation while riding such a treasure, Meng Hao started to feel somewhat excited.

Wei Li's eyes went wide, and she almost went on to tell Meng Hao that such flight treasures were extremely expensive. However, she didn't dare to actually open her mouth on the subject. Then she thought about how he had casually produced ten mid-grade Demon hearts, and she realized that he most likely had an incredible social standing.

After a long moment, she looked over Meng Hao's plain and unadorned robe, and then said, "Senior… you should probably change into a different set of clothing. In Seahold, you can purchase Daoist garments crafted from Sea Demons. According to the rumors, the highest quality garments can even resist an attack from the Spirit Severing level.

"If you prefer simple and unadorned clothing, Seahold has those too. However, regardless of whether it's in terms of the quality of material, or the defensive capabilities, such garments are unique to the Milky Way Sea. Every year, people come from various outside Sects and Clans to have them custom made."

Meng Hao looked down at his robes and nodded. He had never really paid much attention to his attire, but after listening to the young woman's words, he realized that they made sense.

"Hmm, yes. When we get there, I'll buy a few sets."

"Senior, there's also the matter of bags of holding. In the Milky Way Sea, you can get special holding treasures with a capacity a hundred times normal. Some even have other mysterious properties.

"In fact, the highest quality holding items can even store spiritual energy. That way, if you ever run low on magical power, you will have at least one chance to open your bag of holding."

"Such items exist?" asked Meng Hao. It all sounded so new and interesting to him. He nodded. "Okay, when I get there, I'll buy a few."

“Senior, do you have any voice transmission talismans on you? None? You should definitely buy some of the voice transmission talismans available in the Seahold. That way, you can communicate directly with anyone on the outside, no matter where you are in the Milky Way Sea.”

“Alright! I’ll buy several!”

“Senior, considering the level of your Cultivation base, you probably don’t need magical rings, but I still suggest that you buy a few….”

“Excellent. I’ll definitely purchase a handful.”

“Senior, if you plan to stay in the Third Ring for a long time, you might want to buy an Immortal’s cave in the city. Of course, the prices vary depending on the location….”

“I’ll buy the best one!”

As they traveled, Wei Li continued to evaluate Meng Hao from top to bottom. If it were any other situation, Meng Hao wouldn’t really pay attention. However, considering how many Demon hearts he had in his bag of holding, and the number of Spirit Stones he could trade them for, his heart surged with joy.

Filled with the feeling of being rich and imposing, and accompanied by someone describing all the amazing things he could buy, roused his spirit. He flicked his sleeve and decided to buy everything.

Several days later, Meng Hao peered at Seahold from some distance away as they approached. He had already lost track of how many things Wei Li had described to him, nor could he remember exactly what he had said he intended to buy.

However, Wei Li was very professional, and she had long since taken out a jade slip to keep meticulous records.

Up ahead, the Seahold looked matchlessly huge. It was like an ancient sea beast, slumbering upon the surface of the water. At the moment, it was evening, and the city was ablaze with lights. A cursory examination left Meng Hao with the impression that at least 100,000 Cultivators were inside.

The area was surrounded by patrolling Cultivators of the three Sects. Also visible in the middle of the city was a huge tower, adorned with resplendently glowing pearls. They also emanated invisible ripples that no one but Meng Hao could see, which spread out to cover the entire city.

The entire city was surrounded by a towering wall, part of which stretched down below the surface of the water. The wall was completely black, and looked very somber and ominous. Vicious-looking spikes encircled the city, upon which were impaled the dried-up corpses of Sea Demons.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. Within Seahold he could sense, at the very least, hundreds of restrictive spell formations. Clearly, if he attempted to charge directly into the city, it would be impossible.

If they were activated, these restrictive spell formations could easily destroy a Spirit Severing Cultivator.

If that were all there were to it, it might not be a big deal. However, Meng Hao could also sense an aura deep within the city that caused his scalp to grow numb. It seemed to be partly the aura of a Cultivator, and partly the aura of a magical item.

It was impossible to distinguish clearly, but Meng Hao was certain that whatever thing emitted this aura… vastly exceeded the power of Spirit Severing.

After glancing the city over, his eyes came to rest on the huge tower in the middle of the city. In that very moment, red-robed Saint Sun Soul sat cross-legged in that very tower, meditating. Suddenly, his eyes opened.

His gaze passed out from within the tower until it reached Meng Hao off in the distance. Although Meng Hao had changed his appearance, he still recognized him.

The two of them were separated by quite a difference, but they could both sense each other looking at each other. After a moment, they retracted their gazes.

Seeing that Meng Hao had stopped in mid-air, Wei Li looked at him and said, “Senior?”

After a moment, she continued, “Senior, do you have an identity medallion?

“If you do, then you can just enter directly. If you don’t, well, that will be a bit more troublesome….”

Meng Hao frowned. He did not have an identity medallion, and currently, they were standing directly in front of the city gate. Inside, three men sat cross-legged, meditating. In front of them stood a dozen or so Cultivators clutching command medallions. Occasionally, they would glance around with cold expressions.

It was already evening, but there was still quite a line of people outside, waiting to enter the Seahold.

When Meng Hao and Wei Li arrived, the three old men all opened their eyes at the same time. In that moment, Meng Hao could sense the fluctuating ripples coming from nearby restrictive spell formations.

He knew that if he showed even the slightest bit of malice, those spell formations would activate.

“Senior,” said Wei Li, “if you have no identity medallion, then I can go into the city first to buy one for you. Unfortunately, the price will be quite high. Also, I will only be able to get the most common type of identity medallion, which will cause problems later. However….” Even as she was in the middle of speaking, a bright beam of light suddenly flew out from within the city.

Inside was a beautiful woman wearing a pink garment. She was elegant and poised, and as soon as she appeared, the Cultivators in the city gate bent at the waist to bow deeply.

“Respects, Madam Lin!” [2]

At the same time, respectful expressions appeared on the faces of the other Cultivators in the area. One after another, they clasped hands and bowed.

“Greetings, Madam Lin!”

The poised and stately woman nodded and smiled. She passed through the crowds of people until she reached Meng Hao. As for Wei Li, she nervously backed up. Meng Hao’s expression was completely normal as he watched the woman everyone called ‘Madam Lin’ approaching. She stopped in front of him, and, as everyone watched, gave him a curtseying bow.

She didn’t speak, but she smiled and handed a gold-colored command medallion to Meng Hao.

“Someone asked me to pass you a message. The alcohol is quite strong.” She smiled and gave Meng Hao a deep look, then turned to leave.

As she walked away, everyone in the crowd turned to look at Meng Hao. Wei Li stared blankly at him, eyes wide.

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1. Wei Li’s name in Chinese is Wéi lí. It’s kind of a made up name. Wei means “only.” Li means “leave” or “depart.” The name sounds sad, perhaps to indicate that some sorrowful event occurred in her past

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# Chapter 661: Seeing Xiaoxiao Again

As the elegant woman left, the surrounding Cultivators began to cry out in surprise. “First-rank Seahold medallion!”

All eyes were on Meng Hao, and especially the gold-colored command medallion he was currently fiddling with.

“A first-rank Seahold medallion… only the Three Saints of the three Sects can give out such a gift!”

“This is only the second time I’ve ever seen that type of command medallion. This person must be an incredibly honored guest!”

As the buzz of conversation spread out, Meng Hao looked down at the command medallion. It was completely gold, and the image of a Seahold was carved on its surface. On the other side were the characters: Sun Soul Society.

A faintly discernible pressure would be felt emanated from within.

Wei Li’s eyes were wide and filled with disbelief. She stared blankly as she followed Meng Hao through the crowd to enter the Seahold. Everywhere they passed, the Cultivators of the three Sects would immediately clasp hands and bow to them with extremely respectful expressions.

Even after they had made their way well into the city, Wei Li’s mind was still abuzz. Finally, she took a deep breath and then looked at Meng Hao. He seemed to get only more and more mysterious to her.

Finally, she couldn't hold back any longer, and asked, "S-senior…. Sir, don't tell me you know Saint Sun Soul?"

"No, not really," replied Meng Hao casually, who was currently looking around. It was evening, but the city still bustled with noise and excitement, like a boiling cauldron.

Wei Li walked on for a few paces, but didn't seem convinced. "That's impossible. If you don't know him, why did Madam Lin personally give you a Seahold medallion? She's one of the revered Saint Sun Soul's two beloved, and she usually never appears in public."

Meng Hao looked back at her with an enigmatic smile. "I gave him a flagon of alcohol a while back."

A serious look appeared in Wei Li's eyes. She wasn't quite convinced, but what had happened earlier was just far too bizarre. On the other hand, to believe what Meng Hao just said, well, it seemed unimaginably fantastic.

"Forget about it," said Meng Hao, smiling. "Now, why haven't you taken me to one of those places that purchases Demon hearts?" Although he didn't act very imperious, Wei Li started to get a bit nervous. She quickly murmured her assent and then began to give an explanation.

"Senior, there are three locations in the Seahold that specialize in Demon hearts. Those would be the three Sea Pavilions belonging to the Sea Divinity Sect, the Flying Immortal Sect, and the Sun Soul Society.

"The prices they give might not be the highest, but they are always honest with all customers. No matter how many Demon hearts you bring, they can convert them into Spirit Stones.

"In addition to the locations run by the three Sects, there is also the Milky Way Auction House, which of course hold auctions.

"Furthermore, there are other random shops throughout the city that buy Demon hearts. Of course, when all is said and done, this is the Milky Way Sea, and usually you can just buy things directly with Demon hearts.

“In fact, Senior, if you plan to purchase a lot of items, I recommend that you… don’t exchange your Demon hearts into Spirit Stones right away. The majority of items in the Seahold can only be purchased with Demon hearts.”

Meng Hao thought silently for a moment, then nodded his head. “First, let’s go somewhere that sells flying magical items.”

“Senior, what type do you wish to purchase?” asked Wei Li.

“The best type!” declared Meng Hao loudly.

Wei Li’s eyes began to shine, and she immediately began to lead him off in a certain direction. She really was very familiar with the area. Evening continued to descend as she led him through Seahold for roughly the time it takes an incense stick to burn. Eventually, they came to a stop outside a particularly impressive pavilion.

It was built to look like an enormous, plum-colored airship. Although night was now falling, the entire building glowed with resplendent light. Ripples emanated out, and in front of the doors were two gigantic stone qilins, mighty and extraordinary in appearance.

As for the main door itself, it was roughly fifteen meters tall, and was constructed of deep sea driftwood. Looking at the structure from the outside, it truly seemed as if every bit of building material had been carefully selected, and was imbued with abstruse meaning. There were even magical symbols that were filled with strong spiritual energy. Almost anyone who looked at the building would be shocked by the level of luxury.

“When it comes to magical flight items, there are a total of eleven shops in Seahold where you can find them. The best is the Flying Immortal Sect’s Cloudburst Pavilion. The flying magical items here are often sought after even by outside Clans and Sects.” Wei Li was starting to get somewhat excited. In her world, the Cloudburst Pavilion was a place she could never step even half a foot into, let alone purchase any of the magical flight items inside.

The cost of such magical flight items far exceeded her imagination. The most she could normally do would be to glance in from outside. Now, though, she had a chance to actually enter, which left her very excited.

Meng Hao stood outside the Cloudburst Pavilion, studying it. He could see that the interior was decorated with beautiful extravagance. Bright lamplight illuminated everything, and the floors were actually paved with Spirit Stones.

Four or five customers could be seen inside, proud expressions on their faces as they walked about, listening to the Flying Immortal Sect disciples introduce the various magical flight items.

From the clothing they wore, it was possible to tell that they were wealthy and respected people. At a single glance, it was clear that they came from great Sects and Clans; these were definitely not nameless, rogue Cultivators.

Sitting cross-legged next to the entryway were two old men wearing brocaded robes. Their faces glowed with health, and they sat there meditating with eyes closed. Shockingly, their Cultivation bases were at the early Nascent Soul stage. To have Nascent Soul Cultivators acting as door guards would be enough to strike fear into the hearts of any rascals or thieves.

Inside the shop, three more Flying Immortal Sect disciples could be seen, two men and a woman. They were chatting happily, and occasionally, the woman would chuckle lightly. Her eyes sparkled enticingly, and she gave of an enchanting air.

However, they all completely ignored Meng Hao and Wei Li as they stood there outside the shop. They were used to people standing outside and gazing in with envy and admiration.

Meng Hao was just about to walk in, when suddenly, the sounds of laughing and chatting could be heard behind him. A group of Cultivators suddenly appeared, clustered around a woman. They made their way directly toward the shop.

Everyone on the road scurried to the side to make way for the group, their expressions filled with respect. Each and every Cultivator in the group were Chosen of the three Sects, figures who the others on the road would never dare to offend.

Regardless of whether you looked at them in terms of the clothes they wore, or their dispositions, they were imposing in all aspects.

Despite that, these Chosen of the three Sects were currently smiling, laughing, and gushing all sorts of flattery regarding the woman that they were escorting.

The woman was beautiful, and seemed incredibly delicate. Furthermore, her eyes occasionally flashed with a captivating look, which filled her with a tempting allure.

When the Cultivators that surrounded her managed to catch a glimpse of her smile, it caused their hearts to palpitate with eagerness.

Next to the woman walked a young man with slanted eyebrows and eyes that sparkled like stars. He was exceedingly handsome, and wore a long white robe. Overall, he looked completely dashing, with an extraordinary jade-like face.

“Xiaoxiao,” he said, smiling at the indescribably beautiful and striking woman. “This is the Cloudburst Pavilion of the Flying Immortal Sect. Please, step inside!” As he passed, his cool gaze passed over Meng Hao and Wei Li.

Immediately, the two old men sitting cross-legged in the shop opened their eyes and rose to their feet. The other three disciples also rushed forward. All of them bowed to the young man with deep respect.

“Greetings, Junior Leader.”

The young man nodded. His somewhat arrogant and complacent expression became gentle and refined as he turned to look at the woman named

Xiaoxiao. As they all entered the shop, the four or five customers inside quickly clasped hands and bowed deeply.

In contrast to the hubbub inside the shop, Meng Hao continued to stand outside calmly. However, a barely discernible, enigmatic smile tugged at his lips. Next to him, Wei Li had a look of extreme respect as she stared enviously at the woman named Xiaoxiao.

“What a coincidence,” thought Meng Hao. “I never expected to run into her in this place!” This woman was none other than Ji Xiaoxiao, whose promissory Meng Hao still possessed in his bag of holding. 1

“Come on,” he said coolly, “let’s go in.” Wei Li followed him as he stepped foot into the shop. Nobody paid the slightest bit of attention to them. Everyone circled about the Chosen of the three Sects, respectful smiles plastered on their faces.

Meng Hao waited for a moment, but no one came over to greet him. In the entire first floor of the Cloudburst Pavilion, not a single person even looked at the two of them. Meng Hao’s expression immediately darkened.

“So, this is how the Cloudburst Pavilion receives customers, huh?!” His voice immediately echoed out through the entire Cloudburst Pavilion, drawing the attention of everyone inside. Even Ji Xiaoxiao looked over, although she couldn’t recognize Meng Hao because of his changed appearance.

The Junior Leader of the Flying Immortal Sect frowned but continued to interact with Ji Xiaoxiao, occasionally pointing out various magical flight items.

Of course, the two old men noticed his furrowed brow. Immediately, their hearts began to thump. Looking a bit impatient, one of them pointed to the female Flying Immortal Sect disciple.

“Go deal with it,” he said.

Originally, the woman had been quite excited because of the arrival of the Chosen from the three Sects. She had hoped that her good looks might give her some special opportunities.

But now, having heard the old man’s words, resentment instantly bloomed in her heart. She didn’t dare to refuse the order, though, so, face grim and heart filled with irritation, she walked over to Meng Hao and Wei Li.

She glanced over the two of them, and felt more than ever that they weren’t even worth looking at, and were here to just cause mischief. “What kind of magical flight item do you want?” she asked coldly. “The cheapest magical item here costs fifty low-grade Demon hearts. If you can’t afford it, please leave.”

She couldn’t see Meng Hao’s Cultivation base, but this was the Cloudburst Pavilion of the Flying Immortal Sect. Even if he did have a high Cultivation base, it would be nothing she would hold in awe.

In this place, nobody would ever dare to make a scene.

Wei Li was a bit upset, but at the same time nervous. She looked over at Meng Hao.

“Show me the most expensive thing you have,” Meng Hao said coolly, his expression the same as ever.

“The most expensive?” replied the woman with a light laugh. She couldn’t prevent the look of ridicule from appearing in her eyes. She had worked in this place for years, and had seen far too many people just like this, people who believed themselves to be incredible. In the end, they would always leave ashen-faced and depressed.

The woman laughed coldly. “The most expensive item we have costs 5,000 low-grade Demon hearts. Fellow Daoist, do you want to have a look?”

Meng Hao thought for a moment, then nodded. “Sure, why not.”

“Well, a treasure like that is not something that anybody can just look at,” she replied. “If you want to see it, then according to the regulations, you have to pay a thirty percent down payment. Fellow Daoist, do you really want to look at it?” The ridicule in her tone was quite obvious. At the same time, she noticed that the group of Chosen was heading toward the second floor of the pavilion. Suddenly, she started to get a bit anxious.

“The door is over there, Fellow Daoist,” she said suddenly. “You can see yourself out.” With that, she turned to catch up with the group of Chosen.

1. Ji Xiaoxiao is the Ji Clan member whose chest Meng Hao face-planted into before going into the Demon Immortal Sect. He met her first when she was facing off against Fang Yu. Later, he blackmailed her into taking him to the corpse of her fellow Clan member who he had killed. Like many other South Heaven Cultivators, she owes him Spirit Stones from the time when they were all descending into the Fourth Plane of the Primordial Demon Immortal Plane

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# Chapter 662: Xu Pingping

To be the subject of such scorn here for no apparent reason caused Meng Hao to frown. If he revealed his Cultivation base, it would instantly resolve the situation. However, it was with great difficulty that he had managed to strike it rich. Therefore, since he could solve the problem with his Demon hearts, he didn’t want to use his Cultivation base to intimidate people.

Almost in the exact moment that the woman went to leave, Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding. Instantly, a rush of clattering could be heard as 1,500 low-grade Demon hearts piled up in the middle of the pavilion. They looked like a small mountain.

Glittering light flickered out, forming a resplendent scene. In addition, the sound that echoed out, along with the strong spiritual energy, immediately caused all of the Chosen who were about to go up to the second floor, to subconsciously look back. Looks of shock instantly appeared on their faces, after which bright glows appeared in their eyes.

Ji Xiaoxiao looked back at the Demon hearts. Despite her identity and Cultivation base, she was still shaken inwardly. She clearly knew the value of Demon hearts, and couldn’t stop herself from looking over at Meng Hao.

Next to her, the young man also gaped and began to breathe raggedly. Although he was a Junior Patriarch, the sight of more than a thousand low-grade Demon hearts piled up together was something even he would rarely see.

As for the female Flying Immortal Sect disciple, she was actually the last person to realize what had happened. When she saw everyone looking behind her, she subconsciously looked back. Then she saw the mountain of Demon hearts, and her mind went blank.

Roaring sounds filled her head, and she could scarcely believe what she was seeing. How could she possibly imagine that these two plainly dressed, almost rustic Cultivators, would actually… have so many Demon hearts?!

“S-senior… I….” stammered the woman.

“Is that enough?” asked Meng Hao coolly. “Now bring out your best product.” He waved his right hand.

RUMBLE!

A second mountain of Demon hearts appeared. Then, another rumbling could be heard, and a third mountain could be seen. In total, three small mountains of Demon Hearts now lay on the floor of the pavilion, a total of 5,000 Demon hearts. The resplendent light that shined out from them filled the entire area. Intense spiritual energy made the entire area seem like a Celestial paradise.

The woman’s mind was now roaring, and she was almost incapable of standing up straight. Her face was pale and filled with intense disbelief. She was literally incapable of imagining how the person she had just ridiculed could actually be such an ostentatious moneybags.

The other Chosen from the three Sects who currently stood on the stairs were also panting. Their eyes were wide as they stared at the Demon hearts. They dearly wanted to grab them for themselves.

Ji Xiaoxiao also stared in shock. She looked at Meng Hao, and gradually, a burning fervor rose up in her. As for the young man next to her, he took a deep breath as he stared at the Demon hearts.

The entire pavilion was filled with complete silence.

It was at this point that a peal of laughter could suddenly be heard coming from the second floor. A young woman walked out, wearing a set of revealing clothing. She seemed to be innately seductive; as she walked out, a fragrant aroma preceded her, and her forehead was adorned with a five-colored crystalline pattern. Even before Meng Hao could say anything to her, a charming smile could be seen on her face. An aura of maturity emanated out from her, filled with an intense attractiveness.

She walked slowly down the stairs, completely ignoring the Chosen as she passed them. In contrast, all of the Chosen bowed their heads and clasped hands to her.

As for the Junior Leader of the Flying Immortal Sect, when he saw the woman, he immediately lowered his head respectfully.

“Earlier today, I heard the magpies calling, so I knew that an honored guest would come to call. I’ve been waiting all day, although it was nothing more than resting, really. Now the honored guest is here.

“I am Xu Pingping. Greetings, Fellow Daoist.”

Meng Hao glanced at Xu Pingping and saw that she had a late Nascent Soul Cultivation base. She hid it well, but to Meng Hao’s eyes it was clearly visible.

His glance instantly caused Xu Pingping’s heart to quiver. His look gave her the feeling that he could see through every defense she had, all the way into her heart. It seemed almost like all her secrets could be thoroughly revealed, no matter how she tried to hold them back.

Instantly, she became nervous, although her expression did not change in the slightest. Her demeanor continued to be one of maturity and charm.

“Fellow Daoist, please come up to the second floor,” she said with a smile. “I’m sure that the Cloudburst Pavilion has everything that you need.” In both terms of her wording and her inner feelings, she was extremely respectful to Meng Hao.

He nodded, then walked up ahead to climb the stairs. Wei Li followed, her heart pounding. Everything that she had seen so far today had opened up a new world to her. She was both nervous and excited as she trailed after Meng Hao.

She was just about to step foot onto the stairs when suddenly she hesitated and quietly said to Meng Hao, “Senior, the Demon hearts….”

“No one in Seahold would dare to take my Demon hearts,” said Meng Hao slowly, continuing up the stairs. When his words echoed out into the ears of everyone present, their hearts trembled.

Such wording was incredibly domineering.

Xu Pingping’s eyes glittered. When she thought back to Meng Hao’s penetrating glance just now, she couldn’t help but be a bit more cautious than before.

As for the Chosen on the staircase, be they from the Flying Immortal Sect, or other Sects, without even thinking about it, they backed up to make way for Meng Hao. When he neared Ji Xiaoxiao, she looked up over curiously.

In return, he completely ignored her and proceeded on to the second floor.

Xu Pingping followed. As she passed the Chosen, she suddenly stopped and looked back at the two Nascent Soul Cultivators, as well as the other Flying Immortal Sect disciples whose job it was to receive guests.

“The two of you screw off,” she said coolly. “Go back to the Flying Immortal Sect immediately.” The two old Nascent Soul Cultivators tremblingly voiced their acknowledgement.

“The other four of you can also screw off. Go to the Flying Immortal Dungeon, where you will be punished for half of a sixty-year cycle!” Immediately, the Flying Immortal Sect disciples’ faces went deathly pale. They began to tremble, and appeared to be completely filled with terror.

“And as for you….” she said, looking at the dazed female disciple standing in the middle of the pavilion. “If I get in any trouble from the Sect because of you, you pathetic, dog-eyed slut, well, you wouldn’t be able to pay me back if you had ten lives. You’re expelled from the Flying Immortal Sect. Get out of here. The farther you screw off, the better.” With that, she turned and continued on to the second floor. When she passed Ji Xiaoxiao, she nodded and smiled.

The Cloudburst Pavilion only had two floors. The second floor was roughly the same size as the main hall. It was grand and imposing, and had an incense burner directly in the center. It was carved with strange creatures, and the smoke that wafted out from it made the second floor seem almost as if it were filled with mist.

After stepping foot onto the second floor, Meng Hao sat down in a nearby chair. Wei Li stood next to him, looking around. Her heart was nearly bursting with excitement; she had never imagined that one day she would be able to stand in a position like this.

Meng Hao’s expression was calm. He sat there, eyes closed, unspeaking. Moments later, Xu Pingping approached, her smile seemingly covering up the bitterness she felt inwardly.

“Senior, you left so many Demon hearts sitting in the main hall, I can’t help but be a bit nervous.”

Meng Hao opened his eyes and looked at her with an enigmatic smile. As soon as his gaze fell upon her, she got a bit more nervous, and even her smile started to feel a bit forced.

“I want a magical flight item,” he said calmly. “The best you have.”

“I already have everything prepared, Senior,” said Xu Pingping. She clapped her hands three times, after which three women clad in delicate gauze skirts floated out from the smoke of the incense burner. Each of them carried a silver platter, which they held up high as they respectfully approached.

By this point, Ji Xiaoxiao and the others had arrived on the second floor and were looking over from off to the side. Obviously, they were less interested in the magical flight item and more interested in Meng Hao.

The items on the three silver platters included a reddish, copper short sword, a violet wooden boat, and a loom shuttle.

Xu Pingping looked at Meng Hao and smiled.

“Red Copper Sword,” she said. “It expands when it rushes against the wind, becoming three thousand meters long. Nine levels of ghost images will appear inside of it, and it can accommodate three hundred passengers. It also contains a swarm of 10,000 short swords.

“Violet Wooden Boat. It can accommodate two hundred passengers, and has no offensive spell formations, nor any defensive spell formations. However, its speed… is similar to a First Severing Cultivator. Unfortunately, it consumes Spirit Stones at a high rate, one low-grade Spirit Stone for every three breaths of time!

“Soul Loom Shuttle. It is only nine meters long, with average speed. However, its most powerful advantage is its Wind Blade function. Every hour, it can produce a single Wind Blade. As long as you have enough Spirit Stones, there is no limit to the number it can produce.

“These three items are the highest level flying items that we manufacture here at the Cloudburst Pavilion. Which one would you like, Fellow Daoist?”

When the Chosen from the three Sects saw the three magical flight items, their faces filled with longing. They well knew that these items were incredible.

Meng Hao frowned slightly. Others might view the items as high quality, but considering the level of his Cultivation base, they didn’t quite meet up to his expectations.

Seeing Meng Hao’s frown caused Xu Pingping’s heart to quiver, and she started to pant a little. His frown, coupled with what had happened earlier, caused her to start to formulate some speculations about Meng Hao.

She hurriedly continued, “Although, I actually advise you not to purchase these items, Fellow Daoist. They seem incredible, but are actually relatively ordinary. Despite being expensive, they are standard manufacture items; in the lands of South Heaven, you will find quite a few people who own them.”

“Oh?” said Meng Hao, looking at Xu Pingping.

“Senior,” she said softly, her eyes glittering, “if you have enough Demon hearts, then the Cloudburst Pavilion can offer you a one-of-a-kind precious treasure!” She raised her right hand and performed an incantation, then pointed at the incense burner.

Immediately, the incense burner began to rumble, attracting all eyes in the room. Suddenly, vast quantities of smoke poured out from inside, within which could be seen, shockingly, an illusory bronze war chariot!

The war chariot emanated an air of ancientness, and was surrounded by crackling lightning. It was also covered with cracks that made it seem as if it had experienced the baptism of flames of war and countless battlefield bloodbaths.

An indescribable pressure spread out from it, and visible on its surface were numerous flying beasts that almost looked alive. Although no one else could tell, when Meng Hao looked at them, they almost seemed alive.

To his eyes, all of the beasts were living, and struggling, letting out roars that caused his mind and heart to tremble.

He made a slight “eee?” sound, then reached his right hand up to touch his left eye. Then he blinked nine times, causing the Immortal Qi of Immortal Shows the Way to circulate inside of him. When he looked at the war chariot this time, the flying beasts all merged together to transform into a black wing!

Unfortunately, there was only one.

Meng Hao looked away and closed his eyes. After a moment he opened them again and looked at Xu Pingping.

“How much?” he asked.

Xu Pingping’s heart was trembling. Things were not quite going according to her plan for this item. Then she thought of Meng Hao’s actions earlier, and she started to regret.

“Fellow Daoist, this item isn’t for sale. It’s….”

Meng Hao’s face immediately darkened, and suddenly, a shocking pressure emanated out from him to envelop the entire area. It almost seemed as if a storm were coming.

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# Chapter 663: Rich and Headstrong!

Meng Hao looked at Xu Pingping for a moment, then retracted his energy. The second floor returned to normal. However, the pressure just now had caused sweat to begin to stream down her back. The feeling she got was the same as that you might feel when facing some ancient beast.

However, the only one to feel the pressure had been Xu Pingping, and no one else. Neither Ji Xiaoxiao nor the Chosen from the three Sects had felt anything. The only thing they had noticed was the change in Xu Pingping’s expression.

“Name a price,” said Meng Hao coolly. To hear himself saying such words caused Meng Hao’s heart to surge. In his hundreds of years of practicing cultivation, his money purse had always been empty. Even when he occasionally fell into some profit, it would inevitably be sucked away by the copper mirror.

But now, he finally had the confidence derived from achieving the dream he had kept in his heart since childhood….

I’m rich, fools!

Next to him, Wei Li’s eyes shone brightly. She continued to have the strong feeling that Meng Hao was almost glowing, emanating an indescribable aura that battered against her face.

Xu Pingping, feeling somewhat intimidated by Meng Hao’s display, nervously said, “It really isn’t an issue of the price….”

“6,000 low-grade Demon hearts,” said Meng Hao, lifting his chin up proudly.

“That’s….”

“Not enough? How about 8,000?” Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever, but inwardly, that surging feeling grew more intense. To suddenly go from being broke to rolling in wealth gave Meng Hao the feeling that he could buy the entire shop if he felt like it.

This was a confidence that had nothing to do with Cultivation base. The more confident he felt, the more powerful his words became.

I’m REALLY rich, fools!

Even Xu Pingping, who was so experienced and knowledgeable, was shocked by the confidence and power in his words. Her eyes went wide, and she sucked in a deep breath. 8,000 low-grade Demon hearts was an extremely high price!

Wei Li stared blankly at Meng Hao with wide eyes. Mentally, she was calculating how much 8,000 low-grade Demon hearts were worth in Spirit Stones.

As for the Chosen of the three Sects, and Ji Xiaoxiao, when they heard Meng Hao’s words, their jaws dropped and they stared in shock. As of now, they suddenly realized that he really did exude the air of a rich person….

The eyes of a few of the female disciples began to shine brightly as they looked at Meng Hao. Although they hadn’t noticed before, they could see now… this guy was incredibly handsome and had an extraordinary air. He was elegant and dashing, clearly different from the average person.

Although Meng Hao’s tried to keep his expression the same as usual, anyone who looked at it would feel as if the following characters were clearly written there:

I’m Mr. Moneybags!

Xu Pingping’s eyes were wide, and her heart was pounding. “I think….”

“Still not enough?” said Meng Hao. Waving his hand in imitation of the rich folk he remembered from Yunjie County, he cleared his throat and said. “No problem. 10,000 low-grade Demon hearts works for me.”

When he saw the shock on the faces of the bystanders when they heard this, Meng Hao felt quite pleased inwardly, even more so than if he had just experienced an increase in Cultivation base.

Xu Pingping gasped. Ji Xiaoxiao’s eyes were fixed on Meng Hao. As for the Junior Leader of the Flying Immortal Sect, and the Chosen from the three Sects, all of them gaped with wide eyes and slack jaws.

Xu Pingping struggled visibly for a moment before replying, “Senior, this war chariot was delivered to us only recently. Apparently, it appeared on the border between the Second and Third Rings. I haven’t even notified the Sect about it yet.”

Meng Hao’s expression was calm, but his eyes flickered. He definitely did not mind being addressed as Senior.

“If my speculations are correct, Senior, you have come to the Milky Way Sea because of the Sea Devils in the Second Ring, as well as… the legendary ancient battleship!

“This bronze war chariot is filled with ancientness, and is obviously an object from ancient times. For it to appear here indicates that there is a high possibility it originated from the ancient battleship.

“I only have one request, Senior. When you go searching for the ancient battleship, can you take Junior with you? You don’t have to provide me with any assistance. As long as I step foot onto it, all obligations will have been fulfilled.

“In return, I will sell the item to you for 5,000 Demon hearts.”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered.

“And what if I don’t go looking for the ancient battleship?” he asked coolly.

Without hesitation, Xu Pingping replied, “If that is your wish, Senior, then I will have to resign myself to such an outcome.” She quickly performed an incantation with her right hand and then pointed toward the incense burner. Instantly, the smoke inside parted, and the bronze war chariot flew out, almost as if it were trying to escape the pavilion.

Meng Hao waved his right hand, causing the war chariot to immediately stop in midair. It was irresistibly pulled down, shrinking down to the size of the hand of an infant as it landed on Meng Hao’s palm. He immediately put it into his bag of holding.

He stood up, completely ignoring Xu Pingping. Accompanied by Wei Li, and beneath the burning gazes of the Chosen of the three Sects, he walked in the same manner as the number one moneybags of Yunjie County, Steward Zhou. He clasped his hands behind his back and strolled toward the stairs. 1

It was when he stepped foot onto the first stair that Meng Hao finally looked back at Xu Pingping.

“Give me a voice transmission talisman,” he said.

Xu Pingping instantly went wild with joy. Panting, she took out a voice transmission talisman and respectfully handed it over.

Meng Hao put the talisman away and, escorted by Xu Pingping, walked down the stairs and left the Cloudburst Pavilion.

Outside, the sky was already dark, and the sea breeze blew against his face. Wei Li was sweating, and a bit in a daze as she glanced back and forth between Meng Hao and the Cloudburst Pavilion.

Considering how late it was, Meng Hao chose not to go to any more shops, but instead relied on Wei Li’s assistance to find a place to stay. In the end, he rented a private residence with its own main gate.

The residence was actually an Immortal’s cave, and the most expensive type available in Seahold. It had a defensive spell formation, as well as a passageway connecting it to the seafloor, where there was a special chamber designed for secluded meditation. Despite being on the seafloor, the meditation chamber still fell under the general defensive spell formations of Seahold, which meant that no sea beasts would come near it.

At first, Meng Hao planned to actually purchase the residence, but after further thought, he couldn’t bear to spend so many Spirit Stones, and decided instead to rent it.

The residence had many rooms, which meant that Wei Li had her own private room. As the night wore on, she thought back to everything that had happened during the day, and also about how Meng Hao had saved her. Subconsciously, she had allowed Meng Hao’s visage to be deeply imprinted into her mind. However, she knew that there was a vast gap between them in terms of status and identity, and after considering the matter for a while, she sighed and then closed her eyes to meditate.

As for Meng Hao, he sat cross-legged in his own room, surrounded by quiet. Around the time of the third watch, he suddenly opened his eyes.

“I’m finally rich,” he murmured. “It’s too bad that Steward Zhou has long since passed away. If I have a chance in the future, I’ll find some of his descendants and pay back those three pieces of silver that I owe.

“Or… nah, I’m rich now! I’ll pay back a little bit extra.” He smiled and patted his bag of holding.

Then he lifted up his hand, upon which appeared the bronze war chariot.

It was impossible to tell how many springs and autumns the bronze chariot had passed through, but it was covered with flecks of rust, and filled with an air of ancientness, as if it had been buried in the darkness for countless years.

Looking at it caused a strange feeling to well up in Meng Hao. It almost seemed as if the bronze war chariot were currently retelling the stories of the bloodbaths it had witnessed, as if it were describing an explosive, bloodthirsty bellicosity of some long forgotten age.

The beasts carved on its surface looked like dead things, but in Meng Hao’s eyes, they were alive. It was as if they had been sleeping for tens upon tens of thousands of years, waiting for the day in which they would awaken and then roam carefree in Heaven and Earth.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he sent out some Cultivation base power through his right hand into the bronze war chariot. Immediately, faint ripples emanated out, and the war chariot began to expand in size.

Meng Hao was prepared for this, and quickly stepped out into the courtyard. Then he raised up his right hand. With a rumbling sound, the war chariot flew up into the air, continuing to expand until it was roughly nine meters large.

Ripples spread out, and the war chariot glowed with light. The ripples, however, seemed to be filled with decay, and the glow was somewhat dim.

Meng Hao’s body flickered to reappear inside of the war chariot. His right hand touched its side, and he sent out more Cultivation base power. The war chariot trembled and then began to speed up into the air.

It moved with such incredible speed that Seahold quickly became a tiny dot below him. Although the war chariot screamed through the night air, it didn’t vibrate or shake even the least bit.

In exactly this same moment, Saint Sun Soul sat cross-legged meditating in the tall tower in the middle of Seahold. Next to him was the elegant and poised Madam Lin, who gripped a huge feather in both hands, which she was using to perform a conjuring. The feather emanated an aura of rot and decay. At the same time, swirling white lights wafted through the air, to be breathed in by Saint Sun Soul, who currently wore a black robe.

Even in the middle of the cultivation, Saint Sun Soul’s eyes suddenly opened, and he looked off into the distance.

“What’s wrong?” asked Madam Lin, looking over at him.

“Nothing,” he replied. “That troublesome fellow from before is testing out a magical item. Hmph. The both of them are equally mediocre.” His face grew dark, and it was hard to tell exactly what he was going on in his mind.

“Didn’t he give you a flagon of alcohol as a gift?”

As soon as Saint Sun Soul heard the word ‘alcohol,’ his face twitched.

“He was actually threatening me,” he said.

Madam Lin stared in shock, but didn’t respond. As for Saint Sun Soul, he didn’t bring up the matter of the alcohol again.

Meanwhile, Meng Hao was up in mid-air, frowning. He stood there in the war chariot, examining it with a puzzled expression.

“This thing is about as fast as a First Severing Cultivator. However, it expends a lot of Cultivation base power. Too bad I can actually move much faster without it.

“Furthermore….” His eyes flickered as he looked at the rust marks on the chariot, which were actually slowly growing larger. “The more I use it, the more the damage spreads. Soon, the rust will fill the whole thing, and it will be useless.” With that, Meng Hao lifted up his right hand and then slapped it down onto the chariot.

A boom could be heard, and the chariot trembled. Low-pitched roaring sounds emanated out from within, and illusory figures began to surge out.

They were the images of fierce beasts, each one unique. There was a giant ape, a horned lion, even a two-headed giant bear. The various fierce beasts all lifted their heads up and roared.

However… they all were restrained by amorphous chains which connected them to the war chariot. Also… all of their eyes were closed!

Not a single one had opened its eyes.

As soon as they appeared, an intense pressure appeared in the area. Even still, the frown on Meng Hao’s face deepened. He had just noticed that the rust was spreading through the war chariot even faster than before.

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# Chapter 664: War Chariot!

“At the most, I can use it only ten more times.” Meng Hao examined the rust. It almost looked like rot, that, wherever it went, caused the bronze to turn into scrap metal.

“I almost feel like I’m not using it properly,” he murmured to himself. “If using it damages it, then… huh?” Suddenly, his heart trembled.

“Not using it properly?” His eyes glittered, and the trembling of his heart increased in intensity as he thought back to the scene revealed by Immortal Shows the Way, back in the Cloudburst Pavilion.

After a moment’s thought, Meng Hao once more slapped the war chariot. Instantly, the beasts surrounding the war chariot vanished, and chariot began to shrink down. Soon it was yet again the size of an infant’s hand, resting on his palm.

He floated there in mid-air, and after a moment of detailed inspection, he suddenly began to pick up on some clues.

“Its surface is inscribed with ancient magical symbols that don’t seem to be an actual part of the war chariot….

“And then there are the chain carvings. They don’t seem to merge perfectly with the original chariot, as if they were added later.” His eyes glittered for a moment before he suddenly closed his right eye. He blinked nine times and also unleashed the Immortal Qi of Immortal Shows the Way, pouring it into his eye. Immediately, the bronze war chariot’s appearance changed.

It was no longer a war chariot, but rather, a mass of ferocious beasts. They were intertwined together such that, from a distance, they looked like a black wing!

The black wing was indistinct, but Meng Hao was sure that it was actually the wing of a butterfly!

His heart trembled, and he took a deep breath. He circulated some more Qi of Immortal Shows the Way, then focused closely… on the butterfly wing.

The instant he looked at it, a roaring filled his mind. The world in front of him shattered, almost like a mirror breaking. Within that breaking, the mirror turned into countless flickering images that Meng Hao couldn't see clearly.

However, there was one image that instantly branded itself into his memories!

He saw a land in which clouds roiled in the sky, filled with crackling lightning. A man wearing black garments stood in the war chariot, looking down coldly at the lands below.

It almost seemed as if the man were the Heavens, the will of the sky itself.

An interminably rotating vortex could be seen on his forehead, and in his right hand was a string of blank, white prayer beads that seemed to be waited to receive sealing marks.

As for the war chariot in which the man stood, it looked very similar to the one Meng Hao had just recently acquired, except that there were no magical symbols on it.

Beneath the war chariot was an endless sea, in the center of which was an enormous tree that towered up into the sky. Sitting at the crown of the tree was a small boy who smiled as he looked out over the world.

Fluttering in the air around the boy were nine butterflies. Off in the distance were countless living things practicing cultivation. 1

Everything was very quiet and peaceful….

Meng Hao's mind roared, and then the vision faded away. He panted, and a strange light gleamed in his eyes as he looked at the war chariot in his palm.

“That vision….” His eyes flickered, and after taking a few breaths, he lifted up his left hand and pushed it down onto the bronze war chariot to slowly wipe away a magical symbol.

In total, there were ninety-nine magical symbols on the war chariot.

A gentle but also ferocious light rose up from Meng Hao’s hand. He continued to rub the war chariot until he finally succeeded in wiping away a magical symbol. By this point his face was pale. It didn’t seem difficult to wipe away the magical symbol, but actually, he had wasted a significant amount of Cultivation base power to do so.

As soon as the magical symbol was wiped away, the bronze war chariot trembled. Sounds like howls erupted out from within, as if some ancient sleeping giant was suddenly beginning to awake.

When the sound reached his ears, Meng Hao’s spirit was shaken.

“These magical symbols and chains were actually added later. If it wasn’t done as a seal, then it was a method to try to control the chariot due to a lack of understanding of its proper usage.

“That improper usage is actually the source of the damage!” He took a deep breath, and was just about to wipe away a second magical symbol when suddenly, his hand stopped, and a look of doubt could be seen in his eyes.

“Why is it that only I could see the images on the war chariot? Anyone who saw them would know that something was different about it on the inside.” His eyes flickered as he looked down at his own torso.

After a long moment, he slowly murmured, “Immortal Shows the Way…. Choumen Tai!”

The reason he could see the images on the war chariot, and also know the correct way to use it, was all because of the Immortal Qi of Immortal Shows the Way.

“Could it be that this is an Immortal treasure?” He thoughtfully lifted his left hand up again and began to slowly wipe away a second magical symbol.

The bronze war chariot began to glow with even more intensity, and the howling from inside grew clearer.

Next, Meng Hao wiped away a third magical symbol, then a fourth. When he wiped away the tenth magical symbol, the bronze war chariot began to emit a droning sound, and expanded until it was thirty meters large.

The glow emanated out in all directions, as well as a pulsing pressure. Even Meng Hao could feel that he was affected by the intense pressure, which made it impossible to get close to the chariot; he was instantly forced back a bit.

His eyes shining brightly; having erased ten magical symbols, his Cultivation base was virtually exhausted. After closing eyes for a while to recover, he frowned.

“The more magical symbols I wipe away, the more difficult it gets.” His body flickered as he shot toward the war chariot. As he neared, a ring of yellow light suddenly appeared around the chariot.

It quickly began to expand out, filling Meng Hao’s mind with a sense of danger. He shot backward, quickly emerging from within the yellow light. Then he forced out a bit of the Immortal Qi of Immortal Shows the Way to circulate through his body, then shot back in his original direction.

This time, no circle of yellow light appeared. He moved with incredible speed, arriving at the war chariot in the blink of an eye. He didn’t have very much Immortal Qi in his body, and it wouldn’t last long before vanishing.

He placed his hand onto the war chariot. After a moment of thought and rest, he rotated his Cultivation base, pouring power into the war chariot. However, the power seemed to disappear like a rock sinking down into the ocean. There was no reaction whatsoever from the war chariot.

Meng Hao stilled his Cultivation base, and then, without the slightest hesitation, sent out some more Immortal Qi. It was only a sliver, but the instant it flowed out from his hand into the war chariot, the entire world seemed to start rumbling.

A gigantic vortex appeared up in the sky, booming as it spun. Countless bolts of lightning crackled out in all directions. The entire area seemed to have suddenly gone wild, as if all Heaven and Earth were suddenly collapsing.

Meng Hao suddenly felt as if he were fusing with the war chariot, becoming one with it. Then he saw the image of the black-clothed man with the vortex on his forehead, the one from his vision moments ago.

At the same time, a thrumming sound could be heard from the chariot as the images of countless ferocious beasts appeared up ahead. All of them were fastened with chains, and let out soundless roars. They began to run forward, pulling the war chariot with them through the sky. It transformed into something like a shooting star that flew off into the distance with indescribable speed.

The speed with which it moved caused rumbling booms to fill the sky as it shot forward. Yellow ripples emanated out, sweeping through the night sky, filling it with a yellow glow.

At the moment, black-robed Saint Sun Soul suddenly stood up within the tower in Seahold. A look of astonishment appeared in his eyes as he suddenly vanished and then reappeared outside in mid-air. He looked off into the distance, his expression changing multiple times.

“What magical item is that!?” he gasped. Moments ago, his Cultivation base had twitched with a feeling of terror. The feeling was not something he was completely unfamiliar with; it was something he might experience when facing the Sect’s ancestral legacy treasure.

“Is that a legacy treasure?” he thought to himself.

Meng Hao’s heart was filled with shock. The strand of Immortal Qi that he sent out from Immortal Shows the Way caused the war chariot to leave Seahold behind in the blink of an eye. Although there was still seawater underneath him, he had no way to tell whether or not he was still in the Third Ring.

This stretch of sea looked very strange, and the waters, almost black. Everything was quiet; not even a single ripple could be seen on the surface of the water, much less any waves.

“Where… where did that speed come from!?” said Meng Hao with a gasp. He looked down at the war chariot, a look of shock on his face.

“This is a precious treasure!

“Unfortunately, only the power of an Immortal can make it work. This treasure… will not even recognize my Cultivation base.” He sighed. The only Immortal Qi he had was from Immortal Shows the Way. He could use bits of it to employ the Celestial Vision technique, but to use it in battle was like trying to put out a burning horse cart with a single cup of water.

“Immortal Qi…. So this thing really is an Immortal treasure. It only works when fueled by Immortal Qi….” As he considered these matters, his heart suddenly trembled as a bizarre notion appeared in his mind.

“Is the Qi of Immortal Shows the Way really Immortal Qi? Is it possible… that it really isn’t Immortal Qi, but rather, something else….?” Before he could consider the idea very much, he suddenly looked down at the sea below.

The previously still waters were now suddenly filled with ripples. A crocodile appeared, three hundred meters long… heading in his direction.

Crocodiles were not something that would normally appear in the sea, but there was one here right now. It was completely black, and its eyes were somber and cold. On its back were countless ferocious looking bumps and lumps.

Sitting cross-legged amidst the bumps and lumps was a man wearing a dilapidated set of clothing. His expression was cold as he… looked up at Meng Hao.

In the instant in which he looked at Meng Hao, the man’s eyes filled with a bloodthirsty killing intent.

“Cultivator?” he said, his unpleasant voice hoarse and grating. When he opened his mouth to speak, blackened teeth could be seen. To Meng Hao, his entire person seemed to radiate complete vileness.

An aura of Spirit Severing suddenly exploded out of him. At the same time, the crocodile suddenly lifted its head up and roared, also exploding with a Spirit Severing aura. The seawater was in chaos, and a pulsating, fishy stench rose up.

“This is the Devil Sea,” said the man. “Now that you’re here, you won’t be leaving.” With that, he made a grasping motion, causing the air in the area to condense. An incredible pressure then weighed down.

Meng Hao gaped. “Devil Sea?”

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# Chapter 665: The Dawn Immortal Once Again

Meng Hao gave a cold snort as he looked at the young man and how he caused the air in the area to seemingly collapse under the pressure of a gesture. Meng Hao was just about to make a move when he stopped. He stood there in the war chariot, motionless.

He allowed the thunderous roaring to descend upon him, but then, even as it neared, the war chariot automatically emitted a yellow ring of light. The ring expanded out and then slammed into the collapsing air.

A boom rattled out, followed by cracking sounds. Everywhere the yellow ring of light passed was left completely calm and tranquil.

A red glow appeared in the eyes of the man on the crocodile. He then leaped into the air and shot toward Meng Hao, followed by the crocodile, who opened its gaping mouth as it ferociously charged out of the water.

The man closed in, and he didn’t perform an incantation, but instead reached his hand out in a claw-like gesture. Instantly, his fingers all turned pitch black and began to emanate a black fog. The black fog from his five fingers swirled and twisted, transforming into a vicious flood dragon that then charged toward Meng Hao.

A boom echoed out as the flood dragon slammed into the expanding yellow ring of light, and was deflected away. The snapping crocodile also hit the yellow ring, whereupon it let out a bloodcurdling scream as its teeth were shattered. It then retreated at top speed.

Meng Hao gave a faint smile. As for his opponent, he retreated backward a bit, a look of anxiety and doubt on his face as he stared fixedly at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s smile turned wide and splendid. As of now, he realized that the war chariot truly was a precious treasure. As long as he was inside it, it would activate defense powers even if he didn’t imbue it with Immortal Qi.

“There is neither any enmity nor hatred between us,” said Meng Hao. “Why engage in magical combat? I came here by accident, so I’ll take my leave now.” With that, he placed his hand onto the war chariot and then circulated Immortal Shows the Way, and was about to send the war chariot speeding away.

Suddenly, though, the expression of man in the dilapidated clothing grew even more vicious. He lifted his head up and let out an ear-piercing shout. At the same time, his body began to distort and expand. In the blink of an eye, his skin was replaced by black scales. At the same time, his shape began to change, until he didn’t look like a person, but rather… a black flood dragon!

His body flickered again, and he was now over three hundred meters long. His eyes radiated savagery and avarice as he stared at Meng Hao there in the war chariot.

“You will stay,” said the flood dragon. As it spoke the language of humans, black flames accompanied the words. “Consuming you will help improve my Cultivation base. As for that treasure of yours… that also will stay behind.”

The black flames spit out by the flood dragon emanated a green glow along with a rotten stench that seemed to indicate they were imbued with poisons. They shot toward Meng Hao at top speed.

A sea of flames surrounded him, emanating intense heat and power that caused everything to ripple and distort. Waves undulated on the surface of the sea below, as if it couldn’t bear the level of heat. The crocodile had long since retreated off into the distance; it floated there in the water, staring at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s face darkened as he looked coldly at the flood dragon on the other side of the black flames. He lifted up the hand that he had placed onto the war chariot, and ceased to rotate Immortal Shows the Way.

“I thought you were a Cultivator, but it turns out you’re a Sea Demon,” said Meng Hao calmly. “Since you’re looking to die, I guess I’ll help you fulfill your wish.” Meng Hao’s personality was fully on display; the calmer he was, the greater his desire to kill.

Even as he spoke, Meng Hao started to move forward. He stepped out of the war chariot and entered into the black sea of flames. Seeing that he dared to emerge left the flood dragon astonished, and he immediately began to back up.

“I can be crafty too!” said Meng Hao. He waved his hand, and another sea of flames sprang up. These flames were red, and sprang up high into the sky around Meng Hao. As soon as the red flames touched the black flames, an intense rumbling sound could be heard. At the same time, Meng Hao emerged on the outside.

The flood dragon’s face fell, and he continued to move backward in retreat. However, before he could get very far, Meng Hao turned into a green smoke. As for the flood dragon, his heart was pounding in his ears. The fact that Meng Hao dared to emerge from the war chariot was obviously not a good thing. Even as he retreated, Meng Hao suddenly appeared behind him.

A hand raised up, and a fist descended.

The fist seemingly landed on nothing but air. However, a huge rumbling could be heard, and the flood dragon felt as if a mountain were crushing down onto him. Blood sprayed from his mouth, and a look of astonishment appeared on his face. He let out a miserable shriek.

At the same time, the crocodile opened its mouth wide and charged, ignoring any danger whatsoever as it shot toward Meng Hao.

“Trifling First Severing Cultivation base,” said Meng Hao. “You’re not the first one I’ve killed like that.” Not even deigning to look at the crocodile, he punched backward.

BAM!

A tremor ran through the crocodile and then, starting from its head, it began to shatter. In the blink of an eye, the shattering spread out through its entire body. A final bang could be heard as it exploded into bloody pieces.

A fist-sized black Demon heart transformed into a black beam of light that flew into Meng Hao’s hand. He put it into his bag of holding and then looked at the flood dragon. The flood dragon’s trembling increased in intensity.

He took a deep breath, and then turned around. Clouds suddenly circulated beneath him, a divine ability which would enable him to shoot down into the waters below.

Meng Hao’s right hand flickered in an incarnation gesture, and he pointed out.

“Demon Sealing, Eighth Hex!”

Demonic Qi appeared, transforming into numerous invisible, thin strands that wrapped around the flood dragon. It instantly stopped moving, which left the flood dragon scared witless. Even as he struggled, Meng Hao waved his right hand, causing ten Wooden Time Swords to fly out one after another and then pierce through the flood dragon.

A bloodcurdling shriek echoed about as the flood dragon began to rapidly wither. His expression was one of intense fear as he could feel his life force rapidly disappearing.

Feeling death approaching, he suddenly shook and then spit a pearl out of his mouth. The pearl was about the size of a fist, and was not black, but completely and utterly white.

As soon as the pearl appeared, it emanated a soft glow, along with a thick, fragrant aroma. The spiritual energy in the area even grew stronger. A powerful shockwave spread out, causing rumbling booms as the dragon shook free of the binding strands, forced back the wooden swords, and then shot down toward the sea, carrying the pearl with it.

In the blink of an eye, he splashed into the water and then disappeared.

A strange light appeared in Meng Hao's eyes. He looked at the white pearl, and the first thought that ran through his mind was that he was sure he could sell the thing for an exorbitant price.

As soon as the thought entered his mind, the last trace of his hesitation disappeared as he flashed through the air, circulating Immortal Shows the Way as he stepped foot onto the war chariot. His hand touched the chariot, and it instantly began to vibrate and shoot down toward the sea.

In the blink of an eye, he was underwater. Everything around was pitch black, but it only took a moment for Meng Hao to catch sight of the vicious flood dragon up ahead, feeling quite confident that he had just escaped disaster.

Even as the flood dragon felt as if he had managed to scrape out and extra life, he suddenly heard a rumbling sound. He turned, and his eyes went wide and filled with shock when he saw the thirty meter war chariot!

It wanted to dodge out of the way, but was too slow!

Bang!

The war chariot directly struck the flood dragon, causing it to let out a miserable howl. Then, its body began to break apart into pieces. It exploded, and the white pearl flew out. Shockingly, inside the pearl could be seen a miniature flood dragon, its face covered with terror and astonishment.

The pearl and the miniature flood dragon shot off at high speed, but no matter how fast they could go, it was too slow compared to Meng Hao's war chariot.

Meng Hao instantly shot in pursuit. Inside the white pearl, the flood dragon’s face was unyielding and filled with madness. It then let out a miserable cry that it amplified with Divine Will.

“Dawn Immortal, save me!!”

When Meng Hao heard the name ‘Dawn Immortal,’ his mind instantly trembled. It was a name he would never forget. However, this was not the time and place to think about it in detail. His eyes glittered, and he pushed the war chariot in pursuit. His hand stretched out and he grabbed the white pearl.

The struggling of the flood dragon made no difference. Meng Hao sealed the pearl and then quickly put it into his bag of holding.

However, in that instant… a faint sigh could suddenly echoed about in the darkness of the seafloor.

It was a single sigh, but it instantly caused Meng Hao’s scalp to go numb. Cold sweat broke out all over his body, and his face fell. Suddenly, the Resurrection Lily inside of him seemed to go mad.

It seemed as if, regardless of anything, it wanted to reveal itself and let out a cry to be noticed by whomever had just made the sigh.

Meng Hao’s mind trembled, and he instantly caused the war chariot to begin moving. He began to build up the Immortal Qi, and was just about to speed away when a tentacle suddenly shot toward him from within the deep sea.

Immediately, an intense feeling of crisis rumbled through Meng Hao. At the same time, the struggling of the Resurrection Lily reached a peak.

BOOM!

Meng Hao released the entirety of his Immortal Qi, causing it to enter the war chariot. It rumbled, and then shot at incredible speed up and out of the water, transforming into a beam of light that quickly disappeared. Almost simultaneously, a gigantic tentacle erupted from the surface of the sea.

As he shot away, Meng Hao had just enough time to glance back at the enormous tentacle before the world turned blurry.

What he saw caused Meng Hao’s mind to quiver and tremble with confusion.

“What… what is that…?” His face was pale white, and his expression one of disbelief. Given his Cultivation base, his experiences, his level of focus, in the Milky Way Sea, only the ancient Underworld Ship could cause his expression to change in such a way.

However, there was now something else!

In fact, because of his own condition, what he saw caused him to be even more astonished than the ancient Underworld Ship.

“That’s… the Dawn Immortal?”

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# Chapter 666: The Mother of the Resurrection Lily!

What he saw was a gigantic black tentacle, smooth and glossy, almost whip-like in appearance…. Furthermore, at the very end of the tentacle were a few black leaves.

This was not the tentacle of some beast! It was the branch of a plant!!

Anyone else probably would not realize it, but because of his own situation, as soon as Meng Hao saw it, he knew that this… was…

A Resurrection Lily branch!!

From this single branch, Meng Hao had no problem reaching the conclusion that deep in the black, dark depths of the sea was… an incomparably enormous Resurrection Lily!!

What he was seeing was simply a branch, but it was able to stretch up from deep within the sea; he could only imagine how large and terrifying its main trunk was. The frightening speed with which it moved caused Meng Hao to pant. It could even match up to his war chariot!

Furthermore, Meng Hao knew that the only reason he could get away was that his original position was actually not very far away from the surface of the water. Although it seemed he and the branch had emerged from the water at the same time, the war chariot would have actually been no match for the Lily’s frightful speed.

“How many colors does it have…?” thought Meng Hao, panting. By now, the war chariot had left the black area of the sea. The waters below looked normal, and up ahead, he saw storm winds. Meng Hao knew that he was now near the edge of the Third Ring, and was not far from Seahold.

He took a deep breath and thought for a moment. The sky up above was turning light as he put the war chariot away into his bag of holding. Then his body flashed as he headed toward Seahold at the fasted speed he could muster.

He arrived back at his residence before the sky was completely lit. He sat down cross-legged, his expression dark and unstable. The events of the night had left him quite shaken.

“That flood dragon called itself a Devil. It must have been one of those so-called Sea Devils.

“A black sea. That must be the Second Ring of the Milky Way Sea…. I never imagined that that… a terrifying Resurrection Lily would be hiding at the bottom of the Second Ring!

“Was that… the Dawn Immortal?

“No wonder the Resurrection Lily inside of me was going crazy!

“How exactly are the Third Ring and the Second Ring connected? The Third Ring has Demons with Whitebone Lily seals on them. The Second Ring has Devils that can turn into people, and venerate the Dawn Immortal!

“And then, there’s that Reverend Silverlamp. Where exactly is he…? There are so many mysteries in the Milky Way Sea. First, there was the Underworld Ship and then that ancient battleship. And now, the Dawn Immortal has made an appearance!” He continued to think, and a complex expression appeared on his face. However, soon his eyes began glittering brightly.

“Things just keep getting more complicated and dangerous. I need to be even more careful regarding the matter of the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. I wonder who is more powerful, the Dawn Immortal or the 10th Wang Clan

Patriarch?” As soon as the question appeared in his mind, he knew the answer.

“Of course it’s the Dawn Immortal!” Although he had no proof, Meng Hao was sure he was right.

He sighed inwardly, then closed his eyes. He ceased focusing on the frustrating matters, and began to meditate.

It was now early morning, and sunlight flickered down onto the sea. The crystalline, shimmering waters surrounded Seahold, which looked like a giant, slumbering beast that was opening its eyes and awakening. Gradually, the city began to bustle with noise and excitement.

Many people came and went, most of whom were not residents of the city. Some came to recuperate or resupply, some came to sell Demon hearts, others left the city to go hunting. People were everywhere.

When Wei Li came to pay respects, Meng Hao opened his eyes. After tidying up a bit, he had Wei Li take him to a shop that specialized in clothing.

He was finally able to put aside the worrisome events of the previous night. The feeling of being a rich person once again conquered all. He even considered purchasing a set of clothing for Wei Li.

Although the quality of the clothing was good, when he saw how it didn’t match her mask, he decided to save some Spirit Stones and not buy it after all.

Wei Li felt a bit wronged, but she didn’t dare to say anything directly to Meng Hao. She could only follow along irritated as Meng Hao flaunted his superiority.

Everyone in the shop was in awe of Meng Hao and his domineering attitude. He walked around with a trail of people following. If he saw something he liked he would simply point, and someone would rush to package it up for him.

“It feels really good to be rich,” he thought. He left the store looking completely different than before. He wore a long robe that was as blue as the sky and emanated ripples of magical force. When the sun fell on it, it looked even more beautiful and delicate.

The sleeves were embroidered with silver dragons, and the materials of the entire garment were harvested from an impressive Sea Demon. It had a variety of built-in functions, and overall, made Meng Hao quite pleased.

He also purchased a gold belt trimmed with violet decorations, as well as some jade pendants. Each and every item was quite expensive. When he walked down the street, the people he passed couldn’t help but look at him. Meng Hao let out a long, emotional sigh.

Wei Li walked along behind him, pouting and glaring at his back.

“Alright, let’s go buy a bag of holding!” he said, swishing his sleeve. Internally, Wei Li gave a cold harrumph. Now that she was more familiar with Meng Hao, little remained of the awe she had felt for him before. Instead, her deepest impression towards him was that he was a haughty moneybags.

When Meng Hao stepped foot into the shop specializing in holding items, his clothing, coupled with his handsome features, plus the obvious domineering air of a rich person, caused everyone in the shop to immediately look over at him with glowing eyes. They knew that a big spender had arrived, and they immediately greeted him.

Meng Hao looked around and then immediately voiced his desire to buy ten bags of holding.

After they left the shop, a bit of hope flickered in Wei Li’s eyes, and she couldn’t hold back from asking, “Senior, why did you buy so many?”

“For fun!” replied Meng Hao earnestly.

Wei Li gaped. She suddenly had the feeling that the person in front of her was not the person who had saved her. He seemed… a different person completely. If he wasn’t a different person, how could there be such a disparity?

Meng Hao cleared his throat, quite pleased at Wei Li’s shock. He patted his bag of holding, then waved his hand and lifted his chin in much the way that Steward Zhou used to.

“Okay, let’s go buy some magic rings!”

In the magic ring shop, Meng Hao’s domineering air once again shocked everyone present, both customers and employees alike. They gaped in astonishment as, in a single breath, he bought three hundred magic rings.

All of the magic rings had a single function; they could self-detonate.

All you had to do was throw one of the rings out, and it would explode. Furthermore, the cumulative force of three hundred explosions would be incredibly terrifying. Such rings were expensive, and the shop didn’t have very many. However, Meng Hao decided to buy however many they did have.

In the end, he could only sigh and leave, shaking his head the entire time. He glanced around Seahold, thinking about how there was nothing here that he couldn’t buy.

It was in such a manner that Meng Hao spent the entire day, with Wei Li leading him around. Soon, word began to spread. Many people were talking about how an incredibly rich fellow had appeared in Seahold.

Soon, evening was falling. Having accompanied Meng Hao all day, Wei Li was a bit tired. However, from Meng Hao’s expression, he didn’t seem to be any more tired than he had been at the beginning of the day. Wei Li could only smile wryly.

“Senior, NOW where do you want to go?”

“Let’s go to the Sun Soul Society’s Demon heart exchange shop,” he said. The day had passed in a very fulfilling fashion for him, and he had finally fulfilled his desire to live like a rich person.

He hoped that he could continue to live such a life in the coming days, and it was with completely high spirits that he continued to walk along.

“Senior, you’re going the wrong way, it’s this way,” said Wei Li, looking at Meng Hao a bit grudgingly.

Meng Hao stopped in place and then turned around.

It was evening, and the two of them walked through the city under the light of the setting sun. Meng Hao wore his blue robe, and all ten of his fingers were adorned with rings. He stood straight and tall, looking incredibly impressive; obviously he was rich and respectable.

However, it also was also fairly obvious that he had just recently stumbled into his wealth.

The Sun Soul Society’s Demon heart exchange shop was located in the city center of Seahold. The structure itself was very strange. It was pure white and looked like a skull. Quite a crowd was gathered inside.

Despite the late hour, people continued to go in and out of the shop to exchange their Demon hearts for Spirit Stones to be used in cultivation.

When Meng Hao entered, his heavily bejeweled figure immediately attracted a lot of attention.

Instantly, everyone began to talk about it.

“That guy is….”

“I saw him earlier today. He’s the super rich guy I was just telling you about. He went to the Magic Ring Pavilion and purchased more than three hundred magic rings in a single breath!”

“So, that’s him! I heard that a lot of the shops in Seahold were completely sold out today!”

“Who is he? How could he possibly have so many Demon hearts?!”

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as usual. He entered the shop and looked around, eventually catching sight of a Sun Soul Society disciple. When the man saw Meng Hao looking at him, he quickly approached, clasped hands, and bowed.

“Greetings, Senior. How many Demon hearts would you like to exchange? If it’s a small quantity, I would be happy to help you. If it’s a large quantity… well, in that case, I can take you to the second floor, where a Sect Elder will receive you.”

“Second floor, then,” said Meng Hao placidly.

The Sun Soul Society disciple’s eyes began to shine brightly when he heard this. He quickly transmitted a message to the Elder, at the same time leading Meng Hao toward the staircase.

Everyone watched on enviously as Meng Hao and Wei Li walked up to the second floor. As soon as they arrived, a smiling, white-haired old man walked out.

“I am Sun Yunliang. Greetings, Fellow Daoist.” When he saw Meng Hao’s clothing, and the rings on his fingers, he knew exactly what kind of person he was dealing with. His smile grew even more resplendent, and he said. “Come come, please, follow me.” He led Meng Hao to a chair, after which two maidservants appeared with teapots to serve him tea.

“This is a local specialty, Skysea Tea,” explained Sun Yunliang, smiling. “It grows only in the Second Ring, and there are only seven parent trees that produce it. Please give it a try, Fellow Daoist. What do you think?”

Meng Hao smiled and then lifted the cup up to examine the tea. He took a sip, after which his eyes misted up, and his expression grew radiant. His scholar’s aura suddenly became especially prominent. Despite his current state of luxury, it was impossible to completely block. It was almost like he suddenly became a different person. After a long moment, he put the teacup down. The mistiness in his eyes faded away, and they then began to glow with admiration.

“Ah, the cleansing of disquiets both past and present, the livening of the spirit that can only come from… excellent tea!” said Meng Hao.

Sun Yunliang smiled broadly, and a strange gleam flickered in his eyes. At first glance, he could tell that Meng Hao was newly rich. However, when he spoke of the tea, his entire person emanated a light and pleasant air. The air that Meng Hao now emanated caused the old man to suddenly question his previous judgement.

Wei Li stared in shock at Meng Hao. What had occurred just now yet again caused her to think that she was yet again dealing with a completely different person.

At this point, Sun Yunliang directly asked, “Fellow Daoist, how many Demon hearts did you come here to exchange? The exchange rate today is one low-grade Demon heart for six hundred low-grade Spirit Stones.”

Meng Hao was just about to reply when suddenly, footsteps and voices could be heard coming up the stairs from the first floor.

“Don’t worry, gentlemen. When I, Zhou, make a promise, the results are never disappointing. I can get you seven hundred Spirit stones for one low-grade Demon heart.”

When Meng Hao heard this, he had to bite his tongue to hold back from speaking. He lifted the teacup and took a sip.

Sun Yunliang’s face twitched, and glared toward the staircase.

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# Chapter 667: Gamble Royale

A middle-aged man was currently smiling as he led a group of seven older men up to the second floor.

The seven old men wore long brocaded robes, and in a single glance, anyone could tell that they were famous and extraordinary figures. Their eyes were bright and shining, and their Cultivation bases extraordinary. All were at the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage. Although they smiled, their smiles were filled with unyielding pride.

“After you, Fellow Daoists!” said the middle-aged man with a sincere smile. His expression was one of excitement as he led the seven old men up to the second floor. He caught sight of Meng Hao and Wei Li, but after a glance, completely ignored them.

Sun Yunliang was originally frowning, but when he saw the seven old men, his eyes immediately grew bright. Laughing loudly, he rose to his feet and hurried over to receive them.

“So, it turns out to be the Seven Tycoons of Seahold!” said Sun Yunliang, continuing to laugh as he clasped hands and bowed. “Your presence brings light to our humble establishment!”

The seven old men all smiled and clasped hands in return.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he continued to sip tea. As for Wei Li, after she saw the seven old men, her pupils instantly constricted. Her voice filled with awe, she turned to Meng Hao and said, “Senior, these seven men are all famous shopkeepers here in Seahold. Their Cultivation bases are extraordinary, and they control vast amounts of Demon hearts….

“The Demon heart exchange shops set up by the three Sects here in Seahold do not just cater to the masses of ordinary Cultivators. There is a strict requirement of the various shops in the city that they exchange Demon hearts on a yearly basis.

“Of course, as for which particular Sect they pick to do business with, that is up to them. The three Sects have no say in the matter….”

Meng Hao lifted his teacup up and took another sip. His eyes seemed a bit clouded, even empty, as if he weren’t present mentally. Wei Li wasn’t even sure if he had heard her speaking.

Joy filled the heart of Sun Yunliang as he looked over at the middle-aged man, and his eyes flickered with admiration. The middle-aged man looked quite excited, and treated the seven shopkeepers with incredible courtesy.

The whole group laughed and exchanged pleasantries as they walked over to the area with the seats. Sun Yunliang was just about to have one of the maidservants serve some tea when the middle-aged man frowned and looked over at Meng Hao and Wei Li. Then, he directed his attention to Sun Yunliang and transmitted, “Elder Sun, who are these two?”

“Customers who arrived earlier to exchange some Demon hearts,” he responded via the same method.

When he heard this, the middle-aged man felt a bit more at ease. At first, he had taken the people to be friends of Sun Yunliang. “Elder, the Seven Tycoons are honored guests, shouldn’t you have someone from downstairs take care of these other loafers?”

Sun Yunliang hesitated for a moment, then turned to Meng Hao, clasped hands, and smiled.

“Fellow Daoist, I truly beg your pardon. Would you mind going downstairs? I’ll arrange for someone to help you exchange your Demon hearts. What do you say?”

When he heard Sun Yunliang speaking, the cloudiness in Meng Hao's eyes vanished, and he put down his teacup. Instantly, one of the maidservants stepped forward from the group led by the middle-aged man, and collected it up.

Meng Hao frowned, rose to his feet, and looked over at Sun Yunliang. "Fine," he said. "By the way, what is the current exchange rate?"

"Set your mind at ease, Fellow Daoist," he said with a smile, "the price is set at six hundred Spirit Stones for one Demon heart." With that, he clapped his hands together, and a Sun Soul Society disciples immediately came up from the first floor. After giving Meng Hao a respectful bow, he gestured for Meng Hao to follow him downstairs.

Meng Hao smiled, albeit faintly, and his expression was calm. First they had taken away his tea and tried to shoo him away. If the price they gave him was acceptable, he could have accepted the matter, but instead, they offered him a different amount of Spirit Stones than the seven old men.

Continuing to smile, he sat back down.

The action caused Sun Yunliang to instantly frown. In his mind, Meng Hao wasn't acting very sensibly.

The middle-aged man was starting to look a bit impatient. As far as he was concerned, Meng Hao would surely be exchanging no more than a few hundred Demon hearts at most. "Friend," he said, "this shop is owned by the Sun Soul Society. I myself am an honor guard of that very same Sect. This… is not the place for you to cause a disturbance. To go downstairs of your own accord is much better than being assisted to do so."

He had seen many such people, people who couldn't possibly compare to the Seven Tycoons. Each one of the seven had vast amounts of Demon hearts, and he himself had expended quite a bit of effort in order to attract them here.

"Go ahead and try," said Meng Hao coolly.

The words instantly caused Sun Yunliang's expression to turn serious. The middle-aged man frowned, suddenly unsure of who exactly Meng Hao was.

The seven old men didn't look very pleased. They could exchange their Demon hearts at any shop they wished. The main reason they had selected this location was because of the diligent attention paid them by the middle-aged man. Of course, even more important was the fact that the exchange rate here was slightly better than at the other two Sects.

After all, the Saint currently in command of the city was none other than Saint Sun Soul.

The old man who occupied the center position among the seven calmly said, "Elder Sun, Honor Guard Zhou, the seven of us have very limited time. We can't stand around waiting for very long. Why don't we consider doing business another time?"

The words immediately caused the man named Zhou to feel very anxious. He was just about to drive Meng Hao away forcibly when suddenly Elder Sun stepped forward.

"Fellow Daoist," he said, looking at Meng Hao, "the Spirit Stones aren't an issue. I make the decisions here, so how about I give you seven hundred Spirit Stones per Demon heart? What do you say?"

Hearing this, Meng Hao felt a little bit embarrassed. Smiling, he rose to his feet and was about to go downstairs when suddenly, the old man standing in the right-most position among the seven sneered.

"So, it turns out anybody can get seven hundred Spirit Stones," he said. "Well, then, Honor Guard Zhou. How many Spirit Stones will we be getting?"

Immediately, the other six old men began to nod. The shops run by seven of them were backed by their own various Sects and Clans. Furthermore, they were intelligent people who would definitely take advantage of any opportunity they saw come their way.

“If that man can get seven hundred Spirit Stones,” said another of the old men, “then we should get at least eight hundred per Demon heart. In any case, it is unacceptable that we be given the same price as a random passerby. Honor Guard Zhou, that was your promise to us, was it not?”

“Correct,” said another man. “Honor Guard Zhou, the reason we demand more Spirit Stones is because we will be exchanging a huge amount of Demon hearts. In fact, we have more Demon hearts than you usually exchange in several months down on the first floor. If someone with a trifling few hundred Demon hearts can get the same price as us, how can we maintain any face?”

Sun Yunliang’s face flickered as he realized he was in somewhat of a predicament. As for Honor Guard Zhou, his face was also quite unsightly as he glared over at Meng Hao and Wei Li.

“Elder Sun, this really is a bit inappropriate, don’t you think?” asked another of the men.

Sun Yunliang hesitated for a moment, then sighed inwardly. However, before he could even open his mouth, Meng Hao began to speak.

“So you guys have a lot of Demon hearts?” he asked the seven men.

“More than you, I can assure you,” said the first man who had spoken, his voice cool.

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed. He gave a cold harrumph and then flicked his sleeve. “Do the lot of you dare to have a little competition?” he asked. “The loser will forfeit all of the Demon hearts to the winner.”

His words caused the expressions on the faces of the seven old men to flicker. They looked over at Meng Hao, and suddenly, the atmosphere grew very stifling. Sun Yunliang hastened to step forward and clasp hands to both parties.

“Gentlemen, there’s no need to get angry. All of this is my fault, for not providing proper introductions. Fellow Daoist, these are the Seven Tycoons, who run the seven largest businesses in Seahold. Every year, they exchange a huge quantity of Demon hearts.

“Why don’t you give me a bit of face, and just drop the matter? How about it?”

Having heard this, Meng Hao’s face flickered imperceptibly. Yet again, he gave a cold snort. However, this time, his words were a bit softer. “Very well, Elder Sun, for you, I can let the matter drop.” With that, he turned to head downstairs.

The eyes of the seven old men flashed as they stared at Meng Hao. Suddenly, one of them flickered and reappeared directly in front of Meng Hao, blocking his way. “Hold it right there!”

“What are you people trying to pull??” growled Meng Hao. An alarmed and suspicious look flickered in his eyes. From the time he was young, he had grown accustomed to conning people. Furthermore, after all the hundreds of years, he had also grown quite used to putting on an act. It was an ability that had long since seeped down into his bones.

The seven old men might be shrewd and astute, but if they thought they could figure Meng Hao out by looking at his expression, well, that was simply impossible.

Honor Guard Zhou laughed coldly, his eyes were filled with scorn.

Sun Yunliang frowned as he looked at Meng Hao, and then turned back to the seven old men.

The old man who blocked Meng Hao’s way stood there, eyes glittering, unspeaking. As for the six other old men, their expressions were that of excitement. Suddenly, one of them said, “You said you wanted to have a competition, so let’s compete. The loser will turn over all Demon hearts to the winner.”

Sun Yunliang once again clasped hands and bowed. “Seven Tycoons, this Fellow Daoist came to exchange a few hundred Demon hearts. He may have spoken some sharp words, but I implore the seven of you to give me a bit of face….”

Meng Hao sighed in relief audibly, then walked around the man who blocked his way. Followed by Wei Li, he headed toward the staircase. As for the cold smile which twisted the side of his mouth, nobody could see it.

According to his estimation, the seven old men would definitely fall into his con. As it turned out, he was completely correct. By now, because of their probing for information, the old men were certain that even if Meng Hao did have a good collection of Demon hearts, it couldn’t possibly match up to their own.

Sure enough, Meng Hao had only walked down six stairs when two of the seven old men suddenly flickered, appearing in front of him to block his way.

“Careless talk can lead to a lot of trouble,” said one of them. “Since you brought up a competition, a competition is what will take place.”

Meng Hao’s face looked unsightly, and he stood there silently for a moment. His face grim, he turned and headed back up the stairs.

Sun Yunliang smiled bitterly and gave Meng Hao an apologetic look. As for Honor Guard Zhou, the ridicule in his expression was quite obvious.

Meng Hao gritted his teeth, and, looking like he was getting ready to go for broke, said, “How do we compete?”

One of the seven men stepped forward, a lofty expression on his face. “I alone will suffice,” he said, lifting up a bag of holding.

“Inside this bag of holding are 13,000 low-grade Demon hearts. Fellow Daoist, how many Demon hearts do you have?” With that, he tossed the bag of holding over to Honor Guard Zhou, who accepted in and then scanned it with Divine Sense. He nodded, and then, in order to ensure impartiality, produced a stone slab.

It was three meters tall and carved with nine dragons. When Honor Guard Zhou placed the bag of holding onto the slab, the first dragon began to glow with light, making it look very lifelike. As for the second dragon, it was thirty percent lit.

“On the Nine Dragons Demon Heart Scale,” said Sun Yunliang, “each dragon represents 10,000 low-grade Demon hearts.” With that, he produced an identical stone slab for Meng Hao’s use.

The old man competing with Meng Hao loftily said, “I wonder how many Demon hearts you have, Fellow Daoist. Please produce them so that we can widen our knowledge.”

The other six old men looked at Meng Hao with enigmatic smiles, seemingly completely confident of the outcome.

Honor Guard Zhou’s smile grew even more radiant. He hadn’t liked Meng Hao from the beginning, and now, the ridicule in his gaze was even more obvious than before. He couldn’t wait to see Meng Hao’s expression in reaction to what was happening.

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# Chapter 668: It Feels Great

Wei Li looked over nervously at Meng Hao. She truly was worried about what would happen if Meng Hao lost. The price he would pay would be incredible….

Meng Hao’s face was expressionless as he pulled out a bag of holding and tossed it onto the Nine Dragons Demon Heart Scale. As soon as the bag of holding touched its surface, one of the dragons carved onto the stone slab started glowing with a bright light.

Everyone watched closely as the scene played out, especially the seven old men. Their expressions flickered, and then quickly began to shine with happiness.

They weren’t worried about losing; they were worried that Meng Hao’s bag of holding wouldn’t have very many Demon hearts in it. Seeing that it had 10,000, they knew that even after splitting it up, the seven of them would make a tidy profit.

As smiles appeared on the faces of the seven, Honor Guard Zhou’s eyes went wide and he felt a bit of regret. Before, he had assumed that Meng Hao would have a few hundred Demon hearts, or at the most a few thousand. However, it turned out that he actually had 10,000.

His regret quickly vanished, though, as he realized that there was no way Meng Hao could win. He would lose in the end, and then the Seven Tycoons would have more Demon hearts to exchange.

It was in this moment that the second dragon started to glow, until it was half-lit. That indicated that Meng Hao’s bag of holding had 15,000 Demon hearts in it.

“You lose!” he said immediately. Joy and excitement appeared on his face, although he appeared to be struggling to suppress it.

“Said who?” laughed the old man standing in front of him. “The competition is between you and the seven of us. The contest isn’t over until it’s over, and no one is allowed to interfere. In this competition, one party must hand over all Demon hearts to the other in the end.” The other six men all started nodding.

The first old man walked back a few steps, and a second old man proudly stepped forward. He produced a bag of holding, then looked contemptuously at Meng Hao as he tossed it onto the stone slab.

A buzzing sound could be heard, and the stone slab began to vibrate. The dragons on its surface almost seemed alive, and were emanating pulsing ripples. The second dragon was now completely glowing, making it look very lifelike. Furthermore, the third dragon was also fully lit.

“A total of 30,000 Demon hearts!” said Honor Guard Zhou excitedly.

“Do you have more?” asked the old man, looking at Meng Hao.

The other six men were doing the same thing. All of them were imagining a situation in which Meng Hao had a few more Demon hearts, but not many, and the competition would end on a relatively anti-climactic note.

Meng Hao’s expression was grim as he slowly placed his right hand into his robe. Then, he pulled out another bag of holding, which he threw over to the stone slab. As soon as it landed, the third dragon completely lit up, as did ten percent of the fourth dragon.

Honor Guard Zhou gasped and looked over at Meng Hao. “31,000…”

Sun Yunliang’s eyes were wide, and he almost couldn’t believe it. Inwardly, he was laughing bitterly. If he had known Meng Hao possessed so many Demon hearts, there would never have been such a commotion.

Even the seven old men were shocked. Each of them possessed over 10,000 Demon hearts, but none had an accumulation that exceeded 20,000. And yet, their opponent unexpectedly produced 30,000. As of now, they couldn’t help but start to form various speculations about him.

It only took a moment, though, for the seven men to exchange glances. All of their eyes were burning with passion, as they realized that they were actually much more interested in this contest than they had been before. Considering that their opponent had around 30,000 Demon hearts, if they won, it meant each of them would get approximately 5,000. The mere thought of it caused their hearts to begin to thump rapidly.

Then, the seven of them began to chuckle. It was at this point that the second old man stepped back and the third walked forward. He waved his right hand, causing a bag of holding to fly out. Immediately, the fourth and fifth dragons lit up, although the fifth was only ninety percent lit.

“49,000 low-grade Demon hearts!” said Honor Guard Zhou, who then looked over at Meng Hao. It wasn’t just him. Everyone, including Wei Li, were now staring at Meng Hao.

“I refuse to believe that you can continue to compete,” said the third old man, his voice cool.

Meng Hao said nothing. It seemed as if he had an endless supply of bags of holding in his robe. He produced yet another, which he tossed out, causing the fourth, fifth, and sixth dragons to completely light up!

The bag of holding turned out to have 30,000 Demon hearts in it!

Honor Guard Zhou’s mind was spinning, and he was breathing heavily. He stared blankly at the six glowing dragons on the stone slab.

“60,000… Demon hearts!”

The faces of the seven old men flickered, and they stared dead at Meng Hao. Then they exchanged glances, and reached a consensus. In their opinion, this had to be the last bag of holding their opponent would produce.

“60,000 Demon hearts! No wonder he was so domineering!”

“I never imagined that he would have so many Demon hearts. However, compared to the seven of us, he can’t match up!”

“The best would be if he had 70,000, then each of us would get 10,000. That’s quite a hefty profit. Well, even if this guy has someone powerful backing him, does he really think he can fight back against the seven of us altogether?!”

The seven old men chuckled as the fourth and fifth of their number stepped forward at the same time. The two of them tossed out bags of holding, which, as soon as they landed onto the stone slab, caused a blinding light to shine out. It wasn’t the just the sixth dragon which lit up; the seventh did too, and even fifty percent of the eighth.

“75,000 low-grade Demon hearts!” said Honor Guard Zhou, his amazed voice echoing about.

The fifth old man laughed heartily. “Fellow Daoist, however many low-grade Demon hearts you have, bring them out. We’ll keep up with you until the end.” His expression was proud, and his heart was filled with joy that he could not cover over.

The others also smiled complacently as they pondered what it would be like to split up all of Meng Hao’s Demon hearts.

Meng Hao blinked, and then reached yet again into his robe. The eyes of the seven men narrowed as Meng Hao produced another bag of holding, which he tossed over to the stone slab.

A rumbling sound echoed out as the seventh and eighth dragons lit up. Only the ninth dragon remained dark.

Seeing this, the seven old men burst into hearty laughter. Even Honor Guard Zhou let out a sigh of relief. Clearly, Meng Hao only had 80,000 Demon hearts, otherwise, the ninth dragon would already have begun to shine with light.

Sun Yunliang had long since begun to pant, and his heart was pounding. When he saw Honor Guard Zhou's expression, he truly wished he could simply step over and slap the man across the face. "What an idiot! Someone who possesses 80,000 Demon hearts is not someone to provoke lightly. Perhaps he just didn't dare to fight against the power of the seven combined. But now we have this situation here in the Sun Soul Society. He definitely won't give up!"

"This farce is over," said the sixth old man. "Fellow Daoist, it's time for me to teach you a lesson. Never forget, there are always Heavens beyond the Heavens you know, and there are always people out there who are better than you." He didn't even step forward. He simply tossed out a bag of holding. It landed with a bang onto the stone slab, causing the eight dragon to light up completely, along with seventy percent of the ninth dragon.

"87… 87,000 low-grade Demon hearts!" gasped Honor Guard Zhou.

Meng Hao's brow furrowed, and he felt around in his robe. However, he did not produce another bag of holding. All of the low-grade Demon hearts that he possessed had been there in his robe.

When she saw the expression on Meng Hao's face, Wei Li's heart began to pound. The expressions on the faces of the seven old men were of completely complacency. One of them stepped forward, and reached out toward the bags of holding which Meng Hao had placed onto the stone slab.

"Did I say you could touch those?" said Meng Hao. He waved his right hand, causing a mild attack to fly out that pushed the old man back. The old man's face flickered, and as he looked over at Meng Hao, the other six old men stepped forward, displeased expressions clouding their faces.

"Being a sore loser, Fellow Daoist?" asked one.

“Even if you are, it doesn’t matter,” said another. “You must admit your defeat. You lost, so those Demon hearts belong to us now.”

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever. Then he smiled, a faint, bashful smile.

“The competition isn’t over yet, so how could I have lost?” His words caused the hearts of the seven old men to suddenly sink, and they exchanged flabbergasted looks.

“You have more low-grade Demon hearts?”

“Low-grade Demon hearts? No, I’m out,” replied Meng Hao. It was at this point that he slapped the bag of holding at his side, from within which unexpectedly appeared another bag of holding. This was one of the special bags of holding that he had purchased in Seahold.

Hefting it, Meng Hao looked at the Nine Dragons Demon Heart Scale. “Why don’t we use something else other than this slab? It would be a shame for an incredible treasure like it to be damaged.”

Hearing this, the seven old men could only stare in shock at the bag of holding in Meng Hao’s hand. Then, however, one of the old men sneered. “The stone slab only has nine dragons, but if the number exceeds 100,000, then they will change color. To date, I have never heard of anyone being able to use Demon stones to damage a Nine Dragons Demon Heart Scale.”

Meng Hao looked over at Sun Yunliang, who hesitated for a moment before smiling wryly and nodding his head.

“Very well, then,” said Meng Hao, tossing over the bag of holding. When it landed on the stone slab, it caused a boom to ring out that was audible even down on the first floor. At the same time, the ninth dragon completely lit up.

Looks of concentration appeared on the men’s faces.

Next, the first dragon began to change color, turning blue.

The sight of it caused the faces of the seven old men to fall.

After that, the second dragon, the third dragon, in fact, all of the nine dragons turned blue.

Then they changed color again, starting with the first and going all the way to the ninth, until they all glittered with bright violet light.

The seven old men were trembling, and looks of shock and disbelief covered their faces. A few even said, “Impossible!”

However, the changes didn’t stop with the violet light. Once more, the dragons began to change color, this time to orange.

“Orange light… that’s… that’s orange light!” The minds of the seven old men were spinning, as if they were being struck by lightning. They shook, their eyes blank with astonishment.

However, the light was not finished changed. Once again it began to transform, for the fifth time, causing the dragons, one after another, to shine with a glow the color of blood!

The changes in color left the people in the area completely and utterly shocked. They stared with wide open mouths, their minds roaring, as the nine dragons turned completely the color of blood. And then…

The nine dragons flickered brightly, as if… they were about to change to yet another color.

However, the Nine Dragons Demon Heart Scale had apparently reached its limit, and the color couldn’t change. A rumbling sound filled the building, and soon was audible even outside. Shockingly, the sound was coming from the Nine Dragons Demon Heart Scale itself. Cracking noises could be heard as, in the full vision of everyone present, it suddenly… completely disintegrated!

Meng Hao cleared his throat. As he looked around at the shocked people around him, he thought to himself that being rich… felt great!

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# Chapter 669: You Cheated!

In the moment in which the stone slab exploded, Saint Sun Soul sat in his tower in Seahold. His eyes suddenly snapped open, and he sent his Divine Sense down into the city. It immediately locked onto the location where Meng Hao was.

After examining the situation, his face twitched again.

“Trying to compete in Demon hearts with him? Those seven are courting death!

“He mustn’t be given any opportunity to flip out. If he seizes the moral high ground, he’s bound to cause a crisis to develop….” Saint Sun Soul looked up at the bottle gourd which was placed off to the side, and felt a bit of a headache coming on. When he thought about the alcohol inside, his face grew unsightly.

He flicked his right sleeve, and immediately, a person approached from outside the tower. Once inside, he immediately dropped to his knees and kowtowed.

“Greetings, Master.”

It was a middle-aged man wearing a long, violet gown. His expression was one of veneration, and his eyes sparkled with energy. His Cultivation base was at the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage, not far from Spirit Severing.

“Go to the Sect’s Demon heart exchange pavilion,” said Saint Sun Soul coolly. “There’s a man there I want you to invite here. Remember to be extremely courteous. Treat him as politely as you treat me.”

The middle-aged man immediately nodded, but the fact that his Master spoke no more caused him to pause for a moment.

“Master, what is name of this respected member of the senior generation?”

“Just go, you’ll recognize him.” Saint Sun Soul didn’t appear to want to discuss the matter further.

The middle-aged man stood up and, feeling a bit perplexed, left the tower.

Meanwhile, back on the second floor of the Sun Soul Society’s Demon heart exchange shop, Meng Hao stood there with hands clasped behind his back. He looked down at the shattered remnants of the Nine Dragons Demon Heart Scale, and then looked over at the old men, who stood there as dumbstruck as wooden chickens, completely speechless.

They were struck thoroughly and completely senseless. Their heads filled with unprecedentedly large crashing waves, and they felt as if their minds were about to be torn into shreds.

Then, they began to calculate….

“Changing colors once indicates a complete doubling in the number of Demon hearts….

“In total, there were six changes in color, which means that the number of Demon hearts would be six times the amount before…. Before, there were 80,000 demon hearts. Don’t tell me that his bag of holding actually has 500,000 Demon hearts!?!?

“If you changed 500,000 Demon hearts into Spirit Stones, that… that would be….

“Over 300,000,000!!” Their minds roared as they looked over at Meng Hao, terrified.

“No way!!

“The Nine Dragons Demon Heart Scale does indeed have a limitation. According to the standard of low-grade Demon hearts, it’s supposedly able to accommodate 1,000,000. 500-600,000 wouldn’t cause it to shatter. Something’s going on here!” The old men gasped and looked over fixedly at Meng Hao.

However, before they could figure out where the problem lay, Honor Guard Zhou and Elder Sun, despite being thoroughly shaken, also suddenly realized that something was off. They too looked over at Meng Hao.

The eyes of nine people all turned red.

As of now, the expressions of the seven old men were that of complete exasperation as they finally considered… the possibility of losing.

“You cheated!!” they roared, their voices hoarse.

If they lost, their Demon hearts would become Meng Hao’s. It was a vast sum that they fundamentally couldn’t accept. After all, these weren’t their Demon hearts, but rather, the property of the various Sects and Clans that they represented.

“You definitely cheated! The Demon Heart Scale can accommodate 1,000,000 low-grade Demon hearts. I don’t believe that your bag of holding has more than 900,000!

“I don’t know how you did it, but it’s definitely not fair! Such actions deserve death!” The killing intent in the old men immediately grew more obvious.

“Do you, or do you not, dare to compete one more time!? Take the Demon hearts out of your bag of holding, and we can compare numbers directly!

“If you don’t dare, then it proves you cheated! To behave so treacherously in front of us means that you won’t step foot alive out the front door of this Demon heart exchange pavilion!”

The seven old men were acting in a very domineering fashion. They strode forward, their Cultivation bases unleashed, transforming into an intangible tempest which spread out in all directions.

Wei Li’s face was pale, and were she not hiding behind Meng Hao, she wouldn’t be able to take it, and would directly explode.

The old man who had reached out to take Meng Hao’s bags of holding just now suddenly produced another bag of holding which he tossed onto the stone slab. The nine dragons flickered, and suddenly, a blue light appeared.

However, it wasn’t completely blue. Only about half of the first dragon had turned blue.

“98,000 low-grade Demon hearts. This is all the Demon hearts I possess. Do you dare to gamble again?!”

Honor Guard Zhou and Sun Yunliang stood off to the side silently watching. This time, even Honor Guard Zhou didn’t react; he didn’t want to be involved with the matter any more.

Meng Hao coldly looked over the seven old men, then waved his right hand. Instantly, all of his bags of holding flew out from the rubble of the destroyed stone slab. Seeing this, the several old men roared and closed in on him.

However, before they could get close, Meng Hao opened the last of the bags of holding, and expressionlessly removed a Demon heart. It emanated with bright colors, along with dense spiritual energy. Meng Hao waved his sleeve, causing the Demon heart to fly over to Sun Yunliang.

“Elder Sun, would you mind appraising that for me?” he said coolly.

The seven old men stopped in their tracks and looked at the Demon heart in Sun Yunliang’s hand. Their faces fell. They didn’t need to look closely at it. Based on the spiritual energy, as well as its color and size, it was easy to determine….

“Mid-grade Demon heart!!” Sun Yunliang gasped. His words instantly crushed any last bit hope the seven old men had to come out on top.

Sun Yunliang took a deep breath and gazed at the Demon heart. His face flickered through various emotions, and then he turned to stare at the bag of holding in Meng Hao’s hand. The seven old men were doing exactly the same. All of them were inwardly forming speculations about what was going on, which caused their faces to become more and more unsightly.

“The price of mid-grade Demon hearts doesn’t fluctuate very much,” said Sun Yunliang. “A single one is worth 10,000 Spirit Stones, or ten low-grade Demon hearts. Of course, it doesn’t work the other way around.” He looked up at Meng Hao and then slowly said, “Fellow Daoist, how many mid-grade Demon hearts do you possess?”

Meng Hao didn’t say anything in response. He simply waved his sleeve, causing a glittering, crystalline waterfall to spill out of his bag of holding. The entire area instantly filled with dense spiritual energy. The second floor turned into something like a land of Immortals.

10,000 mid-grade demon hearts piled up all around. Immediately, everyone present began to pant, and their minds shook.

“10… 10,000 mid-grade Demon hearts. That’s equal to 100,000 low-grade Demon hearts. They could be traded for… 100,000,000 Spirit Stones!” Sun Yunliang struggled to maintain his composure as he spoke.

Honor Guard Zhou, on the other hand, felt his vision growing dim, and he almost passed out. How could he ever have imagined that the person he scorned so openly would end up having so many mid-grade Demon hearts?

As for the seven old men, they trembled in place and looked almost as if they had just aged ten years.

“There is no need to directly compare,” said Sun Yunliang, looking over at Meng Hao. He clasped his hands and bowed courteously. “Fellow Daoist, you are the victor.”

Wei Li stood behind Meng Hao, her mind reeling. She knew Meng Hao was rich, but she had never imagined that he would be… THIS rich.

Meng Hao lifted his right hand, collecting up the bags of holding belonging to the seven men. The old men watched on with red eyes. Their killing intent was even more intense now, and seeing Meng Hao dare to take their bags of holding put them in the mood to go all out and attack.

“Hold on a minute!”

“Fellow Daoist, you certainly do possess more Demon hearts than us. However, you still haven’t explained the matter of the cheating earlier!”

“Even if you do have 10,000 mid-grade Demon hearts, that’s still not enough to destroy the Nine Dragons Demon Heart Scale! You cheated, which means the bet doesn’t stand! We refuse to accept this!” Of course, the seven old men were now resorting to sophistry, and they knew it. However, what else could they do? There was no way the could simply allow Meng Hao to take away their Demon hearts.

“Well then, I’ll just have to make you accept it,” said Meng Hao calmly. He waved his hand, causing the remaining 20,000 mid-grade Demon hearts in his bag of holding to fly out. They piled up everywhere, nearly completely filling the second floor.

The eyes of the seven old men widened as Meng Hao then sent the high-grade Demon hearts flying out from the bag of holding. The splendor of the high-grade Demon hearts caused them to instantly become the focus of all eyes on the second floor.

The spiritual energy they produced transformed into a pillar-like aura that shot up into the air above Seahold. Wild colors flashed in the sky, and the wind and clouds roiled.

Every Cultivator in Seahold instantly looked over in stupefaction. The buzz of conversation instantly rose up from all areas of Seahold.

Back in the Demon heart exchange pavilion, Sun Yunliang stared with slack jaw at the high-grade Demon hearts. He picked one up and looked at it closely, then hoarsely said, “This… this… is a high-grade Demon heart!!”

Such items were considered treasures, and were rarely seen. A single one would normally be sold at auction, and in all the past years, he had only seen less than a hundred.

“The starting auction price for high-grade Demon hearts is 500,000 Spirit Stones. They can be exchanged for 50 mid-grade Demon hearts, or 500 low-grade Demon hearts…. There are 10,000 here… that means they are worth… worth… 5,000,000,000!!”

Honor Guard Zhou’s vision now went completely dark.

As for the seven old men, their faces were deathly pale, and their minds filled with roaring. How could they ever have imagined that they were actually gambling with someone so enigmatic and impossible to predict?

They, who had Demon hearts worth a few dozen million Spirit Stones, were betting about who was richer… with someone who had 5,000,000,000.

Meng Hao cleared his throat, then waved his hand. Immediately, all of the Demon hearts flew back into his bag of holding, including the roughly 100,000 belonging to the seven old men. The seven old men lifted their heads up and roared. Their eyes were red as the complete power of their Cultivation bases exploded out and they charged Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s expression suddenly turned cold.

“Screw off!”

Two words caused minds of the seven men to feel as if they were filled with lightning. Blood sprayed from their mouths. They weren’t able to even get close to Meng Hao before they were sent tumbling backward. They looked at him and coughed up blood, their expressions filled with unprecedented looks of astonishment and fear.

“Spirit… Spirit Severing!!” Their faces drained of blood, and they began to tremble violently. This time, Honor Guard Zhou really did pass out, falling flat onto the ground.

Sun Yunliang gasped, stepped forward, and then bowed with clasped hands. “Junior offers greetings, senior!”

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# Chapter 670: Crisis Approaches

Right in the middle of Seahold, Meng Hao unleashed his aura, causing the seven old men to scatter backward, blood spraying from their mouths. In that same moment, a jagged black cloud filled with crackling lightning flew through the air in the Fourth Ring, right outside of the Flying Immortal Sect.

Then, the cloud dissipated to reveal an old man wearing a long black robe. His features were ancient, and the feeling of time seemed to circulate around him. He hovered in mid-air, looking down at the surface of the sea with an abstruse light glimmering in his eyes.

If Meng Hao were here, he would recognize him immediately. This old man… was none other than the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch!

“No more delays,” he said coolly. “This time… I’ll definitely wrest away his Dao foundation. If this clone gets defeated, then I’ll simply lock down on the location and come here with my true self via greater teleportation. Even if the Immortality Bestowal Dais does notice, I will achieve my aim!” A sharp gleam appeared in his eyes, which contained both determination and a desire to slaughter.

“There are no traces of him whatsoever in the Fourth Ring. Before coming here, none of my auguries could produce any clue to his position. However, I was able to determine that he is still in the Milky Way Sea!

“If he’s neither in the Fourth Ring, nor the Outer Sea, then that means he must be… in the Third Ring!

“The Third Ring… is a forbidden zone for Dao Seeking….” He frowned, then suddenly flew directly down toward the Flying Immortal Sect.

He remained inside for only the amount of time it takes an incense stick to burn. After he flew out, the entire Flying Immortal Sect suddenly burst into activity. Saint Flying Immortal had issued orders. More than half of the Flying Immortal Sect disciples flew toward the Flying Immortal Sect Sea City in the Third Ring.

Tens of thousands of disciples soared through the air, each one of them clutching a jade slip that contained an image of Meng Hao, along with a bit of the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch's Divine Sense.

Even as the Flying Immortal Sect disciples entered the Flying Immortal Sect Sea City, checks were made of the Third Ring entrance records. However, no traces were found of Meng Hao. After that, the Flying Immortal Sect unleashed all the power it could muster, along with all of its ships, to begin to travel through the Stormwind Divide. They were on their way to the Third Ring to accomplish their task.

Meanwhile, the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch was paying a visit to the Sea Divinity Sect. Although it was impossible to determine what exactly he promised them, when he left, Saint Sea Divinity issued orders that caused tens of thousands of Sea Divinity Sect disciples to spring into action. They transformed into countless sword auras that shot toward the Sea Divinity Sect Sea City, jade slips in hand. After a thorough check was made of the records of entry into the Third Ring, the tens of thousands of disciples began the process of entering the Third Ring, exactly as the Flying Immortal Sect disciples had.

Even Saint Flying Immortal and Saint Sea Divinity, two Spirit Severing experts, joined the forces who left the Sect and entered the Stormwind Divide.

Two of the three great Sects were driven into action by the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. However, because Saint Sun Soul of the Sun Soul Society was stationed in the three Sects' Seahold in the Third Ring, it was impossible for an agreement to be reached. Therefore, although the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch was able to check their records, no forces were mobilized.

After thinking about the matter for a moment, a gleam of insight appeared in the eyes of the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. “This kid is extremely cunning. However, the more I think about it, the fact that there are no records makes it even more likely that he’s in the Third Ring!”

He left the Sun Soul Society’s headquarters and then entered the Stormwind Divide.

“I’ve already flung out an inescapable dragnet into the Third Ring. I can’t believe that Meng Hao… will disappear under the noses of tens of thousands of disciples from two Sects!

“Saint Flying Immortal and Saint Sea Divinity have already promised to go to the Third Ring. Their Cultivation bases are ordinary, but with their Sect’s legacy treasures in hand, they are forces not to be trifled with.

“Nobody understands the Third Ring better than them. Meng Hao, if you can escape them, then I’ll admit your superiority.

“It won’t just be them looking for you either. I’m confident that I can win over the Sun Soul Society. Then, a hundred thousand disciples from three different Sects will be looking for a single you…. And as if that weren’t enough, I’ve also posted a handsome bounty. When the time comes, all the Cultivators in the Third Ring will be my eyes and ears!

If only one person tracks you down, then I will know!” The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch strode through the Stormwind Divide. Everywhere he went, the black mists spread away from him, opening a path. It was as if nothing dared to stand in his way.

“This time, I must succeed. Too much time has passed, and the Ji Clan is growing suspicious….” The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s face was grim. How could he ever have suspected that a trifling member of the junior generation would turn out to be so troublesome, and even defeat him twice in a row?

It was in the same moment that the tens of thousands of Flying Immortal Sect and Sea Divinity Sect disciples flew into the Stormwind Divide that, back in the Third Ring, in the Sun Soul Society's Demon heart exchange pavilion in the three Sects' Seahold, Meng Hao made a grasping motion that caused all of the Demon hearts to fly into his bag of holding.

The seven old men were as mute as cicadas in winter. Their faces were pale, and they didn't dare to do anything to hinder Meng Hao. The pain that filled their hearts had long since seeped out to completely inundate them.

Panting, and eyes burning with passion, Sun Yunliang suddenly spoke up. "Senior, if you wish to exchange those Demon hearts, please rest at ease, the Sect will definitely give you a satisfactory price!" He knew that if he personally could handle the exchange, it would count as an incredible meritorious service to the Sect.

Such meritorious service might even prompt a personal reaction from Saint Sun Soul, and could potentially affect his Cultivation base. He might even have a chance to enter the Spirit Severing stage!

Even if he couldn't, he would definitely become famous within the Sect.

"Can your Sun Soul Society alone handle this many Demon hearts?" asked Meng Hao, looking at him.

Sun Yunliang gaped for a moment, then made some calculations. His face looked a bit unsightly as he realized that even employing all the resources of the Sun Soul Society, it still might be a difficult task to exchange Spirit Stones for so many Demon hearts.

In his moment of hesitation, a bright beam of light flew urgently toward the pavilion. It was Saint Sun Soul's apprentice, who, with a flash of minor teleportation, appeared on the second floor. As soon as he arrived, he saw the seven ashen-faced old men. Then his gaze fell upon Meng Hao.

All it took was one glance for him to ascertain that this was definitely the member of the senior generation to whom his Master had referred.

The reaction was a type of intuition on his part. After a sharp intake of breath, the middle-aged man instantly clasped hands and bowed.

“I am Han Feng of the junior generation. Greetings, senior. I come on orders from my Master to invite you to have a chat with him.”

As soon as the man arrived, Sun Yunliang’s face flickered and he clasped hands in greetings. When the seven old men saw him, looks of awe appeared on their faces, and they also bowed.

Meng Hao looked at the middle-aged man, and his eyes narrowed slightly. Then he turned his head to look at the tower that rose up in the middle of Seahold.

“Your Master is Saint Sun Soul?” he asked coolly.

“My Master is indeed Saint Sun Soul,” replied the man, his tone respectful.

Meng Hao looked back at Sun Yunliang. “I’ll be with Saint Sun Soul,” he said. “You get the Spirit Stone situation sorted out and then come looking for me. How many Demon Hearts I give you will depend on how many Spirit Stones you can afford offer.” Saint Sun Soul’s apprentice gaped in response to Meng Hao’s words, and Wei Li stood there nervously.

Sun Yunliang immediately sent a message. He didn’t provide specific details; he just related the information about how many Demon hearts Meng Hao had. The apprentice’s eyes went wide, and he gasped.

Now he understood why his Master had sent him here.

“How could he possibly have so many Demon hearts?” he thought. It was with even more reverence that he escorted Meng Hao as they flew off toward the tower.

Wei Li was with them, and the closer they got to the tower, the more nervous she got. In the short period of time in which she had followed Meng Hao, she had seen more incredible things than she normally would have seen in her entire life.

That was especially true of the scene that had just played out regarding the Demon hearts, which seemed as if it might cause her heart to stop beating entirely. She had known Meng Hao was rich, but could never have imagined… that he was THAT rich.

Perhaps his wealth couldn't compare to that of an entire country, but it was no exaggeration that it could rival a great Sect.

Soon, the three of them reached the tower. Meng Hao turned to look back at Wei Li.

The apprentice immediately clasped hands and bowed.

“Senior, don't worry. I, of the junior generation, will arrange accommodations for this Fellow Daoist.”

Meng Hao nodded. Seeing that Wei Li did not object, he turned and flew directly toward the top level of the tower, vanishing in the blink of an eye.

When he reappeared, he was inside the tower.

Black-robed Saint Sun Soul sat cross-legged behind a wide table, his face expressionless. Next to him was the elegant and poised woman, his wife. She was sniffing a flagon of alcohol when Meng Hao appeared. She looked at him and smiled warmly.

“You offered me some alcohol,” said Saint Sun Soul. “Now, I'd like to offer you some in return.” Even as he spoke, his wife brought the alcohol flagon over. She then produced two glasses, into which she distributed the alcohol. After that, she sat down next to Saint Sun Soul and looked over curiously at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao said nothing as he sat down directly across from Saint Sun Soul. He picked up the glass of alcohol, looked it over, then drank it in one mouthful.

When the alcohol entered his mouth, it felt freezing cold, and made his entire body feel as if it were being frozen. It even seemed as if the alcohol were about to extinguish the flame of his life force.

The coldness entered his Qi passageways and spread throughout his entire person. Even his Cultivation base was frozen in the blink of an eye. His Divine Sense slowed down, and he almost began to slip into slumber. It was even hard to think.

He was so cold that frost appeared on his skin; it almost seemed like the alcohol in the cup could turn him into a statue of ice.

This alcohol would most certainly kill any ordinary Spirit Severing Cultivator who drank it. However, Meng Hao's fleshly body was far too powerful for that. Although his Cultivation base and Divine Sense had been frozen over, his fleshly body only vibrated slightly. In a short moment, thousands of these vibrations occurred. The frequency of the vibrations seemed to accord with some great Dao, and within the space of about ten breaths, white steam began to rise up from the top of his head. It filled the entire top level of the tower, and even caused the walls to make cracking sounds as they frosted over.

A serious expression appeared in the eyes of the elegant woman, and although Saint Sun Soul's face was expressionless, his eyes were cold as he stared at Meng Hao.

"Your alcohol isn't very strong, at least, not as strong as mine." Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding to produce, not another gourd bottle, but Han Shan's bronze alcohol flagon. He also pulled out a glass which he then filled with alcohol and slid across to Saint Sun Soul.

"Please, be my guest," he said coolly.

Saint Sun Soul's face twitched as he looked down at the glass. He hesitated, which was something he rarely did.

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# Chapter 671: Cooperation

After a few breaths of time, a look of determination filled the eyes of Saint Sun Soul. He lifted up the glass of alcohol and then tossed it down his throat.

After it went down, his body suddenly started shaking, and veins bulged out on his face. A pained expression appeared but he doggedly endured, raising his hand to rotate the full power of his Cultivation base. His wife's face flickered, and she was about to rise to her feet when Saint Sun Soul stopped her with a look.

He panted for the space of about ten breaths, then suddenly pointed out with his right index finger. A blue aura appeared, filled with an intense sharpness. It shot out through the wall of the tower, after which, a monstrous Sword Qi sped off over the horizon.

Saint Sun Soul breathed deeply, and his face was pale white. He looked over at Meng Hao.

"Does everyone in your hometown drink this type of alcohol?"

His expression the same as ever, Meng Hao lifted up the bronze alcohol flagon and took a long drink, all the while staring Saint Sun Soul in the eye.

Saint Sun Soul's face twitched again. He watched as Meng Hao had no reaction whatsoever to the alcohol, and in fact, even took another drink. He sighed.

"In all the years I've practiced Cultivation, this is the first time someone has ever threatened me with some alcohol."

“How could treating you to some alcohol be a threat?” asked Meng Hao, sounding a bit hurt. “In my hometown, everyone really does drink this. It’s just that when I left, I was in a bit of a hurry, so I didn’t bring very much with me. Next time, I’ll make sure to bring you a bit more.”

Saint Sun Soul sat there quietly. He wasn’t quite sure what to make of Meng Hao’s arrival. The Sword Qi in the alcohol was very strong, and moments ago he had actually been rocked both physically and mentally. Then he saw Meng Hao drink it without any reaction at all. He couldn’t help but think that Meng Hao was even more mysterious than he had seemed at first.

“He can attract Sea Demons to the point of driving them crazy,” he thought. “He has this strange sword alcohol and a shocking fleshly body, and even canceled out my freezing Qi…. On top of that he’s also a Time Cultivator. So… why exactly is he here?” He lifted up the glass with the freezing alcohol and took a drink.

“Why don’t you exchange your Demon hearts with the Sun Soul Society? The exchange rate won’t be incredibly high, but neither will it be very low.”

Meng Hao looked back silently at Saint Sun Soul for a moment. Then he asked, “Why do the three Sects value Demon hearts so much?”

“Generally speaking, that is a secret,” replied Saint Sun Soul coolly. “However, considering the level of your Cultivation base, you’ll figure it eventually on your own.

“The history of the three Sects go back a long way,” he continued. “As for how long exactly, even I’m not too sure. I only know that the first generation of Patriarchs of the Sects jointly summoned the Stormwind Divide. After that, this area was sealed off all the way down until this day.

“As to whether those Patriarchs are still alive or dead, nobody knows. However, they left behind a legacy treasure that requires Demon hearts to ensure that it will continue to exist. Furthermore, the cultivation techniques of the Cultivators of the three Sects are different from that of outsiders. To us, Spirit Stones are only moderately effective. Demon hearts, on the other hand, are a different story.

“Furthermore, and most importantly, every rotation of the great spell formation that protects the three Sects requires a shocking amount of Demon hearts. Without the Demon hearts, it can’t be operated.”

Having heard all of this, Meng Hao chuckled a bit. “I suppose there is another reason, isn’t there?”

“Yes, but I can’t tell you,” replied Saint Sun Soul, staring at Meng Hao.

“It has something to do with the yellow springs Underworld Ship in the Stormwind Divide,” said Meng Hao, smiling and eyes glittering.

Saint Sun Soul looked back at him expressionlessly. “There’s no need for you to probe for information. That matter is a secret of the three Sects, which cannot be told to outsiders. However, you know of the yellow springs Underworld Ship…. That’s a bit unexpected.”

Although his tone of voice was the same as ever, inwardly, Saint Sun Soul was shocked to hear Meng Hao mention the yellow springs Underworld Ship. Yet again, he found himself more in awe.

It was at this point that a jade slip suddenly began to glow inside Saint Sun Soul’s bag of holding. He took it out and looked it over, then placed it down onto the table.

“If you don’t want to tell me, then forget about the matter,” said Meng Hao, giving up on his efforts to probe for information. “As for the Demon hearts… as long as you give me a huge enough quantity of Spirit Stones, then of course I’ll exchange them with you!” He pulled out a bag of holding, which he loosened and then placed on the table.

Glancing at the jade slip on the table in front of Saint Sun Soul, Meng Hao smiled and said, “You most likely know exactly how many Demon hearts are inside. Name a price.”

“5,000,000,000 low-grade Spirit Stones,” replied Saint Sun Soul. He waved his hand, causing a ring to fly out which Meng Hao then snatched.

He scanned it with Divine Sense, whereupon he saw that the inside of the ring was densely packed with a vast quantity of Spirit Stones!

They were not low-grade, nor even mid-grade. No, all were high-grade Spirit Stones!

Meng Hao’s pupils constricted. According to his understanding, even great Sects and Clans would have a hard time accumulating so many high-grade Spirit Stones. And yet Saint Sun Soul’s attitude was… relatively cavalier.

Meng Hao muttered to himself inwardly about how this cold-faced man turned out to be the truly rich one. However, he still couldn’t wrap his mind about why the trifling Sun Soul Society would have so many Spirit Stones.

His eyes flickered as all of a sudden, he thought about Demon hearts.

“Could it be that there is something about the Demon hearts themselves that cause the Sun Soul Society to be so rich?” he thought.

“Our transaction is complete, you can take your leave now.” Saint Sun Soul closed his eyes and paid no more attention to Meng Hao, as if even looking at him caused him to feel somewhat annoyed.

Meng Hao smiled, clasped the ring in hand as he stood up and prepared to leave. However, after taking only two steps, he suddenly stopped and looked back.

“Considering how many Spirit Stones your Sun Soul Society has,” he said, “perhaps you would be interested in forming a cooperation.”

Saint Sun Soul opened his eyes and looked at Meng Hao.

“What sort of cooperation?”

“The two of us join forces to kill Sea Demons. I’ll help you to draw them out.”

Saint Sun Soul's eyes glittered, and after a moment of silence, he said, "What's the split?"

"For every ten we acquire, you keep nine and I keep one. Furthermore, when it comes to exchanging the Demon hearts for Spirit Stones, I'll give you a ten percent discount!" 1

"Fifty percent!" retorted Saint Sun Soul.

"No way," said Meng Hao, shaking his head. "It's not easy to attract the Sea Demons, and that's my responsibility. It's just that with your help things will go a bit faster. Also, the Third Ring belongs to your three Sects. If it weren't for that, I could just do it all myself."

"Oh, so you do know what it means to be in the Third Ring after all!" shot back Saint Sun Soul. The two of them continued to negotiate the terms of their cooperation. Off to the side, Saint Sun Soul's beautiful wife covered her smile with her hand as she watched on. She hadn't heard Saint Sun Soul speak so much in years.

She understood her husband well. He seemed cold on the outside, but he viewed the people he approved of as close friends. As for the people he didn't approve of, even people who were incredibly powerful, they would not hear more than three sentences come out of his mouth.

She could see that although her husband and Meng Hao didn't seem to get along, in truth, they both admired each other.

Meng Hao slapped his hand down onto the table, causing the jade slip to fly up into the air. "You listen to me, swindler, I've been going easy on you so far, don't make me get serious! You've tasted my hometown alcohol, so you know that a fifty percent discount is not going to happen!"

Saint Sun Soul gave a cold snort. "For hundreds of years in the Third Ring, the Saints have controlled everything! Without my permission, will you be killing any Demons at all?"

The two of them faced off angrily. Smiling, Saint Sun Soul's wife rose to her feet to refill their glasses of alcohol. Her voice soft, she said, "There's no need to act like this, you two. Instead of sticking to fifty percent or ten percent, why don't you both back down a bit and settle on thirty percent?"

Meng Hao thought for a moment and then nodded in agreement. "Fine, thirty percent it is!" After all, this was the Third Ring, and when it came to Saint Sun Soul, unless he used some of his trump cards, he wouldn't quite be a match. Although the two of them didn't quite know how to deal with the other, Meng Hao couldn't help but think about how annoying it was to try to earn his Spirit Stones only to be interfered with by other random people.

Saint Sun Soul hesitated for a moment and then nodded.

Meng Hao rose to his feet, "Alright, swindler. Since we're in agreement, then we'll head out in a few days."

"I'm a Saint and my name is Lin Tao!" said Saint Sun Soul through gritted teeth.

"Thanks for telling me, swindler," replied Meng Hao, flicking his sleeve and preparing to leave.

It was at this point that Saint Sun Soul's eyes flickered, and he suddenly swept his sleeve across the jade slip sitting on the table, sending it flying toward Meng Hao. Meng Hao turned and grabbed it, then looked at Saint Sun Soul.

"Saint Flying Immortal and Saint Sea Divinity sent me some news. Take a look." He took another drink of alcohol, then closed his eyes and said nothing further.

A serious expression on his face, Meng Hao sent his Divine Sense into the jade slip. After looking at the information therein, a tremor ran through him. According to the jade slip, Saint Flying Immortal and Saint Sea Divinity were currently on their way to the Third Ring, along with seventy thousand of their disciples.

In addition to that information, there was also a picture of Meng Hao, as well as an message to Saint Sun Soul, inviting him to join in the search.

Finally, there was a message indicating that the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch was coming personally to meet with Saint Sun Soul to explain the rewards he would receive for participating in the search.

Meng Hao’s face was expressionless as he tossed the jade slip back, where it hovered in the air in front of Saint Sun Soul.

Saint Sun Soul took and put it away, then coolly said, “Han Feng.”

As soon as the words left his mouth, Han Feng teleported into the room to stand in front of Saint Sun Soul. He clasped hands and bowed.

His voice calm, Saint Sun Soul said, “Go out into Seahold and get rid of any information about Master’s friend here. It doesn’t matter how many people saw him or had dealings with him, go take care of everything. Spare no cost.

“That includes people who have left the city in the past few days. Clean it all up.”

Han Feng gaped for a moment, then bowed his head and voiced his assent. He glanced over at Meng Hao and then turned and left.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he watched these things happen, but he didn’t speak.

“Saint Flying Immortal and Saint Sea Divinity are passing through the Stormwind Divide. Given the speed they can attain, it will take them two months to get here. As for that 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, even if he does have a Dao Seeking Cultivation base, it will also take him about two months.

“I will agree with the requests of the other Saints, as well as of the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. That way, it will be much harder for traces of your passage to be picked up in my territory.”

Meng Hao was silent for a moment before clasping hands and bowing. “Many thanks!”

“I’m not helping you, I’m helping our business,” replied Saint Sun Soul coolly. Then he cleared his throat and looked at Meng Hao. “Eighty percent discount!”

Meng Hao gritted his teeth. Although his expression was the same as usual, he glared at Saint Sun Soul, who was beaming in self-satisfaction. “Forty percent, that’s the most you’ll get!”

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Please e-mail typos and mistakes to issth-deathblade@yahoo.com

1. Just to forestall any questions, Meng Hao’s offer is translated correctly. He gives Saint Sun Soul nine for every one that he gets

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# Chapter 672: Duplicating the Sword Tip!

A short while later, Meng Hao left the tower, his face grim and unsightly. In the end, he had been conned by that swindler; they ended up agreeing to a fifty percent discount.

Meng Hao had always felt as if he lived a life in which he conned others. Rarely did others con him. He especially never imagined that he would be conned by such a solemn-looking, unprincipled swindler like Saint Sun Soul. The whole matter left him feeling extremely exasperated.

“I can’t believe that swindler conned me like he did….” sighed Meng Hao. Saint Sun Soul’s apprentice led him, not to the city area, but to a private villa nearby.

That was the arrangement set up by Saint Sun Soul. By staying in this private district belonging to the Sun Soul Society, contact with outsiders could be kept to a minimum, which would make it much easier to get rid of any traces of his presence.

When Wei Li saw the look on his face, she didn’t dare to speak. Every time she looked over, he seemed to have a different expression. Sometimes he gritted his teeth, sometimes he sighed, sometimes he seemed to be in indescribable pain.

“What’s wrong with him?” she thought in astonishment. What she didn’t know was that to Meng Hao… Spirit Stones had long since become his entire life! For someone to, in one blow, reduce the number of Spirit Stones he could earn, was like a knife stabbing through his heart.

After Meng Hao left the tower, Saint Sun Soul Lin Tao began to chuckle complacently. Feeling quite happy, he raised the alcohol glass to his lips and took a long drink.

His wife sat off to the side, shaking her head. She was also very happy, not because of how much her husband had managed to take advantage of Meng Hao, but rather, the fact that a friendship was slowly developing between the two of them.

Her husband had never had any friends, and she could sense how happy he actually was.

Later that night, Meng Hao sat cross-legged in his room, thinking over his current situation. He still felt a bit of pain in his heart; the feeling of turning from the con-man into the conned left him repeatedly sighing.

“Wang Clan Patriarch, you bastard. Just you wait and see!” Meng Hao had always felt himself to be quite a reasonable person. After thinking the matter over, therefore, he came to the conclusion that the one responsible for these crimes was actually the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch.

Gritting his teeth, Meng Hao probed his Cultivation base. Currently, only three majestic portions of Cultivation base power remained, and they were in the process of fusing.

“The more progress I make, the slower it goes,” he thought, retracting his Divine Sense. This was his path to Spirit Severing. Eventually the three portions would become two, and finally one. When that happened, he would be able to enter Spirit Severing.

“I wonder what I will Sever for the First Severing…?” He was a bit hesitant about this point. Despite having thought about the matter quite a bit recently, he still hadn’t received any sort of enlightenment. The entire matter was still somewhat blurry to him.

Lost in thought, he produced the ring of holding and looked over the Spirit Stones inside. When he saw them glittering and shining, it made him feel a little bit better.

“So, that bastardly Wang Clan Patriarch isn’t dead, and he’s working incredibly hard to track me down. It seems he really thinks he’s going to take my Dao foundation this time.” A cold glint appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes as he took out the Wooden Time Sword and the copper mirror, then began to make copies and refine them with further Time sealing marks.

“Just wait until I get a hundred Wooden Time Swords. They’ll make a huge formation that will give me the power to defend against even the Dao Seeking stage, at least to some extent!”

Now that his Spirit Stones had been completely replenished to the pinnacle, Meng Hao could immerse himself in duplication. Gradually, more and more Wooden Time Swords began to build up.

Several days later, he finally produced the one hundredth copy. All hundred of the swords contained eight sixty-year cycles of Time power.

He wanted to keep working, but there wasn’t enough time. His meeting with Saint Sun Soul was set for dawn of the following morning. He glanced over the one hundred Wooden Time Swords with their eight sixty-year cycles of Time power, and his eyes glittered. But then, he gritted his teeth and examined the vast quantities of Spirit Stones in his ring of holding.

“Spirit Stones are very, very, very important. However, if I die, they’ll end up belonging to someone else….” His eyes flickered, and he took out the Time Sword tip.

He stared at it for a moment and then began to breathe heavily.

“I don’t need many copies of this sword tip, only ten…. then, I can create the first form of the Lotus Sword Formation. The power of such a sword formation would be equivalent to 100,000 years of Time.” He looked at the sword tip, and then the ring of holding. Finally, he began to work with the copper mirror.

Before beginning to duplicate the sword tip, he braced himself mentally. He knew that once he started, he couldn’t stop until the duplication was complete. Therefore, he prepared to go all out. Spirit Stones began to pour into the copper mirror.

Ten Spirit Stones, one hundred Spirit Stones, one thousand Spirit Stones….

Meng Hao's movements were somewhat wooden. He watched the accumulation of Spirit Stones in the ring of holding getting smaller and smaller. Two hours later, the copper mirror suddenly began to emanate bright light in all directions. Meng Hao's eyes burned with passion as the mirror's pupil-like surface slowly seemed to turn into a watery film, from which two identical sword tips immediately appeared.

Meng Hao was panting as he picked them up. Then, he raised his head and started to laugh.

The power of Time within both sword tips was completely identical!

However, even as he laughed, he started to calculate how many Spirit Stones he had spent and he felt a sharp pain stabbing through his heart.

“I actually spent 1,000,000,000!!

“Dammit, it's ridiculously expensive!!” Pain filled him.

“Wang Clan Patriarch, you bastard, things aren't over between us!” His eyes were red and he felt deep pain, all of which transformed into rage toward the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. Then, gritting his teeth, he began to make another duplicate.

With his original accumulation of 5,000,000,000 Spirit Stones, Meng Hao was only able to copy four Time Sword tips. Including the original, he now had five. As for the remaining Spirit Stones, he used them to duplicate medicinal pills, Wooden Time Swords and other miscellaneous objects.

Eventually, he was absolutely and completely equipped for battle. However, his bag of holding was virtually empty. The ring of holding was also empty. To Meng Hao, even though it was early morning and the sun was shining brightly in the sky, everything seemed dark.

The night before, he had been unbelievably wealthy. The next morning, he was back to normal. Other than smiling bitterly, the only thing Meng Hao could do was… well, smile bitterly.

“Perhaps I’m just not destined to be rich…. To me, Spirit Stones are just something I need to copy magical items and other things. Besides, if I chose to cultivate the Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal, which absorbs magical items into my body, then the Spirit Stone wastage would be virtually endless.” He sighed. The Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal was the Daoist magic he had acquired in the Demon Immortal Pagoda, the one that could be used to temper his fleshly body!

It was a Daoist magic that, even in the ancient Demon Immortal Sect, could be considered a famous Dao. In fact, the only reason it was ranked behind the art of Fleshly Sanctification was because the latter was a secret art. The Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal required cultivation year in and year out, and the sealing technique was not difficult. However, the resources that ended up being wasted was something that most Sects could not afford.

The combination of both the Daoist magic and the secret art could be used to temper the body to an ultimate level. It was only by combining them that their true power could explode out.

“Fleshly Sanctification is a secret art, which means that it most assuredly has other functions. My Cultivation base just isn’t sufficient to invoke them.

“Cultivating the Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal… is a shortcut to improving my fleshly body. For others, it would be too difficult. However, as long as I have enough Spirit Stones, there is no end to the number of magical items I can duplicate. Therefore, I could continue to cultivate the Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal indefinitely.” Meng Hao sighed. The entire reason he hadn’t begun to practice the Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal was because of not only matters of enlightenment, but, more importantly, the fact that he was poor….

“Spirit Stones. I need Spirit Stones!!” 1 Meng Hao’s eyes were red as he lifted up his head; his thirst for Spirit Stones had reached a pinnacle. His entire person radiated a somber aura as he flew out.

When Saint Sun Soul Lin Tao arrived and saw Meng Hao, he was instantly astonished.

“Who pissed you off?” he asked.

Meng Hao didn’t say anything, but the somber air grew even more obvious. His body flashed as he flew off into the distance. Saint Sun Soul followed, even more perplexed. The two of them moved at top speed, and within the blink of an eye, were gone from Seahold.

When they were quite some distance away from Seahold, Meng Hao stopped in mid-air and then glanced down at the sea.

“Alright, swindler, are you ready?” he said, looking over at Saint Sun Soul.

“You have no respect for your superiors,” replied Saint Sun Soul, frowning. “How old are you again? Come on, stop wasting time. Let’s get started.”

Meng Hao took a deep breath. Saying nothing further, he began to suppress his Cultivation base. As for the Resurrection Lily, it had become much more active after the encounter with the Dawn Immortal. As soon as it saw an opening, it made its appearance.

When the aura appeared, Saint Sun Soul’s eyes flickered and he backed up. He looked at Meng Hao suspiciously.

“That aura….” he thought. “It’s similar to that of the Sea Devils…. However, he’s clearly a Cultivator.” It was in that moment that the sea suddenly began to churn, and great waves began to roll across the various sea districts of the Third Ring. One Sea Demon after another trembled, then began to head toward Meng Hao, eyes red.

In the time it takes half an incense stick to burn, hundreds of Sea Demons were already in the area, closing in.

“No, it’s not a Sea Devil aura,” he thought. He could sense that something about it was different. “If the aura of a Sea Devil appeared, it would cause most Sea Demons to capitulate. But in this case, they are attacking him as if they are archenemies. It looks like they want to eat him even if they destroy themselves in the process.”

RUMBLE!

Hundreds of Sea Demons burst out of the water to savagely attack Meng Hao.

He gave a cold snort, then raised his right hand. Immediately, 10,000 magical symbols appeared to sweep about the area. Even as the booms rang out, thousands more Sea Demons appeared off in the distance.

“Not very many,” mocked Saint Sun Soul.

Meng Hao didn’t reply. He sank down to the bottom of the sea and allowed the aura of the Resurrection Lily to spread out even more. The entire sea trembled as if it were on fire.

Of course, that fire was none other than countless Sea Demons, burning their own life forces in exchange for shocking speed to rush toward the aura of the Resurrection Lily. In the blink of an eye, tens of thousands of Sea Demons appeared off in the distance. Even further off were hundreds of thousands, causing the sea to swell into towering waves.

In addition, there were seven or eight especially shocking roars that echoed out from over the horizon.

Face flickering, Saint Sun Soul sank down into the water, whereupon he saw Meng Hao surrounded by one hundred wooden swords, which were formed into ten shapes like lotuses. As they swirled around Meng Hao, it became clear that each of the flowers was actually a petal, all of which formed together… into an enormous spell formation that looked like a lotus!

The formation swept about for three hundred meters around Meng Hao, and any Sea Demons that got close withered up and disappeared. It was as if in the blink of an eye, they had passed through an entire life’s worth of time.

In fact, even the water in the area seemed to show signs of wastage. Apparently there was nothing that could escape the power of Time!

The scene caused Saint Sun Soul’s heart to tremble.

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# Chapter 673: The Call of the Dawn Immortal

“Ten swords constitute a lotus,” thought Saint Sun Soul. “Ten lotuses constitute a formation!

“One hundred swords, and an enormous formation, all filled with the power of Time. When the power ripples out, nothing remains unwithered!

“Most intriguing of all is that every sword flower contains thousands of variations. When the ten lotuses turn into the massive formation, the variations increase exponentially. There must be tens of thousands of variations hidden within!

“Such a large formation requires a shocking level of Divine Sense to control. All of that, however… is merely secondary. Most importantly, the formation requires both a physical form and an internal spirit. His Lotus Sword Formation has both of those things!” Saint Sun Soul’s mind trembled. He already had a high opinion of Meng Hao, but now, he couldn’t stop his pupils from constricting as he realized that he actually had underestimated him.

“So, it turns out that he was actually only using a portion of his power in our initial fight. If he used this sword formation, then even I… would have a hard time extricating myself from it!

“Time Cultivators are inherently rare, but he is even more shocking than I expected. And then there’s that flagon of alcohol…. I think there’s an eighty percent likelihood it really is from his hometown. The only problem is that I don’t know where exactly that is!” Having personally witnessed the power of Meng Hao’s sword formation, Saint Sun Soul was inwardly shaken.

Currently, hundreds of thousands of Sea Demons were now rushing toward them.

In the blink of an eye, the sea was completely thrown into chaos. Roaring sounds echoed out as Meng Hao’s sword formation rotated at an incredible speed.

Meng Hao was mentally calculating how many Demon hearts were building up with each Sea Demon he killed. Seeing Saint Sun Soul standing there in a daze, he couldn’t help but get annoyed. “Hey, swindler! If you don’t make a move soon then I won’t even give you a thirty percent discount!”

Saint Sun Soul gave a snort and then waved his right hand. Instantly, 100,000 magical symbols flew out from his sleeve, swirling around to form into ten magical symbol beasts. They roared as they charged into the surrounding Sea Demons and began to slaughter them.

Now that Meng Hao and Saint Sun Soul were working together, the speed of the massacre increased rapidly. Without the stimulus provided by the Resurrection Lily, it would be impossible to kill so many Sea Demons in the Third Ring. Right now, the Sea Demons seemed to have lost any ability to reason and were filled with madness.

Blood dyed the sea red as the slaughter continued for approximately an hour, when suddenly four earth-shattering roars echoed out from the surrounding area.

It was at that point when, shockingly, four enormous Sea Demons with Whitebone Lilies on them approached, one from each direction.

One of the four Sea Demons was a huge jellyfish. Of the other three, one was a gigantic violet sea turtle, and the other two were sea dragons that looked completely identical.

As they neared, huge waves rolled out across the sea as the aura of Spirit Severing rippled out.

“Two for each of us, huh?” Meng Hao said as quickly as he could. “You want to have a little competition to see who can kill them faster? If I win, the discount will be ten percent. If you win, I’d be willing to set it at forty percent. What do you say?”

Saint Sun Soul blinked. He had never met someone so shameless. After directly refusing Meng Hao’s offer, he waved his sleeve, causing two illusory, glowing swords to appear in front of him. They scraped against each other, causing ghost images to appear. Hundreds of swords turned into a sword rain that shot toward the two sea dragons.

Seeing that Saint Sun Soul couldn’t be easily fooled, Meng Hao said nothing more. He turned back around and then performed an incantation gesture with his right hand. Immediately, five Time Sword tips flew out, shooting with incredible speed toward the gigantic violet sea turtle. At the same time, the Time Sword Formation vanished and then reappeared, surrounding the jellyfish.

Meng Hao was located in the middle of the two formations, surrounded by a tempest of 10,000 magical symbols.

“Attack!” he growled. Instantly… the five Time Sword tips circulating around the gigantic sea turtle began to rotate and emit a shocking power of Time. The gigantic sea turtle howled, and the Whitebone Lily on its back began to sway. It was about to rush forward, but when the aura of Time power entered it, it shuddered, and then a look of astonishment appeared on its face. Without any hesitation, it retracted its head into its shell to defend itself.

Unfortunately, nothing can remain unwithered under the power of Time!

Five sword tips emanated a power of Time exceeding 100,000 years. As the power circulated out, the body of the giant sea turtle rapidly withered. A bloodcurdling shriek could be heard, then a boom. A giant sea turtle which possessed the power of Spirit Severing was instantly turned into nothing but ash and smoke….

The speed and savagery of the kill caused even Meng Hao to suddenly focus in concentration. His eyes gleamed with a brilliant light.

“My Spirit Stones were not spent in vain!” he thought.

At the same time, the jellyfish was trapped in the Lotus Sword Formation. It struggled, but its body was beginning to wither. After the space of about ten breaths, a bang could be heard as the sword formation transformed it into nothing more than ash drifting about in the seawater.

By this point, Saint Sun Soul had only managed to kill one of the sea dragons. He jerked his head to look over his shoulder and saw the impressive power of Meng Hao’s Time treasures. His pupils constricted, and suddenly he found Meng Hao to be even more profoundly enigmatic.

Time passed. Several hours later, they were still surrounded by densely packed groups of Sea Demons, who charged at them one after another. The seawater was stained red. Even Saint Sun Soul was shocked at the level of carnage.

However, as they continued to kill and kill, his excitement only grew greater. He even summoned the three swords of Seahold; wherever they passed, they left nothing but death in their wake.

In the end, Meng Hao actually didn’t need to do anything. He just stood there, maintaining the circulation of the sword formation and the magical symbols. Saint Sun Soul was in a frenzy as he slaughtered the Sea Demons. It was almost like he had turned into a different person, flying back and forth and crying out at the top of his lungs.

“DIIIIEEEE!!!!” he shouted, laughing the entire time. Despite being under the water, his Cultivation base caused his muffled laughter to fill the entire area.

Meng Hao looked at blood-soaked Saint Soul Sun and thought. “In the future, I definitely shouldn’t provoke this guy….” The man’s formerly somber face was twisted ferociously, and his previous taciturn personality was now deranged with madness as he continued rant and rave.

“He’s gone crazy….” thought Meng Hao, blinking. “Could it be that the little swindler has just repressed himself for too long?” The more he watched, the more he got the impression that Saint Sun Soul really was a bit crazy.

At some point the parrot appeared and perched on Meng Hao’s shoulder. Its eyes went wide when it saw the slaughter being carried out by Saint Sun Soul. “He really has gone crazy….” it said.

The meat jelly was off to the side, nodding vigorously. “Don’t offend that lunatic, Meng Hao. I’ve seen people like him before, and they’re all psychos!”

“Why aren’t you out there collecting the Demon hearts!?” snapped Meng Hao. The parrot and the meat jelly, eyes glittering, immediately flew out and began to make their way back and forth across the seafloor to pick up the Demon hearts.

Saint Sun Soul saw this, but didn’t pay any heed. At the moment, he was happy to be killing things.

More time passed. Saint Sun Soul was thoroughly engrossed in the slaughter. He even employed a multitude of magical items, causing the sounds of explosions to fill the air. As for Meng Hao, he was even more idle than before. He finally just sat down cross-legged inside the spell formation and closed his eyes to meditate, focusing on fusing the three portions of Cultivation base power within him.

Time passed by. The slaughtering continued for four more hours. Saint Sun Soul’s voice was getting hoarse, and yet his desire to kill had not lessened, but rather, had increased.

After a while, Meng Hao opened his eyes. The seawater that surrounded them was now thoroughly red. After glancing at Saint Sun Soul, he closed his eyes again.

After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, a tremor ran through him. He suddenly stood up and turned his head to look at the seafloor off in the distance. A feeling of imminent disaster suddenly washed over him.

At the same time, the Resurrection Lily sprang into action, and a feeling of excitement radiated out from it, as if it desired to burst out from inside. Such an omen filled Meng Hao's mind with a roaring sound. He suddenly strode forward toward Saint Sun Soul and then waved his hand, causing the war chariot to appear.

"This is fun!" laughed Saint Sun Soul, his eyes completely bloodshot.

"Fun my ass," Meng Hao immediately growled in exasperation. "Let's go!" With that, he reached out to grab Saint Sun Soul. Saint Sun Soul's eyes went wide, but he did nothing to stop Meng Hao, allowing himself to be pulled onto the war chariot.

RUMBLE!

The war chariot shot out, smashing into countless Sea Demons. After it broke through them and charged towards the water's surface, a sinister aura rose up from deep within the sea that caused Saint Sun Soul to feel incredibly cold.

A faint voice could suddenly be heard within the cold and sinister aura. "My son…. come back… come back…."

As the voice echoed out, a huge tentacle shot out from the depths of the sea, like an enormous black shadow. In the blink of an eye, it was upon them.

It moved with such incredible speed that it seemed to be on the verge of wrapping around Meng Hao's war chariot. Meng Hao's eyes instantly went bloodshot. As fast as possible, he circulated the little bit that remained of the Qi of Immortal Shows the Way.

The power of the Qi caused Saint Sun Soul's eyes to go wide. Then he looked back at the enormous tentacle, and his scalp went numb. However, at the same time, an even stronger desire to go to battle welled up within him.

He waved his right hand, causing the three swords that circulated around him to shoot toward the tentacle.

Meng Hao looked up, and his eyes flickered with killing intent. He also waved his right hand, causing five Time Sword tips and the one hundred sword Lotus Sword Formation to appear and follow the three swords.

A huge boom could be heard. Blood sprayed from the mouths of both Saint Sun Soul and Meng Hao. However, the combined power of the two, and their shocking magical items, caused the tentacle to suddenly pause.

Even in the instant in which they called back their magical items, the war chariot started to move. It shot out of the ocean at incredible speed, and then vanished.

The Resurrection Lily branch exploded out from the red seawater, but then slowly descended back down. Red waves spread out for a while, but then the water grew calm again.

Far away, closer to Seahold, a swishing sound could be heard as the war chariot suddenly appeared. Meng Hao's face was pale, as was Saint Sun Soul. The two of them exchanged a glance.

"Dammit, what the hell was that?!" said Saint Sun Soul through clenched teeth. "And how did you manage to attract its attention? You're simply too adept at causing trouble. First there's the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, and now that damned thing!?"

Meng Hao didn't hesitate at all in responding, "I seem to remember you saying something about you controlling everything in the Third Ring. If you don't know what it is, then how do you expect me to know?!"

The two snorted and then stared at each other angrily. For a moment, neither spoke.

Finally, Saint Sun Soul said, "How many Demon hearts did we get?"

Meng Hao did some calculations, and then his eyes began to shine. “About twice as many as last time,” he said.

When Saint Sun Soul heard this, he instantly smiled. “Let’s go back to Seahold and rest for a few days, then we’ll do it again, alright?”

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# Chapter 674: The Wang Patriarch Cometh

Saint Sun Soul watched enviously as Meng Hao put away the war chariot. After holding back for a long moment, he finally said, “That treasure of yours is pretty nice, want to sell it?”

“NO,” replied Meng Hao without hesitation.

“Fine, forget about it!” replied Saint Sun Soul with a cold harrumph. “Crappy thing. I wouldn’t take it if you gave it to me for free.”

“If you give me one for free, I’ll take it,” said Meng Hao, blinking.

“Screw off!” replied Saint Sun Soul angrily.

“Look, swindler, the Demon hearts are all in my bag of holding. Say ‘screw off’ one more time and see what happens!” A bright gleam appeared in his eyes, as if he looked forward to finally be on his own again.

Saint Sun Soul opened his mouth, but struggled to control himself and didn’t say anything in response.

A long moment passed, and when he finally did speak again, he changed the subject. “Alright, no screwing around. What was that thing back there?”

“A damnable, accursed Resurrection Lily,” replied Meng Hao frankly. “Assumably, it resides in the Second Ring.”

“Resurrection Lily!” Saint Sun Soul’s eyes narrowed and flickered.

Shortly thereafter, the two arrived back at Seahold, undetected. Back in the tower, they divided their spoils. Although Meng Hao frequently conned people, when he gave his word, he would never go back on it. Therefore, he wouldn't be secretly stingy. Although he was responsible for collecting the Demon hearts, he didn't hold even a single one back.

According to their previous agreement, Meng Hao got ten percent of the Demon hearts and the rest he sold to Saint Sun Soul at a fifty percent discount. A vast amount of Spirit Stones poured into his bag of holding. Meng Hao once again was struck with the realization that Saint Sun Soul… was filthy rich!

As he left the tower with his Spirit Stones, Meng Hao once again adopted Steward Zhou's manner of carrying himself. He returned to his own residence, then gritted his teeth for a long moment. Then he considered how incredible the Time Sword tip was, and finally pulled out the copper mirror to make a duplicate.

This time, he made five in one go. Altogether, he now had ten Time Sword tips, which meant that he could utilize the first form of the Lotus Sword Formation!

Now that the form was complete, its power was increased exponentially. Meng Hao sent the formation flying back and forth a bit, his expression one of excitement.

Then he retrieved his Wooden Time Swords and began to imbue them with more Time power.

Several days later, he and Saint Sun Soul once again snuck off to a distant area of the Third Ring and used the same method as before to slaughter Sea Demons. They worked together even better this time. Saint Sun Soul grew more and more excited at the killing, and Meng Hao sat there with eyes closed in meditation, remaining on guard against the Dawn Immortal.

A month passed by, during which time the two of them ran amok in the Third Ring. Other Cultivators in the Third Ring were shocked to suddenly find that there were virtually no Sea Demons around.

Furthermore, the Third Ring was so often filled with enormous waves that it made it impossible to go out.

Of course, the profits made by Meng Hao and Saint Sun Soul Li Tao were incredible. In addition, Meng Hao’s Cultivation base had now been reduced from three portions to two.

The day that he could perform his Spirit Severing was just around the corner.

Furthermore, the one hundred Wooden Time Swords in his Time Sword Formation were now filled with ten sixty-year cycles. When the formation was unleashed, its power was incredible. Of course, his most deadly killing move was the ten Time Sword tips.

Even alone, they were enough to shock Saint Sun Soul. However, if he combined them with the Time Sword Formation, making them the nucleus of the lotus, then Sword Qi would fill the surrounding thousand meter area of Seahold.

Meng Hao also purchased a large amount of self-detonating magical items from Saint Sun Soul. Such items were now piled up like a mountain inside his bag of holding.

He was now armed to the teeth, and his overall strength was far more than before.

They didn’t encounter the Dawn Immortal again, although Meng Hao’s vigilance in keeping guard never lessened.

Currently, Meng Hao sat cross-legged within the spell formation. Countless Sea Demons filled the area around them, and Saint Sun Soul was engaged in slaughter. “Just how many Sea Demons are there in the Third Ring?” asked Meng Hao. “We’ve killed so many, and yet every time there are still tons of them.”

Saint Sun Soul killed eight Sea Demons with a sweep of his sword and then looked back at Meng Hao. “They’re endless. Actually, there was once a legend floating around the three Sects that three Star Portals exist underneath the Milky Way Sea!

“Supposedly, the Star Portals connect to the Ninth Sea, and that’s where most of the Sea Demons come from. Of course, the Star Portals have limitations preventing any incredibly powerful Sea Demons from entering.”

A month before, Saint Sun Soul would never have told Meng Hao about the Star Portals. However, they had been working together for a whole month now, and despite their daily bickering, their bond of friendship had actually grown stronger.

“Three Star Portals?” said Meng Hao, staring in shock.

“One in the Third Ring, another in the Second Ring, and a third in the Inner Ring!” replied Saint Sun Soul.

Meng Hao sat there thoughtfully for a moment, and was just about to ask some more questions when suddenly, he sensed a cold, evil aura. Without hesitation, he rose to his feet and started walking forward, pulling out the war chariot at the same time.

When Saint Sun Soul saw this, his face flickered and he instantly headed toward Meng Hao, who grabbed him and pulled him into the war chariot.

Meng Hao was about to send the war chariot flying off, but then, his eyes flickered. He had just noticed that the reaction of the Resurrection Lily inside of him was strangely different this time.

It did not seem active and excited like before. Rather… it was trembling, as if it were terrified. It was almost like it had run into something it considered deadly; it even began to retract its own aura, not letting a scrap of it emanate out.

Meng Hao made a light “eee?” sound, and then spurred the war chariot into movement. It was in that moment that he suddenly heard an ancient voice in his ear.

“The day the Resurrection Lily blooms in seven colors, the flower blooms, Immortal Ascension, one thousand years….

“Immortal Ascension failed, and a Whitebone Lily appeared….”

When he heard the voice, Meng Hao’s mind trembled. The Resurrection Lily inside of him trembled even more violently. At the same time, the war chariot shot up out of the sea and then flew at top speed through mid-air.

“I was unable to sever the Resurrection Lily,” continued the voice, “so I could only sever myself…. From then on, the Resurrection Lily was no more, and the Whitebone Lilies bloomed from shore to shore ….”

Meng Hao took a deep breath and then looked down at the sea beneath him. Then the war chariot split the air as it vanished off into the distance.

When it reappeared outside of Seahold, Saint Sun Soul’s face was a bit unsightly. He had been in charge of the city for many years, besides which, the three Sects called themselves the Lords of the Milky Way Sea. However, in recent days he had come to the realization that there were secrets lurking in the depths of the water that even he wasn’t aware of.

The voice which Meng Hao had heard just now, he had also heard. Furthermore, every time he and Meng Hao came back from their journeys, he had gone to search through the ancient records. Gradually, he had come to an understanding of the Resurrection Lily.

Meng Hao and Saint Sun Soul were silent as they returned to the tower, where they sat down cross-legged on either side of a table.

After a moment of silence, Saint Sun Soul looked at Meng Hao. “That Resurrection Lily has most likely been here for many years, but has never made an appearance. Why would it suddenly emerge after you show up?”

“Because I have a Resurrection Lily inside of me,” replied Meng Hao coolly. He tossed a bag of holding filled with Demon hearts over to Saint Sun Soul.

Saint Sun Soul’s pupils constricted. Meng Hao’s answer to his question was a conclusion he had already speculated about.

A long moment passed, after which Saint Sun Soul took the Demon hearts and then produced Spirit Stones to give to Meng Hao.

He was just about to say something else when a jade slip began to glow inside his bag of holding. He took it out immediately and glanced it over, then frowned. He looked up at Meng Hao.

“Saint Flying Immortal, Saint Sea Divinity, the seventy thousand disciples… even the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch are all emerging from the Stormwind Divide and are on their way here!”

Moments ago, countless ships had begun to emerge from the Stormwind Divide that separated the Third and Fourth Rings. Sitting cross-legged atop the ships were crowds of Cultivators. Rumbling sounds filled the air.

They were densely packed together, and from a distance their numbers almost seemed endless.

Flying in mid-air were two middle-aged men. One wore a blue robe, the other, a white one. Their auras were bright, and their Cultivation bases were shocking enough to fill the sky with a riot of colors. Next to the two flew an old man.

That old man was none other than the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch.

As soon as they emerged, they contacted Saint Sun Soul, and then began to speed toward Seahold. Behind them, seventy thousand disciples charged along, blotting out the sky.

Back in Seahold, Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he listened to Saint Sun Soul. However, deep in his eyes, a bright glow appeared. He stood up.

Saint Sun Soul muttered to himself for a moment then waved his right hand, causing a jade slip to fly out, which Meng Hao grabbed.

“I’ll do my best to help you,” said Saint Sun Soul. “This jade slip describes an area controlled by the Sun Soul Society. You can hide there temporarily with no problems. After everyone heads out to start searching for you, I’ll arrange for someone to get you out of the Third Ring.

“That will make it harder for them to track you down.”

Meng Hao looked at the jade slip, then turned to leave without saying another word. Saint Sun Soul looked at his retreating figure, a complicated expression on his face.

Just as he was about to step foot out of the tower, Meng Hao stopped.

He had suddenly thought of a question he had been contemplating for over a month. “There’s something I’ve been wondering about for a while. Is it just the Sun Soul Society that has such a shocking amount of Spirit Stones, or is it all of the three Sects?”

Saint Sun Soul gave a faint smile.

“Are you aware of what exists in the Stormwind Divide? A quarry. Inside that quarry are three astonishing veins of Spirit Stone deposits. The Sun Soul Society… doesn’t care at all about Spirit Stones!”

“That make sense,” said Meng Hao. “But, would it be possible for you to tell me why you buy so many Demon hearts? What do they do?”

This time, Saint Sun Soul hesitated for a long moment. He didn’t really need to answer the question, but after looking at Meng Hao for a long moment, he finally said, “Demon hearts have a far more important function. Actually, it would be best for you not to sell the Demon hearts that remain in your bag of holding. As for what exactly they do, even my understanding is incomplete. However, I can tell you that seventy percent of the Demon hearts collected by the three Sects… end up being sent away from the lands of South Heaven. We use a special method to deliver them to a Sect in the stars who specially collects them.

“The price we purchase them for… is actually far lower than the price we sell them for.”

Meng Hao nodded, and then his body flickered as he left the tower. Before departing, he found Wei Li and gave her a large sum of Spirit Stones. Then he he took out the war chariot and disappeared over the horizon.

Not too long after Meng Hao left, the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch arrived, along with Saint Flying Immortal and Saint Sea Divinity. They moved with incredible speed; in one breath, they were far off in the distance, in the next breath, they were in Seahold.

Saint Sun Soul strode out from within the tower, his expression cold. He now looked exactly the same as he had when Meng Hao first met him as he glanced over the three approaching Cultivators.

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# Chapter 675: Reverend Silverlamp!

The next day, something completely shocking rocked the Third Ring. 100,000 disciples from the three Sects left Seahold to spread out throughout the entire Third Ring. Each one held a jade slip within which was the picture a person for whom they searched!

The entire Third Ring was shaken by the event. Even the Three Saints emerged to join the rigorous search. If that were all, it might not be a big deal. However, the next thing that happened was that notices appeared in all the shops of Seahold, offering valuable treasures to any Cultivator who joined the search.

Thus, Cultivators could be found virtually everywhere, searching on the surface of the sea. The Third Ring was in a state of complete lockdown.

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch stayed in Seahold. He had divided his Divine Sense up into countless strands which were imbued into the jade slips. If anyone even got near Meng Hao, he would instantly be able to sense it.

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch was even prepared for the possibility that Meng Hao had changed his appearance and aura. He would rather kill the wrong person by mistake than let Meng Hao escape.

Even as the Third Ring boiled into a frenzy, Meng Hao sat cross-legged on an island, his face grim. In his hand was the jade slip that Saint Sun Soul had given him.

“I don’t want to put someone else’s loyalty to the test,” he murmured softly, “nor do I want to place my hope in the hands of others.” He crushed the jade slip, then stood up and flew down into the sea. Since he couldn’t hide on the surface of the sea, then he would conceal himself in its depths.

In the moment that the jade slip was crushed, Saint Sun Soul was flying along in mid-air. He suddenly stopped in place, then smiled broadly. He understood Meng Hao's decision, and that was because… he had been waiting to make his own decision.

"This way works, too," he thought. "I have one more friend and one less enemy." He sighed inwardly, thinking back to everything that had happened in the past month, and all of their battles with the Sea Demons.

At the same time, Meng Hao sped along at the bottom of the sea. The aura of the Resurrection Lily was completely suppressed, with not a bit emanating out. Occasionally he would look around the area; if anything abnormal appeared, he was ready to take out the war chariot the instant anything abnormal appeared.

"To leave the Third Ring would require passing through the Stormwind Divide. However, the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch is no doubt prepared for that. Going to the Stormwind Divide would be casting myself into his net.

"However, I definitely can't stay in the Third Ring. If I do, then I'll definitely be found eventually, and then…." His eyes flickered.

"But the Second Ring… is where the Dawn Immortal lurks." He thought silently for a moment.

"A fiend up ahead, and an army chasing from behind. Ah, who cares!" His eyes shone with a cold gleam.

"In life, one can only hope to have freedom and independence; in life, one can only seek his own happiness! I knew all along that the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch would be coming. Therefore, what's the point in hesitating?

"My only option is the Second Ring. That's where the Dawn Immortal lurks, and that's where I'll lure the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. It is only within ultimate danger that I can go all out to snatch a chance to survive!

"Although, for the Flying Immortal Sect and the Sea Divinity Sect to choose to help the Wang Clan Patriarch so quickly indicates that the compensation they were offered was incredible!” Killing intent flickered in his eyes. He had already had enough of hiding and fleeing.

After returning from the Demon Immortal Sect, all he had done was flee nonstop. The resentment and desire to kill had reached a peak of intensity. It was something that killing no amount of Sea Demons could resolve. He needed to kill… people!

“First sow chaos in the Third Ring, then lure the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch to me. After that… determine victory or defeat in the Second Ring!” Meng Hao was just about to carry out his plan when suddenly, he stopped in mid-stride.

A sinister, vicious aura was once again approaching him. Yet again, the Resurrection Lily was nervous and trembling with terror.

The terror of the Resurrection Lily shook Meng Hao; he took out the war chariot, but didn’t immediately spur it into action. Instead, he looked down toward the bottom of the sea.

This place was actually the same location where he had heard the voice last time.

The same ancient voice once again spoke, shattering the stillness. “Immortal Ascension failed, and a Whitebone Lily appeared….

“I was unable to sever the Resurrection Lily, so I could only sever myself…. From then on, the Resurrection Lily was no more, and the Whitebone Lilies bloomed from shore to shore….”

As he listened to the voice for a second time, Meng Hao could sense grief, indignation, and monstrous resentment in it. Others who heard the voice would be so terrified their hair would stand on end. Meng Hao, on the other hand, actually felt twinges of sympathy.

He stood there silently for a moment before determination shone in his eyes. He sent the war chariot forward in the direction of the voice. Not much time passed before Meng Hao caught sight of the nearby region on the seafloor that was the origin of the sinister and vicious voice.

It was an area filled with countless white bones. They were the bones of both Cultivators and Sea Demons, and seemed never-ending. From a distance, all of them seemed to form the shape of a lily.

A Whitebone Lily.

At the very center of the Whitebone Lily was a patch of black seaweed, within which was a skeleton, sitting there cross-legged. Its skin had long since rotted away, and it floated there gently amidst the seaweed, which curled and wrapped around it.

Meng Hao's mind trembled as he slowly neared. The closer he got, the more the Resurrection Lily trembled. In fact, it had even started to emit terrified shrieks inside of him. When he got within 300 meters of the Whitebone Lily, veins bulged out all over his body. A five-colored Resurrection Lily appeared behind him, and it appeared to be going mad.

In the exact instant in which the five-colored Resurrection Lily appeared, the skeleton swaying within the seaweed suddenly stopped moving. It looked up, staring at Meng Hao with its empty eye sockets.

Meng Hao's mind roared as what seemed to be memories from the corpse poured into him from the corpse's empty eye sockets.

He saw an old man wearing a long golden robe, sitting cross-legged at the bottom of the sea. In front of him was a silver-colored lamp that emanated a gentle glow. Even at the bottom of the sea, the lamp's flame could not be extinguished, and its light enveloped the old man.

The old man's face was twisted ferociously, and occasionally twitched as if he were struggling against something. It seemed that he was experiencing an indescribable pain. Veins bulged out on his face, and he suddenly lifted his head up and roared angrily.

“I am Reverend Silverlamp! I have practiced cultivation for a thousand years, and am at the peak of Dao Seeking! How could I possibly lose to a trifling Resurrection Lily!?!?

“I clearly succeeded! I clearly expunged it! How could it have come back to life!?!?” As the man howled, an enormous illusory image appeared around him.

It was nearly a thousand meters tall, and shockingly, had six colors…. This was… a six-colored Resurrection Lily!!

When it appeared, the old man began to tremble, and his body started to wither. It was as if all of his life force, all of his Cultivation base, all of his memories, were all being sucked away by the Resurrection Lily.

“Immortal Ascension…. If the Resurrection Lily achieves Immortal Ascension, it sucks away the life force of the host. If I want to reach Immortal Ascension, then I must make use of the destiny of the Resurrection Lily!

“I will not yield!” As the old man howled, his eyes filled with hatred and determination.

“I shall reach Immortal Ascension!

“It is all for Immortal Ascension!

“I am destined to be Immortal, and I have my path to Immortality. I was an Immortal in my last life, how come… I cannot continue as an Immortal in this life?!?!

“If I cannot sever the Resurrection Lily, then I must sever myself! Sever my Immortal destiny, sever my path to Immortality! Use the cultivation of my past life to transform my resentment into a sea of white bones!

“Henceforth, my bones will float at the bottom of the Milky Way Sea, and my blood will stain the waters. I will use my bones to disperse the will of the Resurrection Lily, and cause countless Whitebone Lilies to bloom!”

With that, the old man lifted his right hand and slapped his own chest. Blood sprayed from his mouth, and his body withered rapidly. However, his blood oozed out into the water, spreading out in the currents and attracting large numbers of Sea Demons.

"From this day on, my soul will become white bones, which will live as parasites in countless other life forms, and will be… the archfoe of the Resurrection Lily!" The old man began to laugh maniacally, and then once again spit out blood. His blood and even his flesh began to balloon outward, and at the same time, countless Sea Demons pounced on him.

The sounds of crunching and tearing could be heard, as if countless fangs and mouths were consuming the old man's flesh and blood. Meng Hao couldn't see the old man, but he could hear his voice, filled with enmity and hatred.

"Archfoes!!"

At the same time, the six-colored Resurrection Lily behind him began to wilt. It was one with the old man, so as the old man was consumed, it too was devoured. It struggled, but to no avail.

After a certain amount of time had passed, a rumbling boom echoed out and the Sea Demons were all driven away to reveal a white skeleton completely devoid of any flesh or blood. It slowly sank down into the seaweed below. The black seaweed encircled it, wrapped it up, and then it began to float there back and forth.

As for the Resurrection Lily, it had completely vanished. Everything in the area grew quiet. As for the Sea Demons that had consumed his flesh and blood, suddenly they began to explode. Their flesh and blood attracted more Sea Demons, which consumed the flesh and blood, and in turn, exploded.

The process repeated for a full sixty-year cycle. By this time, the Third Ring of the Milky Way Sea was filled with the aura of the old man's flesh and blood. Because of that aura, all of the Sea Demons in this part of the sea were branded with the Whitebone Lily.

Meng Hao’s mind trembled as the vision faded away and everything returned to normal. He was still surrounded by countless white bones. The skeleton in the seaweed lowered its head and once again began to sway back and forth.

Meng Hao began to pant, and his face was ashen.

“The Resurrection Lily…. It seems I’ve underestimated it!

“That skeleton is Reverend Silverlamp. He once traveled to the Violet Fate Sect, and Master said that he helped him dispel the Resurrection Lily!

“And yet… in the end, he died here, perishing together along with the Resurrection Lily to become its archfoe, the Whitebone Lily!

“And he… didn’t have a seven-colored Resurrection Lily, but rather, a six-colored one!

“Reverend Silverlamp was unable to control a six-colored Resurrection Lily, and the Resurrection Lily inside of me already has five colors!” When he thought about this, Meng Hao’s face fell.

He once again realized that he had made a serious misjudgment when it came to understanding the Resurrection Lily.

“If my Resurrection Lily blooms with six colors, then my fate will be exactly the same as Reverend Silverlamp’s!” His face flickered, and his eyes flashed as he looked around.

“The Resurrection Lily inside of me is currently terrified to the extreme…. I might not be able to thoroughly dispel it using my own power, but that doesn’t necessarily mean it would be impossible if I borrowed the power of Reverend Silverlamp!” His eyes narrowed and then began to shine with a bright glow. His body flickered as he headed directly toward Reverend Silverlamp.

Allowing the Resurrection Lily inside of him to struggle madly, it was without hesitation that he crossed his legs and sat down next to the seaweed. In that instant, a faint, sinister voice could suddenly be heard drifting toward him from far off in the distance.

“Leave that place, my child….”

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# Chapter 676: Spirit Severing – First Severing!

As the voice drifted out, Meng Hao suddenly looked slightly distracted, as if he were suddenly empty inside. He slowly rose up from his cross-legged position.

“Leave that place, my child…. Come to me….

“I’ve been waiting for you for over two hundred years….

“Come. Come….

“Your blood is most suited to reach maturity, and your soul… needs to slumber….

“Come…. I’m waiting here for you….”

Meng Hao’s expression grew more blank, and he began to walk away from the seaweed. When he was about thirty meters away, the Immortal Shows the Way inside of him suddenly began exude a faint stream of Qi that bored into his Nascent Soul. Immediately, his Nascent Soul grew faint, and then suddenly, deep inside, a Flying Rain-Dragon became visible!

It was very small, and seemed to be sleeping. However, the stream of Immortal Qi found it and bored directly into the Flying Rain-Dragon.

In that instant, the Flying Rain-Dragon opened its eyes and roared.

As the roar sounded out, an enormous Flying Rain-Dragon fully 30,000 meters long appeared around Meng Hao. Shocking ripples emanated off of it as it roared.

ROOOAAARRRRR!!

The Dawn Immortal’s aura vanished, and a tremor ran through Meng Hao. His eyes suddenly became clear, and looked up at the astonishing Flying Rain-Dragon.

The Flying Rain-Dragon turned its head to look at him, and in that instant, Meng Hao felt as if he were looking at himself.

Then, the Flying Rain-Dragon vanished. Meng Hao’s face was pale white as he thought back to what had just happened. Then he cast his vision inside of himself, to find that the Resurrection Lily had sent countless tendrils throughout the entirety of his body.

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed with killing intent, and he returned to his original spot next to the seaweed. The Resurrection Lily trembled and shrank back, and by the time Meng Hao sat down cross-legged, it had completely hidden itself.

“Right here, right now, I’m going to borrow the power of Reverend Silverlamp to thoroughly sever away the Resurrection Lily!

“The method I will use to do so… is the power of Spirit Severing! My path of Spirit Severing… my First Severing, will be of the Resurrection Lily!!

“I wish to be the master of my own life. I will not allow any outsider to control me. What I want is freedom. My path in life is a journey, and my Dao is a direction! I will continue on in that direction and pursue truth. I will exercise control over my own freedom, and live with independence!

“That is my will of Spirit Severing! I will crush all obstacles, and destroy anything that blocks my way. Whatever stumbling blocks I encounter will be trampled underfoot!

“Fearful of nothing! Freedom! Independence!

“The Heavens will not obscure my gaze, and the Earth will not shackle my feet!

“For freedom, I can pay any price!

“For independence, I will sever anything!

“The Resurrection Lily is like a mountain obstructing my way on the path of life! When I pass it, then my path will stretch out into the distance!

“The Resurrection Lily is a fetter, a cage restricting my freedom. I will sever it… and in the instant of that severing, I will have my independence, and can practice cultivation in freedom!

“This is my First Severing!

“This is my Spirit Severing Domain!

“This is my Dao of Spirit Severing!”

Meng Hao’s eyes glowed with enlightenment. He had remained submerged in the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage for too many years. He had undergone the baptism of the Demon Immortal Sect and had been doggedly pursued by the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. All of that left him feeling as if he had been reborn, purified by fire. Finally, in this moment, he reached complete understanding.

In the moment that he was enlightened, Meng Hao’s Cultivation base began to rumble. The two Cultivation base portions within him that were struggling to combine, suddenly began to fuse together at high speed.

It seemed that his thinking just now had governed the rotation of his Cultivation base. In that instant of realization….

RUMBLE!!

Meng Hao’s entire body began to tremble, and the two portions of Cultivation base instantly merged together. His Nascent Soul vanished, and at the same time, Meng Hao’s body began to shine with brilliant, multicolored light.

The light circulated around the area, swirling about to slowly form together in front of Meng Hao, transforming into a blade as he opened his eyes.

A multi-colored blade that contained a great Dao of Heaven and Earth!

The blade contained the full power of Meng Hao’s Cultivation base, which was the combination of his nine Nascent Souls, including the five elements of Heaven and Earth.

It also contained the memories and experiences of his two hundred years of cultivation. When Meng Hao looked at the blade, it was like looking at himself!

In this moment, Meng Hao’s heart contained neither joy, nor sorrow. It was as if he had forgotten everything except for his thirst for freedom, and his desire to pursue independence.

The Resurrection Lily inside of him seemed to sense that it was in danger. It could hide from his Divine Sense so that Meng Hao couldn’t sense it, but it could not hide even the slightest bit from this blade.

The intense sense of impending death caused the Resurrection Lily to begin to struggle, as if it wished to burst out from inside of Meng Hao. It wanted to once again wrest away the initiative, and yet, as soon as it moved, a dim light began to emanate out from the skeleton floating in the seaweed. Up above, the surface of the sea in the Third Ring began to surge.

Next, imprints of the Whitebone Lily began to shine on all of the Sea Demons in the Third Ring. The marks looked like grotesque faces, and emanated ghastly auras.

Those auras combined to suppress the Resurrection Lily.

Boom!

The Resurrection Lily struggled, and then began to shriek with a voice that no one except Meng Hao could hear.

What was more, the illusory image of a five-colored Resurrection Lily sprang up behind him. It was in a completely frenzy, and struggling madly. Meng Hao’s expression was calm, although his body was withering rapidly, as if his life force and Cultivation base were being sucked away by the Resurrection Lily.

Nevertheless, he remained there motionless, staring at the blade in front of him.

The Resurrection Lily screamed and shrieked, and its struggles grew more intense. However, the suppressive power coming from the Reverend Silverlamp’s Whitebone Lily rushed in. It seemed to deal a severe blow to the five-colored Resurrection Lily. Its body was on the verge of dissipating, and it had no choice but to once again attempt to absorb Meng Hao.

Some time afterwards, when Meng Hao’s body had shriveled and become almost skeletal, the blade in front of him jerked slightly, then slowly rose up.

As the blade lifted up, an immeasurably powerful, heaven-shaking aura arose with it. Instantly it pierced through the surface of the sea and up into the skies, forming a connection with the vast heavens!

From a distance, the Third Ring seethed and churned as a beam of light shot up into the dark night, making it seem like daytime.

In that moment, as Saint Soul Sun hovered above the Milky Way Sea, his face flickered and he suddenly turned his head to gaze at it.

“Someone is performing Spirit Severing. But how could this Spirit Severing provoke such transformations in Heaven and Earth!?”

At the same time, Saint Flying Immortal and Saint Sea Divinity also got the same feeling. They looked at the beam of light, and how the sky was being illuminated, and their faces filled with astonishment.

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch currently sat cross-legged in meditation in Seahold. Suddenly, his eyes snapped open and he looked off into the distance, an expression of joy appearing on his face.

“Those… are the ripples of Spirit Severing. It’s him!! So he is here! He truly is exceptional! His Spirit Severing can connect with the Heavens of Ji, and provoke changes in the sky!

“However, you dare to perform Spirit Severing in front of me? Let’s see how you escape this time!” The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch gave a cold snort and stood up. It was at this point that his face suddenly flickered with an expression of disbelief. Even with his level of willpower, what he saw left him speechless.

“Impossible!!”

The beam of light shooting up from the sea did not stop in the sky. It shot out into the starry sky, causing the heavenly bodies themselves to emanate bursts of starlight as they suddenly changed position to form an astral blade!

The blade shined down on the lands of South Heaven, and soon, everyone therein could look up into the sky and see the image of the massive blade.

It was almost as if it had shattered the sky above the lands of South Heaven and was now descending upon it.

Simultaneously, the aura of a great Dao descended from the sky toward the Milky Way Sea. It penetrated the surface of the waters and fell on the blade floating in front of Meng Hao.

“The blade of the First Severing actually provoked transformations among the stars!” exclaimed the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. “What Dao did he gain enlightenment of?!

“Daos have rankings, they can be great or small. This Meng Hao’s Dao… just what is it? It can cause the stars to transform into a Heavenly Blade that will assist him in Dao Severing!!

“The Heavenly Blade is a Heavenly Dao. The blade of the First Severing is also the first Dao of Spirit Severing!” 1 The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s face filled with complete astonishment, and he stopped moving. As of this moment, he didn’t dare to get even close to Meng Hao’s location. A great Dao was coming, and with his Cultivation base, if he got near, he would die for sure.

Meanwhile, the State of Zhao floated in the Milky Way Sea on top of Patriarch Reliance. The entire island suddenly rumbled, and an enormous head stretched out from the water to look up into the sky.

“That little bastard is performing Dao Severing…. Dammit. The little bastard is an inhuman among inhumans! The Patriarch needs to get out of here! Fudge! You really piss me off, you little bastard!!”

In the lands of the Southern Domain, Xu Qing was in the midst of cultivation when suddenly a tremor ran through her, as if she had just sensed something. She rushed out of her Immortal’s cave and looked up into the sky. It seemed as if she could actually see Meng Hao.

In the Violet Fate Sect, Pill Demon was concocting pills when he suddenly froze. He looked up into the sky, and his face broke into a smile.

Next to him was Chu Yuyan, who also seemed to sense something. She looked up, and seemed to lose herself staring at the sky.

In the same moment, Fatty, Chen Fan, and all the other people in the Southern Domain who knew Meng Hao, all had different reactions. However, none came close to those of Xu Qing and Pill Demon.

With one exception.

In the Blood Demon Sect, a middle-aged man wearing a red robe was surrounded by a blood-colored glow. He stood on the peak of a mountain, looking up into the sky, a faint smile on his face.

“You and I are connected by destiny. The Blood Demon Sect… is definitely the home you shall return to.” 2

1. Please note that in Chinese, the words for “blade” and “Dao” sound almost exactly the same.

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# Chapter 677: The Great Dao Resonates!

The first blade of Spirit Severing!

The first Dao of Spirit Severing!

Meng Hao sat cross-legged at the bottom of the Milky Way Sea. Around him stretched skeletal remains that formed the outline of a flower. Amongst the swaying seaweed, the skeleton pulsed with a faint light, which gradually turned into a ghastly white color, like that of bones.

It weighed down on the five-colored Resurrection Lily, suppressing it so that its struggling turned into a frenzy.

Meng Hao's body withered, continuing to look weaker and weaker, until he looked like a bag of bones. However, his eyes shined with an unprecedented life force.

It was as if he was embodying the Dao; all of his mind and heart and will were focused in his eyes, which rested on the multicolored blade in front of him.

He completely ignored everything in the outside world. His entire focus was that blade!

The blade moved!

It slowly raised up! As it did, the blade in the Heavens above, which contained innumerable constellations, also rose high, casting its light down onto the lands of South Heaven as it did.

Immediately, gigantic waves swelled up across the entirety of the Milky Way Sea, crashing and thundering far and wide. The movement of the blade even caused the Violet Sea in the Western Desert to begin to roil violently.

All of the Cultivators, and in fact, all living things, in the Outer Sea, the Fourth Ring, and the Third Ring, were all flabbergasted.

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch's face was unsightly to the extreme as he stared up into the sky. Although his face flickered with various emotions, he didn't dare to take even a step forward toward the area where Meng Hao was performing his Spirit Severing.

He well knew that a great Dao was nearing. Were he to step foot into that area, that great Dao would exterminate him in body and spirit. The reason was that this Dao… was not his Dao.

"Dammit!" he cursed, killing intent growing with intensity in his eyes. "Well, eventually your Spirit Severing will come to an end. You absolutely must not kill yourself in the process, child, otherwise I'll never acquire your Dao foundation!

"However… I still want to know, just what Dao did you come to understand?"

Within the Third Ring, the Three Saints' faces also flickered. In contrast to Saint Flying Immortal and Saint Sea Divinity, Saint Sun Soul's eyes glowed with a strange light. He was instantly able to determine that the Spirit Severing was being performed… by Meng Hao!

"So, it turns out you were actually only a half a step into Spirit Severing!" he thought, taking a deep breath.

Meanwhile, as the astral blade slowly rose up, the struggling, illusory image of the Resurrection Lily had reached the point of insanity. It quivered in terror because of the unprecedented feeling of deadly crisis; this was the first time it had ever truly experienced dread.

It could clearly sense that the blade in front of Meng Hao had the power to sever it away. That blade was backed by the power of a great Dao, something it was powerless to resist.

A faint voice could suddenly be heard coming from the skeleton in the seaweed, and the eyes of the long dead Reverend Silverlamp suddenly glowed with lucidity. “The Dao of freedom, of independence….”

He looked at Meng Hao sitting in front of him, and murmured, “Were it not for the fact that he was steeled by the Resurrection Lily, this kid would never have been able to comprehend such a great Dao of Heaven and Earth….

“Sever the fetters, and achieve true independence…. The interesting thing is that it’s impossible to tell whether he was tempered by the Resurrection Lily, or whether the Resurrection Lily was tempered by him.

“I can just barely sense that both he and the Resurrection Lily each have someone watching over them…. One is the Dawn Immortal of the Second Ring, mother of the Resurrection Lily who exists in the lands of South Heaven. The other… is in the Eastern Lands.”

Even as Reverend Silverlamp was looking at Meng Hao, a sinister gaze shot out from the black depths of the sea in the Second Ring, bearing a boundless evil. Despite the evil, it still exhibited a trace of Immortal Will as it peered towards Meng Hao.

“I bloomed at dawn,” thought the owner of the voice, “and my consciousness emerged…. On the day of vicissitudes, I achieved Immortal Ascension, and met someone I should not have met.

“Shui Mo stole away my heart, a heart… that contained all of the longing from my previous life…. It sank down into the Milky Way Sea and was sealed in a formation of stone, locked away in a copper coffin… restrained by countless chains.

“What was locked away was my goodness. Eventually, it transformed into a roc, which now weeps in the Rebirth Cave.

“The League of Demon Sealers. The Ninth is the pinnacle. Is he your hope…? I knew long ago that if I could not find you, then I would destroy the hope of the League of Demon Sealers.”

The gaze coming from the Second Ring looked at Meng Hao with complex emotions. There was coldness, confusion, hatred, and viciousness.

Meanwhile, in the Great Tang of the Eastern Lands, a woman was looking in the direction of the Milky Way Sea. Her gaze penetrated through the air, through the Milky Way Sea, all the way to Meng Hao.

It was a gaze filled with concern, worry, nervousness, and anxiety. All of that transformed into an endless love that wrapped up her heart.

She stood atop a lofty Tower of Tang, gazing far off into the distance. Next to her stood a man who silently clasped her hand. He could feel her trembling, and could feel the dampness of sweat in her palm. 1

“This is Hao’er’s tribulation,” he said softly. “I just wanted him to be able to live a normal, mortal life. And yet, he ended up choosing the path of cultivation…. Now there’s no looking back.

“If he fails,” he murmured, “then the both of us can go receive him when he is reincarnated. We can spend a whole life with him, walk a whole sixty-year cycle of springs and autumns….” He seemed to be speaking both to the woman, and himself.

“You know, you’re very cold-hearted,” said the woman. Tears flowed down her cheeks.

A tremor ran through the man, and he closed his eyes. Deep in his heart existed bitter pain, which spread out to fill his entire being. He seemed to be recalling the fragile child running through the fog that year, weeping as he cried out to his father and mother. He remembered how the boy limped about trying to find him. When the boy caught sight of him, he could see the tears in the boy’s eyes, and he realized how much the boy relied on him.

“Li, you don’t understand….” The man did not speak these words, but rather, whispered them in his heart. 2

RUMBLE!

At the bottom of the Milky Way Sea, Meng Hao’s eyes shined with an intensely bright glow. He slowly looked up at the blade in front of him as it rose ever higher. In the Heavens far above the sea, the astral blade also reared up simultaneously.

As they moved toward an apex, the blades seemed to be building up power. By the time they reached that apex, all living beings in the Milky Way Sea were watching on….

The astral blade then suddenly began to slash down toward the Milky Way Sea.

Rumbling filled the sky, and the sea suddenly started to split apart. The seafloor, which throughout countless ages had never been touched by sunlight… was revealed to the world for the first time.

Exposed therein was Meng Hao, as well as the Resurrection Lily, struggling in all of its madness.

Also visible was the multicolored blade hovering in front of Meng Hao.

The first blade of Spirit Severing!

“Heaven and Earth are just resting places for the myriads of living creatures,” he murmured. “Time represents the passage of hundreds of generations of passing travelers.” A glow of determination appeared in his eyes, and the blade descended. 3

“My life is just such a resting place. Wherever my footsteps lead, that is my direction!” His voice echoed out, softly at first, then louder and louder.

“Sever the fetters, and achieve true independence, acquire true freedom!” The sound of his voice caused everything in the area to shake and rumble.

The parted sea water roared, and the glow of the astral blade increased tenfold!

It almost seemed to have formed a resonance with Meng Hao!

That resonance caused Heaven and Earth to dim. The wind whipped and the clouds churned. The glow of the astral blade spread without end, and the multicolored blade in front of Meng Hao emanated a shocking will.

This was… the resonance of a great Dao!

The glow grew more intense, transforming into ripples and then vibration. The air around Meng Hao twisted and distorted, and countless ghost images sprang up. When the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch felt it, his face fell.

“The resonance of a great Dao!”

In the Second Ring, the eyes of the mother of the Resurrection Lily went wide. As for the couple in the Great Tang of the Eastern Lands, both of them trembled.

Only great determination and incredible enlightenment could form a resonance like this!

Spirit Severing is not difficult when compared to causing a Dao…. But even more difficult is to form a resonance!

Meng Hao’s heart, will and mind all fused with the descending great Dao. They became indistinguishable!

I am the great Dao, and the great Dao is me!

In that moment, be it in the Southern Domain, the Northern Reaches, or the Eastern Lands, the Patriarchs and almighty members of all the Sects and Clans could all sense the resonance of the great Dao.

The resonance formed the first blade of Spirit Severing, a blade that would sever, not Meng Hao’s life or existence, but rather… any flaws within him that did not conform to his Dao!

Use the Dao to sever the Dao. It was like a baptism that cleansed any disharmonies, that purged the self. Any nonconforming Dao was absolutely unnecessary.

And of course, the Resurrection Lily was just such a flaw, just such a disharmony, just such a nonconforming Dao. It was absolutely unnecessary!

“Free and unconstrained, at liberty to walk about anywhere in Heaven and Earth! No one can restrict me! Heaven cannot impede me and the Earth cannot restrain my heart! This is my Dao!

“Freedom! Independence!” Meng Hao’s voice was like that of a god, each word cracking like thunder. The Milky Way Sea rumbled. The Dawn Immortal shook. The couple in the Eastern Lands trembled, as did the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch.

The words he had spoken just now were filled with Meng Hao’s great determination!

Everything trembled as the astral blade arrived. It merged with Meng Hao’s multicolored blade, transforming into a Dao blade that slashed down into the top of his head in the exact moment that he finished speaking.

The blade moved with incredible speed; no sooner had his words finished than it had pierced the top of his head into his neck, and then his heart. It passed through his dantian region, and then all the way through him, completely bisecting him!

However, Meng Hao didn’t move a muscle, and his face even showed hints of a smile. In contrast, the five-colored Resurrection Lily behind him let out an unprecedentedly bloodcurdling scream. It trembled violently as any connection it had to Meng Hao… was instantly broken!

Five colorful strands were snapped, and the five-colored Resurrection Lily began to wither up rapidly. It was not willing, and it virtually exploded with resentment and madness. But unfortunately, there was nothing it could do. In that moment, its will completely vanished.

Vanished for all eternity.

Meng Hao’s first blade of Spirit Severing severed the fetters, carving out his freedom. He had obtained independence!

In that moment, he erupted with a boundless, endless life force. His previously withered fleshly body was restored. Meng Hao looked up, and even as the image of the Resurrection Lily was about to completely dissipate, he reached out and grabbed it.

“You lived in me for 200 years, parasite. Do you really think the old scores could be settled so easily! From now on, you are my Spirit Severing Treasure. The day I get you to bloom with seven colors… is the day I reach Immortal Ascension!”

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2. The “Li” character here is , the same character as in Meng Li’s name .

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# Chapter 678: Intrepid Meng Hao!

Spirit Severing Treasures were items that every Spirit Severing Cultivator had. They were refined in the actual moment of Spirit Severing, created from an object unique to the enlightenment of each individual.

As for Meng Hao, he chose to use the fading five-colored Resurrection Lily as the basis of his Spirit Severing Treasure, which conformed with his Dao.

The soulless Resurrection Lily was incapable of struggling. As soon as he grabbed it, it merged into his palm, transforming into the mark shaped like a flower.

He took a deep breath as he rose to his feet, his Cultivation base flaring. This was a true Spirit Severing Cultivation base, with a three thousand meter Area that belonged solely to Meng Hao.

Of course, all Spirit Severing Cultivators had their own Area.

Meng Hao was more slender, and having immersed himself in the great Dao, his fleshly body was now stronger and taller. In the blink of an eye, he reached the absolute pinnacle of the Spirit Severing fleshly body. It was actually impossible for it to progress any further. If it did, it wouldn’t be a Spirit Severing fleshly body, but that of Dao Seeking!

His Cultivation base rocketed up; all the years of practicing cultivation while restricting himself to the Nascent Soul stage had created a buildup that could now explode out.

In an instant, he was at the limit of the First Severing, a breakthrough which gave him the power of a Second Severing Cultivation base. Now all he lacked was a Second Severing Domain.

Once he received enlightenment, and actually performed the Second Severing, Meng Hao was confident that he would instantly be… at the peak of Spirit Severing.

His longevity also increased under the powerful life force. His hair turned black, his physique matchless. He looked younger than before, although, his features also radiated a certain ancientness that was clearly visible.

His entire person experienced a tremendous, earthshaking transformation as he was completely and thoroughly reborn!

Some distance off in the Milky Way Sea, the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch was panting as he stared off into the distance. His eyes shone with a bizarre light and intense avarice.

“With latent talent and good fortune like that, no wonder he has a Perfect Dao Foundation. It’s mine! Definitely mine!” In that instant, he vanished.

At the same time, in the black depths of the Second Ring, the Dawn Immortal’s eyes closed. When they opened again, infinite coldness could be seen therein.

In the Great Tang of the Eastern Lands, the couple stood there. Tears streamed down the face of the woman, tears of joy.

“Without Severing the Spirit, one cannot live past one thousand. My son practiced cultivation for only two hundred years and succeeded in Spirit Severing. He even provoked the descent of a great Dao.” She turned to look at the man. “How does such latent talent compare to the people of your Clan, huh?”

The man stood there silently for a long moment before sighing. “I’m not worried about him having poor latent talent. Even if it was worse, he’s still our son. Is Immortal Ascension that difficult? What I fear… is that his latent talent will be too good. The path of cultivation is not easy to tread. How many people perish upon it? How many people are completely eradicated? How many people are destroyed in body and soul…?”

The woman shivered and didn’t say anything.

“He also has to deal with his Spirit Severing Tribulation,” continued the man softly.

The woman’s face flickered, and she took a step forward. The man grabbed her arm.

“This is his real Tribulation, and there is Karma in everything. If you help him, it will cause the sown Karma to grow greater. When the time comes to reap it… the reckoning will also be greater.

“In cultivation, you cannot build up without first tearing down. If he can transcend the Tribulation, then when his day of Immortal Ascension comes, I will take him to the lands of East Victory!” The man spoke with determination that could chop nails and sever iron. However, what the woman couldn’t see was that concealed in his hand was a medicinal pill.

It was a type of medicinal pill that was rarely seen in the lands of South Heaven, to the extent that it could be considered a precious treasure.

“Hao’er,” thought the man, “if you fail, father will come to look for you in the cycle of reincarnation. Even if you perish, this medicinal pill can bring you back to life…. However, I truly wish that you… can transcend the Tribulation on your own.”

Back in the Milky Way Sea, Meng Hao lifted his head up and roared in laughter as his Cultivation base exploded up. The sensation of the power he now grasped filled him with passion. The feeling of finally acquiring freedom made it so that his thinking was suddenly incredibly clear.

His Divine Sense spread out. It could now reach the 300,000 meter mark. Hosts of magical techniques and divine abilities flashed through his mind, many of which he instantly gained enlightenment of.

Even as he began to fly up into the air, two beams of light appeared from off in the distance. As they sped toward him, two middle-aged men could be seen, Saint Flying Immortal and Saint Sea Divinity.

As soon as they caught sight of Meng Hao, they knew that this was the person they were searching for.

In the success of his First Severing, not only was the Resurrection Lily severed, but also his false appearance, revealing his true features.

“Meng Hao!” cried Saint Flying Immortal, his voice rumbling like thunder. The sea churned in response, as if it were about to explode.

A cold radiance appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes. As soon as he looked at the two men, he knew who they were.

In the moment that Saint Flying Immortal spoke, a glittering glow covered the body of Saint Sea Divinity. Instantly, a set of armor appeared on him, and he strode forward. Even he couldn’t help but be moved by the reward promised by the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch; if he could capture Meng Hao, the greatest benefits would go to him.

He shot with incredible speed directly toward Meng Hao, performing an incantation gesture to summon an enormous trident. Shockingly, the sea stirred, and then vast quantities of seawater shot up into the air to circulate around. As he neared, he pointed out with the trident. The seawater roared as it formed together into the shape of an enormous hand that reached out to grab Meng Hao.

“Are you looking to die?!” said Meng Hao. He was already somewhat displeased at the behavior of the Flying Immortal Sect and the Sea Divinity Sect. Now that Saint Sea Divinity was attacking, Meng Hao’s killing intent flared. He did nothing to evade, but simply took a step forward.

That step caused him to slam into the incoming seawater hand. A huge boom echoed out, and the hand collapsed. Meng Hao wasn’t harmed in the slightest, and when he emerged from the water, he was directly in front of Saint Sea Divinity. He reached out with his right hand, upon which the Mountain Consuming Incantation manifested. The wave of a hand caused a thousand mountains to appear, all of which smashed down toward Saint Sea Divinity.

Saint Sea Divinity’s face fell and he retreated, waving his arm to cause 100,000 magical symbol spirits to appear. They formed into ten symbol beasts, all of whom radiated the power of a Spirit Severing Cultivation base as they charged Meng Hao.

Meng Hao gave a cold snort, but didn’t dodge. A thousand mountains sent out shocking ripples, and the symbol beasts made from 100,000 magical symbols immediately exploded. It was as if they weren’t qualified at all to stand up to the thousand mountains, which then shot toward Saint Sea Divinity.

Everything was happening too quickly. Saint Flying Immortal had no chance to even react, and Saint Sea Divinity’s mind filled with an intense feeling of deadly crisis. He suddenly shouted out, causing his trident to begin to flicker and glow. It instantly transformed into an enormous wall of black sea water in front of him.

Boom!

The wall exploded. At the same time, Meng Hao’s thousand mountains also disappeared. However, the aftershock of the explosion caused Saint Sea Divinity’s face to go pale. As he retreated backward, Meng Hao strode toward him.

He raised his hand, killing intent flickering in his eyes. He did not use any sort of magical technique or divine ability, but instead, punched out directly.

As the fist descended upon Saint Sea Divinity, it seemed to blot out the sky. Energy like that of Heavenly might surged, causing Saint Sea Divinity to feel intense fear. He quickly spit a glowing, blue pearl out of his mouth, which then shot toward Meng Hao. Meng Hao’s fist slammed into it, and the pearl shattered; it was completely incapable of standing up to Meng Hao’s fist, which continued onward to connect with Saint Sea Divinity.

BAM!

As the sound echoed out in all directions, blood sprayed from the mouth of Saint Sea Divinity. Cracking sounds could be heard as his armor shattered into pieces. His terror had now reached a pinnacle.

“Flying Immortal, help me!!”

Saint Flying Immortal’s face flickered, and he took a deep breath. He had never imagined that Meng Hao, having just stepped into Spirit Severing, would be so terrifying.

“Dammit, even if his Spirit Severing caused strange phenomena in Heaven and Earth, and even if he caused a great Dao to descend, there’s no explanation for him to be so inhuman!” He was still in the midst of feeling shocked when Saint Sea Divinity called for his help. Gritting his teeth, he shot forward, raising his right hand toward the sky. Instantly, a sword of light appeared, which he grasped in his hand. At the same time, his speed increased rapidly.

In the blink of an eye, he was upon Meng Hao.

“Area,” said Meng Hao coolly, not even turning back to look at Saint Flying Immortal. In that instant, a three thousand foot Area sprang up, a world that contained Meng Hao’s Dao and will.

The Area world!

Saint Flying Immortal’s speed was suddenly reduced. His mind trembled as Meng Hao once again punched out.

“Nine Heavens Destruction!” The first punch of the Nine Heavens Destruction, the First Heaven, caused a boom to rattle out. Blood poured out of Saint Sea Divinity’s mouth, and his body seemed to be on the verge of exploding. Even as he let out a bloodcurdling scream, Meng Hao stepped forward and punched out with the Second Heaven.

Then the Third Heaven, and the Fourth Heaven. Saint Sea Divinity’s body was blasted apart . His Nascent Divinity flew out, screaming miserably.

“Legacy treasure!!” he howled, instantly causing a statue to fly out from inside the Nascent Divinity. The statue was pitch black, and depicted a faceless figure.

As soon as the statue appeared, it let out a pulsating aura of Dao seeking, which transformed into a wall that expanded out to surround Saint Sea Divinity.

“Legacy treasure?” said Meng Hao. He punched out with the Fifth Heaven and the Sixth Heaven. Booms filled the area, and the statue trembled. Then the Seventh Heaven and the Eighth Heaven. The statue shook, and the wall trembled. Inside, despair filled Saint Sea Divinity’s face.

“Ninth Heaven… Destruction!” said Meng Hao calmly. He lifted his right hand, and this time, it wasn’t a fist, but a palm that softly pushed out.

BANG!

The wall collapsed, and the statue was sent tumbling back. Inside, Saint Sea Divinity’s Nascent Divinity let the last scream it ever would. He was now destroyed in body and spirit!

“How can he be so strong!?!?” thought Saint Flying Immortal. Having personally witnessed Saint Sea Divinity perishing, his scalp went numb, and his heart filled with astonishment. He quickly bit down on the tip of his tongue and spit out a mouthful of blood. He burned life force, not hesitating to waste longevity to struggle free from Meng Hao’s Area world. He transformed into a beam of light that fled at top speed.

Meng Hao turned back to look, and his eyes flickered. He raised his hand to collect up Saint Sea Divinity’s bag of holding, then waved his arm to summon the war chariot.

“Anyone who chased me along with that 10th Wang Clan bastard will have to pay the price!”

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# Chapter 679: Battle!

“How can he be so strong!?!?

“A great Dao descended, making it a great Dao Spirit Severing, different from mine. But, it still doesn’t make sense for him to be so terrifying!

“He hasn’t even used any magical techniques or items! He’s only relying on his fleshly body!!

“Dammit! Just what level is his fleshly body at? Magical items are completely ineffective, nor could it be shaken by divine abilities! What type of fleshly body is it!?” Saint Flying Immortal’s fear had reached the pinnacle. In his entire life of practicing of cultivation, he had never encountered a Cultivator of the same stage who caused him to be so terrified.

“Damn you, 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, you conned me!! If I’d known this Meng Hao was so inhuman, you couldn’t have said anything to convince me to join you….” He flew forward at top speed, fearful of being pursued. He even spit out some blood and burned more life force to go faster.

But it didn’t matter how fast he went, he couldn’t go faster than the war chariot.

Meng Hao was mounted on the war chariot, fueling it with a sliver of the Qi of Immortal Shows the Way. Thrumming, it caught up with Saint Flying Immortal in only a moment. Then it slammed violently toward him.

Saint Flying Immortal’s face fell. He was incapable of evading; he only had time to wave his sword of light behind him to block. A huge boom could be heard as the sword of light shattered into pieces. Saint Flying Immortal’s body then directly exploded.

His Nascent Divinity flew out, clearly in a sorry state. Meng Hao exited the war chariot and waved his hand, employing the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex. Saint Flying Immortal didn’t even have a chance to move before countless invisible strands of Qi seemed to entwine his quivering Nascent Divinity.

His mind was instantly inundated with a profound sense of imminent death. His eyes bulged and he struggled violently, but he could do nothing as Meng Hao waved his hand, causing a hundred Wooden Time Swords to fly out. They circulated around Saint Flying Immortal to form a swirling Lotus Sword Formation.

A miserable shriek could be heard as Saint Flying Immortal’s Nascent Divinity rapidly began to wither up. In the space of about ten breaths, it shrank, much like it would if it was being refined. Then, it withered into nothing; he was dead in body and spirit.

Meng Hao waved his hand to collect up Saint Flying Immortal’s bag of holding, and then looked over the Lotus Sword Formation.

“The lotus is also like the act of refining….” he thought. [1]

It was at this point that the crackling of thunder could be heard in the sky off in the distance. The wind whipped about, and in the blink of an eye, the sunny day turned dark. Countless pitch-black clouds surged up, forming a dense mass that looked like a gigantic face. It was none other than… the face of the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch.

The face was surrounded by crisscrossing bolts of lightning and heralded by peals of thunder; on the forehead of the face, an old man could be seen, his eyes glittering brightly.

“Meng Hao!”

The voice drowned out the thunder, like a Heavenly being’s majestic roar, blasting an enormous craterous depression into the Milky Way Sea down below, which rapidly transformed into a rumbling, spinning vortex.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and looked coldly at the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch.

“Another clone,” he said. His Divine Sense was much more powerful than before, and he understood a lot more about the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch now that he had fought two of his clones before. How could he not notice that this was indeed just a clone?

Meng Hao raised his right hand into a fist, and the Mountain Consuming Incantation appeared. One thousand mountains appeared around him, then more, until tens of thousand of mountains could be seen. The mountains were not small, and appeared to contain seawater. These represented all of the underwater mountains that existed in the range of Meng Hao’s Divine Sense.

“The Mountain Consuming Incantation is divided into three aspects; the mountain, the soul, and the will!

“Along with my Cultivation base breakthrough, I was enlightened regarding the soul.

“This soul aspect more or less can be controlled by means of my Demon Sealing powers. With the art of Righteous Bestowal, I can extract the souls of mountain and insert them into my mountains. That is the complete second stage of the great art of Mountain Consuming!”

Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a strange light. As he faced up against the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, he felt pressure bearing down on him, but at the same time, an intense desire to do battle. He raised his hand and then pushed it down toward the sea.

“Righteous Bestowal!

“Mountains of the Milky Way Sea, you are sunk beneath the waters, living in a world without daylight. Today, I, Meng Hao, will borrow your souls. I will split open the Heavens and Earth and allow you to bathe in the sunlight!

“EMERGE!”

In response to his shout, the sea began to seethe as, one by one, the mountains within the sea began to tremble. At the same time, an invisible aura began to spread up from them toward the surface.

As the sea blustered, the souls of the mountains appeared, merging into the mountains summoned by Meng Hao’s divine ability. Thousands upon tens of thousands of mountains, a world-shaking sight, completely incomparable!

As the mountains spun around Meng Hao, he stretched his arms out wide. Hair flying around him, and eyes blazing with the desire to do battle, he suddenly swept his hands out in front of him. The tens of thousands of mountains all shot through the air with shocking rumbling sounds heading directly toward the gigantic face floating in mid-air.

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s face flickered as he performed an incantation gesture. The face that surrounded him immediately sped toward the mountains. They neared each other, and then slammed into each other, giving rise to a rumbling boom that filled the entirety of the Third Ring.

One mountain after another collapsed, and the face was riddled with gaping wounds. A moment later, amidst deafening roars, all of the mountains collapsed, and the face fell apart into pieces.

Meng Hao didn’t pause for a moment. He flew up into the air, waving his arm to cause one hundred Wooden Time Swords to appear and form into the Lotus Sword Formation. Instantly, the formation shot toward the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch.

At the same time, he began to clench and unclench his fist. Every time he did this, his energy would redouble. It was none other than the Nine Heavens Destruction!

Now that his Cultivation base was truly in the Spirit Severing stage, he had gained complete enlightenment of it.

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s pupils constricted. He could clearly sense that Meng Hao was completely different than he remembered, and was far, far more powerful.

“And yet, you are still… an insignificant bug!” he said with a cold snort. He waved his right hand, causing a red glow to appear in the cloud-choked sky.

It was a sun! A red sun!

“Setting Sun!” he said coolly. The red glow spread out to fill Heaven and Earth, instantly causing Meng Hao’s one hundred Wooden Time swords to slow down.

“Time Combustion!” growled Meng Hao.

In response to the words, the one hundred Wooden Time Swords and their ten sixty-year cycles of Time power, instantly began to burn. The combustion of Time caused their speed to increase dramatically. They pierced through the layers of redness to appear near the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, where they spun around him slowly.

Merely a single rotation caused the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s face to flicker. He could sense that his clone had, in the blink of an eye, lost several thousand years of longevity.

“A trifling Time treasure? Shatter!” He gave a cold snort, and the red glow grew even more shocking. It now emanated intense heat that spread out and began to shatter the Wooden Time Swords.

Meng Hao was already moving forward. “Detonate!”

BOOOOOOOMMMMMMMM!

Of the one hundred Wooden Time Swords, seventy simultaneously exploded. When the Spring and Autumn trees detonated, they unleashed an insane power of Time that turned into a Time vortex. The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s face fell as the rumbling echoed out. His body began to wither, and he was just about to retreat when Meng Hao shot forward as fast as lightning. His right fist had already clenched eight times in a row; now it clenched for the ninth time and then punched toward the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch.

“Nine Heavens Destruction!”

“Setting Sun, Falling Clouds!” The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s body emanated a monstrous red glow that billowed out.

Meng Hao faced it head on, and his body ignited into flames. However, his fist still struck its target.

A huge boom rattled out, and the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch fell back, his face pale. Killing intent radiated from his eyes as he saw that Meng Hao, blood pouring from his mouth and body in flames, was actually pursuing him.

Meng Hao’s hoarse voice once again rang out: “Detonate!”

The detonation from before had been that of seventy Wooden Time Swords. There were still thirty left, all of which exploded at the same time. A tempest of Time was created in the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s path of retreat, finally managing to wound him.

Blood sprayed from his mouth, after which he lifted his head up and roared with rage. Of three clones, two had been slain. This third clone was somewhat weak, was not carrying any magical items, and was limited in the divine abilities it could use. However, it had a Dao Seeking Cultivation base! How could it be injured in this way?

To the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, it was a humiliation!

After panting a few times, he stifled his rage and then looked at Meng Hao approaching him. “He’s intentionally trying to exasperate me. I must under no circumstances come here with my true self. He may still be able to use that Immortal’s sword, and the threat that could pose to me… must not be underestimated!”

Glaring at Meng Hao, he cried, “Call the wind, summon the rain!”

Black clouds containing black dragons whistled around him as a deluge drenched the vicinity, each raindrop contained killing intent. The raindrops seemed to cover Heavens and Earth as they headed straight for Meng Hao.

“Even if I have to sacrifice this clone, I need to draw out that Immortal’s sword. After he uses it, then my true self can come!”

Meng Hao, his body in flames, quickly retreated. A violet glow appeared in his eyes, and he burned life force to restore his flesh, which visibly healed at a rapid rate. Even as the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch neared him, Meng Hao stepped into the war chariot.

It was in that moment that the black dragons roared, and the dense rain of killing intent began to close in.

Meng Hao pushed down onto the war chariot with his hand. Even while continuing to heal himself, he sent the Qi of Immortal Shows the Way into the war chariot. Then, instead of fleeing, he shot toward the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch with all the power the war chariot could muster.

Outside of the war chariot, one vicious beast after another materialized, roaring. The sounds of their chains echoed about as they charged at top speed toward the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, whose face immediately flickered. He hadn’t sensed earlier that the war chariot was extraordinary, so seeing what was happening now left him shaken inwardly. He instantly moved to evade.

However, his speed was no match for the war chariot!

A boom could be heard as it slammed into him. Any black dragons along the way collapsed and the rainwater was destroyed. A massive energy swelled up, slamming into the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. Blood poured from his mouth as he performed a double-handed incantation and then shoved his hands out forward. His face was twisted ferociously as he utilized the entire power of his Cultivation base.

Even still, he was shoved backward by three hundred meters. By the time he came to a stop, blood was gushing out of his mouth, but his body had not been destroyed.

“Before Spirit Severing, he was no weakling. However, I never imagined that after reaching Spirit Severing, he would be so swift and fierce.

“I must have this Perfect Dao foundation!”

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1. In Chinese the world for lotus and the word for “refine” sound very similar

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# Chapter 680: The True Self Arrives!

Meng Hao stood in the war chariot watching as the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch fell backwards swiftly. Killing intent flickered in his eyes, and he waved a hand, causing Han Shan’s bronze Immortal’s sword to suddenly appear.

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s pupils constricted, and he did nothing to dodge or evade. In fact, a cold gleam appeared in his eyes, and he fully rotated his Cultivation base, causing his aura to surge with scintillating brightness. Nascent Divinity flames even began to burn his body.

“So, he finally drew the sword,” he thought. “From the look of it, he can only use it one more time. I’ll use this clone to make him use all of its power. When he slays my clone, then my true self can teleport here!” A strange gleam appeared in his eyes.

Just when it seemed Meng Hao was going to attack with the Immortal’s sword, the sword suddenly vanished. Then, ten glowing beams flew out of his bag of holding. The power of Time roiled off of them as they sped toward the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch.

They moved with incredible speed, plus, the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch was mostly focused on the Immortal’s sword. Therefore, Meng Hao was once again able to take advantage of a critical moment. Ten Time Sword tips flew forward with shocking speed, as well as over 100,000 years of Time power.

As they neared the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, his face flickered as his body rapidly withered, and he retreated immediately at top speed. Of course, the faster he moved, the faster the war chariot moved.

Meng Hao was racing against the clock, so he didn’t hold back any of the Qi of Immortal Shows the Way. He pushed the war chariot until it rumbled, shooting toward the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch.

The Wang Patriarch let out a furious roar, and then, all of a sudden, his right arm directly exploded. This was a type of self detonation that pushed him away violently, enabling him to sidestep the attack. As he did, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with killing intent.

“Detonate!” One Time Sword tip, worth 1,000,000,000 Spirit Stones, exploded. It transformed into a tempest of Time Power that spiraled toward the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, who was still in the middle of dodging away from the war chariot.

He let out a desolate roar and caused his Cultivation base to explode out with full power within the tempest. When he finally managed to completely dissipate the tempest, his body was incredibly withered, and his face ashen. He looked like nothing more than skin and bones. He let out another furious roar.

Meng Hao had no time to feel any pain in his heart because of the loss of Spirit Stones. His ability to defeat this clone of the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch depended, not just on his Cultivation base, but also… his wealth!

He had Spirit Stones, and he had the Heaven-defying Time treasures. Detonating the one hundred Wooden Time Swords was only the beginning. The Time Sword tips were his trump card.

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s clone was being defeated by Meng Hao’s Spirit Stones!

“Detonate!”

As the words left Meng Hao’s mouth, a second Time Sword tip blew up. A massive explosion ripped out, and a Time tempest surged out in all directions. The air aged, the sea dried up, in the blink of an eye, everything seemed to pass through ten thousand years.

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s clone exploded, and a Nascent Divinity flew out, screaming shrilly.

“Meng Hao!! You’re DEAD!!” The Nascent Divinity suddenly began to spin, transforming into an enormous vortex, within which flickered countless magical symbols. As it rotated, it turned into a spell formation.

At the very center of the spell formation appeared a black hole, a passageway leading to the unknown. A pressure that Meng Hao had never experienced before then emerged from within.

It was an aura that caused cracking sounds to fill the air around the black hole as multiple fissures suddenly appeared.

When he saw the fissures, Meng Hao’s pupils constricted as he watched the fissures spread out to fill what looked like an elliptical shape.

From a distance, it actually looked like an eye!

The spell formation vortex was the iris, the black hole was a pupil, and the area around it was the white of the eye. As for the fissures, they were… veins of blood!

Meng Hao’s entire body went cold; the intense pressure weighing down on him made it feel like he was about to explode. What was even more shocking was that the eye seemed to be fixed on him…. He could clearly sense something inside his body, something that had long since fused with him, begin to tremble, as if it was being forcefully extracted.

Meng Hao wasn’t sure how exactly to describe what it was, but he could vaguely sense it. Finally, he realized that it was his foundation. It was his stable, solid foundation, built up after two hundred years of cultivation!

“Dao foundation….” he thought, panting. He could almost hear his heart pounding; everything around him was now completely silent.

The only thing that moved was the vortex….

Meng Hao wanted to struggle, but at the moment, it felt as if his body wasn’t under his own control. He couldn’t move a muscle, and it felt as if his internal foundation was about to separate from him. In fact, he could even see what appeared to be white mist seeping out from his nose and mouth. Not just his nose and mouth, but also, his eyes, ears, and in fact, all of the pores that covered his body.

This was not life force, this was his Dao foundation!

“My Dao, is freedom and independence!!” Meng Hao’s eyes went red as, in that very moment, his Cultivation base suddenly flared up. It was a forced eruption that caused him to cough up three successive mouthfuls of blood. His body also wasted away. But in exchange, he was now able to move again.

In that moment, though, a sigh could be heard from within the vortex. The sound of it stabbed into Meng Hao’s ears, causing him to tremble. He coughed up another mouthful of blood, and his face went deathly white as he saw a coffin slowly emerging from within the vortex.

As soon as the coffin appeared, and ancient aura seeped out to fill the entire Third Ring. All of the Sea Demons underneath the water instantly went motionless. Even the Sea Devils in the Second Ring trembled.

Throughout all of the Milky Way sea, all of the Cultivators, all life forms, suddenly went still and quiet.

The sea did not move. The world was still. There was only the ancientness, roiling out to fill everything.

This was Dao Seeking!

The true peak of Dao Seeking!

Meng Hao did not need to speculate. He immediately knew that this… was the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s true self.

The true self had finally arrived!

Meng Hao’s scalp went numb, and his eyes were completely shot with blood. Without the slightest hesitation, he waved his hand, immediately causing seven of the remaining eight Time Sword tips to fly toward the vortex.

“DETONATE!” he roared, his voice hoarse. A huge boom rattled out as the seven Time Sword tips exploded, transforming into a terrifying storm of Time power.

At the same time, Meng Hao didn’t hesitate for even a moment to pull out Han Shan’s sword. He hefted the bronze alcohol flagon and took a drink, then spit it out. Sword Qi billowed up, and the Immortal’s Sword surged with the last bit of Sword Qi that he had kept, just in case.

A tempest of Time ripped into the vortex, and even the coffin began to wither. In the blink of an eye, cracks appeared all over it. However, even as the tempest raged, a withered hand suddenly stretched out from inside the coffin. It began to clench into a fist, and the violent Time tempest immediately began to shrink down into the fist. When it was completely inside, the fist clenched tightly.

BOOM!

The tempest vanished, and an old man slowly rose up from within the coffin. He wore burial garments, and looked emaciated and frail. His face was a bit flushed, but the flush rapidly disappeared, leaving his face pale white.

His eyes were not large, but the feeling of ancientness that emanated out from him was intense to the extreme. He looked at Meng Hao and grinned. But then he noticed the Immortal’s Sword that Meng Hao held, and his pupils constricted.

The grin caused Meng Hao’s hair to stand on end. It was a grin that revealed no teeth whatsoever in his mouth; this man was ancient to the extreme.

Even as he smiled, Meng Hao raised up the Immortal’s sword. Sword Qi raged up, filled with a song, shocking to the extreme. However, before the sword could slash down, a tremor ran through him, and he coughed up a mouthful of blood.

“Dammit!” His face was pale white as he sent Immortal Qi out of Immortal Shows the Way. The chariot rumbled and shot off into the distance. A gleam of foresight appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes, and he panted. He had intentionally not struck down with the sword, purposefully making it seem like the sword was without power. He could tell from his encounter with the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s clones that the man was wary of the sword.

Since that was the case, Meng Hao refused to believe that he wasn’t prepared for it. Everyone knew that the best time to use something was when you could do so along with the element of surprise.

“This guy is a wily old fox. He’s definitely prepared for the sword. If I want to use it, I have to catch him off guard. My Cultivation base isn’t a match for his; if I want to transcend this Tribulation, I have to use my wits!

“Using the Immortal’s sword at the right time… is the key to victory!” Meng Hao’s face was grim as he thought about how this opponent had crushed the Time tempest with a single fist. That left him trembling in fear.

“This is the peak of Dao Seeking, the power of a False Immortal!” Meng Hao had personally felt the terrifying power of the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, and he well understood the vast difference between the two of them. He was also well aware that the white mist that had begun to emanate out of him was the Perfection that was part of him. By now, it had been loosened and was being forced out of him. The thought of it was frightening.

“There’s no need to run,” said a hoarse voice from behind Meng Hao. “Your life has been prepared for me. It’s your destiny….” The ancient voice echoed about in all directions. It seemed as if the wind was rotting, and when Meng Hao heard the voice, his entire body went as cold as ice.

He didn’t turn to look back, but poured all the power of Immortal Shows the Way into the war chariot. In the blink of an eye, he had shot off into the distance with shocking, incredible speed.

“I knew about you way back when you were in Foundation Establishment. I’ve been waiting for many years for the opportunity to reach Immortal Ascension, and you are that opportunity.” The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s voice seemed nearer this time. Veins bulged out of Meng Hao’s pale face. He could push no more power out of Immortal Shows the Way. Immortal Qi tore through his Qi passageways as it flowed out into the war chariot.

The speed with which he moved was incredible. The seawater down below was no longer that of the Third Ring. It was black, indicating that he had entered the Second Ring.

“This is the Dao of Karma. It is a decision made by destiny. You can’t refuse.

“Do you think you can refuse the Dao of Karma? Do you think you can you refuse the choices of destiny? Since you can’t refuse, why not just willingly give me your Dao Foundation? On the day that I reach Immortal Ascension, you will be in the underworld of the Fourth Mountain. Even after you have drunk the tea of old lady Meng, and forgotten everything about your past life, you will still have a feeling of glory and honor.” This time, it sounded like the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch was right next to him. 1

1. Old Lady Meng, or Meng Po, is a figure from Chinese mythology. She works in the underworld and gives people a tea to drink that makes them forget everything about their past lives. The “Meng” character is the same as Meng Hao’s

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# Chapter 681: Foundation Seizing Grand Magic

“What glory and honor, bitch!?” raged Meng Hao from within the war chariot. He was originally a scholar, and was not the type of person to curse at others. However, after the parrot awakened, it had quite a wicked influence on him, and he had inevitably learned to swear.

Unfortunately, after all the years, he had only mastered this one curse.

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch laughed hoarsely. The sound of it was filled with ancientness, like a cold wind blown from somewhere amidst countless years of time.

“I’m sorry,” he said, “but all the women in my immediate family are dead. If you’d like, we could make a deal. I’d be happy to deliver their skeletons to you. What do you think?”

Meng Hao’s face was extremely unsightly as he sped along in the war chariot. The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch continued to follow, and actually gained on Meng Hao. Meng Hao could clearly sense that his own body was continuously emitting white mist. He was filled with the pain of having something within him forcefully separated, which caused anxiety to fill his eyes.

“It’s still not time to use the Immortal’s sword!” he thought.

“Foundation Seizing Grand Magic!” said the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. His voice echoed out in all directions, but Meng Hao was incapable of looking back. However, he could sense the speed with which the white mist poured out of him suddenly increase by severalfold. An indescribable pain filled him, and he couldn’t hold back from letting out a despondent shout.

Shockingly, something that looked like red veins could be seen pulsing on his face, and in fact, his entire body. It almost appeared as if he was about to be torn to pieces, from the inside out!

Meng Hao began to shake, and blood sprayed from his mouth. He was now unable to continue to employ the qi of Immortal Shows the Way, so the war chariot came to a stop and shrank down. He put it into his bag of holding and then, enduring the intense pain, lifted his right hand to produce the flag of three streamers. He waved it out in front of him, and instantly, dense fog billowed up.

Down below, the seemingly never-ending black seawater seemed almost to be congealed in place. Not a single ripple could be seen on its surface!

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch floated in the air some distance away, grinning at Meng Hao.

It was a ghastly grin, filled with greed, almost as if to him, Meng Hao was food. His expression caused Meng Hao’s scalp to go numb. He waved the flag of three streamers, causing the monstrous black mist to sweep toward the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch.

“That magical item… looks a bit familiar,” said the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, his eyes glittering. He performed an incantation with his right hand, and then pointed forward.

“Moonrise Over the Sea ,” he said in his hoarse voice. Down below, the black seawater immediately turned violet. Then a red-colored moon suddenly rose up from within. The appearance of the red moon caused flames to fill the world. They transformed into a massive fireball that shot toward Meng Hao’s flag of three streamers.

When they slammed into each other, the flag wasn’t damaged, but the black mist immediately fell apart. The red moon, on the other hand, faded like an extinguished lamp, completely defeated and dispersed.

Next, the flag of three streamers expanded, spreading out to blot out the sky and also push Meng Hao and the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch apart.

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s face flickered, and he said, “This treasure… is very familiar. I’m sure that I’ve seen it somewhere before!”

Looking very serious, he performed a double handed incantation, then raised his hands high above his head and touched his ten fingertips together.

“Power of the rising sun, disperse all darkness of night!”

At the moment, everything was pitch black, with no light existing anywhere. The flag of three streamers seemed to have become part of the darkness of night.

But then, a beam of light appeared, shooting out from the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch to swirl around him. It was almost like… he had turned into a rising sun in the middle of the dark night!

The rising sun had appeared, and a bright glow began to spread out in all directions. Its power began to dispel the power of the dark night. The boundless blackness vanished under the light, and was completely cast away!

Meng Hao couldn’t take it, and blood sprayed out of his mouth. The flag of three streamers rumbled and began to glow blurry. It spun backward, shrinking down at the same time. The entire world filled with brightness, and the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch floated there in mid-air. If you looked at him, it was impossible to tell whether he was a person or a sun!

Meng Hao’s mind trembled. This was a divine ability, a Daoist magic that he had never even heard of!

“What divine ability is this!?” A tremor ran through his body, and blood poured from his mouth. When the sunlight had dispelled the darkness of night, it seemed he was considered to be part of the night. His body burst into flames, and he let out a shrill cry. Violet light flickered in his eyes as he frenziedly healed himself. However, it was still amid thunderous rumbling sounds that he fell down toward the black sea below.

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s voice was filled with pride as he said, “That was another art personally created by the Wang Clan ancestor. For you to have seen it with your own eyes means that you can wear a smile on your face as you go to the underworld.” His face was a bit paler than before; clearly it was not a simple thing to use the art he just had. Were it not for the fact that he needed to end the battle, he wouldn’t have used it.

The bright glow filled a vast area, and the seawater was turning violet. As Meng Hao splashed into the water, the Wang Clan Patriarch’s eyes flickered.

“Even now, he still doesn’t unleash the power of that Immortal’s sword?” he thought. “When I first arrived, he could only use about half of the power. Now, on the verge of death, he still doesn’t utilize it…. I can thus be seventy percent certain that the Immortal’s sword is now useless!” He suddenly flashed through the air, stretching his right hand out to grab at Meng Hao.

“Foundation Seizing Grand Magic!” A black glow spread out from the five fingers of his right hand. The light transformed into something like a black hole that emanated a shocking gravitational force.

Meng Hao’s entire person appeared to be decaying. His flesh split and tore, his hair fell out, and he looked withered to the extreme. His life force faded rapidly. Compared to the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s peak Dao Seeking cultivation base, Meng Hao’s own cultivation base… was too weak.

Even as the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch closed in, madness suddenly burned in Meng Hao’s eyes. Despite the fact that his blood vessels were shattered, and he was gravely injured, he still managed to slap his bag of holding with his right hand. The alcohol flagon appeared, and he took a drink. Then the Immortal’s sword could be seen, and he spit the alcohol out of his mouth.

Immortal qi exploded out, swift and fierce to the extreme. When the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch saw that it was about to slash toward him, his heart trembled, but after only a slight moment, he smiled coldly. He had long since prepared for exactly this situation. He immediately began to perform an incantation that would cause a body double to appear in his exact position. However, it was at this point that a violent tremor ran through Meng Hao. Apparently, he couldn't keep his grip on the Immortal's sword. Blood sprayed from his mouth, and his entire right arm instantly exploded into a haze of blood and gore. The Immortal's sword tumbled down into the sea.

No matter how you looked at it, it seemed clear what had happened. Meng Hao was not capable of handling the power of the sword, and yet had still tried to forcefully control it. His right arm couldn't sustain the power, and had exploded.

Meng Hao laughed bitterly, and a look of despair appeared on his face.

"I can't accept this!" he howled, his voice filled with extreme grief and indignation.

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch watched on smiling. As of this point, he was now eighty percent certain that the Immortal's sword could be of no more threat to him. A ferocious expression appeared on his face.

Of course, having lived for so many years, he was wily and cunning, and even more so, cautious. Despite the current situation, and Meng Hao having lost an arm, he was still not off guard regarding the Immortal's sword.

Instead of trying to lay hands on the Immortal's sword, he headed toward Meng Hao.

When Meng Hao saw this, anger sprang up in his heart. However, it only took a moment for a completely ruthless idea to spring up in his head. The ruthlessness of the idea actually did not target the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, but rather, himself!

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch neared. Hovering in front of Meng Hao, he lifted his right hand up and pushed the shimmering blackness onto Meng

Hao’s chest. Then he dug his hand into Meng Hao’s flesh, his fingernails literally ripping through Meng Hao’s flesh.

“Your skin is thick and your body tough,” grated the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. “Not bad. If you were able to take your fleshly body to the next stage, then perhaps I wouldn’t be able to deal with you. But right now… it’s just not quite good enough.” His fingernails stabbed deep into Meng Hao’s chest.

“Foundation Seizing Grand Magic!” A strange light appeared in the eyes of the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, a thirst, a desire, and an excitement. His fingers tightened viciously, and a rotating black hole appeared inside of Meng Hao.

The gravitation force it exerted was shocking, and completely filled Meng Hao.

His body began to tremble as unthinkable pain filled him. Countless blood-colored strands appeared all over his body. These strands had long since fused into him; this was his Perfect Dao foundation!

It was the foundation upon which he would achieve his Dao in the future!

Now, though, the blood-colored strands twisted and distorted as they shrank down, relentlessly sucked toward the black hole in his chest.

They were sucked toward his chest from his legs, his arms, his head, from every position in his body.

“From now on, your Perfect Dao Foundation belongs to me!

“Henceforth, my path to Immortal Ascension will be open!

“I will no longer be a false Immortal, but rather, a true Immortal!

“I will pursue the path of the ancestor and become an almighty expert of Heaven and Earth!” The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch was so incredibly excited that he lifted his head up and laughed out loud. He slowly pulled his right hand back, and as he did, countless red strands stretched out between it and Meng Hao's body.

The red strands shone resplendently, and anyone who saw them would think of Perfection. Absolute Perfection without blemish!

Meng Hao's body withered and grew old. His cultivation base also fell. He could feel his Qi Condensation foundation vanish. His Dao Pillar foundation disappeared. His Perfect Core also faded away.

His expression was hollow, as if he had lost all power to fight back. He lay there blankly, bitterness filling his face. Pain wracked his body, although it couldn't even come close to matching the pain he felt in his heart.

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch looked at the red strands that were building up in his hand, and intense desire built up in his eyes. His heart filled with excitement and elation. In fact, he was more excited now than he ever had been in his entire life.

In this moment, he completely set aside any preparations he had made to defend against the Immortal's sword. His entire heart and mind was completely focused on extracting the Perfect Dao foundation.

It was then, after he had abandoned his defenses, that grim coldness suddenly appeared in Meng Hao's blank eyes.

"Anybody who wants to take my Dao foundation must first pay the price!

"Immortal's sword!" Meng Hao's eyes were filled with madness that caused the Wang Clan Patriarch's mind to tremble. Suddenly, the Immortal's sword that had sunk down into the sea exploded with an earthshaking Sword Qi. It shot out from within the water, moving at incredible speed.

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# Chapter 682: I Will Become Immortal!

Shocking sword qi billowed out as the Immortal’s sword flew up from the bottom of the sea, moving with indescribable speed.

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s face fell, and an intense sense of deadly crisis filled him. He was about to dodge to the side when Meng Hao’s left hand suddenly stretched out and grabbed down onto the Wang Clan Patriarch’s arm.

Meng Hao’s eyes were shot with blood, and his expression was one of utmost ferocity, as if he were a devil or a fiend. He glared at the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, his hand filled with the power of his life force, his stubbornness, and his madness.

“You….” said the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, his face flickering as he sent the power of his cultivation base bursting out in all directions. His mind trembled with the sense of impending doom. He knew that he could not make any mistakes, but because the sword aura completely filled the entire area, he could not tell where exactly the Immortal’s sword was coming from.

What he could do, though, was completely lock down the entire area.

RUMBLE!!

The Immortal’s sword did not fly up out of the sea to attack the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch! That would slow it down a bit, and right now… at this juncture, each moment counted for everything!

In his madness, Meng Hao had been waiting for this very moment. In the end, he used the Immortal qi and the Immortal's sword to…

Stab himself!

The sword pierced into his back to appear directly in front of the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch!

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch had locked down all other avenues of approach, but he had forgotten about… Meng Hao's body.

There was no way he could ever have imagined that Meng Hao would possibly be so ruthless. This was not a ruthlessness toward enemies, but a ruthlessness toward himself. The Immortal's sword stabbed through his body with lightning-like speed, then shot out from his chest toward the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch.

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch's mind spun. His first mistake was not realizing that Meng Hao would actually wait until the very last possible moment to unleash his desire to kill. The second mistake was not realizing that Meng Hao would use his own body as the vessel with which to deliver the blow of the Immortal's sword.

He wanted to defend himself, but could not! He wanted to ward off the blow, but was unable!

"If I can't live, then we will perish together!" said Meng Hao. "What's to fear in death? Mortals can live for a hundred years at most. I, Meng Hao, have already lived more than two hundred years. What's the harm in dying?!?!

"From the moment I stepped onto the path of cultivation, I was prepared. I don't care about dying, but what I do care about… is living a life of freedom and independence!

"The Resurrection Lily turned into fetters that held me back. And as for you, 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, you want to do the same? Well then, I'll just have to sever you!"

Meng Hao’s level of determination and decisiveness could shake Heaven and Earth!

BAM!

The Immortal’s sword and its shocking sword qi stabbed directly into the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. He let out a bloodcurdling scream, then jerked his right arm to shake off Meng Hao’s hand. Meng Hao’s body lurched up as vast quantities of red, Perfect Dao foundation strands were wrenched out of him. They transformed into a resplendent red cloud that hovered up above.

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch immediately pulled the brightly shining red strands of Perfection into his body. It was a moment in which he should have been extremely smug.

Instead, he screamed in miserable and shocking fashion.

The Immortal’s sword pierced through his chest, exploding his heart and sending blood spraying about in all directions. He retreated, his mind filled with astonishment and terror. The wound to his body was secondary to the unbridled Immortal qi which tore through his body.

But all of that was actually not even worth mentioning when compared to the trembling of his soul.

That was the most terrifying thing to him; his soul shook to the point where it felt as if it were going to be torn to shreds.

“NOOOO!!!”

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch howled as he sensed that the three spiritual aspects and seven physical aspects of his soul, which formerly had been fused harmoniously, were now being ripped apart by the stabbing of the Immortal’s sword. In fact, all aspects of his soul were rapidly beginning to fade.

“Meng Hao! DIIEEEEE!!” Unprecedented madness filled the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. He lifted his head up and howled as his entire body filled with rumbling sounds. Blood and gore oozed out from his mutilated chest. Suddenly, his withered body expanded as the red strands of the Perfect Dao foundation fused into his arm and the rest of his body. Suddenly, a trace of his own Immortal qi bloomed inside of him.

Unfortunately, it didn’t matter that Immortal qi had appeared, he was unable to prevent the collapse of his soul.

“Immortal!! I will become Immortal!!” he raved. Shouting, he flew toward Meng Hao, his expression vicious. He raised his right hand into the air; everything shook, Immortal qi rose up into the sky, and the seawater vibrated.

Meng Hao had lost his Dao foundation, and his cultivation base had fallen. He no longer looked like a young man. He was old now, withered, with only a single breath of life left.

And yet, he smiled, a smile filled with contentment, freedom, and viciousness.

“If you want to take away my Dao foundation, you have to pay the price.”

As the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s massive palm strike descended, the sky grew dim. Just as the power of the attack was about to envelop him, suddenly, a sigh could be heard coming from within the sea. Black fog roiled out, covering over Meng Hao. In the blink of an eye, the fog ebbed and he vanished from beneath the Wang Clan Patriarch’s palm.

Something else appeared at the same time as the fog. A ship.

Its aura was ancient, and it was filled with the vestiges of the passage of time. The deck was dilapidated, and the entire ship seemed completely ancient. This was none other than… the ancient Underworld Ship!

At the prow of the ship, a man sat cross-legged, wearing a dilapidated suit of armor. Next to him lay Meng Hao; his eyes were closed, and it was impossible to tell whether he was alive or dead.

The Wang Clan Patriarch’s palm strike slammed into the sea, sending water splashing everywhere as a huge depression appeared. The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch was screaming and going crazy. Although the aura of an Immortal grew more clear on his body, his expression was one of madness. His soul was on the verge of dissipating. He had already lost one physical aspect of his soul, leaving him with only three spiritual and six physical aspects.

“I won’t accept this!!” he roared. His hatred toward Meng Hao had reaching the pinnacle. His mind and thinking were no longer clear, and the only thing on his mind was that before he died, he needed to kill Meng Hao.

He charged forward, but at the same time, the Underworld Ship began to drift away. No matter how the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch pursued it, he couldn’t catch up. He could only watch as the Underworld Ship disappeared off into the sea.

“DIIIIIIEEEEEEEE!!” roared the Wang Clan Patriarch. Blood oozed out of his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. He violently slammed his palm onto the top of his head, causing blood to spray out. However, in that moment, he suddenly regained some of his clarity.

“I will reach Immortal Ascension! My soul must remain complete! I can’t die! I haven’t reached Immortal Ascension yet! I’m just on the verge!!” His eyes bloodshot, he opened up a rift in the air and then vanished.

Shockingly, when he reappeared, he was back in the Southern Domain, in the Wang Clan.

“I will reach Immortal Ascension! I will become Immortal!

“I cannot die! I will not die!

“I have the Perfect Dao foundation, and am destined to be Immortal! Immortal qi has already appeared!

“How could I possibly die!?!?” As he raved, his mind was thrown into complete chaos. Right now the only thing he could think about was reaching Immortal Ascension. His eyes were completely bloodshot as he flew down toward one of the cities of the Wang Clan.

The city was populated completely by members of the Wang Clan. There were mortals and cultivators, elderly people and children. As he shot toward the city, several hundred cultivators flew out. When they saw the appearance of the 10th Patriarch, their faces fell.

“Patriarch!”

“Patriarch, you… AAIIEEEEE!!” Even as the people opened their mouths to greet him, the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch grabbed one of the Wang Clan members and then crushed his fingers down. The cultivator’s head exploded, and his soul flew out to be inhaled by the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch.

The other Wang Clan members were shocked, but before they could react, the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch turned into a black wind that whistled toward them. Miserable shrieks began to echo out in all directions as hundreds of people were all eradicated, their souls absorbed by the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch.

“I will reach Immortal Ascension!” he raved. “I will not die!” His eyes red, he shot down toward the city. Everywhere he passed, bloodcurdling screams rang out. Countless souls flew toward him, which he absorbed. In the space of only about ten breaths, the entire city was deathly silent. Everyone in the city… was dead!

Only the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch remained. He flew up into the air, howling.

“Return to me, my soul!” he howled.

There were a total of three such cities within the Wang Clan. The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch suddenly vanished, to reappear outside the second city.

The scene that played out was exactly the same as before. Miserable shrieks could be heard as countless lives met heartrending ends. A black cloud covered the entire city as all members of the Wang bloodline had their souls consumed by the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. It all happened in the blink of an eye.

And yet, the spiritual and physical aspects of his soul were still dispersing; of the original seven total, one spiritual aspect and two physical aspects had already vanished.

“NOOOO!!!!” he howled, shooting toward the third city. This city was the location of the Wang Clan’s ancestral mansion in South Heaven. As he neared, thousands of cultivators shot out from within, including two Spirit Severing experts. Their faces were filled with shock.

“The Patriarch has gone mad!!”

“He massacred two cities full of clan members! He’s insane!!”

BOOM!

Within the the territory of the Wang Clan were the mountains in which successive generations of Patriarchs were buried. Seven mountain ranges in particular suddenly emanated shocking roars. In the blink of an eye, seven coffins appeared, from out of which exploded seven emaciated old men. Each and every one was in a rage.

“10th Patriarch, what are you doing!?”

“10th Patriarch, stay your hand!!”

Their shocking roars rose up like thunder, causing a bit of lucidity to suddenly appear in the eyes of the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. In that moment, he realized everything that he had done, and his body began to tremble. In his heart, he felt pain from having slaughtered countless members of his own clan.

Intense pain filled him, but only for a moment. Then, his eyes shone with determination.

“I’ll kill you and consume your souls too! Then, I will achieve Immortal Ascension! The whole clan can die, as long as I remain alive!”

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# Chapter 683: Henceforth

He was willing to sink into depravity!

All for Immortal Ascension!

All to avoid death!

Tears streamed down the face of the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. He howled, and his eyes were completely bloodshot. He no longer even had a heart, but he still felt a sense of belonging to the clan and the bonds of kinship toward his fellow clan members. But now… it was too late to turn back.

He was not willing to die, especially not after he had acquired the Perfect Dao foundation and his body was filled with Immortal Qi. The only thing he could do was sink to the lowest level.

Regret? He did not know the meaning of the term. He could only consume. Consume the souls of his own bloodline. Only those souls could save his life.

This was… the only thing he could do!

All for Immortal Ascension!

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch howled hoarsely as his consciousness grew murky. He slipped further into madness. KILL! KILL! KILL!

He had no idea how many people he killed, nor how many souls of fellow clan members he consumed. In one night, all the members of the Wang Clan in the clan’s third city… died.

The Patriarchs buried in the various mountain ranges were destroyed amidst rumbling booms. The seven Patriarchs had incredible cultivation bases, but the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch now possessed Immortal qi, as well as a Perfect Dao foundation. They simply couldn’t compare to him, and were no match at all.

One by one, they all died!

Mountains crumbled, and everything shook. In one night, the Wang Clan’s entire foundation in the lands of South Heaven… was uprooted. This was genocide!

He was the 10th Patriarch, who had existed for ages in the lands of South Heaven. He was the Patriarch with the highest cultivation base in the clan, a person the clan members looked up to like a god.

But on that day, the god became a devil, and carnage reigned. During the massacre, he regained lucidity three times.

The first time was when he killed his younger brother, the 11th Wang Clan Patriarch who had stayed by his side for countless years. He ripped his soul out, then, tears streaming down his face, laughed maniacally and consumed it.

The second time was when he killed his most beloved member of the junior generation. The man cried, begging the Patriarch to spare his life. He crushed the man’s skull, then, his hand still covered with blood and brain, grabbed the soul and consumed it.

The third time was when the world had grown completely silent. Beneath his feet was nothing but wreckage and bodies. No living person existed. At that point, he regained clarity.

However, that clarity only lasted for a few breaths of time. Then he slipped back into madness. By this point, his body was no longer injured. He was recovered. However, the souls that he had lost… would remain forever lost. Two spiritual aspects and three physical aspects were gone forever.

He now had only one spiritual aspect and four physical aspects.

This was a result bought by the lives of all the Wang Clan members in the lands of South Heaven. His soul did not dissipate, and he did not die. However… with only one spiritual aspect and four physical aspects to his soul, who knew if and when he would ever become lucid again.

For the most part, he was descended into madness and carnage. Before he completely sank back down into the depravity, he shed some tears, which spattered down onto the ruins of the Wang Clan. Perhaps years later, a field of blood colored flowers would bloom in that very spot….

He raised his head and let out a mournful, bitter laugh. Then he turned into a bright beam of light that shot off into the distance.

“Immortal Ascension!

“I will become Immortal!”

He left, forever submerged within his insanity.

Henceforth, there was no Wang Clan in the lands of South Heaven. In its place, a lunatic existed who constantly raved about Immortal Ascension. Of course, few people dared to provoke the madman.

That was because… he was halfway into Immortal Ascension. He possessed Immortal qi and only needed to pass through Immortal Tribulation to become a true Immortal!

Unfortunately, his soul was not complete, and he was eternally sunken into depravity. His day of Immortal Tribulation would never come.

…

In the depths of the Second Ring of the Milky Way Sea was an enormous Resurrection Lily, drifting back and forth in the water. It was impossible to see the number of colors, but what could be seen was the figure of a woman sitting on the flower. She almost seemed to be using the petals as a swing as she swayed back and forth.

“No Dao Foundation. He likely perished….

“In the League of Demon Sealers, the Ninth is the pinnacle. It seems the league… is broken.”

Outside the Fourth Ring of the Milky Way Sea, an island sped across the surface of the water. Suddenly, a tremor ran through it, and it stopped moving. After a long, long moment, an enormous head rose up out of the sea and looked off into the distance.

“His aura… is gone….

“The little bastard is full of schemes and wickedness. He’s dead? Good! Great! Wonderf… wait, he died?!?!” He head quivered slightly. Patriarch Reliance wanted to feel happy, but for some reason, he actually wasn’t.

“Dead…. Dammit, who killed him? He’s the Patriarch’s only Inner Sect disciple! The little bastard is endlessly scheming, how could he have died?!?!”

On the island, Guyiding Tri-rain also seemed to have sensed something, and her face paled. She leaned up against the old Boat Spirit, sorrow filling her eyes.

“Didn’t you promise me that you would help me turn into a sea…? You broke your promise….”

In the lands of the Southern Domain, in the Violet Fate Sect, Pill Demon was smiling as he concocted a batch of pills especially for Meng Hao. Recently, he’d gotten the feeling that Master and apprentice would be reunited before too long.

He wanted to finish concocting the special batch of pills before they met in person. However, it was in that moment that the pill furnace suddenly exploded. Pill Demon suddenly seemed to age by hundreds of years. He silently looked off into the distance for a long, long time.

Chu Yuyan was sitting cross-legged in meditation, practicing cultivation in her Immortal’s cave. Then, for some unknown reason, her heart suddenly felt troubled. Her eyes opened, and she looked up into the night sky. A shooting star flew by.

“When I was young, my dad always said that when you see a shooting star, it means someone just perished.”

In the Black Sieve Sect, Xu Qing sat with eyes closed, seeking enlightenment of a Daoist magic she had acquired in the Demon Immortal Sect. Suddenly, a tremor ran through her body, and her eyes opened. Her face was deathly pale, and she lifted her hand up to her chest.

An intense, uneasy feeling made her suddenly stop cultivating. She walked out of her Immortal’s cave, her face growing even more ashen.

“Pain. This is the second time I’ve felt pain like this…. The first time was the time by the Rebirth Cave.

“Meng Hao, is it you? What… happened? Why am I suddenly so frightened?” Xu Qing didn’t know why, but she suddenly found herself weeping. She didn’t dare to think too deeply about her sudden premonition. Trembling, she flew up into the sky.

Although she didn’t know the source of the feeling, for some reason she looked toward the Milky Way Sea and then began flying.

On that day, Fatty was very irritable. He violently lost his temper countless times in the Golden Frost Sect, although he wasn’t sure why.

On that day, Chen Fan killed. Although he looked calm, deep in his heart existed a boundless desire to slaughter. He flew out of the sect and killed numerous villainous cultivators.

On that day in the Blood Demon Sect, Wang Youcai made a cultivation base breakthrough into the Nascent Soul stage. However, he felt no joy. He looked in the direction where the State of Zhao used to exist, and thought of his childhood, and of his old friends. 1

On that day in the Northern Reaches, a Blood cultivator rose to prominence. Acting alone, he slaughtered an entire small-scale sect, then occupied the location. He was young, but unfeeling and coldblooded. In his blood-soaked hands, he held a magical item, a pearl. The young man had a name, too. Dong Hu. 2

On that day, in the Great Tang of the Eastern Lands, in a tall tower, a husband and wife got into an argument the likes of which was virtually unprecedented. The woman eventually stormed off, her eyes filled with tears. The man looked silently off into the distance. There was no one to see it, but tears streamed down his face.

Time slowly passed by.

Xu Qing arrived in the Milky Way Sea. No matter how she searched, she found nothing. An entire sixty-year cycle passed before she silently picked an area on the border of the Southern Domain where she sat down to meditate. Every day she would look out at the Milky Way Sea. She had the feeling that out there somewhere, was Meng Hao.

It was only a feeling, but she believed it.

As for the couple who had argued, the woman also reached the Milky Way Sea. Tears rolled down her cheeks as she went to the Third Ring, to the Second Ring, to everywhere. She found nothing. She searched and searched, and even fought a battle with the Dawn Immortal in the Second Ring.

The battle shook Heaven and Earth. All of the Sea Devils in the Second Ring were killed, and black seawater spread out to cover the entire Third Ring. Heaven and Earth grew dark, and as for who won the battle, and who lost, nobody knew.

One hundred years passed….

In the Inner Ring of the Milky Way Sea, the water was red. An ancient battleship floated across the surface of the water, at the prow of which sat an old man in a suit of armor. He sat there cross-legged, apparently looking off into the distance. It was impossible to tell what exactly he was looking at.

Next to the old man rested a body. It was a man with no hair or eyebrows; he was completely shriveled up. Wrinkles covered his skin, and he looked as if he had just climbed up out of a grave. The entire body stank of putrefaction.

He had no right arm, and a gaping hole could be seen in his chest, where there existed… no heart whatsoever.

A flame burned above him, casting out a gentle light that covered over his body. As the light was cast out, it transformed into glittering dots, within each of which could be seen flickering, incomprehensible magical symbols. Oh so slowly, those dots of light bored into the hole in Meng Hao's chest.

Inside of Meng Hao's chest, the flesh and blood writhed, as if it were slowly growing.

The years seemed as if they would flow by in this manner forever, and because they were in the Inner Ring of the Milky Way Sea, there was no one who could find the ancient ship, or Meng Hao.

On one particular day, the armored old man slowly opened his eyes. Hidden within them were the sun, the moon, and the stars. Endless years of time permeated those eyes, as if the man could see into their boundless depths.

He turned his head, and his abstruse gaze fell onto Meng Hao.

When that happened, Meng Hao's body seemed to experience the passing of thousands of years. The fire burned intensely, emitting more crystalline dots of light that merged into the hole in his chest. The wriggling of the blood and flesh increased, and soon the healing process was visible to the naked eye. A new heart formed, and the wounds were healed. Even the bones and flesh of the right arm slowly began to grow out.

In what seemed like the blink of an eye, Meng Hao was completely restored. Not a wound could be seen on him. However… his hair was pure white, and he looked incredibly old, as if he were an elderly man.

Weakness radiated out from him as he opened his eyes.

His eyes were filled with confusion. He lay there thinking for a long time before memories started to trickle into his brain. He thought of the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, and how he had chosen to end in common ruin with him rather than give up his freedom. In the end, he had landed a sword blow on the Wang Patriarch's soul!

“My cultivation base….” He closed his eyes and cast his senses inward. After a while, he slowly rose into a sitting position and looked at the armored old man, who sat with his back to him. The old man seemed as if he would sit on this ship for all eternity as it roamed about.

Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed deeply. “Senior, thank you for your kindness in saving my life!”

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# Chapter 684: On Board

The old man didn’t say anything in response. It almost seemed like he didn’t even know who Meng Hao was; he was simply roaming about, and happened to encounter him. Spurred by some distant memories, he had randomly reached out to save him.

“Heaven and Earth… have their end….

“But what about me? Where is my end?” The old man’s murmuring voice was hoarse, and incomparably ancient. He finally sighed and closed his eyes, seemingly slipping into a state of lifelessness. Meng Hao could clearly see the old man sitting there with his back to him, but he couldn’t sense his existence at all. In fact, he couldn’t even sense the existence of the ship.

“Senior?” he said, gaping. Finally, he realized that the old man was immersed in his own world. Meng Hao crossed his legs reticently and then looked off into the distance and began to think.

“My Dao foundation… is gone.” He felt empty inside, and could not sense a cultivation base. It was as if it had vanished like mist or smoke. An intense weakness filled him, and he felt so incredibly old that it seemed that death was just around the corner.

He now had absolutely no cultivation base whatsoever.

Filled with bitterness, Meng Hao tried to begin to practice cultivation, but his entire body was like a sieve. No matter what breathing exercises he did, he couldn’t build up even a bit of spiritual energy.

However, he wouldn’t give in so easily, so he produced a bag of holding. Although he himself had no spiritual energy, bags of holding from Seahold could be opened once without any spiritual energy.

He had bought quite a few such bags in the past. The parrot and the meat jelly were inside the bag, sleeping. It seemed Meng Hao's weakness had caused them to lose their own vitality.

He took a medicinal pill out from the bag of holding, then consumed it and started meditating. After attempting Qi Condensation techniques for a moment, he trembled, and his face went pale. Once again, he looked listless and dispirited.

"I can't practice cultivation," he murmured. "I have no foundation whatsoever to build on." As of now, Meng Hao was certain that his Dao foundation was completely and utterly gone.

Still not able to accept it, Meng Hao tried again. Time passed, and soon a month had gone by. Meng Hao tried a variety of methods, but none of them formed even the slightest bit of a cultivation base.

It was a complete failure.

He tried over and over again, but his body only continued to grow weaker. After another month, he finally accepted that he was in a hopeless situation.

Bitter laughter rang out, growing louder and louder, breaking the silence of the Milky Way Sea's Inner Ring as it echoed out from within the ship.

The laughter also contained intense hatred. "10th Wang Clan Patriarch!"

He wasn't sure if the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch was dead, but as of now, that didn't matter.

"I have no cultivation base, but I'm still alive…. However, considering my current life force, who knows how many more days I can stay alive…." His bitter laughter gradually grew weaker, and finally, he stared off into the distance, empty and numb.

He wasn't even sure what he was seeing. His mind was blank. He thought of nothing. He looked at nothing. Eventually, his gaze turned to fall on the armored old man, and hope suddenly flickered in his eyes.

His life had been saved by this old man, and considering how mystical he was, and how bizarre the ancient Underworld Ship was, Meng Hao was confident that if the man did something, his own cultivation base could potentially be restored.

Meng Hao stood, clasped his hands, and bowed deeply.

“Senior.”

The old man didn’t speak. He seemed as lifeless as ever.

Meng Hao hesitated for a moment, then walked around to stand in front of the old man. He was just about to bow again, when suddenly his eyes went wide with disbelief.

The old man’s face was filled with boundless ancientness and time. However, when Meng Hao looked at it, his heart and mind trembled. The man’s body was actually not material, but rather, faint and translucent.

Except, Meng Hao clearly remembered that the old man wasn’t like this before.

After a moment of thought, he slowly reached up his right hand and attempted to touch the old man. His hand passed directly through him as if through empty space, and when he tried it a second time, the same thing happened. Finally, he stepped forward, and ended up walking directly through him. He turned his head to look back, and his eyes were filled with a complex expression.

“Was I simply mistaken before? Was he always like this? Is his existence tied into the meaning of the ship’s name? Underworld Ship…. Ship of the Underworld Specter?” Meng Hao laughed bitterly as he began to look around. The ship was broken down, dilapidated, filled with an aura of rot.

Several days later, he finished exploring the ship in its entirety, and never found anything out of the ordinary. Everything he saw and touched was ancient and archaic.

He stood at the prow and looked out as the Underworld Ship slid noiselessly across the water. Everything was quiet; the sea rose and fell, although there were no waves. They never encountered any other living things.

It seemed that wherever this ship went, everything became completely quiet.

“Well, this is fine, too….

“I can spend the last years of my life on an empty ship, all alone.

“I bet nobody knows that I’m about to perish,” he murmured. “At least that way, Master won’t be sad, nor will Xu Qing feel too much grief. Fatty, Elder Brother, and all my other friends… none of them will know.” He sat down cross-legged in the place where he had woken up earlier and looked off into the distance.

As he did, his heart slowly became peaceful. He no longer burned with resentment, nor did he ponder any more mysteries. He was left with only a bit of ruefulness. He regretted not being able to visit his Master ever again. He regretted not holding Xu Qing in his embrace just once. He regretted not returning to the Southern Domain and gathering with the friends of long ago.

Even more so, he regretted never being able to visit the Great Tang in the Eastern Lands. He regretted not being able to see his father and mother again.

“Old turtle Reliance, from here on out, you’re free….

“Ancestors of the Demon Sealing Sect, it seems that from now, there will be no more League of Demon Sealers.” Meng Hao sighed. He was now slowly growing calmer and feeling less restrained.

Death was something that could not be avoided, so he would not take it to heart too much.

“It’s too bad I have so many Spirit Stones in my bag of holding…. What a pity that I never got to spend them.

“Hmmm, I guess I really don’t have to pay those three silver pieces back to Steward Zhou after all.

“It’s such a pity I still have so many treasures. Well, some little bastard in the future is sure going to get lucky.” When he thought of this, he could only sigh.

“Perhaps my death will spare the world a bit of calamity. To all of you who would have been conned by me in the future, you don’t know how lucky you are!

“So, so lucky!” Meng Hao thought back through his life, to his youth spent studying and participating in the Imperial examinations. Then he ran into Xu Qing and joined the Reliance Sect. He stole Wang Tengfei’s good fortune and became an Inner Sect disciple. Patriarch Reliance conned him, so he conned back. Eventually, he made it to the Southern Domain, where he joined the Violet Fate Sect and then rose to prominence.

“Poor Xu Qing…. She loves me, and I love her. What a pity we won’t be able to get married now…. I’ve never actually even been with a woman….” When he thought of this, Meng Hao suddenly felt especially sad.

“And then there’s Chu Yuyan. She was definitely interested in me….”

Meng Hao continued to sigh and sigh.

He thought of how he had killed the Chosen from the Ji Clan, then escaped to the Western Desert. He recalled everything that happened with the Crow Divinity Tribes, and then couldn’t help think of Han Shan, Demoness Zhixiang, and everything that happened in the Demon Immortal Sect.

“Senior Han Shan, I won’t be able to keep my promise…

“Demoness Zhixiang, don’t worry about that favor you owe me.”

Then there was Ke Jiusi and Ke Yunhai. Meng Hao thought about many things, and eventually started thinking about his First Severing.

“I didn’t even practice cultivation for three hundred years, and yet completed my First Severing. A great Dao descended, and the Resurrection Lily became my Spirit Severing Treasure. For me, Meng Hao, to live a life like this, well… it’s enough for me!

“In all the lands of South Heaven, few people could even come close to comparing to me!” He suddenly felt very proud of himself. The laughter, the bitterness, the fury, and the memories of his entire life became images that flashed through his mind.

More time passed. Another half month went by, during which time Meng Hao continued to look off into the distance, thinking about the past. Finally one day, the illusory, armored old man suddenly caught his attention.

For months, the old man hadn’t moved at all, and seemed completely empty. Now, his right hand raised up, and a sealing mark appeared. He performed an incantation, and gradually, two colors appeared in his hand, black and white.

However, when Meng Hao went over to try to touch the old man, he was as illusory as ever.

As more time passed, Meng Hao began to pay attention to the way in which the old man meditated. He observed his emptiness, and his incantation gestures, along with the blackness and whiteness that they summoned.

Gradually, he focused more and more on the black and white. It seemed to contain something important, although he wasn’t sure what.

The white seemed to contain all of the colors in Heaven and Earth. It seemed to assimilate everything around and transform it into a similar whiteness. As for the black, it was incredibly potent and domineering, as of no colors were qualified to stand in its presence.

Gradually, Meng Hao immersed himself in observing the old man. Without even realizing it, he began to mediate in the same way, including the breathing exercises and the hand gestures.

Eventually, he even decided that he might as well sit in the exact same position as the old man, superimposing with his illusory form. That way, all of his motions would be exactly the same as the old man's.

He closed his eyes and immersed himself in the process. Time passed. In the blink of an eye, three years had gone by.

During the three years, Meng Hao grew weaker, and his life force gradually withered away. He didn't care about that, though. The only thing he was interested in was copying the movements of the old man, and finding a way to keep on living.

One day, he suddenly experienced an emptiness in which he found that neither life nor death were important. As he performed an incantation with his right hand, whiteness became visible.

Suddenly, an ancient voice filled his mind: "When you reach the end of your path, then you will have lost yourself."

Next, blackness appeared in Meng Hao's palm.

The ancient voice once again echoed in his mind. "When you reach the end of your path, then all you will have left is yourself." Meng Hao had the faint sensation that he was in the process of grasping enlightenment.

It was an enlightenment of an unimaginably vast and mysterious great Dao.

"White and black are like the daytime and nighttime…. 1" he muttered. He looked at his right hand and then slowly lifted it up toward the sky. He could sense that if he had a cultivation base, then considering his enlightenment of this Dao, he could turn the sky as dark as night or as bright as day. The interlocking of black and white could unleash a supreme power.

“Too bad I don’t have a cultivation base,” he thought, shaking his head. “Even if I completely understood this Dao, I still couldn’t use it.” He was just about to stand up when suddenly, the ship… stopped moving.

Meng Hao looked up, his eyes wide.

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1. In Chinese, these words for daytime and nighttime also have the characters for white and black in them. Daytime is literally “white day” and night time is literally “black night”

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 685: Traversing the Path

Up ahead, the Milky Way Sea could no longer be seen. It was as if the ship was passing through a river of time. All that could be seen were endless multicolored shards.

Within those shards existed endless worlds.

Meng Hao watched as the ship entered one of the shard worlds. It was a world of flames, filled with countless cultivators who kowtowed to the ship and offered up tribute.

They cultivated a fire technique that seemed to be linked to their bloodline. It seemed to supersede all of the other flames Meng Hao could see, and he could hear the people saying that their flame was the essence of all flames.

He couldn’t interact with the world; it was as if he were simply an observer. The ship passed through the flames for an indeterminable period of time until finally it pierced into another period of time.

Here, the starry sky looked unfamiliar, completely different from the sky of Planet South Heaven. It seemed like a vast and infinite expanse.

Occasionally strange life forms would pass by. Each one would drop to their knees and offer of bizarre and fantastic objects….

Meng Hao felt like he was a sightseer, a tourist hitching a ride on this ship. He saw a fluttering butterfly that was incredibly enormous. It was far off in the distance, and yet still clearly visible. When it neared, it could be seen that its beauty was actually formed by the combination of countless worlds.

“Are these things that have already happened, the recollections of this ship? Or is it something else…? What is happening?” Meng Hao wasn’t quite sure exactly what it was that he was seeing. The butterfly flew off into the distance, and the ship once again disappeared into the vastness.

When it reappeared, a boundless sea stretched out in front of Meng Hao. In the middle was an enormous tree stretching up into the Heavens. The tree had golden leaves, and was incredibly beautiful….

Down below sat a person, looking up silently at the tree. He stared for a long, long time, and it was impossible to tell what he was thinking. Finally, he smiled, and his body began to glow with a boundless light, as if he had just achieved enlightenment.

Meng Hao did not attempt to disturb him, but rather remained seated on the ship, as if this was simply a journey through life. Eventually, the man was left behind.

Meng Hao saw many, many worlds, and countless cultivators. He saw wars, and once, he even saw someone pointing at the ship and raving madly.

Meng Hao was somewhat at a loss. He had lost track of how many years had passed, and he also forgot that he was hovering on the verge of death. As the ship continued onward, he saw a featherless bird, a weeping crane.

A voice suddenly murmured in his ear, seemingly filled with a sense of time: “So many years. I think of you often….”

Meng Hao looked at the featherless, weeping crane, and for some reason, it seemed familiar.

“Don’t tell me I’ve seen it before?” he thought hesitantly.

Time changed again, and the scenery interweaved. He saw an enormous, cultivating tree, as large as the sky. It swept amongst the stars, running amok. However, when it saw the ship, it trembled.

Meng Hao was confused and at a loss.

He saw many types of cultivation, and countless Daos. He saw the cause and effect of Karma, he saw life and death, he saw the Yellow Springs, he saw eternal life and… he saw true and false. He saw a person walked down a path until he became a world. He buried himself to accompany others.

He saw a man who eternally roamed the starry sky, continuing onward, with his destination unknown. That person… appeared to be the armored old man.

A while later he saw another land where a man held the corpse of a woman in his arms. He lifted his head up and wailed, and within his eyes burned an insanity and a stubbornness that Meng Hao found shocking.

“The Heavens allowed you to die, but I WILL bring you back to life!” The man’s echoing voice filled Meng Hao’s heart with unprecedented waves of shock.

That shock was not because of the story of the man and woman, but rather, because the determination in the man’s words seemed indestructible. Even if Heaven and Earth collapsed, the steadfastness of his words could not be destroyed.

“I used to think I had determination,” though Meng Hao, “but compared to that, I don’t know….

“I’ve lost my cultivation base, and my life is waning away. However… can I really give up, just like that?” Meng Hao sat on ship, thinking about the question.

His eyes slowly began to burn with a spark of life. The flame was weak, as if it might flicker out at any moment. But right now, that flame… was resplendent. It was almost as if there was a will that burned within the fire.

Even as Meng Hao was lost in thought, the ship suddenly trembled again. The world around changed again, and nine mountains appeared out in the starry sky.

The nine mountains were lofty and ancient, filled with endless time. It was as if they had existed even if the primordial, distant past…. It was impossible to describe exactly how large they were, but they were enormously bigger, exponentially bigger than all of the other worlds he had seen up to this point.

Also in the starry sky were nine seas.

Nine mountains and nine seas, and in the middle of them all was a sea of stars formed by all the nine seas.

The first mountain had four planets. The sun and moon… rotated around the first mountain, sending sunlight and moonlight throughout the starry sky. The light spread out boundlessly, covering each mountain, illuminating all the seas.

It was like a beautiful painting that filled Meng Hao’s heart with intense waves of shock.

After seeing the nine mountains, a fantastic notion welled up within Meng Hao. “Don’t tell me… that these… are the Nine Mountains and Seas? If I can use the Mountain Consuming Incantation to consume these nine mountains, would it restore my cultivation base?”

It was an audacious idea, but as soon as it appeared in his brain it rooted itself in deeply. Meng Hao began to pant as he thought of the scene of the man swearing his oath to the Heavens as he held the woman in his arms. Then he thought of his own path.

“Am I really going to give up?” The flame in his eyes grew more resplendent. His gaze swept over the Nine Mountains and Seas, and eventually fell onto the Ninth Mountain.

He took a deep breath, and then without hesitation… began to employ the Mountain Consuming Incantation!

The incantation actually did not require a cultivation base, only heart. He studied the Ninth Mountain, branding the image of the mountain into his heart and mind. It was as if every aspect of the mountain remained inside of him, and that he could take it with him.

His gaze remained locked on the Ninth Mountain. He became lifeless, and even forgot about the passage of time, and everything around him. The only thing that existed was the Ninth Mountain.

Losses come with rewards. He had lost his cultivation base, but in return had received the sublimation of his spirit. Right now, amidst the silence, he slowly gained enlightenment about the Ninth Mountain.

Gradually, the image of the mountain grew clearer and clearer in his mind. One year. Two years….

Perhaps it was a hundred years, or a thousand, or ten thousand…. Meng Hao was in a trance as the Ninth Mountain grew clearer and clearer.

Eventually one day, the image of the Ninth Mountain became completely clear in his mind. A tremor ran through him. The image disappeared, transforming into countless magical symbols, each one of which seemed to contain a multitude of Daos.

He did not understand these Daos. However, from the perspective of the Mountain Consuming Incantation, they could be considered the mountain soul of the Ninth Mountain. Absorbing these Daos could be considered consuming the soul of the Ninth Mountain.

Meng Hao focused on the magical symbols; each one contained infinite profundity and possibility. Meng Hao proceeded onward, losing himself in their midst. As this happened, he didn't notice that during the process of his observation of the mountain, various auras had appeared on his body that were different from before.

It was at this point that suddenly, a vast, archaic will stirred in the Ninth Mountain.

“Who… is gaining enlightenment of my Ninth Mountain?!

“I am Ji Tian, the Heavens of Ji, the Lord of the Ninth Mountain and Sea!” 1, 433]

When the archaic voice thundered out, the entire Ninth Mountain instantly turned blurry. Massive ripples spread out through the world, and Meng Hao's mind trembled, instantly causing him to regain his senses.

The will swept about, but did not find Meng Hao or the ship.

The ship suddenly began to move forward. It left the Ninth Mountain and proceeded to the Eighth Mountain. Maintaining its speed, it went to the Seventh Mountain, then the Sixth Mountain….

Meng Hao was unable to see each mountain clearly. When the ship arrived at the Fourth Mountain, a gloomy aura suddenly spread out to cover everything.

An ancient voice suddenly could be heard.

“What is life? What is death…?

“If the lives in the underworld do not transcend, then I will not live!

“In the cycles of reincarnation, if laughter does not sound out from the underworld, then I will not die!

“Returning souls, souls leaving to be reborn, your paths go through here…. Why not return?” A rumbling filled the Fourth Mountain, and suddenly an enormous temple soared out toward Meng Hao.

From within the temple emerged an ox and a horse, completely pitch black. Massive ripples spread out from them, and their energy surged. An aura of death spread out from them to shoot toward Meng Hao. 2

As soon as he saw the ox and horse, he began to tremble. He felt as if he were about to fall asleep, and his soul were about to fly out….

“What is life? What is death?

However, before the ox and horse could get close, the ship had already moved off into the distance.

From behind Meng Hao, a sigh could be heard from the Fourth Mountain. “Almighty one, you do not wish to rest…. Reincarnation is the end of the Dao. Although you do not wish to rest, why must you take this person along with you on your journey through your life?” [3]

When Meng Hao heard this, his mind trembled violently. The ship passed the Third Mountain, then the Second Mountain and finally it reached the First Mountain. As for what happened next, Meng Hao couldn’t see clearly. Everything turned black and white, becoming two spheres of mist. They swirled around, and it looked as if two pearls were forming inside of them.

Meng Hao looked down at his right hand. There on his palm were two pearls, not corporeal, but formed of mist.

The Black White Pearls floated up from his hand and began to rotate, seemingly containing the secrets of Heaven and Earth.

Meng Hao watched on thoughtfully. He could sense that the enlightenment he had received from the armored old man regarding the black and white Pearls embodied a great Dao. Perhaps it was not the path of freedom, like his own Dao, but it could definitely extend that path further.

“Within this black and white exists all of the worlds that I saw, and all the Daos….

“What is life? What is death…?” Meng Hao closed his eyes. It was at this point that he suddenly thought about Ke Jiusi’s shocking… Soul Divergence Incantation! [4]

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2. The ox and horse seem to be a reference to Ox-head and Horse-face, guardians of hell in Chinese mythology

3. It should be noted that in Chinese, the number 4 sounds very similar to the word for “death.” Many elevators in China skip the fourth floor because it could be considered unlucky

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# Chapter 686: Homeland

The Soul Divergence Incantation allowed one to cultivate an undying soul. Once that soul appeared, the cycle of reincarnation in Heaven and Earth could not destroy it. Even if you died, your flesh and blood would be reborn years later.

It was not one of the three thousand great Daos of the ancient Demon Immortal Sect, but rather, something that Ke Yunhai had acquired by chance and taken to be a priceless treasure. Because he could not cultivate it successfully, he passed it on to Ke Jiusi.

However, it was too difficult for Ke Jiusi, despite his incredible latent talent. He could not acquire full enlightenment; in the end it had required the precious treasure that Ke Yunhai had forged before his death, coupled with the vast changes Ke Jiusu experienced, in order to comprehend it and form an undying soul that the cycle of reincarnation could not destroy.

“Life and Death,” murmured Meng Hao. “The Soul Divergence Incantation….” He seemed to have gained partial enlightenment, but the matter was still hazy. It was like he had grasped a vague direction, but when he examined it closely, there was nothing there.

Eventually, Meng Hao opened his eyes and looked down at the black and white pearls in his hand. He gazed at them for a long time, until it seemed that his will itself was fusing into the blackness and whiteness.

The black and white seemed to transform into a vortex that could consume everything. As it rotated slowly, a vision appeared in Meng Hao’s mind. In the vision, he stood there, his cultivation base fully active. His right hand stretched up, and the Black White Pearls rotated in his palm.

Indescribable ripples spread out from the two pearls, filling the entire world. Countless living things all prostrated themselves, and Meng Hao could easily decide whether they lived or died. It was as if the two pearls contained a great Dao which could determine and control life and death.

One day, the ship finally stopped moving. Meng Hao was in a bit of a daze as he opened his eyes and caught sight of a familiar body of water. It was the Milky Way Sea. He also saw a familiar land mass, the Southern Domain.

The ship had stopped at the border of the Milky Way Sea and the Southern Domain, and it was at this point that Meng Hao fully regained his senses.

Everything he had experienced seemed like a dream. The dream had been a dream of a journey, or perhaps a search for the Dao.

“The truths of life and death are something that cannot be understood by someone who has not died.”

Meng Hao sat there silently for a long time before finally rising to his feet. He turned to look back at the Milky Way Sea. Its surface was calm, and no waves could be seen. He took a deep breath.

“It seems the time has come for me to leave, and so the ship has delivered me here.

“Through the Soul Divergence Incantation, I could gain enlightenment about the difference between life and death. Yet even now I’m standing outside of the door, pacing back and forth in hesitation.

“Well then, am I willing to pass into death so quietly?

“No! I’m not willing!” His eyes filled with intense determination that burned like a fire. It kindled the flame of life inside of him, incinerating his confusion and a bitterness regarding his future.

“I still have hope. My Dao Foundation may be gone, but I still have hope!

“And my hope… lies in the Rebirth Cave!!” His eyes shined with an intense glow. The Rebirth Cave was where his hope lay, and it was his last resort.

Although he didn’t understand much about the Rebirth Cave, there were many, many legends about the place in the Southern Domain. Most spoke of powerful experts who, when their lives were reaching the end, when they were about to die, would enter the Rebirth Cave, hoping that inside, they would somehow be able to find a way to cause their life force to burn bright once again.

If you likened birth to a starting point and death to a finish line, then life and death form a cycle. As for the Rebirth Cave, according to the legends… it allowed for a second cycle, almost like a second life.

Meng Hao had heard many such legends in the Southern Domain. Actually, he had personally stepped foot into the region of the Rebirth Cave, although only the outer area, not the cave itself.

To experience rebirth, one’s body must first die. Only after death could one have life in defiance of the Heavens!

“According to the legends, not just anyone can enter the Rebirth Cave,” he thought, “only people who have an overwhelming desire to live, people who are pervaded by an aura of death, who have incredible determination and willpower. Only people like that can enter.

“Otherwise, one will automatically perish along the way.” He looked in the direction of the Southern Domain, and the brightness in his eyes grew more and more intense. It was filled with stubbornness, with the unwillingness to accept what the future seemed to hold. He took a deep breath.

“I, Meng Hao, will enter the Rebirth Cave! I will see what exists inside, and will find out whether or not I can acquire that second cycle, and live a second life!” He walked across the deck of the ship, then disembarked. When he stepped onto the sandy shore, he looked back to see the ancient Underworld Ship slowly drifting away. Fog spread out over the sea, covering the ship up.

In the moment before it vanished, the armored old man’s eyes suddenly flickered with profundity as he looked at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao looked back, and their gazes met through the fog. What the old man saw was not Meng Hao’s world, and what Meng Hao saw was not the old man’s world.

Gradually the ship disappeared into the fog. Eventually, the fog dissipated. The ancient Underworld Ship was nowhere to be seen.

If the ship did not wish to be seen, then no one would ever be able to see it.

On the border between the Southern Domain and the Milky Way Sea there was a barren beach. Occasionally, the remains of various birds or beasts could be seen, but there was no sign of human habitation.

Meng Hao’s hair was gray bordering on white, and although he wore the robe of a cultivator, his features were elderly. No matter how you looked at him, he appeared to be nothing more than an ancient, mortal man.

“I wonder how far away I am from the Rebirth Cave….” he thought as he trudged up the beach, his feet sinking into the sand with each step he took. After a time, he reached the end of the beach, where it turned into forested mountains. He glanced around, then continued to walk.

He had not walked on foot through mountainous forests for a very long time. He thought back to the time before he reached Foundation Establishment, when he had often traveled through mountainous forests like this. After Foundation Establishment, however, he had always flown up above in the air.

The mountains were not easy to travel through. There were thorns and thistles everywhere, and the sun was already beginning to set by the time he passed over the top of the first mountain. He gasped for breath the entire time, and his body ached. As evening fell, he sat down cross-legged beneath a tall tree to meditate.

Meditation was something that had become a force of habit. Although he had no cultivation base to rotate, simply meditating left him feeling calm and relaxed.

The sky grew darker, and then black. It was at this point that howling drifted through the trees, along with an acrid odor. Next, a savage three-headed dog appeared in front of him. One of the three heads was withered, another emanated a chilling cold Qi, and the last appeared to be extremely foul-tempered.

Obviously, these mountains were the domain of this creature, and Meng Hao's incursion caused its eyes to be filled with killing intent.

However, it did not near him, but merely circled around him. Its cultivation base was profound; it was already at the ninth level of Qi Condensation. It had the faint sensation that Meng Hao was filled with boundless danger. Yet, within that sense of danger, it could also sense that he was as weak as a mortal.

The contradiction caused it to hesitate.

However, it could only be so patient. It managed to restrain itself for the time it takes half an incense stick to burn, then let out a vicious howl and transformed into a beam of colorful light that shot toward Meng Hao.

The two non-withered heads opened their vicious mouths, and an acrid odor filled the air as they closed in on Meng Hao. It was at this point that Meng Hao's eyes opened.

His body was weak, but when his eyes opened, they were filled with a cold gleam.

The cold gleam contained all of Meng Hao's killing intent. In his years leading the Crow Divinity Tribes in their migration, he had killed countless numbers of cultivators. The killing intent that existed in him was something usually suppressed by his cultivation base. But now, there was no way to suppress it, and it exploded out fully.

“Screw off!” said Meng Hao with a cold snort. Although he was incredibly weak, some of his energy could still turn into a pressure that bore down onto the three-headed wild dog.

The wild dog trembled, and its fur stood on end. It stopped in mid-air, its expression one of terror. When it heard Meng Hao speak, it instantly turned and sped away.

After scaring the wild dog away, Meng Hao stood up. It might be evening, but he still wanted to hurry on his way.

He was exhausted, but within that exhaustion, he found power, despite the weakness of his body. That was the former power of his fleshly body.

Of course, he couldn’t utilize all of that former power. Because his life force was wasting away, he was incapable of supporting the previous level of power.

Even still, that made him like a strong, young man who caught a disease. Although he could only wield ten percent of his previous incredible power, it was still enough to give him hope. Of course, Meng Hao’s situation was far worse than some sort of disease. His life force was wasting away, and he knew that if he allowed the power of his fleshly body to explode out, then he would surely perish.

Traveling took great effort. However, regardless of whether the sun rose or the sun set, he continued onward. The hope he placed in the Rebirth Cave was as strong as ever.

One day, he reached the end of the mountain range. As he stood at the top of one particular mountain peak, he looked out and saw a huge lake. It was at this point that he gaped.

That lake was actually large enough to be called a sea.

It was impossible for Meng Hao to forget that this place… was his former hometown.

This was where the State of Zhao had once existed. When Patriarch Reliance left, it turned into a huge pit. By now, hundreds of years had passed, and it had turned into a lake.

“So, that ship delivered me here….” he murmured. He kept walking until he reached the edge of the lake, where he stood looking out at the water. Finally, he understood.

“I was born here, and this was my starting point….” He sat down cross-legged next to the lake, stared at the water, and thought of home.

There was a boat floating next to the shore, old and dilapidated. There was also a log cabin, ancient in appearance. It didn’t look like anyone had lived in it for a long time.

Dark clouds filled the sky; thunder rumbled and lightning flashed. Rain… began to fall.

Meng Hao walked over to the cabin, sat down under the eaves, and looked out at the rain. His back was stooped, his face ancient. The rain pattered onto the lake and tapped onto the roof of the cabin. Those were the only sounds he could hear.

When evening fell, the sky turned dark. The crescent moon was mostly hidden by the clouds; only a tiny corner was visible. As the sibilant rain continued, a cold wind sprang up, blowing across the lake and causing the old, dilapidated boat to rise up and down. When the wind brushed against Meng Hao, he tightened his robe and looked out over the lake. There, he saw a white-robed woman walking across the water.

The instant he saw her, his eyes went wide. Then, he lowered his head.

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# Chapter 687: You Live, I Live

The woman walked until she reached the shore. The rain fell around her, but didn’t touch her clothing at all. She was beautiful, and had the aura of a cultivator, which gave her an otherworldly grace.

Her face was cold, and she was frowning. A bitter look could be seen in her eyes, and she seemed to be concealing great anxiety and confusion within her heart.

She was Xu Qing.

She had been searching for Meng Hao for many years, but had found nothing…. She was thinner than before, more lean.

She had followed her heart until she found this lake, which was also her former hometown.

When Meng Hao saw her, she also caught sight of aged Meng Hao. There was something strangely familiar about him, so she changed directions and headed over toward the log cabin.

“Are you the boatman here?” she asked, looking him over. Her face was filled with an expression that could cause one’s heart to tremble. Meng Hao lowered his head and sighed inwardly.

Xu Qing’s voice was calm, and just as cold as it had always been. However, Meng Hao’s appearance had changed far too much. Even people very familiar with him would have a hard time recognizing him based on his physical appearance.

After a long moment, Meng Hao nodded.

Xu Qing’s frown deepened. “Have you seen anyone else pass through here?” she asked. She had searched for a hundred years, and had failed repeatedly, yet had never given up. If he was alive, she wanted to see him. If he was dead, she wanted to see the corpse. If she couldn’t find him… then she would just keep on searching.

Her personality was simple, but it was that very simplicity which gave her such determination.

For some reason, she had the feeling that if she couldn’t find Meng Hao, then perhaps…she wouldn’t ever be able to find her way in life again.

“I haven’t seen anyone,” replied Meng Hao levelly, shaking his head. His voice was hoarse, and sounded nothing like it had before. He was happy to be able to see Xu Qing, but he didn’t want her to realize who he was, not when he looked like this.

What was the point? It would just lead to her waiting for him outside once of the Rebirth Cave. Then, if he never came back out, she would become a woman sorrowed because of a lifetime of gloom and listlessness.

Wouldn’t it be better to forget about each other….?

Xu Qing looked around the area, and then sighed inwardly. After scanning Meng Hao with Divine Sense, all she had seen was a mortal man. And yet, she also felt something familiar that made her give him a second look over.

“Have we met before?” she asked.

“No,” he replied with the shake of a head.

She gazed at him for a very long moment, and a complex look appeared in her eyes. The intense complexity turned into sorrow, and a slight tremor ran through her body.

“I’m looking for someone,” she said. “My beloved. If you see him, please pass a message along for me. In this life… if he lives, then I live. If he dies, then I die!”

Bitterly, she turned and began to walk off into the downpour. Surrounded by the rainfall, wearing her white robes, she looked like a white lotus, beautiful, unsurpassed, and yet also poignant and sad.

Meng Hao looked at her walking away, and a gentleness appeared in his eyes. He could see her exhaustion and anxiety, and it made him sigh.

“Some people,” he thought, “chose not to let anything encumber their cultivation, and are thus able to do so with minds and hearts free of obstruction. Others have hearts filled with obsession, which enables them to achieve great Daos of Heaven and Earth.

“She… started out incorruptible. It was me showing up that changed everything…”

Finally, he spoke up, his voice soft. “Hold on.”

Xu Qing stopped in her tracks, surrounded by rain. She turned back to look at him sitting there in the shadows of the wooden eaves, ancient, old, decaying.

He continued, “Is the person you’re looking for a twenty-something scholar, wearing a long green robe…?”

Xu Qing trembled, and after a moment of silence, she nodded.

“I saw someone who looked like that many years ago,” he said, his voice hoarse. “He lived here for about a year, after which… he died and was buried. He said this place was his home.

“Before he died, he gave me a bag. He said that if anyone came looking for him, then I should give them the bag.” With that, he pulled a bag of holding out of his robe and placed it off to the side.

As Xu Qing stood there in the rain, the water began to seep past the invisible barrier and soak her clothes. She stared deeply at Meng Hao, then walked back and looked blankly at the bag of holding. As she picked it up, tears filled her eyes.

Of course, it was impossible to tell how much of the water flowing down her face was rain, and how much was tears.

A bitter smile appeared on her face, and she looked back at Meng Hao. Finally, she turned and headed once again out into the rain, taking the bag of holding with her.

As he watched her leaving, his expression was complex, but he said nothing.

Xu Qing walked about seven steps before she stopped. She didn't look back, but when she spoke, her voice echoed out in all directions.

"I might be not be very smart, but… I'm not an idiot."

Meng Hao didn't say anything for a moment. He knew that his words couldn't fool Xu Qing. However, sometimes it doesn't matter what is true and what is false. Sometimes… the result is all that matters.

Meng Hao had hoped that instead of tormenting herself by searching for him through all eternity, she could at least cut him off. After that, she could return to her incorruptible self, simple and pure.

It is better to forget….

He closed his eyes, and his heart filled with pain.

Xu Qing was quiet for a while, but finally, she smiled. It was a smile of determination and resolve that contained no regret….

She lifted her hand, and the glow of a sword flew out. It stabbed into the ground, sharp and powerful, rapidly carving out a deep, rectangular pit.

At the same time, mountain crag flew out from the nearby mountainous forest. When it arrived in front of her, she waved her hand, causing it to spin in the air. The sides were then shaved away until the crag turned into a stela.

She then rubbed her hand gently across the surface, causing words to appear.

Grave of Meng Hao and Xu Qing.

A bang rang out as the stone stele sank down into the ground next to the pit. She looked back at Meng Hao, her eyes filled with staunchness and determination.

We met on Mount Daqing.

Because of the Cosmetic Cultivation Pill in the Reliance Sect, and the way you called me Elder Sister, our fate was sealed forever.

That time in the Blessed Land in the Southern Domain, in my moment of despair, even the tears in my eyes could not obscure the image of you and your burning rage.

That time in the Black Sieve Sect, you appeared and helped me when my soul was on the verge of fading away. The way you smiled before we parted made my heart tremble.

That time by the Rebirth Cave, when you turned back to look at me, your image had already long since been imprinted in my heart…. I will never forget you, never!

I looked for you in the Western Desert Violet Sea. I searched for a long time, until finally my teardrop fell into the water. I don’t know if you were able to feel it.

I don’t know if you realized how happy I was when we met again in the Demon Immortal Sect. Those were the happiest days I’ve ever experienced. Life was calm, and we accompanied each other as we practiced cultivation. I was there at your side, you by mine.

Eventually, a day came in which I was incapable of practicing cultivation. My heart was in chaos, and an indescribable unease filled me. That was when… I went to look for you.

“You live, I live. You die, I die!” she said softly.

Meng Hao’s mind trembled, and he suddenly opened his eyes. His eyes were murky, but not murky enough to hide the intensity of his gaze.

He looked at Xu Qing, and he looked at the gravestone. He could see her determination, and he could see her sorrow written on the surface of the gravestone.

You live, I live. You die, I die!

These were not words of endearment, they were a promise….

“I’m a simple person,” she said softly, “but just because a person is simple doesn’t mean they lack determination. When a person has determination… then they will never forget. The path of cultivation is a long one, and I can’t keep going on alone.

“Since that’s the case, let’s go together to the Yellow Springs. What do you say? I can only hope that if there is another life after this one, then we will meet again.” Although her voice was not loud, and the gurgle of rain filled the air, Meng Hao could hear her words clearly.

The trembling of his heart increased, and he stood up. He walked out from under the eaves, allowing the rain to drench him as he walked over to stand in front of Xu Qing.

The ground was slippery, and the wind cold. Meng Hao was freezing, and he looked more elderly than ever.

Xu Qing looked at him. To her, it didn’t matter how much he had changed. To her, he was still that young man from Mount Daqing, her Junior Brother.

Rain fell onto them, and even between them, but it couldn’t stop them from looking into each other’s eyes.

“Take me to the Rebirth Cave!” Meng Hao said. The determination in his eyes grew more intense. He wanted to keep living, and he wanted that second life from the Rebirth Cave.

He was doing it for himself, for the obsession in his heart, for Xu Qing, and for all of his friends and family!

Xu Qing smiled and nodded. She stepped forward and took hold of his hand. Despite Meng Hao's weakness, her face still flushed when she found herself up against his chest.

Time seemed to slow down for an eternity.

At some point, it stopped raining. A rainbow appeared in the morning sunlight, and it was beneath that rainbow that Xu Qing and Meng Hao transformed into a beam of light that shot off into the distance.

Meng Hao could not fly, but he did have magical flight items. Under the control of Xu Qing, the loom shuttle transformed into what looked like the eighth color of the rainbow.

Time passed by. The loom shuttle was powerful enough that it only took ten days to fly from the State of Zhao to the Rebirth Cave. When they finally landed outside, Meng Hao's face was even more ashen than before.

The closer they got to the cave itself, the more Meng Hao felt his life force withering away. He was shriveling up, and the death aura that surrounded him only grew stronger.

Things were different than they had been last time he was here. Perhaps then, Choumen Tai's presence had caused things to change from their normal state, and now that he had entered the Rebirth Cave, everything had returned to normal.

Life was prohibited.

This was the Rebirth Cave.

Living beings were not allowed.

The aura of death in the area made Meng Hao feel even weaker. As it thickened, however, Meng Hao could sense that a trace of opportunity existed within.

To experience rebirth, one’s body must first die. Only after death could one have life in defiance of the Heavens!

Meng Hao took a deep breath and walked forward. Even as he took his first steps forward, Xu Qing reached out to support him. He looked back at her, and she returned the look but didn’t say anything. The determination in her eyes said what thousands and thousands of words could not.

“Living beings cannot enter this place,” he said softly.

She smiled faintly and then led Meng Hao toward the inner region of the Rebirth Cave.

As soon as they entered, Meng Hao became weaker than before. His body withered even faster, as if he were burning with an invisible fire. Every step forward, every step closer to the Rebirth Cave, caused his body, his soul, his everything… to waste away rapidly.

At the same time, more than ten streams of will spread out from within the Rebirth Cave. They looked coldly as Meng Hao and Xu Qing approached.

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# Chapter 688: Together

The Rebirth Cave was one of three Danger Zones in the Southern Domain. However, it ranked above the Dao Lakes and the Ancient Temple of Doom in terms of how mysterious it was!

That was because the Dao Lakes could be viewed as having been formed by ancient almighty figures who passed away in meditation. After they perished, their Daos dispersed, then experienced the vicissitudes of time, leaving behind countless shadows.

As for the Ancient Temple of Doom, its history was also a matter of record.

The Rebirth Cave was unique. To say that it was the number one Danger Zone in the Southern Domain was no exaggeration. In fact, if you looked at the entire Southern Domain as a whole, nothing was more shrouded in mystery than the Rebirth Cave. Throughout countless years, innumerable people had studied it in an attempt to pierce it secrets.

It was said that inside, one could be reborn to live another life!

For ages, many almighty experts came to the Rebirth Cave as they neared death. Not willing to follow the precepts of fate, they entered the cave to search for that opportunity. Unfortunately, those who actually succeeded were as rare as phoenix feathers and qilin horns.

One thing was certain: cultivators who entered the Rebirth Cave either succeeded, or remained inside forever as nothing more than skeletons.

The Rebirth Cave was surrounded by a forest of stones, which was a bit different than how Meng Hao remembered it from the first time he was there. The stones were scattered haphazardly in all directions, and seemed to be imbued with ancientness and mystery, as if they passed through time in some strange and unique way.

In the very center of the forest of stones was a squat mountain, seventy percent of which was made up by the entrance to the cave. It looked like a ghastly mouth, waiting to swallow up anyone who neared.

The entire area was gloomy and cold, and the ground was covered with bluish, frosty ice. Everything was quiet, a quiet that for countless years had almost never been disturbed by anyone.

With the exception of Choumen Tai….

There were cultivators scattered around the region of the Rebirth Cave. Most were alone, or perhaps in small groups. Such people were here to try to get close to the Rebirth Cave and use its bizarre power to cultivate certain unique techniques.

Most of them were rogue cultivators, and none dared to get too close to the cave. When Meng Hao and Xu Qing entered the area, there was a group of three such people sitting cross-legged not too far off, meditating. Their eyes opened and they looked at Meng Hao.

When they saw how weak he was, and the aura of death that surrounded him, their eyes glittered.

They could immediately discern exactly why he was there.

“His aura of death is thick, and he clearly has no cultivation base… Rebirth… how could it be that simple!?”

“Another person here attempting to be reborn. Although, why does that woman next to him seem so familiar?”

“That’s Goddess Xu Qing from the Black Sieve Sect!”

Meng Hao left the Southern Domain hundreds of years earlier, and during that time, Xu Qing’s name had long since spread near and far. Not only were many people familiar with her personally, she was also the focus of quite a bit of public attention because of her position within the Black Sieve Sect.

For her to appear at the Rebirth Cave was shocking to these three cultivators, and they immediately began to pay close attention. They also produced jade slips that they used to send messages and notify others of what was happening.

It took only moments for large numbers of rogue cultivators to hear the news, who then rushed over to that area of the Rebirth Cave to watch Meng Hao and Xu Qing.

The sounds of discussions echoed about, and soon, people began to speculate who the man next to Xu Qing was.

Xu Qing completely ignored all the people watching on. In her world, there was only Meng Hao.

It was difficult for Meng Hao to continue walking, but his eyes were filled with determination. His gaze was focused on the path ahead, and on Xu Qing, who held his arm to support him. Together, they proceeded onward.

Occasionally they would look at each other and smile. Meng Hao’s expression was gentle; Xu Qing’s eyes were filled with tenderness. If this path were the road of life, then the two of them walked it side by side.

It was not an easy path to follow. They were 30,000 meters away from the Rebirth Cave itself when Meng Hao began to shiver. The death aura now covered his entire body, and he looked almost exactly like a corpse.

His face was ancient, and his eyes deeply clouded. Next to him, Xu Qing was also showing signs of aging.

Her eyes were as resolute as ever, though, and every time Meng Hao looked over at her, his heart filled with pulses of tender affection.

30,000 meters. 25,000 meters. 20,000 meters…. When they were only 15,000 meters away, Meng Hao’s mind filled with intense exhaustion. He knew that by this point, the aura of death had entered into his soul.

Xu Qing was trembling, and her face was pale. Her life force had once been vigorous and strong, but now, it was rapidly fading, to the extent that random streaks of white could be seen in her long black hair.

She looked at least five years older than she had before, and the further along she proceeded, the more she seemed to wilt.

Meng Hao stopped walking and looked over at her. It was clear that he didn't want her to proceed along any further.

"If you grow old, then I'll grow old with you," she said softly, gazing at him with a tender expression.

He closed his eyes for a moment. When they opened, they glowed with a brilliant light. His withered body suddenly seemed to be filled with energy, as if the last sparks of his life force had been unleashed. He lifted his right hand, and power surged within him.

This was the last bit of power that he could unleash from his Spirit Severing fleshly body. He waved his sleeve, and power wrapped around Xu Qing, sending her flying out from within the Rebirth Cave area.

She was powerless to even struggle. Meng Hao's Spirit Severing strength sent her away in the blink of an eye. When she reappeared, she was outside of the region of the Rebirth Cave. She bit down on her lip.

She couldn't help but think back to the last time she and Meng Hao were here by the Rebirth Cave. She had only been able to stand there alone off in the distance, struggling inwardly as she watched him depart.

"This time, I won't sit by idly!" she thought, her eyes filling with determination.

Meanwhile, Meng Hao's aura had exploded out, filling the rogue cultivators in the area with complete shock. They instantly felt an incredible, indescribable pressure weighing down on them.

Their minds trembled and their faces fell. One by one, they looked in the direction of the Rebirth Cave.

“Is this being caused by that old man?”

“Is it that guy who was walking with Goddess Xu Qing?”

“What cultivation base is that? Don’t tell me… it’s Spirit Severing!!”

At the same time, Meng Hao’s body transformed into a prismatic beam of light that shot toward the Rebirth Cave 15,000 meters away.

In the blink of an eye, he passed the 10,000 meter mark, and was at the border of the forest of stones. It was at this point that Meng Hao’s body trembled as the last bit of his cultivation base power scattered thanks to the power of the stones in the forest. He dropped to the ground and leaned up against one of the stones. His face was deathly pale, and his eyes blurry.

He felt an indescribable aura of death in the area. It was so strong that it turned into a white mist that covered the ground in all directions. Every inhalation and exhalation was filled with death and decay.

After a long moment, he struggled to lift up his head and then looked at the remaining 5,000 meters that lay between him and the Rebirth Cave. He gritted his teeth and slowly began to walk forward, one step at a time….

Never before in his life had 5,000 meters been such a difficult distance to cross. After walking only about 1,500 meters, he coughed up a mouthful of blood, which was purplish-black and exuded an aura of rot.

His eyes were even more cloudy than before, and his body was ice cold and stiff. His consciousness was fading, and the only thing he could think about was walking forward….

He proceeded on toward the Rebirth Cave, where he would struggle for his chance to be reborn.

He didn’t know how much time had passed. He walked on, trembling, his death aura growing stronger with every step. In the end, his consciousness grew even weaker. Behind him, the path he had walked was stained with the purplish-black blood that he had coughed up, although he couldn’t see that.

Everything was quiet, as quiet as a world of death….

Inside the Rebirth Cave, the ten streams of will stared at him coldly. From further within the depths of the cave, eight other streams of will emerged to sweep over him. They were filled with the feeling of ancientness and time, as if they were archaic divine beings.

As Meng Hao got closer and closer. He walked on further until he was only 500 meters away. It was at this point that a single stream of will silently appeared deep within the Rebirth Cave. When it did, all the other streams of will scattered, trembling.

The solitary stream of will focused on Meng Hao, 500 meters outside of the cave.

Eventually, Meng Hao reached his limit. A tremor ran through him; his head began to sag, and his knees were so stiff they couldn’t bend. He looked almost like a dried up corpse.

There was no life force left in him, only a tiny strand that was his stubborn determination to resist fate!

However, as his consciousness faded, even that strand turned dark. He fell to the ground, 250 meters away from the Rebirth Cave.

“Is it over…?” he murmured as his consciousness disappeared.

In the moment that he fell, a sigh could be heard echoing out from within the cave. All of the wills present slowly retracted, apparently no longer interested in what was happening. Only the solitary will from earlier remained, looking at something behind Meng Hao.

Then, the wills which had retreated just now slowly began to tremble. All of them appeared once again, to look at what was behind Meng Hao.

Within the white mist of death, a woman could be seen trudging along. Each step was taken with difficulty as she entered the forest of stones. Her life force seemed to be filled with determination, dredged up from some unknown place within her.

Her body was slowly withering, her cultivation base dim, and her previously lovely features now elderly as she walked slowly toward Meng Hao.

This was Xu Qing.

She was different than Meng Hao, who had lost his Dao foundation. Her once flourishing life force had been fused with the soul of Matriarch Phoenix. Therefore, she could proceed further in toward the Rebirth Cave than he could. To her, it was just a matter of struggling forward.

When she looked down at fallen Meng Hao, within whom no life force existed, tears began to stream down her face. She gently lifted him up so that he lay against her, then tenderly kissed him.

A strand of life force emerged from within her, passing through her lips into his mouth. Her face flushed with an unusual redness, within which would be seen weakness, but also life.

“This is a secret art from the Demon Immortal Sect… I give you my life….” As she watched Meng Hao once again filling with a bit of life, she smiled. Then she thought back to the time they had walked through the Reliance Sect in the moonlight, watched by everyone.

She looked up toward the Rebirth Cave 250 meters away, and then began to walk forward, carrying him in her arms.

Her face continued to grow more wrinkled, and her body trembled. Her life force was fading away, and yet with every step she took, she continued to pass some of it to Meng Hao.

Every time she did, she grew weaker and older. Yet no regret existed in her heart whatsoever.

Carrying Meng Hao, she walked the entire 250 meters, all the way to the entrance of the Rebirth Cave. Then, without any hesitation…

She walked in.

You live, I live. You die, I die!

If you grow old, then I’ll grow old with you….

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# Chapter 689: Is There Really Such a Thing as Rebirth?

Xu Qing was smiling, and it was beautiful. Although her hair was white and her face covered with wrinkles, her smile was as beautiful as ever.

She gazed softly at Meng Hao, and a glow filled her face that could almost be described as holy. She appeared to be seeing everything that had happened on Mount Daqing and in the Reliance Sect. Each scene ended with Meng Hao, and when that happened, her eyes seemed to fill with all of the love that existed in her life.

She had a simple personality, and was not the type of person to allow the seeds of love to be planted easily. However, once those seeds were planted… they existed for a lifetime.

She held Meng Hao in her arms as she walked forward step by step, directly into the ghastly cave mouth in the side of the mountain, the Rebirth Cave.

Stepping into the cave was like passing through the barrier that existed between life and death. In that instant, everything turned black, and no more warmth existed. There was not even a scrap of the life that existed in Heaven and Earth. The only thing that remained was stifling death and infinite coldness.

The outside of the Rebirth Cave, and the inside of the cave, were two different worlds.

One was a world of life, the other was a world of death.

When Xu Qing carried Meng Hao inside, all of the wills inside the cave retreated back into the recesses of the cave to watch from afar.

To them, when Meng Hao and Xu Qing were on the outside, they were people from a different world. Not only were they envious and jealous of them, they also scorned and disdained them.

But now that Xu Qing had carried Meng Hao into the Rebirth Cave, they were all the same, and all existed in the same world.

Here, there was no power of Heaven and Earth. When living things entered the cave, their life force would fade away even more rapidly than before. When it disappeared, when they were inundated with death, then all they could do was wait for the supposed… awakening.

Xu Qing walked onward with Meng Hao, her face pale, her body trembling. Her life force was rapidly fading away, and as for the single strand that existed within Meng Hao, it would soon be completely gone.

In the moment when Meng Hao's strand of life disappeared, Xu Qing kissed his lips again, delivering more of her own life force… into him.

By the time she had walked a few dozen meters into the cave, Xu Qing's face was completely ancient, and her body was extremely withered. She was thin and emaciated, with no trace of youth left in her at all. She had lost everything.

She sat down cross-legged.

"Meng Hao," she murmured, "I can't go any further…." He now lay resting across her legs, his face devoid of blood, his features ancient. She looked down at him. "When I joined the Reliance Sect, I had already promised myself that I would never marry anyone, not for my entire life. I would not become someone's beloved. Instead, I would focus solely on cultivation…." She stroked his face with a hand that had once been as lustrous as jade, but was now dried up and old.

“But then you came along….” she said. Her face flushed a bit as she looked at him for a long moment. Then she leaned down and kissed him again, delivering more of her life force.

As the life force entered him, a bit of color returned to his face. On the other hand, Xu Qing’s only became more withered. The amount of life force she had was only growing less and less.

“You had only been in the sect for a short time when you happened to get that medicinal pill,” she murmured. “When you ended up giving the pill to me as a gift… my face was calm, but my heart was actually filled with joy.

“Not because of you, but because of the pill.” She smiled. “I gave you the Immortal’s cave because I figured it would make us even. But then, you crafty little fox, you managed to entangle me even further. You got your hands on a Cosmetic Cultivation Pill….” When she thought back to everything that had happened back then, her smile grew sweeter, and she gently stroked Meng Hao’s cheek.

“Did you know that when you killed Zhao Wugang, I secretly helped to make sure no one found out? Down to this day, I don’t think you ever realized that.

“And then you opened your shop in the sect…. Ai. If I wasn’t there… well, let’s just say that by that time a lot of people had taken an interest in you.” Xu Qing wanted to smile, but suddenly was overtaken by a fit of coughing. Fearful of disturbing Meng Hao, she covered her mouth. When she lowered her hand, it was covered with purplish blood.

“If the Reliance Sect hadn’t been destroyed, I wonder how things would have turned out…. When I was taken to the Black Sieve Sect, I was met with coldness. Everything was strange, and I had to deal with that malicious Elder Brother….

“Back then, I really missed the Reliance Sect, and I missed the State of Zhao. I missed… you.” She looked down, and delivered another strand of life force to Meng Hao.

Her face was pale white, and her body frail and withered. She looked like a lamp that was on the verge of flickering out, and she was well aware that every bit of life force she gave to Meng Hao caused her own death to approach even more quickly.

Right now, she could still abandon Meng Hao. If she left the Rebirth Cave, because of her special soul, she could easily return to the outside world and recover all of her life force.

But she did not do that. Nor did she regret the decision.

“You don’t know it,” she murmured, “but when I saw you in the crowds of people, at first, I thought I was dreaming…. Then, in my moment of despair in the ancient Blessed Land, you appeared. From that moment on, you were in my heart.

“Not long after, you saved me again, from the discarnate soul of Matriarch Phoenix.

“Later, outside the Rebirth Cave, I could only weep as I watched you disappear into the distance. My heart hurt so bad….

“When I went to the Violet Sea, I couldn’t find you, but I could sense that you were so close….

“Finally, I saw you again in the ancient Demon Immortal Sect. Meng Hao… I was so happy then. Thank you.” She looked down at him for a long moment.

She didn’t speak very often about how she felt, but her actions showed how deeply her love went. Anyone in Heaven and Earth who could have a companion like this could die without any regrets.

“Meng Hao, I can’t hold on much longer….” She was not a flickering lamp any more. She had reached the end of the road. If she closed her eyes now, then she would never open them again.

Perhaps if she closed her eyes, then years later, someone would come into the Rebirth Cave to find their bodies. A woman, sitting cross-legged. A man, reclining across her legs.

One sleeping. The other smiling. Through all eternity….

“You live, I live. You die, I die….

“If you grow old, then I’ll grow old with you.

“If you slumber here, then I will accompany you….” Xu Qing lowered her head and began to deliver the last bits of life force she had to Meng Hao through a kiss.

As the life force left her, she shivered, and her hair began to fall out. Everything started to go blurry. However, she gritted her teeth and once again prepared to give some more.

By this point, even all of the observing streams of will were shaken by what they saw. It was then that the stream of will that belonged to the roc suddenly emerged, transforming into a woman.

She stood there in front of Xu Qing, indescribably striking and matchlessly beautiful.

She was the embodiment of the roc. She came from the bones that existed in the coffin in the Milky Way Sea. She was… the goodness of the Resurrection Lily that had reached Immortal Ascension at dawn.

Back then, she had fallen in love with a man. From that moment on, she willingly sank into depravity. Because she faced pain and sorrow, she took her goodness and severed it away. Then she became the Dawn Immortal.

That goodness now appeared in front of Xu Qing, in the form of this woman.

“If you keep that up, your soul will scatter,” said the woman softly.

Despite her muddled consciousness, Xu Qing heard the woman’s words and looked up.

“If you keep it up, you will lose your life for all eternity….” The woman looked down at Xu Qing, and almost seemed to be looking down at herself. “From time immemorial, the League of Demon Sealers have been heartless. Is it really worth it to do what you’re doing?”

“I don’t know if it’s worth it or not,” murmured Xu Qing. “I only know that without him in my life, then I can only live a life of pain. In that case, why not die together? I don’t fear death. What I fear is the pain of being alone.”

The woman seemed to shiver, and she looked down thoughtfully at Xu Qing. Finally, she sighed softly. “You’ll regret it.”

Xu Qing smiled but didn’t say anything. She was confident in her heart.

“Don’t believe me, huh…?” said the woman. “I didn’t believe either. Well, in that case, I’ll help you to see. We will find out who is right, you, or me.” A strange light began to glow in the woman’s eyes.

“You have the vestiges of a discarnate soul on you,” continued the woman, “as well as the Daoist magic of the Black Sieve Sect. Within the Black Sieve Sect is a precious medicinal pill. It’s called the Soul Birth Pill. If you can get that pill, then he will have a chance to live.” With that, the woman waved her sleeve, causing an cold wind to spring up around Xu Qing. It picked her up and carried her far off into the distance, out of the Rebirth Cave and into the world of the living, all the way to the vicinity of the Black Sieve Sect.

When the wind faded away, Xu Qing stood there ashen-faced. Her consciousness was no longer muddled, and she looked like her old self. She turned her head to look back toward the Rebirth Cave, and began to breathe heavily. Then she turned and headed toward the Black Sieve Sect.

Back in the Rebirth Cave, the woman stood next to Meng Hao, looking at him.

“Is there really such a thing as rebirth…?

“I have been to every corner of this cave. I left no rock unturned. And I can tell you… there is no rebirth in this place.

“The only thing here is a Ninth Mountain and Sea lodestone. It fell here countless years ago, and enables souls around it to exist forever and cultivate Ghost Immortality.

“Rebirth, ah, rebirth…. It’s a beautiful dream, and nothing more. It’s merely a fiction, invented by people who aren’t willing to die.

“The rosy picture such stories paint gradually obscured the truth, from one generation to the next…….” The woman’s voice was strange and filled with bitterness, as well as exhaustion. As she lost herself in memories of the past, her body gradually faded away.

Meng Hao lay there in the silence. He had no more consciousness, and everything around him was still. It was so quiet that it seemed as if no voices had existed in the area since ancient times.

Without the support of Xu Qing’s life force, Meng Hao’s own life force was rapidly diminishing. After enough time passed for half an incense stick to burn… it had completely vanished.

Within him, Immortal Shows the Way also withered, and gradually lost any usefulness to him. When that happened, a tall man sitting cross-legged deep within the Rebirth Cave looked up and sighed.

“There really is no rebirth in this place,” he said. “There is only a Ninth Mountain and Sea lodestone….

“So, he is not the one who can help me…. Who have I been waiting for, then?”

“Where is the person I’ve been waiting for…?” This man was none other than Choumen Tai.

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# Chapter 691: Extend the Broken Bridge of Life Force

Half a month passed by.

Xu Qing did not return.

Meng Hao lay surrounded by coldness and deathly silence. He did not decompose, nor would he for some time. His body lay there, completely lacking any life force whatsoever.

He was dead.

Normally speaking, his soul could enter the cycle of reincarnation. However, because of the Ninth Mountain and Sea lodestone that existed in the Rebirth Cave, the soul was sealed, and could not dissipate. Furthermore, his soul did not leave his body, preventing the soul-devouring entities from doing anything other than look at him.

As time passed, they were able to see that within Meng Hao was a strand of silk wrapped tightly around his soul.

As long as the silk did not break, the larva could not be destroyed. As long as the larva was not destroyed, the silk could not break!

Life or death hung by a thread… the thread of the eyeless larva! It allowed the existence of Meng Hao’s soul to be forever preserved, even if his body perished. From these seemingly contradictory circumstances arose a state of undeath which was virtually unheard of in Heaven and Earth!

In some ways, it conformed with the Soul Divergence Incantation. However, it was not rebirth.

Another half month passed, and finally, someone appeared outside of the Rebirth Cave.

It was not Xu Qing. It was a fat, middle-aged man. He had a somewhat bawdy look to him, and his body was almost like a sphere. He had freckles on his face, and the Daoist robe he wore was a bit too tight. The way his body bulged out of it made his whole image seem disharmonious.

Apparently, however, he thought of himself as burly and muscular. A greatsword could be seen strapped to his back, and it glittered with golden light.

This was the same Fatty from years ago, Li Fugui.

He was alone, shivering as he moved at high speed into the region surrounding the Rebirth Cave. His face quickly turned pale.

“Dangit, I’m gonna be dead meat! Meng Hao, you jerk, your cons are going to be the death of me!

“And Elder Sister Xu, aiiiii…” Fatty looked upset, but his steps didn’t pause for even a moment. Even though his life force was dissipating rapidly, he shot forward at top speed.

When he reached the 3,000 meter mark, he coughed up a mouthful of blood. Immediately, multi-colored beams of light shot out from inside of him. Within each beam of light could be seen the image of a meditating old man.

“I’m the only heir of my bloodline in the Golden Frost Sect, fools!” bellowed Fatty. “I might not have many kinds of treasures on me, but there’s one thing I have a lot of, and that is life-saving treasures!” It was impossible to say how many life-saving treasures Fatty actually had on his person, but as of this moment, vast amounts appeared as he passed into the 1,500 meter area.

By this time, the glow that surrounded him was starting to fade away. His body no longer looked like a sphere. His flesh withered, and in the blink of an eye, he was suddenly much skinnier.

“Meng Hao is my big bro. For him, all of my precious flesh is disappearing… Uh… well, a bit of gorging will restore it.” With a howl, Fatty shot into the 1,000 meter mark. By now, he was was so skinny that he looked like a normal person. At the same time, cracking sounds could be heard coming from his body.

Those would be his numerous lifesaving treasures treasures being destroyed.

“Dammit, still 1,000 meters to go. The only reason Elder Sister Xu is in such a heartbreaking situation is because of Meng Hao. I don’t even know if she’s still alive…. Everything is up to me now. If I can’t get through, then I’ll regret it for the rest of my life!” Li Fugui’s eyes were completely bloodshot. Roaring, he pulled out more life-saving treasures and, ignoring the rapid withering of his body, continued on, pushing forward another 250 meters.

By that point, his life force was reaching the limit. His vision was growing blurry and dark. If he went any further, he would die.

Actually, the only reason he was able to make it this far was because of all the magical items, and the fact that earlier, he had consumed vast quantities of medicinal pills designed to invigorate his life force.

“750 meters!!” Tears welled up in his eyes as he looked at the squat mountain up ahead. Although he seemed unaffected on the outside, the truth was, when he learned about Meng Hao’s situation, he had dropped everything to rush to this place where life was prohibited. Clearly, in his heart, Meng Hao really was his big bro!

Meng Hao was the same big bro from back in the Reliance Sect, when they had first started practicing cultivation together.

“Meng Hao, I’ve done my best!!” Tears began to roll down his cheeks as he lifted up his right hand. In his palm rested a black pill bottle, which was surrounded by a rotating black halo. As soon as the pill bottle appeared, the death aura in the area rapidly increased.

At the same time, the wills that lurked in the depths of the Rebirth Cave emerged. They swirled about inside the cave, staring at the pill bottle in Fatty’s hand.

Fatty gritted his teeth and then hurled the pill bottle toward the Rebirth Cave. It transformed into a black beam that shot directly into the mouth of the cave.

Fatty coughed up a mouthful of purplish-black blood. His body continuing to wither, he turned and transformed into a beam of light that shot off into the distance. Tears continued to stream down his face as he flew away.

“Meng Hao, you have to be reborn…. You must come out of there!”

Back in the Rebirth Cave, the pill bottle landed on the ground. The wills approached and were about to begin fighting over it when the cold snort of a woman could be heard. Although no outsider would be able to detect it, the wills could hear it clearly, and they instantly began to tremble.

At the same time, an overbearing will emerged from the depths of the cave to sweep up the pill bottle. It then transformed into the very same woman who had sent Xu Qing out of the cave.

She looked around, and the other streams of will scattered, returning to their various places of origin within the Rebirth Cave. The woman turned back around and walked up to Meng Hao’s corpse. She looked him over and then looked at the pill bottle.

She said nothing for a long moment.

Xu Qing had not returned, which was something the woman assumed would happen when she sent her away. Except, she had assumed that love-smitten Xu Qing, after regaining some clarity and having more options to pick from, would hesitate about the difficult decision.

She had assumed that Xu Qing would choose to protect her own life.

But now that the pill bottle had appeared, this woman, the embodiment of the goodness of the Resurrection Lily, suddenly felt her heart trembling.

“She didn’t come,” the woman said softly, “but she sent someone in her stead to deliver the pill. And that person had strange, incredible treasures to prevent his soul from dissipating….” Although she didn’t know the details, she could guess what had happened. Poor Xu Qing had paid an indescribable price to get her hands on the medicinal pill.

The woman sighed.

“My life has been one of sorrow….

“There is no rebirth here. Perhaps there is no rebirth at all. But I did give her my promise, after all….

“I have already existed for far, far too long, and no longer desire to live.

“Since that is the case, why not help her achieve her aim?” The woman looked at the pill bottle in her hand. After a long moment, she suddenly clenched her hand into a fist. The pill bottle shattered with a bang, and a medicinal pill flew out, which the woman immediately consumed.

Instantly, her previously illusory body suddenly became material. Shockingly, she now possessed flesh and blood.

“It feels good to have a flesh and blood body again, even if it’s temporary….” she said softly. This time, her voice was real.

“I will help her achieve her aim. Then she will see whether faithful people truly exist. She will see what decision this final successor of the League of Demon Sealers will make when it comes time to sever emotion.

“The reason I am saving you is not for your sake, but for her,” she said softly. “When the time comes, we will see whether or not she will become like me.

“I take my promises very seriously. It is with the same faithfulness that I treated HIM, all those years ago, that I will treat this girl who wishes to follow in my footsteps.

“I did not come to the Rebirth Cave to look for death, but rather, rebirth. I wanted to have a chance at a new self. I wanted to sever the past, and finally be free when I emerged.

“But this place… has no rebirth!

“What does exist here, though, is my long life… which I can use to extend the broken bridge of your life force!” The woman made a grasping gesture toward the depths of the Rebirth Cave, toward a three hundred meter wide black boulder, half of which was buried in the dirt.

The black rock trembled and shook until a piece of it tore off of the top, which then flew toward the woman.

She grabbed it and crushed it, transforming it into a black powder that she sprinkled over Meng Hao’s body.

At the same time, she performed an incantation gesture. Her eyes filled with a look of reminiscence as she recalled beautiful memories. After a long moment of silence, she pushed two fingers down onto the forehead of Meng Hao’s stiff, withered corpse.

As soon as her fingers touched his forehead, his previously unmoving body suddenly spasmed. In the same moment, the woman began to slowly wither, starting with her feet.

Her life force, her vitality, her everything, poured through her two fingers into Meng Hao.

She looked up into the blackness around them, and images appeared in her mind. She saw herself, and the man who she could never forget.

“You live, I live. You die, I die…. I spoke words like that too,” she murmured. Her body continued to wither, whereas Meng Hao’s was recovering. He was no longer ancient, and signs of life could be seen within him.

“Back then, I looked at you and you looked at me….

“From that day on, I accompanied you. I followed you through so many deadly situations….

“Every time you were hurt, I felt pain. Every time you smiled, I was happy. I know… that you tried to part with me on more than one occasion, but your reluctance held you back.” Her legs were now withered, almost like roots connected to the ground. Her life force poured into Meng Hao, causing his hair to grow long, his face to flush with life. He was not old any more, but rather, middle-aged.

The life force gathered up in Meng Hao, filling up what had once been empty.

“I also know that you had your wife, your Sect, your responsibilities, and your mission. You had everything that was yours.

“But I… really only had you.

“Even my name was given to me by you. I liked it when you called me Da Nu…. 1

“If you grow old, I’ll grow old with you. I also said the same thing.” The woman’s voice was soft as she spoke, filled with beauty and mystery and pain. By now, her body was almost completely withered. Because of the life force she was giving to Meng Hao, he was now a young man again. Except for the fact that his eyes were not open, he looked exactly as he had so many years ago.

“There is only one thing that I said which she didn’t.

“If you reach Immortal Ascension, then I… will become Immortal with you!

“I never broke your heart. I would never, ever hurt you. But on that particular dawn, on the day of vicissitudes, when I saw you severing your emotions, I wept….

“I took all the goodness that was in me, and left it in a coffin in the Milky Way Sea. I don’t blame you….

“If something is to blame, it is that I am not a real woman, but only… a Resurrection Lily who fell in love with you.”

The image of herself in her eyes suddenly was that of a beautiful Resurrection Lily, planted deep within the body of a man. After being inside of him for countless years, she… fell in love with her own host.

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# Chapter 692: A Promise to Keep

Far away in the Great Tang of the Eastern Lands, in a random village, a somewhat sloppily-dressed painter was looking askance at a rich man who fawned over him with endless words.

“Immortal, sir, I beg of you to paint me. I’m willing to pay any price.”

“My paintings are very expensive,” was the response.

The rich man nodded enthusiastically, then waved to his retainers to carry over several large chests.

The old painter glanced at them out of the corner of his eye, then cleared his throat. “Well, it seems that the two of us are connected by destiny. Because of that, I’ll paint something for you.”

He was just about to begin painting when a frown appeared on his face.

“Something just came up,” he said. “I need to take a mental journey. Please wait for a moment.” With that, he sat down cross-legged and closed his eyes.

The rich man didn’t dare to disturb him, and simply stood there off to the side, waiting.

Back in the Southern Domain, in the Rebirth Cave, Da Nu looked off into the nothingness, lost in her memories.

She was a lily that had bloomed with seven colors. On the day of vicissitudes, she had reached Immortal Ascension. However, she mistakenly fell in love with her host. When she reached Immortal Ascension, she severed her goodness and buried it at the bottom of the Milky Way Sea.

On that day, her tears had merged into the Milky Way Sea, and she became… the Dawn Immortal.

As for her goodness, it remained at the bottom of the Milky Way Sea, the same Da Nu as before.

Many years later, she emerged from the coffin and entered into the body of the fish. When she splashed out from the water, she became a roc that flew toward the Rebirth Cave, emanating an intense aura of death. 1

That aura of death came from her dead heart.

In the Rebirth Cave, she had hoped to experience a baptism, a rebirth, to become new. But no matter how she searched, there was no rebirth to be found in the Rebirth Cave. It was then that she understood. The Rebirth Cave was nothing more than a fantasy.

She could not achieve rebirth, so she remained there, submerged in her memories. No one in the world could understand her pain. But then she saw Xu Qing, and when she did, she realized that Xu Qing was just like herself all those years ago.

She sighed. The memories flashing in her mind's eye seemed to grow more beautiful. In contrast, her body was already more than half withered up, like a dying flower.

The hand that touched Meng Hao's forehead was visibly draining as her boundless life force poured into his body. He was now completely recovered, and didn't look old at all.

Inside of him, glowing motes of light appeared. They packed together densely, interlocking to form into the shape of an arched bridge.

However… the bridge was incomplete. In the very middle, there was a broken section, making it impossible for the bridge to be whole.

Those motes of light were the life force that Da Nu was sending into Meng Hao, and that bridge was none other than the Bridge of Life!

“I don’t blame you….” murmured Da Nu softly. Her eyes were blank, her mind submerged into memories that no one could see.

Her entire arm was now dried up. The withering spread to her neck. It looked almost like tendrils, climbing up to her forehead, and eventually covering her entire head. When the tendrils reached her eyes, she was thinking about the first time she had met her host.

In that moment, he had looked at her, and she him. It was a moment that seemed as if it would last an eternity.

“I have never blamed you….” When the withering took Da Nu’s eyes, two teardrops fell. They rolled down her withered face and then landed on the ground with a soft patter.

Her eyes grew listless, and she closed them. Then she lifted up the hand that was pushing down onto Meng Hao’s forehead. After a moment, she softly struck his head.

The blow seemed light, but the force hit him like lightning. He trembled violently, and roaring filled his mind.

The countless nodes of light inside of him that formed the Bridge of Life suddenly vibrated and then expanded. In that moment, the two sides of the bridge linked together, and it was whole.

When the Bridge of Life was complete, Meng Hao’s body spasmed in unprecedented fashion. He suddenly breathed again. His previously still heart began to emit a thumping sound.

When his heart started beating, the powder Da Nu had created from the Ninth Mountain and Sea lodestone swept toward his chest and fused into his heart.

Ba-dump. Ba-dump!

His heart continued to beat, and the sound of it echoed throughout the Rebirth Cave. Suddenly, an incredible gravitation force exploded out inside of his heart.

At the same time, his soul, which had been wrapped up by the Eyeless Larva silk, was caught up by the gravitational force. It merged into his heart, and then was superimposed over his body.

In this moment, the Bridge of Life was thoroughly linked and whole. Blinding light shone out to fill the Rebirth Cave, dispelling all of the darkness. The resplendent light was dazzling to the extreme.

Meng Hao’s blood began to flow. His life force was vigorous! His soul was back in place! He had returned to life!

His eyes snapped open.

The first thing he saw was Da Nu. He saw her withered body, and felt his own surging life force. He could immediately sense the connection between it and the woman.

His mind trembled. If by this point he couldn’t understand what had happened, then his over two hundred years of life would have been lived in vain. It was obvious that this woman had given him her own life force.

“Senior….”

Da Nu looked at him, and her eyes suddenly flickered open. “I gave you life, not for you, but for her.”

An image suddenly appeared in his mind.

He saw himself fall down outside the Rebirth Cave, and he saw Xu Qing arrive. She picked him up and struggled to carry him forward. She had once been beautiful, but now, her hair was white and she was ancient. Purplish-black blood oozed out of the corners of her mouth.

And yet, no regret could be seen in her eyes. She looked at Meng Hao with gentleness and determination.

He watched as Xu Qing used her own life force to sustain him. Every time she delivered her life force to him, it would keep him alive for a bit longer, and make her weaker.

However, her smile never faded.

When he saw these things, Meng Hao trembled. He watched Xu Qing carry him into the Rebirth Cave and sit down cross-legged. He watched her stroke his face.

Xu Qing was ancient, her hair white, and yet she continued to give him her life force, one bit at a time, no matter the consequences to herself.

“You live, I live. You die, I die!”

Tears streamed down Meng Hao’s face. Next, he saw Da Nu appear. She sent Xu Qing away…. And then Fatty came to deliver the medicinal pill.

All of these things struck into his heart and mind like lightning. He trembled violently, and an intense dread suddenly filled him.

“Why… why didn’t Xu Qing bring it herself?” Meng Hao didn’t dare to think about it. He jerked his head up to look at Da Nu.

At the same time, he rose to his feet. Inside, he knew… something bad had happened to Xu Qing!

He had to go find her! He had to find Xu Qing!

However, in the moment that he stood, his face suddenly fell, and he stood there, terror-stricken and motionless. His hands clenched tightly into fists as he realized that he was constrained to the absolute limit.

He shivered ceaselessly as he remembered that he had no cultivation base. He was completely empty….

“There is no such thing as rebirth….” murmured Da Nu to herself. Her body was almost completely withered. She looked at Meng Hao and was just about to deliver the last of her life force to him, and then slip into death, when…

Suddenly, everything began to shake and rumble!

A black mist sprang out from within the depths of the Rebirth Cave. It quickly filled every corner of the cave, as well as the area hundreds of thousands of meters surrounding the cave, turning it all into a world of black mist.

The black mist rose up into the sky, shockingly transforming into an enormous head. The head had black hair, and its facial features were blurry, but it was clearly immeasurably ancient.

“Who said there is no such thing as rebirth!?” growled the voice.

Da Nu looked up, and her eyes filled with a strange light. She had lived inside the Rebirth Cave for many years, and had visited all the areas within, but she had never sensed anything like this black mist.

Even more shocked was Choumen Tai. He could hear the voice from his position deep in the cave, and it filled his mind with roaring. He shot to his feet, his face covered with astonishment. He had also been concealed in the cave for many years, and was very familiar with every inch of the place. However, he was completely unaware that anything like this existed inside!

“Who is this?” he thought with a gasp. He suddenly realized that the Rebirth Cave… was not at all how he had believed it to be.

There were mysteries here… that even he couldn’t detect.

“The Dao of rebirth exists outside of the laws of Heaven and Earth. You can’t feel it, that’s all….

“On this day, you chose death to help this person. That… is true rebirth!

“Rebirth is a death and a life, a cycle. Henceforth, he will represent you on the path of cultivation. You die for him in the cycle of reincarnation. That… is true rebirth!

“If you understand, then you can free yourself from your worldly concerns. If you don’t understand, then… your next life will be one of darkness.”

Da Nu’s body quivered in shock and her breathing grew ragged. She listened to the voice’s words and her eyes gradually flashed with signs of comprehension.

“Rebirth…. Senior, please instruct me.” She slowly closed her eyes, and in that moment, completely withered up, transforming into a Resurrection Lily, right there in the Rebirth Cave.

“Goodness personified, and in the end you still perform good deeds, imbuing your very breath into his body. You are the embodiment of truth and law…. Because of this, I will help you this one time!” Even as the voice echoed about, the black mist contracted. It began to congeal inside of the Rebirth Cave, next to the Resurrection Lily, where it turned into a brush. The brush moved about, seemingly using the air as its canvas to paint an extremely realistic Resurrection Lily.

The brush swished, and the illusory Resurrection Lily settled onto Da Nu’s withered body.

“Sleep for 10,000 years. After that, if you can awaken, then you will be reborn.” As the voice echoed out, the black mist seemed to turn its attention onto Choumen Tai, who was deep in the recesses of the Rebirth Cave.

Choumen Tai’s mind trembled.

“You are a soul who has experienced many years of life, and many reincarnations. You have relied on your persistence to reach this day…. Continue on. I can sense something very familiar about you.”

Choumen Tai began to pant. “Are you….”

Before he could finish speaking, the mist seethed, and Choumen Tai was suddenly swept up. He had no control over his body as he was ejected out of Planet South Heaven and sent out into the starry sky.

“Regardless of whether or not the person you are waiting for is here,” said the voice, “if all you know how to do is use others, then if the time ever comes in which you can bring back to life that person who exists in your heart, well… you will feel only regret. Leave. When the time comes that you understand, you can return here.”

Back in the Rebirth Cave, everything was quiet. The mist spun around and around, and a figure seemed to become visible, looking at Meng Hao.

Trembling, Meng Hao rose to his feet and walked to the mouth of the Rebirth Cave. Although he was merely alive as a mortal now, he still… had a promise to keep.

You live, I live. You die, I die!

In the moment in which Meng Hao was about to step foot out of the Rebirth Cave, the blurry figure behind him coolly said, “Why do you care about the Perfect stratum so much anyway?”

1. A fish turning into a bird-like creature is a common part of Chinese mythology. I’ve seen a few comments that I should translate “roc” as “peng.” Sorry to say, that would only be partly correct. Er Gen consistently uses the full term “ ,” which combines the fish character “kun” and the bird character “peng.” If I were going transliterate it, the most accurate term would be “kunpeng,” not simply “peng.” Also, in ISSTH, unlike the “kunpung” mythology, it is never described as a “kun” which transforms into a “peng.” It’s described as a fish “yu” that transforms into a “kunpeng.”

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# Chapter 693: Eternal Stratum!

A tremor ran through Meng Hao. He turned around and looked at the misty figure behind him. His eyes were bloodshot, and he was on the verge of insanity, albeit a silent insanity.

“Do you remember me?” The misty figure gradually grew clear to reveal an old man. He looked ordinary, and yet, within the ordinariness was an indescribably extraordinary disposition.

“Senior Shui Dongliu?” said Meng Hao, trembling. Of course, he instantly recognized that this man was Shui Dongliu. 1

Shui Dongliu. Whoever existed in his memory could not be destroyed by the Karmic Severing of the Ji Clan.

“The Perfect stratum is great and all, but it’s only a foundation. The ignorant masses think that the Perfect Foundation is the most supreme. It comes from the three classic scriptures, and can qualify you to become a Doyen!

“But! As far as I’m concerned, the Perfect stratum is like a leafy branch. It spreads throughout your body and eventually blooms with flowers that turn into Dao Fruit. That fruit is the key to being a true Paragon!

“You may have lost your foundation, but the Dao Fruit is still there. Why are you acting like what you lost was the important part?!”

Meng Hao was startled, and his mind filled with an intense roaring. “Dao Fruit?!”

“Of course, Dao Fruit,” replied Shui Dongliu coolly. “The whole purpose of the Perfect stratum is to solidify the Dao Fruit of Perfection!

“That Dao Fruit of Perfection is none other than the Paragon stratum. And yet, that stratum also counts for little!” He swished his sleeve.

“Above the Paragon stratum is the Eternal!

“That is the true pinnacle of these strata. Shattered, Fractured, Flawless, Perfect, Dao Fruit, Eternal. These are the six great strata of any stage of cultivation. You only reached Perfect. 2

“To achieve the Dao Fruit, you need to sever your Perfection!

“As for the Eternal… you already meet the requirements; someone even severed your Perfection for you already. Why is your heart… still imprisoned? Why… don’t you just go ahead with your Second Severing?” Shui Dongliu’s voice echoed like thunder in Meng Hao’s ears, giving rise to enormous waves within his mind.

Meng Hao’s brain reeled, his body shook, and an unprecedentedly bright light shone in his eyes. Shui Dongliu’s words thoroughly crushed all traces of his muddlement. It was as if in the darkest of nights, a ray of bright light suddenly pierced through the blackness of his world.

“Dao Fruit…. Dao Fruit….” thought Meng Hao, panting. “Sever Perfection, achieve Dao Fruit!

“The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch took away my Perfect Foundation. However, that Perfection… completely preoccupied my heart! Therefore, this time, I will Sever… my heart!

“Sever away the Perfection in my heart!

“When I had my cultivation base, I could sever it. Without a cultivation base… who is to say that… I can’t still Sever it!?

“Spirit Severing. Spirit Severing. What is Severed is the spirit. What is Severed is the heart. This… is my second blade of Spirit Severing!

“Sever away the Perfect stratum. Sever the past. Carve out my Perfect Dao Fruit!” A boom could be heard in Meng Hao’s mind as he gained enlightenment. Although he clearly possessed no cultivation base, a billowing aura shot towards the sky.

Within that aura appeared Heavenly transformations, roiling clouds, and seething winds. Shockingly, precursors of the descent of a great Dao’s reverberated out, something he had previously experienced in the Milky Way Sea.

In that instant, the sky above all regions of the Southern Domain exploded into motion. Winds surged, lightning cracked, thunder boomed. Every expert in the Southern Domain was shocked, and countless people looked up into the sky in amazement.

At the same time, in the starry sky outside of Planet South Heaven, from inside the Ninth Mountain, a shocking will suddenly appeared. It swept out over the Ninth Mountain and Sea, after which it zeroed in on the lands of South Heaven.

This was the will of the great Dao of the Ninth Mountain and Sea! It was the natural law of Heaven and Earth, the basis upon which the Ninth Mountain and Sea operated.

This will itself was also a great Dao! Its appearance filled the sky of South Heaven with a boundless light. Even the Ji Clan’s Immortality Bestowal Dais outside of Planet South Heaven was shaken, and ceased functioning.

In the lands of South Heaven, the Ji Clan elders, as well as countless powerful experts from other sects and clans, fell to their knees in shock and began to kowtow.

In the sky above South Heaven, the will of the Ninth Mountain and Sea suddenly solidified into a blade that shot down toward Meng Hao in the Rebirth Cave.

This descending will far exceeded the first blade of his First Severing. All of the lands of South Heaven were shaken.

The Heavens opened up, revealing the heavenly bodies. Countless rivers of stars glittered and shined, seemingly prepared to bear witness to what was happening.

In the Rebirth Cave, a blade appeared in front of Meng Hao. This was his Spirit Severing blade, floating there in front of his head, glowing with shocking light.

Hair in disarray, he lifted his head up and roared: “SEVER!”

As his voice echoed out, the great Dao blade descended, slicing into the Rebirth Cave, fusing into the blade above Meng Hao’s head, then slashing into the top of his head.

As soon as the blade touched Meng Hao’s head, it sliced through him all the way to the ground. His body looked as if it had been cut in two.

Shattering sounds could be heard, not from his body, but from the fetters inside him, the shackles created by his reluctance to accept the loss of the Perfect stratum!

All such restraints were completely Severed!

Meng Hao instantly began to shake violently. Then, he experienced a sensation of relaxation, an incredible calm that filled his entire body. It felt as if moments before, the weight of an entire mountain was crushing down on him. Then, that mountain disappeared.

At the same time, shockingly, an image of a fruit appeared on his forehead, emanating a glow like that of a magical item.

This was… a Dao Fruit!

It was made up of countless magical symbols, and looked perfect in every aspect.

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch could steal away Meng Hao’s Dao Foundation, but he could not take away his Dao Fruit. The Dao Fruit belonged solely to Meng Hao, and could not be taken away by anyone.

In the moment that the Dao Fruit appeared, a cultivation base suddenly exploded out in Meng Hao. First it was Qi Condensation, then Foundation Establishment, then Core Formation, and after that, Nascent Soul.

After the peak of Nascent Soul, Meng Hao’s desire for freedom and independence caused his First Severing to reappear.

His cultivation base was completely restored!

Tribulation can also be good fortune!

Meng Hao’s energy was like a multicolored beam of light. His optimism for what would happen after severing the Perfect stratum caused his body to tremble again. An even more powerful cultivation base aura suddenly spread out from his body.

This was a Second Severing cultivation base!

“Dao Fruit Paragon!” A strange light gleamed in Meng Hao’s eyes, and he began to breathe heavily. His fleshly body returned to the Heaven-defying state it had reached because of the art of Fleshly Sanctification. Furthermore, because of the indescribable boundless life force imparted to him by Da Nu, it was even more powerful than before.

“Dao Fruit is good,” said Shui Dongliu levelly, “but since you qualify for the Eternal, why don’t you sit down and try to gain enlightenment!” He flicked his sleeve, causing Meng Hao instantly drop cross-legged to the ground. “Ask yourself, what is the Eternal?!”

“What is the Eternal?” The question echoed out in Meng Hao’s mind.

The Eternal….

The Eyeless Larva was eternal. If the larva was not destroyed, the silk could never be broken. If the silk was never broken, the larva could not be destroyed!

That was an eternal cycle!

The Soul Divergence Incantation was eternal. An undying soul could be created. Once that happened, the cycle of reincarnation of Heaven and Earth could not destroy it. Even if you died, years later, your flesh and blood would be born again.

“The Eternal is something that exists eternally within me. No living thing in Heaven and Earth can do anything to take it away from me. Even the will of Heaven and Earth itself would be incapable of wresting away the Eternal which belongs to me!

“The Eternal is a type of determination, an overbearing attitude!

“What is mine, belongs to me alone!” Meng Hao suddenly looked up at Shui Dongliu.

“Did you figure it out?” said Shui Dongliu, looking at him.

“Yes!” In the instant in which he replied, a rumbling sound filled his body. The Dao Fruit shattered into pieces, causing countless magical symbols to scatter about. They filled his entire body, then fused into his cultivation base, his flesh, and his soul.

At the same time, the Soul Divergence Incantation began to rotate in Meng Hao’s mind. After only a single rotation, Meng Hao suddenly understood the true meaning of the incantation.

It was a supreme Daoist Magic that could lead people to an understanding of the Eternal stratum!

To cultivate the Soul Divergence Incantation, one needed to experience death, to have incredible willpower and unusual good fortune, and most importantly, to experience hanging onto life by a thread, a razor’s edge between life and death where a single misstep would lead to either truly perishing or failing to cultivate this magic.

As for Meng Hao, the reason he could gain enlightenment was because of the Eyeless Larva. Its thread of life and death had thoroughly entwined his soul so that it could not depart. His soul had been alive while his fleshly body was dead.

In that space between life and death, Meng Hao's soul… earned the qualifications for the Eternal!

All those years ago, the coffin prepared for Ke Jiusi by Ke Yunhai served just such a function. That was how Ke Jiusi ended up succeeding in cultivating the Soul Divergence Incantation.

Meng Hao trembled as the magical symbols penetrated every part of his body. Because of the fusing of these symbols into him, although his cultivation base was only at the Second Severing level, his level… was that of the Eternal!

He was no longer Perfect, but rather, far above Perfect, in the Eternal stratum!

The Eternal stratum! What's mine is mine, and no one can steal it from me!

Meng Hao rose to his feet. His energy surged with power. Because of the Eternal stratum, his Second Severing cultivation base could far exceed the gap between it and the Third Severing. In fact, in combination with his Fleshly Body, he was now… the number one person beneath Dao Seeking!

Meng Hao turned to Shui Dongliu, clasped hands, and bowed deeply.

"Senior, many thanks for your kindness in pointing out the correct path!"

Shui Dongliu looked at him for a moment and then said, "There's no need to thank me…. I only hope that from now on, you don't hold any grudges against the Wang Clan. If you wish, you can kill the person who stole your Dao Foundation, but not others. Don't be a monster who kills those who haven't provoked you.

"Now, go. You have something bothering you, I won't keep you any longer."

Meng Hao stared back at him, then nodded silently. He clasped hands and bowed again, then turned and shot out of the cave like an unsheathed sword, radiating intense killing intent.

Shui Dongliu watched Meng Hao leave, then, after a long moment, turned and walked back into the depths of the Rebirth Cave. To people like Choumen Tai and Da Nu, the Rebirth Cave wasn’t very big. But to Shui Dongliu, it was limitless.

He walked and walked until finally he reached a room carved from stone.

The stone room was empty except for a half-painted canvas.

The painting depicted a countryside village. A white-haired old man stood there with his hands clasped behind his back, looking off into the distance. Next to him was a boy who appeared to be pleading for something. In return, the man shook his head.

Shui Dongliu looked at the painting, and a look of reminiscence appeared in his eyes. Finally, he closed his eyes.

In that instant, the old painter sitting cross-legged in the Eastern Lands suddenly opened his eyes. He smiled at the rich man standing in front of them, and then cleared his throat.

“My mental journey went well. Now, let me start that painting for you.”

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# Chapter 694: He Came!

Meng Hao emerged from the Rebirth Cave.

In that instant, his cultivation base exploded out. He really was like a bared sword emanating monstrous sword qi. His killing intent radiated out, causing the air in the area to freeze.

Frost spread out across the ground, covering stones in the nearby stone forest with sheets of ice. As he walked forward, his divine sense spread out until it encountered a familiar figure, standing outside of the Rebirth Cave Region, looking on anxiously.

“Fatty….” thought Meng Hao. He changed directions and, a moment later, reappeared directly next to Fatty.

“Who’s there!?!?” cried Fatty, clearly scared half to death and on the verge of fleeing. He backed up nervously, and popping sounds could be heard as several dozen magical items suddenly appeared.

When he saw Meng Hao, he stared in shock. Then he started hollering at the top of his lungs. “Meng Hao! Meng Hao!!”

A smile appeared on Meng Hao’s face. It had been many years since he last parted ways with Fatty, but as of now, he could clearly sense the feelings of friendship that existed in Fatty’s heart. Neither of them said anything more. They strode forward and shared a manly embrace.

Fatty’s heart was completely filled with joy. He looked at Meng Hao and then thought back to everything that had happened in the Reliance Sect. All of a sudden, he remembered Xu Qing, and his face fell. “You have to go save Elder Sister Xu!!”

When Meng Hao heard this, his eyes flickered. “What happened?”

Fatty hesitated for a moment and then shook his head. “N-nothing….”

It almost seemed like he wasn’t willing to explain.

Meng Hao was silent for a moment. He didn’t ask any further questions, but instead, flew up into the air. Actually, he didn’t need to ask anything else. All he had to do was go to the Black Sieve Sect, and he would naturally find the answers he sought.

Fatty understood Meng Hao quite well, so seeing him flying away like that, it wasn’t hard to guess what he was thinking. Fatty gritted his teeth and then yelled out, “Meng Hao, go save Elder Sister Xu. Because she got that medicinal pill for you, she’s now suppressed at the bottom of the Black Sieve Sect. The entire sect is working to dissolve her alive!!”

Meng Hao jerked to a halt in mid-air, his eyes instantly turning blood-red. “What did you say?”

A preternatural fury and desire to kill roared through him. His body trembled and the air around him rumbled as if it were about to shatter.

Fatty clenched his jaw. Having spoken up, he decided that he might as well explain everything. “Hurry up and go save her! Soon… it’s going to be too late!

“News leaked out that she is the first person in countless years to emerge from the Rebirth Cave! She risked everything to steal that medicinal pill, which she entrusted to me. I brought it here for her.

“In the end, the Black Sieve Sect captured her. They say that because she came out alive from the Rebirth Cave, her body is infected with its aura. The Black Sieve Sect Patriarchs want to refine her into treasured medicinal pills, which they hope to consume and thereby acquire the aura of rebirth.”

The roaring in Meng Hao’s mind was like that of millions of thunderbolts, all striking and exploding at the same time. Heaven and Earth shook, and it felt as if his mind were about to explode into pieces.

Meng Hao’s killing intent exploded out with incomparable intensity. He thought back to what he had seen, to Xu Qing delivering her life force to him. He thought about everything that had happened in their homeland, the State of Zhao. He thought about the grave she had dug, and the gravestone.

He thought about the determination in her eyes when she looked at him and murmured, “You live, I live. You die, I die!”

No other woman had ever treated him in such a way. No other woman cared about his life so much. Never….

Meng Hao lifted his head up and let out mournful roar that caused the colors to fade away from Heaven and Earth. The clouds and wind churned, and the power of his cultivation base exploded out. A tempest kicked up, which swept out in all directions. The air in the area seemed about to collapse.

“BLACK SIEVE SECT!!

“If you dare to harm a hair on her head, I, Meng Hao, will tear your bodies to pieces and crush your bones into powder! I will not rest until you are exterminated!!” He waved his right hand and slapped his bag of holding, causing the war chariot to appear. He stepped inside. Immortal Shows the Way had also been restored to normal; he rotated it and sent some Immortal qi out. The war chariot instantly vanished.

Fatty watched him leave, and then murmured, “Meng Hao, after everything Xu Qing did for you, if you let her down… it will be an intolerable injustice!”

Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a horrific balefulness. His rage and insanity fused into his killing intent, which exploded with monstrous intensity. “Xu Qing, wait for me. I’m coming to save you.

“Xu Qing, just hold on. I’m coming, I’m coming!!”

His cultivation base was at the Second Severing stage, and he was in the Eternal strata. He was the number one figure under Dao Seeking!

He was qualified to do whatever he wished. And he was even more qualified to fight back against an entire sect!

Even if it was the Black Sieve Sect!

Even if it was the countless discarnate souls that existed in the depths of the land!

Even if it was a super sect of the Southern Domain, the Black Sieve Sect!

Meng Hao didn’t consider those things. They weren’t worth even thinking about. In a situation like this, if a man worried about whether or not he would win or lose, worried about his own life, then he… was not even human!

The war chariot sped along, screaming through the air. The wind itself seemed to be filled with memories. Meng Hao saw the events at Mount Daqing. He saw the Reliance Sect. He saw the things that happened in the Blessed Land. He saw the Black Sieve Sect and the Rebirth Cave.

He saw all of the times he and Xu Qing had been together. The images floated there in the wind in front of him. He saw Xu Qing’s gentleness, her simplicity, her determination.

All of those things were now rooted deeply in Meng Hao’s heart.

Most moving of all was how she had sacrificed her own life force for him. It caused his heart to fill with stabs of pain. As of this moment, the killing intent he felt was greater than at any point in his entire life.

“Xu Qing, if you can sacrifice your life for me, then I can do the same for you!

“From this day forward, you are my beloved. Heaven and Earth can bear witness to my words. You live, I live. You die, I die!”

**

The Black Sieve Sect was a grand place. The Hundred Thousand Mountains surrounding it served as a foil to the Ninety-Nine Mountains within their center. Above the Ninety-Nine Mountains floated the First Mountain, upturned to create something that was almost a continent. On its underside, willows draped down, some a few dozen meters long, others hundreds. Clouds curled up around this massive land, giving it a truly celestial feeling.

Richly ornamented buildings, pagodas, and temples covered it. Beneath it, the Ninety-Nine Mountains were all connected with colorful arching bridges. It was extraordinarily beautiful.

Gurgling water dripped off of the ragged rocks on the bottom of the floating mountain, making the sect a place of indescribable beauty. The faint sound of bells filled the air, creating an incredibly serene air.

Currently, the entire Black Sieve Sect was enveloped in a thick, black fog. Outside of the black fog were Black Sieve Sect spell formations, all in full rotation. They let out pulsing ripples, filled with crushing energy that formed the shape of a lotus.

The lotus had ninety-nine petals, each one of which was made up of ninety-nine lotuses. The entire thing formed into a gigantic, shocking lotus.

Inside the formation were the disciples of the Black Sieve Sect, sitting cross-legged in meditation. From up above in the sky, it was possible to tell that of the hundreds of thousands of disciples of the Ninety-Nine Mountains, all disciples were participating in the meditation, regardless of the level of their cultivation bases.

As for the Ninety-Nine Mountains themselves, they formed a central spell formation within the larger spell formation. They too rotated, combining their power with that of the hundreds of thousands of cultivators, all of the Black Sieve Sect’s resources, to pour into the First Mountain… into the sect’s legacy precious treasure.

It was a gigantic incense burner that existed on top of the First Mountain, which was so high that it seemed connected to the Heavens. The enormous incense burner was the subject of generation after generation of worship and sacrifice. Three huge sticks of incense eternally burned inside of it, and the smoke that rose up into the sky was blown by the wind into wisps that resembled willow branches. It was as if within these strands, one could see visions of fleeting, ever-changing lives that belonged to spirits from the underworld.

Sitting cross-legged around the incense burner were three old men. Each one had ancient features, and rarely stepped even half a foot outside of the Black Sieve Sect. As for their cultivation bases, all were in the Spirit Severing stage.

These were the Dao Reserve of the Black Sieve Sect, its very foundation.

The strongest of the three was the ruddy-faced old man in the center position, Murong Duo. His cultivation base was at the Third Severing level.

Of the other two, one was in the Second Severing level, the other the First.

These were the Patriarchs of the Black Sieve Sect!

They sat cross-legged, using the power of the spell formation, and thus, the power of all the cultivators of the sect, to operate the sect’s precious treasure, and refine the person inside of it into medicinal pills!

This was a magical technique known as Heaven and Hearth Reincarnation Refinement, in which the subject was dissolved over a period of forty-nine days. No one could hold out for any longer than that. Eventually, the subject would melt into blood, which would then congeal into the medicinal pill.

An indistinct figure could be seen within the incense burner. It was only possible to tell that it was a woman; her face was not clearly visible, and her body was covered with countless magical symbols. The symbols were deeply imprinted into her flesh and blood, and glittered with bright light as they slowly worked at dissolving her.

The woman was trembling, gritting her teeth as she continued to endure. It seemed that her body might be fully dissolved at any moment.

The aura of the Rebirth Cave pulsated off of her. Every time it did, it would be absorbed by the incense burner, which would then burn hotly and send out a shocking red glow.

The three old men began to discuss the matter.

“So, it turns out that she has been able to endure for thirty-seven days!”

“This Xu Qing sure has unswerving determination. Sadly, her body is infected with the aura of the Rebirth Cave. She’s the first person in years to emerge alive from the Rebirth Cave….

“In that case, she is simply destined to be refined into Rebirth Pills. With such medicinal pills… the slumbering ancestor of the Black Sieve Sect will have a chance to be reborn!”

“It’s a real pity she has the soul of Matriarch Phoenix within her. Unfortunately, her Dao of Nirvana will be lost, never to be handed down. However, sacrificing her and losing a single legacy to improve the entire sect means that her death will be worth it!”

“This matter is not just something that must be done by the Black Yang Sect, but also your Sieve Yin Sect. After all, our ancestor is your emperor!”

The three old men looked at the incense burner, and their eyes burned with passion.

At the same time, the trembling, indistinct figure inside of the incense burner let out a quavering murmur.

“Meng Hao, are you okay…? If you ever are reborn, by the time you emerge, it will be too late…. Well, I was the one who failed to keep my promise, you’re not to blame….

“If it turns out that you weren’t reborn, well then… I’ll be going to accompany you soon.

“As we said. You live, I live. You die, I die….”

In that exact moment….

An incredible boom could be heard outside of the Black Sieve Sect spell formation. It was far more shocking than thunder; an ancient war chariot appeared, emanating intense killing intent and madness. The air shattered as it appeared!

Meng Hao stood in the war chariot, clothed in a green robe. He gripped the flag of three streamers in his right hand, which he waved out in front of him. It stretched out, creating a black screen that seemed capable of blotting out the entire sky. At the same time, Meng Hao’s eyes flashed with an unprecedented desire to slaughter.

He came!

He came to keep his promise!

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# Chapter 695: Attack the Black Sieve Sect!

Meng Hao's appearance on the scene shook the Heavens and rocked the Earth. Everything trembled, and enormous, endless ripples spread out.

A massive roaring echoed out as the war chariot appeared, shattering the air. Meng Hao stood in the middle of the war chariot as cracking sounds filled the air; countless fissures sprang into being.

The entire sky was like a mirror that someone had punched their fist into. Although it was not completely shattered, shocking cracks could be seen spreading out in all directions.

That was especially true because of the flag of three streamers that he wielded. This was his first time truly and intentionally unleashing the full, incredible power of the flag. It whipped about, its blackness covering everything, splitting the sky into two worlds, one of light, one of darkness.

Meng Hao's eyes were completely bloodshot as his gaze swept over the scene in the Black Sieve Sect; he saw the black mist, and he saw the domineering lotus flower!

He sent his divine sense out, but the lotus spell formation and the black mist therein formed a great spell formation that completely protected the mountains of the Black Sieve Sect. This was no ordinary spell formation; even Meng Hao's powerful divine sense could not penetrate inside.

His killing intent instantly surged.

“Black Sieve Sect!” he shouted. The sound rumbled about, more intense than lightning. His fleshly body was at the peak of Spirit Severing, and his cultivation base was at the peak of the Second Severing. This was the first time he had ever shouted in such a way after entering the Eternal stratum. He pushed his hand down onto the chariot, and instantly, the flag of three streamers swished. The blackness, which was like nighttime consuming light, swept toward the huge lotus that surrounded the Black Sieve Sect. Booms could be heard echoing out.

Heaven and Earth trembled, and the sound of explosions filled the air. The lotus instantly collapsed, but then reappeared. Apparently, the aura of the Hundred Thousand Mountains was sustaining what would be an endless succession of enormous spell formations.

Because of Meng Hao’s shout, as well as the collision between the flag of three steamers and the great spell formation, the ground quaked violently. The sounds merged together, creating a shocking barrage that rattled out in all directions, even into the black mist within the Black Sieve Sect.

The disciples of the Black Sieve Sect suddenly could all hear Meng Hao’s enraged voice.

“Hand over Xu Qing!” he said. This was his second sentence. The power of his words far exceeded that of his first sentence. An even more shocking rumbling shook everything; the lotus dimmed and the mist seethed. All of the Black Sieve Sect disciples felt their minds trembling violently.

The beautiful palace buildings began to shake, and some even collapsed under the power of Meng Hao’s voice. The eyes of the Black Sieve Sect disciples in the Ninety-Nine Mountains went wide with shock.

The three old men who sat cross-legged around the incense burner on the First Mountain opened their eyes. Bright glows could be seen.

“Spirit Severing!”

“Second Severing!”

“A powerful expert!”

When they exchanged glances, they could all see the serious look in each others’ eyes.

“We only activated the spell formation to be prepared for all contingencies and to prevent other sects from detecting what was happening. Who is this stranger?”

“It doesn’t matter who he is. Even if he’s a Spirit Severing expert, now that he’s come to the Black Sieve Sect, he’ll be forced to drop to his knees in front of us!”

The three men muttered to themselves for a moment before the Third Severing old man gave a cold snort. “He can’t even get inside! Continue with the dissolving!”

Surrounded by rumbling sounds, the hundreds of thousands of Black Sieve Sect disciples once again continued with their refinement, causing the incense burner glowed bright red. As for the figure inside, when she heard Meng Hao’s voice, she suddenly trembled.

“He… came….”

Outside of the Black Sieve Sect’s spell formation, Meng Hao’s eyes were completely shot with blood. He raised his hand and caused the flag of three streamers to swish through the air. Blackness roiled out to slam into the Black Sieve Sect’s spell formation.

The incredible booms continued to rattle out. The great lotus spell formation suddenly rotated, causing the power of Heaven and Earth to emanate out. The power was indestructible, seemingly eternal. No matter what Meng Hao did to cause the formation to collapse, it would instantly restore itself.

A short period of time passed in which it seemed nothing would work.

The disciples of the Black Sieve Sect were now starting to calm down and focus on their orders from the sect. The dissolving continued. As for the old men surrounding the incense burner, cold smiles twisted their lips as they proceeded with the refinement.

They were not worried. The protective spell formation was so powerful that nothing could compare to it, except perhaps a Dao Seeking cultivation base. Any Spirit Severing expert who tried to break through the formation wouldn't be able to do so unless they spent months trying.

As for the refinement process, they only needed a few more days to finish…. Then they would be able to go against this opponent with the full strength of the sect. Even if he was a Second Severing cultivator, he would be dead for sure.

"How rash and ridiculous," said the Third Severing old man, his voice cool.

Meng Hao stood in the war chariot glaring at the enormous lotus. He had already destroyed the damnable thing at least a hundred times with the flag of three streamers.

However, no matter how many times he shattered it into pieces, it would completely recover, seemingly completely undamaged.

"They mustered all the power of Heaven and Earth from all Hundred Thousand Mountains of the Black Sieve Sect to back this spell formation…. What I'm fighting against is not the formation, but the power of Heaven and Earth from these Hundred Thousand Mountains!

"If the power of Heaven and Earth doesn't break up, then the formation cannot be pierced!

"If only… I could use just a bit of Dao Seeking power to force the spell formation to reach its limit. Break it at least ten times in a row, to the point where the spiritual energy from the Hundred Thousand Mountains can't keep up. Then I can see its weak points!

“One point of weakness is all I need to completely shatter it.” Meng Hao lifted his right hand and made a grasping motion, causing the flag of three streamers to return to him. It swirled through the air around him, almost like a black cloak that covered his green robe.

He placed his hand onto the war chariot and rotated Immortal Shows the Way, sending pulses of Immortal qi into the chariot.

“Unfortunately, I don’t have the power of Dao Seeking!

“Even the flag of three streamers can’t smash through this succession of spell formations. Well then… I’ll just have to bash it head on!” A light of madness shone in Meng Hao’s eyes.

He would not attempt to pierce it; he would smash head on into the formation!

The war chariot began to thrum, and countless magical symbols appeared, along with numerous roaring wild beasts that began to pull it forward into a charge.

The incredible speed was difficult to describe. In the blink of an eye, the war chariot had left its original position and… was shooting like a meteor directly into the lotus, bashing into it.

The lotus instantly fell apart, but almost at exactly the same time, began to reform.

However, the war chariot continued onward, charging forward without stop. It was like a sharp sword, stabbing madly, allowing no time for the spiritual energy of the Hundred Thousand Mountains to rush forward.

“Ninth Anima!” roared Meng Hao. His body was powerful to the extreme, and his Cultivation base exploding with full power. Although this was not the power of Dao Seeking, he was emminently qualified to be called the number one figure under Dao Seeking.

BOOM!

The war chariot shot forward another three hundred meters. Meng Hao's body trembled, and vast pressure bore down on him. However, nothing could prevent him from advancing. Nothing could stand in the way of the war chariot; it was like caged animal that roared as it charged forward.

The further they got, the greater was the pressure that weighed down on them. The interior of the lotus collapsed, but as before, began to heal. The Hundred Thousand Mountains rotated, and the spiritual energy poured out boundlessly. Meng Hao raised his hand up and then pointed out.

"Demon Sealing, Eighth Hex!

"Seal the spiritual energy of these hundred thousand mountains!"

An incredible roar filled the air as the Hundred Thousand Mountains shuddered. Meng Hao shouted out as the war chariot charged forward madly, another three hundred meters. It was now only about six hundred meters from the position where the black mist began.

It was at this point that violent shaking overtook the Hundred Thousand Mountains. Some of the outermost mountains, perhaps a thousand in total, began to split and crack and then directly exploded.

They simply couldn't endure the way Meng Hao fought back against them. After having their spiritual energy sealed, a backlash occurred that instantly shattered them!

As thousands of huge mountains collapsed in the Black Sieve Sect's Hundred Thousand Mountains, the faces of the disciples of the Black Sieve Sect fell. As for the three old men who sat next to the incense burner, their pupils constricted.

One of them gave a cold snort, then lifted his hand up and pointed out.

"Send 10,000 disciples to form a spell formation. Use deadly force. If they're capable of killing him, kill him. If they can't kill him, delay him for three days."

In response to his words, a group of 10,000 disciples flew up into the air. They shot through the black mist and then entered the lotus spell formation to sit down cross-legged on the lotuses inside. They unleashed their cultivation bases as they took control of the lotus spell formation.

In unison with their actions, the lotus spell formation began to rotate, sending out pulses of killing will. In the blink of an eye, innumerable lotus petals flew out, sweeping toward Meng Hao like sharp swords.

The lotus petals almost looked like rain, filled with a desire to kill. However, before they could even get near to Meng Hao, his eyes radiated murder and madness. He pushed the war chariot onward, then waved his wide sleeve. The flag of three streamers shot out, sweeping out with echoing booms. The 10,000 disciples who had just emerged from the black mist trembled and began to cough up blood.

As for Meng Hao and the war chariot, they shot forward with urgency, fighting back against the pressure which weighed down. They moved another three hundred meters. By this point, Meng Hao felt as if a hundred thousand mountains really were pressing down onto his body.

They would soon crush him into a pulp.

As for the Immortal qi inside of him, he couldn’t control it any more. It would be difficult to push the war chariot through the final three hundred meters. A bright glow appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes as, without hesitation, he put the war chariot away and then relied on the strength of his fleshly body to continue on through the last three hundred meters.

As soon as he proceeded forward, the pressure from the Hundred Thousand Mountains bore down. Meng Hao trembled, and cracking sounds could be heard. He stopped in place. Seeing him stop moving caused the 10,000 disciples to feel a bit more confident. They all began to perform incantations, causing the lotuses they were sitting on to teleport forward toward Meng Hao. Shockingly, the lotuses started forming together into a huge statue of a three headed, six-armed god.

The statue was incredibly formidable. Not only did it have three heads and six arms, but lotuses swirled around it, and it was formed from 10,000 people! The three heads all looked at Meng Hao, and the six arms all pointed directly at him.

“Screw off from this place!” roared the statue with the combined voices of 10,000 people. Meng Hao looked up with a vicious smile. The killing intent in his eyes was thick, and his desire to slaughter suddenly surged even higher.

Ninth Anima. Second Spirit Severing cultivation base. Eternal stratum. All of this thrummed inside of Meng Hao. He strode forward, clenching his right hand into a fist.

One man versus a great spell formation, and 10,000 enemies.

“Time to break you!” he cried.

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# Chapter 696: Breaking the Formation

Meng Hao’s fist connected. It was powered by the rage and frustration of having his Perfect Foundation stolen, as well as all the regret that he had severed away.

One fist connected, and everything exploded!

A huge boom filled the air as the statue’s six arms burst into pieces, and its three heads crumbled. The entire statue exploded like a bomb!

It was impossible to describe exactly how much power was unleashed. Blood sprayed from the mouths of the 10,000 Black Sieve Sect disciples as they were sent spinning backward into the spell formation. The gale-force wind generated by Meng Hao’s blow then smashed into them, shredding their bodies to pieces, killing them instantly.

Meng Hao’s eyes shined with determination as he strode forward and punched a second time.

Then a third time, a fourth time and a fifth time!

Every time a blow landed, more of the surrounding lotus spell formation crumbled. With each strike, Meng Hao proceeded forward another thirty meters. By the time the ninth blow landed, he was already at the very edge of the spell formation. The final blow… was the Nine Heavens Destruction!

The lotus collapsed into fragments, and a massive boom rocked Heaven and Earth.

The sound of it filled the Hundred Thousand Mountains, roughly 10,000 of which directly collapsed into pieces. Finally, the Black Sieve Sect's mountain-protecting spell formation was broken.

In that moment, Meng Hao emerged from the spell formation and entered the black mist.

"Give me Xu Qing!" he said. His tone of voice made him sound like he was the ruler of the entire world. It was filled with an indescribable potency and madness that filled the entire Black Sieve Sect.

As his voice resonated out, the surrounding mist seethed, and narrow gaps formed. Through one such gap, Meng Hao caught a glimpse of the Ninety-Nine Mountains on the other side of the mist, and the incense burner on the First Mountain.

Sitting cross-legged inside the incense burner was a trembling figure, indistinct, but with a very familiar aura….

Xu Qing!

It was Xu Qing, who would live and die with him!

Hundreds of thousands of Black Sieve Sect disciples were refining Xu Qing!

Meng Hao's mind felt as if lightning bolts were striking it. An indescribable fury rose up inside of him, transforming into an inexhaustible desire to slaughter.

KILL! KILL! KILL!

In that moment, Meng Hao's hatred for the Black Sieve Sect reached the degree where it could never possibly be reconciled. Every single last disciple of the Black Sieve Sect HAD to die!

"Kill him!" cried the centermost of the three old men by the incense burner. The faces of all three were currently filled with shock; how could they possibly have imagined that Meng Hao would be able to break through their great lotus spell formation?

The First Severing cultivator immediately rose to his feet. He had a violent temper, and his face was grim as he flew up into the air.

“Disciples of the rear twenty peaks of the Hundred Mountains,” said the old man, “follow me into the Sieve Yin Formation. We will kill this drudge!” With that, he entered the black mist. Simultaneously, 30,000 disciples flew to follow him. The weakest among them were Foundation Establishment cultivators, the strongest were Nascent Soul.

Even as they entered the mist, Meng Hao’s voice, filled with unprecedented bereavement and anger, suddenly sounded out.

“Black Sieve Sect! I hereby vow that… I will eradicate your entire sect! The lands of South Heaven will have either you or me, not the both of us!”

Meng Hao’s desire to kill had reached a heinous level. He lifted his right hand and produced the flag of three streamers. It swept out in all directions, causing the mist around him to roil, and rumbling sounds to fill the air. As for the Black Sieve Sect First Severing Patriarch, as soon as he stepped into the mist, it seemed to come alive, as if it were sentient.

“Will of the Black Sieve, understanding of all creation! I shall go to battle, and pluck the stars from Heaven! First formation!” The voice of the First Severing Patriarch echoed about as the 30,000 Black Sieve Sect disciples entered the mist one after another. Shockingly, the mist condensed into eight formations that resembled black dragons.

The black dragons looked incredibly ferocious. Roaring with rage, they circulated around each other and then shot toward Meng Hao, attempting to devour him.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with a cold glow as he looked at the eight dragons. His desire to kill had reached a level it never had before. From the day he had begun practicing cultivation until now, he had never felt a stronger desire to slaughter.

As the eight dragons neared, Meng Hao strode forward and waved the flag of three streamers. Blackness spread out, sweeping over three of the black dragons. The flag began to glow with a bizarre light, and on its surface appeared countless faces, their features twisted as if with greed and the thirst for blood.

At the same time, Meng Hao's body flickered and then reappeared in front of one of the other dragons. Without the slightest hesitation, he punched. A boom echoed out and a huge spasm ran through the black dragon. It began to break apart in layers, accompanied by miserable shrieks. Behind Meng Hao, three more black dragons roared and charged. They moved with such incredible speed that even in the moment in which he turned to look at them, they were directly in front of him.

"Demon Sealing, Eighth Hex!" he said, pointing out his right hand. Instantly, the three black dragons trembled, as if countless invisible bonds were tying them up.

"Demon magic, art of Righteous Bestowal, soul extraction!" Meng Hao performed an incantation, and a vicious gleam appeared in his eyes as he pointed forward.

The gesture instantly caused the indescribably shrill cries to echo out from within the dragons. Inside the dragons were over 10,000 cultivators, their faces twisting and distorting as they screamed. Ghost images appeared, which were their souls being extracted from within!

The three dragons instantly collapsed; over 10,000 corpses suddenly fell to the ground.

The art of Righteous Bestowal was a magical technique of the Demon Sealers. Righteousness came with a thought, bestowal came with a thought. Life came with a thought, death came with a thought!

In the same moment, the three dragons caught up by the flag of three streamers trembled violently and collapsed into pieces. As for the final dragon, it froze in mid-air. The image of the First Severing Patriarch magically appeared in the head position of the dragon, and his face was filled with shock.

“Second Formation!” he cried. Immediately, what remained of all the dragons fell apart and turned into black mist that shot toward the First Severing Patriarch. Within the mist were the rest of the disciples who had not been killed, about 10,000 of them.

In the blink of an eye, the black mist transformed into a three hundred meter tall giant. It wore black armor, and looked like a god. As soon at appeared, it charged toward Meng Hao.

“DIIEEE!!” roared the giant, the combined voice of 10,000 people echoing out to shocking effect. At the same time, the Hundred Thousand Mountains suddenly released a boundless aura that enveloped the giant, causing its body to grow. All of a sudden, it was 1,500 meters tall!

Compared in size to the giant, Meng Hao was nothing more than a bug.

Meng Hao looked up at the approaching giant, and the coldness in his eyes grew stronger. Then he suddenly realized that he wasn’t sure whether or not Xu Qing was alive or dead inside of the incense burner, and his heart grew even more anxious. At the same time, he understood that if he didn’t destroy this spell formation, then he would be unable to enter into the Black Sieve Sect.

“DIE!” the giant roared, stretching its arms out to either side and then smashing them together toward Meng Hao, as if to crush him between its palms. They moved with incredible speed; in the blink of an eye, the hands were almost upon Meng Hao.

He did nothing to evade, allowing the hands to smash into each other around him.

To anyone observer, it would appear as if Meng Hao was completely enveloped by the hands of the giant. However, if you looked closely, you would see that… the giant was trembling.

Not only was it trembling, its expression was one of disbelief and shock.

“What… what fleshly body is this?!” said the Second Severing old man next to the incense burner. He rose to his feet, his face filled with astonishment.

“Calm down. There’s no need to get agitated,” said the Third Severing Patriarch, his voice cool. “That’s only the second transformation out of three total.”

Even as they exchanged words, the giant’s hands suddenly exploded. Black mist spread in all directions as Meng Hao walked out, not harmed even in the least bit. He stepped up to the giant and then instantly punched out.

A huge boom could be heard as the giant opened its mouth and expelled a mouthful of mist to block Meng Hao. At the same time, it retreated at full speed. On the giant’s forehead, the image of the First Severing Patriarch appeared, his expression one of terror and astonishment.

Instantly, he shouted, “Third formation!”

In response, the body of the giant fell apart into boundless black mist that shot toward Meng Hao and surrounded him. It seethed and spun as it then formed into an enormous globe. Rumbling sounds filled the air as black fire erupted out. Then the globe began to shrink, as if it intended to refine Meng Hao inside of it.

It shrank relentlessly. 300 meters. 150 meters. 100 meters. 30 meters….

Next to the incense burner, the Third Severing Patriarch coolly commented, “The third transformation, in combination with the power of Mo Li’s cultivation base, can easily kill an expert of the Second Severing level. It doesn’t matter how powerful his fleshly body is, the soft can defeat the hard. He will not escape.”

The other Spirit Severing Patriarch next to him smiled in agreement. “The Sieve Yin Formation can refine all living things. The only sad thing is that… it can’t produce medicinal pills. Otherwise, that person could be refined into a pill that would definitely be considered a precious treasure.”

As the two of them chatted, a huge rumbling sound suddenly rang out. Their faces flickered as they looked up. Down below, hundreds of thousands of Black Sieve Sect Disciples all had similar reactions.

What they saw was an enormous black globe of mist, shrunken down to only 10 meters in size. Then, a matchlessly vicious aura was released from within the mist globe.

The viciousness of the aura was difficult to describe, as was its incredible coldness. Everyone watched on as, in the blink of an eye, a ferocious figure appeared inside the 10 meter mist globe.

I was not a person, but rather, a flower!

A multi-colored flower!

Its branches and leaves swayed, its petals fluttered. When its aura spread out, the mist globe was incapable of enduring. It exploded with a boom. As it did, blood and gore splattered everywhere, from the corpses of the Black Sieve Sect disciples. In addition, an old man emerged, his face covered with fear, shock, and disbelief as he retreated at top speed.

That old man was none other than the First Severing Patriarch.

“Save me!!” he howled as he fled.

However, before he could get very far, and before anyone could even do anything in response, a black branch snaked out at high speed. It wrapped around the old man and violently dragged him back. The old man screamed miserably as the branch hauled him down toward Meng Hao, who then grabbed him by the neck.

Meng Hao strode forward. Behind him was a five-colored Resurrection Lily, fully sixty meters tall, swaying about with unbridled fury as it floated along.

This was Meng Hao’s Spirit Severing Treasure, his Resurrection Lily!

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# Chapter 697: Hundred Thousand Mountains!

The black mist spell formation was broken!

Meng Hao was enveloped by killing intent as he emerged. He violently twisted his right hand, instantly crushing the life out of the Black Sieve Sect First Severing Patriarch. Bones shattered, and then Meng Hao loosened his grip, sending the old man’s body tumbling down to the ground.

Meng Hao didn’t even think about the man’s bag of holding.

Behind him, the Resurrection Lily swayed about, emanating its vicious aura, making it seem as if Meng Hao were silhouetted against a terrifying, pitch-black backdrop. The Resurrection Lily had actually been ready for use as soon as he completed his Second Severing.

Furthermore, the life force inside of him came from Da Nu, a seven-colored Resurrection Lily. Because of that, although he had long been long locked in a life-or-death entanglement with the Resurrection Lily, after erasing its will, it was now fundamentally amiable.

Such amiability made it so that there was an unbreakable connection between the two of them.

Such a connection superseded that of the Spirit Severing Treasures created by most cultivators.

As of this moment, there was no one else in Meng Hao’s world except for the figure inside the incense burner. The instant he emerged from the spell formation, he transformed into a green smoke that shot directly up toward the First Mountain.

Looks of shock could bee seen on the faces of the two Spirit Severing cultivators next to the incense burner. The Second Severing Patriarch flew up into the air and shouted, “Stop him!”

At the same time, all of the Black Sieve Sect disciples down below flew up to form a huge spell formation. The power of Heaven and Earth descended, and the Hundred Thousand Mountains emitted spiritual energy. The spell formation surged with power.

The Third Severing Patriarch didn’t fly up, but rose to his feet and put his hand onto the incense burner. His eyes flickered as his cultivation base rotated. He was using only the intense power of his cultivation base to perform the refining!

“This man is not weak,” he thought. “The fact that he made it this far leaves me uncertain of whether or not I can defeat him. Therefore, I will disturb his emotions. Considering Zhou Tie’s cultivation base, and the spell formation formed by the other disciples, if his heart is in chaos, then there is a high likelihood that he can be defeated.”

As soon as Meng Hao emerged, he met the resistance of the Second Severing Patriarch. Dense killing intent filled Meng Hao’s eyes, especially when he saw the Third Severing Patriarch next to the incense burner attempting to hasten the refining process. Meng Hao’s eyes turned completely red.

“SCREW OFF!” he roared, waving his sleeve. Instantly, the Second Severing Patriarch was sent tumbling back, blood pouring from his mouth. Astonished as he was, his attempt to block Meng Hao’s path had actually slowed him down a bit.

Simultaneously, the hundreds of thousands of cultivators down below were rapidly unleashing the power of the spell formation. Bright light shot up into the air and then completely enveloped the area. Shockingly, glowing figures shot up into the air, one after another. They resembled shining souls, and represented all of the countless Black Sieve Sect disciples down below.

They quickly shot in tight formation toward Meng Hao in an attempt to block his path.

“Let’s see how you break through that!” said the Second Severing Patriarch malevolently. As his voice echoed out, the spell formation rotated, causing the colors in the sky and on land to fade. Wind spun, and spiritual energy from the Hundred Thousand Mountains surged out.

“Are you people looking to die?” said Meng Hao, his killing intent surging. He shot forward and lifted up the flag of three streamers. In addition, Blood Immortal divine abilities appeared, instantly wreaking death and destruction.

Miserable screams echoed out constantly. The incredible power of Meng Hao’s cultivation base made these enemies like nothing more than bugs. However, the sheer number of Black Sieve Sect disciples was such that it was impossible to kill all of them in a short period of time.

The Second Severing Patriarch ambled over to cautiously make sneak attacks when possible. Whenever he and Meng Hao exchanged blows, incredible booming sounds echoed out. Each time, the Second Severing Patriarch would cough up blood, and his heart would fill with astonishment.

Outside of the spell formation, the Black Sieve Sect’s Third Severing Patriarch pushed the refining process even faster. Then Xu Qing’s plaintive cry rang out from within the incense burner, filled with resigned weakness, and Meng Hao went crazy.

“All of you, DIE!” He suddenly jerked his hands up, then pushed them down toward the ground. When that happened, the land below began to quake. Meng Hao’s hair flew about wildly, and blue veins bulged out on his forehead. He seemed to be slipping into a hitherto unseen type of insanity.

“Mountain Consuming Incantation! Hundred Thousand Mountains, RISE UP!” Meng Hao tilted his head back and let out a violent roar. Down below, the ground churned like liquid, and the Black Sieve Sect's Hundred Thousand Mountains began to shake.

They seemed on the verge of breaking away from their foundations, as if some indescribably powerful force had transformed into a hundred thousand hands that were now trying to rip the mountains up from the earth.

This… was the Mountain Consuming Incantation!

The Mountain Consuming Incantation, powered by Meng Hao's Second Spirit Severing Eternal stratum!

When the incantation was unleashed, it was shocking to the Heavens and could cause the Earth to tremble!

"RISE UP!!" roared Meng Hao. The Hundred Thousand Mountains trembled again, and this time 10,000 mountains were violently torn away from their bases. Rocks and stone showered down as the mountains rose up into the air.

At their jagged bottoms, plants and roots were snapped and hung down, some only a few meters longs, some dozens.

This sight left everyone in the Black Sieve Sect completely and utterly flabbergasted. That included ordinary disciples, Nascent Soul Elders, and even the two Spirit Severing Patriarchs. Their astonishment had reached the complete, ultimate pinnacle.

"Who is this?! How come he looks so familiar…?"

"He looks familiar to me too! What exactly is he doing!?"

"Dammit! What divine ability is that?!"

Rumbling sounds filled the air, and everyone was dumbstruck. The Hundred Thousand Mountains of the Black Sieve Sect were being uprooted. By now, quite a few people realized that Meng Hao looked familiar, as if they had seen him somewhere before. However, considering how quickly everything was happening, they couldn’t recall exactly when they had seen such a fearsome expert.

“Stop him!!” bellowed the Third Severing Patriarch. The Hundred Thousand Mountains were the foundation of the entire Black Sieve Sect, what it relied on to ensure long-term growth. In addition, the protective spell formations in the sect required their spiritual energy to operate.

As such… if the Hundred Thousand Mountains really were ripped out of the ground… even though the sect couldn’t be considered completely destroyed… essentially, it would be!

By this point, the matter of refining Xu Qing was relatively insignificant. The Third Severing Patriarch immediately strode forward and shot toward Meng Hao. Any other Black Sieve Sect disciples who hadn’t done so already also disregarded all danger to charge at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao was now surrounded by the flag of three streamers, the vicious Resurrection Lily, as well as 10,000 magical symbols which had just flown out from inside his bag of holding. The spirits of the magical symbols formed together into a tempest that swept out in all directions.

RUMBLE!!

Thousands of mountains among the Hundred Thousand Mountains were severed from their bases. They floated up to hover in mid-air, their auras shocking, leaking spiritual energy chaotically in all directions.

“Tell me, you people, do you know fear now?” He lifted his head up and laughed maniacally. His eyes were red, and his killing intent monstrous. Gritting his teeth, he once again roared: “Mountain Consuming Incantation! RISE UP!!”

RUMBLE!!

Another 10,000 mountains were ripped up to and began to float in mid-air. By now, more than 20,000 mountains were floating there. The remaining 80,000 mountains trembled violently and let out ceaseless, deafening rumbles. Occasionally, the very peaks of some of the mountains would break off and fly up.

Meng Hao was surrounded by divine abilities as the Black Sieve Sect disciples, including the Second and Third Severing Patriarchs, nearly went mad in their attempts to get to him. Blood sprayed from Meng Hao’s mouth, but then, the power of his Eternal stratum erupted, leaving everyone else in shocked disbelief.

Meng Hao’s wounds all healed up immediately!

He possessed the Eternal stratum, and a virtually undying soul!

With an undying soul, as long as a sliver of the soul remains, then death can be overcome, and one can come back to life!

With the Eternal stratum, as long as only a drop of blood remains undestroyed, one can live again!

“Still haven’t risen up yet?!” Meng Hao roared. Rumbling filled the air as the bases of another 30,000 mountains crumbled, and they rose up into the air. Currently, more than 50,000 now floated in mid-air.

More than half of the mountain range was now afloat. Without their pressure to suppress the veins of spiritual energy that ran through the earth, the spiritual energy in the area was now in complete chaos. Spiritual energy pulsed out, smashing vegetation and trees, causing the entire land to look as if it had been scraped clean!

By now, the violent developments had attracted the attention of the whole Southern Domain.

In the Violet Fate Sect, Pill Demon was in the midst of meditation when suddenly his face flickered. He rose to his feet and jerked his head up. What he saw was a drop of blood hovering in the air above the Violet Fate Sect.

The drop of blood was bright red, and as soon as it appeared, it spread out to form a blood shield that covered over the entire Violet Fate Sect.

“Patriarch Blood Demon, what are you doing?!” cried Pill Demon, flying up into the air. Simultaneously, countless other cultivators flew up from inside the Violet Fate Sect.

Pill Demon waved his sleeve, and the world shook. A massive power shot toward the blood shield, causing an enormous boom. The blood shield trembled, but remained in place.

An ancient man wearing a red robe appeared outside of the shield. He looked down at the Violet Fate Sect. “Fellow Daoist Pill Demon, this blood is from the ancient Demon Immortal Sect. Do you really think you can break through the blood of a Demon King?”

This old man was none other than the Patriarch of the Southern Domain’s Blood Demon Sect! 1

According to legends, deep within the Blood Demon Sect lurked a greater Demon of Heaven and Earth. It had been asleep for many years, and only occasionally awoke. That greater Demon was the Dao Reserve of the Blood Demon Sect!

Normally speaking, what people saw outside of the sect was this Patriarch Blood Demon.

“I bear you no ill will,” continued the old man. “I have utilized this blood, a special treasure, for the purpose of restraining you for seven days.

“After the seven days are up, the shield will fade away. As for the drop of blood… you can keep it as a form of apology.”

“You!” said Pill Demon, his face turning grim. Outside the blood shield, the red-robed old man turned and disappeared off into the distance.

Similar scenes played out at the same time in the Golden Frost Sect, the Solitary Sword Sect, the Li Clan, and the Song Clan. In total, five drops of blood appeared across the Southern Domain to cover over the headquarters of all the superpowers.

The drops of blood became seals, preventing anyone from emerging from the sects, and even preventing their Dao Reserves from awakening!

“Just what is the Blood Demon Sect up to?!”

That was what everyone was wondering. However, what shocked them even more was that the sky… suddenly turned completely red!

Moments ago, 100,000 Blood Demon Sect disciples had appeared in the air above the Southern Domain. Each and every one of the disciples cut open their arms, causing blood to spurt out. Li Shiqi, who floated in their exact center, lifted up an austere magical bottle up into the air. Within this bottle was a drop of golden blood that flew out and soaked up all the fresh red blood. The golden blood then turned bright red, after which all of the drops began to spread out, forming a huge glowing red shield that covered the entire Southern Domain.

The Southern Domain was sealed!

Such a huge seal could not be preserved for very long. At the most… seven days!

In the moment that the sealing occurred, Meng Hao was in the Black Sieve Sect, having just ripped up 50,000 enormous mountains. The spiritual energy was now in chaos, and spreading out through all of the Southern Domain.

The blood-colored shield prevented the ripples from escaping out. None of the super sects or clans of the Southern Domain would find out… nor any of the powerful experts.

Meanwhile, in the depths of the Blood Demon Sect, there existed a blood-colored pond.

Within the pond, a man sat cross-legged in meditation. He was extremely withered, and looked almost like a corpse. Suddenly, his eyes opened, and they were filled with boundless ancientness.

"I've been waiting for such a long time. Finally… the day has come!"

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# Chapter 698: Deranged

In the Southern Domain’s Black Sieve Sect, Meng Hao was surrounded by a bright red glow. The crowds of Cultivators from the Black Sieve Sect were sending all sorts of divine abilities and magical techniques against him, as well as magical items. Even with his incredible fleshly body, it was something he couldn’t stand up against for long.

The flag of three streamers was in full retreat, and even the Resurrection Lily was falling back. The Black Sieve Sect disciples had gone mad. There was not a single one who could watch the Hundred Thousand Mountains, the very foundation of their sect, being pulled up by the roots, and not go mad.

“No time to wait for all 100,000,” thought Meng Hao. “50,000 will do!” With that, he suddenly stretched his right arm out and pointed up to the sky. The 50,000 mountains began to rumble, and then descended with shocking speed.

They shot directly toward the spell formation made up of the hundreds of thousands of Black Sieve Sect cultivators, then began to slam into it. Miserable shrieks filled the air one after another. Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly flickered with burning madness.

“Explode!” he said. It was only a single word.

That one word caused everything to shake. One by one, 50,000 mountains exploded. They sky ripped and the land quaked. Even the Ninety-Nine Mountains were severely affected, and began to crumble.

Blood sprayed from the mouths of hundreds of thousands of cultivators as the spell formation collapsed into pieces. At least half of the people who made up the formation let out bloodcurdling screams as they were destroyed in body and spirit.

“NOOO!!” roared the Second Severing Patriarch. He unleashed a divine ability, causing a gigantic Xuanwu turtle with a viciously spiked shell to appear. As it shot toward forward, Meng Hao waved a finger, causing portions from five enormous, crumbling mountains to crush down toward the old man. Blood sprayed from his mouth as he was sent tumbling backward. At the same time, Meng Hao pushed his hands down toward the ground another time, causing the ground within the Black Sieve Sect to split open.

Spiritual energy surged out, mountain peaks crumbled, the sky dimmed. Meng Hao strode forward toward the First Mountain.

However, even as he stepped foot onto it, the air in front of him rippled, and the Black Sieve Sect’s Third Severing Patriarch stepped out.

A ferocious expression could be seen on his face, as well as surging hatred. The moment he appeared, he waved his sleeve. Shockingly, nine white tigers appeared, each of them fully thirty meters long.

Behind the white tigers, the Third Severing Patriarch let out a roar and then raised his hand up. A seal mark appeared from within, which rapidly increased in size as it shot toward Meng Hao.

Off in the distance, the Second Severing Patriarch gritted his teeth because of the injuries he had sustained, but approached nonetheless. His hand flashed in an incantation gesture, causing black mist to swirl around him and then turn into a statue of a Xuanwu turtle. It emitted a mysterious glow, and also emanated the sounds of wailing, which shook everything in the area.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, and he slapped his bag of holding. Immediately, the only Time Sword tip he still possessed appeared. He grabbed it with his fingers and then suddenly vanished. When he reappeared he was directly in front of the Second Severing Patriarch. He waved his hand, and the sword tip flew out.

When it slammed into the Xuanwu turtle, the beast instantly began to wither. It let out a miserable shriek and then began to collapse and dissipate. The Second Severing Patriarch’s face fell as the sword tip neared him. He was just about to attempt to dodge to the side when Meng Hao stretched out his finger.

“Hex!”

It was a single word, but it instantly caused the Second Severing Patriarch to tremble to a stop. The sword tip stabbed through him, causing not only blood to spurt out, but also 10,000 years of longevity!

“AAHHH!!”

Physical pain didn’t count for much, but the pain caused by the destruction of longevity cause the old man to let out a miserable shriek. By this point, Meng Hao had already turned around. He flicked his sleeve, and a gale-force wind sprang up to send the nine white tigers sprawling backward. Then he looked up at the sealing mark that was bearing down on him. By now, it was already three hundred meters tall, and causing everything to rumble as it neared.

“Suppress!!” roared the Third Severing Patriarch, gesturing with both hands, sending the seal mark smashing down toward Meng Hao.

“Anywhere that mountains exist, that is my Area world!” said Meng Hao. He performed an incantation with his right hand and then pointed out. Shockingly 50,000 illusory mountain suddenly appeared around him. These were the 50,000 mountains that he had just destroyed!

As the mountains made their appearance, they turned into Meng Hao’s Area world. It spread out toward the incoming seal, causing rumbling to fill the air. It also shot toward the Second Severing Patriarch, who was already injured. This new attack caused him to let out a scream of defiance as his body trembled and then exploded. He was dead in body and soul.

At the same time, Meng Hao borrowed the momentum of the blast to shoot at high speed past the Third Severing Patriarch. In the blink of an eye, he was on the First Mountain, next to the incense burner.

Without the slightest hesitation, he anxiously approached and reached out his right hand. Just as he was about to lay hands on the trembling figure inside, an enraged roar echoed out behind him.

The roar spread out, and it contained something that caused Meng Hao’s scalp to go numb with a sense of crisis.

“You want to save that girl? I’d rather let the Rebirth Pill refinement fail than let you succeed! Heaven and Earth furnace, shatter the pill and destroy the body!”

The instant the voice rang out, the incense burner trembled and began to emit intense heat.

“If you fall back, your beloved in the furnace will be killed. If you don’t fall back, then you will die together!”

Meng Hao’s face flickered as he eyed the leaping flames in the incense burner. Critical danger was also approaching him from behind. His eyes flickered with determination. Without hesitation, he stopped in place. He did not fall back.

His two hands flickered in incantation pattern and, ignoring both the danger from behind and the blistering heat from incense burner, he shot forward. He entered the incense burner and wrapped his arms around the stiff figure inside.

His body was instantly attacked by the intense heat. His hair burned, and the flesh of his face was charred black. His fingers dried and withered, revealing bones. Even his chest was eaten away until his heart was visible.

However, he still entered the incense burner to wrap his arms around Xu Qing. In that instant, a tremor ran through him as the danger from behind finally arrived.

Whhhzzzzzzzzzzz….

Meng Hao trembled as the eight white tigers, which had transformed into eight white spikes, stabbed into his back.

Actually, as far as physical pain went, he didn’t even notice it. Currently, he was staring blankly at Xu Qing as he held her in his arms. She was not beautiful like he remembered. Her body was emaciated and withered, her features ancient. She had no life force in her, no soul.

She had… nothing.

Meng Hao quivered, and his eyes filled with tears.

“Elder Sister Xu….” Stabs of pain filled his heart, as if it were being ripped directly out of his body. He instantly fell completely into his madness. At this same time, the voice of the Third Severing Patriarch rang out behind him.

“Eight Tigers Immortal Extinguishing Tribulation!!”

In coordination with the words, the eight spikes that had stabbed into Meng Hao began to emanate an indescribably terrifying power. It instantly filled every corner and recess of his body.

Meng Hao’s eyes were crimson as he looked at Xu Qing. He laughed bitterly, doing nothing to prevent the Third Severing Patriarch from approaching and attacking with a divine ability.

Blood sprayed from his mouth, only to be instantly incinerated.

“First Tribulation!” said the Third Severing Patriarch. Booming filled Meng Hao’s body.

“Second Tribulation!

“Third Tribulation!”

Booming rang out constantly as, one by one, the eight spikes inside of Meng Hao shattered. They battered his soul and shredded his body, but he didn’t care. The only thing he cared about was the corpse of the woman he held in his embrace.

He felt hatred, madness, insanity, and regret.

He had arrived too late….

“You live, I live. You die, I die….

“If you grow old, then I’ll grow old together with you….” Meng Hao heard the words from the past echoing in his ears. He laughed bitterly as the explosions wracked his body.

“Fifth Tribulation!

“Sixth Tribulation!

“Seventh Tribulation!

Suddenly, an intense hope filled Meng Hao’s face. He began to breathe raggedly, and even as the words ‘Eighth Tribulation’ rang out behind him, he realized that there was a problem.

“Xu Qing’s soul…. Her soul is not in her body any more. Her soul….

“Bodies can be restored. As long as her soul has not dispersed, she isn’t dead. However, there are no traces at all of a soul within her. It’s almost like… someone extracted it!” Meng Hao’s entire body trembled, and roaring sounds filled his whole body. He slowly put Xu Qing’s corpse into his bag of holding. As he did, his Eternal stratum, seemingly in unison with his sudden lucidity, exploded out along with the Eighth Tribulation.

It was at that point that roaring flames suddenly burst out all over Meng Hao’s body. The more than 100,000 remaining Black Sieve Sect disciples saw this, as did the Third Severing Patriarch.

They saw flames, and inside of the flames, a person. Everything else above and below faded, and the Black Sieve Sect disciples’ faces filled with excitement.

The Third Severing Patriarch finally breathed a sigh of relief. The menace of Meng Hao was something he couldn’t quite handle, and he had even been worried that, because of Xu Qing, he wouldn’t be able to kill him.

“Finally, the matter is ended….” murmured the Third Severing Patriarch. And yet, even as the words left his mouth, his face suddenly flickered and filled with shock. Without hesitation, he shot backward.

Even as he fell into retreat, Meng Hao strode out from within the raging flames, which were then immediately extinguished. Meng Hao was eternal, and what is eternal cannot be exterminated!

The only way to kill him was to simultaneously exterminate him in both body and soul. Using any other method would be very difficult.

As for the Third Severing Patriarch, he was obviously not qualified to do something like that!

Even as the man began to retreat, Meng Hao’s killing intent exploded out in shocking fashion.

“Where is Xu Qing’s soul!?” he said, glaring directly at the Third Severing Patriarch. He spoke slowly, and his eyes were thoroughly bloodshot. His voice was filled with the thirst for blood and slaughter, and anyone who heard it would feel an incredible sense of danger.

The more than 100,000 surrounding Black Sieve Sect disciples were trembling. By this point, there were a few who finally realized why Meng Hao looked so familiar. Before, they had sensed the familiarity, but didn’t have time to think deeply about the matter. Now, though, they suddenly thought of a name from the past.

“Meng Hao!!”

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# Chapter 699: Sieve Yin Sect

“That’s Meng Hao!!”

“Violet Furnace Lord Meng Hao of the Violet Fate Sect! He even came to the Black Sieve Sect once to give a lecture about the Dao of alchemy!!”

It had been silent before, but suddenly, the sound of gasping filled the air as everyone suddenly thought the same thing.

“Two hundred years ago he was in Core Formation…. But now, he can slaughter Spirit Severing Patriarchs!!”

Meng Hao completely ignored the astonished buzz of conversation. He stared straight at the Third Severing Patriarch and slowly walked forward.

As he neared, an enormous, energy rose up from Meng Hao’s body, which transformed into an incredible pressure that covered over everything. The hubbub instantly died down, and even the wind ceased to blow. The only thing left behind was the indescribable pressure.

At the moment, it was evening, and the sky was just starting to turn dark.

“The Sieve Yin Sect! Her soul is in the Sieve Yin Sect!!”

When the Third Severing Patriarch felt the pressure, and saw Meng Hao’s gaze fixed upon him, his heart grew numb, and a sense of despair filled him. He was certain that if he didn’t tell Meng Hao what he wanted to know, he would die this day. It was then that he remembered that the Sieve Yin Sect was actually the true Dao Reserve of the Black Sieve Sect, so he quickly blurted out the name.

The Black Sieve Sect was divided like Yin and Yang.

In accord with that division, it was split into two factions. On the surface was the Black Yang Sect. However, beneath the Hundred Thousand Mountains was the Sieve Yin Sect!

The two factions were inextricably linked, which was how the name of the Black Sieve Sect came to exist in the Southern Domain.

Of course, Meng Hao was not aware of this, but he did know a bit about the Black Sieve Sect. He knew about the countless discarnate souls that existed underground. It was years ago that he had first sensed the discarnate soul of Matriarch Phoenix in Xu Qing.

He also knew that some Chosen of the Black Sieve Sect had Sieve Yin Sect souls hidden within them.

As for which of the two factions occupied the position of leadership, and which was subservient, well… no outsider knew the answer to that question.

Meng Hao said nothing in response. He simply lifted his right hand up, performed an incantation and then pushed his hand down toward the ground.

As he did, his Demon Sealer's aura exploded out. As a result, the Demonic Qi of Heaven and Earth in the area surged toward him in a constant flow. It swept about, causing his view of the entire world to change instantly.

Shockingly, he could see that the land was covered with boundless auras of sinister death. The auras swirled together to form a vortex that actually existed in the ground deep beneath the Black Sieve Sect.

Gradually, he could also make out what appeared to be a turbid river flowing underneath the surface of the ground. It was surrounded by countless discarnate souls. Surrounding the river were ten enormous, illusory palaces that floated in the air, which seemed to be guarding the river.

In the center of the ten palaces was an altar formed from bleached bones. It was filled with a bizarre, awe-inspiring aura, and above it floated a black, crystal ball. Within that crystal ball was a soul, apparently sleeping.

As soon as he saw the soul, Meng Hao's entire body began to shake.

It was… Xu Qing.

Beneath the crystal ball were four blurry figures sitting there cross-legged. A sinister aura of death radiated off of them, which made it clear that these four figures were corpses that had been there for countless years.

The moment in which Meng Hao saw the four corpses, they all lifted their heads. Bizarre, underwordly light shone in their eyes as they looked at Meng Hao.

There were four corpses, but it was three wills that suddenly exploded out in Meng Hao's mind.

"Screw off!"

"Get the hell out of here!"

"This is not a place you can enter. If you don't screw off within three breaths of time, you'll end up remaining here forever!"

In response, Meng Hao lifted his foot up and then stamped it down onto the ground. The surface of the land rumbled, and a huge fissure opened up. Determination filled his eyes as he shot down into the fissure.

As soon as he entered, a sinister, cold aura rose up. Furthermore, countless discarnate souls emerged from within the river. Their eyes glowed with strange lights, as well as greed, as they shot toward Meng Hao.

An archaic voice echoed out from the turbid waters below: "In the Yellow Springs, the discarnate souls of Heaven and Earth see not the sun. They wish only to remain buried in the depths!"

The countless discarnate souls shot forward, causing an evil wind to spring up.

A strange light gleamed in Meng Hao’s eyes as he proceeded onward three hundred meters. He slowly extended his right hand toward the tens of thousands of incoming discarnate souls. Then, he chopped his hand down, creating an illusory blade imbued with his Dao.

The slash of this blade was like the slash of the Dao! 1

This blade contained Meng Hao’s Dao of freedom and independence. His life was a journey, and he would be free and unfettered! This Dao was a severing of fetters!

Rumbling filled the air as, in the blink of an eye, the blade grew to 3,000 meters in length. It slashed down, sending out monstrous ripples that swept about in all directions. As the blade swept out, countless discarnate souls let out miserable shrieks, and burst into flames.

Meng Hao proceeded forward another measure, advancing six hundred meters. He was now only 1,500 meters from the altar. At the same time, ten streams of divine will appeared from within the ten palaces that surrounded the altar. They shot forward, carrying with them auras of death. Shockingly, they transformed into 100,000 discarnate souls, all of them with eyes full of avarice. As they flew through the air, they merged together to form what appeared to be a waning moon that sped toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao lifted his hand again, and when it descended, a second blade appeared!

This was his second Dao, the severing of Perfection and the acquisition of a new life. It contained his determination, his will, and his enlightenment. As the blade descended, Heaven and Earth shook, as if a great Dao were arriving. In front of Meng Hao, it transformed into a blade that exceeded the 3,000 meter length of the previous blade.

The blade slashed toward the moon!

Booming sounds rattled out in all directions!

Wherever the ripples of the blade passed, the discarnate souls screamed miserably. The waning moon emitted a bright glow as it attempted to fight back.

When the two slammed into each other, the waning moon trembled. Meng Hao’s blade slashed directly into its center, completely slicing it in two. It instantly shattered into pieces.

When the waning moon exploded, the ten temples trembled. All of the discarnate souls in the area looked completely astonished. Even as the waning moon began to reform, Meng Hao waved his hand and pointed.

“Demon Sealing, Eighth Hex!”

RUMBLE!

Demon Sealing magic was incredibly potent when used against the discarnate souls; the waning moon shuddered, and instantly began to disperse. At the same time, countless disconsolate wails could be heard echoing about.

“It’s him!”

“It’s the Demon Sealer from that year!!”

“He’s a Demon Sealer!!”

Even as the voices rang out, Meng Hao advanced a third time, crossing a span of 1,500 meters to directly near the altar. At the same time, three of the four figures opened their eyes and lifted their hands to point toward Meng Hao.

“Discarnate Soul Dao! Dao of Soul Destruction!”

Shockingly, these three corpses had cultivation bases at the Third Spirit Severing level. When they attacked simultaneously, the power was shocking, causing the surroundings to suddenly sink into an illusory world where it seemed Heaven and Earth were transposed. In front of Meng Hao, a vortex appeared.

The vortex, which seemed capable of consuming anything living or dead, sped directly toward Meng Hao.

If that were all there were to it, it wouldn’t be a big deal. However, before Meng Hao could employ any divine abilities, the fourth figure on the altar opened his eyes, rose to his feet, and began to walk toward Meng Hao.

“I am the Yin Divinity. I neither descend to the underworld nor ascend to the shining Heavens. I control my own reincarnation. I possess the Yellow Springs of the Ninth Mountain….” As he spoke, he passed through the vortex to appear in front of Meng Hao. He lifted his hand and pointed out.

The gesture caused what appeared to be an illusory, yellow-colored river to appear above his hand. Something appeared to exist inside the illusory image, and it struggled to emerge, releasing an incredible will of death.

The finger attack caused Meng Hao’s entire body to fill with rumbling, along with an intense sense of deadly crisis. In his estimation, this person… was even stronger than the three people from moments ago!

“Back on that ancient ship, I came to understand two types of Daoist magic….” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he took a deep breath, and then began to perform an incantation. In the blink of an eye, the Mountain Consuming Incantation appeared.

This incantation was something he had acquired in the ancient Demon Immortal Sect. It was not the most powerful magic, however, as far as Meng Hao could tell, the limits of its power likely depended on which mountain was being replicated!

Ordinary mountains, such as the Black Sieve Sects’ Hundred Thousand Mountains, or perhaps other mountains in the Southern Domain, would be incapable of fighting back against this vortex.

“The most powerful mountain that I have had a chance to study… is the Ninth Mountain!” Meng Hao’s eyes went blank. One breath of time later, shockingly, the image of a mountain appeared in his pupils.

It was a mountain that towered among the stars, a boundless, enormous mountain that defied description.

The Ninth Mountain!

As soon as the Ninth Mountain appeared in his eyes, it also manifested in his palm. He lifted his hand up, and the Ninth Mountain grew in size. Along with it, indescribable ripples began to flow out from within it.

The self-proclaimed Yin Divinity discarnate soul in front of Meng Hao suddenly looked shocked, and it began to tremble involuntarily.

“That’s… the Ninth Mountain!

“To produce a copy of the Ninth Mountain requires incredible destiny and good fortune!

“Not only have you summoned an image of the Ninth Mountain, but you’ve summoned it into your palm! Such an action requires incredible luck, as well as… vast audacity!

“How are you capable of all of this! How could you possibly have had a chance to lay eyes on the entirety of the Ninth Mountain?!?!”

He was shocked, as were the three discarnate souls on the altar behind him. Their faces filled with complete disbelief as they looked at the Ninth Mountain.

It must be said that South Heaven is only one of the four planets that orbited the Ninth Mountain. That made the Ninth Mountain… something of supreme importance, above all living things!

To summon an image of the Ninth Mountain, was like summoning Heaven and Earth!

“If he can summon the image of the Ninth Mountain, that means that if he can achieve Immortal Ascension he will have a Mountain Consuming qi! This man cannot be allowed to develop any further!

“He only has the image of the mountain, not the will! Destroy him, seize his blood, wrest away his fortune! Transform this into a great success for the Sieve Yin Sect!”

Instantly, the three discarnate souls on the altar shot out.

It seemed that they were just about to slam into Meng Hao, when suddenly a vast power from the Heavens above suddenly descended to the lands of the South Heaven. As it neared, South Heaven shook and trembled.

This was a great Dao. This was the arrival of the will of the real Ninth Mountain!

The will arrived because Meng Hao replicated its image. It descended because of the mountain in his hand!

1. Don’t forget that “blade” and “Dao” have almost the same pronunciation

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# Chapter 700: True Patriarch Six-Daos

In almost the exact moment in which Meng Hao used the Mountain Consuming Incantation to summon the image of the Ninth Mountain, far out in the starry sky outside of Planet South Heaven, the indescribably majestic Ninth Mountain suddenly trembled.

Along with the trembling, the will of the mountain, as if in response to some mysterious call, neared South Heaven and descended into Meng Hao’s palm, onto the rapidly expanding image of the Ninth Mountain.

It was only a sliver of will, but to Meng Hao and the surrounding discarnate souls, it was shocking to the extreme.

The astonishment of the discarnate souls was at a pinnacle.

“Resonance!!”

“He… actually formed a resonance with the Ninth Mountain!!”

The discarnate souls trembled, and Meng Hao’s eyes were now anything but blank. He suddenly waved his right hand, and the Ninth Mountain in his hand shot forward.

As it bore down on the self-proclaimed Moon Divinity, the discarnate soul defended with every bit of power it could muster. Countless heavenly bodies appeared around its and shot forward to block the mountain.

BAM!

The heavenly bodies collapsed, and the Moon Divinity discarnate soul let out a disconsolate shriek as the Ninth Mountain slammed into it, completely destroying it in all aspects….

Then the Ninth Mountain smashed into the enormous vortex, shattering it into pieces. It seemed as if the mountain was completely unstoppable. The other three discarnate souls on the altar retreated in complete terror, but they were too slow for the Ninth Mountain.

Amidst the rumbling, one managed to dodge to the side. The other two, however, howled miserably. They unleashed all of their divine abilities and magical items, but in the end… they were completely destroyed.

At this point, Meng Hao, his face pale, coughed up some blood. The Ninth Mountain slowly faded away.

As it disappeared, weakness surged through Meng Hao’s body. He had never imagined that the image of the Ninth Mountain would be so shockingly powerful; just now, he had used it to resist Dao Seeking!

Unfortunately, the price paid was something his cultivation base couldn’t handle. Although his soul contained an undying will, the backlash had still injured him. He now knew that if he used this particular divine ability for too long, it would wither his soul!

As for the discarnate soul who had escaped, it was now fleeing in horror. It had completely lost all its nerve, and was panic-stricken because of Meng Hao.

Meng Hao completely ignored it as he strode forward onto the altar. He raised his right hand and was just about to grab the crystal ball when suddenly, a desiccated hand appeared out of nowhere in front of his face.

It pointed at him, and as it did, Meng Hao could see an incredible ancientness emanating off of the finger and its blackish-yellow fingernail.

The finger did not send out any ripples, nor did it emit any of the power of Heaven and Earth. However, it gave Meng Hao the sense of a great Dao, almost like natural laws of Heaven and Earth.

He was incapable of evading or dodging. He could only watch as the finger tapped him gently on the chest.

In response, he heard an incredible roaring, and blood sprayed out of his mouth. He spun up violently into the air, as if he had been delivered a huge blow. He slammed into one of the huge temples, which then shattered into pieces, incapable of sustaining the force of Meng Hao smashing into it.

He shot through the wreckage of the temple and then slammed into the roof of the cave up above. The ground trembled, and roaring echoed out in all directions. The earth split and Meng Hao shot up into the air above the Black Sieve Sect. It was almost like he was passing from the dark of Yin into the light of Yang. When he reached the end of his trajectory, his chest finally exploded into a cloud of blood.

Immediately, his undying soul and Eternal stratum surged into action, causing the wound to begin to heal. And yet, even after it healed, it exploded once again, a vicious cycle. Meng Hao coughed up blood continuously until his green robe had turned violet.

Down below, the disciples of the Black Sieve Sect watched on with expressions of shock on their faces.

At the same time, coughing sounds could be heard from deep within the ground.

A black mist began to rise up from down below, which then flooded out to cover the entire Black Sieve Sect.

The coughing sound grew louder, as if someone were lurching out from within the depths of the ground.

All of a sudden, an ancient voice could be heard. “I was just sleeping for a bit and you had to go stir up such a ruckus!”

A skinny, shriveled old man appeared. He wore a black robe, as well as a hat. His features were wizened and ancient, pale in a way that was frightening to look at. His eyes were vacant, and his entire body radiated an aura of death, almost like a vampiric zombie.

As he walked out, everything around him became freezing cold, and black snowflakes began to drift about.

When the Third Severing Cultivator saw the zombie-like man appear, he immediately began to tremble and sweat. Without even thinking about it, he dropped to his knees and kowtowed. “Greetings from the junior generation, true Patriarch Six-Daos!”

Simultaneously, the discarnate soul expert who had survived Meng Hao’s attack earlier immediately flew out trembling. He, too, dropped to his knees and kowtowed.

“Greetings from the junior generation, true Patriarch Six-Daos!”

Back underground, countless discarnate souls all dropped to their knees to kowtow, their faces filled with awe and terror. At the same time, their voices echoed out in greeting. As for the Black Sieve Sect disciples standing on the ground, they shook uncontrollably, and although they actually didn’t know who this old man was, they kowtowed nonetheless.

Meng Hao’s face was unsightly, and he could feel the wound in his chest continuing to fight against his Eternal stratum. He stared fixedly at the old man for a moment before realizing that the man’s cultivation base…

Was at the peak of Dao Seeking!

Meng Hao could also tell that this man seemed to be slightly stronger than the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch.

This was the true Dao Reserve of a great sect. Any of the five great sects or three great clans in the Southern Domain would have a similar Dao Reserve. Were it not for that, how could they possible pass their legacies down for ten thousand years or beyond?

The old man coughed a bit, then stretched a stiff hand out and made a claw-like gesture toward the ground. The turbid, underground river suddenly surged and then flew up out of the ground. As it did, it shrank down until it could circulate in the air around the old man.

At the same time, the old man pointed toward the incense burner on the First Mountain, causing it to shudder and then fly through the air toward him. It shrank down until it was the size of a fist, and then opened up, after which the turbid river flowed inside. Finally, the incense burner came to rest on the old man's palm.

By now it didn't look like an incense burner, but rather, a flagon of alcohol.

The old man raised it up to his lips and took a sip. Then, his eyes glowing with a strange light, he looked over at Meng Hao.

"You have a pretty good cultivation base," he said. "If it weren't for me, the Black Sieve Sect's foundation of ten thousand years would actually have been destroyed." The old man then pointed toward the ground, causing the crystal ball with Xu Qing's soul in it to fly out. He clasped it between two fingers. "Do you want her?"

Wisps of black mist circulated out from the old man's hand to encircle the crystal ball. They transformed into vicious, wicked spirits who peered into the crystal ball with greed and avarice as if they wanted to rush inside.

Xu Qing's soul immediately began to tremble, as if it was experiencing intense fear.

Meng Hao's heart also began to quiver.

"I can sense the aroma of rebirth," the old man said hoarsely. "My disciples and apprentices must have been refining her for my use. What is she to you? Your beloved?"

Meng Hao glared at the old man, but didn't respond. Pain stabbed through his heart, and his entire body was trembling.

“Not going to say anything?” The old man gently squeezed his fingers down. Cracking sounds could be heard as fissures appeared on the surface of the crystal ball.

“She’s my beloved!” Meng Hao took a deep breath and continued to stare at the old man.

“Then it’s proper for you to have come,” the old man said calmly, the aura of death around him growing thicker. “If you didn’t show up, her soul would have become nourishment for me, and her body would have been refined into a medicinal pill to add to my collection.”

By now, the sky was completely dark, and the moon was out. As its rays shone down, the old man looked up for a moment, then caused the black mist to cover it up.

“Unfortunately, you coming here was useless. Although, I might as well give you a chance.” His murky eyes began to glow with a strange light. “Go ahead and use your best divine abilities and magical techniques. If you can handle one blow from me, then I’ll let you leave with her soul. What do you say?”

Meng Hao stared at this true Patriarch of the Black Sieve Sect, the most powerful person in the entire sect. Inside, he smiled bitterly. In actuality, he knew before coming here that things would probably not go smoothly. However, he had come anyway.

Not coming would have violated his own Dao!

Furthermore, he came without the intention of leaving!

“You live, I live. You die, I die…. That is a promise.” Meng Hao took a deep breath and then lifted his hand up. In his left eye, a bright glow like day gradually appeared. In his right eye could be seen a darkness like night.

This was his most powerful divine ability, which he had acquired after gaining enlightenment about darkness and light from the armored man on the Underworld Ship.

In his right hand, a black mist appeared, along with a white mist.

As soon as the two streams of mist appeared, the Black Sieve Sect’s true Patriarch, Six-Daos, stared in shock.

“So, it’s this….” he said.

The reason he hadn’t killed Meng Hao immediately was because he had sensed some type of good fortune on him. Considering the level of true Patriarch Six-Daos’ cultivation base, he could feel premonitions for both crisis and good fortune.

He was now eying Meng Hao in much the same way that the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch had eyed Meng Hao for his Perfect Foundation. He could faintly sense that Meng Hao had something that could be considered incredibly useful good fortune.

A stiff smile appeared on the face of true Patriarch Six-Daos. His eyes flickered as he watched the black and white mists grow rapidly thicker until they finally formed into two pearls.

Black Pearl!

White Pearl!

The instant the two pearls appeared, true Patriarch Six-Daos’ pupils constricted. Despite his cultivation base and level of power, his face still filled with disbelief.

“This is… a Dao!

“It’s not an ordinary Dao, either. These black and white pearls give me a sense of limitlessness, as if they contain….”

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed and he suddenly stretched out his right hand. He actually didn’t know how to use the two pearls, but they were definitely his most powerful magical technique.

As he waved his hand, the two pearls transformed into two beams, one black, one white, that shot toward true Patriarch Six-Daos.

In that instant, the sky suddenly changed colors. The entire world became one of black and white. There was no third color that existed!

“Heavenly Dao!

“This is a Heavenly Dao, not of the Ninth Mountain, but from outside the great Nine Mountains!!”

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# Chapter 701: Blood Prince of the Blood Demon Sect

“The black pearl represents death and the white pearl represents life!

“No, wait. The white pearl represents death and the black pearl represents life!

“Hmm, that’s not right either. How many Daos are represented here? The cause and effect of Karma. Truth and falsehood. Life and death. The cycle of reincarnation. Heaven and Earth….” True Patriarch Six-Daos’ face flickered. As the pearls neared him, he waved his right hand out in front of him. Immediately, the incense burner flew out and began to expand. Turbid water suddenly exploded out from within.

“Yellow Springs!” growled true Patriarch Six-Daos, causing the turbid water to emanate a monstrous aura of death. It expanded, transforming into a river that swept toward the two pearls.

However, even as it neared the pearls, the Yellow Springs began to tremble and then fall apart…. Countless souls appeared and began to dissipate out in all directions, looking blank and confused.

Next, the incense burner trembled, and images of burning incense sticks from inside began to float up. True Patriarch Six-Daos’ face flickered, and he quickly flashed an incantation gesture with his right hand and then pointed out.

“Joss Fire!” The incense burner began to shake, and illusory worlds suddenly sprang into being. All of them contained countless living beings who were kowtowing on bended knees.

Along with their obeisance, their auras pulsed up into the air and then merged together. Next, the worlds themselves transformed into statues, each one of which bore the semblance of true Patriarch Six-Daos. They then shot at top speed toward the Black White Pearls.

The two pearls closed in, and a shocking boom rattled out. All of the worlds and statues instantly turned black and white, then began to collapse. The incense burner trembled and then shrank down rapidly. True Patriarch Six-Daos' face once again flickered. He stretched his right hand out and pushed down toward the ground.

“Yin-Yang Rotation; Heaven and Earth Transformations!” He held his right hand aloft, causing an enormous flag to appear.

As the flag swept out, shockingly, countless souls could be seen inside, howling.

“One Billion Joss Souls.”

Astonishingly, one billion souls were inside the unfurling flag, which flew directly toward the Black White Pearls, emanating the shocking howls of the billion souls.

It only took a moment for the billion souls to be dispersed. However, the Black White Pearls were incapable of maintaining their form, and once more transformed into black and white mist that shot toward Six-Daos.

Six-Daos' eyes filled with a strange light, and he did nothing to evade. In fact, he strode forward as the black and white mists neared, and then opened his mouth to swallow them. At the same time, a three-headed six-armed figure appeared behind him, which also opened its gaping mouth.

Six-Daos directly swallowed the black and white mists, whereupon his body began to tremble. His face paled as he tried to endured the force, but it was clearly too great. He coughed up a mouthful of blood, and then cracking sounds could be heard coming from inside his body. Suddenly, the black and white streams of mist burst out from his chest and then faded away into the air.

The surrounding Black Sieve Sect disciples were completely shocked. Meng Hao stood there silently, looking at true Patriarch Six-Daos. This was in fact his most powerful technique he could employ.

“Interesting. Very interesting!” said Six-Daos, lifting his head up and laughing loudly. “Great! What an excellent divine ability. Well, you accomplished the task I arranged for you, therefore, it’s time to fulfill my end of the bargain!” With that, he tightened his left hand, causing cracking sounds to fill the air as nearly half of the crystal ball Xu Qing’s soul was shattered. Her soul did not emerge, however, and the discarnate souls in the area all shot forward with expressions of insatiable greed.

“You!!” roared Meng Hao, his eyes bright red. Right now, he didn’t care about life or death. He didn’t care about anything in the world except for the soul in that crystal ball!

The soul’s eyes suddenly opened and looked at Meng Hao. It was a gaze filled with gentleness and longing….

“In my years of practicing cultivation,” said Six-Daos, his voice hoarse, “I’ve never kept my promises. And since you’ve managed to piss me off, do you really think I would spare you a painful death?” With a ghastly smile, he waved his hand, causing an altar to appear next to him that resembled a pagoda, with nine steps leading to its top.

On top of the altar were countless discarnate souls with bulging eyes, who emitted soundless screams.

Next, Six-Daos sent the crystal ball shooting toward the altar, where it floated in the air, emitting cracking sounds.

BANG!

The crystal ball completely shattered, and Xu Qing’s soul emerged. The discarnate souls around her let out excited howls as they pounced.

“If you can save her,” said Six-Daos, looking at Meng Hao, “then I’ll keep my promise this one time.”

Meng Hao, in a frenzy, shot directly toward the altar. Before he could even get near it, though, the discarnate souls' mouths bit into Xu Qing's soul. Trembling, she looked over at Meng Hao, and it seemed as if there were tears in her eyes.

He felt like his heart were being ripped to shreds. His voice filled with misery, he howled, "Eat MY blood and flesh!"

With that he slashed at his chest with his hand, causing blood and gore to splash out in all directions. The aura of a Demon Sealer spread out explosively.

The discarnate souls froze, then turned their heads. The insatiable greed in their eyes surged to an apex, and they charged toward Meng Hao. In the blink of an eye they bored into Meng Hao's chest and began to feed.

PAIN!

Indescribable PAIN!

However, Meng Hao didn't care. He forced himself to continue onward. One by one, he proceeded toward the stairs that led to the top of the altar. More and more discarnate souls latched onto him, and they didn't even bothering to bore into him before beginning to consume his flesh and blood.

However, none of that could prevent Meng Hao from walking onward.

The Black Sieve Sect disciples in the area were completely astonished, even the ones who harbored intense hatred for Meng Hao.

Six-Daos' eyes narrowed.

Black mist billowed around Meng Hao, and his flesh and blood were rapidly disappearing. However, he still had his Eternal stratum, which caused his body to rapidly heal itself. Of course, that only led to more pain.

Step after step led him to the staircase, and finally, Xu Qing. He reached out with trembling hands to take ahold of her.

However, it was in this moment that Six-Daos' eyes glittered with evil. He gave a cold snort and then stretched out a finger causally. Immediately, black mist shot toward Xu Qing's soul.

“This is over,” he said.

The black mist shot toward Xu Qing. Meng Hao then let out the most desolate roar he ever had in his life. “NOOOOOOOOO!!!”

Disregarding anything and everything, he stretched his hands out to grab Xu Qing. However, the black beam didn't stop. It slammed into Xu Qing's soul, enveloping her, transforming into what appeared to be black flames.

It was at this point that Meng Hao's hands landed on Xu Qing's soul. They passed through the black flames to take ahold of her.

The instant he touched her, the tears in his eyes finally spilled out. He had descended thoroughly into madness now. All he could do was watch as Xu Qing slowly faded away within the black flames.

Xu Qing began to murmur, although no sound came out. Only her lips moved. “You live, I die…. Promise me, that you will keep on living….”

Meng Hao was desolate, helpless. His cultivation base was useless, and the world was useless. “I just want to practice cultivation in happiness! I just want to be with Xu Qing! Cultivation? Just… just what kind of life is cultivation?!”

It was in this moment that suddenly, a voice rang out in Meng Hao's mind.

“Promise me something, and I can help you!” The voice was completely unexpected, but as of this moment, Meng Hao didn't care. As soon as he heard it, he responded, without hesitation, without taking time to think about how strange it was.

“I promise. Anything you want. I promise!”

As soon as he spoke the words, Xu Qing, who seemed just on the verge of fading away completely, was suddenly enveloped by a blood-colored beam of light that shot down from the sky.

Instantly, the black flames were extinguished!

Six-Daos' face fell as suddenly, a seething red cloud appeared up above. The sky turned red, and an enormous face appeared in mid-air.

It was the face of an old man, his eyes crimson, with a blood-red horn protruding from his forehead. As soon as the face appeared, the disciples of the Black Sieve Sect felt the blood in their bodies starting to boil, as if it might burst out from within them.

The entire world, the sky, the land, was now the color of blood.

Everything visible was completely blood-colored!

Six-Daos' pupils constricted, and his energy surged. He waved his right hand, causing the incense burner to circle around his head.

"Blood Demon! Do you really dare to interfere with the matters of the Black Sieve Sect?!?!"

"Why wouldn't I dare?" replied the face in the sky. Six-Daos entire body filled with a roaring sound, as the scant amount of blood that actually existed inside of him suddenly exploded out, showering in all directions.

His face flickered, and he flew up into the air, transforming into a beam of light that shot toward the face. "Everybody says Blood Demon is the Top Expert of the Southern Domain! Well I don't believe it!"

"Southern Domain?" The face shook its head. "An uncivilized land at best." Shockingly, a wrinkled, blood-colored hand appeared that emanated a shocking blood will. It shot toward Six-Daos, grabbed him, and squeezed lightly.

A boom echoed out as the incense burner shattered. The Yellow Springs vanished, and more blood sprayed from his mouth. Six-Daos was astonished to the extreme.

“You… you….”

“I’m not going to kill you,” the face said coolly. “That task will be accomplished in the future, by the Blood Prince of the Blood Demon Sect.” The hand loosened its grip, allowing Six-Daos to drop to the ground, his body oozing blood.

The surrounding Black Sieve Sect disciples watched on with pale, astonished faces.

The face in the sky slowly turned to look at Meng Hao, as if he were the only existence in the world it would deign to look upon.

“You made a promise.”

Meng Hao’s face was devoid of blood, but his expression was calm as he looked down at Xu Qing’s soul, enveloped as she was in the red glow. She was no longer in pain, and was now slowly recovering. He looked back up at the face in the sky.

“Even if it’s Demonic Transmigration, Junior is willing.”

“There is no need for Demonic Transmigration. What I want you to do… is experience bedevilment!

“Join the Blood Demon Sect. Turn into a one-of-a-kind Devil. Become the Blood Prince of the Blood Demon Sect!

“The League of Demon Sealers will finally become Devilish. How amusing. This is not the desire of the Heavenly Dao. This is my desire!

“Experience bedevilment. From now on, you are a Devil, a position above Demons. Continue on your path. What I want you do… is no longer seal Demons. No, I want to see if you can use your Demon Sealing powers to seal the Heaven of the Ninth Mountain and Sea!”

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# Chapter 702: Violet East’s Dao Seeking!

The voice belonging to the face up in mid-air was ancient, and as it echoed about in all directions, an enormous red hand descended. The hand snatched up Meng Hao and Xu Qing’s soul, then shot up into the sky.

In the blink of an eye, they vanished….

The only thing left behind was the wreckage of the Black Sieve Sect, and tens of thousand of ashen-faced disciples. True Patriarch Six-Dao’s stood there, an unsightly expression on his face.

He glared with clenched jaw at the redness in the sky as it faded away.

“Blood Demon Sect!” His heart dripping with blood. He had been defeated, thoroughly and utterly defeated, leaving him with unmitigated terror that raced through his heart.

“The Southern Domain’s Top Expert!” he thought. Previously, he had despised the thought, but after this day’s battle, he had no choice but to admit that Patriarch Blood Demon absolutely was the Top Expert in the Southern Domain.

“I don’t think even Jian Chenzi from the Solitary Sword Sect is a match for Blood Demon.” His face sank further. Finally, he flicked his sleeve, transforming into a black smoke that shot down into the ground.

The Black Sieve Sect had not been completely destroyed. However, the majority of the Hundred Thousand Mountains had been crushed. Only about 20,000 remained. Whether it be in terms of the Black Yang or the Sieve Yin factions, the Sect had been severely damaged.

Four Spirit Severing experts had died!

Innumerable Nascent Soul and Core Formation cultivators had also lost their lives. Thanks to the Black Sieve Sect’s Dao Reserve, they could still technically be considered a great sect. However, the sect was so badly mangled that it would be difficult to match their previous pinnacle even after ten thousand years passed.

Meanwhile, the blood-colored shield covering the Southern Domain vanished. The blood-colored shields that had been erected over the Violet Fate Sect, Solitary Sword Sect, Golden Frost Sect, and the Li and Song Clans also disappeared.

The sects and clans were no longer sealed. Their powerful experts immediately sent divine sense out into the Southern Domain to settle accounts with the Blood Demon Sect. However, when they saw the wreckage of the Black Sieve Sect, they gasped.

Instantly, they concealed any desire they had to settle accounts.

Gradually, word of the ancient title of ‘Top Expert’ once again began to spread throughout the Southern Domain.

A few hours after Meng Hao’s departure, Pill Demon appeared in the air above the Black Sieve Sect. His face looked more ancient than ever as he looked down silently at the wreckage below.

After a long moment passed, he sighed and began to murmur to himself. “I’m the Master, and I couldn’t even save my apprentice. Do I even qualify… to be his Master…?

“He kowtowed three times, and called me Master….” Finally, Pill Demon raised his head up, determination glowing in his eyes.

“I’ve been living an easy life for far too long now…. I’ve long since reached the point where I’m not willing to search for the Dao of Immortality…. Is it because I’m afraid? Perhaps.

“The time has come for Severing….” Shaking his head, he left and returned to the Violet Fate Sect.

Three days after returning, a great Dao descended. In that moment, the eyes of all the powerful experts in the Southern Domain turned toward the Violet Fate Sect.

In truth, it was not a single great Dao which descended, but rather, a succession of three!

In the Solitary Sword Sect was an old man wearing a white robe, in front of whom floated a sword of moonbeams. “Violet East… is finally performing his Severing!” he said softly.

In the Golden Frost Sect, deep in a restricted area, within a field of blackness, a mysterious glow suddenly appeared that looked like eyes. “He’s been simmering for all these years, did he finally reach a conclusion?”

Li and Song Clan experts, as well as many others, all gazed toward the Violet Fate Sect to bear witness to the goings on.

“In his previous life, Reverend Violet East refused to become a false Immortal of the Ji Clan. He longed to be a true Immortal. Unfortunately, he passed away in meditation before his Immortal Tribulation arrived. He transmigrated his next life from the cycle of reincarnation into a medical pill, and when the spirit of that pill awakened, it became Grandmaster Pill Demon….” 1

“Three great Daos, and three Severings in a row. Based on the knowledge he has from from his last life, it seems he’s going from Spirit Severing… directly into Dao Seeking!”

“Considering the latent talent of Reverend Violet East, and the nature of this Severing, it won’t be long before he’s at the peak of Dao Seeking. The only question is… will he be able to reach true Immortal Ascension this time?!”

“True Immortal… true Immortal…. Either reach Immortal Ascension, or experience the soul scattering in death. After that there is no reincarnation, only a complete blotting out of one’s existence.”

In addition, there was one other powerful expert who appeared, someone who sat in a blood-colored mountain, wearing a blood-colored robe. “The path to true Immortality that opens every 10,000 years, has once again opened. The opportunity to become a true Immortal has once again appeared. I wonder… how many will experience the downfall of their Dao, dispersing their bodies and souls? Meng Hao, destiny links both you and me to the League of Demon Sealers.

“Although it was for selfish reasons that I forced you to join the Blood Demon Sect, I have absolutely no ill intentions toward you whatsoever. I’m just not too pleased with the inflexible, pedantic eight generations of your league!

“The League of Demon Sealers. Wardens of the great Nine Mountains and Seas. Is your heart… with the Nine Mountains and Seas, or outside!?

“If it is outside, then you are not worthy of the Mountain and Sea Realm. If your heart is here, then why haven’t you sealed the Heavens, Demon Sealer!?

“Starting in ancient times, the League of Demon Sealers has always been heartless. Could it be that the Ninth Generation… is the same…? I refuse to believe it!

“I won’t harm you, and in fact, I will give you great good fortune. I will help you to grow up, and I will be your Dao Protector. When you wish to leave this place, I won’t stop you. I just hope that your experiences and time here in the blood Demon Sect will make you pause for thought when it comes time to make those critical decisions in the future.” The man sighed as he muttered to himself, and it echoed throughout the Southern Domain.

The name of the mountain the man stood on was Mount Blood Demon.

The Blood Demon Sect was one of the five great sects of the Southern Domain. In the past, it was a place of incredible mystery that struck fear into the hearts of anyone who heard its name. In fact, few people knew exactly where it was. They only knew that Blood Demon Sect disciples were all decisive killers.

For example… Li Shiqi!

Another well-known figure among the rising stars of the sect was Wang Youcai, who was surrounded by the glow of blood wherever he went.

Actually, the Blood Demon Sect was not a very large place. It consisted of only five mountains.

The centermost mountain was Mount Blood Demon, which was surrounded by four other mountains that had no true names, but rather, were called by the names of whoever occupied them.

Currently, Meng Hao sat cross-legged on Mount Blood Demon. Behind him was a cave mouth that emanated a glow of blood, and pulsed with a cold, imposing aura.

In front of him was Xu Qing’s soul, surrounded by a glowing sphere of red light.

He looked at her, and she at him.

They were as separated as Yin and Yang, but their gazes seemed capable of lasting an eternity.

Also standing there on Mount Blood Demon was a figure surrounded by an aura of blood. It was impossible to see his face, but he was currently staring off into the sky. “Have you thought it through?” he said slowly.

Meng Hao didn’t reply. He had been in the Blood Demon Sect for several days now. When he first arrived, the blood-colored figure had spoken a few words to him.

“Do you wish to accompany your beloved for your whole life, or for a single lifetime? A whole life includes a single lifetime, but a single lifetime does not include whole life. A single lifetime is a simple matter, and I can help you with that. As for a whole life… I can’t help you.”

That was the choice which had been set before him.

Meng Hao didn’t respond. He only looked at Xu Qing. She didn’t say anything either. She only looked back at him.

That lasted all the way to the moment in which the blood-colored figure spoke again. Finally, Meng Hao responded, his voice soft. “Xu Qing and I have an agreement. She lives, I live. She dies, I die.”

The blood-colored figure was silent for a long moment before his ancient voice once again echoed out in Mount Blood Demon.

“If you choose a single lifetime, then I will fuse her soul into her fleshly body. By nourishing it with a miraculous object of Heaven and Earth, she can be completely recovered in a hundred years.

“However, her soul has been damaged, and her body weakened. The fusion is difficult and if it fails, she won’t last even a hundred years. Even if it does succeed, she will be incapable of Spirit Severing. You will be able to spend a thousand years with each other, until her longevity reaches an end.

“If you choose a whole life, then… she must enter the cycle of reincarnation. Her soul will travel to the underworld of the Fourth Mountain, and she will be born anew. As to which Mountain she is born in, it is impossible to say. Before reaching Immortal Ascension, she will remember nothing from her previous life. However, in the moment she does reach Immortal Ascension, she will remember everything.

“Then, she will be able to accompany you for your whole life.

“You have a choice to make. Take her to the underworld to be reincarnated. Or, live with her here for a thousand years.

“If you take her to the underworld, then I can make you a promise. I’m on good terms with Kshitigarbha, the Earth Store Bodhisattva. Your beloved will be able to avoid any suffering in the underworld, and upon reincarnation, she will be accompanied by incredible good luck. Afterward, there will be a high likelihood that she can achieve true Immortal Ascension.

“You have a month to decide. I’ll be waiting for you in the Blood Pond.” Gradually, the blood-colored figure transformed into a glow of blood that faded away into the surroundings.

The sun rose and set. Meng Hao looked at Xu Qing, and she gazed tenderly back.

They didn’t speak, they just looked into each other’s eyes. Day, after day, after day….

Half a month went by, although it seemed like an eternity. Finally, she smiled. “Send me into the cycle of reincarnation. I don’t want a thousand wonderful years. I want to spend my whole life with you.”

Meng Hao didn’t respond.

She looked at him for a moment. “We agreed, didn’t we? I want to grow old with you….”

Meng Hao shook his head. He was about to open his mouth to speak when Xu Qing smiled and interrupted him. “You’re scared that you won’t be able to find me, aren’t you?

“Senior Blood Demon said that if we pick reincarnation, then it’s impossible to tell which Mountain I will end up on…. However, let’s make an agreement. You come looking for me, and I’ll wait for you….

“There’s no need to fear, Junior Brother. Our agreement in this lifetime, is an agreement for a whole life….

“In my next lifetime, I’ll definitely dream of you treading through the Heavens to come find me. You’ll hold out your hand to take mine, and then we will live the rest of our lives together.

“There’s no need to talk any more about what decision to make. We can live together for ninety-nine years. In the final year… I’ll enter the cycle of reincarnation.” Xu Qing looked at Meng Hao earnestly.

Meng Hao looked at her and then nodded, pain stabbing through his heart.

She smiled, a beautiful smile. He reached up toward the glowing red pearl that contained her soul, and it floated down onto his palm. He closed his eyes and clutched it as if he was embracing her.

He would never forget how her beauty had turned into old age.

He would never forget how some of his life force contained hers.

Finally, he opened his eyes and stood up. “It doesn’t matter which Mountain you are reincarnated to, I will find you.”

With that, he carefully took Xu Qing’s soul into the mouth of the cave behind him, which glowed brightly like blood.

Meng Hao walked into the shallow cave, quickly reaching its end. Up ahead was a blood-colored pond, within which was a withered corpse. It emanated invisible ripples that made it look incredibly ferocious, and growing out of its forehead was a blood-colored horn.

He wore a tattered blood-colored robe, and the skin visible through the tears was dark-red flesh covered with blue veins. The entire image was quite terrifying. His lips were shriveled, his eyes sunken in, his entire body dried up. Visible within his mouth, were razor-sharp fangs.

His body was the shape of a human, but this was clearly no cultivator.

This was a Demon! Patriarch Blood Demon! 2

1. I pointed this out a long time ago, but would like to reiterate that the characters in Pill Demon’s name literally mean “Pill Ghost.” I came up with the translation very early on in ISSTH, before I started reading ahead in the story. By the time I learned of his full story, the name had already stuck, and I didn’t want to change it. So just to be clear, the name does not contain the same character that is usually translated as “Demon” in the story.

2. In contrast, Blood Demon’s name does use the character I usually translate as “Demon.” And yes, the characters are exactly the same as the Blood Demon from the Demon Immortal Sect

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# Chapter 703: Heart of the Blood Demon

This was his true self. Whenever he appeared outside the sect, he used clones. Be it that year in the Reliance Sect, or earlier in the Black Sieve Sect, everything were clone incarnations.

His true self slumbered here eternally. From the beginning until now, he had never stepped even half a foot out of the cave, nor moved out from the pond.

As Meng Hao laid eyes on him, his head slowly raised up and he looked back.

His gaze was archaic, seemingly filled with countless years of time. Anyone who saw him would think that they were watching time move in reverse. It was as if they were looking far into the past, into ancient times, and the stars.

“I’m already aware of your choice,” he said, his hoarse voice echoing about in the cave.

A withered, emaciated hand lifted up and waved through the air gently. Blood rose up from within the pond, moving in accord with the gesture of his finger to congeal into a magical symbol.

As soon as the magical symbol finished forming, its color changed. It was no longer blood-colored, but rather, glowed with a golden light.

An incredibly powerful life force emanated out from it, as if the symbol itself were alive. As soon as the life force appeared, Patriarch Blood Demon visibly became even more ancient and withered. He didn't offer an explanation to Meng Hao, but this gold magical symbol was created from some of the essence of his life force. The power of such life force was developed through ages of cultivation, and was something that could not be restored.

The golden symbol flickered a few times and then flew toward Meng Hao.

“Place this magical symbol on her old fleshly body,” he said, his voice hoarse and his tone casual. “After nine nine-day-cycles of nourishment, a total of eighty-one days, your beloved's soul can re-enter her body, and she can once again walk about in the lands of South Heaven. If she does not enter the cycle of reincarnation within a hundred years, then her longevity of a thousand years will be cut short.

“Once she enters the cycle of reincarnation, this magical symbol will guide her through the void. When she is in the underworld, it will protect her. It will also help her when she reaches Immortal Ascension.”

Meng Hao looked at the symbol. Considering the level of his cultivation base, how could he not see the terrifying life force that existed inside of it, and how Patriarch Blood Demon had grown weaker after it appeared?

Complex emotions suddenly rose up inside of him. It didn't matter that Patriarch Blood Demon had coerced him into accepting the title of Blood Prince, he still felt incredible gratitude in his heart.

Meng Hao carefully accepted the magical symbol and put it away, then clasped hands and bowed deeply to Blood Demon.

“My respects, Patriarch!”

Blood Demon's eyes shone with a strange light, and his hoarse laughter echoed out throughout the Blood Demon Sect.

Meng Hao didn't say anything more. He knew that originally, there was little reason for his life to have much of anything to do with the Blood

Demon Sect. And yet, Patriarch Blood Demon had already showed him incredible kindness.

It wasn’t limited to the events which occured outside the Reliance Sect that year. If you traced matters back further, Patriarch Blood Demon had actually made an appearance INSIDE the Reliance Sect as well. Obviously, Meng Hao had long standing connections to the Blood Demon Sect.

Of course, Meng Hao was aware that his hand was forced back in the Black Sieve Sect. Despite that, he still chose to walk down this path in front of him.

“I make no requirements of you,” said Patriarch Blood Demon. “Even if you want to lead the Blood Demon Sect out into the Southern Domain to wage war on the Black Sieve Sect, to destroy them… I won’t stop you.

“You can do anything you want here. My only wish is that you cultivate the Blood Demon Grand Magic. Cultivate it all the way to the sixth level, and then you can leave without any hindrance from me.”

Meng Hao’s head jerked up to look at Patriarch Blood Demon, a shocked expression on his face. He would never have been able to guess that there would only be one requirement laid on him, and that it would be something like this.

“When you cultivate it to the third level,” said Patriarch Blood Demon, his gaze fixed upon Meng Hao, “I will bestow upon you some good fortune. After that, each additional level will come with further good fortune!

“I didn’t kill Six-Daos of the Black Sieve Sect, I only crippled his foundation. His cultivation base will quickly fall to the early Dao Seeking stage. When your Blood Demon Grand Magic reaches the fourth level, you will easily be able to slaughter that very stage. At that time, you can personally wipe out the entire Black Sieve Sect.”

Meng Hao didn’t say anything in response, but his eyes gleamed with a strange light.

“All I am giving to you is a title in the sect. As to whether or not you can stand on your own, can convince everyone to follow you… and to acknowledge your position, well…

“That depends on your capabilities.” Blood Demon gave Meng Hao a profound look, then waved his right hand. A drop of blood flew out to hover in front of Meng Hao. He took hold of it, and when it touched his palm, it turned into a blood-red crystal, within which flickered magical symbols that seemed to contain a mysterious, great Dao.

After delivering the drop of blood, Patriarch Blood Demon once again grew visibly weaker. The drop was obviously made of lifeblood, which contained some of his will, and was indestructible. It also contained good fortune.

This was a legacy! The legacy of Patriarch Blood Demon!

After watching Meng Hao accept the blood drop, Patriarch Blood Demon looked at him with warmth.

“I’ve lived far too many years,” he murmured in his heart, “and my condition worsens on a daily basis. Eventually, my soul will disperse, and I will die. When that happens, I will finally be able to accompany my long-dead friends in the underworld…. They died, and I live on alone…. Wait for me, my sister. Wait for me, friends. We can reunite soon….

“When I die, my death will have the greatest value of them all. My death will change the League of Demon Sealers!

“In fact, that is the reason I chose to descend here into the lands of the Southern Domain…. This is the homeland of the Demon Sealers. Wait for me, all of you. The day is coming soon….”

Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed deeply, then turned to leave the cave.

Just as he was about to step out of the cave mouth, he suddenly stopped in place.

“Patriarch,” he said, “as the Blood Prince, I have a license to kill, right? How many disciples’ lives are covered by it?”

As soon as Patriarch Blood Demon heard the words, his eyes flickered, and he lifted his head up once again from within the Blood Pond.

“One hundred per year.”

“Regardless of status?”

“Regardless of status,” was the calm reply. To him, none of the other disciples in the Blood Demon Sect were as important as Meng Hao.

Meng Hao didn’t say anything further. He left the Immortal’s cave, and as he did, Patriarch Blood Demon’s voice echoed out to fill the entire sect.

“From this day forward, Meng Hao… is the Blood Prince of the Blood Demon Sect!”

The words rumbled like thunder throughout the five mountain peaks of the Blood Demon Sect. Instantly, streams of divine sense appeared from within the four outer mountain peaks, all of which focused on Meng Hao as he stood there on Mount Blood Demon.

His expression was the same as ever as he strode down the steps. His calm face seemed reticent and taciturn; after dying, his personality had changed dramatically. That was especially so after the massacre at the Black Sieve Sect. After that, he was more ruthless and vicious, and it showed.

Even more influential was everything that had occurred with Xu Qing. As far as Meng Hao was concerned, his entire life was different now.

He walked silently, doing nothing to stop the countless streams of divine sense that began focusing on him. Each and every stream was filled with hostility. After all, to the Blood Demon Sect, Meng Hao… was a stranger!

For a stranger to suddenly come to the Blood Demon Sect and then immediately be promoted to Blood Prince was something that affected the interests of more than a few people. Clearly, many people were resentful.

Their resentment could not be displayed in Patriarch Blood Demon's presence, but when it came to Meng Hao, they didn't care about him one bit. Even if he had been appointed the Blood Prince, in the Blood Demon Sect… words need to be backed up by strength.

As for what had occurred in the Black Sieve Sect, only Meng Hao knew about it. The other experts in the Blood Demon Sect only knew that their Patriarch had set up a spell formation and then returned from the Black Sieve Sect with Meng Hao.

Regarding the particulars of what had occurred, the Black Sieve Sect obviously wouldn't be spreading the news. For the rest of the Blood Demon Sect to learn the details wouldn't likely happen in a short period of time.

There were powerful experts who occupied all four of the outer mountain peaks of the Blood Demon Sect. They built their own organizations within the sect that eventually caused the Blood Demon Sect to be divided into four major powers or sections.

Generally speaking, the four sections did not get along, and it was difficult to determine who was in the superior position. On the surface, things were harmonious, but in reality, there were ceaseless secret struggles that occurred.

Whether it be outside of the sect or inside, it had always been that way.

As for the position of Blood Prince, that was something that each of the powers wished for their own. If they could acquire the position of Blood Prince, it would change everything and would give them the qualifications to take control of all of the mountain peaks.

The first mountain peak was referred to as Mount Ironblood. 50,000 cultivators called it home, and all of them were Demonic cultivators and cold-blooded killers. Currently, all of their cold gazes were fixed on Mount Blood Demon.

They didn't care a whit about the new Blood Prince nor his extraordinary cultivation base. Even were it more extraordinary, he was still nothing more than a stranger. How could he possibly stand up to all of Mount Ironblood?!

In an Immortal’s cave at the highest point on the mountain were the two Ironblood Patriarchs. They were not cultivators, but rather, Demonic Incarnations; as for their true selves, few people knew what they looked like.

Normally, they didn’t venture out very often, and currently, they sat there cross-legged, eyes open as they looked at Meng Hao.

“Nothing more than some member of the junior generation,” said one of them.

There was also a middle-aged man who stood outside of the two Patriarchs’ Immortal’s cave. His eyes flashed with killing intent as he stared toward Mount Blood Demon.

“The title of Blood Prince was intended for me, Chang Yi! This Meng Hao dares to snatch food out of the tiger’s mouth? He’s looking to die!” His body began to glow with a bloody light, and seas of blood surged inside his eyes. The man was clearly in a rage, and countless bloody souls appeared around him, all of them emitting miserable shrieks.

Gritting his teeth, he dropped to his knees and kowtowed toward the Immortal’s cave. “Masters, please allow disciple to take action!”

“He might be the Blood Prince,” said one of the two Ironblood Patriarchs, “but the only difference between his position and yours is that he has unique access to the Blood Demon Grand Magic. If you’re skilled enough to make him bow his head, then he can become your puppet!”

“That’s right,” said the other, his voice cold. “If you’re skilled enough to make him capitulate, then as the operators of the torture chamber, your Masters will be within their rights to crush him. Of course, he was appointed by the Patriarch, so you can’t be the first one to make a move!”

The middle-aged man looked up, and his eyes flickered with viciousness. Without hesitation, he left the peak of the mountain.

At the same time, on the second mountain peak of the Blood Demon Sect, which was known as Mount Darkheaven, a cultivator rose up from meditation to look at Mount Blood Demon. This was respected Patriarch Darkheaven, who was referred to as a Demon, but was in fact a cultivator.

Behind him were his seven apprentices, none of whom seemed to be people of goodwill. Their eyes flickered with red light and killing intent.

The tens of thousands of disciples on Mount Darkheaven, all of whom were commanded by Patriarch Darkheaven, silently stared with cold eyes toward Mount Blood Demon.

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# Chapter 704: Blood Demon Grand Magic

“Interesting,” murmured Patriarch Darkheaven. “The Patriarch did not assign him a mountain peak, nor any followers, huh…? What does that mean?” He appeared in the form of a boy wearing scholar’s garment, and he stood there with his arms clasped behind his back.

“Master,” said one of the apprentices standing behind him, “why the hell does a stranger get to be the Blood Prince? I can’t accept this!”

“Yeah, allow us to go fight this Meng Hao guy, Master! Let’s see whether or not he has the skill to act as the Blood Prince!”

“What’s your rush?” the boy said with a ghastly chuckle. “There will most certainly be others who are in much more of a hurry than you.” Without another word, he turned to head back into his Immortal’s cave.

The seven apprentices’ killing intent filled the air. They exchanged glances and then stared back at Meng Hao as he descended the stone steps of Mount Blood Demon.

A similar scene played out on the fourth mountain peak of the Blood Demon Sect, albeit with much more intensity. The three Demonfire Patriarchs 1 did nothing to restrain themselves, and their fury and arrogance exploded up.

Only the fifth mountain peak was silent. At the very peak of the mountain was a white-haired, hunchbacked old man who supported himself with a walking stick as he looked off toward Mount Blood Demon.

Next to him stood a girl who was quite pretty, yet also radiated killing intent.

“Master,” said the girl, “why prevent the disciples of Mount Ghostcrutch from expressing their discontent with the Patriarch’s arrangement? It’s inherently unfair! I could accept it if Chang Yi from Mount Ironblood became the Blood Prince. But I’ve never even heard of this Meng Hao before.”

The old man smiled. His voice hoarse, he said, “Your Master has lived for a long time. Although I used to be a bit of a fool, I’ve become much more sensible over the years.

“You know, I was there on Mount Blood Demon the year the Patriarch descended.

“Throughout the years, the position of Blood Prince has been filled seven times. I was there every single time.

“I’ve lived a long time and seen many things. These eyes of mine can pierce through the ancient and archaic…. I can tell that this Meng Hao carries something very unusual.”

The girl beside him frowned.

“Don’t provoke him,” continued the old man. “Don’t even get near him. Master needs to observe him a bit more before making a decision.” His eyes glittering, the old man returned to his Immortal’s cave.

Meng Hao’s expression was calm as he walked down the steps. When he was about halfway down the mountain, he suddenly paused as he caught sight of a white-robed woman up ahead. She stood on a boulder off to the side, in front of which was a cliff that stretched down into swirling fog.

The woman’s robes swayed in the wind, making her look quite otherworldly. She was beautiful, and in this moment, looked like a graceful Immortal.

Meng Hao glanced at her for a moment and then looked away as he continued down the mountain.

The woman turned and stared at Meng Hao. “Elder Brother Meng,” she said, “we last ran into each other in the Demon Immortal Sect. Could it be that you’ve forgotten about humble little me?”

This woman was none other than Blood Demon Sect Dao Child Li Shiqi, who had been dressed like a man the first time Meng Hao met her. 2

Meng Hao didn’t say anything in response. He merely looked at her and nodded, then continued on his way down the stairs.

“Elder Brother Meng,” she continued, “the only people who live on Mount Blood Demon are myself and the Patriarch. I’ve been waiting in this spot because I need to give you a warning. The other four mountains won’t approve of you being appointed as the Blood Prince.” She waved her graceful hand, sending a jade slip flying out.

“This is a bit of information about the other four mountain peaks,” she went on. “Take a look, it should be helpful.”

Meng Hao accepted it and was silent for a moment. Finally, he said, “Thank you,” and proceeded on his way.

“How… how is Fellow Daoist Xu Qing?”

“Thank you,” he repeated, his voice drifting up from further down the mountain.

After leaving Mount Blood Demon, Meng Hao found himself in a bleak and desolate forest. The Blood Demon Sect was not like other Sects, where grand temples existed at the bottoms of the mountains, filled with Outer Sect disciples.

Although there were Outer Sect disciples, they also resided on the mountains. As for the region beneath the mountains, there existed only forests.

They weren’t completely uninhabited, though. Log cabins could be seen throughout them, belonging to disciples who had descended from the mountains to practice cultivation in isolation. There were quite a few visible, although some were in states of disrepair.

Occasionally, disciples could be seen and, without exception, they looked at him coldly and without an ounce of respect.

Meng Hao’s expression remained calm in the face of the coldness. He had sensed that he was the subject of many, many such gazes when he made his way down the mountain. Therefore, he proceeded until he found remote corner of the sect where he then sat down cross-legged. He closed his eyes and retrieved the soul orb of the exhausted and slumbering Xu Qing, who he examined for a long moment before stowing away.

At the same time, quite a few streams of divine sense from the surrounding mountain peaks were retracted by their owners, not a few of which were filled with disdain.

“What kind of Blood Prince is this Meng Hao? I thought he was supposed to be super skilled! He can’t even fight with somebody for a log cabin at the bottom of the mountains!”

“He’s not even willing to provoke anyone over a log cabin? In the Blood Demon Sect, everything depends on your strength and viciousness! Immortal’s caves, mountain peaks, one’s beloved, techniques, cultivation resources, everything goes to the strongest! And that includes the position he holds!”

“Hmph. He wants peace and quiet, huh? Well, considering he acquired a position that wasn’t his to begin with, he better give up that idea!”

“Although, there’s no reason to act too quickly. We only know a little bit about him, so let’s just observe for a bit longer….”

Meng Hao closed his eyes and ignored all of the gazes and streams of divine sense, which he couldn’t care less about. Instead, he sent his own divine sense into his bag of holding. There, he found the Blood Mastiff, who had been seriously injured defending him against the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. It had now regrown a physical body, although it was still weak and small.

And then there was the matter of the parrot and the meat jelly…. When Meng thought of them, he frowned. He hadn't seen any traces of them since he awoke on the Underworld Ship.

However, he had the strange sense that the two ninnies were definitely in the Southern Domain.

Silently, he rotated his cultivation base until night fell. Finally, he opened his eyes and produced Xu Qing's desiccated corpse. He slowly fused the golden magical symbol into it, whereupon she instantly began to show signs of life. Gradually, she began to recover.

Her skin slowly changed, and her entire body began to look more limber and charming as she showed signs of awakening. It was a process that would take nine nine-day-cycles, a total of eighty-one days, to complete.

Meng Hao suppressed the excitement he felt, looked her over for a long moment, then carefully put her body away.

"Elder Sister Xu, your eyes will open in eighty-one days," he murmured. After a long moment, he finally took out the blood crystal given to him by Blood Demon.

He looked at it for only a moment before unhesitatingly pinching it between his fingers. Immediately, all the blood in his body began to seethe as if it were boiling, and emanate an indescribable, bloody aura.

Simultaneously, magical symbols appeared in his head. They emanated a crude, ancient aura that transformed into a legacy.

At the same time, the blood-colored mask inside of his bag of holding suddenly began to emit intense ripples. The Blood Mastiff inside trembled, seemingly instinctively responding to the aura coming out of Meng Hao, which it in turn absorbed.

“Blood Demon Grand Magic!” murmured Meng Hao.

The Blood Demon Grand Magic was actually a taboo art in the Blood Demon Sect. Only Patriarch Blood Demon himself possessed it. Even previous Blood Princes of the sect had only been introduced to the art orally. Meng Hao was the only one to acquire the true lifeblood legacy.

The magic was organized into six levels, which were organized two to a stratum, meaning there were three strata in total.

“Qi and Blood, Spirit Meridians, Blood Soul….” he murmured, and a red glow appeared in his eyes. He suddenly discovered that he was possessed of incredible latent talent in regards to the cultivation of the Blood Demon Grand Magic.

After only a moment, he reached the first level, and was halfway through the Qi and Blood stratum.

The Qi and Blood stratum was terrifying; it was capable of absorbing the power of someone else’s Qi and Blood.

Immediately, Meng Hao’s eyes turned as red as fire. He slowly lifted up his hand, which had now turned bright red.

It was almost like his hand was covered with innumerable black holes, all of which were ready… to consume Qi and Blood.

“I can’t believe I was able to cultivate this art so quickly….” thought Meng Hao. “It must have something to do with my cultivating the Blood Immortal divines abilities…. Blood Immortal. Blood Demon…. There must be some relationship between the two.” After a moment of thought, he realized there might be another explanation. He reached inside of him and realized that his Demon Sealing magics were now slightly different than before.

It was as if some intangible change had occurred, although he was unsure of the exact details.

“Patriarch Blood Demon cares about my status as a Demon Sealer. In that case, perhaps that is why the Blood Demon Grand Magic was so easy for me to cultivate.”

He contemplated the matter a bit further, and after a moment, decided that he might as well make another attempt at cultivating the Blood Demon Grand Magic. Following the prescribed method, he continued on. Two hours later, his eyes snapped open, and the bloody glow in his eyes seemed to have completely filled the pupils; he looked terrifying to an astonishing degree.

“The great circle of the Qi and Blood stratum!” Meng Hao took a deep breath. By now, he could see just how tyrannically frightful the Blood Demon Grand Magic was. By consuming the Qi and Blood of others, it could strengthen the fleshly body!

As for how strong, there seemed to be no limits!

“Unfortunately, it’s not permanent and is only a borrowed power.” His eyes glittered as he suddenly was filled with the strong desire to enter halfway into the Spirit Meridians stratum of the Blood Demon Grand Magic.

“All Cultivators build up vast quantities of spiritual energy in their bodies. Because of that, spirit meridians exist. The Spirit Meridians level allows me to consume the spirit meridians of others, which I can use to add to my cultivation base.”

He closed his eyes and sank into cultivation. The sun was high in the sky before he finally opened his eyes and frowned.

“I can’t cultivate it. I’m missing something.” He was in the middle of considering the matter when suddenly the archaic voice of Patriarch Blood Demon echoed in his ears.

“Very good. You reached the second level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic. When you reach the third level, I will give you something that is sure to leave you astonished.

“It has something to do with your League of Demon Sealers. With that item, you will be able to acquire… a Demon Sealing magic!”

Meng Hao looked up toward Mound Blood Demon. He didn’t speak, but his heart trembled. As of this moment, he was now absolutely certain that Patriarch Blood Demon… placed importance upon his identity as a Demon Sealer.

“Just what secrets have I yet to uncover about the Demon Sealers?” he thought. Despite being a Demon Sealer for many years, he still could use only the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex and Righteous Bestowal.

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# Chapter 705: A Test!

The sky was clear, and cultivators bustled about the Blood Demon Sect. It actually did have the air of a sect, although many of the people were actually engaged in deadly combat. The sound of mutual slaughter was intense, and the glow of blood glittered up radiantly.

If disciples from other great sects in the Southern Domain came here, they would be quite out of sorts. However, as far as Meng Hao was concerned, it was just like the Reliance Sect, so it actually felt quite familiar.

He stuck to his remote corner of the sect, ignoring everyone else. No one else cared to come to him, either. It was as if they didn't even notice his existence. Because of Meng Hao's experiences, a single glance was all it took for him to perceive the deep-seated feelings behind the cold expressions on their faces and the scorn in their eyes.

"That's fine," he thought, his face calm. He wasn't the type of person who enjoyed rowdiness. He didn't care about mountain peaks and fighting over resources. He was happy to be left alone to practice cultivation in peace and quiet.

At noon, Meng Hao rose to his feet. He casually felled some of the trees in the area and built a log cabin. Naturally, people noticed this, and everyone stared in shock, especially the people who harbored strong hostility toward him.

"He's actually building a log cabin?"

"It looks like he's really made up his mind to immerse himself in cultivation. But, does he really think that this will allow him to remain separate from sect affairs?!"

Up on Mount Ironblood, middle-aged Chang Yi saw what was going on, and frowned.

It was at this point that Meng Hao opened his eyes and looked out of his log cabin. Approaching slowly on foot was a somewhat emaciated looking middle-aged man. His body emanated the ancientness of time, and he was very thin. There was a ruthlessness to him, which presently seemed to have been replaced by complex emotions.

The ripples of a Nascent Soul cultivation base spread out from him, and when Meng Hao saw him, many different feelings filled him, along with a sense of reminiscence.

As he walked up slowly, his appearance caused many of the surrounding disciples to be shocked.

“That’s Elder Brother Wang Youcai!”

“What is Elder Brother Wang doing here?”

“Wait, look at his expression. Something strange is going on.”

People watched as Wang Youcai walked up to Meng Hao and looked at him silently. Clearly, he was recalling past times.

He didn’t say anything, and neither did Meng Hao. As they looked at each other, both of them seemed to be recalling Mount Daqing.

That was the place where they both began to walk their path of cultivation, and also the place… where Meng Hao and Xu Qing met.

After a long moment passed, Wang Youcai clenched his jaw as if to some inner pain.

“Do you drink?” he asked. With that, he sat down cross-legged and tossed a flagon of alcohol over to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao caught it, and immediately took a long drink. The alcohol burned as it slid down his throat. It felt almost like a knife stabbing into his guts.

“Li Fugui told me about what happened with Elder Sister Xu,” Wang Youcai said, keeping his voice low.

Meng Hao nodded and took another drink. His earliest memories of the cultivation world contained the group from Mount Daqing: Wang Youcai, Fatty, and Dong Hu.

The four of them, including Meng Hao, were taken by Xu Qing to the Reliance Sect. Later, Dong Hu and Wang Youcai apparently had a falling out, and Wang Youcai disappeared. Regarding Dong Hu, his disposition changed completely, and as for Fatty…. Well, out of all four of them, he seemed to have ended up far, far happier than the rest.

Wang Youcai and Meng Hao sat together drinking silently, each one wrapped up in various memories. Of course, there was one thing that existed in both of their memories, and that was Mount Daqing.

“Did you ever run into Dong Hu again?” Wang Youcai suddenly asked.

“Not after I left the State of Zhao,” replied Meng Hao. He looked at Wang Youcai, hesitated for a moment, and then asked, “Back then, the two of you…?”

“His body was physically weak, so I ended up caring for him like a younger brother,” replied Wang Youcai, his voice cool. “I would help him when it came time to haul water, and if people picked on him, I would handle it. In the end… he shoved me off a cliff because of a pearl.”

Meng Hao didn’t respond. He picked up the alcohol flagon and took a big mouthful.

“Be careful of Chang Yi,” continued Wang Youcai. “In fact, be careful of everyone in the Blood Demon Sect…. There is no such thing as camaraderie here. The only thing that matters is who is more vicious!” With a sigh, he rose to his feet and prepared to leave.

“You shouldn’t have come,” said Meng Hao, looking up at him.

Wang Youcai didn’t reply. He knew that what Meng Hao said was true; he shouldn’t have come. The entire sect currently viewed Meng Hao with hostility, which meant that after leaving, he would most certainly face some difficulties. And yet, he came anyway.

In fact, in almost the same instant that Wang Youcai rose to leave, Chang Yi stood there on the first mountain peak, a cruel smile on his lips.

“So, they know each other!” He flicked his sleeve and flew up into the air. “Follow me, Junior Brothers!” Immediately, nineteen beams of light rose into the air from Mount Ironblood and teleported down toward the bottom of the mountain. “You don’t have to make a move, Meng Hao,” he thought. “You can sit there and refuse to provoke anyone. But now, the time has come to see exactly what amazing abilities you have, and why the hell you deserve to be the Blood Prince.

“I’ll test you out and see exactly how profound you are. If you don’t fight back hard, then I’ll just keep pushing until you reach the boiling point. After all, I have plenty of methods to deal with you. If you fight back hard… well, that’s what I’m waiting for.

“Hopefully, you’ll end up killing someone, and then my Masters will have every right to throw you into the torture chamber!”

As Wang Youcai emerged from Meng Hao’s log cabin, twenty beams of light, including Chang Yi, shot down toward the very same area.

Their appearance on the scene instantly caught the attention of the Blood Demon Sect disciples in the surrounding forest. Their expressions turned lively; they knew that an entertaining drama was about to unfold.

Meanwhile, back on the second mountain peak, the seven apprentices of the Spirit Severing Patriarch were all paying very close attention. Merciless gleams glittered brightly in their eyes.

“Now we’ll see exactly how profound this Meng Hao actually is!”

“That Chang Yi has an irascible personality. A whole day hasn’t even passed and he already reached the limits of his patience!”

“No wonder he’s behaving like that, this is a good opportunity to test out Meng Hao. We’ll be able to learn a bit about him by observing how things turn out.”

On the fourth mountain peak, three figures wreathed in flames watched on coldly from outside their Immortal’s caves. The disciples of the fourth mountain peak were also watching on, expressions of derision clear on their faces.

One among their number was a young man, who held a magical fan in his hand. He exuded an air of coldness as his lips twisted into a smile.

“Chang Yi really couldn’t hold on very long,” he said. “That’s good, though. This is only a test; presumably, there won’t be too much of a ruckus. It does have to be said, though, that Chang Yi is quite the fool.

“It’s only been a single day, and Meng Hao was appointed directly by the Patriarch. If someone really tries to subdue him, the Patriarch will intervene. It’s too bad a good opportunity will have been lost.”

On the fifth mountain peak, the pretty young woman’s eyes were fixed on the scene that was playing out, and she was starting to get excited. As for the hunchbacked old man, he casually looked over to watch.

“Master, do you think this Meng Hao will really be subdued if the matter turns serious?” Her eyes flickered with viciousness.

“Serious?” said the old man, his tone one of pride in his own wisdom. “Oh no, it won’t get serious. It’s a small matter. At worst, the harmony will be broken temporarily. You have only practiced cultivation for a short time, but Master has lived for far too long, and has seen many things. I’ve watched things like this play out too many times.

“You just watch, the dispute regarding Meng Hao being the Blood Prince is just starting. It will take quite some time before it gets resolved…”

On Mount Blood Demon, Patriarch Blood Demon rested in the Blood Pond. His eyes opened, and he looked over at what was happening.

“So… what will he do?”

Li Shiqi was also paying close attention, and a profound glint could be seen in her eyes.

Everyone in the whole Blood Demon Sect was looking in Meng Hao’s direction. They all knew that this was his first time making a true public appearance in the sect. They all wanted to see exactly how he would respond to the test.

Of course, it was only a test….

Meng Hao’s face was calm as he looked at the twenty beams of light approaching from Mount Ironblood. It didn’t matter if it was Chang Yi up in front, or the other nineteen of his followers. They were all the same to Meng Hao.

Of the nineteen, eight were Nascent Soul cultivators, and eleven were at the great circle of Core Formation. As for Chang Yi, he had the highest cultivation base, the peak of the Nascent Soul stage.

“Wang Youcai!” cried out someone from the group. The sound of the voice was like springtime thunder echoing out in all directions.

They didn’t even bother with any pretenses; as soon as the voice rang out, its speaker turned into a red beam of light that shot out from the group toward Wang Youcai, filled with killing intent. Blood-colored magical items also flew out, whistling through the air. Three of the Nascent Soul Cultivators directly shot toward Wang Youcai.

As for everyone else, they surrounded the air, their eyes filled with coldness and derision as they eyed Meng Hao.

That was especially true of Chang Yi, whose eyes were sinister and cold as he hovered in mid air, his hands clasped behind his back. He looked at

Meng Hao, waiting to see what he would decide to do. If Meng Hao didn't make a move, then it meant allowing Wang Youcai to be seriously injured. If Meng Hao did make a move, well… that was exactly what Chang Yi was waiting for!

He firmly believed that in that moment, his Masters would appear and subdue Meng Hao.

Rumbling sounds echoed out, causing Wang Youcai's face to turn grim. He immediately teleported forward to escape, and at the same time transmitted an urgent message to Meng Hao.

"Don't do anything! This is Chang Yi. His Masters control the torture chamber, and you can't give them any reason to subdue you down. Don't worry about me." Even as Wang Youcai teleported forward, Chang Yi laugh coldly and waved his right hand. Seven tiny flags flew out, which rapidly expanded in mid-air to form seals that forced Wang Youcai back to the ground. Wang Youcai's face flickered as the three Nascent Soul Cultivators closed in, their faces filled with vicious killing intent.

Everything happened in the blink of an eye. Booms echoed out, and blood poured out of the corners of Wang Youcai's mouth. He retreated, performing an incantation gesture that caused a divine ability to appear. At the same time, he shouted, "Elder Brother Chang Yi, I'm a disciple of the second mountain peak, do you really dare to attack me?!"

"The second mountain peak?" replied Chang Yi, laughing. An arrogant expression appeared on his face as he glanced in the direction of that very mountain.

Immediately, a voice echoed out from the second mountain peak. "As is customary, we won't interfere with the matters of the torture chamber. Elder Brother Chang, if Wang Youcai violated any rules, then you can do anything you wish. However, if he didn't violate any rules, then you'll be held responsible."

Wang Youcai's face grew grimmer as he looked at the incoming vicious Nascent Soul cultivators. He gritted his teeth, and was just about to employ one of the sect’s restricted techniques to stimulate his Qi and Blood, when suddenly Meng Hao stood up. His expression was calm as he arrived next to Wang Youcai with a single step and gripped his shoulder.

In the moment that he appeared, all eyes instantly fixated on him. Everyone from all of the five mountain peaks were watching.

That was especially true of Chang Yi, who was inwardly going wild with joy.

“Blood Prince,” he said coolly. “What is the meaning of this? Don’t tell me you’re really going to interfere with torture chamber matters?” He suddenly glared angrily at the other Mount Ironblood cultivators, who looked a bit hesitant. “Why haven’t you apprehended him yet?!”

The cultivators gritted their teeth. Ignored Meng Hao, they advanced on Wang Youcai, their killing intent radiating about intensely.

It was at this point that a shocking coldness suddenly appeared in Meng Hao’s placid eyes.

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# Chapter 706: Kill!

A whistling sound filled the air as the three Mount Ironblood Nascent Soul cultivators gritted their teeth, ignored Meng Hao, and shot past him toward Wang Youcai, radiating killing intent.

They wouldn’t kill him, of course. However, they would seriously wound him, especially considering that they represented the torture chamber, and their Elder Brother Chang Yi had personally given the orders. In their opinion, they clearly occupied the superior position, especially considering that they were essentially backed by the two Ironblood Patriarchs. A trifling Blood Prince, even if he did have a cultivation base exceeding their own, couldn’t possibly fight back against the two Ironblood Patriarchs.

Because of this line of reasoning, their killing intent grew even more intense than before. Magical items appeared as they shot forward, and the blood-colored glow rose to the Heavens. Under the eyes of everyone in all of the mountain peaks of the sect, they shot forward.

A cold smile could be seen on the face of Chang Yi as he glared icily at Meng Hao, waiting to see how he would respond to this test.

“There is ruthlessness in my heart,” murmured Meng Hao. “It’s been there since I perished in the Milky Way Sea….” He lifted his right hand and casually waved a finger.

Although it appeared that the finger didn’t actually point down onto anything but air, in the blink of an eye, the fastest of the three Mount Ironblood cultivators immediately began to tremble. An expression of confusion flashed across his face, and then he coughed up blood. A moment later, he literally exploded.

It was as if an enormous, invisible pair of hands had crushed him into a pulp!

The speed with which it happened was incomparable. It was so sudden that everyone who was observing was flabbergasted.

Behind Meng Hao, Wang Youcai’s face fell, and his heart began to pound. “Not good,” he thought. “Meng Hao is far too impulsive! What should I do?”

Anxiety welled up in his heart. He could tell that Chang Yi was just testing Meng Hao, and could never have imagined that Meng Hao would act so rashly.

Chang Yi’s eyes went wide. Previously, he had never thought that the Blood Prince would attack… with lethal force. However, this twist caused joy to surge up inside of him. He couldn’t help but muse that the Blood Prince was clearly far too inexperienced. Coldness gleamed in Chang Yi’s eyes as he strode forward.

“Blood Prince!” he bellowed. “How dare you violate sect rules!!”

At the same time, the seven shady-looking apprentices on the second mountain peak watched on with glittering eyes, clearly interested in what was happening.

On the fourth mountain peak, the young man with the fan smiled faintly, and a strange light gleamed in his eyes.

As for the hunchbacked old man on the fifth mountain peak, his eyes flickered. Next to him, the pretty young woman stared in shock. She could never have guessed that Meng Hao would actually kill anyone.

“So, this Blood Prince turns out to be quite a vicious person,” said the hunchbacked old man, sighing emotionally. “However, he is a bit reckless, and also a tad young. He’s not like me, a person who has lived far, far too long.”

Meng Hao completely ignored the reactions of everyone around him. He seemed to be immersed within a world of regrets.

“The ruthlessness grew stronger in the Rebirth Cave….” he sighed. He waved his finger again, and the second incoming Nascent Soul Cultivator’s face fell. He suddenly stopped in place. Rumbling sounds echoed out, and then he exploded, completely dead in body and soul.

Another person slain!

The sight of it caused Chang Yi’s face to flicker, not with happiness, but with shock. Moments ago, he had assumed Meng Hao would stop after killing one person, but unexpectedly, he killed again.

Simultaneously, the surrounding cultivators’ eyes began to shine with a strange light. The disciples on the mountains felt their hearts filling with shock.

“In the Black Sieve Sect… the ruthlessness exploded out,” murmured Meng Hao. “And yet, it was not sated. Instead, it festered at the bottom of my heart and became even more intense, transforming into… what Patriarch Blood Demon mentioned. Devilishness.”

The third Nascent Soul cultivator, seeing his two companions killed right in front of him, was completely dumbstruck. His eyes went wide, and he began to retreat, but it was in that moment that Meng Hao raised his hand and gestured a third time with his finger.

“Eldest Brother, save me….” the man screamed. But then, his body exploded with a bang that echoed out in all directions. Everyone trembled violently, as they were shaken out of their reveries from the events of moments ago.

“He… actually killed three people in a row!”

“How moronic! This guy is a real idiot! He just arrived in the Blood Demon Sect, but won’t bow his head in submission, and even dares to act with unbridled aggression!”

“He’s in big trouble now. Not only did he dare to kill fellow sect members IN the sect, but he chose to kill torture chamber disciples!”

As the buzz of conversation echoed out, Chang Yi flew up into the air, glaring at Meng Hao the entire time. At first, he had been shocked, but that shock was been replaced with boundless elation. Inwardly, he was roaring with laughter.

“My Masters said not to take the initiative in provoking him,” he thought, “but as it turns out, the dolt decided to start killing. Considering his position, killing one could be tolerated, but he killed three…. In that case, if I could get him to kill some more, he would definitely be flirting with death!”

Having reached this point in his train of thought, Chang Yi smiled.

“I offered respect to you as the Blood Prince,” he called out, “and in response you dared to make deadly attacks in the sect, and even offended the torture chamber! It doesn’t matter how high your cultivation base is, you will be put down! Men… take him into custody!”

The faces of all the Mount Ironblood disciples flickered in hesitation. However, it was at this moment that two shocking pulses of Spirit Severing energy erupted from Mount Ironblood.

“When the Blood Prince commits a crime, he will be treated as anyone else!” rumbled an ancient, somber voice. “Take him into custody and bring him to Mount Ironblood. If he resists, subdue him immediately!” As the words echoed out throughout the entire sect, Chang Yi’s expression flickered, and he almost started to laugh out loud with self-righteous laughter.

“He’s dead!” he thought.

At the same time, the other disciples with Chang Yi started to look excited. Now that they knew they had the support of the two Ironblood Patriarchs, they were completely confident. They instantly surged forward toward Meng Hao, completely sure that the Blood Prince would never dare to attack them. If he did, then the two Ironblood Patriarchs would instantly reveal themselves.

Meanwhile on the second mountain peak, Mount Darkheaven, in a temple on the peak, Patriarch Darkheaven sat cross-legged in the form of a young boy. He wore a scholar’s garment, and his expression was grim as he cast his gaze down the mountain.

Outside of the temple were the seven apprentices, all of whom sneered coldly as they watched the scene play out. Their contempt for Meng Hao was even greater than before; they believed his ability to think and plan was clearly lacking.

In response to a simple test, he instantly revealed his weaknesses.

On the fourth mountain peak, the young man with the fan laughed to himself. “This Blood Prince is far too inexperienced,” he thought. “His cultivation base is incredible, but he doesn’t know how to conduct himself. Well, let this be a lesson to him. In the end, he isn’t worthy of his title. He will bow his head in submission soon enough.”

The hunchbacked old man on the fifth mountain peak sighed. “Too young.”

Meng Hao looked up, and his eyes were frigid. In fact, his entire person was like a block of ice, and the ruthless aura within him radiated out explosively.

“My ruthlessness turned into Devilishness,” he murmured, “and I can’t suppress it. It does not conform with my Dao, but… it is what it is…. I might as well let it out!”

He stepped forward, and in the blink of an eye, his killing intent erupted out. At the same time, he swished his sleeve.

It was a simple wave of an arm, but it caused an astonishing gale-force wind to rage up. It was like a wind of Heavenly destruction that swept out in all directions, slamming into more than a dozen incoming cultivators.

As soon as it touched them, their faces fell, and blood sprayed out of their mouths. Regardless of the various levels of their cultivation bases, they were incapable of standing up to the mightiness of the wind, and their bodies were ripped into shreds. Blood and gore sprayed out in all directions.

As for Chang Yi, his face instantly went as pale as death, and his pupils constricted. His cultivation base was at the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage, so it was with great astonishment that he was barely able to stand up to the wind. However, the wind then wrapped around him, transforming into an enormous hand that grabbed him violently.

It squeezed down, and cracking sounds could be heard. Chang Yi screamed miserably. “Masters! Save me!!”

When the onlookers saw this, their faces flickered with astonishment. Up on the second mountain peak, Patriarch Darkheaven shot to his feet. The hearts of the seven apprentices outside of the temple filled with shock.

On the fourth mountain peak and the fifth mountain peak, similar scenes played out.

“What is he doing!?”

“I can’t believe he actually killed so many people!!”

“Is he challenging the torture chamber to battle?”

“This… this was just a test, but he responded in this way!?”

At this point, a cold snort echoed out from Mount Ironblood, and two streams of divine sense shot down toward the land below to rescue Chang Yi.

Meng Hao’s expression was calm as the huge hand in mid-air suddenly began to squeeze shut.

“Stay your hand!” roared the two streams of divine sense.

Even as the sound rang out, Chang Yi’s screaming reached a fever pitch.

“No…” he cried. “This… was just… a test….” Before he could finish speaking, a boom echoed out as his body was crushed into a pulp of mutilated flesh. His Nascent Soul was also completely destroyed. He was dead in flesh and soul.

To him, it was just a test, but to Meng Hao… when it came to attacking, there was no such thing as any so-called testing.

Deathly silence filled the air. No one could ever have predicted that a simple test would unexpectedly end this way. Moments later, the two streams of divine sense descended toward Meng Hao.

“Are you looking to die?!” roared one.

“How dare you kill my Mount Ironblood disciples! I’m going to crush you!” The two Ironblood Patriarchs were furious. At the moment, it didn’t matter that Meng Hao was the Blood Prince, or that they could sense something strange about his cultivation base. Those things didn’t matter.

Truth be told, there was something strange about Meng Hao’s cultivation base. The life force of a Resurrection Lily obscured the traces of his Second Severing, making it seem that he was only in the First Severing level.

He looked up, and not a trace of hesitation could be seen in his eyes as he sent his divine sense shooting out with intense ferocity.

BAM!

His divine sense was simply too powerful. The fact that the two Ironblood Patriarchs were Spirit Severing cultivators didn’t matter. Their streams of divine sense were completely incapable of standing up to to Meng Hao’s, and were immediately shattered.

Massive ripples raged through the Blood Demon Sect, whipping the trees and vegetation into a fury. All of the surrounding cultivators gasped in astonishment.

“There’s no need to come down here to try to subdue me,” said Meng Hao coldly. “I’ll head up there to subdue the two of you!” With that, he flew directly toward the first mountain peak.

As of this moment, the entire Blood Demon Sect was in a complete uproar!

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# Chapter 707: Subduing!

It took Meng Hao only a single step forward to reach the first mountain peak. The instant he stepped foot onto it, all of Mount Ironblood shook. Inside their temple at the peak of the mountain, the faces of the two Ironblood Patriarchs flickered, and they erupted with shocking First Severing energy.

Rumbling filled Heaven and Earth, and the clouds and mist in all directions seethed. At the same time, an enormous face appeared in mid-air up above Mount Ironblood. It was completely the color of blood, and two horns protruded from its forehead.

It looked matchlessly vicious. As for the two Ironblood Patriarchs, their robes whipped madly in the wind, and in their hands they held enormous battle-axes.

The battle-axes were Demon Weapons; the two Patriarchs were facing a mortal enemy, and their hearts were trembling with great waves of shock.

“I can’t believe… he’s so powerful!!”

“What level is his cultivation base?! I can’t see any traces of a Second Severing, but even at the great circle of the First Severing, he shouldn’t have such powerful divine sense!”

“Could it be that he cultivates some technique to specifically enhance his divine sense!?”

The moment the two Patriarchs appeared was the same moment that Meng Hao stepped foot onto the stairs leading up to the peak of the first mountain. Slowly, he began to make his way toward the top.

All eyes were fixed on him, and everyone was thinking that as of this moment, Meng Hao really was worthy of his title after all.

On the second mountain peak, the scholarly looking child, Patriarch Darkheaven, could sense the result of the confrontation between the divine sense of Meng Hao and the two Ironblood Patriarchs. His face was covered with shock as he hastily stood, then instantly teleported out of his temple.

Outside, his seven apprentices gasped, and their faces filled with disbelief.

“He resisted the divine sense of the two Ironblood Patriarchs all by himself!!”

“Just… just what type of cultivation base does he have!?”

“What is he doing? Wasn’t this just a test?”

“QUIET!” barked Patriarch Darkheaven. Shocked, his seven apprentices instantly went as silent as cicadas during winter.

On the fourth mountain peak, the three old men wreathed in flames also rushed out of their temple. Their expression were that of astonishment as they looked toward the first mountain peak.

Off to the side, the young man with the fan who had previously been observing the events with a look of disdain on his face, now stood there slack-jawed, seemingly incapable of even breathing.

He suddenly realized that this was not a situation in which the Blood Prince was being immature. Quite the opposite, his cultivation base was so high that he didn’t need to bother with any sort of strategy or planning. He took out all of his opponents in one blow!

As soon as Meng Hao started up the staircase, the first, second, and fourth mountain peaks were sent into complete, reeling shock. In that same moment, the wind and clouds surged. A black fog appeared, within which could also be seen a white fog.

In the blink of an eye, black and white began to swirl around each other and form into the shape of two enormous pearls. Furthermore, beneath the two pearls was a mountain wreathed in mist and clouds!

The Ninth Mountain!

The Black White Pearls and the Ninth Mountain!

Together!

This was something that Meng Hao had come up with after his battle with Patriarch Six-Daos of the Black Sieve Sect. Although it was not complete, he was still able to use them to shocking effect.

Rumbling echoed out as the Black White Pearls and the Ninth Mountain crushed down onto the two Patriarchs of Mount Ironblood.

RUMBLE!

The ground trembled, and rumbling filled the air. The two Ironblood Patriarchs' faces quivered.

Meanwhile, back on the fifth mountain peak, the hunchbacked old man's eyes widened, and he took a deep breath.

The pretty young woman who stood next to him was utterly shocked.

"What… what is he doing? Could he really be trying to fight back against Mount Ironblood? Master, didn't you say things wouldn't get serious?"

The hunchbacked old man blinked and cleared his throat. "Calm down, alright? Based on my experience, I can tell you that the matter definitely won't get extremely serious. At the most, the first mountain peak will be involved. Hahaha! It seems this Blood Prince is going to take it as a show of force!"

In the central mountain peak, Mount Blood Demon, Patriarch Blood Demon's face was tranquil, but a smile of contentment could be seen on his face.

“The ruthlessness in your heart is too intense, and can’t be dispelled. You might as well let it condense into Devilishness. This has been a long time coming. It wasn’t that I wanted to coerce you; rather, this was the only method that would count as being helpful to you.

“You don’t understand now, but when you reach your Third Severing, you will be enlightened.”

Li Shiqi was also on Mount Blood Demon, and her eyes shone with a strange light as she watched the scene play out. After all, she knew Meng Hao much, much better than anyone else in the Blood Demon Sect.

The events in the ancient Demon Immortal Sect were imprinted indelibly in her heart, and she hadn’t forgotten about anything that happened there. Furthermore, after returning, she told no one in the sect about what had happened, with the exception of Patriarch Blood Demon.

Most shocked of all was Wang Youcai. He stared blankly as everything happened, then began to breathe deeply. Determination began to glow in his eyes. “Meng Hao… is so strong! I… can’t let myself fall behind!”

RUMBLE!!

A massive clamor filled the air as Meng Hao took his third step up the stairs. Up in mid-air, the pearls in the black and white mist, as well as the Ninth Mountain they orbited, shot toward the peak of the mountain. Under the force of the incredible pressure, the two Ironblood Patriarch’s gigantic, ferocious face suddenly revealed an expression of pain.

Meng Hao’s face was cold as he took his fourth step.

Shocking rumbling caused everything to shake. The face formed by the energy of the two Ironblood Patriarchs struggled and howled. However, it did no good. Under the crushing pressure, it shattered into countless fragments.

To the observers, it almost looked like half of the sky had been ripped apart, superseded by the Black White Pearls and the Ninth Mountain. Having seen their vicious face destroyed, the two Ironblood Patriarchs trembled and coughed up blood. In the blink of an eye, they seemed to age, and their faces filled with astonishment.

“Just how powerful is he?!” they thought, their minds reeling. In their wildest imaginations, they could never have guessed that Meng Hao, using only his own aura, could suppress them to this extent.

On the second mountain peak, Patriarch Darkheaven’s face flickered as he stared at the Black White Pearls and the Ninth Mountain. “What divine ability is that?!”

The apprentices next to him were trembling, and so were rest of the 50,000 cultivators of the first mountain peak. They looked up at the sky, and at Meng Hao, and were terrified.

The three flame-cloaked figures on the fourth mountain peak watched on in shock.

“Crushing! Now, that is crushing!”

“He didn’t even attack them directly, he just used energy to pound the two Ironblood Patriarchs into such a tattered state!”

“Blood Prince! He really is the Blood Prince!”

Everyone was panting. In the Blood Demon Sect, respect was shown to the strong. Other than some of the Elite Apprentices who earned their place because of their bloodline, everyone else was now completely astonished by Meng Hao’s show of force.

He took a fifth step.

Everything shook as the Black White Pearls and the Ninth Mountain continued to emit crushing pressure. The two Ironblood Patriarch’s faces flickered, and with growling roars, they shot up into the air. However, even as they flew up, rumbling echoed out and they were swatted back down.

They slammed into the top of the mountain, causing it to tremble violently as it sank down into the ground by a full three meters!

All observers were dumbfounded.

The two Ironblood Patriarchs coughed up blood. Their bodies were covered with wounds, and their astonishment regarding the Ninth Mountain and the Black White Pearls could not grow any further.

“If we can’t fight the divine ability, then we’ll battle with his true self!”

“His magical techniques are monstrous. We can’t fight from a distance, we need to get closer to attack!”

The two Patriarchs roared, and their bodies emitted thumping sounds as they began to grow. They rapidly turned into thirty-meter tall, four-armed giants that looked like devilish fiends.

Their foreheads sported double horns, and they looked nothing at all like humans, but rather, Demons. Their energy exploded out violently as they hefted their battle-axes and then transforming into streaks of light that shot down toward Meng Hao with monstrous killing intent.

“DIE!”

“KILL!”

Meng Hao was taking his sixth step as they bore down on him. He glanced at the two Demons coldly, then lifted his right hand and slapped out violently.

His fleshly body had experienced sanctification and was essentially at the great circle of Spirit Severing. It was second only to Dao Seeking!

His cultivation base was at the Second Severing, but his true power… placed him as the number one person under Dao Seeking in all the lands of South Heaven.

His palm roared through the air to land directly onto the two Demons.

A huge boom echoed out as the battle-axes shattered into pieces. The faces of the two Demons filled with astonishment, and blood sprayed out of their mouths. Miserable shrieks could be heard, and they appeared to be on the verge of exploding. Blood spurted out everywhere as they were sent tumbling backward.

Meng Hao’s palm slammed them back up toward the peak of the mountain. At the same time, the Black White Pearls and the Ninth Mountain began to descend.

“NOOO!!”

“Patriarch, save us!!”

“Darkheaven! Demonfire! Help us!”

When the two Ironblood Patriarchs called out, bloody glows rose up from the second and fourth mountains. As they shot forward, a voice echoed out.

“Enough!”

“Your power has been established! Why haven’t you stayed your hand!?”

The ruthlessness in Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he took his eighth step.

“SCREW OFF!” he said, sending his divine sense exploding out. It transformed into a monstrous blood-colored beam that shot toward the incoming bloody glows. Its explosive intensity instantly shattered the two opposing beams, and they vanished.

“Still want test me? Well then, take a good long look. I’ve taken a liking to this Mount Ironblood.” As his voice rumbled out, the Black White Pearls and the Ninth Mountain slammed down onto the peak of Mount Ironblood.

CRUSH!

Everything quaked, and a riot of colors flashed across the sky. The 50,000 disciples of the first mountain peak trembled as the two Ironblood

Patriarchs screamed miserably. Their bodies were instantly smashed by the Ninth Mountain.

As their bodies were destroyed, their Nascent Divinities flew out, but were unable to escape. The Black White Pearls immediately absorbed them, and they were sealed inside.

In that moment, Meng Hao finished taking his eighth step, and reached the peak of the mountain. As he stood there alone, all of the disciples of the first mountain peak dropped trembling to their knees and began to kowtow.

“We offer our respects, Blood Prince!”

“We offer our respects, Blood Prince!”

The voices echoed out from the first mountain peak, rising into the air and spreading out like massive waves.

The entire Blood Demon Sect was filled with the sound of it.

However, even as the sound rolled out, a grim, penetrating voice could be heard.

“Meng Hao, you might have a high cultivation base, but this is the Blood Demon Sect! Killing the torture chamber Patriarchs to usurp their position is against sect rules! You WILL provide compensation!”

“Crushing the two Ironblood Fellow Daoists requires that you provide compensation!”

The voices came from the second and fourth mountain peaks. Patriarch Darkheaven and the three Demonfire Patriarchs refused to give in, and in their minds, Meng Hao had already established his power. In their opinion, Patriarch Blood Demon would certainly appear soon. Since that was the case, they spoke up to maintain their own face, and make sure everyone knew that they did not fear the Blood Prince.

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# Chapter 708: Sever the Devilish, Seek the Dao!

In their opinions, there was no way that Meng Hao would be willing to make enemies of the entire Blood Demon Sect. The price had already been paid for the test, so they would naturally speak up to preserve their dignity.

Therefore, they made up their minds to worry later about how to deal with Meng Hao. In their reckoning, the next that would happen was that Patriarch Blood Demon would appear and smooth things over.

On the fifth mountain peak, the pretty young woman raised her hand to her chest. Everything that had occurred so far had left a deep impression upon her. As for the hunchbacked old man, he took a deep breath, cleared his throat, and then coolly said, “Patriarch Blood Demon will appear now, and the matter will be concluded. Ah, this Blood Prince…. Too young. Too impulsive. I’ve lived for too long and….”

However, before he could finish speaking….

Meng Hao completely ignored the mangled corpses at his feet and turned his head to look at the second mountain peak. The icy ruthlessness in his eyes grew even stronger.

“How about I give you your compensation right now!” he said. To the disbelief of all onlookers, he began to move straight toward the second mountain peak!

The Blood Demon Sect instantly went as quiet as a graveyard.

On the second mountain peak, Patriarch Darkheaven’s face fell.

“Lunatic!” he thought. “This damned bastard is a lunatic!”

Face flickering, he backed up. “I… I was just babbling,” he thought. “But he’s actually… dammit!”

The three Demonfire Patriarchs on the fourth mountain peak were also shocked. Gritting their teeth, they flew in succession toward the second mountain peak.

Meng Hao moved with incredible speed, so it only took a moment for him to close in. He raised his right hand, and the Black White Pearls appeared, circulating around the Ninth Mountain. As they hovered above the second mountain peak, the sky shook and the land quaked.

The disciples of the Blood Demon Sect were flabbergasted to the extreme. Gasps could be heard as they looked up at their matchlessly domineering Blood Prince!

“‘There’s no need to come down here to try to crush me, I’ll head up there to crush all of you!’

“‘How about I give you your compensation right now!’

“That’s what the Blood Prince said! Domineering to the max! He’s definitely the Blood Prince of our Blood Demon Sect!”

The bloodline disciples of various other Patriarchs in the sect were now all panting as they realized that their Blood Prince was completely domineering. Their eyes were filled with fanaticism as they stared at Meng Hao.

To have a Blood Prince like this was something incredibly impressive.

In contrast, Patriarch Darkheaven of the second mountain, as well as his seven apprentices, were all pale-faced and trembling. Previously, they had sneered at Meng Hao and looked down with scorn at his youth. By now, they had come to their senses, and could do nothing but stare at him in astonishment.

As for the young man with the fan on the fourth mountain peak, his face was pale white with shock. He suddenly realized that the Blood Prince… might look harmless, but was in fact completely overbearing when provoked.

He did not give second chances, and when he decided to establish his might, he did so completely and thoroughly.

Meng Hao sped toward the second mountain peak, and when he stepped foot onto it, the entire mountain rocked back and forth. Meng Hao raised his hand toward the retreating Patriarch Darkheaven and extended his finger.

“You want compensation? Here’s my compensation. Compensation to the second mountain peak, delivered by me for Wang Youcai.” The reason Meng Hao chose to make a move against the second mountain peak really was Wang Youcai.

Meng Hao had noticed how they treated him earlier, and was not pleased. As he extended his finger, wind blasted out that seemed to split the Heavens. The Black White Pearls and the Ninth Mountain transformed into a blur that shot toward the boy in the scholar’s garments, who was none other than Patriarch Darkheaven.

Patriarch Darkheaven’s face fell, and he immediately performed an incantation. A bloody glow erupted around him, transforming into a blood-colored blade that slashed toward the blast of wind from Meng Hao’s finger.

The slashing blade was filled with the energy of the great circle of the First Severing, an explosive power that appeared to be almost on the verge of Second Severing.

Meng Hao snorted and waved his finger again.

“How dare you!!” howled one of the three Demonfire Patriarchs, an old man who emanated the aura of Second Severing. “Meng Hao, you’ve gone too far! You think you’re tough because you’re in the Second Severing? So what if you are!?”

Meng Hao didn’t even turn to look at them. He simply waved his sleeve.

An enormous boom echoed out as the finger attack slammed into the blood-colored blade. The blade immediately fell to pieces, and blood sprayed out of the mouth of Patriarch Darkheaven. Even as he tumbled back like a kite with its string cut, Meng Hao’s second finger attack slammed into him.

Another boom rattled out, and Patriarch Darkheaven let out a bloodcurdling scream as over half of his body directly exploded. His Nascent Divinity flew out, which was the exact moment in which the three Demonfire Patriarchs from the fourth mountain peak arrived.

“Well,” said Meng Hao calmly, “since you’re here, I guess I might as well provide some compensation to you as well.” He stepped toward them.

The three were shocked. However, the Second Severing Patriarch, who was the eldest of the three Demonfire Patriarchs, waved his hand, causing a sea of blood to appear.

“Why do you keep attacking us?! What are you, a spy from another sect? Did you trick Patriarch Blood Demon!?”

“My license to kill will cover seventy-eight more deaths this year,” replied Meng Hao calmly.

As soon as the words left his mouth, the entire Blood Demon Sect uttered a collective gasp, even the three Demonfire Patriarchs, whose eyes went wide. As for the Nascent Divinity of Patriarch Darkheaven, his face was a picture of shock.

The surrounding disciples immediately broke into an uproar in response to Meng Hao’s shocking words.

“License to kill?!?!”

“The Blood Prince has… don’t tell me he has a license to kill!?”

“Heavens, does the license to kill cover all cultivation bases?”

“He has so much power! The lives of all disciples are in his hands!”

On the fifth mountain peak, the hunchbacked old man stood there blankly. Next to him, the pretty young woman’s eyes were wide and she was panting.

“Master, what’s this license to kill all about?”

Without even thinking about it, the old man started to talk. “Ahem, there’s no need to worry. I’ve lived for too long, and this is just a test, it won’t….”

He was only about half way through his speech when he noticed his apprentice staring at him with a strange look in her eye. He cleared his throat again.

“Master, you said the same thing in the very beginning, except that Chang Yi got killed. You repeated yourself, and afterward the first mountain peak was crushed…. You said the same thing, after which, the second mountain peak and the fourth mountain peak took action.

“Now, you’re saying the same thing yet again….” The young woman trailed off and didn’t continue speaking.

In the same moment that her voice trailed off, Meng Hao waved his arm, causing the Ninth Mountain to appear and shoot toward the three Demonfire Patriarchs.

As it bore down on them, the three Demonfire Patriarchs’ expressions were extremely serious. They immediately unleashed divine abilities. As for the Second Severing cultivator, he spit out a fireball that set the sea of blood aflame. Bloody fire roared up around him, rapidly transforming into the shape of a gigantic deer’s head.

The deer’s head was formed completely of fire, and it had two enormous antlers. It shot toward the incoming Ninth Mountain. As it flew through the air, the other two Demonfire Patriarchs combined their power to cause the body of a deer to form around them, which then connected to the deer head.

The massive, fully formed deer then hurdled toward the Black White Pearls and the Ninth Mountain, emanating incredible ripples of Second Spirit Severing power that were only a hair away from the power of Third Severing!

Meng Hao's eyes glinted with coldness. Without hesitation, he waved his right hand, causing the power of his cultivation base to explode out. Fissures appeared in the air all around him, the wind surged and the clouds seethed. Rumbling sounds echoed about in all directions as the Black White Pearls and the Ninth Mountain suddenly expanded, doubling in size and might.

The increase caused an incredible pressure to radiate out. Inside the deer, the three Demonfire Patriarchs' faces filled with disbelief.

BOOM!

The Ninth Mountain slammed into the giant deer, sending a huge explosion blasting out in all directions. The deer was torn into pieces, and the three old men inside coughed up blood as they were sent spinning backward through the air. Their cultivation bases were in chaos, their faces pale, and their hearts surged with waves of shock.

"This is impossible!"

"He's so strong!! He wasn't even fazed by the combined power of all three of us!"

They weren't the only incredulous ones. All of the disciples in the Blood Demon Sect had similar reactions. Even Li Shiqi, who knew a bit about Meng Hao's cultivation base, was shocked.

She never expected Meng Hao to be powerful to such a terrifying level. After all, she only knew a bit about what had happened in the Black Sieve Sect.

Nobody knew the true level of Meng Hao's strength. Were it not for Patriarch Six-Daos, the Black Sieve Sect would have been completely annihilated.

The hunchbacked old man on the fifth mountain peak had an incredibly serious look on his face, and his eyes shone with a strange light.

“I’m old,” he muttered. “Really and truly old. I finally ran into one of those legendary inhumans, and yet didn’t recognize it…. He’s clearly a Dao Severing inhuman!

“There is a rare type of cultivator whose lives are filled with such twists and turns that they either perish, or shock the Heavens! When they mature, they can slay the Dao Seeking stage, even when in the Spirit Severing stage!

“People like that, are called… Dao Severing!

“His ruthlessness has already turned into a Devilish will…. However, the Devilish and the Dao are linked. Both contain a will of persistence. Both are ultimate achievements!

“The path of Dao Severing is a difficult one. Sever the Dao, become a Devil!

“Of course, Devil Severing is another path, an even more difficult one. Sever the Devil, achieve the Dao!! Patriarch, is that why you made him the Blood Prince of the Blood Demon Sect?

“Dao Severing requires a Dao heart. Devil Severing requires a Devilish will!

“I suddenly have a very strong desire… to be there the day he performs Devil Severing!

“Sever the Devilish. Seek the Dao!” Even as the old man muttered to himself on the Fifth Mountain, his eyes grew bright, and he turned to look at Mount Blood Demon.

In Mount Blood Demon, Patriarch Blood Demon sat cross-legged in the Blood Pond. His eyes gleamed with abstruseness, within which infinite ancientness seemed to flow.

“Sever the Devilish,” he murmured. “Seek the Dao!

“Meng Hao, you can’t blame me. I planted the devilish seed within you, but the reason is that the path of the League of Demon Sealers is incorrect…. I will use my remaining years to help you mould your Devilish will, and then wait for you… to Sever the Devil….

“That is Dao Seeking!

“Sever the Devilish. Seek the Dao, then Sever the Immortal. What’s so difficult about that?!”

“When that time comes, you will have sown great Karma with the Demonic. When the day arrives in which you reach the true pinnacle… don’t forget your Demonic destiny.

“Wait for me, my sister, my friends. We will be meeting again soon…. Soon, I will be able to accompany you once more….” The aura of death which surrounded him continued to grow stronger.

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# Chapter 709: Blood Demon Grand Magic! 1

The enormous deer collapsed, and the three Demonfire Patriarchs were sent tumbling backward. Trembling, Patriarch Darkheaven’s Nascent Divinity attempted to flee with all the speed he could muster. His heart was currently filled with infinite regret, regret at the words he had spoken earlier.

He also felt incredible hatred toward the two Ironblood Patriarchs, and especially the now-dead Chang Yi. Were it not for them, he and the others wouldn’t be in such a tough situation now.

“Dammit, if I had known earlier that it would end up like this, I would never have provoked that jinx!”

“Why hasn’t the Patriarch appeared? Don’t tell me this Meng Hao is really going to kill all of us?!”

As they rushed to escape, Meng Hao’s eyes flashed with coldness. He sped forward with unspeakable speed that caused the four cultivators’ scalps to go numb. As he neared, he began to unleash the Blood Demon Grand Magic.

As soon as the magic began to stir, a blood qi exploded up around him, and his right hand turned completely crimson, as if it were made of blood.

“The first stratum of the Blood Demon Grand Magic!”

“The Qi and Blood stratum!”

Meng Hao stretched his hand out toward the three Demonfire Patriarchs and Patriarch Darkheaven’s Nascent Divinity. Although they were separated by dozens of meters, as soon as he reached his hand out, their bodies were surrounded by an enormous blood-colored vortex.

The shocking vortex began to rumble, and from a distance it actually didn’t look like a vortex at all, but rather, a gigantic hand!

The four cultivators were now stuck in the middle of the palm, and were unable to extricate themselves.

The faces of the four filled with even more intense shock than they had been. They could sense that because of the vortex, the qi and blood in their bodies was boiling. Furthermore, they couldn’t even control their cultivation bases; the more they tried, the more they found themselves unable to suppress the boiling.

Immediately, countless cries rang out through the Blood Demon Sect.

“Blood Demon Grand Magic!!”

“This is the Blood Demon Grand Magic!!”

Countless disciples’ eyes gleamed with covetousness as they looked at Meng Hao.

“Only the Blood Prince is qualified to cultivate… the Blood Demon Grand magic!!”

“I can’t believe that the Blood Prince actually acquired the first stratum in only a single day!”

The disciples looked up at Meng Hao and the blood-colored vortex spinning in mid-air, and were filled with both shock as well as unprecedented levels of fanaticism.

There was no other magical technique that could inspire such a craze among the Blood Demon Sect’s disciples like the Blood Demon Grand Magic did. After all, the Blood Demon Grand Magic was the number one magic in the entire Blood Demon Sect!

Once the Blood Demon Grand Magic was unleashed, the three Patriarchs began to struggle violently. Rumbling sounds could be heard as the power of their cultivation bases exploded out. However, it doesn't matter what they did; they were completely incapable of freeing themselves.

Their fleshly bodies began to wither as blood and Qi pulsed out from inside of them to be absorbed by the vortex and then fused into Meng Hao. His mind trembled as he sensed the power of his fleshly body shooting up at high speed!

As the qi fused into him, an intense sensation of strength rose up from deep within.

"So this is the Blood Demon Grand Magic!" he thought, his eyes shining with a strange light.

The three Demonfire Patriarchs howled.

"Nooo!! The power of my qi and blood! Dammit!"

"Stop! Meng Hao, if you slaughter members of your own sect, you'll meet a horrific end!"

"Patriarch Blood Demon, save me!!"

They were unable to prevent the qi and blood from flowing out of them, only to be replaced by a sensation of incredible weakness. The only one who wasn't affected was Patriarch Darkheaven, who had already been reduced to his Nascent Divinity; nevertheless, he was still frightened and astonished.

The entire scene was incredibly shocking to all the onlookers. Hovering in mid-air, Meng Hao lifted up his right arm and made a grasping motion toward the blood-colored hand, causing more pulses of qi and blood to emerge from the men in front of him, which he then absorbed.

"Do you submit, or not!?" he asked coolly.

"Never!!" cried one of the three Demonfire Patriarchs.

“We three Demonfire Patriarchs serve Patriarch Blood Demon! Do you really think we would submit to a trifling brat like you!?” In their rage, the three Demonfire Patriarchs continued to struggle to free themselves from the vortex, and yet were completely incapable.

Their bodies were visibly withering, their skin was smeared with blood. And yet, that did not leave them in despair. What truly left them without hope was… Patriarch Blood Demon still had not appeared.

That cleared up any doubts about one matter. The license to kill that Meng Hao mentioned truly did exist!

And even the lives of Spirit Severing Patriarchs were covered by it. That also made it obvious that… to Patriarch Blood Demon, no one in the entire Blood Demon Sect could compare to Meng Hao!

Because of that, the heart of the Demonfire Patriarch with the weakest cultivation base began to quiver. Blood was oozing out of him, and he could feel the shadow of death looming over him.

“I submit!!” he cried through gritted teeth. “I submit!! Blood Prince, I give you my allegiance!”

The other two Demonfire Patriarchs were furious.

“Third Brother, what are you doing!”

“How could you possibly give your allegiance to a brat like that!?!?”

His voice cool, Meng Hao said, “Swear a Dao oath.”

“You….” The Third Demonfire smiled bitterly, then looked over apologetically at the other two Demonfire Patriarchs. He had no choice but to submit to Meng Hao. The terror he felt because of Meng Hao caused coldness to rise up from within the depths of his heart. That was especially true after he realized that Meng Hao… really could kill him.

It didn’t matter that he was a Spirit Severing Patriarch of the Blood Demon Sect!

He really had no other option. He dared not rebel against the sect, and was already terrified of Patriarch Blood Demon. Adding one more terrifying person into the mix, especially since it was the Blood Prince, was something he could accept.

He quickly swore a Dao oath, after which the gravitational power of the vortex surrounding him ceased to affect him.

Because the Qi and Blood stratum of the Blood Demon Grand Magic now had one less person to split its power amongst, the other two Demonfire Patriarchs felt even more pressure than before. qi and blood flowed madly into Meng Hao. At the same time, he suddenly seemed to slip into a strange, indescribable state.

He suddenly sensed… a sort of boundless awareness that existed outside of the lands of South Heaven. It seemed to be faintly connected to the universe in myriad, uncountable ways.

“Is that Dao Seeking…?” thought Meng Hao, his eyes glittering.

“I submit! I’ll swear allegiance!!” roared the Second Demonfire Patriarch. He gritted his teeth and swore a Dao oath. His body was already extremely withered, and his energy almost completely depleted. If he tried to hold on any longer, his fleshly body would be crushed into dust.

Now that he swore allegiance, the most powerful of the three Demonfire Patriarchs, the Second Severing cultivator, was alone. His body was stained red from blood, and rips could even be seen in his skin. Clearly, he was on the verge of collapsing.

“I submit!!” he said, letting out a long sigh. Under the Blood Demon Grand Magic, he had no other choice but to submit. He too was incredibly intimidated by Meng Hao, whom he was simply unable to contend against whether it was in terms of cultivation or combat skills.

As soon as the Demonfire Patriarch submitted and offered up his Dao oath, Meng Hao’s eyes flashed over to Patriarch Darkheaven, who had been sucked into the vortex. Though the vortex had no effect on him due to his lack of a physical body, his whole body shuddered when Meng Hao's gaze landed on his body and he hastily squeaked, "I submit too!!"

When the leadership of the second and fourth mountain peaks submitted, the hunchbacked old man on the fifth peak raised his voice and called out, "I am Yuan Daozi! I offer my respects, Blood Prince!"

Behind him, the pretty young woman was looking at Meng Hao with ardor burning in her eyes. She immediately dropped to her knees and kowtowed, as did all of the disciples on the fifth mountain peak.

"Respects, Blood Prince!"

Up in mid-air, the three Demonfire Patriarchs as well as Patriarch Darkheaven unhesitatingly clasped hands and bowed deeply.

"Respects, Blood Prince!"

The fourth mountain peak, the second, the first, all of the 200,000 disciples of the Blood Demon Sect joined their voices together. It far exceeded the sound of the combined voices of the 50,000 disciples of the first mountain peak. The massive sound waves exploded out, shaking everything.

As he hovered in mid-air, Meng Hao waved a hand, causing the blood-colored vortex to vanish. At the same time, the absorption of any qi and blood ceased.

"I can't waste any of it," he thought. "I need to see exactly how powerful this Blood Demon Grand Magic is." A strange light appeared in his eyes, and he clenched his fist. Then, he focused all of the power of the qi and blood he had absorbed into a single blow aimed at the sky.

Bright colors flashed, and a huge roaring sound filled the air as Meng Hao's fist shot out. The sky shook, and the air was rent by rifts. An enormous black hole appeared in mid-air, which then transformed into a twisting beam of light that shot off into the void.

From a distance, it almost looked like a black dragon, incomparably vicious, with a desire to cause the fall of the Heavens.

The rip in the Heavens emanated an aura that left even the Spirit Severing cultivators trembling. These were the vibrations of Dao Seeking!

Everyone was shocked to the core, even the Spirit Severing Patriarchs.

“That attack… contained the will of Dao Seeking!”

“That was comparable to the early Dao Seeking stage!” As of this moment, everyone was completely convinced of Meng Hao’s qualifications, and no one dared to show him even the slightest scrap of disrespect.

As for the ordinary disciples, they were in awe to the point of fanaticism, and cries to the Blood Prince echoed out with increasing intensity.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. He had viewed the Blood Demon Grand Magic as incredible before, but as of now, he realized that it was actually far more powerful than he had ever imagined!

“This art far exceeds the Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal. It’s probably on the same level as the mysterious Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao!” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. 2

“And this is only the first stratum of the Blood Demon Grand Magic! If I can cultivate it all the way through the third level and the fourth, thus unleashing the great circle of the second stratum, then I can summon ten vortexes!

“The hand formed by those ten vortexes would have the power to absorb cultivation bases!

“If I can complete the fifth and sixth levels, which is the third stratum, the Blood Soul stratum… according to the description of the technique, the sky will turn the color of blood, and the Heavens will transform into an enormous hand that can wrest away souls!

“No wonder Patriarch Blood Demon said that if I can reach the fourth level, I can slay Patriarch Six-Daos of the Black Sieve Sect!

“When I reach the fourth level, the great circle of the Spirit Meridians second stratum, then I can definitely strike down the early Dao Seeking stage!

“This art, is a Demon magic!” He looked up in the direction of the Black Sieve Sect, and the killing intent in his eyes grew stronger. Deep in his heart, even more ruthlessness took hold, and his devilish will grew stronger.

“Of the magic that I cultivate, the Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal can strengthen my fleshly body, and the Blood Demon Grand Magic along with the Blood Immortal divine abilities can act as my trump cards.

“Furthermore, by fusing the Black White Pearls with the Ninth Mountain, I have created my own divine ability!

“Now… all I have to do is cultivate the Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao, and I can form a true self clone!

“When all of them have reached the great circle, then I will definitely be able to find enlightenment regarding my Third Severing!”

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# Chapter 710: Xu Qing Awakens

Meng Hao hovered in mid-air. Up above was the massive rift ripped in the sky, the sight of which was incredibly shocking.

The surrounding Blood Demon Sect disciples, regardless of who they were, looked at Meng Hao with trembling minds and hearts. As of this moment, he had everyone’s complete attention.

Even the sect’s Spirit Severing cultivators felt awe in their hearts, an awe that was now permanently branded there.

The complete and utter silence that filled the Blood Demon Sect was suddenly broken by an archaic voice that echoed out from the centrally-located Mount Blood Demon.

The voice, hoarse and filled with the feeling of countless ages of time, filled the entire Blood Demon Sect, and was heard by all disciples.

“Meng Hao was originally a scholar, born three hundred years ago in the State of Zhao in the Southern Domain…

“By chance, he began to walk the path of cultivation. He had a Perfect Foundation with ten Dao Pillars, and slew Core Formation cultivators!”

The voice, of course, belonged to Patriarch Blood Demon. As it echoed about, all of the cultivators of the Blood Demon Sect listened intently. When the State of Zhao was mentioned, Wang Youcai’s expression was one of reminiscence. After all, the State of Zhao was his hometown, too.

“Later, he made his way to the Southern Domain. In the Song Clan’s search for a son-in-law, he clinched victory in the competition, but then abandoned his status as a son-in-law of the Song Clan to join the Violet Fate Sect!

“In the Violet Fate Sect, his skill in pill concocting reached the highest of levels. He was promoted to Violet Furnace Lord, and became known as… Grandmaster Pill Cauldron!”

By the time these words rang out in the Blood Demon Sect, the silence was impossible to maintain. Gasps could be heard, and a massive commotion erupted. Once again, all eyes came to focus on Meng Hao, who hovered there calmly in mid-air.

“Meng Hao… I remember now! Meng Hao was Grandmaster Pill Cauldron back in the Violet Fate Sect!”

“Heavens! Last year I went to an auction where a pill marked with Grandmaster Pill Cauldron’s emblem was sold at an astronomical price!”

“It’s him!! Grandmaster Pill Cauldron!!”

“I remember! Meng Hao caused a huge disaster that year, and then just disappeared!”

People were now staring at him with even more fervor than before. Earlier, they had submitted to Meng Hao’s cultivation base, but now, his experiences were shaking them, filling them with incredible admiration.

Li Shiqi gazed silently at Meng Hao as images of all the past events flitted through her mind.

“In Foundation Establishment, he could vanquish Core Formation. In Core Formation, he could slay Nascent Soul. All of you have heard stories about Meng Hao over the years. He left the Southern Domain and went to the Black Lands, where he quickly rose to prominence. He entered the Western Desert, where he single-handedly led his tribe out of the Violet Rain Apocalypse. He slaughtered countless enemies and his name rocked the Western Desert!

“Later, he sank to the bottom of the Violet Sea, the waters of which have the power to decay all living things. It was on the seafloor that he gained enlightenment of a great Dao and entered the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage!”

Patriarch Blood Demon’s voice was as ancient as ever. When all the disciples heard his words, it gave rise to massive waves of shock. They stared in disbelief at Meng Hao; to them, his experiences were the stuff of legend.

Even the previously hostile Legacy Apprentices of the Spirit Severing Patriarchs were now staring at Meng Hao with awe and fanaticism.

“He’s done so many things!”

“Compared to him, our lives are soft and easy! Sure, we might kill a few people here and there, but compared to him… our experiences aren’t even worth mentioning!”

Meng Hao said nothing. Hearing Patriarch Blood Demon recount his experiences was almost like listening to the stories of a stranger. However, he wasn’t surprised that Patriarch Blood Demon knew so much about him.

“When Meng Hao was in the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage, he battled with a First Severing cultivator. In a war that rocked the Black Lands and shocked the Western Desert, he exterminated the man’s entire tribe.

“The war didn’t last long, nor did word of it spread very far, before he left for the ancient Demon Immortal Sect!

“As for the details of what happened there, I’m not entirely clear. One thing I do know… the events that occurred there because of him were nothing short of incredible!

“After leaving the ancient Demon Immortal Sect, Meng Hao encountered the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, a peak Dao Seeking expert. Meng Hao slew his clone, and was then forced to go to the Milky Way Sea. After multiple encounters, his cultivation base was stolen away, and he became mortal!!”

At this point in the tale, gasps rang out. The listening disciples could scarcely believe what they were hearing. What they had heard before already left them with the sensation that Meng Hao's experiences were a legend, but then the story encountered an even more shocking twist.

"He… became mortal?!"

"He lost his cultivation base? He made an enemy of a Dao Seeking expert? The Blood Prince… he's incredible!"

"He lost his cultivation base? But look at him now! He's obviously incredibly fierce and valiant. What happened in the meantime?"

The buzz of conversation filled the air. The three Demonfire Patriarchs were gobsmacked, and Patriarch Darkheaven was staring at Meng Hao with an expression of intense astonishment. As for the hunchbacked old man from the fifth mountain peak, his eyes radiated a strange glow.

The pretty young woman next to him, as well as the other Legacy Apprentices, were hearing the story of Meng Hao for the first time. All of them were panting as they looked up at him floating there calmly in mid-air. Gradually, they began to realize that there was something about him that seemed… lonesome.

Wang Youcai was staring at Meng Hao in a daze. He was aware of the rest of the story, although he wasn't sure of all the details.

Meng Hao continued his silence. He wasn't surprised that Patriarch Blood Demon even knew about his encounters with the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch in the Milky Way Sea. What happened in the Black Sieve Sect showed that.

Clearly, Patriarch Blood Demon was not holding back anything about Meng Hao. He revealed everything he knew.

"After becoming mortal, Meng Hao chose to go to the Rebirth Cave!

"There, his beloved chose to give up everything for him. In the end, he was reborn. He performed his Second Severing, becoming the number one figure under Dao Seeking. As for his beloved, she was captured by the Black Sieve Sect!

“Meng Hao, acting alone, slaughtered his way into the sect. He killed tens of thousands of Black Sieve Sect disciples, including several Spirit Severing Cultivators. In the end, he fought with the Black Sieve Sect’s number one Patriarch, Six-Daos!

“I intervened in that battle, which is how the Blood Demon Sect came to have a new Blood Prince, Meng Hao!

“This is his story. Who among you… choose not to submit?” As the echoes of Patriarch Blood Demon’s archaic voice faded away, the heart of each and every disciple surged with waves of shock.

They were completely shaken by hearing of Meng Hao’s experiences. The shocking path which he had walked, as well as his cultivation base, filled them with intense zealotry.

In their astonishment, the three Demonfire Patriarchs and Patriarch Darkheaven now understood everything.

As for the seven Legacy Apprentices of Patriarch Darkheaven on the second mountain peak, the fan-wielding young man on the fourth mountain peak, and the pretty girl on the fifth mountain peak, they gazed at Meng Hao with minds and hearts reeling.

They now clearly understood how powerful Meng Hao was, and it filled them with a terror that far exceeded that which any other Chosen could impart.

To them, this was not just a matter of Meng Hao being worthy of becoming Blood Prince. In fact, few sects could ever have a Sect Prince like this.

A person like him could actually found his own Sect!

One by one, everyone began to clasp hands and bow to Meng Hao.

“Blood Prince, we offer our respects!”

Meng Hao’s cultivation base had crushed anyone who refused to bow their head in submission. The recounting of his experiences had shocked the hearts of anyone who inwardly refused to acknowledge him. Patriarch Blood Demon’s words ensured that Meng Hao was now truly worthy to be… Blood Prince of the Blood Demon Sect!

Meng Hao said nothing. He waved his right hand, causing the Black White Pearls and the Ninth Mountain to vanish. At the same time, the Nascent Divinities of the two Ironblood Patriarchs were released. Meng Hao had not truly wiped them out of existence.

Their Nascent Divinities trembled; from their position within the Black White Pearls, they had seen everything that had happened, and had also heard Patriarch Blood Demon’s words. Currently, they didn’t even have the tiniest intention of provoking Meng Hao. Quite the opposite. They were filled with deep awe, and went along with everyone else to bow to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s gaze swept across the crowds. Then, he turned silently and made his way off into the distance. He did not choose to occupy one of the mountains within the area of the five mountain peaks. Instead, he chose to occupy a beautiful valley on the outside.

The valley had no name, but after Meng Hao occupied it, the blood Demon Sect disciples came to view it as a Holy Land second only to Patriarch Blood Demon’s mountain peak.

There were plenty of disciples who were more than happy to stand guard outside, transforming the valley into one of the most important locations in the Blood Demon Sect.

Because of Meng Hao, Wang Youcai became even more famous in the Blood Demon Sect. In fact, the hunchbacked old man from the fifth mountain peak personally appeared to take him as an apprentice.

As a result, Wang Youcai became a Legacy Apprentice of the fifth mountain peak, a position far higher than what he had occupied before.

As for the valley Meng Hao occupied, the Blood Demon Sect disciples secretly began to refer to it as… Blood Prince Gorge.

The Blood Prince liked peace and quiet, and therefore no one dared to enter Blood Prince Gorge unless they were summoned.

Time passed. Nine nine-day-cycles later, on the eighty-first day, Meng Hao sat in his log cabin in the valley. The fragrance of flowers drifted through the air, and green grass carpeted the entire area. It was like a utopia hidden away from the turmoil of the world.

A woman lay in front of Meng Hao, her eyes closed. She was beautiful, and she radiated the aura of an Immortal spirit. Her skin was as pure as flawless white jade.

Meng Hao looked down at her and continued to wait patiently.

Around dusk, the woman's eyelashes trembled, as if she were gathering the strength to awaken. A moment later, she slowly… opened her eyes.

At first, her eyes were filled with a confused look, as if countless memories were streaming into her mind. The process continued for a long moment before finally, the blankness vanished and transformed into lucidity. It was then that she realized that someone was sitting next to her, looking at her with warmth in his eyes…. Meng Hao.

Xu Qing looked at Meng Hao, and smiled a warm, beautiful smile.

She slowly sat up, and then reached out to stroke the side of Meng Hao's face.

"It feels wonderful to wake up…."

Meng Hao looked back at her and also smiled. However, it was a smile that, deep down, contained sadness. He knew that what he was experiencing now could last no more than ninety-nine years.

"I won't leave this valley for the next ninety-nine years," Xu Qing said. "I'll accompany you… until the time for reincarnation comes."

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# Chapter 711: Ancient Dao Lakes

One year.

An entire year had passed since Meng Hao had arrived in the Blood Demon Sect. During that time, he didn’t even step half a pace outside of his valley, nor did anyone disturb him. In the utopia of his valley, he and Xu Qing watched the sun rise and set. Everything was calm and peaceful, and they spent their time enjoying the warmth and sweetness of each other’s company.

During that year, Xu Qing did not practice cultivation. She lived like a mortal woman, accompanying Meng Hao. Occasionally, her laughter would drift out from within the valley, and the Blood Demon Sect disciples standing guard on the outside would smile and look back toward the valley.

This was their Blood Prince and their Blood Prince’s beloved.

During that year, Meng Hao’s reputation inside the Blood Demon Sect did not lessen. Furthermore, stories of what had occurred in the Black Sieve Sect began to spread out from the Blood Demon Sect into the rest of the Southern Domain. Soon, Meng Hao’s name became even more illustrious.

He was a Spirit Severing expert, Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, Blood Prince of the Blood Demon Sect, and had waged war against the Black Sieve Sect. The stories spread, and soon the name ‘Meng Hao’ was on the minds of everyone in the Southern Domain.

As for Meng Hao, he learned of the tragic fate of the Wang Clan, and heard about the broken-souled lunatic who raved of Immortal Ascension and wandered around, having lost everything…

During that year, Meng Hao did not give up on cultivating the Blood Demon Grand Magic. However, on repeated occasions he sensed that he was incapable of reaching the third level. He was missing something.

He had reached a bottleneck, that much was obvious. Patriarch Blood Demon did not provide him with any tips or reminders. Actually, during the entire year, he didn’t even speak to Meng Hao at all. It seemed he had delivered the entire Blood Demon Sect into Meng Hao’s hands. Meng Hao now had authority over the life and death of everyone in the sect.

Although he experienced no breakthrough in the Blood Demon Grand Magic, he did gain enlightenment regarding the cultivation of the Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal.

The art was crude and simple, but it could temper the fleshly body to an incredible degree. Unfortunately, it required a vast number of magical items to fuse into the flesh. Essentially… it was a divine ability that could refine one’s body into a treasured magical item.

Most people, even if they could gain enlightenment, would find it difficult to cultivate. After all, it required incredible amounts of magical items. Just to cultivate the first level required 10,000 Spirit Severing level magical items.

Thankfully, the requirement wasn’t Spirit Severing life-essence treasures; were that the case, Meng Hao would have given up immediately. He simply could not cultivate something like that.

However, if he could successfully cultivate the first level, then his fleshly body would exceed Spirit Severing, and would reach the Dao Seeking stage. When the fleshly body reached Dao Seeking, the qi and blood contained a natural law of Heaven and Earth.

Such a body was like a precious treasure.

If the second level was cultivated successfully, the fleshly body could break through Dao Seeking and then experience Fleshly Body Immortal

Tribulation. If transcended… the qi and blood could reach Immortal Ascension.

“There are a total of four levels to this art. If I can cultivate the highest level…” His eyes gleamed with a brilliant light for a moment. It quickly faded. The items required to cultivate the fourth level were things the like of which he had never even heard of.

“And then there’s the Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao!” he thought, his eyes shining with a strange light. During the year, his greatest achievement was not related to the Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal, but rather, the Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao!

After much pondering, Meng Hao had finally gained a bit of understanding. It was actually an art that could be used to create a clone. Granted, clone magic was not common in the Southern Domain, but neither was it rare, and most Spirit Severing Cultivators had found a way to create clones.

After all, if a clone died, the true self could continue on living. Likewise, if the true self died, the clone could also continue on living. Creating an additional clone was like creating an additional life.

There were many magics that could be used to cultivate clones, and they all had their various unique aspects. As for the Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao, it was one of the highest ranked Daoist magics in the ancient Demon Immortal Sect. Furthermore, it was the life-essence Daoist magic of the Withering Flame Demon, one of the three Demon Paragons ranked directly beneath Lord Li.

In terms of how powerful it was, it would be hard to find something more illustrious in all the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

“Other clone magics require extracting a strand from one’s own soul, then inserting it into a flesh and blood body, or perhaps a spirit body. Another option is to use some sort of magical item to create a body, then link it to the true self.

“Those are the safest methods, and avoid any problems that can arise from the clone revolting.

“However, the Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao can create a homologous clone body. The clone body also requires a strand of soul, except not from one’s own soul, but rather, the soul of an outsider.

“The stronger the soul, the stronger the clone! In fact, more than one soul can be fused into it, which would make the clone even more powerful!

“It is not a matter of controlling the body with the soul, but rather, controlling the soul with the body. The soul withers, transforming into a flame that nourishes the clone. This is not a Daoist art, but rather, Demon magic. Once the clone is created, the physical body’s will transforms it into a true self, suppressing the clone’s soul and becoming the True Self Dao.

“The body is like a sheath and the soul is like a blade. They key to it all is controlling that razor-sharp blade!

“This art is incredibly overbearing!

“Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao!

“What this magic cultivates is not actually a clone, but a second true self! An incredibly powerful true self!”

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Many things happened in the outside world during the year that passed. One of the most shocking events was not the reappearance of Meng Hao, but rather, the fact that one of the three Danger Zones of the Southern Domain, the Ancient Dao Lakes, had begun erupting.

Furthermore, the eruptions were occurring with increasing frequency. At first, they were limited to Dao Geysers on the periphery of the Dao Lakes, but eventually, even the Dao Lakes themselves began to erupt. 1

“The Ancient Dao Lakes are erupting again!”

“I heard that last month, one of the smaller Dao Lakes erupted, and a Spirit Severing magical item appeared!”

“You don’t even need to mention the Dao Lakes. The Dao Geysers are also erupting. Cultivators are gathering, and I heard that many people are gaining enlightenment.”

Such cries could be heard frequently in the Blood Demon Sect in recent days. More than a few disciples left the Sect and traveled to the Dao Lakes to seek good luck and fortune.

As time passed, more and more of the disciples became interested in the Dao Lakes. Of course, at first, it was only Core Formation up to mid Nascent Soul cultivators who were most interested.

However, a month later, a great circle Nascent Soul cultivator from the Solitary Sword Sect received enlightenment and entered the Spirit Severing stage. This shook the entire Southern Domain, and caused virtually all the great circle Nascent Soul stage cultivators who were stuck beneath the Spirit Severing stage to immediately rush to the Ancient Dao Lakes to seek good fortune.

Soon, witnesses began to spread reports of an eruption which had occurred within the Ancient Dao Lakes. Apparently, it gave rise to incredible ripples that could allow Spirit Severing cultivators to experience enlightenment regarding a great Dao.

The news gave rise to a virtual storm that swept across the Southern Domain. Spirit Severing Patriarchs from all sects and clans went wild with eagerness.

The Blood Demon Sect was no exception.

After obtaining permission from Meng Hao, the two Ironblood Patriarchs, Patriarch Darkheaven, and the three Demonfire Patriarchs entered the valley and approached Meng Hao, who sat cross-legged outside of his log cabin, a flagon of alcohol placed in front of him.

“Blood Prince, the Dao Lakes are erupting. The Patriarch is in secluded meditation and has not inquired about any sect affairs. Will the Blood Demon Sect be allowed to participate in this opportunity for good fortune?”

“It’s true, Blood Prince. The other sects and clans are beginning to stir. As a matter of fact, a few days ago the Solitary Sword Sect sent a large group of cultivators to the Ancient Dao Lakes, led by a Spirit Severing Patriarch.”

“The Dao Geysers in the border region of the Ancient Dao Lakes don’t erupt according to any sort of pattern. However, the small lakes in the inner region erupt once every two thousand years. As for the Prime Lake, it erupts once every ten thousand years.

“According to the calculations, now is the time when virtually all of the Ancient Dao Lakes will be erupting!”

Xu Qing stood quietly off to the side. The Spirit Severing Patriarchs treated her very courteously. After all, the fact that Meng Hao had single-handedly fought the entire Black Sieve Sect because of her showed the place she held in his heart.

Meng Hao opened his eyes, and a profound light could be seen therein, as well as a ruthlessness that was difficult to conceal, so intense that it could not be dispelled. The instant his eyes opened, the six Spirit Severing Patriarchs’ hearts shuddered, and they respectfully bowed their heads.

“The Ancient Dao Lakes….” murmured Meng Hao. His cultivation base was now stuck at a bottleneck. Although he had some ideas, he was still not clear regarding his Third Severing. Furthermore, even further secluded meditation would not help him to progress with the Blood Demon Grand Magic.

He turned his head to look at Xu Qing.

“I’ll be fine,” she said with a smile. “I’ll be waiting here for you…. Wouldn’t the best thing be for you to acquire some good fortune?” Her gaze was filled with warmth as she looked at him. During the past year, she had been very happy. She didn’t worry about cultivation, or about the complications of life. She was with Meng Hao, and it almost felt like the simple life back in the Reliance Sect.

The Spirit Severing Patriarchs all looked expectantly at Meng Hao, waiting for his answer.

It was at this point that Yao Ming, the Second Severing expert of the three Demonfire Patriarchs, suddenly seemed to notice something. He looked down toward his bag of holding and then produced a glowing jade slip. He looked at it deeply for a moment, his expression flickering.

“Blood Prince, we can’t hesitate for too long. Now that the Solitary Sword Sect has taken action, the Golden Frost Sect, Violet Fate Sect, Black Sieve Sect, Song Clan, and Li Clan have followed suit. All have sent forces led by Spirit Severing experts to the Ancient Dao Lakes.” With that, he handed the jade slip over to Meng Hao.

When Meng Hao heard the words ‘Black Sieve Sect,’ he saw Xu Qing’s expression darken. Killing intent flickered in his eyes as he accepted the jade slip. After examining it, he looked up, and his eyes shone with determination.

“Let’s go!” he said, rising to his feet and striding forward. The six Blood Demon Sect Spirit Severing Patriarchs’ expressions brightened. Considering the level of Meng Hao’s cultivation base, with him as their leader, the Blood Demon Sect would definitely reap an abundant harvest.

Meng Hao walked out of the valley followed by the six. There were already tens of thousands of disciples gathered outside, looks of anticipation on their faces.

Meng Hao glanced over them.

“Each mountain peak shall select 10,000 disciples to come with me to the Ancient Dao Lakes!”

“Yes, Blood Prince!”

“Yes, Blood Prince!” The excited cries instantly rang out through the Blood Demon Sect. Under the direction of the six Spirit Severing Patriarchs, arrangements were made, and soon a crowd of tens of thousands of beams of light shot up into the air to follow Meng Hao.

Li Shiqi was among them, but as for Wang Youcai, he remained behind to maintain guard cross-legged outside of Meng Hao’s valley.

In the same moment that Meng Hao led the disciples flying away, Patriarch Blood Demon sat in the Blood Pond in Mount Blood Demon. Slowly, he opened his eyes.

“To Sever the Devil, one must first accept bedevilment. His Devilishness is not profound enough yet….”

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# Chapter 712: Gathering at the Dao Lakes!

The three Danger Zones of the Southern Domain!

The Rebirth Cave, the Ancient Dao Lakes, and the Ancient Temple of Doom.

The most mysterious of them all was the Rebirth Cave. The most ferocious was the Ancient Temple of Doom. However, to cultivators, the site that offered the most benefits in terms of cultivation… were the Ancient Dao Lakes!

However, it was still considered a Danger Zone. After entering, it would be difficult to predict whether you could come out alive or not. Only when the Dao Lakes region was in a state of eruption would the danger be slightly reduced, and the opportunities for good fortune increased.

Within the Dao Lakes region, invisible rifts often appeared that could cut through anything except perhaps certain precious treasures. In addition, there were many restrictive spells which had existed for countless years. If you stumbled into one there was a ninety percent chance that you would end up dead.

In addition, there were many teleportation traps. They would appear without any warning whatsoever, and would randomly teleport you to certain areas in the region of the Dao Lakes. If you got lucky, then you might walk away completely unharmed. If you were unlucky, however, you might get teleported into one of the rifts or even into one of the Dao Lakes. Even Dao seeking experts would either be killed or wounded in such a situation; no one could escape unscathed.

There was an even more terrifying possibility… it was possible to enter into a cycle of teleportation in which you entered a teleportation trap that constantly teleported you in and out to various locations, without letting you leave.

It was an endless cycle, and cultivators who entered one would be tormented by continuous teleportation until they died in body and spirit.

Such a tragic outcome was something not unheard of in the Ancient Dao Lakes. In fact, sometimes it was even possible to see corpses passing in and out of various teleportation traps.

Few people were aware of exactly how the Ancient Dao Lakes were formed. In the very center of the entire region was the largest Dao Lake, which was surrounded by numerous smaller lakes. These lakes had mirror-like surfaces, which to onlookers seemed to reflect the entirety of the Heavens.

Further out were the Dao Geysers. Normally they were dry and empty, but when they erupted it was possible to see Dao Projections.

In addition to the Dao Projections that would become visible in the Dao Geysers and Lakes, they would sometimes spit out precious treasures, ancient records, or even bizarre and terrifying beasts. Occasionally, Heavenly materials and Earthly treasures would appear, or jade slips with special techniques. Some were worthless, whereas others were priceless. In summary, it was possible for just about any type of item to erupt out.

Over time, some people came to suspect that beneath the Ancient Dao Lakes were the ruins of some ancient structure or city that had fallen ages ago.

Many people wished to make their way into those ruins, but even peak Dao Seeking cultivators were incapable of doing so. Even the cultivators of the Ji Clan of South Heaven were incapable, much to their chagrin.

Currently, hundreds of thousands of cultivators were gathered outside of the Ancient Dao Lakes. The vast majority were rogue cultivators who didn’t dare to enter into the inner region of the Dao Lakes. They couldn’t do anything more than squabble with each other over control of the Dao Geysers.

Those who had enough strength could occupy a Dao Geyser, which would allow them to establish a foundation for their future. However, there were less than three thousand Dao Geysers, which led to bitter fighting on virtually a daily basis.

Of course, even with all the violence, one cultivator after another would gain enlightenment and rise to prominence in the area. That in turn led to even further excitement among the crowds of cultivators, who would go mad at the chance to acquire good fortune.

As time passed, more and more cultivators arrived. Of course, some attempted to venture into the inner region where there weren’t just Dao Geysers, but 30-meter Dao Lakes!

As far as the Dao Geysers were concerned, ninety-nine percent of the time, they spit out Dao Projections. Only occasionally would they erupt with other items.

When it came to Dao Lakes, it was an entirely different matter, which tended to depend on the size of the lake. For example, the 30-meter Dao Lakes had a ten percent chance of spitting out items other than Dao Projections. The 300-meter Dao Lakes further in had a thirty-percent chance.

Then there were the 3,000-meter Dao Lakes that had a sixty-percent chance.

Finally, there was the 30,000-meter Dao Lake, which had a ninety-percent chance of erupting with precious treasures!

As for the Dao Geysers, once they erupted, a Dao Projection would appear. Afterwards, that particular Dao Geyser would be locked with that one single Dao Projection, which would appear in every subsequent eruption. The Dao Lakes were different. Even if a Dao Projection did appear, it would eventually vanish. Then, you could wait at the edge of a lake for a certain period of time for another eruption.

Within the region of the Ancient Dao Lakes, there were roughly a thousand 30-meter lakes, each one of which was occupied by small-scale sects, making it difficult for any outsider to get near. There were a few hundred of the 300-meter lakes, the majority of which were occupied by mid-scale sects or clans.

As for the 3,000-meter Dao Lakes, there were ten in total, which great sects or clans like the Solitary Sword Sect were qualified to occupy.

By this point, the number of Southern Domain cultivators that had gathered did not exceed 1,000,000, but rather, was more in the range of 700,000 to 800,000. As more arrived, there was more fighting and killing.

Boom!

A group of cultivators suddenly appeared up in the sky. Each and every one shone with a golden light, the reason being that they were all wearing golden suits of armor. Altogether, they looked completely wild and rough.

As they shot through the air, the sky and land grew dim, and ripples spread out in all directions. They didn’t didn’t look down, but instead, fixed their gazes on the inner region of the Ancient Dao Lakes. When they entered, they didn’t fly, but rather, proceeded carefully under the leadership of sect experts.

“The Golden Frost Sect has arrived!”

“Those are cultivators from the Golden Frost Sect! The one in the front is Golden Frost Sect Patriarch Ling Dong! Don’t tell me that the guy behind him is Grandmaster Eternal Mountain!?!?” 1

“See that fat guy off to the side? That’s the guy who swore to take a hundred beloved, the shameless Li Fugui, right?”

Cries of alarm began to ring out from the interior region of the Dao Lakes as the small-scale and even mid-scale sects began to grow anxious. That was especially true of the female disciples, whose countenances flushed with trepidation at the mention of the name Li Fugui.

Soon, more voices rose up from the region outside.

“The Li Clan is here!!”

“That’s… the 19th Li Clan Patriarch! They say he’s a Second Severing expert! Look at the people behind him! They seem to have an equal status, don’t tell me they’re also Spirit Severing Patriarchs?!”

“The Song Clan’s here too! I can see the Song Clan’s Inkstone Puppets!!”

“The Black Sieve Sect! The Black Sieve Sect people are here!”

“Just about all the sects and clans in the whole Southern Domain have arrived!”

Voices echoed about in all directions throughout the Ancient Dao Lakes. The person in the lead position of the Black Sieve Sect was none other than the Third Severing Patriarch who had survived Meng Hao’s attack. Clearly, his cultivation base had recovered quite a bit, but his face was grim as he glanced around and led his people into the Dao Lakes.

Within the group from the Song Clan was Song Jia. Her expression was placid, and she was followed closely by a middle-aged man. Somehow, he looked threatening despite the lack of any sort of anger on his face. Also in the group was Eccentric Song, whose cultivation base was slightly higher than before. He was now in the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage, just half a step from Spirit Severing. 2

Behind them were over ten thousand junior members of the Song Clan, as well as more than ten thousand puppets. The puppets were black, emanated an intense coldness, and were completely shocking in appearance.

Almost in the same instant in which the Song Clan entered the inner region of the Ancient Dao Lakes, a violet-colored auspicious cloud appeared in the sky off in the distance. As it neared, a sallow-faced old man became visible within. He was surrounded by several other old men who all bore similar auras. Their faces were grim and they did not speak. Behind them within the cloud were tens of thousands of disciples, as well as an enormous pill furnace, around which circulated a sword.

Their energy was bright and colorful, and as they neared, the cultivators outside the Dao Lakes immediately realized who they were.

“The Violet Fate Sect!”

“That’s Reverend Withered-Dao of the Violet Fate Sect! He’s a Spirit Severing Expert!”

“Look behind him! It’s the two beauties of the Violet Fate Sect… Chu Yuyan and Hanxue Shan!”

Within the crowd of Violet Fate Sect disciples, Chu Yuyan’s gaze swept over the scene down below. Her delicate brow was furrowed, as if she was looking for someone in particular, only to find that person not present. Next to her was a charming young woman with skin like snow, incredibly attractive. She was none other than the Holy Daughter of Holy Snow City in the Black Lands, Hanxue Shan.

She also seemed to search through the crowds, after which her expression grew somewhat gloomy. Next to her was a taciturn, middle-aged man with handsome features. Occasionally, he would look over at Hanxue Shan with a tender look in his eye that he kept well-hidden. 3

He was none other than Ye Feimu, the same person who vied with Meng Hao that year for the title of Violet Furnace Lord…. He was a Chosen of the Dao of alchemy, and after the hundreds of years that had passed he was now in the late Nascent Soul stage. 4

There was another person within the group who seemed somewhat nondescript, and yet had an early Nascent Soul cultivation base. He also looked down below as if he were searching for a figure that existed somewhere in his memories.

“He didn’t come…?” the old man sighed. “Oh well, I bet he wouldn’t even remember who I am….” Within the old man’s mind flickered countless memories of past times in the Violet Fate Sect.

“Elder Brother Fang Mu, do you still remember Bai Yunlai…?” 5

Surprisingly, among the forces of the Violet Fate Sect could also be seen An Zaihai and Lin Hailong, the two Violet Furnace Lords. Their gazes swept about, and complex expressions could be seen on their faces. 6

The auspicious cloud carried the group from the Violet Fate Sect into the region of the Ancient Dao Lakes, and then vanished. Finally, the region outside the lakes returned to its previous state.

Three days later, far off on the horizon, a blood-colored light shone out. The bloody glow spread out in all directions as something that bore the semblance of a blood-colored Demonic beast appeared. It shot forward at incredible speed, whereupon a gigantic face could be seen.

The vicious, blood-red sported a spiraling horn, which emanated an astonishing energy!

If you looked closely, you would be able to tell that, shockingly, the face was actually made up of tens of thousands of cultivators. As for the horn, at its tip was a young man wearing a blood-colored robe. His long hair whipped about his dispassionate face. Within his eyes could be seen a streak of ruthlessness.

He was handsome, but there was nothing scholarly about him. Instead, he seemed cruel and cold. This was… Meng Hao, who after experiencing death, had the ruthlessness of a Devil.

Behind him were six Spirit Severing Patriarchs of the Blood Demon Sect, as well as 40,000 disciples.

“The Blood Demon Sect!”

“That young man… could he be Meng Hao? He used to be called Fang Mu, Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. Now… he’s the Blood Prince of the Blood Demon Sect!!”

“To save his beloved, Xu Qing, he single-handedly battled the entire Black Sieve Sect! It’s Meng Hao!” Instantly, the region outside the Dao Lakes was thrown into a huge commotion. By now, more than a year had passed since the incident at the Black Sieve Sect, and the news had long since spread out through the masses.

Within the crowds, more than a few female cultivators gazed at Meng Hao with shining eyes and thought, “I want a beloved just like Meng Hao!”

As the buzz of conversation rose up from all the Cultivators, Meng Hao and the group from the Blood Demon Sect entered the region of the Ancient Dao Lakes.

In that moment, the entire region suddenly began to tremble. Along with the quaking, one Dao Geyser after another, along with a succession of Dao Lakes, all began to erupt. Innumerable Dao Projections appeared, and a riot of colors flashed in Heaven and Earth.

The Blood Demon Sect had arrived just in time for a Dao Lake eruption!

5. Bai Yunlai was Meng Hao/Fang Mu’s assistant/partner in the Violet Fate Sect

6. An Zaihai and Lin Hailong were recurring characters who appeared multiple times throughout the alchemy arc. Both were on good terms with Fang Mu/Meng Hao

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# Chapter 713: Dao Lake Eruption

The rumbling of the sky echoed out in all directions, and the land quaked violently. It seemed almost like a giant was buried under the ground, roaring, the power of its voice exploding out through the Dao Geysers and Lakes.

From a distance, it almost looked like volcanos erupting, except what was exploding out was not lava, but numerous colorful Dao Projections. These Dao Projections were images of cultivators wearing ancient attire. Some were engaged in magical combat, others were practicing cultivation or gaining enlightenment regarding Heaven and Earth.

A variety of cultivation bases could be seen, the lowest being Foundation Establishment and the highest being Nascent Soul.

Looking at the scene as a whole, there were quite a few Dao Projections.

It was in this moment of eruption that Meng Hao and the force from the Blood Demon Sect entered the region of the Dao Lakes. At the same time, cries of shock spread out.

“That’s….”

“A Spirit Severing Dao Projection!”

“It’s actually a Spirit Severing Dao Proj… wait, no! That’s a Dao Projection of a great circle Nascent Soul Cultivator in the moment of his First Severing!”

Great numbers of cultivators swarmed at top speed toward the Spirit Severing Dao Projection.

Meng Hao stopped for a moment and looked back. Off in the distance, he saw a Dao Geyser erupting with shocking blue light. Inside the light was a Dao Projection of a tall, slender cultivator performing Spirit Severing.

Hundreds of thousands of cultivators in the area were spurred into action. Many among the tens of thousands who were with Meng Hao were also visibly moved.

Meng Hao did nothing to stop them. “Why don’t you try to gain enlightenment here?” he said. Immediately, 20,000 cultivators clasped hands and bowed to him, then flew off. Not all were of the Nascent Soul stage; there were other items in the area that were of interest to other stages as well.

Rumbling, as well as intense ripples, echoed out from the area up ahead of Meng Hao. Numerous 30-meter Dao Lakes, as well as countless Dao Geysers, were erupting with intense booms.

“Dao Treasure! It’s a Dao Treasure!”

“Look at that sword! It’s fragmented, but the sword aura is still incredibly sharp!!”

A black sword flew up out of one of the 30-meter Dao Lakes at incredible speed, and the sword qi it emanated was monstrous. Further off, other Dao Treasures erupted up into the air.

All of the 30-meter Dao Lakes were being defended by various small sects. When the eruption began, everyone became incredibly excited and began to fight. In the blink of an eye, the entire area dissolved into chaos.

The remaining 20,000 disciples of the Blood Demon Sect wore expressions of hope on their face as they looked at Meng Hao.

“Do as you wish among these Dao Lakes,” he said. “If you run into danger, remember to call for help from fellow sect members.” In response to his words, the majority of the 20,000 or so cultivators sped off, some rushing towards the inner regions, and others toward the various 30-meter Dao Lakes to join the fighting.

Still following Meng Hao were the six Spirit Severing Patriarchs as well as several thousand disciples. These were people who couldn’t care less about the 30-meter Dao Lakes, and they joined Meng Hao as he sped onward. All of them transformed into streaks of colorful light that shot forward.

Although they appeared to be moving quickly, Meng Hao had plenty of time to send his divine sense up ahead. What he saw was cultivators flying back and forth, some of them letting out bloodcurdling screams as their bodies were slashed by the rifts. The lucky ones lost arms or legs, and unlucky ones were completely ripped apart.

Everything was in chaos, and without exception, deadly battles were taking place next to the Dao Lakes and Geysers.

RUMBLE!

Up ahead, the air started to rumble. Seven or eight cultivators neared the area, and suddenly seemed to be swallowed up into nothing. They vanished, leaving behind only the echoes of miserable shrieks.

Rivers of blood flowed down below, especially in the areas where Dao Treasures appeared. Massacres were being carried out in all directions.

“Kill them!” Cries such as this echoed out constantly.

Meng Hao ignored all of that and proceeded forward. After advancing about 3,000 meters, he suddenly stopped in place and raised his right hand to signal those behind him to do the same.

As they ground to a halt, they saw a 30-meter Dao Lake up ahead, above which floated a Dao Treasure that looked like a bottle-gourd. Several hundred cultivators could be seen near it, locked in heavy combat. However, it was at this point that the ground in the area suddenly began to glitter with light. Magical symbols appeared, which flickered for a moment and then caused a shocking power of teleportation to surge out.

At the same time, a dozen or so corpses suddenly appeared out of thin air.

There was no time for anyone to react. The moment in which the corpses appeared, the power of teleportation rumbled out. The several hundred cultivators who were fighting next to the Dao Lake, as well as the corpses that had just appeared, all vanished in the blink of an eye.

Even Meng Hao couldn’t prevent his eyes from going wide. The six Spirit Severing Patriarchs behind him had serious expressions on their faces, and the other disciples gasped.

“Was that a teleportation trap?”

“That sort of thing happens all the time in the Ancient Dao Lakes. The fearsome teleportation traps can appear randomly, without any warning….”

“When the teleportation trap appeared just now, I could swear I saw more than ten desiccated corpses inside!”

After the teleportation trap disappeared along with the cultivators that it snagged, the bottle gourd floating above the Dao Lake glittered as resplendently as ever, attracting even more attention. More cultivators surged toward it. However, Meng Hao was already on the move. In the blink of an eye, he was above the 30-meter Dao Lake, where he flicked his right sleeve to collect up the bottle gourd.

His actions immediately caused all of the cultivators who had been rushing over to stop and turn to fly off towards other areas.

“Let’s go!” he said. He and his followers transformed into beams of light that shot onward.

As they proceeded onward, they saw more than ten teleportation traps and more than a hundred instances in which the rifts appeared. On one occasion, a single rift slashed through over one hundred people at once.

At one point, Meng Hao noticed that the teleportation traps contained living people inside of them, and he grew even more cautious. The people stuck inside were madly trying to break free, but as they only materialized for a split second, they were powerless to escape and were helpless to do anything but be continuously teleported around.

For the lucky ones, the power of the teleportation traps might dissipate after three or four activations. The unlucky ones… ended up being stuck in the cycle until they died.

As they proceeded deeper into the Dao Lakes region, there were fewer people, but the fighting was far more intense. Soon, 300-meter Dao Lakes appeared, all of which were forcibly occupied by mid-scale sects and clans.

For the most part, it was great circle Nascent Soul cultivators who stood guard.

Such cultivators were locked in combat as Meng Hao and the Blood Demon Sect forces approached. These cultivators were instantly shaken, and at the same time, there were thousands of Blood Demon Sect disciples whose eyes began to shine with a strange light. After asking for permission from Meng Hao, they shot forward to join the fray.

The sounds of intense fighting caused everything to shake, and as Meng Hao looked over the chaotic scene, the ruthlessness in his eyes grew even stronger. He continued onward, refraining from joining the fighting. After all, the Dao Projections and Treasures here were of no interest to him.

They proceeded onward, and soon, only 300-meter Dao Lakes were visible. Suddenly, Meng Hao turned his head to look at one such lake not too far off, above which was a Dao Projection of a cross-legged figure in meditation.

It appeared to be a Nascent Soul cultivator in the midst of gaining enlightenment regarding Heaven and Earth. A Dao Projection like that was actually a common sight both outside, and in this area.

Surrounding the Dao Projection were seven or eight early Nascent Soul stage cultivators, all fighting over the chance to gain enlightenment. Any time one of them got close to the Dao Projection, the others would join forces to prevent that person from seizing the opportunity.

The methods being used were ruthless, the attacks deadly. Furthermore, the surrounding area was littered with corpses.

Meng Hao looked the scene over, and his eyes glittered slightly. He moved forward toward the Dao Projection, which caused the six Spirit Severing Patriarchs and the other Blood Demon Sect disciples to stare in shock.

Seeing Meng Hao nearing at high speed caused the seven or eight early Nascent Soul stage cultivators' faces to fall.

"The Blood Demon Sect!"

"He's… don't tell me that's the Blood Prince of the Blood Demon Sect!"

It appeared as if their hearts were trembling in fear, and they were just about to approach as if to cover something up, when Meng Hao stretched his hand out and made a grasping motion. He then jerked his hand up.

RIIIPPP!

It was like the surface of a painting had just been peeled away. Ripples spread out, revealing another world. There was still a Dao Lake, but instead of a Dao Projection, floating above it was a 30-meter tall mountain peak. Also visible were three old cultivators fighting each other.

The air around the mountains twisted and distorted, as pulsating ripples were sent out. The mountain seemed to contain some sort of magnetic force that caused the magical items of the three old men to be gradually sucked toward it.

As soon as Meng Hao appeared, the faces of the three old men flickered.

"Who's there?!" said one of them. All three looked toward Meng Hao, and when they saw his clothing, as well as the six experts behind him, they gasped.

Earlier, they had used a deception spell to prevent outsiders from seeing what was really happening in the area. That way the three of them could focus on their own fight. Of course, they had never imagined that someone like Meng Hao would appear.

“Hmm,” thought Meng Hao, looking over the mountain peak with glittering eyes. It was obvious that the mountains were not ordinary items, and he could even sense a bit of Spirit Severing aura on them.

“Spirit Severing level magical item!” he murmured. With that, he stretched his arm out toward the mountain and made a grasping motion. The three old cultivators were simply too slow to react and were incapable of doing anything to block him. The mountain peak rumbled, then transformed into a huge hand that flew down into Meng Hao’s palm.

After putting it away, his entire person flickered as he proceeded onward.

The forces of the Blood Demon Sect followed. As for the three old men, they stamped their feet, but were not truly angry. After all, the items that appeared in the Ancient Dao Lakes had no owner; they belonged to anyone who had the power to take them.

“Dammit, what a waste of time! Fine, let’s stick with the old plan and go rob some things from somebody else!”

“Hurry up! If we wait any longer this eruption is going to end!”

Just as the three old men were about to head to another Dao Lake, an unprecedentedly loud rumbling sound could be heard coming from deeper within the region. At the same time, a 3,000 meter pillar of light shot up into the air off in the distance. Shockingly, a black hammer could be seen floating inside of it, surrounded by crackling lightning. The incredible sound echoing out caught the attention of quite a few onlookers.

“3,000…. Is that a 3,000-meter Dao Lake erupting!?!?”

“A 3,000-meter Dao Lake! They don’t erupt very often, usually it’s only the 300-meter Dao Lakes. But look, it’s erupting now!”

“This is the first time a 3,000-meter Dao Lake has erupted during this flare-up of the Ancient Dao Lakes!”

“It’s too bad only the great sects and clans can survive over there. We can’t win against them!”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he looked in the direction of the 3,000 meter beam of light. The six Spirit Severing Patriarchs behind him also had looks of fervor in their eyes. Along with the few thousand disciples who remained in the group, they sped forward at top speed.

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# Chapter 714: Teleportation Cycle

From their current position, the 3,000-meter Dao Lake didn’t seem to be very far away from Meng Hao and his group. However, considering the dangers that lurked in the Ancient Dao Lakes, it was not a distance that they could traverse rapidly.

Furthermore, the other sects and clans had arrived earlier than the Blood Demon Sect, and had already reached the innermost ring of the Ancient Dao Lakes. There, the ten 3,000-meter Dao Lakes had already been divided up, as had the 300-meter Dao Lakes in that area.

One might think that the fighting in the area would be intense, but in reality this was not the case.

Once a great sect or clan occupied a Dao Lake, others would not take the initiative to try to fight with them over it – unless, of course, the item spit out by the lake was incredibly valuable.

Otherwise, all parties would abide by customs and rules; a Dao Lake belonged to… whoever occupied it!

In reality, the battles over the treasured items were really battles for the Dao Lakes themselves.

In fact, what the sects and clans really came to this area to fight over was… something located in the central-most position of the recesses of the Ancient Dao Lakes. That was… the 30,000-meter Dao Lake!

The eruption of the Dao Lakes was shocking in the extreme. As Meng Hao and the others sped onward, the air in front of them suddenly began to distort. Meng Hao’s eyes flashed, and he waved his right hand behind him.

The group immediately dodged to the side as a huge rift suddenly slashed through the air.

It was in such a fashion that they slowly made their way forward. More and more rifts appeared, and many of the Blood Demon Disciples eventually gave up on going onward, deciding instead to stay behind and search for good fortune on their own.

Eventually, only the six Spirit Severing Patriarchs and less than a hundred of the most powerful Blood Demon Sect disciples were able to keep up with Meng Hao as he continued further into the inner ring of the Ancient Dao Lakes.

Soon, it was possible to see that there were less than 3,000 meters between them and the Dao Lakes. By this point, the other sects and clans had caught sight of their group.

There were many familiar faces there. However, as soon as their gazes fell upon Meng Hao… all of a sudden, countless magical teleportation symbols appeared all around him.

The moment the magical symbols appeared, the faces of Meng Hao and the other Blood Demon Sect disciples flickered. As for Meng Hao, although he was at the edge of the teleportation trap, he was still fully inside its borders. As for the other Blood Demon Sect disciples, there were only a few that were trapped inside with him, including Patriarch Darkheaven, the two Ironblood Patriarchs, as well as the most senior member of the three Demonfire Patriarchs.

Off in the distance, there were quite a few members of the Violet Fate Sect who suddenly shot to their feet. The faces of Fatty of the Golden Frost Sect and Chen Fan of the Solitary Sword Sect fell as the power of teleportation rose up around Meng Hao.

The teleportation happened too quickly. In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao and the other Patriarchs began to vanish.

Before disappearing, Meng Hao had only enough time to bark out: “Go to the central zone and wait for me there!”

When he vanished, a look of wild joy appeared on the face of the Black Sieve Sect Third Severing Patriarch, who was occupying one of the 3,000-meter Dao Lakes. “Die!! I hope that jinx dies in there!”

For the most part, the members of the Solitary Sword Sect and the Golden Frost Sect, as well as the Li Clan, were all gloating at Meng Hao’s misfortune. Only Chen Fan, Fatty, and many of the Violet Fate Sect cultivators looked worried. That was especially true of Chu Yuyan, whose face was deathly pale.

The members of the Song Clan were silent and pensive, and as for Song Jia, a complex expression could be seen on her face. The middle-aged man next to her watched as Meng Hao vanished, then closed his eyes mutely.

When the teleportation trap vanished, it took only a few moments for the remaining two Demonfire Patriarchs to conceal their anxiety and lead the rest of the disciples to the central zone of the Ancient Dao Lakes.

Without Meng Hao there to protect them, the journey was even more fraught with danger, and they ended up losing several dozen disciples in the process. By this point, there were only about thirty survivors.

Even as they hurried along, the two Demonfire Patriarchs noticed that all of the ten 3,000-meter Dao Lakes were occupied. Many of the people among those forces glared at them as they passed, which caused the Demonfire Patriarchs to frown.

Furthermore, the surrounding sects and clans suddenly erupted with Spirit Severing auras. There were multiple Spirit Severing auras near each and every lake. The sect with the fewest Spirit Severing cultivators was the Black Sieve Sect, although their Patriarch was in the Third Severing.

“Blood Demon Sect, you came late! There’s no place for you here now!”

“Your luck is bad, you only have two Spirit Severing experts! Do you really think we’re going to share with you!?”

“Why don’t you just scram!”

“There aren’t any extra Dao Lakes here! However, considering your strength, you could always go occupy some of the 300-meter lakes. There are more than enough to spare.”

“Your fellow Blood Demon Sect disciples who fell into the teleportation trap just got unlucky. About half of the Spirit Severing cultivators who fall into them never make it out alive.”

Of the ten 3,000-meter lakes, the Solitary Sword Sect had occupied three, the Golden Frost Sect two, the Black Sieve Sect one, and the Violet Fate Sect two. As for the Li and Song Clans, they each had one.

Surrounding each of the 3,000-meter lakes were ten 300-meter lakes, all of which were also occupied by the sects and clans.

The two Demonfire Patriarchs’ eyes filled with anger. The words of ridicule from the other sects and clans caused their pupils to glow with the color of blood. They exchanged a frustrated glance. If Meng Hao were here, they wouldn’t be afraid at all. But he wasn’t. If the other four Spirit Severing Patriarchs were there, they would be a force that could content with anyone. But they weren’t.

Unfortunately… they simply weren’t capable of contending for any of the 3,000 meter Dao Lakes.

“Why don’t you hurry up and beat it?” said an old man from the Solitary Sword Sect. He wore a gray Daoist robe, and sat cross-legged with a wooden sword resting on his legs. His words echoed out like thunder.

The sound rumbled in all directions, causing the two Demonfire Patriarchs’ faces to flicker.

“Sir Jian!” 1

There had always been serious grievances between Blood Demon Sect and the Solitary Sword Sect, and it seemed that now, they were on the verge of exploding out. 2

It was at this point that the emaciated old man from the Violet Fate Sect suddenly rose up from his cross-legged position.

“Fellow Daoists from the Blood Demon Sect,” he said coolly, “this Dao Lake is yours!” Instantly, the Violet Fate Sect disciples backed away from the 3,000-meter Dao Lake that he pointed to.

The eyes of the cultivators from the other sects flickered. As for Sir Jian from the Solitary Sword Sect, he turned his head to look coldly in the direction of the Violet Fate Sect. “Reverend Withered-Dao!”

Reverend Withered-Dao of the Violet Fate Sect calmly looked back at him.

Their gazes met, and then Sir Jian looked away and gave a cold snort. He did nothing to interfere with what was happening.

The two Demonfire Patriarchs were shocked, but then seemed to remember something. Clasping hands, they bowed politely and then led their group over to the Dao Lake.

The Blood Demon Sect disciples thanked the Violet Fate Sect, but their inward frustration didn’t lessen. They had arrived late, losing any advantage, and then their most powerful experts had been teleported away. The once domineering Blood Demon Sect was suddenly in an incredibly weak position in the Ancient Dao Lakes.

They were in such a bad position that they couldn’t even compare to the severely weakened Black Sieve Sect.

Furthermore, the Solitary Sword Sect was clearly in the position of greatest power; they had three 3,000-meter Dao Lakes, and would obviously be difficult to contend with.

The two Demonfire Patriarchs exchanged a glance. Enduring the frustration, and ignoring the words of ridicule from the other sects, they closed their eyes and began to meditate.

As for the other Blood Demon Sect disciples, they couldn't hold back from commenting.

"Blood Prince, when are you going to return?!"

"Wait until the Blood Prince returns, he'll take care of them!"

"That teleportation trap might be strong, but considering the Blood Prince's cultivation base, he'll definitely get out of it soon!"

Meanwhile, in another location in the Ancient Dao Lakes, Meng Hao was frowning. Next to him were Patriarch Darkheaven, the two Ironblood Patriarchs, and the First Demonfire Patriarch, their faces flickering with various emotions. There were also seven or eight other Blood Demon Sect disciples, all of whom were sitting cross-legged in meditation, although it seemed like they wouldn't be able to hold out for much longer.

The teleportation continued on without stop. Just now, it had paused, but before anyone could do anything, another teleportation commenced.

Plop!

One of the disciples coughed up blood, and then his entire body withered up into a desiccated corpse. More sounds rang out as others suffered the same fate.

In a relatively short period of time, they had already teleported thirteen times.

The world in front of Meng Hao changed over and over. Every time they teleported, an intense force would slam into their bodies, causing their souls to shudder. Apparently there was some sort of power inside the teleportation trap that was consuming their energy.

“Blood Prince, we can’t keep going on like this!!” said the First Demonfire Patriarch, his voice gloomy. “Blood Prince, what do we do?!”

RUMBLE!

The teleportation ceased, and they found themselves in a grassy area. Then they vanished again.

Meng Hao stood there the entire time. Finally, he raised his hand, and the Black White Pearls appeared, swirling around the Ninth Mountain. His eyes were fixed ahead of him, and he waited for a few more teleportation cycles, until they reached the thirtieth teleportation. Up ahead, he saw some Dao Lakes. It was at this point that his eyes glittered.

Without hesitation, he sent the Black White Pearls and the Ninth Mountain out ahead. Rumbling filled the air, and the teleportation trap once again began the teleportation process.

“Expand!” said Meng Hao, his voice echoing out. Inside the teleportation trap, the Ninth Mountain suddenly began to grow. It expanded to a thousand meters in height, ten thousand, until it appeared as if an enormous mountain peak were growing up out of the land.

As soon as the mountain appeared within the Ancient Dao Lakes, it was noticed by quite a few other cultivators. As for the Blood Demon Sect disciples by the 3,000-meter Dao Lake, as soon as they saw it, their expressions brightened.

There were even cultivators in the region with the 30-meter Dao Lakes who saw it and stared with gaping mouths.

“It’s… it’s someone trying to break out of a teleportation trap!”

“Once you get into one of the teleportation traps, it’s impossible to get out!”

RUMBLE!

In order to attempt to move the enormous mountain, the teleportation trap had to condense huge amounts of power, and it began to shudder.

In that instant of pause, Meng Hao shouted, “Go!”

Immediately, Patriarch Darkheaven flew out, taking advantage of the pause to break out of the teleportation trap.

Meng Hao was right behind him.

However, even as they neared the border, the teleportation trap surged with more power in its attempt to block their way.

“Suppress!” said Meng Hao, his brow furrowed.

Intense rumbling filled the air as the Ninth Mountain began to expand once again. The teleportation trap was forced to a standstill. In that moment, Patriarch Darkheaven and the other Spirit Severing Patriarchs burst out. However, at the same time, the teleportation trap began a shocking teleportation, the likes of which were rarely seen in the Ancient Dao Lakes. A pillar of light rose up into the air that closely resembled the eruption of a 3,000-meter Dao Lake. Amidst the rumbling, Meng Hao and the Ninth Mountain vanished.

“Blood Prince!”

“Considering the Blood Prince’s strength, he should be able to free himself within a few teleportation cycles. We should head to the central zone and seize a Dao Lake as soon as possible!”

“That’s right, let’s go!”

The four Patriarchs had the utmost faith in Meng Hao. After exchanging glances, their eyes filled with determination, and they transformed into colorful beams that shot toward the central zone.

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1. Jian is a surname, but also same character as ‘sword’

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# Chapter 715: Crushing Spirit Severing!

In a valley in a particular area of the Ancient Dao Lakes, the glow of teleportation rose up into the sky. Rumbling sounds echoed out as a figure emerged at high speed from within the valley.

As soon as the figure emerged, the light of teleportation faded away.

Flying through the air was none other than Meng Hao.

His face was pale white, and as soon as he flew out from the valley, he landed on the ground and looked behind him, a trace of fear on his face.

“After getting Darkheaven and the others out, I was teleported seventy more times! The cycle of teleportation is astonishing. Toward the end, it started going faster and faster, and my qi and blood was being sucked out, weakening me.”

He took a deep breath and then produced some medicinal pills, which he quickly consumed. Then he flew up into the air and looked around to gain his bearings. The eruption of the Dao Lakes had ceased, as had most of the fighting.

“The disciples from the Blood Demon Sect most likely followed my instructions and went to the central zone.”

Having determined the general direction of the 3,000-meter Dao Lakes, Meng Hao started flying.

The entire way, he sent out his divine sense out to avoid the rifts, and also employed teleportation techniques.

Meanwhile, near the 3,000-meter Dao Lakes in the central region, the Solitary Sword Sect and the Blood Demon Sect were faced off with proverbial daggers drawn.

“The Blood Demon Sect are cultivators of a Demonic Dao! If they only occupied one lake that’s one thing, but they even dare to covet more!”

“Are you looking to die!?”

The Solitary Sword Sect was the most powerful force in the area. They had seized the initiative and taken control of three Dao Lakes. They had eight Spirit Severing cultivators, all of whom had cold expressions and iridescent auras.

In addition to the eight, the old man called Sir Jian, who sat cross-legged off in the distance, glared at the Blood Demon Sect.

As for the Blood Demon Sect, Patriarch Darkheaven and the others had arrived a bit earlier. Killing intent swirled around the six Spirit Severing Patriarchs as they faced off against the Solitary Sword Sect.

“The Blood Demon Sect is simply borrowing the Violet Fate Sect’s lake, and it must be returned to them. Your Solitary Sword Sect is occupying three lakes! You need to give one up!

“Look, Solitary Sword Sect. You can fight, or share. You decide!”

Both parties’ killing intent radiated out. The Blood Demon Sect and the Solitary Sword Sect were already mortal foes, which meant that fights between the two could break out easily at any time. That was not even to mention the current situation in the Ancient Dao Lakes, where so much potential benefit was on the line.

Suddenly, the Third Severing Patriarch from the Black Sieve Sect rose to his feet and started laughing uproariously. His eyes glittered with coldness as he looked over at the Blood Demon Sect.

“Blood Demon Sect, I couldn’t care less that your Dao is Demonic. However, the Dao Lakes represent good fortune for all cultivators of South Heaven. If you keep causing problems, I’ll personally have to step in to do something about it!”

Hearing this, the cultivators of the Solitary Sword Sect began to chuckle. Sir Jian looked over at the Third Severing Patriarch and nodded cordially.

The faces of the six Patriarchs from the Blood Demon Sect flickered.

Next, booming laughter rang out from a middle-aged man who strode out from the the Golden Frost Sect. He was tall and well-built, with skin that seemed as hard as a diamond, and a full suit armor. “Fellow Daoists from the Solitary Sword Sect and Black Sieve Sect,” he said, “your words couldn’t be more appropriate.”

Further back were five old men who sat cross-legged. When their eyes opened, they glowed brightly with the aura of Spirit Severing.

His appearance made clear that an agreement had been reached between the Golden Frost Sect, the Solitary Sword, and Black Sieve Sects. The combined might of three sects was now bearing down oppressively onto the Blood Demon Sect.

In the worst position of everyone were Chen Fan and Fatty. They could do nothing about the situation, so they backed up silently.

As for the Violet Fate Sect and the Song Clan, they were silent.

Only the Li Clan was left. The 19th Li Clan Patriarch flicked his sleeve, and a gleam of killing intent could be seen in his eyes as he stepped forward.

“Well, is your Blood Prince dead, or not? If he’s not, then why isn’t he here?” The death of the Li Clan Dao Child all those years ago was something they had brooded about ever since.

Now that the Li Clan had joined in, there were four sects in the alliance. The faces of the Blood Demon Sect Patriarchs fell, and they backed up.

There was no way they could stand up to the combined might of four sects.

“Why waste your breath on them?” said the Black Sieve Sect Third Severing Patriarch, his eyes glittering. “Just drive them away, and if they won’t leave, exterminate them!” With that, he leaped forward and waved his right hand. Immediately, eight white tigers appeared, roaring as they charged toward the Blood Demon Sect cultivators.

The 19th Li Clan Patriarch also attacked, as did the Solitary Sword Sect cultivators. There were than ten Spirit Severing experts who all flew out and attacked at the same time. In the blink of an eye, a chaotic Spirit Severing battle had begun.

BOOM!

The two sides slammed into each other, and the six Blood Demon Sect Patriarchs were instantly sent into retreat. Facing up against the more than ten attacking Spirit Severing experts on all sides, they were simply incapable of fighting back.

Attack after attack met with success against the Blood Demon Sect cultivators. Shocking magical items and divine abilities were employed, and the dozens of the Blood Demon Sect disciples present were forced back bit by bit. Even as they retreated, cultivators from the other four sects flew out to join the fray.

Of the four allied powers, the Black Sieve Sect had the largest grudge with the Blood Demon Sect. The Li Clan was targeting them because of Meng Hao, and as for the Solitary Sword Sect, they had a long-standing feud. Only the Golden Frost Sect had no apparent reason to attack.

Booms echoed out, and blood sprayed out of the mouth of Patriarch Darkheaven as he tumbled backward. With the exception of the First Demonfire Patriarch, all the others also coughed up blood and fell back. As the fighting played out, a bloody glow rose up, and miserable shrieks sounded out.

Reverend Withered-Dao of the Violet Fate Sect frowned, hesitated for a moment, then closed his eyes. As for the Song Clan, they did not come to the aid of the Blood Demon Sect, but neither did they join with the alliance of four.

“Retreat!” The six Blood Demon Sect Patriarchs’ hearts burned as with fire, but facing up against this force, they had no choice but to flee. The would have to surrender the Dao Lake, which had been given to them by the Violet Fate Sect.

“Screw off to wherever you came from!” said the Third Severing Patriarch from the Black Sieve Sect. “The Blood Demon Sect isn’t allowed to be in a place like this!” He swished his sleeve, causing the eight tigers to send out roars that transformed into terrifying ripples. They slammed into the six Blood Demon Sect Patriarchs, sending them spinning backward, blood spraying from their mouths. Some of the other ordinary disciples directly exploded because of the intensity of the ripples.

Their desire to slaughter could not be any higher.

“Where is the Blood Prince?”

“If he doesn’t come, then we’ll have to give up and leave!” The six Patriarchs’ faces flickered with their suppressed grievances as they continued to retreat.

“It doesn’t matter who shows up,” came a voice from the Solitary Sword Sect, along with a cold snort. “The Blood Demon Sect is not allowed to be here. Screw off!”

It was at this point that a beam of light appeared off in the distance. It neared at incredible speed, like a shooting star, carrying with it a shocking murderous air, as well as a will of ruthlessness that towered into the heavens.

As soon as the beam appeared, the cultivators from the Violet Fate Sect looked over, especially Chu Yuyan and Hanxue Shan, whose faces bore intent gazes.

Song Jia couldn’t stop from looking up.

The beam of light moved so fast that in the blink of an eye, it had arrived. It shot past the six Blood Demon Sect Patriarchs and came to a stop directly in front of them.

A booming sound exploded out, along with a shocking ripple that slammed into the force of cultivators from the alliance of four powers. The more than ten Spirit Severing cultivators’ faces flickered, and they immediately stopped in place. As for the cultivator in the vanguard position, a Spirit Severing expert from the Golden Frost Sect, he let out a bloodcurdling scream as he was thrown backward, then immediately exploded. The blood and gore that spattered about in all directions was incapable of obscuring the young, crimson-robed man who stood there in front of the group.

The young man’s face was calm, but his eyes were so cold that they seemed capable of freezing the highest heavens. His right hand was clenched into a fist, a fist that had just burst into pieces the Spirit Severing expert from the Golden Frost Sect.

The fact that one punch had just destroyed a First Severing expert caused everyone present to be shaken.

Meng Hao’s long hair floated around him, and his robes swayed gently. His Second Severing cultivation base emanated shocking energy out in all directions.

All color in the land and sky dimmed and the wind howled. It was as if a tempest had arrived, causing all the dust in the area to fly up into the air.

As of this moment, all eyes were completely fixed upon Meng Hao.

“Who said that the Blood Demon Sect isn’t allowed to be here?” he said, looking around. His gaze flickered with killing intent and ruthlessness as he looked at the Spirit Severing cultivators who made up the force of four allied sects.

From behind Meng Hao, the cultivators from the Blood Demon Sect immediately grew excited and began to bow and offer greetings.

“Blood Prince!”

“Greetings, Blood Prince!”

The face of the Third Severing Patriarch from the Black Sieve Sect flickered. “Meng Hao!” he shouted.

The cultivators from the Golden Frost Sect also looked shocked, and the eyes of the Li Clan Patriarch widened. As for the people from the Solitary Sword Sect, their faces all filled with astonishment.

In the group from the Violet Fate Sect, An Zaihai and Li Hailong stared blankly at Meng Hao in his blood-colored robe. It was as if memories were flitting through their mind of a young man with a very different face whose features now seemed to merge with the person in front of them.

Chu Yuyan was trembling. There were thousands of things she wanted to say to Meng Hao, but right now, she couldn’t say a single thing.

Hanxue Shan was a bit more innocent and immature than Chu Yuyan. As she gazed at Meng Hao, she kept thinking about everything that had happened in Holy Snow City in the Black Lands.

Ye Feimu stood there, taciturn. His expression was a complicated one as he looked at Meng Hao, who was now a Spirit Severing expert of high standing. He was illustrious and famous. Ye Feimu couldn’t help but think back to the time the two of them had wrangled over the title of Violet Furnace Lord.

Although he didn’t want to admit it, it was obvious that he himself… had fallen even further behind.

Another person stood within the group from the Violet Fate Sect, an old man within whose eyes flickered many memories of Meng Hao. He also stood there quietly, wondering if Meng Hao would remember a nobody like himself.

Everything was quiet. Meng Hao looked over the group standing in front of him, and then his eyes came to rest on the Third Severing Patriarch from the Black Sieve Sect.

“Was it you who said it?” he asked.

When the Third Severing Patriarch heard the words, his face filled with dread, and his mind roared. He thought back to how terrifying Meng Hao was last time he saw him, and he backed up, his body trembling.

When the others in the area saw this, it caused them to be even more shaken.

To be able to strike dread into the heart of a Third Severing expert with a single sentence was incredible. Granted, what the man had Severed was only a simple and ordinary Dao, making him unlike those terrifying, inhuman, and almighty Third Severing experts who severed great Daos. But it still served to show… how powerful Meng Hao was.

The man from the Golden Frost Sect immediately fell back, his eyes flashing. He took the other Golden Frost experts with him. The person who had just been killed was from their sect, so of course they could retreat. Naturally, the Li Clan also retreated, unwilling to even touch the razor-sharp blade that was Meng Hao.

Meng Hao had burst onto the scene and destroyed a potent Spirit Severing expert with a single blow. Such an act deeply shocked everyone who saw it, and the results were apparent.

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# Chapter 716: Overbearing!

“You want to leave?” said Meng Hao, killing intent radiating out of his eyes. The instant he laid eyes on the cultivators from the Black Sieve Sect, that desire to kill had become insuppressible! Nor did he want to suppress it!

He wanted catharsis! He wanted… to kill!

Others could leave, but as for the cultivators from the Black Sieve Sect, well, if he hadn’t seen them, it wouldn’t matter. But now that he had… they had to die!

They absolutely, positively had to die!

Even as the words left his mouth, Meng Hao was moving forward at an incredible speed. He shot toward the Third Severing Patriarch, whose face instantly fell. Of course, he had long since prepared himself, and immediately shot backward in retreat.

“Meng Hao, you can have our Dao Lake, we’re leaving this place!!”

“Not happening!” was Meng Hao’s cold reply. It was with incredible speed that he shot forward to appear directly in front of the Patriarch. He waved his hand, giving rise to an intense rumbling sound that caused everyone in the area to begin to pant and look over.

That was especially true of the Spirit Severing Patriarchs, whose eyes glittered. They assumed that this was going to be a fierce battle, like a fight between a dragon and a tiger. However, even as the thought occurred to them….

Meng Hao lifted up his hand and made a gesture toward the Black Sieve Sect's Third Severing Patriarch. Instantly, an enormous blood-colored vortex appeared around him. At the same time, a gigantic blood-colored hand magically appeared, which grabbed down onto him mercilessly.

RUMBLE!

"NO!!" shrieked the old man from the Black Sieve Sect. He went all-out as he tried to struggle free, but was completely incapable. His fleshly body withered away with incredible speed as his qi and blood was absorbed by Meng Hao.

The sight of it caused the onlookers to gasp with shock. Amazed exclamations could be heard from all directions.

"Blood Demon Grand Magic!"

"That's the true magic of the Blood Demon Sect, the Blood Demon Grand Magic!"

Sir Jian from the Solitary Sword Sect stared at what was happening, his expression one of unprecedented seriousness. His eyes shone with an intense, bright light, and he was breathing heavily.

The 19th Li Clan Patriarch's pupils constricted, and his heart skipped a beat.

In the Song Clan was a cultivator who appeared to be an ordinary old man. Suddenly, he lifted his head up, and his eyes shone with a bizarre glow.

In the Violet Fate Sect, Reverend Withered-Dao's face was covered with a strange expression. He looked at Meng Hao and let out a long sigh in his heart.

All of this takes some time to describe, but actually happened in the space of only a few breaths. The Black Sieve Sect Patriarch's miserable screams rang out in all directions. However, he was a decisive individual. He saw his body withering rapidly, and realized that he couldn’t break free. When the decisive moment arrived, he gritted his teeth and chose to self-detonate.

His fleshly body exploded, causing the power of qi and blood to surge out; Meng Hao’s Blood Demon Grand Magic trembled. At the same time, the Black Sieve Sect Patriarch’s Nascent Divinity shot out at top speed from within the blood-colored vortex.

“Damn you, Meng Hao!” howled the Nascent Divinity. “I should have tortured that slut Xu Qing even more when I had the chance!” He shot through the air toward a rip that had just appeared, and was about to enter it, when….

When Meng Hao heard the old man’s words, his killing intent skyrocketed to the pinnacle. He lifted his right hand and then pushed it out in front of him.

In response, the Black White Pearls and the Ninth Mountain appeared in mid-air. They were almost like Meng Hao’s hands, smashing down onto the fleeing Nascent Divinity.

BOOOMMMMMM!!

The ground quaked and the air vibrated. The Ninth Mountain crushed down, drowning out the miserable scream that rang out. When the mountain vanished, the Black Sieve Sect Patriarch’s Nascent Divinity was in fragments; he was completely and utterly dead.

The entire process lasted only for about ten breaths of time. To Meng Hao, slaughtering a Third Severing expert was like turning over his hand. The sight caused all onlookers to be thrown into deathly silence.

Of course, the Blood Demon Sect members were all quite excited, and looked at Meng Hao with more fanaticism than ever.

“Fall back!” said Sir Jian. The words echoed in the hearts of the Solitary Sword Sect cultivators as they returned to their places in the three Dao Lakes.

The Golden Frost Sect cultivators also retreated without the slightest bit of hesitation, as did the Li Clan members. All returned to their various Dao Lakes, keeping a vigilant eye on Meng Hao the entire time.

“Do not leave any Black Sieve Sect cultivators alive,” said Meng Hao calmly. Immediately, the several dozen remaining Blood Demon Sect disciples shot toward the Black Sieve Sect cultivators next to the Dao Lake.

This was not Meng Hao engaged in random killing. No, these Black Sieve Sect disciples had all been part of the spell formation used to dissolve Xu Qing. Sad and shrill screams filled the air for about ten breaths worth of time as the Black Sieve Sect’s force was completely slaughtered. Although everyone in the vicinity saw what was happening, no one tried to interfere.

There were also quite a few 300-meter Dao Lakes in the area surrounding the 3,000-meter Dao Lakes. Meng Hao immediately flew toward one of them and waved his hand, causing a blood-colored flag to stab into the dirt next to the lake.

“This lake is mine!” he declared.

The blood-colored flag was of course the standard of the Blood Demon Sect, and its surface was embroidered with the character ‘Meng .’ This was actually Meng Hao’s Blood Prince standard, of which quite a few had been specially crafted by the disciples of the Blood Demon Sect during the past year.

A standard like this was an item that, as Blood Prince, he had to possess as a token of his authority.

When he stabbed the flag into the ground, and his voice echoed out, the faces of the people in the area flickered, especially those of the cultivators who were standing guard next to that particular lake.

Meng Hao approached another nearby lake, then waved his hand to send another flag flying down.

“This lake is mine.

“This lake is mine, too!

“And this one!

“This one also!” Meng Hao flashed back and forth. Shockingly, in the blink of an eye, more than half of the 300-meter Dao Lakes were marked with Meng Hao’s Blood Prince standard.

It took only a moment for blood-colored flags to fill the area. Meng Hao was like a surging flood, domineering to the extreme.

It didn’t matter which sect or clan the Dao Lakes originally belonged to, as long as the people guarding a particular lake weren’t from the Violet Fate Sect, Meng Hao would occupy it.

The other sects and clans were shaken by Meng Hao’s slaughter of the Black Sieve Sect disciples, and didn’t dare to do anything to stop him. He whistled through the air, much to the excitement of the Blood Demon Sect disciples, who flew after him to occupy the various lakes.

As for the cultivators who were originally occupying those lakes, they unhesitatingly retreated one by one.

While Meng Hao was in the middle of seizing one Dao Lake after another, there was suddenly a minor eruption. Not many items emerged from the Dao Lakes, especially in the center zone that Meng Hao was in. However, there was one 300-meter Dao Lake up ahead of him that did spit something out.

In this case, it wasn’t a Dao Shadow, nor a magical item, but rather… a violet-colored humanoid beast. It was completely ferocious in appearance, with bat-like wings and a horn sticking out of its forehead. As it shot out of the Dao Lake, it transformed into a violet beam of blinding light.

It roared as it shot forward to try to break through the shield that surrounded the lake.

Immediately, excited cries rang out.

“It’s a beast! A violet beast!!”

“That’s a violet beast! Its body is like a treasure! You can refine countless items from it! Violet beasts like that are virtually extinct!!”

Some people were so shocked they were speechless.

The instant the beast appeared, the cultivators guarding the lake shot forward toward it. Before they could get near, a boom echoed out. The beast roared, its sound transforming into ripples that surged toward the cultivators.

The cultivators retreated, but Meng Hao moved forward. He slapped his hand down, causing the image of a gigantic hand to appear, which then shot toward the violet beast.

The violet beast let out a shrill cry and was about to fight back when the huge hand smashed onto it. Its body began to crumble, and then it was smashed into the surface of the lake, a mess of flesh and bones. Meng Hao quickly collected it up.

“This lake is also mine,” he said calmly, throwing down a flag.

In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao had occupied nearly seventy percent of the 300-meter Dao Lakes. When he finally finished, everyone watched with complex expressions as he returned to the area with the 3,000 meter Dao Lakes.

Along with other Blood Demon Sect members, he occupied the Dao Lake formerly held by the Black Sieve Sect. After that, the Blood Demon Sect members explained everything that had happened before, including the matter of the Violet Fate Sect offering them a Dao Lake.

After hearing the explanation, Meng Hao looked over toward the Violet Fate Sect. There were many people looking back at him, and their gazes met.

Meng Hao saw Chu Yuyan and Hanxue Shan. He saw An Zaihai, Lin Hailong, and Ye Feimu, as well as that other old man.

“Bai Yunlai….” he thought, instantly recognizing the man who had been a fellow apprentice alchemist with him when he joined the Violet Fate Sect.

In his former days, Bai Yunlai had been known as the young man who knew everything about the East Pill Division. Now, he was an old man in his declining years.

Meng Hao avoided Chu Yuyan’s gaze. In his heart, there was only Xu Qing.

Chu Yuyan seemed to be able to sense his state of mind, and a tremor ran through her. She lowered her head.

Meng Hao sighed inwardly, then glanced over at Fatty and Chen Fan. Finally, he closed his eyes for a moment. When they opened, his pupils were once again as cold as ice.

He turned his gaze to the Li Clan, then began to walk over to them. Blood Demon Sect cultivators followed him excitedly.

The 19th Li Clan Patriarch’s face flickered. Four other old men from the Li Clan walked out to stand with him, as if they were about to face a mortal enemy. The other members of the Li Clan nervously produced magical items.

“Meng Hao, what are you doing?!” bellowed the 19th Li Clan Patriarch.

“Screw off!” replied Meng Hao. It was a single command, but it rang out like claps of thunder. Everyone in the Li Clan who was under the Spirit Severing stage coughed up blood. As for the 19th Li Clan Patriarch and the other four Spirit Severing Patriarchs, their faces went pale, and two of them even staggered backward.

“You’re going too far!” cried the 19th Li Clan Patriarch. “Fellow Daoists Sir Jian and Han Yun, don’t tell me you’re just going to ignore this matter?!” Clearly, the 19th Li Clan Patriarch was terrified of Meng Hao because of the slaughter that had just occurred with the Black Sieve Sect.

“SCREW OFF!” repeated Meng Hao, his eyes flashing with murderous intent. Again, it was only a single command, but it caused Heaven and Earth to tremble. With the exception of the 19th Patriarch, all the Spirit Severing Patriarchs coughed up blood. As for the ordinary cultivators, some couldn’t endure, and their bodies exploded.

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# Chapter 717: Old Friends Meet by the Dao Lake

The 19th Li Clan Patriarch’s face fell. Gritting his teeth, he ceased hesitating and backed up. The other four Spirit Severing Patriarchs looked at Meng Hao in shock as they, too, retreated. Along with their fellow clan members, they left the Dao Lake.

“Everything within 30,000 meters of this spot is a restricted zone,” said Meng Hao slowly. “Any of you who dares to enter will be killed. By me.” The Li Clan members sullenly moved to a position 30,000 meters away.

A buzz of conversation immediately rose up among the bystanders.

“Just what cultivation base does this Meng Hao have?!?!”

“He single-handedly fought the entire Black Sieve Sect before. Granted, he was defeated by Six-Daos, but according to the rumors, he’s the number one figure under Dao Seeking!”

“He just killed a Third Severing expert. Calling him the number one person under Dao Seeking is definitely appropriate!”

As the sound of conversation filled the air, the Blood Demon Sect disciples took possession of the Dao Lake. Forgetting about the Dao Lake that the Violet Fate Sect had given them, they now controlled two Dao Lakes.

The Blood Demon Sect Patriarchs’ killing intent was boiling as they waited for Meng Hao to accomplish his next goal.

Meng Hao stood there, ignoring the Violet Fate Sect, allowing his gaze to pass over the Song Clan to fall onto the Golden Frost Sect.

The middle-aged Golden Frost Sect cultivator’s face darkened. Moments ago, he had wanted to come to aid of the Li Clan, but the feeling he got from Meng Hao was too terrifying. It was in his brief moment of hesitation that the Li Clan dispersed.

Now that Meng Hao was staring at them, everyone from the Golden Frost Sect began to tremble inwardly. As for Fatty, he hesitated for a moment, then looked up at Meng Hao. Their gazes met for a moment, and then Meng Hao looked away toward the Solitary Sword Sect.

In that moment, the Golden Frost Sect let out a collective inward sigh of relief. As for the middle-aged man, he looked thoughtful for a moment before his eyes turned cold.

When Meng Hao looked at the Solitary Sword Sect, he saw Chen Fan, who was standing toward the back. His cultivation base was at the great circle of Core Formation. His face was sallow, and he looked thin. When Meng Hao looked over, he returned the gaze.

After a long moment, Meng Hao began to look away from the Solitary Sword Sect. However, it was in that instant that he suddenly sensed a feeling of danger, coming from a person located behind Sir Jian.

As for Sir Jian, his eyes were ice cold as he stared at Meng Hao. When Meng Hao stared back in the same direction, it almost seemed as if an intangible rumbling resulted.

Sir Jian gave a muffled groan, and his body quivered. Beads of sweat appeared on his forehead, and a nervous expression appeared on his face as he suddenly realized that he couldn’t withstand the pressure weighing down on him. And then he realized… Meng Hao wasn’t even looking at him.

Rather, Meng Hao was looking at the teenager behind him, an unremarkable boy who was rather frail-looking.

As soon as Meng Hao looked at him, he lifted his chin slightly and looked back, a calm expression on his face.

Their simple act of looking at each other actually caused Sir Jian to be injured.

When he realized that Meng Hao was looking at the teenager behind him, Sir Jian’s heart began to thump.

Suddenly, as everyone watched on, Meng Hao walked forward toward the Solitary Sword Sect. The atmosphere in the area couldn’t be any heavier.

Every step he took seemed to ring out like thunder.

He headed toward the third of the Solitary Sword Sect’s Dao Lakes, causing the cultivators gathered there to brace themselves as if they were about to face a deadly foe. The Spirit Severing cultivators’ faces grew anxious, and they started breathing heavily.

Meng Hao looked back at the teenager behind Sir Jian, and coolly said, “I want this Dao Lake too.”

“Impossible!” blurted Sir Jian, instantly rising to his feet. The Solitary Sword Sect disciples drew their swords, and the eight Spirit Severing experts’ cultivation bases exploded with intensity. In one short moment, the sword qi of the Solitary Sword Sect burst out, causing the wind to scream and a riot of colors to flash in the sky.

However, it was at this moment that the teenager behind Sir Jian suddenly spoke. His voice was hoarse and ancient, and didn’t match his youthful appearance at all.

“Take it.”

Sir Jian’s expression immediately changed as he turned and bowed his head respectfully. The other Spirit Severing Cultivators stared in shock, then looked at the teenager and seemed to suddenly realize something important. One by one, their expressions began to fill with incredible respect, as well as fanaticism and inspiration.

“Since you like this particular Dao Lake,” continued the teenager, “I’ll give it to you.” He spoke with a smile, but his eyes were as cold as ice, something he did nothing to conceal.

When Meng Hao looked at the teenager, it felt like he was looking at a sword!

A shocking, astonishing sword!

Even as the words left the teenager’s mouth, the Solitary Sword Sect disciples surrounding the their Third Dao Lake all fell back, leaving it open for Meng Hao.

Meng Hao nodded, and Blood Demon Sect disciples moved forward to take control of the Dao Lake.

As of now, the situation regarding the 3,000-meter lakes in the central zone of the Ancient Dao Lakes was as such: Blood Demon Sect, three. Solitary Sword Sect, two. Golden Frost Sect, two. Violet Fate Sect, two. Song Clan, one. Black Sieve Sect, exterminated. Li Clan, driven 30,000 meters away.

As for the 300-meter Dao Lakes, including the ten that surrounded each of the 3,000-meter Lakes, there were more than 700 in total.

Of those, more than four hundred bore the standard of the Blood Demon Sect’s Junior Leader. Of course, there were only a few dozen Blood Demon Sect cultivators in this area. Even if one disciple occupied each lake, there were still hundreds of lakes with only a flag to watch over them.

Meng Hao sat down next to the 3,000-meter lake that formerly belonged to the Black Sieve Sect, closed his eyes, and rotated his cultivation base as he waited for the next Dao Lake eruption. The people in the surrounding sects and clans who knew him all sighed inwardly.

This version of Meng Hao, and his coldness, made him seem like a stranger.

In the Song Clan, Eccentric Song looked over at Meng Hao and sighed emotionally in his heart. He couldn’t help but think back to the time in the

State of Zhao when he saw Meng Hao for the first time.

It was the same with Wu Dingqiu in the Violet Fate Sect. He was in the same mood as Eccentric Song. In fact, he was actually thinking about a certain spear, which still existed to this day in the Violet Fate Sect…. 1

Time passed by. The 3,000-meter lake region was completely silent. As for the 30,000-meter lake which all of those lakes surrounded, not even a ripple could be seen on its surface. It looked almost exactly like a huge mirror.

Chu Yuyan sat quietly for a long time before finally rising to her feet and walking out from the crowd of Violet Fate Sect disciples. Reverend Withered-Dao looked over, but did nothing to prevent her from approaching the Blood Demon Sect.

Her actions immediately drew the attention of quite a few people.

As she neared the area where Meng Hao sat cross-legged, she was blocked by a Blood Demon Sect disciple.

“I want to see Meng Hao,” she said softly, looking over at him sitting cross-legged not too far off.

The Blood Demon Sect disciple hesitated for a moment, aware that the Blood Prince had ties to the Violet Fate Sect.

Meng Hao opened his eyes and looked over at Chu Yuyan. “Let her pass,” he said.

The Blood Demon Sect disciple immediately stepped aside. Chu Yuyan said nothing as she walked up to Meng Hao and then sat down next to him, a complex expression in her eyes.

At first, she didn’t say anything, and neither did Meng Hao.

After what seemed like a very, very long time had passed, she finally spoke. “It’s been a few hundred years. Did you ever go back to that ravine?”

Meng Hao knew exactly which ravine she was referring to. That was the location in which the two of them truly got to know each other, and where he acquired the good fortune of the Blood Immortal legacy.

“No, I didn’t,” he replied calmly.

“I did,” she said, looking him in the eyes.

Meng Hao didn’t respond.

Chu Yuyan stared back out at the Dao Lake, her expression one of bitterness. Several hours passed, and she finally stood up and began to walk back toward the Violet Fate Sect. After seven steps, she stopped.

“If there was no Xu Qing…?”

“No ‘ifs,’” Meng Hao replied softly.

“But why?”

“The opportunity was missed. What’s done is done.”

Chu Yuyan trembled, and then left Meng Hao’s Dao Lake and returned to the Violet Fate Sect, tears streaming down her face.

Hanxue Shan came to see Meng Hao, innocent and making no attempts conceal her lingering feelings for him.

Fatty came, carrying a wild chicken. Meng Hao glanced at it, then summoned flames. The two of them sat next to the Dao Lake for a long time, eating wild chicken while everyone around watched on.

Fatty laughed and filed away at his teeth with a sword. In the end, he pulled Meng Hao into a bear hug and then left.

An Zaihai and Lin Hailong both came. Sighing, they recounted past times, although they avoided mentioning Grandmaster Pill Demon. They were well aware that to Meng Hao, the most important person in the Violet Fate Sect… was his Master.

Ye Feimu didn’t come. The last person from the Violet Fate Sect to come was an old man. His Cultivation base was not very high, but as soon as he neared, Meng Hao’s face broke out into a smile.

“Bai Yunlai.”

“Fang… Meng Hao.” The old man inadvertently started to call Meng Hao by the name Fang Mu.

People came from the Song Clan, the Golden Frost Sect, and the Solitary Sword Sect. Earlier they had faced off with hostility, but now they came to chat. These were people of the same generation as Meng Hao in the Southern Domain, Dao Children and Chosen, the most powerful of whom were merely in the Nascent Soul stage.

When they saw Meng Hao, the couldn’t help but think of all the things that had happened in the past. Meng Hao didn’t see Li Tiandao of the Li Clan, who hadn’t come to the Dao Lakes this time. 2

As far as Wang Lihai, and that figure who existed deep in his memories, Wang Tengfei, after the genocide of the Wang Clan carried out by their 10th Patriarch, Meng Hao wasn’t sure if they were even still alive.

There was one person who Meng Hao hadn’t seen at all since returning to the Southern Domain, and that was Han Bei. Han Bei of the Black Sieve Sect.

The last person to come visit was Chen Fan. He looked older than before, and hadn’t reached the Nascent Soul stage yet. His body was somewhat emaciated, which sharply contrasted with the Chen Fan that Meng Hao remembered.

It seemed that many matters of the heart had built up in him during the past centuries, and had reached the point that they were suffocating him.

He didn’t say much at first, and he brought a flagon of alcohol with him, which he drank from continuously. It was hard to say when, but at some point, he had begun to drink on a daily basis. It had reached the point where he didn’t just need to drink, he needed to get drunk.

He was no longer the blazing sun that he had been in past years, nor was he one of the Seven Swords. One fellow sect member after another had surpassed him, and his dreams of rising up within the Solitary Sword Sect had not come true.

However, he still smiled. He smiled at Meng Hao, and it contained the same warmth it always had, the same concern and love.

“Elder Brother Chen….” said Meng Hao, looking him over. Every time he saw his old friends, he couldn’t help but think of the Reliance Sect.

“Make sure to focus well on your cultivation,” said Chen Fan. “If you ever reach Immortal Ascension, then I can boast to people that I have a little brother who’s an Immortal.” He chuckled, and clapped Meng Hao on the shoulder. Then he took a long swig of alcohol and headed back toward the Solitary Sword Sect.

Meng Hao could clearly see the scorn with which many of the Solitary Sword Sect disciples looked at Chen Fan.

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# Chapter 718: Give Me This Lake!

RUMBLE!

Several days later, the Ancient Dao Lakes once again began to erupt. It was an enormous eruption in which glowing pillars of light shot up into the sky from roughly eighty percent of the Dao Lakes and Geysers.

It was the same in the inner region as the outer.

When the Dao Lakes erupted, countless Dao Shadows appeared. In the inner region, there were even three hundred or so Dao Lakes that erupted with magical items and other treasures. As far as the 3,000-meter Dao Lakes, there were two that erupted with Dao Shadows and eight that spit out magical items.

All of the magical items were different, there were intact ones and ones that were broken apart or missing parts; some were ancient and dilapidated, others were brand new. Even more numerous than these were fragments of magical items. Lastly, there were broken bits of rocks and dirt from ancient ruins.

Of the Blood Demon Sect’s three Dao Lakes, two spit out magical items. As for the lake Meng Hao occupied, a Dao Shadow appeared above it.

The other Dao Shadow appeared from within the 3,000-meter lake belonging to the Golden Frost Sect, the one Fatty was seated next to.

That particular Dao Shadow depicted a plump fellow cultivating some sort of formidable magical technique. When Fatty saw it, his eyes went wide, and he immediately began to seek enlightenment.

Because of the eruption, the previous quietude was instantly shattered. However, there was no descent into chaos. The Dao Lakes had been divided up, so unless some incredibly shocking item appeared, there would be no frenzied fighting like that which occurred in the outer region.

Whoever occupied a given lake had rights to whatever it spit out.

Immediately, countless cultivators flew up into the air toward their various Dao Lakes. Rumbling filled the air. The six Blood Demon Sect Patriarchs began to collect the various objects that had been spit out.

All of this takes some time to describe, but it actually only took the space of about ten breaths of time for all of the items from the 3,000-meter Dao Lakes to be collected up by the various sects. It was then that attention was turned to the 300-meter lakes.

That was especially true of the more than four hundred 300-meter lakes that belonged to Meng Hao. More than a hundred of them had spit out magical items, which floated there in mid-air. There were also some that had Dao Shadows and other miscellaneous objects. The sight was shocking, and would naturally cause anyone who saw it to be moved.

Despite that, not a single fight broke out. Meng Hao’s actions earlier had clearly shown how powerful he was, as well as the unbridled manner in which he tended to act. Any cultivator who coveted an item protected by one of the Blood Prince’s standards would first think long and hard before doing anything.

The Blood Demon Sect disciples were tired but happy. They bustled about for nearly two hours collecting up the various objects spit up by the Dao Lakes. The cultivators from the other sects and clans looked on enviously.

Just when they were about to deliver all the objects up to Meng Hao, one of the 300-meter lakes that had spit out a Dao Shadow, suddenly began to rumble.

Immediately, large numbers of cultivators rose to their feet, their eyes burning with passion.

“A second eruption!”

“It’s common for Dao Geysers to erupt twice. For a 30-meter Dao Lake to do so is uncommon. For a 300-meter Dao Lake to erupt a second time… is rare!”

“A second eruption almost certainly means a precious item will appear!”

Up to this point, Meng Hao had been sitting there meditating, but now that one of the Dao Lakes was erupting a second time, he opened his eyes.

RUMBLE!

Bright light blasted out from the Dao Lake as a corpse was spit out from within!

“A corpse!!”

“The corpse of a cultivator from ancient times?!”

“Wow… I have to get that!”

Corpses were incredibly rare, and in the instant that it appeared, the Solitary Sword Sect, the Golden Frost Sect, the Violet Fate Sect, the Song Clan, and even the Li Clan off in the distance, were shaken. However… the Dao Lake that was erupting for the second time happened to have a blood-colored flag flying next to it. That instantly made quite a few people suddenly calm down.

Not everyone calmed down, though. Three of the Spirit Severing experts from the Golden Frost Sect flew out with glittering eyes. In their minds, Meng Hao had refrained from taking action against the Golden Frost Sect earlier because he was apprehensive; a fact they could take advantage of to keep him in check.

The three cultivators flew up into the air and then shot directly toward the 300-meter Dao Lake.

The six Blood Demon Sect Patriarchs instantly moved to intercept.

“How dare you, Golden Frost Sect!!”

“What gall!”

When Meng Hao saw what was happening, a cold smile turned up the corners of his mouth. He then slapped his hand onto the ground, causing everything to tremble. At the same time, his body transforming into an afterimage, which then completely vanished.

His incredible speed far exceeded both the three Golden Frost Sect cultivators and the Blood Demon Sect Patriarchs. He appeared next to the Dao Lake in the blink of an eye, then waved his right hand to collect up the corpse. Finally, he turned to stare coldly at the three men from the Golden Frost Sect.

“It seems you three are looking to die.”

The three cultivators’ faces flickered. Shocked by Meng Hao’s display of speed, they unhesitatingly retreated.

At the same time, the armored man from the Golden Frost Sect flew out, followed by the other experts from the Golden Frost Sect.

Meng Hao snorted coldly, then raised his right hand into the air and made a grasping motion. The Blood Demon Grand Magic appeared. A huge vortex surrounded the three cultivators, and a bloody hand appeared. Immediately, the three old men started to be consumed.

Miserable shrieks could be heard as the three cultivators exerted every scrap of power they could muster to try to free themselves, all to no avail.

“Stay your hand!” roared the man in the golden armor. He sped through the air with explosive speed. The five cultivators behind him began performing double-handed incantations, after which they pointed forward. Shockingly, the illusory images of puppets encapsulated them.

The puppets were dozens of meters tall, and as they flew forward, the armored man suddenly performed another incantation. Blue veins popped up on his forehead as another puppet image appeared above him!!

Cracking sounds could be heard as all of the puppets quickly merged together. Shockingly, they transformed into an enormous golden puppet, three hundred meters tall and carrying a golden greatsword. It emanated a shocking pressure, which caused everything to tremble.

A similarly shocking voice rumbled out from the mouth of the puppet. “Stay your hand!”

The voice turned into powerful sound waves that spread out in all directions.

“Too late,” replied Meng Hao, his voice cold. He clenched his hand into a fist, and a boom resonated out. The three Golden Frost Sect Spirit Severing cultivators let out bloodcurdling screams as they were crushed into a bloody pulp. Their qi and blood streamed toward Meng Hao, merging into his body, where it transformed into a shocking power that raged inside of him.

As the three Nascent Divinities frenziedly tried to escape, the six Blood Demon Sect Patriarchs shot in pursuit.

“Dammit!” cried the man in the golden armor. “Do you really think the Golden Frost Sect is afraid of you!?” He and the five cultivators behind him began to perform incantation gestures in unison. In response, the resplendent puppet began to emit… a shocking aura that bordered on Dao Seeking.

The instant the aura appeared, the faces of the members of the surrounding sects and clans flickered.

“That aura is borderline Dao Seeking!!”

“That’s the supreme magic of the Golden Frost Sect, the Golden Frost Marionette!”

The golden puppet raised its greatsword and slashed down. A ripping sound could be heard as a 30-meter rift appeared. An aura close to Dao Seeking exploded out, transforming into a pressure that could weigh down on anyone in the Spirit Severing stage.

“DIE!” cried the six Golden Frost Sect cultivators, their voices joining together into a shout that caused everything to tremble.

“Dao Seeking aura, huh?” said Meng Hao, eyes glittering. “I have that too!” The power of the Qi and blood of the three Spirit Severing Cultivators combined with the dissipating remainder of what he had absorbed from the Third Severing Patriarch of the Black Sieve Sect, fused together inside of him and then exploded out.

He clenched his hand into a fist and then punched directly toward the incoming sword.

RUMBLE!

The air shattered under the power of the fist. A black hole appeared that was not 30 meters, but rather, 90 meters wide, raging with a Dao Seeking aura.

Dao Seeking was an embodiment of natural law, a stage in which such laws were fused with the body.

The natural laws were based on the enlightenment of the Dao that accompanied the Third Severing. Dao Seeking was the time to see whether or not the Daos of the three Severings conflicted with each other. It was an introspection regarding the heart, and could not be interfered with nor influenced in any way.

If one had been correct in one’s Dao, then that was that. If they had erred, there was nothing to be done. If correct… one entered Dao Seeking. If incorrect… the Dao vanished.

Therefore, this so-called aura, was a Dao aura.

As the aura spread out, the surrounding cultivators gasped. Sir Jian, Reverend Withered-Dao, and the Spirit Severing Patriarch leader from the

Song Clan were especially shocked. They watched on in shock as the power from Meng Hao’s fist connected with that of the greatsword.

BOOOMMMMMM!

The golden greatsword shattered into pieces that swirled about like flower blossoms. The puppet shook violently, and numerous cracks appeared on its surface. As they spread out, a look of shock appeared on the puppet’s face, and then it exploded.

As the puppet blew up, the six cultivators inside, including the man in the golden armor, spit up blood. Their bodies sagged, and their expressions were that of astonishment as they retreated at full speed.

As for Meng Hao’s fist, it lost its Dao aura.

After all, the power came from the strength he had gained by using the Blood Demon Grand Magic, and not from within himself. Now that the energy had been released by his first blow, he was incapable of making a second similar strike.

“The more I fight with the Blood Demon Grand Magic, the more ferocious it becomes!” Eyes glittering, he shot after the six retreating figures.

The three Nascent Divinities being chased by the six Blood Demon Patriarchs were incapable of escaping; at this point they had already been sealed up and collected. The Golden Frost Sect’s power base in the area was now significantly weakened.

Seeing Meng Hao flying toward him, the man in the golden armor suddenly felt his heart tighten with anxiety. Gritting his teeth, he called out: “The Golden Frost Sect will give you a 3,000-meter Dao Lake!!”

“One won’t do!” shot back one of the six Patriarchs. “Give us two!”

“Dammit….” The cultivators of the Golden Frost Sect grumbled, and the man in the gold armor’s face fell. He had been in fear of Meng Hao’s strength earlier, and actually didn’t want to end up fighting him. He was just about to agree when….

Meng Hao’s eyes fell onto Fatty, who was sitting next to the Dao Lake staring at the Dao Shadow.

He then looked at the other lake and pointed at it. “Give me that lake.”

The man in the golden armor gaped for a moment, then quickly nodded his head. He looked at Fatty, and then finally put the pieces of the puzzle together. At this point, he realized that the reason Meng Hao hadn’t made a move against them earlier wasn’t because of any apprehension regarding the Golden Frost Sect, but rather, because of Li Fugui.

The Golden Frost Sect retreated to the Dao Lake with the Dao Shadow, and the Blood Demon Sect occupied another 3,000-meter Dao Lake. As of now, they had a total of four!

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# Chapter 719: Main Lake Eruption!

The appearance of a Dao Seeking aura had ensured that Meng Hao would now be completely and utterly famous within the great sects and clans of the Southern Domain.

The battle just now would soon spread to become a legend in the Southern Domain, and Meng Hao's name, and his titles of Blood Prince of the Blood Demon Sect and Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, would rise to complete prominence.

Most shocking of all was that not one, but two instances of Dao Seeking aura occurred. This enabled a comparison between the two, which made it all the more astonishing.

The first was the Dao Seeking aura of the Golden Frost Sect puppet.

Moments ago….

Everyone in the inner region of the Ancient Dao Lakes sensed it, but few actually recognized it for what it was. What they could tell, however, was that the aura was fearsome to the extreme. It immediately astounded all the cultivators in the area.

"Whose aura is that?!"

"It's so terrifying! In fact, it almost feels like Heavenly might!!"

"Even our sect's Patriarch doesn't have an aura like that!!"

Tens of thousands of cultivators in the central region of the Ancient Dao Lakes, all of them from famous sects and clans of the Southern Domain, could sense the terrifying pressure of the aura.

The pressure was so intense that even the Dao Shadows above the Dao Geysers and Lakes distorted, as if some intangible force were affecting them.

“Dao Seeking aura!!”

“It’s definitely the aura of Dao Seeking!”

“Heavens! Don’t tell me there’s a Dao Seeking treasure in one of the Dao Lakes!? Or what if… it’s a Dao Seeking eccentric who came here personally?!”

RUMBLE!

Even as everyone looked around in astonishment, another pulse of Dao Seeking aura exploded out. The intensity of this aura far exceeded that of the first; it shook everything!

Winds seethed, and even the divine abilities of the cultivators in the area were affected, and began to dissolve into chaos. Magical items began to tremble, and it seemed as if they would lose their connection to their owners.

A natural law descended, something that seemed to pulse with a strange power that caused all of the cultivators to feel intense pressure suppressing their cultivation bases. At the same time, the power of their fleshly bodies seemed to temporarily increase.

Furthermore, because of the Dao Seeking aura, some of the Dao Shadows above the Dao Geysers distorted to the point that they were destroyed.

“Heavens! Another aura!”

“This aura is even stronger than the first one! Two pulses of aura means that it’s not a Dao Seeking treasure. No, there are two Dao Seeking experts fighting!”

“Who is it? What Dao Seeking eccentric showed up!? There are very few Dao Seeking cultivators in the lands of the Southern Domain. If you count them up there can’t be more than thirty, and most of them have been in secluded meditation for countless years!”

A huge commotion filled the entire region of the Dao Lakes as Meng Hao and the Golden Frost Sect puppet slammed into each other. Two massive Dao Seeking forces slammed into each other, sending out a shockwave that instantly swept out like a gale-force wind.

Most of the Dao Shadows were destroyed, and hundreds of thousands of cultivators felt as if their minds were under barrage. They were stunned, and required a long moment to recover.

In contrast, things quickly settled down in the inner region of the Ancient Dao Lakes. After the Golden Frost Sect submitted, peace and calm were restored. Meng Hao now sat cross-legged next to the Dao Lake, contemplating the enormous Dao Shadow.

The eruption of the Dao Lakes had caused two Dao Shadows to appear above the 3,000-meter lakes. One Dao shadow was being studied by Fatty, the other by Meng Hao.

The Dao Shadow Meng Hao was studying was that of a middle-aged cultivator wearing a simple, ancient Daoist ensemble. He sat cross-legged, meditating, and a drop of blood hovered in front of him . He performed incantations, after which ghost images sprang up around his body. After a single glance, Meng Hao could tell that the Dao Shadow was cultivating some sort of clone magic.

He couldn’t determine the the Dao Shadow’s cultivation base, but he could tell that in certain aspects, the clone magic was similar to the Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao. Meng Hao looked over the image a few times, then began to immerse himself in studying it.

He had examined the Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao many times over the years, and had a general understanding of it. However, there were some parts that he couldn’t completely understand. He knew the general process, but not exactly how to carry it out.

Every time he felt he had enlightened regarding important aspect, and then lifted his hand up to perform the incantation, he discovered that his understanding actually didn’t seem to amount to anything at all.

Therefore, the appearance of a Dao Image such as this was definitely a lucky break.

Time went by gradually, and soon three months had passed.

The eruptions of the Ancient Dao Lakes grew more intense. In the beginning, they would erupt once every four or five days. In the last month, however, the frequency had increased to every other day. Furthermore, the quantity of the items spit out was also increasing.

Seven or eight corpses had appeared, as well as five beasts. The sects and clans fought bitterly over them, and the victors made incredible gains.

Although the Dao Lakes were erupting with more and more items, more than half of the lakes were controlled by the Blood Demon Sect. However, nobody went near them. Meng Hao’s actions three months before made it so that anyone who even thought of trying to snatch an item from one of them would instantly think of the violent repercussions that would follow.

As such, the Blood Demon Sect disciples were the most tired of all. More and more magical items were delivered to Meng Hao, and in this three months period, he had built up quite a stash.

As for Meng Hao himself, he never moved from the lakeside, where he sat studying the Dao Shadow. As long as he didn’t take the initiative to disperse it, the Dao Shadow would remain in place. That was a special feature of the 3,000-meter lakes.

Fatty had emerged from his meditation two months ago, seemingly enlightened on many things. Afterward, he once again closed his eyes and continued to cultivate.

Two more months passed.

The Dao Lakes were now erupting at a frequency of once per day. To the cultivators of the Southern Domain, the Ancient Dao Lakes had turned into something like a paradise. As long as one could secure control of a Dao Geyser or Dao Lake and avoid wandering about randomly, then shocking good fortune was guaranteed.

To the cultivators in the central region, however, the increase in the frequency of eruptions meant only one thing. The main lake… would soon experience a massive eruption!

The pivotal moment in this surge of activity of the Ancient Dao Lakes was about to arrive…the 30,000 meter Dao Lake, which had not produced even a single wave the entire time, was finally going to erupt!

According to the information in the ancient records, the 30,000-meter Dao Lake wouldn't erupt with just one object. It would spit out many items at once, and among them were sure to be precious treasures!

In fact, it was even possible for magical items to appear that were equivalent to the legacy treasures of the sects and clans. Such items essentially gave that sect or clan the equivalent of a Dao Seeking eccentric. A possibility like that was enough to cause the cultivators of the Southern Domain to go mad with desire.

Gradually, more and more eyes came to be fixed in the direction of the 30,000-meter main lake.

In contrast, Meng Hao was immersed in seeking enlightenment, and in fact, had already formed some speculations about the Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao.

"Withering Flame. Demon Magic. True Self Dao! This is not just a clone magic! There are other Daoist magics hidden within!" This enlightenment caused Meng Hao's mind and heart to tremble. He had never seen a divine ability or magical technique that was so profoundly layered.

After another month had passed, the Ancient Dao Lakes were now erupting every few hours. The disciples of the Blood Demon Sect were swamped.

They had literally no time to rest as they shot back and forth between the erupting Dao Lakes to collect various magical items and miscellaneous objects. To everyone else in the central region of the Dao Lakes, they almost looked like they were harvesting crops.

The Blood Demon Sect disciples were in pain from all the hard work, but they were happy.

Of course, the members of the other sects and clans watched them bustling about, and also felt a bit of pain… and they were not happy.

Least happy of all were the members of the Li Clan, who were still positioned 30,000 meters away. They could do nothing more than watch on helplessly as more and more magical items erupted from within the Dao Lakes. They didn't dare to step even a foot past the 30,000-meter border. Although there were Dao Lakes in the area they occupied, they couldn't even compare to the ones further in. They were better than nothing, of course, but the Li Clan cultivators only continued to grow more and more frustrated.

Their hatred for Meng Hao increased with each passing day.

Despite that, they didn't dare to proceed past that 30,000-meter mark. Meng Hao was just far too powerful and intimidating.

The members of the Solitary Sword Sect, the Golden Frost Sect, the distant Li Clan, and the Song Clan were all looking toward the 30,000-meter main lake, suppressing their emotions and continuing to wait.

“Come on, hurry up! The 30,000-meter main lake is going to erupt soon!”

“We've been waiting the entire time just for this day! The only thing we don't know is exactly when the eruption will occur!”

“That Meng Hao's cultivation base is just too high! However, we don't need to fight him. When the 30,000-meter lake erupts, the rules here will change. The teleportation talisman that didn't work before will be able to function. Once the 30,000-meter lake erupts, all you have to do is grab an item and then use a greater teleportation talisman to get away! The real competition will be over who is fastest!”

“Meng Hao might have a high cultivation base, but he’s only one person. With so many items, we’ll just have to wait and see who gets lucky!”

The Violet Fate Sect was also taking things seriously. However, considering their close ties to Meng Hao, their attitude toward him was much warmer.

The Song Clan kept to themselves, but they also had their ambitions. All the sects and clans had their hearts set on the main lake.

As for the teenager who sat cross-legged behind Sir Jian in the Solitary Sword Sect, his eyes shone with a strange light as he looked toward the 30,000-meter main lake.

“The reason I sent my clone here in the first place was for this instance of good fortune,” he thought. “If my augury was correct, then the good fortune I seek will be coming with this eruption. That rascal Meng Hao might have Heaven-defying power, but if we end up fighting, I’ll have no choice but to subdue him.”

In the Golden Frost Sect, the man in the armor glanced over at Meng Hao, and then exchanged looks with some of the people behind him. They could all see the hesitation in each other’s eyes.

Then their eyes glittered, no longer with hesitation, but determination.

“Fight!”

“Cultivation is all about the smash and grab! When it comes to luck and good fortune, it won’t just randomly come to you! You have to fight for it!”

The entire central region of the Dao Lakes gradually filled with an oppressive aura. No one spoke, and all attention was focused on the coming eruption of the 30,000-meter main lake.

Meng Hao was still concentrated on enlightenment, although he wasn’t looking at the Dao Shadow anymore. His eyes were closed as he inwardly pondered the truths of the Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao.

Three days later.

RUMMMBBBBLLLLEEEEE!

The land quaked as all of the Dao Lakes ceased any eruption. The lake in front of Meng Hao began to vanish. Everything became blurry. The 3,000-meter lakes, the 300-meter lakes, the 30-meter lakes, all of the lakes dried up and shrank rapidly.

Even the Dao Geysers were completely drained.

It almost seemed like someone was beneath all of the lakes, breathing in, inhaling the lake water away.

Of course, what came after an inhalation, was an exhalation!

“The 30,000-meter main lake is going to erupt!!”

“It’s going to start! This is when the true good fortune appears!”

“I wonder what the 30,000-meter main lake is going to spit out! I heard that the Solitary Sword Sect’s precious treasure came from the eruption of the main lake!”

The teenager from the Solitary Sword Sect rose to his feet. The armored man from the Golden Frost Sect was panting. The cultivators from the Song Clan stood there with glittering eyes. Reverend Withered-Dao was pulsating with ripples. 30,000-meters away, the Li Clan cultivators were focusing all the power in their bodies.

Only Meng Hao still had his eyes closed.

And then….

The formerly placid 30,000-meter Dao Lake was marred by ripples, as if something were bubbling underneath its surface.

BOOOMM!!

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# Chapter 720: Everything Explodes!

With the exception of the 30,000-meter Dao Lake, all of the Dao Lakes and Geysers were drying up. Splits and cracks began to appear across the entire landscape, some of them enormous.

Teleportation traps flashed in and out madly, in some case appearing by the thousands to sweep across the land.

When the water of the 3,000-meter lakes began to lower, the South Heaven cultivators outside of the inner region began to withdraw. They knew the greatest windfall of all was just around the corner.

Unfortunately for them, it was good fortune they could never acquire. Only the cultivators in the inner region would have that chance. Furthermore, anyone who remained in the outer region would be killed during the eruption.

Currently, hundreds of thousands of cultivators milled around outside the border, peering inward. After all, even though they had no chance at getting the good fortune for themselves, the chance to witness the event was still an incredible opportunity. For all they knew, they might be able to gain some enlightenment that could lead to a breakthrough into another stage of cultivation.

Everyone’s eyes were fixed on the main lake.

RUMMMMMBBBBLLLE!

The ground quaked as the 30,000-meter lake exploded.

It is difficult to describe how shocking the scene was, and how completely gobsmacked everyone was. The only thing that can be said is that in the enormous outer region of the Ancient Dao Lakes, massive fissures spread out across the land as if some enormous gravitational force under the ground was causing the land to sink down.

The land itself was too brittle, so fissures and cracks appeared as it sank.

When the entire land had sunk to a certain degree, it actually reversed itself and, amidst continuous rumbling, inflated back to its original state, as if it was an exhalation subsequent to an inhalation. It was almost like there was a giant, living deep beneath the ground, breathing, causing the land to sink and rise. As for the single 30,000-meter main lake, it formed what seemed like a passageway connecting the ground to the Heavens above, something completely unique in all existence.

It was the epicenter of the explosive exhalation; water surged up from the 30,000-meter lake into the air, forming a massive column!

From a distance, the sight was completely astonishing. It was not a pillar of light, but when illuminated by sunlight, the column of water glittered brightly with a rainbow of colors. It was dazzling to the extreme, and its allure irresistible.

Of course, what drew people toward it was not the light itself, but the great Daos of Heaven and Earth that seemed to be contained within.

In this moment, a blurry figure appeared in mid-air outside of the Dao Lakes among the hundreds of thousands of cultivators, although none of them could see him. He was a young man in a Daoist robe, around whom a black wind swirled. His eyes glittered as he stared at the Dao Lakes region.

“So, I didn’t come in vain this time. My Coffin Altar Sect of the Northern reaches uncovered the fact that great fortune is available for me here. I, Zhou Chen, have arrived, so how could the good fortune possibly escape me!?” 1

The young man clearly did not have a Dao Seeking cultivation base. However, his body emanated faint bits of a virtually undetectable Dao Seeking aura. He appeared to be scanning the area for something in particular, when he suddenly jerked his head to look toward the Ancient Dao Lakes. He frowned. “Hunh… Dammit! That guy’s here too? Lu Bai….” 2

Off in a different direction, a burly man stood on the peak of a mountain. He wore garments crafted from animal skins, and looked completely barbaric. He held a flagon of alcohol in one hand, and at his feet was the corpse of an Outlander Beast. Occasionally, he would rip some flesh off of the Outlander Beast corpse and eat it raw. His eyes glittered with a savage gleam.

“So, quite a few people are here from the Northern Reaches,” the man thought. “Well, the good fortune here belongs to me, Di Ye of the Desolate Clan! And I don’t just want the good fortune, I’m gonna chow down on some of these Southern Domain cultivators. Their flesh is soft, definitely much more delicious than the people from the Northern Reaches.” 3

A smile twisted his face as he stared down at the Ancient Dao Lakes region.

Suddenly, he caught sight of something, and his face flickered with rage. “Lu Bai from the Imperial Bloodline Sect 4. Dammit! He’s generally acknowledged to be the number one figure under Dao Seeking in the Northern Reaches, and is also one of the four great Young Starlords of South Heaven. What is he doing here? At the Second Severing level, he can fight early Dao Seeking! He’s inhuman! Considering he’s such a hotshot superstar with access to limitless good fortune, what the hell is he doing here?!?!”

As the thousands of teleportation traps swept through the Ancient Dao lakes, a young man proceeded along, his expression cool. He seemed gentle, and was extremely good looking, to the point of perfection. The teleportation traps in his path were completely incapable of even touching him.

“What an interesting place,” he thought, “although it doesn’t suit me very well. Why did the exalted Dawn Immortal send me here? According to her, I would encounter the enemy I am destined to face….

“How amusing. I wonder who this supposed enemy will turn out to be?”

As he proceeded forward, the image of a Resurrection Lily could be seen behind him, swaying back and forth ominously.

The Dao Lakes region was full of powerful forces!

The ground quaked in shocking fashion, and everyone watching from a distance was astonished.

Just outside the 30,000-meter Dao Lake, the experts from the great sects and clans were staring fixedly, holding their energy in check, just waiting until the full eruption.

And then… it happened.

A thunderous roar could be heard as countless magical objects, corpses, Dao Shadows, miscellaneous objects, and even beasts exploded out from the 30,000-meter main lake.

In the blink of an eye, multicolored glows appeared, the shocking light of magical treasures. The collective gasp of the cultivators outside turned into a sound wave that rolled out. Considering that they had such a reaction, there is little need to mention the reaction of the people in the inner region, who simply had to reach out to grab the treasures.

Among the magical items was a longsword, two meters in length, around which circulated nine one-meter-long shortswords. The pressure it exuded was incredible.

There was also a gigantic war drum, next to which was an enormous puppet, which seemed like the only thing even remotely capable of matching up to the war drum.

There was also an enormous halo. It was impossible to tell what it was made from, but it shone with golden light, and its surface was covered with countless inscriptions of magical symbols. From within could be sensed an incredible sealing power, radiating out in all directions.

In addition… there was a shocking corpse! It wasn’t the corpse of a human, but rather, a black-colored dragon!!

To say that it was a dragon would be correct. However, this particular dragon had wings! Although it wasn’t a Flying Rain-Dragon, it was fully 3,000 meters in length and had long horns!

There was also a tree with a red trunk and branches, black leaves, and blue flowers. As for the three fruit it produced, they were white!

There were vast quantities of jade slips, one bag of holding after another, and even shrunken palaces. Most astonishing of all, however, was a gigantic claw!

The claw was pitch black, and had three talons. It was over three hundred meters in length, and emanated an oppressive, murderous air.

There were a vast variety of items, and it would be impossible to describe them all. Upon cursory examination, there were roughly ten thousand in total, and because the various auras were all mixed together, it was difficult to determine which of the items was the most powerful.

In any case, as they burst out from the lake water, the rippling aura that spread out was shocking to the extreme.

The instant the Dao Lake erupted, the teenager from the Solitary Sword Sect immediately teleported. Ripples of Dao Seeking energy spread out as he headed directly toward the lake.

In addition to the teenager, the Spirit Severing experts from the Solitary Sword Sect also shot toward the lake.

The golden-armored man from the Golden Frost Sect, along with the other Spirit Severing experts, transformed into the golden puppet, which immediately stepped into the lake.

From the Violet Fate Sect, Reverend Withered-Dao moved with shocking speed that matched the teenager from the Solitary Sword Sect. He vanished, and when he reappeared, he was also above the Dao Lake. Of everyone in the Violet Fate Sect, he was the only one to take action.

As for the Li Clan off in the distance, they instantly went mad. Their Spirit Severing Cultivators couldn’t match up in terms of speed, but they had teleportation talismans. They instantly activated them and appeared in mid-air above the erupting Dao Lake.

At long last, the old man from the Song Clan, who up to this point had not spoken a single word nor revealed the tiniest bit of his aura, rose to his feet. The area around him transformed into what looked like a tempest as he, along with the two Spirit Severing cultivators from the Song Clan, headed toward the Dao Lake.

The shocking eruption of the Dao Lake made it seem like it was raining.

Even as all the others took action, the invisible Coffin Altar Sect disciple Zhou Chen took a step forward. Nine bottle gourds began to spin around him, creating a tunnel, which led directly to the erupting Dao Lake.

On the mountain peak across from him, the burly Di Ye lifted his head up and roared. “Shrink, shrink, SHRINK!”

He called out three times, and with each call, the world seemed to shrink in front of him. By the time he said ‘shrink’ for the third time, the world looked like a zoomed-out image to him. He took a single step, and crossed the void to appear in mid-air directly above the Dao Lake!

At the same time, the young man Lu Bai, who was walking through the teleportation traps in the Ancient Dao Lakes outer region, stretched out his hand. The illusory Resurrection Lily behind him suddenly shrank down, and a six-colored Resurrection Lily appeared in his palm.

The instant the flower appeared in his hand, the area around him began to distort. Suddenly, images appeared around him of everything that had ever existed or even passed by the spot that he stood in.

He stood in the middle of the glowing lights, staring around at how everything had changed.

“Going back three breaths should suffice,” he thought with a slight smile. Everything around him began to distort again, and suddenly, what he saw was the world that had existed three breaths of time ago. He took a step forward, and he was back in that exact same time, just before the Dao Lake was going to erupt. He took another step, and was in mid-air above the Dao Lake. It was in that instant that the lake suddenly erupted.

His divine abilities and magical techniques were bizarre and astonishing!

When the Dao Lake erupted, the light of magical items shone up into the Heavens. The six Spirit Severing Patriarchs of the Blood Demon Sect anxiously looked over at Meng Hao. Since his eyes were still closed, they stamped their feet and flew up into the air, shooting directly toward the erupting Dao Lake.

They weren’t far from it to begin with, so it didn’t take long to get close.

As for Meng Hao, his eyes were still closed, and his mind was filled with the Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao. He was still in the midst of contemplation. Although it first seemed impossible to comprehend, he was now reaching the limits of his understanding.

He had already determined that the Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao was actually split into three different Daoist magics, the first being the Withering Flame, the second being the Demon Magic, and the third being the True Self Dao!

But now, he suddenly sensed that the Daoist magic… could actually be split into seven sections! Each section was its own shocking Daoist Magic.

Withering. Flame. Demon. Magic. True. Self. Dao!

The clone aspect was merely the divine ability represented by the character “self!”

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1. Zhou Chen’s name in Chinese is zhōu chén. Zhou is a common surname. Chen means “dust” or “dirt”

2. Lu Bai’s name in Chinese is lù bái. Lu is common surname. Bai means “cypess” or “cedar”

3. Di Ye’s name in Chinese is dì yě. Di is a surname which also means “emperor” or “god.” Ye means “wild” or “rough”

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# Chapter 721: You Must Know Liu Zichuan

The hundreds of thousands of cultivators outside of the Ancient Dao Lakes region were bearing witness to a rare and shocking spectacle!

“That longsword… is two meters long, the nine shortswords are each one meter long. Look at the brilliant glow, and the lightning! It almost looks like Tribulation Lightning! Is it possible… is it possible that sword is the legendary Deadwinter Tribulation Sword?!?!”

“Why does that war drum looks almost the same as the Primordial True Spirit Drum that I read about in the ancient records…? And that puppet next to it…. I get the chills just looking at it!”

“What is that tree?! It looks so bizarre, and has three fruits on it!!”

“Check out that beast claw! It looks incredible! Could it be a Dao Seeking treasure?!”

“That’s… that’s a black dragon!? It’s a real-life dragon!! It looks relatively small, but its body is definitely a treasure!!”

The few dozen Spirit Severing cultivators immediately convened above the 30,000-meter main lake as one object after another appeared amidst the eruption of the lakewater.

Boom!

There were simply too many magical items! Fierce fighting broke out in the blink of an eye.

“Screw off!”

“Hey, I wanted that!”

“This is mine! Anyone who dares to fight me over it will die!!”

Explosions immediately began to echo out as the Spirit Severing experts shot toward the treasures they had taken a liking to. Shocking roars filled the air, and wild colors danced about.

The greatest focus of attention was the teenager from the Solitary Sword Sect, then the Golden Frost Sect puppet, both of whom exuded Dao Seeking auras. Strangest of all were the three people from the Northern Reaches. They flew about in three different areas, causing the air to shatter around them wherever they went.

Their sudden appearance on the scene was quite a source of alarm for the Southern Domain cultivators. However, there was no time to try to uncover information about their origins and backgrounds. Everyone sped toward the treasures that they wanted.

The teenager from the Solitary Sword Sect flew at top speed toward the two-meter longsword. In the blink of an eye, his hand clasped the hilt.

The enormous puppet from the Golden Frost Sect exploded with a Dao Seeking aura as it headed toward the puppet next to the war drum, slamming aside several Solitary Sword Sect Spirit Severing cultivators in the process.

The Song Clan Patriarch flew along at top speed, his body pulsing with an aura that seemed to contain a force which was incompatible with the spiritual energy of Heaven and Earth. Everywhere he passed, shocking illusory blades flew about. His goal was one particular jade slip that glowed with violet light.

The 19th Li Clan Patriarch shot furiously toward the black dragon.

The only member of the Violet Fate Sect to make an appearance, Reverend Withered-Dao, headed toward the red-trunked tree with the black leaves, blue flowers, and three white fruits!

As for the barbaric, hulking Di Ye from the Northern Reaches, an enormous wolf-tooth club appeared in his hands. A savage and wild aura exploded out from him, reaching a pinnacle in the blink of an eye. His wolf-tooth club swept back and forth, shattering the surroundings as he charged toward his goal, the three-hundred-meter long black-colored claw.

“This claw belongs to Di Ye!”

Dao Child Zhou Chen from the Coffin Altar Sect, also from the Northern Reaches, looked incredibly soft and feminine. The air around him did not shatter, but rather his surroundings warped and twisted, causing everything he passed by to wither.

His expression was cold as he headed toward the enormous golden halo that emanated a pulsing power of sealing.

Last was one of the four Young Starlords of South Heaven, the number one figure under Dao Seeking from the Northern Reaches, Lu Bai of the Imperial Bloodline Sect, who could battle Dao Seeking even when in the Spirit Severing Stage!

As he hovered in mid air, the Dao Lake eruption surging around him, he almost seemed to exist in a different time and location. It was as if he could, at will, travel anywhere in space and time.

He glanced around at the various objects in the area until his gaze came to rest on the corpse of the enormous black dragon. As it did, a strange gleam began to shine in his eyes.

He immediately headed in the direction of the black dragon, and toward the 19th Li Clan Patriarch, who was clearly vying for the same object.

Everyone had their own targets and goals, some the same as others, some different. In addition, there were Spirit Severing experts from the other sects and clans who also headed toward their own favored objects.

The six Blood Demon Sect Patriarchs scattered and headed toward various things that attracted them.

The fighting seemed chaotic, but was in fact quite the opposite. Only the most powerful experts would actually fight over any of the visibly extraordinary items. Others weren’t qualified to do so.

“Dammit! That’s mine!”

“Nobody owns the Dao Lakes! The treasures go to the lucky, and you’re not lucky! Screw off!”

“Die!”

Explosions rattled out, and in the blink of an eye, they were joined by miserable shrieks.

A Golden Frost Sect cultivator was cut down by Reverend Withered-Dao. A Li Clan member excitedly closed in on the black dragon, and was about to grab it when a soft sigh could be heard. The sigh caused his body to begin to tremble, and then blood sprayed from his mouth. His fleshly body immediately transformed into a pool of blood. His Nascent Divinity flew out without hesitation, but was then crushed by the power of Time.

Meanwhile, Meng Hao still sat at the edge of the dried-up 3,000 meter Dao Lake that bordered the 30,000-meter Dao Lake. His mind rang with thunderous roars as he gained further enlightenment regarding the Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao. He was finally able to thoroughly break it down.

“Withering. Flame. Demon. Magic. True. Self. Dao!” His eyes opened.

“This magic has three levels and seven parts! Each character represents a different secret art. Combined, they form something unbelievably powerful!

“The ‘self’ character is the clone magic!

“It’s too bad I didn’t understand it before, and pursued some incorrect theories. Were it not for that, I might have already been able to gain some true understanding, and therefore, some boosts in power!

“What I currently have the deepest understanding of is not the ‘self’ character and its clone magic, but rather the ‘withering’ character!

“All living things wither. However, a withered tree can grow anew in spring. The character ‘wither ’ has a ‘tree ’ component on the left, which represents life. The ‘ancient ’ component on the right represents death. The left is the past, the right is the future.

“The character ‘wither’ is also similar to the third level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic. Once I enter the Spirit Meridians stratum, I will be able to consume spirit meridians, which in actuality… is very similar to the ‘wither’ character!

“Withering someone’s spirit meridians is akin to crippling their cultivation base and influencing time. It’s like planting a seed. The seed is planted, then reaped immediately, ignoring the time that normally passes inbetween!

“That is the true meaning of the Spirit Meridians stratum of the Blood Demon Grand Magic!

“All I need is some time spent in secluded meditation, perhaps half a month, and I should be able to step fully into the third level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic!” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with a brilliant glow. It was in this moment that shocking energy suddenly surged up from within him.

Instantly, the eyes of all the cultivators above the Dao Lake turned in his direction.

He raised his head, and a golden gleam could be seen in his eyes. Suddenly, he performed a minor teleportation and reappeared in mid-air above the lake.

“Meng Hao!!”

“He was meditating before, and based on his energy now… could it be that he made a breakthrough?!”

“Dammit! If he gets involved, that means there’s one more powerful foe in the mix!”

“Please, please, PLEASE don’t take a fancy to this magical item here, go look at someone else’s.”

Various thoughts and feelings such as these bubbled up in the blink of an eye.

Rumble!

When Meng Hao appeared above the Dao Lake, his energy immediately drew special attention from four people.

The first was the teenager from the Solitary Sword Sect, whose pupils constricted.

The other three were the Chosen from the Northern Reaches. One of them, Dao Child Zhou Chen from the Coffin Altar Sect, frowned and stared seriously for a moment. A look of scorn appeared on the face of Di Ye, although his heart filled with vigilance.

The person who seemed most interested in Meng Hao was none other than Lu Bai. He turned to look at Meng Hao, and when he did, a tremor ran through him.

“It’s him!” he thought.

He sensed a feeling like destiny, and was instantly sure that the young man he was looking at was the person the esteemed Dawn Immortal had referred to, his destined adversary.

Meng Hao’s arrival on the scene shocked everyone. He glanced around, and then, to the shock of many, shot toward the black claw.

His decision caused quite a few people to sigh in relief, and continue fighting.

Di Ye’s eyes flickered with killing intent as he too barreled toward the black-colored claw.

The teenager from the Solitary Sword Sect had just grabbed the two-meter longsword. Energy exploded out, and he lifted his head back and laughed loudly. Next to the black dragon, the 19th Li Clan Patriarch coughed up some blood. He was no match for Lu Bai, who swept his sleeve to collect up the black dragon.

The Golden Frost Sect was after the enormous war drum and puppet. There were a few Spirit Severing experts fighting them over it, but with the power of their Dao Seeking aura, the Golden Frost Sect steamrolled everyone in their way and promptly seized it.

As for the red-trunked tree, no one else dared to fight with Reverend Withered-Dao over it. Everyone knew that Grandmaster Pill Demon could refine all types of objects into medicinal pills. Since the tree didn’t seem to be of much use to others, Reverend Withered-Dao was easily able to collect it up.

The Song Clan successfully acquired the violet-colored jade slip they had been after.

As for the golden halo, there were quite a few people who tried to fight Zhou Chen of the Coffin Altar Sect over it, but all were sent into retreat, blood spraying from their mouths. Two people were even slain. In the end, Zhou Chen took it.

Regarding the other miscellaneous objects, Spirit Severing cultivators from various sects and clans had already divvied them all up.

Di Ye arrived near the black-colored claw. His wolf-tooth club swept about, causing lake water to spray about. His left hand reached out toward the black-colored claw.

However, just when his hand was about to latch onto it, Meng Hao pierced through the air with indescribable speed to appear directly next to the claw.

Seeing that Meng Hao wanted to contend with him over the claw, Di Ye roared, “Screw off!” Then smashed his wolf-tooth club down toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as his fist struck out. The fist had no Dao Seeking aura, but considering that Meng Hao was the number one figure under Dao Seeking, it contained explosive power, which smashed directly into the wolf-tooth club.

A huge boom rattled out. A tremor ran through Meng Hao, and the wolf-tooth club was sent flying back. Di Ye’s face fell as he was sent staggering back seven or eight measures. He looked up, and a vicious expression could be seen on his face.

“So you’re not on par with that inhuman Lu Bai!” Di Ye’s body flickered as he charged forward once more. Although Di Ye and the other two from the Northern Reaches had actually arrived quite a bit earlier, even Lu Bai wasn’t able to see what was happening inside the Dao Lakes. Only after the master lake had erupted, causing the surrounding air to distort and churn and allowing them to teleport closer, were they able to get a clear glimpse of what was going on. As such, he was unaware of the shocking things Meng Hao had done.

After looking more closely at Di Ye, Meng Hao realized that the hulking man had the familiar aura of a Northern Reaches cultivator. “Northern Reaches?” he asked.

“Yeah! I’m Di Ye from the Desolate Clan in the Northern Reaches!” Di Ye roared as he closed in on Meng Hao.

“You must know Liu Zichuan!” 1

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# Chapter 722: A Second Eruption!

Rumbling echoed out and everyone looked over to watch Meng Hao and Di Ye fight over the black-colored claw.

The eyes of the teenager from the Solitary Sword Sect flashed as he gripped the rotating two-meter longsword. In his mind, nobody here could possibly pose a threat to him except perhaps for the handsome Lu Bai, with his mastery of Time power.

The Golden Frost Sect puppet also looked over at Meng Hao, and its eyes glittered.

Reverend Withered-Dao said nothing, as if he didn’t care to watch anything that was happening.

The 19th Li Clan Patriarch was severely wounded and in full retreat. As for the members of the Song Clan, after acquiring the item they sought, they seemed to be ready to leave.

Dao Child Zhou Chen from the Coffin Altar Sect seemed to be itching to fight. When he looked over at Meng Hao, he suddenly frowned.

“He’s only at the peak of Spirit Severing,” he thought. “He can’t compare to Lu Bai.”

As for the Imperial Sect’s Lu Bai, he was also observing the fight between Meng Hao and Di Ye. After seeing them attack, his expression remained tranquil. From a young age his talent had been prodigious and no one from the Northern Reaches was a match for him. Even the Ji Clan from the Eastern Land’s Great Tang had wanted to take him in as an honorary disciple. Afterwards, though, he had been favored by the Dawn Immortal, who guided him on his path of cultivation. Thus, he no longer cultivated normally, but rather, pursued the Dao of the Resurrection Lily.

What was more, the Dawn Immortal did not permit the Resurrection Lily to absorb him. Rather, she had planted a seed within him that had no consciousness, allowing him to consume it and acquire the power of the Resurrection Lily. It was as if she was trying to sow good karma with him.

Instead of saying he was a cultivator, it would be more accurate to say that he… was a Resurrection Lily!

Because of that, even the Fang Clan took him quite seriously, and expressed interest in bringing him into the clan as a son-in-law. Because of all these things, he had a unique status. There were even rumors that he was in fact some almighty expert who had descended to Planet South Heaven to be reincarnated and rebuild his cultivation base from the ground up.

Considering his mastery of Time power, he would be able to take care of Di Ye in only three moves.

“Too weak,” he thought after a single glance, shaking his head at Meng Hao.

However, it was in that exact moment that Meng Hao spoke the words “Northern Reaches.” The sound of it echoed out, evoking tempestuous thoughts in all the South Heaven cultivators. Even the teenager from the Solitary Sword Sect turned to look at Di Ye.

Relations between the Southern Domain and the Northern Reaches was a sensitive subject. Although it had been many, many years since full-scale war raged between them, it wasn’t a rare thing in the history of the lands of South Heaven.

Every time there was a war, one side among the two would flow with rivers of blood.

“Northern Reaches?”

“No wonder the cultivation bases of those three seem so unfamiliar. It turns out they’re from the Northern Reaches!”

“The Northern Reaches are connected to the Eastern Lands, both of which are on the other side of the Milky Way Sea! It takes a long time to cross the Milky Way Sea. Did they really come here just for the Dao Lakes?”

Even as the crowds from the Southern Domain were reeling in shock, Meng Hao spoke the name Liu Zichuan.

Although the name was unfamiliar to the Southern Domain cultivators, as soon as Dao Child Zhou Chen from the Coffin Altar Sect heard it, his eyes flickered and he looked at Meng Hao.

Lu Bai was slightly taken aback. He was from the Imperial Bloodline Clan, Zhou Chen came from the Coffin Altar Sect, and Di Ye was from the Desolate Clan. As for the Liu Zichuan Meng Hao had just mentioned, he was also from the Imperial Bloodline Clan!

The Imperial Bloodline Clan was the number one clan in the Northern Reaches!

And Liu Zichuan was the Imperial Son of the Imperial Bloodline Clan!

His cultivation base was only at the First Severing level, but as far as his position went, he could be considered one of the top figures in the entire Northern Reaches.

“You know Liu Zichuan?” asked Di Ye, his pupils constricting. His Desolate Clan was an auxiliary branch of the Imperial Bloodline Clan, so although he had a high cultivation base, whenever he heard the name Liu Zichuan, he had no choice but to lower his head and voice greetings to the young Lord.

“He owes me 9,000,000 spirit stones!” said Meng Hao with a cold snort. “How could I not know him?!” He casually opened his bag of holding and pulled out a fistful of jade slips, which detailed the amount of spirit stones owed to him by the cultivators from the ancient Demon Immortal Sect.

“Xu Shouyan owes me 8,000,000 spirit stones!

“Tian Leifang owes me 7,800,000 spirit stones!

“Zhou Jie owes me 9,500,000 spirit stones! 1

“Di Luo owes me 11,000,000 spirit stones!

“And then there’s someone named Han Peng, who owes me the most. 15,000,000 spirit stones! 2

“All of these people are from your Northern Reaches, right?”

Every single sentence spoken by Meng Hao caused the faces of the three Northern Reaches cultivators to flicker. That was especially true when the names Zhou Jie, Di Luo, and Han Peng were uttered. Even Lu Bai gaped in shock.

Zhou Jie and Zhou Chen were from the same clan, and Di Luo was Di Ye’s younger brother. As for Han Peng, he was a Chosen from the Imperial Bloodline Clan, with a position second only to Lu Bai.

“How… how could they owe you so many spirit stones?!” bellowed Di Ye, his eyes wide. Unfortunately, the jade slips in Meng Hao’s hands were imprinted with life essence aura. Due to the fluctuations of these auras that emanated from them, the three Northern Reaches cultivators could not doubt their authenticity, nor the identities of who they belonged to.

The surrounding members of the various sects and clans of the Southern Domain were even more shocked than the three Northern Reaches cultivators. They looked at Meng Hao with expressions of disbelief and astonishment.

This was especially true of the cultivators of the Blood Demon Sect and the Violet Fate Sect. They stared with gaping mouths.

“What did the Blood Prince do in the past?”

“He…. How did he get so many people to owe him so much?”

“Th-th-this…. I noticed that when he pulled out those jade slips just now, he only took out a few, the ones that belonged to the Northern Reaches cultivators. Could it be that the rest of the jade slips include people from the rest of the lands of South Heaven?!”

“The Blood Prince must have done a lot of business in the past!!”

Di Ye’s eyes were bloodshot, and he was filled with feeling of humiliation. Throwing his head back and roaring, he hefted his wolf-tooth club and charged toward Meng Hao.

“NONSENSE! I’m gonna smash you to death, fool!”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered brightly. As the hulking man bore down on him, he raised his hand up and pointed forward.

“Blood Demon Grand Magic!”

Immediately, a blood-red vortex began to spin around the man. As the vortex rotated, an enormous blood-colored hand appeared that grabbed onto Di Ye. He struggled, but was absolutely incapable of doing anything to free himself. He could do nothing but cry out in rage and look around with confusion.

It only took a moment for him to realize that his fleshly body was rapidly withering, his qi and blood pulsing out of him and speeding toward Meng Hao. As for Meng Hao, his fleshly body was rapidly becoming stronger.

Up to now, Meng Hao had not met anyone under Dao Seeking who could free themselves from the Blood Demon Grand Magic.

The scene didn’t faze the Southern Domain cultivators at all. However, Zhou Chen of the Coffin Altar Sect from the Northern Reaches was completely shocked. His face flickered and his eyes went wide as he stared at Meng Hao.

Shocked, he began to pant, and any scorn which he had felt toward Meng Hao was now long since vanished. As far as he could tell, a magical technique like this was on the same level as Lu Bai's Time magic.

"Inhuman! Just as inhuman as Lu Bai!"

Lu Bai of the Imperial Bloodline Clan was also staring with a strange light in his eyes, and a slight smile on his face. Inwardly, the desire to do battle was growing stronger. "If that's how it is, he might be worthy of going up against me!"

Inside the Blood Demon Grand Magic, Di Ye's fleshly body was withering rapidly. Horror and astonishment filled his heart, and he was completely terrified of Meng Hao.

"Dammit! You're just as inhuman as Lu Bai!" he roared. He clenched his teeth and then slapped his bag of holding to produce a crystalline magical talisman.

The magical talisman glittered brightly; this was a life-saving treasure given to him by his clan before leaving for the Southern Domain. He never imagined that he would have to use it after making his first appearance. However, facing this deadly crisis, he ignored any consternation and instantly smashed it between his fingers.

The instant the magical talisman was smashed, a stream of Dao Seeking power descended. The intensity of the power caused a tempest to spring up and slam toward the blood-colored vortex.

Rumbling filled the air as the Dao Seeking power descended. The blood-colored vortex trembled, and Di Ye, taking advantage of the surge of power, burst out. However, in that exact moment, Meng Hao gave a cold snort and waved his finger.

"Wither!"

Instantly, the Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao that Meng Hao had just come to understand, sprang into action.

The single character transformed into a natural law of Heaven and Earth, replacing what currently existed. A will of Heaven and Earth descended. In the blink of an eye… the air transformed, and distortions appeared.

Di Ye let out a miserable shriek as his body once again began to wither. This time, the withering was not limited to his fleshly body. His cultivation base withered, his life force withered, everything withered.

Sensing his death approaching, Di Ye looked toward Lu Bai, who hovered off in the distance, his eyes glittering. “Lu Bai, save me!!”

Lu Bai lifted a hand and pointed out. “Reverse!”

As soon as he uttered the single character, the air distorted, and transformations of Time appeared around Di Ye. It almost seemed as if time were being forced to run in reverse, initiating an abstract struggle against the power of Meng Hao’s ‘withering’ character.

One moment, Di Ye’s body was almost completely withered; in the next, it had been completely restored. The sort of pain caused by going back and forth between these states made Di Ye intermittently issue bloodcurdling screams.

The entire process lasted for the space of three breaths.

However, to Di Ye, those three breaths were like three lifetimes.

In the end, there was a boom, and Meng Hao backed up four measures. The ‘withering’ character and the Blood Demon Grand Magic collapsed. Lu Bai fell back three measures, his face flickering. His secret art of Time magic also vanished.

Between them was Di Ye, his body half-withered. He was now bony and thin, but not dead. He had managed to scrape by with his life. Aghast, he shot toward Lu Bai, his terror regarding Meng Hao having reached a pinnacle.

As far as the struggle between Meng Hao and Lu Bai, it was hard to say who won and who lost. However, it seemed clear that Lu Bai was a bit more powerful.

And yet, even as Meng Hao backed up, he reached up with his left hand and slapped the 300-meter long black-colored claw. Immediately, the treasure was sucked into his bag of holding. The six Blood Demon Sect Patriarchs appeared behind him, having finished gathering up a large assortment of various items.

As for the surrounding crowds from the Southern Domain, they were all panting.

“He’s gotten stronger again!”

“Meng Hao only had a little flash of enlightenment, but his magical techniques actually advanced again. Dammit… He could already display Dao Seeking power, but now… if a Dao Seeking expert doesn’t appear, who could possibly suppress him?!”

“Meng Hao!”

Dao Child Zhou Chen from the Northern Reaches’ Coffin Altar Sect looked at Meng Hao with astonishment. He was well familiar with Lu Bai’s reputation. He wasn’t just famous in the Northern Reaches; he was also well-known in the Eastern Lands.

If he weren’t, how could he receive the honor of being deemed one of the four great Young Starlords of South Heaven?!

Starlord was an honorific title in the lands of South Heaven to refer to the four strongest people in the Spirit Severing stage.

“He was able to fight Lu Bai and even make him retreat three paces! This Meng Hao is too powerful!”

Lu Bai gazed at Meng Hao, and within his eyes the desire to do battle grew even stronger. He raised his right hand, and the air in the area distorted. A pulse of Dao Seeking power began to descend.

“I’m not in Dao Seeking,” he announced, “I’m only at the Second Severing level. However, I can enter the Third Severing at any time. It’s just that my Dao still requires refinement, so I haven’t performed it yet.

“Today, you will be the whetstone to sharpen my blade!” By this time, his desire to fight was raging to the heavens. He took a step forward.

However, even as his foot descended, the lake beneath him suddenly began to rumble. The water began to shrink down, as if… another eruption were about to occur!

“A second eruption!!”

“Heavens! The 30,000-meter main lake is going to erupt a second time! What… what exactly does this mean?!?!”

“It’s actually going to erupt a second time!!”

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1. Fun fact: The name Zhou Jie is exactly the same as the Dao Child from the Black Sieve Sect back in the day!

2. Other fun fact: I know someone named Han Peng here in China, same Chinese characters as this!

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# Chapter 723: True Immortal Soul

The lands of the region of the Ancient Dao Lakes sank down once again into a concave shape, almost as if it were inhaling.

The sight of it instantly caused the hundreds of thousands of cultivators on the outside to gape with wide eyes and reeling minds.

“A second… a second eruption!”

“When the 30-meter Dao Lakes erupt a second time, there’s a good chance that treasured items will appear. It’s the same with the 300-meter lakes. For the 3,000 meter lakes… there’s no need to even mention that. But this is actually… a second eruption of the 30,000 meter lake!”

“It’s going to spit out a precious treasure! It will definitely be a precious treasure!”

“It will definitely exceed everything from before! A… precious treasure!” If the cultivators on the outside were aware of such things, then one can only imagine the understanding of the people above the lake itself.

Even Lu Bai’s mind trembled. Abandoning any thoughts of fighting Meng Hao, he looked down at the Dao Lake, his heart quivering.

The teenager from the Solitary Sword Sect stared down at the Dao Lake with glittering eyes, and began to breathe heavily. “Don’t tell me… that sword wasn’t the good fortune. Is this… the real good fortune?!”

A strange gleam appeared in the eyes of the Golden Frost Sect puppet. The Golden Frost Sect cultivators inside had already acquired a treasure, and planned to leave, but seeing the new development caused them to collectively change their minds and resolve to make one last gamble.

Reverend Withered-Dao stared in astonishment and stood there mutely, while the Song Clan cultivators unleashed their auras. As for the 19th Li Clan Patriarch, he wiped the blood from his mouth and glared about with wild eyes. He had been defeated earlier, but this time he was willing to pay any price to steal something away.

Di Ye grumbled inwardly. He was currently weak, and not in a condition to be fighting. Next to him, Zhou Chen’s eyes began to shine brightly.

It was then that more rumbling could be heard. The second eruption of the Dao Lake would begin momentarily. The lake water began to boil, and it seemed a huge blast was imminent.

Just when the lake was about to erupt… all of a sudden, Meng Hao flickered and shot toward the 19th Li Clan Patriarch.

“Dammit!!” The 19th Li Clan Patriarch’s face fell, and he retreated at top speed. The other Li Clan members behind him all had similar reactions.

“Lunatic! Madman! The second eruption is about to begin and you still think you have time to try to kill us?!”

“Meng Hao, what are you doing!?!?”

“You crossed the 30,000-meter line, so I’m going to kill you,” responded Meng Hao coolly. He had never had a good impression of the Li Clan. Whether it was Li Daoyi that year in the Blood Immortal Tournament, or the overbearing way that the Li Clan cultivators forced him into a corner outside the rebirth cave, they all caused Meng Hao’s killing intent to rise. 1

Currently, the qi and blood in his body was bursting with vigor. After having absorbed Di Ye’s fleshly body, he was ready to explode out with power at any moment. He moved forward with incredible speed, and as he neared, waved a sleeve.

Immediately, a gigantic hand magically appeared, which emanated a Dao Seeking aura as it shot toward the Li Clan members.

Surrounding cultivators watched on but did not interfere. The eruption was imminent, and they were more concerned with what treasures would appear.

BOOM!!

Five people, including the 19th Li Clan Patriarch, all spit out blood and tumbled backward. They were just about to employ teleportation talismans to leave, when Meng Hao pointed a finger toward them.

The Blood Demon Grand Magic appeared. A blood-colored vortex began to spin around them. The 19th Li Clan Patriarch and the others could only watch on in shock.

“NO!!”

“Meng Hao, let us go! Give us a chance!”

“We’ll leave immediately! IMMEDIATELY!”

“Did you give me a chance at the Rebirth Cave that year?” responded Meng Hao coolly. The blood-colored vortex began to absorb them, and miserable screams rang out. The bodies of all five, including the 19th Li Clan Patriarch, rapidly withered. Massive amounts of qi and blood power flew toward Meng Hao.

As that happened, Meng Hao’s fleshly body became even more powerful.

A Dao Seeking aura exploded out, followed by bloodcurdling screams as the Li Clan cultivators’ bodies turned into skeletons. As the skeletons shattered into dust, their Nascent Divinities flew out and tried to escape. Meng Hao waved his arm in response.

Wither!

A wind suddenly kicked up, and the five Nascent Divinities trembled for a moment, and then began to wither and dry up. It took only a moment for the five Li Clan cultivators to be dead in body and soul.

“It’s too bad I haven’t entered the third level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic, otherwise I could use the Spirit Meridians stratum!” Even as Meng Hao sensed the ripples of strength inside his fleshly body, a massive roaring sound filled the air.

Down below, the 30,000-meter Dao Lake was beginning to erupt!

The second eruption!

All eyes came to be fixed on the lake down below, and the boundless lake water rising up into the air. There was only one person who wasn’t looking at the lake.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered over to Dao Child Zhou Chen of the Coffin Altar Sect. After a quick glance, he headed directly in the man’s direction.

Who would have ever thought that Meng Hao would actually attack Zhou Chen? Even Zhou Chen could scarcely believe it. After all, he had no enmity with Meng Hao.

Moving with incredible speed, Meng Hao punched out. A Dao Seeking aura surged out, and the air shattered as the fist sped toward Zhou Chen. Zhou Chen’s energy surged; he performed an incantation and then shoved his hand out in front of him.

BOOM!

Blood sprayed from Zhou Chen’s mouth, and he tumbled backward. Mind spinning, he roared, “What are you doing?!?!”

“I want the halo you took earlier and put into your bag of holding,” said Meng Hao, advancing toward him.

“Dammit! DAMMIT!!” Zhou Chen was just about to retreat when suddenly the eruption of the Dao Lake grew more intense. A bright glow appeared within the water, as if treasured items were about to appear.

By this point, nobody was paying attention to Meng Hao and Zhou Chen, although they remained on guard. Virtually all attention was focused on the

Dao Lake below.

Meng Hao punched again, and a shocking rumble sounded out. Zhou Chen's face paled as he tumbled back. He performed an incantation gesture that caused his body to distort and grow blurry, but he was still just as incapable of fighting back. More blood sprayed from his mouth.

"Too powerful! I'm simply not a match for him!" Zhou Chen's face was ashen. The timing of Meng Hao's attack couldn't be worse for him. Right now, teleportation was impossible; it only worked after the eruption had begun.

"It's going to erupt any moment now," he thought, clenching his teeth. "There's no way that I can't hold on for just a few breaths worth of time!"

Meng Hao's expression was cold. The reason he had attacked the Li Clan cultivators was to absorb their qi and blood, which he planned to then use to snatch away treasures that others had already collected.

There was no enmity between him and Zhou Chen. However, it was better to rob Northern Reaches cultivators than Southern Domain cultivators. That had nothing to do with any hatred between them, but rather territorial allegiances.

Of course, this was a line of reasoning that Zhou Chen wouldn't be able to understand.

"Give me the halo, or you die!" said Meng Hao, shooting in pursuit. The rumbling of the Dao Lake grew even more intense; the waters were boiling, and had sunken down so low that it appeared the eruption would occur in the next breath.

"Hold on!" thought Zhou Chen, gritting his teeth tightly. "Just hold on a few more breaths!" His face flickering, he retreated with all the speed he could muster."

"You really are looking to die!!" Meng Hao said with a cold snort. He waved his hand, causing the Ninth Mountain to appear, around which swirled the Black White Pearls. As it descended toward Zhou Chen, Zhou Chen's face filled with intense astonishment. He wanted to struggle, but Meng Hao's fleshly body was already comparable to Dao Seeking. Meng Hao raised his right hand up, seemingly fusing it with the Ninth Mountain. An indescribable force of destruction then rumbled down.

CRUSHING!!

An incredible sensation of deadly crisis filled Zhou Chen's heart. The sensation was intense to the extreme; Zhou Chen was absolutely certain that he was incapable of evading, and that if the mountain did strike him, he would be dead in body and spirit.

"Dammit!!" He was a decisive person, so with a snarl, he produced the glowing, golden halo from his bag of holding and tossed it out. The instant that Meng Hao laid hands on it…

RUMMMBBBLLLEEE!

The Dao Lake erupted!

Endless amounts of lake water shot up into the air, within which could be seen, not vast quantities of treasures like the first time, but only one item!

It was an illusory object that shone with multitudinous colors, like a soul. It looked like a man, although the features were somewhat obscure. As soon as the soul shot out from within the lake water, the sky grew dark and the land below began to quake.

An unprecedented aura suddenly burst out, the intensity of which could suppress Spirit Severing and subdue Dao Seeking. This was….

Immortal!!

An Immortal aura surged skyward.

Furthermore, it was not that of a false Immortal but rather… a true Immortal! The area surrounding the soul instantly changed; natural law spun and altered, as if this object’s existence could substitute its own laws for what already existed.

“The soul of a true Immortal!” said the teenager from the Solitary Sword Sect, his voice hoarse and his expression one of extreme excitement.

“True Immortal’s soul!” said the Golden Frost Sect puppet, panting.

Reverend Withered-Dao, the Song Clan Patriarch and everyone else were completely shocked. Although they had all braced themselves mentally earlier and knew that the second eruption of the Dao Lake would produce a precious treasure, none of them had ever imagined that it would actually be… the soul of a true Immortal!

“To someone at the peak of Dao Seeking, absorbing the soul of a true Immortal would create an incredible opportunity to achieve true Immortal Ascension!”

“It’s actually a true Immortal’s soul!”

Not many people actually recognized what it was, especially among the hundreds of thousands of cultivators outside. However, the majority of the people above the 30,000-meter lake could tell what it was at a single glance.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered.

There were both true and false Immortals. True Immortals were people who were enlightened regarding a personal Dao, and after reaching the pinnacle, experienced Immortal Tribulation. Those who survived passed from Dao Seeking to Immortal Ascension!

On the other hand, false Immortals faced no Immortal Tribulation. They carved their name onto the Immortality Bestowal Dais of the Ninth Mountain, and were bestowed with Immortality. They had Immortal qi, but… could only be Immortals in the Ninth Mountain.

Such Immortals could not step foot outside of the Ninth Mountain. Furthermore, were the Immortality Bestowal Dais to be destroyed, they would all perish. After all… they were all Immortals of the Ji Clan!

“Not good! The appearance of a true Immortal soul will definitely attract the attention of the peak Dao Seeking cultivators from the various sects and clans of the Southern Domain.”

“This aura is extremely difficult to seal. It won’t get out of the Southern Domain, but as of this moment, there are definitely people here who have already sensed it.”

The Solitary Sword Sect teenager, the Golden Frost Sect puppet and Reverend Withered-Dao, as well as some of the other cultivators, all realized what this meant.

“Fight!!”

“I have to get my hands on it as quickly as possible! Even if I can’t use it, I can give it as a gift, and still be rewarded with incredible good fortune!”

“I have to have it! Anyone who fights me for it is dead!”

The teenager from the Solitary Sword Sect shot out, his eyes bloodshot. Everyone else in the area also shot forward with glowing eyes.

In the blink of an eye, everyone surged into motion, even Meng Hao.

Fight for the soul of the true Immortal!

They would fight to gain control of the true Immortal soul as soon as possible, before the peak Dao Seeking eccentrics arrived. This was Immortal destiny, the opportunity to become a true Immortal. When opportunities such as this came along, nothing else was important.

The only important thing… was the Immortal destiny!

BOOM!!

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# Chapter 724: Pull Out All the Stops!

Deep within Mount Solitary Sword of the Solitary Sword Sect in the Southern Domain, a rumbling could suddenly be heard. An ancient aura exploded out, causing the sky to go dark. An illusory sword appeared, floating in midair.

At the same time, an ancient old man in a black robe appeared out of nowhere. As he stood there, his peak Dao Seeking aura burst out, causing everything to tremble. He turned to look in the direction of the Ancient Dao Lakes.

“The soul of a true Immortal!” A glow of determination appeared in his eyes, and he suddenly vanished, disappearing in the direction of the Ancient Dao Lakes.

In a restricted area of the Golden Frost Sect could be seen a tombstone with nothing written on its surface. It looked ordinary and unremarkable. However an ancient aura of decay suddenly emerged from inside the tomb, and a dried-up hand stretched out. The ground cracked and shattered as an ancient figure with disheveled hair abruptly flew out.

“The soul of a true Immortal! That’s the aura of a true Immortal’s soul!” A bizarre glow appeared in the figure’s eyes as it shot through the air.

Within the Violet Fate Sect, everything was still. A sigh rang out, and then the silence resumed.

A roar could be heard within the Li Clan. In the blink of an eye, an ancient man appeared. He wore a brightly brocaded robe, and had towering killing intent. He flew through the air in the direction of the Ancient Dao Lakes, accompanied by rumbling booms.

Deep in the Song Clan, a half-corpse sat as still as death. Suddenly, its eyes opened, and they shone with a bizarre light.

“A true Immortal’s soul! My chance to achieve Immortal Ascension has finally arrived! Flesh and blood suddenly appeared to fill out the lower half of his body. In the blink of an eye, he was a middle-aged man. He had no hair, and wore a long Daoist robe. He took a step forward and then vanished.

In the Black Sieve Sect, Patriarch Six-Daos could sense the same thing as everyone else. However, he hesitated, then let out a frustrated growl. “Dammit! My cultivation base has already dropped to the mid Dao Seeking stage. How could I hold my own in the fighting? Meng Hao! Blood Demon Sect!! I won’t rest until you’re dead!!”

Meanwhile, on a mountain in the border region between the Southern Domain and the Milky Way Sea was a hamlet populated by a hundred or so families.

Smoke curled up into the air, and crisp peals of laughter could be heard from children playing outside the village.

“Wheeee! You can’t catch me, old man!”

“Grandpa, your hands are too dirty, don’t try to grab me!”

“Try to catch me, old man! We’re right here!”

The children were playing hide-and-seek with an old man. His hair was unkempt, and he looked a bit crazy. His clothes were dirty, and even his skin had splotches of mud on it. It looked like his long, draping hair hadn’t been tended to in a very long time. The old man laughed foolishly as he chased the children back and forth, which made the children laugh merrily.

“Hahaha! I’m gonna getcha! I’m gonna catch ya! Hahaha! I have no soul! I’m gonna getcha! Meng Hao…. Who’s Meng Hao…? Immortal Ascension, Immortal Ascension….” In the middle of running back and forth, the old man suddenly stopped in place, as if he had noticed something. A tremor ran through his body, and he looked off into the distance, his eyes listless.

“The soul of an Immortal…. A true Immortal’s soul…. Who am I…? Who am I?

The old man grabbed his head in his hands. “Immortal Ascension! Immortal Ascension! I will become Immortal!!”

He then lifted his head up and let out a disconsolate howl, filled with shocking ripples and Immortal qi. The amorphous ripples swept out in all directions.

The smiles on the faces of the children twisted, and then their bodies began to turn illusory. The entire hamlet twisted and distorted, and began to glow with glittering lights. The lights flew up into the air and then shot toward the old man, where they swirled together to form a heavy saber. The man gripped the saber in his hand and shot off into the distance.

The hamlet was never real, and neither were the people who lived there. They were all simply incarnations of the saber.

“Immortal Ascension! Immortal Ascension! I will become Immortal!!” The old man continued to roar as he shot through the air. His expression was one of confusion, and his soul was incomplete.

Meanwhile, back in Mount Blood Demon, Patriarch Blood Demon sat in the Blood Pond. His eyes suddenly opened, and he was about to rise to his feet, then hesitated.

“No Karma or destiny connected to me,” he said, shaking his head. He settled back down and continued to meditate.

Throughout the entire Southern Domain, all the great powers were shaken. A streak of colorful light shot out from the Western Desert. It was a black-robed young man who looked very similar to Meng Hao. His expression was grim as he sped through the air. If you looked at him from a distance, he resembled an enormous, black bat.

He shot toward the Ancient Dao Lakes at top speed.

“He’s there…. I can sense him….”

As the Southern Domain was shocked, back in the inner region of the Ancient Dao Lakes, booms rang out across the 30,000-meter Dao Lake.

The battle for the True Immortal’s soul was not something that ordinary Spirit Severing cultivators could participate in. Even someone of the Second Severing would have a hard time wresting away this good fortune without perishing.

Although the mere thought of the opportunity caused everyone’s hearts to shake. After experiencing the fighting after the first eruption of the 30,000-meter Dao Lake, the Spirit Severing experts of the various sects and clans were left shaken. Therefore, they now hesitated, and many of them retreated from the fighting.

The six Blood Demon Sect Patriarchs were the first to fall back. Then, Sir Jian and the others from the Solitary Sword Sect. As for the Song Clan, the Patriarch who had led them here finally gritted his teeth and departed.

Reverend Withered-Dao was the only one present from the Violet Fate Sect. A strange gleam appeared in his eyes and he hesitated for a moment, but in the end, chose to leave.

Booms rattled out, and violent pulses of magical energy spread through the air. Only a few people qualified to participate in this battle!

The mysterious teenager from the Solitary Sword Sect, the composite puppet from the Golden Frost Sect, Lu Bai of the Imperial Bloodline Clan from the Northern Reaches, and lastly… Meng Hao!

Di Ye had been seriously injured by Meng Hao, and Zhou Chen from the Coffin Altar Sect had experienced having his pride completely destroyed. The two of them didn’t dare to participate in the fighting, and retreated off to the side.

The booms were shocking. The mysterious teenager from the Solitary Sword Sect wielded the two-meter longsword. As he slashed it out in front of him, a dazzling, resplendent crescent moon exploded out, sending out shocking ripples.

In the battle for the true Immortal’s soul, no one had any allies; everyone was an enemy. Therefore, no one dared to fight one-on-one with anyone else, but instead used divine abilities that were essentially area attacks.

Currently, the path to victory involved blocking the way of others.

“All of you get out of my way!” roared the Golden Frost Sect puppet. Brilliant light rose up from it, and it raised its hand and then swept it forward. A black mass of seawater magically appeared, within which surged numerous black dragons. Each of the black dragons spit out a pearl, which became a world that surged out in attack.

Lu Bai of the Imperial Bloodline Clan let out a cold snort. He quickly performed an incantation gesture and then waved his finger. The air distorted, as if time were beginning to reverse. Everyone suddenly slowed down exponentially, and it seemed as if time were about to flow backward.

As for Lu Bai, in a scant moment, he was closing in on the soul of the true Immortal.

And then there was Meng Hao. He didn’t employ any special divine abilities. All he did was summon the Black White Pearls and the Ninth Mountain, which then bore down directly onto the position of the true Immortal’s soul.

The incoming Ninth Mountain caused Lu Bai’s face to flicker. A moment ago, he had been on the verge of reaching the true Immortal’s soul, but now he was blocked.

The other powerful experts in the area were all attacking one by one. Everything rumbled, and for the moment, all of the cultivators were prevented from advancing toward the soul. It was in this moment that the teenager from the Solitary Sword Sect lifted his head up and roared. His body began to grow; in a split second, he had become a young man.

His aura grew explosively. Dao Seeking power rose up, and he was no longer in the Spirit Severing stage. Apparently, he had stepped into Dao Seeking. Natural law formed around him, and he advanced forward through the black seawater. He broke through Lu Bai’s time reversal and slammed into Meng Hao’s Ninth Mountain.

A boom echoed out as the Solitary Sword Sect teenager lifted his hand and pointed. His natural law slammed into the Ninth Mountain and pierced it through. The man reached his hand out toward the true Immortal’s soul.

“Dammit!”

“You’re looking to die!”

“Kill him!”

Lu Bai’s face fell and he quickly performed a double-handed incantation, then pointed out. Immediately, a beam of light flew out, and the power of time reversal instantly appeared around the young man from the Solitary Sword Sect.

The Golden Frost Sect puppet roared and then waved a hand. Monstrous black light transformed into a black rain, which then coalesced into ten thousand howling dragons that shot toward the young man from the Solitary Sword Sect.

Killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes. He did not use any offensive magic, but instead, waved a finger to employ the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex!

It didn’t matter that the young man from the Solitary Sword Sect had an early Dao Seeking cultivation base. The combined might of the three others was still enough to shake him. Lu Bai’s bizarre magic made it so that he was almost stuck in time. Meng Hao’s shocking divine ability thoroughly bound him in place and weakened his cultivation base. Then the Golden Frost Sect puppet closed in with raging killing intent.

The combined attack of the three different parties caused the young man from the Solitary Sword Sect to go pale in the face. Blood sprayed from his mouth as he tumbled backward.

Lu Bai was the first to make a move. Utilizing time reversal, he appeared next to the soul of the true Immortal, and was about to grab ahold of it when the young man from the Solitary Sword Sect roared. His sword raged, and ten thousand moons roared forth. They combined with the ten thousand snarling dragons of the Golden Frost Sect puppet and Meng Hao’s irksome hex.

BOOM!

Lu Bai couldn’t hold up. His scalp went numb, and blood sprayed from his mouth. He had no time to grab the true Immortal’s soul, and was forced into retreat.

In almost that exact same moment, Meng Hao and the Golden Frost Sect Puppet flew forward toward the true Immortal’s soul. Their speed was shocking, and only a tiny instant passed before both were about to lay hands on it. The Golden Frost Sect puppet’s eyes flickered, and ten thousand dragons roared toward Meng Hao. At the same time, the young man from the Solitary Sword Sect and Lu Bai joined together to attack Meng Hao and the Golden Frost Sect puppet.

This was a battle royale, filled with strikes and counterstrikes of all sorts! If this continued, no one would be able to prevail. Furthermore, time was of the essence. They all knew that peak Dao Seeking experts were definitely approaching, and then none of them would be able to continue to participate in the fighting.

The Blood Demon Grand Magic was powerful, but Meng Hao wasn’t confident that it could restrain all three of the others at the same time. If he missed even one, it would be difficult to fight that person while simultaneously maintaining the Blood Demon Grand Magic.

His eyes flickered as he saw the divine abilities nearing. He suddenly lifted his hand and clenched it into a fist. All of the power of qi and blood that he had absorbed merged together in that fist, creating the most powerful blow he had ever delivered.

This punch was comparable to Dao Seeking!

However, what he attacked was not a person.

The fist struck out, and the air vibrated. The land shook, and a deafening sound filled the air. He punched a gigantic hole into the air itself, after which, a shocking gravitational force exploded out from within.

It seemed that, in order to repair itself, it needed to suck everything from the outside world into it. This was a part of a natural law. Behind the emptiness was the void.

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# Chapter 725: Grab That Soul!

The power of the gravitational force within the gap in the void was actually not very great. However, Meng Hao's strike contained Dao Seeking power. An incredible wind arose which, in combination with the gravitational force, caused the others to gasp in shock.

The young man from the Solitary Sword Sect looked astonished as he was helplessly sucked toward the gap. It was the same with the Golden Frost Sect puppet, and even Lu Bai. In just a short moment, they were already nearing the rift.

Their expressions flashed again when Meng Hao, despite being as out of control as them, suddenly looked at them with flashing eyes.

"Blood Demon Grand Magic!"

An enormous vortex suddenly appeared around Meng Hao, and a gigantic red hand wrapped around him. He was using the Blood Demon Grand Magic, not on one of them, but on himself.

He was using the power of the red vortex to fight against the gravitational force coming from the gap.

A rumbling sound could be heard as Meng Hao instantly came to a stop. Everyone could see that, of the group, he was the closest to the soul of the true Immortal!

Fighting against the power of the gravitational force, he used the power of his fleshly body to shrug off the attacks from the Solitary Sword Sect teenager and Lu Bai, as well as the Golden Frost Sect puppet's divine ability. After coughing up some blood, he stretched his hand out and grabbed the soul of the true Immortal!

“Dammit!!”

“Meng Hao, are you looking to die?!?!”

“Meng Hao!!”

As soon as he touched it, a rumbling filled his mind. At the same time, the soul of the true Immortal began to shrink. It took only a moment for it to transform into a crystal, which Meng Hao closed his fingers around.

“Got it!” he thought. His eyes glittered, and he prepared to teleport away.

However, it was in that instant that the 30,000-meter Dao Lake down below suddenly emitted an astonishing rumbling sound. At the same time, the lake water transformed into an enormous whirlpool that pulsed with an incredible gravitational force.

This intense gravitational force instantly superseded the gravitational force from the fissure in the air. Immediately, the Golden Frost Sect puppet broke into pieces, reverting to the five cultivators from the Golden Frost Sect. Their bodies were completely beyond their control, and they let out miserable screams as they were sucked down into the Dao Lake below.

Next were the young man from the Solitary Sword Sect and Lu Bai, whose faces instantly fell. The young man from the Solitary Sword Sect immediately crushed a jade slip. His body began to fade with the power of teleportation. However, it was not powerful enough, and he too was sucked down into the Dao Lake.

The power of Time immediately began to ripple around Lu Bai as he attempted to reverse the flow of time. However, after a single breath of time, the distortions shattered; time was incapable of being reversed. He was transformed into a streak of light and sucked down into the Dao Lake.

Meng Hao was the last person remaining. The Blood Demon Grand Magic remained, but it was trembling violently. Meng Hao’s mind reeled as he fought to free himself from the gravitational force. However, he was only able to hold out for the space of three breaths before cracking sounds could be heard from the Blood Demon Grand Magic and the enormous hand. They shattered, and Meng Hao was violently dragged down into the Dao Lake.

Almost in the same moment that they were sucked down into the 30,000-meter Dao Lake, two beams of light appeared far off in the distance. It took only one breath of time for two old men to suddenly appear above the lake.

“Dammit!!”

One of them immediately gestured down toward the lake, but not even a single ripple spread out across its surface. At the same time, more beams of light approached from all directions, closing in on the same position. These were all the peak Dao Seeking eccentrics who had sensed the soul of the true Immortal.

All of them were just a moment too late. However, they wouldn’t give up that easily. They joined forces to attack the lake, after which they guarded it, observing it for a long time. When they were finally convinced that they couldn’t get inside, they left, sighing with regret.

It was at that point that the Ancient Dao Lakes were finally restored to peace and quiet.

As for Meng Hao and the others, they were considered missing. Of course, the fact that Meng Hao ended up obtaining the soul of the true Immortal was something that couldn’t be kept under wraps. After all, Spirit Severing experts from all the clans and sects had witnessed the event personally.

More and more people across the Southern Domain learned of the matter, and the various eccentrics of the sects and clans nearly went mad. They even joined forces to perform auguries which revealed that Meng Hao was, in fact, not dead. A furious search then unfolded across the entire Southern Domain.

If Meng Hao appeared, then the sects would surely find out immediately. Of course, the Blood Demon Sect didn’t agree to all of that. As such, random skirmishes between sects became common in the lands of the Southern Domain.

The entire Southern Domain was slipping into chaos. Rogue cultivators feared for their lives; although there was no formal declaration of war, minor battles and fights were a common occurrence.

As for Meng Hao, after he was sucked down into the Dao Lake with the others, he entered what seemed like a tunnel, and then lost consciousness. He was sucked along for an indeterminable period of time before an incredible roaring sound suddenly shook him awake.

When he came to, he found himself in mid-air. Above was not a sky, but rather a boundless solid surface inlaid with infinite shining pearls that lit the entire area as brightly as day.

Interspersed among the pearls were the mouths of tunnels, virtually endless. As soon as he saw them, Meng Hao could guess that he had dropped out of just such an opening.

“What is this place…?” he thought, his mind trembling. As he looked around, his eyes instantly went wide and his face filled with shock.

He was… not in the Ancient Dao Lakes!

He was surrounded by endless ruins, the sheer enormity of which was difficult to describe. Wreckage and corpses stretched out in all directions, some of them half-buried. From the look of it, there were even more ruins that were completely buried beneath the ground.

It seemed as if this place was filled with layers of ruins that had built up over countless years of time.

There were also mountains visible!

The mountains were not true mountains, but rather, enormous collections of magical items, medicinal pills and even corpses. There were tens of thousands of such mountains scattered about everywhere. The sight was completely shocking.

Even more shocking was that in the middle of the tens of thousands of mountains floated an enormous portal of flames.

The bright red flames of the portal shot up high into the sky, causing the entire world to be filled with the color of its fire.

Up above in the air flew vicious winged creatures which were too numerous to count. Their bodies were completely violet, and they carried armfuls of magical items that they tossed into the portal’s flames, which then burned them to absolutely nothing.

Apparently, the magical items provided some sort of power, which caused magical symbols to occasionally appear on the flame portal. Every time the magical symbols flickered, a sea of flames would roil out.

Beneath the flame portal was a gigantic awl, fully 30,000 meters long. It was bright crimson, and was suspended in midair to point down toward a 3,000-meter wide abyss.

There were a few of the winged beasts who glowed with a silver light. They seemed as if they were in a position of great authority, and carried whips, which they used to lash the others. There were also some golden-colored beasts who lay prone near the flame portal, apparently asleep.

In addition to all that, there were also a variety of strange beasts going to and fro on foot. They emanated shocking auras as they made their way among the ruins, carrying all sorts of objects.

They carried corpses, magical items, spirit stones, and other wreckage.

Almost in the same moment that Meng Hao saw them, the denizens of this place seemed to notice him. They all stopped moving and suddenly looked in his direction.

Countless gazes came to fall on him, causing his scalp to go numb.

Meng Hao had actually seen the violet, winged, humanoid beasts being spit out from the Dao Lakes in the outside world. Each and every one he saw now was similar to the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage, and there were even some who had Spirit Severing auras.

As for the silver-colored beasts, each and every one…. was a Spirit Severing beast! There were even some who had Dao Seeking auras, nearly two hundred of them.

Most shocking of all… were the gold-colored beasts that lay prone by the flame portal. There were eleven in total.

From what Meng Hao could sense, the golden-colored beasts all had Dao Seeking power.

One of them was a violet-gold color, and Meng Hao could tell that it was even more powerful, at the peak of Dao Seeking.

It was even above Patriarch Six-Daos and the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch.

As for the beasts who walked about on foot on land, they were a bit weaker. Even still, the vast quantity of the beasts was in and of itself enough to fill Meng Hao with a sense of deadly crisis.

“What is this place?!” he thought, his scalp tingling. As he saw the beasts turning to look at him, he felt as if he were standing under the shadow of death. If the golden-colored beasts weren’t there, it wouldn’t have been so bad. But with them present, the threat Meng Hao sensed was just far too great.

Worst of all, there was a deep-gold-colored beast sitting in the middle of the fire portal. Meng Hao could sense an even more terrifying aura, the aura of an Immortal!

It was at this point that the gold-colored beasts laying prone around the flame portal all began to open their eyes. They stared over at Meng Hao with cold gazes. At the same time, the deep-gold-colored beast looked at Meng Hao, and he immediately felt as if he was being sealed in place.

“That thing is far more powerful than the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch!!” thought Meng Hao. “If Six-Daos were here, he wouldn’t be close to being a match.

“What kind of beast is this? I can’t believe this underground world has such shocking beasts in it. Or perhaps… they’re Demons?” His face flickered, and he edged backward. However, it was then that he suddenly saw a person pop out from one of the tunnel mouths up above.

It was none other than Lu Bai!

The instant he appeared, he looked around, and his face flickered.

After him came the young man from the Solitary Sword sect, and then the five Golden Frost Sect cultivators.

When he realized the order in which they emerged, Meng Hao’s eyes glittered.

“I was the last to be sucked in, but the first to be dropped out,” he thought. “The five Golden Frost Sect Spirit Severing cultivators were the first to be sucked in, and the last to drop out.”

When the young man from the Solitary Sword Sect and the five Golden Frost Sect cultivators saw the lands around them, their faces also fell.

All eight of the cultivators backed up, fearful of offending the terrifying beasts and provoking an attack.

“Foreigners!” an ancient voice said. It echoed out through the entire world, from none other than the most powerful of the beasts, the deep-gold-colored one that sat in the flame portal.

It flew up into the air and suddenly began to grow larger. In a brief moment, it was 300 meters long, and it appeared to be the overseer of the place.

“You are the second group of foreigners to arrive during this era…”

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# Chapter 726: Trial by Fire!

“In accordance with the ancient treaty, you may take part in the life-or-death trial by fire here. If you succeed… then according to the ancient charter, you may acquire treasures from this place.

“If you fail, then this place shall be your grave!

“There are three levels, and by passing the second level, you earn the right to leave if you wish.

“If you make it past the third level, you can enter the land that has been guarded by my clan from generation to generation. There… you can acquire the ultimate good fortune.

“That good fortune is the Divine Flame Essence, the most supreme flame that exists in Heaven and Earth. Even the tiniest spark of that flame can burn an Immortal to death!

“In this age, you are the second group to enter this place. As for the first group, it consisted of nineteen people in total. Of that group, two made it through the second level. One left, and the other died in the third level.”

As the voice echoed out, Meng Hao’s mind trembled, and he stopped in his tracks. The young man from the Solitary Sword Sect, as well as Lu Bai, both had strange gleams in their eyes. As for the five Patriarchs from the Golden Frost Sect, their eyes were glittering brightly.

“You of this second group are quite powerful, more powerful than the first group….”

One of the old men from the Golden Frost Sect hesitated for a moment before tentatively asking, “Can we decline to participate in the life-or-death trial by fire?”

As soon as the words left the man’s mouth, the deep-gold overseer’s eyes flickered and it looked over at the old man. “What was that?!?!”

The old man immediately began to quiver, as if his cultivation base had suddenly become unstable.

A look of scorn appeared in the eyes of the deep-gold overseer. “Once you come to this place,” it said coolly, “you must participate! If you choose to quit… you die! Those were the terms of the ancient treaty. Our clan gave its approval, so the agreement will not be changed!

“Once you pass the second level, then you may choose to depart!

“The first level, is none other than our current location!

“You will battle with my fellow clan members. If you can enter the flame portal, then it signifies that you have passed the first level!” The deep-gold overseer’s voice echoed out in all directions.

Lu Bai’s eyes glittered and he cautiously said, “Senior, you’re at the peak of Dao Seeking! How can we compare to you?”

“I will not participate,” was the calm reply. “Furthermore, only one of my gold-colored fellow clan members will join the battle.”

The golden-armored man from the Golden Frost Sect immediately asked, “Do we fight one at a time, or can we go together?”

“One at a time. One person, one level. You will have three chances to get past a level. If you lose on your third chance, you die!”

Next to speak was the young man from the Solitary Sword Sect. “What if we kill too many of your people, and then you regret letting us fight?”

“Kill too many?” The deep-gold overseer laughed heartily. “Our clan descended from the Undying Divinity Clan. Do you really think you can kill us?” As his voice echoed out, black flames sprang up from the bodies of the beasts down below. As soon as the fire appeared, the level of their auras shot upward!

The explosive growth was terrifying; many of the violet-colored beasts, which were at the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage, actually completely exceeded the limits of the Nascent Soul stage and stepped directly into Spirit Severing.

As for the silver-colored beasts, their energy also shot up.

“Fine. I, Gu Tianxiang, will be the first to go,” said the young man from the Solitary Sword Sect. He lifted his right hand, causing the two-meter longsword to appear, as well as the nine one-meter shortswords that circulated around it. The energy that surged out was that of the early Dao Seeking stage. The young man’s eyes flickered as he shot forward.

The instant he charged forward, the violet-colored beasts began to fly toward him one after another. Booms rang out without cease as Gu Tianxiang of the Solitary Sword Sect shot forward with incredible speed, slaughtering the entire way. However, his expression soon began to flicker; the violet-colored beasts were extremely valiant. When they were injured, the flames that covered them would heal their wounds in a flash.

However, Gu Tianxiang was also incredibly valiant. As he fought his way on, silver-colored beasts appeared. He fought his way onward until he was about 1,000 meters from the flame portal. It was at that point that that he fell, surrounded by a group of twenty silver-colored beasts. With a miserable shriek, he retreated back to his original position.

“1,000 meters. Your first attempt has failed,” stated the deep-gold overseer in a cool voice. “Although, the fact that you were able to retreat in one piece is quite an accomplishment. You have the potential to make it past the first level.”

The expressions of Meng Hao and the others sank when they saw the incredible power of the beasts’ fleshly bodies. They didn’t seem to possess any divine abilities or magical techniques, but their physical might really was too powerful, to the point that they seemed virtually unkillable.

Furthermore, after being injured, their flames would immediately heal them.

Lu Bai’s eyes flickered, and he suddenly strode forward. He was a powerful expert from the Northern Reaches who wielded the power of Time and Space, and possessed no scant amount of life-saving treasures. In the Spirit Severing stage, he had already slaughtered experts of the early Dao Seeking stage.

He immediately transformed into a streak of light that charged forward, surrounded by distortions of space-time. As he proceeded along, it almost seemed as if the beasts were incapable of even touching him. Every blow landed on thin air.

Gu Tianxiang’s pupils constricted, and unsightly expressions could be seen on the faces of the five men from the Golden Frost Sect. As for Meng Hao, his eyes began to shine brightly.

“Eee?!” said the deep-gold overseer, its expression one of surprise as it watched Lu Bai. “A master of the secret arts of Time, with your own Dao. Excellent. You are qualified to match up to the two members of that first group of foreigners who entered here.”

Boom!

Lu Bai slaughtered his way on, passing the 1,500-meter mark, where he was immediately surrounded by twenty silver-colored beasts. When that happened, he began to sweat, but still managed to kill his way more than 500 meters further. By now, he was only about 500 meters away from the flame portal. Gu Tianxiang from the Solitary Sword Sect had a very unsightly expression on his face.

“Is this really my limit…?” Lu Bai’s eyes were shot with blood as he performed an incantation with his right hand and then pointed up into the sky.

“River of Time!” he cried. Immediately, countless sparkling lights appeared around him, which transformed into a river that stretched out far and wide.

The twenty silver-colored beasts had no choice but to fall back. Lu Bai charged forward 250 meters. He was now only 250 meters away from the flame portal!

The deep-gold overseer up in mid-air watched on with a strange gleam in its eyes.

It was at this point that a gold-colored beast suddenly rose to its feet. It shot with incredible speed toward Lu Bai, and when the two met, a huge boom rose up into the sky. Blood sprayed from Lu Bai’s mouth, but his expression was one of savagery as he backed up and slapped his bag of holding. Immediately, a black dragon corpse appeared.

This black dragon corpse was none other than the one he had procured during the eruption of the Dao Lake.

“Time Reversal, Resurrection!” Blue veins popped out on Lu Bai’s forehead, and he suddenly seemed to age by ten years. The River of Time exploded into countless colorful lights which then inundated the black dragon.

It was now possible to see the dragon apparently returning to life from the dead. Its eyes suddenly snapped open, and a shocking aura roiled out which contained the power of an Immortal!

The power exploded out for only a moment. Then it vanished, and the dragon was once again dead.

But that one moment was shocking to the extreme!

Gu Tianxiang of the Solitary Sword Sect gasped, and a look of astonishment could be seen in his eyes. How could he have imagined that Lu Bai… would have such an amazing secret art?!

The five men from the Golden Frost Sect all looked shocked, and their minds were filled with roaring. A secret art like the one they had just seen was unbelievable!

Meng Hao’s eyes widened. Earlier, he had been able to sense that Lu Bai was powerful, but now he realized… Lu Bai was even more powerful than he had imagined!

“However, he was only barely able to use that secret art!” he thought. Suddenly, the same desire to do battle that he had seen in Lu Bai’s eyes now appeared in his own. “I wonder who between the two of us… is stronger!?”

Surrounded by the beast horde, Lu Bai’s secret art unleashed the explosive power of the dragon, which turned into an incredible attack that shot toward the gold-colored beast. The gold-colored beast’s face fell, and it wanted to flee, but before it could, the attack slammed into it with a boom, shredding its flesh into ribbons. It let out a miserable scream and fell back at high speed. Flames burst out, rapidly healing the wounds.

It didn’t die, but it was forced into retreat. That gave Lu Bai the opportunity he needed. Coughing up blood, he shot forward at top speed, crossing the final 250 meters and stepping up into the flame portal.

He coughed up some more blood, then waved his hand to collect up the black dragon corpse.

“What an incredible cultivator!” said the deep-gold overseer, an expression of admiration on its face. “To have passed the first level in one attempt… you may proceed to the second level. I look forward to seeing how you perform there. After passing the second level, you will acquire a precious treasure from our clan.

“When your secret Time art has reached its pinnacle, you can bring dead things back to life. Unfortunately, your cultivation base is too weak. If you can achieve true Immortal Ascension, and then utilize that art… you can resurrect that Nightmare Dragon to aid you for an entire battle!”

“There’s no need to wait to be a true Immortal!” said Lu Bai coolly, wiping the blood from his lips. “The day I reach the peak of Dao Seeking, I can resurrect it to use in battle!” He turned to look back toward Meng Hao who was standing 3,000 meters away.

His gaze passed through the hordes of beasts to lock with Meng Hao's.

"Meng Hao, can you pass through?" he asked coolly. "Don't disappoint me, now." With that, he turned, paying Meng Hao no more heed as he stepped into the fire portal. In the blink of an eye, he was gone.

"Your turn," said the deep-gold overseer, his gaze sweeping over Meng Hao and the others. "If you're not confident, you can wait here until you are.

"Time means nothing to us. If you wish to practice cultivation here for a few thousand years before you try to charge through, you may.

"Normally speaking, it's quite lonesome here. Now that I've been able to lay eyes on you foreigners, I feel… it would be a shame to see you die here.

"However, if you fail three times in a row, then I will personally slay you. And of course, there is always the possibility that you will be killed trying to break through."

Meng Hao's eyes glittered.

"Thousands of years…? I can't wait at all. Elder Sister Xu won't even stay alive for another ninety-nine years. I need to spend this life with her, not end up getting stuck in this place!" His eyes shone with coldness as he stepped forward, transforming into a beam of light that shot toward the beast hordes.

This time, it was the Solitary Sword Sect's Gu Tianxiang whose eyes were fixed on Meng Hao as he shot forward.

"I always thought Meng Hao was the most inhuman cultivator I'd ever seen. I never imagined that Lu Bai would be even more shocking… Although, it took a bit of effort for Lu Bai to pass the level. This Meng Hao… won't be able to make it across."

The five Golden Frost Sect cultivators were looking on with unsightly expressions. If they joined forces, they might have a chance. But alone, none of the five had any confidence at all.

To them, this place was a dead end. After seeing Gu Tianxiang suffer defeat, and then seeing Lu Bai succeed, they were filled with many complex emotions. At the moment, they were watching Meng Hao.

Meng Hao shot forward with incredible speed, smashing into the beast horde with a bang.

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# Chapter 727: Completely Golden!

Immediately, countless violet-colored humanoid beasts surrounded him with flapping wings. All he could see was a mass of violet.

Of the 3,000 meters to the flame portal, the first 1,500 meters were firmly occupied by the violet-colored beasts. Only after passing through that region would they stand down. The silver-colored beasts made their move at the 1,000-meter mark, which was where Gu Tianxiang of the Solitary Sword Sect had been defeated.

If one could pass the silver-colored beasts, the next challenge was a gold-colored beast.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. He didn’t have time to waste here, so he immediately went on the offensive. The Black White Pearls and the Ninth Mountain rumbled out. As the Ninth Mountain descended, with the Black White Pearls circulating around it, everything trembled. The air vibrated, and multiple layers of ripples expanded out, transforming into an astonishing pressure that weighed down on everything.

The intense pressure was like a wall that crashed into the violet-colored beasts. As Meng Hao charged forward, they tumbled back, howling. Even the most outstanding of the violet-colored beasts were incapable of even getting close to Meng Hao before being smashed backward.

250 meters. 500 meters. 750 meters. 1,000 meters….

Within in the space of only a few breaths of time, Meng Hao proceeded forward as if he were walking along a paved path. He quickly reached the 1,500 meter mark, with the violet-colored beasts left behind in the dust. They glared at him, but didn’t pursue or attack him any further.

Up ahead was a glittering, silver glow, which was a silver-colored beast. It shot forward with a ferocious expression and incredible speed. Its power seemed equivalent to the Second Severing.

Meng Hao gave a cold snort as he waved his right hand. The Ninth Mountain arrived, crushing the silver-colored beast. It let out a miserable howl as its body began to fall apart. However, the flames leaped out and quickly restored it.

Meng Hao quickly advanced by about 250 meters, putting him only 1,250 meters away from the flame portal.

It was then that six more silver-colored beasts joined the beast from earlier. Seven total, five with Second Severing cultivation bases, and two with Third Severing cultivation bases, charged toward Meng Hao.

“Crushing time!” Meng Hao advanced, waving his right finger. The Ninth Mountain grew in size, rumbling as it crushed down onto the seven silver-colored beasts.

Meng Hao charged onward. He was now only 500 meters away from the flame portal.

At this point, more than ten silver-colored beasts attacked him furiously. Booms rang out from the Ninth Mountain as the seven silver-colored beasts being suppressed burst out from within, their bodies wreathed in flames. They joined in to completely surround Meng Hao.

The five men from the Golden Frost Sect were watching intently as all of this happened. Off to the side, Gu Tianxiang’s eyes glittered. Meng Hao was now in the same position he had been when in when he suffered defeat. “That Lu Bai is inhuman!” he thought. “Meng Hao might be powerful, but if he thinks he can get any farther, well, that’s impossible!”

The deep-gold overseer up in mid-air was also watching the proceedings closely, and thought, “He’s definitely going to be defeated.”

However, it was then that Meng Hao's right hand flashed with an incantation gesture, and he waved his sleeve.

"Blood Demon Grand Magic!"

Rumbling could be heard as a gigantic vortex formed, enveloping the roughly twenty silver-colored beasts. At the same time, an enormous blood-colored hand appeared, which firmly grasped the beasts.

"Qi and Blood stratum!" roared Meng Hao. The more than twenty silver-colored beasts began to tremble, and expressions of astonishment could be seen on their faces. Their bodies began to wither rapidly as vast quantities of qi and blood shot toward Meng Hao.

A tremor ran through him. The qi and blood was incredibly powerful, and in an instant his body had already reached the limit that Spirit Severing could accommodate.

The more than twenty silver-colored beasts struggled violently, to the point that the vortex seemed to be on the verge of collapsing. Apparently, the limit of the second level of Meng Hao's Blood Demon Grand Magic had been reached.

Gu Tianxiang's eyes glittered. "He's going to be defeated!"

The five members of the Golden Frost Sect sighed. If Meng Hao couldn't get past the first level, then there was no hope at all for them.

Up in mid-air, the deep-gold overseer eyed Meng Hao's Blood Demon Grand Magic, and its expression flickered, but then quickly returned to normal.

Currently, the more than twenty silver-colored beasts were struggling and roaring so violently that the vortex couldn't handle it. Cracking sounds could be heard, and rifts spread out. However, Meng Hao then pointed his finger and cried, "Wither!"

The ‘withering’ character from the Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao caused the silver-colored beasts’ bodies to tremble. Their fleshly bodies began to wither even more rapidly, and their cultivation bases were instantly suppressed. Even their life forces showed signs of withering.

Because of their weakening, the Blood Demon Grand Magic vortex was no longer under the strain it had been. It once again rumbled into motion. From a distance, the vortex was incredibly huge and shocking.

Boom!

Even denser streams of qi and blood poured from the vortex to be absorbed by Meng Hao. He trembled violently as his fleshly body suddenly burst out of the Spirit Severing stage and into Dao Seeking.

The more than twenty silver-colored beasts were withering rapidly, and seemed to be just on the verge of death. Flames appeared to restore their bodies, but their power was sucked away by Meng Hao even as the restoration occurred.

It was a cycle that became like a wellspring of power for Meng Hao. It was almost as if he could continue to grow stronger… forever!

Early Dao Seeking. Mid Dao Seeking….

He lifted his head up and roared as he felt an unprecedented level of power coursing through him. Along with this incredible fleshly body power came an increased self-confidence.

This was the Heaven-defying might of the Blood Demon Grand Magic!

This intense, unprecedented strength also caused Meng Hao to be wracked with severe pain; it felt as if his body might be ripped apart. When Gu Tianxiang saw what was happening, he gasped. The five cultivators from the Golden Frost Sect watched with wide eyes.

The deep-gold overseer up in midair was even more astonished. He gasped and thought, “What divine ability is that!? It’s so shocking!! It’s completely different than the River of Time, and, in fact, far more terrifying!”

Furthermore, the regeneration of the more than twenty silver-colored beasts was actually not able to keep up with the absorbing power of the vortex. Looks of despair could even be seen on some of the beasts’ faces.

Meng Hao seemed as if he had become the vortex itself as he gobbled up all the incoming power of blood and qi.

The deep-gold overseer’s face fell. “Dammit! If this goes on, he might really be able to wither my clan members to death!!”

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed as his fleshly body exploded with power. It burst through the mid Dao Seeking stage and then stepped into the late Dao Seeking stage!

In that moment, the Blood Demon Grand Magic vortex suddenly changed color, turning from red to gold!

When it became gold-colored, intense rumbling sounds filled the air and an incredible pressure weighed down on everything. The five Golden Frost Sect cultivators’ faces were filled with shock, and their hearts trembled. They could clearly sense the fearsomeness of the golden vortex, and they knew that even if they combined into the puppet, they would be incapable of fazing Meng Hao in the least bit.

Gu Tianxiang of the Solitary Sword Sect was even more shocked. His pupils constricted as he realized that Meng Hao was actually just as inhuman as Lu Bai!

The golden vortex seemed to have transformed on a fundamental level. The pressure exploded out tenfold, and Meng Hao trembled inwardly as he sensed the terrifying nature of the golden vortex.

“No wonder I wasn’t ever able to cultivate the third level. The blood-colored vortex… isn’t the final limit of the second level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic! Only by turning the vortex golden can I reach the great circle of the Qi and Blood stratum!”

Enlightened, Meng Hao was now confident that he could easily suck the silver-colored beasts out of existence. However, that was not the course of action he chose.

After all, the deep-gold overseer was in control of this entire place, so it was best not to go overboard.

“Dammit!” thought the deep-gold overseer. “One inhuman is bad enough. How could a second one have appeared! And this new one is even more shocking than the previous one!!”

Lu Bai had passed through the first level by using his River of Time to avoid the silver-colored beasts. Meng Hao, on the other hand, was relying on the power of his magic to crush everything in his path. It was easy to see which of the two was superior!

The deep-gold overseer was getting anxious, but because of the ancient treaty there was nothing he could to interfere. Just when he was at the peak of anxiety, Meng Hao waved his hand, causing a boom to rattle out. The golden vortex faded away, and the more than twenty silver-colored beasts were sent spinning away, blood spraying from their mouths. They were listless and dispirited, and they looked at Meng Hao with expressions of unprecedented fear and awe.

They had not feared Lu Bai; were Lu Bai to be even stronger than he was, he still wouldn’t be able to kill them.

Meng Hao was quite different, though. He was qualified to utterly exterminate them!

Even as rumbling sounds continued to echo out, and the more than twenty silver-colored beasts retreated, Meng Hao proceeded onward. He had absorbed a virtually inexhaustible amount of qi and blood. Although it didn’t truly belong to him, he was temporarily incredibly powerful, and could explode out with fleshly body power that was almost completely equivalent to the peak of Dao Seeking.

He proceeded forward, and natural law spread out around him. The world rumbled, the air distorted, and shocking energy filled him. As he charged forward, the deep-gold overseer’s eyes flickered. It had a certain amount of control based on the treaty, so it quickly called upon a gold-colored clan member that was more powerful than the one that had attacked Lu Bai. It roared and charged toward Meng Hao, its Dao Seeking cultivation base surging. Its body was surrounded by flames, and it streaked toward Meng Hao like a shooting star.

Meng Hao could instantly see the difference between this beast and the one that had attacked Lu Bai. He snorted coldly and then clenched his fist.

“SCREW OFF!” he roared, punching with all the strength his fleshly body could muster. Everything dimmed as an insane, earth-shattering wave of power rocketed forth which seemed capable of covering the sky and burying the earth.

The incoming gold-colored beast looked shocked, and was instantly filled with an intense sensation of deadly crisis. Without hesitation, it attempted to dodge. However, the wave of power generated by Meng Hao’s fleshly body was far too shocking. In the blink of an eye, it completely inundated the gold-colored beast.

A bloodcurdling scream echoed out. Flames completely covered it, but they were incapable of preventing the creature’s body from beginning to fall apart completely.

Seeing that its fellow clan member was about to die, the deep-gold overseer shot down in a flash of light. It grabbed the gold-colored beast, then slapped out to disperse the wave of power generated by Meng Hao. It managed to save its fellow clan member in the nick of time.

The gold-colored beast was panting for breath and staring at Meng Hao with intense fear. It wasn’t just this particular gold-colored beast. All of the others were watching on with intense shock.

“You have passed the first level!” said the deep-gold overseer, staring at Meng Hao with a deep look.

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# Chapter 728: Second Level!

The gold-colored beast that had attacked Meng Hao was clearly far more powerful than the one that had been dispatched against Lu Bai.

Despite that, it almost died. Were it not for the intervention of the deep-gold overseer, it would surely have been destroyed.

However, Meng Hao was also only capable of throwing this one punch!

That strike had contained all the power he had just absorbed. At the moment, his body was returning to normal. Although his aura was quite a bit weaker, there was no one who would dare to look down on him.

The five Golden Frost Sect cultivators were thoroughly shaken.

“He’s… even stronger than before!!”

“Don’t tell me that golden vortex appeared because he was just enlightened?! Or, was he simply holding back before?!?!”

The five men exchanged glances, and each could see how shocked the others were. If they were to fight Meng Hao, and he used the golden vortex, then even in their puppet form, they would still be… completely defeated!

Gu Tianxiang from the Solitary Sword Sect had a face filled with shock. His eyes were wide, and his heart trembled. “He’s clearly only at the Second Severing level, but that Blood Demon Grand Magic… it’s simply… simply terrifying!!”

He was a powerful expert from the Solitary Sword Sect, and had previously viewed himself as quite knowledgeable regarding the Blood Demon Sect.

As of now, though, he realized that the magic of the Blood Demon Sect was beyond imagination.

The deep-gold overseer was also shocked, and could do nothing but stare wordlessly at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he slowly walked forward. When he reached the flame portal, he stepped in without hesitation.

On the other side of the flame portal was what seemed to be a completely different world. As soon as Meng Hao entered, he saw Lu Bai off in the distance, coughing up blood as he tumbled backward like a kite with its string cut. The black dragon in front of him was returning to its usual lifeless state.

This world was a world of fire. A sea of flames stretched out in all directions, from within which emerged an enormous, towering altar. The altar was colossal, hundreds of thousands of meters tall, arranged into nine levels.

Just now, Lu Bai had met defeat on the third floor, and was ejected, blood spraying from his mouth. He hovered in mid-air, his face pale. He looked back and saw Meng Hao, and his eyes began to shine with a bright glow as well as complex thoughts.

“So, you’re here,” he said as he floated down to the ground. Paying Meng Hao no more heed, he sat down cross-legged and began to meditate.

Meng Hao looked up at the enormous altar stretching up out of the sea of flames. For some reason, he got an odd feeling about this place. For some reason, he felt more relaxed, as if some intangible shackles had been removed from him. His mind felt clearer.

“Foreigner!” said an ancient voice, which echoed out from up above. Looking up, Meng Hao was shocked to see a white, humanoid beast, another overseer.

It hovered up above at what seemed to be the very top of the world, emitting absolutely no cultivation base aura whatsoever.

It looked down at Meng Hao and said, “You have passed the first level, which is your good fortune. If you pass the second level, you will be qualified to leave this place and can also receive a treasured item of our clan.

“This is a life-or-death trial by fire, the result of the treaty with our benefactor long ago. Any foreigner who enters, regardless of which clan they come from, may participate in the trial by fire.

“Step across the flames and onto the altar of nine floors. Defeat the enemy you find on each floor, and you may pass to the following floor!

“You may employ any magical technique, any divine ability, any means or method you wish!

“You have three chances. If you suffer defeat on your third attempt… you will be blotted out of existence.”

When the white-colored overseer finished speaking, it closed its eyes and said nothing further.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and then immediately sat down cross-legged to meditate. After fine-tuning his cultivation base for a day, he opened his eyes and stepped out over the sea of flames.

In that instant, Lu Bai opened his eyes and looked at Meng Hao.

“Be careful of the third floor,” he said slowly. “There, you will find a copy of yourself.”

Meng Hao stopped for a moment, looked at Lu Bai, and nodded. Then, he flew across the sea of flames and stepped onto the first floor of the altar. As soon as he did, he saw a human-shaped statue, which immediately melted and transformed into a young man wearing an azure robe.

The young man’s eyes were listless at first, but when Meng Hao looked at them, they suddenly began to shine with a brilliant light.

“That kid from earlier got past me by a fluke. You… won’t be so lucky.” Even as he spoke, he lifted his hand up into the air and then pointed forward. Behind him, a single, black bee appeared. Immediately, ghost images sprang up around it. In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao was facing over ten thousand bees.

Buzzing sounds could be heard as the bees shot toward Meng Hao. The young man’s fingers flickered in an incantation, and he pointed out again. This time, shockingly, more than ten thousand centipedes appeared.

“A Dragoneer?” thought Meng Hao, shocked. Everything that was happening seemed very familiar. In the Western Desert, Dragoneer cultivators attacked in much the same fashion. Meng Hao didn’t immediately respond, but rather backed up a bit and looked the situation over. After a moment, he realized… this was not Dragoneer magic, but overall, it was very similar.

As for Meng Hao, when it came to the Dao of Dragoneering, he was once a Grand Dragoneer of the Western Desert. In fact, it could be said that he was the most powerful Grand Dragoneer of his generation.

Meng Hao’s face was the same as ever as the bees and centipedes closed in. He performed an incantation gesture to employ Dragoneer magic. His divine sense rolled out, and the bees and centipedes immediately stopped short.

They looked a bit confused, and as for the young man, his face filled with shock.

At the same time, Meng Hao pointed out, causing the Black White Pearls and the Ninth Mountain to appear. Roaring sounds filled the air as they crushed down. Meng Hao shot forward with incredible speed to appear directly in front of the young man. He waved his right hand, and the Blood Demon Grand Magic appeared.

The shocking golden vortex appeared, as well as a golden hand that grabbed ahold of the young man. Immediately, his body began to wither as his qi and blood were absorbed. It only took a moment for him to completely collapse.

After collapsing, the young man reappeared in another location. He looked deeply at Meng Hao for a moment before coolly saying, “I am merely a Dharma Clone created by a strand of qi. However, you were able to rout me, which is something no one has ever done before. You… have passed.”

Meng Hao frowned slightly. He had not absorbed very much qi and blood, and he was still unable to see the young man’s cultivation base. Without another word, he flashed toward the second floor.

As soon as he stepped foot onto the second floor, an incredible power surged toward him.

Meng Hao’s face flickered and he raised his hand and pushed it straight out in front of him.

Rumbling filled the air as an incredible surge of energy bore down on him. Meng Hao trembled, and his face flickered as he retreated at full speed.

He looked up to see a giant minotaur, looking back at him with an expression of surprise. “At the very least,” thought Meng Hao, “he also has Dao Seeking fleshy body power. It also seems like the attack just now was casual! How did Lu Bai get past this part?”

“Hahaha!” the minotaur laughed maliciously. “Excellent! Excellent! Finally somebody with some real power has arrived! That brat with the Time powers was much weaker than this!” The minotaur’s muscles bulged as he stamped his foot into the ground and charged at Meng Hao.

“Don’t let me down, now!” he roared. “That brat from before was a complete hassle! That secret Time art he used was strange and difficult to deal with. Fighting that fool wasn’t fun at all! He pestered me to the max until I finally let him past. But you…. I like you, punk!”

BANG!

The minotaur punched out with explosive Dao Seeking power, causing Meng Hao’s face to flicker. He rotated his cultivation base and immediately sent out his own punch.

A massive, astonishing roar rippled out, and Meng Hao’s face went even paler. He was now in full retreat; the minotaur lifted his head back and laughed heartily.

“Excellent! Excellent!” he said, charging toward Meng Hao once again at full speed.

Meng Hao’s eyes widened.

“He’s using more power this time!!” he thought, and the desire to fight gleamed in his eyes. Power surged throughout his fleshly body, and he once again counterattacked, adding the power of vibration into his attack.

The two massive powers collided, and Meng Hao coughed up a mouthful of blood as he was sent tumbling backward. As for the minotaur, his body vibrated, and the ground beneath his feet cracked and split. When he looked up, his eyes shone with a bright light.

“This is awesome! Awesome! You’re not bad at all, brat. Come come, allow Grandpa Minotaur to smash you to death!” With a hearty laugh, he charged again.

Meng Hao’s face flickered, and his entire body was shaking and numb. In contrast, his opponent didn’t seem to be even slightly hurt. In fact… Meng Hao could sense that the thing’s fleshly body was actually growing increasingly powerful.

“I can’t compete with him in terms of physical strength!” thought Meng Hao, his eyes flashing. As the minotaur bore down on him, he performed a minor teleportation to evade.

“Why are you running away!?” fumed the minotaur, charging him once again. Meng Hao performed another minor teleportation, leaving the minotaur enraged.

“Dammit! You’re pissing me off as much as that other guy!” roared the minotaur. He suddenly stamped his right foot onto the ground, unleashing an incredible boom. The air distorted, making it impossible for Meng Hao to teleport. He quickly performed an incantation and then pointed out.

“Blood Demon Grand Magic!”

Immediately, the golden vortex appeared around the minotaur, who was immediately stuck in place. As his fleshly body began to wither away, his eyes bulged, and he howled, “What kind of crappy magic is this!?”

With that, power seemed to explode from within him, surging out to fight back against the vortex. For the first time ever… the vortex collapsed.

Meng Hao’s face fell and he shot backward in retreat. The minotaur laughed maniacally and then unleashed another punch.

Meng Hao was barely able to dodge it, and yet was still forced to cough up a mouthful of blood. He retreated again, a thousand ideas flitting through his mind.

“Extraordinary strength, an incredibly tough body, can lock down teleportation in the area, and even the Blood Demon Grand Magic is useless against him…. What do I do?!” Meng Hao fell back constantly, and was wounded constantly. Blood sprayed from his mouth, and the minotaur continued to get more and more excited as he battled on.

“If I could absorb his fleshly body, then I would definitely turn this around and win! But he simply shook off the Blood Demon Grand Magic vortex…. Wait….” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered.

“Hold on a second. The Blood Demon Grand Magic first binds, then absorbs. That’s why it requires such a huge vortex. That means its power is spread out. If I focus the vortex on the smallest area possible, and don’t attempt to absorb everything, but instead only do a quick absorption….” Meng Hao’s mind was now thinking incredibly clearly. Enlightenment had come suddenly, right in the midst of battle. At the same time, the minotaur was yet again almost on top of him.

Meng Hao had no time for further consideration. He waved his hand, and again the Blood Demon Grand Magic appeared. However, it was not a large-scale version, but rather, a vortex the size of the inside of his palm.

The vortex spun rapidly in his palm, fusing into his hand to such a degree that it seemed to replace his palm print.

“Well, it’s go time. Will it work?!”

Even as the minotaur closed in, Meng Hao shot forward, extending his palm out in a strike.

“Blood and Qi stratum!”

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Here’s a picture of some promotional art from the ISSTH web game of a “minotaur”

OceanofPDF.com

# Chapter 729: Spirit Meridians Stratum!

Boom!!

Blood sprayed from Meng Hao’s mouth. He could tell that the minotaur’s punch contained an incredible fleshly body power. Such power and ferocity was something he himself couldn’t withstand.

However, before the blow could land, the qi and blood absorbing suction power in his hand, which was even more astonishing than before, immediately absorbed a batch of power, strengthening his own fleshly body.

Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed brightly.

The minotaur stared in shock and astonishment.

“Well, that worked!!” thought Meng Hao. “The Blood Demon Grand Magic doesn’t just have to be used externally. I can employ it using other methods, for example, fusing it with my fleshly body!” Meng Hao laughed out loud, and his eyes gleamed with the desire to do battle. However, instead of rushing to attack, he fell back into a pattern of retreat just like before.

Every time he dodged or evaded, he would find ways to get close to the minotaur to touch it with his palm.

“Dammit! This is like getting bitten by a mosquito!” roared the minotaur. “I dare you to fight head on!” Meng Hao didn’t respond with a single word. However, his eyes began to glow with increasingly bright light. Every time he touched the minotaur, he would absorb a bit of qi and blood. Gradually, the power of his fleshly body increased, and he grew more powerful.

After the time it takes an incense stick to burn, Meng Hao's body trembled, and in the instant the next attack was leveled against him, his fleshly body burst out of Spirit Severing into Dao Seeking.

"Wanna fight? Let's fight!" As he spoke, he ceased retreating, and punched directly toward the minotaur, who was a bit slow to react.

The minotaur actually seemed to be rejoicing, and was laughing wildly as he charged forward.

BOOOOOMMMMMM!!

Meng Hao and the minotaur exchanged blow after blow in mid-air. Each time, Meng Hao would end up tumbling backward, but at the same time, his fleshly body grew more and more powerful.

In contrast, the minotaur grew more and more shocked. His strength was slowly diminishing, and his previous hulking and sturdy body was gradually withering.

"You're so strong!" he exclaimed. "Don't tell me you were just going through the motions before? How dare you toy with me!!" Now that it realized something was going on, it went on a rampage, charging Meng Hao relentlessly.

Another incense stick worth of time passed…. Meng Hao could now battle head on, back and forth, with the minotaur and did not need to retreat. The minotaur's rage continued to intensify.

Yet another incense stick worth of time passed….

"Y-y-you… you're so powerful! How is it possible!?!?" Now the minotaur was retreating, and was completely struck dumb by Meng Hao's display of ferocity. He punched and punched, but the result was only increasing weakness.

After enough time passed for three incense sticks to burn, a boom rang out and the minotaur tumbled backward head over heels. He slammed hard onto the surface of the altar, his body withered and incredibly weak. Compared to his previous stalwart frame, he was much weaker, though this still made him far stronger than the average person.

“How come… how come I’m skinny now? AGHHHHHH! I’m skinny!!” The minotaur saw Meng Hao closing in again with another attack, and suddenly gave a start. “Demon magic! You little punk, you’re using Demon magic!!”

The minotaur was now in full retreat, it’s face filled with fury. “Okay, I quit! Dammit! The contest is over! You win, you pass!”

Meng Hao stopped in place. He actually felt a bit bad. Thanks to the minotaur, he had gained a new understanding of yet another unique usage of the Blood Demon Grand Magic. This new technique made the Blood Demon magic even more useful.

“Many thanks, senior,” he said, clasping hands and bowing deeply.

The minotaur gave a cold snort and ignored Meng Hao. He looked down at his body and scowled miserably. “I’m skinny now…. So skinny…. I’m finished. Finished! When I get home, my woman is gonna beat me for sure. What… what if she gets some crazy ideas about what happened? What am I supposed to do?”

Meng Hao felt even more guilty now. He cleared his throat; aware that no explanations could fix the situation, he quickly headed toward the third floor.

On the third floor, he found himself facing a huge, glittering mirror. From within the mirror emerged a person who looked completely like Meng Hao in all aspects. He glanced down at his body, then smiled bashfully and looked back at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed, and then thought back to Lu Bai’s warning.

“Fighting myself? Black White Pearls and the Ninth Mountain!”

“Black White Pearls and the Ninth Mountain!” Both people attacked at the same time, and instantly, shocking booms rattled out. Outside the altar, Lu Bai lifted his head and looked up toward the third level, his eyes gleaming.

Meng Hao retreated, as did his doppelgänger.

“Blood Demon Grand Magic!”

“Blood Demon Grand Magic!”

BOOM!

Both attacked with exactly the same divine abilities and magical techniques. After fighting for several hours, Meng Hao’s doppelgänger suddenly changed strategies. No longer did it do exactly the same thing as Meng Hao. Instead, it used Meng Hao’s various techniques and magics to attack in its own unique way.

Rumbling filled the air as Meng Hao saw a gigantic Blood Immortal face appear in front of him, along with a blood-colored vortex that began to spin around him. His face was extremely unsightly. This magical incarnation was incredibly troublesome. A real headache.

All of a sudden, he realized what it must be like for other people to fight him…. What a feeling! That was especially true when he thought of… the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex. His doppelgänger actually utilized the technique perfectly, and Meng Hao had to admit that this opponent… was much better than he was.

Every time the doppelgänger attacked, it would use the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex at just the right time. Meng Hao wanted to bellow in rage.

“So, you can use the technique in THAT way!” he thought. Even in the midst of his frustration, he began to imitate how this magical doppelgänger used his own battle magic.

The Eighth Demon Sealing Hex was incredible!

An incredible booming sounded out as the two of them attacked each other. By now, they had been fighting for close to a day. Every time Meng Hao used the Blood Demon Grand Magic to absorb some of his opponents qi and blood, the same would happen to him.

It seemed that it would be difficult for either party to clinch victory. However, Meng Hao was learning a lot over the course of the fighting.

“At this rate, I won’t be able to wrap things up any time soon!!” He was starting to get anxious. It was at this point that the white-colored overseer up in mid-air suddenly opened its eyes.

“You may not battle for more than a day on any given level. You still have enough time left for an incense stick to burn. After that, if the battle has not been concluded… then it counts as your loss!”

“Why?!” asked Meng Hao, looking up at the white-colored overseer.

“Defeating others is easy and while defeating yourself is difficult…. if you can’t even come up with a method to defeat yourself, then how can your Dao heart be stable? How can you face Immortal Tribulation in the future?!

“In the earliest of times, any foreigner who came here would die. However, the ancient will arrived and my clan had no choice but to enter into the treaty. After that, this place became a location for deadly refinement. According to the treaty, the purpose is to train true Immortals!

“For example, the first level tests your survival capabilities. If you reach true Immortal Ascension, you will face many Tribulations. You must have the power to protect yourself!

“This second level tests your powers of perception and understanding. If you are perceptive enough, you can naturally gain enlightenment regarding various magics that are currently stuck in atrophy. The Dao heart is only one aspect.

“Defeat yourself, strengthen your Dao heart. That is only the first step toward being a true Immortal. If you can’t pass this first step, then of course you fail!”

Meng Hao’s mind reeled.

“Don’t tell me that you haven’t noticed that this place is different from the outside?!” continued the overseer.

“Well, forget it. You’re only in the Spirit Severing stage. You are incapable of seeing how extraordinary this place is. Let me tell you, kid… there are no natural laws here!

“The second level is a place with no laws. Here, everything is a blank!

“Therefore, you have even more opportunity to gain enlightenment regarding your magical techniques, and even your Dao. Understand your divine abilities and your path to enlightenment. Because, this place… has no law to interfere with or distort your true heart!”

Meng Hao stared in shock. Before, he hadn’t put too much thought into why this place seemed a bit strange. All he knew was that he felt somehow freer, and his mind clearer.

He had never imagined that this place… lacked natural law?!

“You have the time it takes an incense stick to burn. If you can’t defeat yourself in that time, then you fail!”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. Rumbling filled the air as his doppelgänger closed in. The two of them once again began to battle back and forth. Time passed, and soon, half an incense stick had burned.

“What do I do?” thought Meng Hao. “What do I do?! If I fail the first time, the second time will be even harder!

“If I could gain enlightenment into the third level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic and cultivate it successfully, then I could probably slay this doppelgänger!

“Another possibility would be to gain enlightenment into my Third Severing! Or perhaps, if I understood how to use one more of the characters that make up the Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao!

“If I could use the soul of the true Immortal to make a second true self, it would definitely be terrifying in the extreme!

“Another option is the Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal!”

Unfortunately, there was not enough time for any of those things. He only had the time it takes half an incense stick to burn!

Meng Hao’s eyes were shot with blood as he fell into retreat. Suddenly, his doppelgänger utilized the Blood Demon Grand Magic; so Meng Hao did as well.

Instantly, the doppelgänger’s fleshly body began to wither. However, at the same time, he absorbed Meng Hao’s qi and blood, replenishing himself. Such a circumstance had occurred many times throughout their battle.

“The third level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic, the Spirit Meridians stratum! All cultivators have spirit meridians running through their body. Such spirit meridians are essentially the cultivation base. The purpose of the Blood Demon Grand Magic is to stir the spirit meridians. In much the same way that a miner deals with a vein of gold, the spirit meridian is dug up and consumed!

“But, how exactly am I supposed to absorb the spirit meridians?!”

Time was running out!

“Spirit meridians!!” Meng Hao and his doppelgänger ceased using the Blood Demon Grand Magic and began to utilize other divine abilities. Meng Hao’s mind was racing as he tried to come up with a solution. This was a world with no natural law, and his mind was extremely clear. It was in that moment that he suddenly thought of… the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch!

He recalled the scene of the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch absorbing his Perfect Dao foundation.

When he thought back to that time, he remembered the various transformations that occurred in his body. His cultivation base had rotated in reverse, and then collapsed, transforming into an energy which was then sucked out of him. Recalling that feeling suddenly caused a tremor to run through Meng Hao.

“Reversal. I understand now! The key to the third level is reversal! When the vortex of the second level reaches maximum rotation, I can suddenly reverse the flow, which will unleash an incredible power!”

His eyes shone with a bright light.

Boom!

In that moment of enlightenment, he utilized the Blood Demon Grand Magic, then immediately pushed it through from the second level… to the third!

When he entered the third level, energy exploded around him. A strange light glowed in his eyes, and he lifted his hand to point at the doppelgänger. Instantly, a golden vortex appeared around the doppelgänger, which caused it to give a cold snort. It raised its hand and pointed toward Meng Hao as it too once again employed the Blood Demon Grand Magic.

However,at this point, when the golden vortex was rotating at full speed, Meng Hao suddenly reached his hand out and then turned it over.

Immediately, the vortex surrounding the doppelgänger reversed. The doppelgänger’s expression flickered as its cultivation base suddenly collapsed, completely beyond its control. It rushed out through the doppelgänger eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, to shoot toward Meng Hao.

Simultaneously, the doppelgänger’s entire body collapsed, and it disappeared without a trace. The only thing left behind was the glittering mirror.

“In your first tempering, you defeated yourself in less than a day,” said the white-colored overseer, looking deeply at Meng Hao. “As such, it is unnecessary for you to participate in the following floors. Please go directly to the ninth floor. If you can pass the ninth floor, then you may leave this place! In addition, you can acquire one of our clan’s valuable treasures!”

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# Chapter 730: Another Lord Fifth!

Outside the altar, Lu Bai suddenly looked up. His eyes shone with shock as he caught sight of Meng Hao on the third level, and heard the words of the white-colored overseer up in mid-air. He suddenly grew incredibly taciturn.

“He… successfully defeated himself?” thought Lu Bai, slowly lowering his head. A moment later, he looked up again, and his eyes shone with the intense desire to do battle.

“I don’t care about my status as a Young Starlord, nor my titles in the Northern Desert, nor the rumors about me being a reincarnated, almighty cultivator. The only thing I care about… is that I must be… the strongest person in my stage!

“According to my Dao, I must become a true Immortal! My heart must be intensely staunch!

“If Meng Hao can do it, then I… can do it too!” With that, Lu Bai took a deep breath. Eyes radiating unprecedented resoluteness, he slowly rose to his feet and then strode back toward the first floor of the altar.

“This time, I’ll definitely pass the third floor!”

Meng Hao stood on that very same third floor to which he referred. He didn’t proceed onward immediately. Instead, he closed his eyes to feel the surging of his cultivation base, and the majestic third level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic. Now that he was in the Spirit Vessels stratum, he could absorb cultivation bases into his own body and transform that into incredible power.

“No wonder Patriarch Blood Demon said that if I get to the fourth level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic I can hold my own against early Dao

Seeking cultivators!

“This Blood Demon Grand Magic is incredibly astonishing. It’s especially useful when fighting against groups. The more enemies that get stuck inside… the more powerful I can become!

“Black Sieve Sect….” Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly snapped open, and they shone with incredible killing intent. His hatred for the Black Sieve Sect had long since seeped into his very marrow. If it weren’t for the Black Sieve Sect, Xu Qing wouldn’t have to enter the cycle of reincarnation, and could have had the chance at Immortal Ascension in this lifetime.

Now though, they only had a hundred years, after which, this lifetime would be destroyed. This enmity… was absolutely irreconcilable!

Meng Hao took a deep breath and then took a step forward, whereupon he vanished. When he reappeared, he had passed the fourth and fifth floors… and gone all the way to the ninth floor!

The ninth floor was the smallest of all the floors.

This was the pinnacle of the altar!

This was the final barrier of the second level!

After passing this floor, Meng Hao would have the option to either leave this world or, of course, enter the third level.

Boom!

The instant he stepped foot onto the ninth floor, he felt almost like he was at the pinnacle of the sky. Around him stretched a world of boundless flames, beyond which was nothing but pitch black.

In the instant that he stepped foot onto the ninth floor, he also heard an ear-piercing, squawking laugh.

The laugh sounded almost like the call of a male duck, and was filled with an indescribable arrogance.

“It’s been many years since someone has stood in front of Lord Fifth, bitch! Come come, allow Lord Fifth to see how much fur you have on your body!”

As soon as he heard that voice, all the noble and lofty feelings that had existed inside of Meng Hao instantly vanished . His eyes went wide with disbelief as he stared at something appearing out of thin air in the middle of the ninth level. It was…

An enormous parrot!

The parrot was covered with motley feathers that all stuck out on end. Its expression was one of extreme arrogance and pride, as if it was the only important thing in all of Heaven and Earth. As soon as it appeared, a shocking energy exploded out from its body.

“You…” said Meng Hao, his breath quickening. This parrot appeared to be exactly the same damnable bird that had fled the instant Meng Hao faced true danger.

“What do you mean ‘you,’ huh? Bitch! What, you’ve never seen a Lord Fifth as handsome as me before?” As the parrot flew out, it seemed to be completely displeased with the way Meng Hao was looking at it. Its eyes gleamed with a sharp light, and its voice was jarring.

Even as it spoke, the parrot went on the offensive, charging at incredible speed. Meng Hao could barely see it, and before he could react, he was sent tumbling backward. The parrot re-formed in midair and then squawked and attacked again.

Meng Hao’s face flickered. The parrot was moving so fast that he couldn’t see it clearly. Nonetheless, he was able determine that this parrot was actually not exactly the same as the damnable bird that he remembered.

As for what exactly about it was different, he couldn’t quite say. It was more of a feeling.

Booming sounds echoed out as the parrot attacked relentlessly. However, it didn’t seem to be able to completely overwhelm Meng Hao within a short period of time. Meng Hao retreated without hesitation; every time the parrot attacked, it almost felt like a mountain was bearing down on him.

He tried using the Blood Demon Grand Magic, but the parrot was too fast and impossible to entangle. It was as if it was surrounded by some strange power that enabled it to break through anything that stood in its way.

“This damned, wretched bird! How could it be so strong!?” Meng Hao frowned. At the same time, the parrot appeared suddenly in mid-air up ahead of him.

Staring seriously at Meng Hao, it said, “I’m gonna screw you, bitch! Screw you, ya hear? How could your body be so tough? Well fine, the tougher the better. Screw you, screw you, screw you into a pulp…!” With a piercing cry, and incredible speed, it circled around Meng Hao, and its eyes shifted maliciously in the direction of Meng Hao’s rear end….

When Meng Hao sensed that, his scalp went numb, and his heart trembled. The first thing he thought of was the parrot’s vile hobbies, and then, images of the parrot exploding rear ends suddenly flashed through his mind.

These thoughts stabbed through his mind, causing his train of thought to be upset and fall into disarray, such that it caused Meng Hao to begin to shake uncontrollably. It didn’t matter how vicious he had become inside, the images left him profoundly frightened.

Normally speaking, he was the one to hear the miserable shrieks of others. There was absolutely, positively no way that he wished to experience such things himself.

“Dammit! DAMMIT!” Beads of sweat broke out on his forehead. Even when facing the challenge on the third floor, he had not sweat, but as of this moment, he was tempted to concede defeat.

This… this was a power that cultivators were fundamentally incapable of matching up against.

Especially the incessant hooting call of the damnable parrot, and how its previously curved beak suddenly transformed, becoming ever longer and straighter….

A few times, it opened its mouth, after which a perverse aura blasted out, causing Meng Hao’s heart to tremble.

Having no other options, Meng Hao anxiously cried out, “I know you!”

“Huh?” replied the parrot, gaping. “Well, Lord Fifth doesn’t know you, so you’re gonna get screwed anyway!” With that, it prepared to charge again.

“I’m your master!!” said Meng Hao, slapping his bag of holding to produce the copper mirror.

“You’re insulting me!!” said the parrot, completely ignoring the copper mirror. It transformed into a black streak of light that shot toward Meng Hao.

“What do I do? What do I do?!” Having noticed that the black streak of light was curving through the air to flank him from behind, Meng Hao was now in a state of complete emergecy.

As the black beam of light closed in, Meng Hao had a sudden flash of inspiration as he recalled the damned bird’s fatal weakness. Without hesitation, he cried out, “Even if you were more powerful than you are now, who cares? I don’t believe for a second that you could drill a hole through this altar! You can’t, can you?!”

As soon as the words left his mouth, the black beam stopped in mid-air. The parrot appeared again, and it glared at Meng Hao, as if infuriated.

“What did you just say? Did you say there’s something Lord Fifth can’t do?”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and his thinking was suddenly stable. A look of scorn appeared in his eyes.

The expression immediately caused the parrot to go mad. Its voice shrill, it yelled, “How dare you look down on Lord Fifth! Lord Fifth is omnipotent! Y-y-you….”

“Pshh.” Meng Hao have a cold snort.

“AHHHHHHHHH!” To be scorned with such words caused the last bit of the parrot’s powers of reasoning to be scorched away.

“You just watch, bitch!” raged the parrot. “Watch Lord Fifth! Watch Lord Fifth bore a massive hole into this altar!” With that, the parrot flew up into the air and then turned to charge toward the altar.

The white-colored overseer immediately flew down to intercept the parrot.

“Immortal Fifth, please calm yourself. Calm… There’s no need to get impulsive, right? Listen to me….”

“Screw off and listen to this, bitch!” roared the parrot.

“Immortal Fifth, I….” The white-colored overseer smiled wryly and was about to expound when….

“I said screw off, bitch! If you don’t, I’ll screw you along with him!”

The white-colored overseer was getting extremely nervous. This was the first time it had heard of the parrot having such a weakness. It looked over angrily at Meng Hao, and was about to rebuke him, when Meng Hao saw the look in his eye, rolled his eyes and then snorted coldly.

“He doesn’t believe you can break through the altar either. Forget about the altar. I bet you couldn’t even screw that white-colored overseer!”

“AHHHHHHHH! How dare you look down on me like this!” The parrot’s fury raged to the Heavens. It jerked around to glare at the white-colored overseer, who immediately began to tremble.

Seeing that the parrot was about to attack, the overseer immediately roared without hesitation, “You pass!! Pass!!!”

Instantly, the altar began to rumble, and an incredible force enveloped the parrot, who did nothing to fight back. As the power covered it over, it stared fixedly at the rear end of the white-colored overseer.

“When this place was built, Lord Fifth helped out, and therefore left behind a stream of divine will,” said the parrot. “Truth be told, it would be difficult to break a hole through the altar. However, if I have the chance, you cheeky little beast, Lord Fifth will definitely give screwing you a try!”

With that, the parrot gave a cold snort, then glared over at Meng Hao. It said nothing, but the look in its eyes was clear.

You just wait, brat. If I get a chance, I’ll screw you too!

Meng Hao glared back at the parrot. He didn’t say anything either, but his meaning was equally clear.

You just wait, you damned bird. When I get out of here, I’m going to track you down, and then we’ll see who’s boss!

Meanwhile, in the Milky Way Sea, on the shore near the Northern Reaches, a hulking, dark-faced man currently hovered in mid-air. Surrounding him was a group of smaller cultivators, all of whom looked at the man with fawning eyes. The dark-faced man seemed quite pleased with himself.

In his arms he carried a black bear, which he would occasionally lean down to kiss, his expression one of intoxication. The bear had a luxuriant coat of fur, and it was hard to tell where he had found something like it in the Milky Way Sea….

“Ah, this is the life! Don’t be despondent, little Third. It’s merely a master we’re talking about. We can always get a new one! Look, after somebody else gets the mirror and refines it, then we can go back. Look at how free and unconstrained we are now! This is the good life!”

Suddenly, the dark-faced man sneezed, then shuddered. A strange look appeared in its eyes, and suddenly two voices began to argue inside of him.

“What’s going on? What was that? Lord Third just sneezed!”

“Screw off, it was obviously Lord Fifth who sneezed!”

“You’ll even steal that from me?!”

“Something fishy is going on here, bitch! Something’s off! I feel an evil wind stirring, as if something bad is about to happen!”

“Huh?! Don’t tell me Meng Hao is alive!! Finished! We’re finished! I’m gonna die, we’re finished! When we ran off that time….”

“What do you mean ran off? That was a strategic transition! You don’t understand crap!”

“Dammit! Last time, you said we needed to give him a chance to temper himself. You’re changing your mind again?”

“Are you absolutely sure that’s what I said?”

“You did! You said it! You said….”

Despite the bickering, the dark-faced man turned and flew toward the Northern Reaches.

“Let’s go to the Northern Reaches, it should be safe there….”

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# Chapter 731: Essence of The Divine Flame!

Beneath the 30,000-meter Dao Lake, in that world within a world, at the very top of the altar in the second level, Meng Hao moved forward.

The parrot gave a cold snort as it faded away. The white-colored overseer sighed with relief, then looked over at Meng Hao, clearly displeased, but incapable of doing anything about it.

“You got lucky, but you passed,” the white-colored overseer said slowly. “As of now, you have two options. You may leave, or proceed onward to the third level!

“Up to now, no one has ever passed through the third level. Therefore, no one has ever been able to inherit the essence of the Divine Flame. Now, make your decision.”

Meng Hao muttered to himself for a moment. He still had his Eternal stratum, which meant that although he wasn’t completely indestructible, he was still completely unique in the lands of South Heaven.

That was a trump card, something he could use to rise back up from the clutches of death when in battle.

Unfortunately, he didn’t have time right now. If he got stuck in the third level, a hundred years could go by in a flash. Although, he wasn’t quite resigned to giving up on trying to pass the level.

He suddenly looked up at the white-colored overseer. “Senior, I remember you saying that a valuable treasure would be given as a reward for passing the second level.”

The white-colored overseer’s eyelids twitched as if it didn’t want to respond. It waved its right hand, instantly causing a pitchfork to appear.

It was pitch black, and completely unimposing. It did emanate a Dao Seeking aura, but in this world where there were no natural laws, the aura was not very powerful.

Even the white-colored overseer realized that it was being stingy. “A Dao Seeking item, a valuable treasure,” it explained.

According to the ancient treaty, it was actually supposed to produce all of the clan’s valuable treasures and allow anyone who passed through the second level to pick one of their choosing. However, their clan had always been a stingy one. Even the two that had passed from the first wave of people to come here before Meng Hao had only been given an option to take one of three items.

It was a loophole in the agreement, but the overseer did not feel that it was breaking the treaty.

Meng Hao’s face was the same as ever as he looked the pitchfork over. It was obvious to him that the white-colored overseer was displeased with him, and his eyes glittered.

“According to the ancient treaty, it can be assumed that you can offer a better treasure than this, senior. Perhaps you can give me a few options to select from.”

“Forget about it!” was the reply, accompanied by a cold snort.

“In that case, senior, I will pass on the item. However, I have two small requirements….” The white-colored overseer immediately put the pitchfork away. In truth, even giving that away was something it wasn’t quite willing to do.

Meng Hao licked his lips and continued, “I noticed that outside in the first level, there were many mountains. They were all made up of various magical items and treasures, many of which were Spirit Severing treasures. How about this, senior. I’ll just take 100,000 Spirit Severing magical items. What do you think, sir…?”

The white-colored juggernaut stared with wide eyes. The reason it didn’t wish to part with the Dao Seeking treasures was that they contained their own natural law within them, and were extremely valuable. As for Spirit Severing treasures, they were far inferior.

“100,000? Are you trying to rob me? 10 at the most!”

“90,000! It can’t be any less, senior. I just gave up a Dao Seeking treasure, you know….”

“Hey… Spirit Severing magical items are equally valuable! At the most, I can give you 100!”

“Senior, how can you be like that? After all, I just passed through the second level. The lowest I can go is 80,000 magical items. On the outside, Spirit Severing treasures are incredibly common. Furthermore, I want a chance to poke my head into the third level to see what it’s like.”

“Well… you did make it through the second level, but….”

The two bickered for a while, and in the end, the white-colored overseer gave Meng Hao 5,000 Spirit Severing magical items. Furthermore, Meng Hao was to be allowed one chance to step into the third level.

After they finished negotiating, the white-colored overseer grimly waved his arm, causing two vortexes to appear. One was the exit, the other was the entrance to the third level.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, and a look of resolve appeared in his eyes. He immediately transformed into a beam of light that shot toward the third level’s vortex. Just as he was about to enter, the altar rumbled; Lu Bai had entered the third floor and was beginning to fight himself.

Meng Hao looked back, then paid no further heed as he vanished into the third level.

As soon as he stepped foot inside, he found that he was not in a land of flames. Everything around him was quiet. He saw a blood-colored field that was surrounded by enormous structures. They were pagodas that looked like spikes driven into the earth.

The grass in the world was completely white.

There was no wind, and yet the grass swayed back and forth.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he surveyed his surroundings, and he muttered to himself for a moment before sending his divine sense out.

It quickly covered an enormous area.

“990,000 pagodas!

“Countless bleached bones!

“The 990,000 pagodas seem to form a colossal spell formation!

“There’s a city!”

Meng Hao’s divine sense detected the 99,000 densely packed pagodas, which were arranged around a gigantic city.

The city was pitch black and covered with white vines. A spark of flame hovered in mid-air, seemingly an endlessly burning fire that sent resplendent light out into the entire world.

Almost in the same instant that Meng Hao sent his divine sense out to the limit, he suddenly heard a roar.

“Dao Fang, you must die!!

“You killed me, Dao Fang, and if I’m reincarnated, I’ll definitely kill you!

“The world of Immortals is doomed to experience tribulation! The Immortal lands will grow old, and the Immortals will perish! But I refuse to give in!!

“I know the truth! No matter how long you suppress me, I won’t admit defeat!

“Damned monkey! If I can get free, I’ll have your hide!

“If I’m transmigrated, I will slaughter myself out of this place! If my transmigration fails, I will fall into oblivion like all other living things, with virtually no hope of reawakening even after countless cycles of reincarnation. Therefore, I will leave a Heavenly command for this place!

“My decree contains the essence of my Dao flame, a remnant of the existence of my flame. I hope that countless years later, that vestige will still exist!”

Meng Hao’s mind was reeling; it felt as if a sharp sword was stabbing into his brain, preparing to split apart his body and shred his soul. Blood oozed from his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. He staggered backward, coughing up a mouthful of blood.

A rumbling filled him, and he felt as if his body might explode. Thankfully, his Eternal stratum immediately pulled everything back together. However, that omnipresent divine sense and resentful will raged as madly as ever. The sensation of grave danger that he felt grew even stronger.

He looked around in shock at the world around him, backing up at top speed all the while. The divine sense filling this world closed in on him again, and he immediately leaped out of the third level.

When he emerged, he was back in the second level coughing up blood, his face pale and breath ragged. From what he had heard, he could tell that what he had encountered was a shred of will.

However, despite the fact that it was only a shred of will, it was still able to injure him instantly. This was terrifying to a degree that thoroughly astonished him.

“Failure,” said the white-colored overseer, its voice cool. “No one has ever successfully passed the third level.”

“What is that place…?” asked Meng Hao, looking over at the overseer.

“Only those who pass the third level are qualified to know the answer to that question. You may leave now.

“Remember, if you speak to anyone of the things that occurred in this place, you will meet with great calamity.” The white-robed overseer gave him a meaningful look.

Meng Hao didn’t respond. He looked back down at the altar, and Lu Bai on the third floor. Without another word, he clasped hands and bowed to the white-colored overseer, then stepped into the exit vortex.

In the blink of an eye, he vanished.

The white-colored overseer hovered in mid-air looking at the spot where Meng Hao had left through the vortex, a profound, ancient look in its eyes.

In the lands of South Heaven, not too far way from the region of the Ancient Dao Lakes, was a valley in the mountains. A brilliant, glittering light rose up in the valley, a teleportation spell. Suddenly, Meng Hao appeared within the light.

As soon as he appeared, the teleportation spell vanished.

“I snatched the true Immortal’s soul, and a lot of people saw,” he thought. “Word will spread…. I need to get back to the Blood Demon Sect as quickly as possible!” His eyes glittered as he flew into the air, slapping his bag of holding to produce the war chariot.

Once in the war chariot, rumbling could be heard as it sped off into the distance.

Meanwhile, at almost the exact moment that Meng Hao reappeared, an old man sat cross-legged in a restricted area of Mount Solitary Sword in the Solitary Sword Sect. In front of him, nine pearls circulated in the air, apparently rotating in accord with some natural law. Suddenly, one of the pearls began to glow brightly.

The old man’s eyes opened and he looked at the pearl. There were many images within the pearl, but one of them was Meng Hao teleporting out into the region near the Dao Lakes.

“So, he finally reappears!” The old man vanished.

In the Golden Frost Sect was a pool of water, next to which sat the peak Dao Seeking Patriarch of the Golden Frost Sect. As he gazed into the water, ripples suddenly spread out over the surface of the pool. The ripples seemed to conceal mysteries of Heaven and Earth, mysteries that others would never be able to comprehend. However, an image of Meng Hao actually materialized in the reflections within the Patriarch’s eyes.

In the Li Clan, in a restricted area, a cold voice suddenly rang out. “The soul of a true Immortal is not something that a tiny Spirit Severing cultivator may possess!”

The voice caused Heaven and Earth to distort, and a shocking energy shot out in all directions.

At the same time, Meng Hao was detected by the withered, half-bodied old man in the Song Clan. He suddenly opened his eyes from meditation.

“True Immortal’s soul…. However, the person who snatched it was Meng Hao….” He hesitated for a moment, then closed his eyes to meditate.

In the Violet Fate Sect, everything was quiet. No aura spread out, nor did any ripples appear. However, a brilliant light appeared in the enormous statue of Reverend Violet East, as it stared off into the distance.

The formerly calm and peaceful Southern Domain was suddenly stirred into commotion by the appearance of Meng Hao. To peak Dao Seeking experts, the soul of a true Immortal was something incredibly precious. So precious, in fact, that they would do anything in their power to get it.

In the Black Sieve Sect, Patriarch Six-Daos let out a miserable shriek. His cultivation base had already degraded to the border of the mid Dao Seeking stage. Soon, it would drop further, and he would be in the early Dao Seeking stage.

“I can’t accept this! Blood Demon Sect, you must be destroyed! Meng Hao… you shall die!”

At some point, dark clouds had appeared above the Southern Domain in many locations. Lightning danced, and thunder crackled. The sun was covered up, casting the lands into darkness. Huge raindrops the size of beans began to plop down….

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# Chapter 732: The Blood Prince Returns!

The rain appeared not because the clouds layered top of each other, building up to a critical pressure. Rather, it was the passage of people forcibly tunneling through the cloudy sky that caused them to collapse in on themselves and shed rain prematurely.

At the moment, three peak Dao Seeking eccentrics were shooting toward Meng Hao’s location. Their speed was such that they appeared near the Ancient Dao Lakes shortly after Meng Hao stepped foot into the war chariot.

They did not reveal their physical appearances, but their aura was clear. It only took a moment for them to pick up traces of Meng Hao’s passing, after which they shot after him in pursuit.

Of course, they had never imagined that Meng Hao would actually be equipped with something that could achieve the terrifying speed of the war chariot.

Meng Hao pushed as fast as possible. In the blink of an eye, he was far away from the Ancient Dao Lakes, and was nearing the border of Blood Demon Sect territory. At this point, he took a deep breath and went even faster. Behind him, a rumbling like thunder could be heard as a pair of emaciated hands ripped a massive hole in the air. From within emerged a red-haired old man.

He was big and tall, and sparks of electricity arced around his body. Rumbling filled the air as soon as he appeared, as if he were a god.

Off to his right, a sword aura appeared, seemingly capable of splitting Heaven and Earth. A black-robed old man stepped out from within the sword aura.

Further off in the distance, the peak Dao Seeking cultivator from the Li Clan, their 3rd Patriarch, proceeded along, accompanied by booms like thunder. The full power of his cultivation base was on display. As he flew, orbs of ghostly flame twinkled around him, blazing up into the sky.

When these three people appeared, Meng Hao’s face fell. Each of them were comparable in power to the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch when they fought years ago. The instant the three appeared, the war chariot rumbled, and countless fierce beasts appeared. Everything trembled, and Meng Hao shot off into the distance.

He moved with such speed that he disappeared in the blink of an eye. The three Dao Seeking cultivators began to pursue him.

Suddenly, from another direction, a deranged old man flew beneath the clouds, laughing maniacally as the rain soaked him.

“Hahaha! Immortal Ascension…. Immortal Ascension….” His foolish laughter seemed to contain a hint of lucidity. His body flickered, and he vanished.

Meng Hao’s war chariot moved with incredible speed, but his three pursuers moved as fast as lightning. As they got closer and closer, the sense of danger in Meng Hao’s mind grew more intense.

However, killing intent could also be seen in his eyes, along with ruthlessness and fury.

And yet, he did not slow down or stop. His cultivation base was no match for a peak Dao Seeking opponent, and he did not want to risk losing his Eternal Dao foundation! Nevertheless, the distance between him and his pursuers continued to shrink!!

“Faster! Must go faster!” he thought with an internal roar. Behind him, the three Dao Seeking experts raised their hands and pointed in Meng Hao’s direction. All of a sudden, a cold snort echoed out from up above.

“SCREW OFF!!” said a voice that was ancient and yet also filled with boundless aggressiveness. As soon as the voice rang out, the sky turned crimson, and the land transformed into a sea of blood. Patriarch Blood Demon suddenly appeared between Meng Hao and the Dao Seeking experts.

His words caused rumbling to echo throughout the heavens, and groaning creaks to issue forth from the land itself as everything to turn the color of blood. A roar rose up from the ground that transformed into a shockwave which sped toward the incoming three cultivators.

The three men all used various methods. The red-haired old man lifted his hand up then dropped it down in a palm strike. 10,000 bolts of red lightning smashed down, yet the old man was forced to stop in place, his face flickering.

The black-robed old man from the Solitary Sword Sect had a gaze that was like a sword. The air around him rumbled and then shattered as he suddenly stopped in place.

As for the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch, who wore a brocaded garment and had flowing white hair, his body emanated a powerful energy, and an illusory sun and moon circulated around him. He fought back against Patriarch Blood Demon’s attack, too, but issued a muffled grunt as he was also stopped in place.

Meng Hao let loose a sigh of relief, then put away the war chariot. He stood next to Patriarch Blood Demon, staring coldly at his three pursuers.

The three old men’s gazes were just as cold as they looked at Patriarch Blood Demon and then began to speak.

“Blood Demon, hand over the soul of the true Immortal!”

“Hand over the true Immortal’s soul! Let the matter drop! You can’t fight back against the entire Southern Domain!”

“Take it out and we’ll decide here and now who it belongs to. In fact, we can even take turns sharing it. Blood Demon, give us your answer, or else….”

Of course, inwardly, all three feared Patriarch Blood Demon, especially after the battle at the Black Sieve Sect.

“Or else what…?” replied Patriarch Blood Demon.

“Or else you’re instigating war with the entire Southern Domain!”

“The Solitary Sword Sect, the Golden Frost Sect, the Li Clan… and especially the Black Sieve Sect will all be happy to join forces to invade you. If that happens, you’d better prepare your Blood Demon Sect to be exterminated!”

“Four great powers of the Southern Domain can easily destroy the very foundation of the Blood Demon Sect. Blood Demon, don’t do anything to bring ruin down on yourself!”

Having heard all of this, Meng Hao’s heart was trembling. Although he had made his own appraisal of the value of the true Immortal’s soul, he had never imagined that it was so valuable that it could instigate a great war in the Southern Domain.

Meng Hao looked at Patriarch Blood Demon. He didn’t want the soul of the true Immortal that he had snatched to draw everyone into a war. “Patriarch,” he began, “I don’t mind….”

“There’s no need to say anything,” said Patriarch Blood Demon, his voice placid. “You took it, so it belongs to you. That true Immortal’s soul will be of great use. How can you even think of giving it away?” His gaze then swept over the three other cultivators, and he laughed coldly.

“As for the rest of you… SCREW OFF!”

“Blood Demon!” they shouted. Their faces flickered with various emotions, and they stared fixedly at Patriarch Blood Demon. Finally, eyes flickering, they turned and vanished.

“Patriarch,” said Meng Hao, “if you need this true Immortal’s soul, it’s yours….” His heart was still trembling a bit. Suddenly he realized that Patriarch Blood Demon seemed somewhat different than he had been before.

“Don’t worry,” said Patriarch Blood Demon, shaking his head. “I’ll handle everything. As for the soul of the true Immortal…. It wouldn’t be of much use to me. I’m afraid it wouldn’t be of much help to your master, Pill Demon, either. In the future, let him study it for a bit, and that will do.”

“My master?” said Meng Hao, gaping. Of course, he was unaware of the matter of Pill Demon’s Spirit Severing and Dao Seeking.

“You’ll understand the details later.” With that, Patriarch Blood Demon flicked his sleeve, sweeping up Meng Hao and vanishing into thin air. When they reappeared, they were back in the Blood Demon Sect.

As soon as the disciples of the Blood Demon Sect saw him, they began to speak excitedly.

“Blood Prince!”

“The Blood Prince is back!”

“Greetings, Blood Prince!”

Patriarch Darkheaven and the five other Patriarchs all flew down from their mountain peaks to greet Meng Hao with excited expressions.

“Congratulations on your return, Blood Prince!”

On the fifth mountain peak, the hunchbacked old man smiled and then bowed toward Meng Hao with clasped hands.

Wang Youcai rose to his feet from his place at the mouth of the valley and looked over at Meng Hao. Xu Qing was his Elder Sister, and he had grown up with Meng Hao. Although Wang Youcai had become grimmer because of his violent surroundings, there were some fundamental aspects to his personality that would never change.

When Meng Hao wasn’t present, he would protect the valley with his life. What he was protecting were his memories, and the last vestiges of a once wonderful life that existed inside of him.

Xu Qing walked out from the valley and smiled up at Meng Hao, who hovered overhead.

When her gaze met his, it became a memory that would last for an eternity.

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# Chapter 733: On the Eve of War in the Southern Domain

Patriarch Blood Demon looked at Meng Hao, smiled, then faded away into thin air. Yet another clone….

Meng Hao turned to look at Mount Blood Demon, and a warm feeling rose in his heart. For the first time, he felt as if the Blood Demon Sect was his home.

Welcoming voices surrounded him as he returned to Blood Prince Gorge. Xu Qing had alcohol warmed and waiting, and she immediately filled a cup for him. They looked into each other’s eyes for a long time before speaking.

Ten days passed in the blink of an eye. Now that he was back in Blood Prince Gorge, he felt separate from the world. He had Xu Qing to accompany him, and the days were wonderful. Suns rose, suns set.

Patriarch Blood Demon honored his promise to Meng Hao. Aware that Meng Hao had reached the third level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic, he had a cane sent over.

The cane was crafted from bone, and was pitch black. When he held it in his hand, Meng Hao felt icy coldness pulsating out into his body. In addition, the Demon Sealing Jade in his bag of holding began to glow, spontaneously flew out of the bag, and circulated around the bone cane.

After a moment, it actually fused into the cane, and the two apparently become one.

Simultaneously, something like memories flooded into Meng Hao’s mind. They were vague, almost as if someone were whispering them to him. Many of the things the voice said were indistinct and unintelligible, but there was one sentence that was crystal clear.

“Seventh Demon Sealing Hex. Karmic Hex!”

Use Demonic qi to hex Karma, slaughter anything formed from five elements, and exterminate to the highest Heavens!

Meng Hao’s mind trembled. The Demon Sealers had a multitude of magical arts, but the eight Demon Sealing Hexes were considered their primary abilities. Each one was personally crafted by a previous generation of Demon Sealers and were shockingly powerful.

However, the various hexes had not been passed on and had, for the most part, been lost over the years. It was only by coincidence that Meng Hao was able to acquire the Eighth Hex. Now, by means of this bone cane, he had acquired the Seventh Hex!

He quickly immersed himself in gaining enlightenment of the Karma of the Seventh Hex. Thankfully, he already understood a bit about Karma; therefore, he was able to cultivate the Seventh Hex without any obstacles, albeit a bit slowly.

As he practiced his cultivation, the rest of the Southern Domain made quite a contrast to the calm and quiet of the Blood Demon Sect. The Southern Domain was boiling.

The Solitary Sword Sect was fully prepared for war. Countless disciples had been recalled from all corners of the Southern Domain, and the sect was now like a shocking, unsheathed sword, ready for battle.

They even produced precious treasures that could seal the fates of entire sects. After refining the treasures, they floated up in mid-air above the sect, casting about radiant, multicolored light and incredible energy.

Anyone could tell that the Solitary Sword Sect… was about to march to war!

In addition to the Solitary Sword Sect, the Golden Frost Sect was also preparing for war. All eighteen of their great spell formations were fully operational. Clearly, they had activated the spell formations in order to protect the sect in preparation for war.

The Golden Frost Sect disciples were nervous. They had heard bits of news here and there that slowly formed together into a more accurate version of recent events. Fatty was getting quite anxious, although he hid it well. Unfortunately, there was nothing he could do to prevent what was happening.

Of the three great clans, the Wang Clan was no more. The Li Clan was now in the position of prominence. The killing intent of the Li Clan members surged high as they prepared for war.

In the Black Sieve Sect, Patriarch Six-Daos didn’t hesitate at all after he received the invitation. He immediately responded in the affirmative.

In recent days, the full power of the Black Sieve Sect was focused on mobilizing discarnate souls, as well as the full power of their Dao Reserve. 193 coffins were brought in, all of which were to be used in battle.

At the same time, the medicinal pills, spell formations, and magical items needed for warfare were purchased in large quantities by all four of the great powers. All of these things caused rumors to spread like wildfire across the Southern Domain.

“There’s going to be a war!”

“The sects and clans haven’t mobilized like this in ages. I just wonder who they will be going to war against!?”

“The Blood Demon Sect for sure!”

The cultivators of the Southern Domain were alarmed by the developments. However, there were also some rogue cultivators who saw opportunity. When the four great powers began to recruit rogue cultivators, many joined because of the potential benefits.

The Violet Fate Sect maintained silence on the matter. Because of their relationship with Meng Hao, they did not join the group of four powers. The four great powers, of course, understood this, and did not expect to form any alliance with the Violet Fate Sect.

However, what they wanted to prevent was the Violet Fate Sect coming to the aid of the Blood Demon Sect.

As far as the Song Clan was concerned, the four great powers were rather confused to find that they also maintained silence, and would not join the alliance.

When an entire region goes to war, it cannot be done secretly. A properly conducted war requires much preparation, preparation that cannot be completed quickly. The preparations for war often create a stifling pressure that influences everyone, and is even more intense than the actual war itself.

As a result, in the Blood Demon Sect, taciturn silence was becoming more common and frequent.

Based on what was happening in the outside world, it was obvious that the Solitary Sword Sect, Golden Frost Sect, Black Sieve Sect, Li Clan, and large numbers of rogue cultivators were preparing to go to war with the Blood Demon Clan!

Hundreds of thousands of cultivators were coming to wipe them out!

Such pressure from the outside world weighed down on the Blood Demon Sect disciples, causing them to grow more and more dour. Even more so, killing intent began to radiate out from the depths of their marrow.

They were Blood Demon Sect disciples, and they behaved like Demons. Furthermore, the name of their sect had the character ‘blood ’ in it! How could such a thing not be terrifying!?

Of course, they were getting ready for the coming war too, and the hunchbacked old man from the fifth mountain peak was in charge of all the preparations.

In Blood Prince Gorge, Meng Hao could also sense the pressure. He knew that all of this was happening because of the true Immortal’s soul. In fact, he actually attempted to hand the soul over. However, Patriarch Blood Demon once again refused.

“What’s yours is yours. I brought you here to be the Blood Prince of the Blood Demon Sect, and I’m responsible for you!

“If I allow some bystander to snatch away something that belongs to you, then what’s to prevent them from taking things from other disciples? How could the Blood Demon Sect stand for such a humiliation?!

“I might be old, but I still need to maintain face! If they want war, we’ll give them war!”

When Meng Hao heard this, his eyes began to glow with a strange light, which gradually transformed into determination. By this point, he didn’t care how it was that he came to be in the Blood Demon Sect. What he cared about was a concept that existed in his heart: to face others with a clear conscience.

For the Blood Demon Sect to treat him like this meant that he needed to act just as responsibly in return.

Meng Hao chose to go into secluded meditation. For the moment, he ceased his constant study of the Seventh Demon Sealing Hex, and instead spent most of his time on the ‘self’ character from the Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao.

He was already enlightened regarding most of the aspects of the ‘self’ character. What he needed to do now was actually make a second true self!

As for how powerful the second true self would be, even he had no idea. He did know that it was made from his own flesh and blood, and was like a sheath, within which was placed a soul. As for which soul to use, Meng Hao decided to use… the true Immortal’s soul!

His only concern was that if he used it, then his Master Pill Demon would be unable to benefit from it later on. Therefore, he consulted with Patriarch Blood Demon on the matter. After Patriarch Blood Demon reassured him that there was no harm in going forward with his plan, he made up his mind.

Meng Hao was in thorough anticipation of what sort of power would be unleashed when he merged the true Immortal’s soul into his second true self.

“Other people can cultivate clones, but this art produces a true self!” he thought as he sat cross-legged in the log cabin.

“Those who cultivate clones merely separate a portion of their soul and then use that as the essence. Place it into a moulded body, and that is the Dao of cloning.

“To cultivate a true self, you use flesh and blood. After nourishing it, it becomes like an invincible sheath, within which is concealed an unmatchable sword.

“Using the soul as the basis is actually very different from using flesh and blood. They seem similar, but in fact are completely different.” After gaining enlightenment of the ‘self’ character, his eyes suddenly opened.

In unison, he splayed the fingers of his right hand, after which five drops of blood flew out. He then did the same with his left hand. Five drops of blood flew out from both hands.

Next were each of his legs, then his feet; five drops of blood each. Finally, a tremor ran through his torso, and ten drops of blood emerged.

In total, there were forty drops of blood floating in front of him, radiating brilliant light. Then, they began to congeal together. As they did, the skin of Meng Hao’s forehead split open, and another drop of blood emerged to join the others. Finally, he bit the tip of his tongue and spit out some qi and blood.

42 drops of blood radiated brilliant light and merged together, gradually forming the shape of a person.

Meng Hao’s face paled, and his body sagged with weakness. However, his eyes were as determined as ever.

“What makes this a true self?” he mused rhetorically.

“The blood that circulates is mine. The skin is mine. The blood vessels are mine. The vital organs are mine. It all comes from me, and is the same as my original true self.

“This, is my second true self!”

A vicious gleam appeared in his eyes as he lifted his hand and stabbed it into his abdomen. A cracking sound could be heard, but he endured the pain as he broke off one of his own ribs. After pulling it out of his body, he crushed it into a powder which he then blew out toward the blood-mass of a person in front of him.

As soon as the bone powder entered the body in front of him, cracking sounds could be heard, as if a skeleton were forming inside.

Meng Hao trembled as his Eternal stratum healed his body at rapid speed. Unfortunately, the drops of blood, and the rib, were lost forever.

“The second true self is formed from what the Self Character Incantation permanently extracts from my body. What is taken away, can not be recovered…. This divine ability basically creates a new person. How extraordinary!” Muttering to himself, Meng Hao severed some of the redundant blood vessels in his body and then fused them into the other body.

Immediately, blood vessels appeared within.

Next came the vital organs and other miscellaneous parts. The only thing lacking now was the soul.

Time passed, although Meng Hao wasn’t sure how much. His body was very weak, but in front of him was now a person whose features were the exact same as his own.

He wore a white robe, and sat there cross-legged, as fair as jade. He was handsome, and had a strong scholarly aura. He looked exactly like Meng Hao had when he was about fifteen or sixteen years old.

Looking at him, Meng Hao got the sensation that he was looking at an extension of his own body. He almost forget altogether that this was his second true self. It was almost like… a precious treasure in the shape of a person.

“And now it’s time to insert the soul of the true Immortal!” His eyes shone with strange light as he slapped his bag of holding. The true Immortal’s soul appeared, along with gentle, radiating light and a mysterious aura.

The instant the soul appeared, the entirety of Blood Prince Gorge filled with Immortal qi. In fact, the entire Blood Demon Sect instantly became like an Immortal paradise.

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# Chapter 734: Second True Self!

Patriarch Blood Demon opened his eyes and stared in the direction of Blood Prince Gorge.

Outside in the Blood Demon Sect, everyone was astonished.

“What aura is that?”

“How refreshing! I feel incredible!”

“I feel like my cultivation base just advanced a little bit….”

Back in Blood Prince Gorge, Meng Hao took a deep breath. He began to place sealing incantations onto the true Immortal’s soul according to the prescribed method of the Self Character Incantation. It was not done in a forceful manner, but rather oh so gently. This was not a fusing of the soul and the body; rather, what was needed was for the soul to remain inside without struggling or fighting back.

Meng Hao carefully placed the sealing incantations onto the soul and then, filled with anticipation, placed the soul into his second true self with the greatest of care.

In that instant, a tremor ran through his second true self, after which he returned to his previous placid state.

“In eighty-one days, my second true self will awaken!

“There are three phases to incubating my second true self. The first is eighty-one days, the second is eighty-one months, the third is eighty-one years!

“At the end of each of those phases, the second true self will become more and more perfect.” Meng Hao took a deep breath. This was the first time he had ever worked with such a bizarre and strange magic. Finally, he closed his eyes and calmed his mind, then rotated his cultivation base.

A few days later, he opened his eyes again. He was no longer weak. Although he had sustained quite a few unrecoverable losses, the overall impact to him was relatively insignificant.

Compared to the gains, such losses were completely worth it.

“Three months!

“In three months, the first version of my second true self will emerge. I wonder… how powerful it will be!” His eyes shone with persistence and anticipation. He was extremely curious to find out how this combination of the true Immortal’s soul and his second true self… would turn out!

“And now, it’s time for the Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal!” he thought, his eyes glowing with a bright light. In the underground world beneath the Ancient Dao Lakes, he had acquired thousands of Spirit Severing level magical items. Although he didn’t quite have ten thousand, it was still enough to cultivate the Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal.

“Ten thousand Spirit Severing magical items will make my fleshly body incredibly tough, and will enable me to break through from the Spirit Severing level to Dao Seeking!” With that, he opened his bag of holding and took out a sword. He placed it onto his arm, and then the Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal appeared in his mind. After enough time had passed for an incense stick to burn, something like flames appeared in his eyes.

The flame consisted of nine layers, which merged together and then flew out shapelessly from his eyes. It was invisible, but when it touched the sword on his arm, the sword melted, then fused into his body in the blink of an eye.

When the sword fused into him, he felt an intense jolt of pain. He began to tremble, although he did his best to control it. By the time the sword was completely absorbed into him, his body was soaked in sweat.

The pain reminded him of the pain he had felt when his Dao foundation was ripped away.

He took a deep breath and clenched his right fist tightly. Popping sounds rang out, and the air around his fist twisted and distorted.

“I really am a bit more powerful….” he thought. Excitement shone in his eyes. It was painful, but the Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal truly did make his fleshly body stronger, and that was all he needed.

“One more time!” he thought, his expression one of determination. A great war was on the horizon, and he needed to use every method at his disposal to get even more powerful.

More time passed. Two months later, the four great powers were now completely ready for war. 150,000 cultivators flew out from the Solitary Sword Sect, including ten Spirit Severing cultivators and two Dao Seeking experts.

One of them was none other than the Dao Reserve of the Solitary Sword Sect, the peak Dao Seeking old man who wore a black gown. It was impossible to tell how many countless years he had lived.

The other was an ordinary Dao Seeking eccentric. Although he was only in the early Dao Seeking stage, he was still a Patriarch of the Solitary Sword Sect.

As they flew out, tens of thousand of swords also appeared. Ten of those swords were roughly 3,000 meters in length. Most shocking of all was a 30,000-meter bronze sword.

In addition, there were various valuable treasures that flew along, circulating around the swords. Their glow seemed infinite as the countless cultivators flew through the air.

“Sword, come!” cried the peak Dao Seeking expert in the black robe. He extended his hand toward the enormous stone sword that rose up into the sky above the Solitary Sword Sect. It began to rumble, and then cracks appeared on its surface to reveal a green sword made of bamboo!

As soon as it appeared, wild colors danced in the sky, the wind howled, and a shocking sword qi could be sensed. When the peak Dao Seeking expert grasped the sword, it continued to vibrate with a humming sound.

“The ancestor acquired this treasure in the Ancient Dao Lakes,” the old man said coolly. “Now, it will be used in battle to acquire the true Immortal’s soul, also from the Ancient Dao Lakes. This is Karma! Clearly, the true Immortal’s soul was meant for the Solitary Sword Sect!” With that, he flicked his sleeve, and the 150,000 Solitary Sword Sect cultivators made their way directly toward the Blood Demon Sect.

At virtually the same time, countless armored figures flew up into the air from the Golden Frost Sect. This was a force of 100,000, flying on loom shuttles, surrounded by countless valuable treasures. Shockingly, the huge group began to organize into a spell formation, which transformed into a gigantic puppet, tens of thousands of meters tall.

The huge puppet was completely shocking in appearance, and emanated an indescribably terrifying aura. The peak Dao Seeking expert of the Golden Frost Sect, a red-haired old man, appeared on top of the puppet’s head. He sat there cross-legged, eyes radiating ferocity.

This red-haired old man was the only Dao Seeking expert from the Golden Frost Sect. Apparently, they couldn’t quite match up to the Solitary Sword Sect, which made sense since the Solitary Sword Sect was considered the number one sect in the Southern Domain.

However, that did not mean the Golden Frost Sect was weak. Their offensive techniques, utilizing puppet incarnations which combined the energy of large groups of cultivators, could explode out with multilayered power.

As their puppet strode across the land toward the Blood Demon Sect, it let out a roar, which was actually the combined roar of 100,000 cultivators.

Chen Fan of the Solitary Sword Sect refused to participate in the battle, as did Li Fugui of the Golden Frost Sect. Fatty had a special status, so he had that right. However, Chen Fan was different. Because of his refusal, he was punished by being locked up in the sect dungeon, where he was to be tortured for thirty years.

Even as the Solitary Sword Sect and the Golden Frost Sect mobilized their forces, the Black Sieve Sect emerged in full strength. Patriarch Six-Daos had been waiting for this day for a long time. As soon as he received the notice, countless discarnate souls, as well as all the Black Sieve Sect disciples, flew out.

Han Bei, however, was nowhere to be seen. Neither had she been present the day when Meng Hao came to wipe out the Black Sieve Sect the first time. Apparently, she had gone missing after returning from the ancient Demon Immortal Sect.

As for the Li Clan, they also flew out in formation. Flying up ahead of them was an enormous bronze bell. It emitted a droning sound as well as golden light, which spread out to cover all of the Li Clan members and carry them along through the air.

On top of the bell was the Li Clan’s most powerful expert, their 3rd Patriarch. He sat there cross-legged, his eyes shining with bright, flickering light.

The four great powers all sprang into action at the same time, heading directly toward the Blood Demon Sect.

Earlier, the four powers had distributed declarations of war throughout the Southern Domain, calling for rogue cultivators to join them in punishing the Blood Demon Sect. No small quantity of magical items and medicinal pills had been offered up as rewards!

The declarations of war listed nearly a thousand wicked acts committed by the Blood Demon Sect. The cultivators who perused the list were instantly furious, and felt their hair standing up on end in rage.

In truth, though, everyone also knew that much of the list was a mere fabrication. Even so, nobody would attempt to question it too much.

After all, declaring that they were righting wrongs in accordance with the Heavens, wiping out the Blood Demon Sect to cleanse the Southern Domain, was just a pretext.

Few people believed that the Blood Demon Sect would be able to escape this catastrophe. Everyone felt that they were doomed to be destroyed. All Blood Demon Sect disciples would surely be wiped out, and any who somehow managed to escape would be hunted down and killed. Soon, there would be no more Blood Demon Sect in the Southern Domain.

Therefore, hundreds of thousands of rogue cultivators sprang into action. In their minds, the outcome of this war was a certainty, and they could use the destruction of the Blood Demon Sect cultivators to acquire resources they needed for their own cultivation.

The war was like a massive storm that swept across the Southern Domain, made up of the four great powers and the rogue cultivators, a combined force of 600,000-700,000 cultivators.

The clouds blackened, and the lands grew dark. A great war… would break out at any moment.

In the Blood Demon Sect, all the disciples waited in taciturn silence, their killing intent rising to monstrous heights. They were proud to be Blood Demon Sect cultivators, and even if they were facing an apocalyptic calamity, their faith in the sect was not weakened. They… would fight!

“To battle!!”

“Live or die with the sect!”

“The Patriarch is the Top Expert of the Southern Domain! The Blood Prince is the number one figure in the Spirit Severing stage! So what if we have to fight all the other sects in the Southern Domain!?”

“If we lose, fine. But if we don’t, then we will sweep across the four powers and make the Blood Demon Sect the only sect in the entire Southern Domain!”

Roaring and shouting filled the air in the Blood Demon Sect. It wasn’t necessarily that they were devoted heart and soul to the Blood Demon Sect. Rather, this war… was unavoidable. They had two choices: fight, or die!

No disciple would betray the sect, not even if the destruction of the sect itself was nigh. The terrifying consequences for betrayal had long since been imprinted into the hearts of the disciples.

Seven days later, the Solitary Sword Sect, the Golden Frost Sect, the Black Sieve Sect, and the Li Clan blasted through the air to appear in the region of the Blood Demon Sect, surrounding it on all sides.

These four powers could be seen advancing from all four directions. The sword qi of the Solitary Sword Sect surged. The Golden Frost Sect’s puppet was astonishing. The Black Sieve Sect was sinister to the extreme. The Li Clan was surrounded by golden light.

In actuality, they could have come earlier had they wished. However, they had spent a bit more time en route in order to make sure that they all arrived at the same time. That way they could assure victory in one fell swoop.

They didn’t attack immediately, but instead, began to set up spell formations to block and surround the Blood Demon Sect.

They also began to set up teleportation portals right under the Blood Demon Sect’s noses, which enabled vast crowds of rogue cultivators to teleport to the area from all over the Southern Domain.

The sealing and blockade spell formations thoroughly pinned the Blood Demon Sect down. No one would be able to escape.

The sky above the Southern Domain filled with dark clouds, as did the hearts of the Blood Demon Sect disciples.

All of their own spell formations had long since been activated. The glow of blood circulated through the air in all directions around the sect. From a distance, it looked like an enormous Demon.

The Demonic Incarnation was illusory, but its body was tens of thousands of meters tall; it was bigger than a mountain. It sat cross-legged on the land, clad in black armor. Its green hair floated in the wind, and a golden mask covered its face.

The mask was incomplete, as if it were composed of many parts. On the head of the Demonic Incarnation was a long, curved horn, around which lightning crackled.

The parts of the Demonic Incarnation's skin that were not covered by armor were crimson, like the color of blood. Anyone who laid eyes on it would be filled with a sense of awe and terror.

This was the Blood Demon Sect's most powerful spell formation, the Blood Demon Grand Spell Formation!

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# Chapter 735: War!

This spell formation resulted in a Demonic Incarnation that could merge the cultivation bases of all of the Blood Demon Sect disciples. It had protected the Blood Demon Sect for countless years, and had ensured its long-lasting survival.

Inside the Demonic Incarnation, the five mountain peaks of the Blood Demon Sect glowed with brilliant light that transformed into five layers of ripples. Each layer was a different color, and as they spread out, they transformed into a five-layered restrictive spell shield.

Each layer of the shield was maintained by Spirit Severing experts, and was filled with the power of the entire mountain peak. The entire defense was incredibly tough and resilient.

Suddenly, Patriarch Blood Demon’s voice echoed out through the Blood Demon Sect. “The first formation, the Demonic Incarnation, will have Meng Hao as the nucleus. He will lead 100,000 disciples, and will control the formation!”

Meng Hao currently stood in Blood Prince Gorge. When he heard Patriarch Blood Demon’s voice, he looked up.

Next to him was Xu Qing. She didn’t speak, but instead silently straightened his robe, and then wrapped her arms around him. After a moment passed, she released him and stepped back. Meng Hao looked at her.

“Wait for me. I’ll be back.”

Xu Qing nodded. Inside, she was getting incredibly nervous, but she didn’t let Meng Hao see it for fear that it might distract him.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and then walked out of Blood Prince Gorge. The moment he emerged, the mad, burning eyes of the Blood Demon Sect disciples all came to focus on him.

When he saw their impassioned gazes, Meng Hao felt a deep guilt. All of this was because he had taken the true Immortal’s soul. If he hadn’t, this great catastrophe would not have descended on the Blood Demon Sect.

It was at this point that he suddenly heard Patriarch Blood Demon’s calm voice speaking in his ear. “There’s no need to feel guilty. Do you really think that the Solitary Sword Sect, the Golden Frost Sect, and the Li Clan are willing to start a war just because of the soul of a true Immortal?

“The true Immortal’s soul was just an instigating factor. The true reason for their actions… is their fear of me. They believe me to be an existential threat, and have been looking for an opportunity to get rid of me.

“Even if the true Immortal’s soul didn’t come along, this war still would have happened. The Southern Domain has been at peace for too long.”

Meng Hao didn’t respond, but his eyes gleamed with decisiveness and the desire to slaughter. In this war, he would definitely be doing some killing!

In fact, he would do everything within his might to kill as many enemies as possible.

His body flashed as he flew up toward the first spell formation. Behind him, 100,000 Blood Demon Sect disciples soared through the air. All of them entered the spell formation and then sat down cross-legged.

There were 20,000 in the torso. The four limbs had 15,000 each. The head had 20,000. In total, there were 100,000 disciples. As for Meng Hao, his position was in the forehead of the Demonic Incarnation.

As soon as the 100,000 disciples entered the spell formation and sat down cross-legged, they unleashed their cultivation bases. As the power merged into the Demonic Incarnation, rumbling sounds filled their minds. The enormous Demonic Incarnation suddenly seemed to revert from a state of deathlike inactivity, to life. Flourishing life force exploded out inside of it.

Meng Hao sat cross-legged in the forehead position, monstrous killing intent visible in his eyes. He would protect this place, both for the Blood Demon Sect, and… for Xu Qing.

As long as he was alive, he would not permit anyone to harm even a hair on Xu Qing’s head.

Even as he sat there cross-legged, he continuously produced Spirit Severing magical items, which he absorbed into his body. Even as the pain threatened to cross the threshold that he could tolerate, he clenched his jaw tightly and pressed on. With the absorption of each treasure, his fleshly body continued to grow stronger, bit by bit.

The strongest of all…. was his right arm. That was the first location into which he had absorbed the Spirit Severing treasures. After melding exactly a thousand such treasures into his right arm, he could sense a breakthrough in that specific area; it now radiated ripples similar to Dao Seeking.

“Almost there….” he thought. His expression was calm as he continued to fuse more items into his body.

Time passed. Several days later, the Blood Demon Sect was deathly silent. The atmosphere was one of suppression, suppression of the incredible energy that had built up to a peak and was just waiting to explode out.

Outside of the sect, the four great powers had finished setting up their spell formations. Hundreds of thousands of Southern Domain rogue cultivators had arrived.

From a distance, 700,000 cultivators could be seen surrounding the Blood Demon Sect, spread across the horizon as far as the eye could see. It was an incredible force, and looking at it would cause one’s heart to tremble.

“Blood Demon Sect!”

“This war will end with the extermination of the Blood Demon Sect!”

“FIGHT!!”

It was noontime, but the sun was completely covered by the dark clouds. Lightning crackled through the sky as the vast crowds of the four great powers roared. 700,000 voices combined together, roaring with such intensity that the clouds were split open and rain began to pour down.

Rain. Thunder. Slaughter….

Battle!

The war was beginning!

The Solitary Sword Sect, the Golden Frost Sect, the Black Sieve Sect, and the Li Clan were not the first ones to make a move. The first to attack were naturally the rogue cultivators who had come hoping to earn rewards.

Hundreds of thousands of them surged forth with earthshaking power. The sky shook, and the rain was incapable of even falling to the ground, and was instead scattered about in all directions.

A great variety of cultivation bases could be seen among the rogue cultivators. The highest were in the great circle of the Nascent Soul stage; however, there were no Spirit Severing experts present. As they attacked, the spell formations around them burst out with blinding light. Lightning from above was pulled down, entering into the spell formations, which then produced numerous silver snakes composed of lightning bolts.

There were eight silver snakes in total, 300 meters wide and 30,000 meters long, that sucked the hundreds of thousands of rogue cultivators inside of them as they emerged. From a distance, tens of thousands of rogue cultivators could be seen inside each of the silver snakes, lending their power to the lightning. The snakes immediately shot directly toward the enormous Demonic Incarnation surrounding the Blood Demon Sect.

Inside the Demonic Incarnation, the 100,000 Blood Demon Sect disciples began to call out.

“Blood Prince, do we fight?!”

“Blood Prince, we’re waiting for your command!!”

Their voices echoed about inside of the Demonic Incarnation, but could not be heard in the outside world.

“The time has not come yet,” replied Meng Hao calmly. He slowly raised his right hand, and in response, the enormous, cross-legged Demonic Incarnation also raised its hand, then pounded the ground violently with a palm strike.

Boom!

A deafening sound could be heard as a blood-colored shield of light shot out from the palm of the Demonic Incarnation to sweep out in all directions.

As the eight incoming lightning snakes closed in on the Demonic Incarnation, they were blocked by the blood-colored shield at a distance of 3,000 meters. The shield twisted and distorted under the power of the repeated attacks levied against it, but did not collapse.

Inside the Demonic Incarnation, killing intent flashed brightly in the eyes of the 100,000 Blood Demon Sect disciples. Their bodies emanated bloody glows as they waited, fused completely with the Demonic Incarnation. As for Meng Hao, he sat in the forehead position, continuously feeding Spirit Severing treasures into the flesh of his right arm.

1,451. 1,452…. As the items continued to fuse into his arm, it grew more and more powerful. The Dao Seeking aura became more prominent, and Meng Hao knew that he was just a little bit away… from making his hand the first part of his fleshly body that was truly in Dao Seeking.

Eight silver lightning snakes attacked constantly, but the blood-colored shield continued to hold strong, despite the distortions that marred its surface. It even managed to make counterattacks, such that two of the silver snakes were beginning to show signs of breaking apart.

“Trash! Even with the help of our Li Clan spell formations, those good-for-nothing fools still can’t break the Blood Demon Sect’s first spell formation!” The Li Clan’s 3rd Patriarch gave a cold snort.

“Fellow Daoist Six-Daos,” said the red-haired Golden Frost Sect cultivator, his eyes coming to rest on Patriarch Six-Daos of the Black Sieve Sect. “It’s about time for you to make your move.”

The black-robed cultivator from the Solitary Sword Sect also looked over at him.

Six-Daos’ face flickered and he snorted coldly. There was no way for him to refuse, so he raised his hand and pointed forward. The Black Sieve Sect discarnate souls and cultivators behind him gritted their teeth and charged forward. There was even one discarnate soul who emanated a Spirit Severing aura; including it, the Black Sieve Sect looked like an enormous sword, slicing through the air to stab toward the blood-colored shield that the eight lightning snakes were contending with.

A huge boom rattled out, and the blood-colored shield shuddered, seemingly growing weaker. The eight lightning snakes merged their power together. That, combined with the cultivation bases of the Black Sieve Sect, smashed into the weakest parts of the shield.

Cracking sounds could be heard as fissures spread out. The fissures quickly sealed back up, though, and even sent counterattacks back out. The two silver lightning snakes that had been weakened before suddenly exploded.

There were no miserable screams. The instant that the snake exploded, the tens of thousands of cultivators inside were instantly wiped out, dead in spirit and body.

The cultivators in the remaining six lightning snakes looked shocked. However, they had come here to seek good fortune and had been promised by the four great powers that they would get what they sought. It didn’t matter that the battle was fierce; would they really give up so easily?

“Meng Hao!” the Spirit Severing discarnate soul cried out. “Are you going to keep hiding in the Blood Demon Sect the whole time? I dare you to come out and fight!” He assumed Meng Hao was somewhere in the Blood Demon Sect, not inside the Demonic Incarnation.

His voice reverberated as it passed through the blood-colored shield, all the way to the Demonic Incarnation, and into Meng Hao’s ears.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with killing intent, but he did nothing. Instead, he continued to feed Spirit Severing treasures into his right hand.

1,479. 1,480!

Meng Hao could clearly sense that his right arm was now almost completely beyond Spirit Severing, and had truly entered into Dao Seeking.

Booms echoed out from the outside as six lightning snakes, joined by the Black Sieve Sect cultivators under the leadership of the Spirit Severing discarnate soul, continued to attack the blood-colored shield. The shield began to distort and shrink, and portions even began to shatter.

“Meng Hao!” called the Spirit Severing discarnate soul. “I was the one who personally extracted Xu Qing’s soul! The process of separating her body and soul wracked her with intense pain! The look on her face… I still remember it as if it were yesterday.” He waved his hand, and the shield shook. He was obviously trying to bait Meng Hao into fighting.

The instant his voice rang out, Meng Hao looked up. Intense viciousness could be seen in his eyes, as well as explosive killing intent.

The 1,500th Spirit Severing treasure fused into his right arm, and it broke completely out of Spirit Severing and reached the Dao Seeking level.

An incomplete, fragmented natural law spread out, although it didn’t affect Meng Hao. His right hand was now the most powerful part of his fleshly body!

“Blood Prince, let’s fight!!”

“Blood Prince, we want to do battle!!”

“Yes,” said Meng Hao. “FIGHT!” Even as the words left his mouth, he raised his right hand and made a violent grasping gesture. What everyone on the outside saw was the Demonic Incarnation raising its enormous right hand, which then shot out of the shield with indescribable speed to grab ahold of the Spirit Severing discarnate soul.

The hand clenched viciously, and a boom could be heard, as the discarnate soul was crushed into pieces. A lingering scream echoed out over the battlefield.

The Demonic Incarnation suddenly stood up. It was tens of thousands of meters tall, completely shocking in appearance.

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# Chapter 736: Devastating!

Meng Hao sat cross-legged in the forehead position of the Demonic Incarnation. The life forces and cultivation bases of 100,000 cultivators poured into the Demonic Incarnation, all of which Meng Hao could sense.

“Early Dao Seeking!” said Meng Hao, sensing the power of the Demonic Incarnation. He waved his hand, and in response, the shrinking, blood-colored shield returned to cover the entire Demonic Incarnation. Without the blood-colored obstructing the way, the six lightning snakes instantly shot toward Meng Hao. So did the Black Sieve Sect discarnate souls and cultivators, who were ashen faced.

“Offend the Blood Demon Sect? You shall die!” The combined voices of 100,000 people boomed out from the Demonic Incarnation. Heaven and Earth shook, and Meng Hao raised his hand and clenched it into a fist.

The fist slammed into one of the lightning snakes, which instantly collapsed into pieces. In the blink of an eye, the entire snake fell apart in a huge explosion.

Meng Hao sent the Demonic Incarnation forward. It performed an incantation with its right hand, then gestured forward. Immediately, the air was rent open as a huge fissure appeared. It slashed out and hit another lightning snake, which then exploded.

All of these things happened with incredible speed. Next, Meng Hao turned the body of the Demonic Incarnation and sent it directly toward the enormous sword formed by the discarnate souls and cultivators of the Black Sieve Sect.

“DIE!!” Meng Hao’s voice joined with the 100,000 cultivators to let out an incredible roar. Their cultivation bases surged, and the power of early Dao Seeking bolstered the noise to transform the roar into a terrifying sound wave.

The sound wave transformed into visible ripples which then slammed into the Black Sieve Sect discarnate souls and cultivators. One by one, the discarnate souls vanished, as if they were being erased. As for the cultivators with fleshly bodies, they were ripped into pieces by the passing ripple. Tens of thousands of Black Sieve Sect disciples… all died in body and soul.

“Your Blood Demon Demonic Incarnation is pretty good!” said the black-robed man from the Solitary Sword Sect, his voice cool. He advanced forward, and was soon directly in front of Meng Hao. Although his hand was clearly empty, a shocking sword qi suddenly materialized and slashed toward Meng Hao.

However, before the sword qi could fully descend, a cold snort echoed out from within the Blood Demon Sect. A blood-colored figure flickered into being in front of Meng Hao. It was none other than Patriarch Blood Demon.

“How meaningless to bully the junior generation!” he said. “You want to fight? Let’s fight!”

BOOOMMM!

Patriarch Blood Demon and the black-robed man from the Solitary Sword Sect immediately rose high up into the air as they began to fight. At the same time, the red-haired old man from the Golden Frost Sect, the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch, and Patriarch Six-Daos flew up. Six-Daos cast a murderous glare at the Demonic Incarnation under Meng Hao’s control, gave a cold snort, then proceeded to completely ignore it as he flew toward Patriarch Blood Demon.

It was at this moment, though, that three more blood-colored figures shot out from the Blood Demon Sect. Each and every one looked exactly like

Patriarch Blood Demon, and each one shot toward one of the three who had just flown out.

There were now four clones of Patriarch Blood Demon present. Four incredible clones, battling four of the most powerful Patriarchs of the Southern Domain.

Booms filled the air, and the battle above caused the air to warp and distort. It was difficult for anyone looking on to see clearly, but they could tell that the sky itself seemed on the verge of falling. The intense battle being carried out could clearly shake even the Heavens.

“KILL THEM!!” Almost in the same moment that the Patriarchs were locked in the decisive battle up above, the rest of the forces of the four great powers charged into battle. Hundreds of thousands of cultivators sped directly toward the Demonic Incarnation controlled by Meng Hao.

Among them was an early Dao Seeking expert from the Solitary Sword Sect, as well as a puppet from the Golden Frost Sect formed by Spirit Severing experts, which also emanated a Dao Seeking aura. The Li Clan had even more spell formations circulating around them. Unfortunately for the Black Sieve Sect, they had sustained severe casualties.

Killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes as he brazenly sent the Demonic Incarnation forward to battle directly with the four powers!

Inside the Demonic Incarnation, the 100,000 Blood Demon Sect disciples’ eyes were bright red. They formed the Blood Demon Sect’s first spell formation, which was not easily destroyed. Were it to be broken, the Blood Demon Sect would then be vulnerable to the outside world.

“To the death!”

The Demonic Incarnation emanated early Dao Seeking energy as it roared into battle against the hundreds of thousands of cultivators which surrounded it.

There were only four lightning snakes left, filled with rogue cultivators with bloodshot eyes. They flew through the air, occasionally attacking. As for the Black Sieve Sect, they were in disarray and no longer had enough forces to do battle.

However, such was not the case with the Solitary Sword Sect. Under the leadership of the early Dao Seeking expert, 100,000 flying swords exploded out, transforming into a shocking power that continuously pelted Meng Hao.

The early Dao Seeking expert was actually capable of fighting directly with Meng Hao and the Demonic Incarnation. He became the primary force in the battle, backed by the power of ten Solitary Sword Sect Spirit Severing cultivators.

The Spirit Severing experts of the Golden Frost sect combined to form a puppet, which also emanated a Dao Seeking aura that caused the clouds to seethe when it attacked. They joined forces with the early Dao Seeking cultivator from the Solitary Sword Sect and successfully pinned down Meng Hao and the Demonic Incarnation.

As for the Li Clan, they were attempting to harm Meng Hao more covertly. They flew around the perimeter, surrounding the area with countless spell formations. Some were used to bind the Demonic Incarnation, others self detonated. Incredible pressure weighed down on Meng Hao.

Every time Meng Hao attacked, every time the two sides clashed, many of the cultivators inside the Demonic Incarnation would spit up blood. On one occasion, the Solitary Sect’s early Dao Seeking expert and the Golden Frost Sect Puppet combined their attacks and struck the Demonic Incarnation with an earth-shaking force. 20,000 of the cultivators inside were unable to withstand the force and their bodies immediately exploded.

Blood oozed out from the Demonic Incarnation, forming a bloody rain that splattered down onto the ground.

However, the forces of the four great powers were also paying a heavy price.

Over a three day period, a third of the Golden Frost Sect cultivators died. Twenty percent of the Solitary Sword Sect perished. The Black Sieve Sect was thoroughly crippled, and twenty percent of the Li Clan were dead.

As for the rogue cultivators, Meng Hao had no time to pay them any heed. Despite that, of the four lightning snakes, one more was destroyed.

As of this point, the four great powers had suffered over 200,000 casualties!

Meng Hao persisted with gritted teeth. Were it not for the fact that his right arm possessed Dao Seeking strength, he would not have been able to hold out for this long. He lifted his right hand and punched out, connecting with the Golden Frost Sect puppet up ahead. It tumbled back, seemingly on the verge of complete collapse. However, the early Dao Seeking cultivator from the Solitary Sword Sect suddenly appeared and blocked Meng Hao with a flick of his sleeve.

Countless spell formations around him detonated, and amidst the booming explosions, 100,000 greatswords stabbed into Meng Hao’s Demonic Incarnation.

“Piss off!” roared Meng Hao, his voice hoarse. The Demonic Incarnation collided with the Golden Frost Sect. Everywhere he passed, he left in his wake the shattered remains of countless puppets formed from the Golden Frost Sect cultivators.

“Solitary Sword Formation!” Bright gleams appeared in the eyes of the Solitary Sword Sect disciples. All of them began to perform incantations, then gripped their swords tightly as their bodies began to shine intensely, as if they were swords glinting in the light. Each and every person seemed to transform into a sword that flew up into the air. Shockingly, the swords began to interweave into an enormous sword formation!

The sword formation swirled in mid-air, forming into the shape of a gigantic greatsword that slashed down toward Meng Hao.

“Black White Pearls! Ninth Mountain!” Meng Hao waved his left hand, and the Ninth Mountain smashed into the greatsword. The mountain trembled and then collapsed, but so did the Solitary Sword Formation!

Meng Hao sent the Demonic Incarnation into retreat. Of the remaining 80,000 cultivators inside, 10,000 were once again unable to withstand the force of the blow, and exploded. At the same time, the Solitary Sword Sect's early Dao Seeking expert suddenly appeared. His hand flashed in an incantation gesture, and an amorphous green fog appeared, within which was a poisonous thorn. He pointed out, causing the green fog to envelop the Demonic Incarnation.

Simultaneously, the poisonous thorn shot forward to stab directly into the Demonic Incarnation. As it passed through, bloodcurdling screams rang out in Meng Hao's ears.

Meng Hao clenched his right hand into a fist and instantly punched out. The early Dao Seeking expert frowned, then gave a cold snort and performed another incantation. Rumbling could be heard as his body vanished, then reappeared three thousand meters away. His face was a bit pale; clearly, despite have avoided the fist, he had still suffered injuries.

“Everyone, attack!” he cried. As his voice rang out, he pointed up into the sky. “Bamboo sword!”

A green streak of light shot out of his finger, which then transformed into a tiny, bamboo shoot. It rapidly grew larger, transforming into a bamboo stalk. The stalk then shed its leaves and became a bamboo sword!

There were some experienced cultivators in the surrounding groups who began to cry out in shock.

“The Solitary Sword Sect's precious treasure!!”

“I've heard of this precious treasure!”

The most powerful of the Golden Frost Sect's puppets let out a cold snort, then made an incantation gesture with its right hand. It stretched its right hand out and made a grasping motion, whereupon a hand-sized piece of rock flew out. It grew rapidly, transforming into a 3,000-meter tall mountain.

It was pitch black, except for one golden character on the side.

Termination!

Mount Termination!

This was the precious treasure of the Golden Frost Sect, as famous in name as the bamboo sword of the Solitary Sword Sect!

The 5th Li Clan Patriarch, who had a cultivation base at the great circle of the Third Severing, had been flitting about activating spell formations. When he saw the latest developments, he produced a pink Feng Shui compass and then pushed down onto its surface.

Immediately, the ground began to rumble, and multiple columns of pink light shot up into the air.

“DIE!!”

The Solitary Sword Sect’s bamboo sword seemed to split the heavens, transforming into a green beam of light that shot toward Meng Hao. The Golden Frost Sect’s Mount Termination began to rotate, emitting crushing pressure as it joined the green beam of light to attack Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s face fell, and the Black White Pearls and Ninth Mountain appeared again. He waved his right hand, and summoned the full power of his cultivation base to strike out with the most powerful blow he could muster.

BOOM!

The Demonic Incarnation fell back. Green light flashed as a huge wound was opened up. The Demonic Incarnation’s right arm was lopped off; it transformed into 10,000 cultivators in mid-air, and as soon as they appeared, a massive power swept over them and ripped them into pieces.

BOOM!

Mount Termination crushed down, and Meng Hao coughed up blood. A multitude of cracks appeared on the Demonic Incarnation, which then rapidly began to spread out. Soon, numerous cross-legged Blood Demon Sect disciples became visible, expressions of hopelessness covering their faces.

BOOM!

The final salvo came from the spell formation formed from the pink beams of light. Everything rumbled as the light transformed the land into a world of pink. The light beams then shrank down into the form of an enormous pink talon, which slashed out at Meng Hao's Demonic Incarnation.

The Demonic Incarnation was incapable of holding out any longer. It appeared to be on the verge of collapse, and many of the cultivators inside died. Currently, only 30,000 remained alive.

"Retreat!" Meng Hao shouted. "Back to the sect!" A tremor ran through the Demonic Incarnation as the 30,000 cultivators were ejected from its back.

Meng Hao was the last to retreat. As soon as he left, his right hand flickered in an incantation gesture and then pointed at the almost-shattered Demonic Incarnation.

"Detonate!!"

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# Chapter 737: A Leaf!

A shocking boom rumbled out. Even Patriarch Blood Demon and his opponents couldn’t help but notice the detonation of the Demonic Incarnation.

The force of the explosion actually helped the 30,000 Blood Demon Sect in their retreat. However, to others in the immediate vicinity of the blast, it was like a devastating attack.

The shocked Dao Seeking expert from the Solitary Sword Sect shot forward, determined to block the force of the explosion, as did the puppet from the Golden Frost Sect. Even the 5th Li Clan Patriarch did the same.

If they did not do so, then the losses their various sects and clans would experience would be far too critical.

Even so, there were still many cultivators who simply couldn’t avoid the blast, and were incinerated.

In the blink of an eye, the Solitary Sword Sect, the Golden Frost Sect and the Li Clan, as well as the rogue cultivators, all sustained heavy losses. Thanks to the Solitary Sword Sect’s Dao Seeking expert, the Golden Frost Sect’s puppet, and the 5th Li Clan patriarch, the losses were reduced by about half. Were it not for them, even more would have died.

Unfortunately for the nearby rogue cultivators, no one was around to assist them. The ripples from the explosion completely wiped them out, along with the remaining silver snakes. Afterwards, not a trace remained of them.

Fundamentally speaking, this battle was not something they were qualified to participate in. They had believed that, with the assistance of the four great powers, exterminating the Blood Demon Sect would be a simple task. They had never imagined that the Blood Demon Sect would be so fearsome.

And this… was only the first spell formation!

When the Demonic Incarnation collapsed, the air distorted, and the five mountain peaks of the Blood Demon Sect suddenly became visible!

The five mountain peaks were actually located in an enormous basin in the ground. They were surrounded by a five-layered shield which emanated brilliant, blinding light. It was something that could not be bypassed save by battering it into nonexistence, one layer at a time.

That was actually exactly what the Blood Demon Sect wanted. The four great powers would have to smash against the shields and withstand counterattacks. That meant that in order to break the shield, they would have to pay a price.

Borrowing momentum from the explosion of the Demonic Incarnation, Meng Hao led the 30,000 Blood Demon Sect disciples back into the sect. As soon as they passed the second layer of the shield, other Blood Demon Sect disciples arrived to give aid to them, helping them along and also giving them medicinal pills to consume.

As for Meng Hao, his face was pale white. He had significantly depleted himself in the course of the battle, but now was not the time for rest. He stood there, surveying the scene outside of the spell formation shield.

The two Ironblood Patriarchs sat cross-legged off to the side, surrounded by more than 20,000 disciples. The forces of Mount Ironblood were the ones responsible for maintaining the first layer of the shield created by the second formation.

Behind Meng Hao, the cultivators on the other various mountain peaks were all in the process of maintaining the other four shield layers of the second spell formation.

Outside the shield, the cultivators of the Solitary Sword Sect, the Golden Frost Sect and the Li Clan were all shaken by the events of moments ago. However, after they saw the five mountain peaks of the Blood Demon Sect, their killing intent soared.

Immediately, a clamor arose as the cultivators of the four great powers began to call out.

“Kill them! Don’t leave a single one alive!”

“The time has come to eradicate the Blood Demon Sect!”

“From now on, there will be no Blood Demon Sect in the Southern Domain!”

Even as their voices echoed out, the remaining several hundred thousand cultivators charged toward the Blood Demon Sect.

There were so many enemy cultivators that it was essentially impossible to see the end of their ranks. They seemed infinite. Earlier, when Meng Hao had been fused with the enormous Demonic Incarnation, he had been able to see the extent of their forces clearly. Now that the Demonic Incarnation had been destroyed and he had retreated to this position, all he could see was cultivators, stretching out in all directions.

The sheer numbers involved caused his scalp to go numb.

The cultivators whistled through the air toward the enormous five-layered shield formed by the Blood Demon Sect’s second spell formation.

Even though the shield was in place, the Blood Demon Sect disciples had not lost their fighting spirit, and were just waiting for the enemy forces to slam into the shield.

However, it was at this point that a bright beam of light suddenly streaked toward the battlefield from high in the sky. It sliced through the air, moving at an incredible, indescribable speed. It almost looked like the Heavens were being split apart in shocking fashion.

What was now visible was a leaf!

It was a flying, burning leaf, emitting an astonishing aura!

Its target was no single person, but rather, the Blood Demon Sect’s second spell formation!

“What gall!” roared Patriarch Blood Demon furiously, who was still in the midst of battling with the other Patriarchs. Immediately, he waved his hand, and a glittering, bloody light shot toward the incoming leaf.

Rumbling could be heard as the leaf decayed by more than half. However, there was still a streak of green that made it through the blood-colored light. The streak continued on, slamming into the shield of the second spell formation, piercing through the fifth layer, the fourth, and the third, before finally stopping at the second.

The fifth, fourth, and third layers all shook and trembled. Although they did not collapse, they now had holes punched in them!

Patriarch Blood Demon let out a furious shout, but the other Patriarchs went all out to prevent him from doing anything.

When the gaps in the shield appeared, the faces of the Blood Demon Sect disciples fell.

At the same time, killing intent could be seen in the eyes of the hundreds of thousand of cultivators on the outside. They immediately changed directions and headed toward the places where the gaps had been opened.

The holes were not large, but were something that the spell formation was incapable of closing up.

Facing such a situation, and such enemies, looks of dour hopelessness appeared on the faces of the Blood Demon Sect disciples.

“Dammit…. how do we fight back now?!?!”

“They punched holes in the shields! Those are biggest areas of weakness now! How do we fight?!”

“Our Blood Prince killed so many of them, yet there’s still more of them, as far as the eye can see… do we have any hope left at all?” Facing hordes of attacking enemies and holes punched through to the second shield, the Blood Demon Sect disciples fell into a mute despair.

Xu Qing had long since emerged from Blood Prince Gorge, where she had stood the entire time, nervously watching Meng Hao. When he finally returned safely, she had breathed a sigh of relief. The new developments, however, caused her face to go pale.

Meng Hao looked up into the sky, and began to pant nervously for a moment before calming himself down. He looked around at the despairing Blood Demon Sect disciples and did nothing to try to rouse their spirits. He wasn’t willing to do so. He already felt guilty because of the war; how could he directly ask them to go put their lives on the line?

He couldn’t.

Suddenly, a sigh could be heard echoing amongst the crowds. The hunchbacked old man from the fifth mountain peak slowly walked out. Clearly, he intended to head toward the gap in the fifth shield layer.

Behind him was the pretty girl, his apprentice. “Master….” she said, her eyes filled with anxiety; clearly she had guessed her master’s plan.

“I’ve lived for too long and seen too many things,” he said with a smile. “Don’t worry, I’ll be fine.” He was just about to step out when suddenly Meng Hao strode forward.

He couldn’t ask the Blood Demon Sect to fight, but there was one thing he could do. He walked out, and as he did, he looked back toward Xu Qing and gave her a slight smile. Then, coldness filled his eyes and he advanced onward.

Next, he appeared outside of the shield, directly in front of the only weak space, that one gaping hole.

“Blood Prince!” said the hunchbacked old man, gaping.

“I will hold this gap!” said Meng Hao coolly. He obviously planned to use himself as the stopper to prevent anything from entering.

“My right arm already has Dao Seeking power,” he thought, “and the Blood Demon Grand Magic is perfect for fighting against groups! If I can hold out for only ten more days, then my second true self will awaken! It’s time to fight!”

When Meng Hao appeared on the outside of the shield, the Blood Demon Sect disciples behind him were shocked.

“Blood Prince!”

“Blood Prince, you….”

Meng Hao did not look back. He took a deep breath and rotated his cultivation base. He was tired, but he ignored the feeling, and pushed himself to the peak of his power.

His Spirit Severing aura exploded out, and his right arm gradually began to exude the pressure of Dao Seeking. He waved his hand through the air, and the Ninth Mountain magically appeared around him, as well as the Black White Pearls.

Next, he retrieved the Blood Immortal Mask from his bag of holding and slipped it onto his face.

Rumbling filled the air as hundreds of thousands of cultivators closed in on him.

It was at this point that a roar suddenly echoed out from within the mask. A beam of red light shot out to appear next to Meng Hao. It was none other than… the fully reformed Blood Mastiff!

It had died before, but now that it had reappeared, it was even more ferocious than before. Its Spirit Severing aura roiled out, and its energy surged.

Meng Hao waved his hand again, and Time Sword tips appeared. They were objects that were useless against the peak Dao Seeking powers. However, they were still incisive to the extreme. Shockingly, ten Time Sword tips flew out!

Meng Hao had specially prepared them just for this battle, using the copper mirror.

The ten Time Sword tips swirled about in the air, transforming into a sword formation. As it rotated, a bloody glow appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes.

“My Eternal stratum makes my stamina… almost limitless!

“My Resurrection Lily, my Spirit Severing Treasure, has been hibernating for too long… the time has come for it to appear!” Meng Hao’s life force surged up, and at the same time, a shocking, illusory Resurrection Lily suddenly appeared.

It had five colors, but shockingly, a sixth color could just barely be made out on one of the petals.

The sixth color faded in and out. Meng Hao was convinced that it wouldn’t take long before the sixth color would appear in full. When that sixth color became stable, it would only need to bloom with one more color to achieve Immortal Ascension!

The sight of the ferocious Resurrection Lily caused the faces of many of the incoming hundreds of thousands of cultivators to flicker.

However, they did not cease their approach. The scene from the inside of the shield was that of Meng Hao, alone, facing hundreds of thousands of enemies. It was an image that would be indelibly burned into the minds of each and every Blood Demon Sect disciple, a memory that would remain for an eternity.

“DIE!” shouted Meng Hao. Killing intent blazed in his eyes as he performed a double handed incantation, then suddenly pointed out. The Blood Mastiff charged, and the the Time Sword Formation shot out. The Resurrection Lily behind him writhed as its tentacles shot out like whips toward the incoming waves of enemies.

The slaughter… had begun.

The power of Meng Hao’s right arm was incredible. A single punch could cause Heaven and Earth to shake.

A glow of blood emanated out from the Blood Immortal Mask; this was the Blood Immortal divine ability. Without a face, a single word, flames of war unify!

Ceaseless rumbling filled the air as the Blood Demon Grand Magic appeared.

Despite all of this, he was still facing hundreds of thousands of cultivators. It was like a single praying mantis standing up to an army. The initial onslaught sent blood spraying from his mouth, and his fleshly body instantly began to explode.

However, in the very instant that the signs of collapse appeared, his fleshly body fused back together under the power of the Eternal stratum. Meng Hao could almost be considered unkillable. He remained there in front of the gap, carrying out slaughter just as before.

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# Chapter 738: A Silhouette Like a Mountain

When the Blood Demon Grand Magic was unfurled, the golden vortex sent endless quantities of blood and qi into Meng Hao, along with spirit meridians and cultivation bases.

RUUMMMBBLLLLEEE!

Only ten breaths of time had passed since the initial onslaught, yet Meng Hao’s body had fallen apart three times. The third time was because of a combined attack from the early Dao Seeking expert from the Solitary Sword Sect, the Golden Frost Sect puppet, and tens of thousands of cultivators.

Despite all of this, he refused to budge, nor did he allow anyone to enter through the gap.

When the Blood Demon Sect disciples behind the shield saw his body on the verge of collapse, blood smeared on his skin and soaking his clothes, their eyes went red. There were even some from the group of 30,000 survivors from the first spell formation who leaped up and began to charge toward the battlefield.

“Blood Prince!!”

“Blood Prince, we will fight with you!!”

However, even as they charged forward, Meng Hao waved his sleeve behind him, causing a powerful wind to rise up and carry them back behind the safety of the shield.

“All of you, stay back!”

He looked back, and determination could be seen in his eyes. It was a look that said, This is my fight. To Meng Hao, this was the only option that could leave him with a clear conscience. Besides, his body was difficult to destroy, which could not be said of the others.

BOOOOMMMMM!

Meng Hao fell back, a ferocious expression on his face. By this time, multiple Blood Demon Grand Magic vortexes had appeared in the area, nine in total. Each and every one was gold in color, and unleashed boundless gravitational force.

The cultivators who found themselves trapped in the vortexes could only watch in shock as their bodies withered rapidly, and their cultivation bases were sucked out.

Massive quantities of qi and blood flowed toward Meng Hao, which he absorbed, causing his fleshly body to grow powerful to an incredible degree. His cultivation base also climbed higher, making him… even harder to destroy.

A strange glow appeared in his eyes. He would not let anyone into the gap in the shield behind him, not even… over his dead body!

BOOM!!

Even with the vast quantity of qi, blood, and cultivation base power that were replenishing him, he was facing up against assaults from hundreds of thousands of enemies. There were also many powerful experts amongst them. Blood sprayed from his mouth, and his body once again exploded into a cloud of blood and gore.

In the blink of an eye, however, it seemed that the cloud underwent a reversal of time and coalesced back into the form of Meng Hao. Meng Hao’s eyes were bloodshot as he roared and yet again unleashed the Blood Demon Grand Magic.

The Ninth Mountain appeared up ahead, and descended with massive rumblings. Along with the Time Sword Formation, it swept across the battlefield madly. The Blood Mastiff was not faring well, and didn't seem capable of holding out much longer. However, with Meng Hao there, it would continue to fight.

But would Meng Hao really allow the Blood Mastiff to face such danger? He waved his right hand, causing the Blood Mastiff to return to the blood-colored mask. Then, he performed an incantation gesture, and a tenth Blood Demon Grand Magic vortex appeared.

"If I can hold on with the Blood Demon Grand Magic, then there's the possibility that the vortex will reach a certain point that it can sustain my defense of this position indefinitely!" As he gritted his teeth, Resurrection Lily tentacles shot out from behind him, creating a dense barrier in front of him.

"Looking to die?!" someone said, along with a cold snort. Three old Spirit Severing cultivators appeared, standing on glowing halos that appeared to be a spell formation. They immediately shot toward Meng Hao.

Behind them were tens of thousands of cultivators wielding countless varieties of divine abilities. If Meng Hao had faced any of these magics by themselves, he could just ignore them. However, their overwhelming numbers caused the sky to dim and the land to quake.

It was like a massive flood filled of murderous hate, surging down onto Meng Hao.

The three Spirit Severing cultivators closed in, and Meng Hao's killing intent flickered as he realized that these three were experts from the Li Clan. He performed an incantation with his left hand, and Blood Immortal divine abilities appeared. Rumbling filled the air as they fused with the Resurrection Lily. A blood-red flower shot out to defend against the incoming flood.

Massive explosions boomed out as Meng Hao unleashed all his magic against the torrent of enemies. Unfortunately, he could only hold them back temporarily. Soon, they burst through, and the three Spirit Severing cultivators bore down on Meng Hao, roaring. As they neared, the halos beneath their feet shot out ghost images that closed in on Meng Hao.

“Seal!”

“Seal!”

“Seal!”

Immediately, the ghost images of the three halos began to emanate brilliant glows, as well as shocking, explosive sealing power. They descended onto Meng Hao, preparing to seal him away.

It was at this exact same moment that six more people flew out from the crowds.

Of the six, three were from the Solitary Sword Sect and three were from the Golden Frost Sect. The air around them distorted as they unleashed their most powerful, shocking magical techniques.

“DIE!!”

Nine incredible Spirit Severing cultivators all attacked with full force. Furthermore, not far behind them was the Solitary Sword Sect’s early Dao Seeking expert, and the Golden Frost Sect’s puppet. They glared at Meng Hao like tigers eyeing a prey. They didn’t need to personally attack right now; once Meng Hao was either dead or sealed in place, they could enter the gap in the shield and then begin to carry out their slaughter.

It wasn’t even necessary to keep Meng Hao sealed for a long period of time. A few short breaths of time was all they needed.

The Blood Demon Sect disciples in the shield could see that a perilous situation was developing, and their anxiety grew. Li Shiqi looked at Meng Hao’s silhouette in the outside world and bit her lip, her expression one of worry.

Wang Youcai sat quietly, but killing intent burned hotter and hotter in his eyes. He hated the fact that his cultivation base was insufficient, and that he did not possess enough latent talent to be Chosen.

Xu Qing gazed at Meng Hao in silence, her eyes filled with an affection that seemed like it might be able to melt the world away. Meng Hao's current state caused her heart to ache with distress.

The six Spirit Severing Patriarchs of the Blood Demon Sect, as well as the hunchbacked old man from the fifth mountain peak, stared blankly at what was happening, at the Blood Prince that they had initially refused to acknowledge.

A rumbling suddenly echoed out from the three Li Clan Patriarchs. Meng Hao's eyes began to glow with a bright light, and he struck out violently with his right hand.

The blow caused everything to tremble and shake; this was a Dao Seeking blow!

The three incoming halos trembled and seemed to be on the verge of collapsing. However, they were able to continue on, causing Meng Hao to take a deep breath. The surrounding golden vortexes suddenly shattered. The force of the shattering sucked away any remaining qi and blood from the people trapped inside, all of which then merged into Meng Hao. Finally, he punched out again.

BANG!

The three glowing halos were crushed as easily as dry weeds!

The three Li Clan Patriarchs' faces fell, and they employed divine abilities to defend themselves. However, blood still sprayed from their mouths, and one of them let out a miserable shriek as his body exploded. Looks of astonishment appeared on the faces of the two that remained, who then clenched their jaws and charged toward Meng Hao.

“DIE!!”

By now, the six cultivators from the Solitary Sword Sect and the Golden Frost Sect were closing in on Meng Hao.

At the same time, vast quantities of cultivation base power surged into Meng Hao. He raised his right hand and pointed up to the sky, causing the Ninth Mountain to appear. It immediately spread out to fight back against all eight of the incoming enemies.

Booms rattled out, and blood oozed out of the corners of Meng Hao's mouth. A ferocious expression filled his face as the illusory Ninth Mountain shook.

"Now's our chance!" said the early Dao Seeking cultivator. He and the Golden Frost Sect puppet flew up into the air. At the same time, Meng Hao pointed toward the two of them.

"Demon Sealing, Eighth Hex!"

Demonic qi roiled out like strands of silk to entangle the two of them. Although they were able to slough it off in the space of only a single breath, that was all the time Meng Hao needed to unleash a divine ability.

"Ninth Mountain Destruction!" Instantly, the Ninth Mountain that surrounded him exploded. The eight Spirit Severing experts were sent tumbling backward, blood spraying from their mouths. The Solitary Sword Sect early Dao Seeking expert and the Golden Frost Sect puppet were forced to stop in their tracks.

"Kill him!" roared the eight Spirit Severing cultivators. In response, hundreds of thousands of cultivators roared and then began to unleash divine abilities. Shocking booms could be heard as a rain of magic descended onto Meng Hao.

The air distorted around Meng Hao as he stood in place, panting heavily, his cold eyes flickering across the crowds. Currently, he was silhouetted against the brilliant glow of the magical techniques and divine abilities of hundreds of thousands of cultivators. His Eternal stratum once again surged into operation, and he held his ground.

None shall pass!

Behind him, the disciples of the Blood Demon Sect looked on with trembling hearts. For the rest of their lives, they would never be able to forget the image of the Blood Prince’s silhouette.

It was a silhouette like a mountain!

Unfortunately, the war was not concluded, and the fighting raged on.

Time continued to pass in much the same manner. In the blink of an eye, three days had gone by. Now, only seven days remained until Meng Hao’s second true self awakened!

Meng Hao couldn’t remember exactly how many times his body had fallen to pieces. Were it not for his Eternal stratum, he would long since be dead.

By now, he could unleash more than fifty golden vortices.

Terrifying amounts of qi and blood poured into him, as well as cultivation base power. And yet… it was not enough.

He trembled, and his eyes were shot with blood. His world was now a world completely the color of blood.

During those three days, Meng Hao finally came to understand that there was nothing truly Eternal in the world. Even though his body was restored over and over again, the speed with which it occurred was slowing, and he was even beginning to show signs of withering.

Behind him, the Blood Demon Sect disciples watched with red eyes as their Blood Prince used his own body to block the single gap in the shield. Their hearts felt as if they were being stabbed through with blades. Even someone completely apathetic would be shaken by Meng Hao’s figure.

Even the Patriarchs engaged in battle with Patriarch Blood Demon were moved by the scene unfolding below.

Finally, after three days of slaughter, silence broke out down below. Of the hundreds of thousands of enemy cultivators, many had died. But their numbers were vast, so the group as a whole didn’t really care. The only thing they cared about was that Meng Hao was blocking the gap. He was like a god; with him holding the pass, the entire army was blocked on the other side.

Meng Hao’s clothes were soaked in blood, and his expression was one of exhaustion. His eyes were completely shot with blood. To his hundreds of thousands of opponents, he had become like an unforgettable nightmare.

Meng Hao stared out at the hundreds of thousands of cultivators, and they stared back. In truth, by this point, many of them had begun to secretly admire him.

He was one man, defending one gap. He might have extraordinary divine abilities, and he might have a bizarre fleshly body that could revive itself, but even with that, what he was doing still required courage.

He was doing something that few other people could do.

Furthermore, they could see that despite the fact that his fleshly body could heal itself, he was showing signs of withering. He was obviously reaching his limit.

The early Dao Seeking old man from the Solitary Sword Sect looked at him coldly, and killing intent flickered in his eyes. “I haven’t admired very many people in my life,” he said. “From today on, you are one of those few!

“Since you have some mysterious magic that prevents you from dying, then let’s see how many strikes from our legacy precious treasure you can withstand!

“Release the legacy precious treasure!”

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# Chapter 739: Patriarch Fifth Peak!

Legacy precious treasure!

In the Dao Reserve of every sect was some sort of precious item that would ensure the continued existence and development of the sect, and could also be used as a threat to protect it from its neighbors.

The Solitary Sword Sect’s Dao Reserve was multitudinous. However, it was the bamboo sword that truly intimidated the rest of the Southern Domain!

The sword came from the Ancient Dao Lakes, and was almost infinitely powerful. It could unleash different amounts of power depending on who wielded it, and after extensive research, the Solitary Sword Sect came to the conclusion that its true powers… could only be unleashed by an Immortal.

Unfortunately, although Immortals had appeared in the Solitary Sword Sect before, they were only false Immortals. As far as true Immortals went… from ancient times until the present, not a single one had ever appeared in the entire Southern Domain!

There was no need to even mention the Western Desert. True Immortals had only ever appeared in the Eastern Lands!

The early Dao Seeking expert from the Solitary Sword Sect took a deep breath and lifted his right hand. Shockingly, a leaf appeared again, which quickly began to grow. In the blink of an eye, a stalk of bamboo could be seen, which then peeled away to reveal… the bamboo sword!

“This sword is only a subcomponent of the main treasure,” the old man said coolly. “However, considering the level of my cultivation base, even if I had the full sword, I would only be able to wield a portion of its power.” With that, he raised the sword up, and abundant life force surged in the area. It was as if everything had turned green, and innumerable motes of light began to swirl around. The entire scene was extremely magnificent.

The Dao Seeking puppet from the Golden Frost Sect gave a cold snort. It lifted its right hand, and the tiny, hand-sized rock in its hand rose up into the air and began to expand. In the blink of an eye, it was a 3,000-meter-tall mountain.

It exuded an overbearing will, which exploded out to cover the area around the puppet. Ripples appeared, which transformed into a river that swept across the area. There was also a pulsating aura that emerged from the rock mountain.

This rock was also a precious legacy treasure, and was even more domineering than the Solitary Sword Sect’s bamboo sword. Everything beneath the mountain seemed about to crack and shatter.

The 5th Li Clan Patriarch was watching from off in the distance, his expression the same as ever, but his eyes cold and grim. He swished his sleeve, and the Feng Shui compass flew out. The countless magical symbols on the Feng Shui compass sank down and then began to glitter with shining light, giving off the feeling that there was some sort of enigmatic, undeterminable natural law at work.

All three of these people were not using their main treasures, but subcomponents. The true treasures were up in the air, wielded by the three Patriarchs who were battling with Patriarch Blood Demon.

When the three precious treasures appeared, the surrounding hundreds of thousands of cultivators slowly began to back up, yielding the battlefield to them and denying Meng Hao any opportunity to utilize the Blood Demon Grand Magic.

Meng Hao’s pupils constricted, and an intense sensation of crisis welled up inside of him. However, his expression remained as calm as ever. He had experienced such feelings of danger at virtually every moment during this battle.

“Cleave!” the Solitary Sword Sect Dao Seeking expert said coolly. His hand descended, and the Bamboo Sword sucked in all the green light that it had previously emitted and then transformed it into brilliant sword of light. It flew up into the air and then transformed into half of a green greatsword.

The greatsword, filled with indescribable power, slashed down toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao looked up.

“Ninth Mountain!” he said, and the Ninth Mountain appeared, only to immediately collapse.

Wooden Time Sword tips appeared, combining into a sword formation that instantly began to spin rapidly. And yet, this formation also fell apart almost immediately.

The Bamboo Sword continued relentlessly toward Meng Hao, who lifted his head up and roared, simultaneously stretching both hands out in front of him. In his left hand, a white fog appeared, and in his right hand, a black fog. They transformed into the Black White Pearls, which then flew up to resist the greatsword.

A huge boom echoed out. The greatsword shuddered and the Black White Pearls trembled. Meng Hao coughed up a mouthful of blood, and the pearls vanished.

The greatsword seemed just on the verge of slashing into Meng Hao when a bloody glow suddenly appeared in his eyes. Cultivation base power exploded out, which he focused into his right hand and then punched out toward the descending sword.

Everything shook. The sword stopped in place, and Meng Hao’s hand looked as though it might be ripped to shreds. An indescribable pressure crushed down onto him, and cracking sounds could be heard from inside of him. It almost seemed like he couldn’t stand up to the power weighing down on him.

Countless rips appeared all over his body. Although they healed almost as soon as they appeared, the matchless speed with which more appeared made it so that Meng Hao was quickly covered in blood. It looked like he was about to be torn to pieces at any moment.

At the same time, the Golden Frost Sect puppet raised its hand, causing the 3,000-meter-tall mountain to teleport to a position directly above Meng Hao. It instantly began to crush downward.

BOOM!

Meng Hao’s body fell apart again, to be held together only by the Eternal stratum. The greatsword continued its slashing descent, sword qi swirling, causing Meng Hao’s body to fall apart again. The stony mountain continued its descent, emitting massive amounts of crushing pressure.

It was at this point that the 5th Li Clan Patriarch gave a cold snort and waved his hand, causing the Feng Shui compass to fly out.

“Black flames and hellfire, killing intent refined into a soul!” A vicious gleam appeared in the man’s eyes as he spoke. Black-colored fire suddenly spewed out of the Feng Shui compass, which then transformed into numerous black flame birds. Fully a thousand appeared, which then shot toward Meng Hao’s collapsing figure.

They were clearly aiming to strike a fatal blow!

Even with the Eternal stratum, Meng Hao would surely perish when facing an onslaught from precious treasures like these!

By this point, the Blood Demon Sect disciples were all going mad.

“Blood Prince!!” Not a single one held back. All of the Blood Demon Sect disciples transformed into beams of light as they utilized the top speed they could muster to shoot forward.

However, in the moment that they began to charge, the hunchbacked old man let out a sigh. His hunched back suddenly straightened a bit, and his features changed. He looked different than the old man from before.

“Shield, collapse!” He pushed his hands forcefully out in front of him, and an indescribable power spread out. As soon as it touched the fifth layer of the shield, it rippled and then, in the blink of an eye, shattered into pieces.

The shattering released an incredible, surging force that spread out in all directions. The intensity of it instantly caused the three precious treasures to stop in place. Then, they started to emanate ripples that caused the ground to quake and the air to rip.

Borrowing the force of the shattering, the hunchbacked old man dashed forward, reaching the location of the three precious treasures in only a moment. He raised up both hands, then jerked them down.

BOOM!

His cultivation base exploded out, creating a huge shield that covered over Meng Hao and his collapsing body. It seemed the old man was using all the power he could muster to protect Meng Hao and give him time to recover. As for him, he fought back alone against the three precious treasures.

The greatsword descended, and the hunchbacked old man’s body trembled. Blood spewed from his mouth, and a vicious gleam appeared in his eyes. Once again, his hunched back straightened, and his features changed to that of a middle-aged man. As he stood his ground, his cultivation base suddenly changed to that of the Second Severing.

Given the brief respite, Meng Hao’s body fused together once more, and it seemed that in a moment, it would be completely whole again.

That was when the mountain completely crushed down. The hunchbacked old man’s face went pale, and blood sprayed out from his entire body, forming something like a mist. His hunched back straightened even further, and he now looked like a young man.

By this point, Meng Hao’s body was more than half materialized.

Unfortunately, that was when the black flame birds arrived. Under their onslaught, the hunchbacked old man lifted his head up and roared. His back was now completely straightened, and he looked like a teenager. His cultivation base surged again, and he was in the Third Severing.

He now appeared to be fourteen or fifteen years old. His features were handsome, and his energy surged. At the same time, his body burst into flames. Not flames of darkness, but flames of life force.

As he burned his life force, his cultivation base once again climbed up until it was at the early Dao Seeking stage, where it now contained natural law.

He was using his own life force to fight back against the three precious treasures.

The scene was moving even to the hundreds of thousands of enemy cultivators.

“Master!!” cried his apprentice, the pretty young woman. Tears were streaming down her face as she realized what he had chosen to do.

“Patriarch Fifth Peak!!”

“Patriarch!”

As the Blood Demon Sect disciples watched what was happening, their hearts quivered, and their eyes filled with tears.

Burning one’s life force in such a way would result in certain death!

Finally, Meng Hao’s body completely restored itself, and he opened his eyes to look at the teenager burning his life force to give him time to recover.

Although his fleshly body had been on the point of shattering, his soul and divine sense had remained, so he was aware of everything happening around him.

“You….” he said, his eyes filled with grief.

“Blood Prince,” said the teenager, his voice ancient and archaic, “you’ve done too much for the Blood Demon Sect already. This time, no arguing with me over who does what. This time, allow me to protect you!” He laughed happily, but his body quivered as he fought back against the three precious treasures. Even by burning his life force, he would not be able to hold out for very long.

“Get out of here!” he suddenly said, glancing back at Meng Hao. “I’m going to die, but before I do, I’ll sully these three precious treasures, making it impossible for them to be used against you, at least temporarily. The Patriarch is fighting, and so am I… but soon, everything will be up to you! Go!”

Meng Hao trembled as he realized that Patriarch Fifth Peak was already mentally prepared to die, and that there would be no changing his mind. Meng Hao’s heart felt like it was about to be ripped to shreds, but decisiveness appeared in his bloodshot eyes and he immediately retreated.

When he passed into the fourth layer of the shield, the teenager who had once been an old man smiled and continued to burn his life force.

“I’ve lived for too long, and seen too many things….” He turned back to look at his apprentice back in the Blood Demon Sect. He gave her a kind smile, then closed his eyes. The flames of his burning life force turned a bright, majestic red. Suddenly, his body exploded, releasing shocking, blood-colored undulations that slammed into the precious treasures, staining them red.

The precious treasures immediately grew dark and drab, as if their spirits had been sullied. They instantly began to fall toward the ground.

“MASTER!!” cried the heartbroken disciples of the fifth mountain peak. Tears ran like blood down the face of the pretty young woman.

All of the disciples of the Blood Demon Sect were trembling. Their previous hopelessness was now gone, replaced by frenzied hatred.

They needed no rousing speeches now. The Blood Demon Sect was like a sword, ready to kill!

Meng Hao looked up, and a shocking red glow could be seen in his eyes.

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# Chapter 740: Fourth Level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic!

The subcomponents of the precious legacy treasures of the Solitary Sword Sect, Golden Frost Sect, and Li Clan were sullied and fell to the ground. However, because of the heroism displayed by Patriarch Fifth Peak, there was something that occurred which no one noticed, not even Meng Hao. A unique halo suddenly flickered into being around the Solitary Sword Sect’s legacy precious treasure.

Apparently, the halo had always been there, but had been sealed and suppressed. Now that the item was sullied, the seal weakened a bit, allowing the halo to become visible for the first time.

Although this sword not the main treasure, only a subcomponent, the reaction that had begun was like a spark thrown onto a bale of hay. That spark, although tiny, it was impossible to extinguish. Furthermore, it even affected the main treasure in the hand of the black-robed old man up in mid-air, who was currently locked in combat with Patriarch Blood Demon’s clone.

“What’s going on?!” he cried, even in the midst of performing an incantation. Next to him was the true legacy precious treasure of the Solitary Sword Sect, the bamboo sword. Before, it had been matchlessly sharp, and could emanate astonishing pressure. Even Patriarch Blood Demon had to be careful of its potency.

Now, though, the sword was emanating a unique aura. In fact, it was an aura… that seemed like Time power!

When the aura appeared, the bamboo sword became even more astonishing, causing joy to rise in the heart of the black-robed man from the Solitary Sword Sect.

Patriarch Blood Demon frowned. He could spread his power among many clones, or concentrate it in just one. A single clone could easily defeat any peak Dao Seeking cultivator, just as he had done with Patriarch Six-Daos.

Now, however, he was facing three peak Dao Seeking experts, all of whom wielded legacy precious treasures. It was only by increasing the number of clones he was using that he could deal with the sheer number of foes.

Furthermore, deep in his heart, Patriarch Blood Demon had the feeling that someone was watching him, as if a gaze from some unknown place had suddenly come to be fixed on him.

“It’s too bad I can’t let my soul leave the Blood Pond….” he thought with a sigh. However, not even a scrap of fear could be seen in his expression. He was completely confident that no matter what violent upheavals occurred, he could resolve all crises that arose.

That confidence had always existed in his heart, and had not faded in the least, no matter how bad the situation seemed.

The battle in mid-air continued as he used clones to fight three peak Dao Seeking experts, as well as Patriarch Six-Daos, who had used some secret art to burn his longevity and temporarily restore his cultivation base to the point where he could battle Patriarch Blood Demon.

The hatred in his heart for Patriarch Blood Demon had turned into a festering obsession.

RUMBLE!

The fighting on the ground below was also changing.

With the fifth shield layer having collapsed, Patriarch Fifth Peak having fallen, and the three subcomponent treasures sullied, hundreds of thousands of cultivators were left shaken. At the same time, crowds of Blood Demon Sect disciples were waiting behind the fourth shield layer, looking like monstrous, blood-colored swords.

“Storm the breach!” roared the early Dao Seeking cultivator from the Solitary Sword Sect, his eyes sparkling with coldness. He was in the vanguard position, flanked by the Golden Frost Sect puppet and the Li Clan cultivator, as well as numerous Spirit Severing experts. All of them shot toward the fourth shield layer.

“Die!” hundreds of thousands of cultivators joined the charge, their energy surging. Once again, they looked like floodwaters ready to completely submerge and shatter the Blood Demon Sect.

Inside the fourth shield layer, Meng Hao took a deep breath and then strode forward. This time, he was followed by the two Ironblood Patriarchs as well as more than ten thousand Blood Demon Sect disciples, who radiated killing intent.

Their eyes were filled with such decisiveness and determination that Meng Hao knew he could do nothing to prevent them from fighting.

“Since that’s the case, today, we will fight to the bitter end!” He looked up, and his eyes shone with sparkling redness. Time Sword tips swirled through the air around him, transforming into the shape of a lotus that emanated an astonishing power of Time. Even the air seemed to affected by that power.

At the same time, a faint bloody glow became visible around Meng Hao. It started out as what appeared to be a ghost image, but when it moved forward, it became clear that it was a Blood Clone!

The Ji Clan Blood Clone!

“FIGHT!” Meng Hao’s right hand flashed in an incantation and the Time Sword Formation shot forward. The Blood Clone’s eyes glittered, and a blood-colored glow shot up into the sky, along with an evil will. Then it transformed into a streak of red that pounced onto one cultivator after another.

Every time it pounced, its victim would tremble and then let out a miserable shriek. It would only take a moment for that person’s blood to be completely drained. After they became a desiccated husk, the Blood Clone would fly out looking like it had just enjoyed a grand meal. It would then shoot gluttonously toward its next victim.

Gradually, a bit of consciousness seemed to be awakening within the Blood Clone, which was one reason that Meng Hao was hesitant to use it in battle.

On previous occasions, he had dealt with resistance from the Blood Clone, and he was certain that the more blood it absorbed, the harder it would be to control. In fact, there was also the possibility of direct rebellion.

Right now, though, in this battle, Meng Hao did not have the luxury to worry about the future. Therefore, the Blood Clone appeared in the battle, and the glow of blood it cast rose up into the sky. The Blood Clone… could be considered undying, and was bizarre in appearance. Although it did not kill vast numbers of enemies, the sight of it caused quite a few people on the battlefield to be alarmed and bewildered.

“What’s that!?!?”

“Don’t let that blood-colored thing touch you! It’s evil!”

“The Blood Demon Sect only cultivates Demon magic. Malicious magical arts like that are why the Blood Demon Sect deserves to be exterminated!”

Bloodcurdling screams, shouts of anger, cries of madness, and the sounds of explosions fused together into sound waves that shook the entire battlefield.

Amidst the cacophony of sound, the two Ironblood Patriarchs and the ten thousand Blood Demon Sect disciples met the enemy head on.

As for Meng Hao, he single-handedly pinned down the Solitary Sword Sect early Dao Seeking Patriarch, the Golden Frost Sect puppet, and the Li Clan cultivator, as well as several Spirit Severing experts. Golden vortexes of the third level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic spun in all directions. By use of his various magical techniques, he ensured that these powerful opponents could not break out of the area.

The task was a strenuous one for Meng Hao, especially against the old man from the Solitary Sword Sect, who snorted coldly and unleashed natural law. Then he strode forward, and appeared near the two Ironblood Patriarchs, toward whom he leveled a deadly attack.

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed with killing intent.

“Detonate!” he growled, causing one of the Time Sword tips in the Lotus Sword Formation to explode. The power of Time burst out, transforming into a tempest that swept out in all directions.

Peak Dao Seeking experts could disregard such a Time tempest, but not an early Dao Seeking cultivator. The old man’s face flickered, and he forced himself to a stop, then retreated.

“Spirit Severing cultivators!” he cried. “New orders. Pin him down immediately!”

The Solitary Sword Sect’s Spirit Severing cultivators immediately shot forward. The Golden Frost Sect Puppet and the Li Clan cultivator also issued similar orders. It only took a moment for numerous Spirit Severing cultivators to charge toward Meng Hao, unleashing divine abilities and magical techniques to obstruct him.

At the same time, the Golden Frost Sect puppet’s eyes flickered as it attempted to fly past Meng Hao’s position. The Li Clan cultivator was also trying to do the same thing.

It was at this point that a cold glow appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes.

“Detonate. Detonate! DETONATE!”

Three Time Sword tips exploded in quick succession. The Golden Frost Sect puppet and the Li Clan cultivator were forced to halt in place as Time tempests raged out in all directions.

Meng Hao was sparing no cost in this battle. He strode forward, and a vicious expression appeared on his face as he waved his hand.

“DETONATE!” Of the remaining Wooden Time Sword tips, five exploded, leaving only one remaining behind. An enormous tempest of Time power surged out in all directions, causing the entire battlefield to rumble and shake.

Miserable shrieks could be heard as the Spirit Severing experts’ bodies rapidly aged. Several actually ran out of longevity and then directly died, and the others retreated at full speed. However, even as they fell back, Meng Hao transformed into a green smoke that vanished and then reappeared behind one of the men. His right hand shot out, and a crunching sound could be heard as a neck was smashed. Another flicker, and punch. Another enemy killed.

Meng Hao’s shadow flashed back and forth, and in only the space of a few breaths of time, he had killed seven Spirit Severing cultivators.

By this time, the Time tempest had faded away. The early Dao Seeking expert from the Solitary Sword Sect, the Golden Frost Sect puppet, and the Li Clan cultivator all joined forces, releasing their most powerful divine abilities in an earth-shattering attack that threatened to inundate Meng Hao.

BANG!

Meng Hao’s body collapsed, then reformed. His face was pale, and he had the intense premonition that if his body continued to collapse in this way, then it wouldn’t be long… before he actually died.

By now, many of the Blood Demon Sect disciples on the battlefield had been killed, their bodies dead and their Nascent Souls destroyed. Before dying, most chose to self-detonate, causing blood to spatter throughout the battlefield like red flowers.

The bravery shown was grand and spectacular! Inside the fourth layer of the shield, the rest of the Blood Demon Sect disciples’ eyes were bloodshot. Tens of thousands of disciples flew out, along with the three Demonfire

Patriarchs. However, considering that they were up against hundreds of thousands of enemies, the best they could do was delay them for a bit. Even then, they couldn’t hold on for very long.

Even Meng Hao was slowly forced to fall back under the repeated onslaught of the Solitary Sword Sect, Golden Frost Sect, and Li Clan experts.

The Ninth Mountain had collapsed.

He was no longer capable of wielding the Black White Pearls.

He had detonated his entire Time Sword formation.

The tentacles of his Spirit Severing treasure, the Resurrection Lily, had been severed, and it was in a sorry state.

His own body was weak to the extreme!

He utilized the Blood Demon Grand Magic over and over again, but by now, whenever the multicolored lights of the magic appeared, people in the area were prepared and quickly evaded.

As for the early Dao Seeking expert of the Solitary Sword Sect, the Golden Frost Sect puppet, and the Li Clan cultivator, the third level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic wasn’t strong enough to thoroughly pin them down.

“The Patriarch said that the Blood Demon Grand Magic’s fourth level was enough to slay early Dao Seeking,” he thought. “Fourth level… I need to achieve the fourth level!” His eyes were bright red as he retreated, once again unleashing the Blood Demon Grand Magic, and once again experiencing the collapse and recovery of his fleshly body.

“I need the vortex to spin faster! If it goes fast enough, it will reach the fourth level! There shouldn’t be a bottleneck before the fourth level; I’m already in the Spirit Meridians stratum. I just need the golden vortex… to rotate faster! Much faster!” His cultivation base exploded with power as he unleashed the Blood Demon Grand Magic and pushed hard toward the fourth level. At the same time, the early Dao Seeking expert from the Solitary Sword Sect, the Golden Frost Sect puppet, and the Li Clan cultivator were aggressively advancing toward him….

Suddenly, Meng Hao's mind became clear, and everything around him seemed to slow down. He lifted his hand up and pointed forward.

A golden vortex suddenly appeared that was ten times larger than any of the previous vortexes. It appeared right on top of the early Dao Seeking expert from the Solitary Sword Sect, as well as a few dozen other surrounding cultivators.

The golden vortex instantly exploded out with a frenzied gravitational force. Both cultivation base as well as qi and blood were rapidly absorbed, and all the cultivators inside the vortex were instantly turned into corpses, with the exception of the Solitary Sword Sect expert!

As for him, he gave a cold snort and was about to collapse the vortex when suddenly, his eyes went wide. He suddenly realized that this vortex was different than the ones before.

The intense gravitational force had already sucked away at least a third of his cultivation base!

Most importantly, he realized that he… was incapable of freeing himself! He was locked down tight!

"Impossible!" he said, his voice hoarse.

The speed with which objects were pulled by the gravitational force far exceeded the third level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic. Meng Hao had been retreating, but now, he stopped in place and looked up at the Dao Seeking expert stuck in the vortex. Killing intent flickered in his eyes.

"Blood Demon Grand Magic. Fourth level!"

His breakthrough was successful!

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# Chapter 741: Clone of the Dawn Immortal!

The Blood Demon Grand Magic had six levels in total!

The Qi and Blood stratum, the Spirit Meridians stratum, and the Blood Soul stratum!

Three grand strata, designed to strengthen the fleshly body, the cultivation base, and the soul!

The first stratum allowed the cultivator to temper the fleshly body to a virtually limitless level of power that could shake Heaven and Earth. The second stratum was even stronger; cultivation bases of others could be absorbed, providing a temporary increase in one’s cultivation base.

Limits could be exceeded, and one could temporarily achieve a pinnacle of power!

As far as the third stratum, the Blood Soul stratum, went, Meng Hao wasn’t too clear about the details. According to the description of the Blood Demon Grand Magic, the third stratum had something to do with the soul, and divine will.

What he did know was that the 3rd stratum of the Blood Demon Grand Magic had its own unique name.

It could form divine will into clones, and butcher Immortals with a single thought!

Rumbling filled Meng Hao’s body. As he looked out over the chaos of the battlefield, his energy surged, and his eyes radiated an unprecedented glow that caused the Golden Frost Sect puppet's heart to tremble. The Li Clan cultivator's pupils constricted, and as for the Solitary Sword Sect's early Dao Seeking expert stuck in the golden vortex, his mind reeled, and a sense of grave danger welled up from his heart.

Meng Hao slowly raised his hand up and pointed at the man.

"Die!" he said.

In response, the vortex began to spin even faster, transforming into a cyclone that seemed to stretch from the land all the way up into the sky. Viewed from a distance, it was shocking to the extreme, and all the cultivators on the battlefield, both the Blood Demon Sect disciples and the forces from the four great powers, were astonished.

The Solitary Sword Sect cultivator was no longer visible inside the tempest. Only a desolate shriek could be heard from within the raging winds. Vast quantities of qi and blood transformed into a bloody haze that flowed out from the tempest toward Meng Hao.

By this point, Meng Hao's entire fleshly body had already reached the Dao Seeking stage. At the same time, vast amounts of cultivation base power surged into him from the tempest, pushing his own cultivation base up into the third Severing!

Inside the tempest, the Solitary Sword Sect cultivator was experiencing unbelievable pain. His fleshly body withered rapidly, and he was transformed into a living corpse in the blink of an eye!

A tremor ran through Meng Hao, and a shocking aura suddenly rose up from his body that could be felt by everyone on the battlefield.

The aura was not Spirit Severing, but… Dao Seeking!

Finally, the golden vortex faded away, revealing the Solitary Sword Sect cultivator. He was nothing but skin and bones, and possessed not even a bit of cultivation base. His life force barely flickered; he had lost everything!

He was incredibly weak, virtually a mortal, without even the strength to retrieve any magical items from his bag of holding. Even his Nascent Divinity was completely withered.

Shock filled his eyes; everything had happened so quickly that he could scarcely believe it had actually occurred. As the vortex disappeared, Meng Hao sped forward to appear directly in front of the old man. Then he reached out and pushed down on top of the man’s head.

Hundreds of thousands of cultivators all looked on, their faces awash with astonishment, shock, terror and disbelief.

BOOM!

The early Dao Seeking expert from the Solitary Sword Sect exploded, sending blood and gore showering out in all directions, which then… transformed into ash that dissipated in the wind.

The entire battlefield went silent.

Only a withered Nascent Divinity remained behind, looking confused and terrified. He tried to flee, but before he could put much distance between himself and Meng Hao, killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes. He raised his right hand, and the flag of three streamers appeared. It swept out, filling the area with rippling blackness that then wrapped around the withered Nascent Soul. Then it jerked him back toward Meng Hao, sealing him up inside the flag.

Deathly silence reigned….

The Golden Frost Sect puppet gasped and fell into retreat. The other Golden Frost Sect cultivators who comprised the other puppets had looks of astonishment and disbelief on their faces. A powerful expert of the early Dao Seeking stage had just been slaughtered in front of their eyes.

The Li Clan cultivator stared with wide eyes.

The deathly silence only lasted for a few moments, after which an explosion of reactions occurred.

“Early Dao Seeking….”

“Dead?!”

“A mighty Patriarch of the Solitary Sword Sect just perished!!”

None of them dared to believe what they had just witnessed.

Even as they reeled in shock, they stared over at Meng Hao. The image of him standing there was something they would never be able to forget for the rest of their lives.

The Blood Demon Sect disciples were quivering in excitement, and began to shout out to Meng Hao.

“Blood Prince!”

“Blood Prince!!”

“BLOOD PRINCE!!!” The sound surged out over the battlefield, transforming into countless echoes which caused everything to shake.

The slaying of the early Dao Seeking cultivator caused the Blood Demon Sect disciples to be more roused than ever. Meng Hao looked up. Now that he could wield the fourth level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic, he was completely confident that he could fight back against the hundreds of thousands of enemies.

He strode forward and then transformed into a savage beam of light that shot toward the Li Clan cultivator.

As rumbling filled the air, the Li Clan cultivator’s face fell. He immediately fell into retreat, not daring to get close to Meng Hao. He was completely terrified of the Blood Demon Grand Magic vortex.

Despite his fleeing at top speed, he wasn’t faster than Meng Hao’s Blood Demon Grand Magic. Meng Hao waved his hand, and three golden vortexes appeared, which descended toward the hundreds of thousands of enemy cultivators.

Immediately, miserable shrieks rang out as the three vortexes enveloped several hundred enemy cultivators. Immediately, their bodies withered up, and their cultivation bases vanished. Qi and blood and spirit meridians were extracted and shot toward Meng Hao.

His fleshly body grew stronger!

His cultivation base rose to shocking heights!

Meng Hao advanced at top speed and then pointed out toward the fleeing Li Clan cultivator.

Eighth Demon Sealing Hex!

Demonic qi swept about, silk-like, entangling the Li Clan cultivator in the blink of an eye. His body stopped in mid-air. He struggled, and seemed just on the verge of breaking free, but the price he paid for that brief pause….

Was that Meng Hao had time to unleash the Blood Demon Grand Magic vortex!

Rumble!

As soon as the vortex appeared, the Li Clan cultivator screamed. He threw out numerous magical items, and fully employed all the power of his cultivation base, but if the early Dao Seeking expert from the Solitary Sword Sect couldn’t avoid perishing, how could he, with his slightly lower cultivation base?

As the shrieks rang out, the Golden Frost Sect puppet looked on, eyes wide. The Li Clan cultivator withered up, and his cultivation base was dissolved. The cultivators in the puppet felt their scalps go numb, and they retreated at top speed.

Within the space of a few breaths, the Li Clan cultivator’s entire cultivation base, and all of his qi and blood, were absorbed by Meng Hao. Then Meng Hao waved his hand, and what remained of the Li Clan cultivator exploded into bits.

“Kill them!” roared Meng Hao, which further roused the spirits of the surrounding Blood Demon Sect disciples. There were tens of thousands of them, and they were facing hundreds of thousands of enemies.

And yet… the death of the early Dao Seeking expert from the Solitary Sword Sect, the fall of the Li Clan Elder, the retreat of the Golden Frost Sect puppet, along with all of the shocked Spirit Severing cultivators attempting to escape, caused the forces of the four great powers to be profoundly shaken and, apparently, lose their will to fight.

Furthermore, Meng Hao’s Blood Clone was still pouncing from cultivator to cultivator, draining them dead. All of this sapped the energy of the hundreds of thousands of enemies. For the first time, the Blood Demon Sect… forced the enemy forces into retreat!

If you likened the enemy forces to a fist, then Meng Hao had taken that fist… and pried it open!

Seeing the sudden shift in events down below, the old black-robed Solitary Sword Sect cultivator up in mid-air let out a bellow of rage. “You’re courting death, kid!”

The Li Clan Patriarch also roared in fury. They wanted to charge down to attack Meng Hao, but Patriarch Blood Demon’s clones clearly would not allow them to do any such thing. Echoing booms filled the air, and the air was distorted and warped.

“Dammit!” cried the black-robed old man from the Solitary Sword Sect. “Dawn Immortal, you promised to help!”

As soon as his voice rang out, a faint sigh could be heard echoing down from up above. It swept across the lands, causing the minds of all the cultivators to reel, both the hundreds of thousands of enemies, and the

Blood Demon Sect disciples. Their minds trembled, and then went completely blank.

The Resurrection Lily suddenly appeared behind Meng Hao, looking incredibly vicious, with its tentacles whipping about madly. Meng Hao looked up into the sky, his eyes filled with grim killing intent.

Up above, a woman could be seen. As she strode down from the sky, flowers blossomed beneath her feet, and a shocking energy swirled faintly around her.

She was not beautiful, but had striking, unusual features which would cause anyone who looked at her to feel a breathtaking attraction to her.

Her appearance instantly caused quite a stir on the battlefield. Patriarch Blood Demon's clones looked up, and their eyes all came to focus on the woman.

"Dawn Immortal," he said.

"Blood Demon!" she replied.

Patriarch Blood Demon's clones all merged together into a single clone. That single clone emitted a powerful aura, which transformed into an enormous, blood-colored face that hovered in mid-air.

"A measly clone?" said Patriarch Blood Demon. He looked over at the Solitary Sword Sect expert and the others. "This is your trump card?" His gaze shifted back to the woman. "That leaf earlier was your handiwork, too, I presume."

"Under different circumstances," she responded, "I would be incapable of dealing with you, Senior Blood Demon. But now you are bound by an aura of death. You are simply too weak, Senior. If I remember correctly, the Blood Demon Grand Magic can only be utilized by one person in any given age. You haven't used it during the battle, only that child down there has…. Although, that doesn't really matter. All I need to do is delay you for a bit." She suddenly looked down toward the ground, and Meng Hao.

Meng Hao looked back up at her, and his mind trembled when their eyes met. An incredible pressure suddenly weighed down on his mind, as if an entire mountain were crushing down onto him.

Behind him, the Resurrection Lily was writhing about madly.

“Dawn Immortal!!” he thought, staggering backward. Despite the fact that blood oozed from his mouth, he continued to stare at the woman up above. He would never forget the feeling of that gaze, the same gaze that had fallen upon him when he was in the Milky Way Sea!

This woman was none other than the mysterious Dawn Immortal, although it was not her true self, but merely a clone!

“The good part of me gave you her life force,” the woman said coolly. “My son is now your Spirit Severing Treasure…. You and I really are connected by destiny.”

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# Chapter 742: Time To Come Home, Darling

As the words left the mouth of the Dawn Immortal’s clone, Meng Hao felt the pressure weighing down on him increase. It was as if a will of extermination was about to thoroughly crush him.

Behind him, the Resurrection Lily was in a frenzy, prismatic colors flickered across it, and its tentacles writhed violently. It even seemed to be emitting voiceless screams.

Meng Hao felt himself shaking, and he gritted his teeth as he continued to stare at the Dawn Immortal. He had heard of her way back in the Reliance Sect, but it wasn’t until this moment… that he saw her personally.

The Dawn Immortal lifted her right hand, within which a leaf appeared. She waved it gently, and brilliant light exploded out as it shot down toward Meng Hao.

Everything in Heaven and Earth went still except for the leaf. It transformed into a streak of light that instantly bore down on Meng Hao. But then… an ancient hand stretched out and grabbed hold of the leaf.

The hand clenched into a fist, and the leaf was crushed.

When the hand opened, dust drifted out into the wind.

The hand belonged to none other than the composite clone of Patriarch Blood Demon!

“Facing the likes of you people, so what if I can’t use the Blood Demon Grand Magic?” he said coolly. All of a sudden, he was surrounded by the glow of blood, which shot up into the air to encompass even the enormous face up above. Shockingly, a ferocious horn grew out of the face, which suddenly looked exactly like that of the Demonic Incarnation Meng Hao had been in control of earlier.

“Blood Realm, Activate!” said Patriarch Blood Demon. Rumbling filled the sky, and red mist roiled out in all directions. At the same time, the Dawn Immortal clone’s eyes flickered and she waved her hand, causing a Resurrection Lily to magically appear behind her. It shone with boundless radiance that spread out to battle against Patriarch Blood Demon.

The black-robed old man from the Solitary Sword Sect, the Golden Frost Sect Patriarch, and the Li Clan Patriarch unleashed divine abilities to aid the Dawn Immortal in resisting Patriarch Blood Demon!

As for Six-Daos of the Black Sieve Sect, he was just about to lend his assistance when the Dawn Immortal suddenly said, “Six-Daos, there’s no need for you to participate in this fight. Go wipe out the foundation of the Blood Demon Sect, and destroy Mount Blood Demon. That is where this Blood Demon’s true self lies!”

“Kill that kid Meng Hao while you’re at it!” added the black-robed old man from the Solitary Sword Sect. He waved his hand, causing the Solitary Sword Sect’s legacy precious treasure, the bamboo sword, to fly toward Six-Daos. “Here, I’ll even lend you my sword!”

At first, Six-Daos was about to refuse. Seeing Meng Hao slaughter the early Dao Seeking expert from the Solitary Sword Sect had shocked him to the core. When he saw the bamboo sword flying toward him, however, he was suddenly enlivened.

He was well aware that the Solitary Sword Sect’s legacy precious treasure was shockingly powerful. As soon as his hand closed around the hilt, he flickered and shot down toward the ground.

Patriarch Blood Demon frowned as the rumbling explosions of magical battle filled the air.

Six-Daos shot down from the sky, eyes fixed on Meng Hao and flickering with the desire to kill. He raised his hand, and the bamboo sword began to emanate blinding light. The air distorted, and an amorphous aura began to seep out from within it. The sword seemed to be emanating the power of Time, and its might was reminiscent of a gigantic mountain.

Meng Hao's face was unsightly, but as soon as he sensed the aura of the Bamboo Sword, he stared in shock, and a look of disbelief appeared on his face.

As the sword grew closer, his brow furrowed. Patriarch Six-Daos' cultivation base was between the early and mid Dao Seeking stages. However, with the added might of the Bamboo Sword, he was beyond Meng Hao's ability to threaten.

"Get back into the shield!" said Meng Hao. He and the rest of the Blood Demon Sect disciples immediately fell back behind the fourth layer of the shield.

As Six-Daos neared, he laughed coldly and gestured toward the fourth layer of the shield. "BREAK!"

The wave of his hand caused an enormous incense burner to appear.

The incense burner was none other than the Black Sieve Sect's legacy precious treasure, although cracks could be seen on its surface, the result of the pressure exuded by Patriarch Blood Demon's clone back in the Black Sieve Sect.

The incense burner exuded an ancient aura as it smashed down toward the fourth shield layer.

A massive boom echoed out. Although the incense burner was cracked, it was still a legacy precious treasure of a great sect. As it smashed downward, shocking green smoke surged out of it, transforming into countless vicious, evil spirits that joined the smashing attack.

As they neared the shield, cracking sounds could be heard, and the shield began to collapse.

Thankfully, Meng Hao and the other Blood Demon Sect disciples had already retreated behind the third layer of the shield. As the fourth layer exploded, massive power was unleashed, causing intense vibrations to rock the incense burner.

Six-Daos laughed coldly, lifting the Bamboo Sword and rotating his cultivation base. The most powerful sword beam he could summon appeared, fully 30,000 meters long, seemingly capable of splitting Heaven and Earth. It was filled with boundless Time power as it slashed down toward the third layer of the shield.

The bizarreness of the sword was now becoming even more apparent. Gradually, the exterior of the Bamboo Sword was filling with more and more rips and fissures, within which could be seen another sword. It was as if the inner sword were a sapling in springtime, sprouting from a wilted bough!

An even more intense aura of Time emerged from the sword, causing the black-robed old man from the Solitary Sword Sect to be even more pleased than before.

Six-Daos was even happier, and he lifted his head up to laugh uproariously. “Meng Hao, you’re DEAD!”

BOOM!

The third layer of the shield only lasted for the space of a few breaths before it shattered. As it did, Meng Hao’s face should have been extremely unsightly, but instead it held an odd expression, and his eyes were glittering.

“Fall back again!” he said, leading the Blood Demon Sect cultivators behind the glow of the second shield layer.

At the same time, the hundreds of thousands of enemy cultivators felt their spirits lifting. They surged toward the Blood Demon Sect as Six-Daos once again unleashed a massive attack toward the second shield layer.

Night had fallen, and the bright moon hung high in the sky. However, the ground trembled, and the fighting had reached such intensity that no one was paying attention to whether it was day or night.

“Meng Hao, you scamp, the day you stepped foot into the Black Sieve Sect, you must have known that this day would come!” As Six-Dao’s voice echoed out in all directions, the incense burner rotated in the air above him. The bamboo sword swirled around him, emanating a brilliant aura.

Six-Dao’s eyes were filled with venomous rancor. His animosity toward Meng Hao had long since seeped into his very marrow. He wanted to exterminate the Blood Demon Sect and destroy Meng Hao in body and soul. To achieve that goal, he would sacrifice anything and everything.

“DIE!!!” he howled, laughing maniacally as he raised his hand and unleashed the full force of his cultivation base into the bamboo sword, causing it to explode with an incredible sword beam.

The sword beam was shocking to the extreme!

Cracking sounds could be heard as the light beam burst out. More tears spread out across the Bamboo Sword and, finally, a bang could be heard as it exploded.

In the instant in which it was ripped open, shockingly, a wooden sword appeared in its place!

The wooden sword had been hidden inside the bamboo sword all along! Now that the bamboo sword had shattered, the wooden sword was revealed!

As soon as it appeared, boundless Time power radiated out, and an incredibly ancient aura flooded the area. Even the Dawn Immortal’s and Patriarch Blood Demon’s faces flickered when they sensed the aura.

The black-robed old man from the Solitary Sword Sect was going wild with joy. He lifted his head up and laughed heartily. Although he had loaned the sword to Six-Daos, it was still the legacy precious treasure of the Solitary Sword Sect, something that had been handed down from generation to generation. Despite being in the hands of another, it still belonged to the Solitary Sword Sect; no one could ever steal it away!

There was one fact unknown to outsiders that was passed down only to the successive generations of Solitary Sword Sect Patriarchs. The primary master of this sword was the Solitary Sword Sect itself. When it was originally discovered, it was actually nothing more than a stick of bamboo which possessed a naturally-occurring, intrinsic sword qi. The Solitary Sword Sect had taken it to be a supreme treasure, and had refined it into a sword. 1

“That’s the heart of the bamboo! The heart of the bamboo is transformed into wood, so naturally it would be a sword!!” The black-robed old man from the Solitary Sword Sect and Patriarch Six-Daos were both laughing loudly. Six-Daos’ eyes shone brightly as he abruptly pointed toward Meng Hao.

“DIE!” he cried, his voice booming like thunder, and filled with unmatchable confidence. He was absolutely certain that even with the shield protecting him, Meng Hao would definitely die beneath the power of this sword!

In response to his words, the wooden sword began to rumble and then shot toward the second layer of the shield.

The hundreds of thousands of cultivators in the area breathlessly watched the dazzling sword and its aura. Shocking pressure emanated from it as it shot magnificently through the air.

“Time became bamboo,” murmured the Dawn Immortal, “and the bamboo concealed time. It transformed into bamboo wood….” Her battle with Patriarch Blood Demon did not slow down, but instead grew even more intense.

As the wooden sword descended, the ground trembled and fissures appeared, as if it couldn’t withstand the incredible pressure of Time.

The grass withered, and time itself seemed to distort. A Time tempest appeared, shocking the surrounding cultivators, who immediately fell back.

The sword was now on the verge of slamming into the second shield layer. Inside, the Blood Demon Sect disciples had looks of despair on their faces. In contrast, the surrounding hundreds of thousands of enemies wore expressions of anticipation.

All eyes were fixed on the sword flying through the air.

Six-Daos' laughter echoed out across the battlefield.

Meng Hao had an odd expression. Earlier, he had sensed something familiar about the aura of the bamboo sword. When the rips appeared on its surface earlier, that familiar sensation grew stronger. When the bamboo shattered and the wooden sword appeared, a connection appeared between him and the sword that only he could sense!

He was connected to the wooden sword!!

At a certain point, a bashful smile appeared on Meng Hao's face, and he cleared his throat. Even as the eyes of all the Blood Demon Sect disciples and enemy cultivators were fixed on the wooden sword, he suddenly stepped out from behind the second shield layer.

This action immediately attracted everyone's attention, and the buzz of conversation rose up into the air.

"What is he doing? Don't tell me he's going to try to fight the legacy precious treasure of the Solitary Sword Sect!?"

"He really overestimates his ability! He might be strong, but he's going to die for sure!"

"Hahaha! I never thought someone could be so arrogant! He actually dares to step out from behind the shield? That sword is going to destroy him in body and soul!!"

“Looking to die?” laughed Six-Daos. He assumed Meng Hao must have become so frightened that he lost his senses. A normal person would never step out from behind the shield, they would cower behind it.

What attracted even more attention was how Meng Hao not only stepped out from behind the shield, but then stretched his hand out… directly toward the shockingly powerful wooden sword that was slashing toward him… as if he were beckoning toward it.

He cleared his throat and then said, “Time to come home, darling!”

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1. I was curious about what the bamboo sword might look like as opposed to a wooden sword, so I did some image searching on baidu.com. Check out the interesting results here

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# Chapter 743: Call Out To It! Does It Answer?

As soon as Meng Hao’s words echoed out, the majority of the hundreds of thousands of enemy cultivators immediately burst out into raucous laughter.

“What did he say? Darling? Come home?”

“Has Meng Hao gone insane?”

“This is pretty funny. It’s the first time I’ve seen such a powerful expert go crazy!”

Six-Daos was also laughing loudly. “I’ve lived a long time, but this is the first time I’ve encountered a lunatic like you!”

Even the black-robed expert from the Solitary Sword Clan split off a strand of divine sense to observe what was happening. After he saw what was happening, he shook his head and laughed.

The voices and laughter rippled out, and all sorts of snide, mocking comments could be heard. When they first spoke, the wooden sword was just on the verge of slashing down. However, even in the middle of deriding Meng Hao, looks of astonishment began to appear on each of their faces.

That was because… the sword did not slash down, but rather, lurched to a stop.

When the sword lurched to a stop, it seemed as if hundreds of thousands of hearts similarly lurched to a stop.

Six-Daos’ eyes went wide, and the Blood Demon Sect disciples inside the second shield layer seemingly forgot how to breathe. They stared blankly at their Blood Prince, who standing outside the shield, beckoning toward the astonishing precious treasure that was the wooden sword.

Up in mid-air, the black-robed Patriarch who was fighting Patriarch Blood Demon had originally been extremely pleased. All of a sudden, however, the sword ground to a halt, and his heart began to thump.

The wooden sword came to a stop about thirty meters above Meng Hao. The power of Time emanated out in all directions, causing everything to wither. Even the second shield layer was rippling and distorting. In this condition, it seemed that the slightest tap would cause it to instantly shatter.

And yet Meng Hao… was not affected by the wooden sword, even in the slightest.

The wooden sword seemed to have a spirit of its own, and was apparently hesitating. After stopping in mid-air, glittering light seemed to dance fluidly across the blade.

Six-Daos’ face flickered with disbelief. What he was seeing completely exceeded the limits of his imagination. It didn’t matter that he used to be at the peak of Dao Seeking, or the Patriarch of a great sect. The events that he was witnessing with his own eyes left him completely shaken.

He was incapable of even comprehending what was happening. Why had the Solitary Sword Sect’s legacy precious treasure… ground to a halt directly in front of Meng Hao? Furthermore, it even seemed to be hesitating.

He could not come up with any explanation, even though he wracked his brains over and over again.

“Impossible!” he thought, gritting his teeth and causing his cultivation base to rumble with power. He used every scrap of strength he had to try to control the wooden sword, but there wasn’t the slightest reaction. The sword completely ignored him and, even more shocking, directly severed their connection.

When that happened, Six-Daos’ face fell even more.

The surrounding hundreds of thousands of cultivators stared with wide eyes at a scene they would likely never encounter again in their entire lives. Most incredulous of all were the cultivators from the Solitary Sword Sect.

The wooden sword was a legacy precious treasure of the Solitary Sword Sect, the symbol and foundation of their entire sect!

There was someone even more shocked than the ordinary disciples, however. The black-robed old man up in midair simply couldn’t believe what was happening. His mind felt as if lightning were crashing around inside. Unable to defend against the divine ability Patriarch Blood Demon was attacking him with, he was slammed backward, blood spraying from his mouth. The mist of Patriarch Blood Demon’s Blood World enveloped him, making it impossible for him to charge in and attack. All he could do was perform a double-handed incantation and then point out toward the wooden sword.

“Solitary Bamboo Sword, return!” he roared, continuing with another incantation gesture.

The wooden sword trembled, apparently in response to the old man, whose heart immediately sank. A very, very bad feeling welled up inside of him. Under normal circumstances, all it took was an incantation gesture and the simple point of a finger to instantly cause the bamboo sword to fly back to him. Now, all it did was tremble.

“Dammit! What’s going on?!?!” He performed another incantation gesture, and even went so far as to spit out a mouthful of blood. How could he not be anxious? This was the Solitary Sword Sect’s precious treasure, and if he allowed it to be snatched away, it would be a great sin against the sect.

“You were refined by the Solitary Sword Sect! We acquired you from the Ancient Dao Lakes! You were personally crafted into a sword by the ancestors of the Solitary Sword Sect! You belong to us!!

“Solitary Bamboo Sword, get back here!!” The black-robed man howled in rage, and blood sprayed out of his mouth. Finally, the invisible connection between him and the sword finally seemed to function. The wooden sword began to vibrate, and then moved backward several meters.

Even as the black-robed man let out a sigh of relief, the wooden sword suddenly stopped again, and the man’s heart once again began to thump.

“You were born in the Solitary Sword Sect! For years, we Solitary Sword Sect disciples offered sacrifices to enable you to gain sentience! We spent countless resources making you sharper and more powerful! Our entire sect worked to help you!!

“Y-y-you… you get back here right now!!” Despite his anxiety, the black-robed old man was pinned down by the mist of blood. He let out a roar, then spit out more blood, completely ignoring the wastage to his longevity as he once again pointed toward the wooden sword.

This time, however, there was no reaction whatsoever from the sword….

“Finished playing around?” said Meng Hao, his face grave and his tone berating. “If you don’t come over here right now, just wait and see how I punish you after we get home!”

As Meng Hao’s words rang out, the wooden sword shuddered in midair. Then, it severed its connection with the black-robed man and shot directly toward Meng Hao. In the blink of an eye, it was circulating around him, its thrumming sound echoing out in all directions. It was almost as if it was clamoring in joy, fawning over him, even exhibiting signs that it had missed him.

Anyone looking on could clearly tell that this sword… belonged to Meng Hao!

Six-Daos’ eyes were wide, and he very nearly coughed up a mouthful of blood.

The surrounding hundreds of thousands of cultivators gasped, having been thoroughly astonished by Meng Hao.

The Solitary Sword Sect disciples gaped as their Sect’s unsurpassed, proud and aloof precious treasure, swirled around Meng Hao like a happy pet. Clearly… it recognized Meng Hao as its master.

“I must be asleep….”

“That’s… that’s our sect’s legacy precious treasure?”

“What’s… what’s going on…?” The minds of the Solitary Sword Sect disciples were spinning, but most disbelieving of all was the black-robed man up in midair.

His eyes filled with an expression of both madness and injustice, which then transformed into a towering rage. He was just about to open his mouth to say something when blood spurted out and he grew visibly older.

He just couldn’t understand or comprehend how the sword could possibly recognize Meng Hao as its master!

He just couldn’t believe it. His world was turned upside down, as if enormous waves were surging through his psyche.

“How could this be happening!?!?” he roared madly. He wanted to try to break through the blood mist, to grab the sword in his hand and ask its spirit why it was acting this way. Why was it betraying the Solitary Sword Sect, why would it recognize Meng Hao as its master when it had only seen him once?

“That sword belongs to the Solitary Sword Sect!!!”

“It belongs to you?” asked Meng Hao coolly. “Call out to it. Does it answer?” He stretched out his hand, and the sword flew down to land hilt-down on his palm. It even danced back and forth, apparently in complete excitement.

“YOU!!” The Solitary Sword Sect Patriarch almost spit up some more blood because of the flames of rage that burned in his heart. By this point, it didn’t matter that he had a cultivation base at the peak of Dao Seeking. Even an Immortal would be unable to accept a blow like this, nor such loss.

That was especially so… considering how the wooden sword was frolicking around happily. The black-robed old man felt as if a blade were stabbing viciously into his heart. That was because he himself had needed to make sacrificial offerings to it, and had never seen it act in such a way.

Meng Hao could also sense that this sword, one of the ones he had buried so long ago, had developed a sword spirit. Despite that, his contingencies from the very beginning were still effective. No matter how many hands the sword had passed through, once it saw him, it knew that he was its original master.

“Alright, stop making a fuss,” he said. “Now, go kill him!” Even as he spoke, Meng Hao pointed at Patriarch Six-Daos.

Six Daos’ heart was pounding, and his face fell. He immediately retreated at top speed, but before he could get very far at all, the wooden sword shot toward him with indescribable speed. It also emanated a shocking power of Time, which caused everything around it to ripple and distort. Any cultivators who were too close withered in the blink of an eye, as if countless years had passed in an instant. There were even some who directly passed away.

“Dammit!” thought Patriarch Six-Daos, his face falling. Roaring, he employed the full power of his cultivation base, which unfortunately for him was still stuck between the early and mid Dao Seeking Stages. It wasn’t enough, so he had no other choice but to summon the incense burner to block the wooden sword. A bang rang out, and the wooden sword stabbed directly into the incense burner.

Booms could be heard as cracks spread out over the surface of the incense burner. An ancient will could be sensed, and signs of decay could be seen. Six-Daos’ heart ached, but he didn’t dare to call back the incense burner. That was because he had noticed that the sword’s ripples were causing him to age significantly. If it stabbed him, he could only imagine what would happen to his longevity; it would be thoroughly destroyed.

In his terror, he shot backward at high speed. Considering he was using a special secret art to bolster his cultivation base, what he feared most… was being obliterated by Time power.

The surrounding hundreds of thousands of cultivators were also astonished and trembling. They didn't dare to advance, and quite the opposite, retreated. Meng Hao stood alone outside the second shield layer. One man, one sword…caused the enemy forces to retreat three thousand meters.

"Dammit!!" More and more cracks spread out across the surface of the incense burner. Patriarch Six-Daos immediately roared, "Fellow Daoist Sword Paragon, Patriarch Golden Frost, Li Yuanlei, if you don't help me then I'll be forced to summon discarnate souls to defend myself!!"

Even as the last words left his mouth, the incense burner exploded into pieces. The wooden sword shot onward, and Six-Daos lifted his head up and roared. All of a sudden, his body exploded, allowing the wooden sword to pass right through it.

However, there was a soul strand that remained, which then transformed into a river of souls that contained 100,000 discarnate souls!

Even as the 100,000 discarnate souls flew out, the black-robed old man from the Solitary Sword Sect burst into flames. These were life force flames, and as they burned, his cultivation base exploded with power. He transformed into a long streak of light that burst out from within Patriarch Blood Demon's blood mist. Ignoring any injuries, he shot toward Meng Hao's wooden sword, he himself transforming into what looked like a sword as he flew through the air.

"Meng Hao, you twerp! DIE!!"

Meng Hao's eyes glittered. There was no time to slaughter Six Daos' 100,000 discarnate souls. The wooden sword flew back to him at breakneck speed. Even as the black-robed Solitary Sword Sect Patriarch closed in, Meng Hao stepped back behind the second shield layer.

However, the Solitary Sword Sect Patriarch did not slow down at all. Instead, he increased his speed as he stabbed toward the shield.

“BREAK!!”

Patriarch Blood Demon’s eyes flickered with killing intent. However, the Dawn Immortal’s clone was really causing him quite a headache; it was not merely at the peak of Dao Seeking, but rather, higher than that. It was more comparable to a false Immortal.

Even as his clone frowned, deep in the cave in Mount Blood Demon, his true self’s eyes opened. A drop of blood suddenly floated up from within the Blood Pond, then flew out of the Immortal’s cave and dissipated. Shockingly, the first and second layers of the shield were instantly dyed red.

Boom!

The blood-colored shield easily blocked the furious attack of the Solitary Sword Sect’s black-robed Patriarch.

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# Chapter 744: Arise, Second True Self!

When the red-haired old man from the Golden Frost Sect saw the blood drop fly out, he loftily said, “Patriarch Blood Demon, you’re fighting all of us at the same time, and still want to split your attention? It seems you really don’t have any regard for us at all.”

At the same time, he performed an incantation, which caused numerous puppets to magically appear around him. Each of the puppets was thirty meters tall, and seemed both real and illusory at the same time. As soon as they appeared, they transformed into beams of colorful light that shot toward Patriarch Blood Demon.

“Patriarch Blood Demon, your destruction is imminent,” said the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch. “You can’t escape our net! Once Mount Blood Demon falls, your true self will face the light of the Heavens and be destroyed in body and spirit!” He snorted coldly and then waved his hand, causing the Feng Shui compass to emit blinding light as well as countless magical symbols. The magical symbols formed together into layer upon layer of spell formations as they shot forward.

Patriarch Blood Demon said nothing, and not even a trace of alarm could be seen on his face. His expression was actually indifferent. No matter what happened, he was confident that he could reverse any setback.

“Senior Blood Demon,” said the Dawn Immortal’s clone, her voice soft. “I know full well that your true self cannot face the glory of the Heavens. You were originally a drop of blood that transformed into a Demon, and the Heavens can turn your true self back into a drop of blood. What I don’t know is, at this point… what tricks do you have left?” Behind her, the ferocious, illusory Resurrection Lily's tentacles whipped about, and an intense pressure radiated out. Rumbling sounds could be heard as countless tentacle incarnations shot out to surround Patriarch Blood Demon.

The Dawn Immortal was his strongest opponent, so Patriarch Blood Demon focused sixty percent of his attention on her. The other forty percent was divided between the red-haired Patriarch of the Golden Frost Sect and the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch.

Both parties had each other locked down. Although it looked like they were engaged in magical battle, in reality, both sides were being cautious, waiting for the other to expend enough cultivation base power that, at the critical time, a lightning-like strike could be made.

Down below, a rumbling sound echoed out over the battlefield. Meng Hao stood inside the second shield layer, the wooden sword swirling through the air around him. A droning sound could be heard from the sword, and pulses of Time power caused the air around it to distort. The Blood Demon Sect disciples were all behind the second shield layer, staring at the hundreds of thousands of cultivators on the other side, as well as the black-robed old man from the Solitary Sword Sect, who was in a frenzy and burning his own longevity to gain power.

The black-robed old man's fury and frustration was impossible to describe. He wanted nothing more than to slaughter Meng Hao over and over again and then take back the Solitary Sword Sect's precious treasure.

As he attacked, although he held no sword in his hand, the sword will which emanated out from his body transformed into an amorphous sword which repeatedly slashed into the second shield layer.

The layers of the Blood Demon Sect's five-layered shield got stronger the closer they got to the sect itself. In addition, the counter-attacks from the shields became even more intense.

Most importantly, the second shield layer was now the color of blood, thanks to the drop of blood from the Blood Pond inside Mount Blood Demon. Its power was not something that could quickly be broken.

Furthermore, the second shield layer had not been punctured by the leaf earlier; only the fifth, fourth and third layers had. The second shield layer was intact.

The shield rumbled and distorted as the black-robed old man vented his fury on it. However, the shield held!

The Blood Demon Sect forces sat there reticently, as did Meng Hao. He looked out coldly as the black-robed old man attacked and attacked. Killing intent flickered in his eyes, which the wooden sword could apparently sense, as it began to emit an intense droning sound.

BOOM!

The shield vibrated, and the black-robed man fell back. He lifted his head up and roared at the top of his lungs: “All cultivators, heed my command! Attack the shield with everything you have! Break it down!!”

The hundreds of thousands of cultivators hesitated for a moment. The first to spring into action were the Solitary Sword Sect disciples. Tens of thousands of flying swords whistled through the air toward the shield. They were followed by the the Golden Frost Sect disciples and the members of the Li Clan. There were also some rogue cultivators. All of them unleashed divine abilities to blast against the blood-colored, second layer shield.

Instantly, a massive roaring filled the air. The land quaked violently, and nearby vegetation was destroyed. Mountains were leveled, and the entire ground seemed to be gouged out by an entire meter by the force of the combined attack.

From a distance, the mountain range in which the Blood Demon Sect was located was now crushed into a flat plain. The vegetation in the area was completely dead, and no life existed at all.

Everything was in ruins, except for the very center of it all, where the blood-colored shield glittered brightly. Although it rippled and distorted violently, it did not fall!

The Blood Demon Sect’s five mountain peaks were now the focus of all attention.

Aftershocks from the divine abilities exploded out, and the forces of the allied powers also sustained injuries from the backlash, causing countless cultivators to cough up blood and retreat. However, others immediately surged forward to take their place.

Such a cycle continued on as countless attacks were made.

The black-robed old man from the Solitary Sword Sect was especially focused on attacking. Every time he made a move, boundless sword qi would rumble out against the blood-colored shield. Two days later, the shield was finally starting to show signs of breakage.

When the third day arrived, more and more cracks spread out across the blood-colored shield. The Blood Demon Sect disciples sat there silently. Meng Hao’s eyes flashed.

Finally, a snapping sound echoed out. The countless cracks merged together into something that looked like a huge wound. The black-robed Patriarch from the Solitary Sword Sect exploded out with peak Dao Seeking cultivation base power. Natural law descended and swirled about, transforming into an incredible Heavenly sword.

As soon as the sword appeared, lightning crackled up above. The sword suddenly flashed, seemingly filled with the power of lightning as it shot toward the second shield layer.

BOOOOMMMMMM!

The second shield layer could not stand up to the blow. The amorphous sword stabbed into it, and it shattered, sending out a huge shockwave in all directions. The Blood Demon Sect disciples and Meng Hao had already retreated behind the final remaining shield layer.

“Do we fight, Blood Prince!?!?”

“The point of death has arrived! It would be better to charge out and slaughter to our heart’s content than be stuck in here!”

“If we can’t avoid perishing, then let’s die in battle!” The Blood Demon Sect disciples’ eyes shone bright red, and even the Spirit Severing experts were looking in his direction.

This first shield layer was the final line of defense. Once it broke, the Blood Demon Sect would be powerless to defend itself. Hundreds of thousands of cultivators would charge into it. When that happened… they might be able to hold out for a little bit, but in the end, they would all die.

Wang Youcai looked at Meng Hao, awaiting his decision.

Li Shiqi was also looking at Meng Hao. He was the Blood Prince, and had earned respect through his strength. His lone charge into battle with no thought of personal safety gained him the utmost esteem.

Everyone was watching him.

However, Meng Hao’s gaze… fell upon Xu Qing.

She had been standing outside of Blood Prince Gorge the entire time watching the battle. Now that Meng Hao looked over at her, she turned to look back.

In that moment it was just the two of them in the Blood Demon Sect, behind the blood-colored shield, surrounded by the booms from the outside world. They looked at each other, and Meng Hao could see the encouraging look in her eyes. As well as…

You live, I live. You die, I die!

BOOM!

The shockwave from the destruction of the second shield layer faded away, and the black-robed Solitary Sword Sect Patriarch took the lead in the charge. Boundless sword light surrounded him as he shot toward the first shield layer to attack.

Explosions echoed about everywhere. Of the hundreds of thousands of cultivators from the original force, only around 200,000 were left. All were wounded and tired. The battle had lasted for a long time, and regardless of whether it was in terms of them or the Blood Demon Sect disciples, it had been a long and fierce fight.

“It’s almost over!”

“All we have to do is break this final line of defense, and the Blood Demon Sect… will be exterminated!”

“Four more days! In four days, there will be no Blood Demon Sect in the Southern Domain!” The 200,000 cultivators’ eyes were bright red. Despite their injuries, they roared and attacked the shield with all the strength they could summon.

RUMMMBLLLLLE!

The shield rippled. However, this first layer shield was even sturdier than the second layer, and had even more counterattack power. It only took a moment for thunderous roars to rise up into the sky. Clearly, the shield would not break in any short period of time.

Unfortunately, even a stronger shield would not be able to stand up for very long under the combined assault of 200,000 cultivators.

“Blood Prince, let’s fight!!” The Blood Demon Sect disciples inside the shield had risen to their feet. Their energy was focused and ready, their killing intent more and more intense than before.

Meng Hao was silent for a moment, then gritted his teeth and said, “Wait four more days!”

His second true self needed exactly that amount of time before it woke up!

These were the final four days!

Meng Hao had no way to assess exactly how powerful his second true self would be upon awakening. Had he used something other than the soul of an

Immortal, he would have been able to speculate. But since it was an Immortal's soul in his second true self, he had no way to guess. He would have to wait until it awakened… to see if it was truly Heaven-defying.

"It HAS to be strong!" he thought, looking out beyond the shield.

One day passed.

The shield trembled violently under the attacks of 200,000 cultivators, pushing it to its limit. The counterattacks sent out into the 200,000 cultivators caused numerous serious injuries.

Two days!

The shield rippled and distorted in virtually every spot, and was even trembling. In fact, cracks were visible in some locations, although they quickly sealed back up.

The black-robed Solitary Sword Sect Patriarch was on the offensive; every time he launched an attack, the shield seemed as if it might collapse.

Three days!

"BREAK!"

Rumbling filled the air as, for the first time, a crack spread out that could not be sealed back up. The death knell had been struck for the shield. The 200,000 cultivators had endured counterattacks for three days, which had sapped many of them of their ability to fight, forcing them to retreat from the battlefield.

The remaining cultivators' numbers exceeded 100,000, but they still crowded the battlefield, making it virtually impossible to see the end of the army. As they continued to attack, more and more cracks appeared!

Finally, the fourth day arrived!

On the fourth day, the blood-colored shield was covered with cracks. Many of them stretched out and then combined to form huge gaps.

The shield trembled, and cracking sounds could be heard. It didn’t seem like it would be able to hold on for very much longer.

At the same time, intense killing intent and even madness could be seen in the eyes of the black-robed Patriarch from the Solitary Sword Sect. He suddenly flew high up into the air and then waved his sleeve. Immediately natural law transformed into a sword up above.

This was his Dao Seeking sword!!

“The Blood Demon Sect will be eradicated on this very day!” cried the Patriarch. He pointed out, and the sword rumbled as it shot down toward the shield.

The Blood Demon Sect disciples were in a frenzy. Their eyes were red, and they were completely ready for the moment when the shield collapsed. Then, they would fight to the death.

However… even as the amorphous sword shot toward the shield, a tremor ran through Meng Hao as he sensed an incredibly familiar aura rising up from within Blood Prince Gorge.

His eyes glittered. The day he had been waiting for had finally arrived.

“Arise, second true self!”

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# Chapter 745: Peak!

In Blood Prince Gorge, Meng Hao’s second true self sat cross-legged inside the log cabin. Moments ago, not a scrap of any sort of aura could be detected on him. He almost seemed dead, like a statue.

Now, though, his eyes snapped opened, and a shocking iciness could be seen within them.

Gradually, a feeling like that of an Immortal could be sensed emanating out from him. The look in his eyes was different from that of Meng Hao, but his body was clearly the same.

The soul was like a sword, and the body the sheath. The power hidden within… was the ‘self’ from the Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao!

Cultivation base ripples suddenly exploded out from it.

In the blink of an eye, they filled all of Blood Prince Gorge. As the second true self took a breath, the ripples were once again drawn back, bottled up inside.

The body was the Dao, and the soul was blade. A sharp blade hidden in a great Dao!

In that same moment, all of the vegetation in Blood Prince Gorge withered up and died. A sinister coldness, along with a terrifying aura, circulated around the second true self.

He looked up and then slowly… raised his right hand toward the sky above Blood Prince Gorge.

In that moment, it seemed as if time itself stopped.

Outside the valley, Meng Hao sat with eyes closed, his consciousness spread out in all directions. Next to him, the wooden sword trembled, and then suddenly seemed to sense something. Next, it shot out toward the final remaining layer of the shield.

As it emerged from within the shield, it blossomed with a radiant glow that was… the power of Time!

Time was like a river that suddenly poured out from within the sword!

100 years. 1,000 years. 5,000 years…. 10,000 years!

Ten thousand years of time swept out from the wooden sword, transforming into distortions in the air. Time suddenly stopped, causing the incoming Dao Seeking sword to… come to a halt in midair.

Apparently, in order to pass through the river of Time, it would have to pass through 10,000 years!

The Blood Demon Sect disciples were shocked by what they saw, and the more than 100,000 cultivators outside the shield were equally astonished. All eyes were now focused on the wooden sword.

The eyes of the black-robed Solitary Sword Sect Patriarch were completely bloodshot. Fury was rekindled, and raged in his heart; this wooden sword was the precious treasure of the Solitary Sword Sect, and had been worshiped by the sect for countless years. Even still, he could never have possibly guessed that the sword actually concealed such incredible Time power!

Although he had seen signs of it when the bamboo sword split apart earlier, it had quickly changed owners, and he had been disinclined to consider the matter further. By now, his heart was consumed with frustration and rage.

Now that he could sense the power of Time on the wooden sword, the Solitary Sword Sect Patriarch was incapable of suppressing his fury. He roared and pushed his cultivation base even harder. Peak Dao Seeking energy, bolstered by the burning of his longevity, immediately surged out.

His entire person resembled a shooting star or, perhaps, a razor-sharp sword that flickered through the air to appear next to the wooden sword. Bucking directly against the river of Time power, he stretched his hand out to grab the wooden sword.

“Get back here!” he bellowed.

However, as soon as he stretched out his hand and touched the sword… Meng Hao’s second true self stood up in Blood Prince Valley. He took a step forward and then suddenly appeared outside the shield, next to the wooden sword. His hand slowly lifted up to grasp the sword by the hilt.

His robe was black, as was his hair, and he was very thin, but clearly had exactly the same facial features as Meng Hao. However, the feeling people got when they looked at him was not the feeling one got when looking at a person. This second true self was as cold as ice, and as he hovered there, he emanated a supremely haughty air, as if he looked down with contempt at every living thing.

His appearance on the scene immediately caused the Blood Demon disciples to be filled with shock. Panting, they looked back and forth between Meng Hao and his second true self, their expressions blank.

The more than 100,000 cultivators in the outside world were equally as astonished.

“A clone?” Those were the words that immediately appeared in everyone’s minds.

“A mere clone?” said the Solitary Sword Sect Patriarch, his eyes widening. “Die you trifling….” He was just about to unleash a divine ability when suddenly, he began to tremble, and his eyes went wide with disbelief and shock.

He wasn’t the only astonished one; the surrounding enemy cultivators were all dumbstruck.

Even the Blood Demon Sect disciples were thoroughly stunned.

Because….

The instant that Meng Hao’s second true self gripped the wooden sword, his cultivation base began to erupt out from within.

First Severing. Second Severing. Third Severing…. Early Dao Seeking!

Intense rumbling filled Heaven and Earth as the cultivation base of Meng Hao’s second true self roared up. Mid Dao Seeking. Late Dao Seeking…. It went all the way to the peak of Dao Seeking!!

This development sent the entire battlefield into chaos!

Merely stepping into Dao Seeking put one on the level of a sect Patriarch, and as for peak Dao Seeking… they were the truly powerful experts, the strongest force of even the largest sects!

They would even be considered part of that sect’s Dao Reserve!

In the entire Southern Domain, there were not even ten people who were at the peak of Dao Seeking!

In all of Planet South Heaven, less than a hundred peak Dao Seeking experts existed!

Any peak Dao Seeking cultivator could take a step forward and become a false Immortal!

As of this moment, Meng Hao’s second true self was firmly in the peak Dao Seeking stage, something that would certainly shock and astonish anyone watching.

The buzz of conversation immediately rose up.

“How is this possible!?!?”

“Peak Dao Seeking! That’s definitely peak Dao Seeking. This is the same feeling I get from our sect’s Patriarch! Except… even stronger!!”

“Meng Hao, Meng Hao…. No matter how this battle ends, there is a new powerful expert in the lands of South Heaven, and that is Meng Hao!”

“How did he create a clone like that? If his clone is at peak Dao Seeking, then his true self is definitely destined to have a peak Dao Seeking cultivation base!”

One change after another on the part of Meng Hao caused their souls to feel shocked. Everything that happened was something they would never be able to forget.

The Blood Demon Sect disciples excitedly began to call out.

“Blood Prince!!”

“Blood Prince!!”

At the same time, Patriarch Blood Demon and the others up in midair were also shocked, especially the red-haired Patriarch from the Golden Frost Sect and the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch.

“Dammit!! How can that kid have a peak Dao Seeking clone!?!?”

The eyes of the Dawn Immortal’s clone widened. She knew Meng Hao was no ordinary person, but this development left her deeply shocked. In fact, this was the first time he truly astonished her to such an indescribable degree.

Patriarch Blood Demon’s eyes swept over the land, and a profound look flickered within.

The black-robed Solitary Sword Sect Patriarch’s eyes flickered. Suppressing his shock, he gritted his teeth and said, “Peak Dao Seeking? What’s the big deal? I’m also peak Dao Seeking!”

He stretched out his hand in an incantation gesture, immediately causing more than 10,000 streams of sword light to swirl around him.

Heaven and Earth dimmed, and the clouds churned. The streams of sword light swirled about, making it seem as if the entire area were a world of swords.

The black-robed Patriarch pointed at Meng Hao’s second true self, causing the sword lights to all shoot directly toward him!

The second true self hovered in midair, his black hair swirling, his expression cold. He held the wooden sword gripped in his right hand, and his eyes flickered. Suddenly, he squeezed his hand down.

Immediately, the wooden sword trembled, and began to drone. In the blink of an eye, it began to emit endless amounts of Time power!

10,000 years. 20,000 years. 30,000 years….

The power of Time exploded out, accompanied by the excited droning of the wooden sword, to echo out in all directions. It was in this moment that, at long last, the true power of the wooden sword could finally be revealed.

What was happening right now was something that even Meng Hao could not do. Only his second true self, with its peak Dao Seeking cultivation base, could unleash the power of the wooden sword in this way.

40,000 years. 50,000 years….

Everything shook above and below. A river of Time swept out around the second true self, a sight completely shocking to the eyes. As for the 10,000 incoming beams of sword light, they suddenly stopped in place, incapable of moving forward even an inch.

What was blocking their way was the passage of time!

The black-robed Solitary Sword Sect Patriarch’s face fell, and a sense of danger welled up in his heart. At the same time, the more than 100,000 enemy cultivators were all flabbergasted.

Up in midair, the red-haired Golden Frost Sect Patriarch and the 13th Li Clan Patriarch, were equally shaken.

The second true self hovered in mid-air, black hair and black robes fluttering. The sword in its hand still was not finished!

Boom!

60,000 years!!

The moment the river of Time surged with 60,000 years of Time power, the second true self sprang into action.

He swiped the sword out, and the 10,000 streams of sword light instantly vanished. In the blink of an eye, they passed through 60,000 years, and no longer existed.

“Impossible!!” gasped the black-robed Patriarch. His astonishment had reached a pinnacle, and he finally backed up at top speed. However, the power of Time still brushed against him, and his body withered. In the blink of an eye, he seemed at least 10,000 years older. He coughed up a mouthful of blood, and his clothes seemed to decay. His face was waxen, his expression had turned from amazement to terror.

He could feel the shadow of death looming over him, as if he might die at any moment.

The second true self gripped the wooden sword, and its power was shocking. It could clearly battle the peak of Dao Seeking with no problem.

“Immortal’s soul!” exclaimed the Solitary Sword Sect’s Patriarch. “This clone is emanating the ripples of an Immortal’s soul!!”

Even as the words left his mouth, the second true self stepped forward, and Time turned into a wind that swept out like a river. Everywhere it passed, living things rotted and decayed.

RUMBLE!!

The sword slashed, and the Solitary Sword Sect Patriarch coughed up a mouthful of blood. His body withered significantly, and his eyes shone with terror. He looked at the approaching second true self, and fell back again. He waved his hand and, astonishingly, tens of thousands of beams of sword light shot out in defense.

Rumbling echoed out as the sword lights were crushed like rotten wood in the face of the second true self. He raised his hand, and swung the wooden sword a third time. 60,000 years of Time power surged forth.

Everything shook, and the sense of danger in the Solitary Sword Sect Patriarch's mind grew even more intense. He shot back toward the more than 100,000 cultivators, suddenly waving his hands down toward the ground. Immediately numerous cultivators were swept up, completely unable to control their own bodies as they were thrown back to block the wooden sword's Time power.

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# Chapter 746: False Immortal’s Soul

One sword swept out, bones withered and souls perished!

The power of Time flowed out like a bright, dancing beam. In the blink of an eye, the cultivators who had been swept up by the fleeing black-robed Patriarch, were completely withered into nothing more than dust and smoke. Their bodies, their magical items, everything was rotted into nothing.

All of the onlookers couldn’t help but be shaken deeply by the deaths.

People wanted to flee, but considering the level of the black-robed Patriarch’s cultivation base, they were nothing more than ants. No matter how quickly they scattered, he still threw them back as obstacles. As the power of Time consumed them, the black-robed Patriarch fled. Finally he had just a bit of breathing room.

“Dammit! DAMMIT!” His face was ashen, and the shadow of death loomed heavily over him. It had been many, many years since he had experienced the feeling of a deadly chase like this.

Inside, he was terrified, and was on full alert. Behind him, Meng Hao’s second true self continued to close in.

It was a solitary sword that rumbled through the heavens. The power of Time fell like rain, enveloping everything. The black-robed Patriarch’s face paled even further, and his pupils constricted. He suddenly slapped his bag of holding to produce a black horn. He bit the tip of his tongue and spit some blood onto it, causing it to writhe and wriggle. It shattered with a bang as two centipedes suddenly flew out from inside!

The centipedes were pitch black, except for a white line that ran down their abdomens. As soon as they appeared, the aroma of deadly venom wafted out, along with an indescribable aura.

“Attack!” The black-robed man’s face was pale. This was his trump card, something he had acquired years ago, and had even enabled him to launch a successful sneak attack against an injured false Immortal.

As soon as the centipedes appeared, they shot through the air like Immortal creatures. Their speed was incredible as they closed in on the second true self. However, as soon as they entered the power of Time, they instantly stopped in place.

The black-robed Patriarch became even more nervous, and he quickly produced even more magical items.

At the same time, the two many-legged centipedes continued to move forward, albeit much more slowly than before. They even looked excited.

The white lines on their abdomens began to expand until they covered more than half their bodies. Now, the centipedes appeared to be half white and half black.

At the same time, an incredible aura began to emanate out from them, and they grew even more excited. Gradually, their speed increased. Apparently, they were consuming the power of Time!

The sight of it caused Meng Hao’s eyes to narrow as he stood within the shield.

The black-robed Patriarch was inwardly delighted, and he continued to flee at top speed. As he did, he waved his sleeve, causing the numerous glowing, magical items to shoot toward Meng Hao’s second true self.

At the same time, the black-robed Patriarch's eyes flickered, and he performed an incantation gesture then pointed up into the sky. A lightning bolt crackled downward, and a lightning sword coalesced in the sky which then slashed down toward the second true self.

The second true self gave a cold snort and loosened his grip on the wooden sword, allowing it freedom to orbit around him. It immediately transformed into a vortex, which became a tempest. Sword qi raged, and the power of Time screamed through the air.

As for the second true self, he lifted his right hand up, during which time a confused expression appeared in his eyes.

Suddenly, his right hand became transparent, and thousands of magical sealing marks appeared. Shockingly, they shot forward to form the shape that looked like a closed parasol!

The parasol was formed from numerous magical symbols, and as soon as it appeared in full, it opened.

A shocking aura exploded out, along with a brightness that rivaled the sun. In fact, anyone who glanced at it would think that this parasol really was a sun.

This was not one of Meng Hao's divine abilities, but rather, a Daoist magic that existed in the memory of the Immortal's soul inside the second true self!

"Solitary Yang Sky!" said an ancient, icy voice that came from the mouth of the second true self. As the words echoed out, the black-robed Patriarch's magical items all shattered into pieces. As for the Patriarch himself, he was caught up by the glowing light and the tempest. Blood sprayed from his mouth as his body withered significantly.

Shock covered his face. "What divine ability is that!?!?"

What caused him even more despair was that the two centipedes, caught up in the river of Time, had been sated on Time power. Now, they shrank down and balled themselves up, leaving them unable to move and floating there in midair. Even when the black-robed Patriarch called for them to return, they completely ignored him.

“Dammit!!” he thought, his heart filled with frustration. Suddenly, back inside the shield, Meng Hao waved his right hand. The war chariot appeared directly in front of him, which he entered without hesitation, at the same circulating the qi of Immortal Shows the Way.

RUMBLE!

The chariot vanished, to reappear moments later in front of his second true self. He waved his hand, and the two sphere-like centipedes were instantly sucked into his bag of holding.

“YOU!!” roared the black-robed Patriarch, nearly coughing up blood. What he saw in front of him was two people who looked the same, and yet felt completely different. Immediately, he began to flee at top speed.

Even as he fled, Meng Hao’s second true self took a step forward and then raised his hand, pointing out toward the Patriarch. Immediately, the wooden sword began to emit a droning sound. At the same time, Meng Hao also performed an incantation and then pointed forward.

Meng Hao’s second true self was completely under his control, and in this moment he coordinated with it to jointly control the wooden sword. Droning, the wooden sword exploded with the power of Time.

70,000 years!!

Under the power of 70,000 years of time, the river of Time transformed into a sword!

Boundless sword qi caused everything to tremble and shake as the sword itself slashed toward the black-robed Patriarch.

The black-robed Patriarch’s eyes widened, and he was about to dodge out of the way when suddenly, the golden vortex of the Blood Demon Grand

Magic appeared, as well as the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex.

Enveloped, the man couldn’t move an inch. He could only remain there in place as a sword containing 70,000 years of Time power descended upon him.

“NO!!” he howled. He performed a double-handed incantation, causing an ancient aura to suddenly appear, along with two sealing marks on both of his hands. His body was withering rapidly, not because of the vortex, or because of the decay of Time, but because of something he was doing to himself.

All of the flesh and blood in his body, even the bones and qi passageways, all of his fleshly body was condensing into a divine ability.

“Fleshly Sword Body!” he roared. His body collapsed, although his Nascent Divinity wasn’t harmed at all. His bag of holding tumbled off to the side as the various parts of his fleshly body were shattered and then formed back together… into a sword! Its blade was made of bone, and its hilt, flesh and blood! Qi and blood swirled around it in all directions.

The sword shot directly toward the Wooden Time Sword.

BOOOOOMMMMMMM!

A massive explosion could be heard that shook the entire battlefield, astonishing everyone.

The white bone sword shattered, and the hilt fell to pieces. Qi and blood transformed into ripples that spread out in all directions. Meng Hao’s wooden sword trembled and emitted a droning sound as it spun backward. However, the second true self easily reached out his hand and grabbed it.

The second true self’s face was pale white as he staggered backward a few measures. As for Meng Hao, he was completely protected by his second true self, and yet still coughed up a mouthful of blood.

“So, peak Dao Seeking experts really can’t be killed easily,” he thought, his eyes glittering.

Rumbling rolled out across the lands below; the force of the explosion just now was too powerful, and the Blood Demon Sect’s final shield layer couldn’t take the impact. It trembled, and then directly shattered into pieces. The Blood Demon Sect was now completely exposed in the middle of the battlefield.

The black-robed Patriarch’s Nascent Divinity grew very dim under the power of the explosion, but fled at top speed nonetheless, an expression of madness and hatred on his face. Since becoming Patriarch of the sect, he had never been so seriously injured, especially not to the point of being forced to use the Fleshly Sword Body. All of his failures had to do with the wooden sword. The most powerful magical arts he could utilize were all designed to be used in coordination with the sect’s precious treasure.

“You’re all dead!” the black-robed Patriarch roared. “Meng Hao, I’m going to possess your body!! Golden Frost, Li Yuanlei, no more delays! I’m making my move now!” Gritting his teeth, he grabbed his bag of holding and then slapped it to produce an enormous statue!

The statue was fully three thousand meters tall, and completely black. An intense energy surged up into the air as soon as it appeared. Gradually, a seemingly infinite murderous aura began to swirl around it. Its presence caused strange colors to flash in the sky, and the clouds roiled. At the same time, a huge vortex appeared around the statue.

An aura suddenly exploded out that belonged to an Immortal.

It was an Immortal’s treasure!

The Dawn Immortal had been their trump card, but this statue was their last resort.

The red-haired old man from the Golden Frost Sect and the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch exchanged determined glances.

The Golden Frost Sect Patriarch took a deep breath and then waved his hand. Immediately 1,000 fist-sized rocks flew out from within his sleeves. Shockingly, Immortal qi immediately began to emanate out. These were not magical items, nor spirit stones. These were… pieces of Immortal jade!!

Even Immortals would rarely see so many pieces of Immortal jade!!

As soon as the pieces of Immortal jade flew out, the vortex around the statue sucked them up. The statue’s energy shot upward, and the murderous air to its aura increased by tenfold.

The 3rd Li Clan Patriarch had a very serious look on his face as he opened his mouth and spit out a mouthful of blood. His entire body suddenly sagged, and he backed up anxiously. Within the blood were countless dots of golden light, which formed together into countless strands that resembled a root formed of countless veins.

This was… a root of Immortality!

The Immortal root flew into the statue, and the instant it did, the statue seemed to come to life. Its limbs trembled, and the entire statue turned into a puppet!

At the same time, the black-robed Patriarch waved his sleeve to collect up Patriarch Six-Daos’ discarnate soul, then threw it off to the side.

The river of 100,000 discarnate souls was no longer under the control of Patriarch Six-Daos, but rather, the black-robed Patriarch. He led the river of souls directly into the statue-puppet, which caused its eyes to open and radiate brilliant light.

The aura of an Immortal exploded out with full intensity.

This was an Immortal!

Although it was not a true Immortal, even a false Immortal could still be called Immortal.

A false Immortal puppet!

“Meng Hao, it’s time to die!!” said the puppet, its voice that of the black-robed Patriarch.

The puppet’s eyes shone with boundless light at it slowly stood up. Its energy rumbled boundlessly, and the ground quaked. An Immortal aura exploded out.

“Everyone, attack! Eradicate everyone in the Blood Demon Sect! Leave no one alive!!”

In response to the puppet’s voice, the more than 100,000 cultivators’ hearts surged. It was almost as if their bodies weren’t even under their own control. Without the slightest hesitation, they shot directly toward the shieldless Blood Demon Sect.

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Please send typos or mistakes to issth-deathblade@yahoo.com

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# Chapter 747: Decisive Battle!

The final, decisive battle had finally begun!

Booming filled the sky and the land, the Heavens dimmed, and the wind screamed. The Blood Demon Sect was the center, and surrounding it was a vast sea of cultivators unleashing magical techniques that gave rise to enormous ripples. The earth was smashed and the air shattered. It was as if doomsday had arrived.

More than 100,000 cultivators charged across the battlefield madly toward the Blood Demon Sect disciples that they had besieged this entire time. The Blood Demon Sect disciples had repressed themselves to the limit, and now their savagery exploded out.

“KILL THEM!!” There were tens of thousands of Blood Demon Sect disciples and more than 100,000 enemy cultivators. Despite the fact that they were significantly outnumbered, they did not hesitate to wade into the bloody battle.

This was their sect, and this war was being waged to exterminate them. Not a single one of them would be left alive. Since that was the case, they would take some of the enemy with them!

Or perhaps… they would be able to slaughter their way to a chance for survival.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he retreated back to Blood Prince Gorge. Xu Qing was shivering slightly when he landed in front of her, but when she saw him she took a deep breath and gazed at him with gentle eyes.

He embraced her, then looked up at the vast array of enemy forces charging toward them. He watched as the Blood Demon Sect disciples charged madly into the fray, and the final, decisive battle began.

“Are you afraid?” he asked Xu Qing softly.

“No,” she replied with a chuckle.

Meng Hao’s second true self hovered in midair, eyes glittering. He raised his hand, causing the wooden sword to circulate around him as his peak Dao Seeking cultivation base surged. Then, he turned into a prismatic streak of light that shot toward the false Immortal puppet.

The puppet immediately met him in combat and explosions rang out, sending boundless ripples out in all directions. This became a third battlefield, the second being where Patriarch Blood Demon was fighting.

On the ground below, the slaughter commenced. Shouting rang out, along with the sounds of killing. The Blood Demon Sect disciples were in a frenzy, holding nothing back, even sustaining injury and burning longevity. When they were too severely injured, they would smile bitterly and then choose to self-detonate.

Rumbling filled the battlefield as the Blood Demon Sect disciples massacred the enemy with savagery and madness.

One particular Blood Demon Sect disciple with a Nascent Soul cultivation base, received a fatal blow. Using the last bit of his energy, he lunged forward and buried his teeth into his opponent’s throat and ripped out a huge chunk of bloody flesh. As his opponent screamed miserably, the Blood Demon Sect disciple laughed maniacally and then self-detonated.

Another Blood Demon Sect disciple unleashed a forbidden art. His entire cultivation base and fleshly body, even his soul, transformed into a drop of blood which stabbed through the foreheads of multiple opponents. After slaying eight people in a row, he exploded.

Ruthlessly savage!

Due to the berserk fighting of the Blood Demon Sect, the more than 100,000 enemies were kept outside of the mountain peaks, and were incapable of stepping half a pace into the interior of the sect. The vicious slaughter being carried out by the Blood Demon Sect completely shook their opponents.

In a very short period of time, the Blood Demon Sect lost more than 10,000 cultivators. However, the enemy forces paid a heavy price; more than 20,000 of their number were killed!

Meng Hao did not participate in the fighting, but rather stood outside Blood Prince Gorge, surrounded by Blood Demon Sect disciples, silently observing the battle. To the other disciples, their Blood Prince had already paid a heavy enough price. Now… it was time for them to do their part.

Up in midair, the Dawn Immortal’s clone began to shine with a brilliant light. The illusory Resurrection Lily behind her almost seemed corporeal. She was now relying purely on her own strength to keep Patriarch Blood Demon’s clone in check.

Rumbling filled the air as they attacked each other. As for the red-haired Golden Frost Sect Patriarch and the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch, they circled around the area, occasionally attempting to interfere with the battle, but mostly just setting up spell formations in an attempt to prevent Patriarch Blood Demon from breaking free.

In a different location, Meng Hao’s second true self was fighting the false Immortal puppet. The black-robed Patriarch’s Nascent Divinity was now driving the puppet, and thanks to his towering killing intent and the puppet’s incredible strength, Meng Hao’s second true self was slowly being pushed back.

The gap between the peak of Dao Seeking and a false Immortal was too vast!

Thankfully, Meng Hao’s second true self had the Wooden Time Sword, and the Immortal’s soul inside of him made him just capable of holding his own in the battle.

However, anyone could see that eventually, the Blood Demon Sect… would be defeated.

“DIE!” roared the more than 100,000 enemy cultivators as they surged onto the offensive once more. In the middle of all the fighting could be seen the Golden Frost Sect puppet with the Dao Seeking aura. Its eyes flashed as it advanced cautiously through the crowds.

The cultivators who made up this Golden Frost Sect puppet were already thoroughly frightened by Meng Hao. They had looked on helplessly as the Solitary Sword Sect’s early Dao Seeking expert was killed, and the Li Clan Patriarch severely injured. Then there was the black-robed Patriarch, who they didn’t even come close to matching up to.

They would have long since fled, but this was war, and they could not.

Even as the Golden Frost Sect puppet started to advance, Meng Hao’s eyes began to flicker with icy coldness. He looked at the puppet, and as he did, it stopped in its tracks.

Meng Hao looked down at Xu Qing and began to speak, his voice soft. “I’m going to kill a lot of people today. If you don’t want to see so much bloodshed, you can always close your eyes.”

Xu Qing looked up at him with a tender expression, then closed her eyes.

Holding Xu Qing tight with one arm, he flicked his sleeve, causing the war chariot to appear. He stepped inside, and the war chariot began to shine with a blinding light. Numerous beasts magically appeared, and they roared as they began to pull the chariot forward.

He stood there in the war chariot, Xu Qing at his side. Now that he had reappeared on the battlefield, he once again became the focus of attention. Everything he said and did would be noticed, and would affect the overall situation on the battlefield.

Boom!

The war chariot charged into the crowds, and instantly people were killed. In the blink of an eye, a bloody path was carved out across the battlefield.

Bloodcurdling screams filled the air constantly. Anyone who was struck by Meng Hao’s war chariot died in a spray of blood. Soon, the chariot itself was the color of blood.

Meng Hao’s face, hair, and clothing were also soaked in blood, but he didn’t care. His eyes were cold and grim as he waved his hand, causing the Ninth Mountain to appear as well as the fourth level vortex of the Blood Demon Grand Magic.

He was no longer the scholar he had been. Nor was he the same Meng Hao of the Southern Domain. After joining the Blood Demon Sect, his heart had begun to fill with an insatiable desire to kill.

That desire to kill was the Devil in his heart!

Be a Devil in heart. Bedevilment! As a Devil, carry out mass slaughter!

Meng Hao lifted his head and roared as the war chariot shot forward, this time toward the Golden Frost Sect puppet. The Golden Frost Sect puppet’s face fell, and it fell back at top speed. It performed an incantation gesture, causing the glint of blades and swords to spin toward Meng Hao.

Boom!

Meng Hao made no attempt to dodge. The war chariot smashed forward, crushing the incoming blades and swords like dried weeds as it barreled toward the puppet.

Another explosion rattled out, and popping sounds could be heard from the puppet as cracks spread out across its body. It retreated again, waving its hand to produce a golden greatsword which then slashed down toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao snorted coldly, clenched his right hand into a fist, and punched out.

The instant his punch connected with the greatsword, cracks spread out across the sword, and it exploded into pieces. Having lost the greatsword, the Golden Frost Sect puppet appeared to be in a state of despair. It was incapable of dodging the war chariot, which slammed directly into its body.

A boom could be heard as the Golden Frost Sect puppet fell to pieces. It transformed into four Spirit Severing cultivators, all of whom were coughing up blood. Faces aghast, they were about to flee, only to find that the fourth level vortex of the Blood Demon Grand Magic was waiting for them.

The vortex rumbled into motion, and not a single one of the four were able to escape. They were enveloped by the vortex, and their bodies began to wither. Their cultivation bases were sucked away; even genuine early Dao Seeking cultivators would be incapable of getting out of this vortex. As for these four… how could they possibly escape death!?

BOOM!

Their bodies exploded, and their cultivation bases were gone. Their Nascent Divinities flew out, whereupon the flag of three streamers appeared to sweep them up.

Unfortunately, this small victory did nothing to change the tide of the battle as a whole. In the same moment that Meng Hao vanquished the Golden Frost Sect puppet, booming sounds could be heard from up in mid-air as his second true self coughed up blood and retreated at top speed.

The false Immortal puppet, under the control of the black-robed Patriarch, was emanating an incredible energy. Immortal qi surged about, and the air around it shattered. Natural law bowed before him, as if it were the ultimate sovereign.

“Blood Demon Sect! Today, you will be exterminated!” cried the black-robed man from within the false Immortal puppet, his voice laced with killing intent. “Meng Hao, you twerp, you will not escape death today!”

The enormous puppet flickered, suddenly changing directions to attack, not the second true self, but Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s killing intent filled the air, but he was well aware of the gap in power between him and the puppet. The war chariot thrummed as he retreated. Unfortunately, the false Immortal puppet only continued to pursue him, and even increased its speed. It got closer and closer!

It didn’t seem as if there were any place Meng Hao could flee to. The false Immortal puppet would catch him no matter where he went!

His second true self flickered and shot toward him. However, Meng Hao knew that there was nowhere to flee to. He suddenly grinned hideously, and then stopped in place. He raised his right hand, and the Blood Demon Grand Magic appeared, along with the Ninth Mountain, the Black White Pearls and the Blood Immortal divine abilities!

He also summoned the ‘withering’ character, and called the Ji Clan Blood Clone from down on the battlefield. In addition, the Resurrection Lily blossomed behind him, writhing viciously.

And finally… he clenched his right fist!

As for the second true self, he utilized his peak Dao Seeking cultivation base to unleash the Solitary Yang Sky!

It combined with the Wooden Time Sword, a river of 70,000 years of Time power, and everything else, to form the most powerful attack that Meng Hao could currently unleash.

He was battling a false Immortal!

The entire battlefield shook violently!

A shocking boom rang out that turned the heads of countless people on the battlefield. The air was shattered, and the false Immortal puppet not only stopped in place, it retreated three measures!

Meng Hao’s second true self spat up a huge mouthful of blood and stumbled backward. As for Meng Hao himself, blood also sprayed from his mouth. However, his body did not collapse due to the protection of the chariot. The war chariot tumbled end-over-end, and the qi of Immortal Shows the Way vanished, causing the war chariot to also disappear.

Meng Hao held Xu Qing tight as he fled. When he looked back, he saw the false Immortal Puppet laughing maniacally and proceeding forward with killing intent swirling.

“Time to die!” roared the puppet, raising its right hand. Shockingly, a multi-colored glow appeared, swirling Immortal qi which transformed into an Immortal lotus. The lotus pulsed, and a massive pressure rumbled out.

It was at this point that….

Up in midair, Patriarch Blood Demon’s clone, the one that was fighting the Dawn Immortal, suddenly sighed. Then, it turned and vanished.

Meanwhile, in the cave in Mount Blood Demon, the armored Patriarch Blood Demon sat cross-legged in the Blood Pool. Suddenly, his eyes snapped open, and they radiated a glow the color of blood.

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# Chapter 748: Blood Demon’s True Self!

An ancient voice echoed out from Mount Blood Demon.

“It’s time to end this war.”

Apart from the Blood Demon Sect disciples, everyone on the battlefield was immediately rooted in place.

Even the false Immortal puppet controlled by the black-robed Patriarch, which had been bearing down on Meng Hao, was stopped in midair.

The red-haired old man from the Golden Frost Sect, the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch, even the Dawn Immortal’s clone, all were frozen in place. They could not move, but they could still think, and their minds… were filled with astonishment!

“The fact that you were able to push me this far shows that I truly did underestimate you Southern Domain cultivators,” said the ancient voice. It sounded incredibly tired, yet at the same time, filled with a mighty and wild pride.

“Dawn Immortal, earlier you asked me why I was so confident. Well now I’m going to show you… exactly why I am so confident.

“You all believe that what sits in the Immortal’s cave in Mount Blood Demon is actually my true self?” Even as the voice boomed out, Patriarch Blood Demon slowly rose from his cross-legged position in the Blood Pond. He stepped forward and then… walked out of the Immortal’s cave on Mount Blood Demon.

As he stepped foot onto the mountain peak, a sea of blood burst out from behind him. It truly was a sea, vast quantities of blood that surged up into the sky. In the blink of an eye, it covered everything, so that everything up above… was the color of blood.

The previous sky was no longer visible, making the entire world seem to be one of blood. Within this world of blood, atop Mount Blood Demon, stood Patriarch Blood Demon, clad in armor, looking out at the world with ancient eyes.

patriarch blood demon art

Official ISSTH art of Patriarch Blood Demon

Official ISSTH "cute" Patriarch Blood Demon art

Official ISSTH “cute” Patriarch Blood Demon art

The red-haired Patriarch from the Golden Frost Sect trembled, and an intense apprehension welled up inside of him.

The 3rd Li Clan Patriarch was equally astonished, and an unprecedented feeling of crisis filled him.

The Dawn Immortal’s clone wore an expression of astonishment as she suddenly realized that her understanding of Patriarch Blood Demon… was far from complete.

The false Immortal puppet controlled by the black-robed Patriarch was also shaking. The massive pressure which weighed down on him was such that he knew a mere thought could kill him!

“Impossible! How could he be so powerful!?!?”

Down below on the battlefield, the more than 100,000 cultivators of the allied powers were also dumbfounded.

“There are many stories about me in the lands of the Southern Domain,” said Patriarch Blood Demon coolly. “According to some of those stories, I am the incarnation of a drop of blood from a Demon. That is why… I am called Patriarch Blood Demon.

“That story is true.” He stood there atop Mount Blood Demon, not even the tiniest ripple emanating from his cultivation base. He seemed, for all intents and purposes, to be a mortal.

“And yet, it is also false!” When he said this, the land began to quake. Fissures spread out, as if some enormous creature were waking beneath the surface of the land and was about to emerge.

“I say it’s true because I am indeed incarnated from a drop of blood. I say it’s false because this body formed by the drop of blood… is not my true self!”

Rumbling sounds could be heard as the rifts in the land grew larger. However, the cultivators were completely stuck in their original positions. Even if the land fell away beneath them, they would remain floating there in place.

As for the Blood Demon Sect disciples, they had already retreated back to the region of the five mountain peaks. Meng Hao was among their number, his mind reeling as he held Xu Qing tight at his side.

Xu Qing’s eyes had opened and she was also looking on with shock.

“My confidence lies in my true self. I don’t have much life left in me, so I didn’t want to move…. However, this battle has earned you the right to see me.” Even as the words began to leave his mouth, an intense rumbling could be heard from the ground.

Everything shook as, shockingly, a gargantuan hand burst out from the ground. It was followed by an arm that was thousands of meters long. It looked like a mountain as it rose up, causing everything to tremble.

The surface of the ground collapsed as a head appeared. He had blood-colored skin, and a horn protruded from his forehead. He wore an ancient, dilapidated suit of armor. It only took a moment… for him to completely rise up from the ground!

He was nearly thirty thousand meters tall, completely crimson, and covered with innumerable complex magical symbols.

He looked almost exactly like the Demonic Incarnation of the Blood Demon Grand Spell Formation that Meng Hao had controlled before, only more ancient and more real!

The red-haired old man from the Golden Frost Sect felt his mind buzzing. His face fell, and he began to pant. Next to him, the Li Clan Patriarch gasped, and his eyes went wide with disbelief.

The Dawn Immortal’s clone was also trembling, and the Resurrection Lily behind her was struggling. As for the false Immortal puppet controlled by the black-robed Patriarch, it was also trembling.

The instant the enormous figure appeared, the Patriarch Blood Demon that stood on Mount Blood Demon stepped out into the air and then flew up to sit cross-legged on top of the enormous head. Then, he slowly merged down into the enormous Demon.

It was at this point that the Demon’s eyes suddenly opened.

“This is my true self!

“I was seriously injured, and chose this place to recuperate. I incarnated a clone with a drop of blood, and founded the Blood Demon Sect.” His voice rumbled across the lands like thunder. Up above, the blood-colored sky glittered brightly. The more than 100,000 cultivators were trembling in shock, even the most powerful experts.

Meng Hao was equally shaken.

“Unfortunately, I can only wield a fraction of the power that I could when I was at my peak. It would be difficult for me to harm a true Immortal.

However, to kill a false Immortal… is child’s play.” With that, his huge hand stretched out and grabbed the Dawn Immortal’s clone.

Rumbling filled the air, and the Dawn Immortal’s clone screamed miserably. The Resurrection Lily behind her writhed as she struggled to fight back. She could only hold on for a moment, though, before her body was crushed. She, along with the Resurrection Lily, began to fade away.

Before vanishing completely, the Dawn Immortal’s cold, merciless voice rang out: “Blood Demon, I refuse to believe that you will be able to keep ahold of that Demon body for much longer! Since you’re dying, your Demon body will soon belong to me!”

“Ah, so it’s true…. You came here for my Demon body.” It was then that Blood Demon’s eyes came to rest on the red-haired old man from the Golden Frost Sect. He stretched his finger out.

The old man trembled, but could do nothing to fight back. Blood Demon’s finger touched him, and it was a boundless mountain smashing down onto him. He immediately was smashed into pieces, leaving behind only his Nascent Divinity. His expression was one of terror and despair, incapable as he was of fleeing.

Just when he thought he was going to disappear forever, Blood Demon calmly said, “I’ll leave you alive.”

With that, a blood-red light descended from the blood-colored sky, enveloping the red-haired Patriarch, instantly transforming him into something that looked like a Blood Clone.

Along with the new body came a blank expression, as if all his previous memories had been wiped away.

“From now on, you will be a Dharma Protector of the Blood Demon Sect,” said Patriarch Blood Demon, his voice cool. Next, his gaze shifted to the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch, and his finger moved again.

The 3rd Li Clan Patriarch trembled, and his body exploded. As the blood and gore dissipated, his Nascent Divinity flew out, and was encased in a similar body of blood. His memories were erased, and he became another Dharma Protector of the Blood Demon Sect.

Patriarch Blood Demon seemed exhausted, and he closed his eyes, as if he didn’t even have enough energy to keep them open. It seemed that his actions just now put quite a strain on him.

After a moment, he forced his eyes open again and looked at the puppet being controlled by the black-robed Patriarch. “And then there’s you…. I think you, too, will be a Dharma Protector of the Blood Demon Sect.”

“That one must die!” said Meng Hao suddenly.

Blood Demon’s eyes flickered. Without another word, he reached out and grabbed the false Immortal puppet and squeezed down violently. What was being crushed was in fact the Nascent Divinity of the black-robed old man.

A miserable scream could be heard as the Nascent Divinity was completely obliterated.

Having accomplished these things, the enormous Blood Demon closed his eyes. Apparently, he was now completely out of energy. He once again sat down cross-legged and then sank down into the ground. The image of Patriarch Blood Demon once again appeared at the top of his head, looking completely exhausted, and surrounded by an even stronger aura of death than before. As the enormous Demon disappeared into the earth, Patriarch Blood Demon stepped foot onto Mount Blood Demon. As he entered the Immortal’s cave there, the sea of blood that covered the sky rushed back into the cave to reform the Blood Pond. Patriarch Blood Demon sluggishly sat down cross-legged to meditate.

It was at this point that Meng Hao suddenly heard Patriarch Blood Demon’s exhausted voice in his ear.

“I didn’t want to use my real body, as it is an incredible drain on the scant bit of power I have left….

“But you… represent a hope that I cannot ignore….

“I need to sleep now, and I won’t be able to awaken again for another hundred years. Perhaps I will never awaken. As for the Blood Demon Sect… I give it to you…. Be careful of the Dawn Immortal. She is both a Resurrection Lily, and not a Resurrection Lily…. Also, the great territorial war is coming soon.”

The rift in the ground closed up, and the restrictive spell formation surrounding the area vanished. The more than 100,000 cultivators on the battlefield could now move again. Trembling, they looked with terror at Mount Blood Demon. It was hard to say who was first, but they began to retreat, scattering like a flock of birds, fighting amongst themselves to be the first to flee.

As for the 70,000 remaining Blood Demon Sect disciples, their killing intent was even more intense than ever. Their sect had narrowly escaped complete eradication in this war, and they would never rest easy unless they exacted their revenge.

“Blood Prince!!”

“Blood Prince!!”

All of the Blood Demon disciples turned to look at Meng Hao as they awaited his decision about what to do next.

Meng Hao looked at the exhausted Blood Demon Sect disciples and then after a moment of contemplation said, “Debts of blood can only be paid in full WITH blood! We rest for one month. After that, I will take you… to unify the Southern Domain!”

Their intense killing intent, along with the thirst to unify the Southern Domain, transformed their morale into one of excitement and frenzy. The mood completely enveloped the battered Blood Demon Sect!

Meanwhile, outside of the Blood Demon Sect, an old man sat cross-legged up in the sky. Beneath him was a pill furnace. He had a complex expression on his face as look down at the Blood Demon Sect.

It was Pill Demon, also known as Reverend Violet East of the Violet Fate Sect.

“Patriarch Blood Demon, you have paid too heavy a price in order to prepare him to Sever the Devil and enter Dao Seeking. He is my apprentice, so this kindness is something that he should not have to pay for. I will take the responsibility to repay you.” After a long, deep look at the Blood Demon Sect, he turned and vanished.

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# Chapter 749: Emperor Black Sieve!

One month later….

There was no hotter topic in the Southern Domain than the war between the four allied powers and the Blood Demon Sect. After a month, stories about the battle had already spread far and wide.

The peak Dao Seeking Patriarch of the Solitary Sword Sect had fallen in battle, as well as an early Dao Seeking elder!

Patriarch Six-Daos of the Black Sieve Sect had been killed!

A Patriarch of the Golden Frost Sect and the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch were wiped of their memories and transformed into Dharmic Protectors of the Blood Demon Sect!

The Blood Demon Sect's Blood Prince, Meng Hao, had a peak Dao Seeking clone and an undying body. No matter how many times he was killed, his body reformed!

Patriarch Blood Demon's true self was actually beneath the Blood Demon Sect, and was shockingly powerful to the extreme!

All the details were spread throughout the Southern Domain. Soon, all cultivators were shocked by the might of the Blood Demon Sect.

"The Patriarchs of four sects were either killed or enslaved! I can't believe the Blood Demon Sect is actually that powerful!"

"That's nothing. I heard that the Solitary Sword Sect's precious treasure was actually taken away by the Blood Demon Sect's Blood Prince! How bizarre is that!?"

“The number one sect in the Southern Domain is definitely the Blood Demon Sect!”

“Four great powers were defeated, do you really think the Blood Demon Sect will stop now? It won’t be long now before another great war unfolds!”

“It’s too bad about all those rogue cultivators who enlisted. I heard almost all of them died….”

During the month, discussions raged regarding the battles between the Blood Demon Sect and the four great powers. Soon, people began to realize that… there were suddenly far fewer cultivators in the Southern Domain than there used to be.

Heavy casualties had been sustained by four great powers, as well as a vast quantity of rogue cultivators. Such losses significantly reduced the overall military might of the Southern Domain as a whole.

As the rest of the Southern Domain was marveling about the Blood Demon Sect, the Solitary Sword Sect was awash with misery. They had once been the most powerful sect, with two Dao Seeking Patriarchs. Now, however, both of those patriarchs were dead.

Furthermore, their sect’s precious treasure now belonged to someone else. The forces that returned to the sect were less than half of the number who had left to wage war. Virtually all of their Spirit Severing experts had died. Only three returned.

As soon as the Solitary Sword Sect’s forces returned, they immediately sealed down the entire sect, activated their grand spell formation and cut themselves off from the outside world.

All of the sect members’ hearts were filled with fear and even terror at the thought of reprisals from the Blood Demon Sect.

The Golden Frost Sect was in much the same position as the Solitary Sword Sect. Their Patriarch had died, their Dao Seeking puppet had been destroyed, and virtually all of their Spirit Severing experts had been slain. The only Spirit Severing expert who remained was an Elder of the Second Severing, who was now the most powerful person in the Sect.

Their eighteen grand spell formations were activated one by one. The Golden Frost Sect… also chose to seal their entire sect off from the outside world!

As for the Li Clan, both their 3rd and 5th Patriarchs were dead, and significant injuries and deaths had been inflicted on their forces. It was an incredibly heavy blow to the Clan. Thankfully for the Li Clan, they had existed for many years, and were able to awaken a Third Severing Patriarch. However, he was only one person. Therefore, the Li Clan also sealed itself, its mountain ranges, and all the surrounding areas.

And then there was the Black Sieve Sect…. There was no need for the Black Sieve Sect to seal anything. There were only a handful of disciples left alive. As for the ones who survived the war with the Blood Demon Sect, they didn’t return to the sect.

The disciples who had been left behind to guard the sect quickly learned of the death of Six-Daos, and the great victory of the Blood Demon Sect. Filled with terror, they all left. The once flourishing mountains of the enormous Black Sieve Sect were now empty.

Of course, there were some rogue cultivators and small-scale sects who cast their eyes on the spiritual energy and resources within the sect. They snuck in to search for the sect’s ancient records, legacies and magical items.

However, something happened that instantly turned the entire Black Sieve Sect into a forbidden zone that no one dared to enter.

About half a month previous, a group of several hundred rogue cultivators were wandering through the Black Sieve Sect when suddenly, a sinister roar could be heard coming from underground, deep beneath the Black Sieve Sect. Then, a voice could be heard.

“I, the Emperor, have been sleeping for so long, and when I finally wake up… well, look at what has happened to this place! Well then, you people will be staying behind!” As the voice echoed out, black fog roiled up from the ground beneath the Black Sieve Sect. It quickly enveloped the entire area, whereupon bloodcurdling shrieks could be heard coming from the rogue cultivators inside. Not a single one was able to escape.

The people who were outside of the fog fled in shock, and then spread word of what had happened.

As the Southern Domain slipped into chaos, the Solitary Sword Sect, the Golden Frost Sect and the Li Clan were all sealed. There was little change in the Song Clan and the Violet Fate Sect. For them, things continued on as normal. They had not participated in the war with the Blood Demon Sect, and therefore sustained no losses whatsoever, and maintained their previous levels of power.

As time passed, more and more Southern Domain cultivators were trying to figure out what the Blood Demon Sect would do next. Would they strike back? If they sought revenge, which sect would they move against first?

In fact, quite a few cultivators lingered near the outskirts of the Blood Demon Sect, awaiting the day they took action.

Finally, one bright and beautiful day, beneath a cloudless sky, a beam of colorful light shot up from within the Blood Demon Sect. It was not just one beam, but hundreds, then thousands, until finally… tens of thousands of beams of light caused Heaven and Earth to tremble.

Instantly, the cultivators lingering outside of the Blood Demon Sect began to get excited.

“The Blood Demon Sect is on the march!!”

“Tens of thousands of cultivators have been dispatched! There’s definitely going to be a war!”

“They’re absolutely going to strike back, otherwise why would they marshal such an incredible force!?”

The rogue cultivators quickly spread the news. At a sensitive time like this in the Southern Domain, this news about the Blood Demon Sect swept across the entire land like a stormwind.

The Blood Demon Sect was on the move!

Tens of thousands of beams of light shot through the air, with Meng Hao in the lead. His expression was grim as he whistled through the air. Shockingly, he was flanked by two figures wearing blood-colored robes, with blank expressions on their faces. They seemed barely aware of what was going on around them, but their auras were intense, that of peak Dao Seeking.

Behind them were the Spirit Severing experts, then tens of thousands of ordinary disciples, all of them bent on revenge.

They traveled in silence, and with utmost speed. Quite a few Southern Domain cultivators caught sight of them flying through the sky and were shocked, but then began to follow along. Gradually, more and more cultivators were following behind the Blood Demon Sect.

Soon, the buzz of conversation could be heard from the cultivators trailing the Blood Demon Sect.

“The Black Sieve Sect! That’s their target! It’s the Black Sieve Sect!”

“You’re right. Based on the direction, the only target could be the Black Sieve Sect!”

“The Black Sieve Sect has already fallen to pieces. Its disciples are either dead or scattered! The whole sect is in ruins!”

“Did you forget what happened half a month ago, though? There’s a fog covering the entire sect, with some mysterious danger lurking inside.”

Meng Hao was in the vanguard position, his expression calm, but his eyes flickering with killing intent. Many people had been wounded or killed in the fighting, and his hatred had reached such heights that retribution was absolutely necessary.

As far as the Black Sieve Sect went, Meng Hao had long since planned to destroy it. He didn't just want to kill the disciples of the sect, he wanted to completely rip it up by the roots and erase its name from the Southern Domain for all time.

"After joining the Blood Demon Sect, I have slaughtered countless enemies. Therefore… I might as well be thorough about it!" A bloody glow could be seen in his eyes, and a monstrous desire to kill filled him as he pushed forward at top speed.

RUMBLE!

Several days later, the Blood Demon Sect appeared as beams of light in the sky above the Black Sieve Sect. Shockingly, more than 100,000 additional beams of light were behind them. They… were disciples from other Southern Domain sects, as well as rogue cultivators. They had followed the Blood Demon Sect here to bear witness to the great war.

The Black Sieve Sect no longer looked like the place Meng Hao remembered. What he saw was a vast churning fog, completely black, that covered the Ninety Nine Mountains and exuded an intense aura of death. Its coldness was palpable. Furthermore, the surroundings were caked in layer after layer of bluish ice, as if the area was experiencing a glacial winter.

Meng Hao quickly blinked his right eye several times in succession, and the qi of Immortal Shows the Way spread out into his eye. Now when he looked at the fog, he was able to make out some more vague details.

He could see the ruins of the Ninety Nine Mountains, as well as a group of a few hundred people milling about in the center of them all. Their bodies were stiff, as if they existed in a state somewhere between living and dying.

A black thread was attached to the head of each one of the group of several hundred. The black threads stretched down into the ground into a mass of fog deep below the surface of earth. It was roughly thirty meters wide, and even Meng Hao's gaze couldn't pierce into it.

However, Meng Hao could sense that the ball of fog emanated a Dao Seeking aura.

He gave a cold snort as he rotated his cultivation base. He lifted his right hand and then pushed it down over his right eye. The full power of Immortal Shows the Way poured into his eye, and his pupil began to glow with a golden light. All of a sudden, it was as if a veil had been lifted from the world.

He could now see clearly into the thirty meter ball of fog. He saw a platform in the shape of a lotus, upon which a man was seated cross-legged.

The man wore the robe of an emperor, as well as a crown. His body was shriveled and emaciated, almost like a withered corpse. Hundreds of black threads could be seen on the ground, all of them connected to his head. Bizarrely, the threads were squirming and writhing.

Behind the withered corpse was a door.

The instant Meng Hao laid eyes on the corpse, its eyes opened. A green light appeared there which shot out through the mist to meet Meng Hao's gaze.

"Meng… Hao…." said the corpse, its voice ancient and strange as it echoed back and forth.

Meng Hao's eyes flickered. He did not find it strange at all that this person knew who he was. As for the hundreds of threads, Meng Hao could sense that they were being used by the withered corpse to control the hundreds of people up above. It was something similar to Soul Searching.

"I… don't want… to be… your enem… wait, your aura…?!" The withered corpse didn't even get halfway through its sentence before it seemed to sense something. It looked closely at Meng Hao, and then the flickering green glow in its eyes grew even more intense.

“You’re… that Demon Sealer… from that time years ago! Demon Sealer! If I kill you… I can confirm the path to true Immortality!” The withered corpse suddenly shot to its feet. In that instant, the fog covering the Black Sieve Sect suddenly exploded out, shooting directly toward Meng Hao.

Inside of the fog were hundreds of figures, all of them roaring as black mist bored into their bodies. Their cultivation bases surged, and although their eyes were blank, their faces twisted with rage. Their bodies grew severalfold, and black fur appeared on their skin. Their teeth turned into fangs, and dual horns sprung out of their heads.

They no longer resembled people, but rather Demons, roaring as they charged into battle.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with coldness, and he said, “Looking to die?!”

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# Chapter 750: Severing Karma

Several hundred figures with inhuman, demonic bodies charged forward. Their speed increased dramatically, and their cultivation bases climbed higher by a whole stage.

Among their number were four Nascent Soul stage cultivators who grew to an incredible and powerful level. They were now thirty meters tall, with cultivation bases similar to Spirit Severing!

After the transformation, the weakest of the cultivators was at Core Formation, with most being in the Nascent Soul stage.

The power to do such a thing could be considered top rate for any sect or clan. It was something that no power would look down upon during a fight. In fact, an ability like this could easily change the balance of power in a battle.

That was especially true for the four Spirit Severing cultivators. Currently, the remaining Dao Seeking cultivators in the Southern Domain refused to show themselves, so if a Spirit Severing cultivator so much as stomped his feet, it would cause a huge commotion.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and behind him, the killing intent of the tens of thousands of Blood Demon Sect disciples surged. They had come here for revenge. When it came to the people who had besieged and battled them, they faced either destruction or assimilation.

There were only these two choices.

Meng Hao’s face was calm as he looked at the hundreds of people charging forward. He did not attack them personally. Instead, he waved his sleeve and coolly said, “Exterminate them.”

Immediately, roars filled the air behind him.

“DIE!” howled the Blood Demon Sect disciples. Instantly, tens of thousands of cultivators unleashed divine abilities and magical techniques. In the blink of an eye, colorful ripples exploded out in all directions. Their magic was like floodwaters that swept through the air.

The fog rumbled and cracked, and the hundreds of people inside were instantly shredded into a haze of blood and gore, with the exception of the four Spirit Severing cultivators.

That was the result of the combined power of tens of thousands of cultivators. The hundreds of strange, mutated cultivators that belonged to the Black Sieve Sect, despite being powerful enough to constitute the backbone of any Sect’s fighting forces, were simply incapable of withstanding even one of their attacks.

Rumbling echoed out, and blood sprayed from the mouths of the four Spirit Severing enemies who had just been raised from the Nascent Soul stage. However, they did not fear death, nor did they do anything to evade. Instead, they charged forward in a frenzy and then… chose to self detonate.

Flames burst out on their skin, and a shocking pressure emanated out from them. Countless beams of brilliant light shone out as they prepared to blow themselves up.

Meng Hao’s expression remained completely the same as these four seemingly Demonic Spirit Severing cultivators detonated. It was in this moment that his second true self appeared. He raised his right hand, splayed his fingers and pushed forward.

A huge boom could be heard as the four Demons exploded, the power of which transformed into an attack that made the fog seethe and the air split open. A multicolored mushroom cloud began to rise up, within which was flesh and blood, as well as incredible destructive power. However, the power of the mushroom cloud attack was met by Meng Hao’s second true self.

As he faced the expanding mushroom cloud, the second true self slowly began to close his hand into a fist. As he did, the mushroom cloud stopped expanding, and then began to shrink down.

By the time the second true self's hand was fully closed into a fist, the destructive power of the self-detonation, the mushroom cloud, was completely suppressed.

The second true self clenched his fist violently, and a boom could be heard. The destructive mushroom cloud suddenly… faded away into nothing.

The sight of this instantly roused the spirits of the Blood Demon Sect cultivators. As for the hundreds of thousands of Southern Domain cultivators further back, their faces filled with astonishment, and they gasped.

"This clone of the Blood Demon Sect's Blood Prince… is so… is so… completely terrifying!"

"The power of four Spirit Severing cultivators' self-detonation was crushed by a single palm!"

"No wonder the joint attack of the four great powers was incapable of defeating the Blood Demon Sect. Not only that, they sealed themselves away from the world after the war was over! The Blood Demon Sect… is too powerful!"

In the moment that the hundreds of cultivators were defeated, the fog churned, then began to rise up. Up in midair, it transformed into an enormous beast that stood on two legs and resembled a black bear.

It was completely ferocious in appearance. Although it had no horns, its enormous fangs were shocking. Mist swirled around it as it roared and then charged toward the Blood Demon Sect, its eyes bright red.

Shocking pressure emanated out from the mist beast, and although it did not emanate any sort of natural law, the feeling Meng Hao got from it was that of Dao Seeking.

As the mist condensed and formed this beast , the Ninety Nine Mountains of the Black Sieve Sect were revealed, and at their center, a huge rift in the ground could be seen, from within which black fog emanated out.

Deep within that rift was the figure that Meng Hao had seen earlier.

“Left Dharma Protector, slay this mist beast,” said Meng Hao coolly. To the left of him was what had once been the Golden Frost Sect Patriarch. His eyes were the color of blood as he unhesitatingly strode forward toward the mist beast and lifted his hand. A tiny mountain appeared, which was the Golden Frost Sect’s legacy precious treasure.

A boom could be heard as the two clashed in battle.

“Right Dharma Protector, go kill the bastard hiding in that rift.” The Blood Clone that was formed from the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch shot forward, a bloodthirsty gleam in his eyes. The Li Clan’s legacy precious treasure, a Feng Shui compass, rotated around him as he headed toward the rift in the ground.

Booms echoed out as Meng Hao floated in midair, declining to participate in the battle. His two peak Dao Seeking Dharma Protectors were enough to sweep across the Southern Domain and slaughter everything.

To the Blood Demon Sect, unifying the Southern Domain would be a extremely simple task, and that was exactly what Meng Hao intended to do. Exert incredible pressure on all the sects and clans of the Southern Domain, and unite the entire land.

Rumbling filled the sky as the mist beast, incapable of standing up to the divine abilities of the Golden Frost Sect Patriarch, was defeated in the space of only seven or eight breaths. In the end, it exploded, transforming into countless streams of fog that dissipated in all directions.

Underground, booming explosions rang out, followed by bellows of rage. The corpse wearing the imperial robes was now battling the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch. Currently, ripples of the peak Dao Seeking stage were now emanating off of the corpse.

As the two of them fought back and forth, the ground quaked, and the rift was torn open even wider. The corpse’s enraged shouts grew louder, and then Meng Hao waved a finger, sending the Golden Frost Sect patriarch into the rift to join the fight. Now, it was two against one!

There was little to be suspenseful about. After enough time had passed for half an incense stick to burn, the withered corpse suffered defeat after defeat. Howling with rage and frustration, it called out, “Meng Hao…. Just leave! I don’t care that you’re a Demon Sealer any more! How about we just leave each other alone!?

“If we keep fighting this way, you might win, but one of your men will be seriously injured, maybe even killed! Let’s call it quits, how about it?”

“You don’t care that I’m a Demon Sealer?” said Meng Hao coolly. “Well I do!” His second true self’s eyes glittered as he took a step forward, then suddenly teleported into the rift. In the blink of an eye, more thunderous explosions could be heard from inside.

The withered corpse let out an exclamation of shock. The ground quaked, and more rifts snaked out across the land. Even some of the mountains began to crumble.

The entire Black Sieve Sect was in a horrible state. Mountains were toppling, and the land was being torn apart. Grand palaces and other buildings that had just recently been rebuilt were now falling to pieces.

A huge crater then appeared, which began to swallow up the Ninety Nine Mountains. Four beams of light shot up from within it, one up ahead, three following. The withered corpse was in the lead, blood streaming from his mouth, his entire body in tattered and wounded. His expression was one of astonishment as he fled. Behind him were Meng Hao’s second true self and two Dharma Protectors.

The three combined their attacks to shocking effect, making it impossible for the withered corpse to flee. He was sent tumbling through the air, whereupon the second true self appeared off to the side, Wooden Time Sword shining brightly. The withered corpse was terrified in the extreme.

As the three closed in, the withered corpse's eyes suddenly filled with madness. He lifted his right hand up and then tore open a hole in his chest, revealing his withered innards. In the same location as his heart, shockingly, there was a tiny black imp.

The pitch-black imp had three eyes, no nose and a wide mouth, and it appeared to have grown up along with the heart itself. Its three eyes opened to reveal a bizarre glow. It immediately flew out into the air, after which the withered corpse trembled. All of the life force seemed to have been sucked out of it, and it died.

As the withered corpse died, the imp shot up into the sky. It hovered there, looking down coldly at Meng Hao, its eyes filled with grimness and hatred. Apparently, it was committing Meng Hao's image to memory.

This development caused Meng Hao to gape in shock. The surrounding cultivators were also astonished. Who would ever have thought that hidden inside of the withered corpse was something as bizarre as this imp?

"Demon Sealer…." said the imp, its voice high-pitched. "As emperor, I will never forget this. Sooner or later, I'll make you pay! For now… I'm leaving, and nobody can stop me!" With that, it looked up, apparently preparing to shoot up into the starry sky.

The Left and Right Dharma Protectors unleashed divine abilities to obstruct its way. However, the pitch-black imp smiled mockingly, and did nothing to evade the divine abilities. Instead, he shot directly through them, and sustained no damage in the process.

Meng Hao's second true self gave a cold snort and then attacked. Magical symbols formed into the shape of a parasol, which emanated brilliant light. The imp's pupils constricted, and it let out a piercing shriek. Suddenly, massive quantities of black fog poured out from it and shot toward the parasol.

A boom rang out as the parasol of magical symbols collapsed into pieces. The imp's fog was melted, leaving it visibly weakened. However, it was now high in the sky. It glanced back at Meng Hao and then turned to fly away.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he experienced a menacing sensation. He wasn’t sure where this pitch-black imp came from, but there was something about it that filled him with a feeling of grave crisis.

“I can’t let him escape!” he thought. His right hand shot up into the air, and he waved his finger toward the imp.

Eighth Demon Sealing Hex!

Boom!

The imp suddenly shuddered to a stop. However, it took only a moment of struggling to free itself. Its piercing voice rang out again, “You want to hex me? Your cultivation base isn’t strong enough!”

Seeing that his opponent was about to disappear, Meng Hao took a deep breath and then calmed himself. He stretched out his right hand toward the sky, and then made a chopping motion.

His mind was now devoid of everything except for Karma.

Seventh Demon Sealing Hex!

Hex of Karma!

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# Chapter 751: Returning to the Blessed Land

Karmic Hexing had been bestowed upon him by Patriarch Blood Demon when he reached the fourth level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic. It was a hexing magic that belonged solely to the Demon Sealers, and was something that only Demon sealers could learn and utilize.

Meng Hao had long since achieved internal enlightenment regarding the magic. However, after testing it out, he found that he was unable to successfully cast it consistently. Now that he saw the pitch-black imp fleeing, coldness filled his eyes and he immediately unleashed the magic.

When he raised his hand and then chopped it down, the entire world seemed to grind to a halt. He was now able see innumerable silk-like threads attached to everyone. They were wrapped and twined together as they spread out into the air to connect to everything else in the world.

This was not the first time Meng Hao had seen something like this. The Karmic Severing of the Ji Clan invoked a similar sight.

However, Meng Hao was a Demon Sealer, so he would not sever Karma, he would hex it!

Karmic Severing was, of course a severing, whereas Karmic Hexing was a type of sealing!

Severing someone’s Karma with Karmic Severing would result in their complete and utter death. It didn’t matter if the victim had numerous clones; any memories that existed of the victim in anyone’s mind would be blotted out. By erasing the image of the person in everyone’s mind, even if that person still lived on somewhere, they would be dead.

Such a fearsome Daoist magic was a fundamental magic of the Ji Clan, and in fact, could be considered the most powerful art in the Ninth Mountain. The reason being, of course, that the Heavens of the Ninth Mountain… was none other than Ji Tian. 1

As for Meng Hao, his Karmic Hexing was, simply stated, using Karma as a hex.

It could use your own Karma to seal you!

The more Karma you possessed, the more powerful the sealing. It didn’t matter if you were a human, Immortal, or some other powerful being; as long as you had Karma, you could be sealed.

At first glance, it did not seem to be as domineering as the Ji Clan’s art. In reality, though… severing something was as simple as wielding a sharp blade. To seal someone with Karma, however, required controlling Karma itself, and therefore, a deep understanding of it.

The Ji Clan’s Karmic Annihilation had been cultivated to the ultimate degree, but definitely could not be used to control Karma. The Ji Clan cultivated a blade with which to sever Karma, whereas the Demon Sealers controlled it. With a single word, they could break the Karmic connection itself.

The two arts were on completely different level.

The power of Karmic Hexing was enough to shake the Heavens. It was like the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex, one of the eight great Demon Sealing hexes. Only such a peerless Daoist Magic was worthy to be among those created by the successive generations of Demon Sealers.

Furthermore, it was only by creating such an individualized hex that someone could truly be considered… a Demon Sealer!

“I wonder what my own personal hex, the Ninth Demon Sealing Hex… will be like…?” Meng Hao murmured to himself. His eyes were now blank as he looked up into the sky at the pitch-black imp.

He saw the innumerable Karma Threads attached to the thing, and then he saw them suddenly twisting and distorting as they entangled the pitch-black imp.

“NO!!” screamed the imp. “The seventh hex! It’s the seventh hex…. The seventh generation Demon Sealer has already perished, his Hexing magic was lost! How could someone in this world be using it!?!?

“Impossible! I can’t accept this! There’s only one sixty-year cycle left….” The pitch-black imp struggled, but the only result was that it became more entangled. Within the space of a few short breaths, it was completely wrapped up; escape was virtually impossible.

Of course, everyone who was watching saw something very different than what Meng Hao saw. They could not see the Karma Threads; they only saw Meng Hao point, and in response, the pitch-black imp suddenly stopped in midair. It seemed to be struggling, as if its body weren’t under its own control any more. Then it began to move backward.

Toward Meng Hao!

After only a moment, it was back in front of Meng Hao and then on the palm of his hand. Everyone gaped as Meng Hao casually put the imp in his bag of holding.

Gasps could be heard from all directions. The Blood Demon Sect disciples took it much more in stride; after all, they were used to Meng Hao’s enigmatic unpredictability. However, the hundreds of thousands of rogue cultivators were flabbergasted.

“Was that… a sealing?”

“But I didn’t sense any ripples or signs of sealing magic! It was like… like that pitch-black imp flew over of its own accord!”

“This Blood Prince of the Blood Demon Sect, Meng Hao… he’s beyond comprehension!”

The Black Sieve Sect was now completely destroyed.

The only thing that remained was a crater. The mountains were crumbled, and the once glorious sect now existed only in minds of those who remembered it. All that was left of this shattered and barren land was the unceasing rotation of the heavens above.

A great sect that had existed for ten thousand years, was now nothing more than wreckage and ruins.

Gone. Completely gone.

The surrounding rogue cultivators looked down silently at what used to be the Black Sieve Sect, and gradually, began to sigh to themselves.

Meng Hao hovered in midair, looking down at the ruins of the Black Sieve Sect, and thought back to the first time he had come here. He also thought about when he came here as Fang Mu, and then the third time he came, for Xu Qing.

After a long moment, he shook his head. He was just about to leave when he stopped in place. He looked back down at the ruins and then a strange light began to shine in his eyes.

“It seems I forgot about something….” he murmured. His eyes glittered as he thought back to the first time he had come to the Black Sieve Sect, and the ancient Blessed Land.

It was there that he encountered the vexatious meat jelly.

It was also where he saw that ancient cauldron!

It was an enormous cauldron that was square on the outside and circular on the inside. It was cracked, and contained infinite lightning inside, as well as several enormous statues which bore the surnames of various ancestors from ancient times. 2

In the very center of the statues was an inner cauldron that was round on the outside and square on the inside. Inside of that cauldron… was the precious treasure of an incredibly ancient, almighty being.

Meng Hao's eyes flickered, and he decided not to leave. Instead, he disappeared in a flash toward the enormous fissure in the ground. He had just recalled that the withered corpse had been sitting cross-legged in front of a door.

His second true self took the lead into the fissure. They sped downward and quickly landed on the lotus-shaped platform, directly in front of the doorway, which exuded an ancient and primordial aura.

Meng Hao hesitated for a moment as he looked at the door. Heart trembling, he sent his second true self ahead to enter.

After a moment, Meng Hao's eyes flickered, and his divine sense that existed in his second true self allowed him to see everything that his second true self was seeing. Without hesitating, he stepped into the door.

RUMBLE!

Everything twisted, distorted, and turned blurry. When things became clear again, Meng Hao appeared in that same world that he had come to before, the ancient Blessed Land!

Because of his familiarity with the place, he was able to see that things were quite different than they had been before. Everything was still and quiet. There were no trees or grass, and everything was black.

There were still mountains visible, but they had black iron chains wrapped around them. The entire world almost seemed to be an enormous spell formation.

"That pitch-black imp was guarding this door," he thought, "so it must have some connection to all this blackness." He flew up into the air and, based on what he remembered of the place, headed in the direction of the enormous cauldron.

As he sped over the land, he was shocked to see that roughly seventy percent of the entire place was pitch black. The other thirty percent was gradually changing. Based on the speed with which it was occurring, it would probably take about one sixty-year-cycle or less for the entire place to turn black.

As he studied the land below, an an expression of reminiscence appeared as he recalled reuniting with Xu Qing for the first time in this place.

After a while, he sighed.

Enough time passed for an incense stick to burn before he arrived in a location that had not been covered over by the blackness. The same teleportation portal as before was still operational.

Considering Meng Hao’s current cultivation base and experience, he only had to look at it for a moment before determining how to operate it. He produced a spirit stone, which he placed on the surface. Immediately, the glow of teleportation rose up, and Meng Hao faded away.

When he reappeared, he was near the location of the enormous cauldron. He could hear the shocking rumble of thunder, and off in the distance, he could see…

An enormous, bronze cauldron!

As he looked at the cauldron, he recalled the visions he had experienced, of an almighty being who had refused to capitulate when the Ji Ancestor assumed control of the Ninth Mountain, and had used the cauldron to try to bolt from under the Ji Heavens.

His decision was the same as that of the legendary World Tree. However, in the end, the World Tree had exploded amid the starry sky. As for that almighty being, after the cauldron was broken open, he was apparently eradicated in form and spirit. The only thing that remained behind was this shocking cauldron.

Perhaps to Lord Ji, the cauldron and its Heaven-murdering will were useless. Perhaps there was another reason why he didn’t take it for himself. In any case, to other people, the cauldron would definitely be considered a precious treasure.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and headed forward. As he neared the enormous bronze cauldron, the sound of lightning grew louder and more frequent. Blue lightning bolts fell relentlessly, transforming the entire area into a sea of lightning.

Shockingly, some of the lightning bolts were even black.

About 3,000 meters away from the cauldron, Meng Hao stopped. “When I came here with Han Bei and the others, we waited until the lightning was at its weakest before daring to go in. But now….

“Now… I’m quite different than I was back then.” Eyes glittering, Meng Hao strode forward into the lightning. Countless bolts of lightning fell, and at the same time, an ancient, domineering voice resounded out from within the cauldron.

“Halt!”

In conjunction with the voice, the lightning fell with increased intensity. It transformed into something almost like a sheet that covered everything in all directions.

“I have some fuzzy recollections of you,” the voice continued, echoing amidst the thunder with might like that of the Heavens. “You shouldn’t be here. Leave immediately. If you take even a single step forward, a tribulation of fire and lightning will descend and you will most certainly die.”

Meng Hao stopped in place and then called out, “Senior, you must be the spirit of this treasured cauldron!”

The ancient voice did not speak again, and the lightning and thunder grew more intense. However, a path through the lightning appeared behind Meng

Hao. Apparently Meng Hao was being given a message…. The only path for him was the one that left this place.

He took a deep breath and then said, “Senior, I’ve come here today for one purpose. I wish to take this cauldron away from here. Senior, could you please explain how to do so?”

After a long moment, the ancient voice could be heard once again. This time, its tone was colder than before, and even filled with a touch of disdain. “All you have to do is approach the cauldron and brand it with your divine sense. Then you can take it away.”

Hearing this, Meng Hao immediately picked up on the unstated implication. “You’re not the cauldron’s spirit?”

“Of course I’m not!”

1. Ji Tian is the name of Lord Ji, but could also be translated “Heavens of Ji”

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# Chapter 752: Dao Seeking Fleshly Body!

The first time he came here, he would never have dared to even open his mouth, let alone directly ask the question he just had. Back then, his cultivation base was simply too low, and it was only by lucky coincidence that he was even able to come here in the first place.

Now, though, he was a Second Severing cultivator with a second true self that was at the peak of Dao Seeking.

In the current age in which Immortals were incredibly rare in the lands of South Heaven, the peak of Dao Seeking fully deserved to be called the pinnacle level of power. Meng Hao really was on the same pedestal as the most powerful experts of South Heaven.

And that was not speaking of the Southern Domain, but Planet South Heaven as a whole.

Meng Hao looked calmly at the endless sheets of lightning between him and the bronze cauldron, then stepped forward. As soon as he entered the lightning, he was surrounded by shocking rumbling sounds. Endless amounts of lightning shot toward him.

Smacking sounds echoed out as the lightning bolts slammed onto him. They were like writhing white snakes that, from a distance, looks almost like a tempest that surrounded Meng Hao.

He proceeded forward slowly, but every step was taken firmly and stably. Soon, he had advanced by ten measures, each measure being roughly three meters!

The rumbling grew more shocking and intense, and the lightning bolts more numerous. The pressure was intense, and even Meng Hao couldn’t help but frown after passing twenty measures. He felt his body spasming, and knew that he could proceed forward. However, based on his calculations, after three hundred measures, he would be able to proceed no further.

The ancient voice once again rang out, filled with coldness: “You are currently a thousand measures away from the cauldron. Based on your level of strength, the most you can reach… is three hundred measures. The sensible thing would be to give up now. If you do something completely moronic, then you will either end up dead or seriously wounded.”

“Actually,” said Meng Hao coolly, “if I really wish to traverse this path of lightning, well… it’s not that difficult of a thing.” He waved his sleeve, and the air behind him rippled. In the blink of an eye, his second true self stepped forward to stand next to Meng Hao. Lighting fell around them, but the second true self wasn’t harmed in the least bit. In fact, neither its hair nor even the edges of its garments were even stirred.

“Hnhh?” Within the huge cauldron, the ancient voice seemed momentarily struck speechless. “The soul of an Immortal!” it then exclaimed. In conjunction with the words, the lightning in the area grew even more shocking. Suddenly, the lightning merged together to form a man, who hovered in midair.

He was an old man with indistinguishable features. Only his outline was visible, but based on his appearance he seemed to be the lord of the lighting here. He emanated a shocking pressure, and seemed to be able to wield shocking power.

“No, not the soul of an Immortal,” murmured the old man. “It’s a clone… and yet, also not a clone. This is a fleshly body created with some secret art, raised to a pinnacle of power, after which… the soul of a true Immortal was inserted into it!” When Meng Hao heard the old man’s musings, his eyes went wide. Clearly, the old man could pick up on various clues to piece together the truth.

“False Immortals are common, but true Immortals are very rare! With this Immortal clone, you definitely qualify to take the cauldron. However… the cauldron itself has no soul. Whoever touches it for the first time will find part of their soul extracted to become the essence of the cauldron spirit. Are you sure that you want your Immortal clone… to touch the cauldron?” The old man gazed steadily at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao frowned slightly, and muttered to himself for a bit. According to what the old man said, if his second true self touched the cauldron, then part of his soul would be split away. That meant the cauldron would not belong to Meng Hao, but to the true Immortal’s soul.

Furthermore, that meant that although he would most likely be able to use the cauldron, it wouldn’t be his.

“This old guy is pretty mysterious,” thought Meng Hao. “Regardless of what he says… I can’t trust him completely.” After some more thought, he looked down at his right arm, and the lightning dancing back and forth across it. Occasionally, lightning would be absorbed into his arm, which gave rise to a tickling sensation. From the look of it, his right arm was actually strong enough to absorb the lightning.

Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly began to glitter.

“My Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal needs to absorb vast quantities of magical items…. Could it be that I can actually absorb the lightning from this place?” Heart pounding, he took a deep breath and closed his eyes for a moment. When they opened, his Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal was fully rotating.

As soon as he employed the art, the lightning around him acted as if it had suddenly found a drain to pour down, as if his body was a black hole. In the blink of an eye, all of the lightning… began to fall directly onto Meng Hao.

Apparently, Meng Hao was able to consume it all!

He trembled as pain stabbed through him. The Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal really was absorbing the lightning, which flowed through his body, merging into it. Enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, and he trembled the entire time.

Then, his eyes began to glow with an intense light.

“I’m a bit stronger,” he thought. “About as much as I would be by absorbing a few dozen Spirit Severing treasures.” He took a deep breath as he realized that this place would be extremely dangerous to anyone except to someone who cultivated the Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal. To him, this place was a location of incredible good fortune.

Meng Hao immediately sent his second true self back to its original position, then looked up at the old man formed from lightning.

“Senior, I think I will make an attempt alone,” he said. With that, he stepped forward into the rumbling. Lightning fell, and Meng Hao’s body trembled. The Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal spun into action once again, and the lightning was absorbed.

The pain he felt as the lightning danced through his flesh and blood made him shiver. However, his eyes shone with persistence. Enduring the pain, he continued onward, one measure at a time until he reached 100!

100 measures was 300 meters!

There was now more lightning, falling in vast sheets. Meng Hao was completely submerged in it, and from a distance he was barely even visible.

Within the lightning, the power of the Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal flowed through him. His fleshly body writhed as the lightning danced. It bored into him over and over again, and as it did, he could clearly sense his fleshly body becoming stronger and more powerful.

Before, his fleshly body was already at the absolute pinnacle of Spirit Severing. All he needed was to push it forward a single step and it would be in Dao Seeking.

“I must take advantage of this opportunity!” he thought, his eyes flickering as he continued onward.

Up in the sky, the old man made of lighting watched on with an expression that only continued to grow more serious. A brilliant glow began to flicker in his eyes; clearly he had noticed that there was less lightning in the area.

Although it was only a small reduction, it was something that he had never experienced in all the countless years he had been here.

“So, he can absorb lightning?” he thought, shocked. “And not even normal lightning, at that. Tribulation Lightning! He can absorb it and use it to strengthen his fleshly body!

“What technique does he cultivate to be able to do something like that? Don’t tell me… it’s one of those legendary Heaven-defying fleshly body Daoist magics?!” By this point, Meng Hao had already traveled to the 900 meter mark.

Lightning crashed down onto him the entire time, and he was surrounded by the booming of lightning. It was as if countless silver spikes were being stabbed into him nonstop.

Even using the expression “ten thousand arrows piercing the heart” would not be an exaggeration.

The pain was so intense that Meng Hao’s vision began to grow dark. Despite being completely surrounding by bright, resplendent lightning, all he could see was darkness. He quickly bit the tip of his tongue, causing himself to regain a bit of clarity. Spitting out the blood, he proceeded forward.

RUMBLE!

1,500 meters!

Meng Hao raised his head up and roared. His right arm had now fully broken through from Spirit Severing to Dao Seeking. As for the rest of his body, it was now pushing the very borders of the limits of Spirit Severing.

The lightning in the area had previously spread out for three thousand meters. But Meng Hao had absorbed a lot of it, and now it only stretched for 2,500 meters.

The reduction only went faster after his right arm reached Dao Seeking. The 2,500 meters quickly shrank down to only 2,000 meters.

Excited, Meng Hao gritted his teeth and pushed forward.

He soon reached the 1,800 meter mark.

2,000 meters!

An incredible rumbling could be heard as his left arm broke through to the fleshly body of Dao Seeking.

2,500 meters!

Both legs radiated the aura of natural law, as if they were now connected in some bizarre way to Heaven and Earth. Both of them were now in Dao Seeking!

2,750 meters!

Meng Hao was panting as the lightning around him suddenly shrank down to only 1,000 meters.

It was at this point that the black lightning bolts smashed down toward him with incredible destructive power. He looked up, his eyes bright red, and allowed the black lightning to slam into him.

As soon as the black lightning bolts merged into him, cracking sounds could be heard. Tears instantly spread out across his skin; it almost appeared that he would be incapable of withstanding the lightning, and would fall to pieces.

Next, though, his Eternal stratum kicked in, and the wounds healed. Intense pain surged through him, the likes of which he had never felt before. He couldn’t hold back from letting out an anguished howl.

Even as he did, rumbling filled his body; it was not the sound of him collapsing into pieces, but rather, the shocking rumbling of an incredibly powerful Dao Seeking fleshly body.

His limbs and torso all broke through from Spirit Severing into Dao Seeking. Only his head remained as a weak spot, and the most difficult area to strengthen. Meng Hao took a deep breath and then pushed onward. 2,800 meters. 2,850 meters…. 2,900 meters!

His head felt as if it were being crushed down upon by the Heavens. Countless lightning bolts danced across him, and the Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal rotated rapidly….

2,950 meters…. 2,999 meters…. Finally… 3,000 meters!!

The bronze cauldron was directly in front of Meng Hao. He stood there trembling, surrounding by a mere 300 meter area of lightning. Surrounded by the boundless lightning, he coughed up a mouthful of blood and then slowly began to lift his hand. Gritting his teeth, he slapped his palm down onto the surface of the bronze cauldron!

The huge cauldron began to thrum, and the three hundred meter area of lightning instantly condensed down onto Meng Hao.

BOOM!

“From now on, you belong to me!” said Meng Hao, his voice quavering out from within the lightning.

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# Chapter 753: Destination – Solitary Sword Sect!

RUMBLE!

The lightning in the three hundred meter area rushed toward Meng Hao, thoroughly enveloping him. The Lightning Elder up in mid-air watched Meng Hao’s actions with sparkling eyes. By this point, he was thoroughly shaken.

It was then that, all of a sudden, the enormous bronze cauldron began to shudder. Within the lightning, Meng Hao seemed on the verge of being torn to pieces. His skin was ripped and torn, and was clearly on the verge of exploding.

It was at that point, when he was almost about to explode, that natural law descended and swirled around his head. Now, every inch of Meng Hao’s person… was completely in Dao Seeking!

This was a Dao Seeking fleshly body!

This Dao Seeking was not as obvious as a Dao Seeking cultivation base. The influence it had on natural law was not very intense. However, from this moment on, Meng Hao’s body was truly like a Dao Seeking treasure.

At this point, he could close his eyes and allow any Spirit Severing cultivator to attack him at will, and it wouldn’t harm his body in the least bit.

In fact, in all the lands of South Heaven you would be as likely to find a phoenix feather or a qilin horn as you would to find someone with a fleshly body comparable to Meng Hao’s. Not even in the Ji Clan could someone like that be found.

This was an extremely powerful fleshly body!

Meng Hao lifted his head back and roared. In a short moment, all of the lightning in the area was sucked into his body. It disappeared without leaving behind even the tiniest trace. Meng Hao flew up into the air, and although no lightning could be seen on him, if you looked deep into his eyes, you would be able to sense amorphous lightning deep within.

As he hovered there in midair, he cast his senses throughout his body, and could feel how terrifyingly powerful it was. He could even sense some of the natural law of Heaven and Earth. Because this was an ancient Blessed Land, the natural law in this place was different from that of South Heaven. Therefore his aura was now a bit more primordial and chaotic than before.

It seemed ancient, filled with the passage of years, and the air he let off was one of boundless time.

He took a deep breath and then looked back down at the enormous bronze cauldron, and his eyes flashed. Moments ago, when he had placed his hand onto the cauldron, he had felt a bit of his soul detaching and entering the cauldron.

As he looked at it now, he could sense some vague, mysterious connection to it.

“Rise!” he said, raising his hand aloft.

RUMBLE!

The enormous bronze cauldron trembled. Creaking sounds could be heard, and fissures spread across the surrounding terrain, as it slowly rose up into the air, causing vast amounts of dust to spread out in all directions like a cloud.

As the cauldron rose into the air, its primordial, ancient aura became more and more similar to Meng Hao’s.

The sight of it caused the old man hovering in midair to gasp. He looked deeply at Meng Hao, then glanced down at the second true self standing not far away.

“I am not the spirit of the cauldron,” he said lightly. “However, I am its guardian. The truly valuable thing about this treasure is the inner cauldron, which is mysterious in origin. As for the outer cauldron, my master forged it. Now, it belongs to you. Since you have acquired it… it means you are tied to it by destiny. Time will tell whether or not you can use the cauldron to achieve the same glory that my master did.

“Now that you have obtained the cauldron, my mission is accomplished….” His eyes began to grow dim, and his body started to fade away.

His voice cool, he continued, “I should have perished long ago. That year, I was the lone survivor of the Tribulation Lightning, and my soul did not disperse. Now that my mission is complete, I can experience rebirth….

“I will travel to the underworld of the Fourth Mountain and be reincarnated, be born once again as a human. Years from now, perhaps you and I will meet again on the road to Immortality….” He continued to fade away until he was nothing more than dots of light, which began to fly up into the sky, then disappeared.

Meng Hao looked in the direction the old man had departed to. He wasn’t sure who he was, but he couldn’t help but think of the tall man he had seen in the vision all those years ago.

For a moment, the two of them had seemed quite similar.

After a moment of thought, Meng Hao looked back at the enormous cauldron.

“Shrink!” he commanded.

The huge cauldron thrummed, and then began to shrink. When it was the size of a hand, it floated down to rest on Meng Hao’s palm. As soon as it touched him, lightning surged out from Meng Hao, and he was immersed in electricity.

Within the lightning, Meng Hao’s body trembled, and he was able to sense some of the remarkable abilities of the bronze cauldron. It seemed as if this knowledge had suddenly popped into his mind automatically as soon as he touched the cauldron.

“Form Displacement Transposition ….” He gaped for a moment, then suddenly pushed down on the cauldron and looked over at his second true self.

In that instant, everything suddenly went blurry for a moment. When he could see clearly again, he was shocked to discover that he… was still holding the cauldron, but was now down on the ground where his second true self had just been standing. As for his second true self, he was hovering in midair where Meng Hao had just been.

“Incredible!” he thought, his eyes going wide. Panting, he looked down at the Lightning Cauldron, and his eyes shone with a strange light. He could immediately tell that this cauldron would be extremely useful in magical combat.

In fact, its usefulness wouldn’t be limited to battle. He could use it in many circumstances. It truly was Heaven-defying.

“It has other abilities too,” he thought. “It can unleash lightning, and is also incredibly heavy, capable of carrying out true crushing!

“Furthermore, it was created in ancient times. The sturdiness of the materials used make it is such that other magical items can’t even compare!” His eyes flickered as he suddenly thought of the statues inside the Lightning Cauldron, as well as the inner cauldron.

“This is truly a precious treasure!” he thought, breathing heavily. He put the Lightning Cauldron into his bag of holding, then flew up into the air.

Together with his second true self, he shot off into the distance.

Moments later, he teleported out of the ancient Blessed Land and found himself once again on the lotus-shaped platform deep in the recesses of the former Black Sieve Sect. The door was no longer operational, and broke into tiny pieces, which then vanished.

Meng Hao glanced back at the disappearing door, then shot up out from within the earth. The Blood Demon Sect disciples were waiting outside, and when they caught sight of Meng Hao, they clasped hands and bowed.

“Blood Prince, we welcome you back with deep respect!”

The two Ironblood Patriarchs could sense that there was something different about Meng Hao, although they weren’t sure exactly what it was. As for the Golden Frost Sect Patriarch and the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch, they were now Blood Clone puppets, and had no way to tell.

When it came to the hundreds of thousands of rogue cultivators, not a single one could pick up on even the slightest clue. All they could tell was that Meng Hao… somehow seemed stronger, and more ancient.

“The Black Sieve Sect is destroyed,” declared Meng Hao, looking around at the crowds of people. “Next… is the Solitary Sword Sect!”

“The Solitary Sword Sect!” The forces of the Blood Demon Sect flickered with killing intent, and their desire to slaughter burned like wildfire. The hundreds of thousands of rogue cultivators were also getting excited.

“He’s actually going to completely wipe out the four powers who allied against him!!”

“If the Blood Demon Sect does that, then they really will unite the Southern Domain!”

Even as the hundreds of thousands of rogue cultivators expressed their shock, a glow like that of lightning appeared beneath Meng Hao’s feet, and he shot off into the distance, followed by countless beams of light that were the Blood Demon Sect disciples.

Several days later, the sky outside the Solitary Sword Sect began to rumble. The clouds collapsed as a mighty gale-force wind swept through the area. A storm seemed to be gathering above the Solitary Sword Sect.

The sect was completely sealed up. Disciples inside were not permitted to leave, and the entire sect was poised as if to face a mortal enemy. Everything was sealed to protect against reprisals from the Blood Demon Sect.

The mood in the Solitary Sword Sect was gloomy and distressed. Everyone was nervous. There were only a few tens of thousands of disciples left, and all of them were on edge. The sect's Dao Seeking Patriarch was dead, and the strongest people in the entire sect were their three Spirit Severing Cultivators, including Sir Jian. 1

When they saw the beams of light flying through the air that were the Blood Demon Sect, they knew that they could do nothing to fight back. They could only hope that their grand spell formation, designed to protect the sect, would be able to stand up to the revenge-bent Blood Demon Sect.

The air outside the sect rippled as tens of thousands of beams of light approached. Meng Hao was in the vanguard position, and the murderous air around him was thick. His eyes flashed with killing intent as he glanced over the Solitary Sword Sect.

In this part of the Southern Domain, the mountains stuck straight up like swords. In the middle of the sect was a shocking mountain surrounded by thin mist. Looking through the mist at the sect, it appeared to be completely bleak and desolate.

Although the mist appeared to be thin, it was actually the first spell formation of the Solitary Sword Sect's grand spell formation.

The Blood Demon Sect disciples behind Meng Hao joined their voices together into a raging sound that boomed like waves through the Solitary

Sword Sect.

“SURRENDER, OR DIE!”

There was no response. However, the thin mist that surrounded the Solitary Sword Sect began to spin, transforming into numerous swirling dragons. The dragons rapidly merged together, shockingly forming… an enormous Sword Dragon!

The dragon was lizard-like, and gigantic enough to cover the entire sect. Its back was covered with innumerable great swords that stuck up like needles. It was green, and shocking to the extreme. As soon as it appeared, it raised its head up and roared at Meng Hao. 2

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with coldness. He slapped his bag of holding with his right hand, and the Lightning Cauldron flew out. It thrummed, expanding rapidly until it was the size of a mountain. Endless bolts of lightning shot out from it, causing the entire sky to become a world of lightning.

A shocking pressure weighed down, and the sight of the cauldron caused Sir Jian and the other two Spirit Severing Patriarchs to become extremely nervous. As for the other disciples, they were shocked to the core.

However, there was one man off in a far corner of the Sect who did not seem nervous at all. He looked almost like an old man, but was in fact middle-aged. He had a stubbly beard, and looked lonely. Although he was a Solitary Sword Sect disciple, he wore no sword at his side.

The only thing he had was a flagon of alcohol from which he drank. He stared at what first seemed like an ordinary boulder that rested a bit further up the mountain from him. However, upon closer inspection… a person was visible inside the boulder. That same person existed for all eternity in his heart.

“Junior Brother,” the man said. “Kill them…. Kill everyone in the Solitary Sword Sect. Avenge my master, and pay for my crimes.” With a bitter smile, he took another long swig of alcohol.

As the shocking Lightning Cauldron expanded in size, more and more lightning appeared, causing everything to tremble.

The Blood Demon Sect disciples, as well as the hundreds of thousands of rogue cultivators that came to observe, were all flabbergasted. They looked on in awe as the Lightning Cauldron sped toward the Solitary Sword Sect’s Sword Dragon.

RUMBLE!

“Stand firm!” roared Sir Jian.

“All disciples, pour full energy into the spell formation!” cried another of the three Solitary Sword Sect Patriarchs.

Tens of thousands of disciples gritted their teeth and poured all of their energy into the spell formation. Instantly, the Sword Dragon looked even more corporeal than before.

Everyone watched as the Lightning Cauldron descended toward the Sword Dragon, which roared and then charged up to meet the Lightning Cauldron in mid-air.

Shocking booming sounds rang out.

Gasps rang out in all directions when the Sword Dragon slammed into the Lightning Cauldron, only to begin to shatter into pieces! It was incapable of standing up to the Lightning Cauldron in even the slightest capacity, and its entire body collapsed into fragments in only the blink of an eye….

It was destroyed as easily as crushing dry weeds!

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2. “Sword Dragon” could also be translated stegosaurus. However, I have seen Chinese art in which such creatures are not stegosauruses. Although there is no way to know exactly what Er Gen envisioned (he did describe it as having swords sticking out of its back and looking like a lizard), I

decided to go with the more literal translation of the characters. Also, there is an obvious connection to the name of the sect, so it seems apropos

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# Chapter 754: The Tale of Chen Fan

The Lightning Cauldron crushed the Sword Dragon amidst incredible rumbling sounds, then struck the Solitary Sword Sect's spell formation head on.

Ripples spread out through the air, and from the perspective of cultivators on the outside, the Solitary Sword Sect distorted and looked as though it might be ripped apart at any moment. Inside the sect, the three Patriarchs trembled and coughed up blood.

As for the tens of thousands of Solitary Sword Sect disciples, they also trembled, and their faces were pale as they spit up mouthfuls of blood.

"Second Spell Formation!!" cried Sir Jian, his voice echoing throughout the sect. Immediately, tens of thousands of disciples produced medicinal pills to consume.

They knew deep in their hearts that this battle would determine whether the Solitary Sword Sect survived or was destroyed. If their spell formation could hold, then they would be able to continue on sealed in their mountain. If it could not hold… then that meant the Solitary Sword Sect would be wiped away from the Southern Domain.

Of course, there was also the possibility of surrender.

As the forces of the Solitary Sword Sect unleashed the full scope of their power, countless sword beams appeared from within the ground, the mountains, and the buildings; from every corner of the sect.

There were more than 100,000 of them, and they flew out to circulate around the entire sect, like a tempest. As the tempest raged, the swords began to merge together, forming the shocking image… of a gigantic greatsword!

It was more than 30,000 meters long, and the entire Solitary Sword Sect fit inside of it. It was essentially a sword-shaped shield.

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever as he gestured out into the air. The Lightning Cauldron shrank down and returned to him. When it touched down onto his palm, he was instantly surrounded by lightning.

"Break that formation!" he said coolly. The Golden Frost Sect Patriarch and the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch immediately charged ahead. As they neared the sword shield, they waved their hands, causing peak Dao Seeking cultivation base power to explode out. Booms echoed as tens of thousands of Blood Demon Sect disciples also sent out attacks. Divine abilities and magical techniques descended like rainfall, slamming into the Solitary Sword Sect's grand spell formation.

Meng Hao sent his thoughts out to control his second true self, who suddenly appeared along with the Wooden Time Sword, and then immediately shot into the fray.

The combined power of tens of thousands of cultivators, which included three peak Dao Seeking cultivation bases, slammed into the spell formation. Instantly, the Solitary Sword Sect's greatsword shuddered, and then began to crack.

Meng Hao hovered in midair, watching the scene coldly.

Booms filled the air for an entire hour, after which the Solitary Sword Sect's greatsword could not hold out any longer. Many of the swords which made up the sword formation began to collapse. Once the spell formation was no longer complete, its demise could only hasten.

In the end, a huge explosion occurred, in which the spell formation was breached. The flying swords were shattered, sending shrapnel flying about. The Solitary Sword Sect's grand spell formation now had a huge gap torn into it, visible through which was the true Solitary Sword Sect. Tens of thousands of pale-faced disciples could be seen, as well as the three despairing Spirit Severing Patriarchs.

Boom!

Meng Hao’s second true self entered the gap. Eyes flashing, he stretched his hands out to the left and right, causing cracking sounds to echo about. The gap was torn even larger, until the spell formation was completely destroyed.

At the same time, the Blood Demon Sect disciples charged in like a cloud of blood, ready to slaughter the entire Solitary Sword Sect.

In their despair, the Solitary Sword Sect disciples could not even muster the will to resist. It was impossible to say who did it first, but they all began to drop to their knees and kowtow.

“Surrender! I want to surrender!”

“We surrender!”

Of the three ashen-faced Spirit Severing experts, two laughed bitterly and were just about to voice their own surrender, when suddenly, Sir Jian’s eyes flickered. He quickly performed a minor teleportation, reappearing some distance off next to the middle-aged man with no sword and a flagon of alcohol.

As soon as he reappeared, his hand snaked out and latched onto the top of the man’s head. Sir Jian’s eyes filled with insanity and savagery.

“MENG HAO!!” he screamed. “This is your Elder Brother from the Reliance Sect, Chen Fan. I know he’s your close friend, so if you dare to make a single move, I’ll kill him, even if it means I die too!”

This development caused the Blood Demon Sect disciples to stop in their tracks and look coldly over at Sir Jian. Even the Solitary Sword Sect disciples gaped in shock. None of them looked happy in the least bit and, in fact, their faces went as pale as death.

This was especially true of the two other Spirit Severing Patriarchs, who were completely caught off guard. They knew that they were no match for the Blood Demon Sect. Their failed attempt to fight back moments ago was clear evidence of that.

Surrender was their only option!

And yet, Sir Jian suddenly pulled this trick, dragging the entire Solitary Sword Sect along with him in provoking the jinx Meng Hao. The two Patriarchs’ faces instantly fell.

“Sir Jian, you must not do this!!”

“Sir Jian, you….”

Sir Jian’s expression grew even more vicious. He glared down at Chen Fan’s head for a moment, then back toward the Blood Demon Sect forces, and Meng Hao.

“Meng Hao, give me the Solitary Sword Sect’s Immortal Puppet! All I want is the Immortal Puppet. Once I have it in hand, I won’t harm a hair on Chen Fan’s head!”

When Meng Hao first laid eyes on Chen Fan again back at the Ancient Dao Lakes, he could tell that he was in a bad situation. He had wanted to help, but could tell that Chen Fan was already dead inside. He had actually come to the Solitary Sword Sect this day for two purposes. One was vengeance for the Blood Demon Sect. The other was his concern for Chen Fan.

“Are you insane?” replied Meng Hao, his face grim.

“So what if I’m insane!?” Sir Jian roared back, his eyes bloodshot. “I just want the Immortal Puppet. Hand it over, and I’ll let him go!”

Chen Fan’s face was pale as he looked over at Meng Hao. He said nothing, but he was smiling. It was the same smile he had worn when he had reunited with Meng Hao all those years ago in the Southern Domain. 1

“Junior Brother, you’ve grown up….” That was what he had said all those years ago. Now, he wore the same smile, and Meng Hao could almost sense the same high-spirited Senior Brother he remembered from the Reliance Sect, the same Chen Fan who was so focused on pursuing the Dao.

Seemingly in a flash, hundreds of years had passed, and Chen Fan had changed. The one thing that remained were the emotions forged between them back in the Reliance Sect.

“Meng Hao,” said Sir Jian, his eyes filled with maliciousness, “you might be high and mighty now, but your Elder Brother’s life has been filled with bitterness!” When he saw the grim look on Meng Hao’s face, he relaxed a bit. At first, he was worried Meng Hao wouldn’t care about whether Chen Fan lived or died. Hoping to foster further pity on the part of Meng Hao, he coldly continued.

“This Chen Fan was once a Chosen in the Solitary Sword Sect, and was even one of the Seven Swords. Unfortunately… he should never have fallen in love with Shan Ling!

“Shan Ling was the incarnation of a mountain boulder, and other than the legacy precious treasure, she was the most important treasured item in the Solitary Sword Sect!

“She was not permitted to foster emotions or desires of the flesh! Were she to do so, she would no longer be a spirit, and would separate from the boulder. That would affect the fate of the entire Solitary Sword Sect! After all… according to legend, that stone came from the Ninth Mountain!”

As Sir Jian spoke, Meng Hao recalled the first time he had come to the Solitary Sword Sect, and the beautiful woman he had seen floating down the mountain. 2

“Chen Fan violated sect rules. He fled with the boulder, altering fate and absconding with Shan Ling. In the end, the Solitary Sword Sect captured them…. Then, because of Chen Fan, his master….”

“Enough!” roared Chen Fan. His eyes snapped open, and they were shot with blood.

Meng Hao’s heart trembled. He had known Chen Fan for years, and this was the first time he had seen him so emotional. There was pain in his eyes, even madness, the type that made Meng Hao recall his own state when he caught sight of Xu Qing’s discarnate soul back in the Black Sieve Sect.

“Enough?” said Sir Jian. “How is it enough? When it came time for the fury of the sect to fall upon you, your master took your place. His cultivation base was crippled, and he was reduced to a mortal, which was how he died.

“As for you, if Shan Ling hadn’t threatened to destroy herself and the boulder…. Well, in the end, she made an arrangement with the sect to spend the rest of eternity as a boulder, never to awaken, all to save your measly little life!”

“ENOUGH! No more….” Chen Fan was trembling, and tears poured down his cheeks. Although his expression was one of intense pain, he smiled bitterly. His eyes seemed to grow more and more dispirited.

He would never, ever be able to forget how his master stood in front of him, bowed his head to the sect, and said, “He is my apprentice. I will accept responsibility for his mistake.”

He had watched wide-eyed as his master’s cultivation base was crippled. The man who had once been a powerful Nascent Soul expert, became an old man, a mortal. Until the day he died, his master did not complain a single time. On the contrary, he was as warm and gentle as ever. Unfortunately, that only caused Chen Fan’s pain to increase, a feeling that was enough to drive him to insanity.

His master’s son hated Chen Fan with a passion, which was yet another thing that made him wish he could simply die. 3

Chen Fan was filled with hatred. He hated that he was powerless to change any of the things that had happened, and he hated the Solitary Sword Sect for being too callous.

He wanted to die.

And yet… he couldn't stop thinking about her.

The only thing left to do was drink. In his drunken dreams, he could return to the wonderful times of the past.

He had let his master down. He had let Shan Ling down. He had let anyone who had anything to do with him down.

Meng Hao stood there, taciturn. Now that he understood what had happened to Chen Fan, he realized how someone who had once been so high-spirited and full of mettle, could sink into such a depression.

"Enough…" murmured Chen Fan bitterly, bowing his head.. "I beg of you, please… enough…. Please…."

Sir Jian laughed coldly. "Were it not for Shan Ling's actions, do you really think you could have committed such a heinous crime and gotten away with nothing more than a shattered Nascent Soul? Do you think the only price to pay would have been the inability to break through to the next stage of cultivation?

"Your existence is nothing but a tool the sect can use to influence Shan Ling. Unfortunately… the war with the Blood Demon Sect changed things too unexpectedly." Sir Jian then looked at Meng Hao. "Only the Patriarch knew how to control the boulder. Otherwise, you would never have been able to break through our spell formation so easily." Seeing that Meng Hao seemed to be more and more focused on his words, Sir Jian began to believe that his control of the situation was growing. He looked back at Chen Fan.

"You singlehandedly drove your Master to his death and ruined your beloved. And yet you still say 'enough?'"

"SHUT THE HELL UP!" roared Meng Hao. His voice echoed like thunder, and his eyes flashed with killing intent. His words caused Sir Jian's pupils to constrict, and his heart to seize. He immediately began to squeeze down with his right hand.

However, it was at this exact moment that the Lightning Cauldron in Meng Hao’s hand flashed.

Form Displacement Transposition!

What changed positions was not Sir Jian, but rather, Chen Fan!

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# Chapter 755: I Pray That You Find Happiness

When the Lightning Cauldron in Meng Hao’s hand began to sparkle with brilliant lights, and then emit a rumbling sound, Sir Jian’s face fell, and a bad feeling welled up in his heart. Without the slightest hesitation, he squeezed down with his hand, planning to stab his fingers into Chen Fan’s head, injuring him as a threat to Meng Hao.

However, the instant his fingers began to move, an incredibly shocking power shot back into his hand. It was as if what he was squeezing was not flesh and blood, but a red-hot iron. The backlash of power made it feel as if needles were stabbing into his palm. Sir Jian was completely shocked.

At the same time, he was astonished to find that, instead of staring at Meng Hao as he had been this whole time, he was now looking at Chen Fan.

Heart pounding, he slowly looked down to see his hand resting on Meng Hao’s head!

His eyes went wide, and his scalp numb. He immediately shot back, spooked out of his mind.

“What divine ability is that!?!?!?” Sir Jian was completely astonished, and also terrified. He bit down on the tip of his tongue and spit out some blood which he used to flee even faster than before.

“Trying to run away?” said Meng Hao, his eyes flickering with killing intent. He pointed out with his left index finger, and his second true self immediately unleashed the Wooden Time Sword. Even if Sir Jian could move faster, it still wouldn’t be enough to escape the Wooden Time Sword.

It was upon him in the blink of an eye, causing everything around it to twist and distort. To his shock, Sir Jian began to wither rapidly. He let out a miserable scream, upon which the Wooden Time Sword stabbed directly through his head.

Slaughtered with a solitary sword!

Tidy and efficient, not the least bit sloppy. Sir Jian's body was withered, his Nascent Divinity killed. As he fell, it almost seemed as if ten thousand years passed; he quickly turned into nothing more than dust floating in the wind.

There was nothing left to indicate that he had ever been. He was completely and utterly… dead.

The two other Spirit Severing experts of the Solitary Sword Sect, along with the tens of thousands of other disciples, were shocked into complete silence. Their faces were pale white, and barely a moment had passed before one of the Spirit Severing experts gave a start and then dropped to his knees to kowtow.

"Blood Prince, we wish to surrender to the Blood Demon Sect!"

The other disciples immediately dropped to their knees, their hearts pounding and voices trembling as they cried, "Greetings, Blood Prince!"

Despite the fear in their voices, there were tens of thousands of them, and the sound of their cry formed a sound wave that rolled out in all directions.

Meng Hao didn't respond. Instead, he looked back at Chen Fan. Chen Fan's face was downcast, filled with an expression that betrayed his lack of interest in life. To him, life was a pain from which he wished to extricate himself.

Meng Hao's heart twinged with pain as he thought back to the Eldest Brother that existed in his memories. That person didn't look like this. That person wholeheartedly sought after the Dao and had lofty ambitions. Although at times he could be a bit stuffy and uptight, he was a hero who never hesitated for even a moment to stand in front of Meng Hao and protect him from any danger.

That Chen Fan viewed Meng Hao as a Junior Brother, someone he needed to care for after their sect vanished. He was an Elder Brother who even worried about Meng Hao finding a wife.

“Elder Brother….” said Meng Hao, his voice soft.

Chen Fan was silent for a moment before slowly looking up at Meng Hao. After a moment, he forced a smile onto his face.

“Junior Brother, you’ve grown up…. I can finally stop worrying…. Do you have some time right now? If you do, let’s drink a bit.”

Meng Hao immediately nodded, waving a hand to dismiss the Solitary Sword Sect disciples and the Blood Demon Sect disciples. All of them left the sect and waited outside, cross-legged.

The entire Solitary Sword Sect was quiet. Meng Hao and Chen Fan sat down on the mountain peak, beneath the strange boulder. Chen Fan produced a flagon of alcohol, which he handed over to Meng Hao.

A complex look could be seen in Meng Hao’s eyes, but he wasn’t sure how to even begin to give advice, so he simply accepted the flagon and took a long drink.

The alcohol was strong and burned like fire as it slid down his throat.

Chen Fan looked at the boulder and softly said, “She’s your sister-in-law.”

Meng Hao sat there quietly.

As Chen Fan continued, tears began to stream down his face.

“We promised each other that since the path to Immortality was filled with so many obstacles and unforeseen twists and turns, it would be better spend our lives with each other.

“She’s sleeping now, and might not wake up in this lifetime. But then again, maybe she will…. I’ll stay here to accompany her. That was our agreement.

“I let down my master. I was unworthy of him….” Chen Fan looked like an old man. More and more tears poured down his face.

He rarely wept, not even when he and Shan Ling were captured and brought back to the sect. When Shan Ling made the decision to rest in sleep, there were tears in his heart, but they wouldn’t come out. The first time he truly cried was when his master accepted the punishment for him.

The second time he cried was when his master died.

The third time was here, in front of Meng Hao.

“Elder Brother….” began Meng Hao, but he wasn’t sure what he should say, so he stopped talking. After a moment, a determined look appeared in his eyes. He suddenly raised his right hand, and a drop of blood slowly formed on the tip of his finger.

When the drop of blood appeared, his face went a bit pale. A scintillating, blood-colored glow appeared, and Chen Fan’s eyes went wide. After a moment, his eyes flashed in realization, and he shot to his feet.

His expression stern, he cried, “Junior Brother! What do you think you’re doing!? Stop this instant!”

“Elder Brother, I can’t do very much to help you. The only thing I can do is help you to restore your cultivation base. That way, your longevity will be increased, and you can… you can have more time to stay with your beloved.” With that, he gestured with his finger. His lifeblood instantly shot forward and merged into Chen Fan’s forehead.

Chen Fan trembled. Years ago, his Nascent Soul had been damaged, cracked; at this moment, however, time seemed to run in reverse. His Nascent Soul absorbed the blood, and the cracks sealed up.

The blood didn’t just contain some of Meng Hao’s life force, it also contained some of the power of his Eternal stratum. It was that power that enabled Chen Fan’s cultivation base to be restored.

Of course, Meng Hao only had a few such drops of lifeblood. If he parted with too many, that which was Eternal within him would be no more.

But Chen Fan was his Elder Brother. The friendship that had formed between the two of them, and everything that had happened since then, made it so that Meng Hao didn’t even hesitate. If he didn’t give his lifeblood to Chen Fan, that would mean… that he wasn’t Meng Hao.

Chen Fan started trembling, and after a moment passed, coughed up a huge mouthful of blood as his Nascent Soul instantly reappeared like new. Now that he had a Nascent Soul again, his cultivation base surged, and his salt-and-pepper hair turned black.

His aged features once again became young and heroic, and he no longer looked like an old man. He was middle-aged and bursting with energy.

Now he looked more like the Chen Fan that Meng Hao remembered.

Chen Fan

Official ISSTH Chen Fan artwork

Chen Fan gaped at Meng Hao. “Junior Brother, you….”

“There’s no need to talk about it,” said Meng Hao softly. “You’re my Elder Brother….”

Chen Fan held his tongue, and after a long moment passed, slowly nodded. He picked up the flagon of alcohol, looked at the boulder, and began to drink.

The sky gradually grew dark, and eventually the moon rose. When the dawn sun peeked its head over the horizon, Meng Hao took the initiative to start a conversation. He and Chen Fan began to chat about the Reliance Sect, and all the things that had happened after that in the Southern Domain. They talked about all the wonderful things from the past.

When the sun was high in the sky, Meng Hao rose to his feet.

“Elder Brother, I need to go now…. If you ever grow weary of being here, you can always find me in the Blood Demon Sect.”

Chen Fan didn’t respond at first. He looked at the boulder, and the woman who rested inside with her eyes closed.

“You’ve grown up,” he said softly, “and your Elder Brother has gotten old…. Don’t worry about me. You follow your path…. and I’ll follow mine. I’ll stay here with her until the day I close my eyes for good.

“When that day comes, Junior Brother… can you please bury me here? That way I can watch the sun rise and set with her forever. If there is another life after this one… I’ll find this place again. Life after life… I’ll wait, until the day she wakes up.” He turned to look deep into Meng Hao’s eyes.

“Junior Brother… take care of yourself. Your Elder Brother isn’t good at much, so all I can do… is pray that you find happiness. I hope that your path… leads you to greatness!”

Meng Hao stared at Chen Fan, and his face was filled with a variety of complex emotions. He also had an indescribable feeling in his heart that led him to believe he would never forget that person from the Reliance Sect who was so focused on pursuing the Dao. He would never forget the person standing in front of him to protect him. He would also never be able to forget… the Elder Brother from now, who stood there softly murmuring his story.

“Elder Brother… take care of yourself,” Meng Hao said quietly. He clasped hands and bowed deeply, then turned and left, sighing inwardly.

Chen Fan sat down cross-legged and watched Meng Hao leave.

“Ling’er, he’s my Junior Brother. In my heart, he’s family…. I don’t have much family, just him and Junior Sister Xu. Only those two.

“If you still have some awareness of the outside world, then let’s pray together that they find happiness….”

Meng Hao flew out of the Solitary Sword Sect. As soon as he appeared, the Solitary Sword Sect disciples and the Blood Demon Sect cultivators rose to their feet, their expressions that of deep respect.

Meng Hao looked over the Solitary Sword Sect and then said, “Produce strands from your souls and swear blood oaths. After that, you may remain here and become an auxiliary branch of the Blood Demon Sect. Everything will remain as it did before, although your jade slips, ancient records, and legacy items will all be handed over to the Blood Demon Sect.

“Henceforth, there is no Solitary Sword Sect in the Southern Domain, only an auxiliary branch of the Blood Demon Sect.

“The man who sits beneath the boulder on the mountain top is my Elder Brother Chen Fan. No one is allowed to step even half a pace onto that mountain. No one may disobey him in the slightest.”

The Solitary Sword Sect disciples voiced their agreement. From the moment they had agreed to surrender, they were prepared for something like this to happen. Their soul strands and blood oaths were organized by the Blood Demon Sect, then transformed into a soul slip, which was given to Meng Hao. Next, the magical items and ancient records in their treasure house were removed, as well as their legacy items.

Finally, some Blood Demon Sect disciples were stationed in the sect permanently. After that….

Meng Hao flicked his sleeve, and the Blood Demon Sect took to the skies.

Their next target was… the Golden Frost Sect!

As for his second true self, he had already vanished, sent to a different location by Meng Hao.

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# Chapter 756: Crazy Fatty!

In the Golden Frost Sect, it didn’t matter that the whole sect had been sealed. The disciples were still faced with difficult decisions.

Should they continue to defend their position, or should they leave the Southern Domain…?

Should they surrender to the Blood Demon Sect, or die in battle…?

The destruction of the Black Sieve Sect was nothing astonishing. However, the Solitary Sword Sect’s surrender had been witnessed by hundreds of thousands of Southern Domain cultivators. Word had long since spread, and even the sealed-off Golden Frost Sect had gotten the news.

It didn’t take very long at all for the Golden Frost Sect to grow incredibly alarmed. Of course, the least alarmed of all was Li Fugui. However, despite his lack of alarm, he was still quite nervous. Recent days found him sighing with distress, and at a distinct loss.

The Golden Frost Sect had treated him well, very well, from the very beginning. He had been given many beautiful beloved companions, which left him exhausted, but happy…. On the other hand, Meng Hao had been his brother ever since their days in the Reliance Sect.

They had joined the sect together as Outer Sect disciples. They had caught wild chickens to eat, and had even run the general store together. Meng Hao had looked out for him, and that was something he would never forget.

The two of them were truly brothers.

Now, though, he was in an awkward predicament, and was actually somewhat confused about what to do. His brother was on the way to destroy the Golden Frost Sect, and he wasn’t sure how to handle the situation.

A few days after the surrender of the Solitary Sword Sect, the Golden Frost Sect’s only Spirit Severing expert, along with Li Fugui’s master, personally came to him to discuss the matter.

“Sue for peace?” said Fatty, gaping in shock at the Spirit Severing Patriarch, who looked quite exhausted.

“You’re on good terms with Meng Hao. He’s the type of person who… despite being cruel and merciless, capable of carrying out horrendous massacres, and with an unfathomably high cultivation base, is still… someone who cares about past friendships.

“We can verify that from the news about the Solitary Sword Sect. Based on what happened with Chen Fan, it’s possible to tell a little bit about what Meng Hao is thinking.

“Li Fugui, think about it. How has the sect treated you ever since you joined? We’re now facing imminent catastrophe. Hopefully, you can step forward bravely and use your friendship with Meng Hao to help us weather this storm!

“The Golden Frost Sect is willing to surrender. Our only request is that we don’t become an auxiliary branch, but rather, allies!

“We will do everything in our power to comply with the Blood Demon Sect, but we want to preserve our core Daoist teachings and doctrines, so that our sect will not be wiped away from the Southern Domain. Perhaps years from now, we can once again rise to prominence. We must fight for that chance.”

The Golden Frost Sect’s only Spirit Severing Patriarch clasped hands and bowed deeply to Li Fugui. Li Fugui’s master stood off to the side, looking at him.

Li Fugui was quiet for a moment before nodding seriously.

Another day of nervousness passed for the Golden Frost Sect. Finally, the clouds seethed outside of the sect’s grand spell formation, and tens of thousands of beams of light appeared. They were like a towering sea of blood, bright red as they shot toward the Golden Frost Sect.

These were the Blood Demon Sect disciples. They had destroyed the Black Sieve Sect and forced the Solitary Sword Sect into compliance. Now, they turned toward the Golden Frost Sect, their hearts filled with the desire to kill.

Behind them were the rogue cultivators, even more than before. Hundreds of thousands were following the Blood Demon Sect through the Southern Domain to bear witness.

Outside of the Golden Frost Sect was an area where the air did not ripple with the distortions of a defensive spell formation, nor was there any enshrouding fog. Instead, an illusion barrier protected it, revealing only the image of a barren mountain.

As soon as the Blood Demon Sect disciples appeared on the scene, and before they could even react, a beam of light could be seen, and Fatty’s round figure was there on the mountain.

“Don’t attack, don’t attack, it’s me!” he called out at the top of his lungs. Seeing the tens of thousands of Blood Demon Sect disciples, and the hundreds of thousands of rogue cultivators behind them, left Fatty completely frightened.

Meng Hao looked at Fatty, and then glanced over at the Golden Frost Sect. It only took him a moment to figure out what the Golden Frost Sect was planning. Inwardly, he had already been experiencing some doubts regarding how to handle them.

Fatty was here, and Meng Hao knew that no matter what he did to the Golden Frost Sect, it would affect Fatty negatively.

Seeing Fatty suddenly appear, Meng Hao waved his sleeve, causing the air around him to distort. He vanished, then reappeared in front of Fatty. They were then surrounded by a blurriness that prevented anyone from seeing clearly what was happening.

A faint smile appeared on Meng Hao’s face. He looked over Fatty’s rotund figure, then laughed out loud. Fatty heaved an inward sigh of relief, and the two of them embraced.

Unfortunately, it didn’t take long for Meng Hao’s smile to turn wry.

“Your belly… is too huge,” he said. Fatty was so fat that it made it hard to hug him.

“Yeah, I got fat again,” said Fatty, smiling and rubbing his head. “Recently I’ve been thinking of trying to lose some weight.” He looked past Meng Hao toward the tens of thousands of murderous-looking Blood Demon Sect disciples.

“So, um…. Eldest Brother Meng Hao, what do you say we get down to business?” Fatty looked extremely nervous.

“Oh?” replied Meng Hao, blinking and looking back at Fatty with an enigmatic smile.

Fatty sighed and then just directly explained. “The sect’s Spirit Severing Patriarch sent me here to sue for peace. How about… we don’t fight!? The sect will surrender as long as they can preserve their core Daoist teachings and doctrines….”

As the two of them chatted, the disciples of the Golden Frost Sect looked on nervously from within their sect, wondering what the result would be.

“I wonder if Elder Brother Li will succeed or not…?”

“Meng Hao really values friendship. He shouldn’t have a hard time convincing him.”

“You can’t say for sure. Meng Hao is the Blood Prince of the Blood Demon Sect. He’s killed countless people, and is completely cruel and ferocious. There’s no way he’ll agree to our demands so easily.” Even as they discussed the matter, Meng Hao was listening to Fatty make his demands. An even wider smile broke out on Meng Hao's face.

"Fatty, you're working so hard to represent the sect and sue for peace, but what has the sect offered you in return?"

Fatty gaped for a moment, then suddenly slapped his thigh. A look of fury appeared on his face.

"Fudge! You're right! Those bastards didn't offer me anything!! Alright, Meng Hao, don't agree to anything yet. I'm gonna go back to the sect and tell them that the negotiations didn't go well. After they offer Young Master Fatty something good, then I'll come back."

Meng Hao chuckled and shook his head. Then he flicked his sleeve, causing the blurriness around them to fade away. As it cleared, everyone in the outside world could see the two of them.

Meng Hao's face darkened, and Fatty's eyes gleamed. Realizing that it was time to put on the show, he flew into a rage and then roared, "Meng Hao, how could you be like this!?!?"

Burning with rage, he turned and headed back to the Golden Frost Sect.

The faces of the Golden Frost Sect cultivators fell, and their hearts began to thump.

Fatty angrily returned to the sect, and was immediately surrounded by anxious-looking disciples.

"I'm done with that fool! Done!" cried Fatty. "Meng Hao doesn't care at all about friendship! I'm through trying to reconcile with him!" Hearing Fatty's ranting caused the Golden Frost Sect cultivators to grow even more alarmed.

The only Spirit Severing Patriarch immediately strode forward and asked, "He didn't agree?"

“As soon as I brought up the matter of suing for peace, he asked me what authority I had to negotiate for the sect! On what authority?!?! I’m a Golden Frost Sect disciple, dammit! What an insult!” As he spoke, Fatty’s eyes shifted back and forth craftily.

The surrounding Golden Frost Sect disciples had been suppressing themselves for too long now. They had placed all their hope on Fatty, and now that he had failed, they couldn’t suppress themselves any longer.

“Well if he’s going to be like that, then let’s fight!”

“Yeah! It would be better to die in battle than be insulted like this! Even Elder Brother Li couldn’t do anything about it. Let’s fight!”

“FIGHT!!”

Their desire to go to battle soared, and soon, the entire sect was filled with a murderous aura. People even began to rotate the sect’s spell formations into battle readiness.

Fatty was stupefied. He thought he had made things pretty obvious, and was shocked that no one had picked up on his hidden meaning.

The Spirit Severing Patriarch stood there silently, looking at Meng Hao floating in midair off in the distance. He sighed inwardly. He had no desire to go to war; the Golden Frost Sect didn’t even come close to matching up with the Blood Demon Sect. But now… what other options did they have?

Normally speaking, he would have picked up on the hidden message in Li Fugui’s words just now. However, he was so anxious and alarmed that he simply didn’t notice.

“If we’re going to fight, then we should make the first move!” said the Spirit Severing Patriarch, gritting his teeth. “Fight now, and worry about everything else later!”

Fatty’s eyes went wide, and his heart started to pound. Realizing that things were getting out of control, he quickly stepped forward.

“Actually…” he said. “I think there’s still some hope….”

“Elder Brother Li, there’s no need for further discussion. We’re going to fight!”

“Yeah! Junior Brother Li, we’ve been pushed into a corner. The only option now is to fight!”

“We’ll show them who the Golden Frost Sect is! We might be down and out now, but we still have the power to fight!”

Fatty was now extremely nervous. “Hey everybody, you need to listen to me! I think….”

“Li Fugui, there’s no need!” said the Spirit Severing cultivator, his eyes cold. “I made an error in judgement. It seems we’ll have to fight first before we can have a shot at turning this around. Disciples, heed my command….” He flicked his sleeve and was about to issue orders when, all of a sudden, Fatty lifted his head up and roared.

“Patriarch, give me one more chance! I, Li Fugui, will put my life on the line to secure peace for the sect!” He was so nervous that his throat was hoarse.

Immediately, everyone turned to look at him in shock, even the Spirit Severing Patriarch.

Li Fugui slapped his chest so hard that it stung, and tears welled up in his eyes.

“You’re an amazing kid,” said the Spirit Severing expert, clearly moved. “You… you really don’t need to put yourself in such danger. We will fight them, and show them the true power of the Golden Frost Sect! That’s our only hope!” With that, he prepared to give combat orders.

Fatty was trembling, and veins bulged out on his forehead. Once again, he let out a mighty roar.

“Don’t worry, Patriarch. I’m a disciple of the Golden Frost Sect. Even if I die the most cruel death, I will help the sect to pass through this crisis! This time I’ll just tell that Meng Hao that I’m a disciple of the Golden Frost Sect, and its future Golden Prince. If he doesn’t agree to our terms, I’ll kill myself right in front of him!” With that, he flew up into the air, his face calm and unflinching.

A tremor ran through the Spirit Severing Patriarch, and the other disciples were completely moved to see Fatty’s tear-soaked face and calmness in the face of death.

“Regardless of whether or not you succeed,” said the Spirit Severing Patriarch, “you are now the Golden Prince of the Golden Frost Sect!!” By this point, he felt that something fishy was going on, but considering the crisis they were in, he couldn’t focus too much on that.

Fatty immediately started to get excited. In his opinion, it was the time to push things a bit further, so he took a deep breath and then ripped off the top of his robe, revealing his rolls of fat. His expression serious and filled with the determination to die for his sect, he cried out, “Patriarch, please bestow me with a titular tattoo!

“Please carve the characters ‘Golden Prince of the Golden Frost Sect’ onto my back!”

The Spirit Severing Patriarch stared in shock, and his face twitched.

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# Chapter 757: Calamity for the Li Clan!

As soon as the words left Fatty’s mouth, all of the Golden Frost Sect disciples stared in shock. The Spirit Severing Patriarch’s face twitched, and then he took a deep breath and, with effort, spoke as if he were very moved.

“What an amazing kid. Amazing!! The sect will never forget you! You are our hero!

“Very well, I’ll bestow the tattoo unto you!” With that, the Spirit Severing Patriarch waved his right hand toward Fatty, causing the characters ‘Golden Prince of the Golden Frost Sect’ to appear on his back.

The characters were carved… quite deeply, causing intense pain that made Fatty clench his teeth, and even squeeze out some tears. However, he didn’t make a sound. Once the characters were inscribed, he took a deep breath, and then swept his fellow disciples with a meaningful gaze.

“I’m going now,” he said, “and perhaps I won’t return. Even if I die, I will still belong to the Golden Frost Sect, whether in flesh and body, or in spirit and soul!

“Fellow disciples! My beautiful, beloved companions! I’m leaving now!” With that, he flew out of the sect.

As he shot through the air, quite a few disciples had unsightly looks on their faces, and one even began to give voice to suspicions.

“I’m not sure, but wasn’t Junior Brother Li acting a bit weird just now?” he asked.

In response to his question, there were a few disciples who frowned and were about to respond, when the Spirit Severing expert snorted coldly.

“Li Fugui is willing to risk his life for the sect, and even requested that I give him that tattoo…. ” After mentioning the tattoo, the Spirit Severing Patriarch paused momentarily, struggling with himself internally. Although he hadn’t picked up on any of the clues at first, he had lived for many years. In the end, how could he not have seen through Fatty’s incongruous behavior?

It only took a moment of thought for him to thoroughly understand that Fatty was milking the glory for all it was worth. Although the Spirit Severing Patriarch didn’t really approve, considering the current situation, he couldn’t very well say anything.

Not only was he forced to hold his tongue, he also had to help cover for Fatty’s earlier conspicuousness and make the story seem more convincing. As he realized this, he couldn’t help but sigh inwardly.

“Anyone who has any suspicions can go take his place if they want!” he continued.

When he thought back to how he had bestowed the tattoo, the Spirit Severing Patriarch couldn’t help but think that the whole thing seemed so fake…. “Why couldn’t Li Fugui put on a more convincing performance?” he thought. “Damn it all, what the hell is a titular tattoo anyway…y-y-you…!”

However, considering the relationship Fatty had with Meng Hao, he couldn’t risk offending him. Therefore, he began to consider coming up with some good, justifiable reasons as to why he had bestowed the tattoo, reasons that everyone would believe.

Even as the Patriarch was wrestling with such thoughts, Fatty was flying out of the sect, his face as calm and unflinching as ever. Inside, however, he was grinning ear to ear.

“Hahaha!” he laughed inwardly. “Grandpa Fatty outsmarts them again! Especially that titular tattoo thing! It completely sets the matter in stone. In the future, if anyone dares to deny that I’m the Golden Prince, all I have to do is take my shirt off!” Feeling quite pleased with himself, he flew toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao waited, hovering in mid-air. When he saw the shining white ball of flesh flying through the air toward him, he gaped. Staring quizzically at Fatty as he arrived, he waved his hand, causing the area around them to blur. Then he noticed the characters tattooed on Fatty’s back.

“Well? What do you think?!” said Fatty, his expression one of wild joy.

Meng Hao stared for a moment, then let out a long sigh.

“What’s wrong?” asked Fatty, not looking very pleased. He subconsciously produced a flying sword and started to file at his teeth.

“How can you have such low ambitions?” said Meng Hao with a wry smile. “Why didn’t you have them write ‘Sect Leader of the Golden Frost Sect?’”

Fatty suddenly stopped filing his teeth, and his eyes went wide. He let out a roar, and his eyes went bloodshot.

“Dammit! DAMMIT! How come I didn’t think of that?! This won’t do. Meng Hao, don’t agree to the terms yet. Hold on a moment, I’m going back to the sect!” He turned, and was just about to speed back to the sect when Meng Hao reached out and grabbed his arm.

Meng Hao looked speechlessly at him. Then he thought back to how bumbling Fatty had been back in the Reliance Sect, and he suddenly understood everything.

“Golden Prince is fine,” he said quickly. “Look at me, I’m a Sect Prince, too.” Worried that Fatty would continue to mess things up, he quickly projected his voice to fill the entire Golden Frost Sect.

“Golden Frost Sect, considering that Li Fugui has become your Golden Prince, I will exempt you from the death penalty for your act of besieging the Blood Demon Sect. From now on, you are a part of the Blood Demon Sect!

“I shall permit you to retain your core Daoist teachings and doctrines, but you must immediately provide soul strands and blood oaths!”

In response to his words, the Golden Frost Sect’s spell formations opened up to reveal the sect. The Spirit Severing Patriarch, as well as tens of thousands of disciples, all flew out and bowed to Meng Hao.

“We will obey the decrees of the Blood Demon Sect!”

The Golden Frost Sect surrendered, and its members gave soul strands and blood oaths. Fatty became the sect’s Golden Prince, and although some people didn’t approve, no one dared to say anything. After all, the threat posed by Meng Hao was far too great.

In any case, their discontent was not severe. Had Meng Hao personally forced them to raise Fatty to Golden Prince, the situation might have been different. In any case, resolving the issue of the Golden Frost Sect in this way was not the most ideal method for Meng Hao, but he could accept it.

Unfortunately, he felt a bit guilty for the Blood Demon Sect disciples. They had come to exact revenge, but in the end, hadn’t been able to kill anyone. Their fury and resentment could only fester in their hearts, with nowhere to vent it.

Killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes.

“Next, the Li Clan!” he shouted.

He had never had any good impressions of the Li Clan, especially towards Li Daoyi, whom he had met many years before. If one didn’t consider their tangential relationship, then the only other person from the Li clan that Meng Hao had anything to do with would be the Li Patriarch inside the blood mask, who had been turned into a Soul of Lightning.

Meng Hao turned to the Blood Demon Sect cultivators behind him, to the disciples who had suppressed their killing intent for too long, and said, “There will be no surrender for the Li Clan!”

With that, he flicked his sleeve and flew up into the air. The tens of thousands of Blood Demon Sect cultivators turned into beams of light as they followed him, consumed by their desire for carnage. In the battle for the Blood Demon Sect, they had narrowly escaped with their lives, and the majority of their comrades had died. The resulting desire for revenge now burned hot and deep.

This was an enmity that could only be washed away with blood!

The Black Sieve Sect had essentially been empty. The Solitary Sword Sect surrendered. The Golden Frost Sect had Li Fugui. They could understand Meng Hao’s decisions, but their desire to kill had been held back for too long, and needed a release.

The place it would be released was none other than the Li Clan!

There was no peace and quiet in the Li Clan; everything was abuzz with activity. There were tens of thousands of clan members left alive, and the sole remaining early Dao Seeking Patriarch had been awakened from sleep to take charge. They were attempting to teleport the entire clan out of the Southern Domain.

Originally, they had assumed that sealing the clan off from the outside world would be sufficient to prevent reprisals from the Blood Demon sect. However, the Solitary Sword Sect’s spell formations had crumbled, which destroyed their hopes. As of that moment, they suddenly realized that… the Li Clan could by no means remain in the Southern Domain.

They considered surrender, but once the Golden Frost Sect did that very thing, the Li Clan’s Dao Seeking Patriarch realized that a great catastrophe was heading their way.

“The Blood Demon Sect mobilized to exact revenge,” said the Patriarch. “There was no slaughter carried out at the Black Sieve Sect, Solitary Sword

Sect, or Golden Frost Sect…. That means that the Li Clan is in grave danger!” It was without hesitation that preparations began to teleport the clan out of the Southern Domain.

Unfortunately, at almost the same moment that their teleportation portal began to rotate, a massive rumbling filled the air, and an enormous parasol formed of magical symbols appeared above the clan.

The parasol shone with boundless radiance as it immediately exploded, causing formless ripples to emanate outward. The ripples enveloped the Li Clan, not to destroy it, but to seal it.

Having been sealed, the Li Clan’s teleportation portals immediately ceased functioning.

The seal was formed by the power of a peak Dao Seeking divine will, and in just a twinkling, spread out for hundreds of kilometers in every direction.

This area was like a world unto itself, cut off from everything else.

Unless the Li Clan had another peak Dao Seeking expert, then even with the aid of some special magical items it would be extremely difficult for them to break the seal without expending a great deal of time. Furthermore, Meng Hao’s second true self now floated cross-legged in midair above the sect, eyes closed in meditation, completely ignoring the Li Clan down below.

He had been dispatched to the Li Clan directly from the Solitary Sword Sect, sent here by Meng Hao specifically to prevent the Li Clan from attempting an escape upon learning of what had happened.

Although the second true self sat there with eyes closed, his body emanated the pressure of peak Dao Seeking. All of the Li Clan members within the area of the seal were trembling in terror. It was a dread that came from the depths of the heart, and it quickly infected the entire clan.

“Meng Hao!” said the early Dao Seeking Li Clan Patriarch, who happened to be their 9th Patriarch. He flew out from the Clan estate, flicking his sleeve to cause a scroll painting to appear.

The scroll painting depicted a woman whose eyes were closed in meditation. At first glance, she seemed indescribably beautiful and striking, but upon closer inspection her features were somewhat indistinct. As soon as she appeared, shocking ripples spread out in all directions. The 9th Li Clan Patriarch performed an incantation gesture, causing the ripples to surge through the air in an attack on Meng Hao’s second true self.

Booms echoed out, and the air distorted. Meng Hao’s second true self slowly opened his eyes to reveal somber coldness. He looked down at the 9th Li Clan Patriarch, gave a cold snort, and pointed downwards.

The gesture instantly caused the city below to begin to quake. Signs of withering appeared within all of the cultivators; it almost seemed as if the natural law of the world inside the sealing area had changed.

The face of the 9th Li Clan Patriarch fell, and he cried out inwardly. Then he bit his tongue and spit out a mouthful of blood, which was then absorbed by the scroll painting.

“Ancestor, save me!!” he cried miserably.

As his voice rang out, the scroll burst into flames, and the woman inside opened her eyes!

When she spoke, her voice was raspy and yet strangely magnetic. “The Li Clan is not originally from Planet South Heaven, but rather, Planet North Reed. If you insist on slaughtering these people, Fellow Daoist, the Li Clan will not rest until you are dead.

“I won’t hold you accountable for your lack of knowledge about the origins of the Li Clan. Simply sever your arms as punishment. Furthermore, dig out both of your eyes…. That is the punishment for anyone not of the Li Clan who lays eyes on me.

“Now, as to whether or not you try to wipe these Li Clan members out, the choice is up to you.”

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# Chapter 758

The eyes of Meng Hao’s second true self gleamed with killing intent. Although the soul of the second true self was not Meng Hao’s, thanks to the hidden power within the fleshly body, as well as Meng Hao’s divine will, he could control him as if it were his own body.

“Screw off!” said the second true self, his voice cold.

The words did not come with a thunderous roar, nor were there any boundless ripples. There was only monstrous coldness that spread out in all directions, causing everything for hundreds of kilometers to freeze over.

Within the flaming painting, the woman’s eyes widened.

“You really don’t know what’s good for you!” she exclaimed through gritted teeth. She lifted her right hand, causing a tempest of flame to appear, which immediately shot out in all directions to attempt to fight against the region set up by the second true self.

The second true self snorted and then closed his eyes, completely ignoring the rumbling that filled the air. He had completely sealed down everything, making it impossible for the Li Clan to flee.

Time passed, and the Li Clan only continued to grow more panicked. No matter what techniques they attempted to use, they were incapable of teleporting away, nor could they break through the seal created by the second true self. Even the face of the woman on the screen was beginning to look unsightly. After all… she was only a strand of divine will, and even if she were stronger than she was now, she was still nothing more than a scroll painting, with a cultivation base at the mid Dao Seeking level, falling short of the peak.

After all, the Li Clan of South Heaven was merely one of many offshoot branches of the main Li Clan on Planet North Reed. If it weren't for the fact that they had some unique ties to the main clan, they would already have died out. As for their previous heights of glory and their present state of decline, in terms of the complex inner workings of the Li Clan as a whole, it actually didn't amount to much.

Three days later, rumbling continued to fill the air just as it had the entire time. The woman in the scroll painting was more than half burned away, having gone all out with the power available to her as a divine will clone to bolster the Li Clan's frantic efforts to break through the seal. As a result, cracks were finally becoming visible in it.

It was at this point that suddenly, tens of thousands of beams of light appeared off in the distance. They shot through the air like a red cloud, radiating killing intent.

It was the Blood Demon Sect's tens of thousand of disciples who had all been holding themselves back for so long. In the lead was Meng Hao, flanked on the left and right by his Dharma Protectors.

As he neared, the eyes of the woman in the scroll painting glittered; she could tell at a mere glance that this was the true self of the clone.

Her eyes flickered with killing intent, and she was just about to say something, when coldness burst out of Meng Hao's eyes. Without so much as a word, he waved the index finger of his right hand, and the Golden Frost Sect Patriarch and the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch shot toward the Li Clan, eyes shining with a glow like blood.

At the same time, the tens of thousands of Blood Demon Sect disciples exploded with a blood-colored glow as they finally unleashed the rage that had been pent up this entire time.

"Kill them!!"

"Spare no one! Kill them all!"

The tens of thousands of Blood Demon Sect Disciples recalled the bitter images from the battle outside their own sect, and their eyes turned red. Bloodthirsty and mad with rage, they charged the Li Clan. In response, the tens of thousands of Li Clan members began to fight back in desperation, looks of hopelessness on their faces.

This was a battle where no quarter would be given; its sole objective was to wipe out an entire clan.

Off in the distance, the hundreds of thousands of rogue cultivators were shaken by what they saw.

“The killing has started….”

“The Blood Demon Sect’s revenge is now truly being carried out!”

“The Li Clan… will be no more in the Southern Domain.”

“The Li Clan is going to be wiped out, and the Wang Clan was mysteriously destroyed in a single night. The only clan left in the Southern Domain will be the Song Clan!”

“Of the five great sects, the Black Sieve Sect was eradicated and the Solitary Sword Sect surrendered and lost their core Daoist teachings and doctrines. It was only because of Li Fugui that the Golden Frost Sect maintained theirs, but they will not be able to return to their former glory for many years. That just leaves the Violet Fate Sect….”

The slaughter intensified as the shocked rogue cultivators looked on. The left and right Dharma Protectors had lost their conscious wills, and attacked with shocking power. The woman in the scroll painting was defeated in exchange after exchange, and the 9th Li Clan Patriarch’s face was ashen. Blood sprayed from his mouth as his fleshly body was destroyed by the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch. His Nascent Divinity flew out at top speed.

“3rd Patriarch!!” he shrieked miserably.

Unfortunately for him, the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch was not aware of what was happening, and his only reaction was to attack again.

The Li Clan members fought back miserably, but were incapable of standing up to the elite cultivators of the Blood Demon Sect.

Thousands were killed just in the initial salvo.

The battlefield was soon soaked with blood, with slaughter being carried about constantly. Meng Hao didn’t attack, nor did his second true self. They merely observed the battle.

By now, Meng Hao was starting to grow weary of the bloodshed. In all the years since he had begun to practice cultivation, he had never killed so many people…. Even during the migration in the Western Desert, he had not seen such endless slaughter.

He felt a great weariness in his heart, and his expression was somewhat blank.

His ears were filled with the din of slaughter, bloodcurdling screaming, curses uttered moments before death, and battle cries. Despite the sheer volume of these sounds, all of it seemed to transform into a drone that came from very, very far away.

He suddenly realized that he reeked of blood. He could even sense that his heart was changing color… and was almost black.

It was the result of the accumulation of murderous desires and too much killing. When his heart became completely black, Meng Hao knew that would probably mean… that he had reached the point where the excessive killing didn’t bother him any more.

But was all of this what he really wanted?

He suddenly missed his days back in the Demon Immortal Sect, back during the Western Desert migration, back in the Southern Domain as an alchemist, and even his naive life in the Reliance Sect.

But now, he was surrounded by killing, and he was exhausted because of it. When he closed his eyes, he could sense the countless vengeful spirits of the people he had killed, swirling around inside of him. They engulfed him, transforming into an intense, resentful miasma that was like a curse. A never ending curse.

Meng Hao stood there, taciturn and silent.

He really was… very tired.

“Perhaps this is why I have been unable to push the Blood Demon Grand Magic past the fourth level,” he thought with a sigh.

“After all, I am still not the Devil that Patriarch Blood Demon wishes me to be…. I simply can’t be that cruel and merciless. I just can’t kill and kill without being shaken inwardly.”

After reaching the fourth level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic, he had tried on multiple occasions to achieve enlightenment regarding the fifth level, but all to no avail. It was as if he had reached the end the road.

He looked out at the bloody carnage and the twisted expressions of those that were caught up in the slaughter, and the weariness and exhaustion within him surged even higher. Finally he had his answer.

“Perhaps, deep in my heart, I’m simply not truly willing to allow myself to become completely blackhearted. I don’t want my happiness to come from the ghosts of those who I have killed. I don’t want my path to be filled with slaughter. In that case… I guess I’ll never reach the fifth level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic in this lifetime.

“The fifth level requires even more killing. It requires innumerable souls…. It requires more and more vengeful spirits to gather around me to successfully cultivate the magic.

“Only if I concede and become a Devil can I fully embrace the Blood Demon Grand Magic. At all times, regardless of the circumstances, I must embrace the colors of red and black.

"That is the only way. And it is a way… that I cannot accept." He stood outside the Li Clan looking at rivers of blood, mountains of corpses, and ruins. Booms filled the air as cultivators from both sides fought back and forth ferociously, almost as if they had lost any semblance of reason.

It was at this point that Meng Hao suddenly came to a realization….

The battle didn't last very long. With the left and right Dharma Protectors in action, it barely took two hours before the Li Clan's fate was sealed.

The woman in the scroll painting could not be killed. She was a strand of divine sense that would return to her true self on Planet North Reed upon the painting's vanishment. As she began to fade away, her cold voice echoed out.

"You chose the path of extermination! From now on, if you step foot outside of Planet South Heaven, the Li Clan will hunt you down wherever you go in the Ninth Mountain, for as long as it takes!"

Meng Hao's eyes flickered with coldness. His second true self waved its right hand toward the woman in the scroll painting and the fading of her figure was suddenly arrested, and the flames which burned around her died down a bit.

The woman gaped in shock, during which time Meng Hao pointed out his right index finger.

Demon Sealing, Eighth Hex!

Demon Sealing, Seventh Hex!

The combination of these two great hexing magics being unleashed at the same time caused the woman to tremble violently. She was formed from divine will, but all of a sudden, she found herself severed from the divine will of her true self.

"What are you doing!?!?" she cried in shock, her face falling.

Next, Karma enmeshed her, and strands composed of the five elements sealed her inside. Meng Hao lifted his hand, and the woman's body gradually began to shrink. In the blink of an eye, she became a glowing white sphere which floated down to land on his palm. He immediately crushed it.

A boom echoed out as Karma was shattered. The woman let out a bloodcurdling scream as she was completely destroyed along with her Karma.

Now, she was completely incapable of returning to Planet North Reed and her true self.

"Court death, and you just might succeed," said Meng Hao coolly. He opened his hand, and countless glowing particles rose up into the air. Meng Hao could now sense another vengeful spirit circulating around him.

No one could see the venomous stares; Meng Hao was the only one who could sense them.

Meanwhile, on one of the four great planets that circulated the Ninth Mountain, Planet North Reed, there was a continent that covered half of the entire planet. The entire continent belonged to one clan, and that was the Li Clan!

According to some legends, this Li Clan was founded by the descendants of Lord Li of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. As to whether or not that was true, it was impossible for any gossipers to determine. Although, if it were true, why hadn't Lord Ji exterminated this Li Clan?

In the vast lands of the Li Clan was a towering altar, the design of which was very unique; it was shaped like an enormous trident. At the very tip of the trident, a woman sat cross-legged in meditation. She had very long hair that hung down her body, and she was exceptionally beautiful, almost celestial.

Suddenly, her eyes snapped open to reveal a sharp, but confused light.

“The divine sense clone I left behind for my younger brother’s clan on South Heaven just died….”

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# Chapter 759: The Northern Reaches Mobilizes

The Li Clan was destroyed.

Not a single clan member was left behind. All were killed. It was nothing Meng Hao could do to stop. Nearly seventy percent of the disciples of the Blood Demon Sect had died. Although there was a certain coldness between disciples of the sect, this was war, and when fellow disciples passed away, the survivors would pay any price to exact vengeance.

Vengeance became an obsession!

The Solitary Sword Sect was the first to surrender, so the Blood Demon Sect disciples could choose to endure.

Because the Blood Prince’s dear friend was a member of the Golden Frost Sect, they were able to hold on to survival.

But when it came to the Li Clan, they could endure no more. Perhaps the Blood Demon Sect disciples did not hate the Li Clan any more than the others, but they needed to kill. They needed their revenge. They needed an outlet for their obsession.

The Li Clan was awash with rivers of blood. What had once been glorious, was now in ruins. In the years to come, the clan would eventually turn into nothing more than barren dirt.

Of course, many mortals live in the Li Clan’s headquarters. However, the Blood Demon Sect had not sunk to the level in which they would massacre mortals, so they were left alive.

Finally, the Blood Demon Sect disciples left. They returned to the Blood Demon Sect, and at long last, the slaughtering was over in the Southern Domain. Peace and quiet returned. However, all of the Southern Domain’s cultivators were well aware… that from now on, the Blood Demon Sect was not just the number one sect in the Southern Domain, it was… the ruler!

There was no power that could resist them. The Blood Demon Sect now had… four peak Dao Seeking cultivators!

Patriarch Blood Demon, Patriarch Golden Frost, the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch, and the fourth member, Meng Hao’s clone!

With four peak Dao Seeking experts, the Blood Demon Sect had the power to sweep unhindered across the Southern Domain. They were even comparable to some of the true super sects of the Eastern Lands.

Furthermore, the level of power they had displayed recently was just the tip of the iceberg.

After the destruction of the Li Clan, the Southern Domain was once again stable and quiet. Unfortunately, the overall number of cultivators in the land as a whole had been significantly reduced. There were even some areas that were noticeably empty.

Meng Hao didn’t immediately go back to the Blood Demon Sect. First, he went to the Violet Fate Sect, which of course sent the entire sect into a stir. When he arrived outside the main gate, he looked up silently at the enormous statue of Reverend Violet East.

The Violet Fate Sect was silent for a short while, and then the East Pill Division and the Violet Qi Division appeared in solemn, ceremonial form. Meng Hao saw many familiar faces, and he sighed.

His desire had not been to reunite with the Violet Fate Sect in such a way. This type of meeting… made him feel like a stranger.

The elderly Violet Fate Sect Sect Leader strode forward, an old man who was very familiar to Meng Hao. He looked very nervous as he clasped hands and said, “Blood Prince, your gracious presence is a bright light shining down upon our humble sect. Please, come in!”

The Violet Qi Division and the East Pill Division made similar welcoming declarations. Among their number was the sect Elder from years ago who had identified Meng Hao’s incredible latent talent. He saw Violet Furnace Lords Lin Hailong and An Zaihai, as well as the man he had become entangled with all the way back in the State of Zhao, Wu Dingqiu. 1

All of them approached Meng Hao and clasped hands in respect.

Hanxue Shan made an appearance, but not Chu Yuyan.

The respect shown to him by the Violet Fate Sect made Meng Hao sigh in his heart. He couldn’t help but speak up and ask them not to treat him in such a way, but unfortunately, he could not change the murderous air which swirled around him. The events that had occurred in the Black Sieve Sect, the Solitary Sword Sect, the Golden Frost Sect, and the Li Clan had struck fear into the entire Southern Domain. It all turned into something like a palpable pressure which radiated out from Meng Hao.

He could tell that Wu Dingqiu was nervous, and could sense the fear in the hearts of An Zaihai and the other Violet Furnace Lords. Even Hanxue Shan seemed reluctant to approach him.

There were other familiar faces, and it was the same with all of them. Apparently, his murderous aura was too strong, like a stabbing needle that prevented people from getting near him…. Meng Hao stood there, silent, his heart twinging painfully.

“After someone gets too powerful,” he thought, “must he grow apart from the people he used to know…?” Meng Hao suddenly felt very lonely. It was the kind of isolated feeling that came when you were with your friends, then suddenly realized that you felt as if you were all alone in the vast world.

Meng Hao thought of Chen Fan and Fatty. For some reason, he even thought of Grand Elder Ouyang from the Reliance Sect, and Sect Leader He Luohua. Throughout the hundreds of years, Meng Hao had never run into them. 2

Feeling both like a friend and a stranger, Meng Hao entered the Violet Fate Sect.

Normally, the peak Dao Seeking Patriarch of the Violet Fate Sect would never appear in public, but now that Meng Hao had arrived, he emerged from secluded meditation.

He was a middle-aged man with an ancient, transcendent air. He was skinny, and had no brilliant glow in his eyes, but his peak Dao Seeking aura was not weak. He peered out from within the temple, watching Meng Hao approaching with Violet Fate cultivators crowding around him.

“Fellow Daoist Meng, please have a seat.” With a slight smile, the man waved his hand, causing a long table to suddenly appear in the center of the temple’s main hall. Alcohol and spirit fruits could be seen on the table, and off to the side were floating figures playing beautiful music.

The rest of the Violet Fate Sect members stopped outside of the temple hall. They clasped hands and bowed deeply, then slowly left. Soon, only Meng Hao and the middle-aged man remained.

“Patriarch, there’s really no need for all of this,” said Meng Hao.

“You’re a guest, Fellow Daoist,” the man said with a smile. “Even though you used to be a disciple of the Violet Fate Sect, now that you’ve come in this fashion, how could I not entertain you? Please, have a seat.”

Meng Hao stepped forward and then sat down at the table. With a smile, the middle-aged man sat down across from him.

“I am Sun Tao, and to be honest, I’m not a Patriarch. I am simply an apprentice alchemist, so there’s no need for you to address me as Patriarch.

Actually, to be most correct… I should actually call you Young Lord.” The man laughed and then poured Meng Hao a cup of alcohol.

Meng Hao stared at him in shock.

“In the past, I was apprentice alchemist to Reverend Violet East.” Sun Tao looked at Meng Hao for a moment, and then smiled. “In fact, I still am.”

At this point, Meng Hao’s eyes glittered.

“It is neither necessary nor proper for you to ask the question that is on your mind,” continued Sun Tao. “I know exactly why you have come here. Unfortunately, your master is in secluded meditation, and cannot come out….”

Meng Hao’s heart trembled. The reason he had come to the Violet Fate Sect was because he wanted to see his master. They had been separated for many years, but he had never forgotten the three kowtows.

“Your master sent me here to explain something to you,” Sun Tao went on. “When practicing cultivation… one must cultivate the heart!

“As long as the heart is there, it doesn’t matter if it is red or black. Your will is the most important factor. Your will is like a blade, and that blade… can still be used in your Third Severing. There is no need to be swept up with confusion.

“Life is a series of decisions. Whether you make the correct decisions or not doesn’t matter. The important thing is to keep going forward. Years later, when you look back, perhaps you’ll find that the incorrect decisions you made… weren’t really incorrect. Similarly, the correct decisions… might not necessarily have been correct.

“Why struggle with frustration? Why proceed with confusion? In all things… resolution only comes from continuing to move forward.

“Following this line of reasoning, if there is no such thing as ‘incorrect,’ then how can the ‘correct’ exist? Similarly, if there is no ‘correct,’ then how can the ‘incorrect’ exist?

“Another matter,” said Sun Tao, gazing at Meng Hao. “The Dao of alchemy is a great Dao. Your master wished me to remind you to never abandon it. Although it might not be of much use to you in your cultivation here in the lands of South Heaven, your future path… will take you far away from here.

“At that time, the Dao of alchemy… will be of incredible assistance. It will ensure that regardless of whatever hardships you face, your alchemic flame will never be extinguished.”

Meng Hao sat there silently. After a long moment, he lifted his glass and took a long drink of alcohol. Then he stood, clasped hands, and bowed deeply to Sun Tao.

“Many thanks for the enlightenment, senior,” he said. “Please pass word to my master that I will never forget his teachings!”

Sun Tao remained seated, but gave a slight nod in response. Meng Hao took a deep breath and then turned to leave the temple hall.

At the same time, in an Immortal’s cave in the number one mountain peak of the East Pill Division, a white-haired old man sat cross-legged in meditation. The air around him twisted and distorted as if due to a great Dao.

His eyes opened a crack as he looked out at Meng Hao leaving the main temple, and an expression of contentment could be seen on his face.

As soon Meng Hao emerged from the temple hall, the Violet Fate Sect Leader, Elders, and others hurried forward. At the same time, Meng Hao suddenly stopped in place and turned his head to look toward the mountains of the East Pill Division.

After a long, long moment, he looked back at the Sect Leader. “I’d like to visit my old Immortal’s cave,” he said. The Sect Leader immediately nodded, and the group escorted him to the East Pill Division.

Almost as soon as he entered the East Pill Division, a strange expression appeared on Meng Hao's face.

He had just caught sight of… an iron spear!

After all these years, the spear was still here in the Violet Fate Sect…. It was stabbed into the ground, surrounded by an ornate barricade. The spear had now become a landmark in the Violet Fate Sect.

Seated cross-legged by the spear were two old men. Despite their age, Meng Hao still recognized them. They were none other than…. Lu Song and Qian Shuihen. 3

As of now, they were both Core Formation cultivators and Honor Guards of the Violet Fate Sect. The moment Meng Hao laid eyes on them, they rose to their feet, expressions of deep respect on their faces. They immediately clasped hands and bowed deeply to Meng Hao.

"Greetings, Senior Meng."

The Violet Fate Sect Leader laughed heartily. "Hahaha! Blood Prince, do you still remember this spear? It was originally brought back to the sect by Wu Dingqiu. This area is now a famous place in the sect."

"Senior Meng, you can rest your heart at ease," said Lu Song excitedly.

"Yes, senior, we will definitely care well for the spear!" agreed Qian Shuihen.

Lu Song and Qian Shuihen had long since forgotten their resentment from years ago. Now, they viewed Meng Hao with almost feverish adoration. In fact, everything that had happened between them and Meng Hao years ago was a source of pride for both of them.

Meng Hao cleared his throat and then rubbed his bag of holding. Only he knew that inside was a gold spear that he still hadn't found a chance to con someone with…. 4

Off to the side, Wu Dingqiu shuddered. Grumbling inwardly, he was just about to edge backward when Meng Hao suddenly looked over at him.

A tremor ran through Wu Dingqiu, and he immediately plastered a smile onto his face. However, his heart was pounding, and he could not stop cursing Eccentric Song for instigating the spear incident.

Even as Meng Hao was in the Violet Fate Sect, reminiscing about old times, a desolate and frightening scene was playing out on the border of the Northern Reaches, near the Milky Way Sea.

Nearly a million cultivators were standing at combat readiness near the shore. They were divided into more than ten battalions according to the various sects and tribes they were from.

There were also numerous 300-meter-tall beasts, shackled so tightly with iron chains that they couldn’t free themselves no matter how fiercely they struggled.

Up in the sky were countless vicious flying beasts that emitted piercing cries as they circled about. Their wings cast enormous shadows down below as they nearly blotted out the entire sky.

Further off in the distance were dozens of roaring giants as tall as mountains that wielded bone cudgels.

Even further off in the distance were dark clouds that circulated about, apparently concealing countless savage and evil spirits.

This was the army of the Northern Reaches which had gathered next to the Milky Way Sea. Apparently… they were waiting for something!

Most shocking of all were the eleven unbridled and lofty auras which roared high into the sky. These auras… were all peak Dao Seeking auras!

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# Chapter 760: Your Mother Was Here

Storm clouds were gathering.

Up above the Violet Fate Sect, dark clouds formed in thick layers. Flashes of lightning could be seen, accompanied by the rumble of thunder.

The rain would soon begin to pour down.

When it came to weather like this, with rain or snow, most sects would do nothing to shield the sect from the elements. Instead, they would allow the rain and snow to fall onto the sect itself. They believed that rain and snow were part of the Dao of living things, and that by experiencing such weather, the spiritual energy in the sect would thrive.

By preventing the rain and snow from entering the sect, the sect might have the appearance of an Immortal paradise but, in fact, it would lose some of its connection with nature.

Meng Hao glanced one more time at the iron spear, then cleared his throat and spoke a few polite words. Then he headed further into the East Pill Division, toward the small mountain that had once been his home. Throughout all the years that had passed, no one had ever been allowed to occupy the mountain. It was as if the mountain had been reserved for him for all eternity.

From this detail, he could tell that, as far as his master Pill Demon was concerned, Meng Hao… would always be a disciple of the Violet Fate Sect.

When Meng Hao entered his old Immortal's cave, the Violet Fate Sect Leader, Elders, and others could all see the reminiscence in Meng Hao's eyes, and they discreetly took their leave. Meng Hao was left alone in his old residence.

Before long, the thunder overhead grew louder and the rain pattered onto the ground as it began to fall in earnest. A fine mist was kicked up, but it didn't rise too far before it was seemingly beaten back down by the oncoming rain. Small rivulets of water could soon be seen.

Everything grew hazy as the sheets of rain descended. The entire scene was one of charm and peacefulness.

Meng Hao stood at the door of his Immortal's cave, looking out at the rain, thinking about his days as an alchemist.

Time passed. The sky grew dark, and the rain continued to fall harder and harder. Meng Hao stood there for a long time, expecting… a certain someone to appear. However, by the time the glow of dawn appeared in the sky, she hadn't.

Meng Hao smiled and shook his head silently.

As the sun rose, the rain ceased. The sky was clear, and the moisture left behind by the rain made the air thrum with exuberant life force. Meng Hao walked out of his Immortal's cave and prepared to leave the Violet Fate Sect.

On his way out, he visited Bai Yunlai and gave him a hefty sum of spirit stones and medicinal pills.

He also went to see Hanxue Shan and some of his other old acquaintances. He gave gifts to all of them, even… Chu Yuyan.

After a moment of silent consideration, he left her a jade slip with a strand of his divine sense, which would protect her in a moment of deadly crisis. He gave the jade slip to Hanxue Shan and asked her to pass it along to Chu

Yuyan. With that, he flew up into midair, then transformed into a beam of colorful light that shot off into the distance.

In the moment that he left, Chu Yuyan sat in her Immortal’s cave in the East Pill Division, gnawing on her lip as she looked up into the sky.

“You made your choice, and I have my pride!” she murmured softly. Eventually, Hanxue Shan came. She hesitated for a moment before offering the jade slip to Chu Yuyan.

Chu Yuyan was silent for a moment. At first, she didn’t want to accept the gift, but in the end, she couldn’t control herself. She lifted her hand up and took the jade slip.

Hanxue Shan gave a slight sigh and then left.

Chu Yuyan trembled as she held the jade slip in her hand. It was hard to say when, but at some point, tears began to roll down her cheeks.

Meng Hao left the Violet Fate Sect and flew through the boundless sky over the familiar lands of the Southern Domain toward the Song Clan!

The Song Clan was in the south, in a special area that did not suppress the cultivation base of cultivators, but made it impossible for them to absorb the spiritual energy of Heaven and Earth.

Years ago, Meng Hao had no way to understand why the Song Clan was like that. However, considering the current level of his cultivation base, he now knew that it was a feature created by a peak Dao Seeking expert.

Dao Seeking cultivators could form their own personal natural laws, which grew more and more powerful as they approached the peak of Dao Seeking. Eventually, such natural law could create special regions, just like the Song Clan.

When Meng Hao entered the territory of the Song Clan, the entire clan was thrown into a commotion. The Song Clan Patriarch, who had been in secluded meditation under the surface of the clan, immediately opened his eyes and went out to meet Meng Hao.

The clan would not allow the slightest bit of disrespect to be shown to Meng Hao. In fact, there was not a single cultivator in the entire Southern Domain who would treat Meng Hao disrespectfully now.

Perhaps Meng Hao himself was not incredibly strong, but his second true self was a peak Dao Seeking cultivator, and Meng Hao was the Blood Prince of the Blood Demon Sect.

The entire Song Clan arranged a grand banquet to honor Meng Hao, the scale of which was completely unprecedented. As he sat there, Meng Hao looked around at the Song Clan and mused that this was his second time visiting this place.

The first time was for the Song Clan's search for a son-in-law. That was when he had acquired good fortune and met… Shui Dongliu.

The Song Clan Patriarch sat next to Meng Hao and couldn't help but sigh emotionally.

Even more emotional than the Patriarch, however, was Eccentric Song…. He was still a Nascent Soul cultivator, and he sat in a position not too far away from Meng Hao, his head bowed, fearful that Meng Hao would look his way.

Despite his bowed head, Meng Hao still noticed him.

"Fellow Daoist Song," he said coolly, "How are all those wild beasts that you collect?" After all, Meng Hao had never viewed himself as the type of person to hold a grudge….

Eccentric Song shivered, and thought back to what he had witnessed Meng Hao do back at the Ancient Dao Lakes. After it was all over, Eccentric Song had assumed everything was water under the bridge, but now that Meng Hao was actually in the Song Clan, he was more nervous than ever.

As soon as Meng Hao asked his question, Eccentric Song lurched to his feet and clasped his hands toward Meng Hao, bowing repeatedly. His face was covered with a flattering smile that was even more unbearable to look at than if he had begun to cry.

“Senior, I am honored by your concern. However… I don’t collect wild beasts any more….”

“Oh….” replied Meng Hao. As he gazed at Eccentric Song, he noticed the pleading look in the man’s eyes.

Meng Hao smiled slightly and then looked away.

Eccentric Song heaved a sigh of relief and quickly sat down, whereupon he picked up his glass and took a long drink of alcohol. Although his fear had been allayed, moments ago he had been frightened to death. He had long since heard stories of Meng Hao’s shocking, murderous air. Meng Hao could kill without blinking an eye. He had exterminated Dao Seeking experts, and slaughtering Spirit Severing cultivators was as easy to him as killing dogs. As for Nascent Soul cultivators… he could blot them out of existence by simply breathing.

Meng Hao’s presence, and the fact that he was sitting next to the Song Clan Patriarch, left Eccentric Song completely terrified. Ever since Meng Hao returned to the Southern Domain, Eccentric Song had begun to regret his past actions. Then the Blood Demon Sect rose to prominence, and his fear grew.

“I absolutely, positively, without a shadow of a doubt should NOT have provoked that jinx all those years ago…. Who would have ever guessed that the brat would eventually become so terrifying…. Aiiiii, nobody could have predicted it.” Sighing, Eccentric Song thought back to the events in the State of Zhao, and how Meng Hao had slaughtered a path all the way to the top of the mountain with the iron spear. Eccentric Song almost seemed to be in a trance as he remembered all the spirit stones and medicinal pills that were taken away.

“Although,” he thought, “how many people in the Southern Domain can say that they caused that jinx, Meng Hao, to flee from them? I guess this just goes to show how great I am.” Now that he thought about it, Eccentric Song felt a bit pleased with himself. “Besides, it was that old bastard Wu Dingqiu who instigated the whole incident!”

There was another person at the banquet who sighed emotionally, and that was Song Jia’s mother. As for Song Jia, she sat next to her mother, her expression indifferent. Her mother was the one with the excited expression.

“According to what that woman said all those years ago,” she thought, “Jia’er can become Meng Hao’s maidservant…. Not bad, actually! How do I bring it up to him, though?” She frowned and then looked over at the Song Clan Patriarch, only to find that he was looking at her. 1

She immediately understood what he was thinking, and abandoned her previous plan.

The banquet lasted for a few hours. Meng Hao’s primary objective in coming to the Song Clan was to reassure and pacify them. After all, the Blood Demon Sect was now the greatest power in the unified Southern Domain. The Song Clan had maintained neutrality, so it was necessary for the Blood Demon Sect’s Blood Prince to personally visit them.

There was no need for formal agreements. Meng Hao’s visit was enough to explain the stance of the Blood Demon Sect. Similarly, for the Song Clan Patriarch to personally entertain him showed the Song Clan’s attitude.

As evening fell, Meng Hao politely refused the Song Clan’s urgings that he stay behind for longer. When he rose to leave, his gaze fell upon Song Jia, and he hesitated for a moment before producing a jade slip.

The jade slip contained a strand of divine sense similar to the one he had given to Chu Yuyan. Meng Hao knew that he was beholden to Song Jia. His youthful hot-headedness had influenced her search for a husband, and was the reason she had never married. Meng Hao had always felt like he owed an apology for the matter.

Considering that he had personally gifted her with the jade slip, and also helped her in the ancient Demon Immortal Sect, he finally felt as if there was some resolution to the matter.

Song Jia accepted the jade slip and bowed her head in thanks, her expression as calm as ever.

Off to the side, the Song Clan Patriarch smiled as he looked on, and his eyes glittered. Finally, he laughed heartily and then escorted Meng Hao out of the Song Clan ancestral mansion.

“Patriarch, there’s no need to see me out,” said Meng Hao. “If I have some free time in the future, I’ll come back to visit.” He clasped hands, then made to leave.

“Meng Hao, my young friend,” said the Patriarch with a laugh, “there’s no need for such formality. Actually, we’re already like family, right? My little granddaughter Song Jia has long since become your maidservant, so there’s no need for you to treat the Song Clan as if we’re strangers.”

“Maidservant?” said Meng Hao, stopping in his tracks. He looked back at the Patriarch with a strange expression.

“Oh? You didn’t know, young friend?” The Song Clan Patriarch could tell the truth from Meng Hao’s expression, but he feigned astonishment nonetheless. “Back during the Song Clan search for a son-in-law, your mother came personally to ask us to make my little granddaughter your maidservant.”

Meng Hao’s heart began to pound with great waves of shock. However, after practicing cultivation for so many years, he was not the novice he had been years ago, and his expression remained the same as ever. However, a profound gleam appeared deep in his eyes as he looked back at Patriarch Song.

“Patriarch, there’s no need to beat around the bush,” said Meng Hao.

Considering Meng Hao’s countenance, Patriarch Song’s expression became solemn.

“Well, I’m not entirely sure if it was your mother, young friend. After the incident occurred, I realized that there are two possibilities. Either it really was your mother, or… it was the mother of the Resurrection Lily!

“I have no way to determine for certain, but what I can tell you for sure is that she is an Immortal. As to whether she is a false Immortal or true Immortal I don’t know…. However, she definitely came from the Eastern Lands!” Patriarch Song slapped his bag of holding to produce a jade slip, which he handed to Meng Hao.

“This is her likeness, which I inscribed onto this jade slip from my memory.”

Meng Hao silently accepted the jade slip. He almost didn’t dare to look at it. Taking a deep breath, he sent his divine sense inside, whereupon he saw the image of a woman. Instantly, towering waves of shock filled him.

Even if his composure were even stronger, it would still be shattered nonetheless. He suddenly felt as if a hundred thousand thunderclaps were exploding in his ears. His body trembled, and his eyes shone with intense attachment and obsession.

He had long since stopped trying to track down information about his parents. He had long since assumed that his childhood dream of traveling to the Eastern Lands was something of the past.

But now, he had an intense impulse to immediately go to the Eastern Lands to ask… WHY?!

That was because the woman in the jade slip….

Looked exactly like the image of his mother that existed in his memories!!

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# Chapter 761: An Old Friend….

Meng Hao’s hand slowly tightened around the jade slip.

Although he kept his thoughts concealed deeply in his heart, and would not easily reveal them, Patriarch Song had practiced cultivation for many years, and was able to pick up on some clues from the motion of Meng Hao’s hand. He knew that his gamble had paid off.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, then clasped hands and bowed deeply to Patriarch Song.

“Many thanks!” he said.

He said nothing more than those two words, but to Patriarch Song, that was enough. He nodded and clasped hands in return.

“Meng Hao, my young friend, if you ever go to the Eastern Lands, the Song Clan’s branch there may be able to provide you with some assistance.”

Meng Hao nodded, then, without another word, transformed into a beam of light that shot off into the distance.

Patriarch Song watched him fly off. After a long moment, when Meng Hao was no longer visible, he turned and headed back into the Song Clan ancestral mansion.

As Meng Hao flew through the air, a complex expression could be seen on his face. Images from his childhood appeared in his mind, which had not faded after the passing of years, but were clearer than ever.

“Mom, dad… just… why?

“Why did you have to leave? Why did you leave me behind? Why?! Why would you come to the Song Clan… and not tell me?! You were obviously there!

“WHY?!?!”

Meng Hao felt as if his heart was being stabbed with a knife. These questions had been buried in his heart for far too long, with no answers.

The answers… were in the Eastern Lands!

Finally, Meng Hao sighed and regained his composure. He was a powerful expert who had practiced cultivation for hundreds of years. The only thing that could cause him to lose control was the matter of his father and mother.

“The Eastern Lands,” he thought. “It was always my dream to go there…. That… is where I MUST go!” Decisiveness appeared in his eyes. He took a deep breath and then sped onward.

As evening deepened, he shot forward at top speed. He had called upon the Song Clan and visited the Violet Fate Sect. Now, it was time to return to the Blood Demon Sect and spend the rest of the hundred years with Xu Qing.

Even as he continued along, his gaze was suddenly drawn to something that was happening off in the distance.

“So, it’s him….” he thought, surprised.

Currently, he was in the border region between the Song Clan and the Blood Demon Sect. Fifty kilometers or so from his current position, three streaks of light sped through the air.

Clearly, there were two cultivators chasing a third cultivator. The target was a middle-aged man who wore a blood-stained white robe. From the look on his face, he had experienced many things. He seemed exhausted, and even more so, full of grief.

It was easy to see that once upon a time, he had been incredibly handsome. Now he looked old, but still carried himself with an extraordinary, heroic spirit. However, the years had not been kind to him, and he had undergone a baptism of ruthlessness. Now, his life was one of pain.

“Wang Tengfei, where do you think you can run to now?!”

“You used to be a top Chosen of the Wang Clan, but now you’re nothing more than a stray dog! All you know how to do is run away!”

“What are you running for? Come on, show us some of your skills from all those years ago. You used to be the pinnacle of arrogance! You chased me and my brother for years trying to kill us. Now we finally get to meet again, and you’re running away?!”

“Hahaha! Of course he’s running. There’s no Wang Clan in the Southern Domain anymore! It was wiped out in a single night! Wang Tengfei just got lucky and escaped death! Unfortunately for him, he ran into us here! Wang Tengfei… you’re dead!”

The person being chased was none other than Wang Tengfei!

The pursuers were two middle-aged cultivators with late Core Formation cultivation bases, only half a step away from the Nascent Soul stage. As for Wang Tengfei, he was also in the late Core Formation stage. However, he was clearly wounded, and could do nothing more than flee from his two opponents.

His face was ashen, and filled with intense grief. Apparently, the words spoken by his pursuers stabbed deeply into his heart. After the Wang Clan was destroyed, he had experienced far too many slanderous insults. He had once been Chosen, but in the blink of an eye had turned into an outcast. Originally, he told himself that he could get used to this new situation, but every time he heard words such as those being hurled at him now, they hurt deeply.

It felt as if people were digging his heart out of his chest, and it made the pained expression on his face grow even more intense.

He had been there that night when the Wang Clan was wiped out. He had personally witnessed the Patriarch's insanity as he slaughtered one clan member after another. That night, it felt as if the sky had fallen.

His father and mother died. His grandfather died. Everyone died, one by one.… As for himself, he had been consumed by terror and sorrow. And then, his older brother… the older brother who he had always wanted to surpass, struck him on the head with a palm.

That palm swept through him like thunder, rendering him unconscious. The last thing he remembered was his brother murmuring in his ear, "Hey kid, you need to stay alive…."

When Wang Tengfei woke up, he opened his eyes to find himself in a sea of blood. He was surrounded by the corpses of his fellow clan members. Laying directly on top of him… was the body of his older brother.

His brother had covered him with his own corpse, using the aura of death to hide Wang Tengfei. That was how Wang Tengfei… managed to escape the disaster caused by the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, who in his demented state had not bothered to search very carefully. 1

At that point, Wang Tengfei had begun to weep.

He had nothing. No clan. No family. Everything was gone.

He felt like he was the only person alive in the entire world. Bitterly, he had crawled to his feet and began to wander….

He was alive, but it was as if he had already died. People who had once been his friends now looked at him with cold mockery. The constant ridicule was a vast difference from how he had been treated in the past, and it caused the trembling Wang Tengfei to come to a realization.

All he could do was bow his head and bitterly accept the ridicule.

He wanted to find the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, and ask him… why?!

Why did you eradicate the entire Wang Clan, sir?!

WHY?!

It turned into the only reason for Wang Tengfei to continue living. He began to search the entire Southern Domain, using his bloodline connection to try to find the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. Even if he died in the process… he would get his answer!

It was finally in this area that he had sensed the presence of the 10th Patriarch. He had started a thorough search, but before he could track him down, ran into these two people who he had previously disdained as being unworthy to even be looked at. They were nobodies whom he and his subordinates had hunted down and tried to kill over some magical item.

Now, he could only flee from them.

Wang Tengfei's two pursuers performed incantation gestures, causing two flying swords to speed out. Glittering, they shot toward the ashen-faced Wang Tengfei, who quickly produced a small drum that he tossed behind him. It rapidly expanded and reverberated with a pounding sound as the two swords neared it. The items collided and…

Boom!

As the explosion reverberated out, Wang Tengfei spit out blood. His face was pale white as he braced himself and pushed forward at top speed. He didn't take the time to try to retrieve the drum. The two pursuing cultivators laughed as one of them took the drum. Then they shot forward in pursuit once again, their eyes shining with greed and killing intent.

They continued to fight back and forth, and Wang Tengfei continuously coughed up blood. The sword glow beneath his feet began to fade, and a look of despair could be seen in his eyes. To him, the whole world seemed…to have turned gray.

"You used to be so arrogant, didn't you?!"

"Back then you were so high and mighty. You looked down on everyone else as if they were bugs, and you were the Chosen of Heaven! Where is your arrogance now, huh?!”

“Wang Tengfei, you’re dead! If you get reincarnated, then remember not to be so arrogant in your next life!”

The two pursuers’ eyes flashed with killing intent, and they attacked simultaneously, unleashing their most powerful divine abilities. Sword qi swirled, and a massive palm rumbled out toward Wang Tengfei.

Wang Tengfei smiled bitterly. He knew that he couldn’t escape, so he suddenly turned in place and started to laugh. He had had enough of life, and should have died with the rest of his clan anyway. He was just about to throw caution to the wind when….

Suddenly, a sigh could be heard echoing throughout the land.

Once they heard the sigh, Wang Tengfei’s two pursuers stopped, and their faces went pale. They instantly began to tremble as they looked behind Wang Tengfei.

“Blood… Blood Demon Sect. The Blood Prince!!”

“It’s Meng Hao!”

Meng Hao floated down from behind Wang Tengfei until he stood between him and the two pursuers.

“This person is an old friend of mine,” he said. “Fellow Daoists, would you mind giving me a bit of face?”

The two pursuers gasped, and their hearts filled with terror. They immediately clasped hands and bowed with the utmost respect.

“Senior, we didn’t know that Wang Tengfei was an old friend of the Blood Prince. Please don’t be offended, your excellency.”

“We’ll, we’ll be leaving now….”

The two cultivators were completely shaken. There wasn't anyone in the Southern Domain who was unfamiliar with Meng Hao's face. They didn't care a whit about Wang Tengfei, but as for Meng Hao, he was terrifying to the extreme. Even as they spoke, the two men backed up, trembling.

Wang Tengfei gaped at Meng Hao's back, then saw the expressions on the faces of the two men, and felt stabs of pain in his heart. Such expressions were the type that would fill the faces of people who looked at him, the kind of expressions he savored back before the Wang Clan was eradicated. But now….

Wang Tengfei's face distorted. He felt as if a blade was stabbing through his heart as he glared angrily at Meng Hao. His hatred for Meng Hao ran deep, and even before the destruction of the Wang Clan, he had dreamed of personally slaying him.

He hated Meng Hao for taking away his legacy. He hated Meng Hao for taking away his fiancé. He hated Meng Hao for all his success. In Wang Tengfei's mind, everything that Meng Hao had achieved, should have been his!

In recent days, whenever he heard stories of Meng Hao, he felt like his heart was being crushed. He almost felt as if he would go insane. His hatred ran all the way to his very marrow!

"I don't need your help!" he cried out. "Kill me, alright? Just kill me! KILL ME!

"I'm done with living, Meng Hao. You wanna kill me? Fine! You don't have to pretend! Come on! Wang Tengfei's spirit is indomitable! I'm standing right here. Come on, kill me!

"You took away all my good fortune! You took away all my opportunities! You even took away my fiancé. I will NOT live under the same sky as you, you charlatan! You lowlife! Come on, kill me!

"You were NOTHING back in the Reliance Sect. I could have killed you with the wave of a finger. If Grand Elder Ouyang hadn't interfered, I would have cut you down!

“I am Chosen! Chosen of the Reliance Sect! Chosen of the Wang Clan! And you? You’re… an insect!!”

Wang Tengfei started to laugh maniacally. He had repressed himself for too long, and now he hysterically shouted out all his grievances.

1. Although he is not mentioned by name, Wang Tengfei’s brother was Wang Lihai, a recurring character who appeared in the Blood Immortal Legacy Tournament arc, the Dao Geyser arc, and the Demon Immortal Sect arc, and perhaps some other places that are currently skipping my mind

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# Chapter 762: 10th Patriarch

Wang Tengfei's hysterical screaming did nothing more than cause Meng Hao to frown slightly. However, the other two cultivators' faces went deathly pale, and their hearts began to pound with fear.

They suddenly recalled an event that had caused a minor stir in the Southern Domain, the matter of the love triangle involving Meng Hao, Wang Tengfei, and Chu Yuyan.

"Not good! These two used to be rivals in love!!"

"Dammit, we happened to run into both of these guys, and then heard some things we weren't supposed to…." The two cultivators' faces fell, and they backed up nervously. Seeing that Meng Hao wasn't paying attention to them, they fled at top speed, cursing the fact that they couldn't sprout wings.

"Come on, kill me! KILL ME!" raged Wang Tengfei, his eyes bloodshot. He even began to approach Meng Hao, until he was right in front of him.

"Didn't you want to kill me back in the Reliance Sect, Meng Hao? I remember your fingernails sticking into the flesh of your palms, and the blood dripping down. Back then you were an ant, and I was Chosen! 1

"Now look at me! I bet you're happy, aren't you. Very happy, right? Come on, kill me!!

"I've lived enough already. My clan is gone, my clan members are gone, my family is gone. My older brother gave his life for me, but what's the point? At least dying at your hand will release me from my worldly cares!

"Why haven't you made a move yet? Kill me!!"

A complicated expression could be seen on Meng Hao’s face as he looked back at Wang Tengfei. He had long since learned of what had happened to the Wang Clan. As for everything from the past, it was nothing more than that, the past.

“I’m a Wang Clan Chosen. When I was a child, a drop of blood from a Flying Rain-Dragon fell from the skies. I followed my instincts and intuition, and after paying a huge price, finally found the Reliance Sect!

“The Flying Rain-Dragon legacy belongs to me!! But you took it away! You took away my legacy! And you took away my Inner Sect qualifications in the Reliance Sect too! You destroyed any chance I had of getting the Sublime Spirit Scripture!

“Then you even took my fiancé away from me! Chu Yuyan was MY fiancé! But she dissolved our engagement… all because of YOU!

“Do I owe you a debt from my previous life or something, Meng Hao? Why? Over and over again, you took away EVERYTHING!!” As Wang Tengfei screamed and yelled, tears began to stream down his face.

“Now you have everything that belongs to me. I should be the number one person in the Southern Domain. I should be on top. And you… you should be like I am now!

“Everything you have… was taken from me! And now, here you stand in front of me, the winner again. You’re gonna save me?! You’re not saving me. I don’t need your pity or compassion, I just need you to kill me!!

“Don’t give me that look, Meng Hao,” he said, tears streaming down his cheeks. “I’m Wang Tengfei!” After the destruction of the Wang Clan, Wang Tengfei had been the subject of endless ridicule. It was a pain that he could handle. There was only one thing in the world that he couldn’t abide. A single person.

Meng Hao!

He would rather die than see pity and perplexity in Meng Hao's eyes. He was Wang Tengfei! If he had to die, fine, but he would die with pride!

Meng Hao sighed, then shook his head. When he recalled everything that had happened between him and Wang Tengfei, he knew that he had acted a bit impulsively.

He had been young and hot-headed, and now that he looked back, he realized that… many of the things he had done were a bit excessive. For example, the matter with Chu Yuyan…. Perhaps… if he hadn't deliberately sabotaged Wang Tengfei and Chu Yuyan, the two of them would still be together today, happy and content.

At least they would be better off than they were now.

Meng Hao didn't say anything. He produced a jade slip and imprinted it with some divine sense, then tossed it over to float in front of Wang Tengfei.

"Take this," he said softly. "If you get into grave danger, it can save your life a single time. You and I… are old friends. I truly hope… that you can find your way." With that, he turned to leave.

Wang Tengfei stared in shock at the jade slip hovering in front of him. Then he lifted his head up and began to laugh madly as more tears poured down his face. He didn't want goodwill from Meng Hao. He didn't want to be weak in front of the person he had once hated more than anyone in the world. After the destruction of the Wang Clan, he had experienced many things, and had come to experience the hypocrisy of the world.

Former good friends kicked him when he was down. Past companions avoided him as if he were a poisonous vermin. Such pain was something he could accept. If past enemies tried to kill him, at least he could self-detonate and end in common ruin with them.

How could he ever have imagined that the person he hated the most… would be the only person to treat him kindly after his fall from the top?

He didn’t want to accept it, and could not accept it. His hysteria was a way to vent. His tears were an expression of sorrow.

He waved his hand, sending the jade slip clattering to the ground.

“I’m Wang Tengfei! I don’t need your sympathy!!”

Meng Hao stopped and looked back, then sighed again. He was just about to leave when suddenly, he heard a long cry coming from within the nearby forest.

The cry caused colors to flash through the sky, and sent the clouds churning. A figure emerged from the trees who emanated an aura that exceeded the peak of Dao Seeking.

“Hahaha! Immortal Ascension, Immortal Ascension…. Hahaha! I will become Immortal!” It was a deranged old man with unkempt hair, tattered clothing, and filthy skin.

Meng Hao’s pupils constricted, and killing intent flickered in his eyes. His second true self suddenly materialized next to him, and took a step forward.

The deranged old man look very different from before, but Meng Hao could still tell that he was… the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch!

Meng Hao had previously made some inquiries about the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. He knew that the Patriarch, in his madness, had destroyed the Wang Clan, then gone completely insane. However, this was the first time he had personally encountered him in the Southern Domain.

“Patriarch!!” cried Wang Tengfei.

“10th Wang Clan Patriarch!” growled Meng Hao grimly. He raised his hand and pointed a finger, causing his second true self to shoot through the air toward the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch.

Rumbling explosions filled the air as the two of them instantly began to fight. As for the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, Immortal qi swirled around him.

His hair was completely disheveled, and his aged face was filled with a confused expression.

“Immortal Ascension. I will become Immortal….” Laughing foolishly, he waved his hand, causing the air to distort. Powerful cultivation base ripples spread out as he battled with Meng Hao’s second true self.

Meng Hao gave a cold snort and flew out. He had a Dao Seeking fleshly body, as well as the Lightning Cauldron, which he produced as he closed in on the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch.

Booms echoed out as Meng Hao and his second true self fought back and forth with the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. The wind screamed, and the land quaked.

“Sever!” Meng Hao’s second true self let out a cry and sent the Wooden Time Sword slashing out. Tens of thousands of years of Time power swept out like a great river. However, the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch was no ordinary peak Dao Seeking cultivator. He had Immortal qi, and an Immortal aura which he sent out to resist the Time power. A boom echoed out, and the second true self fell back. The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s face went pale, and all of a sudden, the confusion in his eyes began to be replaced with clarity.

“Meng… Hao….” he said, staring fixedly at Meng Hao. His voice was hoarse, and he spoke haltingly as he regained his senses.

“Patriarch!!” shouted Wang Tengfei urgently, flying toward the 10th Patriarch.

“Teng… Fei….” said the 10th Patriarch, looking over at Wang Tengfei. Suddenly, his expression was one of extreme pain. He lifted his hands up to clutch at his head, and then let out a miserable shriek. “Don’t come near me!

“The Wang Clan…. I’m guilty, guilty…. I killed everyone in the Wang Clan. I killed everyone…. All to become Immortal. All for Immortal Ascension. Was it worth it…? WAS IT WORTH IT?!?!” The 10th Wang

Clan Patriarch lifted his head and let out a mad howl, and his face was distorted by intense bitterness.

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed as he stood off to the side with his second true self. They did not attack, but simply looked on, eyes flickering with killing intent.

“I’m guilty… I was the one who personally slaughtered all of my fellow clan members….” The 10th Wang Clan patriarch howled, and tears streamed down his face. He felt as if his heart were being crushed. He felt regret, helplessness, and insanity swirling around inside his head. The faces of the clan members he had personally killed began to appear around him, and he trembled. His face was awash with indescribable agony.

He suddenly turned to look at Meng Hao, head in hands and his eyes bright red. “You. It was all because of you!”

Every so often, the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch would regain clarity. Whenever that happened, it was a time of unspeakable guilt and pain. His heart would fill with horror and regret, and the madness that arose from knowing that his hands were stained red with the blood of his fellow clan members, made him want to die.

But his cultivation base had reached the point that dying… was not easy.

He made to charge Meng Hao, but Meng Hao dodged to the side, his eyes flickering with coldness. He did not attack, and yet the enmity in his eyes grew deeper. A cold smile appeared on his face.

“Want to die?” he asked. “It won’t be that easy! How could I let you die? Death squares all accounts, so letting you die would simply be releasing you from your pain and bitterness. I think I’d rather just let you continue living in your madness. Every so often you will wake up and be wracked with guilt and pain! That is the vengeance you deserve!”

The hatred in Meng Hao’s eyes burned. He detested the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. If it weren’t for him, Xu Qing would not be in her current situation. He would not have faced so many deadly crises. In fact, considering what had happened in the Rebirth Cave, he truly had died already.

Such enmity was not something that a mere death could wipe away. To force the Wang Clan Patriarch to live a life of suffering… that was true vengeance!

Meng Hao laughed coldly as he backed up. However, it was at this point that the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch's face once again began to fill with a blank look. He began to smile foolishly, as if amnesia was beginning to wash away all the pain.

But Meng Hao couldn't allow him to so easily forget.

He raised his hand and pointed out his finger.

The Seventh Demon Sealing Hex. Karmic Hexing!

He didn't fully employ the art. Instead, he just used the Karmic magic to cause the 10th Patriarch to be tormented by Karma even when he was in a state of senselessness. He infused the Karma Threads with the lives of the clan members that had been killed. Now, they would constantly pester him, reminding him of his bloodstained hands. He would now always be plagued by the memories of what he had done.

Rumble!

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch's Karma Threads were thrown into chaos. His body trembled, and his eyes filled with tears. Although his expression was blank, he let out a roar of madness. Pain stabbed at his heart, and he lost control.

"Immortal Ascension…. D-d-don't get near me! My soul…. Kill…. Kill…. Kill you all…. Little brother, don't get near me…. AGGHHHHHH!! Immortal Ascension…."

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# Chapter 763: The Deepest Love

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch was already insane, but as of this moment, he had sunk even further into insanity. He was insane, and yet lucid, unable to control his body or his consciousness. The only thing he could do was constantly relive the destruction of the Wang Clan.

As of this moment, he could no longer forget the things which he so wanted to forget.

From the methods Meng Hao used, it was clear how deeply he hated him.

After finishing his work, what Meng Hao acquired was not a feeling of happiness, but rather, deep exhaustion. It was an exhaustion that stemmed from the heart, and it caused him to sigh.

He turned to leave. He wanted to be far away from this place. He had no further desire to see the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. Exacting further revenge was meaningless. Xu Qing had less than a hundred years to live before she needed to travel to the underworld to be reincarnated.

Meng Hao felt blank. He was just turning to leave when Wang Tengfei, his eyes filled with determination, smiled bitterly and took a deep breath. He suddenly flew directly toward the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, who hovered in mid-air, his head in his hands, tears streaming down his face.

“Immortal Ascension…. Kill…. Kill….” He was completely immersed in the memories of slaughtering his fellow clan members. His soul seemed to be imprisoned in that particular day, forever doomed to repeat what he had done.

“Patriarch!” cried Wang Tengfei. As soon as he neared, the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s eyes gleamed with a fiendish glow.

“Soul…. Soul…. My soul….” he said, staring fixedly at Wang Tengfei. To him, the souls of fellow clan members were an irresistible temptation. He was attracted to them on an instinctual level, as he believed them to be something he needed to mend his own soul.

It was an instinct he had no control over. His body flashed as he shot toward Wang Tengfei, whereupon his hand snaked out to latch onto the top of his head.

Wang Tengfei did nothing to evade him. He allowed the 10th Patriarch to near, allowed his hand to latch onto his own head. There was even a cracking sound as fingers pierced into his skull.

To Wang Tengfei, the intense pain didn’t really matter.

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s eyes glowed with avarice and madness as he prepared to extract Wang Tengfei’s soul and use it to try to mend his own.

Meng Hao’s mind reeled, and he spun around, his eyes flashing. He lifted his right hand, and his second true self immediately shot toward Wang Tengfei.

“Meng Hao!!” Wang Tengfei cried, his face twisted and ashen. His body shook as it began to wither; apparently, all of the essence of his life force was being sucked away as soul nourishment. “This is my choice! This is the whole reason I’ve been searching for the Patriarch!

“Don’t interfere! This is Wang Tengfei’s choice!” His body quivered as his legs were sucked dry. The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s eyes gleamed with a strange light, and his right hand tightened.

“My life has no meaning. I’d rather die at the hands of the Patriarch than be killed by some other person. Let my soul help to restore his soul!

“Meng Hao, I don’t need you to come save me. There’s no need! Let me… die in a way that has meaning!

"I think this is the most meaningful thing I've ever done in my entire existence. My family, my parents, my big brother, all my clan members… they've already given their souls. I'm the only one left… and now… it's my turn!

"I can't choose to keep living, Meng Hao, but I can choose how to die…. Just leave me alone, don't save me. This is a Wang Clan affair, and it has nothing to do with you!" Wang Tengfei trembled as the rest of his body withered up. His life force was pouring into the 10th Patriarch's soul, causing strands of white mist to rise up from the places where the fingers had pierced him.

An expression of struggle could be seen on the face of the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. However, the instinct to absorb his fellow clan members did not go away, and he continued to suck away the life force. Wang Tengfei's body began to fall apart, and vast quantities of white mist rose up out of his head. His soul.

His eyes faded, and he seemed to age. It seemed like he had reached the end of his life. He was no longer the perfect, handsome young man that Meng Hao remembered. He was grotesque, nothing more than skin draped over a skeleton.

"Meng Hao, back then… it was all my fault…. I just realized it too late. It wasn't until my clan had been exterminated that I realized… how aggravating I must have been to everyone.

"No wonder Yuyan left me…. She was right…. Meng Hao, my hatred for you is mostly just jealousy and envy. Everything I said after you saved me earlier…. Actually, I just didn't want to admit that after everything changed for me, you were the only person who treated me better than before….

"Meng Hao…." Wang Tengfei looked at Meng Hao, and he seemed reluctant to part with the world. The look in his eye was the same look of wild ambition that had existed before, and the same pride.

"Meng Hao, I… have one last request. Can you… please treat Chu Yuyan well?!?!

“She’s a good girl, and I don’t deserve her. She might seem detached, but inside, she’s very weak…

“Meng Hao, since you have my legacy, and since you took my good fortune, well then, you… must definitely… keep on going! Reach the pinnacle! Leave Planet South Heaven and climb to the highest heights….

“That’s my dream. You… must keep on going!” Wang Tengfei chuckled as he realized that he didn’t actually hate Meng Hao. Along with his laughter, he suddenly seemed to relax. Apparently, he was losing himself in the wonderful times of the past, in the perfect simplicity of the Reliance Sect.

He smiled, and then his head sagged and his life ended….

His soul was completely extracted by the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, who then placed it into his mouth. More tears streamed down the Patriarch’s face as he violently chomped down on the soul and then swallowed it. Then, he lifted his head up and roared.

“Immortal Ascension…. Immortal Ascension…. Kill. Kill….” Roaring, he barreled off into the distance, weeping and howling miserably.

Meng Hao stood there agape. After it was all over, he closed his eyes for a long time. When he opened them, exhaustion could be seen. After seeing the determination in Wang Tengfei’s eyes, he understood. Even if he and Wang Tengfei hadn’t run into each other this day, once Wang Tengfei found the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, he would still have done the exact same thing.

Because the blood of the Wang Clan coursed through his veins, the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch would still have pounced on him and instinctively sucked out his soul. Nobody could do anything to change that. As for Meng Hao, all he had done was force a bit of lucidity onto the Patriarch, to ensure that he would eternally regret his actions.

In the end, who was really at fault…?

Was it Meng Hao? He was also a victim. Was it the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch? Perhaps his pain was greater than anyone’s.

The Wang Clan members were completely innocent. As for Wang Tengfei, his decision was solemn and stirring.

Who was at fault…? It was an unanswerable question that ran in circles. If blame truly needed to be assigned somewhere, perhaps… greed was the answer.

If the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch had not lusted after Meng Hao’s Perfect Dao foundation… then perhaps none of these things would have happened.

“Karma is a cycle with many twists and turns….” murmured Meng Hao. All of a sudden, his understanding of the cause and effect of Karma deepened. However, this understanding had come at a terrible price.

Meng Hao sighed dejectedly, then slowly turned and made his way off into the distance.

Wang Tengfei’s final choice was something Meng Hao could never have predicted. As he flew through the air, he suddenly recalled the first time he saw Wang Tengfei back in the Reliance Sect.

He thought about their first battle, and the Flying Rain-Dragon legacy. Then there was the contest to get into the Inner Sect, as well as all the events that played out in the Southern Domain. Everything seemed to have occurred so long ago. Right now, Meng Hao knew… the most profound memory of Wang Tengfei would be the words he had spoken moments before he died, and the expression on his face.

“And that was Wang Tengfei!” he murmured softly.

He finally returned to the Blood Demon Sect, exhausted, immersed in enlightenment regarding Karma, and with hands stained red with blood. The first place he went was Blood Prince Gorge.

He found Xu Qing, and then wrapped his arms around her for a long, long time. He buried his head in her fragrant hair, and said nothing.

Xu Qing seemed to understand. She held him, softly patting his back in comfort.

He felt tired out. First was the emotional tale of Chen Fan, and then the news about his mother. Finally… there was Wang Tengfei and the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, and his understanding regarding the gravity of Karma.

“Xu Qing, I want to sleep,” he said softly.

“Sleep then,” she replied gently. “I’ll stay here with you….”

He closed his eyes.

Xu Qing held him. She sat down outside the log cabin in Blood Prince Gorge, and he lay across her legs and slept.

She looked down at him, and twirled a strand of his hair around her finger. The expression on her face was one of pity, and deep love.

Meng Hao slept for two days. When he finally opened his eyes, it was night. Up above in the darkness, the canopy of stars twinkled brightly, but they couldn’t come close to matching the beauty of Xu Qing’s eyes. They were neither as warm and resplendent as her gaze, nor as soft and entrancing as her expression.

Meng Hao looked into her eyes, and she looked back.

Suddenly, something seemed to click inside Meng Hao’s head.

“The deepest expression of love is simply to stay with someone….” he murmured. He suddenly understood why Elder Brother Chen Fan chose to stand guard over that boulder instead of leaving to practice cultivation. To Chen Fan, simply staying with his beloved was an expression of love.

Meng Hao also understood why Wang Tengfei chose to die. To him, it was more important to stay with his clan members, and his Patriarch. That…

was his expression of love.

It didn’t matter if you spoke of love for friends, love for family, or romantic love…. The deepest expression of love was simply to stay with someone.

You stay with me, I’ll stay with you…. That was love.

For himself, the fact that Xu Qing chose to stay with him made him realize what the meaning of love really was.

“Xu Qing,” he said, looking at her earnestly, “let’s… have a bonding ceremony. Let’s get married.”

A tremor ran through Xu Qing; her eyelashes trembled and her heart began to pound. To any woman, a wedding is one of the most important occasions possible in life. Xu Qing’s cheeks flushed, but she didn’t avoid Meng Hao’s gaze. She looked back at him and then slowly nodded.

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# Chapter 764: The Wedding Stirs the Southern Domain

Meng Hao’s grand wedding!

It only took a few days for news to spread from the Blood Demon Sect throughout all the lands of the Southern Domain. Soon, every cultivator in the Southern Domain was talking about it. Within a period of ten days, the whole continent was in an uproar.

Meng Hao’s name was now irrefutably famous and illustrious, like a grandiose rainbow, stretching to the far reaches of the sky.

Blood Prince of the Blood Demon Sect!

Peak Dao Seeking clone!

Formerly known as Grandmaster Pill Cauldron!

Because of his various identities, Meng Hao’s grand wedding became the focus of attention of all Southern Domain cultivators. In the past, there had never been a wedding that caused so much of a commotion, and likely, there would never be another like it in the future.

The news was like a gale-force wind that swept across the Southern Domain, causing innumerable minds to tremble. Countless cultivators shook with the desire to be able to personally attend.

In fact… those who did qualify to attend were the subject of intense admiration and envy.

“Did you hear? The Blood Demon Sect’s Blood Prince, Meng Hao, is getting married on the fifteenth of next month!”

“Yeah, of course our sect heard about the grand wedding of his excellency Meng Hao. Our Patriarch even came out of secluded meditation to personally prepare a wedding gift!”

“I bet all the most powerful experts in the entire Southern Domain will be gathering at the Blood Demon Sect.”

“Your news is out of date! My master already found out that his excellency Meng Hao’s grand wedding isn’t going to be at the Blood Demon Sect. It’s going to be on the border of the Southern Domain, at some big lake!”

Meng Hao’s wedding was the news everyone was discussing. All the various sects and clans sprang into motion to prepare valuable and remarkable gifts for the wedding.

The wedding date was the fifteenth of the following month, and the location, a lake on the border of the Southern Domain, was unique enough that people quickly began to analyze its significance.

“That’s… where the State of Zhao used to be!”

“A few hundred years ago, the State of Zhao mysteriously disappeared. The only thing left behind was a huge hole in the ground. As time passed, it filled up with water and turned into a lake….”

“That’s right. The exalted Meng Hao and his beloved, Xu Qing, are both from the State of Zhao. How fitting for the bonding ceremony to be held there!”

Even as the discussion raged, the tens of thousands of Blood Demon Sect disciples excitedly left the Blood Demon Sect and happily headed toward the location of the bonding ceremony, that enormous lake.

After arriving, they would immediately get to work constructing the necessary buildings and decorate the entire region, turning it into something grand and palatial!

Meng Hao’s wedding was a major event for the Southern Domain, and even more important as far as the Blood Demon Sect was concerned. After the determination Meng Hao had shown by putting his life on the line in the war with the four allied powers, all the disciples of the Blood Demon Sect burned with fanatical devotion for him.

Therefore, the Blood Demon Sect disciples, down to the last one, were determined to ensure than not the slightest negligence be shown in the preparations.

Meng Hao was aware that it was impossible to keep his marriage to Xu Qing a secret. It was the most important event in their lives, and they would become bonded cultivators. It was necessary to inform the Southern Domain. As for the people who attended the ceremony that day, all of them would be distinguished guests.

Thus, Blood Demon Sect disciples sent out invitation cards to the various sects and clans. Any sect or clan who received one would be filled with excitement and incredible pride.

However, there were some locations that deserved exceptional treatment. Meng Hao took Xu Qing there personally to deliver invitations.

The first stop was the Violet Fate Sect. The Violet Fate Sect’s peak Dao Seeking Patriarch, Sun Tao, happily appeared to accept the invitation.

After a polite exchange, Meng Hao glanced in the direction of the main peak of the East Pill Division. He and Xu Qing both clasped hands and bowed deeply toward Grandmaster Pill Demon’s secluded meditation location.

Almost at the same moment that Meng Hao bowed, an ancient voice rang out in joyous laughter from the mountain.

“Hao’er, master will emerge on the day of your wedding. I will be the official witness!”

Meng Hao trembled and raised his head to look in the direction of the main mountain peak. Next to him, Xu Qing smiled shyly and bowed her head.

“Many thanks, master!” Meng Hao said softly.

When he and Xu Qing left, something happened that Meng Hao didn’t notice, although Xu Qing did. On one of the mountain peaks in the East Pill Division stood a woman. She looked sad as she stared silently at Meng Hao and Xu Qing.

It was Chu Yuyan.

Her body shivered slightly in the stiff mountain breeze that fluttered her garments. She looked like a goddess, but in that moment, her heart felt as if it were sinking into a pit of ice. She felt coldness engulfing her, and pain stabbed through her.

She stood there bitterly, and tears streamed down her face.

Meng Hao didn’t see those tears, but Xu Qing did.

Xu Qing held her tongue as she turned and left with Meng Hao.

On another mountain stood Hanxue Shan. She wasn’t happy either, and she kicked a rock that lay in front of her. The man who stood next to her, Ye Feimu, was even less happy than she was. He glanced over at Hanxue Shan, a complex expression in his eyes. He said nothing as he remained standing at her side.

Meng Hao and Xu Qing also paid a personal visit to the Song Clan. Because of the matter of the Song Clan Patriarch giving him the jade slip, Meng Hao knew that he owed the Song Clan a favor.

Patriarch Song would never say anything about it, of course, but the matter was extremely important to Meng Hao.

Patriarch Song laughed heartily as he accepted the invitation. Then, he looked at Meng Hao and Xu Qing with a long sigh. After Meng Hao and Xu Qing flew off into the distance, a certain woman inside the Song Clan cut a lonely figure as she stood there, by herself. She sighed, but in her heart, she truly wished for Meng Hao and Xu Qing to find happiness.

That woman was Song Jia.

The next stop was the Solitary Sword Sect. As soon as they entered, the Solitary Sword Sect disciples bowed with extreme respect. They clustered around Meng Hao almost as if he were a Patriarch as they escorted him into the sect.

Chen Fan was still sitting cross-legged next to the boulder, meditating. When he opened his eyes and saw Meng Hao and Xu Qing, he smiled happily.

“Congratulations, Junior Brother. Finally you’ll get to hold a beautiful woman in your arms. You know, I could tell way back in the Reliance Sect that you had some feelings for Junior Sister Xu.

“At long last, you two are getting married. Well, I think you’re a match made in heaven!

“It’s too bad we can’t find Grand Elder Ouyang and Sect Leader He. Although, if they’re still in the Southern Domain, they’ll surely hear about the wedding.”

Chen Fan was very happy to see Meng Hao and Xu Qing, and he laughed more that day than he had in decades.

They visited with Chen Fan for a whole day. Before leaving, Meng Hao and Xu Qing clasped hands and bowed to the boulder which contained Shan Ling, the wife of their brother Chen Fan. In response, the boulder glowed faintly, as if it were wishing blessings upon them.

Finally, Meng Hao and Xu Qing went to the Golden Frost Sect. Fatty was ecstatic. Not only did he wink salaciously at Meng Hao, he had all of his more than one hundred beloved companions come out in quite a flaunting display.

The more than one hundred women extended greetings in tittering, melodic whispers. Meng Hao had a strange expression on his face, and although Xu Qing appeared to be smiling, she looked at Fatty with a gaze that showed that she was not amused.

Fatty didn’t notice, and proceeded to regally instruct Meng Hao to be more like himself and collect a few more beloved concubines….

“Li Fugui,” Xu Qing interrupted coolly, “don’t forget that it was me who brought you to the Reliance Sect that year.”

Fatty was taken aback. Then he saw Meng Hao’s awkward smile, suddenly shivered in realization, and then quickly changed the topic of conversation.

They stayed at the Golden Frost Sect for a night, and then left.

They didn’t return to the Blood Demon Sect or the lake. Meng Hao took Xu Qing to travel through the Southern Domain like mortals. They didn’t fly, they walked, through mountains and past rivers. During the days they strolled along together, and at night they slept in each other’s arms. They walked through deep mountain ranges and across vast plains, gracing them with the traces of their passage.

Occasionally they would encounter people, all of whom would immediately clasp hands in greeting. Soon, word began to spread through the Southern Domain of the Beatific Sweethearts.

During that month, they traveled to many places. Xu Qing laughed happily as she accompanied Meng Hao. Meng Hao stopped worrying about cultivation and the future. He focused on relaxing and enjoying Xu Qing’s company.

When the month was up, and their traveling finished, they proceeded toward the enormous lake that occupied the spot where the State of Zhao used to be.

The land there had undergone a complete transformation, and now looked like a celestial paradise. In the center of the lake, upon the rippling water, sat an island with jade buildings which had been ringed with ornamental statues and carvings. It was not excessively opulent, but held a great deal of charm.

That was where they settled down to wait for the half month until… the day of the wedding!

The sound of laughter rang out as tens of thousands of Blood Demon Sect disciples bustled about in the area surrounding the lake, using magical techniques to completely change the entire area. Occasionally, the disciples would look over their shoulders toward an island in the middle of the lake, and their faces would fill with fanaticism and benediction.

Soon, Southern Domain cultivators began to show up and gather in the area as they awaited the big day.

Meanwhile, in the central region of the Southern Domain, in a very ordinary town, was a street food stall that sold noodles. Two old men would set up the shop in this particular location around this time every year. Their noodles were quite famous in the area.

One of the old men had a stooped back, white hair, and a kindly expression. The other looked to be a bit younger, but still had quite a few gray hairs on his head. When he was younger, he had obviously been quite handsome.

The two men would often lounge together and watch the sunset while smoking from long-stemmed pipes. They usually sat together in silence and didn’t chat much.

Day after day, year after year, that was how they spent their time. When they moved to this place, they were middle-aged, but as time went by, they had become old.

On one particular evening, when the evening was being replaced by night and the twinkle of lamplight began to spread throughout the town, the stooped old man suddenly put his pipe down.

“Should we go?” he asked, his voice hoarse.

The other old man next to him also put down his pipe.

“You were the one who took a liking to him all those years ago. You paid quite a heavy price for the kid without a word of complaint. Now he’s famous. Probably couldn’t be any more famous, actually. When the wedding day comes… maybe I could decide not to attend, but you… could you really stay away?”

The stooped old man laughed and then stood up. “Alright, it’s settled. We’re going. I could tell as soon as I looked at that pup that he had potential!”

“Well, fine,” said the other man. “Neither of us have much longevity left. Let’s go see all the kids, then we will have accomplished everything and can die content.”

The two old men exchanged a glance, then disappeared laughing off into the night.

These two were none other than Grand Elder Ouyang and He Luohua from the Reliance Sect. All those years ago, Grand Elder Ouyang had already been running low on longevity; the fact that he was still alive now indicated that he had run into some sort of good fortune since then.

Similar scenes played out in the Black Lands.

Meng Hao’s grand wedding had sent all the lands astir.

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# Chapter 765: Seventh Year Tribulation!

The great tribes in the Black Lands were also focusing on the Southern Domain right now. The matter of the four allied powers besieging the Blood Demon Sect, and the following events in which the Blood Demon Sect unified the Southern Domain, were all well-known.

When Meng Hao’s name rose to prominence, the Golden Crow Clan in the Black Lands was especially excited. When news arrived of Meng Hao’s grand marriage, the Clan Chief personally led quite a few clan members out of the Black Lands to attend the ceremony and offer wedding gifts.

The other great tribes also did the same.

Last but not least, the Church of the Golden Light called out their signature catchphrase as they ran toward the Southern Domain, surrounded by a swirling fog.

Meanwhile, in the Eastern Lands, in the Fang Clan ancestral mansion, was a tall tower. It looked very similar to a Tower of Tang, although it was roughly thirty meters taller. 1

It was thirty meters taller than each and every one of the other Towers of Tang throughout the Southern Domain.

Within the tower stood a man and a woman who were in the middle of a fierce argument. Tears streamed down the woman’s face as she looked off in the direction… of the Southern Domain, and Meng Hao.

“We left him before his seventh birthday…. He faced grave danger so many times in the Southern Domain, and we didn’t help him. We didn’t even dare to get near him…. I shouldn’t have gone to see him at the Song Clan, but… he’s my son! He’s OUR son!

“His Dao foundation was stolen in the Milky Way Sea, and I knew we couldn’t go help him, but that didn’t do anything to alleviate the stabbing pain in my heart. Then Xu Qing gave up so much for him in the Rebirth Cave. I saw everything that happened. Everything! I like that girl….

“Now, he’s getting married, and I’M GOING!” The woman looked over at the man, her eyes flashing with determination.

The man was trembling, and sadness filled his eyes. His heart also felt stabs of pain. However, there was nothing he could do other than endure them, and place all of his hopes on what would happen in the future.

“Just wait a little bit longer, Lili 2,” the man murmured. He trembled, and gripped the column next to him until his knuckles turned white. “Can’t you just wait a bit longer…? We suffered untold hardships to bring him here and give him a chance to live. Once he reaches Dao Seeking, then the danger will be past. Dao Seeking, that’s all.

“Just a little more waiting. The day he enters Dao Seeking, we’ll go together. We’ll explain everything, together!” Deep love could be seen in the man’s eyes as he looked off into the distance.

“We can’t make any mistakes,” he continued. “If we fail this time… Lili, the fourth life, the Seventh Year Tribulation. Can you really bear such pain again?

“I’m his father, and he is our child. It was for him that both of us swore Dao oaths to guard the gate of South Heaven for 100,000 years, and not step foot out of South Heaven for that entire time. All of that was for this one chance. Just keep waiting….” The man closed his eyes. For his son, he would gladly sacrifice his life, his everything.

“Seventh Year Tribulation….” More tears streamed down the woman’s face as she recalled the bitter memories of the past. “But so many years have already passed….”

“Spirit Severing stabilizes the soul, and Dao Seeking lays the blood to rest,” the man murmured, and it was hard to tell whether he was talking to the woman, or to himself. “Every day before Dao Seeking is another day that the Seventh Year Tribulation… remains unneutralized. His body is already at Dao Seeking, all that remains is his cultivation base…. Soon. The day will come… soon.”

The wedding day approached. When the bonding ceremony was only five days away, more than a million cultivators had already amassed in the Northern Reaches, adjacent to the Milky Way Sea.

Vicious beasts, wicked spirits, powerful experts…. It all transformed into something like a cyclone that could sweep across everything in astonishing fashion.

Dao Seeking Patriarchs from various clans, tribes, and sects flew up into the air, eleven astonishing figures who then stared out at the Milky Way Sea, toward the Southern Domain which lay beyond the horizon.

“The chance for Immortality lies in the Southern Domain!”

“The Southern Domain has just faced incredible misfortune. They are at their weakest now, and could never imagine that our army would appear now!”

“This is an incredibly rare opportunity!”

“In this war, we will exterminate their Dao Seeking experts, slaughter their Spirit Severing cultivators, eradicate all of their Nascent Soul disciples! As for Core Formation, they don’t really matter.”

“Shatter their foundation, cut off their chance for Immortality, and then we can occupy the Southern Domain! We can gain enlightenment about Immortal destiny, and we can become Immortals!”

“In this war, we, the allied forces of the Northern Reaches, with the help of the Resurrection Lily, will definitely seize control of everything!”

“Strike fast and hard! Don’t give the Eastern Lands a chance to interfere!”

These eleven Dao Seeking experts were all adorned in different attire. Some were covered in tattoos. Others were festooned in bone accouterments that emanated black light. Some wore Daoist robes. However, all of them possessed incredible power.

They hovered in midair looking out at the Milky Way Sea. Suddenly, an incredible roaring filled the air. There was no wind, but massive waves still rolled out across the sea.

The Milky Way Sea’s Fourth Ring, Third Ring, Second Ring, all of the areas in the entire sea outside of the Inner Ring, were covered with huge waves. The disciples of the three great sects in the Third Ring were completely astonished.

The cultivators who lived on the various islands in the sea could hear the roaring, and were shocked.

This was not the ordinary roar of the sea, but rather, was filled with a monstrous, murderous air. The water surged up, as if some colossal creature was attempting to rise up from the depths of the sea!

As everyone looked around in astonishment, deep in the dark recesses of the Second Ring, a gargantuan Resurrection Lily was writhing like mad. This… was the source of the roaring that filled the Milky Way Sea.

Rumbling echoed out constantly as the gigantic Resurrection Lily suddenly began to grow, almost without limit. It only took the space of ten or so breaths of time for massive tentacles, each thirty meters thick, to rise up from within the Second Ring. Seawater poured off of them as they shot up over the sea.

The tentacles emitted a shocking aura as they sped through the air. At the same time, countless smaller tentacles spread out along the seafloor. When they reached the waters of the Third Ring, they too shot up into the air.

More tentacles spread out, piercing into the Stormwind Divide that separated the Third and Fourth Rings.

If you could stand in a position high up in the sky where the entire Milky Way Sea was visible, you would be able to see that more than 100,000 tentacles were spreading out. It appeared as if… a fearsome presence lurked beneath the waters.

Of course, it was none other than the Resurrection Lily!

The Resurrection Lily grew rapidly, growing larger until finally, to the astonishment of all the cultivators, it rose up completely from the water. The tentacles merged, braiding together.

They formed… a bridge!

It was a bridge, one side of which was formed from fifty thousand tentacles, more than 1,500 kilometers across. Shockingly, this part of the bridge neared the Southern Domain, but didn't touch it.

The other side of the bridge arced out to connect to the Northern Reaches!

In the very middle of the two sides was a huge Resurrection Lily that was so large you could scarcely see from one side to the other, dripping vast quantities of water as it rose up.

The scene was indescribably shocking and astonishing. A gigantic flower had risen up to form a bridge with its branches and leaves, a bridge that connected two great continents!

The greatest difficulty in waging war between these regions was the problem of transporting the troops. But now, that problem had been solved, and the great war could begin at any time.

Rumbling filled the air as the Resurrection Lily bridge appeared. The more than 1,000,000 Northern Reaches cultivators lifted their heads up and roared. The eleven Dao Seeking experts waved their hands, and the cultivators headed directly toward the Resurrection Lily bridge.

The evil spirits were behind the cultivators, followed by the mountain-like giants, as well as countless wild beasts. All of them charged onto the Resurrection Lily bridge, where they used all the speed they could muster, as well as some of the built-in teleportation features of the bridge, to proceed forward. Soon, the distance between them and the Southern Domain was rapidly reduced.

They would only need a few days to reach the Southern Domain.

The wedding day got closer.

The big lake that used to be the State of Zhao was now decorated with lanterns and brightly colored decorations. Tables were set up all around, and Blood Demon Sect disciples circulated to entertain the guests.

The sounds of happy laughter and cheerful voices permeated the air.

Chen Fan arrived, as did Fatty, along with one after another of Meng Hao’s friends from the Violet Fate Sect, who had all rushed to the location as fast as possible. Xu Qing’s smile grew more and more beautiful. When she looked at Meng Hao, the warm look in her eyes seemed like it could thaw even the coldest ice.

Meng Hao was also smiling, although sometimes he seemed to be at his wits’ end, not quite sure what to do or where to go. Thankfully, the Blood Demon Sect’s Spirit Severing Patriarchs were familiar with weddings, and they did their best to manage affairs properly. There was also Fatty, who had already been formally united with more than a hundred beloved concubines. With all of their advice and help, Meng Hao was kept quite busy with all the formalities.

In the end, Chu Yuyan eventually came. She arrived with a smile that seemed sincerely congratulatory. However, deep in her heart she felt frustration and disappointment. When Meng Hao ran into her, he opened his mouth to say something, but in the end all he could do… was sigh.

Xu Qing pulled Chu Yuyan off to the side, where they began to confer quietly.

Hanxue Shan and Song Jia also came. Soon all the women, along with Fatty’s beloved concubines, made their way to the island in the center of the lake, after which the twitter of their voices could often be heard floating out from within.

A few days later, the big day arrived, and wedding bells tolled cheerfully.

Starting at dawn, countless honored guests flowed in from sects and clans all over the Southern Domain. Soon it became apparent that there weren’t enough banquet tables, even though they had prepared more than 100,000. There was standing room only, and everyone was packed tightly together as far as the eye could see. There were even cultivators hovering in the air far off in the distance. Even if they couldn’t have a seat, they still wanted to watch the bonding ceremony and cheer in congratulations.

Spirit Severing cultivators and Dao Seeking experts were all present! As the wedding bells rang out, a violet streak appeared in the air. It was an old man in a violet robe, ancient and dignified. However, a kind smile covered his face, and the aroma of medicinal pills wafted around him. As soon as Meng Hao caught sight of him, a tremor ran through his body, and he flew up into the air. In front of all the other cultivators present, he clasped hands and bowed deeply.

“Greetings, master!”

The old man was none other than Pill Demon. He looked at Meng Hao contentedly, and with love. Laughing, he helped Meng Hao to straighten up.

“Today is your grand wedding, and I’m here to bear official witness.”

1. As I’ve mentioned before, I convert the ancient Chinese measurements into metric. The tower is nine “zhang” taller, and as we all know, nine is a significant number in Chinese culture and ISSTH

2. “Lili” is a repetition of the character Li , from Meng Li’s name

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# Chapter 766: Grand Wedding!

The Church of the Golden Light arrived!

The disciples approached the wedding site in formation, surrounded by billowing fog.

The Golden Crow Tribe arrived!

All sects and clans dispatched members to attend, to bear witness to the first grand wedding ceremony to occur in the Southern Domain in many years.

It was unprecedented and unrepeatable.

The wedding guests surrounded the huge lake. Hundreds of thousands of cultivators had arrived, perhaps nearing eighty percent of the population of the Southern Domain.

It was impossible to take them all in with a single glance. Everywhere you looked was densely packed with people, and based on the mass of wedding gifts that had been delivered, it was possible to see the incredible wealth of the Southern Domain.

Grandmaster Ouyang and He Luohua arrived. They stood in the crowds, unable to get very close. However, from afar, they could see Meng Hao and Xu Qing, as well as Fatty and Chen Fan. The two old men’s faces broke out with benevolent smiles.

They were happy, and also proud of themselves. They knew that these Chosen of the Southern Domain were all former members of the Reliance Sect!

Tribes of the Western Desert also came, most of whom Meng Hao was familiar with, or the other way around. Even though there were hundreds of thousands of people present, there was no chaos. Fatty and the Blood Demon Sect disciples kept everything orderly and yet also colorful and dramatic.

The atmosphere was cheerful and happy; the sound of laughter and chatting filled the air.

The powerful experts had gathered. This wedding was definitely one of the grandest and most important events to ever occur in the history of the Southern Domain.

When she made her appearance, Xu Qing was incredibly beautiful. She wore a red wedding gown, and Meng Hao stood next to her. All the onlookers began to cheer and call out blessings and well wishes.

“Congratulations to the exalted Meng Hao and goddess Xu Qing on their marriage!”

“Congratulations! May you live to a ripe old age in conjugal bliss and love each other for all time!”

“Congratulations….”

The sound rolled out like waves in all directions. Meng Hao’s heart was pounding; even he couldn’t stop himself from getting nervous. He also wore a long red robe, and his handsome features were filled with happiness.

Meng Hao and Xu Qing

Official ISSTH art of Meng Hao and Xu Qing on their wedding day

He held Xu Qing’s hand as they floated there in midair, the center of all attention.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and squeezed Xu Qing’s hand. “Ladies and Gentlemen. Fellow Daoists. Many thanks to you for coming to witness my and Qing’er’s bonding ceremony.”

With that, Meng Hao and Xu Qing clasped hands to the crowds.

Xu Qing’s face was flushed, and her heart thumped rapidly. At a time like this, any woman would feel the same. Moments like these are when women are the most beautiful, the most nervous, and the most excited.

The entire Southern Domain had come to bear witness to Meng Hao and Xu Qing’s entrance into a binding agreement for life.

Rumble!

An incredibly loud sound filled the air as ten Spirit Severing experts suddenly flew up into the air. They unleashed spectacular divine abilities that, from a distance, transformed into ten beautiful balls of flame.

The color of the sky instantly changed, and all the cultivators down below stared up in awe at the beautiful sight.

The cultivation bases of the ten Spirit Severing experts exploded out as they caused the brilliant, colorful divine abilities to surge with power. Boundless light shone out, making it seem like there were ten suns up in the sky.

As the rumbling echoed out seemingly without end, the ten Spirit Severing experts continued to fuel the divine abilities, causing ripples of magic to constantly flow out above the crowds.

Immediately, a buzz of conversation rose from the crowd as they watched the spectacle, their hearts trembling.

“Heavens! He really does deserve to be the Blood Prince of the Blood Demon Sect. Despite their status, ten Spirit Severing experts are willing to put on a performance by summoning fireballs!”

“In all the Southern Domain, only Meng Hao could pull something like this off!”

“When the day of my bonding ceremony comes… if I could get some Core Formation cultivators to do something similar, that would probably be the most incredible thing in my entire life!”

Anyone who was watching closely was able to see that this was just the beginning.

The divine abilities of the ten Spirit Severing experts suddenly changed. Shockingly, the fireballs began to connect together to form a long dragon and a colorful phoenix.

The dragon and the phoenix were auspicious symbols that could bring prosperity and good fortune. They swirled through the sky in astonishing fashion, looking extremely lifelike.

Next, a thousand Nascent Soul cultivators flew up, stabilized themselves in midair, then closed their eyes and summoned their life force fire to create a thousand flickering candles.

Candlelight illuminated Heaven and Earth, creating a resplendent and indescribably beautiful atmosphere.

The display still wasn’t over. After the appearance of the thousand Nascent Soul cultivators, ten thousand Core Formation cultivators flew out. They circled about in mid-air, unleashing magical techniques that seemed to create the outline of a staircase that stretched up into the sky.

The staircase glittered like a magical treasure, and was completely astonishing. The glittering light from the candles made it seem like even the Heavens were participating in the wedding ceremony. The dragon and the phoenix crisscrossed through the air, occasionally letting out piercing cries. The atmosphere at the wedding ceremony seemed to have reached a pinnacle.

Just when many people assumed that the pomp was over, two colorful beams of light shot into the air. They were two old men who, although they had blank expressions on their faces, immediately caught the attention of the crowds.

They were… the Golden Frost Sect Patriarch and the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch!

They were the peak Dao Seeking left and right Dharma Protectors of the Blood Demon Sect. As soon as they appeared in midair, they performed incantation gestures and then flicked their sleeves. Immediately, at the top of the seemingly never-ending staircase that rose up into the sky, the air began to twist and distort as it turned into an Immortal's temple palace.

The Immortal's temple palace was enormous and dignified. Every tile that decorated its surface glowed like a magical treasure. This was an illusion summoned by the power of two peak Dao Seeking eccentrics' cultivation bases.

If that were all there was to it, it might not have been a huge deal. However, in the instant that the temple palace appeared, a rainbow descended from up above the palace, causing its beauty to increase exponentially.

It was then that cranes appeared, as well as innumerable other auspicious creatures. They flew gracefully through the air, calling out blessings. The entire scene was almost like a dream.

Down below, the cultivators gasped. This was the first time a display like this, a show of such extravagance, had been witnessed in the Southern Domain.

It was at this point that Patriarch Song laughed, and then said, "Young friend Meng Hao, please allow me to add a bit of cheer to your grand wedding!"

He lifted his arm and pointed up into the sky, immediately causing energy to surge out.

Up above, a brilliant glow shot out in all directions. Countless motes of light appeared, each of which transformed into the image of an Immortal goddess. In the blink of an eye, they appeared on the temple palace, on the rainbow, on the staircase, above the candle flames. In unison, they clasped hands and bowed deeply to Meng Hao and Xu Qing.

They acted like bridesmaids, and at that moment, the illusion up in the sky became even more realistic. That was because in each of the Immortal goddesses' hands could be seen a spirit fruit. All of the spirit fruits… were real!

This was the wedding gift of the Song Clan.

In the group from the Violet Fate Sect, peak Dao Seeking expert Sun Tao chuckled. All of a sudden, his voice rang out.

"Young Lord, allow me to add some cheer to your grand wedding as well!" With that, his spit out a mouthful of qi, which shockingly transformed into a gigantic pill furnace that came to rest outside the temple palace. Wisps of medicinal smoke began to rise up out of the furnace, swirling around the area. Within the wisps of medicinal smoke were numerous imperial bodyguards wearing golden armor.

In total, there were 10,000 bodyguards who spread out in the area, emanating shocking energy. All of them turned toward Meng Hao, stabbed their swords down in front of them, and then dropped to their knees to kowtow.

The cultivators down below were almost in a frenzy.

Four peak Dao Seeking experts had lent their hands to the affair, along with the magical images of the ten Spirit Severing experts, the burning candles of a thousand Nascent Soul cultivators, and the treasure-like staircase of ten thousand Core Formation disciples. It was a scene that thoroughly astonished all of the cultivators down below.

"This is unheard-of! Completely unheard-of!"

"Immortal goddesses as bridesmaids, Immortal soldiers as groomsmen, an Immortal's palace as the temple, a rainbow to add blessings, an auspicious dragon and phoenix summoned by Spirit Severing cultivators, wedding candles provided by Nascent Soul cultivators. Everything provided by cultivators…."

"I'll never forget this bonding ceremony even after I die!"

“How incredible to be able to see something like this!”

Everyone was in a huge stir!

A kind smile appeared on Pill Demon’s face as he stood next to the Immortal’s palace, looking down at Meng Hao and Xu Qing.

“Let the ceremonies begin! There is no need to be concerned too much with trifles. However, you must still climb the treasured staircase, pass the burning candles, and ascend to the Immortal’s palace.”

Meng Hao took a deep breath and squeezed Xu Qing’s hand. It was trembling, and a bit sweaty. They exchanged a glance, and could see both nervousness and warmth in each other’s eyes.

They smiled, and then flew forward to the staircase. The Immortal goddesses bowed as they passed, and the Immortal soldiers kowtowed. They ascended the stairs, passed the candles and the circulating dragon and phoenix. Finally… they stepped onto the rainbow. The cranes and auspicious beasts clustered around them as they stood in front of the Immortal’s palace temple.

They turned, and from their vantage point they could look out to see the Milky Way Sea, and look down to see the hundreds of thousands of cultivators down below, all of whom were cheering and shouting. The sound of it echoed out in all directions, shaking Heaven and Earth.

The sound of it even managed to make its way all the way to… the Milky Way Sea!

By this point, the bonding ceremony could be considered half finished. The next part was the most critical part, the part where Pill Demon would begin to officiate!

Pill Demon looked at Meng Hao and Xu Qing, and then his voice boomed out, “It is my pleasure to announce…”

Down below, the crowds cheered wildly.

However, before Pill Demon could finish, even as the crowds were cheering, Meng Hao's expression suddenly flickered. A sharp light appeared in his eyes as he looked out at the Milky Way Sea.

Although it appeared to be normal, something had abruptly caused him to shake with fear. It was as if some shocking danger was lurking in the Milky Way sea, as if an enormous gaping mouth full of teeth were approaching.

In the same moment that Meng Hao looked out toward the Milky Way Sea, all of the peak Dao Seeking experts felt similar trembling in their hearts. They, too, looked out toward the sea.

Although everything looked normal, Meng Hao blinked his right eye nine times and circulated the qi of Immortal Shows the Way. His view of the world blurred, and then grew clear. Now, he was able to see two different worlds.

The first world was the normal Milky Way Sea. In the second world… the sea was in a fury, waves surging and roaring. An enormous, shocking bridge formed from a Resurrection Lily could be seen!

On top of the bridge were hundreds of thousands of Northern Reaches cultivators, surging forward with towering murderous intent!

Among the Northern Reaches' cultivators was an enormous stone cauldron, supported on the backs of ten thousand cultivators. The cauldron seemed ancient, and its insides were filled with pitch-black dirt. Shockingly, a single stick of incense could be seen sticking up out of the soil!

The incense stick was small, far smaller than the huge cauldron, and was easy to miss.

However, the feeling it gave off was one of complete terror and evil. Even the peak Dao Seeking experts of the Northern Reaches seemed to fear it.

The forces from the Northern Reaches drew closer and closer. As of this moment… they had almost reached the lands of the Southern Domain!

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# Chapter 767: The Northern Reaches Invades!

“Northern Reaches!” thought Meng Hao, his pupils constricting.

Currently, the other peak Dao Seeking experts were unable to see what Meng Hao was seeing. Except for… Pill Demon. His eyes began to shine with golden light, and his face fell.

The cheers were still echoing out through the air as all the cultivators down below awaited Pill Demon’s words of officiation, and the final moments of the wedding ceremony.

However, Meng Hao and Pill Demon’s hearts froze up and, as of this moment, were sinking to the lowest depths!

From the expression on Meng Hao’s face, Xu Qing could immediately sense that something was wrong. “What’s wrong…?” she asked, nervously gripping his hand.

“The Northern Reaches… are invading us,” he said quietly, clasping her hand tightly.

Although none of the cultivators below could hear what he said, the nearby peak Dao Seeking Patriarchs’ faces suddenly fell.

“That’s….” Pill Demon’s eyes went wide as he looked at the enormous, shocking bridge that stretched out over the Milky Way Sea, as well as the enormous cauldron which drew nearer and nearer.

Pill Demon’s face flickered. Worried that panic would ensue, he kept his voice low as he said, “Meng Hao, look closely. Do you see that stone cauldron with no decorations, filled with pitch-black soil? Is there… an incense stick… sticking out of the soil?!?!”

Even as Pill Demon spoke, the cheering cultivators down below suddenly grew quiet. Expressions of confusion appeared on their faces, and soon, everyone began to realize that Pill Demon was looking at the Milky Way Sea.

In response to Pill Demon’s question, Meng Hao blinked his eye nine more times. Instantly, his view of the Milky Way Sea zoomed in, and he confirmed that there was indeed an incense stick in the black soil that filled the enormous cauldron.

“Yes,” he said, nodding his head.

Pill Demon’s face went ashen, and his pupils constricted. He immediately flew up into the air, and called out in a loud voice: “Southern Domain cultivators, all of you must immediately unleash the power of your cultivation bases and interfere with the flow of spiritual energy of Heaven and Earth. Create a barrier immediately. HURRY!

“Patriarch Song, apprentice alchemist and Meng Hao, come with me. Bring Patriarch Golden Frost and the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch!!

“We must not under any circumstances… allow that stone cauldron to touch the lands of the Southern Domain!” roared Pill Demon as he shot toward the Milky Way Sea. “That is none other than Hellwither Nineruins Incense, refined from the flesh and blood of a true Immortal!! It is the most malicious of curses; if it even touches the land, the curse will spread out to all cultivators born in the Southern Domain! Their fleshly bodies will wither, and their cultivation bases will decline! There is no cure or antidote, and it is impossible to flee, not even by leaving the Southern Domain. Anyone born in the Southern Domain will be cursed!”

Patriarch Song’s face fell, and Sun Tao of the Violet Fate Sect had a similar reaction. Without hesitation, they followed along at top speed.

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed with killing intent. Today was his grand wedding, the most important day in his life. Xu Qing had less than a hundred years of longevity, and all he wanted was to give her a magnificent wedding. Unfortunately, they had been interrupted halfway through.

The arrival of the Northern Reaches cultivators was completely unforeseen. How could Meng Hao not be enraged?

He looked at Xu Qing, and although her heart was filled with concern, the only thing that could be seen on her face was a gentle expression.

“The wedding ceremony isn’t over yet,” she said softly. “I’ll be waiting here for you.”

Meng Hao nodded, then flew up into the air. His second true self materialized next to him, and Patriarch Golden Frost and the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch emerged from within the Immortal’s palace. In the blink of an eye, they all transformed into beams of light that shot toward the Milky Way Sea.

The Spirit Severing cultivators who had formed the dragon and phoenix immediately appeared. The power of their cultivation bases surged out, causing the air to distort. Down below, the hundreds of thousands of other cultivators, still reeling in shock because of the sudden developments, also unleashed the power of their cultivation bases. It only took a moment for the air to distort, and a violent windstorm to rise up.

Meanwhile, the Northern Reaches cultivators on the Resurrection Lily bridge over the Milky Way Sea realized that they had been discovered. With no further need to conceal their presence, rumbling filled the air, and the appearance of the Milky Way Sea instantly changed!

It no longer looked sunny and calm. Instead, massive waves surged across its surface, as well as numerous corpses. Those corpses were none other than Milky Way Sea cultivators.

Also fully visible was the ferocious-looking Resurrection Lily bridge, as well as the million Northern Reaches cultivators, stretching out in formation like a huge dragon.

“Within a month, the Southern Domain will be destroyed!” a cold and ancient voice rang out. It was an old man within the Northern Reaches forces. He wore animal-hide clothing, and a necklace of bone teeth was strung around his neck. He flew up into the air, followed by three shocking figures.

Of those three people, two were old men and one was a boy.

The two old men looked exactly alike, except that one wore all black clothing and the other wore all white. Astonishingly, their cultivation bases were at the peak of Dao Seeking. As for the boy, he held a Cinnabar Fruit in his hand, which he would occasionally gnaw at. A red glow could be seen in his eyes, and he was surrounded by a thick, murderous air. He was also at the peak of Dao Seeking.

These four people were the Patriarchs leading the first wave of the Northern Reaches army. A few days behind them was the second wave of hundreds of thousands of Northern Reaches cultivators.

The first wave was so close that they could see the mountains of the Southern Domain, as well as the six bright beams of light that were shooting through the air.

At the same time, they also noticed the shocking windstorm created by the cultivation bases of the hundreds of thousands of cultivators, which rose up into the sky, emitting shocking power.

“These Southern Domain cultivators are clever. They actually sensed us ahead of time, and knew exactly when we would arrive.”

“Not only did they know the time, they also knew the place, and are in combat readiness! They’ve even combined the cultivation bases of several hundred thousand cultivators into a windstorm! They hope to reduce the power of our sacred balm!”

“From their reaction, it seems they actually know about our plan! Thankfully, we’re thoroughly prepared. It’s too bad the sacred balm is most effective when they are scattered!”

“Of the six people approaching, four are at the peak of Dao Seeking. One is early Dao Seeking, and the third, the red-robed youth… it seems he’s only a Second Severing cultivator?”

“Whatever, it doesn’t matter, we’ll stick to the plan and sacrifice our sacred balm!!”

The four Northern Reaches Patriarchs exchanged glances, and then the old man with the bone-tooth necklace snorted coldly. He produced a red medicinal pill which was covered with bizarre magical symbols, which he immediately consumed. Then he stretched his hands out and lifted his head back to let out a wild roar.

“Dragonfish Transformation!”

At the same time, his body instantly began to expand and grow scales. In the blink of an eye, he was dozens of meters tall and bulging with muscles. Shockingly, the bone teeth around his neck shot out to swirl around him in a spherical spell formation!

Rumbling filled the air, along with a roar from within the spell formation. Suddenly, a huge black crocodile emerged, three hundred meters long!

The crocodile slapped its tail down, causing ripples to spread out. Immediately, the 10,000 cultivators bearing the huge stone cauldron flew forward and landed on the crocodile’s back.

The crocodile let out a roar, and its eyes began to glow red as it charged forward toward the Southern Domain.

As for the several-meter-tall old man, his body emanated savage energy as he followed, acting as an escort to the crocodile.

Behind him, the two old men, who looked identical except for the contrasting black and white clothing, both swished their sleeves. Shockingly, they began to emanate an incredible aura of death. Even more astonishing, two hopping vampires appeared behind them, also wearing contrasting black and white clothing! 1

The two hopping vampires had long teeth and vicious expressions. They wore hats, and moved in leaping motions along with the two old men as they escorted the stone cauldron.

Last, was the young boy. As he advanced, a giant emerged from the forces atop the Resurrection Lily bridge. It wielded an enormous wolf-tooth club, and roared as it shot forward, kicking up a huge wind. The boy flew up to stand on its shoulder.

He had eaten almost half of the Cinnabar Fruit, and held the other half in his hand, rubbing it occasionally.

The crocodile in the lead position had bright red, glowing eyes. It roared as it advanced at top speed, transforming into what almost looked like a black lightning bolt. As it neared the Southern Domain, Pill Demon, Patriarch Song and the apprentice alchemist Sun Tao rushed to meet it.

There was no talking. As soon as they met, the fighting began.

BOOM!

Sun Tao summoned a pill cauldron that emanated medicinal smoke. Within the smoke appeared countless warriors in golden armor that immediately blockaded the entire area.

Patriarch Song gave a cold snort and performed an incantation gesture. Instantly, the spiritual energy in the area faded, and a copper coffin appeared, the precious treasure of the Song Clan.

As for Pill Demon, he shot directly toward the stone cauldron.

The crocodile roared, as did the several-meter-tall old man next to him. Suddenly, the old man flickered and appeared directly in front of the crocodile, then punched out.

“Piss off!” he cried.

BOOM!

The fist strike was backed by the power of his fleshly body. It shattered the air as it screamed toward Sun Tao’s golden warriors. Immediately, the warriors began to wither and collapse into pieces.

The old man was extraordinarily strong. Natural law swirled around him, making the entire area around him his own. He barreled forward, smashing through the barricade, followed by the crocodile.

Meanwhile, the old men in the black and white clothes closed their eyes. Their bodies grew blurry, and astonishingly, they merged with the two hopping vampires behind them. The eyes of the hopping vampires suddenly began to glow with intelligence. As they leaped forward, their death aura rose up into the air, transforming into a vortex. Countless pale-white arms then stretched out from within the vortex. One of the hopping vampires shot toward Patriarch Song, the other headed to block Pill Demon.

The last to make a move were the boy and the mountain-like giant. The giant brandished its wolf-tooth club, and the boy pointed out, causing Sun Tao’s face to fall. All of a sudden, a huge blister bulged out of the boy’s forehead. It was bright red, and looked exactly like a Cinnabar Fruit.

A battle between peak Dao Seeking experts exploded out in the blink of an eye. Booms filled the air as Meng Hao approached, followed by his second true self and the left and right Dharma Protectors.

“Hao’er,” said Pill Demon urgently. “Block that stone cauldron! Don’t let it touch the ground!”

Having sized up the battle, Meng Hao’s eyes flashed, and he shot like lightning toward the crocodile.

The several-meter-tall old man in front of the crocodile had a fleshly body that could crush enemies like dried weeds. When he saw Meng Hao approaching, he completely ignored Meng Hao and focused on the three peak Dao Seeking cultivators next to him.

“SCREW OFFFFF!!” roared the old man, punching out into the air.

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1. Here is some info about “hopping vampires.” And here is a picture

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# Chapter 768: Hellwither Nineruins

Boom!

The old man’s punch gave rise to an enormous vortex, the center of which was black, like a black hole. A terrifying gravitational force exploded out, distorting the air as it shot toward Patriarch Golden Frost.

Patriarch Golden Frost’s expression was blank, but he had a peak Dao Seeking cultivation base. He waved his hand, causing mist to billow out, which then formed together into a mist sword that shot toward the vortex.

The 3rd Li Clan Patriarch glided through the air, the glow of spell formations swirling beneath his feet. As he shot through the air, he left behind sealing marks that emanated powerful ripples. In the blink of an eye, he had circled completely around the old man and the crocodile, surrounding them with sealing spells.

Meng Hao’s second true self waved his right arm. His eyes glittered as the Wooden Time Sword circled around him, and a river of Time power swept out. He advanced, stepping through the air to appear right next to the crocodile, whereupon he reached his hand out toward the stone cauldron.

As for Meng Hao, he slapped his bag of holding to produce the lightning cauldron, then cast a cold glance toward the old man in the animal skin garments, and waited for the right opportunity.

The old man’s face was vicious as he lifted his head up and roared. Again, he grew larger, and a mocking smile twisted the corners of his mouth. It was at this point that he actually… self-detonated!!

This sudden and unexpected self-detonation of a peak Dao Seeking cultivator was something that nobody in the area could have predicted and prepared for. Such a gambit was something that was fundamentally inconceivable.

And yet… it happened!

As his fleshly body exploded, roaring filled the air, and shocking ripples surged out in all directions. All the natural law in the area was disturbed, and everything was locked down, making teleportation impossible.

Patriarch Golden Frost and the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch quickly fell back and used their full power to fight back against the power of the self-detonation. Meng Hao’s second true self had no choice but to do the same and evade.

As for the crocodile, it transformed into a black lightning bolt that shot forward at incredible speed toward the Southern Domain. In the blink of an eye, it was in midair, just about to slam into the ground.

The stone cauldron on its back began to emanate black light. The black soil inside the cauldron began to squirm and writhe, and the incense stick… began to spontaneously combust!

Smoke swirled up, and the faces of all the Southern Domain cultivators fell.

Pill Demon, Patriarch Song and Sun Tao of the Violet Fate Sect all shot back toward it at high speed in an attempt to block it. The old men dressed in black and white laughed and flew forward in pursuit.

As for the young boy who continuously stroked the Cinnabar Fruit, he also followed. In the blink of an eye, the entire group was above the Southern Domain, getting ready to attack.

When Meng Hao saw the crocodile descending toward the ground, his hand shot up and he pointed forward.

Eighth Demon Sealing Hex!

Immediately, invisible Demonic qi formed together. It wrapped around the crocodile, which suddenly stopped in place. It struggled to free itself, but before it could, a golden vortex appeared around it.

Blood Demon Grand Magic!

The golden vortex spun round and round, causing qi and blood, as well as cultivation base, to be sucked out of the crocodile. At the same time, Meng Hao shot forward at top speed. It only took a moment for him to close in on the stone cauldron, and then reach his hand out in preparation to grab it.

“Looking to die?!” said the two old men in black and white. With cold snorts, they descended upon Meng Hao, although Patriarch Song and Sun Tao immediately moved to intervene.

The boy who stood on the giant’s shoulder laughed coldly, tossed the remaining half of the Cinnabar Fruit off to the side, then flew into the air to charge toward Meng Hao.

At this point, the left and right Dharma Protectors immediately approached with all the speed they could manage.

A truly chaotic battle was unfolding!

Meng Hao was almost on top of the crocodile, and was just about to make contact with the cauldron when suddenly, his eyes widened. A strange feeling arose within him, something he could sense only because of his status as a Demon Sealer; it felt as if some terrifying crises were just at hand.

It wasn’t just him who felt it; his second true self also had a similar feeling, which Meng Hao could sense through their connection.

It was at this point that a withered hand suddenly burst out from the soil inside the stone cauldron. The hand was clenched into a fist which punched out toward Meng Hao’s grasping hand.

An ancient voice echoed out from within the stone cauldron: “Measly Spirit Severing cultivator! Screw off!!”

A huge boom exploded out!

Meng Hao could sense an incredible power rushing toward him like floodwaters. Cracking sounds immediately sounded out from his body. If he didn't have a Dao Seeking fleshly body, this punch would have severely injured him.

However, his Eternal stratum immediately went to work healing him. Not only did he not fall back, his eyes began to radiate a murderous air. His right hand reached out and grabbed the withered fist, then wrenched at it violently.

BOOM!

The soil in the stone cauldron exploded out as an old man wearing animal hide garments was jerked out by Meng Hao. When he appeared, the crocodile's body began to wither even faster. Part of its life force and cultivation base was being absorbed by Meng Hao, but the majority was being sucked up by the old man. As he absorbed the power, he rapidly returned to his previous several-meter-tall appearance.

He… wasn't dead after all!

What had self-detonated was not his true self, but a clone!

"Dao Spirit Pill!!" exclaimed Pill Demon, his eyes widening.

Dao Spirit Pills were rare in the lands of South Heaven. It was a type of ancient medicinal pill, few of which existed. When a Dao Spirit Pill fused into a cultivator's aura, it produced an incarnation which could not exist for a very long time, perhaps enough time for an incense stick to burn.

The self-detonation had been caused by none other than the Dao Spirit Pill incarnation!

As soon as the old man in animal skin clothing was wrenched out of the soil by Meng Hao, a look of shocked surprise could be seen in his eyes. However, the expression quickly turned into one of ferocity as he punched out with his left hand.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered with coldness as he also punched out!

A huge boom could be heard, and blood oozed out of the corners of Meng Hao’s mouth. He shot backward through midair and then exploded. However, even as the blood and gore began to shoot out, they pulled back together to reform his body.

The old man in animal skin clothing laughed loudly and said, “I am the High Priest of the Imperial Bloodline Clan of the Northern Reaches! Fellow Daoists from the Southern Domain, you might be fast, but are you fast enough to stop THIS?!”

He reached out and grabbed the stone cauldron, hauled it up into the air, and then threw it toward the ground.

The stone cauldron moved with incredible speed. In only a moment, it was less than a thousand meters from the ground.

Patriarch Song, Sun Tao and the left and right Dharma Protectors pursued as fast as they could. They wanted to teleport, but the self-detonation of the old man’s clone had sent the area into chaos, making teleportation impossible.

That was his plan all along, and it was working perfectly!

The two men wearing black and white, as well as the young boy, did everything in their power to prevent the stone cauldron from being blocked. All they needed to do was delay for a few moments. Considering their opponents were of the same stage as them, that was no difficult task!

When Meng Hao’s body finished forming back together, his were eyes calm. His second true self neared, and they both flew out together. As the second true self unleashed a river of Time power, Meng Hao produced the lightning cauldron and then pushed down on it, simultaneously looking at a boulder down on the ground.

A boom rattled out from the lightning cauldron, and lightning crackled, causing everyone to look over.

However, the instant in which they caught sight of Meng Hao… he vanished! In his place was an enormous boulder!

At the same time, Meng Hao appeared in the previous location of the boulder, down on the ground. He then shot up into the air and grabbed hold of the stone cauldron!

“Impossible!!” The old man in animal skin clothing stared in disbelief. It wasn’t just him, the old men in black and white clothing, as well as the young boy, all stared with wide eyes. They almost couldn’t believe that a Spirit Severing cultivator would be able to do something like this.

Furthermore, the smoke from the incense stick swirled out and entered into Meng Hao’s body to wither it. However, his Eternal stratum completely suppressed that power.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with determination. He could not allow the thing to continue to burn, so he reached out with his right hand to extinguish it. However, even as he grabbed the burning head of the stick between his fingers and squeezed, an incredible power radiated out. Once the incense stick was ignited… it could not be put out!

“Fine, I don’t need to put it out….” thought Meng Hao, his eyes radiating coldness. With that, he produced the lightning cauldron, and then looked around. A moment later, his eyes came to rest on the crowds of Northern Reaches cultivators still above the Milky Way Sea.

“NOOOO!!” howled the Northern Reaches experts, turning to shoot toward Meng Hao.

They were a bit too slow. The lightning cauldron rumbled, and lightning flashed. Meng Hao’s body vanished, to be replaced by a confused looking Northern Reaches cultivator.

As for Meng Hao, he was now above the Milky Way Sea, in the middle of the crowds of Northern Reaches cultivators. He immediately tossed the stone cauldron down toward the cultivators on the bridge.

His incredible speed made it impossible to obstruct his way. Rumbling sounded out as the cauldron descended and then exploded. Utilizing the force of the detonation, the incense stick burned all the way to the end, releasing boundless strands of gray smoke. The smoke seemed to be sentient, and hungry for flesh and blood. It immediately began to search for nearby bodies, then started boring into the hundreds of thousands of Northern Reaches cultivators. Some of them even bored into the Resurrection Lily, causing some sections of the bridge to turn gray.

Miserable shrieks could be heard as the horrified Northern Desert cultivators found smoke burrowing into them and withering their bodies before they could even step foot into the Southern Domain.

Meng Hao heaved a sigh of relief, but the sense of danger he felt did not dissipate. Instead… it grew stronger to the point where his scalp was numb!

“What’s going on?!” he thought, shooting up into the air as gray smoke swirled toward him. Suddenly, Meng Hao caught sight of something far off in the distance. It was a half-eaten Cinnabar Fruit, falling towards the ground. When he saw it, his eyes went wide.

It was almost impossible to tell, but the Cinnabar Fruit… was burning!!

If you looked closely, you could tell that hidden almost undetectably inside of the Cinnabar Fruit was an incense stick!

Pill Demon also could sense that something wasn’t quite right. The incense smoke that he saw was just like the Hellwither Nineruins Incense that he remembered, but he still had the feeling that they had overlooked something.

His face flickered as he looked around and then suddenly saw… the Cinnabar Fruit that the Northern Reaches boy had casually tossed away!

“NOT GOOD!”

The Cinnabar Fruit itself didn’t seem to be anything extraordinary; the only noteworthy thing about it was that it had been bitten in half. It hadn’t fallen at a high speed, and because of that it had been difficult to detect. By the time it was discovered, it had already landed on the ground.

A rumbling sound could be heard as the Cinnabar Fruit shattered into pieces. Hidden inside it was half of an incense stick, much smaller than the incense stick in the stone cauldron. However, it was burning, and as soon as it touched the ground… the ground turned gray. Then, the grayness spread out rapidly. There was no way to stop it.

Meng Hao's face fell!

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# Chapter 769: The Power of the Curse!

Hellwither Nineruins was refined from the blood, flesh and fat of a true Immortal. By congealing the deep rancor felt by a true Immortal in the moments before death, a powerful curse was formed. As long as it didn’t touch any land, its power was ordinary. However, once it touched the land, the power of the curse would be unleashed on all living things that were born in that land.

It only had one fatal flaw, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say a weakness. While it was true that it used the refined rancor of a true Immortal’s flesh and blood to curse the land, the curse couldn’t be sustained for very long. At the most, it would last for three months before the land naturally purified itself!

Unfortunately, three months was enough time for all of the cultivators in the Southern Domain to be completely withered up and weakened to the point of death. For those who didn’t die, their cultivation bases would be significantly reduced.

The best way to use it was to enact the curse the moment the army arrived. Then, the Northern Reaches army could slaughter their way in like a thunderbolt, and quickly eliminate the foundation of the Southern Domain.

The Northern Reaches placed significant importance on the war with the Southern Domain. Because of that, the Imperial Bloodline Clan had spared nothing, not even the final remnants of its Hellwither Nineruins Incense, of which there was not one piece, but two.

One of the incense sticks had been used in an overt attack, the other in a sneak attack. That way… they hoped to ensure that at least one of the incense sticks touched the ground of the Southern Domain.

The Northern Reaches only had two chances!

And both of those chances were due to… the bizarre treasures of the Imperial Bloodline Clan!

The Imperial Bloodline Clan… could actually trace its origins back to the Southern Domain. However, long ago, they were suppressed by Lord Ji when he unified the four great planets and became the Lord of the Ninth Mountain.

As for the Imperial Bloodline Sect of the Northern Reaches, they were actually a branch of the Imperial Bloodline Clan, with the same bloodline. The only difference was that, instead of following the Imperial Bloodline’s internal family hierarchy, its structure was set up in the form of a Sect. Furthermore, they had sent out a big announcement to attract outsiders to join, and thus increase their overall power.

Under normal circumstances, the Northern Reaches would not dare to use such a bizarre treasure right under the noses of the Ji Clan in the Eastern Lands, not even with the Southern Domain in chaos.

But now… the true Immortality destiny had appeared. During this period of time, whoever came out on top in the struggle for the Immortality destiny would be able to achieve true Immortal Ascension. Using a special technique, the Imperial Bloodline Clan was able to determine that the source of the Immortality destiny… was in the Southern Domain!

That was why they attacked with such madness!

By occupying the Southern Domain, they could control the source of the Immortality destiny.

Currently, miserable shrieks could be heard coming from the crowds on the Resurrection Lily bridge. The first wave of hundreds of thousands of

Northern Reaches cultivators screamed as their bodies were withered, and their cultivation bases dropped.

They were sustaining significant losses before they even stepped foot into the Southern Domain. That caused the four peak Dao Seeking leaders that had come with this first wave to go mad.

Their hatred for Meng Hao instantly exploded to monstrous heights.

However, the lands of the Southern Domain were still in imminent danger!

In the blink of an eye, the grayness of the Hellwither Nineruins Incense spread out rapidly, and it wouldn’t take long for it to cover the entire Southern Domain.

It was a deep gray, almost black. Plants and vegetation withered and died as far as the eye could see. Wild animals screamed miserably and tried to flee, but rapidly weakened and then fell to the ground, trembling, eyes filled with despair.

Up in midair, Patriarch Song’s face went pale white. Even though he was floating above the ground, his body instantly began to emanate black smoke. The same thing happened to Sun Tao, the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch, and Patriarch Golden Frost.

Black smoke curled up as their flesh and blood began to rot. It was the same with Pill Demon.

“Hellwither Nineruins Incense….” said Pill Demon with a bitter chuckle. “The Northern Reaches want to cut off our Southern Domain cultivators’ foundation. This curse… even if we flee the Southern Domain at top speed, it won’t do any good. Anyone born in these lands will be incapable of fleeing…. This curse is so potent!” Even as he spoke, black smoke rose up from his body in wisps, and the grayness spread further.

“If only we could stop the curse from spreading… but how?!” It was in this moment that Pill Demon, his face twisted with sorrow, looked over at Meng

Hao, who was trembling with rage, his eyes bloodshot. Pill Demon gaped. “Hao’er… you’re… you’re not affected by the curse!!”

Meng Hao’s body wasn’t emanating any black smoke at all…. Earlier, before the Hellwither Nineruins Incense touched the ground, it had affected him. But now that the Southern Domain had been cursed, only people who were born there would be affected. However, Meng Hao… didn’t seem to be affected at all!

As for his second true self, it had been created using his own fleshly body, so it was the same.

Meng Hao didn’t have time to think about why the curse wasn’t affecting him. His eyes were shot with blood as he flew down toward the ground. He could see that there was nothing he could do to stop the rapid spread of the curse. He could also see that the grayness of the curse had already reached the location of the wedding ceremony. Everything was turning gray.

At the site of the wedding, hundreds of thousands of cultivators were combining their cultivation base power to form a windstorm in a desperate attempt to fight back. The purifying effect of the windstorm was somewhat effective in reducing the power of the curse, but could not completely block it.

Black smoke was already starting to roil up in shocking fashion.

By now, the four Northern Reaches peak Dao Seeking experts had noticed that Meng Hao was wearing garments that cultivators normally wouldn’t wear. They also saw the wedding decorations off in the distance. Finally, they understood.

“Don’t tell me that the Southern Domain cultivators were actually gathered here to attend this guy’s wedding!” said the old man in the animal skins. His eyes flashed with a bright light.

The two men who looked like animated corpses smiled ruthlessly. “Hundreds of thousands of cultivators gathered for a cultivator bonding ceremony!” said one of them. “It’s destined to be soaked with the color of blood!”

“Hahaha!” laughed the young boy. “A wonderful Red Wedding!” 1

“It’s too bad they’re all gathered together, though. If they were scattered out across the land, the Hellwither Nineruins could spread out with even greater impact. Now… it seems it will be a bit weaker.”

Meng Hao shot at top speed back toward the site of the wedding. He immediately burst through the windstorm to appear above the island in the lake.

Xu Qing, Chu Yuyan, everyone was all sitting cross-legged, pouring the power of their cultivation bases into the windstorm to fight back against the curse.

Xu Qing’s body was trembling especially hard. Because of her unique situation… the curse affected her even more severely than the others!

As soon as Meng Hao saw Xu Qing, his eyes filled with resolve. He stretched out his right hand and slammed it hard onto the surface of the ground. Immediately, the fourth level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic spun into motion.

Instead of absorbing blood or cultivation bases, he would use the Blood Demon Grand Magic vortex to try to absorb the curse power of the Hellwither Nineruins!

Meng Hao wasn’t sure if it would work, but he could think of no other options. The Northern Reaches had invaded on the day of his wedding. A joyous occasion had become lifeless. This was something he could not accept!

His heart quivered, and he was on the verge of insanity. The Blood Demon Grand Magic spun rapidly, a golden vortex that encompassed him, the island, and the entire lake.

It rotated rapidly, causing the lake water to also spin around. However, although it seemed as if the Hellwither curse was being affected at first, it suddenly seemed to completely ignore Meng Hao.

“Get over here!!” he roared. He ripped open a huge gash in his right palm, sending bright red blood splashing down onto the ground. At the same time that the blood entered the soil, the Blood Demon Grand Magic reached the pinnacle of its speed. Finally, the Hellwither curse was affected and started to near him. However… it was going far too slow!

“Second true self!” he cried. His second true self shot down from up above and landed behind him. He sat down cross legged, then stretched his right hand out and placed it on the middle of Meng Hao’s back.

By combining his own power with that of his second true self, Meng Hao was able to push the fourth level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic even faster.

RUMBLE!

It was like flinging a drop of water into a hot frying pan. The water in the lake boiled, with Meng Hao at the center. The Hellwither curse power that filled the land immediately began to surge toward Meng Hao.

It followed his blood and flesh to his palm, where it entered his body. He instantly began to tremble, and his hair turned white. His body also started to wither as vast amounts of curse power gathered together within him.

He was forcing the curse to fuse into him!

The Eternal stratum immediately surged into action as he used his own body to attempt to purify the land of the Hellwither curse. Any other person would be incapable of doing this. Meng Hao only had such a chance because he had the Eternal stratum.

Rumbling surrounded him as the Eternal stratum restored his body. As soon as it happened though, more curse power began to wither him away. It was a vicious cycle; in the short space of a few breaths of time, the Eternal stratum restored his body countless times.

Everything rumbled as the grayness in the area… began to change. From up above in the sky, it was obvious that Meng Hao was like a black hole into which the grayness of the curse power was being sucked, cleansing the land.

The four peak Dao Seeking experts from the Northern Reaches were completely shocked.

“Impossible!”

“Who is he?!?! That peak Dao Seeking cultivator is his clone!”

“He was clearly not affected by the curse! He wasn’t born in the lands of South Heaven 2! But his physical body… is actually… so powerful that he can can affect the Hellwither curse by himself!”

In all their years of cultivation, they had never encountered a cultivator as fearsome as this.

“Inhuman!” In their shock, they flew forward in an attempt to stop Meng Hao. However, how could Patriarch Song and Pill Demon possibly let them do as they pleased? After all, they had now seen a ray of hope. Along with Sun Tao, Patriarch Golden Frost and the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch, they flew forward, using their full strength to block the way.

Booms echoed out and the four Northern Reaches cultivators howled. However, they could do nothing to break through and had no way to interfere with Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s body trembled visibly as it was continuously withered away and then restored. The severity of the pain was enough to cause all but the most strong-willed person to pass out.

He gritted his teeth and continued on doggedly. However, then he looked over and saw Xu Qing sitting there, shivering even more violently than before.

“Too slow! I need to go faster!!” He pushed his left hand down onto the ground.

RUMBLE!

Curse power surged madly toward his two hands, furiously pouring into his body.

The grayness of the land was gradually fading away!

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1. Yes, this is the same term used to describe the Red Wedding in Game of Thrones, at least in the TV show. It literally means “blood-colored wedding,” but considering it appears to be a direct reference to THE Red Wedding, I think this is the best way to translate it. Incidentally, Game of Thrones is also popular in China. Some people download it, others watch the subtitled, edited version which is available to view streaming online. That version is mostly edited for sex, not violence.

2. Questions have been directed to me in the comments section, on Reddit, and via e-mail, so I’m adding this footnote. The original Chinese says “South Heaven” in this part. It is not a typo

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# Chapter 770: That Laughter….

The ground quaked, and the gray color had faded by ten percent!

Up in midair, the four Northern Reaches Dao Seeking experts were in the midst of magical combat with Patriarch Song and the others. When they saw the color changing down below, they were astonished.

“Ten percent!”

“Dammit! How could he be so inhuman? He used his own body as the vessel to absorb ten percent of the curse power!!”

Meng Hao trembled as the curse power filled him. His flesh and blood constantly withered, and his Eternal stratum continuously restored him. Within a brief span, this cycle had already been repeated innumerable times.

It was an even more brutal sight than what had occurred when Meng Hao stood outside the Blood Demon Sect’s shield while fighting the four allied powers.

Blood oozed constantly out of the sides of his mouth, and even his eyes leaked black, viscous blood. His face was as pale as a corpse, and yet his hands remained planted firmly on the ground. The Blood Demon Grand Magic spun rapidly as it sucked the curse power from the ground.

His second true self was also trembling as he used all the strength he could muster to raise the gravitational force of Meng Hao’s Blood Demon Grand Magic to a shocking level.

The entire island was surrounded by a gray whirlwind, which emitted shocking rumbling sounds as it rotated, covering the entire lake and spreading out into surrounding areas. The endless curse power that had spread off into the distance was gradually sucked into the Blood Demon Grand Magic, and then into Meng Hao's body.

The intensity of the pain that stabbed through him was impossible to describe. The cycle of withering and recovery seemed like the most vicious and painful torture imaginable. Soon, Meng Hao's hair couldn't be restored, and was no longer black. Instead, it was gray, and turning whiter by the moment.

"Have to go even faster!" thought Meng Hao. He gritted his teeth and then spat up a huge mouthful of blood. His body swayed back and forth, but his ten fingers were firmly planted on the ground as he sucked in curse power at an incredible speed.

Twenty percent!

Thirty percent!

The color of the curse was changing throughout the entire Southern Domain. In a short moment, Meng Hao seemed to have been reincarnated a hundred times. It was almost like his body didn't belong to him any more; only his will remained as steadfast as ever.

Up in the sky, the four Dao Seeking experts from the Northern Reaches were completely astonished, and couldn't help but gasp. They could scarcely believe what they were seeing.

The fact that someone could do this, could use their own body to resist the Hellwither Nineruins curse, and even absorb it, was beyond their imaginations. In fact, had any one of them been in that position, it would have been impossible for them to do the same.

From their perspective, Meng Hao was taking a huge, suicidal risk.

"Crazy! That guy's crazy!"

"How could he not be crazy!? Today is his wedding day, and now it's turned into a funeral!"

"He'll die for sure. There's no way his body can take it! He'll turn into a pool of blood that will be an even more noxious curse!"

"He's DEAD!"

As for the hundreds of thousands of cultivators who had come to participate in the wedding celebration, their bodies were still slowly withering. Although Meng Hao was frenziedly attempting to absorb the curse, as long as the curse was still there, everyone would still be under its effects.

One face after another grew pale and aged. At the same time, Xu Qing… was trembling. She looked like a flower that would completely wilt at any moment.

Meng Hao's heart was filled with a grief and indignation that was like a pent-up breath of frustration which could not be exhaled. It surged through his body, and his eyes turned red. Within his mind, a single thought revolved….

He had to do everything he could to absorb the entire curse!

However… it was apparent that ability of his body to recover from the curse was slowly lessening. In fact, his skin was already beginning to shrivel and parch. His Eternal stratum, even were it stronger than it already was, would be incapable of infinite recovery.

"There really isn't anything truly Eternal in this world…." Meng Hao thought as blood flowed out from his mouth. He knew this, and knew that his Eternal stratum would be incapable of sustaining him in perpetuity. However, as before… he chose to continue to absorb the curse.

RUMBLE!

The color faded even more.

Forty percent!!

Not much time had passed, and he had already absorbed forty percent of the Hellwither Nineruins curse. As a result, he was filled with unspeakable pain.

His teeth were loosening in his jaw, and his skin was growing old. His bones were softening, and blood oozed out of his eyes, ears, nose and mouth. And yet to Meng Hao… none of that mattered!

He looked over at Xu Qing and took a deep breath. There was a vast amount of curse power built up in him already, to the point that the Eternal stratum couldn’t dispel it. His vital organs were now beginning to wither and rot.

At this point, Xu Qing’s eyelashes fluttered and she… opened her eyes.

She looked at Meng Hao and didn’t have the energy to speak. However, anxiety, deep concern, and anguish could be seen in her eyes. It was an expression that broke Meng Hao’s heart.

The wedding ceremony… had only been half completed.

Now, everything was gray… and the color of blood!

It should have been the happiest day of his life, but now… it was turning into a tragedy.

Meng Hao laughed. He lifted his head up to the sky and laughed. That laughter sounded maniacal, enraged, filled with intense discontent. Rumbling sounds could be heard from beneath his palms. His body was already nearly completely withered by the curse, and yet he continued to absorb it.

RUMBLE!

The ground changed color again.

Fifty percent!!

Boundless curse power rumbled toward him. Meng Hao was a black hole at the center of the windstorm, absorbing everything.

Blood poured out of his eyes, ears, nose and mouth. His skin was tearing, and he was now sitting in the middle of a pool of blood. The accumulation of curse power within him was reaching a peak.

The Hellwither Nineruins curse contained incredible powers of withering. It withered the land, and also caused the cultivation bases of all the cultivators born in that land to wither. Now, that power was building up inside of Meng Hao. The Eternal stratum could not wipe it away, causing Meng Hao to tremble violently.

It was at this point that Meng Hao suddenly made unexpected progress. After all, he cultivated the Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao. Within those seven characters was the ‘withering’ character!

As of this moment, he gained complete enlightenment of withering!

With the complete understanding of the ‘withering’ character, Meng Hao’s body rumbled, and the curse power within him began to shrink. It condensed into his blood vessels, his soul, his flesh, and transformed into… a ‘withering’ character divine ability!

At that moment, Meng Hao sucked in a deep breath as the Withering Character Incantation combined with the Blood Immortal Divine Ability. In combination with the frenzied assistance of the second true self, massive rumbling sounds filled the air.

Sixty percent!!

The color of the curse throughout all the Southern Domain changed once again. Everything shook, and the four Northern Reaches peak Dao Seeking experts up above were further shocked.

“His body… his body is actually at Dao Seeking!!”

“There’s something strange about the technique he cultivates. This guy… this guy’s body can constantly regenerate!”

“He can actually absorb the withering power of the curse!!”

The four men only continued to be more and more astonished. In fact, even Patriarch Song and the others could hardly believe what they were seeing. The only one who wasn't surprised was Pill Demon. He looked sadly at Meng Hao, as well as the lands below.

He was Meng Hao's master, and he knew why Meng Hao was risking everything. Today was his wedding day, and his wife was on the same island he was.

"Unless he absorbs one hundred percent, the effects can't be completely reversed…." murmured Pill Demon.

When Meng Hao absorbed sixty percent of the curse, the withering effect on the surrounding hundreds of thousands of cultivators was visibly reduced. Although they were still trembling, the effects of the curse seemed to have eased up a bit. When they opened their eyes, what they saw… was Meng Hao, coughing up blood, his body slowly dissolving.

Sixty percent… was not enough!

Meng Hao produced the lightning cauldron and attempted to pour the curse power into it, but it didn't work. The lightning cauldron and the curse were two completely different things. He thought about using the Wooden Time Swords to afflict the curse with the passage of time, but doing that would also affect the curse power in the bodies of the Southern Domain cultivators.

Once the Time power activated, it might end things… but it would also cause the destructive power of the curse to be inflicted faster.

He thought of many other options, but none could resolve the problem.

The only thing left to do was to continue to absorb the curse power. He once again sent the Withering Character Incantation into operation. Once again the land rumbled, and the color changed.

Seventy percent!

The Withering Character Incantation was reaching its limit. With seventy percent of the curse power absorbed, even it was incapable of absorbing more.

Meng Hao had truly reached his limit.

His Eternal stratum was on the verge of fading away. His body couldn’t handle any more withering from the curse. He was ancient now.

Tears rolled down Xu Qing’s face.

The four peak Dao Seeking cultivators from the Northern Reaches had already been completely shaken by Meng Hao. However, now they could see that he had reached his limit, and they heaved sighs of relief.

“It’s over. He’s reached his limit. He can’t absorb any more!”

“He absorbed seventy percent of the curse power and yet didn’t die. The power of withering even seems to exist within him! As far as I can tell, this guy… is the number one figure in the entire Southern Domain!”

“To destroy the Southern Domain we must first destroy him! Damnation! There’s only thirty percent of the curse power remaining!”

Back on the island, Meng Hao saw the tears on Xu Qing’s face, and it seemed as if the entire world went completely silent.

He looked at her, and his life force ignited. His cultivation base exploded with power. The mark on his hand that had appeared in the past appeared once again.

He raised his head up and laughed. It was a shrill laughter that echoed out. Meng Hao was burning everything he had in one mad, desperate attempt to absorb more curse power.

“NO!” Xu Qing cried weakly, trembling. The moment she cried out was the same moment that Meng Hao made his final, crazed attempt.

The ground trembled and the color changed again, growing more faded.

Eighty percent!!

After eighty percent of the curse power entered his body, Meng Hao attempted to absorb all the way to ninety. But then, his body trembled and he coughed up a huge mouthful of blood. Some sort of massive power pushed back against his palms, and he was sent tumbling backward. Blood sprayed out. He was now… incapable of absorbing any more curse power.

“Impossible!!” thought the four Northern Reaches peak Dao Seeking experts.

Without Meng Hao to absorb it, the remaining twenty percent of the curse power suddenly exploded out to inundate the hundreds of thousands of cultivators…. Their cultivation bases surged with all the power they could summon as they fought back. The result was… the curse power was reduced by another ten percent.

As of now, ninety percent of the curse power had been wiped away. Only ten percent was left behind. That ten percent seemed to erupt with unprecedented power. The hundreds of thousands of cultivators all coughed up blood.

However, there was an intense, murderous look in the eyes of each and every one. To these cultivators, the remaining ten percent of the curse power was no catastrophe. It was something they could bear. Furthermore, there was little weakening to their cultivation bases.

One by one, they stood up, and in their eyes was monstrous killing intent. In that moment, wild colors flashed in the sky, and the clouds churned. The four peak Dao Seeking experts from the Northern Reaches felt their scalps going numb. They were completely shaken.

It was only Xu Qing, still clothed in her red wedding dress… who coughed up blood and continued to grow weaker. Because of her body’s unique situation, even the ten percent of the curse power that remained could be fatal to her.

She suddenly began to topple over. Meng Hao, around whom swirled black wisps of death aura, immediately lurched forward and caught her in his arms. Filled with grief and rage, he carried her off into the distance, far from the raging war that was about to erupt.

He had saved the entire Southern Domain, but couldn’t save his wife. In his insanity, Meng Hao began to laugh with grief. Laughter that sounded like weeping echoed out across the lands.

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# Chapter 771: Let Me Rest a Bit

An incredible silence suddenly filled the entire battlefield. After that, killing intent exploded up into the Heavens.

“KILL THEM!!” Hundreds of thousands of cultivators charged madly toward the Milky Way Sea, towards the hundreds of thousands of withering Northern Reaches cultivators.

The war… had begun!

Meng Hao left. And yet, not a single Southern Domain cultivator felt even the slightest bit upset because of that. They had attended Meng Hao and Xu Qing’s wedding, as well as the invasion of the Northern Reaches. They had also experienced the Hellwither Nineruins curse.

They only thing they felt regarding Meng Hao was sorrow, as well as hope that he would eventually have the strength to continue on.

A huge massacre unfolded on the border of the Southern Domain.

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Meng Hao held Xu Qing; both were still wearing their red wedding garments. He held her in his arms, and she leaned up against his chest. A dark aura surrounded Meng Hao, and his body was incredibly withered. Tears filled his eyes, and his heart was torn to pieces. He felt as if he was being continuously stabbed with countless sharp blades.

A black aura also appeared on the withered Xu Qing. She had already died once, and although her body had been restored, it was only meant to survive for a hundred years.

The remaining ten percent power of the curse might not affect others very much, but to Xu Qing, well… it was something her body couldn't handle.

The remaining ten percent of the curse power was like exponential time power. Within only a few days, she would live out an entire lifetime.

Xu Qing suddenly forced her eyes open to look at her husband as he held her. He was the most dear and important person in her entire life. Her voice weak, she said, "I want… to go back to the valley."

She didn't want Meng Hao to be unhappy, nor did she want to see him hurt even the smallest bit. She wanted to be happy with him forever, with no pain, and no sadness.

No matter what, as long as you are safe and sound, then I'm content.

"Alright, let's go back…." said Meng Hao with a nod. His heart trembled as he looked at her. He didn't want his grief to affect her, so a warm smile appeared on his face.

Except, it was a smile that was filled with silent tears.

"You did the right thing," she murmured. "They came to attend our wedding, and we shouldn't let the guests be harmed. We owe them now…. In the future, if I'm not here, make sure to pay everyone back." With that, she sunk into his chest exhaustedly and closed her eyes.

When she closed her eyes, Meng Hao stopped in place. After sensing that she was simply unconscious, he felt that he could finally unleash his grief. He looked up into the sky… and tears began to pour out.

He didn't want to alarm Xu Qing, so he held her very gently as they proceeded off into the distance. They passed over mountains and lands until they reached the Blood Demon Sect, Blood Prince Gorge, and their log cabin.

He went to seek advice from Patriarch Blood Demon, but the Immortal's cave was sealed with a blood-colored shield, preventing him from entering.

Patriarch Blood Demon was asleep, and incapable of awakening.

Back in the valley, Meng Hao held Xu Qing, and his heart ached. Straightening her hair, he softly said, “We agreed to spend a hundred years together. After that you would be reincarnated, and I would go find you….”

Xu Qing opened her eyes and smiled at him. What she didn’t see was that when he stroked his hand through her hair, it was filled with withered strands of hair that had fallen out.

Meng Hao saw, and he trembled. He quickly clenched his fingers, causing the hairs to vanish.

Xu Qing’s face was pale. Her hair, like her life, was withering away. Her face was also slowly changing. She was no longer young and beautiful. Wrinkles were spreading out across her face.

The flow of time affected her body in a way that made it seem as if many years had elapsed.

As Meng Hao watched her pretty features growing older, he felt as if he didn’t have a heart anymore. All he had was a feeling of emptiness, as if a painful black hole existed within his chest.

Xu Qing looked at the night sky, and the twinkling stars. Her voice soft, she murmured, “I wish… we could go back in time to the Reliance Sect. I could be your Elder Sister in the sect and you could be my Junior Brother….

“I would take you to meet my family. I remember that before I was taken to the sect, I had a younger brother….

“I wish… I could be with you forever….” She was growing weaker. She closed her eyes and slept.

Meng Hao could tell that Xu Qing’s life force was reaching its end. Her fleshly body was withered, and it seemed as if it might vanish at any moment. She had no energy left, like a candle in the wind….

Xu Qing was aging. She no longer appeared to be in her twenties, but rather, middle-aged. However, to Meng Hao, she would eternally be that beautiful young woman to whom he had once given a Cosmetic Cultivation Pill.

“I won’t let you wither away,” he said softly. “We agreed to spend a hundred years together, and we will!” Eyes filling with a flame of unprecedented decisiveness, he reached down to stroke her cheek.

After a long moment, he closed his eyes briefly, then reopened them and extended his right index finger. From the look of it, it was now the only part of his body that hadn’t been affected by the withering. That was because… it contained what little remained of his Eternal stratum.

He carefully sliced a cut into his finger and slowly squeezed out a few drops of blood onto Xu Qing’s lips, blood which contained his Eternal stratum.

Her lips turned the color of blood, and it almost seemed they they were the only part of her body that had any color. It formed a stark contrast to her ashen skin. As the blood seeped into her mouth, her face suddenly wasn’t old any more.

Meng Hao, on the other hand, trembled, and his body withered up a bit more. His Eternal stratum was now weakened, but in his heart, he felt hope.

However, after three days passed, Meng Hao realized that his Eternal stratum could not prevent Xu Qing from withering. Finally, he started laughing bitterly.

Xu Qing’s hair was now mostly white, and her face looked middle-aged. She was skinny, and no longer beautiful like she used to be. However, the warmth in her eyes, and the curve of her smile, were things that Meng Hao would never forget.

Finally, she smiled and prevented Meng Hao from using any more of his Eternal stratum blood. It hurt her heart to see him doing such a thing, even more so than the thought of her imminent death.

“Just stay with me,” she said. “Until the end. Take me to be reincarnated…. That’s good enough.

“We agreed to a whole lifetime. So, it’s just like… I’m going to sleep for a bit. When I wake up, I’ll see you there. Right…?”

“Absolutely!” said Meng Hao, his voice quavering.

Days passed, and Xu Qing grew older. The time she remained awake every day lessened. Most of the time, she slept.

Meng Hao stayed by her side, and didn’t take even half a step outside of the valley. He held her the entire time, held her in a way that said he never wanted to let her go.

As for his own body, as the days passed, the Eternal stratum gradually awoke and began to restore him. Even as the curse power was slowly expelled from within, Xu Qing continued to grow weaker.

Meng Hao tried every method possible to reverse the fading of Xu Qing’s life force, all to no avail. He hated that his cultivation base wasn’t high enough, and even more so, he hated the cruelty of the Northern Reaches curse.

His heart was already Devilish, but he had been suppressing it, almost as if with shackles. But now… the shackles began to loosen….

He could do nothing but watch over Xu Qing. He watched as her hair turned white, and her youth disappeared. She went from being middle-aged to being elderly. Although he could have changed her out of the red wedding dress, he didn’t, and she still wore it.

At one point she forced her eyes open to look at him, but they were cloudy, and she couldn’t see him clearly. “Chu Yuyan is a good girl,” she murmured. “I told her that I can only stay with you for a hundred years, and that she should help me take care of you.

“Song Jia isn’t bad either….”

Meng Hao didn’t say anything. He looked at her, his eyes filled with grief as he slowly caressed her wrinkled face. What he saw was her former beautiful face that had changed in only a few days as he held her.

By now, the Devil in Meng Hao’s heart was unshackled and awakening….

In those few days that passed, great changes occurred outside in the Southern Domain. In the battle on the shore of the Milky Way Sea, the hundreds of thousands of Northern Reaches cultivators all died. The Milky Way Sea was stained red with blood.

Then the second wave of the Northern Reaches’ forces arrived. The hundreds of thousands of Southern Domain cultivators began to retreat. The battlefield grew from the border of the Southern Domain, to engulf fully half of the entire continent.

Fierce fighting raged every day. Among the hundreds of thousands of Northern Reaches cultivators were seven Dao Seeking experts, which made it virtually impossible for the Southern Domain to hold their ground. They were constantly forced into retreat.

All of the Southern Domain’s cultivators were mobilized. It didn’t matter the sect or clan, everyone was called into action for this war of life or death!

It was without a doubt a fight to the death. The Northern Reaches’ invasion was not one in which surrender was sought. They wanted the complete annihilation of the Southern Domain cultivators’ foundation. Furthermore, because of the casualties suffered by the initial wave of attackers, the Northern Reaches cultivators harbored an even more intense and deep-seated hatred for the Southern Domain than they had in the beginning.

No one would rest until the other side was dead!

Sects were laid to waste and one clan after another was left in ruins. Eventually, the war focused on six different fronts. It was as if six mighty arrows had been shot from the Northern Reaches directly into the Southern Domain.

The third and fourth fronts eventually overlapped, and became the location of the largest concentration of cultivators. Hundreds of thousands of Southern Domain cultivators were there, as was the main force of the Northern Reaches army. The carnage was never ending, and the Southern Domain was in a state of constant retreat.

Severe casualties were inflicted every day, and bloody paths strewn with corpses stretched across the land.

Several days later, over half of the hundreds of thousands of Southern Domain cultivators in the third and fourth fronts were dead. The remaining 200,000 were now falling back to the Blood Demon Sect.

A final line of defense was being set up outside the Blood Demon Sect to resist the Northern Reaches’ murderous assault.

Rumbling filled the battlefield, along with miserable screams and the sound of fierce combat. The colorful lights of divine abilities filled the air, and the ground quaked.

The Northern Reaches had come with giants the size of mountains, who wielded enormous wolf-tooth clubs. They charged onto the battlefield in the vanguard, and even when their bodies had been covered with bloody wounds, they continued their awful massacre. Then there were the countless wild beasts and innumerable evil spirits that accompanied the hundreds of thousands of Northern Reaches cultivators. They were a powerful force of destruction that crushed everything in their path.

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# Chapter 772: No Regret Regarding the Grand Wedding!

The chaotic sounds of battle drifted into the Blood Demon Sect. All the remaining Blood Demon Sect disciples were outside, alongside the other Southern Domain cultivators, defending against the advancing Northern Reaches army.

The Southern Domain cultivators had no choice but to fall back to the Blood Demon Sect. As the Northern Reaches army advanced, this location had became something of a holy land for the Southern Domain.

The Blood Demon Sect was the most powerful sect in the Southern Domain!

The Blood Demon Sect had Meng Hao, who had saved the entire Southern Domain from the curse!

The Blood Demon Sect also had the legendary, incredibly powerful Patriarch Blood Demon.

Therefore, that was the location the forces from the third and fourth fronts retreated to. The Northern Reaches cultivators were happy to see this; they wanted to destroy the foundation of the Southern Domain. If they could take out the Blood Demon Sect, then they would be able to deliver the coup de grâce to the Southern Domain cultivators in one fell swoop.

The other fronts throughout the Southern Domain were also changing locations, getting closer to the Blood Demon Sect. From the look of things, they wanted to make the Blood Demon Sect the location of their final stand.

The Southern Domain… did not seem to have any hope of winning. By now, the Northern Reaches had mobilized the third wave of their army, which would arrive in only a few days from the Milky Way Sea.

That third wave army represented the ultimate power of the Northern Reaches.

Constant carnage could be witnessed in the area surrounding the Blood Demon Sect. Pill Demon, Patriarch Song, and in fact, all of the peak Dao Seeking experts in the Southern Domain, were there at what was essentially the primary battlefield of the war. They had been fighting and killing for so long that their eyes were completely bloodshot.

Patriarch Song had lost his right arm, as well as an eye. His aura was weak, and he had even been forced to start burning his life force.

Sun Tao from the Violet Fate Sect had lost his fleshly body, and was now nothing more than a Nascent Divinity. However, he was surrounded by swirling pill furnaces, and continued to fight nonetheless.

Patriarch Golden Frost was severely injured. As the battle had progressed, he had recovered some of his senses, and was no longer muddle-headed and ignorant. In the moment when he became lucid, he did not flee, but rather began to laugh bitterly.

“I have sinned!” he roared. “Sinned against the Southern Domain!!” With that, he began to fight even more frenziedly than before.

The 3rd Li Clan Patriarch did not recover his senses. He died fighting.

His death shook the entire battlefield. He was at the peak of Dao Seeking, and in the end, opted to self-detonate. Although he wasn’t able to kill any of the peak Dao Seeking experts from the Northern Domain, he did manage to severely injure three of them.

Pill Demon was completely exhausted, and also injured. At some point, a violet mark had come to appear on his forehead. Apparently, it was something that had previously been sealed, but now… he was experimentally unleashing it.

When the mark appeared, his cultivation base left the early Dao Seeking stage, passed through the middle stage and ended… by emanating the power of the late Dao Seeking Stage.

It was as if terrifying waves had been unleashed inside of him that rolled around constantly in an attempt to break out.

Even more Spirit Severing experts died.

The Northern Reaches suffered similarly large casualties. The war unfolded rapidly, and in a short period of time, rivers of blood flowed everywhere.

As the sound of battle and slaughter rumbled from the outside world into Blood Prince Gorge, Meng Hao sat there holding Xu Qing, watching her gradually grow older and older. More wrinkles covered her face, and her hair was now completely white. Finally, the pain in his heart seemed to form a resonance with the fighting and killing going on outside.

There was no way for him to keep Xu Qing's life force from slipping away. There was nothing he could do but watch as her beauty slowly faded.

There was no sparkle or reflection in her cloudy eyes when she opened them; her whole world had become blurry.

“After I'm gone, will you miss me…?” she asked.

When Meng Hao heard this, more tears welled up in his eyes, and stabbing pain filled his heart. He held her tight, and his tears dropped down onto her face.

“Don't cry….” she murmured, using what scant energy she had left to raise a withered hand and try to wipe his face dry. “I'm happy. Happy that I ran into you that day on Mount Daqing….

“I hope that after I'm reincarnated and then regain my memories, it will be on another Mount Daqing… with you….

“Meng Hao, I’ve been dreaming a lot recently. I always dream… that we are back on Mount Daqing, or in the Reliance Sect….” As she spoke, the flame of her life force began to slowly fade away.

By now, she was fully conscious. Clearly, this was the last bit of lucidity she would experience before death, the last burst of life force. Her eyes were not clouded now, but clear, filled with warmth as she recalled past times, and also brimming with an intense reluctance to leave.

She didn’t want to leave the lands of the Southern Domain. She didn’t want to leave Meng Hao. There were too many things keeping her here, too many memories. She didn’t want to part with any of them. She wanted to stay with Meng Hao for the rest of the hundred years. Unfortunately… that was now impossible.

She sighed, and deep in her heart she felt regret. Regret that the wedding ceremony… was only half completed.

“Meng Hao… take care of yourself…. You live, I live… you die, I die…. When the day arrives that I recover my memories after being reincarnated, you need to be there…. If you’re not, then I don’t ever want to wake up from the darkness of being unaware.” The light that flickered in her eyes was gradually fading. The hand she had lifted up moments ago grew so weak that it fell back down.

In the moment that it began to fall, Meng Hao reached out to take hold of it. Deep in his eyes, grief mixed with warmth as he looked at Xu Qing.

He placed his right hand onto her back and poured more of his own life force into her. In that moment, his hair turned completely white.

The simple act bolstered her fading life force just a little bit, allowing her to stay alive in the world just a little bit longer. She could breathe bit more of that air she didn’t wish to part with, and her eyes glowed with just a little bit more light as she looked at Meng Hao.

“Let me go, okay…?” she murmured weakly.

Meng Hao’s eyes glowed with determination. “Our wedding hasn’t been finished,” he said. “So you can’t go yet…. I’m going to give you a complete cultivator bonding ceremony!” With that, he held her tight and flew up into the air.

He dared not loosen his grip on her. It was his flow of life force that was preventing her from fading away.

They were still wearing their red wedding gowns, and both had snow white hair. They were old.

It was as if great rejoicing and great calamity were fused together as Meng Hao flew out of Blood Prince Gorge. Off in the distance, he could see the shocking battle which was underway.

Hundreds of thousands of cultivators fought like mad. The ripples cast off by magical techniques flowed out in all directions. Bright colors flashed in the sky, and the clouds churned chaotically. Booms and explosions accompanied death and destruction…. At any given moment, miserable screams could be heard drifting across the battlefield. They turned into waves of sound that resembled the Yellow Springs of the underworld.

The sky above and the land below seemed to have become the color of blood, filled with endless corpses….

It was evening, but the shattered air and swirling tempests caused the sky to look as dark as night.

When Meng Hao appeared, it instantly attracted quite a bit of attention. The powerful experts of both the Southern Domain and the Northern Reaches saw the old man carrying the white-haired old woman, both of whom were clad in red wedding attire.

They could also sense the profound mixture of calmness and grief that radiated out of the man.

When the Southern Domain cultivators saw him, they couldn’t help but feel bitter and pained.

“Meng Hao…. It’s the exalted Meng Hao!”

“Don’t tell me… is that Xu Qing in his arms…? That… that curse power is….”

“I was there at the wedding ceremony. I’ve never seen a more spectacular sight in my whole life….”

Patriarch Song looked at Meng Hao, and it seemed like he wanted to say something. In the end, he didn’t. He could sense the profound pain in Meng Hao, the kind that was like losing your own heart.

The awoken Patriarch Golden Frost also remained silent.

Sun Tao had nothing left but a Nascent Divinity. He looked at Meng Hao from some distance off, then turned and continued to fight.

Pill Demon’s expression was one of sorrow. He saw his apprentice and couldn’t help but think about how the wedding ceremony had turned into this current situation. Great rejoicing had turned into great sorrow. He wasn’t sure what he should say.

Virtually none of the Northern Reaches cultivators recognized Meng Hao at first. However, once they saw his clothes, and the white hair, as well as the agonized expressions of the Southern Domain cultivators, they thought of a name that had already become legendary among the Northern Reaches cultivators.

“Meng Hao! It’s definitely that damnable Meng Hao!”

“Yeah, that’s him! He infected the entire first wave of the army with the Hellwither Nineruins. Hundreds of thousands of cultivators… massacred! The Milky Way Sea turned red with blood!”

“Our Northern Reaches forces invaded the Southern Domain on the day of his wedding. What bad luck for him! His wedding day turned into a day of death and sorrow!”

"Well, he deserves it! Now that he's shown his face again, he'll die for sure. It's actually a good thing for him! They can go to the underworld together! A happily married pair of dead souls!"

The Northern Reaches' peak Dao Seeking experts were among the forces that were currently abuzz with surprise. All of them were hurt, especially the three who were seriously injured by the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch's death. Among those three, one was the man dressed in animal skins, and another was the young boy, both of whom were from the first wave army. The third was an old woman from the second wave army.

"That's the Meng Hao that the Southern Domain cultivators always talk about!" said the man in animal-skin garments, frowning. "He absorbed eighty percent of the curse power and still didn't die!!"

"He could be considered the archenemy of the Northern Reaches," said the boy through clenched teeth. His eyes burned with killing intent. "If he had died, it would have been lucky for him. Since he's not dead, then I'm going to turn him into mincemeat today!

"Actually, it's good that he's still alive. Let him wallow in the feeling of withering up with his beloved on his wedding day! Let him be immersed in the sensation of growing old! Let his pain be a sacrifice to put to rest the souls of the hundreds of thousands of Northern Reaches heroes who died because of him!"

Next to the three wounded peak Dao Seeking experts were several Northern Reaches Patriarchs. They had long since heard the name of Meng Hao, and now that they laid eyes on him personally, their killing intent spread everywhere.

Countless eyes across the battlefield were fixed on Meng Hao; his expression was one of grief as he looked at the aged, white-haired Xu Qing. Finally, he looked up, and his gaze came to fall upon his master, Pill Demon.

"Master," he said. "I want to finish the wedding ceremony here and now. Master, could you please continue to bear witness to the marriage!"

Although his words were calm, that calmness contained something that caused the spirits of all the Southern Domain cultivators to be completely shaken.

Xu Qing’s eyes were fixed on Meng Hao. She fought with all her power to prevent them from closing, and as she did, scintillating teardrops welled up inside and then seeped out down her cheeks.

A tremor ran through Pill Demon.

At the same time, the eyes of the Southern Domain cultivators began to glow with red light.

“The Blood Prince’s grand wedding ceremony will continue!!”

“Blood Prince, I couldn’t prepare a wedding gift for you, so let me kill some Northern Reaches cultivators for you! Their heads can be my wedding gift, and their blood my means of congratulating you!”

“Exalted Meng Hao, let the wedding ceremony continue!!”

The sorrow in the hearts of the Southern Domain cultivators transformed into a massive roar that echoed out across the battlefield.

Immediately, Blood Demon Sect disciples flew out to create an area decorated with lanterns and banners. It only took a moment for the place to look like a joyous and happy wedding was taking place there.

The battlefield now seemed to be completely split in two!

On one side was blood and slaughter!

On the other side was Meng Hao’s wedding!

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# Chapter 773: Xu Qing Enters Reincarnation

To hold a wedding ceremony in the middle of a battle was something that had never happened in the Southern Domain. As the Southern Domain cultivators roared with grief and rage, Pill Demon hovered in midair, looking at Meng Hao and the white-haired Xu Qing. Pill Demon’s heart trembled.

“I… will absolutely continue to bear witness for you and Xu Qing!” he said, his voice ancient and his heart filled with grief.

His voice echoed out across the battlefield, prompting a roar of response from the Southern Domain cultivators.

The hundreds of thousands of Northern Reaches cultivators were shocked by the scene that was playing out in front of them. As for their seven peak Dao Seeking experts, their eyes flickered with killing intent.

“The first half was a Red Wedding. Therefore… let’s make the last half even more red with blood!”

“Northern Reaches cultivators! Eradicate all of the Southern Domain cultivators! Stain the ground red with blood! Fill the place with discarnate souls! Soak this Red Wedding… with blood! CHARGE!!”

In response to the words of the peak Dao Seeking experts, the hundreds of thousands of Northern Reaches cultivators’ killing intent rocketed up. Roaring, they charged forward.

“KILL THEM!!”

The carnage once again continued. The ground shook and the air rippled with distortions. The battle between the Southern Domain and the Northern Reaches was like an enormous grindstone. Every time the two sides clashed, miserable screams would ring out. Every time they slammed into each other, blood and gore would spray in the air and discarnate souls would cry out in misery.

The Southern Domain cultivators had gone mad, and their hearts surged with righteous ardor.

“We’ve come this far, now the time has come to die in battle! FIGHT!!”

“The Southern Domain is my home while I live, and the Southern Domain shall be my haunt when I die!”

“The wedding will blossom like a flower in the heart of bloody battle! How grand! Present the blood and heads of the Northern Reaches cultivators as wedding gifts! KILL THEM!”

Deadly combat filled the battlefield. For the Blood Demon Sect disciples, the mountains were the wedding candles and the land below was the wedding veil. With the wave of a few hands, a palace rose up, beautiful and grand, with lanterns and streamers. The palace appeared to display the facade of a happy wedding. Everyone was smiling, except within their smiles could be seen deep grief.

Meng Hao held Xu Qing, and she rested her head against his chest to look out at the scene. She could hear his heart beating, and could feel her own connection to the world.

She looked up at Meng Hao as if she were trying to burn his image into her very soul in such a way that reincarnation would be incapable of wiping it away, the River of Forgetfulness would be incapable of washing it clean, and not even the tea of old lady Meng could make her forget.

Popping sounds could be heard as magical techniques and divine abilities were employed to create what looked like fireworks. Beautiful colors filled the land and sky; the sight was beautiful to behold.

The new bride and groom were a huge contrast to the battle around them!

Meng Hao’s white hair floated around him as he held Xu Qing in his arms and poured life force into her. Xu Qing’s hair was also white, and her face was covered with wrinkles. However, it also seemed to glow with a certain purity and holiness.

Even as an old woman, she could continue to smile despite the fact that her beauty had faded away!

Meng Hao was also smiling, and yet, the grief in his heart continued to grow more and more profound. As of now, the only thing he could do was look deeply into her eyes. He knew that if he loosened his hand, she would fade away.

She would part from the world of the living and find her way to reincarnation.

“KILL THEM!” roared the seven peak Dao Seeking experts as they charged down from above. Patriarch Song’s expression was one of grief as he roared and shot to meet them. Sun Tao’s Nascent Soul and Patriarch Golden Frost joined him, along with Meng Hao’s second true self.

Booms echoed out as four people completely blocked the way of seven!

Bitter fighting continued all around; roars filled the air along with bloodcurdling screams. Both Northern Reaches cultivators and Southern Domain cultivators were fighting with madness, killing everything that moved.

The ground trembled as the fighting raged like wildfire.

Nearby, it was visible to everyone that… the wedding ceremony was officially commencing.

Pill Demon flew into the air to hover in front of Meng Hao and Xu Qing. He looked at Meng Hao, and he looked at Xu Qing, whom he held in his arms. Despite the fact that Pill Demon’s heart felt like it was being ripped apart, his lips couldn’t help curving into a gentle smile.

Meng Hao held Xu Qing as he looked at Pill Demon.

“Master, make the declaration, okay?” he said.

The ground was trembling, but there was still a significant number of cultivators in the area who dropped to their knees to kowtow. It was a spontaneous action on their part, their way of thanking Meng Hao for absorbing the curse and saving their lives.

Such kowtows were kowtows that came directly from the heart.

From far up above the battlefield, it could clearly be seen that, shockingly, the entire place had been split into two areas. In one area, the wedding ceremony was being carried out. In the other, it was complete carnage!

Those present who had attended the first half of Meng Hao’s wedding ceremony were now participating in the second half, and they would by no means retreat!

It didn’t matter if the wedding was stained blood red or turned ash-gray. It would be finished! This was Meng Hao’s choice, and also the way for the Southern Domain cultivators to repay him. Meng Hao and Xu Qing’s wedding… would not be a wedding of regret!

The kowtowing cultivators were spattered with blood. Some was the blood of enemies, some was their own blood. As for their exhaustion, they hid it inside. As for their grief, they bottled it up in their hearts. The only thing that could be seen… were the smiles on their faces.

These smiles were like brilliant sunlight that caused the entire battlefield to be shaken.

Pill Demon’s heart was trembling as his ancient voice once again rang out to cover the entire battlefield.

“I declare… that henceforth….”

The seven peak Dao Seeking cultivators from the Northern Reaches fought with increasing ferocity. The hundreds of thousands of Northern Reaches cultivators down below bellowed with rage as they charged in wave after wave of attack.

“Henceforth… Meng Hao and Xu Qing are bonded cultivators. Their hands are bound by destiny for all time. Whether they live or die, that connection will never be broken!” His voice echoed from one end of the battlefield to the other.

Xu Qing, nestled in Meng Hao’s arms, heard the words, and her face flushed. She smiled shyly. A wedding is the most important day in a person’s life, and to a woman, it is a day when dreams come true.

She and Meng Hao were now husband and wife. Heaven and Earth bore witness, as did the hundreds of thousands of cultivators from both the Southern Domain and the Northern Reaches. Pill Demon officiated, and the ceremony was held under the vast canopy of the sky. Discarnate souls were present to bear witness, and the entire scene was as red as blood.

Together, all bore witness to the fact that… they were married!!

“Our hands are bound by destiny for all time,” murmured Xu Qing, gazing at Meng Hao. “Whether we live or die, that connection will never be broken….” Tears poured out of her eyes to disappear in the wrinkles that covered her cheeks.

“Our hands are bound by destiny for all time,” repeated Meng Hao, looking into her eyes. “Whether we live or die, that connection will never be broken….”

The ground shook, and the kowtowing cultivators in the area looked up. Then they joined their voices together in a cry that sent out shocking soundwaves. “Meng Hao and Xu Qing! Their hands are bound by destiny for all time! Whether they live or die, that connection will never be broken!”

The sound echoed across a battlefield that reeked of blood and gore. Amidst the carnage, a Southern Domain cultivator dashed forward, grabbed the severed head of a Northern Reaches cultivator and held it high into the air.

In the blink of an eye, chaotic fighting erupted out as the Southern Domain cultivators let out unprecedented roars of rage and went berserk. They seemed to be trying to outdo each other as they offered up one wedding gift after another.

“Fellow Daoist Meng, this is my wedding gift to you!”

“Exalted Meng Hao, this is my wedding gift!”

“This is mine!”

“Hahaha! Who dares to fight me over this severed head! This is my wedding gift for the Blood Prince!”

The sudden counteroffensive caused the hundreds of thousands of Northern Reaches cultivators to tremble in their hearts. For the first time… they actually fell back under the attack.

“They’ve gone crazy! It’s just some wedding, but it’s pushed them into insanity!”

“Insane! Completely insane! Wedding gifts?!?!”

“Dammit, they’re turning us Northern Reaches cultivators into wedding gifts!!”

As such comments echoed across the battlefield, Meng Hao stood in the temple, holding Xu Qing. He didn’t want the grief he felt to show on his face. However, by this point, the grief had completely inundated his heart. It was reaching the point where suppressing the Devil in his heart was virtually impossible.

He held tight to Xu Qing, unwilling to release his grip on her.

Xu Qing smiled, and to Meng Hao, it was the most beautiful smile to ever exist in the world. When he saw her smile, what he saw was not her age and her white hair. He didn’t care about any of that. All he cared about… was Xu Qing herself.

“Take me… to enter the cycle of reincarnation….” she said softly. “Now that we are husband and wife, I have no regrets…. Let me go…. Let me… leave. Please.”

Meng Hao’s eyes were shot with blood.

Xu Qing’s hand trembled as she reached up to stroke his cheek. As she murmured these things to Meng Hao, her eyes suddenly flashed with a final, brilliant radiance like that of a sunset. She had severed her own arteries!

She did not wish to see Meng Hao continue to deliver his life force to her, to give her a little bit of extra time at the cost of his own vitality. It pained her, and she did not want him to receive injury. She did not want to see any more white hairs on his head because of her.

“Qing’er!”

A tremor ran through Meng Hao.

Xu Qing looked at him one final time. A smile appeared on her lips, and it was the same smile that had appeared when she saw him for the first time, leaning out over the cliff on Mount Daqing. Of course, Meng Hao had never seen that smile.

A final tear rolled out of the corner of her eye.

In that exact moment, her body dissipated, transformed into motes of glittering light. There was no body for the teardrop to fall onto, so… it fell down onto the ground.

“You’re my wife….” murmured Meng Hao. “The Heavens. The Earth. None of it matters. No matter how long it takes, let the cycle of reincarnation bear witness. No one will take you away from me. When you are born again, I will find you!” He tried to keep ahold of her, but the only thing that remained was motes of light. Inside of him, the pressure weighing down on his heart transformed into a roar.

The battlefield suddenly went silent. In that moment, all gazes fell upon Meng Hao, whether they were from the Southern Domain or the Northern Reaches. They saw Xu Qing transform into motes of light that turned into a river which flowed up into the sky.

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# Chapter 774: Dao Seeking Felled!

The motes of light turned into a long river. In the darkness of the sky, the river of light was resplendent and glittering as it swept higher and higher.

A vast vortex suddenly appeared up above, rotating silently. It was as if the sky itself was being split open to reveal the starry sky above it. There, out in the stars, another river was visible, vast, mighty, and incomparably boundless. The water of the river seemed withered and yellow, and was filled with innumerable… discarnate souls!

The cultivators down below were shocked.

“The River of Forgetfulness!!” 1

“Heavens! That’s the legendary River of Forgetfulness!”

What the people down below could see was only one small portion of the river that flowed through the starry sky, visible through the vortex.

Xu Qing, now a collection of light motes, was just about to flow through vortex and merge into the River of Forgetfulness, then be swept away to the underworld of the Fourth Mountain.

Meng Hao hovered in midair staring blankly at the scene. Tears streamed down his face, and his heart was wracked with stabbing pain. Up above, the motes of light seemed to form the outline of a face as they entered into the vortex. It was Xu Qing’s face.

It looked just like the face that Meng Hao saw underneath the moonlight in the Reliance Sect. His heart quivered.

Xu Qing’s face seemed to be smiling at him. She looked at him for a moment, then turned and once again turned into a flowing river that flowed up toward the vortex.

Among the seven peak Dao Seeking experts from the Northern Reaches, the young boy in the red robe had an evil glint in his eye. His body flickered as he shot directly toward the motes of light.

His voice was high-pitched as he cried out, “Want to enter the cycle of reincarnation…? You’re dreaming! If you’re gonna die, your soul is going to disperse into nothing!”

When Meng Hao saw the boy closing in on the motes of light that were Xu Qing, he began to tremble. A Devilishness, along with a desire to kill, exploded out in his heart, both of which were impossible to suppress.

In the same moment, just when the red-robed boy was about to reach the motes of light, he let out a miserable shriek. A mysterious power enveloped him, and he was sent tumbling backward, blood spraying from his mouth. He looked up at the vortex with shock in his eyes.

He had already been seriously injured in battle earlier when the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch self-detonated. Without an incredibly powerful cultivation base to support him, he would have long since died.

Right now, the power that swept out from within the vortex was filled with a shocking aura, something that left him frightened out of his mind. Furthermore, it seemed to only be a warning.

The vortex continued to spin as Xu Qing disappeared inside and merged into the great river. She was now one of many souls floating along in the waters.

However, there was something different about Xu Qing’s soul. She had a red glow surrounding her, protecting her, making it so that none of the other discarnate souls could even get near her. All was quiet around her… as she drifted in the river water, far off into the distance.

The vortex vanished, and the sky returned to its normal state.

Meng Hao was silent. The temple vanished, and the candles were extinguished. The lantern and banners transformed into ash, and the happy atmosphere disappeared. The only thing that remained was a battlefield.

Meng Hao slowly descended to the ground. He looked down at his hands, and for a moment it almost felt as if he were still holding Xu Qing. Except… she was no more.

“Gone….” he murmured, his voice hoarse. “We made an agreement to spend a hundred years together…. But now you’re gone….” His face twisted, and his white hair began to rise up as an intense murderous aura rose up.

The murderous aura grew more intense. In the blink of an eye, it was an inferno, a black mist that roiled around him. Everything around him froze, and an aura of death spread out. The black mist rose up to turn into an enormous face up in midair.

The face was none other than Meng Hao’s face!

His eyes were no longer red, but black, with no pupils. It was as if he could see nothing but infinite blackness.

As he stood there, he lifted his head up and began to laugh bitterly. When the laughter entered the ears of the Northern Reaches cultivators, their hearts began to tremble, and their souls shivered.

Suddenly, cracking sounds filled Meng Hao’s body, although only he could hear them. It was the sound of shackles breaking. Within him… a Devil was being unleashed, something that had existed within him since the events in the Milky Way Sea.

As of this moment, he no longer had any desire to control it. He did not wish to suppress it. He only had one desire….

To kill each and every cultivator from the Northern Reaches who had invaded the Southern Domain! To kill each and every peak Dao Seeking expert. Kill them! Kill them ALL!!

He would pay any price to be able to do that!

If he couldn’t become an Immortal, then what was the harm in becoming a Devil!?

As he laughed bitterly, his body rumbled, and black mist poured out of him. His hair was now completely white, but his features were no longer withered. His youth was restored, and his face was shockingly icy.

He looked like a blood-thirsty Devil that could only see blood and killing.

Cracking sounds rose up from the ground as blood-colored ice spread out in all directions. Intense coldness spread around him, as if the seasons were suddenly changing. Black snowflakes began to flutter through the air.

Meng Hao had thoroughly unleashed the Devil within him, and he had removed any suppression of his desire to slaughter. He was now completely grim and cold, not just to his enemies, but even to himself.

His wedding day had been turned into a tragedy, and the only thing he could do now was become a Devil!

In the instant that his inner Devil was unleashed, the Blood Demon Grand Magic finally began to move away from the fourth level toward the fifth.

Meng Hao’s gaze looked out into the sky toward… the red-robed boy.

“You,” he said. “You shall die!”

Instantly, his second true self looked over with flickering eyes.

At the same time, Meng Hao vanished, then shockingly, reappeared up in midair. His body was wreathed in seething black mist and Devil flames. Along with his second true self, he shot toward the red-robed boy.

“Your clone is pretty tough,” said the boy with a snort, “but your true self? Screw off!” In unison with his words, the fighting on the battlefield broke out once again. Whether it was the peak Dao Seeking experts up above or the madness of the close-quarter combat of the Southern Domain and Northern Reaches down below, the battling was intense. This was far beyond the fighting which had taken place outside of the Blood Demon Sect in the initial war.

Meng Hao’s second true self shot toward the red-robed boy at high speed. As soon as they met, winds blasted out and lightning boomed. Explosion after explosion rang out as, within a short period of time, they exchanged thousands of moves.

As for Meng Hao, as soon as he flew out, the old man in animal-hide clothing moved to intercept him. Grinning viciously, he punched out violently toward Meng Hao.

“Your beloved is dead! What’s the point in continuing to live? Why don’t you go join her!”

As the fist descended toward him, Meng Hao looked at it coldly. He lifted his right hand, and the Lightning Cauldron appeared, causing the old man’s face to instantly flicker.

It was then that lightning poured out from within the cauldron to surround Meng Hao. Brilliant light was cast out onto the battlefield, and then he suddenly vanished. So did the old man!

Their positions had been reversed!

When Meng Hao appeared in the spot previously occupied by the old man in animal-hide clothing, he didn’t even turn to look back. Even as the old man roared in fury and shot in pursuit, Meng Hao proceeded forward. He had one target: the red-robed boy!

It was that boy’s Cinnabar Fruit that had cursed Xu Qing!

Furthermore, he had just attempted to interfere with Xu Qing entering the cycle of reincarnation!

Meng Hao was like a Devil in his determination to slay him!

The red-robed boy was currently fighting Meng Hao’s second true self. He had already been seriously injured, and as such, was not a match for the second true self. He continued to fall back in retreat, his eyes bloodshot as he attacked with reckless abandon. When he saw Meng Hao bearing down on him, he pointed out with a finger.

“Trying to get yourself killed on purpose?! Fine, I’ll kill your true self!” In the instant that the boy pointed out, Meng Hao used the Lightning Cauldron again. There was a flicker, and he switched places with his second true self.

A boom rang out as his second true self appeared in the spot he had just occupied. As for Meng Hao, he was now… closer to the boy than anyone else on the battlefield!

Meng Hao’s use of the lightning cauldron had reached the acme of perfection!

The red-robed boy’s mind trembled. His finger attack just now was incapable of doing anything to Meng Hao’s second true self. He jerked around and was about to make a deadly attack against Meng Hao, when suddenly, Meng Hao waved his hand. Shockingly, a magical symbol appeared in his hand!

It was a single character!

Wither!

This was the Withering Character Incantation which had appeared after he absorbed eighty percent of the curse power! The incantation could be used as a divine ability that could be continuously maintained for a long period of time. As Meng Hao’s cultivation base grew higher, the withering power of the magic would grow more consummate, its might, more and more terrifying.

However, he could also focus its energies into a single instant attack. This would deplete the magical symbol and cause it to dim, requiring it to recharge and absorb more withering energy before it could be used again.

“I haven’t personally killed a peak Dao Seeking cultivator before,” said Meng Hao quietly. “You’re going to be the first. The pain that my wife felt before she died, is now something… that you will have the pleasure of experiencing!”

Meng Hao’s voice was calm, calm in a way that caused the red-robed boy’s heart to pound. A profound sense of deadly crisis appeared inside of him.

The ‘withering’ character caused the red-robed boy to begin to pant. His scalp went numb, and he instantly tried to flee.

At the same time, Meng Hao, his eyes cold, coolly said, “Withering Character Blast!”

As soon as the words left his mouth, blinding gray light shot out from the palm of his hand. It immediately filled the sky, causing the hundreds of thousands of cultivators down below to look up in astonishment. They could sense the withering curse power exploding out up above.

The old man in animal-hide clothing gasped, then immediately began to back up.

“NO!!” screamed the red-robed youth. Cultivation base power exploded out, and he produced massive quantities of magical items to try to fight back against the power of his own Hellwither Nineruins curse.

However, no matter what he did, when it came to the explosive withering power, he was like a praying mantis trying to block an army. In the blink of an eye, he was inundated by the grayness.

The only thing that remained behind was a bloodcurdling scream that echoed out across the land.

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1. Although the river Lethe from Greek mythology is also known as the River of Forgetfulness, this is a different river, one that comes from Chinese mythology. I couldn’t find much information about it in English, so I translated the summary from the baidupedia article about the River of Forgetfullness (this is information about the mythological river, not necessarily the river as portrayed in ISSTH): In Chinese mythology, after people die, they pass through the gates of Hell and travel the path of the Yellow Springs to the underworld. Between the Yellow Springs and the underworld itself is the River of Forgetfulness. The water of the river appears to be both yellow and blood-red. Within the river are countless wandering souls and wild ghosts that cannot be reincarnated, as well as endless bugs and vermin. The stench from the river buffets your face like a wind. Running over the river is the Bridge of Helplessness, beside which sits an old woman, who is old lady Meng. To cross the River of Forgetfulness, you must drink the tea of old lady Meng. If you don’t drink the tea, you can’t cross the Bridge of Helplessness, which means that you cannot be reincarnated

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# Chapter 775: FIGHT!

The Withering Character Incantation had absorbed eighty percent of the Hellwither Nineruins' curse power. It was the most powerful magical symbol he possessed, and when its power erupted with the curse, it could slay the peak of Dao Seeking.

Meng Hao was well aware of this fact.

However, it would only work once, after which, the magical symbol would grow dark. Meng Hao had decided to use that one sure kill on the red-robed boy.

Grayness filled the world, and the red-robed boy screamed miserably. Everyone could hear it, and they were completely shaken and astonished.

It was just possible to see the red-robed boy within the grayness of the curse. His robes were in tatters; his hair was white and falling out of his head. His skin dried up; his flesh, blood, bones, organs and soul were all withering away.

Seeing the boy screaming miserably, Meng Hao calmly asked, "Does it hurt? Qing'er didn't want me to see her pain over these past few days. She endured it.

"Can you imagine how a fragile girl like her was able to endure such shocking pain?"

Everyone on the battlefield could hear his words, and it caused an intense coldness to well up in their hearts.

"I've also experienced such pain," Meng Hao continued slowly. "Now, it's your turn."

The boy’s horrible shrieks grew even more intense. His entire body shook, and he even tried to detonate his Nascent Divinity, but was incapable. His Nascent Divinity had already become withered, just like his soul.

During that short moment, he experienced indescribable pain. His teeth fell out, and soon he didn’t even have the energy to scream…. Eventually, he was nothing more than a pool of yellowish liquid.

He had been withered to death!

After he died, the gray curse power up in the sky flew back to Meng Hao’s palm. It transformed once again into the ‘withering’ character. However, the magical symbol was not as resplendent as before. It was now dimmer by half.

Half of the curse power remained after killing the red-robed boy. From this, the terrifying power of the curse could be seen.

By this point, the battlefield was utterly silent. Even the battle between Patriarch Song and the other peak Dao Seeking experts had stopped, and they were looking on, dumbfounded.

After a brief moment of silence, the Northern Reaches cultivators burst out into an uproar.

“The Patriarch of the Coffin Altar Sect… just died?”

“The Patriarch of the Coffin Altar Sect was at the peak of Dao Seeking! He… he just perished!!”

At the same time, the Southern Domain cultivators were enlivened, and seemed to have been rejuvenated, resuming their furious attacks with increased strength!

Once again, the fighting broke out down below. As for the Northern Reaches’ peak Dao Seeking experts, they were inwardly shaken. This was the first time since the invasion had begun that a peak Dao Seeking cultivator had died.

The old man in the animal-hide clothing had eyes shot with blood. The red-robed boy had been one of his closest friends. With an enraged roar, he shot toward Meng Hao.

Off to the side were the two old men who looked completely identical except for their contrasting black and white robes. They joined the old man in charging Meng Hao.

The second true self’s eyes glittered as he moved to intercept them. Booms rang out as he began a tremendous fight with the black and white twins.

The old man in the animal hide clothing was going berserk. He spit blood out of his mouth and performed a double-handed incantation, causing all of his skin to suddenly change color. It rapidly became blue, and his speed increased dramatically. He skirted the second true self to head directly toward Meng Hao, toward whom he extended a powerful punch.

“DIE!!”

Meng Hao was quite close. His face was pale, and blood was oozing out of his mouth. This was the first time he had used only his own power, and not that of his second true self, to attack and kill a peak Dao Seeking cultivator.

As the man in the animal hide clothing closed in, Meng Hao extended his right hand down toward the ground. Immediately a huge vortex appeared within the Northern Reaches army.

The vortex was no longer golden, but black. It looked like a huge mouth, ready to consume everything. Immediately, miserable screams could be heard from the Northern Reaches cultivators caught inside. They rapidly withered, and their cultivation bases flowed out through their mouths and noses. Even their souls were shaken, and appeared to be on the verge of being sucked out.

RUUMMBLLLE!!

Shockingly, seven such vortexes appeared all over the battlefield!

Seven huge vortexes enveloped nearly thirty thousand Northern Reaches cultivators, extracting power from their blood and flesh, which shot up toward Meng Hao and fused into his body.

It was the same with their cultivation base power!

Meng Hao closed his eyes, and when he did, his cultivation base shot up. Suddenly, he transformed into what looked like a shooting star that sped directly toward the attacking old man.

As he flew through the air, his eyes snapped open. The black mist face above him suddenly formed into the shocking shape of an enormous palm that slammed into the old man.

A shocking boom filled the air!

The old man tumbled backward in shock, blood spurting out of his mouth. At the same time, the miserable screams continued to echo out from down below. Quite a few within the vortexes had already withered and died.

Meng Hao shot backward, biting the tip of his tongue and spitting some blood out. As soon as the blood emerged, it expanded, transforming into a lake of blood!

That blood contained, not just the power of Meng Hao’s qi and blood, but the power of the qi and blood of the thirty thousand cultivators stuck in the vortexes. All that power transformed into a lake that rumbled toward the old man in animal hide clothing.

The old man’s face fell. He pulled his hand back, and it increased in size and sprouted spikes of bone. Then he punched out, and a shocking boom rattled out. The lake of blood collapsed into pieces.

In that moment, the black mist which surrounded Meng Hao once again shot forward in attack. In a short period of time, constant booms rang out as hundreds of exchanges occurred between Meng Hao and the old man.

The black mist surrounding Meng Hao continued to increase. The qi, blood, and cultivation base power from the cultivators down below was like a huge river pouring into his body, giving him shocking battle prowess.

“Dammit! BREAK!” roared the old man. He was leery of Meng Hao’s ‘withering’ character magical symbol. However, he never imagined that Meng Hao, without even using the magical symbol, would be so difficult to deal with. Finally, he slapped his chest and began to burn life force as he made a double handed attack.

Two fists punched out, shattering the air, causing the sky to dim. Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a cold light. He said nothing, nor did he evade. Instead, he shot forward, relying on his cultivation base, his fleshly body, the Ninth Mountain, everything. It was an explosive attacked that contained his mad, Devilish will, combined with the qi, blood and cultivation bases absorbed by the vortexes, all merged into one palm strike.

Another direct showdown!

“Still not dead?!?!” thought the old man, even as he retreated, coughing up blood.

Meng Hao was also sent tumbling back, and his body exploded. However, the Eternal stratum kicked in. Unfortunately, only a sliver of Eternal power remained in him. It had been severely drained during his battle with the curse power. Currently, there wasn’t enough power left to completely heal him.

Seeing this caused killing intent to glitter in the old man’s eyes.

“DIE!” he cried, extending his hands out in front of him, not in fists, but stretched out like claws. As he leaped out, the air distorted around him, and shockingly, he transformed into an enormous bird-like creature!

It looked like a roc, with a beak that emitted a cold glow and talons that could rend Heaven and Earth. He shot toward Meng Hao with such incredible speed that he was nothing more than a streak flashing through the air.

A fiendish wind buffeted Meng Hao's face as he lifted his right hand up to reveal the Lightning Cauldron.

The cauldron began to flicker, and Meng Hao looked down at a Northern Reaches Nascent Soul cultivator down below. Suddenly, Meng Hao vanished. The savage Nascent Soul cultivator then appeared in the spot Meng Hao had just occupied, and Meng Hao was now where he had been down below.

Form Displacement Transposition!

The Nascent Soul cultivator saw bright colors flash across his eyes, and then suddenly, he was up in midair. He couldn't help but be shocked. Moments ago, he had been preparing to plunge his hand through the chest of a Southern Domain cultivator. Now, he was floating up in the air.

Suddenly, an intense sense of deadly crises surged through him as he saw a vicious roc flying toward him at indescribable speed. It was impossible for him to dodge, and even his nascent soul was scared so witless that it seemed as if it would crumble to pieces.

Boom!

The roc smashed into him, sending blood spattering out in all directions. A roar of rage filled the sky as the roc turned blurry and the old man reappeared. He glared down at the ground, his eyes flaring with killing intent.

"Meng Hao!" he raged. Once again, he transformed into a roc that shot toward the ground amidst a gale force wind.

Down below, Meng Hao stood in the midst of a huge force of shocked Northern Reaches cultivators, among whom he had seemed to just randomly appear. Before any of them could react, he gestured down toward the ground.

Blood Demon Grand Magic!

Rumble!

An enormous vortex appeared, with Meng Hao in the center. It instantly enveloped several thousand people. As for the Southern Domain cultivators it caught up, they felt a gentle force pick them up and eject them from the vortex.

Meng Hao remained within the vortex, his white hair swirling around. Once again he gestured downward, and his eyes were filled with calm coldness.

“Qi and Blood.”

Rumbling could be heard as the Northern Reaches cultivators within the vortex began to shriek miserably, and visibly wither at a rapid rate, regardless of the level of their cultivation bases.

Huge quantities of qi and blood power poured into Meng Hao. His body grew stronger, and his internal injuries were healed significantly because of the borrowed power.

“Spirit Meridians!” he said.

Rumble!

More miserable shrieks could be heard from the thousands stuck in the vortex. They were little more than skin and bones now that their qi and blood had been removed. The only thing they had left, their cultivation bases, transformed into white smoke that began to ooze out of their eyes, nose, mouth and ears. Their eyes bulged and their faces began to grow blank. They were completely paralyzed, and the only thing they were capable of doing was trembling and screaming.

Their cultivation bases flew out to be absorbed by Meng Hao, causing his own cultivation base to rise. His wounds were also healed even further.

By this time, the old man in the shape of a roc was now bearing down on him, roaring with killing intent.

“Soul!” said Meng Hao, yelling out the final word.

He WOULD break through to the fifth level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic!

Once he did, he would be able to control something that even his second true self couldn’t control, something special that had been created for him by Patriarch Blood Demon… a false Immortal puppet!!

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# Chapter 776: Fifth Level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic!

The ‘soul’ character had been uttered!

At that moment, the Northern Reaches cultivators stuck in the vortex around Meng Hao let out the last miserable shrieks that they would ever utter. Their bodies were withered dry, their cultivation bases vanished. Now, they felt an intense pain enveloping them like floodwaters.

Everything went black in their eyes, and the world disappeared. Their lives… were no more!

Numerous wailing, struggling souls emerged from their eyes, ears, nose and mouth. Each and every cultivator’s back was arched, their face sunken, and their eyes gray. Their mouths were stuck open stiffly.

Their souls emerged and then fused into the vortex, becoming a cyclone of souls. Anyone who could see the spectacle was flabbergasted.

“Demonic magic! That’s Demonic magic!!”

“Such a sinister divine ability has got to be Demon magic!!”

The Northern Reaches cultivators in the area were trembling, and their hearts were filled with terror. Horrified, they watched as the souls spun into a cyclone, and Meng Hao gestured toward the ground, then looked up. His white hair floated around him, and his eyes glowed with a cold ruthlessness.

His face was also as pale as death, making his overall appearance like that of a Devilish god. The souls of the slain around him looked like slaves that were incapable of escaping him.

Up in the sky, the old man who was in roc form gasped, completely shaken by what he was seeing. However, killing intent flickered in his eyes, and ferociousness burned in his heart. He continued to dive directly toward Meng Hao.

“Your occult trickery won’t work on me! DIE!!”

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, and as the old man bore down on him, he suddenly blasted up from the ground. The cyclone of countless struggling souls surrounded him, looking almost like a river as he sped to meet the roc.

A boom echoed out and even as strong and stalwart as he was, the old man couldn’t stop the blood from oozing out of the corners of his mouth. He could no longer maintain the form of a roc, and reverted to his human form as he tumbled backward.

Blood sprayed from Meng Hao’s mouth, and the ground beneath him cracked and split, radiating in all directions.

The struggling souls exploded, transforming into motes of soul light that then sped toward Meng Hao and fused into his body. Meng Hao could sense that he had reached… the threshold of the Blood Demon Grand Magic’s fifth level.

“I need even more souls!” he thought, his eyes flickering. Not waiting for the old man to charge him again, he produced the Lightning Cauldron. There was a flicker, and he switched places with another Northern Reaches cultivator.

He appeared once again in the middle of the Northern Reaches’ army, whereupon he immediately gestured toward the ground. A vortex appeared as the Blood Demon Grand Magic once again surged into motion.

It almost seemed as if, to Meng Hao, the Northern Reaches cultivators were merely food. They were essential to his ability to combat a peak Dao Seeking expert. As he absorbed them, miserable screams filled the air. Qi, blood, and cultivation bases were sucked away, used by Meng Hao to strengthen his fleshly body to the point where it burst from the mid Dao Seeking stage into late Dao Seeking.

As for his cultivation base, it now exceeded Spirit Severing and had temporarily entered into Dao Seeking! Natural law swirled around him, making Meng Hao… even more valiant!

The Blood Demon Grand Magic was most suited to fighting against multiple opponents!

The more enemies there were, the more invincible one could become!

Up in midair, the old man in animal hide clothing roared. His body flashed as he transformed, not into a roc, but into a gigantic black python. He opened his vicious mouth and struck toward Meng Hao as if to swallow him up.

Meng Hao waited in the vortex as the python closed in. Thousands of Northern Reaches cultivators could be heard screaming as their bodies withered, their cultivation bases faded, and they neared death.

Suddenly, Meng Hao said ‘soul,’ and a rumbling could be heard as the thousands of cultivators exploded, and their souls flew out.

Then Meng Hao vanished. Even as the python was about to reach him, he was off in the distance, where another Blood Demon Grand Magic vortex sprang up.

The old man was completely infuriated, and yet there was nothing he could do to stop Meng Hao and the Lightning Cauldron. The agile teleportation-like ability made it incredibly difficult to pin Meng Hao down, and left him shocked in his heart.

“Dammit! Meng Hao, I dare you to fight me one on one!”

Killing intent flickered in the old man’s eyes. This time, he didn’t pursue Meng Hao, but instead flew toward the Southern Domain’s army of cultivators.

“If you won’t come out and fight, then I’ll just start killing some Southern Domain cultivators!”

Meng Hao stopped in place, then waved his right hand. The Blood Demon Grand Magic appeared, and the Lightning Cauldron flickered. This time, he changed positions with the old man.

After the exchange took place, the old man… was shocked to find himself directly in the middle of one of Meng Hao’s vortexes.

Meng Hao hovered in midair, looking coldly at the old man.

“Wanna fight?” he said. “Let’s fight, then!” He stretched his arms out to either side, and the multiple vortexes he had created moments ago echoed with the shocked screams of Northern Reaches cultivators. Qi and blood flowed toward him, causing Meng Hao’s body to once again reach the peak of Dao Seeking.

Rumbling filled the air as the old man’s body began to wither. However, he was able to struggle his way out, whereupon he aimed a punch at Meng Hao.

“DIE!”

Meng Hao clenched his fists and shot forward to meet him. The two of them flashed back and forth over a hundred times, causing booms to rattle everything in the area. Finally, the old man’s eyes flashed with a bright light. Suddenly, two golden birds flew out from within his pupils, emitting shrill cries as they shot toward Meng Hao.

At the same time, the old man began to spin rapidly like a top. He lifted his right leg high into the air and then slammed it down toward Meng Hao’s head. If the kick connected, Meng Hao would obviously suffer a serious injury.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered coldly as he said. “Spirit Meridians!”

Immediately, more miserable shrieks could be heard coming from the Northern Reaches cultivators stuck in the vortexes down below. Their cultivation bases were sucked away through their noses and mouths to shoot directly toward Meng Hao. Cultivation bases swirled around Meng Hao in the form of a tempest, bolstering his own cultivation base until it was as strong as the peak of Dao Seeking.

He quickly performed an incantation gesture and pointed towards the sky.

“Ninth Mountain! CRUSH!”

Rumbling filled the air as the majestic Ninth Mountain appeared up above. It was huge, almost like a real mountain, and the natural law that swirled around it stirred the sky and caused the land to shake. Massive pressure crushed down on the old man.

The old man lifted his head up and roared. His body expanded rapidly as he turned into a mountain-like giant. He immediately raised both hands into the air and grabbed onto the Ninth Mountain.

A boom could be heard as the Ninth Mountain slammed into him. Blood sprayed from his mouth, and cracking sounds could be heard as he managed to resist it.

“Soul!” said Meng Hao, his eyes radiating coldness. As the Northern Reaches cultivators in the vortexes toppled over dead, struggling souls flew toward Meng Hao from from their eyes, ears, noses and mouths.

The vast quantities of souls that were merging into Meng Hao’s body caused a rumbling sound to fill his head. All of a sudden… he reached the fifth level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic!!

In that moment, Meng Hao’s cultivation base did not change. However, his battle prowess instantly grew several times over!

His hair whipped about, and he looked every bit like a Devilish divinity. His eyes shone like suns, and the entire battlefield down below was obscured by the shadow of the black mist that surged around him. It was as if he was blotting out the entire Heavens.

He took a deep breath and then advanced forward.

The old man let out an enraged roar as he shoved upward with his arms. Apparently, he was causing some form of natural law to spring into motion. Now, cracking sounds could be heard coming from the Ninth Mountain, and then it shattered into countless pieces.

“Little bastard!” said the old man, blood oozing out of the corners of his mouth. Collapsing the Ninth Mountain had taken quite a bit of effort on his part. Now, his body flickered as he transformed into a white tiger, which roared and pounced toward Meng Hao.

This time, Meng Hao didn’t evade. The two cultivators met in midair; booms echoed out as they fought back and forth.

“Qi and Blood!” said Meng Hao coolly. This time, a tiny vortex appeared in the palm of his hand. When he landed a blow on the front leg of the old man’s tiger form, the entire leg instantly turned into skin and bones!

The sudden, shocking turn of events caused the old man’s face to fall. He gasped, a tremor ran through his white tiger form, and he retreated at top speed.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with killing intent. How could he possibly allow the old man to flee as simply as that? His body flashed through the air, and he appeared right next to the old man. The vortex in the palm of his right hand shot toward the old man’s back.

“SCREW OFF!!” roared the old man. Immediately, his cultivation base surged with an explosion of qi that shot outward. Meng Hao gave a cold snort and continued on with his palm strike.

“Spirit Meridians!”

A boom could be heard as he absorbed, not qi and blood, but cultivation base. As the terrifying cultivation base explosion emanating from the old man reached Meng Hao, Meng Hao simply touched it with his hand, and it appeared to collapse. Boundless cultivation base power immediately began to fuse into Meng Hao’s palm.

The old man’s scalp went numb. He could never have imagined that Meng Hao’s magical technique could be so shocking. In two short moments of contact, he had lost ten percent of his cultivation base as well as his qi and blood. It was nothing short of terrifying to the man, and he immediately fell back in retreat.

Meng Hao pursued without any hesitation. They fought back and forth, and the old men let out continuous roars. He didn’t dare to get too close but could only flee at top speed under an unending bombardment from Meng Hao. Blood sprayed from his mouth, and he fell back.

Meng Hao’s face was cold, and his killing intent raged.

Onlookers could hardly believe what they were seeing. The old man in animal hide clothing was incapable of fighting back against Meng Hao, and was being beaten to the point that he was forced to retreat.

“Save me!!” he cried, his mind trembling. His body was quickly becoming nothing more than skin and bones, and he had lost forty percent of the power of his cultivation base. He knew that he was in a moment of grave crisis.

The Northern Reaches cultivators were astonished, and the other five Northern Reaches peak Dao Seeking experts up above were shaken. Moments ago, when Meng Hao had slain the red-robed boy, they were shocked. However, in their minds, Meng Hao had simply used some sort of trickery to win. But seeing what he was doing now left them thoroughly rattled.

Just when they were about to make a move to help the old man, the ‘withering’ character flickered into being next to Meng Hao. Gray light radiated out, and all of the peak Dao Seeking experts halted in place.

They didn’t dare to get close to him!

That was exactly why Meng Hao hadn’t used the ‘withering’ character again. The magical symbol’s greatest use to him right now… was as a threat against any outside interference!

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# Chapter 777: Dawn Immortal, Do You Dare To Fight Me?!

Meng Hao was a shooting star that closed in on the old man in animal hide clothing. He pointed out his index finger, and the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex appeared, causing the old man to freeze in place, trembling.

In that moment, Meng Hao’s thrust his right hand violently at the old man’s chest and stabbed into the flesh.

“Qi and Blood, Spirit Meridians!”

Boom!

The old man howled miserably as he fell back. His body withered up, and his cultivation base flowed out from him. He quickly bit the tip of his tongue and spat out some blood. The blood expanded in midair, shockingly transforming into a huge blood-colored cauldron which slammed towards Meng Hao in an attempt to shake him off.

Meng Hao snorted coldly, then clenched his hand into a fist and punched. He landed a blow onto the cauldron that was backed by his qi and blood, the energy of tens of thousands of cultivators, and even the power of the old man himself. A huge boom echoed out over the battlefield.

The cauldron immediately shattered into pieces. As Meng Hao’s fist passed through the remnants, it transformed into a palm, and then a claw which latched onto the old man’s face.

Rumbling filled the air as qi, blood and spirit meridians were rapidly sucked out of the old man’s body. The old man screamed in pain and shoved his hands out toward Meng Hao. In response, Meng Hao vanished, then reappeared behind the man. He slapped his hand down onto the man’s back.

“Save me!!” cried the old man. The sense of deadly crisis he felt caused his mind to reel.

“No one can save you now,” responded Meng Hao, his voice icy cold.

However, it was at this moment that a leaf suddenly appeared. Not just one leaf, but many, emanating scintillating glows as they descended from above.

An aura also appeared that Meng Hao was very familiar with!

The voice of a woman then echoed out coldly across the battlefield.

“What if I save him?”

Leaves fluttered down over the lands of the Southern Domain.

The innumerable leaves began to to spin, then rapidly formed together into the shape of a woman. She wore a colorful gown, and exuded a palpable, exotic allure that would attract anyone who looked at her.

However, this was no girl. It was a woman.

It was… the mother of the Resurrection Lily. The Dawn Immortal!

She stretched out her right hand and pointed toward Meng Hao.

Numerous branches suddenly appeared around him. They expanded rapidly and then grew together, transforming into a cage that threatened to completely seal Meng Hao up.

“You showed up at the battle of the Blood Demon Sect, and now you show up again here! Screw off!” Killing intent flashed in Meng Hao’s eyes as his cultivation base exploded with power. It transformed into a cyclone that thrashed about in all directions, smashing a hole in the cage of branches. Meng Hao instantly shot out from within, and immediately headed in the old man’s direction.

The Dawn Immortal laughed coldly and waved her right hand. Shockingly, a seven-colored leaf appeared, which shone with prismatic light as it sped toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao's mind trembled, and yet he didn't slow down in his pursuit of the weakened old man. He caught up in a short moment, and then reached out his hand to push down onto the top of the old man's head.

"Soul!" he said calmly.

The old man immediately let out a shriek of pain. His body trembled, his mouth opened wide, and his eyes bulged. His soul… began to seep out through his nose and mouth in many delicate strands that were quickly absorbed by Meng Hao.

"Looking to die?!" said the Dawn Immortal, her eyes flickering with killing intent. The seven-colored leaf picked up speed as it closed in on Meng Hao. In the blink of an eye, it was about to hit him.

Meng Hao took the old man and violently tossed him forward to slam into the leaf. A boom echoed out, and the old man's body exploded. He was dead in body and spirit.

As for Meng Hao, he retreated immediately, his face somewhat pale. Having absorbed the old man's complete cultivation base, as well as all of his qi and blood, plus his soul, he was now filled with indescribable energy. Resisting the leaf attack caused him to retreat, but did not injure him!

Now that the leaf was heading toward him for a second attack, his eyes flashed with killing intent. The Lightning Cauldron appeared, and a flash of electricity could be seen. In that moment, he switched places with one of the peak Dao Seeking experts who was fighting Pill Demon and the others, the old woman!

In response to the Form Displacement Transposition, the old woman's face fell. The seven-colored leaf ground to a halt, then changed directions and shot after Meng Hao. By this point, Meng Hao was next to Patriarch Song, with whom he joined forces to launch an attack against the white-robed hopping vampire that was a Northern Reaches peak Dao seeking expert.

A boom could be heard, and the white-robed old man coughed up a mouthful of blood. Even as he fell back, the seven-colored leaf neared.

The flash of electricity surrounded Meng Hao, and he then appeared in the middle of the Northern Reaches army down below. Blood Demon Grand Magic vortexes instantly appeared, enveloping thousands. Qi, blood, spirit meridians, and souls were all absorbed, and miserable screams rang out. Then Meng Hao vanished again.

Meng Hao had long since completely mastered the use of the Lightning Cauldron!

The peak Dao Seeking experts in midair were shocked.

“Dammit!”

“What kind of magical item is that Lightning Cauldron!? This Meng Hao is too hard to pin down!”

Meng Hao’s actions in the battle were strange and mysterious. He attacked with ruthless viciousness that left them thoroughly shaken. By now, Meng Hao was an archenemy in their minds!

He was such a threat that they knew he needed to be eliminated immediately!!

“I’ll deal with him,” said the Dawn Immortal coolly. Her eyes flashed with seven-colored light that bathed the entire area, apparently in an attempt to seal it.

“That toy of yours is quite mysterious,” she said a moment later. “I can’t completely seal it, but what I can do is slow down the transpositioning speed. Go ahead and try it out now.” Then, she began to advance on Meng Hao.

As she neared, an intense pressure weighed down on everything. Furthermore, a vicious, seven-colored Resurrection Lily appeared behind her!

The flower swayed back and forth, obviously immaculately beautiful, and yet at the same time, boundlessly evil.

Meng Hao’s expression was calm, and did not reveal the slightest shift in emotions. He put away the Lightning Cauldron and then pulled out… a blood-colored puppet the size of a hand.

The puppet flew out from Meng Hao’s hand and then began to grow. By they time it was thirty meters tall, it exploded with a shocking aura. Wild colors flashed through the sky, and the clouds churned. This was the aura of an Immortal!

Not a true Immortal aura, but that of a false Immortal.

Either way… it was still Immortal!

The Dawn Immortal’s face flickered for the first time, and the handful of peak Dao Seeking Experts from the Northern Reaches were all shocked.

This puppet was the trump card of the combined forces of the Solitary Sword Sect, Golden Frost Sect, Black Sieve Sect and Li Clan when they besieged the Blood Demon Sect. Were it not for the appearance of Patriarch Blood Demon back then, it would have clinched the victory.

Instead, Patriarch Blood Demon slaughtered the Solitary Sword Sect Patriarch, then made some alterations to the puppet so that only Meng Hao could use it. That was his reward for reaching the fifth level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic!

Meng Hao’s body flickered as he merged into the thirty-meter-tall blood-colored puppet. Moments ago, its eyes had been dark, but now they radiated a grim light, just like Meng Hao’s eyes.

As Meng Hao took control of the puppet, it suddenly stood up. A shocking false Immortal aura exploded outwards across the battlefield, turning into an shock wave that swept out, forcing the Northern Reaches cultivators to fall back amid shocked gasps.

As for the Southern Domain cultivators, their spirits were lifting, and they began to shout out Meng Hao’s name.

Sound waves rippled across the land, causing everything to shake!

“Dawn Immortal, do you dare to fight me!?” Meng Hao flew up into the air and then pointed toward the Dawn Immortal. A sound like thunder could be heard, and an intense pressure rumbled out. The earth cracked and the air shattered. In the blink of an eye, a black wind rose up to sweep across the land.

The Dawn Immortal did not speak, but her eyes glittered with a mysterious light. She stretched her beautiful hand out and pointed. The apparition of the Resurrection Lily behind her passed through her body and flew into the air, its tentacles writhing in a bizarre and awe-inspiring fashion as it charged toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao snorted coldly. Due to his control of the puppet, he felt as if he was completely connected to Heaven and Earth. He waved his hand, and dark clouds appeared in the sky. Lightning descended like rain, transforming into a lake of lightning that enveloped the Resurrection Lily.

“Nothing but a false Immortal,” said the Dawn Immortal coolly, shaking her head. “If you use it, you’ll sow Karma with the Ji Clan.” Suddenly she vanished, and when she reappeared, she was directly in front of Meng Hao. She lifted her hand up, then dropped it.

Seven-colored light radiated brightly, transforming into a seven-colored sun that exploded into Meng Hao.

A huge boom shook everything. Even the peak Dao Seeking experts were flung aside. The old woman among their number was just about to retreat, when shockingly, Sun Tao of the Violet Fate Sect transformed into a powerful beam of light that completely inundated her.

She let out a miserable scream that echoed out in all directions.

“My body has already returned to the dust, and I can’t hold out any longer,” echoed the voice of Sun Tao from within the light. “Before I leave… I’ll take this woman with me. Fellow Daoists… I sincerely hope that you achieve complete victory!

“Master, I can’t be your apprentice alchemist any longer, nor will I be able to see you achieve true Immortal Ascension….”

A huge boom could be heard as the light exploded. The screams of the old woman from the Northern Reaches were suddenly cut off. Brilliant light covered everything, even Meng Hao and the Dawn Immortal.

Meng Hao felt stabs of pain in his heart. When the light faded away, Sun Tao was gone, as was the old woman.

Pill Demon trembled, and tears streamed down his face. He lifted his head up and began to laugh sadly. Suddenly, innumerable magical symbols began to appear on his body. One by one, they started shattering into pieces. In the blink of an eye, more than half of them were gone.

At the same time, his cultivation base shot up. He was no longer in the mid Dao Seeking stage. He broke completely through to the late Dao Seeking stage and then broke through again into peak Dao Seeking!

The destruction of the magical symbols was not something he could consciously do. Rather, it was provoked by the intense feelings that surged through him.

Now that Pill Demon was in the peak Dao Seeking stage, an unfamiliar aura appeared on his body. Furthermore, his appearance had changed. Now… he looked exactly like the statue of Reverend Violet East from back in the Violet Fate Sect!

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# Chapter 778: Decisive Battle with the Dawn Immortal!

“Reverend Violet East….” Having seen everything that had happened, Patriarch Song’s expression was a complex one.

“A powerful expert from 10,000 years ago,” he murmured. “At one time… you were the number one Chosen in the entire Southern Domain. Reverend Violet East. You founded the Violet Fate Sect, and were its first generation Patriarch!

“You were at the peak of Dao Seeking 10,000 years ago, but weren’t willing to become a false Immortal. You vowed to tread the path of true Immortal Ascension. Before transcending the tribulation, however, you realized that you were on the incorrect path. You personally concocted a medicinal pill that contained a strand of your own soul. That pill became your vessel, with which you reestablished your cultivation!

“Now in our time you have once again reached the peak of Dao Seeking as Pill Demon. When all of the magical symbols are destroyed, the true Immortal Tribulation that you have been suppressing… will finally be unleashed!

“Unfortunately, throughout the years, far too many people have died during true Immortal Tribulation. Few have ever succeeded. Pill Demon… can you succeed?” Patriarch Song sighed.

Pill Demon didn’t reply. Violet qi swirled around him as he advanced forward. His aura was completely different than it had been before. Shockingly, he was now powerful enough to single-handedly fight two of the most powerful Northern Reaches peak Dao Seeking experts, and apparently, even suppress them.

Booms echoed out as Pill Demon’s intense power caused everyone to be filled with shock. Even the mother of the Resurrection Lily, the Dawn Immortal, looked over and raised an eyebrow.

Patriarch Song shook his head and sighed, then once again began to fight the other peak Dao Seeking experts, along with Meng Hao’s second true self and the severely-wounded Patriarch Golden Frost.

Down on the ground, the Northern Reaches cultivators were shocked to the core to have seen such a succession of defeats just now. After adding in the losses that had occurred earlier, the tide of battle between the Northern Reaches and the Southern Domain had completely reversed. The Southern Domain cultivators’ eyes were red as they closed ranks and then screamed through the air in attack, more than 100,000 strong.

Blood flowed in rivers, and the sky darkened. The sounds of slaughter immediately caused everything to shake.

Up above, Meng Hao and the Dawn Immortal were fighting fiercely. The forces unleashed by their attacks seemed capable of collapsing the sky and the land. The Dawn Immortal’s cultivation base was mysterious and enigmatic. Although this was nothing more than a clone, it was still incredibly powerful. In the short time she had been battling Meng Hao, they had exchanged more than a thousand moves. Massive rumbling caused many of the nearby mountains crumble. Now, only Mount Blood Demon stood strong and tall.

However, Patriarch Blood Demon remained inside, his eyes closed in deep sleep. His body seemed to lack even the slightest scrap of life force. Despite the violent trembling in the world around him, he did not awaken.

The ground cracked, and rifts appeared in the sky. Meng Hao and the Dawn Immortal’s combat was like the collision of two storm fronts. The Ninth Mountain appeared, then shattered. The Black White Pearls appeared, then were suppressed. The Resurrection Lily writhed, transforming into a whip which the Dawn Immortal used to slash holes into the air itself.

The difficulty of this battle far exceeded what the Northern Reaches cultivators could ever have imagined or predicted. Meng Hao’s appearance on the battlefield had completely turned the battle around.

First was the death of the red-robed boy, and then the old man in animal hide clothing perished. The pinnacle of the Northern Reaches’ fighting forces had been reduced by thirty percent. That… was something that could determine victory or defeat in a battle!

Then the Dawn Immortal appeared, and she seemed to be capable of getting control of the situation. But, contrary to what everyone would have expected, Meng Hao… pulled out a false Immortal puppet.

With the body of a false Immortal puppet, he was now engaged in a duel with the Dawn Immortal that cast the sky and land into complete shadow.

In addition, Pill Demon awakened, unleashing peak Dao Seeking power. Now, the Northern Reaches cultivators were getting quite anxious. At the moment, it seemed that securing victory… was no easy task!

Rumbling echoed out and Meng Hao spit up blood. Popping sounds could be heard as cracks spread out through his puppet body. Up ahead, the Dawn Immortal was frowning. The false Immortal puppet was forcing her to use all the power she could muster.

Even more shocking was Meng Hao’s Blood Demon Grand Magic, which continuously popped up around the Dawn Immortal. The more he used it in battle, the stronger he got. It was extremely difficult to deal with.

The Dawn Immortal’s true self was in the Milky Way Sea and could not leave, which meant that the battle was now in a deadlock!

Of course, the fact that there was a deadlock was a good thing for the Northern Reaches cultivators!

This group here was the main force of the second wave of invaders. Currently, there were four other armies in other parts of the Southern Domain, stabbing toward the Blood Demon Sect like sharp arrows. It would only be a matter of time before they arrived.

Although those armies did not contain any peak Dao Seeking experts, only Spirit Severing leaders, their combined forces numbered over 100,000. Once they arrived, they would be a critical factor in ending the deadlock.

Most important of all… the hundreds of thousands of Northern Reaches cultivators were only the second wave of the Northern Reaches' expeditionary army. Currently, the third wave of 1,000,000 cultivators was making its way across the Resurrection Lily bridge.

The third wave was en route, in battle formation, and once they arrived in the Southern Domain, they would add four peak Dao Seeking experts to the battle!

Furthermore, they were not just any peak Dao Seeking experts, they were the four most powerful Patriarchs in the entire Northern Reaches!

Among their number was the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief, whose cultivation base was monstrous; he was capable of battling false Immortals!

Once they reached the Southern Domain, victory would be assured!

This was something all the Northern Reaches cultivators were aware of, and the Southern Domain cultivators could conclude via speculation. All of the peak Dao Seeking cultivators in midair were also aware of these facts.

There was nothing the Southern Domain could do about it. If things went on too much longer, great tribulation would fall upon the Southern Domain!

Unless… they could quickly overcome this second wave of Northern Reaches cultivators before the third wave arrived. Perhaps that would buy them enough time to set up some spell formations, as well as get some much-needed rest.

If that didn’t happen, and the ferocity they had experienced so far continued with wave after wave of opponents, then the Southern Domain forces would continue to sink further into exhaustion, and would have no time for vital preparations.

Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a cold light as he fought back and forth with the Dawn Immortal. He, too, was aware of the overall situation, and it caused his eyes to flicker with killing intent. He took a deep breath, and even as he moved in for another attack, an expression of determination filled his face.

Without the slightest hesitation, he performed an incantation, causing a divine ability to appear. Using all the power of the false Immortal puppet that he could muster, he suddenly caused a blinding light to shine out.

Beams of light appeared, making Meng Hao’s puppet look like a sun above the battlefield, casting bright light in all directions.

A powerful destructive force then began to surge out from the puppet.

This was a sign of self-detonation, which would unleash an unthinkably destructive force. After all… this was a false Immortal puppet. The power released by its self-detonation would turn into a petrifyingly powerful attack.

The terrifying aura that appeared immediately caused the minds of everyone on the battlefield to spin. As for the peak Dao Seeking experts of the Northern Reaches, their faces fell.

“He’s going to self-detonate!!”

“The self detonation of that puppet will unleash an incredible shockwave that would cause even a false Immortal to perish!!”

“Meng Hao….”

The Dawn Immortal’s pupils constricted, and her heart filled with a sense of grave crisis. As she prepared to retreat, she twirled the Resurrection Lily whip into circles, creating a defensive shield.

Meng Hao’s determination left her completely shocked. She knew that this was a false Immortal puppet, something that would put Meng Hao in a superior position virtually anywhere he went in the lands of South Heaven.

Any powerful group would attach incredible value to a false Immortal puppet. It was a precious treasure that could certainly lead to violent conflicts.

And yet, Meng Hao was now going to blow the thing up!!

The shocked Dawn Immortal had just finished forming her shield when Meng Hao, utilizing the intense surge of power that came just before the detonation, increased his speed and suddenly appeared directly in front of her. He did nothing to prevent her from unleashing various divine abilities; instead, he stretched out his hands, coughed up blood… and then wrapped his arms around her.

He held tight to the Dawn Immortal, after which the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex suddenly caused her body to momentarily lurch, frozen in place. Under Meng Hao’s control, the puppet shot high up into the sky.

“You’re looking to die!” she said coldly, her face flickering. For the first time, she appeared to be truly angry. The illusory Resurrection Lily whipped about, unleashing wild attacks.

Instantly, more cracks spread out across the puppet. Inside, Meng Hao coughed up blood and trembled. Each of the attacks being slammed against him could have injured someone at the peak of Dao Seeking.

As the puppet continued to disintegrate, innumerable beams of light shot out, and the ground quaked. All of the cultivators looked up in astonishment.

What they saw looked exactly like a sun!

Pill Demon’s heart was racing; he knew of Meng Hao’s Eternal recovery abilities, as well as the Blood Demon Grand Magic. However, this was the self-detonation of an Immortal’s soul. Pill Demon had no idea whether Meng Hao could survive such a blast.

Patriarch Song was also incredibly nervous.

Most nervous of all were the four remaining peak Dao Seeking experts from the Northern Reaches.

They hearts were pounding as they realized that… if the Dawn Immortal was destroyed in the detonation, and Meng Hao survived… then there would be no way for them to continue fighting this battle. Unless the third wave of the army showed up, they would be forced to either flee or be killed.

Up in the air, the Dawn Immortal was struggling wildly. Meng Hao’s face was twisted ferociously, and a vicious air surrounded him. He had been pestered for years because of the Dawn Immortal, and was completely fed up with her.

“The one that’s going to die… is you!” he said through clenched teeth, shooting higher up into the sky.

Self-detonating down below wasn’t an option; too many people would be killed, both friend and foe alike. His only option was to self detonate high up in the air, and focus all the power on destroying the Dawn Immortal.

When he reached the apex of his flight, fear appeared on the face of the Dawn Immortal for the first time. By now, she realized that no matter what she did, she could not free herself. A strange light began to gleam in her eyes, and suddenly, countless leaves began to sprout out from her skin. The enormous whip transformed into an huge Resurrection Lily that began to wrap around her.

At this very moment, the light emanating from Meng Hao’s puppet had reached its brightest point. The air was shattered and the sky flashed with colors. An explosive boom and an indescribably powerful destructive force exploded out, sweeping across the entirety of the Southern Domain.

Everything was shaken violently!

The gigantic flower which surrounded the Dawn Immortal was ripped into pieces, destroyed like a dried weed, exposing from within a face filled with complete terror!

In the next instant, the Dawn Immortal’s figure was been enveloped by the wave of destructive power.

Inside the puppet, Meng Hao’s flesh was slashed into pieces, and he began to burn. Some of his skin even began to melt. At that moment, when he was just about to be enveloped… the Lightning Cauldron appeared in his hand. Coldness gleamed in his eyes. He might be in a deadly and critical situation, wracked with intense pain, but he was not flustered in the slightest.

His eyes shifted… to look down toward the battlefield… at one of the peak Dao Seeking experts of the Northern Domain. It was a middle-aged Patriarch with a long violet robe, surrounding by a swirling, illusory flood dragon.

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# Chapter 779: The Northern Reaches Routed!

Heaven and Earth trembled, and the thunder-like, rumbling sound of the explosion echoed out through the entire Southern Domain. The self-detonation of the false Immortal puppet didn’t just shake the Southern Domain. Ripples of air turbulence spread throughout the Northern Desert, and the clouds above the Eastern Lands churned.

Simultaneously, as the destructive power washed over Meng Hao, his body flashed with lightning.

Form Displacement Transposition!

His body vanished, and when he reappeared, he was in the spot just occupied by the middle-aged man with the violet robe and flood dragons. The peak Dao Seeking expert from the Northern Reaches reappeared where Meng Hao had been. He did not even have enough time to let out a miserable shriek before the power of destruction overwhelmed him.

Massive rumbling sounds filled everyone’s ears; it almost seemed as if the sky would collapse and fall.

The peak Dao Seeking expert was instantly killed and the Dawn Immortal was enveloped by the destructive force. Even any sound or sign of her was incapable of escaping.

However, the two halves of the Resurrection Lily bridge that stretched out across the Milky Way Sea trembled, as if they were being wracked with intense pain. Rumbling sounds could be heard as parts of the bridge collapsed, the tentacles transformed into nothing more than ash.

A screeching cry sounded out from the Resurrection Lily, so powerful that it caused the ground to split and the sky to shake!

“MENG HAO!!”

Back in the Southern Domain, Meng Hao appeared next to Patriarch Song on the battlefield, and his body was a bloody mess.

The only part that remained intact was the hand that held the lightning cauldron. The rest of his body was in tatters. His skin was flayed off and his blood dried up. His vital organs were visible inside, and half of his head was destroyed. Upon cursory glance, it seemed that he would be incapable of anything but dying.

His Eternal stratum was virtually exhausted, and still in the process of repairing itself. As such, it was incapable of restoring Meng Hao’s body. These were wounds that even the most miraculous medicinal pills would be incapable of healing!

Immense amounts of destructive force had battered Meng Hao. The fact that he didn’t die in the blast was actually pure luck. Were it not for the Heaven-defying Lightning Cauldron, Meng Hao would most assuredly have been destroyed!

Even still, when he reappeared, the remaining three peak Dao Seeking experts from the Northern Desert gasped and unconsciously fell back. They didn’t dare to try to take the chance to make a move.

Meng Hao’s initial savagery and ruthlessness, his fearsome act of self-detonation, the slaughtering of the Dawn Immortal’s clone, the casual slaying of the peak Dao Seeking expert… all of these things ensured that his fearsome name struck terror into the hearts of anyone and everyone.

A buzz of conversation rose up from the more than 100,000 cultivators from the Northern Reaches.

“He’s still not dead!!”

“Look at how mangled his body is, and yet, he’s still alive!!”

Pill Demon rushed over with medicinal pills, while Patriarch Song and Patriarch Golden Frost immediately sped to Meng Hao’s side to stand guard.

“Hao’er!” said Pill Demon, with great urgency.

As for Meng Hao’s second true self, he sagged listlessly and darkened. After all, if Meng Hao died… then he would most certainly also die.

Meng Hao couldn’t speak. His eyes were blank and his expression looked confused. An aura of death swirled around him, as if he might pass away completely at any moment. He only had one tiny scrap of consciousness remaining. He looked down toward the ground at the astonished Northern Reaches cultivators.

Then, the Lightning Cauldron flickered, and he vanished. When he reappeared, he had switched places with one of the Northern Reaches cultivators. Then, his hand exploded. The only intact portion of his body that remained was half of his head!

Even the last remaining part of his head exploded into a bloody mist as it fell on the ground. The mist didn’t vanish, though. It suddenly bored into the body of a nearby Northern Reaches cultivator, entering through his eyes, ears, nose and mouth. The Northern Reaches cultivator let out a bloodcurdling scream. His body began to writhe, and blue veins popped out on his forehead. His expression was one of astonishment and horror.

“NO! Help me—” In the middle of his sentence, his words were cut short. He began to wither as his qi, blood, cultivation base and soul were all sucked away.

As he died, vast quantities of red mist emerged from inside of him, which then split into two streams that then spread out once more.

Miserable screams rang out; quickly a shocking change occurred on the battlefield!

Rumbling sounds filled the air as one Northern Reaches cultivator after another withered up and died. The blood mist then split from two parts into four, then eight, then sixteen, then thirty-two, then sixty-four…. In the end, hundreds of streams of blood mist spread out, boring into hundreds of bodies, sucking away their qi, blood, cultivation base, and soul. Then, the mist spread out again.

All it took was the blink of an eye for thousands of streams of red mist to be visible. It was evil, Devilish, and seemed to be sentient as it spread out, avoiding all Southern Domain cultivators and seeking only Northern Reaches cultivators to destroy.

Up in mid-air were the three peak Dao Seeking Patriarchs from the Northern Desert. There were the two identical old men who wore black and white clothing and looked like hopping vampires. The other bore the semblance of a young man, around whom swirled mysterious magical symbols. From the look of it, each one of those magical symbols contained some type of weapon, just ready to be unleashed.

All three of them looked at what was happening with complete shock. After exchanging glances, they didn’t hesitate any longer. Employing all the speed they could muster, they fled off into the distance.

How could they possibly dare to continue the fight?!

The Dawn Immortal was dead. Of the seven peak Dao Seeking experts, four were gone, three of them slain by Meng Hao. Furthermore, it seemed apparent that Meng Hao… still wasn’t dead!

There was no way they could possibly dare to stay behind. Besides, Pill Demon was now at the peak of Dao Seeking, as were Patriarch Golden Frost and Patriarch Song. Those three alone were enough to cause problems, and that was not to mention Meng Hao’s second true self. He might seem weak, but if Meng Hao recovered, he would be yet another powerful enemy!

There was simply no way to continue to fight.

The death of the Dawn Immortal’s clone had sealed the fate of the Northern Reaches’ second army.

The remaining three peak Dao Seeking experts fled, shivering in fear. Their only hope was to rendezvous with the third wave army. Only then would they possibly dare to reappear and face Meng Hao.

It wasn’t that it didn’t occur to them to seize this opportunity to try to kill Meng Hao once and for all…. Rather, the risk was too great. Fleeing was the safest option.

The three fleeing Dao Seeking experts completely ignored the remaining 100,000 or more Northern Reaches cultivators down below. As for Patriarch Song and the others, they hesitated for a moment as they considered whether or not to pursue them. In the end, they decided that Meng Hao was more important.

Even if they did catch up with them, it wouldn’t be easy to secure a win in a short period of time.

Pill Demon and the others exchanged glances.

“Don’t interfere with him,” said Pill Demon. “Let’s start setting up spell formations to seal this place off and protect him!

“That’s the correct course of action. He’s using the Blood Demon Grand Magic to recover! Let’s go!” Immediately, they split up and began to seal down the area.

Down below, the blood mist raged. It was now split into more than ten thousand streams, which completely obfuscated the sky and land. Vast quantities of Northern Reaches cultivators were being consumed. No Blood Demon Grand Magic vortexes could be seen; the blood mist bored directly into the cultivators. They were incapable of fleeing, and their bodies were withered rapidly. Their fate was sealed; their qi and blood, their cultivation bases and their souls all became living sacrifices!

Miserable shrieks filled the battlefield, along with cries of pain. The Southern Domain cultivators were completely shocked and surprised by what they were witnessing.

What they saw was countless withered corpses with wide eyes and lifeless faces filled with what seemed to be the utmost pain.

The blood mist grew larger and larger. Soon there were tens of thousands of streams, which were now forming a nucleus in the place where Meng Hao had initially exploded. As for the mist itself, it seemed to stretch out from that central nucleus.

Soon, a tempest of bloody mist seethed around that nucleus, rapidly transforming it into something that looked like a cocoon. Then, something that resembled a shocking heartbeat could suddenly be heard.

Thump-thump!

Thump-thump!

Thump-thump!

Every heartbeat caused the land to tremble, and the sky to darken. It was as if the entire world were being covered by infinite ferocity. Boundless red mist seemed to be stretching out from the cocoon. There were now more than 50,000 streams sweeping about, making impossible for the Northern Reaches cultivators to flee.

“NOOO!!”

“Damn you, Southern Domain cultivators! You’re too ruthless!”

“Kill them! Kill some of these Southern Domain bastards while there’s still the chance!”

The Northern Reaches cultivators who had invaded the Southern Domain seethed with hatred and let out enraged shouts.

Meanwhile, far out among the stars outside of Planet South Heaven, there was a mighty river that no cultivator would be able to see, speeding along.

At first glance, the river seemed to be frothy and muddy, but upon closer inspection it grew more clear. This river was called the River of Forgetfulness, and its source was the Fourth Mountain 1. It swept through the great Nine Mountains and Seas, controlling the cycle of reincarnation, and the path to the underworld.

Any living being which died in the Nine Mountains and Seas, assuming their soul did not disperse, would enter into this great river, and then be carried to the Fourth Mountain, after which they would begin their cycle anew.

There appeared to be endless souls within the great river, most of whom looked around wide-eyed, moaning and screaming. Many struggled to escape the river water, including powerful beasts and mighty cultivators.

Of the numerous fierce beasts in the river, one was a pangolin who was covered with long spikes. It was fully three thousand meters long, and was currently roaring in rage. 2

It was half submerged in the river water and struggling mightily. Once it was completely submerged, it would lose its mental faculties. As it struggled desperately, the beast let out a mighty roar.

“I’m an Immortal from the Mountain Deity Tribe! My grandfather is the Dao Lord of the Wind People of the Seventh Mountain! How dare you try to drag me into the cycle of reincarnation!!”

As the beast roared, it began to rise up. It was just on the verge of leaving the water, when suddenly, the river began to seethe. A spray of water burst into the air, which expanded out to form a sea. A rumbling sound could be heard as the beast was submerged. A miserable shriek rang out through the void as the gigantic creature was smashed, transforming into countless discarnate souls that merged into the river water.

The scene caused all the surrounding beast souls to tremble with fear and astonishment, even terror.

Off in the distance, an old man sat upright, floating above the surface of the water, surrounded by the melodious music of a great Dao. Every bit of his soul radiated Immortality, and his body shone with radiant light that spread out in all directions over the vast river. He seemed like a preeminent Immortal, towering over the River of Forgetfulness. He ignored the water, which seemed incapable of fazing him in the least.

“I am an almighty Dao Lord of the Sixth Mountain. My longevity might have ended, but in the past, the longevity of Dao Lords in the Nine Mountains and Seas was unlimited! Now… under what authority are you dragging me into the cycle of reincarnation, Fourth Mountain?!” The old man suddenly looked up, and his eyes seemed like two suns. Any souls that he looked at immediately began to scream and dissipate.

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1. I think I mentioned in a footnote before that in Chinese, the number 4 is pronounced almost the same as the word for “death,” and they are usually associated with each other

2. In Chinese, pangolins have a pretty cool name. The characters literally mean “pierce mountain armor”

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# Chapter 780: Slaughtering an Underworld Judge

The old man slapped his hand down onto the surface of the water and then began to fly upward. His hand flashed in an incantation gesture, and then a rift tore open in the starry sky, which he prepared to enter.

However, it was at this point that a black fish suddenly splashed out of the water. It had sharp teeth and looked incredibly ferocious. As soon as it appeared, black rays of light began to shine out from it, making it look like a black sun. It only took a moment for it to appear in front of the old man.

An indescribable pressure exploded off of it.

“You’re… an underworld fish!” said the old man, his face paling. “There’s an Underworld Judge of the Fourth Mountain who is an underworld fish. You’re his clone!” Just when the old man prepared to fight back, the underworld fish flickered and then stabbed into the old man’s forehead. The old man shook, and then his body began to dissipate.

Even as he began to fade away, the old man’s eyes suddenly flickered with a glow of determination.

“I might be dying, but you Underworld people must be dreaming if you think I’ll go down without a fight! My Dao manifested the music of a great Dao. Dead souls of the river, if you have any reluctance at all to part with the living world, then awaken! Listen to the call beckoning you to stay in the world of men! Break free, return, and exist as undead!” With that, he lifted his head back and laughed loudly. His body collapsed, but the sound of his voice rolled out through the River of Forgetfulness, which stretched out further than the eye could see.

The old man died, but the music of his great Dao echoed out over the discarnate souls within the River of Forgetfulness. They trembled, and were then unable to control themselves as they flew up into the air. They transformed into a tempest of souls which shot madly toward the rift out in the void.

“Let’s go home!”

“Flee this place and return home!!”

Rumbling could be heard as the countless souls whistled through the air. On the surface of the river water lay a woman surrounded by a blood-colored light. She also flew up into the air to join the other souls in the tempest.

The underworld fish next to the rift looked coldly at the souls.

“You people are already dead!” the underworld fish said coolly. “If you want your souls dispersed as well, then as an Underworld Judge, I can accommodate!

“All souls in the River of Forgetfulness… will have no trial! Your sentence is to be refused entry into the cycle of reincarnation! Your souls will be exterminated immediately and melted into the River of Forgetfulness, where they shall remain for all eternity!” A black glow emanated out from the fish, transforming into a Dharmic decree that spread out in all directions.

In the blink of an eye, the entire area was covered with a black glow. Any soul who touched it screamed and then faded away, having been instantly eradicated!

“I don’t want to die!!”

“Ahhhh, soul dispersion! I refuse to submit!!”

“My life was ended, and now I get no second life?! I can’t accept this!!”

It took only a moment for all the souls above the river to fade away, with the exception of the woman’s soul. The black light was blocked by the red glow that surrounded her.

The black underworld fish looked over with glinting eyes that suddenly went wide.

The woman was none other than Xu Qing’s soul!

“So you already have a Dharmic decree attached to you, directing you into reincarnation?” The fish hesitated for a moment. Generally speaking, souls with Dharmic decrees had incredible backstories. The fish couldn’t help but look more closely at Xu Qing.

After further examination, a look of surprise gleamed in the fish’s eyes.

“This woman has a Dao root? And it just sprouted? I’ve never heard of something like this before! I’ve been looking for a new slave girl. This one will do just fine!” Suddenly, black light appeared in front of the fish which then transformed into a huge hand covered with fish scales. It reached out toward Xu Qing to grab her.

However, as soon as it made contact with the red glow, shocking ripples flowed out. The hand trembled, then shattered into pieces, leaving the underworld fish astonished. It only took a moment for a bright glow to appear in its eyes.

“Interesting. This woman with the Dharmic decree must be some shocking, almighty figure. Now that she’s died, she’s weak and exhausted. If I can suppress her here in the River of Forgetfulness, then there won’t be any chance of her coming back to look for me later!”

The underworld fish’s body flickered, and the River of Forgetfulness began to crash with enormous waves. The waves surged, merging together, hundreds of thousands of them. The red glow fought back against the waves, but was eventually incapable of resisting the mysterious power of the River of Forgetfulness. After some time passed, the glow began to fade.

When it completely dissipated, the underworld fish laughed loudly and then summoned the black hand to once more reach out and grab at Xu Qing.

“I’ll bless you with some good fortune! Wipe your memories and sever your path to mortality. You won’t be going into the cycle of reincarnation, from now on, you’re going to be the slave girl of an Underworld Judge!”

Just when the black hand was about to grab onto Xu Qing, a strand of divine sense suddenly flew up into the air and began to emanate an astonishing power. The strand slashed down, slicing the black hand in two!

A miserable scream could be heard from the underworld fish. With an expression of complete astonishment and terror, it shot backward in retreat.

At the same time, a cold voice echoed out through the River of Forgetfulness.

“How dare you touch the daughter-in-law of the one surnamed Fang!” The voice seemed enraged, and the entire River of Forgetfulness shook. The underworld fish couldn’t look more shocked.

“You…. Fang…. You’re….” It began to tremble with such fear that its soul nearly dissipated. Before it could finish speaking, the strand slashed out into the starry sky, severing all natural law. The strand continued to slash down toward the underworld fish. It screamed as its body was sliced into two halves. The strand then appeared to be preparing to finish the job and completely destroy it.

“Your excellency, please spare my life!” cried the underworld fish. It was completely terrified, and filled with a sense of deadly crisis. Unfortunately, it was incapable of fleeing, and had no other option than to beg for mercy.

It was at this point that another voice, ancient and archaic, echoed out from within the River of Forgetfulness.

“Elder Brother Fang, calm your anger. Considering my position as king, can’t you give me some face….”

In conjunction with the voice, an enormous face appeared within the River of Forgetfulness. It had a third eye on its forehead, and as soon as it appeared, all the stars in the sky trembled.

“No, I can’t,” was the cold response. A bloodcurdling scream rang out from the mouth of the underworld fish. Its body was destroyed, completely and thoroughly. Then, a will of extermination appeared that quickly found the true self that the clone originated from, and destroyed it as well.

Nothing could prevent this from happening!

The starry sky was now tranquil and quiet.

“Elder Brother Fang, we haven’t seen each other for years, but you still have the same temper…. You know, you might just be a stream of divine sense come from the lands of South Heaven, but that’s still a violation of the agreement.

“The 100,000 year period has just begun. You and your beloved are not permitted to leave South Heaven!”

“During the 100,000 years, I can send out one stream of divine sense,” replied the cold voice. “That was also written in the agreement.”

Down below, they eyes of the enormous face in the River of Forgetfulness flickered. “True, true. Although, you may only do that one time, ostensibly to provide a Dao Protector for your son. I never imagined you would use the divine sense on this girl.”

“The son of Fang is a dragon of Heaven and Earth! He doesn’t need me to act as Dao Protector!”

“Oh? You’re not afraid that someone might kill him?!” the face replied coldly.

“If someone kills my son, I will kill his everything!” responded the voice, cold and calm. “I will destroy his entire family, and their chance at reincarnation!” The words were spoken with a monstrous, domineering air. Intense, icy coldness spread out, and as for the face on the river, it trembled inwardly.

“Even after all these years, he definitely deserves to be called the number one Chosen of the Fang Clan,” thought the face. “For the sake of his crippled son, he was stationed on planet South Heaven for 100,000 years… unable to leave. South Heaven is old and dull, and his cultivation base cannot advance. It won’t take 100,000 years for plenty of other people to pass him up.”

At this point, the cold voice continued: “This is my daughter-in-law. My strand of divine sense will stay with her to protect her and ensure that she is peacefully reincarnated. During her time in the underworld, no one is allowed to interfere with her in any way.” With that, the strand of divine sense slowly floated down to circle around Xu Qing’s arm, then faded into her.

The face on the river water said nothing. After a moment passed, it slowly sank back down into the water. This stretch of the vast River of Forgetfulness now had no souls in it other than Xu Qing’s. Gradually, she drifted off into the distance.

Back in the Southern Domain, on the battlefield, the Southern Domain cultivators milled about, not attacking, but merely surrounding the Northern Reaches cultivators. They had long since grown accustomed to the reek of blood. They looked on coldly as the Northern Reaches cultivators let out their final screams.

Everything was sealed. The Northern Reaches cultivators couldn’t flee. By now, there were less than 30,000 left, each and every one of whom… was withering away into a corpse.

The corpse-littered battlefield was huge, but now it was possible to see that in the very center, there was a giant blood-colored cocoon, within which sat a cross-legged figure. It was impossible to see the figure clearly, only its outline, but when the Southern Domain cultivators looked at it, their eyes filled with reverence and fanaticism.

A magic had been used that merged the qi, blood and cultivation bases of more than a hundred thousand people, to mold a new body. Such magic was matchlessly sinister and vicious. And yet, the magical technique itself was neither evil nor good. The nature of good and evil is often decided by the masses, and the heart.

To the Northern Reaches cultivators, the blood mist was evil to the extreme and indescribably cruel. They hated it to their bones. However, to the Southern Domain cultivators, it was exactly the opposite.

The living sacrifice of the Northern Reaches cultivators allowed their esteemed Meng Hao to mold a new body. It was something that left them incredibly moved on an emotional level.

It was impossible to say who it was that spoke first, but soon, all of the more than 100,000 surviving Southern Domain cultivators spontaneously began to cry out. Their voices grew louder and louder, until everyone was shouting out one name.

“Meng Hao!!”

“Meng Hao!!”

“Meng Hao!!”

They were calling out to Meng Hao, calling out for him to awaken!

The sound rumbled out over the remaining 20,000 or so Northern Reaches cultivators. They were enveloped by red mist, and their miserable screams were a sharp contrast to the calls of the Southern Domain cultivators. Two very different sounds could be heard on the battlefield.

The Northern Reaches cultivators only lasted for the space of a few breaths before they were completely withered up. 20,000 corpses toppled over, and the thick red mist surged back into the enormous, blood-colored cocoon. Then, the heartbeat coming from within the Blood Cocoon… grew louder!

Thump-thump! Thump-thump! Thump-thump!

Not only did the heartbeat grow more intense, the image of the person inside began to grow clearer!

“Meng Hao!!”

“Meng Hao!!”

“Meng Hao!!”

100,000 Southern Domain cultivators were shouting at the top of their lungs, and the sound of it caused everything to shake, and even penetrated into the Blood Cocoon itself!

Within the Blood Cocoon, the figure’s eyes… suddenly opened!

“Who… calls me…?”

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# Chapter 781: Meng Hao Awakens!

Within the Blood Cocoon sat a cross-legged figure with pale white hair. His body had no skin on it, making it possible to see the various blood vessels and other meridians. Overall, he looked completely horrifying.

His eyes were listless, and a monstrous Devilish aura emanated off of him, making him seem like a Blood Devil!

This was Meng Hao!

He had absorbed the qi, blood and cultivation bases of more than 100,000 cultivators, as well as their souls.

However, he had been destroyed by the explosion of the false Immortal puppet, washed over by the force of eradication. Therefore, even what he had already absorbed was not enough to completely restore his body.

The cultivators in the outside world called his name, and the sound continued to grow louder. It entered into the Blood Cocoon and echoed in Meng Hao’s ears, muffled and distorted as if time were passing slowly, stretching out the sounds.

Gradually, Meng Hao’s eyes were no longer blank, but rather, bright and clear.

“I… am Meng Hao….” he murmured. A tremor ran through him, and his mind seemed to fill with rumbling as his memories flooded back.

There were memories of his early childhood, and then that night when he was seven years old. His parents went missing, and he ran out into the fog to look for them. Then there was the Reliance Sect, the Violet Fate Sect, the

Western Desert, the Demon Immortal Sect, the Milky Way Sea, and finally the war of the Southern Domain.

He remembered everything. He remembered his and Xu Qing’s wedding. He saw her soul enter the River of Forgetfulness. All of it caused him to tremble. Then he looked down at the back of his right hand and saw that same mark that had appeared before, flickering and glittering.

This time when he looked down at the symbol, there was more…. There were unfamiliar memories, broken fragments that he couldn’t quite piece together.

Within those fragments were memories from before when he was seven. However, the setting was unfamiliar. It was not the State of Zhao, but some other place. It was some location where there seemed to be seven moons, one of which was bright, six of which were dark.

Underneath that unique sky, he was being carried in the arms of a woman. Off to the side was a young man who was smiling at him. Further off to the side was a tall old man, who was laughing kindly.

The man and the woman were not unfamiliar to him. They looked exactly like the father and mother that he remembered from when he was young.

As for the sky and the land, it was a world Meng Hao didn’t recognize.

What he did know was… it was not South Heaven.

“That curse targeting one of the lands of South Heaven didn’t affect me at all…. Is it possible that I actually wasn’t born here?” Before, Meng Hao didn’t have the time to consider the question. Now, here in this Blood Cocoon, his mind stirred with scattered fragments of memories.

After some time passed, the mark on Meng Hao’s hand faded. He looked up, and heard the voices calling to him from the outside. Slowly, he rose to his feet. The Blood Cocoon exploded, transforming into a shocking, blood-colored whirlwind.

Meng Hao stepped out from within the whirlwind, into the view of the Southern Domain cultivators. What they saw was a Meng Hao with white hair and ferocious features. His body had no skin, making him even more terrifying. However, they continued to call his name.

“Meng Hao!”

“Meng Hao!”

“Meng Hao!”

Pill Demon, Patriarch Song, and Patriarch Golden Frost sped over to appear at Meng Hao’s side. Meng Hao’s second true self was also recovered, and appeared off in the distance.

“Hao’er….” said Pill Demon. Seeing Meng Hao’s current condition pained him in his heart.

Meng Hao clasped hands in greeting, then softly said, “Master, I’m fine…. These are merely the excesses of the sixth level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic.”

“The sixth level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic!” Patriarch Song exclaimed with a gasp.

This truly was the sixth level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic. As soon as Meng Hao’s body fell apart, the sixth level automatically activated. It seemed that in order to truly enter the sixth level, it required all the blood in the body to dissipate.

“As of now, you….” Pill Demon trailed off and didn’t finish his sentence.

“Master,” said Meng Hao, his eyes flickering with red light, “are there still cultivators from the Northern Reaches’ second wave army left in the Southern Domain?”

“Yes!” he replied. “There were a total of six fronts. The third and fourth overlapped here, but there are still four others scattered in the four cardinal directions. There are still roughly 100,000 Northern Reaches cultivators out there.” A flicker of worry could be seen in Pill Demon’s eyes. He knew what state Meng Hao was in. He was bedeviled, and would carry out slaughter like a Devil.

“Master, I’ve found my path to the Third Severing,” said Meng Hao. He looked at Pill Demon, then clasped hands and bowed respectfully.

Pill Demon looked at him seriously for a moment, and then suddenly laughed out loud. Relieved, he waved his hand, sending a jade slip flying out that detailed the locations of the four Northern Reaches armies.

Meng Hao caught the jade slip, then turned to clasp hands toward Patriarch Song and Patriarch Golden Frost. Finally he looked out at all the Southern Domain cultivators, clasped hands and bowed. With that, he flew up into the air. His second true self rippled and vanished, becoming his shadow as he shot off into the distance.

After Meng Hao left, Pill Demon produced a pill furnace and then unleashed a vast quantity of medicinal pills for the Southern Domain cultivators to use to recover. Then he, Patriarch Golden Frost and Patriarch Song started to set up spell formations.

They knew that the war wasn’t over. The Northern Reaches’ third wave, which was the strongest of all, was currently en route. It wouldn’t be long before it arrived, and then the true battle for victory or defeat would begin.

In the end… the Southern Domain’s chances of winning were small. But they would fight nonetheless!

It would be better to die in battle than let the Southern Domain be overrun.

Meanwhile, Meng Hao shot through midair in a beam of blood-colored light. He sped forward, jade slip in hand, heading toward the second front, which wasn’t very far off.

“The Blood Demon Grand Magic has three strata. With the first stratum, I can battle early Dao Seeking. With the second, I can battle mid Dao

Seeking. With the third stratum complete, and my current cultivation base, I can definitely shake the peak of Dao Seeking!

“If I can perform my Third Severing and step into Dao Seeking, then… I would be considered invincible within the Dao Seeking stage!” Meng Hao’s expression was placid, but his heart was thumping.

“Regarding my Third Severing… I already have the basics lined up.” He looked down toward the ground and saw a shadow that others would not be able to perceive, which was his second true self.

As he proceeded onward at top speed, he was soon able to hear the sounds of battle. Though It was not the shocking sound of hundreds of thousands of cultivators fighting, it still caused everything in the area to shake.

There were tens of thousands of people on the battlefield, locked in combat.

One side was in a state of constant retreat, and the other side was pushing them relentlessly. The ground was stained with blood and littered with corpses.

20,000 Northern Reaches cultivators were currently fighting 10,000 Southern Domain cultivators. Most of the group of Southern Domain cultivators was made up of Violet Fate Sect disciples. Among their forces were Chosen of the Violet Fate Sect who had not completely grown into their prime, and as such, were unable to take the lead. Currently, the cultivators taking the lead were three aged Spirit Severing cultivators.

On the Northern Reaches’ side, there were four Spirit Severing cultivators.

Booms filled the air as the Southern Domain army was forced into constant retreat. Their three Spirit Severing cultivators were seriously injured. Their army had suffered severe casualties. Chu Yuyan was there fighting, her face pale, blood oozing out of her mouth.

There were many familiar faces, some who had already fallen, some who were still holding firm.

Meng Hao shot down from the sky like a bloody shooting star that stained the sky red. As soon as he appeared, the tens of thousands of bitterly fighting combatants were shocked to the core.

This was especially true of the Southern Domain’s Spirit Severing cultivators, whose pupils constricted. They were unable to tell whether or not this person was a friend or an enemy!

That was not the case with Chu Yuyan. She dodged a fatal strike, coughed up some blood, and then looked up at the figure in the beam of light. Her heart trembled.

He had white hair, and no skin. He was fearsome and terrifying to the extreme. And yet, she could still tell… that it was Meng Hao.

“What’s… happened to you…?” she thought, her heart aching. She had her pride, but even with that pride, when she saw Meng Hao like this, pain filled her heart.

BOOM!

Meng Hao slammed into the middle of the Northern Reaches forces like a meteor. Massive fissures spread out across the land, and numerous Northern Reaches cultivators coughed up blood and then directly exploded.

The four Spirit Severing cultivators from the Northern Reaches were in shock. They gritted their teeth and attacked, but before they could even get close to Meng Hao, he waved his hand out in front of him, causing a vast red mist to spread out.

The four Spirit Severing cultivators had just begun their charge when the mist bored into them. They began to scream; shocking, earth-shaking screams. They were powerful Spirit Severing experts, but it only took the blink of an eye for them to begin to wither up. Qi, blood, cultivation bases, souls; all were extracted. As the mist spread out, anyone caught in it became a desiccated corpse that toppled to the ground.

The sight of it shocked all of the Northern Reaches cultivators. More miserable shrieks rang out as the red mist continued to spread.

Moments ago, the Northern Reaches cultivators’ faces had been covered with malevolent, murderous expressions. Now, they were trembling in terror. Their bodies withered up, their cultivation bases vanished, their souls were wrenched out.

Soon, the entire battlefield was filled with the sounds of screaming. The Violet Fate Sect disciples backed up, their faces ashen. The scene which was playing out in front of them left them stunned, with looks of horror on their faces.

“Who is that!?!?”

“His entire body is the color of blood! He has no skin! His magic is Demonic!”

“How come… that looks a lot like Meng Hao’s Blood Demon Grand Magic…?”

Chu Yuyan looked at Meng Hao in the middle of the Northern Reaches cultivators, and it felt like she was looking at a Blood Devil. Her heart ached as she realized that Meng Hao also had an air of sorrow to him.

Rumbling filled the air. The 20,000 Northern Reaches cultivators around Meng Hao screamed miserably as, one by one, they became desiccated corpses. Eventually, the red mist returned to Meng Hao. Cracking sounds could be heard from inside of him.

His previously skinless body now had some skin on it. His qi and blood were more vigorous, and up above in the sky, thunder rumbled.

“Meng Hao! It’s… Meng Hao!”

“It really is Meng Hao! I couldn’t tell before, but now that there’s some skin on him, you can tell… it’s Meng Hao!”

“How come he looks so different!?”

The Violet Fate Sect disciples were shocked. However, even as their voices rose, Meng Hao leaped up into the air. He looked down at the crowds, and his gaze lingered for a moment on Chu Yuyan. As he turned to leave, his voice rang out.

“Go meet up with the others at the Blood Demon Sect!”

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# Chapter 782: Three Swords Sweep Across the Eastern Lands!

In the same moment that Meng Hao left the second front in the Southern Domain, a man and a woman stood in a monolithic Tower of Tang in the Eastern Lands, just as they had been standing there the entire time.

Looking toward the Southern Domain.

“Soon…. He’s going to break through soon!” the man said softly. “Once he does, once he reaches Dao Seeking, we can go to him. We can tell him the truth about everything!

“Before he reaches Dao Seeking, we cannot interfere with his Karma. We have to be extremely careful even with things tangentially related to him.

“If any accidents happen, this lifetime will have been a failure…. I… I don’t want to see him go through any more suffering.” As he spoke, a love shone in his eyes that seemed capable of melting even the coldest ice.

The woman standing next to him had tears in her eyes as she stared off toward the Southern Domain. She could see Meng Hao, and his current skinless visage caused her heart to quiver.

“But… he’s just a child,” she said, and the tears began to flow down her cheeks.

Almost as soon as the words left her mouth, her expression suddenly changed. Shocking, murderous intent flickered in her eyes as she turned her head to look in a different direction. Toward… the Ji Clan!

At this very moment, the clouds there were seething as an enormous vortex appeared above the clan, a vortex that anyone under Dao Seeking would be incapable of seeing.

It was something only visible to Dao Seeking and higher.

Within the vortex, a gigantic altar appeared. It was none other than… the Immortality Bestowal Dais!

Behind the Immortality Bestowal Dais, up in the sky above the Eastern Lands, a huge face appeared. Its eyes were closed as if it were sleeping. However, as soon as it appeared, an indescribable pressure emanated out that weighed down on all living creatures in the Eastern Lands.

“The false Immortal puppet Hao’er used was infected with Ji Clan Karma,” said the woman. “He already had Ji Clan Karma on him to begin with, now… they’re going to make a move!” The killing intent in her eyes grew even more intense.

At this point, rumbling sounds could be heard from within the Immortality Bestowal Dais; clearly, it was just on the verge of performing a teleportation.

“Remove my seal,” the woman said urgently. “They’re going after Hao’er, and I’m going to stop them!” The man didn’t say anything. However, his hand released the column it had been gripping and clenched into a fist.

“There’s no need,” he said calmly. “I’ll handle it myself.” The woman looked over in shock. As far as she could remember, her husband always opposed her when she tried to interfere in matters. They had quarreled about such things many times.

But now, HE was going to do something!

“You….”

“Hao’er is at a critical juncture, and can’t be disturbed. If WE can’t interfere, then… neither can the Ji Clan!” A cold gleam appeared in his as he stretched his hand out and pointed up into the sky.

Instantly, the entire Eastern Lands started to tremble. The face in the sky distorted as a gargantuan finger appeared up above, which then poked viciously down toward the Immortality Bestowal Dais.

As the rumbling filled the air, roars of rage could be heard from within the Ji Clan. Three figures appeared, which shot up toward the Immortality Bestowal Dais, and the descending finger.

The song of a great Dao rose up from the Immortality Bestowal Dais, and from the ancestral lands of the Ji Clan. The sky trembled, and the eyes of the enormous face opened a sliver.

Instantly, the enormous finger began to shudder, seemingly incapable of withstanding the force.

Then, the man in the Tower of Tang snorted coldly.

The Eastern Lands consisted of 216 states. The Northern Reaches had 113. The Southern Domain, 219. The Western Desert had none, and was also the only region that had no Towers of Tang.

In the lands of South Heaven, there were a total of 548 Towers of Tang!

Currently, roughly a third of those Towers of Tang began to emit bright light. Brilliant beams shot up into the air, which sped toward the Tower of Tang in the Eastern Lands, where they formed into the shape of a sword.

It seemed to be a simple, ordinary iron sword. There was nothing resplendent about it whatsoever. However, as soon as it appeared, wild colors flashed throughout the sky, and Planet South Heaven… quaked.

Immediately, the sword slashed out with such speed that it was impossible to even see. It cut through the Immortality Bestowal Dais, rending a huge gash and causing the altar to fall down toward the ground.

“This dais wanted to seal my son. It shall remain fallen for 10,000 years!”

Then the sword slashed a second time, toward the three incoming figures from the Ji Clan. They could do absolutely nothing to block it, and disappeared in a haze of blood. The sword continued to slash downward into the Ji Clan ancestral mansion. A massive gorge was hewn out through multiple layers of the mansion as the sword headed toward the same location where the man’s wife had been stopped the last time she had gone to that place. Sitting at the top of a tall staircase was a young man. 1

The young man’s face flickered, and he immediately roared and counter-attacked with all the power he could muster. A boom rattled out, and blood sprayed from his mouth as both of his arms were severed! They flew up into the air and spontaneously combusted, gone for all eternity.

“Your clan wishes to infect my son’s Karma!? You’re nothing but a puny peak Immortal Realm Dao Lord who hasn’t even opened the great door to the Ancient Realm, and yet you dared to chide my wife? I’m severing your arms! Furthermore, you’ll never reach the Ancient Realm in this lifetime!” 2

The sword slashed a third time, toward the face up in the sky. Massive amounts of sword qi billowed out, and a huge rift was opened up in the sky. The face vanished.

“If your honored clan chief were here, I would obviously be no match for him. But the trifling strand of divine will that has become the Heavens of South Heaven… is not enough to keep me under its thumb!

“You listen to me, Ji Clan. I, Fang, have a family with four people in it. We’ve only been in the lands of South Heaven for a few hundred years, and have done nothing to interfere with your operations here. But starting today… I will fully assume my status as the Prison Warden of the Ninth Mountain. Henceforth, the Ji Clan will keep itself in line! If you harbor even the slightest ill intentions… well, let me remind you that you’re nothing more than an offshoot of the Ji Clan. Besides, even if you were the main branch, I’ve lost count of how many people I’ve killed from there!”

The Ji Clan instantly fell silent.

It was at this point that the woman's proud voice could be heard from within the Tower of Tang.

"Listen up, you people. When my Hao'er returns, you little twerps who owe him spirit stones had better pay them back or else!"

Her way of handling things was somewhat reminiscent of Meng Hao….

Everyone in the Ji Clan was trembling. The Chosen, the Array disciples, even Ji Xiaoxiao, all felt their scalps go numb. At first, they weren't sure who these voices were talking about, but once they heard mention of the debts of spirit stones, all of the Chosen who had been to the Demon Immortal Sect shivered and recalled the same person, that oft-remembered bastard who had conned them out of who knew how much, and had left them gnashing their teeth.

Deep in the Ji Clan, the young man who had lost his arms sat silently on an altar. A complex expression filled his face, and after a long moment, he sighed.

"He sealed himself here for 100,000 years, and is unable to leave South Heaven. He even became the Ninth Mountain Prison Warden. All to give his son a slim chance at life…. And it turns out that little kid down there is his son!"

The iron sword vanished, and the Towers of Tang in the lands of South Heaven went dark. Everything that had just happened was something that mortals wouldn't be able to see. Even most cultivators would not have been able to see anything.

As everything faded away, the woman turned turned to stare at her husband, and a strange light gleamed in her eyes.

The man's face was calm, his voice cool as he said, "Surprised? You interfered a few times already, which was quite dangerous. I lectured you before, but actually, I interfered once too. I prevented some punk child from trying to mess with Xu Qing's soul."

The woman suddenly smiled. “Afraid Meng Hao would resent you if you didn’t?”

“When Xu Qing left the lands of South Heaven and entered the River of Forgetfulness, I was then truly free to act,” he continued. “She is his beloved, which makes her our daughter-in-law. That strand of divine sense will protect her in her reincarnation, all the way until we meet her in person.

“As for Hao’er…. I have faith that he is a dragon among men. He’s not some spoiled brat that needs to cower under the protection of his father and mother.

“We must stay here on Planet South Heaven for 100,000 years. That was the agreement. An oath. We can’t leave, yet neither can we force him stay with us here for those 100,000 years. His path lies much further off in the distance. In this lifetime, he relied only on himself to get as far as he has, and we can be proud of how far he’s risen. Therefore, we must have faith that in the future… he will continue to make us proud!” He spoke softly, and it was hard to tell whether he was speaking to his wife, or to himself.

Back in the lands of South Heaven, Meng Hao’s skin was now thirty percent recovered. He didn’t look as terrifying as before, although his expression was as cold as ice. He flew through the air in a beam of blood-colored light as he headed toward the next battlefront.

Of the six fronts in the Southern Domain, the third and fourth had merged together. The other four were already being pushed toward the Blood Demon Sect. Considering the incredible speed Meng Hao was capable of, it didn’t take long for him to appear in the air above the first front.

There were a few Violet Fate Sect disciples here, as well as many rogue cultivators. All of them were united to defend against more than 20,000 Northern Reaches cultivators. A bloody battle was being fought.

Desperate fighting was under way, and corpses littered the ground as far as the eye could see. It was completely shocking.

When Meng Hao appeared, he swept down like a red wind.

Among the Northern Reaches cultivators was an unusually domineering Spirit Severing expert. He was soaked with blood, although little of it was his own. His expression was merciless, and his eyes radiated killing intent as he occasionally laughed cruelly. Two human heads were hanging at his waist. One of them was a person Meng Hao recognized; it was one of the Blood Demon Sect’s two Ironblood Patriarchs.

“Southern Domain cultivators!” roared the huge man. “You act like your way of cultivation is the only way, but now you’re less than dog crap! I’ve even killed two of your Spirit Severing Patriarchs. All of you can go die!” He laughed loudly as he brandished his huge war club. Wherever he went, he left a trail of destruction.

Behind him were two giants as tall as mountains. They roared as they slammed into the virtually defenseless Southern Domain cultivators.

It was at this point that Meng Hao arrived, swathed in red. A red mist rose up around him that, from a distance, almost looked like a cloak… a cloak that covered the entire sky.

Meng Hao exuded the air of a Paragon.

The burly Spirit Severing cultivator saw him, and his expression flickered. Roaring filled his mind as an indescribable pressure bore down on him. He suddenly felt as if he couldn’t breathe. Cold sweat broke out all over. He felt like a tiny little animal facing up against a lion.

“Stop him!” cried the man, shivering. He fell back as the two giants lunged toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s expression was indifferent as he closed in. He simply passed by the giants, refraining from attacking. The red mist spread out to cover them up, and then, bloodcurdling roars rang out. The giants withered up in the blink of an eye and then toppled over onto the ground.

The Spirit Severing cultivator gasped, and his eyes filled with astonishment. “You’re… you’re at the peak of Dao Seeking. Definitely the peak of Dao

Seeking! Dammit, aren’t the Southern Domain’s peak Dao Seeking experts all at the central battle? How could one of them be here?!”

He had no time to think about the question. In the blink of an eye, the red mist enveloped him, like the ravenous mouth of a Devil. He was swallowed up, along with the rest of the Northern Reaches cultivators.

For a few moments afterwards, miserable screams abruptly rose up into the air.

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# Chapter 783: Overwhelming

A short while later, the red mist reformed into the shape of Meng Hao. His skin was now roughly fifty percent restored. He no longer looked so hideous, but the coldness of his expression made his Devilish aura even more intense.

He flicked his sleeve, and then, under the shocked gazes of the Southern Domain cultivators, pierced through the air to disappear off into the distance in a beam of prismatic light.

Of the six fronts, hostilities had now ceased on four, and only two remained.

Meng Hao flew as fast as possible. The air shattered around him and lightning crackled as he sped across the land. Soon he appeared at the fifth front. Few Southern Domain cultivators remained on this front, only a few thousand. In contrast, there were more than 10,000 Northern Reaches cultivators, battling fiercely, pushing the Southern Domain force back in constant retreat.

Shockingly, Fatty was there in the crowd, spattered with blood, his expression fierce. Although his cultivation base was not incredibly high, he abounded with magical items. Furthermore, as the Golden Prince of the Golden Frost Sect, he was constantly guarded by other members of the sect.

Even so, currently facing a dangerous situation. After coughing up some blood, he leaped out, enraged, and bit a chunk out of the enemy’s flesh.

When Fatty bit things, it didn’t matter if it was flesh, bone or magical items; everything would be crushed and ripped. It was an incredibly fierce and cruel sight.

The Northern Reaches forces who pursued Fatty were covered in wounds that appeared to be bite marks.

“Dammit! Is this a person or a wild beast? How can he have such sharp teeth!?”

“What technique does he cultivate?!?!”

“Slay him and pry his teeth out! I’m positive that you can refine them into a shocking magical item!”

Their killing intent seethed, and the glow of magical items swirled around their bodies as they gave chase to Fatty.

“Bring it on!” roared Fatty. “Grandpa Fatty’s gonna bite you to death!”

The fighting raged, and the Southern Domain cultivators fell back again. The Northern Reaches army advanced with unbridled frenzy, and from the look of the situation, it seemed that the Southern Domain Cultivators would soon be completely wiped out.

Fatty’s eyes had long since been shot with blood. Off to the side, one of his beloved concubines received an injury, causing him to leap to her aid. He pulled her back and then lunged out, snapping his teeth at the arm of a Northern Reaches cultivator who was about to land a palm strike on her.

The Northern Reaches cultivator immediately fell back, scalp numb. Although Fatty only ended up biting air, the sound it emitted was completely shocking.

“Dammit!” cried the Northern Reaches cultivator. Shamed into rage, he waved his arm, causing a lump of bronze to appear. He tossed it out in front of him, whereupon it exploded with a bluish light that was apparently sentient; it immediately shot toward Fatty as if to consume him.

Fatty’s face fell, and a sensation of deadly crisis washed over him. He shot backward at high speed, pursued by the blue light.

Just when the light was about to slam into Fatty, a cold snort echoed out across the land. It was a mere sound, but it instantly caused the Northern Reaches cultivators' bodies to tremble. There were some who coughed up blood and felt their minds reeling unstably.

The cultivator who was after Fatty suddenly went pale in the face. Blood sprayed from his mouth, and he turned his head in astonishment. What he saw was a blinding red light filling the sky.

The following moment, a hand stretched out from behind Fatty, grabbed his shoulder and pulled him back. It was then that Meng Hao appeared.

"Meng Hao!" cried Fatty exuberantly. Immediately, the spirits of the surrounding Southern Domain cultivators lifted.

"The exalted Meng Hao has arrived!"

"We're saved! Meng Hao is here!"

The Northern Reaches cultivators had all heard of Meng Hao; they knew that he was the one who had wiped out the first wave army. When they heard his name, many of them gasped and subconsciously backed up.

Someone who could wipe out an army of 100,000 cultivators was clearly an astonishing figure, no matter how he accomplished the task.

As soon as Meng Hao appeared, his energy transformed into an oppressive air that sent the minds of the Northern Reaches cultivators spinning. At the same time, Meng Hao stretched out his hand and flicked the blue light that had been bearing down on Fatty.

"Disperse!" he said coolly. The blue light shuddered, then emitted a screech as it shot backward and swallowed up the Northern Reaches cultivator. Unable to escape, it then shrank back down into a lump of bronze and was pulled back through the air into Meng Hao's hand.

The lump of bronze trembled, seemingly pleading for its life with Meng Hao, who looked at it for a moment and then put it into his bag of holding.

Then he glanced around at the more than 10,000 Northern Reaches cultivators.

A dark look gleamed in his eyes, and he stepped forward. Vast quantities of red mist instantly roiled out, like countless vipers. They shot toward the more than 10,000 enemies, boring into their bodies, causing shocking miserable shrieks to fill the air.

Meng Hao still stood there, arms raised into the air, eyes closed. Rumbling sounds filled the air as one after another, the Northern Reaches cultivators transformed into desiccated corpses. Red mist poured out from their eyes, ears, noses and mouths, which then flowed back to Meng Hao. His skin grew rapidly, and in the time it takes half an incense stick to burn, the screams faded away. The corpses toppled over, and Meng Hao opened his eyes.

His skin was now over seventy percent restored. His white hair floated around him, and he emanated a fiendish air that caused the Southern Domain cultivators to feel both anxious and shocked.

“The sixth level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic… soon….” murmured Meng Hao. Eyes gleaming with cruelty, he turned to look at the Southern Domain cultivators. When his gaze fell upon Fatty, he smiled.

Yet… the smile caused Fatty to inhale sharply.

“You….” he said hesitantly.

Meng Hao didn’t respond. He turned and shot up into the air, preparing to head to the final front. That was where… he would complete the sixth level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic!

Fatty looked at Meng Hao flying up into the air, and couldn’t hold back from shouting out, “You’re not Meng Hao! Who are you?!”

When Meng Hao had appeared, he had been filled with joy. But after a moment, he had realized that there was something unfamiliar about him. There was a coldness that hadn’t been there before. Fatty suddenly got the feeling that this person was not the Meng Hao that he remembered from the past. He was different.

Very different!

It was the same feeling Chu Yuyan had experienced, except that with Fatty, it was even stronger.

The Meng Hao he remembered was not the type of person to carry out massacres. He was not so savage and cruel. He would not consume others' qi, blood, life force and souls to further his cultivation. Those techniques were the craft of Devils!

Such practices would give rise to shock no matter what era or location they appeared in.

Cruelness, ruthlessness, the ability to treat life as worthless… that was how this Meng Hao was acting. He was completely different from the con-loving Meng Hao who existed in Fatty's memories.

Meng Hao came to a halt up in midair, and Fatty's words echoed about in his mind. He paused for a moment without looking back down at Fatty, then vanished off into the distance.

The sixth front was the location of the final remnants of the Northern Reaches' second wave army. The cultivators responsible for holding them back were from the auxiliary branches of the Blood Demon Sect: the Solitary Sword Sect and the Golden Frost Sect.

This was the only front out them of all where… the Southern Domain maintained a superior position!

There were originally over 20,000 Northern Reaches cultivators, but now there were little more than half that. The Southern Domain cultivators fought back fiercely, and their enraged battle cries filled the area.

Chen Fan was in the middle of it all, along with Li Shiqi. The battlefield was filled with the glow of magical techniques and the power of divine abilities.

Chen Fan’s cultivation base had returned to the Nascent Soul stage, and he fought with a sword. He truly looked like a sword cultivator, fighting as he did with shocking, killing blows. Li Shiqi was surrounded by a blood-colored glow. Of course, she did not cultivate the Blood Demon Grand Magic, but rather, used other magical combat techniques of the Blood Demon Sect.

Booms filled the air, and the sky suddenly turned bright red. Rain began falling, red rain. It was completely unexpected, and both the Southern Domain and Northern Reaches cultivators were astonished.

It was at this point that the falling rain transformed into a red mist that shot, swirling, toward the Northern Reaches cultivators. In the blink of an eye, it bored into their bodies.

The Southern Domain cultivators were shocked, and immediately fell back. They watched, shaken, as the Northern Reaches cultivators began to scream with unprecedented misery. Their bodies withered up and their hair fell out as their cultivation bases and souls were extracted through every orifice.

It was the same with the nearby mountain-like giants. Even the ghoul-like spirit creatures that the Northern Reaches had brought were screaming. Their bodies faded as if they were being erased.

The Southern Domain cultivators gasped at the sudden, shocking turn of events. It almost seemed as if they were witnessing in a living hell.

Corpses fell to the ground one by one. The giants died, and the evil spirits screamed and faded away. After that, everything was silent.

Within the silence, the red mist surged up toward the red clouds in the sky, taking the qi, blood, cultivation bases and souls with it.

The scene left a deep impression on all of the Southern Domain cultivators. The red mist churned and rolled, and as they looked up at the red clouds, they saw someone sitting there cross-legged.

That was the person who was absorbing all the red mist!

Meng Hao’s skin was now fully regrown. He was dressed like a scholar; however, his previously scholarly aura was now as cruel and merciless as a Blood Devil.

His white hair floated around him, and when his eyes slowly opened, it seemed as if red lightning were crackling within them. After absorbing all the power from the battlefield below, his body flickered, and he vanished.

There were friends down below, but he didn’t want them to see him like this.

“Living sacrifices! He used some evil technique to turn them into living sacrifices!!”

“Who was that person in the clouds!?” Most of the Southern Domain cultivators made such exclamations. However, there were some people whose faces flickered as they seemed to recall a similar, although not quite as vicious, scene.

Chen Fan stood there silently, a complex look on his face as he looked up into the sky.

Not too far off was Li Shiqi, who stood there trembling. She was a Blood Demon Sect disciple, and although she did not cultivate the Blood Demon Grand Magic, she was not unfamiliar with it.

“It was him….”

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# Chapter 784: The Final Battle!

When the fighting stopped on the sixth front, the war of the Southern Domain finally became peaceful and quiet. However, everyone knew that this was only the calm before the true storm.

The storm was nigh!

The final, decisive battle was coming!

As to where the location of the final battle would be, many opinions were voiced by various Southern Domain cultivators. Some people had their minds set on the Blood Demon Sect. With the spell formations that were already in place, much time could be saved. Furthermore, the majority of the battle-ready cultivators in the Southern Domain were already congregated in the area.

Many others felt that the best location was the point where the Northern Reaches cultivators actually entered the Southern Domain. Doing so would prevent the Northern Reaches cultivators from razing and pillaging the rest of the Southern Domain.

In the end, Pill Demon, Patriarch Song, and Patriarch Golden Frost all agreed that time was the most valuable commodity!

Thus, the Blood Demon Sect was selected. It was far from the Milky Way Sea, but relatively close to the Black Lands, and could be considered to be on the border of the Southern Domain. Although this would cede a large amount of territory, every day that they continued to survive was another day that the Northern Reaches would not be able to completely conquer the Southern Domain.

Furthermore, the Northern Reaches cultivators would have to travel all the way to the Blood Demon Sect, which meant that the Southern Domain cultivators would have more time to prepare.

After the decision was made by Pill Demon, Patriarch Song, and Patriarch Golden Frost, all the battle-ready cultivators of the Southern Domain were marshaled. There were approximately 200,000 of them, and they were divided into multiple defensive fronts, with the Blood Demon Sect at the center.

Meanwhile, Pill Demon and the others personally went around the Southern Domain to the remaining sects and clans to collect vast quantities of supplies and treasures. They also set up enormous spell formations, ten in total, which caused shocking pressure to weigh down around them.

The atmosphere was tense. All of the Southern Domain cultivators were focused on healing and recovering their energy. Every area on the final battleground was filled with silence.

The final battle would determine victory or defeat. If the Southern Domain was victorious, they would be able to welcome in a new era of peace. After a period of rest and reorganization, they would be able to once again bloom like a beautiful flower, even more resplendent than before.

However, if they were defeated….

The Southern Domain would essentially become part of the Northern Reaches. Their core Daoist teachings and doctrines would be wrenched away. Their cultivators would be exterminated and the foundation of the Southern Domain would be lost. They would be ruled by the Northern Reaches, and years later… perhaps no one would even remember the formerly glorious Southern Domain.

This was the battle for everything!

They would live or die. There was no option for surrender.

A few days earlier, Meng Hao had returned to the Blood Demon Sect, where the final battle would soon take place. He went back to the same location where he had held Xu Qing and watched the sunrises and sunsets. Except now, there weren’t two shadows falling on the ground. There was only his own.

His white hair fluttered in the wind, and his blood-red robe swayed.

His face was pale white, morbid and seemingly devoid of blood. It was a sharp contrast to the redness of his robe. However, his eyes radiated darkness.

Anyone who looked at him could sense a pulsing feeling, as if his body contained a terrifying qi and blood power. Also barely visible were over 100,000 shrieking souls that swirled around him. They seemed to spread out endlessly, and their howls were astonishing.

Apparently, these were the people Meng Hao had consumed and destroyed. They were shackled to him for all eternity, unable to enter the cycle of reincarnation.

“Qing’er,” he murmured, “are you doing well…?” His eyes were cold, and contained a trace of loneliness that made his aura seem even more desolate.

Anyone who looked at Blood Prince Gorge would feel that it was filled with blood and mysteries. The news had long since spread that Meng Hao had consumed the qi, blood, cultivation bases and souls of the enemy cultivators. Virtually all of the cultivators in the entire Southern Domain knew about it, and in fact, most had witnessed it.

Deep in their hearts, the veneration they felt toward Meng Hao was now coupled with dread.

The Southern Domain was finally rested, and their spell formations were prepared. Five days passed….

Near the border of the Southern Domain, where it touched the Milky Way Sea, the sea water roared. Massive waves surged across the surface of the water. It almost seemed as if the Southern Domain would be drowned. Up above, shockingly bright lights could be seen on the Resurrection Lily bridge; apparently, teleportation portals were in continuous use.

Slowly, people began to appear. Soon they packed the bridge, seemingly without end.

The Resurrection Lily bridge trembled as two mountain-like giants appeared. These giants were different than the ones from the second wave. They were more powerful, and wore suits of golden armor. The pressure they exuded was astonishing.

Shockingly, these giants were not comparable to the Spirit Severing stage, but rather, Dao Seeking!

It was only early Dao Seeking, but considering their enormous frames, they could clearly crush any cultivator within the same stage. Furthermore, they wore armor, and had enormous greatswords strapped to their backs, making them even more fearsome.

Behind the two giants was a monstrous, sinister death aura that took the form of an emerald-colored mist. In the region near the mist, numerous dead sea creatures could be seen floating on the surface of the water.

Inside of the mist were three 10,000-year-old wraiths!

The wraiths all emanated an air similar to Dao Seeking as they swirled about within the mist, shrieking and howling.

In addition to these, there were hundreds of thousands of Northern Reaches cultivators that composed the main military force. They were packed in tight formation atop the Resurrection Lily bridge, and anyone who saw them would surely gasp in shock.

However, what was most eye-catching was what could be seen in the very rear position of the army.

It was a gigantic iron cage, fully three hundred meters tall. It was being pulled forward by countless iron chains, and sitting inside was a monkey that had bright red eyes. It was covered with numerous magical symbols, and sat motionless in the cage, breathing heavily.

In the vanguard position of the army were three people that emanated shocking auras. They hovered in midair, looking coldly out at the Southern Domain.

In the center position among the three was an old man with red hair and a ruddy face. He wore a white robe, and a mysterious pressure emanated off of him. He was surrounded by countless bolts of lightning that formed together to make what appeared to be… true dragons!

If you continued to watch, you would see the true dragons swirl together to form something entirely different… a miniature cauldron!

Were Meng Hao here… he would instantly be able to tell that this cauldron closely resembled his own Lightning Cauldron. However, on this cauldron was engraved… a dragon with lightning bolts curling around it!

The old man hovered there, clearly emanating the power of peak Dao Seeking. And yet, the feeling of his aura was somewhat similar to that of Meng Hao’s false Immortal puppet.

Yet again, further examination would reveal that his aura was even more ancient and archaic.

He seemed to possess an aura that was somewhere between a true Immortal and a false Immortal.

This old man was the most powerful person in the entire Northern Reaches, the Clan Chief of the Imperial Bloodline Clan.

On either side of him stood a man and a woman. The man was gentle and effeminate, with phoenix-like eyes and a frame as lithe as the wind. However, within his eyes could be seen what appeared to be the cross-legged image of two Immortal Divinities, reciting scriptures. A mere glance at the man would show that he was completely beyond the ordinary.

He was also at the peak of Dao Seeking, with a strange air similar and yet different to that of a false Immortal.

The woman, on the other hand, was by no means beautiful. She had a black birthmark on a face that was twisted and uncouth. Furthermore, her body was neither elegant nor appealing and she was extremely obese.

Wrapped around her neck was a crimson snake that occasionally flicked its forked tongue out. Its eyes were grim, and if you looked closely, you would see that the snake did not actually have a physical body; shockingly, it was actually composed of countless discarnate souls.

This was the third wave army of cultivators from the Northern Reaches, the final wave, and also the most powerful!

As soon as they arrived at the border of the Southern Domain, three beams of light emanating the power of peak Dao Seeking shot toward them. They were the three Northern Reaches Patriarchs that had been frightened off by Meng Hao.

When they joined the force, it increased the number of peak Dao Seeking experts in the third wave to six!

In addition, there were the two giants and three wraiths. This army of Northern Reaches cultivators was incredibly powerful.

The three newcomers did not say anything. They produced jade slips which they tossed out to the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief and the others, who examined them closely for a few moments. Although their expressions did not change, serious looks could be seen in their eyes.

The six cultivators exchanged glances and then began to transmit a conversation.

“Meng Hao….”

“I’ve already received your earlier reports about him. It seems this Meng Hao… is the greatest hindrance to our Northern Reaches’ invasion of the Southern Domain!”

“He has a peak Dao Seeking clone, and his true self can absorb life force, qi, blood, cultivation bases and souls….”

“We must eliminate him. Without him, the Southern Domain is ripe for the picking!”

After a moment, their flickering gazes came to rest on the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief.

Lightning danced around him, and his closed eyes suddenly snapped open. He spoke for the first time, and his hoarse voice was filled with strange power.

“To deal with him, I approve the use of the ancestral statuary!”

The other five nodded in response. There was no further discussion. Moments later, the third wave army marched off of the Resurrection Lily bridge and into the Southern Domain!

In that instant, the killing intent of the Northern Reaches cultivators exploded out. The sky darkened as they shot through the air like a black cloud.

The Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief looked off into the distance. Lightning danced around him as he snorted coldly and then stretched his hand out and pointed upward. Immediately, a bolt of lightning shot up into the sky.

The air distorted, and then a fist-sized, translucent eyeball appeared up above. The lightning smashed into it, blasting it to pieces.

“The Southern Domain knows we’ve arrived,” said the old man. “Push forward at top speed. We will finish this war in one swift blow!” In response, the Northern Reaches cultivators roared and surged forward at incredible speed.

Colors flashed in the sky, and the wind screamed. Down below, the earth quaked under their killing intent!

Outside the Blood Demon Sect, Patriarch Song’s face flickered as he opened his eyes.

“They’ve arrived!” he said. “There is an old man with lightning surrounding him, most likely the most powerful person in the Northern Reaches, the Clan Chief of the Imperial Bloodline Clan. His cultivation base is astonishing. He noticed my Arcane Scrying Eye.

“They will be here in three days at the latest!”

Pill Demon and Patriarch Golden Frost exchanged glances. Seeing the profound gleam in each other’s eyes, they suppressed their anxiety and rose to their feet.

“Spread the word. The final battle is about to begin!”

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# Chapter 785: The Battle Begins!

Ten successive spell formations protected the Blood Demon Sect. When the 200,000 Southern Domain cultivators inside heard Pill Demon's proclamation, they opened their eyes from meditation. Their eyes were still bloodshot; their righteous ardor had by no means evaporated.

Although they had been able to rest for a few days, their minds were like taut bowstrings that had not relaxed in the least. Everyone was waiting… for the final battle to begin.

Now the moment was upon them.

No one spoke. The sound of their breathing formed a thunderous, reverberating echo. Each and every cultivator exuded a murderous air. All of it mixed together into a shocking aura that caused everything to tremble.

In this battle, there would be nowhere to retreat to!

In this battle, the ultimate frenzy of the Southern Domain would be unleashed!

In this battle, defeat meant death, and victory meant a chance for life!

No one was confident that they would be alive after the battle was over. Not even Patriarch Song and the other powerful experts had such faith. However, in a battle of this scale, between two major territories and hundreds of thousands of cultivators, anything was possible.

They sat there, taciturn. Many removed jade slips from their robes and inscribed them with their most consummate and powerful abilities, then applied blood curses to ensure that anyone who studied such arts in the future would be forced to view the Northern Reaches cultivators as their ultimate archenemies.

Some people produced magical treasures or other arcane heirlooms that represented important memories. They held them in their hands and stared at them, murmuring.

They appeared to be… making their farewells….

Meng Hao sat motionless in Blood Prince Gorge. During these days of rest, he did not practice cultivation. As for the Blood Demon Grand Magic, it was not fully complete. He still lacked some souls harvested from battle.

He sat there in the same spot where he had held Xu Qing, his mind a blank. It almost seemed as if his aura had vanished.

Time passed. On the evening of the second day since Pill Demon’s proclamation, the Southern Domain cultivators’ breathing had grown even louder and hoarser. It sounded like muffled thunder, echoing about. As before, no one spoke.

Finally… a black streak appeared far off on the horizon!

Soon, it became apparent that the shocking black streak was actually countless Northern Reaches cultivators!

They shot through the air, hundreds of thousands of them, bursting with energy. The clouds churned due to their passage, and rumbling echoed out across all the lands.

The ground quaked as the two giants in golden armor ran, stepping over entire mountains with each stride. The mere sight was terrorizing. The three wraiths flew through the air surrounded by swirling emerald mist. Wherever they passed, the living things down below died, and the mountain peaks appeared to melt.

Up in front were the six peak Dao Seeking experts, led by the Clan Chief of the Imperial Bloodline Clan. They streaked through the sky, looking almost like a gigantic talon, ready to rip the sky asunder.

The Southern Domain cultivators looked up. They put away the jade slips and the precious heirlooms, and stopped thinking about loved ones. As of this moment, they cleared their minds and allowed the desire for battle to burn hot and bright.

“Fight!”

It was hard to say who said it first, but the cry spread quickly. They had been suppressing themselves for days, and now they could finally vent. The roars grew louder.

“Fight!!”

“FIGHT!!!!” One by one, the Southern Domain cultivators rose to their feet. Their roaring caused the sky to dim as an explosive murderous air surged up, passing out through the spell formations to contend with the energy of the Northern Reaches cultivators.

Rumbling filled the air as the energy from the hundreds of thousands of cultivators fought against each other. It was an invisible conflict, but casualties were still inflicted. The Northern Reaches cultivators stopped in place, and there were even some with blood oozing from their mouths. It was the same with the Southern Domain forces.

Suddenly, a cold voice echoed out from the Northern Reaches forces.

“Central regiment, advance! Flanking regiments, form into a blade! Summon the Immortal Gate to smash the entire place flat!” The voice came a veiled woman who floated cross-legged within the green wraith mist.

In response to her words, three regiments split from the army of hundreds of thousands of Northern Reaches cultivators. The central regiment numbered 100,000, and advanced directly forward. The two flanking regiments had 50,000 cultivators each, and formed together into something that looked like sharp blades that shot forward.

Simultaneously, a rift suddenly opened up above in the sky. An enormous golden door emerged, which then smashed down toward the ground.

The two mountain-like giants in golden armor leapt forward, howling as they stretched their arms out to catch the enormous golden door, which they then hefted on their shoulders!

The door slowly opened to reveal a void of primal chaos, within which was a giant, green tree.

The tree slowly began to emerge from the door, and an ancient, archaic aura spread out to fill the land. It was shocking to the extreme.

“Activate the formations!” said Patriarch Song. Rumbling could be heard as the ten spell formations began to rotate. Innumerable illusory spirit swords flew out, blotting out the sky as they shot toward the Northern Reaches cultivators.

“Break that formation,” the woman in the green mist said indifferently.

Instantly, the two giants with the door on their shoulders began to run toward the Southern Domain’s spell formations. More of the enormous tree had emerged from the door, roughly three hundred meters worth.

The two giants possessed extraordinary strength, and were incapable of being obstructed. In the blink of an eye, they were right on top of the Southern Domain cultivators’ tenth spell formation, which they struck with the gigantic tree.

A boom rang out, and cracking sounds could be heard. The tenth spell formation was completely incapable of withstanding the attack, and shattered into pieces.

Inside the spell formation perimeter, Patriarch Song’s and Patriarch Golden Frost’s faces fell.

“What is that!?”

“It a Formation Breaking Tree!” said Pill Demon, his face grim. “The Northern Reaches has access to profound resources. I can’t believe they still have one of those trees left!” Even as the words left his mouth, the two giants strode toward the ninth spell formation, followed by a massive wave that was the Northern Reaches army. Hundreds of thousands of cultivators prepared to inundate the Southern Domain forces.

At the same time, five of the six peak Dao Seeking experts up in midair flew forward at top speed toward the ninth spell formation. They reached it in the blink of an eye, and employed divine abilities as they joined the two giants in attacking it.

A moment later, the land trembled and the sky filled with rumbling as the the ninth spell formation was destroyed, and then the eighth. When the seventh formation was destroyed, a destructive power hidden within it was unleashed that transformed into an explosive shockwave which roared outwards.

The giants bearing the golden door were incapable of fighting back against the attack. Trembling, they were forced back about three hundred meters. Many of the Northern Reaches cultivators behind them were incapable of standing up to the attack and were destroyed in body and spirit.

As the attack power spread out, the five peak Dao Seeking experts immediately sprang into action. Colorful divine abilities were employed, causing the ground to tremble, and the attacking power to dissipate….

“Charge!” roared Patriarch Song. He, along with Pill Demon and Patriarch Golden Frost, flew out, followed by five Spirit Severing experts and the 200,000 Southern Domain cultivators. This was the opening salvo of the final battle!

Pill Demon and the others headed toward the five peak Dao Seeking experts. Patriarch Song and Patriarch Golden Frost could only fight one enemy at a time, but Pill Demon had two lives worth of cultivation backing him. Although the magical symbols constraining him had not been fully removed, his peak Dao Seeking power far exceeded that of the other two.

When he attacked, the song of a great Dao swirled around him. A pill furnace materialized that seemed capable of refining Heaven and Earth, which he immediately sent against the effeminate Northern Reaches cultivator. At the same time, he waved his sleeve, enveloping the white-robed man who looked like a hopping vampire.

Booms filled the air as the three Southern Domain peak Dao Seeking cultivators waded into battle.

Unfortunately, the Northern Reaches had sent five peak Dao Seeking experts. There was still one left that could not be obstructed. That was the obese woman, who grinned as she shot toward Patriarch Song with a lethal attack.

However, even as she shot forward in attack, her scalp suddenly went numb and her face fell. She stopped in place and then retreated as a wooden sword suddenly materialized and slashed through the space where she had just been. The sword glittered with the power of Time, which caused the air around it to suddenly pass through tens of thousands of years of time.

“Who is it?!” she thought.

Meng Hao’s second true self stepped out of thin air. He waved his hand, causing hundreds of magical symbols to appear, and a spell formation shaped like a parasol shot toward the woman.

The woman opened her mouth and spit out a writhing mist that transformed into the shape of a wild beast. It charged toward Meng Hao’s second true self, and rumbling sounds filled the air. The woman’s face flickered. She was not an ordinary peak Dao Seeking cultivator; she exceeded that. Normally, she could easily slay other peak Dao Seeking experts. She could never have imagined that she would meet someone here who was not weaker than her.

“So you’re Meng Hao?” she asked. She wasn’t the only one who had such thoughts. The effeminate man who was fighting Pill Demon looked over. The leader of the Northern Reaches, who had been observing the battle instead of fighting, also glanced over.

“That’s Meng Hao’s clone!” said the old man that looked like a hopping vampire.

Booming could be heard as the peak-level experts’ battle unfolded in midair.

At the same time, the five Spirit Severing experts whistled through the air down below. Unfortunately, the Northern Reaches had sent seven Spirit Severing cultivators to block their way.

Five battles quickly broke out as the remaining two Northern Reaches Spirit Severing experts heading toward the ordinary cultivators from the Southern Domain with evil gleams in their eyes.

On the battlefield, no one discriminated regarding cultivation base, not when it came to killing. Battles were won or lost depending on how many of the enemy you could kill.

It was at this point that the cross-legged woman in the mist once again spoke out coldly.

“Three Elders of the Northern Sky, please make your move.”

Immediately, the three wraiths in the mist began to cackle. Surrounded by swirling mists, they shot down toward the Southern Domain cultivators. Their eyes shone with mysterious light and bloodthirsty intent, as if they planned to consume the life forces of as many cultivators as possible.

The situation did not look good for the Southern Domain. However, there were still spell formations left standing. With that foundation, it was always possible to fall back to safety.

And yet, there still seemed little hope for victory. The most powerful expert from the Northern Reaches still hadn’t made a move yet.

As the three wraiths descended like death toward the Southern Domain’s main army, Meng Hao sat in Blood Prince Gorge. He saw what was happening, and the blankness left his eyes. A blood-like glow suddenly appeared, and then he vanished.

When he reappeared, he was in the middle of the battlefield!

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# Chapter 786: Slaying Wraiths!

Meng Hao appeared without a word or a sound. Not many people in the battle would be able to detect his sudden appearance. One of the few who did was the number one most powerful expert from the Northern Reaches, the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief up in midair.

Meng Hao appeared just outside of the spell formation, swathed in red, his face pale white. He looked almost as if he were devoid of blood. He held the Lightning Cauldron in his right hand, which crackled with lightning as he suddenly vanished again.

Shockingly, when he reappeared, he had taken the place of a despairing Southern Domain cultivator who was being attacked by a burly Spirit Severing cultivator with wild hair.

The Southern Domain cultivator originally thought he was going to die, and was preparing to self-detonate. Then, his vision went blurry, and he switched places with Meng Hao. Even as his mind reeled with shock, Meng Hao reappeared in front of the burly cultivator with wild hair.

The burly man had already struck out with his hand. When he saw Meng Hao, his face flickered and his pupils constricted. Shocked, he was about to fall back when Meng Hao, like a soul vampire, moved forward and touched the man on the right arm.

A miserable shriek rang out from the burly man’s mouth as his arm rapidly withered. The technique being used against him was like a black hole that rapidly sucked away his qi and blood. In the blink of an eye, his burly frame was nothing more than skin and bones. His cultivation base was gone and his soul was sucked away. His body fell into pieces as massive quantities of red mist were absorbed into Meng Hao.

Meng Hao didn’t even pause. After casually killing the man, the lightning cauldron flickered again, and he reappeared in front of a Spirit Severing expert who was slaughtering his way through the Southern Domain forces.

The old man’s scalp went numb; the speed with which Meng Hao had killed the burly man was such that he didn’t even have time to react. Even as his jaw was still dropping from shock, Meng Hao appeared in front of him.

Meng Hao’s profound and mysterious face was devoid of any trace of blood, and a mysterious, dark glow filled his eyes. The old man was scared out of his mind.

“NO!”

He was about to flee when Meng Hao reached out and placed his hand on top of his head. The old man screamed miserably as his body withered, sucked out through the top of his head into Meng Hao’s hand.

All of this happened in the time it takes a spark to fly off of a piece of flint. Meng Hao had just appeared, and already, two people had been slaughtered. The speed with which it happened caused all the onlookers to be taken aback.

Starting with the handful of people who Meng Hao had just saved, the Southern Domain cultivators began to chant his name.

“Exalted Meng Hao!”

“Exalted Meng Hao!!”

“EXALTED MENG HAO!!!” The combined voices of all the Southern Domain cultivators turned into a massive sound wave that rolled out.

Meng Hao stood there, his blood-red robe fluttering, his white hair floating around him, his energy surging.

Up in midair,The Northern Reaches’ number one most powerful expert, the Imperial Bloodline Clan chief, looked down with wide eyes.

“That kid is seeking death!” he said. Without hesitation, he transformed into a Lightning Roc surrounding by crackling electricity that shot toward Meng Hao in a deadly attack.

Meng Hao’s expression was as cold as ever as he caused the Lightning Cauldron to flicker, and he vanished yet again.

In another location on the battlefield was one of the three wraiths, which vaguely resembled an old woman. She wore a twisted smile as she grabbed onto a Southern Domain cultivator, opened her mouth wide, and bit into the man’s head. Crunching sounds could be heard as his skull cracked open and she began to absorb his soul.

The screaming man was still alive when suddenly, he vanished and was replaced by Meng Hao. The darkness in the woman’s eyes flickered, and relying on the fact that her spirit body was illusory, she didn’t pause. Laughing evilly, she opened her mouth to bite Meng Hao.

“Well,” she said, “since you’ve delivered yourself up, let’s see exactly how strong you are!”

Her mouth opened, a mouth which could cause the soul of an ordinary cultivator to be extracted with ease. Meng Hao’s expression was cold as the mouth neared him. It was at this point that he opened his own mouth and began to inhale.

As he inhaled, the woman’s body began to tremble. An indescribable sense of deadly crisis rose up in her, and she screamed. She immediately let go of Meng Hao and began to back up.

“Dammit! Are you even a cultivator?! How could it be that you practice ghost magic!?!?”

Before the old woman could back up very far, Meng Hao inhaled even deeper, and her body collapsed. It transformed into countless motes of sparkling light which shot into Meng Hao’s mouth.

It was possible to see the image of the woman in one of those motes of light. She was screaming as Meng Hao swallowed her down. His face darkened for a moment, then returned to its previous pale white, shrouded by a head of billowing white hair. Nearby, the other two wraiths were already flying away in retreat, thoroughly horrified.

Behind Meng Hao, the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief descended, roaring. He moved with incredible speed, and in the blink of an eye, was almost upon Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes glinted with coldness. He suddenly turned, then shot up into the air, spinning rapidly. A droning sound could be heard as he smashed directly into the Lightning Roc.

Boom!

The deafening roar that rippled out shocked even the peak Dao Seeking experts fighting in midair. Even as the Lightning Roc collapsed, an ancient looking hand emerged and punched down toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao was sent tumbling backward, blood spraying from his mouth. As he fell back, the Lightning Cauldron flickered, and he switched places with a Northern Reaches cultivator off in the distance. Now he was directly in the path of one of the fleeing wraiths.

Shockingly, everything that was happening was exactly as Meng Hao had planned it.

The instant he appeared, he leaped forward without the slightest hesitation. His right hand flickered in an incantation gesture, then he waved his hand, and his body began to emanate red mist. The mist transformed into a cyclone that headed straight for the wraith.

The wraith’s face fell and it let out a high-pitched shriek as it sped backward. Such action was useless, however. The cyclone swallowed it up instantly, whereupon it was shredded to pieces, destroyed both in form and spirit. As Meng Hao absorbed it, he could tell that the Blood Demon Grand Magic was becoming more refined.

“Just need a little bit more!” he thought, his eyes flashing with red.

The final wraith was now completely and truly scared to death. After sweeping across the Northern Reaches for years, he had finally been captured and transformed into a wraith. In the past he had been a powerful expert, but was then forced to consume souls as a form of cultivation. To him, feasting on human flesh to bolster his spirit was the natural order of things.

However, this was the first time he had encountered… a terrifying existence that could consume ghosts and wraiths like himself!

The wraith flew backward in complete astonishment, merging back into the green mist that hovered in midair, not daring to emerge again.

Up above, the two mountain-like giants with the golden door on their shoulders, and the huge tree, were now once again bombarding the Southern Domain’s spell formations.

The sixth spell formation collapsed into pieces, and the fifth formation started crumbling.

Down below, the number one expert of the Northern Reaches, the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief, was once again in human form, his body surrounded by crackling lightning that formed his own Lightning Cauldron. He suddenly lifted his hand and waved his finger toward Meng Hao.

A lightning bolt immediately shot out from his Lightning Cauldron. It was black, and looked like a dragon as it sped through the air.

At the same time, the old man changed shape again, transforming into a three hundred meter long dragon. This was no ordinary dragon, this was a Lightning Dragon! 1

“Primordial Lightning Dragon Transformation!” cried the old man, his voice thrumming with what seemed like the power of Heaven. A savage and archaic aura rose up from his body, as the incarnated Primordial Lightning Dragon charged toward Meng Hao.

Unfortunately for the old man, this was not a true Primordial Lightning Dragon, but merely the shape of one. Even still, it was shockingly powerful!

For the first time, Meng Hao’s face flickered; this old man was the most powerful person he had ever encountered other than the Dawn Immortal!

Although this man didn’t match up to the Dawn Immortal in terms of bizarreness, the domineering extent of his energy exceeded hers. That was especially true of this Primordial Lightning Dragon incarnation, which clearly emanated a feeling of an archaic time. It seemed monstrously aggressive, as if anything which stood up against it could be crushed like dried twigs.

“What kind of dragon is that!?” thought Meng Hao, his eyes flickering as he backed up. “That cauldron in his hand just now looked very similar to my Lightning Cauldron….” Suddenly he vanished, switching places with a Northern Reaches cultivator off in the distance.

As soon as the Northern Reaches cultivator appeared where Meng Hao had been, he was ripped to shreds by lightning.

“You can’t flee!” roared the old man in Primordial Lightning Dragon form. “There’s nobody who can even lift a finger against the Primordial Lightning Dragon! Lightning Transformation!” His speed suddenly increased explosively by severalfold; he was clearly not going to allow Meng Hao to have another chance to flee with his Lightning Cauldron.

“I don’t plan to flee,” said Meng Hao, his eyes glittering. “As for this Lightning Dragon… I’ll show you what happens when I lift a finger!” As the Primordial Lightning Dragon bore down on him, Meng Hao raised both hands into the air. A vortex appeared, which was Meng Hao himself. As it pushed outward, the countless struggling souls which surrounded him screamed bitterly. Hundreds of thousands of them were under his control. They flew like raindrops, merging together into the shape of a gigantic head.

This head was the color of blood, and had a horn sticking out of its forehead. It was none other than the head of a Blood Demon!

Before the two divine abilities could slam into each other, a miserable cry rang out from the sky up above.

Over the past days, Patriarch Golden Frost’s wounds had remained unstable, despite the medicinal pills provided by Pill Demon. Currently, he was in full retreat up in the air, a look of madness in his eyes.

“My longevity was already reaching its end,” he said. “I’m going to die soon anyway. The only reason I didn’t die in previous battles was because the Li Clan Patriarch saved me. And now… if I’m going to lose my life, dying as part of the Southern Domain’s struggle means my death is not in vain!” He roared, and suddenly his body burst into flames as he unleashed the flame of his life force. In the blink of an eye he was temporarily at his ultimate peak!

His legs had burned away, and his body began to dissipate. Apparently he was using every aspect of his life force to transform into… the final sword form of his entire life, a forbidden sword art!

“Golden Frost Immortal Slaying!”

A power capable of devastating Heaven and Earth rumbled forward.

The golden glow of the sword rose into the heavens, and it only took a moment for it to reach the black-robed old man who looked like a hopping vampire. He was incapable of evading, and after the sword passed by, his head toppled down toward the ground.

Patriarch Golden Frost, having unleashed this final sword form, completely faded away. His soul was dissipating, and would be incapable of entering the cycle of reincarnation.

“Patriarch!!” Down below, the Golden Frost Sect disciples among the Southern Domain cultivators were all filled with grief and anger.

“If there was one mistake I could take back, it would be joining the Solitary Sword Sect to go to war with the Blood Demon Sect. It’s the biggest error I made in my entire life. Hundreds of thousands of cultivators were pointlessly sacrificed in that war, and Fellow Daoist Blood Demon was injured so badly… that he cannot awaken!

“Were that not the case, the puny Northern Reaches would never be so arrogant as to dare to invade the Southern Domain!” Regret could be seen in Patriarch Golden Frost’s eyes. Finally, he turned into nothing more than dust, and vanished from the lands of the Southern Domain.

1. “Lightning Dragon” or “Thunder Dragon” is also how you would translate “brontosaurus”

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# Chapter 787: The Rise of a Blazing Sun!

Of the powerful experts of the four powers that had waged war against the Blood Demon Sect, the Solitary Sword Sect Patriarch had perished in battle, as had the Black Sieve Sect Patriarch. Now, Patriarch Golden Frost transformed his life force into a sword, which slaughtered a Northern Reaches cultivator and then became ash in the wind.

As far as he was concerned, if the war with the Blood Demon Sect hadn’t occurred, the Southern Domain would currently be much stronger. Even if the Northern Reaches did have eleven peak Dao Seeking experts, they still wouldn’t have dared to send troops into the Southern Domain.

After all, the five great sects and three great clans had deep Dao reserves. Although they only had eight peak Dao Seeking cultivators, they did have several other Dao Seeking experts.

When you added in the precious treasures of the various sects and clans, it would have been more than enough to make the Northern Reaches cultivators pay a heavy price for any incursion.

But now… all of that was mere wishful thinking.

“Patriarch!!” cried the Golden Frost Sect cultivators down below. Their minds were filled with grief as they watched their Patriarch fade away.

As for Patriarch Golden Frost, in his mind, he was atoning for his sins committed in the past.

Now there were only five peak Dao Seeking experts among the Northern Reaches forces. Unfortunately, the Southern Domain cultivators now only had the increasingly weakened Patriarch Song and Pill Demon, and then Meng Hao’s second true self.

It was the three of them versus four peak Dao Seeking opponents!

Rumbling filled the air, and the fierce fighting continued down below. Heaven and Earth were wreathed in shadow, and the clouds churned. Miserable howls drifted through the air, as did the boom of magical techniques. In the final moments before death, some people chose to self-detonate. All of this transformed into something like a funeral dirge that echoed like thunder throughout all creation. Rivers of blood flowed wide and deep.

Down below, the number one most powerful person in the Northern Reaches, the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief, had transformed into the shape of a Primordial Lightning Dragon. Lightning crackled out from his body, seemingly connecting all the way up to the sky. The power it contained as he shot toward Meng Hao was indescribable.

Meng Hao had rotated the Blood Demon Grand Magic to the pinnacle of its speed. Hundreds of thousands of enslaved souls, incapable of entering the cycle of reincarnation, had merged together to form a Blood Demon’s head, with its vicious horn. The head was huge, and anyone who saw it couldn’t help but be astonished.

This was a duel between a Primordial Lightning Dragon and a Blood Demon!

This was a battle that could possibly have actually occurred countless years in the past. Now, it was occurring again. The Primordial Lightning Dragon and the Blood Demon were once again locked in deadly combat!

In the blink of an eye, the Primordial Lightning Dragon and the Blood Demon slammed into each other. The Blood Demon Head shattered and then exploded into countless pieces.

Simultaneously, the Blood Demon's horn glittered like a sharp blade which sliced into the body of the Primordial Lightning Dragon, then slashed through it, splitting it completely in half.

A shocking boom rolled out, accompanied by the roar of the Lightning Dragon and towering Demonic qi from the Blood Demon head. It turned into a powerful blast that rapidly spread out in all directions.

All of the hundreds of thousands of cultivators on the battlefield were momentarily shaken into senselessness by the blast.

The Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief appeared in the spot where the Lightning Dragon dissipated, blood oozing out of his mouth. Veins bulged out of his forehead as he glared at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao trembled and coughed up a huge mouthful of blood. He staggered backward a few paces, and even as the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief looked over, the lightning from his Lightning Cauldron covered him and he vanished. When he reappeared, he looked back to see a Northern Reaches cultivator standing in the spot he had just occupied.

As soon as he reappeared, Meng Hao stretched out his hands, causing vast quantities of red mist to spread out. The mist was apparently sentient, and it immediately shot toward thousands of nearby cultivators.

Miserable shrieks rang out across the battlefield as it bored into their bodies. One after another, the Northern Reaches cultivators' bodies dried up and died; their qi, blood, cultivation bases and souls emerged and flew toward Meng Hao.

The Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief was in a rage. Lightning seemed to pulse in his eyes as he took a deep breath and caused his body to expand. In the blink of an eye he had turned into a thirty meter tall giant. As his long hair floated around him, he lifted his head and roared, a roar which contained a bizarre natural law. Everything around him ground to a halt.

It almost looked like everything around him was moving slower, whereas he was moving faster!

His body flashed as he shot toward Meng Hao and punched out.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered coldly. This old man was powerful, and considering his current cultivation base and divine abilities, was difficult to fight back against.

“Unless… I could use the sixth level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic!” Meng Hao pushed his hand down toward the ground, then lifted it up, causing the thousands of corpses in the area to fly up and shoot like meteors toward the incoming Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief.

“Time to die!” cried the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief, his voice echoing out coldly. The corpses crumbled to pieces, and he appeared in front of Meng Hao. His punch landed!

BOOM!

Blood sprayed from Meng Hao’s mouth as he suddenly vanished. He reappeared some distance away, where the Blood Demon Grand Magic suddenly surged into motion. The screams of thousands of surrounding cultivators once again rose into the air.

“Dammit!!” the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief roared, enraged. He immediately shot forward in pursuit, in state of complete astonishment because of Meng Hao’s gory technique. He couldn’t allow Meng Hao to just sweep freely through the Northern Reaches cultivators. If he did, it wouldn’t be long before that technique absorbed all of their lives.

“It doesn’t matter what age or era this evil technique appeared in, anyone would consider it Devilishly evil!” he yelled. “Everyone would rise together to destroy it! Cultivating a technique like this has doomed you to face the wrath of Heaven! You WILL meet a violent end!”

“Magic is neither good nor evil,” replied Meng Hao calmly. “That exists only in the heart. You are incapable of harming the Dao heart of Meng Hao!” He flickered to reappear in another location on the battlefield. The astonished Northern Reaches cultivators in the area tried to flee, but they weren’t as fast as Meng Hao’s red mist, which bored into their bodies and began to absorb them.

“Let’s see who’s faster, you or me!” said Meng Hao, his eyes flashing with the desire to kill. He could sense that he was just about to achieve the sixth level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic.

The Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief ’s eyes gleamed with a profound light as he ceased pursuit. Instead, he shot up into the air, his target being the location where the Northern Reaches’ peak Dao Seeking experts were fighting Patriarch Song and the others.

“You kill Northern Reaches cultivators? Fine, I’ll kill Southern Domain peak Dao Seeking cultivators!”

As the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief shot up into the air, Meng Hao’s lips twisted into a cold smile. He stopped absorbing the life forces of the Northern Reaches cultivators and then caused the Lightning Cauldron to flicker. In response, the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief laughed.

It only took a moment for his laughter to turn choked.

That was because Meng Hao had not switched places with someone nearby to block his path.

Instead… he reappeared next to the two giants, who were barreling forward with the giant golden door and the huge tree.

“Dammit, how insidious!” thought the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief, his face falling. “This kid is vicious and merciless. If we don’t get rid of him, it’s going to be difficult to finish wiping out the Southern Domain!” With that, he shot in Meng Hao’s direction.

Meng Hao had reappeared directly next to one of the golden-armored giants, and a strange light gleamed in his eyes. Completely ignoring the fact that the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief was closing in on him, he stretched his hands out. Rumbling could be heard as red mist exploded out from him.

It shot forward in the blink of an eye, boring into the body of one of the golden-armored giants, whose face then filled with astonishment. It let out a terrified howl.

Its body began to shake, and its eyes shone with an expression of unbearable suffering. Its body withered rapidly as its boundless qi, blood, cultivation base, and soul were rapidly extracted.

Its entire body withered in the blink of an eye. Cracking sounds could be heard as its legs, incapable of supporting the giant golden door, began to disintegrate. The giant then began to lean to the side, on the verge of collapsing.

It was then that the enraged Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief arrived. His fist slammed into Meng Hao, causing blood to spray from his mouth. Meng Hao immediately shot backward in retreat, his eyes shining with an extraordinary light.

“Die!” yelled the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief, advancing at top speed. The Primordial Lightning Dragon appeared again, along with the roc, the python, as well as white tigers. The energy being unleashed was astonishing, and it all combined into a single punch.

Just when the punch was about to slam into Meng Hao….

The withered giant in the golden armor couldn’t hold on any longer. Its life force vanished, and its corpse slammed into the ground. Massive amounts of red mist glittered brightly with the power it had absorbed.

The brilliance of the glow far exceeded that shown when Meng Hao had absorbed countless tens of thousands of Northern Reaches cultivators. As the red mist fused back into his body, he began to tremble.

The energy in his body was completely recovered, and the Blood Demon Grand Magic… all of a sudden reached…

The sixth level!

His energy was now vastly different than it had been moments before. Instantly, a blood colored tempest sprang up around him, stretching up high into the sky.

Within him, the Blood Demon Grand Magic was rotating at the pinnacle of speed. Meng Hao raised his hand in a palm strike that surged directly toward the incoming Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief.

A vortex appeared around the palm. At first it was only three meters across, but it rapidly expanded to three hundred meters. It looked like a huge mouth, biting voraciously toward the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief.

For the first time, the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief felt a sense of deadly crisis. He immediately put all the power he could muster into his own strike.

A shocking, thunderous boom echoed out!

The Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief was consumed by the vortex. A moment later, an enraged roar could be heard, and the vortex collapsed. From within, a blood-soaked figure flew out.

It was the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief. He was severely wounded, with blood spurting out of various wounds. An expression of astonishment could be seen on his face as he realized that twenty percent of his power had been withered away in the brief moment that had just passed.

The collapsed vortex immediately flowed back into Meng Hao. A tremor ran through him as his fleshly body grew even more powerful. In fact, even a bit of Immortal will could be detected!

His cultivation base also surged with rumbling power.

He hovered in midair, the blood-colored tempest raging around him, the Lightning Cauldron crackling with electricity, his hair whipping around. He looked like a Paragon!

He glanced down coldly at the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief, and the aura of a Paragon grew even more intense. Colors flashed in the sky and the wind screamed. The hundreds of thousands of cultivators on the ground, even the peak Dao Seeking experts locked in combat up above, were all completely shocked.

Meng Hao looked like a blazing sun, rising up with infinite splendor!

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 788: Suppression!

The number one most powerful expert in the Northern Reaches, the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief, stared at Meng Hao with wide eyes. Earlier, Meng Hao had been pestering him, but now, the feeling he gave off was like that of some primordial wild beast. His gaze, his aura, the blood-colored tempest, all caused the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief to feel incredibly shocked.

His expression was grave as Meng Hao walked forward, eyes glowing with coldness. It only took him a moment to reach the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief, after which he waved his hand, causing a blood-colored light to spread out. In the blink of an eye, the two of them had exchanged dozens of blows.

Booms echoed out. Around them, the fierce fighting continued, and up above, the battle of the peak Dao Seeking experts continued.

Originally, the Southern Domain had been in the weaker position, but now that Meng Hao had risen up with his Blood Demon and the sixth level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic, everything… had been turned around!

If Meng Hao could just kill the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief, then the Southern Domain… would probably… have a chance to eke out a victory!

The morale of the Southern Domain cultivators surged, and they lashed out with increasingly vicious attacks.

Outside of the spell formations, one of the golden-armored giants had been killed, and the other stood there trembling, completely terrified of Meng Hao. The huge golden door, having lost one of the giants that had been supporting it, was now tilting awkwardly to the side.

The giant watched in horror as Meng Hao fought the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief, and its scalp began to grow numb. Finally, it threw the huge door down and turned to flee.

After all, it was not a cultivator, but rather, a giant descended from an ancient bloodline. The thought of fighting Meng Hao struck terror into its heart.

However, in the same instant that it turned to flee, the cold, detached woman who floated in the churning green mist looked over with flashing eyes. Her beautiful hand stretched out and pointed at the giant.

“Fleeing before the battle is finished? I’ll exterminate your bloodline to the ninth degree of kinship!”

Immediately, the giant began trembling, and a sealing mark appeared on its forehead. The mark began to burn, deep into its skin, all the way to the bone. The giant let out a miserable shriek, and madness appeared in its eyes.

“I shall erase your mind,” said the woman calmly, “send you into insanity, replace your life force with madness. Kill a hundred thousand enemies, and the curse will be lifted.” The giant howled, and its expression twisted into one of insanity. Its eyes were blood-red as it leapt toward the Southern Domain army.

Any Southern Domain cultivators it encountered were ripped to shreds before they even had a chance to flee. The giant crushed them with its feet, then picked them up and tossed them into its mouth. Blood flowed down its chin, and it seemed to be completely mad.

To the Southern Domain forces, a mountain-like giant with strength similar to Dao Seeking was a huge influence on the battle as a whole. In the blink of an eye, hundreds of Southern Domain cultivators were killed.

It was virtually impossible to stop. The only way to faze it would be for tens of thousands of cultivators to all attack it in unison. Unfortunately… there was no way the Northern Reaches cultivators would give the Southern Domain the opportunity to do such a thing. Under the direction of the woman in the green mist, the Northern Reaches cultivators began to push forward in an offensive.

An endless sea of people surged forward like the tide in a general charge.

In the battle between the Dao Seeking experts up above, Patriarch Song and Pill Demon were anxious, and yet were incapable of doing anything to provide assistance to the Southern Domain. All they could do was watch as the flow of battle once again reversed.

Booms filled the air as Meng Hao fought back and forth with the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief. The number one figure from the Northern Reaches had powerful energy, an incredible cultivation base, and wild, vicious attacks. That, along with Meng Hao’s sixth level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic, made it seem as if the ground itself were about to explode up into the sky.

As they struggled back and forth in combat, Meng Hao saw the giant going crazy, and could sense the sinister woman hovering in the green mist.

“Time to die!” he said to the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief. Killing intent flickered in his eyes as he lifted his right leg up and then began to spin around rapidly. He turned into a cyclone that shot forward and slammed into the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief’s incoming fist attack.

A huge boom echoed out, and blood sprayed from the mouths of both opponents. However, it was at this point that Meng Hao suddenly vanished, then reappeared in the place of a Northern Reaches cultivator next to the charging giant.

“You’ll die for that!” roared the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief. Meng Hao’s nimble manipulation of the battlefield was giving him a headache. He was just about to give chase when Meng Hao decisively waved a hand, causing a gigantic red mist to appear. The mist instantly churned into a vortex that swallowed up the roaring giant.

A crunching, chewing sound could be heard. The sound was grating to the ears, and anyone who heard it couldn’t help but be shocked.

Blood flowed out from the vortex, along with miserable screams. Rumbling could be heard as the vortex then faded away. The red mist within flowed toward Meng Hao, fusing into him, making him… even stronger!

He turned and punched directly at the incoming Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief. A huge boom could be heard as, for the first time, the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief was sent tumbling backward. His expression showed first shock, and then fury. Then his body flickered as he changed shape into a three-legged golden crow!

Brilliant light shone off of him, making him look like a sun. Intense heat blasted against Meng Hao's face.

At the same time, the woman in the mist looked on with coldly glittering eyes. She stretched out her hand, causing nine magical symbols to fly out at top speed. They swirled together in midair to form a huge sealing symbol!

The shockingly powerful sealing symbol immediately flew directly toward Meng Hao.

"Suppress!" said the woman lightly, her voice cold and devoid of any emotion. Her face was pale to begin with, but unleashing the nine magical symbols left it even paler.

Meng Hao's eyes flashed with killing intent. His cultivation base surged as he raised his left hand, within which appeared a shocking black claw, roughly the same size as a human fist.

As soon as the claw appeared, a brutal aura exploded out. At the same time, something that resembled the shriek of a cat echoed out, causing everything to shake.

This claw was none other than one of the items Meng Hao had acquired during the eruption of the ancient Dao Lakes! After refining it for some time in the past, he was finally able to use it!

It was not the claw of some wild beast, but actually, a cat!

It was a cat’s claw!

The claw was black, and the cat it had come from was also completely black.

As soon as it appeared, a brutal aura filled the air, and the astonishing shriek of the cat shook the minds of everyone in the area. It almost seemed to be an attack levied against the soul. Catalyzed by Meng Hao’s cultivation base, the claw flew up into the air and expanded. It grew larger and larger until it was dozens of meters wide. Instantly, the claw slashed toward the incoming three-legged golden crow.

The three-legged golden crow trembled, but was incapable of evading the strike. The claw slashed into it, and its three legs instantly exploded. It let out a miserable shriek as it morphed back into the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and his arms were slashed to pieces. He shot back in astonishment, simultaneously using a magical technique to instantly regrow his lost arms.

His face was ashen and his voice weak as he said, “Nine Hells Burial Cat!”

At the same time, the sealing symbol continued to barrel toward Meng Hao. He looked up at it, and the Blood Demon Grand Magic vortex rumbled up around him, transforming into a tempest, and then a Blood Demon head. Its expression was savage as it shot toward the sealing symbol, surging with a shocking energy that seemed capable of ripping everything apart.

“Disperse!” said Meng Hao, his voice echoing out. The huge sealing symbol shuddered, then began to split apart. Cracking sounds could be heard, and then it exploded, transforming once again into nine magical symbols. Three of them were now dark, and gradually faded away. The other six flew back to the woman in the mist.

Then, Meng Hao began to slaughter his way toward the woman.

“Your turn to be suppressed!” he said. “Ninth Mountain!” He pointed out with his index finger, and everything shook. The Ninth Mountain appeared, followed by the Blood Demon Grand Magic, which fused into it, turning it bright red. It then shot directly toward the woman in the mist.

As it descended, a huge fissure opened up in the ground below, which consumed no small amount of Northern Reaches cultivators. The woman’s face flickered, and she suddenly reached out and grabbed the remaining trembling wraith, then hurled it up into the air.

The wraith transformed into a shooting star which shot toward the Ninth Mountain. At the same time, the woman performed an incantation gesture, which caused her six remaining magical symbols to fly up at top speed and form a halo that joined the wraith as it slammed into the Ninth Mountain.

BOOOOOMMMMM!

Shockingly, the descending power of the Ninth Mountain seemed to have been obstructed.

“Black White Pearls!” Meng Hao said coolly. A black and white mist appeared around the Ninth Mountain, which then turned into two pearls. As they rotated around the Ninth Mountain, a rumbling could be heard, and the mountain began to descend once more. The wraith was shattered into pieces, and the halo exploded in a brilliant flash of colors. They were incapable of blocking the Ninth Mountain as it continued to descend toward the shocked woman.

Colors flashed in the sky and rumbling filled the air. The green mist was blasted to bits. The woman, as well as quite a few of the Northern Reaches cultivators in the area, were all completely crushed under the mountain.

As of this moment, there was a new mountain in the land!

Everyone in the area was shocked, including the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief. His eyes were shot with blood. Because of Meng Hao, the Northern Reaches had sustained far too many losses in this difficult battle.

Originally, victory had been a certain thing for the Northern Reaches, but now… all because of Meng Hao, the tide had turned! If they couldn’t handle Meng Hao, then the Northern Reaches… would lose!

Having reached this conclusion, the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief's eyes flickered with determination. Originally, he wanted to avoid using the ancestral statuary, as it would waste a significant amount of qi reserves. That was why he had first attempted to handle Meng Hao himself.

Now he could see… that he had made a mistake.

"I should have used the ancestral statuary from the beginning, regardless of the cost!! However, it's still not too late!

"Meng Hao, to be suppressed by my clan's ancestral statuary will be your good fortune!" The Imperial Clan Chief's eyes radiated determination as he pointed one finger up toward the sky and another down toward the ground.

"Ancestral statuary, please reveal yourself!"

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# Chapter 789: A Huge Crisis!

As the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief’s voice rang out, Meng Hao’s eyes flashed, and an ineffable sense of deadly crisis abruptly rose up inside of him.

Meng Hao did not retrieve the Ninth Mountain, but rather, left it there towering above the land, emanating incredible pressure.

The Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief pointed up at the sky and down toward the ground. A bolt of blue lightning suddenly appeared, piercing Heaven and Earth….

Some distance away from the battlefield was an area that had previously been completely cloaked, but was now suddenly visible. It was as if a curtain had been pulled back to reveal… an enormous cage!

Inside the cage was a monkey, its body completely covered with magical symbols, and its eyes as red as blood. It seemed to be filled with a madness that could consume the Heavens.

As soon as Meng Hao caught sight of the cage and the monkey, his mind reeled. Even he… had been completely unable to detect the existence of the cage.

That indicated that the intense power of the cage exceeded Meng Hao’s cultivation base by a huge amount!

Right now, even a false Immortal would be incapable of completely evading Meng Hao’s detection. Thus, it indicated that the cage… was comparable to a true Immortal!

Furthermore, the Imperial Bloodline Clan would never use anything less powerful as their ancestral statuary!

It was a precious treasure formed from countless years of collected qi reserves.

The cage slowly rose up into the air, surrounded by lightning which stretched from the ground all the way up into the sky. The Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief immediately dropped to his knees in worship, raised his hands into the air, and began to chant a bizarre spell.

The air suddenly filled with the music of a great Dao. It sounded like the chanting of countless voices, droning dully in a way that made it impossible to hear clearly. However, the surrounding cultivators who did hear it were shaken mentally. The peak Dao Seeking Patriarchs up in midair looked on with shock.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. The sense of deadly crisis had reached a pinnacle inside of him. He lifted the Lightning Cauldron up, and lightning spread out to cover his entire body. He suddenly switched places with a cultivator close to the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief. He flew up into the air, performing an incantation gesture that caused the Blood Demon Grand Magic to appear as he sped toward the clan chief.

He could not allow the man to continue to perform his magic; the strange, ancient cage was something that filled Meng Hao’s heart with fear.

BOOM!

His divine ability slammed into the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief, who didn’t do the slightest thing to evade. He knelt there in worship just as before, the spell’s words pouring from his mouth. As Meng Hao’s divine ability reached him, it was blocked by some invisible power, and then… dissipated.

Meng Hao’s face fell.

It was at this point that, inside the cage, the monkey’s eyes suddenly flickered. The countless magical symbols on its body began to squirm and wriggle, and then flew into motion across the surface of its body. Golden light emanated off of the monkey, along with an aura like that of an Immortal Divinity.

Meng Hao’s scalp went numb, and his sense of deadly crisis rose even higher. Seeing that he couldn’t attack the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief, he began to back up, preparing to leave this area of the battlefield and the terrifying cage.

However, even in the moment that he began to back up…

The Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief looked up, and his expression was one of madness. “Ancestral statuary,” he cried out in a loud voice, “please slaughter this person!”

Lightning descended to dance around the cage, making it like a sun of lightning in midair.

The magical symbols on the monkey’s body began to move even faster than before. Then, all of the magical symbols on its right arm suddenly vanished, scattering to other parts of its body.

The magical symbols were like seals that kept it under constant suppression. Now… the right arm had been unsealed.

Next, one section of the cage in front of the monkey rippled and twisted into an opening!

A ferocious gleam appeared in the monkey’s eyes, and it suddenly roared: “The world of Immortals is the root of all evil! Immortals… must be suppressed!”

As its voice echoed out, it stretched out its right hand, passing through the gap to appear outside the cage as it reached toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s scalp was numb. The Lightning Cauldron crackled, and he vanished, reappearing some distance off, where he immediately transformed into a shooting star that sped away.

In the instant that he took to flight, however, the arm stretching out of the cage began to expand. In the blink of an eye it was three hundred meters long. Another blink, and it was three thousand. Then thirty thousand!

An enormous hand shot after Meng Hao. It was huge, filling up the sky, blocking the light, exceeding mountains and rivers as it closed in on Meng Hao.

It was impossible to tell exactly what type of divine ability was involved. Meng Hao was astonished, as were the peak Dao Seeking experts.

Meng Hao spat out a mouthful of blood as he pushed himself forward at indescribable speed. However, the enormous hand seemed to have no limits. It was like a continent unto itself as it shot after him. It spread out to completely encompass him. Up ahead of him, what looked like five gigantic mountain peaks were descending from up above!

Meng Hao’s eyes went wide from astonishment regarding this ancestral statuary. However, a cold gleam then appeared in his eyes, and the image of a roc appeared on his forehead. He burst forward as the image of a fish appeared in the air around him, its flapping tail shattering the air around him as he propelled himself forward. 1 The war chariot appeared, and he circulated the qi of Immortal Shows the Way. Rumbling filled the battlefield as he shot forward.

Utilizing the power of the war chariot, he was able to pass through one of the gaps between the five descending mountains.

Behind him on the battlefield, the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief spat up a mouthful of blood. Immediately, the magical symbols reappeared on the arm of the monkey in the cage. The chief was enraged; how could he ever have imagined that the ancestral statuary would be incapable of capturing Meng Hao?

“Dammit, this is unbelievable!” The Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief bit the tip of his tongue and spat some more blood out. Then he took out a skull fragment, which he pushed down onto his forehead. His body began to tremble, and rumbling sounds could be heard. A boundless radiance shone out from him, and countless voices spoke in unison.

“Ancestral statuary, please seal this person!”

As the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief’s roar echoed out, the monkey’s eyes flickered. No longer did they glow with red light; instead, they began to darken, as if the flame of its life force were burning out. It was at this point that the monkey transformed into a stone statue.

When that happened, the cage began to shine with brilliant light, simultaneously increasing in size. Then, it abruptly vanished.

Meanwhile, Meng Hao was speeding off into the distance, utilizing all the possible power of the war chariot. In the blink of an eye, he was far, far away. He turned to look behind him, and when he could see no enormous hand, he sighed with relief. Then, killing intent flickered in his eyes, and he was about to return to the battlefield, when suddenly, his mind reeled with shock.

Everything around him was flat and drab. The whole world looked peaceful and calm. In fact, there seemed to be no life present at all.

He looked up, and could see a mountain range off in the distance.

“Considering the power of the war chariot, and how hard I pushed it just now, I should be able to see the Milky Way Sea from here….” His mind spun, and a bad feeling welled up in his heart. Eyes flashing, he sped forward toward the mountain range he had just seen. Then, his face fell.

Those… were no mountains! Instead, they were enormous pillars!

Meng Hao’s scalp tingled. He turned again and, shockingly, found himself looking up at a gargantuan statue.

It was a statue of a monkey, and the expression on its face was one of derision.

A thunderous roar filled Meng Hao's mind. If by this point he didn't understand what had happened, then he wouldn't be Meng Hao.

"I'm inside that cage!" he thought with disbelief. He had just employed the top speed he could muster, and had clearly outrun the monkey's palm. Panting, he again sped off into the distance. It only took a bit of flying around for him to determine that he was definitely not in the lands of the Southern Domain, but rather, a square-shaped world.

In each of the four directions, he ran into pillars. In the center of all of them was the gigantic stone monkey. Finally, Meng Hao's face fell.

It was at this point that chanting sounds began to pulse toward him from all directions. The voices seem to contain some unspeakable power. As they floated about, the world began to tremble. What happened next was clearly visible to Meng Hao. The entire world… began to shrink!

At the same time, a shocking pressure weighed down.

The more the world shrank, the more intense the pressure became. It was a suppressing force that made Meng Hao tremble; it felt as if a mountain were crushing down onto him.

Meanwhile, in the outside world, Pill Demon, Patriarch Song, and the others hovered above the battlefield, shaken. Down below, the cultivators of the Southern Domain looked hopeless.

Everyone could see that the cage up in midair, which was covered by countless lightning bolts, now contained a figure inside that was Meng Hao!

However, he seemed to have been shrunk down to a tiny size, and was being suppressed by some power within the cage.

A ruthless gleam appeared in the eyes of the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief. He put away the skull fragment, then spit out a mouthful of blood. His body aged visibly; manipulating the ancestral statuary in the way he just had came with a steep price.

“This campaign has been fraught with setbacks. However, Meng Hao has finally been suppressed. At long last, the war of the Southern Domain shall end. The Northern Reaches will now control this territory!

“The Immortal destiny will definitely appear within a Northern Reaches cultivator!” He lifted his head up and laughed. The heavy price he had paid was worth it considering that the result was that Meng Hao was suppressed.

Killing intent flickered in his eyes as he shot up into the air, heading directly toward the battle with Patriarch Song and Pill Demon. After killing them, the battle would be completely in hand.

Down below, the Southern Domain cultivators were in a state of hopelessness, whereas the Northern Reaches cultivators were enlivened. Roaring, the Northern Reaches cultivators charged in attack; in the blink of an eye, the Southern Domain suffered heavy casualties, and were pushed back. The only thing they could do now was fall back behind the protection of the spell formations.

The spell formations were strong, but not strong enough that they could block an entire army of hundreds of thousands of maddened cultivators. The enormous golden door was once again hoisted up by tens of thousands of cultivators. The fourth spell formation was destroyed, then the third. Although some Northern Reaches cultivators died in the process, the second spell formation was also broken.

The Ninth Mountain still hadn’t faded away. It remained there, emitting rumbling sounds, as if someone was inside trying to break out!

The Southern Domain was in a huge crisis!

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1. Don’t forget that rocs, or “kunpeng,” start out their existence as a fish.

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# Chapter 790: He Once Said….

Up in the air was another crisis!

Blood sprayed from Patriarch Song's mouth. He had lost another eye, ripped out by the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief. Were it not for Meng Hao's second true self interfering with the Time Sword, he would surely have perished.

Patriarch Song, having lost both his eyes, was in a sorry state. Suddenly, his forehead tore open, and a brilliant glow appeared, which was his Nascent Divinity. Since he had no fleshly eyes, he would use his Nascent Divinity as his eyes so that he could continue to battle.

He couldn't afford to self-detonate. If he self-detonated in this moment of grave crisis for the Southern Domain, it would not only ensure that Pill Demon and Meng Hao's second true self would be defeated even sooner, it would also be a crippling blow to the morale of the Southern Domain cultivators.

"A fight to the death! What's the big deal in that?!" Laughing, Patriarch Song continued to battle on.

Pill Demon coughed up blood. He was fighting against two opponents, and considering how powerful the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief was, he couldn't hold his own. Thankfully, Meng Hao's second true self intervened, pinning down the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief as well as the obese woman.

"I already suppressed your true self, you trifling clone!" said the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief with a cold laugh. "Screw off!"

He waved his hand, and the Primordial Lightning Dragon appeared. Roaring, it bore down on Meng Hao's second true self.

Meng Hao's second true self looked coldly at the dragon. After his true self had been sealed, the connection between the two of them had been lost. Although he was incredibly nervous about the matter, there was nothing he could do about it except stall against the enemy.

The ground shook, and cracking sounds could suddenly be heard from the Ninth Mountain. A rift appeared on its surface, as if the person it was sealing would soon be freed. It was in that moment that a huge boom rang out; the Southern Domain's final spell formation was destroyed.

The backlash attack that it unleashed sent the Northern Reaches cultivators flying backward in retreat. However, it was only moments later that they charged once again, eyes bloodshot, faces covered with ferocious, cruel expressions.

The Southern Domain cultivators had been pressed down to the limit. Of their original force of 200,000, less than half remained. Now, they were prepared to put everything on the line in a final, brazen charge.

"Kill them!!"

The ground quaked, rivers of blood flowed, and fierce fighting raged.

There was so much blood that the sky itself reflected it, turning red. The killing field that was the final battle for the Southern Domain shook violently.

Back inside the cage, Meng Hao was also experiencing deadly tribulation. His body trembled underneath the pressure, and he coughed up blood. It seemed that… the Southern Domain… would inevitably suffer a huge defeat!

The cultivators were in a disastrous situation. The Dao Seeking experts were in sore straits. The Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief's eyes glittered ruthlessly; the battle seemed moments away from being won.

However, it was at this point that….

“South Cleaving!” An ancient voice rang out to echo through the land. It was like a windstorm that swept out in all directions.

“South Cleaving!!” A second voice rang out, uttering the same words. It was an equally archaic voice that swept out to fill Heaven and Earth.

“South Cleaving!!”

“SOUTH CLEAVING!!!” More voices rang out, until finally it was impossible to tell how many there were. Everything shook, and the sky flashed. Looks of shock began to appear on the faces of the Northern Reaches cultivators. The Southern Domain cultivators looked equally confused.

Up in the air, Patriarch Song and Pill Domain stared in shock. The Northern Reaches’ Dao Seeking experts turned to look off into the distance.

As for the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief, his face flickered.

“South Cleaving!” Amidst the rumbling, 10,000 figures suddenly appeared, striding through the air. They wore green armor that brimmed with an ancient air. It was as if these figures had existed for countless years; many were even dilapidated and broken down.

Inside the armor could be seen expressionless faces that appeared to be completely lifeless. They were puppets! Green-armored Demon guardians!

Every one of the green-armored Demon guardians had a core formation cultivation base, and the ground trembled as they advanced. Behind them were ninety additional figures wearing black armor.

Pitch black and circulating Demonic qi, these were… black-armored Demon guardians!

Each one had a Nascent Soul cultivation base, and possessed shocking power. As they advanced, it could be seen that behind them were six figures in violet armor.

Each of those six figures emanated Spirit Severing auras and shocking energy. As soon as they appeared, the ground trembled and the sky dimmed.

Behind those six figures were three old men wearing bronze battle armor. Their hair was white and floated about them, and their facial features were ancient. They seemed to have existed for many, many years. These old men were also puppets, no longer cultivators. However, the auras they emanated were that of the peak of Dao Seeking!

As these more than 10,000 people appeared, they all shouted the same thing.

“South Cleaving!”

As the sound rose up into the sky, the Southern Domain cultivators began to think about an ancient legend.

According to the legend, the Southern Domain and the Western Desert had not always been on stable terms like they were now. In fact, there had been lots of friction, including several instances of war.

In one of those wars, the Western Desert had been in the weak position, whereas the Southern Domain was much more powerful. The Southern Domain invaded the Western Desert, which prompted the Western Desert cultivators to join forces to create the South Cleaving Sentinels. Supposedly, all of their peak Dao Seeking cultivators volunteered to give up everything and become puppets. They created a mountain range to cleave the south from the west; it completely and thoroughly separated the Western Desert and the Southern Domain.

From that time forward, those boundless mountains were called… the South Cleaving Mountains!

Within those mountains existed eternal guardians of the Western Desert, which was the former legion… of the South Cleaving Sentinels! 1

Afterwards, the Western Desert declined in power, and then the Violet Sea arrived. No more Dao Seeking experts had arisen there, and so, relations with the Southern Domain gradually stabilized.

“South Cleaving Sentinels!”

“Those are the Western Desert’s South Cleaving Sentinels!!” The appearance of this new force left the Southern Domain cultivators completely shocked. That was especially because they weren’t sure if the South Cleaving Sentinels came as enemies or allies!

The Northern Reaches cultivators were in the same position. The sudden appearance of a third party left them astonished.

It was at this point that a group of tens of thousands of people could be seen charging out from behind the South Cleaving Sentinels. They wore simple clothes, and looked rough and coarse. They had barbarous expressions, and their hair flung about wildly like savages.

They also gave off an archaic air, as if within their veins pulsed blood that had existed for countless ages. These people were… the Golden Crow Clan, the great Wild Flame Tribe, the great Demon Butterfly Tribe, and the great Cloud Sky Tribe!

The Western Desert had become the Violet Sea, the great tribes had migrated to the Black Lands, and these people were the warrior tribes of the Black Lands.

“Fellow Daoist Pill Demon, we are indebted to you for your kindness all those years ago. Fellow Daoist Meng Hao, we are here to join you in battle!!”

“Patriarch Meng Hao, we’re here!!”

“We might have had our differences with the Southern Domain in the past. However, when the Violet Sea Apocalypse came, the Southern Domain permitted the Western Desert to occupy the Black Lands, and did not interfere with us. Nor did you take advantage of our situation to harm us. Such kindness… will be repaid by the Western Desert cultivators on this very day!”

“We have already consulted with South Cleaving Pass on this matter, and the Patriarchs agree. We will aid the Southern Domain to drive out the Northern Reaches!”

As the voices rang out into the ears of the Southern Domain and Northern Reaches cultivators, everyone was shocked.

The Southern Domain cultivators were trembling. They had never imagined that at the eleventh hour, the Western Desert… would actually send troops to their aid!

The Northern Reaches cultivators were also trembling. Just when the battle seemed to be clinched, another setback occurred!

It was at this time that behind the Western Desert Cultivators could be seen hundreds of thousands… of wild beasts!

Although the beasts were not incredibly strong, their speed and numbers were enough to darken the sky. Numerous Dragoneers could be seen controlling the beasts as they charged toward the battlefield, forming a pincer formation with the Southern Domain cultivators to completely surround the Northern Reaches forces!

The Southern Domain cultivators’ spirits were instantly raised, and they began to fight passionately.

Trembling, Patriarch Song lifted his head and laughed. Next to him, Pill Demon also appeared to be moved. He had treated the Western Desert well in the past, often providing them secret assistance. That was because long ago, Reverend Violet East had once been on good terms with the Western Desert. 2

Now that the Western Desert cultivators had arrived, the Southern Domain had been given a new lease on life from its imminent crisis!

This was especially true considering the presence of the South Cleaving Sentinels. As soon as they reached the battlefield, the old men in the bronze armor immediately shot toward the peak Dao Seeking experts’ battle.

“Dammit!” roared the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief. “You Western Desert barbarians are looking to die!” He was immediately pulled into fighting with one of the three peak Dao Seeking Western Desert puppets from the South Cleaving Sentinels. Fierce fighting caused everything to shake.

Three great territories were now locked in battle! The Western Desert! The Southern Domain! The Northern Reaches!

As the battle raged, the sky grew dark. The land was shattered into pieces, and the air itself was rent. The sky above was torn, revealing a peek of what appeared to be a different set of stars up above. Even the whole of South Heaven seemed as if it had been tilted on its axis, and the entire planet trembled.

Originally, the Ji Clan would have stepped in to prevent these three territories from going to war like this, and from shaking the very foundation of the lands of South Heaven. But now… the Ji Clan was acting as if they didn’t even notice. Not a single Ji Clan member appeared.

Within the rumbling of battle, beasts and cultivators slashed murderously at each other. The Southern Domain, the Western Desert and the Northern Reaches all fought with madness. Currently, it was actually difficult to tell who was in the winning position.

No one was confident of clinching victory, neither the Southern Domain and Western Desert, nor the Northern Reaches.

The lands flowed with blood, and fierce fighting raged everywhere. Miserable screams drifted about, and countless corpses fell to the ground. Everything was stained with blood. The sky was dark. Everyone seemed to have become mired in a bloody slaughterhouse. The only thing to do was kill… and keep killing!

Up in midair, the five Northern Reaches Dao Seeking experts were fighting against three Southern Domain cultivators and three Western Desert experts, a total of six. Their battle thoroughly shook the sky up above, dissipating the Ji Clan’s sky and revealing the true starry sky of ancient times.

On any other occasion, the Ji Clan would never have allowed such a thing to happen. But now… the Heavens of Ji were severed. They had lost their protector, making it so that the current sky distorted into a massive vortex.

The spinning vortex looked like a huge eye, within which spun a starry sky!

The Violet Sea churned and the Milky Way Sea roared. The massive quaking was such that, in the area where the two seas bordered each other, it was possible to see that the Violet Sea was now leaking out into the Milky Way Sea. Instantly, shocking transformations began to occur.

The transformations were astonishing by themselves, but what was even more astounding was that… the blood that inundated the battlefield did not soak into the ground, but rather, began to slowly flow into the Milky Way Sea.

The lands which had once been the Blood Demon Sect were awash with blood that now poured into the Milky Way Sea. Considering that the Violet Sea was also flowing into it, the Milky Way Sea… erupted.

At this point, a faint voice rose up over the Milky Way Sea.

“He once said… when the vortex eye appears in the sky, when the lotus transforms, when there is a gap between Immortal and Devil, the Blue Lotus will appear…. And now…

“The stars can be seen, the blood of millions of cultivators flows freely, and the vortex eye can be seen in the sky.

“The Western Desert Apocalypse and the boundless Violet Sea concealed the transformations of the lotus.

“On the day the Heavens are numbed 3, filled with legions of grieving ghosts, I desire… to see the Blue Lotus!

“I will turn the blood of millions of cultivators into mud! I will transform all the wronged souls into a sludge. I shall… emerge spotless and unblemished from within that sludge of endless bloody mud! I shall… cast off the body of the Resurrection Lily and become the Blue Lotus!” 4

3. I previously translated this “on the day of vicissitudes.” I think this version is more accurate, and will go back to change the previous references later. Also, this line and the previous two lines rhyme in Chinese

4. Confucian scholar Zhou Dunyi wrote, “I love the lotus because while growing from mud, it is unstained.”

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# Chapter 791: Great Dao Resonance!

When the Milky Way Sea merged with the Violet Sea, its color changed; it was now indigo-blue!

The water on the surface churned, and the foamy waves suddenly looked like hair floating up from within the sea.

The enormous Resurrection Lily bridge that connected the Southern Domain and the Northern Reaches suddenly began to tremble. Then the tentacles retracted from both the shores of the Southern Domain and the Northern Reaches!

They pulled back to the surface of the Milky Way Sea to form… a shocking Resurrection Lily!

A seven-colored Resurrection Lily!

The Resurrection Lily was blooming, and its colors were fading along with the Milky Way Sea’s change in color. It now bore the semblance of an indigo-blue lotus.

Boundless spiritual energy of Heaven and Earth surged toward the Blue Lotus that had once been a Resurrection Lily, as if the process of transformation desperately needed the entire planet’s energy.

Colors flashed in the sky, and the winds screamed. The Ji Clan immediately noticed these phenomena, and the clan members’ minds were shaken.

In the lands of the Southern Domain, the ordinary cultivators didn’t notice anything more than a slight reduction in the spiritual energy around them.

However, the Dao Seeking experts up in midair could detect the astonishing changes that were occurring in the direction of the Milky Way Sea.

The number one most powerful expert of the Northern Reaches, the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief, couldn’t help but look shocked. The other peak Dao Seeking experts of the Northern Reaches were also astonished. Now that the Resurrection Lily bridge had disappeared, they had no escape route back to the Northern Reaches!

“Dammit!” Their faces fell.

As for Pill Demon and Patriarch Song, their eyes flickered with killing intent. They weren’t sure what the Resurrection Lily was planning to do. Right now, the most important task at hand was slaughtering the Northern Reaches cultivators!

Even if the sky were falling, they would still fight as desperately as before.

Rumbling filled the air, and fierce fighting raged. The three parties of the Northern Reaches, the Southern Domain and the Western Desert all fought bitterly. The Dao Seeking experts up in midair were the same. With the addition of the forces from the Western Desert, the battle was now much more even.

It was now a fair fight!

However, the battle was being fought in the Southern Domain, the home of the Southern Domain cultivators. If the fighting kept going on much longer, the Northern Reaches cultivators would surely be beaten!

Unfortunately, the Southern Domain and the Western Desert would have to pay a grievous price to win this war. However, it had to be won, no matter the cost. Anything was better than the foundation of their cultivation being destroyed.

“Kill them!”

The ground trembled and blood flowed everywhere. The sky was rent, and wild winds whipped across the land. The entire rotation of South Heaven was influenced.

In fact, there were even some areas of the Southern Domain which quaked so badly that the land collapsed, allowing the Milky Way Sea to rush in.

Meanwhile, the Imperial Bloodline Clan's ancestral statuary floated in midair, emanating an ancient aura. Inside the cage, Meng Hao was now facing the most critical danger he had ever faced in his life.

The cage's world was shrinking. As of this moment, he could see that the entire world was barely 30,000 meters wide!

An intense pressure bore down on him, sealing him completely.

Blood oozed out of his mouth. He performed incantation gestures to summon divine abilities. The Blood Demon Grand Magic raged as he attempted to break through the seal. However, nothing worked. No amount of power did anything to affect the area around him.

He could only watch, wide-eyed, as the 30,000-meter world became 25,000 meters, and then continued to shrink.

"Dammit!" he said, his eyes bloodshot. He flew up into the air, focusing all the power of his cultivation base to transform into a shooting star that sped up into the sky in the hopes of making a hole and breaking out.

BOOM!

Meng Hao's body shook violently and he coughed up a huge mouthful of blood. He slammed back into the ground, having done absolutely nothing to weaken the power of the seal.

The area was continuing to shrink. Now there were only 20,000 meters left!

Meng Hao's head suddenly jerked up. His hair was in disarray, and his body was filled with rumbling. He took all of the qi and blood power that he had absorbed earlier and focused it in his right hand, creating… the most powerful punch he had ever unleashed.

At the same time, his cultivation base exploded with incredible ripples, as he focused all of the cultivation base power he had absorbed into his right hand. By now, his right hand was glowing with a blinding, dazzling light.

“Souls!” Meng Hao roared, and vast quantities of struggling souls screamed out. Hundreds of thousands of them seemed to blot out the sky. Then Meng Hao’s hand became a black hole that began to suck in the souls.

By now, his fist contained a terrifying destructive power, a power that was the absolute peak of what he could summon. He flew up and then struck out at the sealing barrier which surrounded him.

A massive boom raged out which caused the entire world to shake. Time ground to a halt, and a gigantic vortex ripped open that seemed capable of sucking the whole world into it.

Heaven and Earth distorted, and cracking sounds could be heard. The seal seemed to be on the verge of falling apart, until… the stone monkey in the middle of the world suddenly opened its eyes. A bizarre light shone out, which then surrounded the entire world.

Everything seemed to be freezing over!

BOOM!

The vortex collapsed, and the distortion disappeared. Everything returned to normal. The previous 20,000 meter distance was now 10,000!

Meng Hao coughed up some blood and backed up. The world was shrinking too much, and the pressure weighing down on him had doubled. He coughed up more blood.

An archaic voice echoed out from the stone statue.

“The world of Immortals is the source of all chaos. Immortals are the source of all slaughter. The Immortal Realm must be sealed! Immortals must be suppressed!”

The pressure grew more intense, and Meng Hao could hear cracking sounds inside of him, as if his bones were being broken.

Anyone else in this situation would already have been crushed out of existence; it was only because of his incredibly powerful fleshly body that he could hold out.

“What the hell are you talking about?!” he said. The words spoken by the stone monkey didn’t make any sense to him. However, his eyes were completely shot with blood, and the killing intent he felt in his heart continued to grow stronger. Being stuck in this sealing cage was causing him to feel completely helpless.

“I was a bit too weak just now,” he thought. “This stone monkey’s gaze negates anything I do! I don’t have the power to break open the cage, but… I can borrow some power!” His eyes suddenly filled with a gleam of determination. He took a deep breath, and no longer made any attempts to violently break out. Instead, he sank back down to the ground and sat down cross-legged, a profound look in his eyes.

“I’ve already reached an understanding regarding the path of my Third Severing…. I’ve only been hesitant about the correctness of the path. But now… I might as well just go ahead with it!

“I’ll borrow the power of the blade of the Third Severing, the Dao Severing blade, to break open this cage!” His eyes gleamed with decisiveness.

“My First Severing cut away the Resurrection Lily, and carved out freedom. That was my direction!

“My Second Severing cut away the past, and carved out my Dao Fruit!

“My Third Severing… will cut away the Devil in my heart! I will carve away my desire to become Devilish. That is Devil Severing!

“I must… Sever the Devil and Seek the Dao!” When he looked up, an intense glow could be seen in his eyes. He took a deep breath and began to rotate his cultivation base. He used all of the power of his cultivation base to stimulate the blade of the Third Severing!

In Spirit Severing, there were three blades. As long as one was confident of the Dao, and one’s spirit was ready, the blades could link with Heaven and Earth to cause a Dao blade to descend!

If the Severing was correct, then the cultivation base would experience a breakthrough. If the Severing was incorrect, the body would perish and the Dao would dissipate!

Spirit Severing cultivators who were not 100% confident would not easily perform a Severing. What they feared most was realizing at the last minute that they had Severed incorrectly. Their fate would then be death.

The First Severing was difficult, and the Second was incredibly dangerous. As for the Third Severing… that was the most critical of junctures!

If the Severing was correct, then the cultivator would step into Dao Seeking. If it was incorrect, the cultivator would die. If the Severing was somewhere in between, neither correct nor incorrect, the result was an existence of being crippled. No further advancements would be possible, and they would forever remain in the Third Severing stage until their longevity ran out and they returned to the dust.

As for what was correct and what was incorrect, the answer could only be found in the heart of the cultivator!

If the heart was correct, everything was correct. If the heart was incorrect, so everything else would be!

It had been a profound mystery since ancient times, and even in modern days, no one completely understood the matter.

Meng Hao’s cultivation suddenly surged out. It was irrelevant that he was in a cage, or that he was sealed. The Dao was amorphous, and although places existed in Heaven and Earth where there was no Dao, clearly… this cage was not one of those places!

Almost as soon as Meng Hao’s cultivation base exploded out to call his blade of the Third Severing, lightning and thunder crashed in the world outside. Rumbling filled the air, and the sky split. A vortex appeared, and the power of a great Dao suddenly emerged.

This great Dao power descended from the starry sky, nearing the lands of South Heaven, and the battlefield on the Southern Domain!

In the blink of an eye, virtually all of the cultivators down below could sense the power of the great Dao. One by one, looks of shock appeared on their faces.

“That’s… a great Dao of Spirit Severing!”

“Who’s calling to a Dao of Spirit Severing!?”

“Don’t tell me someone is about to break through to Spirit Severing right in the middle of the battlefield!?”

Despite the fact that battle was raging, the appearance of the power of a great Dao made it impossible for people to remain calm. From the expressions on the faces of the peak Dao Seeking experts of the three territories, it was clear that they were thoroughly astonished.

Their gazes swept about, but none of them could see anyone who seemed to be attaining Spirit Severing enlightenment.

It was at this point that suddenly, the rumbling great Dao power intensified by tenfold. The vortex up above seemed to be completely obscured. It was as if nothing were left in the world except for the great Dao.

Even the cultivators who were locked in vicious combat suddenly found that it was extremely difficult to utilize any magical techniques or divine abilities. It was as if they were being assimilated by the great Dao.

It was the same with the peak Dao Seeking experts up in midair. People began to gasp, and expressions of shock could be seen everywhere.

“That’s not a blade of First Severing, that’s a Third Severing blade!”

“That can’t be right! There’s never been a Third Severing blade with such astonishing power before!”

“Don’t tell me that….”

Rumbling echoed out as the power of the great Dao grew more intense. The entire sky of the lands of South Heaven was shaking and blurred. And yet, the power of the great Dao grew even stronger. Even the Resurrection Lily in the Milky Way Sea was astonished.

The power of this great Dao was shocking the entire world. It was like a wall that prevented anyone on the battlefield from attacking. Their expressions were that of shock as they realized that the Imperial Bloodline Clan’s ancestral statuary cage was now emanating intense light.

After looking closely, it was possible to see that the source of that light was none other than Meng Hao, who was still in the cage!

The bright light appeared to be some sort of resonance!

A Great Dao Resonance!

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# Chapter 792: The Dao Becomes a Mist; the Mist Becomes a Blade!

“It’s Meng Hao!!”

“It’s the exalted Meng Hao! How could that dinky ancestral statuary possibly suppress his excellency Meng Hao!?”

“Isn’t his excellency Meng Hao at Dao Seeking…? How could there be a great Dao of Spirit Severing?”

The Southern Domain cultivators were in an uproar, and many of them were completely flabbergasted. From the feeling most people got, Meng Hao couldn’t possibly be in the Spirit Severing stage. Essentially, most people had long forgotten that his cultivation base was actually at the Second Severing level!

In the history of the lands of South Heaven, there had never been a Spirit Severing expert who possessed a peak Dao Seeking clone. Nor had there ever been a battle in which a Spirit Severing cultivator actually fought and killed someone at the peak of Dao Seeking.

The things which these cultivators were witnessing were completely unheard-of. Therefore, there were quite a few people who actually believed that Meng Hao… was at the peak of Dao Seeking!

Of course, the Northern Reaches cultivators’ shock and astonishment was even more intense.

“The ancestral statuary can’t keep him suppressed! Just… where is this guy from!?”

“He’s actually at the Spirit Severing stage? That’s impossible!!”

“Heavens! How… how could he possibly be a mere Spirit Severing cultivator!? If he can fight the peak of Dao Seeking now, then when he steps into Dao Seeking, doesn’t that mean he could fight false Immortals!?!?”

The Northern Reaches cultivators were thoroughly astonished. One by one, they all looked over toward Meng Hao with expressions of shock and disbelief.

These people were not very familiar with Meng Hao. Now that they realized the truth about him, it was almost impossible for them to accept.

As for the Western Desert cultivators, they immediately began to make loud exclamations, the noise of which turned into a sound wave that shook everything.

“The number one non-Immortal in all the lands of South Heaven!”

“The exalted Meng Hao is about to free himself!”

“Spirit Severing into Dao Seeking!”

As for Pill Demon and Patriarch Song, they were unfazed. Although they knew Meng Hao’s true cultivation base, and had gotten used to his incredible power, they had stopped paying attention to the fact that he was actually still in the Spirit Severing stage.

However, the Northern Reaches cultivators did not know this, and they stared with gaping mouths. The obese woman was especially astonished, and she suddenly glanced over at the expressionless face of Meng Hao’s second true self.

Then she started to tremble, and her scalp went numb. She suddenly had the feeling that the Northern Reaches had made a colossal mistake in invading the Southern Domain.

There was someone who was even more shaken than her, a person whose heart filled with massive waves of astonishment. That was the number one most powerful expert from the Northern Reaches, the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief!

He was in a daze, and could hardly believe what was happening. In fact, he wasn't willing to believe. The incredible battle he had just experienced with Meng Hao had left him wounded, and had forced him to use the ancestral statuary. And that… was a battle with a Spirit Severing expert!?

“Impossible!” he gasped. His eyes were filled with not just shock, but also terror. He could never have possibly imagined that there really was an unequaled Chosen who could accomplish the things Meng Hao had while merely in the Spirit Severing stage.

In his disbelief, he felt his scalp grow completely numb.

“No matter how you put it, you have to say that the Third Severing is the most critical of all,” he thought. “The slightest mistake, and you immediately perish. Even if you aren't completely right or wrong, your cultivation base will be forever restrained.

“Meng Hao obviously hasn't prepared well for the Third Severing, that much can be determined. Therefore, this Spirit Severing right now is being done because he's been forced into a corner. It's a forced Severing!

“In that case… if he fails, then he will perish this very day!

“Meng Hao… there's no way that you can succeed!” The Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief was truly frightened, and simply couldn't believe how unimaginably powerful Meng Hao would be if he succeeded in entering into Dao Seeking….

The great Dao was growing even more powerful. The entire sky above South Heaven was now completely obscured.

In the lands of South Heaven, in that tower of Tang, the man and woman stood together, trembling. The woman was excited, and the man was apparently trying to keep his cool, but failing.

They had been waiting for this day for a very, very long time.

“We still can’t go,” murmured the man. “Just wait a bit longer. Only a little bit…. This is the final stretch!

“If he succeeds, then we will finally be able to reunite. If he doesn’t succeed….”

His wife clasped his hand tightly. Both of their palms were slick with sweat.

In their entire lives, this man and woman had never been so nervous, nor was there any event they had ever experienced that was so important. Even if some shockingly powerful individual attempted to interfere with what was happening, they would pay any price to stop that person from causing even the slightest bit of trouble!

“We’ve waited for three lives. For hundreds of years…. Just for this moment!”

“Hao’er, you… must… succeed and reach Dao Seeking!”

Back in the cage, Meng Hao sat cross-legged, trembling slightly, his hair floating around him. The world around him had shrunk down to only about three thousand meters. There was virtually nothing around him except for air. All of the mountains and everything else had been crushed into dust by the shocking pressure.

Cracking sounds could be heard emanating out from his body, as if his skeleton were being ground away.

However, Meng Hao didn’t notice. All of his concentration was focused on summoning the blade of the Third Severing. The more intense his summons grew, the more obscure Heaven and Earth became in the outside world.

The great Dao grew stronger, to the point where a mist appeared…. The mist was first seen on the battlefield and then spread out to cover all of the lands of South Heaven.

The peak Dao Seeking experts from the three territories immediately recognized what was happening. They began to speak in hushed tones, which were overheard by the other cultivators, causing their hearts to tremble.

“That’s….”

“A Dao turned into mist!!”

“The only time a Dao will take form as a mist is when an incredibly powerful expert gains enlightenment of a great Dao! Only then will such transformations of Heaven and Earth take place!!”

“This is something you only hear about in legends! It’s virtually unheard of in the lands of South Heaven!!”

A gleam of excitement appeared in Pill Demon’s eyes, and he almost couldn’t hold back the laughter that burst out in his heart.

Patriarch Song looked equally excited.

In contrast, Meng Hao’s second true self suddenly closed his eyes and sat down cross-legged in midair!

The descent of the great Dao caused all hostilities to cease. Even the peak Dao Seeking experts were incapable of making attacks during the great Dao’s descent. The Northern Reaches experts could do nothing but stare in wide-eyed disbelief at Meng Hao’s second true self sitting there cross-legged.

“Dammit! You’d better not pull it off, Meng Hao!” thought the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief. His heart was pounding.

Currently, all of the powerful experts of the Northern Reaches, Western Desert and Southern Domain were closely observing the scene. Back in the Eastern Lands, the Ji Clan was completely quiet. As for the young Patriarch with the missing arms, he was staring fixedly at what was happening.

By this time, there were other powerful experts from various sects and clans in the Eastern Lands who had also sensed what was happening. Shocked, they sent out their divine sense to observe. However, no one dared to do anything. After all, if the Ji Clan wasn't interfering, how could they dare to interfere?

It was at this point that, back in the cage, Meng Hao abruptly lifted his head. His eyes opened, and he cried out: "Third Severing!"

His voice echoed back and forth within the world, which had now shrunk to 1,500 meters. At first it didn't seem that the sound could be heard in the outside world, but in actuality, it was as if there were innumerable Meng Haos issuing an echoing cry that could be heard faintly by those outside.

It almost seemed as if the sound was coming from the mist itself, as if the echoing response came from within the descending great Dao itself.

Countless ears heard the voice, and everyone who did was completely and thoroughly shaken.

As the voice echoed out, the mist that covered all of South Heaven suddenly surged back, roiling as it condensed above the battlefield in the Southern Domain. There, in midair, it formed into the shape…

Of a Mist Blade!!

Mist Blade!

Dao enlightenment! 1

As soon as the Mist Blade appeared, the eyes of all of the peak Dao Seeking experts on the battlefield went wide. Their minds filled with a roaring sound. Even Pill Demon wore an expression of disbelief.

The fact that there was a Dao that became so strong it turned into a mist was shocking enough. Something legendary like that was possible to accept. However… to see the mist turn into a blade was something that filled them with uncontrollable shock.

“Mist… Blade!!” thought the shocked Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief. “That’s… something that should be experienced on the Immortal Mountain, just before pushing open the Door of Immortality, when reaching Immortal Ascension!!”

“Those who achieve true Immortal Ascension must face Immortal Tribulation. After they transcend the tribulation, they will stand on an Immortal Mountain of their own. As they take that step forward, a Mist Blade will fall. Then, they will be severed from the Spirit Realm and have the power to push open the Door of Immortality, and become a true Immortal!

“But he… is using a Mist Blade to perform his Third Severing!! When that Mist Blade slashes through him, it will sever his Spirit Nucleus and stabilize the path to true Immortality!!”

His mind was reeling, and his body trembling. Suddenly, he realized that sending troops into the Southern Domain had been a monumental error!!

All of the peak Dao Seeking experts up in midair were shocked. Of course, it wasn’t just them. In the Eastern Lands, the Patriarchs of the various sects were equally astonished. They could hardly believe what they were seeing, and were filled with shock and disbelief.

“Who is that young man!?”

“He’s using a Mist Blade for his Third Severing! If he fails then it doesn’t matter, but if he succeeds, wouldn’t it be a defiance of the Heavens?!”

“If he succeeds, then will he step into Dao Seeking, or Immortality?”

The armless young man in the Ji Clan suddenly rose to his feet, his eyes wide and filled with disbelief.

“Rumor has it that Fang Xiufeng, the number one Chosen in the Fang Clan, used a blade composed of twenty percent mist in his Third Severing. That caused a huge commotion among the ancient clans of the Ninth Mountain. Even the Patriarch watched the whole thing with rapt attention. 2

“This Meng Hao… he… he’s actually even more Heaven-defying in his Spirit Severing than Fang Xiufeng. He’s actually… using a complete Mist Blade!”

In the Tower of Tang, the woman gasped.

“The Dao became a mist, and the mist became a blade!” The woman’s eyes shone with excitement, and she was trembling violently. “Husband… can you believe Hao’er is doing this!?!? He even… he… he didn’t just bring SOME of the mist together, he actually used all of it to make a Mist Blade! He’s vastly more shocking than you!!”

“Seventh Year Tribulation,” murmured the man. “Four lifetimes. Three incarnations predestined…. Only by preventing his Karma from being contaminated by ours, could we give him a slight chance at life!

“The Dao became a mist, the mist became a blade. That blade will complete the gap between Immortal and Devil!” The man’s eyes shone with a bright light, and he couldn’t help but lift his head up and laugh. “It’s natural that a son of Fang is even more astonishing than his father!”

1. There is an important play on words here. In Chinese, “Mist Blade” is pronounced “wù dāo,” almost exactly as the pronunciation of Dao enlightenment, which is “wù dào”

2. Fang Xiufeng’s name in Chinese is fāng xiù fēng. Fang is a surname which also means “square” or “direction.” Xiu means “elegant” or “handsome.” Feng means “peak” or “summit”

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# Chapter 793: Sever the Devil, Seek the Dao!

Third Severing!

The mist sent the sound of his voice throughout the lands of South Heaven, and then it, along with the contraction of the mist, was sucked back in. In the end, the mist was formed into a Mist Blade, and Meng Hao’s voice echoed above the battlefield in shocking fashion.

The Mist Blade looked ordinary in every aspect.

It was made from nothing but mist, and yet that mist… was formed by a great Dao that had reached an utmost purity! Inside of that blade was the distillation of the entirety of the great Dao that had descended!

That blade didn’t just contain the mist from before, all of the obscurity that had existed in the sky had been turned into countless amorphous strands of power that joined the mist in transforming into the enormous blade.

It was a blade, and it was a Dao!

It was a mist, and it was enlightenment!

It was a Mist Blade, and it was Dao enlightenment!

SEVER!

The Mist Blade descended toward the cage. Inside, the stone monkey’s eyes snapped open, and they gleamed with a strange light that tried to fight back against the blade. However, almost as soon as it shone out, the light shattered. The blade dropped, slicing into the cage and bearing down on Meng Hao.

The stone monkey howled and leaped up into the air in an attempt to block the blade.

As soon as it touched the blade, however, rumbling filled its entire body and blood sprayed from its mouth. Then… it was directly sliced in half, powerless to affect the Mist Blade in the least.

There were only three hundred meters left within the world of the cage. As the Mist Blade sliced down, it easily split what had moments before been an unshakable barrier to Meng Hao.

Rumbling filled the air as the cage was completely split open!

The walls collapsed, the stone monkey was split in half. The cage that was the ancestral treasure of the Imperial Bloodline Clan was completely destroyed. It finally shattered into countless pieces, and Meng Hao once again appeared in the outside world!

He sat cross-legged just as before, looking up, his white hair fluttering around him. Devilish flames engulfed him, and his skin glowed with a black aura that seemed to penetrate deep down inside him.

That was his Devilish will, the source of his desire to kill. That was his Devilishness!

Rumbling filled the air as everyone looked on mutely. All onlookers were incapable of moving, even the peak Dao Seeking experts.

They could only spectate, wide-eyed, as this once-in-a-lifetime event occurred right in front of their eyes!

The Mist Blade rumbled as it sliced down. When it touched the top of Meng Hao’s head, a twinge of pain could be seen on his face. The blackness that surrounded him rapidly flew into motion, becoming countless struggling, twisted faces.

Meng Hao quivered; the pain he was experiencing was indescribable. He almost felt like his body was being ripped apart. And yet, his eyes shone with determination.

By now, it wasn't just the crowds on the battlefield who were watching him. The Patriarchs in the Eastern Lands were using a variety of methods to observe, some of which even came at a high price.

The Ji Clan was looking on, as were the couple in the Tower of Tang.

Everyone was watching closely, keen to find out whether Meng Hao would succeed or fail!

"Sever the Devil!" thought Meng Hao, his eyes shining with decisiveness. He looked at the Mist Blade and let out a powerful roar, and his cultivation base exploded out with incredible power as he stimulated the Devilish will inside of him. Deep within his heart, the desire to slaughter rose up. At the same time, images appeared of all the murderous massacres he had carried out after becoming bedeviled.

The Mist Blade trembled, then continued to descend. This time, it stabbed three inches down into the top of Meng Hao's head. No blood flowed out, because this was not a physical blade, but a Dao!

And yet, Meng Hao still experienced intense pain, a pain more powerful than he would feel were the blade physical. The black aura began to spread out from him, where, shockingly, it transformed into a face.

That face… looked exactly like Meng Hao's!

However, it was filled with vileness, savagery, and madness. Devilish qi roared up, and the face opened its mouth, soundlessly howling at the Mist Blade.

The Mist Blade gradually descended further. The power of this blade did not come from the Heavens, from the Earth, or from the underworld. No, it was Meng Hao's!

This was Meng Hao’s Severing!

The power of the Severing came from his own will. Whatever he wished to Sever, this blade would Sever. If he gave up, then the blade would fade away, and his Spirit Severing would be a failure!

“SEVER!” he said hoarsely, through gritted teeth. Rumbling could be heard as the Mist Blade continued to slice down. It cut through his head, then his neck. The blade trembled. As for the ferocious, vile face that existed around Meng Hao, it was now possible to see a huge split down the middle of it, something that would never be mended.

Miserable screams could be heard coming from the vile face’s mouth. Then the face scattered and surged back into Meng Hao’s body. Now, everything below his head was completely black.

“My path is not incorrect!” he murmured. “True freedom and true independence! The Resurrection Lily was incapable of possessing me! I even awoke from death! My Dao… is not the Dao of the Devilish!

“Devilishness can be a type of obsession. That kind of perseverance is something that I need. What I don’t need is something that controls me. I am not a Devil. I am not an Immortal. I am me and nothing else!” He took a deep breath, and more power poured into the Mist Blade. Rumbling could be heard as it began to slice down once more.

RUMMMMMBLE!

The Mist Blade sliced through his shoulders, and then down to his dantian region. There was now only a moment left, and Meng Hao’s Severing would be complete.

Currently, black qi had merged together on either side of him to form the shape of two wings. Gradually, they took on the appearance of Meng Hao himself. One of the figures was roaring in rage at Meng Hao, the other was whispering to him silently.

They seemed unwilling to be severed away; they were born of his Devilish will, and were part of him. They wanted to exist within his mind, and were not willing to be severed.

Meng Hao sat there silently, a blank expression on his face.

As of this moment, he forgot that he was engaged in Spirit Severing. In his mind, he saw two images of himself, and they were fighting each other.

As the Devilish will raged, he thought back to the things he had seen the first time he had charged into the Black Sieve Sect. As the other Devilish will whispered to him, he thought of how he had held Xu Qing's corpse, and the ruthless laughter of the Northern Reaches cultivators.

He paused.

In that moment in which his will paused, the Mist Blade also paused.

Everyone on the battlefield was watching him closely, as were the Patriarchs of the various sects in the Eastern Lands.

The Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief wore an expression of joy. Seeing that Meng Hao was hesitating, he joyously called out in his heart: "Stop! Just stop!"

In the Ji Clan of the Eastern Lands, the armless young man, the Patriarch, looked on with shining eyes.

In the Tower of Tang, the woman looked extremely anxious. And yet, there was nothing she could do. Anything she did to interfere could have a huge negative influence. Everything… was completely up to Meng Hao.

Ten breaths of time passed.

Even though it was a mere ten breaths, to everyone watching it seemed like a very, very long time.

Meng Hao sat there quietly, his eyes closed. When they opened, they were calm, so calm that it was impossible for anyone to tell what he might be thinking. However, the two Devilish images on either side of him appeared to be delighted.

“People say that there are two opposing concepts: good, and evil,” murmured Meng Hao.

“Rather than say my Third Severing is a Severing of the Devilish, it would be better to say that it is a Severing of the evil.

“But… is it really possible to completely Sever evil?

“If humanity was left only with goodness, perhaps that would make the world a more beautiful. Unfortunately, that isn’t realistic. Without the existence of evil, perhaps good… would no longer be called good.

“Good and evil are the desires of the heart. If I earnestly perform good deeds, evil can be suppressed. Likewise, if I malevolently perform evil deeds, good will be suppressed.

“Perhaps there is nothing truly good or truly evil in the world, similar to what my master Pill Demon told me about what is correct and incorrect. 1

“What I have… is my own will!

“The choices I make decide everything!” As his voice echoed out, the music of a great Dao rose up around him, as well as the power of natural law. These were things that did not exist moments before, but gradually appeared along with Meng Hao’s words.

Apparently…The laws of nature were being dictated by the words that Meng Hao spoke!!

When the Dao Seeking experts sensed that natural law, their minds trembled. It was at that exact moment that…

“Oh great Dao, continue your severing!”

RUMBLE!

The Mist Blade sliced down through Meng Hao’s dantian region, completely passing through him. Miserable shrieks could be heard emanating out in all directions as the two Devilish figures on either side of him were separated completely from his body.

In that instant, any ferocious air that Meng Hao had faded away. The aura of a scholar returned. Furthermore, the mark on his right hand once again flickered brightly, filled with an aura of mystery. Powerful natural law surged around him, distorting the air, transforming into a shocking windstorm that swept about.

After witnessing what was happening, the Southern Domain cultivators on the battlefield instantly understood what had happened, and their faces went wild with joy.

“Meng Hao!!”

“Meng Hao!!”

“Meng Hao!!” The combined voices of a hundred thousand people rose up. Their eyes were filled with fanaticism. Fatty was in the crowds, yelling at the top of his lungs despite his hoarse throat.

The Western Desert cultivators were also roaring, especially the members of the Golden Crow Tribe and the Church of the Golden Light.

In sharp contrast, the Northern Reaches cultivators trembled and looked at Meng Hao with fear and dread.

Up in midair, Pill Demon was laughing uproariously, along with Patriarch Song, despite his weakened state.

The peak Dao Seeking experts of the Northern Reaches’ faces were ashen and pale. All of them were wondering… exactly how powerful Meng Hao was about to become!

“He just entered Dao Seeking,” thought the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief. He clenched his jaw. “Well, I’ll make sure that the day he enters Dao

Seeking is the day that he perishes!” He pushed aside his dread, and intense killing intent could be seen in his eyes.

Meanwhile, the two Devilish wills merged together, transforming into a monstrous black aura. Since they had been Severed, they were unable to exist any longer, and began to fade away.

“It really would be a pity to let a Devilish will like this simply dissolve….” Meng Hao said coolly. With that, he lifted a finger, causing the Devil Construct to tremble. Then, it shot directly toward Meng Hao’s second true self.

The second true self’s eyes snapped open, and he sucked in a breath. Immediately, the Devilish will surged into him through his nose and mouth. The second true self’s eyes instantly began to glow with intense coldness. It was a coldness that seemed to be completely callous and grim, even vile. The desire to kill began to emanate off of it.

He was surrounded by a black aura that made him look completely like a Devil Immortal!

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# Chapter 794: Invincible Meng Hao!

Meanwhile, out on the Milky Way Sea, the enormous Resurrection Lily was shrinking in on itself. The petals folded up into a bulb, and the tentacle roots weaved together to form the shape of a Blue Lotus!

The Blue Lotus swayed back and forth, and although it appeared to be in full bloom, there also seemed to be something missing, as if it was unstable and could revert to the shape of a Resurrection Lily at any time.

“The gap between Immortal and Devil has appeared….”

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On the battlefield in the Southern Domain, the crowds were crying out with loud voices. The Northern Reaches cultivators stood there ashen-faced as the great Dao blade slowly faded away.

At the same time, the state of motionlessness which had been imposed on everyone gradually disappeared. However, no fierce fighting broke out. The Northern Reaches forces began to form up in groups. Up above, the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief let out a roar and transformed into the Primordial Lightning Dragon. Bypassing the three South Cleaving Sentinels in bronze armor, he shot toward Meng Hao.

“Let’s see just how strong you are now that you’re in Dao Seeking!” he roared.

As the old man neared, killing intent flickered in the other four peak Dao Seeking experts’ eyes. Their cultivation bases burst with power; they knew that their only chance was to attack in unison. If they didn’t do that now, the battle would definitely end in a huge defeat!

If they could kill Meng Hao now, then… they might have a chance to turn a defeat into a victory!

Five people closed in at incredible speed.

“Kill him!”

“He was already powerful before, so there’s no chance that he won’t be Heaven-defying now that he’s in Dao Seeking. Except, his cultivation base is unstable since he just completed his Third Severing. Kill him now!”

“Only by killing him can we turn this battle around! We can’t leave him alive!”

“Kill him before he truly enters Dao Seeking!”

Those were the thoughts running through their heads as they closed in, roaring.

The extremely obese woman rumbled through the air, surrounded by colorful streams of mist that transformed into seven hypertoxic strips of paper!

Each strip was a different color, and each one was covered with countless glittering magical symbols that pulsed with Dao Seeking auras.

Flying next to her at top speed was the effeminate man whose body emanated shocking coldness. The coldness transformed into an obscene statue that possessed both male and female properties. Furthermore, it emanated a Dao will that seemed to combine the properties of both yin and yang.

Glittering light spread out, and the effeminate man suddenly began to transform into a woman, extremely beautiful, and yet filled with a murderous aura.

Of the other two peak Dao Seeking experts, one of them was the old man who looked like a hopping vampire. Suddenly, black fur sprouted out all over his body, and his eyes began to glow with a green light. Cracking sounds could be heard as his body grew larger, and an aura of death surged out from him. Now he looked like a drought ghoul! 1

He was surrounded by an aura of death, and although he should have emanated yin-type coldness, he actually burned with ghost fire. The ghost fire spread out, its faint glow causing the sun and moon to tremble. Within the flames could be seen countless evil spirits, so many that they blotted out the sky and the land. Rumbling filled the air as they shot toward Meng Hao.

The last Dao Seeking expert was the man in the violet robe who had participated in the second wave army's attack. Despite being seriously injured, he had continued to fight all the way down to this final, decisive battle. He spit up blood, and seemed like an arrow at the end of its flight, completely spent of all energy. Nonetheless, he let out a roar, and his body suddenly grew larger. His features became aged, and in the the blink of an eye, he looked like an old man.

By sacrificing longevity, he was able to gain earth-shaking power. His body expanded rapidly, and scales grew out to cover his skin. A horn even grew out of his forehead, and a long tail appeared behind him. He now completely resembled a Demon Devil!

A savage aura burst out, as well as rancid wind. Dust swirled around him in the wind, transforming into a sandstorm that flew directly toward Meng Hao.

These four peak Dao Seeking experts went berserk as they unleashed pyrrhic divine abilities that could kill a thousand enemies at the expense of eight hundred allies. As for the number one most powerful person from the Northern Reaches, the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief, he instantly transformed into a Primordial Lightning Dragon. Thunderous booms filled the air as he shot toward Meng Hao.

The five of them swept through everything in their path, as if nothing could possibly block them. They closed in from five different directions, radiating such indescribable power that the air vibrated and everything shook. Not even Pill Demon and the others could block them.

From the look of it, even a false Immortal would be seriously injured by this allout attack by five peak Dao Seeking experts, in which caution was thrown to the wind!

Down below, the Southern Domain cultivators' eyes were shot with blood.

"Your excellency Meng Hao!!"

"Not good! Blood Prince Meng Hao just performed his Third Severing and hasn't had time to stabilize himself! Those damned Northern Reaches cultivators!!"

Patriarch Song's and Pill Demon's faces fell. They were just about to risk everything to try to block the Northern Reaches cultivators when all of a sudden, Meng Hao's voice echoed out.

"Allow them to come."

It was one sentence, with only four words. 2 They were words spoken with the utmost confidence, such confidence that apparently he didn't even need to utilize his second true self.

As soon as those words rang out, the Southern Domain cultivators calmed down.

No one did anything to block the Northern Reaches cultivators. As for the five peak Dao Seeking experts, rumbling filled the air as they shot through the air in five beams of colorful light.

"Meng Hao, you're DEAD!!" they roared.

As they neared, Meng Hao looked up at them, his face calm in an unparalleled manner. Then he slowly rose to his feet from his cross-legged position.

The movement only took a moment, but during that time the air around him rumbled as a power exploded up within him that seemed capable of splitting Heaven and Earth apart.

Shocking thumping sounds filled the air.

As he stood, the power of natural law descended and the area around Meng Hao filled with streams of ancient magical symbols. They glittered brightly as they formed Meng Hao's personal natural law of Dao Seeking.

It was a Dao of freedom, a Dao of good and evil, formed from Meng Hao's will. It was a law that could transform Heaven and Earth with a single thought.

When the natural law appeared, the rumbling in the area grew even more shocking. The sky shook as something appeared that seemed to be a mountain. It was not the Ninth Mountain, but rather a lush, green mountain…. It was…

Mount Daqing! It was also a Dao-confirming mountain!

As soon as it appeared, it began to shine with brilliant light. Meng Hao took a deep breath and looked down at the mark on his right hand. It was also pulsing with an aura that merged into his body and then transformed into the aura of an Immortal.

It was Immortal qi!

After experiencing the mist blade, Immortal qi had appeared on Meng Hao!

When the Immortal qi appeared, the world trembled. The Northern Reaches cultivators down below were shaking in their boots, and the Southern Domain forces were getting even more excited than before.

Pill Demon gasped, and then murmured, "Severing the Devil and Seeking the Dao. This is something rare that only exists in legends!!"

Patriarch Song was equally excited.

Moments before, the peak Dao Seeking experts from the Northern Reaches had a sliver of hope that they might win by a fluke. Now that the Immortal qi had appeared, they gasped, and their minds were sent spinning.

The five peak Dao Seeking experts from the Northern Reaches were astonished.

“He just stepped into Dao Seeking and he already developed Immortal qi! Impossible! I’ve been in Dao Seeking for years and still haven’t developed even a scrap!”

“Just what level of cultivation base does he have! I actually… can’t even clearly make out what his cultivation base is!!”

“It seems like early Dao Seeking, but at the same time, mid Dao Seeking, and also peak Dao Seeking! What’s going on!?!?”

“Now that I think about it, there’s a legend about a type of Dao Seeking which isn’t split into multiple levels! As soon as you step into it, you’re at the peak….”

However, they were already like arrows unleashed from the bow. They had to go through with their attacks; if they didn’t, their fate would certainly be death.

Considering that retreat meant certain annihilation, then the only course of action they could take… was to attack!

The five of them closed in on Meng Hao, surrounded by rumbling sounds!

The fastest of them all was the man who had assumed the shape of a beautiful female cultivator. He was was the first to arrive, surrounded by a shocking cold aura. The matchlessly bizarre statue emanated faint light; it had been refined by the man after he had reached Dao Seeking, by sacrificing some of his his own life force. It could unleash a shocking divine ability.

“Yin-Yang Nine Tribulations!” the cultivator bellowed, stretching out both hands. His goal was to completely destroy Meng Hao in one shot.

However, even as he neared, Meng Hao clenched his right fist and punched out. It was a tidy and efficient blow, delivered with indescribable speed. The air was sucked in, and massive energy surged. The beautiful cultivator’s face fell as he sensed an unsurpassable pressure surging toward him like Heavenly might. It was something impossible to contend with, and the amorphous power blasted into him before he even had a chance to retreat.

BOOOOMMMMM! A huge explosion rattled out.

The beautiful cultivator was at the peak of Dao Seeking, and was burning life force in an incredible display of power. Despite all of that, blood sprayed from his mouth in a constant stream. The statue shattered into pieces. His body trembled, and then exploded into pieces. His Nascent Divinity sped out, shrieking.

One punch had completely destroyed a peak Dao Seeking expert who was burning life force!

The sight caused countless gasps to ring out. At the same time, Meng Hao gave a cold snort. His eyes shone with a strange light as he unexpectedly did not destroy the Nascent Divinity, but instead, slapped his hand out toward the extremely obese woman and her hypertoxic, multicolored strips of paper.

The slap was calm and even leisurely, almost as if he were swatting a fly. As it neared her, the woman’s eyes went wide and she let out a miserable shriek. She went all out with every scrap of power she had, causing the seven strips of paper to emanate blinding beams of light. Ghost images sprang up from the papers, making them look like a bound book. She placed her hand on the book and shoved it out to meet Meng Hao’s palm.

BOOOOOOMMMMM!

A deafening explosion caused everything to shake.

The book composed of seven pieces of colored paper trembled, and didn’t even manage to stay together for the space of one breath of time. It exploded into swirling confetti, which then became dust. As for the woman, her hypertoxic mist was completely incapable of fazing Meng Hao. She flew backward, blood spurting from her mouth. After ten meters, her arm exploded. After twenty meters, her entire body began to crack. After thirty meters, her body completely exploded.

Meng Hao did not destroy her Nascent Divinity either, but rather, allowed her to flee, her face filled with with terror and astonishment.

“And now you,” Meng Hao said coolly, turning to the hopping vampire. He pointed out, and its body began to tremble. A look of despair appeared on its face as the ghost-fire which covered it was immediately extinguished. To Meng Hao, it was so weak it couldn’t withstand a single blow. The man’s Nascent Divinity emerged, surrounded by an aura of death. He looked at Meng Hao, trembling, his eyes shining with intense fear and astonishment.

“Invincible!! He’s invincible!!”

Everything was shaking. Of the five peak Dao Seeking Experts, three had just had their fleshly bodies completely destroyed. As for the violet-robed man who looked like a Demon Devil and the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief, they were roaring madly as they descended upon Meng Hao, like moths to the flame.

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1. The “drought ghoul” refers to a mythological creature. Although the wikipedia article indicates that it is a specific person, this kind of creature can be seen in games as a type of enemy creature. Normally it would be “drought demon,” but considering the implications of the word “demon” in the story, I’m going with the word “ghoul.” The character “ yao” does not appear in the name of the creature itself

2. I can’t always match up the words to the sentences, but in this case it’s the same in Chinese. One sentence, four characters!

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# Chapter 795: Half a Step Into Immortality!

The violet-robed man who looked like a Demon Devil had skin covered with scales. Even his face had transformed; his eyes were deeply sunken in, whereas his jaws protruded, revealing a mouthful of wicked fangs. He had a long horn with a razor sharp tip, as well as a lashing tail.

He had already been shaken by Meng Hao, but now he had no other choice than to attack. He roared as his body burst into flames, causing his cultivation base to instantly surpass that of the three Nascent Divinities nearby. He became a cyclone that shot directly toward Meng Hao.

As he neared, he stretched out both hands in front of him and made a ripping motion.

“Rupture the Heavens!” he roared, causing everything around him to shake. A huge rift was ripped open in the air, like a gigantic mouth that wanted to swallow Meng Hao whole. However, even as the rift was almost upon Meng Hao, Meng Hao gave a cold glance in the old man’s direction.

It was a single glance, a simple look.

The rift collapsed, and the fiend-form old man let out a miserable shriek. Meng Hao’s gaze was like that of a god. Indescribable pressure bore down on the old man, causing first his hands, and then both arms to explode in a haze of blood.

His eyes were red, and he tilted his head as he attempted to use his horn to pierce through the pressure radiating out from Meng Hao’s eyes. Perhaps he couldn’t kill Meng Hao, but at least he would be able to wound him in some way.

However, just when the horn seemed about to stab Meng Hao, he reached up and grabbed it. His expression was calm, but he seemed to be recalling the brutal image of the old man slaughtering Southern Domain cultivators earlier. Meng Hao twisted his hand, and a cracking sound could be heard as the horn snapped off.

Screaming, the old man tried to attack with his tail, but before he could get near, a rumbling sound filled his entire body, which then began to collapse into pieces. Terror flooded into his mind, completely submerging him. His Nascent Divinity burst out, terrified, and tried to flee. As he did, one word blared out in his mind.

“Invincible….”

Down below on the ground, the cultivators gasped. Everyone was looking on, eyes wide with disbelief.

Four of the five peak Dao Seeking experts from the Northern Reaches now had nothing left but Nascent Divinities. It was unclear why Meng Hao hadn’t destroyed them; if he wanted to, though, all four of his opponents would already be dead.

As for Meng Hao, he was calm and unruffled. And invincible!!

The last person left was the number one most powerful expert from the Northern Reaches, the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief, who was still in the form of a Primordial Lightning Dragon. He roared at the top of his lungs, and it was a roar filled with indignation, despair, and even… the desire for death.

“DIIEEEE!” he howled. Lightning crackled as he shot through the air, surrounding him with a lake of lightning. It was lightning summoned from the highest Heavens; apparently he wished to die together with Meng Hao.

At this point, the air behind Meng Hao rippled, the sky above him rumbled, and the ground down below quaked. The entire world seemed to be in motion, set off as a foil to Meng Hao himself.

The Immortal qi in his body grew stronger as he finally finished rising completely to his feet. He was surrounded by a boundless, blinding light as he gazed at the incoming Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief. Suddenly, behind him, all of the motion swirled together to form… a giant!

The giant looked exactly like Meng Hao in every way, but was unimaginably tall. Its head touched the sky, and its feet were planted on the ground. Its body emanated a shocking pressure that caused the land to quake. The countless cultivators down on the ground below were completely shocked to find that their cultivation bases were utterly suppressed.

Gradually, all of the natural law in the area began to swirl around the enormous figure behind Meng Hao. Starlight from the starry sky outside of the vortex up above shone down on it, bathing it in brightness, giving it a completely unearthly energy.

It looked like a Paragon!

The enormous image behind him looked very much like the type of image that Dao Seeking cultivators could normally summon. And yet, it was completely different. The images summoned by Dao Seeking cultivators were illusory, powerful beings from ancient times who were summoned via means of a magical technique. In contrast, the image behind Meng Hao was like a projection of himself!

Of the two kinds of images, one was illusory and the other was a projection. Although neither were real, the difference in caliber between the two was like the difference between Heaven and Earth.

In fact, one day, if Meng Hao ever became strong enough, then anyone who received his approval could summon the same image by calling upon his name.

That was another area in which his image was completely different.

This image was referred to by a unique name….

Dharma Idol!

“It’s a Dharma Idol!!”

“He… he actually summoned a Dharma Idol!!”

“Only Immortals can summon Dharma Idols! But look, he has one!!”

As soon as the Dharma Idol appeared behind Meng Hao, everything began to rumble. All of the lands of South Heaven were shaken.

The Dao Seeking experts of the Northern Reaches, the Western Desert and the Southern Domain all gasped. In the Eastern Lands, gasps of disbelief could be heard in all of the ancient sects.

“He just stepped into Dao Seeking, but I can’t see his cultivation base! That can only happen in that legendary state when both the fleshly body and the cultivation base are in the Dao Seeking stage!! That man… that man couldn’t have a Dao Seeking fleshly body, could he?! Impossible!!”

“Immortal qi. He actually has Immortal qi! And it’s not false Immortal qi, but that of a true Immortal! True Immortal qi!! He hasn’t even stepped into the boundless Immortal Realm, and yet he already has that aura!”

“The path to Immortality opens every 10,000 years. Don’t tell me that South Heaven’s sole true Immortal from this generation is that man!?!?”

“He actually produced a Dharma Idol. That’s…. that’s a divine ability that, according to the legends, belongs only to Immortals. That kid… that kid is half a step into true Immortality!! Other than the Ji Clan and a few other mysterious beings, this kid could could stand up to anybody!!”

The great sects of the Eastern Lands were all shaken. Meng Hao hovered in the air above the battlefield, his face calm, and his aura devoid of anything even the least bit vile. Now, he looked like a scholar from the mortal world. He wore a green robe, and his hair was no longer white, but pitch black.

His eyes shone brightly, and the enormous Dharma Idol behind him radiated a shocking pressure that stifled the breathing of everyone in the area.

Next to him was his second true self, which radiated monstrous Devil flames. It was sinister to the extreme, filled with a vileness that carried the desire to kill. It looked around at the world with cold eyes.

“DIE!!” the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief roared as he threw all caution to the wind, bearing down on Meng Hao in his Primordial Lightning Dragon form.

Meng Hao looked at the man and then waved his finger.

As he did, the Dharma Idol behind him also waved its finger. It seemed to blot out the Heavens, transforming into a gigantic land mass that descended to slam into the Primordial Lightning Dragon.

A massive boom rattled out. The Primordial Lightning Dragon collapsed into pieces. The Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief coughed up blood and staggered backward, his face filled with astonishment and disbelief. He came to a stop several hundred meters back, where he continued to cough up seven or eight mouthfuls of blood. His body was listless and weak.

“You….” he said, his face deathly white. Meng Hao was now so powerful that the simple wave of a finger left the man seriously injured. Then, Meng Hao’s gaze fell upon him, and he felt his mind reeling as an intense, indescribable pressure weighed down him. It felt like countless bolts of lightning were about to slam into him.

“That little cauldron of yours is connected to me by destiny,” said Meng Hao, a bashful expression appearing on his face. He waved his hand, causing the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief’s Lightning Cauldron to fly over onto his palm.

The Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief’s face grew even more pale, and he coughed up more blood. He seemed to have aged rapidly in just the past few moments, and his eyes shone with hopelessness. Behind him were the other Northern Reaches peak Dao Seeking experts, all of whom shook with fear as they looked at Meng Hao.

His gaze swept over them, and they trembled so violently that it seemed their Nascent Divinities would explode at any moment.

Finally his gaze shifted to the forces of the Western Desert, and the South Cleaving Sentinels. “Fellow Daoists from the Western Desert, many thanks for your assistance. This kindness… will be remembered by the Southern Domain for generation after generation. It will never be forgotten!”

With that, he clasped hands and bowed deeply.

Immediately, the South Cleaving Sentinels bowed back with deep respect, as did all of the Western Desert cultivators. Meng Hao’s incredible bravery and power, coupled with the events of past years, made it so that the Western Desert cultivators viewed Meng Hao as one of their own.

“This war is now over,” said Meng Hao, looking out at the Northern Reaches cultivators.

“More killing would be meaningless. There is no path for you to return to your home, so you will stay in the Southern Domain. The price you will pay for this invasion is that your cultivation bases will be sealed. From this generation forward, your bloodlines will not produce Nascent Soul cultivation bases. Your path to Immortality is broken. Henceforth… you are felon citizens.” Meng Hao’s voice was calm, but his words struck like thunder, making it clear that his words would be strictly enforced. When he said ‘felon citizens,’ the words were branded deeply into the hearts and minds of the Northern Reaches cultivators, and they knew that this would be their identity for generations to come.

Furthermore, among the more than 100,000 Northern Reaches cultivators, all of the Nascent Soul cultivators trembled as their Nascent Souls involuntarily shattered. Their cultivation bases fell, and in the blink of an eye, not a single Nascent Soul cultivator could be found among the Northern Reaches forces.

Next, he turned his attention to the Dao Seeking experts.

“As for you people…. Your war has shattered the Southern Domain. Innumerable cultivators have died, and the spiritual energy of the land has become sparse. The five of you will be suppressed and turned into the Southern Domain cultivators’ foundation in the future. For generations to come, the power of your Nascent Divinities will be extracted to replenish the spiritual energy in the Southern Domain!” Even as he spoke, he waved his hand, causing the Ninth Mountain, which had been trembling this entire time, to suddenly rise up into the air. Revealed beneath was a woman, blood oozing from her mouth, left with only a tiny scrap of life force.

The mountain then shot toward the five Dao Seeking experts.

“Henceforth, this mountain shall be called Sin of the North!”

Meanwhile, back in the Ji Clan, in a hidden location, the armless young Patriarch took a deep breath. A look of regret appeared in his eyes, and he shook his head.

“Fang Clan….” he murmured. “Son of a Chosen, with fifty percent of the power of a true Immortal. Half a step into true Immortality…. That mark on his hand… it must be… THAT mark.” A strange light appeared in his eyes, and he smiled. Apparently he had just recalled something.

“Interesting. I just remembered that the main branch of the Fang Clan on Planet East Victory has a peerless Chosen by the name of Fang Wei. If the two of them ever meet, I wonder what will happen.”

At the same time, the couple in the Tower of Tang wore excited expressions. They exchanged a glance, then clasped hands and stepped forward.

“It’s time to reunite….”

“We’ve been waiting for this day for so long….”

“Seventh Year Tribulation. Ah, the Seventh Year Tribulation. My son has transcended the tribulation. Now the fish will make its leap into being a dragon amongst men!” [1]

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[1] This is a reference to a common Chinese expression about a fish “leaping” to success and becoming a dragon

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# Chapter 796: Putting the North in its Place

“NO!!”

“I’ve practiced cultivation for thousands of years! I refuse to be suppressed!”

“Sealing the path to the Nascent Soul for Northern Reaches cultivators? Suppressing us with a mountain? Extracting our spiritual energy to bolster the Southern Domain?! I won’t allow it!” The five peak Dao Seeking experts from the Northern Reaches, including the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief, were in a rage. However, they were no match for Meng Hao, now that he had produced a Dharma Idol and was half a step into true Immortality.

The peak of Dao Seeking was simply not a match for him, not even when they joined forces like they had earlier. Roaring, the five transformed into prismatic beams of light as they attempted to flee.

In this war, the Northern Reaches had been defeated… completely and utterly defeated!

However, as long as the five of them remained alive, there was always the possibility that they could turn things around in the future. Therefore, they fled at top speed, each one heading in a different direction.

Meng Hao floated in midair, calmly looking on. He waved his hand, and the Ninth Mountain rumbled, shooting forward to appear directly in front of the obese woman.

The woman was moving with indescribable speed. However, as soon as the Ninth Mountain appeared, her body sank down and her Nascent Divinity flew out amidst the shattering air. She let out a miserable scream, and a boom rang out as the Ninth Mountain completely suppressed her, sealing her Nascent Divinity inside of it.

Then the mountain flickered again, reappearing off in the distance, where it began to suppress the old man who had looked like a hopping vampire. His cultivation base was the weakest of them all, and his Nascent Divinity had a look of despair on its face. He tried to attack madly, but was completely incapable of doing anything to the mountain. Rumbling could be heard as he was sealed inside.

After that, the mountain flickered again, to appear in front of the effeminate man. His body was covered with glittering magical symbols that made him look almost like a moon. Seeing that he would be incapable of escaping, a ruthless gleam appeared in his eyes, and he chose to self-detonate.

He would rather die than be suppressed!

However, before he even had time to self-detonate, the rumbling Ninth Mountain sealed his Nascent Divinity inside, filling the effeminate man’s eyes with despair.

After quickly sealing those three people in succession, the Ninth Mountain’s spiritual energy was incredibly strong. A droning sound filled the air as it moved once again, causing winds to stir and the air to distort. It was now in front of the old man who looked like a Demon Devil. He struggled, but it only made the situation worse. He was suppressed and absorbed into the mountain.

Finally… the mountain vanished for the final time, to appear in front of the Northern Reaches’ most powerful expert, the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief. The man’s face was ashen, and he began to laugh bitterly. Turning his head to Meng Hao, he said, “We will replenish the spiritual energy of the Southern Domain, but you have to give the Northern Reaches a time limit… then I will help you!”

“Ten thousand years!” said Meng Hao, his voice neutral.

“Ten thousand years….” The old man laughed bitterly, but ceased his struggling and allowed the Ninth Mountain to suppress and seal him.

After suppressing five powerful experts, the mountain was now bursting with spiritual energy. It looked like a spirit mountain as it slowly descended down to the lands below. When it touched down, it would fuse with the Southern Domain, and use the spiritual energy coming from the five peak Dao Seeking cultivation bases to nourish the land.

These five people were now like five spirit stones; their spiritual energy would be slowly sucked away until the Southern Domain’s spiritual energy once again flourished like it used to.

It was then that, all of a sudden, a faint sigh echoed through the land. At the same time, a woman appeared, coming from the direction of the Milky Way Sea.

She wore a blue gown which spread out to cover everything beneath her, almost like a stretch of sky. She floated toward the battlefield from off in the distance, a swath of blue drifting between Heaven and Earth.

Dawn Immortal

Official ISSTH art of the Dawn Immortal (note the Resurrection Lily in the background)

As soon as she appeared, the natural law in the world faded. Even time seemed to come to a standstill. The Ninth Mountain hovered there in midair, incapable of touching down onto the ground. As for all of the cultivators on the battlefield, they stood there trembling.

Even the Dao Seeking experts could do nothing but stop in place. Everything was motionless.

The woman was the only one who was moving. She strode through the air up toward Meng Hao.

“He once said… when the vortex eye appears, the lotus transformation will be seen; in the gap between Immortal and Devil, the blue lotus will appear…. And now….” The woman’s voice was faint but profound as it echoed out through Heaven and Earth. Behind her, a faint image appeared, that of a Blue Lotus. It was… a Dharma Idol!

“Under the gaze of the countless stars, the blood of a million cultivators flows, and the vortex eye appears.

“The Western Desert Apocalypse created the boundless Violet Sea, within which was concealed the transformations of the lotus.

“The day has arrived in which the Heavens are numbed and filled with grieving ghosts. Now my Blue Lotus… can appear!

“The only thing I am missing is the gap between Immortal and Devil…. The Mist Blade descended, you severed the Devil and sought the Dao, and thus, the gap between Immortal and Devil appeared.” The woman’s gaze seemed somewhat distant. At first glance, her eyes looked calm, at second glance, insane, and at a third glance, profound. It was as if her gaze contained countless cycles of reincarnation.

“I will use the blood of millions as mud. The countless aggrieved ghosts as muddy stains. I will… emerge unstained from the blood-soaked mud, without a blemish upon me. I will… shed the Resurrection Lily and become a Blue Lotus!

“I sought the Dao on the day the Heavens were numbed. By dawn, I had already reached Immortal Ascension. I severed my goodness, and cut away my root of Immortality. Only when my evil reached the pinnacle, could I risk everything to make a transformation.” She strolled forward, and came to a stop three hundred meters in front of Meng Hao.

“I’ve been making preparations for a long time. Now that the gap between Immortal and Devil has appeared, I can assimilate you, and then be complete.

"I scattered countless roots years ago, so the gap between Immortal and Devil was bound to appear eventually. Originally, I wouldn't have selected you, but you became part of the League of Demon Sealers. It seems you were fated by Karma. Now… I must thank you." With that, she gave him a curtseying bow.

Meng Hao didn't respond at first. The pausing of the natural law of Heaven and Earth, and of time, was all due to this woman. However, cracking sounds could suddenly be heard around Meng Hao, like that of something shattering. In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao was restored to normal. The Dharma Idol behind him began to shine with resplendent light.

"Mother of the Resurrection Lily," he said. "Dawn Immortal."

The woman nodded, and a faint smile could be seen on her face. It was a beautiful smile that contained reminiscence. As she studied Meng Hao, she suddenly looked a bit distracted.

"You don't look like him… but your aura is the same," she said softly. "From ancient times until now, the League of Demon Sealers… has been cold and heartless.

"I'll assimilate you, and become a Blue Lotus. Karma will be fulfilled. What was sown that year will be reaped this year. From now on, I owe him nothing, and he owes me nothing." She stretched out her hand and pointed toward Meng Hao.

Immediately, everything seemed to change. The world filled with shocking, illusory waves of seawater that swept toward Meng Hao from all directions, seemingly preparing to inundate him. However, it was at this point that the Dharma Idol behind him suddenly opened its mouth and roared.

It was one roar, but it caused everything to shatter. Cracking sounds echoed out, and the waves collapsed. The seawater vanished as if it had evaporated, transforming into endless dark clouds up above.

"Back in the Reliance Sect," said Meng Hao coolly, "you were lurking in the shadows. When I was in the Milky Way Sea, you were there hiding. You even showed your face at the battle of the Blood Demon Sect. And yet again, here you are in this territorial war.

“I don’t care about your motive for all of this. You want to assimilate me…? Unfortunately, you’re not qualified.” His Dharma Idol’s eyes glittered; it then took a step forward and lifted its hands up. The Blood Demon Grand Magic appeared, an enormous vortex which shot toward the woman.

If you looked closely, you would see that the Blood Demon Grand Magic was similar to the vortex up in the sky. As it rotated, the clouds up above swirled and also surged toward the woman.

“When the Resurrection Lily blooms with seven colors,” the woman said softly, “the petals fall, Immortality in one thousand years.” She looked at the incoming vortex, then waved her finger. Shockingly, a seven-colored Resurrection Lily appeared in front of her. Instantly, it shattered, forming seven multicolored wisps that floated through the air like dandelion seeds as they collided with the Blood Demon Grand Magic vortex.

A shocking boom could be heard. As the seven multicolored wisps passed through the vortex, they trembled slightly. They might have seemed weak, but they didn’t pause at all. They transformed into beams of multicolored light that shot directly toward Meng Hao.

As they neared him, they became seven flower petals that resembled magical sealing marks.

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed with coldness. His Dharma Idol roared, causing the surroundings to distort, and the seven petals to stop in place.

It was at this moment that he raised his right hand, in which… the copper mirror appeared!

A glittering light could be seen within the copper mirror. If you looked closely, you would be able to make out… Demon Weapon Lonelytomb!

When Meng Hao merged the Demon Weapon into the copper mirror, he had been unable to use it. Only after he had entered Dao Seeking, had Immortal

Qi, and could summon a Dharma Idol, was he finally able to sense Lonelytomb inside.

He pushed down onto the copper mirror and grabbed, and a huge roar filled the air. A gust of Demonic qi surged out, filling the air everywhere. It was at this point that a long, red spear appeared in his hands.

It was both red and white, the colors intertwined in a way that made it impossible to describe with any word other than Demonic.

With Lonelytomb in hand, Meng Hao didn’t hesitate for even a moment. He immediately struck out toward the seven petals.

The spear shot through the air, and everything rumbled. Demonic qi surged out, sweeping across everything. As Demon Weapon Lonelytomb surged through the air, shockingly, a tombstone suddenly appeared in front of Meng Hao.

The tombstone instantly suppressed everything in the area.

BOOOOMMMMM!!!!

The seven flower petals were destroyed, exploding into seven-colored motes of light that spread out into the air.

In this moment, Meng Hao stood there, holding Demon Weapon Lonelytomb in hand, and he looked like a Paragon of Heaven and Earth, undefeatable!

The woman’s expression was the same as ever, as if she didn’t care at all about Meng Hao’s grandiose aura. In fact, a look of pity appeared on her face.

“You are of the League of Demon Sealers, so I won’t lie to you. Nobody can save you. This planet’s branch of the Ji Clan owes me a favor, and they won’t do anything to stop me.

“Other than them, there are a few ancient beings on this planet, but none of them will do anything to obstruct my way either. Today… nobody can save you.

“The time has come, for you… to be assimilated.” As she spoke, she began to glow with boundless light. Behind her, the Blue Lotus began to sway and emit an indescribable, crushing pressure. For the first time, Meng Hao’s facial expression flickered.

Neither he nor his Dharma Idol were capable of moving even the slightest bit. Furthermore, it even appeared as if a Blue Lotus… was about to sprout out of his body!

At this exact moment… a cold snort echoed out like thunder, shattering the air as it rolled across the land.

“I dare you to touch him. Just try it!”

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# Chapter 797: Reuniting….

“I should have killed you the last time we met in the Milky Way Sea, slut!” This second voice was that of a woman.

The two voices instantly shattered the pause which had caused everything to cease moving. The Ninth Mountain continued to descend, and all the cultivators could move again.

Even as the cold snort continued to echo about, a sword beam shot through the air to completely sever the invisible connection between the Dawn Immortal and Meng Hao!

Booming echoed out, and a tremor ran through Meng Hao. The Blue Lotus vanished, and his Dharma Idol was restored. His eyes went wide as he saw two figures approaching from off in the distance.

It was a man and a woman, and when Meng Hao could see them clearly, his mind filled with thunderous roaring.

He knew those faces well. Even if tens of millions of years passed, he would not be able to forget them. The woman was his mother, the mother who had held him in her arms when he was a child, and told him stories. The man was his father, who seemed strict, but whose eyes were filled with boundless fatherly love.

Fang Xiufeng

Official ISSTH art of Fang Xiufeng, Meng Hao’s father

Meng Li

Official ISSTH art of Meng Li, Meng Hao’s mother

Cute Fang Xiufeng

Cute version of Fang Xiufeng

Cute Meng Li

Cute version of Meng Li

Meng Hao began to tremble, and could do nothing more than stare blankly. At the same time, the mark on his hand began to shine brightly.

As soon as the man and woman appeared, the Dawn Immortal’s face flickered. She began to pant, and her expression was one of complete disbelief as she backed up.

She had only retreated by three measures when the man’s gaze locked onto her.

A rumbling sound echoed out, and then blood sprayed out of the Dawn Immortal’s mouth. A look of astonishment covered her face. It was at this point that the Dharma Idol behind her directly exploded into countless pieces.

Furthermore, the enormous resurrection lily on the Milky Way Sea, which was the Dawn Immortal’s true body, also exploded, shattering into countless pieces. The Resurrection Lily… was completely defeated.

“One look from him shattered my Dharma Idol,” thought the Dawn Immortal, her face pale. “It even seriously injured me…. What just severed my Blue Lotus bridge just now was not a sword, it was his gaze!

“Who is he!?!?

“His level of power is unimaginable. Even the Ji Clan can’t begin to compare!” Her foundation had been destroyed, and now, she didn’t dare to back up any more. In the face of an almighty being like this, whether or not she lived or died wasn’t up to her.

“Before I came to this planet,” the man said coolly, standing between Meng Hao and the Dawn Immortal, “an old friend revealed to me that there was a flower here within the ocean, left behind by his benefactor. The flower had long since become a Demon that had existed for countless years.

“It had experienced nirvanic rebirth numerous times, and was not willing to truly ascend to Immortality. You must be the flower he spoke of.

“You clearly could have achieved true Immortal Ascension long ago, and made your way out into the starry sky. Why have you made things hard on yourself, and on others? Well, considering your existence has provided some benefit to my son through all his tempering, I won’t slay you this day.

“Go break through to Immortal Ascension already!” The sky and land trembled as if struck by countless peals of thunder. When this man spoke, natural law conformed to his words. The Dawn Immortal’s face went pale, and more blood sprayed from her mouth as she fell back a full three thousand meters. Finally, she looked up, and a smiled a heartrending smile.

The woman standing next to the man suddenly spoke up. “Why waste your words on her? Just sever her head!”

Meng Hao stood behind the two of them, his mind spinning with disbelief. His heart was in complete chaos, and he had no idea what to say.

“Sever me?” The Dawn Immortal laughed bitterly. Her face twisted savagely, and her hair was thrown into disarray. She had lost her foundation, the actual Resurrection Lily. Her Dharma Idol had been destroyed. And yet, a look of madness could be seen in her eyes.

“The League of Demon Sealers are all a heartless bunch. I kept that man company, but he severed me in the end!

“My heart beats with HATRED!!

“I was born in ancient times, and yes, I could have achieved Immortal Ascension on many occasions throughout the years. The only reason I never left this place is because of what he told me back then.

“He severed me here, and then left on his own. I killed countless members of his bloodline, but my hatred remains!

“And now you… YOU want to sever me too!?” She lifted her head up and laughed. Then she flung her arms out wide.

“I have existed in the lands of South Heaven since ancient times. I may have stayed hidden and out of sight, but now, I call on all of the people who owe favors to me, the Dawn Immortal…. All of you… help me assimilate this child!

“Help me achieve my desire! Abide by your promises from the past!”

Her shrill voice echoed out throughout all the lands of South Heaven. As it did, a soft sigh could be heard echoing out from within the Ancient Dao Lakes. The sigh seemed to contain helplessness, and at the same time, shocking power.

“I should not emerge. According to the treaty from back then, I cannot emerge. And yet this favor… must be paid back.” A gold-violet beast suddenly appeared from within the Ancient Dao Lakes.

At the same time, dust began to fall off one of the statues inside the Ancient Temple of Doom. The statue’s eyes opened. At first, they looked confused, but then an archaic light began to shine out, and the statue slowly rose to its feet.

“It was she who enabled me to go into hiding in this ancient temple, and acquire that joss stick’s power. If I don’t emerge, I can’t rest my heart at ease.”

Far beneath the surface of the Milky Way Sea, an emaciated figure suddenly clawed its way out from within the mud and silt.

“The favor from years ago will be repaid today. However, before that happens, I must consume more blood.”

In the vast Western Desert, because of the draining of the Violet Sea into the Milky Way Sea, its water level had been greatly reduced. Not too far beneath the surface of the Violet Sea was a mountain that at first seemed completely ordinary. But then the mountain began to shake, and suddenly a face appeared on it. This mountain… began to rise up.

It was no mountain, but rather, an enormous giant. It looked like a mountain deity as its head broke through the surface of the water. Its expression was archaic as it flew up into the air.

“Slaughter! To repay my debt, I shall slaughter a million cultivators!”

Also underneath the Violet Sea was a mountain range called the Black Dragon Mountains. The mountain range began to tremble, sending numerous boulders tumbling down its sides. Shockingly, an enormous crocodile appeared. It swished its tail as it shot out of the water, causing everything to shake.

A brutal gleam could be seen in the crocodile’s eyes, and it did not speak. However, its unbridled ferocity exploded with intensity.

In the Northern Reaches, in the lands of a minor tribe, was an altar, upon which rested a skull that had remained in that position year in and year out. It was impossible to tell how long it had been there. At this moment, a dim light began to shine out from the skull, and it flew into the air.

Also in the Northern Reaches was a valley that was sealed over with ice. It was a forbidden zone for cultivators, and deep in its depths… was a chunk of ice. Sealed inside of the ice was a man who had golden wings growing out of his back.

The man’s eyes snapped open, and cracking sounds could be heard as the ice shattered. He stepped out, frowned, then gave a light sigh.

“Back when I arrived, I was seriously injured and was on the verge of death. She kept me alive… and made me promise to pay her back.”

In the vast Eastern Lands were two forbidden zones.

One was the Ancient Paradise. Rumor had it that the entire place was filled with countless ancient medicinal plants, each one of which emanated strong auras of death. That was because the Ancient Paradise was actually… an ancient battlefield.

Within the Ancient Paradise was an enormous, withered tree, whose roots spread throughout the ground. The tree trembled in response to the Dawn Immortal’s call, and its roots retracted back into the body of the tree. When that happened, the tree… surged with shocking energy!

There was another forbidden zone in the Eastern Lands, which some people called the Immortality Temple. It was located in a sprawling mountain range, and was filled with innumerable restrictive spells. Deep in the mountains was an ancient, dilapidated temple.

The statue of whatever divinity it was that the temple had been erected to had long since crumbled, and was impossible to see clearly. However, inside the temple was an oil lamp which had not been lit for uncountable years. As of this moment, that oil lamp blazed with fire, and began to pulse with a divine light.

The light covered the entire ancient temple, as well as the statue of the divinity. Suddenly, a figure appeared, who then sighed.

“Well, she came from here, and is connected to me….” It separated from the image of the divinity, floated up out of the ancient temple, then flew off into the distance.

A total of nine auras surged out, causing rumbling to spread throughout all the lands of South Heaven. The sky turned dark, and the living creatures in the land trembled. All of the cultivators on the battlefield appeared to be on the verge of losing consciousness.

The great sects of the Eastern Lands were completely astonished, and their Patriarchs began to think about the various legends recorded in their ancient records.

In the Ji Clan of the Eastern Lands, the armless young Patriarch stood up, and a strange light gleamed in his eyes.

“The Dawn Immortal is incredible! Even I could never have imagined that she would have set up so many contingencies!

“And it’s no wonder! She has existed for… countless, countless years. If she had focused solely on cultivation, it would be impossible to even speculate what Realm she would be in.”

As the lands of South Heaven trembled, the husband and wife stood there in front of Meng Hao. The woman’s face flickered as she looked around, then she stepped back to stand next to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s mind was still spinning, and as he looked at her face, he felt like he was in a trance.

“Are you… really my mom…?” he murmured.

“Hao’er,” she responded. “You’ve suffered many hardships throughout the years.” This woman was none other than Meng Hao’s mother. When she looked at him, her heart stabbed with pain. She reached out to clasp his hand, and her eyes were filled with both love and tears.

“It’s all my fault,” she said. “I’m a bad mother for not being able to take care of you. You were so young back then…. When daddy and I left, you ran out of the house crying and yelling. I saw you fall down, and my heart broke.” 1

It was at this point that the man turned back to look at Meng Hao. It was a gaze that caused Meng Hao’s mind to tremble. It was filled with love and kindness, and it instantly caused tears to begin to stream down Meng Hao’s face.

He never imagined that he would cry at this moment in time. He had never imagined that he would reunite so quickly with his father and mother.

He wasn’t sure what to say, but he couldn’t stop the tears from streaming down.

His mother saw Meng Hao weeping, which caused more tears to flow down her own face.

“Hao’er….” she said, and then embraced him warmly, which made Meng Hao think about the times when he was a boy, and how he hated leaving her side.

“Don’t cry,” said his father, tousling his hair. He was smiling, and the love in his eyes seemed to grow even stronger.

“You’re grown up now….” he said calmly. “You’re already half a step into true Immortality, so it’s time that I pass on some Daoist magic to you. My Dao, is the Dao of the sword…. Watch carefully, I’m going to show you nine sword forms.

“First form!” He extended his left leg and bent it slightly. Then his body sprang into motion. He bent backward gracefully until he looked almost like a taut bow, completely at one with Heaven and Earth. In the next breath, it seemed as if Heaven and Earth were wholly incompatible with him, and yet were helpless to do anything. It was as if he had drawn an incredible burst of power down from the Heavens.

He extended his right hand, within which appeared an ordinary iron sword.
2

The sword… swept toward the Southern Domain’s Ancient Dao Lakes!

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# Chapter 798: Father Makes a Laughingstock of South Heaven

“Three thousand great Daos,” the man said softly. “They each have their powerful and extraordinary aspects. In fact, it’s impossible to say which is the most powerful….

“The Dao exists in the heart, and the heart is born of the will. If your will is strong, then your Dao will be powerful, and your sword… will be invincible!

“Pay attention to my movements. There are nine in total, and each one can stir up the power of the stars.” The iron sword descended.

The sky and land shook, and all the light in the world seemed to vanish. The only thing left behind was the sword beam. Everything grew faded and blurry; the only thing remaining was the iron sword!

The sword beam surged, and the iron sword descended. It appeared above the Ancient Dao Lakes, directly in front of the flying beast that had just emerged. The beast stared in shock at the sword beam, and its face fell completely. It let out a miserable shriek, and appeared to be in a state of thorough astonishment and disbelief. It raced backward in an attempt to get back into the Ancient Dao Lakes.

“This… this….” Even as the beast retreated, the sword beam closed in. At the same time, the Ancient Dao Lakes erupted, and an archaic voice echoed out.

“Your Excellency, please calm your anger. I beg of you to show mercy to this clan member of mine….”

“Request denied!” growled a voice which caused explosive pressure to fill the air above the Ancient Dao Lakes. The sword beam swept through the air, and the beast let out a bloodcurdling scream. Its body exploded into burning chunks as it was destroyed in body and spirit.

One sword blow blotted it out of existence. Everything rumbled as one out of the nine auras which had appeared was wiped away. The remaining eight auras froze in midair, and their faces filled with astonishment. After only a moment, they hurriedly retreated.

Unfortunately for them, it was too late!

“Hao’er,” said Meng Hao’s father, “look carefully at the second sword form. Always remember that when you attack with a sword, your mind must be empty, free of all distraction. You are the Dao, and the Dao is the sword!” Shockingly, what he was passing on was the most powerful Dao he had ever mastered in his life.

A Dao could not be passed down lightly. However, this was his son. Considering that he had agreed to stand guard over South Heaven for 100,000 years for Meng Hao, there was no need to even wonder about whether he would pass down a Dao.

Even as he spoke the words, he stepped forward with his right foot. The move was made so quickly that it kicked up a fierce wind. The second sword beam exploded out. The sky vibrated under the terrifying power; it almost seemed like all the man had to do was exercise a thought, and the Heavens could be slashed apart!

Rumbling could be heard as the sword beam appeared above the Southern Domain’s Ancient Temple of Doom. The image of the statue was terrified, and already fleeing at top speed. However, before it could enter the temple, the sword beam slashed through the air. A bloodcurdling scream rang out as an almighty being was beheaded. His body raged with fire as he was completely destroyed.

The only thing that remained was the lingering cry of death.

“Above the Spirit Realm is the Immortal Realm,” said Meng Hao’s father. “Right now, you are half a step into true Immortality, which means you are in the space between the Spirit Realm and the Immortal Realm. When you complete that step… you will enter the Immortal Realm!

“Now, pay attention to the third sword form.” Breathing steadily, he caressed the blade of the sword with his left hand, almost as if he were awakening its spirit. In this third sword form, the blade was stabbed down into the ground, causing the entire land to shake. The sword beam appeared beneath the Milky Way Sea, behind the withered figure there that was fleeing at top speed.

“Who are you!?!? Don’t kill me! I surrender! I can be your son’s Dao Protector!!”

Back in the Southern Domain, Meng Hao’s father looked back at him. “Hao’er, do you want him?”

Meng Hao stared in shock, and then subconsciously shook his head.

His father laughed.

“Dao Protector? You’re not worthy to play such a role for my son.” As his voice echoed out, the sword descended. Rumbling filled the withered figure as his body collapsed into pieces which burned into nothingness.

Three sword forms had slaughtered three almighty beings!

When the Patriarchs of the ancient sects in the Eastern Lands saw what was happening, they rose to their feet and began to tremble with terror. As they observed, they began to surmise what exactly was happening.

In the Ji Clan, the armless young Patriarch sighed.

“If you people hadn’t showed your faces, none of this would have happened. He wouldn’t have gone to make trouble for you. At any other time, it wouldn’t have mattered. Considering his temperament, he really wouldn’t have paid you any attention. But now… you had to go and mess with his son.

“Messing with his son is like rubbing a cat’s fur backward! Who would dare to do such a thing?”

The remaining six auras were trembling violently. How could they ever have imagined that the Dawn Immortal would actually provoke someone this terrifying? Of these six auras, two ceased falling back, and instead shot high up into the sky, as if to flee the planet itself.

One was the skull, the other was the mountain deity from the Western Desert’s Violet Sea.

“On the path of cultivation, one cannot rely on the protection of others. You haven’t left Planet South Heaven yet in this lifetime. Let me tell you, I’ve seen far too many Chosen who utilize the help of Dao Protectors. By now… each and every one is as useless as a wild chicken or a stray dog.” Meng Hao’s father turned to him and chuckled, then performed an incantation with his left hand, extending his index finger and middle finger together. It almost seemed as if he were wresting away energy from Heaven and Earth, causing a bizarre glow to surround his entire body as he took two more steps forward. With each step, a blast of sword qi shot up into the sky.

A moment later, the mountain deity let out a miserable shriek. Its enormous frame was clearly just about to escape Planet South Heaven. Nonetheless, it collapsed into pieces, which then burned into nothing.

As for the skull, it shot out into the starry sky and was speeding away. Unfortunately for it, even with such speed, it could not outrun the sword qi.

“NO!!” screamed the skull. Then, it was completely destroyed, including its Nascent Divinity.

Meng Hao’s eyes widened, and he stared blankly at his father. He had taken five steps, and unleashed one sword after another. One by one he had slaughtered five terrifying beings as easily as if he were killing baby chickens. Those almighty creatures’ auras were such that any single one would leave Meng Hao dazed; any of them could have slaughtered him easily. And yet, a single beam of sword qi from his father, and they were completely eradicated.

“What… what Realm are they in?” Meng Hao murmured.

The first to reply was his mother. “They have opened their Immortal meridians, solidified their Dao Fruit, and stepped into the peak of the Immortal Realm. They refer to themselves as Dao Lords, but are unable to open the door to the Ancient Realm. They aren’t even true Immortals, and will one day return to the dust.”

“In the Spirit Realm, Dao Seeking is the absolute peak,” said Meng Hao’s father. “In the Immortal Realm, there are two paths. The first path involves offering worship to an ancestor, acquiring that ancestor’s Dao Fruit, and then using it to tread the path to Immortality. On that path, you will never have a Dharma Idol of your own. Immortals like that are referred to as false Immortals. That is because, if that ancestor ever perishes, everyone who worships him will experience a drop in their cultivation base!

“That is the easy path to Immortality, the one which the vast majority of people choose to follow. However, there is another path…. On that path, you worship yourself. Your Dharma Idol is your own. You experience Immortal Tribulation and tread your own path. Others can worship you and tread your path of cultivation as false Immortals. This second path is the path of… the true Immortal!”

Meng Hao’s father moved like the wind as he took two more steps forward. Each step caused the ground to quake. His hair swirled around him in the air, and wisps of mist rose up from the top of his head. He waved his right hand, causing two more beams of sword qi to fly out, one toward the Eastern Lands, the other toward the Western Desert.

In the Ancient Paradise of the Eastern Lands, the tree’s branches were rustling, and its aura surged. Its mind was unprecedentedly focused as it drew upon all the power it could muster. The entire Ancient Paradise began to vibrate. The ground split, and the tree’s roots writhed as it prepared to fight back against the incoming sword qi.

A boom rang out, and the tree wailed. All the power it could muster did nothing to stop the incoming sword qi. The tree was split completely in half, and then began to burn. Screams of pain filled the air as the tree was transformed into ash.

Beneath the surface of the Violet Sea in the Western Desert, the crocodile was trembling. It fled with all the speed it could muster, but the sword qi descended upon it nonetheless. In the blink of an eye, it was right above its head.

The crocodile wore a look of hopelessness.

“I… I can be a mount!” the crocodile cried out. “I don’t qualify to be a Dao Protector, but I… I’m willing to be a mount!”

When it cried out, the sword qi suddenly came to a stop in midair. It swirled around, transforming into a sealing mark which fused onto the crocodile’s body.

“You possess some of the bloodline of a Scaly Dragon. Thus, you are qualified to be a mount for my Hao’er.”

The crocodile trembled, and its mind was completely occupied by terror and fear. After being sealed, its body shrank down until it was only about three meters long. Then it was pulled back rapidly until it appeared in front of Meng Hao.

The crocodile knew that it was dealing with a Little Patriarch, so it immediately put on an ingratiating air and swished its tail back and forth.

Meng Hao looked at the crocodile, an awkward expression on his face.

“Unfortunately,” said Meng Hao’s father, shaking his head, “you’ve only opened 53 meridians. If you could open at least 60 or more, then you could summon the power of the Scaly Dragon’s bloodline.

“Hao’er, in the Immortal Realm, there are no stages. There are only the 100 meridians of the Dao of Immortality.

“All living creatures have 100 meridians, that is a constant. No living thing has more or less.

“Once you enter the Immortal Realm, you will cultivate those 100 meridians. The soul is grouped into three spiritual aspects and seven physical aspects; a total of ten vessels. The meridians are organized into groups of ten, each of which form a vessel. If all 100 meridians are opened, you have achieved the Immortal Soul, and will produce your own unique Dao Fruit, whereupon you can open the door to the Ancient Realm! 1

“Unfortunately, success in the Immortal Realm is not so easy. From ancient times until now, someone with 50 opened meridians would be considered to be at the peak of the Immortal Realm, and could attempt to open the Ancient Door. According to legend, it is as easy to find someone with 80 opened meridians as it is to find a phoenix feather or a qilin horn. Only Chosen who are direct descendants of various great sects and clans would have a chance to do so.

“90 opened meridians is something even rarer, and exists only in legends. As for the full 100 meridians… from ancient times until now, no one has ever done it.”

“But you can, Hao’er!” said his mother immediately.

His father laughed, then suddenly crouched slightly, then straightened up, his posture like a giant holding up the weight of the world. He took two steps forward and waved his arms, causing two beams of sword qi to shoot out, one toward the Eastern Lands, the other toward the Northern Reaches.

Considering the level of his cultivation base, he actually didn’t need to use such meticulous movements; he normally moved as fluidly as the clouds or flowing water. However, for Meng Hao’s sake, he was demonstrating all of the movements in detail.

In the frozen valley in the Northern Reaches, the man who had walked out from the ice earlier was now laughing bitterly. He didn’t make any move to evade, but rather, sat there cross-legged, chuckling, his eyes shining with a light of madness.

Suddenly, his skin turned purple, and the power of a curse began to circulate around him as the sword qi bore down.

“Anyone who kills me will have their bloodline cursed!” he cried, and the wings on his back suddenly opened wide.

A cold snort echoed out. “Someone from a measly species of curse-users? Your bloodline isn’t pure, and yet you dare to try to curse the house of Fang?”

The sword qi descended, slashing directly into the winged man’s head.

Flames burst out, dissolving the curse power. It never even had a chance to be unleashed before it was dissipated completely.

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# Chapter 799: Born On East Victory!

The final blast of sword qi shot through the ground toward the deep mountains of the Eastern Lands, and the ancient temple. An intense, glowing light rose up from the temple, as well as the music of a great Dao. It seemed as if there were countless Immortal Divinities sitting cross-legged inside the temple. The mountain itself, as well as everything surrounding it, seemed to be part of a Daoist rites temple. It was even possible to see that crowds of Chosen had practiced cultivation there throughout the years.

“Oh?!” exclaimed Meng Hao’s father. The sword qi came to a stop.

The door of the ancient temple opened up, and a figure emerged. It was impossible to see the figure clearly, but it stood there facing Meng Hao’s father.

“I didn’t realize that there was an Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple here…. How rude of me! Well, since this location has been activated… hand over the Immortal Ancient Daoist Medallion!”

The figure was silent for a moment, then waved a hand. The ancient temple rumbled, and out flew a command medallion that pulsed with Immortal qi. The bright light emanating from the temple faded, and the figure vanished.

Nine powerful experts had appeared; one after the other perished. The crocodile became a mount, and the figure from the Immortal temple offered up an Immortal Ancient Daoist Medallion to prevent any trouble. The other seven were all slain.

It all happened incredibly quickly. By the time Meng Hao's father finished speaking a few words to Meng Hao, everything was over.

The cultivators on the ground in South Domain were astonished. The peak Dao Seeking experts in midair were completely shaken.

The Dawn Immortal laughed bitterly and staggered back a few paces. Blood oozed out of her mouth as she looked at Meng Hao and shook her head.

"Fate, how cruel you are…." she said. "I wanted to become a Blue Lotus… not for the sake of true Immortality, but because he said… once upon a time… that he loved lotuses." The Dawn Immortal chuckled sadly and backed up further. Her body seemed to be starting to dissipate.

She had lost her foundation, and since she couldn't assimilate Meng Hao and become a Blue Lotus, the only thing left for her to do now was fade away.

"Meng Hao…." she murmured. "You are of the League of Demon Sealers. From ancient times, they have always been cruel and heartless. One day, if you ever encounter one of them who mentions Resurrection Lilies, I'd like you to ask him something for me….

"Ask him if he remembers a flower back in the lands of South Heaven…. A Resurrection Lily whom he severed away."

She looked up into the sky, and tears glistened down her cheeks as she began to fade away. "I am filled with hatred…. But what I hate is not you. I hate myself… for not being a Blue Lotus." Her soft voice echoed out across the lands before fading away.

Meng Hao's mind trembled as he watched the Dawn Immortal vanish into nothing.

The war between the Southern Domain and the Northern Reaches… was over.

The Western Desert left, their towering South Cleaving Sentinels leading the way. The Southern Domain would never forget the kindness shown to them by the Western Desert; it would be engraved in their memories for generation after generation to come. As for the sinners from the Northern Reaches, they had lost their path back home, and become felon citizens….

There were now only a hundred thousand cultivators in the Southern Domain. Many sects and clans had been completely wiped out. Numerous core Daoist teachings and doctrines had vanished. Even the spiritual energy in the land was sparse. Thankfully, the mountain that Meng Hao had created continued to infuse the land with spiritual energy.

Perhaps many years later, the Southern Domain would once again shine with its former glory.

Pill Demon went back to the Violet Fate Sect, and Patriarch Song to the Song Clan.

If you didn’t count Meng Hao, they were the two remaining peak Dao Seeking experts in the Southern Domain. Furthermore, the Violet Fate Sect and the Song Clan were now like Holy Lands within the Southern Domain.

In the days to come, they would lead the Southern Domain cultivators to rebuild their sects and clans, and also select appropriate people from among the mortal populace to begin practicing cultivation. Slowly, the Southern Domain would be restored.

What was needed was time; at the very least, hundreds, or perhaps thousands, of years.

The mountain in which the five peak Dao Seeking Northern Reaches cultivators was sealed, the one named Sin of the North, stood tall above the lands. As time passed, it would become a famous landmark in the Southern Domain.

The war… was over.

During that war, Meng Hao had risen to complete prominence. His name was famous in the Southern Domain and the Western Desert. It had even shaken the Eastern Lands. Meng Hao… had become the focus of attention of all the lands of South Heaven.

As for all the Chosen of his own generation, some were dead and some had faded into obscurity. None of them were able to keep up with Meng Hao, let alone surpass him.

To the cultivators of the Southern Domain, Meng Hao’s stories were the stuff of legend.

He had started out in the Reliance Sect, acquired the Blood Immortal Legacy, thrown the Southern Domain into chaos, and shocked everyone at the Song Clan. Then, in the Violet Fate Sect, he had rocked the entire Southern Domain again under the name of Pill Cauldron.

At the Rebirth Cave, he had slain one of the sons of Ji, a Quasi-Array member!

In the Black Lands, he had participated in the siege of Holy Snow City!

In the Western Desert, he had led his tiny tribe through the Violet Rain Apocalypse. Because of him, they rose to glory one step at a time, until he finally brought them to the Black Lands.

Then, he had vanished, only to reappear years later, fighting the Spirit Severing expert Patriarch Huyan in a shocking battle that had astonished the Western Desert and Black Lands alike. Then, he had left everyone reeling in shock as he went to the Demon Immortal Sect.

The Chosen of the Southern Domain had congregated in the Demon Immortal Sect, but couldn’t do anything to Meng Hao even after joining forces. After wresting away virtually all of their good fortune, Meng Hao had next appeared in the Milky Way Sea!

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch had appeared in person, and Meng Hao narrowly avoided death. His Perfect Dao foundation was stolen, and just when he was about to truly die, Xu Qing saved him, proving that they were destined to be bound in marriage. After he awoke in the Rebirth Cave, he battled the Black Sieve Sect, then shockingly, descended into Bedevilment.

At the Ancient Dao Lakes, he had snatched the soul of a true Immortal. Four powers of the Southern Domain had allied against the Blood Demon Sect in a shocking war. Then, on the day of his grand wedding, the Northern Reaches invaded. Xu Qing died, and Meng Hao went mad. Fight, fight, FIGHT!

Kill, KILL, KILLLL!!!

Finally, he severed the Devil and sought the Dao, stepping halfway into true Immortality.

Meng Hao’s story swept through the Southern Domain like storm winds. The Western Desert heard the tales, as did the shocked Northern Reaches. Even the Eastern Lands caught wind. Meng Hao’s name… had truly risen to prominence!

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Currently, Meng Hao sat in Blood Prince Gorge in the Blood Demon Sect. His father and mother sat in front of him. Meng Hao was no longer shaken like he had been before. Instead, he sat there quietly, even taciturn.

Hundreds of years had passed, and he had finally reunited with his parents. Although the memories from when he was seven years old had not been erased, they were somewhat foggy. However, the affection he felt because of the blood connection with his parents made things even more complicated.

There were so many things he didn’t understand, too many perplexing conundrums. Why did his father and mother leave that year? Why had they suddenly reappeared now? Where had they been this whole time…?

Where were they when he was experiencing grave crises?

Where were they when the Resurrection Lily infected him?

Where were they when the Wang Clan Patriarch stole his Perfect Dao foundation?

Where were they when he nearly died in the Rebirth Cave?

Where were they… when Xu Qing died?

If they were merely mortals, it wouldn't matter. But they had just casually slain nine incredibly powerful experts in a single short battle. Meng Hao now knew that his father and mother were powerful. So powerful, in fact… that the Ji Clan hadn't appeared during the entire affair.

He needed an answer. He needed an explanation. His heart… felt twisted into a knot.

"Hao'er…." began his mother, tears streaming down her face. "You don't need to worry about Xu Qing. Your father placed a stream of divine sense on her. It will keep her safe during reincarnation, and will guide her back to you."

"I know what is gnawing at your mind," his father said. "You must have many questions." There was love in his eyes, and it was clearly strong. He stretched out his hand, and a brilliant glow appeared at the tip of his finger.

"Allow me to take you into the past, to awaken your memories. Then… you will see the explanation with your own eyes." The brilliant glow rose up and approached Meng Hao.

Meng Hao looked at his father, and then looked at the brilliant glow. Finally, he closed his eyes. The bright glow fused into his forehead, then pulled him down into the deepest recesses of his memories.

When he was born, there were two moons in the sky, and countless stars. It was picturesque.

He heard laughter ringing about in a magnificent temple. The temple was so enormous that it spread out across half of the entire planet it occupied. That entire area belonged to…

The Fang Clan!

“This boy will be a qilin of the Fang Clan! 1 Throw a banquet that will last for 300 years! Invite all of the Fellow Daoists from Planet East Victory!

“Wait. Planet East Victory isn’t enough. My grandson’s name will definitely shake the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea! Invite the Fellow Daoists from all the other three planets! Invite the ancient sects as well!

“This child is my daughter’s son, which means that his future path of might will encompass the Eighth Mountain too! Invite everyone from the Eighth Mountain to come offer their congratulations!”

The voice rang out amongst endless cheerful laughter. When Meng Hao opened his eyes, these were the things he heard and saw.

A woman was holding him in her arms. When he looked up at her, he saw his mother, although she looked much younger. Standing next to her was a young girl of five or six years of age, looking at him with a curious, mischievous smile. Occasionally, she would take advantage of her mother’s distraction to make faces at him. That was his older sister.

Further off in the distance was his father, who looked very excited. He was surrounded by old men who were constantly toasting him.

Meng Hao’s birth caused a huge sensation throughout Planet East Victory. The reason was that… his father was a direct descendant of the Fang bloodline, and also the eldest son. As for Meng Hao… he was also a direct descendant, and the eldest grandson!

Another reason was that Meng Hao’s maternal grandfather was not from the Ninth Mountain. He was from the illustrious Meng Clan of the Eighth Mountain. In fact, the Lord of the Eight Mountain was surnamed Meng!

When Meng Hao was born, even the Ji Clan sent congratulatory gifts, and Lord Ji sent a Dharma Clone to visit.

Meng Hao’s birth rocked all four great planets, the entire Ninth Mountain, and all the ancient sects.

There were many people who understood that as long as this baby didn’t turn out to be completely useless, then considering the power of the Fang and Meng clans, he would one day shine with blazing brilliance among the stars and seas.

This was especially the case because the child had been born with a special mark on the back of his hand. It was a Nirvana Brand!

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“Young Lord, you can’t go in there! That’s a restricted area! You can’t just barge in!”

“Young Lord, I beg of you, please don’t bite that!”

“Young Lord, stop it, stop it! You can’t dig holes there! The Patriarch planted that tree there personally! Y-y-you… that tree never did anything to you, don’t dig it up….”

He was a five-year-old boy who caused headaches for everyone in the Fang Clan. He was simply far too naughty.

Virtually every day he ran around followed by a trail of fellow clan members. If there wasn’t someone keeping an eye on him at all times… havoc would be wrought.

“Little brother, you’ve been naughty again!” said his older sister, cracking her knuckles and looking at him with narrowed eyes and a mischievous smile. She was a head taller than him, and the sight of her stomping toward him caused Meng Hao’s scalp to go numb. He backed up, stammering, and was just about to try to make an explanation when the smackdown began.

As his sister grew up, she continued to be very strict on him, to the point where Meng Hao’s heart filled with fear at the thought of her and her violent personality.

1. This expression is used to describe a child that will bring good fortune and prosperity to the family

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# Chapter 800: Seventh Year Tribulation!

“Young Lord, you need to study now….”

“Young Lord, stop bullying your cousin Prince Wei! Look, he’s crying because you hit him!” 1

“Aiya! Young Lord, don’t bully Princess Ling’er. She’s… she’s your future beloved! The Patriarch already issued the official order!”

Meng Hao gaped at everything that was happening. He watched the five-year-old version of himself pummeling another boy his age. Apparently the boy had told on him, which earned Meng Hao beating from his sister. This was his revenge. In the end, the boy was in tears and begging for mercy. In another scene, he saw himself setting fire to the hair of a young girl who was about the same age as him. That left him feeling quite shocked. In fact, he couldn’t help but think… this kid couldn’t really be him, could he?

He saw many unfamiliar faces, and he also witnessed the carefree life he had lived until he was seven years of age. The life he had lived was one of simple happiness.

He wasn’t studious at all, which made Meng Hao recall how poorly he had fared in the Imperial examinations.

However, on his seventh birthday, everything changed!

The day his seventh birthday arrived, something completely unforeseen happened to him. It was a misfortune, an extremely shocking matter that caused a huge commotion throughout the entire Fang Clan, although the news was quickly hushed up.

The Fang Clan had a bloodline legacy, a Daoist Magic that was completely Heaven-defying. It manifested differently among different clan members, depending on their bloodline. It was a Daoist magic that could… allow for Nirvanic Rebirth up to four times! It was an ability that essentially gave them a chance to live up to four lifetimes!

The character ‘Fang ’ is composed of four strokes, just like those four lifetimes 2. It was this Daoist magic that ensured that the Fang Clan remained as a towering force in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, regardless of whether it was the era of Lord Li or Lord Ji.

Any clan member who was born with a Nirvana Brand was considered Chosen. If a clan member was born without it, it was very difficult to develop it later in life.

Furthermore… throughout all the years, it was virtually unheard of for anyone to actually live all four lifetimes. Even some of the clan Patriarchs, when they became old and weak, could only experience Nirvanic Rebirth once. Those who had been able to experience Nirvanic Rebirth twice were extremely rare.

It required a deep cultivation base, as well as a very pure Fang clan bloodline.

Every time Nirvanic Rebirth was experienced, a Nirvana Flower would bloom. It would meld into the body, and allow the subject to become incredibly powerful by living an entire additional lifetime!

On Meng Hao’s seventh birthday… he experienced Nirvanic Rebirth!

He did not have a powerful cultivation base, and yet… he experienced Nirvanic Rebirth!

This matter shook the whole Fang Clan. Meng Hao’s father and mother were even more astonished!

That was because… although Nirvanic Rebirth was a good thing, and enabled someone to live more lifetimes, for something like that to happen to a seven-year-old child was the most brutal of calamities! 3

He hadn’t even lived a life yet. He had a road of endless possibilities ahead of him, but was stifled before he could explore any of them! All of the essence of his flesh and blood, all of his fated good fortune that had yet to be revealed, was sucked into the Nirvanic Rebirth as he started over from the beginning!

His body began to degenerate as he passed backward from seven years of age until he was in the same state he had been when he was born. The Nirvana Brand on the back of his hand faded some, and a layer of it fell off, which then transformed into a flower. Shockingly, the flower… gave bloom to a fruit!

That fruit gave rise to further shock in the Fang Clan. Even the Patriarchs who were locked away in secluded meditation came out to see.

According to the legends, the pinnacle of the Fang Clan’s Nirvanic Rebirth Daoist magic was none other than the Nirvana Fruit!

Nirvana Flowers were rare, but there were people in every generation who produced them…. However, for many many years in the Fang Clan, the Nirvana Fruit had only been spoken of as the stuff of legend. Up until then, in the entire Fang Clan there was only one shriveled up, auraless husk of a Nirvana Fruit.

Nirvana Flowers bloomed when a member of the Fang Clan experienced Nirvanic Rebirth and began to live another lifetime. They were born inside of the body, and could enable one to grow incredibly powerful. When that clan member died later on, the Nirvana Flower would wither and fade away.

However, Nirvana Fruit… were the absolute pinnacle of power. They could be preserved… and passed on as legacies!

And now… little Meng Hao actually produced a Nirvana Fruit!

This matter shook the Fang clan, and many clan members started to view Meng Hao as an extraordinary Chosen. However, his father and mother were a bit uneasy about the matter. And as they watched as their son reverted from being seven years of age to being an infant, that unease grew more intense.

This type of good fortune was something that they didn't dare to think too deeply about. If they did… it caused their hair to stand on end in terror. It was the prospect of a child who, at seven years of age, had lost an entire lifetime, as if an eighth year of life didn't even exist for him.

Meng Hao's paternal grandfather looked on silently. Then one night, he left. Before leaving, he told Meng Hao's father and mother that he was going to seek an Outsider, who he believed was the only person who could explain what was happening. Meng Hao's maternal grandfather, the venerable old man from the Eighth Mountain's Meng Clan, went with him.

The two of them disappeared into the starry sky.

Little Meng Hao grew up again, almost as if he had been reincarnated. He did not retain the memories of his previous life, and his personality had changed drastically. He was much quieter. He also noticed the strange looks that many clan members would give him when they thought no one was looking, and it scared him.

Such gazes were not the look you would give to a child, but rather, some type of Heavenly material or Earthly treasure.

When people looked at him in that way, his older sister would burst into a ranting rage and storm over with Meng Hao in tow to beat them up. She was frequently at his side, watching out for him.

"Don't be scared little brother, your big sister is here to protect you!" She was fifteen or sixteen years old now, and was already slender and elegant. However, her violent personality hadn't changed. In fact, she had actually grown more violent. 4

One day, a senior member of the clan gave Meng Hao that same strange look, which left him very frightened.

Later, he told his father about it. His father smiled and tousled his hair, then rocked him to sleep. After Meng Hao fell asleep, his father turned to leave, and his face was extremely grim. That day, the entire Fang Clan was sent into an explosive uproar, and many miserable shrieks rang out. Meng Hao's father swept through the entire clan, sword in hand.

From that day onward, there were far fewer such gazes cast Meng Hao's way.

Time passed. The other children who were once Meng Hao's age were now older, and the people he used to bully began to make progress along the path of cultivation. He could no longer set fire to that increasingly beautiful girl's hair. He was completely incapable of beating up Prince Wei, whom he found so objectionable. None of his former friends would play with him. Although he was constantly attended by various clan members, he was still plagued by a festering feeling of loneliness. Eventually, he also found out about the rebirth he had undergone when he had turned seven.

The only people who he truly had to accompany him were his father, his mother, and his older sister. During this second lifetime, Meng Hao rarely went outside. Most of those seven years were spent in silence….

Finally, the seventh birthday of his second lifetime arrived, and… he once again went through Nirvanic Rebirth.

When it happened, Meng Hao felt fear, and pain. His body withered, and everything went blurry. It was as if his flesh and blood were fading away. The mark on the back of his hand once again shone with a bizarre glow.

The Fang Clan was yet again thrown into chaos. As Meng Hao experienced the Nirvanic Rebirth, his mother held him in her arms, and tears flowed down her face onto his. As he experienced these blurry memories, Meng Hao couldn't help but stare blankly at his mother, and the look of pain and heartbreak on her face.

Little Meng Hao’s voice was hoarse as he said, “Mother… don’t cry…. Didn’t you tell me that this is just like sleeping a bit…? I’ll rest for a while and then wake up…. When I wake up, you have to tell me a story, okay…?” His older sister stood off to the side, weeping as she watched her little brother. She was already twenty years old, and to see her little brother grow up twice, only to experience Nirvanic Rebirth twice, was heartrending.

His father stood off to the side, fists clenched tightly at his sides, eyes seemingly on the verge of dripping with tears of blood. Unfortunately, there was no way for him to vent the anguish he felt in his heart.

Nirvanic Rebirth was certainly Heaven-defying. However… for it to happen twice to a young child on his seventh birthday, was no good fortune. It was a tribulation!

Seventh Year Tribulation!

If it happened a third time, and then a fourth, then what awaited Meng Hao would be certain death. He would leave behind four Nirvana Fruits, and would then vanish into nothing.

His life would be one in which… he never reached eight years of age.

A strange atmosphere fell over the Fang Clan. Many people were watching, waiting for Meng Hao to complete the Nirvanic Rebirth, and then give bloom to a second Nirvana Fruit. However, no strange looks could be seen, and no one spoke.

They watched as Meng Hao gradually degenerated, once again becoming a young child…. The mark on his hand produced a flower, which then bore a Nirvana Fruit.

Thus, the curtain fell on Meng Hao’s second incomplete life.

When he finally became an infant yet again, he didn’t cry. As his mother held him in her arms, he gazed blankly up at the stars.

His mother wept. Trembling, his father lifted his head up and roared. Unfortunately, that didn’t change anything. They could see the mark on the back of Meng Hao’s hand, the Nirvana Brand, and they knew that the third lifetime had begun.

This time, he was clearly doomed to experience Nirvanic Rebirth again on his seventh birthday.

There were many aged members of the Fang Clan who were observing what was happening. Many of them appeared to be very distressed; others sighed.

Word of the matter finally began to spread outside the clan. However, the secret of Nirvanic Rebirth was maintained. The only thing that people on the outside knew was that the Fang Clan’s eldest grandchild, the direct descendant of the bloodline, was born with tribulation attached to him. Every seven years he would experience such tribulation.

A child like that was essentially crippled.

Meng Hao’s mother spent her days with tears staining her face. His older sister’s violent temper caused her to get into fights virtually every day, as if that was the only way for her to give vent to the anger in her heart. His father did everything in his power to try to figure out a way to solve the problem, but it was all in vain.

His two grandfathers never returned.

When he was one year old during his third lifetime, a young man came to Planet East Victory. His arrival caused the elder members of the clan to reel in shock. One after another, they came out to bow in respect.

The young man said he had been sent by Meng Hao’s grandfathers. After laying eyes on Meng Hao, he was silent for a long time. His face flickered with memories and conflicting emotions, as well as surprise.

“In life, all things relate to the reaping and sowing of Karma. Farming is an example. You must work hard before you can bring in the harvest…. You must pay out before you can profit.

“As a husband and wife, are the two of you willing to abandon any future glory, to give up your current status and become the Prison Wardens of the Ninth Mountain, to guard the gate of South Heaven for 100,000 years? Are you willing, no matter what Heaven-shaking Earth-shattering events take place, no matter what calamitous tribulations occur in the outside world, to spend 100,000 tedious years in that one place and not step foot outside of South Heaven? Are you willing to guard the gate of South Heaven, and not let any living beings from the outside world pass through it?

“If you are willing to leave behind everything that has been polluted by your Karma, then take this child to South Heaven. That place is the origin of the entire Ninth Mountain. If you take him there… then you must leave him before his seventh birthday. Keep your distance from him until the day he reaches Dao Seeking. You must not meet him, and must not allow your Karma to contaminate him. All of this will depend on the level of your sincerity. If you are truly sincere, then you can succeed.

“He must not be surnamed Fang. Have him take his mother’s surname.

“If you do these things, then perhaps… he will have a chance at a life.”

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End of Book 5: Nirvanic Rebirth. Blood Everywhere!

2. Click here to see the four strokes of the character ‘Fang’

3. This word for “calamity” is actually composed of two characters . The first character is the same character “Hao ” from Meng Hao’s name. The second is the character often translated “tribulation .” Together, they mean calamity.

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# Chapter 801: We Will Meet Again!

Book 6: Fame That Rocks the Ninth Mountain; the Path to True Immortality

Meng Hao’s father and mother didn’t hesitate for even a moment. As long as there was a chance for Meng Hao to get better, they were willing to pay any price. If that price was a loss of freedom, and required them to relinquish their status and prestige and go to Planet South Heaven to guard it for 100,000 years…

Then they were willing!

They would leave Planet East Victory, and take Meng Hao and his older sister with them. They would leave the Fang Clan!

On the eve of their departure, the entire elder generation of the Fang Clan emerged to see them. Because they could not take anything with them that was contaminated with their Karma, Meng Hao’s father was forced to leave everything behind.

The only thing he took was an iron sword.

They did not take Meng Hao’s two Nirvana Fruits with them. The clan’s elder generation, including the Patriarch, chose to hold them in safe keeping. When Meng Hao recovered and returned, the two Nirvana Fruits would belong to him.

Meng Hao’s father sneered coldly in response to this. How could he not understand the true meaning behind the directive? Originally, he hadn’t planned to leave the Nirvana Fruits behind.

“Very well, the Nirvana Fruits will be left here with the Clan Chief,” he said, his eyes glittering with a sharp light. “In a few years, Hao’er will personally return to retrieve them!” With that, he tossed out the precious treasures that were the Nirvana Fruits.

Of course, what the elders didn’t know was that to Meng Hao’s father, these two precious treasures were actually the source of incredible sorrow.

They left a few days later, taking Meng Hao and his older sister with them. Ever since the most recent Nirvanic Rebirth, he had been lethargic and somewhat blank.

When they arrived at Planet South Heaven, they went to the remote State of Zhao, beneath Mount Daqing, and settled down in Yunjie County. Meng Hao’s sister didn’t stay with them. She went to the Eastern Lands, where she joined the Eastern Lands division of the Fang Clan, and focused on cultivation. She wanted to leave her father and mother alone to spend what remained of the seven years with her little brother.

During those seven years, Meng Hao was actually very happy. He gradually grew to be very intelligent, and began to focus on studying. On the eve of his seventh birthday, a violet wind gusted outside. His parents were heartbroken and anxious, but in order to save his life, they left. They had no other choice.

When he awoke and began to weep, his parents broke down….

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Meng Hao opened his eyes. The tears streaming down his face had soaked his garments. The vision faded away, and he saw his father and mother sitting there in front of him.

He could now see some white hairs on his mother’s head that hadn’t been there before. His father’s face looked older than it had in the past.

They were looking at Meng Hao with a love that made his heart tremble.

Now he understood everything. His doubts were resolved. His questions were answered. When he saw the events that had taken place in his previous two lifetimes, they seemed like a dream. Yet now he had awakened, and still, everything that had happened during the dream remained in his head, and would never be wiped away.

“Seventh Year Tribulation….” he thought. “My parents agreed to guard this place for 100,000 years…. for me. 100,000 years….” Meng Hao couldn’t even wrap his head around such an incredible period of time. The twisted feeling in his heart was completely gone. He no longer felt wronged, and in fact, felt a bit of pain and regret.

His parents did not deserve blame.

They had paid far, far too much, and never complained even once. They did not make any demands of him, nor ask for any compensation. They only wanted… for him to be able to live.

Meng Hao trembled, and even more tears began to stream down his face.

“Mom….” he said softly. “Dad….”

Trembling, his mom stepped forward and took him into her arms. She was crying too.

“Hao’er, everything’s going to be fine. You transcended the tribulation. Everything will be okay….”

Meng Hao’s father, who was once the eldest son and direct bloodline descendant of the Fang Clan, an astonishing Chosen who was still marveled at in the outside world, stepped forward and wrapped his arms around his wife and son.

“It’s past us now, Hao’er. It’s all in the past now….” His voice quavered a bit, and he was crying too. This was only the second time he had ever cried as an adult.

The first time was when Meng Hao had experienced Nirvanic Rebirth for the second time. When he watched his son revert from being seven to an infant, when he saw the pain on Meng Hao's tiny face, when he saw his eyes slowly grow listless… he had cried.

"What about my big sister…?" Meng Hao asked softly. He would never be able to forget the image of his stern older sister protecting him in his second lifetime.

Nor would he ever forget the words she had spoken.

Don't be scared little brother, your big sister is here to protect you!

Weeping happily, his mother responded, "She's been in secluded meditation in the Eastern Lands for some time. After we go back, we'll wait for her to emerge, and then we can have a big reunion!"

"What about Grandpa Meng and Grandpa Fang…?" asked Meng Hao.

When he asked the question, his father stood there silently for a moment. Meng Hao's heart began to thump. He remembered that his two grandfathers had left together to go search for an Outsider.

The Outsider came, but his two grandfathers had never returned.

After a long moment, his father said, "All things come with a price. Your Grandpa Meng's and Grandpa Fang's life lamps still burn. They are still alive, but… we don't know where they are."

Meng Hao sat there silently, and his heart twinged painfully. Now that he knew the reason for everything, he felt deep guilt regarding his two grandfathers.

Were it not for them, that Outsider would never have appeared, and he would have long since returned to the dust, with only four Nirvana Fruits left behind.

It was because of him that his two Grandfathers had never returned.

Furthermore, his parents were stuck guarding South Heaven for 100,000 years. When he thought about this, Meng Hao felt even worse. He looked at his parents, and although he didn’t say anything, his feelings were already etched deeply in his heart.

He would never be able to pay back the kindness shown to him by his parents and relatives.

Patriarch Blood Demon never awoke, and soon it came time for Meng Hao to leave with his father and mother. His father and mother faced to Mount Blood Demon, clasped hands and bowed deeply.

A few days later, when the restoration work was well under way in the Southern Domain, Meng Hao and his parents left. Before returning to the Eastern Lands, they went to visit his master, Pill Demon.

His mother and father were very grateful for everything Pill Demon had done, and even offered expensive gifts. In response, however, Pill Demon’s face darkened. It didn’t matter that he was facing people with mighty cultivation bases, he refused to accept the gifts.

“Meng Hao is my disciple! How could I accept gifts from you!?” he said.

Meng Hao’s father clasped hands and bowed deeply to him, then sent out a strand of his Dao will, which solidified inside of Pill Demon’s body and caused a tremor to run through him.

Dao Will such as this was something very important to Pill Demon, and would help him to verify his path of cultivation.

“How rude of us,” said Meng Hao’s father. “Forgive me, Grandmaster. Please accept this strand of Dao will. Hao’er was not born in the lands of South Heaven, so the Immortal destiny for this ten thousand year period cannot belong to him. Grandmaster, I very much admire your aspirations regarding the Dao. When your true Immortal Tribulation arrives, I will personally act as a Dao Protector for you!”

They stayed in the Violet Fate Sect for several days. Chu Yuyan continuously avoided Meng Hao, which caused him to sigh. However, he didn't force the matter, and eventually left with his parents. They went to visit Patriarch Song, and then finally left the Southern Domain.

When they transformed into beams of prismatic light that shot off into the distance, Chu Yuyan was standing proudly on a mountain peak in the Violet Fate Sect. She said nothing, but merely stood there, looking somewhat desolate. When Pill Demon caught sight of her, he sighed.

It was in this fashion that Meng Hao left the Southern Domain with his parents.

On the way, Meng Hao mentioned that he wanted to stop by the Milky Way Sea to look for that old turtle Patriarch Reliance. Meng Hao's mother shook her head with a smile.

"The turtle you're talking about left a long time ago. He's not in the lands of South Heaven any more."

Meng Hao gaped, and then a hateful expression appeared on his face. "It's a good thing he left so quickly," he thought to himself, "otherwise I would have tracked him down and shown him a thing or two!"

Meanwhile, out in the starry sky….

An enormous turtle was drifting among the stars. He had an entire continent on his back, upon which existed countless lives, including numerous cultivators and sects.

Of course, they didn't realize that they were floating out among the stars. When they looked up, what they saw was a magically produced sky.

The turtle, of course, was none other than Patriarch Reliance. Currently, his head was tucked inside of his shell, and he was humming a little tune. He looked incredibly happy and proud of himself.

“Heh heh heh! The Patriarch is the most incredible, yet again! Now that I’ve fled out here, that little bastard will never be able to find me!

“Hahaha! From now on, my future is as boundless as the sea and sky! The Patriarch has freedom at last!

“Let’s see how that little bastard reacts when he finds out that I’m no longer on Planet South Heaven. He’ll be struck dumb! Hahaha!” The thought of Meng Hao going to the Milky Way Sea to look for him, only to be unable to find him, caused Patriarch Reliance’s spirits to instantly be lifted even higher. He continued to muse on how he was vastly more intelligent than Meng Hao.

“You want the Patriarch to be your Dao Protector? Impossible! Ai… it’s all the fault of those old bastards from the League of Demon Sealers. They must have damaged my brain somehow. How come it didn’t occur to me before that I could simply fly away from Planet South Heaven?!

“Although, it’s better late than never. Now that I’ve finally flown away from South Heaven, I feel like I’ve actually gotten smarter!

“Aiyaaa, where should I go now? Ah, it doesn’t really matter. I remember that years ago I had a beloved on Planet East Victory. I wonder how she’s doing after all these years? I should go see my old sweetheart.” Sighing somewhat emotionally, Patriarch Reliance flickered as he shot toward Planet East Victory, taking the State of Zhao with him.

As he flew, he hummed his little tune, feeling extremely happy….

There was someone else speeding along through the starry sky. It was a crazy old man who was clearly not Immortal. However, for some reason, he emanated a strong Immortal qi, and was capable of flying among the stars.

“Immortal Ascension…. Immortal Ascension….” As his voice echoed out, a strange transformation seemed to be occurring. His face was ancient for a moment… but then looked young all of a sudden.

However, the old face and the young face looked different from each other. They were two different people!

This was the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. As for the transformation to his appearance… were Meng Hao here, he would recognize that young face. It was none other than… Wang Tengfei, whose soul had been swallowed up by his ancestor!

Meanwhile, two figures appeared on the border between the Northern Reaches and the Eastern Lands, creeping forward stealthily. One of them was a young man in black robes who looked delicate and pretty, almost like a scholar. If you looked closely, he actually resembled Meng Hao. However, there was a perverted expression in his eyes that completely ruined the entire image.

Next to him was a tall, fat man, who occasionally mumbled complaints.

“Run, run, run away. All you know how to do is run away. I’ve been telling you all along, this is wrong. It’s immoral! It’s very, very shameless! We should never have fled back then…. We’re finished. Completely finished! Meng Hao has become incredibly powerful…. What do we do now? What is Lord Third supposed to do now?”

“Shut the hell up!” the young man replied loftily, looking at the fat man out of the corner of his eye. “Lord Fifth hasn’t even said anything yet, what are you flapping your gums for? What the hell do you want? Let me ask you, do you know what comes after three? Can you count all the way to five?

“Well, Lord Fifth can!

“Have faith in the Lord Fifth, gain eternal life! Lord Fifth is taking you to the Eastern Lands! With this feather that fell from the sky, we’re definitely going to be able to live the good life!” The young man shook his body in much the same way that a bird does when straightening out its feathers.

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# Chapter 802: Immortal Ancient Dao Medallion!

In the vast Eastern Lands was the ancient city of Chang’an.

It was a place that countless scholars in the lands of South Heaven dreamed of. All of them hungered to pay homage to the Great Tang, and to stroll through Chang’an.

The military strength of the Great Tang was incredible, and even possessed garrison states populated entirely by cultivators. There was no location in the mortal worlds of South Heaven in which people did not pay homage to the Great Tang.

It was no surprise that there were great numbers of sects and clans in the Eastern Lands. Their strength and influence exceeded that of any of the powers that existed in the Northern Reaches, Southern Domain or Western Desert. In terms of sects alone, there were nine major ones.

In addition, there were seven great clans with vast numbers of disciples, followers, and clan members. The Eastern Lands were a flourishing place with countless Chosen, many of whom were famous even in the other continents.

Even the Imperial family had its own Daoist teachings and doctrines, which they used to exercise control over the whole continent. The Tang Emperor himself possessed a powerful cultivation base, and although he rarely made public appearances, his power held sway over the all the land.

Chang’an was the center of it all, and was encircled by ten defensive fortresses. Of those, eight belonged directly to the Great Tang, with the remaining fortresses belonging to two different clans.

One was the Fang Clan and the other was the Ji Clan!

Just because they occupied the defensive fortresses didn’t mean that these two clans bowed their heads to the power of the Emperor. They were independent, and in fact, above everyone else. It was the other sects and clans who bowed their heads to them!

This was especially true of the Ji Clan. The Heavens themselves belonged to the Ji Clan, so who was there that could possibly surpass them?

As for the Fang Clan, they had vast and powerful resources at their disposal. Although they were only a subdivision of the main clan, they were still deep and immeasurable. Of course, in compliance with their clan rules, they respected the Great Tang, and would protect the Tang Dynasty for all time. After all… the Tang Emperor was surnamed Li! 1

However, despite the fact that these were the circumstances surrounding Meng Hao at the moment, they were far distant from his daily life.

Currently, Meng Hao sat cross-legged in a courtyard in the Fang Clan, underneath an ancient tree. Sitting next to him was a trembling little crocodile who was oh-so-cautiously looking at the man sitting cross-legged in front of Meng Hao.

That man was none other than Meng Hao’s father.

“Hao’er,” he said, “your future path is your own to tread. As to what you do and how you do it, your mother and I can assist from the sidelines, but will not help you directly. The most important thing you should focus on is… Immortal Ascension!

“You’re already halfway into true Immortality, lacking only that final half step. Then you will be in the Immortal Realm.

“The chance to gain true Immortality is something that comes along once every 10,000 years. There are many cultivators of the elder generation, and even current Chosen, who are willing to suppress their own cultivation bases, all for the chance to get that true Immortal destiny.

“During this 10,000 year period, the true Immortal destiny lies in the lands of South Heaven. However, since you weren’t born on South Heaven, it cannot belong to you. The location of your true Immortality is on Planet East Victory.

“The simplest way to achieve true Immortal Ascension is by means of the rarely seen Immortality Illumination Vine. Use that to gain enlightenment regarding the meaning of Immortality, and you can achieve true Immortal Ascension.

“Although Immortality Illumination Vines are rare, it is not impossible to acquire them. In fact, there are enough that, during each 10,000 year period, most powerful sects manage to produce one or two true Immortals. However, the vines are only effective in the 1,000 years after the true Immortal destiny appears.

“The second way to achieve true Immortal Ascension is very difficult, and that is to acquire the Immortal destiny that appears once every 10,000 years, and use it to tread the path to true Immortality. That is the path your master Pill Demon must take.

“Both of these types of Immortals are true Immortals.

“Your master is going about it the most difficult way. If he succeeds, then he will most certainly be taken away by some powerful organization and made a Conclave disciple.

“Therefore, when the time comes for your master’s true Immortal Ascension, the lands of South Heaven are going to be a very lively place. The various Chosen of other sects and clans who have left South Heaven will return to fight for their chance. When that time comes, I will act as Dao Protector for your master.

“As for you, after you help your master transcend his tribulation, then you will go to Planet East Victory. Father has already prepared an Immortality

Illumination Vine for you there!

“Initially, using the Immortality Illumination Vine produces a slightly inferior result. However, cultivation isn’t always dependent on the first steps, and using that method can also lead you to great glory.

“So there are only these two ways to achieve true Immortal Ascension?” asked Meng Hao, a bit surprised. “Why could the Resurrection Lily achieve it?”

“People aren’t flowers and flowers aren’t people. The path of the Resurrection Lily can be learned from, but if cultivators try to follow it, they will find it very difficult to realize their Dao.

“There is a third path which is not dependent on any of the planets or any Immortal lands. It is to achieve true Immortality… by your own power!

“This is a very rare thing. According to the legends, only Patriarch Ksitigarbha, the Earth Store Bodhisattva of the Fourth Mountain 2, has ever traveled that path. Other than him, no one has ever pulled it off. When he did, it caused all of the Immortal qi in the Mountain and Sea Realm to surge and swirl towards him, such that everyone knew about it.

“As to how to tread that path, even I don’t know.” Meng Hao’s father shook his head. Even though he had a high opinion of Meng Hao, he didn’t think it was possible for him to tread that third path. “For now,” he said, looking at Meng Hao sternly, “focus on my nine sword forms. Make sure you understand them thoroughly.”

Sadly, Meng Hao’s older sister Fang Yu was still unable to emerge from secluded meditation. Meng Hao’s return had caused many in South Heaven’s Fang Clan to act with great caution. They were unfamiliar with him, and didn’t dare to even try to probe him for information.

Word of Meng Hao’s deeds in the Southern Domain had long since spread amongst the cultivators of the vast Eastern Lands.

When it came to the Ji Clan, there quite a few people there who were currently vacillating nervously…. Those people were the Chosen who owed Meng Hao spirit stones from back in the Demon Immortal Sect. There were Chosen from other sects in the Eastern Lands as well, all of whom had mixed feelings about Meng Hao.

As they sat there beneath the tree, Meng Hao's father waved his hand, causing a scintillating command medallion to fly out toward Meng Hao. It came to rest in front of him, where it floated in the air. It only took a glance for Meng Hao to be able to sense the vast ancientness pulsing off of it.

"This is an Immortal Ancient Dao Medallion," said Meng Hao's father.

"In the future, when you leave the lands of South Heaven, you could return home to the clan to continue your cultivation, or you could use this medallion to join the Ninth Mountain's Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite and cultivate their Daoist magic!

"In the Ninth Mountain and Sea, there are many Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temples. Whenever one of those temples opens its doors, it will attract a lot of attention.

"Currently, only the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite of the Ninth Mountain continues to pass on its legacies. Many cultivators practice cultivation among them, making them one of the most superlative Daoist Societies in the Ninth Mountain. By the time any Daoist rite temple is revealed to the world, it will already long since been left untended and abandoned.

"Only the most powerful of Chosen can join the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite. Lord Li joined, as did Lord Ji. The Fang Patriarch of that era also joined. Their requirements for accepting disciples are very strict. However, if you possess an Immortal Ancient Dao Medallion, then you can join directly as a Conclave disciple.

"Take good care of this medallion!

"The medallion has another function. I happened to discover an Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple. Although it's deserted, if you enter it, the temple will automatically come to life….

“Accept the medallion’s guidance, and you can cultivate enlightenment in the temple. It will greatly improve your chances at achieving Immortal Ascension.

“However, after the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple comes to life, others will detect it. Therefore, Chosen from the sects and clans of the other planets will come to try to seize the luck and good fortune in the temple.

“What they will be most interested in obtaining is the Immortal Ancient Dao Medallion.

“That will be your chance to hone your skills.”

Meng Hao looked closer at the medallion, and inside, he could just barely make out an Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple, filled with countless figures practicing cultivation. There was also a glowing Immortal who was giving a sermon regarding the Dao.

The music of a great Dao floated through the air, which Meng Hao couldn’t hear clearly. However, it caused him to perceive an unusual sensation of being bathed in an celestial radiance, with Immortal qi swirling around him.

After a long moment, he trembled, and recovered his senses. He quickly reached out to take hold of the Immortal Ancient Dao Medallion.

“Keep the Dao medallion safe, and achieve Immortal ascension. Those are my tests for you. If you can’t accomplish these things… then it would be better for you to stay here with me and your mother.

“If you can fight with all your might against the Chosen of the sects and clans of the other planets, if you can protect this medallion, if you can achieve true Immortal Ascension, then… your mother and I will be confident that you are ready to leave us and forge your own glorious future!”

Meng Hao clutched the Immortal Ancient Dao Medallion, looked up at his father, and slowly nodded.

Meng Hao’s father looked back and then smiled. It was a smile full of love and encouragement.

“Go,” he said. “Leave this crocodile here. When you achieve Immortal Ascension, it will be the mount you can use when you leave. Hao’er… you did not have me and your mother at your side in this lifetime. You’ve reached your current stage by relying only on your own efforts!

“Likewise, I believe that in the future… you won’t need help from me or your mother. Your path will lead you much further… and you can do it on your own!”

Meng Hao took a deep breath and then bowed to his father.

“Now go. We cultivators don’t focus on the trifles in life. Besides… you’ve grown up.” His father’s smile grew wider. From the look in his eye, you could see that he wished for his son to be a dragon, to truly succeed. It was a look similar to the one Meng Hao had seen in the eyes of Ke Yunhai.

Meng Hao rose to his feet and caught sight of his mother approaching. She walked up to him, adjusted his clothes, and then looked at him lovingly. She clearly did not wish to part with him, and was also worried.

“Mom, I’m fine,” he said with a bashful smile.

When she saw his smile, his mother shook her head.

“That’s the same smile you used to make when you were little,” she said, “whenever you were about to get into mischief.”

Meng Hao’s smile grew even more bashful. He chatted a bit more with his parents, then clasped hands and bowed. Giving them a final deep look, he turned and made his way off into the distance.

They watched him leaving, and Meng Hao’s mother sighed.

“This is how cultivators were meant to practice cultivation,” his father said calmly. “Hao’er is a dragon amongst men. His path… is his own to tread!”

“I’m still worried though…” his mother said.

“It was without our help that he stepped halfway into true Immortality,” his father replied proudly. “He’s grown up, and given his personality, it would be impossible for him to stay with us here for 100,000 years. Since we can’t leave, he needs to temper himself with appropriate challenges. Moreover… in all the Ninth Mountain and Sea, there truly are few who have achieved a cultivation base like his at such an age!”

“I’m just afraid that this Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple that you’ve activated will attract people above the Spirit Realm…” his mother said softly.

Meng Hao’s father laughed coolly. “Fang Xiufeng makes the rules here on Planet South Heaven, and I say… if anyone above the Spirit Realm dares to enter, I’ll just kill them!”

Meng Hao left the Fang Clan, the first time he had done so since arriving. The streets were busy, and as he looked around at the bustle, it was clear that this was a city of mortals. There were cultivators present too, but they didn’t dare to act superior to others. Apparently, cultivators were not permitted to act aggressively in the lands controlled by the Great Tang.

Meng Hao looked up, and off in the distance he could see an enormous city. That was… Chang’an.

At first glance it looked ordinary, but when Meng Hao circulated his Immortal qi, he was shocked to find that there were ninety-five gold dragons spiraling through the air above the city. Occasionally they would let out shocking roars. Of course, it was something that everyone else could not see or hear.

Gradually, the ninety-five dragons merged together into a figure sitting there in midair. When Meng Hao looked at it, the figure seemed to sense his gaze, and then looked back at him.

Suddenly, a majestic voice filled Meng Hao's mind. "The son of Elder Brother Fang. As expected, you are quite extraordinary. It's a pleasure to meet you. Allow me to bless you with some qi reserves to incorporate into your body."

The ninety-five dragons each spit streams of draconic qi, which merged together into an extremely lifelike golden dragon. It turned into a golden beam of light that shot through the air and merged into Meng Hao. As it swirled through his body, an incredibly refreshing feeling filled him.

Cracking sounds could be heard from inside him, and an otherworldly aura seemed to be washing over him, like a baptism. It almost seemed as if he had formed a resonance with the land, and could now see various Daoist magics and natural laws wherever he looked.

Meng Hao's mind trembled as the figure looked away from him.

"The Tang Emperor!" gasped Meng Hao. He was certain that the person just now…. was the Emperor of the Great Tang!

"The lands of South Heaven are filled with hidden dragons and crouching tigers…." he thought. "The Emperor of the Great Tang has an unfathomable cultivation base. Is South Heaven the only place like this, or are the other planets similar? Perhaps only people in the same Realm as father can understand such things."

Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed toward Chang'an. Then, he transformed into a beam of colorful light as he followed the Immortal Ancient Dao Medallion's guidance toward the temple. His second true self became the shadow beneath him, following him wherever he went.

Meng Hao had just appeared outside the city, and was about to head off into the distance, when his eyes glittered.

"I heard mom say that the Ji Clan isn't too far away from here…." A bashful smile appeared on his face and he rubbed his bag of holding. He still had many promissory notes inside, some of which were written by Chosen of the Ji Clan.

“I think it’s time to go settle accounts….” Meng Hao thought with a dry cough. He took out a jade slip which continued a detailed map of the vast Eastern Lands. After examining it for a moment, he headed toward the Ji Clan’s fortress….

1. The character in the surname of the Tang Emperor is , the same as Lord Li, previous ruler of the Ninth Mountain as well as the Li Clan, which we know exists on Planet North Reed, and whose auxiliary branch was destroyed by Meng Hao

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# Chapter 803: Going to the Ji Clan to Collect Debts

The Ji Clan didn’t just have one ancestral mansion, but many. The one located within the fortress was just one of those.

It was enormous and sprawling, taking up roughly thirty percent of the entire fortress. On the outside it looked relatively ordinary, but once you stepped foot inside, you would catch sight of indescribably beautiful carved balustrades and marble steps.

An ancient, aged will emanated out in all directions, making every block of wood and stone seem sentient. It was something completely extraordinary that even the Eastern Lands’ Fang Clan couldn’t equal.

Meng Hao navigated his way through the fortress using the map, and eventually found the Ji Clan’s main gate. He walked up the gate and cleared his throat. As he looked around, he didn’t see anyone around standing guard.

He knocked, and, seeing that there was no reaction from within, flew up into the air and prepared to simply fly into the mansion. However, a massive pressure bore down on him as soon as he rose up into the air. Clearly, the airspace here was restricted.

Meng Hao suddenly heard someone chuckling behind him.

“Fellow Daoist, don’t waste your time! People like you come here every day hoping to pay respects to the Ji Clan.”

There were two cultivators there who had caught sight of Meng Hao as they were passing by.

“The Ji Clan is the number one clan in the lands of South Heaven,” said the first one, “and this is one of their ancestral mansions. You think you can just waltz right in? The only way to get inside is if you’re invited by the Ji Clan.”

“Why even try?” chuckled the second one. “You might end up irritating one of the Ji Clan members, and then you’d be in grave danger.”

Actually, Meng Hao’s handsome appearance and down-to-earth disposition left these two cultivators with a good impression, so they really were trying to help him out.

“I’m not here to pay respects,” said Meng Hao, coughing lightly. “I’m here to collect some debts.” His eyes suddenly glittered brightly as he caught sight of the two iron hoop handles that adorned the main gate.

The two iron hoops seemed ordinary, but by using his Celestial Vision technique, he could instantly sense the aura of ancient magical symbols pulsing off of them.

“These things are magical treasures!” Meng Hao thought. Taking a step forward, he grabbed one of the iron hoops and then yanked hard on it. Unfortunately, the gate didn’t budge an inch. The two startled cultivators looked on in shock.

“Fellow Daoist, what… what are you doing?”

Meng Hao took a deep breath, and strange gleam appeared in his eyes. As he prepared to yank on the iron hoop a second time, the wide-eyed cultivators behind him began to back up. They came to the citadel frequently to go shopping, and often saw cultivators pacing back and forth in front of the Ji Clan’s main gate, hoping to gain entrance to offer respects.

However, they had never, ever seen someone covet the iron hoops on the main gate. The mere sight of it made their scalps numb. As they backed up, Meng Hao wrenched at the iron hoop with full force.

Some distance away, a group of seven or eight youths were loitering on the street corner, chatting and laughing. When they noticed what Meng Hao was doing, one of their number gaped for a moment and then let out a roar of fury. He instantly flew into the air toward Meng Hao.

“How brazen! Did you just eat a dragon heart?! How dare you behave so boorishly in front of the Ji Clan!?!?”

The two cultivators near Meng Hao were so scared they could barely speak, and began to back up even faster.

“Not good! It’s Ji Xueming! He’s a Quasi-Array disciple of the Ji Clan!”

Ji Xueming’s hands flashed in an incantation gesture as he whistled through the air. Bright light pulsed off of his body, which then transformed into a long spear that emanated a strong force like a tornado. He stabbed the spear toward Meng Hao without hesitation.

As Meng Hao stood there at the entrance to the Ji Clan, he turned his head to look at the incoming spear, then gave a cold snort. He waved his right index finger, causing the long spear to tremble and then explode into pieces. The shockwave didn’t even lift a hair on Meng Hao’s head, but Ji Xueming was sent tumbling backward through the air. He slammed into the ground about three hundred meters away, coughing up blood, his face ashen.

His companions’ faces filled with rage as they looked over at Meng Hao.

“Looking to die!?!?!” Ji Xueming howled, crawling to his feet. His cultivation base was at the late Nascent Soul stage, and although Meng Hao’s cultivation base was not visible to him, he raged at him nonetheless.

“You’re Ji Xueming?” Meng Hao asked. “Okay, hold on a second….” With that, Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding to produce a large stack of promissory notes. After flipping through them for a moment, his eyes sparkled and pulled out one in particular.

“Are you related to Ji Xuelin?” he continued, sounding hopeful. 1

“He’s my big brother! How dare you act so wildly in the Ji Clan! You’re DEAD!!” With a shrill cry, he waved his right hand, causing spiritual energy to surge in mid-air, giving rise to ripples that only a cultivator could see.

Meng Hao smiled bashfully, then proceeded to ignore Ji Xueming and look back at the iron hoops. He was getting even more excited about them.

“This is really a lovely treasure!” he thought, causing his cultivation base to begin to rotate. His Dharma Idol flickered into being behind him, which then reached down to grab an iron ring and yank on it.

A boom could be heard as the entire main gate shuddered. Even the ground quaked as the iron ring… was ripped off the door by Meng Hao.

The two cultivators who had just been trying to persuade Meng Hao to leave, were now watching with wide eyes.

Ji Xueming’s companions’ eyes went even wider with disbelief, as if they had seen a ghost. As for Ji Xueming, his shrill cry gurgled to a stop, and he gaped at Meng Hao in shock.

The huge boom just now had echoed throughout the city, and quite a few cultivators had hurried over to see what was happening. When they saw what was going on, they instantly began to cry out in shock.

“He… he ripped off a door hoop?”

“That’s… that’s impossible….”

“Is that guy crazy!? How could he possibly dare to provoke the Ji Clan!!”

“This is the Ji Clan’s ancestral mansion, a representation of the whole clan’s face! And yet… he actually ripped a door hoop off!!”

“He’s poking the Heavens in the eye!!”

A buzz of conversation immediately echoed out.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he hefted the iron hoop in his hand to get a sense of its weight. Then, his eyes shone with a gleam of pleasure.

“Truly a lovely treasure,” he thought. It was at this point that his head swiveled to look at the other iron hoop. He was just about to reach out and grab it when a cold snort echoed out from inside the Ji Clan. Next, the gates silently swung open and a young man walked out.

His long hair draped down over his shoulders, and his features were handsome, albeit cold. A Spirit Severing aura swirled around him as he strode out. Instantly, a rumbling sound filled the air, as if bizarre ripples were spreading out from his body.

“According to the clan rules,” the young man said as he walked out, “anyone who damages the clan gate will be exterminated to the ninth degree of kinship.” He looked over coldly at Meng Hao, and then suddenly, his jaw dropped.

Three hundred meters away, Ji Xueming didn’t notice that point. He was extremely excited and cried out, “Big brother, kill that guy!”

Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed with a strange light. As soon as he laid eyes on this newcomer, he couldn’t help but feel happy. He laughed loudly and then said, “Fellow Daoist Xuelin, do you remember me?”

At first, the young man’s bearing had been cold and aloof, but after looking closely at Meng Hao and hearing his words, his face went deathly white. Even if he had a more steely will, he would still have cried out hoarsely in alarm. As it was, he couldn’t prevent himself from staggering backward several paces.

“No, I don’t remember!” he cried out, then slammed the gate shut.

Eyes glittering, Meng Hao lifted his right foot up and then kicked hard onto the huge gate. A boom echoed out as the gate crashed open. Ji Xuelin was on the other side, and was sent tumbling backward, blood spurting out of his mouth. Then he began to cry out loudly.

“Meng Hao’s here! Meng Hao’s here!!”

His urgent call immediately caused the faces of numerous Ji Clan old-timers to flicker. As for the Chosen who happened to be in the mansion, they didn’t comprise all of the Ji Clan Chosen. However, there were four or five who happened to owe Meng Hao spirit stones, and their faces filled with shock.

When the people gathered outside the Ji Clan heard Ji Xuelin’s call, they were completely taken aback. Many weren’t able to put the pieces together, but there were some whose expressions flickered with understanding.

“Meng Hao? That’s the guy who ended the war between the Southern Domain and the Northern Reaches! He’s half a step into true Immortality, and is the number one figure in his generation!”

“It’s him… he’s actually in the Eastern Lands. Dammit! Now that I think about it, the sect issued orders recently that we are not to offend Meng Hao in any way! I didn’t understand before, because I thought he was in the Southern Domain. But it turns out he’s already in the Eastern Lands!”

“So… he really is Meng Hao!”

Stories of the war of the Southern Domain had long since spread widely throughout all the lands, and Meng Hao’s name could be heard everywhere. He had sealed the cultivation bases of more than 100,000 Northern Reaches cultivators, cutting off their path to the Nascent Soul stage and reducing them to felon citizens. Furthermore, he had summoned a huge mountain to suppress five peak Dao Seeking experts.

Because of all of that, Meng Hao was now thoroughly famous in all the lands of South Heaven.

Ji Xueming stood there quivering, face pale and eyes wide. He vaguely remembered that some time ago, word had been passed down through the clan forbidding anyone from provoking Meng Hao.

Everything trembled as Meng Hao entered the Ji Clan. As he passed the nearly destroyed gate, he casually reached down to wrench off the other iron hoop, which he put in his bag of holding.

The sight of him doing so caused gasps to rise up from the people who stood outside watching; Meng Hao's domineering manner had already left them with a deep impression. On the other hand, flames of rage could be seen burning in the Ji Clan members' eyes.

After all… there were only a few people who actually owed him spirit stones. To all the other members of the Ji Clan, Meng Hao's actions just now were nothing short of blasphemous.

Immediately, eight older members of the Clan snorted coldly and then stepped forward. Hands were waved, and divine abilities appeared. However, when they neared Meng Hao, his eyes flickered and he flicked his sleeve. Rumbling echoed out as a storm wind rose up. It blasted out in all directions, causing the eight older clan members to tumble back with blood spraying from their mouths.

Meng Hao cleared his throat and pulled out some promissory notes.

"I'm not here to cause a ruckus," he said, as he began leafing through the notes. "I just want to collect some debts. Ji Xuelin, Ji Tianyi, Ji Xiaoxiao…." In a brief moment, he recited seven or eight names.

Finally, he looked up.

"When exactly were you people planning on paying me back the tens of millions of spirit stones you owe me?! Hand them over!!"

His voice roared out to be heard not only by the entire Ji Clan, but also everyone on the outside. Instantly, all of the people whose names he recited, with the exception of those not present, suddenly grew incredibly wrathful. How could they not? After all, the sheer amount of spirit stones owed… made it impossible for them to pay off the debt.

“You’re shameless, Meng Hao! You forced us to write those promissory notes!”

“We didn’t want to write them! You made us!!”

“Yeah, you threatened us! We had no choice but to sign the promissory notes, so they don’t count!”

When the other Ji Clan members heard what was being cried out, they couldn’t help but be shocked. The cultivators on the outside were also looking on with wide eyes.

“I can’t believe Meng Hao was so daring back then! He actually forced Ji Clan Chosen to write promissory notes!!”

“Tens of millions of spirit stones! How… how do you force someone to the point of signing that kind of promissory note?!”

Meng Hao’s eyes went dark. “Not going to acknowledge your debt!?”

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1. In traditional Chinese culture, all males of the same generation in a family will have the same first character in their given name. In this case, it would be logical to assume that since the first character in Ji Xueming’s name is Xue, that he would be related to Ji Xuelin, who also has the character Xue. Incidentally, Madam Deathblade’s family follows this tradition, so her brother and cousins all have the character Zhi in their given name

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# Chapter 804: Debts Must Be Repaid!

The Ji Clan members glared furiously at Meng Hao, their eyes brimming with killing intent. For years on end, no one had ever dared to crash through the Ji Clan's gate. Well… except for a certain husband and wife.

Now, Meng Hao was the third person to do so.

"What a pack of lies!" a voice said from among the Ji Clan members. As the same time, a surge of energy burst out, accompanied by three older clan members. They moved with incredible speed, and were in front of Meng Hao in the space of one breath. Their cultivation bases emanated the shocking power of Dao Seeking, and even as they arrived in front of Meng Hao, they snorted and launched attacks.

They knew Meng Hao was extraordinary, which was why they joined forces to attack in unison. Everything trembled violently, even the sun and moon. The illusory image of an altar appeared which rumbled toward Meng Hao, exuding incredible pressure.

"For the sake of your parents, we won't kill you today, but that doesn't mean we'll let you off without teaching you a lesson!" The ground quaked as the altar descended toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao's expression was calm. He smiled and glanced at the incoming altar, then suddenly clenched his fist. Even as his punch sailed through the air, the Ninth Mountain materialized, which then slammed into the altar.

A huge boom rattled out and the altar was sent spinning backward. The Ninth Mountain floated there, emanating shocking pressure, and most shocking of all, surrounded by swirling Immortal qi. The three Ji clan members staggered backward, blood oozing out of their mouths, their faces filled with shock.

In the same moment that they fell into retreat, seven more older clan members flew up into the air. They also joined forces, shoving their hands down from above to summon an enormous lake. There were fish swimming to and fro within the lake, one of which leapt out and transformed into a red dragon that roared and headed toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao lifted his foot up and took a step forward. The ground quaked as a massive force rippled out in all directions. The three Dao Seeking experts coughed up blood and fell back once more, astonishment written on their faces.

As for the seven old clan members who had summoned the red dragon, blood sprayed from their mouths and they tumbled back through the air like kites with their strings cut.

Then there were the ordinary clan members, whose faces fell as they felt themselves being shoved back violently, their bodies completely beyond their own control. They looked over in shock at Meng Hao, who stood there, towering above everyone.

The people on the outside continued to watch with wide eyes and gaping mouths. To them, Meng Hao looked like a Paragon, standing there unmatched and invincible!

“Debts must be repaid!” Meng Hao said, walking forward again. “It’s a law of Heaven and a principle of Earth! If you renege on your debt, then I’ll just have to come take it myself.” As he advanced, the Ji Clan members were forced to fall back. It was almost like they couldn’t even control their own bodies, and were literally being forced back by an incredible power.

One of their number was a young man who suddenly felt an incredible force wrapping around his body. He was suddenly hauled out from the other Ji Clan members and pulled directly in front of Meng Hao.

It was Ji Xuelin.

“Meng Hao, you’re pushing things way too far!” he cried shrilly, glaring furiously at Meng Hao. He looked like he was about to fly into a rage, but inwardly, he was trembling. Even as the words left his mouth, he braced himself for something horrible to happen. However, he had no choice but to speak such words; after all, this was the Ji Clan, and if he didn’t say something, how could he possibly hold his head up in front of his fellow clan members?

“You owe me money, and I’m here to collect! How is that pushing things too far?”

In the face of all the nearby Ji Clan members, Meng Hao grabbed Ji Xuelin’s bag of holding and opened it up. He frowned.

“You barely have more than 1,000,000 spirit stones? How could that be!?” Meng Hao’s tone turned stern. “Ji Xuelin, that’s simply not enough. Okay, let me see…. you owe me 7,650,000 spirit stones….” He reached out, stuck his hand into Ji Xuelin’s robe and started to loosen it.

“Meng Hao! Y-y-you….” Ji Xuelin let out a roar. Meng Hao had just snatched away his bag of holding, and then taken away some of his other personal belongings. After that, shockingly, Meng Hao began to disrobe him! This caused Ji Xuelin to be frightened out of his wits, filled with unprecedented terror and astonishment.

“Y-y-you… what are you DOING!?!?”

He wasn’t the only frightened one. The other Ji Clan members looked on with wide, disbelieving eyes as Meng Hao pulled Ji Xuelin’s robes off.

“You owe me money! These clothes are pretty nice. I bet I could sell them for a few spirit stones.” Meng Hao put the robes away and then looked at the shivering Ji Xuelin. Finally, he heaved a sigh of pity.

“If I had known things would turn out this way,” Meng Hao said, shaking his head sympathetically, “I would have done things differently back then.

Ah, young people. You shouldn’t write promissory notes so easily, you know? I hope that in the future, you keep that in mind. Turn over a new leaf!

“Although, don’t forget that you still have to pay me back what you owe me. This little bit today can just be considered interest.”

Ji Xuelin let out a mighty roar, and then coughed up a mouthful of blood. He was so enraged that he then passed out and flopped over onto the ground, although it was hard to say whether it was real or an act….

It was at this point that a cold snort echoed through the air. A shadow passed over the mansion, and an incredibly cold aura spread out. Boundless killing intent roiled through the air as an enormous black hand appeared up above. Rumbling pressure weighed down in all directions, transforming into the power of peak Dao Seeking. As Meng Hao looked up, the hand descended toward him.

Just barely visible behind the huge hand was an old man wearing a black robe. He was thin and emaciated, and emanated an aura of decay and rot, as if he had just climbed up from a grave.

“You don’t qualify to run amok in the Ji Clan!”

Rumbling filled Heaven and Earth, and astonishing killing intent filled the air. It seemed evil to the extreme, and caused the bright spring day to suddenly became as cold as dead winter. Black snowflakes began to flutter down, and the entire place appeared to have turned into… a midwinter battlefield.

Suddenly, countless corpses appeared on the battlefield, as well as innumerable cultivators locked in deadly combat. All of was incredibly realistic! It was… a Dao Seeking Region!

It was a peak Dao Seeking Region!

As Meng Hao stood there in the middle of the Region, his face grew dark and grim. Anyone who saw the expression found their hearts suddenly thumping. This version of Meng Hao seemed completely different, a vicious version which had been hiding inside him all along!

“Killing intent? You can’t have more than I do,” he said coolly. Suddenly, the shadow beneath his feet rippled, and his second true self emerged. At first, his eyes were closed, but as he stepped out, they opened, and blood-colored light spilled out. A killing intent radiated out that was exponentially stronger than the previous killing intent. It caused the sky to change color and the clouds to seethe. The sun and moon trembled as the intensity of the killing intent caused everything in the area to shake.

The emaciated man up in midair gasped, and his face filled with disbelief. The surrounding Ji Clan members were all shaking in astonishment, and many of them were coughing up mouthfuls of blood.

Everyone on the outside felt as if they were frozen in place by icy coldness, and were shivering violently.

This was Meng Hao’s second true self, who had absorbed his boundless Devilish will!

The Devilish will was shocking; a black aura exploded out from Meng Hao’s second true self, transforming into roiling black clouds that then formed into the image of an enormous face. The face was matchlessly savage, and seemed to contain a madness that wished to exterminate all forms of life.

The intense killing intent immediately exerted incredible pressure on the emaciated old man, who felt his scalp go completely numb.

“This… this….” His mind was reeling. This ferocious spirit, this killing intent, this madness… were something rarely seen in life.

Meng Hao’s mood had turned sour. His voice level, he said, “As for this battlefield illusion, let me ask you… have you ever seen a real battlefield before?”

His second true self’s body distorted, causing what looked like beams of light to shoot out in all directions, causing… a different battlefield to appear!

It was a battlefield of complete carnage, with rivers of blood flowing everywhere. A mountain-like giant roared, and a woman was hidden in ball of mist. Fierce fighting raged as people chose to self-detonate rather than see their home be overrun. The ground was stained bright red, and up above in the sky, peak Dao Seeking experts fought at close quarters. One of them laughed uproariously and self-detonated.

The scene was incredibly realistic, because… these were images of things that had actually occurred in the war between the Southern Domain and the Northern Reaches!

“Have you ever been on a battlefield like that?” asked Meng Hao. His second true self’s eyes flickered and he took a step forward. His ferocious spirit merged with the energy of the battlefield, which then rose up into the air to meet the descending pitch-black hand, and the emaciated old man.

A huge boom rang out as the black hand collapsed into pieces. The emaciated man coughed up blood and was flung backward. As he flew through the air, he coughed up three more mouthfuls of blood. His cultivation base dropped, and cracking sounds rang out as a life-protecting jade slip was destroyed. Without that jade slip, he would most certainly have been dead.

Everything was dead silent. The Ji Clan members were completely shaken as they stared at Meng Hao. It was the same with the cultivators on the outside.

“Now that… is Meng Hao!”

“He is a Chosen who rose to fame during the war between the Southern Domain and the Northern Reaches. He’s the number one figure of this generation in the lands of South Heaven….”

“That battlefield just now must have been images from the war….”

A sharp inhalation could be heard, followed by the image of Meng Hao shaking his head. “Couldn’t control it fully,” he said.

With that, he made a beckoning motion, and his second true self vanished, once again turning into his shadow. From what everyone watching could see, it appeared as if Meng Hao was once again calm and tranquil.

“That’s enough, you little punk!”

The next voice that echoed out was ancient and archaic. It came from deep within the Ji Clan ancestral mansion, from a location that looked very different from the beautifully decorated buildings around it. It was a thatched cottage that seemed completely ordinary in every respect. Suddenly, the cottage’s door opened, and a teenager stepped out.

He appeared to be about fifteen or sixteen, but had a full head of white hair. His expression was the type you would see on an old man; clearly, he cultivated some technique that allowed the body to reverse the effects of aging.

As soon as he stepped out, everything in front of him trembled. Shockingly, an enormous Dharma Idol appeared behind him.

The Dharma Idol was not humanoid, but rather, was an enormous bottle gourd which was a swirl of red, blue and yellow colors. As soon as it appeared, shocking light spread out to cover over the entire fortress.

As soon as the Ji Clan cultivators saw the bottle gourd and heard the ancient voice, their spirits were lifted. Regardless of age, they all turned toward the gourd, clasped hands and bowed.

“Greetings, Patriarch Nine!”

“It’s Patriarch Nine! Greetings, Patriarch Nine!”

Simultaneously, the teenager strode forward a single step. It was as if the entire Ji Clan fortress shrunk; in the blink of an eye, he was directly in front of the crowd of Ji Clan cultivators. His hands were clasped behind his back, and his white hair floated around him as he stared icily at Meng Hao.

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# Chapter 805: We’ll Pay You Back!

A false Immortal!

This was a false Immortal!

The teenager made his appearance coldly, and as he stood in front of the other Ji Clan members, his eyes fell onto Meng Hao.

“Screw off!” he said. He was well aware that Meng Hao had powerful backing, and didn’t want to provoke him. However, the ancestral mansion was under his personal command. If Fang Xiufeng showed up, he wouldn’t do anything to offend him. But for a member of the junior generation to dare to act in this way filled his heart with rage.

His appearance on the scene immediately caused the surrounding Ji Clan members to grow excited. Ji Xuelin instantly “regained consciousness,” and looked excitedly at Patriarch Nine. Then he looked back at Meng Hao with anticipation regarding his imminent vengeance.

“You’re definitely going to get put in place this time!” he thought.

Meng Hao cleared his throat and looked up at the enormous bottle gourd Dharma Idol floating there.

“Dharma Idol, huh….” Meng Hao smiled. “Well I have one too.” Eyes glittering, he took a step forward. Up to this point, he hadn’t called on the full extent of his power. Now, he rotated his cultivation base, and Immortal qi emerged. As soon as it did, everything trembled and shook, and an enormous Dharma Idol appeared that seemed capable of holding up the sky.

The strength of this Dharma Idol was extraordinarily shocking; it was like some primordial giant whose face was that of Meng Hao!

The sky shook and the ground quaked the moment the Dharma Idol appeared; natural law spread out, along with a vast pressure that weighed down on everything. The bottle gourd began to quiver, and it seemed to be expending all of its energy as it struggled to fight back against Meng Hao’s Dharma Idol.

The sky looked like it was on the verge of being torn to shreds, and ear-shattering booms filled the air. The incredible pressure seemed capable of tearing Heaven and Earth apart from each other, and the land looked as if it were about to shatter into pieces.

Almost instantly, Meng Hao and the teenager were in a deadlock!

The Ji Clan members looked on, panting, their expressions blank. Their scalps were numb and their minds reeled. They knew that Meng Hao was strong, but… how could they ever have imagined that… he would be this strong!?

He could even fight Patriarch Nine to a standstill. And their Patriarch Nine… was an Immortal!!

The teenager’s face sank, and a strange light appeared in his eyes as he looked at Meng Hao. Inwardly, he let out a long sigh. He had known before that Meng Hao was extraordinary, but it wasn’t until he actually faced up against him that he realized… he had underestimated him.

“So it’s true that he’s actually… half a step into true Immortality!”

By now, the nearby cultivators had spread the news that Meng Hao had charged into the Ji Clan fortress. The news reached other sects, and soon all of the powerful experts of the Eastern Lands knew. Divine sense streamed forth, and gasps could be heard in the various sects throughout the Eastern Lands when they saw that Meng Hao could grapple with a false Immortal.

“This Meng Hao is incredible!”

“His father is extraordinary, and… so is he!”

“The Fang Clan….”

Countless eyes throughout the Eastern Lands were now fixed on the Ji Clan, and Meng Hao. Meng Hao’s eyes blazed with the desire to do battle; ever since his incredible cultivation base breakthrough, he had not battled a false Immortal. He truly wished to know how such a battle would turn out!

He reached out his hand and pointed toward the teenager, and his desire to fight was clear.

“Make your move!” he said.

The Ji Clan cultivators were panting, especially those who normally flaunted their status as Chosen. Their faces were pale, and they were forced to admit that there was now a vast, unimaginable gap between themselves and Meng Hao. It was like the difference between Heaven and Earth, and was a chasm that could not easily be crossed.

“He… is so much stronger than us!!”

“It’s laughable to say that we are of the same generation. We can shake things up, but he… he can battle with our Patriarch!”

“We… don’t even qualify to be his opponent….” This fact was quite a blow to the Chosen. Earlier, they had heard about Meng Hao’s strength, but to witness it with their own eyes was shocking to the soul.

As he faced up against a bristling Meng Hao, Patriarch Nine realized that he was in somewhat of a dilemma. As the saying goes, if you ride a tiger, it’s hard to get off. Even as he hesitated, an archaic voice suddenly rang out from thin air to fill the Ji clan.

“The Ji Clan cultivates Karma. Spirit stones are material objects, and can be considered a seed of Karma. The Ji Clan must not be infected by such Karma. Anyone who owes this person spirit stones must pay them back!

“All of you, pay heed. The Ji Clan’s cultivation is different than that of the masses. To cultivate Karma, we must revere Karma. If you do not have the power to sever Karma, then you must yield to it!

“Give it to him! Him coming here to ask for his spirit stones is in fact an aid to you in severing Karma with him. Do you still not understand? Once the Karma is severed, your cultivation will surely flourish.”

As these few sentences reverberated through the air, the voice vanished. Patriarch Nine’s body jerked to a stop as he realized that the voice had come from the true Patriarch of the Ji Clan here in the Eastern Lands. His energy immediately dissipated along with the Dharma Idol, and he clasped hands and bowed to Meng Hao.

“Many thanks for the assistance you have provided to these children of the Ji Clan in severing Karma, my young friend. Please inform me of exactly how many spirit stones are owed, and I will give them to you.”

There were many people who appeared to be enlightened, and not just members of the Ji Clan. As for the handful of Chosen who owned spirit stones to Meng Hao, their bodies trembled as brilliant Dao light shone out from them. What seemed to be the music of a great Dao swirled around them, as if in this moment, their Dao heart was nudged forward.

Meng Hao gaped in shock at this sudden reversal. That was especially so when he saw that the Dao light shining off of Ji Xuelin had intensified. From the look of it, he was experiencing a cultivation base breakthrough, which caused Meng Hao to breathe deeply.

“I can’t believe the Ji Clan’s magic is so Heaven-defying!” he thought. “Cultivate Karma, revere Karma, sever Karma….”

He watched wide-eyed as Ji Xuelin suddenly clasped hands and bowed to him.

“Elder Brother Meng, many thanks for helping me to sever the Karma from that year.”

The Chosen who owed Meng Hao spirit stones immediately began to clasp hands toward him and bow in thanks.

“Many thanks, Elder Brother Meng!”

“Many thanks, Fellow Daoist Meng Hao!”

Meng Hao abruptly took a few steps back. He was actually a bit angry. He had merely come here to collect some debts; how could it have ended with him helping them?

“Who was that old geezer who was talking just now?” he thought, frowning. “He’s so powerful! With just a few words, not only was he able to settle the dispute, he provided his clan members with good fortune AND turned me into the grindstone to help them polish their understanding of severing Karma.

“Dammit!” Meng Hao was just about to leave when Patriarch Nine hurried forward, smiling.

“Young friend, what are you doing?” he asked. “How many spirit stones do they owe you? Tell me and I’ll hand them over to you.”

“Uhh, no, that’s fine,” Meng Hao said hastily. “All of us are actually good friends, and I was just pulling a little prank. Let’s leave the debt in place, alright? I’m… I’m in no hurry.” By this point, he was already back at the huge gate.

“No, that won’t do,” said the youthful-looking Patriarch Nine. “There’s no need to say anything more, young friend. You’re being too magnanimous.” He turned to the Chosen. “All of you, tell me how much you owe. And tell me how much Xiaoxiao and the other two owe, too.” Patriarch Nine had also been somewhat enlightened now. He knew that to sever a Karma infection was something of great importance to these Chosen.

To Ji Xuelin and the others, it was clear that great fortune had just arrived. Having just been enlightened about such a great truth, they immediately responded.

“7,650,000!”

“9,180,000!”

“14… 14,000,000!”

“8,330,000!”

“Altogether, Xiaoxiao and the other two probably don’t owe more than 30,000,000….”

When the youthful-looking Patriarch Nine heard how many spirit stones were involved, he stared in shock, then looked deeply at Meng Hao.

“Young friend, you really are very magnanimous. In the future, you’ll surely be incredibly rich.”

“You’re too kind, really,” said Meng Hao clearing his throat, and backing up. “Since Ji Xiaoxiao and the other two aren’t here, they can’t return what they owe personally and it doesn’t count as them settling the debt.” As far as he was concerned, these people from the Ji Clan were a bunch of lunatics. Who would possibly offer to pay back so many spirit stones? If he owed so many spirit stones to someone, he sure wouldn’t pay them back, even if he were beaten to death!

“Really,” he said, “there’s no need to be hasty. How about this… you people get back to what you were doing. My dad asked me to help out around the house, so I’ll head home now….” By this point he was outside the main gate. However, just as he was about to leave, a bag of holding flew out and landed in his hand.

“Inside that bag are all the spirit stones owed to you from the people here. As of now, they have no Karma connected to you.”

There was a booming sound as the Ji Clan’s main gate slammed shut.

Meng Hao chuckled bitterly. The promissory notes in his bag of holding instantly turned to ash. Luckily… there were still three remaining, the ones belonging to Ji Xiaoxiao and the others. Since they weren’t here, they wouldn’t be able to resolve their Karma.

Meng Hao had his money, but was actually a bit depressed. Of course, what he didn’t know was that his matter of collecting his debts had actually shaken the entire Eastern Lands. Countless gazes were being cast in his direction at that very moment.

He looked at the Ji Clan’s main gate, then recalled the iron hoops in his bag of holding. He hesitated for a moment.

“Fudge, who cares about all that crap he said about Karma!? I’m keeping the iron hoops!” With that, he turned, clasped hands to the surrounding cultivators, then turned into a beam of prismatic light that shot off into the distance.

He moved with such speed that in the blink of an eye, no trace of him remained. He reappeared far off in the distance, in the sky above the Eastern Lands. He sent some divine sense out to make sure that no one was watching him, and then his expression darkened.

After a long moment, his eyes flickered.

“I think that in the future, I should get more people to write promissory notes. Getting them to personally write the notes… is Karma….

“Interesting. Perhaps these promissory notes will be of some use in the future!” Eyes glittering, Meng hao was just about to allow the Immortal Ancient Dao Medallion to guide him to the Daoist rite temple when suddenly, he stopped in place.

“If I remember correctly… I still owe money to some people too…. I owe Steward Zhou three pieces of silver….” When he considered the matter, something about it didn’t seem right.

“But when went looking for him before, Steward Zhou was already dead. Should I go find his descendants? Agh! That damned Patriarch Reliance has the State of Zhao on his back. And he left the lands of South Heaven! How… how am I supposed to settle that Karma!” After a moment, he smiled bitterly.

Shaking his head, he sighed, then sent some divine sense into the Immortal Ancient Dao Medallion. Following its guidance, he headed off into the distance.

Several days later, Meng Hao appeared at the edge of a boundless mountain range in the depths of the Eastern Lands. He then vanished as he entered the mountains. As he proceeded along, he saw no signs of life. He passed many treacherous locations, and faced quite a few dangers.

As he traveled further into the mountains, the air up above became restricted, and eruptions of black mist would occur frequently. Despite Meng Hao's incredibly powerful fleshly body, he could still be injured by that black mist, which filled his heart with trepidation after it happened a few times.

"They don't seem like restrictive spells," he thought. "Could it be that somebody buried something here? Whatever they are, they're incredibly dangerous!" After some careful examination, Meng Hao was certain that there were items buried beneath the ground that would explode if stepped on.

There were also naturally occurring restrictive spells which, if he got caught in their explosions, would certainly cause his cultivation base to drop.

Thankfully, the Immortal Ancient Dao Medallion was very effective in avoiding both the restrictive spells and the objects buried underground. Using the medallion's guidance, he was able to proceed onward for several days with no incident. Finally, he found himself on a narrow path which cut deep through the mountains in such a way that he could only see a sliver of the sky up above. This path also was laced with the buried, explosive objects. Thankfully, by means of the medallion, and utmost caution, he was able to proceed along the path for some time without incident. Three times, eruptions occurred, but in the end, he finally found himself… in front of a run-down old temple.

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# Chapter 806: The Wind Stirs in the Ninth Mountain and Sea!

Twenty days earlier on Planet South Heaven, Meng Hao’s father had slashed out with his sword, causing sword qi to descend on the Eastern Lands. It had pierced into a mountain range, to a dilapidated old temple, whereupon the illusory images of a Daoist rite temple had appeared. The whole thing had been unsealed by Meng Hao’s father.

When such a thing happened, it was only the beginning. The invisible ripples that spread out were very difficult to conceal, and in fact made their way from Planet South Heaven out into the starry sky, whereupon many almighty figures sensed them.

On Planet East Victory, about half of the entire planet belonged to the Fang Clan. Actually, if the Fang Clan wished it, they could easily take control of the entire planet.

When the invisible ripples spread out from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple on Planet South Heaven, an ancient voice floated out from inside of an archaic temple on Planet East Victory.

“So, another Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple has been unsealed… and in the lands of South Heaven…. Have the Array Chosen of the clan go to acquire good fortune…. Fang Xiangshan. Fang Yunyi. Fang Donghan. You three have a predestined connection to go seek your fortunes there. Your clan uncle Fang Xiufeng is there on South Heaven, so he might be able to provide you with some assistance.

“As for the other clan disciples, although you might not have the destiny, if you wish to go… you may.” The voice echoed out throughout the entire planet, and in response, incredible energy surged up from three specific locations. One such location was a lake, on the surface of which was a solitary boat. Sitting cross-legged in the boat was a woman wearing white garments, who seemed graceful in an otherworldly way. Her long, lustrous hair fell like a cape down her back, and she seemed ethereal, beyond that which was mortal. On either side of her were two indistinct figures, guards who were there to protect her at all times.

The woman’s eyelashes fluttered as her eyes opened.

“If this is your order, Patriarch, then Xiang’er will definitely make the trip.”

In another location was a wild stretch of mountains that was constantly filled by roars of wild beasts so shocking they seemed capable of ripping the sky apart. This place was actually referred to as a restricted area, and was incredibly dangerous. Standing there in the mountains was a young, bare-chested young man currently locked in deadly combat with a gigantic ape that glowed with glittering, golden light. The ape roared, and shockingly, a Dharma Idol appeared. However, the vicious young man still managed to rip the ape in half, showering himself with copious amounts of blood.

“Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple?” said the young man. “That means that an Immortal Ancient Daoist Medallion will certainly appear! Fang Wei is out training and won’t be back any time soon. This good fortune will certainly fall to me, Fang Donghan!” The young man drank a huge mouthful of ape blood then rose to his feet. Two beautiful woman materialized, not with physical bodies, but with spirit bodies. Any worldly-wise person would know at a single glance that these were Wind Spirit bodies, something that only members of the Wind Spirit people could possess. Few members of their people existed like this; only a handful would be born in any given generation that were suitable to cultivate this type of Wind magic.

The two women picked up a cloak, which they draped over the young man.

The third location was an enormous basin filled with countless chunks of broken stone. These were no ordinary stones; each and every one came from outside in the starry sky, and had fallen to this place as meteors.

As a result, the basin was filled with incredible pressure, and any cultivator inside would find it hard to even take just a few steps. When inside, it felt as if one’s entire body were bound tightly, and if you managed to force yourself to be able to walk, your body might explode.

Currently, a young man could be seen sitting cross-legged in the depths of the basin. He had no hair, and wore golden clothing. Cracking sounds could be heard ringing out from inside of him; his fleshly body was powerful to the extreme. In fact, he could rely on that power alone to resist the shocking pressure that surrounded him.

After a few moments passed, he opened his eyes. Within each of his eyes was the image of what appeared to be a planet, bizarre and strange.

“Interesting. An Immortal Ancient Dao Medallion…. If I could acquire that and give it to Goddess Zhixiang, it would probably improve her impression of me.” The bald young man smiled and rose to his feet. He walked out of the basin, where he was met by two old men who stood guard at his side.

In addition to these three people, there were more than ten others from Planet East Victory who chose to compete for this particular opportunity.

Meanwhile, a slender young man stood in the middle of a desert on Planet West Felicity 1. He wore a green robe which swayed in the wind, and the sword strapped to his back emanated a monstrous sword aura that caused the desert around him to seem like a lake of swords. The music of a Dao floated in the air, and the entire area seemed like a Holy Land. As he stood there, he appeared to be respectuflly listening to someone. After a moment, a brilliant glow appeared in his eyes.

“Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple…. I have the strange feeling that if I don’t go, I’ll regret it. In that case… I’ll just have to go check it out.” He smiled faintly, then transformed into a sword beam that shot off into the distance.

In another location on Planet West Felicity, a veiled woman sat cross-legged on a mountain peak. Demonic qi swirled about, causing wind and thunder to roll through the air. The woman's eyes were closed, and her aura seemed Demonic, and yet not; Immortal, and yet not.

"Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple," she murmured softly, her voice mesmerizing and charming. "The Southern Domain…." She smiled as she seemed to visualize the image of a young man.

"Ah, why not go and see some old friends?" she said. "I wonder if that little punk succeeded in Spirit Severing."

At the same time, on Planet North Reed, a shocking scene was playing out.

The Li Clan of the Southern Domain had merely been a collateral branch. The real Li Clan was extremely famous in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Currently, a massive airship was flying out of the Li Clan. It was fully 30,000 meters long, and at the front of the ship stood ten clan members, who looked out as the ship shot through the starry sky.

One of those clan members was an icily arrogant woman who sat ramrod straight at the head of the group. Moonlight flickered in her eyes, and the mark of a willow leaf could be seen on her forehead. Her expression was as cold as freezing ice.

"The Immortal Ancient Dao Medallion must be mine!"

There were two other locations on Planet North Reed where similarly shocking sights could be seen. In one location, an old man suddenly materialized outside the mouth of an enormous volcano. He clasped hands and bowed deeply.

"Young Lord Luodan, the Patriarch has issued a command. He wants you to lead some people to Planet South Heaven. An Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple has been activated. He wants you to go do your best to seize the good fortune."

Rumble!

A flame-cloaked figure strode out from inside the volcano. He stopped in front of the old man, whereupon the flames that surrounded him merged together to form a flame crow that perched on his shoulder.

He was a tall, strapping young man with a scar that ran from his forehead all the way down to his neck, giving him a thoroughly fearsome appearance. His garments were composed of magical flame symbols, merged together into robes.

“I understand,” he said coolly, then made his way off into the distance.

In another location was a pitch-black bamboo forest, within which lurked numerous recently deceased souls that flew back and forth wildly. A young man sat cross-legged on a bamboo stem. He was handsome, with eyebrows like swords and eyes like stars. His eyes shone brightly as he looked over at another nearby bamboo stem.

On that other piece of bamboo was an old man who looked like a monkey. He was staring at the young man with arrogance and contempt, and the young man was staring back at him.

“You’re coming with me!” the young man said.

“Like hell I am!” the old man replied with arrogant disdain. “Your Grandpa Xu has been famous for years. You think I’m going to go around with a wimpy little brat like yourself? Scram! If I was like the old me, I would already have beaten the crap out of you!”

“I’ll remind you I’m surnamed Wang!” the young man through gritted teeth said.

“Wang Shmong! You bastard!” the old man said impatiently. He waved his hand, sending the young man flailing backward, blood spraying from his mouth.

When he rose to his feet, a ghost flitted over, came to a stop next to the young man, and whispered in his ear. The young man’s eyes flickered with irritation.

“You just wait, you crotchety scoundrel! After your Young Master gets the Immortal Ancient Dao Medallion, I’m gonna come back here and boil you to death! You belong to me!”

“SCREW OFF!” echoed the old man’s impatient voice. “Listen to Grandpa Xu and screw the hell off!”

The unsealing of South Heaven’s Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple sent great waves crashing throughout the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea. In addition to the super planets, there were many other smaller powers who detected the matter. Orders were issued, sending the disciples of many sects to Planet South Heaven to fight for good fortune.

Even the Ji Clan of the Ninth Mountain was sent into motion. Their clan was located on the peak of the Ninth Mountain, where they ruled over all of the Ninth Mountain and Sea!

Inside the Ji Clan, several figures approached a teleportation portal. One of them was a tall, slender man who was surrounded by boundless, swirling Karma. It was difficult to clearly make out his features, but the other Ji Clan members backed up as he neared, expressions of reverence and fanaticism on their faces.

He said nothing as he entered the teleportation portal and sat down cross-legged. When he closed his eyes, boundless Karma surged around him, transforming into thin strands that glowed with brilliant light when they touched each other. Everyone who looked at the scene was dazzled, and felt as if their souls were being tugged over, completely beyond their control.

“This Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple was activated when the Son of Ji is in secluded meditation and can’t emerge. I never thought that Ji Yin would chose to go!” 2

“The year when those three fought over the title of Son of Ji, the Heavens and Earth fell into darkness. Even the sun and moon trembled. The whole Ninth Mountain and Sea was shaken and countless people looked on…. In the end, Ji Yin was defeated, and yet, he is still so powerful that he is viewed as a major rival by the Chosen of the Three Churches and Six Sects, the Three Great Clans, and the Five Great Holy Lands.”

“In this generation… not many could stand up to people like him. Although, I heard that in the Fang Clan there’s someone named Prince Wei who beat Ji Yin in a fight once. I’m not sure if that’s a true story though….”

The whole Ninth Mountain and Sea was in a stir. Countless sects and clans were spurred into motion and sent Chosen disciples toward the lands of the South Heaven, to try to acquire good fortune in the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple.

Even the Ninth Sea, which was located between the Ninth Mountain and the Eighth Mountain, was included in the commotion. You could say that it was a sea, but actually, it was composed of countless fragments of heavenly bodies that emanated spiritual energy, which then turned into a sea of mist.

Rumbling could be heard within that starry sea as an enormous door rose up. As the door appeared above the surface of the sea, countless sea dragons flew out. Trembling, they prostrated themselves in front of the door, which emanated a boundless light, as well as the music of a great Dao. It almost seemed like countless Immortal Divinities were sitting cross-legged in meditation surrounding the door. The energy was completely shocking.

Slowly, the door opened, giving view to an entire world.

A woman walked out from that world. She had long hair that stretched all the way to her calves. She was incredibly beautiful, as if all the charm in Heaven and Earth were collected on her person. She emanated the air of an orchid as she waved her hand, causing the door to close behind her and then sink back down to the bottom of the sea.

“Currently, the Three Great Daoist Societies’ Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite only has four Conclave disciples,” murmured the woman. “That’s one less than my Ninth Sea God World. I can’t let that daoist medallion fall into anyone else’s hands.” She took a step forward, and a roaring sea dragon flew out obediently beneath her feet, then carried her off into the distance at top speed.

In the great Ninth Mountain and Sea, the ancient Fang Clan, the Three Great Clans, the Three Great Daoist Societies, the Five Great Holy Lands, the Three Churches and Six Sects… were all mobilized into action. A vast group of Chosen were all heading toward Planet South Heaven.

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2. This “Yin” is the same yin from yin-yang, which connotes aspects such as the moon, darkness, hidden things, female thing, negative things

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# Chapter 807: Ancient Immortal Daoist Rite Temple!

Planet South Heaven. The vast Eastern Lands.

In the middle of a seemingly endless range of mountains was an area that was considered a forbidden zone by Eastern Lands cultivators. Even Dao Seeking cultivators who entered it would never come back out. According to rumor, there were fearsome entities inside that stopped countless explorers in their tracks and made it so that no one dared to ever enter.

Even a Patriarch of the Ji Clan had on one occasion led a group in to search for the Karma within. However, the entire force was completely wiped out except for the Patriarch, who fled back to warn the Eastern Lands' Ji Clan to never again set foot inside the area.

Actually, that Patriarch still resided in the Ji Clan. He was the peak Immortal Realm young man who had just recently lost his arms!

Even he was incapable of penetrating the depths of the mountain range. En route, his force was completely rocked by the restrictive spells. This place was a mystery relating to the lands of South Heaven, and as such, the Ji Clan Patriarch did not report the matter to his superiors. He knew that… there were far too many terrifying aspects to the place.

He never attempted to enter the place again. As far as he was concerned, the only way to do so was by use of incredibly powerful clan treasures. Without such treasures, it was simply impossible.

However, such powerful clan treasures were few and far between. Furthermore, considering his status in the clan, it didn't matter that he was in charge of the forces on Planet South Heaven. He still did not have access to such things. The Immortality Bestowal Dais was one such treasure, but it possessed its own consciousness and was not something that he could wield by means of force. Other treasures… were only bestowed upon Chosen disciples of the clan.

No one really understood why Planet South Heaven was so unique. There was actually no single power that held complete sway. Even the Ji Clan's dominant position was maintained only by the threat of their clan's military might. It was a sharp contrast to Planet East Victory, where the Fang Clan occupied half of the planet, and yet could easily take over the entire planet if they wished.

In the lands of South Heaven, there were four main areas, each with their own core Daoist teachings and doctrines. If one investigated the matter, it became obvious that… most of the sects on South Heaven did not actually originate there. The majority were auxiliary branches of sects that existed outside the lands of South Heaven.

It was as if most major powers wished to leave some of their core Daoist teachings and doctrines behind there.

Furthermore, it was in the lands of South Heaven that Meng Hao's father had become the Prison Warden of the Ninth Mountain. At first, the word "Prison" seemed to explain a lot….

And yet, when Meng Hao asked about it, his father told him that the word "Prison" actually didn't carry the usual meaning of the word!

Regarding the particulars, he offered no further explanation. His expression was vague, as if he himself felt that the truth was so unbelievable that it caused him to be at a loss for words.

In any case, the lands of South Heaven… were completely unique!

Meng Hao had transcended his Seventh Year Tribulation there, and the League of Demon Sealers had also passed down their legacy there. Patriarch Blood Demon had hidden there when the ancient Demon

Immortal Sect was destroyed. Even more unbelievable to Meng Hao was that… there was a mighty mortal empire, the Great Tang!

Meng Hao was even more astonished when he thought about the Tang emperor.

One thing that Meng Hao was very perplexed about was the area beneath the Ancient Dao Lakes, where he had participated in the trial by fire and heard the Overseer mention an ancient treaty. And there was… the terrifying experience of the final level.

The Essence of the Divine Flame!

All of it left Meng Hao feeling quite at a loss. Now, here he was, having followed the guidance of the Immortal Ancient Dao Medallion to this place deep in the mountains. When he caught sight of that ancient temple, his heart trembled.

That was because, all of a sudden, his vision swam and he saw a completely different and unbelievable place.

It was a majestic Daoist rite temple that stretched seemingly without end. Mountain peaks, vegetation, everything around him vanished. He now stood on the green limestone-paved main square of that enormous temple.

Countless figures sat cross-legged around him, and each was so powerful that Meng Hao couldn’t help but gasp. They seemed like innumerable Immortal Divinities sitting there in meditation. The music of great Daos floated around in all directions, and the sun and moon trembled in the sky as if here, in this place, they were incapable of emitting any light.

In the middle of the Daoist rite temple was an altar, upon which an old man sat cross-legged. He exuded the air of a transcendent being, and a faint smile could be seen on his lips as he gave a sermon on the Dao. His voice was muffled and indistinct and seemed to harmonize with and meld into Heaven and Earth. Meng Hao couldn’t quite make out what he was saying, but he could see that many of the people who were listening to his sermon seemed to be gaining enlightenment.

It was at this point that the old man lifted his right hand up into the air, waved it about… and caused an enormous “Immortal ” character to appear!

It was was an azure “Immortal ” character!

It was simply a character, and yet it caused all the colors in Heaven and Earth to fade. The sun and moon dimmed, and Heaven and Earth seemed to prostrate themselves in worship to it in much the same way that people would.

Meng Hao trembled as he looked around at the terrifying world around him. Each green slab of limestone beneath his feet seemed to emanate an indescribable energy filled with Immortal qi. The intensity of that Immortal qi was difficult to even comprehend.

Also visible in the Daoist rite temple were nine gigantic cauldrons scattered about in different locations. Puffs of green smoke wafted out of them, and numerous worlds could be seen inside the smoke as it swirled up into the air.

Up in the sky… were heavenly bodies. A river of stars flowed; the sun and moon rose and fell. Even more unbelievable was that almighty figures could be seen flying about up in the sky. Occasionally, they would stretch out a hand and pluck a star out of the river of stars! It would then be refined by a massive illusory hand. When the hand returned to its owner, the star would be a glittering treasure in that person’s palm!

There were other people who stamped their feet onto the ground, causing massive rifts to appear. Subterranean fire would rise up and transform into living creatures which resembled Earth spirits. The cultivators would snatch them up and then use them to pull war chariots that screamed through the sky, chariots to which were harnessed thousands of Earth spirits.

There was one man up in the sky who laughed heartily then spoke a few words. Popping sounds could be heard as his body grew rapidly. In the blink of an eye, he was so large that you couldn’t even see his entire body.

The only thing that could be seen… was a toe that seemed to fill the entire world as far as the eye could see!

As for how large his body was, it was impossible to even imagine.

Flying about and plucking stars!

Refining spirits from the depths of the Earth!

Rising up to shoulder the universe!

All of these images swirled together in Meng Hao’s eyes, finally merging into one… into a dilapidated temple.

The temple’s main door was shut, and the grounds were in a state of complete disrepair. Portions of the outer wall were collapsed, making it so that you wouldn’t even need to pass through the gate as there were “entrances” all around. Through these gaps the inner temple hall could be seen, where there should have been glorious statues of deities. Presently, though, all of the statues were in various states of disintegration. Their former glory now existed only in the praises uttered by later generations, and their eternal legends had long since crumbled into a void of nothingness.

There was a bronze oil lamp, covered in layers of rust that told the story of its ancientness. Oil burned within the lamp, emanating faint popping sounds. Lamplight shone out in all directions, within which could be seen the projections of numerous shadowy figures.

Other than that, everything was completely still and silent.

A well could be seen in the courtyard, the bottom of which was pitch black. Perhaps evil spirits lurked there, but it was impossible to tell. However, a single glance at the well would leave anyone scared stiff. Next to the well was a bamboo trellis, covered with dried-up vines. From the look of it, a grapevine had grown up to cover the bamboo trellis many, many years ago, providing a shady and cool place to rest one’s head.

Underneath the bamboo trellis were some dried up white flowers, which were completely unremarkable in appearance.

Meng Hao stood there quietly. Everything he had seen amidst the silence suddenly caused his scalp to grow numb. Were it not for the fact that his father had instructed him to come here, he would immediately turn around and get as far away from this place as possible.

His heart trembled, and although he felt no pressure weighing down him, he found it difficult to breathe. There was no visible danger, yet he felt an unprecedented sense of crisis in his heart.

Everything about this place was completely bizarre!

Why was there a temple in these mountains? Clearly the temple was not in harmony with its surroundings; it was as if it had flown here from some distant place in some age long past.

Meng Hao took a breath, steeling himself, and then stepped forward. After only walking a few steps, he suddenly heard the sound of weeping. It was woman, choked with sobs, the sound of which caused Meng Hao’s hair to stand on end as it floated past. His cultivation base surged with power, and he whipped his head around to look behind him. However, he saw nothing strange.

There wasn’t even a wind blowing….

After a moment’s silence, his eyes flickered and he slapped his bag of holding. Instantly, the Immortal Ancient Dao Medallion appeared in his hand. Meng Hao wasn’t sure whether or not it was specifically because of the medallion, but now, the place didn’t seem as cold and sinister as it had.

He carefully proceeded forward until he was in front of the main gate. The strangeness of this place made him feel that it would be best not to jump over the wall or find alternate routes to enter. The best way to go in… would be the straightforward and above-board way.

He waved his sleeve, pushing the door of the temple open.

He had assumed the door would actually be difficult to open, but it wasn’t. It creaked open, revealing the courtyard, the main temple hall, and the well.

A cold wind blew, making it seem as if something was walking past him. Meng Hao’s face flickered as the feeling grew stronger. He circulated the Immortal qi inside his body, focusing it on his right eyes. After blinking several times, he looked around.

There was nothing except for ruins.

Meng Hao chuckled bitterly.

“Dad, what the hell kind of place did you send me to…?”

He took a deep breath and then stepped inside. Overall, the temple wasn’t very large, nor was the courtyard. Meng Hao glanced over at the well, and couldn’t shake the feeling that there was something very strange about it. He studied the bamboo trellis for a moment, and was just about to walk further into the courtyard when suddenly his scalp vibrated. He stopped in place and jerked his head to look back at the bamboo trellis. Panting, he walked over to the trellis and looked closely at the dried up little flowers beneath it. He couldn’t prevent a look of astonishment from appearing on his face.

“These…. These are… Resurrection Lilies!” Meng Hao was more than familiar with Resurrection Lilies and was completely astonished to find that… all of the little flowers were Resurrection Lilies!

However, these Resurrection Lilies… were apparently just garden-variety flowers in this place. The scene caused him to breathe heavily; this place really was… completely veiled in mystery.

Currently, the sky was darkening as evening fell. Meng Hao hesitated for a moment as he looked around at the dilapidated statues of deities, and the dust that covered everything. Even the prayer mats that could be seen were old and worn out, but after a moment of thought, he knelt down on one of them and began to offer worship to one of the broken statues.

“Bless and protect me, Divine Immortal. Bless and protect me, Divine Immortal….” After murmuring his worship, Meng Hao felt as if the sinister air around him had again faded a bit. Apparently his prayers were effective. As he rose to his feet, a wind blew, and the lamplight flickered. Dust was lifted up from the ground, causing Meng Hao’s eyes to narrow. Now that some of the dust had been moved, he could see that the ground… had an enormous character carved into it!

Immortal !

It was the same character he had seen in the vision he had experienced moments ago, when the old man had waved his hand.

It looked completely identical!

When he saw the character, a crude and ancient aura blasted against his face, almost as if someone was whispering something to him. It almost sounded like someone giving a sermon about the Dao, an archaic voice echoing out from ancient times.

However, Meng Hao’s heart lightened at the thought of his good luck. He sat down cross-legged and retrieved the Immortal Ancient Dao Medallion, then focused all of his attention on the character.

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B) I think the translation probably sucks

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# Chapter 808: Projections Passing Down Daos!

It was difficult to say how much time passed. It seemed both long and short. Outside, the sky gradually darkened, and faint moonlight spread out into the blackness.

Under the darkness of night, the flame in the bronze oil lamp danced back and forth, and it almost seemed as if the shadow of a person existed in the wick, looking up at the moon….

Shadows began to appear inside the temple, revealed by the lamplight. As the lamp's flame danced, the shadows seemed to sway back and forth gracefully.

Meng Hao didn't realize it, but the color of his garments were fading into a gray color, and were actually becoming tattered. It was as if his clothes were passing through time, becoming ancient even as he sat there cross-legged.

His whole person exuded this same feeling, as if his soul were being transported back through time to the ancient Daoist rite temple, to listen the music of the Dao. At the same time, the effects to his soul spread to his body, causing it to become ancient.

Deep night….

Suddenly, the sound of weeping floated out. It drifted out through the night air, clear and vivid. As the weeping echoed about, it gradually transformed into faint sighing.

“Do Immortals still exist in this world…?” asked a voice. Then there was silence, broken only by the rustling of the leaves in the trees.

At the same time, wisps of smoke began to rise up from the well. If there were someone standing next to the well, they would surely be shocked to find that it was filled with countless long strands of hair!

The black hair swirled out from within the well and then sank to the ground, where they spread out quickly to fill the entirety of the courtyard. It was at this point that cracking sounds could be heard coming from the bamboo trellis.

A dried up vine sagged down, making an arc-like shape that almost resembled a swing. It began to rock back and forth, almost as if… there were a person sitting on the vine, using it as a swing!

The sound of wailing drifted out from within the well, and laughter could be heard from the swing. They mixed together to fill the courtyard with an eerie sense of bizarreness. As for Meng Hao, he sat there in the courtyard, eyes closed, completely motionless.

He was surrounded by the flickering lamplight and the shadowy projections it revealed. The projections distorted and rippled, and then began to move, walking to and fro in the courtyard. Some sat down cross-legged, some prostrated themselves in worship. Some concocted medicinal pills, some held brooms in their hands that they used to sweep the floor. Some of them even approached the area where Meng Hao sat and peered at him curiously.

As for the dilapidated statue of the god, it now stood tall and straight like it had in the past. The statue’s shadow, which stretched out beneath it, suddenly separated from the statue and transformed into an old man.

The old man’s clothing looked very similar to Meng Hao’s long, worn-out robe. The man’s face was ashen, and blood oozed out from his eyes, ears, nose and mouth; severe injuries could be seen on his head. He looked like an evil spirit as he approached Meng Hao. It was impossible to tell what he was thinking as he floated to a position behind him, where he stood and looked down at the top of Meng Hao’s head.

A moment later, all of the projections within the courtyard turned and looked at Meng Hao. They approached, crowding around to stare at him closely.

Up above in the sky, black clouds covered half of the moon, and a soft wind blew across the land, along with an intermittent wail that sounded like mournful, choked sobbing.

It was at this point that the ground trembled, and muffled moaning sounds could be heard coming from deep within the temple.

“Home…. This place isn’t my home…. I want to go home….

“Take me home…. Take me home, Paragon… take me home….”

When the voice drifted out, the projections in the temple all trembled. In the temple’s courtyard, the black hair spreading out from the well suddenly flew up into the air. The swinging vine suddenly stopped moving.

At the same time, a head emerged from the well. It was illusory and pallid, and the expression on its face was incredibly terrifying and ferocious. Apparently this was… a head that had been soaking in the well’s water for millions of years, and yet had not decomposed. It was the head of a woman, whose listless, pupil-less eyes stared at the ground.

No figure was visible on the swing, and yet drops of black blood dropped down onto the ground beneath it.

It was at this point that a tremor ran through Meng Hao’s body. A hair-raising sense of terror filled him, and he opened his eyes. When he looked up, his scalp went numb as he realized that a pitch-black figure was standing directly in front of him.

In fact, he was completely surrounded by shadowy projections, all of whom appeared to be on the verge of touching him. His mind was sent completely spinning.

The shades seemed to know that Meng Hao had awakened, and they floated backward and then sat down cross-legged some distance away from him. Meng Hao could clearly see all of the projections, as well as the black hair in the courtyard. He saw the swinging vine, and the floating head. Feeling more creeped out than ever, he slowly rose to his feet to leave the temple.

He was filled with the feeling… that this place wasn’t somewhere he should continue loitering about in.

As he stood, he suddenly felt a coldness behind him. Without thinking about it, he turned his head and caught sight of an ancient face only an inch away from his own, blood flowing out of its eyes, ears, nose and mouth. Completely startled, Meng Hao staggered backward a few steps, his eyes widening.

“Who are you!?” he cried, sending his cultivation base rotating rapidly. His Dharma Idol appeared behind him, and his heart began to pound rapidly. The strangeness of this place left him feeling completely and utterly unsafe.

The old man’s expressionless eyes completely ignored Meng Hao. He turned and walked back toward the statue of the deity. As he neared it, his body gradually faded and then disappeared altogether.

The other projections in the area were still there, some sitting in meditation, some walking about, some practicing cultivation.

Meng Hao was panting rapidly as he began to leave. However, when he reached the threshold of the temple, he stopped in place and looked over to see a shadowy projection sitting cross-legged off to the side. It had a pill furnace in its hand, and was apparently concocting pills.

Furthermore… Meng Hao had never seen this method of pill concoction before; it was as if through absorbing the power of Heaven and Earth, no medicinal plants or other physical ingredients were needed!

Meng Hao gaped in shock. After looking more closely for a moment, his eyes began to shine with a strange light. He was a grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy, and his skill in concocting pills could be considered the highest in the lands of South Heaven, with the exception of Pill Demon.

“Creating something from nothing….” murmured Meng Hao, his eyes shining brightly. Back in the ancient Demon Immortal Sect, he had created a pill from nothing, and it still remained in his bag of holding. He had never consumed it.

Meng Hao felt that it was a miracle that he had even succeeded in concocting that one pill, and he had even tried on one occasion to duplicate it with the copper mirror, but had failed.

Now he saw this dark projection concocting pills here in this place. Its hands moved with adept proficiency, calm and unhurried.

Meng Hao blinked, and then decided not to leave. He looked around at the projections around him. Some were practicing cultivation, some were walking to and fro, some were utilizing incantation gestures to perform various Daoist magics.

The scene caused Meng Hao’s mind to tremble.

“Passing down Daos!!” he murmured. “They’re passing down Daos!!” His heart trembled even more than before. A Dao was not something to pass down lightly, but that was exactly what these projections were doing. It was as if all he had to do was go observe and contemplate them, and he would have the opportunity to acquire them.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, then looked back at the dark projection who was concocting pills. He walked over and sat down cross-legged in front of it and watched as it worked. The light in his eyes grew brighter and more brilliant. After a while, he pulled out his own pill furnace and began to imitate the dark figure’s pill concocting technique.

A night passed. It wasn’t a long time, but it felt very, very long to Meng Hao. It felt like such a long time that he couldn’t properly wrap his head around it. Finally, when the sky began to grow bright, the shadowy figure finished concocting a single pill, which it casually tossed out into the mountain range outside of the temple. At some point, Meng Hao became aware that he had also successfully concocted his own pill.

The sky was light now.

The projections in the temple faded away. The strands of hair in the courtyard vanished, and the vines returned to their original state, as if none of it had ever happened. Panting, Meng Hao looked down at the medicinal pill in his hand, which was surrounded by swirling blackness.

Actually, it was not really a pill. It was only a mass of swirling black mist. However, when the sunlight touched it, a black peel formed around it, and then it turned into a black-peeled medical pill.

There was no medicinal aroma to it, but rather, an explosive power.

Meng Hao frowned as he looked at the black-peeled pill. After a moment of thought, he squeezed it, whereupon his face instantly fell. Without hesitation, he threw the pill away from him. In midair, it began to emanate black mist, and then suddenly exploded.

A shockwave swept about in all directions.

“An incomplete concoction… and this is the botched product,” he thought. “But it was still creating something from nothing.” He was actually quite shocked. The explosive power caused by the medicinal pill’s explosion was like an attack.

“It’s too bad it’s so unstable. Simply touching it causes it to explode. Although now that I think about it, something about it seems familiar.” Eyes flickering, he thought back to the path he had trod up to this ancient temple. He had encountered many areas where the ground exploded. All of a sudden, he thought about how the figure had thrown out the medicinal pill just now, and everything clicked….

“This thing… has another use.” Eyes glittering, he thought for a moment, then produced his pill furnace and began to use the same method he had learned the previous night to absorb the spiritual energy of Heaven and Earth and use it to concoct more pills.

After several failures, he finally succeeded in producing two of the same swirling masses of black mist. When the sun touched them, they were covered over with a black peel. Holding the pills in his hand, he flew out of the temple. After a bit of experimentation, he found that the explosive effect would be activated simply by throwing it out. It could be used as a trump card.

“Burying it seems like a waste. I can’t really control it. Throwing it out directly is the best way to use it. With something like this, I have another life-saving technique at my disposal. It’s too bad though. This thing is pretty explosive, but appears to be connected to the unique aura of this place. I doubt I’ll be able to concoct them outside.” After some more thought, he returned to the temple and continued to concoct pills.

Several days passed. At night, Meng Hao would seek enlightenment regarding the Daos being passed down by the projections. During the day, he would concoct medicinal pills. Soon he had several dozen. He tried to imbue them with divine sense, but it was a failure and he eventually gave up on the idea.

He even left the mountains at one point to try to concoct the pills on the outside, but it didn’t work. That confirmed his theory. This type of pill… could only be concocted using the spiritual energy that existed inside the temple.

After returning to the temple, he continued to concoct the unusual black-peeled explosive medicinal pills.

“I imagine that the Chosen from the other worlds will be arriving soon….” His eyes glittered with anticipation regarding the fighting that would break out when they came. He keenly desired to see how he measured up to them, and… exactly how strong or weak he was.

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# Chapter 809: Immortal Ancient Dao Meridian!

Time passed. During the nights, Meng Hao closely observed the projections in the temple. Upon deeper examination, it became clear that all of them were different from each other. There were men and women, old people and young. Some of the figures weren’t even human, but were strange and beast-like.

After the passage of so much time, Meng Hao had long since lost any sense of fear toward the place. He was also used to all the bizarre scenes that played out. Every day at nightfall, the black strands of hair would emerge from the well. Eventually, Meng Hao found that sitting cross-legged in the hair would fill his body with an incredible coldness that benefited his attempts to gain enlightenment from the figures passing down their Daos.

As for the weeping which came from within the well, after listening to it for some time, Meng Hao realized that there was a bit of charm within the wails….

Then there was the vine swing. Meng Hao had the feeling that some great Dao existed within the swinging motion. An image appeared in his mind of a swing, swaying endlessly back and forth.

Meng Hao even got used to the voices calling out about “going home.” Occasionally he would impulsively stamp his feet on the ground in annoyance when the voices disturbed his cultivation.

Essentially, he got used to everything that went on in the temple. That included the old man with blood oozing from his orifices. Whenever Meng

Hao sought enlightenment, the old man would stand behind him and look at the top of his head.

After a while, he simply allowed the man to continue to do so.

Meng Hao changed his clothes several times, but no matter how new they were, whenever he awoke after having sunk into enlightenment, the clothes would be tattered and old. Finally, he gave up and stopped changing them.

Recently, Meng Hao had been observing one particular figure who sat cross-legged in meditation. However, powerful ripples emanated off of the figure’s body. After observing for quite some time, the air in front of Meng Hao grew blurry, and a black roc appeared that emanated a savage energy.

“This is a Daoist Magic form!”

It made Meng Hao think of his battle with the Northern Reaches’ Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief, and the bizarre divine ability he’d used to transform into various wild beasts. In Meng Hao’s opinion, it had been completely extraordinary.

He continued his contemplation, losing himself to it. It was as if he actually returned to that ancient Daoist rites temple to hear the music of the great Dao. He awoke when the sky turned bright, having been significantly enlightened.

Everything in the temple returned to normal around him. Meng Hao could sense that he had made great strides in terms of his cultivation base. His personal Dao Seeking did not contain discrete stages. According to what his father told him, the result of using the Mist Blade to perform his Severing turned his Dao Seeking into a single stage and put him at the very peak of the entire Spirit Realm.

His next step would be true Immortality.

To Meng Hao, the imparting of these strange Daos was incredibly suitable to his current situation. After working with the Daoist magic of Roc

Transformation, he proceeded on to another Dao Projection after gaining some enlightenment.

Unfortunately, he could not gain enlightenment regarding all of the Dao Projections. Many were in conflict with his personal direction, which made it impossible for him to understand them.

Meng Hao was now watching a Dao Projection near the wall of the temple. The image that flickered in his eyes was that of a man floating in a clear sky. The man’s hand formed into the shape of a claw, which he stretched out, causing the land beneath him to shatter into pieces.

“It’s a claw attack method!”

Meng Hao’s consciousness trembled as he imprinted the image into his mind.

A few days later, Meng Hao had just gained enlightenment regarding another Dao Projection when he saw a Daoist off in the distance stretching his hand out and grabbing onto a star. He then pulled down violently, causing the star to tremble and transform into a resplendent glow in the palm of his hand.

“That’s… a… magic of Star Plucking!”

Meng Hao immersed himself in gaining enlightenment from the Daoist legacies in the temple. Eventually, he realized that the flame in the bronze oil lamp was showing signs of flickering out. He could tell that when that happened, the good fortune in this particular Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple would be over.

Several days later, Meng Hao took a deep breath as he woke from meditation. By this point, he had identified all of the Daoist Projections that he could gain enlightenment from; unfortunately they were quite miscellaneous. There were only three that Meng Hao truly had a basic understanding of.

The Claw Attack, the Roc Transformation, and the Star Plucking Magic.

However, these were just types of magic, not Daos.

“There are millions upon millions of magics, but the Dao can only exist in the heart. Where exactly is… the Dao of this Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple?” Meng Hao looked around until his gaze finally came to rest on the dilapidated statue of the deity.

Finally, he stood and approached the deity. After sitting down cross-legged, he looked up at the broken statue.

The deity statue was more than half destroyed. It had no head, and its torso was half gone. It was only possible to tell that it was sitting cross-legged, with its right hand extended to form an incantation gesture.

Meng Hao could make the same gesture, but when he did, he got no special feeling at all from the statue.

Feeling a bit annoyed, he turned to the old man behind him and said, “You’ve been following me around for half a month already. Is my head that interesting to stare at?”

Looking at the man, Meng Hao didn’t think he looked fierce or frightening at all any more, just dull and lifeless. “You’re formed from the shadow cast by the fire of that oil lamp. Don’t tell me you’ve been watching me this half-month for no reason at all?”

“Immortal!” the old man suddenly said, his voice hoarse and scratchy.

Meng Hao’s eyes widened. This was the first time the old man had spoken in the entire half month.

“What did you just say?”

“Immortal!” repeated the old man. “This statue is an Immortal!”

Meng Hao gaped.

“Do you wish to become Immortal?” the old man blurted. His eyes glowed with a strange light as he stared at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao was now starting to once again feel that this old man was very strange. His eyes narrowed slightly as he said, “I only have half a step to take and I’ll be a true Immortal.”

“How could Immortal be split between true and false…? That’s an incorrect path.” The old man shook his head, and from the look in his eyes, he seemed to be recalling the past. Then he murmured: “An incorrect path…. Has the legacy been cut off…? Too many years have passed since that war….”

All of a sudden the old man started laughing crazily. “They’re all dead! The land is shattered! The river of stars is cut off….” The man continued to laugh, then started to pace back and forth in the temple, weeping.

“Cut off! I can’t suppress the living, I can only suppress the ghosts….

“Gone, everything’s gone….”

Meng Hao’s mind was spinning. He looked at the projected image of the demented old man, and realized he seemed to be filled with an ancient forlorn sadness. The weeping from the well grew more shrill, and more blood dripped down from the swinging vine.

“Senior, which war are you talking about?” Meng Hao asked.

The old man laughed and wailed. The flame in the bronze oil lamp danced wildly, and the projections all rose trembling to their feet and walked around Meng Hao in circles, laughing and weeping.

Meng Hao was panting, and was on the verge of saying something when suddenly a popping sound rang out as… the bronze lamp was extinguished.

Everything vanished.

Darkness reigned. Meng Hao looked around in shock before noticing that far off in the distance, the sun was just beginning to rise.

Meng Hao was in a bit of a daze for the rest of the day. The old man’s words, and all the other events of the previous night, left him feeling that there was some incredible mystery pertaining to this Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple.

It was a secret that perhaps… related to all the lands of South Heaven!

“Why did the enormous Daoist rite temple… disappear just now?

“All of those projections… where did they go to?

“Why is the temple hall in such a state of ruin?”

The day passed, and when night fell, the bronze lamp burned once again, although the flame was dimmer than it had been at the beginning. The old man appeared again. This time, he positioned himself next to the door of the temple hall. He was no longer weeping or crying, but rather, stood there silently.

After a moment, the man suddenly looked over at Meng Hao. “Your father is powerful. Even in the era in which I lived, he would be considered a powerful expert.

“He is also aware that his path is the incorrect one. However, he can do nothing to change that. If he could, he would be even more powerful.

“You have a good foundation, even better than many of the cultivators from my era. Do you… wish to become Immortal? I do not speak of any sort of false or true Immortal. Just Immortal…. A full 100-meridian Immortal!

“Only by opening all 100 meridians can one truly be considered Immortal! Even in past ages, full 100-meridian Immortals were few and far between. Only those who inherit great Daos might be able to reach that state, and with great difficulty at that.”

Meng Hao’s heart trembled. According to his father, 80 meridians made one Chosen, 90 meridians were rarely seen, and 100 meridians… supposedly didn’t exist. Meng Hao nodded in response to the man, his eyes glittering.

“Magic can not be spoken of lightly, and Daos cannot be passed down recklessly. Now that this place has been unsealed, the whole Ninth

Mountain and Sea will be set astir….This bronze oil lamp was kindled in ancient times, but what it illuminates is the present.

“It has already burned for more than ten days, and will soon be extinguished. Use your blood as the oil and ensure that it continues to burn unceasingly for seven cycles of seven days, forty-nine days. Do not allow anyone to set foot into the temple hall and touch it. Ensure that only your aura is present in it from beginning to end.

“If you do these things… if the flame burns for seven cycles of seven days, forty-nine days, then it will emit a strand of Immortal Ancient Dao Qi. Fuse that into your body, and it will become an Immortal Ancient Dao Meridian!

“If you have that Dao meridian, given the proper circumstances, you can gain enlightenment of the Dao of Immortality!” The old man gave Meng Hao a profound look, then turned and merged back into the deity statue.

As Meng Hao stood there silently, a glow of determination filled his eyes. He looked down at the “Immortality” character carved into the ground, and an ancient aura suddenly rose up from within his heart to fill his whole body.

“False Immortal. True Immortal…. Immortal!” he murmured. The bronze lamp abruptly became dimmer, and showed signs of being extinguished. Meng Hao walked forward, cut a slice into his wrist and poured some of his blood into the lamp. Crackling noises could be heard as the flame, instead of being extinguished, actually burned brighter.

Meng Hao sat down cross-legged in front of the lamp, feeling an unprecedented level of clarity in his mind.

A few more days passed. Suddenly, brilliant beams of light appeared in the starry sky outside of Planet South Heaven. An enormous teleportation portal could be seen which caused all of the stars to dim. A glow of starlight spread out in all directions as several dozen figures appeared in the middle of the teleportation portal.

The first three were the Chosen from the Fang Clan. Behind them were more than ten additional Fang Clan members, as well as their accompanying Dao Protectors from the clan.

Their appearance caused the starry sky to shudder. However, most of them were not in the Immortal Realm, and thus could not stay out in the starry sky for long periods of time, requiring others to protect and escort them. Their cultivation bases were in between Dao Seeking and the Immortal Realm, as were those of the three Chosen.

However, there were some clan members who were beyond the Spirit Realm, and although they were not Chosen, their cultivation bases were Immortal. Their appearance on the scene was completely shocking.

“We’re here. This is Planet South Heaven!”

“It seems the Fang Clan is the first party to arrive on the scene. Let’s go. It’s time to acquire some good fortune!” The group of a dozen or so people, including the Dao Protectors, immediately shot toward Planet South Heaven at top speed.

The three Chosen among the group kept their distance from each other. Each one of them was a person who the other clan members looked up to with reverence. The woman was Fang Xiangshan, and the other two included the bald young man with stars in his eyes and the incredible fleshly body, Fang Yunyi. The other was the one who bathed in the blood of wild beasts, Fang Donghan! 1

These three were known as the Three Great Chosen of the Fang clan. They had not yet reached the Immortal Realm because they were suppressing their cultivation bases in the hopes of building a solid foundation and breaking into true Immortality.

They were people who refused to become false Immortals!

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# Chapter 810: Two Restrictions!

Just as the group from the Fang Clan was about to enter Planet South Heaven, a cool voice echoed out from down below.

“Now that the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple has been unsealed, there are two rules here on Planet South Heaven. One. Only cultivators in the Spirit Realm may enter Planet South Heaven. Two. The door to South Heaven will only open once. All who wish to enter must wait to do so together with everyone else.”

As the voice echoed into the Fang Clan members’ ears, their facial expressions flickered.

“That was clan uncle Fang Xiufeng!”

“Clan uncle, can you please bend the rules a bit? The Patriarch commanded us to come here for good fortune. Clan uncle, please assist us in acquiring it!”

“Immortals can’t enter? That’s a good rule for others, but we’re all from the same clan! We demand to be allowed to enter!”

The calm voice once again rang out from the lands of South Heaven. “I am the Prison Warden of the Ninth Mountain, and I guard Planet South Heaven. Anyone who breaks one of these two rules… will be struck down.”

Killing intent bubbled up, causing the Fang clan members’ minds to spin. Many were actually enraged. One of the Immortal Realm clan members frowned, and then, relying on the protection his status earned him in the clan, flew directly toward South Heaven.

However, before he could even get close, a beam of sword qi shot up and sliced through him like a sharp knife cutting a blade of grass. Blood spurted out in all directions, and the man's eyes went wide as his body was slashed completely in half. He didn't even have a chance to say anything before he was dead.

Immediately, the Fang Clan members all went silent. The eyes of Fang Xiangshan, Fang Yunyi, and Fang Donghan went wide, and their faces fell.

“Fang Xiufeng, are you saying that we Dao Protectors are not allowed to enter South Heaven?” The voice that spoke was an ancient one. It belonged to an old woman who was positioned behind Fang Xiangshan, and whose eyes glowed with a brilliant light as she spoke.

“You may not!”

“What happens if some accident befalls these members of the younger generation? What then?”

“They are Chosen, and have come to acquire good fortune. They should be prepared to die an early death! Life and death are determined by fate!”

“Just… just because your son is a cripple doesn't mean you should make it hard for other clan members! No matter what you say, they are your juniors. They—”

“I dare you to call my son a cripple again!” Fang Xiufeng's voice was suddenly ice cold, causing the old woman to shiver. Beads of cold sweat began to drip down her forehead, and she didn't speak another word.

It was at this point that an airship could be seen speeding through the void some distance away. More than a hundred people could be seen onboard; this was the Li Clan from North Reed. Sitting in the lead position was the extraordinary woman with the glittering willow leaf mark on her head.

“That's Li Ling'er!” 1

“They say that she’s the Dao Daughter of this generation of the Li Clan! Her cultivation base is extraordinary, and even exceeds peak Dao Seeking. She could face Immortal Tribulation at any time!”

Next, another figure appeared in the starry sky. It was a young man who stood on a flying sword. Sword light spread out in all directions as he sped forward.

His expression was placid, his features handsome. Just barely visible on his forehead was a third eye. As he neared, quite a few members of the Fang Clan and Li Clan looked over, and their eyes flickered.

“That’s Zhao Yifan from the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto, one of the Three Great Daoist Societies. Every generation, they only send two disciples out into the world!”

“People say that he once fought Song Luodan from the Song Clan, and defeated him!”

As the buzz of conversation rose up, a cold snort echoed out. A sea of flames appeared in the starry sky off in the distance, within which could be seen dozens of figures. In the lead position was a young man in a red robe. Perched on his shoulder was a flame crow, and his expression was one of fury. He seemed to emanate the air of a Paragon, and as he flew, the area around him twisted and distorted.

“Zhao Yifan!” he cried. “We didn’t finish fighting last time. Why not pick things up where we left off!?” This young man was none other than Song Luodan of the Song Clan. As he looked at Zhao Yifan, his eyes brimmed with the desire to do battle.

Fang Donghan of the Fang Clan stepped forward, his energy surging. Li Ling’er, daughter of the Li Clan, looked on with a calm expression, but the willow leaf on her forehead emanated an astonishing moon-like glow.

It was at this point that rumbling could be heard from off in the distance as two more teleportation portals appeared in the starry sky outside of South Heaven. Dozens of people appeared within each of the two teleportation portals. In one of them, a veiled woman could be seen. She was slender and graceful, and a bizarre aura emanated out as soon as she appeared on the scene.

Quite a few people looked over at this veiled woman.

In the other teleportation portal, a young man could be seen with eyebrows like swords and eyes like stars. His features were plain, his expression cold. As he stepped forward, his energy surged up with each step. It almost seemed like he wished to exert pressure on the other Chosen, all of whom snorted coldly.

“Demoness Zhixiang from the Demon Immortal Sect!”

“That’s… Clan Prince Wang Mu from the Wang Clan! They say that he has energy from the Wang Clan Patriarch, and that he can even force the Wang Clan’s ancient sword spirit to capitulate to him!”

Next, one teleportation portal after another appeared. Rumbling could be heard as people from the Five Great Holy Lands, the Three Churches and Six Religions, essentially every major power in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, all appeared in the starry sky above South Heaven. Ripples flowed out in all directions, and energy surged that seemed capable of repressing the entire planet.

Cries of astonishment could be heard from all directions. Each one of these groups contained Chosen who were already famous in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, so their appearance here was completely sensational.

It was at this point that suddenly, a scroll painting swirled out through the starry sky toward the congregated cultivators. It was fully 30,000 meters long, completely shocking, and depicted an enormous mountain.

Countless figures were seated cross-legged on that mountain. One of those figures was surrounded by a swirling Karma blade. When he opened his eyes, everything around that he looked at instantly began to tremble mentally.

“The Ji Clan!!”

“The Ji Clan is here! That’s… Ji Yin!”

“The year that the three Ji Clan members fought over the title of Son of Ji, Ji Yin was defeated. However, he is still considered Chosen, and few people of this generation could possibly contend with him!”

Everyone was shaken by the appearance of the Ji Clan; however, the desire to do battle could clearly be seen glowing in the eyes of the various Chosen.

The scroll painting flashed by all of the other cultivators, completely ignoring them as it headed directly toward Planet South Heaven. Before it reached the planet, a beam of sword qi flew out toward it. However, an old man then stepped out from within the scroll painting. He waved his arm to block the sword qi, but then coughed up a huge mouthful of blood and staggered backward three thousand meters. He looked up, shaken.

“Fang Xiufeng, what is the meaning of this!”

The voice of Meng Hao’s father could be heard from Planet South Heaven. “Two things are not permitted. Anyone above the Spirit Realm, and anyone entering ahead of the appointed time. Rule violators will be beheaded.”

The old man’s face flickered. “You….”

The faces of the cultivators from the other powers also flickered, and then stared down at Planet South Heaven.

“Fang Xiufeng…. I heard that he was honored with the position of top Chosen in the Fang Clan. He was a consummately powerful expert who could shake even the Patriarchs of the various sects!”

“It’s too bad that for the sake of his crippled son, he agreed to guard Planet South Heaven for 100,000 years… and not leave it.”

“I also heard about his story. It’s been a few hundred years, so presumably, his crippled son is long since dead. That’s probably why he’s not too happy with all these Chosen.”

“Hmph! Even if his crippled son isn’t dead, there’s no way he could compare to the Chosen of all the sects! Why the hell is Fang Xiufeng not allowing Immortal Realm cultivators to enter!?”

Even as the standoff continued, a sea dragon appeared, floating through the void. It roared, and the stars seemed to become a sea. Everyone looked over at the woman who sat cross-legged atop the sea dragon, her long hair floating around her.

“That’s Fan Dong’er from the Ninth Sea God World!”

“It’s Goddess Fan Dong’er!”

“I can’t believe she’s here!” Everyone was looking over at her, most notably, Fang Xiangshan and Li Ling’er.

Fang Donghan’s eyes gleamed brightly, and Zhao Yifan’s expression brightened. The eyes of Wang Mu from the Wang Clan also flickered brightly.

As of this point, all of the Chosen from the Ninth Mountain and Sea who could come, were present!

Meng Hao’s father’s voice once again drifted up from South Heaven. “The Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple has been unsealed. All of you may enter.”

Someone immediately asked, “If those of us in the Immortal Realm seal our cultivation bases and limit ourselves to the Spirit Realm, can we enter?”

Meng Hao’s father was silent for a moment, and was apparently thinking. Then he said, “If you seal yourself, then yes, you may enter. But if you exceed the Spirit Realm, you will be destroyed in body and soul!”

“Very well!” Although the various groups weren’t happy, this was the mysterious Planet South Heaven, and they didn’t dare to piss off Fang Xiufeng in his capacity as Prison Warden. Furthermore, before coming to

South Heaven, all of the Patriarchs from their various organizations had instructed them to be cautious in all matters.

There were well over a thousand people who now flew toward Planet South Heaven. Those in the Immortal Realm sealed their cultivation bases so that they were at the peak of the Spirit Realm. Together, they formed a cluster of light beams that shot toward the planet.

On that day, the cultivators in the lands of South Heaven looked up to see over a thousand shooting stars flying across the sky. They descended like meteors, emanating astonishing energy that caused the minds of all South Heaven cultivators to tremble.

Many sects immediately ordered their disciples to remain indoors and not emerge.

There were some sect Patriarchs who came out from secluded meditation. There were precious treasures within their sects that emitted brightly shining light, apparently having formed resonances with some of the approaching strangers.

The lands of South Heaven were shaken, but the newcomers did nothing to interfere with the planet itself. Before coming here, they had been strictly instructed that because of the unfathomable mysteriousness of Planet South Heaven, it was not to be unnecessarily disturbed.

Therefore, the over one thousand beams of light whistled through the air but did not near any of the sects there. Relying on the auguries from the clan and sect Patriarchs, they headed directly for the Eastern Lands.

They charged into the deep mountains of the vast Eastern Lands, toward the mountain range that housed the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple. In the blink of an eye, the sky trembled and the land shook, almost as if it were on the verge of tearing itself to pieces. Countless numbers of cultivators noticed the shocking display.

There were some great sects in the Eastern Lands who came to the conclusion that some valuable treasure had appeared. That was the only thing that would cause such an incredible display of power.

However, nobody emerged. As they looked out from within their sects, they could see that many of the most terrifying figures emitted ripples that were only of the Dao Seeking stage. However… some were very close to being Immortal, and were obviously there to protect the younger members.

As for the young people, the feeling they gave people was that they were like gods. Soon they would be respected Immortals with flourishing energy, completely shocking to everyone. Therefore, the sects of the Eastern Lands were all struck with fear.

“These are definitely Chosen from outside of South Heaven. Not even the Ji Clan has emerged… they’re just watching.”

“I wonder what sort of precious treasure appeared to attract so many fearsome Chosen. They… look young, and not because of some art of bodily preservation, but because they truly haven’t practiced cultivation for very long. And yet, their cultivation bases are incredible….”

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# Chapter 811: I’ve Been Waiting!

The sects were shaken, and even the Ji Clan simply looked on from the sidelines. Not a single group from the Eastern Lands made a move. Some of the newcomers, upon passing through the Eastern Lands, were shaken by the draconic qi of the Great Tang. A few even looked a bit greedy and headed in that direction. However, as soon as they neared, the Great Tang’s ninety-five golden dragons roared, and those people exploded into hazes of blood.

That, of course, shocked all of the outsiders; even Fan Dong’er’s eyes widened.

After that incident, no one dared to even get near the Great Tang, but steered clear as they headed toward the mountain range that was their destination.

During all the commotion, two figures could be seen lurking in one of the mortal cities that existed in the vast Eastern Lands. They sat there slurping noodles and looking around with shifty eyes.

The mortals could not see all the beams of light that whistled through the air up above, but these two men could. In fact, they were looking at them quite closely, studying them in detail. They noted the location of their bags of holding, as well as any pendants or jewelry they wore.

“It’s too bad none of them have fur or feathers!” said one of the two, a young man. He shook his head and then slurped up a mouthful of broth. “Pay attention, Little Third. These people are definitely easy marks!

“In the days to come, we’re going to eat and drink to our fill, all thanks to these fat sheep, ripe for the plucking. Come come. Let’s pick one of them.”

Next to the young man was a fat man who suddenly pointed up into the air. “I pick him! One look and I can tell he’s a bad person. Immoral and completely shameless! He is obviously steeped in wicked deeds! Lord Third MUST convert him!”

The person he pointed at was a young man with an arrogant expression on his face. He wore silks and satins, and was surrounded by an entourage of attendants. He even wore a violet crown, making him look extremely powerful and extraordinary.

“Him? Alright. Now, use the method I taught you to turn into a hot babe.” The fat man’s young companion looked at the target with a wily glint as the two of them vanished.

Back in the deep mountains, Meng Hao sat cross-legged in the temple. His eyes suddenly snapped open, and he looked up into the sky.

“The time has come to begin the tempering that father talked about….” he murmured.

“The Immortal Ancient Daoist Rites Temple is a test. If I can pass it, and keep the bronze lantern from being extinguished, then a genuine Immortal Meridian will form in my body!

“I also want to see exactly how awesome these Chosen from outside of South Heaven actually are.” A bashful smile appeared as he thought about all the black-peeled pills he had arranged outside of the temple.

He closed his eyes and continued to wait.

Time passed. A few days later, many Chosen of the Ninth Mountain and Sea were now gathered outside the mountain range, studying the place from afar. Their expressions were somber; in their view, this place was full of mysteries. As they neared, they realized that the airspace up above was restricted, and as they proceeded onwards the restrictions on their movement grew even stronger. There were fatal dangers hidden around every corner that would lead to calamitous results at the slightest inattention.

Of course, anyone who came to this place had made some advanced preparations. The various sects and clans split up and spread out, choosing different routes as they made their way into the mountain range.

Some disciples among the crowd had grim looks on their faces. Apparently something had happened to them in the past few days that had nearly driven them mad. Whatever it was, they weren’t willing to talk to anyone about it, and could only grit their teeth and endure their frustration as they followed the other clans and sects into the mountains.

There were quite a few such disciples, several dozen in fact.

The holy Fang Clan, the Three Great Clans, the Three Great Daoist Societies, the Three Churches and Six Sects, and the Five Great Holy Lands, had all sent people here, with the exception of the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite. In total, there were over a thousand people entering the mountains, clutching magical items in their hands as they attempted to be the first to make their way into the unsealed Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple.

It didn’t take long for the mountains to begin to echo with the sound of magical techniques being employed. Soon, the restrictions in the air above made flight impossible for everyone. Of course, they were prepared for this. However, injuries and deaths still occurred. Nonetheless, as a whole, the group made its way ever closer to Meng Hao.

“The real contest isn’t on the road, but at the actual Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple itself!”

“Whoever gets inside first will have the best chance at getting the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Medallion!”

“Other than the medallion, the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temples always have Dao Projections passing down Daos. There will definitely be chances to get divine abilities and Daoist magics!”

“I’ll kill anyone who tries to compete with me!”

The Chosen of the various sects and clans proceeded forward with glittering eyes.

One of the Five Great Holy Lands was Mount Sun. According to the legends, the mountain had actually been magically transformed from a sun that had fallen out of the sky. All of the people in that area had experienced a sort of baptism, and were blessed with a special bloodline. That was how the Mount Sun Holy Land came to be.

When Lord Ji fought the Heavens, Mount Sun offered powerful support. Therefore, in later days Ji Tian conferred on Mount Sun the status of Holy Land.

There were a few dozen cultivators from Mount Sun in the group that had come to Planet South Heaven. The most impressive of all of them was a young man who was named Taiyang Zi 1. He wore a golden robe that made him look like an actual sun, and radiated intense heat that caused the land around him to burst into flames wherever he went. Quite a few fellow clan members accompanied him, as well as some elder Dao Protectors.

This powerful group charged forward at top speed, and were one of the first to get close to the temple itself.

Eventually, they found themselves in a valley. One of the clan members that was in the lead checked the surroundings and determined that it was free of any obstruction. However, as soon as they set foot inside, a huge explosion rippled out, and a black light shot into the air. The Mount Sun cultivator who was caught up in the blackness screamed miserably and coughed up a mouthful of blood as his body was tossed backwards. At the same time, seven or eight additional explosions could be heard echoing out through the mountains in quick succession. More bloodcurdling screams echoed out.

This gave rise to instant shock on the part of everyone.

Taiyang Zi’s eyes flickered with a serious expression. Everyone exchanged glances, then proceeded forward even more cautiously than before. All of the forces that had come to South Heaven were the same.

Among the Fang Clan cultivators, Fang Donghan’s face was grim, and blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth. He was the one who had just been injured by stepping in the wrong place. If he hadn’t leapt to the side as quickly as he had, he would barely be alive.

In another area, one of the Li Clan cultivators wasn’t so lucky, and was torn to pieces, destroyed in body and spirit. This filled the other Li Clan members’ hearts with horror.

The Ji Clan was moving very quickly, until one of their clan members made a misstep and was ripped to shreds….

Explosions rang out among the sects and churches, followed by bellows of rage.

All of these things were caused by the power of the restrictive spells that only grew stronger and more numerous as they neared the temple. Meng Hao himself had faced dangerous situations several times on his journey to the place, but with the help of the Immortal Ancient Daoist Medallion, had been able to avoid most of them with ease.

By now, Meng Hao could hear the explosions from his position inside the temple hall. He knew that this was a struggle over good fortune, and that hostilities were certain to occur. He took a deep breath, and the desire to do battle gleamed in his eyes. Finally, he stood up and poured some more of his blood into the oil lamp. It was something he had to do on virtually a daily basis, lest the flame flicker out.

Next, he left his second true self sitting cross-legged in the temple hall and walked out into the courtyard. When he reached the main gate and was just about to push it open, he paused, then headed back to the door that led into the temple hall. There, he dug a few holes and carefully placed some of the black-peeled medicinal pills inside. Satisfied with the results, he walked outside of the courtyard gate and sat down cross-legged.

It was time to wait for everyone to arrive!

“If there’s going to be a battle, then I’ll fight to my heart’s content!” he thought. He steadied his breathing, and as he did, the glow of a great Dao began to emanate off of him. There were no distracting thoughts in his head; only the increasingly strong desire to do battle.

His current state formed something of a resonance with his surroundings. All of a sudden, he saw images of cultivators fighting a decisive battle in the ancient Daoist rite temple.

As of this moment, Meng Hao almost didn’t seem to belong to the current world. He was back in ancient times, and was inundated by its aura. His entire person emanated an archaic air.

Coupled with his tattered gray garments, he seemed to be a part of the ancient temple which lay behind him. Anyone who looked at him would have a hard time telling whether or not he was from the modern age, or ancient times.

Several hours passed, during which time explosions rang out constantly. On a few occasions, seven or eight explosions could be heard at exactly the same time, causing the ground to tremble.

Because of all these things, the pace of the powerful clan members and Chosen of the various sects had slowed down to a crawl. Further, the closer they got to the temple, the fewer available paths existed, until there was only one left. Of the over one thousand people who had come, many were dead or severely injured. The survivors now looked at the tiny path that led up into the distance. Nobody seemed willing to go first.

“The fact that there are restrictive spells in this place isn’t surprising. However, a mere step activates the explosive devices under the ground. For some reason, they don’t seem like restrictive spells to me!”

“Is it possible that someone buried these things here on purpose?”

“From the looks of it, that’s exactly the case. That means that the person who buried these things must be up ahead!”

“Dammit! How pernicious! How many of those things did he set up…?”

“I don’t care who did it, when we get to the temple, he’s dead!”

As more people joined the crowd, more and more enraged curses could be heard.

Finally, Taiyang Zi of Mount Sun snorted coldly and stepped forward. His body shone with brilliant light, and his expression was indifferent. Quite a few people looked over.

“Of course they aren’t restrictive spells,” he said coolly. “They are black-peeled medicinal pills!” With that, he extended his hand. A bright glow appeared in his palm, within which was a black-peeled medicinal pill.

“I happened to dig this pill up from a location further back. There is a chaotic qi inside of it, very unstable. It’s obvious that someone buried them here on purpose.”

At this point, Zhao Yifan from the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto coolly said, “Ladies and gentlemen, these black-peeled pills do indeed contain extremely unstable chaotic qi, and it is certain that the path up ahead is riddled with pills just like this one. Why don’t we all join forces to clear the way?”

As a representative of one of the Three Great Daoist Societies, his words carried a lot of weight.

“The chaotic qi in that medicinal pill is very dense,” said Fan Dong’er from the Ninth Sea God World. Her voice was calm and pleasing to the ear, and when the Chosen of the other sects heard her words, they exchanged glances and then began to nod.

Since everyone was in agreement, people began to produce magical items. Ripples that resembled a great Dao flowed out, and a sound like the roaring of dragons and phoenixes could be heard. Beams of light intersected, and the ripples merged together to become a powerful force that surged ahead across the ground. As it passed, it seemed to scrape away the ground itself, cutting out a path about a meter deep.

Figures shot forward as the Chosen employed all the speed they could muster to follow the path toward the temple that could be seen at its end!

When they arrived, they saw a figure sitting cross-legged outside the temple wearing a tattered robe. He emanated an ancient aura, and seemed as archaic as the temple itself. Within the temple behind him could be seen the manifestation of an ancient Daoist rite temple, leaving everyone completely shocked.

The cross-legged man opened his eyes, and he almost seemed to be looking out at ancient times. When he spoke, his voice echoed out, bolstered by an archaic aura.

“I’ve been waiting for you….”

Everyone gasped and stopped in their tracks.

1. Taiyang Zi’s name in Chinese is tài yáng zǐ. “Taiyang” literally means “sun.” Zi means “son” or “child.” Therefore, his name could also be translated “Sun Child” or “Sun of the Son,” or something similar. However, it’s literally his name, not a title, so I’m going with Taiyang Zi

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# Chapter 812: I’m the Groundskeeper

There were already more than ten Chosen who came to a stop when they saw Meng Hao. They had come to the conclusion that someone might have come to this place before them. But when they caught sight of Meng Hao, their thought process was turned on end.

“He’s….”

“He looks young, but from the feeling he gives off, he seems have existed from ancient times all the way until now! Who is he?!”

“Look at his robes! They’ve obviously passed through countless years of time. Just look at them! He obviously didn’t just put on some random tattered robes as a disguise. Those clothes rotted away while he was wearing them!”

“Could it be… could it be that he’s the Dao Protector of this Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple!?”

“That archaic air about him is something you can’t fake. It’s definitely real!”

It really was true that the feeling Meng Hao gave off was not that of a cultivator belonging to their current age. By now, the elder members of the various sects and clans from the Ninth Mountain and Sea were arriving. When they saw Meng Hao sitting cross-legged in front of the ancient temple they couldn’t help but gasp.

“This man’s ancient aura is exactly the same as that of the ancient temple! Could it be… that he really is a Dao Protector?!”

“I once heard a story that in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, when those four other Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temples were unsealed, there were always strange aspects to them. In one, a person like a Dao Protector appeared!”

“But he… looks too young! What if he got here before us and is just trying to pull a fast one on us!?”

Various comments could be heard. Some people were shaken and some were suspicious. As for the Chosen, they were very intelligent people, adept in the arts of scheming. After all, one could not rely on latent talent alone to become an outstanding Chosen.

Although they had received a bit of a shock, they quickly began to look closely at Meng Hao, and strange gleams could be seen in their eyes.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever, but inwardly he was shocked. When he heard their discussions, his heart began to thump with eagerness, and then a bit of a bashful expression appeared deep in his eyes. After a moment, though, it turned serious, and his dispassionate gaze swept over the crowds.

His tattered robes rippled despite the lack of a breeze, and the ancient aura grew stronger. As he intentionally caused the music of the great Dao to grow stronger, Meng Hao slowly began to speak in a very ancient-sounding voice.

“The Immortal Ancient has been unsealed and the great Dao has descended. In this place of legacies, you must decide which path is the correct one…. Cultivators of the junior generation, step forward…. I… have been waiting for you for quite some time….” He lifted his right arm and then flicked his sleeve. However, the flicking of his sleeve caused nothing to happen.

The crowds looked around cautiously, eyes flickering. Seeing that nothing untoward was occurring, Taiyang Zi snorted.

“You’re an impostor!” he said, striding forward. “A deceitful mischief-maker!” However, he only made it three steps before he suddenly stopped in place and stared with unprecedented shock at something up ahead of him.

When the crowds saw this happen, their eyes flickered. Fang Xiangshan took a step forward, as did Fang Yunyi and Fang Donghan. After three steps, all of them trembled and stopped in place, then began to pant as they stared at something up ahead.

A strange gleam could be seen in the eyes of Zhao Yifan from the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto. He, along with Wang Mu and Song Luodan from the Song Clan, all stepped forward. They also stopped after only three steps.

Li Ling’er’s eyes flickered as she stepped forward, along with Ji Yin, around whose body swirled Ji Clan Karma. They were followed by Fan Dong’er from the Ninth Sea Godworld.

Eventually, all of the Chosen stepped forward, as well as their Dao Protectors. Only Zhixiang remained behind as she stared in shock at Meng Hao sitting there cross-legged in front of the temple. She blinked a few times in disbelief and then… almost laughed. 1

By now, just about everyone had stepped forward. As soon as they passed into the three hundred meter area surrounding the temple, they experienced the same shocking vision Meng Hao had seen when he first visited this place.

It was a vision of a grand square made of green limestone. Countless figures practiced cultivation, and on a tall altar, an old man was giving a sermon about the Dao. His voice was impossible to hear clearly, but when he waved his sleeve, a huge “Immortal” character appeared.

A river of stars flowed through the sky, and the moon and sun rose and set. People plucked stars from the sky and stamped onto the ground to extract spirits. A rumbling battleground could be seen, and people gained Dao enlightenment. One man rose to his feet laughing, and his body grew unimaginably large until only a toe was visible. The rest of his body… couldn’t be seen.

Everyone was shaken by what they saw. They almost felt as if they had been transported back into ancient times, and it left their minds spinning. What they saw in the end was a figure sitting cross-legged in front of them, a person that looked… like Meng Hao!

Before they could look closely, the vision faded away and everything returned to normal. Everyone was breathing heavily. Even Taiyang Zi trembled as he looked over at Meng Hao. Now he didn't dare to speak in the same way he had before.

Now, it seemed obvious to them that when Meng Hao had flicked his sleeve earlier, it wasn't that a divine ability hadn't manifested. Instead, it was a Daoist magic that was too profound for them to understand.

The people in the crowd exchanged glances. They didn't want to believe, but the shocking images they had just witnessed felt too real.

A random female disciple clasped hands and bowed deeply to Meng Hao. "Senior… are you… the Dao Protector of this place?"

Having heard her question, everyone looked expectantly at Meng Hao. As for Zhixiang, a strange expression appeared on her face.

The Chosen were completely focused. They might have received a shock just now, but their eyes glittered exactly as they had before. Zhao Yifan looked closely at Meng Hao, and the glow of swords could be seen in his eyes.

Fan Dong'er's expression was tranquil, but a sharp gleam could be seen in her eyes as she looked from Meng Hao to the temple behind him.

Ji Yin had an icy look. He said nothing as he stood there, and yet a strange pressure radiated off of him, and Karma swirled around him the same as ever.

The were all looking at Meng Hao. Meng Hao was now the center of attention of all the Chosen of the sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain. Many of the people who looked at him did so with narrowed eyes.

“I am not the Dao Protector of this Daoist rite temple,” said Meng Hao, his voice quavering. “I am merely the groundskeeper.” A look of reminiscence appeared on his face, something he had learned from the crazy old man in the temple hall.

HIs words instantly caused many people to inhale sharply.

“The groundskeeper? I heard a story once that in many ancient places like this, the most powerful people aren’t the Dao Protectors, but rather, the unassuming groundskeepers!”

“I heard the same thing….” Even as people discussed the matter, an arrogant looking young man stepped out, a dark expression on his face. He wore splendidly decorated garments, and a crown. The power of the stars seemed to swirl around him as he walked out from the crowd.

“That’s the Quasi-Dao Child from the Church of the Immortal Emperor!”

“I heard that he once killed a false Immortal! Of course, he got injured in the process, but that’s something an ordinary Spirit Realm cultivator could never do!”

More discussions buzzed as the young man walked in Meng Hao’s direction. He was followed by dozens of disciples of the Church of the Immortal Emperor, as well as several old men who had sealed their cultivation bases. All of these people wore cold gazes and clearly didn’t believe anything that Meng Hao said.

“I don’t care if you’re a Dao Protector, a groundskeeper, or even if you’re just running a scam. Step aside! I’m going into that temple!”

As they neared, Meng Hao’s face darkened. He raised his hand, and even though there was no wind in the area, his clothes rippled. Shockingly, the Black White Pearls appeared in his hand, transforming into an ancient, archaic power that spread out in all directions.

Meng Hao then recalled how the old man on the boat had looked all those years ago, and mimicked the same look. His eyes filled with an archaic aura as he looked at the young man from the Church of the Immortal Emperor.

“Stop right there!” he said coolly. The Black White Pearls emanated a brilliant glow, and in the blink of an eye, Meng Hao seemed to radiate an intense archaic will.

The Quasi-Dao Child from the Church of the Immortal Emperor stopped in place, his face flickering. Then he stared dead on at Meng Hao.

The people who were following him, and in fact, everyone present, were all staring at Meng Hao. Each and every one of them weren’t sure what to make of Meng Hao, and didn’t want to rashly attempt to make a move against him.

“The Immortal Ancient has been unsealed, but that does not mean just anyone can enter and be enlightened regarding this Daoist rite temple. Any who are capable of achieving their Dao may approach.”

The Quasi-Dao Child from the Church of the Immortal Emperor hesitated. As he looked at Meng Hao he got the feeling that he was filled with some mysterious energy, although it was difficult to be sure about the matter. He looked back at the others in the crowd, and saw that they had similar expressions.

Nobody said a word. Currently, they sky was growing dark, and the moon had appeared. Suddenly a wind began to blow, and whimpering sounds could be heard. Darkness began to stretch out across the land. It was at this point that Fang Donghan chuckled coldly and stepped forward. His energy surged, and intense power rose up from his cultivation base.

“It doesn’t matter who you are. It’s time for you to give me some feedback on my combat skills!” He sped up, and was just on the verge of attacking Meng Hao, when Meng Hao muttered something to himself. The sky was getting dark, and the whimpering of the wind had given him an idea. He suddenly glared at Fang Donghan.

He rose up from his cross-legged position, instantly attracting the attention of all the onlookers. Many of them were skeptical about the whole situation, and didn’t quite believe he was telling the truth.

Even Fang Donghan’s eyes widened. Superficially, his actions seemed impulsive, but he was actually a very cautious person.

As everyone looked on, Meng Hao suddenly threw his head back and laughed uproariously.

“An incorrect path…. Has the legacy been cut off…? Too many years have passed since that war….” He continued to laugh, and soon the laughter was tinged with madness.

“They’re all dead! The land is shattered! The river of stars is cut off….” Suddenly, he seemed to be weeping, and began to pace back and forth.

“Cut off! I can’t suppress the living, I can only suppress the ghosts….

“Gone, everything’s gone….”

His words seemed to provoke a reaction from his surroundings. The wind became cold and strong, and the sound of a weeping woman could be heard drifting about. The land trembled, and everyone’s faces flickered as complete darkness fell. It was at this point that….

“Save me, I want to go home…. Paragon, save me. Save me, Paragon….” Dismal voices rose up from the ground, and a shocking coldness filled the air. Black hair roiled out from the well inside the temple. The vines drooped down and began to swing back and forth. The sounds of weeping and laughing filled the air.

The only faint light that could be seen was from the bronze oil lamp’s flickering flame.

When you added in Meng Hao’s voice, it all turned into a terrifying scene that would make anyone’s hair stand on end. All of the Chosen who had doubted Meng Hao before were now completely shocked. Fang Donghan’s scalp went numb, and he immediately backed up. The Quasi-Dao Child from the Church of the Immortal Emperor gasped, and staggered backward in astonishment.

Meng Hao continued to weep and laugh in front of the temple, feeling very pleased with himself.

1. By way of reminder, Meng Hao helped Zhixiang in the ancient Demon Immortal Sect. She then said that the new Demon Immortal Sect would owe him a favor

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# Chapter 813: Inky and Lily

With the exception of Zhixiang, all of the Chosen who had come to the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple were shaken. They were now… starting to feel convinced about Meng Hao.

Some had been skeptical before, but then, one bizarre thing after another appeared. The strange sights, the cold wind, the shocking aura… made it so they had no choice but to believe.

This was especially true when apparently, Meng Hao's crazed weeping and laughing resonated with his surroundings. It left the onlookers with tingling scalps. The bizarre phenomena in the place, the inky black hair, the swinging vine, the voices rising up from the ground, all of it appeared to them to have been caused by Meng Hao.

Even Zhixiang stared with eyes wide from disbelief. If she didn't already know Meng Hao, she would have been completely astonished.

If everything went as planned, it might be able to buy Meng Hao some time, but not much. The people here were all extraordinary, and the slightest misstep could arouse their suspicions. All it would take would be for one person to attack him, and the charade would be broken.

In fact, it was at this moment that an elder member of the Ji Clan suddenly moved forward, eyes glittering, clearly with the intent of testing Meng Hao out.

Meng Hao sighed as he realized that these people really weren't easy to fool. However, it was at this point that the old man from the Ji Clan suddenly stopped in place, and his face filled with astonishment. Everyone else's expressions also flickered, and not a few people actually gasped.

Meng Hao was taken aback and wondered what he had done to provoke such a reaction.

It was at this point that a cold wind gusted against his back. It almost felt like ice on the nape of his neck. Reflexively, he turned around to see….

A head floating up from the well behind him. It was a head that looked like it had been rotting away in the waters of the well for millions of years!

When Meng Hao turned around, the head floated over toward him, and just when it seemed it would touch him, he blinked. Then he turned back to the crowds and, his voice placid, said, “This is Inky. There’s no need to fear her.”

He cleared his throat and then pointed over to the swinging vine that dripped with black blood. “Over there is Lily. Come on, Lily, say hello to everyone.”

As soon as he spoke, the vine stopped moving. Then the dripping blood began to move, as if an invisible figure were walking over to stand next to Meng Hao.

Even Meng Hao was shocked by this. He looked at the black blood dripping to the ground next to him and could just barely make out the image of a little girl standing there, but it was unclear whether she was staring at the crowds of people, or at him.

Meng Hao wasn’t sure how much longer he could keep this up. Giving a firm look at the crowd of nearly a thousand people, he sat down cross-legged and closed his eyes to meditate.

He was starting to feel that he might have taken things a bit too far….

In the eyes of all the onlookers, Meng Hao, with his tattered robe, placid expression, and ancient air, seemed to be at one with the temple. As he sat there cross-legged, the pale-white head floated behind him, surrounded by drifting strands of inky blackness.

Next to Meng Hao was some invisible being that dripped black blood down onto the ground. Each drop that splashed onto the ground echoed with strange power that filled their hearts with shock.

No one dared to move a muscle, not even Zhao Yifan from the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto, who stood there hesitating. Further off, Fan Dong’er was staring at Meng Hao, a brilliant light flickering in her eyes.

Ji Yin sat cross-legged some distance away, Karma swirling around him in such a way that it was impossible to even see him clearly.

The three Chosen from the Fang Clan all sat down. Occasionally, Fang Yunyi would look over at Zhixiang with a look of adoration. Fang Donghan stared the temple, his eyes flickering with desire.

Song Luodan sat with the Song Clan, proud and aloof. Occasionally he would look at Meng Hao, and the desire to fight could be seen flickering in his eyes.

As for Li Ling’er, it was impossible to tell what she was thinking. Her head was bowed and she seemed to be studying the earth in front of her. Occasionally she would gently stroke her hand across the surface of the ground, apparently performing some type of augury.

Wang Mu sat there with flickering eyes that made it impossible to read his thoughts.

The Chosen of the other sects, churches and Holy Lands were all lost in thought in the darkness of night. Shockingly, they sat there in front of the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple for an entire night.

At dawn, the oil lamp winked out. Meng Hao knew that once night ended, the lamp would stop burning. However, only when it was truly extinguished would the trial by fire actually be over.

The instant the sky became bright, Meng Hao opened his eyes. The floating head had vanished, and the dripping blood was gone. Everything returned to its normal state. Many people in the crowd opened their eyes to look at Meng Hao.

Zhao Yifan was the first person to stand up and approach Meng Hao. Fan Dong’er rose to her feet at almost the same time, and approached from a different direction. Li Ling’er looked coldly over at Meng Hao and also moved toward him.

In addition, Ji Yin stood, Karma swirling around him as he began to stride in Meng Hao’s direction.

There were other Chosen who also began to approach Meng Hao, angry looks on their faces.

“Stop right there!” said Meng Hao coolly.

The others said nothing in response, but rather, sped up. Zhao Yifan was the fastest, and he waved his hand as he closed in on Meng Hao, causing a stream of sword qi to appear. The dragon-like sword qi spread out, transforming into nine shocking Sword Dragons. Their roaring caused the air to vibrate as they twirled together to shoot toward Meng Hao.

“Fellow Daoist,” said Zhao Yifan, “I can sense the aura of South Heaven on you! You’re no groundskeeper!”

By the time he finished speaking, the Sword Dragons were almost upon Meng Hao.

“The Dao of the sword exists in the heart, and within one’s will,” continued Zhao Yifan. The nine Sword Dragons had transformed into nine swords that stabbed down toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as his desire to fight exploded up. As he rose to his feet, his right hand clenched into a fist that punched out toward the nine swords.

As he punched out, a mountain appeared in front of his fist, which rumbled through the air to slam into the nine swords. A huge boom rattled out, and massive ripples spread out in every direction.

“Your Karma is not that of someone from ancient times.” The cold voice belonged to Ji Yin. As it echoed about, his body went blurry, then reappeared behind Meng Hao. His right hand flashed in an incantation gesture and then pushed out toward Meng Hao’s back with lightning speed.

The motion caused Meng Hao’s soul to tremble. All the memories in his life seemed to appear, which transformed into Karma that stirred his mind.

Meng Hao’s expression was calm, and he snorted coldly. Since his act had been seen through, there was no point in continuing with the facade. His left hand flashed in an incantation gesture and he pointed toward Ji Yin.

The Withering Character Incantation erupted out, and the air between Meng Hao and Ji Yin seemed to collapse as a huge black hole appeared. It instantly exerted an incredible gravitational force that rumbled loudly. Meng Hao leapt backward as Li Ling’er appeared in front of him, her beautiful face twisted with the desire to kill.

“The memories of this land say you only got here a month earlier than us!” she said. Her graceful hands performed an incantation, and the willow leaf mark on her forehead flickered. Suddenly, a willow leaf appeared in her hand.

As soon as the willow leaf appeared, a boundless life force exploded out of it. When it reached its pinnacle, it suddenly began to show signs of death. The willow leaf turned black, and then flitted out into the air toward Meng Hao.

“Seal!” said Li Ling’er coolly. The willow leaf emitted a rumbling sound as it exploded. It transformed into a network of black veins that almost looked like a net, which then descended toward Meng Hao.

Seeing that he was about to be sealed, Meng Hao snorted coldly and then stretched out both arms. He lifted his head up and shouted, invoking some Daoist magics he had learned that enabled him to sprout feathers and grow hide. Shockingly, he transformed into a huge black roc, cruel and savage in appearance, that escaped the enveloping black veins.

As soon as he shot into the air, he heard a melodious voice speaking in his ear.

“Daoist Brother, you’re quite exceptional. You almost had Dong’er here fooled.” As the voice was transmitted to him, Meng Hao suddenly felt his hair stand up on end as a profound sense of danger filled him. Without hesitation, the produced the Lightning Cauldron. Lightning covered his body, and he switched places with Li Ling’er.

As soon as he switched places, he looked over at Fan Dong’er and saw that she had a Blue Lotus in her hand. A moment ago, a young boy could be seen standing on the lotus, beckoning to him as if he wanted to turn him into a lotus seed to pop into his mouth.

There was also a rusted black needle that emanated an aura of rot, which had been thrown toward him by one of the old men standing next to Song Luodan of the Song Clan. If that needle had stabbed into him, he would have been transformed into a puddle of blood.

All of these things take some time to describe, but actually happened in the time it takes a spark to fly off of a piece of flint. Meng Hao had just exchanged blows with Zhao Yifan of the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto, one of the Three Great Daoist Societies, Ji Yin of the Ji Clan, Li Ling’er of the Li Clan, and Fan Dong’er of the Ninth Sea God World.

It seemed like a simple encounter, but in actuality, it brimmed with killing intent. The slightest misstep, and Meng Hao’s blood would have showered down like rain. Even as the desire to fight burned in his eyes, Li Ling’er’s face fell. The willow leaf mark on her forehead glittered rapidly, and Fan Dong’er made a surprised grunt and held back her attack. Because of that, Li Ling’er was able to avoid the deadly Blue Lotus Magic.

Everyone watching the encounter was completely shocked. Strange gleams appeared in some of the Chosen’s eyes as they flew into the air toward Meng Hao.

“Who is this guy? Zhao Yifan and those others all attacked at the same time, and he still didn’t seem to be in a bad position!”

“He can’t just be some random person! I wonder how long he’s been practicing cultivation. If it’s less than a thousand years, then he’s definitely extraordinary!”

“He just avoided the Blue Lotus Magic of Goddess Fan Dong’er from the Ninth Sea God World! That Lightning Cauldron has the power of Form Displacement Transposition!”

“You’re missing the most important part, which is… he got here before us! He must be in possession of the good fortune of the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple!”

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# Chapter 814: Call Me Meng Hao!

At the same moment in which such words were spoken, Meng Hao fell back. Simultaneously, a cold snort could be heard echoing out from some distance away.

“Last night I could see the clues,” said Song Luodan. “However, despite your fakery, the apparition behind you was real. Now… I will cut you down, and show you that nobody makes a fool of me!”

Song Luodan was the Song Clan cultivator with the scar that ran from his forehead down to his neck. Flaming magical symbols burst out around him, and the flame crow on his shoulder stared coldly at Meng Hao. When Song Luodan stepped forward, the energy of peak Dao Seeking erupted out. However, this was not the ordinary power of peak Dao Seeking, but rather, something that exceeded that.

He was even more powerful than the Imperial Bloodline Clan Chief who Meng Hao had fought. He had Immortal will swirling around him. Shockingly, despite still being in Dao Seeking, he cultivated a battle prowess comparable to a false Immortal.

Behind him was an emaciated old man who appeared to be nothing more than skin and bones. His face was expressionless, but his eyes were icy cold. He gave off a terrifying feeling that made him seem like a powerful Immortal that could suppress Meng Hao in a single move.

His body seemed to have numerous open meridians, but clearly they had been sealed and could not be used. Now, he was only able to wield the power of a false Immortal.

Actually, false Immortals were the highest level of cultivation that Meng Hao's father had permitted into South Heaven.

In the moment that Song Luodan stepped forward, Meng Hao spun in midair and looked at him and the old man, killing intent flickering in his eyes.

The vicious needle thrown out by the Song Clan just now had been incredibly sinister.

"I'm gonna kill you!" said Meng Hao, transforming into a huge roc that sped toward Song Luodan. Shocking rumbling filled the air as the roc and Song Luodon exchanged more than a hundred moves in the blink of an eye.

Fire rippled everywhere, and a sea of flames roiled off of Song Luodan. It transformed into the shape of a flame crow that attacked Meng Hao.

Their attacks were shocking, and caused everything to tremble. Although they were fighting in midair, Meng Hao didn't want to get too far away from the temple's main gate. As for other locations along the wall where it seemed possible to go in, he ignored those. He remembered from his initial premonition that if someone tried to enter in that fashion, they would be struck dead.

Booms echoed out; Zhao Yifan and the others stopped in place to watch the fighting, as did everyone else.

"That guy is incredible. He was at a bit of a disadvantage earlier when he was up against Fan Dong'er and the others, but now that he's fighting Song Luodan alone… it's hard to say who's going to win!"

"It's got to be Song Luodan! He was able to fight with Zhao Yifan from the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto. Supposedly he lost, but he's also very smart, which is his strong point!"

Everything shook, and brilliant lights flashed about. Within his sea of flames, Song Luodan looked like a flame Immortal, calm yet threatening.

At one point, he flew into the air, lifted his right foot and violently kicked down toward Meng Hao.

“DIE!”

The kick gave rise to a flame sea, which then transformed into another flame crow that seemed capable of ripping the air apart. Flames spread out in all directions, and seemed to be on the verge of sealing Meng Hao.

At the same time, the old Dao Protector at his side laughed coldly and waved his hand. Another decaying needle appeared, which shot toward Meng Hao. Immediately, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with killing intent.

He snorted coldly, raising his right hand into the air and pointing at Song Luodan. Immediately, the Blood Demon Grand Magic appeared, and a rumbling vortex formed around Song Luodan. Like a dragon gulping down water, it sucked in the flame sea and left Song Luodan completely revealed out in the open.

Song Luodan’s face flickered with astonishment. His right foot began to wither, and he let out a roar. Coughing up a mouthful of blood, he fell back at full speed. Somehow… in this moment of grave crisis, he actually managed to escape the Blood Demon Grand Magic vortex. He retreated, face pale, looking at Meng Hao with an expression of both shock and the cold desire to kill.

All of the observers were shaken. Amongst the crowd, Zhixiang’s eyes were wide, and she was panting. The divine ability vortex she had just seen reminded her of a legendary Daoist magic she had read about in the ancient records of her sect, something that had long since been lost to the passage of time.

Zhao Yifan from the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto was looking on with shining eyes, the flames of battle flickered in his pupils. Li Ling’er from the Li Clan of Planet North Reed was also panting. Her expression was one of extreme concentration as she stared at Meng Hao.

The four who had attacked just now did not do so with all their strength. Therefore, the fact that Meng Hao was able to evade those attacks merely left them thinking that there was more to him than met the eye. Nothing had happened that in any way left them thinking that he was worth paying attention to.

Karma swirled around Ji Yin, and although it was impossible to see his expression clearly, he was surely surprised.

As for Fan Dong’er, a strange light shone in her eyes, but her expression was placid. She radiated a sense of pureness and holiness, and at the same time, seemed cold and distant. However, her incredible beauty made it so that anyone who looked at her couldn’t help but be instantly attracted to her, and would want to embrace her as a wife.

The person who Meng Hao resented was not Song Luodan, but rather, the old man next to him. Twice so far, he had used sinister needles to attack Meng Hao. Meng Hao suddenly stretched his hand out in a claw-like motion which seemed similar to that used by the people he had seen plucking stars. Immediately, his hand seemed to become enormous, and he grabbed the needle out of the air.

Meng Hao had only gained a smattering of enlightenment about the Star Plucking Magic. If he completely came to understand it, and also had a sufficient cultivation base, he would actually be able to reach up and pluck heavenly bodies out of the starry sky!

As soon as he grabbed the deadly needle, Meng Hao’s body flickered, and he shot toward the old man. The old man laughed coldly. Instead of retreating, he began to move toward Meng Hao.

“Don’t know the difference between life and death? Allow me to educate you!”

“Old codger!” growled Meng Hao, summoning the roc. In response, the old man waved his hand, causing a gray aura to spread out that contained Immortal qi.

“Suppress!” said the old man.

“I’ll be doing the suppressing!” replied Meng Hao. His cultivation base rumbled, and his Immortal qi roared as it filled his body. Immediately, everyone in the area was completely shocked.

The Immortal qi caused a huge rumbling roar to fill the air, and the old man’s face flickered with astonishment.

“What sect or clan are you from?!”

Meng Hao didn’t respond. As the Immortal qi swirled, he performed an incantation gesture and then pushed his hand out in front of him. The Ninth Mountain rumbled out, crushing down toward the old man.

“Not gonna tell me?” snorted the old man. “Well, don’t blame me for eradicating you!” Suddenly, a Dharma Idol appeared behind him, the image of some powerful deity, a middle-aged man with an incredible bearing. Immediately, everything around him was thrown into chaos.

As Meng Hao and the old man closed in on each other in midair, Meng Hao let out a shout, and his own Dharma Idol appeared. The power that came from being half a step into true Immortality erupted out, transforming into an incredible pressure that weighed down on the old man. His face fell, and he shot backward using a magical technique. The killing intent in Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, and he waved his right hand, causing eight black-colored medicinal pills to fly out. As soon as they hit the old man, they exploded.

Blood sprayed from his mouth, and his face fell. He had been seriously injured, and was just about to flee, when Meng Hao, moving at incredible speed, descended upon him. His right hand unleashed the Star Plucking Magic, and the old man let out a furious howl. He raised his right hand, and what appeared to be the sun, moon, and other heavenly bodies could be seen in the palm that he sent surging toward Meng Hao

The man let out a miserable howl; at the same time, Meng Hao coughed up blood and staggered backward. The lightning cauldron appeared in his hand, lightning danced, and he vanished as he switched places with Fan Dong’er, who had been attempting to sneak into the temple during the chaos of the fighting.

When he reappeared, Meng Hao stood tall and straight in front of the main gate of the temple, blood oozing out of his mouth. He seemed to be in command of everything, and when he stamped his foot onto the ground, everything trembled. At this point, he stretched out his right hand and made a claw-like gesture.

Three claw images appeared; it almost looked as if some ancient beast were awakening. The claws shot up into the air along with his Dharma Idol.

The huge attack surged toward Li Ling’er and Fang Donghan of the Fang Clan, who had just been preparing to charge toward him.

Amidst the rumbling booms, Song Luodan’s Dao Protector up in midair suddenly let out a miserable shriek. He had just noticed that, shockingly, a needle was sticking out of his hand! It was the same needle he had just tried to use to kill Meng Hao!

The decaying power of the needle was just as effective on the old man!

“NOO!!” he shrieked, terrified. The flesh on his face was already starting to decay and fall off into bits of ash. Terror filled him. He was well aware of how quickly the vicious poison on the needle worked. In the blink of an eye, the poison contaminated all of his aura.

As his screams echoed out, the crowds gasped. The old man’s body collapsed. All of his flesh and blood turned into nothing but drifting ash….

Instantly, complete silence fell.

This old man was no ordinary person. He was a Dao Protector of the Song Clan, a powerful expert with an Immortal Realm cultivation base. He had opened dozens of meridians, and yet now… he died in this place… at the hands of a Spirit Realm cultivator.

It was only an accident, only a chance occurrence, had only occurred because his cultivation base was sealed. But regardless of those things… he was dead!

Dead at the hands of Meng Hao!

“Song Luodan’s Dao Protector… just died!?”

“He… he actually killed a Dao Protector!”

“Who is this guy? He can’t be some random person, and he’s definitely not from the lands of South Heaven. He must be a Chosen from some outside sect!”

“But he doesn’t look familiar. I’ve never seen him before….”

Even as the buzz of conversation rose up, Zhixiang looked on with wide eyes, astonished. Her cultivation base had originally been in the Immortal Realm, but after acquiring the Demon Immortal Body, she had pushed herself down into the Spirit Realm to reestablish her cultivation and gain a chance at even more power in the future. As such, she was far more powerful than she had been last time she was in the Spirit Realm. Even still, there was no way she could attack and kill a false Immortal.

“Who are you!?” Zhao Yifan suddenly asked.

Ji Yin looked at Meng Hao, as did Li Ling’er, as well as Wang Mu, who still hadn’t made a move yet. All of the Chosen from the various sects and clans, including Taiyang Zi, were all staring over at Meng Hao.

As for Song Luodan, he was panting in shock. His Dao Protector had just been shockingly killed, causing Song Luodan’s killing intent to grow even stronger.

Fan Dong’er hovered in midair, now in the position that Meng Hao had occupied moments before. Fury burned in her heart, but her face was placid as she calmly said, “Daoist Brother, who exactly are you? Would you mind telling us?”

Meng Hao looked out at the Chosen. He had to admit that these people were strong. However, he still felt like fighting, and in fact, was looking forward to something in particular.

He was looking forward to when he left the lands of South Heaven and entered the world of the Chosen outside. He couldn’t wait to see what kind of waves he would stir up then.

He looked calmly at the chosen of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, well aware that after this decisive battle, his name would surely spread rapidly until everyone knew who he was.

“Call me Meng Hao!”

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# Chapter 815: Fan Dong’er

All cultivators in the lands of South Heaven knew Meng Hao’s name. If the Chosen of the sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea had spent more time there, they would also know the name.

This was their first time hearing it, though, and it would remain in their memories for all eternity.

Meng Hao!

Zhixiang gazed absent-mindedly over at Meng Hao standing there by the main gate of the temple. She seemed to be recalling that young cultivator she had pushed around all those years ago, and then everything that had happened in the ancient Demon Immortal Sect.

Recalling all the memories, she couldn’t help but take a deep breath. At the moment, she was the only one who knew that Meng Hao hadn’t even been practicing cultivation for five hundred years.

“Not even five hundred years, and he already has Immortal qi…. Furthermore, he’s… half a step into true Immortality!

“His Dharma Idol depicts himself. His Immortality… is not false. He walks the path of true Immortality!

“He has high aspirations. Like all of us, he is not willing to become a false Immortal. He wishes to transcend true Immortal tribulation and become a true Immortal!

“I wonder which sect he represents here. Immortality Illumination Vines are quite rare in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Without one, his only option is to go all-out for Immortal destiny, and then wait for the once-in-10,000-years chance to achieve true Immortal Ascension.”

Amidst the rumbling that filled the air, Wang Mu from the Wang Clan of Planet North Reed suddenly said, “How long have you been here?”

Meng Hao looked over at him but didn’t respond. He stood there in front of the temple gate, his desire to fight burning as hot as ever.

“He’s obviously been here for several days,” said Song Luodan, hovering in midair, “and now he wants to prevent us from entering the Daoist rite temple!” Instantly, several Chosen flew out from the crowd, including Taiyang Zi. Multicolored lights flashed, and energy surged as they transformed into eight beams of light that shot toward Meng Hao.

“Get the hell out of the way!” The voices of these eight people were like crackling thunder.

Behind them flew Dao Protectors from their respective sects and clans, who observed the proceedings with flickering eyes. In total, a few dozen people were now closing in on Meng Hao.

Even were Meng Hao more powerful, it would be impossible to do much against so many peak experts. Even Meng Hao’s father could never have imagined that going to the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple would end him up in such a trial by fire.

Meng Hao’s father had assumed he would end up fighting alongside everyone. He had also assumed that arriving early would provide Meng Hao with some advantages, but he’d never imagined that the primary good fortune of the entire place could be acquired in less than a month.

And yet… Meng Hao had done exactly that.

Right now, he couldn’t back down. He couldn’t allow people to enter the temple itself. As the dozens of people bore down on him, Meng Hao suddenly slapped his bag of holding to produce several dozen black-peeled pills, which he immediately threw out in front of him. As they banged against each other in the air, they exploded violently.

Any one of those medicinal pills could produce an astonishing level of power, but dozens exploding together caused the ground to quake and the mountains to tremble. A deafening roar filled the air as blood sprayed out of the mouths of everyone near the explosion. There were even two people whose bodies were ripped to pieces.

Bloodcurdling screams filled the air.

“It was him! It was him!” cried Taiyang Zi, his voice shrill. “He’s the one who buried all those black-peeled medicinal pills that we encountered!” Taiyang Zi’s arm had been completely vaporized in the explosion.

The people who had been injured on the path to the temple looked over at Meng Hao with killing intent flickering in their eyes. They had had their suspicions when Song Luodan’s Dao Protector died, but everything had happened so fast that there was no way to confirm the details.

Now, though, they immediately recognized the black-peeled medicinal pills, which were the same as those buried outside. New hatreds piled onto old ones.

Immediately, more people flew into the air to attack Meng Hao.

There were quite a few others, including Fang Yunyi, who flew toward the wall of the temple in an attempt to enter that way. Just before entering, Fang Yunyi was overwhelmed by a terrifying sensation, and stopped in place. The others, however, more than ten of them, unhesitatingly flew through the gaps in the walls.

As soon as they entered the run-down courtyard, they began to tremble, and then screamed miserably. Their bodies instantly began to decay, and in the blink of an eye, they had transformed into pools of black liquid.

Seeing this caused all the onlookers’ minds to spin, and their faces to fall. Some of the people who had just died were Dao Protectors, and even they had been powerless to fight back, and been killed instantly.

“You can only get in through the main gate! No other way is permitted!”

“The main gate is the only path!”

“Meng Hao is blocking the main gate, and all the incredible stuff is obviously on the other side! Kill him so we can get in!”

Now that it was revealed that there was only one entrance, the pressure on Meng Hao was even greater. Booms rang out constantly. Even with the powerful black-peeled medicinal pills, Meng Hao would be incapable of holding out for much longer. After all, he didn’t have very many pills left.

Killing intent bore down on him from all sides, but Meng Hao didn’t retreat. Instead, he stayed as close to the main gate as possible. Zhao Yifan’s sword qi surged mightily, and then transformed into the shape of a sword, surrounded by a lake of smaller swords. He then shot toward Meng Hao at top speed, causing everyone else to move to the side to make way for him. As for Meng Hao, he immediately felt an intense sense of deadly crisis.

“This guy is strong!” he thought. Blood oozed out of his mouth, and he was injured in several places. Seeing that this was not the time to make a final stand, Meng Hao glanced at the incoming Zhao Yifan, and then his eyes flickered as he retreated back through the gate.

As soon as Meng Hao entered the temple gate, Zhao Yifan’s sword arrived like a blazing sun, sword qi glittering magnificently. Those behind him looked on with gleaming eyes as the temple gate was opened. Immediately, everyone surged forward to enter the temple.

However, in the instant that Meng Hao entered the temple, a monstrously murderous aura exploded up next to him. Killing intent and icy coldness appeared, along with a Devilish will. Writhing black smoke appeared underneath the evening sky.

A figure that looked exactly like Meng Hao suddenly walked out from behind him.

Meng Hao's second true self!

He walked out of the temple gate and waved his hand, causing the Wooden Time Sword to appear. Time power rippled out in all directions as the Time Sword met Zhao Yifan's sword.

A boom echoed out. Zhao Yifan's face flickered and he fell into retreat. The second true self gave a muffled snort as he advanced. Time power spread out, causing looks of shock to appear on all of the onlookers' faces. All of them could clearly sense their longevity withering.

"A Time cultivator!!"

"Dammit, there's two of them, not just one!"

As his second true self stood outside the temple, Meng Hao produced some medicinal pills. After consuming them, he sat cross-legged in meditation for about ten breaths' worth of time. Then he opened his eyes and walked out of the main gate to stand next to this second true self. Booms echoed out as the two of them began to fight. Astonishing power was unleashed as a massive battle unfolded.

The first person to attack his second true self was Fan Dong'er. At the same time, others attempted to charge into the main gate.

Meng Hao growled, and a blood-colored vortex appeared; the Blood Demon Grand Magic was finally completely unleashed. Instantly, everyone's faces fell, and they fell back in retreat.

Meng Hao was really an annoying headache to everyone present. His second true self had monstrous killing intent and sinister coldness. His attacks were ruthless, and he was surrounded by swirling Devilish will, as well as the power of Time. All of it was very hard to deal with.

Meng Hao fought back and forth with Fang Donghan, and explosions filled the air. In any situation where Meng Hao was on the verge of being forced away from his position in front of the gate, he would throw out black-peeled medicinal pills, which always resulted in countless angry curses.

He even used the Lightning Cauldron; whenever any Chosen were on the verge of being able to enter the temple, Meng Hao would quickly switch positions with them.

He switched places with Zhao Yifan, Fan Dong'er, Li Ling'er, Wang Mu, Taiyang Zi, Ji Yin, Fang Xiangshan… virtually all of the Chosen had opportunities to enter the temple, but Meng Hao seemed to be made of eyes, and whenever one of them got close, lighting would crackle and he would use Form Displacement Transposition.

By now, it was getting dark, and a cold wind sprang up. The vine in the courtyard once again drooped down and began to swing back and forth. Black blood dripped onto the ground, and tendrils of green smoke began to rise up from inside the well.

The oil lamp once again began to burn tenuously inside the temple hall, and countless projected images appeared. When all the newcomers saw this, they gasped. As for Meng Hao, he could feel the pulsing cold coming from behind him.

It was at this point that Fan Dong'er's eyes glittered. Suddenly, the image of a door appeared in her pupils.

"In the gap between yin and yang, Ninth Sea God!" Suddenly her entire body appeared to be sucked into her own pupils! She vanished, and when she reappeared, she was inside of the courtyard!

In that instant, Meng Hao's expression flickered. He tried to use Form Displacement Transposition, but for the first time ever, it failed!

Fan Dong'er's expression was one of indifference as she prepared to enter the temple hall. Meng Hao immediately flew toward her, extending his hand in a claw-like gesture. This left the main gate exposed, and his second true self was incapable of holding his position alone. In that short bit of time, one of the Dao Protectors managed to slip into the courtyard.

When that happened, he immediately screamed and vanished into a pool of black liquid.

This sudden turn of events caused everyone on the outside to gasp, and cease any aspirations of entering.

Meng Hao didn’t have time to consider what had just happened. He transformed into a huge roc that shot aggressively toward Fan Dong’er.

“Dammit!” he thought. “I forgot whether that crazy old man said to prevent people from entering the temple as a whole, or just the temple hall!!” Furious, he called his second true self to join him in his attack.

His second true self’s eyes glittered. Everyone looked on raptly as the second true self entered the main gate without any problem.

Seeing Meng Hao’s second true self nearing, Fan Dong’er’s face flickered.

“How can he get in here too!?” she said. “Ah, he’s not a cultivator, he’s your clone!”

Rumbling filled the air. Fan Dong’er’s face was as indifferent as ever as she began to fight back and forth with Meng Hao. In the blink of an eye, there were more than a hundred exchanges. Everyone on the outside watched with glittering eyes. A random cultivator tried to use a special magical technique to enter through the main gate, but the result was that he died screaming. By now, everyone understood the situation.

“You can enter during the daytime, but not during nighttime!”

“Dammit, Fan Dong’er realized this earlier, so she didn’t use her divine ability until yin and yang transposed, and night replaced day! That’s when she entered!”

“She let Meng Hao use Form Displacement Transposition on her a few times before to get him used to thinking it would work on her!”

“Her scheming ability is so profound! I hate those people from the Ninth Sea God World!”

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# Chapter 816: Battling the Goddess

Everyone stood outside the courtyard, looking in with glittering eyes.

Within the courtyard, Meng Hao and his second true self were locked in combat with Goddess Fan Dong’er of the Ninth Sea God World. Off to the side, the vine swung back and forth, and laughter could be heard as the black blood dripped onto the ground.

At the same time, strands of black hair danced through the air. Countless Dao Projections appeared. Some sat in meditation, some concocted medicinal pills, and some employed Daoist magic. The copper lamp flickered weakly, illuminating the area. The crumbling statue of the divinity appeared to be emitting some faint, divine aura.

This was not the first night that these people had spent in the vicinity of the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple. However, when they caught sight of the Dao Projections, many people made hoarse exclamations.

“Passing down Daos!”

“Those Dao Projections are passing down Daos! If we can just get inside, we can acquire new Daos!”

“The Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple is full of good fortune!”

“Dammit! I wonder how many days Meng Hao was here for before we arrived. From the look of it, he already got the greatest good fortune of all, the Immortal Ancient Daoist Medallion!”

Outside, conversations buzzed. Inside, Meng Hao and his second true self had already fought over a hundred rounds with Fan Dong’er. Booming echoed out, and Fan Dong’er frowned as she was constantly pushed back in retreat, unable to to get close to the temple hall. Not only that, she was actually being forced to the point where she might get shoved out the main gate.

Meng Hao had originally been extremely nervous. However, after seeing that everything in the temple hall remained the same even after Fan Dong’er entered the courtyard, he was able to let out a sigh of relief.

“The crazy old man must have meant the temple hall and not the courtyard!” he thought. Eyes gleaming, he stretched out his hand toward Fan Dong’er in a claw-like gesture.

Fan Dong’er was getting angry. She snorted lightly and then lifted the Blue Lotus in her hand. Brilliant light shone out that seemed to contain blessings. It formed Immortal qi, which she sucked in through her eyes, ears, nose and mouth. Then, golden light began to shine out from her eyes. She looked at Meng Hao and said a single word.

“Suppress!”

That single word caused Meng Hao’s pupils to constrict as he felt an incredible force come into existence around him. It instantly began to entangle him; even his second true self could feel its interference.

Fan Dong’er’s expression was cool as she prepared to enter the temple hall.

“Emerge!” Meng Hao shouted, and rumbling could be heard as his Dharma Idol appeared, shining with boundless radiance and surrounded by a great Dao. The Dharma Idol’s light shone up into the sky, and it seemed as if countless Immortal Divinities were sitting cross-legged around it, meditating. A snapping sound rang out as the invisible fetters were destroyed. Meng Hao shook himself free, then stretched his right hand out to use the Star Plucking Magic.

All it took was one snatching motion, and Fan Dong’er, who was still in mid-stride heading toward the temple hall, was dragged back to him.

Her body was completely beyond her own control as she flew through the air. Just when she seemed about to slam into Meng Hao’s hand, she gave a cold snort and performed an incantation with her left hand. She pointed to the ground, and a vast sea appeared beneath her, from within which more than ten roaring sea dragons burst out.

Meng Hao’s Star Plucking Magic dissipated, but by that point, his second true self had closed in. He waved his sleeve, and a boom could be heard as the air around Fan Dong’er shattered. Blood oozed from the corners of her mouth as she was sent staggering backward. In the meantime, Meng Hao performed an incantation gesture and pointed out.

The Blood Demon Grand Magic vortex instantly appeared. Both Meng Hao and his second true self were on the attack. All of the rapid changes in the battle were dazzling to the eye. There was no hesitation on anyone’s part, and attacks were made with complete confidence and speed.

RUUUMMMBLE!!

Fan Dong’er’s face fell. Meng Hao’s Blood Demon Grand Magic filled her with dread. She performed a double-handed incantation, causing a bright light to appear that seemed to shine down from the sky above. It descended to form the image of a mermaid behind Fan Dong’er.

The mermaid had extremely long hair, and was incredibly beautiful, and actually resembled Fan Dong’er somewhat, except that she wasn’t wearing any clothes whatsoever. Her bottom half was covered with scales, but as a whole, she emanated an enticing aura that would cause anyone to be attracted to her.

“So high and mighty, yet you summon something without clothes?” said Meng Hao sternly, glancing at the Dharma Idol. “How scandalous!”

“You glib lowlife!” she replied evenly. “One look and I could tell that you were a lecher!” She performed an incantation, causing her Dharma Idol’s eyes to shine with golden light.

“Ninth Sea God Lightning!” The four words echoed like thunder, and immediately caused four bolts of golden lightning to crackle down toward Meng Hao.

His eyes narrowed; these Chosen from the Ninth Mountain and Sea were all incredibly powerful. He had long since ceased to look down on them. He knew that he couldn’t view them as being ordinary peak Dao Seeking cultivators. These were all people who had high aspirations; they wanted to achieve true Immortal Ascension.

There were even some of them who had clearly practiced cultivation for many years, but were intentionally holding their cultivation bases back to wait for Immortal destiny.

Some of them gave Meng Hao a feeling of impending crisis. One was Zhao Yifan, and another was Fan Dong’er.

“There are many Chosen, and powerful experts are as numerous as the clouds,” he thought. “My path of cultivation has just begun; the vast world is just now opening up to me….” The desire to fight burned hot in his eyes. He truly couldn’t wait to step foot out of the lands of South Heaven into the starry sky, to contend with the Chosen of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

“Today is just a sneak peek,” he thought. His body flickered as he sprang into motion. His Dharma Idol roared and grew even larger than before, and then sent a right hand speeding toward Fan Dong’er.

The four bolts of golden lightning sent out shocking ripples, but they were all obstructed Meng Hao’s Dharma Idol.

Echoes rattled out, and Fan Dong’er’s face fell. The second true self closed in along with a river of Time power, bursting with a murderous aura. Killing intent raged as he launched a vicious attack that very nearly sliced Fan Dong’er’s neck open.

“Just who is this Meng Hao…?” she thought. “There’s no need to even mention this clone of his. He himself is incredibly powerful, plus he has a

Dharma Idol that depicts himself. Based on his power, he must be half a step into true Immortality!

“At the moment he still hasn’t merged back with his clone. When that happens….” Fan Dong’er’s eyes flickered.

“He seems to be concerned with people entering the temple hall. Could it be that there is some legacy process underway inside, and he doesn’t want anyone to interfere? I must disrupt that legacy!

“I can’t let a fifth Conclave disciple appear in this Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple!” Her eyes flickered with coldness.

“Ninth Sea God Will!” she said, retrieving a conch shell from her bag of holding. The conch shell immediately began to blaze with intense light that caused everything to tremble. The music of a great Dao began to spread out in all directions.

Everyone on the outside had long since been shaken by the intensity of the fighting inside. In addition, dread of Meng Hao had taken root in their hearts.

“To be able to fight with Fan Dong’er of the Ninth Sea God World means that this Meng Hao… is definitely a Chosen too!”

“That’s… a precious treasure of the Ninth Sea God World, the Nine Gods Conch!”

“According to legend, that conch once slew an almighty Dao Realm expert….”

“That’s not the real thing, it’s only a copy. However, it’s still shockingly powerful!”

As the buzz of conversation filled the air outside, Meng Hao’s face flickered. He could sense that this conch was intensely dangerous. His eyes flickered and he performed another incantation gesture, causing the sixth level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic to appear.

At the same time, Fan Dong’er’s eyes became ice cold as she raised the conch up and blew into it. As soon as her breath entered the conch, it began to emanate a golden light, within which was a strand of Dao music.

As the music drifted through the air, it sounded like a woman singing. It expanded out amorphously, transforming into three colorful bubbles, within each of which appeared to be a magical symbol. The sky grew dark, and wind screamed as one of the bubbles floated gently toward Meng Hao. He began to tremble, and his second true self seemed to lose control of his body and stopped in mid motion. It was at this point that bubble popped.

Blood sprayed from the mouth of the second true self as a roaring sound filled his ears. As he fell back, the second bubble floated forward and then popped. Meng Hao coughed up blood, and suddenly found that he was covered with countless strips of seaweed which were growing out from his skin to cover his whole body. At the same time, the seaweed bursting from his skin caused him to bleed profusely.

His second true self trembled as he too was covered with seaweed. The flourishing seaweed sucked away at Meng Hao’s life force, causing it to grow longer, and even take root in the ground. As a result, Meng Hao and his second true self were rapidly being rooted in place.

People outside of the courtyard gasped.

“The Curse of the Ninth Sea!!”

“This Meng Hao… is going to perish!”

Fan Dong’er coughed up a mouthful of blood and staggered backward a few steps, her face pale; she had payed an incredible price in order to blow on the conch shell.

She took a deep breath as she looked over at Meng Hao and his second true self entangled in the seaweed. Her expression calm, she turned and hurried toward the temple hall.

Just when she was on the verge of stepping into the temple hall, a tremor ran through Fan Dong’er. The mud beneath her feet suddenly began to emanate a black mist. At the same time, a huge rumbling sound filled the entire area.

The courtyard trembled from the force of the explosion, and Fan Dong’er coughed up a mouthful of blood. Her body was completely beyond her control as she was sent flying into the air, more blood spurting out from her mouth.

“Meng Hao!” she cried, her heart filled with rage. She had been incredibly cautious in everything, but could never have imagined that Meng Hao would have buried black-peeled medicinal pills in front of the temple hall’s door.

Those pills had been secretly placed there by Meng Hao as a failsafe against the people from the outside.

At the same time that Fan Dong’er was sent flying backward, the third bubble neared Meng Hao. He trembled, and his eyes filled with a cold gleam. His second true self shuddered; he slowly began to fade away and turn into Meng Hao’s shadow, merging together with him.

“Fuse!” As he merged with his second true self, Meng Hao’s left eye was icy cold, whereas his right eye burned with murderous desire. The Dharma Idol behind him then changed; shockingly, half of it became completely black!

To everyone looking at it, it no longer looked holy, but rather, like a mixture between an Immortal and a Devil!

Rumbling sounds could be heard as the third bubble popped. However, at the same time, Meng Hao freed himself from the seaweed and launched a counterattack in the form of a punch.

A huge explosion filled the air and Meng Hao coughed up a mouthful of blood. Nonetheless, a bright gleam could be seen in his eyes as his hand snaked out toward the beautiful Fan Dong’er.

Fan Dong’er’s face flickered. She had been seriously injured, and now that Meng Hao had freed himself, she had no choice but to retreat from of the courtyard.

It was then that Meng Hao’s hand latched onto her.

“Trying to get away?”

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# Chapter 817: Here You Go, Inky!

The Star Plucking Magic suddenly sprang to life, and Fan Dong'er was snatched up and dragged back by Meng Hao before she could escape from the courtyard. A look of vicious hatred could be seen on her face, and she quickly performed a double-handed incantation, causing the conch shell to appear again!

Just when she was about to blow it, Meng Hao flung her forcefully toward the well in the courtyard.

“Why don't you get in that well and blow your shell for my Inky!” he said.

Fan Dong'er's face filled with shock as, before she could blow the conch, she descended into the well, her body completely out of her control.

At the same time, Meng Hao performed an incantation, summoning the Ninth Mountain and sending it rumbling down toward the well.

A miserable shriek rang out from inside the well as the Ninth Mountain slammed down and sealed the mouth of the well, followed by rumbling booms. Meng Hao flitted up to the peak of the mountain, where he sat down cross-legged, his face somewhat pale. The murderous gleam in his right eye vanished, and boundless black mist surged out from within him, which then transformed once again into his second true self.

Blood oozed out from the sides of Meng Hao's mouth, and his second true self's eyes were somewhat dimmer than usual.

This was a result of the backlash from forcing a separation before fully fusing.

Everyone outside the courtyard was thoroughly shocked, and stared at Meng Hao in amazement.

“He… he actually sealed the Goddess of the Ninth Sea God World inside a well?”

“If I remember correctly… that head which looks like it’s been soaking in water for millions of years… came out from that well!”

“Dammit, I should kill him for treating the Goddess like that!”

As the buzz of conversation filled the air, Zhao Yifan’s eyes flickered. He stared at Meng Hao, his desire for combat growing ever stronger. After all, he lived to fight!

“If you’re good enough to suppress Fan Dong’er,” he thought, “then… I can’t wait for day to break so that we can fight!”

Song Luodan couldn’t help but gasp in response to what had happened, as did Wang Mu, Li Ling’er, Fang Donghan and many others. When they saw Meng Hao fight Fan Dong’er and then seal her up, it instantly left an indelible impression in their minds.

Taiyang Zi’s face flickered, but, not willing to be outshone, he snorted coldly and said, “You finagled your way to victory. If you step foot outside, I’ll fuse your bones and blood, burn your soul, and then kill you!”

The Chosen from the other Holy Lands and sects now had a much clearer understanding of who Meng Hao was, as did the Dao Protectors, whose eyes glittered brightly.

The night grew deeper. Meng Hao sat on top of the mountain, listening to Fan Dong’er’s shrieks echoing out from down below.

She was inside the well, half submerged in water. Her scalp was numb with terror as inky black hair swirled around her. Although her surroundings were pitch black, because of her incredible cultivation base, she could just barely see the water-soaked head gazing steadily in her direction.

If you think about it, anyone in this situation would feel their blood run cold and their hair stand on end. Fan Dong’er couldn’t hold back from screaming.

The tendrils of black hair began to wrap around her, and the soaking head got closer and closer….

“Meng Hao, I won’t let you get away with this!” she screamed. However, it didn’t matter what divine abilities or magical techniques she used, there was nothing that could get her out of the well. In fact, the more magic she used, the more the black hair wrapped around her, and at one point, the floating head even touched her own head.

An icy sensation spread out across her skin, and Fan Dong’er’s scream was even shriller than before.

As Meng Hao sat on top of the mountain, he snorted and said, “Inky, if you take care of this wench for me, then you can have her!”

By now, he had recovered most of his wounds, and he glanced over to look into the temple hall, at the bronze lamp which, thanks to Fan Dong’er’s failure to enter the temple hall, had not been extinguished.

A strange light shone in his eyes, and suddenly a bashful gleam could be seen within.

“These Chosen all have lovely treasures on them, don’t they….” He licked his lips and smiled, which the crowds on the outside found very surprising.

“What is Meng Hao smiling like that for?”

“Hmm. That smile looks… bashful! Is something fishy going on…?”

Meng Hao flew down off of the mountain and, as everyone watched, dug a hole and carefully put some black-peeled medicinal pills in it. Then, he cautiously stood on top of it, looked up, and extended his hand. The Lightning Cauldron appeared.

Electric light glittered, spreading out across his body, and the bashfulness in his smile grew even more apparent as he looked out at the crowd with anticipation.

“Dammit, Meng Hao’s about to pull a con!”

“He has that Form Displacement Transposition cauldron, and black-peeled medicinal pills under his feet. If you step on that pill lightly, nothing happens. But when he switches positions with someone, the slightest force will cause it to explode!!”

“Fudge! How could someone be so evil!?”

“Shameless! I’ve never seen a bastard as shameless as him!”

Everyone in the crowd began to back up, their faces flickering with various expressions. Meng Hao’s eyes finally came to rest on Taiyang Zi, whose face instantly went white, and his eyes wide. Before he could say anything, lighting from Meng Hao’s cauldron flashed, and he switched places with Taiyang Zi.

The instant the change occurred, Taiyang Zi appeared in the middle of the courtyard, screaming. Apparently, this method of entering the courtyard did not violate the restrictive spells, so he was not instantly transformed into a pool of blood. However, as soon as his foot made contact with the medicinal pills, four or five of them instantly exploded, and he was engulfed in black mist.

Taiyang Zi let out a bloodcurdling shriek, along with a spray of blood. Meng Hao’s second true self instantly closed in on him.

As for Meng Hao, as soon as he appeared outside the courtyard, he instantly produced his war chariot. Rumbling filled the air as he shot back into the courtyard.

Only an afterimage remained in the spot he had just occupied, which was then instantly inundated by various divine abilities and magical techniques.

“Don’t be so polite, Fellow Daoists!” he called out, looking back at the crowd and waving. “I don’t need your gifts, really!” The ripples from the explosions couldn’t catch up with him, leaving the onlookers so frustrated that their gums itched.

“Shameless!!”

“How could he have such a high cultivation base but be so despicable!?” Numerous such curses filled the air.

Meng Hao just smiled nonchalantly and hummed a little tune as he watched his second true self grab hold of Taiyang Zi and restrain him.

When Taiyang Zi saw Meng Hao approaching, he began to tremble, and his eyes shone with a brilliant light.

“I’m from the Holy Land of Mount Sun! Our founder was Patriarch Sun—”

SMACK!

Meng Hao walloped Taiyang Zi directly across the side of the face, causing blood to spray from his mouth, along with a couple teeth. He turned back to look at Meng Hao, a vicious expression of madness on his face.

“From the moment I started practicing cultivation,” said Meng Hao, “I’ve heard Chosen like you say things like that when they’re about to die. Do you know how annoying it is!?” Thinking about how often he had heard words similar to those uttered by Taiyang Zi, he kicked Taiyang Zi sharply with his right foot.

“Didn’t you just say you were going to burn my bones and blood, then roast my soul?” Meng Hao kicked down again.

The shocked crowd looked on, trembling, as Taiyang Zi’s howls entered their ears. The Dao Protectors and other cultivators from Mount Sun were enraged, and several of them flew forward.

“Stay your hand!!”

“Dammit, if you harm him, you’ll call a great disaster down on yourself that will affect your entire clan!”

“Once the sun comes up, you’re dead! No one will be able to save you!”

The two Mount Sun Dao Protectors stood outside the courtyard, glaring at Meng Hao and threatening him with gruesome words. In response, Meng Hao kicked Taiyang Zi again, provoking another miserable shriek, then turned and stared a the two Dao Protectors.

“I’m from the archaic Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite! My dad is—” Meng Hao suddenly stopped talking and cleared his throat. Quite a few hateful looks appeared among the crowd, especially from the people from Mount Sun. It was quite obvious that Meng Hao had just been mocking Taiyang Zi’s words from moments ago.

Meng Hao grabbed Taiyang Zi and dragged him over to the well. He lifted the mountain and then said, “Why don’t you and the wench fool around together down there!”

Taiyang Zi’s eyes went wide, and he let out a panic-stricken yelp as he struggled against Meng Hao.

Meng Hao cleared his throat and then said, “Alright, I’ll give you one last chance. You probably have a lot of magical items on you, right?”

“Let me go, and you can have them all!” Taiyang Zi blurted. He was truly frightened; down below, he could see Fan Dong’er and the soaking head, which was obviously a mysterious evil spirit connected to the Daoist rite temple.

“Hey, I’m a gentleman and a man of my word!” replied Meng Hao sternly. “What makes you think that I would contaminate my Karma by stealing your magical items!?” His expression became colder so quickly that Taiyang Zi gaped in shock. However, it only took a moment for his mind to flash with understanding, and he quickly unfastened his bag of holding and held it aloft.

“Here, I’m giving it to you as a gift!”

Meng Hao took it, opened it up, and looked through its contents. His eyes lit up, after which he turned to look at the command medallion hanging at Taiyang Zi’s waist.

“Actually, that looks pretty nice….” he said.

“You can have it!”

“Eee? This thing is pretty nice too.”

“You… you can have it!”

“I’ve never seen one of these before….”

“You can have it….” Taiyang Zi was on the verge of tears as he handed his belongings over to Meng Hao one by one.

Meng Hao’s hand closed around a fist-sized chunk of golden-colored stone which emanated an intense heat and blinding light. From the feeling it gave off, it almost seemed like something was sleeping inside. When Meng Hao swept it with his divine sense, the music of a great Dao filled his mind, and he sensed a pulsating aura of danger.

It almost seemed like this rock… was a sun!

Meng Hao’s eyes widened as he looked it over. He had never seen anything quite like this particular item.

He slowly pulled the rock out of Taiyang Zi’s bag of holding.

Immediately, people on the outside began to comment in astonishment.

“A treasured magical item! It’s a treasured magical item from Mount Sun!!”

“Mount Sun is really getting the short end of the stick today….”

Taiyang Zi’s face was pale white as he looked bitterly at the rock in Meng Hao’s hand. He had never even had a chance to take it out and use it before Meng Hao took it away from him.

Meng Hao closed his eyes as he examined the rock with his senses. After a moment, the heat emanating off of the rock seemed to decrease, and Meng Hao put it away. Then he opened his eyes and looked at Taiyang Zi. Eyes narrowing, he pulled out a piece of paper and a pen from within his robe, then handed them over to Taiyang Zi, whose eyes went wide with shock.

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# Chapter 818: Changing Fate!

“What are you staring at? Write out a promissory note! However much you think your life’s worth, write down that many spirit stones. Although, if the amount you write down is too small, don’t forget that I have a lot of spirit stones in my bag of holding, and I might just fork them over to buy you.”

“You!!” cried Taiyang Zi, almost coughing up a mouthful of blood as he glared at Meng Hao. After a long moment, he sighed and then wrote down a huge sum onto the promissory note. Meng Hao carefully placed it with his collection of other promissory notes.

When the people in the crowd, and Taiyang Zi, saw how many promissory notes Meng Hao had in his bag of holding, they gasped.

“How many people has he conned in the past…? I can’t believe he has so many promissory notes!”

“Just where exactly is he from? He couldn’t be a cultivator from the lands of South Heaven, could he?”

“There’s no way. South Heaven is a strange place, but how could it produce a shameless bastard like that!?!?”

Taiyang Zi looked at all the promissory notes and suddenly felt a bit better about his situation. With a forced smile, he looked at Meng Hao.

“Elder Brother Meng….”

“Don’t worry,” Meng Hao said earnestly. “Meng Hao is honest with all customers, and open and aboveboard in all matters. I would definitely never use the promissory note to coerce you.” Suddenly, he lowered his voice to a whisper. “Alright, you’ve been very cooperative. Come come, tell me who among all those bastards out there you have a beef with. I’ll grab that person next.

“Choose carefully.” With that, Meng Hao stepped to the side, dug another hole, and then put some medicinal pills in it.

Taiyang Zi stared at Meng Hao with wide eyes. The crowds outside gasped, and quite a few of their number began to back away. There were even a few who directly flew away.

Taiyang Zi was in a daze for a moment, until finally his eyes flickered and he turned to look out at the crowds. Then, his gaze locked with that of Wang Mu from the Wang Clan.

“Wang Mu!” cried Taiyang Zi, his face twisting with hatred. “He’s the one! He stole my good fortune that year. Him!”

When Wang Mu, who stood off in the distance, heard what Taiying Zi said, his eyes flickered. The Dao Protectors near him stepped forward, their eyes radiating coldness.

“Got it,” said Meng Hao. He quickly reached out and tied Taiyang Zi up, then tossed him over to the grapevine trellis. Then he produced the Lightning Cauldron, which glittered with electricity as he looked over at Wang Mu. Wang Mu instantly rotated his cultivation base with all his power.

However, in the next instant, Meng Hao shifted his gaze to Song Luodan. Instantly, the two of them vanished. Then, Song Luodan reappeared in the courtyard. However, he remained hovering in the air, and didn’t touch the ground.

“Do you really think it’s worth it to play such ridiculous games?” Song Luodan chuckled coldly. Most of the people in the crowd outside were now prepared for Meng Hao to use the Lightning Cauldron. However, it was at this moment that Meng Hao’s second true self violently stamped his foot onto the ground. Immediately, a boom could be heard as the medicinal pills beneath Song Luodan’s feet exploded.

Song Luodan coughed up blood as the explosion rippled out. He had no time to evade. His hair was thrown into disarray, and he let out a miserable shriek. At the same time, Meng Hao's second true self closed in.

As soon as Meng Hao appeared outside, booms filled the air as Li Ling'er, Fang Yunyi, Fang Xiangshan, as well as the Ji Clan members, and even Chosen from other sects, along with their Dao protectors, all attacked.

The gleam of spell formations appeared on the ground, which had been set up in secret earlier in order to cause problems for Meng Hao.

Some people even used magical items. Massive roaring filled the area in the blink of an eye. Meng Hao coughed up a mouthful of blood, and then sped backward in the war chariot. Lightning flickered as he switched positions several times in a row before he was finally able to extricate himself. Just when he was almost back into the courtyard, a sword shot through the air toward him. The sword filled the darkness with brilliant light, and left a bright streak in the air as it bore down on Meng Hao.

The shocking sword caused Meng Hao's face to flicker. He quickly performed an incantation gesture, causing divine abilities to explode out. At the same time, his Dharma Idol appeared and blocked the sword. Rumbling shook everything as the sword unexpectedly sliced through the Dharma Idol and then slashed down onto the war chariot.

A huge boom filled the air, and blood sprayed out of Meng Hao's mouth. However, he borrowed the momentum from the blast to shoot back into the courtyard. Once inside, he coughed up another mouthful of blood and then suddenly looked up. At some point, Ji Yin had appeared right in front of the temple gate. His right hand stretched out, surrounded by swirling Karma power, clearly on the verge of passing into the courtyard.

Then, it did pass into the courtyard itself, apparently completely unaffected by the restrictive spells. Rumbling like thunder rippled out as he stretched his hand out about three inches into the courtyard. However, at that point, he could proceed no further and he slowly retracted his hand.

Many gasps could be heard from the crowd as they looked at Ji Yin, whose back was to them all, making it impossible for them to see his facial expression.

Meng Hao's pupils constricted, and his heart trembled. As of this point, he was now aware of how incredibly powerful Ji Yin was.

"Let me in, and I'll spare your life," said Ji Yin. It was hard to tell whether his voice was that of a man or a woman. However, it was completely cold-blooded, and filled with a lust for battle.

Meng Hao smiled and wiped the blood off of his mouth. He then turned and walked over to the seriously wounded Song Luodan, who had already been restrained and tied up by his second true self.

Song Luo glared hatefully at Meng Hao, killing intent flickering in his eyes.

Meng Hao wasn't in the mood for chattering, so he simply slapped Song Luodan in the face a few times, which of course cause his rage to surge even higher. Without another word, he took Song Luodan's bag of holdings, rifled through them, and then finally then pulled out a piece of paper and a pen.

"I won't sign that thing even if you kill me!" raged Song Luodan, looking especially ferocious because of the scar running down his face.

"Won't sign it?" Meng Hao responded coolly. He turned to look over at the swinging vine, from which the sounds of faint laughter and the drip of black blood could be heard. "Lily, weren't you looking for a friend to swing with you?"

From what Meng Hao could tell, Inky and Lily had changed quite a bit ever since the crazy old man gave Meng Hao his approval.

As soon as Meng Hao spoke, the swing stopped moving. Then, the astonished Song Luodan flew up into the air, his body clearly completely out of his own control. Next, his body began to shrink; in the blink of an eye, he looked like he was seven or eight years old. Finally, he floated down to land on the vine, where he began to swing back and forth.

His expression was numb, but intense terror could be seen in his eyes.

At this point, the faint glow of dawn was just becoming visible. Soon, the strange phenomena inside the courtyard would disappear.

Killing intent flickered in the eyes of the crowd outside. This was especially true of the cultivators from Mount Sun and the Song Clan, and the various Chosen who were smitten with Fan Dong'er from the Ninth Sea God World.

Meng Hao frowned. After looking up at the sky, he walked back into the temple hall, where he looked around at the Dao Projections and the ancient bronze lamp. Finally, he sighed.

"49 days total, but only half of them have gone by. Obviously… there's no way I can keep people out of this place for that long.

"There are simply too many of them outside. So far, I've only been able to stretch things out for two days…." He stood in front of the bronze lamp and looked at the flickering flame. During the day, the flame would go out, but after having observed the item for so long, Meng Hao knew that the flame itself wasn't truly extinguished. The heart of the flame still existed.

The lamp itself only burned brightly at night.

Muttering, Meng Hao once again poured some blood into the flames, which hissed and then emitted a delicate fragrance that left him feeling enlivened after smelling it.

"I'm not supposed to let anyone come inside to touch the lamp and contaminate it with their aura. It's… fundamentally impossible to meet that requirement." Meng Hao sighed. The more he thought about it, the more it seemed completely unfeasible. Furthermore, the sky was almost bright….

Meng Hao could sense the killing intent coming from the groups outside the courtyard. He was like a thorn in their sides, someone blocking their path to good fortune. Furthermore, some of that killing intent resulted directly from him offending people.

“Well, if I have to ask for help from dad and mom because of something as trivial as this, then I’m not Meng Hao!” His eyes began to shine with a cold gleam. Before reaching Dao Seeking, he had not relied on any assistance from his father and mother. He had stepped halfway into true Immortality all by himself.

He had experienced multiple deadly situations, had battled the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch in the Milky Way Sea, had tread the narrow gap between life and death, had fought in the great war of the Southern Domain, and had risen to the pinnacle of prominence.

Those were all things that made Meng Hao feel quite proud of himself.

“Besides, my road leads beyond South Heaven, whereas dad and mom… must stay here for 100,000 years. I have to walk my path alone. If I want good fortune… I’ll take the risks myself and earn it myself!

“If I did it any differently, I’d be the same as all of those people out there.” The desire to fight gleamed in his eyes. He took a deep breath, when suddenly, a new idea appeared in his mind. He stopped in place, and a strange expression filled his face.

“Wait a second….

“That crazy old man said that I couldn’t let the flame be extinguished for 49 nights. He also said that I couldn’t let anyone come in here to touch the lamp.

“In other words, actually stepping foot into this place isn’t the problem. As long as no one touches the lamp, then the requirement will be met, right?” Meng Hao’s eyes sparkled.

“If that’s true, then it also goes to say that… it doesn’t matter what I do; I could even take the bronze lamp away from here. As long as nobody else touches it, and it remains unextinguished, then everything will be fine.”

Having reached this point in his train of thought, he began to pant. A gleam of determination appeared in his eyes, and he decided that since he couldn’t prevent everyone from entering this place, he might as well… try out his new idea!

He immediately stretched his hand out and grabbed the lamp. The instant he tried to actually pick it up, he realized that the lamp was completely immovable; there was no way for him to put it in his bag of holding. A strange light flickered in his eyes as he rotated his cultivation base at full power. His Dharma Idol appeared behind him, and Meng Hao used all the power he could muster to try to pull up the bronze lamp.

Shocking rumbles could be heard coming from within the temple hall. The ground trembled and the entire temple shook. A deep, subterranean rumble could be heard, as well as the sound of laughing and crying from the courtyard. The mountain range, and in fact, the entire land, was shaking violently.

The crowds outside the courtyard stared at the temple hall in shock.

In that instant, all of the lands of South Heaven were shaken, to the extent that the entire planet temporarily ceased to rotate!

The Milky Way Sea roared, and all the continents trembled. All the powerful experts in South Heaven were shaking in astonishment!

In the Tower of Tang, Meng Hao’s father and mother were in the middle of playing a game of Go when suddenly his father’s face flickered. Even as he looked up, Meng Hao’s mother’s face also flickered.

“That’s….”

“The Immortal Ancient is in motion. Not good! There must have been some kind of accident!” Meng Hao’s father rose to his feet and was just about to fly up into the air, when both he and Meng Hao’s mother stopped in place. Their expressions flickered as they saw a figure approaching from off in the distance.

He had long gray hair, an ordinary-looking robe, and looked completely archaic. His eyes were filled with the glow of heavenly bodies. Not only did he look like a person who existed inside a painting, he looked like the type of person who could paint a multitude of universes with a wave of his hand.

Meng Hao’s parents were immediately shaken. They clasped hands and bowed.

“Xiufeng offers greetings, senior!”

“Meng Li offers respectful greetings, senior!”

This was the same man who had appeared to them on Planet East Victory, and had indicated that they should come to Planet South Heaven. He was the one who had directed them to guard the planet for 100,000 years. He was… an Outsider!

If Meng Hao were here, he would immediately recognize that this person was… Shui Dongliu![1]

“The chance for Immortality was consumed by the Dao of Heaven,” he murmured. “The Dao path has overlapped with the ancient. I saw nine fluttering butterflies once again flying in approach[2]. I saw the one who has vanished; and the look in his eyes as he turned his head to look back…. It can’t be predicted anymore, and I can’t see through it anymore…. He… actually managed to change his fate!” A strange gleam appeared in his eyes as he gazed toward the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple in the distant mountains.

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# Chapter 819: A Flickering Vision of Ancient Times

At the same time, within the Inner Ring of the Milky Way Sea, the water was boiling. A gray fog suddenly rose up, which spread out in all directions, filled with an aura of death.

An ancient ship slowly pierced through the fog, and as it did it seemed to cause flickering images of countless worlds to appear within the fog.

It almost seemed like the ship had just come from ancient times, and was now making an appearance in this day and age.

At the prow of the ship was an old man wearing a dilapidated suit of armor. His long hair was the color of silver, and it was impossible to see his facial features. It was only possible to see a pair of blank eyes that seemed to be staring off into eternity, looking for the answer to some unanswerable question.

Suddenly, the old man raised his head up and looked in the direction of the ancient Daoist rite temple off in the Eastern Lands.

“Who… has shaken the world?”

All of the ripples which were spreading out throughout Planet South Heaven suddenly vanished.

Outside the Tower of Tang, Meng Hao’s parents listened to Shui Dongliu’s words, and were shaken.

“Impossible to predict. He has changed his destiny.

“You two must not interfere; too many Karmic connections would be detrimental to him…. He… is connected to South Heaven by destiny.”

“Senior….” said Meng Hao’s father, his voice anxious as he looked at Shui Dongliu.

“The tribulation…. is coming,” murmured Shui Dongliu. “I have seen countless corpses, and endless rivers of blood. I have seen the calamity which will leave only nine mountains in the starry sky. That calamity… is not very far off.

“The existences that were once subdued cannot cross over from ancient times, but the ones who escaped subdual will return full of vengeance….

“When was the enmity created? What was its root cause? Forgotten…. They’ve all forgotten everything…. Nobody remembers anymore….

“They… enslaved the Dao of Heaven. And they are on their way.” He shook his head slowly.

Meanwhile, in the depths of the mountains, in the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple, the ground was quaking outside of the temple. Everyone was astonished as they listened to the shrill sound of weeping mixed with laughter, and the incredible roaring coming from deep beneath the ground. Then they saw the temple itself shaking. Cracks spread out, and suddenly, an illusory Daoist rite temple appeared once again.

Inside the temple hall, Meng Hao’s face was pale. All he had wanted to do was to pick up the bronze lantern, so the intense rumbling, and the quaking of the land, caused his eyes to go wide.

Furthermore, he now could not separate his hand from the bronze lantern; intense pain stabbed into his hand, causing the skin to be slit open and blood to spray out, which was then absorbed by the bronze lantern.

After absorbing the blood, the lantern’s flame burned even more radiantly. It emanated a red glow which seemed capable of piercing the air and tearing open the barrier to ancient times. Meng Hao was suddenly able to sense that everything was in motion.

The images around him began to rotate, spinning faster and faster, until they were roaring violently in the form of a vortex.

It was hard to say how long it lasted, but at a certain point the vortex suddenly ceased moving. Shaking, Meng Hao looked around to see… the exact same ancient Daoist rite temple that he had seen before. He could hear the sound of a sermon being given about the Dao, and everyone sat cross-legged beneath a river of stars.

On the altar was an old man who waved his hand, causing everything in Heaven and Earth to suddenly reverse; an enormous “Immortal  ” character appeared….

Shockingly, the “Immortal” superimposed over Meng Hao. It was as if the oil lamp in his hand had turned into the mountain, while he was the person! Together, they transformed into the character… “Immortal!” 1

Countless eyes fell upon him, and Meng Hao’s mind spun. Everything that was happening was far too incredible, and he could barely believe it.

Next, the lamp began to absorb more and more of his blood. His face went pale as the world around him spun. Rumbling filled the air as everything once again ceased moving. Shockingly, Meng Hao found himself looking at yet another world.

An enormous hand could be seen in the sky, which smashed directly into the ground. There were countless cultivators locked in deadly combat; they attacked by hauling stars out of the sky and transforming them into divine abilities.

To defend, enormous swaths of earth were ripped up and hurled into the sky.

There was an enormous, amorphous figure who had stars shining in its forehead. Next to it were innumerable furred creatures with long tentacles, as large as planets, wreaking death in all directions.

It was impossible for Meng Hao to tell who was friend or foe. There were multiple powers all fighting each other. Far off in the distance, he saw an enormous rift tearing open to reveal… nine suns!

They were nine suns that caused the starry sky to tremble, caused the void to shatter into fragments, and caused all life to be extinguished!

Unexpectedly, the nine suns were hauling an enormous stone statue through the rift. The statue depicted a man who had ordinary features and yet emanated an unforgettable aura!

An indescribably large shadow began to spread out, seemingly intent on covering up the entire starry sky. From the look of it, it was possible to see that it was something completely unique and bizarre.

People began to cry out in alarm, to shout about the Dao of Heaven….

Even more shocking, from a different direction, nine butterflies could be seen flying in approach. They were indescribably gargantuan, larger than anything else. In the moment they appeared, what seemed like portals that led to other worlds opened up on their bodies, from within which emerged clouds of figures. Meng Hao was completely shocked; these nine butterflies were incredibly large, like continents, and they were slowly moving in his direction.

“The world of Immortals is the source of all chaos! Immortals are the pinnacle of evil!” It was impossible to tell who this voice that rang out in Meng Hao’s vision belonged to. The only thing that he could see were the nine suns, the nine butterflies, and below them, nine shocking mountains.

Massive rumbling filled everything, and then the vision faded away. Meng Hao’s mind was reeling, and everything around him was shattered to pieces. Once again, a vortex formed, with Meng Hao in the middle of it. He reappeared from ancient times, and stepped out into the temple hall.

Almost all of his blood had been sucked out of his body into the bronze lantern. As for the lantern…. It had of its own volition floated up into the air above Meng Hao's head, where it was now flickering dimly.

It was at this point that the sky outside… grew bright!

In the moment in which dawn broke, the bronze lamp above Meng Hao's head flickered and transformed into an ember. It was not extinguished, but rather, turned into a weak, green smoke that bored into Meng Hao's mouth, nose, ears, and eyes. All of a sudden, he experienced an unprecedented clarity.

Meng Hao's mind trembled, and his eyes glittered brightly. He knew that now was not the time to hesitate. Followed by the shadow that was his second true self, Meng Hao emerged from the temple hall, flicking his sleeve to collect up Taiyang Zi and Song Luodan, who he then tossed into his bag of holding. He glanced at the well, which was still sealed by the Ninth Mountain, and then unhesitatingly left the courtyard.

When he emerged from the main gate, he saw that everyone outside had blank expressions on their faces. Apparently, they were still caught up in the vision of ancient times. Even the sons of Ji were trembling.

Meng Hao immediately started flying. However, a beam of sword light screamed through the air toward him before he could get very far. It was none other than Zhao Yifan!

As it turned out, he was the first to awaken!

More people began to wake up, and when they saw Meng Hao, they instantly unleashed magical techniques as they chased after him.

"Hey, the Daoist rite temple is all yours!" he called. The war chariot appeared, and instantly shot forward at incredible speed. The incoming magic from his pursuers very nearly overwhelmed him.

Thankfully, he hadn't paused for even the slightest moment; furthermore, his mind was incredibly clear because of the bronze lantern. Everyone else, even Zhao Yifan, had just come to their senses, and as such, found it difficult to employ the full power of their cultivation bases.

Rumbling filled the air, and Meng Hao coughed up a mouthful of blood. However, he was being doggedly pursued, so he shot forward at top speed toward that narrow path surrounded on either sides by high cliffs.

Unfortunately, the airspace was restricted, and it quickly became apparent that the war chariot was having difficulty staying aloft. It began to slow down rapidly as soon as he entered the narrow path, until Meng Hao was finally forced to put it away. As soon as he touched down onto the ground, he shot away like an arrow from a bow. A whizzing sound could be heard as he shot off into the distance.

There were hundreds of people pursuing him, although none of them were Chosen. Instead, they were the Dao Protectors from the various sects and clans. Only Mount Sun and the Song Clan sent all of their forces after him.

The other Chosen, after awakening, looked at the empty temple and then charged in.

As soon as they entered the place, the mountain above the well collapsed into pieces, and the desolate wail of a woman could be heard.

“Meng Hao! Things are NOT finished between us!” Fan Dong’er flowed up from within the well, her face pale and her hair disheveled. All of the other Chosen who were so smitten with her were just about to rush forward to her when suddenly, they gasped. They looked at Fan Dong’er with astonishment, and slowly began to back up.

Fan Dong’er gaped, and her face fell. It was then that she raised her right hand; a bright light flashed, and a mirror appeared. When she looked into the mirror she could see that her face, although somewhat pale, was still as beautiful as ever.

She breathed a sigh of relief. Except then….

“Dong’er, b-behind you….”

“There’s someone behind you!!”

“Why… why did you carry a corpse up here on your back…?”

It was at this point that Fan Dong’er caught sight of something else in the mirror’s reflection. Behind her… floated the corpse of a woman, the exact same corpse which had tormented her inside the well.

Fan Dong’er felt like her head was going to explode. She immediately flew up into the air, only to find that the corpse did exactly the same thing. It was almost as if their souls were connected; apparently, it would follow her no matter where she went.

Fan Dong’er could only imagine what it would be like if, no matter where she went, she was followed by a corpse that had been fermenting in water for millions of years…. Such a matter would completely shock the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea once word got out.

Fan Dong’er screamed….

“Meng Hao, I’m going to kill you. KILL you!!”

By this point, the other Chosen had already entered the temple hall. They looked around in shock for a moment, then immediately fled out of the temple complex. Cracks spread out rapidly, and the ground shattered into a chasm, into which the entire temple immediately fell!

Thankfully, everyone moved with enough speed that no one was caught up in the destruction. However, they all looked back in shock as the remains of the temple were sucked down into the ground. After that, the ground returned to its normal state, as if nothing had ever been there….

“Dammit! That bronze lamp that Meng Hao took was obviously a precious treasure from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple!”

“He definitely has the Immortal Ancient Dao Medallion!”

“Get him! The airspace here is restricted, so he can’t have gotten far. Seal the entire mountain range! Lock down the air! Dig up the earth until we find him!”

1. You may remember that Er Gen once broke down the character “Immortal ” as being made up of a person and a mountain

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# Chapter 820: Who’s Trying to Steal My Business?

It took only a moment for everyone from all of the various sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea to be sent into a blur of motion. They used a variety of techniques to lock down the mountain range. They used shocking divine will, secret magics, and various divine abilities as they spread out in all directions to search for Meng Hao.

This was especially true of Fan Dong’er, who cried out shrilly as she sped through the air. Normally she was surrounded with a calm, holy air. That was gone now; any beautiful woman would be incapable of doing so when being constantly followed around by a corpse.

She could imagine how soon, news of the matter would spread throughout the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea, which made her hatred for Meng Hao rise to new heights.

As for the Chosen from the rest of the sects and clans, they were proud people, and were the type who didn’t like to show inferiority to anyone. Although they were used to the constant competition and fighting with other Chosen and the dangers that came along with that, they were not used to coming up empty-handed in their endeavors. Instead, they usually compared amongst themselves to see who ended up with more good fortune than the others.

But this time… in the lands of South Heaven, when meeting Meng Hao for the first time, they also encountered another first. They came face to face with incredible good fortune, but were unable to get even a scrap of it.

And when they thought of how Meng Hao had hoodwinked them all, had run a deadly con on them, it caused them to hate him so much that their gums itched.

“Too shameless! That guy is evil to the marrow!”

“For someone as extreme as that to NOT be famous in the outside world is simply impossible! He’s most likely a cultivator from Planet South Heaven!”

“It doesn’t matter who he is! We’ll make him cough up the good fortune he stole from us!”

Whooshing sounds filled the air as hundreds of cultivators employed their top speed to spread out through the boundless mountains. They formed something like a huge web as they searched for Meng Hao.

Meng Hao proceeded along cautiously. Despite employing a variety of methods, he was unable to get the bronze lamp into his bag of holding. He was forced to just deal with it floating there, flickering above his head.

The land around him trembled, and divine sense swept about. Meng Hao increased his speed. These mountains were huge, and were also dotted with restrictive spells that, if accidentally triggered, would very likely kill him. Because of that, he wasn’t able to maintain top speed.

As he proceeded along cautiously, his eyes gleamed brightly. Before, he had moved around in the area in front of the temple, but now the whole sprawling mountain range was open to him.

“Now that they’ll be forced to come at me one by one, I’m curious to see which of these Chosen from the outside is actually the most powerful!”

Time passed by. Soon, it was midday. Meng Hao happened to be in a forested area, when suddenly his expression flickered, and he shot backward. A black arrow slammed into the ground where he had just been standing. The ground exploded, sending dirt and vegetation showering into the air. Then a cold snort could be heard.

“So, this is where you’ve been hiding!” someone said. A young man appeared, wearing a magnificent violet robe embroidered with dragons. He wore a crown on his head, and his cultivation base was incredible, beyond the peak of Dao Seeking. As soon as he appeared, his gaze locked onto the bronze lamp above Meng Hao’s head.

“If I can subdue you, then I, Sun Hai, will achieve even more fame than before! The good fortune of the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple will belong to me!”

Next to Sun Hai was an old man who radiated an archaic aura. He seemed extremely ancient, and although he was initially unprepossessing in appearance, his eyes suddenly began to shine brightly like two suns.

Sun Hai turned to the old man and said, “Subdue him!”

The old man looked at Meng Hao and smiled. His body then surged with energy, almost as if an Immortal were inside him, sitting in meditation. As he stepped forward, ripples spread out, distorting the air around him.

Meng Hao silently turned to face the two people, and his eyes narrowed. He remembered these two; the young man was one of the Chosen he had seen back at the temple, one of the group of seven or eight who had attacked him.

“Let’s see if you’ve got the skill to suppress Meng Hao,” he said with a slight smile.

As the old man stepped forward, the world in front of Meng Hao seemed to stretch out, and then suddenly shrink back to normal. When the interchange was completed, the old man was standing directly in front of Meng Hao.

“Die!” he said coolly, extending his right hand. Something like a sun appeared in his hand, which began to emanate brilliant light. As the light enveloped Meng Hao, Meng Hao snorted coldly. Not only did he not retreat, he actually advanced, and as he stepped forward, a shadow appeared behind him that turned into his second true self. It radiated a murderous aura as it headed toward the violet-robed Sun Hai.

“Kill the old one first, then cut down the young one!” said Meng Hao coolly. His Dharma Idol appeared, bursting with the energy of a cultivation base half a step into true Immortality. The Dharma Idol’s hands lifted up and pushed out to fight back against the old man.

Rumbling filled the air, and the old man’s arms trembled. A cold light appeared in his eye that was filled with a murderous aura. His body suddenly seemed to turn weak and skinny, but an incredible energy surged out from within him. He clenched his palm into a fist and then punched out toward Meng Hao.

Off to the side, Meng Hao’s second true self was already fighting with the violet-robed Sun Hai. Booms echoed and ripples spread out in all directions.

In ten short breaths of time, Meng Hao and the old man exchanged over a hundred moves. Suddenly, a blood-colored vortex appeared beneath Meng Hao, and the old man’s face flickered in response. Meng Hao then shot backward, and the vortex began to speed toward the old man, apparently capable of sucking in any physical object in the area.

The old man’s eyes flashed and he performed an incantation gesture. Shockingly, the illusory image of an emperor appeared behind the old man, who then waved his hand toward Meng Hao.

A look of scorn appeared on Meng Hao’s face, and in the blink of an eye, he shapeshifted into a huge roc. With shocking speed, he flew past the old man toward his second true self and the violet-robed Sun Hai.

The old man’s face fell, and he immediately shot after him in pursuit.

Sun Hai’s face flickered, and he roared, “Wherever the Emperor stands is sovereign territory!” He performed a double-handed incantation and spit out a mouthful of blood. An emperor identical to the one behind the old man appeared behind him and took a step forward, causing the entire area to be locked down.

Meng Hao didn’t say anything. He slapped his bag of holding with his right hand, causing a beast claw to appear. Using his superficial knowledge of its workings, he sent it slashing forward.

Sky and land darkened, and the screech of a cat filled the air. A black illusory cat appeared, which then clawed at the sealing power that had locked down the area. A boom filled the air as the sealing power was shattered.

In that instant, roc-form Meng Hao moved like lightning to appear directly in front of Sun Hai, whose eyes narrowed. Even as he backed up, Meng Hao closed in and slashed a claw-like hand at him, and they began to fight.

The Ninth Mountain appeared next to Meng Hao, blocking an attack from the old man. At the same time, Meng Hao unleashed the Star Plucking Magic. An enormous hand appeared which grabbed Sun Hai. Blood sprayed from his mouth, and he struggled mightily, but Meng Hao closed in on him and pushed down onto his chest. The Blood Demon Grand Magic surged, and Sun Hai screamed as his body withered up. Then Meng Hao quickly sealed him and tossed him into his bag of holding.

As he turned, the old man let out a roar of rage. His eyes were completely bloodshot as he watched Meng Hao capture the Young Lord Sun Hai. He was instantly sent into a violent rage.

“Shouting isn’t going to do you any good,” said Meng Hao with a cold laugh. “You’re not strong enough to suppress me, and yet you provoke me anyway? You’ve brought your death upon yourself.” As Meng Hao sped backward, the old man shot toward him, howling furiously. The emperor image behind him let off a shocking pressure, causing Meng Hao’s face to flicker. This old man was a Dao Protector and, despite his sealed cultivation base, was still incredibly powerful.

Meng Hao snorted coldly, and his eyes flickered. It was at this point that, all of a sudden, Wang Mu burst out from the forest behind Meng Hao. He had already been in the area when he sensed the ripples emanating out from the fighting. As soon as he appeared, his vision suddenly rippled, and electricity flashed all around him. In the next breath, he and Meng Hao had switched positions.

“Many thanks, little brother Wang,” Meng Hao laughed. He instantly disappeared into the forest. His second true self transformed into a shadow and then vanished.

Wang Mu and the enraged old man slammed into each other, causing a huge boom to rattle out. Then they turned their heads in the direction Meng Hao had disappeared, and killing intent surged. Without another word, they shot after him in pursuit.

Meng Hao grumbled to himself in irritation, then gritted his teeth and sped onward.

Two hours passed in a flash. In addition to his incredible speed, Meng Hao also had the Lightning Cauldron. As he flitted through the forest, he sent his divine sense out. The forested area was not small, and although he was being pursued, it was relatively easy for him to make his way freely through the trees.

After a while, he slapped his bag of holding with his right hand, causing the crown-wearing Sun Hai to appear.

“I’m from the Church of the Immortal Emp—”

POW!

Meng Hao slapped him across the side of the face.

Sun Hai’s eyes turned red and he glared at Meng Hao, panting. However, he didn’t say anything further. Meng Hao completely ignored him, and instead looked through Sun Hai’s bag of holding, and then patted Sun Hai down. In the end, his eyes went wide.

“You have nothing at all?” he said angrily. “What happened on your way here, did you get robbed or something?” He felt as if he had been fooled into snatching someone who was actually poorer than himself.

Sun Hai’s bag of holding had absolutely nothing in it….

Sun Hai wanted to howl with rage. As a Chosen from the Church of the Immortal Emperor, he had come to South Heaven with vast quantities of magical items, and even some very rare items. In fact, some of the magical weapons were specifically useful because of his type of cultivation base, and could push his divine abilities to the peak of their power. However… before meeting Meng Hao, he actually had been robbed in a very humiliating fashion.

That was one reason why it had been so easy for Meng Hao to capture him.

“Are all of you people from Planet South Heaven bandits!?” said Sun Hai through gritted teeth, his heart dripping with blood.

Meng Hao stared in shock. All it took was one question, and Sun Hai revealed the truth. Meng Hao thought about it, and couldn’t recall anyone in the lands of South Heaven who had tried to steal business from him. However, now that a competitor had appeared, he realized he needed to be on guard.

“Well, whatever,” Meng Hao said with a slight sigh. “I guess it’s just my bad luck. Now, write up a promissory note!”

“Y-you…. Forget about it! I’m not writing any promissory note!”

“You don’t give me any magical items, and you won’t write a promissory note?! You useless piece of crap! If it weren’t for the fact that I don’t want to cause any unnecessary problems for my dad and mom, I would just cut you down!” Glaring, Meng Hao reached out and grabbed him by the hair, then sealed his mouth and cultivation base, and finally, cast a minor magical spell on him that he had learned in the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect. Then, he sped off, dragging Sun Hai by the hair behind him on the ground….

Sun Hai was trembling. His cultivation base was sealed, as was his mouth. Whatever magical technique it was that Meng Hao had just used on him caused his sensitivity to pain to increase severalfold, making it so that being dragged across the ground felt like death by a thousand cuts….

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# Chapter 821: Mopping Up Li Ling’er!

As he was dragged along, Sun Hai lost consciousness from the pain several times. However, the misery quickly caused him to reawaken. This was a feeling the likes of which he had never experienced before in his entire life.

Were he able to shout, he would definitely scream with incredible bitterness.

Meng Hao didn’t even look at him. He gripped his hair tightly as he dragged him along, intentionally choosing a rough and difficult path to tread. Sun Hai had no choice but to bump along behind him on the ground like a writhing snake.

Soon, darkness began to fall. When everything was pitch black, the bronze lamp above Meng Hao’s head suddenly trembled. Meng Hao stopped in his tracks as he sensed the blood in his body being absorbed by the lamp. His face went pale as the lamp’s flame hissed to life.

The flame was dim, but it cast countless shadows in all directions. Someone far away would not be able to see it, but anyone nearby would definitely notice.

Meng Hao frowned, but after trying everything he could to prevent the light from shining out, and failing, he sighed lightly and proceeded forward with glittering eyes. Instead of leaving the mountain range, he headed deeper in, proceeding along as fast as possible.

Here, there were many more restrictive spells….

Everything was silent. There was wind, but it made absolutely no noise as it brushed across his face. Sun Hai’s pain caused him to hover between life and death as Meng Hao dragged him around for several hours. By now, it was the middle of the night, and as Meng Hao walked along, he suddenly stopped in place. A sense of deadly crisis rose up, and he turned to find a woman approaching through the trees.

She was incredibly beautiful, and as she walked out from the darkness, she looked as if she were descending from an Immortal paradise. She wore a long gown and had mark on her forehead in the shape of a willow leaf. Everything seemed to fade in comparison to her beauty, as if she were the only thing worth looking at in the world.

“Give me the Immortal Ancient Dao Medallion,” she said calmly. This was none other than Li Ling’er from Planet North Reed. When she looked over at Meng Hao, her eyes seemed to be filled with heavenly bodies.

As she walked along, the grass swayed gently and grew taller, and flowers bloomed, as if her aura breathed life into everything around her.

“When Fan Dong’er was around, I didn’t notice that you were also really quite pretty,” said Meng Hao, his eyes widening. Li Ling’er was another of the people who had ganged up to attack him earlier, and in the brief interchange with her, he could tell that she was beyond ordinary.

There was something dreadful lurking within her aura, although the only physical thing that drew Meng Hao’s attention… was the willow mark on her forehead.

However, what caused his eyes to become like sharp blades was the fact that… there were no Dao Protectors standing next to her.

He clearly remembered that back when she stood outside of the courtyard, she had been followed by Dao Protectors. That there were none with her now indicated that she was extremely self-confident. Apparently there were quite a few other Chosen who possessed such confidence.

Zhao Yifan was the same, as was Ji Yin. Fan Dong'er was like that, and now this Li Ling'er.

Li Ling'er's expression didn't change at all in response to Meng Hao's words, as if she didn't care about them at all. She continued to walk forward, an intense energy surging out that caused an enormous, shocking tree to appear behind her.

The tree was wizened and withered, and a vine wrapped around it that looked like a flood dragon. The tree itself was pitch-black, but its leaves were emerald-green.

"Are you going to give it to me, or not?" she asked. Her expression seemed calm, but her eyes were filled with arrogant pride as she gazed at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao sighed, and then said, "I want to give it to you, but… I'm already married."

His words caused Li Ling'er's jaw to involuntarily drop. Meng Hao's response had absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with her actual question.

Even as she gaped in shock, Meng Hao's eyes began to glow brightly. His Dharma Idol appeared behind him, and he shot forward in a flash, clenching his hand into a fist and punching toward Li Ling'er.

Sun Hai had already been tossed off to the side. He was bound up, so all he could do was look on with anticipation as Meng Hao and Li Ling'er began to fight.

"You aboriginal South Heaven cultivators are incompetent insects," she said coolly. The vine on the huge tree behind her began to glow, and then countless branches shot out, slamming into Meng Hao's Dharma Idol with a boom. At the same time, Meng Hao's punch slammed into a huge leaf which blocked his way.

However, before Li Ling'er's expression could even change, Meng Hao snorted and then lifted up his left hand, within which appeared the

Lightning Cauldron. As electricity danced, a scornful smile appeared on Li Ling’er’s face.

“You can’t get away!” she said. As the words left her mouth, countless branches sprouted up around Sun Hai, completely locking him in place.

“I wasn’t planning to run!” he said, almost simultaneously. Electricity flashed, and Meng Hao and Li Ling’er switched places!

Meng Hao really hadn’t planned to flee, but instead, switched locations with Li Ling’er instead of Sun Hai!

Li Ling’er was shocked, and before she could react, a rumbling echoed out as, in the blink of an eye, she and Meng Hao switched places seven or eight more times.

The rapid frequency of the transpositioning was something Li Ling’er couldn’t deal with. One time was fine, and two could be dealt with. But after the third time, being shuttled back and forth left her feeling as if she would be ripped apart.

Thankfully, Meng Hao had an incredibly tough fleshly body, otherwise, he wouldn’t be able to handle it either.

What caused Li Ling’er’s face to fall more than anything else was how Meng Hao was able to launch attacks even in the middle of switching back and forth. He was able to use his divine abilities exactly as he normally could, but often Li Ling’ers attacks would be interrupted.

BOOOMMMM!!

In the blink of an eye, a brilliant light began to shine out from Li Ling’er. A vine flew out, which transformed into a flood dragon that shot between her and Meng Hao, tearing a rift into the air itself, pushing them completely apart.

Li Ling’er shot back rapidly, blood spurting out of her mouth. She looked up to glare at Meng Hao, shocked at the incredible power of his fleshly body.

“Despicable!” she said. However, electricity crackled around Meng Hao even as the words left her mouth, causing her face to fall.

However, Meng Hao did not switch positions; he was merely using the dancing lightning to startle her. He punched out again, followed by his Dharma Idol. At the same time, his second true self appeared, and was just about to assist in suppressing Li Ling’er when, shockingly, a Dharma Clone of Li Ling’er stepped out of thin air!

The Dharma Clone immediately began to battle with Meng Hao’s second true self.

Booms filled the air, and Meng Hao roared as he turned into a roc, which flew forward as fast as lightning. Li Ling’er had already been injured, and now she was being forced back bit by bit. Meng Hao was incredibly ferocious, and his attacks provoked peals thunder and flashes of lightning. There was an aura of invincibility surrounding him that caused Li Ling’er to feel suppressed.

In a short period of time, the space of only a few breaths, they fought back and forth viciously. The Blood Demon Grand Magic reappeared. In response, Li Ling’er clasped her hands together above her, causing her entire body to glow with brilliant emerald-green light that transformed into the shape of a magical bottle which fought back against the Blood Demon Grand Magic.

Meng Hao transformed from a roc to the form of a Blood Demon head, slammed into the magical bottle, causing it to explode. At the same time, Li Ling’er waved her right hand, causing the image of a vine to materialize, which then slapped into Meng Hao.

The Blood Demon head shattered, causing blood to ooze from Meng Hao’s mouth. However, he didn’t retreat in the least. Instead, he charged forward, his fleshly body bursting with intense power. He waved a hand, causing countless enormous mountains to appear one after another. They became a mountain range that forced Li Ling’er to retreat, her heart filled with shock.

From what she could tell, Meng Hao was actually more powerful now than he had been when fighting Fan Dong’er.

In fact, he seemed to be building up his energy!

“He could actually become invincible,” she thought. “I can’t let him finish building up that energy. Otherwise… this battle will end with my defeat!” Eyes flickering, she backed up, performing a double handed incantation, her expression unprecedentedly solemn.

“World Tree, detonate. Rebuke the Heavens with your spirit. Transform for me! Stifle all the Earth!” As she spoke, she shoved both of her hands out in front of her. A sound could be heard that seemed explosive, and yet at the same time, stifled, like the thump of a heartbeat.

Meng Hao’s face flickered. A second sound rang out, then a third, and a fourth. It was at that point, that the huge tree behind Li Ling’er collapsed into pieces, as if it had just passed through countless years of time. The pieces transformed into a three-hundred-meter log that then passed through Li Ling’er to shoot toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao immediately sensed critical danger as the log neared him, as if it were filled with death itself. In that critical moment, he slapped his bag of holding to produce a rock.

It was a golden-colored rock that looked like a sun, which he shoved out toward the incoming log, filling it with all the power of his cultivation base. Even his Dharma Idol faded as he called upon all the power he could muster. A brilliant light exploded out, illuminating everything in the entire area in a way that everyone in the entire mountain range could see.

Something that looked like a burning sun slammed into the log, causing the ground to quake and the heavenly bodies up above to tremble. The log melted, and the stone’s light faded away. Blood oozed out of Meng Hao’s mouth, and Li Ling’er convulsed violently. Blood sprayed from her mouth, and she retreated backward with an expression of complete disbelief on her face.

“Trying to run away?” said Meng Hao, eyes flickering with killing intent. “My mom has no maidservant and you’ll do just fine!” With that he extended his hand and pointed toward Li Ling’er.

The Eighth Demon Sealing Hex immediately surged out.

In that instant, Li Ling’er’s face fell. All of a sudden, it was as if she had no cultivation base. Although it only lasted for a moment, in the middle of magical battle, a moment could change everything.

She stopped in midair, and Meng Hao appeared next to her. He was just about to reach out and grab her when a vicious expression appeared on her face. The air behind her flickered as she prepared to once again utilize the same magic she had used moments before.

However, there was no way Meng Hao would allow that. The Lightning Cauldron appeared, and they once again switched places. Then, again and again, until they had switched places dozens of times!

Even Meng Hao was having difficulty enduring, and his skin began to split and tear. Li Ling’er was even worse off; she coughed up blood as she sustained serious internal injuries.

Gritting her teeth, she crushed a jade slip, causing ripples to spread out into the air. Clearly, she was just on the verge of teleporting away. Meng Hao snorted, then lifted his right hand and employed the Star Plucking Magic… to suddenly viciously grab Li Ling’er’s firm rear end and drag her back toward him.

Li Ling’er trembled, and her entire body went numb. Goosebumps spread out over her skin as she was pulled back to Meng Hao. He sealed her cultivation base, and then everything went dark as she was shoved into his bag of holding.

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# Chapter 822: From Now On, Call Me Li’l Hai!

Off to the side, Sun Hai’s eyes were wide with astonishment as he watched Meng Hao tuck Li Ling’er into his bag of holding. The attacks he had seen just now left his scalp tingling.

“This guy’s just one of those aboriginal local cultivators, how… how could he be so powerful!?!?”

Meanwhile, a roar of rage drifted out from some distance off. The voice belonged to Fan Dong’er, who was followed by a large group of people.

Meng Hao’s body flickered as he once again put Sun Hai into his bag of holding. His second true self turned into his shadow as he then sped off into the distance.

The burning lamp floating above his head let off a weak light as Meng Hao proceeded forward. He wiped the blood off of his mouth and then produced some medicinal pills to consume. His eyes shone with a brilliant gleam as a beam of sword qi flew down from a nearby mountain peak, where a single silhouette could be seen.

It was Zhao Yifan, who was separated from Meng Hao by a mountainous valley. The airspace in this area was restricted, so he was incapable of flying directly over. However, his sword qi could slice through the air, and its incredible energy caused huge ripples to spread out in all directions as it descended on Meng Hao. Everyone to whom it was visible found it completely shocking.

Meng Hao looked up at the incoming sword qi, and couldn’t help but recall the nine sword forms taught to him by his father. Although the incoming sword was nothing compared to his father’s, he could see some clues regarding the Dao of the sword within it.

His eyes shone with a strange gleam as he took a deep breath, then extended his left leg. His body bent like a bow, and in his mind, he could visualize the breathing technique his father had passed down to him. In that instant, multilayered ripples spread out, and the ground seemed to shrink. Meng Hao himself suddenly seemed to grow rapidly.

As he breathed, it seemed as if all the energy in the entire area were being sucked into him. Popping sounds could be heard as, although his hand did not hold a sword, shockingly… scattered bits of sword qi appeared!

Meng Hao felt like his body was about to explode. He knew that the next movement involved moving his right foot forward, and that it must be executed rapidly along with a powerful gust of wind. Unfortunately, he wasn’t capable of executing the movement properly. His body was already at its limit, filled with incredible, and in fact too much, power.

He decided not to go into the second movement, and instead, swept his arm up into the sky like an arrow. Immediately, all the hair on his body stood on end and the incredible energy within him, along with all the power of his cultivation base, exploded out.

Rumbling filled the air as the onlookers saw a shocking sword qi on the mountain Meng Hao stood on. Although it was unfocused, it was still able to surge out and meet the incoming sword qi from Zhao Yifan.

Cries of surprise instantly rang out throughout the mountains.

“The Dao of the sword!”

“What?! He’s… he’s proficient in the Dao of the sword too!?!?”

“The sword!? Only people with benevolent hearts can cultivate that Dao. This guy is shameless to the extreme! How is it possible for him to utilize the Dao of the sword!?”

Rumbling filled the air as the two beams of sword qi slammed into each other. Brilliant, resplendent light flashed in the air, brightening the entire area.

On the mountain opposite Meng Hao, Zhao Yifan stood there trembling. Although he was not injured, he was excited. His eyes gleamed more than ever with the desire to do battle.

“It’s you…. You are the grindstone to polish my sword!!”

Zhixiang was off in the distance, and when she saw what was happening, her delicate mouth went wide with shock. The more she learned about Meng Hao, the more enigmatic he seemed to be. In fact, he almost seemed to be completely different than the Meng Hao she remembered.

“How could he… have changed so much!?” she thought, gasping. It was at this point that Fan Dong’er’s enraged voice could be heard echoing off in the distance.

“Meng Hao, I’m gonna kill you!” she screamed, seemingly on the verge of going mad. The female corpse floated behind her like a shadow. During the day it wasn’t so bad. It was frightening, but at least it didn’t make any noises….

However, at nighttime…. The corpse’s hair would fly about, and its eyes would shine with a strange light. It would begin to weep with choked, horrifying sobs that penetrated deep into Fan Dong’er’s soul. When she sat down and mediated, the weeping would wrench her out of her trance.

The Mount Sun Holy Land and the Song Clan especially wanted to kill Meng Hao. However, they were worried because he had taken their Young Lords captive, and they weren’t sure whether they were alive or dead. Therefore it was with both great anxiety and deadly intent that they pursued Meng Hao.

The three members of the Fang Clan had spread out in different directions to search. Fang Donghan was somber, and rarely made any moves in public. In fact, many people actually overlooked him. However, were it not for the inhuman Fang Wei, the blazing sun of the Fang Clan would actually be Fang Donghan.

Fang Yunyi saw nothing unusual about Meng Hao's sword qi, and as for Fang Xiangshan, she was completely focused on cultivation and didn't pay much attention to the outside world. If it weren't for the fact that the Patriarch had made the request, she would not have come to this place. Therefore, although she didn't have negative feelings toward Meng Hao, neither did she have a good impression.

However, Fang Donghan was currently staring at Meng Hao disappearing into the mountains, and his mind was buzzing. He… actually recognized that sword move! It was a mysterious Daoist magic recorded in the ancient records of the Fang Clan. The Heaven Severing Sword!

In all of the Fang clan, the only person who had mastered the Heaven Severing Sword and forged his own Dao, was Fang Xiufeng!

“Meng Hao…. That kid from all those years ago would actually be my older cousin…. He was the oldest grandson of my generation…. His name was Fang Hao!

“Fang Hao. Meng Hao….” Fang Donghan took a deep breath, and his eyes glittered brightly.

By the time everyone rushed over to the mountain where Meng Hao had just been seen, he was long gone and nowhere to be found.

However, it didn't take long for the members of the Li Clan to discover that their Holy Daughter Li Ling'er… was missing.

Soon, people from the Church of the Immortal Emperor realized that their Chosen had also vanished….

After double-checking, they came to the conclusion that Li Ling’er and Sun Hai had in fact disappeared. Obviously… the person responsible for this was most likely Meng Hao!

“Heavens! Taiyang Zi, Song Luodan, Li Ling’ler, and Sun Hai were all captured by Meng Hao!”

“Don’t forget Fan Dong’er. Although she wasn’t taken captive, she’s actually in a much more bitter position than if she had.”

“This Meng Hao… wishes to defy the Heavens!”

Few words were spoken for the rest of the night. There were many people searching for Meng Hao, but the mountain range was simply too vast. The various sects and clans even used some secret powers at their disposal, but because they couldn’t utilize flight, they were unable to find Meng Hao, at least temporarily.

Mysteriously, the restriction on the airspace actually did not decrease when the ancient temple disappeared, and actually, grew more intense, and covered an even wider area.

Soon it was dawn. Meng Hao stood beneath an ancient tree, his eyes gleaming brightly. After resting for a few hours, his energy was completely restored, and he was just about to continue onward when suddenly he decided to slap his bag of holding and take out Li Ling’er and Sun Hai.

Their cultivation bases were sealed, so all Li Ling’er could do was glare at Meng Hao. Her hair was a mess, and she was grinding her teeth; as of this moment, there was no aloof pride to her whatsoever.

Sun Hai was shivering, and when he saw that Meng Hao was about to grab him by the hair, he immediately wailed, “I’ll write the promissory note!”

He did not dare to oppose Meng Hao any further. His clothing had long since been torn to shreds, and his flesh had become a mass of scrapes and wounds. After that, he had witnessed Meng Hao’s fight with Li Ling’er, and he immediately decided to yield.

“Why didn’t you say so earlier!?” said Meng Hao, smiling happily. He immediately produced a paper and pen and handed it to Sun Hai, who sighed and then began to write down a huge sum. He looked sullenly at Meng Hao, and then inwardly swore that if he survived this ordeal, he would never forget Meng Hao’s face for the rest of his life.

Having taken care of Sun Hai, Meng Hao next turned to look at Li Ling’er. She stared back at him furiously, causing him to clear his throat.

“Don’t look at me that way,” he said. “I really am married already, and my wife is way prettier than you.” With that, he took a look into Li Ling’er’s bag of holding, and instantly, his eyes began to shine brightly.

“You Chosen… are… really stinking rich!!” He took a deep breath as he glanced over the vast quantities of spirit stones in the bag of holding. There were also rare medicinal pills and a jade box.

Inside the jade box was a deep-gold shortsword, upon which was affixed a magical talisman.

The pressure it exuded was comparable to the sunstone he had acquired earlier. It was definitely a very precious item!

The sword was something that required advanced preparation to wield; Meng Hao’s incredible power had put her in such a bad position during their battle that she’d never had time to focus on using it.

“I really hate to say it, but I’m going to need to take this sword,” he said, clearing his throat. Flames seemed to be on the verge of bursting out of Li Ling’er’s eyes. Meng Hao put her bag of holding away, then reached out and put his hand into her robe, and after searching for a while came out with a jade slip and a few other miscellaneous objects.

Off to the side, Sun Hai looked on wide-eyed, feeling a bit envious of Meng Hao.

Li Ling’er’s face went bright red, and her murderous intent and rage burned even harder. Even as Meng Hao took away all her miscellaneous items, her body suddenly flashed. Shockingly, she still had a bit of cultivation base accessible. She leaned to the side and then reached out toward the bronze lamp. She moved with lightning speed, having waited patiently for this one moment to make her move. As her hand closed in on the lamp, the flame dimmed, as if it were about to be extinguished.

“What a patient little wench,” Meng Hao said coolly. He then lifted his right hand up and spanked her rear end.

A slapping sound rang out, and Li Ling’er let out a miserable squeal. Her entire body went numb, and she crumpled to the ground in pain, completely incapable of reaching out to touch the ancient bronze lamp. Her face went pale, and cold sweat began to drop down her forehead. Meng Hao had struck her… far too viciously. In fact, from Sun Hai’s vantage point, it was obvious that… Li Ling’er’s buttocks were now uneven….

“You’ve been bad,” Meng Hao said somberly. He lifted his right hand up into the air again, and as Sun Hai looked on in shock….

SMACK!

Sun Hai’s mind was now completely blank as he realized that Li Ling’er’s rear end… was now even once again.

Li Ling’er was in such pain that tears rolled down her face, and she couldn’t see clearly. Somehow, that made her look even more beautiful than before in a way that could cause people to fall in love with her. Meng Hao looked like he was smiling, but actually, his eyes were completely calm. After everything he had experienced in his life, he wasn’t the type of person to be moved easily by those kinds of things.

After thoroughly sealing Li Ling’er, he put her back into his bag of holding and then looked at Sun Hai.

“Let’s see, you’re Fellow Daoist Sun, right?”

Sun Hai began to shiver when he realized Meng Hao was staring at him. His heart trembled, and he put a very fawning expression onto his face.

“Elder Brother Meng, I still haven’t introduced myself. In the future, you can just call me Li’l Hai….

“Elder Brother Meng, you know, as soon as we all caught sight of you for the first time outside the temple, I could tell that you were a dragon amongst men, a Dao child amongst Chosen, a prodigy amongst Dao Children! Your eyes are like two seas of stars, and from the moment I saw you, my esteem for you was burned deep into the recesses of my soul!

“In fact, I, Li’l Hai, could not be more grateful for the painstaking instruction you have provided me with these past few days. That gratitude is etched upon my very heart, filling its every nook and cranny. Every bit of my soul is filled with respect for you, sir!”

Meng Hao gaped at him.

“Please,” Sun Hai repeated somberly, “from now on, call me Li’l Hai!”

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# Chapter 823: Ambush!

Although Meng Hao had experienced a lifetime of volatile situations, to see Sun Hai from the Church of the Immortal Emperor so quickly change his tone, to put on such a flattering air and to speak such fawning words, caused him to first gape and then sigh emotionally. He suddenly missed the shameful and degenerate meat jelly and parrot.

After Sun Hai finished talking, Meng Hao cleared his throat. Although he was actually inwardly pleased, he glared solemnly at Sun Hai and said, “Well aren’t we glib!? Do you really think I’m the type of person who likes to be flattered!?”

Sun Hai’s heart began to pound, and he muttered to himself that things were not looking good. In his entire life, he had only met a few people with personalities as strong as this, and he knew that they were the most difficult of all to deal with. He hesitated for a moment, and then Meng Hao suddenly sighed.

“However,” Meng Hao said, “considering that everything you said is completely true, I’ll forgive you just this once.” With that, he grabbed Sun Hai by the hair and made to toss him back into his bag of holding.

Sun Hai was inwardly outraged. It seemed to him that his hair was on the verge of falling out completely. However, he didn’t dare to struggle, and actually put on a thankful expression.

Inside, he was cursing with grief and indignation.

After putting Sun Hai away, Meng Hao coughed lightly.

“Gratitude etched upon the very heart, filling its every nook and cranny. Every bit of the soul filled with respect. Well said.” Meng Hao looked up into the sky, then flickered into a blur as he headed deeper into the mountains. His expression was the same, but his eyes gleamed coldly as he proceeded along, completely soundless.

“Considering the level of dad’s cultivation base, he could have prevented these people from even coming here. This is a trial by fire for me…. Therefore, it won’t exceed the limits of what I can handle.

“All those old bastards are actually Immortals. Their cultivation bases definitely exceed the Spirit Realm, but they’ve obviously sealed themselves….” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he considered the speculations he could put together with the clues he had.

“They don’t dare to unseal themselves… otherwise they would face a complete catastrophe!”

One by one, several days passed.

Meng Hao would alternate between resting and traveling. When he would encounter pursuers every so often, he would often flee after a bit of fighting. Sometimes he would intentionally show up in order to baffle them and throw off their predictions of where he would be.

More days passed. Eventually, all of the injuries he had sustained during his battle with Li Ling’er were healed. The bronze lamp floating above his head continued to burn. By this point, he was able to vaguely sense traces of Immortal might swirling around inside of it!

That got him very excited, and fueled his determination to endure for the entire 49 days.

“The end is in sight!” he thought. Taking a deep breath, he once again sped off into the distance.

Three more days passed. It was evening, and Meng Hao was moving along as usual, when suddenly, he stopped in place, then dashed backward. A ghostly figure was closing in on him, seemingly heading directly toward his forehead.

At the same time, a person approached from off in the distance. Every step he took caused the ground to quake, as if he weren’t a person, but rather, some ancient wild beast.

He had no hair, and was incredibly well-built. His body emanated incredible pressure, and his eyes seemed to be filled with glittering stars. Blinding, brilliant light swirled around him.

These were signs that his fleshly body had been cultivated to the peak. This person… was Fang Yunyi from the Fang Clan!

“Sure enough, I find you here,” he said with a proud smile.

“Sure enough?” replied Meng Hao, his eyes glittering like swords. The words “sure enough” carried a lot of meaning, and this Fang Yunyi was not unfamiliar to Meng Hao. He was one of the three members of the Fang Clan that Meng Hao had taken special notice of back outside the temple.

Meng Hao had complicated feelings regarding the Fang Clan.

“I don’t care about your good fortune. What I’m interested in is you yourself!” As he spoke, he rushed forward like the wind, rapidly closing the gap between him and Meng Hao.

“Join my entourage… or die!” As he spoke, the heavenly bodies in his eyes grew more apparent, and his energy surged up to the pinnacle.

The last word he spoke echoed out like thunder in all directions, causing everything to ripple. Amorphous rifts were torn into the air, and in the blink of an eye, Meng Hao turned into a tiny rowboat in a raging sea. The intense pressure weighing down seemed as if it would crush him at any moment.

“Screw off!” said Meng Hao, looking coldly at Fang Yunyi. His simple words rang out as shocking as massive peals of thunder, creating a sound wave that shattered the pressure formed by Fang Yunyi’s invisible energy

“Looking to die?!” Fang Yunyi said with a cold laugh. He took a step forward, clenched his right hand into a fist, and then punched out with the energy of a fleshly body that exceeded peak Dao Seeking. Massive power exploded out. Furthermore, a huge, illusory Dharma Idol appeared behind him. It was blurry, making it difficult to clearly make out what exactly it was, but it was clearly humanoid.

Meng Hao’s eyes grew colder, and he said nothing further. He strode forward, and the power of his own fleshly body exploded out as he punched out with his right fist, meeting Fang Yunyi’s attack directly.

A rumbling boom echoed out as Meng Hao transformed into a roc. The Mountain Consuming Incantation became numerous mountains that linked together into a mountain range that swept across the area. Fang Yunyi’s face flickered, and in the blink of an eye, nearly a hundred exchanges had occurred.

Booms rang out, and the air was ripped to pieces. Finally, they both separated. Fang Yunyi’s face was pale, and he was unable to prevent the blood from oozing out of the corners of this mouth.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he prepared to leave.

“Stop annoying me!” he said.

Fang Yunyi’s eyes were bloodshot, and blue veins bulged on his neck and face.

“Heaven Sundering!” he suddenly roared. Rumbling filled the air as the blurry image of the Dharma Idol behind him suddenly became clear. Shockingly, it was a two-headed giant!

The giant emanated an archaic aura, as if the Dharma Idol itself had originated in ancient times, and had traveled through time to appear here. The two heads tilted back and a shocking, soundless roar filled the air. At the same time, Fang Yunyi’s energy shifted and became completely different than before.

It now possessed a shocking savagery!

He roared again as he shot forward, aiming another punch directly at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s pupils constricted from the sense of grave crisis he felt from Fang Yunyi. His expression was solemn as his own Dharma Idol appeared, an equally shocking giant whose appearance caused everything to tremble. Meng Hao clenched his hand into a fist as he moved to intercept Fang Yunyi.

Even as the two of them closed in on each other, the sound of wailing filled the air as a figure appeared, shooting like lightning toward Meng Hao.

In addition to the wails of grief, the figure howled shrilly, “Meng Hao!!”

The voice was filled with boundless hatred, and its owner was a woman. It was none other than Fan Dong’er, and the wailing did not come from her, but rather… Inky, who was only a few inches behind her.

At the same time, two more figures neared. They were older cultivators, one from Mount Sun and the other from the Li Clan. From the method of their arrival, it seemed as if they knew Meng Hao would appear here.

Rumble!

As the three newcomers neared, Fang Yunyi’s mouth twisted into a derisive smile. Although he looked crude and impetuous, he was actually very capable of crafty scheming. His right fist opened up into a palm that moved to grab hold of Meng Hao’s fist. He was convinced that all he had to do was delay Meng Hao for a few breaths of time, and he would be defeated.

At this critical juncture, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. His right index finger pointed out as the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex was unleashed. Demonic qi swept about, and Fang Yunyi trembled. His face fell as he realized he was suddenly completely locked in place.

Next, Meng Hao touched the tips of his five fingers together to form the shape of a mountain. A vicious expression could be seen on his face as his hand stabbed directly into Fang Yunyi’s palm.

At the same time, his Dharma Idol roared as it slammed into Fang Yunyi's Dharma Idol up in midair.

Rumbling filled the air as mountains crumbled. Blood sprayed out of Fang Yunyi's mouth. Shock filled his face, but before he could retreat, Meng Hao turned into a roc that slammed into his chest. A cracking sound could be heard, and Fang Yunyi's face fell. It felt like a star was slamming into him. Even as his breastbone shattered, Meng Hao unleashed the Blood Demon Grand Magic, which began to suck away at Fang Yunyi. At the same time, his second true self emerged and shot toward Fan Dong'er.

Meng Hao was now borrowing the strength of Fang Yunyi's fleshly body to replenish himself. At the same time, he endured the powerful incoming attacks from the two old cultivators.

A shocking boom could be heard, and Meng Hao coughed up a mouthful of blood. Fang Yunyi let out a miserable shriek as his body withered up. He was just on the verge of passing into death when Meng Hao tossed him into his bag of holding and then began to speed off into the distance.

The Lightning Cauldron appeared, crackling with electricity. He was just on the verge of using its powers when suddenly, a beam of starlight appeared. The electricity was snuffed out, and Meng Hao's Form Displacement Transposition failed!

Shockingly, Fan Dong'er held a chunk of starstone in her hand, which radiated glittering starlight.

It was in that moment that a shocking beam of sword qi shot down from up ahead, heading directly toward Meng Hao. That was none other than Zhao Yifan.

"So, somebody figured out that I would pass by this way, and… they set up an ambush!" Were Meng Hao unable to put the pieces of this puzzle together, he would never have been able to rise to prominence in the lands of South Heaven.

The flame in the bronze lamp above his head was still burning, but was much weaker than before. It looked like it might wink out at any moment. Furthermore, Meng Hao was in a very difficult position. Not only was everyone attacking him all at once, but at this time he was also the more seriously injured than he had been this entire time.

There was sword qi blocking his path forward, which came from Zhao Yifan, who stood there looking like a sword Immortal. Behind him was Fan Dong'er, who was tangling with his second true self. Her eyes radiated killing intent, and the sea of stars surrounding her surged toward Meng Hao to smash him.

On the left and right respectively were the two old cultivators. Their faces were cold and grim, and their sealed cultivation bases gave them power similar to false immortals.

Meng Hao was surrounded on all sides, and was the target of a deadly attack that would surely kill him!

Starlight filled the area, restricting the airspace completely and sealing his surroundings.

At the same time, Ji Yin from the Ji Clan sat cross-legged on a nearby mountaintop, surrounded by boundless, swirling Karma that made it difficult to make out his appearance.

However, his eyes obviously glowed with merciless coldness, piercing out through the layers of Karma to look… at the bronze oil lamp hanging over Meng Hao's head.

"That lamp… does not exist within Karma," he murmured. An unprecedented burning fervor gradually appeared within the coldness of his eyes.

"The main reason I came to the lands of South Heaven was because I could sense through Karma that there was an object here clearly connected to me by destiny!

“This Meng Hao is extraordinary, but that destiny… belongs to me!”

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# Chapter 824: Wrecking the Ambush

It was a deadly ambush. Meng Hao didn’t even have the time to try and take Li Ling’er and the others out of his bag of holding to use as hostages. Power bore down on him from all sides, and in any case, Fan Dong’er and Zhao Yifan wouldn’t withhold from attacking him because of hostages.

In the time it takes a spark to fly up from a piece of flint, a threatening, cold gleam appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes, and he stopped in place. He took a deep breath and then extended his right hand, within which was the sunstone he had acquired. Boundless blinding heat waves instantly exploded out in all directions.

Rumbling could be heard, and everything distorted as ripples spread out. The two old Dao Protectors stopped in their tracks, and Zhao Yifan’s eyes exuded a penetrating glow. In the blink of an eye, he transformed into the shape of a greatsword that slashed down toward Meng Hao.

At the same time, starlight from Fan Dong’er’s starstone shot out to resist Meng Hao’s sunstone.

A mere sunstone was in no way capable of doing anything to stop the combined attack of four experts. All it could do was make them pause for a moment. However, Meng Hao used that moment of time to spin around and transform into a prismatic beam of light that shot toward Fan Dong’er.

He moved with incredible speed, and as he closed in, his Dharma Idol appeared and attacked. In the blink of an eye, he exchanged several moves with Fan Dong’er. Meng Hao was shaken, and blood even spilled out of his mouth, but he did not back up. A vicious gleam appeared in his eyes, and he suddenly swung his leg in a kick that screamed through the air like a cyclone. A series of booms echoed out, and Fan Dong’er’s face fell. Meng Hao felt completely different to her than he had before; now he attacked relentlessly, consumed with boundless, bloody fiendishness.

Fan Dong’er performed a double-handed incantation, and an enormous conch shell appeared behind her. As the susurrating droning sound of the conch filled the air, Meng Hao produced his beast claw. The image of a black cat materialized, and a piercing screech filled the air as it slashed toward Fan Dong’er.

A snapping sound could be heard as the image of the black cat was destroyed. However, the conch also trembled and then exploded. Fan Dong’er gave a cold snort, performed another double handed incantation gesture, and pushed forward. The shattered pieces of the conch then swirled together into a cyclone that shot toward Meng Hao.

Fan Dong’er herself backed up rapidly, then faced off against Meng Hao’s second true self.

Meng Hao’s expression became even more vicious. Behind him was Zhao Yifan’s monstrous sword Qi. The two old Dao Protector’s killing intent was even more intense than before as they sped toward him. The ripples of power from Meng Hao’s sunstone were now incapable of restraining them in any way.

Meng Hao shouted as he relied on the strength of his extraordinary fleshly body to slam head first into the incoming cyclone of conch shell fragments. He became a golden roc that moved with lightning-like speed as he smashed through the cyclone. He came out the other side slashed and bleeding, and before Zhao Yifan or the two Dao Protectors could get near, was speeding in pursuit of Fan Dong’er!

Fan Dong’er’s face fell. She had never imagined that Meng Hao could be so vicious. In their previous encounter, she had taken him to be shameless, and nothing more. But in this fight, she could sense an unprecedented level of savagery on his person.

Such savagery wasn’t something most people could possess. It was something earned from events that ordinary people couldn’t experience, and that gave rise to incredible power.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with killing intent. The golden roc’s wings spread as it swept toward Fan Dong’er. Rumbling filled the air as she hastily made a counterattack. A boom rattled out, and blood sprayed from Fan Dong’er’s mouth. She instantly fell into retreat, her eyes filled with hatred as she crushed the starstone she held in her hand!

The stone shattered, causing boundless starlight to spread out and envelop Meng Hao. In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao was rendered motionless.

Because of that pause, the incoming sword qi from Zhao Yifan… slashed down onto Meng Hao.

He trembled as the attack slashed a huge bloody gash down his back, revealing the bones within. Were it not for his powerful fleshly body, and the ripples of the sunstone causing everything in the area to be weakened, that sword would have completely cut Meng Hao in half!

Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth. In the same moment in which he was slashed by the sword, the two old Dao Protectors closed in from either side. Divine abilities and magical techniques slammed directly into Meng Hao.

A huge boom filled the air, and more blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth. Thankfully, he was well prepared; a mountain range materialized around him, along with the Black White Pearls. The sunstone was weakened, but Meng Hao was not dead. However, he was sent spinning like a kite with its string cut. He flew through the air and then slammed into the ground some distance off. He struggled to his feet, coughing up more blood.

“DIE!” cried Fan Dong’er, flickering as she charged toward him. A divine sea appeared around her, within which were countless roaring sea dragons that sped toward Meng Hao.

Zhao Yifan’s expression was calm, albeit slightly disappointed. As for the two old Dao Protectors, they approached Meng Hao with cold smiles, clearly intent on cutting him down.

Meng Hao’s vision was swimming, and the bronze lamp over his head was dim, and seemed to be on the verge of being extinguished. When he saw that, Meng Hao suddenly smiled coldly.

“Second true self…. Devilish will, return!” When his words rang out, the sky and the land began to rumble. The air twisted as his second true self closed his eyes. Immediately, black mist began to pour out of his nose, ears and mouth.

Shockingly, it transformed into an enormous head which radiated an indescribable murderous desire as it shot forward. This was Meng Hao’s Devil Construct, formed from the murderous desire that had led him to kill countless enemies.

Back when he stepped into Dao Seeking, he had severed it, then fused it into his second true self, having believed that he would never need it again. The Devilish will could make him even more powerful, although the consequences would be immense!

It was even possible that it might influence him on a psychological level. In this critical moment, though, it was without hesitation that he took a deep breath, causing the boundless black mist to shoot toward him.

It moved with incredible speed, merging into him in the blink of an eye. Instantly, black veins appeared all over his skin. At the same time, an unprecedented murderous aura exploded out from him.

This was the aura of a Devil!

This was an aura of murder!

This was Meng Hao’s previous pinnacle!

Countless evil spirits suddenly surrounded Meng Hao, ferocious and savage as they emitted soundless howls. These were the ghosts of all the people Meng Hao had slaughtered.

The entire area suddenly became incredibly cold, and filled with fluttering black snowflakes.

Meng Hao’s hair whipped around him as his energy rocketed up. A cold mercilessness appeared in his eyes, and he suddenly gave off the feeling that he was a god of death!

Fan Dong’er started trembling, and her eyes went wide with disbelief.

“Who is this guy?” she thought. “For such a murderous aura to appear all of a sudden, means… just how many people has he killed? Only a powerful expert who has climbed mountains of corpses and swam through seas of blood could have a Devilish, murderous aura like that!”

Zhao Yifan’s eyes once again began to shine brightly.

The two old Dao Protectors stared in shock, but it was without hesitation that they charged toward Meng Hao, their killing intent even stronger than before.

As they closed in, Meng Hao suddenly looked up. Then, he started laughing. A Blood Demon Grand Magic vortex appeared, causing the vegetation and trees in the area to wither. Even the ground began to crack and split.

Meng Hao’s energy was still soaring upward, and as his four enemies closed in on him, he rose to his feet and took a step forward. He extended his right hand and used the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex at full power.

RUMBLE!

The Eighth Hex coalesced all of the murderous aura and Devilish will inside of him. Explosive power caused everything to shake as invisible Demonic qi caused the four other cultivators to instantly stop in place.

Meng Hao took another step, and was then standing in front of Fan Dong’er. He raised his right hand and punched Fan Dong’er in the stomach, causing blood to spray from her mouth. Cracking sounds could be heard as three separate jade slips on her person were shattered, as if they took her place in passing away into death.

Meng Hao’s face was cold and merciless as his right hand suddenly snaked out to latch onto Fan Dong’er’s arm. He violently wrenched down, and a ripping sound could be heard as Fan Dong’er, her eyes filled with determination, allowed her arm to be ripped off as she herself shot backward at top speed. Meng Hao looked at her coldly, but didn’t pursue. Instead, his body flickered, and he appeared in front of Zhao Yifan. Another punch was sent out, and Zhao Yifan was sent tumbling backward, blood spraying from his mouth.

At that moment, Meng Hao raised his hand, holding the sunstone aloft.

“Shatter!” he said, his voice raspy. The sunstone shuddered and then exploded, causing a wave of intense heat to billow out in all directions, instantly enveloping Zhao Yifan.

Zhao Yifan’s entire body burst into flames, and he let out a muffled grunt, then sped backward at top speed, blood spraying from his mouth.

At the same time, Meng Hao delivered a third punch. This punch landed on Li Ling’er’s Dao Protector. Backed by the full power of the Devilish will, his blow caused the old man to cough up blood. He instantly sagged weakly, his expression one of astonishment.

As of this moment, it appeared as if Meng Hao had borrowed the power of the Devil Construct to temporarily break past the peak power of the Spirit Realm.

He did not land a fourth blow, as his vision had begun to swim. He could recall his Devilish will, but if too much time passed, the effects would be irreversible. It was at this moment that, all of a sudden, a figure appeared off in the distance.

“Stay away!!” cried Fan Dong’er, her facial expression flickering. The most important aspect of their ambush had been to restrict Meng Hao’s ability to use his Lightning Cauldron. In addition to using the starstone to suppress it, it was also important that there be nobody in the area that he could switch places with.

This was something that everyone understood, and also why only four people were attacking him, while everyone else waited off in the distance, out of Meng Hao’s field of view.

As soon as the approaching figure heard Fan Dong’er’s words, it sped backward at top speed. However, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he looked at the figure off in the distance; suddenly, the Lightning Cauldron appeared in his hand. Electricity danced, and Meng Hao used Form Displacement Transposition on the distant figure.

The instant they switched places, Meng Hao heard a voice speaking in his ear.

“Elder Brother Meng, Ji Yin is the one who figured out that you would pass by here.”

Meng Hao ignored the voice, almost as if he hadn’t even heard the words being spoken. His eyes were dark, and he almost didn’t seem to be conscious. However, an almost undetectable flicker could be seen in his eyes when he realized that the person he had switched locations with was none other than Fang Donghan!

After switching places with him, Meng Hao was free of the ambush. Electricity danced around him as he looked toward the crowds of shocked people off in the distance.

He quickly found another target to switch places with. As long as he could see someone, he could switch places, and would not find himself locked down in an ambush like he had been.

Because of the repeated use of Form Displacement Transposition, his body was on the verge of collapse, and his Eternal stratum was hard at work.

However, because it was still recovering from its earlier depletion, it was unable to provide its previous high-speed regeneration until it had fully been restored. And that, would require time.

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# Chapter 825: Zhixiang Pays Her Debt!

Unfortunately, time was a luxury that Meng Hao did not have!

He was surrounded by Chosen and Dao Protectors from the various clans and sects of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Virtually all were present, and even though he could use Form Displacement Transposition, he still had his limits.

Furthermore, the Chosen and Dao Protectors had now recovered from being stunned at Meng Hao's escape from their ambush and were once again racing to catch up to him.

Meng Hao's face was pale as he sped along, pursued by Wang Mu and some other Chosen. Gradually, more and more figures began to gather in pursuit around him. Although Meng Hao couldn't actually see any of them, he could sense them, and knew that there were many.

The one-armed Fan Dong'er was clearly visible behind him giving chase, although Zhao Yifan was nowhere to be seen.

Meng Hao could also see the Fang clan's Fang Xiangshan in the crowd.

From the look of things, a grand battle was about to break out. However, it was at this point that a huge boom rang out. The ground beneath Meng Hao's feet quaked, and massive fissures spread out as a mountain peak up ahead of Meng Hao collapsed into pieces.

As it exploded, a huge beam of majestic light shot out from the ruins of the mountain. It appeared to be some sort of precious treasure manifesting itself, and it immediately attracted the attention of all of Meng Hao’s pursuers.

At the same time, the ground seemed to be on the verge of collapsing. A huge depression appeared as an enormous yellow loach suddenly exploded out of the ground that was nearly a thousand meters long. Actually, it was not one, but a total of nine that appeared.

In an instant, the situation on the battlefield had completely changed.

“A Demon Loach!”

“How could there be a Demon Loach in this place!?!?”

“Dammit! Aren’t Demon Loaches native to Planet North Reed!?”

The entire area was thrown into an uproar as the nine Demon Loaches roared onto the scene. The ground quaked, and all of a sudden, an urgent voice transmitted into Meng Hao’s mind.

“Meng Hao, head toward the third Demon Loach!”

Because of the voice, Meng Hao awoke somewhat from his previously hazy mental state. He looked over at the third Demon Loach, and then instantly began to speed toward it. As he neared it, the enormous Demon Loach opened its mouth and swallowed him up, then dove back down toward the ground.

People on ground-level in the area began to call out, and several attempted to block the diving loach. However, it was at this point that the rest of the Demon Loaches spontaneously exploded. Massive booms rattled out over the land. At the same time, the bright light shining from the mountain reached a pinnacle of intensity, covering all the land until no one could see anything except the light.

Eventually, the light got so bright that it turned into blackness!

As for Meng Hao, everything went dark after being swallowed by the Demon Loach. However, he could feel that the creature was moving along at high speed, so he sat down cross-legged and rotated his cultivation base. He quickly began to exorcise the Demonic will, then consumed large quantities of medicinal pills to begin his healing process.

Meng Hao had been quite seriously injured in the battle just now. However, throughout his life, he had been seriously injured on many occasions, so from beginning to end, he was calm inside.

Time passed. A few days later, the Demon Loach finally stopped moving, and instead sank downward into the earth. Meng Hao's eyes opened, and he saw that there were three people with him inside of the Demon Loach's tunnel-like body.

The person in the lead position was a woman wearing a veil. It was impossible to see her features clearly, but her eyes were beautiful, and from that it was possible to tell that the woman herself was stunning.

Standing on either side of her were two old women, both of whom were ancient, with faces covered with wrinkles. They seemed to have seen many years between them, and their eyes were dim. Of course, within that dimness was hidden storm-like violence.

Meng Hao looked at the woman and calmly said, “We haven't seen each other for years.”

The woman was none other than Zhixiang!

One of the old women standing next to Zhixiang coolly said, “The kindness you showed to the Demon Immortal Sect has been paid back to you by us two this day. Our Demon Loach has already taken you away from the the deadly ambush set for you by Ji Yin.”

The woman glanced at the bronze lamp above Meng Hao's head, then looked away and said nothing further. She, along with the other Dao Protector, sat down cross-legged.

Zhixiang stepped forward to stand in front of Meng Hao. After looking him over for a moment, she covered her mouth with her hand and laughed.

Despite the fact that her face was covered by a veil, her laughter was sweet and attractive.

“Like I said, the Demon Immortal Sect was deeply in your debt,” she said. She extended her right hand toward Meng Hao, within which was a jade bottle. “This is a medicinal pill, an ancient medicine from the Demon Immortal Sect. It should heal your wounds rapidly.”

Meng Hao didn’t respond, nor was he surprised by any of this. The urgent voice he had heard transmitted into his mind earlier had belonged to her.

He took the jade bottle and opened it up. There was a red medicinal pill inside, which, based on his skill in the Dao of alchemy, he could instantly tell was extraordinary. After a moment of consideration, he picked up the medicinal pill, examined it closely, then swallowed it.

“You’re not afraid?” Zhixiang asked suddenly.

“There is nobody in the lands of South Heaven who can harm me,” Meng Hao said calmly.

“Oh? What about that deadly ambush just now?”

“I was tempering myself through training. If there was really a chance that I was going to die, things would have changed.” With that, he closed his eyes, which caused the two old women to open their own eyes and look at him.

The pill contained no poison, and as soon as he consumed it, it transformed into a warm current that flowed through his body. The injury on his back immediately healed up, and black mist slowly seeped out of the palm of his right hand.

A few days passed, and by the time Meng Hao opened his eyes again, his hand was filled with a black mist that was the Devil Construct, which was now completely forced out of his body.

Having expelled the Devil Construct, Meng Hao felt his heart pounding in trepidation. The danger he had faced in this incident was not the threat to his life, but rather, the influence of the Devilish will. Although the Devil Construct could give him access to incredible power, he had to pay a steep price for that.

Now that the Devil Construct was taken care of, Meng Hao’s injuries were nearly completely recovered.

“Thank you,” he said to the two seated old women, and Zhixiang.

Zhixiang looked at the Devil Construct in Meng Hao’s hand, thought for a moment, and then looked at Meng Hao.

“Ji Yin sealed your second true self and took him away.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered coldly.

“That’s fine,” he replied. “I’ll just have to go get him back.” With that, he rose to his feet, clasped hands, and bowed deeply to Zhixiang and the two old women. “Many thanks to you.”

“There’s no need to be so polite,” replied Zhixiang. “We were simply repaying you for the favor from that year.” The two old women merely looked deeply at Meng Hao.

Zhixiang smiled. Seeing that Meng Hao wished to depart, she waved her hand, causing a spinning vortex to appear behind him. Within the vortex could be seen the mountain range in the outside world.

“Regardless, I will remember what you have done for me this day,” said Meng Hao. He bowed again, then gave Zhixiang one final look. Zhixiang couldn’t prevent her heart from quivering a bit as she recalled everything that had happened back in the ancient Demon Immortal Sect.

Meng Hao turned and walked toward the portal.

“I heard you got married. Is it true?” asked Zhixiang.

Meng Hao stopped walking.

“It’s true.”

“Congratulations,” Zhixiang said with the same calm smile as ever. “Oh, there’s one other bit of news that I wanted to tell you. It won’t be long now before something big happens in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. The Three Great Daoist Societies will be hosting a disciple recruitment event, which will be supported by the Five Great Holy Lands, and the Three Churches and Six Sects!

“This sort of thing happens every so often, and when the time comes, any cultivator in the Ninth Mountain and Sea who is above the Nascent Soul stage and below the Immortal Realm may participate.

“Some people do it in the hopes of joining a sect. Others do it for the precious treasures that are prepared as rewards for the momentous occasion!”

Meng Hao’s eyes filled with a look of concentration. After a moment of thought, he nodded his head and then walked into the vortex, whereupon he vanished.

Silence reigned inside the Demon Loach. The two old women’s eyes flickered as they exchanged a hesitant glance.

“He did me a great favor,” said Zhixiang calmly.

The two old women nodded.

“Oh well. He appeared to be injured, but he is obviously as cautious as ever. A Chosen like him would definitely have other tricks up his sleeve.

“Besides, after he woke up, he appeared to be confident in having someone to back him. Now that I think about it, that makes sense, especially considering he was able to get into the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple before everyone else.”

**

Meng Hao left the Demon Loach via the vortex, emerging beneath an evening sky. A tongue of flame appeared in the bronze lamp above his head, which caused Meng Hao to breathe a sigh of relief.

The lamp was still unextinguished, and if Meng Hao’s calculations were correct, there were only four more days left of the 49 day period.

“Four days….” he thought, a cold gleam appearing in his eyes.

“In four days, the good fortune of the bronze lamp will be completed. When that happens, I won’t have anything holding me back from making all of these people pay the price for coming here!” He snorted coldly and then disappeared as he flashed off into the distance.

The first thing he did was find a suitable place to act as a hidden Immortal’s cave. He sat down cross-legged to meditate and wait for time to pass.

As the days went by, the situation in the outside world reached a frenzy. In the boundless mountain range, numerous Chosen and Dao Protectors had spread out in all directions in their search for Meng Hao.

They had set up sealing spells all over the mountains to ensure that Meng Hao couldn’t flee. They literally did everything in their power to find traces of him.

The battle that had resulted from the ambush made it so that none of his pursuers looked down on him any more. In fact, to them, he was now viewed as the cream of the crop when it came to the Chosen.

After all, any other Chosen who ended up trapped in an ambush like he had been, would surely have been killed!

In contrast, Meng Hao had seriously injured Zhao Yifan, severed Fan Dong’er’s limb, and severely hurt a Dao Protector. During the process, he himself had been seriously injured, and yet had managed to escape from the ambush.

Although quite a few people could tell that he had received aid in the end, his reputation was still rapidly growing!

One could imagine how, after all these people left Planet South Heaven, they would spread word of Meng Hao’s escapades throughout the Ninth Mountain and Sea!

He had suppressed Taiyang Zi, sealed Song Luodan, captured Li Ling’er and crushed Sun Hai and Fang Yunyi.

Because of him, Fan Dong’er was transformed from being a Goddess into a woman haunted by a ghost, and had also lost a limb. Zhao Yifan was seriously injured, and had retreated from battle. He had injured a Dao Protector, and evaded the search of roughly a thousand people for days. All of that… was enough to leave any Chosen completely shaken.

As of this point, Meng Hao’s tempering was complete.

And yet… he wasn’t satisfied!

“The end is almost here!”

The four day period was over. As the search continued in the outside world, Meng Hao’s eyes opened, and were filled with anticipation regarding the bronze lamp.

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# Chapter 826: ! 1

This day was the 49th day Meng Hao had kept the bronze lamp alight!

This day was the last day!

It was currently nighttime, and the moon wasn’t visible. The entire mountain range was swathed in pitch black, without the slightest bit of light anywhere.

The only light in the entire land… was in Meng Hao’s Immortal cave… from that flickering flame.

The bronze lamp burned with Meng Hao’s blood, creating an Immortal flame that had flickered to the very end.

Meng Hao was staring at the bronze lamp, waiting. He had experienced much carnage to reach this point, and now… the moment was here.

“Keep the lamp burning for 49 days,” he murmured, “and then, in the moment that it’s extinguished, it will form an Immortal meridian inside me!

“Gain enlightenment about that Immortal meridian, and my path… will be the path of ancient times!” By this point, the Chosen and Dao Protectors of the various sects and clans had sensed that something strange was going on.

A pressure had gradually arisen that weighed down on the entire mountain range. At the same time, the restrictions on the airspace… had suddenly been loosened.

Gradually, a sensation of imminent crisis could be sensed.

Ji Yin stood atop a mountain, looking at the surrounding lands. Karma swirled around him, making it impossible for anyone to see him clearly. However, his eyes shone with intense light.

“Dammit… this Karma wasn’t supposed to be his!!” Ji Yin abruptly vanished, transformed into countless strands of light that merged into the mountain range. This was a unique search method that he hoped would be able to locate Meng Hao.

The other Chosen in the mountain range used various other methods to try to track him down. This was especially true of Fan Dong’er. Her arm had been recovered by this point, but having been thwarted twice by Meng Hao, her pride had suffered nearly irrecoverably.

“Only by defeating him can I confirm my Dao heart!” she thought, her eyes gleaming with killing intent.

Fang Donghan was sitting quietly off in another location, watching everything play out, a smile on his face. His actions earlier had made him the subject of suspicion, but he didn’t care.

“Fang Hao. Meng Hao…. Interesting. I can’t wait until he runs into Fang Wei.”

Wang Mu’s face was grim. He felt that he was always a step too slow to catch Meng Hao. Every time they crossed paths, he hadn’t had the chance to truly engage him in combat. Currently, he sat with his right hand placed onto the ground in front of him. He closed his eyes, and his face went slack as he employed a secret technique. His soul was now merged into the land as he used his divine sense to search for Meng Hao.

Most anxious of all were the cultivators from Mount Sun, the Song Clan, the Li Clan, and the Church of the Immortal Emperor. Their Chosen had been captured by Meng Hao, which was a complete humiliation. Glum expressions could be see on their Dao Protectors’ faces as they carried out their search.

“Dammit, if our cultivation bases weren’t sealed, then Meng Hao would never dare to be so arrogant!”

“He’s dead! Once we find him, he’ll be dead without a doubt!”

Everyone was looking for Meng Hao, and gradually, the search perimeter grew smaller. Everyone was getting closer to Meng Hao and his Immortal’s cave.

Nighttime… began to turn into dawn!

The bronze lamp’s flame suddenly grew incredibly intense. It became a torch that illuminated the entire Immortal’s cave. In fact, the light seeped out through the walls of the cave… to shine brightly in the outside world.

Meng Hao trembled as his blood suddenly began to flow in reverse. He started to bleed from his eyes, nose, ears and mouth, drops of which flew up and merged into the flame, causing it to burn even brighter.

Rumble!

The entire mountain range was shaking, and a roaring sound filled it as incredible pressure radiated out. Many of the cultivators began to tremble, and were forced by the incredible pressure to sit down cross-legged and begin meditating.

RUMBLE!

A second roaring sound rose up. At the same time, Meng Hao’s Immortal’s cave began to melt as a burning light rose up into the sky.

The ground was quaking even more severely, almost as if giants were running across it, and the intense pressure increased exponentially. On one particular mountain, countless Karma threads suddenly appeared, which then merged together into the shape of a person. It was Ji Yin, and blood was oozing out of his mouth.

He had no choice but to immediately sit down cross-legged and fight back with all the power he could muster.

As for Wang Mu, blood sprayed out of his mouth and he immediately began to meditate. Fan Dong'er and all the other Chosen were shaken and forced to meditate.

Next, a third roaring sound filled the air, and without exception, all of the Dao Protectors in the mountain range coughed up blood and sat down in meditation.

The mountains were trembling, and what seemed like a never-ending vortex appeared up above. Massive roaring sounds shook Heaven and Earth, and it was even possible to see the shape of the land changing!

Outside the mountains, in the Eastern Lands, Meng Hao's father and mother hovered in mid-air with Shui Dongliu, staring off at the mountains. A strange light could be seen gleaming in Shui Dongliu's eyes.

"The moment in which fate is changed!"

In the Milky Way Sea, the old man sat cross-legged on the ship. He slowly opened his eyes and looked toward the mountain range.

Back in the mountain range, in the location previously occupied by the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple, there was only a crater. However, at this moment, a figure slowly coalesced in the middle of that crater.

It was an old man wearing a dilapidated gray robe, and he was looking off in Meng Hao's direction.

RUMBLE!!

A fourth sound spread out, and this time it was filled with power that could tear open the sky. The blackness of night changed as the vast sky above the mountain range distorted, and then became a starry sky, seemingly that of ancient times.

Up in that starry sky, blurry figures could be seen, speeding along. There were numerous true dragons and mighty Immortal beasts, one after another.

A fifth sound echoed out. The land quaked, and countless mountains vanished as a Daoist rite temple suddenly appeared!

This was the real Daoist rite temple, with countless figures seated cross-legged in meditation. A towering pillar could be seen, seated atop which was an old man, giving a sermon on the Dao. Astonishingly, on top of his head… was a bronze oil lamp!

The flames emitted green smoke that rose up into the sky and, as the man flicked his sleeve, the smoke… transformed into a huge character.

‘Immortal!’

In response to the materialization of the character, all of the figures in the Daoist rite temple began to prostrate themselves toward the old man. The stars in the sky dimmed, and countless figures up above began to kowtow.

In that instant, the sun and moon stopped shining, and even the stars bowed their heads. All living things knelt in worship, and it seemed as if all creation were bowing down!

It was then that the sixth roaring sound blasted out. Boundless dazzling flames surrounded Meng Hao, sending an indescribably brilliant light shining out in all directions.

All of the cultivators in the entire mountain range could now see Meng Hao as he slowly rose up into the air, surrounded by boundless light.

He was cross-legged, and shockingly, a bronze lamp could be seen above his head!

He looked almost exactly like the old man!

That was especially the case… when Meng Hao, bathed in light, rose up to superimpose over the image of the old man. Everyone was completely shocked.

Meng Hao’s mind was blank, and his body was currently withering. All of the blood in his veins poured into the bronze lamp, which then began to burn with the final vestiges of his life force.

From the onlookers’ perspective, Meng Hao was now replacing that old man!

All of the figures who were bowed in worship were no longer worshipping the old man, but rather, Meng Hao! The sun and moon trembled, and the stars went dim. All of the dragons and other Immortal beasts kowtowed in worship.

Everyone was prostrated in worship, even the almighty beings who plucked stars, the enormous giant who shouldered the starry sky, even Heaven and the Earth!

It was in this moment that a seventh roaring sound could be heard!

It filled all of the lands of South Heaven, almost like the tolling of a bell. It did not pass out of Planet South Heaven, and yet… in the other Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple on the Ninth Mountain, the temple where incense still burned and its legacy still existed, the tolling of the bell could be heard, and countless Immortal figures appeared, astonishing everyone on the Ninth Mountain!

At the same time, back in the lands of South Heaven, in midair above the mountain range, the bronze lamp on Meng Hao’s head… faded away completely in response to the seventh roaring sound!

The flame was extinguished, but light still spread out!

A wisp of green smoke rose up above the bronze lamp, a smoke that seemed to embody a great Dao. In the moment that it appeared, it transformed into the character ‘Immortal!’

A single character made up of green smoke, causing the minds of all onlookers to reel.

Next, the ‘Immortal’ character once again dissipated into green smoke, which then rushed toward Meng Hao. It poured in through his nose, mouth, and ears, then circulated through his body, linking together to become… an illusory meridian!

It was… an Immortal meridian!

The moment the Immortal meridian appeared, Meng Hao felt a tremor run through his body. Everything in his body felt as if it were changing. His bones, his flesh, his blood. All of it was completely transforming.

Rumbling filled the air, as if an Immortal were being born inside of him. His energy surged, and the sky and land darkened.

His Dharma Idol appeared behind him, and his cultivation base experienced an astonishing transformation!

Fifty percent of a true Immortal!

Sixty percent of a true Immortal!

Seventy percent of a true Immortal!

Eighty percent of a true Immortal!

Meng Hao's cultivation base rose in shocking fashion, and his Immortal qi grew more intense. His flesh and blood were reaching the pinnacle of power!

As he sat there cross-legged, he looked almost exactly like an Immortal!

The Immortal meridian was complete, and the path to Immortality was open!

He did not need some true Immortal destiny that appeared once every 10,000 years! He did not need some Immortality Illumination Vine! Meng Hao's Immortality was completely his own. He… would tread his own path of true Immortality!

He was not a true Immortal yet. However, based on the path he was treading, once that illusory Immortal meridian became true and complete…

then he would, beyond a doubt, be a true Immortal!

When the day came that he opened 100 meridians, because he had this extra Immortal meridian, he would have more Immortal meridians than others. He would be… a 101-meridian Immortal!

When it came to those 100 meridians, whether you had 1 extra or 10,000 extra, they were all extra. Thus… having 1 extra was the same as having 10,000, which was the same as having 100,000,000, which was the same as having an infinite amount!

Everything rumbled as Meng Hao’s eyes snapped open. The brilliant light that filled the world suddenly faded, and Meng Hao’s voice filled the entire mountain range.

“Fan Dong’er. Ji Yin. Zhao Yifan. Who of you… will fight me!?”

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# Chapter 827: Never Too Late for Revenge!

Meng Hao’s voice echoed out through the vast expanse of the sky. He hovered in midair, filled with power that held all under Heaven in contempt. A brilliant light surrounded him, and the Dharma Idol behind him did not look illusory in any way. Furthermore, he emanated pulses of Immortal might!

That… was a pressure that exceeded that of a false Immortal!

That… was eighty percent of the power of a true Immortal!

He hovered cross-legged in midair, looking every bit like an Immortal. His eyes appeared to contain stars, and his voice was awe-inspiring as it echoed through the lands like thunder.

Wild colors flashed in the sky, and the wind screamed. The cultivators in the surrounding rugged mountains could only watch, their minds filled with roaring. This was especially true of the three whose names Meng Hao had called out. Their minds were filled with panic and shock.

Fan Dong’er’s face had completely fallen, and she was panting as she stared at Meng Hao. Her heart was in tumult, and her face was a mass of disbelief.

“True Immortal might! He actually has true Immortal might!”

Furthest away of the three was Zhao Yifan, who stood on a far off mountain, his face pale. He had suffered severe injuries, and had had no choice but to withdraw from this struggle for good fortune. Now, he gazed silently at Meng Hao hovering in midair, and began to breathe heavily. The desire to fight burned in his eyes, but his pupils constricted, and it was easy to see that inwardly, he was anything but calm.

The last person who Meng Hao called out was Ji Yin. He sat cross-legged on another mountaintop, looking at Meng Hao, face expressionless but hands clenched tightly at his side.

The entire mountain range was completely silent except for the sound of Meng Hao's voice echoing about. Countless Chosen and innumerable Dao Protectors looked on with trembling minds.

It was in this moment that the restriction on the airspace… suddenly vanished!

It was as if the restriction on the airspace had been in place only in preparation for good fortune to appear within Meng Hao.

"I'll fight you!" someone bellowed. A figure flew out from the mountains, a young man with eyebrows like swords and eyes like stars. It was none other than Wang Mu!

When he flew out, his fighting spirit burned brightly, and his heart was filled with rage. None of the three names Meng Hao had called out were his, which he took to be a personal humiliation.

As he flew, he performed a double-handed incantation, calling the wind and summoning the rain. Everything trembled as it all transformed into black dragons that roared as they shot toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao looked over coldly at the incoming Wang Mu. As he neared, Meng Hao waved his hand to unleash the Star Plucking Magic!

Backed by Meng Hao's eighty-percent true Immortal cultivation base, the Star Plucking Magic caused everything to grow dark as an enormous hand appeared and shot toward Wang Mu.

Rumbling filled the air, and Wang Mu let out a shout, extended his hand and pointed out with his index finger. An incredible power exploded out that caused the descending, illusory hand to suddenly stop in place.

Wang Mu chuckled coldly and continued to charge toward Meng Hao. He performed another incantation gesture and then pointed toward Meng Hao. A will of extermination exploded out, turning into a shocking energy that seemed to contain infinite destructive power. 1

Before that power could even get near, Meng Hao took a step forward, appearing directly in front of Wang Mu, whereupon his hand slapped out with incredible speed. Wang Mu’s face filled with shock as Meng Hao completely ignored his extermination attack, and in fact, allowed it to land on him. At the same time, his slap connected with Wang Mu.

A boom rang out and Wang Mu gave a muffled grunt. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and he tumbled backward. A manic look appeared on his face, and he was just about to charge back into the fight when Meng Hao snorted and transformed into a golden roc.

The golden roc spread its wings, causing golden light to explode out. Then the roc disappeared as it transformed into a golden beam that shot toward Wang Mu. Numerous mountains appeared, which linked together into a mountain range that also slammed down toward Wang Mu.

Incredible rumbling sounds rose up. Wang Mu roared angrily and struggled with all of his might, but Meng Hao spun toward him like a tornado. Suddenly, a blood colored glow ignited and bashed into Wang Mu’s shoulder.

A cracking sound rang out as Wang Mu’s right shoulder was shattered. Intense pain filled him, and a cold sweat instantly broke out all over his body. In the blink of an eye, he began to wither up, and yet, he gritted his teeth, clearly not willing to give up the fight.

“Screw off!” said Meng Hao, punching Wang Mu in the middle of his stomach with eighty percent of the power of a true Immortal. Blood showered out of Wang Mu’s mouth, and his entire body trembled. Meng Hao grabbed Wang Mu’s bag of holding as Wang Mu himself shot like a meteor down to the ground, where he slammed into the earth. He coughed up more blood, and his mind was filled with anxiety. He was completely shocked by the level of Meng Hao's power.

All of the surrounding cultivators looking on gasped. The Chosen's eyes were wide, and the Dao Protectors were watching with serious expressions.

"He's almost a true Immortal!!"

"He got all of the good fortune of the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple! Dammit!"

As the onlookers' expressions flickered, Meng Hao gave a cold snort and then swept his gaze across the crowds until he found the Dao Protectors from Mount Sun and the Li Clan. Killing intent flickered in his eyes as he looked at the two men.

Their faces fell as Meng Hao extended his right hand, within which was the Lightning Cauldron. Electricity danced as Meng Hao suddenly switched positions with someone standing near the Li Clan Dao Protector. As soon as he appeared, he stamped his right foot viciously onto the ground. A boom rattled out, and the ground was shattered. A blood-colored vortex sprang up, and just as the old man was about to flee, Meng Hao pointed out with his right index finger.

The Eighth Demon Sealing Hex was unleashed, and the old man's face fell. He instantly froze in place, and Meng Hao closed in. Meng Hao had an incredible fleshly body, and eighty percent of the power of a true Immortal, all of which he poured into three powerful punches that slammed into the old man in quick succession.

Blood sprayed from the old man's mouth, and his face went pale. Roaring, he performed an incantation gesture, causing a divine ability to appear. An enormous magical bottle materialized in midair; it radiated boundless energy that instantly surged to envelop Meng Hao.

Meng Hao's Dharma Idol roared, which caused everything in the area to shake. Ripples spread out, and the magical bottle distorted. Even as the old man's face began to fall, Meng Hao's Dharma Idol punched out.

Booms echoed out as Meng Hao and the old man fought back and forth in midair. The Blood Demon Grand Magic appeared, a swirling blood-red vortex that turned into a Blood Demon head that viciously headbutted the old man.

Blood spurted out of the old man’s mouth, and his body withered rapidly. He fell back, his expression one of astonishment and ferocity. At this point, he prepared to unseal his cultivation base, only to be shocked to find… that he couldn’t!

“What…?” The old man’s face flickered as Meng Hao once again turned into a huge golden roc. Blinding golden light flickered as he shot toward the old man with indescribable speed. The onlookers only heard a miserable shriek. When the golden light finally faded away, they could see that the old man’s head had completely exploded into pieces.

Meng Hao took his bag of holding, and before the old man’s Nascent Divinity could escape, had his Dharma Idol grab him and pop him into its mouth.

An air of ferocity filled the area, and gasps could be heard in all directions. Meng Hao’s body flickered as he next moved toward the Mount Sun Dao Protector. It was time to collect interest from the debts incurred by those who had ambushed him earlier.

The Mount Sun Dao Protector’s face flickered, and he shot backward, attempting to unseal his cultivation base. Then, his face completely fell when he also realized… that he couldn’t unseal it!

His scalp went numb and he fled as fast as possible.

“Fellow Daoists!” he screamed miserably, “join forces with me to kill this bastard!!”

Immediately, four or five people flew forward, clearly intent on blocking Meng Hao’s path. However, it was at this point that electricity danced, and Meng Hao used Form Displacement Transposition to appear directly in front of the old man from Mount Sun. His expression was cold, and his eyes flickered with killing intent as he raised his right hand. The Blood Demon Grand Magic spun, a massive vortex that instantly enveloped the old Dao Protector.

Rumbling filled the air, mixed with the old man’s bloodcurdling screams. Meng Hao and the old man were inside the vortex for only a few breaths of time before the four or five interlopers arrived and launched divine abilities. The blood-colored vortex faded, and Meng Hao’s body flickered and reappeared off in the distance. As for the old man from Mount Sun, he was nothing more than a skeleton.

All of his flesh and blood, his cultivation base and soul, had been absorbed!

“Kill him!”

“Join forces to wipe him out!”

“He’s on the verge of true Immortality! Refine his body and we might be able to concoct a True Immortality Pill!” Seven or eight people flew out, including several Chosen and Dao Protectors. After joining forces with the people who had just attacked, they made a force of more than a dozen that transformed into beams of prismatic light that charged toward Meng Hao.

Another group of about ten people approached from another direction.

There were others who looked on with flickering eyes. They had to admit that Meng Hao was powerful, but he was only one person. In their minds, that wasn’t enough to shake all of them together.

Dozens of people closed in on Meng Hao, who hovered there in midair. Just as they were about to launch their deadly attacks, Meng Hao laughed coldly. The image of his father’s first sword form appeared in his mind as he took a deep breath, bent his body like a bow and raised his right hand.

In the blink of an eye, he appeared to become like a black hole, sucking in all of the power of Heaven and Earth. Sword qi appeared, and as the people closed in, Meng Hao’s hand suddenly chopped downward.

An astonishing beam of sword qi exploded out, slashing about in all directions. Rumbling filled the air, and the dozens of attackers shot backward, faces filled with shock. There were even two or three who were directly slashed by the sword qi and then shattered to pieces, leaving behind only bloodcurdling screams.

Meng Hao used this slight pause to again utilize the Lightning Cauldron, and Form Displacement Transposition to… close in on Fan Dong’er!

“Fan Dong’er, you wanted to kill me, right? Well, here I am!”

Fan Dong’er’s face fell. As of this moment, Meng Hao’s power made him virtually invincible. There was no way for anyone to stand in his way. So far, Fan Dong’er had lost an arm and been seriously injured. Although she had recovered some, the process wasn’t complete, and she knew that there was no way she could win against Meng Hao. Her face fell as she retreated backward.

As soon as she started backing up, Meng Hao became a golden roc that shot toward her with incredible speed. Golden light filled the air, and he was upon her in the blink of an eye.

From a distance, everyone could see the beautiful Fan Dong’er, her hair in disarray, facing up against a gigantic, golden roc, which extended its claws viciously toward her.

Many of the surrounding Chosen greatly admired Fan Dong’er, so when they saw what was happening, their faces fell. There were even seven or eight who immediately flew out toward Meng Hao.

“Meng Hao, you’re pushing things too far!!” cried Fan Dong’er miserably.

“Who cares!” replied Meng Hao coolly. The golden roc closed in.

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# Chapter 828: Invincible!

Fan Dong'er's pupils shrank into tiny dots, and she shot backward, simultaneously performing a double-handed incantation. Instantly, a boundless sea appeared behind her, made up of endless heavenly bodies, even suns and moons.

“Ninth Sea God World!” she cried. In response, the huge sea behind her grew exponentially in size. In the blink of an eye, it had covered the entire area. Next, the heavenly bodies inside of it all began to shoot toward Meng Hao.

At the same time, the eight Chosen closed in on him.

“Without a face, a single word, flames of war unify!” As Meng Hao transformed into a golden roc and shot forward, he began to change color. He was now bright red. The Blood Demon Grand Magic appeared around him, forming a massive vortex.

The vortex then turned into a face that emanated shocking, blood-colored ripples that spread out in all directions. The incoming group of Chosen were instantly affected. Then, the face opened its mouth and cried a soundless cry, immediately shaking their minds.

Instantly, smoke began to seep out from the tops of their heads, rising up as if from the flames of war! Shocking rumbling filled the air.

Suddenly, their blood began to flow backward, and then their bodies began to fall apart. In the blink of an eye, they were covered with masses of blood and gore. Faces filled with astonishment, they coughed up blood and were forced to retreat.

“Sundered clouds, a bloody rain, seas that cover the sky!” Meng Hao transformed into a huge, crimson roc that shot toward Fan Dong’er and the Ninth Sea. As they barreled toward each other, sundered clouds appeared up above, and bloody rain fell, which transformed into a sea of blood! Shockingly, two massive seas were now visible in the sky up above.

One was the Ninth Sea, and the other was a sea of blood. Above the Ninth Sea, Goddess Fan Dong’er glowed with boundless light. In the sea of blood, Meng Hao’s Dharma Idol stood like a shocking giant. The two slammed into each other, and a massive boom echoed out.

The sky shook, and the land quaked and began to split. Everyone fell back, shocked by what they were seeing.

As the two seas collided, Meng Hao’s roc form shot directly toward Fan Dong’er and viciously raked out at her with sharp claws.

Rumble!

Fan Dong’er performed a double-handed incantation. Nine sea dragons materialized around her and roared as they moved to block Meng Hao. However, sea dragons are not really dragons, only enormous serpents. The golden roc’s vicious claws ripped them to shreds. Their miserable shrieks were still echoing in the air when Meng Hao finally reached Fan Dong’er.

Sharp claws slashed at her, and blood sprayed from her mouth. She fell back yet again, her hair in disarray. Glaring at Meng Hao, she performed a double-handed incantation that caused the conch shell to appear again. Even as she began to unleash her divine ability, Meng Hao and his Dharma Idol roared, and he rotated his cultivation base to full power.

Shocking rumbling filled the area, and the sky went dim. The sound from the conch… was unexpectedly suppressed, and began to tremble violently. Fan Dong’er coughed up another mouthful of blood.

At the same moment in which she began to retreat, Meng Hao’s right hand extended in the Star Plucking Magic.

Fan Dong’er’s face fell once again, and she waved her hand, causing countless illusory, sensuous mermaids to fill the area. It took only a moment for them to organize into a huge formation that moved to block Meng Hao.

Meng Hao snorted coldly, and a bright, bloody glow rose up into the air. The Blood Demon Grand Magic was unleashed at full power. In the blink of an eye, a blood-colored vortex appeared, fully three hundred meters wide. However, as Meng Hao surged forward, all that could be seen was a gigantic Blood Demon head that directly headbutted the mermaid spell formation.

The resulting boom filled the entire mountain range. The spell formation collapsed, and the mermaids withered away. Meng Hao’s Blood Demon head vanished, but he pressed forward, his body shining with bloody light. A fist descended, and a huge boom rattled out. Fan Dong’er retreated again, blood spurting from her mouth, her face filled with astonishment.

This version of Meng Hao left everyone feeling shocked to the extreme. Meng Hao’s momentum was impossible to stop!

“Die!” he said, slashing his hand toward Fan Dong’er’s neck. Just when it seemed to be on the verge of making contact, Fan Dong’er let out a miserable shriek. Her body began to twist and distort as she transformed into a blue flood dragon. Her mouth opened wide as she shot forward to swallow up the golden roc.

There was a boom, and the flood dragon collapsed. Meng Hao’s golden roc also shuddered and vanished, revealed Meng Hao himself.

Fan Dong’er took advantage of this opportunity to use a secret magic. Her body suddenly experienced a rapid weakening in exchange for a burst of speed that put her far off in the distance. Then she waved her hand, causing the blue bracelet on her wrist to fly out. It shattered in midair, forming a wall of fragments that resembled heavenly bodies. It was as if the two areas she and Meng Hao occupied were now completely separated by a huge divide.

Fan Dong’er glared at Meng Hao in a way that seemed to suggest she was committing his facial features to memory.

“We will meet again,” she said through gritted teeth. “Next time, I’m going to kill you!” She performed a double-handed incantation, after which, rumbling could be heard as a huge door began to coalesce behind her.

That door lead directly to the Ninth Sea God World!

Killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes, and he was just about to tear apart the divide composed of heavenly bodies when the seven or eight Chosen who worshipped Fan Dong’er moved to block his way.

They shot forward with incredible speed, immediately unleashing divine abilities. The images of a true dragon and a flaming phoenix appeared, as well as a vicious golden tiger. One of the Chosen waved his hand to produce 1-meter-long giant ants; more than a thousand of them filled the sky as they moved to block Meng Hao.

“There’s not going to be a next time!” said Meng Hao, snorting coldly. He closed his eyes and took a deep breath. Behind him, his Dharma Idol began to shrink down in size and then superimposed itself over his body.

In that instant, the Immortal qi inside of him suddenly exploded out. In that instant, he was the Dharma Idol, and the Dharma Idol was him!

The eight people closing in on him were instantly shaken inwardly. An intense sense of deadly crisis filled their hearts, and they were suddenly overwhelmed with the sensation that Meng Hao was too dangerous to even get close to.

As their faces fell, Meng Hao began to stride forward. The air vibrated, and the two Chosen nearest Meng Hao fell back in astonishment, blood spraying from their mouths. He didn’t even attack them. The mere rise in his energy injured them, causing their terror toward him to climb even higher.

All of these people gasped and looked at Meng Hao in shock. Their bodies stopped in place, and they didn’t dare to move forward even an inch. Everyone in the area was now beginning to back up, fully aware of how powerful Meng Hao was.

Even Fan Dong’er’s face completely fell.

Meng Hao took his first step forward, and the illusory Immortal meridian inside of him rotated and began to emanate scintillating light that swirled around Meng Hao. His second step took him through the air and completely into the divide. His body trembled a bit as he passed into it, and yet, he was able to take a third step!

At that moment, countless gasps could be heard from the surrounding cultivators.

“He fused with his Dharma Idol! That’s something only people in the Immortal Realm can do! He’s not in the Immortal Realm, though he’s immeasurably close to it, and yet he can still successfully fuse with it!”

“Is he really a cultivator from the lands of South Heaven…?”

“This Meng Hao is just too powerful! If he doesn’t perish in this battle, then he’ll become completely famous in the Ninth Mountain!”

All of the exclamations came when Meng Hao took his third step. When that step fell, the divide began to vibrate; clearly he was just about to emerge from within it.

By this point, the huge door behind Fan Dong’er was now fully visible. The door began to open, and Fan Dong’er let out a quiet sigh. She gave Meng Hao one final cold glance, and then turned to enter the huge door.

“Inky!” Meng Hao suddenly said.

As soon as his voice rang out from the divide, the listless eyes of the corpse that followed Fan Dong’er suddenly flickered. Long strands of black hair floated out and began to wrap around her.

Fan Dong’er’s face filled with panic and shock, and she nearly coughed up a mouthful of blood. Just when she was about to step into the door, rumbling filled the air. Meng Hao had taken his fourth step, and emerged from within the divide. In that instant, his Immortal qi was in full circulation, and he stretched his hand out in a claw-like gesture toward Fan Dong’er, who screamed shrilly.

Fan Dong’er was already halfway through the invisible door, and just about to vanish. Meng Hao frowned. He could sense an incredible feeling of peril from beyond the door, and yet didn’t hesitate. He unleashed the Star Plucking Magic, and a gigantic, illusory hand appeared. Just in the moment when Fan Dong’er was about to disappear…. the giant hand grabbed her by the hair.

The hand yanked back viciously. In that moment, a muffled grunt could be heard from Fan Dong’er. She vanished, and the illusory door disappeared amidst a rumbling boom. Meng Hao was left with only a handful of hair, the roots dripping with blood, which caused his expression to darken.

Meng Hao looked at the hair for a moment and then thought back to one of the magical techniques he had learned in the ancient Demon Immortal Sect. It was a cursing magic, which he immediately unleashed, causing the hair in his hand to burn with green flames. Then, he blew out the flames and performed an incantation, which resulted in a single black hair materializing in front of him. He quickly put the strand of hair away. He now had a powerful weapon to use next time he encountered Fan Dong’er.

Everything was silent. All eyes were on Meng Hao, and no one was speaking. As far as the Chosen were concerned, Meng Hao was incredibly intimidating. Furthermore, because the Dao Protectors were unable to loosen the seals on their cultivation bases… they were no match for him either.

The shock was especially intense among the people who had fought with Meng Hao before. All of them began to edge back, hearts filled with astonishment. Meng Hao’s gaze swept across the crowd until they finally came to rest on Ji Yin, who was still sitting cross-legged on the distant mountain peak.

From start to finish, Ji Yin hadn’t moved from that mountain, and had watched Meng Hao achieve eighty percent of the power of a true Immortal, as well as his apparent invincibility.

“Ji Yin, you took something that belongs to me,” Meng Hao said calmly. “Are you really sure you want to sow Karma between us?”

“You also took something that belongs me,” Ji Yin replied slowly, looking over at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with coldness as he transformed into a roc that surged with Immortal qi. He flew into the air and shot directly toward Ji Yin.

He moved with incredible speed, surrounded by a glow of blood. This was not a golden roc, this was a crimson roc!

“Taking care of you will be simple!” said Meng Hao as he closed in. The words were simple, but they contained a profoundly domineering air. Anyone who heard them felt shock in their hearts.

It must be said that although Ji Yin had met defeat when struggling to become Dao Child of the Ji Clan, he was still a Ji Clan Chosen!

And the Ji Clan… ruled the Ninth Mountain!

“Laughable!” said Ji Yin coolly.

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# Chapter 829: Severing Versus Hexing!

The words echoed out, and Ji Yin’s eyes flickered. As Meng Hao bore down on him, he slowly lifted his right hand and pointed toward Meng Hao.

Ripples immediately appeared around him as two black fish materialized, which then twisted back and forth as they sped toward Meng Hao.

As they neared, Meng Hao let out a cold snort. He waved his right hand, causing eighty percent of the power of a true Immortal to surge out. It transformed into a shocking sound which shattered the air in all directions and then transformed into a blood-colored vortex. The vortex was like a giant mouth that directly swallowed up the two fish.

In that instant, however, the fish leaped upward. Shockingly, they transformed in midair into two black dragons, which roared as they proceeded onward toward Meng Hao. Meng Hao snorted again and punched out. A mountain range appeared, which then rumbled through the air to crush down onto the two black dragons.

A boom rattled out as the black dragons crumbled to pieces. However, there were two black strands of light that were apparently impossible to blot out. They instantly formed a sealing mark on Meng Hao’s palm, and then began to sink into his flesh. In that moment, everyone who knew Meng Hao suddenly felt their minds tremble, as if there were some amorphous force interacting with the Karma that existed between him and them.

A serious expression filled Meng Hao’s face, but a cold smile could be seen on his lips. He advanced, as if he didn’t even notice the fluctuations in the Karma. He appeared in front of Ji Yin and raised his right hand, within which could be seen a blood-colored vortex. He shoved his hand toward Ji Yin.

Ji Yin’s expression was the same as ever. However, his eyes flickered, and all of the Karma that surrounded him surged, transforming into countless illusory images behind him. These were all the people who he remembered, or who remembered him.

Shockingly, one of those figures was Meng Hao.

All of the figures had Karma Threads attached to them, which then exploded with energy. It was as if Meng Hao was now fighting back against all of them at the same time.

Rumbling filled the air and nearby mountain peaks crumbled. Meng Hao and Ji Yin rose up into the air, and in the blink of an eye they had exchanged over a hundred moves.

The Blood Demon rumbled out, and Ji Yin frowned. However, he didn’t retreat. The Karma attached to him glittered, and then spread out to lock down the entire area. The glow of the confinement magic fought back against the Blood Demon, and was not affected in the slightest by the gravitational force it emitted.

Ji Yin waved his right hand again, then performed an incantation. Then he pointed at the countless figures behind him, and the one that belonged to Meng Hao began to tremble, and then coughed up blood.

Meng Hao’s face flickered, and he felt a stabbing pain in his chest. However, his eyes flickered, and he forced himself to take another step forward. As he raised his hand, Countless mountain ranges appeared, including the Ninth Mountain, which then crushed down toward Ji Yin.

Rumbling filled the air as Meng Hao’s Blood Demon head smashed forward. Wild colors flashed in the sky, and Ji Yin was forced into retreat. An incantation gesture flashed in his hand, and the boundless Karma that surrounded him began to spread out and transform into threads that shot toward Meng Hao.

“When it comes to the Dao of Karma, you must not let yourself be contaminated. If you do, an accounting must eventually be made!” As Ji Yin spoke, the Karma Threads began to entwine around Meng Hao. As of this moment, Meng Hao’s mind was trembling, and he was secretly shocked. Seeing the Karma Threads threatening to bind him up, he threw his head back and roared. Immediately, his body began to expand, as if his Dharma Idol were struggling to break free from the boundless Karma.

“Karmic Severing!” said Ji Yin, his eyes glinting coldly. Gazing steadily at Meng Hao, he lifted his right hand up into the air and then chopped it down.

As he uttered the words, the entire sky, all the lands, the whole world suddenly went deathly silent. It was as if all the natural laws had changed, or were influenced. Time almost seemed to stand still.

Absolutely everything went completely silent.

Meng Hao was locked down tight in midair. And yet, he still managed to lift his right hand and point toward Ji Yin.

Although he said nothing, the power of the Seventh Demon Sealing Hex, Karmic Hexing, was being unleashed.

One was the power of Karmic Severing, the other was the power of Karmic Hexing!

In Karmic Severing, the Karma Threads are severed, and life becomes death!

In Karmic Hexing, Karma is restrained. The more Karma one has, the more powerful the effects!

The Karma that swirled around Ji Yin seemed terrifying, but from Meng Hao’s perspective, he was the perfect target for Karmic Hexing!

As he was rooted there in place, countless flickering threads of numerous shades and hues of color began to emerge from within Meng Hao. These threads were all of Meng Hao’s Karma.

They started out as a solid clump, which then spread out in all directions. Some of the Karma Threads were connected to nearby cultivators, but most spread out over the vast lands of South Heaven.

“I have been shrouded by the Dao of Karma since I was young,” said Ji Yin. “I will not sever all of your Karma, only one thread. However, that will mean that you can never step into the Immortal Realm.” Although his voice was calm, he was actually quite apprehensive about Meng Hao. That was why, when he finally attacked, he did so with his most powerful Daoist magic!

He gestured slightly with his hand, and Meng Hao’s Karma seemed to ripple as if someone was flipping through them like they were pages of a book, then begin to rapidly connect to Ji Yin’s Karma.

The scene that was playing out in front of the nearby cultivators caused the expressions of even the Chosen to fill with shock.

“So this is the power of the Ji Clan….”

“The Dao of Karma is something nobody under Heaven can fight back against. According to the legends, Lord Ji used the Dao of Karma to place the Heavens over Lord Li!”

“No wonder this Ji Yin was able to contend for the spot of Dao Child. I heard that there was something bizarre about his birth, that he had Karma on him from the moment he appeared in the world. Supposedly, his skill in the Dao of Karma is incredible.”

“Meng Hao… is definitely dead!”

However, in the instant in which Ji Yin was browsing through Meng Hao’s Karma, his face suddenly flickered with disbelief. Although no observer could see it, all of the Karma that surrounded him was suddenly thrown into chaos.

Then, Meng Hao’s karma threads began to separate. Not just one, but all of them. Shocking rumbling sounds filled the air as the Karma Threads joining the two of them began to pull apart from each other.

At the same time, the Karma Threads connecting him and Meng Hao began to snap one after another. Each thread emitted shocking booms as they snapped, and the Karmic connection between the two was rapidly broken!

At the same time, the Karma Threads around Meng Hao slowly began to grow dim, and he was no longer locked in place, but could move normally. He hovered there in midair, staring impassively at Ji Yin.

As for Ji Yin, he was trembling, and his face was filled with disbelief. His Karma threads were in complete disorder, and rumbling sounds pulsed out from them. It almost seemed like countless screams were echoing out.

His Karma threads spread out in all directions, causing the air around Ji Yin to ripple. Then the Karma threads began to merge together. Brilliant light would burst out every time one collided with another.

Ji Yin was trembling. It was at this point that one of his Karma Threads drooped down onto him and bored into him like a sealing mark, the power of which then spread out to every corner of his body. After that, another Karma Thread descended onto him, bored into him, and vanished. Then another. And another.

As more and more of the Karma Threads vanished, Ji Yin’s appearance was finally becoming visible.

The onlookers were shocked at this development, and were unsure of what exactly was happening. Moments ago, Ji Yin had clearly been unleashing the Ji Clan’s Karmic Severing. And yet a moment later, Ji Yin was suddenly in a losing position.

All of it happened in the space of a few breaths of time. Now, people were able to see Ji Yin’s facial features for the first time ever. As soon as people’s eyes fell onto Ji Yin, the sound of gasps could be heard, and eyes went wide.

What they saw was the face of a young woman, beautiful, with pale skin. On her forehead could be seen an image depicting a pair of fish, and her entire person exuded an air of sickly beauty.

She… was Ji Yin!

Even in the Ji Clan, very few people knew that Ji Yin was a woman!

Everyone looked on silently as Ji Yin was revealed. She trembled as she sensed her cultivation base fading away. The Karma that she herself had cultivated was now not even under her own control. It was as if some astonishing power were interfering with it, allowing her opponent to use it to lock her down!

“This is impossible….” she thought, her mind reeling. In the entire time that she had cultivated Karma, she had never encountered a situation like this before. It left her feeling… completely terrified!

“You….” Her face was pale as she looked at Meng Hao. At this moment, the last of her Karma threads bored into her body, becoming a portion of what was sealing her.

As of now, everyone could clearly see that she was a young woman wearing a long black robe. The paleness of her face was a sharp contrast to the darkness of her robe, and for some reason, the contrast made her seem incredibly fragile.

“How are you doing this?” she asked.

Meng Hao’s expression was placid, his eyes cold as he stepped forward. He stood before Ji Yin, who now had no cultivation base, and was incapable of any struggle. He reached out, grabbed her, and threw her into his bag of holding.

As of that moment, everyone was filled with utter shock. As they looked at Meng Hao, they wondered what unfathomable secrets he carried.

The onlookers didn’t really understand what had just occurred in the battle; only Meng Hao and Ji Yin were aware of the frightening truth. Meng Hao had fallen victim to the Ji Clan’s Karmic Severing before, and knew how terrifying it would have been if Ji Yin had succeeded.

As for his Karmic Hexing, it was the bane of those who pursued the Dao of Karma. The more Karma someone had, the more powerful its hexing effects, which made it especially shocking when used against the Ji Clan.

It was at this point that a voice rang out from the crowd.

“Kill him! As long as he lives, he retains all the good fortune! He can’t be allowed to remain alive!

“He already captured Taiyang Zi, Li Ling’er, Sun Hai, Fang Yunyi, and Song Luodan. Now he has Ji Yin! This guy’s set a record for creating calamities! He’s definitely going to end up dead!

“He must die! He might be strong, but he’s only one person!

“He can fight back against the Dao of Karma, which means he’s definitely hiding some precious treasure! It’s probably good fortune from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple!” As the voice drifted through the area, it was obvious that this person was trying to stir up the crowd to attack Meng Hao.

People’s eyes began to flicker in response to the voice. How could they not understand what this person’s intentions were? After all, his argument made sense.

Even as their hearts began to surge, killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes. The Lightning Cauldron danced with electricity, and Meng Hao vanished. When he reappeared, shockingly, he was standing directly next to a man wearing a wide bamboo hat.

Meng Hao’s sudden appearance caused the man’s face to fall. This, of course, was the person who had just spoken. He tried to retreat backward, but Meng Hao was too fast. He burst out with eighty percent of the power of a true Immortal, causing rumbling to fill the air as he punched out seven times in quick succession. The young man in the wide bamboo hat was crushed as easily as dried weeds, and exploded into a haze of blood.

Meng Hao took his bamboo hat and bag of holding, then turned to face the dozens of figures who were currently bearing down on him. Behind them were hundreds of other cultivators, all flying toward him to attack together.

“You shouldn’t be in such a hurry to attack me,” Meng Hao said cooly. “Starting from now, and lasting until the time you leave the lands of South Heaven… we’re going to play a little game!

“A game of cat and mouse!” His body flickered as he used Form Displacement Transposition to suddenly appear far off in the distance. Earlier, he had escaped an ambush with only fifty percent of the power of a true Immortal. Now that he had eighty, if he wanted to leave this place, there was nobody who could stop him.

When everyone in the area heard his words, their minds filled with shock.

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# Chapter 830: Evacuation!

Meng Hao transformed into a beam of prismatic light that shot off into the distance. Hundreds of people trailed behind him in pursuit, but as of now, most had cultivation bases that didn't compare to his at all, and the others were incapable of releasing the seals that would make them his match. Furthermore, Meng Hao had the Heaven-defying Lightning Cauldron and its Form Displacement Transposition. Therefore, it only took a few hours for him to completely lose any pursuers.

The hundreds of people who remained behind fell silent. After a while, some of them just decided to give up; they immediately flew up into the air to leave Planet South Heaven. However, there were still quite a few who weren't willing to give in so easily.

This was especially true of the sects and clans whose Young Lords and Ladies had been captured by Meng Hao. They obviously could not leave, and had no choice but to join together to search for Meng Hao.

By this point, they didn't care about the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple's good fortune at all. It had all been acquired by Meng Hao. Therefore, it was easy to imagine how, once everyone left Planet South Heaven, it wouldn't take long before Meng Hao's name was spread throughout the Ninth Mountain.

Meng Hao now sped along silently through the mountains, wearing a wide bamboo hat. The hat was actually quite miraculous; after putting it on, his aura was completely concealed, making him completely unfathomable. He could even use the hat to change his appearance.

If that were all there was to it, it wouldn't be a big deal, and the item could be considered as useless as chicken bones. After all, even after changing his appearance and hiding his aura, any intelligent person who had seen him take the hat would know it was him as soon as they saw the hat itself.

However… the bamboo hat had another function. After putting it on his head, the music of a great Dao surrounded him. Although it wasn't very clear, he felt incredibly tranquil once the music entered his ears.

Meng Hao felt that it wasn't a bad item, so he put it on as he began to rifle through the bags of holding he had acquired. Wang Mu's bag of holding had quite a few miscellaneous objects in it that caused Meng Hao's eyes to shine. The Dao Protectors' bags were also filled to the brim.

"Rich! These Chosen from outside South Heaven are all totally rich!" His eyes shone as brightly as two suns. After quickly putting the bags of holding away, his body flickered as he sped onward.

Two hours later, a boom echoed out, and the ground quaked. An enraged roar could be heard, along with a bloodcurdling scream. The source of the commotion was a group from one of the Three Sects and Six Churches, the Church of the Blood Orchid. Only moments before, Meng Hao had suddenly appeared and attacked them. He didn't kill anyone, but did beat them to a pulp until they were seriously injured, and then took their bags of holding.

Even as he made to leave, he scanned the bags of holding belonging to the Chosen of the Church of the Blood Orchid, after which his fury raged.

The bags of holding weren't all empty, but were definitely much lighter than they should have been. It was almost as if someone had looted them at some point earlier in time!

"Dammit!" cried Meng Hao. He turned and thrashed the Church of the Blood Orchid disciples a bit more. Their Dao Protectors were enraged to the point of insanity, but with their cultivation bases sealed, all they could do was endure.

As for the Chosen, they were forced to write promissory notes. The hatred they felt for Meng Hao was now completely beyond description.

“These South Heaven people are all bandits and thieves!” said one of the Chosen from the Church of the Blood Orchid, a young woman who appeared to be on the verge of bursting into tears.

“Don’t worry,” Meng Hao said grimly. “I’ll help you get your revenge. Who the hell dares to steal my business!?”

Six hours later, in another part of the mountain range, the ripples of magical techniques spread out in all directions from a group from one of the Five Holy Lands, the Blue Lotus Sky.

Their fate was the same as the Church of the Blood Orchid. Meng Hao was invincible, booms rang out, and serious injuries were inflicted. Afterwards, Meng Hao took their bags of holding, and was happy to find that they were much fuller than the last group, and had not been ransacked before.

In the following several days, Meng Hao roamed about, occasionally killing people, but mostly just inflicting injuries. Despite that, widespread indignation and discontent rose up among the various power groups. Many opted to just leave, and when they finally reached the starry sky outside Planet South Heaven, they breathed sighs of relief. The Dao Protectors’ cultivation bases were restored, and they hated Meng Hao down to their bones. However, they were incapable of setting foot back on the planet, and had no choice but to stamp their feet angrily and leave.

This was… an evacuation….

Meng Hao had single-handedly stood up to all the Chosen and Dao Protectors of the various sects and clans of the Ninth Sea. Now, the mountains were being evacuated. The fate of anyone he ran into was to be picked clean after failing to escape.

When he came across empty bags of holding, he would often make their owners write promissory notes. Anyone who didn’t cooperate suffered the same fate as Sun Hai, and were dragged around by the hair.

More and more sects and clans chose to leave. Even Mount Sun and the Li Clan eventually lost their courage and had no choice but to depart. Sticking around was simply a source of too much pain for them.

Though the Dao Protectors had higher cultivation bases than him, those cultivation bases were sealed. The fact that Meng Hao, a member of the junior generation, had defeated them, was driving them mad.

A few days later, Meng Hao spent an entire day searching without finding anyone left behind in the mountain range. After some thought, he came to the conclusion that everyone had left. However, it was at this point that suddenly, he stopped in place and turned to look off in the distance. Because of the level of his cultivation base, he was just barely able to make out some faint ripples.

“There’s still someone who hasn’t left?” he thought, surprised. During the past few days, he’d been methodically attempting to force a complete evacuation, and had assumed that everyone had already chosen to leave. Unexpectedly, he now found that there were still people remaining.

He disappeared in a flash as he shot off into the distance. Soon, he caught sight of a group of four people who were traveling along at maximum speed. One of them was Fang Xiangshan. Next to her were two old women, apparently her Dao Protectors, and finally, an old man, who was presumably one of Fang Yunyi’s Dao Protectors.

As Meng Hao neared, the faces of these four Fang Clan members flickered. The two old women stepped forward and glared at Meng Hao. As for Fang Xiangshan, hatred flickered in her eyes as she looked at Meng Hao.

“Everyone else has gone,” he said suddenly. “Why haven’t you people?”

In response to his words, Fang Xiangshan’s face flickered suspiciously, and she rushed out from behind her two Dao Protectors to charge toward Meng Hao.

The old man quickly grabbed Fang Xiangshan’s arm.

“Young Lady, let’s get out of here!”

The other two Dao Protectors, the old women, transformed into beams of light that shot toward Meng Hao.

“Go find your clan uncle Fang Xiufeng! Then you’ll be safe! Get out of here!”

They had been advancing with extreme caution, and were obviously scared of attracting Meng Hao’s attention. However, now that Meng Hao was here, there was no need to try to remain hidden, so they sped forward as fast as they could.

When Meng Hao heard the words “Fang Xiufeng”, he couldn’t hold back from coughing lightly. He was just about to say something when the two old women let out shrill shrieks, and then attacked viciously. A cloud of poison spread out, within which were two skeletons that radiated mysterious light. As they passed through the air, the vegetation beneath them withered up and died.

Meng Hao frowned, then punched out with his right hand. The Mountain Consuming Incantation caused a mountain range to materialize, which swept out to crush down onto the two old women.

Rumbling could be heard as the two old women attacked with all the power they could muster. False Immortal cultivation base power exploded out as they attempted to block Meng Hao.

Meng Hao snorted coldly, then waved his hand, causing his Dharma Idol to appear, whose fist slammed into the ground, causing everything to quake and fissures to appear on the surface of the land. The Blood Demon Grand Magic appeared, and instead of chasing after Fang Xiangshan, he continued to battle with the two old women.

After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, booms filled the air and the old women coughed up blood. Their bodies were severely withered as they were tossed down to the ground, where they stared at Meng Hao with venomous hatred.

“You’re dead!”

“We’re in the lands of South Heaven, and a powerful expert of the Fang Clan is stationed here! Now that you’ve dared to treat us this way, you’re going to die beyond the shadow of a doubt!”

“I wasn’t planning to kill you, so stop tempting me,” Meng Hao said coldly.

With that, he turned and shot off in pursuit of Fang Xiangshan. He couldn’t shake the feeling that there was something fishy going on with her. By now, everyone had left South Heaven, but she was still here. Most important of all was her reaction to his words just now.

“Could it be that there’s still some good fortune left to be had in this place?” he thought curiously. Even as he sped through the air, the two old women’s faces flickered. Gritting their teeth, they flew after him in pursuit.

Meanwhile, nine enormous teleportation portals had opened up in the starry sky outside of Planet South Heaven. Glittering light spread out in all directions as more than a dozen figures appeared in the nine huge teleportation portals.

The figures were blurry, and were obviously not true selves, but rather divine will clones. Despite being nothing but divine will, for them to appear here caused ripples to spread out through the starry sky, and immense pressure to bear down on Planet South Heaven.

The figures all began to speak at almost exactly the same time.

“Fellow Daoist Fang, we can forget about what happened in the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple…. However, I only hope that you can return Ji Yin of the Ji Clan to us. Fellow Daoist Fang, please show some charity….”

“Elder Brother Fang, a Chosen of Mount Sun was also captured…. Please, allow him to be released!”

“The Li Clan has a good relationship with the Fang Clan. How could Li Ling’er of the junior generation possibly have been taken captive here…? She’s a young woman, and if her purity has been compromised, the Li Clan can tolerate it. However, don’t forget, Fang Xiufeng, Li Ling’er is the future fiancée that links our clans!”

“Elder Brother Fang, my eldest son Song Luodan was also taken captive. We became friends as soon as we met way back when, Elder Brother Fang. Look what’s happened now….”

“Elder Brother Fang, you’re close friends with the Pontifex of the Church of the Immortal Emperor. Ai… the Pontifex is sealed in critical meditation and can’t come out. So… could you give us some face? Sun Hai is one of my own descendants.”

“Big bro Fang… the Patriarch is somewhat at a loss considering what happened, and asked me to come talk with you…. Uh… my son, your nephew, Fang Yunyi was also taken captive….”

As the voices echoed about in the Great Tang of the Eastern Lands, Shui Dongliu shook his head and smiled, then vanished. Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li also chuckled bitterly. After the restrictive spells had been removed from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple, they had seen and heard everything that had occurred.

“That rascal, he’s too….” Fang Xiufeng sighed, and couldn’t help but feel that he was, indeed, somewhat in the wrong. Had the people outside of South Heaven been rude and abusive, then the situation would have been easier to deal with. However, they were very calm and polite, and they were correct to point out the relationships that existed. As a result, Fang Xiufeng felt a bit embarrassed.

His wife, Meng Hao’s mother, was actually beaming with joy and was clearly very pleased.

They exchanged a look. Then, Fang Xiufeng muttered and then waved his hand toward the sky. Everything trembled, and an enormous rift appeared. More than ten figures immediately flew down from up above.

Even though they were still blurry, their appearance caused all of Planet South Heaven to tremble from the incredible pressure that spread out.

However, this was Planet South Heaven, and they still needed to act cautiously.

They clasped hands in greeting to Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li, and in response, Fang Xiufeng smiled wryly.

“Fellow Daoists, this matter… oh, never mind. I’ll take you to the scene to make sure the members of your junior generation are all safe.”

These people were being polite because they had no desire whatsoever to offend Fang Xiufeng. In response to his words, the group transformed into prismatic beams that shot toward the mountainous location of the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple.

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# Chapter 831: The Grownups Arrive….

All of the cultivators of the Eastern Lands could see the enormous rift up in the sky, including Meng Hao, who was currently in hot pursuit of Fang Xiangshan. Suddenly, his heart began to thump, and he actually began to feel a bit guilty.

However, his eyes quickly grew calm and unperturbed, and he continued his pursuit.

Fang Xiangshan was up ahead. The old Dao Protector continued to grasp her by the arm as he unleashed the fastest speed he was capable of. He even used secret magical arts and blood evasion techniques. Because this was already near the border region of the mountain range, before long they were able to charge out from within the mountains. They transformed into prismatic beams and shot toward the Fang Clan's fortress in the Great Tang of the Eastern Lands.

At the same time, the two old women were anxiously pursuing Meng Hao, their hearts filled with venomous hatred.

"Once we find your clan uncle, all of this will be resolved," the old man said, "and that Meng Hao will be dead for sure!" Fang Xiangshan bit her lower lip and nodded. She was inwardly alarmed, but was also certain that, based on her status in the Fang Clan, the clan uncle would definitely resolve the crisis. Furthermore, he would most certainly make Meng Hao pay the price for what he had done.

She believed this, the old man believed it, and the two venomous old women behind Meng Hao also believed it.

"My clan uncle is stationed here on Planet South Heaven, so if anyone dares to harm the interests of the Fang clan, he'll definitely do something to stop it!"

"Your clan uncle might have imposed restrictions on the people entering Planet South Heaven, but he's still a member of the Fang Clan. This Meng Hao is malicious to the extreme, so he'll definitely be killed!"

"All we have to do is lay eyes on the clan uncle, and Meng Hao will be dead! No matter how deep the resources of Meng Hao's sect here on South Heaven are, nothing will be able to save him!"

There were two people up front, Meng Hao in the middle, and two old women following from behind. Five people whistled through the air, eventually charging out of the mountain range. It was at this point that Meng Hao extended his right hand and made a grasping motion. Rumbling filled the air as he snatched at the old man flying next to Fang Xiangshan. The old man's body trembled, and he coughed up a mouthful of blood as he evaded Meng Hao's attack. A rancorous look filled his face as he began to speed away once again.

The two old women behind Meng Hao anxiously sent forth attacks, filling the air with rumbling sounds.

"Don't push things too far, Meng Hao! This might be Planet South Heaven, but even so, this area is the Fang Clan's jurisdiction!"

"You're going to die today!"

Meng Hao gave a cold harrumph, and prepared to attack again. He had no intention of killing anyone, of course; he just wanted to rummage through Fang Xiangshan's bag of holding. However, it was at this point that over a dozen beams of light approached from off in the distance, moving with indescribable speed.

In the lead were Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li. Behind them were the more than ten powerful experts from various outside sects and clans.

When Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li caught sight of Meng Hao, Fang Xiufeng glared at him. As for Meng Hao’s mother, she seemed to have a somber expression on the surface, but a smile could be seen in her eyes.

When Meng Hao saw them, the guilt he felt grew. As for the old man next to Fang Xiangshan, when he saw the approaching newcomers, his face lit up with joy.

The two old women very nearly started laughing.

“Clan uncle, save me!” cried Fang Xiangshan. The old man couldn’t contain his excitement, and quickly clasped hands in greeting to Fang Xiufeng.

“Greetings, your excellency Fang!”

The two old women immediately stopped in place, joy bubbling up in their hearts. They quickly circled out to seal Meng Hao’s paths of retreat. Their faces flickered with killing intent; to them, Meng Hao was already as good as dead.

After this, they clasped hands and bowed to Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li.

“Greetings, your excellency Fang!”

Meng Hao slowed down and came to a stop, after which he stood there rubbing his nose.

In the blink of an eye, Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li were already descending through midair. Behind them, the more than ten powerful experts could be seen, blurry and unclear, but radiating intense power and pressure that caused even the sky to grow dim.

As soon as their gazes fell onto Meng Hao, it was as if multiple mountains were crushing down around him, sealing him in place completely.

“Clan uncle, it’s me, Shan’er!” cried Fang Xiangshan excitedly. “Clan uncle, please back me up here!” Now that she had caught sight of her two relatives, she found it impossible to hold back from giving vent to the humiliations she had just endured.

It was at this point that the old man and the two old women glanced over at Meng Hao. Looking pleased, and eyes brimming with hatred, they began to talk as if they were speaking of a dead person.

“Your excellency Fang, this is Meng Hao. He has a sinister and vicious heart, and is unmatchably shameless! He even used despicable methods to capture Yunyi!”

“You can’t leave this guy alive! Not only did he capture Yunyi, he also humiliated Goddess Fan Dong’er from the Ninth Sea God World! Plus, he captured Chosen from the other sects and clans! He’s contemptible to the maximum!”

“Yeah, that’s right! Even more excessive was that he used disgraceful tactics to steal all the good fortune of the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple for himself! The thought of it makes your hair stand up in anger!”

“This guy is rotten to the core! Not only did he plant landmines outside of the Daoist rite temple, which caused injury to everyone, but after that, he posed as a Dao Protector outside the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple! He even called himself the groundskeeper!”

“He has absolutely, positively no sense of shame! He occupied the entire Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple by himself, and didn’t let anyone else inside, and then, used disgraceful techniques to extort and rob the rest of us! There were many fellow cultivators who were injured by him!”

Tears were now streaming down Fang Xiangshan’s face as she looked over at Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li and bowed continuously.

“Uncle, aunt. This guy chased me down and was trying to kill me! If I hadn’t run into the two of you, Shan’er would definitely have been buried in this place, and I would never have been able to see you again.” Fang Xiangshan was not a direct bloodline descendant of the Fang Clan, so she could only use an informal version of the address “uncle.” If she were a direct bloodline descendant, then she would have called him “Uncle Fang Xiufeng,” and used a more formal version of the word “Uncle.” After all, when it came to the direct bloodline of the Fang Clan, Fang Xiufeng counted as the eldest son, and Meng Hao as the eldest grandson.

When Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li heard the words being spoken, their faces darkened. Meng Hao felt even more guilty, and a bashful, seemingly apologetic, smile appeared on his face.

The ten or more people behind Fang Xiufeng then began to laugh coldly as they looked at Meng Hao.

“So, you’re Meng Hao of the junior generation!”

“How daring, Meng Hao. You still haven’t released the Chosen of our Mount Sun? You’ll be coming back to Mount Sun with me to atone for your crime!”

“You have Chosen Ling’er of the Li Clan. To pay for this crime, you must immediately drop to your knees, cripple your cultivate base, and dig out your eyes!”

“Song Luodan is a Chosen of the Song Clan! He is honest and upright, and has an extraordinary cultivation base. What underhanded tricks did you use to capture him!?”

“You have Sun Hai and still haven’t let him go? You’re obviously young and ignorant, so I’ll take your father and mother’s place to offer you some discipline!”

If Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li weren’t here, any one of this group of people could have cut Meng Hao down where he stood. Instead, they just spoke cold words that made everything feel as frigid as ice.

Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li’s faces were equally icy.

When Fang Xiangshan saw all of the people standing behind Fang Xiufeng, her heart swelled with joy, and she instantly gave Meng Hao a spiteful look and said, “Uncle, aunt, this guy even has the Immortal Ancient Daoist Medallion!”

“Ladies and gentlemen,” said the old man from the Fang Clan. “Your excellency Fang. This young man not only has the Immortal Ancient Daoist Medallion, he also has a bronze lamp. That lamp gives him eighty percent of the power of a true Immortal!”

When the other people heard this, they stared at Meng Hao, who lowered his head with a bashful smile, like a little child who had just been caught with his hand in the cookie jar.

Fang Xiufeng turned his head to look at Meng Hao.

“Is what they said true!?” he said.

Meng Hao blinked for a moment, then quietly said, “It’s not as incredible as they make it sound…. I didn’t do it on purpose!”

Fang Xiangshan and the others didn’t notice anything unusual about the way Fang Xiufeng and Meng Hao were speaking to each other. However, among the group of ten or more powerful experts, there were a few who felt their hearts quiver. All of a sudden, something didn’t seem right.

Fang Xiufeng gave a cold snort and flicked his sleeve. Immediately, the pressure weighing down on Meng Hao vanished. Although the motion appeared casual, when the onlookers saw it happen, their hearts were shaken.

The expert from the Church of the Immortal Emperor narrowed his eyes. “It almost seems… like there’s some fishy connection between Fang Xiufeng and this kid….”

The representative from the Ji Clan looked over at Meng Hao, eyes glittering, then looked back thoughtfully at Fang Xiufeng.

Fang Xiufeng frowned and looked at Meng Hao, a serious look in his eyes.

“Why haven’t you let those people go already?” he asked.

Meng Hao cleared his throat. He looked hesitantly at his mother, then back at his father, who was obviously putting on a forced and phony demeanor. Finally, he sighed and patted his bag of holding.

Sun Hai came out first.

His clothes were in ribbons, and his expression haggard. However, as soon as he appeared, he immediately clasped hands to Meng Hao and fawningly said, “Elder Brother Meng, Li’l Hai pays his respects, sir….” He was about to continue when he suddenly noticed everyone else in the area. He gasped, and then began to tremble excitedly.

The expert from the Church of the Immortal Emperor had an unsightly expression on his face. He shot a ruthless look in Sun Hai’s direction, clearly displeased with the face-losing words he had just uttered.

Sun Hai’s heart trembled, and yet, he couldn’t hold back his excitement. Tears immediately began to flow down his face.

“Uncle!” he cried out loudly, using the respectful form of address. “Save me, Uncle! He forced me to do it! You have no idea how brutal this shameless bastard is! He took my bag of holding and stole all of my belongings, then he forced me to write a promissory note!

“I didn’t want to, but he dragged me around by the hair and did everything he could to hurt me. Look, I don’t even have any clothes any more, just rags. He forced me to do everything!” From the tone of Sun Hai’s words as they echoed out, everyone could sense what a miserable and terrible experience he had gone through.

Meng Hao stared coldly at Sun Hai, his eyes wide. He said nothing.

“Hey, what are you looking at, you little punk!?” cried Sun Hai, his eyes widening threateningly. “You’re dead!” However, at the same time, he backed up quickly to stand next to his Uncle. Once he was there, he heaved a sigh of relief as he stared at Meng Hao.

Fang Xiufeng watched all of this with wide eyes and slack jaw. Meng Li blinked a few times, and looked over a Meng Hao, a grin in her eyes.

“Release the other ones, too,” said Fang Xiufeng. He looked like he might be getting a headache.

“Oh, right.” replied Meng Hao, then slapped his bag of holding to produce Taiyang Zi.

Taiyang Zi looked miserable; his hair was disheveled, and he looked completely tattered. His eyes even looked blank, and he stood there in a daze for a moment before beginning to tremble with excitement.

“Master Uncle….” he said, his voice quavering with emotion from finally being able to see the light of day, as if he suddenly had seen a gleam of hope in his life again. Then, he sped over to stand next to the powerful expert from Mount Sun. Finally, he turned to look hatefully at Meng Hao.

“Meng Hao, I hope that you DON’T die here today! That way, one day I’ll have the chance to slaughter you myself! I hereby swear that I will help you to understand what it means to live a life worse than death!”

Meng Hao glared back viciously at Taiyang Zi.

“I dare you to say one more word!” said Meng Hao, his eyes burning with murderous intent. Taiyang Zi was just about to open his mouth when he saw the look in Meng Hao’s eyes, and suddenly, his heart began to tremble, and he didn’t dare to speak another word.

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# Chapter 832: Everyone Is Released

“What incredible gall!” said the old man next to Fang Xiangshan. He snorted coldly and glared at Meng Hao. Clearly… he hadn’t yet picked up on any of the clues. By this time, however, of the more than ten people behind Fang Xiufeng, most had realized that the mood in the area… was off.

From the way Fang Xiufeng and Meng Hao talked to each other, it didn’t seem that they were strangers. In fact, it was more like the way a father and son would talked to each other.

Light gasps could be heard. By following such a path of reasoning, they quickly called to mind the reason that Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li had come to Planet South Heaven in the first place. Then, they looked at Meng Hao again, but in a different way than they had before.

“Stop stalling! Release them all!” said Fang Xiufeng. Inwardly, he was chuckling wryly, but also felt a touch of pride. After all, Meng Hao had accomplished something that few others could.

With a long face and somewhat of a pout, Meng Hao released Fang Yunyi and Song Luodan. They appeared, looking distressingly haggard. Fang Yunyi’s injuries seemed especially serious, and he coughed up some blood and then immediately fainted. The old man standing next to Fang Xiangshan immediately stepped forward to catch him, then looked back at Meng Hao, killing intent swirling in his eyes.

Song Luodan was taciturn as he walked off. He turned his head and gave a meaningful glare at Meng Hao, but didn’t say anything. When he reached the powerful expert from the Song Clan, he stood there with his eyes closed. It was impossible to tell what he was thinking.

“Any more?” asked Fang Xiufeng.

“Uh… a few,” Meng Hao replied. He reluctantly released three more people from his bag of holding. These were three other Chosen he had captured in the past few days. As soon as they were released, they turned to look at Meng Hao with fury burning in their eyes, as well as the desire to kill.

When they saw that three additional Chosen had been tucked away in Meng Hao’s bag of holding, everyone gaped, even Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li. No one could have imagined that Meng Hao would be able to snatch up so many people. This was especially true of the powerful experts from the outside sects and clans.

They stared blankly at the people emerging from Meng Hao’s bag of holding, and couldn’t help but think that Meng Hao… truly was terrifying.

“Alright, that’s it,” Meng Hao said, spreading his hands wide and looking calmly at the powerful experts standing behind his father and mother.

In response to his words, the powerful experts from the Ji and Li clans glared back with wide eyes. Fang Xiufeng let out a cold snort.

“What about the Chosen from the Ji Clan, and Li Ling’er!”

Meng Hao suddenly looked a bit startled.

“Li Ling’er? Who? Uh, I don’t know her. Ji Clan Chosen? I never saw any Ji Clan Chosen!” As Meng Hao rambled on, Fang Xiufeng looked back at him with a deadpan expression, and finally sighed.

“I need to get off of Planet South Heaven,” Meng Hao thought to himself. “It so boring being held back here.” Finally, he decided to pull Ji Yin out of his bag of holding.

As soon as Ji Yin emerged, a thick mist appeared around her body, concealing her completely. Finally she looked back at Meng Hao, a profound expression on her face. Then she turned and began to walk over to the powerful expert from the Ji Clan.

“Don’t forget that you owe me a promissory note!” blurted Meng Hao. He had long since recovered his second true self, and had also cleaned out Ji Yin’s bag of holding.

Ji Yin’s pace faltered briefly, as if she was having to exert intense control over herself. After a long moment passed, she gritted her teeth and continued walking.

“Okay, that was really the last one!” said Meng Hao resolutely.

The more than ten people behind Fang Xiufeng stood there silently. If there were any of them who hadn’t yet figured out what was going on by now, then they didn’t deserve to have practiced cultivation to the level that they had. The expert from the Li Clan sighed, and apparently felt a headache coming on. In the agreement between the Li Clan and the Fang Clan all those years ago, Li Ling’er was supposed to be engaged to Fang Xiufeng’s crippled son.

From the look of things, she could tell… that the crippled son from all those years ago was actually none other than the Meng Hao they were facing right now.

The Li Clan expert sighed and looked at Fang Xiufeng. “Elder Brother Fang… look….”

Fang Xiufeng smiled wryly then turned to glare at Meng Hao.

“Release her!”

Meng Hao set his jaw, took a step forward and glared at Fang Xiufeng. “She’s supposed to be a maidservant for mom!”

His wording was quite barbaric, but it actually softened Fang Xiufeng’s heart. He knew that from the time Meng Hao was very young, he and Meng Li had been unable to be there for him, and he would surely react negatively to being restrained and instructed.

Meng Li covered her smile with her hand, then took a few steps forward and looked at her son. Her tone gentle, she said, “Take her out and let me see.”

Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding, and Li Ling’er flew out, her hair a mess and her lips still smeared with blood. Her buttocks were still slightly uneven and still had a deep impression of a handprint on them, and her face was pale. She appeared to be in such pain that she was on the verge of passing out.

As soon as she appeared, a vicious look gleamed in her eyes, and she spun toward Meng Hao. Her hands twisted into claws that slashed toward Meng Hao’s face. Meng Hao glared at her and extended his right hand.

Li Ling’er’s heart trembled, and she instantly fell back, glaring angrily at Meng Hao.

“Someone as savage as you isn’t suitable to be my mom’s maidservant. BEAT IT!” Meng Hao waved his hand dismissively. He was in a foul mood now considering how much he had just lost out on.

“Meng Hao!” screeched Li Ling’er, so furious that she trembled. She was just about to charge forward and attack again when the Li Clan expert held out a hand to block her way. She pulled her off to the side and transmitted a few words to her. Li Ling’ers eyes went wide, and she stared at Meng Hao, then looked over at Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li. Suddenly, her face went completely ashen, as if her entire world had gone dark.

“Impossible….” she murmured, almost as if she had been possessed. “It’s impossible….”

“Hmph. Fine, that’s everybody,” said Meng Hao. “If there’s nothing else then I’ll be leaving now.” He swished his sleeve and was about to leave when the old man from the Fang Clan, who still hadn’t picked up on what was going on, suddenly laughed coldly.

“You want to leave? Hand over your bag of holding, then get on your knees and beg for mercy!” His body flashed as he shot toward Meng Hao. As for the two old women, they hesitated for a moment. Something seemed off to them, but in the end, they gritted their teeth and charged toward Meng Hao.

Fang Xiangshan had not practiced cultivation for a very long time, but even she could tell that something was off, although she wasn't quite sure what.

Seeing the three people closing in on him, Meng Hao's face immediately darkened.

"Who the hell do you people think you are!?" His right hand clenched into a fist and he immediately punched out. A boom rang out as the three old Dao Protectors' bodies were shaken. They fell back, and were just about to unseal their cultivation bases when….

Suddenly, another cold snort echoed out, and Fang Xiufeng's voice reverberated through the air.

"WHO THE HELL DO YOU PEOPLE THINK YOU ARE!?" An icy light flickered out from his eyes. It was nothing more than a gaze, but it caused the three old Dao Protectors to tumble backward and cough up mouthful after mouthful of blood. Rumbling filled their bodies as numerous sword wounds appeared on them; they appeared to be on the verge of being sliced to pieces.

The three old Dao Protectors' faces fell as ninety percent of their cultivation bases were slashed away. Blood spurted about everywhere, and they were very nearly killed.

"Your excellency Fang…."

Off to the side, Fang Xiangshan gaped. "Clan uncle…."

"Ladies and gentlemen, Fellow Daoists," said Fang Xiufeng, a slight smile on his lips. "I still haven't been able to make the proper introductions. This… is my young son." When his voice echoed out into the ears of the powerful experts, they began to smile wryly. Earlier, they had for the most part figured things, so to hear Fang Xiufeng personally speak the words came as no surprise.

However, Ji Yin and all the others looked over at Meng Hao in complete shock. Li Ling'er was trembling, and her expression was blank. However, the most terrified of them all wasn't her, but Sun Hai. He watched blankly as the scene played out, and thought back to everything he had said earlier. Immediately, a gloomy expression could be seen on his face, as if his whole world had gone dark.

By this point, Fang Yunyi had regained consciousness. He and Fang Xiangshan stood there with minds abuzz and hearts filled with explosive thunder. The old man and the two old women gasped in disbelief.

They thought about all the threatening things they had said to Meng Hao… how they had tried to use a son's own father to threaten him. Then… they began to shake in their boots.

“I unsealed the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple on South Heaven to provide my young son with a training ground. From a young age, he has lived a rough, unrestrained life. For the sake of my face, I hope all of you Fellow Daoists will not be too offended by any of his faux pas.” Laughing, Fang Xiufeng clasped hands to all the surrounding cultivators.

The more than ten powerful experts chuckled wryly and shook their heads. They then exchanged some polite words with Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li, at the same time glancing over at Meng Hao occasionally. As for the bags of holding he had snatched, and all the other things that had occurred in the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple, it was a bit inappropriate to bring them up anymore.

“Since all of you are here,” said Fang Xiufeng, “don't be in a hurry to leave. Please, come back with me to my clan headquarters and allow me to entertain you.” The more than ten experts laughed to themselves. The matters of the junior generation were things they could afford to ignore. Therefore, they laughed and chatted as they followed Fang Xiufeng to the Fang Clan.

As for Song Luodan and all the other Chosen, they hated Meng Hao just as much as before, and he them. They did nothing to conceal this fact, and neither did Meng Hao. He glared back at them hatefully, then pulled out a thick stack of promissory notes, which he then began to leaf through. Song Luodan and the others had no choice but to grit their teeth and turn to follow the members of the senior generation.

Meng Hao decided not to go back home to the Fang Clan, nor did Fang Xiufeng attempt to force him to. Meng Hao's mother straightened his garments and then pinched his nose. Then, in much the manner one would speak to a young child, she warned him not to get into any trouble. Finally, she turned and left.

Fang Yunyi and Fang Xiangshan were scared witless, and were just about to follow their seniors when Meng Hao stepped forward and blocked their way.

"C-cousin…." Fang Xiangshan stammered.

Fang Yunyi snorted coldly and looked away, refusing to speak.

Meng Hao glared at him, then suddenly reached out and smacked him across the side of the face. Blood sprayed from Fang Yunyi's mouth, and he was sent tumbling onto the ground. His Dao Protector stood off to the side, head bowed, smiling bitterly, pretending like he didn't see what was happening.

"You!" said Fang Yunyi, looking up at Meng Hao. However, in the instant that the word was out of his mouth, Meng Hao's foot slammed down onto the sprawling Fang Yunyi.

"You refuse to address me as brother when you see me!? What kind of upbringing did you have!" Meng Hao viciously kicked him a few more times, and Fang Yunyi screamed. His head was now covered with blood, causing Fang Xiangshan to be frozen in fear as she looked on. Meng Hao's viciousness now caused her to remember some scenes from when she was young. If she recalled correctly, she had actually been bullied by this older cousin of hers on a few occasions.

"AAAHHHHH! I'm gonna kill you!" roared Fang Yunyi.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered coldly, and he punched out again, landing a blow directly onto Fang Yunyi’s mouth, shattering his teeth and making it impossible for him to speak. Blood spurted out.

By now, Fang Xiangshan was trembling violently. The old man and the two old women were staring in shock, and yet didn’t dare to interfere.

Fang Yunyi was being beaten senseless. His body was wracked with pain, and he was on the verge of losing consciousness. Memories from his childhood floated up, and he vaguely remembered being beaten up by a certain brother and sister team.

Miserable shrieks rang out as Meng Hao kicked him again. It seemed that if Fang Yunyi didn’t speak up and say the right words, he would be trampled to death.

Filled with fear, Fang Yunyi spit out a mouthful of blood and then blurted, “C-cousin!”

Meng Hao’s foot stopped in midair above Fang Yunyi’s face. He slowly pulled his foot back, and then a bashful smile appeared on his face.

“Little bro, welcome to Planet South Heaven.”

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# Chapter 833: An Amateurish Seduction Con

Meng Hao turned to look at Fang Xiangshan, and in that instant, she produced a dilapidated bottle from her bag of holding.

“Cousin, this is something I found in the mountain range, it has the music of a Dao inside….”

Her heart stabbed with pain, but considering the fate of Fang Yunyi that she had just witnessed, she didn’t dare to do anything other than hand over the bottle. This was especially true considering everything she had said in front of Meng Hao’s parents. When she thought about that, her scalp went numb.

Likewise, how could Meng Hao forget all of the venomous things she had said just moments ago? He reached out and took the bottle, looked at it, then threw it back to Fang Xiangshan. The bottle was not unfamiliar to him; there had been many like it inside the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple.

Although it had the music of a Dao inside, that was simply because it had existed inside the temple for so long.

Ignoring Fang Xiangshan, Meng Hao turned and transformed into a beam of light that shot off into the distance. When he finally disappeared, the three old Dao Protectors sighed and helped the injured Fang Yunyi to his feet, then took him and terrified Fang Xiangshan off into the distance.

Several days passed by in a flash. During that time, Meng Hao traveled around in the Eastern Lands, mostly in the area surrounding the Immortal

Ancient Daoist Rite Temple mountains. He didn’t reveal his appearance or aura, but instead concealed it with the bamboo hat.

As for clothing, he pulled out a long robe that had belonged to Sun Hai from the Church of the Immortal Emperor. He roamed through the area slowly, waiting.

Waiting… for those two damned bandits!

“How dare they steal business from me!” he thought, his expression dark. Meng Hao had long since been brooding about the two mysterious bandits who had stolen all the items that belonged to him.

“Unless I’m mistaken, I know exactly which bastards pulled such a shameless stunt!” He snorted coldly as he flew through midair.

“Those two bastards fled during my battle with the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, and haven’t dared to show their faces since then. This time, I’ll definitely track them down!” For some reason, Meng Hao was certain that there was no one other than the meat jelly and the parrot who could have accomplished something that caused him to lose out on so much.

“Although, those two little bastards aren’t that strong. How could they have managed to rob so many Chosen?” Meng Hao was very curious about this, and it was the one thing he couldn’t figure out.

“Did they come across some sort of good fortune?” he thought suspiciously. He continued to fly through midair in the region near the mountain range. Three days passed, until finally, he ran into one of the Eastern Lands’ walled cities. He glanced at it, then slowly and deliberately flew around in the city a few times before finally making his way off into the distance.

What he didn’t notice was that in one of the city’s inns, two pairs of eyes were surreptitiously peering out at him.

Two burly fellows, tall and sturdy, were at a table slurping alcohol and chomping down on meat. One of them sat cross-legged in a chair, the other squatted down next to the table. Apparently, those were the only positions that were comfortable to these two.

Even stranger, the burly fellow who sat there cross-legged would drink the alcohol in huge slurps, and would toss enormous quantities of food into his mouth with each bite. As for the other man, he… pecked at his food almost like a bird would.

“Did you see that?” said the bird-like man. He blinked, and then a wily gleam appeared in his eyes as he watched Meng Hao disappear off into the distance.

“Huh?” said the other man, looking up to stare at Meng Hao’s retreating figure.

“You idiot!” said the bird-like man, smacking the other man hard across the head. “Fool! Get a brain, would you!! Lord Fifth has hauled you around for so many years now! How could you still be so stupid!?!?”

“What the hell?!” roared the big man, food spraying from his mouth, revealing dancing electricity inside. “You’re being immoral! You’re being shameless! This isn’t right! I’m gonna convert you!!”

“Quiet down,” said the bird-like man self-assuredly. “Listen to me, did you see that guy with the bamboo hat? He was hiding his aura. That hat is definitely some kind of treasure!”

“Treasure!?” said the big man, his eyes lighting up.

“Right. Definitely a treasure. Based on my experience, people who carry treasures like that are usually weaklings. They’re basically lambs waiting for the slaughter!

“Have faith in the Lord Fifth; that guy is definitely an easy mark! Furthermore, his cultivation base probably isn’t very high, but his bag of holding is probably very deep. Did you see his clothes? Not too long ago, we robbed a guy who was wearing clothes exactly like that.

“Most important of all, he clearly doesn’t want people to recognize him. That indicates he has secrets! Secrets, I tell you!” The bird-like man was continuing to get more and more excited.

“Secrets!” exclaimed the big man, his eyes glowing brightly.

“With secrets like that, and a weak cultivation base, plus a plump bag of holding… he’s definitely ripe for the plucking. Besides, a single look, and you can tell he’s the kind of person who knows how to dress well. He’s the perfect mark for us. Trust me, if we can clean him out, then we’ll be able to live in complete comfort.” The bird-like man was even more excited than before.

The big man’s eyes gleamed brightly, but then he hesitated.

“But we failed so many other times, and even almost got captured. Especially in the past few days. Whenever you take on HIS appearance, we end up getting chased by everyone…. Wait, is he a bully?”

“You got it!” said the bird-like man, nodding. “Of course he’s a bully. He couldn’t be anything else! Look, we’ll definitely succeed this time, just have faith in the Lord Fifth. All the other times were mere mishaps. Those Chosen have all left, so the only people left behind have got to be easy marks.”

“Straighten him out!” said the big man, clenching his jaw and nodding his head. “Fudge, Lord Third is gonna set him straight!”

“Hold on, let Lord Fifth plan this out. A person like that, hmm… there’s an eighty to ninety percent chance that he’s a ladies man. Okay, we can’t use the same tactic that we used before. This time, we’ll directly implement plan #9. Quickly, transform into a hot babe.”

“#9? Which one is nine? How dare you ridicule Lord Third!!” the big man raged.

“Uh… #3! Plan #3!!” replied the bird-like man.

“Well why didn’t you say so earlier? Alright, who should I look like?”

“Anybody, it doesn’t matter, as long as she’s hot and seductive. Come, hurry up, we need to go!”

“Hot and seductive?” The big man thought for a moment, and then a popping sound rang out as he changed form. Now he was a woman, extremely curvaceous and completely alluring, with a beautiful, entrancing face, and eyes that tugged at the heart and soul.

If Meng Hao were here, he would instantly recognize that this was… Demoness Zhixiang.

“Too many clothes!” said the bird-like man. “Come on, less clothes!”

Pop!

The big man changed again.

“Now you’re way too revealing! Y-y-you, you idiot! How could you even go outside looking like that!?!”

After seven or eight adjustments, the bird-like man was satisfied and prodded the other man out the door.

The big man in Zhixiang form wore extremely revealing clothes, and felt completely resentful because of it. Consequently, he started picking his nose and making big, manly strides as they walked down the road, causing the bird-like man to fly into a rage. More adjustments were made.

Meng Hao had just left the city. Beneath the bamboo hat, he was frowning. After traveling around the area near the mountain range for all these days, he still hadn’t run into the two bastards he was looking for.

“Could they have left?” he thought. “Or maybe they detected my aura?” Suddenly, his face flickered, and he spun around. There, in midair not too far off, a woman was approaching him. An anxious expression could be seen on her face, as if she were being pursued.

The instant the woman appeared, Meng Hao’s jaw dropped in astonishment.

This woman was none other than Zhixiang, which was of course the big man in disguise.

She wore revealing clothing, and smelled like a spring breeze. She possessed an alluring charm and grace, and had a flirtatious look in her eyes, eyes that seemed capable of enchanting anyone who looked into them. Most people who laid eyes on her would instantly find their hearts pounding.

As she passed Meng Hao, she looked over and smiled shyly. Then she made to hurry off. However, before she could get very far, she turned and looked back at him, apparently having been attracted to him in some way. She gave him an entrancing, tantalizing look, then turned and walked off, her curves undulating gently. The sight of her slender figure from behind was enough to cause any man who saw her to palpitate with eagerness.

Meng Hao gaped.

‘Zhixiang’ was not happy at all, and was inwardly muttering about how obvious things had been made, and yet the mark didn’t respond at all. Instead, he just stared with a slack jaw. Finally, ‘Zhixiang’ intentionally spit out a mouthful of blood.

Her face went pale, and she staggered in place.

“Fellow Daoist, save me!” she cried, looking back at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes were wide as he examined ‘Zhixiang.’ Then, a virtually imperceptible smile appeared in his eyes. Grinning, he approached.

“With me here,” he said, “you have nothing to fear, Fellow Daoist.”

“Someone’s chasing me,” said ‘Zhixiang’ lightly, her voice somewhat weak and yet even more enticing than before. “As I fled, I was injured. Fellow Daoist, if you can escort me to my Immortal’s cave, then I’ll definitely be very grateful….”

Inwardly, Meng Hao laughed loudly, and mused about how fake this whole act was, and yet he smiled the same as before, and immediately nodded. Then, he flew into the air with the woman. The two of them sped into the mountains, to an Immortal's cave. The woman gestured for him to follow her inside.

At this point, Meng Hao's eyes narrowed. The Immortal's cave seemed extraordinary. The spell formation outside radiated a sense of danger, and based on Meng Hao's cultivation base, he knew that even he would have a tough time breaking out of it.

After stepping into the Immortal's cave, the woman sighed, and then stopped and turned to Meng Hao with a charming smile.

"Many thanks, Fellow Daoist," she said, intentionally edging closer to him. "Would you mind acting as Dharma Protector for me here? Once my wounds are recovered, I'll definitely repay your kindness."

"Of course, no problem!" said Meng Hao, suppressing the urge to vomit. He backed up a few steps.

The disguised man frowned. Things weren't going according to plan, and now he wasn't sure what to do. He quickly stamped his foot onto the ground, which instantly sent a secret notification to the bird-like man.

After a few breaths of time passed, the door of the Immortal's cave slammed open, and a monstrous aura surged out that gave Meng Hao quite a shock. A man emerged, wearing black robes, his features handsome. He even emanated the aura of a scholar.

"So, you're back, wife!" said the young man, laughing. However, when he saw Meng Hao and 'Zhixiang,' he suddenly stopped in place, and then his eyes went wide.

"Slut! Y-you're actually committing adultery right here!?!?" The young man's face twisted with rage, and his aura exploded with power. Heaven and Earth went dark, and everything began to tremble and seemed to be on the verge of exploding. The door of the Immortal’s cave exploded, and the shocking spell formation Meng Hao had seen collapsed into pieces.

A terrifying aura raged out that far exceeded the Spirit Realm. It was incredibly powerful, and made it seem as if an Immortal was descending. The entire area was instantly locked down, causing an intense sense of deadly crisis to rise up in Meng Hao’s heart.

It seemed as if the person standing in front of him had an aura that could easily decide whether or not he lived or died.

“Husband, this is all just a misunderstanding….” said ‘Zhixiang.’

“Misunderstanding my ass! Get the hell out of my way! Since we’re husband and wife, I won’t kill you this day. However, this paramour of yours had better give me some compensation! I don’t care what sect he comes from, when the one surnamed Meng wants a person dead, who would dare to save him!?”

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he looked at the young man, and a strange expression appeared on his face.

This young man looked… exactly like Meng Hao himself!

Of course, Meng Hao was wearing the bamboo hat, which changed his appearance in such a way that no one would be able to recognize him.

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# Chapter 834: Take A Look and See Who I Am

“Your majesty, you are…?” Meng Hao said.

“Hmph! I’m Meng Hao!” said the young man. “The number one ruler in South Heaven!” His aura scintillated prismatically, and his words caused everything to shake.

“Number one ruler! Do you know what that means!? It means that in all the lands of South Heaven, nobody dares to provoke me!” The young man lifted his chin, and an arrogant expression covered his face.

“Quick, give him some compensation,” said the ‘Zhixiang.’ “My husband is the number one most powerful expert in the lands of South Heaven, with the exception of some of those old-timers. He’s at the peak of all South Heaven, and even ended the great continental war.”

“Shut your trap!” said the young man, glaring and swishing his sleeve. “When men talk, the women should stand quietly off to the side!” He glared coldly at Meng Hao.

“Meng Hao says what he means and means what he says! Considering that this is your first offense, I’ll let you off with your life, just this one time!”

Meng Hao wore an odd expression as he looked at this copy of himself talking. Then he looked over at ‘Zhixiang,’ and smiled. He really couldn’t think of anyone other than the parrot and the meat jelly who could pull off such a mistake-ridden scam.

“Presumably, you’ve heard of my illustrious name,” the young man continued coldly. “Alright, forget it. I’m not going to make things any harder for you. Just hand over your bag of holding, and I’ll allow you to use material goods as your form of apology!

“If you dare to resist, then you will be buried here this very day!” Once again, his aura burst out explosively, transforming into a tempest that swept across the land. Anyone who sensed such an aura would immediately feel incredible distress. It was as if some amorphous volcano were rumbling, and if one attempted to fight back against it, it would erupt, and one would instantly be killed.

The remnants of the spell formations outside of the Immortal’s cave were now completely destroyed. Sand and pebbles raged into a sandstorm; mountains collapsed and fissures covered the surface of the land. The intense aura caused a riot of colors to flash through the sky. Even Meng Hao couldn’t stop his eyes from widening.

If he wasn’t absolutely sure that the two fellows in front of him were the meat jelly and the parrot, if he wasn’t completely familiar with the two dunces, then he would surely be thoroughly intimidated.

“Hey, how do you know this is my first offense?” said Meng Hao with an enigmatic smile.

The young man gaped, as did ‘Zhixiang.’

“Dammit!” roared the young man. “Don’t tell me this ISN’T your first offense!? This is ridiculous!!” He waved his sleeve once again, causing the ground to quake and mountains to collapse as his aura surged up. He looked as if he was just about to smash Meng Hao into oblivion, but then forcibly restrained himself.

Meng Hao’s current manner caused the bird-like man’s heart to begin to pound. Suddenly, he had a bad feeling. After exchanging a glance with the ‘Zhixiang,’ he snorted coldly.

“Apparently, you still don’t understand Meng Hao! Do you know who my dad is? He’s Fang Xiufeng!” Inwardly, the bird-like man was quite pleased with himself for assuming a role that was essentially the most powerful in all of South Heaven. In recent days, after assuming the visage of Meng Hao, he had learned about Fang Xiufeng from some other members of the Fang Clan.

“Scared yet?” he said.

Meng Hao cleared his throat, then blinked somewhat bashfully. “Are you really Meng Hao?”

“I, Meng Hao, would never change my surname OR my given name!” the young man said proudly. “Of course I’m Meng Hao!”

Meng Hao shook his head. “I heard that Meng Hao can stomp his foot down so hard that the ground shatters. Can you do that? I don’t really believe that you can.”

“You don’t believe!?” raged the young man, glaring at Meng Hao.

“I don’t!” replied Meng Hao decisively.

“Dammit! You actually don’t believe!” Howling, the young man stamped his foot onto the ground. Shockingly, the Immortal’s cave collapsed, the ground quaked and a huge fissure spread out.

“Well, what about that? Believe me now?!”

“That’s just one single fissure,” Meng Hao said with disdain. “I’m talking about shattering the earth and making a huge crater. Meng Hao can do that, what about you? Ah, forget about it. I know you can’t.”

“AGGGHHHH! You’re really pissing me off! You really don’t believe!? Dammit! Alright, pay attention. Watch and see whether Lord Fif— er, Meng Hao can do it or not!!” The young man’s eyes were completely bloodshot. There was nothing he hated more than people disbelieving him, nothing dismayed him more than a provocation. He suddenly flew up into the air, then slammed back down into the ground, instantly causing a huge hole to appear.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he looked at the ground in front of him, and then compared it to the vegetation off in the distance.

A moment later, the young man flew out pompously from within the hole.

“Believe me now?!”

“It’s not deep enough,” sighed Meng Hao.

The young man flew into a rage. His body flickered as he once again slammed down into the hole. A huge boom echoed out, and the land quaked. It almost seemed as if the hole would extend all the way down to the center of the planet; in fact, subterranean fire even shot up out of the hole, along with the young man. He glared at Meng Hao; from the look in his eye, if Meng Hao refused to believe him, he was willing to tear a hole all the way through the lands of South Heaven.

Meng Hao coughed lightly.

“Alright, fine, I’m scared. I have a total of ten bags of holding, how many do you want?”

“All ten!”

“Three! I want three!” cried ‘Zhixiang,’ whose eyes glittered brightly.

“Moron! We want ten!”

“You’re the moron!” the big man roared back. “Three is the biggest number! We want three!” It seemed like a fight was about to break out as ‘Zhixiang’ glared at the young man. “You idiot, three bags of holding is a lot! Y-y-you, you want ten? How many is ten? Is it bigger than three, huh?!?!”

“You IDIOT!” howled the young man. “Of course ten is more than three! Three is nothing! We want ten!!”

The big man stared in shock.

Meng Hao sighed, and decided to switch conversation partners.

“Ai, Miss Fellow Daoist, for some reason, I get the feeling that this husband of yours is acting a bit too much like a bully. No matter how you look at him, he definitely seems to be a bully. Bullies like that should really be converted. I really feel sorry for you.” To any other cultivator, these words would be incredibly childish and essentially wouldn’t have convinced anyone. It was so obvious that he wanted to stir up dissension that he might as well just have told them to fight each other directly.

Of course, the big man and the young man didn’t pick up on anything strange at all….

That was especially true of the big man. Once he heard Meng Hao say the word “bully” a few times, his eyes went wide and filled with a vicious gleam.

“Bully? Dammit! That’s exactly what you are! You can’t do this! You’re immoral! You are far too shameless! I’m… I’m going to convert you!” Howling, the big man pounded toward the young man.

The young man nervously shot backward, letting out an equally enraged shout. However… he was slightly quicker on the pickup, and suddenly turned to look at Meng Hao.

“Hold on! Ol’ Third, wait! Something seems off here…. We can’t start fighting amongst ourselves. Something fishy is going on. Something’s not right. This guy just said a few random sentences, and suddenly we’re fighting!” Murmuring to himself, the young man looked closely at Meng Hao, and only seemed to grow more surprised.

Meng Hao was smiling the same as before as he stood there. He looked at the expression on the young man’s face, and couldn’t help but muse that the parrot actually wasn’t that stupid after all, and had finally picked up on the clues.

It was at this point that the young man suddenly cried out, “I’ve figured out his identity!! He saw through the flaws in our scam! He used only a few words to get us to fight each other. He’s obviously… Patriarch Reliance!!”

The young man let out a roar of rage, and the big man began to tremble. A popping sound could be heard as Zhixiang disappeared, and the big man reappeared. He gasped, and staggered backward several paces.

“You’re Patriarch Reliance!?!?” blubbered the big man. “You can’t blame me! He forced me to change forms! He’s the one who changed into Meng Hao!”

Meng Hao’s face darkened. No longer in the mood for fooling around, he gave a cold snort and then removed the bamboo hat.

“You two morons open your eyes wide and see exactly who I am!”

The instant the bamboo hat left his head, his aura changed completely, and his appearance became clear to the young man and the big man. When they saw Meng Hao’s face, the big man let out a shriek, and a pop could be heard as he transformed into the meat jelly.

“It’s him!” he cried, flying away at top speed. “It’s Meng Hao! He’s caught up to us! Finished! We’re finished! We’re dead for sure. DEAD! It’s all your fault! YOUR fault!”

The young man shivered and let out a piercing shriek. A pop could be heard as he transformed back into a colorful parrot, within whose claws was gripped a black feather. His wings began to flap furiously as he apparently prepared to use all the power he had left in his body to make his getaway.

“Dammit! How could you possibly show up here!? This is impossible! How could we run into YOU!?!?”

Everything was in complete chaos. The parrot and the meat jelly shrieked and tried to flee at top speed. As soon as they attempted to make their escape, the land in the area distorted and returned to how it looked before.

There was no fissure in the ground, no hole, no Immortal’s cave, not even any fearsome restrictive spells.

There had never been an Immortal’s cave in the area, only a valley. Everything had been an illusion, a very realistic illusion.

The source of the entire illusion was the black feather that the parrot gripped in its talons. The feather gave off a bizarre, flickering glow, a power that would influence the area around it and create illusions.

Meng Hao watched as the parrot and meat jelly attempted to flee. He made no move to pursue them, but instead stood there and coldly said. “I’ll give you three breaths of time to get back here. Whoever returns first will be exempt from punishment. The other will receive double punishment for abandoning me in my moment of crisis that year.”

As soon as his voice rang out, the meat jelly and the parrot came to a stop in midair.

“Dammit,” thought the parrot, “that meat jelly has a completely one-track mind. That idiot will definitely be fooled by this. That means that the safest thing is for Lord Fifth to be fooled first!” Immediately, he turned around and shot toward Meng Hao as fast as he could.

The meat jelly trembled.

“That parrot is completely crafty. He was the cause of all of this! He was the one who incited me to flee in the first place. There’s no way I’ll take his punishment for him!” Almost in the same instant that the parrot turned around, the air surrounding the meat jelly began to crackle with lightning. He employed all the power he could muster to shoot back toward Meng Hao.

“I surrender!!”

“Fudge! I also surrender!”

The parrot and the meat jelly shot back toward Meng Hao urgently. Meng Hao gave a cold snort and suddenly lifted his right hand up into the air, within which appeared the copper mirror. The parrot squawked, transforming into a beam of light that shot into the mirror.

As for the black feather, it floated down into Meng Hao's hand. The meat jelly was trembling as it began to cry out.

“Master, Lord Third has missed you to death! It was that damned parrot who dragged me with him when he left that year! It's his fault, master! Let's convert him together!”

Meng Hao slapped out with his right hand, hitting the top of the meat jelly's head. A boom could be heard as it shrank down into a tiny ball that Meng Hao grabbed in his hand then tossed down toward the ground. The ground trembled as a huge crater appeared. The meat jelly let out a miserable shriek as it bounced up and Meng Hao grabbed it again. As he proceeded forward, he bounced the meat jelly down again and again, causing it to let out continuous screeches.

“Quit faking,” said Meng Hao, causing the meat jelly's screams to instantly turn into entreaties.

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# Chapter 835: Pill Demon's Tribulation

For the following several days, the meat jelly spoke nonstop of all the bad things the parrot had done. From the Milky Way Sea, all the way down to their bandit days in the Eastern Lands, it revealed everything, complete with highly embellished details. It even voluntarily handed over three bags of holding that contained all of its portion of the spoils they had taken.

Meng Hao had constantly smashed it into the ground over and over during the past few days, and it feared further reprisals. Furthermore, Meng Hao's cultivation base was now incredibly high, and if he felt like it, he could use a strand of Immortal qi to seal its mouth and prevent it from speaking even a single word. To the meat jelly, that was the most terrifying thing that could happen.

As far as the parrot was concerned, Meng Hao didn't ask it any questions at all. He kept it sealed inside the copper mirror, with no chance whatsoever to even see anything that had fur or feathers. That was the greatest punishment which could possibly be inflicted on it.

After studying the black feather for a while, Meng Hao was shocked. The feather brimmed with transformative power, which was why the parrot had been able to release such an astonishing aura. It was all thanks to the feather.

According to the meat jelly, the feather had simply fallen from the sky when the two of them were on their way from the Milky Way Sea to the Eastern Lands….

Meng Hao wasn't quite sure that he believed this, but after putting the feather away, he returned to the Fang Clan. By this time, the members of the sects and clans from the Ninth Mountain and Sea had long since departed. The lands of the Southern Domain had now quieted down. Unfortunately, Meng Hao's older sister still hadn't emerged from secluded meditation.

An entire month had soon passed by.

During that time, word of Meng Hao began to spread in the world outside of South Heaven, in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Of course, the stories told about him were always accompanied by gnashing teeth. Soon, many people in the Ninth Mountain and Sea knew that on Planet South Heaven, there was a shameless fellow who went by the name of Meng Hao.

He had monopolized the good fortune of the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple, had caused the corpse of a woman to become attached to Fan Dong'er, had captured numerous Chosen, had defeated Ji Yin in one move, and most excessive of all was his unusual habit of forcing people to write promissory notes.

No one could figure out that last matter, or guess why Meng Hao had such a strange hobby….

There was another matter that shook the Ninth Mountain and Sea during that month, and caused a huge stir among countless cultivators. Many clans took special note of the event.

The Three Great Daoist Societies, which consisted of the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto, the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite, and the Ninth Sea God World, were holding a disciple recruitment event open to all cultivators in the Ninth Mountain and Sea!

Anyone of the Nascent Soul stage or higher, but below the Immortal Realm, could participate.

Furthermore, members of the Five Great Holy Lands, the Three Churches, and Six Sects would all participate, so that this disciple recruitment event would be as grand as possible. Any rogue cultivator from the four planets and all over the 9th Mountain and Sea would be able to participate regardless of their age or heritage as long as their cultivation base met the requirements.

To most cultivators, it represented a chance to make great advancements in a single leap. This was especially true of the cultivators who normally had no way of leaving their respective planets. It was a chance they had to seize, a once in a lifetime opportunity that would change their fate if they were successful.

A disciple recruitment event such as this was something that might happen only once in a period of tens of thousands of years. Now that the event was underway, it was impossible to say when it would happen again. In the Ninth Mountain and Sea, the four great planets contained many cultivators of the appropriate cultivation base to participate. There were even more such cultivators who actually resided on the Ninth Mountain itself.

Then there were the various meteor-like islands in the Ninth Sea, which were also inhabited by numerous cultivators, as well as various other smaller worlds attached to and dependent on the Ninth Mountain and Sea. It was easy to see that an enormous number of people would be participating.

There were to be three levels of recruitment during the event. Nascent Soul. Spirit Severing. Dao Seeking. The participants from these three different stages would all compete in different areas, and would have no contact with each other.

Even more shocking was the news that anyone who got first place in any of the three stages would not only just be able to join one of the Three Great Daoist Societies, but they would immediately become a Conclave disciple, and would be rewarded with precious treasures.

That even caused the Chosen of the various great clans to be excited. Clan cultivators were not required to remain within their respective clans, but often went out to join other sects. The clans generally did not force their members to stay.

When it came to the Three Great Daoist Societies, they had existed for countless years, and apparently had histories that stretched further back than the current era.

That was one of the reasons why the Three Great Daoist Societies were so aloof, and rarely involved themselves in any sort of conflict. Actually, the only enemies the Three Great Daoist Societies had were themselves. Most important of all, they never participated in various clan struggles.

For instance, in the year Lord Ji altered the Heavens, the Three Great Daoist Societies did not interfere in any way, seemingly because they had already seen far too many changes occur throughout the long years of their existence.

In this particular disciple recruitment event, the Three Great Daoist Societies were each looking to recruit only one disciple.

From all the vast crowds of cultivators from the Ninth Mountain and Sea, they would be the only three who were formally recruited. From this, it could be seen that whoever those three people were, their lives and destinies would soon be completely changed.

As for those who didn't end up being recruited by the Three Great Daoist Socities, it was still possible that the Five Great Holy Lands or perhaps the Three Churches and Six Sects would select them from within the competition.

News of the matter spread like wildfire throughout the Ninth Mountain and Sea, via the mouths of innumerable cultivators. Even the four great planets, including Planet South Heaven, were informed.

In fact, Lord Ji issued a Dharmic decree to Planet South Heaven, which the Ji Clan there sent throughout all the lands. In the blink of an eye, all of the cultivators on Planet South Heaven who were of the Nascent Soul stage or higher, were filled with excitement.

There were many among them who hadn't even been aware that other worlds existed outside in the starry sky. When they found out, their hearts trembled. As for those who already knew about these other worlds, they were filled with even more intense anticipation.

The whole Ninth Mountain and Sea was in a spectacular stir. The recruitment event was the subject of almost every conversation in every location.

It was at just about this time that Meng Hao received a jade slip from Grandmaster Pill Demon.

“Return to the Violet Fate Sect immediately!”

The message was short, but Meng Hao could sense Immortal will within its words!

Fang Xiufeng stood next to Meng Hao. He wasn’t looking at the jade slip, but rather, up into the sky, as he said, “Your master is about to attempt to transcend his Immortal Tribulation.”

Meng Hao’s heart trembled. He was well aware that true Immortal Ascension was a very difficult matter. Furthermore, he knew that when the true Immortal destiny appeared on Planet South Heaven, it would not be his. The true Immortal destiny came once every ten thousand years, and as to which of the four great planets it would appear on, that only became detectable in the few hundred years before it appeared.

Furthermore, only people born on that planet would be qualified to acquire the destiny. Since Meng Hao wasn’t born on planet South Heaven, the true Immortal destiny did not belong to him.

“True Immortal destiny,” said his father said calmly. “Immortal Tribulation approaches…. Your master will be competing with people who intentionally arranged for their male heirs to be born on Planet South Heaven. They will come to try to seize the Immortal destiny!

“There will also be other peak Dao Seeking experts from South Heaven who will choose that moment to strike!

“Your master showed great kindness to you, and that kindness will be paid back. I will act as his Dharma Protector during the true Immortal Tribulation. I will not allow anyone from the outside to enter Planet South Heaven. As for the lands of South Heaven themselves… I will leave that to you!”

Meng Hao took a deep breath, then stood and faced his father.

Fang Xiufeng flicked his sleeve, and the air around them began to distort. Ghost images sprang up in front of them, which then formed into the image of a map of the lands of South Heaven.

Fang Xiufeng stepped forward, followed by Meng Hao, and the two of them stepped into the illusory map. Meng Hao’s eyes swam, and when his vision grew clear again, he could sense the aura of the Southern Domain.

In one instant, they traveled from the Fang Clan in the Eastern Lands, to the Violet Fate Sect in the Southern Domain.

The Violet Fate Sect’s grand protective spell formation had long since been activated. A soft glow spread out in all directions, and the enormous statue of Reverend Violet East emanated a bright glow as well. If you looked closely, you would be able to see that Immortal qi swirled around it.

Shockingly, a person could be seen sitting cross-legged on the very top of Reverend Violet East’s head. It was Pill Demon.

He opened his eyes from meditation and turned his head to look at Meng Hao and Fang Xiufeng. A kind smile broke out on his face, and he waved his hand, causing an opening to appear in the grand spell formation. A beam of light extended out toward Meng Hao.

“You go,” said Fang Xiufeng. “Father will wait here for the Immortal Tribulation to start, and then act as Dharma Protector.” He nodded to Meng Hao, and before Meng Hao could even enter the spell formation, sat down cross-legged and closed his eyes.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and then stepped onto the flowing light. In a flash, he appeared directly in front of the statue of Reverend Violet East, and Pill Demon.

“Master….” said Meng Hao softly, his heart filled with nervousness and worry. He already had a cultivation base with eighty percent of the power of a true Immortal. His path was different from Pill Demon’s, but he could still faintly sense that when he reached one hundred percent of the power of a true Immortal, his own Tribulation would descend. That tribulation would be even more terrifying than Pill Demon’s true Immortal Tribulation.

In true Immortal Tribulation, the chances of making it through alive were small.

“You should be happy for your master,” said Pill Demon, smiling kindly. He looked at the disciple who had kowtowed to him three times, binding their destiny as master and apprentice. Now, his own apprentice was already stronger than him, and that made Pill Demon happy.

“Your master has prepared for true Immortal destiny for two lives…. In my last life, I was Reverend Violet East. At the peak of Dao Seeking, I refused to become a false Immortal. I desired true Immortality, so I reincarnated to reestablish my cultivation!

“In this life, I started out as a medicinal pill, which refined a strand of consciousness and then formed a body. Finally, I have reached this day…. Regardless of whatever destiny or tribulation there is, the next step… must be taken!

“Even if my Dao vanishes and my body dies, I will have no regrets!” Pill Demon sighed softly, then looked up into the Heavens. His eyes gleamed with stubbornness and determination, as well as anticipation.

It was anticipation regarding the Dao, and the determination to become Immortal.

“I had thought of giving up before. Not because I didn’t dare to make the attempt, but because of you. When Immortal destiny descended, how could

I possibly fight over it with my own apprentice? But now, everything is clear. This Immortal destiny… belongs to your master!” As Pill Demon spoke, his energy surged, and Immortal qi flourished.

“Immortality . One man and one mountain !

“In Immortal Ascension, a Dao Corroboration Mountain is required. The mountain statue from my first life is that Dao Corroboration. It represents my Dao Heart. I shall stand atop my first life, to search for Immortality in my second!

Pill Demon turned to look at Meng Hao and carefully said, “Whether I succeed or fail, the next few days will be an interesting experience for you.

“Pay close attention. What you see happening will be extremely important to you in your coming true Immortal Tribulation!

“I have your father to act as Dharma Protector, which is good. As for the other old-timers from the lands of South Heaven, they have the same mind-set as me. You don’t need to interfere with them. If master isn’t confident enough to contend with them, then how could I become a true Immortal!

“You stay here and just watch as your master… transcends true Immortal Tribulation to become a true Immortal!” Pill Demon’s voice rang out, and Meng Hao took a deep breath. He looked at his master, and could sense the determination he had to corroborate his Dao, and pay any price to achieve his goal.

He did not fear death. He only feared… not achieving true Immortal Ascension!

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# Chapter 836: The Door of Immortality Descends

Meng Hao’s mind trembled. Seeing his master like this, and hearing the determination in his voice when he spoke of Immortal Ascension, caused his heart to twinge. He offered no words of advice, but rather sat down cross-legged, an enlightened expression on his face.

“If you wish to achieve Immortal Ascension,” said Pill Demon, “you must possess incredible willpower and ambition. Fuse them into a Dao Heart, which searches for Immortality.

“That Dao Heart represents a lifetime of obsession that will cause you to feel regret to your dying day if you cannot achieve true Immortality.”

Pill Demon smiled slightly, then closed his eyes. In only a few days, the true Immortal Tribulation would descend. During that time, he needed to preserve his calm mind, and keep himself at the absolute pinnacle of readiness. Then, he could be ready to meet the Immortal Tribulation that he had been waiting for two lifetimes to see!

Time passed. More and more Immortal qi began to circulate through Pill Demon’s body. The Violet Fate Sect’s grand protective spell formation was in full rotation, and all of the sect’s disciples sat cross-legged reciting scriptures. Their will poured out, forming together to create a bizarre power that bolstered the statue of Reverend Violet East. As a result, the statue appeared to grow more and more lifelike.

Chu Yuyan was in the crowd. She saw Meng Hao, and then closed her eyes. She could sense that the gap between the two of them was only continuing to grow more vast. Meng Hao was almost an Immortal, and she was still in the Nascent Soul stage.

It was as if a vast ravine existed between the two of them that cut off any future possibilities.

The atmosphere in the lands of the Southern Domain was gradually becoming oppressive. Patriarch Song came, along with the South Cleaving Sentinels of the Western Desert, as well as countless other cultivators. They did not approach the Violet Fate Sect, but rather took up positions around the perimeter to stand guard and act as Dharma Protectors.

Anyone who had been shown favor by Pill Demon throughout the years appeared to pay back his kindness by acting as Dharma Protectors. At the same time, in the vast Eastern Lands, as well as in other secret locations throughout South Heaven, people who had suppressed their cultivation bases and gone into secluded meditation, began to awaken. These were people who had been waiting their entire lives for true Immortal Ascension.

They stepped out into the various mountains in the wilderness that housed their places of secluded meditation, and used varied methods to approach the lands of South Heaven. They didn’t interfere with the Violet Fate Sect, but rather chose nearby locations to set up their own restrictive spell formations, within which they sat cross-legged, rotating their cultivation bases as they waited for the chance to fight for Immortality!

On this occasion, all the cultivators in the lands of the Southern Domain who wished to fight for Immortality, would appear.

This was the reason that the experts from the Northern Reaches had originally decided to wage war on the Southern Domain. They had wanted to occupy the key position in the fight for Immortal destiny.

The sky gradually grew murky; even at nighttime, it was still not completely black. The heavens were in a perpetual state of evening. Furthermore, a shocking pressure weighed down on all of Planet South Heaven.

The mortals all slipped into comas, and the vegetation seemed to fall dormant and become devoid of life. The animals all lay prone on the ground in hibernation.

The highest of mountains no longer seemed high, and the rivers ceased to flow. No waves could be seen on the Milky Way Sea; it was as flat and smooth as a mirror.

It was at this point that countless beams of light appeared outside of Planet South Heaven. Numerous teleportation portals popped up, sending ripples out in all directions. People hurried toward South Heaven from locations all over the Ninth Mountain and Sea. These were people who, by various methods, had left clan members behind on the planet who were now emerging to fight for Immortal Destiny. It was only natural for their relatives to return at this critical juncture.

However, as they neared the lands of South Heaven, a beam of sword qi rose up into the starry sky and encircled the entire planet. Fang Xiufeng’s voice then resonated out.

“Planet South Heaven is now sealed. Fellow Daoists, please take your leave.”

When the people rushing through the starry sky heard the echoing voice, their faces flickered. Many of them transmitted requests to step foot onto the planet, along with promises and pledges of various sorts, but Fang Xiufeng ignored them. He continued to sit with his eyes closed outside of the Violet Fate Sect, using divine sense to control the sword qi that had sealed all of Planet South Heaven.

He knew that such actions directly cut off the path of Immortality for many. He also knew that numerous other sects and clans would be displeased by the matter. Although it wouldn’t affect him very much, it wasn’t a good thing for Meng Hao.

Fang Xiufeng had previously explained these things to Meng Hao, who hadn’t said anything in response. The determination glowing in his eyes said all that needed to be said.

“That’s exactly how my son ought to be,” thought Fang Xiufeng. “Kindness should be repaid, and enmities should be avenged!”

Planet South Heaven was sealed, making it impossible for the crowds on the outside to enter. They could only look on nervously. Some of them gritted their teeth and transformed into beams of prismatic light that tried to force their way in. However, before they could even get near, the sword qi swept out, and they were sent flying back, blood spraying from their mouths.

“That was just a warning,” said Fang Xiufeng, his voice cold. “From now on, any trespassers will be executed immediately.” The people on the outside were both resentful and, at the same time, filled with fear.

Three days later!

The lands of South Heaven were filled with rumbling sounds that emanated not from the planet itself, but from the starry sky overhead. It was almost as if a giant were roaring from outer space.

Roaring out to cause a character to appear!

That character, was the character ‘Immortality!’”

As the sound echoed out, it seemed as if everyone in all the Ninth Mountain and Sea would hear it, and yet… it was only audible on Planet South Heaven!

At the same time, the starry sky outside South Heaven trembled, and countless shards appeared that began to form together into… an enormous door!

The door emanated boundless antiquity. It appeared to be made of bronze, and was carved with countless totemic patterns. Although it was impossible to clearly make out all the details, the archaic air of the door made it seem as if it had existed since the beginning of Heaven and Earth.

The door was somewhat dilapidated, as if it had experienced horrifying wars. Black stains could be seen on its surface that appeared to be blood, and it radiated a powerful, terrifying aura that was virtually impossible to describe. As for the size of the door, it was matchlessly gargantuan, seemingly large enough to prop up the starry sky itself.

Even Fang Xiufeng was mentally shaking after sensing the door and its aura. Were this thing a magical item, it would surely be able to suppress all living things once its power was unleashed.

When it appeared in the starry sky, the crowds of cultivators outside, who were incapable of entering Planet South Heaven, looked on with shock and couldn’t help but cry out in surprise.

“The Door of Immortality has appeared! True Immortal destiny has arrived!”

“Dammit! Fang Xiufeng is blocking the way so that we can’t get in! Don’t tell me that we’re just going to have sit idly by and watch the good fortune get taken away!?”

“Does Fang Xiufeng really think that he alone can stop all of us! Let’s storm the place!” The eyes of all the onlookers were completely bloodshot.

At the same time, gusts of Immortal mist began to emanate off of the Door of Immortality, which then flowed directly toward Planet South Heaven.

It covered all of Planet South Heaven in the blink of an eye, making it seem like a planet of mist. Next, the door began to move forward, passing through the crowds to enter those mists, then sink down toward the lands of South Heaven.

As of this point, the cultivators on the outside were going crazy, and they began to charge South Heaven. In response, Meng Hao’s father sent his icy divine will out. Sword Qi rumbled, sweeping across the crowds that wished to descend onto South Heaven.

Rumbling echoed out, and the starry sky trembled. Miserable screams could be heard, and blood showered down like rain. The sword qi swept about, making it impossible for even a single person to pierce through to the lands of South Heaven.

Down on South Heaven, the sky was a mass of roiling Immortal qi that replaced the previous perpetual evening. Rumbling filled the air, the result of the mists chafing against each other; this was Immortal thunder.

There were also lightning bolts that danced about within the mists. Every single lightning bolt that appeared filled the onlookers with shock, and they felt as if their souls were about to shatter.

“Immortality!” An archaic voice spoke from within the mists, and the word echoed throughout all the lands of South Heaven, to be heard in the minds of all Dao Seeking cultivators. That character became a key that opened the path of Immortality to any who were qualified.

“Immortality!” Pill Demon looked up and opened his eyes, which shone with intense determination. Slowly, he rose to his feet.

At the same time, there were all the other Dao Seeking experts who were now in the Southern Domain, be they from the Eastern Lands, be they experts who had suppressed their cultivation bases for an entire life, or be they cultivators like Pill Demon who had reestablished their cultivation.

All of them were waiting for this true Immortal Tribulation!

Simultaneously, all of them opened their mouths and began to speak the word ‘Immortality.’ Then, they began to fly up toward the source of that ancient voice in the mists.

Meng Hao’s mind trembled, and he rotated his cultivation base. His blood began to circulate faster; just now, the Immortal qi in his body had been stimulated, and even he had almost began to call out ‘Immortality.’

However, he was not born in the lands of South Heaven, and was not part of the group to whom this destiny belonged. Therefore, he endured. However, everything that was happening up in the sky left him with an indelible impression.

Next, the mists began to churn. More thunder rumbled out, and countless bolts of lightning danced as a gigantic door began to descend!

The ancientness of the door was impossible to describe, as if it had existed from the beginning of Heaven and Earth. It was incredibly old, perhaps even older than the Nine Mountains and Seas. Its emergence made it seem as if the lands below were nothing in comparison. The carvings on its surface were stained with blood, and the aura it emanated left everyone breathing raggedly. It was almost as if looking at this door was looking back into the lost pages of history!

“Where did it come from?” thought Meng Hao as he looked at it. “How come it can turn people into true Immortals?” Suddenly, the bronze lamp in his bag of holding began to vibrate, as if there were some resonance between it and the bronze door.

Pill Demon lifted his head up and laughed.

“The Door of Immortality descends! This… this is true Immortal Tribulation!

“There is no tribulation for false Immortals. They only need a Dharmic decree from a true Immortal, and then they can achieve false Immortal Ascension. However, if a true Immortal dies, then his false Immortals will also die!

“That’s not the path of a cultivator. That’s charity! What cultivators cultivate defies the laws of Heaven; it is a path of freedom. How could a cultivator become an Immortal enslaved to another?!

“Step onto the Dao Corroboration Mountain, break open the Door of Immortality during Immortal Tribulation. That is true Immortal Ascension!

“If the Door of Immortality doesn’t open, and the Immortal Tribulation does not dissipate, then what does it matter if you die?!”

Beneath Pill Demon’s feet, the mountain that was the statue of Reverend Violet East uprooted itself. Rumbling rose up as a soft and gentle power spread out, pushing Meng Hao away from the enormous statue.

At the same time, the same bizarre power caused the statue to rise up into the air and head toward the Door of Immortality.

Simultaneously, seven completely unique mountains suddenly appeared throughout the lands of South Heaven.

Of those seven mountains, the largest resembled a needle-like sword, and the smallest looked like a burial mound. Each one was different, but all seven of them belonged to ancient beings who would contend with Pill Demon over the Immortal destiny. These were the Dao Corroboration Mountains of powerful Dao Seeking experts!

In much the same fashion as Pill Demon, those powerful experts stood on their respective mountains as they rose up into the air toward the Door of Immortality.

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# Chapter 837: Mistaken? I’ll Still Do as I Said!

Beneath the feet of each person was a mountain that was their own Dao Corroboration Mountain. One person , one mountain , that… was an Immortal !

Eight people, eight Immortals, flying through the air.

The true Immortal Tribulation was not something that would eventually fade away. No, it would only grow more and more intense until, in the end, it would be strong enough to destroy any cultivator in the Spirit Realm. Even cultivators of the Immortal Realm or the Ancient Realm… would all be destroyed when facing that level of power!

The key to transcending the tribulation was attacking the Door of Immortality!

Only by breaking open that door could the tribulation be dispersed, and successfully transcended.

Almost in the same instant that Pill Demon and the other eight began to fly up on their respective mountains, the Immortal mist up above churned, and eight bolts of lightning shot down. Each bolt of lightning was as thick as an arm, and moved with incredible speed. They contained enough power to easily eradicate any normal peak Dao Seeking expert.

A massive boom rang out from the direction of each of the eight cultivators. The ground quaked and the sky churned. Magical items were utilized and divine abilities unleashed. All eight cultivators roared and forced their way through the lightning as they continued on toward the Door of Immortality.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he hovered there in midair. He could clearly tell that of the eight bolts of lightning, his master Pill Demon’s was somewhat different from the others.

That particular lightning bolt seemed to possess intelligence and personality. Although initially it seemed similar, upon closer examination, it was clearly different.

“That’s the main bolt of lighting, while the other seven are auxiliary!” he thought. “Right, father mentioned that the true Immortal destiny of this lifetime belonged to my master. Considering the level of father’s cultivation base, and his vast experience, he wouldn’t randomly say such a thing.

“It goes to show that the Immortal destiny of this lifetime has selected master. Therefore, the main bolt of lightning sought him out. However, the others could still seize the main position and take his place!” Killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes. He had experienced many things in his time as a cultivator, and had long since developed a decisive and ruthless personality.

He didn’t know these seven people, but since they were just about to fight his master over the true Immortal destiny, that made them Meng Hao’s enemies.

He snorted coldly, and killing intent glittered in his eyes. He flew out and began to head in the direction of one of the old men, circulating the Immortal qi which existed inside of him as he prepared an explosive attack.

Up in midair, Pill Demon was charging toward the Door of Immortality along with the other seven cultivators.

“Hao’er, get back!” he shouted, his tone serious. “Master will fight alone for the Immortal Destiny. Stand down!” Of course, he was also concerned that considering Meng Hao’s current state, participating in this Immortal Tribulation might have an influence on him in the future. Therefore, he instructed Meng Hao to hold back.

Meng Hao stopped in place. He could hear the urgency and care in his master’s words, and he didn’t want to cause any distractions. Therefore, he clenched his jaw and ceased his charge. However, eighty percent of the power of a true Immortal surged out explosively. Instantly, a wind whipped up, and the seven old men who were about to contend for the Immortal destiny trembled.

“Listen up, you seven!” said Meng Hao, his eyes glittering. “Do your best to fight with my master, and I won’t interfere. But if any of you try any tricks, then don’t blame me for attacking.

“And let’s make another thing clear. Even if you succeed in getting the Immortal destiny… well, I’ve killed a few false Immortals and… I’m itching to try to slaughter a true Immortal.” The first statement was intimidating, and the second was outright threatening. His goal was to sow chaos in the hearts of the seven contenders, to thoroughly distract them on their path to fighting for Immortality.

Immediately, two among the seven spoke, their voices cold and sinister.

“The Immortal destiny is descending on Planet South Heaven, and anyone born here qualifies to fight for it. What the hell gives you the right to say something like that!?”

“Hmph! You’re playing with fire, kid! Immortal destiny is good fortune, and anyone can get it! If you dare to interfere, then you’ll be fighting against the Door of Immortality. I’m also curious to know why the hell you think you can interfere with Immortal destiny!”

Clearly, these two people had been in secluded meditation for far too long, and had no idea what had happened recently in the outside world. The only reason they emerged was because of the Immortal destiny, and they had no idea who Meng Hao was. Of the rest of the seven, four were from the Eastern Lands, and didn’t say anything.

“What the hell gives me the right?” said Meng Hao, flicking his sleeve. “How about my father, who’s preventing people from all over the Ninth

Mountain and Sea from returning to South Heaven to help the offspring they planted here on South Heaven!

“How about the fact that if they managed to return, you would have no chance of fighting for the Immortal destiny!

“How about the fact that the Southern Domain is my home!”

“Who cares about all that?” responded one of the old men among the seven. “Immortal destiny is in front of us and we all have the chance to get it. Your master has been waiting for a long time, but so have we. Even if we steal the Immortal destiny, what’s so wrong with that?”

Meng Hao’s face darkened. Looking over the seven, he continued, “You’re right, there’s nothing wrong with it. My mistake. However, even if I’m mistaken, I’ll still do exactly as I said.”

The old men who had just spoken made no retorts. Not only could they sense the massive ripples of the huge battle being fought in the starry sky outside, they could also feel the determination in Meng Hao’s words.

Rumble!

A second round of lightning descended. Booms rang out as Pill Demon and the others were shaken, and came to a stop. A third round of lightning bolts then materialized and slashed down like flying swords. Rumbling filled the air as Pill Demon and the others unleashed divine abilities and magical items. Even still, blood sprayed from their mouths.

However, they continued to press on toward the Door of Immortality. By the time the sixth round of lightning descended, they were there. They arrived at almost exactly the same time, and immediately began to levy attacks against the Door of Immortality itself.

Massive booms rattled out, and yet Pill Demon and the others, despite unleashing the full powers of their cultivation bases, could not budge the door even the slightest bit. It didn’t even crack open, which caused all the hearts of all eight to begin to thump.

Down below, Meng Hao’s face was anxious.

More waves of lightning crackled down. The sky churned as the ninth wave fell. These lightning bolts were as thick as water buckets, and illusory flood dragons could be seen inside of them. As soon as they appeared, wild colors flashed, and a massive pressure weighed down. The flood dragon that shot toward Pill Demon had a long horn, and was clearly different than the other seven flood dragons.

The booms that rattled out caused the land to quake and the air to shatter. Pill Demon coughed up blood, and the magical items he had just been using collapsed into pieces. He trembled and fell back a few paces. As for the other seven, they also coughed up blood. However, they seemed to have taken less damage than Pill Demon. They gritted their teeth and resumed their attacks on the Door of Immortality.

And yet, the door still would not budge!

It was at this moment that Pill Demon raised his head and roared. Immortal qi swirled around his body, almost as if he were on fire. Beneath him, the statue of Reverend Violet East was also wreathed in flames, and the statue’s eyes shone with bright light.

It almost seemed as if the statue were coming to life. As for Pill Demon, he stood on the head of the statue, performing a double-handed incantation. Then he pointed out at the Door of Immortality. Instantly, the statue trembled and, carrying Pill Demon with it, flew up directly through the lightning to appear directly in front of the Door of Immortality. The statue then clenched its right hand into a fist and punched out at the door.

Pill Demon also clenched his hand into a fist and punched out.

This was the combination of two lifetimes’ worth of cultivation, all coalesced into a single strike!

The blow coming from the statue of Reverend Violet East almost seemed to be coming from ten thousand years in the past, traveling through time to appear here to join with the power of his second life and create an indescribable force.

“Immortality!” shouted Pill Demon, and his voice echoed out in all directions. The other seven cultivators were shocked to see the punch… slam directly onto the surface of the enormous Door of Immortality.

Crashing sounds filled the air as the Door of Immortality… finally moved! The combined attack of Pill Demon and the statue of Reverend Violet East caused the door to open by a tiny, tiny sliver!

In the instant that the sliver-like opening appeared, Pill Demon coughed up a huge mouthful of blood. Beneath him, the statue trembled, and almost looked as if it might collapse into pieces. However… in that moment, the Immortal qi within Pill Demon suddenly grew denser.

Tribulation Lightning descended again. As for the other seven cultivators, one lightning bolt descended on each of them. In contrast, three bolts of Tribulation Lightning fell toward Pill Demon. Seeing this caused the seven others’ faces to flicker, and their hearts to tremble.

“We can’t let him continue to attack! We have to kill him!”

“He’s already opened the door by a sliver! If he keeps going, the Immortal destiny will belong to him!”

“Stop him! Kill him! The only way for us to keep fighting for Immortal destiny is for him to die!”

Meng Hao’s threat had been somewhat effective before, but now that the good fortune was clearly visible, and everyone had the chance to get it, how could the other seven continue to act rationally?

Killing intent flickered in their eyes. They had practiced cultivation in hiding down to this very day; they were Paragons of their generation, and this caused determination to flicker in their eyes. There were three in particular who charged directly toward Pill Demon.

“He has the aura of Immortal destiny on him! Whoever kills him will be wresting away destiny!”

As the three closed in on Pill Demon, three lightning bolts also descended. Blood sprayed from his mouth, and his face was pale; he seemed to be just on the verge of collapsing.

From his position down below, Meng Hao looked up, his eyes bloodshot. Eighty percent of the power of a true Immortal exploded out. His Dharma Idol materialized, and his energy rocketed up. He flickered, appearing in front of Pill Demon, and punched out at the incoming three cultivators.

“Don’t force me to kill you!” he said, his voice echoing like thunder. His voice, backed by eighty percent of the power of a true Immortal, transformed into a destructive attack that slammed into the three men. Instantly, their faces filled with shock, and blood sprayed from their mouths. There was even one among their number whose arms exploded in a haze of blood. A bloodcurdling scream echoed out, and a vicious gleam appeared in the old man’s eyes. His eyes began to bleed black blood, and two beams of black light shot out from them. The two beams seemed capable of defiling anything and everything as they shot toward Pill Demon.

“You’re looking to die!” shouted Meng Hao, his body transforming into something like a hurricane as he whistled forward through the air and let out another punch.

This punch shook the sky and rocked the land. The armless old man was simply too slow to dodge to the side. He didn’t even have time to produce one of the magical items he had prepared to help transcend the tribulation. In the end, he was simply at the peak of Dao Seeking; despite the fact that he was participating in Immortal Tribulation, he had still not achieved Immortal Ascension.

“You dare to interfere with Immortal destiny!” he screamed as he died. “You will be punished!” Then he exploded, completely destroyed in body and spirit.

Meng Hao snorted coldly and turned away. In that instant, the mist up above seethed, and a sound like a roar of rage could be heard as a lightning bolt descended that was clearly different than all the other lightning bolts. This lightning bolt was crimson, and it tore a rift into the air as it shot down toward Meng Hao.

This was the punishment!

The punishment for interfering with Immortal Tribulation!

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# Chapter 838: So, You Are a Thief Too!

“Hao’er!” cried Pill Demon anxiously, and was just about to assist him.

Meng Hao looked up and took a long, deep breath. As he did, his Dharma Idol was sucked inside of him. He performed an incantation gesture and then pointed up toward the red lightning bolt.

Flashes of color swept across the sky and land; mountains crumbled and the land shattered. Massive rumbling filled the air as Meng Hao was shoved downward several paces. Blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth, but the red lightning bolt vanished.

“That was the punishment?” said Meng Hao, looking up. “Master, don’t worry about me. You keep blasting that Door of Immortality. Apprentice… will act as your Dharma Protector!”

Pill Demon knew that his apprentice was powerful. After all, he had completely suppressed all of the experts from the Northern Reaches, and had transformed over a hundred thousand cultivators into felon citizens. The mountain called Sin of the North still stood, within which were five peak Dao Seeking experts, whose spiritual energy was being used to replenish the Southern Domain.

Pill Demon took a deep breath. He saw the determination in Meng Hao’s eyes, and it filled his heart with warmth. He smiled, and then his expression turned decisive. His body flickered as he once again used the power of two lifetimes to attack the Door of Immortality.

Pill Demon knew Meng Hao, but when it came to the two remaining old men among the group who had attacked Pill Demon, this was their first time encountering him. Their faces fell, and their scalps went numb. The red lightning bolt that had fallen just now was clearly far more powerful than any of the other lightning bolts that had descended during the Immortal Tribulation. Had they been the subject of such an attack, they would surely have been killed.

And yet, the young man in front of them directly fought back against it with his own might. He didn't even use magical items, and most importantly, the only thing that happened as a result was a bit of blood seeping out of his mouth. In their view, that made Meng Hao completely inhuman, and caused their breathing to come in ragged pants. However, they did not retreat. If one did not succeed in Immortal Tribulation, the result was death.

"If you don't do anything to interfere with my master, and simply struggle normally to acquire the Immortal destiny, then I won't do anything to you," said Meng Hao. He hovered in midair, looking at the two men in front of him, as well as the other four who were still nearby.

The six men exchanged looks. Even the cultivators from the vast Eastern Lands who knew the might of Meng Hao's status, didn't care about that by now.

"Struggle normally to acquire Immortal destiny…? Killing the lucky one and taking his destiny IS the normal way. There's no going back now!"

"There is no enmity between us, and you block our path to Immortality? That makes us irreconcilable foes!"

"There is no going back! Defeat means death! Only by killing this guy with two lifetimes can we have the chance to reach Immortal Ascension!"

Considering their hearts were filled with the desire to transcend the tribulation, how could they possibly fear death? Killing intent flickered within the six men's eyes as they suppressed their dread of Meng Hao and shot toward him.

Meng Hao stood there silently. He wanted to block their way, and had no desire to kill any of them. However, when it came to the path to Immortality, there was no right or wrong. Blocking the path to Immortality truly did make them irreconcilable foes.

Meng Hao hovered by Pill Demon. Not making his stand in this way would be the wrong thing to do. However, from the perspective of the other six men, Meng Hao's actions were an unforgivable sin!

"There is no enmity or hatred between us," said Meng Hao, his voice profound. "Perhaps blocking your way to Immortal Ascension and cutting off your path to Immortality… will result in Karma. If so, I will do my best to accept it." A cold gleam flickered in his eyes.

As the six men closed in, Meng Hao's body flickered, and suddenly shone with boundless golden light. He transformed into a golden roc that shot screaming toward one of the incoming enemies.

From a distance, it was possible to see the golden roc swooping down, with talons sharp enough to slice metal and rock. It slammed into the old man, who was employing all of the divine abilities he could summon, as well as magical items. None of it made any difference. The gap between him and Meng Hao was too great. In a few short breaths of time, he was seriously injured and on the verge of death. At the critical moment, his eyes filled with madness and he suddenly reached out his right hand, within which appeared a jade slip.

The jade slip pulsed with Immortal qi, and emanated a feeling of nameless danger that caused Meng Hao's eyes to widen.

"DIE!" cried the old man, crushing the jade slip. This was an object he had prepared for use in a critical moment when transcending tribulation. However, considering he had been pushed into a corner, he didn't hesitate to use it now. Rumbling spread out as something like a sun materialized in front of the old man. Boundless rays of blinding light shot out from the sun as it hurtled toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao remained silently in place. He could have used the Lightning Cauldron and Form Displacement Transposition. However, out of respect toward these people and their struggle for Immortality, he did not wish to use tricks to kill them.

The jade slip unleashed incredible power, such that even a false Immortal would be shocked by it. Back when Meng Hao only had fifty percent of the power of a true Immortal, he would have had no choice other than to dodge. Now, though, he had eighty percent of that power. As soon as the sun began to explode, he lifted up his right hand, causing magical light to surge up around him. He shot forward, stabbing directly into the sun. As it exploded, Meng Hao pointed his finger toward the old man’s forehead.

The old man’s eyes went wide with disbelief at what he was seeing. The item he had specially prepared to assist him in transcending this tribulation unexpectedly… was incapable of doing anything against this terrifying figure in front of him.

Smiling bitterly, the old man’s eyes began to grow dim. Suddenly, however, a gleam could be seen in them once more, as if in looking at Meng Hao, he had suddenly realized something. His eyes went wide, and he laughed loudly.

“So, it turns out you are a thief too.”

A boom could be heard as the sun exploded. Before the ripples could even begin to spread out, Meng Hao was back in his original position. As for the old man, none of his aura could be sensed anymore.

Meng Hao waved his hand, and the old man’s corpse began to peacefully float back down to the ground.

The Immortal mist up above began to rumble loudly, and a red bolt of lightning even bigger than the previous one suddenly began to fall. It moved with incredible speed, giving Meng Hao almost no time to react.

A rumble could be heard as Meng Hao’s golden roc collapsed into pieces. Meng Hao himself reappeared, coughing up a mouthful of blood. Then he took a deep breath and shifted his gaze toward another of the incoming old men.

The old man’s face was pale white, and filled with the utmost astonishment.

“After all my years in secluded meditation, how could someone so inhuman have appeared in the lands of South Heaven!” he exclaimed bitterly. “Just who is this man!? Tribulation Lightning can’t kill him, and he’s already killed two of us! Don’t tell me this how our Tribulation will end!?!?” The old man wasn’t willing to give in. His eyes gleamed with venomous madness, and, knowing that he couldn’t hide or flee, he slapped his bag of holding to produce a bottle of blood. He placed it against his lips and consumed the entire bottle, and his energy suddenly began to flow in reverse. At the same time, a bloody mist began to emerge from the top of his head.

His face distorted, and veins bulged out on his face as he let out a vicious roar like that of a wild animal.

“Blocking my path to Immortality is the same as cutting off my chance at life! If I can’t achieve Immortal Ascension, then I am certain to die. Therefore… it doesn’t matter whether I die by the Immortal Tribulation or by your hand. There’s no difference!” Face filled with bitterness, the old man charged Meng Hao.

Simultaneously, lightning crashed, as Immortal Tribulation Lightning bolts descended one after another. They grew stronger and stronger, causing everything to shake. Pill Demon once again neared the Door of Immortality. Surrounded by rumbling sounds, he focused the power of two lifetimes, braced himself against the Immortal Tribulation, and attacked the Door of Immortality again.

Blood sprayed from Pill Demon’s mouth, and the Door of Immortality trembled as it opened slightly further. However, it was in that instant the the remaining four old men unleashed divine abilities and magical techniques in a direct attack against Pill Demon.

It was a moment of grave crisis. Pill Demon was already seriously injured, and was fighting back with everything he had. Not only was he forced to fight these four people, but lightning continued to fall on all of them. Everything was shaking as Meng Hao battled against the beast-like old man.

The old man roared as he fought. He wasn’t a match for Meng Hao, but in his heart, he was prepared to die, and didn’t care about defending himself. He attacked with full power, causing Meng Hao to sigh as he lifted his right hand and utilized the Star Plucking Magic. A gigantic hand appeared out of thin air, and crushed down on the old man, whose body was smashed into pieces as he screamed.

Meng Hao did his best to keep the body intact as it floated back down toward the ground, then he shot toward the remaining four old men who were attacking Pill Demon. Up above, a third red lightning bolt formed within the roiling clouds. This time, the lightning also contained blackness, which made the entire lightning bolt appear violet. As it slammed into Meng Hao, his body trembled, and he coughed up two mouthfuls of blood before he managed to continue onward.

He transformed into a golden roc that shot toward the remaining cultivators who were fighting Pill Demon. At the same time, lightning descended onto Pill Demon. Blood sprayed from his mouth, and the mountain beneath his feet seemed on the verge of collapsing.

Magical light swirled around Meng Hao as he closed in, transforming into a cyclone. Rumbling filled the air as he attacked the four old men, forcing them into retreat, blood spurting from their mouths. They smiled bitterly, and at the same time, their desire to kill grew even stronger.

“All of you, stop forcing my hand!” said Meng Hao, standing firm in front of Pill Demon. Pill Demon’s face was pale and he appeared to be on the verge of collapse. He consumed some medicinal pills and then attacked the Door of Immortality once again with all the strength he could muster.

The door trembled, and the crack opened wider. More Immortal Tribulation descended.

The glittering glow of lightning covered the land, and Meng Hao stood between Pill Demon and the four other cultivators, almost like a massive, uncrossable ravine!

“There is nowhere to turn back to! Unless we kill this cultivator with two lives and steal his destiny, there is no way we can break open the door!”

“Death lies on the left and the right. Life only exists straight ahead! If we die, we’ll die fighting!”

“We have waited for this day for too long. Now that it is here… it seems it truly is a tribulation….” The four men began to laugh loudly. Their hearts were focused on striving for the Dao, a desire that had not lessened even now.

Laughing, they transformed into beams of colorful light, burning their cultivation bases to achieve the absolute pinnacle of power as they shot toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s expression was complex. Silently, he took a deep breath as the four cultivators bore down on him. His Dharma Idol suddenly began to expand, transforming into a giant that stepped toward the four incoming old men. It became something like a wall that the four of them then slammed into.

A huge boom rattled out, and everything shook as an astonishing shockwave spread out. However, because of the Dharma Idol, none of the ripples interfered with Pill Demon.

Pill Demon looked over at Meng Hao silently. Although he said nothing, it was clear that everything that was happening was being etched deeply onto his soul.

“If this sows Karma,” he murmured, “then I refuse to allow my apprentice to bear it! Let their souls be entangled with mine for all generations to come!” With that, his body flashed as he attacked the Door of Immortality yet again. The statue beneath his feet seemed to be on the verge of collapse, and his own body appeared to be at its limit. However, the attack shook the door, which was now opening even wider than before. At the same time, however, the Tribulation Lightning was getting even stronger!

Meanwhile, the four old men on the other side of the Dharma Idol were like lamps with little oil left in them. Laughing bitterly, they all suddenly flew straight up into the air. They did not wish to die by Meng Hao's hands, but rather, chose to die by Immortal Tribulation!

They flew up, and the Immortal Tribulation descended. Booming sounds rang out as all of them were destroyed in body and soul.

Although Meng Hao didn't kill them himself, they had died because of him. In the same moment that they died, the mist in the sky above seethed, and something like a roar of rage echoed out. Massive quantities of red lightning bolts began to form together, transforming into a sea of lightning than then shot down toward Meng Hao.

From a distance, the massive quantity of lightning looked almost like a huge hand that wished to crush Meng Hao to death.

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 839: True Immortality is a Challenge!

Despite the level of Meng Hao’s cultivation base, the massive lightning hand that descended caused him to feel a sense of impending doom. Almost as soon as it began to fall from the sky, Meng Hao’s eyes glinted with madness. He raised his hand, and the Blood Demon Grand Magic surged with full power. Rumbling filled the air, and his entire body radiated magical light.

In the blink of an eye, all existence was illuminated by the glow of his magic.

At the same time, the Blood Demon Grand Magic vortex roared like a beast from ancient times. All the cultivators in the Violet Fate Sect could clearly see a red horn protruding from the middle of the vortex.

Next, a gigantic head appeared, the head of a Blood Demon that then hurled itself directly toward the glittering lightning hand.

When they met, the resulting explosion caused all creation to shake violently. The Blood Demon head’s horn shattered, after which, the entire head collapsed into pieces. The blood-colored vortex shattered, as did Meng Hao’s Dharma Idol.

As for the lightning hand, it was also shaken. One finger after another collapsed, until all that remained was a single finger that continued to jab viciously down toward Meng Hao.

Just when it was about to slam into him, Meng Hao’s body began to shine with boundless golden light. He became a golden roc, which flapped its wings, sending him speeding off into the distance. As the palm raced after him in pursuit, Meng Hao rotated his cultivation base and then unleashed another divine ability. He pointed directly toward the incoming palm.

BOOM!

A huge crash could be heard, and the lightning palm vanished. Blood sprayed from Meng Hao’s mouth, and he staggered backward to a position nearly three thousand meters away. After coughing up seven successive mouthfuls of blood, he finally came to a stop.

His face was pale, and his body was wracked with trembling. Sparks of electricity continued to dance around his body, and he had lost more than half of his qi and blood. There was a massive wound in his chest, which burned with intense pain.

Meng Hao gritted his teeth and looked up; his eyes shone with a boundless, intense light.

He had completely surpassed the Tribulation Lightning’s punishment!

As of this moment, all of the Southern Domain cultivators who had come to act as Dharma Protectors for Pill Demon were left in complete and utter shock. What they had just witnessed exceeded anything they had ever seen before in their lives.

They had the impulse to rush to help Pill Demon in his true Immortal Tribulation. However, the massive pressure that weighed down not only filled them with awe, it made it impossible for them to even fly into the air.

They could only look on as Meng Hao acted, and his intense strength only deepened their impression of him.

In the Violet Fate Sect, all of the disciples’ minds were shaken. Everything that Meng Hao was doing caused their gratefulness to him to become even more intense.

Were it not for Meng Hao's presence, Pill Demon might still have been able to avoid death during this tribulation. However, it definitely would have been much more difficult to acquire the true Immortal destiny. And if he had failed… he would have perished and his soul would have been dispersed.

Meng Hao wiped the blood from his mouth and looked up into the sky. He saw his master Pill Demon, standing on the damaged statue of Reverend Violet East, once again combining the power of two lifetimes to strike the Door of Immortality.

Once, twice, three times….

He struck the door again and again, and it continued to open wider and wider. At the same time, more Immortal Tribulation Lightning descended, with increased intensity. By now, all of Pill Demon's magical items were in use, and the Immortal Tribulation had reached a shocking level of intensity.

The Violet Fate Sect's grand spell formation was activated to the fullest extent to help Pill Demon fight back against the Immortal Tribulation. However, the Immortal Tribulation was growing more intense, and the Door of Immortality was only forty percent open! There was still another sixty percent to go!

"Fellow Daoist Pill Demon, use this magical item of mine!"

"Senior Pill Demon, take my magical item!"

"Pill Demon, this is a treasure I prepared to help you transcend the tribulation!"

Many among the crowds down below began to produce various magical items. They severed their own connection with them and then tossed them up into the sky.

The magical items transformed into countless beams of glowing light that shot toward Pill Demon and then swirled around him. These were all lightning-resisting items, and all of them were extremely valuable.

At this moment, they didn’t hesitate for even a second to give them to Pill Demon. Pill Demon trembled, and his heart filled with appreciation. Now was not the time for words, though. He took a deep breath, clasped hands to the crowds below, and then waved his arm, causing the hundreds of magical items to emit a boundless glow that fought back against the Immortal Tribulation!

Meng Hao hovered off in the distance, watching the scene. He also waved his hand, sending a magical item out, his beast claw. It emitted an incisive glow that, when it joined the other magical items around Pill Demon, transformed into a bizarre light.

Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed with the anticipation of being able to bear witness to his master becoming a true Immortal.

RUUMMMMBLLEEEE!!

Bolt after bolt of Immortal Tribulation Lightning slammed down, without end. Soon, they were so numerous that they became a lake of lightning. It was almost as if a hole had been ripped into the sky, and lightning was falling like rain in a violent downpour.

Pill Demon’s figure was submerged in the lightning to the point where onlookers couldn’t see him clearly. Only Meng Hao was just barely able to see him.

The blasts against the Door of Immortality continued. Fifty percent. Sixty percent….

The magical items surrounding Pill Demon were beginning to shatter. In the instant that the door opened by sixty percent, even Meng Hao’s beast claw collapsed into pieces. By the time all of the magical items were destroyed, Pill Demon was like a flickering lamp about to be extinguished. He laughed bitterly, and looked up at the Tribulation Lightning, then at the Door of Immortality, which was only sixty percent opened. Then, he sighed.

“True Immortality really is a challenge….” he said, his voice filled with pain. “A chance that comes once in ten thousand years, and is incredibly difficult…. Despite my best efforts, I fell short by forty percent.” The sky rumbled, and the lake of lightning screamed. It seemed to cover everything, filled with destructive power as it bore down onto Pill Demon, who stood in front of the Door of Immortality.

However, at this moment, Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and he smacked his bag of holding. The meat jelly appeared, and Meng Hao threw it into the air before it could even react. It shrieked as it became a beam of prismatic light that shot toward Pill Demon and the Heavenly Tribulation.

“Master, keep battering that door!” yelled Meng Hao. As soon as the meat jelly reached the lake of lightning, it let out a curse and then opened its mouth. It began to inhale, and the lake of lightning trembled, then began to move toward the meat jelly.

Popping sounds rang out from the meat jelly, and it turned completely black in the blink of an eye.

“Meng Hao you bastard, you bully! You’ve gone too far! Y-y-you…! Lord Third is gonna convert you!”

Pill Demon trembled, but didn’t hesitate for a moment to lash out toward the Door of Immortality with all of his power. The meat jelly continued to consume the lake of lightning, and currently, no more Immortal Tribulation Lightning fell. Pill Demon went all out, combining two lives’ worth of good fortune to break open the Door of Immortality!

Seventy percent….

Eighty percent!

When the door opened by eighty percent, a boundless glow of Immortal light spilled out, as well as thick Immortal qi. Instantly, the sky became like an Immortal paradise, and the air filled with the music of great Daos, as well as the sound of scriptures being chanted.

The cultivators down below, and the disciples of the Violet Fate Sect, were bathed in the light of Immortality. Their cultivation bases instantly began to rotate as they acquired good fortune.

However, it was in this moment that the meat jelly let out an agonized shriek. It trembled, and countless rips spread out across its body. Although it was capable of consuming Immortal Tribulation Lightning, it could only withstand so much. Finally, it screamed and flew away, unable to hold on any longer.

The lake of lightning once again rumbled down, enveloping Pill Demon. Pill Demon roared and caused his cultivation base to explode at full power to fight back. His entire body shook violently, and the statue of Reverend Violet east was starting to collapse.

Meng Hao was getting very worried. However, something suddenly occurred to him, which caused him to take a deep breath. Without any hesitation, he summoned his second true self. He extended his hand and pointed, and his second true self began to tremble. His eyes grew dim as his soul flew out of the top of his head.

This was… a true Immortal's soul!

In the past, Patriarch Blood Demon had mentioned that this soul would be strangely effective when transcending tribulation, most especially when reaching true Immortal Ascension.

Meng Hao wasn't sure if the soul of the true Immortal would be of any help in this situation; no matter how he had contemplated it or observed it in the past, it didn't seem useful for anything. Having no other options, Meng Hao extracted the soul itself.

In the instant in which the true Immortal's soul emerged, all of the lightning that was striking toward Pill Demon suddenly stopped in place. Then, it abruptly left Pill Demon and shot toward Meng Hao, or, more accurately speaking, toward the soul of the true Immortal.

This soul… could actually attract Immortal Tribulation!

Rumbling filled the air as the lightning shot forth. It rapidly surrounded the true Immortal’s soul, as if it violated some Heavenly decree, and deserved to die a horrific death at the hands of the lightning.

With no lightning striking him, Pill Demon, his eyes completely bloodshot, went all out. Both he and the Dharma Protecting cultivators below had expended all the resources they could. This was the critical moment. If there was no success now, the result would be death!

Pill Demon roared, and his body burst into flames. He was burning his life force, as was the statue of Reverend Violet East beneath him. This was the power of two lives’ worth of cultivation base.

Within the flames, Pill Demon turned into something like a shooting star that sped toward the Door of Immortality. He would blast into it with all of the power of his life force.

A huge boom rattled out through the entire Southern Domain, and, in fact, through all the lands of South Heaven, as the Door of Immortality was knocked open even more.

Ninety percent!

Massive rumbling could be heard as the statue of Reverend Violet East collapsed. Pill Demon had aged dramatically, and he looked as if he were at the very end of his life. However, he was not willing to give up. Roaring at the top of his lungs, he used the power of his life force to once again strike against the Door of Immortality, like a moth drawn to the flame.

BOOM!

The sound shook all of Planet South Heaven, and even rolled out into the starry sky, to be heard by all of the people outside who were trying to fight their way past Meng Hao’s father.

When they heard the sound, everyone felt as if… their minds were reverberating with the tolling of bells.

The Door of Immortality… was ninety-five percent open. Only a tiny sliver… and it would be completely open!

However, it was in this moment that the sky churned, and a wind sprung up in the seething mists!!

This was a Spirit Extermination Tribulation Wind, the second stage of tribulation that came after the Tribulation Lightning!

When the wind blew, Pill Demon, who was already like a sputtering candle, whose statue of Reverend Violet East had already been destroyed, began to fade away.

He had failed.

In this moment, all the lands went quiet, and everyone who was watching the scene felt waves of sorrow rise up in their hearts. The sound of wailing began to drift out of the Violet Fate Sect.

Pill Demon's body began to rapidly vanish. Behind him, the Door of Immortality started fading away….

It was ninety-five percent open, with only a tiny bit left to go!

Pill Demon sighed. He felt no bitterness. However, his reluctance to part with the world could be seen on his face. He did not wish to leave the people he knew down below. He did not wish to say goodbye to his apprentice. Nor did he wish to abandon his Dao. But he had reached the end.

Pill Demon wanted to say something, but by this point, he couldn't speak. His body was growing illusory, and half of it had already transformed into ash and been destroyed. The rest of his fleshly body was now continuing to turn into ash. His skin fell off, and he began to vanish into the air.

He could only use his gaze to offer his blessings to all of the crowds of people down below.

Meng Hao was trembling, and his eyes were shot with blood. Seeing that the Door of Immortality was fading, and that Pill Demon was on the verge of death, he couldn't hold back. He shot forward.

"Master, I'm coming to help!"

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# Chapter 840: The Path Ahead Lies In The Stars, Not On This Planet

Spirit Extermination Tribulation Wind was the second form of true Immortal Tribulation, and was far more powerful than the Tribulation Lightning from earlier. Once the wind blew, the fleshly body would scatter, and the soul would vanish.

In the instant that Pill Demon’s body began to fade away, Meng Hao unhesitatingly shot forward. There was no time to consider the danger he may be facing, nor was he thinking about how his actions might benefit him in the future. In this moment, the only thing he was thinking about… was how kindly his master Pill Demon had treated him.

That kindness had originated in the days of the Violet Fate Sect, and had grown with all the little things that happened after that. It was the relationship of a master and an apprentice.

Back when he didn’t know where his father and mother were, back before his father-son experience with Ke Yunhai, Pill Demon had been the only parental figure in his life that had cared about him.

Because of that, Meng Hao charged in without hesitation.

As soon as he entered the Spirit Extermination Tribulation Wind, his fleshly body began to vanish, his soul began to get blurry, and his spirit began to gradually disappear. However, he didn’t care about any of that.

Time seemed to stretch out, but Meng Hao was filled with determination, and as he closed in on Pill Demon, he used all the power he had to fight back against the agony that the deadly wind sent through him. Then he grabbed Pill Demon and rammed the Door of Immortality himself!

Head first!

BOOM!

The Door of Immortality had been on the verge of fading away, but now it trembled. That tiny bit that had remained unopened, was now thoroughly gone! The door was completely open! Rumbling filled the air, and majestic Immortal light poured out. Meng Hao had used every scrap of strength he could muster to push Pill Demon into the Door of Immortality!

Blood sprayed from Meng Hao’s mouth, and his entire body became incredibly withered, almost completely fading away. Now, he was shooting down toward the ground at rapid speed.

Everything happened so quickly that the people down below didn’t even have time to react. Meng Hao slammed into the ground and flopped over a few times. His body was virtually in pieces, his flesh decayed, his aura incredibly weak. However, his eyes shone brightly, completely devoid of any regret as he looked up into the sky.

Up above, Pill Demon could be seen within the Door of Immortality. His eyes were somewhat blank at first, but as soon as he entered the door, his entire body surged with boundless Immortal qi. It rapdily swirled around him, reforming his body anew. At the same time, the tribulation mist up above no longer sent down tribulation, but rather, swirled toward the Door of Immortality.

At the same time, boundless Immortal light rose into the sky. Immortal qi surged, and Dao music floated about. Pill Demon was surrounded by swirling lights as the aura of a true Immortal came into being around him.

“In my previous life, I was Violet East, and in this life, Pill Demon. For a lifetime, I focused everything on cultivating the Dao of alchemy…. Now, I am a true Immortal, and have formed true Immortal pill qi…. This qi contains my life force, and I won’t restrain it inside of me. Instead, I will give it to my apprentice….” Pill Demon looked down at Meng Hao down below, and his expression was one of kindness and gratitude. He extended his right hand, and suddenly, a beam of green qi flew out toward Meng Hao.

As it flew through the air, flowers bloomed, sleeping animals awakened, and rainbows filled the sky. All the lands filled with a majestic medicinal aroma. This was the life force pill qi formed as Pill Demon became a true Immortal, and it exceeded even an Immortal pill!

Meng Hao couldn’t refuse this pill qi even if he wanted to. In the instant it fused into his body, all of his injuries began to heal up. Furthermore, his Eternal stratum, which had never fully recovered, was now completely restored.

With his Eternal stratum fully returned, Meng Hao’s body filled with roaring sounds. His injuries healed completely, and he rose to his feet. He looked at his master up in the sky and then clasped hands and bowed deeply.

As Pill Demon stood within the Door of Immortality, more and more Immortal qi began to gather. Everyone present felt some of that qi washing over them, like a baptism, and their cultivation bases experienced advancement. There were even some who made cultivation base breakthroughs because of it.

The aura of a true Immortal around Pill Demon became more and more intense. After the space of about ten breaths, rumbling filled the air, and Pill Demon began to radiate a mighty pressure similar to that of Meng Hao.

True Immortal!

As his energy surged, true Immortal will became even more apparent, although it was different than Meng Hao’s. Boundless light radiated off of Pill Demon. His soul became the soul of a true Immortal, and his Dao became the Dao of a true Immortal.

His body… became the body of a true Immortal!

In this instant, he was thoroughly, in all aspects, a true Immortal!

The Door of Immortality also rumbled. Apparently, there was an entire world inside of it, a world that others could not see. Even Meng Hao could barely make out any details. Only Pill Demon could see it clearly, and when he looked at that world inside the Door of Immortality, his body trembled.

Next, a beam of Immortal light emerged from inside the door, within which was a scroll. When the scroll unfurled, one could see that countless names were written upon it.

Some of the names were dim, as if the people to whom those names belonged were now dead. But others shone with light as bright as the sun. It was impossible to see exactly how many there were. These were… all of the true Immortals who had existed in the boundless history of the great Nine Mountains and Seas.

There seemed to be many, but in actuality, when compared to the vast population of cultivators in the Nine Mountains and Seas, true Immortals… were as difficult to find as phoenix feathers or qilin horns.

After all, the Nine Mountains and Seas would only produce nine true Immortals every ten thousand years, one for each of the Mountains and Seas.

Of course, there were also the Immortality Illumination Vines, which meant that the number was larger than that. Even so, the number of true Immortals that appeared in the Nine Mountains and Seas in any ten thousand year period would not exceed one hundred.

And as of now, a new name appeared on that scroll…. Pill Demon!

This meant that as of now, Pill Demon was a true Immortal in all respects!

Furthermore, in the following one thousand years, there would be Chosen in the Nine Mountains and Seas who used Immortality Illumination Vines to also become true Immortals. Their names would also appear on the scroll, although no one would be there to see that happen. Only after another ten thousand years had passed, and someone else acquired Immortal destiny and achieved true Immortal Ascension, would anyone be able to see them.

The Door of Immortality faded soundlessly, transforming into a beam of light that shot up into the sky and out into space. As for all the crowds in the starry sky, the ones trying to get into Planet South Heaven, they sighed and stopped in place. None of them said anything as they slowly turned and left, filled with regret.

Of course, it would be difficult for them not to harbor resentment toward Fang Xiufeng, and the person down below who had succeeded in becoming a true Immortal.

It was at this moment that an enormous teleportation portal suddenly appeared in the starry sky. Boundless light spread out to cover everything, and an old man materialized, mounted on a white deer.

The old man’s features were ordinary, and he wore a smile. The white deer he rode had a vicious set of antlers, and its eyes shone with a savage glow. It was only a white deer, and yet, it emanated a completely shocking aura. When the old man made his appearance, everything trembled, and the starry sky went dim. Among the departing crowds were people who recognized the old man, and instantly gasped.

“Daoist Kunlun from the Kunlun Society!” 1

“The Kunlun Society is one of the most mysterious of the Three Churches and Six Sects, and Daoist Kunlun is their Sect Leader!!”

“I can’t believe that he actually showed up here…. That white deer must be the fiendish deer that wreaked havoc in the Ninth Mountain fifty thousand years ago!”

Fang Xiufeng’s eyes glittered, and his pupils constricted a bit.

“Greetings, Daoist Kunlun.” Despite how powerful he himself was, Meng Hao’s father clasped hands and bowed deeply to Daoist Kunlun.

“Xiufeng,” replied the old man with a smile, “I’m here to get my apprentice back. He inherited my teachings via a dream of mine, and his name is Violet East. Now that he has achieved true Immortality, the time has come for him to return.” Everyone in the area looked on in shock. Many people’s eyes widened, and the hatred they had been feeling toward the person who had just become a true Immortal, vanished completely.

The Kunlun Society was one of the Three Churches and Six Sects, and were shrouded in mystery. They kept their secrets to themselves. Furthermore, had they lent their assistance to Lord Ji when he altered the Heavens, the Kunlun Society would have become a Holy Land, and there would now be more than five Holy Lands.

Fang Xiufeng’s eyes widened, but he said nothing. Daoist Kunlun did not pressure him, but instead smiled.

A moment later, the image of Fang Xiufeng that had materialized outside of Planet South Heaven stepped aside, then gestured for Daoist Kunlun to enter. Daoist Kunlun smiled and nodded.

“I will not forget this kindness,” he said. Everyone watched as the white deer approached Planet South Heaven and then appeared in the Violet Fate Sect in the Southern Domain.

When Meng Hao caught sight of the old man riding the white deer, his jaw dropped.

Up in midair, Pill Demon saw the old man, and an absent-minded expression could be seen on his face, as if he had suddenly recalled something. He approached the old man, clasped hands, and bowed deeply.

“Do you remember now?” said the old man, smiling.

“I remember. Greetings, master!”

“In the childhood of your previous life, I appeared in your dreams to offer guidance in your cultivation, pointing the way to the Dao of alchemy. In that life, before your Nirvanic Rebirth, I left, and you asked when we would meet again.

“At that time, I said that when you reached true Immortal Ascension, that you would become my Legacy Apprentice.

“Today, I’m here to accept you.” The old man smiled.

Pill Demon took a deep breath, then bowed once again.

“Master, my own apprentice, he….”

“He has his own path. Come, it’s time to leave. Who knows, you may meet him again soon in the future. However, there are a few people within the sect you founded that have the necessary latent talent, and we can bring them along too.” After a glance and nod at Meng Hao, Daoist Kunlun’s eyes swept over the rest of the Violet Fate Sect. He raised his hand, and seven or eight people, including Chu Yuyan, slowly flew up into the air with stunned looks on their faces.

“Let’s depart. You shall walk the path of Kunlun, and speak of the Dao of Kunlun. From now on, your cultivation will leave with the desire to prostrate yourself before Kunlun.”

Daoist Kunlun chuckled, then waved his sleeve, sweeping up Pill Demon, Chu Yuyan and the others as he turned to leave.

Pill Demon looked back at Meng Hao with an encouraging look in his eyes.

Chu Yuyan also looked back, but she looked as confused as ever. Complex emotions could be seen in her eyes as she looked at Meng Hao, but then, her eyes grew calm. She nodded at Meng Hao, and then turned away.

Meng Hao looked on in shock as Pill Demon, Chu Yuyan and the others were taken away by Daoist Kunlun. Gradually, they disappeared off into the starry sky.

Then his father appeared next to him.

“Planet South Heaven is too small,” he said softly. “You and your master, and even that little girl, all have your own paths to tread… out in the stars, not on this planet.

“Don’t waste time missing them. The Ninth Mountain isn’t a very big place either. You’ll see them again one day.”

1. Kunlun is a pretty famous part of Chinese mythology. Check out the wikipedia article here

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 841: The Ancient Road of Trial by Fire is Opened!

“The next time we meet,” murmured Meng Hao, “it will be out in the starry sky.” The departure of Pill Demon, Chu Yuyan, and the others, was too sudden, and left him feeling empty.

He thought back to his hundreds of years of cultivation, and it seemed like there many people who had ended up departing, and were no longer in the lands of South Heaven.

Patriarch Reliance was gone. Xu Qing was gone. Pill Demon was gone. Chu Yuyan was gone….

Thankfully, Fatty, Chen Fan, and the others were still there. There were some people Meng Hao wasn’t sure about; the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch for example, Han Bei from the former Black Sieve Sect, and of course Dong Hu, who had joined the Reliance Sect at the same time as him.

Meng Hao sighed. He did not leave the Southern Domain along with his father. Instead, he went to the Golden Frost Sect. He and Fatty drank together. Fatty sent his more than one hundred beloved concubines away, and he and Meng Hao sat on top of a mountain, drinking and talking about the past.

They talked about the State of Zhao, and about Yunjie County. They talked about the Reliance Sect, and everything that had happened there. Eventually, evening fell, and the stars slowly came out. It was impossible to tell how much exactly they had drunk.

“I’m going to join the disciple recruitment event held by the Three Great Daoist Societies of the Ninth Mountain and Sea!” declared Fatty, tossing aside his alcohol flagon and looking determinedly over at Meng Hao. “I don’t want to be stuck in the lands of South Heaven for the rest of my life. I want to go out into the starry sky!”

Meng Hao looked back at Fatty. He himself had heard from Zhixiang about the Three Great Daoist Societies’ disciple recruitment trial by fire. News about the matter had now spread throughout the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea, even here to Planet South Heaven.

Fatty gazed at Meng Hao with an expression of determination.

“You don’t need to say anything,” Fatty continued. “I know that you won’t stay in the lands of South Heaven for much longer either. Your path exists in the starry sky. Well, we’re brothers, so if you go, then I won’t stay behind! I’m going to give it a shot!”

Meng Hao didn’t respond at first. He simply lifted his wine flagon and took a drink, looked at Fatty, and smiled.

Then he said, “Considering those teeth of yours, you’ll definitely get some good fortune!”

Fatty laughed uproariously, then grabbed a flying sword and began to file at his teeth. The two of them laughed together, and then continued to chat until the sky turned bright. Meng Hao stayed with Fatty for a few days before leaving. The next stop on his journey through the Southern Domain was to visit Chen Fan.

Chen Fan sat as he always did, next to the mountain boulder. Meng Hao meditated silently next to him. Chen Fan no longer drank alcohol, but the stubble of a beard was still visible on his chin. An abstruse gleam could be seen deep in his eyes, but most of his time was spent gazing at the boulder, as if he were immersed in memories.

Meng Hao didn’t interrupt him, but rather sat next to him for an entire night.

When the sky grew bright and the time had come for Meng Hao to leave, Chen Fan suddenly said, “I’ve decided to go to the trial by fire held by the Three Great Daoist Societies.”

Meng Hao nodded and left.

His next stop was the Blood Demon Sect. He saw Wang Youcai, who, much like Fatty and Chen Fan, was interested in the trial by fire.

He also decided to participate, to take a chance for his future.

Meng Hao didn’t see Patriarch Blood Demon. Outside of Patriarch Blood Demon’s Immortal’s cave, Meng Hao could sense a dense aura of death. He stood there for a long time before finally clasping hands and bowing deeply.

“Senior, I will never forget your kindness in helping me to Sever the Devil and Seek the Dao!” He bowed again.

The aura of death was the same as ever as Meng Hao finally turned to leave. Off in the distance, he could see the valley where he and Xu Qing had spent their final days together, as well as the location where they had been married.

It was a mountain, on one side of which were the beautiful memories of Xu Qing, on the other side of which was carnage and battle. That was where he and Xu Qing had been married.

As he gazed at the location, Meng Hao suddenly felt very lonely. After staring for a long moment, he finally left.

Now, he wasn’t sure where to go in these sprawling lands. All he could do was look up into the starry sky.

“Perhaps it’s time for me to leave as well.”

Two months passed in the blink of an eye. Meng Hao went to the Milky Way Sea, to the Western Desert, to the Northern Reaches, and finally to the Eastern Lands. Eventually, the day came when the sky began to rumble, and the music of a great Dao spread out in all directions. Three enormous, multi-colored vortexes appeared in the sky.

The three vortexes' rotation caused a sound to echo out that could be heard by all cultivators in the lands of South Heaven. Be they in the Western Desert or the Southern Domain, in the Northern Reaches or the Eastern Lands, in that instant they could all see the three bizarre vortexes up above.

They looked like they were up in the sky, but actually, they existed in everyone's eyes.

Regardless of where the cultivators were located, as long as their cultivation bases met the requirements, and they had the desire to seek the Dao and find good fortune, then all they had to do was take a step forward and enter the vortex.

At the same time the vortexes appeared, an archaic voice echoed out from within them. Everything trembled, and no natural law could prevent the voice from echoing out as if from ancient times, striking fear into the hearts of all.

“The trial by fire was founded by the Three Great Daoist Societies, the Five Great Holy Lands, and the Three Churches and Six Sects!

“Anyone in the Ninth Mountain and Sea may participate, regardless of background, regardless of age, as long as the cultivation base requirement is met!

“The three vortexes are for the Nascent Soul stage, the Spirit Severing stage, and the Dao Seeking stage!

“First, walk upon the Ancient Road. The ten thousand people who reach the end the fastest will be able to participate in the honorable trial by fire!

“Of those ten thousand people, seven thousand will be from the Nascent Soul stage, two thousand from Spirit Severing, and one thousand from Dao Seeking! Cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea…. let the trial by fire begin!”

Planet South Heaven trembled. Everyone knew that the enormous disciple recruitment trial by fire held by the Three Great Daoist Societies… was now underway!

Countless cultivators were prepared to participate. Their blood boiled at the possible good fortune in front of them. Without becoming Immortal, it was impossible to tread through the starry sky. Therefore, if they could seize this opportunity, they could have a meteoric rise, and be like a fish leaping from the sea into the heavens.

Simultaneously, similar vortexes appeared on Planet North Reed, Planet East Victory and Planet West Felicity, along with an identical voice with identical words. It was the same in the Ninth Sea and the Ninth Mountain. Throughout all locations in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, the voice echoed out, and three vortexes appeared.

The Ninth Mountain and Sea was completely abuzz, and countless cultivators were filled with determination, and hearts that wished to search for the Dao. They flew up toward the vortexes from innumerable locations.

More than ten thousand people flew up from the lands of South Heaven alone. Most were Nascent Soul cultivators, who flew into the Nascent Soul vortex to tread the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul. There were a smaller group who flew into the Spirit Severing vortex.

The smallest group was that which walked… the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking.

If you looked at the Ninth Mountain and Sea as a whole, it was really impossible to tell how many people tread the Ancient Roads.

This was a grand event for the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea, so the Three Great Daoist Societies, the Five Great Holy Lands and the Three Churches and Six Sects all sent people to stand guard over the three Ancient Roads.

These three roads had a long history. They might be called Ancient Roads, but in truth, they comprised an ancient set of crumbled ruins within the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Within those ruins existed uncountable good fortune, and they had supposedly existed longer than the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

In truth, the three roads were only a small portion of the larger set of ruins that the Three Great Daoist Societies exercised control over. The fact that the roads were opening now aroused ambitions in countless hearts in the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

This was especially true because… these ruins were called the Ruins of Immortality, and in the past, people had discovered Immortality Illumination Vines there. That was what had changed the entire structure of true Immortality in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Furthermore, the other eight great Mountains and Seas had similar ruins in them.

Most areas inside of the ruins were restricted areas. This was especially true in the depths of the ruins. If you entered those places, you would almost certainly die. Throughout countless years, only the most powerful of experts had ever dared to travel into the depths of the Ruins of Immortality, and virtually no one had ever emerged alive.

Rumor had it that Lord Li had traveled into the depths of the ruins, but as for what had happened there, no one knew. They only knew that the Dharma Clone he had left behind issued the Dharmic decree regarding returning fate to the Heavens.

It was because of that Dharmic decree that, in following days, Lord Ji replaced the Heavens, which in turn drew the support of most of the powers within the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

There was another rumor that in the great Nine Mountains and Seas, regardless of which Mountain or Sea, anyone who could gain enlightenment regarding the secrets of the Ruins of Immortality, would become the Overlord of all the Nine Mountains and Seas.

Although this was a generally acknowledged point, no one could actually accomplish it, not even Ksitigarbha, the Lord of the Fourth Mountain and Sea.

Now that the trial by fire had begun, countless figures vanished into the three vortexes. Fatty, Chen Fan, Wang Youcai, and others all decided to take a chance to try to get some good fortune.

As for Meng Hao, he sat cross-legged underneath a towering tree in the Fang Clan of the Eastern Lands, looking up at the three enormous vortexes. After sitting there quietly for a moment looking at the flashing vortexes, a strange light gleamed in his eyes.

“You have the Immortal Ancient Dao Medallion, so if you want to join the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite, then you don’t have to participate in the trial by fire.” The voice came from Meng Hao’s father, Fang Xiufeng, who strolled up from behind him. He stood behind Meng Hao and continued, “Furthermore, there is always the danger of perishing in the trial by fire. Aren’t you scared of that?”

“Other than the chance to join one of the Three Great Daoist Societies, is there any other good fortune to be had?” asked Meng Hao.

“Of course there is!” replied his father. “If you get first place, then you can acquire a precious treasure. Considering the resources at the Three Great Daoist Societies’ disposal, even I would be excited at the prospect of getting a magical item from them.

“Furthermore, father can tell you another secret. In addition to the founders of the Three Great Daoist Societies, the founders of the Four Great Clans, the Five Holy Lands, and the three Churches and Six Sects… all previously walked the Ancient Roads of the Ruins of Immortality!

“It was there that they acquired the unimaginable good fortune that allowed them to found their various clans and sects.

“It was the same with the Fang Clan Ancestor. That was where he acquired the bloodline that has ensured that the Fang Clan stands tall in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. That, of course, is…. the Fang Clan’s Four Lives Awakening!”

“Dad, did you go there?” asked Meng Hao.

Fang Xiufeng didn’t respond at first. After a long moment, he shook his head.

“Originally, your mother and I planned to wait for you to grow up, then we planned to take a trip there.”

When he looked at his father, Meng Hao could sense that some amount of regret existed in his heart. He glanced back up at the three vortexes, and then a gleam of determination appeared in his eyes.

“Dad, I want to go.”

“If you want to go, then go. We cultivators should never be afraid of dying!” Fang Xiufeng looked at Meng Hao, and the love in his eyes was clear, as was the look of encouragement.

“At the end of the Ancient Road are the arena matches. Actually… I hope that you do participate in this event!

“Do you know why your father’s name is known throughout the Ninth Mountain and Sea, and is even known in other Mountains and Seas? That’s because even when I was in the Spirit Realm, I never shrank from a fight with anyone in the same stage as me. I fought and killed my way to the place I am now. I passed up all the members of my same generation, suppressed them, and seized destiny. That is how to become powerful!

“Never forget, the word cultivation is made of two characters, which implies studying and practice, and which implies action. It is not enough to just have , the studying and learning. You must also have , action…. You must always strive forward; that is the way to reach the pinnacle of power!”

Meng Hao coughed dryly, and a bashful smile appeared on his face.

“Dad, I can’t really identify with your path. I think… getting all of the Chosen in the Ninth Mountain and Sea to owe me money is the ideal way.”

Fang Xiufeng’s jaw dropped as Meng Hao chuckled and then flew into the air. His body flashed as he flew toward the Dao Seeking vortex. He took a deep breath, and without any further hesitation, entered.

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# Chapter 842: Just a Misunderstanding….

The vortexes in the sky rotated, sending rumbling sounds echoing out in all directions. In virtually all regions of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, people were flying up into the vortexes. However, many of those people took steps to change their appearance upon entering.

They had various reasons for not wanting others to know who they truly were. After all, a grand event like this would draw the attention of the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea.

As soon as Meng Hao entered, he immediately sent some divine will out to the meat jelly. Moaning and groaning, the meat jelly helped Meng Hao to change his appearance to that of Fang Mu, from back in his days in the Violet Fate Sect.

Meng Hao was attending this event only for the trial by fire, and considering how he had flaunted his abilities in the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple on Planet South Heaven, and was now making his way alone off planet, he figured it would be much more convenient to rely on a second identity.

Furthermore, there would be no better opportunity to become famous under a second identity than this trial by fire hosted by the Three Great Daoist Societies.

“It’s too bad my second true self is temporarily incapacitated because the true Immortal’s soul was damaged by the Immortal Tribulation,” he thought. “But, that’s not such a bad thing.” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered brightly after making the transformation, and he looked out at the pitch blackness surrounding him. He could just barely make out a vortex spinning around him, with faint beams of light occasionally coming into view as they spun around him.

The sensation of being pulled along grew even stronger, and he felt increasing pressure weighing down on him.

After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, a bright light became visible up ahead in the darkness. It grew brighter and brighter, and soon, completely enveloped Meng Hao.

When his vision grew clear once again, Meng Hao found himself looking out at a void, which was densely packed with countless platforms. Some were thirty meters wide, others, three hundred, and some three thousand.

The sizes varied, and in the center of each of the platforms was a stone stele, upon which could be seen a map. Beneath each stone stele was a candle holder. The candles were unlit, leaving the maps on the stone steles cloaked in darkness.

As for how many platforms there were, it was impossible for Meng Hao to count. His divine sense was under incredible pressure, making it impossible to send it out very far. As Meng Hao looked around, more and more people came into view. Much like Meng Hao, they stared out in shock at all the platforms.

All of them had peak Dao Seeking auras, and there were even a few who didn’t quite measure up to the Chosen he had encountered before, but were very close.

They all wore different clothing, and bore different appearances. There were men and women, old and young. Some weren’t even humanoid, but looked like beasts. From what Meng Hao could tell, there were several hundred in his immediate vicinity, with more and more people appearing off in the distance.

It was hard to tell who it was that flew out first, but soon, one of the three-thousand-meter platforms was occupied by a cultivator. After that, all of the cultivators who materialized in the void shot out toward the platforms at full speed. Each person who appeared occupied a single platform. Fighting broke out, but it was controlled. After all, there was no reason to unleash vicious fighting the moment they entered the Ancient Road trial by fire. It wasn't worth it.

Furthermore, any ownerless platform apparently created a bond to whoever set foot on it first, and the unlit candle would then begin to burn, illuminating the map on the stele.

As such, there wasn't very much fighting. As the saying goes, first come, first served, so anyone who was beaten to a particular platform would quickly leave in search of another.

Meng Hao's eyes glittered. The three-hundred-meter and three-thousand-meter platforms were relatively far away from him, and the closest one to him was a thirty-meter platforms, so he quickly made his way toward that one.

However, just when he was about to step foot onto it, someone else nearby apparently had the same idea as he did. It was a tall, hulking man with ripples spreading out from beneath his feet which, if you looked closely, resembled illusory seawater that contained three swimming fish. Overall, it made the hulking man seem incredibly impressive.

He and Meng Hao were both about to step onto the platform at exactly the same time, when the hulking man snorted coldly. Killing intent flickered in his eyes.

"Screw off!" he said.

With that, his right hand made a hurling motion toward Meng Hao. The fish began to swim through the water at incredible speed, and an intense power surged out, transforming into an illusory sea dragon which shot toward Meng Hao, mouth gaping open to consume him.

Meng Hao's expression was as calm as ever, but he moved with explosive speed as he dodged past the sea dragon and then set foot onto the platform one breath of time before the hulking man.

In that instant, the candle on the platform burned to life, sending light spreading out in all directions. The hulking man’s face was very unsightly as he glared at Meng Hao, and he let out a cold snort as he shot toward another nearby platform.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever, and he completely ignored the hulking man as he sat down cross-legged in front of the stone stele to examine the map. The map encompassed a huge area, but roughly ninety percent of it was covered in darkness, leaving only about ten percent clearly visible.

Within that small visible area, he could see numerous narrow roads spreading out, the origin of which was the location he was in now. The end location of all the roads was a place near the dark area on the map.

Out in the void, more and more candles were springing to life; apparently the number of platforms here was equal to the number of people who had arrived. Before long, all of the cultivators had occupied a platform.

Unfortunately, a handful of unlucky cultivators ended up dying in the fighting.

As for the hulking man from earlier, he had managed to secure a platform to the right of Meng Hao. He looked over at Meng Hao occasionally, his eyes glowing with killing intent. The spat between the two of them had obviously left him irritated.

Apparently, Meng Hao didn’t notice the man, and focused intently on studying the map.

After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, everything grew quiet. Finally, an archaic voice boomed out through the void.

“I am Ling Yunzi of the Ninth Sea God World. As of now… the Dao gate has opened, and the Ancient Road stretches out. All of you must traverse the road… use it to corroborate your Dao, and to corroborate your destiny! 1

“The road is well-lit, but is filled with danger. Any who tread it must do so with utmost caution!

“As of this moment, if you turn back, you still have a chance to retreat. But once you step forward…when you look back, there won’t even be the safety of a shoreline.” His voice rang out over all the platforms, filling the entire area. All of the Dao Seeking competitors in the trial by fire could hear him.

When Meng Hao heard the Ninth Sea God World mentioned, he looked up. It instantly made him think of Fan Dong’er, and he felt a bit apprehensive. He reminded himself that he had changed his appearance, but still didn’t feel any less nervous. He quietly took out the black feather the parrot had acquired, and placed it an easily accessible location in the front of his robe.

“You may now enter the road. This is a trial by fire, and anyone with unsuitable latent talent will be eliminated first, leaving behind only the most suitable candidates.

“After that, you shall not simply walk as you wish along the road. At every stage along the way, you will be tested.

“Depending on your performance in the tests, I will arrange for you to proceed a certain number of steps. Everything you do here is visible to observers on the outside, so you need not fear that I will be unfair in my decisions.

“And now, let the first stage begin, the stage of combat!

“You may use any means fair or foul, even deadly means, to snuff out as many candles as you can in the time it takes an incense stick to burn! Anyone whose candle is snuffed out will lose the qualification to continue. Anyone who is killed will automatically be considered to have their candle extinguished!” As soon as they heard Ling Yunzi’s words, all the Ninth Mountain and Sea cultivators in the Dao Seeking trial by fire felt their hearts tremble, and their killing intent exploded up.

Everyone had assumed that all participants would be allowed to enter the Ancient Road, and that the fastest one thousand among them who reached the end would be able to proceed. They had never imagined that the trial by fire would actually begin in this way.

The point of the first stage was to prevent one’s candle from being extinguished, and at the same time, put out the candles of the others.

In the blink of an eye, people began sending out Dharma Clones to charge toward other platforms. Instantly, fierce fighting broke out; divine abilities and magical techniques caused everything to rumble and shake. The entire area was thrown into chaos, and roaring filled the ears of everyone present. It only took a moment before screams of death rang out.

Even as Meng Hao’s eyes began to glitter coldly, the hulking man off to his right who had been glancing at him murderously gave a vicious laugh and waved his right hand. Instantly, a Feng Shui compass flew out, which then transformed into a glittering spell formation that spread out to protect his candle. Then the man flew out toward Meng Hao.

“I’ve killed lots of peak Dao Seeking experts,” he said. “Since you dared to compete with me, then you’ll be the first person I kill in this trial by fire!” The illusory seawater swelled beneath his feet as he stepped onto Meng Hao’s platform. He quickly performed an incantation gesture, causing a sea dragon to roar toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao was sitting cross-legged next to the candle, and when he looked up his face was calm. There wasn’t even a cold gleam visible in his eyes. He looked placidly over at the hulking man, then waved his hand through the air in a snatching motion. Shockingly, the Star Plucking Magic was unleashed.

The first thing that it grabbed was the sea dragon, which was completely incapable of fighting back, and although it struggled for a moment, Meng Hao simply pinched his fingers together, and it collapsed into pieces. The hulking man’s eyes widened; he was well aware that the sea dragon had materialized with roughly eighty percent of his total power. Normally speaking, there were few peak Dao Seeking experts in the Ninth Sea who could possibly evade this sea dragon.

However, he had just watched as his opponent casually waved a hand and crushed it to pieces. In that instant, the hulking man’s scalp went numb, and he was very nearly scared out of his mind.

“Not good!” he thought. “Don’t tell me this is one of those inhuman freaks from one of the sects or clans? Impossible! I’ve seen all of those people from afar, but I’ve never laid eyes on this guy before!”

The man’s face fell, and he immediately cried out with a loud voice: “Misunderstanding! Fellow Daoist, this was just a misunderstanding….”

As he spoke, he retreated at top speed. However, Meng Hao’s Star Plucking Magic bore down on him and snatched up him. The hulking man’s face filled with fear, but Meng Hao’s was expressionless as he gently squeezed down.

Boom!

Before the hulking man could even let out a bloodcurdling scream, his body was crushed into pieces, and he was destroyed in spirit and body. When he died, his candle immediately snuffed out.

After making his deadly attack, Meng Hao pointed toward the Feng Shui compass that covered the hulking man’s candle. It trembled, and was just about to fly back toward Meng Hao when a black beam flew toward it. The beam turned into a black-robed youth, who reached out to grab the Feng Shui compass.

However, almost as soon as his hand latched onto the item, Meng Hao’s cold snort echoed out. When it entered the young man’s ears, he began to tremble violently, and subconsciously looked over at Meng Hao. When their gazes locked, his mind filled with a roaring sound.

To him, Meng Hao’s gaze felt like two sharp swords, stabbing into his eyes and threatening to slash his mind into pieces, stabbing into his brain and down into his soul.

The young man’s face fell, and he coughed up a huge mouthful of blood. His face was pale, and he ceased all attempts to grab the Feng Shui compass.

“Fellow Daoist!!” he cried urgently in a raspy voice. “Pardon my offense!”

1. Ling Yunzi’s name in Chinese is líng yún zǐ – Ling is a surname which also means “rise high.” Yun means “cloud,” and Zi means “son” or “child.” Also, is a word which means “soar to the skies.” Therefore, his name contains a bit of clever wordplay

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# Chapter 843: Fight For Supremacy, the Entire Way!

Meng Hao didn't immediately slaughter the young man. He calmly beckoned with his hand, causing the Feng Shui compass to fly over and settle onto his hand. Because the hulking man was dead, the item was currently masterless, so after Meng Hao sent some divine sense into it, it was branded to him.

"It's definitely mysterious," he said, "but unfortunately, not very powerful." He waved his hand again, causing two ultra high-grade spirit stones to fly out from his dwindling collection. He pushed them onto the Feng Shui compass before their aura could spread out and be detected.

In the blink of an eye, the Feng Shui compass changed. Although it looked normal, it now exerted a spell formation which was far mightier than it had been before. It was worlds apart. Meng Hao quickly placed it down next to him, whereupon its glow spread out to cover the candle.

"Unless someone like Taiyang Zi or one of the other Chosen show up, this should hold out for the time it takes an incense stick to burn. Ordinary peak Dao Seeking cultivators won't be able to break through it." He rose to his feet and looked around. By now, half of the time was already gone, and he had only extinguished one candle. There were others off in the distance who had snuffed out seven or eight. Perhaps some people even further off had extinguished even more.

In the same moment that Meng Hao left his platform, people in the outside world, in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, were looking up at what had once been merely swirling vortexes, but now contained enormous viewing screens.

Those screens displayed everything that was happening on the Ancient Roads, although the images were very small. Of course, if one's cultivation base was high enough, it was still possible to clearly see each and every individual despite how small they were on the screen.

Countless people in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were watching the screens. There were people from the Three Great Daoist Societies, the Four Great Clans, the Five Holy Lands, and the Three Churches and Six Sects, as well as various powerful rogue cultivators.

The various sects were paying especially close attention. They were not clans, and therefore had to recruit disciples from outside. Therefore, they would be paying close attention to the trial by fire. Many would not wait until the end of the event was reached, but would select disciples to recruit throughout the process.

Of course, numerous conversations could be heard among the crowds throughout the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

“The Three Great Daoist Societies have created ten stages within the three Ancient Roads in the Ruins of Immortality. Each stage involves a different test, which will allow them to slowly filter out the competitors, and leave behind only the future Chosen.”

“It's possible that some of the people who get eliminated might have great potential, but were just unluckily knocked out.”

“Look, the current leader on the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul has already extinguished 39 candles. Although the Nascent Soul cultivators' cultivation bases aren't very high, they have an intense will to fight!”

“The highest number of extinguished candles on the Ancient Road of Spirit Severing is 27!”

“Who is that masked young man on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking…? He's already extinguished 19 candles!”

“The Ancient Road of Dao Seeking is the most interesting after all. See that one guy? He’s probably a disciple of the Li Clan. He’s changed his appearance, but you can recognize who he is from the divine abilities he’s using. He’s already put out 15 candles.”

Even as the discussions were going on outside, Meng Hao flew out toward a thirty-meter platform on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking. As soon as he set foot on it, an enraged roar echoed out, and an old man with disheveled hair appeared. A will of madness radiated out as he charged toward Meng Hao.

“Die!” he cried, performing an incantation gesture that caused a fissure to appear, which then transformed into a broadsword!

“Void Severing!” he cried, causing some others in the area to look over in shock and then backpedal. Meng Hao turned, his expression calm as he gazed at the incoming Void Severing attack. He did not retreat, but instead utilized the Golden Roc Transformation. At the same time, he used the powers of the black feather inside his robe so that the golden roc actually looked like a pitch-black vulture instead.

The vulture sped through the air toward the incoming Void Severing attack. When they slammed into each other, a huge boom echoed out, and the Void Severing blade collapsed, completely incapable of fazing Meng Hao in the slightest. When the old man saw this, his face filled with shock, and he fell back. However, before he could get very far, a blast of wind gusted against him as Meng Hao swooped down in vulture form. Claws slashed out, and a splattering sound could be heard as the man’s head was crushed.

This was a trial by fire, a fight for good fortune. If you didn’t kill your opponent, your opponent would kill you.

Meng Hao had experienced much gory brutality, so he was used to things like this. He wouldn’t allow such a thing to affect him inwardly. When the old man died, his candle went out, and Meng Hao proceeded to the next platform. If nobody blocked his path, he would merely extinguish the candle; if people tried to kill him, he would return the favor and end their lives.

In a brief moment, Meng Hao swept across the entire area. No one could offer any resistance for longer than the space of a single breath, and ended either with a death, or an extinguished candle.

Meng Hao proceeded along as if he were walking across dried up weeds, his intense energy allowing him to rapidly rise up above the others.

Three candles. Four candles. Five candles….

Meng Hao attacked viciously and decisively. Currently, of the dozen or so people in his vicinity, there were four or five who were concealing their cultivation bases. When Meng Hao attacked them, their power exploded out; although none of them seemed to be on the level of Taiyang Zi and the other Chosen, they still possessed unique and exceptional divine abilities.

There was even one person who controlled powers which resembled those of Lu Bai, the Chosen from the Northern Reaches who used a Time divine ability. When this person attacked, he could seemingly lock down space and time in shocking fashion. 1

Any other peak Dao Seeking expert who went up against people like this, especially the one who could control space-time, would most certainly perish. However, Meng Hao possessed eighty percent of the power of a true Immortal, and could even eradicate false Immortals. Each and every attack he made either killed someone, or snuffed out a candle. Booms rattled out constantly.

The only time he didn’t instantly attack with lethal force was when he faced the old man who could control Time. After a bit of observation, he realized that this Dao of Time was the same type he had gone up against when he fought Lu Bai. At the time, it had definitely tantalized him, but was something that until now he still couldn’t quite understand no matter how much he contemplated it.

When he attacked, he paid close attention to the results. Considering he had eighty percent of the power of a true Immortal, he was able to pick up some clues. As they fought, the old man grew more and more shocked, until finally he was virtually scared witless. From his view, he was fighting what appeared to be an ordinary youth, one that still somehow appeared to be analyzing and even imitating his Dao of Time. At a certain point he even seemed to be utilizing some of the same power, which left the old man completely shocked.

“Inhuman! This guy must definitely be one of those legendary Chosen!!” The old man’s heart trembled, and it was without hesitation that he suddenly extinguished his own candle to ensure that he could continue to live.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered in response to the old man’s decisiveness, and he made no further attacks. After the candle went out, he gave the old man a glance and simply teleported past him and continued onward.

Roughly a third of the amount of time it takes an incense stick to burn remained, and Meng Hao had already extinguished 19 candles!

Most of the platforms in the area were empty. As for the people whose candles were extinguished but who were not killed, one by one, they faded and were teleported away by the power of the Ancient Road, having lost any qualifications to continue with the trial by fire.

Many people were shocked by this; it didn’t matter if you died or simply lost the qualifications, you were eliminated either way. This was a heavy blow to anyone who had placed high hopes in coming here and skating through some of the tests.

“So that Dao of Time is similar to the power of Time that I wield. There are similarities, but they’re actually different!” Meng Hao’s eyes were calm, but a thoughtful flicker could be seen in his pupils. The battle just now had not been short, and Meng Hao had actually benefited quite a bit. 2

As of now, he stood on one of the platforms, and his eyes swept about the area. Finally, his body flickered and he flew off in a different direction.

It was at this point that the archaic voice of the Ninth Sea God World’s Ling Yunzi suddenly echoed out again.

“Of that one incense stick’s worth of time, there are now less than one hundred breaths of time left…. After those one hundred breaths of time, the first stage will be complete. Those of you who extinguish the most candles during that time, and also prevent your own candle from being extinguished, will receive a special reward!”

This announcement caused the entire Ancient Road of Dao Seeking to boil with excitement. Similar announcements were made on the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul and the Ancient Road of Spirit Severing. The participating cultivators’ killing intent immediately soared upward.

Meanwhile, in the outside world, vast crowds were paying close attention to the three screens visible in the giant vortexes. The Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul was a mass of chaos. On the Ancient Road of Spirit Severing, the fighting was more orderly.

The Ancient Road of Dao Seeking was unique. On the screen, what was clearly visible were over ten thousand locations in which a powerful expert had completely cleared out all of the candles nearby, making something like a vacuum for themselves.

Of those ten thousand or so areas, some were large and some were small. However, if you could rise above the field of competitors like an awl poking through a sack, it proved that you were a powerful expert. Soon, the experts began to fight among themselves.

“There’s already someone who’s extinguished seventy candles on the Dao Seeking road!”

“There’s not much time left! This trial by fire is completely brutal! So many people have already been eliminated!”

The outside world was abuzz. Back on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking, many people were so agitated that their eyes were completely red. Some were attacking with deadly force, and some had already made significant achievements and were just stalling, waiting for time to run out. Meng Hao looked around, then barreled into a nearby area where eight people were all fighting each other at the same time. All of these people were powerful experts who had already cleared out the other nearby areas.

Shockingly, one of them was a fierce pangolin, a wild beast whose bright eyes revealed that it was no less intelligent than any human.

There was also a woman whose body appeared to be young, but whose face was covered with wrinkles. A pink, illusory image, which was clearly the early form of a Dharma Idol, could be seen behind her.

All of these seven or eight people fought with vicious attacks that sent booms rattling out in all directions. However, none of them seemed capable of overcoming the others, and in fact, some of them appeared to have joined forces.

As soon as Meng Hao neared, they looked over at him. None of them knew him, nor each other; they were all from different locations in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. They were here to fight for good fortune, so the instant they saw Meng Hao, the pangolin flashed through the air as it charged toward him. A few of the others also charged Meng Hao, their eyes flashing.

“No matter how much we fight, we can’t overcome each other! Instead of wasting time fighting each other, let’s go kill some other people! The good fortune will go to whoever is lucky enough to land the killing blow!”

“Yeah! This guy showed up here after us. His battle prowess is obviously ordinary, otherwise he would have already wiped everyone in his own region out!”

“He’s just unlucky! Kill him!”

The seven or eight people charged with killing intent in their eyes. Of course, despite their words, they were still on guard against each other. They might seem to have joined forces to attack someone else, but that didn’t mean they were any less likely to attack each other.

As the eight people closed in, Meng Hao’s expression was calm, and he stopped in place. There were now less than 61 breaths of time left before the conclusion of this stage; time was running out quickly.

In the blink of an eye, the eight people were upon him. The pangolin’s numerous scales lifted up as a divine ability rumbled out, seemingly powerful enough to break apart a mountain. The woman also waved her hand, causing a pink aura to spread out behind her, which transformed into a pink skull.

The others also unleashed various divine abilities as each and every one leveled astonishing attacks.

Meng Hao looked on calmly, then clenched his right hand into a fist and punched out toward them through the void.

When the punch landed, an indescribable blast rose up, sweeping across the eight attackers. Their faces fell as Meng Hao made his move!

2. The abilities of Lu Bai (and this old man) are described with different Chinese characters than the power that Meng Hao uses. However, both have the same meaning, “Time.” The characters of Meng Hao’s “Time powers” carry more of a sense of “years” as in aging.

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# Chapter 844: First Place in the First Stage!

He transformed into a wind. A whirlwind!

The intense whirlwind swept out in all directions through the void, filled with crackling lightning. It was like a windstorm that swept across everything as it shot toward the incoming eight cultivators.

When the windstorm hit them, their divine abilities were shaken, and their expressions became that of shock. Their hearts trembled with astonishment. All of these people had slaughtered their way out of their own respective zones among the platforms, and were essentially the strongest people from those areas. In the outside world, they could be completely domineering in all the Spirit Realm, to the point where it was even difficult for them to outdo each other.

No one had ever been able to stand up to them, or outdo them in terms of power. And yet, Meng Hao’s one punch left them feeling as if they had run into a windstorm.

This was a windstorm they couldn’t fight back against nor resist. This windstorm… contained the might of Heaven and Earth, limitless destructive power that could rip them to pieces as easily as dried up twigs!

This was… a completely and thoroughly crushing power!

Intense rumbling rose up, and the whirlwind screamed, filled with never-ending bolts of lightning as it hurtled at top speed toward the eight cultivators. The eight cultivators’ minds filled with roaring sounds, and intense light. The incredible scene instantly drew the attention of other people on the larger battlefield.

In that moment, everyone outside in the Ninth Mountain and Sea who was watching the trial by fire stared fixedly at the three vortex screens.

On the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul, massive carnage was visible. The Ancient Road of Spirit Severing was similar. Fatty could be seen there, soaked in blood, roaring as he pounced forward to latch his teeth onto the neck of an enemy. His eyes were bloodshot, and his teeth glittered brightly. He howled as his opponent's candle was extinguished.

Even Fatty didn't realize how ferocious, and even savage, he appeared. He had already drawn the attention of quite a few sects.

Then there were Chen Fan, Wang Youcai, Li Shiqi, and others who Meng Hao knew from the lands of South Heaven. They were all on the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul. Some died, some were disqualified, others… fought until the very end!

Chen Fen held a sword in his hand. His expression was gloomy, seemingly without the slightest bit of life in it whatsoever. He seemed empty and dark, which affected his attacks, causing them to be filled with a similar gloominess. However, a black aura swirled around his sword, and anyone who encountered it would feel their emotions suddenly being affected. Therefore, Chen Fan was also distinguishing himself on the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul, and drawing quite a bit of attention.

Fatty and Chen Fan had both been noticed, as had many others. This was merely the beginning of the event, and if they could continue to perform so stunningly, or even take first place on the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul, then they would definitely have a chance at good fortune.

Of course, what drew the most attention was the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking. The fighting there had given rise to a foul wind and a bloody rain and, having come to its most critical juncture, was definitely the focal point for most of the audience.

It was easy to see the contrast with the chaos of the Ancient Roads of the Nascent Soul and Spirit Severing. The Ancient Road of Dao Seeking was filled with a shocking murderous aura. Of the previous ten thousand or more areas, each one was now controlled by a single powerful expert, all of whom were now fighting each other viciously as they attempted to extinguish each others' candles.

Victory or defeat was determined within the space of a few breaths in battles like that, and soon, massive changes to the situation on the battlefield could be seen.

"93 candles extinguished! Who is that? I've never seen anything like it!!"

"Look at that guy in the mask! He's put out more than almost anyone else. He's the first to extinguish more than 100!"

"Look, the Chosen from the Li Clan has extinguished more than 100 too!"

Everyone was in an uproar, and was crying out loudly.

"200! The person in first place has put out 200 candles!!"

"Things are happening too fast! The suspense is killing me! The guy with the mask, he's… he's… he's actually exceeded 300!!"

"He's the only one who's exceeded 300. The next four people behind him have around 200 or more. Those five are definitely the most powerful people in this stage!"

"Time's almost up!"

The sound of the uproar filled the air.

Back on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking, there were five people who had attracted the most attention from the other cultivators. The cultivators from the Three Sects and Six Churches, the Five Great Holy Lands, and the Three Great Daoist Societies watched the vortex screens, eyes filled with strange gleams. All five of those people shared something in common….

They stood completely alone in their respective areas, surrounded by emptiness!

Of those five people, the most prominent was the young man wearing the pitch-black mask. His black hair floated around him, and he wore a black robe. He looked almost like a shadow, and he exuded a cold, desolate and deadly aura.

His attacks were incisive, and he didn’t even seem to use any divine abilities. The simple wave of a finger would cause the divine will of other peak Dao Seeking cultivators to be destroyed, and their Nascent Divinities would be shattered and perish.

There was another person among the five, a young woman. She wore a gauzy violet gown that made her look like the flower of the same name. Her face was obscured by some unknown technique, making it impossible to tell exactly what she looked like. She seemed charming and gentle, but attacked with complete ruthlessness. She was surrounded by countless violet flower petals, and upon each one could be seen a drop of blood. It was an astonishing sight.

The third among the group of five was a boy. He was skinny and virtually hairless, but possessed of remarkable speed. Furthermore, his body was covered with countless blue-colored decorative patterns that looked like sealing marks, which appeared to have formed naturally, as opposed to having been added later.

He exuded a wild and barbaric aura that he concealed as best he could; however as his blood flowed through his veins, the aura seeped out, and it made him seem like he wasn’t a cultivator, but rather some savage beast from the wilderness.

The fourth person was a middle-aged man. His expression was cold and haughty, and he wore a white robe. He was surrounded by a cloud of brown mosquitos, each one of them the size of a fist. Their mouthparts were long and pointed, and buzzing could be heard as they circled around him. The sight was enough to cause anyone’s scalp to go numb.

The mosquitos’ bright red eyes and savage bloodthirsty appearance left everyone trembling from fear.

The fifth person was extremely peculiar. Sometimes he looked old, sometimes he looked middle-aged, and sometimes he looked like a teenager. It was as if his age were in constant flux. Every time he changed, his battle prowess would surge; he clearly cultivated some strange and bizarre Daoist magic.

These five people were currently the focus of most of the attention on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking. Each one of them had extinguished more than 200 candles, and the masked young man had put out more than 300.

Ranked behind them were many other Chosen who weren’t the focus of as much attention. However, this was only the first stage, so it was really impossible to say how things would turn out in the end.

“There are less than thirty breaths of time left!!”

“These people are the mightiest amongst the mighty! With only thirty breaths of time left, it would be hard to change the outcome. The first stage is essentially over! The results are set!” Most people were thinking this way. Even the cultivators from the major sects felt the same way.

It seemed like time was about to expire, but just at this moment the whirlwind created by Meng Hao’s fist swept over the eight people who were attacking him.

“Impossible!” cried the woman. Her eyes shone with disbelief, and she performed a double-handed incantation in an attempt to fight back. All of the power she could muster transformed into a mist that blocked the windstorm. However, the mist was instantly shattered, and the woman let out a bloodcurdling scream as she first began to vibrate and then was ripped to shreds by the windstorm, destroyed in spirit and body.

The windstorm spread out, accompanied by her shriek. Three more people went all out with their cultivation bases, and yet were incapable of standing up to the crushing power of the windstorm. Popping sounds rang out as they were exterminated.

The remaining four people were scared out of their minds, and wanted to flee, but couldn’t. The windstorm surrounded them, and the shadow of death loomed up. Their original intent was to slaughter Meng Hao, but his deadly counterattack left them trembling, minds filled with terror.

They were about to plead for mercy, but the windstorm overwhelmed them. Two of them had no time to even speak, and were shattered into fragments. Their candles winked out.

“I refuse to accept this!” roared the beast cultivator, the pangolin. His fleshly body was the most powerful among them, but even he could only hold out for a single extra breath of time before his scales were ripped off and his flesh shredded by the windstorm. In an instant, he was nothing more than a skeleton.

All eight cultivators were dead!

In that moment, Meng Hao’s count of extinguished candles broke past the 100 mark and began to climb toward 200!

The windstorm did not fade away. Meng Hao remained in the center position, his expression calm as he punched downward three more times. Then he took a deep breath and punched another three more times.

Rumbling filled the air as the windstorm experienced a threefold increase in size. Massive amounts of lightning crackled about, and the sound of thunder was deafening. The gigantic windstorm swept out in all directions, and reached a size of 3,000 meters in the following ten breaths of time.

By now, even the people on the outside world had noticed the enormous, lightning-filed windstorm on the vortex-screens.

“What’s that!?!?”

“I didn’t notice that before! Where did that huge windstorm come from?!”

“Heavens! That windstorm is still growing!!”

It wasn’t just the crowds who were now paying attention to the windstorm. Even Ling Yunzi from the Ninth Sea God World was eying it. By now, there were only three breaths of time left before the first stage ended!

Three. Two! One!!

Boom! BOOM!! BOOOMMMM!!

In the same instant in which the stage concluded, Meng Hao’s windstorm spread out to a size of 30,000 meters! Simultaneously, it exploded, accompanied by numerous miserable shrieks, cries of alarm, and roars of defiance.

Furthermore, the number of candles listed next to Meng Hao’s name rose rapidly!

200!

300!

400!

500!!

All of the cultivators caught up in the enormous 30,000-meter windstorm were completely wiped out. In the blink of an eye, the entire area of the windstorm was swept completely clean. The only person remaining… was Meng Hao. He stood in the middle of the windstorm, his hair whipping about, his expression calm. However, even the outside audience could sense that deep within the calmness was a vicious ruthlessness.

In that instant, the entire Ancient Road of Dao Seeking went completely quiet. The audience outside stared at the vortex screens, eyes wide with disbelief at the sight of Meng Hao standing there, surrounded by complete emptiness.

He had come up from behind at the last minute to clinch first place in the first stage!

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# Chapter 845: Rising Star!

As of this moment, all eyes were on Meng Hao!

It wasn’t just the people watching in the outside world. The remaining cultivators on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking couldn’t help but look over at Meng Hao. Although everyone was separated by large distances, within the void of the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking he was the only one who had been able to clear out everyone within 30,000 meters. The sight was enough to shock everyone.

Even the person who had previously been in first place, the masked young man, had only been able to clear an area around 20,000 meters wide to call his own.

As of now, the high-level members of the Three Sects and Six Churches, the Five Great Holy Lands, and even the Four Great Clans, were all inwardly shaken. Their eyes glittered brightly, and many voices could be heard.

“Use any means necessary to send that man a message. Whatever his requirements are, get him to join the Burning Incense Stick Society!”

“Getting first in the rankings during the first stage doesn’t say too much. There are quite a few more stages to go, so there will certainly be others who rise to prominence. I’m afraid the person who came in second place won’t be shown much interest at the moment. However… the first place winner, even if he doesn’t do well in the following stages, showed such amazing strength in the first stage that we, the Church of the Immortal Emperor, must have him as a disciple! Send word down immediately!”

“His battle prowess is astonishing, and his temperament ruthless. A person like that is perfectly suitable to join us in the Church of the Blood Orchid!!”

Quite a few of the powers who made up the Three Churches and Six Sects were instantly attracted to Meng Hao because of his flashy display of power.

As for the Five Great Holy Lands, the Four Great Clans, and the Three Great Daoist Societies, although they were astonished, none made any such proclamations. However, they definitely looked at him differently than the others.

Also watching the Ancient Roads on the vortex screens were Meng Hao’s parents. They were in the Fang Clan in the vast Eastern Lands, looking up at the spectacle. Meng Hao might have changed appearances, but Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li could still recognize him instantly.

When they saw that he had taken first place in the first stage, both of them smiled. They were smiles filled with pride and anticipation. Of course, Meng Hao’s mother’s smile also contained a bit of concern. However, she knew that Meng Hao’s path… was his own to tread.

In the Kunlun Society, Grandmaster Pill Demon was watching the Dao Seeking vortex screen. Although nobody else might recognize Meng Hao, how could Pill Demon not be able to identify that person who had once been called Fang Mu?

Chu Yuyan stood next to Pill Demon, looking on silently. There were emotions in her heart which she would never be able or even willing to forget. After all this time, she had grown used to watching Meng Hao from a distance.

She was Pill Demon’s apprentice, but in the Kunlun Society, Pill Demon had been directly accepted as Daoist Kunlun’s apprentice, and had instantly become a blazing sun. Because of that, Chu Yuyan also had a unique position. It only took a short time for her to become acquainted with many of the Chosen there. Furthermore, because of her incredible beauty, countless Kunlun Society disciples began to pursue her.

Her worldview was now completely different. There was no sky above her head now, but rather, stars. What she saw when she looked around were not towering mountains, but rather, a sea of heavenly bodies.

Despite all of that, though, the memories of everything that had happened on Planet South Heaven were etched deep into her soul.

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The first stage was over. Vast numbers of competitors had been eliminated from the Ancient Roads of the Nascent Soul, Spirit Severing, and Dao Seeking. Those who had made it through now waited for the second stage, exhausted and anxious.

Next, archaic voices spoke out in the three different Ancient Roads. The words spoken were different, but the meaning was the same, as the voice notified everyone that the first stage was over, and at the same time… announced how many steps each competitor would be able to take!

“Those who extinguished fifty candles or less in the first stage may go forward 3,000 paces! One hundred candles or less, 5,000 paces!

“Two hundred candles or less, 7,000 paces. Three hundred candles or less, 9,000 paces… Five hundred candles, 10,000 paces!” For the first time, Ling Yunzi of the Ninth Sea God World appeared personally in the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking. He was thin, and wore a long green robe. He had white eyebrows, and a blue mark could be see on his forehead that seemed to contain an entire ocean!

He stood there, his aura pulsing with monstrous power, as if he himself were made of a sea of stars!

Shockingly, the illusory image of a nine-headed sea dragon could be seen behind him. Although it was illusory, when Meng Hao looked at it, he felt as if he were looking at some celestial force.

Ling Yunzi could be considered one of the top most powerful experts in the whole Ninth Mountain and Sea!

His eyes swept the area, lingering for a moment on Meng Hao.

After he finished speaking, Ling Yunzi waved his sleeve, causing everyone in the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking to disappear as they moved forward beyond their own control, traveling an exact amount of steps in accord with the explanation that had just been provided.

Step by step, they advanced, encountering no candles or platforms along their way. They floated through the void until they reached a stretch of endless ruins. The crumbled remains of buildings could be seen, as well as ancient statues, dried up forests, rivers, and mountain ranges.

They were now in… the Ninth Mountain and Sea's Ruins of Immortality.

The void they had just been in was simply the entrance!

The only words that could be used to describe this area were: lifeless, archaic, ancient, mysterious, silent, and enormous!

Those were the six words that floated in the minds of all the competitors as they laid eyes on the Ruins of Immortality for the first time. The last word was actually the most prominent feeling that they experienced.

It was almost impossible to tell that this was a road of any sort. The one thing that stood out were the countless altars that stretched off in a line off into the distance. They seemed to be filled with an air of time, an ancientness. They were carved with complex magical symbols that were impossible for anyone to understand. The altars further off in the distance were covered even more thickly with magical symbols than the nearer ones, and gave off an air of incredible mystery.

If you had to call this place a road, then perhaps… the way the altars stretched out made the shape of that road visible.

It was impossible to tell how many altars there were; they extended out endlessly off into the distance.

Upon first glance, the altars didn’t seem very big. However… they were actually incredibly enormous. In fact, the smallest of them were about thirty percent of the size of the entire void they had just been in.

Each and every one of the altars was simply gargantuan!

From this, it can be imagined how shocking the Ruins of Immortality were. From the feeling Meng Hao got, it was as if this place had not been constructed for use by cultivators, but rather, but some enormous race of giants.

But then, he suddenly changed his mind as he thought back to… what he had seen in the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple in the mountains in the Eastern Lands. In his vision, he had seen many things that seemed to indicate that many such things existed ancient times. Perhaps giants and cultivators were actually one and the same.

The group that stopped at 3,000 paces was relatively small. They all ended up on one of the altars, and there was no crowding whatsoever. The largest group was made up of those who could go 5,000 paces. Despite the large number of people, each person still had a large area to call their own on that particular altar.

Next were those who could move 7,000 paces. There were fewer in that group, and they quickly spread out across the altar, eyeing each other.

When it came to 9,000 paces, there was only the masked young man and the person who could change his age. Currently, he had changed from being an old man to being young. He and the masked youth shared one enormous altar.

As for Meng Hao, he was the last person to come to a stop, in the lead position. He was the only person to occupy an entire altar all by himself!

Similar scenes were playing out on the Ancient Roads of the Nascent Soul and Spirit Severing.

“The second stage, is the stage of killing!” said Ling Yunzi, his voice cold.

“The first stage was a test of your ability to engage in magical combat. Cultivators practice cultivation to be able to fight. We fight people, we fight the Heavens, we fight Earth. Only by fighting can we hew out a Heaven-defying destiny!

“This second stage of killing tests exactly how powerful you are in the Dao Seeking stage!

“This stage seems similar to the first stage, but is actually very different. In the first stage, you all fought different opponents. Some were weak and some were strong. There was no way to objectively determine exactly how powerful you are.

“In the second stage, you will all be fighting exactly the same enemy!

“To us cultivators, the Dao is of utmost importance. Our magics are prepared to protect our Daos. Without sufficient magic, how can we achieve our Dao? Therefore, all of you must unleash all the power you can in this second stage!

“In this stage, the time limit will again be set at one incense stick. This test is not regarding the number of fatalities you can inflict, but rather… how fast you can kill!

“Kill everything that you see. Anyone who cannot complete the task in the time it takes one incense stick to burn will be eliminated. In this second stage, your lives will be at risk. If you wish, you may turn and leave of your own volition right now!” Ling Yunzi’s eyes swept across the crowd, but no one chose to withdraw. His expression cold, he swished his sleeve, and immediately, the magical symbols on the altars began to shine brightly. Rumbling filled the air, and brilliant light swirled everywhere.

The light quickly spread out to cover the entirety of each altar, completely enveloping each and every person.

1,000 paces behind Meng Hao, the masked young man stood there, staring at Meng Hao as the light enveloped him. His eyes shone with a fierce gleam as he watched Meng Hao disappearing.

“You won the first stage, but the second stage will not belong to you!”

The old man with the age-changing ability was now a teenager, and his eyes shone with a similar light.

Behind them were all the other contenders who had earned top marks in the first stage. Each one was looking at Meng Hao’s disappearing figure, their eyes filled with stubborn gleams.

“Earlier, he obviously used some trick at the last minute. This time… he’ll be forced to show his true colors!”

At the same time, on the Ancient Roads of the Nascent Soul and Spirit Severing, everyone was also being covered up by the brilliant light. Soon no one was visible at all, and the only thing that could be seen within the glowing light was a list of names.

After each name was a number that indicated how many fatalities they had inflicted.

Back on Meng Hao’s altar, a cold voice suddenly rang out in his ear asking his name. Meng Hao’s face flickered slightly, and after muttering to himself for a moment, he responded with “Fang Mu.”

In the blink of an eye, the characters Fang Mu appeared in the altar’s light. Immediately, everyone in the Ninth Mountain and Sea could see it.

“His name is Fang Mu!!”

“Could it be possible that he’s connected to the Fang Clan? Although, there are tons of people surnamed Fang who aren’t connected to the Fang Clan.”

“Fang Mu. Fang Mu…. He got first place in the first stage, I wonder how he’ll perform in the second stage….”

“Don’t think too much of it. There’s no way somebody could take first place in the first stage and then again in the second stage. I suspect that he used some sort of forbidden Daoist Magic at the very last minute.

Otherwise, he would never have come to the fore in the first stage. That’s why he suddenly jumped into the spotlight at the last minute.”

“Be that as it may, if he takes first place again, it would be totally Heaven-defying. The sects would be thrown into an uproar!”

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# Chapter 846: Fastest!

The three Ancient Roads were filled with splendorous light that covered everyone. The only thing visible were the lists of names, some of which were real and some assumed.

Soon, the only thing Meng Hao could see was bright light, and then everything around him changed, even the sky; the altar seemed to become a massive, glowing spell formation. It didn’t last for very long, only the space of a few breaths of time, and then the light vanished.

Everything around him had changed. There was no sky up above, only stars. There was no ground beneath his feet, only a gigantic 3,000-meter long ancient beast!

It was an enormous python, completely pitch-black in color, its body covered with scars and wounds. It was even possible to see its bones in some places, and in other locations, you could see all the way through its entire body.

It appeared to be just on the verge of death, its life force fading, with barely enough energy left to even fly. Although it seemed to be just barely clinging to life, there was still a terrifying aura surrounding it it, the power of which shocked even Meng Hao. Were it to explode out, even a true Immortal would likely be killed by the blast.

Meng Hao was standing on the head of the ancient python, and it appeared to connected to him, as if he could control it.

After staring in shock for a moment, Meng Hao looked down to find that he was wearing a suit of armor. The armor seemed brand new, and it radiated a mild energy. Overall, he seemed to physically be in this place, but at the same time, his body also seemed to be illusory. Furthermore, up ahead of him was a planet!

It was much, much smaller than Planet South Heaven, and in fact, might not even have been large enough to actually call a planet. Perhaps it was nothing more than a large asteroid. It also seemed completely unstable, filled with chaos.

Almost as soon as Meng Hao laid eyes on the black planet, innumerable dots of light appeared that looked like eyes. All of the eyes opened and looked straight at Meng Hao.

An intense sense of crisis filled Meng Hao, and his mind trembled. Suddenly, whistling sounds could be heard, and, astonishingly, one thousand beams of light shot toward Meng Hao from the planet.

Figures could be seen within these beams of light, figures that weren’t cultivators, but rather, puppets!

Meng Hao was not the only one to be seeing this. Each and every one of the cultivators on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking was in a unique world of their own. What they were seeing and experiencing was exactly the same as Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered coldly, and he didn’t instantly spring into action. Instead, he took advantage of the time it would take for his opponents to reach him, to further study the ancient python. It appeared to be severely wounded, and on the verge of death, although it clearly had the power to make one final attack.

Such an attack would surely leave the beast completely dead in spirit and body. However, that final attack would surely be shocking, that much Meng Hao could tell.

He frowned and sent his divine sense out, then sighed. All of the puppets flying out from the planet had peak Dao Seeking auras, though not one of them was comparable to a false Immortal.

Just then, however, five auras suddenly exploded out from the planet, five auras that were all of the false Immortal stage. If that were all there were to it, it wouldn’t be a big deal. But in that moment, yet another aura, even stronger than the others, exploded out.

The planet shook, and ripples spread out in all directions. The energy rose up, growing more and more powerful. It was very similar to the asteroid-like planet, completely filled with a will of chaos and madness.

Meng Hao’s face sank, and his eyes widened….

It was a true Immortal!!

“One thousand puppets, five false Immortals, and one true Immortal…so this is the trial by fire?

“According to what Ling Yunzi said, I’m supposed to kill all of these enemies within the time it takes an incense stick to burn. That’s the only way to pass this stage. Ordinary attack methods would never be able to accomplish such a thing.”

Meng Hao muttered to himself as the more than one thousand puppets whistled ever closer to him.

“There’s no way that this trial by fire will eliminate almost all the competitors in only the second stage….” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he looked down at the ancient python beneath his feet.

“This ancient beast is powerful…. The last attack it makes before dying will be powerful enough to kill all those thousand peak Dao Seeking puppets. Or, if I wait a bit, I could kill the five false Immortals with it. If I wait until the very end to use it, then I could kill the true Immortal.

“I only have one shot….

“That’s the choice we competitors are being given!” The light of understanding flashed in his eyes.

In the various other worlds in which the cultivators on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking all faced the same scenario, everyone was hesitating regarding how to stick out from the crowd. There were many Chosen hidden among the competitors, and they were all intelligent people. It only took them a moment to come to the exact same conclusion Meng Hao had about the crux of this stage.

The masked young man looked out with flickering eyes. Without hesitation, he shot out to fight the more than one thousand peak Dao Seeking puppets, intending to use the ancient python's final attack to kill the true Immortal.

Such a decision was audacious, and required incredible self-confidence.

As for the old man with the age-changing transformation ability, his eyes flickered as he chose the same tactic.

There were, however, quite a few cultivators who chose to use the ancient beast's powerful attack first, rumbling out and slaughtering the thousand peak Dao Seeking puppets. After the puppets had been completely wiped out, the cultivators would step forward themselves to fight against the five false immortals.

There were multiple cultivators who made each of the various choices. Shortly, the echoing sound of booms and the glow of magical abilities rocked Heaven and Earth within each of the various worlds.

However, the actual scenes playing out within these worlds was hidden to the observers out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea; the only thing they could see was the list of names and the numbers representing the kill count next to each name, which were quickly soaring.

As for the high-level Patriarchs from the Three Great Daoist Societies, Four Great Clans, Five Great Holy Lands, and the Three Churches and Six Sects, they were all sitting cross-legged in an enormous palace in the starry sky, staring at an enormous ancient mirror.

The mirror was split into three sections, within which could be seen clear images of everything that was happening on the three Ancient Roads.

“That masked young man chose the hardest path, but from that, you can see that his heart is as resolute as a boulder. He definitely has potential.”

“That cultivator with the age-transformations is most likely an apprentice of Patriarch Mirage. He might also be a rogue cultivator, but in any case, it’s quite rare to see cultivators of the Dao Seeking stage who practice time transformation magic.”

“There are many potential stars in this trial by fire….”

“From the three choices given them, we can learn about their personalities. Although, it doesn’t matter which choice they make, as long as they pass this stage, they can be considered Chosen!”

The old Patriarchs discussed the matter calmly, occasionally glancing at the Ancient Roads of the Nascent Soul and Spirit Severing to identify people they deemed worthy of notice.

Meng Hao, naturally, also received some attention. And yet, on the outside, there were currently no numbers displayed next to the name Fang Mu.

Meanwhile, the Patriarchs were continuing to discuss the matter….

“Hmm. That young cultivator with the mosquitos is the first one to make an unexpected move.”

“There’s also that kid in the yellow robe. He didn’t make any of the obvious choices either!”

All eyes in the palace were fixed on one of the scenes playing out on the mirror’s surface. The young man with the mosquitos waved his hands, causing his mosquitos to fly toward the python, whereupon they stabbed their mouthparts into it and began to absorb its blood.

Another image depicted a young man who had performed unremarkably in the first stage. His body suddenly went blurry, and he fused down into the python. He quickly took control of it and set it to fighting, hoping to use it to kill both the puppets and the false Immortals.

Not too much time passed before other cultivators also began to use various unorthodox methods that did not conform with the three obvious choices. None of the members of the crowd in the palace seemed to find this unexpected, and in fact, had apparently predicted that such a thing would happen.

“This is excellent. There are far more people doing the unexpected than in the last trial by fire.”

“From ancient times until now, there are always competitors in the Ancient Road’s trial by fire who make breathtaking achievements in their later days. This group of cultivators is not bad at all!”

“How come that Fang Mu hasn’t done anything yet?”

Amidst their chatting and laughing, some people had been paying attention to Meng Hao all along. Instantly, all eyes turned to the image portraying Meng Hao. He stood atop the head of the python, seemingly in a daze as the more than one thousand puppets bore down on him. They were now only about three hundred meters away.

“That Fang Mu most likely doesn’t have any plan at all. It’s not uncommon for cultivators to struggle when it comes to making decisions.”

“That’s too bad. I’d hoped to see if he could perform exceptionally well in the second stage too.”

“For someone to take first place in two stages in a row isn’t unheard of, but isn’t very common either. Unfortunately, I’m afraid he’s not the type that can do it.”

As the puppets whistled toward him, Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and his lips turned up slightly into a cold smile.

“The three choices seem different, but in fact, they are the same. Perhaps by using some unexpected tactics, it would be possible to introduce some degree of variation in the results. However, even if you were able to wipe all of these things out, that would be overlooking something even more important!

“And that is… that planet!” His eyes shone with a strange light as he looked at the planet.

“In truth, this python has another function other than its one attack… and that is the power of flight!

“Before I proceed, though, I need to test out whether or not this body is real!” Eyes glittering, he suddenly reached his right hand out and then slapped it down hard onto his chest.

A boom rang out, his body trembled, and his eyes began to glow with a brilliant light. He’d felt like something was off as soon as he’d entered this place. Although everything seemed real, after experiencing the illusory world of the ancient Demon Immortal Sect, he had a much deeper understanding of such things.

In all the other worlds, everyone was already in the midst of furious fighting.

In Meng Hao’s world, the puppets were closing in. Meng Hao suddenly sat down cross-legged and then stretched his hands out to rest on the ancient python’s head.

The python’s eyes turned bright red, and it let out a roar. Then its body burst into flames as it used the last scraps of its life force to shoot forward at blinding speed.

The puppets scattered as the python swept through them. Even the five false immortals were incapable of blocking it. It moved with shocking speed as it carried Meng Hao directly toward the planet.

As soon as it reached the planet itself, the python collapsed into bits of ash that vanished. At the same time, the aura of a true Immortal exploded out from within the planet. A figure flew out, wreathed in golden light, moving with astonishing speed toward Meng Hao, who had just stepped foot onto the planet itself.

Its energy soared, and it looked like a windstorm as it bore down on Meng Hao.

However, even as it neared, a vicious expression appeared on Meng Hao’s face, and he unleashed the Star Plucking Magic. A huge hand appeared that grabbed onto the golden figure, after which, Meng Hao closed his eyes. With ruthless decisiveness, he caused his cultivation base…

To detonate!

The power of the self-detonation was channeled directly into the golden figure through the Star Plucking hand. It didn’t matter how incredibly powerful this figure was; its body was filled with roaring and, because its aura was chaotic to begin with, the power of the self-detonation compelled its inner aura to become even more turbulent, such that the figure was also forced…

To self-detonate!

A massive boom rattled out as both Meng Hao and the figure self-detonated together. The entire planet was then thrown into instability, causing it to shatter into countless pieces. A massive destructive power was unleashed as the fragments then transformed into a black hole which began to suck everything in!

The puppets and false Immortals had no time to fight back; they were instantly swallowed up by the black hole.

In the palace in the starry sky, the members of the crowd looked on in stupefaction.

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# Chapter 847: Talent. Cultivation. Age.

Crowds in locations all over the Ninth Mountain and Sea were watching the events on the vortex screens. However, regardless of location, the eyes of every spectator suddenly went wide with disbelief.

On the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking, Fang Mu's name had previously had no number next to it. In the blink of an eye, there was suddenly a number: 1,006!

The number appeared so quickly, so suddenly, that people didn't even have a chance to register it mentally before both the number, and Fang Mu's name, disappeared.

The light that covered the altar upon which Meng Hao stood slowly faded away, to reveal Meng Hao, sitting there cross-legged.

He was the first person…

To pass the stage!!

"That's… that's impossible!!"

"What just happened? I remember that just now, Fang Mu didn't have any numbers next to his name at all. That means he hadn't even killed a single enemy. Then I blinked my eyes, and he passed the stage?"

"A bunch of numbers appeared just now, and then they vanished, and Fang Mu passed the stage. Is it possible… is it possible that he used only one move to kill all of the enemies!?!?"

“Heavens! He got first place in the second stage too! Hardly any time has passed, not even a hundred breaths!!”

“He got first place in the first stage, and now first place in the second stage!!” Everyone out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea was completely shocked. Cries of astonishment rang out in all of the locations where people were watching, and the buzz of conversation immediately rose up.

In the vast Eastern Lands, Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li were gaping at the scene. Even they weren’t too sure exactly what Meng Hao had done.

Pill Demon and Chu Yuyan were also looking on with wide eyes, staring dumbly at Meng Hao on the screen.

The crowds out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were in an uproar.

“That Fang Mu, he’s definitely the star of this whole trial by fire!”

“How powerful is he exactly? He actually… he actually killed all of the enemies with one move!”

“I want to see how exactly he did it. It must have been breathtaking!!”

Meanwhile, not too far away from Planet East Victory, an enormous turtle floated in the starry sky, carrying an entire continent on its back. He was staring in shock at the three vortex screens down below on East Victory.

“Dammit. It must be him! Even if he transformed into dust, the Patriarch would still recognize that little bastard!!

“But… what exactly did he do? He got first place in the blink of an eye!” This gargantuan turtle was of course none other than Patriarch Reliance.

At the same time, in another location in the starry sky, a figure could be seen sitting cross-legged on an asteroid, hair disheveled as he looked up at three vortex screens. His expression was taciturn, but a brilliant light glittered in his eyes.

“How could I have imagined that I wouldn’t die…. Meng Hao, Planet South Heaven was only the first half of my life. I have to thank you for helping me understand so much. In the remaining years, I will definitely find a way to pay you back.”

Even as everyone in the Ninth Mountain and Sea was shaken, back in the palace among the stars, silence reigned. The Patriarchs of the various sects and clans, even the representatives from the Three Great Daoist Societies, were all watching with wide eyes and slack jaws.

After a long moment, one of the old men chuckled wryly and said, “That’s cheating!!”

These people were the only ones who could clearly see what had actually happened.

“The fact that he came up with a way to seize victory like that might be considered cheating, but it’s amazing nonetheless!!”

“He didn’t hesitate to kill himself along with the enemy! Fervor like that is what clinched the victory!”

“Compared to this Fang Mu, all the others couldn’t even be considered to be using unorthodox tactics. His methods are truly astonishing. To self-detonate with such decisiveness, and furthermore, to control it so ingeniously… we can be certain that Fang Mu was the first person to realize that the second stage was an illusory world!”

“Even still, he should be disqualified! Fraudulent methods like that are a complete disgrace!”

“Oh please, you want him disqualified so you can secretly go recruit him! That’s not cheating. The other competitors just didn’t think of that idea, or perhaps couldn’t pull it off. That’s just weakness on their part. This Fang Mu has definitely cleared this stage!”

As the discussions continued in the palace, one of the three Elders from the Three Great Daoist Societies who sat at the head of the group suddenly opened his eyes, filling the palace with endless light.

“Fang Mu. Stage cleared!” He spoke only four words, but they echoed out from the palace into the starry sky, and then, by means of a special technique, echoed throughout the Ancient Road, and then out into the rest of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Suddenly, a ranking list appeared in the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking, and in first place was the name Fang Mu. Every spot beneath it was blank.

The Ninth Mountain and Sea was abuzz, and many of the Patriarchs seated in the palace pulled out jade slips to transmit information to their sects, ordering them to attempt to recruit Fang Mu.

It was at this point that Meng Hao opened his eyes. At first, they seemed blank, but then quickly grew bright. His expression was calm as he sat there cross-legged and unmoving.

The second stage was a complete illusion, and the so-called risk to the lives of the competitors was false. However, because of the brutality of the first stage, the other competitors subconsciously assumed that the second stage would be exactly the same.

By now, roughly half of the prescribed time period had passed. Shockingly, a blue-robed young woman from the group who had proceeded 3,000 paces suddenly became visible from within the light that surrounded her. Her eyes brimmed with confidence as she looked over at the ranking list, and then suddenly went wide with shock.

“He was actually faster than me!” she thought. “I possess the Dao of souls, allowing me to take control of the puppets. And yet Fang Mu possesses some more powerful divine ability? Just what is it?!”

More people began to clear the second stage after the young woman. It didn’t take long for enough time to pass for an incense stick to burn. Roughly a third of the competitors didn’t manage to clear the stage. As for those who did, they used a variety of methods to succeed. When it came to the true Immortal, most of them chose to use the python to destroy it in a single blow.

No one used the same method as Meng Hao.

As people emerged from clearing the stage, they looked over at the ranking list, and were shocked.

“Fang Mu took first place in the first stage, and now he took first place in the second stage too!”

“Dammit!!” The masked young man was one of the last to emerge from the second stage. Behind his mask, his face was extremely unsightly. His previously high aspirations had been dealt a heavy blow. As for the old man with the age-transformation powers, he also looked ashen-faced, and was frowning.

Most of the cultivators who distinguished themselves in the first stage did not fare very well in the second stage.

Meanwhile, on the Ancient Roads of the Nascent Soul and Spirit Severing, the second stage had likewise concluded. Fatty, Chen Fan and Wang Youcai had all succeeded. Chen Fan put on the most astonishing performance, and although he didn’t take first place, he was in the top 100, which was quite an accomplishment!

As for Fatty and Wang Youcai, they ended up in the top 1,000.

Li Shiqi ranked toward the bottom, and had barely been able to pass.

It was only the second stage, but the previously large number of competitors had already been whittled down by roughly half.

Of course, Meng Hao’s performance caused a huge stir in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, and the name Fang Mu was now planted thoroughly in everyone’s minds. Many people were now looking forward to the third stage, to see if he could take first place yet again!

On the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking, Ling Yunzi of the Ninth Sea God World stood there in illusory form, looking out at the crowds. This time, his gaze lingered on Meng Hao for a bit longer than it had last time.

Without another word, he then waved his hand, causing everyone to disappear. When they reappeared, they were further along down the Ancient Road. They still stood on altars, although everyone's positions were now changed. Some who were in the lead, were now sent further back, whereas some who had been far in the back, had now caught up.

Only Meng Hao was alone, far up ahead of everyone on his own altar. Behind him were all the other Dao Seeking cultivators, staring at his back, faces filled with the desire to do battle.

"The previous two stages tested your battle prowess," Ling Yunzi said coolly. "You will now pass through the third, fourth, and fifth stages simultaneously. They will test your latent talent, the depth of your cultivation base, and also… your true age!

"The higher your latent talent, the deeper your cultivation base, and the younger you are, the more outstanding your results will be!

"This is a composite test. Even if you did not perform well in the first two stages, if you do well in this third stage, you can still rise above the other competitors." With that, he waved his hand, causing everything to flash with bright colors, and a wind to pick up. Suddenly, three enormous stone steles rose up out of the altars in front of each competitor.

Each stone stele was inscribed with a single large character.

Talent! Cultivation! Age!

"Place your hand onto the stone stele, and allow its power to enter into you. Let the testing begin!"

The majority of the cultivators on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking stepped forward and placed their hands onto the 'talent' stone steles. In the blink of an eye, columns of light began to rise up from the stone steles, each one reaching a different height. Most reached a height of approximately 30 meters. However, there was one that suddenly shot up to 60 meters, drawing quite a bit of attention.

To any sect, the latent talent a cultivator possessed was actually more important than battle prowess.

Next, a 90-meter column of light appeared, then a 150-meter column, a 180-meter column, and even a 300-meter column!

That one belonged to the young woman who had emerged from the second stage right after Meng Hao. She looked at the column of light, her expression as calm as it usually was.

Behind her, more 300-meter columns appeared. Among the other cultivators who possessed 300-meter columns were the masked young man and the cultivator with the mosquitos. Those two, along with the young woman, were known to the audience by now. The others whose columns reached 300 meters were all people who hadn't attracted much attention in the previous two stages, but were now making a spectacular showing.

“A 300-meter column of light shows an incredible level of latent talent. I never imagined that there would be seven people with such latent talent in the Dao Seeking division of the trial by fire!”

“There are nine in the Spirit Severing division!”

“There are even more in the Nascent Soul division! A total of seventeen 300-meter columns!”

“I wonder how Fang Mu will perform….” While the crowds outside discussed the proceedings, the Patriarchs in the palace who represented the various sects and clans were looking on with glittering eyes. They eyed the various cultivators with exceptional latent talent, and of course, were looking at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao hesitated for a moment. He had never really paid much attention to his latent talent, but he lifted his hand up and then placed it onto the stone stele.

As soon as he touched it, a gentle power spread out into his body from the stone stele. It quickly flowed into his qi and blood passageways, eventually swirling out through his whole body. However, it was at this point that the illusory Immortal meridian created by the bronze lamp suddenly quivered. Then, it began to emit a gravitational force that… instantly sucked up the gentle power from the stone stele.

Meng Hao’s eyes went wide.

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# Chapter 848: Senior, Bring Another!

On the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul, glittering light rose up. Fatty stared blankly at the stone stele in front of him; the beam of light that rose up was only 90 meters tall, although there were still quite a few others that weren't as tall as his.

"Fudge!" he thought, his eyes blazing with fury. "Why the hell isn't my latent talent the best? That doesn't make sense! All those years ago the Golden Frost Sect told me that my latent talent was unequalled in the whole world!" He was especially depressed when he looked over and saw that Wang Youcai's column of light was 150 meters tall.

Then he looked over at Chen Fan, and Fatty's eyes went wide with disbelief. Chen Fan's beam of light… was actually among the 300-meter columns!

Li Shiqi's wasn't quite 300 meters tall, but was still tall enough at 250 meters.

On the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking, as the competitors placed their hands on the stone steles, radiant light shot up, filling the area with scintillating brightness. Only Meng Hao's stone stele was completely without any light whatsoever. He smiled wryly.

It was impossible for the stone stele to emit any light whatsoever, because the gentle power that was the source of the light never returned from Meng Hao's body into the stele. Instead, it had been swallowed up by the ethereal Immortal meridian inside of him.

Right now, the audiences in the outside world were all abuzz. Much importance was attached to the latent talent stage of the event. After all, latent talent was an important foundation for cultivators, and all sects paid close attention to it. As for the cultivators who displayed unusual amounts of latent talent, they were immediately taken note of.

There were quite a few people who looked over at Meng Hao. He had taken first place in the previous two stages, which put him directly in the limelight. Many people were waiting in anticipation to see if he would take first place in the third stage as well. Of course, there were also others who looked on with cold smiles, just waiting to ridicule him.

By now, all of the stone steles were lit up, be they on the Ancient Roads of the Nascent Soul or Spirit Severing, or the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking. Now, all attention was focused on Meng Hao….

This was especially the case because, after taking first in the first two stages, he was now ahead of everyone on the Ancient Road. There weren't even any other cultivators around him, which made his position even more conspicuous.

"What is Fang Mu up to?"

"Eee? There's no light coming from the stone stele at all! What's wrong? He can't possibly be completely devoid of latent talent. Even if it's poor, there would still be some light, right?"

"Maybe he didn't actually start the analysis yet. But hold on, his hand is clearly resting on the stele!"

Soon, everyone on the outside was looking over at the image of Meng Hao on the vortex screens, and were astonished.

The powerful experts from the various sects were also watching, as was everyone in the palace up the starry sky. Everyone from the Three Churches and Six Sects, the Five Great Holy Lands, the Four Great Clans, and even the Three Great Daoist Socities, was now looking at Meng Hao and his lightless stone stele.

“What crafty scheme is that little bastard pulling off?” thought Patriarch Reliance, his face twisted with fury. Although he had a complex relationship with Meng Hao, Meng Hao was the sole Inner Sect disciple from the Reliance sect. Therefore, the scene that was playing out right now left Patriarch Reliance feeling quite disgraced.

Back in the vast Eastern Lands, Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li were also staring in shock. They knew exactly what kind of latent talent Meng Hao had. Although he’d experienced the Seventh Year Tribulation, he was also the first person in the entire Fang Clan in years to actually experience a second and even a third lifetime.

Because of that, they knew that his bloodline ran especially strong. A cultivator’s bloodline was one of the aspects of their latent talent, so they couldn’t understand why the stone stele in front of Meng Hao did not shine with light.

Meng Hao cleared his throat and looked around at all the other people and their columns of light. Feeling all the eyes boring down into his back, he slowly lifted his hand up and then pressed it down again onto the stone stele.

The gentle power appeared once again, but just like the last time, the Immortal meridian swallowed it up. It was at this point that Meng Hao noticed that after absorbing the power, the Immortal meridian was a bit different.

He casually lifted his hand up again and then pushed it down, causing more of the gentle energy to spread out inside him. The spectators looked on in shock as Meng Hao continuously attempted to activate the light.

After trying seven or eight times, he realized that the Immortal meridian had absorbed too much of the gentle power, and now there wasn’t any emanating out from the stone stele at all. However, the Immortal meridian inside of him had changed from it’s previous illusory state. About ten percent of it had solidified.

This development caused Meng Hao's heart to pound with wild joy and excitement. He knew that the moment the Immortal Meridian was complete, he would step into true Immortality.

Suppressing his excitement, he plastered an expression of surprise onto his face and then pushed his hand down onto the stele a few more times experimentally. He glanced around, then looked up, apparently frustrated, and called out into the void: "Senior Ling Yunzi, are you there!? This stone stele is broken! Can I have another?

"Actually, sir, it would be best to bring out several, just in case there are any other broken ones. That will save you some frustration in the long run." He gazed up into the starry sky, an expression of eager anticipation on his face.

Everything was silent. The other cultivators on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking all looked on silently.

In the starry sky palace, the Patriarchs from the various sects were all frowning. However, they knew that the Ruins of Immortality were veiled in mystery. Even though the Three Great Daoist Societies held control of the three Ancient Roads, there were many things about them that they didn't understand.

After a long moment, the Patriarch of the Ninth Sea God World said, "Fellow Daoist Ling Yunzi, give him another."

The voice echoed out into the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking, and Ling Yunzi materialized out of the void. He looked down indifferently at Meng Hao, then waved his sleeve, causing the stone stele in front of him to vanish as if had been teleported away. Moments later, it was replaced by another stone stele.

Meng Hao's eyes gleamed as he quickly reached his hand out and pushed it down onto the stone stele.

"SHINE!" he bellowed. The gentle power once again entered his body and began to flow about. At the same time, an imperceptible flicker appeared in

Meng Hao's eyes as he used both the meat jelly and the black feather to conceal anything that was happening inside of him.

The Immortal meridian quickly sucked in every last bit of the power, although it didn't seem to have a very drastic effect on the meridian itself. Meng Hao blinked. Then, as Ling Yunzi looked on wide-eyed, he dramatically inspected the stone stele and tried to place his hand onto it several times. Soon, all the power from the stele was sucked away by the Immortal Meridian.

Ling Yunzi wasn't the only person who was paying close attention to what was happening. The people in the starry sky palace were also observing closely, and their frowns deepend.

"There's something wrong!"

"The stone stele isn't defective. Even though everything seems normal, there's actually something strange going on inside of his body."

"He must cultivate some unique Daoist magic…."

As the discussions buzzed in the palace, an old man wearing a long crimson gown suddenly rose to his feet.

"There's no need for any testing," he said. "Ladies and Gentleman, Mount Sun would be happy to dispel any doubts for you. I will recruit him to join Mount Sun, and then all disputes will be resolved." Laughing heartily, he began to walk forward, but then his path was suddenly obstructed.

"There's no need for the Holy Land of Mount Sun to go to that trouble! The Burning Incense Stick Society is more than willing to take the risk of recruiting him."

In the blink of an eye, the atmosphere in the palace was completely astir. As they verbally sparred over the matter, Meng Hao stood on his altar on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking. Sighing, he looked up at the grim-faced Ling Yunzi.

“Senior, this… this one’s broken too! Why don’t you give me a few more…?”

Ling Yunzi stared at him silently for a moment, then waved his hand. Rumbling echoed out as four stone steles with the character ‘talent’ inscribed on them suddenly appeared.

Meng Hao’s heart thumped, and he coughed lightly again and began the assessment.

“Hm, this one’s broken.

“Eee? This one’s broken too! Dammit!

“Heavens! Who would have thought that this one would also be broken!

“I… I can’t believe it! This one’s broken too!” Meng Hao looked up with a sheepish, pained expression, as if the Heavens were playing a cruel joke on him. Ling Yunzi looked back with an extremely unsightly expression.

Of course, inwardly, Meng Hao was extremely excited. Although the five stone steles from just now had not been incredibly effective, they had pushed his Immortal meridian from being ten percent solid to twenty percent.

Of course, all of the crowds looking on in the Ninth Mountain and Sea weren’t sure whether to laugh or cry. Although Meng Hao was no longer in first place, he was actually even more a center of attention than before, when he had placed first.

“Senior, why don’t you give me another ten,” Meng Hao said expectantly.

Ling Yunzi’s eyelids twitched. With a cold harrumph, he waved his hand, then apathetically announced the first place winner of the third stage.

After that he said, “The next stage assesses cultivation base! Let the assessment begin!”

As his words rang out, the ‘talent’ stone steles vanished.

The first place winner of the third stage glared at Meng Hao in frustration, but could do nothing except wallow in anger.

“Senior!” Meng Hao cried out in distress. “Hey, senior! I’m not done with the assessment! This isn’t fair!”

Ling Yunzi completely ignored Meng Hao, and in fact, vanished into thin air.

Nobody paid any attention to Meng Hao’s complaints whatsoever. At the same time, everyone else on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking stepped forward toward the ‘cultivation’ stone steles. The Patriarchs in the starry sky palace up above looked on with glittering eyes. Although they had been bickering moments ago, it was all in accord with the various plans they had.

As for the crowds in the Ninth Sea, they had originally had high expectations for the third stage, but after what had happened with Fang Mu, the mood… was completely different.

“This is so unfair!” grumbled Meng Hao. He walked forward to the ‘cultivation’ stone stele, reached out his right hand, and was delighted to find that the gentle power, although somewhat different than the power from before, was actually slightly more powerful. As soon as it entered his body and began to circulate around, the Immortal meridian trembled and then thirstily spread out to absorb all of it.

“Dammit! How could this one be broken too?” exclaimed Meng Hao, seemingly furious. As all of the other stone steles around him shone with bright light, Meng Hao continued to attempt to get his to work, looking as though he refused to believe it wouldn’t. After the seventh or eighth attempt, he had absorbed enough power from the stone stele to solidify his Immortal meridian to thirty percent.

His cultivation base, with its eighty percent of the power of a true Immortal, actually experienced some advancement.

Licking his lips, Meng Hao once again called out loudly. “This really isn’t fair! Senior Ling Yunzi, please, let me switch steles!”

Ling Yunzi materialized and, his expression dark, looked at Meng Hao and waved his arm. The ‘cultivation’ stone steles vanished, and then Ling Yunzi’s annoyed voice echoed out.

“Pipe down! Any more chatter from you and you’ll be disqualified! Next stage, the age assessment!”

Meng Hao blinked. Feeling slightly guilty, he proceeded toward the ‘age’ stone stele and pushed his hand down onto it.

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# Chapter 849: Creativity

On the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul, everything was normal. The cultivators on the Ancient Road of Spirit Severing had made incredible progress. These three stages of talent, cultivation, and age assessments tested one’s foundation, and as such, were of great importance to the various sects and clans. There were already quite a few people from both the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul and Spirit Severing whose names had been recorded by the sects. As long as they continued to perform well in the following stages, their future good fortune was essentially guaranteed.

Chen Fan was just such a person!

Unfortunately, Fatty and the others had not yet made it onto any of the lists.

In contrast, the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking was in complete chaos. It wasn’t that the proceedings themselves were chaotic, but rather, there was a feeling of unpredictability because nobody was paying attention to who would take first place in the assessments of talent, cultivation and age.

All sorts of conversations were playing out throughout the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

“Just what kind of latent talent does Fang Mu have? And what cultivation base? How old is he?!”

“I can’t believe the stone steles didn’t work! They even changed steles several times. There’s obviously something special about Fang Mu!”

“Oh right, who took first in the talent and cultivation assessments?”

“I wasn’t really paying attention. I’m just wondering whether the age-assessing stone stele will be effective on Fang Mu!”

Back on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking, Meng Hao was like an unwelcome guest whose style and actions took the wind out of everyone’s sails. He was now, once again, the focus of all attention.

Although he wasn’t in first place… the current first place competitor was being completely ignored.

More and more sects were becoming interested in Meng Hao, and in fact, his name had already been recorded by all of the Three Churches and Six Sects. Furthermore, it was in first place on all of those lists!

Meng Hao bashfully placed his hand on the ‘age’ stone stele, sucked in the energy, solidifying his Immortal meridian to forty percent.

He felt that it was quite a pity that Ling Yunzi was so stingy. Sighing wistfully to himself, he thought of yelling out another complaint about how unfair it all was, but managed to keep his mouth shut. He said nothing, but rather, stood there gauging the other competitors’ columns of light. No matter how high any of those columns were, everyone’s faces were extremely unsightly.

“The age-assessing stage is concluded!” announced Ling Yunzi with the flick of a sleeve. Everyone except for Meng Hao vanished and reappeared on altars further off in the distance.

Meng Hao had now gone from first place to dead last.

This development caused everyone who was competing in the trial by fire on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking to be very agitated. Virtually, all of them turned to glare back at Meng Hao, inwardly musing about how benevolent Ling Yunzi was. In their minds, someone like Meng Hao should obviously have been disqualified immediately.

“He obviously just doesn’t have enough latent talent, so he used some insidious technique to disable the stone steles. How shameless!”

“There must be something weird about his cultivation base that he doesn’t want anyone to know about. To use such methods to skirt the issue is really detestable. You know, he should be disqualified! Merely getting sent to last place is really showing him mercy!”

“Punish him to sate our anger!”

Everyone on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking was furious at Meng Hao, especially those who hadn’t made a name for themselves in the previous two stages. Those who had excelled in the assessments of talent, cultivation, and age were especially angry.

“This isn’t fair!” yelled Meng Hao.

“Not fair?” replied Ling Yunzi, glaring back at him. “You didn’t earn any marks in the last three stages, you wasted several stone steles, and even depleted some of the valuable resources of the Ruins of Immortality! You’re lucky to not be disqualified! I dare you to keep yapping!”

Anyone else who was in Meng Hao’s position that received such words and such a gaze from Ling Yunzi would instantly be filled with awe, fear, and concern over the consequences of their words. However, as far as Meng Hao was concerned, he hadn’t come here to join any sect.

“Oh great and powerful senior,” he said, “I know that I was in the wrong. Listen, how about this. Just give me three more stone steles to try out. If they don’t work, then junior will resign himself to his fate.”

Ling Yunzi gaped at Meng Hao, so angry that he almost felt like laughing. Were it not for Meng Hao’s previous performance having attracted the attention of all the spectators outside, he would definitely disqualify him immediately. Meng Hao was turning into a real headache. In the end, Ling Yunzi just pretended he didn’t hear him.

“The sixth, seventh, and eighth stages will assess your divine sense, willpower, and intuition!”

In response to Ling Yunzi’s words, Meng Hao blinked. Inwardly, he vowed that the next time he saw Fan Dong’er, he would definitely show her who was boss, and vent his anger toward Ling Yunzi on her.

“You will pass through these three stages simultaneously. Each of you will find yourself in your own world, filled with unique and strange phenomena, which you will use to create your own divine ability!

“Depending on the results of your creation, you will be presented with a certain number of….” At this point, Ling Yunzi faltered for a moment before speaking the final two words.

“… stone steles!”

When Meng Hao heard the words ‘stone steles,’ his heart began to thump, and his eyes shone brightly.

Ling Yunzi waved his hand, causing all of the altars began to tremble; massive amounts of fog began to accumulate, covering over everyone present. Then, the power of teleportation spread out, and everyone disappeared.

Outside in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, everyone settled their qi and calmed their minds, then focused on the scenes playing out on the vortex screens. It could be said that the first two stages tested fighting, and the third through fifth stages tested the foundation. In that case, the sixth, seventh and eighth stages tested creativity!

For cultivators, creativity required divine sense, willpower, and of course intuition.

Every time the Three Great Daoist Societies held a recruitment event, shocking and peerless individuals would create divine abilities in these three stages that would become incredibly famous.

Everyone was watching with keen anticipation.

In the starry sky palace, the Patriarchs were no longer squabbling, but instead, were watching with rapt attention. The Five Holy Lands, the Three Great Daoist Societies, all of them were closely examining the screens, and the cultivators on the Ancient Roads of the Nascent Soul, Spirit Severing and Dao Seeking.

The people who had ended up on the name lists of the various sects were the subject of special scrutiny. As long as they maintained good positions during these three stages, then there was no question about whether or not they would eventually be recruited.

As for the rest of the people who hadn’t made it onto the name lists, if they performed spectacularly in these three stages, they would surely be noticed and their names would be added to the lists.

Up in the palace among the stars, everyone was sighing emotionally.

“Creating a divine ability is not a simple thing! It’s very difficult…. I can’t wait to see what stunning divine abilities we will see!”

“In any other place, it would probably be easier to find a phoenix feather or a qilin horn than to find someone in this group who could create a divine ability. However, the Ruins of Immortality are a special place, with a unique power. There are astonishing things here that would normally be very rare, or even nonexistent in the outside world, things that can inspire the competitors, and influence them inwardly.”

“That’s right, on the Ancient Roads, it will be much easier for them to create divine abilities. If they can’t make one here, it shows that their future path will not stretch very far.”

“Divine abilities must be created, a process that stems from the intuition of the creator. Willpower could be considered part of intuition, whereas divine will acts as a Dao Protector. In the final analysis, the same objects and the same source of inspiration will be viewed differently by different people, and can lead to different forms of enlightenment.”

“From ancient times until now, the Daoist Societies have held this trial by fire on several occasions. The most powerful person to ever participate was Sir Fan from the Ninth Sea God World. When he created his divine ability that year, he caused nineteen stone steles to appear, which is a record that stands to this day!”

“He created The Mortal Sea Becomes Immortal, which was eventually developed into a Daoist magic, one of the most powerful ever!” 1

Meanwhile, as the people in the starry sky palace were sighing in emotional reminiscence, all of the people being teleported opened their eyes as the scenery around them became clear.

A tremor ran through Meng Hao as he looked around at completely unfamiliar lands. Everything around him was a mass of black soil that stretched out as far as the eye could see.

It was blazingly hot, and nine suns could be seen high up in the sky, almost like nine mighty Immortals looking out across the lands.

This place was a wasteland!

Scattered structures were visible off in the distance, half sunken into the soil; those that remained above the surface were in a state of collapse. However, carvings of auspicious beasts could be seen on their surfaces, harkening back to their former glory.

A moaning wind blew through the land, brushing against the black soil, causing what sounded like a sad melody to spring up. It filled one with the desire to go searching for whoever might have listened to such a song in the past, but as it floated across the land, it seemed to be drifting through countless ages of time, and ancient memories.

Meng Hao stood there, completely alone in this vast stretch of land.

The only thing to accompany him was the murmuring wind, the black soil that stretched out in all directions, and the ruins that could be seen off in the distance.

Being in such a location caused Meng Hao’s mood to sink, and his eyes flickered with a strange light.

“So, this place can influence the emotions,” he thought, sending his divine sense spreading out. It swept the area, and in addition to everything he had already seen, he could now sense a faint pressure weighing down on him.

If he hadn't sent his divine sense out, he would have never detected it…. Furthermore, he was only aware of it within the range of his divine sense.

Meng Hao's expression slowly changed as he carefully examined his surroundings using divine sense. Now he could sense that there were actually different ranges of pressures, some strong, some weak, coming from all the various ruins lying about!

It was at this point that Ling Yunzi's voice echoed out to everyone on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking. It almost sounded like it was coming from a different world that overlapped with this one.

"Sixth stage, divine sense.

"Seventh stage, willpower.

"Eighth stage, intuition.

"The world you are in contains 99 ruins, as well as a virtually intact Immortal pavilion. The pressure is different in each area, and you will find different forms of enlightenment in each location. The more powerful your divine sense is, the more Immortal ruins you will be able to sense, and the greater your enlightenment will be.

"After you find each Immortal ruin, your willpower will determine whether or not you can stand up to the pressure there.

"Your intuition will decide your final type of enlightenment, and how it becomes a divine ability!" Ling Yunzi's archaic voice echoed about in the wasteland; it almost sounded like he was a figure from ancient times, that his voice was being affected by the agedness of the ruins and then transmitted through time into the ears of the competitors.

The wind whimpered, and the land looked as ancient as ever. Meng Hao's eyes glittered as he sent his divine sense out and found that it was impossible to cover the entire world. He could only see seven sets of ruins.

The nearest was about three thousand meters away, and it appeared to be a dried up well, surrounded by a broken-down wall.

Meng Hao strolled over, and when he was about three hundred meters away from the well, he could sense pressure pushing down on him. It was powerful, like a windstorm.

The windstorm bore down on him, accompanied by a voice that, when compared to Ling Yunzi, truly did seem to come from ancient times.

“Whenever I see it, I think of you….

“To anyone who hears my voice in the future: Have you felt the same way as I do? Do you also have an object that makes you think of someone?”

1. Sir Fan’s surname in Chinese is  fán, a surname shared by Fan Dong’er, which means “ordinary” or “mortal.” In the divine ability he created, the word “mortal” is the same character, a play on words.

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# Chapter 850: Can the Leopard Change its Spots?

Meng Hao stopped in place and stared blankly at a vague illusion that suddenly appeared in front of him. He saw a middle-aged man wearing a long white robe, sitting cross-legged in front of the well.

The wall surrounding the well was suddenly intact, and a simple hut could be seen attached to it, the sides of which were covered in bottle-gourd vines.

The middle-aged man seemed to be gazing eternally at the well, as if he were locked in a single moment for all eternity.

It was a simple vision, almost ordinary, but Meng Hao felt himself trembling. The voice in his ear penetrated into his mind and echoed through his soul.

He thought of many things, many people, many objects.

He wasn’t sure when, but at some point, he had walked up, sat cross-legged in front of the well and started staring at it. His mind filled with perplexity and struggle, as if the ancient voice from just now was allowing the dilapidated Ancient ruin here to interfere with his willpower and make him lose himself.

Inside, he was fighting against the pressure, and based on the intensity of his willpower, he was able to maintain a scrap of consciousness that prevented him from losing himself.

After two hours passed, the perplexity in Meng Hao’s eyes slowly faded away, and was replaced with a bright light.

“What an incredible Dao Projection!” thought Meng Hao. Sweat pouring down his forehead, he took a deep breath and thought back to the daze he had just been in, and it frightened him. If there were any deadly forces in this area instead of just good fortune and chances for enlightenment, then Meng Hao would have been in great danger just now.

“Divine sense will allow me to find more of these Immortal ruins, and my willpower will enable me to fight back against the pressure. As for intuition, that is what I need to gain enlightenment. That… is what leads to creativity.”

After a moment of silence, Meng Hao continued to sit there cross-legged, recalling everything he had just seen.

“There must be an object which, when I see it, will make me think of someone,” he murmured. He opened his bag of holding and swept it with his divine sense. Suddenly, he paused, and his eyes flickered awkwardly.

“Uh….” He hesitated for a moment, then pulled out a stack of paper from his bag of holding.

“Every time I look at this particular promissory note, I think of the resplendent Taiyang Zi….

“And this paper makes me think of Ji Xiaoxiao.

“This one makes me think of Song Luodan.

“And this one… Li Ling’er. This one is Sun Hai. It’s too bad I don’t have a promissory note from Fan Dong’er. Ji Yin didn’t write one either.” After looking over the promissory notes, he smiled wryly and realized that the enlightenment he had experienced didn’t seem to be the same as that of the middle-aged man in front of the well.

The man obviously missed an old friend or acquaintance, or perhaps a significant other. Meng Hao's experience was quite different than that.

Sighing, Meng Hao put the promissory notes back in his bag of holding and rose to his feet. After looking at the ruins one last time, he flickered off into the distance.

"I don't think the enlightenment of that place suits me," he thought, shaking his head. "If it did, how come I would think of promissory notes in a place that was clearly designed to make one think of old friends?" He turned into a beam of light that shot off into the distance.

Of course, his divine sense was backed by eighty percent of the power of a true Immortal, so when he sent it out to search for another ruin, he quickly found one, and then flew in that direction.

What he found was a dried-up old river.

The only thing left behind was an empty riverbed, and pressure once again radiated out as Meng Hao neared. This time, there was no voice, only pressure, and this pressure was stronger than that which he had experienced at the well.

He sat down cross-legged in the riverbed and wrestled against the pressure for about an hour. When he returned to his normal state, he was panting, and more sweat poured down his forehead.

"If there are 99 sets of ruins like this, plus an intact Immortal pavilion, then that means that the more enlightenment I gain, the better my results will be when I create my divine ability.

"However… I'm only at the second ruin and it's already so difficult. I wonder how many ruins some of the others have reached enlightenment in." Meng Hao frowned and looked at the riverbed. Fighting back against the pressure with his willpower, he began to experience a vision.

He saw water flowing up into the sky, and boundless waves. This river seemed capable of shaking Heaven and Earth. As it flowed upward, it cut a huge rift through the sky.

“I bet if I can understand this river,” he murmured to himself, “I’ll be able to create a divine ability that has to do with flowing water. When I unleash it, a celestial river would appear all around me that would sweep over everything.” After thinking about it, he decided that such a divine ability would definitely be powerful. Therefore, he continued to sit there cross-legged, silently trying to reach enlightenment.

However, after six hours flowed by, he opened his eyes in frustration. After all that time, he wasn’t even able to organize his thoughts.

“When I look at the river, I know that it can lead to enlightenment about a divine ability, but I can’t stop thinking about the river beneath Mount Daqing, the bottle gourd I threw into it, and the slip of paper that was inside.” Scratching his head in puzzlement, he remembered how he had written down his great aspiration onto that note, and how he still hadn’t achieved that goal. He couldn’t help but sigh. 1

“It seems this place doesn’t suit me either,” he thought.

Standing, he sent his divine sense out to look for more ruins.

Meanwhile, everyone out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea was watching the various scenes playing out on the Ancient Roads of the Nascent Soul, Spirit Severing, and Dao Seeking. Of course, everything was quite blurry; not even the Patriarchs from the various sects up in the starry sky palace could clearly see what was happening.

After all, these Immortal ruins were filled with incredible power. It wouldn’t be until the various participants created their final divine ability that everyone outside would be able to see what was happening.

However, the audience was able to see the three Ancient Roads, and knew that all of the participants were trying to gain enlightenment from the ruins.

Up in the starry sky palace, the various Patriarchs were discussing the scenes on the screen.

“It seems most of the competitors are still immersed in studying their first Immortal ruin. I wonder what type of enlightenment will be gained by the person who studies the most!?”

“Well whoever that is, they will definitely be able to create an incredibly powerful divine ability, that much is certain.”

“That’s right, Sir Fan from the Ninth Sea God World gained enlightenment from 91 of the Immortal ruins. That was how he managed to create the stunning and peerless Mortal Sea Becomes Immortal! In the end, he got 19 stone steles!”

“Creating divine abilities has a lot to do with one’s disposition. Grand and magnificent people create divine abilities that match their personality, whereas people with narrow thinking tend to make extreme divine abilities. Different personalities, different divine abilities.”

It was at this point that the Patriarch from the Burning Incense Stick Society suddenly looked over at Meng Hao’s screen. “Huh? Fang Mu has already gained enlightenment from two Immortal ruins!”

Shockingly, two bright dots could be seen on Meng Hao’s screen.

Meanwhile, on the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul, Fatty was sitting next to a woodpile, seemingly in a daze. The woodpile seemed ancient, as if it had existed for countless years, and was over three hundred meters tall, towering above the lands.

At the very top of the woodpile was a magic fungus!

It was an enormous magic fungus shaped like a millstone, completely violet in color, and emanating a fragrant aroma. Fatty swallowed, and then his eyes began to shine brightly.

“That thing is a treasure…. Just smell it and you can tell it’s some Heavenly material or Earthly treasure.” He immediately produced a flying sword from his bag of holding and sent it flying toward the magic fungus. The sword trembled as it neared, then was hit with a jolt that sent it flying back. The mushroom did not move one iota.

Fatty’s eyes shone with determination, and he produced some more magical items, then pushed out hard with his cultivation base. After an hour passed, he had not even succeeded in breaking the magic fungus’ skin.

“I don’t believe it!” he said, leaping to his feet. Gritting his teeth, he flew up to the magic fungus and then opened his mouth ferociously and bit it.

When he bit down, he couldn’t help but scream out in pain as he tumbled backward. Stars swam in his eyes, and his teeth felt as if they might shatter. Tears flowed down his cheeks, and his expression was much the same as that year back in the Violet Fate Sect when Meng Hao had concocted a special medicinal pill for him to eat.

“I won’t back down!” he roared, flying forward again and using all the power he could summon from his cultivation base and focusing it on his treasure-like teeth. Once again, he bit down viciously onto the magic fungus.

Pain washed over him, but Fatty endured it and surged with even more energy.

“There’s nothing that Grandpa Fatty can’t bite through!” he cried, his eyes shot with blood as he bit down even more viciously. It was fortunate that no one was here to witness what was happening, otherwise they would have been dumbstruck.

If someone were to paint this scene, it would depict Fatty, looking much like a wolfhound as he tore at the magic fungus with his teeth….

After biting it over and over again for an hour, Fatty let out a roar of rage and finally, was able to bite a tiny chunk out of the magic fungus.

His eyes were bright red as he chewed the magic fungus viciously and then swallowed it. He was just about to continue with his efforts when suddenly, a tremor ran through him, and he flopped over onto his back, unconscious.

After lying there unmoving for two hours, he finally opened his eyes, and they looked blank.

“What a dream!” he thought. “I saw myself creating a divine ability….” After a moment, his eyes began to shine with a bright light, and he resumed ripping at the magic fungus until he tore off another chunk, after which he passed out again.

The cycle repeated itself over and over again, so many times that even Fatty was unaware of how long it had been going on. Eventually, he had managed to eat about half of the magic fungus.

Also on the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul was Chen Fan, who stood silently next to an enormous boulder. A brush could be seen in his hand, and his expression was blank, as if he were submerged in a reverie. Finally, he extended his hand and began to draw the image of a woman.

It was none other than his wife, Shan Ling.

“My spirit has darkened,” he murmured, “but I won’t forget love, not for the rest of my life.”

In another location was Wang Youcai, in front of whom was an enormous bronze mirror that looked completely and utterly ancient. He sat there cross-legged, staring at the image of himself in the mirror.

A vicious expression could be seen on his face, which was sometimes replaced by blankness, and then other times, an expression of enlightenment. He had already been sitting there for a long time.

His voice was hoarse as he said: “When I look at the world, when I look out at Heaven and Earth, I see the future, and I see the past…. However, I know that these eyes of mine can see more than that!” He almost appeared to be on the verge of going mad.

When Meng Hao, Dong Hu, and Wang Youcai had joined the Reliance Sect that year, Meng Hao could be described as quick-witted, Dong Hu as somber, and Wang Youcai as stubborn!

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# Chapter 851: Loyal Personality

There was one other familiar person on the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul, Li Shiqi.

She wore a long white robe, and walked slowly across the black soil, sending out divine sense until she found an Immortal ruin off in the distance.

She would not make her selection casually, nor rashly begin to test herself against the ruin. That was her personality.

After walking along for some time, she finally came across a blood-colored lake. At one time, the lake had been vast and deep, but now there wasn’t much left to it.

At the very bottom, a bloody flower was visible.

It was an orchid that was as red as blood.

A Blood Orchid.

Li Shiqi looked at the orchid silently for a while, after which a gleam of determination appeared in her eyes, and she walked toward it. This was the first ruin she had selected. Now that she had made her decision, she would see it through to the end. That was her personality.

“There is much good fortune in this world,” she murmured softly, “and I can’t have all of it. I just want to find something that is suitable for me, that will be good enough.” As she walked toward the Blood Orchid, she felt increasing pressure. Eventually, she sat down cross-legged, her expression blank as she submerged herself in contemplation.

Virtually all of the people on the three Ancient Roads were similarly deep in contemplation. Some were like Li Shiqi, who made her selection carefully. Others tried out one Immortal ruin after another.

Different personalities. Different paths.

Time passed. Everyone was fighting for their own future, attempting to gain enlightenment regarding their own personal divine ability. The crowds outside in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were all watching closely and patiently. This was the creation of a divine ability, not some simple copy of some other magic. The more time one spent developing the divine ability, the more likely it would lead to something breathtaking.

“After these three stages, there will definitely be people who become famous overnight and draw the attention of all of the sects. There might even be some people, whether they are on the name lists or not, who be immediately recruited!”

“There will also be people who suffer disastrous failures and completely lose any advantage they previously had.”

“We definitely have to watch closely in case someone creates a ten-stele divine ability. In the future, that person will surely be deemed Chosen.”

Conversations like this played out in many of the various areas in the Ninth Mountain and Sea where people had gathered to watch the trial by fire. Some of those people were Chosen like Taiyang Zi, who had been to Planet South Heaven, but most of them were people who had never seen Meng Hao, only heard of his name.

As of this moment, all of these Chosen were watching the trial by fire with their own thoughts and feelings.

They knew that there very well might be people participating who in future days would be their competition within their own sect.

Time passed by. Soon, three days had passed. Meng Hao had already passed through 19 Immortal ruins, and after spending some time at each one had left disappointed and wondering if something was defective about him.

“It’s so depressing….” he said with a sigh. “How come the enlightenment I achieve at each of these ruins always has to do with spirit stones….” Currently, he was walking up to an enormous copper mirror, which, as soon as he laid eyes on it, filled him with the impulse to pull out a spirit stone and put it on the surface of the mirror.

After a moment, Meng Hao left the mirror, his face filled with determination.

“Apparently each one of these ruins makes me involuntarily think about spirit stones. That inevitably leads to thinking about those promissory notes… Well then, I’ll just make a divine ability that’s completely unique!” Taking a deep breath, he made his decision, and his eyes began to shine with a strange light. The more he thought about it, the more sense his choice made.

His body flashed as he shot off toward another Immortal ruin.

More time went by. Fatty had passed out and regained consciousness numerous times during the past few days. Every time he awoke, he would grab hold of the mushroom and viciously chomp a few bites out of it. He was currently chewing the final mouthful of the magical fungus. Feeling a bit anxious about leaving anything behind, he bit a chunk out of the wooden stump that the mushroom had been growing out of, swallowed it down, and then passed out again with a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction, and a look of anticipation.

Chen Fan still stood in front of the boulder, painting his beloved wife. His brush moved with increasing quickness, and Shan Ling’s image was becoming clearer and more and more lifelike with each brushstroke.

Wang Youcai continued to sit in front of the bronze mirror, his eyes bloodshot to the point where tears of blood were dripping down his face and onto his clothes. His entire body was trembling, and blue veins bulged out on his face and neck. His expression was savage and hideous.

“I can see more than this!!”

As Li Shiqi quietly stared at the Blood Orchid, her previously white clothes were beginning to turn red, the exact same red as the flower itself.

Three more days passed. Meng Hao had now passed through 39 Immortal ruins. It was at this point that rumbling echoed out from the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul, and all the cultivators in the Ninth Mountain and Sea who were watching the Ancient Roads turned their attention to the Nascent Soul vortex screen with eagerness.

“Someone succeeded!”

“The sound’s coming from the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul! I wonder how many stone steles will appear!”

The Patriarchs in the palace floating in the sky all began to look over.

On the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul, an old man had lifted his head back and was laughing uproariously. He waved his hand, and all of the black-colored mud and soil around him suddenly lifted up into the air, then began to form together into a statue. It had three heads and six arms, and as soon as it fully coalesced, emanated a shocking might.

“I have gained the enlightenment of this barrow!” declared the man. “This soil contains spirits, spirits that I will transmogrify into the divine wills of the people who are buried here! This will become my divine ability, which I shall henceforth name… Descent of the Spirits!”

As the old man’s voice rang out, two stone steles rumbled out from the void to land in front of him. A powerful glow could be seen that filled the entire world, revealing everything clearly to the onlookers.

“Two stone steles…. Not bad! This guy’s pretty good!”

“He also used the least amount of time. Earlier, nobody really noticed him, but now people are going to start paying attention to him.” As the discussions continued among the spectators, the representatives from the various sects quickly began to add the old man’s name to their records.

However, even while the old man’s laughter was still ringing out, rumbling sounds could be heard from seven or eight other cultivators on the three various Ancient Roads, as they too completed their divine abilities.

Rumbling filled the air as one stone stele after another descended. In all cases, though, there were only two pillars, never three.

In the following days, more and more contestants completed their divine abilities, one after another. All of the three Ancient Roads were the same. At the very least, one stone stele appeared, and at the most, four, which of course attracted much attention.

Suddenly, on the seventh day, on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking, a roar could be heard unlike anything before it.

The old man with the age-transformation powers now bore the appearance of a middle-aged man, an age that was truly the prime of life. He floated in midair, performing an incantation gesture, causing an extra layer of skin to appear on him, which then began to peel off as if he was molting. These were not scattered bits of flesh, but a fully connected body of skin!

The skin seemed to be smiling, although that smile was horrifying to look at!

“I have created this divine ability, Life Possession!” he said coolly as he floated there in midair. “This skin that I have shed can possess the body of even a false Immortal!” Everything rumbled as eight stone steles descended.

Those eight steles caused wild colors to flash about, and sent the crowds out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea completely abuzz.

There were even several Patriarchs in the starry sky palace whose eyes shone with gleams of surprise.

“Eight stone steles! What a shocking creation!”

“He performed well in the previous stages, and now that he’s created an eight-stele divine ability, it goes to show that he definitely has potential!”

“Hahaha! The Three Great Daoist Societies might not spare him a second glance, but the Seven Seas Sect must have disciples such as him.”

The outside world was in an uproar, too. Eight stone steles was currently the most that had appeared for anyone.

Almost in the same moment as the eight stone steles descended, rumbling could be heard coming from the images of more people on the Ancient Roads trial, as if some specific critical point had been reached. More divine abilities appeared, although none of them caused eight steles to descend; at most, six appeared.

But then… an incredible noise rose up on the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul, and everything began to tremble. Wind screamed and massive energy surged that stifled even the old man with the eight stone steles. Soon, all of the powerful experts in the outside world were looking over.

The source of the noise… was Fatty!

He hadn’t made a very big impression in the previous stages, mostly because of his lack of control. Now, he opened his eyes, and while they seemed blank at first, it was possible to see that nearly half of the huge woodpile had been consumed; it appeared to be in a shambles.

Fatty rose numbly to his feet, then suddenly opened his mouth and took a deep breath. That breath caused the Heavens to tremble, and clouds to gather together. In the blink of an eye… an enormous mouth was visible up above.

The mouth was filled with numerous razor-sharp teeth, and as it bit down toward the ground, it grew larger and larger, until it was more than ten thousand meters wide. Everything trembled violently as the enormous mouth slashed through anything and everything to take an enormous bite.

Everyone on the outside looked on with wide eyes and slack jaws.

It was at this point that the Heavens rippled as thirteen stone steles descended, rumbling, from up above. They were floating in the air around Fatty as his eyes grew clear from his previous reverie.

“Thirteen stone steles! What… what divine ability did that fat guy create?!?!”

“Thirteen stone steles! That’s second only to Sir Fan from back in the day! This little fatty is extraordinary! I never imagined that he would have such powerful intuition!!”

In the palace in the starry sky, the sect Patriarchs were all watching with wide eyes. Even the Three Daoist Societies were shocked. It was at this point that the Patriarch from the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum, one of the Five Holy Lands, suddenly rose to his feet. It was with incredible speed, and before anyone could react, that he shot forward and disappeared into the screen up ahead.

There were four other Patriarchs who stood up, but they weren’t fast enough, and the Patriarch from the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum suddenly appeared in the world in front of Fatty. He had long gray hair that draped down over his shoulders, and wore a long robe.

“What is the name of this divine ability?!” he asked as soon as he materialized. He immediately waved his hand, causing the entire area to be locked down so that no one else could enter.

Fatty started shivering.

“I’m not sure,” he replied, unsure of how this old man had appeared in front of him. “I just ate some of that wood, and the magical fungus, then I had a dream about being really hungry, and my gums were itching and I constantly felt like I had to file my teeth and eat stuff.”

“Excellent, excellent. A loyal personality and an excellent divine ability. Henceforth, it shall be known as Gulping Down Heaven!

“Are you willing to join the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum as one of our disciples?!” The old man’s eyes shone with a mysterious and approving light as he looked at Fatty.

“Uh, alright,” replied Fatty, blinking. Then he asked, “But… but what about all my beloved concubines back home? Can they come with me?”

“As I thought, you’re a man who values relationships. Don’t worry. Your concubines may also join the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum!” With an emotional sigh, the old man waved his hand. Fatty was covered with a brilliant light, and then he vanished, and the world around him collapsed. Back in the palace in the starry sky, the various Patriarchs weren’t very happy, but there was nothing they could do.

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# Chapter 852: Flowers in Full Bloom

The other Patriarchs were angrily grumbling in the palace up in the starry sky.

“Dammit, I was just a bit too slow and lost out on a potential star! He got snatched away!”

In the outside world, great waves of shock rolled about as a consequence of Fatty being taken as a disciple.

“What was that fat guy’s name again? I can’t believe he got taken as a disciple by the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum, one of the Five Great Holy Lands!”

“I’m pretty sure his name is Li Fugui. His life is sure going to be different from now on!”

“Considering he made a thirteen-stele divine ability, that Li Fugui is definitely Chosen. Think about it; it won’t be long before he has a cultivation base breakthrough. Eventually, he’ll definitely get to Dao Seeking, and then he’ll then move on to Immortality!”

“But what about that tree stump he was on top of? How come it had all those bite marks, as if a dog had been chewing on the wood? Was it like that from the beginning?”

All of the spectators outside in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were shaken inwardly. Some couldn’t figure out what to think, others were filled with envy.

As the discussions continued, another rumbling sound could be heard from the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul. This time, it came from Li Shiqi. By now, her garments were entirely the color of blood. She sat cross-legged next to the Blood Orchid, almost as if she herself had become a part of it!

She opened her eyes, and in that moment, the Blood Orchid… completely wilted!

When that happened, Li Shiqi's countenance shone with unprecedented spirit and vigor. Instantly, her cultivation base rose up, pushing her immeasurably close to Spirit Severing.

At first, she looked confused, but once she regained clarity, she performed an incantation with her delicate hand and then pointed up into the air. All the Heavens up above turned blood red, and a Blood Orchid materialized over her and slowly began to bloom.

Rumbling echoed out, and one stone stele after another descended from the blood-red Heavens. One, two, three… ten, twelve… thirteen….

In the end, fourteen stone steles fell from up above to stand tall in the earth around Li Shiqi, causing everything to tremble and shake. As Li Shiqi rose to her feet, she was the complete focus of all attention.

The audiences in the Ninth Mountain and Sea exploded into an uproar.

"Heavens! She's even more shocking than that fat guy! Fourteen stone steles!!"

"She was enlightened about the Blood Orchid? The Church of the Blood Orchid is definitely going to go crazy! They won't hesitate to pay any price to recruit her!"

"How could it be that two Chosen appeared on the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul? Neither of them were very eye-catching before, and yet now, they're so shocking!"

When Fatty made his debut, five Patriarchs in the starry sky palace had flown out, including the Patriarch from the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum. Now, however, seven people flew into the air. No one from the Three Great Daoist Societies had moved a muscle. However, even the Patriarch from Moonset Lake, one of the Five Great Holy Lands, was in motion.

The seven Patriarchs reached the screen at the same time, and then all of them appeared in front of Li Shiqi in the world of the trial by fire.

“Girl, are you willing to join the Moonset Lake, one of the Five Great Holy Lands?!”

“The Five Great Holy Lands already have plenty of Chosen,” said another of the seven. “If you join them, you might never be able to distinguish yourself. Based on your powers of understanding, you could definitely be an Empress of this generation in the Church of the Immortal Emperor!” Everyone was now trying to recruit Li Shiqi.

It was at this point that an old man wearing a blood-colored robe suddenly spoke up.

“You were enlightened regarding the Blood Orchid, and used that to create a divine ability. This shows that you have destiny connecting you to the Church of the Blood Orchid. Join us, and you will be in line to become our Holy Daughter!” The other six Patriarchs present were all shocked. The cultivators recruited from within the trial by fire usually had to pass through a probationary period. However, the Patriarch from the Church of the Blood Orchid offered to make a candidate their Holy Daughter, which was not in keeping with the general rule. However, considering she had been enlightened regarding the Blood Orchid, the others could understand.

Li Shiqi looked quietly for a moment at the old man from the Church of the Blood Orchid. Finally, she made a curtseying bow.

“Senior, I am Li Shiqi, and I am willing to join the Church of the Blood Orchid.”

The uproar in the outside world grew even more intense. Li Shiqi left with the Patriarch from the Church of the Blood Orchid, after which all the cultivators from that organization knew that a young woman named Li Shiqi was like the fish who had jumped over the dragon gate, and had successfully passed her examination.

In the future, her glory would likely exceed that of Li Fugui. She had gained enlightenment of the Blood Orchid, and had then created a divine ability from it. To the Church of the Blood Orchid, which had been established because of the Blood Orchid itself, this definitely qualified her to be a candidate to become a Holy Daughter.

By this time, Meng Hao had passed through 72 Immortal ruins. Fewer people were paying attention to him because of all the commotion caused by Fatty and Li Shiqi. However, some people with especially high cultivation bases were the type to consider the future, and look deeply into matters.

They did not participate in the various discussions, but when they saw Meng Hao gaining enlightenment from so many Immortal ruins, they were inwardly shocked. The Patriarchs in the palace were also paying attention to this, although no one took the initiative to say anything about it.

By now it was obvious that if any of the other sects tried to fight over someone like Meng Hao, they would be forced to offend the Three Great Daoist Societies. After all… the Three Great Daoist Societies were in charge of the entire trial by fire.

Everyone well knew that in the assessment of divine ability creation, only those with wild ambitions could gain enlightenment from so many Immortal ruins. Regardless of whether it be on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking, Spirit Severing, or the Nascent Soul, there were few people who walked the same path as Meng Hao. Most others gained enlightenment from a handful at most, which was a vast difference from Meng Hao.

As people in the outside world discussed the matter of Li Shiqi and Fatty, Wang Youcai sat cross-legged in front of the bronze mirror. His eyes were completely red, and continuously dripped with blood. His body was trembling, almost as if he were possessed.

“I can see even more! I can see everything….

“My latent talent doesn’t measure up to Dong Hu, and my cultivation base is not as good as Meng Hao’s. But I refuse to back down!” More blood built up in Wang Youcai’s eyes, and his pupils seemed on the verge of exploding.

“This is my only chance. In the past several stages, nobody was paying attention to me. But now… I WILL rise to prominence!

“I want to see… everything! I want to see all destinies. My eyes will see what lies beyond the Heavens, and past the underworld that lies beneath the Earth!” Blood flowed out of his eyes continuously, and his pupils were beginning to shatter.

After ten breaths of time… a rumbling sound could be heard from the world in which Wang Youcai sat. At the same time, Wang Youcai’s murmuring voice could be heard.

“I can see now….” In the instant he spoke the words, his eyes suddenly collapsed into pieces. Everything in front of him went black, and from this instant, was gone for all eternity. As his eyes shattered, he closed them.

The shattering occurred in a split second, and as it did, the world around Wang Youcai cracked and… exploded into pieces.

As everything fell apart, he rose to his feet. Stone steles were descended through the shattered canopy above, one after another. By now, all attention on the outside world was focused on Wang Youcai.

They saw the world shatter, and saw the stone steles descended, and everyone gasped.

One, five, ten, thirteen, fifteen….

A total of sixteen stone steles descended, swirling around Wang Youcai, who stood there quietly with his eyes closed.

“Henceforth, my eyes shall remain closed in perpetuity. Should they open, Heaven and Earth will experience shocking changes!

“My divine ability, is called…. Blackest Night.”

As Wang Youcai’s voice rang out, the Ninth Mountain and Sea looked on in astonishment.

“Sixteen stone steles! There are actually sixteen stone steles!”

“That’s Heaven-defying! From ancient times until now, the only person who ever exceeded that is Sir Fan of the Ninth Sea God World, whose exploits are recorded in the ancient records!!”

“I bet even the Three Great Daoist Societies are shocked!”

In the starry sky palace, many of the Patriarchs of the various sects gasped as they watched Wang Youcai. Even they were shocked by what they were seeing.

“He destroyed his own eyes to create a divine ability, leaving him blind! However, considering his battle prowess, even though he’s in the Nascent Soul stage, he’s capable of slaughtering Spirit Severing! When he reaches Dao Seeking, if he opens his eyes, the result will be shocking.”

“How ruthless! How stubborn!”

Ten people flew toward the display screens with incredible speed. The fastest was the Patriarch from Moonset Lake. However, he did not enter the screen, but rather turned and clasped hands to everyone else.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, Fellow Daoists, the Daoist magic of Moonset Lake is quite suitable for this child. After the moon sets, there is no light in the sky. Instead, the black night is endlessly deep. I request… that you please do not fight with me over this child!

“Daoist Elders of the Three Great Daoist Societies, if you give some face to Moonset Lake, then we promise to repay the favor in future days!” He clasped hands and bowed deeply, his expression very somber. Everyone else stopped in their tracks, their eyes glittering. No one spoke, but instead looked toward the Patriarchs from the Three Great Daoist Societies.

The Patriarch from the Ninth Sea God World thought for a moment and then nodded his head. “I take no issue.”

Sitting in the center position of the Patriarchs from the Three Great Daoist Societies was an old man who had the bearing of a transcendent being. He wore a white robe, and had a calm expression. Immortal qi swirled around him as he said, “There is a person here who has destiny with the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite. However, he will not join us during this trial by fire. Actually, the only reason I agreed to hold this event was to see him. The person you have mentioned is not him, so I will do nothing to stop you.”

Next to him was an old man from the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto. He smiled slightly, a smile that seemed somewhat cold and almost looked like a fierce sword.

“I have also taken a liking to this child, but… huh?” The old man from the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto had just begun speaking when suddenly, his face flickered, and he looked over at the screens. Next to him, the Patriarchs from the Ninth Sea God World and the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite did the same.

“91!”

“He’s gained enlightenment from 91 Immortal ruins!”

On the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking, Meng Hao stood in a tall pagoda. When his eyes opened, they seemed confused, but quickly regained clarity. Without pause, he left and headed in another direction.

He sent his divine sense out, looking for more Immortal ruins, eventually finding the 92nd, and then the 93rd….

Time passed by on the Ancient Roads. One person after another created their divine abilities, but none were as shocking as those which had occurred earlier. Chen Fan created his divine ability, but only eight stone steles descended in response.

At any other time, it would have been shocking, but at this point, it was nothing especially noteworthy.

Time passed, and now more attention was being paid to the participants who had not created their divine abilities yet, but were still continuing to gain enlightenment from the Immortal ruins. Everyone understood that these people would either fail, or would have Heaven-defying results.

Once again, Meng Hao became the center of attention. By now, the number of Immortal ruins he had gained enlightenment from had exceeded that of Sir Fan!

“96!!”

“Does he really seem like the kind of person who can gain enlightenment from all 99 ruins? From ancient times until now, less than a hundred people have ever done that! Of course, of all those people, Sir Fan was the only person that ended up creating a nineteen-stele divine ability!”

“No one else could measure up to Sir Fan. I wonder how many stone steles… will descend when Fang Mu creates his divine ability!?”

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# Chapter 853: Nine Bridges!

Outside in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, everyone was watching Meng Hao and discussing his progress.

“Maybe he’ll outdo Wang Youcai from earlier. Or who knows, maybe he won’t match up!”

“There’s no way he’ll come in behind Wang Youcai. From ancient times until now, less than a hundred people have ever gained enlightenment from more than 90 Immortal Ruins!”

“You can tell that this Fang Mu has terrifying divine sense and incredible willpower. The final creation of his divine ability will truly be a test of his intuition!”

In the palace in the starry sky, each and every one of the various Patriarchs were also staring fixedly at the screen that represented Meng Hao’s area.

While everyone paid such close attention to the screens, Meng Hao was standing atop a towering cliff. His eyes opened, and his expression was blank like before. Then he headed off into another direction.

Nearby the cliff were the ruins of an archaic temple. This was the 97th Immortal ruin he had gained enlightenment from, which then caused another dot of light to appear on his screen in the outside world. That immediately sent everyone into an uproar.

“97 Immortal ruins! This Fang Mu defies the Heavens!”

“I can’t wait to see whether or not he can create an even more Heaven-defying divine ability!”

“It’s not guaranteed. Of all the people who have done a similar thing, only Sir Fan followed up with a peerless divine ability!”

As for all the other people who were going about the trial by fire in the same way as Meng Hao, the person with the next greatest amount of Immortal ruins under their belt only had 83!

That was the young man in the mask. Had Meng Hao not participated in the trial by fire, he would definitely have been the complete center of attention in the previous stages, and would now be in first place.

Meng Hao’s appearance on the scene cast him in the shadows.

Currently, he had no idea what was going on outside his own world. His expression was one of determination as he gritted his teeth and continued onward. He left the 83rd Immortal ruin and then began to search for another.

As more time passed, they made slower and slower progress. It took a few days before Meng Hao finally regained his senses in the 97th Immortal Ruin. After sitting there cross-legged for some time, he slowly rose to his feet and made his way to a different location, a deep crater.

Glittering light could be seen deep within the crater, as if, years in the past, a meteor had smashed down here.

This was not a location that just anyone could find. Anyone who did find it would find it difficult to endure the pressure. Only Meng Hao, with his incredible divine sense and shocking willpower, was able to descend into the crater and then sit down cross-legged.

“98!” The crowds in the outside world were shocked, and the Patriarchs in the starry sky palace looked on with glittering eyes.

“After this, there’s only one more, and that will be all 99!”

“From ancient times until now, no one in the Spirit Realm has ever gained enlightenment from so many Immortal ruins on the Ancient Road of Dao

Seeking!”

“Who exactly is this Fang Mu?! Where is he from? If he can really pull it off, his fame will shake all of the Ninth Mountain!” The outside world was abuzz, but the palace in the starry sky was dead silent.

All of the Patriarchs from the various sects were paying close attention, and none of them were speaking.

As for the other competitors in the trial by fire, no one was paying attention to any of them. Even the masked young man, who had just reached the 88th Immortal ruin, was behind Meng Hao, who was clearly in first place.

Five days passed!

Meng Hao slowly opened his eyes. He looked exhausted, and even more blank than before. This time, he had teetered on the edge of not awakening. The crater was filled with chunks and fragments of stone, each one of which emitted different auras, which had combined together to transform into an ancient vortex that influenced the mind.

It was as if he had been experiencing a Daoist magic that came straight from an ancient era. Someone had waved a hand, and a star up above was crushed down into a meteor, which then slammed into the ground.

The massive blow had cracked the land, and shattered some of the heavenly bodies up above. In that instant, Meng Hao had felt as if his own divine sense were being ripped to shreds. It was only by virtue of his intense willpower that he was able to claw his way back to lucidity.

“More and more difficult….” he thought. “I’ve already gained enlightenment from 98 Immortal ruins. According to what Ling Yunzi said, there are a total of 99 Immortal ruins, and after that, an intact Immortal pavilion!

“But, after sending my divine sense out, I can sense the final Immortal ruin, but not any Immortal pavilion.

“Unfortunately, even with my divine sense, I’m only able to sense the general direction of that final Immortal ruin, and not anything specific about it. However, I have a premonition that it… is very dangerous!” After a moment, he stood up and walked silently out of the crater. After that, he stood on the edge of the crater, thinking.

He was currently hesitating about whether to continue onward, or just make his divine ability right here. By this point, he already had some ideas about what type of divine ability he wanted to create.

After a moment, his eyes shone with decisiveness. He was not the type of person to back down easily. Even if the danger was great, he was stubborn. Were that not the case, he would not have been able to travel the long path from being a scholar to possessing eighty percent of the power of a true Immortal!

“The more powerful the divine ability, the more stone steles will descend. And I need stone steles!” Meng Hao took a deep breath, ceased any thoughts of hesitation, then headed off in the direction of the 99th Immortal ruin, as indicated by his divine sense.

Although he didn’t know the specific location, Meng Hao was confident that he would be able to find it. He just needed to expend a little bit of time.

One day. Two days. Three days….

The palace in the starry sky was completely silent as the Patriarchs of the various sects looked on.

Then, an archaic voice echoed out within the palace. This person had not spoken at all yet, nor had he attempted to solicit recruits. It was an old man from the Kunlun Society.

“Can he find the 99th Immortal ruin? Actually, I’m very curious about something. This 99th ruin which is shared by all three Ancient Roads… what exactly does it look like?

“Fellow Daoists of the Three Great Daoist Societies, could you quell my curiosity?”

Were it any other sect that inquired about the matter, the Three Great Daoist Societies would pay no heed to the question. But the Kunlun Society was different. The three Patriarchs from the Three Great Daoist Societies exchanged glances, after which the old man from the Ninth Sea God World spoke up.

“According to the legends, during the great war, the three exalted Paragons united all of the Immortal Ancient Doyens. They extracted all of the Immortal qi from the world and sacrificed it to a boundless spirit, which was the fallen… Pāramitā Heaven-treading Foundation!” 1

These words provoked a collective gasp from all of the Patriarchs. Looks of astonishment appeared on their faces, and some of them even rose to their feet.

“WHAT?!”

“The legendary Pāramitā Foundation?”

The Kunlun Society elder’s eyes went wide. He said nothing, but from his expression, he was clearly shaken.

Time passed, and Meng Hao continued to search for the 99th Immortal ruin. More people created divine abilities on the three Ancient Roads. There were also people who failed, and chose to give up.

Seven days later, there were only seven people on the three Ancient Roads who had yet to create a divine ability!

Those seven people were now the subject of intense scrutiny. Everyone was watching to see what would happen. There was one person on the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul, two people on the Ancient Road of Spirit Severing, and the remaining four were on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking.

One of them was the young man in the mask, another was the cultivator with the mosquitos.

“If anybody in this trial by fire can exceed twenty stone steles, it’s one of these seven!”

“See that one, with 90 Immortal ruins? His name is Li Yan, that cultivator with the mask. He’s yet another that has gained enlightenment of 90!!” 2

“This is really incredible. Now there’s a second person in this trial by fire who has acquired enlightenment from 90 Immortal ruins!”

There were many cries of shock in the crowds in the outside world as quite a few people began to pay attention to the masked young man, Li Yan. As for the Patriarchs in the starry sky palace, they too would occasionally glance away from Meng Hao to look at the masked young man’s screen.

Currently, Meng Hao was making his way through the world, following the direction of his divine sense as he searched for the 99th Immortal ruin. He had already searched for seven days, and felt certain that he had thoroughly explored all of the areas indicated by his divine sense. Despite that, he still hadn’t found the ruin.

“Just… where is it?” Suddenly, Meng Hao stopped in place. Frowning, he looked around silently, and then simply closed his eyes. He sent his divine sense out again, and could vaguely sense that there were Immortal ruins up ahead of him. When he opened his eyes, he saw nothing.

Muttering to himself, he closed his eyes again. Then, without opening his eyes, he began to walk forward. It was using this method that he proceeded on for about two hours until, suddenly, his body trembled.

He did not open his eyes, and yet, was able to see something incredible with his divine sense, right there in front of him.

He saw… nine bridges! 3

Nine incredibly shocking bridges that seemed to rise above the heavens. The sight of these bridges was unmatchably astonishing as they rose up into the air, each one higher than the one before it. They formed something that almost looked like a staircase, linking up into the boundless starry sky.

As he examined the bridges with his divine sense, Meng Hao gradually got the feeling that if someone could tread these nine bridges all the way to their end, then that person would definitely become matchlessly powerful.

Meng Hao’s body was trembling; there was an indescribable pressure radiating out from the bridges, something that seemed capable of crushing him in an instant. Right now, it wasn’t being sent out at full force, but rather, simply swirling around the bridges.

Even still, Meng Hao coughed up a mouthful of blood and staggered backward several paces. He had the intense sensation that these nine bridges were actually incomplete. Were they intact, then even looking at them would destroy him in body and spirit.

“What exactly are these bridges?!?!” he gasped, not daring to open his eyes. He carefully observed with his divine sense, and began to experience a vision.

He saw illusory images of things that had happened countless years in the past. He saw a figure that looked like a sun attempting to tread on the bridges. However, before he could get past the first bridge, he shattered into countless pieces.

He saw an old man with white hair, who radiated boundless coldness. He stepped onto the first bridge, then the second….

As he proceeded higher and higher, he became more and more powerful. In the end, all the colors in the sky and the land faded. The ninth bridge began to tremble, as if it couldn’t stand up to the old man’s steps.

The old man reached the end and stood atop the final bridge. Then he turned, and Meng Hao was able to clearly see his eyes. In that instant, Meng Hao’s mind filled with roaring.

Blood sprayed from his mouth, and he once again staggered back. When he lifted his head back up, he unhesitatingly opened his eyes.

As soon as his eyes opened, the nine bridges vanished. The air up ahead of him was absolutely empty, devoid of any object.

“This place is the location of the 99th Immortal ruin!” Meng Hao was panting, and his eyes glowed with a strange light. He wiped the blood from his mouth, sat down cross-legged, and rotated his cultivation base to begin healing his injuries.

It was at this point that, in the outside world, 99 dots of light appeared on the screen which represented him in the outside world!

99!

1. Here is some more information about Pāramitā. Also, I translated Pāramitā as “resurrection” in the Resurrection Lily. When I first researched the Resurrection Lily, I came across references to Pāramitā in connection to the lily. It could have been translated Pāramitā Flower or Pāramitā Lily. However, the “Pāramitā Lily” is a real flower which (in real life) is sometimes called a resurrection lily, because of how the dead flowers once again bloom in summer. In any case, to forestall any confusion, the Pāramitā referenced here does not have a connection to the Resurrection Lily, and I think in this situation, Pāramitā is definitely the more accurate translation

2. Li Yan’s name in Chinese is lí yán – Li means, among other things, “depart.” Yan means “flame” or “scorching”

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# Chapter 854: Secret Clues!

“He found it!” In the palace, the old men from the Three Great Daoist Societies were all watching with brightly shining eyes. This was especially true of the old man from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite, whose entire face glowed with unprecedented brightness.

“He is the first person from ancient times until now to tread the Ancient Road with a Spirit Realm cultivation base and find the Pāramitā Heavenly Foundation!”

“He can only observe from a distance, not get near. Based on his divine sense and willpower, he should be able to determine that it isn’t safe. He won’t brazenly get close.”

“That depends on his good fortune. In these worlds of the sixth, seventh, and eighth stages, time passes differently than in the outside world. Actually, contemplating enlightenment for one day in there is like spending ten years at it out here!”

Murmured conversations filled the palace.

In contrast, the crowds in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were buzzing with chatter.

When they saw the 99th dot of light, everyone knew exactly what it meant. Everyone was in an uproar, and now, the name Fang Mu was deeply imprinted in the hearts of everyone present.

Even as everyone on the outside was in a tumult, Meng Hao opened his eyes. He breathed heavily for a moment, then gritted his teeth and closed his eyes again. He sent his divine sense out to once again observe the nine astonishing bridges.

The bridges appeared to be complete, but Meng Hao knew that if they had been, he would have been killed simply by looking at them. Right now, even observing them from a distance caused him to be injured. Actually, it was a good thing the bridges were broken down. Otherwise, considering his cultivation base, as soon as his divine sense touched them, he would have been completely annihilated.

“Nine Heaven-defying bridges like this were actually destroyed…. These are no mere bridges! They were obviously especially created to allow cultivators to experience incredible cultivation base growth, to be able to punch through to an incredible realm of power!

“I never imagined that I would be able to see something like this here! This is extremely good fortune for me!” As he thought about it, Meng Hao’s mind suddenly trembled.

“There was never any rule about only being able to create one divine ability…. In that case, why not create two?” Originally, Meng Hao had already devised a plan to create a divine ability, but after seeing the nine bridges, a new form of enlightenment had appeared in his mind, which then transformed into the shape of a divine ability. Furthermore, he didn’t wish to give up on either of the two ideas.

The first divine ability aligned perfectly with his personality. As for the second one, Meng Hao sincerely desired to possess it.

He took a deep breath and then decided to stop thinking about it. He focused his divine sense on the nine bridges, and on resisting the pressure. Not only was he imprinting the image of the bridge onto his mind, he decided to try to get a bit closer, to acquire a bit of good fortune from the pressure weighing down.

Time slowly passed by.

Ten days later, only four people remained. The other three had finally realized they couldn’t continue to gain enlightenment from the Immortal ruins, and had decided to create their divine abilities. Of those three, the individual who had found the most Immortal ruins had found 76.

The divine abilities they created were powerful. One of them caused eleven stone steles to descend, which provoked a lot of attention.

Ten more days passed, and of the four remaining people on the Ancient Roads, two of them could not continue, and chose to create their divine abilities. One of them was the young man with the mosquitos, who had found 89 Immortal ruins. At that point, he created a thirteen-stele divine ability.

Quite a few people were astonished by this, and the young man quickly rose to prominence.

As of this moment, there were only two people left on the Ancient Road. One of them was Meng Hao, and the other was the young man in the mask, Li Yan!

Li Yan had already found the 93rd Immortal ruin, and was now the second person in the trial by fire to have exceeded Sir Fan.

He and Meng Hao were the focus of the attention of the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Three more days passed. Meng Hao coughed up some blood, and his vision went blurry. During the more than twenty days that had passed, he had sustained injuries on multiple occasions as he forced himself to continue to contemplate the nine bridges, and imprint their image on his mind.

It was difficult, but with his intense willpower, he was slowly but surely able to continue to grind away. He was not so wildly ambitious that he intended to commit all nine bridges to memory, only the first one.

Finally, the twenty-first day arrived. In this special location, contemplating enlightenment for that amount of time was like spending more than two hundred years on the outside. Rumbling filled Meng Hao’s mind, and his eyes shone with the glow of enlightenment as the full image of the first bridge materialized in front of him.

In that instant, deep within his mind, he was able to sense exactly how damaged the bridge was. Suddenly, ninety-nine percent of the bridge actually vanished, and he found that the first bridge was actually… nothing more than a fist-sized rock!

It was a mere stone, but even looking at it caused Meng Hao to cough up blood, and he knew that if he approached it, he would be destroyed in body and spirit. These more than twenty days of contemplation were like two hundred or more years in the outside world.

In the moment that he understood the real situation regarding the first bridge, and the outline of the bridge itself appeared in his mind, images began to appear in his eyes, a vision.

Within the vision were nine enormous suns hauling an astonishing statue. They seemed so large that they were impossible to see the ends of. An army of countless cultivators lashed out with attacks that ripped a huge hole in the air, which they then entered.

Behind the shocking statue were nine astonishing bridges that shook the heavens. Boundless light that covered everything radiated off of them.

The scene caused Meng Hao's mind to tremble, and reminded him of the things he had seen back in the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple. Some of the images were almost exactly the same. 1

Then, the vision changed. He saw a world-shaking war. Countless living things were being slaughtered, and heavenly bodies collapsed. The starry sky shattered, and in every breath of time, endless numbers of lives perished.

The nine bridges exerted incredible pressure, causing the starry sky to begin to collapse. Next, Meng Hao saw three enormous figures appear up above. When they joined forces, the starry sky disappeared, and the world went black, as if all the auras in existence were absorbed, condensed to form nine mountains, which then crushed down toward the nine bridges.

The bridges… shattered!

The vision abruptly ended. Meng Hao had no time to thoroughly analyze the images before they vanished. He was left standing there, his jaw slack, his eyes wide. His mind was blank and trembling.

“Those nine mountains….” Meng Hao was panting. From what he could sense, he had only been able to glimpse a tiny bit of some huge secret.

“Why does the world I live in consist of only nine mountains and nine seas, with four planets circling around each of those mountains?!

“I never thought about it too much before, but how come Planet South Heaven is so special? Why did that Outsider want my parents to guard it?!

“Also, what about that place I went to underneath the Ancient Dao Lakes on Planet South Heaven? That being which was crushed and then sealed there said something like… Immortals are the source of all chaos! 2

“What exactly does that mean?!” Meng Hao’s breathing was unprecedentedly ragged, and he was shivering all over. He now had an idea of what it all meant, but didn’t dare to consider that it was true.

As his mind trembled, the nine bridges in front of him vanished. This time, they really were gone; even when Meng Hao searched with his divine sense, he was unable to find them.

After a long moment of silence, Meng Hao sighed lightly. The matter of the vision was something far removed from the current situation, and considering the level of his cultivation base, he wasn’t really qualified to begin to probe such secrets.

“One day, I’ll understand it all!” he thought, his eyes shining with determination. He took a deep breath and sent his divine sense out one last time. Seeing that it was impossible to locate the bridges, he decided to search for the Immortal pavilion that Ling Yunzi had mentioned.

Several days later, he still remained empty handed. No matter what methods he used, even closing his eyes, he was unable to detect any Immortal pavilion. In fact, he was now fairly certain that he would be unable to find it at all, so he decided to sit down cross-legged in the location where the nine bridges had stood, and begin to create his divine ability!

He quickly slipped into a trance.

Many ideas and thoughts flitted through his mind, as well as numerous flickering images. The enlightenment he had received in the 99 Immortal ruins began to merge together, until finally, a will exploded out from within his mind that was a divine ability belonging solely to him.

As Meng Hao was piecing together the enlightenment to create a divine ability, Li Yan had passed the 95th Immortal ruin, but could not find the 96th.

After a while, he had no choice but to stop regretfully and begin to create his divine ability.

By this point, everyone out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, as well as the Patriarchs in the starry sky palace, were now waiting to see what types of divine abilities Meng Hao and Li Yan would create.

There was something else going on that nobody in the palace noticed. Although the elders from the Three Great Daoist Societies seemed to be looking at the vortex screens with glittering eyes, deep within their gazes could be seen faint sighs of disappointment.

Such sighs were deeply hidden, yet seemed to be a disappointment that was not entirely unexpected.

Days passed, and the anticipation among the audience out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea only continued to grow.

“Just what types of divine abilities are Fang Mu and Li Yan creating? Which one will have the most stone steles?!”

“My guess is Fang Mu. After all, he gained enlightenment from 99 Immortal ruins. That’s unheard of!”

“It won’t necessarily be Fang Mu. It could be that he just took advantage of some lucky situations. In the end, I bet the best divine ability will be created by Li Yan!”

“If neither of them can create a sixteen-stele divine ability, then that means Wang Youcai will take first place in the sixth, seventh, and eighth stages!”

Two more days passed, when suddenly the area around the masked Li Yan burst into flames.

The flames were black, and instantly set the Heavens ablaze. Li Yan’s eyes opened, and his pupils were composed entirely of fire!

Flames roared all around him, covering the land, burning everything. The entire world became a sea of flames, and then began to melt, as if it couldn’t sustain the heat. The people outside in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were now able to clearly see Li Yan and everything that was happening in his world.

Gasps rang out from many areas in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, and in the palace in the starry sky, the Patriarchs looked on with strange gleams in their eyes. The old man from the Bones of the Flamedevil, one of the Five Great Holy Lands, couldn’t help but observe with wide, glowing eyes.

“Li Yan is incredible! What type of flame divine ability did he create? It can actually melt the entire world!”

“He’ll definitely get at least sixteen steles. His divine ability appears to be on a similar level as Wang Youcai’s, but from the feel of it, it’s more powerful!”

Li Yan slowly stood, a proud expression on his face beneath the mask. Then, he breathed in three times.

Each breath caused everything to tremble, and the flame sea to spread out even farther. After three breaths, the entire world was engulfed in flames. Finally, Li Yan inhaled deeply.

When he inhaled, all of the flames in the world began to churn and roil, tumbling toward Li Yan as he sucked them into his body.

Next, a rumbling sound emanated out from his body, and although no one could see any flames, when they looked at Li Yan himself, it caused them to feel twinges of pain like that caused by fire.

“A body magic!”

“Heavens! That’s the most difficult thing to create! A body magic!!”

“It’s not just any body magic, that’s almost a Daoist magic!”

“Although it’s not a complete Daoist magic, it’s definitely unique. If in the future he continues to cultivate it to the peak, there’s a high likelihood he could refine it into a true legacy Daoist magic!!”

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# Chapter 855: A Bit of Karma!

Everyone in the Ninth Mountain and Sea was completely shaken. In the starry sky palace, the Patriarchs of the various sects looked on with strange gleams in their eyes. The elder from the Holy Land of the Bones of the Flamedevil chuckled and rose to his feet.

“Presumably, this young man is not the type to be selected by the Three Great Daoist Societies. This magic is connected by destiny to the Bones of the Flamedevil. Ladies and Gentlemen, I humbly request that you do not compete with me in this matter.” Even as he spoke, the old man moved with incredible speed. However, at the same time, eight or nine other people sped forward.

Of the Five Great Holy Lands, Wang Youcai and Fatty had been taken by the Moonset Lake and the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum respectively. Up to now, only the Blue Lotus Sky, Mount Sun, and the Bones of the Flamedevil hadn’t truly made a move. Now, though, they sprang into action.

Even as they neared Li Yan’s world, rumbling echoed out as multiple stone steles descended. One, three, five, seven….

In total, seventeen stone steles appeared!!

One more than Wang Youcai!

Each one of the seventeen stone steles was fully three hundred meters tall, and as they spun around Li Yan, they turned into a vortex that sent light towering up into the sky. Li Yan stood in the middle of it all, surrounded by the boundless glow, looking like an unparalleled Chosen.

When the crowds out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea saw the seventeen stone steles, they were completely shocked.

“From ancient times until now, he’s second only to Sir Fan!”

“Seventeen stone steles! He’s definitely worthy to have been enlightened regarding 95 Immortal ruins! He created a body magic that summoned seventeen stone steles!”

“It’s impossible to predict what kind of future he will have, especially since his cultivation base is at the peak of Dao Seeking. Once he joins a sect, he’ll get some training and will definitely become an incredible Chosen!”

All sorts of envious and jealous comments could be heard echoing out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. In Li Yan’s world, the Patriarchs from the various sects had arrived. After some bickering, the Bones of the Flamedevil managed to recruit Li Yan as a disciple.

As of now, the only person left in the world of the sixth, seventh, and eighth stages was Meng Hao. His divine ability had not fully been created yet.

Everyone was now watching closely, including the Three Great Daoist Societies in the palace up in the starry sky.

The anticipation in the air continued to grow more intense.

“If he can outdo everyone else, then he’ll take first place! Let’s see how many stone steles his divine ability will cause to descend!”

“He gained enlightenment from 99 Immortal ruins. If he gets anything less than fifteen stone steles, it would be completely disappointing!”

“It’s hard to say. I heard that one year, somebody gained enlightenment from 98 Immortal ruins, but in the end only created a nine-stele divine ability!”

Three days later, as Meng Hao sat there cross-legged, his eyes suddenly opened.

“Each time I gained enlightenment from the first 98 Immortal ruins,” he thought, “I saw images of spirit stones and promissory notes. In the future, I hope to make all the Chosen in the great Nine Mountains and Seas write me promissory notes!

“That is my grand aspiration….

“Writing me a promissory note is also sowing Karma, and those Karma threads can be used to interfere with fate. However, most people aren’t willing to write promissory notes. Therefore… I will create a divine ability that forms ties of destiny with them by force!” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered and he raised his right index finger.

Immediately, the world began to tremble as countless threads appeared. Some of the threads were bright, and some were dark, but all were Karma Threads, and they did not originate from this world, but from Meng Hao!

Shockingly, just a movement of his finger had caused all of his Karma Threads to become visible. The entire world began to shake even more violently, and roaring filled the air, as if the entire place were about to collapse.

Meng Hao looked up and gazed at the Karma Threads, and his eyes glittered brightly. He suddenly formed his right hand into a claw, which reached out and grabbed one of the Karma Threads. The instant he touched it, he suddenly saw an image of Fan Dong’er.

He yanked on the Thread, and it twisted. At the same time, Meng Hao pulled out a piece of paper. Then, he unhesitatingly caused the Karma Thread to twist into the shape of a magical symbol, which he then imprinted onto the piece of paper.

As soon as the mark appeared, Fan Dong’er, who sat cross-legged in meditation in the Ninth Sea God World trying to suppress the female corpse on her back, felt a tremor run through her. Her eyes opened wide and then shone with astonishment.

Next, her face flickered, and she coughed up a mouthful of blood. A look of astonishment covered her face.

“What just happened? Did somebody just use the Dao of Karma to plot against me?”

In the instant that Fan Dong’er’s face flickered, Meng Hao’s expression became one of excitement. He took a deep breath, and then a strange light appeared in his eyes. This magic which forced ties of destiny was only in the first level of development. In the second level, he would be able to fuse promissory notes into the Karma Threads, and then unleash the full divine ability.

As far as the third level went, he would be able to use the promissory notes as Karma seeds, which, if successfully planted and the magic was allowed to grow to its full extent, would give Meng Hao the power to determine life or death with a mere thought.

“This is my divine ability. A Bit of Karma. It might not be complete, but in the future, as my cultivation base grows more abstruse, I WILL perfect it!” As Meng Hao’s words rang out, the world around him shook, then filled with fissures. Everything trembled as Meng Hao came into clear view of everyone on the outside world.

The Patriarchs up in the palace were shocked.

“It’s a Daoist magic!!”

“It’s the Ji Clan’s Dao of Karma! Wait, no! It’s something different than the Ji Clan’s Dao of Karma! The Ji Clan severs Karma, but this forcefully ties destiny together. It’s equally domineering, equally shocking!”

“That’s not just a Daoist magic, that counts as a secret magic!! Fang Mu’s intuition is incredibly high!”

“I’m curious to know what enlightenment led him to create such a Daoist secret magic like this!!”

Daoist magics were rare, but secret magics were even rarer!

The spectators out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were looking on with wide eyes. Gasps could be heard, and unprecedented looks of astonishment could be seen.

“This defies belief!!”

“This Fang Mu created a magic that seems to be both a Daoist magic and a secret magic! I’m afraid only the powerful experts from the great sects would be able to understand it!”

“In any case, it caused the world to begin to collapse. Now, I wonder how many stone steles will descend!? Will he exceed Li Yan?!”

As the world trembled around Meng Hao, intense rumbling sounds could be heard as the stone steles began to fall.

One, three, five, seven….

People looked on, astonished, as a total of twenty-one stone steles descended. They Circulated around Meng Hao endlessly, creating a completely astonishing spectacle.

Instantly, the crowds in the Ninth Mountain and Sea began to seethe with excitement.

“Twenty-one stone steles! Heavens! That… that exceeds Sir Fan!!”

“Inhuman! This guy’s battle prowess is monstrous, and his creativity is inhuman! Even though we couldn’t see his latent talent, it’s surely extraordinary! He’ll definitely take first place in this trial by fire!!”

“I bet all of the Three Great Daoist Societies are in shock!! Twenty-one stone steles! This Fang Mu is definitely going to be famous in the Ninth Mountain and Sea!”

In the starry sky palace, the Patriarchs from the Three Great Daoist Societies were all sitting there as before. However, everyone else had already leapt to their feet. Their eyes shone with incredible brightness. If by any chance the Three Great Daoist Societies did not want to recruit Meng Hao, then they were ready to fight over him.

All of the disciples that had been recruited before Meng Hao could still be considered Chosen. However, sometimes people or events can come along that are simply beyond compare. Attempting to compare them with others would be unfair.

In the vast Eastern Lands, Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li looked at each other and smiled. Meng Li’s face was covered with a proud smile as she looked back at Meng Hao on the vortex screen, and her heart filled with love.

“Little bastard!” muttered Patriarch Reliance. “It’s good that in the end, you didn’t lose me any face!”

Pill Demon and Chu Yuyan both let out light sighs. Chu Yuyan didn’t understand much about Meng Hao and his proclivity toward promissory notes, but Pill Demon knew something of it, and a strange expression could be seen on his face. As for the rest of the crowds, most of them didn’t understand Karma very well, but they could speculate as to the general idea.

“With a magic like this, who will ever dare to refuse to write me a promissory note!” Meng Hao was inwardly delighted, and completely satisfied with the divine ability he had created.

At this point, everyone assumed that the Three Great Daoist Societies would swoop in to recruit Meng Hao. The Ninth Sea God World and the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto were definitely moved, and they were just getting ready to enter discussions with the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite, when all of a sudden, Meng Hao suddenly closed his eyes again. Apparently… he was sinking back into contemplation!

This scene instantly caused everyone to stare in shock.

“What is he doing?”

“Could it be… could it be that he intends to create another divine ability?” Even as shock rolled through everyone, a bright light suddenly began to shine around Meng Hao, and the music of a great Dao began to echo out.

Meng Hao truly was in the midst of contemplating enlightenment. The reason he didn’t immediately absorb the power of the twenty-one stone steles was that, considering his current state, he was now ready to use his understanding of the nine bridges to create another divine ability.

“He’s actually going to create another divine ability!!”

“How… how is that possible? He already created one divine ability, how can he create another one? Does he think that creating divine abilities is as simple as eating or drinking?”

All the spectators in the outside world were completely shocked, even Meng Hao’s father and mother. The Patriarchs in the starry sky palace were also staring with wide eyes.

Li Yan, as well as all the other competitors who were now waiting outside, stared at Meng Hao in a daze.

This was especially the case when, only a few hours later, a massive rumbling sound surrounded Meng Hao, and an intense energy surged up from him. Because the previous world had already collapsed, the energy affected the altar Meng Hao sat on, which everyone could see. There was no need for them to experience the divine ability; everyone was able to sense that this incoming divine ability was incredibly shocking.

“He’s actually creating another divine ability! What kind of jinx is this guy?!?!” The crowds were in an uproar, and before they even had a chance to calm down, Meng Hao suddenly frowned.

“No,” he murmured, “my line of thinking was a bit off.” He waved his hand, causing the surging energy that had shocked everyone to suddenly be extinguished. Once again, he began to contemplate.

When everyone saw that happen, they were left completely speechless…. The other competitors in the trial by fire began to smile bitterly. The divine ability that Meng Hao felt to be off, was actually far more powerful than any of the divine abilities they had created. Each and every one was left completely without words.

After a few more hours, energy once again began to surge up from Meng Hao. But then….

“Off again!” he said angrily. He once again quashed the energy and started over.

The crowds were now looking at each other, dumbfounded. They began to smile wryly as they looked over at Meng Hao on the vortex screen.

As for the Patriarchs in the starry sky palace, their eyes were shining brightly, and it looked like they were getting ready for a struggle. An inhuman cultivator like this was someone each and every one did not wish to allow the Three Great Daoist Societies to recruit as a disciple.

The Patriarchs from the Three Great Daoist Societies were gaping in astonishment. Then, they exchanged glances, and within each others’ glittering eyes, they could all see anticipation and something hidden deep within…. Hope!

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# Chapter 856: Paragon Bridge

This was a hope that they had held throughout all the numerous times they had hosted this trial by fire in the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

It was actually a far more important reason than disciple recruitment!

The three elders were panting slightly, but considering their high cultivation bases and levels of concentration, it didn't matter how many years they had watched the recruitment event with such hope; they wouldn't allow others to pick up any clues by looking at their facial expressions.

However… a virtually imperceptible flicker of astonishment could be seen in the eyes of the old man from the Kunlun Society, who seemed to have picked up on a few of the oddities about the situation.

Time passed by slowly. Several hours later, rumbling once again surrounded Meng Hao, quickly vanished… and then returned with even more intensity than before.

This indicated that the divine ability Meng Hao was creating was growing in power!

The audience in the Ninth Mountain and Sea stared fixedly at the vortex screens, and the cross-legged Meng Hao. They waited in keen anticipation to find out what miraculous divine ability he would create.

"That Daoist magic from before caused twenty-one stone steles to descend. Then he started making another divine ability. If he succeeds… I wonder how many stone steles will appear?!"

"This is unheard-of! The ancient records don't contain information about the first time the Three Great Daoist Societies held this trial by fire, but from the time records were kept until now, nobody has shaken the stars like this shocking Fang Mu!”

“A Chosen like that would be the focus of all attention no matter which sect he joined. It’s just strange that before today, I’ve never heard of him before!”

The buzz of conversation echoed out everywhere, both in the outside world, and among the trial by fire competitors on the Ancient Road. Everyone was shaken by Meng Hao.

They were all waiting… for Meng Hao’s miraculous creation!

The next day, more shocking rumbling could be heard. The following day, the sound of it filled the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking. Three days later… it once again began anew. Even the people on the Ancient Roads of the Nascent Soul and Spirit Severing could hear it.

It had filled the entire Ancient Road!

More people were astonished than ever!

Four days later, the intense roaring that echoed out from Meng Hao left the Ancient Road via the vortexes, passing out into the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

When that happened, Meng Hao finally opened his eyes.

In that instant, boundless, radiant light poured out from his pupils, such that anyone who faced him would feel blinded by the piercing light. Meng Hao’s expression was calm as he raised his hands into the air. There in his mind was the image of the first bridge, indelibly imprinted there, never to disperse for all eternity.

As he raised his hands into the air, the world around him began to tremble, and countless rifts appeared. The air swirled, and began to scatter in layers. In just a few breaths of time, all of the land around him was shattered and began to break down. Wind screamed, and the air collapsed.

As for Meng Hao, he remained cross-legged, but as everything around him dissipated, it seemed as if he was floating in the middle of nothing, surrounded by twenty-one stone steles, each one three hundred meters tall.

It was at this point that, all of a sudden, a rumbling sound could be heard coming from the boundless void up above. It was like an echoing roar, which was accompanied by… descending stone steles!

One, two, three… a total of nine made their way down to join the other twenty-one stone steles. Furthermore, these new steles were actually silver-colored!

Their appearance was far more magnificent than the other twenty-one steles, and far more shocking.

The Patriarchs in the starry sky palace looked on with widened eyes, and the crowds out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were immediately sent into an uproar of disbelief.

“He… he isn’t even finished creating the divine ability! He’s just mobilizing his energy, but the stone steles already descended!”

“Those stone steles are silver-colored! I’ve never even heard of such a thing!”

“This divine ability is surely Heaven-defying! If it wasn’t, how come a mere surge of its energy would cause the stone steles to descend, even before it’s complete!”

“Just what divine ability is this?!?!”

While the crowds engaged in heated discussion, Meng Hao sat there, his face calm, his eyes devoid of either joy or sadness. His mind seemed to be completely immersed in silent contemplation of the first bridge.

His energy continued to grow more intense. After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, the image of the bridge in his mind suddenly began to expand, growing out in the blink of an eye, until it covered his entire body.

It was as if he had become the bridge!

And at the same time, the bridge… had become him!

Even more noticeable to Meng Hao was the indescribable pain that completely filled him. It was an anguish that made it seem as if a hundred streams of qi were ripping his insides open.

Great beads of sweat rolled down his face as within his body appeared… one hundred meridians!

These one hundred meridians were Immortal meridians, which previously had not yet existed inside of him. However, now that the bridge had spread out, it forced them open. Although it would only last for a moment, and was not permanent, it actually created a mold for Meng Hao’s Immortal foundation!

When you added in the ethereal Immortal meridian he already had, it was a scene that would thoroughly flabbergast anyone who could see it. However, even the three Patriarchs from the Three Great Daoist Societies would be incapable of seeing what was happening inside of him. Even if they tried to force their vision inside of him, all they would be able to see was a blinding light.

The instant the one hundred meridians were forced open inside of Meng Hao, massive rumbling could be heard as more stone steles descended from up above. Shockingly, there were nine gold-colored steles!

The sight of these nine gold-colored stone steles threw the crowds in the outside world, as well as the other competitors in the trial by fire, into complete tumult.

“Eighteen stone steles!!”

“Heavens! Nine silver steles and nine golden steles! The divine ability isn’t fully created yet, but… but there are already eighteen stone steles!”

“This guy is peerless among Chosen!!”

Meng Hao couldn’t hear the buzz of conversation from the outside world. His body was trembling, and he was filled with the sensation that this divine ability that he had created was indescribably powerful. It seemed like a magic that he was actually incapable of wielding with his current cultivation base.

It was a magic that required all one hundred meridians to be genuinely open before it could be used!

Even a weaker version would still need at least fifty meridians.

At the moment, all of his one hundred meridians had been forcibly opened, but Meng Hao knew that it was only temporary. He was borrowing power from his own good fortune, a result of his creation of a divine ability, and it was something that wouldn’t last for very long. However, to Meng Hao, it was still incredible good fortune. It opened up a path for him, so that all he had to do was take a step forward, and he would be able to proceeded unhindered into true Immortality.

“Even if I can’t actually use this magic for the time being, I will still see it completely created!” His eyes shone with determination as the full power of his cultivation base surged into action, causing an intense roaring to fill the air.

Gradually, the image of a bridge started to be visible behind him!

The bridge was just a vague illlusion. If a perfectly clear image of the bridge could be considered a hundred percent, then this illusory image would only be ten percent!

However, even with only ten percent clarity, it was still filled with an archaic, ancient aura. It seemed to be filled with a natural law that did not conform with the Nine Mountains and Seas. That natural law was Heaven-defying, as if it could split open the vault of heaven, and place the Heavens… beneath its feet!

The energy was boundlessly domineering, as if, when it looked out, all living things would have no choice but to worship on bended knee! This was a supreme power!

Meng Hao began to tremble with increased intensity. The one hundred meridians that had been opened had been shining with boundless light moments ago, but were now beginning to grow dim, as if their light were being sucked in by the bridge.

In the blink of an eye, only thirty of the meridians remained open. At this point, a frenzied determination shone in Meng Hao’s eyes. He tilted his head back and roared, and the remaining Immortal meridians inside of him went dim. In that instant, the bridge behind him suddenly became twenty percent clear!

That twenty percent caused all three Ancient Roads in the Ruins of Immortality to quake. Up above in the palace, the Patriarchs’ minds were reeling. They appeared to be completely shaken. Outside in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, there were even some cultivators who coughed up blood.

Furthermore, up above in the void appeared nine… seven-colored stone steles!

Nine silver. Nine gold. Nine seven-colored!

The entire world was dumbfounded!

“What divine ability is that!?!?”

“That’s beyond a Daoist magic, and even above a secret magic! Just what magic is it?!”

“Could it be… could it be a legendary Paragon magic!?!?”

With the exception of the three Patriarchs from the Three Great Daoist Societies, everyone in the starry sky palace was on their feet, faces filled with astonishment.

“Paragon magic!! For Fang Mu to be able to create a Paragon magic while in the Spirit Realm means that his intuition is stupefying!!”

“He can’t actually use the magic right now, but in the future, when his cultivation base rises into the peak of the Immortal Realm, he’ll be able to use this magic to slay experts of the Ancient Realm!”

The Patriarchs were now in an uproar. The spectators out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were completely astonished, and were staring with wide eyes and open mouths. They didn’t know what Paragon magic was, but when the bridge appeared behind Meng Hao, they could sense their cultivation bases trembling!

Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth, and he was incapable of continuing on any further. The bridge winked out, and his body returned to its normal state. However, he felt completely exhausted, almost as if he were ill, and his face was ashen. But his eyes shone with unprecedented brightness.

“When that bridge appears, it is supreme and unparalleled. In that case, its name shall be…

“The Paragon Bridge!!

“This is my second divine ability!”

Meng Hao slowly rose to his feet, under the eyes of the countless people watching in various locations.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, then closed his eyes and sent his divine sense out to the forty-eight stone steles.

He suddenly inhaled, and the stone steles trembled and began to emit Immortal qi. It transformed into a gentle power that rushed toward Meng

Hao, surrounding him like a vortex. As he absorbed it into his body, his Immortal meridian almost seemed to come alive as it voraciously consumed the qi.

Thirty percent, forty percent, fifty percent, sixty percent, seventy percent!!

Before coming to the Ruins of Immortality, Meng Hao's Immortal meridian had only been illusory. But now, it was consuming Immortal qi with shocking speed. The stone steles began to vanish, and by the time the last one was gone, the Immortal meridian inside of him was fully eighty percent solidified!

This was an Immortal Ancient Dao meridian, formed by the ancient bronze lamp. It was an Immortal meridian that exceeded that which any modern cultivator could have, and came from ancient times. According to Shui Dongliu, it had even changed Meng Hao's destiny!

Now, it was eighty percent complete, and radiated Immortal might. Now, Meng Hao's cultivation base exploded with intense energy, that of a true Immortal!

With an Immortal meridian that was eighty percent complete, he now seemed to be undergoing huge transformations. Although he clearly was not a true Immortal yet, he was actually… even more powerful than Pill Demon when he had become a true immortal!!

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# Chapter 857: Warrior Pavilion!

The crowds outside in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were staring with wide eyes and slack jaws. Their minds were completely and utterly blank.

“He gained enlightenment from 99 Immortal ruins, created two grand divine abilities, and caused a total of forty-eight stone steles to descend….”

“Never before has something like this happened, and perhaps it never will again….”

“Which Daoist Society… will he choose to join?!”

As the discussions raged, Meng Hao stood there, filling everyone with unprecedented shock.

That was especially true of the Chosen of the various sects. By now, the name Fang Mu was deeply rooted in their hearts, and to them, he was clearly the most powerful opponent they would ever face.

“His energy… is that of a true Immortal!” The Patriarchs up in the starry sky palace were all panting, and their eyes shone with light.

“Earlier he was clearly not a true Immortal. Could it be that after creating that shocking Paragon magic, he actually became a true Immortal?!”

“There was a legend in ancient times that creating Paragon magic would transform the cultivation base. It seems that legend is accurate!”

“No, he’s still not a true Immortal. He has the energy of a true Immortal, but lacks the Immortal root!”

As the other Patriarchs discussed the matter, the hope in the eyes of the three old men from the Three Great Daoist Societies grew even more intense. They did not speak, but they were all looking at Meng Hao. More specifically, they were looking at the area surrounding Meng Hao.

It was at this point that the old man from the Kunlun Society suddenly said, “This Fang Mu has already created a Paragon magic. Logically speaking, he should now appear on the altar on the Ancient Road.”

As soon as the words left his mouth, the old men from the Three Great Daoist Societies narrowed their eyes.

By now, the forty-eight stone steles around Meng Hao had vanished completely. It was then that, all of a sudden, an ancient pavilion suddenly materialized directly in front of Meng Hao.

It was richly ornamented, and brimming with Immortal will. This was no ruin; it floated up above in the air, surrounded by green stone slabs and exotic plants. Its marvelous appearance made it seem like the only thing in existence.

Immortal qi swirled around it, letting off an ancient will, and a feeling of holiness. It was as if this place had at one time been a Holy Land.

The pavilion was decorated with carved black jade, and emanated intense pressure. It was the same feeling Meng Hao had gotten when looking at the nine bridges. In front of the pavilion was an enormous boulder, upon which two characters were written in calligraphy as flamboyant as flying dragons and dancing phoenixes.

Warrior Pavilion!

The two characters were blood red, and shone with intense light. When Meng Hao read them, he could hear roars that truly sounded like they came from real dragons and phoenixes.

As for the crowds outside in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, they couldn’t see what was happening clearly, because the vortex screen depicting Meng Hao had suddenly gone blurry.

People began to cry out in shock.

“What just happened?”

“All of a sudden, we can’t see the screen!!”

Back in the starry sky palace, the Patriarchs from the Three Great Daoist Societies slowly rose to their feet. The other Patriarchs were staring in shock; they couldn’t see the images on the screen either. Apparently, the Immortal pavilion blocked the view of anyone on the outside.

The Patriarchs from the Three Great Daoist Societies had very serious looks on their faces as they looked at each other and then transmitted three sentences amongst themselves.

“He actually found it! Activate the spell formation and unleash the Heavenly communication magic!”

“I never imagined that, after all these tens of thousands of years of trials by fire, this day would finally arrive!”

“Throughout the years, our Three Great Daoist Societies have tried every means possible, but have been unable to even lay eyes on it, let alone acquire the legendary item within. According to our previous calculations, only people in the Spirit Realm can actually find the Immortal pavilion!”

Although no one could hear the three Patriarchs’ words, the old man from the Kunlun Society narrowed his eyes. After a moment of contemplation, his face suddenly lit up.

“So, it turns out that the Three Great Daoist Societies have repeatedly held this trial by fire throughout the ages, not just to recruit disciples, but for another purpose!”

Other Patriarchs apparently recalled something in particular and, from their expressions, seemed shaken. Despite their cultivation bases and abilities of concentration, they were still panting and trembling.

“Fellow Daoists from the Three Great Daoist Societies, this matter….”

The person who responded was the old man from the Ninth Sea God World.

“This is a private affair of our Three Great Daoist Societies,” he said, his eyes shining with a strange light. “It has nothing to do with you, Ladies and Gentlemen. In a moment, the trial by fire will continue!”

Meanwhile, Meng Hao was looking at the Immortal pavilion. It had appeared in front of him quite suddenly, apparently in response to his creation of the Paragon magic.

“Ling Yunzi said that there were 99 Immortal ruins as well as an intact Immortal pavilion. Could it be that this pavilion is… the very one I was looking for before, but couldn’t find?” His eyes went wide.

After a moment of thought, he was about to step forward when, quite abruptly, an ancient voice was transmitted into his mind.

“Fang Mu, I am Ling Yunzi of the Ninth Sea God World. I represent all of the Three Great Daoist Societies to pass a message to you. Use whatever means necessary to enter the Immortal pavilion and bring out a Feng Shui compass that rests inside. If you do, the Three Great Daoist Societies are willing to give you any reward you wish. As long as it is within our power to accomplish, we will do it!”

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, and he didn’t respond. However, he did stop in place, and a look of hesitation appeared on his face.

“There is no need to worry about any danger,” Ling Yunzi continued. “The Immortal pagoda appeared because of your good fortune, and I am personally unable to appear there at all; if I were to appear there, it would cause the pavilion to immediately vanish. As for you, there will be no danger to you when you go inside.”

Meng Hao hesitated for another moment before a gleam of determination appeared, and he hurried forward toward the Immortal pavilion.

No one in the outside world could see what was happening on the screens. However, the Patriarchs from the Three Great Daoist Societies were panting, and their eyes shone with a strange gleam.

They could not enter the world Meng Hao was in either, and could only remain on the outside. They had waited for many years for this particular opportunity.

As Meng Hao neared the Immortal pavilion, the pressure grew more and more intense. However, for some strange reason, while the pressure would have prevented any other person from getting close, it actually dissipated for Meng Hao, making a sort of personal path for him to walk.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. He sensed no danger, so he slowly walked up to the Immortal pavilion and stood in front of it. Then he took a deep breath as he lifted his hand and pushed on the front door.

Absolutely no sound could be heard as the door opened. However, the instant it did, boundless light shone out from inside, blinding light that completely enveloped Meng Hao and then spread out in all directions outside of the pavilion. After a moment, Ling Yunzi let out a miserable shriek. As it turned out, he had actually been following Meng Hao in an attempt to personally enter the Immortal pavilion.

However, the light instantly forced him back. Blood oozed out of his eyes, ears, nose and mouth, almost as if he had been cursed. Filled with fear and shock, he immediately shot backward and then left the world, lest he be killed.

Now, Meng Hao was the only person in the vicinity of the Immortal pavilion. He stood there in the light, completely unharmed, until the glow slowly faded away. He looked blankly at the pavilion in front of him, then took a deep breath.

“What is this place…?” he murmured. Inside of the Immortal pavilion, he could now see numerous shelves, which, shockingly, were completely filled with all sorts of magical items.

There was a whip that was surrounded by a dragon-like mist of swirling smoke. It appeared to have been constructed from sinew and tendons, and it emanated a shocking pressure, as if it had been refined from a true dragon. There was an ancient mirror, covered with cloudy mist. From the look of it, there was some living being sealed inside of it.

There was a crimson eye that, although shut, gave Meng Hao a shocking feeling when he looked at it.

There was a cauldron that rested atop a toad, which it seemed the cauldron was suppressing.

Further away was a long, green spear, with a spearhead carved from bone. When Meng Hao looked more closely at the wood that made up the shaft, his mind reeled. He recognized that wood! It was from… the World Tree! 1

There was a broadsword, stained with black, wet blood. That blood seemed to still contain a consciousness and was emitting shocking howls.

In addition to those items, there was also a Feng Shui compass. For the most part, it was ordinary in appearance. However, a white crystal was inset into the very middle of the compass. The crystal emanated a gentle glow that caused the entire Feng Shui compass to appear extraordinary.

From the look of it, the white crystal could be removed from the center of the compass, as if the compass had merely been created to allow the crystal to emanate its power.

There were many magical items of all sorts, the use of many of which Meng Hao was unable to determine. The whip was one of the more bizarre items, but actually any of them would cause a huge stir if they showed up in the outside world.

In addition to all the magical items, there was also a desk in the Immortal pavilion, upon which were some bamboo slips, as well as various other writing utensils.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, and his eyes shone with brilliant light as he took a step forward, entering the Immortal pavilion. As soon as he stepped foot inside, the door shut behind him.

Simultaneously, an ice-cold voice suddenly echoed out.

“In compliance with the last will and testament of the Three Great Paragons, anyone with a Spirit Realm cultivation base who creates Paragon magic may enter the Warrior Pavilion and select a treasure.”

Meng Hao looked around, but couldn’t see anyone except for himself in the Immortal pavilion. The voice that had just spoken was cold and detached, seemingly emotionless. After it spoke that single sentence, it said nothing further.

Meng Hao hesitated for a moment, then began to look around at the various precious treasures, his heart thumping eagerly.

He actually wished he could take all of the magical items in sight, but after gazing about for a bit, his eyes came to rest on the Feng Shui compass.

“That must be the Feng Shui compass the Three Great Daoist Societies want me to get for them,” he thought, his eyes flickering. After looking at the Feng Shui compass for a moment, he began to mutter to himself.

“The Three Great Daoist Societies’ trial by fire has an additional purpose, which is to get someone to come in here and retrieve this item for them. If I don’t comply with their wishes, I fear my future will be fraught with grim possibilities after I leave this place.” He wasn’t quite willing to go along with their request, but after a moment of consideration, he looked at the Feng Shui compass with glittering eyes. Then he stepped forward and picked it up.

In the moment he lifted up the Feng Shui compass, he also retrieved a flying sword from his bag of holding and vigorously went to work trying to pry the white crystal out.

“You people think you can profit at my expense!? Never!” Gritting his teeth, he shoved down on the sword until a popping sound rang out and the crystal flew out from its spot in the center of the Feng Shui compass. Meng Hao grabbed it, then smiled as he carefully put it away in his bag of holding.

Then he looked over the Feng Shui compass again. It actually looked perfect. After ensuring that there were no scratches on it, he cleared his throat and looked around at all the magical items.

“Although that voice said I could only take one treasure, it didn’t say anything about repercussions for taking another. I might as well try.” His heart began to beat even faster as he walked over to the spear. He reached his hand out, but almost as soon as his hand was about to grab it, a powerful force of expulsion pushed back at him.

The cold voice once again rang out inside the Immortal pavilion.

“This item is not connected to you by destiny. You have already taken a treasure. You may leave now.”

“Not connected by destiny?” thought Meng Hao. “Destiny is like the cause and effect of Karma. So does that mean that I have no Karma connecting me to these magical items?” A strange light gleamed in his eyes, and he suddenly cleared his throat. It was at this moment that the Seventh Demon Sealing Hex, the magic of Karmic Hexing, was suddenly unleashed.

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# Chapter 858: The Last Time!

The Seventh Demon Sealing Hex was a magic unique to the League of Demon Sealers. It seemed similar to the Ji Clan’s Dao of Karma, but was fundamentally different. As he unleashed the magic, Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed with a strange light, and he looked around at all the magical items.

Instantly, he was able to see numerous threads attached to the various magical items. These were none other than Karma Threads.

All of the magical items had Karma Threads attaching them to the Warrior Pavilion, and now Meng Hao could see each and every one of them clearly.

“So, even magical items can have Karma on them,” he thought. “Well, now I’m not so worried.” Clearing his throat, he glanced around craftily.

“First, I’ll hex the Karma on these magical items, and then I’ll form a destiny connection with them!” Waving his hand, he caused the Seventh Demon Sealing Hex to cover all of the magical items in the Warrior Pavilion.

In the blink of an eye, bright light shot out in all directions, and the entire Warrior Pavilion began to shake.

Meng Hao’s heart pounded as he waited for a few moments. Seeing that there was no further reaction, he relaxed a bit, then looked around craftily one more time.

“The floor tiles here are excellent,” he thought, licking his lips. “Later on, I think I’ll pry up a few to take with me. And the wood those shelves are made from is anything but ordinary….

“Those decorative tiles are nice too!” His eyes shone brightly as he took a deep breath.

He quickly performed an incantation gesture, causing Karma Threads to appear on top of his head. These were his own personal Karma Threads, which glittered with resplendent colors. Meng Hao settled his qi and calmed his mind, then searched through his Karma Threads until he found one that seemed to be on the verge of fading away.

That Karma Thread was the one that had been created when he first laid eyes on the spear moments ago. Of course, the thread was incredibly thin, as if even a slight breeze would cause it to scatter.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, then lifted his hand and pointed out toward that particular thread. Instantly, the Karma Thread twisted into the shape of a magical symbol, which then descended into Meng Hao’s hand.

“Bind destiny!” he said. Instantly, the thread began to glitter with radiant light. At the same time, the spear began to tremble, as if it were struggling against something.

As it fought, the Karma thread attached to Meng Hao’s head that represented the spear suddenly grew very clear. Now it seemed to be even more closely attached to Meng Hao, as if the Karma between the two of them was growing deeper.

“A Bit of Karma! Bind destiny!” Meng Hao’s eyes shone with bright light, and he let out a bellow. The magical symbol on his right hand began to glitter radiantly as he crushed it. A boom rattled out as the magical symbol shattered. In the moment that it dispersed, the spear ceased struggling, and Meng Hao could suddenly feel something like a summons, echoing out from the spear.

Unable to withhold his excitement, he stretched his hand out into the air. The spear immediately flew through the air with a screaming whistling sound and landed directly in his hand

Meng Hao laughed out loud.

“Mine! All of the magical items here are mine now!” Even as excitement filled his heart, suddenly, a murderous aura surged toward him from behind.

The aura was so intense that it seemed capable of destroying him in body and spirit by merely brushing against him.

Meng Hao’s face fell, and he jerked his head around. However, there was nobody behind him. The murderous aura was still there, though; apparently it came from the Warrior Pavilion itself.

Cold sweat dripped down Meng Hao’s face, and he didn’t dare to move. The murderous aura filled him with intense nervousness, and he began to edge his way toward the door. The murderous aura followed him as he went, as if it were attempting to intimidate him.

“I was just creating some ties of destiny!” Meng Hao said quickly. “What are you flipping out for?” After a moment, he continued, “Uhh… a misunderstanding, a misunderstanding. Warrior Pavilion, my brother, this was all just a misunderstanding, alright?” The murderous aura seemed as intense as ever.

After a long moment, though, Meng Hao sensed that the aura was dissipating. Seeing that it hadn’t attacked him, his eyes darted around. He had half a mind to leave, but when he saw all the magical items around him in the Warrior Pavilion, he just couldn’t make himself do it.

“Warrior Pavilion, my brother, don’t pay any attention to me!” he called out loudly. “I’m fine here by myself. You get back to whatever it was you were doing, alright?” With that, he carefully sidled over to the sword covered with black blood.

Ever-vigilant of the murderous aura, he quickly used A Bit of Karma to find the Karma Thread that connected him to the sword, then bound the destiny as quickly as possible.

The sword trembled, and the murderous aura from the Warrior Pavilion exploded out. Cold beads of sweat broke out on Meng Hao’s forehead, but he gritted his teeth and used Ties of Destiny a few more times. After the third time, the sword stopped struggling, and an invisible connection formed between the two of them.

The sword flew out and began to swirl around Meng Hao like a dragon.

Meng Hao had no time to rejoice as the Warrior Pavilion’s murderous aura exploded in intensity throughout the entire pavilion. It seemed to be incensed, and matchlessly fierce.

“That was the last time!” said Meng Hao. “The last time!”

He then licked his lips and stood in place, not daring to move for a long moment, after which he cautiously inched over toward a magical jade flower. Gritting his teeth, he immediately slammed A Bit of Karma into the magical flower. A magical symbol appeared; this flower was apparently different from the other magical items, and he succeeded on his first try.

Almost immediately, the shocking murderous aura caused everything to tremble violently. Meng Hao’s entire body was now soaked with sweat.

“That was the last time!” he cried out urgently. “I promise, that was really the last time!

“Warrior Pavilion, my brother, it was really the last time. I’m taking off now, see you!” The intensity of the murderous aura caused Meng Hao’s face to grow pale, and his heart to tremble. Even as he spoke, he quickly began to walk toward the exit.

However, after only a few steps, he couldn’t help but use Ties of Destiny on a little bottle he saw on a nearby shelf. It was blackish-green, and although it seemed unremarkable, Meng Hao could sense a boundless aura emanating off of it.

“Dammit!” he thought, gnashing his teeth. At the same time, he found the Karma Thread connecting him to the bottle and used it to make a magical symbol. As soon as the symbol landed in his hand, he crushed it and, without taking the time to check whether or not he had succeeded, quickly grabbed the little bottle.

As soon as his hand wrapped around it, his body flashed toward the Warrior Pavilion’s exit. At the same time, the murderous aura exploded toward Meng Hao at an incredible speed, and a faint roar of rage could be heard echoing about.

“The last one!” he cried. “That was really, really the last one. I’m going now, I’m going now!” Meng Hao’s scalp was numb as he shot forward. Behind him, the murderous aura swept toward him as if to drive him out.

Next to the door was the table he had seen earlier. As he passed, he couldn’t stop himself from reaching out to grab a jade slip he saw sitting there.

That seemed to push the murderous aura of the Warrior Pavilion past the limits of its patience. It transformed into an explosive attack that shot toward Meng Hao.

A faint howl could be heard from within the murderous aura: “Get the hell out of here!”

When it smashed into Meng Hao, blood sprayed from his mouth, and he was flung toward the door like a kite with its string cut.

The door slammed open, and Meng Hao was thrown out, whereupon the door slammed shut again.

Almost immediately, the Warrior Pavilion began to fade away. At the same time, the scene was now clearly visible to the Patriarchs of the Three Great Daoist Societies up in the starry sky palace, as well as the Patriarchs from the other sects.

On the screen, they saw Meng Hao flying out, blood spraying from his mouth, his expression one of incredible determination. From the look of it, he had been willing to look death calmly in the face in order to complete the task assigned to him, and had been willing to pay any cost.

Meng Hao coughed up another mouthful of blood and then cried out, “Fang Mu of the junior generation, despite facing great personal injury and near death, went through hell and high water to accomplish the mission given to him by the mighty Three Great Daoist Societies!” With that, he produced the Feng Shui compass and held it aloft.

It was a very moving image. Blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth, and his face was pale white. His body trembled, and he was clearly very seriously injured. His words, and the image he presented, instantly moved the three Patriarchs from the Three Great Daoist Societies.

The three Patriarchs were panting, and were completely incapable of controlling the wild exuberance they felt in their hearts.

It was at this exact moment that the pale-faced Ling Yunzi suddenly materialized in front of Meng Hao. He immediately made a grasping gesture with his right hand, and the Feng Shui compass in Meng Hao’s hand flew over to him. He nodded to Meng Hao, and then sighed inwardly with emotion. He himself had just been injured by the light from the Warrior Pavilion, and knew how dangerous it could be. When he saw the injuries Meng Hao had received, he was filled with sympathy. Then he noticed Meng Hao’s solemn and stirring facial expression, and he suddenly had the feeling the things that had previously occurred between the two of them must have been misunderstandings.

“What a good kid!” he said. “Here, take this medicinal pill. It’ll take care of those injuries!” Moved, he waved his right hand, causing a white medicinal pill to fly out and hover in front of Meng Hao. Because of his skill in the Dao of alchemy, Meng Hao could tell from the medicinal aroma of the pill that it was definitely a treasured pill.

“It’s too bad I can’t duplicate it right here and now,” Meng Hao thought. He quickly accepted the pill and then put it into his bag of holding.

“I think you should eat it now,” said Ling Yunzi, looking concerned. “Those injuries are quite serious.”

Inwardly, Meng Hao chuckled bitterly. He had no desire whatsoever to consume the medicinal pill. All he needed to do was activate his Eternal stratum, and he would recover almost immediately. However, Ling Yunzi’s was staring right at him, so Meng Hao endured the pain of his loss, clenched his teeth, and finally consumed the pill.

As soon as the medicinal pill dissolved into him, a warm current filled his body, and all of his injuries were healed.

“What a loss,” he thought. “What a terrible loss. If I could have duplicated that medicinal pill, I could have sold it later for an exorbitant price.” Inwardly, he was laughing bitterly, but on the outside he put on an expression of appreciation as he clasped hands and bowed toward Ling Yunzi.

Ling Yunzi nodded again. The more he thought about it, the more he felt that Meng Hao was among the best of the best, both in terms of cultivation base and intuition, not to mention fate.

“I really misunderstood him in the matter of the latent talent and those other stages,” Ling Yunzi thought.

Smiling broadly, he then said, “Fang Mu, are you willing to become a Conclave disciple of the Ninth Sea God World?!”

In response to the words, the Patriarchs in the starry sky palace all looked on with glittering eyes.

The Patriarch from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite smiled faintly, a smiled that contained abstruse meaning. The Patriarch from the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto hesitated for a moment. As for the Patriarch from the Ninth Sea God World, he laughed out loud.

Meng Hao gaped for a moment, and was thinking about refusing. Then he thought about how funny it would be if he joined the Ninth Sea God World under his assumed name Fang Mu, considering that Fan Dong’er was also a member.

He cleared his throat and clasped hands.

“Junior is willing,” he replied. “Unfortunately, I have a few random matters that I have to take care of. If senior is willing to give me a bit of time to handle those affairs, then when I’m finished, I will immediately go to the Ninth Sea God World.”

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# Chapter 859: The Final Two Stages

“Of course, if that is your wish,” Ling Yunzi said with a smile. “Why don’t you think about it a bit. Once you get to the Ninth Sea God World, you can give me your final answer.” He waved his sleeve, causing a command medallion to fly out to Meng Hao.

“When you’ve taken care of your affairs, crush that medallion. It will bring you to the Ninth Sea God World.” With that, Ling Yunzi turned and vanished. At the same time, the air around Meng Hao shattered. When things grew clear again, he was back on the altar on the Ancient Road.

All of the other competitors in the trial by fire were looking at Meng Hao with expressions of disbelief.

As for everyone in the outside world, although they weren’t sure about the details of what had gone on between Meng Hao and the Three Great Daoist Societies, that didn’t mean they were any less amazed regarding Meng Hao’s rise to prominence in the trial by fire.

This was especially the case due to Ling Yunzi’s recruitment of Meng Hao as a Conclave disciple.

When the spectators in the Ninth Mountain and Sea heard that, their gazes became torn between envy and admiration. All of them were staring at Meng Hao on the screen.

“He’s pretty much the number one figure in the entire trial by fire. It’s no surprise that he ended up joining the Ninth Sea God World.”

“I wonder if he’ll participate in the final two stages. Of course, after that is the most important part… the arena matches!”

“If I were him, I would participate in the final two stages, but not the arena matches. After all, the Chosen from the great Sects will be able to join in the fighting there. They’re qualified to do so without participating in the testing, which is why they don’t walk the Ancient Road. They can directly go straight to the arena matches!

“This Fang Mu might be strong, but it’s doubtful that he can measure up to all those Chosen.”

“That’s really too bad. Throughout the successive trials by fire put on by the Three Great Daoist Societies, the arena matches are the highlight. There are incredible prizes up for grabs!”

Even as the discussions continued outside, the ninth stage was beginning on the three Ancient Roads.

The number of people still participating in the trial by fire had already been significantly reduced. People had been eliminated consistently throughout the previous eight stages. Plus there were people like Fatty and the others who had been directly recruited and escorted away by various sects, and would not be participating in the final two stages or the arena matches.

Ling Yunzi suddenly materialized on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking.

“The final two stages will assess the heart, and the Dao!” he said. He looked over at Meng Hao with an approving smile, and then swept his hands through the air. This caused everyone’s positions to change once again, and Meng Hao was yet again in the lead position.

“The ninth stage refines the heart! The tenth stage inquires of your Dao!

“After these two stages, seven thousand Nascent Soul competitors, two thousand Spirit Severing competitors, and one thousand Dao Seeking competitors, will be chosen to partake in the arena matches!

“I must remind you that there are many prizes available during the arena matches. However, your opponents will not just be fellow competitors in the trial by fire. You will also be up against Chosen from various sects, as well as disciples from the Three Great Daoist Societies.

“This might be a bit unfair, but there are many things under Heaven that are like that. The truly mighty will definitely rise above the others!” Ling Yunzi waved his hand again, and the altar once more began to grow hazy.

The crowds in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were gazing steadily at the screens as they waited for the final two stages. In the palace in the starry sky, the various Patriarchs were also looking on with pensive expressions. None of them asked any questions of the Three Great Daoist Societies, but instead, focused on the competitors in the trial by fire who they had taken note of earlier.

The Patriarchs from the Three Great Daoist Societies sat up front, their expressions calm. They themselves were the only ones who knew how truly excited they were.

Meanwhile, many discussions were being carried on in the outside world.

“The ninth stage tests the heart, and whether or not the contestants can be victorious over the Devil in their hearts!”

“That stage has something to do with willpower, but not a lot. The key to being victorious over the Devil in one’s heart is not just willpower, but most importantly the certitude of one’s Dao Heart. That’s why the ninth and tenth stages are conducted together.

“I wonder if Fang Mu will continue to be the center of attention in this stage. If he stays in first place like he has so far, then his glory will be completely and utterly established. After all, he’s completely surpassed tens of thousands of others in each of the various stages.”

“I’d say… not necessarily. He might have come in first in the previous stages, but now that the final two stages are here, he’s definitely exhausted. It will be difficult for him to succeed!”

As the discussions continued, the competitors in the trial by fire on the Ancient Roads were gradually being covered over by the blurriness as they were taken to a special world. This world was completely different than the others they had been to.

Meng Hao opened his eyes to see… a purgatory!

It was a world of flames. Even the sky was on fire, and what land was visible that didn't have flames was dry and cracked, without the slightest sign of life.

Furthermore, Meng Hao quickly realized that he had been strung up, bound by an iron chain. As he looked around, he saw that there were iron chains everywhere, all of which bound people.

Among those were Nascent Soul and Spirit Severing cultivators, as well as some Dao Seeking cultivators like Meng Hao. Meng Hao saw the young man in the mask, as well as Chen Fan with his Nascent Soul cultivation base.

"What's… what's going on?!" Before coming into this world that tested the heart and the Dao, he had been full of confidence. After all, he had passed through all the previous levels as the center of attention.

Now, though, as he looked around at this unique world, for some unknown reason he was suddenly filled with a stifling sense of crisis.

He was not the only one to be regaining clarity. Around him, there were roughly a hundred thousand cultivators all recovering their senses. When they realized the situation they were in, they began to cry out in alarm.

"What is this place? How could the final two stages be like this!?"

"I never thought… I never thought that we would all be tested together!"

Meng Hao's breath came in ragged pants as he tested out the chain that bound him and found that he couldn't make it budge an inch. Also, his ability to use his cultivation base had apparently been suppressed, leaving him with nothing but the ordinary power of Dao Seeking.

Even more shocking to Meng Hao was that he could feel the iron chain that bound him swaying back and forth. Also, when he looked off into the distance, what he saw caused him to gape. In fact, there were even some people whose eyes went wide when they saw what was off in the distance, and they let out cries of shock and alarm.

Meng Hao was able to clearly see that at the very end of the iron chains that bound all the cultivators was an enormous cudgel, which was in turn slung over the shoulder of a giant!

The giant was gargantuan, and bare chested. He wore animal hide clothing, and his skin was pitch-black, with a violet tint. He moved forward at a run, which caused the iron chains to sway back and forth, making everyone attached to them feel as if the entire world was spinning.

The crowds in the outside world of the Ninth Mountain and Sea were equally shaken. They watched the vortex screens, and the gargantuan giant which had appeared.

“So the final two stages are like this!”

“What kind of test is this?”

It was at this point that a huge rift appeared in the sky of the world that Meng Hao and the others were in, out of which flew hundreds of thousands of figures.

These figures were not cultivators, but rather, winged beasts. Their appearances were savage, and they kicked up a shocking wind as they immediately began to fly toward the cultivators.

It was at this point that the giant suddenly stopped running, and then swung the huge cudgel into the air, which also swung the iron chains attached to its end. All of the cultivators were buffeted by gale force winds that made it feel as if they had been slammed into a huge cliff face. The cultivators were sent flying directly into the charging flying beasts.

The beasts' eyes were bright red, and voracious grins could be seen on their faces. They immediately pounced onto the cultivators, and in the blink of an eye, miserable screams could be heard. Many people were instantly killed in the initial salvo, completely wiped out by the beasts, who swallowed them alive.

A rain of blood fell down toward the ground, causing the sea of flames down below to dim and darken.

A vicious gleam appeared in Meng Hao's eyes as his body swung with the chain, completely out of his own control. However, he was still able to attack, and he didn't hesitate to perform an incantation with his right hand. He made a claw-like gesture, and lines of claw marks appeared, which slammed into an incoming beast's head.

A boom could be heard, and the beast shrieked, after which its head exploded. However, even as its body tumbled past Meng Hao, three more beasts appeared behind it.

More booms could be heard as Meng Hao attacked like the wind. He had a vicious personality that he now made no attempt to hide. His attacks sent blood flying through the air, and the killing intent which shone in his eyes grew more and more intense. After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, more than thirty beasts had died under his attacks.

There were many other cultivators like Meng Hao, all engaged in fierce fighting. Gradually, more and more of them died. The few people that were left behind were now facing ever greater numbers of beasts.

Furthermore, some beasts had appeared that were similar to the Dao Seeking stage in power. Within an hour, false Immortal beasts were on the scene, and one cultivator after another died around Meng Hao. After two more hours passed, there were less than a hundred people, who were surrounded and quickly being overwhelmed.

Meng Hao held on for fifteen breaths of time before his body collapsed and his head was devoured by a beast. In the last moments before his death, he was able to see that he had held out long enough to be the last person to die.

Everything went black.

When things became clear again, Meng Hao found himself in a world of flames, with a dismal sky, and swaying chains. Everything he saw was exactly the same as before. Other people began to awaken, then stare around themselves in shock.

Meng Hao was also gaping, and then his scalp went numb. Apparently, nothing had changed. The giant was still running forward, and everyone who had died was back where they had been before.

After enough time passed for half an incense stick to burn, the rift opened up in the sky and the beasts poured down. It was all exactly the same as before, almost as if they had been reincarnated. Yet again the giant roared and flung the cudgel out. Meng Hao and all the other cultivators who were attached to the chains were once again thrust into battle.

Meng Hao quickly found that exactly the same beasts as before came to attack him.

After two hours passed, Meng Hao died. When he opened his eyes, the chains were still there, swinging….

Once, twice, three times…. Meng Hao quickly lost track of time and how many times he had died. Soon, people around him began to grow numb to what was happening. As soon as they were tossed out, they chose to die, then begin the cycle again.

An expression of frustration gradually appeared on Meng Hao’s face. There was no way to leave this place. This was supposed to be a trial by fire, but there seemed to be no chance to live.

Die, die, and die again.

Revive, revive, and revive again.

Some people began to collapse into frenzied howls. However, that made no difference. Some people silently contemplated different methods of success, but all craftiness and plots were in vain.

Meng Hao watched as a Dao Seeking cultivator used some unknown method to try to possess one of the attacking beasts, then use it to flee. Soon, he vanished, apparently having escaped.

However, the next time Meng Hao regained consciousness, the man was still strung up on the chain, just like before.

As to what exactly had happened, the man gave no explanation.

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# Chapter 860: The Heart is Strong, the Dao is Unyielding!

Dying fills people with fear. Dying 100 times will make people numb. Dying 1,000 times can cause one to feel lost. Dying 10,000 times…

That can make someone feel as if they aren’t even human any more.

Such an experience gave birth to pain, a pain that the competitors could only hope would just come to an end. A pain that spread into the hearts of everyone. Their hearts filled with torment to the point that their Daos were in peril of being lost.

This trial by fire was like an enormous grindstone, slowly crushing away their wills as it turned and turned.

More and more people gave up on fighting back. If fighting back 10,000 times in a row did no good, how many people were there that could persevere…?

Meng Hao persevered. Every time he woke up, he would continue to fight and kill the beasts that attacked him. 10,000 times.

As time went by, Meng Hao saw countless cultivators making various decisions. Some chose to try to flee. Some chose to attack the giant. Some chose to commit suicide.

There were even some people who attacked other cultivators.

Regardless of what they did, every time Meng Hao regained his senses, he saw the same people in the same places on the iron chains, without exception.

The audiences in the Ninth Mountain and Sea watched the screens, and their hearts and minds trembled. If you said that the spectators had been shocked by the previous eight stages, then this stage left them completely astonished.

Before, they had been envious of the competitors, and had even sighed, wishing that they could switch places. Now that they saw what was happening in the final two stages, however, they could only watch silently.

As for how many times the cultivators had actually died, nobody knew.

“Just what kind of test is this? How does dying over and over again help their hearts and their Daos?”

“These last two stages are basically Hell!” By this point, the audience members were all breathing in ragged pants.

“You can see people trying all kinds of different methods. If you add everything together, it seems they’re trying every possibility! But in the end, there’s no other result than defeat.”

“How can this test be passed? I’m afraid Fang Mu will have no way to clinch first place.”

Complete silence reigned in the starry sky palace as the Patriarchs stared wordlessly at the display screens.

The dying continued, over and over again, an endless cycle.

Meng Hao remained silent and taciturn throughout the process. However, unlike many of the people around him, he never attempted to flee, nor did he lose his desire to fight. From beginning to end, every time he regained lucidity, he would begin killing.

However, his deaths came more and more quickly. That was because more and more of the others ceased resisting. When the iron chains were flung out, they would simply close their eyes and wait to die.

Gradually, fewer and fewer people were like Meng Hao, constantly fighting back. Of the tens of thousands of people who had started out fighting, there were now only a few thousand remaining. Suddenly, Ling Yunzi’s voice echoed out within the world.

“If you say ‘I give up,’ you can leave.”

The instant these nine words spread out, among the countless cultivators who had grown numb to the constant dying and were once again on the verge of being killed, someone quaveringly spoke up.

“I give up….” As soon as he spoke the words, he vanished, leaving the world entirely.

After him, one voice after another began to ring out, and one cultivator after another began to vanish.

Without the presence of despair, if someone is given hope, they might not attach too much importance to it, especially if they have a steadfast heart and an unchangeable Dao.

However… if you torment someone to their limits and place them in the midst of despair, then give them a sudden scrap of hope, an opportunity to be extricated, then most people would not hesitate to grab that chance.

More and more people chose to give up. However, there were also others who had previously ceased resisting, who suddenly seemed to be filled with energy, and began to fight the beasts.

Time passed by. They died over and over again, and as they did, the words ‘I give up’ seemed to become like an inner Devil, lurking in the hearts of all the cultivators.

Simply speaking, all they had to do was say some words, and the constant torment would be over. They would be released.

“What a brutal test,” said one of the Patriarchs in the palace.

“From ancient times until now, the mark to pass this stage has been 30,000 deaths.”

“More than 50,000 marks a participant as Chosen!”

“To date, no one has exceeded 79,113. That was the mark set by Sir Fan.”

“So, he participated in this part too. Without the element of despair, perhaps many could grit their teeth and continue on. But with hope right there, so close that all they have to do is reach out and grab it, how many people will be able to persevere?”

“The ninth stage tests the heart, the tenth stage inquires of the Dao. These two stages test how strong one’s heart is and how unyielding one’s Dao is!”

“The longer they endure, the more terrifying everything becomes!” In addition to the Patriarchs in the palace who were discussing the matter, there were many outside in the Ninth Mountain and Sea who were able to piece together some clues about the nature of the two stages.

“I heard that when Sir Fan reached these last two stages, he died more than 79,000 times. He held on until he was the very last person before giving up.”

The outside world was abuzz, but their discussions could not pass into the world in which Meng Hao was continuing to persevere. Inside of him, two voice were speaking, one of them telling him to give up, the other telling him to endure.

Every time, he would die wracked with pain, and would wake up confused. It is a simple thing to describe, but it was nothing short of torture. The number of cultivators left behind continued to shrink.

The sound of the words ‘I give up’ that echoed around was like the voice of that inner Devil. It actually caused even more of the remaining cultivators to eventually decide to quit.

Time passed by. Fewer and fewer cultivators remained behind. Soon there were only a few hundred. After three days, there were only a hundred. After another three days, there were only nine.

Of those nine, there were three who were enduring, but had ceased to fight back. It was a somewhat fraudulent method, and although it initially seemed as if it would lessen their torment, in the end, it actually made things even more painful.

The other six included Meng Hao. Every time he awoke, he would begin to fight.

He had no idea how many times he had died. His eyes were bloodshot, and everywhere he looked, he saw blood. Another three days passed, and the three people who had been passively allowing themselves to be killed, finally couldn’t take it any more and gave up.

Of the five people other than Meng Hao who had continued to fight, four quit.

There were now only two people left. One was Meng Hao, the other was… Chen Fan!

Chen Fan fought. Every time he regained his senses, he fought viciously, almost as if he hoped to achieve some special state amidst all the carnage.

Out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, everyone was shocked. In the starry sky palace, the Patriarchs were watching with baited breath, closely observing Chen Fan.

Chen Fan had had his outstanding moments in the previous stages, but had not attracted much attention when creating his divine ability. Now, in these last two stages, he was suddenly rising to prominence.

“With such a heart and such a Dao, this young man has incredible good fortune!”

“He could give up at any time, but has endured all the way to this point! He’s already died 70,000 times!!”

“He’ll most likely be able to hold on for a while longer. In this stage, the most difficult point is when there is only one person left. At that point, first place is secured, which leads to a softening of the heart, making it difficult to continue on. Even Sir Fan, when he reached that point, didn’t last for more than a thousand deaths before giving up.

A day later, Chen Fan began to tremble, and finally chose to quit. He had endured for more than 70,000 deaths, which was second only to Sir Fan’s performance all those years ago. He was now quite the center of attention, and there were several sects who were preparing to try to recruit him.

At this point in the shocking trial by fire, everyone was looking at the final remaining participant… Meng Hao.

“He took first place in the first two stages, outshone the first place winner in the middle three stages, and then in the following three stages, took first place yet again. Now in the final two stages… he actually… took first place again!”

“He’s definitely going to rise to complete prominence! Nobody can get in his way. As long as he doesn’t get killed, then he’s going to be thoroughly famous in all the Ninth Mountain and Sea!”

“It’s like we’re looking at a future Paragon….” All of the cultivators who were watching the trial by fire out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea could now feel their minds spinning.

By now, especially after seeing the final two stages, they all had to admit that if they were in Meng Hao’s place, they would not be able to do what he was doing.

Meng Hao was still hanging on. He knew that he was the only person left, and yet he didn’t give up. A vicious, ruthless smile appeared on his face, and each time he regained consciousness, he would wade into battle with the countless beasts. It was in the middle of this carnage that he tempered his heart and his Dao.

“My Dao is the endless path of life, freedom and independence! Now, I am restrained by these chains, which is the furthest thing from freedom!

“My heart is unconstrained. If Heaven and Earth collapse, it will not be destroyed. If all living things become ancient, it will not wither. But now, it hesitates!

“My Dao is not free, but I desire freedom! My heart hesitates, but I wish to persist past the point of hesitation!

“This trial by fire is testing me, and I’m using it to polish my Dao. In this way, although I might seem to be restrained, in actuality they are nothing but chains. They can’t tie me up, they can only polish my Dao!

“As for my heart, if I wish it to be unhesitating, then I need to endure. Endure to the point… where I do not feel pain in this trial by fire, but instead, happiness!

“When I pass this stage, then I will be truly free, and my heart will be incredibly strong!” Eyes shining brightly, he launched an attack.

73,000. 76,000. 79,000….

80,000!

When Meng Hao died for the 80,000th time, the audiences in the outside world roared, and the patriarchs in the starry sky palace, despite being somewhat accustomed to how Meng Hao worked wonders, were still completely shaken.

“He exceeded Sir Fan!!”

“I just added it up, and that was the 80,000th death! That puts him in first place among everyone from ancient times until now!!”

“Fang Mu. Fang Mu! This name is definitely going to shock the Heavens!”

While the audience was in an uproar, Meng Hao continued to persevere. A smile could be seen on his face, and he actually seemed to be incredibly happy. It wasn’t happiness because of dying, or killing, but rather, a happiness because of his own Dao. His heart was now growing even more resolute.

To his heart and his Dao, death… was unworthy of being anything more than a grindstone.

A few days later, he died for the 90,000th time!

A few more days, and it was… 100,000!

That 100,000th death caused universal uproar. When Meng Hao opened his eyes afterward, wild colors flashed in the sky, and a wind screamed. The giant slowly dropped to one knee and raised the cudgel aloft. The countless beasts that had poured out of the rift all dropped to the ground.

It was as if they were prostrating themselves in worship!

The stage had been cleared!

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# Chapter 861: First Place!

“What a Chosen!” By this time, all of the Patriarchs in the starry sky palace had risen to their feet with expressions of deep emotion on their faces. They were looking at the vortex screens, where the giant and the beasts were all bowing in worship to Meng Hao.

All of the sects wanted to recruit Meng Hao as a disciple, but the Ninth Sea God World of the Three Great Daoist Societies had already made a move, leaving them with no opportunity.

It wasn’t just the other Three Great Daoist Societies who were in such a position, but also the Five Great Holy Lands.

“This Fang Mu is one of the most incredible Chosen to appear in countless years!”

“Congratulations to the Ninth Sea God World. Fang Mu will definitely demonstrate extraordinary talent and skill in the God World!” In response to such words from the various Patriarchs, the old man from the Ninth Sea God World laughed heartily. His expression was one of extreme contentment.

By now, it was clear that Fang Mu was definitely in first place in this trial by fire!

Of course, the crowds outside in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were in commotion. When it came to the final two stages of the heart and the Dao, Meng Hao was the first person to ever clear the entire stage. Not even Sir Fan had been able to do so.

Meng Hao had earned everyone’s complete and utter attention!

“He definitely deserves to be in first place!”

“His name will soon shake the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea. He’s going to be number one among all Chosen! Once he joins the Nine Sea God World, if he continues on this path of growth, he’ll definitely become a Divine Son! If he and Fan Dong’er get together, then they’ll definitely become a legend!”

“You guys didn’t notice, but in the final twenty thousand deaths, Fang Mu was actually happy! Compared to the pain everyone else was in, that’s probably even more frightening!”

As the echo of discussion spread throughout the Ninth Mountain and Sea, Patriarch Reliance was out in the starry sky, looked quite pleased. Then, he suddenly shuddered.

“Dammit! I’ve been thinking about this wrong! What the hell does that little bastard’s life or death have to do with me? His being the center of attention has nothing to do with the Patriarch! We’re enemies! Dammit! Dammit! I’ve been looking at it all wrong!!”

Also somewhere in the starry sky was the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, his hair disheveled, his eyes narrowed as he looked off into the distance.

“Strong… much stronger than I remember,” he murmured. Deep within his eyes flickered the glow of Wang Tengfei’s spirit. “Meng Hao, I truly can’t wait until the moment when we meet again!” With that, he turned and disappeared into the distance.

In the Kunlun Society, Pill Demon and Chu Yuyan looked on with trembling hearts. Having personally witnessed everything that had gone on in the trial by fire, were they not already aware that Fang Mu was Meng Hao, they would never have possibly drawn a connection between the two.

Fang Mu… really was the complete focus of attention.

“Planet South Heaven is too small,” Chu Yuyan murmured, a twinge of obsession visible in her eyes. “You were being held back there. Your world… is out among the stars.”

Back on Planet South Heaven, in the Fang Clan in the vast Eastern Lands, Meng Hao’s parents looked at the vortex screens with smiles on their faces. Of course, buried within those smiles were emotional sighs.

“Hao’er really is going to leave us,” murmured his mother, her voice soft.

After a moment of silence, his father gently said, “Planet South Heaven is too small for him, and was limiting his growth. He was bound to leave South Heaven sooner or later. After this trial by fire is over, I won’t try to get him to stay too long.”

“But he’s just a child,” she replied bitterly.

“He’s grown up. If you don’t let him fly, how can he ever come to know the boundless universe?”

Meanwhile, on Planet West Felicity, Zhao Yifan was polishing his sword, and the desire to fight flashed within his eyes. Then he looked away from the vortex screen up in the sky.

“I must not underestimate all of the other members of my generation out there. I never imagined someone else like Meng Hao of Planet South Heaven existed. But now, this Fang Mu appears in the trial by fire!” The desire to fight burned hot in his eyes.

“I truly hope that you participate in the arena matches!” said Zhao Yifan, taking a deep breath and then closing his eyes. He would of course take part in the arena matches, and would actually lead the disciples of the Sublime Sword Flow Grotto into the fighting.

Only one cultivator from the Nascent Soul, Spirit Severing, and Dao Seeking stages would come out victorious in the arena matches. Then, they would be recruited as a disciple by one of the Three Great Daoist Societies, and become a Conclave disciple at that.

Of course, that didn’t mean that participation was restricted. On the contrary, if disciples from the Three Great Daoist Societies participated and took first place, then they would also be able to join the Conclave.

As far as other sects went, they did not participate for the chance to join a Daoist Society, but rather, for the incredible prizes offered up in the arena matches.

In the Ninth Sea God World, Fan Dong’er sat cross-legged with her eyes closed. Her complexion was ashen, and there seemed to be a trace of Karma in it. For some reason, she kept thinking about Meng Hao, whom she hated with a passion that had permeated even her bones.

Behind her, as always, was the female corpse. When her master saw the corpse, he did not attempt to help her get rid of it. Instead, he told her that it was good fortune for her.

However, Fan Dong’er did not wish to have good fortune like this.

“How come just looking at this Fang Mu pisses me off!?” thought Fan Dong’er as she looked up at the vortex screen, her graceful brow furrowed. She was another of the Chosen who would participate in the arena matches.

In the Li Clan on Planet North Reed, Li Ling’er’s expression was indifferent as she sat cross-legged in the clan’s Daoist rite centers. Seated in front of her was a large group of Li Clan members, all of whom were listening to her give a speech about cultivation. To these clan members, Li Ling’er was like a celestial goddess, selfless, incorruptible, and aloof.

Occasionally, the vortex screens up above would draw the attention of the Li Clan members, and even Li Ling’er would occasionally look over.

When the clan members asked her if she would participate in the arena matches…

“Yes, I will!” she responded coolly.

Taiyang Zi, as well as Sun Hai of the Church of the Immortal Emperor, were both required by their sects to participate in the fighting. Virtually all of the sects and clans sent their Chosen to join the arena matches.

Some of them were people Meng Hao knew, but many were Chosen who hadn’t ever been to Planet South Heaven.

In the outside world, everyone was preparing for the arena matches. As for Meng Hao, the world around him shattered into pieces. When he reappeared, he was back in the lead position on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking.

Behind him were all the other competitors in the trial by fire. They looked at Meng Hao with awe in their eyes, even the masked young man and the cultivator with the mosquitos.

Meng Hao had used his own strength to crush the other participants in virtually every way.

Ling Yunzi materialized up in midair. He hovered there, looking at the crowd for a moment before speaking.

“The ten stages of testing have concluded,” he said coolly. “Being responsible for the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking, I will now select one thousand people to continue.” With that, he waved his hand, causing several thousand Dao Seeking cultivators to instantly vanish, teleported back to their places of origin.

One thousand people remained.

“All of you have passed the testing phase. Next, you may decide whether or not to participate in the arena matches.

“In the arena matches, anyone who makes it to the top 100 will receive a prize of 1,000 Immortal jades. Perhaps some of you are unfamiliar with Immortal jades. They are objects that can be used in cultivation after you reach the Immortal Realm. They are a rare thing in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. 1,000 Immortal jades is similar in value to 10,000,000 spirit stones.”

Originally, Meng Hao hadn’t been very interested in participating in the arena matches. However, when he heard this, his eyes went wide and began to shine with a bright light.

“10,000,000 spirit stones….” he thought, panting. “The Three Great Daoist Societies are way too rich! You get 10,000,000 spirit stones just for getting in the top 100?!?!” Meng Hao was now feeling a bit excited.

“If you get into the top 16, the prize is 5,000 Immortal jades,” Ling Yunzi continued. As his voice echoed out, Meng Hao got even more excited. All of the remaining participants were now panting eagerly.

“If you reach the top 8, the prize is 10,000 Immortal jades!”

Meng Hao’s mind filled with roaring, and he was mentally adding up how much 10,000 plus 5,000 plus 1,000 Immortal jades was in spirit stones. After finishing the calculation, his eyes began to shine with fierce light.

“The prize for reaching the top 4 is an Immortality Illumination Vine!” continued Ling Yunzi, which instantly caused many among the thousand remaining participants to cry out loud in disbelief. Meng Hao didn’t seem to care too much, but the eyes of the others around him instantly went completely bloodshot.

To most people, Immortal jades were just material wealth, and although they could be used in cultivation, that wouldn’t help until the Immortal Realm. However, an Immortality Illumination Vine could completely change one’s fate in life, and could make true Immortal Ascension possible!

This was especially important because of the fact that a true Immortal had recently appeared on Planet South Heaven. In the following thousand years, Immortality Illumination Vines could be considered precious treasures to everyone, except perhaps Meng Hao.

They could change fate and determine the future!

There were different prizes offered on the other two Ancient Roads. However, regardless of the stage they were in, when the cultivators found out what rewards that were being offered, it sent their blood boiling. They weren’t the only ones. When the crowds in the Ninth Mountain and Sea heard of the prizes available on the three Ancient Roads, their eyes went bloodshot, and they began to breathe heavily. Were it not for the fact that they didn’t possess the requisite qualifications, they too would be there to participate in the fighting.

This was especially true when they heard that one of the prizes on the Ancient Path of Dao Seeking was an Immortality Illumination Vine.

“I can’t believe the prize is… an Immortality Illumination Vine!!”

“Dammit! If I had known that, I would have participated! In the next thousand years, anyone who has an Immortality Illumination Vine has a high likelihood of becoming a true Immortal!!”

“True Immortality! Although using an Immortality Illumination Vine doesn’t measure up to seizing destiny, it doesn’t matter how you become a true Immortal among the stars, you’re still a true Immortal!!”

Ling Yunzi looked out with satisfaction at all the looks of shock. However, when he looked at Meng Hao, he could tell that although he was cheering like everyone else, it seemed a bit perfunctory. After a moment of thought, Ling Yunzi spoke out again.

“Fang Mu, although you are a Conclave disciple of the Ninth Sea God World, if you don’t perform enough meritorious service in the future, you won’t be awarded with an Immortality Illumination Vine. You must seize this opportunity to acquire one.”

Meng Hao quickly nodded his head, and then suddenly asked, “How many spirit stones is an Immortality Illumination Vine worth?”

Ling Yunzi’s jaw dropped.

“They’re priceless,” he responded. “If you put one up for auction, it’s very likely that it would sell for millions of Immortal jades.”

When Meng Hao heard that, his mind spun, and he began to tremble. Immediately, his eyes went completely bloodshot, and his expression turned completely vicious.

Seeing Meng Hao like this caused Ling Yunzi to clear his throat. He was gradually starting to understand Meng Hao's personality a bit more.

"Whoever takes first place will receive a prize of…." Ling Yunzi paused dramatically.

"A drop of blood passed down by the Three Great Paragons!"

The response to his words was complete silence. However, there were some people who began to tremble, and expressions of intense disbelief covered their faces, looks that exceeded the ones that had appeared when they were told about the Immortality Illumination Vines. The outside world was quiet too, but only for a moment, after which a great tumult broke out.

"A drop of blood from the Three Great Paragons! Heavens! That would contain the Dao of the Three Great Paragons!!"

"The Three Great Paragons!? According to legend, they were powerful experts from ancient times. They… they actually left behind a drop of blood!?!?"

"Is this for real?!?!"

Even the Patriarchs in the starry sky palace could hardly believe it. They shot to their feet, panting, expressions of shock written on their faces.

Only Meng Hao didn't seem to have much of a reaction. However, Ling Yunzi's next words, which were clearly directed at him, caused Meng Hao's heart to skip a beat.

"Fang Mu, if you put this drop of Paragon's blood up for auction, it would be easier to find a phoenix feather or a qilin horn than to find someone in the Ninth Mountain who could afford it."

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# Chapter 862: Provocation!

Meng Hao took several more deep breaths, but he was unable to calm himself. Even he had to admit that deep down, his main weakness was… his love of money.

But that wasn’t his fault! He had been poor since he was little, and even though lots of people owed him money, those debts hadn’t been repaid. Things really weren’t easy for him!

When he was young, he had been so poor that he developed a fear of lacking money. After he grew up, he entered the world of cultivation, and still had never really been rich. There was that short period of time in the Milky Way Sea, and his unexpected windfall. However, when he thought about it, the only reason he had been able to save up the money he had now was because he hadn’t used the copper mirror in a long time. When he thought about how voraciously the copper mirror consumed wealth, it made Meng Hao feel completely impoverished.

1,000 Immortal jades made him excited. 10,000 sent his blood boiling. The value of the Immortality Illumination Vine made his eyes go bloodshot. Now, there was the drop of Paragon blood, which caused Meng Hao’s eyes to go green.

When Ling Yunzi saw that green glow, he stared in shock for a moment. He had never before seen a light like that shining in someone’s eyes. This was the first time.

However, it only took a moment for more heavy breathing to be heard. Many of the other participants were much like Meng Hao, and didn’t originally understand the value of a drop of Paragon’s blood. When they heard Ling Yunzi’s second sentence, their minds filled with roaring.

They weren’t the only ones. The Patriarchs in the starry sky temple were also panting; to them, a drop of Paragon’s blood was like a precious treasure.

They were well aware that an item like that was something that only the Three Great Daoist Societies could possess. They would most certainly not have very many either. It was a precious treasure, the likes of which was not common in this age. And yet, unthinkably, the Three Great Daoist Societies were offering it up as a prize in this trial by fire.

The Patriarchs from the Three Great Daoist Societies smiled slightly, but did not speak. Obviously, there was some profound meaning behind offering the Paragon’s blood as a prize. Actually, it didn’t really matter who it was specifically that acquired it. The point was to let everyone know that they had Paragon’s blood!

The crowds in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were seething with excitement. Even the Chosen out in the various sects who were preparing to participate in the fighting began to pant. The disciples from the Three Great Daoist Societies were much the same. Although they were members of the Daoist Societies, it would normally be impossible to acquire the things that were being offered as prizes unless they performed some incredible service to the sect.

But now… all they had to do was win first place, and it would be theirs!

Zhao Yifan rose to his feet, bursting with the desire to fight. “Paragon’s blood…. It’s impossible to say which Paragon, but if I fuse it into my Dao of swords, it will definitely make my Dao even more incisive!”

Fan Dong’er’s eyes went wide, and she began to pant.

“With that blood, perhaps I can finally free myself from this corpse!”

Li Ling’er, Taiyang Zi and Sun Hai, as well as the other Chosen, all had similar reactions. There were even some Chosen who had elected not to participate in the fighting, such as Song Luodan and some others, who immediately regretted their decision.

“The arena matches will take place inside the Ruins of Immortality,” continued Ling Yunzi. “However, the location will not be here on the three Ancient Roads, but rather, on an ancient Dao Tree located further within!

“All of you will be given three days of rest, after which, I will personally take you to the ancient Dao Tree!

“During those three days, if any of you wish to leave, you may do so freely.” With that, Ling Yunzi turned to leave.

“Patriarch, please wait a moment!” Meng Hao hurriedly cried out.

Ling Yunzi stopped in place, then turned back to look at Meng Hao. His eyes were filled with approval, and a smile could be seen on his face.

“What’s the matter?”

A bashful smile could be seen on Meng Hao’s face as he somewhat embarrassedly said, “Patriarch, er… earlier you mentioned that I could ask for anything I want, and you would give it to me. Well… I think that a drop of Paragon’s blood would do nicely.”

When Ling Yunzi heard this, his eyes went as wide as saucers. He was just about to rebuke Meng Hao, when he noticed Meng Hao’s expression. Then he thought about how stirring all of Meng Hao’s actions had been, and his anger cooled.

“That is not something I can personally decide,” he said, shaking his head. “How about this: once you get to the sect, we will continue this discussion.” With that, he left.

“I knew all along they wouldn’t keep their promise,” Meng Hao thought. “I should have plucked off the pointer needle on the Feng Shui compass too.”

Time passed. None of the thousand participants on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking chose to leave. They all sat down in meditation, taking every moment of opportunity to practice cultivation, hoping to put themselves in top fighting condition.

Most of them felt quite drained from the previous ten stages of the trial by fire. They had expended much, were mentally exhausted, and their cultivation bases were running low. This was especially the case after the final two stages, and their near collapse into complete despair.

The torment they had experienced was severely draining mentally. However, the remaining 1,000 people were naturally outstanding individuals, so they took advantage of every moment to restore their energy.

Meng Hao had his Eternal stratum, so he was the only person who didn’t need to spend any time recovering.

“So, there are three more days until the arena matches,” he thought. “Why do I have the feeling that I’ve really lost out on a lot during my time here? I wasn’t able to take the floor slabs and decorative tiles from the Warrior Pavilion, not to mention the shelving. There wasn’t any time….

“The Three Great Daoist Societies took the Feng Shui compass as well.” He turned to look over at the trial by fire contestants on the other altars, then suddenly felt a flash of inspiration. He stood up and flew to the edge of the altar, and as he neared, sensed an intense pressure. A faint rumbling sound could also be heard.

The rumbling immediately attracted the attention of the other thousand participants. They looked over with wide eyes to see what Meng Hao was doing, and instantly, their faces began to flicker. Even the people in the outside world noticed and were shocked.

“What’s he doing?”

“He needs to calm down! Why is he trying to move off of the altar?”

In the palace in the starry sky, the Patriarchs of the various clans looked on with shock. Ling Yunzi suddenly appeared as well, and he looked on in astonishment.

Meng Hao had once again succeeded in drawing all attention onto himself. As he moved out into the gap between his altar and the one behind it, the pressure grew even more intense. Finally, massive rumbling filled the air, and great beads of sweat broke out on Meng Hao's forehead. He began to tremble, and yet, his eyes shone with a brilliant light.

When the spectators in the Ninth Mountain and Sea saw this, they immediately picked up on what they thought were the hidden details, and began to heave sighs of praise.

"He's practicing cultivation!"

"He definitely deserves to have taken first place in the trial by fire! Even during the three days of rest before the arena matches, he actually refuses to waste time, and is working hard at cultivation!"

Soon, everyone came to the conclusion that the only possible explanation for Meng Hao's actions was that he was practicing cultivation.

The Patriarchs in the starry sky palace began to nod in approval.

"Excellent. Using the pressure weighing down on the Ancient Roads to practice cultivation. Considering the level of pressure, cultivating there for three days is like spending thirty days in the outside world. If you spent longer, you would get even more used to the pressure, and once you were released, would be able to unleash explosive might. Such a thing would give you much greater momentum going into the arena battles."

"No wonder he was able to take first place in the trial by fire. His awareness of cultivation is deeper than most people could comprehend."

As the Patriarchs nodded and discussed the matter, the three elders from the Three Great Daoist Societies were all smiling.

Meanwhile, the Chosen from the various sects on the outside were practicing cultivation in preparation for the arena matches. They cared little about most of the people they would be facing up against. However, there were some that had left them with deep impressions. Meng Hao, of course, was the one from whom they felt the most pressure.

When the Chosen saw Meng Hao practicing cultivation out in the pressure of the Ancient Roads, their expressions became serious.

“In a situation like that, to be able to think up such a method to practice cultivation…This Fang Mu really is extraordinary,” said Zhao Yifan.

“This Fang Mu will be a formidable adversary.” Fan Dong’er frowned.

Li Ling’er, Taiyang Zi, and Sun Hai all had solemn expressions on their faces.

Back on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking, Ling Yunzi hovered in the void, slowly nodding his head, the look of praise on his face growing even deeper.

Slowly, the participants on the other altars began to react. Quite a few began to imitate Meng Hao, and stepped off the altars and into the pressure. However, none of them could last for very long before being forced to return to their altars.

That only served to increase their awe of Meng Hao.

Four hours passed by, after which Meng Hao finally managed to close in on the nearest altar. On that altar, Li Yan’s pupil’s constricted. Although he had long put himself on guard inwardly, his expression didn’t change, and he looked over at Meng Hao coldly.

He had also attempted to move out into the pressure outside the altar, but had only been able to last for an hour before being forced to return. As for Meng Hao, he had persisted for four hours; that was something that left Li Yan completely shocked.

At first, he assumed Meng Hao would only rest for a bit and then go back, but in complete contrast to his expectations, Meng hao actually approached him.

“Fellow Daoist Fang, come no closer!” he said, his eyes glittering coldly. His hair was already standing on end, and he couldn’t be any more vigilant.

He waved his hand, causing a shield to immediately appear, bursting with energy.

The scene instantly attracted quite a bit of attention. The people in the crowds in the outside world all began to look over.

“Fellow Daoist,” Meng Hao responded with a smile, “don’t get the wrong idea. I have no ill intentions. I’m just here to sell some medicinal pills. Look, right here, I happen to have a wonderful Spirit Reviving Pill.” With that, he adroitly produced a medicinal pill from his bag of holding.

“One pill will completely enliven you, and will increase your energy by a hundredfold. How about this: for 100,000 spirit stones, I’m willing to part with this medical pill and give it to you!” He looked over at Li Yan.

Li Yan was staring with wide eyes, as were all of the other competitors in the trial by fire. Up in midair, Ling Yunzi was in complete shock.

The crowds in the outside world looked on agape, and all of the Chosen were staring fixedly. Even the Patriarchs in the starry sky palace were gaping.

“He… he expended all that effort, fought back against that enormous pressure, just to… just to sell some medicinal pills?!?!”

“And he wants 100,000 spirit stones for a Spirit Reviving Pill? That’s… that’s way too expensive!”

Ling Yunzi wasn’t sure whether to laugh or cry. At first he wanted to get angry, but then he thought about how sensitive Meng Hao was regarding spirit stones, as well as the stirring matter of the Feng Shui compass, and he sighed.

“This kid is definitely a rogue cultivator. He’s no doubt experienced many hardships in his practice of cultivation. Therefore, he has a strong attachment to spirit stones.”

Li Yan looked hesitantly at Meng Hao. He actually did want to buy the medicinal pill. The problem wasn't about the amount of spirit stones, but that he didn't dare to actually buy it. At this moment, he wasn't sure if he could trust that what Fang Mu was saying was true or not.

After a long moment, Li Yan carefully replied, "Fellow… Fellow Daoist Fang, I actually have my own medicinal pills."

"Oh, I see," said Meng Hao, looking disappointed. He then turned to look at the participants on the other altars.

Most of them looked back silently. However, there happened to be a middle-aged man who stood six altars away from where Meng Hao currently was. He looked on with an arrogant expression.

"I can't believe someone who cares so much about money could take first place," he called out. "I've really been blind. If you can personally deliver those medicinal pills to me, then however many you want to sell, I, Zhao, will buy.

"However, I'll only wait for half a day. If you can't make it here in that amount of time, then you'll just have to scram."

Meng Hao looked up at the middle-aged man. Then, a bashful smile appeared.

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# Chapter 863: Pill Delivery Service!

Meng Hao stood there on the second altar, looking at the man standing on the eighth altar. There were a total of five altars standing between them!

This man was one of the thousand participants on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking, and back home, he was a Chosen. That was why he was able to stick out so well on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking.

Originally, he had believed himself capable of struggling his way into the top ten, but the brutality of the trial by fire had resulted in him sustaining some severe blows to his self-confidence. However, during the three trials of talent, cultivation, and age, he had taken second place in the trial of talent. He had been very excited about that, but then Meng Hao had thrown everything into chaos, the result being that few people had taken note of him.

Jealousy of Meng Hao had taken deep root within him then and there. Then, Meng Hao’s spectacular performance in the other stages had caused that jealousy to transform into bone-deep hatred.

Of course, he was not a witless person. If he was going to attempt to humiliate Meng Hao in full view of everyone, he would definitely have to ensure his own safety. That was why he had put a half-day time limit on his offer.

He did not believe that Meng Hao could possibly make it to him in half a day. After all, Meng Hao had spent roughly four hours to get to the second altar. Half a day contained twelve hours, so therefore, the man was confident that Meng Hao would not be able to reach him.

“If the time passes and he still comes, he won’t be able to do anything at all to me. There are rules, after all! If he tries to attack me, the Three Great Daoist Societies will intervene. That he’s a disciple of the Ninth Sea God World… makes no difference!

“Rewards come only with risk. If I humiliate Fang Mu, people will definitely notice me. This is my opportunity to get my name out there to the sects. This is my chance to get noticed!” The man’s eyes flickered, and his mouth turned up into a cold smile.

A bit of a bashful smile tugged at Meng Hao’s lips. He nodded at Li Yan, then turned and headed toward the edge of the altar. When he stepped out into the void, the pressure of the outside once again weighed down on him. Meng Hao was like a rowboat in an angry sea, his robes whipping about. However, he proceeded forward with firm steadfastness, moving ahead one bit at a time.

When he started out toward the next altar, it instantly caused all of the competitors in the trial by fire to look over. Their eyes glittered as various thoughts ran through their heads.

“Even if Fang Mu does something more spectacular than he already has, I don’t think he can get to that man in half a day.”

“That’s not very smart. He should just have put up with the man’s words and waited to handle the matter after the arena matches.”

“That guy really is malicious. He’s smart though. He actually went out of his way to provoke Fang Mu. If he ends up humiliating him, he’ll really earn a name for himself.”

The remaining competitors in the trial by fire were intelligent people, and they quickly understood what was going on.

Up in midair, Ling Yunzi looked on with a cool expression. Considering the level of his cultivation base, he wouldn’t pay too much attention to the competitors jockeying for positions. However, he couldn’t help but feel quite a bit of admiration for Meng Hao, and began to watch, wondering if Meng Hao would be able to reach his destination in less than half a day.

The cultivators out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea looked on with interest, and quite a few of them realized what the middle-aged man was thinking. There were, of course, varying opinions about the matter.

“This Fang Mu is a bit impulsive.”

“He shouldn’t have tried to sell those medicinal pills. He’s just giving his opponents an opportunity and invitation to humiliate him.”

The Patriarchs up in the starry sky palace settled their qi and calmed their minds. The conflicts between the trial by fire competitors weren’t something they would pay close attention to. However, considering everything that Meng Hao had accomplished, many of them were waiting to see how he would resolve this issue.

“This is actually a test in and of itself,” said the Patriarch from the Church of the Immortal Emperor. “The previous stages all tested internal weaknesses. A person’s response to provocation can reveal a lot about their instincts.” Many others nodded in response,.

Time passed by. Two hours later, Meng Hao was moving along at a quick pace. He was now between the second and third altars, and the pressure weighing down on him from the surrounding void sent his hair whipping about. However, his expression was calm, and he continued without pause.

The other competitors were all silently shaking their heads. They knew that the half-day timetable was something Meng Hao couldn’t meet.

The middle-aged man’s facial expression was one of complete complacency. When he’d opened his mouth earlier, it had actually been with some nervousness, but now he was completely calm and even laughing.

“Fang Mu, you only have half a day! If you can’t make it here by then, you can just get the hell back to your own altar. After half a day passes, even if you offer your medicinal pills to me for free, I won’t take them.”

The arrogance in his tone was extremely apparent.

Meng Hao looked up at the man far off in the distance, and smiled. He proceeded forward, taking about an hour to get to the third altar.

This time he finished the trip an hour faster than the last time, which was of course shocking to many onlookers. However, of the twelve hour time limit, there were now only nine hours left. The middle-aged man looked even more relaxed, and laughingly called out.

“Fang Mu, you have five altars to go, but only nine hours left! You’d best take advantage of your time. I’m curious to see how many altars you can get under your belt before the nine hours is up!”

Meng Hao smiled bashfully, then stepped out into the void once again. The pressure surrounded him, and his energy surged. Boundless light radiated off of him, and he continued onward without pause. Although he was moving slower, and the pressure was increasing, he managed to reach the fourth altar in only two hours.

That gave rise to quite a bit of astonishment among the onlookers. The middle-aged man’s face flickered a bit, but he called out just as arrogantly as before.

“So what? There are still four altars between us, and you only have seven hours! Do you really think you can make it here?”

“I don’t need that much time,” said Meng Hao, his first time speaking to the middle-aged man. Even as he spoke, lightning crackled out around him and he stepped out into the void. Rumbling echoed out because of his incredible speed, almost as if from friction. This time, he used only one hour to set foot onto the fifth altar.

“What!?” Many of the trial by fire competitors jumped to their feet, their expressions that of astonishment. The spectators out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were also looking on wide-eyed.

To cross the gap between two of the altars in only one hour required astonishing speed. That was especially true considering that his first attempt had taken a full four hours.

“Was he intentionally holding back the first time around? Or is he just getting used to the pressure!”

“Is this Fang Mu really going to pull off some kind of miracle?!”

The outside world was in an uproar, and the middle-aged man’s face had fallen. He was panting as he stared at Meng Hao, fully cognizant of the fact that there were only three altars between them.

In terms of the time limit, there were six hours left!

“Impossible!” thought the man. His face was ashen, and his eyes wide as he looked over at Meng Hao charging toward him. There was a shy smile on Meng Hao’s face, and it seemed almost apologetic.

Next, Meng Hao strode out to cross the void. This time, his speed was such that he only needed the time it takes an incense stick to burn before landing with a bang on the sixth altar. He was now very close to the middle-aged man on the eighth altar.

Without even a pause, he proceeded from the sixth altar out into the void toward the seventh altar. This time, he didn’t even need the time it takes an incense stick to burn before he was standing at the edge of the seventh altar, looking at the middle-aged man not too far off in the distance.

The man’s scalp was numb as he rose to his feet, an expression of astonishment on his face.

“Impossible!!” he said, trembling, and edging backward slowly. He now felt incredible regret, and if he had a chance to do things over, he would definitely never have chosen to provoke Fang Mu.

All of the surrounding competitors were also astonished, especially the cultivators on the seventh altar where Meng Hao currently stood. They quickly rose to their feet and made a path for Meng Hao to walk through, clasping hands and bowing deeply at the same time.

Meng Hao’s might left them all stunned. The cultivators watching from outside in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were equally shocked, especially the Chosen. They stared at Meng Hao on the vortex screens, and by now, had placed him in a very high position mentally.

In the starry sky palace, the Patriarchs had strange looks in their eyes.

Ling Yunzi hovered in midair, smiling slightly and looking at Meng Hao with admiration. His cultivation base was profound, and he had long since seen through the various clues. This was not a case of Meng Hao concealing his cultivation base, but rather, him becoming accustomed to the pressure in the place.

“For him to be able to create Paragon magic, to have the image of the Pāramitā Bridge in his heart, and considering the profundity of his cultivation base, very few types of pressure under Heaven would be able to stop him.”

Now many among the crowds of trial by fire competitors were looking over mockingly at the middle-aged man. His face was ashen, and he was trembling. Earlier, he had been surrounded by no small amount of fellow competitors, but now, they had all edged away from him.

“It’s never a good idea to provoke people, and yet this guy chose to provoke Fang Mu.”

The middle-aged man trembled, and his heart was pounding. Roaring filled his mind, and he had no time to think of any more ideas as Meng Hao flew out and crossed the last void in the space of twenty breaths of time.

Meng Hao looked like an Immortal Divinity as he flew through the void to appear directly in front of the middle-aged man. All of the other competitors immediately clasped hands and bowed, then backed away.

The man trembled and stared fixedly at Meng Hao. After taking a deep breath, he then let out a cold snort.

“Fellow Daoist Fang, clearly you have a profound cultivation base to be able to come here personally. Fine, I, Zhao, will buy your medicinal pill.” With that, he produced a bag of holding which he tossed over.

“There are 100,000 spirit stones in there. Take them and leave.”

Meng Hao smiled as he caught the bag of holding. Then his expression turned a bit bashful.

“Oh, this won’t do,” he said. “I have a lot of Spirit Refreshing Pills, you know.” With that he patted his old bag of holding to produce… a pill bottle.

He waved the pill bottle in front of the middle-aged man’s face. Inside were dozens of medicinal pills.

The middle-aged man’s eyes went wide, and he began to inch backward.

“You never said how many you had! You….”

“Huh?!” In one moment, Meng Hao had a sincere smile on his face, but the next, it darkened.

“I came here from all the way over there to deliver medicinal pills to you! And now you’re not going to buy them!?” He stepped forward until he was directly in front of the man, and then his hand lashed out.

The man tried to fight back, but how could he possibly be a match for Meng Hao? A boom could be heard, and blood sprayed out of the man’s mouth. Meng Hao grabbed his hair and shoved him down onto the ground.

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# Chapter 864: The Real Ruins of Immortality!

“Trying to make a fool of me?” growled Meng Hao, killing intent flickering in his eyes. He lifted his right foot up and kicked down viciously onto the man. Cracking sounds could be heard, and blood sprayed from the man’s mouth. Bones were smashed, and the man opened his mouth to say something, but in that moment, a vicious expression appeared on Meng Hao’s face and he punched downward.

A boom echoed out. Meng Hao had attacked viciously, immediately prompting a miserable shriek from the middle-aged man. He was now broken and bleeding, miserable to the extreme.

“Misunderstanding! Fellow Daoist Fang, this was just a misunderstanding!”

“Misunderstanding my ass!” Meng Hao leapt up into the air and then trampled down onto the man’s face. A bloodcurdling scream rang out. The man was now soaked in blood, cradling his head in his arms as Meng Hao thrashed him.

“Wanna buy my stuff? Buy it! Don’t wanna buy it? You’re gonna buy it anyway!” Meng Hao grabbed the man by the hair, lifted his head up, and then slammed it back down into the ground.

Before the man could even scream, Meng Hao lifted his right leg up and kicked down hard. A crack could be heard as the man’s leg was shattered!

This scene of explosive violence, and the rapid change in Meng Hao’s facial expression, caused all of the surrounding onlookers to stare in complete, jaw-dropping shock.

The audiences outside in the Ninth Mountain and Sea gasped, and stared blankly at what was happening on the vortex screens. Meng Hao's savagery left them totally astonished.

"This guy is definitely someone you can't provoke!"

"What a brutal personality! He's definitely someone to avoid pissing off!"

"I can't believe that a cultivator with a scholarly aura like that could have such a violent temper!!"

The Chosen from the various sects were also taken aback, some more than others. For example, Sun Hai looked on with wide eyes, panting. He watched blankly as Fang Mu grabbed the middle-aged man's hair, and then Sun Hai began to tremble. He suddenly called to mind something that had happened to him that he would never be able to forget for the rest of his life, a completely humiliating and embarrassing memory.

"This seems… somewhat similar…. But that's not him, is it…?" Sun Hai hesitated for a moment. After recalling that certain person, a tremor ran through him. The whole incident was a nightmare. After returning to the Church of the Immortal Emperor, he had often been jolted out of meditation by the shocking memories. Furthermore, he had shaved his hair, and was now completely bald.

Sun Hai

"From now on, call me Li'l Hai!"

In the starry sky palace, the Patriarchs looked on with wide eyes, staring in shock as Meng Hao violently beat the middle-aged man. At first, they were completely shocked, but then they began to chuckle.

"This Fang Mu's personality is kind of amusing."

"He exacts revenge for the slightest offense, and isn't willing to suffer any losses whatsoever. Well, truth be told, the other man was the one who started the whole thing."

On the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking, Ling Yunzi chuckled and shook his head, pretending as if he hadn’t seen what was happening.

The middle-aged man was dripping with blood, and was both screaming miserably and also trying to fight back. However, the more he struggled, the more ruthlessly Meng Hao beat him. More cracking sounds echoed out as another bone was broken.

Of the surrounding trial by fire competitors, one after another gasped, and all of them were looking at Meng Hao with intense terror in their eyes. They were so afraid of Meng Hao that their scalps were numb.

“This guy seemed perfectly normal! How could he be so brutal!?”

“Must not provoke him! Absolutely must not provoke him!”

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed with killing intent, and he jabbed two fingers of his right hand toward the middle-aged man’s eyes.

The man let out a miserable shriek and then urgently cried out, “Buy! I’ll buy!”

The words floated into Meng Hao’s ears like a melody of nature. His right hand stopped in place, and the brutal, vicious expression on his face vanished, to be replaced by a bashful smile and a somewhat embarrassed expression.

He cleared his throat and then said, “Well, look at you! Why didn’t you speak up earlier?”

He quickly squatted down and, as the trembling middle-aged man looked at him with terror in his eyes, slowly helped him to his feet.

“You don’t need to help me up, really….” The simple action of being helped to his feet caused the man to be even more frightened than before, and he began trembling violently. Before he could even finish speaking, though, Meng Hao glared at him, and he didn’t dare to say another word.

“This pill bottle is full of Spirit Reviving Pills,” said Meng Hao. “Delivery fee included, one pill costs 200,000 spirit stones. There are a total of 15 pills, so that’s a total of 3,000,000 spirit stones.” He placed the pill bottle into the man’s hand and then looked at him expectantly, eyes gleaming.

The man was on the verge of bursting into tears. The single thought that occupied him now was just to get Meng Hao to leave as quickly as possible, lest he find himself in an even more deadly situation.

“Okay, I’ll buy them….” The middle-aged man immediately produced a vast quantity of spirit stones.

Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed as he caught sight of the huge amount of the spirit stones that were still left in the man’s bag of holding. He obviously had quite a few left over even after buying the pills. Meng Hao cursed the fact that he only had one bottle of Spirit Reviving Pills in his bag of holding.

“Look, you’re a customer, so I’m responsible for your safety,” Meng Hao said solemnly. “Tell me who it was that beat you up, okay? Or, well, never mind. That’s not important. The important thing is that you’re hurt, and you’re going to be participating in the arena matches that begin in two days. But you don’t need to worry, Fellow Daoist. I have more medicinal pills!

“These are top-notch injury-treating pills, for only 200,000 per pill. Don’t worry, I’m honest and fair with all customers.” Meng Hao immediately pulled out seven or eight pill bottles, which he then handed to the middle-aged man.

The man stared in shock. He really and truly wanted to weep now. For a moment, he considered not buying them, but when he looked at Meng Hao and his bashful smile, he began to shiver uncontrollably. Gritting his teeth, he purchased each and every one of the pills.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, then began to stare at the man’s bag of holding, his eyes shining brightly. Clearing his throat, he said, “Fellow Daoist, considering the level of your injuries, I don’t think those medicinal pills are enough. It seems even your Nascent Divinity was injured.”

“What?” The middle-aged man’s scalp was going numb. His Nascent Divinity had not, in fact, been injured, but when he saw the look in Meng Hao’s eyes, he knew that it very easily could be.

The man scowled miserably, and his heart was filled with intense regret. He was already starting to run out of spirit stones; these were his life savings, including special rewards given to him by his sect.

“Fellow Daoist Fang, let me go, alright?” he pleaded. “It really was my mistake….” Of course, deep inside, his hatred burned, and he wanted to tear Meng Hao into pieces.

Meng Hao smiled, but his eyes were completely cold as he said, “You know, the first person I ever killed was also surnamed Zhao.” 1

The man trembled, and he felt like a cold breeze was filling his entire body. Gritting his teeth, he pulled out some more spirit stones and bought Meng Hao’s new medicinal pills. By now, his bag of holding was completely empty.

Meng Hao nodded in satisfaction, then patted the man on the shoulder.

“If you have any other needs, don’t hesitate to call me over.”

The middle-aged man trembled and nodded.

Meng Hao turned and stepped back out into the void. This time, his trip all the way back to his original position on the first altar only took about an hour. The entire way, the other trial by fire competitors clasped hands and bowed, making way for him, their eyes filled with fear.

Back on the first altar, Meng Hao sat down cross-legged and began to take inventory of everything he had acquired. Looking at the accumulation of spirit stones inside, he finally felt as if his trip here hadn’t been a waste.

“It’s too bad that Warrior Pavilion was so stingy, though,” he thought. “All I did was take a few magical items, right? I didn’t take the floor tiles or the shelving. I didn’t even touch the decorative tiles!

“Back in the Bridge of Immortal Treading, I dug up all the floor tiles!” When he thought about how stingy the Warrior Pavilion was, his hatred grew. There was nothing he hated more than stingy people.

“Well, in any case, a lot of small gains can add up to a windfall. As long as I keep going in life, then one of these days, I’m going to be the richest person in the all the Nine Mountains and Seas!” Thinking about his grand aspirations, he took a deep breath. For some reason he felt as if he was now one step closer to fulfilling his dreams.

“When I find Xu Qing, the two of us will always have more than enough money to spend.” He sighed emotionally.

Time passed by, and soon the three day rest period had ended. The trial by fire competitors opened their eyes, and bright gleams could be seen. With Meng Hao there, most had no thoughts of trying to take first place; they just hoped to make it into the top 8!

Ling Yunzi materialized out of the void and glanced over the crowds.

“The arena matches will be held in the ancient Dao Tree of the Ruins of Immortality. All of you must keep one point firmly in mind. The location of the Dao Tree cannot be considered the depths of the Ruins of Immortality, but it is still a place of extreme danger. Virtually anything could happen outside of the tree while you participate in the fighting. Remember… you must not, under any circumstances, leave the ancient Dao Tree.

“Only by staying on the tree itself can you guarantee your safety. If you leave the tree… it is impossible to say whether you will survive or not!” Ling Yunzi gazed sternly at the competitors, then waved his hand. Immediately, a red glow sprung up everywhere, and the void trembled. Ripples spread out as everything present, including Meng Hao, flew up into the air. Ling Yunzi suddenly seemed to grow incredibly large, whereupon he swished his sleeve, causing everyone to fly inside of it.

This scene caused Meng Hao’s heart to tremble!

“What an extraordinary divine ability!” he thought, panting. After all the trial by fire competitors were pulled into Ling Yunzi’s sleeve, they could clearly see the outside world whizzing by, and knew that Ling Yunzi was now moving forward at incredible speed.

The audiences in the outside world watched as similar scenes played out on the Ancient roads of the Nascent Soul and Spirit Severing. The two old men in those locations also flew up, and soon joined Ling Yunzi as they flew off into the distance.

The path they traveled was covered with mist, and occasionally, wails and howls could be heard echoing about, as well as terrifying roars. Gradually, an enormous head became visible, floating there in the mists. Blood oozed out of its eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, and an enormous centipede could be seen burrowing in and out of its eyes.

When the crowds on the outside saw these things, they gasped and stared at the vortex screens in shock.

“Ruins of Immortality! These are the real Ruins of Immortality!!”

“That giant’s head is at least ten thousand meters tall!!”

Inside of Ling Yunzi’s sleeve, Meng Hao could see everything that was happening outside. He also saw the giant’s head, and he couldn’t help but feel shocked as they passed it by.

More time passed. The mists grew thicker, and the wailing undulated endlessly. Eventually, a huge vine appeared up ahead, swinging back and forth. Shockingly, there were countless corpses bound up on the vine, corpses that were ancient and shriveled, and yet who possessed magical items and treasures that were related to bags of holding.

Considering that the items still existed after all these years, it showed that… this vine was incredibly mighty, and would tolerate no incursions.

Several days passed, during which time Meng Hao saw countless bizarre things. He saw an enormous ball of fur the size of a planet. He saw a gigantic bleeding eye. He saw an army of cultivators in tattered clothes, walking slowly through the void with blank looks on their faces.

Each of those cultivators was so powerful that Meng Hao found it difficult to breathe.

Most shocking of all, though, was when Meng Hao saw… a ship, floating slowly through the mists. Meng Hao was not unfamiliar with this ship, and when he saw it, his mind trembled. This was the same ship he had seen in the Milky Way Sea, and just like before, an old man sat at the prow!!

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# Chapter 865: Sixth Demon Sealing Hex!

Seven days went by. Ling Yunzi and the other two old men gradually began to decrease their speed, and looks of concentration appeared on their faces. Although they had made this trip on numerous occasions, every time they did, it was with the utmost caution. These were the Ruins of Immortality, not some other random location. Although not every single step was filled with danger, there were still many shocking things that could fill even them with senses of deadly crisis.

One misstep, and they might end up being buried in this place. Furthermore, this was a trial by fire, so if there were any accidents, they wouldn’t be the only ones who died; all of the people stored inside their massive sleeves would go along with them.

If that happened, it would be a huge blow to the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Ling Yunzi and the others stopped in place for a moment to perform some incantations of augury. Then they exchanged glances, and one of them commented, “Are the lives of the Chosen from the great sects really that much more valuable than all the other lives?”

Ling Yunzi shook his head and declined to answer. Whereas the three of them were personally escorting all of the trial by fire competitors, the Chosen from the great sects would simply wait for them to arrive at the ancient Dao Tree. There, a teleportation portal would be set up, and they could go to the place directly.

The teleportation portal would only be able to remain active for the space of about ten breaths of time, and could only handle a volume of about one hundred people. Even that would require a huge expenditure of resources.

That price would be split between the various sects, all to ensure that their Chosen would reach their destination without any complications.

“There are still ten hours left before the entrance appears,” said the old man who carried the Spirit Severing competitors. “Why don’t we rest for a bit?” With that, he sat down cross-legged.

The one who had complained before was the old man carrying the Nascent Soul cultivators. He gave a cold harrumph and looked off into the distance.

“Let’s bring the competitors out and let them take a look around,” said Ling Yunzi. “This ten hour period should be relatively safe.” He swished his sleeve, and the one thousand Dao Seeking cultivators, including Meng Hao, immediately appeared. Many of them gasped as they were finally able to personally see the surroundings. Their minds were clearly shaken, but none of them spoke a single word.

Moments later, the Spirit Severing and Nascent Soul experts appeared in vast groups. They looked around at their surroundings and sharp inhalations of breath could be heard everywhere.

“Do nothing rash, and do not stray too far,” Ling Yunzi said, his voice echoing about. “We are now in the real Ruins of Immortality, and there are many dangers lurking about. Considering the level of your cultivation bases, you would never normally be able to come to a place like this. Since you’re here with us now, take a moment to experience what it feels like. You can consider this one of your rewards.”

Meng Hao took a deep breath as he looked around. They were surrounded by mists, some thin, some thick. Many areas radiated intense pressure. Clearly, there were different areas, some of which were possible for people of greater power to enter, other areas not so much.

The area they occupied contained the weakest pressure of all. Furthermore, the three old men were pushing back, reducing the power by at least half. Even with much of the power being deflected by the three old men, it was still difficult for many of the competitors to hold up.

The majority of the Nascent Soul and Spirit Severing cultivators were meditating cross-legged. The remainder that were not forced to focus fully on fighting back against the pressure, were examining their surroundings. Among the Dao Seeking cultivators, about half were meditating, with the remaining several hundred moving about in the area.

Meng Hao walked ahead until he was about three hundred meters out. There, he stopped. He suddenly had the feeling that the pressure would increase explosively if he proceeded any further. He stood there silently for a moment before smacking his bag of holding to produce a flying sword. He gradually extended it out, and when it went past the three hundred meter mark, cracking sounds could be heard. Fissures spread out across the sword, and after a few breaths of time, it disintegrated into ash.

“Five breaths of time,” he thought, his eyes glittering. The flying sword he had used just now was a Spirit Severing treasure, and yet here, it could only last for five breaths of time.

Shaking his head, Meng Hao began to back away from the three hundred meter mark, when suddenly, a voice echoed into his mind.

“Come… come….”

He stopped in his tracks, and his eyes began to shine with a brilliant light. As he looked out into the Ruins of Immortality, the voice continued to echo in his mind. He turned to look at the people behind him, but apparently, not even Ling Yunzi and the other two could hear what he was hearing. It seemed that only he could detect the voice.

At the same time that the voice echoed out, the ancient Demon Sealing Jade in his bag of holding suddenly began to emanate flickering light.

The Demon Sealing Jade had remained dormant for a very long time, but now it was glowing once again. However, unlike the previous occasions, it did not speak.

The voice from moments before continued to speak.

“League of Demon Sealers… come here… come to me….” As the voice spoke, the mist in front of Meng Hao seemed to weaken and change, as… a path appeared.

Meng Hao’s mind trembled as he looked at the path. He did not walk forward, but rather, began to edge backward. He knew that the level of his cultivation base placed him at the peak of his peers. However, when you considered the Mountain and Sea Realm as a whole, he was merely in the Spirit Realm, which made him very weak.

This path might lead to good fortune, but considering the level of his cultivation base, that good fortune could very well lead to his death.

In the moment that he stepped backward, the voice continued on with even more urgency.

“The League of Demon Sealers…. I am a member too. Come to me, I shall give you good fortune…. I shall give you destiny to step upon the Heavens, to achieve a meteoric rise! You can directly become Immortal!”

The more the voice tried to persuade him, the more Meng Hao backed up. When he had backed up about thirty meters, the mist in front of him suddenly began to churn, as if some incredible power were approaching, heading directly toward Meng Hao.

His face fell, and he began to speed backward. By this time, Ling Yunzi and the others had sensed that something was happening. Faces flickering, the three of them immediately sprung into action, pulling all of the trial by fire competitors back into their sleeves, and at the same time, striding forward to stand next to Meng Hao. By this point, the swirling mists had spread to reveal a figure.

It was a cultivator whose body was in a state of decomposition. His head was half destroyed, and his clothes were tattered. An archaic, rotting aura emanated out from him, and he was surrounded by swirling mists. In his hand, he held a tattered banner, and he stood there, staring listlessly at Ling Yunzi and the others with his one remaining eye.

Ling Yunzi and the other old men stared at the man as if he were a deadly enemy. Their energy surged, and the light of magical techniques began to swirl around them.

“Senior, you have already perished,” said Ling Yunzi. “Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. We of the junior generation are still alive, and are just passing through here. We disturbed your rest, please forgive us. Senior, kindly return from whence you came!”

The half-headed figure slowly raised his right hand and pointed a decomposing finger directly at Meng Hao.

“I… want… him….”

Ling Yunzi’s face fell, as did those of the other two old men.

Breathing heavily, Meng Hao backed up until he was behind the three old men. As he stared at the figure, his heart trembled. It was at this point that he noticed that the half-headed man… had a sword stabbed into his waist.

The sword was pitch black and emanated a freezing aura. However, Meng Hao could also tell that the sword possessed Demon Sealing power. It only took a moment for him to realize that it was the power of a Demon Sealing Hex!

It was at this moment that the ancient Demon Sealing Jade in his bag of holding finally spoke into his mind with its archaic voice.

“Sixth Demon Sealing Hex!”

Ling Yunzi placed his right hand onto his bag of holding. “Senior,” he said, “Please don’t push us too far!”

The half-headed man suddenly looked over at him, and flames leapt up within his single remaining eye. He suddenly lurched forward, the mists surrounding him seething, as if they contained countless vengeful souls, screaming miserably. He waved the banner, and rumbling sounds could be heard as mist poured toward the three old men.

Ling Yunzi's face flickered and he let out a roar, unhesitatingly slapping his bag of holding to produce a talisman.

It was an ancient talisman that emanated a boundlessly archaic aura. It seemed to have existed through countless years of time. All it depicted was a simple, smiling face. However, as soon as it appeared, the half-headed man stopped in place, and even the incoming mists stopped, seemingly stuck permanently in place, not daring to get any closer.

Ling Yunzi took a deep breath, performed an incantation gesture, and then pointed out. The talisman immediately floated up into midair. At the same time, Ling Yunzi grabbed Meng Hao and then shot backward at top speed. The other two old men also retreated, leaving the talisman floating there in the air.

“I can't believe we ran into a revenant here. That talisman should hold it in place for twenty hours.” Ling Yunzi frowned and looked over at Meng Hao. “How did you draw its attention?”

Meng Hao smiled wryly, unsure of exactly what to say.

“It probably has nothing to do with him,” said the man carrying the Spirit Severing cultivators, who happened to be from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite. “The revenants here usually just look for people they think will be suitable to help them to return to life. We've run into them before, haven't we?”

Meng Hao hesitated for a moment, then asked, “Seniors, what is… a revenant?”

“Some ancient cultivators left strands of resentful will behind when they died. Those strands of will exist outside of the natural law of the Mountain and Sea Realm, and continuously attempt to return to life. Those are revenants.”

Meng Hao nodded and looked back at the half-headed man. He had a mind to go and try to retrieve the sword, but he knew that it was impossible to do so. Inwardly, he sighed with regret.

Soon, ten hours had passed, and the surrounding mists were churning. Meng Hao was back in Ling Yunzi’s sleeve, and yet, was still able to see the world outside. Shockingly, off in the distance… was an indescribably large corpse.

It was so huge that Meng Hao could do nothing less than gasp. It seemed larger than a planet, seemingly without end. A cultivator who stood in front of it would be smaller than an ant.

The corpse appeared to be almost like an enormous continent, hanging there in the void.

As Ling Yunzi and the other two old men flew forward, they each produced a magical symbol that caused their bodies to emanate a gray light. They shot toward the huge body, and in the blink of an eye, touched down onto it and then sped forward.

Meng Hao looked on gaping as Ling Yunzi and the other two continued onward for an entire month at an indescribable speed. Despite that, they still had not crossed the entirety of the corpse. Eventually, a tree appeared up ahead.

It was a gargantuan, shocking, ancient tree.

Apparently, the tree was growing directly up from within the corpse, as if it was using the corpse’s blood and flesh as nutrients.

The trunk of the tree stretched high up into the air, until, at a certain point, two huge branches split off in opposite directions, making it look like an enormous fork.

The tree was covered with innumerable leaves, each one of which was fully three hundred meters wide. The leaves did not bend downward, but spread out evenly like platforms.

“We’re here!” said Ling Yunzi. He and the other two came to a stop, then waved their hands, causing all of the competitors to fly out from within their sleeves and land on the tree leaves.

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# Chapter 866: I Am a God!

The crowds in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were watching on the vortex screens, and could see everything that Ling Yunzi and the others encountered.

That included the decomposing, half-headed man, as well as all the other things lurking in the mists.

Many gasps could be heard from the cultivators in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. For most of them, this was their first time ever seeing the Ruins of Immortality. In previous trials by fire, outsiders were not permitted to see these things, but this time was different. Not only were the prizes astonishing, but for the first time, everyone was able to catch a glimpse of the Ruins of Immortality.

Although it was only a tiny portion, it was still enough to capture the attention of innumerable cultivators.

When they saw the gigantic corpse, cries of shock echoed out in all directions. Then the ancient Dao Tree appeared, and even greater shouts of astonishment could be heard.

“It’s actually… growing on the top of the giant’s corpse!”

“That’s the ancient Dao Tree? What exactly is it? Why is it called a Dao Tree?!”

“That corpse… Heavens! I never imagined that things that huge existed! How is this possible?! If that thing wasn’t dead… who could possibly fight it? It’s… actually a real corpse!”

The faces of the Patriarchs up in the starry sky palace were calm; all of them were familiar with the Ruins of Immortality.

However, they were all wondering what motive the Three Great Daoist Societies had to allow all the crowds on the outside to see.

A huge corpse. An ancient tree.

“The tree leaves are the arenas,” said Ling Yunzi. “The leaves on the left side will be the Nascent Soul battleground. The leaves on the right are for Spirit Severing. As for the central main trunk… that is where the Dao Seeking fights will take place!” As his words echoed out, Meng Hao stood there on one of the leaves on the main trunk, at the bottom level.

All of the other Dao Seeking cultivators were also located on bottom-level leaves. When they looked up, they could see that the branches sticking out from it were arranged in layers, the highest of which was ten levels away.

The higher the level, the fewer the leaves. In fact, at the apex, there was only one golden leaf, which was completely eye catching.

As for the battlegrounds on the left and right, they were also arranged in levels, although instead of climbing straight up, they moved out to the side. Similarly, though, as they reached their ends, the leaves grew sparser, until at the very end of each, was a golden leaf!

Three golden leaves. Those were the limits of the ancient Dao Tree, and the locations where the final matches would be fought.

Even as Ling Yunzi provided his explanation, he and the other two old men performed incantation gestures and produced magical materials which they used to begin to set up teleportation portals on the giant’s corpse beneath the tree.

After the teleportation portals took shape, the three old men performed incantation gestures and pointed out, causing boundless light to shine up. Out in the sects of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, as soon as the light from the teleportation portals rose up, Zhao Yifan, Taiyang Zi, Fan Dong’er, and other Chosen all stepped forward onto the teleportation portals at their locations. Light flashed, and they vanished.

When they reappeared, they were standing atop the giant’s corpse in the Ruins of Immortality.

It only took the space of about ten breaths of time for roughly a hundred people from all the sects to arrive. Then, cracking sounds could be heard as the teleportation portals shattered and faded away.

As Fan Dong’er and the others spread out, they looked around with trembling minds. This was apparently their first time coming to this place as well.

From the leaf he stood upon, Meng Hao could see Fan Dong’er, Taiyang Zi, even Sun Hai and others. His eyes flickered and a smile appeared on his face.

Ling Yunzi waved his sleeve, causing the nearly one hundred Chosen to fly out toward tree leaves according to the level of their cultivation base.

Soon, Fan Dong’er and the others were standing on leaves on the lowest level of the tree. As for Fan Dong’er, she wore a white robe, and behind her swirled a globe of white mist. It was very thick, making it impossible to see exactly what was inside.

The leaf she stood upon wasn’t very far away from Meng Hao, and he couldn’t help but glance over at her. His eye was especially caught by the white mist behind her.

Fan Dong’er noticed him looking at her, and frowned. However, she knew the two of them would soon be fellow disciples of the same sect, so she suppressed her anger and merely glared at him.

Meng Hao quickly looked away, focusing his attention on Zhao Yifan, then Li Ling’er. When he looked at Li Ling’er, he subconsciously… checked out her rear end.

He could still remember how he had spanked her two times, leaving her buttocks uneven.

Li Ling’er glanced at him coolly, then ignored him completely. Feeling somewhat pleased, Meng Hao then looked around until he noticed one particular young man who happened to be looking at him.

When their gazes met, the young man trembled. He was… naturally, Sun Hai.

Sun Hai didn’t recognize Meng Hao, but for some reason, when Meng Hao looked at him, it caused him to gasp and be filled with a cold, unsettling feeling.

At first, Meng Hao didn’t recognize who the bald-headed youth was. But after a moment, his jaw almost dropped.

“What happened to all his hair?” he thought. “I seem to remember leaving quite a bit behind.” It wasn’t just Meng Hao who was sizing up these Chosen. Many of the other competitors in the trial by fire were examining them closely.

Not much more time passed before Ling Yunzi’s voice was heard once again.

“The arena matches of the Nascent Soul, Spirit Severing, and Dao Seeking, will be completely separate from each other, and shall progress separately. The ancient Dao Tree leaves upon which you stand contain a teleportation function. Not only will it teleport two people onto one leaf to fight, but it will also teleport the winner to the next level!

“The matches will proceed in this fashion all the way until the final battle.

“In the arena matches, life and death are determined by fate. Defeat will result in elimination from the competition. If you utter the words ‘I concede,’ then you will also be removed from the competition.

“Bear in mind that we are in the Ruins of Immortality, and danger lurks everywhere! Even if some strange things appear on the outside, things which attempt to distract you, or lure you out, you must under no circumstances leave the tree leaves.

“On the tree leaves, you are safe. If you leave them, though… it is impossible to say whether you will make it back alive.

“And now, let the arena matches begin!”

Almost in the same instant that the words left Ling Yunzi’s mouth, Meng Hao suddenly cried out loudly.

“Patriarch, wait a moment!”

His voice echoed out, attracting quite a bit of attention from those around him. Ling Yunzi frowned and looked over at Meng Hao. At first he was tempted to ignore him, but after thinking about the expression on Meng Hao’s face when he held the Feng Shui compass aloft, his heart softened.

“Yes, what is it?”

“Patriarch, I wanted to know, the enormous corpse down there, is it a cultivator?” Actually, Meng Hao wasn’t the only person who wanted to know the answer to that question. All of the competitors were wondering the same thing. As for the newly arrived Chosen, they remained silent; they had already asked about the subject when they were in the outside world.

Ling Yunzi remained silent for a moment. He didn’t actually have the sole authority to answer such a question. He looked over at the other two men, and all of them exchanged glances. Then, they produced jade slips which they used to communicate with their sect headquarters, inquiring as to whether they were permitted to respond.

After a moment, Ling Yunzi put his jade slip away and looked back up at Meng Hao.

“This is a God of the Pāramitā!”

After uttering those words, Ling Yunzi didn’t wait for anyone’s reaction. He immediately called out again, “Let the arena matches begin!”

Meng Hao’s mind trembled, and he couldn’t keep himself from taking in a deep breath in response to the answer he had just received. A God….

Actually, all of the trial by fire participants were mentally shaken. However, even as this happened, the world in front of them distorted, and they began to grow blurry. In the blink of an eye, everyone grew clear again, and they were on the next level of leaves.

However instead of being alone on the leaves, each person was now facing an opponent.

Meng Hao found himself looking at a young man who had originally been bursting with power. However, as soon as things grew clear and he saw that he was facing Meng Hao, his face fell.

He was not one of the Chosen from the outside sects, but rather one of the competitors from the trial by fire. Furthermore… he had been on the same altar as the middle-aged man upon whom Meng Hao had vented his anger earlier. He had personally witnessed the entire incident.

Although he felt torn inwardly, his eyes quickly filled with a fierce light. He let out a powerful roar and employed the full power of his cultivation base as he turned into a prismatic beam of light that shot toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s face was calm as the young man closed in. He raised his right hand and punched out into the air, then spun and began to walk toward the edge of the arena.

Almost in the same moment that he turned, a huge boom could be heard, and blood sprayed from the young man’s mouth. Although he had been approaching like a shooting star, in that instant, his light went dim, and he was forced back more than thirty meters, where he coughed up another mouthful of blood. His expression was now dismal, and his face ashen.

He was well aware that Meng Hao had been holding back. The blow just now had been directed at the air in front of him, and had it actually landed on his body, he would not have gotten off as easily as being forced back a bit and only slightly injured.

He took a deep breath, then looked sadly at Meng Hao, clasped hands, and bowed deeply.

“I concede,” he said, sounding a bit bitter.

As soon as the words left his mouth, he faded away, returning to the first level of leaves, which indicated that he had been eliminated. As for Meng Hao, he sat down cross-legged at the edge of the arena and looked around at the other matches that were taking place.

He was feeling quite pleased with himself, but as for the cultivators from the Ninth Mountain and Sea watching the arena matches, they were completely shaken by Meng Hao’s power.

“One punch… into the air! And he actually injured a peak Dao Seeking cultivator!”

“This Fang Mu hasn’t even used any magical techniques! He’s just relying on the strength of his fleshly body!”

“No wonder he could stand up to the pressure outside those altars! Such fleshly body strength is extremely rare!”

The first round of the arena matches was a simple thing for Zhao Yifan, as well as the other Chosen. None of them needed more than ten breaths of time to secure victory.

Meng Hao looked around at the other arena locations and identified about ten other people besides the Chosen who were worth paying attention to. Among those, one was the masked young man Li Yan. Another was the cultivator with the mosquitos, and a third was a young boy who was also one of the trial by fire competitors. Although he never spoke, he had made it into the group of one thousand Dao Seeking competitors, and had his own unique capabilities.

In the first round, he attacked viciously, the result being that his opponent was instantly reduced to a bloody pulp.

The fourth person was a garrulous old man who constantly shivered and muttered to himself. His first opponent was a Chosen from the Seven Seas Sect. Strangely, as soon as he appeared in front of the mumbling old man, the Chosen suddenly seemed to go crazy and tried to charge outside of the leaf arena. Were it not for Ling Yunzi immediately intervening to save him, he would have been in great danger.

Of those four people, the one who caused Meng Hao the greatest consternation was not the garrulous old man or Li Yan, but rather, that unprepossessing young boy!

“He has at least thirty percent of the power of a true Immortal!” thought Meng Hao, looking at him closely. Almost in the exact instant that Meng Hao looked at him, the boy turned his head to return the gaze. Their eyes locked over all the various arenas between them, and the boy’s mouth twisted into a vicious smile.

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# Chapter 867: One Punch! 1

Other than those four, there were six Chosen who Meng Hao hadn’t seen on Planet South Heaven when all the outside Chosen came. Four were men and two were women. One of the women wore a white mask and a long red robe. When she attacked, a Blood Orchid bloomed around her, indicating that she came from the Church of the Blood Orchid.

The other woman wore garments of five colors, and was not very pretty. She attacked with shocking five elements magic, and even though Meng Hao had previously cultivated a five elements Nascent Soul, he had the feeling that this woman’s skill with the five elements exceeded his own. She was from the Five Colors Sect.

The other four cultivators were all young men. One of them did not personally attack his opponent, but rather, caused a coffin to appear, from within which emerged a corpse. The corpse easily slaughtered the young man’s opponent. He was from one of the Five Great Holy Lands, the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum.

The second young man was bony, with eyes that burned like fire. Like the other young man, he did not personally attack, but instead, simply stared at his opponent, who then burst into flames and then transformed into nothing but ash.

The third young man was handsome and, shockingly, had a third eye on his forehead. It was clearly a Dharma Eye, and it remained closed the entire time. The young man wore a slight smile, and he seemed almost completely harmless, as if he lacked any ability to attack whatsoever. Furthermore, his opponent didn’t attack either! The two of them transmitted a few words to each other, and then the opponent knelt down on one knee, looking at the young man with a pious expression, and conceded.

This young man was from the Burning Incense Stick Society.

The last person was a hulking man from the Kunlun Society. He was stalwart, with a powerful fleshly body. He started his match standing there like a mountain. When his opponent attacked, he waved a finger, causing a huge mountain to descend, smashing into his opponent and instantly defeating him. However, he did not kill his opponent.

When Meng Hao saw that, his eyes suddenly shone with the desire to do battle.

As the intense fighting of the first round of arena matches played out, the audiences outside in the Ninth Mountain and Sea closely watched the screens in the three vortexes. Each of those screens was divided into multiple smaller screens which depicted each of the battlegrounds.

In the palace in the starry sky, the various Patriarchs were closely observing to the goings on, and were paying especially close attention to the Chosen from their own sects. They were also watching the cultivators from the other sects. Although most of the Chosen were not particularly powerful, they were the future blazing suns of the various sects.

As long as they did not unexpectedly perish and could mature and grow stronger, they would eventually allow their sects to gain more power and influence.

“This generation has come across the fate of becoming a true immortal; in the Nine Mountains and Seas, every 10,000 years, the true immortality destiny descends, and an entire generation of Chosen always comes out of the woodwork.”

“I wonder which three will last until the end to take first place in their stage!?”

Everyone was watching the fighting, hearts filled with anticipation.

Back in the battleground, Meng Hao’s expression was calm as he sat there cross-legged on the leaf. He looked around at the other arenas, and could see many people looking back at him.

After looking around for a while, Meng Hao had the mind to take a look at the Nascent Soul battles, but unfortunately, it was currently impossible to see the fighting taking place in the other two areas. Finally, he closed his eyes and waited for time to pass.

On the Nascent Soul battleground, Chen Fan’s expression was as gloomy as ever. His attacks appeared to be normal, but his opponent seemed to have been infected by his mood, and as such, was only able to fight with half of the power of his cultivation base.

On the Spirit Severing battleground, the fighting was equally intense.

The first round of arena matches for the Dao Seeking stage was the first to end, after a total of four hours. Half of the competitors were eliminated, and the other half stood on their leaves on the second level, eyes flickering. The leaves beneath their feet began to shine with light that spread out to cover everyone and teleport them to the third layer of leaves.

When he reappeared amidst the flickering light, Meng Hao was facing an old man whose face was covered with dark blotches. Immediately, a murderous aura sprang up, along with shocking energy. The man held a cane in his hand, and as he walked forward, he suddenly realized he was facing Meng Hao, and his pupils constricted.

“Fang Mu!” he thought, and his heart began to pound with unease. He had never imagined that he would end up facing the mighty Fang Mu in the second round. “His fleshly body is incredibly powerful, and his divine sense is incredible. He has a profound cultivation base and attacks without mercy…. Dammit, why did I have to end up facing him? Although, I might not necessarily be unable to earn a victory. I excel in terms of speed!”

Eyes flickering, the old man turned into a blur as, all of a sudden, nine clones appeared.

The nine clones closed in on Meng Hao, each one coming from a different direction.

Meng Hao stood there, looking around coldly at the incoming figures. His expression was calm as he raised his right hand and once again released one punch. As soon as the punch landed on the ground, he turned and, just as he had in the last battle, began to walk to the edge of the arena.

Behind him, massive booms rang out. His one punch caused a huge vortex to appear, which emanated a shocking gravitational force and intense rumbling. Ten figures immediately began to be sucked in toward the vortex. Nine of them collapsed into pieces, and the old man's true self coughed up blood. His expression was one of astonishment as he quickly called out that he conceded.

As soon as the words left his mouth, he faded away to reappear back on the first level of leaves. He had been completely defeated.

By that point, Meng Hao had reached the edge of the arena, where he sat down cross-legged and closed his eyes.

Many people in the outside world were paying attention to Meng Hao, and what they saw shocked them.

"One punch again!! It was exactly the same as the first round, except that the old man's cultivation base was clearly much higher than the guy from the previous fight!"

"This Fang Mu's fleshly body is so powerful that he can create a vacuum! Maybe his speed truly isn't that great, but he's so strong that he doesn't even need speed! Who could possibly fight back against that one punch!"

"He's definitely going to get into the top 16. I can't wait to see him fight against some of those Chosen!!"

The outside world was in an uproar. It didn't take long for the second round of arena matches to end, and the third to begin. Meng Hao appeared on the next level of leaves, where he looked at the glittering lights in front of him and watched his opponent emerge.

This person was no Chosen. Instead, it was the young man with the mosquitos. When he laid eyes on Meng Hao, instead of looking nervous like the previous two opponents, his eyes gleamed with the desire to do battle.

“Fang Mu,” he said. “It’s my pleasure to be able to fight with you. Finally, I’ll be able to see exactly how powerful you are!”

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever; completely emotionless. What he had been paying attention to this whole time was not the young man himself, but rather his mosquitos.

Before the young man even finished speaking, he waved his hand, causing a shocking cloud of fierce mosquitos to appear. The largest were a meter long, and many were the size of a fist. They spread out in a great cloud as they shot toward Meng Hao.

A buzzing sound could be heard as they closed in. Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he clenched his fist and then punched out.

Just like the previous matches, it was only one punch. Rumbling filled the air and ripples spread out in all directions. At the same time, Meng Hao turned and walked toward the edge of the arena.

Behind him, the shocking ripples slammed into the mosquitoes, causing them to collapse into pieces. The young man’s body began to vibrate uncontrollably as he shot backward. Blood sprayed from his mouth, and his expression was one of shock. He hadn’t even been able to attack, and yet his cultivation base was suppressed, and he almost felt as if his vital organs were being tossed about.

At the critical moment, even the young man’s voice quavered as he cried out, “Concede… I concede!!”

He looked over at Meng Hao with an unprecedented expression of fear. He had been aware that Meng Hao was powerful, but had never imagined that he was THIS powerful!

As the scene played out in front of the eyes of the audience in the outside world, it sent them into tumult. In the first round, one punch. In the second round, also one punch. In the third round, facing up against a powerful opponent, and… also one punch!

“Just… just how powerful is he!?!?”

“He definitely deserves to take first place! With power and confidence like that, he’s basically invincible!”

“I’m guessing that only the Chosen from the great sects can actually fight him!!”

“I wonder who will force him into using two punches!?”

Up in the starry sky palace, the various Patriarchs were nodding in approval. None of them had any reason to deny that among his generation, Meng Hao truly was incredibly powerful!

“He must be using a vibration magic. This Fang Mu isn’t very old, but he’s actually mastered the magic of vibration!” 2

“That’s a fleshly body technique that can only be learned when the fleshly body has reached a certain level of power. It can be considered very strong within the Spirit Realm. In fact, even in the Immortal Realm, there are only a handful of people who have mastered it!”

Meng Hao’s performance was flashy and eye-catching, making him the center of attention of everyone watching the arena matches. When it came to the Chosen who were participating in the arena matches, they were also paying close attention to Meng Hao. Although their matches ended quickly, none of them were able to finish them with the ease that Meng Hao did.

“Hmph, he’s just gotten lucky. How could he have run into so many weak opponents?! If he had faced off against formidable adversaries like we did, there’s no way he would’ve gotten off so easy!”

“The further along we get, the more powerful the opponents will be. Let’s see exactly how many rounds he can last!”

Discussions like these could be heard as the third round of matches concluded, and the fourth round began. By now, most of the cultivators had been eliminated, and only about a hundred remained.

Each and every one… was incredibly powerful!

Meng Hao stood on the fifth level of leaves as another opponent appeared amidst glittering lights. It was a hulking man who wore a long robe. Ripples spread out as he materialized. This was not the powerful expert from the Kunlun Society, but was a Chosen nonetheless.

He came from the Seven Seas Sect.

In each of the previous rounds, he had torn his opponent to shreds. All of them had died. When walked out into the arena, a cruel smile could be seen on his face, and his eyes shone with a vicious gleam.

“Fang Mu…” he said. “We meet at last. You made quite a show in the past few rounds, but that was only because the people you were up against were weaklings!

“This time, I’ll help you to understand how wide the gap is between a rogue cultivator like you and us Chosen. That gap… will leave you in despair!” The man laughed uproariously, and put on the appearance of being crude and rash. In truth, he was actually being very cautious, and was careful not to let any of his scheming thoughts show on the surface. As he spoke, he began to charge forward, and illusory seawater appeared around him. Seven seas appeared, causing rumbling sounds to fill the air. Simultaneously, a huge sea dragon materialized and roared toward Meng Hao.

As of this moment, many people among the audiences outside in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were watching Meng Hao in the arena. When they saw the Chosen from the Seven Seas Sect attacking Meng Hao, many of them sighed.

“Fang Mu will definitely be incapable of pulling off something amazing with a single punch like before.”

“Hmph. Going up against weaklings makes it easy to seem powerful. But now that he’s fighting a Chosen, he’ll have a tough time remaining calm. Even if he wins, this battle is definitely going to be like a fierce struggle between a tiger and a dragon.”

“I’ve heard that the Seven Seas Sect’s Yun Tianhe has a bizarre energy. After combining that energy with the cultivation base, it create a power that enables him to fight a false Immortal without being at a disadvantage.”

The discussions in the outside world could not be heard in the arenas. At the same time, the hulking man from the Seven Seas Sect let out a powerful roar as he closed in on Meng Hao. Meng Hao’s expression was as calm as ever as, just the same as before, he punched one time!

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# Chapter 868: Junior Blood Immortal!

“Looking to die!?” said the hulking man with a malicious grin. He was clearly not pleased with Meng Hao’s plan to end the fight with one punch. Sneering inwardly, he redoubled the power he was putting into his attack, and also unleashed a forbidden technique of his sect, which further increased its power by thirty percent.

He didn’t just want to win, he wanted to kill his opponent, and he seemed very excited at the prospect of ending the life of the first place competitor who was also a future Conclave disciple of the Ninth Sea God World.

Killing someone in an arena match was nothing anyone could complain about, so there was little danger of repercussions. His sect would reward him, and even more importantly, protect him.

What he saw was a chance to make great advancement with little effort, right there in front of him.

“DIE!” he roared, his eyes bursting with a murderous look as he caused the Seven Seas Dragon to suddenly grow another vicious head, which also snapped toward Meng Hao.

It was at this point that Meng Hao’s fist connected with the dragon.

It was only one punch, but that punch slammed into the dragon with an enormous boom. A violent tremor ran through it, and then its first head cracked and exploded. The second head also exploded, and then, bit by bit, its body.

The seven seas rumbled briefly and then collapsed, vanishing in the blink of an eye, as if they had never been there to begin with. At this point, Meng Hao’s fist slammed into the hulking man’s chest.

The big man’s eyes went wide as he looked at Meng Hao, and his face twisted. Meng Hao’s expression was calm as he pulled his hand back and walked off to the edge of the arena.

In the instant he turned, blood sprayed from the hulking man’s mouth. Fissures spread out from the point of impact on his chest, and in the blink of an eye, they had covered his entire body. A look of disbelief could be seen on his face, and he opened his mouth to say something. Before any words could come out, though, he exploded.

As the haze of blood and gore blasted out, Meng Hao reached the edge of the arena and sat down cross-legged. The entire time, only one, placid expression could be seen on his face. He reached up to wipe a drop of blood off of his cheek, then closed his eyes.

Gasps could be heard from the audiences outside in the Ninth Mountain and Sea as they watched Meng Hao in terrified shock.

“That was still… just one punch!!”

“Heavens! Just exactly how powerful is this Fang Mu!? That Chosen from the Seven Seas Sect could match up to a false Immortal, and yet he collapsed from a single punch! Fang Mu hasn’t even punched two times yet.”

“Four matches, and he only punched one time each! Fang Mu is way too powerful!!”

“He’s already in the top 100, with only four punches!!”

Even the eyes of the Patriarchs in the starry sky palace went wide.

Meng Hao was the focus of the attention of all the Chosen from the various sects, and was now viewed by most of them as a major adversary. Even

Zhao Yifan was wondering whether or not he could beat the Seven Seas Sect’s Chosen with only one punch. Of course, if he used a sword, he was confident he could.

Rumbling booms continued to echo out as the fourth round of arena matches proceeded. There was another battle that was particularly eye-catching. In fact, after Meng Hao’s match ended, most eyes among the audiences in the Ninth Mountain and Sea turned to watch it.

That battle was the match being fought by a disciple from the Holy Land of Mount Sun, the illustrious Taiyang Zi!

His body was surrounded by boundless light, making him look almost like a sun. His opponent was a boy, the same competitor Meng Hao had noticed earlier, and had been paying special attention to.

From what Meng Hao could tell, he possessed at least thirty percent of the power of a true Immortal.

When the battle started, most of the spectators were confident that Taiyang Zi would come out victorious. And yet, contrary to all speculations, he actually lost!

Furthermore, it was an incredible defeat. If he hadn’t uttered the words ‘I concede,’ then he would almost certainly have died. The boy’s magic caused a bloody glow to emanate out, and it seemed incredibly bloodthirsty. The sight of it caused quite a stir among the crowds, and many of the cultivators participating in the arena matches were shocked.

“Junior Blood Immortal! That was one of the names that came up in the trial by fire!”

“He actually defeated Taiyang Zi!”

“He’s making his rise to the top!!”

While the outside audiences were discussing the matter, Meng Hao looked over at the boy to find him looking back with killing intent flickering in his

eyes.

Two hours later, the fourth round of matches ended. There were now only a bit over sixty people left in the competition. The next round… would determine the top 32!

From more than a thousand people, 32 would move on! One could imagine that even if there were a weak person among that number who had happened to overcome more powerful people by chance, then that luck could be considered an aspect of their power.

“The top 32 are about to be determined!”

“Even some of the top Chosen from the great sects were defeated in the previous fights. I wonder who will make it to the top 32!”

While the outside audiences buzzed, Ling Yunzi stood below the ancient Dao Tree and glanced over the more than sixty competitors who remained.

“In the Dao Seeking arena matches,” he announced, “the most powerful people will form the top 32. Unfortunately, you have three too many people to make all the matches even. Therefore, some of you will be fighting more than one battle to make it into the top 32. As for who those people are, only the Heavens know. It will all be up to the Dao Tree’s teleportation.

“You will have four hours to rest, after which the battles to determine the top 32 will begin!”

During those four hours, Meng Hao sat there cross-legged, meditating. He could sense that there were many people watching him, but he didn’t open his eyes. Considering the level of his cultivation base, he was clearly at the pinnacle of the competitors in the arena matches. Were it not for the Immortal jades and the precious treasures, he would never have participated.

However, now that he was here, there were a few people who had attracted his interest. Unfortunately, he had yet to face them as opponents.

Four hours later, glittering light covered the leaves of the Dao Tree, teleporting Meng Hao and all the remaining contestants up to the next level of leaves. From within the glittering light in front of Meng Hao, a young woman stepped out.

She wore a blood-colored robe, and a white mask. This was the Chosen from the Church of the Blood Orchid, and as soon as she caught sight of Meng Hao, she stopped in her tracks. However, it took only a moment for her to emanate a powerful will to fight.

The intensity of that will caused Meng Hao's eyes to shine with a fierce glow.

"Fellow Daoist Fang," she said, her words echoing out coldly from behind her mask, "please give me some fighting tips!" Even as she spoke, she performed an incantation gesture with her right hand, causing a Blood Orchid to appear in front of her. As the flower swayed back and forth, it began to grow rapidly. Rumbling sounds could be heard as, in the blink of an eye, it grew to a size of thirty meters.

It had a thick trunk, blood-colored petals, and looked both extremely imposing and visually stunning. At the same time, the flower twitched, causing branches to shoot toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao stepped forward, clenched his fist, and sent out a single punch.

As of this moment, everyone in the outside world was watching as the punch caused a huge vortex to appear. Rumbling sounds spread out, causing the air to vibrate, and everything else to shake violently.

The incoming Blood Orchid branches twisted and then completely collapsed. However, in that moment, the Blood Orchid's petals of the spread wide as it bloomed. A drop of blood emerged that flew back to land on the forehead of the young woman's mask. Radiating an intense aura, the young woman then flickered as she shot toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao stood in place, neither retreating nor advancing. However, at the same time, he punched a second time.

This second punch caused the air to ripple, and a massive force to explode out and sweep across the young woman. Her body trembled, and she was about to unleash a divine ability when an intense pressure crushed down onto her cultivation base. In the blink of an eye, she completely lost any ability to rotate her cultivation base, which left her not only completely surprised, but also incapable of avoiding the punch that slammed into her.

A boom could be heard. Beneath the mask, blood spurted from the young woman’s mouth, and she staggered backward a full thirty meters, after which she looked up at Meng Hao, panting.

“You’re no match for me,” Meng Hao said coolly.

The young woman was silent for a moment, after which she chuckled bitterly and nodded.

“I concede,” she said, and then vanished. When she reappeared, she was back on the first layer of leaves.

Meng Hao had won once again, but before the audiences outside could comment, light began to glitter on the tree leaf again, and… another person emerged!

It was a boy, none other than the same boy who had just defeated Taiyang Zi. Junior Blood Immortal!

His appearance on the scene instantly sent the audience into tumult.

“Fang Mu is one of the people who has to fight twice!!”

“There were three extra people in the competition, so some people have to fight more than once to get into the top 32. I never thought that Fang Mu would be one of them!”

“This is going to be one intense battle! Fang Mu versus Junior Blood Immortal! I wonder who will be strongest!?!?”

Junior Blood Immortal emerged slowly, and when he saw Meng Hao, his mouth twisted into a vicious grin. Killing intent flickered in his eyes.

“So, we meet at last!” he said in a raspy voice, licking his lips. A shocking red glow could be seen in his eyes as he stared at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao looked the boy over. He knew that he attacked with bizarre ferocity, and had reduced all of his opponents to pools of putrid blood, with the exception of Taiyang Zi.

Contrary to what one might expect, the boy had not made much of an impression during the ten stages of the trial by fire. He had achieved just enough to make it into the top 1,000. Clearly, he had been holding back in virtually all aspects.

Meng Hao’s expression was calm, and he said nothing. He merely looked indifferently at the boy.

When their gazes met, roaring sounds filled both of their minds as their divine senses made contact with each other. The boy’s eyes filled with surprise. He knew his opponent was powerful, and yet, still remained fully confident in himself. Taking advantage of the rumbling caused by the divine sense, he charged toward Meng Hao, raising his right hand to perform an incantation gesture. Bloody light flickered up, and the in the blink of an eye, a blood-colored bottle gourd appeared, rotating as it sped through the air toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he took a step forward. In that instant, the entire arena match leaf began to quake, and a wind began to swirl around Meng Hao.

“This divine ability of mine will cause all of the blood in your body to boil and turn into a putrid sludge!” The Junior Blood Immortal’s voice was now shrill as he called out. In the blink of an eye, the blood-colored bottle gourd began to exert an incredible gravitational force, as if it wanted to suck Meng Hao inside of it.

Meng Hao snorted coldly. He did not level any punches; this Junior Blood Immortal had a bizarre cultivation base, and Meng Hao would not take him lightly. The wind swirling around him quickly transformed into a violent tempest that shot forward. At the same time, his body transformed into a black vulture, which flapped its wings, charging through the gravitational force to appear directly in front of the boy, where it slashed out with claws vicious enough to shatter stone and metal.

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# Chapter 869: Top 32!

The boy's expression flickered, and blue veins popped out on his forehead as he howled at the incoming vulture. Sound waves rippled out that seemed to wish to shatter the air. The boy's expression was vicious as he raised both hands up, causing a sea of blood to appear and surge out toward Meng Hao.

Booms rang out as the two of them fought back and forth in midair. At one point, the boy let out a shrill cry, causing the sea of blood to turn into a blood-colored vortex that tried to suck Meng Hao in.

Meng Hao waved his hand, causing numerous mountains to appear, which then linked together to form a mountain range. However, thanks to the black feather, that mountain range actually looked like a huge river, which then surged in counterattack against the blood-colored vortex. The vortex was crushed as easily as dried twigs, shattering into pieces as vulture-form Meng Hao once again slashed through the air, his claws extended toward the boy's torso.

Boom!

Blood sprayed from the boy's mouth as a huge hole was ripped into his chest. He immediately shot backward in retreat, biting the tip of his tongue and spitting out some blood, which twisted in the air to become ten blood drops. Each drop immediately began to expand, turning into ten seas of blood that spread out to cover everything.

"Ten Seas, Blood Slaughter!" roared the boy. Meng Hao's face was calm, and he didn't retreat. Instead, he advanced, an aura of invincibility exploding out of him. As he faced the ten seas of blood, he clenched his hand into a fist and punched out into the air. Then, he punched again.

Two mere punches did not seem capable of fighting back against the ten roaring seas of blood. However, the boy’s face flickered as he realized that something didn’t seem quite right about the two blows, although he wasn’t sure what.

In the blink of an eye, and before he had any time to react, Meng Hao attacked a total of nine times. He didn’t even seem to be paying attention to the seas of blood that surrounded him, but instead, was punching directly forward.

Nine punches, each one more shocking than the one before.

This was… a Daoist magic! Nine Heavens Destruction! [1]

As soon as the ninth punch exploded out, the boy’s face fell. His pupils constricted as he retreated at top speed. At the same time, a massive boom echoed out, so powerful that cultivators in the surrounding arena matches heard it and were shocked.

A gigantic vortex surged out as a result of the nine punches. The blood seas were completely incapable of doing anything except be sucked up by the vortex. As for Meng Hao, he stood next to the vortex, his expression cold as he watched the boy fleeing. Then he raised his hand and stretched it out in a grasping motion.

Star Plucking Magic!

BOOM!

Blood sprayed from the boy’s mouth. An expression of astonishment covered his face as he was dragged back toward Meng Hao, his body completely beyond his own control. In the blink of an eye, he was directly in front of Meng Hao, and was close enough that he could even see the cold look in Meng Hao’s eyes.

“You’re looking to die!” howled the boy, his eyes bright red. Suddenly, his skin turned crimson, and black mist began to float up from the top of his head. Shockingly, an enormous image began to form above him.

It was a gigantic leech, covered with scales, that emanated an intense pressure. As soon as the cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea saw it, their faces flickered with shock.

“Blood Leech Grand Magic!!”

“That’s a forbidden magic! That boy’s actually using a forbidden magic!”

In the starry sky palace, the various Patriarchs were looking on with strange gleams in their eyes.

“That boy has remained undercover this entire time. Considering he cultivates a vicious magic like that, it’s little wonder he could defeat Taiyang Zi!”

“However, Saint Blood Leech was exterminated years ago by the Three Great Daoist Societies. Even if some of his Divine Clones survived, they wouldn’t be able to do this alone! It seems this boy must have gotten his hands on one of them. Although it’s only the first form of the Blood Leech Grand Magic, Fang Mu is still in grave danger.”

“According to legend, the only thing that can restrain this magic is the Dao of the Blood Demon. Either that, or an incredibly powerful cultivation base.”

Back in the arena, a vicious expression could be seen on the boy’s face. This was his trump card, which he had intended to save for someone in the top 4. However, he was now forced into a corner, and had no other choice. His desire to kill Meng Hao now grew even stronger.

“Killing you won’t be a waste of my grand magic,” said the boy with a hideous grin. “Considering your reputation, slaying you will make me famous!” The enormous illusory Blood Leech opened its mouth, revealing countless sharp teeth as it pounced toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao frowned slightly. This leech left him feeling as if his blood were unstable, and that it would burst out from inside of him at any moment. He snorted coldly, and rumbling filled the air as his Dharma Idol appeared behind him.

Because of the transformative powers of the black feather, the Dharma Idol now looked exactly like Fang Mu. It was three hundred meters tall, and emanated boundless magical light. As soon as it appeared, it stepped forward and punched toward the enormous leech.

A boom could be heard, and the boy’s face fell. Blood spurted out all over his body as he tumbled backward. The enormous illusory leech trembled, seemingly on the verge of collapsing to pieces.

“I refuse to back down! Fang Mu, DIE!!” The boy howled as countless rips and tears appeared all over his body. At the same time, the image of the leech shattered, transforming into innumerable fragments that shot toward the boy and fused into him. In the next moment, the boy suddenly exploded.

In that moment of explosion, the boy’s flesh and blood transformed into numerous blood-colored leeches, a vast cloud of nearly a thousand. Buzzing could be heard as they shot toward Meng Hao. In addition to the leeches, a bloody mist spread out in all directions, making it impossible for onlookers to see what was happening clearly.

This new development caused great shock among the onlookers in the outside world. Even the Patriarchs in the starry sky palace were surprised.

“The second form!”

“I can’t believe this boy has cultivated the Blood Leech Grand Magic all the way to the second form!”

Not even the Patriarchs in the starry sky palace could see what was happening inside the red mist. Were this some other location, nothing could block their divine sense. However, these were the Ruins of Immortality, so they could only watch with their eyes, not with their divine sense.

Even Ling Yunzi and the other two old men couldn’t do anything but watch. Their faces flickered as they considered the danger Meng Hao was in.

The outside world was in tumult.

“Don’t tell me Fang Mu is going to perish!”

What the people on the outside couldn’t see was that Meng Hao was standing in the middle of the bloody mist, his body glowing with red light as he stared coldly at the more than one thousand incoming Blood Leeches. The leeches were now trembling in terror.

The boy’s quivering divine sense emanated out from the leeches.

“Blood… Blood Demon Grand Magic? Spare me, Fellow Daoist Fang, spare me….”

Meng Hao ignored him. After sweeping his own divine sense across the leeches, he exercised a bit of will, and booms could be heard as one leech after another began to explode. All of them transformed into nothing more than drifting ash.

As the bloody mist faded away, Meng Hao walked calmly over to the edge of the arena and sat down cross-legged.

The outside world was in an uproar.

“That boy’s grand magic was actually defeated!”

“There were clearly more than a thousand leeches just a moment ago. Then that red mist covered everything over, and we couldn’t see anything. How exactly did Fang Mu secure victory!?”

“Junior Blood Immortal defeated Taiyang Zi, and then Fang Mu defeated Junior Blood Immortal! Fang Mu… is invincible!!”

The outside crowds were astonished, and the Patriarchs inside the palace were frowning. They were all looking at Meng Hao with thoughtful expressions.

They had been unable to see what had happened inside the red mist, but they knew that the second form of the Blood Leech Grand Magic was incredibly difficult to deal with. The fact that it had been defeated so quickly was quite puzzling to them.

As everyone pondered these matters, the old man from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite spoke up.

“Perhaps the boy’s version of the second form wasn’t stable, and he accidentally self-destructed,” he said slowly, his voice echoing about.

This was the only answer that made sense. After all, the second form of the Blood Leech Grand Magic was very difficult to cultivate successfully.

Back in the arena, Meng Hao sat there calmly. His battle with the boy just now had caused quite a bit of shock amongst the other competitors, especially the Chosen. The boy had just defeated Taiyang Zi, so the fact that Meng Hao had ended up killing him caused even more attention to be sent his way.

The Chosen had been quite shocked just to see the Blood Leech Grand Magic; what had played out after that left them filled with a sense of mystery.

Zhao Yifan’s eyes flickered, and his desire to fight grew stronger as he looked over at Meng Hao. He said nothing, but the look flickering in his eyes grew even more intense.

Fan Dong’er frowned. On the one hand, she felt some mysterious and unexplainable loathing toward Meng Hao, but on the other hand, she had to admit that he was definitely on her level.

Li Ling’er and Sun Hai also looked over at him. Compared to Li Ling’er, Sun Hai’s feelings were far more intense; to him, looking at Meng Hao kept causing him to think about his nightmarish experience on Planet South Heaven.

The other matches proceeded along. Now that Meng Hao’s battle was over, there was another intense match that drew quite a bit of attention. That was the masked young man, Li Yan, who was fighting the emaciated youth from the Bones of the Flamedevil.

The youth attacked with a monstrous sea of flames, and fire burned within his eyes. As for Li Yan, the fighting had reached the point where he had finally removed his mask, revealing a scar-covered face, and eyes that brimmed with the desire to do battle. They fought with shocking attacks until Li Yan finally ran out of power. However, the Chosen from the Bones of the Flamedevil was also seriously injured.

Because of Li Yan’s defeat, Meng Hao now had a much better idea of exactly how powerful he was.

The crowds in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were sighing.

“What a pity. It seems Li Yan isn’t strong enough to make it into the top 32. However, this was a battle against Chen Hao from the Bones of the Flamedevil, and he’s incredible. Even though Li Yan lost, he still managed to seriously injure Chen Hao.”

“You can only chalk it up to bad luck. At least he can feel proud in defeat!”

“I wonder how many competitors from the trial by fire will be left in the end. Will the first place spot for the stages of the Nascent Soul, Spirit Severing, and Dao Seeking belong to them, or to the Chosen?!”

In the palace among the stars, the Patriarchs were watching the various battles thoughtfully, but their expressions revealed nothing about what they were thinking.

In contrast, bets were already being placed in the outside world regarding who would make it into the top 8.

Soon, this round of matches was over. The extra three people were eliminated, along with half of the other participants, leaving 32 competitors behind!

These 32 were incredibly powerful cultivators!

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# Chapter 870: The Fiends Descend!

“Spend the next day in rest and recovery,” said Ling Yunzi. “After that, the top 16 will be selected!” Meng Hao and the others among the top 32 were now getting ever closer to the top of the main trunk of the ancient Dao Tree. Currently, they began to rest and prepare for the battles to get into the top 16.

By now, the battles to select the top 32 had already begun for the Nascent Soul and Spirit Severing stages. From Meng Hao’s position up above, he could finally see Chen Fan down in the Nascent Soul arena matches.

Although Chen Fan was currently fighting against a Nascent Soul cultivator like himself, the level of difficulty to get into the top 32 was extreme.

Nevertheless, he was still enduring. His sword strikes had gained an additional sharpness which, combined with his gloomy demeanor, caused shock to fill the heart of his opponent.

Chen Fan had long since drawn the notice of quite a few sects. His sword contained a Domain, even though he himself was only in the Nascent Soul stage. Someone like that was certain to make stunning accomplishments in the future.

One of the Three Churches and Six Sects, the Solitary Sword Pavilion, which was somewhat related to the Solitary Sword Sect, was especially interested in Chen Fan. They were actually the first to take note of him.

The day passed by quickly, and in the end, Chen Fan made it into the top 32.

As for Meng Hao, he began to fight for his spot in the top 16!

As the battle began, glittering light spread out, and they moved closer to the top of the tree. Meng Hao’s opponent was another Chosen!

It was the young woman from the Five Colors Sect, who wore robes that were a mixture of five colors. Meng Hao had been paying attention to her in previous battles, and knew that she had astonishing skill in five elements magic.

This young woman was much more cautious than Meng Hao; once she saw who her opponent was, her heart began to thump. Of the handful of people she truly feared in the arena matches, Meng Hao was one of them.

After she and Meng Hao clasped hands to each other, the young woman took the initiative, performing a double-handed incantation, immediately unleashing metal, wood, water, fire and earth, all five elements. They materialized into a massive sea, a huge battleship, a blazing sun, and an enormous clay golem that wielded a golden greatsword, all of which shot toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed with the light of anticipation. Body flickering, he waved his hand, causing a Violet Sea to descend, which was his water totem. Then the Golden Crow appeared, his metal totem. After that were his wood, fire, and earth totems. Shockingly, five elements fought against five elements.

The clash caused wild colors to flash about, and rumbling to fill the air. The audiences in the outside world were looking on with rapt attention.

In the arena, Meng Hao and the young woman fought back and forth in midair. Metal, wood, water, fire, and earth, the five elements, were unleashed amidst rumbling booms. In a short time, they had exchanged several dozen attacks, but throughout it all Meng Hao never went all out. Rather, he merely relied on the five elements as the avenue of attack while facing off against the woman.

He was using this fight to strengthen his five elements magic. Considering that the young woman was even more skilled than Meng Hao in the use of the five elements, this match gave those watching it the feeling that it was two disciples from the Five Colors Sect who were fighting.

In fact, the disciples from that very sect were somewhat confused, and watched in shock as the battle unfolded.

“Fang Mu actually excels in five elements magic as well!!”

“This is unbelievable! Although many people can use five elements magic to some degree, no one can compare to the Five Colors Sect. And yet, Fang Mu is actually evenly matched with Han Mei!”

There were sixteen arenas with thirty-two people fighting in them; no one had secured victory as of yet. It was at this point that a black wind rose up within the Ruins of Immortality. Not even the enormous corpse beneath the ancient Dao Tree could do anything to prevent its arrival. It swept out, appearing directly above the huge tree. Inside of the black wind, a pair of white eyes could be seen, which stared down at the crowds of people fighting down below.

The instant the black wind appeared, the faces of Ling Yunzi and the other two old men flickered. It wasn’t just them; the crowds out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were also shocked.

Most nervous of all were the Patriarchs in the starry sky palace. They all rose to their feet, even the old men from the Three Great Daoist Societies, their eyes widening in response to the sudden appearance of the black wind.

“The ancient Dao Tree was personally planted by the Paragons, and contains a bit of the Paragons’ will,” said the Patriarch from the Ninth Sea God World. “They will be safe as long as they stay on the tree.”

By now, all of the fighters on the Dao Tree had seen the Black Wind, and their faces flickered. Ling Yunzi and the other two old men took deep breaths, and then Ling Yunzi’s voice rang out.

“You must not leave the leaves of the tree! As long as you remain on the leaves you will be in no danger!”

Almost in the same instant that Ling Yunzi’s words could be heard, a scream rang out from off in the distance, a sound so piercing it seemed capable of shredding iron or rock. It echoed about, and to the people on the tree it merely gave them a twinge of pain in their ears, inflicting not even a minor hindrance to them. However, Ling Yunzi and the other two old men coughed up blood and, faces falling, quickly retreated as close as possible to the tree.

In that same moment, an enormous eyeball began to descend from up above. It was thoroughly bloodshot, and as it neared, the veins of blood within the eye began to extend themselves and whip around. Suddenly, a shrill voice echoed out.

“Who! Who plucked out my right eye!?!?

“My right eye! Get back here, come back….”

As the sound echoed about, the crowds on the Dao Tree coughed up blood. Thankfully, a bright glow spread out from the Dao Tree, ensuring that there were no deaths, only injuries.

The black wind and the eye merely milled about outside the Dao Tree, apparently in dread of it. However, after a moment, the black wind seemed to lose patience. A shrill shriek could be heard as an enormous, decomposing roc flew out from inside. It was shockingly large, and as it flew out, its sharp talons slashed out toward the Dao Tree.

Before it could get very close, brilliant light spread out from the Dao Tree, causing the roc to let out a miserable shriek and fall back. However, it did not leave. Instead, it continued to loiter outside of the Dao Tree, its eyes radiating an intense aura of death and savagery.

Considering that was all that happened, Meng Hao, although shocked, didn’t pay very close attention to the matter. However, just when he was about to resume fighting with the young woman, another figure approached from off in the distance.

It was a man with half a head, his body surrounded by swirling black mist. He held a banner in his hand, and a sword had been plunged into his side. The grievous wound that had taken off half of his head did not appear to have been inflicted while alive, but rather as if some creature had bitten it off after he was already dead. Instead, the fatal blow that killed him was apparently delivered by the sword that was still stuck into his side.

He approached slowly, his one remaining eye sweeping over the crowds until it finally came to rest on Meng Hao. Then, he began to head directly toward him.

When Ling Yunzi and the others saw the man, their faces fell. Meng Hao's eyes flickered.

It was at this moment that the young woman from the Five Colors Sect suddenly performed an incantation gesture and attacked. Her five elements magic caused five-colored light to blaze up, transforming into a five-colored sealing mark that rotated rapidly as it shot through the air toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao frowned. He was no longer interested in fighting, so he punched out with his right hand, simultaneously causing his Dharma Idol to appear. Intense energy surged out, and a boom could be heard as the five-colored sealing mark shattered. The young woman's face fell, and blood spurted from her mouth.

It was in this moment that the half-headed man waved his right hand, causing the banner in his hand to unfurl. A black mist appeared, which transformed into a huge vortex. At the same time, he pointed toward Meng Hao.

"Come… come… come…." His voice was archaic, as if it had originated in ancient times. As the voice echoed out, an enormous gravitational force exploded out and enveloped the tree leaf Meng Hao was on. Meng Hao's face flickered, and he immediately dropped to the surface of the leaf. However, the face of the young woman from the Five Colors Sect fell as she was involuntarily swept up into the air. In the blink of an eye, she appeared to be on the verge of… flying completely away from the leaf.

Everyone looked on as it happened, but none of them were able to do anything to come to her aid. Ling Yunzi and the others stared with wide eyes, but could do nothing to help.

The crowds watching in the Ninth Mountain and Sea observed the scene with wide eyes, and many gasps could be heard.

In the starry sky palace, the Matriarch from the Five Colors Sect watched with an expression of unprecedented anxiety. The young woman participating in the arena matches was not a Chosen of the sect, but one of her direct bloodline descendants.

“Save me!” the girl cried in shrill alarm. She was now flying through the air toward the edge of the leaf, and was just about to be sucked outside. She could see the terrifying roc inside the black wind nearby, opening its decomposing mouth. She could also see the eyeball, with the countless veins stretching out from it.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and he suddenly extended his hand toward the girl and made a grabbing motion. The Star Plucking Magic was unleashed as he grabbed onto her and began to pull her back. However, the suction force was too strong, and all Meng Hao could do was slow her down a bit.

“Hurry up and concede!” he growled.

The young woman suddenly seemed to come to her senses, and urgently cried out, “I concede!!”

As soon as the two words left her mouth, and just as she was about to be sucked outside, glittering light surrounded her and she vanished. When she reappeared, she was back down on the first layer of leaves, badly shaken and her face ashen. She looked up toward Meng Hao with an expression of deep gratitude.

Meng Hao heaved a sigh of relief, then sat down cross-legged, looking out coldly at the half-headed man outside of the Dao Tree.

Everyone else who had been watching also sighed in relief. Ling Yunzi looked over at Meng Hao with even more admiration than before. Even he hadn’t thought of using the words ‘I concede’ to get out of danger.

Everyone out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea was completely surprised by everything that had happened. They were especially shocked by how quickly Meng Hao had reacted. To them, it was evidence of incredible quick thinking and resourcefulness.

“That’s right! All she had to do was concede, and then she was teleported out. It took a moment, but that was definitely the simplest method. How come I didn’t think of that!?”

“This Fang Mu is extremely quick-witted to come up with a plan like that in such a situation!”

Up in the palace in the sky, the Matriarch from the Five Colors Sect took a deep breath and then glanced at Meng Hao on the vortex screen. Her expression was one of gratitude; she was not the type of person who liked to owe favors to others, so this was a kindness she would be sure to repay in the future.

“The arena matches will now continue,” said Ling Yunzi from his position beneath the Dao Tree. “All of you must remember to never step foot outside of the arena. If any situation arises similar to what has just occurred, it would be much better to concede than to die.” Ling Yunzi sighed. Although he was aware of why the Three Great Daoist Societies had chosen this place to hold the arena matches, the dangers of the area made it such that those in the Spirit Realm really should not be here.

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# Chapter 871: Invincible Power!

The arena matches continued as the top 32 continued to fight. The dangers of the outside world had now become a sort of a tempering and assessment of their own.

Because the young woman from the Five Colors Sect conceded, Meng Hao was the first to complete this round, and he sat there cross-legged in the arena, looking at the half-headed man outside. The man looked back at him.

Although there was a vast gap of empty space between them, as they looked at each other, Meng Hao could sense the feeling of a summons rising up within him.

“If I get the chance, I WILL take back that sword!” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. Although the sword might not seem special to anyone else, to Meng Hao, it had the Sixth Demon Sealing Hex!

Each of the eight Demon Sealing Hexes were strange and mysterious. Both the Body Hexing and Karmic Hexing gave him superiority in flexibility when it came to fighting, and basically prevented anyone from guarding against his attacks.

After four hours passed, the various arena matches wound to a conclusion. The top 16 were now set. From over a thousand cultivators, successive victories had led these people into the top 16. Each and every one could be considered a peak expert of the Spirit Realm.

Experts like this could crush false Immortals, and could even compare to some extent to true Immortals. In fact, most of them would assuredly employ an Immortality Illumination Vine in the near future, after which it wouldn’t be long before they became true Immortals.

Their path to Immortality would be a smooth one, and given their accumulated resources, it would only be a few short years before they were at the peak of the Immortal Realm.

This sequence of events happened once every ten thousand years; since every true Immortal could cultivate at a speed that far exceeded a false Immortal, true Immortals always rose to prominence and became famous in all the Mountains and Seas.

Were it not for the incredible prizes being offered up during the arena matches, the various sects would not have sent their Chosen here, but would have kept them in secluded meditation to prepare for true Immortality.

Actually, one of the reasons even more Chosen hadn’t joined the arena matches was that most of them were still in secluded meditation. Once they emerged, as long as they didn’t fail in the process, they would be true Immortals.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, rose to his feet and looked around at the top 16 competitors in the arena matches.

Zhao Yifan was among them, as was Fan Dong’er. Sun Hai, surprisingly, was there too, as well as some of the other Chosen who Meng Hao had previously taken note of. As far as competitors from the trial by fire, Li Yan had been defeated, as had the young man with the mosquitoes and Junior Blood Immortal. Other than Meng Hao, the only remaining competitor from the trial by fire was the garrulous old man.

Top 16!

“Rest and recuperate for one day, and then the battle for the top 8 will begin!”

The next day, the battle for the top 8 began!

On the main trunk of the Dao Tree, at the very top, there was a single golden leaf. Beneath that were two silver leaves, further down were four bronze leaves, and beneath that were eight light green leaves.

The battles for the top 8 would be fought on those eight light green leaves!

Eight battles, fought simultaneously. All of the crowds in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were paying rapt attention.

“The top 8 will be selected from these sixteen people! Each one is a top expert of the Dao Seeking stage. This round is definitely going to be spectacular!”

“I wonder who exactly is going to win! Who’s going to be eliminated!? Even the top 16 experts have no way of knowing!”

“The thing I’m most curious about is whether that Fang Mu will be able to enter the top 8!”

In the starry sky palace, the Patriarchs were also paying close attention.

By this point, many people had already forgotten about the main reason why the arena matches of the trial by fire were being held to begin with. Whoever took first place would have a chance to be taken in by the Three Great Daoist Sects as a disciple. The three Patriarchs from the Three Great Daoist Societies did nothing to remind anyone of this.

It was almost as if the taking of disciples wasn’t very important at all.

Light glittered in front of Meng Hao and next, he was standing on a light green leaf. In front of him, a thin, emaciated figure appeared.

Although he was skinny, amorphous flames spread out around him as he walked forward. They were invisible, but Meng Hao could feel them, as if what was walking toward him was not a cultivator, but a flame Devil!

Within his eyes, flames could be seen flickering. He wore a long black robe, and his hair floated around him. He stood there, his energy surging, growing more and more powerful. In the blink of an eye, the air around him began to ripple and distort.

This was the Chosen from the Bones of the Flamedevil, one of the Five Holy Lands… Chen Hao!

Back in the ten stages of the trial by fire, the masked Li Yan had repeatedly performed just behind Meng Hao. He had been defeated by Chen Hao, although he had ended up seriously wounding Chen Hao in the process.

Meng Hao looked at him calmly, and Chen Hao looked back at him.

Neither of them spoke. The flames in Chen Hao’s eyes burned bright, and the air around him distorted as the invisible flames burned. The flames seemed capable of scorching anything and everything as they shot toward Meng Hao.

No observer could see the fire, but by using divine sense, Meng Hao was able to sense them clearly. What he saw was an illusory body of flames rushing toward him.

“This is not the fire of the five elements!” Meng Hao thought, his eyes glittering. The fire of the five elements was a natural law of Heaven and Earth. In fact, the fire wielded by the young woman from the Five Colors Sect had contained that natural law. However, the flames unleashed by Chen Hao from the Bones of the Flamedevil had no natural law, but instead, a strange will!

After examining it closely for a moment, he realized that it seemed to be bound by some sort of summoning contract, as if… some all-powerful being had bestowed the power of the flames. It was as if this flame was actually a type of life force flame.

Meng Hao’s expression was normal as he clenched his right hand into a fist. As soon as he punched out, a vortex appeared, which sent ripples spreading out. Explosive rumbling could be heard as it slammed into the flames, and was then completely submerged by them.

“Eee?” said Meng Hao, falling back for the first time. Chen Hao’s eyes overflowed with the desire to fight, and as Meng Hao retreated, he advanced, performing an incantation gesture that caused more roaring flames to appear around him. Shockingly, they transformed into the shape of an enormous mouth that bit toward Meng Hao.

The sight of Meng Hao retreating caused quite a stir in the outside world. This was the first time they had ever seen him back up in a fight.

However, as the flame mouth closed in on him, Meng Hao stopped in place and set his jaw. A look of anticipation gleamed in his eyes as he performed an incantation gesture. Then, he punched out repeatedly, using the Nine Heavens Destruction once again.

Booms rattled out in all directions as Meng Hao then transformed into a vulture that shot toward Chen Hao like black lightning. Chen Hao's face fell, and he performed an incantation gesture. Immediately, a set of flaming armor appeared around him. He reached out with his right hand in a grasping motion, causing an enormous flame spear to materialize. His hands closed around it, and he stabbed it toward the incoming Meng Hao.

The scream of the spear was ear-splitting, and countless erupting volcanos appeared around it as it shot toward Meng Hao in shocking fashion.

Meng Hao snorted coldly as mountains of his own appeared and linked together into an equally shocking mountain range, although it appeared as a huge river to onlookers. It slammed into the volcanoes, causing a huge boom to rise into the air. It was at this point that Meng Hao's shocking Dharma Idol appeared behind him.

In that instant, Chen Hao tilted his back and roared. His own incredible Dharma Idol appeared, a corpse which was covered in scales and emanated black flames. It immediately began to contend with Meng Hao's Dharma Idol.

When the Dharma Idols collided, Meng Hao employed the Star Plucking Magic. An incredible force that Chen Hao could not resist suddenly grabbed him, causing a sense of crisis to well up inside of him. Letting out a bellow of rage, Chen Hao caused his suit of flame armor to detonate, using the force of the mighty explosion to fight against Meng Hao's Star Plucking Magic.

Chen Hao's face was ashen, and blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth. As of this point, he knew that he wasn't a match for Meng Hao, and yet he chose to continue fighting anyway.

However, in the instant that his flame armor exploded, Meng Hao’s eyes began to shine with an intense desire to do battle. He strode forward; even the roaring flames could do nothing to prevent his charge. As he passed through the sea of flames, he let out a huge roar.

The roar caused the entire leaf to tremble, and even passed outside of the Dao Tree itself. At the same time, his roar caused an enormous wind to spring up, slashing into the sea of flames and cutting a path through them directly to Chen Hao.

Chen Hao’s face fell as he realized how powerful this Fang Mu was. It was only at this decisive moment of the battle that he realized that his opponent was completely terrifying. Magical techniques and divine abilities were secondary; the critical factor was his incredible energy.

“He has an aura of invincibility about him!” thought Chen Hao, madness glowing in his eyes. He bit his tongue and spit out some blood, which then transformed into lava, and then exploded into meteors that streaked through the air toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao snorted coldly, then pointed out with his right finger as he unleashed the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex onto the sea of flames and the shooting stars. No outsider would be able to tell what was happening, but Chen Hao’s face instantly fell as his cultivation base lurched to a standstill.

The cost of that standstill was…

Meng Hao closed in, causing all of the shooting stars and the entire sea of flames to be sent spinning away. As Meng Hao bore down on Chen Hao, he punched out. A boom rang out as blood sprayed from Chen Hao’s mouth. It only took a moment for him to recover, after which a fierce flame appeared in his eyes. Taking advantage of his backward motion, he spun his right leg around rapidly toward Meng Hao’s head.

At the same time, a look of determination appeared in his eyes.

“Flamedevil Transformation!” he cried out

This battle was the complete focus of all eyes out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. As of now, they were beginning to see how invincible Meng Hao’s power was. As for Chen Hao, he also possessed similar power. As they battled, neither of them spent any time on defense, but instead, consistently attacked!

Meng Hao did nothing to evade Chen Hao’s spinning back kick. He lifted his left hand and grabbed down hard onto Chen Hao’s leg, sending a massive power of vibration into it. Rumbling could be heard, and Chen Hao coughed up some blood. However, by this time his entire body was turning red!

This red was not the red of blood, but rather, the red of flames!

It was as if all the blood in his body had turned into lava. Flames burst out all around him, engulfing him entirely. His skin didn’t seem capable of bearing the flames, and began to split apart all over. Soon, the rips and tears covered him completely.

However, his energy exploded up, and despite the fact that Meng Hao was holding onto his leg tightly, he let out a bellow and caused flames to surge toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s expression was calm as he released his hand, then kicked out viciously with his foot. A boom could be heard as Chen Hao was sent flying several dozen meters back.

“Body transformation magic, huh?” said Meng Hao coolly. “Well, I’ll just have to beat you back into your original state.” He suddenly transformed into the vulture, which shot forward at incredible speed. In the blink of an eye, it appeared in front of Chen Hao and slashed at him with its claws. Then Meng Hao returned to human form and punched out with a fist.

BOOOMMMM! After changing forms, Chen Hao thought that he would be even more powerful, capable of fighting Meng Hao. However, he never imagined that a few punches from Meng Hao would slam into him like wild tempests. The speed and power were incredible, and he was incapable of standing up to it. Just when he was about to try to resist, Meng Hao’s divine sense transformed into an incredible crushing power that slammed down onto him.

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# Chapter 872: She Appears!

Meng Hao advanced as if he were crushing rotten twigs. Chen Hao fell back continuously. In the blink of an eye, dozens of lightning-like exchanges occurred between the two of them. Chen Hao constantly coughed up blood, and his energy was rapidly depleting. In the end, he slammed down onto the surface of the arena. The flames covering his body were extinguished, and blood spurted out all over. After struggling to his feet, he found a long spear leveled against his throat.

It was none other than the spear Meng Hao had acquired in the Warrior Pavilion, with the shaft made from part of the World Tree, and a sharp bone spearhead. Thanks to the power of the black feather, however, it looked completely different, and was something no one would ever recognize.

Chen Hao shivered as he sensed the murderous aura coming from the spearhead, which left his entire body feeling ice cold. Then there was Meng Hao, whose eyes had remained intensely cold from the beginning of their battle until this moment. He seemed to be waiting for Chen Hao to say something, and if Chen Hao didn’t say it… then the spear would immediately stab completely through his throat.

Meng Hao didn’t say anything. He just looked calmly at Chen Hao.

Out in the world of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, cultivators watched the match with thumping hearts. They had never heard of Fang Mu before, but now, he astonished them in battle after battle, proving that he was more powerful than any opponent could imagine!!

“He can definitely take first place!!”

“Heavens, he took first place in the trial by fire already. If he also takes first place in the arena matches, then he… he….”

“This is matchlessly breathtaking! Throughout all the years, there has never been another person like this!”

“Just who is he? There’s no way a person like him could be an obscure nobody!”

While the audiences were in an uproar, the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch floated in the starry sky. His eyes glittered brightly, and Immortal qi swirled around him for a long moment before he retracted it. The desire to fight burned strongly in his eyes.

“Meng Hao….”

Near Planet East Victory, Patriarch Reliance switched back and forth between smiling broadly and gnashing his teeth. He definitely had very complex feelings regarding Meng Hao.

Everyone was watching as Chen Hao lay silently in the arena. He took a deep, painful breath and looked up at Meng Hao.

“How much of your cultivation base did you use?” he asked suddenly.

“Is that really important?” Meng Hao replied coolly.

“It is to me!” said Chen Hao firmly.

“Well, not to me.” Meng Hao shook his head, staring at Chen Hao coldly and with a bit of impatience.

Chen Hao’s trembling heart filled with coldness. Then he suddenly recalled standing in the outside world, watching some of Fang Mu’s bizarre actions. Immediately, he pulled a bag of holding out from within his robe.

“There are over 3,000,000 spirit stones here. I didn’t bring many with me today, but you can have them if you just answer my question.”

Moments before, Meng Hao’s expression had been ice cold, as emotionless as a cold-blooded killer. Now, however, his eyes narrowed, and a slight smile could be seen on his face. It happened so quickly that Chen Hao stared in shock.

Meng Hao quickly grabbed the bag of holding and scanned it with his spiritual sense. Finally, his face beamed with joy.

“Elder Brother Chen, there’s really no need for this,” he said, licking his lips. “It’s just a question, right? What’s the point in pulling out so many spirit stones? Alright, alright. If I refused them, that would be an insult to you. In that case, I guess I’ll just have to suck it up and take them.” His current expression was indeed vastly different than what it had been before. Chen Hao stared in disbelief at how different Meng Hao was now, and how quickly he had changed. It seemed unbelievable how completely natural the change had come to him.

“Taking money to resolve others’ issues… Elder Brother Chen… just now I was using…

“Seventy percent full power!” These last four words were transmitted directly into Chen Hao’s mind. Of course, as to how much he actually used, naturally, that was something he would never reveal.

Chen Hao rose to his feet, taciturn. He didn’t want to believe Meng Hao, but the answer mostly lined up with his own judgement and perception. Giving Meng Hao a long, penetrating look, he finally uttered the words ‘I concede.’

Immediately, he faded away and reappeared on the first level of leaves.

Meng Hao was feeling very pleased. He had never imagined that he would be able to earn some spirit stones in the middle of fighting. Suddenly, he looked up in thought, and then an annoyed expression appeared on his face.

“How could I have forgotten about making money? If I’d thought of doing this earlier, I probably could have made a small fortune in the past few matches.”

As the battles to decide the top 8 continued, Meng Hao sat down cross-legged. After glancing around at the other battles going on around him, he looked down toward the Nascent Soul arena matches, and Chen Fan.

The Nascent Soul arena matches were also in the middle of determining their top 8. Chen Fan was soaked in blood as he fought a young woman. A look of annoyance could be seen on her face as they fought back and forth. Up to this point in the battle, the gloomy will cast out by Chen Fan’s attacks had kept the woman feeling quite suppressed.

However, this young woman was not one of the trial by fire competitors. She was a Nascent Soul Chosen from the Solitary Sword Pavilion, and was definitely powerful enough to make it into the top 4. She and Chen Fan were currently fighting back and forth.

Meng Hao watched the battle silently. Based on the level of his cultivation base, he was able to tell that Chen Fan had reached the end of the line in this battle.

Moments later, Chen Fan lost, and was unable to enter the top 8. He clasped hands silently to the young woman as his body faded away, and he reappeared down below.

Meng Hao sighed. He had sensed the deep bitterness within Chen Fan on previous occasions, but it wasn’t until Xu Qing finally departed that he came to understand why Chen Fan had fallen so low.

Time passed, and rumbling booms echoed out. Gradually, victory and defeat were determined in multiple arenas. However, it was at this time that, all of a sudden, numerous figures began to appear outside of the Dao Tree. They hovered there, faces blank as they stared at the arena matches on the Dao Tree.

Each and every one of these figures emanated auras that would cause anyone to tremble. Ling Yunzi and the other two old men immediately started to get nervous.

By the time the battles to select the top 8 had concluded, there were numerous terrifying figures outside of the Dao Tree. One of them had the upper body of a cultivator and the tail of a snake. The creature materialized in midair, then looked coldly over at the Dao Tree, her eyes flickering with a bloodthirsty gleam.

There was another shocking thing that attracted all eyes. It was not a living creature, but rather, an enormous battle-ax. The head of the ax was carved with mountains and rivers, and appeared to be flecked with rust. The battle-ax made no sound as it materialized, but after it appeared, most of the other entities near it immediately moved away.

This battle-ax sent the crowds out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea into an uproar. However, there were actually few people who knew what the battle-ax represented, other than… the Patriarchs in the starry sky palace.

The three Patriarchs from the Three Great Daoist Societies all rose to their feet. Their expressions were deeply solemn, and within their eyes could be seen gleams of hope and excitement.

The Patriarchs from the other clans also had serious expressions as they stood up. One of the main reasons they had agreed to hold the arena matches in the Ruins of Immortality was because of the plan that had been laid out before them earlier by the Three Great Daoist Societies.

If that plan succeeded, then all of the sects would benefit.

“So… will SHE appear…?” asked the old man from the Kunlun Society. When he spoke the word ‘she,’ his voice quavered a bit.

“Perhaps, perhaps not,” said the Patriarch from the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto. “Either way, we have a chance.”

Back in the location of the Dao Seeking arena matches, the top 8 had been selected. They stood on their eight respective green leaves, the center of all attention.

Those eight cultivators included Meng Hao, the garrulous old man, Zhao Yifan, Fan Dong’er, and Li Ling’er. In addition to those five, there was the young man from the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum, who fought using corpses and coffins.

The seventh person was the tall, muscular man from the Kunlun Society who attacked with descending mountains. He was the one who had defeated Sun Hai.

The last person was the youth from the Burning Incense Stick Society. He had a third eye on his forehead, and throughout all the matches, had only ever attacked anyone once. All the other times, he merely transmitted some words, whereupon his opponents would prostrate themselves on the ground and look at him with fanatical piety.

Of these eight people, six were Chosen, and two were competitors from the trial by fire. They were now the focus of all attention from the outside world.

Countless eyes looked on with anticipation, waiting to find out which of the eight would make it into the semifinals, and after that, the final battle!

“The semifinal qualification matches will be different than the previous matches,” said Ling Yunzi, his voice echoing out in all directions.

“Victory will no longer be determined by a single battle. Each and every one of you must fight at least four battles!

“First, we will determine who are the top 4 and the bottom 4. The winners of the first fight will become the top 4, the losers will be the bottom 4.

“Then, each of the top 4 will fight the remaining three competitors who they did not fight previously. In the end, the four people who end up with the most victories will become the final 4!

“The outcome of any tie will be determined by a tie-breaking match.

“You will have three days to rest and recuperate. After that, the semifinal qualification matches will begin!” This method of determining the final 4 would prevent anyone from winning out through sheer luck. Furthermore, the final 4 would well and truly deserve to be called the most powerful!

The Three Great Daoist Societies had decided on this method, and none of the other sects had disagreed.

Time passed. Meng Hao sat there cross-legged, feeling quite confident. However, the other seven people in the competition were all powerful experts, especially Zhao Yifan and the others. Meng Hao had already tangled with them on Planet South Heaven, and was very curious as to how the coming matches would turn out.

Even more curious were the audiences out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Many bets had already been placed on the final outcomes.

“Zhao Yifan will definitely make it to the semifinals!”

“Fan Dong’er will most likely make it as well!”

“I wonder if Fang Mu will be able to continue his legendary run!”

Three days later, just when Ling Yunzi’s echoing voice was announcing the beginning of the semifinals qualification matches, and all eyes in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were focused on the vortex screens in anticipation….

Suddenly, music could be heard drifting toward the Dao Tree from off in the distance. The music drifted slowly about, echoing in the ears, penetrating the mind. Everyone who heard it suddenly felt sorrow in their hearts, which immediately influenced their emotions.

It was a sad song, filled with longing, as if it were recalling the past, and an old friend.

As the music echoed about, a woman approached from off in the distance. She wore a snow-white gown, and was stunningly beautiful. She approached slowly and came to a stop above the Dao Tree. Her face was ice cold, seemingly devoid of any emotion whatsoever.

Her sudden appearance on the scene caused everyone to stare in shock. She was as different from the other beings in the Ruins of Immortality as black is from white. Immediately, the black wind shuddered, and the huge roc let out a miserable shriek; they both fled in terror at top speed.

Apparently, that roc had been killed by the woman in the past!

As for the blood-colored eye, it shrank back, trembling, and then fled. The other almighty figures all dropped to their knees and then… kowtowed to the woman!

As for the naga cultivator, she let out a shriek of astonishment and then fled, terrified.

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# Chapter 873: She’s a Paragon!

The battle-ax emitted a droning sound as it approached the white-robed woman, and began to circulate around her. She looked at it, and slowly, an expression of reminiscence and sorrow appeared on her face.

Everyone on the ancient Dao Tree felt their hearts thumping as they stared blankly at the woman.

Ling Yunzi and the other two old men were also trembling, and their faces were pale white. They said absolutely nothing.

Meng Hao’s eyes widened as well. However, what was most concerning to him was not the woman and her appearance on the scene, but the fact that the half-headed man who had been following him, and was now hovering near the arenas, did not flee or bow like the other beings. He quivered a bit, but by force of will remained hovering there just as before.

When Meng Hao saw this, his heart began to pound.

It was at this point that the Patriarchs from the Three Great Daoist Societies urgently stepped forward toward the vortex. Their expressions were that of shock, and they seemed to be thinking a variety of thoughts. Moments later, though, they began to tremble with wild joy.

All of the other Patriarchs were staring at the woman, dumbstruck.

“It’s actually… HER!!”

“She looks exactly like the image recorded in the sect’s records!”

“When the Three Great Daoist Societies told us about their plan, I thought it was crazy…. That woman… how could she be alive after all this time!?!?”

The Patriarchs from all the sects were now on their feet, staring at the white-robed woman in the vortex screen in disbelief.

“She’s the Paragon from the legends….” murmured the old man from the Kunlun Society.

Similar words echoed about in the minds of all of the other Patriarchs in the starry sky palace, and waves of audible gasps arose from the crowd there.

Meanwhile, at the very peak of the Ninth Mountain, was a statue of a cross-legged man, sitting atop a boulder. The statue seemed devoid of any life force whatsoever, and yet, in this instant, cracks spread out across the surface of the statue. At the same time, the stars in the sky above the Ninth Mountain went dim, with the exception of one, which shone brilliantly, almost as if it were a solitary eye.

It seemed expressionless and ancient, as if it could lord it over all the entire starry sky and everything in it. It looked at the nearby vortex screen and saw the woman floating there, and the eye… trembled.

“Paragon….” murmured an ancient voice.

Back by the arenas, the white-robed woman hovered there in midair, looking at the Dao Tree. All of the cultivators on the tree got the feeling that she was examining them personally.

Ling Yunzi was panting, as were the two old men next to him. After a long moment passed, he clenched his teeth violently and then, face ashen, said, “Cultivators of the Nascent Soul, Spirit Severing, and Dao Seeking stages in the arena matches, let the qualifying round for the semifinals begin!

“Unleash your most powerful divine abilities. Let loose your most powerful Daos. All of you… are fighting in arena matches. However, this is also… a chance for perhaps the greatest good fortune of your entire lives!

“Whether or not you can seize this opportunity is up to your own destiny!” Ling Yunzi wasn’t able to reveal any further information. What he had already said pushed the limits of the boundaries.

His words caused the hearts of all the cultivators in the arenas to tremble. Meng Hao was especially interested in the white-robed woman.

He got a very strange sensation when he looked at her. He could see her with his physical eyes, but when he tried to look at her with divine sense, it was as if she wasn't even there.

It was at this point that glittering light surrounded all of the cultivators, and they appeared on the green layer of leaves. In the blink of an eye, everyone was facing an opponent.

Meng Hao's opponent was none other than… Li Ling'er!

Zhao Yifan was facing the hulking man from the Kunlun Society. As for the other matches, the garrulous old man was up against the smiling youth from the Burning Incense Stick Society.

The last match was between Fan Dong'er and the young man from the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum.

The match to decide the top 4 and the bottom 4 was now beginning!

As Li Ling'er and Meng Hao faced off against each other, the willow leaf mark on Li Ling'er's forehead suddenly began to shine brightly, and an incredible aura exploded out from her.

A strange expression could be seen on Meng Hao's face, and he cleared his throat. Without even thinking about it, he glanced toward her rear end.

"How shameless!" she said with a cold frown. She raised her right hand, instantly causing an ancient, archaic tree to appear behind her. Shockingly, as soon as it materialized, it seemed to form a resonance with the ancient Dao Tree, and brilliant light rose up to surround Li Ling'er, causing her energy to surge.

She waved her hand, causing the ancient tree's branches to whip through the air, weaving together almost like vines as they snaked toward Meng Hao at incredible speed.

This was not the first time Meng Hao had gone up against Li Ling'er. Back in the Southern Domain, he had defeated her and taken her captive. However, his victory had come as the result of a bit of trickery; he had used the teleportation power of the Lightning Cauldron to quickly defeat her.

It was not possible to use the Lightning Cauldron in the arena matches, lest he reveal his identity.

However, Meng Hao was also different than he had been during their initial encounter. Now he had an Immortal meridian that was eighty percent solidified, and his true Immortal powers made him vastly, vastly more powerful than before.

Meng Hao's eyes glittered as he observed the incoming vines. Then, he kicked out, his energy surging with the power of true Immortality. Behind him, his Dharma Idol appeared, disguised with the transformative powers of the black feather. The gigantic Dharma Idol brandished its fists and then punched out, causing boundless light to appear that transformed into a Dharma Sea, which then shot toward the incoming vines.

A huge boom could be heard, and massive ripples spread out. Meng Hao didn't back up even an inch, but instead headed directly toward Li Ling'er. Last time, he had relied on his aura of invincibility to capture her. Now, his true fighting style could be unleashed. As he closed in, he transformed into a vulture, which slashed its claws toward Li Ling'er with lightning speed.

Li Ling'er's face flickered, and she performed a double-handed incantation gesture. A magical bottle appeared, which she then tossed out ahead of her.

"Shatter!" said Meng Hao. His vulture-form slashed viciously at the bottle, and at the same time, he secretly unleashed the claw magic that he had learned from the wall of the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple. 1

A boom rang out as the bottle exploded. In their last encounter, Meng Hao had been forced to use the Blood Demon Grand Magic to deal with the magical bottle, but this time, all it took was a single strike on his part. 2

It was just a simple magical technique, but Meng Hao could clearly sense how much more powerful it was now.

Li Ling’er’s face fell, and she began to pant. She anxiously fell into retreat, and yet, no matter how fast she moved, Meng Hao always kept up, bearing down on her as the vicious vulture. He slashed at her again, causing the air to vibrate, as a will of invincibility exploded out.

BOOOOMMM!

Li Ling’er was defeated in exchange after exchange. No matter how she attacked, no matter what divine abilities or magical techniques she employed, regardless of the various magical items she used, they were all useless. Meng Hao bashed her over and over again like a buffeting windstorm, as easily as he would step on a dried weed.

After only the space of a few breaths, the two had exchanged dozens of blows. Blood sprayed from Li Ling’er’s mouth, and a look of shock could be seen on her face. This match immediately caused her to recall Meng Hao from Planet South Heaven. He was equally swift and fierce, equally invincible, equally impossible to rattle.

Were it not for the fact that she got the feeling that this Fang Mu far exceeded Meng Hao, she would definitely have assumed that they were one and the same person!

“They can’t be the same,” she thought. “Meng Hao might have possessed a will of invincibility, but his energy was not incredible like this. Fang Mu… has intense energy, far more than that damned Meng Hao!” She fell back again, gritted her teeth, and performed another incantation gesture, causing her enormous tree to suddenly begin to vibrate.

“World Tree, detonate. Rebuke the Heavens with your spirit. Transform for me! Stifle all the earth!”

Li Ling’er’s voice echoed with an ancient cadence, and immediately caused the air between her and Meng Hao to echo with deep rumbling.

Thump!!

The sound caused everything to shake. The surface of the arena trembled, and Meng Hao’s face flickered. Li Ling’er had used this exact same divine ability the last time they had fought, and it was as astonishing as it had been before; the pressure exerted by the image of the World Tree was intense.

Last time, if he hadn’t possessed the sunstone, he would never have been able to win the battle. After all, Li Ling’er possessed fifty percent of the might of a true Immortal.

Thump!

Thump!!

THUMP!!!

The successive rumbling sounds seemed to strike at Meng Hao’s heart. The air around him distorted, and wild colors flashed. Everything was shaking as the tree behind Li Ling’er suddenly collapsed. Its leaves fell, and its branches withered until all that was left of the tree was a single log!

It was… the World Tree!

As it fell towards the ground, it emitted a droning sound and passed through Li Ling’er to shoot toward Meng Hao. She performed a double handed incantation, causing her hair to whip around her head, and more power to pour into the attack.

At the same time, a pearl appeared above her head. It began to rotate rapidly, which would apparently sustain her cultivation base, preventing it from being drained by the tree.

“That’s nothing but an illusory World Tree!” said Meng Hao, his eyes glittering. His cultivation base far exceeded its previous level. He extended his right hand, and the World Tree spear appeared with its bone spearhead. Meng Hao hefted it and then flung it toward the incoming illusory World Tree.

From the perspective of the spectators in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, a green sun suddenly appeared between Meng Hao and Li Ling’er as the World Tree and the long spear slammed into each other.

In the blink of an eye, a monstrous roaring sound filled the air as the illusory World Tree trembled and, incapable of standing up to the long spear, collapsed into pieces and then violently exploded.

The spear sliced through the illusory tree like a sharp knife through a piece of bamboo, emerging from the shattered remnants to bear down on Li Ling’er with incredible speed.

In that critical moment, the pearl floating above Li Ling’er’s head shattered, causing a gentle force to flow out and then shove her off to the side. The long spear whistled through the air, kicking up a powerful wind that instantly sent Li Ling’er’s hair into complete and utter disarray. Meng Hao appeared off to Li Ling’er’s side, grasping the long spear and glancing down at her curvaceous rear end.

At the same time, Li Ling’er, who had just avoided the attack, looked over with eyes that flickered with killing intent. In the same moment that she passed Meng Hao, she raised her right hand, gathered the power of the exploded pearl treasure, and then stabbed her two fingers toward Meng Hao’s eyes.

In that instant, Meng Hao let out a cold snort and extended his left hand to violently spank Li Ling’er’s buttocks!

It was a cruel strike, similar to the strike which had landed on her not too long ago….

The slapping sound was accompanied by a miserable shriek from Li Ling’er. Once again, her rear end was now uneven, she even felt her pelvis creaking. She immediately staggered backward in retreat, her face pale and devoid of any blood.

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# Chapter 874: Semifinals!

“I’m gonna kill you!” raged Li Ling’er. Subconsciously, she had already superimposed Meng Hao’s image over Fang Mu. She didn’t realize that this had happened, as the sudden intense pain in that specific region left her with no time for deep consideration.

Just when she had been about to attack, agonizing pain sent her staggering backward. At the same time, the long spear whistled through the air and came to a stop right in front of her forehead.

Meng Hao looked down at her coldly. After the previous incident, his mother had told him that Li Ling’er was the same Princess Ling’er whose hair he had lit on fire as a child. He also knew that his Grandpa Fang had arranged for the two of them to be married.

However, Meng Hao did not approve of such an agreement. He only had one wife, and that was Xu Qing.

Li Ling’er trembled as she felt the coldness radiating off of the spear that was pointed at her forehead. A sensation of imminent death washed over her, and she knew that if she didn’t say the two words that Meng Hao was expecting to hear, the spearhead would unhesitatingly stab directly into her forehead.

“I don’t want to kill you,” Meng Hao said coolly. Actually, there was something else that he wanted to say…. He still had Li Ling’er’s promissory note in his bag of holding, so until he got his spirit stones, he needed her alive.

If she died, who would repay the spirit stones…?

Li Ling’er glared at Meng Hao, her ample chest rising and falling as she breathed heavily. Finally, she gritted her teeth and slowly said the two words.

“I concede.” Immediately, she vanished, then reappeared on the next layer of leaves. She had not lost her chance to get into the semifinals. If she won out in the following three matches, she would still have that opportunity.

After all, this first round was only to determine who was in the top 4 and the bottom 4.

Immediately, the crowds in the Ninth Mountain and Sea began to comment.

“Fang Mu beat Li Ling’er!”

“He’ll definitely be in the top 4! Li Ling’er is a Chosen of the Li Clan, and will without doubt become a true Immortal in the future. I even heard that she’s never been beaten before, and that a fight between her and Fan Dong’er once ended in a draw!”

“This Fang Mu is invincible!”

Meng Hao was actually not the first person to secure a win. Shockingly, the first battle to end was the one between Zhao Yifan and the hulking man from the Kunlun Society.

That battle had been just as astonishing as Meng Hao’s fight just now, and had drawn quite a bit of attention. When the man from the Kunlun Society attacked, he used an enormous chain of mountains. Even he himself seemed like a mountain, completely impervious to all attacks.

However, Zhao Yifan was also a terrifying figure, which became clearly apparent in their battle. He only used six Earth-shattering sword moves in the fight. Each sword attack was more shocking than the one before it, and they slashed down onto the mountains, severely injuring the big man from the Kunlun Society.

The final sword blow was so powerful that the man from the Kunlun Society was powerless to resist it. His mountains exploded, and were it not for the fact that Zhao Yifan was holding back his killing intent, the man would definitely have been slain.

The battle’s result caused quite a commotion in the outside world. Unfortunately, the Patriarchs in the starry sky palace were not watching the arena matches, but instead were focused on the white-robed woman. Their expressions were a mix of reverence and other complex emotions.

Booming sounds continued to rattle out as the garrulous old man, one of the trial by fire competitors, fought against the young man from the Burning Incense Stick Society. Although their ages were different, both of them gave off the feeling that they were hustlers of some kind.

One of them didn’t attack, but rather, constantly mumbled and chattered madly at his opponents, frothing at the mouth. The other smiled and transmitted words into his opponent’s minds, causing them to fall down and worship him. In fact, even after those battles ended, the opponents would continue to look piously at the young man from down below on the lowest layer of leaves.

When they fought, they didn’t engage in close quarter fighting. Instead, they sat down cross-legged and looked at each other. Although nothing usual seemed to be going on, those who were in the know understood that they were currently in an extremely ruthless showdown.

“A battle of divine will!”

“The Burning Incense Stick Society excels in the use of divine will. They coalesce the will of many living things to become their Dao of burning incense. Xie Yixian is a Chosen of the Burning Incense Stick Society, and supposedly, he’s in the running to become Dao Child! His strength in divine will is spectacular!” 1

“If I remember correctly, the old man’s name is Qian Duoduo. He… is actually going to participate in a divine will contest with Xie Yixian from the Burning Incense Stick Society!” 2

On the other battleground, Fan Dong’er was facing the young man from the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum. Fierce fighting raged between the two of them, and the face of the young man from the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum twisted with passion. His eyes seemed capable of melting any coldness, but what had driven him mad was not Fan Dong’er. Rather, part of the mist behind Fan Dong’er had been scattered during the course of the fighting to reveal the female corpse behind her.

“That is… the most beautiful corpse I have seen in my entire life!” murmured the young man. Seven coffins were arrayed in front of him, all of them opened to reveal seven corpses, which he was using to fight Fan Dong’er.

Fan Dong’er was on the verge of going mad. Right now, there was nothing she hated more in the world than corpses, and the look in her opponent’s eyes filled her with revulsion.

Booms rang out, and time slipped by. The white-robed woman continued to float above the Dao Tree, coldly watching the cultivators in the arena matches. It was impossible to tell what she might be thinking.

After a long moment passed, a boom rattled out next to Fan Dong’er, and the young man coughed up a mouthful of blood. He fell back, and as he did, a black hair suddenly appeared in his hand. It did not belong to Fan Dong’er, but rather, the female corpse.

Fan Dong’er’s face twisted into a unsightly expression as the mist behind her vanished. The white-robed corpse was now clearly visible to everyone who was watching in the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Fan Dong'er

Official ISSTH art of Fan Dong’er

“I concede!” cried the young man from the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum. He coughed up some more blood, but his face was plastered with a look of enchantment. He held the hair up to his nose and inhaled deeply, then carefully put the hair away. Eyes burning, he looked over at the female corpse behind Fan Dong’er.

“She is my true love. Fan Dong’er, you better take good care of her.” With that, the young man vanished to appear on the set of leaves for the bottom contenders among the top 8. However, he continued to look down at the corpse, intoxicated.

Discussions immediately rose up among the audiences in the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

“That guy Xiao Luo from the Paleo-Immortal Museum is such a pervert! He’s a Chosen, but it turns out he’s actually a necrophiliac!” 3

“I can’t believe what everyone has been saying is true! There’s a female corpse floating behind Fan Dong’er!”

“From what I heard, the corpse got attached to her when she ran into some fellow named Meng Hao on Planet South Heaven!”

As the crowds buzzed about the matter, the match between the garrulous Qian Duoduo and Xie Yixian from the Burning Incense Stick Society had come to an end. Xie Yixian’s face was flushed, and blood gushed out of his mouth. After wiping it off, he sighed lightly, rose to his feet, and bowed to the old man.

“I have been thoroughly convinced that your divine will magic is an amazing inheritance, Fellow Daoist,” he said. “I, Xie, concede.”

Qian Duoduo’s face was also a bit pale. His eyes snapped open and he rose to his feet, then solemnly clasped hands toward Xie Yixian.

Conversations immediately broke out.

“So, Qian Duoduo actually won!!”

“He defeated Xie Yixian from the Burning Incense Stick Society. Just how strong is his divine will? He’s really a dark horse in this competition.

Earlier I had assumed he wouldn’t make it past the top 16. I never imagined he would pull off a win like this and make it into the top 4!”

Regardless of the analyses of the outside crowds, the top 4 had been decided: Meng Hao, Zhao Yifan, Qian Duoduo, and Fan Dong’er!

The bottom four consisted of Li Ling’er, Xie Yixian, Xiao Luo and the hulking man from the Kunlun Society. What would happen next would be the final three battles of the round!

Now everyone from the top four would have to fight against the rest of the bottom four. After all of the battles were completed, the four people with the most wins would become the semifinalists!

After six hours of rest, when everyone was back at their peak readiness, the second fight in the struggle to qualify for the semifinals began! Meng Hao stood motionless on the bronze leaf as light glittered in front of him to reveal the hulking man from the Kunlun Society.

The man stepped forward, and it was like the descent of numerous mountains, although Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever. Regarding the various sects of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, he was already familiar with the Demon Immortal Sect, because of Zhixiang. Also, he knew of… the Kunlun Society.

His master Pill Demon had joined the Kunlun Society, and because of that, Meng Hao smiled amiably at the hulking man.

The big man stared in shock, then nodded at Meng Hao and clasped hands.

“I am Yang Yi from the Kunlun Society,” he said. “Fellow Daoist Fang, please give me some fighting tips!”

“Of course!” replied Meng Hao, clasping hands back at the man.

Introductions having been made, Yang Yi’s eyes began to glow brightly, and a massive aura exploded out as he charged toward Meng Hao. As he neared, shockingly, numerous mountains materialized around him.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever, but his pupils constricted. He had noticed before that this hulking man was actually wielding… the Mountain Consuming Incantation!!

The Mountain Consuming Incantation was a Daoist magic from the ancient Demon Immortal Sect, and previously, Meng Hao had assumed it was something only he could wield. Having seen the hulking Yang Yi in action, though, he was now much more interested in the Kunlun Society.

“So, the Mountain Consuming Incantation…?” thought Meng Hao. Laughing inwardly, he also stepped forward, causing numerous mountains to materialize around him. Of course, with the help of the black feather, he made them look like streams of water.

In the blink of an eye, the two began to fight back and forth. They did not use a variety of techniques, but rather, focused on the Mountain Consuming Incantation, and their incredibly powerful fleshly bodies.

RUMMMBLE!

Dozens of exchanges occurred, after which Yang Yi fell back, body trembling, but eyes overflowing with the desire to fight.

“Wonderful! This match is far more enjoyable than the fight with Zhao Yifan!” Yang Yi laughed heartily, then clenched his fists, causing the mountains around him to link up into a mountain range. He himself seemed to change into an enormous mountain.

Meng Hao was laughing as loudly as Yang Yi. He attacked, causing the streams to unite into a mighty river that rumbled through the air. They fought back and forth again, holding nothing back. Booms echoed out, attracting quite a bit of attention from the shocked audience.

They didn’t fight for very long, only enough time for an incense stick to burn. Finally, Yang Yi was sent staggering backward seven or eight paces. Panting, he flicked his sleeve, causing the mountains to vanish. Then he stood there and gazed deeply at Meng Hao. Finally, he shook his head and laughed.

“I’m not a match for you. I have to concede! However, I do have to say that this was the most fun I’ve had in all of the arena matches!

“Yang Yi won’t be entering the semifinals. However, if you have time, Elder Brother Fang, please come to the Kunlun Society so that we can drink together!”

Meng Hao laughed. He could sense that Yang Yi was an outspoken and straightforward person. After all of Meng Hao’s years spent in the world of cultivation, he could tell that the man was no hypocrite or faker. Meng Hao nodded and smiled.

“I will definitely be going to the Kunlun Society!” he said.

Yang Yi laughed as he faded away to reappear on another leaf for his third battle.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and then sat down cross-legged. After an hour passed, light suddenly glittered as the third battle began. However, no opponent appeared. Instead, rumbling could be heard as nine coffins materialized, smashing down from up above.

“The female corpse behind Fan Dong’er is my true love, so I can’t harm her. The rest of you, however, are completely different!” The voice which spoke was soft and feminine, but the figure who walked out of the light was a man.

This was none other than Xiao Luo from the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum, one of the Five Great Holy Lands!

1. Xie Yixian’s name in Chinese is xiè yī xiān. Xie is a surname which also means ‘thanks.” Yi means ‘one,’ and Xian means ‘Immortal’

2. Qian Duoduo’s name in Chinese is qián duō duō. Qian is a surname which also means ‘money.’ Both Duo characters mean ‘many’ or ‘more’

3. Xiao Luo’s name in Chinese is xiào luō. Xiao is a surname which means ‘resemble.’ Luo means a lot of things including ‘net’

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# Chapter 875: Domineering!

When Xiao Luo made his appearance, a cold wind sprang up, causing his hair and robes to flutter. He was clearly male, but there was also something overtly feminine about him. This was especially true when it came to his cheerless eyes, which caused his handsome features to be strangely twisted.

Xiao Luo stood there in the middle of the arena, looking at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he stood there looking past the nine upright coffins at Xiao Luo.

“Nine Heavens Asura Squad!” cried Xiao Luo, his eyes flickering with killing intent. He waved his hand, causing rumbling sounds to emanate out of the nine coffins, which then simultaneously opened, causing a thick aura of death to spill out.

The air twisted, and strange colors danced. Nine tall figures appeared within the coffins, nine corpses who abounded with auras of death. Their bodies were not decomposing, but rather, mummified. They wore tattered clothing and had vicious expressions, and it was just possible to tell that seven were men and two were women.

“Kill him!” said Xiao Luo with a vicious chuckle. A ruthless gleam could be seen in his eyes as the nine corpses charged toward Meng Hao, kicking up a foul wind.

They closed in on Meng Hao in the blink of an eye. However, Meng hao’s expression didn’t change in the slightest. He extended his right hand, within which materialized the World Tree spear with the bone spearhead. Then, he dashed forward like the wind, the spearhead leading the way.

A bang could be heard, along with an ear-piercing rumble as a huge vortex appeared, spreading out in all directions and instantly interfering with the nine corpses’ movement.

Meng Hao moved rapidly, bypassing the corpses and heading directly toward Xiao Luo. In the time it takes a spark to fly off of a piece of flint, Xiao Luo performed an incantation gesture with his right hand and pointed toward the surface of the arena. Immediately, Yin-type qi surged up, transforming into a blast that shot toward Meng Hao like a huge wall.

A boom could be heard as Meng Hao’s spear pierced the Yin qi wall. The wall shuddered and then collapsed, after which Xiao Luo waved his hand, causing nine black magical needles to appear. They immediately shot toward Meng Hao like nine black vipers.

At the same time, the nine corpses that were now behind Meng Hao turned, becoming black beams of light that immediately began to surround Meng Hao.

Xiao Luo laughed coldly. He had unleashed his most powerful magic in an attempt to catch his opponent off-guard.

“DIE!”

In this moment of deadly crisis, Meng Hao simply snorted. He stabbed his spear into the surface of the leaf, causing a boom to echo out. Cracks spread out across the surface of the arena as a shocking energy suddenly exploded. It transformed into a storm-like vortex that spread out in all directions, slamming into the corpses. The corpses fell back, trembling, and as for the nine needles, cracking sounds could be heard as they simply fell to pieces mid-flight.

Within the screaming vortex, Meng Hao released his grip on the spear, then transformed into the vulture. There was a flash, and then he appeared directly in front of Xiao Luo and slashed at him viciously.

Boom!

Xiao Luo’s face fell, and he quickly performed an incantation gesture, causing the Yin qi to surge, transforming into another wall to block against the vulture’s slash. A huge boom could be heard as that wall collapsed, too. Before Xiao Luo could even fall back in retreat, the vulture vanished and Meng Hao reappeared, his leg flashing around in a spinning kick.

A bang could be heard as the kick, seemingly powerful enough to smash mountains, formed a semicircle and slammed directly into Xiao Luo. In that critical moment, Xiao Luo’s eyes went wide, and he spit a pearl out of his mouth. The pearl emanated a powerful glow that attempted to block the kick, and yet instantly shattered, completely incapable of standing up to the attack. However, it did manage to give Xiao Luo a moment of breathing room. Coughing up blood, he rapidly fell backward in retreat.

At the same time, Meng Hao increased his speed and levied another attack. Currently, he paid no heed to defending, but rather, attacked like lightning, like a windstorm that could crush anything in its path.

He bore down on Xiao Luo like a tempest, performing an incantation with his right hand and then stabbing his finger out ahead of him. The shocking finger attack caused the air to vibrate, and Xiao Luo’s face to fall. This magical battle was unfolding so quickly that Xiao Luo had no time to even breathe. He had to exercise complete and utter attention; the slightest misstep would leave him dead.

Xiao Luo performed an incantation gesture as fast as possible, causing the Yin qi to form into numerous pearls.

“Burst! Burst! BURST!” roared Xiao Luo. Booms rang out as the pearls flew toward Meng Hao and then exploded, transforming into a powerful shockwave that swept out in all directions. A vicious smile appeared on Xiao Luo’s face. The Yin qi pearls seemed ordinary, but in fact, they were a secret magic from the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum. Any one of those explosions was powerful enough to slay a peak Dao seeking expert.

Xiao Luo knew his opponent was powerful, but even a Stone Golem would at least be injured by their detonation.

“I just need to put a bit of distance between us,” Xiao Luo thought with a cold laugh. “Then I can send the nine corpses to slaughter him!” Just as Xiao Luo was about to continue to fall back, the air twisted as Meng Hao actually stepped into the explosions. To him, these detonating pearls could do nothing more than inflict flesh wounds. His right hand clenched into a fist and he sent out a punch.

BOOM!

Xiao Luo let out a miserable shriek. Blood sprayed from his mouth as he tumbled backward. In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao was on him again, slamming out with an attack that could shatter rock. Xiao Luo once again fell back, blood pouring from his mouth.

In the blink of an eye, ten more exchanges were made. Meng Hao’s shocking energy and will of invincibility made it so that all Xiao Luo could do was fall back and focus all of his energy on defending himself. He wasn’t the slightest bit capable of attacking.

Meng Hao’s moves were just too swift and too vicious. Booms echoed out in the short span of a few breaths that to Xiao Luo, seemed like a very, very long time. Then, a cracking sound rang out as his leg was broken by Meng Hao.

Intense pain caused his face to go pale. A look of complete astonishment could be seen on his face.

“Dammit,” he thought, “I can’t let him build up any more energy. Otherwise, I’m going to be defeated for sure!”

The crowds outside watched the semifinal qualification rounds with intense concentration. Many were focusing on Meng Hao, and were completely astonished by what they saw.

“If I were in Xiao Luo’s place, I would be just as powerless!”

“This Fang Mu is completely domineering! His attacks are swift and fierce; he’s totally incomparable!!”

“You definitely can’t let yourself be put on the defensive when facing Fang Mu. Doing that… is just giving him a chance to explode with ferocity and turn the battle into a catastrophe!”

Xiao Luo gritted his teeth, and a look of madness appeared on his face. Roaring, he caused bursts of Yin qi to explode out, which formed into numerous ghostly figures. Just as he was going to attempt to make a counterattack, Meng Hao’s fist landed again. All of Xiao Luo’s qi collapsed, and he was sent flying backward like a kite with its string cut, blood spurting from his mouth.

Then, with indescribable speed, Meng Hao shot toward Xiao Luo and extended his finger toward his forehead, killing intent roiling.

Xiao Luo’s eyes went wide, and his heart was trembling. In this moment of deadly crisis, he bit the tip of his tongue, burning some of his Essence Blood and longevity to unleash a forbidden magic.

“Time to risk it all,” he cried. “YIN MOON SEVERING!”

A crescent moon appeared on his forehead, which rapidly transformed into a black-colored moon that shot toward Meng Hao in a slashing motion.

Meng Hao’s eyes widened as the moon closed in on him. Suddenly, his Dharma Idol appeared behind him, and its fist shot out to meet the incoming Yin Moon.

A huge boom could be heard, and a tremor ran through Meng Hao as the Yin Moon exploded. Blood oozed out of Xiao Luo’s mouth, but he used the short moment of freedom to shoot backward. Face twisted with unprecedented bitterness, he let out a shout.

“Nine Corpses Demon Transformation!” he cried. Immediately, the nine corpses that had continuously been behind Meng Hao and unable to even touch him, began to tremble violently. In the blink of an eye, long black fur began to grow out of their bodies, and their appearance became even more ferocious than before. Furthermore, Demonic qi began to surge within them, although that was something nobody would be able to detect.

As the Demonic qi surged, the nine corpses' cultivation bases began to rise dramatically. In the blink of an eye, they were comparable to false Immortals!!

Nine false Immortals!!

This was Xiao Luo's trump card that he had originally hoped to use to secure first place. It was not something he would casually unleash, but he had been forced into a corner, and therefore, in the frenzy of this fight, he didn't hesitate at all.

“DIE!” he roared as the nine false Immortal corpses bore down on Meng Hao. One by one, they began to lash out with astonishing attacks that caused the crowds out in the Ninth Mountain to reel in shock.

“Heavens! That's false Immortal energy!!”

“What magical technique is that!? He actually gave those nine corpses the powers of false Immortality!!”

“Xiao Luo didn't even use that divine ability in his fight with Fan Dong'er!”

As the outside crowds were in a commotion, the nine corpses closed in on Meng Hao, bursting with explosive energy. As for Meng Hao, an odd expression could be seen on his face.

“Demons….” he thought, his facial expression quickly returning to normal. His right hand suddenly rose into the air, and he performed an incantation gesture. The art of Righteous Bestowal was unleashed. This art was different than the Eighth Hex, and was designed specifically for subduing Demons!

No one got any special feeling when Meng Hao unleashed the art. However, as soon as his hand lowered, the nine corpses suddenly stopped in place and began to tremble. Their previously blank eyes then began to glow with bright light.

Xiao Luo’s face fell completely, and he retreated in astonishment, frantically performing incantation gestures in an attempt to regain control of the nine corpses.

However, it was at this point that Meng Hao extended his right hand. A strange light could be seen in his eyes as, under the cover of the transformative powers of the black feather, he unleashed the Seventh Demon Sealing Hex, Karmic Hexing!

Rumbling filled the air as the Karma threads connecting the nine corpses to Xiao Luo began to separate. As that happened, the corpses trembled even more violently, and explosive death auras radiated out of them. Then they toppled over onto their faces.

Xiao Luo was trembling, and he coughed up nine successive mouthfuls of blood. From the look on his face, he was completely gobsmacked. He stared at Meng Hao for a moment, shaking violently.

“I concede!” he yelled, fearful of losing his life in this place.

As soon as the words left his mouth, he was surrounded by flickering lights, and then vanished.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he picked up his spear and walked off to the side.

He stood there, his energy surging, the focus of attention of all eyes in the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

“Three fights, three wins!!”

“There’s one more fight, but Fang Mu is definitely in the semifinals!”

“Not even Xiao Luo was a match for him. From the look of things, Fang Mu hasn’t even used all of his power yet. Just… how strong is he?!?!”

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# Chapter 876: Four Battles, Four Victories!

When Meng Hao attacked, the white-robed woman floating in midair outside of the Dao Tree looked at him calmly for a moment, although no onlooker would notice that fact, not even Meng Hao.

Xiao Luo reappeared on another leaf, his entire body shaking as he looked back at Meng Hao with terror and astonishment. Before their battle, he had been aware that Meng Hao was powerful, but he had never imagined that he would only be able to defend and would be completely incapable of fighting back against him.

He had even burned some of his longevity and used his Nine Corpses Demon Transformation, explosively increasing their cultivation bases to be similar to false Immortals. And yet, his opponent had then unleashed some unknown divine ability… to cause his nine corpses to stop in mid-flight, and even sever their connection to him.

As he thought about it, Xiao Luo took a deep breath. This was the first time he had ever truly been afraid of another person.

“He’s somebody I can’t ever provoke! If I ever meet him again, I’ll simply flee! His magical technique… can inhibit my Dao!” Xiao Luo took another deep breath as he looked at Meng Hao. Intense terror filled his heart, and he rejoiced at his decision to concede when he did. If he hadn’t, he himself might be a corpse now.

Almost in the same moment that Meng Hao finished his match, Zhao Yifan also secured another victory. After that… the fourth battle began.

Meng Hao stood as usual on his leaf. From the very beginning to now, he had not moved to the losers bracket. There was only one other among the top 4 who had done the same, and that was Zhao Yifan!

Even Fan Dong’er had been defeated, by none other than Xie Yixian from the Burning Incense Stick Society.

That match garnered quite a bit of attention, and caused Xie Yixian to suddenly rise up abruptly in the eyes of the onlookers.

The bizarre Qian Duoduo ended up being defeated by Li Ling’er, whose magical techniques were somewhat effective at counteracting the old man. However, in the very end, it was actually difficult to say who won and who lost. Li Ling’er earned her victory mostly due to luck.

As of this moment, Meng Hao and Zhao Yifan were certain to enter the semifinals, but as for everyone else, it was hard to say.

Meng Hao’s opponent in the fourth battle was the Chosen who had beaten Fan Dong’er, Xie Yixian from the Burning Incense Stick Society. As soon as he emerged from the glittering light to stand in front of Meng Hao, his eyes gleamed seriously.

Of all the people who made it to the top 8, he truly feared three of them. One was the spectacular Zhao Yifan, the other was the talkative Qian Duoduo, and the last… was none other than this Fang Mu.

“I am Xie Yixian from the Burning Incense Stick Society. Fellow Daoist Fang, please give me some fighting tips!”

Having said this, Xie Yixian suddenly sat down cross-legged and performed an incantation gesture with his right hand. Immediately, a copper furnace appeared in front of him.

Stuck into the very top of the copper furnace was an incense stick.

As the incense stick burned, streams of smoke curled up into the air to surround Xie Yixian, obscuring him slightly.

“Fellow Daoist Fang, my magical technique is different from the kind you’ve seen before. If you can stand up to it for the amount of time it takes this incense stick to burn, then I will concede.”

Meng Hao stood in place, his expression the same as ever. He had been paying close attention to how Xie Yixian fought. Right now, Meng Hao didn’t even speak. He took a step forward, and then suddenly, everything around him distorted, and in the blink of an eye, the arena was gone. In its place, a boundless land stretched in front of Meng Hao.

Countless cities could be seen dotting the land, and within each one was an enormous statue. If you looked closely, you would see that the statues depicted none other than Xie Yixian.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered.

At this point, a majestic voice rang out throughout the world.

“The Heavens are grand, the Earth majestic!” As soon as the voice echoed out, the statues of Xie Yixian trembled and opened their eyes, almost as if they were coming to life. They flew up into the air, a total of 9,000 of them, which then began to circulate around Meng Hao and emanate radiant light. In a short moment, the statues merged together into one.

They became… a lifelike Xie Yixian.

He hovered there in midair, smiling slightly at Meng Hao.

“The Heavens are grand, and the Earth is majestic, but the greatest of all is the host of all living things!

“Living things possess desire. Desire becomes thought. Thought becomes burning incense. Worship the gods, pray for their blessing. Through the cultivation of this burning incense, if they worship me, then I am a god! If they pray to me, I am a god!

“This place is my Burning Incense World. Here… I am a god, and in this place, I cannot be defeated!

“If I say that a single breath will last for ten thousand years, then ten thousand years that breath shall last!

“Fellow Daoist Fang, you have a monstrous cultivation base, and shocking divine sense. Willpower and determination like yours is something I rarely see. Why not become my follower here? Become part of my Burning Incense Flock. Cultivate the Dao of burning incense. Then one day, you too can be a god.” Xie Yixian’s words were spoken indifferently, but seemed to contain a bizarre power. As they echoed out into Meng Hao’s ears, he felt his mind trembling, as if there was something within the word that made them impossible to resist, and that was forcing him to comply.

“If I become part of your Burning Incense Flock, how many spirit stones will you pay me per month?” asked Meng Hao coolly.

As soon as the words left his mouth, Xie Yixian gaped. After a moment, though, he laughed loudly, then waved his hand. A massive roaring could be heard that transformed into a continent of spirit stones. All of the mountains, cities, even the vegetation, turned into spirit stones.

In the blink of an eye, the entire world transformed into endless, uncountable spirit stones.

“You can have however many you wish.”

Meng Hao looked around and then shook his head. “I don’t want these. I want real spirit stones, in the outside world.”

Xie Yixian’s face darkened, and he gave a cold snort. The sound started out light, but then rapidly turned into something that sounded like thunder, echoing out with incredible pressure. It was like Heavenly might that crushed down onto Meng Hao.

“Kneel before me!” said Xie Yixian. His voice echoed out shockingly, filled with a will that seemed almost impossible to resist.

Meng Hao looked up, his expression the same as ever.

“That’s all the pressure you can exert?” he asked. Suddenly, he transformed into a vulture that shot toward Xie Yixian. A boom rang out as Xie Yixian’s body collapsed. A moment later, he reappeared some distance off.

“My life force is limitless in this place,” he said coolly. “You can’t kill me!” He raised his right hand, coalescing the power of the world into a huge palm that shot toward Meng Hao.

Energy raged, and boundless pressure emanated out.

“Can’t kill him?” thought Meng Hao, frowning. “Is that because the magic is an illusion? Or because I haven’t affected the essence of his life force?” He extended his right hand and made a grasping gesture. Instantly the Blood Demon Grand Magic surged into action. An enormous blood-colored vortex appeared, which spread out to cover Xie Yixian, enveloping him completely.

A boom rang out as his body collapsed into pieces. At the same time, another image of him appeared off to the side. But this time, his face was pale and filled with astonishment.

“What magical technique is that!?!?”

“Ah, so it was because the essence of his life force hadn’t been affected.” Meng Hao smiled, and then suddenly, his hand turned bright red. He immediately flew out, closing in on Xie Yixian. Even as the young man stared in shock, Meng Hao slapped out with his palm.

A bang could be heard as Xie Yixian once again collapsed into pieces. Actually, his battle prowess wasn’t very high to begin with. What was truly shocking was his magical technique. Unfortunately, that magic wasn’t very useful on Meng Hao.

In the past, whenever someone killed him in this world, he would come back to life. It could happen over and over again, without end, leaving opponents completely dispirited.

Now, though, every time he died, some of his life force was actually drained away. It was something that had never happened to him before, and in his shock, he tried to evade Meng Hao. However, he was no match at all. Were it not for the magical technique he was using, Meng Hao could have killed him numerous times in the blink of an eye.

Rumbling echoed out. Every time Xie Yixian died, one of his statues would shatter. Every time Xie Yixian reappeared, his face was covered with astonishment, and he would instantly fall into retreat.

“Elder Brother Fang, stop! I’ll let you out, you can leave….”

“You don’t need to let me out,” Meng Hao replied calmly, “I can get out on my own.” With that, he slammed his foot down onto the surface of the ground. A huge boom could be heard as his Dharma Idol appeared, towering 300 meters into the air, its energy surging.

Xie Yixian’s face flickered, and he was just about to say something else when Meng Hao suddenly stamped his foot down again. Rumbling could be heard as his Dharma Idol rapidly grew in size. Now it was 3,000 meters tall!

Monstrous energy surged, and the power of a true Immortal erupted out. Xie Yixian’s face instantly fell as Meng Hao stamped down a third time.

BOOM!

Meng Hao’s Dharma Idol grew again. In the blink of an eye it was now 6,000 meters tall, seemingly big enough to prop up the sky.

“Tear this place open!” said Meng Hao, his eyes flickering with killing intent. As he spoke, he raised both hands high into the air, then slammed them down. Rumbling filled the air as his Dharma Idol also raised its hands up, grabbed ahold of the air, and then began to rip it in two different directions.

Massive, shocking rumbles echoed out. Xie Yixian’s face flickered as he performed incantation gestures, causing the world to begin to rotate and stabilize. However, despite his efforts, a massive rift appeared in the sky.

The world was actually being ripped apart!

“Impossible!” shouted Xie Yixian. “This is my Burning Incense World! I am God here! Maybe you can hurt my life force, but if I say that nothing can destroy this land, then no power exists that can do so!”

“I’m afraid your cultivation base is simply… not high enough,” said Meng Hao, his voice cool. He stamped his foot down onto the ground a fourth time, and his cultivation base surged with eighty percent of an Immortal meridian, and eighty percent of the power of a true Immortal. His Dharma Idol grew again; it was now 12,000 meters tall. It lifted its hands up, then violently ripped at the sky. The earth quaked and bright colors flashed in the sky. A massive rumbling sound echoed out.

The rift in the sky opened wider, and an enormous rumbling sound filled the air. Meng Hao’s Dharma Idol was literally tearing the sky open!

As the sky was ripped open, the entire world, as well as Xie Yixian, suddenly shattered. When things grew clear again, Meng Hao was standing in the same place as before in the arena. Xie Yixian was there in front of him. Only about ten percent of the incense stick in front of him had burned so far. A cracking sound rang out as the incense stick suddenly collapsed into pieces.

When that happened, the smoke dissipated, revealing Xie Yixian sitting there cross-legged. He opened his eyes and coughed up a mouthful of blood. Face pale, he looked at Meng Hao and smiled bitterly.

“Elder Brother Fang, you are quite powerful… I concede!”

Even as the words left his mouth, he coughed up another mouthful of blood. Suddenly, a rip appeared on his forehead, a wound that seemed very difficult to heal. It was a Dao Wound!

The cause of the wound was none other than the tearing open of his Burning Incense World.

This fight had been a very strange one. From start to finish, barely a hundred breaths of time had passed, and all the other matches were still in progress. The audiences in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were instantly in an uproar.

“Four battles, four victories!!”

“The last battle seemed ordinary, but actually, the disciple from the Burning Incense Stick Society was in grave peril!”

“A tear appeared on Xie Yixian’s forehead! I heard that if the magic of the Burning Incense Stick Society is broken, it can cause a backlash that will turn into a Dao Wound! Don’t tell me… that’s a Dao Wound!”

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# Chapter 877: Unleashed!

Everyone watching in the Ninth Mountain and Sea was stunned. Even the Patriarchs in the starry sky palace were looking on with surprise. It was clear that the most-watched person in this trial by fire and these arena matches was Meng Hao.

From the beginning of the trial by fire, all the way to the end of the arena matches, his path had been one of power and prominence.

The qualifying matches for the semifinals were still underway. After enough time passed for half an incense stick to burn, Zhao Yifan finished his battle. He easily defeated Xiao Luo from the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum, who had long since lost his will to fight. His connection with his nine most powerful corpses had been severed, making it impossible for him to fight for a spot in the semifinals.

Zhao Yifan was now the second cultivator to secure a place in the semifinals. Throughout all four of the battles he had fought, he never left his arena. He looked over at Meng Hao, who was two arenas over, and their gazes locked for a moment. Zhao Yifan’s eyes brimmed with the desire to fight, but Meng Hao’s expression was calm, and after a moment, he looked away.

An hour later, the other two battles concluded. Li Ling’er, with four battles and three victories, had successfully made it to the semifinals.

Li Ling’er had made quite the comeback. She fought her way from the bottom four into the semifinals, which caused a big stir out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, especially in the Li Clan, where everyone was very excited.

Qian Duoduo had also won three out of his four battles. His only defeat had been at the hands of Li Ling’er. All of his other opponents had temporarily gone insane to some degree or another. Only Li Ling’er did not react to his magic at all, which secured her victory.

Fan Dong’er was eliminated. She had been defeated twice, once by Xie Yixian from the Burning Incense Stick Society, and once by Li Ling’er. All of this was a huge blow to her.

Her expression was gloomy as she sat there cross-legged on the lowest layer of leaves, staring off into the distance. Mentally, she replayed the various battles she had fought, and finally bowed her head. As of now, she understood that the reason for her failures was that her Dao Heart had been split.

That split was caused by the female corpse.

She took a deep breath, after which her expression brightened.

“This is my personal tribulation,” she thought. “However, master said that it’s actually good fortune for me. Therefore… from now on, I won’t hide the corpse. I will reveal her for all to see, and will not resist her, but accept her!” As of that moment, the mist behind her vanished to clearly reveal the female corpse.

She completely ignored all the people who suddenly turned their heads to look at her. Her eyes gleamed with determination.

In the starry sky palace, the Patriarch from the Ninth Sea God World nodded his head slightly. From his perspective, this huge defeat for Fan Dong’er was actually a good thing for her.

The semifinalists had been selected!

These four people were the subject of the complete and utter attention of everyone in the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Ling Yunzi glanced cautiously over at the white robed woman floating above the Dao Tree, and then spoke out.

“You have three days to rest, after which… we will find out who is qualified to make into the final round!”

Meng Hao sat there cross-legged, his eyes closed, not speaking. The half-headed man had remained floating near his arena this entire time, staring at Meng Hao, not even blinking.

That gaze was enough to cause anyone to feel so terrified that their hair would stand on end. However, after all this time, Meng Hao had gotten used to it, and ignored the man completely.

A day later, the Nascent Soul and Spirit Severing arena matches produced their semifinalists.

Three days later, the semifinal rounds began!

When Ling Yunzi’s voice rang out, a buzz of excitement rose up among the spectators in the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

“There’s no suspense at all! Unless Fang Mu and Zhao Yifan fight each other in the semifinals, then the final match will definitely be between them!”

“You’re absolutely right. Li Ling’er already lost to Fang Mu, so the only person for him to fight is Qian Duoduo. Qian Duoduo’s cultivation base is mysterious and unfathomable. That would be an interesting matchup.”

“Well, we’ll just have to wait and see how the matches are arranged!”

As the audiences waited in anticipation, Meng Hao vanished from his spot in the arena. Before he or any of the other semifinalists reappeared, a virtually imperceptible flicker could be seen in the eyes of the woman floating outside the Dao Tree. Apparently, that flickering did something to the Dao Tree.

Moments later, everyone appeared.

When Meng Hao emerged from the light, he was just beneath the golden leaf at the top of the Dao Tree.

The leaf he currently stood on was silver-colored, one of only two such leaves on the Dao Tree.

When Zhao Yifan appeared, the person he found facing him… was not Meng Hao! Instead, Li Ling'er emerged from the glittering light.

As for Meng Hao's opponent, it was the crazy old man, Qian Duoduo.

These were the exact match ups that the audiences in the outside world had wanted, and the excitement and anticipation was building. Of course, the Patriarchs in the starry sky palace noticed that something odd had just happened, and many faces flickered. The old men from the Three Great Daoist Societies took deep breaths, and looks of excitement appeared in their eyes.

"So, she actually did something to interfere with the Dao Tree!"

"That shows that she approves of the competition!!"

Back in the arena, Meng Hao's face was calm as he watched Qian Duoduo approaching. In this group of semifinalists, Meng Hao and Qian Duoduo had both risen up from through the trial by fire to reach this point.

Qian Duoduo looked at Meng Hao silently for a moment, and a bright light could be seen coalescing within his eyes. His energy began to rise up, reaching a level far beyond that which had been seen in previous matches.

Not even when he was defeated by Li Ling'er had he focused so much energy.

"I am Qian Duoduo. Greetings, Fellow Daoist Fang. During this battle, I will use all the power I can muster. I want to take first place, and my only chance to do that is by defeating you!"

Meng Hao gazed at Qian Duoduo. He had been paying attention to this old man earlier. The fact that he had made his way through the trial by fire all the way to here proved that he was beyond ordinary.

That was especially the case considering he had won a victory over Xie Yixian. Although Meng Hao had seemed relaxed in his fight against Xie Yixian, if he didn't have the Blood Demon Grand Magic to steal the young man's life force, the battle would have been very difficult. Of course, based on the power of Meng Hao's cultivation base, the Burning Incense World would not have been able to restrain him forever.

In any case, Meng Hao wasn't sure exactly how this old man had managed to win out over the Burning Incense World.

"Every person who fought him went crazy," he thought. "Even Xie Yixian and the other people he defeated all showed signs of insanity to some extent or another." Meng Hao's eyes glittered brightly. "Interesting."

Clenching his right fist at his side, he nodded at the old man.

Qian Duoduo took a deep breath, and then all of a sudden, his body began to inflate like a balloon. Cracking sounds could be heard as his emaciated frame suddenly bulged with muscles. In the blink of an eye, he had grown taller by two heads, and his energy surged with power.

The sight of it caused Meng Hao's eyes to shine. The audiences in the outside world were shocked; Qian Duoduo had never done anything like this in his previous matches, not even when he fought against Li Ling'er.

Rumble!

Qian Duoduo flew into the air with incredible speed, leaving a ghost image behind as he shot forward to appear directly in front of Meng Hao. He immediately sent out a punch that was met by Meng Hao's palm.

As a massive boom shook the arena, Qian Duoduo's foot spun through the air toward Meng Hao in a roundhouse kick.

Meng Hao's eyes were shining even more brightly now. He didn't retreat, but rather took an exploratory step forward. He waved his hand, causing numerous streams of water to materialize around him, which then formed together into a massive river that swept across the entire arena.

A bang rang out as Qian Duoduo fell back. However, he immediately performed an incantation gesture, causing the image of a sun and moon to materialize. They rotated rapidly, creating a vortex that surged toward Meng Hao. Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever as he transformed into a vulture that charged toward the old man. It was at this point that a look of surprise appeared in Qian Duoduo's eyes, and he suddenly let out a loud shout.

"Wicked!"

The word seemed to contain some bizarre power that poured into Meng Hao's ears and entered his mind. Suddenly, his mind began to spin, and wicked thoughts suddenly rose up unrestrained within his heart.

Because of the wicked thoughts, Meng Hao was incapable of maintaining the vulture form, and once again returned to human shape. Qian Duoduo then performed an incantation gesture with his right hand and then waved his finger. Meng Hao snorted coldly and was about to attack when…

"WICKED!" roared Qian Duoduo.

This time, the sound was like a thunderclap that exploded in Meng Hao's mind. Wicked thoughts multiplied in him with an unbridled frenzy. He was incapable of controlling the thoughts, which filled him with a sensation of insanity.

Gradually, Meng Hao realized that the Devilish will that he had severed during his time of Severing the Devil and Seeking the Dao… was now reappearing. In the blink of an eye, the Devilish will consumed the wicked thoughts. Apparently, the Devilish will had been inside of him all along, hiding deep inside of him, sealed away.

Now, in response to Qian Duoduo's astonishing magical technique, the Devilish will was forming once again!

In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao and Qian Duoduo exchanged dozens of moves. Qian Duoduo ended up calling out the word ‘wicked’ six times. Each time, it caused Meng Hao’s magical techniques and attacks to be interrupted. For the first time in all of his arena matches, Meng Hao was now forced into constant retreat.

Blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth, and his eyes were bloodshot. A terrifying aura seemed to be on the verge of being unleashing from inside of him. Qian Duoduo was the one responsible for releasing the Devilish will, although he actually had no idea what he was unleashing. Despite not knowing what he was dealing with, he was still very excited, and continued to unleash monstrous attacks.

When the crowds out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea saw what was happening, their expressions flickered in astonishment.

“Fang Mu is actually being beaten back!!”

“Just what magical technique is Qian Duoduo using to be able to stifle Fang Mu?!”

“Could it be that Fang Mu will finally be defeated!?!?”

As the audiences buzzed in astonishment, Qian Duoduo attacked relentlessly, causing repeated booms to echo about. Meng Hao’s face was pale, and his eyes were completely bloodshot, as if he were on the verge of going insane. Blood oozed out of his mouth, and yet, a faint grin suddenly blossomed on his face.

“You’re finished!” Qian Duoduo transmitted into Meng Hao’s mind, so that only he could hear. “My magic can steal good fortune from Heaven and Earth! It doesn’t matter how strong your willpower is, if you have even a scrap of wicked thoughts in your heart, they will be evoked by my magic!

“When the wicked thoughts explode out, they will cast your body into flames, and you will be defeated!

“I must use this art on you in order to secure my chance at taking first place. I’ve been holding back this entire time, and I even let myself be defeated by Li Ling’er because I was sure I would make it into the semifinals, and I didn’t want you or Zhao Yifan to be on guard..

“The only thing you can blame is your own bad luck, since you’re letting Zhao Yifan off the hook by giving him a chance to prepare some defenses!

“I will unleash all of your wicked thoughts, transforming them into a fire of retribution to burn your soul, to destroy you in body and spirit!

“WICKED!” he roared, performing an incantation gesture and pointing at Meng Hao. This was… the ninth ‘wicked!’

As soon as the words left his mouth, the Devilish will inside of Meng Hao surged and was completely unleashed. His eyes were bright red as he was wrapped up in a gloomy, ruthless madness. Deep within that madness, was an unprecedented coldness.

Black flames leapt from his skin and raged madly high into the sky. However, the flames didn’t hurt Meng Hao in the least. He looked up at Qian Duoduo, and a rumbling filled the old man’s mind. His face instantly fell.

“These aren’t wicked thoughts! What… what exactly did I unleash!?!?”

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# Chapter 878: Eclipsing Everything

Qian Duoduo’s face fell, and he staggered backward several paces, his face ashen and his eyes wide. An intense sense of deadly crisis crashed through him.

“What exactly did I unleash!?!?” said Qian Duoduo hoarsely. “These aren’t wicked thoughts! Wicked thoughts would form fires of retribution, a fire that can burn a person up in moments, destroy them in body and spirit!

“This… this feeling, this aura, even the black flames of retribution are incapable of burning it. This will… is so powerful that it’s suffocating!!” As Qian Duoduo backed up, his heart filled with incredible regret. Were he given another chance, nothing could have convinced him to unleash whatever it was he had just unleashed.

He had the feeling that he had opened a sluice gate, unleashing a horrific Devil.

The spectators out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were all astonished at the sight of Meng Hao on the vortex screens, covered with black flames that seemed completely incapable of harming him whatsoever.

Meng Hao’s red eyes seemed to be filled with the utmost insanity, and yet… they were also unshakably level-headed. Furthermore, his energy was rocketing higher and higher.

“He… he….”

“What state is he in? What technique does he cultivate? Why did he instantly become so blood-chillingly terrifying?”

“Devil! Heavens! It’s a Devilish will! A monstrous Devilish will! Only someone who has carried out endless slaughter, who is cold and ruthless to a Heaven-defying extent, could possibly have a Devilish will like that!”

In the starry sky palace, the Patriarchs were all on their feet, panting and watching with serious expressions.

“What a shocking Devilish will! But earlier, he seemed completely normal! This kid… this kid has shocking willpower!”

“A Devilish will like that can never be fully expelled, nor completely severed! It will even accompany him through reincarnation!”

“From ancient times until now, anyone who possessed a Devilish will like that has ended up facing countless deadly twists and turns throughout their lives!!”

Up above the Dao Tree, the white-robed woman had floated there absolutely expressionlessly for this entire time. However, as of this moment, her eyes began to shine with a curious light as she looked at Meng Hao.

As for Qian Duoduo, he hadn’t ceased backing up, and was trembling with fear. His scalp was numb and he was scared witless. Meng Hao hadn’t even attacked yet, but the energy of the Devilish will and the fire of retribution had astonished Qian Duoduo to the extreme. The sensation of blood and gore, the towering murderous aura, left him shaking in his boots. He almost felt like what he was looking at was not a cultivator, but mountains of corpses and seas of blood, an evil star risen up from the Yellow Springs.

“I conc—” Before he could even finish speaking the words, Meng Hao’s eyes turned to look directly at him.

Those eyes were like oceans of blood, with pupils that emanated brilliant rays of eternal light that seemed capable of absorbing the soul.

As soon as their gazes met, Qian Duoduo’s mind roared, and felt as if it were about to explode. His body trembled, and he felt as if sharp blades were piercing into his eyes, stabbing into his soul. They exploded inside of his brain, transforming into a battlefield covered with mountains of corpses and seas of blood. He saw a person on the battlefield, surrounded by a vortex. Wherever that man went, countless cultivators let out bloodcurdling screams as their bodies were withered up, their flesh and blood was absorbed, their souls were consumed. In the end, the only things left behind were desiccated corpses staring wide-eyed up into the sky.

Qian Duoduo coughed up a mouthful of blood, and then, suddenly his vision cleared and he saw that Meng Hao had appeared directly in front of him, covered with raging black flames. Meng Hao lifted his right hand and grabbed the old man’s neck, then lifted him up into the air. His eyes burned with cold madness, and his mouth twisted into a brutal smile.

“Thank you. This feeling is… wonderful. It’s too bad that this state doesn’t conform with my Dao Heart. I thought I had completely severed it away, and never imagined that it still existed….

“In any case, I still have to thank you for helping me to realize that it was here all along. And now… I will give you a grand burial ceremony!” Meng Hao chuckled, and Qian Duoduo’s eyes went wide. He was currently incapable of speaking a single word, and was trembling violently. Within his wide eyes could be seen extreme terror.

As soon as Meng Hao finished speaking, the black flames that surrounded him surged up, transforming into the shape of a huge mouth. The mouth twisted with savagery and insanity as it shot toward Qian Duoduo.

It took only a moment for the black flames to inundate him. He let out a miserable shriek that didn’t even sound human. The wretched sound echoed about in all directions, causing all of the cultivators on the Dao Tree to feel not only shock, but sympathy. Then they began to shiver.

Li Ling’er’s face went pale when she saw what was happening. Even she began to shiver from the intensely terrifying feeling she got from Meng Hao.

Zhao Yifan’s face was covered with an expression of intense concentration as he looked over. Both he and Li Ling’er were panting.

Qian Duoduo screamed as his body rapidly withered. As he slipped into death, he gazed blankly at Meng Hao, and his mind filled with intense regret. He knew that he should never have unleashed wicked thoughts inside of his opponent. In the end, he had personally… unleashed a Devil!

In the space of only a few breaths of time, Qian Duoduo transformed into nothing but drifting ash.

Meng Hao lowered his hand, and the flames winked out, transforming into black sealing marks that were visible on his skin. As he stood there, his energy raged.

At this point, he suddenly flew up out of the arena and landed on the golden leaf at the top of the Dao Tree, then turned and looked back at Zhao Yifan.

“Zhao Yifan, you wanted to fight me, didn’t you? Well, come on!”

The half-headed man who was watching Meng Hao apparently sensed the Devilish will, after which he trembled almost imperceptibly. Apparently, even he was in fear of the Devilish will.

A tremor ran through Zhao Yifan as he looked up at Meng Hao. A very serious expression covered his face, and his eyes burned with the desire to fight. Completely ignoring Li Ling’er, he also flew up into the air and landed in front of Meng Hao on the golden leaf.

He reached his right hand out, and suddenly, an azure sword appeared.

The sword was two meters long, and glittered with greenish light, as well as a coldness as vast as a sea. Zhao Yifan looked at Meng Hao, then raised the sword and slashed toward him like an arrow loosed from a bow.

The sword caused the air to vibrate, and wild colors to flash about. Intense coldness surged out in all directions, and dragon-like sword qi formed together into the shape of an Azure Dragon. The Azure Dragon had vicious claws that slashed the air into pieces, and long whiskers that shattered its surroundings. Rumbling filled the air as the dragon shot toward Meng Hao. The entire arena quaked, and the air was ripped apart. It almost seemed as if this Azure Dragon could smash through any and all obstacles in its path.

In the blink of an eye, it was directly in front of Meng Hao. In the moment before it impacted, Meng Hao's expression was cold, and his eyes were bloodshot. Unexpectedly, he did nothing to avoid it, but instead, lifted his hand up and pushed it out toward the dragon.

Massive rumbling could be heard as beams of sword qi rapidly expanded out in all directions, transforming into an arcing barrier formed of ten thousand swords. Meng Hao's hair whipped about him… as he stood there unmoving, using only that one hand movement to send sword qi out in defense.

It was as if his one hand could eclipse everything!

Everyone looked on with astonishment at this final, decisive battle!!

In the starry sky palace, the Patriarchs were also watching with full concentration.

The decisive battle had begun too quickly. As of this moment, everyone in the Dao Tree now served as foils to Meng Hao and Zhao Yifan, who were the complete center of attention.

Meng Hao gazed coldly at Zhao Yifan, and slowly clenched his hand into a fist. As he did, the arcing barrier that had spread out began to emit cracking noises, and then suddenly shrank down.

As it shrank, the Azure Dragon within it struggled, but to no avail. Meng Hao's hand closed into a fist.

Boom!

The sword qi obstacle shattered, and the Azure Dragon collapsed into pieces and then exploded. The sword attack vanished, and all that remained behind to show for it was a white mark on Meng Hao's palm. It seemed like it should have been a wound, but in the blink of an eye, it was healed, and the mark vanished.

This development was noticed by the audiences in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, and they were astonished.

“He has regenerative powers!!”

“He used a single hand to block Zhao Yifan's sword, and all it did was cut him a little! Heavens! He already recovered!”

“This is Fang Mu's true power! Before, he was concealing his cultivation base!!”

As the crowds were in an uproar, the Patriarchs in the starry sky palace were panting, and staring fixedly at the image of Meng Hao on the screens.

“That must be… an Eternal stratum!!”

“He actually possesses the Eternal stratum of legend!”

“With a stratum like that, he can be considered invincible to his peers!!”

Meanwhile, outside of Planet East Victory, Patriarch Reliance was staring blankly at the vortex screen, eyes wide. He began to pant, and then moments later, started muttering curses.

“Little bastard, I can't believe he has an Eternal stratum!!”

Another strange gleam appeared in the eyes of the white robed woman floating above the Dao Tree as she looked at Meng Hao.

At the same time, outside of the arena where Meng Hao stood, the half-headed man hovered there, motionless. However, his one remaining eye stared dead at Meng Hao, glowing with what seemed to be avarice.

Zhao Yifan's face flickered, and he took a deep breath. His Dharma Idol suddenly appeared behind him, and the image it depicted was of himself!

It was an enormous giant, 3,000 meters tall, that radiated shocking energy.

In order to have a Dharma Idol like this, one had to possess one's own power of true Immortality, at least sixty to seventy percent. Back in the Southern Domain, Zhao Yifan had been strong, but not this strong. In fact, it was even possible to just barely see some sort of glowing vine on the Dharma Idol!

It was… an Immortality Illumination Vine!!

“Heavens! Zhao Yifan is actually engaging in battle at the same time as he's using an Immortality Illumination Vine! Most other people would be in secluded meditation right now, but he dares to come out and fight!!”

“Is he using battle to contemplate enlightenment? Using a duel to illuminate Immortality and open his path to true Immortality? This Zhao Yifan definitely deserves his reputation as of the two most powerful successors to have appeared in years in the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto!”

Even more shocking was that his Dharma Idol gripped a mighty longsword, upon which were inscribed two characters.

Cloud Sealing!

The words were somewhat indistinct, but everyone could see them.

As soon as people caught sight of the two characters, everyone was sent into an uproar.

“A Cloud Sealing Sword! His Dharma Idol actually produced a Cloud Sealing Sword!”

“The Sublime Flow Sword Grotto has three types of divine swords, and the Cloud Sealing Sword is one of them! They are swords which don't exist in reality, but can only be summoned by cultivating Daoist magic from the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto. There are only a few Chosen who have the magical techniques and divine abilities to do it.

“But… but for the sword to appear in the hands of a Dharma Idol is completely unheard-of! Doesn’t that mean that he can use any magical technique and divine ability he wants, and still unleash the power of that Cloud Sealing Sword at the same time!?”

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# Chapter 879: Peak Battle!

Zhao Yifan suddenly looked up at Meng Hao, and his eyes overflowed with the desire to fight. Before his trip to Planet South Heaven, there had only been two people of his same generation who filled him with such a desire to fight.

After Planet South Heaven, there was another, Meng Hao. And now… yet another, Fang Mu.

Monstrous fighting desire raged inside of him. Behind him, his 3,000-meter Dharma Idol held the Cloud Sealing Sword, and was radiating shocking sword qi. As Zhao Yifan raised his head, he also lifted up his hand. Simultaneously, his Dharma Idol raised the Cloud Sealing Sword.

“First Sword, Incarnating the Divine!” cried Zhao Yifan, and the sword descended!

The sword did not transform into an Azure Dragon, but rather, a green beam of light that instantly caused the entire golden arena to quake. A huge rift was ripped open in the air, and a massive rumbling sound echoed out. Wild colors flashed, and the heavenly bodies shook. Radiating a monstrous will, it shot toward Meng Hao, seemingly incapable of being blocked.

Almost as soon as the first sword descended, Zhao Yifan’s energy surged upward, and in the midst of the already intense power, more explosive power appeared. Zhao Yifan swept forward like a whirlwind, and then gave a piercing shout.

“Second Sword, Shocking the Spirit!”

After that, a third sword appeared.

“Third Sword, Severing the Immortal!”

This sword caused rumbling to fill the air as it followed the first two swords, splitting Heaven and Earth, surging forward invincibly!

After that, a fourth sword appeared.

“Fourth Sword, Shattering the Ancient!”

Each sword was faster than the previous sword, and more powerful. The four swords caused colors to flash, and the air to vibrate. Everything began to shake, and all the other cultivators on the Dao Tree looked on in astonishment.

The heavenly bodies seemed to grow dark, as if all the splendor of the world was being replaced by these swords.

However… Zhao Yifan wasn’t finished.

“Fifth Sword, Trampling the Heavens!”

Shockingly, a fifth sword appeared. This fifth sword was far more incisive than all the previous four swords. Everyone who could see it with their own eyes felt as if they were being suffocated. The spectators out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea made a collective gasp, and the Patriarchs in the starry sky palace looked on with shining eyes.

Five swords, shocking to the extreme!

Meng Hao remained standing in his original position. Although his expression was calm, a nearly undetectable desire to fight flickered in his eyes. As the five swords descended toward him, the black sealing marks all over his body began to move, swirling across his skin. His Devilish will exploded out, distorting the air and even affecting time. To him, it seemed as if everything he was seeing was now moving in slow motion.

He didn’t move, but instead lifted his hand, performed an incantation gesture, and then tapped the first sword.

A boom could be heard as black light spread out from Meng Hao’s finger. The first sword, with its astonishing energy, came to a stop in front of the fingertip. A howl of rage could be heard echoing out from the sword as it suddenly transformed into millions upon millions of swords. Just when they were about to try to sidestep the power of Meng Hao’s finger attack, they began to tremble, and then simply exploded. Sword qi spread out in all directions, causing the golden arena to shake violently, seemingly on the verge of collapse. Meng Hao took a step forward, then pointed out a second time with his index finger to tap the second beam of sword qi.

A massive boom rattled out in all directions. Everything shook as the second sword collapsed in response to Meng Hao’s finger attack, transforming into even more swords than had appeared just moments before, all of which then exploded.

When the spectators on the outside saw this, they were astonished. Everything was happening too quickly, giving them virtually no time to react. Meng Hao took a third step forward, right into the middle of endless sword shadows. Boundless sword qi swirled around him, and the number of swords was innumerable. It was almost as if he had entered a world of swords.

The third sword attack formed a globe of swords that began to shrink down as soon as Meng Hao stepped into it, transforming into one sword that slashed down toward him. Meng Hao’s right hand lifted up, and a third finger attack was unleashed.

When it touched the third sword, a boom rattled out that shook the whole Dao Tree. A massive wind kicked up, and everything went dark for a moment. Even the mists outside of the Dao Tree began to churn.

In the midst of all the noise, the third sword attack… shattered into pieces. Everyone in the outside world watched as the sword world collapsed, and Meng Hao stepped out, his fourth step.

All of this takes some time to describe, but actually, Meng Hao’s four steps took place in the space of only a few breaths. By this time, the fourth and fifth sword attacks were bearing down on him simultaneously. They were like two lightning bolts that slashed through the air, bearing monstrous sword will.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he raised his right hand. He waved his finger two times, once for each of the two beams of sword qi. Shocking rumbling could be heard, booms that caused everything to quake. The air surrounding the arena twisted and distorted, and even the barrier separating the Dao Tree from the outside world seemed to be affected.

The sword qi collapsed, dispersing as Meng Hao took his fifth step. By that time, he was directly in front of Zhao Yifan, whereupon his right hand stretched out in a claw.

Zhao Yifan immediately fell back, waving his arm and causing a sixth sword to appear. After that came a seventh sword, which descended toward Meng Hao amidst massive rumbling. Two beams of sword qi swept toward him, although they did nothing to prevent him from advancing.

“Seven Swords Slaughter Mount Heaven!” roared Zhao Yifan in an earth shattering voice. His Dharma Idol took a step forward, raising its right hand to lift the 300-meter Cloud Sealing Sword. In this moment, it looked incredibly realistic, as if it truly existed.

Colors flashed, and a will of invincibility exploded out as the sword descended toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao stopped in place and looked up. A vicious smile then appeared on his face, and he stamped his foot down onto the surface of the arena. Rumbling could be heard as… his own enormous Dharma Idol materialized!

When the Dharma Idol appeared, it was 3,000 meters tall, filled with shocking energy. It stepped forward and performed a double-handed incantation, then punched toward the huge sword descending from above.

From a distance, it was possible to see the two enormous Dharma Idols engaged in fierce fighting. Down on the surface of the arena, Meng Hao’s body was wreathed in black flames, making him look like some sort of terrifying Devil. He advanced toward Zhao Yifan, waving his hand to cause millions of streams to appear, which then transformed into an enormous river.

Zhao Yifan’s face flickered; he bit his tongue and then spit out some blood, each droplet of which transformed into an enormous sea, all of which then formed together into an even larger shocking composite sea. This was a sea that was not composed of water, but countless swords!

It was… a sea of swords!

The sea of swords immediately slammed into the massive river that was Meng Hao’s Mountain Consuming Incantation. A shockwave spread out in all directions, causing everything to tremble. The dazzling light of magical techniques and divine abilities radiated out in all directions.

Meng Hao didn’t stop for a moment. His body flickered as he transformed into an enormous black, flaming vulture. He whistled through the air, piercing the sea of swords to appear in front of Zhao Yifan and viciously slash razor-sharp claws at him. Zhao Yifan’s face darkened as he fell back in shock. At this moment, he finally understood why all of Meng Hao’s previous opponents had suffered setback after setback in combat. Now that he was experiencing the same thing himself, he truly felt terror of Meng Hao.

Meng Hao had an aura of invincibility, and he only attacked, sparing nothing for defense.

Facing this energy, one had no choice but to retreat, and by doing so, involuntarily fall into Meng Hao’s rhythm of battle. Eventually, the continuous retreat would lead to one end… defeat.

Booms echoed out as over a hundred exchanges occurred between Zhao Yifan and Meng Hao. The golden arena was wracked with massive booms. As for the crowds outside in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, they watched the scene unfold with pounding hearts. The only thing they were paying attention to was the groundbreaking championship battle between Meng Hao and Zhao Yifan.

“I can’t keep retreating!” thought Zhao Yifan, blood oozing out of his mouth. Suddenly, a fierce gleam appeared in his eyes as his Dharma Idol, which was currently locked in combat with Meng Hao’s Dharma Idol, grew to a height of 6,000 meters, causing something like a violent windstorm to spread out across the arena.

Taking advantage of that blast of power, Zhao Yifan took a deep breath, and looked at Meng Hao with an unprecedented look of solemnity.

“Five Cleaving Swords, First Cleaving… Rising Sword Form!” As he spoke, he lifted his right hand. Sword qi began to swirl around each of his five fingers, and his speed suddenly increased to shocking effect. He waved his hand, causing numerous beams of sword qi to shoot out.

In the blink of an eye, 100 swords appeared in the form of sword qi. Shockingly, they flew up into the air, then spun and began to fall down toward Meng Hao like a rain of swords. Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he stretched out his right hand and made a grasping motion, which caused the long spear with the World Tree shaft and the bone spearhead to appear. He immediately swept it out in front of him, causing rumbling sounds to be heard as the 100 swords were deflected and sent stabbing into the surface of the arena.

However, Zhao Yifan’s divine ability was still unfolding. 1,000 swords appeared up above, which then whistled down toward Meng Hao. The long spear danced, and more booms could be heard as the thousand swords were scattered and sent plunging into the ground. However, it was at this point that 10,000 swords appeared up above.

Rumbling filled the air as they began to fall. The arena had now become a world of swords. Meng Hao was surrounded by a whirlwind, which was the long spear. Banging sounds could be heard as the 10,000 swords were vanquished and sent stabbing into the ground.

However, it was at this point that Zhao Yifan spoke again.

“First Cleaving, Swords Cleave the Heavens!” Instantly, the 11,100 swords that had been stabbed into the ground rose up into the sky, where they merged together to form one huge sword.

One shocking sword appeared, a sword that caused the entire world to go still. For the first time, Meng Hao’s facial expression changed as he looked up to stare at the huge weapon. He took a deep breath, raised his right foot up, and then stamped it down hard.

A boom echoed out, and his Dharma Idol suddenly began to expand until it too was 6,000 meters tall. It took a step forward and then punched out toward the huge sword.

The resulting boom was deafening, and the entire world trembled. The sword slashed through the fist of Meng Hao’s Dharma Idol, then continued to cut down until it was only seven inches away from the top of Meng Hao’s head, where it came to a stop. A defiant droning sound could be heard from the sword, and then it collapsed.

When the sword fell to pieces, Zhao Yifan coughed up blood and staggered backward.

Meng Hao looked up at the collapsing sword, and then turned to look at Zhao Yifan.

“You’re pretty strong….” he said. “But now, it’s my turn.” With that, he vanished. When he reappeared, he was directly in front of Zhao Yifan, whereupon he clenched his hand into a fist and punched.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Meng Hao punched nine times; this was none other than the Nine Heavens Destruction.

The final blow unleashed violent upheavals. Zhao Yifan was sent tumbling backward, blood spraying from his mouth. He toppled head over heels along the ground, but before he could get very far, Meng Hao transformed into the vulture and swooped down toward him.

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# Chapter 880: Shocking Transformations!

The vulture’s claws could shred metal and crush stone!

Blood sprayed from Zhao Yifan’s mouth, and his chest was a mass of mangled flesh. However, his mouth was twisted in a cold grin and he suddenly opened his mouth, causing a sword to fly out. In the blink of an eye, it pierced through the air and was about to stab into Meng Hao. Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a gleam of surprise, and he let out a mighty roar.

The sound of the roar caused ripples to spread out, and the sword stopped in place for a moment. In that short pause, Meng Hao’s right hand moved like the wind, unleashing the Star Plucking Magic to grab the sword and crush it violently. Cracking sounds rang out as the sword shattered. Zhao Yifan coughed up blood yet again.

However, he also took advantage of that moment to leap up into the air.

“Dharma Idol True Body!” An expression of madness flickered on his face as he held his ground and refused to concede. As his words echoed out, his Dharma Idol suddenly vanished as it merged into his body. A moment later, a 6,000-meter giant appeared in midair.

It was Zhao Yifan.

“Fang Mu, our battle isn’t over yet!” With a roar, he lifted his right hand, within which appeared the Cloud Sealing Sword, which he slashed down toward Meng Hao.

Almost in the same moment in which the sword began to fall, Meng Hao closed his eyes. When he opened them, his Dharma Idol vanished and merged with his body, whereupon another 6,000-meter giant appeared. His foot sped through the air in a roundhouse kick, smashing into the sword. Then, the two of them began to fight back and forth up in the air.

Booms echoed out, and the audiences in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were breathing heavily.

“They’re too powerful!!”

“Neither Zhao Yifan nor Fang Mu are Immortals, but even false Immortals would be like ants to them! They could kill them without expending any effort at all! They could probably even fight true Immortals!”

“They’re both only at the peak of the Spirit Realm, but they’re shocking even to me, and I’ve opened 30 meridians!”

“Too powerful!”

“If the two of them actually become Immortals, then of the ten stages in the Immortal Realm, they would definitely have at least 90 meridians!”

In the starry sky palace, the various Patriarchs were staring fixedly at the proceedings. Although any one of them could easily defeat Zhao Yifan or Meng Hao, the battle that was playing out in front of them was stunning and spectacular. After all… even though it was only a Spirit Realm battle, the Patriarchs were able to sense that both Zhao Yifan and Meng Hao both had the potential to be future Paragons.

“They both have 6,000 meter Dharma Idols. That’s comparable to a stage two Immortal. In the ten stages of the Immortal Realm, each stage adds 3,000 meters to one’s Dharma Idol!”

“Both of them have built a strong foundation for success. Zhao Yifan has been suppressing himself in the Spirit Realm for a long time, just waiting for true Immortal destiny to appear. Then, he can use his Immortality Illumination Vine to achieve true Immortal Ascension. One thing is for certain, once he enters the Immortal Realm, his cultivation speed will be explosive. He’ll most likely reach the peak of the Immortal Realm in less than a hundred years!”

“It looks like Fang Mu is in the same position. In fact, the Chosen of the all the important sects in the Ninth Mountain and Sea are all like that!”

Back in the arena, Meng Hao and Zhao Yifan were fighting fiercely. However, Meng Hao had not yet unleashed his full power. Even though his Devilish will had been rekindled, making him stronger than ever, he could sense that Zhao Yifan was still hiding some sort of terrifying aura, so because of that, Meng Hao was also holding back.

Rumbling filled the air, and Zhao Yifan’s eyes were completely bloodshot. By this point in the battle, he was already using everything that he could exercise control over, and yet was still not a match for his opponent. In fact, he was consistently forced into retreat.

“I refuse to accept this!” he thought. Killing intent flickered in his eyes, and even as he fell back, he suddenly took a deep breath. It was at this point that a vine suddenly appeared, wrapping around his body and emanating gentle light, as well as Dao music. It was none other than an Immortality Illumination Vine.

Zhao Yifan threw his head back and roared. At the same time, the Immortality Illumination Vine began to glow radiantly. He began to tremble, and then grew even larger. He was now 9,000 meters tall!!

His 9,000-meter tall body radiated shocking power, a power that Zhao Yifan actually found difficult to control, a power that came from sacrificing the Immortality Illumination Vine.

When the crowds out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea saw what was happening, they were sent into an uproar.

“He was actually suppressing his cultivation base before!!”

“Heavens! He’s actually… comparable to a stage three Immortal!”

“Fang Mu is finished!!”

Zhao Yifan’s vision had grown blurry. The only thing that he could see now was Meng Hao, and the only thought that existed in his head was that he had to defeat Fang Mu!

BOOM!

Zhao Yifan’s body flashed, and his energy surged to the heavens. He closed in on Meng Hao, sword qi raging in all directions, shattering the air. Rumbling sounds rang out as they once again began to fight.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. Black flames surged around him as his Dharma Idol body suddenly grew with explosive speed. Now he was 9,000 meters tall too!

In that instant, a collective gasp of disbelief could be heard out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, and even from the cultivators on the Dao Tree.

“Heavens! Fang Mu was also concealing his true cultivation base. I can’t believe that he… is also comparable to a stage three Immortal!”

“Just who is going to win this battle!? Who… is going to take first place!?”

Booms rang out as Meng Hao and Zhao Yifan fought back and forth. In the blink of an eye, hundreds of exchanges had taken place. The ground quaked, the entire golden arena was shaking, and rifts could be seen in the air in all directions.

Finally, Zhao Yifan staggered backward, blood spraying from his mouth, a look of despair on his face. He had unleashed all the power he could muster, had done almost everything he could do, and yet still could not gain victory over his opponent.

“No,” he thought. “I still haven’t used everything. I still haven’t used the Second Cleaving of the Five Cleaving Swords. But….”

Zhao Yifan’s eyes radiated madness, and as he fell back, he suddenly stared straight at Meng Hao.

“Fang Mu, unleash the battle prowess of your most powerful cultivation base! We’re going to determine victory and defeat with one move!” With that, Zhao Yifan tilted his head back and laughed uproariously. His lips were twisted with madness, and the obsession to win. Suddenly, he began to shake, and a burning aura exploded out.

In that instant, his Dharma Idol body began to emit blinding light. The light spread out and then all of a sudden… shrank back down!

This was… Dharma Idol self-detonation!

“Sublime Flow Sword Grotto, Five Cleaving Swords, also known as Five Immortal Swords. With my current power, I can unleash the First Cleaving. Now, I will utilize the power of self-detonation to unleash the Second Cleaving!

“Fang Mu, if you can’t stand up to this attack, then you will be defeated!” As Zhao Yifan spoke, his Dharma Idol rapidly grew smaller. However, his terrifying aura grew more and more powerful.

The audiences in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were in an uproar. In the starry sky palace, the Patriarchs had all risen to their feet. The old man from the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto stamped his foot onto the ground.

“So impulsive!” he thought, frowning. As he watched the scene playing out on the vortex screen, his expression darkened.

“Fang Mu,” cried Zhao Yifan, “after this attack, I will be powerless to do anything. If I don’t die, then at the very least, I’ll have to go into secluded meditation to recover, and it will be difficult for me to create another Dharma Idol. But I, Zhao Yifan, have no regrets!

“This battle, this attack, contains all of my hope! Show me… exactly how strong you actually are!” By now, Zhao Yifan had shrunk from 9,000 meters tall to only 900. His energy continued to surge, and the air around him shattered. Even the arena itself was trembling.

Meng Hao looked in Zhao Yifan’s eyes, and what he saw was a madness inspired by the heat of battle. He nodded his head silently, and suddenly, the Devilish will inside of him exploded out. Black flames surged into the Heavens, and his Dharma Idol once again began to grow!

9,500 meters. 10,500 meters. 11,500 meters…. All the way to….

12,000 meters!

He stood there, surrounded by intense rumbling. All of the cultivators on the Dao Tree were flabbergasted. None of them had ever heard of someone in the Spirit Realm who was comparable to a fourth stage Immortal!!

They could understand Zhao Yifan’s extraordinary display of power, especially because he had an Immortality Illumination Vine to rely on. But Meng Hao’s Dharma Idol had no Immortality Illumination Vine!

Such a thing was… completely terrifying!!

Out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, the crowds were going wild. The buzz of conversation echoed about everywhere, and anticipatory shouts drifted about.

“Zhao Yifan is detonating his Dharma Idol and drawing on his life force to unleash his most powerful sword attack! And Fang Mu… is actually comparable to a fourth stage Immortal!!”

“Victory and defeat will be determined right now! I wonder which of these two… will take first place!!”

The most anticipated moment of the entire trial by fire, and of all the arena matches, had now arrived!

The audiences’ eyes were glued to the vortex screens as Zhao Yifan’s body shrank down to the size of a normal person. His 9,000-meter Dharma Idol had collapsed, and all of the power of that collapse had been coalesced into the sword that he held in his hand.

This was no ordinary sword!

“Five Cleaving Swords, Second Cleaving…. Immortal: Why Sever the Mundane World?!” As Zhao Yifan’s voice rang out, he lifted his right hand, and his eyes shone with unprecedented brightness. This sword attack contained his life force, his Dharma Idol, his willpower, his everything!

He raised his sword up, and then swung it downwards. It transformed into a Heavenly sword, something that could sever mortality. It was as if the sword were asking an Immortal, ‘will you sever the mundane…? Or not?!’

Rumbling filled the air as the sword slashed down. Meng Hao took a deep breath. He had eighty percent of the power of a true Immortal, and the power of an Immortal meridian. All of that power exploded out as his Dharma Idol performed a double-handed incantation, then prepared to punch out. Shockingly… an Immortal meridian appeared in the air around his Dharma Idol!

The Immortal meridian looked like a strand of silk, swirling around him, bursting with shocking Immortal qi that coalesced onto his hand, creating the most powerful punch he was capable of. The punch slammed out into the air above the arena.

When the sword and the punch collided, a massive boom rattled out, shaking the entire Dao Tree. The air churned, and even the people outside in the Ninth Mountain and Sea could sense it. In the starry sky palace, the various Patriarchs were all panting.

BOOOMMMM!

The sound seemed capable of ripping open the Heavens. A gigantic vortex appeared, instantly spreading out to cover the entire golden arena. The aura inside the vortex grew more and more intense, as all of the power unleashed by Meng Hao and Zhao Yifan gathered together. At the same time, the entire arena began to collapse!

It was at this point that a massive backlash of power rose up in the vortex, which then swept down directly onto Zhao Yifan. It was far too much power for him to bear, and a wan smile suddenly appeared on his face as he realized that he had been defeated.

Blood sprayed from his mouth, and cracking sounds could be heard all over his body. More than half of the bones in his body were shattered as he was violently thrown out of the Dao Tree itself.

“I lost….” he murmured. In the moments before he lost consciousness, he saw Meng Hao standing there, fighting back against the power. Then Zhao Yifan passed out.

After Zhao Yifan lost consciousness, Meng Hao coughed up a mouthful of blood. Instantly, the flames from the Devilish will were extinguished, and a peaceful glow appeared in his eyes. However, the force of the attack against him sent him tumbling back, out of control. Rumbling could be heard as he was sent flying off of the arena and outside of the Dao Tree!

In that exact moment….

The half-headed man who had been lurking outside of the arena the entire time looked over with an expression of excited greed. Utilizing incredible speed, he shot from his position by the arena toward Meng Hao, who was tumbling through the void above the Ruins of Immortality.

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 881: Sixth Demon Sealing Hex!

“Dammit!” Meng Hao’s face fell. Everything that had happened moments ago seemed almost like a dream. When Qian Duoduo drew out his Devilish will, it influenced Meng Hao on an emotional level, and had also changed his personality. Although he had seemed calm and cool-headed, it was merely an external thing. He had actually lost any sense of what was going on around him.

Situational awareness was something incongruous with the Devilish will.

And now, here he was being ejected from the arena into the outside.

Because of the intense power he had just unleashed, the Devilish will had been completely set aboil, and because of the force that caused him to shoot out of the arena, it had dissipated by more than half. Because of that, Meng Hao’s consciousness was not being interfered with any more; it was almost as if he had awoken from a dream.

There was no time to worry about expelling the rest of the Devilish will. Meng Hao was now in the middle of a maelstrom of danger. As soon as he left the arena, the half-headed man closed in and grabbed ahold of him.

His hand was ice-cold, and as soon as it latched onto Meng Hao, Meng Hao’s entire body turned icy. He was just about to try to struggle when, all of a sudden, his face flickered. This was a result of something the half-headed man did, a magical art that he unleashed that Meng Hao was very familiar with!

It was… the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex!!

In an instant, Meng Hao was completely confined, incapable of even the slightest movement. At the same time, his life force, his cultivation base, everything was instantly sent toward the half-headed man, as if he wanted to voraciously consume it.

Meng Hao's mind was reeling as the half-headed man instantly shot off into the distance with Meng Hao in tow, to disappear into the mists.

It all happened too quickly. Meng Hao was gone before anyone on the Dao Tree could react.

Ling Yunzi's face fell, and he flew up into the air. However, when he looked out into the boundless void, despite his anxiety, he knew… it was impossible for him to go out into the mists.

The other two old men also had dark looks on their faces as they stared out at the spot where Meng Hao had disappeared into the mists.

Everyone on the Dao Tree gaped in shock.

Everything had happened too quickly, and it was something nobody could have predicted. As for Zhao Yifan, he now lay crumpled on the ground beneath the Dao Tree, unconscious and hovering on the brink of death.

Outside in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, the cultivators who had been watching the battle now felt their minds trembling. Expressions of disbelief appeared on their faces as they watched the half-headed man take Meng Hao away.

"He… he got first place, but…."

"What's going on? How could something like this happen? This is impossible!"

"Dammit! He got first place! He defeated Zhao Yifan! He got first place in the trial by fire, and then first place in the arena matches. He's supposed to become famous in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. How come… how come it had to end up like this!?!?"

"I can't believe the Ruins of Immortality are this dangerous! Why did they have to hold the arena matches in a place like this!?!?"

Many people in the crowds outside in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were furious. They had all just witnessed Fang Mu's rise to prominence. Many had even come to view him as a future Paragon, and yet all of it disappeared in an instant.

There were some people who actually breathed sighs of relief. Fang Mu was far too powerful, to the point where cultivators of his generation felt stifling pressure. For him to simply disappear was the best outcome, as far as they were concerned.

"Fang Mu is definitely dead. That half-headed man took him away to experience an untimely death."

"What an unlucky Chosen. Well, now there's one less person for me to challenge in the future."

While the crowds in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were abuzz, the Patriarchs in the starry sky palace looked on in shock. The Patriarchs from the Three Great Daoist Societies also wore grim expressions as they slowly rose to their feet. First, they looked toward the spot where Meng Hao had disappeared, and then they turned their attention to the white-robed woman who hovered above the Dao Tree.

The woman glanced down at the unconscious Zhao Yifan, then turned her head to look out into the void. She appeared to be muttering to herself for a moment, and then suddenly she turned and disappeared in the same direction Meng Hao had gone.

After seeing this, the Patriarchs from the Three Great Daoist Societies were extremely excited.

"Perhaps… Fang Mu isn't dead!"

"Perhaps… we really will succeed this time!!"

“Ah the Echelon. In the great Nine Mountains and Seas, only the Ninth Mountain and Sea have yet to send someone into the Echelon….”

Meanwhile, outside of Planet East Victory, Patriarch Reliance floated among the stars, his eyes wide with astonishment, breathing heavily as he looked at the vortex screen.

“Is the little bastard going to die just like that? Impossible! If the little bastard was that easy to get rid of, well wouldn’t that be poetic justice? Although, how come… how come that half-headed man… looked so familiar…?”

The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch sat cross-legged on an asteroid shooting through the starry sky, watching silently as the events played out on the vortex screen up ahead.

In the Kunlun Society, Pill Demon was trembling, and a brilliant light shone from his eyes. Although he didn’t believe Meng Hao could be killed so easily, it was the Ruins of Immortality….

Chu Yuyan was also shaking. Her breath came in ragged pants, and her face was pale white. She didn’t dare to believe that Meng Hao was really dead. All of the energy seemed to drain out of her, and she staggered back a few steps. Tears began to stream down her face.

“He won’t die….”

On Planet South Heaven, in the vast Eastern Lands, Meng Hao’s parents sat in the Fang Clan, their faces pale, holding hands tightly. Fang Xiufeng’s expression was calm, but in his heart, a monstrous desire to kill had risen up.

After a few deep breaths, he growled, “Hao’er is not the type of person to die young. He won’t be killed. But if he does perish… then I, Fang Xiufeng, vow that I will continue to guard this planet. However, after the 100,000 years have passed, then I will personally open the gate to release the evil Devils, and ensure that the Three Great Daoist Societies are buried together with my son!

“Furthermore, those Ruins of Immortality… will serve as burial objects!”

When Chen Fan, Fatty, and Li Shiqi saw what had happened, they trembled in disbelief.

All of the Ninth Mountain and Sea was in an uproar. Meng Hao had just earned first place, and then… had disappeared to who knew where!

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Naturally, Meng Hao was not dead.

The half-headed man grasped him tightly as they shot through the mists. Meng Hao trembled as his life force, cultivation base, and aura were absorbed by the man.

Slowly, the flesh and blood of the man’s head began to heal. His aura gradually moved away from death, and a bit of life force could be detected. However, he still seemed to be lacking in terms of consciousness, as if he had no mental faculties, and was only acting on instinct.

Meng Hao couldn’t move, and his thoughts were sluggish. Icy coldness filled him. However, as his life force was sucked away, the remaining Devilish will inside of him was also absorbed.

As the half-headed man absorbed more and more of the Devilish will, he suddenly stopped in place, and black flames flickered on his body.

The man had feared the flames of the Devilish will before, and now that he was absorbing Meng Hao’s cultivation base and life force, he himself began to burn, and an expression of anguish appeared on his face.

In that instant, Meng Hao was suddenly able to move again. He also recovered his mental faculties, and was instantly shocked.

“He… he can use the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex!” he thought. “Who is he? Don’t tell me… he’s also from the League of Demon Sealers!?

“That sword contains the Sixth Demon Sealing Hex, and it’s stuck into his side. If he’s from the League of Demon Sealers, then either there was infighting within the League of Demon Sealers, or… he stabbed the sword into himself, as a sealing!!” Numerous speculations ran through Meng Hao’s head, but in this critical moment of danger, he had no time to think too much about it.

Eyes glittering, Meng Hao took advantage of the moment to unleash his cultivation base. His Immortal meridian began to emanate Immortal qi, which he attempted to use to struggle against the half-headed man. Unfortunately, the man was far too powerful, and Meng Hao’s efforts were in vain.

However… Meng Hao was not interested in battling the man. Instead, he used the brief moment in which he could move to suddenly reach out and grab the sword that was stabbed into the man’s side.

As soon as he touched the sword, the ancient Demon Sealing Jade in his bag of holding began to vibrate madly. At the same time, the half-headed man began to let out a miserable shriek. As this happened, Meng Hao used every scrap of power he could muster to yank the sword out from the man’s side.

As he pulled the sword out of the man… a stream of black blood sprayed out with it. The man trembled, releasing Meng Hao, who then backed up at top speed, face pale and blood spurting out of his mouth.

He had lost a lot of life force, and his cultivation base was in chaos. He was in very sore straits, and yet, he didn’t pause for even the least bit, but instead, unleashed every bit of speed that he could to escape.

The half-headed man trembled, and pushed his hand down onto his wound. However, no matter what he did, blood continued to stream out of the wound.

“Who am I…? Who… who am I?” the man murmured, a confused expression on his face. His mind seemed to be in chaos as his words echoed out.

“My sword… my sword….” As his words rang out, the blood flowing from his body suddenly congealed together to form into blood snakes. Their bodies were covered with long feelers, and they looked extremely vicious. More and more of them continued to pour out of the man’s wound, until they filled the area, nearly a thousand of them.

Meng Hao’s scalp was going numb.

It was at this point that a shrill whistling sound could be heard from off in the distance. A black wind was approaching, along with the decomposing roc, the same things Meng Hao had seen outside of the Dao Tree. The roc closed in greedily, heading straight toward the half-headed man.

As it neared, the man murmured something, and then his eyes glittered, and he performed an incantation with his right hand, then pointed at the roc.

Eighth Demon Sealing Hex!

That one wave of a finger caused the huge roc to stop in place and then fall downward.

Meng Hao’s mind was trembling.

Next, the mists began to churn as more and more figures appeared. One of them was the naga cultivator, and all of them were staring greedily at the vicious blood snakes that were boring out from within the man’s wound. From the look in their eyes, it was as if they were staring at treasures. In the blink of an eye, they charged forward madly.

“I am… the Sixth Generation Demon Sealer….” the half-headed man said. He looked around blankly at the incoming figures. His hand was pressed onto the wound at this side as he attempted to prevent the blood snakes from emerging. Within his eyes, a gleam of clarity suddenly appeared.

“Sixth Demon Sealing Hex… Life-Death Hexing!”

With that, he waved his finger.

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 882: 13th in the Echelon!

Sixth Demon Sealing Hex, Life-Death Hexing!!

The Sixth Generation Demon Sealer pointed out with his right index finger, and instantly two streams qi poured out, one black and one white. They swirled around each other to form a vortex.

That vortex… was gray!

The gray vortex expanded rapidly; in the blink of an eye it was over 3,000 meters wide, and exerted a gravitational force in all directions. The figures that surrounded the area began to let out miserable shrieks; they trembled as their bodies decomposed, and magical symbols appeared all over them.

Those magical symbols were also gray, and they glittered as the figures screamed, then looked blankly toward the Sixth Generation Demon Sealer, dropped to their knees and bowed in worship.

Even the powerful naga did so.

As Meng Hao watched all this, his scalp tingled, and he continued to back up rapidly. However, it was at this point that the Sixth Generation Demon Sealer slowly turned his head to look directly at Meng Hao.

In that instant, the man’s jaw dropped.

Meng Hao felt as if his blood were freezing. An intense sensation of deadly crisis appeared, and he suddenly stopped in place and stared back at the Sixth Generation Demon Sealer. He had the sudden feeling that if he continued to back up, the man would attack him.

Currently, the Sixth Generation Demon Sealer seemed to be hesitating, thinking.

Time seemed to slow down. More and more black snakes poured out of the man’s wound, and they swirled around him, seemingly on the verge of escaping. However, for some reason they also seemed to be locked in one area, unable to leave.

After a long moment, the Sixth Generation Demon Sealer began to speak.

“End the League of Demon Sealers in exchange for keeping the spirit of Pāramitā asleep,” he murmured, “or… allow fate to run its course, and give hope to the League.” He gazed deeply at Meng Hao for a long moment, and then looked down at the sword Meng Hao held.

“Take this chance to contemplate the matter thoroughly,” he said softly, his expression kindly. Then he turned, keeping his hand pressed down onto his wound, and began to walk off into the distance, surrounded by shrieking black blood snakes. The snakes apparently wished to flee from the area surrounding the Sixth Demon Sealer, but were incapable of doing so, and were dragged along with him as he walked off.

As for all of the other figures in the area who had been caught up in the Life-Death Hexing, they seemed to have lost all sense of themselves, and slowly began to follow the Sixth Generation Demon Sealer.

“Senior!” Meng Hao suddenly cried out. “What happened to you? Where are you going!?!?”

“I was defeated in the third Mountain and Sea Tribulation….” The Sixth Generation Demon Sealer’s voice was archaic and ancient. “I am going to search for my final resting place…. As for you… in the future, you will also face the Mountain and Sea Tribulation. If you are defeated, then we will be waiting for you on the road to that final resting place.

“Demon Sealers. The League. We are the most powerful in the Nine Mountains and Seas. We are also the ones… who bear the most grief.

“It is a rough and bumpy road, so take care of yourself….”

Meng Hao looked at the Sixth Generation Demon Sealer’s back as he floated off into the distance.

“Defeated?” he said, staring in shock. Then he suddenly thought back to the words uttered by the Eighth Generation Demon Sealer, which were recorded in the jade slip. He had also spoken of transcending the Mountain and Sea Tribulation!

“What is the Mountain and Sea Tribulation!?” Meng Hao asked urgently. As he looked at the Sixth Generation Demon Sealer, Meng Hao suddenly had an intense premonition that one day… he could end up just like this.

“Ancient Dao; Tenacious Desire to Seal the Heavens, Benefaction for All in the Mountains; Inevitable Dao Tribulation of the Nine Mountains and Seas; Perennial Will!

“Ancient Dao; Study Demons of Myriad Variations; Tread not the Path of Immortals; Face the Tribulation of the Nine Mountains and Seas; My Dao is Eternal; the Masses Have Erred, but My Dao Is True; Perennial Will!”

Those same two verses!

Meng Hao’s mind trembled. They were the same words that had been uttered by the Eighth Generation Demon Sealer.

“What happens in the case of success!?” Meng Hao asked. The Sixth Generation Demon Sealer was already far off in the distance, but after a long moment, his ancient voice echoed weakly into Meng Hao’s ears.

“With a thought, the Nine Mountains came into existence. With a thought, the Nine Seas appeared. The Nine Mountains and Seas, return to the Essence.”

Meng Hao’s face was pale. Everything he had seen since leaving the arena was like a dream. It turned out that the half-headed man was actually… the Sixth Generation Demon Sealer.

“If all that happened was that he failed to transcend some tribulation… then what horrifying thing happened to his body? And what were those blood snakes?!

“With a thought, the Nine Mountains exist. With a thought, the Nine Seas appear. Nine Mountains and Seas, return to the Essence. Just what does that mean?

“Nine Mountains and Seas. The Essence…. The League of Demon Sealers….” Meng Hao was now panting.

“Also, how could the Sixth Generation Demon Sealer use the Eighth Hex?”

After a long moment, he grew silent and then looked around. Then, doing his best to remember the path the Sixth Generation Demon Sealer had taken to get to this place, he began carefully making his way back.

There were far too many dangers lurking in this place, many of which would be fatal to him. All he could do was remain as cautious as possible. The slightest misstep could lead to him perishing.

Time passed.

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The arena matches were over. A pained expression could be seen on Ling Yunzi’s face. He really had attached a lot of importance to Meng Hao. He couldn’t forget the steadfast expression on his face when he’d retrieved the Feng Shui compass.

He left, along with the other two men from the other Great Daoist Societies. They took the cultivators away from the arenas, the Dao Tree, the God corpse, and the Ruins of Immortality. They returned to the starry sky.

Some people went home, others were taken in by the sects as disciples. The Three Great Daoist Societies’ trial by fire and accompanying arena matches were officially concluded.

Zhao Yifan was taken back to the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto. When he regained consciousness and heard about what had happened, he balled his hand into a fist and slammed it into the ground. Blood spattered out of his fist, and intense regret could be seen in his eyes, along with determination.

In the end, Chen Fan was taken in as a disciple of the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto.

Fatty went to the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum. When his master accompanied him back to Planet South Heaven and found out that he had over a hundred beloved concubines, he stared in shock, and was speechless for a very long moment.

Li Shiqi joined the Church of the Blood Orchid. Considering her experience fusing with the Blood Orchid, she was immediately put into the running to become Holy Daughter.

Wang Youcai’s unsurpassed brutal experience, a madness in which he had destroyed his own eyes, leaving him in a world of darkness, was actually in perfect concordance with the Dao of the Moonset Lake.

After moonset, there is no light whatsoever in Heaven and Earth. Before light arrives, when there is no moon, everything is covered by…darkness.

In addition to these four, there were quite a few others from Planet South Heaven who participated in the trial by fire and were accepted as disciples into other minor sects. Others returned home in disappointment.

Time passed, an entire month. During that month, the name Fang Mu became well-known throughout the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Even cultivators who hadn’t been watching the vortex screens heard of the stories.

He was not Immortal, and yet was as powerful as a stage four Immortal!

He took first place in the trial by fire and first place in the arena matches. Because of everything that had happened, Fang Mu became a legend. That was especially true when it all ended with him disappearing into the Ruins of Immortality. Because of that, the legend spread even more widely.

Meanwhile, Meng Hao plodded along through the Ruins of Immortality, his face pale. He sent his divine sense out, but didn’t dare to send it too far. During the past month, he had already faced several dangerous situations. On three of those occasions, he had almost ended up dead.

On more than one occasion, he saw a group of huge floating heads. Each of the heads seemed to be as big as a planet, causing Meng Hao to pant, and his mind to spin.

He saw an ancient battlefield, filled with countless corpses. Roving amongst the corpses were people who… feasted on the rotting flesh around them. He had no idea when the battle had actually taken place, but the corpses still had flesh on them, as if they would never rot away.

He saw a huge medicinal plant garden, choked with weeds. However, within the weeds, Meng Hao caught sight of some legendary medicinal plants, the sight of which left him panting.

They were plants that Pill Demon had spoken of back when he cultivated the Dao of alchemy in the Violet Fate Sect, plants that were supposed to be extinct. However, within that medicinal plant garden, he saw at least a hundred different varieties of such legendary plants.

There was something else he saw there that was especially noteworthy… an Immortality Illumination Vine!!

The only problem was that there were innumerable black beetles in the area, seemingly without end. If he got too close, they would fly up in great clouds, forcing him to flee off into the distance. If he had been even the slightest bit slower, it would surely lead to his death.

He saw something the size of a planet, but covered with tentacles. Even the mere sight of it in the distance caused Meng Hao’s scalp to grow numb, and he immediately fled.

At one point, he saw a right hand that was so huge it looked as big as a galaxy….

In addition to these things, he saw innumerable corpses floating about in the Ruins of Immortality. There were shattered remnants of buildings, vast stretches of land, and even wild beasts whistling through the air.

Compared to these vast and mysterious Ruins of Immortality, Meng Hao himself was tiny and weak. Compared to all of the amazing things he saw, he was nothing.

During the month, some of his life force actually vanished. However, his cultivation base was slowly recovering, which gave him some more confidence. Most importantly, the Sixth Generation Demon Sealer’s sword contained some strange power. Any time he faced some danger, the sword would emanate a bright light, which was one of the main reasons Meng Hao was still alive.

When he touched the surface of the sword, he was able to feel the Sixth Demon Sealing Hex. However, this hex was a difficult one, and during the month, Meng Hao was unable to gain enlightenment.

After walking around for a month, he was unable to find the corpse of the Pāramitā God. Nor did he ever see the Dao Tree. The only way for him to find his path back home was if he found that corpse and that tree.

One day, he saw an Immortal’s cave, floating there in the air. It appeared to be in the midst of a phasing teleportation cycle, occasionally there, occasionally not there.

It was covered with cracks, as if countless battles had been fought outside of it. When Meng Hao looked at the cracks, his mind spun, as if there were shocking divine abilities and magical techniques inside of them.

In the instant that he caught sight of the Immortal’s cave, its door opened soundlessly, and a white-robed woman could be seen sitting there. In that moment, it seemed as if everything else disappeared except for the woman, sitting there all alone.

Her gaze was tranquil as she looked off into the distance, and also seemed to be filled with an unending loneliness….

She seemed to be the type of person who could elicit the worship of all living things, who could cause the Ruins of Immortality to tremble. She seemed to have lost something that she could never get back, something that only the sad song that had echoed out by the Dao Tree could possibly clearly explain.

She slowly looked up, and her gaze fell onto Meng Hao.

Meng Hao trembled as he realized that this woman… was none other than the one who had appeared by the ancient Dao Tree, the one who had caused all the other figures to bow in worship.

“Henceforth you are 13th in the Echelon,” she said slowly. Her echoing voice sounded as if it was resonating out from ancient times.

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 883: Snatching Food From the Tiger’s Mouth!

“13th in the Echelon?” said Meng Hao, gaping at the woman. He had no idea what she was talking about.

The woman didn’t respond at first. She simply looked at Meng Hao, her expression one of seeming reminiscence, as if she were thinking of something she had once experienced. After a long moment, her cold voice echoed out once again.

“In the great Nine Mountains and Seas, there are only room for nine. There are a thousand years until the plan can be carried out. The nine people who break into the Ancient Realm first, can set off on the journey.

“There are already seven people ahead of you who have succeeded.

“The Ninth Mountain and Sea has already fallen behind by quite a bit.” With that, she extended her right hand and pointed at Meng Hao. He was incapable of resisting as a sealing mark flew out and settled onto his forehead.

The sealing mark glittered with dim light, flashing thirteen times before it faded away.

The sealing mark caused Meng Hao to tremble, and suddenly, he felt as if an additional stream of qi had appeared inside of him. The qi circulated throughout his entire body, then concealed itself, fading away.

“This sealing mark can protect your soul from being destroyed, but only twice,” the woman said, her ice-cold voice echoing about.

“After that, if your soul is exterminated, then naturally your qualifications will vanish. However, if you eventually enter into the top nine rankings… then your future potential is limitless.

“Seize this opportunity.” Having finished speaking, the door of the Immortal’s cave began to close, and the Immortal cave itself began to fade, as if it were about to vanish.

“Senior,” he replied, “the opportunity you speak of, and this setting off on a journey. What’s the destination?”

The woman’s voice echoed out from within the Immortal’s cave: “Outside the great Nine Mountains and Seas, to the outside world. To find out the true reason that ancient war was fought.

“There are some who wish to awaken a certain person,” the woman murmured. “There are some who wish to bring a certain person back to life…. The fault does not lie with us!” She seemed to be on the verge of fading away.

“Senior, wait a moment,” said Meng Hao. He still had the feeling that the sealing mark wasn’t a good thing, and that the so-called good fortune was good fortune in word only. Currently, he was left with a sense of extreme danger. “I still don’t understand,” he continued. “If my soul is exterminated, and my qualifications vanish, then what about the person who kills me?”

“Whoever kills you will acquire the sealing mark. If they can come to me here, then they will be the successor of your qualifications.” The Immortal’s cave was now approximately seventy percent vanished, and the woman’s voice was faint.

Meng Hao’s eyes widened, and he anxiously said, “Senior, um… my father and mother are getting old, and I also have an older sister. I’m waiting for my beloved to return to me. Uh… can I decline to go? I don’t really want this sealing mark.”

“You were enlightened regarding Paragon magic, took first place in the arena matches of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, and have the qualifications of a Daoist Society. Therefore… you cannot decline to receive my sealing mark. If you do not wish to make the journey, then go out and find someone to exterminate your soul twice.” The Immortal’s cave was fading away rapidly, and now only ten percent remained.

“You….” Meng Hao was getting really anxious now. “Senior, I’m stuck here, and can’t get out. If I’m 13th in the Echelon, is there any way you can get me out of here?

“If I can’t get out, then I might perish, then you putting me in the Echelon would have been completely in vain. Furthermore, this place is simply too dangerous for someone like me.”

Meng Hao was pretty sure that most of the sects would have no idea what this woman was talking about when she mentioned the Echelon. However, the Three Great Daoist Societies definitely knew. And while they might not bear him any ill intentions, he didn’t like his own life or death to be determined by a mere thought on the part of someone other party.

The vanishing of the Immortal’s cave paused momentarily, and after a moment of silence that lasted for the space of a few breaths, a crystalline beam of light shot out from inside to land in Meng Hao’s hand in the form of a jade slip.

“That jade slip will teleport you out of here. You can only use it once, and it will take you anywhere that you can mentally recall.” After she finished speaking, the Immortal’s cave vanished completely.

Meng Hao held the jade slip in his hand, and his eyes widened. Then he frowned and touched his forehead. After a moment passed, his eyes began to glitter.

“Forget about this Echelon business for now. Just finally being able to get out of here is good thing!” Meng Hao knew that if he only relied on the power of his cultivation base to get out, it would be far too difficult.

After taking a deep breath, he hefted the jade slip and was about to use it to teleport out, when suddenly he gave a start.

“Now that I can leave any time I want… well, if I left now, it would be a bit of a waste.” After thinking about it for a moment, his eyes filled with determination, and he gritted his teeth.

“I’m gonna give it a shot!” he thought. That was Meng Hao’s personality. To go out and return empty-handed was a waste. Therefore, he turned and retraced his tracks back to the medicinal plant garden.

Rewards come only with risk!

After Meng Hao left, the Immortal’s cave that had just vanished suddenly reappeared. The white-robed woman also returned, and she watched Meng Hao walking off into the distance, a look of reminiscence on her face.

“The League of Demon Sealers….” she murmured. In that moment, a rare tenderness appeared on her face.

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Meng Hao proceeded cautiously through the Ruins of Immortality. In almost any location in this place, it was possible that there were terrifying things lurking about that could destroy him in body and spirit. There were many places that he couldn’t avoid no matter how cautious he was. It was fortunate, therefore, that Meng Hao had already traveled this path before and thus didn’t attempt to explore any of those locations. Instead, he proceeded slowly and carefully for about half a month until he once again found himself outside the medicinal plant garden, where he stood there and salivated at what he saw.

From a distance, the medicinal plant garden seemed like a vast stretch of land overrun with countless weeds. However, amidst the weeds were random medicinal plants, many of which were virtually extinct in the outside world, and which would be called Celestial medicinal plants. There were even some locations that had legendary Holy medicinal plants.

The problem lay in the innumerable, frightening black beetles with razor-sharp mandibles that had occupied the entire garden and posed a threat to everything nearby.

“That’s… Reincarnation Leaf!

“And there’s a Sun Blossom!

“That’s Arhat Grass!” Meng Hao was trembling with anticipation. Even from a distance, he was able to recognize these three Holy medicinal plants. Any one of them was enough to cause people in the outside world to go crazy.

Further in, there were a greater quantities of even better Holy medicinal plants, but Meng Hao knew how to restrain himself. It would clearly be impossible to get that far in. Not to mention, even though everything in the area of the much-closer Reincarnation Leaf seemed harmless at the moment, Meng Hao remembered that when he had come here earlier, a step too close had given rise to clouds of black beetles.

Reincarnation Leaf came from a small violet-colored tree. Nine leaves grew on the tree, and they bore the shape of crescent moons; a unique magical symbol glittered brightly on each of them. Just looking at the tree gave a person the sensation that they were looking at the cycle of Reincarnation itself.

As for the Sun Blossoms, they creeped along the ground, tiny orange flowers that looked exactly like suns, glowing with brilliant light.

Then there was the Arhat Grass, which was an ordinary-looking plant that resembled a dandelion.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and then narrowed his eyes. Holding the jade slip in his left hand, he gritted his teeth and then slowly caused his aura to weaken.

“When I came here before,” he thought, “tens of thousands of beetles appeared when I got within three thousand meters of the medicinal plant garden…. It seems the beetles are sensitive to auras….” His aura continued to grow weaker and weaker, until he had suppressed himself to the point that he bore the appearance of a Core Formation cultivator.

“A bit more!” he thought, still not quite convinced that it was enough. After pushing his aura down even further, it was at the Foundation Establishment stage. This was the limit of what he could accomplish at the moment.

Next, his body flickered as the shapeshifting meat jelly was tossed out. It was just about to begin jabbering when it suddenly looked around and started shaking.

“Dammit! Dammit! I was only asleep for a bit and y-y-you… you brought me to a place like this? Heavens! Heavens! This… this place is way too dangerous!!”

“Quiet!” snapped Meng Hao. He quickly retrieved the black feather, gave it to the meat jelly, and then provided a few instructions. After hearing his plan, the meat jelly was shocked, and shook its head vigorously. However, after Meng Hao uttered enough threats, the meat jelly put on a long face and agreed to the plan.

Meng Hao crept slowly toward the medicinal plant garden. He’d already made the decision that if he couldn’t acquire the Holy medicinal plants, then he would swallow his regret and teleport out. However, by this point, he had reached the 3,000-meter position that had caught the attention of the countless beetles before.

His heart pounded madly as his foot stepped past that point. He stared up ahead, vigilantly preparing for the beetles to appear, yet none did.

“This method works!” Licking his lips, he continued forward until he was at the 1,500 meter mark. Suddenly, dozens of black beetles flew up from within the weeds. Meng Hao’s face fell, and he gripped the jade slip tightly. However, he held his ground, gritting his teeth and remaining stock still.

The dozens of black beetles all emanated ferocious auras as they flew about. However, after finding nothing, they slowly flew back down to the ground.

Beads of sweat rolled down Meng Hao’s face. He knew that at this distance, if the black beetles suddenly attacked, he would be in great danger.

After a long moment passed, he gritted his teeth and crept forward again. He was now at the 1,000-meter mark, and a thousand beetles flew up buzzing into the air. Meng Hao was even more nervous than before.

“The only way I can get close is be suppressing my aura to the point where they think I’m too weak to be a threat.” A moment later, the black beetles all flew back down to the ground, and Meng Hao crept forward once again.

600 meters. 300 meters. 150 meters!

As soon as he passed the 150-meter mark, his eyes widened, and his throat tightened as everything turned black.

Tens of thousands of beetles instantly shot up into the air.

In that moment, Meng Hao urgently sent out divine will. Further out, the meat jelly was trembling and cursing inwardly. Gritting its teeth, it used the black feather to suddenly cast out a shocking aura.

Immediately, the beetles up ahead of Meng Hao were sent astir. A black sheet of light rose up that was composed of tens of thousands of black beetles, all of whom shot directly up into the sky.

The auras cast out by the beetles brushed against Meng Hao, and blood sprayed from his mouth. However, his expression was one of complete determination and utter excitement. His body flickered as he shot down toward the Reincarnation Leaf. Without the slightest hesitation, he didn’t collect the leaves, but actually tried to wrench the entire tree out of the ground, along with the Immortality Illumination Vine that was at its root!

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# Chapter 884: Family Reunion

The little violet tree was actually very tough; unexpectedly, it resisted Meng Hao’s efforts to pull it out of the ground. A brutal gleam appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes, and he used all the force he could muster; the power of a stage four Immortal exploded out as he tugged violently on the tree until a boom could be heard, and the tree was pulled up out of the ground.

“Rich! I’ve struck it rich!!” Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed with excitement, and his heart pounded with happiness. He turned and sped toward the Sun Blossoms. Eyes burning with madness, he waved his sleeve to pull them up by the root as well.

All of this happened in the time it takes a spark to fly off of a piece of flint. In the meantime, the meat jelly was hollering and blubbering as it speedily retreated through the sky above, its entire body numb as it looked at the endless black beetles flying toward it. As it shot backward, the illusion created by the black feather fell away.

With its aura suddenly weakened, Meng Hao’s actions down below were instantly noticed by the black beetles. Such provocation was something they hadn’t experienced in years; no one had ever had the gall to try place themselves within the mouth of the tiger.

Rumbling could be heard as the beetles performed an about face and shot toward Meng Hao. They moved with incredible speed, blanketing the area as they closed in. The meat jelly gritted its teeth. It didn’t want to follow the plan that Meng Hao had laid out, but it thought about how dangerous the place was and changed its mind. Wailing piteously, it used the black feather to make itself look like a black beetle, which then joined the army of other black beetles in their charge.

Such a transformation would be very difficult to pull off without the black beetles noticing, and sure enough, some of the beetles detected the anomalous presence of the meat jelly. Some of them charged toward it madly and began to voraciously bite it. The meat jelly howled, but continued to shoot toward Meng Hao as fast as possible.

Meng Hao’s face flickered as he looked at the cloud of black beetles closing in on him. Scalp tingling, he used his left hand to press down on the jade slip. Rumbling could be heard, and a bright light began to shine as the power of teleportation exploded out.

In that instant, Meng Hao used the Star Plucking Magic to grab another Holy medicinal plant off in the distance. In the blink of an eye, the plant flew through the air to land in his hand.

At the same time, the black beetles roared down toward him. The quickest of them all was the meat jelly; when it saw the light of teleportation growing stronger around Meng Hao, it nearly went crazy. It had no desire to be left behind in this place, so it burst forward with all the speed it could muster, latching onto Meng Hao’s robe with its mouth and holding on for dear life.

The countless black beetles pounced onto Meng Hao, but in that instant, the power of teleportation peaked, and he vanished.

Suddenly, the land began to tremble in response to the provocation of the teleportation. In all directions, everything turned black as millions of black beetles flew up into the air, covering the sky. At the same time, the land continued to change violently. Even though the beetles had flown up into the air, the land didn’t change color; it was as black as ever.

A muffled roar could be heard from the ground, and everything was shaking. Suddenly, it became clear that… the land was not land at all, but actually, an enormous black beetle!

In a scene reminiscent of Patriarch Reliance that year, the land in the area turned out to be resting on the back of an enormous black beetle!

Snatching food from the tiger's mouth!

If Meng Hao did not possess the teleportation jade slip, then even if he had a cultivation base in the Ancient Realm, it wouldn't have mattered. He would have been killed in body and spirit.

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In the vast Eastern Lands on Planet South Heaven, snowflakes drifted through the air, and the land was the color of silver. It was winter.

In the mountains where the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple had once stood, a bright light rose up into the air as an enormous teleportation portal appeared.

Rumbling could be heard, and the bright light faded to reveal Meng Hao. As soon as he appeared, he shot forward at top speed. The meat jelly was still latched onto his robe, and there were seven black beetles following him that had been caught up in the teleportation.

The black beetles were streaks of black light that shot murderously toward Meng Hao.

He took a deep breath, and, sensing that he was back on Planet South Heaven, lifted his head up and laughed. The feeling of narrowly escaping a catastrophe was exhilarating. He turned and faced the seven black beetles, his eyes flickering coldly.

"Seven? That's nothing!" He extended his right hand and unleashed the full power of his cultivation base, the power of a stage four Immortal. His Dharma Idol appeared, throwing a punch that gave rise to a tempest, which then bore down onto the seven black beetles.

Of the seven black beetles, five were similar to false Immortals, and two were even more powerful, emanating the aura of stage two Immortals. Back in the Ruins of Immortality, when the beetles were all grouped together, their collective power was like that of the peak of the Immortal Realm. It was something completely hair-raising. But now, there were only these seven, and under the power of Meng Hao’s punch they were all flung backwards. Their carapaces were crushed, and they were flung violently against the side of a nearby mountain.

Despite being injured, they were as vicious as ever. Radiating ferocity, they once again shot toward Meng Hao in a deadly attack.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered brightly.

“My attack just now could have killed a stage two Immortal with twenty opened meridians. But these seven beetles are as ferocious as ever. No wonder, considering they’re from the Ruins of Immortality. It would be a real waste to kill them!” He flickered forward, and as the seven black beetles closed in, he reached out, grabbed them, and threw them into his bag of holding, where he forcibly sealed them.

The seven black beetles struggled in vain as the sealing marks were laid onto their bodies. Even afterward, they still viewed Meng Hao as an enemy, and although they couldn’t escape, they would be difficult for him to control.

“When I have the time, I’ll refine them a bit. Or maybe when I fully understand the Sixth Demon Sealing Hex, I can use that to control them.” Meng Hao took a deep breath and then headed off into the mountains.

“The trial by fire ended with an unforeseen occurrence. I really need to get home to see dad and mom. They’re going to be worried.” Meng Hao turned into a beam of light that shot out of the mountains and headed toward the Fang Clan.

On the way home, Meng Hao saw snowflakes filling the sky, and colorful lanterns and streamers decorating the homes he passed. Children played happily, and a feeling of warmth and joy filled the air. Lights burned brightly in all the windows.

“Is it New Year already?” Meng Hao suddenly stopped in midair. He suddenly realized that he missed his family. During the New Year festival, such feelings tend to grow stronger. He was just about to continue onward when he suddenly thought of something. 1

“Hey, I got first place in the final arena match! But I never got my prizes!! My Immortal jades! My Immortality Illumination Vine! My Paragon’s blood!!” When he remembered these things, his jaw dropped.

When he thought of the value of the Immortal jades, how precious the Immortality Illumination Vine was, and how many Immortal jades the Paragon’s blood was worth, his eyes were instantly shot with blood. After a long moment, he clenched his jaw.

“This won’t do. Those things belong to me! I’m definitely going to be heading to the Ninth Sea God World! The Three Great Daoist Societies had better pay me what they owe!!” There was nothing he could do about it now, though, so he had no choice but to sigh in frustration and fly back to the Fang Clan.

It didn’t take long before the Fang Clan fortress appeared up ahead, decked out with lanterns and colorful banners. The feeling of New Year was heavy in the air. All of a sudden, Meng Hao sensed an aura, not of a true Immortal, but perhaps twenty to thirty percent of that of a true Immortal.

At the same time, a young woman appeared. She flew out from the Fang Clan and hovered in midair, looking at Meng Hao.

It was none other than Fang Yu.

She had emerged from secluded meditation while Meng Hao was in the trial by fire. Her cultivation base had risen all the way to the peak of Dao Seeking. With some guidance from Fang Xiufeng, she was now more powerful than a false Immortal. She also would travel the path of true Immortality, although she would use an Immortality Illumination Vine to do so.

When Fang Yu saw Meng Hao, her face lit with happiness. Moments later, Meng Hao’s father and mother appeared from behind her, smiles on their faces.

Actually, Fang Xiufeng had sensed Meng Hao as soon as he had appeared on Planet South Heaven. He gazed at Meng Hao with a loving, although somewhat reserved, smile. As for Meng Hao's mother, tears were streaming down her face. The past few months in which they hadn't been certain whether Meng Hao was even alive, had left her haggard from grief.

"Dad, mom, I'm back," Meng Hao said, smiling. Then he looked at Fang Yu, and couldn't help but recall memories from Planet East Victory. This was his big sister, who had protected him when he was small. She had a violent personality, which as a youngster had left him awestruck, but there was a warmth between them that came from being family, and Meng Hao could never forget that.

"Sis…." he said cautiously. He actually felt a bit guilty. Before, when they had met for the first time, he had been unaware of who she was, and they had actually battled each other. 2

"When you say it like that, it sounds a bit forced," she said with an enigmatic smile. After emerging from secluded meditation and learning that Meng Hao had transcended his tribulation, she was very happy. When the two of them were young, and she was forced to watch as he never grew older, it had filled her heart with pain. It was a feeling she would always remember.

Seeing her own little brother in misery was a misery for her as well. His frustration left her feeling unhappy. She would never forget how she had watched him lying in their mother's arms, reverting from seven years of age back to infancy. Fang Yu had stood there, hands clenched into fists, tears streaming down her face as she watched.

She was willing to do anything for her little brother, as long as it would let him be happy, and actually grow up. Back when they were both young, she had stood in front of him on countless occasions, unleashing her violent personality onto any clan members who bullied him.

Back on that occasion when they first met, outside the Rebirth Cave in the Southern Domain, she had immediately sensed something familiar about him. Then she saw the mark on his hand, and despite her violent personality, had been shaken inwardly, and had barely been able to hold back from crying.

In that instant, she recalled all the hardships her parents had endured, and then suddenly feared that Meng Hao might notice something about her, so she had deliberately spoken some confusing and meaningless words to throw him off the trail. From that day forward, she had been looking forward to the day when their whole family would finally be reunited.

Of course, there was also the time she ran into him in the ancient Demon Immortal Sect. At that time, she had an even stronger sense of family. After all, he was her little brother…. 3

She couldn't refrain from forcing him to call her 'big sis.' Later, some of the other Fang Clan members had scorned Meng Hao, which had caused her rage to flare. She had even been worried that Meng Hao wouldn't be able to find a host body, and had given one of the Fang Clan's host bodies to him.

There had been one moment in the Demon Immortal Sect when she had been fighting Ji Xiaoxiao and the other Ji Clan Chosen. Meng Hao had turned to leave, and in that moment, she was assured that he didn't know who she really was. And yet, seeing him leave like that broke her heart.

Then he had stopped and turned back to look at her fighting the Ji Clan, and she had smiled.

"It's not forced!" Meng Hao replied quickly. He smiled. "Sis, you look prettier than ever!"

"Oh, really?" Fang Yu smiled and began to walk toward him. She lifted her hands up and cracked her knuckles. At the same time, explosive energy surged up, and a brutal aura began to emanate out from her.

Meng Hao's face fell, and he began to fall back. Even as he took his first step back, Fang Yu pounced on him like an explosive dragon.

"Back then you dared to say I was violent!? Well, today I'll show you what violence really is!"

Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li looked at each other and smiled. Then they turned to watch Meng Hao getting chased and beaten up by Fang Yu. He didn’t even dare to fight back against her. Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li sighed emotionally.

“It’s been so long since our whole family… has been together like this.”

Off in the distance, magical fireworks exploded in the sky. A beautiful New Year had arrived.

1. The New Year referenced here is Chinese New Year or Spring Festival, the Lunar New Year, a very important holiday in Chinese culture in which almost everyone returns to their ancestral hometown and spends time with family

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# Chapter 885: Revisiting Old Haunts

Meng Hao spent an entire wonderful year with his family. The laughter and happiness they shared would exist forever in his heart.

Some days after that year ended, Fang Yu left. She did not return to the Fang Clan on Planet East Victory. Fang Xiufeng made different arrangements. An Elder from the Church of the Immortal Emperor came to Planet South Heaven to personally take Fang Yu away.

Fang Xiufeng had decided long ago that Fang Yu should join the Church of the Immortal Emperor. Her latent talent conformed with the their cultivation requirements. Furthermore, in the past, Fang Xiufeng and the current Pontifex of the Church of the Immortal Emperor had experienced harrowing adventures together.

With the Pontifex watching out for Fang Yu, and the threat of Fang Xiufeng himself, it was assured that no one would cause problems for her, despite the fact that Fang Xiufeng couldn’t leave South Heaven.

Fang Xiufeng was very protective of his daughter, but when it came to his son, his line of thinking was different.

Before leaving, Fang Yu hugged Meng Hao tightly, and then gave him a long look. The affection in her eyes caused Meng Hao’s heart to fill with a deep reluctance to part ways with her.

“Little brother, we’ll meet again out in the stars,” said Fang Yu, tousling his hair. In this moment, there was nothing violent about her at all. She was just a gentle older sister.

Fang Yu bade farewell to her parents, then took a deep breath and followed the respectful Elder from the Church of the Immortal Emperor as he stepped into the teleportation portal. Bright light flashed, and they vanished.

Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li were also reluctant to part with their daughter, especially Meng Li, whose eyes were filled with tears. Being unable to leave Planet South Heaven, she was very worried about Fang Yu, and currently clutched Fang Xiufeng’s hand tightly.

Fang Xiufeng patted his wife gently on the shoulder and watched as his daughter left. His eyes were filled with both sadness and hope. Then he turned to look at Meng Hao.

He knew that it wouldn’t be long before Meng Hao also left Planet South Heaven.

“Hao’er, your path doesn’t lie in becoming a true part of the Fang Clan,” he said. “I’ve already arranged for you to join the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite, although, if you’re not happy with that, you don’t have to go there.

“Whatever choice you make, there is one thing that you absolutely must do before anything else.

“You must first go back to the Fang Clan on Planet East Victory. I left an Immortality Illumination Vine there for you, so that you can achieve true Immortal Ascension!

“Even more importantly… your two Nirvana Fruits are also waiting for you there!

“Those two Nirvana Fruits belong to you. Now that you’ve transcended your tribulation, you can assimilate them, and they will help you reach the peak of the Immortal Realm in a very short period of time. In the future, you must not fall behind the other Chosen, but instead, must surpass them! Leave them behind you for all eternity!”

Next to speak was Meng Li.

“If you have the chance,” she said softly, “you can go to the Eighth Mountain and Sea. That… is mother’s home.”

Meng Hao nodded his head solemnly. He understood the deeper meaning in his father’s words, the meaning that was left unspoken. His father wanted him to return to the Fang Clan and rise to prominence there. He wanted to makes sure everyone knew that Fang Xiufeng’s son was no cripple, but rather, a blazing sun!

Therefore, Meng Hao vowed to himself that not only would he rise to prominence in the Fang Clan of Planet East Victory, in the future… he would definitely go to search for his Grandpa Fang and Grandpa Meng.

“You can leave the lands of South Heaven any time you want,” Fang Xiufeng continued. “When you’re ready, just let me know. I’ll arrange for someone from Planet East Victory to come and escort you there. Remember, your path is that of true Immortality. On Planet East Victory… you can become a true Immortal. Force all the people in the Fang Clan to tilt their heads back to look up at you; make them acknowledge that you are my son.” Fang Xiufeng looked deeply at Meng Hao, his son, and his pride in life.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and then nodded deeply.

A few days later, Meng Hao left the Eastern Lands. There were a few more matters he needed to attend to, after which he planned to leave Planet South Heaven.

“My path to true Immortality is different from that of others,” he murmured to himself as he flew through the air. “When the Immortal meridian inside of me is completely solidified, then I will become a true Immortal.

“I actually gained a lot from the trial by fire in the Ruins of Immortality, both in terms of the creation of divine abilities and in progress with my Immortal meridian….”

Meng Hao was able to sense when he cultivated via breathing techniques that his Immortal meridian was continuing to naturally solidify. However, the process was very slow, and unfortunately, things like the stone steles from the Ruins of Immortality were things that could only be encountered serendipitously.

“Back when master opened the Door of Immortality, the power that emerged from within the door was probably similar to the power in those stone steles. Both of them can be used to become a true Immortal.

“The fastest way to achieve true Immortal Ascension is via the Door of Immortality….

“Could it really be true that it’s now impossible to achieve true Immortal Ascension here in the lands of South Heaven?” Meng Hao sped through the air, lost in thought. He passed over the Milky Way Sea and then reached the Southern Domain.

He flew down into the Violet Fate Sect, although nobody noticed him. He stood on a tall mountain, looking out over the sect. The statue of Reverend Violet East was no longer there, but this particular mountain that he stood on was one that Pill Demon had frequented.

As he stood there, he took a deep breath and closed his eyes. He rotated his cultivation base, and the Immortal meridian inside of him, at full power. The Immortal meridian was eighty percent solid, and shone with glittering light. Dense Immortal qi emanated out from Meng Hao, and eighty percent of the power of a true Immortal merged into the surrounding lands.

In the blink of an eye, winds began to sweep about, and the lands rumbled and quaked. All of the cultivators in the Southern Domain trembled inwardly. Soon, it wasn’t just the Southern Domain that was affected. The Western Desert, the Northern Reaches, and even the Eastern Lands were all experiencing bizarre transformations.

Gradually, a vortex formed above the mountain peak where Meng Hao sat. However, almost as soon as the vortex appeared, some sort of incredible restraining power exploded out from Heaven and Earth, destroying the vortex.

It faded away, and everything returned to normal. The lands were quiet, and the cultivators of Planet South Heaven were left wondering what astonishing event had just occurred.

Meng Hao opened his eyes and sat there quietly for a long moment before shaking his head.

“Sure enough, it didn’t work…. I can sense the path of true Immortality, but am not able to summon the Door of Immortality. In each of the Mountains and Seas, Immortal destiny will appear on one of the planets, every 10,000 years. The rule cannot be broken.

“What if I used the Immortality Illumination Vine…?” Eyes glittering, he produced an Immortality Illumination Vine from within his bag of holding, the one he had acquired in the medicinal plant garden in the Ruins of Immortality.

After a bit of muttering, he shook his head.

“The Immortality Illumination Vine can definitely lead to true Immortal Ascension. However, it also cuts off the Spirit Realm, and all the advancement made therein. It’s a forced breakthrough.

“The Chosen of the other sects build themselves up for years, restrict their cultivation bases until the critical moment, and then use Immortality Illumination Vines to instantly break through.

“As for me, I’m currently at eighty percent of the power of a true Immortal. If I used the Immortality Illumination Vine to break through, I would become a true Immortal, but I would be stuck at eighty percent. That eighty percent would then become my one hundred percent.

“Apparently, my path of true Immortality really can’t be tread here on Planet South Heaven. Perhaps going to Planet East Victory like my father said is really the best choice.” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he gave up on the thought of using a vine to make his breakthrough, and then he took a deep breath and turned to leave.

No one detected his arrival or his departure from the Violet Fate Sect. He next went to the Blood Demon Sect, where he stood outside of Patriarch Blood Demon's Immortal's cave. The only thing he could sense was an aura of death; there didn't seem to be even the slightest bit of life force inside.

Patriarch Blood Demon did not emerge.

After standing there quietly for a long time, Meng Hao went to Blood Prince Gorge. It was maintained by Blood Demon Sect disciples on a daily basis, who kept the entire valley neat and clean. Meng Hao looked at the log cabin, and all the other familiar sights in the valley, and suddenly he seemed to go into a bit of a trance. He saw the outline of a woman, smiling sweetly at him.

"Xu Qing…." he murmured. He would never forget the agreement that he and Xu Qing had made.

"Wait for me…. I WILL find you!" A warm look could be seen on his face as he recalled the times he had spent with Xu Qing in Blood Prince Gorge. After a while, he left the valley and walked over to the place where he and Xu Qing had held their wedding.

A few days later, Meng Hao left. This would be the final time he visited these places, where memories of Xu Qing abounded, before leaving Planet South Heaven.

After visiting the Blood Demon Sect, he traveled about in the Southern Domain. He stopped outside the Song Clan and swept it with divine sense. He could see Patriarch Song, who was incapable of detecting Meng Hao's presence.

Meng Hao also saw a familiar woman, Song Jia. She sat there cross-legged, meditating. Although she was beautiful, it was possible to see the signs of aging on her.

"She didn't go to the trial by fire to join a sect among the stars. Does she really want to stay behind on Planet South Heaven…?"

Images from the past flitted through Meng Hao’s mind. After a long moment, he turned and left, leaving Song Jia undisturbed.

He went to the Rebirth Cave, walking through the pressure that had been so difficult to deal with all those years ago. Back then, it had been difficult to take each step, but now, it was as easy as walking down a paved road. The surrounding cultivators in the region of the Rebirth Cave looked at Meng Hao casually walking toward the Rebirth Cave itself, and their faces flickered with astonishment.

“Who is that?”

“He… he’s actually walking right into the depths of the Rebirth Cave region! The pressure here is difficult even for Spirit Severing experts.”

“Why does he look so familiar…?” As he neared the Rebirth Cave itself, more people saw him, and all of them were astonished.

He calmly proceeded deeper into the region, and was soon near the cave mouth itself.

About 1,500 meters from the cave, he saw two old men with Spirit Severing cultivation bases. They sat there cross-legged, resisting the pressure and staring at each other as if they had some enmity between the two of them. Their life forces burned low, and, they clearly hoped to find some good fortune within the Rebirth Cave.

As soon as Meng Hao approached, the two stared at him in shock.

“Who are you?” one of them growled. Then Meng Hao simply walked past them.

This left them in complete shock, and they watched wide-eyed as Meng Hao casually walked past the 1,500-meter mark and then entered the cave itself.

Panting, they exchanged glances, and could see the disbelief in each others’ eyes.

“He looks familiar….”

“Is… hey! That was Meng Hao! Heavens! He’s the Blood Prince of the Blood Demon Sect! He sealed the Dao Seeking experts from the Northern Reaches, and turned a hundred thousand Northern Reaches cultivators into felon citizens! That was Meng Hao!!”

When the two old men realized it was Meng Hao, their minds filled with a roaring like that of thunder.

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# Chapter 886: Another Challenge at the Dao Lakes!

Meng Hao calmly walked into the rugged interior of the Rebirth Cave. He saw bones lying about, which grew fewer the further he went into the cave. He stood in the spot where he had died, and as he looked down, his heart twinged in pain.

He thought of Xu Qing.

She had used her own life force to keep him going, and then, in order to resurrect him, had ended up being imprisoned in a restricted area in her own sect. Everything that had happened after that flitted through Meng Hao's mind. After a long moment, he sighed.

He then walked further into the depths of the Rebirth Cave, but saw nothing there.

There was no Immortal's corpse like the one that had fallen from the sky all those years ago, nor were there any other bizarre beings. There was a strange power that he could sense, but other than that, there was nothing.

"Rebirth Cave…. Rebirth Cave…. Yes, it was here that I actually… experienced a rebirth." Meng Hao shook his head and was about to leave, when all off a sudden he stopped in place and turned his head to look toward the very end of the Rebirth Cave. The cave wall there appeared to be normal, but moments ago, he had sensed a strange aura emanating out from that very spot.

He walked over and examined the area carefully, after which his eyes suddenly went wide, and an expression of astonishment and disbelief filled his face. He had just seen a door in the cave wall.

A closed door!

He took a deep breath and looked closer, but saw nothing. However, he was very certain that moments ago he had not been mistaken in what he saw.

“Now this is the kind of mystery that makes the Rebirth Cave worthy of its name,” he thought. He stood there looking at the cave wall for a long time, before finally turning and leaving. He was very curious, but after his experiences in the Ruins of Immortality, he well knew that there were many great secrets in the world, secrets that the level of his cultivation base did not allow him to understand.

When he walked out of the Rebirth Cave, the two old men were still sitting there cross-legged. When they saw Meng Hao, they began to pant, and immediately got to their knees to kowtow.

“Greetings, Blood Prince Meng.”

“Greetings, your excellency Meng Hao!”

Meng Hao stopped, nodded to the two men, and then prepared to leave.

One of the old men, whose life force was very dim, hesitated for a moment and then asked, “Your excellency Meng Hao… uh… what exactly is inside the Rebirth Cave?”

Meng Hao didn’t respond at first. After a moment passed, he said, “Hope.”

Then he left.

The two old men’s spirits lifted. Sighing, they settled back down cross-legged, hope surging in their hearts.

“According to the legends, the exalted Meng Hao actually experienced rebirth inside of the Rebirth Cave!”

“He said hope exists in there, so maybe we do have hope!!” The glanced at each other, and their eyes shone brightly.

After leaving the region of the Rebirth Cave, Meng Hao flew up into the air and looked around emotionally. Finally, his gaze came to rest on the Ancient Temple of Doom.

After a moment of silence, he shot in that direction. It only took a moment for him to appear in midair above the Ancient Temple of Doom. He looked at the grand temple, and thought about Chu Yuyan, and the gorge they had spent time in, and the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament.

“Now that I think about it, this temple… protected me from the Heavenly Tribulation that year.” He floated down from midair to stand directly in front of the archaic and dilapidated Ancient Temple of Doom.

Stone steps led up to the temple itself, and numerous deity statues could be seen within, statues that bore the appearance of Immortal Divinities, solemn and grand.

There were quite a few cultivators congregated outside of the temple. This was one of the three most mysterious locations in all of the Southern Domain, and was the least dangerous of all, which attracted cultivators who wanted to try to acquire some of the good fortune inside.

Meng Hao’s arrival was noticed by a few of the cultivators, but no one paid very close attention to him.

Meng Hao looked at the temple for a moment, then walked forward. Not too far behind him was a cultivator who was observing the temple, but didn’t dare to get very close. When he saw Meng Hao walking closer the temple, he called out in a sincere voice.

“Fellow Daoist, you can’t get too close to the Ancient Temple of Doom! It’s very dangerous!”

It wasn’t just this man who noticed Meng Hao now. Many of the surrounding Southern Domain cultivators saw him approaching the temple.

Quite a few looked on with cold sneers, or even open ridicule as they waited for something exciting to unfold.

“This temple is something that the average person can’t get close to. Our location here outside of the perimeter is the closest one can get. With the exception of some of the Patriarchs, anyone who gets any closer is dead for sure!”

“That guy doesn’t look very familiar, what sect is he from?”

As the crowd discussed what was happening, Meng Hao reached the staircase and then began to climb up one step at a time. The other cultivators looked on with wide eyes, panting. Expressions of disbelief and astonishment could be seen.

“He’s… he’s actually going up the stairs!”

“What cultivation base does he have? This is impossible!”

“How come… he looks somewhat familiar…?”

As the cultivators looked on in shock, Meng Hao finished climbing the stairs and now stood directly in front of the towering temple. The doors had long since been broken completely open, and as Meng Hao stood there, he could clearly see all of the deity statues inside.

Each and every one depicted a powerful expert from the Ancient Doom Clan.

“They fought with Ji Tian…” murmured Meng Hao, “and were defeated. Before their clan was exterminated, they built this temple, the Will of which shall eternally resist the Heavens of Ji….” As he stood there, he felt as if he were looking at a former mighty clan, displaying all the brilliance of their long history.

After a long moment passed, he clasped hands and bowed deeply to the temple.

The entire Ancient Temple of Doom trembled in response to his show of respect. Rumbling sounds echoed out, and all of the cultivators further out felt their minds trembling, and backed up in astonishment.

That astonishment came from the fact that they were witnessing Meng Hao bowing to the temple, and in response, more than half of the statues inside the temple bowed in return, as if they had come to life.

Furthermore, a brilliant light rose up from the temple, which spread out in all directions to cover everything.

“Heavens! What’s going on? How can this be happening!”

“The statues in the Ancient Temple of Doom, they’re… they’re actually alive!!”

“Who is that cultivator?! Can it really be that the temple cannot bear to accept his show of respect without returning the salute?” Even as the crowds were in an uproar, Meng Hao looked up and saw that roughly sixty percent of the statues were bowing to him. The other forty percent were looking at him with faint smiles.

At the very back of the temple stood three majestic statues who remained completely unmoving. However, they looked at Meng Hao without any ill will whatsoever.

“That’s… that’s his excellency Meng Hao!!”

“It’s Meng Hao!! That’s Blood Prince Meng Hao!” As more and more people recognized him, a buzz of conversation instantly rose up.

As Meng Hao looked into the temple, he gradually became aware of numerous ancient voices murmuring in his ears. The voices were obscure, but they seemed to contain anticipation, hope that one day they would be able to leave the temple and carry out a slaughter in the Heavens.

After a long moment, Meng Hao bowed again, then turned to leave. As he flew into the air, the light shining up from the Ancient Temple of Doom slowly faded, and the temple returned to its original condition.

After leaving the Ancient Temple of Doom, Meng Hao did not depart from the lands of the Southern Domain, but instead, headed toward the Ancient Dao Lakes.

“I wonder if Lu Bai and those others are still trapped under there,” he thought. He proceeded onward, passing the various locations where he had experienced such dangerous situations that year, and eventually came to a stop above the enormous Dao Lake in the middle of the region.

As he hovered there in midair, looking at the lake, a thoughtful look appeared in his eyes. Were he to pick one place in the Southern Domain that was the most dangerous place of all, the Ancient Dao Lakes would definitely be his choice.

That was especially true due to the third level of the trial by fire therein. When Meng Hao thought back to that incident, he was still unsure as to whether or not he could succeed if he went back. But then his eyes glittered, and he patted his bag of holding to produce a white crystal that emanated pulsing coldness.

The coldness seemed faint, but according to Meng Hao’s speculations, there was something about this object that was completely extraordinary. This item… was the crystal he had acquired from the Feng Shui compass in the Warrior Pavilion in the Ruins of Immortality.

“The Essence of Divine Flame….” A gleam of curiosity appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes. He still remembered the enormous flame seed inside the third level. The incredible intensity of that fire had been beyond his imagination.

Because of the level of his cultivation base that year, Meng Hao didn’t understand what the term ‘essence’ meant. Even now, he still didn’t fully understand; he only had a vague idea.

“Even with this white crystal, it will be difficult to pass the test in that level. I only want a little bit of that flame… but what can I take it away in?”

After a moment of silent thought, he slapped his bag of holding to produce a bronze oil lamp whose flame had long since been extinguished. As he gazed at the lamp, his eyes glittered.

“Once I leave Planet South Heaven, it’s impossible to say when I’ll return. I’ll definitely be facing all sorts of peril. If I can take some of that flame essence with me, it can serve as a trump card for me in dangerous situations. I’m not sure if I can succeed, but I have to try.” Meng Hao took a deep breath and then flew down to the surface of the Dao Lake, which he then sank down into.

In the blink of an eye, he was at the bottom of the lake. There was no entrance visible; everything looked completely ordinary. However, considering that he had eighty percent of the power of a true Immortal, when Meng Hao looked at the lake bottom, he saw a huge teleportation portal.

His body flickered as he moved to stand within the portal, and yet nothing happened.

As he stood there, he transmitted a message with divine will. “Oh senior member of the people who guard the world beneath the lake, I have returned to once again challenge the third level!”

In response to his divine will, the lake began to churn. After a moment, the teleportation portal rotated into operation, and brilliant light swallowed Meng Hao up.

A moment later, Meng Hao could see again, and he was underground. He was surrounded by numerous mountains formed from magical items, and countless beasts of different colors. There was an enormous door, before which lay a golden beast. All of a sudden, the beast turned to look at Meng Hao.

“You… wish to challenge the third level?” The echoing voice had been very intimidating the first time Meng Hao had come here, but now he simply looked out calmly over the first level. At the moment, he couldn’t see any of the other people he had come here with that year.

“There’s no need to look for those people,” the voice continued. “With the exception of Lu Bai, all of them… have long since perished.

“Are you certain that you wish to challenge the third level?” asked the golden beast, its voice rumbling out like thunder. All of the other beasts in the area looked at Meng Hao, their eyes radiating ferocity.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and nodded.

“Yes, I wish to make the challenge!”

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# Chapter 887: The Essence of Divine Flame!

The golden beast looked deeply at Meng Hao, then threw its head back and roared. Instantly, all of the other beasts in the first level parted, creating a path for Meng Hao to follow to the huge door.

Meng Hao proceeded forward, passing through the animals, his gaze fixed on the door. Suddenly, an enormous beast off to the right who possessed a Spirit Severing aura, roared and pounced toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s expression was normal, and he didn’t even look at the beast. He simply raised his right hand and made a grasping motion toward its forehead.

When compared in size to the enormous beast, Meng Hao’s hand was miniscule. However, he viciously grabbed onto the beast’s head, instantly causing it to begin to howl miserably. In response, the surrounding beasts leapt angrily to their feet.

Meng Hao’s expression was calm as he continued to walk forward. He did not loosen his right hand, but instead, dragged the enormous beast along with him as he walked.

The golden beast lying beneath the huge door looked on with wide eyes. However, it did nothing to interfere. It allowed Meng Hao to approach the door, where he finally released the beast from his hand, then looked at the golden-colored beast and nodded. Then he stepped through the door.

When he reappeared, he was on the second level, where he saw the same ancient, white-colored overseer beast that he had seen the last time. He also saw Lu Bai, sitting cross-legged in meditation, just a single pace away from the final level.

The stubble of a beard could be seen on Lu Bai’s face, and his clothing was in tatters. However, his face shone with a brilliant light, and as soon as Meng Hao appeared, he glanced over. A look of shock appeared on his face.

Meng Hao stood down below and looked up at the ancient beast. “Senior, I would like to attempt the third level.”

The beast looked down at Meng Hao and, after a long moment passed, nodded its head. Meng Hao immediately flew up to the peak of the level.

The beast’s pupils constricted, and a look of concentration appeared on its face.

“You’ve changed,” said the beast. “You’re far more powerful than the last time we met…. However, I would like to give you a bit of advice. Considering the level of your cultivation base, you will not be able to pass this third level.

“Considering how you passed the second level last time, you were given a chance to experience the third level for a moment, which is how you escaped death. This time… if you fail, you will likely have no chance to leave the level, and will perish inside.

“The test of the third level is to completely absorb the Essence of Divine Flame into your body.”

Meng Hao looked back silently at the overseer, but his eyes gleamed with determination. He nodded.

The beast thought for a moment, but did nothing more to block Meng Hao’s way. It waved its hand, and an enormous vortex appeared, within which could be seen the flicker of flames. This sea of flames was none other than the entrance to the third level.

Meng Hao was just about to step in when….

Lu Bai couldn’t hold back from calling out.

“Meng Hao…. Um… how are things outside?” He had been privy to the Northern Reaches’ invasion plans, and as such, he knew that the Southern Domain should have been occupied. However, now he saw Meng Hao, with a cultivation base even more terrifying than before. He himself had performed his third Severing, and had successfully stepped into Dao Seeking. However, with his early Dao Seeking cultivation base, he was unable to clearly see Meng Hao’s cultivation base.

He had a very bad feeling, a feeling that caused his face to go pale.

Meng Hao stopped in place and looked back at Lu Bai silently for a moment before replying.

“The Northern Reaches’ invasion failed. Most of your Dao Seeking experts were killed.”

“Impossible!” replied Lu Bai, his voice hoarse. “The Grand Elder, the High Priest, and all the others aren’t just at peak Dao Seeking. Some of them are comparable to false Immortals! Plus, they have powerful magical items! Even a false Immortal who went up against the Northern Reaches would perish! How could they all be dead?!

“The Northern Reaches has vast resources! How could an army of a million cultivators suffer a defeat like that!?!?”

Meng Hao’s voice was calm as he responded, “The Grand Elder you speak of, as well as the High Priest, and a few of the other strongest Dao Seeking experts are all suppressed under a mountain called Sin of the North. Their cultivation bases are being used to replenish the spiritual energy in the lands of the Southern Domain.

“As for the army you speak of, most of those million cultivators died. The surviving hundred thousand or so had their cultivation bases severed and were turned into felon citizens. For generations to come, the bloodlines of the Northern Reaches’ cultivators will never produce Nascent Soul cultivators.

“And then there’s you. If you get out of this place, you can go to Sin of the North to bear witness yourself. If, from this day forward, you agree to practice cultivation peacefully, then I won’t kill you where you stand. However, if you cause any problems… there are people in the outside world who will slaughter you.” With that, he ignored Lu Bai and stepped into the vortex.

Lu Bai’s face was pale white, and he coughed up a mouthful of blood. From the way Meng Hao spoke, he could tell that his words were not false. Everything he had said was true.

He was silent for a moment, and then began to chuckle bitterly. He thought of his friends from home, his master, his Patriarch. He had never imagined that while he was stuck in this place… the entire world outside would be turned upside down.

In the moment that Meng Hao stepped into the vortex, he felt as if he were passing through a boundless sea of flames. At the same time, a terrifying roaring could be heard.

The roaring became very clear as soon as Meng Hao stepped fully into the world of the third level. In front of him was no sea of flames, but rather, a blood-colored field.

The lands were also filled with white grass.

A total of 990,000 pagodas could be seen circling out in all directions, in the middle of which was a black city. The city was overgrown with the white grass, and a spark of flame hovered in midair above it. The flame seemed as if it would burn for all eternity, and cast brilliant, flickering light throughout the entire world.

Then, the same voice Meng Hao had heard the previous time he had been here echoed out.

“Dao Fang, you must die!!

“You killed me, Dao Fang, and if I’m reincarnated, I’ll definitely kill you!

“The world of Immortals is doomed to experience tribulation! The Immortal lands will grow old, and the Immortals will perish! But I refuse to give in!!

“I know the truth! No matter how long you suppress me, I won’t admit defeat!

“Damned monkey! If I can get free, I’ll have your hide!

“If I’m transmigrated, I will slaughter myself out of this place! If my transmigration fails, I will fall into oblivion like all other living things, with virtually no hope of reawakening even after countless cycles of reincarnation. Therefore, I will leave a Heavenly command for this place!

“My decree contains the essence of my Dao flame, a remnant of the existence of my flame. I hope that countless years later, that vestige will still exist!”

The voice was like a sharp sword, stabbing into his mind. His head spun, and he felt as if his body were about to collapse into pieces.

However, this time, not only had Meng Hao come prepared, but also, his cultivation base was far different than before. It was like the difference between Heaven and Earth. Now, the only thing that happened was that he bled from his eyes, ears, nose and mouth. His body did not begin to fall apart like last time. As the sound echoed out, Meng Hao looked at the enormous Essence of Divine Flame up ahead.

The Essence suddenly burst with power that rumbled out through the entire world. Originally, there had been no flames here, but now, everything burst out with fire. The land, the sky, everything turned into flames. In the blink of an eye, the whole world was aflame.

The flames were shocking, and Meng Hao felt a sense of deadly crisis as soon as they spread out. These flames were definitely powerful enough to kill him.

In the moment of crisis, Meng Hao unhesitatingly produced the white crystal from his bag of holding. As soon as he grabbed ahold of it, icy coldness spread out to cover his body, blocking the flames.

When that happened, Meng Hao sighed in relief. The whole reason he had dared to come to this place was because of the crystal. However, he had only been eighty percent sure that it would be successful, and had thus hesitated. However, now that he saw that the crystal was indeed effective, Meng Hao’s eyes glittered brightly.

He looked up at the Essence of Divine Flame, and smiled in anticipation.

The huge spark hovered in midair, spewing out a sea of flames, as if it were the source of all flames.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. Then, hefting the crystal, he began to slowly move forward. The flames around him raged ferociously, battering against him in waves. The power of the fire was shockingly intense, and he knew that if even the tiniest ember from those flames touched him, even his Eternal stratum would only keep him alive for a short time before he was completely destroyed.

Time passed, and Meng Hao continued to get closer and closer to the enormous Essence of Divine Flame. After a while, he came to a stop a few thousand meters away from the flame. He found it very difficult to progress further, not because the crystal was incapable of absorbing any more of the flame’s power, but because he was physically unable to approach any further even by employing his cultivation base at its maximum power. The pressure in the area was just too intense.

If he didn’t have the crystal, at most, he could reach a point around ten thousand meters away from the flame.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and looked around at the sea of flames. By this point, he could see images within the flames, including beasts, magical items and types of vegetation.

Each image was intensely powerful, something that would shock even someone at the peak of the Immortal Realm. The closer he got to the Essence of Divine Flame, the more terrifying the flame spirits became.

“I don’t want to take away the entire Essence of Divine Flame,” he thought. “I just want a bit of fire to use as a trump card in the future.” He cautiously sent his divine sense out, opened a gap in the protective shield created by the crystal, and pulled in a flame spirit that looked like a butterfly. Once it was inside, he backed up at top speed, and used all the power of his cultivation base to use the power of the crystal to envelop the flame butterfly.

After backing up some distance, the power of the flame sea decreased a bit, and Meng Hao stopped. Panting, he looked at the butterfly fluttering around within the power of the crystal. Then, he carefully sent a stream of divine sense toward the flame butterfly. As soon as it made contact, his divine sense ignited into flame, and he instantly severed the connection.

Determination appeared in his eyes as he produced the ancient bronze lamp from his bag of holding. Exercising the utmost caution, he extended it toward the flame butterfly.

“If this works, then I’ll have an excellent trump card to use in the future. If I fail, well… I won’t have lost out on anything.” Gritting his teeth, he touched the bronze lamp to the flame butterfly.

In that instant, the bronze lamp suddenly flickered. The flame butterfly landed on the lamp’s wick, and a puffing sound could be heard as the flame blazed to life!

It only burned for a moment, and then went dark. However, there was now a glimmering spark inside the lamp.

Meng Hao excitedly attempted to put the lamp back into his bag of holding, and was successful. Then he pulled it back out and blew on it. Instantly, a sea of flames erupted out, and Meng Hao held his breath. A moment later, the flames died out, and only a spark remained in the lamp.

“Success!” he said, laughing loudly. Licking his lips, he thought about trying to collect some more flame, but then he looked at the Essence of Divine Flame floating there in midair and considered the bizarre nature of the place. In the end, he decided that it wasn’t wise to act rashly. Reigning in his greed, he backed up a bit and then put the the crystal away. He allowed the flames to burn him a bit, then, eyes glittering, stepped into the exit and vanished.

In the moment that he vanished, a vertical eye suddenly appeared within the Essence of Divine Flame. It stared coldly at Meng Hao as he faded away, and then, after a moment, a long sigh could be heard.

“After all these years, he is the first person to succeed…. He… will definitely be back!”

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# Chapter 888: Let Them Fly On Their Own!

As soon as the old white-colored beast saw Meng Hao appear back in the second level, he looked a bit surprised.

“Considering your cultivation base, you were doomed to fail,” he said, his voice echoing about. “And yet, you didn’t perish in there….” He looked deeply at Meng Hao, and when he noticed his tattered, charred clothing, his suspicions mostly vanished.

Meng Hao smiled wryly and shook his head, then took a deep breath.

“Senior, I was crude and rash. I thought that my cultivation base was different, and that I could give it a try. I never thought that, as you mentioned, I would fail…. Thankfully, I didn’t get too close, otherwise I would have ended up dead and buried in there.”

The old beast nodded, and Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed. The old beast did nothing to prevent Meng Hao from vanishing into the exit portal.

As for Lu Bai, he silently watched Meng Hao leave.

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In a certain region outside the Ancient Dao Lakes, glittering light rose up as Meng Hao was teleported out of the underground world. His expression was one of excitement as he patted his bag of holding and took a deep breath.

“That fire spirit from the 3,000-meter region is a trump card I can use if I ever run into a dangerous situation involving someone at the peak of the Immortal Realm. Unfortunately, the fire isn’t eternal. I wonder how many times I’ll be able to use it? Not many, I’m sure.” With that, Meng Hao vanished.

Meng Hao appeared in many places throughout the Southern Domain over the following days. He went to many familiar places, including the Black Lands, where he visited many old friends.

The Western Desert was still, for the most part, covered by the Violet Sea, and was lifeless.

After bidding farewell to his friends in the Black Lands, he went to the place where he’d once encountered the being who had fought with the Heavens of Ji. When he got there, there was no trace of anyone present at all. 1

After that, he went to the Milky Way Sea, where everything was still and silent, a sharp contrast to how it had once been. It was in the Inner Ring was where he had seen the ancient ship to which he felt so much gratitude, the same ancient ship he had also seen in the Ruins of Immortality.

After circling about the Milky Way Sea, he went back to the Eastern Lands. Finally, he let out a long sigh as he realized that it really was time to depart.

“Fatty is now in the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum, Elder Brother Chen Fan went to the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto, and Wang Youcai joined Moonset Lake…. Even all those Chosen I know from the Ji Clan have left to go to the Ninth Mountain.” These were all things Meng Hao had recently been told by his father.

All of the Chosen that he had known from the Southern Domain were either dead, gone, or far beneath him in terms of power. Most did not even qualify to meet his gaze.

“It’s really time to leave,” Meng Hao thought with a sigh. He was now walking through the Eastern Lands, past mountains and through plains, making sure that his memories of the lands of South Heaven were firmly implanted in his mind. One day, he found himself on the shore of a mighty river in the Eastern Lands, where he suddenly stopped in his tracks.

He had sensed a familiar aura, although it was incredibly faint. If he hadn’t been walking through this area, he would never have noticed it.

“This aura….” He looked at the river in front of him, which was considered the main river in the Eastern Lands. It divided the sub-continent in half, and actually flowed out from the Milky Way Sea.

The strangest thing was that this aura was not just familiar, it was incredibly familiar. It was… his own aura!

Muttering to himself, Meng Hao followed the traces of the aura until he found himself on a remote shore of the river. There were no people anywhere nearby, and evidence of wild animals could be seen.

At a certain point, he suddenly caught sight of an object on a shallow bank nearby that instantly caused him to stop in place and stare with wide eyes.

Time seemed to suddenly come to a standstill, and the world seemed to cease its rotation. Everything else in front of Meng Hao vanished, except for that one item, floating there in the water. It seemed as if it were something eternal, and quickly became the only thing he could see.

It was a bottle gourd.

It was stuck between two rocks, battered by the elements, having soaked in the river water for countless years. It was thoroughly dilapidated and apparently on the verge of rotting to pieces completely. It floated there quietly, as if it were waiting for someone to come along and pick it up.

Perhaps, were it not for the two rocks that kept it stuck in place, the bottle gourd would have floated away long ago. Perhaps… it would have made it to the Great Tang.

Meng Hao began to tremble. The bottle gourd looked ordinary, but it was something he would never be able to forget.

Back when he was a young scholar, he had yet again failed in the Imperial examinations, then stood atop Mount Daqing, where he wrote something on a slip of paper, stuck it in a bottle gourd, and threw it into the river at the bottom of the mountain. 2

That river had been said to flow all the way to the Eastern Lands, but Meng Hao had long since learned that it connected not to the Eastern Lands, but to the Milky Way Sea.

It was as if, over the years, there were some power that had guided the bottle gourd across the Milky Way Sea and all the way to the Eastern Lands, where it got stuck in this river.

Meng Hao stared at the bottle gourd with its familiar aura. He had never imagined that one day he would once again see this bottle gourd. He had assumed that it had long since sunk to the bottom of the river or the sea, or had been picked up by someone.

“I threw this bottle into the river before I began to practice cultivation. Now, just when I’m about to leave, I’ve run into it again….” He walked quietly over to the bottle-gourd, then bent down to pick it up.

It was rotting, and as he held it in his hand, he felt as if he didn’t even need to expend any effort to break it open.

“But how… could it possibly still be around after hundreds of years…? It’s just an ordinary bottle gourd. It should have vanished long ago.” After looking at it for a long moment, he uncorked the gourd. Inside, it was slightly damp, but there was no water. Meng Hao turned it upside down, and a rolled up strip of paper fell out.

When he saw the paper, an emotional expression of reminiscence appeared on his face. He thought back to the youthful version of himself, standing there on Mount Daqing, and the bellowing rage he had flown into after each time he failed the Imperial examinations.

He also thought about his life in Yunjie County, and all the things that had happened there.

He gingerly uncurled the strip of paper. Although the words were somewhat blurry, he was able to vaguely make out the grand aspiration that he had written down that year….

He looked at the piece of paper, and as he smiled, it seemed as if the bottle gourd no longer bore the weight of his desire, and it transformed into ash. The strip of paper also gradually disintegrated into tiny pieces that drifted through his fingers and vanished with the wind.

Meng Hao then felt that familiar aura fade away.

He stood there quietly for a moment, saying nothing. Finally, he closed his eyes. Time passed. One day after another went by, until an entire week passed. The river water flowed, the sun and moon rose and set. Birds and beasts scampered to and fro along the river bank.

Seven days later, Meng Hao opened his eyes, and they shone with enlightenment.

“There is a mysterious power in the world….” he murmured.

“And that power is desire.

“That ordinary bottle gourd was able to survive down to this day because it was sustained from within by my desire. As a cultivator, the desire that I had back then has grown stronger even as I have grown stronger, however far away the realization of it was.

“It was my own familiar aura which helped that bottle gourd… to survive all these years.

“After picking it up, the desire that had coalesced in the bottle gourd and the piece of paper vanished and returned into my hand. That is why it disappeared into Heaven and Earth.

“It’s similar to what Xie Yixian from the Burning Incense Stick Society said during our arena match. Burning Incense… coalesces the desires of all living things, and the cultivation of that desire is burning incense. 3

“I never imagined that I would be enlightened here regarding the power of burning incense.” After a moment he looked down at his hand, which he then waved.

Time seemed to move in reverse, as the drifting pieces of ash from seven days before suddenly reappeared. They transformed into a piece of paper, as well as the bottle gourd which had vanished.

Meng Hao’s expression was calm as he once again placed the strip of paper into the bottle gourd and tossed it into the river. As the water flowed, the bottle gourd bobbed up and down, drifting off into the distance.

“I still haven’t achieved what I desire, so how could I let that bottle gourd disappear…? Perhaps years from now, someone will find my bottle gourd and open it up to reveal my desire… and my aura….” As he watched the bottle gourd disappear into the distance, a faint smile broke out on his face.

“It’s time to leave,” he said. Taking a deep breath, he turned and, his expression one of determination, strode off into the distance. Eventually, he appeared up in the sky, where he became a beam of light that disappeared off into the distance.

One day later.

In the Fang Clan of the Eastern Lands, a huge teleportation portal had been set up in a rear courtyard. Glittering light rose up from the portal, next to which stood Meng Hao, his parents, and another middle-aged man.

The middle-aged man acted extremely respectfully toward Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li, and when he looked at Meng Hao, an emotional and loving expression could be seen.

“Hao’er,” said Fang Xiufeng, “this is your 19th Uncle. He’s my younger cousin and a member of our bloodline.”

Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed deeply.

19th Uncle laughed heartily and quickly straightened Meng Hao up from his bow. His expression of fondness only continued to grow deeper.

“You’re a good kid,” he said. “Wonderful, truly wonderful. When we get back to the clan, I hope that you can help me take care of my own son. He loafs around all day and is always a big headache.”

“The Fang Clan is on Planet East Victory, which is far away from Planet South Heaven,” said Fang Xiufeng, looking at Meng Hao with a serious expression. “With your cultivation base, you can’t travel directly through the stars. You will need two teleportation portals to get there. Your 19th Uncle has come here personally to escort you along the way.”

Meng Li stood next to Fang Xiufeng, clearly reluctant to part from Meng Hao. However, she knew that Meng Hao’s path lay among the stars, not on Planet South Heaven.

All she could do was start straightening up his luggage. Although he had a bag of holding, she had personally sewn some luggage for him. She straightened up his clothing, then looked over her son, tears welling up in her eyes.

“Mom,” he said softly, “don’t worry, I’ll be fine.”

“I can’t leave Planet South Heaven,” said Fang Xiufeng. “If you face any dangers out there, I can’t protect you. This crocodile can temporarily act as your Dao Protector, but in the end, you must watch out for yourself.” He waved his hand, causing the crocodile to emerge and obediently shrink down and descend onto Meng Hao’s palm, then scurry up into his sleeve. Fang Xiufeng continued quietly, “If you perish….

“Father will get revenge for you!”

Meng Hao and 19th Uncle stood in the teleportation portal. Soft light glittered out as Meng Hao looked at his parents standing outside of the portal. Suddenly, his eyes felt moist, and he dropped to his knees to kowtow three times to his parents.

“Dad, mom. I’m leaving now…. You don’t need to miss me or worry about me, I’ll come back to visit often.”

Rumble!

The light from the teleportation portal rose up into the air. In the moment before he vanished completely, Meng Hao waved at his parents.

Meng Li couldn’t hold the tears back any longer as she watched Meng Hao disappear. Her heart filled with worry, and in that brief moment, she grew older.

Fang Xiufeng seemed strong on the outside, but even his eyes grew blurry.

“The kids have grown up. We have to let them fly on their own.”

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# Chapter 889: Killing Intent Lurking Everywhere!

The scintillating lights on Planet South Heaven lasted for the time it takes an incense stick to burn before fading completely away.

Out in the starry sky was an asteroid field that seemed to be eternally drifting among the stars.

The largest of the asteroids were tens of thousands of meters wide, the smallest were dozens. From a distance, the asteroid field almost looked like a river of stars floating through space.

This portion of space was actually not completely black; occasional dots of sparkling light glittered to and fro. At first glance, the starry sky seemed without end, but in fact, it was not so. It also seemed to pulse with life.

The asteroid field was filled with many large asteroids that were apparently surrounded by shocking power, almost like shields.

One of those asteroids was tens of thousands of meters wide, and emanated glittering light. It was possible to see numerous teleportation portals carved into its surface, over a thousand of them packed tightly together.

One of those teleportation portals was currently emanating dazzling light, and the figures of Meng Hao and 19th Uncle slowly became visible.

“Hao’er,” 19th Uncle said with a smile, “there is a vast distance between Planet South Heaven and Planet East Victory. It would be difficult to teleport there directly. That’s why we need to transfer teleportation portals here.” When he looked at Meng Hao, the emotion and love in his gaze was apparent.

He was very pleased that his older cousin’s son had successfully transcended his tribulation, and was finally able to return to the clan.

When he thought of the steep price Fang Xiufeng had paid over the years, he couldn’t help but sigh in his heart.

“You can take a look around,” 19th Uncle continued. “This asteroid belongs to the Fang Clan, so we’re in no danger. I need some time to make some adjustments to the teleportation portal. The way it is now, your body probably couldn’t handle it. I need about… enough time for an incense stick to burn.” With that, he began to make adjustments to the teleportation portal.

Meng Hao nodded in response, then stepped out of the teleportation portal to look around.

There was no sun and no sky. The only things he could see were sparkling stars amidst pitch black darkness. Although this was not Meng Hao’s first time stepping out into the starry sky, it was different than those other times.

“I’ve really left Planet South Heaven….” He looked off into the distance, but actually had no sense of direction, and no way to determine where Planet South Heaven might be. His heart felt a bit empty, and he was also nervous about arriving as a stranger on Planet East Victory.

Of course, that was where he had been born, and was also a planet that belonged to his own Fang Clan.

He patted his bag of holding, within which was a jade slip given to him by his father. It contained a map of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, along with various paths among the stars.

“Once I’ve finished making these adjustments, we can be on our way,” 19th Uncle called out, smiling as he continued to adjust the teleportation portal to suit Meng Hao. “The Patriarchs are all in secluded meditation, and have left the Grand Elder in charge. He was very happy to hear that you're returning, and has arranged for large numbers of clan members to gather together and receive you.

"It's going to be very lively! Hahaha! Once we're back, you really have to help me get my son in line!"

Meng Hao nodded, and for some reason, he wasn't able to keep a bit of warmth from rising up in his heart. That was the warmth of family, a warmth that had begun to grow cold almost as soon as he left Planet South Heaven and stepped out into space.

"19th Uncle, does all of Planet East Victory belong to the Fang Clan?" he asked.

"Your father didn't tell you? Well, that makes sense. Cousin is a bit resentful of the clan. Ai….

"Hao'er, you probably already know that all the lands and stars are actually part of nine mountains and seas. Another way of putting it is that nine mountains exist in the starry sky, and each mountain has a sea, thus, nine seas.

"The Nine Mountains and Seas are divided into groups of mountains and seas, and thus nine worlds.

"In each of those, there are four planets which rotate eternally around their respective mountains. Outside of the Nine Mountains are two enormous heavenly bodies; the sun and a moon.

"Because of the reflections cast by the sea of stars, the sun and moon look different on each of the planets, but in fact, there is only a single sun and a single moon for all the Nine Mountains and Seas.

"In the Ninth Mountain and Sea, one of those four planets is Planet East Victory, which belongs completely to the Fang Clan. Although there are other sects and power structures on the planet, if the Fang Clan wanted to, we could unify the other powers. Instead, we permit them to exist.

“Actually, the largest planet in the Ninth Mountain and Sea is not Planet East Victory, but rather Planet North Reed. It is several times larger than Planet East Victory, and is where the Wang Clan, Song Clan, and Li Clan, the Three Great Clans, all call home.

“Then there is Planet West Felicity, where you can find the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto, one of the Three Great Daoist Societies, as well as other illustrious sects.

“To further analyze matters, you have to look at the Ninth Mountain and the Ninth Sea as a whole.

“Compared to everything else, Planet South Heaven is special. Since your father didn’t tell you the details about that, then I won’t presume to talk about them.” After providing his explanation, 19th Uncle smiled and continued with his adjustments to the spell formation.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered with an intense light. 19th Uncle’s description overlapped with his own understanding of matters to provide a much larger picture in Meng Hao’s mind.

“19th Uncle, what other sects are on Planet East Victory?” he suddenly asked.

“The most famous are the Church of the Blood Orchid and the Church of the Puppet God, which are listed among the Three Churches and Six Sects. In addition to them is the Medicine Immortal Sect. They might not be listed among the Three Churches and Six Sects, but when it comes to the Dao of alchemy, in all the Ninth Mountain and Sea, they are second only to the Kunlun Society.

“Most accurately speaking… the Medicine Immortal Sect has a deep connection with the Fang Clan. Ai… it was actually founded by a Patriarch of the Fang Clan who got angry and left to start his own sect.

“After we get back to the clan, my son, your cousin, can tell you more about all that.” 19th Uncle extended his right hand and pushed down onto the surface of the teleportation portal, causing bright light to glitter up.

“Alright, that’s it! Let’s get going, Hao’er. After enough time passes for an incense stick to burn, you’ll be able to lay eyes on Planet East Victory!” Laughing loudly, 19th Uncle stepped into the teleportation portal, followed closely by Meng Hao. As the light of teleportation surrounded them, a glow of anticipation could be seen in Meng Hao’s eyes.

Meng Hao and 19th Uncle soon vanished with the light. However, in the moment that they faded away, a black-robed cultivator appeared above the teleportation portal.

He wore no expression at all on his face, which was as cold as ice. He almost seemed completely devoid of emotion. He appeared without making a single noise, and when he saw that Meng Hao and 19th Uncle had disappeared into the portal, he stamped down viciously with his right foot, instantly shattering the teleportation portal.

The teleportation portal was fundamentally very difficult to shatter. Otherwise, Meng Hao and 19th Uncle would not have been so confident in using it; after all, this asteroid belonged to the Fang Clan, and was protected by a shield, making it very difficult for outsiders to get into the place.

The black-robed man pulled out a jade slip and sent some divine will into it.

“Target acquired. Teleportation portal’s foundation destroyed.” With that, he vanished.

Almost in the same moment that he vanished, brilliant lights could suddenly be seen at a point somewhere between the asteroid and Planet East Victory, accompanied by massive rumbling. In the middle of the light was a hole that had been ripped in the void, from which a multicolored glow surged out, as well as deadly ripples. A roar could be heard, which was 19th Uncle, who shot out from within the hole, his hair in disarray, his expression that of rage, and his cultivation base rotating at full power. Next, Meng Hao stepped out from within the hole, surrounded by thunderous roaring.

19th Uncle’s face was grim, while Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed with an intense light. Moments ago, they had been in the midst of teleportation, when suddenly, the teleportation tunnel collapsed. If 19th Uncle hadn’t protected Meng Hao with his powerful cultivation base, then Meng Hao would definitely have been killed.

Almost as soon as 19th Uncle and Meng Hao appeared, ripples began to spread out all around them. In the blink of an eye, nine completely emotionless black-robed figures appeared. From the look of things, they had already calculated any avenues of escape that would be open to 19th Uncle and Meng Hao, and had sealed them off; this was a deadly ambush!

Rumbling echoed out as the nine people attacked in unison… all with peak Immortal Realm power!

“Dammit!” roared 19th Uncle. “You people really have gall! Didn’t you know that was a teleportation portal of the Fang Clan!?” He immediately performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, causing an explosively destructive aura to surge out in all directions.

However, it was at this point that a faint aura suddenly materialized in the void, and then roared out explosively. This aura was not that of the Immortal Realm, but a step beyond that, the early Ancient Realm!

The appearance of this new aura caused 19th Uncle’s face to flicker. He gritted his teeth, and a look of determination appeared on his face. He quickly grabbed Meng Hao and threw him off into the distance, as well as some other object, which turned into a beam of light that followed Meng Hao.

“Hao’er, they’re probably after me. You get out of here, and I’ll come after you later!” 19th Uncle then began to perform a double-handed incantation.

“Great Heavenly Void!” cried out 19th Uncle. His entire body suddenly transformed into an enormous vortex that instantly sucked in the hidden Ancient Realm aura, as well as the nine peak Immortal Realm cultivators. Then, they all vanished.

Everything happened extremely quickly. From the collapse of the teleportation to 19th Uncle unleashing his divine ability and swallowing up his opponents, barely enough time passed to blink an eye.

Meng Hao was panting as he tumbled through the void. The beam of light that had been following him materialized into a flying shuttle, which surrounded Meng Hao and sped off into the distance. The shuttle would provide Meng Hao protection from the starry sky for quite some time.

Meng Hao's face flickered, and he turned to look back at the spot where 19th Uncle had fought the mysterious assailants. There was nothing to be seen; apparently, Meng Hao was now the only person out here among the stars.

"Were those people after 19th Uncle, or were they… coming after me!?" Meng Hao's eyes flickered. He was not a novice in the Cultivation world. Contrariwise, he was extremely discerning. After all, he had traveled the road of cultivation all the way to the peak of Dao Seeking completely on his own power and ability, all without even knowing his father and mother. The tempering he had gone through had left him with shocking willpower and intuition.

Without pausing for a moment, he sent some divine sense into the flying shuttle. After a moment of thought, he realized that while he didn't distrust 19th Uncle, he also knew that if those people weren't targeting him, then he could do whatever he wished right now. However, if they were targeting him, then that meant they had the ability to determine not just 19th Uncle's location, but his own. Therefore… he was not safe in this shuttle.

He decided not to use the shuttle after all. He took a deep breath, gritted his teeth, and then flew out of the shuttle into the starry sky.

As soon as he left the shuttle, a suffocating pressure bore down on him. His body was immediately sent out of balance, and he began to sweat profusely. Fundamentally speaking, anyone who was not Immortal could not tread among the stars.

"I have eighty percent of the power of a true Immortal. I can kill false Immortals as easily as turning over my hand, and I'm actually comparable to a 40-meridian Immortal. Plus, my fleshly body is incredibly powerful. Therefore… I can rely on myself to fly through the stars!

“Although my speed might not be that great, I can still do it safely!” He lightly tapped the shuttle, sending it flying off in another direction, and splattered some blood onto it at the same time, which instantly transformed into a crude Blood Clone that could not wield divine abilities.

The flying shuttle speedily drifted off into the distance carrying his Blood Clone.

With that, Meng Hao turned into a beam of light that shot off into the distance.

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# Chapter 890: Battling Formidable Opponents!

Traveling through this endless void was different than traveling through the Ruins of Immortality. Here, Meng Hao had experienced an intense sensation of weightlessness. Here, things were different.

However, with his cultivation base, Meng Hao was able to quickly adjust and find his center of gravity, then was able to right himself and proceed along stably.

“So, I really can travel among the stars with this cultivation base,” he thought, his eyes glittering. He could not breathe, but to cultivators, merely rotating their cultivation base was enough. He did not need anything from outside his own body to sustain himself.

He tapped his bag of holding to produce the jade slip his father had given him. After scanning it with divine sense, he quickly pulled up the map, and found Planet East Victory. When he found his own location and compared the distance between the two, he realized… that although it didn’t look too far away, his current location was actually incredibly remote.

He muttered to himself for a moment, then put the jade slip away and continued speeding along. As he traveled, he would frequently unleash magical techniques and divine abilities, all to get more used to magical combat among the stars.

Several days later, as he proceeded along, his face suddenly flickered. He had just sensed that the Blood Clone he had left in the flying shuttle had disappeared.

“So, they were targeting me after all!” he thought. His eyes flickered with the desire to kill.

At the same time, in another location in the starry sky, two black-robed men hovered there, frowning. They wore the same type of clothing as that which had been worn by the black-robed men from earlier, although they were clearly not among the ten who had already shown their faces.

In front of them was the wreckage of the flying shuttle. Moments ago, a body could be seen inside the shuttle, but it had vanished, leaving behind only a spatter of blood, which then turned into a mist and faded away.

“What a cunning little son of a bitch,” said one of the men. “I never thought someone so young could be such a profound schemer. He’s really playing it careful.”

“He’s just a Spirit Realm cultivator,” replied the other. “Even if he’s comparable to a false Immortal, with forty or fifty percent of the power of a true Immortal, he won’t be able to get very far. It will be very difficult for him to travel through the starry sky. Let’s split up and look for him. There’s still time to track him down!”

After exchanging a glance, the two men split up and began to search in two different directions with their divine sense.

Each of these men was at the peak of the Immortal Realm. However, they were incapable of opening 80 meridians, and in fact only had 70 or so. That made them stage 7 Immortals, which was their apex .

Meng Hao’s face was grim as he sped along. As he grew more familiar with the starry sky, his speed increased. Soon, there was little difference between this type of travel and moving about on a planet.

Anyone else would be incapable of achieving something like that. However, based on all the experiences Meng Hao had had, he was naturally able to quickly adapt.

“I’m not sure how they managed to interrupt the teleportation process in the first place,” thought Meng Hao, “but it shows that they’re clearly very powerful.

“If 19th Uncle hadn’t unleashed his divine ability, they might have just tried to pin him down, then go after their true target, me!

“Who is it exactly that wants to kill me?” Meng Hao frowned, killing intent flickering in his eyes.

“Could it be those Chosen that I crushed back then on South Heaven? Or was my identity as Fang Mu revealed?

“There’s also another possibility, that the enemy tracked down and destroyed the flying shuttle to simply get rid of witnesses. Maybe they weren’t targeting me.” There was really no way for Meng Hao to be sure, but there was also one other guess as to the enemy’s motives that he had contemplated in silence…but it was an answer that he didn’t dare to lightly consider, and instead, focused on continuing forward at top speed.

Seven days passed, during which time the black-robed men continued to thoroughly search the area. Another black-robed cultivator arrived, making a total of three. Despite their combined efforts, there were no results.

Finally, they met back together to confer.

“Dammit! Did the kid grow wings and fly away? There’s no sign of him anywhere!”

“Maybe he has a magical item that allows him to survive for long periods out in the stars. Let’s widen the area of our search. We absolutely must track him down and kill him!”

“Once we find the son of a bitch, he’s dead for sure!”

The three headed off in different directions to carry out a wider search.

One of them ended up searching the area where Meng Hao actually was.

A few days later, Meng Hao was speeding along when suddenly, his face fell. An intense killing intent exploded out from behind him, and he turned to find a black-robed cultivator closing in on him through the void.

The black-robed man was expressionless, and a flicker of ridicule could be seen within his cold eyes. Before he even got close, his voice echoed out.

“We underestimated you,” he said. “Never thought you could get this far.” As he closed in, the power of a stage seven Immortal exploded out, and a huge statue appeared behind him.

The statue was 21,000 meters tall, and pitch black. It was fearsome in appearance, and looked absolutely nothing like the black-robed man.

He wasn’t a true Immortal, but a false Immortal. However, even a false Immortal who had reached the seventh stage, and opened 70 meridians, possessed shocking energy that would pose quite a bit of difficulty for Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, and his expression was one of alarm and terror as he edged backward.

“W-what do you want?!” he cried out loudly, his voice quavering. “I’m from the Fang Clan! My father is Fang Xiufeng! How dare you try to kill me!!” It was almost impossible to see in his eyes that he was actually gauging the distance between him and his opponent.

The black-robed man grinned viciously. He didn’t respond, but instead got closer, raising his right hand into the air. The eyes of the statue behind him glittered, and it sent its massive hand out toward Meng Hao, clearly intending to crush him to death in a single blow.

Meng Hao stood in place as if he were scared stiff, allowing the huge palm to fall down toward him. At the same time, the black-robed man continued to get closer. He was now less than three hundred meters away.

In that instant, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with killing intent. Three hundred meters was close enough for him to unleash some of his divine abilities. He stretched out his right hand and pointed toward his opponent. Instantly, the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex was unleashed. The starry sky distorted, and the black-robed man was suddenly locked in place.

Blood began to ooze out of Meng Hao's eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, a result of the backlash caused by using this Hex on someone whose cultivation base vastly exceeded his own. However, no look of pain could be seen in his expression, only the desire to kill. His expression grew more and more fierce.

In the same moment that his opponent was locked in place, Meng Hao waved his sleeve. A black beam flew out, along with a astonishing energy, as the crocodile appeared. Shockingly, the crocodile was also comparable to a stage seven Immortal, and as soon as it appeared, it swished its tail. A boom could be heard as the black-robed man's eyes went wide and blood sprayed from his mouth. Because he was so close to Meng Hao, there was no way for him to dodge. He had no choice but to take the blow straight on and then shoot backward in retreat. The enraged crocodile pounced on him, and they began to fight back and forth.

"Dammit!" said the black-robed man, his face pale. He now realized that he had underestimated his opponent, and had been fooled. The battle hadn't even started, and he was injured, causing his killing intent to boil. He was just about to make an attack, when Meng Hao waved his hand out in a claw-like gesture. Immediately a long spear appeared that had a haft made from the World Tree, and a bone spearhead. Even as he hefted it, his Dharma Idol appeared behind him, and his cultivation base exploded out. Now was not the time to hold back, so in the blink of an eye, his Dharma Idol grew to 12,000 meters.

As soon as the Dharma Idol appeared, the black-robed man's face flickered with disbelief. According to the report he had received, his opponent only had power equivalent to thirty or perhaps fifty percent of that of a true Immortal. However, he was now obviously facing a stage four Immortal, which was especially shocking considering his target… was clearly not in the Immortal Realm.

“No wonder his majesty ordered this kid dead. He’s incredibly discerning and cunning, and has a Heaven-defying cultivation base! He can’t be left alive!” Astonishment filled the black-robed man’s heart as Meng Hao closed in, killing intent glittering in his eyes. Behind him, his Dharma Idol barreled forward, and at the same time, the Mountain Consuming Incantation was unleashed, causing countless mountains to appear, which then linked together to form a mountain range that crushed down onto the black-robed man.

The black-robed man’s face fell, and even as he prepared to fight back, the crocodile roared and lunged forward again. The already injured black-robed man was once again forced into retreat.

Rumbling could be heard, and blood poured out of his mouth. However, it was at this moment that a second black-robed man suddenly appeared, moving toward them at incredible speed. In the blink of an eye, he was upon them. A boom rang out from the shocked Meng Hao’s chest as it instantly caved in. He was sent tumbling backward like a kite with its string cut, blood spewing from his mouth.

It didn’t matter that Meng Hao’s cultivation base was so much lower than the second black-robed man; he attacked him with full power anyway. However, when the man caught sight of Meng Hao again, a look of surprise could be seen on his face.

“Not dead?” His body flickered into motion as he attacked Meng Hao once again.

Meng Hao’s chest was wracked with intense pain, and blood flowed from his mouth continuously. His chest was a mangled mess, but his eyes overflowed with killing intent. His Eternal stratum was currently healing him, but even as it did, Meng Hao realized that a third black-robed man had appeared off in the distance.

“There are actually three of them!” he thought, an imperceptible flicker running through his eyes. Temporarily suppressing the restorative power of the Eternal stratum, he transformed into a golden roc to evade the second black-robed man. A boom rang out, and Meng Hao transformed back into human form, blood spraying from his mouth. The second black-robed man frowned and then shot toward Meng Hao once more, utilizing bizarre speed.

However, just when the man was almost upon him, he suddenly extended his right hand, within which appeared the Lightning Cauldron. Electricity danced, and rumbling echoed out as he vanished to switch places with the third black-robed man.

The sudden switch in position aggravated Meng Hao’s wound, and blood sprayed from his mouth. As he back up anxiously, the third black-robed man’s eyes lit with a bright light.

“Precious treasure!”

A gleam of greed could be seen in the second black-robed man’s eyes as well. He and the third black-robed man employed the full explosive power of a stage seven Immortal at almost the same time. To them, Meng Hao was something that could easily be killed, and yet, even still, they employed all the power they could possibly muster, transforming into beams of light that shot toward Meng Hao in quick succession.

They looked like strings of light flashing through the air, like arrows that, in the blink of an eye, were only thirty meters away from Meng Hao.

“Die!” the second cultivator said coldly. The killing intent in Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, and suddenly, his body split in two as his second true self appeared. His second true self stepped forward and spread his hands wide to block, while Meng Hao’s true self backed up. Then, he slapped his bag of holding to produce a bronze lamp.

As soon as the bronze lamp appeared, a weak flame flickered inside, and a terrifying aura exploded out. The two black-robed men’s faces fell completely.

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# Chapter 891: Divine Flame Incinerates Immortals!

The faces of the two men instantly fell, and they immediately wanted to flee. They were in a dangerous situation, but considering the level of their cultivation base, it wasn’t impossible to dodge aside. However, it was at this moment that Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with a vicious gleam.

He immediately sent out a message with divine will: “Second true self, detonate!!”

His second true self’s eyes flickered, and his arms locked in place. In the blink of an eye, he self-detonated. This was the self-detonation of a true Immortal’s soul and Meng Hao’s fleshly body, as well as the Devilish will inside. A massive explosion shook the stars, and brilliant light spread out in all directions, almost like a sun.

BOOOMMMM!

The sudden detonation of Meng Hao’s true self was a decisive move that few other people could pull off. However, Meng Hao had practiced cultivation for many years and had experienced many deadly situations. Because of his decisive personality, he didn’t hesitate for a moment to detonate his second true self.

The two black-robed cultivators had been on the verge of fleeing, but the self-detonation was something that shook even them. Blood sprayed from their mouths as they lost their chance to retreat.

At the same time, raging killing intent could be seen in Meng Hao’s eyes. He held out the ancient bronze lamp and then blew. A tiny bit of his breath brushed against the lamp, causing the flame inside to suddenly expand. Instantly, a flame sea sprang into being in front of Meng Hao.

The stars trembled as the flame sea raged.

It didn’t spread out very far, only a few dozen meters. However, within that space, the shocking flames caused everything to ripple and distort. From a distance, the sea of flames resembled an enormous fiery butterfly, spreading destruction as it fluttered its wings.

The two black-robed men let out miserable screams. They tried to use magical items to defend themselves, but even the third black-robed man’s treasures were instantly destroyed. Flames engulfed their bodies, and their skin cracked and burned.

The potency of the flame went beyond even Meng Hao’s expectations. In the end, it only took a few breaths of time for the fire to completely incinerate the two black-robed men, who had actually excelled in terms of speed. One of them, in the moment before his death, glared at Meng Hao viciously, then used some unique divine ability to rapidly wither his own body and send a burst of energy out.

“We die together!” he howled. The energy surged toward Meng Hao, enveloping him.

Meng Hao’s entire body began to tremble; massive power began to shred his skin. In the exact same moment that his body exploded, his Eternal stratum surged into action. The only thing left behind was the bronze lamp. By that time, the second black-robed man finally transformed into ash, and his soul dispersed. In the last instant before he died, no regret could be seen in his eyes; he had accomplished his mission.

The two men were incinerated, even their bags of holding and very bones transformed into nothing but ash.

Any presence of their existence was completely blotted out.

Off in the distance, the first black-robed man was still tangling with the crocodile. When he saw what had just happened, his jaw dropped in disbelief and terror.

“What fire is that!?!?”

He could never have imagined that the person he was going up against would be so terrifying. In order to kill him, two of his compatriots, both stage seven Immortals, had been killed, and had even been forced to attempt to end their own lives to accomplish the mission.

Those flames left the black-robed man’s face completely ashen, and his heart pounding. He was now even more frightened than before, and was actually rejoicing that he hadn’t been so hasty in his attack earlier. If he had been, he would most likely be dead now.

“This Meng Hao was vicious! He actually detonated his own clone to kill his opponents! Were it not for his decisiveness, the two of them would have been able to flee. With their cultivation bases, they shouldn’t have been destroyed in body and spirit.

“If this kid hadn’t met such an early end, then he would definitely have become famous throughout the Ninth Mountain and Sea!

“Well, it’s too bad that he did die!” A look of greed appeared in the man’s eyes. Even as he fought with the crocodile, he looked over at the bronze lamp, which had a slice of bloody flesh laying across it. Next to it was Meng Hao’s bag of holding.

“That precious treasure belongs to me now! Also that Lightning Cauldron with the transposition powers!

“Plus, now I will get all the credit for killing Meng Hao!” However, it was in this moment of excitement that his face suddenly filled with disbelief. Voice hoarse, he said, “Impossible!”

In that moment, the shredded, bloody pieces of Meng Hao’s body formed back together. An ancient aura spread out that carried the feeling of Eternity.

In only a moment, Meng Hao was completely formed anew!

His face was pale, but his eyes flickered with the desire to kill. He looked up at the black-robed man, his expression icy, as if he were looking at a dead man. The black-robed man's face fell and, despite the level of his cultivation, he was filled with terror and wanted to flee. Unfortunately for him, the crocodile went crazy to block his way.

Meng Hao coldly patted his bag of holding to produce a set of clothing, which he quickly donned. Then he put the bronze lamp back into his bag of holding. The spark inside was clearly much dimmer; it would probably only be usable once or twice more.

After putting everything in order, Meng Hao looked at the spot where his second true self had detonated. He waved his hand, causing all of the bits of blood and flesh to fly toward him. The soul of the true Immortal had not completely dissipated, although it had been reduced to only ten percent of its former power. All that was left of his body was a lump of gore, within which was the fully coalesced Devilish will. The whole thing resembled a black heart.

After sealing it and putting it away, Meng Hao headed toward the crocodile and the black-robed man.

He had sustained heavy losses in this fight, but thanks to his Eternal stratum, he was anything but dead.

The black-robed man looked at him, his heart filled with fear. Meng Hao looked like some ancient fiend as he slowly approached.

The black-robed man was filled with shock, and had already sustained injuries. His heart was in chaos as the crocodile suddenly bit down on his right leg, causing cracking sounds to emanate out as the leg was shattered. It was in that moment that Meng Hao arrived, a red vortex beneath his feet. The vortex grew larger and larger until it resembled a sea of blood.

"Come no closer!" howled the black-robed man. He tried to retreat, but the crocodile had him pinned down, and he was injured again. By this point, he couldn’t even unleash the full power of his cultivation base; he was now at the level of a stage five Immortal.

Meng Hao moved forward with incredible speed, the blood sea beneath his feet growing larger and larger. In the end, the sea of blood churned in a massive vortex that surrounded Meng Hao, until he wasn’t even visible anymore.

BOOM!

The black-robed man performed an incantation, unleashing a divine ability that slammed into the sea of blood. It began to fall apart, but then reformed. The black-robed man’s face was pale white, as he performed constant incantation gestures and constant attacks. He continued to try to retreat, and was continually harassed and injured by the crocodile.

His will to fight had long since vanished. Seeing his two companions die had struck quite a blow, and then Meng Hao had returned to life, which was an even more intense shock.

Furthermore, no matter how he attacked, Meng Hao’s blood sea vortex couldn’t be destroyed. Every time the vortex began to fall apart, it would quickly recover. In the space of a few breaths of time, the blood sea vortex reached the black-robed man and then began to envelop him.

Booms rang out, accompanied by the black-robed man’s muffled, bloodcurdling shrieks. The vortex collapsed, but then exploded back out. Every time it collapsed, it reformed, until gradually, the screams grew weaker. After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, the cries faded away.

After a moment, the blood sea began to shrink back down, transforming into Meng Hao once again. In front of him was the desiccated corpse of the black-robed man, who stared up with wide, vacant eyes. His flesh and blood, cultivation base, and even soul had been sucked dry.

Meng Hao’s face was a bit flushed as he hovered there among the stars, eyes closed. After a long moment, he opened his eyes, and he looked exhausted. Yet, within that exhaustion could be seen the desire to kill.

“So, they’re actually from… the Fang Clan!!” In the end, Meng Hao had used one of the abilities of the ultimate form of the Blood Demon Grand Magic, a terrifying divine ability with potentially fatal side-effects, that required only a bit of time to perform.

It was an ability that left him completely vulnerable to outside attack, which was why he had never used it before, a divine ability that allowed him to completely absorb the victim’s memories.

“How cute,” he thought, “and what a lovely clan. I haven’t even arrived yet, and they’ve already sent people to kill me….

“Clearly, someone doesn’t want me to get back to the Fang Clan alive….

“It’s too bad that someone used a memory-wiping technique on this black-robed cultivator, making it impossible to determine who gave the orders to kill me. Clearly that person truly fears me.” Meng Hao smiled, although it was a somewhat sinister smile.

As of now, he was no longer the Meng Hao who, after reuniting with his father and mother, could rely on their help. He was back to his old self, running wild, with only himself to depend on.

“The more somebody wants to prevent me from getting back alive, the more I want to get to the Fang Clan,” he thought, his eyes flickering with murderous intent. Gradually, the killing intent faded into the recesses of his mind. He opened the black-robed man’s bag of holding, but there was nothing inside other than a flying shuttle.

The flying shuttle operated on spirit stones, and would enable to him to make his way through the stars. As long as he had spirit stones, it would work. Unfortunately, because of the quality with which it was constructed, and the spell formations that it operated, its effectiveness was limited. However, higher quality spirit stones would enable it to move much faster

After he saw the flying shuttle, Meng Hao examined it closely, and realized he had no other options. He quickly branded it with divine sense, then waved his hand, causing the shuttle to grow larger. When it reached thirty meters in length, he sat down inside of it, then, suppressing the pain he felt, placed a high-grade spirit stone down onto its surface. Rumbling could be heard as the shuttle then began to move forward.

Meanwhile, in another location in the starry sky, another black-robed man whose cultivation base exceeded the Immortal Realm suddenly stopped in his tracks. He lifted his right hand, and three shattered jade slips appeared within it.

“Dead? I sent those three to kill a Spirit Realm cultivator, and they ended up getting killed…? Did someone else interfere?” After a moment of silence, the black-robed man continued onward at top speed, intending to search for Meng Hao personally.

“In order to have Meng Hao killed, his excellency even sent people to keep Prince 19 from interfering. All just for this chance. Failure is not an option. Meng Hao… must die! He must not get to Planet East Victory alive!”

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# Chapter 892: East Heaven Gate

The flying shuttle was a beam of bright light that shot through the starry sky at a speed far, far greater than that Meng Hao was capable of achieving. At the same time, the rate with which it consumed spirit stones was terrifying.

Meng Hao’s heart hurt, but he had no other options at his disposal. He could only continue to feed the high-grade Spirit Stones into the slot.

This type of flight method was something most people only used over short distances. To use it over a long period of time in the way Meng Hao was using it right now was quite rare.

“Just to be safe….” Meng Hao patted his bag of holding and the meat jelly appeared. It immediately began to jabber on and on but, this time, no matter what Meng Hao said in response, it wouldn’t agree to help him.

Having no other choice, he finally produced the copper mirror and brought out the parrot.

As soon as it emerged, it began to wail and shout.

“Dammit, Haowie! Dammit!” it cried, seemingly on the verge of tears. “Dammit, Lord Fifth is finally out!” It had been sealed in the mirror for a long time; from its perspective, it seemed almost like 10,000 years. Now that it was free, it flew out squawking.

Meng Hao looked at the meat jelly and the parrot, and suddenly felt a headache coming on.

“Have the meat jelly change my appearance again,” he said. “Otherwise I’ll seal you back inside.”

The parrot was enraged and refused to cooperate, but then it thought of the pain of being sealed away, and recalled being unable to have furred and feathered lovers, and was suddenly extremely frightened.

Finally, they reached an agreement. As long as the parrot agreed not to do anything out of line, it wouldn’t be sealed away again. It immediately flew up to the meat jelly and began to arrogantly use some unknown method to get the meat jelly to suddenly look very anxious. Finally, with a dour expression on its face, it helped Meng Hao change his appearance, as well as the appearance of the flying shuttle.

The flying shuttle then whooshed away, taking a circuitous route toward Planet East Victory, instead of heading directly toward it.

Several days later, the black-robed man with a cultivation base exceeding the Immortal Realm appeared in the location where Meng Hao had fought the other black-robed men. After looking around for a moment, he was visibly moved.

“What flame was it that burned them up…?

“Don’t tell me he has a Dao Protector who cultivates a flame power of the Ancient Realm!” An unsightly expression appeared on the man’s face. After a moment, he sent his divine sense out, but couldn’t find any traces of Meng Hao. Most importantly, he couldn’t detect Meng Hao’s aura, and thus couldn’t lock down a specific area in which to search for him.

Finding someone in the middle of space is like looking for a needle in the middle of an ocean.

“If I say you can’t escape, then escape you shall not!” said the man with a cold harrumph. He lifted his right hand, within which could be seen an archaic turtle shell which was obviously very, very old.

“His excellency even gave me this precious treasure to use, all for the purpose of seeing you dead! With this item, I can definitely track you down.” Eyes glittering, he slowly raised up the turtle shell and began to chant a complicated, awkward-sounding incantation. Finally, he spit out some blood onto it.

“Fang Hao!” he growled. The turtle shell sucked in the blood and then began to quiver. Slowly, bubbles began to rise up from it, and images floated within each of them.

The black-robed man stared intently at the bubbles, chuckling coldly. He was very confident that this strange treasure would be able to find Meng Hao because of the clan blood that ran in his veins.

A moment later, the treasure began to shine with flickering light, and Meng Hao’s image appeared. However, in the exact moment that he appeared…

The strange treasure began to shake, as if during the process of searching for Meng Hao, it had encountered some indescribable force of interference. Then a boom could be heard as the treasure exploded into countless fragments.

As it exploded, a shocking aura surged out from the treasure that caused the black-robed man to tremble, and a roaring sound to fill his mind.

It happened so quickly that he didn’t have time to react. The force of the explosion sent him flying thirty thousand meters away, where he coughed up three mouthfuls of blood. A look of shock filled his face.

“His fate is untraceable?!” he said, his face ashen. Then he thought of the aura just now, and his scalp went numb.

Time passed. Three months. The atmosphere in the Fang Clan on Planet East Victory was a strange one during that time. Three months before, a clan member had been set to return, and yet no one showed up.

The welcoming ceremony was cancelled. Eventually, they realized they had lost contact with Prince 19, who had been sent to escort the direct bloodline grandson back. His disappearance made the atmosphere even stranger than before.

All of the members of the direct bloodline were furious. Many of them even left Planet East Victory to conduct searches of their own, but it was all in vain.

It wasn’t just the direct bloodline clan members who went out searching. Ordinary clan members also went out to search for Meng Hao. Of course, the black-robed men were out searching as well, to find either Meng Hao or his corpse.

No one dared to deliver the news to Fang Xiufeng on Planet South Heaven. When Prince 19 finally returned and made his report to the Grand Elder, his face was extremely dark.

The Grand Elder appeared to be enraged, and even personally went out to where the teleportation tunnel had collapsed. Eventually, he determined that it had been an ambush set up by a sect who had harbored enmity with Prince 19.

The fact that Meng Hao had been dragged into this situation caused quite an uproar, and the Fang Clan eventually sent some experts to destroy the offending sect completely, which was quite a shock.

After three months with no news from Meng Hao, his 19th Uncle wallowed in guilt on a daily basis. He would constantly go out to search for Meng Hao, but never found anything. 19th Uncle felt especially guilty towards Fang Xiufeng, but didn’t dare tell him about the matter.

Of course, he had been scared of his older cousin from the time he was small, and knew exactly what type of personality he had. If Fang Xiufeng found out what had happened, who knew what could happen as a result. One thing was for sure… a catastrophic storm would definitely occur.

Slowly, things calmed down in the Fang Clan. Fewer people went out to search for Meng Hao, until eventually, only the direct bloodline members were interested in the matter.

The Fang Clan was huge, and the direct bloodline had once been at the peak of glory. Meng Hao’s grandfather had a monstrous cultivation base, there were other direct bloodline Patriarchs, and of course Meng Hao’s father was a Chosen who struck awe into the hearts of everyone in his generation.

Now, however, Meng Hao’s grandfather was missing, the other direct bloodline Patriarchs were reaching the point of Nirvanic Rebirth, and were in secluded meditation, and Fang Xiufeng had gone to Planet South Heaven.

In addition to all that, Meng Hao, the eldest grandson, had been born crippled. Gradually, the direct bloodline was now losing its power and influence. Before, it had been at the height of power, but now, only about ten percent of the other clan members were still loyal to the direct bloodline.

As the direct bloodline declined, auxiliary bloodlines rose. There was one bloodline in particular from which the Chosen Fang Wei descended. His father, and other Patriarchs of the bloodline, were shining radiantly, and in the past few hundred years, had worked hard in service of the clan. Their reputations had even spread outside the clan, and therefore, their power only continued to grow. Soon, they commanded the loyalty of roughly thirty percent of the clan.

The remaining sixty percent remained in a position of neutrality, maintaining their own power structures and assisting each other as needed.

An entire half year passed. It was now almost a year since Meng Hao had gone missing. By now, even the direct bloodline had little hope that he would return, and ceased virtually all searching.

Even the cultivators in the black robes gave up, having assumed that Meng Hao died out in space. Not even the black-robed expert whose cultivation base exceeded the Immortal Realm was able to find traces of Meng Hao. Space is an enormous place, and it was impossible to completely lock down the starry sky which surrounded Planet East Victory; there was simply too much activity there.

Planet East Victory gradually returned to normal, and people stopped thinking about Meng Hao.

On one particular day, two thirty-meter flying shuttles limped and tottered into the starry sky outside Planet East Victory. As they gradually approached the planet, Meng Hao could be seen sitting cross-legged in one of the shuttles. His clothes were in tatters, and his face was withered and yellow. However, his eyes shone brightly. At first glance, he seemed to cut a sorry figure, but deep in his eyes, he seemed even more powerful than when he had left Planet South Heaven.

He had been traveling for nearly a year to get to the planet up ahead; at long last, he was almost there.

The number of spirit stones he had wasted had reached a shocking level. Whenever he thought about it, he gnashed his teeth, and his heart hurt painfully.

Throughout the year of travel, he had been forced to be extremely cautious in order to avoid being tracked down and killed. Even so, he had faced many dangers and run into many evil cultivators. Magical battles had ensued on multiple occasions.

It could even be said that he had experienced tough training throughout that year. He quickly forgot about the protection he had enjoyed from his father and mother. Once again, he experienced what it was like to be on his own.

“Finally… I can see Planet East Victory with my own eyes!” he thought, looking at the planet up ahead. It was huge, composed of about thirty percent blue ocean water, and seventy percent land. One of the continents spread out over nearly half the planet, was red in color, and emanated a bizarre aura.

The planet also had a glowing ring surrounding it, composed of countless drifting asteroids. The sight was spectacular.

As he looked over the scene, Meng Hao was shocked to find that there were cultivators sitting cross-legged in meditation on many of the asteroids. There were even some asteroids that had Immortal’s caves cut into them.

The planet seemed to teem with powerful experts, and their shocking auras combined together to emanate dazzlingly out into the starry sky.

Without even setting foot onto the planet, Meng Hao was able to tell that it was a flourishing place. Countless cultivators entered and exited the planet. Colorful beams of light flashed to and fro, and the whole scene looked very different than Planet South Heaven, causing a cold light to shine in Meng Hao’s eyes.

A young man sat cross-legged in the flying shuttle next to Meng Hao’s. Smiling, he used divine will to transmit a message to Meng Hao.

“Elder Brother Meng, this is Planet East Victory. Once you take care of your affairs, don’t forget to come visit me in the Medicine Immortal Sect. I can introduce you to some nice friends.”

The young man’s name was Feng Xun. Meng Hao had rescued him from the clutches of a gang of rogue cultivators, for which Feng Xun had been eternally grateful. After they had begun chatting, Meng Hao found out that he was a disciple of the Medicine Immortal Sect. Upon hearing that Meng Hao was traveling to Planet East Victory, he had immediately volunteered to personally escort Meng Hao there.

“Many thanks, Elder Brother Feng,” Meng Hao replied with a smile. “I definitely will.” As he looked at Planet East Victory, the bright light in his eyes suddenly turned cold.

“According to my analysis,” he thought, “the people in the Fang Clan who tried to kill me are definitely also afraid of my father. There seem to be some other reasons as well. Perhaps because of certain clan affairs, they feared anyone finding that they were the ones who killed me if they succeeded.

“That’s why they lured 19th Uncle away, and then sent those black-robed men to kill me. Plus… those men had their memories erased, which lends proof to my speculation.

“Well then, although the Fang Clan might seem to be a dangerous place for me, I should actually be pretty safe there. They won’t dare to kill me right in the middle of the clan!

“I have a high position in the Fang clan, so they definitely wouldn’t be so bold as to do something in the open.” Chuckling coldly, Meng Hao sent the flying shuttle closer to Planet East Victory. As soon as he neared, a powerful divine sense shot out from the planet. It swept over him, then vanished and transformed into a vortex.

Simultaneously, a cold voice transmitted into his ear.

“Foreign cultivator: enter the vortex up ahead of you, and it will take you to the planet. Prepare your travel permits and jade identification plaque.”

An imperceptible gleam flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes. A vortex had appeared in front of Feng Xun as well. Looking around, Meng Hao saw similar scenes playing out with other arriving cultivators. Apparently, this was how things worked on Planet East Victory.

“Elder Brother Meng, there are a lot of rules on Planet East Victory. Everyone who arrives here is treated like this. If you have no travel permits and no identification plaque, then you’ll have to pay dozens of times as many spirit stones, but will still be able to enter. Of course, the amount of spirit stones you pay will depend on how long you plan to stay on the planet.

“If you try to force your way in, you’ll be killed.

“There’s really nothing you can do about it. The entire planet is under the power of the Fang Clan. Years ago, Lord Ji actually gave the entire place to them….” Smiling wryly, Feng Xun collected his flying shuttle, clasped hands to Meng Hao, and stepped into the vortex.

After a moment of thought, Meng Hao also put his flying shuttle away and stepped into the vortex.

Glittering light filled his eyes, and when everything became clear, he was no longer out in space. A sparkling shield of light stretched out beneath his feet, allowing him to see the lands below.

Directly in front of him was an enormous gate!

The gate was thirty thousand meters tall, forged from bronze, and was completely ancient in appearance. Carved with designs that appeared to have come from ancient times, it was completely shocking. However, if you looked at it closely, the images on the gate would be too blurry to make out.

There were three characters inscribed on top of the gate that were visible to all.

East Heaven Gate!

It was just a gate, but when Meng Hao looked at it, his pupils constricted. This gate… actually resembled the Door of Immortality.

Arranged in formation in front of the gate were over a hundred cultivators, looking around coldly at the over 1,000 other people who were lined up, waiting to enter.

On either side of East Heaven Gate were three other gates, much smaller. One of those gates was inscribed with the characters Puppet God, and on the other was a carving of a Blood Orchid.

The last gate was special. It looked archaic and bizarre, but it pulsed with a power that stimulated the bloodline power within Meng Hao.

Feng Xun appeared next to Meng Hao and began to explain.

“Elder Brother Meng, this is East Heaven Gate. Those other two gates are for the Church of the Puppet God and the Church of the Blood Immortal. The last one… is only for children of the Fang Clan.”

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# Chapter 893: Might As Well Make a Scene!

East Heaven Gate was the only gate that had large numbers of cultivators lined up outside of it. The gates for the Church of the Puppet Immortal and the Church of the Blood Orchid had no lines whatsoever, nor did the Fang Clan’s gate.

“Elder Brother Meng, the only way to get onto Planet East Victory is by going through this gate. I’m actually from Planet East Victory, and even though the Medicine Immortal Sect has no gate, I have special privileges. However, since this is your first time here, I’ll wait in line with you.” Feng Xun ended his words by clasping hands and bowing.

Meng Hao clasped hands in thanks and the two of them took their place at the end of the line. He looked around at everything that was happening and mused about how completely different this was from Planet South Heaven.

Planet East Victory was huge, and in terms of how it was guarded, as well as how orderly everything was, there was a sense of sternness to everything. There also seemed to be an excess of rules.

Any cultivator who entered the Planet was carefully inspected. Only members of the sects from Planet East Victory enjoyed any sort of special treatment, and the most special treatment of all went to the Fang Clan.

As Meng Hao stood at the end of the line, he noticed that virtually all of the cultivators around him were in the Immortal Realm, although the majority were only stage two or three. There were few who were stage five or higher. Furthermore, although there seemed to be large numbers of them, they were all False Immortals.

After all, only cultivators in the Immortal Realm could step out into the starry sky. Cultivators in the Spirit Realm could only go there temporarily.

As time passed, the cultivators in line slowly passed through East Heaven Gate. Meng Hao remained in place, his expression calm, as he watched the cultivators handing over spirit stones in exchange for jade medallions.

Occasionally, miscellaneous cultivators from the Church of the Puppet God or the Church of the Blood Orchid would return from the stars, and would disappear into the gates specially set up for their sects. Every so often, people would leave from those gates as well.

Four hours passed rather quickly. Soon, Meng Hao was toward the front of the line, with only about seven people ahead of him. It didn’t take long until their turn arrived. It was in this moment that ripples suddenly spread out up above in the starry sky. In the blink of an eye, eight streaks of light shot down.

They were eight cultivators, dressed in luxurious clothing, laughing and chatting as they proceeded along, as comfortable as if they were walking through the garden of their own house. The two cultivators in the lead position seemed to be in high spirits, full of energy and with extraordinary cultivation bases. They emanated an air of elitism.

“Look, people from the Fang Clan!” Feng Xun whispered to Meng Hao. “I recognize the two in the front. They’re from a collateral bloodline of the Fang Clan that is second only to the direct branch of the clan.”

The cultivators in the area immediately began to whisper to each other. Meng Hao’s expression didn’t change, though a barely detectable flicker could be seen in his eyes.

When the hundred or so cultivators gathered in front of the East Heaven Gate saw the eight newcomers, their expressions turned solemn. They immediately stepped forward, clasped hands, and bowed deeply.

“Greetings, Princes.”

The two cultivators in the lead position among the eight smiled and turned back to a young woman among their number.

“Junior Sister Hong,” one of them said, smiling, “9th Uncle has been waiting for some time for you to return from your outside training!”

The pretty young woman smiled in response. Then she and the rest of the group walked past the bowing cultivators, nodding to them as they headed toward the Fang Clan gate. One by one, they passed through the gate, and as they did, glowing beams of light rose up into the air. The height of each beam was different, and when the young woman who had been addressed as Junior Sister Hong stepped through the gate, the light shot up roughly 300 meters into the air.

Expressions of envy could be seen on the faces of the cultivators around Meng Hao as they discussed what was happening in low tones.

“A 300-meter Bloodline Gatebeam! That young woman… she definitely has a high position in the Fang Clan! Could she really be THE Fang Hong!?” 1

“It probably is. The Fang Clan gate only opens for members of the Fang Clan, and the thicker their bloodline is, the higher that beam of light!”

“Last year I was fortunate enough to catch sight of Prince Wei. When he walked through the Fang Clan gate, the Gatebeam was 24,000 meters high! It was spectacular!”

Of course, despite their envy, there was nothing they could do to alter their own bloodline backgrounds. Even if they became Outer Clan disciples, having Fang Clan blood was still an honor they wouldn’t have.

Feng Xun was a disciple from the Medicine Immortal Sect, but even he was sighing in envy. Then he proceeded to explain all the advantages of being a member of the Fang Clan on Planet East Victory to Meng Hao. Of course, despite everything he said, it was still possible to hear how proud he was of his own identity.

“The Fang Clan might be powerful, but I’ll never leave the Medicine Immortal Sect,” he concluded.

Meng Hao listened silently during Feng Xun’s explanation.

Eventually, the bowing cultivators straightened up. Their ingratiating expressions became once again solemn, and they resumed collecting spirit stones from the line of cultivators in exchange for allowing them to enter one by one.

Finally, Meng Hao was standing directly in front of the gate. The cultivator responsible for collecting spirit stones had a black birthmark on his forehead, making him look quite ferocious as he stared coldly at Meng Hao.

“How long do you plan to stay?” he asked. “If you have no identity medallion, then you’ll have to pay 100 spirit stones per day. If you exceed a month, the price increases to 1,000 per day. After two months, the price is 10,000 per day.”

Meng Hao frowned. He had heard the prices mentioned earlier, when he was further back in line, and they seemed extremely expensive. In contrast, if you did possess an identity medallion, then the price was only 10 spirit stones per day.

“I have no identity plaque,” Meng Hao muttered, holding out a hundred spirit stones.

“One day?” The cultivator with the black birthmark grinned slightly. Over the years, he had encountered many cultivators who had claimed to only plan to stay one day, but who actually intended to stay longer, and just wanted to avoid paying the spirit stones.

People like that were eventually arrested by the Fang Clan, and then ended up paying even more spirit stones.

The man looked Meng Hao up and down, then tossed him a white command medallion and looked at Feng Xun, who stood further back.

Feng Xun’s demeanor was different now than the one he used with Meng Hao. He looked a bit proud and arrogant as he threw his medallion over to the man. As soon as the cultivator saw the command medallion, his face broke into a smile, and, although he didn’t clasp hands the way he had for the members of the Fang Clan, obviously treated him differently than Meng Hao.

Meng Hao held the white command medallion in his hand and walked toward East Heaven Gate. Just as he stepped into the gate, a powerful repelling force surged out, enveloping him and ejecting him from within the gate.

This scene immediately caused expressions of sympathy to appear on the faces of the cultivators in line. Feng Xun gaped in shock, then suddenly seemed to realize something, and involuntarily frowned. As for the cultivators standing guard outside the gate, their cultivation bases exploded with power and they immediately surrounded Meng Hao.

“Ejected by East Heaven Gate, huh? Seems you must have some evil intentions! Come with us. If the investigation proves that you’re innocent, then you’ll obviously be set free!”

“East Heaven Gate only rejects people who harbor malicious thoughts. Your cultivation base isn’t very high, so if you resist us, we’ll just kill you!”

The guard cultivators all stared at him with cold eyes.

Meng Hao frowned and looked down at the identity plaque he held. A moment ago, he had clearly sensed that the reason he had been obstructed by East Heaven Gate was because of the jade medallion, not he himself.

Feng Xun immediately approached, not hesitating to mention his status as he smoothed the matter over. After he finished speaking, the cultivator with the black birth mark, the one who had given Meng Hao the jade plaque, spoke up.

“Since Fellow Daoist Feng here is willing to vouch for you, we can forgo the investigation. Just hand over 10,000 spirit stones as bail, and we’ll forget the matter.” His eyes overflowed with scorn as he looked at Meng Hao. He was convinced that a person like Meng Hao, with no identity medallion and a low cultivation base, had obviously run into trouble outside, and was now attempting to seek refuge on Planet East Victory.

Had Meng Hao been generous to begin with, and just handed over 10,000 spirit stones to purchase the right to stay there, then he wouldn’t have caused any problems for him. However, he was obviously seeking a favor from Planet East Victory, and yet at the same time was being stingy. Whenever the cultivators who guarded the gate ran into people like this, they would make sure to teach them a lesson.

Of course, if Meng Hao had an incredible cultivation base, then they wouldn’t dare to do something like that. But with his current cultivation base, he was definitely the type they would give a hard time to.

If it weren’t for the fact that they wouldn’t do anything to offend Feng Xun personally, they would definitely do everything they could to take advantage of Meng Hao.

Killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes. He had never imagined that just being a little stingy and handing over too few spirit stones for the toll would cause such a fuss.

Especially since… this was his home, the Fang Clan of Planet East Victory.

Especially since… he had experienced numerous twists and turns on his journey here, and had even had people trying to track him down and kill him. All of those things which had been brewing in Meng Hao’s heart were now on the verge of causing him to explode.

Originally, his plan had been to get onto Planet East Victory, look around a bit, and then go to the Fang Clan. But as of this moment, he changed his mind. Now that he had finally arrived at Planet East Victory, he actually needn’t keep a low profile any more. It was time for him to see who it was that actually dared to try to kill him!

He chuckled coldly, slapped his bag of holding, and caused 10,000 spirit stones to trickle out and form a small mountain.

The surrounding cultivators who guarded East Heaven Gate looked on with snide smiles. The man with the black birthmark made a grasping motion to collect the spirit stones. Then he looked scornfully at Meng Hao and threw him a jade plaque.

“If you’d done this to begin with you could have saved yourself a lot of trouble. Now, you may enter Planet East Victory.”

Feng Xun quickly walked over to Meng Hao and murmured, “I forgot to mention this earlier, Elder Brother Meng. These aren’t ordinary guards, they’re Outer Clan members of the Fang Clan…. If you had just spent a bit more money, then they wouldn’t have given you a hard time.

“But, you only bought one day on the planet, and you didn’t even have an identity medallion….” Inwardly, Feng Xun was shaking his head; were it not for the fact that Meng Hao had saved his life before, he would never have intervened and vouched for him.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he looked at Feng Xun and coolly said, “Many thanks for your assistance in this matter, Elder Brother Feng. However, on Planet East Victory, if somebody takes my spirit stones, they will pay me back a hundredfold.”

His words caused Feng Xun to gape.

Meng Hao turned and headed, not toward East Heaven Gate, but rather, in the direction of the Fang Clan’s gate.

This immediately caused all of the cultivators in the area to stare him shock.

The more than one hundred gate guards were also looking on in astonishment.

“Is this guy crazy? He’s actually heading toward the Fang Clan’s gate?”

The man with the black birthmark sneered and said, “How reckless! Well, if he tries to force his way through the Fang Clan gate, then he’ll be crushed to death. We don’t have to do anything.”

Feng Xun’s face fell and he immediately hurried forward.

“Elder Brother Meng, it’s… it’s impossible for you to enter this gate! If you don’t have the blood of the Fang Clan in you, then you’ll be killed!!”

Meng Hao paid him no heed, and in the blink of an eye, was in front of the gate. While all the other cultivators looked on in astonishment, he lifted his foot and stepped into the gate.

1. Fang Hong’s name in Chinese is fāng hóng. Hong means ‘rainbow’

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# Chapter 894: His Bloodline Shakes the Clan!

Discussions immediately broke out among the onlookers outside of East Heaven Gate.

“This guy is nuts….”

“If he doesn’t have Fang Clan blood, then he’s dead for sure! But, if he does possess a Fang Clan bloodline, then why would he wait in line and even pay a spirit stone tax?”

“Maybe he has some other way to get through the Fang Clan’s gate. But wait, that’s not possible! No matter what you do, even if you’re from the Fang clan itself, you can’t hide your bloodline. Anyone who isn’t from the Fang Clan will definitely be killed by that gate.”

The over one hundred Fang Outer Clan members standing guard outside the gate looked on with cold smiles, especially the cultivator with the black birthmark, whose eyes especially shone with scorn.

“You went looking to die, so you can’t blame anyone else,” he sneered. “Fellow Daoist Feng, it’s not that I didn’t give you face, sir. I already gave him permission to enter East Heaven Gate, and yet, he’s choosing to kill himself.”

Feng Xun stamped his foot, and then an anxious expression appeared on his face. However, there was nothing he could do.

It was in this moment that Meng Hao began to step into the Fang Clan’s gate. Only half of his foot had actually entered the gate when it began to rumble.

“It’s going to crush him to death!” said the cultivator with the black birthmark, a coldly sinister smile plastered across his face. A moment later, that smile suddenly froze, then turned into an expression of disbelief. Everyone else who was discussing the matter also stopped, and their eyes went wide.

The more than one hundred Outer Clan disciples who were guarding East Heaven Gate stared with open mouths.

Feng Xun’s eyes flickered with shock, and his brain filled with roaring as he gasped in astonishment.

Everyone could clearly see that as Meng Hao stood there, the gate trembled and… began to shine with light.

It took only a moment for a 300-meter beam of light to rise up, completely filling the pupils of all onlookers with glittering reflected light.

“Impossible!” said the cultivator with the black birthmark, his voice hoarse. He suddenly began to quiver.

The more than one hundred cultivators guarding East Heaven Gate gasped, and their minds reeled.

The crowds immediately went into an uproar.

“A 300-meter Gatebeam! Heavens! He’s a member of the Fang Clan, and not an ordinary one at that! The fact that he has a 300-meter Gatebeam shows that his bloodline exceeds that of an ordinary clan member!”

“If he’s a member of the Fang Clan, then why did he try to go through East Heaven Gate?”

It was then that the crowds fell silent.

As soon as Meng Hao’s foot touched onto the ground, and half of his body entered the gate, the beam of light shot up… from 300 meters to 3,000 meters, accompanied by deafening rumbling sounds.

The 3,000-meter Gatebeam was spectacular to behold, and all of the cultivators outside of East Heaven Gate felt as if they couldn’t breathe. They stared in shock and disbelief, their minds reeling.

“A 3,000-meter Gatebeam…. Heavens! He’s a Chosen of the Fang Clan!!”

“Who is he? A cultivator with 3,000-meter Bloodline Gatebeam can’t be a nobody! He must have a high status in the Fang Clan!”

The cultivator with the black birthmark staggered backward a few steps, his face deathly pale, and a feeling of intense regret rose up in his heart. He even felt resentful.

“Y-y-you… you’re actually a member of the Fang Clan!” he thought, panting continuously. “With a bloodline like that, why would you go through East Heaven Gate!? Why did you have to make trouble for me…? Well, even if you do have a 3,000-meter Bloodline Gatebeam, I was just enforcing the law as I should have, so my actions were justifiable!” Even still, his heart was filled with intense apprehension.

Feng Xun stood there gaping at Meng Hao, unable to even speak.

If that were all there were to the matter, it wouldn’t be a big deal. But then, Meng Hao finished stepping into the gate, which caused the rumbling sounds to increase, and the beam of light to shoot higher into the air.

3,000 meters. 4,500 meters. 6,000 meters. 7,500 meters….

In the space of only a few breaths of time, the beam of light reached a height of 9,000 meters!

A plopping sound could be heard as the cultivator with the black birthmark suddenly seemed to lose all of his cultivation base and strength. He sat down onto the ground, his face as pale as a corpse’s, without the slightest sign of color.

“9… 9,000 meters!!” he thought. “Finished. I’m finished! If… if it were only 3,000 meters, I could still say I was just enforcing the law, but he… he has a 9,000-meter Bloodline Gatebeam. A clan member like that, I… I….”

He wasn’t the only one who was acting like that. The Fang Outer Clan members who had surrounded him earlier and mocked him coldly were now looking on with fallen faces. Their scalps were numb, and they were terrified.

The rest of the people standing outside of the gate were watching with wide eyes and slack jaws, their minds trembling.

“9… 9,000 meters…. What bloodline is that? That’s second only to the number one Chosen in the Fang Clan, Prince Wei. When Prince Wei entered the door, his Gatebeam reached 24,000 meters!!”

“Who is this guy…?”

It wasn’t just the people outside the gate who were shocked. In the Fang Clan’s ancestral mansion in Planet East Victory, there was a huge bell. Moments ago, that bell had begun to toll. The sound of it rang out through all of the clan’s various branches. No outsider could hear it; it rang out only in the minds of the members of the Fang Clan.

In the main hall of the ancestral mansion, an old man with a full head of white hair sat cross-legged in meditation. His expression was solemn, and when he opened his eyes, his gaze was profound, and his eyes flickered like lightning. Sitting in front of him were eight other people, all of whom were engaged in a discussion.

When the bell tolled, the faces of all of the men in the main hall flickered, and they looked up.

“Someone with a strong bloodline just entered the Fang Gate and has invoked the toll of the bell!!”

“The Dao Bell only tolls when a clan member enters the gate for the first time, and a Bloodline Gatebeam of 3,000 meters or higher appears!”

“What member of the junior generation has gone to test out their bloodline?”

Everyone was shocked, and the old man sitting up front looked up, suspicion flickering in his eyes.

When members of the Fang Clan came of age, they would enter the Fang Gate to test their bloodline. The Dao Bell would only ring the first time they did so.

As of this moment, there were many locations within the Fang Clan in which expressions of surprise could be heard. Meng Hao’s 19th Uncle was currently sitting cross-legged next to a lake, clutching a flagon of alcohol, his face glum and anguished. When the bell tolled, he almost didn’t seem to hear it, and just kept drinking. Off to the side, a young man with a bitter expression on his face hung upside down in midair.

In another location was a stretch of pitch black land from which a volcano rose up. Sitting cross-legged deep inside the volcano was a middle-aged man, whose eyes suddenly snapped open and began to shine with brilliant light.

In another area, there was a blood-red desert, where a young man could be seen sitting. He suddenly raised his head and looked up into the sky.

In a variety of locations, clan members began to take notice of the tolling of the bell. When it tolled a second time, even more people were visibly moved. When it tolled a third time, even more people were shocked.

However, after the third tolling of the bell… it didn’t stop!

Meng Hao stood there in the Fang Clan’s gate, unmoving, surrounded by a gentle aura that swirled around his body, stimulating his bloodline. His face was calm; since he had chosen this route, then he would continue to shock Heaven and Earth.

He took a deep breath and fully released the power of his bloodline, allowing the gentle power of the gate to thoroughly assess its strength.

In the blink of an eye, the Gatebeam exploded up. It broke through from 9,000 meters to 12,000, causing the bell to toll a fourth time!

That fourth bell toll could be heard by all the Fang Clan members over the entirety of Planet East Victory, and caused even more people to feel astonishment. Next, however, the Fang Gate's Gatebeam shot higher, reaching 15,000 meters. A fifth bell toll echoed out, shaking the entire Fang Clan.

"Five bell tolls! Who is testing out their bloodline? It's… so strong!"

"In the younger generation of the Fang Clan, there are less than fifty people who can achieve a 15,000-meter Gatebeam! When it comes to a 18,000-meter beam, there are less than ten, and as for a 21,000-meter beam… there are only three! And then there's… Prince Wei, with his 24,000-meter beam!!"

The Fang Clan was in an uproar. Meng Hao stood bathed in light in the Fang Clan's gate, the Gatebeam so bright that no one could see him inside of it. Meng Hao took another breath, and his eyes glittered as the Gatebeam… shot up once again!!

It went from 15,000 meters up to 18,000 meters, the scintillating light seemingly limitless. All of the people outside of East Heaven Gate were struck speechless.

When the sixth bell tolled, the entire Fang Clan was sent into a stir.

Multiple figures shot up from various locations in the clan and headed toward East Heaven Gate. Even the Elders in the main hall of the Ancestral Mansion flew outside and then began to teleport toward the gate.

Tens of thousands of people all flew out at the same time, including countless powerful experts. In the blink of an eye, numerous people emerged from East Heaven Gate and looked over toward the Fang Clan's gate.

The other cultivators outside of East Heaven Gate began to edge backward, their bodies trembling, their expressions that of excitement. They looked at the people walking out of East Heaven Gate and realized that all of them were cultivators from the Fang Clan, powerful experts.

These people peered at the Fang Clan’s gate, but were unable to clearly see who was inside.

“I wonder which branch’s child has achieved such a level!!”

“Hahaha! The Immortals are blessing the Fang Clan. Another Chosen has appeared!”

“Who is it? Is it Tao’er? Or Young Hai? Perhaps Hong’er?”

The Fang Clan members who had just arrived were all waiting in anticipation. It was at this point that a group of eight figures appeared, led by the white-haired old man who had been sitting in the lead position in the main hall of the ancestral mansion.

As soon as he appeared, the other Fang Clan members looked over in shock, and then clasped hands.

“Greetings, Grand Elder!”

This old man was none other than the person who had been left to preside over the Fang Clan’s affairs after the Patriarchs had gone into secluded meditation. He was… the Grand Elder, Fang Tongtian! 1

Just as his name suggested, Fang Tongtian had an exceedingly high cultivation base that was virtually beyond comprehension. As he walked out of East Heaven Gate, he looked over at the Fang Clan’s gate, but even he could not see who was inside. All he could see was a vague shadow.

Fang Tongtian laughed loudly and said, “An 18,000-meter Gatebeam is an incredibly important matter for the Fang Clan. Very well, very well… a clan member with a bloodline like this means that the Fang Clan will definitely have a new Chosen!”

At the same time, more and more Fang Clan members were emerging from East Heaven Gate.

Meanwhile, the Outer Clan cultivators who had been guarding the gate were so scared that their limbs had become like jelly. They seemed on the verge of dropping dead from fright. As for the cultivator with the black birthmark, he was laying on the ground shivering uncontrollably.

Feng Xun was also shaking. He looked around at the powerful figures around him, and then back at the Fang Clan's gate, his face covered with a look of disbelief.

It was at this point that more rumbling sounds could be heard as the light exploded up once again. It went from 18,000 meters to 21,000 meters, completely shocking the Fang Clan and everyone else outside the gate.

Grand Elder Fang Tongtian's eyes were shining with unprecedented brightness.

1. Fang Tongtian's name in Chinese is fāng tōng tiān. Tongtian means 'all-powerful' or 'exceedingly high'

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# Chapter 895: He’s… Back!

“21,000 meters!! In the current generation of the Fang Clan, there aren’t even ten people who can cause a 21,000-meter Gatebeam to appear! Today… there’s one more! Who is this person?”

“It’s definitely someone from an auxiliary bloodline. I’m eighty percent certain that it’s Tao’er.”

The Fang Clan members outside East Heaven Gate were completely astonished. Meanwhile, back on Planet East Victory, seven bell tolls had rung out into the ears of all Fang Clan members. It was at this point that Meng Hao’s 19th Uncle, who sat by the lake drinking alcohol, suddenly quivered. He slowly put the flagon of alcohol down and looked up into the sky.

“Seven bell tolls…” he thought. “Who exactly is stepping into the Fang Clan’s gate for the first time. Could it be… that it’s Hao’er?!?!” 19th Uncle suddenly stood up and waved his hand. The young man who had been hanging there upside down let out a shriek as 19th Uncle grabbed him and flew up into the air.

“Dad! Dad, it was my fault! I really made a mistake….” 19th Uncle completely ignored the young man’s shrieks, simply carrying him along as he shot toward East Heaven Gate. He had to see if this newcomer… really was Meng Hao!

Meanwhile, in the Fang Clan ancestral mansion, there was another temple hall in which two people sat. One was an old man, the other slightly younger. They sat there cross-legged, listening to the tolling of the bell.

The old man’s eyes opened, and he coolly said, “Go see which bloodline this person comes from. If it’s ours, then it doesn’t matter. If not… ask that person to come here; I can always adopt another grandchild.”

The middle-aged man’s expression was dignified, and he actually somewhat resembled Fang Xiufeng. He nodded, then strode away and vanished. When he reappeared, he was up in the sky.

His eyes glittered brightly.

“Latent talent with a 21,000-meter Gatebeam. That’s only a little bit less than my boy, and makes this person worthy of becoming his little brother.”

At the same time, deep down in the earth beneath the Fang Clan ancestral mansion, there was an Immortal’s cave. It was filled with dense Immortal qi, the reason being that the entire Immortal’s cave… was made of Immortal jade!

A young, bare-chested man sat cross-legged in that Immortal’s cave, surrounded by nine wizened old men. The old men were bound with iron chains that were in turn connected to spell formations. The men howled shrilly as Immortal qi flowed out from them into the spell formations, and was then absorbed by the young man.

There were an additional three old men who stood in the cave, observing the process with slight smiles.

“Prince, your cultivation base is continuing to progress.”

“Considering your latent talent, Prince, you can definitely be reckoned one of the very best in all the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Soon, even the Chosen from the Three Great Daoist Societies will have no choice but to bow their heads in your presence.”

“Prince, you have incredible ambitions. It won’t be long before you reach true Immortal Ascension. Then, you will be able to sweep across all the Chosen in the Ninth Mountain and Sea.”

It was at this point that the tolling of the bells reached their ears, and the faces of the three men flickered. The young man, however, continued to meditate.

None of the non-Fang Clan members on Planet East Victory could hear the the bells. However, more and more Fang Clan members were flying out and heading toward East Heaven Gate, gathering there to look at the boundless Gatebeam.

“Just who exactly is it…?”

“There’s no need to get excited. We’ll be able to see who it is soon enough. Pretty soon, this person’s rank in the clan is going to be very different from everyone else!”

Within the crowd, Meng Hao’s 19th Uncle peered toward the shadow in the Fang Clan’s gate, trembling. Nobody else had ever seen Meng Hao before, and thus, wouldn’t recognize him. However, 19th Uncle could sense something familiar about the shadow.

“Who is it?” asked the young man next to 19th Uncle, staring with wide eyes. “Who has a 21,000-meter Gatebeam?” In response, his father smacked him hard.

“Dad….” grumbled the young man, scowling. He was just about to say something else when, all of a sudden, more rumbling could be heard, and the beam of light coming from the Fang Clan’s gate… shot higher once again.

RUMMMBLLLE!

It went from 21,000 meters all the way to 24,000 meters. The grand sight caused all the Fang Clan Members outside East Heaven Gate to stare blankly.

“Heavens! What’s… what’s going on!?!?”

“24,000 meters. I can’t believe… that it actually reached 24,000 meters! Prince Wei’s Gatebeam is also 24,000 meters! This person’s bloodline is actually as strong as Prince Wei’s!”

“Who is there in the clan that could pull this off? It’s impossible! If I remember correctly, there is no clan member at all who has a bloodline like this!!”

Amidst all the uproar, there were a few old men in the crowd from the Fang Clan whose expressions were grim and bitter, and who said nothing. There weren’t many people like that in the crowd, but they were all direct bloodline descendants of the Fang Clan!

Their glory was now a thing of the past. First Meng Hao’s grandfather had gone missing, then his father went to Planet South Heaven. After that, the direct bloodline Patriarchs all went into secluded meditation and wouldn’t emerge. The direct bloodline was in decline, and the situation was only continuing to grow worse.

When they saw the boundless light in front of them, they could only sigh.

“Our bloodline used to have a someone who could considered a true Chosen!! It’s too bad… he was supposed to return last year, but… now we don’t even know if he’s alive or dead.”

There was another person in the crowd, a person who had just arrived. He was the middle-aged man who intended to try to acquire Meng Hao for his own bloodline. Originally, he stood there in the middle of all the other clan members, smiling broadly.

However, now that the Gatebeam had reached 24,000 meters, his eyes widened, and deep therein could be seen a flicker of killing intent. It didn’t matter who this person in the gate was, the fact that they had caused a 24,000-meter Gatebeam to appear meant that they were a threat to his son.

Grand Elder Fang Tongtian’s pupils constricted imperceptibly. However, his expression was one of kindness, and even more so, excitement.

“Wonderful! It appears that the Fang Clan will soon have another almighty Chosen like Fang Wei!”

The Fang Clan was in an uproar. On Planet East Victory, the bell had tolled eight times, and the clan members who had not already flown up into the air were astonished. Whether it was the young man in the blood-colored desert, or the middle-aged man practicing cultivation in the volcano, or anyone else, they all flew up.

Back in the ancestral mansion, the old man who had sent his son to East Heaven Gate suddenly opened his eyes, and they shone with terrifying light.

“24,000 meters. Other than my grandson, there is no one in the current generation of the Fang Clan who has such a strong bloodline. This person must not be from Planet East Victory!

“It’s him… it must be that damned son of a bitch!! He’s not dead after all!” At first, killing intent flickered in his eyes, but then he frowned, and felt fear welling up in his heart. This was Planet East Victory, and because of the Fang Clan Dao Reserves… it didn’t matter how high up he was in the clan, he didn’t dare to publicly break clan rules.

“Dammit, he’s making such a big scene! You can tell he’s a profound schemer!”

By now, everyone in the Fang Clan was shaken. Meng Hao’s Gatebeam put him on par with the number one Chosen in the clan, Fang Wei. The strength of such a bloodline was completely terrifying.

The ordinary clan members were all excited, but those clan members with deep cultivation bases or otherwise held significant influence watched with various expressions. They were happy to see a Chosen appear. However, if that Chosen’s power reached a terrifying level… then it wouldn’t actually be a joyous occasion.

If this person threatened Fang Wei’s status, a fight would surely break out like that between a dragon and a tiger, the result would be a clan member dying, and would affect the struggle for supremacy by the various sub-branches in the family. In-clan fighting was a very complicated thing.

Meng Hao stood there in the Fang Clan’s gate, his eyes closed but his blood surging. As it flowed through his body, he could sense that… there was still more power locked in his blood.

He took a deep breath and then suddenly opened his eyes.

“If I’m going to make a big scene, then I might as well go all out!” His cultivation base exploded with power, his blood flowed, and the entire gate began to shake. The Gatebeam outside once again shot up higher into the sky.

25,000 meters. 26,000 meters… 27,000 meters!

A buzz of conversation rose up, but was quickly silenced as… the beam continued to climb higher!

28,000 meters. 28,500 meters… 29,000… All the way to…

29,900 meters!

30,000 meters!![1]

All of the Fang Clan members were completely shaken to the maximum. Although Grand Elder Fang Tongtian’s pupils dilated with shock, his face was plastered with a huge smile. The older members of the clan were frowning, but the ordinary clan members were shouting out in happiness.

“30,000 meters!! That’s even more than Prince Wei! This person’s bloodline purity is unprecedented!!”

“A 30,000-meter Gatebeam! In the tens of thousands of years of recorded clan history, there has never been something like this before!!”

“According to the legends, only the early ancestors of the clan had a 30,000-meter Gatebeam. That means this person’s bloodline… evoked an Ancestral Awakening!!”

Meng Hao’s 19th Uncle was incredibly excited, and his eyes shone brightly.

“It’s definitely Hao’er. Only a grandson of the direct bloodline could have blood like that!!”

On Planet East Victory, the ninth bell tolled, and then a tenth. As they echoed out, the old man in the ancestral mansion suddenly shot to his feet, an expression of disbelief on his face. Deep beneath the surface of the ground, the young man in the Immortal’s cave who was absorbing the Immortal qi from the nine old men suddenly opened his eyes. His pupils were violet, and shone with a strange glow.

“So, has he returned…?” the young man murmured.

On this day, the Fang Clan members were sent into unprecedented astonishment.

On this day, the crowds were packed tight outside East Heaven Gate.

On this day, all of the powerful experts of the Fang Clan flew out to East Heaven Gate.

On this day, the cultivators who had lined up outside East Heaven Gate experienced something they would never forget.

On this day, Feng Xun saw something that he would remember for his whole life, something like a dream. A cultivator he knew as Meng Hao… stepped into the Fang Clan’s gate, and a 30,000-meter Bloodline Gatebeam shot up. It was the stuff of legends, and perhaps, the foundation of a myth.

Rumbling echoed out from the Fang Clan’s gate as the brilliant light slowly faded away. The eyes of all onlookers, of all the Fang Clan members, were cast toward the gate. Gradually, what became clear was an unfamiliar young man who walked out to stand in front of everyone.

He was tall and slender, and wore a long blue robe. His black hair drifted about in the air around him, and his face was somewhat sallow and thin.

However, as he stood there, he looked like he was standing on top of the sun.

His eyes shone brightly, like stars, and as he stood there, he looked around at everyone a bit bashfully.

“My father is Fang Xiufeng. My mother is Meng Li. My big sister is Fang Yu. I took my mother’s surname, and my name is Meng Hao. Grandfathers and Grandmothers, Uncles, Brothers and Sisters… greetings!”

Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed deeply.

1. In the original Chinese, 30,000 meters is written as 10,000 ‘zhang.’ When the two characters ‘10,000’ and ‘zhang’ are combined into a word, it also means “extremely high/deep” or “lofty”

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# Chapter 896: The Fang Clan of Planet East Victory!

Meng Hao looked at all the members of the Fang Clan and introduced himself in an unprecedented fashion. The response to his words was complete and utter silence.

All the clan members looked at Meng Hao, at his unfamiliar face, and the Fang Clan gate behind him. The 30,000-meter beam of light from moments ago had faded away.

Meng Hao was a name they weren’t familiar with, but when it came to Fang Xiufeng, that was a name that had once been the most glorious name in all the Fang Clan, and a name that would never be forgotten. Fang Xiufeng was the eldest son of the direct bloodline, and the number one Chosen of his generation. He had swept easily across all the other clan members of the other bloodlines, and had also suppressed the Chosen of various other sects in the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

During that time, Fang Xiufeng was so mighty that he was like a blazing sun in the sky and all others in his generation were like ordinary stars that served only to illuminate him in his splendor.

Furthermore, he ended up marrying an exceptional daughter of the Meng Clan. People came from the Eighth Mountain to attend their cultivator bonding ceremony, turning it into a grand occasion that people from both of those great Mountains and Seas still discussed.

Then Meng Hao was born, which pushed Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li to the peak of fame.

But then, in much the same way that luxury often fades to poverty, everything had changed in the blink of an eye. To the surprise and disbelief of many, Fang Xiufeng's father disappeared, and then Fang Xiufeng… went to Planet South Heaven to guard it for 100,000 years….

And all of this was for his son, Fang Hao!

He was a boy with a strong bloodline, who had experienced Nirvanic Rebirth at the age of seven. He had a Heaven-defying bloodline, but had been born crippled. During those years, there were many people who believed that Fang Hao was holding his mother and father back.

But now, Meng Hao had returned!

Or perhaps you could say, Fang Hao had returned!

The return of this one individual had prompted the entire clan to emerge to receive him. When he left with his parents, it shook all of Planet East Victory. Then he returned, and similarly shook the entire planet once again.

That was because his return was marked with a 30,000-meter Bloodline Gatebeam, which immediately vanquished the number one Chosen of the Fang Clan, Fang Wei. His actions swept across all clan members, and made him the focus of all eyes.

After a moment of silence, the clan members erupted into conversation.

"Meng Hao…. He's Fang Hao! The eldest grandson of the direct bloodline!"

"Heavens! It's actually him! He's returned! He's the kid from years ago who had the strong bloodline and underwent Nirvanic Rebirth at the age of seven! He's… back!"

When Meng Hao spoke the names of his parents, the direct bloodline clan members in the crowd began to tremble with excitement. 19th Uncle strode forward, staring at Meng Hao. During the past year, he had been wallowing in guilt and self-blame for letting his older cousin down, to the point where he had almost drowned in the negativity. Now that he saw Meng Hao safely returned, and also surging with incredible power, the joy he felt was virtually impossible to even describe.

Laughter rang out as Grand Elder Fang Tongtian walked forward. He looked at Meng Hao and then smiled kindly.

“As long as you’re back, that’s what’s important. It doesn’t matter if your name is Meng Hao or Fang Hao, you are still a member of the Fang Clan, and the eldest grandson of the clan’s direct bloodline!

“I held you in my arms when you were a little kid, you know.” Fang Tongtian laughed heartily, and the kindness on his face was readily apparent. The more he looked at Meng Hao, the happier he seemed.

Behind him were other elder members of the clan, all of whom wore happy smiles on their faces as they approached Meng Hao.

“What a good kid! You must have suffered many hardships through the years.”

“As long as you’re back, that’s what’s important. Now that you’ve returned to the clan, your future prospects are limitless.”

“Today is a day for great rejoicing! Wonderful! Simply wonderful!”

All the members of the Fang Clan were crying out in joy. In the cultivation world, when it comes to clans and sects, bloodlines and family, while they may be complicated, they are sometimes very simple.

Meng Hao’s return was the subject of great happiness for countless individuals. The previously taciturn middle-aged man was laughing out loud. He stepped forward, looked Meng Hao over, and then sighed deeply.

“Hao’er, I’m your 2nd Uncle. Years ago, your father and I fought in battles together, grew up together, and practiced cultivation together. In fact, you and Wei’er were born only an hour apart. You were virtually born together.

“The most important thing is that you’re back. You’re a member of the Fang Clan, and within our clan, you are definitely Chosen!”

More people crowded around Meng Hao, especially the direct bloodline clan members. They were more excited than anyone else. Meng Hao’s return was a source of incredible inspiration and encouragement. Furthermore, the appearance of the 30,000-meter Bloodline Gatebeam finally gave them hope for their own bloodline.

“Hao’er,” said the Grand Elder, “come. Come here to me, and we can return home together.” The praise and geniality in his eyes were clear.

19th uncle approached and began to introduce everyone to Meng Hao. “Hao’er, this is the Grand Elder. The Patriarchs are all in secluded meditation. Fortunately, the Grand Elder is here to handle clan affairs.”

Meng Hao quickly clasped hands and bowed.

“Junior offers greetings, Grand Elder.”

The Grand Elder laughed; he seemed to be growing fonder of Meng Hao by the minute.

“However, I can’t return to the clan at the moment,” said Meng Hao, sounding a bit embarrassed. In response to his words, everyone stared in shock.

“A few moments ago, somebody stole some of my spirit stones,” Meng Hao continued, sighing. His gaze swept across the group of Outer Sect cultivators who had been guarding East Heaven Gate, lingering for a moment on the cultivator with the black birthmark. In response, a tremor ran through the man, and then he passed out from fear.

“How much was stolen?” asked the young man standing next to 19th Uncle, looking excitedly at Meng Hao.

“A million,” Meng Hao replied indignantly.

“Alright, well I’ll take care of it.” The young man licked his lips. “Oh, my name is Fang Xi.” This young man was also a direct bloodline descendant, and was Meng Hao’s younger cousin. 1

The rest of the Fang Clan members started to laugh out loud. The scene that was playing out in front of them was almost like a comedy. Clearly, someone had offended Meng Hao earlier, before they had known who he was. The Fang Clan members viewed the honor of the clan as an important thing, and wouldn’t tolerate that honor being trampled, not even by Outer Clan cultivators who weren’t aware of Meng Hao’s identity. Those cultivators had unwittingly committed a grave mistake, and would have to be punished.

Immediately, clan members sprang into action, lining up the ashen-faced guard cultivators and taking them away.

As the cultivator with the black birthmark was taken away, he howled miserably. In his regret, tears streamed down his face.

The Grand Elder shook his head and laughed, then clasped Meng Hao’s hand and led him into the Fang Clan’s gate. The other Fang Clan members followed behind. Light from the gate shot high into the air, and rumbling sounds echoed out in all directions.

Feng Xun stared in shock. As Meng Hao walked off, he turned back and nodded benevolently. Although Meng Hao said nothing, Feng Xun was very moved.

Gradually, all of the Fang Clan members returned to Planet East Victory. A new set of cultivators was brought to stand guard outside the gate. These new cultivators trembled nervously; they knew what fate was in store for the previous guards, and held deep respect and fear for Meng Hao.

Now, they treated the crowds lined up outside the gate with incredible courtesy as they let them through.

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Back in the Fang Clan, clan members from various bloodlines returned from afar and gathered together in the ancestral mansion for a grand welcoming ceremony.

Compared to the gathering that had been prepared one year before, it was exponentially grander. After all, the previous gathering had been more for show. This time… many people came back of their own volition. They wanted to see for themselves exactly what Meng Hao looked like, this clan member who had a 30,000-meter Bloodline Gatebeam.

Roughly half of Planet East Victory was under the Fang Clan's jurisdiction and was occupied by various auxiliary bloodlines. On this planet, there was no Imperial dynasty, only the Fang Clan.

Regardless of whether it was their mortal cities, or their cultivators, the Fang Clan… was so large and powerful that they eclipsed everyone else. Furthermore, the Church of the Blood Orchid and the Church of the Puppet God both had deep connections to the Fang Clan.

Of course, the Medicine Immortal Sect was independent, since it had been founded by a Patriarch of the Fang Clan who was still alive, creating a unique relationship.

The Fang Clan ancestral mansion was essentially a huge city, and served as the capital city of the Fang Clan. It was situated next to an ocean, and was the location where the innumerable bloodlines of the Fang Clan would come to gather. It was filled with extravagantly decorated palatial buildings and numerous pagodas that stretched out as far as the eye could see.

In the past, only the direct bloodline had occupied the ancestral mansion, but in recent years… as the direct bloodline declined, some areas had been occupied by an auxiliary bloodline. Now, the direct bloodline only controlled about half of the entire ancestral mansion. In fact, signs pointed to that auxiliary bloodline eventually coming to be considered the main branch.

The welcoming ceremony for Meng Hao's return was an affair attended by tens of thousands of clan members, who were now gathered in the central square in the middle of the ancestral mansion. To Meng Hao, it looked vaguely similar to what he had seen in the illusory Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple.

The ground was paved with green stone slabs, and numerous spell formations could be seen, which emanated incredible pressure. To Meng Hao, it almost felt as if an enormous ocean were covering everything and weighing it down.

The buildings he saw in all directions were luxurious, and it was as if an enormous sect that could shake all of the Ninth Mountain and Sea had suddenly revealed a tiny portion of itself to Meng Hao.

Yet, all of it was really just the tip of the iceberg. There were further layers of power that Meng Hao couldn’t even sense with his cultivation base. All he knew was that it was impossible for him to even imagine how many Fang Clan members there were on Planet East Victory, and that wasn’t even mentioning the Outer Clans or other cultivators who had been specially bestowed with the surname Fang.

Altogether… it was a staggering number of cultivators.

Furthermore, the people who had appeared earlier outside of East Heaven Gate were only the most illustrious members of their various bloodlines.

The Grand Elder presided over the welcoming ceremony, and introduced Meng Hao to many clan members. After sacrifices were made to the ancestors, he gave Meng Hao a command medallion and numerous other trifles. After that, he led Meng Hao to the Fang Temple in the ancestral mansion.

The temple was enormous, and from the outside, resembled some enormous beast sitting there cross-legged. Inside was a coliseum-like structure, with ten thousand seats arranged in concentric rings. At the moment, more than half of those seats were occupied by various elder members of the clan. All of them looked on with sparkling eyes, and had cultivation bases so profound that Meng Hao couldn’t assess them.

Grand Elder Fang Tongtian sat up in the front, his gaze as bright as fire as he looked at Meng Hao standing in the middle of the temple. There were many other clan members seated nearby, including his 2nd Uncle, as well as an old man covered with wrinkles, who gazed piercingly at Meng Hao as he measured him up. That old man… was Fang Wei's paternal grandfather, the same old man within whom killing intent toward Meng Hao had flickered earlier.

There were other clan members seated in the area. Most of them were young, and among their number, Meng Hao caught sight of Fang Donghan, who looked at him and smiled. 2

Meng Hao also saw Fang Xiangshan. When she saw him looking at her, she trembled and lowered her head. She obviously still remembered everything that had happened on Planet South Heaven 3

Many Chosen from the Fang Clan were there, including a young man in a white robe, with skin as smooth as jade. He was the young man who had been practicing cultivation earlier in the Immortal's cave deep under the ancestral mansion. Currently, he sat in a seat, surrounded by a group of over a hundred cultivators roughly his age.

One of the young cultivators near him was Fang Yunyi! 4

Fang Yunyi gave Meng Hao a venomous stare, then leaned over and whispered something into the ear of the young man in the white robe.

Actually, that young man had no need for the entourage. Comparing their energy to his was like comparing the darkness of night to a raging fire. He seemed like a wolf in the middle of a flock of sheep, and was someone anyone would recognize at a single glance.

This was the previous number one Chosen in the Fang Clan, Prince Wei… Fang Wei!

Fang Wei

Official ISSTH art of Fang Wei. The gate in the background reads “East Heaven Gate”

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Fang Xi – This “Xi” is a bit hard to pronounce. The easiest way to say it is like the word “she” in English. However, the beginning sound in the word actually doesn’t exist in English and is more like something half-way between SH and S

1. Fang Xi’s name in Chinese is fāng xī. Xi means ‘west’

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# Chapter 897: Fang Wei!

Fang Wei was always surrounded by groups of fellow young cultivators. No matter where he went, he was the center of attention. After all, he was Fang Wei, the long time number one Chosen of this generation in the Fang Clan.

He was famous in all the Ninth Mountain and Sea!

Furthermore, although he wasn’t the legitimate eldest grandson of the Fang Clan, he essentially held that position.

In this generation of the Fang Clan, the only person who ranked above him in seniority was Meng Hao!

As he sat there calmly, he glanced at Meng Hao for a moment, then closed his eyes. A year before, when the clan had convened the welcoming ceremony, he did not make an appearance; he couldn’t care less that Meng Hao had been scheduled to return.

The only reason he came today was because the strength of Meng Hao’s bloodline had piqued his interest.

The air in the temple was very solemn. All of the people seated inside were Fang Clan Elders, and although not every single clan Elder had come, this group comprised the majority of those who were on Planet East Victory.

Each person in the temple looked like an Immortal Deity. All of them, be it in terms of their qi and blood, or in terms of their aura, were terrifying to the extreme. As Meng Hao looked around, he realized that he couldn’t gauge any of their cultivation bases.

As of this moment, Meng Hao gained a clearer understanding of how powerful the Fang Clan was.

If you didn’t count the Ji Clan, this clan could actually be considered the number one clan in all the Ninth Mountain and Sea. The year that Lord Li disappeared, if the Fang Clan had been stronger by just a hair… the Ninth Mountain and Sea might now be following a Lord Fang.

Meng Hao was also well aware that he was really only looking at the tip of the iceberg. The Fang Clan had even deeper and more powerful resources, making them a force that few would ever trifle with lightly.

Furthermore, Meng Hao… was the eldest grandson of the direct bloodline of the Fang Clan. It was easy to imagine what would have happened if he hadn’t experienced the Seventh Year Tribulation. Had he grown up in the Fang Clan, his status and fame would definitely have made him well-known throughout the Ninth Mountain and Sea, as well as the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

All of the Elders were now looking at Meng Hao. It was impossible to tell whether they were happy or angry; their expressions were abstruse and impossible to read, and filled the hall with incredible pressure. As for Fang Wei, and his father and grandfather, undetectable gleams flickered in their eyes.

Meng Hao was the only person standing, right there in the middle of the temple. As for the pressure that emanated from those surrounding him, Meng Hao didn’t even flinch.

After a long moment, Grand Elder Fang Tongtian finally spoke.

“Fang Hao!” he said, his expression solemn. His voice echoed out in the temple, making it sound almost as if a throng of people were speaking. Everything trembled.

“Having offered sacrifices to the ancestors, you are now officially a member of the Fang Clan. Henceforth, you shall enjoy access to the Fang Clan’s cultivation resources, and many things will now tilt in your favor.

“However, there is something you must never forget!” The Grand Elder’s expression was suddenly threatening, although it lacked any anger.

“Now that you are a member of the Fang Clan, you must follow all of the clan rules. Violate those rules, and it doesn’t matter how strong your bloodline is, or that you have a 30,000-meter Bloodline Gatebeam. Despite that… you will still be punished!

“Speaking of the clan rules, I will give you a detailed copy that you can study in a moment.”

Meng Hao stood there silently, looking at the Grand Elder.

After the Grand Elder finished speaking, a white-haired, ruddy-faced old man seated off to the side smiled and said, “Ladies and Gentlemen of the clan, let us discuss how the cultivation resources will be allocated to Fang Hao.”

“Hao’er is the eldest grandson of the direct bloodline,” someone said. “In fact, he is the highest-ranking grandson of his generation in the entire Fang Clan. He’s had a hard time in the outside world during these years. Now that he’s back in the clan, he should naturally be given the very best of everything!”

“The Immortal’s cave next to Brightmoon Lake has good fortune of Heaven and Earth inside,” another person said. “Furthermore, the remains of a Heavenly Dragon can be found therein. It is absolutely the best Immortal’s cave in all of Planet East Victory. From my perspective, that Immortal’s cave should definitely be given to Hao’er.”

Another of the Elders looked at Meng Hao with praise in his eyes and said, “That’s right. For years, no one has possessed the qualifications to have that Immortal’s cave. We of the direct bloodline have him as our eldest grandson, and in fact, the highest-ranking grandson of his entire generation! He is the only one who could possibly be qualified to have that Immortal’s cave.”

This was not a situation where people were trying to bring Meng Hao down by over-praising him. These people truly wanted Meng Hao to have the best resources to help him advance himself in the quickest manner possible.

Almost as soon as soon as the Elder from the direct bloodline finished speaking, other Elders began to speak.

“That’s not entirely proper. Hao’er has just returned, and hasn’t yet made the least contribution whatsoever to the good of the clan.You can’t reward him with that Immortal’s cave on the basis of his position alone. That wouldn’t be fair.”

“Precisely. In the Fang Clan, one’s standing is based on how much one has contributed to the clan. To avoid causing other clan members to have feelings of resentment, Hao’er should not be given that Immortal’s cave.”

It only took a moment for a clamor to arise as numerous Elders began to give their opinions. In the end, Meng Hao could tell that about thirty percent of the Elders disagreed, with only about ten percent standing on Meng Hao’s side. The rest maintained their silence.

The Grand Elder had predicted that something like this would happen, so he sat there silently, his expression the same as usual.

It was at this point that suddenly, Fang Wei, who sat in a chair surrounded by over a hundred young companions, suddenly opened his eyes to speak.

“Respected Elders, I regret to inform you that Junior has already taken the Immortal’s cave by Brightmoon Lake and gifted it to someone.” His voice was placid and seemingly devoid of any emotion whatsoever. As soon as he spoke, the direct bloodline Elders’ faces grew dark. However, none of them offered any sort of response.

An imperceptible flicker appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes. The words spoken by Fang Wei carried much meaning. This was a meeting of Fang Clan elders, and none of the other members of the younger generation had seats except for Fang Wei.

Furthermore, his words actually carried a domineering weight that seemed to be intolerant of any opposition. It was so domineering… that even the direct bloodline Elders didn’t dare to retort.

Meng Hao looked over at Fang Wei, and Fang Wei looked back at him for a moment before closing his eyes.

Then, the direct bloodline Elder spoke up again.

“Other than the Immortal’s cave, there are also the ten batches of Rainbow Immortal Evanescence Pills concocted by Pill Elder from the Dao of Alchemy Division. That type of pill is a rare medicine that provides mysterious assistance when rising from the Spirit Realm into the Immortal Realm. Seven batches of those pills should be given to Hao’er!”

“That’s not appropriate either,” said another Elder. “Only ten batches of pills are concocted per year, and the medicinal plant ingredients are all extinct in the outside world. The Rainbow Immortal Evanescence Pill is the Fang Clan’s strongest type of pill that exists in the gap between the Spirit and Immortal Realms. They are concocted for the benefit of the entire junior generation. Therefore, giving seven batches to Hao’er is impossible. I say, one batch should be enough.”

As before, the Grand Elder said nothing. It was at this point that the white-robed Fang Wei opened his eyes and spoke again.

“Respected Elders, I regret to inform you that Junior has already made arrangements for all ten batches of Rainbow Immortality Evanescence Pills.”

Immediately, silence once again filled the entire temple. Fury burned in the direct bloodline Elders’ eyes, but all they could do was clench their jaws and maintain silence.

Meng Hao had not spoken yet either, but his brow had gradually become furrowed as he looked over at Fang Wei. Fang Wei had only spoken twice, yet each time his words had silenced the Elders. This fact revealed a lot.

In addition, Meng Hao was gradually coming to detect something familiar about Fang Wei, although he couldn’t quite put his finger on what it was. After a moment, he began to wonder if he was just imagining it.

Silence reigned in the temple, and while the direct bloodline clan members sat there gloomily, there were Elders from other bloodlines who were smiling slightly. Finally, Grand Elder Fang Tongtian cleared his throat and then began to speak, his eyes shining.

“Well, since we have a disagreement regarding the Immortal’s cave and the medicinal pills, let’s put those matters aside for now. Hao’er, you are the eldest grandson of the direct bloodline, so I will take responsibility for you now. There will be no more discussion. You will be given the highest quality compensation from the clan.” With that, he waved his right hand, causing a jade slip to fly out and come to float in front of Meng Hao.

“Take this jade slip to the clan’s Hall of the People. That is where you can withdraw your monthly set cultivation resources.

“As for the Immortal’s cave….” The Grand Elder muttered to himself for a moment, then waved his hand, causing a gentle light to spread out, which rapidly solidified into a map.

There were various dots of glowing light on the map, each of which represented an Immortal’s cave. The closer the Immortal’s caves were to the center of the map, the stronger the auras they emitted. In the very center of them all was a lake, which was none other than Brightmoon Lake.

“Hao’er, go ahead and select an Immortal’s cave from among the ones you see here. The dim lights represent Immortal’s caves that have already been spoken for.” As the Grand Elder spoke, about eighty percent of the lights on the map went dark. Not many were left behind. There were still a few next to Brightmoon Lake, but most were located in other areas, and especially along the edges.

All eyes were on Meng Hao, and most of the onlookers seemed concerned, although it was impossible to tell whether such feelings were true or false.

Meng Hao was silent for a moment, then clasped hands and bowed to the Grand Elder.

“Grand Elder, Junior has come to Planet East Victory upon my father’s request to take my two Nirvana Fruits. I don’t really care about Immortal’s caves or medicinal pills. I don’t need them. I just want my Nirvana Fruits.” Having directly spoken these words, Meng Hao gazed at the Grand Elder.

Complete silence filled the temple.

Finally, the Grand Elder waved his hand as if he couldn’t accept Meng Hao’s refusal of the Immortal’s cave and other things.

“Hao’er, you just got back to the clan,” he said, his voice kind. “You need some time to get familiar with everything. An Immortal’s cave, cultivation resources, and those medicinal pills are things that, as a member of the Fang Clan, belong to you by right.

“Regarding the Nirvana Fruits, fear not, they’re yours. Naturally, they will be returned to you. I personally promised your father exactly that when he left.

“Don’t worry about that matter. Although, it is a significant affair. Two days from now, I will make an announcement throughout the entire clan, inviting clan members here to bear witness to the returning of the Nirvana Fruits into your hands.”

Meng Hao didn’t respond. Originally, he didn’t have any desire to come to the Fang Clan. Now that he was here, and he understood the situation, he was even less willing to stay.

In fact, he was even of a mind to simply leave right then and there. However, when he thought of his parents’ hopes, he took a deep breath, and a fierce glow appeared in his eyes for a brief moment. He nodded, and then decided to say one more thing.

“Grand Elder, there is also an Immortality Illumination Vine that my father had prepared for me. Could you please return that to me as well?”

Before the Grand Elder could even respond, the white-robed Fang Wei’s voice could be heard.

“I regret to inform you that I’ve already made arrangements for that Immortality Illumination Vine as well,” he said coolly.

As soon as the words left his mouth, Meng Hao’s eyes sparkled with icy coldness. He looked over at Fang Wei, smiled slightly, and then began to speak.

“Junior Cousin Fang Wei,” he said, his voice ice cold despite his smile, “apparently, I beat the crap out of you too hard when we were young. That’s the only explanation for why you’ve become such a nutcase. Otherwise, what would possibly make you think it was acceptable to steal from me?”[1]

When Fang Wei heard this, his eyes glowed with icy coldness as he stared dead at Meng Hao.

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# Chapter 898: Do You Want to Die?!

“Could it be that as long as something belongs to me, you’ll try to steal it?

“Your twisted view of life is really my fault. In the future, I’ll do my best to help you correct the error of your ways.” Meng Hao said these things while staring directly at Fang Wei.

“Do you want to die?” replied Fang Wei coolly.

“How pretentious of you!” said Meng Hao, walking toward Fang Wei. Each step he took caused the ground to tremble, and his eyes were cold as he stared at Fang Wei.

“In terms of status,” he continued coldly, “I am the eldest grandson. In terms of bloodline, my Bloodline Gatebeam was 30,000 meters. In terms of clan seniority, I’m your Elder Cousin. It’s my duty to admonish you, and you have no grounds upon which you would be justified in resisting! Since you insist on spewing hogwash, I have to ask you, Fang Wei… do YOU want to die?” Meng Hao’s words were incredibly aggressive.

After he finished speaking, he turned to the Grand Elder and clasped his hands.

“Grand Elder, Fang Wei has shown disrespect to his elders, which undermines the norms of etiquette, a sin that neither Heaven nor Earth can forgive. For a clan to prosper, it must have a standard of conduct. Given the Fang Clan’s status as a great clan of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, the rules must be stricter than others. Respect for seniority is the standard which must be met for the future growth of the clan!

“Do the clan rules permit someone to act in this way? If not, then he has violated clan rules. What might the punishment be for such actions?” As he spoke, the surrounding Elders' eyes went wide, especially the direct bloodline Elders, who were greatly shocked.

When Meng Hao spoke, his words were as sharp as a sword, completely astonishing everyone in the audience. None of them could possibly have imagined that he would speak in such a vicious tone.

Of course, they didn't know that Meng Hao had been raised as a scholar, and loved to spar with words. Back in his days as an alchemist, he had engaged in a debate that had resulted in his opponent's Dao Heart becoming unstable. From that, it could be seen how sharp his words could be.

Furthermore, he had verbally dueled with the meat jelly on many occasions, which could be considered further training in debate.

It was at this point that Fang Wei's father, who sat off to the side of the Elders, suddenly spoke, his voice cold.

"Fang Hao, clan rules prohibit internal conflicts. How could you speak such malicious words? You need to spend some time in self-examination! Men, take him away!"

Meng Hao showed no fear in response, but instead, began to laugh uproariously. Now that he was here in the Fang Clan, and could now take advantage of the Clan's regulations and ordinances, he would not allow anyone to dare try to openly put him at a disadvantage.

"2nd Uncle, correct? Were my words really malicious? I said that I beat him too severely when we were young. That is a simple fact. I said that he has become abnormal, an expression of regret. Then I said that I wish to help him correct the error of his ways. As his Elder Cousin, all of this is a condemnation of myself!

"As his senior, it is my responsibility, in fact, my DUTY to help my Junior Cousin. Therefore, I am unsure as to why 2nd Uncle would call such words malicious."

Fang Wei’s father frowned. “How nasty and derogatory! Your histrionics will do you no good! Facts are facts!”

“I’ll tell you the facts,” retorted Meng Hao. “This headstrong Junior Cousin wants to steal my Immortal’s cave. He also wants to steal my medicinal pills. Despite that, I said nothing. He is the Junior and I am the Senior. If I ALLOW him to have those things, then very well, he can have them.

“However, the reason that I chided him was because he also expressed his desire to steal the Immortality Illumination Vine left for me by my father. Since that item belongs to my father, how could a Junior member of the clan possibly steal it? Can a Junior member of the clan actually be permitted to steal things that belong to someone of the Senior generation? 2nd Uncle, is it possible that you actually approve of such a thing?

“Isn’t such behavior a violation of clan rules? It certainly does not respect the rules of seniority, does it? Aren’t such actions tantamount to open rebellion?

“In the Ninth Mountain and Sea, what clan exists that permits members of the Junior generation to steal things from the Senior generation? What clan exists that believes such a thing to be proper? Furthermore, what clan exists that intentionally misrepresents the facts, inverting right and wrong?

“2nd Uncle, please, enlighten me. Junior’s experience is limited, and I’m really unsure of the answers to these questions.” Meng Hao flicked his sleeve and looked over at Fang Wei’s father, his eyes glittering.

“You….” Fang Wei’s father looked enraged, but he apparently couldn’t think of anything to say in response.

The temple hall was completely silent. The Elders who had originally maintained a position of neutrality were now looking over curiously at Meng Hao.

19th Uncle’s son, Fang Xi, was also there in the crowd, staring blankly at Meng Hao. He had never imagined that Meng Hao could speak so incisively.

Meng Hao had just taken a small matter and turned it into something important, had transformed a relatively minor event into a huge one. He had struck people speechless. Such skill in speaking was something that Fang Xi had never encountered before in his life, and it caused his eyes to shine brightly.

“Enough!” said Grand Elder Fang Tongtian. He frowned and swished his sleeve.

“We’re all members of the same clan; there’s no need for bickering. The matter has passed and will not be brought up again. Hao’er, the Immortality Illumination Vine left behind by your father will be given to you.” With that, he made a grasping motion, causing a bag of holding to suddenly appear in his hand. He tossed it out toward Meng Hao, who grabbed it and scanned it with spiritual sense. Inside, he could see the Immortality Illumination Vine, roughly three inches long and as thick as a finger.

Killing intent flickered in Fang Wei’s eyes. He gave a cold harrumph, then stood up and walked out of the temple, completely ignoring Meng Hao in the process. Rustling sounds could be heard as his more than one hundred followers left with him. Each and every one glared menacingly at Meng Hao as they left, especially Fang Yunyi, whose eyes were filled with intense venom.

Meng Hao ignored Fang Wei, as if he wasn’t worth looking at. He clasped hands and bowed to the Grand Elder, then looked back at the map of Immortal’s caves. As of now, he was determined to rise to prominence in the Fang Clan, all for the sake of his father and mother. As such, he would need to make some preparations.

“Dad and mom want me to fight hard and excel for their sakes, and they want me to make sure all the people in the Fang Clan see it…. As their son, that’s exactly what I’m going to do!”

After looking over the Immortal’s caves, he found one that didn’t seem very extraordinary at all, although it did have a nicely-sized medicinal plant garden.

“Grand Elder, I’ll take this Immortal’s cave.”

The Grand Elder nodded and performed an incantation gesture. Immediately, a command medallion appeared and flew out toward Meng Hao.

“Very well. This clan meeting will now adjourn.” Next, he looked kindly at Meng Hao and said, “Hao’er, in two days, come back here, and I will personally give you your Nirvana Fruits. There’s no need to feel anxious about that.” It seemed the Grand Elder approved of how Meng Hao had behaved during the meeting.

As the crowds dispersed, 19th Uncle called Meng Hao over and introduced him to the Elders of the direct bloodline. When they looked at him, emotional expressions of reminiscence could be seen on their faces.

Some of these men had watched Meng Hao’s father grow up, and had even held Meng Hao when he was a baby. They began to talk, and when Meng Hao’s father was mentioned, they sighed. Then the subject of his grandfather came up, and their expressions darkened.

It was evening before they finally dispersed. Fang Xi volunteered to escort Meng Hao through the ancestral mansion to his Immortal’s cave.

En route, Fang Xi took him to get his cultivation resources, and the two of them began to chat amiably.

“Ai, Coz, it’s a good thing you’re finally back. If you hadn’t returned, the direct bloodline would only continue to waste away….

“You have no idea how angry I’ve been recently. Every time I see Fang Wei, I have to hold back from giving him a taste of my fist! What’s so special about that bastard, huh? His latent talent? His strong bloodline?

“Hmph. If it weren’t for his father and grandfather, and their Patriarch who occasionally shows his face, their branch would never have started eyeing the ancestral mansion!”

Fang Xi continued to complain to Meng Hao the entire way.

“In terms of latent talent, Coz, yours is definitely the best. Your Bloodline Gatebeam was 30,000 meters high! Fang Wei can’t even compare! Let’s see how he continues to claim to be the number one Chosen in the future!

“And then there’s that good-for-nothing Fang Yunyi. He’s vicious! Coz, in the future, you really need to be careful about him.

“Come to think of it, Coz, your cultivation base needs some improvement. It’s too bad about those Rainbow Immortal Evanescence Pills. They’re powerful, very powerful. With pills like that, coupled with the power of an Immortality Illumination Vine, it’s easily possible to achieve true Immortal Ascension, and then have a big improvement in your cultivation base.

“It’s one of the Fang Clan’s miraculous pills. In fact, when you consider medicinal pills for the Spirit Realm, Rainbow Immortal Evanescence Pills are one of the top types of pills in all the Ninth Mountain and Sea!

“Damn that Fang Wei! If it wasn’t for him, all of those pills would have been yours.” Fang Xi jabbered on and on, almost like the meat jelly. Eventually, he started to tell Meng Hao stories from when he was young, starting from the time he was one year old and going all the way until he was hundreds of years old….

Meng Hao just smiled and listened to Fang Xi’s grumblings and other explanations about the Fang Clan. From all of this, he now had a much better understanding of the Fang Clan. Gradually, though, Fang Xi’s energetic blabbering turned into nothing more than a buzzing in Meng Hao’s ears.

Overall, though, Meng Hao could sense the sincerity in Fang Xi.

As they walked along, they ran into many Fang Clan members, all of whom looked curiously at Meng Hao. Some wore smiles, other scowls. Just about any expression imaginable could be seen.

“Coz, there’s another important thing. You were really badass back at the temple! I’ve never seen anybody from the Junior generation dare to stand in the middle of the temple and talk like that. Every single thing you said was true and sensible. They were all struck speechless!”

Night had fallen by the time Fang Xi led Meng Hao to his Immortal’s cave, which was located in the far northern section of the ancestral mansion. It was a quiet, idyllic location that almost looked like a painting. It was night, but the two moons in the sky lit up everything, making it a beautiful scene.

Meng Hao’s Immortal’s cave was actually a sprawling two-story residence, beautifully decorated and quite luxurious. There was a small lake nearby, and a stone path which led to it. The canopy of stars overhead was reflected by the lake water, making everything sparkle.

A garden surrounded the little lake, within which grew a variety of medicinal plants. There wasn’t a huge amount, but they still caused a sweet fragrance to fill the air. Lotuses could be seen floating on the surface of the lake, and overall, the entire scene looked like something celestial.

Meng Hao looked around and was quite content. Although this place might not count as very special when compared to all of the other Immortal’s caves in the Fang Clan’s ancestral mansion, in the outside world, it would be considered one of the best.

There was abundant spiritual energy here, as well as Immortal qi. Meng Hao walked into the courtyard and then took a deep breath; he really liked this place.

“Coz,” said Fang Xi, “about your gift of the tongue… do you think you could teach me about that? My dad says that I jabber all the time, but that nothing I say makes sense. He’s even beaten me on more than one occasion because of it. Coz, could you help me out? Please?” Fang Xi’s tone was one of piteous entreaty.

Meng Hao turned to look at Fang Xi and smiled.

“Are you sure?”

Fang Xi’s expression brightened, and he nodded.

Meng Hao hesitated for a moment, but seeing Fang Xi’s hopeful expression, he couldn’t help but sigh. Tapping his bag of holding, he caused the meat jelly to appear in his hand.

The meat jelly immediately pouted and then began to jabber discontentedly.

“Meng Hao, you bastard, you deserve to die a horrible death! You dumped me and then exploited me! Wait. No. You exploited me then dumped me! Y-y-you, you’re immoral! You’re shameless! You’re a big bully! I’m going to convert you!”

“Fang Xi,” said Meng Hao, clearing his throat, “keep coming to visit me. Every time you do, you can chat with this thingamajig. When you can hold a conversation with it for three days, you’ll be a badass.”

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# Chapter 899: Difficult To Distinguish Between Enmity and Benevolence

“That thing?” said Fang Xi, staring with wide eyes at the meat jelly. The meat jelly suddenly stopped talking and looked at Fang Xi. Both of them seemed to be somewhat at a loss at first, but soon, bright glows appeared in both of their eyes.

“Killing intent!” gasped Meng Hao, backing up as he sensed the aura building between the meat jelly and Fang Xi.

“So, finally a worthy opponent!” said the meat jelly, leaping up into the air and landing next to Fang Xi, an expression of unprecedented solemnity on its face.

“It seems I’ve met my match!” replied Fang Xi, having sensed the energy within the meat jelly. It was an explosive energy that only he could sense, and from it, he knew that the meat jelly could continue a conversation for days on end.

“It seems I need to warm up a bit first,” said the meat jelly, clearing its throat. “Ahem. Look kid, Lord Third is going to tell you a story that took place three three three three three… well anyway, countless three years ago. This was back in the early days of Heaven and Earth….”

“Cut the crap! All you know is three? Three three three three three. What a disgrace!” Fang Xi hadn’t even begun speaking when all of a sudden, the parrot flew out from Meng Hao’s bag of holding. It landed on a nearby tree branch and looked at Fang Xi with a look of disdain.

“Kid, don’t listen to his jabbering,” said the parrot. “You study with Lord Fifth. Look at my mouth, is it sharp or not? From that, you should be able to imagine how sharp-tongued I am!”

Meng Hao quickly left the courtyard and fled into the Immortal’s cave itself. In his opinion, the battlefield occupied by the meat jelly, the parrot and Fang Xi, was a place he shouldn’t remain in. He had already experienced some of Fang Xi’s gift of the tongue on the way here. He had talked the entire way, telling stories from the day he was one year old all the way to the present, and tales from the founding of the Fang Clan all the way to modern times. When he had run out of conversation topics, he had then begun to introduce the different members of the Fang Clan to Meng Hao.

Of course, it wasn’t an introduction made in person, just his own opinions….

Inside his residence, Meng Hao looked around and saw extreme luxury. Even the furniture was made of spirit stones, which caused his eyes to grow wide.

“The Fang Clan… is really rich! And I’m the eldest grandson! Yet… I’m so poor….” Sighing at the injustice of it all, he waved his hands, causing all of the spirit stone furniture to be sucked into his bag of holding.

The once luxurious residence was now simple and stark, and as he looked around, he felt much better. Finally, he sat down cross-legged on the ground, his eyes glittering.

“Father wanted me to get my Nirvana Fruits. It goes without saying that reason is because he wants me to rise to prominence in the Fang Clan….

“It won’t be incredibly difficult to do that, but as for the Nirvana Fruits… the Fang Clan… will they actually be able to give them to me?” Frowning, Meng Hao considered the ambush he had experienced on the way here, and how they had tried to kill him, and his eyes glowed with coldness.

“I wonder if Fang Wei’s branch of the clan sent the assassins….” Meng Hao had learned of how the clan’s direct bloodline was currently in a very poor situation. On the other hand, Fang Wei's branch of the clan was on the rise. Not only did they have the support of many of the clan Elders, but they had even occupied some of the ancestral mansion. Some branches of the clan remained neutral, but for the most part, Fang Wei's branch had completely eclipsed the direct bloodline.

"The Grand Elder was acting strange," Meng Hao thought. "He seemed kind, but in my opinion, it was just an act." He smiled coldly. Other people all assumed that he had been taken care of by his father and mother from the time he was young. They believed that, although his life had not been what it might have been had he stayed in the Fang Clan, surely he had not experienced the twists and turns of a dangerous life.

The truth of the matter was that from the age of seven onward, Meng Hao had been completely alone. In the mortal world, he had struggled hard during his youth, and had developed a spirit of independence. Then he had entered the cultivation world, and had experienced many things, and had survived numerous deadly crises. Step by step, he had advanced through life to reach his current situation. The help he had received from his parents had been scant, to say the least.

Although he might not be a perfect judge of character, he rarely made mistakes when sizing people up. He had quite a bit of experience in contending with others, and naturally, had become quite good at it.

"In two days, they will most likely not give me the Nirvana Fruits. They'll come up with some excuse that I won't be able to dispute, and then delay the matter….

"Of course, me returning to the clan has probably caused a huge headache for whoever it was that was trying to have me killed. However… the higher my position within the Fang Clan, the more afraid they will be to do anything to me."

After some more thought, his eyes flickered, and he opened the bag of holding that contained his cultivation resources from the Fang Clan. After looking it over, he couldn't help but take a deep breath.

There were a hundred bottles of medicinal pills, 1,000,000 spirit stones, and one hundred magic manuals. Although there were no Daoist magics, there were many powerful divine abilities. As for the Fang Clan’s most powerful Daoist magics, of course there were none.

That was something else Meng Hao had learned from Fang Xi. Not even Fang Wei could have access to those core Daoist magics, not without performing deeds of merit. Such deeds were considered contributions to the Fang Clan.

The more deeds of merit one performed, the more rewards could be acquired.

It was a rule that applied to all of the Fang Clan; not even the Grand Elder could violate it.

“I get one thousand merit points every month based on my status in the clan alone. Unfortunately, that’s simply not enough to enable me to get some of those core Daoist magics.” Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed as he pulled out a jade slip which listed the names and properties of countless medicinal pills, Daoist magics, and other magical items.

All of these things were items that could be purchased with merit points.

There were many that caused Meng Hao’s heart to thump after seeing them.

“There are many ways to earn merit points. The most common way is to complete some of the various trials by fire that are publicly announced throughout the clan. Different trials by fire can earn you different amounts of merit points.”

At the same time that Meng Hao was studying the jade slip, Fang Wei’s father and grandfather were seated cross-legged in a temple in the eastern section of the ancestral mansion.

Fang Wei’s father was named Fang Xiushan. Frowning, he looked at his own father and said, “Dad, I can’t believe that brat has returned….” 1

“It doesn’t matter,” the old man replied coolly. “I’ve already taken care of the matter.” A sinister gleam appeared in his eyes. “If he had returned and kept a low profile, it wouldn’t have mattered. But since he has decided to act so high and mighty, he’s already placed himself half a step into the Yellow Springs.

“Make sure Wei’er focuses on his cultivation. He’s a Chosen of the Fang Clan, and the Patriarch of our bloodline has high hopes for him. Don’t let him get distracted.”

“Dad, there’s no need for you to worry about that. Wei’er has true willpower. He won’t be rattled by that son of a bitch.” Fang Xiushan smiled.

“The direct bloodline is rapidly declining,” said the old man confidently, his eyes flickering as if with fire. “Fang Hehai has been missing for years, and although his life force flame has not been extinguished, if he were capable of returning, he would have long since done so. 2

“His son Fang Xiufeng agreed to guard Planet South Heaven for 100,000 years for his crippled son. All of that has doomed the direct bloodline to fall!

“It has also ensured that our bloodline will once again become the next lords of the Fang Clan, and the new direct bloodline!

“Years ago, Fang Hehai suppressed me, and his son Fang Xiufeng suppressed you. In this generation, our Wei’er will definitely rise to prominence. That insignificant Fang Hao will be nothing more than a mere stepping stone to him.” The old man flicked his sleeve.

Time passed. For two days, Meng Hao did not leave his residence. He sat there meditating, doing breathing exercises to absorb Immortal qi. Those two days were like an entire month spent on Planet South Heaven. Being able to practice cultivation like this was of great benefit to Meng Hao.

He pulled out the heart of his second true self and began to nourish it with the Immortal qi near his villa.

It was about noontime when Meng Hao opened his eyes from his trance to slap his bag of holding and produce a jade slip that was glowing brightly. He quickly scanned it with divine sense.

“Hao’er, come to the main temple.” It was the voice of the Grand Elder, and in response, Meng Hao smiled coldly. He put the jade slip away and walked out of the residence. The first thing he saw in the courtyard was Fang Xi. He had dark circles under his eyes, and his aura was incredibly weak.

The meat jelly and the parrot were currently taking turns bombing him indiscriminately with various arguments.

As soon as Fang Xi saw Meng Hao, he hurried to his feet and looked over at Meng Hao with an expression of both madness and veneration.

“Coz, you’re incredible,” he called out. “Having these two following you day in and day out, and living to tell the tale, it must be so hard. Coz, don’t worry. I’ll definitely learn the ways of a sharp tongue!” Fang Xi gritted his teeth with resolve.

A strange expression could be seen on Meng Hao’s face, and he cleared his throat, unsure of exactly what to say. Then he saw the determination in Fang Xi’s eyes, and he patted his shoulder and left the courtyard.

“Speech is endowed by Heaven, but requires tempering,” he thought. “If he can endure the training provided by the meat jelly and the parrot, then he will eventually gain the long-windedness of the meat jelly, and the acidic speech of the parrot.” Clearing his throat again, he hurried toward the main temple.

The ancestral mansion was huge, and flight was prohibited there. It took Meng Hao two full hours to stroll all the way to the temple. When he got there, he could see tens of thousands of clan members, as well as the Grand Elder, filling the area, seated cross-legged.

As soon as he saw Meng Hao, the Grand Elder’s face broke out in a kind smile, and he nodded his head.

“Hao’er, your Immortal’s cave is some distance away. How about this, I’ll give you a command medallion that gives you special privileges in the ancestral mansion. Other than some specially restricted areas, you will now be able to fly wherever you wish.” With a smile, he handed Meng Hao a violet jade slip. When the onlookers saw this happening, they gaped in shock and jealousy.

Normally speaking, only Elders were permitted to fly inside the ancestral mansion. Of the members of the Junior generation, only Fang Wei had the honor of being able to do so. Now, Meng Hao did too.

Meng Hao accepted the jade slip. If he didn’t trust his own judgement, then it would seem for all intents and purposes that the Grand Elder really did like him a lot. Considering his position as Grand Elder, it appeared as if what he was doing was not only a true kindness, but at the same time, just and even-handed. He was doing his best to follow the clan’s rules.

“Today, many clan members have gathered to bear witness to an important event!” the Grand Elder proclaimed.

“Years ago, Hao’er became weak with illness. His Seventh Year Tribulation caused many clan members to worry greatly about him. As for me, when I saw a young lad like him enduring such incredible suffering, it also pained my heart.

“Thankfully, the Immortals are blessing the Fang Clan, and an Outsider came, providing us with a way to deal with the problem. Fang Xiufeng and his wife took the child away, leaving the Nirvana Fruits behind with the clan.”

Meng Hao stood in front of the Grand Elder, staring in shock. From the way the old man was speaking, and the expression on his face, it didn’t seem at all like he was going to delay the matter; rather, it looked like he was really going to hand the Nirvana Fruits over.

“Don’t tell me I was overthinking things…?” thought Meng Hao.

1. Fang Xiushan’s name in Chinese is fāng xiù shān. Xiu means ‘elegant’ or ‘handsome.’ Shan means ‘mountain.’ It’s very similar to Fang Xiufeng’s name. The Xiu in both names is the same, which makes sense since they are of the same generation. The final character in Fang Xiushan means ‘mountain’ whereas the final character in Fang Xiufeng’s name means ‘(mountain) peak’ or ‘summit.’ The final character in Fang Xiufeng’s name actually has the ‘mountain’ component as part of the character. Look at the two names side by side and you will see what I mean. In the final character of Fang Xiufeng’s name, you can see the mountain squished on the left side of the character. Fang Xiushan . Fang Xiufeng

2. Fang Hehai’s name in Chinese is fāng hè hǎi – He means “congratulate.” Hai means “sea”

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# Chapter 900: Third Grandpa

“Years ago, the Patriarchs who are now in secluded meditation personally said that these Nirvana Fruits were to be returned to Hao’er when he came back to the sect. What once belonged to him, will always belong to him!

“It doesn’t matter that he only just arrived and is not yet familiar with the clan, or that his cultivation base is not at the proper stage to assimilate the Nirvana Fruits, or that he has not performed any meritorious service to the clan!

“No…. He is the eldest grandson of the direct bloodline, and was once a blazing son of the Fang Clan. He has endured many hardships over the years, and as such, now that he has returned to the clan, none of those other things matter. It is as if they don’t exist!

“These two Nirvana Fruits are his!

“Today, I will take the responsibility to give him these Nirvana Fruits! If the Patriarchs come out of meditation in the future and ask about the matter, I will assume all responsibility!” The Grand Elder’s words were spoken decisively, and his face was very solemn. When it came to the part about the past, he sighed emotionally.

Many of the surrounding Elders had looks of surprise written on their faces, and those from the direct bloodline seemed, at first shocked, but then excited.

Meng Hao was panting as he looked at the Grand Elder speaking so warmly. Meng Hao had never imagined that the Grand Elder would say such things in front of so many people.

“Don’t tell me… I really misjudged the situation?” thought Meng Hao. “Impossible! He’ll definitely say something more.” Meng Hao took a deep breath and calmed himself.

“Fang Hao!” the Grand Elder said suddenly. His eyes shone as he looked at Meng Hao. “Remember, you will always be a member of the Fang Clan. The blood of the Fang Clan runs through your veins. You can always determine what will happen to you in the future, but you can never make any decisions regarding your birth!

“Your surname is Fang!

“We Elders are old, and the Patriarchs are even more ancient. Even if they are still alive now, they will eventually perish. But you… you are a future blazing sun of the Fang Clan! You are the hope for the future.

“You must work hard in your cultivation. The day will surely come in which you will grow into a mighty tree that stretches up into the Heavens!” Grand Elder Fang Tongtian seemed quite excited. As he spoke, he raised his hands up, clasped them together, and then bowed toward the rear of the temple.

“Respected Patriarchs. On this day, I, Fang Tongtian, ask all of these clan members to bear witness to the return of the Nirvana Fruits to Fang Hao!” With that, he lifted his right hand up into the air and made a grasping motion.

Immediately, shocking rumbling filled the sky, echoing out in all directions. A huge vortex appeared in midair, and as it spun, it slowly revealed some sort of celestial abode.

A tall pagoda could be seen, glowing with boundless light that attracted all eyes. The nearby Fang Clan members saw the pagoda and began to cry out in shock.

“It’s the Ancestral Treasure Pagoda!!”

“In the Fang Clan, only precious treasures can be placed within the Ancestral Treasure Pagoda!!”

“The pagoda itself is a precious treasure left behind by the first generation Patriarch!”

“Even if Heaven and Earth were destroyed, the Ancestral Treasure Pagoda would survive. Even the Grand Elder can only exercise limited control over it to retrieve items. He says the name, and the pagoda will send the item out.”

Meng Hao couldn’t believe it. What was happening went completely contrary to his sense of judgement. Everything that was happening was the opposite of how he had expected it to be. His heart was now starting to pound with shock.

He had great faith in his sense of judgement, but what was happening right now was impossible to disbelieve.

The Grand Elder took a deep breath, then performed a double handed incantation gesture. Finally, he shouted, “Ancestral Treasure Pagoda, please produce the Nirvana Fruits!”

Immediately, rumbling could be heard, and more beams of brilliant light shot out. At the same time, a jade box flew out from the pagoda. In the blink of an eye, it had already sped out of the vortex and landed in the Grand Elder’s hands.

After that, the vortex up above gradually faded away, obscuring the treasure pagoda, which disappeared from sight.

Meng Hao was panting as he stared at the jade box. Even now, he still couldn’t believe that the Grand Elder was simply going to hand the Nirvana Fruits over to him.

He had assumed it would be difficult to get them, but it had turned out to be quite the opposite. It all seemed too simple.

The Grand Elder unhesitatingly opened the box and lifted it up for all the surrounding clan members to see.

Meng Hao immediately caught sight of two withered fruits. They were so dried up that it seemed as if the slightest breeze might cause them to vanish. As soon as he laid eyes on them, Meng Hao’s blood surged in his veins, and he felt a sensation like that of a summoning. He was immediately able to tell that these were, in fact, Nirvana Fruits.

“Nirvana Fruits!!”

“Years ago, I saw Hao’er’s two Nirvana Fruits, and those are definitely them!”

Many of the surrounding direct bloodline clan members were shocked, especially Meng Hao’s 19th Uncle.

“Those are Nirvana Fruits!”

Meng Hao panted as the Grand Elder looked over at him with glittering eyes. Suddenly, a thought occurred to Meng Hao.

“Maybe he’s giving them to me because he intends to send someone to steal them from me?” Meng Hao still had faith in his own judgement, and he just couldn’t believe that the grand Elder would hand over the Nirvana Fruits so lightly.

The Grand Elder suddenly tossed the jade box out into the air toward Meng Hao, who caught it. As soon as he touched the box, the blood in his veins seemed to boil.

“There is one more thing that I must say in the presence of all you clan members,” said the Grand Elder, looking around with coldly glowing eyes. “Let me make one thing very clear.

“These Nirvana Fruits belong to Hao’er, and now, he has them in hand. Perhaps there will be people who harbor malicious intentions. However, in all of Planet East Victory, neither the Church of the Blood Orchid nor the

Puppet God Sect would dare to try to steal a precious treasure of the Fang Clan. Even now that they are in Hao'er's possession instead of the clan's, they still wouldn't dare.

“Regarding the other sects around here, they would be even less willing. When it comes to people not from Planet East Victory, we have the East Heaven Gate, which restricts most people from entering. Therefore, if Hao'er's Nirvana Fruits turn up missing, then the only culprits would be other members of the Fang Clan!

“Therefore, do not blame me for reminding all of you that if any person steals the Nirvana Fruits from Hao'er, I will have no choice but to carry out the will of the Patriarchs and exterminate that person's entire bloodline! Fang Heshan, your bloodline would do well to keep this in mind!” As he spoke the final words, the Grand Elder's eyes shone with cold light as he stared at Fang Wei's grandfather. The old man's face was unsightly, and he bowed his head in acknowledgement. 1

“The rules of the clan must be complied with. Today, I swear an oath that if anyone dares to steal Hao'er's Nirvana Fruits, I will without fail take action. Furthermore, if I myself have any selfish thoughts regarding the matter, the Heavens shall eradicate my soul!” As soon as the words left his mouth, rumbling sounds could be heard up above; Oath Thunder, which indicated that he was swearing upon the Dao.

The other clan members were shaken. Moments ago, some of them had actually harbored some malicious intentions. As of this moment, however, those malicious intentions were completely wiped away.

Meng Hao's mind trembled even harder. He really couldn't believe everything that was happening. However, the facts were right in front of him, and the Grand Elder had even gone so far as to swear an oath.

“Perhaps I was actually wrong….” Meng Hao thought. “But, how come I still feel like the Grand Elder is putting on an act…. Of all the things he's said, what is true and what is false?” Meng Hao didn't say anything. He took a deep breath, put the Nirvana Fruits away, and then bowed deeply toward the Grand Elder.

The Grand Elder looked at Meng Hao, his kind smile wider than ever.

“Hao’er,” he said loudly, “I’ve already made arrangements for the Rainbow Immortal Evanescence Pills. Seven batches are really too much, so you’ll be given five batches!

“As for the Immortal’s cave, you can switch at any time. It doesn’t matter what arrangements have been made, I have the authority to make these decisions!” The surrounding clan members’ hearts trembled.

Now, they looked at Meng Hao in a completely different light than before.

“All of you are dismissed,” said the Grand Elder, waving his arm. “Hao’er, you come with me.” As he led Meng Hao inside the temple, the surrounding clan members burst into conversation. The events that had just occurred would surely spread through the entire clan in a very short period of time.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and suppressed his suspicions as he followed the Grand Elder into the temple.

The temple was quiet, and nobody was inside other than Meng Hao and the Grand Elder.

As soon as they were inside, the Grand Elder turned and looked at Meng Hao. His expression was one of approval and reminiscence, as if looking at Meng Hao caused him to remember things which had happened in the past.

“Grand Elder….” Meng Hao said softly.

“When no one else is around, you can call me Third Grandpa,” said the Grand Elder. “Your grandfather is my older brother, and he used to occupy the position of Grand Elder. However, he went missing, and your Second Grandpa and his bloodline are up to no good….” He sighed.

“Therefore, the Patriarchs asked me to assume the title of Grand Elder. The Fang Clan has no Clan Lord, and since the Patriarchs are normally in secluded meditation, the Grand Elder is responsible for just about everything in the clan.

“I… am also a member of the direct bloodline,” he said quietly. “Your grandfather and I are blood brothers.

“However, from the moment I took on the position and responsibilities of Grand Elder, I officially belonged to no bloodline. I maintain the entire clan’s operations, and have to keep a balanced relationship with all the different bloodlines.

“There are many things in which… I have no power. My heart lies with our bloodline, but my position forces me to be unbiased in everything. All my decisions… must be in accord with the clan rules!

“This is the only occasion in which I asserted my authority and made a decision unilaterally, and gave you your Nirvana Fruits!” The Grand Elder looked kindly at Meng Hao, almost as if he were looking at his own grandson.

“I have no son, and since your grandfather is my Senior in the bloodline, it means that his grandson is also my grandson.

“Grand Eld—“ almost as soon as Meng Hao began to speak the words, the Grand Elder scowled. Meng Hao quickly said, “Third Grandpa!”

His heart was filled with complex emotions. He still felt that something fishy was going on, but he couldn’t figure out what it was that made him feel so uneasy.

“Hao’er, these two Nirvana Fruits are now several hundred years old, and have long since dried up. However, they are precious treasures formed from the Fang Clan’s bloodline. Therefore, they won’t wither away. As long as you have some Spirit Extract, you can return them to their previous state.

“The next step you need to take is to cultivate these Nirvana Fruits on a daily basis. Fuse as much Spirit Extract as you can into them. Because they belong to you, you can actually absorb them very easily. Once you absorb them… your cultivation base will advance by leaps and bounds. You can easily advance to be the Number One Chosen in the Fang Clan, and become the blazing sun that you once were!

“Remember, you must absorb them as quickly as possible. This might be shocking to the clan, but the longer you wait, the more likely it will be that someone will recklessly try to make a move against you. However, once you absorb them, they won’t be able to do anything.

“Hao’er, remember, absorb them as quickly as possible. Third Grandpa has bought you some time, but I’m afraid it won’t be much.”

Meng Hao nodded in acknowledgement, but inside, his heart was thumping.

“Spirit Extract….” he thought. “Is it possible that my feelings of suspicion have something to do with the Spirit Extract?”

“Another thing,” said the Grand Elder. “The Spirit Extract you need to absorb the Nirvana Fruits requires your own blood to be part of the mixture. That’s something nobody else would have access to. Therefore, you don’t need to worry about that aspect. How about this: I noticed that the Immortal’s cave you selected has a medicinal plant garden. Assumably, you know something of the Dao of alchemy.

“Why don’t you go to the Fang Clan’s Dao of Alchemy Division. You can use your merit points to get some medicinal plants and Spirit Extract formulas. Spirit Extract is easy to concoct, so making it yourself will be the safest thing.” The Grand Elder seemed very sincere in his words. Perhaps what he had said was coincidental, but the result was that all of Meng Hao’s conjectures were shattered.

1. Fang Heshan’s name in Chinese is fāng hè shān. He means “congratulations.” Shan means “mountain.” Fang Wei’s Grandfather’s name is similar to Meng Hao’s Grandfather’s name in much the way Fang Xiushan’s and Fang Xiufeng’s names are similar. With Fang Hehai and Feng Heshan, the final character difference is that Meng Hao’s grandfather has the character “Sea” and Fang Wei’s grandfather has the character “Mountain”

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# Chapter 901: A Thorough Investigation

Meng Hao silently clasped hands and bowed deeply to the Grand Elder, who looked on with a kind smile as Meng Hao left.

Finally, the Grand Elder was the only one who remained in the temple. Gradually, the kind look faded away, to be replaced by a tranquil calm. However, deep within his eyes, a sinister coldness flickered, something no one would be able to detect.

He turned, and headed deeper into the temple.

A cold voice suddenly echoed out within the temple, causing the Grand Elder to stop in his tracks for a moment.

“Thank you.”

“I’m not helping you,” the Grand Elder replied, “I’m just following the clan rules. Everything… is for the clan!”

Meng Hao sped through the ancestral mansion in a bright beam of light until he reached his Immortal’s cave. As soon as he set foot into the courtyard, he saw Fang Xi sitting there quietly in front of the meat jelly and parrot.

Considering how mentally preoccupied he was, Meng Hao walked past them and sat down cross-legged in his residence. Eyes glittering, he pulled out the box containing the Nirvana Fruits and looked down at it.

“Contrary to expectation… the Grand Elder really did hand it over to me….

“Nothing he said in the temple seemed fake, but I still can’t shake the feeling… that there was more to what he was saying than what was on the surface.”

Meng Hao wasn’t acting paranoid. After stepping into the cultivation world, things had not always gone as he had expected. He knew that if he wasn’t constantly on the alert, he could easily have ended up perishing on multiple occasions.

He was also aware that he was in danger here in the Fang Clan. If he wasn’t cautious in everything, he could easily find himself in a deadly situation.

“There must be something wrong with the Nirvana Fruits themselves!” he thought, his eyes glittering. He was still sticking to his original judgement of the Grand Elder; none of the things the old man had said could change that. Finally, he looked down at the box and slowly opened it up.

A faint pressure began to emanate from within the box as Meng Hao looked in thoughtful silence at the two withered fruits inside. Each of them was about the size of an infant’s fist.

The blood in his veins surged, a bloodline connection to the fruits that caused Meng Hao to suddenly feel a twinge of doubt regarding his judgement.

“These truly are Nirvana Fruits, and they’re definitely stimulating my blood. I seems like… they really are the Nirvana Fruits I produced all those years ago.

“Don’t tell me that I really was thinking too much into things?” He sighed and then slowly picked one of the Nirvana Fruits up. As soon as he touched it, the reaction from his blood was even stronger, as if it longed to assimilate the fruit. He placed it directly in front of his face and looked at it closely.

“I need a lot of Spirit Extract to return these Nirvana Fruits to their original state. At that point, I can absorb them….” He sighed again and then began to place the Nirvana Fruit back into its box. It was at this point that, all of a sudden, his hand stopped in place, and a bright gleam appeared in his eyes.

“Wait, something’s off. The aura of Time on these Nirvana Fruits… is not that of only a few hundred years!!” Panting, he slowly lifted the Nirvana Fruit back up and stared at it closely. After a long moment, a grim expression filled his face.

Meng Hao had cultivated the magic of Time in the past, and had used Time-based divine abilities. Therefore, there were few people who could accurately judge matters of Time the way he could. Although the auras of the Nirvana Fruits were incredibly weak, they had been perfectly preserved inside the jade box. Because of that, the aura of Time was still there, and even though it was almost impossible to detect, Meng Hao… could sense it!

This was something that nobody, not even the Grand Elder, could possibly have predicted.

“It’s time to find out exactly how old these particular Nirvana Fruits are!” He performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, unleashing Time magic. He made a sealing mark, and then the light of augury could be seen in his eyes as he slowly stripped away the layers of mystery that surrounded the fruit.

100 years. 200 years. 300 years….

Two hours passed, after which Meng Hao began to breathe heavily.

“10,000 years already!” By this point, he could determine with absolute certainty that this Nirvana Fruit was not his. A cold light flickered in his eyes, and after taking a deep breath, he continued to utilize Time magic to determine exactly how old the Nirvana Fruit was.

15,000 years. 20,000 years. 25,000 years….

If Meng Hao didn’t possess eighty percent of the power of a true Immortal, and have an Immortal meridian inside of him that was eighty percent complete, then he definitely would not have been able to use Time magic for such an extended length of time. The sun soon set, and the moon rose high into the sky. A tremor ran through Meng Hao; his cultivation base was almost thoroughly exhausted… However, he was finally able to roughly determine the true age of the Nirvana Fruit.

“More than… 100,000 years!!”

Meng Hao panted, and a look of disbelief could be seen on his face. He then glanced over at the second Nirvana Fruit. To his senses, both seemed to be exactly the same.

“They both exceed 100,000 years!

“These aren’t MY Nirvana Fruits! Whose are they?” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, and as of this moment his faith in his own judgement was stronger than ever. The Grand Elder definitely had some sinister motive in giving him these Nirvana Fruits.

“The problem doesn’t lie with the Spirit Elixir, nor in the words he spoke. Instead… the problem lies in that which I would least suspect… the Nirvana Fruits themselves!” His face darkened.

“Now that I think about it, one of the things he emphasized the most, the part that seemed to be spoken out of care for me, was the part about absorbing the Nirvana Fruits as quickly as possible. That part… is definitely suspicious!” Killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes. As of now, he was certain that if he tried to absorb the Nirvana Fruits, he would find himself in some sort of deadly crisis.

Snorting coldly, Meng Hao put the Nirvana Fruits back in the box, then strode out into the courtyard and interrupted the duel between Fang Xi and the parrot and meat jelly.

“Fang Xi,” he said, “have you heard of anyone else in the clan producing Nirvana Fruits?”

Fang Xi looked completely exhausted, although a gleam of stubbornness and even excitement could be seen in his eyes. When he heard Meng Hao’s question, he gaped in shock.

“No, I haven’t,” he replied. “Only Nirvana Flowers, but those are kind of useless. The only person to ever produce Nirvana Fruits is you…. Eee? Wait, now that I think about it, there’s a rumor that the first generation Patriarch produced Nirvana Fruits. Why, what’s wrong?”

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, and he promptly avoided answering the question. However, more feelings of suspicion rose up in his heart.

“The Nirvana Fruits of the first generation Patriarch,” he thought. “They would definitely be considered a precious treasure. Why would the Grand Elder give them to me? Apparently, these Nirvana Fruits are incredibly ancient, over 100,000 years old….”

Starting the next day, Meng Hao made his way around the ancestral mansion filled with doubts, although no trace of his feelings could be seen on his face. He met quite a few clan members, and went to quite a few different buildings. He did his best to act exactly as a clan member would who had been missing for years, and finally returned to the clan. For example… he thirstily devoured information about the clan’s history.

Everything he did seemed completely normal, and not suspicious in any way. Days passed. About a week later, Meng Hao’s interest in the Clan History Pavilion seemed to grow deeper.

Much of the information about the clan’s history was recorded there, and Meng Hao often showed up to pour through the records, which no one found strange. There were a vast quantity of jade slips filled with information about past events. Unfortunately, there wasn’t much information about clan Patriarchs, usually just a sentence or two, or a brief description.

Half a month passed. Occasionally, the Grand Elder would kindly summon him and remind him to concoct the Spirit Elixir as soon as possible, and then absorb the Nirvana Fruits. In the end, Meng Hao finally managed to piece together a relatively intact story from all of the scattered bits of information he had found.

Currently, he sat cross-legged in his residence, eyes closed as he reviewed all of the information he had gathered in the past days.

“A sixth generation Patriarch, with an exceedingly high cultivation base, went into secluded meditation for a single day… and suddenly died!

“A tenth generation Patriarch was also in secluded meditation… and suddenly died!

“The same thing happened to a thirteenth generation Patriarch and a sixteenth generation Patriarch. Both of them went into secluded meditation and then… suddenly died!

“It wasn’t just them. In the past 100,000 years, there were other Chosen and various clan members who went into secluded meditation and then mysteriously died.”

All of this was information he had discovered in the jade history slips, tiny clues and scraps of knowledge that at first seemed unremarkable.

Although they didn’t seem out of the ordinary when taken alone, Meng Hao, being in the crisis that he was, had discovered all the information and organized all the clues. In the end, an intense desire to kill rose up in his heart.

“Roughly 30,000 years ago, the frequency of the sudden deaths decreased. Nowadays, they rarely occur.” When he opened his eyes, they shone with a bright light.

“After tracking down more information about those ancestors who had died… there was one common factor connecting all of them together. Some of them went directly into the Ancestral Treasure Pagoda, and others traded merit points to acquire rewards from the same pagoda.

“That’s definitely suspicious. Throughout the past 100,000 years, many clan members have earned rewards from the Ancestral Treasure Pagoda. These people were the only ones who died suddenly. It does seem suspicious, but somewhat circumstantial.

“Until….” Meng Hao patted his bag of holding to produce a jade slip. His eyes began to glow coldly.

“Until I found out this bit of information about the last clan member to suddenly die, 30,000 years ago, information recorded in the diary of his son!

“Just before dying, he managed to pass word to his son that he was going to assimilate an object belonging to an ancestor. It was something no one in the past had ever succeeded in doing. Furthermore, anyone else who had attempted to accomplish the same feat had died. However, word had been passed down by one of the ancestors that if someone could successfully absorb it, it would solve the riddle of the Fang Clan bloodline!”

Meng Hao took a deep breath and closed his eyes. After a moment, they opened again, and were extremely calm. There were no waves of shock or astonishment as he looked down at the jade box.

“If my speculations are correct, most, if not all, of those people suddenly died for exactly the same reason. And that reason was none other than these two Nirvana Fruits!

“These Nirvana Fruits… originally belonged to that ancient ancestor!” A cold smile broke out on Meng Hao’s face.

“The Grand Elder is pushing me to absorb them because he wants me to experience that same sudden death!

“The Grand Elder gave me the Nirvana Fruits in front of everyone, so that it would be no secret. All the things he said, even that biased oath, all seemed extremely aboveboard and honest.

“Therefore, if I died while absorbing the Nirvana Fruits, just like everyone else who has attempted to do so, he would have done nothing except lead me in that direction with his words. Any blame for my death would have been placed solely on the Nirvana Fruits.

“Quite a flawless plan. I would die a meaningless death, and the Grand Elder might even hold an incredible funeral service for me….” Meng Hao’s smile became even colder than before.

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# Chapter 902: The Fang Clan’s Dao of Alchemy

The Grand Elder didn’t think he had underestimated Meng Hao, but in the end… that is exactly what he had done.

To the Grand Elder, Meng Hao was simply a member of the Junior generation. However intelligent he might be, he was still just a Junior.

He could never have imagined that Meng Hao had cultivated Time magic, and that because of his unbridled persistence, would need only half a month to sift through the vast clan histories and piece together random clues into the truth!

The two Nirvana Fruits were exactly what Meng Hao had speculated; items belonging to the first generation Patriarch that had been left behind as precious treasures. However, one clan member after another had suddenly died while trying to absorb them. Eventually, they became something like taboo objects.

30,000 years ago, the clan had clamped down on all information regarding the two Nirvana Fruits, and they had been put into long-term storage in the Ancestral Treasure Pavilion. Despite being objects from that first generation Patriarch, they were completely useless.

Nowadays, it was possible that there were a few people in the clan who knew that one of the Patriarchs had left Nirvana Fruits behind, but it would be easier to find a phoenix feather or a qilin horn than to find someone who remembered about those clan members suddenly dying.

Not even Meng Hao’s father would be aware of such a thing.

Were it not for Meng Hao's suspicious nature, and his ability to use his Time magic to determine the true age of the Nirvana Fruits, then even if he did search through the clan histories, he would never have been able to detect all of the random, inconspicuous clues that he had.

"Well then, what about MY Nirvana Fruits," he thought. "Are they still around… or not?" He looked down at the jade box, a complicated expression on his face. As of now, Meng Hao realized that all of the spectators who had looked on as the Grand Elder handed him the jade box must have thought that the Nirvana Fruits really did belong to him.

Sometimes, if everyone believes something to be true, then the matter basically becomes true, and cannot be changed.

After a long moment of thought, Meng Hao looked down at the two Nirvana Fruits, and his eyes began to glitter.

"In terms of value, these two Patriarch's Nirvana Fruits are surely priceless…. Based on all the clues I pieced together, those clan members who suddenly died all ended up as desiccated corpses, as if their life force had been sucked away.

"From the look of it, the Nirvana Fruits can't be restored simply by feeding them some Spirit Elixir as the Grand Elder suggested. Doing that will probably only revive them temporarily. Absorbing them during that period of brief restoration will most certainly lead to death.

"That's because fundamentally, they are still dry and withered. Unless…. I can truly and completely restore them. Perhaps… then I actually could absorb them.

"Of course, there must have been clan members who came to that same conclusion, and yet they also failed. Perhaps my line of thinking is just as flawed as theirs…. In that case, perhaps it's simply impossible to gather enough Spirit Elixir to restore them completely!

"If that's the case, then there are two possibilities. One is that not even the Fang Clan… can afford the terrifying wastage of resources that would be required to get enough medicinal plants. After all, the supply of medicinal plants is not infinite. Perhaps it’s really impossible to restore the Nirvana Fruits completely, even if you use substitute ingredients in the Spirit Elixir.

“Even more likely than that possibility is the second possibility. Perhaps these Nirvana Fruits were withered from the very moment they were created.” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered for a moment, after which he patted his bag of holding to produce the copper mirror.

“There’s always the chance that I really could restore the Nirvana Fruits to a state of completeness!” Meng Hao was panting, and a strange gleam could be seen in his eyes. Then he thought about his beloved spirit stones, and he gritted his teeth in hesitation.

“There are plenty of Chosen in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, and in the future, I should have plenty of chances to bleed them dry of spirit stones. But if I could restore these two Patriarchs’ Nirvana Fruits, then absorb them… then it would be the greatest good fortune I could get here in the Fang Clan!

“Time to go to where they concoct pills around here!” As of this moment, a gleam of determination could be seen in Meng Hao’s eyes.

The next day at dawn, he walked out of his residence to find that Fang Xi was nowhere to be seen.

In the end, Fang Xi felt that he had made great strides in his gift of the tongue, and was ready to graduate to the next level. Therefore, he had decided to test his debating abilities out on the masses.

The meat jelly and the parrot, claiming that it was time to test him out, had gone along to supervise.

The courtyard was silent as Meng Hao transformed into a beam of light and flew toward the direction of the clan’s Pill Concocting Quarter.

The Fang Clan was an enormous clan, so they naturally had their own Dao of alchemy, and had set up their own Dao of Alchemy Division. Every cultivator there was drawn from the Fang Clan itself, and no matter what bloodline they came from, once they were inducted they belonged solely to the Dao of Alchemy Division.

The clan’s Dao of Alchemy Division was set up outside the ancestral mansion, in its own area. It was almost like a sect, with mountains winding about in all directions, dotted with various pavilions and buildings. Radiant light shone up into the air, and the place pulsed with energy.

The Dao of Alchemy Division was made up of more than 100,000 alchemists, ensuring that the aroma of medicinal pills would always waft about and never disperse. It was always possible to see the colorful aura of medicinal pills, which was beautiful beyond compare.

The Fang Clan’s Dao of Alchemy Division had a strict division of ranking among alchemists. It was not like the Violet Fate Sect, which simply divided the higher levels into Furnace Lords and Violet Furnace Lords. In the Fang Clan, the alchemists were organized into nine tiers.

Tier 9 was the absolute peak, whereas tier 1 was the level for novices. Underneath the alchemists were vast numbers of apprentice alchemists, roughly 1,000,000 in total.

When practicing cultivation, medicinal pills were an absolute necessity. That was even more true in the Immortal Realm, in which cultivators cultivated boundless Immortal qi. There simply wasn’t enough Immortal qi in the Ninth Mountain and Sea to support all of the cultivators, which meant that they needed to rely on the assistance of the power of plants and vegetation within medicinal pills to condense the vast amount of Immortal qi that they needed.

Because of that, alchemists occupied a very lofty position. Of course, not every clan member was gifted in the Dao of alchemy; people with such talent were not common. This was especially true of tier 6 alchemists, who were quite rare. When it came to tier 9 alchemists, there was only one in the entire Fang Clan, and he was referred to as Pill Elder.

For the most part, he only concocted pills for the clan Patriarchs who were in secluded meditation for long periods of time.

From the moment Meng Hao flew out of the ancestral mansion, he could see the mountains that made up the Fang Clan's Dao of Alchemy Division. As he neared, he could sense a terrifying spell formation that had been set up to block the entrance to the mountains, so he produced his jade identity plaque, whereupon the spell formation flickered. After confirming Meng Hao's identity, bright light spread out over him, stimulating his blood flow. Finally, he was allowed to enter.

The aroma of medicinal pills washed over Meng Hao, and he felt enlivened. It was a very familiar scent, and it instantly made him recall the Violet Fate Sect. He took a deep breath, and immediately began to analyze what different medicinal plants he could detect in the air, and how they had been blended together.

When it came to the Dao of alchemy, even Pill Demon had to admit that Meng Hao exceeded him. His pill concocting skill had reached a terrifying level.

Mountains could be seen in all directions, and Meng Hao could sense the aura of numerous alchemists. There was also the heat of Earthly fire, making the entire place quite hot. He could see alchemists moving about to and fro among the mountains, although it was more common to see apprentice alchemists in their unique jackets, flying back and forth in beams of colorful light between the various regions that comprised the Dao of Alchemy Division.

"I wonder what the alchemists here are like…?" thought Meng Hao, his eyes gleaming with anticipation.

Clearly, the Grand Elder had made arrangements in advance, because as soon as Meng Hao entered the Dao of Alchemy Division, a middle-aged man flew toward him from a nearby mountain. He landed in front of Meng Hao and then looked him over, sizing him up.

“You’re Fang Hao? The one with the 30,000 meter Bloodline Gatebeam?” The man wore a long green robe, and his expression was one of arrogance. The collar of his robe was embroidered with five golden dragons, indicating that he was a tier 5 alchemist.

Meng Hao nodded.

“I really don’t know what the Grand Elder was thinking,” said the man, looking at Meng Hao a bit impatiently. “It doesn’t matter you have a 30,000-meter Bloodline Gatebeam, this is the Dao of Alchemy Division. If you want to study pill concocting, having a strong bloodline won’t help you one bit.

“You need to be gifted in the Dao of alchemy to study pill concocting. Can you concoct pills?”

This question caused Meng Hao to hesitate. The Dao of alchemy was vast and limitless, so he wouldn’t dare to say that he thoroughly understood pill concocting.

“I understand something about it,” he responded.

“Something?” The man didn’t seem too pleased. He himself had been immersed in the Dao of alchemy for many years, and the more he understood about it, the more he realized how boundless it was. Even an entire lifetime of hard work was not enough to grasp a tiny a corner of it. If someone asked him how much he knew, he would never dare to say that he knew ‘something.’ At most he would say that he understood ‘a bit.’

And yet this young man standing in front of him, a Chosen with a 30,000-meter Bloodline Gatebeam, actually dared to say that he understood ‘something’ about the Dao of alchemy. Obviously, he knew nothing!

“How many years did you spend formally studying pill concocting?” the man asked coldly, his expression even more displeased than before.

Meng Hao hesitated for a moment and then said, “In terms of formal studying, I guess a little more than a year….”

The man’s face darkened, and he impatiently threw a bag of holding toward Meng Hao.

“Inside, you’ll find the formula for the Spirit Extract that the Grand Elder wanted you to have, plus ten sets of medicinal plants.” The man then waved his hand and sent a wooden placard in his direction.

“Concocting Spirit Extract is much simpler than concocting pills. Just follow the description in the formula and you’ll be able to concoct it with no problem. If it’s too difficult for you, find an apprentice alchemist to make it for you. If you want to study the Dao of alchemy, you need to start by learning to identify medicinal plants. Take that placard to Alchemy Lodge Peak #7191. Study there for about a hundred years, then come back and find me.” With that, the man turned, took about seven or eight steps, then stopped and looked back.

“Don’t forget,” he said, “the Dao of alchemy is vasty and mighty. In the future, if someone asks you about it, don’t give such a wildly arrogant answer. You think that after studying for a year you can know ‘something’ about the Dao of alchemy?!

“Furthermore, your 30,000-meter Bloodline Gatebeam doesn’t mean anything here. Here, you’re not a Chosen, you’re just a regular clan member. If you don’t have the natural talent, then there’s no need to stick around here wasting the clan’s resources! Just go back to wherever you came from!”

Having finished reprimanding Meng Hao, the man turned and transformed into a beam of light that shot off into the distance.

Meng Hao smiled wryly. He felt that his answer had been quite appropriate, but it had ended up irritating the man. Meng Hao scanned the bag of holding with divine sense, then pulled out the formula. He looked it over, and found that the Spirit Extract really was incredibly simple to concoct. One didn’t need to be an alchemist to concoct it; even an apprentice alchemist could do so.

However, the medicinal plant ingredients were quite expensive, including some medicinal plants that were considered quite rare on Planet South Heaven.. There were enough sets of ingredients to produce ten batches of Spirit Extract.

There was one plant that only had three leaves, and emitted Immortal qi.

“Three Immortals Leaf!” he thought, his eyes glittering. Seeing that particular plant helped him understand exactly what resources were at the disposal of the Fang Clan’s Dao of Alchemy division.

“If I can have access to plants like Three Immortals Leaf, that means this Dao of Alchemy Division is like a Holy Land!” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and his breathing sped up a bit. He actually wasn’t sure exactly what level his Dao of alchemy had reached. After all, when it came to many of the medicinal pills that were frequently used to gauge the strength of someone’s Dao of alchemy, he had always lacked some of the key ingredients, and had never had the chance to concoct them.

“Well, I might as well go see how strong my Dao of alchemy is in comparison to the Fang Clan’s Dao of alchemy!” Clutching the wooden placard in his hand, he followed the map toward Alchemy Lodge Peak #7191.

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# Chapter 903: A Brief Glimpse of Cutting Edge Talent

The mountains that made up the Fang Clan’s Dao of Alchemy Division stretched out boundlessly in all directions. There were 10,000 mountains in the inner region that were occupied by alchemists, which were surrounded by 100,000 additional mountains.

The higher a given alchemist’s ranking, the closer that alchemist could get to the center of all the mountains.

The 100,000 outer mountains were divided into ten districts, which were areas in which apprentice alchemists studied. They were known as Alchemy Lodges, and were comprised of 10,000 peaks each.

Meng Hao’s destination was Alchemy Lodge Peak #7191.

Thankfully, there was no prohibition on flight here, otherwise it would have taken Meng Hao a very long time to reach his destination. He shot forward at top speed and, with the help of the map, soon reached an ancient and primitive-looking mountain peak.

The peak was not sharp and tall, and in fact, it appeared as if the top had been directly cut off to create what looked like a huge public square. Currently, several hundred people sat cross-legged surrounding a raised central platform, listening to an old man give a lecture about medicinal plants. He wore a long robe, the collar of which was embroidered with a single golden dragon.

The old man rambled on and on, occasionally holding out a medicinal plant. Every so often, one of those plants would bloom, and would be surrounded by multicolored light. The audience members were apparently experiencing significant enlightenment as they watched.

In the audience of hundreds of cultivators could be seen men and women, old people and young, all of whom were members of the Fang Clan, come here to study pill concocting. Of course, everyone had to start out as an apprentice alchemist.

No one paid much attention to Meng Hao’s arrival. He sat down off to the side to listen to the old man’s lecture.

“This is Godshine Flower,” the old man said coolly, “which is also known as Sunbirth Leaf. On any given day, its medicinal strength is at its peak at high noon. Make sure to pay close attention to this flower’s vein pattern, because it looks very similar to Godrain Flower.” With that, he pulled out another medicinal plant and began to introduce it.

Occasionally, the old man would look out at the crowd, and when he saw the earnest expressions of the faces of the apprentice alchemists, he felt quite a sense of accomplishment.

He was a mere tier 1 alchemist, and had virtually no hope of ever being promoted for the rest of this life. Therefore, he had been assigned to deliver lectures on plants and vegetation to the apprentice alchemists. It was only during times like these that he could enjoy the sensation of a crowd looking at him enviously.

Even as he continued his lecture, a glimmer of displeasure suddenly flickered within him. He had just seen a young man in the audience frowning at what he was saying. At first, he didn’t pay the matter much attention, but over the course of the next two hours, he realized that the young man had frowned seven or eight times.

That made the old man more and more irritated. He had been giving lectures here for many years, and every single apprentice alchemist looked at him with deep respect and courtesy. Even Chosen from other clans’ Dao of Alchemy Divisions would recognize his authority in this place.

The old man had never encountered someone like Meng Hao, who frowned at what he said. The more he saw this happening, the more offensive he found it.

Meng Hao continued to listen to the lecture. Eventually the old man began to talk about Brightmoon Vine, and Meng Hao frowned again. He could clearly tell that this old man had an incorrect understanding of plants and vegetation. He was making mistakes that, if the audience of apprentice alchemists paid attention to, could cause problems for them in the future. They might even pay heavy prices before they understood the truth.

“This type of tree grows in the frigid weather of regions that were once extremely hot. It is called Midwinter Tree. When it is burned, it can produce a type of sap that is considered a precious treasure, the name of which is Midwinter Sap!” As soon as he finished speaking, he saw Meng Hao frown yet again. That made it more than ten times in which Meng Hao had frowned. At long last, the old man couldn’t take it any more. Face cold, he pointed directly at Meng Hao.

“You! What’s your name!?” he asked, his voice rumbling like thunder. The surrounding apprentice alchemists had just been listening to his lecture in a virtual trance, and were instantly shocked. They quickly followed the line of the man’s finger to see Meng Hao.

“Meng Hao,” replied Meng Hao coolly. “Or, you can also call me Fang Hao.”

“You have no regard for your elders and betters! In my role as an alchemist, I will ask you, an apprentice alchemist, a question. Let’s see if you dare to stand up and answer!” The old man chuckled coldly.

Meng Hao had no desire to get into an argument with the old man, so he casually stood up.

“Do you acknowledge your error?” the old man demanded. “Well, too late! Let me ask you: why was your attention wandering during my lecture? Why did you keep frowning? If you don’t enjoy listening to my lectures here, then you can just get lost! You’re not permitted to stick around here and annoy people!

“You’re name’s Fang Hao, huh? From now on, you are not welcome here!” He snorted coldly. This old man was not a tolerant person, so Meng Hao’s continued frowning had really been a provocation, or even a challenge.

Meng Hao frowned, and an icy coldness could be seen within his eyes. He looked at the old man for a moment, but didn’t say anything. As he turned to leave, the old man snorted again.

“Did I say you could leave? If you can’t explain why you were frowning just now, then I’ll throw you out! You can’t just walk away!”

Meng Hao stopped in place and slowly looked back at the old man. Then, he began to speak, his voice calm.

“The first time I frowned was when you mentioned Sunbirth Leaf. Although that leaf’s medicinal strength is indeed greatest at high noon, that is not a suitable time to harvest it, let alone to use it to concoct medicine. At that time, the Yang energy in the leaf is too intense. If you concoct medicine with it then, and it is not the primary ingredient, then it doesn’t matter. However, if you use it as the primary ingredient, the concoction will fail! The correct time to harvest said leaf is at a specific time AFTER high noon!”

Meng Hao’s voice boomed out in all directions as he took a step forward toward the man.

The old man’s face darkened, and he was just about to say something when Meng Hao continued to speak.

“The second time I frowned was when you talked about Groundfall Root. What you said was completely incorrect. You said that Groundfall Root contains an aura of rot. However, true Groundfall Root is the part that connects the plant to the ground. Half an inch is underground, the other half is above ground! If you harvest the incorrect part of the plant, then any pill you concoct will be black and full of toxins. It would be detrimental to anyone who consumed it."

As he spoke, he took another step forward, and his energy surged.

The old man's face flickered. When it came to Sunbirth Leaf, he had an argument that he could make in his defense. But when it came to Groundfall Root, as soon as the words left Meng Hao's mouth, his heart began to thump. He suddenly remembered that when he had attempted to concoct a pill with Groundfall Root in the past, the result was exactly as Meng Hao had described.

"The third time I frowned was when you brought up Tenderwillow Branch. The first half of what you said about it was absolutely correct. If you take nine of its leaves and refine them together, it will form a true Tenderwillow Leaf. However, you missed something very important; it is vital to collect some of the soil from beneath the tree itself and combine that into the mixture. The reason is that the soil in areas where Tenderwillow Branches grow, when compounded with wood and metallic elements, can purify the metal portion, leaving behind a newborn plant!"

As Meng Hao took another step forward, the old man's face flickered again. Beads of sweat broke out on his forehead, and he subconsciously took a step backward. As Meng Hao neared, the man sensed an amorphous energy that filled him with fear.

Most importantly of all, what Meng Hao had said about the Tenderwillow Leaf left him completely shocked. It was actually the first time he had heard of such a thing. However, it suddenly caused him to think back to a time when he had been invited to visit another alchemist, who at the time happened to be concocting a pill with Tenderwillow Leaf. He had actually put some soil into the mixture. At the time, the old man had been confused as to why he would do that, but too embarrassed to ask about it.

"The fourth time I frowned was when you spoke of Cloudsipping Grass. How could that grass possibly grow inside of clouds, which is exactly what you said? That's nothing but sheer and utter nonsense! It's a grass that grows in mountain streams, surrounded by wisps of cloud and mist.

THAT’S why it’s called Cloudsipping Grass!” The next step Meng Hao took left the old man completely ashen-faced. Yet again, he subconsciously stepped back. He suddenly remembered that Cloudsipping Grass was exactly as Meng Hao had just described it. When he had talked about it earlier, he had intentionally spouted some hogwash; his explanation actually had nothing to do with reality. That was because he had no idea what the plant really was.

“The fifth time I frowned was when you talked about the Tree of Nine Eyes….

“The sixth time I frowned was because of what you said about Gauzewood Moss….

“The seventh time I frowned….”

Every time he spoke, Meng Hao took another step forward, and the old man’s face grew paler as he fell back in retreat. His expression soon became one of panic, which caused the surrounding apprentice alchemists to stare in shock.

“The twelfth time I frowned was because you said that Brightmoon Vines have flowers that bloom with two different colors. One color is toxic, the other isn’t. You spoke of the plant’s medicinal properties, but then never explained how to tell the difference between the two. That is why I frowned!” Meng Hao advanced with each of his explanations, and the old man fell back. By this point, Meng Hao was now standing on the platform.

“The last time I frowned was when you talked about Midwinter Sap. I have no idea from whom you learned about plants and vegetation, but even though Midwinter Sap can be produced by burning it with a cultivation flame, that will produce an inferior product. The highest quality Midwinter Sap requires magically induced lightning to create!” With that, Meng Hao flicked his sleeve.

Voice echoing, he continued, “The Dao of alchemy is vast and limitless. The number of medicinal plants is like the water in the sea. No one can remember all of them, and the mistakes you made are not unforgivable.

However… we are in our clan’s Dao of Alchemy Division. The apprentice alchemists here to listen to your lecture are all fellow clan members. If you know something, then talk about it. If there’s something you’re not clear about, no one will make fun of you for that. That being the case, there is absolutely no reason to make up random garbage! If you do that, these apprentice alchemists might end up paying with their lives because of the mistakes they will make in the future!”

Meng Hao’s words were spoken with little courtesy. Originally, he had intended to simply leave. However, the old man had aggressively provoked him, and as such, he laid bare all of the reasons why he had frowned earlier.

The old man opened his mouth to respond, but there was nothing he could say. His mind spun as he realized that there were indeed aspects of his speech in which he didn’t know what he was talking about. However, he had fallen into a habit of lecturing on those things merely based on his own personal experience and judgement.

Currently, his face was as pale as death, and he was trembling. There was nothing he could do to refute Meng Hao’s stern criticism. In fact, for some reason, the feeling he got when he looked at Meng Hao was the same feeling of awe he’d had years ago when he was an apprentice alchemist looking at the full alchemists.

Everything Meng Hao had said left him shaken, and actually answered many questions that he himself had wondered about.

In the silence that followed, the surrounding hundreds of Fang Clan apprentice alchemists began to talk.

“Fang Hao…. I just remembered! He’s the one with the 30,000-meter Bloodline Gatebeam! His bloodline is inconceivably strong! It’s that Fang Hao!!”

“It’s really him! He came from Planet South Heaven. Supposedly, he experienced some kind of Seventh Year Tribulation. Now he’s back, and not only does he have a strong bloodline, he also managed to silence an alchemist on the subject of plants and vegetation!”

“He’s the eldest grandson of the direct bloodline! His bloodline is even stronger than Prince Wei’s. I can’t believe he’s here in the Dao of Alchemy Division!”

“After hearing him talk about all those different medicinal plants, I suddenly feel like I understand them far better than I did before! Could it be that Fang Hao is also an alchemist?”

Meng Hao was just about to leave when the trembling old man stepped forward. Clasping hands, he bowed deeply to Meng Hao.

“Alchemist Fang. Sir, you were right to chide me. My name is Fang Qun, and everything was my fault. Would you mind staying for a moment and clearing up some of my confusion, Alchemist Fang? I… I actually have some questions about plants and vegetation that I hope you can help me with.” Although Fang Qun seemed a bit embarrassed to say these things, he didn’t hesitate to speak them. [1]

His words caused instant excitement among the surrounding apprentice alchemists. They could clearly see that Meng Hao’s skill with plants and vegetation far exceeded that of Fang Qun.

The idea of being able to hear a lecture by an alchemist like that was a rare opportunity, and true good fortune.

“Please, Alchemist Fang, stay for a bit. Give us some pointers!!”

“Alchemist Fang, we have a lot of questions about plants and vegetation! For the sake of us fellow clan members, could you stay and dispel some of our confusion…?”

Everyone began talking at once, clasping hands and bowing. Meng Hao stopped in his tracks and looked around for a moment before nodding.

A cheer of excitement rose up from the enthusiastic crowd.

1. Fang Qun’s name in Chinese is fāng qún. Qun means ‘group’

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# Chapter 904: Now Let’s Throw Down

“Heavenrain Leaf veins will only appear when they are soaked by heay rainfall. As far as what can types of medicinal pills can be concocted with those veins, I know of 87,645 different types….

“Golden Mean Tree cannot be used as a primary ingredient. However, you can add it to the mix during the concocting process to increase metal-type energy. Furthermore, it will add a golden color to the medicinal pill.”

Meng Hao was currently standing on the platform. He had just introduced a variety of unique medicinal plants that were easily misidentified, and was now fielding questions from the apprentice alchemists.

Fang Qun sat down below, constantly asking questions about various plants and vegetation that he wasn’t clear about. He seemed very excited.

“Milky Way Stone isn’t really a type of rock. It’s actually a type of sea moss that grows in the narrow crevices rocks. Furthermore, the more cracks a stone has, the higher the quality will be.

“Nine Dragons Spice is not naturally occurring. No, it is actually the result of a graft of nine different medicinal plants. The grafting formula is actually a secret, so all I know about it is from my own conclusions based on what I’ve heard about the pill itself; I can’t actually be 100% certain of the exact method of grafting.”

Meng Hao spoke patiently to the apprentice alchemists and the excited Fang Qun. The sky was growing dark, but the audience didn’t seem tired at all.

Quite the opposite. Many of them were excitedly recording the information Meng Hao was giving them onto jade slips.

Soon, the moon hung high in the sky, and yet, nobody had left. Eventually, passing apprentice alchemists from nearby mountains noticed that something was going on, and came over. When they saw that an alchemist was listening to this lecture about plants and vegetation, they were shocked. That was especially true after many of them recognized Fang Qun. In the end, these curious newcomers… didn't leave either.

It didn't take long before the mountain platform was packed tight with, not several hundred people, but several thousand. All types of questions were asked, and there wasn't a single one that Meng Hao couldn't answer.

Some people even started to intentionally ask trick questions, but Meng Hao didn't even need to think before providing an answer. Everything he said was correct and complete, which caused even the questioners trying to trip him up to feel completely astonished.

Eventually, the mountain was packed. The new arrivals, who of course didn't want to leave, had to float in the air nearby to listen.

Meng Hao tried to conclude the lecture on numerous occasions, but there were too many people in the audience, and too many questions. He wanted to leave, but considering that he was trying to rise to prominence in the clan, the Dao of alchemy was probably his best chance to do so. Therefore, he stayed.

Gradually, an entire night passed, and to these alchemy cultivators, Meng Hao's lecture was almost like a sermon about the Dao. More and more apprentice alchemists crowded around. By the time the sun rose, there were over 10,000 people present.

That in and of itself sent the surrounding areas into a commotion. More people approached to hear Meng Hao's lecture, and to ask questions. However, from start to finish, there seemed to be nothing Meng Hao didn't know, and no question that he couldn't answer, or even give him the slightest pause.

Shock spread through all hearts, and soon, some of the other alchemists in the area who had been preparing to give their own lectures noticed. At first they chuckled coldly, but soon their eyes grew wide with disbelief.

“His skill with plants and vegetation… it’s actually… it’s actually incredibly high!!”

“Heavens! The questions are never-ending, and they touch upon virtually all aspects of plants and vegetation. But this guy can actually answer all of them! What an incredible knowledge base!”

Gradually, the size of the audience grew. Meng Hao spoke for three days straight, and eventually, there were 30,000 people in attendance. The entire world of the apprentice alchemists in the Dao of Alchemy Division was shaken. There were even many tier 1 alchemists who came. As for the tier 2 alchemists, however, most stayed in the inner mountains. They rarely interfered with the affairs of the outer mountains, nor did they pay too much attention to what happened there. After all, most alchemists spent their time in seclusion, concocting pills.

“Three Immortals Leaf is a rare medicinal plant. I would never have expected the Fang Clan’s Dao of Alchemy Division to be able to grow them. If you use this medicinal plant as the main ingredient, a vast amount of medicinal pills can be concocted. Although I haven’t personally concocted anything using Three Immortals Leaf, I’m aware of around one thousand pill formulas that use it.

“Sun Blossom? That’s a legendary medicinal plant that has long since gone extinct. Naturally, I’ve never laid eyes on one, but I’ve heard that if you add Sun Blossom to a medicinal pill, you are certain to produce a one hundred percent consummate pill.” 1

Meng Hao was now seated cross-legged on the platform, smiling as he spoke. Everyone in the audience was still excited. Even after three days, they didn’t seem tired at all. All of them were deeply aware that this was a very rare opportunity for them.

Meanwhile, word spread to the Fang Clan ancestral mansion. Fang Yunyi sat in his Immortal’s cave, listening as an apprentice alchemist gave a lively description of Meng Hao’s lecture on plants and vegetation.

Fang Yunyi’s face darkened, and then after a moment, broke out into a cold smile.

“What does that prove?” Fang Yunyi said coldly. “Any tier 2 alchemist from the inner mountains of the Dao of Alchemy Division could go out and give a lecture on plants and vegetation. Any one of them would draw a crowd of tens of thousands, or even more.

“Piddling Meng Hao. You come here from a backwater place like Planet South Heaven, so even if you have a bit of skill, it’s still bound to be quite limited. You just joined the Dao of Alchemy Division and are already acting so arrogantly? You’re nothing but a loser who thinks he’s hot stuff.” He still constantly brooded over the events that had taken place on Planet South Heaven, and hated Meng Hao to his bones.

He really wanted Prince Wei to go punish Meng Hao. Unfortunately, Prince Wei never did anything, no matter how Fang Yunyi pushed the subject. Now, just as he was managing to quell his frustration, this apprentice alchemist came to tell him about the waves Meng Hao was making in the Dao of Alchemy Division. Finally, he snorted and sent the apprentice alchemist away, then sat there frowning.

“This damned Meng Hao, I can’t just let him trot around so happily!” Grinding his teeth, Fang Yunyi produced a transmission jade slip, imprinted it with divine sense as well as some various promises, and then threw it out.

The jade slip immediately shot into the air.

Shortly thereafter, somewhere within the 10,000 inner mountains of the Dao of Alchemy Division, on one particular mountain that was fairly close to the outer mountains, a middle-aged man was concocting some medicinal pills. He wore an alchemist’s robe that had two golden dragons embroidered on the collar.

The pill furnace in front of him glowed bright red, and flickered with light. A medicinal aroma wafted out from the furnace, which surrounded the entire mountain and seemed to nourish all of the vegetation in the area.

In the middle of his concocting, a jade slip suddenly appeared. It floated there off to the side, but the middle-aged man ignored it completely, instead continuing with his pill concocting. Two hours passed before the bright red color of the pill furnace began to fade away. When the furnace cooled completely, the man began to murmur to himself.

“I’ve been working on this batch of Mortality Convergence Pills for three months. It’s too bad I wasted so many ingredients…. I wonder if I succeeded this time. If not, I’m going to have to go get some more medicinal plant ingredients.” The man frowned and then waved his hand, causing the jade slip to fly over. After scanning it with divine sense, his eyes began to glitter.

“Fang Hao? Even I’ve heard of that name recently. He had a 30,000 meter Bloodline Gatebeam. However, in the Fang Clan, you can’t only rely on your bloodline.

“Fang Hao might be a Chosen….

“But this is the Dao of Alchemy Division, and things are different here. Nobody cares if you’re a Chosen or not. Furthermore, I have no conflicts with Fang Yunyi, and considering what he’s offering me, it won’t hurt to help him out this once.” He hesitated for a moment and looked at the pill furnace. If this batch of pills went bad, then he would have to go get more medicinal plant ingredients, which he really didn’t want to do. He thought for a moment, then decided not to refuse Fang Yunyi’s request. He quickly headed toward the outer mountains.

“What kind of ability could some trifling clan member from Planet South Heaven have? Besides, skill with plants and vegetation is a low-level fundamental skill, that’s all. Any tier 2 alchemist could get a whole bunch of apprentice alchemists to gather around them.

“As for the tier 1 alchemists, well….” He snorted coldly. In the Fang Clan’s Dao of Alchemy division, the only tier 1 alchemists who were stationed in the outer mountains were the ones who had no hope of advancing to the next tier.

“7191…. Right, I remember. That place is overseen by Fang Qun.” The man chuckled. Fang Qun was the lowest ranking of all the tier 1 alchemists. The fact that he had passed the test was a completely lucky break.

The man flew out of the inner mountains at top speed. Whenever any apprentice alchemists saw him, they respectfully clasped hands and bowed. He hurried to the outer mountains as quickly as possible, and after enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, he caught sight of Alchemy Lodge Peak #7191. The first thing he saw was the crowd of tens of thousands of apprentice alchemists packed together. It almost looked like a static cyclone.

The sight of it caused the middle-aged man to give a cold harrumph. He was actually a bit offended. Whenever he went to the outer mountains to give lectures, he would usually draw a crowd of about 10,000. However, there were clearly about 30,000 apprentice alchemists in attendance here.

The man neared, but because all of the apprentice alchemists were paying close attention to Meng Hao, no one noticed the newcomer.

The man frowned and then snorted coldly, the sound of which echoed out and caused numerous nearby apprentice alchemists to turn around in shock. When they saw him standing there, their faces fell and they quickly clasped hands in greeting.

“Greetings, Alchemist Xuzhong!” 2

“It’s Alchemist Fang Xuzhong!!”

It didn’t take long before everyone was turning to Fang Xuzhong and bowing in greeting. He nodded back proudly, and proceeded forward. People backed up, creating a path that he followed all the way to the mountain peak, where he stood on the platform next to Meng Hao.

He looked Meng Hao over a few times.

All of the apprentice alchemists, and even Fang Qun, rose to their feet, bowing to Fang Xuzhong with clasped hands.

Meng Hao was the only one who remained seated. It was obvious that this man came with ill intentions, and the measuring look in his eye also contained a bit of scorn.

“So you’re Fang Hao?” he asked coldly.

Meng Hao nodded, after which Fang Xuzhong smiled, and the disdain therein was clear. He waved his sleeve and coldly announced, “You’re only an apprentice alchemist, and yet you dare to give a lecture about plants and vegetation? How scandalous!

“However, I won’t make things hard for you. I’ll ask you about three types of medicinal plants, and if you can’t answer, you will put end to this commotion immediately, and focus on being a good apprentice alchemist instead of arrogantly assuming the mantle of a full alchemist!” After saying these things, Fang Xuzhong suddenly recalled an additional requirement that Fang Yunyi had laid out.

“Also,” he added coldly, “for however long you sowed chaos in the Dao of Alchemy Division with your lecture, you will kneel here for the same length of time!” 3

Meng Hao looked at the arrogant man standing in front of him, and frowned.

“I’m just an apprentice alchemist and you’re a full alchemist. Doesn’t this count as bullying? Also, what happens if I answer your questions correctly?”

“Then you can continue your lecture!” replied Fang Xuzhong with a cold laugh.

Meng Hao hesitated, as if he was debating whether to accept the challenge. Then he looked around, as if he was considering the face he would lose in front of all these people if he didn’t accept. Gritting his teeth, he produced a bag of holding and put it down off to the side. Eyes bloodshot, he looked over at Fang Xuzhong.

“I came here with good intentions to explain matters of plants and vegetation to fellow clan members. You’ve come to stop me. If I lose the challenge, you want me to kneel here in humiliation. However, if you lose, there is no loss on your part. That’s not really fair. Why don’t we REALLY throw down? If you match the number of spirit stones in that bag of holding, then I’ll accept your challenge!

“If not, then I might as well just leave.”

Fang Xuzhong frowned. Coming as he had in his role as a full alchemist really was a case of the big bullying the small. There were a lot of people watching, and he had to consider how the matter would affect their view of him. However, if he didn’t get Meng Hao to kneel, then he wouldn’t be meeting the requirements laid out by Fang Yunyi. Finally, he looked at Meng Hao and laughed coldly, imagining what it would look like when he was humiliated and kneeling on the ground. He would definitely have to make Fang Yunyi give him an extra bonus as a reward. Without further hesitation, he pulled out a bag of holding and threw it down next to Meng Hao’s.

He said nothing, but his eyes glittered coldly.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and licked his lips. A bashful smile appeared on his face, and he even looked a bit embarrassed.

“Many thanks, Alchemist Fang. Now, let’s throw down.”

2. Fang Xuzhong’s name in Chinese is fāng xū zhōng. Xu means ‘necessary.’ Zhong means ‘middle’

3. In Chinese culture, kneeling on both knees publicly is very humiliating

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# Chapter 905: Plant and Vegetation Throwdown!

Alchemist Lodge Peak #7191 was now surrounded by tens of thousands of apprentice alchemists, all of whom were staring fixedly at Meng Hao and Fang Xuzhong on the platform.

It was especially interesting that there was a wager between the two of them, and the apprentice alchemists couldn’t wait to see what happened. Many could read between the lines, and knew that Fang Xuzhong had intentionally come here to stir up trouble with Meng Hao. However, considering that it didn’t affect them personally, those people were even more excited than the others. They wanted to see who exactly was better when it came to knowledge of plants and vegetation.

If Meng Hao hadn’t just given a three-day lecture on the subject, the apprentice alchemists would not have hesitated even a moment to say that Fang Xuzhong would prevail. Now, however… it was hard to say.

Meng Hao looked extremely bashful as he embarrassedly scanned Fang Xhuzhong’s bag of holding with divine sense. Then he licked his lips and looked back over at Fang Xuzhong. He felt luckier with every minute that passed. He had never imagined that, having only been in the Dao of Alchemy Division for a few days, there would already be someone who came looking to deliver up spirit stones.

When he realized what he was thinking, he suddenly felt a bit more embarrassed.

Seeing all the eyes focused on him, Fang Xuzhong snorted coldly. He had been immersed in the Dao of alchemy for many years, and was highly proficient when it came to skill with plants and vegetation. As the saying went, his proverbial pill furnace glowed with the bright green of perfection. Actually, he was already qualified to be promoted to a tier 3 alchemist, and as such, was absolutely confident in being able to win the bet.

Were it not for the fact that he was badly in need of alchemy resources, he would never have come here. After all, participating in something like this was really beneath his status.

His expression proud and lofty, Fang Xuzhong raised his hand high and then smacked his bag of holding. Instantly, a medicinal plant appeared in his hand. It was green, and looked no different from an ordinary blade of grass. He waved his hand, sending it flying through the air to hover in front of Meng Hao.

“I won’t make things hard for you,” he said coolly. “I’ll show you three medicinal plants. You simply have to tell me their names and properties. This is the first one.” From his perspective, this plant in and of itself was enough to stump his opponent. He planned to show this Fang Hao the height of the Heavens and the depths of the Earth. He would help Fang Hao to know exactly how vastly separated the two of them were in terms of qualifications.

As a tier 2 alchemist, he wanted to ensure a quick victory. Considering his status in the Dao of Alchemy Division, knocking his opponent out of the competition with a single blow would be the most suitable result.

Fang Xuzhong smiled coldly, swished his sleeve, then clasped his hands behind his back and looked arrogantly at Meng Hao. “Forget about this guy,” he thought. “Not even a tier 1 alchemist would recognize this medicinal plant.”

Meng Hao was smiling just as before as he looked at the medicinal plant.

All of the apprentice alchemists were also staring at it, trying to guess what it was. The tier 1 alchemists in the area were also digging through their memories, and yet, none of them could recall even the slightest scrap of information about a plant like this.

Immediately, a buzz of conversation rose up.

“This can’t be right. That medicinal plant doesn’t look special at all. It doesn’t even look like a medicinal plant! Is it just an ordinary plant from the mortal world?”

“I might not have incredible skill when it comes to plants and vegetation, but I know a bit. However, this plant… is something I’ve never seen before.”

“He definitely deserves to be a tier 2 alchemist. He pulled out a medicinal plant that nobody even recognizes!”

Fang Xuzhong looked haughtily over at Meng Hao.

“If you don’t recognize it, then kneel upon this mountain peak for three days, and then screw off.” Almost as soon as the words left his mouth, however, Meng Hao suddenly looked up at him and chuckled.

“Alchemist Fang, I never imagined that you would actually possess this type of Wind Spirit Grass. Such a plant is useless for medicinal purposes. However, when struck by a strong wind, it will blossom with a Spirit Flower. That flower can bloom with up to seven colors, with seven being the optimal number. That medicinal flower is one of the most important ingredients used when concocting wind-type medicinal pills.

“Unfortunately, Alchemist Fang, this particular plant of yours has a lot of imperfections. It will only produce a three-colored flower.”

Meng Hao’s words left the surrounding apprentice alchemists in shock. Even the tier 1 alchemists were astonished. They had never even heard of Wind Spirit Grass, although many knew of Wind Spirit Flower. At this point, they suddenly had an epiphany, and realized the origin of Wind Spirit Flowers.

It was at this point that Meng Hao blew onto the blade of grass. Because of the level of his cultivation base, that breath was like a gale force wind. A rumbling sound filled the area, and then the blade of grass began to wriggle and sway back and forth. Everyone watched as a three-colored flower bloomed at the tip of the blade, and a medicinal aroma filled the area.

“It really has three colors!”

“Fang Hao’s skill with plants and vegetation is astonishing after all! He didn’t just recognize that plant, he was able to judge its nature entirely!”

The surrounding crowds were in an uproar. The tier 1 alchemists were now looking at Meng Hao with complete and utter respect. In the Fang Clan’s Dao of Alchemy Division, powerful alchemists were treated with fervor and veneration.

Fang Xuzhong’s eyes widened, then he stared dead at Meng Hao, and a serious look spread out across his face. The Wind Spirit Grass might seem like an ordinary medicinal plant, but it was actually a line of demarcation when it came to determining skill with plants and vegetation. Even many tier 2 alchemists wouldn’t know much about it. Even more shocking to him was how his opponent had identified how many colors the flower would bloom in. That was something that only tier 3 alchemists should be able to do.

“So, this guy has some skill after all,” he thought. “It seems I need to take things a bit more seriously.” Fang Xuzhong waved his hand to pull the Wind Spirit Grass back into his bag of holding, from which he then produced another medicinal plant.

This plant had more than one hundred leaves, which formed the shape of a triangle. The stamen of the plant’s flowers were long and almost looked like tentacles as they drifted back and forth.

A single look at this medicinal plant, and it was clear that it was beyond ordinary. Everyone looking at it also felt a faint sense of danger.

“In order to avoid any accusations of bullying,” said Fang Xuzhong, “I will not require you to explain the properties of this plant. Merely telling me its name will suffice.” He stared icily at Meng Hao. Although he didn’t say anything further, inside, he was laughing coldly. In his opinion, he had underestimated his opponent a bit when it came to the first medicinal plant. However, with this second one, he was completely confident that he could secure victory.

“When I first got this medicinal plant,” he thought, “I didn’t have any idea what it was. It was personally grown by one of the tier 5 alchemists, and I had to spend a small fortune to acquire it.

“It’s completely one-of-a-kind. Not a single manual of plants and vegetation will contain a description of it. It was grafted together from a variety of other medicinal plants, using the top-secret technique of a tier 5 alchemist.

“I simply can’t believe that an inconsequential apprentice alchemist will be able to identify it!” Smiling coldly, Fan Xuzhong lifted his chin and stood there, hands clasped behind his back as he looked at Meng Hao.

He could visualize his opponent with tears streaming down his cheeks, racking his brains as he tried to identify the plant. He would probably spout a bunch of nonsense, for which Fan Xuzhong had already prepared appropriate words of response.

Everything was completely quiet. All eyes were focused on the medicinal plant. Because of the vague sense of danger it emanated, everyone was now paying close attention to it. Gradually, the medicinal aroma wafting out from the plant vitalized the minds of all present.

“What medicinal plant is that!?!?”

“I’m pretty sure I’ve never seen it before, although something about it seems familiar. How strange!”

Even the tier 1 alchemists were all frowning and trying desperately to recall what this plant was. Some people even pulled out jade slips containing information about plants and vegetation, which they began to search through for clues.

“That plant is even more mysterious than the Wind Spirit Grass from before!!” As the members of the audience began to speculate further about the plant, Meng Hao looked at it, and his eyes began to shine.

“I never imagined that the Fang Clan’s Dao of Alchemy Division would be so skilled with plants and vegetation,” he said. Immediately, the audience went silent, and everyone looked at Meng Hao.

Fang Xuzhong laughed coldly.

“Can you identify it, or not? There’s no need to be deliberately cryptic.”

Meng Hao chuckled in response.

“This medicinal plant is something I doubt you could grow,” he said. When the onlookers heard this, they didn’t think too much of it. However, Fang Xuzhong’s heart began to thump.

“It has no name,” Meng Hao continued slowly. “Or, perhaps you could say… the only person qualified to name it, is the alchemist who created it.”

When Fan Xuzhong heard this, his face flickered. Meng Hao’s two sentences were like lightning bolts striking his brain. How could he ever have imagined that his opponent would be able to pick up on the clues with just a glance? He quickly prepared to retrieve the plant and put it away, since Meng Hao’s first two sentences had already revealed the truth regarding the name of the plant.

He recalled how the first time he had ever laid eyes on this plant years ago, he had stared in shock. To him, it had seemed like some strange and miraculous item. It wasn’t until the tier 5 alchemist explained the plant to him that he understood the truth, and prostrated himself in admiration.

“Just how skilled is this Fang Hao?” he thought. “He actually recognized the plant! Dammit! No, I really have to pull a fast one!” Feeling more on guard than ever, he immediately had the urge to slander his opponent. However, in the Dao of Alchemy Division, reputation was extremely important, and with so many people looking on, word would spread quickly.

Fang Xuzhong gritted his teeth, and was just about to retrieve the medicinal plant and put it away when suddenly, Meng Hao started talking again.

“This is a medicinal plant produced by a grafting technique. Let me see…. It seems to be grafted from nineteen different medicinal plants. Those nineteen plants consist of Watershed Root, Spiritdream Grass, Mount Heaven Leaf, Mortality Bloom….” Meng Hao calmly listed all nineteen varieties of plants.

Fang Xuzhong’s eyes widened, and he began to pant. He subconsciously staggered backward several steps, his expression one of disbelief. As for the next plant he had planned to pull out, Meng Hao had just mentioned it in the list he had rattled off, so Fang Xuzhong had no choice but to abandon any idea of using it. How could he have ever imagined that this person could possibly…

Could possibly name all of the plants that made up the graft! Fang Xuzhong’s mind was spinning. Of course, he couldn’t be absolutely certain as to whether what Meng Hao had said was completely correct or not, because only the tier 5 alchemist who created it would be able to verify it.

After all, this was… a top secret technique!

Eventually Meng Hao reached his conclusiion and said, “…afterwards, use the magic of the four seasons, invert Yin and Yang, graft three plants simultaneously. Combine all nineteen medicinal plants, do not allow them to be touched by the sun, allow the Yin qi to coalesce, which completes the process.

“Because this medical plant was created by grafting nineteen other plants together, if it is used in pill concocting, there are many possible transformations. An ordinary alchemist would probably be incapable of using it to concoct anything at all. Presumably, the alchemist who gave you this medicinal plant also gave you a pill formula specifically designed to be used with it.

“Tell me, Alchemist Fang, am I correct?” Meng Hao smiled and looked at Fang Xuzhong.

Meng Hao’s words were followed by deathly silence. Everyone was looking at Fang Xuzhong, whose face flickered back and forth between various emotions. He felt like lightning was crashing around in his head, and without realizing it, he stepped backward. He was now looking at Meng Hao with wide eyes, as if he were some type of evil spirit.

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# Chapter 906: The First Waves

“Impossible! This is Impossible!!” Fang Xuzhong’s heart trembled violently. He had no idea how the medicinal plant had been grafted together and no way of knowing whether Meng Hao was correct or not. However… based on his skill in the Dao of alchemy, he was fairly certain that what Meng Hao had said was true.

Most importantly, the tier 5 alchemist from whom he had acquired this medicinal plant had indeed given him a pill formula to use with it. Furthermore, the words that alchemist had used to describe the plant were exactly the same as the words Meng Hao had uttered just now!

“You….”

The surrounding apprentice alchemists noticed Fang Xuzhong’s pale face, the fact that he had backed up, and his facial expression. Virtually all of them understood exactly what it meant; Meng Hao had been completely correct in what he had said.

There was no other reason for Fang Xuzhong’s expression to change the way it had.

“Fang Hao was right again!!”

“Not even Alchemist Fang Xuzhong is capable of outdoing Fang Hao when it comes to plants and vegetation!!”

“It’s a good thing I kept good notes from when Fang Hao was lecturing about plants and vegetation earlier. I’m going to go back and review them thoroughly!”

The surrounding apprentice alchemists were abuzz. After all, as mere apprentice alchemists, they didn’t really understand much about alchemy. Even the tier 1 alchemists were panting and looking on with wide eyes. Then they exchanged glances, and saw similar looks of disbelief on each other’s faces.

They were alchemists, and though they might only be tier 1, their knowledge base far exceeded that of apprentice alchemists. Since they couldn’t identify the medicinal plant Fang Xuzhong held in his hand, they initially hadn’t felt that there was anything special about it. However, after Meng Hao spoke, and especially after he revealed the grafting technique, their minds trembled.

“Uh… that grafting technique is a top secret method of a tier 5 alchemist!!”

“Nineteen medicinal plants! I’m afraid only a tier 5 alchemist could create something like that. But… but Fang Hao is so inhuman that he actually… easily identified the grafting method by simply looking at the plant!!”

“Just what is the full extent of his skill in plants and vegetation, and his Dao of alchemy? How frightening! It’s almost like no secrets that relate to plants and vegetation can be kept from him!!”

Because of their advanced understanding, the tier 1 alchemists were thoroughly astonished.

Fang Xuzhong’s face was pale white as he looked at Meng Hao, who in his view had become completely inscrutable and terrifying. He could never have predicted that anyone would be able, with a single look, to see through an alchemist’s top secret technique and reveal the grafting method.

To him, such a thing was vastly terrifying.

As of this moment, he knew that he was absolutely no match for Fang Hao when it came to skill in plants and vegetation. He simply didn’t stand a chance of winning when up against an inhuman like this in a competition.

“Damn you, Fang Yunyi!” he thought. “You just wait until I get back. I’ll teach you a thing or two!” Fang Xuzhong was filled with bitterness, as well as a sudden, bone-deep hatred of Fang Yunyi. As for Meng Hao, he didn’t dare to hate him.

Because the Dao of Alchemy Division had its own way of doing things, he could ignore the fact that Meng Hao was Chosen. However… after getting a sense of Meng Hao’s skill with plants and vegetation, he was frightened to death.

“With skill like that,” he thought, “even if he’s not very good at pill concocting, he’ll still rise to complete prominence…. Furthermore, what if he’s just as gifted in pill concocting? That would be petrifying. He’ll certainly exceed me in the Dao of Alchemy Division. Now, thanks to Fang Yunyi, I’ve offended him. It definitely wasn’t worth it….”

Fang Xuzhong took a deep breath, gritted his teeth, and was just about to admit defeat when suddenly his heart quivered. He suddenly realized that this defeat could actually be turned into an opportunity. He hesitated for a moment, then clasped hands and bowed to Meng Hao.

“Alchemist Fang, your skill in plants and vegetation is profound. I’m no match for you. I was crude and rash earlier, and I hope you can look past that. Please take the spirit stones in that bag of holding as my gift to you upon our first meeting. I admit defeat….” His words sent the apprentice alchemists into an uproar. However, the tier 1 alchemists had already surmised that he would take such action.

There would obviously be something wrong with any of them who would still feel confident enough to continue even when faced with someone so inhuman as to be able to identify a top secret grafting technique.

“However, I would also like to ask for some pointers, if that’s okay. I… I saw a medicinal plant a while back. I’ve asked many people about it, but no one can tell me exactly what it was.” Fang Xuzhong once again clasped hands and bowed. “Alchemist Fang, if you can help me out a bit, I’d be more than happy to give this grafted medicinal plant to you as an expression of my thanks.”

Meng Hao’s expression was as calm as ever. However, inwardly, he sighed, thinking that he should have acted a bit weaker earlier. Showing off so much had only deprived him of a chance to fleece this fat sheep.

“It’s too bad,” he thought. “I have a lot more spirit stones in my bag of holding, and I was planning to con this guy even harder. Now I’ve lost the chance.” Feeling a bit depressed, he waved his hand to collect Fang Xuzhong’s bag of holding. After scanning it with divine sense and seeing how many spirit stones were inside, he felt a bit better.

Then he looked up at the grafted medicinal plant. He knew that the value of such a plant would be significant. Besides, the grafting techniques that had been used were intriguing. As a result, he nodded to Fang Xuzhong.

Fang Xuzhong’s expression brightened, and he immediately produced a jade slip from his bag of holding, which he respectfully handed over to Meng Hao, who accepted it and scanned it with divine sense.

Immediately, an image of a violet flower appeared in his mind, growing on top of a tiny, hand-sized horse, which was galloping at top speed.

That was all he saw before the image vanished.

Meng Hao’s expression became more serious, and he scanned the jade slip again. After a moment of thought, he asked, “Where did you see this?”

“On an island in a sea district here on Planet East Victory. I just randomly happened to see it, and chased after it for a while to no avail. I asked some of the local fisherman about it, and all of them reported seeing it before on occasion.

“However, even after returning to the location on a few times, I was never able to find it again.” Fang Xuzhong had shown this jade to slip to numerous alchemists, but none of them had ever been able to identify it. The best he had gotten were speculations that it was some type of rare medicinal plant.

“I think that horse is actually the root of the medicinal plant,” said Fang Xuzhong.

“You would be wrong,” said Meng Hao, shaking his head. “That’s not a medicinal plant. It’s… a medicinal pill! A sentient medicinal pill!”

“What!?!?” exclaimed Fang Xuzhong, feeling both shock and disbelief. None of the numerous alchemists he had asked about this image had ever come to the conclusion that it was a medicinal pill. No matter how you looked at it, the only answer that made sense was that it was some kind of medicinal plant.

“How is that even possible?” said Fang Xuzhong, mostly to himself. “Medicinal pills are medicinal pills! They’re concocted by people! How could a medicinal pill come to life?”

“Such things do exist,” said Meng Hao. “I’ve seen them.” Without providing any further explanation, he handed the jade slip back to Fang Xuzhong, then clasped hands and bowed to the crowd. Finally, he turned and left.

Even after Meng Hao left, Fang Xuzhong was still in a state of disbelief. The surrounding apprentice alchemists all began disperse excitedly.

Soon after, Fang Xuzhong returned to his residence, whereupon he took out Fang Yunyi’s jade slip and then grimly transmitted a stream of divine will into it.

Meanwhile, Fang Yunyi was in the ancestral mansion, meditating in his residence as he waited for news from the Dao of Alchemy Division.

“Alchemist Fang Xuzhong is a tier 2 alchemist. His skill in the Dao of alchemy is incredible. Once he shows up, that Meng Hao will definitely get put in his place. Forcing him to kneel there for three days will definitely lighten my heart a bit.” He chuckled coldly, and he felt incredible anticipation for the moment when he could visit the Dao of Alchemy Division and personally look at Meng Hao kneeling there.

“Your dad was there on Planet South Heaven, and that’s why you could be so arrogant and despotic. But here, you’re an outsider. Let’s see you try to be pompous here!” A wide smile appeared on his face. It was at this point that his expression flickered as he produced a jade slip from his bag of holding. Then he laughed out loud.

“Alchemist Fang sent me a message!” His expression one of anticipation, he sent his divine sense into the jade slip. After a moment, the jade slip began to glow, and an illusory version of Fang Xuzhong’s face appeared. His expression was grim.

As soon as he saw Fang Xuzhong’s expression, Fang Yunyi gaped in shock. Before he could even say anything, Fang Xuzhong had already begun to speak.

“Fang Yunyi, what enmity is there between us?! You set me up, you bastard! You wanted me to humiliate Fang Hao? His skill in plants and vegetation is inhuman! Fang Yunyi, I’m not going to forget the trouble you’ve caused me!”

Fang Yunyi’s face fell.

“Alchemist Fang, this….”

“Don’t call me Alchemist Fang! From this day forth, when you want pills concocted, don’t come looking for me! Furthermore, none of my alchemist friends will concoct for you either!

“Fang Yunyi, what you’ve done is far too excessive!” Fang Xuzhong glared at Fang Yunyi for a moment, then gave a cold snort and severed the divine will connection.

Fang Yunyi’s face flickered with various emotions, and then suddenly, he shot to his feet and pulled out another jade slip, which he used to connect with the apprentice alchemist he had sent away earlier. After finding out what had happened between Meng Hao and Fang Xuzhong in the Dao of Alchemy Division, his face darkened. He wrathfully smashed the jade slip, and his face twisted with rage.

“Meng Hao!” he howled, and his hatred for Meng Hao grew even more intense.

In the Dao of Alchemy Division, everyone watched Meng Hao leave, and then dispersed. It didn’t take long before Meng Hao’s name began to be spread by all of the apprentice alchemists who had been present. The story of the bet between Meng Hao and Fang Xuzhong was especially popular.

When the apprentice alchemists from the outer mountains learned that Meng Hao had actually defeated Fang Xuzhong in terms of plants and vegetation, it only made Meng Hao all the more mysterious, and the subject of even more debate.

He had a 30,000 meter Bloodline Gatebeam, he had experienced the Seventh Year Tribulation, was the eldest grandson of the direct bloodline, and was a Chosen of the Fang Clan.

Word of all of these things spread, and soon, Meng Hao’s name began to rise to prominence among the apprentice alchemists. There were even some low-level alchemists who took note.

In the ancestral mansion, Fang Wei’s father and grandfather sat in a temple, their faces grim as they listened to a tier 1 alchemist retell the story of what had happened that day at the Dao of Alchemy Division.

After a long moment, the tier 1 alchemist left. Fang Wei’s father, Fang Xiushan, looked incredibly gloomy.

“Dad, if that son of a bitch keeps doing things like this, it’s going to cause waves of disturbance….”

“It doesn’t matter,” the old man said somberly. “He won’t live much longer. Besides, even if he becomes famous in the Dao of Alchemy Division, the rules of the Fang Clan are clear; anyone who practices cultivation must contribute merit points.

“He just arrived, and will be provided with a set monthly allowance of merit points. It doesn’t matter if it’s in terms of cultivation or pill concocting, he won’t be making any waves.

“Besides, if he wants to earn more merit points, he’ll have to accomplish tasks set forth by the clan…. When that happens, it doesn’t matter if he’s avoided death so far, he’ll be on the outside, where accidents can happen at any time.”

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# Chapter 907: I Definitely Don’t Want It!

Meng Hao had returned to his Immortal’s cave residence. He already had some idea as to what would be happening right now back in the Dao of Alchemy Division, and some of those things were exactly what he wanted.

“My cultivation base isn’t good enough to help me rise to prominence in the Fang Clan, but since they have their own Dao of alchemy, why not rise to prominence there? That can make me just as popular and famous.

“The higher my status in their Dao of Alchemy Division, then the higher my status will be in the clan in general.

“The Dao of alchemy…. If I could become the most powerful alchemist in the Fang Clan, then I would definitely be super famous. When I control the entire Dao of Alchemy Division, then finding out what happened to my two Nirvana Fruits won’t be very difficult!” His eyes gleamed, and a cold smile appeared on his face.

After a moment, Meng Hao closed his eyes and rotated his cultivation base, as well as his Immortal meridian. The portion of it which remained illusory was slowly becoming solid.

“I still need more time before my Immortal meridian is full and complete. When that happens, I’ll be a true Immortal!” He took a deep breath. Outside, it was gradually growing dark, and the moon had risen. Meng Hao’s eyes finally opened, and he waved his hand, causing the ten sets of ingredients for Spirit Elixir to emerge.

Meng Hao looked them over carefully, then examined the formula for a while.

“This formula is pretty simple,” he thought. “Also, the Spirit Elixir it produces won’t be very high quality.” Eyes glittering, he produced the jade box and took out the Nirvana Fruits. After examining them for a bit, he tried his hand at concocting the Spirit Elixir.

First, he made one batch using the method described in the formula. To Meng Hao, that method was simply too basic. After concocting the first batch, he decided to use his own method. He altered the formula a bit, then produced a total of nine batches of Spirit Elixir, each one slightly different than the others.

Then, he carefully dripped them onto one of the Nirvana Fruits one batch at a time, and observed the various reactions.

He was immediately able to see signs of restoration on the fruit. By the time the ninth batch of Spirit Elixir had been absorbed, the Nirvana fruit was no longer cracked and wrinkled, and in fact looked wholly recovered. It even emanated a splendorous light that strongly stimulated the blood in Meng Hao’s veins.

He even had the mistaken feeling that he should immediately absorb the Nirvana Fruit into his body. He quickly closed his eyes and suppressed the impulse to try it out. After four hours, the Nirvana Fruit slowly began to wither back up. By the time six hours had passed, it had returned to its original dried-up shape.

“If I had actually tried to absorb it,” he murmured, looking at the withered fruits, “then I would have been turned into a desiccated corpse just now. A sudden and unexpected death.

“If I want to absorb these Nirvana Fruits, then I need to truly restore them so that they aren’t dangerous. Of these nine batches of Spirit Extract, the seventh was the strongest. It was around twice as strong as any of the others.” He looked down at the final remaining set of ingredients. After a moment of hesitation, a gleam of determination appeared in his eyes.

“This formula still isn’t good enough. The medicinal plants used to concoct the Spirit Elixir can actually be substituted with other medicinal plants.” Meng Hao sank into contemplation regarding the combination of medicinal plants. After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, he gritted his teeth and pulled out a Sun Blossom and a Reincarnation Leaf, legendary medicinal plants that were extinct in the outside world. After adding them to the formula, he began to concoct more Spirit Elixir.

This time, it took him two full days to complete the concoction. When the medicinal plants were finally refined into a liquid, he ended up with a glob of emerald-green fluid about the the size of a fist, which he then placed into a small bottle.

It was filled with dense Immortal qi, and because it contained Sun Blossom and Reincarnation Leaf, it meant that this bottle was shocking in terms of both quality and value.

Enduring the pain in his heart, Meng Hao produced the copper mirror and duplicated it, then very carefully poured a single drop from the bottle onto one of the Nirvana Fruits. It instantly returned to life, and began to glow with scintillating light.

However, Meng Hao knew that the fruit had not truly recovered. He continued to pour one drop after another onto the fruit, a total of one hundred. When the liquid was completely absorbed by the Nirvana Fruit, it gradually began to transform. Although it was difficult to describe the exact nature of the transformation, Meng Hao was just barely able to detect some sort of life force from within.

“It’s working!” he thought, his eyes flickering. However, his heart then began to twinge with pain. Duplicating that single bottle of Spirit Elixir had removed a distressing amount of spirit stones from his bag of holding.

He clenched his jaw.

“It’s just a bit of money, right…?” he said through gritted teeth, and then duplicated another bottle. Time passed. Five days.

“Dammit! Do you absorb Spirit Elixir or spirit stones!?!?

“Y-y-you’re… you’re still absorbing the Spirit Elixir!?!?

“It-it… it’s like I’ve fallen into a bottomless pit!!

“Argh, my spirit stones!!”

Meng Hao’s eyes were bloodshot as he stared at the Nirvana Fruit. During these five days, he had depleted the number of spirit stones in his bag of holding by half. He had duplicated an ocean of Spirit Elixir, all of which had been absorbed by the Nirvana Fruit. The life force inside of it was growing stronger, but there seemed to be no end in sight. Meng Hao could clearly sense that it was thirsty to absorb more Spirit Elixir.

If you calculated exactly how much Spirit Elixir the Nirvana Fruit had absorbed, anyone in the Fang Clan would have been shocked. Furthermore, that Spirit Elixir was of the finest quality. A few bottles might not have been a big deal, but for most people, it wouldn’t just be a problem of spirit stones; they simply would never be able to gather that many medicinal plants. Especially not the Sun Blossoms and Reincarnation Leaves.

“Only when it reaches the point that it can’t absorb any more Spirit Elixir, will I know that it’s fully restored!” Meng Hao’s heart dripped with blood, and he ceased duplicating the Spirit Elixir. He quickly packed the Nirvana Fruit up and then closed his eyes.

After a moment, he opened his eyes again and then frowned.

“This isn’t the right method. I need to increase the Spirit Elixir’s power. To do that, I need to replace all of the current medicinal plant ingredients. If I can create an even more powerful Spirit Elixir, that would be the best thing. Although it might cost more spirit stones to duplicate on an individual basis, overall, I’ll be able to save a lot of resources.”

Meng Hao took a deep breath and then rose to his feet, ending the current madness of duplication and concoction. He was now preparing to make another trip to the Dao of Alchemy Division, and figure out a way to get the medicinal plants he needed.

“Unfortunately, I don’t have the clan merit points I need…. However, that problem is solved easily enough.” Eyes shining brightly, he turned into a beam of light that shot toward the Dao of Alchemy Division.

People recognized him almost as soon as he arrived. That was especially true when he reached Alchemy Lodge Peak #7191. The apprentice alchemists there, including the old alchemist Fang Qun, immediately rose to their feet excitedly, clasped hands, and invited him onto the platform.

Meng Hao didn’t decline, but instead took his place and began to lecture about the Dao of alchemy, and even asked the apprentice alchemists to go invite others to come listen.

“All of this is for the clan,” Meng Hao announced in a profound voice. “I hope that, even with my meager skills, I can help to advance our clan’s Dao of alchemy.” His voice seemed to be full of loyalty and righteousness toward the clan.

The apprentice alchemists were getting excited, and immediately took out jade slips to inform their friends, who quickly hurried over, and also spread the word.

Over the course of the following four hours, the mountain peak came to be surrounded by tens of thousands of onlookers, who packed together to listen to Meng Hao lecture about plants and vegetation. Many among the audience were people who had heard of the events that had previously occurred, and were skeptically listening to Meng Hao for the first time. However, after listening for only a short time, their eyes went wide, and they were quickly absorbed in the information, seemingly entranced.

Meng Hao lectured for an entire day, after which he started to look a bit tired.

“Ladies and Gentlemen of the clan, it’s not that I don’t wish to continue, but I really don’t have enough time. I have to go do some tasks for the clan.

Next time I’m free, I’ll be sure to come back.”

No matter what the crowd said to try to get him to say, Meng Hao refused, and immediately left the Dao of Alchemy Division.

Later, for no apparent reason, Fang Xi suddenly became interested in the Dao of alchemy. He pulled some strings to get a chance to become an apprentice alchemist, and went directly to Peak #7191, quickly becoming familiar with some of the apprentice alchemists there.

In the following days, whenever Meng Hao returned, Fang Xi was in the crowd. Every time Meng Hao showed up, it was evening, and he would only talk for four hours before leaving.

Of course, each and every time, he would stop right at a critical moment in the lecture, which made the apprentice alchemists even more excited to hear what was next. He would always appear to really wish to keep lecturing, but be unable to because of Clan assignments, and would leave.

On one particular occasion, he lectured for about six hours before preparing to leave. It was at this point that one of the apprentice alchemists called out in a loud voice.

“Fang Hao, isn’t the point of performing clan assignments to get merit points? How about I give one of my merit points to you, and you keep talking for two hours! What do you think?!” This apprentice alchemist was none other than Fang Xi. From the look on his face, he was prepared to go all out, to pay any price necessary to gain more knowledge of plants and vegetation.

As soon as the words left his mouth, the surrounding apprentice alchemists hesitated for a moment. However, there were a few others who immediately voiced their approval, calling out to Meng Hao, who stopped in his tracks.

“Oh, I don’t think that’s a good idea….” he said hesitantly.

“What’s not good about it!?” hollered Fang Xi at the top of his lungs. “Fang Hao, your skill in plants and vegetation is so high that even a tier 2 alchemist is no match for you! If you’re willing to sacrifice your own merit points for the clan, and for us, then we’re willing to do the same thing for you! If we weren’t, it would be a huge shame for us!”

Other apprentice alchemists began to chime in.

“That’s right! Fang Hao, during these days, we’ve personally witnessed the sacrifices you have been making for the sect, and for us. We’re all very grateful….”

“Fang Hao, you’re a Chosen, and yet, you’re not arrogant at all! No matter what questions we come up with about plants and vegetation, you patiently answer them all! You deserve to get merit points from us!”

“That’s right! Anyone who refuses to part with their merit points should just get the hell out of here! The most valuable thing in the world isn’t bullying other people! It’s knowledge!!”

As the atmosphere in the area grew more passionate, Meng Hao’s face filled with emotion. Finally, he took a deep breath and stood tall on the platform, nodding his head.

“Very well,” he said, sounding determined. “Thank you for your support, everyone. Since all of you demand this, then I will forgo any service to the clan, and will instead personally impart all of my knowledge of plants and vegetation to all of you!

“For two hours, I’ll charge only one merit point per person! Don’t offer any more! If you do, I won’t accept!”

The surrounding apprentice alchemists all had strange looks on their faces. Some were actually looks of disdain; how could people not have at least some idea of what had just happened?

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# Chapter 908: Medicine Pavilion

Immediately, conversations rippled through the crowd.

“He’s actually charging a fee!!”

“Doggone-it! How shameless! How fake!”

“Let’s go to some other peak. None of the other alchemists charge merit points!”

Almost immediately, tens of thousands of apprentice alchemists flicked their sleeves and left. Meng Hao watched them leave and sighed.

“These Fang Clan people are so stingy,” he thought. “There were so many people before, but as soon as I mentioned charging merit points, so many of them just got up and left….”

In the end, only about a thousand people remained behind. To them, one merit point wasn’t very much; considering it was Meng Hao who was lecturing, they felt it was worth it.

This time, Meng Hao lectured for six hours, after which, he collected several thousand merit points, then left the Dao of Alchemy Division and returned to his Immortal’s cave. A few hours later, Fang Xi returned, looking both excited and cautious at the same time. The parrot perched on one of his shoulders, the meat jelly on the other. He looked very proud of himself.

“Coz! We really made a profit this time!”

Meng Hao laughed, and his eyes glowed with bright light. In the Fang Clan, merit points were essentially the same thing as spirit stones, or even

Immortal jades. Anything you wanted required an exchange of merit points.

Meng Hao waved his sleeve, producing a jade medallion. After scanning it with divine sense, he partitioned a hundred merit points and transferred them to Fang Xi.

“We need to make sure the apprentice alchemists you hired don’t get discouraged. Tell them that the better they do in promoting me, the more merit points they can earn.”

Fang Xi was actually quite excited. He had never before thought of using such a method to earn merit points. Normally speaking, the most he could ever get in a one-month period was about five hundred. But just now, it only took about six hours to make several thousand. To him, it made Meng Hao even more enigmatic than before.

It was at this point that Fang Xi said, “Coz, I promised them ten points apiece….”

“Don’t be stingy, Fang Xi,” Meng Hao replied, sounding very solemn. “Look, don’t take this the wrong way, but you’re simply too stingy. You need to think big! It’s just a bit of money, right?! If cultivators like us are constantly thinking about material things, then how can we ever increase our cultivation base?”

Fang Xi gaped for a moment in hesitation, but couldn’t hold back from carefully saying, “Coz, what I mean is… you didn’t give enough. I promised them ten per person, and I hired 173 people….”

Meng Hao’s face immediately flickered, and he said nothing for a moment.

His silence caused Fang Xi to immediately get nervous, and he quickly continued, “Coz, I know I messed up. Next time I hire them, I’ll tell them it’ll be fifty per person.”

Meng Hao’s cheek suddenly twitched. Taking a deep breath, he looked at Fang Xi and sincerely said, “Fang Xi, listen. You haven’t lived the hard life, so you don’t know how difficult things can be. Do you know what cultivators like us use up the most? Resources! Spirit Stones! Immortal jades!

“If you want to be stronger than everyone else, then you need more spirit stones! More resources! That’s the path to power!

“Now, don’t take this the wrong way, but you need to learn how to work hard and live a simple life! Be diligent, thrifty! Learn how to take only one merit point, and split it ten ways! That’s how cultivators like us can reach the top and stay there!” Meng Hao patted Fang Xi’s shoulder. Suppressing the inward pain he felt, he took out his command medallion and once again sent his divine sense out, causing a thousand merit points to transfer over.

“Remember what I just told you,” Meng Hao urged. “One merit point, split ten ways…. You can’t just throw your money away!”

Fang Xi gaped at Meng Hao in utter shock. The words he had spoken just now were the complete opposite of what he had said before. And yet, both made sense.

In the end, Meng Hao couldn’t hold back from adding, “Next time you hire people, it’s one merit point per person. That should be enough.”

Sighing, he turned and headed into his residence.

Of the more than three thousand merit points he had started out with, he now had less than half left. It was quite a blow.

Add to that the fact that later that night, Meng Hao had to duplicate more Spirit Elixir to use on the Nirvana Fruit, and the result was that by the following day, his bag of holding once again seemed sadly shrunken. By that time, Meng Hao truly felt as if he were about to go crazy.

He loved spirit stones, and loved being wealthy. Furthermore, what he loved least was spending his spirit stones….

To him, it felt like draining out his own blood.

At dawn, Meng Hao emerged. When Fang Xi saw him, he stared in shock.

“Coz, what’s wrong?” he asked, concerned.

Meng Hao’s eyes were completely red, and his expression had become somewhat vicious. He took a deep breath and cleared his head. Deep within his eyes, a brilliant light flickered.

“I HAVE to get rich! I HAVE to get merit points!!”

Meng Hao returned to the Dao of Alchemy Division, and to Peak #7191. Yet again, he lectured about plants and vegetation. However, this time, there were actually fewer people than last time, only about nine hundred.

There wasn’t much he could do. In order to get as many merit points as possible, he lectured for an entire day before leaving in exhaustion.

Each time he came after that, there were fewer people. After about a month, there were just over four hundred people who came, causing Meng Hao to sigh. The ones that stayed behind were the original group of apprentice alchemists, the ones whose fervor toward Meng Hao was the most intense.

Among their number was also tier 1 alchemist Fang Qun, who fairly worshipped Meng Hao.

After finishing his lecture, Meng Hao didn’t leave. Instead, he went to Fang Qun’s Immortal’s cave and directly asked some questions.

“Fang Qun, in the Fang Clan’s Dao of alchemy division, how do apprentice alchemists get promoted to full alchemist?”

Fang Qun always treated Meng Hao very respectfully. Despite his surprise about the question, he quickly answered.

“To become a full alchemist, you have to concoct at least a thousand tier 1 medicinal pills, and must also pass through the first level of the Medicine Pavilion.

“The first thing to do is pass through the Medicine Pavilion. That indicates that your skill with plants and vegetation has reached the level of a tier 1 alchemist.

“Unfortunately, it’s very difficult. Anyone in the Dao of Alchemy Division who hasn’t studied plants and vegetation for at least ten years would have a very hard time passing the first level. Take me, for example. I can concoct tier 2 medicinal pills, although my success rate isn’t very high. However, despite my best efforts, I barely passed the examination of the Medicine Pavilion. Due to my lack of skill in plants and vegetation, I wasn’t able to get past the second level, and in the end, I became a tier 1 alchemist.” Fang Qun chuckled bitterly.

“Medicine Pavilion?” asked Meng Hao, his eyes sparkling. “How do you get into it?”

“It doesn’t matter if you’re a full alchemist or an apprentice alchemist, anyone can enter the pavilion at any time. The Medicine Pavilion was set up in the past by a Patriarch of the Dao of Alchemy Division. It tests everything that you can think of, and has nine levels, which corresponds to the nine tiers for alchemists.

“Anyone who feels confident enough, can pay one hundred merit points to go to the inner mountains and take the Medicine Pavilion trial by fire.

“It’s extremely hard,” said Fang Qun, lowering his voice. “Of all the apprentice alchemists from Peak #7191, only about seven or eight might be able to attempt it, and that would only be after another ten or more years of study. As for the rest, most would need dozens of years of study before they could even think about trying. If you were to try to brute-force imprint your memory with knowledge, your mental world would burst from being overwhelmed by the infinite possible varieties of plants and vegetation. Unless your cultivation base is at an unfathomable level, of course.”

Meng Hao knew that when it came to plants and vegetation, there were endless variations, which were hard to imprint with spiritual sense. After hearing Fang Qun’s explanation, Meng Hao began to mutter to himself. Then, a plan started to form in his mind.

“Is there any other way to become a full alchemist?” Meng Hao asked.

“Other ways…?” Fang Qun thought for a moment, and then his eyes brightened. However, they grew dull again just as quickly. “There is, but it’s too difficult. In fact, it’s impossible to succeed that way.

“For tens of thousands of years, there have been three specific medicinal pills in the Dao of Alchemy Division which, if any full alchemist or apprentice alchemist can concoct, will allow them to immediately be promoted to tier 8 alchemist. That person would instantly become famous in the entire clan.

“Those three pills are famous pills concocted by past Patriarchs. Unfortunately, even though they left pill formulas behind after they perished, no one has been able to successfully concoct them.

“In all of Planet East Victory, even the Medicine Immortal Sect is only capable of concocting two of those pills. Of course, even though the Medicine Immortal Sect has its roots in the Fang Clan, and might even be considered a branch of the sect and a part of our Dao of alchemy, they are still almost considered outsiders. The fact that they can concoct pills that we cannot is somewhat disgraceful.

“That’s why those three pill formulas were placed in the Pill Pavilion. The clan has posted incredible rewards for concocting them. Supposedly, the reward for even the most simple of the three includes Immortal jade, tons of spirit stones, and 5,000,000 merit points, not to mention vast quantities of medicinal plants, magical items, and technique manuals.

“Unfortunately, after all these tens of thousands of years, nobody has ever succeeded. Even our only tier 9 alchemist, Pill Elder Fang Danyun, had to admit that he can’t concoct them.” 1

Fang Qun shook his head.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered and then almost seemed to glaze over.

“Another thing: because the cost of the medicinal plant ingredients is so high, anyone who attempts to concoct the simplest of those pills is must put up 1,000,000 merit points as a collateral. Regardless of whether they succeed or fail, the merit points will be erased.”

When Meng Hao heard that, he felt like someone had grabbed him by the neck and started squeezing down tightly. It took him a long moment before he could breathe again.

“Merit points! Merit points again!!” He suddenly frowned, and pushed down the impulsive feelings rising up in his heart. After spending a bit of time planning, his eyes began to glitter.

“Take me to the Medicine Pavilion!” he suddenly said.

“You… you want to try to challenge the Medicine Pavilion!?” asked Fang Qun, looking shocked. Then, he suddenly looked excited. He was well aware that he had no idea as to the limits of Meng Hao’s skill in plants and vegetation.

“Try to challenge the Medicine Pavilion?” Meng Hao replied, sounding surprised. “What, are you going to pay for it? Nah, I’m not going to try to challenge it, I’m just going to take a look at the first level.” With that, Meng Hao flew out of the Immortal’s cave.

“Uh… no, I’m not going to pay for it….” Fang Qun hurried to follow as Meng Hao shot through the mountains.

Soon, two mountain peaks appeared ahead of Meng Hao, between which was an enormous treasure pavilion, floating there in mid air, emanating brilliant and colorful light. Clouds and mist floated around it, and it truly looked like an abode of Immortals.

Two old men sat cross-legged outside of the treasure pavilion, next to an enormous stone slab.

“This is the Medicine Pavilion,” Fang Qun said softly, a pious look in his eyes. “According to the stories, this pavilion is actually a magical item, a precious treasure that the first generation Patriarch brought from off planet. It was originally owned by someone else, and had always attempted to fly away to rejoin him. However, after the Patriarch passed away in meditation, it has remained locked in place here, floating in midair and unable to go anywhere.”

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, and he flew up into the air directly toward the Medicine Pavilion. As soon as he got close, an incredibly powerful medicinal aroma hit him in the face. In the blink of an eye, he sensed millions upon millions of different types of medicinal aromas all mixed together.

“So many types of plants and vegetation!” thought Meng Hao with a gasp. He was still outside, and yet could already tell how terrifying it must be inside.

As he neared, the two old men who acted as guards outside the Medicine Pavilion opened their eyes. They appeared to be incredibly ancient, as if they were Immortal Divinities with unfathomable cultivation bases. From what he could tell, they were even more powerful than the Grand Elder.

His face solemn, he clasped hands and bowed.

The two old men looked over Meng Hao, and it almost seemed as if they could see through him. Finally, they retracted their gazes and closed their eyes. Meng Hao took a deep breath and then looked at the huge stone stele that rested off to the side.

The stone stele was divided into nine levels, upon each of which were written names. The first level had the most names, hundreds of thousands of them. After the first level, the higher you went, the fewer names there were, and some of the names were gray-colored. On the ninth level, there were ten names, with nine being gray, and one shining brightly.

Fang Danyun!

1. Fang Danyun’s name in Chinese is fāng dān yún. Dan means ‘pill.’ Yun means ‘cloud’

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# Chapter 909: Cheating!

In the Fang Clan's Dao of Alchemy Division, there was currently only one tier 9 alchemist, the man known as Pill Elder… Fang Danyun.

Meng Hao looked at the ten names on the ninth level of the stone stele, and suddenly thought of his master Pill Demon.

"From my current perspective, it's now obvious that Pill Demon's skill in the Dao of alchemy vastly exceeded any standards for Planet South Heaven. Were it not for the fact that he lacked certain medicinal plant ingredients, he would surely have been able to concoct some medicinal pills that were famous in all the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

"Now, he's a member of the Kunlun Society, with even more resources at his disposal and able to focus completely on the Dao of alchemy." When Meng Hao thought of his master, he couldn't help… but also think of a certain woman. It was Chu Yuyan, who had left with Pill Demon to go to the Kunlun Society.

"Waiting to meet out in the big wide world… is a beautiful type of regret." Meng Hao shook his head. To him, emotions were not everything. In this life, it was enough for him to have only Xu Qing.

Even more important was to accomplish something incredible, all on his own.

"I'm going to become the richest person in all the Ninth Mountain and Sea!" he thought, his eyes filling with determination as he strode into the Medicine Pavilion.

As soon as he entered, a gentle light swept over him, and his identity jade medallion flew out. Glittering light could be seen as one hundred clan merit points were deducted from within.

Meng Hao’s heart twinged in pain. Those one hundred merit points represented lecturing to a hundred apprentice alchemists for two hours.

“No pain, no gain!” he thought. “I’m going to go for it!” Gritting his teeth, he continued onward into the Medicine Pavilion. Suddenly, he found himself surrounded by thick mists that made it difficult to see.

After a moment, a glowing light appeared in front of him, within which were 1,000 types of medicinal plants. It was hard to see them clearly, as they were obscured by mist. Simultaneously, an archaic voice echoed throughout the first level.

“One hundred breaths of time. Identify at least 900 medicine plants and imprint them with divine sense. You will be given ten sets; completing nine of them will count as passing the level.”

As soon as the voice finished speaking, the mists covering the 1,000 medicinal plants vanished, leaving them clearly visible. Meng Hao’s gaze passed over them, and he immediately recognized all of them. However, he did not imprint any of them with divine sense, but instead committed all 1,000 plants to memory.

One hundred breaths of time quickly passed, and the light flickered. The 1,000 medicinal plants vanished, to be replaced by another set of 1,000.

Meng Hao quickly looked them over, and his eyes sparkled as if with electricity. After committing the medicinal plants to memory, he waited for the hundred breaths of time to end, and the third set of 1,000 medicinal plants to appear.

In this manner, he consumed all ten opportunities that he was given. After being shown 10,000 medicinal plants, he was wrapped up by a gentle force, and, in the blink of an eye, sent flying out of the first level of the Medicine Pavilion, to appear outside.

Fang Qun was waiting outside, filled with anticipation. As soon as he saw Meng Hao appear, his jaw dropped. Whenever anybody passed the first level, glowing lights would appear. And yet, the first level looked exactly the same as when Meng Hao had entered it.

Fang Qun gaped in shock, and was about to step forward when Meng Hao suddenly strode directly back toward the entrance, paid his one hundred merit points, and entered the Medicine Pavilion again.

Inside, he once again memorized the 10,000 medicinal plants that were shown to him, and was expelled. Gritting his teeth, he went in again.

Twice, three times, four times…. In a relatively short period of time, Meng Hao entered ten times. His merit points were vanishing rapidly. However, he stuck with it. Fang Qun was struck dumb, and could scarcely believe that Meng Hao couldn't pass the first level of the Medicine Pavilion. And yet, here he was watching the bizarre scene play out right in front of him.

"What exactly is he doing?" thought Fang Qun. In his estimation, it should be a relatively simple matter for Meng Hao to pass the first level of the Medicine Pavilion. He just couldn't figure out why he would want to go in at the same level over and over again.

Time passed. Meng Hao, seemingly bewitched, tried out the first level ten times, twenty times, thirty times. In the end… he entered the first level a hundred times.

That was 10,000 merit points, and considering he hadn't even earned 20,000 merit points over the last month or so, that meant he had now depleted his supply by more than sixty percent.

"100 times!" he said after appearing outside. He looked over at the Medicine Pavilion and took a deep breath.

After taking the examination over 100 times, he had been shown 1,000,000 medicinal plants. However, many of those were actually duplicates. After some thought, he looked at the more than 4,000 merit points he had left, gritted his teeth, and entered the Medicine Pavilion yet again.

After passing through 40 more times, Meng Hao had less than a hundred merit points left. The two old men sitting outside the Medicine Pavilion watched his odd behavior with fascination. They could clearly sense the determination that filled him.

“140 times! You would think that 1,400,000 medicinal plants would appear. But in reality, when you eliminate the repetitions, there were only about 1,000,000.

“From all those 1,000,000 medicinal plants, each section of the test only selects 1,000. All you need to do is recognize 900, and then, do that nine times…. In other words, in any given test, you actually only have to identify about 8,100 medicinal plants correctly!

“When you think about it that way, it’s not really that hard.” Meng Hao mused thoughtfully. In particular, there were about 5,000 medicinal plants that recurred most often in the test, which had special significance. These were plants that were easily confused with others.

Eyes glittering, he turned and left, followed by Fang Qun. Fang Qun wanted to ask some questions, but after seeing Meng Hao’s thoughtful look, he hesitated, and then decided not to interrupt.

Evening was falling, but Meng Hao did not return to his Immortal’s cave. Instead, he accepted Fang Qun’s invitation to stay at his Immortal’s cave for the night. During that time, he did not practice cultivation, but instead took out a jade slip and began to analyze and record information from his 140 examinations in the Medicine Pavilion, and to gather together information about the most common medicinal plants to appear.

Day and night, he classified and categorized the different plants. Three days later, he emerged, his expression one of exhaustion, and yet with brightly gleaming eyes.

“Measly Medicine Pavilion,” he thought. “I’m going to help all of the apprentice alchemists who listen to my lectures pass the first level of the Medicine Pavilion. When that happens, there will definitely be a huge increase in my audience.” He laughed heartily, and his eyes shone with anticipation and determination. To do something like he was doing was something no other alchemist would ever think was possible.

The reason Meng Hao could do it was because his skill in plants and vegetation had reached a completely terrifying level. Because of that, he was capable of memorizing and then organizing all of those 1,000,000 medicinal plants.

Of course, other high level alchemists might be able to do the same thing. However, they would never think to use the same method, to waste such energy and such a large amount of merit points, to organize all that information for the purpose of cheating.

After spending a few more days organizing all of the information and data, Meng Hao was completely confident. The next time he went to lecture the more than 400 fanatical apprentice alchemists, all the content was regarding information about those specific medicinal plants.

He especially focused on the most common plants, as well as the ones that were most easily misidentified.

This was a method that focused specifically on memorizing correct answers. Meng Hao completely forgot any exhaustion he felt, and committed himself to lecturing. A month later, the number of apprentice alchemists didn’t increase, but neither did it decrease.

By the time that month ended, Meng Hao had finished introducing all of the plants that most commonly appeared in the Medicine Pavilion test. After finishing a lecture, he would wave his hand, and use the magic of a divine ability to cause 1,000 medicinal plants to appear.

“Next, I’ll give you a little test,” he said. “I’ll give you two hours to try to identify as many of these 1,000 medicinal plants as possible. Mark down any that you don’t know. When the time limit is up, I’ll give you the correct answers.”

This was a completely fresh and new experience for these apprentice alchemists, but as for Fang Qun, he looked on with wide eyes. After listening to Meng Hao's lectures for a month, he was starting to feel a bit apprehensive. After all, he had passed through the first level of the Medicine Pavilion, and was starting to pick up on what Meng Hao was doing. This was especially the case when Meng Hao started using the same testing method as the first level of the Medicine Pavilion. It was at this point that he started panting, and a look of astonishment could be seen on his face.

"Don't tell me… he actually went through the first level of the Medicine pavilion more than a hundred times just to be able to see all the test's contents!

"That's… that's basically the same as just seeing all the answers! Now that he's giving specific lectures about the answers, these apprentice alchemists will have a much, much higher chance of passing the examination. That's… that's cheating!

"It's even more so the case considering he's using the same testing method as the Medicine Pavilion, just to get them used to it…." Fang Qun couldn't help but gape in shock.

Two hours later, the images vanished, and the apprentice alchemists began to ask questions about the medicinal plants they couldn't identify. Meng Hao emphasized various key points, and then waved his hand again, causing another set of images to appear.

It was in this fashion that time slowly passed. Meng Hao rarely returned to his Immortal's cave. Most of his time was spent in the Dao of Alchemy Division. Eventually, he reduced the amount of time he gave the apprentice alchemists from two hours to one hour. Then to the time it takes an incense stick to burn. Then half that amount of time.

By the time another month had passed, Meng Hao had reduced the time limit to one hundred breaths.

His audience gradually got used to it, and eventually started to get excited about the continually increasing number of medicinal plants they could identify, and the continuously increasing speed at which they could identify them. Actually, it was virtually impossible for them NOT to identify the medicinal plants, because during that time, Meng Hao lectured exclusively on the contents of the Medicine Pavilion examination.

During that three month period, the apprentice alchemists gave most of their merit points to Meng Hao. In exchange, there were more than a hundred among the group who had reached the point of being able to identify more than 900 medicinal plants in one hundred breaths of time.

On that day, Meng Hao ceased lecturing. Instead, he looked seriously at all of the four hundred members of his audience.

“Your merit points have not been spent in vain,” he announced. “Right now, all of us are going to the Medicine Pavilion to participate in the first level examination. Trust me, at least twenty percent of you will definitely pass!” In response, the apprentice alchemists looked at him with shock and hesitation.

“Fang Qun, lead the way!” said Meng Hao, waving his hand. Fang Qun gritted his teeth, nodded, and walked forward. The four hundred unconfident apprentice alchemists then followed his lead to the Medicine Pavilion.

Meng Hao flew along with them.

Along the way, more than few people noticed what was going on, and when they heard that the group was going to the Medicine Pavilion to take the examination, they began to laugh out loud.

“How long have they been studying? And they think they can take on the first level of the Medicine Pavilion?”

“Without studying about plants and vegetation for dozens of years, how could you possibly succeed in the Medicine Pavilion? Do you people want to just throw away their merit points or something?”

“That’s funny. A lot of them have barely studied plants and vegetation for three years, right?”

More and more apprentice alchemists took note. All of them wondered what the reason was for all of this, and they began to laugh and ridicule them.

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# Chapter 910: Rocking the Pavilion

The ridicule caused many of the four hundred apprentice alchemists to feel very embarrassed, and even hesitant. They weren’t confident in their chances of success at all, but Meng Hao was very enthusiastic about the whole matter. Were it anyone else, they would think they were intentionally being set up to look bad.

“Ignore all of them! Trust me!” cried Meng Hao, his expression solemn. The four hundred apprentice alchemists gritted their teeth.

They still weren’t confident, and yet, were still interested in knowing how far away they were from being able to succeed in the first level of the Medicine Pavilion.

The sound of the onlookers’ mockery rang out, and there were quite a few people who decided to follow along to see what happened when the group tried to pass the examination in the Medicine Pavilion. There were some tier 1 alchemists who recognized Fang Qun and, when they saw what was going on, shook their heads.

“Fang Qun is really too shortsighted. Those are apprentice alchemists from Peak #7191, right?”

“Although it’s true that an alchemist lecturer will receive a reward if any apprentice alchemist from their peak passes the first level of the Medicine Pavilion, these people only have a few years of experience with the Dao of alchemy; they definitely have no chance of succeeding.”

“I heard that Fang Hao took over for Fang Qun over the past few months to give lectures at Peak #7191. He even started charging merit point fees. What a joke.”

Surrounded by laughter and ridicule, Fang Qun and the four hundred apprentice alchemists slowly passed into the inner mountains and then appeared in front of the Medicine Pavilion. Although some of the alchemists in the inner mountains noticed them passing by, none took an interest.

Granted, there were four hundred people all going to take the test together, but that wasn’t something unheard of. After all, there were many, many people who were members of the Dao of Alchemy Division. Furthermore, the Medicine Pavilion was a mysterious place; entrance was not limited to a single person. Even 10,000 could enter at one time if they wished.

The interior of the pavilion would appear empty to each participant, as if they were taking the test alone.

The four hundred apprentice alchemists gritted their teeth, paid their merit points, and were about to step into the Medicine Pavilion when Meng Hao took a deep breath and called out.

“All of you, remember, just do things the way you normally do, and you won’t have any problems!”

The four hundred apprentice alchemists gave nervous, forced smiles to Meng Hao as they clasped hands and bowed to him. Then, clenching their jaws, they entered the Medicine Pavilion one after another. In the blink of an eye, four hundred people vanished.

By this point, a few thousand people had gathered to watch, and were all laughing and joking.

Fang Qun was extremely nervous. Many of the people who had gathered were familiar with him, and he could clearly hear their jokes, but there was nothing he could say in response.

Meng Hao’s expression was calm as he floated there in midair looking at the Medicine Pavilion.

Meanwhile, inside, the four hundred apprentice alchemists inside all faced empty mists. Then, 1,000 medicinal plants appeared in front of them, and the vast majority were shocked.

“Huh? How come it’s exactly like the tests Alchemist Fang gave us?”

“This seems… actually, kind of simple! I know almost all of these….”

“One hundred breaths of time? I’ve practiced so many times, I’m used to it!” Virtually all of the apprentice alchemists were shocked and excited. Earlier, they never believed that they could succeed, but now they suddenly felt hope.

Time passed by…. One thousand breaths.

Of course, the onlookers were all still laughing about the matter.

“I really don’t get what Fang Qun is thinking. And as for all those apprentice alchemists, they don’t know the height of the Heavens and the depths of the Earth. There’s no way they can succeed.”

“Time’s almost up. They’ll be coming out soon. If even one of them succeeds, I’ll beat myself to death.”

It was at this point that a beam of light appeared on the first level. Instantly, the laughing was silenced.

“Wow, somebody actually succeeded? Well, I guess out of four hundred people, it was inevitable that someone would get lucky….”

“It’s possible that person is a Chosen in the Dao of alchemy. It’s a given that someone like that would perform shockingly.”

Even as the discussions broke out, silence once again reigned as a second beam of light appeared on the first level.

After that, a third, fourth, and a fifth…. 113 beams of light appeared in the blink of an eye. They formed a dazzling spectacle that could be seen from quite a distance away.

The onlookers were deathly quiet and stared with gaping mouths. Their eyes were wide and filled with disbelief, and their minds roared.

This vastly exceeded anything they could have ever imagined, and they could hardly believe it.

It was at this point that, from within the dazzling lights, four hundred apprentice alchemists appeared. The ones who had succeeded in passing the first level were wild with joy. As for the ones who had met with failure, they weren't dejected at all. Instead, their eyes shone brightly with hope; they knew that they had come very close to succeeding.

All of them rushed over to Meng Hao and began crying out excitedly.

"That was so simple! I actually identified all of them!!"

"I did it! Hahaha! I passed! I've only studied the Dao of alchemy for three years, but I passed the first level of the Medicine Pavilion and I succeeded!!"

"Thank you, Alchemist Fang! Thank you!!"

Fang Qun was equally excited.

Meng Hao smiled widely, then cleared his throat. After glancing over at the shocked onlookers, he looked back at the apprentices and then put a solemn expression onto his face.

"What's there to be excited about? What's the surprise?

"During these three months, you paid a few hundred merit points to listen to my lectures about plants and vegetation, so the big surprise would be if you didn't pass the measly first level of the Medicine Pavilion.

"Now, all of you, tell me. Was it worth it to spend those merit points on listening to my lectures?"

The instant the question left his mouth, the more than four hundred apprentice alchemists joined their voices into a mighty roar of approval. All of the onlookers began to tremble inwardly.

Meng Hao laughed heartily, then turned to leave, sure that this matter would quickly turn into a massive wave that swept through all of the Dao of Alchemy Division.

“I need to stop giving lectures for a few days,” he thought. “I’ll wait a bit… and then there will surely be more people willing to fork over their merit points.” His eyes glittered with anticipation.

However, Meng Hao had actually underestimated the matter. Over the course of the following days, the Dao of Alchemy Division was struck by a massive tempest. After all, four hundred people had simultaneously taken the Medicine Pavilion examination, and then more than one hundred had successfully passed.

That in and of itself was not shocking. However, when you took into account the amount of time those test takers had been studying the Dao of alchemy, it was completely astonishing.

Those who had studied the longest had five years under their belt. The shortest amount of time any of them had studied was three years. An event such as this was enough to cause shock even among the alchemists of the inner mountains.

It eventually reached the point that the Alchemist Council, which was responsible for the operational affairs of the Dao of Alchemy Division, called a session to discuss the matter. Nineteen alchemists converged in the meeting location; these were the Pavilion Elders of the Dao of Alchemy Division.

All of these nineteen Pavilion Elders were tier 8 alchemists!

Deep in the inner mountains, on the cloud-cloaked peak of a tall mountain, was an ancient temple. Ten enormous statues stood guard outside the temple, each one of which represented a glorious past alchemist of the Fang Clan’s Dao of Alchemy Division.

This was the location where the Alchemist Council held their session. In the main hall of the temple, nineteen enormous seats floated in the air, in the middle of which was an enormous illusory pill cauldron that emanated flickering light.

The seats were occupied by ancient old men with extraordinary cultivation bases, and whose Dao of alchemy could shake Heaven and Earth. Any one of these old men could be the founding Grandmaster of an alchemic sect.

“Fang Hao arrived four months ago from Planet South Heaven,” said one of the old men, whose face was covered with wrinkles. He barely seemed to have the energy to open his eyes, but a strong medicinal aroma was eternally attached to him. “With a 30,000-meter Bloodline Gatebeam, he is a Chosen of the clan. Later, the Grand Elder from the main clan arranged for him to come to the Dao of Alchemy Division. Therefore, tier 5 alchemist Fang Huiguo took responsibility to send him to Alchemy Lodge Peak #7191!

“I made some of my own inquiries, and also got some answers from Fang Huiguo. Fang Huiguo believed that while Fang Hao might have some understanding regarding pill concocting, he was also wildly arrogant. Let’s ignore his subjective presumptions for now. Within two hours of Fang Hao’s arrival at Peak #7191, he discovered twelve areas in which tier 1 alchemist Fang Qun made errors in explaining plants and vegetation. Fang Hao then personally gave a lecture about the subject that attracted tens of thousands of spectators.

“Tier 2 alchemist Fang Xuzhong was incited by the main clan’s Fang Yunyi to challenge Fang Hao, making a wager regarding plants and vegetation. Fang Hao easily defeating him, instantly identifying the top secret grafting technique of a tier 5 alchemist, and also revealing the collocation technique. I personally went to verify that the collocation technique was indeed correct!

“Later, he used his plant and vegetation lectures to collect merit points from the audience….” At this point, the old man paused. Some of the other elders began to chuckle.

“His audience dwindled to only a few hundred people, and his profit ranged only in the tens of thousands of merit points. Unsatisfied, he went to the Medicine Pavilion, where he took the examination 140 times in a row.

“He didn’t pass, not even once. However, that was because he intentionally failed. After finishing, he organized all the information about plants and vegetation from the exam and began to lecture the apprentice alchemists of Peak #7191 regarding… all of the test material from the first level of the Medicine Pavilion.

“In this way, by developing a cheating technique and preparing the apprentice alchemists for the test by training them in the test method. He then took four hundred people to the first level of the Medicine Pavilion, and over one hundred of them succeeded.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, these are the results of my investigation into Fang Hao. What do all of you think?” The old man’s voice was cool the entire time. Even he found Meng Hao to be somewhat amusing.

People immediately began to voice varying opinions.

“Is the kid crazy or something? I can’t believe he charged merit points for lectures on plants and vegetation! Why didn’t I think of that when I was his age!?”

“Amusing, but in the end it was cheating. He should be punished somehow. Perhaps have him clear out the pill rubbish receptacles?”

“No way! A punishment like that is too severe. Let me handle it. I’ll have him try to concoct some of my pills for me; I’ll show him a thing or two.”

“That’s not really cheating. To be able to memorize all of the medicinal plants from the first level of the Medicine Pavilion shows that he has a terrifying level of skill with plants and vegetation. I’m curious to see what level he could get to in the pavilion if he really tried.”

There were differing views on the matter. Some of them thought it was nothing more than a small matter, and were actually interested in Meng

Hao. Others thought he was a problem waiting to happen, which should be punished and dealt with immediately.

Eventually, everyone finished speaking without reaching a consensus. Located in the middle of the nineteen chairs was an old man who wore a long robe and had flowing white hair. He hadn’t spoken the entire time and was instead sitting there with his eyes closed. Finally, his eyes opened, and they seemed to be filled with starlight. It was as if all the heavenly bodies had been shockingly fused together, and existed inside of him.

He cleared his throat.

In that moment, all of the other elder alchemists quieted down and looked at the old man with expressions of ardor and veneration.

“He’s nothing more than a member of the Junior generation,” the old man said slowly. “Let him do as he pleases. Although, the rules of the first level of the Medicine Pavilion will need to be changed.”

In response to his word, all of the Pavilion Elders bowed their heads in acquiescence.

As they did, a strange light appeared in the old man’s eyes.

“Kunlun Society alchemy methods… and some vestiges of the Demon Immortal Sect. Interesting. Very interesting.”

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# Chapter 911: Changes in the Dao of Alchemy Division

When four hundred apprentice alchemists all challenged the Medicine Pavilion together, and over a hundred succeeded, the news didn’t cause a huge stir in the inner mountains, but in the outer mountains, a tempest erupted.

To any apprentice alchemist, passing the first level of the Medicine Pavilion was a major step in life, and something incredibly important. That was even more so for those who had been studying for dozens or even more than a hundred years, and yet still could not pass. They were on the verge of going crazy.

Then there were the apprentice alchemists who hadn’t been studying for very long. When they saw others who had been studying for a similar period of time suddenly succeed, and not because they were naturally gifted, but rather, because they had studied with Fang Hao, and listened to his lectures, it is easy to imagine how violent of an uproar it caused.

Even more so, the apprentice alchemists who had chosen not to pay merit points to listen to Meng Hao felt intense regret, and couldn’t help but think about how a few hundred merit points over the course of three months could have gotten them past the first level of the Medicine Pavilion. Then they would have been pre-qualified to become tier 1 alchemists, which could not be bought with merit points, no matter how many they offered to pay.

Meng Hao didn’t make an appearance for three days. In the meantime, the storm among the outer mountain apprentice alchemists continued. Tens of thousands had gathered outside of Peak #7191 to wait for Meng Hao. Some people even got into magical combat in order to get a good seat.

On dawn of the fourth day, Meng Hao appeared in the Dao of Alchemy Division. A soon as people spotted him, word spread like wildfire.

Meng Hao was quite pleased about all this. Murmuring to himself about how his methods really were effective, he eventually reached Peak #7191. When he saw how many people were waiting, he immediately got excited.

“There have to be about 40-50,000 people here,” he thought, panting. “At one merit point a piece for a two hour lecture, I would get around 50,000 merit points! If I lecture for four hours, it would be 100,000. If I lectured for eight hours, 200,000!!” Eventually, he took a deep breath. Smiling the whole way, looking like a preeminent Daoist master who viewed material wealth as filth, he slowly strode forward.

When all of the apprentice alchemists gathered around the mountain saw him, they clasped hands and bowed. Then, they joined voices in greeting.

“Greetings, Professor Fang!”

The combined voices of all the apprentice alchemists echoed out like thunder. Meng Hao stepped foot onto the platform, looked out at the audience with shining eyes, and then cleared his throat.

“Today, I will lecture for eight hours,” he said.

Immediately, Fang Xi flew out of the crowd with a jade slip in hand, and called out, “Professor Fang is kind and generous. To him, material wealth means nothing. In previous months, we had to force him to accept our payment. Now, because he cannot bear to watch the clan’s apprentice alchemists fail the examination of the Medicine Pavilion, he has come here to lecture about plants and vegetation. We can’t let him down!

“Come come. Everyone put some merit points into this jade slip. Even if Professor Fang doesn’t want it, we’ll force him to take it!” At the same time that Fang Xi yelled out these words, a group of several hundred apprentice alchemists flew out from the crowd in various areas, jade slips in the hand. They immediately began to accept merit points from the other apprentice alchemists in their area.

This time, not a single one of the 40-50,000 people departed. All of them paid their merit points, and then the several hundred jade slips were placed in front of Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s face darkened.

“What do you people think you’re doing!?” he snapped, flicking his sleeve and looked very displeased.

Yet again, Fang Xi took the lead in crying out.

“Professor Fang, this is only what should be yours by right. Sir, please accept!” When Fang Xi finished speaking, his hundreds of companions began to shout.

“Accept it, Professor Fang. If you don’t, we’ll be very upset!”

After listening for a moment, Meng Hao hesitated, then let out a long sigh and collected up the jade slips.

“Very well,” he said emotionally. “Since you demand it, all I can do is work as hard as possible to help you pass the examination of the Medicine Pavilion.

“Material wealth is nothing,” he said, shaking his head. “What I care least about in life is just that, money.” Inwardly, of course, he was extremely excited and was shouting about how he was rich now.

The eight hour lecture ended quickly. Meng Hao again talked about the key medicinal plants from the medicine pavilion. After a while, he would wave his hand, causing a thousand medicinal plants to appear, just like the examination in the Medicine Pavilion. Many of the apprentice alchemists who were experiencing this for the first time were instantly enlivened.

In the following days, Meng Hao was engrossed in lecturing about plants and vegetation. He lectured for eight hours a day, and as time progressed, more and more people came to listen, until the audience exceeded 100,000!

The area was packed full of people, and no end could be seen to the massive crowds. This only spurred Meng Hao on to put even more energy into his lectures. He even employed his cultivation base and some divine abilities to broadcast his voice out into the distance so that every person could hear him

He was now making hundreds of thousands of merit points every day. To Meng Hao, that income was a powerful motivating force. Eventually, his lectures became the center of attention of all the outer mountains.

As Meng Hao got more and more merit points, he was able to get more and more valuable medicinal plants. As such, the ingredients he needed for the Spirit Elixir were all replaced by what could be considered treasured items. Soon, the efficacy of the Spirit Elixir reached a terrifying level.

As for the leftover merit points, he would acquire other medicinal plants, which he would take to his Immortal’s cave to concoct medicinal pills. This enabled his Dao of alchemy to steadily improve with each passing day.

He would also exchange merit points for spirit stones, which he would use to duplicate the Spirit Elixir. The life force in the Nirvana Fruits continued to grow stronger.

Of course, not a few people saw what was happening, and their eyes went bloodshot. The other alchemists gazed over at Meng Hao like ravenous wolves. Although they had never thought to use a method like his, when they saw how much he was profiting, many of them began to imitate him. There were even tier 5 alchemists who left the inner mountains and began to lecture about plants and vegetation, all in order to earn merit points.

Because the Alchemist Council didn’t oppose what was happening, it meant they tacitly approved. In fact, they were happy that more alchemists were opting not to spend all their time concocting pills, but instead, were going to the outer mountains to speak to the apprentice alchemists about plants and vegetation, as well as the Dao of alchemy.

It was as if the entire Dao of Alchemy Division was invigorated, and now bustled with activity. Things were very different than before. Now that more alchemists were coming out of the inner mountains and charging to give lectures, some of Meng Hao’s audience was being drawn away. However, there were a million apprentice alchemists in the Dao of Alchemy Division, so even if a few left, others would take their place. The Dao of Alchemy became a place where numerous viewpoints and expressions were now being heard, and everyone was struggling to promote their own perspective.

Alchemists began using all sorts of methods to attract more apprentice alchemists to their lectures. Some would even lecture about their top secret methods. Gradually, because they were able to attract more and more attention, everyone was able to make a handsome profit.

Soon, tier 6 alchemists and even some tier 7 alchemists were moved to the point of emerging from the inner mountains. The atmosphere in the Dao of Alchemy Division had reached a peak, and even the main clan was was affected, and the Grand Elder, shocked, made a personal visit.

That event caused quite a stir, and word soon spread throughout the clan.

As the apprentice alchemists began to run low on merit points, they chose to perform service for the sect, all to get more merit points. People even began to compete over the tasks assigned by the Dao of Alchemy Division. Everything was flourishing.

“What a change in the Dao of Alchemy Division!” Even the nineteen tier 8 alchemists were very excited. They watched the developments in the atmosphere in the Dao of Alchemy Division, and could tell that if things kept going on this way, the Dao of Alchemy Division would definitely experience a great rise, and a new generation of alchemists would soon come forth.

All of it started with Meng Hao, and because of it, everyone was once again speaking his name!

Back in the ancestral mansion, the Grand Elder sat silently in the temple, his face dark. It had already been several months since he gave Meng Hao the Nirvana Fruits, and there had been plenty of time for him to concoct whatever type of Spirit Elixir he wanted. And yet, Meng Hao had not suddenly died. By this point, the Grand Elder was starting to put the pieces together.

“I underestimated him,” he thought with a sigh. “He must have detected something somehow. What a pity…. In any clan, clan rules are everything. All clan members must respect the clan rules. As for him….” The Grand Elder shook his head, and within his eyes could be seen a glint of killing intent.

In another temple in the ancestral mansion, Fang Xiushan and his father sat there, extremely grim faced because of the huge name Meng Hao was making for himself.

“That damned son of a bitch!” grumbled Fang Xiushan, frowned. “He actually thought up a scheme like this to earn large amounts of merit points!! The amount he’s earning on a daily basis is enough to cause even my eyes to turn red…. With things like this, it’s going to be impossible to constrain his development.” He looked over at his father.

The old man opened his eyes, and a cold glimmer could be seen within.

“What are you losing your head over?” he said coolly. “He’s just a child. The only reason he came up with this method was because someone from the direct bloodline is coaching him. Even still, it doesn’t matter.

“I have my methods to cut off his source of merit points!” With that, he produced a jade slip, imprinted it with some divine sense, and then flung it out the door.

“Just wait and see,” he said, closing his eyes once again.

As Meng Hao rose to prominence, Fang Donghan, who was a member of one of the neutral bloodlines in the clan, was watching. From the very beginning, he had been paying attention to Meng Hao and Fang Wei, and now that he saw Meng Hao becoming famous in the Dao of Alchemy Division, his sense of anticipation was growing. 1

“It won’t be long now before he and Fang Wei fight each other!” he thought. He took a deep breath and then smiled.

In the ancestral mansion, in the subterranean Immortal’s cave, Fang Wei sat cross-legged in meditation. Yet again, there were nine old men surrounding him, who trembled as their Immortal qi was absorbed by Fang Wei.

Fang Yunyi kneeled in front of him respectfully, eyes shining with zeal as he looked at Fang Wei.

A moment later, Fang Wei opened his eyes and finished his session of cultivation. Of the surrounding nine old men, three of them coughed up blood, and then their bodies rapidly withered away until they were desiccated corpses.

“What’s the matter, Yunyi?” Fang Wei asked coolly.

“Cousin,” replied Fang Yunyi, “your Cultivation base is incredible. You’re just a step away from the Immortal Realm. When you finally become Immortal, you’ll be able to sweep across all of the Chosen of the Ninth Mountain and Sea!”

Fang Wei’s expression was the same as ever, and he didn’t respond. He just looked at Fang Yunyi.

“Cousin,” continued Fang Yunyi, “do you remember Fang Hao? He’s that bastard who was disrespectful to you in the temple a while back. You are generous and open-minded, and would never sink yourself to his level, but he’s not like that. He is narrow and petty-minded, and already views you as a thorn in his side.

“Recently, he’s been using despicable methods to make a name for himself in the Dao of Alchemy Division, and he’s even started spreading harmful gossip about you. Cousin, he’s tarnishing your name, which really makes me mad. Unfortunately, I can’t beat him. I can only watch as he rises to prominence in the Dao of Alchemy Division.” Fang Yunyi chuckled bitterly.

Fang Wei’s expression was the same as usual. He seemed neither joyful nor angry. He looked calmly at Fang Yunyi, as if he could see all the way through him, as if he could tell exactly how much of what he had just said was true or false.

Seeing that Fang Wei was studying him, Fang Yunyi suddenly began to tremble in fear. He had no idea what Fang Wei was thinking, so he didn’t dare to say anything further. He was just considering leaving, when Fang Wei finally spoke.

“Tell me about it.”

Fang Yunyi was immediately enlivened, and began to explain in detail everything Meng Hao had done in the Dao of Alchemy Division.

After listening to everything, Fang Wei closed his eyes for a few moments. Then he opened them and coolly said, “There are a lot of people in the world who like to get things for free. When you have the option of getting something for free, or paying, most people will opt for the first. Fang Yunyi, do you get my meaning?”

Fang Yunyi gaped. After a moment of thought, his eyes grew bright, and he rose excitedly to his feet, laughing.

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# Chapter 912: Hardships Prompt Changes!

The Dao of Alchemy Division was undergoing a renaissance in the form of competition. One high level alchemist after another came out from the inner mountains to give lectures, all to get merit points from the apprentice alchemists. The Dao of Alchemy Division was booming, and the bustle was incredible.

Furthermore, competitive fire is something that exists in all people’s hearts, and although the alchemists didn’t pay too much attention to it, everyone knew that the number of apprentices that could be attracted to any given alchemist’s lecture would show how much influence that alchemist had, as well as the level of their Dao of alchemy.

Soon, competition between various parties formed. However, the resulting conflicts proceeded according to the Dao of Alchemy Division’s rules governing competition. The result was that in the outer mountains, the apprentice alchemists had to make a daily choice: which alchemist would they go listen to?

Of course, Meng Hao wasn’t very happy about this. More and more of his audience was being stolen away. In the end, he was only able to keep about 50,000. That was about half of his original audience, which meant that he was losing out on over 100,000 merit points per day.

It was as if someone was slicing off his skin.

He could endure it though. After all, his lecture was something unique, and in the end, the apprentice alchemists who listened to his lectures had exponential increases in their confidence in being able to pass the first level of the Medicine Pavilion.

However, it wasn’t long before Meng Hao became furious. The reason was because, on the mountain just across from him, Peak #7192, a tier 7 alchemist had suddenly appeared to give lectures.

It was an old woman who rode an enormous five-colored peacock, and whose expression was haughty and arrogant. She was a tier 7 alchemist, someone the apprentice alchemists could only hope to meet in person on accident, and could never go to seek out. She was like a supreme entity to them.

Up to now, there had only been one tier 7 alchemist who had come out to give lectures. Furthermore, that alchemist did not come out on a daily basis. The 100,000 seats available for those lectures were always the subject of fierce contention. In fact, were there even more seats available, it was certain that more people would attend.

Now, another tier 7 alchemist appeared. She was very famous in the Dao of Alchemy Division, and when she came to give a lecture right across from Meng Hao, a lot of the alchemists in his audience immediately went over to listen to her.

In a single day, Meng Hao lost more than half of his current audience, leaving him with only about 20,000 apprentice alchemists. He stood there on the platform, looking at the 100,000 people crowded around that old woman, and ground his teeth angrily.

“That old granny is doing this on purpose!” he thought with a cold harrumph. The outer mountains were vast, and the lecturing alchemists would always distance themselves from each other, and would certainly never get very close. Considering the old woman intentionally selected this particular location, if someone tried to convince Meng Hao she wasn’t doing it to target him, he would refuse to believe them.

Any apprentice alchemists who came to listen to Meng Hao would look the scene over and then be forced to make a decision. Would they listen to

Meng Hao, or would they choose the tier 7 alchemist? Meng Hao was furious, especially because the old woman only charged one merit point for four hours of lecturing.

That was half as much as Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s audience continued to shrink. Three days later, only about 10,000 remained to listen to him.

Were that all there were to the matter, it wouldn’t be a big deal. Although his audience had been significantly reduced, he was still making tens of thousands of merit points per day. But over the following days, Meng Hao gradually came to the realization that someone had been imprinting his lecture information onto jade slips, which they were distributing for free! Information people had to pay three merit points to hear personally, could be acquired without charge in this fashion.

This was a near-fatal blow to Meng Hao’s lectures. Soon, his audience dwindled from 10,000 down to only about 1,000.

Meng Hao could only watch helplessly as the enterprise he had created was ruined. His audience had started at a peak of 100,000 members, in which he was making hundreds of thousands of merit points per day, and was slowly reduced to only 1,000. Now, he was only making a few thousand merit points per day.

One day, Meng Hao took a deep breath and ended his lecture. Then he flew over to the old woman, paid some merit points, and began to listen to her speak.

The old woman sat cross-legged on the platform, her five-colored peacock circling through the air above her. The peacock would occasionally spread its beautiful tail feathers, making it even more magnificent than normal. The old woman spoke indifferently about plants and vegetation, and occasionally mentioned some things about certain techniques of the Dao of alchemy, which would provoke a buzz of comments from the audience. Every single thing the old woman said was original and distinctive.

Naturally, she noticed Meng Hao arrive, and an expression of scorn appeared on her face. There weren’t even a hundred tier 7 alchemists in the Dao of Alchemy Division, and although she was not the most powerful among that group, but more toward the middle of the pack, she still possessed the skill of a tier 7 alchemist. She had passed the seventh level of the Medicine Pavilion, so it was a simple thing for her to speak on the subject of plants and vegetation.

Her command of knowledge regarding plants and vegetation was terrifying, and normally speaking, she would never show her face to target Meng Hao in the manner she had. However, a member of her auxiliary branch, someone who she could not easily refuse, had made a request. Of course, she was a member of the Dao of Alchemy Division, which operated under their own system. But when all was said and done, she was still a member of her clan division, and thus had emerged from the inner mountains.

In her opinion, the gap between herself and Meng Hao was as vast as that between Heaven and Earth. She didn’t even actually have to try; all she had to do was give random lectures, and that would be enough to completely destroy Meng Hao.

Meng Hao hovered there quietly, listening to the woman speak about plants and vegetation. After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, his eyes flashed, and he turned to leave. The woman glanced over at him making his way off, and then completely ignored him.

In her opinion, Meng Hao’s lecture audience would be whittled down until only a few hundred people remained. Eventually, he would be incapable of making any big waves whatsoever.

The main reason for her confidence was that she had heard a rumor that the rules of the examination in the first level of the Medicine Pavilion were going to be changed.

Sure enough, three days later, an announcement was made in the Dao of Alchemy Division that the Medicine Pavilion’s first level rules had been changed. All of the 1,000,000 medicinal plants had been replaced. Now, the examination content could be taken from 10,000,000 plants of various varieties. It was really a terrifyingly high number.

In addition, another rule change had been made. Now, the test was to determine how many medicinal plants could be identified in a given period of time. That change instantly caused Meng Hao’s lectures to be thrown into chaos. To top it all off, and prevent any unforeseen problems, each apprentice alchemist would only have one chance per month to enter the Medicine Pavilion.

These changes completely foiled any of Meng Hao’s cheating techniques.

All of this was a critical blow to Meng Hao. Within two days, his audience dropped from 1,000 to only a few hundred.

Most of those were the people who had been his audience all along.

However, after some time, many of those also chose to leave. After all, the situation was different than it had been in the beginning, when Meng Hao was outshining anyone and everyone. After all, they now had the chance to hear tier 7 alchemists speak, and who would turn down an opportunity like that?

In the end, Meng Hao was left with a bit more than 70 audience members….

All of these blows had struck like lightning, leaving Meng Hao panting. He looked out at his sparse audience of several dozen apprentice alchemists, and suddenly a bright light appeared in his eyes. Then, he turned his head to look over at the nearby mountain with 100,000 people circled around it.

“Coz, what do we do?” Fang Xi asked quietly from off to the side. “Even Lord Third and Lord Fifth headed over there….” Unexpectedly, the parrot and the meat jelly had rushed over to the other mountain to listen to the tier 7 alchemist’s lecture. It was impossible to say whether they understood what she was talking about, but from the look of it, they were entranced.

Meng Hao, of course, knew that the parrot was actually hung up on the five-colored peacock. As for the meat jelly, it was completely oblivious, and had merely been dragged along by the parrot.

“Hardships prompt changes, changes bring solutions!”

Fang Xi gaped.

“Somebody is trying to restrict my path to wealth, to cut off my path to riches! It’s like they’re trying to chop me into pieces with a knife!” Meng Hao clenched his jaw and then flicked his sleeve as he flew into the air.

Fang Xi followed as he made his way off into the distance. He didn’t really understand what Meng Hao had just said, so he quickly asked, “Coz, what’s the plan now?”

“There’s no plan,” Meng Hao replied, “My name is going to rock the Dao of Alchemy Division, and END this predicament!” As his voice echoed out, he pushed his speed to the maximum. Rumbling sounds could be heard as he shot into the inner mountains. Avoiding any restricted areas, he headed directly toward the Medicine pavilion.

It didn’t take long to reach it.

There were a few apprentice alchemists gathered outside, hesitating as to whether or not to enter. There were even some full alchemists off to the side. They all noticed Meng Hao arrive, and suddenly seemed energized, and began to talk amongst themselves.

“I heard word spreading outside that the rules of the first level have been changed. It was all because Fang Hao memorized the entire first level, and figured out some way to cheat. That’s how all those apprentice alchemists were able to pass so easily!”

“Could it be that he’s shown up to try to figure out a way to cheat on the first level again?”

“Interesting. Although, considering the way the rules have been changed, it would be difficult to do that. He can only go in once per month.”

Meng Hao didn’t pause for even a moment as he headed toward the Medicine Pavilion. The two ancient old men sitting outside the pavilion opened their eyes and looked at Meng Hao. Although they didn’t normally pay attention to what went on in the outside world, the occasion in which Meng Hao had charged through the first level 140 times had left a deep impression on them. Combined with the rumors they had heard, they now knew that Meng Hao’s efforts back then had been a deliberate effort to study the level for the purposes of cheating.

The two old men looked at Meng Hao solemnly.

“This is the Dao of Alchemy Division,” one of them said. “How can one always think of getting in via alternative paths? Your latent talent is excellent, as is your skill in plants and vegetation. You should tread the straight and narrow path.”

Meng Hao, apparently directly accepting the advice, clasped hands and bowed to the two old men.

“Elders,” he said immediately, “I am aware of my mistake. Now is the time for repentance and reformation. I am not here to research cheating methods. I am here to truly test myself!”

The two old men nodded and closed their eyes.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. As everyone in the area looked on, he stepped into the Medicine Pavilion. As soon as he entered, a few among the Dao of Alchemy Division’s nineteen tier 8 alchemists immediately noticed. They ceased their pill concocting and sent out divine sense, which coalesced outside of the Medicine Pavilion.

It was three white-haired old men who materialized.

“Don’t tell me this Fang Hao has showed up looking for ways to break the system again? Is he addicted?”

“How can the little bastard be such a slow learner? We spent a lot of effort to make the first level completely flawless, and yet he shows up again?!”

“If this kid gets up to troublesome things again, I have half a mind to pull him out and smack him around. I wouldn’t be scared even if his father showed up. I concocted pills for his father once, you know.”

Although they seemed angry, they were actually very excited. In all their years, no one had ever appeared who could cause so many problems for them. To them, the whole situation was very amusing.

No one was able to detect their presence except for the two old men keeping guard outside the Medicine Pavilion, who merely glanced at them.

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# Chapter 913: Changes Bring Solutions!

“Hardships prompt changes, changes bring solutions!” Meng Hao’s eyes shone with the light of obsession. This saying was something he had come across in a book he had read when he was a scholar living at the foot of Mount Daqing.

Nowadays, he had not forgotten the true meaning of the phrase. However, because of his personality, he had come to a new understanding. To him, the first character of the expression… referred to being poor![1]

“If I can’t make a profit when it comes to merit points, then it means I’m poor… therefore I need to think of some ways to change the situation. That’s the only way to make it through the impasse. After I make it through, then I can start earning merit points again.”

After stepping into the first level of the Medicine Pavilion, Meng Hao was surrounded by mists. He took a deep breath, and his eyes began to shine brightly.

“In the past, I didn’t have a lot of spirit stones, but with over 100,000,000, it couldn’t count as being in short supply…. But, dammit! The Nirvana Fruits basically consume spirit stones! I barely have thirty percent of my original stockpile….

“It’s like a bottomless pit! Considering I’ve spent so many spirit stones on them, I definitely can’t stop now. I have to keep going! I wonder if the Grand Elder knew all along that I had a lot of spirit stones, and wanted to use this method to force me to go broke!

“A tier 7 alchemist sitting next to me, lecturing about plants and vegetation, cutting off my path to wealth! That’s outright bullying! Unbelievable!” Meng Hao was actually very angry.

Fueled by obsession and anger, he stalked into the first level of the Medicine Pavilion and was surrounding by swirling mists. In the blink of an eye, three incense sticks materialized in front of him.

Black smoke rose up from the first incense stick, swirling through the air to surround Meng Hao. Shockingly, a brilliant light appeared, as well as the images of countless medicinal plants.

At first glance, there appeared to be at least 10,000,000, packed together endlessly. It was only by looking closely that it was possible to clearly make any of them out.

In the space of a single breath, before Meng Hao could imprint any of them with divine sense, the 10,000,000 medicinal plants suddenly flickered with light, and then began to superimpose over each other. In the blink of an eye, they all merged together in the form of an ancient tome.

The book seemed archaic and old, and three characters were written on its cover.

Classic of Plants and Vegetation. (    )

Next, an ancient voice echoed out through the first level.

“In the time it takes three incense sticks to burn, identify the first 10,000 medicinal plants in the Classic of Plants and Vegetation. If you make a hundred mistakes or more, the result will be failure.”

“Now that the rules have changed,” thought Meng Hao, “this test is certainly a bit more impressive.” He sent out his divine sense to open the Classic of Plants and Vegetation to the first page. Visible there was a single medicinal plant.

“Quickspirit Flower!” he thought, identifying it immediately, branding it with divine sense, and also providing a quick description of its properties and use in medicines.

The tome flickered, and the second page appeared. Meng Hao made another divine sense imprint with incredible speed. Gradually, it began to appear as if a strong wind were blowing across the tome in front of Meng Hao. The pages flipped rapidly in quick succession.

Meng Hao stood there, not speaking, his divine sense covering the tome. To him, identifying these medicinal plants was a simple matter.

Before the incense stick had even finished burning, it seemed as if the tome’s pages were flipping by so fast they couldn’t go any faster. Dozens of pages would flip by in the blink of an eye. By the time the incense stick had burned to about 90%, Meng Hao had already identified 10,000 medicinal plants without making a single mistake.

However, he didn’t stop there. If his goal was simply to pass the level, then it wouldn’t matter. But if he was going to take this exam, he would do so in shocking fashion. He would make sure his name spread far and wide. That was the only way he could ensure that his lectures on plants and vegetation were profitable.

Therefore, he continued to identify medicinal plants. Soon, hundreds of pages flipped by in every blink of an eye. As soon as Meng Hao scanned them with divine sense, the profiles and information regarding these plants and vegetation appeared in his mind.

10,000. 30,000. 50,000. 100,000.

Faster and faster.

In the time it took an incense stick to burn, Meng Hao had identified 1,000,000 medicinal plants without a single mistake. The mist around him churned, and brilliant rays of light flickered. It was just barely possible to see countless magical symbols swirling around in response to Meng Hao’s miraculous performance.

Outside the Medicine Pavilion, it was impossible to tell what was happening on the inside. Many of the full alchemists and the apprentice alchemists were discussing and speculating about the matter. None of them believed that Meng Hao would fail to pass the level, but then they considered how the rules had been changed, and figured that even he might have to expend some effort.

The three old tier 8 alchemists looked at each other and then began to talk.

“How come the kid is taking so long?”

“If he’s really interested in taking the examination, then he should be able to pass the first level in the time it takes an incense stick to burn. Since he hasn’t come out, does it mean… that the kid is actually going to try to crack the test?”

Back in the Medicine Pavilion, Meng Hao was frowning.

“Time’s running out. It seems I was going a bit slow before.” His eyes flickered, and his right hand suddenly reached out to grab the tome’s right cover. At the same time, his divine sense exploded out, entering the tome. Meng Hao closed his eyes.

In that moment when his eyes closed, his divine sense filled the tome completely. It was as if countless medicinal plants had appeared in front of him, which he immediately began to identify and imprint at top speed.

1,000,000. 1,500,000. 2,000,000!

In the blink of an eye, rumbling sounds could be heard, and the mists surrounding him were churning in a violent and shocking manner. Brilliant light shone out, and more magical symbols appeared, with Meng Hao seemingly at the center of them all.

3,000,000. 4,000,000. 5,000,000!

The second incense stick was almost completely burnt out. Meng Hao’s skill in plants and vegetation was extremely deep and profound, so much so that it had even left Pill Demon shaken back in his days in the Violet Fate Sect. When you added in his later experiences, his mastery had only increased. By the time he went to the ancient Demon Immortal Sect's illusory world, he had been able to master much of that sect's Dao of alchemy as well. Due to that, his skill in plants and vegetation had risen even higher, reaching an indescribably terrifying level.

Right now, all of that accumulated knowledge was exploding out, causing the tome's pages to flip by at incredible speed. It was now impossible to even see the pages moving. Several thousand pages would flip by in the time it takes to blink an eye.

The second incense stick finished burning, and the third incense stick ignited. Meng Hao grabbed the other side of the tome with his left hand. It was at that point that eighty percent of the power of a true Immortal exploded out.

Glittering light shone out in all directions, and the mists were seething. A sound like thunder rumbled, and the magical symbols swirled around him endlessly. As of now, this place didn't resemble the Medicine Pavilion, but rather, some bizarre world in which Meng Hao was the nucleus of everything.

By now, 10,000 pages flipped by with each blink of an eye. Not a single medicinal plant caused the slightest problem for Meng Hao. Each and every one of them was already encompassed by Meng Hao's skill with plants and vegetation.

Outside the Medicine Pavilion, expressions of bewilderment could constantly be heard. Although they couldn't see the shocking scene on the interior of the Medicine Pavilion, they felt that something was amiss. Even though some of the people present had ill feelings toward Meng Hao, everyone felt that it would be a simple matter for him to pass the first level.

And yet, enough time had passed for two incense sticks to burn, and yet Meng Hao still hadn't emerged from the first level. Everyone was astonished.

However, the three tier-8 alchemists had serious expressions on their faces. As they looked at the Medicine Pavilion’s first level, expressions of shock became visible on their faces. Although they couldn’t see what was happening inside, these three men were gradually coming to realize that the first floor was building up with incredible pressure.

“What’s this kid doing?!”

“That pressure appears when someone identifies more than 1,000,000 medicinal plants. Is it possible that this kid has identified more than 1,000,000 medicinal plants in the time it takes two incense sticks to burn?”

As the old men looked on in shock, Meng Hao had his hands planted firmly on the tome. His eyes shone with brilliant light as he thoroughly identified all of its contents.

6,000,000. 7,000,000. 8,000,000….

The third incense stick was still burning, but still had about halfway to go. Finally, a tremor ran through Meng Hao’s body, and he looked up. His hands slowly released the tome. He had finally reached the very last page!

10,000,000!!

The entire first level of the Medicine Pavilion was rumbling, and brilliant light shone out in all directions. Magical symbols swirled about, and something that sounded like Immortal music could be heard drifting about.

Usually, when someone passed the first level, a beam of light would appear on the outside. However, when Meng Hao reached the last page of the tome, what people on the outside saw was the entire first level shining with unprecedentedly bright light!

It was as if the first level was completely bathed in boundless, unfathomable light that spread out in all directions, and even up into the Heavens. The Heavenly bodies trembled, and strange colors flashed through the sky.

Each and every person in the Dao of Alchemy Division, in all 10,000 inner mountains and all 100,000 outer mountains, could now see what was happening.

“What’s going on!?!?”

“Why are there such transformations in Heaven and Earth!? What is that pillar of light!?!?”

All of the apprentice alchemists listening to lectures were thoroughly shocked as they looked up into the sky at the boundless light. As for the alchemists, their faces flickered with shock.

“Could it be that some member of the Senior generation is concocting pills?”

“No, that’s not it! Look at that light! It’s rising up from the location of the Medicine Pavilion!”

Even the clan members in the ancestral mansion could see the bright light coming from the Dao of Alchemy Division. Many clan members left their residences and looked in that direction, expressions of shock on their faces.

Everything was shaking, and the countless apprentice alchemists of the Dao of Alchemy Division, as well as numerous full alchemists, were all staring in shock. When they realized that the light was coming from the Medicine Pavilion, they began to fly toward it.

In a brief moment, innumerable beams of colorful light filled the Dao of Alchemy Division.

The crowd outside the Medicine Pavilion was panting, and their minds trembled. They were shocked, and completely ignorant of what exactly was happening. They didn’t understand how Meng Hao passing the first level would cause such a boundless light to appear.

The three tier 8 Elders exchanged glances and could see the shock in each others’ eyes.

“He identified 10,000,000 medicinal plants! Because the rules have been changed, it’s something that nobody has ever done before! The result of his passing the first level in this way is this incredible pillar of Dao Light!!”

“I can’t believe this Fang Hao… has such an incredible foundation in plants and vegetation!!”

“That’s comparable to a tier 4 alchemist! Perhaps even beyond that! However, it’s still not quite at the level of a tier 5 alchemist.”

1. In Chinese, the first character of the phrase “Hardships prompt changes, changes bring solutions!” by itself could mean “poor,” but the general meaning of the phrase refers to overcoming an impasse or difficult situation

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# Chapter 914: First in Level After Level

The Dao of Alchemy Division was in a tumult. More and more people were showing up outside the Medicine Pavilion to stare with astonishment at the brilliant light that shone up into the sky. Eyes wide, they immediately began to ask others in the area what was going on, and when they heard that Meng Hao had entered the Medicine Pavilion, giving rise to these transformations, their expressions were that of incredible shock.

“I can’t believe it’s Fang Hao!!”

“So, he’s the one going through the Medicine Pavilion. His… his skill in plants and vegetation actually made the Medicine Pavilion shine with that much light!?!?”

“I listened to one of his lectures on plants and vegetation once…. But, is the person who caused such shocking transformations really Fang Hao?” By now, more than 10,000 people were present. Even as everyone was staring in shock at the bright light, some people turned their attention to the stone stele outside of the Medicine Pavilion.

Hundreds of thousands of names could be seen on the lowest level of the stone stele. As of this moment… all of the names went dim, and then seemed to move backward one space. At the very top of the list… was a new name!

Fang Hao!!

When the onlookers saw the name there at the top of the list, another buzz of conversation rose up.

“It’s really Fang Hao! His name is first on the list!”

“Most people who pass this trial have their names show up in the bottom, and only a few ever make it even to the middle of the pack! And yet Fang Hao is actually in first place!”

“For him to take the first spot means that his skill with plants and vegetation is greater than all of the other hundreds of thousands of people on the list!”

“Of course, all the strong alchemists’ names are higher up on the stele. Who knows whether Fang Hao will actually continue higher in the Medicine Pavilion this time, or whether he’ll try to find a flaw in the system to benefit the apprentice alchemists, just like the rumors said he did last time.”

The conversations continued. Eventually, they realized that Meng Hao had not emerged from within the Medicine Pavilion. That led them to the conclusion that… he was continuing with the examination!

Everyone immediately got even more excited than before. Also, they wanted to know… the exact level of skill Meng Hao had with plants and vegetation, this newcomer who had just recently risen to prominence in the Dao of Alchemy Division.

It wasn’t just them who wanted to know. The surrounding alchemists were also very curious.

Inside the Medicine Pavilion, Meng Hao took a deep breath and waited for the mists around him to slowly fade away. A staircase appeared in front of him, which led to the second level. Meng Hao immediately headed up the stairs.

“If I’m going to shock people, then I might as well do a thorough job of it,” he thought. “I’m also curious how far my level of skill with plants and vegetation will take me in the Fang clan’s Medicine Pavilion.

“In the Fang Clan, plants and vegetation are the most important aspect of their Dao of alchemy. In order to rise among the ranks of the alchemists, one must first earn qualifications in the Medicine Pavilion. Actually, this system makes a distinction between apothecaries and alchemists!” After reaching the top of the stairs, he found himself on the second level.

Bright light filled the second level, and yet again, 10,000,000 medicinal plants appeared, some of them repeats from the first level. They quickly merged together into the form of a tome.

This time, it wasn’t three incense sticks that appeared in front of him, but six.

Yet again, an archaic voice echoed out through the second level.

“You have the time it takes six incense sticks to burn to identify the first 100,000 medicinal plants, in which case you can pass this level. If you make ten or more mistakes, you fail.”

Meng hao frowned, then looked around at the second level for a moment.

“So this is the second level,” he thought. He stepped forward and opened the book, then poured his divine sense into it and began to imprint the medicinal plants.

Three incense sticks of time seemed to pass relatively quickly. Boundless light shone off of the tome; Meng Hao had already imprinted all 10,000,000 medicinal plants. Rumbling sounds filled the air, and another staircase appeared in front of him.

He climbed the stairs to the third level without hesitation. After looking around, an expression of disappointment could be seen on his face. The third level again featured 10,000,000 medicinal plants floating around, which then superimposed to create the same Classic of Plants and Vegetation.

However, the requirement to pass this level was not just to identify 100,000, but to identify 1,000,000, and also to list them in order according to a special method required by the ancient tome. Furthermore, just three mistakes would be considered a failure.

To Meng Hao, that wasn’t very difficult at all. Shaking his head, he stepped forward and opened the ancient classic.

This time, he only needed two incense sticks’ worth of time before the tome began to rumble, and the third level sent bright light outside. Yet again, Meng Hao had passed. When he reached the fourth level, his expression finally brightened.

What he saw on the fourth level was fully ten times as many medicinal plants as he had seen on the third level. There were over 100,000,000 plants, which caused his eyes to glow with a bright light.

“Now things are getting interesting,” he murmured. “Although there are still too few plants.” The 100,000,000 medicinal plants formed together into an ancient tome, which was labelled, yet again, the Classic of Plants and Vegetation.

The requirement for the fourth level was to identify 10,000,000 medicinal plants, without making any mistakes. A single mistake meant failure.

“100,000,000 medicinal plants, huh?” Meng Hao took a deep breath, eager to try. Back in the Violet Fate Sect, he had really enjoyed examinations like this. They reminded him of his scholar’s days back in Mount Daqing, and his experiences with the Imperial examinations.

Without hesitation, he placed his hands onto the book, poured in his divine sense, and immediately began to brand medicinal plants.

By now, over 100,000 people were standing around outside the Medicine Pavilion, having been drawn there by the bright lights. Before the light from the first level had even dissipated, a brilliant light already shone up from the second level, and then the third level.

Although the new light wasn’t as scintillating and blinding as the light from the first level, it was still shocking. Most importantly, as Meng Hao’s name moved up to the second and then the third level, it maintained its position as first in the lists!

Many of the surrounding alchemists were watching with very serious expressions.

“He’s gotten to the fourth level!”

“This Fang Hao passed all the way through the third level in a very short time. I wonder if the fourth level will cause any problems for him!?”

“In the Dao of Alchemy Division’s Medicine Pavilion, the first three levels are simply foundational. From what I’ve heard, no more than 10,000,000 medicinal plants will appear. The fourth level is different. The difficulty level is ten times higher!”

Back inside the fourth level, Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a bizarre light. His divine sense rumbled as he imprinted medicinal plants at an incredible speed. He immediately recognized every medicinal plant that he saw, causing the tome’s pages to flip by rapidly. It turned into a blur that, if any outsider was able to see, would leave them shocked.

Actually, Meng Hao wanted people on the outside to see. If they could watch, it would definitely be a big help in his efforts to earn merit points. After a moment, he retracted his divine sense and then decided to ask the Medicine Pavilion if such a thing was possible.

Everything was quiet for a moment, before an archaic voice slowly spoke out.

“The Medicine Pavilion has no such power now. However, if you can identify all 100,000,000 of these medicinal plants, then I can attempt to do so on the next level.”

Hearing this, Meng Hao immediately nodded his head, took a deep breath, and continued imprinting.

“In order to give the people on the outside more of a reason to listen to my lectures, in order to earn more merit points… I’m going to go all out!

“Just wait until I get out of here! I’ll definitely raise my prices! Two hours, two merit points!” His eyes shone with determination, which seemed to affect his divine sense, making it even faster than before.

1,000,000. 10,000,000. 30,000,000….

Meng Hao continuously imprinted the medicinal plants that appeared in his divine sense. The feeling he was experiencing made him sigh emotionally. If he’d had a skill like this when he’d taken the Imperial examinations that year, then he would surely have become a high official in the State of Zhao.

“Although, not for very long,” he thought. “Several hundred years have passed since then. If I hadn’t started practicing cultivation, I would be long dead.” He shook his head, sighed, and continued to imprint.

The tome couldn’t even be seen clearly. The pages flipped by so quickly that the whole book seemed frozen in eternity, almost unmoving.

40,000,000. 50,000,000. 60,000,000…

Time passed. To Meng Hao, it felt like he wasn’t expending any energy at all. Furthermore, his mastery of plants and vegetation seemed to be growing even more firm.

70,000,000. 80,000,000. 90,000,000….

In the end, Meng Hao let out a sharp breath and slammed the book shut.

100,000,000!!

The Medicine Pavilion trembled, and boundless light shone out in all directions. A staircase appeared, which Meng Hao climbed, filled with anticipation.

Everyone outside the Medicine Pavilion looked on as brilliant light from the fourth level spread out in all directions.

“He passed the fourth level!!”

“If he passed the fourth level, that basically means he’s a tier 4 apothecary! If his pill concocting skill is just as strong, he’ll be a tier 4 alchemist!”

The crowd was in quite a commotion. Of course, there were some people with looks of disdain on their faces. In their view, any tier 4 alchemist could pass the fourth level, which meant that Meng Hao hadn’t accomplished anything unusual. At the most, he had done something special on the first level only.

However, before the discussions could finish, a beam of light suddenly shot out from the fifth level. It flew into the air and then began to ripple out.

Shockingly, within those ripples, appeared… a screen!

Meng Hao was visible within the screen, walking up a staircase into the fifth level.

This scene caused the surrounding 100,000 spectators to stare in shock. Even the three tier 8 Elders were astonished.

The screen was so huge it seemed to fill the sky. There were many people in the Dao of Alchemy Division who hadn’t come to the Medicine Pavilion but, after catching sight of the huge screen, were suddenly curious, and began to head over at top speed.

One of them was the old woman, the tier 7 alchemist who had disrupted Meng Hao’s lectures. Shocked, she flew in from the outer mountains.

Everyone around the Medicine Pavilion began to discuss the unprecedented appearance of the screen. They were all very excited.

“What’s going on? I’ve never heard of a screen appearing when people entered the Medicine Pavilion.”

“Could it be that that this is a new divine ability manifested by the Medicine Pavilion now that the rules have been changed?”

“Hahaha! This is great! We’ll be able to clearly see how Fang Hao passes through the fifth level. This is much better than before!”

The three tier 8 Elders stared in shock and then exchanged suspicious glances.

It was strictly prohibited to reveal what happened inside the Medicine Pavilion. Even though some people might secretly find out some details, they would keep things low key and not spread the information around. That was especially true of the fifth level and higher.

“Pill Elder is in control of the Medicine Pavilion, could it be that he has some secret plan?” Even as the three old men transmitted a discussion, everything around them went quiet. On the screen, it was possible to see Meng Hao, who had just stepped foot off of the stairs and onto… the fifth level.

At the same time, on the stone stele located outside of the Medicine Pavilion, Meng Hao’s name appeared on the fourth level, yet again first on the list!

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# Chapter 915: Striving for the Pinnacle of Perfection

In the instant that he entered the fifth level, Meng Hao stopped in his tracks and looked around. Then he took a deep breath, and his eyes began to shine with a brilliant light.

He began to tremble, a trembling that originated from the excitement in his heart, and seemed very difficult to control. Meng Hao would never act like this in a life-or-death battle, but this was an examination, a test of his skill with plants and vegetation.

He truly wished to know the extent of his skill. Therefore, he wanted the examination to get harder, and for there to be more medicinal plants involved.

As of this moment what he saw was… an enormous fifth level, filled with glittering lights and seemingly infinite medicinal ingredients. There were plants of all kinds and types, and even some things that bore the semblance of wild animals.

From the look of it, this level had ten times as many items as the previous level!

“1,000,000,000….” Meng Hao thought, his eyes shining as he looked around. As of this moment, he now had a much deeper understanding of the Fang Clan’s Dao of alchemy. These 1,000,000,000 medicinal ingredients were essentially anything that could be counted as medicinal that had appeared in the Ninth Mountain and Sea throughout tens of thousands of years of history.

These items weren’t just limited to plants and vegetation!

They were not grafted plants either. Everything was whole. Meng Hao glanced over them and saw tens of thousands of items that he didn’t recognize.

He began to breathe heavily. These 1,000,000,000 medicinal resources suddenly superimposed over each other in front of Meng Hao to transform into an enormous ancient tome that was as tall as a person.

Yet again, it was the Classic of Plants and Vegetation.

However, underneath the title of the book were the words ‘volume one.’

“This must be the full first volume of the Classic of Plants and Vegetation!” thought Meng Hao, his heart pounding. “1,000,000,000 medicinal plants. The Fang Clan’s Dao of alchemy truly is boundless and profound!”

The crowds in the outside world were equally shocked.

More and more cultivators were showing up, and when they saw the image on the screen, their jaws dropped.

“Is that… the fifth level?!”

“1,000,000,000 medicinal plants…. The only way to ever be promoted to a tier 5 alchemist is to pass this level! Any tier 5 alchemist in the Dao of Alchemy Division is incredibly famous and powerful in the outside world!!”

As the buzz of conversation filled the air outside, an archaic voice could be heard filling the fifth level.

“1,000,000,000 medicinal plants. Identify the first 100,000,000 in the Classic of Plants and Vegetation to pass this level. One mistake means failure.”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered with a bright light. Expression solemn, he slowly walked forward. As far as he was concerned, this was the first time the test had actually seemed difficult. Even his first cursory scan confirmed that there were tens of thousands of items that he wasn’t familiar with.

One mistake in those first 100,000,000, and he would fail.

“It seems I’ve underestimated the Fang Clan’s Dao of alchemy,” he thought. Expression serious, he reached out, placed his hand on the ancient book, and sent his divine sense into it.

Immediately, countless medicinal plants appeared within his divine sense, which he immediately began to imprint. The pages of the ancient book began to flip at high speed. In the blink of an eyes, several thousand pages had already been turned over.

None of the observers had ever seen anything like this before. Now, though, the scene was playing out right in front of them, clearly visible on the screen. Tens of thousands of observers on the outside looked on in shock. Deathly silence filled the air, and all minds reeled as they watched Meng Hao and the ancient book.

The apprentice alchemists’ eyes went wide, and as for the full alchemists, they began to pant. Even the tier 5, 6, and 7 alchemists were stunned.

The three tier 8 Elders gasped. The scene playing out left even them truly amazed.

They even began to wonder whether they could make the tome’s pages flip so quickly. From the look of things, Meng Hao was simply a natural born genius when it came to plants and vegetation.

“Just how familiar is he with plants and vegetation? He doesn’t even need to think! He recognizes them the instant he looks at them!”

“His foundation in plants and vegetation really is terrifying. With whom did he study the Dao of alchemy to lay such a foundation!?”

“This is unbelievable!”

As the audience's reaction swelled into an uproar, Meng Hao was inside, concentrating solely on the contents of the Classic of Plants and Vegetation. Time passed, and he identified more and more of the tome's contents, faster and faster.

10,000,000. 30,000,000. 50,000,000….

It didn't take long before he had identified 90,000,000. The spectators observed with rapt attention. It was at this point that, all of a sudden, Meng Hao stopped turning the pages of the ancient book. There on the page in front of him, a heart had appeared.

It was a wooden heart, parched and cracked. A few tiny flowers could be seen growing out of it, and when Meng Hao saw it, he stood there quietly.

The alchemists in the world outside were watching the screen closely. Some of the tier 5 alchemists looked at the wooden heart, then frowned and began to wrack their brains to try and identify it. Some of the tier 6 alchemists hesitated, and were unable to determine with certainty exactly what it was.

Even the old woman who had stolen Meng Hao's business looked on with flickering thoughtfulness.

Only the three tier 8 alchemists didn't seem fazed. They exchanged glances and began to transmit a conversation.

"Fang Hao really got unlucky. In the fifth level, there are ten types of medicinal plants that have long since become extinct. They are plants no outsider would ever know about. Even we didn't find out about them until we reached tier 8."

"He definitely won't be able to identify the Woodbear Heart."

"The test is over. What a pity. However, he can try again in a month. Considering the momentum he built up before, as long as he doesn't run into a medicine plant he's never seen before, he shouldn't have much of a problem passing the fifth level."

“Although, I find it strange that this particular medicinal plant would appear in the first 100,000,000. Yet, there it is.”

The three old men were then lost in thought, and didn’t converse any further.

Back on the fifth level, Meng Hao looked at the image in front of him, muttering. He didn’t recognize the item, and in fact had never seen it before. At first glance, if you didn’t know it was wood, you would probably think it was an actual heart.

Meng Hao extended his right hand and pointed at the page. Immediately, glittering light rose up, and an illusory version of the wooden heart appeared in front of him, then rapidly grew very clear.

He could even sense a faint medicinal aroma emanating out. After inhaling deeply, he closed his eyes and began to make some mental deductions. Although he didn’t recognize this wooden heart, he was still able to use his skill with plants and vegetation to analyze its medicinal properties.

After enough time passed for half an incense stick to burn, Meng Hao’s eyes snapped open, and he began to make an imprint with divine sense.

“Effective against chills that enter the body. Is filled with rich spiritual energy, and the power of fire and wood. Contains 9,137 variations. Can be grown using Spirit Extract, and when it reaches maturity, it contains the potential to materialize Immortal qi. When using it to concoct medicinal pills for the Immortal Realm, depending on which variations are used, and which of those is the main ingredient, then, regardless of which medicinal pill is created, as long as you add Apefever Flower, its medicinal strength can be increased by ten percent!” Meng Hao quickly finished imprinting the information. Although he didn’t know the exact name of this medicinal item, the name… wasn’t actually important.

After finishing the imprint of information, the wooden heart vanished from the page, to be replaced by a block of text that thoroughly described the plant’s properties and growth characteristics. The description was incredibly detailed, including information about medicinal effects, details vital to using the ingredient to concoct medicinal pills, descriptions about how to harvest it, and other information.

When Meng Hao saw all the information, he took a deep breath. Although he had determined many correct bits of information about the wooden heart, his information had not been as detailed as the final description. He quickly committed the information to memory.

Then he waved his hand and continued to flip through the pages.

When the spectators saw what had happened, they were shocked. Even the three tier 8 Elders gasped, and stared with wide, astonished eyes.

“He most likely has never seen that Woodbear Heart before. And yet, he just smelled it a few times and then was able to explain its medicinal properties!”

“What an incredible Dao of alchemy! What profound skill with plants and vegetation!”

Deep within the Dao of Alchemy Division was a mountain that was considered to be a sacred location. This was where Fang Yundan resided, the Dao of Alchemy Division’s only tier 9 alchemist!

He had a full head of white hair, and as he sat there cross-legged on the mountain peak, his eyes slowly opened. He then gazed in the direction of the Medicine Pavilion, his eyes shining with a gleam of curiosity.

“I wonder which Grandmaster of the Dao of Alchemy trained a disciple like this…. His skill with plants and vegetation has already reached incredible heights. He came from Planet South Heaven…. I haven’t ever heard of any Grandmaster on Planet South Heaven who could develop such a talented pupil.” The old man sighed.

“Although, Planet South Heaven is shrouded in mystery. It’s possible this kid… has had some unique opportunities.” He continued to look at the Medicine Pavilion in silence.

Back on the fifth level, Meng Hao continued to rapidly flip through the tome’s pages. They moved so fast that the entire book seemed like one connected piece. Soon, he had completely imprinted ten percent of the 1,000,000,000 items inside. However, Meng Hao didn’t stop there.

His mind was completely absorbed in the book, to the extent that he forgot his original reason for drawing everyone’s attention to him here. Gradually, the ten percent became twenty, then thirty….

After completing fifty percent, his speed gradually slowed. He would occasionally encounter medicinal plants that he didn’t recognize, but in those cases, he actually got excited.

He wanted to see more medicinal plants that he had never seen before. That was the only way for him to experience the sensation of groping for the correct answer. That was when he could truly unleash his skill with plants and vegetation, analyzing the item from various angles and using his best judgement to determine, not necessarily the name, but rather, enough information to imprint it with divine sense. When the full description appeared, he would commit it to memory. He was now getting the feeling that attempting to pass through the Medicine Pavilion was really helping him to learn a lot more about plants and vegetation.

Meng Hao’s skill with plants and vegetation had reached an incredible level. By now, there were few types of plants or vegetation within the Ninth Mountain and Sea that he was unaware of. Every single new one that he encountered pushed his skill to an even more refined extent.

Sixty percent. Seventy percent. Eighty percent….

Meng Hao wasn’t aware of how much time had passed. However, the closer he got to the end of the book, the more medicinal plants he encountered that he was unfamiliar with, which required even more time. And yet, his excitement only grew.

Outside of the Medicine Pavilion, there were now nearly 200,000 cultivators clustered around, watching the screen with blank expressions.

The excitement on Meng Hao’s face was clear, and the more medicinal plants he identified, the more everyone’s minds reeled.

“Inhuman…. When it comes to plants and vegetation, this Fang Hao is a beast!”

“Don’t tell me he was actually a medicinal plant in a past life? Otherwise, how else could he be so inhuman!!”

“The fifth level has 1,000,000,000 medicinal plants, and from the way he’s going, it looks like he’s going to identify them all….”

“I just realized something! The merit points I paid to hear him lecture about plants and vegetation were worth it! Definitely worth it!!”

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# Chapter 916: Lotuses With Each Step!

As time passed, a few people noticed that under normal circumstances, the fifth level would have already concluded. However, Meng Hao was still plugging away.

Apparently, the time limit had been cancelled, leaving Meng Hao free to spend as much time as he wanted there.

Slowly, the number of plants and vegetation he identified increased. Eventually, three days went by.

Meng Hao could never have imagined that he would need to spend so much time and energy on the fifth level. His eyes were bloodshot, and he felt that he was on the verge of mental exhaustion. However, he was still excited and his spirits were high.

Among the final twenty percent were many types of of the plants and vegetation that Meng Hao didn’t recognize. Each one required a great deal of time and energy to analyze and judge before he could identify some clues that would lead him into further levels of investigation. Eventually, he would get enough information to be able to create a divine sense imprint.

Detailed introduction on the plant would appear every time he made his imprint. That was what he truly looked forward to; he was like a dried-up sponge, just waiting to absorb boundless knowledge about plants and vegetation.

Three more days passed…. None of the audience members left, but instead settled themselves cross-legged in the area. Were these ordinary cultivators, they would probably find the affair boring. However, they were alchemists and apprentice alchemists, people who had devoted their lives to the Dao of alchemy. Watching Meng Hao’s examination on the screen enabled them to see medicinal plants that they might otherwise never be able to see, which was an incredible opportunity.

Everyone was imprinting the information into their minds, studying and learning.

More and more people joined the crowd. On the tenth day, there were nearly 300,000 people present, densely packed together as far as the eye could see.

On the fifth level, a tremor ran through Meng Hao’s body as he woke up from his reverie of plants and vegetation. There in front of him was the final page of the ancient book.

At that moment, all of his exhaustion from the past days enveloped him, and his head felt swollen and began to pulse with pain. To him, these past ten days left him feeling more worn out than when he had fought the three black-robed Immortal Realm cultivators.

And yet, he did not close his eyes. He examined the tome, upon which his results for this level were revealed.

He hadn’t paid any attention to the results for the first four levels, because he was absolutely confident that he hadn’t made any mistakes. However, on this fifth level, he wasn’t so confident.

“I missed more than 200….” he murmured, “all of them in the final 300,000,000 plants.” Finally he closed his eyes and rotated his cultivation base to restore his composure

He wasn’t happy with his results at all. However, he had been introduced to many, many unfamiliar medicinal plants on this level, and his skill with plants and vegetation had increased by a whole level.

To the outside audience, the results were completely shocking, and that included the three tier 8 Elders. Everyone gasped, and then a huge uproar occurred.

“1,000,000,000 plants and he only missed a bit over 200…. He’s definitely inhuman!!”

“Any tier 5 alchemist would pass by identifying the first 100,000,000. But Fang Hao required more of himself! He went through all 1,000,000,000. From the look on his face, he seems a bit disappointed.”

The sound of the conversations among the 300,000 audience members was like thunder that spread out in all directions, and was heard by quite a few of the Dao of Alchemy Division’s apprentice alchemists and full alchemists. The ground trembled and the clouds in the sky shattered.

The three tier 8 alchemists wore forced smiles on their faces as they exchanged glances.

“When I attempted the fifth level that year, I couldn’t have done that.”

“Forget about back then. Even right now, we’re probably the only people who could. Even the tier 7 alchemists probably couldn’t pull something like that off.”

Bright beams of light appeared off in the distance as more tier 8 alchemists appeared. Of course, no one present could see them. As they arrived, they looked at the Medicine Pavilion… and their eyes were filled with anticipation.

“Finally, our Dao of Alchemy Division has… a truly Chosen member of the clan!”

Back on the fifth level of the Medicine Pavilion, Meng Hao opened his eyes. Much of his tiredness and exhaustion had vanished. He took a deep breath, rose to his feet, and stepped forward toward the ancient tome. Then, he clasped hands and bowed deeply.

“Many thanks for bestowing me with such kindness!” he said softly. Each and every word rose up from the depths of his heart. To cultivators of the Dao of alchemy, Meng Hao’s experience just now was truly like being gifted with an amazing Dao.

The tome vanished after Meng Hao bowed, and a flight of stairs appeared up ahead of him. At the same time, his name moved from its previous position up to the fifth level, where, as before, it was now in first place on the list!

His expression was somber as he strode forward toward the steps and began to climb up to the sixth level. When he arrived, what he saw absolutely nothing.

There were no medicinal plants, there was no tome, there was no mist. There wasn’t even any light. There was only complete darkness. Everything seemed empty, as if nothing at all existed there.

Meng Hao gaped in shock, and he wasn’t the only one. The people outside were also staring at the screen, astonished.

The only ones who didn’t were the alchemists who had previously been on the sixth level. Their faces were grave as they stared closely at the screen. The tier 7 old woman looked on, her face grim. Now that she had seen how inhuman he was, she regretted what she had done earlier. She had offended him, but she also knew that there was little she could do about it now, and so she might as well stick to her guns.

After all, from her perspective, he might be inhuman, but he couldn’t compare to the people who had sought out her help in the clan. The compensation they had provided was incredible.

“I might not be able to do what he did in the fifth level,” she thought to herself, “but that doesn’t matter. As an alchemist, you don’t need to have such breadth and depth of knowledge regarding plants and vegetation. It’s enough to be intimately familiar with the ones that you do know.

“I failed dozens of times at this level before finally passing. There’s no way this Fang Hao will succeed on his first try. After all, the sixth level is completely different from the first five.” She smiled coldly.

The nearby tier 5, 6, and 7 alchemists were shaking their heads. All of them had challenged the sixth level of the Medicine Pavilion, so they knew how difficult it was.

“This level is a watershed,” commented one of the tier 8 Elders, his voice light.

“The first five levels require sufficient knowledge of plants and vegetation. The last four levels are completely different, and it only gets harder and harder.”

On the stone stele outside of the Medicine Pavilion, hundreds of thousands of names could be seen on the first level. There were only 100,000 on the second level, 50,000 on the third level, 20,000 on the fourth level, and less than 10,000 on the fifth level.

As for the sixth level, only 5,000 people had ever passed it.

The seventh level had 1,000 names and the eighth level only had a bit more than 200. The last level, the ninth… only had 10.

It mustn’t be forgotten that those numbers represented the accumulation of all the generations that had existed since the founding of the Fang Clan’s Dao of Alchemy Division. From this, it was easy to imagine how difficult the Medicine Pavilion was.

Furthermore, whenever anyone passed the sixth level, the first thing that would happen would be that a Dao Bell would appear in the sky above the ancestral mansion. No outsider could see that bell, and when it tolled, only the members of the Fang Clan on Planet East Victory could hear it in their minds.

That bell represented true honor and glory!

Meng Hao stood on the Medicine Pavilion’s sixth level, looking around at the pitch black around him. Even after sending his divine sense out, he could sense nothing but darkness. After hesitating for a moment, he took a step forward.

As soon as his foot landed, he stopped in place and cocked his head. His expression flickered.

Just now, he hadn’t seen anything within the darkness, but had been able to smell the fragrance of medicinal plants. Some of the aromas were faint, some were dense. They all melded together to fill the entire area, and seemed to grow even thicker further on.

It was at this point that the archaic voice echoed out through the sixth level.

“Aroma Scrying is one of the realms of skill with plants and vegetation. You may take up to 100 steps. With every step, you will smell the fragrance of different medicinal plants.

“Determine what each plant is based on its smell, and imprint the information into the darkness. One mistake means failure.”

Meng Hao wasn’t the only one who could hear the voice. The audience of more than 300,000 in the outside world could also hear it, and it caused their faces to flicker with expressions of disbelief.

“How… how could you possibly provide all the answers! No wonder this sixth level is considered so difficult. Aroma Scrying is virtually a legendary realm!”

“I never thought that the test would involve Aroma Scrying! I heard about this realm when I first became an apprentice alchemist. To think that over all the past tens of thousands of years in the Fang Clan’s Dao of Alchemy Division, 5,000 or so people have actually passed this level!”

The outside world was in a huge commotion. Virtually everyone took this test to be excessively difficult. It was in a completely different league than the previous five levels.

The tier 7 old woman chuckled coldly. As she thought back to the difficulty of this level, she actually felt frightened.

“The seventh level is even harder, for any alchemist,” she whispered to herself. “And then there’s the hell-like eighth level!”

Back on the sixth level, Meng Hao began to breathe deeply, allowing the fragrances of countless medicinal plants to enter his nose. Immediately, his mind exploded as images of numerous medicinal plants appeared, each one of which was associated with one of the fragrances he had detected.

There were no less than 10,000, but in the blink of an eye, his divine sense swept out, and the images of medicinal plants began to appear in the dark void around him.

Furthermore, the outline of an illusory lotus appeared beneath his feet.

He took a second step, and once again breathed in deeply. A tremor ran through his body, and another 10,000 images appeared around him. A second lotus appeared beneath him.

One step after another, and another….

Meng Hao proceeded forward, and with each step he took, he breathed in deeply. Afterward, numerous medicinal plants would appear around him, causing the pitch-black world to be lit up by what looked like a procession of blazing lanterns.

Furthermore, lotuses continued to appear beneath his feet.

After taking 69 steps, 69 lotuses had appeared, and he was surrounded by millions of shining medicinal plants.

To everyone who was watching, Meng Hao almost looked like a holy being, surrounded by swirling plants, lotuses blooming with each step he took.

“Lotuses with each step!!” thought the old woman. Her eyes were wide, and she was panting. She well knew how difficult the sixth level was, and also knew that the only way a lotus would appear would be if he correctly identified the fragrance of every single medicinal plant, and imprinted it correctly.

When she had passed the sixth level, she had only caused three lotuses to appear. But Meng Hao… shockingly… created lotuses with each step!

She wasn’t the only shocked one. All of the alchemists who were familiar with the sixth level were shaken. They watched Meng Hao on the screen, and the image they saw would eternally be imprinted into their minds. It was an unforgettable scene that they would never forget for the rest of their lives.

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# Chapter 917: Climbing Higher!

The handful of tier 8 alchemists in the area were visibly moved. They looked at Meng Hao on the screen, and their eyes shone with both praise and hope.

The Fang Clan's Dao of Alchemy Division was not a sect, but rather, a division of the clan. All of the alchemists and apprentice alchemists were clan members, and their sense of clan pride and honor was at the core of what had kept the clan from falling into ruin over the ages.

Actually, merit points were one of several methods that kept clan members from becoming estranged from the clan.

Of course, the Dao of Alchemy Division hoped for a truly Chosen alchemy cultivator to appear, to arouse interest in the Dao of alchemy and to bring glory to the Fang Clan's Dao of Alchemy Division once again. However, despite the passage of many years, although other divisions of the clan had produced Chosen, the Dao of Alchemy Division had remained a quiet and desolate place. Chosen alchemy cultivators were something that could only be happened upon, and never sought out.

There were some who had the talent for it, but were not the type who were inclined to study the Dao of alchemy, and instead preferred to focus on cultivation. People like that believed that the road to power would only be obstructed by focusing on other practices.

Today, though, these tier 8 Elders finally had a bit of hope.

On the sixth level of the Medicine Pavilion, Meng Hao was taking his 70th step. In that instant, he deeply inhaled the dense odor of plants and vegetation. His nose and brain exploded with soundless rumbling, and a tremor ran through him. All of the blood in his body suddenly began to circulate in reverse.

Images of medicinal plants began to float up in his mind, endless varieties of them. This type of Aroma Scrying did not just test someone's skill with plants and vegetation, it also tested instincts!

To be able to know how many types of medicinal plants there were by simply sniffing, without thinking about it too much…. This was something… that could really only be done by instinct, and by being incredibly familiar with all sorts of plants and vegetation.

This higher level of skill with plants and vegetation was like the Instantaneous Formula Scrying of the Dao of alchemy. They were actually two branches of the same skill and the same realm. 1

The level of difficulty of this sixth level examination was such that the requirement to pass was that the test-taker successfully take twenty steps. With each of those steps, ten or more misjudgements were tolerated before that step would be counted as a failure.

The reason for the rules being set in such a fashion was because this level was simply too difficult.

Therefore, it was easy to imagine how Meng Hao, who had already taken 70 steps, with lotuses blooming for each step, would be so incredibly shocking to all the alchemists outside who understood how difficult the test was. They could hardly believe their eyes.

71 steps. 72 steps. 73 steps…. Meng Hao didn't pause. He kept moving forward, heading further and further in. The aromas of plants and vegetation grew stronger, and were filled with even more types.

And yet, Meng Hao continued to produce… lotuses with each step.

It wasn't until he reached the 80th step that he finally started to slow down, although to the alchemist watching outside, it still looked fast.

81, 82, 83…. With each step he took, the surrounding void of darkness glittered more and more brightly. Botanical lanterns shone with scintillating light, until the entire sixth level now appeared to be brightly lit.

Having taken his 90th step, he only had 10 more steps to go. He was now moving even slower, as if these ten steps were difficult even for him. Each step took a lot more thought, which was clear to the audience.

His instincts now felt clouded, and now he needed to spend more time analyzing and deducing each aroma. It was only after painstaking examination that he was finally able to identify all of the medicinal plants.

The outside world was filled with silence. 300,000 spectators were all staring at Meng Hao on the screen. Behind him was a path of lotuses, and he was surrounded by endless numbers of botanical lamps.

As of this moment, Meng Hao was like an Immortal of plants and vegetation. He was the focus of all attention; even that old woman looked on silently.

91, 92, 93… each step now took approximately two hours. Each time, lotuses would bloom, and bright lanterns flickered everywhere.

The 95th step took him six hours; he stood there motionless within the boundless aroma before he finally imprinted all of the plants and vegetation within it.

The 96th step took twenty hours.

The 97th took two days.

By the 98th step, Meng Hao had long since lost track of time. Everyone in the outside world was staring closely at the screen. Five days later, he stepped forward again, and another lotus bloomed.

The 99th step took ten days, but yet again, a lotus bloomed, and the crowds went wild.

By now, approximately 400,000 people had gathered in the area. All of them were breathing heavily as they waited for Meng Hao… to take the final step.

The 100th step!

There on the sixth level, Meng Hao’s eyes were closed. He had no idea how many steps he had taken. Without even thinking about it, he took another step forward. Rumbling sounds filled his mind, and his body trembled.

Meng Hao was panting. Every imprint he made forced him to sift through a blur of obfuscating information, and required much analysis.

More time passed. Everyone in the outside world waited. Three days. Seven days. Ten days….

Finally, twenty days passed!!

The outside world was abuzz; no one had ever been able to spend so much time testing inside of the Medicine pavilion. Meng Hao had already taken nearly two months to pass from the first level all the way to the sixth.

Five more days passed, when suddenly, all of the innumerable botanical lamps in the sixth level exploded with scintillating light. Beneath Meng Hao’s foot… appeared the 100th lotus!

His eyes opened, and his body shook. Blood sprayed from his mouth. This level was so difficult that Meng Hao only passed it by shedding blood, sweat, and tears. The last step had pushed him to the limits of his skill with plants and vegetation, which, in the end, had enabled him to pass with perfect marks!

Up ahead, the innumerable botanical lamps merged together to form a staircase of vines, something that seemed suitable only for a sovereign of plants and vegetation.

The seventh level was now open!

At the same time, from the view of the outside world, the sixth level began to shine with boundless light. The sky went dim, and all darkness was dispelled. The Dao of Alchemy Division was now the focus of all eyes.

Meng Hao’s name appeared on the stone stele, in the first position on the list of names for the sixth level!

The audience was abuzz.

“He… passed the sixth level! Lotuses blossomed with each step! One hundred steps, one hundred lotuses!”

“Could it be that this Fang Hao is going to bring about a renaissance in the Dao of Alchemy Division!?”

“Just wait until he’s finished here in the medicine pavilion! I’m definitely going to go listen to his lectures on plants and vegetation!!”

Meanwhile, an enormous, ancient bell appeared in the air above the Fang Clan’s ancestral mansion. From the look of it, the bell appeared to have seen the passage of ages. It was engraved with mountains and rivers, and as soon as it appeared, it rang loud and sharp.

The sound echoed out through Planet East Victory, to the ears of anyone with Fang blood in their veins. Outsiders could not hear, but the Fang Clan members could!!

The Fang Clan was shaken. Everyone in the Dao of Alchemy Division who was not already at the Medicine Pavilion was aroused. Sensing the light shining up from the Medicine Pavilion, many of them immediately flew in that direction.

Everyone in the ancestral mansion was equally shaken. First, there was the light shining up from the Dao of Alchemy Division, and then there was the bell. All Fang Clan members were shocked, and many flew toward the Dao of Alchemy Division to see what exactly was going on.

The Grand Elder stood silently in the main temple, his expression complex, and even somewhat confused.

“Did I… make a mistake?” he murmured. “No, I didn’t. Everything is for the clan. Everything I have done is according to the rules of the clan!!” The Grand Elder took a deep breath, but he still seemed to be at a loss. He looked over at the Dao of Alchemy Division, and a fierce glint could be seen in his eyes.

Meng Hao sat cross-legged on the sixth level of the Medicine Pavilion. After meditating for a period of time, he opened his eyes, which were still slightly bloodshot.

“From the difficulty of the fifth and sixth levels, I can see the boundlessness of the Fang Clan’s Dao of alchemy,” he murmured. “I made a lot of mistakes on the fifth level, and the sixth level was actually even harder. It’s only because I absorbed the Resurrection Lily that I can have such instincts with plants and vegetation!

“Therefore… my ability with Aroma Scrying is actually a bit of a cheap trick.

“This seventh level will definitely be even harder than all the others!” With that, he stood up, and his eyes flashed with a glimmer of obsession. When he had started in the Medicine Pavilion, his goal had been to amaze the world and become an overnight celebrity. It had all been for the merit points. Now, however, he was doing it to improve his skill with plants and vegetation.

He wasn’t just concerned with passing the level; he wanted to pass every level at the pinnacle. That was the only way for him to increase his skill with plants and vegetation.

He took a deep breath and began to walk up the stairs.

At the same time that he set foot on the seventh level, all of the hundreds of thousands of spectators outside were looking on. Compared to the sixth level, the seventh level didn’t seem very extraordinary. The only things that were visible were two enormous books.

One of them was, of course, the first volume of the Classic of Plants and Vegetation, with its 1,000,000,000 medicinal plants.

The second was empty. It apparently had no content whatsoever.

Even as Meng Hao laid eyes on the two books, the archaic voice rang out through the seventh level.

“Using grafting techniques and your knowledge of the mutual augmentation and suppression between different types of plants and vegetation, you must create… 10,000 unique medicinal plants. That is the threshold to pass this level. If you wish to pass the level with perfect marks, you must create 100,000.”

Meng Hao’s heart trembled. He took a deep breath, and his eyes began to shine with bright light.

“Finally… a level like this!” He knew that having accumulated so much knowledge regarding plants and vegetation, the time had eventually come to step into a new realm. It was a realm which used the principles of mutual augmentation and suppression, along with grafting techniques, to create medicinal plants that belonged to him and him alone.

Using medicinal plants like that to concoct pills would make it very difficult for others to identify the pill formula. Even if they could, it would still be very difficult to create the necessary medicinal plant ingredients. This was also a higher realm of pill concocting.

Back when Meng Hao was in the Violet Fate Sect, he had encountered such things, but not very often. The ancient Demon Immortal Sect’s Dao of alchemy also touched on such matters, but he had never had a chance to systematically study it.

Now, he settled his qi and calmed his mind, then stepped forward toward the tome and closed his eyes to think.

All of the people in the outside world who had never heard of what the seventh level was like, now gasped. Actually, according to the requirements of the Fang Clan's Dao of alchemy, alchemists began to explore grafting techniques beginning in tier 5. In order to become a tier 7 alchemist, it was necessary to create 10,000 personally grafted medicinal plants.

Among the hundreds of thousands of spectators, the tier 6 and 7 alchemists all began to whisper among themselves.

"I wonder if Meng Hao will be able to pass the seventh level…. How many kinds of grafted medicinal plants will he create!?"

"It's going to be difficult for him to pass. No one has ever done so on the first try. Not even his excellency Pill Elder was able to; it took him four tries."

"Only with a profound knowledge base, and significant experience with grafting plants and vegetation, can someone even attempt the seventh level, let alone pass it."

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# Chapter 918: Boundless Dao of Alchemy!

On the seventh level of the Medicine Pavilion, Meng Hao stood in front of the tomes for the time it takes an incense stick to burn, thinking. Then, his eyes opened, and he waved his hand, causing the Classic of Plants and Vegetation to rapidly flip open to a certain page. Instantly, a medicinal plant appeared and floated up into the air.

More pages flipped in quick succession, nine of them, and nine more medicinal plants appeared. Meng Hao made a grasping motion, causing all nine plants to appear on the blank tome's first empty page.

Next, the plants followed his line of thought. Some were stripped of their bark, others had flowers removed. In the end, they formed together within Meng Hao's divine sense, where he used the techniques of mutual augmentation and supression to graft them together.

The medicinal plant on the first page glittered brightly, whereupon the book seemed to analyze and judge it. After the blink of an eye, the page slowly turned, indicating that Meng Hao had successfully created his first medicinal plant.

He once again waved his left hand over the Classic of Plants and Vegetation, pulling out more medicinal plants and using his divine sense to transform and graft them together, continuing to create different medicinal plants according to his desires.

Time passed. To cultivators who didn't understand the Dao of alchemy, this examination seemed somewhat boring. However, to the cultivators of the

Dao of Alchemy Division, it was an unprecedented opportunity for good fortune.

Even the tier 7 alchemists looked on with strange lights glowing in their eyes. As Meng Hao created his medicinal plants, they gained more enlightenment, and were continuously shocked. In fact, their own skill with plants and vegetation was slowly creeping upward.

“I can’t believe that you can make cold-type plants that way…. After adding nine hot elements, the original formula was to add one cold element. But instead, he added nine cold elements. According to the law of mutual augmentation and supression, you would think that the result would be neutral. And yet, the result is like that!”

“That Moonspirit Flower can actually turn into Sunsplendor Leaf through grafting! What an outrageous line of thinking, and yet, it works!”

Even the old woman stared with wide eyes. Subconsciously, she began to imitate Meng Hao, and her own skill with plants and vegetation gradually began to increase.

The tier 5 and 6 alchemists were incredibly excited. When it came to plant and vegetation grafting, they were just in the initial stages of learning. As they watched Meng Hao at work, they committed everything they saw to memory.

To them, this was an extremely rare opportunity.

As for the lower level alchemists, this was a realm far removed from them. However, they all understood that if they wanted to travel far along the path of the Dao of alchemy, then they would eventually have to learn how to graft plants and vegetation. Therefore, they also did as much as they could to take advantage of the situation.

The apprentice alchemists were even less clear about what was happening. However, seeing the intent expressions on the faces of the higher level alchemists, they also realized that what Meng Hao was currently doing with grafting techniques was astonishing. Therefore, they kept their eyes glued on Meng Hao and did their best to try to remember what sort of grafting techniques he used.

The world outside the Medicine Pavilion was completely quiet. Even the two old men who stood guard outside had opened their eyes and were looking at the screen up in midair.

The tier 8 alchemists stood there silently, watching Meng Hao and observing his grafting techniques. All of them were filled with anticipation.

Meng Hao once again lost track of time as he absorbed himself in the grafting of plants and vegetation. His left hand sped over the first volume of the Classic of Plants and Vegetation, seemingly flipping pages nonstop.

Time passed. Meng Hao created more and more medicinal plants. 10. 100. 1,000….

Seven days later, Meng Hao finally created 10,000 medicinal plants. He took a deep breath, but he wasn't finished. Instead, he focused inwardly for a moment, experiencing a similar feeling regarding plants and vegetation to that which he felt when practicing cultivation. He could clearly tell that as he created more medicinal plants, his understanding of plants and vegetation grew more refined.

Although it had been a long time since he had concocted medicinal pills, he could also sense that his pill concocting skill… was becoming stronger.

"My hand is the pill furnace, and I will blend all Heaven and Earth together in my palm to create an almighty medicinal pill!" His eyes shone with a light that originated from his Dao, with his Dao of alchemy. With this Dao, he could corroborate his heart, and then use that heart to concoct pills.

Seven more days passed. By now, Meng Hao had created more than 15,000 medicinal plants. Everyone outside was shaken, and their admiration for Meng Hao had reached the pinnacle.

Even the old woman had to ask herself whether her own skill with plants and vegetation was equal to Meng Hao's. In the end, she had to sigh and admit that people like Meng Hao were exactly what the Dao of Alchemy Division lacked, and in fact, desperately needed.

As for her… if she continued to comply with the wishes of those in the main clan who wanted her to target Meng Hao, perhaps she would fall out of harmony with the Dao of Alchemy itself.

“Forget it,” she thought, her eyes shining with determination. “After all… I am a member of the Dao of Alchemy Division!” She took a deep breath, and dispelled all thoughts of targeting Meng Hao. All of a sudden, it felt as if a great weight had been lifted off of her. She focused on the screen, and on contemplating plants and vegetation.

15,000. 20,000. 30,000….

A month passed by, during which time Meng Hao created 30,000 medicinal plants. More people gathered outside. By now, there were over 500,000, spread out in all directions.

Everyone was watching Meng Hao create medicinal plants. Occasionally, people seemed to go wild with joy at what they were seeing, and at other times they looked confused. However, in the end, everyone watching was able to gain something.

Unfortunately, Meng Hao was completely absorbed in what he was doing, and had no idea what was going on outside. If he did know, he might well have gone nuts. After all, this was a prime opportunity… to charge merit points.

If at this moment he stepped out of the Medicine Pavilion and bellowed out that he demanded payment, virtually everyone in the audience would instantly pay what he asked.

From the moment he had entered the first level until now, a full four months had passed. Although cultivators had a long lifespan, and often a single meditation session might last years, to them, four months would still seem to pass by slowly if they weren’t meditating.

Despite that, no one grew impatient. Instead, they continued to make gains by watching.

Meng Hao immersed himself in grafting, and he was happy. There was no other place like this Medicine Pavilion, with 1,000,000,000 medicinal plants inside that he could choose from.

Although they were all illusory, that didn’t really didn’t matter to Meng Hao. They could still help him advance to a higher level in his skill with plants and vegetation.

Another month passed, and Meng Hao’s eyes were bloodshot. He had now created 50,000 medicinal plants.

In the beginning, it had been relatively simple. However, the further along he progressed, the more difficult it became. Were he content to do a perfunctory job, this level would have been simple. However, he placed high requirements on himself. The medicinal plants he was creating now all were composed of at least one hundred other medicinal plants.

In fact, the past 10,000 he had created were grafted from at least five hundred other medicinal plants!

Exhaustion swelled up within him. The fifth, sixth, and seventh levels had all been quite a mental strain on him. In fact, as a result, he had even unwittingly grown a great deal in terms of divine sense.

Even more amazing to Meng Hao was that over the past months, his cultivation base was nearing ninety percent of the power of a true Immortal.

As the sixth month arrived, Meng Hao trembled. His mental energy was almost completely depleted, and his head felt as if it were swollen. Piercing pain occasionally stabbed through his temples, and even his thinking had slowed.

However, he had now created nearly 70,000 medicinal plants.

Not a single one was a repeat, and any of them that appeared in the outside world would certainly cause a huge stir. That was especially true of the last 5,000…. Each one of those contained more than a thousand different grafting elements.

Medicinal plants like that could be refined into a pill just by adding a few minor ingredients.

The spectators outside were entranced and deeply moved by Meng Hao’s skill with plants and vegetation. Another half a month passed. Finally, Meng Hao’s energy was spent. His face was ashen, and he seemed to be on the verge of collapsing. Even his Eternal stratum couldn’t keep up with the mental strain.

He let out a long sigh and finally ceased working.

He had created over 75,000 plants.

“My mind isn’t up to the task,” he thought. “If I keep going, I might injure my foundation. Most important of all… my mastery of plants and vegetation isn’t good enough, at least not in terms of grafting.

“I think perhaps 10,000 more would be my absolute limit.

“Furthermore, considering my current skill with plants and vegetation, creating an almighty medicinal plant composed of 10,000 grafts, would be too difficult.” He took a deep breath and then slowly rose to his feet, his eyes shining with a gleam of obsession.

“I must deeply study the Fang Clan’s way with plants and vegetation!” With that, he turned and vanished. When he reappeared, he was outside the Medicine Pavilion. When he saw the packed crowd of 500,000 cultivators, he gaped in shock.

Although he had assumed some people would come to observe, he had never imagined that so many people would show up. He even saw that all sorts of full alchemists were present, many of them still not fully awakened from the reveries of enlightenment they had fallen into while watching Meng Hao.

He was too tired to say anything. The only thing he wanted to do was return to his Immortal’s cave and rest for a few days. He immediately flew into the air, transforming into a beam of light that shot off into the distance.

As soon as he flew into the air, the crowds began to come to their senses. They looked at Meng Hao making his way off into the distance, and then went completely crazy.

“That was Fang Hao!!” someone shouted. “He came out!!” More people came to their senses, and when they realized that the screen was gone, they understood that Meng Hao had already emerged from the Medicine Pavilion.

“75,000 medicinal plants, huh. He’s a Grandmaster of plants and vegetation! He fully deserves to be called an apothecary!”

“With Grandmaster Fang Hao’s skill in plants and vegetation, if he wanted to simply pass through the Medicine Pavilion, I wouldn’t dare to say he could pass the ninth level, but the eighth level would definitely be no problem!”

Everyone was in a tumult as they watched Meng Hao leave. Their eyes shone with fanaticism and reverence. In the world of cultivation, the strong are respected, and it was no different in the Dao of Alchemy Division.

“He stopped on purpose this time, but in a few months, he’ll definitely keep going!”

The surrounding alchemists watched Meng Hao leave, and they all sighed emotionally. This was especially true of the tier 8 Elders, whose faces were filled with hope and excitement.

Deep in the inner mountains, Pill Elder Fang Yundan had been watching Meng Hao the entire time. Finally he sighed, and a smile appeared on his face. “There is finally a successor for the Dao of Alchemy Division….”

He waved his right hand, within which appeared an ancient book, upon which were written the words “Classic of Plants and Vegetation.”

“Give this to Fang Hao,” he said softly, waving his hand again. A mysterious light appeared, covering over the book and taking it away.

Meng Hao flew out of the Dao of Alchemy Division, not even fully aware of his surroundings. However, a moment later, he suddenly stopped in place, and his eyes went wide. His mind felt as if it had just been struck by lightning.

“Dammit! How could I have forgotten to charge merit points!? There were more than 500,000 people there just now! How many months was I in the Medicine Pavilion!? This… This….”

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# Chapter 919: Provocation

Meng Hao trembled, his face pale white. At first, he tried not to calculate how much he had lost, but in the end, he couldn’t stop himself. His mind filled with a terrifyingly huge number of merit points, and he almost coughed up a mouthful of blood.

“Screwed! Royally screwed!!” He felt like weeping, but no tears would come. All he could do was curse his horrible luck at having completely wasted such a good opportunity to earn merit points.

At this thought, he threw his head back and roared, which caused quite a few nearby birds to scatter in flight.

Trembling, heart bleeding, face ashen, Meng Hao felt completely drained of energy. Listless and depressed, it was at this point that he suddenly noticed that someone was flying through the air behind him.

He turned feebly and saw a young woman; his lifeless countenance caused her to stare in shock.

She was graceful and beautiful, with an entrancing face. She wore a long pink garment, and her fragrance was delicate and pleasing.

She looked at Meng Hao in shock for a moment, before tentatively asking, “Um, are you… Elder Cousin Fang Hao?”

Meng Hao listlessly nodded his head. He was still inwardly tied up in knots over the huge sum of merit points he had lost. In his mind, even the sky had turned completely black.

The young woman’s face grew serious as she looked at Meng Hao. She thought to herself that this person was willing to drive himself crazy before giving up, all for the sake of skill with plants and vegetation. She could see a level of unswerving determination in Meng Hao that she did not possess.

“Elder Cousin Fang Hao, I saw you in the Medicine Pavilion just now, and I, Wan’er, couldn’t help but admire you.” She clasped hands and bowed, then held out a tome toward Meng Hao. “This… is a tome that his excellency Pill Elder wanted me to give you.”

Meng Hao was still in a daze. Face blank, he muttered, “I just had an unimaginable amount of merit points placed in front of me, but I didn’t cherish them as I should have… what a waste!!”

The young woman gaped for a moment, unsure about the meaning of what she had just heard. “Elder Cousin, what did you just say?”

Meng Hao shook his head and dejectedly accepted the tome. Then he turned and, looking incredibly depressed, headed off into the distance. The young woman watched him make his way off, and couldn’t help but feel even more admiration for him.

“He is definitely worthy of being the eldest grandson of the direct bloodline. Elder Cousin Fang Hao is crazy about the Dao of alchemy. He created more than 70,000 medicinal plants on the seventh level of the Medicine pavilion, but he still feels disappointed. It’s almost like he’s lost his faith and ideals. A person like that is really rare. No wonder his excellency Pill Elder wanted me to give him that tome.

“Wan’er,” she said to herself encouragingly, “you have to work hard and study more, like Elder Cousin!” She looked at Meng Hao leaving, and was filled with reverence.

Meng Hao had no idea how much encouragement his expression had given to that fragile young woman. He continued along his way toward the ancestral mansion, drowsy and out of sorts.

As soon as he entered the ancestral mansion, his mood worsened. Even as he transformed into a beam of light and shot forward, a group of seven or eight people strolled out ahead of him, chatting and laughing.

Among that group of people was a young woman who Meng Hao recognized from when he had first arrived at East Heaven Gate. She was a female cultivator named Fang Hong. She was clearly a natural born beauty, and she currently wore a long, pale garment. She held her hand in front of her mouth and laughed as she walked along. Among those walking with her, three had cultivation bases at the peak of Dao Seeking, similar to false Immortals. There were a few others who were in the Spirit Severing realm.

All of them were people Meng Hao had seen following Fang Wei back in the temple.

Behind them trailed an old man with salt-and-pepper hair and an apathetic expression. He held his hands in front of him, tucked into the opposite sleeves, and followed the group with a slight bow, almost as if he were a servant.

He was not a member of the Fang Clan, but had a different surname, and had taken shelter with the Fang Clan in exchange for acting as a Dao Protector to members of the younger generation.

The young cultivators around Fang Hong chatted and laughed.

“Hong’er, I heard that when you went out for training this time you ended up taking Reverend Shui Yun as your master. Senior Shui Yun might be just a rogue cultivator, but his cultivation base is incredible. Congratulations! Oh, and now that you’re back, don’t be in a hurry to leave again. It won’t be long now before the centennial rising of the East Ascension Sun. Prince Wei will be in charge of the East Ascension Pavilion, and he’s already invited Chosen from quite a few other sects to come enjoy the spectacle. When the time comes, you can meet all of them.”

“Yeah, that’s right! Princess Hong, of all the Chosen in the Fang Clan, there are few whose cultivation bases exceed yours. You’ll definitely be a blazing sun in the East Ascension Pavilion.

In response to what everyone was saying, the young woman smiled slightly and shook her head, although her expression revealed traces of pride.

“Prince Wei and Prince Han both have cultivation bases higher than me,” she said. “And as for you, Prince Tao and Prince Hai, with your cultivation bases, as long as you make the proper preparations, you should be able to use an Immortality Illumination Vine at almost any time.”

“Not necessarily,” said one of her companions. “The clan has Immortality Illumination Vines, but they’re rare. There are only a few available in this generation. Unless you’re one of the top three in the current generation, then the only way to get one is to pay a ton of merit points. It’s really difficult.”

“That’s not the case with you, though, Hong’er. With the help of Reverend Shui Yun, you have a much better chance than all of us.” Sighs could be heard. It was at this exact moment that Meng Hao flew overhead in a beam of light. The people down below looked up, and the three youths with cultivation bases similar to false Immortals all frowned.

Even the young woman Fang Hong was frowning.

In the Fang Clan ancestral mansion, there were only two people who were qualified to fly. One was Fang Wei, and the other… was none other than Meng Hao.

“Sir Chen, I don’t like people flying over my head,” said Fang Hong, her voice calm. In response, the old man who had been following the group looked up, and his previously calm eyes began to glow brightly. He looked up at Meng Hao flying through the air.

“Get down here!” he bellowed. He didn’t attack, he just spoke. His words didn’t echo out very far; they were directed solely at Meng Hao, and appeared to contained natural law that required his orders to be followed. They transformed into something like explosive, muffled thunder that only Meng Hao could hear.

Boom!

Meng Hao suddenly screeched to a halt in midair as an enormous force built up around him. It was as if the air around him had been restricted, and he was suddenly forced downward. Something like a huge hand pushed down, forcing him out of the sky.

His body trembled, and he felt incredible pressure like that of the peak of the Immortal stage, that of a stage 7 Immortal.

“Huh?” thought the old man, frowning. Seeing that he hadn’t instantly suppressed Meng Hao, he gave a cold snort and caused his cultivation base to explode out with power. Massive pressure swelled out, and Meng Hao lost control of his body completely and fell out of the sky.

It wasn’t until he landed on the ground that the pressure faded away. The old man’s face was calm as he lowered his head, almost as if nothing had happened.

Fang Hong and her followers all looked over at Meng Hao.

Immediately, Fang Hong’s followers spoke up.

“So, you’re Fang Hao, the one who caused all the ruckus in the Dao of Alchemy Division?”

“Don’t forget, it doesn’t matter if the Grand Elder gave you the qualifications to fly in the ancestral mansion. If you don’t have enough power, don’t randomly fly over people’s heads.”

“You may go now.”

These people didn’t know much about Meng Hao. After all, the first thing he had done after returning to the clan was spend most of his time in the Dao of Alchemy Division.

All they knew was that his Bloodline Gatebeam was 30,000 meters. This made them feel a bit self-conscious. When it came to the Dao of alchemy however, they viewed it as a lesser type of Dao that wasn’t worthy to share the stage with cultivation.

Having spoken their words, they resumed chatting and laughing, completely ignoring Meng Hao as they brushed past him.

Meng Hao had already been in an abominable mood. He had just been flying along, minding his own business, when suddenly he was forced down to the ground. Considering his personality, how could he possibly accept such a thing? His eyes grew cold, and a smile slowly spread out across his face.

It was a smile, but it was a very cold smile.

“So,” he said indifferently, “you people see me but don’t offer formal greetings! It seems you’ve forgotten all about the clan rules!”

The eight people frowned and stopped in place, slowly turning back to look at Meng Hao.

“Sir Chen,” said Fang Hong, “get him out of here, why don’t you.”

Sir Chen’s expression was as calm as ever as he nodded, then stepped toward Meng Hao. He pushed out with his right hand, causing an incredible force explode out toward Meng Hao. His goal was to physically push Meng Hao completely away.

As he advanced, the force rumbled out ahead of him. Meng Hao flicked his sleeve, causing a black beam of light to fly out, which transformed into the crocodile. It swished its tail, causing an incredible energy to surge out.

The old man’s face flickered as the tail slammed into him, causing a huge boom to fill the air.

“You, a foreign servant, dare to raise your hand against me?!” Meng Hao said coolly. Then he stepped toward the group of eight.

The eight young cultivators’ faces fell as they first saw the old man fighting the crocodile, and then saw Meng Hao walking toward them.

“And then, you people! I can’t believe you see me but refuse to offer greetings!” He advanced toward them, his energy surging and a cold gleam flickering in his eyes.

The three young men with cultivation bases equivalent to false Immortals immediately stepped forward.

“Why the hell do you think we would offer greetings to you?” said one of them.

“Why the hell do I think you would offer greetings to me? Because I’m the eldest grandson of the direct bloodline! It doesn’t matter which bloodline you people are from, or which branch. All members of this generation call me Cousin!” Even as Meng Hao’s voice echoed out, he slapped out with his right hand.

The three young men snorted, and were just about to attempt to fight back, when all of a sudden, their faces fell. They were completely incapable of doing anything; Meng Hao’s shocking wave of power completely destroyed all of their divine abilities and magical techniques.

Booms rang out as Meng Hao’s hand slapped into all three of their faces in succession. Blood sprayed from their mouths as they were sent tumbling backward.

In that same moment, Meng Hao stepped forward, and his leg blurred into a whirlwind as he kicked the three young men over and over again. Booms mixed with bloodcurdling screams as they were sent hurtling backward, where they slammed into the ground.

Cracking sounds could be heard as more than half of their bones were broken.

“What do you think you’re doing!?” said one of them, his face falling. “We’re inside the clan, you—”

“Oh, so it turns out you do know that we’re in the Fang Clan,” said Meng Hao coldly. “Don’t tell me you’ve forgotten that I’m also surnamed Fang!?” He stepped forward again, then waved his right hand, causing Fang Hong’s Spirit Severing acquaintances to cough up blood as many of the bones in their bodies were crushed. Miserable shrieks rang out.

“You see me and actually don’t extend greetings!? I’m the eldest grandson, so I guess all I can do is teach you a lesson about the clan rules. And then there’s you….” He turned to face Fang Hong. As soon as he stepped forward, a voice called out from the distance.

“Stay your hand!”

Fang Hong’s face flickered, and she quickly lifted her right hand into the air, causing a huge, illusory cauldron to appear, upon which the character ‘Fang’ could be seen. It immediately crushed down toward Meng Hao.

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# Chapter 920: An Exception!

“Ten percent of the power of a true Immortal!? Puny!” Completely ignoring whoever it was behind him, Meng Hao smiled coldly and clenched his hand into a fist. He punched out, causing a boom to echo out as the cauldron shattered. His fist continued on toward Fang Hong.

Another boom could be heard. Blood sprayed from Fang Hong’s lips as she doubled over in pain. Meng Hao’s punch was too fierce, and her qi passageways were shattered as she hurtled backward. It didn’t matter that she was a woman, Meng Hao was as cold as ever.

After punching her, he turned icily to to face the group that was speeding toward him in the distance.

“Meng Hao, you twerp! How dare you!” Six people were flying through the air. Three of them were white-haired old men with cultivation bases in the Immortal realm. The one in the middle was clearly more powerful than the others, and was at the peak of the Immortal Realm.

That was the one who had spoken just now.

Behind the three old men were two masked cultivators, one whose cultivation base was hidden, making it impossible to see how deep it was. However, he emanated a desolate, murderous aura that was especially strong, as if his only job in the Fang Clan was to kill people.

The last of the group was none other than Fang Yunyi!

He was the one who had yelled out to Meng Hao to stay his hand.

As for the old man who had just spoken, he appeared next to Fang Hong even as his words echoed out. He immediately picked her up in his arms and gave her some medicinal pills.

Fang Hong’s face was pale, and she was quivering. Blood oozed out of her mouth, and it was with difficulty that she swallowed the medicinal pills.

“Grandpa,” she said with a bitter smile, “my… my qi passageways….”

The old man had already noticed that Fang Hong’s qi passageways had been shattered, and he responded, “Don’t worry. Grandpa will fix this for you!” With that, he turned to glare at Meng Hao, his eyes flickering with killing intent.

“What gall you have! How dare you slaughter people within the clan! There’s no need to send you to the clan dungeon, I’ll execute you here and now!” With that, the other two old men who had accompanied him began to close in on Meng Hao.

“That crocodile too! Kill it!” The two masked cultivators immediately headed toward the crocodile. Sir Chen instantly fell back to Fang Hong’s side, his face anxious.

A cold smile appeared on Fang Yunyi’s face, and inwardly, he was going wild with joy at finally being able to catch Meng Hao off guard. This time, he knew that Meng Hao was going to be killed without a doubt.

“Sixth Grandpa, correct?” Meng Hao stood his ground, completely ignoring the two old men who were closing in on him. “Let me ask you, did you see me slaughter anyone?” He slapped his bag of holding to produce his identity medallion.

“I’m the eldest grandson of the direct bloodline. My dad is Fang Xiufeng, and the Grand Elder is my Third Grandpa. If you people dare to kill me, you’ll be violating clan rules. Anyone who violates clan rules will be put to death!” As his voice echoed out, the two old men who were moving toward him suddenly stopped in place, their faces flickering as they hesitated.

“I was flying happily through the air,” Meng Hao continued calmly, “when these clan members asked this foreign servant to suppress me. And after seeing who I was, they refused to greet me respectfully. Apparently, they aren't familiar with the clan rules, so I set about to teach them a lesson. Sixth Grandpa, have you suddenly developed a vision problem?" He stood there, his expression stony.

"Kill him!" cried Fang Hong's grandfather a second time, with a cold snort. Hearing his words, the two old men clenched their jaws and continued on toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao's face flickered, and he fell back. Even before the two old men could get close to him, he slapped his own chest with his palm, coughing up a huge mouthful of blood, and then letting out a miserable shriek. At the same time, he ripped open his bag of holding, causing the jade box that contained the Nirvana Fruits to fly out.

Next, he yelled out at the top of his lungs, "You want to steal my Nirvana Fruits! Grand Elder! Third Grandpa! Someone's trying to steal my Nirvana Fruits!"

Using all the power his cultivation base could muster, he sent his voice echoing out in all directions.

When the Grand Elder gave Meng Hao the Nirvana Fruits, he had sworn an oath that anyone in the clan who dared to steal them from Meng Hao would be exterminated. As Meng Hao's voice spread throughout the clan, many people heard it. The two old men who had been closing in on Meng Hao to kill him, suddenly stopped in place, and their faces fell.

Even Fang Hong's grandfather's face fell, and he gritted his teeth.

"I get it!" continued Meng Hao, backing up, and at the same time, crying out loudly. "You clan members of my generation pulled me out of the sky because you're… you're in collusion with that foreign servant to steal my Nirvana Fruits!!

"You Heaven-damned clan delinquents! How could you be so ruthless! How could you try to steal my Nirvana Fruits!

“Grand Elder, save me! Third Grandpa, if you don’t show up quickly, my Nirvana Fruits are going to be taken away! Third Grandpa, Grand Elder, SAVE ME!”

His bellowing caused the enraged three youths with the near-false Immortal cultivation bases to one again cough up blood.

“Stop talking nonsense!” cried Fang Hong, blood oozing from her mouth. She was also getting nervous. “We saw you flying toward us and just wanted you to go around us! We never brought up anything about your Nirvana Fruits!”

“You sharp-tongued troublemaker!” howled Fang Hong’s grandfather. “You’re not from the Fang Clan! DIE!” As he closed in on Meng Hao, it became apparent that the Grand Elder was nowhere to be seen.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered coldly, and he suddenly lifted his right hand. The Lightning Cauldron appeared. In that critical moment, he looked over at Fang Yunyi, whose face instantly fell.

Rumble!

They instantly switched places, and Meng Hao watched from off in the distance as the old man’s palm descended onto Fang Yunyi, who let out a piercing scream.

The old man pulled his palm back at the very last moment, then turned to look at Meng Hao. He was just about to charge toward him once again, when suddenly, several dozen beams of light shot through the air toward them from various directions.

“6th Older Uncle, my Older Cousin entrusted Hao’er to me for safekeeping. If you dare to touch him, I’ll wipe out your entire bloodline. Worst case scenario, afterward I’ll take my entire family to stay with my Older Cousin on Planet South Heaven!” The speaker was none other than Meng Hao’s 19th Uncle, who came to a stop directly in front of Meng Hao. He looked over coldly at Fang Hong’s grandfather.

More beams of light descended. Two were middle-aged men, who intercepted the attacks of the masked cultivators against the crocodile, saving it from certain annihilation.

In the blink of an eye, the entire situation had changed. Meng Hao was surrounded by more than a dozen cultivators. However, the man who 19th Uncle had called 6th Older Uncle was also joined by quite a few newcomers.

As they faced off with proverbial daggers drawn, the archaic voice of Grand Elder Fang Tongtian suddenly echoed out from deep within the ancestral mansion.

“That’s enough. Fang Hong, Fang Tao, Fang Hai, and the rest of your companions, you disrespected the rules of seniority. You will be punished in the Fire Smelting Pit for ten days!

“Fang Hao, although clan members treated you disrespectfully, there was no need to attack so viciously. You will also be punished in the Fire Smelting Pit for ten days!

“The sentence will be carried out immediately!”

As soon as the Grand Elder’s voice rang out, Fang Hong and the others’ faces went pale. The Fire Smelting Pit was also called Hell, and to spend ten days there would be like being skinned alive.

The clan members in the area, both those of Meng Hao’s bloodline and 6th Older Uncle’s, didn’t dare to say another word. 6th Patriarch’s eyes flickered and he held his tongue.

However, Meng Hao opened his mouth immediately.

“Third Grandpa, Grand Elder, um… my Spirit Elixir is almost finished! I’m almost ready to absorb the Nirvana Fruits, so I really don’t have time to go to the Fire Smelting Pit. Look, if you make an exception, I’ll make up the punishment later. What do you think?”

Meng Hao’s words were met with utter silence. No one would ever dare to contradict the Grand Elder’s orders. Fang Hong and the others looked on with wide eyes. In their opinion, Meng Hao was really far too brazen. Even the other Elders in the area were gaping at him.

Fang Yunyi was elated, and inwardly, started laughing uproariously. In his hatred for Meng Hao, he rejoiced at Meng Hao’s words to the Grand Elder, and couldn’t wait for Meng Hao to experience even more misery.

“Be quiet!” hissed 19th Uncle. All of the other clan members surrounding Meng Hao also felt that his words were far too crude and rash.

“What?” said the Grand Elder. He had never imagined that Meng Hao would dare to speak up, and when his voice echoed out, it seemed to send a chill through the entire area. However, after the space of a few breaths went by, he spoke further, and the words he uttered caused everyone to gasp.

“Very well. Absorbing the Nirvana Fruits is a very important matter. As soon as you finish, go to the Fire Smelting Pit!”

“Many thanks, Third Grandpa,” said Meng Hao, looking very grateful. Everyone else looked on with shock and other strange expressions. In their memory, the Grand Elder had always been unswervingly just, which was how he had earned the clan’s respect over the years.

But now, he was clearly being partial toward Meng Hao.

“This… the Grand Elder actually just….”

“He called the Grand Elder by the address Third Grandpa…. Now that I think about it, the Grand Elder used to be part of the direct bloodline!” All of a sudden, thoughtful expressions could be seen on the onlookers’ faces. The 6th Patriarch’s face flickered, and he gritted his teeth. Finally, he let out a cold snort. His face extremely grim, he flicked his sleeve and carried Fang Hong away.

As Fang Hong was taken away, she looked back at Meng Hao, and she couldn’t help but muse about how terrifying he was.

“The Grand Elder actually showed partiality toward him….”

The youths with the near-false Immortal cultivation bases were trembling as they clasped hands and bowed toward Meng Hao.

“Cousin….”

Meng Hao grunted in response, then looked over at Fang Yunyi, who was gingerly attempting to sneak away, and gave an obviously fake smile.

Fang Yunyi’s scalp went numb, and the images of what had happened on Planet South Heaven flitted through his mind. Gritting his teeth, he bowed his head.

“Cousin….”

Meng Hao smiled, then turned to clasp hands and express his gratitude to 19th Uncle and the other members of his bloodline. All of them looked at him encouragingly as he transformed into a beam of light and shot away.

“When the Grand Elder looks at Meng Hao, he must be thinking of Meng Hao’s own grandfather. The two of them were brothers, and were very close!”

“Yeah, that’s right. The Grand Elder is always unswervingly just. In the past several hundred years, he’s never shown partiality toward anyone. He hasn’t made a single exception!”

“Hao’er is really a blazing sun of the Fang Clan. The fact that the Grand Elder is willing to make an exception for him illustrates that point!”

Even as they discussed the matter, Meng Hao disappeared off into the distance.

Eventually, he reached his Immortal’s cave.

As soon as he set foot inside, his eyes turned cold, and a grim expression covered his face.

“Grand Elder. Third Grandpa. Why do you want so badly for me to die…?”

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# Chapter 921: Objectives

Meng Hao took a deep breath as he sat there cross-legged in his residence. Although he was physically in the Fang Clan right now, he didn't have much of a sense of belonging.

"This isn't my home," he murmured softly. "My dad and mom aren't here. Since they're on Planet South Heaven, Planet South Heaven is my home."

At the moment, he was completely exhausted. After spending half a year in the Medicine Pavilion, and then experiencing the encounter moments ago, he was worn out mentally and in pain physically.

Then he thought again about all of the merit points he had basically lost while he was in the Medicine Pavilion. It was like a knife stabbing through his heart.

"Oh, the pain…." he thought, clenching his jaw. "Thankfully, I didn't go all the way through. Next time I'm definitely going to arrange things ahead of time. No merit points, no watching me!" Having made this decision, he let out a long sigh and then closed his eyes and rotated his cultivation base to begin his recuperation.

Ten days later, he opened his eyes, and they shone with an energetic gleam. He took a deep breath. During the past half year, he had expended a lot of mental energy. Now that he was fully recovered, his eyes glittered. He produced the tome that had been given to him from his bag of holding.

"So, Pill Elder gave this to me…." After a moment of thought, he began to flip through the pages. The more he saw, the more brightly his eyes glowed. This was the true Classic of Plants and Vegetation, and it was incredibly detailed. There were even medicinal plants recorded therein that he hadn't seen in the Medicine Pavilion.

As he skimmed its contents, Meng Hao suddenly realized that his divine sense had experienced growth after his experience in the Medicine Pavilion. He sent it out into the courtyard, where he saw Fang Xi sitting there abjectly. The parrot and meat jelly were not sitting on his shoulder as usual. They were nowhere to be seen.

Meng Hao gaped for a moment. He remembered seeing Fang Xi in the group of 500,000 spectators outside of the Medicine Pavilion, but he couldn't remember if the parrot and meat jelly had been there. He pushed open the door of his residence, and the sound caused Fang Xi to look up. His eyes were a bit blank, and when he saw Meng Hao, he sighed and rose to his feet.

Hanging his head, he bitterly said, "Coz, you need to punish me. It was all my fault. Lord Fifth and Lord Third, they… I… I…."

Apparently, he couldn't finish his thought.

"What's wrong?" asked Meng Hao in amazement.

"I don't know what happened with Lord Fifth. After you came out of the Medicine Pavilion, I was going to take him and Lord Third back here. However, something happened to Lord Fifth. All of a sudden… he headed toward tier 7 alchemist Fang Shuiyan, that old woman. Lord Fifth and her peacock started fighting….

"There was nothing I could do to stop it. Lord Fifth went crazy…. Lord Third couldn't say anything to stop what was happening either, so he eventually just joined Lord Fifth." Fang Xi seemed to be completely out of sorts, and wasn't even speaking coherently.

As soon as Meng Hao heard Fang Xi's story, he knew exactly what was going on. He remembered that peacock, and its luxuriant coat of feathers….

“Don’t worry about it, the parrot was just having some fun with the peacock,” Meng Hao said euphemistically.

“Having fun? Coz!” exclaimed Fang Xi in agitation. He seemed upset. “There was definitely nothing fun going on!

“You didn’t see what happened. It… it was terrifying. The peacock’s rear end virtually exploded! It was horrific!!” Fang Xi shuddered. When he thought about what he had seen, he felt a sense of terror. Then he thought about how much time he’d spent with Lord Fifth, and how the parrot was constantly glancing behind him, and all the hair on his body stood on end.

“Coz, that bird… you need to find a place to set it free. It’s simply appalling!” Fang Xi’s breath came in ragged pants.

“You’re still young so you don’t understand,” Meng Hao said, sounding very sure of himself. “As far as the birds are concerned, it was just having fun.”

“Coz, there’s something else I didn’t mention,” Fang Xi continued, unable to hold back. “Once when I went out with Lord Fifth and Lord Third, we encountered a fierce bear, and Lord Fifth… Lord Fifth had… had some fun.”

Meng Hao patted Fang Xi on the shoulder and explained once again that it was all in good fun.

“In the end,” added Fang Xi, “Lord Fifth and Lord Third were taken away by Alchemist Fang Shuiyan….”

“Don’t worry,” said Meng Hao, waving his hand nonchalantly, “That meat jelly can’t be killed, and if the parrot dies, then the world will simply have one less scourge to worry about. Don’t pay them any more attention.” He was well aware that the two morons were incredibly tenacious, and couldn’t be hurt easily. They were virtually indestructible.

“But—”

“Really, don’t say anything more. Come on. Let’s head over to the Dao of Alchemy Division. I wasted an entire half year in the Medicine Pavilion. It’s time to go make some merit points!” Meng Hao shot out of the Immortal’s Cave and Fang Xi reluctantly followed him. The two of them sped toward the Dao of Alchemy Division as fast as possible.

Along the way, Meng Hao’s heart began to surge with excitement. He very much wanted to find out if his tactic of going to the Medicine Pavilion would solve his problem with the merit points.

“Hardships prompt changes, changes bring solutions, solutions resolve hardships!” Before long, the two of them reached the Dao of Alchemy Division and entered the outer mountains. Meng Hao was instantly recognized.

“It’s Fang Hao! He’s here!!”

“Could it be that he’ll go to the Medicine Pavilion again!? It’s too early, isn’t it? Wait, don’t tell me… he’s going to give a lecture on plants and alchemy!?” As soon as the nearby apprentice alchemists saw Meng Hao, they got very excited, and began to spread word to their friends in the clan.

By the time Meng Hao got to Peak #7191, he was being followed by tens of thousands of people. He stepped onto the platform, cleared his throat, and was just about to begin speaking when suddenly, numerous beams of bright light shot toward the area. In the blink of an eye, the crowd exceeded 100,000 people.

There were even alchemists who emerged from within the inner mountains to come hear Meng Hao lecture about plants and vegetation.

Meng Hao had proven to everyone how terrifyingly skilled he was with plants and vegetation. By now, most people were convinced that his skill was at least tier 8 level!!

In the entire Dao of Alchemy Division, not counting Meng Hao, there were only nineteen people who were presently at tier 8 level when it came to skill with plants and vegetation. Those were the tier 8 alchemists, also referred to as Pavilion Elders of the Pill Pavilion.

People like that would never go out and give lectures. From this, it can be imagined how enthusiastic the audience was. Before much time passed, the audience swelled to 200,000.

Meng Hao didn’t need to say a word about the merit points. Everybody knew the rules, and immediately paid their due.

Meng Hao was also excited to note that the old woman Fang Shuiyan was no longer present on the opposite mountain peak. Without any competition to worry about, he shelved his idea of increasing prices and proceeded to give his lecture.

Six hours later, having collected hundreds of thousands of merit points, Meng Hao gritted his teeth and decided to talk for four more hours. That pushed his profit into the 1,000,000 range, and Meng Hao went wild with joy.

With so many merit points, Meng Hao now felt much more at ease. All he had to do was give a lecture for a few hours a day, and vast amounts of merit points would come flowing in. All of a sudden, he felt a sense that the Fang Clan’s Dao of Alchemy Division was showing him quite a bit of hospitality.

Meng Hao now lived a life of extravagance. He bought vast quantities of medicinal pills and medicinal plants. He even procured plenty of Immortal jade, which, after absorbing the spiritual energy, causing his Immortal meridian to become even more solid. On one occasion, after acquiring what was essentially the clan’s entire yearly supply of Immortal jade, he was able to instantly solidify his Immortal meridian to a degree of ninety percent!

His cultivation base experienced rapid growth. He no longer had eighty percent of the power of a true Immortal, but rather, ninety percent. His battle prowess even broke past that of a stage 4 Immortal. Back in his Immortal’s cave, he produced the crocodile, and after a bit of sparring, determined that he was now comparable to a stage 5 Immortal!

He was also just barely able to detect the power of Tribulation forming. He knew that once he became one hundred percent true Immortal, the Door of Immortality would descend.

“I’ve been waiting for a long time for that day to arrive,” he thought, eyes glittering with excitement. “I’ve prepared well, so once I step into true Immortality, I’m going to absorb huge amounts of Immortal qi from the Door of Immortality. I’m going to open dozens of Immortal meridians in one shot!”

This was the same reason why the Chosen of so many sects consolidated their power and waited for true Immortal destiny before making their breakthrough. They wanted to burst into true Immortality by opening multiple Immortal meridians. There were even some Chosen who opened sixty or seventy Immortal meridians in one shot.

Such opportunities were available only when the Door of Immortality appeared. At other times, it would be impossible to experience such a wild leap in one’s cultivation base.

At the same time, Meng Hao continued to concoct Spirit Elixir with increasingly rare plants. The quality of the Spirit Elixir he was producing had reached a terrifying level.

The life force in the Nirvana Fruits was growing stronger. Of course, his spirit stones were rapidly depleted, and when he finally reached the end of his supply, he started exchanging merit points to get more spirit stones.

Unfortunately, after making a few exchanges, he was unable to acquire any more spirit stones; the number of spirit stones that could be doled out to any given person was limited.

Actually, few people were aware that such a rule existed. After all, not many people would ever spend as many merit points as Meng Hao had on spirit stones. Meng Hao was shocked by this development, and nearly went mad.

Right now, he did not lack merit points, he lacked spirit stones. He even thought about selling his merit points for spirit stones, but that was actually a violation of clan rules. Of course, violating the rules didn’t bother him, since he didn’t care much about the rules to begin with.

However, the Fang Clan was in a delicate state at the moment. Meng Hao knew that there were quite a few people who were secretly watching him, and even the slightest mistake could be turned into a major issue.

There were some areas of the ancestral mansion that Meng Hao had never visited. He had stuck to and risen to prominence in the Dao of Alchemy Division. Thanks to his fame and position there, the people who considered him a problem couldn’t make a move against him easily.

For the most part, he wasn’t very familiar with the Fang Clan. He wasn’t well acquainted with the various relatives from other branches, and didn’t even know very many people from the direct bloodline.

The people he had dealings with the most were Fang Xi and 19th Uncle. He didn’t really feel like getting very close with anyone else.

He caught sight of Fang Donghan a few times, who always seemed to be trying to avoid him. Meng Hao knew quite well that he was a Chosen, just like Fang Wei. However, he had been suppressed by Fang Wei, and was looking forward to when Meng Hao and Fang Wei finally squared off. Meng Hao understood how he felt.

As far as Fang Xiangshan went, she also avoided him. On the few occasions when they ran into each other, Meng Hao could see the fear in her eyes.

He couldn’t help but sigh at this. Was he really that scary?

Regarding the other Chosen, he didn’t know them, nor did he have any desire to get to know them.

He had no plans to stay in the Fang Clan for a long time. After all, he had only three objectives in coming here.

The first was to get his Nirvana Fruits. The Second was to excel for his dad and mom’s sake, and make all the Chosen of the Fang Clan look at him with respect.

The third was to reach true Immortal Ascension!

Once he achieved those objectives, Meng Hao would leave the Fang Clan. Then, he would use his Immortal Ancient Dao Medallion to join the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite. There… was where he would continue practicing cultivation and truly rise to prominence.

“It’s important to have someone to rely on. I learned that when I was in the Reliance Sect. Here in the Fang Clan of Planet East Victory, the Dao of Alchemy Division is what I have to rely on.” Meng Hao took a deep breath, and his eyes glittered. Moments later, though, he grimaced.

“However, I’m out of spirit stones. What do I do about that…?”

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# Chapter 922: The Sound of a Drum in the Pill Pavilion!

“Spirit stones… spirit stones!” Meng Hao’s face glowed and he took a deep breath.

“Fang Qun told me that the Dao of Alchemy Division has three types of medicinal pills that no one has ever been able to concoct. The clan will give a huge reward to anybody who does. Since I don’t have any spirit stones, I might as well go see if I can concoct one of them and get that reward!” This was the simplest method he could think of, and he was just about to go try it out when Fang Xi’s excited voice could be heard outside his residence.

“Coz, are you there?!”

Before Meng Hao could even respond, Fang Xi pushed the front door open and rushed in, looking very excited, even entranced. As he ran over, Meng Hao noticed that sky outside looked somewhat different than usual.

Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed in concentration.

It was currently midday, but the sky outside almost appeared to be aflame. The entire sky was crimson red, yet no sun was visible.

It was just barely possible to see that the natural law of a great Dao hung up in the sky.

“Coz, I just saw Goddess Fan Dong’er from the Ninth Sea God World!!

“And Li Ling’er from the Li Clan! And also some new disciple from the Church of the Blood Orchid!” Fang Xi seemed very excited. When he mentioned Fan Dong’er’s name, his eyes seemed to gleam with adoration, and he seemed especially enthusiastic when he talked about Li Ling’er.

“Lots of Chosen have come. Taiyang Zi, Sun Hai from the Church of the Immortal Emperor, Wang Mu from the Wang Clan, and Song Luodan from the Song Clan. There’s even a guy from the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto, someone named Zhou Xin!” As Fang Xi spoke, Meng Hao rose to his feet. Eyes shining, he reached out and grabbed Fang Xi’s shoulders.

“Taiyang Zi is here? And Song Luodan? Li Ling’er? And Sun Hai…?” Meng Hao started laughing out loud. Just when he started worrying about his lack of spirit stones, a whole throng of people showed up who all happened to owe him money.

“Over the next few days, even more Chosen are going to arrive from the various sects and clans. They’re here to watch the East Ascension Sun from the East Ascension Pavilion,” Fang Xi exclaimed excitedly. Although he felt that Meng Hao was acting a bit strange, he didn’t put too much thought into it.

“East Ascension Sun?” This was the second time Meng Hao had heard someone mention East Ascension. The first time had been when Fang Hong’s group had mentioned it.

“Every hundred years, the sun outside of the Nine Mountains and Seas reaches the point in its orbit in which it is closest to Planet East Victory. At that time, Planet East Victory will experience a brand new rising sun!

“Daoist magic and natural laws of Heaven and Earth will appear. Because the sun is so close, if you have the intuition and understanding, then in the moment that the East Ascension Sun rises, you can bathe in the resulting boundless sunlight. That sunligh contains a great Dao that can strengthen your fleshly body!

“Coz, you definitely have to go watch. When the East Ascension Sun appears, all of the clan members under the age of 1,000 will fly up to bathe in the sunlight. The higher you fly, and the closer you get to the sun, the more you’ll benefit!

“A hundred years ago,” Fang Xi continued excitedly, “Wu Daozi from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite made a breakthrough, and his fleshly body reached a height almost comparable to true Immortality!”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. His fleshly body was already incredibly powerful, but now that his Immortal meridian had appeared, his fleshly body was actually a bit weaker than his cultivation base. Furthermore, he knew of no way to improve it. If he could use this chance to do so, it would be great good fortune.

“When does it start?” Meng Hao asked.

“In seven days,” Fang Xi replied.

Meng Hao rubbed his bag of holding and then licked his lips. “Where are Taiyang Zi and all the others?” he asked. “Take me to them.”

“Huh?” Fang Xi hesitated for a moment. Just now, he had seen the aforementioned group at the ancestral mansion’s main gate. “Oh, Fang Wei invited them all to the East Ascension Pavilion in the East District. That… belongs to their branch of the clan. It would be appropriate to go there on the actual day of the East Ascension Sun, but right now….”

“Oh, I see….” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and he smiled. “Well, never mind, then. I’ll just see them in seven days. First, I need to make a trip to the Dao of Alchemy Division. Why don’t you come along?”

Fang Xi shook his head.

“Dad wanted me to go find him. I only came here to tell you about the East Ascension Sun. You go ahead without me, Coz.”

Meng Hao nodded, and he and Fang Xi walked out of the residence, after which they went their separate ways.

Meng Hao transformed into a beam of light that shot out of the ancestral mansion and headed toward the Dao of Alchemy Division. Before long, he arrived. Many of the apprentice alchemists were discussing the East

Ascension Sun, and numerous full alchemists were making special preparations to concoct pills during that time. Condensing the power of the sun into fire-type medicinal pills would significantly increase their medicinal strength.

Furthermore, the power of the sun could be used to condense sunlight itself to concoct East Ascension Pills. Such pills could only be concocted once every hundred years, during the rising of the East Ascension Sun!

Furthermore, only tier 7 alchemists or higher could actually concoct such pills.

Meng Hao did not go to Peak #7191, but instead, went to find Fang Qun. After he explained what he wanted to do, Fang Qun stared back at him in a daze. He had never seen Meng Hao concoct pills. In fact, he wasn't the only one. No one in the entire Dao of Alchemy Division had ever seen Meng Hao concoct pills.

Because of that, many people speculated that Meng Hao only understood plants and vegetation, not pill concocting.

Others believed that Meng Hao would definitely have an understanding of the Dao of alchemy, and only wondered what realm his pill concocting was in.

When Fang Qun heard that he was going to try to concoct one of the three legendary pills that nobody had ever concocted, he stared in shock. A moment later, though, he started to get excited. Nodding his head, he began to show Meng Hao the way.

The two of them sped through the Dao of Alchemy Division, straight into the inner mountains. Many apprentice alchemists saw them, and their eyes began to shine.

“Fang Hao's going into the inner mountains? Could it be that he's heading to the Medicine Pavilion again?!?!”

“I need to go early this time or I won't get a good seat.”

“Come on, let’s follow him!” Numerous apprentice alchemists hurried to follow Meng Hao, and soon, he had a crowd of thousands following him. Bright beams of light shot through the air into the inner mountains. Many of the alchemists there sensed what was happening, and immediately joined the crowd.

After they realized he wasn’t heading to the Medicine Pavilion, many of them were disappointed. However, it was at this point that people started to realize that he was actually headed…

To the Pill Pavilion!

The Dao of Alchemy Division had a Medicine Pavilion and also a Pill Pavilion!

Enshrined within the Pill Pavilion were vast quantities of medicinal pills. Whenever alchemists concocted pills, they could actually sell them here in exchange for other items that they needed.

It was also the location where a huge reward was offered for those three sacred pills!

“He’s going to the Pill Pavilion? Maybe he’s going to buy some medicinal pills?”

“No, that isn’t right…the Pill Pavilion doesn’t sell pills, it only buys them…. Don’t tell me he knows how to concoct pills?”

All of the people following Meng Hao were very curious. Few of them left; most continued to follow him as he neared the Pill Pavilion.

This pavilion didn’t look very different from the Medicine Pavilion. There were also two old men standing guard outside, as well as a huge stone stele that was packed tight with the names of various medicinal pills.

Another difference between the two was that the Medicine Pavilion floated in the air, seemingly held in place by fetters, as if it wished to fly out of the Dao of Alchemy Division into the sky.

The Pill Pavilion did not float in the air. It was held down on the ground by an enormous stone hand, the fingers of which pierced into the pavilion itself. It, too, seemed to wish to fly away, but was forever obstructed by the gigantic hand.

“The Medicine Pavilion was obviously snatched from somewhere else and then brought to the Dao of Alchemy Division by the Fang Clan’s first generation Patriarch,” thought Meng Hao. “That’s why it’s held in place with fetters; to prevent it from returning to its original master. As for the Pill Pavilion, at a single glance you can tell that it was also snatched from somewhere else, and is being held in place to prevent it from going back to its true master.” A strange expression could be seen on Meng Hao’s face as he looked at the Pill Pavilion. From the situation of these two pavilions, it was possible to see how domineering the first generation Fang Patriarch had been.

In front of the Pill Pavilion were three enormous drums, each of which looked ancient, as if they had existed for countless years. On each of the drum heads could be seen ancient characters, glittering with radiant light.

Heavenly Thought Pill!

Sea-Cleaving Heaven-Defying Pill!

Skypalace Sunspirit Pill!

Three drums, three sets of ancient characters. These three medicinal pills had been the life’s work of three Patriarchs of the Fang Clan of ages past. And yet, in all the years since, no one else from the Fang Clan had been able to concoct them!

It was even publicly acknowledged that not even this generation’s most powerful alchemist, Fang Yundan, could concoct it. However, some people speculated that, although Pill Elder could not concoct the Heavenly Thought Pill and the Sea Cleaving Heaven Defying Pill, he actually could concoct the easiest of the three pills, the Skypalace Sunspirit Pill.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and sent out his divine sense. As soon as it touched the three drums, an archaic voice echoed inside of his head.

“Skypalace Sunspirit Pill. Whoever concocts this pill will receive a reward of 100,000,000 spirit stones, 100,000 Immortal jades, 5,000,000 merit points, 10,000 medicinal plants of your choice from the Dao of Alchemy Division, three clan Daoist magics, and one Immortal treasure. Furthermore, the Dao Bell will toll nine times! Those who wish to attempt this pill, strike the drum and produce the fee of 1,000,000 merit points to acquire a set of ingredients.

“Sea-Cleaving Heaven-Defying Pill! Whoever concocts this pill will receive a reward of 1,000,000,000 spirit stones, 1,000,000 Immortal jades, 20,000,000 merit points, 100,000 medicinal plants of your choice from the Dao of Alchemy Division, six clan Daoist magics, and one Ancient treasure. The Dao Bell will toll 18 times! The ingredient fee is 10,000,000 merit points.”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and he began to pant. He looked at the drums with wide eyes.

“Heavenly Thought Pill. Whoever concocts this pill will be the Lord of the Dao of Alchemy Division! The prerequisite to attempt this pill is to concoct the previous two pills. The ingredient fee is 100,000,000 merit points.”

Meng Hao’s mind reeled. He knew that, considering the rewards that were available, and the fact that tens of thousands of years had passed without anyone concocting the pills… the Heavenly Thought Pill was incredibly difficult to concoct.

“I don’t really need to concoct the Heavenly Thought Pill,” he mused. “If I can simply concoct the Skypalace Sunspirit Pill and get that 100,000,000 spirit stone reward, that will be enough.” Licking his lips, he kept the thought of the reward in his mind as if he had just imprinted it onto his soul. His eyes were completely bloodshot.

“For the spirit stones!! And for that Immortal treasure!” He flew forward.

“I’m going to go all out!” Transforming into a beam of light, he shot toward the Pill Pavilion as the surrounding audience of several thousand looked on. He didn’t enter the pavilion, but instead, headed toward the three drums. The eyes of the audience went wide.

In the blink of an eye, he was directly in front of the drums. He then extended his right hand toward the Skypalace Sunspirit Pill drum and struck it with his palm.

DONG!!

The drum reverberated with a deep thrum that echoed out through the entire Dao of Alchemy Division. Ripples spread out in all directions, and all alchemists and apprentice alchemists heard the sound.

“That’s… the sound of someone striking a drum at the Pill Pavilion!!”

“Someone’s trying to concoct one of the three impossible medicinal pills! Even the simplest one requires a fee 1,000,000 merit points. Who could possibly be so rich? Those pills can’t be concocted! It’s a complete waste of 1,000,000 points!”

“That’s… an entire 1,000,000 points!!”

The Dao of Alchemy Division was instantly thrown into an uproar.

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# Chapter 923: Meng Hao Concocts Pills!

Many of the apprentice alchemists in the outer mountains were listening to various alchemists giving lectures about plants and vegetation. When the drum echoed out, all of the apprentice alchemists lifted their heads up in shock. When they realized that the sound of the drum came from the Pill Pavilion, their faces flickered.

“That’s the sound of the drum from the Pill Pavilion! Someone’s trying to concoct one of the three legendary medical pills from the Dao of Alchemy Division!!”

“The simplest of them all requires a fee of 1,000,000 merit points! Unless you successfully concoct the pill, those merit points are wasted!”

“Who is it, I wonder?”

The apprentice alchemists in the outer mountains weren’t the only ones to have such a reaction. The alchemists in the inner mountains also heard the sound of the drum, and their faces filled with shock. There were some who even subconsciously sneered.

“Nobody has tried to concoct one of those pills for years. I wonder which alchemist is going to try.”

“1,000,000 merit points is such a waste. It’s a real pity. Although, things like this only happen every so often, so I definitely need to go watch.”

Many alchemists flew up from the inner mountains. There were even many alchemists who rarely made public appearances, but still flew toward the

Pill Pavilion. After all… this was a spectacle that could only be had at the cost of 1,000,000 merit points.

The tier 7 alchemists in the inner mountains flew into the air with glittering eyes. Even the nineteen tier 8 alchemists heard the sound of the drum, and several of them immediately flew toward the Pill Pavilion.

In the very center of the inner mountains, Pill Elder Fang Yundan sat cross-legged on his mountain peak, looking off toward the Pill Pavilion, his eyes shining with a light of curiosity.

“So, Fang Hao is finally going to try his hand at pill concocting.”

It took only moments for tens of thousands of people to gather around the Pill Pavilion. Beams of light shot toward it continuously as more and more people arrived. When people saw that it was Meng Hao standing outside the Pill Pavilion, they were shocked.

“It’s Fang Hao!”

“Now it makes sense that someone could afford so many merit points. It turns out to be him! But… can he concoct pills? Even if he can, does he really dare to take on those legendary pills, a challenge that countless people have failed over the past tens of thousands of years?”

“He has too many merit points. You know, I think he’s just flaunting the 1,000,000 merit points to attract the attention of the whole Dao of Alchemy Division, and thus, gain more fame. That’s all.”

Meng Hao ignored the crowds that were gathering. As the sound of the drum reverberated out, he held out his identity jade medallion, and 1,000,000 merit points vanished.

Simultaneously, the sound of the drum seemed to enter Meng Hao’s body, and suddenly, a pill formula appeared in his mind. The pill formula was extremely mysterious: he could see it clearly, and yet was unable to commit it to memory.

It was also impossible to imprint it onto a jade slip. Apparently, it was protected by some unique restrictive spell. Actually, Meng Hao was not unfamiliar with such a situation; he had experienced similar things in the ancient Demon Immortal Sect.

“They want to protect the pill formula, in order to make sure it doesn’t get leaked outside the clan.” His eyes flickered as the head of the drum in front of him suddenly rippled like water, and a set of medicinal plants floated out.

In total, there were thirteen of them.

Each medicinal plant could be considered extremely precious. There were five of them that caused a shocking botanical aroma to spread out in all directions as soon as they appeared. Even Meng Hao’s pupils went wide because of that. There were two plants in particular that he found shocking.

One was completely black, with a single delicate flower. It was beautiful, and at a single glance it was obvious that it had an aura of extreme heat circling around it.

Surprisingly, the other plant… was a Sun Blossom!

Meng Hao took a deep breath. He had thought Sun Blossoms to be virtually extinct in the outside world. He had never imagined that he would run into one here. Unfortunately, when compared to the Sun Blossom he had harvested in the Ruins of Immortality, this Sun Blossom was damaged and incomplete. However, it was still a Sun Blossom.

“Considering all of this, those 1,000,000 merit points were actually worth it….” he thought, taking a deep breath. However, he knew that he couldn’t simply take these medicinal plants away; he had to use them here and now to concoct a medicinal pill.

Meng Hao sat cross-legged in front of the Pill Pavilion and closed his eyes to analyze the pill formula. Time passed. More and more people arrived, and soon, 500,000 people were crowded around.

All of them stared at Meng Hao. The sight of someone spending 1,000,000 merit points to concoct a pill was a sight that could only be come across serendipitously. And yet, such a scene was playing out right in front of them. Whether or not Meng Hao succeeded, all of the onlookers were happy to be able to watch this rare scene.

Four hours later, Meng Hao opened his eyes, and they shone brightly.

“This medicinal pill… will not be easy to concoct,” he murmured. “I’ve never come across anything like it before…. It might not be as difficult as concocting something from nothing, but it’s still very challenging. Most importantly, if I fail, the cost will be immense!” He frowned.

“The concocting method actually changes depending on the weather and the time of day. Furthermore, it must absorb Yang qi from each of the twelve two-hour periods in the day without interruption. Divine Will then comes into being, and it can become a sun spirit!

“However, that’s not all. The first word in the name of the pill, Skypalace, is important. It’s actually referring to that mythical celestial palace which exists beyond the clouds in the sky….”

Meng Hao frowned deeply. After a while, he patted his bag of holding to produce a pill furnace. It was pitch black, and a face was just barely visible on its surface, which stared fiercely at Meng Hao.

This was the pill furnace Meng Hao had acquired years ago when he became a Violet Furnace Lord in the Violet Fate Sect. 1

He tapped the pill furnace, and a clear, crisp sound echoed out. The pill furnace shuddered, and the face’s vicious expression suddenly turned into one of fear and respect.

When the sound of the pill furnace spread out, the apprentice alchemists didn’t think much of it. However, the expressions on the faces of the tier 5 and higher alchemists all changed. No longer did they look at Meng Hao with scorn, but rather, with intense concentration.

Whenever masters go to work, the evidence of their foundation can be seen.

All of the tier 5 and higher alchemists could tell that the method with which Meng Hao tapped the pill furnace contained the Dao of alchemy!

“All pill furnaces need to be warmed up! Even a pill furnace that has been used millions of times needs to be warmed up before its full power can be unleashed. But Fang Hao simply tapped the furnace… and produced the same result! Ingenious!”

“It’s a different technique for warming up the furnace! How domineering! He dispersed the medicinal qi within the furnace, making it easier for the pill to take shape!”

“To accomplish something like that requires incredible skill in the Dao of alchemy!”

Meng Hao ignored all of the comments from the audience, and focused all of his attention on the medicinal pill he was going to concoct. No matter how he went about it, he had to attempt to the concoct the pill in order to solve his spirit stone quandary.

“I’m actually not sure I can do it,” he thought. After reflecting for a moment, he reached out to grab one of the medicinal plants. As he held it there in his hand, it seemed to come to life. All of its impurities dissipated, and it turned transparent, like crystal. Then Meng Hao crushed it and placed it into the pill furnace.

This action also caused the other alchemists to be visibly moved.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and looked up into the sky. Then, he placed his left hand onto the pill furnace, causing it to burn, although there was no flame. The medicinal plant instantly began to melt into a liquid.

Two hours later, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, and he selected another medicinal plant. Soon, 24 hours had passed. Last, he put the Sun Blossom into the mix, and then, he placed both hands onto the pill furnace.

Everyone was panting as they watched. During the last day in which they had watched Meng Hao work, they had been able to catch glimpses of his pill concocting techniques. People began to grow more and more shocked at Meng Hao’s proficiency in the Dao of alchemy.

“Time to look at this pill!” Meng Hao growled above the rumbling sound that echoed out from within the pill furnace. Suddenly, the pill furnace’s lid popped off, and a medicinal pill flew out.

As soon as it appeared, it radiated incredible light for 300 meters in all directions, causing everyone’s minds to reel, and a collective gasp to ring out.

“He succeeded?”

“He… actually succeeded?”

Meng Hao closed his eyes. Cracking sounds could suddenly be heard from the medicinal pill, and it shattered, transforming into black sediment that appeared to be somewhat toxic. The sediment slowly transformed into wisps of black smoke.

Failure.

After a moment of silence, everyone burst out into conversation. Meng Hao sat there with his eyes closed, thinking. In truth, he had already known that he had failed about halfway through the concocting process.

However, a failure was exactly what he needed. Based on his skill in the Dao of Alchemy, his analysis of the Skypalace Sunspirit Pill formula told him that there were thousands of different possible concoction methods. Each one seemed as if it would lead to success, and yet simultaneously seemed doomed to lead to failure.

After an hour, Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly opened. “Based on what I learned from this failure, further analysis now reveals 791 possible concocting methods remaining.”

With that, he extended his hand and struck the drum again. The sound of it echoed out, and 1,000,000 merit points vanished. Once again, thirteen medicinal plants flew out.

The audience saw Meng Hao making another attempt and thought he was crazy. Despite the outrageous amount of merit points he was spending, he had decided to try again.

24 hours later, the pill furnace rumbled, and another medicinal pill flew out. This time, it radiated light for 3,000 meters. The pill itself was violet-gold in color, and looked like an inimitable treasure. However, a moment later, cracking sounds could be heard, and it collapsed into wisps of black smoke.

“As expected,” Meng Hao thought, “Based on what I learned this time, I’ve narrowed it down to 216 concocting methods!” Without stopping to rest, he hit the drum, paid another 1,000,000 merit points for thirteen more medicinal plants, and started a third concocting effort.

The audience gaped in shock. When they saw him squandering such a vast amount of wealth, even they felt pain in their hearts.

“Just how many merit points does he have to squander them so freely? After all these years, nobody has ever successfully concocted that medicinal pill, what makes him think he can?”

“If he thinks he has too many merit points, he should just give some of them to me….”

Another 24 hours passed, and rumbling could once again be heard. Meng Hao’s third concoction was a failure.

However, his expression lacked the slightest bit of dejection, and in fact, his eyes were glowing.

“From this third defeat, I’ve now narrowed it down to 17 possible methods that could lead to success!” He struck the drum a fourth time, shocking everyone. Even the tier 6 alchemists thought he was crazy.

After another 24 hours, four straight days of concocting, he failed again.

“From this fourth failure, I have now narrowed down the total possible methods to only 3!” Taking a deep breath, eyes completely bloodshot, he struck the drum again.

The sound reverberated through the air as he began a fifth concoction.

24 hours later, a medicinal pill flew out of the furnace, shone with brilliant light, and then collapsed. Meng Hao suddenly shot to his feet.

“I understand now!” Eyes shining, he struck the drum a sixth time!

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# Chapter 924: Skypalace Sunspirit Pill

All of the successive failures left the onlookers astonished. However, the tier 7 alchemists were starting to catch on to what Meng Hao was doing.

“Every failure actually represents an exponential increase in the chances for success!”

“He… might really be able to succeed in concocting it!” The tier 7 alchemists were all panting as they exchanged shocked looks.

As for the tier 8 alchemists present, their eyes shone with curious gleams.

Meng Hao now only had a bit more than 1,000,000 merit points left. If he failed for a sixth time, he would be unable to continue with further attempts. He spent the merit points, and then his eyes flashed as the thirteen medicinal plants flew out.

“The first difficult aspect of concocting the Skypalace Sunspirit Pill is that the medicinal plants must be adjusted every two hours according to the weather, time, and strength of the spiritual energy in the area!

“Success requires profound skill with plants and vegetation, as well as significant preparation in terms of grafting techniques.

“The second difficult aspect has to do with the pill itself. Although the role of the thirteen medicinal plants in the pill formula seems fixed, in actuality, there is no true set pill formula. The thirteen medicinal plants cannot be used in a fixed sequence, but rather, must be added according to the time of day in which the pill is being concocted.

“The original pill formula can definitely be used to successfully concoct a Skypalace Sunspirit Pill, but only in a unique place, at a unique time, and under unique conditions of spiritual energy. Under any other circumstances, concocting the pill with the original formula would lead to failure.” Meng Hao eyed the thirteen medicinal plants and took a deep breath.

“A third area of difficulty… is that this pill actually does not require a pill furnace. It requires twelve two-hour periods to concoct, and yet thirteen medicinal plants are provided. One of those medicinal plants… acts as the pill furnace!

“A fourth difficulty is that the concocting must be completed in exactly twelve two-hour periods. Even one breath beyond that amount of time will lead to a high chance of failure.” Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a bright light. He had concocted many pills, and had even concocted something from nothing.

His skill in the Dao of alchemy was unfathomable. And yet, this was his first time encountering a medicinal pill that had so many intrinsic internal variables. He took a deep breath and looked up at the sky. Currently, it was midday.

He waited silently. Time passed one breath at a time. Most of the audience looked on, astonished, but the tier 8 alchemists’ eyes were suddenly shining brightly.

Simultaneously, at the center of the inner mountains, Pill Elder rose to his feet and gazed at the Pill Pavilion. A glimmer of excitement could be seen deep in his eyes.

“He’s onto something!” murmured Fang Danyun. “Actually, I can also concoct Skypalace Sunspirit Pills, but only on this mountain, during the middle of the centennial rising of the East Ascension Sun. That is the only day… when I can perfectly concoct it.

“On any other occasion, my success rate of concoction would be only one in ten, and the result wouldn’t be of very high quality.”

Back above the Pill Pavilion, the sky was now shifting into afternoon. Meng Hao's eyes glittered, and he quickly reached out to grab the Sun Blossom. All of its branches and leaves were stripped off in the blink of an eye, leaving behind only the flower petals themselves, which spread open into the shape of a bowl.

"Refine the Sun Blossom into a pill furnace!"

In the moment that the Sun Blossom was successfully transformed into a pill furnace, Meng Hao's eyes flickered with the glow of augury as he mentally analyzed all of the twelve medicinal plants. Then, he reached out to grab one of the medicinal plants, at the same time sending the power of his cultivation base out to transform the shape of the plant. Its medicinal properties were neutralized, and he began to mold it according to the current Yang qi and spiritual energy in the area.

A moment later, the entire medicinal plant transformed into a drop of shining, golden liquid, which he dropped into the Sun Blossom.

Beads of sweat dotted his forehead by the time he finished with that first drop. He continued to channel heat into the Sun Blossom, and also meditated to clear his mind. Soon, the second of the two-hour time periods arrived, and his eyes snapped open. He looked up at the sky, felt the sunlight and the spiritual energy, and then selected another medicinal plant. Following the same method as before, he transformed it into a liquid, which he dropped into the Sun Blossom.

The third two-hour period arrived, then the fourth, and the fifth…

Time passed. The sun set, and dusk fell. Two moons rose as Meng Hao refined a black flower. His expression was extremely intent, especially during the final four two-hour periods. He was clearly expending an incredible amount of mental energy, as much as he had when challenging the Medicine Pavilion.

Every two hours, he had to select the appropriate medicinal plant, and then transform it in accordance with the transformations of Heaven and Earth.

This required significant consideration and judgement, and was something that even tier 8 alchemists would have difficulty with.

If it wasn’t for the fact that Meng Hao’s skill with plants and vegetation was at an incredible level, and that he also had shocking talent in the Dao of alchemy, he would never have been able to accomplish this.

The ninth two-hour period came, then the tenth and the eleventh….

Noon of the second day arrived as Meng Hao selected the final medicinal plant. He transformed it into a liquid, and then dropped it into the Sun Blossom pill furnace. Eyes bloodshot, face a mask of exhaustion, he extended both hands and pushed down onto the Sun Blossom.

His action caused the Sun Blossom to wrap around itself, transforming into a fist-sized flower bud that slowly floated up into the air.

As of this moment, the eyes of hundreds of thousands of panting spectators were all fixed on the flower bud.

The events of the past six days had left everyone shaken, apprentice alchemists and full alchemists alike. Meng Hao’s pill concocting was something that exceeded the imaginations of everyone present. Despite having witnessed the matter with their own eyes, it was still something that words could not describe. They weren’t even sure exactly what he was doing.

The moment had arrived which would reveal whether this concoction was a success or a failure.

Meng Hao looked up at the floating Sun Blossom bud.

Suddenly, beam after beam of light began to shoot out from inside. They pierced through the petals, shining out for 100,000 meters in all directions, penetrating Heaven and Earth.

More beams of light continued to shoot out, the pinnacle of resplendence. The flower bud slowly began to open, the petals spreading apart one by one to reveal a blinding light.

The light caused the sky to fade and all the land to go quiet. In the blink of an eye, all color everywhere dimmed, despite it being high noon. It was as if these flower petals… contained a sun.

That sun rose up, and just barely visible within was a figure seated cross-legged. It was almost as if this figure had been born inside the sun, and was a sun spirit!

Skypalace Sunspirit Pill!

DONG…. DONG…. DONG….

The ancient Dao bell slowly appeared above the Fang Clan ancestral mansion and began to send out its ancient toll. Nine tolls could be heard, which echoed out in all directions. At the same time, writing became visible on the surface of the bell itself.

Fang Hao – Skypalace Sunspirit Pill Concoction – Success!

The words, along with the sound of the bell, were transmitted into the minds of every clan member on Planet East Victory. As of that moment, everyone knew exactly what had just occurred.

The entire Dao of Alchemy Division was thrown into an uproar. Even people who had not come to watch events unfold at the Pill Pavilion could see the blinding light emanating from that very area, and their faces flickered.

Then the toll of the bell could be heard in their minds, and they flew into the air toward the Pill Pavilion.

At the same time, every Fang Clan member on Planet East Victory felt roaring in their minds, regardless of where they were or what they were doing at the moment.

“Fang Hao again!! He… he actually concocted a Skypalace Sunspirit Pill!!”

“Nobody has been able to concoct that medicinal pill for tens of thousands of years. I can’t believe he succeeded! From today on, his position within the Fang Clan is going to be completely different!!”

All bloodlines were astonished, and countless clan members felt their minds reeling. By now, the name Fang Hao was committed to all of their memories. It could be said that during the past year, Fang Hao… had repeatedly astonished the Fang Clan.

In all of the Fang Clan, he was the one who had caused the Dao Bell to ring the most. Not even Fang Wei could do something like that. Even more important… he caused his name to appear on the Dao Bell itself. To the Fang Clan, that was an inestimable honor!

His name, and the words next to it on the Dao Bell, would last for an eternity. As long as the Fang Clan existed, along with its Dao Bell, those words would remain!

The direct bloodline was thrown into a state of complete excitement. The more Meng Hao rose to prominence, the greater their hope in the revival of the direct bloodline.

“Cousin, it’s clear that Hao’er is a true Chosen of the Fang Clan!” thought 19th Uncle, laughing loudly as he looked in the direction of Planet South Heaven.

Meanwhile, Fang Wei’s father and grandfather sat gloomily in the ancestral mansion. Fang Wei’s father, Fang Xiushan, grabbed a magical jade bottle that rested next to him, and crushed it.

“That damned son of a bitch! I can’t believe his Dao of alchemy is at such a high level!

“He concocted a Skypalace Sunspirit Pill. By rising to prominence in the Dao of Alchemy Division, he has risen to prominence in the clan in general. Nobody will dare to make a move against him now!” Fang Xiushan gritted his teeth, and a vicious expression could be seen on his face.

“Dad, that son of a bitch MUST die, for Wei’er’s sake! We need to open the Fang Clan Immortal World!!”

His father took a long, deep breath, and his eyes flickered with killing intent.

“That’s not something I can do on my own,” he said. After a moment of thought, even stronger killing intent flickered in his eyes.

In the main temple of the ancestral mansion, Grand Elder Fang Tongtian stood at the door, gazing off toward the Dao of Alchemy Division. On his face could be seen rare look of surprise.

“Did I… do the wrong thing?” The Grand Elder suddenly seemed to grow a bit older. “No, I didn’t. It’s all for the clan!”

In another location within the East District of the ancestral mansion was a lake known as Brightmoon Lake. Long ago, an ancient Heavenly Dragon passed away in this location, making the Immortal qi abundant there. In fact, the location was essentially a one-of-a-kind Blessed Land on Planet East Victory.

In the middle of the lake was a beautifully ornamented building. It was very large, and was currently occupied by a few dozen people who were talking and laughing. In the middle of them all was Fang Wei, next to whom as Fang Yunyi and other Fang Clan Chosen such as Fang Hong.

Fang Donghan and Fang Xiangshan were there, as well as Taiyang Zi, Sun Hai, Song Luodan, Wang Mu and Li Ling’er, and Chosen from other clans.

Fan Dong’er was also in the group, with the female corpse floating there behind her. Her expression was calm, and she did not seem out of sorts like she had back in the Ruins of Immortality. Quite the opposite; she now wore a sweet, beautiful smile.

Fang Wei was also smiling softly. He was versed in the ways of etiquette, and was very cultured and refined, causing quite a few of the female cultivators to be in very high spirits.

Currently, the group was discussing the Three Great Daoist Societies' recent trial by fire. Of course, the name Fang Mu came up; many people believed that Fang Mu… was either not a member of the Fang Clan, or was actually Fang Wei himself.

Fang Wei did nothing to refute the idea that he was Fang Mu; all he did was shake his head and change the topic. Of course, that only confirmed the suspicions of many.

“I've heard that the Fang Clan has an Astral Projection magic,” said Taiyang Zi, his eyes glittering. “So in the end, is Fang Mu… really you, Elder Brother Fang?”

Fang Wei smiled, and was about to say something in response when his face suddenly flickered. It wasn't just him; the faces of all the members of the Fang Clan flickered, and they subconsciously turned to look toward the Dao of Alchemy Division.

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# Chapter 925: Future Brother-In-Law?

Fang Yunyi’s face suddenly looked extremely unsightly. The faces of the other Chosen who surrounded Fang Wei also darkened, as did the faces of all the other Fang Clan members who were there to accompany Fang Wei.

In their opinion, even though Meng Hao was the eldest grandson of the direct bloodline, in the Fang Clan, it was Fang Wei who had been declared Dao Child by the Patriarch. Fang Wei was sure to reach the Ancient Realm within a thousand years, and therefore, he was someone that no one could afford to depose or offend.

In addition to that, there were Fang Yunyi’s provocations; he constantly told everyone about how vicious Meng Hao was. In the end, many of the Chosen of the clan were already fed up with Meng Hao.

Deep within Fang Donghan’s eyes was a virtually imperceptible flicker. Everything that was happening was exactly what he wanted to see. The more Meng Hao rose to prominence, the more at odds he would be with Fang Wei, and the two would surely become irreconcilable adversaries.

“The two of them are going to fight each other sooner or later,” he thought. “And my own opportunity to rise up will come… when that battle ends!” He lowered his head so that others would not be able to see the wild ambition in his eyes.

Fang Xiangshan stood off to the side, panting, her eyes wide. She had seen Meng Hao a few times within the clan, and had always scurried away at the sight of him. Now the sound of the bell echoed in her mind. How could she ever have imagined that Meng Hao… would actually concoct a Skypalace Sunspirit Pill?

The entire Fang Clan was shaken!

“What happened?” asked Song Luodan with a smile, his eyes flickering. The Chosen of the other clans all looked curiously at Fang Wei, even Li Ling’er and Fan Dong’er.

A touch of scorn could be seen within Li Ling’er’s expression. When the subject of Fang Mu came up earlier, she could only laugh grimly at how Fang Wei had acted. She well knew that Fang Mu was not Fang Wei, but rather, the detestable Meng Hao.

Fang Wei’s expression returned to normal, and he smiled slightly as he turned back to the other Chosen.

“Oh, nothing really,” he said. “Just a clan member concocting a pill, which caused the Dao Bell to toll, that’s all. Fellow Daoists, once this day passes, the day of the East Ascension Sun will be upon us.

“I, Fang Wei, would like to congratulate all of you ahead of time on what you will gain. This is a day of jubilee for the Fang Clan that happens once every hundred years, and as one of the Four Great Clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, it is always our pleasure to invite disciples from all the various sects and clans. Let us once again enjoy this East Ascension Sun together!!”

Fang Wei’s words made it difficult for anyone to ask further questions. They resumed chatting and laughing, although nobody forgot about what had just happened.

Sun Hai’s expression was that of extreme haughtiness as he chatted politely with the Fang Clan cultivator next to him. The Fang Clan members didn’t show the slightest bit of disrespect. After all, they had recently heard that Sun Hai had clinched the nomination to become the Imperial Child of the Church of the Immortal Emperor.

“Now that you mention it,” said Sun Hai, laughing heartily and rubbing his bald head, “I actually have a deep connection with the Fang Clan.

“I have a Junior Sister in the Church of the Immortal Emperor who happens to be a member of the Fang Clan.” When Sun Hai mentioned this Junior Sister, his eyes glowed with adoration. He still remembered the first time he had seen the young woman, how he had stared blankly, and how it felt as if his mind were being struck relentlessly by lightning. In that moment, it had seemed as if that young woman from the Fang Clan was the only thing that existed in the whole universe.

Although her true identity was kept a secret in the Church of the Immortal Emperor, Sun Hai knew that she was a member of the Fang Clan.

He had sworn an oath that, one day, the two of them would be united as beloved. In the course of pursuing that dream, he had already been violently beaten up on several occasions, all just to be near her….

Each time he was beaten up, he got extremely excited, as he took it as an expression of her desire to be on intimate terms with him.

Within the East Ascension Pavilion, everyone was talking about the imminent sunset, and then the following rise of the East Ascension Sun. Outside of the pavilion, the shores of Brightmoon Lake were encircled by more than a hundred thousand people. Most of them were Fang Clan members younger than 1000 years of age, and although they were all extremely excited in their anticipation of the following day’s sunrise, they were now all shaken inwardly by the tolling of the Dao Bell.

Fang Xi was in the crowd, a bit closer to the lakeshore than most of the others. Currently, he was clenching his fists in excitement, but also feeling a bit disappointed that he hadn’t gone to watch Meng Hao’s performance earlier.

In his excitement, he didn’t notice that within the East Ascension Pavilion, Fang Yunyi’s grim gaze had come to rest on him.

“I don’t dare to provoke Meng Hao again,” Fang Yunyi thought, “but Fang Xi… is always following him around! He’s just looking for trouble!” With a cold snort, he turned his head to a nearby clan member and whispered a few sentences. The young man hesitated in response, after which Fang Yunyi spoke a few more words. The young man immediately left the pavilion to go make the appropriate arrangements.

Meanwhile, back in the Dao of Alchemy Division, Meng Hao was looking at the medicinal pill floating in midair. He exhaled deeply as the blinding but gentle light surged out from the medicinal pill. Finally, he made a grasping motion, causing the pill to fly down into his palm, whereupon he examined it closely.

The minds of the surrounding cultivators trembled as they stared blankly at Meng Hao and the medicinal pill in his hand. Gasps filled the air.

It was clearly… a Skypalace Sunspirit Pill!

The medicinal pill contained unsurpassable Yang characteristics, as well as a divine air. To cultivators who cultivated fire magic, it was like a Heavenly material or Earthly treasure. In fact, it was a medicinal pill that Spirit Realm cultivators couldn’t consume, and even Immortal Realm cultivators who used it would do so with extreme caution.

After absorbing it successfully, one’s fire magic would without doubt achieve an incredible breakthrough, as would one’s cultivation base. Any fire poisoning that resulted would actually be an incredible divine ability to any cultivator who practiced fire magic.

Furthermore, because of the East Ascension Sun on the following day, if this pill was consumed at that time, the internal fire and the external fire would combine, catalyzing the pill’s medicinal properties and making it endlessly powerful in terms of body refinement!

To any alchemist, this pill… was even more precious. By studying it, one could potentially refine and improve one’s Dao of alchemy. When it came to the other two rare medicinal pills of the Fang Clan, there were none left in the Pill Pavilion. There were still some Skypalace Sunspirit Pills remaining though, less than ten.

Rumor had it that those pills had been there for a long time, and could only be acquired by exchanging a significant amount of merit points.

Of course, the Medicine Immortal Sect could concoct the pill, but to purchase it there required a vast and dreadful expenditure of spirit stones. Even tier 7 alchemists wouldn’t necessarily be able to buy one.

Immediately, the surrounding alchemists began calling out, desirous of purchasing the pill.

“Alchemist Fang, are you going to sell that pill?”

“How many spirit stones are you selling it for?! I want to buy it!”

As soon as Meng Hao heard spirit stones mentioned, his eyes began to glow. As he hesitated, the previously invisible tier 8 alchemists in the area suddenly materialized.

Immediately, the faces of the full alchemists in the crowd flickered, and they simultaneously clasped hands and bowed.

“Greetings, Pavilion Elders!”

Their reaction caused the other members of the audience to gasp and look at the unprepossessing old men who had just appeared. Their minds spun as they realized that, other than Pill Elder, these were the most supreme figures in the Dao of Alchemy Division, the Pavilion Elders!

“Greetings, Pavilion Elders!”

“Greetings, Pavilion Elders!”

All of the surrounding hundreds of thousands of cultivators clasped hands and bowed. The rumbling sounds of their voices echoed out like thunder. In response, the five Pavilion Elders’ faces remained expressionless. One of them, a rather short, hunchbacked old man, smiled and waved his hand, causing him to flicker and then appear in front of Meng Hao.

“Fang Hao offers greetings, Pavilion Elder!” said Meng Hao, clasped hands and bowing.

“Fang Hao, there’s no need to act like this. The Dao of Alchemy Division has a rule that any person who concocts one of the three sacred pills will be granted the status of Pavilion Elder. Come. I shall take you to pay a visit to Pill Elder.” The old man’s face glowed with admiration and approval. The other four elders around them, despite their expressionless faces, emanated similar feelings.

Meng Hao took a deep breath as he obediently followed them. The entire group transformed into beams of prismatic light that shot further into the inner mountains.

They left behind hundreds of thousands of cultivators, all of whose faces shone with envy. As for all of the apprentice alchemists who had listened to Meng Hao’s lectures, they looked extremely excited. Since they considered themselves to be followers of Meng Hao, that meant… they were the followers of a Pavilion Elder!

Off in the distance in midair, the Pavilion Elders looked at Meng Hao’s obedient and charming demeanor, and their approval of him deepened.

“Neither arrogant nor rash,” said one of the elders, smiling. “Furthermore, you have no flaws of character, and also understand etiquette. You might be a bit greedy, but there’s no harm in that. Hao’er, you’re really remarkable! Far more exceptional than your father.”

“My dad?” Meng Hao gaped.

“Back before your father met your mother, he came to me to concoct some pills. He was extremely arrogant and domineering, and even threatened me! He said that if I didn’t concoct the pills for him, he would set up my granddaughter with some Junior Brother of his.” The old man suddenly looked a bit irritated, and he harrumphed.

“Really?” exclaimed Meng Hao, staring with wide eyes. He could hardly believe that his father, who seemed so mighty and solemn, eternally strict, would act like the person this Pavilion Elder had just described.

“It’s absolutely true in every way!” said another of the Pavilion Elders, nodding earnestly. “After he met your mother, your father became much more restrained. To think that, back in the day, he was the number one bully on East Victory. He oppressed all the men and subjugated all the women!” The old man sighed.

Meng Hao cleared his throat and shook his head, unsure of what to say, and still not quite able to believe what he was hearing.

“That’s why I say that you’re remarkable, Hao’er,” said the hunch-backed old man. “Wonderful and with boundless prospects.” He laughed heartily and looked at Meng Hao with an expression of praise.

“Pavilion Elder,” Meng Hao asked, “in the end… did you refine the pills for him?”

“Hmph! I am upright and proud,” the old man said haughtily. “I won’t bow my head to anyone! I have my principles, and because of that, if I don’t feel like concocting pills, it doesn’t matter who comes to me, even your father, do you think I would make an exception? Therefore, I only concocted five hundred batches of medicinal pills for him. Not one more!”

Off to the side, another old man who hadn’t spoken so far looked at Meng Hao and winked.

Meng Hao blinked, cleared his throat, and didn’t dare to ask another question.

Before long, the Pavilion Elders had led Meng Hao to the very center of the inner mountains. Off in the distance was a peak that towered up into the swirling clouds. Upon close inspection, it was possible to see countless caves riddling the heights of the peak.

Gradually, a droning sound became audible from within the caves, a sound that caused Meng Hao's scalp to go numb.

Before they could get very close, countless black beams shot out from the caves. In the blink of an eye, the sky was filled with millions of black beetles, which were usually known as Split-horned Scarab Beetles! 1

Buzzing sounds filled the air as millions of them swarmed around Meng Hao's group, emanating astonishing energy.

"Fear not," said the hunchbacked Pavilion Elder, smiling. "We call these bugs Unicorn Immortals, and they are personally raised by Pill Elder himself. Actually, there's something about him you probably don't know. Pill Elder… excels, not in the Dao of alchemy, but in the Dao of insects!"

Meng Hao was shaken. Pill Elder didn't excel in the Dao of alchemy, and yet was a tier 9 alchemist. One could only imagine how terrifying he would be if he did excel in it. Seeing these Unicorn Immortals, caused him to recall the countless black beetles he had seen in the medicinal plant garden in the Ruins of Immortality.

It was at this point that an archaic voice suddenly echoed.

"Fang Hao, come…."

The Unicorn Immortals circled around the mountain peak and then shot back into one of the caves.

1. In Chinese, the word for scarab beetle is literally "Golden Turtle." There is an extra line that I'm leaving out of the main text which reads, "Although the name has the world 'turtle' in it, these weren't turtles, but vicious bugs!"

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# Chapter 926: Daos and Tools!

Meng Hao took a deep breath and headed toward the mountain peak. When he arrived, he saw an old man in white robes, surrounding by swirling mists. He stood on top of the mountain, his back to Meng Hao. As Meng Hao approached, the man turned to face him, and smiled.

Meng Hao’s eyes widened as soon as he caught sight of him.

The feeling he got when he looked at this old man was very similar to the feeling he got from Pill Demon!

It was actually extremely similar. In fact, although their physical appearance was different, in terms of the energy within him, it seemed almost exactly the same.

As he stood there with the mists swirling around him, Meng Hao almost thought he was looking at his master.

Both wore white robes, and both had long white hair. Both were aged, and both were surrounded by a swirling medicinal aroma. They seemed equally kind, and seemed to both be filled with the same feeling of anticipation.

The old man looked over at Meng Hao and said, “Fang Hao, to be able to concoct a Skypalace Sunspirit Pill, especially considering that it was done at a time of year and time of day not specific to the pill formula, means that your Dao of alchemy has already reached the pinnacle.”

From the man’s words, Meng Hao was already able to tell that the rumor about Pill Elder being incapable of concocting the three sacred medicinal pills was likely not true.

The key to understanding the Skypalace Sunspirit Pill was understanding that there was ‘no specific’ time or hour. For Pill Elder to say this indicated that he already had a deep understanding of the Skypalace Sunspirit Pill.

Meng Hao thought for a moment. As he looked at Pill Elder, the drone of the Unicorn Immortals filled his ears. Sometimes, all of them would make noise at the same time, giving rise to an incredibly intense sound. Other times, only a few would make noise. Either way, the sound was continuous.

“Fang Hao, look over there, and tell me what you see.” Pill Elder glanced off into the distance, toward the numerous cloud-wreathed mountain peaks.

Meng Hao suddenly realized that his heart had become very calm after laying eyes on Pill Elder. He felt free and at ease, as if listening to the old man speak had caused him to enter some strange state.

Although he couldn’t explain it clearly, for some reason his heart felt more and more calm as he looked off into the distance at the mountains and clouds.

Instead of answering the question, he asked one of his own. “Senior Pill Elder, may I ask, what do you see, sir? Or perhaps you can tell me what it is you wish me to see?”

Pill Elder laughed at Meng Hao’s slippery words. He didn’t seem to mind, and in fact, seemed to approve. Apparently he hadn’t been looking for an answer to begin with.

“I see mountains, and I see clouds,” said Pill Elder. “I see the cultivators of the Dao of Alchemy Division, and I see the world that belongs to our Dao of Alchemy Division.” He sighed.

Meng Hao remained silent, unsure of what hidden meanings might be contained within Pill Elder’s words.

“These things are tools. They are both tangible and intangible, visible and invisible. They are tools of the Dao of Alchemy Division, or perhaps you could even say, its physical form.

“30,000 years ago was the golden age of the Dao of Alchemy Division. Our Dao and our tools were united, and seemed as if they would exist for all eternity…. However, many of the Patriarchs of the Dao of Alchemy Division passed away into meditation. Then, the last of the Patriarchs from that age turned against our Dao of alchemy, and founded the Medicine Immortal Sect.

“At that time, we were battered by theories from other Daos of alchemy from the outside world. From that time on, the tools of the Dao of Alchemy Division… were shattered.

“For tens of thousand of years after that, one generation of alchemists after another has contemplated alchemy, and attempted to restore us to our previous pinnacle. However… their Dao of alchemy had long since forgotten the existence of our own tools, and was influenced by the Daos of alchemy from the outside world.

“It was as if their Dao of alchemy was soulless.

“As if their souls had fled, leaving behind an empty husk.

“It was as if the Fang Clan’s Dao of alchemy had been walking in a dream. Its soul had been struck too viciously by the outside world, and had been influenced by too many random alchemical philosophies. The body of the Fang Clan had no soul, and therefore rested all its hope in aimless searching… among the philosophies of the outside world.

“If things continue in this fashion, then the Fang Clan’s Dao of alchemy will gradually become a lost part of history, and will fade into nothing.

“Daos and tools must be combined. Pick up the Fang Clan’s Dao of alchemy, and restore it to its pinnacle. That is the true way to cause the Fang Clan’s Dao of Alchemy Division to rise to prominence once again.

“And thus, the three sacred medicinal pills!

“Do you understand?” His gaze returned from the distance to settle on Meng Hao. His eyes seemed to be piercing deep into Meng Hao, to be viewing his very soul.

Meng Hao was silent for a long moment and then nodded at Pill Elder.

“I think I understand some of what you mean, Senior,” he said. “Tools can be tangible or intangible. The Fang Clan’s Dao of Alchemy Division used them for many years, after which they formed a soul. That soul must return to the body, lest the Dao of Alchemy Division be submerged in ignorance.”

Pill Elder stood there quietly, unspeaking.

“However, there is one thing I don’t understand, Senior,” Meng Hao continued calmly. “People who comprehend the Dao, and who also absorb various schools of thought, will eventually form their own Dao. Isn’t such a thing unavoidable when coming to comprehending the Dao?”

“Absorbing various schools of thinking regarding the Dao of alchemy in order to achieve your own Dao, is absolutely a path to comprehending the Dao. However… the premise is that you possess your own Dao to begin with. If you do, then of course you can absorb the ideas of others. However, if you don’t, and simply attempt to tangle with the tools of the other schools of thought, then you won’t be absorbing them, you will be assimilated by them.

“Tools are like a home. The Dao is the heart. When you merge tools with the Dao, then your heart is home! Fang Hao… do you really understand?” He once again looked deeply at Meng Hao.

After a moment, he casually continued, “I heard that the Grand Elder gave you two Nirvana Fruits.”

It was hard to say whether or not it was a coincidence, but as soon as he began to speak those final words, the Unicorn Immortals on the mountain suddenly began to buzz loudly. If Meng Hao hadn’t been standing very close to Pill Elder, he wouldn’t have been able to hear clearly.

As soon as he finished speaking, Pill Elder waved his hand, causing a bag of holding to fly over and hover in front of Meng Hao.

“In there are the rewards for concocting the Skypalace Sunspirit Pill, with the exception of the Immortal treasure. Think about your exact requirements for the treasure, and tell me later. I’ll make the arrangements to have it forged for you.”

Meng Hao trembled. As he thought about the two exhortations just given to him by Pill Elder, he had to ask himself if he truly understand what it all meant….

“Perhaps the deeper meaning in his questions about the Dao of alchemy are a reminder that the Nirvana Fruits are not mine,” he thought. “Or could it be that he’s indicating that there are still secrets I don’t understand about the Nirvana Fruits?” Meng Hao didn’t pursue the conversation topic. Instead, after hearing about the Immortal treasure, his eyes flickered.

After a moment’s hesitation, he said, “Senior Pill Elder, um… I really don’t need any Immortal treasures. Can I exchange that reward for something else?”

Pill Elder looked at Meng Hao for a moment, and then began to chuckle. This was the first time he had actually smiled. “What exact reward would you like to exchange it for?”

“Um….” Meng Hao cleared his throat and decided that he might as well give his idea a shot. “Senior Pill Elder, I think those Unicorn Immortals are pretty incredible. Would you mind teaching me a bit about the Dao of insects, sir?”

“Oh?” Pill Elder replied with a smile. “Well, these Unicorn Immortals have the power of Ancestral Awakening in their bloodline. I raised them for years before they reached the point where they could be trained. The Dao of insects is a top-secret magic. Even though you’re a clan member, you would still need to undergo an assessment before you could start to work with it.”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. Considering that Pill Elder hadn’t refused him outright, that meant that there was a bit of hope. As soon as he had neared this mountain, those Unicorn Immortals had drawn his attention. Ever since he’d returned from the Ruins of Immortality, there had been an idea percolating deep within him.

He had long since become quite envious of that cloud of beetles he had seen in the Ruins of Immortality. Ever since, he had thought that if he could wave his hand and cause tens of millions of black beetles to fill the sky, then any opponent he faced would instantly become as petrified as he had been that year. With a mere thought, he could instantly turn his enemies into nothing but ash.

The mere thought of being able to do something like that one day, left Meng Hao very excited.

This was especially true considering that there were several black beetles currently inside his bag of holding. Their life force was incredibly powerful, and they had not died, but rather remained dormant inside his bag of holding after being sealed.

“Senior, look, you know… I’m the kind of old-fashioned cultivator who doesn’t like to rely on external weapons.” As he spoke, his tone continued to grow more somber. “If you start using magical items, then eventually you’ll start to rely on them. The Dao of insects is different! It’s like a divine ability, an academic art, even more so, a Dao!

“Senior, I don’t want any magical weapons. I just seek the Dao.” As he spoke his final sentence, he clasped hands and bowed deeply.

In his mind, he felt quite satisfied with his eloquence, especially in the delivery of that last line.

Pill Elder looked at Meng Hao for a long moment, then waved his right hand. A jade slip flew out to hover in front of Meng Hao. It was emerald green, and one side was carved with the image of a Unicorn Immortal. The creature seemed matchlessly vicious, with a monstrous killing aura.

The other side was carved with another Unicorn Immortal. However, this one was extremely placid, and looked like it wouldn’t even hurt a fly.

“Take a look at the first of the three volumes on the Dao of insects. If you have the talent, I’ll teach you.

“You’ll also find a command medallion in that bag of holding. According to the rules of the Dao of Alchemy Division, anyone who concocts the Skypalace Sunspirit Pill will automatically become a tier 8 alchemist. Your status in the clan is now equal to a Clan Elder. You may also select any mountain in the Inner Mountains to serve as your Immortal’s cave.”

With that, he waved his sleeve, causing a gentle wind to materialize. It swirled around Meng Hao, causing his vision to swim. When it became clear again, he was far away from the mountain.

He looked back toward the mountain peak in the center of all the other mountains. For just a moment, he could make out all of the caves on the peak. Eyes glittering, he took a deep breath, clasped hands and bowed.

Then, he left.

He flew out of the inner mountains, during which time he encountered several alchemists. As soon as they saw Meng Hao, their expressions filled with awe, and they immediately clasped hands in greeting. The story of Meng Hao concocting the Skypalace Sunspirit Pill had already spread throughout the Fang Clan, and everyone knew about it.

There were some people who hadn’t been convinced by Meng Hao charging all the way to the seventh level of the Medicine Pavilion. Now, though… Meng Hao had concocted a legendary medicinal pill. In Dao of Alchemy Division, he was as stable as Mount Tai, and not a single voice of doubt could be heard regarding him.

In the world of cultivation, respect is given to the powerful. It was no different in the Dao of Alchemy Division!

Just as Meng Hao was about to leave the inner mountains, he suddenly stopped in place and turned his head to look at one particularly beautiful mountain peak. The entire mountain was jade green, and its snow-capped peak was surrounded by swirling clouds.

Almost in the exact moment that he turned to look at the mountain, he heard a miserable, bloodcurdling shriek echo out from within the misty mountain.

That scream was not the scream of a cultivator, but rather… it came from the beak of a beautiful peacock.

At the same time, a bellow of rage could be heard that obviously came from the mouth of an old woman.

“You damned mutt of a bird! It’s time we fight! I’m going to refine you into a pill!!”

Next, the arrogant and despotic voice of a parrot could be heard squawking out. “Do you know how many years Lord Fifth has swept across Jianghu? Huh? Look, you old crone, Lord Fifth screwed a hole through the Heavens before you were even born!

“Do you know who Lord Fifth’s master is? Well I’ll tell you, and you’re gonna be scared to death! Lord Fifth’s master is Fang Hao!”

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# Chapter 927: The Shore of Brightmoon Lake

Meng Hao’s face was unsightly. Feeling somewhat helpless, he watched a multicolored parrot flapping its wings as it flew through the air. A small bell could be seen attached to its claw, and the parrot looked very pleased with itself. It somehow seemed licentious, and even had a black strip of cloth wrapped around its head, covering one of its eyes. The remaining visible eye gleamed brightly as it flew out from the mountain peak.

“You just wait for Lord Fifth, you old hag. And as for you, my beloved concubine, don’t worry, Lord Fifth will be coming back for you. I’ll risk everything to rescue you from this place!”

Behind the parrot was the tier 7 alchemist, the old woman. Her face was a mass of fury as she shot after the parrot at top speed. Behind her was a beautiful young woman, clad in a white robe, the picture of purity and innocence. This was the same young woman who Meng Hao had encountered after challenging the seventh level of the Medicine Pavilion, the clan Junior Sister named Wan’er.

Miserable shrieking could be heard in the distance, and Meng Hao could just barely make out a beautiful peacock, gasping and struggling in vain to rise to its feet. From the look of the situation, it had just experienced some unimaginable catastrophe.

Meng Hao sighed, feeling quite sorry for the peacock. Anything with feathers that showed up in front of the parrot would find it difficult to escape the bird and its fiendish hobbies.

As soon as the parrot flew out, it caught sight of Meng Hao, and its uncovered eye lit up. It hurried over and began to cry out plaintively.

“Master, save me! Master, this old hag is out of control! She’s trying to kill me! Save me, master!” As the parrot cried out, the bell attached to its claw suddenly made a popping sound and transformed into the meat jelly, which also began to cry out to Meng Hao.

“Master, here you are, finally! There’s a bully following us! Master, she’s a real bully!”

Not too far behind, the furious old woman caught sight of Meng Hao, as did the young woman in the white robe. The young woman’s jaw dropped in surprise, as if the Meng Hao in her mind couldn’t possibly have anything to do with this shameless parrot.

Clearing his throat, Meng Hao hurriedly backed away, and then made to continue on his way as if he hadn’t seen anything that was happening.

“Master, save me….” the parrot screeched immediately, flying toward Meng Hao at top speed.

Meng Hao waved his hand, and his body disappeared in a minor teleportation. When he reappeared off in the distance, the parrot immediately changed directions and continued to speed toward him. As for Meng Hao, he suddenly seemed to radiate an air of righteousness. Expression solemn, he began to speak.

“I do not know you, evildoer! Exactly who the hell are you?” he said. Then a slightly confused expression appeared on his face as he looked at the pursuing old woman.

“Meng Hao!” squawked the parrot, glancing back the old woman, who was about to catch up. “I have spirit stones!”

“Hold your tongue, evildoer!” said Meng Hao, stopping in place. His face was somber, as if he was the sole representative of justice. “There is no enmity between us, and yet you try to frame me? Well, never mind. I might as well just put you in your place right now!” With that, he waved his right hand.

Meng Hao didn’t even have a chance to unleash a divine ability. Before anything could actually happen, the parrot let out a miserable shriek, and then its body went stiff, as if it had just been seriously injured. Then, it shot directly into Meng Hao’s sleeve.

Meng Hao cleared his throat and inwardly cursed the parrot’s unconvincing performance.

“Senior,” he said to the old woman, cautiously backing up. “This bird is vile and detestable. I’m just on my way back from visiting Pill Elder, after having been fortunate enough to become a tier 8 alchemist. Junior will help you take care of this bird, don’t worry.”

The old woman’s cultivation base was so profound that Meng Hao couldn’t assess it. In the Dao of Alchemy Division, alchemy was the true Dao, and one’s cultivation base played a mere supporting role. However, because of all the life-or-death scenarios that Meng Hao had faced, he still edged backward carefully as if guarding against any contingencies, simultaneously flashing his tier 8 alchemist’s command medallion.

The old woman looked at Meng Hao backing away, and said nothing. Eventually, he transformed into a beam of light that fled into the distance. At that point, the old woman’s eyes flashed.

The young woman hesitated for a moment, then quietly said, “Grand-aunt, that bird….”

“Just forget about it,” said the old woman, turning to head back toward the mountain. The young woman followed.

Along the way, the young woman couldn’t refrain from asking, “Grand-aunt, Fang Hao…?”

The old woman did nothing other than shake her head. A flash of insight could be seen deep within her eyes. From the moment Meng Hao had challenged the seventh level of the Medicine Pavilion, she knew that he would be a new force coming to the fore of the Dao of Alchemy Division. Then he concocted the Skypalace Sunspirit Pill, which left her shaken inwardly, and also thoroughly convinced that Fang Hao would be a blazing sun of the Dao of Alchemy Division!

She wasn’t sure if he was the type of person to nurse grudges. Because of the level of her cultivation base, she had been aware all along that the parrot and the meat jelly belonged to him. Furthermore, she had intentionally driven them out at the exact moment in which Meng Hao had been passing by.

Her entire goal had been to resolve any feelings of resentment Meng Hao might have toward her.

She was much higher than him in terms of clan seniority, had a profound cultivation base, and had been famous for many years. Therefore, she was well versed in finding clever ways to resolve problems, and the scene that had played out just now was just the method she had come up with to resolve her issues with Meng Hao.

Meng Hao continued flying through the Dao of Alchemy Division. When he realized that the old woman wasn’t pursuing him, his eyes flickered. He, of course, understood her intention.

As they emerged from the Dao of Alchemy Division, the parrot’s spirits seemed to lift. It flew out of his sleeve and arrogantly cried, “You just wait for Lord Fifth, you old hag! Lord Fifth will be back!”

Off to the side, the meat jelly nodded its head vigorously. For the meat jelly to act in such a way was clear evidence of the sufferings these two dunces had endured in recent days.

However, as soon as the parrot finished speaking, Meng Hao’s right hand shot out, grabbed the parrot, and dragged it in front of him. The parrot’s eyes bulged.

“What are you doing!? What are you grabbing your Lord Fifth for!?”

“What did you say just now about spirit stones?” Meng Hao asked coldly. Whenever he and the parrot interacted, it was never with courtesy.

“Spirit stones?” the parrot pretended to be confused. “What spirit stones?”

Meng Hao glared at the parrot, and then suddenly, a bashful expression appeared on his face. The parrot’s eyes immediately went wide, and it began to shiver.

The meat jelly gasped and let out a muffled shriek.

“It’s that expression again! Finished! We’re finished! Whenever that expression appears, it means the end is near! The bird is really done for this time….”

The parrot’s eyes filled with fear, and before Meng Hao could even say anything, it fawningly said, “Hahaha! I’m just playing around with you! Spirit stones… ah, spirit stones. That old hag has a whole vein of spirit stones underneath that mountain of hers. Whenever you feel like going to steal them, Meng Hao, I’ll help you dig them up.

When Meng Hao heard the words ‘vein of spirit stones,’ his eyes began to shine. He then began to ask about the specifics.

One man, one bird, and one meat jelly flew back toward the ancestral mansion, conversing with each other in hushed tones.

By now, evening was falling. Off in the distance, the setting sun filled the sky with golden light. When Meng Hao got back to the ancestral mansion, he saw numerous clan members heading toward the East District. Meng Hao looked in that direction and suddenly remembered what was going to be happening in the morning.

“East Ascension Sun!” Muttering to himself, he changed directions and flew toward the East District. The parrot perched on his shoulder, and the meat jelly transformed into a bell and attached itself to the parrot’s claw.

Meanwhile, in the East District’s East Ascension Pagoda, Fang Wei smiled as he chatted with the various Chosen. Not once did he mentioned the event which had just sent the entire Fang Clan astir.

Although nothing seemed unusual about the way the other Chosen were carrying themselves, all of them had long since caught on to the fact that something unusual had happened. The mere fact that Fang Wei had brushed the matter aside was what had led them to this conclusion in the first place.

At one point, somebody brought up Fang Mu again. Just like before, Fang Wei didn’t openly admit that he was Fang Mu, and yet, he looked over and gave Li Ling’er an apologetic smile. Quite a few Chosen noticed this, and began to consider what it meant.

Li Ling’er snorted coldly, and even more derision could be seen in her expression. She was even more convinced than Sun Hai that Meng Hao was Fang Mu. She hated Fang Mu deeply, but when she looked at Fang Wei, her expression was one of ridicule. She seemed to be sickened by him.

When Fang Wei saw the look on her face, his eyes flickered imperceptibly. He suddenly changed the topic and began to chat about the East Ascension Sun.

Sun Hai’s eyes flashed, but when he thought about how the girl he adored was a member of the Fang Clan, he didn’t say anything. Instead, he pulled another of the Fang Clan Chosen off to the side and asked whether or not he knew a member of the Fang Clan clan named Fang Yu.

The sky was growing dark, and more and more members of the Fang Clan clustered together around Brightmoon Lake. Originally, they had been waiting quietly, but now they were all discussing the matter of Meng Hao concocting the Skypalace Sunspirit Pill. Although the Dao Bell had long since ceased to toll, the sound of it still rang within their hearts.

“I can’t believe Fang Hao actually concocted a Skypalace Sunspirit Pill!”

“That’s one of the three sacred pills! I never could have imagined that he would be able to concoct one of them!”

“When Fang Hao returned, I didn’t really think much of him. He was kind of quiet. But now he’s causing all sorts of waves!”

Words such as these echoed out constantly. Fang Wei’s expression was the same as ever, making it impossible to determine what he was thinking. In contrast, Fang Yunyi’s face only continued to grow darker. Then he looked over at Fang Xi near the lakeshore, chatting excitedly with the clan members around him, and he snorted coldly.

A cold gleam flickered in his eyes, and his lips twitched into an icy smile; the people he had arranged to take care of Fang Xi were now closing in.

“The direct bloodline… is crap! They had their glory in the past, but now they’re in decline. The Fang Clan… is no longer a place where they hold the upper hand!” Fang Yunyi snorted again. “Today is the day when I humiliate Fang Xi of the direct bloodline!” His eyes narrowed.

Meanwhile, Fang Xi stood in the crowd, excitedly flaunting his recent experiences to the clan members standing next to him.

“Of all the people over all the years in the Dao of Alchemy Division, nobody has ever been able to concoct that medicinal pill. But my Coz concocted it!

“He had a 30,000-meter Bloodline Gatebeam, and he even challenged the seventh level of the Medicine Pavilion. And then he concocted the legendary Skypalace Sunspirit Pill. That’s my Coz! Fang Hao!” The other clan members panted as they heard the stories of Meng Hao. More and more people were elevating their personal estimation of Meng Hao’s status to the same level as Fang Wei.

About this time, two young men appeared nearby, pushing their way through the crowd. Their expressions were icily arrogant as they neared Fang Xi, then rudely waved their hands, causing a burst of wind to materialize. It descended onto Fang Xi, causing his face to flicker. He tried to fight back, but was no match. He made a slight grunt as he was involuntarily shoved backward ten paces.

“The clan has ordered that it is prohibited to be loud and disorderly during the rise of the East Ascension Sun!” said one of the two young men, his eyes cold. “Anyone who violates the rule will be stripped of the qualifications to observe!”

“You….” said Fang Xi, looking up with rage in his eyes. However, when he saw who the two young men were, his face fell. The other clan members in the area also looked shocked, and immediately backed up.

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# Chapter 928: You Stick With Me!

The young men who had pushed Fang Xi back wore long black robes decorated with images of a moon. There seemed to be an especially stern and forbidding air about them, an icy coldness that caused anyone they looked at to feel as if they were being stared at by a viper.

Furthermore, they had stage 3 Immortal cultivation bases, and emanated amorphous ripples that gave them the appearance of mighty Immortals.

As soon as the surrounding clan members saw who the two young men were, their faces flickered and their hearts filled with awe. They slowly backed up.

“They’re Blackmoon Guards!”

“Lots of Chosen from other sects are here for the East Ascension Sun, and the Blackmoon Guards have been tasked with keeping things orderly!”

“There are nine guard corps in the Fang Clan, four of which are stationed off-planet, and five of which have jurisdiction here on Planet East Victory. Of those five, the Blackmoon Guards and the Violetsun Guards are responsible for the ancestral mansion!”

The nine guard corps of the Fang Clan had each earned glorious achievements in battle, and had shaken the Ninth Mountain and Sea. As for the Blackmoon Guards, they were known for being sinister and vicious, just like vipers.

That was their reputation among outsiders and within the Fang Clan itself. Everyone feared the Blackmoon Guards.

Fang Xi looked at the two young men, and his face flickered. Whatever words he had been about to say stuck in his throat. He might be from the direct bloodline, but everyone in the clan knew that the direct bloodline was on the decline. He… could not afford to offend the Blackmoon Guards.

“Fang Xi,” said one of the young men, his voice cold, “for loud and disorderly conduct on the shore of Brightmoon Lake, for disturbing public order, and for losing face for the clan in front of guests from other sects, you will move your ass 300 meters back from this location!” The young man spoke without the slightest bit of courtesy.

“If you dare to step within 300 meters of any Blackmoon Guard,” said the other young man, his eyes brimming with scorn, “then it will be taken as an act of insurrection! Fang Xi, get the hell out of here!” With that, he waved his hand, causing another shocking wind to appear, which swept Fang Xi up and forced him back.

Fang Xi was powerless to resist, and in the blink of an eye had fallen back nearly three hundred meters. There was complete silence as all of the surrounding clan members looked over at Fang Xi.

He finally came to a stop at 299 meters. His face was pale, and he was trembling. Rage flickered on his face as he glared murderously at the two young men.

He was no fool, and knew that these two had intentionally come to humiliate him in front of the other clan members. Word would quickly spread that he had been unceremoniously dismissed by them.

What was especially obvious… was the sinister way in which they went about humiliating him. With their cultivation bases, they could have easily pushed him 300 meters away. Instead, they only pushed him 299 meters, making sure that Fang Xi would have to voluntarily step back the final meter.

Fang Xi’s eyes were bright red, and he panted as he glared at the two young men nearly 300 meters away. He did not wish to step back, but he also knew that clan rules took precedence over anything and everything. The

Blackmoon Guards were responsible for keeping order in the area, and if he defied them openly, they would have a vast array of options regarding how to deal with him. Most important of all was that the Blackmoon Guards… were under the direct control of Fang Wei's branch of the family.

Fang Xi clenched his fists tightly and, as everyone watched, bowed his head and stepped back one last meter until he was at the 300-meter mark.

That final step was a movement that crushed Fang Xi's dignity, and humiliated his bloodline. However, Fang Xi had to accept it; there was no way he could fight back.

He stood there trembling as everyone looked at him. Not a word was spoken by anyone, although many of the onlookers sighed inwardly.

As for the two young Blackmoon Guards, they laughed coldly and then, ignoring Fang Xi, turned and left.

Everyone who was watching assumed that the chiding of Fang Xi was now over. Even Fang Xi assumed that by bowing his head, he would face no further difficulties….

However, it was at this point that two Blackmoon Guards suddenly appeared next to Fang Xi. Instantly, they waved their hands, causing their cultivation bases to surge with power. A fierce wind kicked up, wrapping around Fang Xi and driving him backward yet again.

This time, he was yet again sent back 299 meters.

"The Blackmoon Guard has already warned you once," said one of the two, his voice cool. "You must remain 300 meters away from any location we occupy! We're standing here now, so scram!"

"YOU!!" Fang Xi was trembling, and his eyes were bright red.

The two Blackmoon Guards laughed at Fang Xi's reaction, and their eyes radiated cold glows. It was as if they were just waiting for Fang Xi to fight back. Although they might fear his father, they had received orders under the auspices of Prince Wei. Besides, they were responsible for maintaining order here, so if Fang Xi did anything rash, their backers would shield them from any consequences.

Fang Xi was in a rage, and he wanted to cast everything aside and fight back. But then he thought about how often his father sighed about the decline of the direct bloodline. Fang Xi didn't have a strong personality, and in fact, was often gentle. Not wanting to cause any further troubles for his father, he bitterly took another step back.

As he stepped back, a hint of dejection could be seen in his eyes.

It was at this point that more than ten Blackmoon Guards suddenly appeared. The crowds stepped back, making a wide path for them. The Blackmoon Guards stared at Fang Xi with cold eyes.

Fang Xi lowered his head and continued to retreat. 300 meters. 1,500 meters. Soon he was almost out of the crowd entirely, a full 3,000 meters away from Brightmoon Lake. The Blackmoon guards stared contemptuously at Fang Xi, who was by now figuratively scarred and battered.

"One more step!" said the Blackmoon Guard closest to Fang Xi, his voice cold. Currently, they were separated by 299 meters.

Nothing could be heard but silence. Many of the Fang Clan members sighed inwardly, but said nothing. The Fang Clan's direct bloodline was on the decline, and Fang Wei's was on the rise. That was current state of affairs.

Fang Xi laughed bitterly as he realized that he couldn't stay here any longer. He was just about to turn and leave when suddenly, a hand appeared behind him and patted him lightly on the back, preventing him from taking that final step.

At the same time, a calm voice could be heard from behind him.

"What's wrong, Fang Xi?"

When Fang Xi heard that voice, a tremor ran through him. He turned back to see that Meng Hao was behind him, having appeared there at some undetermined point in time. Perched on Meng Hao's shoulder was the parrot, who winked at Fang Xi.

Meng Hao had appeared without the slightest sound, and not a single one of the nearby clan members had even noticed. All they saw was Meng Hao suddenly standing there, right behind Fang Xi.

The more than ten Blackmoon Guards looked over with fiercely glinting eyes. They were shocked, because even they had no idea how Meng Hao had appeared there. He had literally shown up in the blink of an eye.

His appearance on the scene immediately caused a stir among the Fang Clan members.

"It's Fang Hao!"

"What a strange way to make an entrance! He didn't make any ripples of displacement at all!" Many people felt their hearts beginning to pound. Meng Hao had just concocted the Skypalace Sunspirit Pill, and had caused the Fang Clan's Dao Bell to ring. By now, Meng Hao was a person many of the clan members were pondering deeply.

"Coz…." said Fang Xi, looking over at Meng Hao. His expression was one of grievance, the kind of look that appears when a dear relative shows up right when you are being picked on.

Meng Hao smiled lightly, then patted Fang Xi's shoulder. However, within Meng Hao's heart, icy coldness surged up to monstrous heights. A moment ago, he had been off in the distance, watching Fang Xi being pushed back by the sinister Blackmoon Guards.

"Fang Xi, you stick with me. Let's see who tries to stand in my way." With that, Meng Hao stepped in front of Fang Xi and then began to walk forward. Fang Xi took a deep breath. Eyes filling with determination, he began to follow Meng Hao.

The dozen or so Blackmoon Guards watched with various expressions as Meng Hao walked forward. When he had walked about thirty meters toward them, two of the Blackmoon Guards snorted and then closed in on him.

“You may approach,” said one of them, “but Fang Xi disturbed the public peace here, and if he dares to step within 300 meters of us, he’ll be punished!” In the blink of an eye, the two Blackmoon Guards were right in front of Meng Hao.

Their words still hung in the air as Meng Hao suddenly lifted his right hand and pushed it out in front of him. Rumbling could be heard as a gale force wind sprang up. An incorporeal Flying Rain-Dragon suddenly appeared, roaring soundlessly as it shot toward the two Blackmoon Guards. In the blink of an eye, it was upon them. Their faces flickered, and they fought back with all the power they could muster. However, blood sprayed from their mouths as they were tossed to the side.

This development immediately sent the crowds into an uproar. It must be noted that even though the Blackmoon Guards had targeted Fang Xi, the only thing they did was drive him away. They did not attack or injure him. In sharp contrast, Meng Hao attacked with domineering force, immediately injuring the two Blackmoon Guards.

Fang Xi instantly started to get nervous, but Meng Hao’s expression was as cold as ever. As he proceeded forward, the rest of the dozen or so Blackmoon Guards up ahead began to head toward him.

“You’ve disturbed the peace and even dared to hurt people! Fang Hao, it doesn’t matter if you’re backed by the Dao of Alchemy Division, you will still face the clan’s punishment this day!”

The dozen or so Blackmoon Guards bore down on Meng Hao. When they were only a few dozen meters away, brilliant beams of light suddenly exploded from Meng Hao’s eyes, and he said one thing.

“SCREW OFF!”

The words rang out like claps of thunder. Rumbling filled the area, and even the Chosen in the East Ascension Pavilion heard it and looked over.

The Blackmoon Guards in front of Meng Hao felt as if some enormous, invisible mountain was crushing down onto them. Blood sprayed from their mouths, and deafening roars filled their ears. They suddenly felt as if their cultivation bases had become unstable. It didn’t matter that they were in the Immortal Realm; they began to tremble as a terrifying wind swept over them, sending them tumbling backwards. Meng Hao’s one sentence caused their minds to reel, and sent them flying away.

The surrounding Fang Clan members were completely shocked.

Fang Xi looked on, stupefied, as Meng Hao calmly proceeded to walk forward. The crowds immediately parted, making a path for him that led all the way to Brightmoon Lake!

On the island in the middle of the lake, within the East Ascension Pagoda, Fang Wei and the others around him all saw the crowd part as if some sort of Immortal Divinity had appeared.

Meng Hao strode out, back straight, long hair draped over his shoulders like a cloak. His expression was grave and stern, as if his rise to prominence gave him a blinding aura that no one could ignore.

When the Chosen in the pavilion saw that it was Meng Hao who was walking toward them, a variety of different expressions could be seen.

Li Ling’er’s face flickered with hatred as she stared at him.

Sun Hai’s eyes went wide, he took a deep breath, and subconsciously edged backward.

Song Luodan and Taiyang Zi saw Meng Hao at the same time, and their eyes shone with piercing light.

Then there was Fan Dong’er, whose gaze turned as sharp as a dagger. In that moment, she had no stronger desire than the wish to chop Meng Hao into tiny pieces. She began to pant, and it suddenly became impossible for her to maintain her previously stoic expression.

“Meng Hao….”

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# Chapter 929: Momentum

Fang Wei’s gaze immediately fell onto Meng Hao. His expression was the same as ever, although his pupils constricted. He wasn’t surprised to see that Meng Hao had shown up. Back in their initial meeting in the main temple, the moment they looked at each other, Fang Wei could tell that Meng Hao was not a pushover. However, he hadn’t paid much attention to him, and had in fact disregarded him. It wasn’t until Meng Hao rose to prominence in the Dao of Alchemy Division that he had been forced to take him seriously.

That was especially true now, when he was suddenly acting so aggressively. Fang Wei snorted coldly.

A moment later, his expression was seemingly as placid as ever, without any hint of disturbance.

Wang Mu was also there in the East Ascension Pavilion. When he saw Meng Hao, his eyes shone with a sharp light, and his desire to do battle increased.

Fang Yunyi stood there as well, looking venomously in Meng Hao’s direction, a cold smile twisting the corners of his lips.

The crowds surrounding Brightmoon Lake were in an uproar. They made way for Meng Hao as he strode slowly forward, Fang Xi in tow, who was both excited and nervous. The Blackmoon Guards were one of the nine guard corps of the Fang Clan, and were responsible for maintaining peace. They would most certainly not respond kindly to Meng Hao provoking them.

“Coz….” he whispered. Suddenly, whistling sounds could be heard as more than thirty figures closed in on Meng Hao from all directions.

These were more Blackmoon Guards, the keepers of the peace! As they flew toward Meng Hao, their cultivation bases roared with power; shockingly, all of these cultivators were in the Immortal Realm!

Two of them were even stage 5 Immortals, and as they all closed in at high speed, they unleashed divine abilities and magical techniques. Brilliant light shot out in all directions, exerting intense pressure.

“How brazen!”

“You dare to attack the Blackmoon Guard? You dare to sow public chaos!? It doesn’t matter who you are, kneel now and prepare to be sent to the dungeon to be tortured!”

As the shouts echoed out, Fang Xi started to look anxious.

However, Meng Hao’s expression didn’t change at all. Instead, he smiled coldly.

“It seems that even random nobodies dare to squawk in front of me,” he said. “Could it be because I haven’t used force often enough in the clan?” With that, he stepped forward. As soon as his foot touched the ground, he transformed into a bright beam of light.

The beam of light was gold-colored, and inside, Meng Hao took the form of a golden roc. A droning could be heard as he shot toward the incoming Blackmoon Guards at high speed.

In the blink of an eye, he slammed into three of them. The roc’s talons slashed, ripping the air and causing cracking sounds to ring out. The three Blackmoon Guards’ faces fell and blood sprayed from their mouths and their bodies twisted before they could even fight back. They were instantly sent flying backward by Meng Hao’s talons, powerless to resist.

Even as they flew backward, coughing up blood, they looked back at Meng Hao with expressions of shock.

“How… how could he be so strong!?!?”

Meng Hao didn’t pause for even a moment; he instantly swept towards the other guards. The roc flapped its wings, and in the blink of an eye, five more Blackmoon Guards let out muffled grunts. Blood sprayed from their mouths as they were thrown into the air, and looks of shock covered their faces as they looked at roc-form Meng Hao.

“What cultivation base does he have? Even the combined power of all five of us can’t stop him!”

To describe all of these actions takes quite a few sentences, but these eight people were injured and sent tumbling hundreds of meters away in a brief flash. Eight people had been injured and flung over 300 meters away. Now, there were seven Blackmoon Guards left in front of Meng Hao.

Among those seven were the two stage 5 Immortals, who were now panting. Their expressions that of astonishment, they gritted their teeth and joined voices to call out, “Blackmoon Formation!”

Immediately, the other five of their number joined with the first two, combining together to form the shape of a moon!

Because their clothing was black, that moon… was also black!

A black moon!

As soon as the moon appeared, a monstrous energy surged out that weighed down on everyone in the area. The Chosen in the East Ascension Pavilion all looked on with strange gleams in their eyes.

“The Blackmoon Guards’ first fusion art!” said Taiyang Zi, his eyes flickering.

“Rumor has it,” said Sun Hai, eyeing the black moon, “that with this art, seven people make the formation, seven formations make a magic spell, seven spells make a divine ability, seven divine abilities make a Dao!”

Others had similar reactions, although Li Ling’er simply watched with coldly flickering eyes.

The crowds surrounding Brightmoon Lake were also in a commotion.

Fang Xi’s face fell, and Fang Yunyi smiled an overtly sinister smile.

In that moment….

Meng Hao, in golden roc form, didn’t hesitate for a moment. He charged toward the black moon, and as he did, the roc turned blurry and transformed into numerous mountains. The mountains linked together to form a chain of mountains that then crushed down onto the black moon!

This was none other than the Mountain Consuming Incantation!

From a distance, it looked like massive mountain peaks suppressing the very moon in the Heavens. Boundless, enormous mountains filled the sky, and as for that black moon, it was visibly shrinking.

Everyone watching was astonished, especially the Chosen in the East Ascension Pavilion who had previously crossed swords with Meng Hao. When they saw the mountains, they were reminded of that year in the lands of South Heaven, when Meng Hao had single-handedly swept over all of the Chosen. Despite being chased by over a thousand opponents, he had been as valiant as ever.

Booms echoed out in all directions.

The black moon only lasted for the space of a few breaths under the crushing pressure of the mountains. Subsequently, it shattered into pieces, and the seven people inside coughed up blood and tumbled backward, their faces filled with terror.

The mountains faded away, and Meng Hao stepped out from within them. He once again transformed into a beam of light that shot forward.

“Fang Xi, keep up!” he said loftily. “I’m taking you to the pavilion on the lake!” To everyone who heard his booming voice, it was as if Meng Hao was the only person in existence.

There were many clan members who suddenly felt as if they were meeting Meng Hao for the first time. Their hearts trembled with shock, and even Fang Xi was panting. Gritting his teeth, he flew to follow Meng Hao.

The two of them proceeded onward toward Brightmoon Lake, Meng Hao in the lead, Fang Xi following.

In the East Ascension Pavilion in the middle of Brightmoon Lake, the various Chosen were all looking at Meng Hao. Regardless of whatever conflicts they had with him, as of this moment all of them had no choice but to admit that Meng Hao… was a blazing sun!

Fang Wei stood there quietly, his eyes icy. Fang Yunyi, on the other hand, had an expression filled with incredible venom.

Fang Hong was already in awe of Meng Hao, and subconsciously stepped backward, as did Fang Xiangshan. Fang Donghan was secretly excited; this outcome was exactly what he wanted, a fight between Meng Hao and Fang Wei.

As everyone watched Meng Hao nearing the edge of Brightmoon Lake, all of a sudden, a person appeared on the shore.

It was a middle-aged man wearing a black robe embroidered with two moons. He had the flourishing cultivation base of a stage 6 Immortal.

“You ignominious fool!” the man said coldly. “Back down!” This stage 6 Immortal was the leader of the Blackmoon Guards in this area. He stood there, brow furrowed, doing nothing to conceal his loathing of Meng Hao. Even as he spoke, he pushed his hand out in front of him, causing shocking pressure to roil out. At the same time, an enormous, illusory hand appeared that shot toward Meng Hao.

“I’m from the direct bloodline of the Fang Clan,” Meng Hao replied, “I’m the eldest grandson of this generation, with a supreme status in the clan. You’re the one who’ll be backing down!” Instead of slowing down, he sped up. At the same time, he clenched his right hand into a fist and punched out into the air nine times.

Nine Heavens Destruction!

RUMMMBLLLLE!

Massive roaring filled the air as his Dharma Idol suddenly materialized behind him. 15,000 meters tall, shocking to the extreme, it also punched out. Nine blows descended toward the middle-aged man, seemingly capable of shattering Heaven and Earth.

When Meng Hao’s attacks slammed into the palm strike, the hand shattered. The man’s face fell as Meng Hao’s fist continued onward the man himself.

Dozens of blows were exchanged in the blink of an eye. Each exchange caused the man’s face to flicker; his expression was now being taken over by fear as he realized that his cultivation base was being weakened, as was his life force. It was being absorbed by Meng Hao!

In the end, blood sprayed from his mouth, and he was forced to retreat.

In that moment, Meng Hao grabbed Fang Xi. As everyone watched, he flew up into the air… directly out over Brightmoon Lake!

As soon as Meng Hao was airborne, all of the dozens of Blackmoon Guards in the crowd urgently took flight and sped toward Meng Hao. It didn’t matter if he was a fellow clan member, his flagrant challenge of the Blackmoon Guards was something that could not go unanswered.

However, Meng Hao completely ignored them. He dragged the astonished Fang Xi through the air, transforming into a long beam of light that shot over Brightmoon Lake toward the East Ascension Pavilion.

Inside the pavilion, the Chosen were all shocked. Li Ling'er clenched her jaw, and a cold light could be seen in Fan Dong'er's eyes. Wang Mu was itching to fight, and Song Luodan's face was icy. As for Sun Hai, he was getting nervous. Taiyang Zi and the others felt their energy surging as Meng Hao sped toward them.

Fang Wei frowned. Fang Yunyi was panting; seeing Meng Hao's powerful momentum caused him to subconsciously step backward.

Everyone watched as Meng Hao carried Fang Xi across the water. In the blink of an eye, he was almost at East Ascension Pavilion. Just when he was about to set foot inside….

"You don't qualify to be here," Fang Wei said calmly.

He took a step forward and then struck out with his palm!

The palm strike unexpectedly… caused everyone to feel as if the land were quaking and the mountains were trembling. The surface of Brightmoon Lake churned, as if some ancient being were awakening underneath and was now emitting a terrifying aura.

The palm strike looked ordinary, and yet as soon as it was delivered, a golden magical symbol appeared outside of the East Ascension Pavilion. The symbol was like the sun, instantly causing everything outside to turn golden.

In response to the palm strike, all of the Chosen in the pavilion, even Fan Dong'er and Zhou Xin from the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto, narrowed their eyes in concentration. Various expressions could be seen; the explosive energy of Fang Wei's attack left everyone shocked.

This was even more the case when people realized that Fang Wei's attack contained an aura of reincarnation. It was almost like a natural law, as if… anyone who opposed Fang Wei was actually an enemy of the Heavens!

A sense of crisis rose up in Meng Hao, and his eyes widened. He released Fang Xi, simultaneously causing the Black White Pearls to swirl out.

Furthermore, a Blood qi rose up, transforming into the head of a Blood Demon. All of it coalesced onto Meng Hao’s hand, after which he also… struck out with his palm.

Rumbling filled the air in the space between Meng Hao and Fang Wei in the East Ascension Pavilion.

This was the first time that Meng Hao and Fang Wei exchanged blows!

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# Chapter 930: I’ve Missed All of You!

It was a collision of gold and blood!

It was a struggle between the power of reincarnation and the Black White Pearls!

This was Fang Wei… versus Meng Hao! Their first battle!

Rumbling filled the air as the colors of gold and blood smashed into each other. The night sky suddenly grew bright as the power of reincarnation and the Black White Pearls collided, causing Heaven and Earth to tremble. Massive roaring echoed out in all directions.

The Blood Demon head collapsed, and the world of gold shattered. The sensation of reincarnation faded away… and Meng Hao’s Black White Pearls also collapsed.

A tremor ran through Meng Hao, and his Eternal stratum immediately surged into action, giving him the power to completely shrug off the blow. What all onlookers saw was that Fang Wei’s palm strike did nothing to stop him! He didn’t even pause… he just stepped right into the East Ascension Pavilion!

Fang Wei’s eyes brimmed with icy coldness, and his face had turned a bit pale. Although he had been separated from Meng Hao’s counterstrike to his palm attack, he was still struck by the backlash.

Most shocking of all was that this was Brightmoon Lake, a place where Fang Wei practiced cultivation. He had formed a resonance with the lake water, and therefore held the upper hand. Furthermore, Meng Hao had been protecting Fang Xi.

In the end, however, it was really difficult to determine which of them was actually more powerful!

Almost in the same moment that Meng Hao set foot into the pavilion, dozens of Blackmoon Guards flew out across the lake toward him.

Meng Hao completely ignored them. Instead, his cold gaze flitted across the crowd and came to fall on Fang Wei.

“Junior Cousin Fang Wei, why is it that I’m not qualified to enter this pavilion?”

“Anyone who is being pursued by the Blackmoon Guards is naturally not qualified to set foot inside,” Fang Wei replied coolly. The Blackmoon Guards were closing in on the pavilion, and even more were now converging further out beyond the lakeshore. Furthermore, it would only be a short time before their true experts arrived.

In his heart, Fang Wei laughed coldly. He truly wanted to see how Meng Hao could possibly resolve the current situation.

Fang Xi’s face was ashen as he stood there next to Meng Hao, panting. He had never been inside the East Ascension Pavilion before, and would normally have been very excited. Right now though, the Blackmoon Guards were moments away from catching up, and when he thought about what would happen then, he couldn’t help but take a deep breath and brace himself to go for broke.

He had already decided that because all of this was happening because of him, he would take full responsibility, and make sure that the clan didn’t cause any problems for Meng Hao.

“Is that so?” replied Meng Hao, smiling. Sharp whistling sounds could be heard as seven or eight Blackmoon Guards shot through the air behind him.

Their expressions brimmed with killing intent, and they were just about to attack when…

Meng Hao casually raised his hand and showed something to the Blackmoon Guards behind him.

Then, without even turning his head, he coldly barked, “Screw off!”

As his voice echoed out, the Blackmoon Guards outside of the pavilion saw the item in his hand. Their faces fell, and they suddenly stopped in place, staring in disbelief at Meng Hao’s hand, and the object therein.

Then they began to pant. Meanwhile, more Blackmoon Guards converged in the area. All of them had the same reaction, as if lightning were crashing around inside their minds.

The dozens of nearby Blackmoon Guards, and the hundreds that were gathered further off, all stared wordlessly in shock.

When the Chosen in the East Ascension Pavilion saw what was happening, their eyes gleamed with a strange light. Fang Wei suddenly seemed to remember something, and his face turned extremely unsightly. Fang Yunyi gaped, unsure of how to react to this sudden development.

He couldn’t understand what the Blackmoon Guards had seen that would suddenly cause them to stop in place and not dare to get any closer.

Fang Hong stared in shock. Fang Xiangshan hesitated. Fang Donghan’s eyes shone with curiosity.

“What the hell are you still doing here?” said Meng Hao icily, still not deigning to look behind him.

The instant the words left his mouth, the Blackmoon Guards behind him gasped. They suddenly clasped hands and bowed to Meng Hao, then bitterly turned and made their way off.

Many among the audience around Brightmoon Lake saw this, and gaped in shock. They had just personally witnessed the Blackmoon Guards, brimming with killing intent, suddenly stop in place and then retreat en masse, clearly not daring to get even an inch closer.

There were a few people in the crowd who had exceptional eyesight, and managed to catch a glimpse of the object Meng Hao held in his hand. They gasped, and expressions of blank disbelief appeared on their faces.

“The command medallion of a tier 8 alchemist!!”

“That’s the same as a clan Elder’s command medallion…. A tier 8 alchemist’s command medallion!! That gives him the same status as a clan Elder! And clan Elders… are qualified to order the Blackmoon Guards to stand down!”

“Fang Hao concocted a Skypalace Sunspirit Pill, which means that he instantly became a tier 8 alchemist!!”

The sounds of the tumult outside drifted into the pavilion, causing the cultivators gathered there to inhale sharply.

Fang Xi gaped, and then suddenly went wild with joy.

Meng Hao slowly lowered his hand, looking at Fang Wei with a slight smile.

“Would you say I’m qualified now?”

Fang Wei’s expression was extremely unsightly as he stared at Meng Hao. Before he could even respond, Meng Hao stepped forward and raised his right hand. Fang Yunyi’s face fell, and he tried to escape, but his body involuntarily flew through the air toward Meng Hao, who grabbed him by the neck.

“You see me, and don’t greet me properly,” Meng Hao said, smiling, gently patting Fang Yunyi’s cheek. “Ah, Yunyi, it seems that the last time I taught you a lesson, you just didn’t get it.”

Meng Hao’s smile caused Fang Yunyi to begin to tremble. He was about to say something, when suddenly Meng Hao’s face darkened and he slammed

Fang Yunyi onto the floor of the pavilion.

The pavilion was magically reinforced, and couldn't be damaged by such an action. It was incredibly tough, which resulted in Fang Yunyi letting out a bloodcurdling scream. Next, Meng Hao slammed him into the ground seven or eight more times.

Blood sprayed from Fang Yunyi's mouth, and he screamed over and over again. He even begged for mercy. Fang Wei frowned.

"That's enough!" he said.

Meng Hao smiled and looked over at Fang Wei.

"Under my authority as an Elder, I'm reprimanding a clan member. Junior Cousin Fang Wei, on what authority did you speak those two words to me just now?"

With that, Meng Hao grabbed Fang Yunyi by the hair, swung him around and then chucked him off to the side. Blood spattered everywhere. The Chosen in the room watched and said nothing. However, as they observed at Meng Hao's actions, each of them were thinking different things.

That was especially true of Sun Hai, who was shivering slightly.

Fang Wei's expression was extremely grim as he looked at Meng Hao. He was about to say something, when Meng Hao laughed.

"On the other hand," he said, "the moon is out tonight, and the stars are bright. Tomorrow is the rise of the East Ascension Sun, an auspicious day. Besides, I see a lot of old friends here, which makes me happy. I won't make things any harder for you." He looked out at all the Chosen, each of whom had different expressions on their faces.

Sun Hai subconsciously bowed his head. Li Ling'er stared in rage. Fan Dong'er's face flickered with killing intent, and Wang Mu looked like he wanted to fight then and there. Song Luodan and Taiyang Zi were both staring at him with clenched jaws.

Their past experiences with Meng Hao were things that they would never be able to forget.

Meng Hao looked slightly embarrassed, then chuckled bashfully as he looked down at the terrified Fang Yunyi, who lay there bedraggled and broken-boned.

“Write me a promissory note,” Meng Hao said, narrowing his eyes and smiling. He immediately produced pen and paper from his bag of holding, which he held out in front of Fang Yunyi. “You know me, and you know what to write.”

With that, he patted Fang Yunyi on the head.

Fang Yunyi’s face was pale white. To him, Meng Hao was the most evil fiend imaginable in Heaven and Earth. Trembling, he used his own blood to write out a promissory note.

Meng Hao accepted the promissory note, blew on it a bit to dry it, and gingerly placed it in his bag of holding as if it were a treasure. Then, he smiled at Fang Yunyi and said something that caused Fang Yunyi’s blood to run cold.

“Yunyi, you’ll get no third chance. If you act like this again the next time you see me… I’ll make sure you live a life worse than death.” Meng Hao’s smile stretched from ear to ear, but his words were as cold as ice. It was a stark contrast that caused all of the Chosen in the pavilion to look on in reticent silence.

Fang Yunyi started to pant and tremble, and his expression turned into one of extreme terror. He could sense the murderous intent in Meng Hao’s words, and was also certain that when Meng Hao said he would do something… he would never fail to follow through on his promise.

Fang Yunyi knew that if he did not respectfully greet Meng Hao the next time he saw him, Meng Hao would definitely… leave him wishing he were dead.

He was frightened, well and truly frightened. Even Fang Wei was incapable of helping him in this situation, causing his fear to reach heights that it could not be described even with the word ‘terror.’

“Now, screw off to whatever hole you crawled out of,” said Meng Hao. He grabbed Fang Yunyi by the hair and violently tossed him out of the pavilion. Intense pain wracked Fang Yunyi’s body as he flew out over Brightmoon Lake and landed in the middle of the crowd outside.

After being helped to his feet, he left immediately, trying to put as much distance between himself and Meng Hao as possible. The entire time, his heart was gripped with icy terror.

Back in the East Ascension Pavilion, Meng Hao looked around at the various Chosen, and a bashful smile appeared on his face, as if he were slightly embarrassed to have suddenly run into so many old friends.

“Greetings, Fellow Daoists!” he said. “We meet again! I’ve missed all of you!”

Looking quite at ease, he walked up to Sun Hai and, before he could back away, slid his arm around his neck, as if they were good friends.

“Hey, if it isn’t L’il Hai! How are you?! Have things been well? Why did you shave your head? Not bad, I think it’s quite a unique hairstyle.”

Sun Hai started to tremble, and he looked as if he might start crying at any moment. Meng Hao’s shadow lurked perpetually in his heart, a point that could be seen clearly from his cleanly-shaven head.

Meng Hao rubbed Sun Hai’s shiny head and patted it a few times. Sun Hai choked with silent fury, feeling frustrated to the extreme. At this point, Meng Hao’s gaze came to rest on Li Ling’er. Subconsciously, he couldn’t refrain from… looking at Li Ling’er’s curvaceous rear end.

“Aiya! Little sis Ling’er, I haven’t seen you for so long! You’re even prettier than before. Your rear end… looks really nice….” He cleared his throat. “Hey, don’t look at me that way! You know, now that I think about it, we were actually engaged as children!”

Li Ling’er’s expression was extremely dark as she stared at Meng Hao. Her chest rose and fell as she panted, and she looked like she was on the verge of exploding. Were it not for the fact that she knew she wasn’t a match for Meng Hao, and that they were also in the Fang Clan, then she would definitely go all out to fight him.

Seeing that Li Ling’er was on the verge of bursting, Meng Hao quickly looked away, turning his attention to Fan Dong’er. Instantly, his eyes brightened.

“Eee? Inky! You’re here too! Little sis Dong’er, I’ve already loaned you Inky for quite a while now, when will you be giving her back to me?”

Fan Dong’er’s eyes blazed with rage, and she raised her right hand. Cracking sounds could be heard as two violet flying daggers suddenly appeared. Mysterious flames hissed up from the daggers, and they emanated terrifying auras.

“I dare you to say one more word!” she said through gritted teeth.

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# Chapter 931: Her Name is Fang Yu!

Her words overflowed with killing intent, as if a single inappropriate word would lead to a fight.

Meng Hao blinked and then coughed lightly. Keeping his arm wrapped around Sun Hai, he looked around at some of the others.

“Well, if it isn’t Song Luodan! And Taiyang Zi! Wang Mu, you’re here too! Wonderful! You’re all here. Well then… when are you going to be paying back the money you owe?”

Meng Hao’s handful of sentences instantly provoked a reaction from the various Chosen in the East Ascension Pavilion. Some burst out angrily, others glared at him furiously, and some had bloodshot eyes.

“Shut the hell up!”

“Shut your trap!”

“Meng Hao, you’re pushing people too far!!”

“Meng Hao, if you dare to insult me one more time, we’re going to have a blood feud the likes of which has never been seen before!!”

When Fang Xi saw all of this happening, he stared at Meng Hao in blank shock. Then he looked at the enraged Chosen, and took a deep breath. He had no idea what Meng Hao had done to provoke such widespread indignation, to cause these Chosen to be so wrathful.

Fang Xi was even more thunderstruck by the words exchanged between Meng Hao and Li Ling’er, as well as Fan Dong’er. Actually, Fan Dong’er was the celestial goddess of Fang Xi’s dreams….

And yet, in the blink of an eye, that celestial goddess had summoned deadly weapons. Any rapturous illusions Fang Xi had about her were instantly dispelled by her vicious wrath.

Fang Xi wasn’t the only shocked one. Fang Hong also stared with wide eyes. She couldn’t imagine what disputes Meng Hao had with these people to make them act in this way. Apparently, Meng Hao’s brief words had stabbed deep into their hearts.

Even Fang Wei was at a loss as to how Meng Hao could be so familiar with these people….

Only Fang Xiangshan and Fang Donghan truly knew of the inspiring and tragic connection between all of them, and how world-shaking those events had been.

The surrounding Fang Clan members stared in shock at Meng Hao and the Chosen, their minds reeling.

Meng Hao’s appearance in the pavilion made him the complete center of attention. Even Fang Wei was somehow surpassed.

The Chosen’s response to his words caused Meng Hao’s face to suddenly darken.

Before he could even say anything though, the parrot, which had maintained silence up to this point, rolled its eyes and then glared at all the people.

“He who owes shall repay!” it squawked. “This is a principle of Heaven and Earth! You shameless bunch had better repay what you owe immediately!

“If you have no money, then find some furred or feathered beasts for Lord Fifth! If Lord Fifth is satisfied, then he’ll help you pay back the debt! What do you say?”

Meng Hao snorted coldly and glared at the crowd. Then he slapped his bag of holding and produced a stack of promissory notes. He began tapping his finger on the notes, and then looked up.

“White paper and words written in blood. The handwriting is very clear, yes? Do you people really dare to renege on your debts?” Meng Hao was clearly incensed. He was well aware that concocting the Skypalace Sunspirit Pill had temporarily resolved his spirit stone quandary. However, according to his calculations, what he had earned still wouldn’t be enough. Now, his joy at finding so many people who owed him money was turning into fury.

In the instant that Meng Hao pulled out the stack of promissory notes, Fang Xi gasped. Fang Hong’s eyes went wide, and even Fang Wei stared in shock.

All of the surrounding members of the Fang Clan stared blankly in disbelief at Meng Hao standing there, tapping his finger on the promissory notes. This image of Meng Hao was now deeply ingrained in their hearts.

“How… how many promissory notes does he actually have?”

“Didn’t Fang Hao come from Planet South Heaven? How could there be so many people who borrowed money from him?”

“What exactly does this guy do? Is he a cultivator? How come he just doesn’t seem like a cultivator to me?”

The Fang Clan’s Chosen gaped as their minds filled with buzzing thoughts.

“Sun Hai,” said Meng Hao, sounding very displeased. “Why don’t you start first.” He patted Sun Hai’s head. “Don’t think that because you’re bald now that I can’t grab ahold of you. There’s always going to be some place on your body that has hair, right?”

Upon hearing these words, the parrot’s eyes suddenly shone brightly, and it stared at Sun Hai with interest.

Sun Hai began to quiver. He gritted his teeth and was about to protest, when Meng Hao’s words suddenly reminded him of his nightmarish experience on Planet South Heaven. Finally, he scowled.

“Uh…can I pay back a little less than I owe?”

Meng Hao was instantly pleased.

“Alright!” he said, eyes shining. “Let’s start with the interest, how about that?” Sun Hai grimaced, clenched his teeth, and then slapped his bag of holding, producing some spirit stones that he handed over to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao quickly collected them up, licked his lips, and then eyed Sun Hai’s bag of holding.

“Considering how rarely we run into each other, why don’t you repay a bit more than that?”

“I really can’t,” said Sun Hai. “I… I actually came to the Fang Clan to buy something particular…. It’s… well, I know this girl from the Fang Clan, and I really want to buy her a gift. Hey, you never know, we might end up being family!”

“Oh, so that’s how it is,” said Meng Hao. “Why don’t you repay a bit more of your debt, and I’ll put in a good word for you.” He smiled and patted Sun Hai’s head.

He suddenly realized that patting Sun Hai’s head actually felt very good, so he patted it a few more times for good measure.

“Li’l Hai, don’t worry. Pay back those spirit stones, and I’ll help you out. In the Fang Clan, the highest Elders and the lowliest branch members all have to give me face.”

Sun Hai hesitated for a moment. He knew that Meng Hao was the eldest grandson of the direct bloodline. Even though the direct bloodline was in decline, Meng Hao's father was still alive, and Meng Hao had certainly been throwing his weight around the clan recently.

Based on his earlier inquiries, none of the other Chosen in the clan were familiar with the girl he liked, which was making Sun Hai anxious. Now that he saw how domineering Meng Hao was, he figured… he might as well give Meng Hao's suggestion a shot.

"I wonder if he'll really put in a good word for me…." Sun Hai thought, gritting his teeth. He was thoroughly entranced with this Fang Clan girl, to the point where he wasn't even acting rationally. Finally, he slapped his bag of holding and passed an even larger sum of spirit stones over to Meng Hao.

When Meng Hao saw them, his eyes shone with brilliant light.

"Li'l Hai, don't you worry. You leave everything to your Big Bro." Meng Hao put the spirit stones away, and before Sun Hai could say anything more, began to walk over to Li Ling'er.

She stared at him, furious, her expression icy.

He hesitated for a moment, then glanced down at her rear end. Sighing, he thought about his actions as Fang Mu, and realized that there was an eighty percent certainty that Li Ling'er had recognized him. Therefore, he couldn't push her too far.

He turned to look at Fan Dong'er, but when he saw the deadly-looking violet flying daggers swirling around above her hand, his expression turned somber, and he turned to walk toward Taiyang Zi and the others.

"Taiyang Zi, Song Luodan, Wang Mu!" he barked. "All of you owe me money. It's time to PAY UP!"

Taiyang Zi and the other two glared back at Meng Hao, flames of rage flickering in their eyes.

They all stared at each other for a few breaths of time, after which Meng Hao took a step forward toward them. At this exact moment, Taiyang Zi and the others attacked simultaneously. Booms echoed out as all four of them flew out of the pavilion and began to fight.

Rumbling filled the air as Meng Hao transformed into a golden roc that slashed its talons toward Taiyang Zi. At the same time, a chain of mountains rumbled out next to him, crushing down toward Song Luodan. A moment later, he flapped a wing, causing the air to shred as power shot toward Wang Mu.

Booms echoed out in all directions. Even though it was late at night, and very dark, the light of magic filled the air, and all of the Fang Clan members down below stared up to watch. When they saw Meng Hao single-handedly battling three amazing Chosen, their minds trembled.

“That’s Song Luodan from the Song Clan. And Taiyang Zi from the Five Great Holy Lands! The last one is the Wang Clan Chosen, Wang Mu!”

“All three of them are in the process of rising to be true Immortals! Once they do, they’ll definitely be even more famous than they are now!”

“I can’t believe Fang Hao is fighting all three of them at the same time!!”

Booms echoed out as the four of them fought back and forth constantly. Meng Hao clenched his fist and then punched out, unleashing the Nine Heavens Destruction. Blood sprayed from Song Luodan’s mouth. As for Wang Mu and Taiyang Zi, one of them called wind and summoned rain, while the other transformed into blinding sunlight. Even as they closed in on Meng Hao, he snorted coldly. A Blood Demon head appeared, which head butted Wang Mu. Simultaneously, the Ninth Mountain materialized, slamming toward Taiyang Zi.

“You guys are a lot stronger than the first time we fought,” said Meng Hao. “Unfortunately for you… I could put you in your place last time, and I can do the same thing today!” His cultivation base surged with power, and he extended his hand. Rumbling filled the sky as numerous mountains descended, cutting off all avenues of escape for Taiyang Zi and the others.

Roaring, the three of them materialized their Dharma Idols. Meng Hao responded in kind. The Dharma Idols belonging to Taiyang Zi and the others all bore visible traces of Immortality Illumination Vines.

As they fought, Taiyang Zi and the others were continuously forced to retreat. Finally, a boom could be heard, and blood sprayed from their mouths as they tumbled backward. Meng Hao's eyes glittered, and he prepared to rush forward in pursuit.

However, it was at this point that an archaic voice rumbled out from the ancestral mansion.

“Magical battle is prohibited during the rise of the East Ascension Sun. If anyone makes another attack… their right to bathe in the sunlight will be revoked!”

As the voice echoed out, two ancient figures noiselessly appeared in midair around the East Ascension Pavilion. Massive pressure radiated out, separating Meng Hao from Taiyang Zi and the others.

These two old men were Elders of the Fang Clan. They looked over at Meng Hao, frowned, then looked at Taiyang Zi and the others.

“All of you get back into the pavilion. Sunrise is almost upon us.”

Taiyang Zi and the others took deep breaths. Then they clasped hands and bowed to the two old men. Glaring angrily at Meng Hao, they flew back into the pavilion.

Meng Hao glared back at them, then headed back to the pavilion himself.

“Still won't pay me back?” he said with a cold smile. “From now on, any time I run into you, I'll definitely put you in your place!” After setting foot back into the pavilion, he looked around until he saw Fang Xi and Sun Hai, after which he walked over to Sun Hai.

As time passed, most everyone in the pavilion sat there cross-legged. Fang Wei remained quite subdued; after Meng Hao returned to the pavilion, he remained mostly silent. His expression did not reveal anything either, as if the previous clash between the two of them didn't matter to him at all. In fact, when Meng Hao had fought with Taiyang Zi and the others, he had taken one glance and then looked away as if he didn't care.

Soon, everything quieted down. Daybreak was nearing. Eventually, it reached that darkest of pre-dawn moments in which everyone knew that the East Ascension Sun… was about to rise!

Meng Hao's eyes shone with a strange light, and he took a deep breath. It was at this point that Sun Hai hesitated for a moment, then quietly began to speak.

"Meng Hao… um… about that thing you promised earlier…."

"Don't worry, I'll take care of it," said Meng Hao, yawning. "Oh, right, how far along are you in your relationship with this girl?"

Sun Hai's face reddened, and he lowered his voice even more.

"I'm not really sure," he said. "She always beats me up…."

When Meng Hao heard this, he suddenly perked up.

"Well, that won't do!" he said. "What's her name? Is she here in the pavilion? Of all the nerve! How could she dare to beat people up?!"

"Oh, it doesn't matter," Sun Hai hurried to respond. "Every time she hurts me, I actually feel very happy…. She's not here now, though. She's a disciple of the Church of the Immortal Emperor. Her name is Fang Yu."

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# Chapter 932: The Sun Rises!

It was now the moment before daybreak. Everything was pitch black, and all eyes were fixed on the east!

It wasn’t just the group inside the East Ascension Pavilion who were staring eastward. All of the Fang Clan members on the shores of Brightmoon Lake, throughout the rest of the ancestral mansion, and even on all of Planet East Victory, were now waiting.

However, back in the East Ascension Pavilion, Meng Hao heard the name ‘Fang Yu,’ and his expression instantly changed. His eyes went wide, and he turned to look at Sun Hai.

Sun Hai looked a bit embarrassed. Whenever he said Fang Yu’s name, he felt happy, and an expression of longing would appear on his face.

“Did you just say that the girl you like is named Fang Yu?” asked Meng Hao. He was starting to pant, and he suddenly had a very bad feeling.

“Yeah, that’s right,” Sun Hai replied, nodding his head. “Her name is Fang Yu. She’s a member of the Fang Clan, but also a disciple of the Church of the Immortal Emperor.” The happiness he felt grew stronger, and as of yet, he hadn’t noticed the change in Meng Hao’s facial expression.

“Elder Brother Meng, it’s all up to you now,” he continued. “However many more spirit stones you need, as long as I can get my hands on them, I’ll give them to you. Elder Brother Meng, please, please put in a good word or two for me….”

Meng Hao’s expression changed again. Now he was staring blankly.

Unwilling to accept the truth, he asked another question.

“That Fang in her name, is it the same Fang as from my Fang Clan? And the Yu, is it the same character that means ‘beautiful jade?’”

“Yeah, that’s right!” said Sun Hai, looking somewhat intoxicated. “She’s none other than Fang Yu, as beautiful as a piece of fine jade.”

Meng Hao’s heart started to pound.

“Did she join the Church of the Immortal Emperor less than two years ago?” he asked, still hardly capable of believing what he was hearing.

“Eee? How did you know? That’s right! She just joined the Church of the Immortal Emperor a little less than two years ago! However, Junior Sister Fang’s latent talent is shocking. It’s impossible to say clearly what her future prospects are.” Sun Hai sighed.

“You….” Blue veins had popped out on Meng Hao’s forehead, and he was staring wrathfully at Sun Hai.

Sun Hai gaped as he finally noticed Meng Hao’s strange expression.

Surprised, he quickly said, “Elder Brother Meng, don’t worry. Sun Hai will never forget this kindness. If Fang Yu and I ever get married, I’ll definitely invite you to the wedding banquet….”

Meng Hao’s mind filled with roaring as he thought about the explosive temper of his older sister Fang Yu. If she knew about what he had promised to do for Sun Hai, it would be impossible to say how many times she would beat him up the next time she saw him…. All of a sudden, he felt like the biggest idiot in the entire world. He had actually… sold his older sister off….

Sun Hai then continued, getting more and more excited as he spoke.

“If we have a son, you can even be his godfather!

“As a husband and wife, we will never forget your kindness for the rest of our lives…. It’s all riding on you, Elder Brother Meng….

“Oh, Elder Brother Meng, could you help me ask around and find out which bloodline Fang Yu is from? I’m planning to go make a formal visit soon….”

“Shut your mouth this instant!” roared Meng Hao. He truly felt stupid for not having thought of this possibility. His sudden outburst caused numerous faces in the pavilion to turn and look his way. Sun Hai gaped, uncertain of why Meng Hao would suddenly be so angry.

Meng Hao reached out, grabbed Sun Hai, and pulled him close. Jaw clenched, he stared Sun Hai in the eye, certain that Sun Hai had done all of this on purpose, had dug a pit for him, and then pushed him in headfirst.

Yes! It was definitely on purpose!

“Do you have a younger sister?” Meng Hao asked through clenched teeth.

Sun Hai was momentarily struck dumb. From the feeling he got at this moment, Meng Hao seemed to be on the verge of flying into a rage.

“Uh… yeah, yeah I have a younger sister, she—”

“Who’s more of a bitch, you or your sister!” Meng Hao interrupted loudly. “You joker! I can’t believe you have the gall to con ME!!” His eyes were bloodshot, and his heart pulsed with rage. All his life, he had been the one to con others, and had never imagined that somehow, Sun Hai would manage to pull a con on him.

That was especially true when he remembered that he had promised to act as a go-between. Meng Hao couldn’t help but sigh inwardly. There was no way that he would dare to have anything to do with his sister’s love life. Any time he thought of her violent temper, he would feel his head starting to ache.

“I didn’t con you!” said Sun Hai, looking confused. “I really do have a younger sister. Her name is Sun Chan.” Meng Hao’s flare of temper was really strange to him. Moments ago, everything had been going smoothly, then he flew into a rage in the blink of an eye. All of a sudden, Sun Hai had the feeling that Meng Hao and Fang Yu were very similar in some ways.

Meng Hao burned with anger and was just about to say something else when light appeared in the darkness outside.

The light swept out instantly, shredding the darkness into pieces. Sunlight expanded in all directions, a mighty power that instantly suppressed all the dark of night.

In that instant in which darkness and light intersected, where white and black clashed, all eyes in the world seemed to be locked… on the east, which was the source of all the beams of light.

“It’s here! The East Ascension Sun!”

“The East Ascension Sun rises every 100 years. The one hundred year cycle reaches its culmination now! This is when the Sun is at its closest point to Planet East Victory!”

“If you bathe in the light of the East Ascension Sun, your fleshly body can reach a point of incredible power!”

Even as the buzz of conversation spread out, the entire world of Planet East Victory suddenly became filled with indescribable, broiling heat. It was almost as if the whole planet had been wrapped in fire!

Black smoke rose from the ground, and steam ascended from bodies of water. The land seemed to ripple, as if the heat was affecting the entire planet.

The East Ascension Sun… was rising!!

Even Meng Hao forgot about his plans to cause trouble for Sun Hai, and looked up.

The sight immediately sent his mind spinning, because… the sun was clearly rising up from the east, and, according to how things would normally go, it should rise up slowly. However, in the instant that Meng Hao glanced over, what he saw… was the noon sun!

It was as if the process of the sun rising up from the horizon into the middle of the sky took only the space of a few breaths.

Actually, this was not the movement of the East Ascension Sun, but rather, the movement of Planet East Victory. In that instant, some unfathomable method caused the entire planet to rotate, adjusting its angle so that the Fang Clan ancestral mansion was fixed at the point closest to the sun!

It was now moving along with the sun, which meant… that with the East Ascension Sun in the sky, instead of a normal 24-hour day, the daylight would last for 36 days!

36 days later the Sun would continue to move off into the distance, and would no longer be closest to Planet East Victory, whereupon the planet would return to its normal state of affairs.

That would mark the end of the rise of the East Ascension Sun. As for the people on the other three great planets in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, they might receive some benefit, but because they were further away, they would not gain nearly as much as those on Planet East Victory!

Sunrise lasted for only a moment and then, for 36 days, it would be high noon!

The entire scene was even clearer when viewed from out in space. Planet East Victory hung there, shimmering, smoke rising up from it, almost as if it were on the verge of melting!

The power that put Planet East Victory on the verge of melting… came from a bright, shining field of light that lit up the entire starry sky!

The light shone from the east, sweeping through the starry sky, its power dissolving anything that it touched.

Countless meteors and debris vanished without a trace, almost as if they had evaporated.

If there were some almighty figure who stood inside of that light, they would be able to see that, to the east of Planet East Victory, within the previously pitch-black void of space, there was now… suddenly… a matchlessly enormous heavenly body!

This heavenly body was crimson, as if it were formed from lava, and it emanated intense heat and light. This was… the sun!!

This was one of the two heavenly bodies that existed outside of the Nine Mountains and Seas. The sun!

Outside of the Nine Mountains and Seas was an enormous sun and a gigantic moon, which maintained fixed orbits around all of the mountains and seas. Around and around, they had spun for countless years without crossing paths, and apparently, would continue to do so for an eternity.

Because of the position of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, it and the First Mountain and Sea were the places in which one could now bathe in the light of the sun and the moon. As for Planet East Victory, it was the closest one could get to the sun in all the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

As of this moment, there were few cultivators who could survive out in the space between the sun and Planet East Victory. The only people who could… were Dao Realm experts of the Ninth Mountain and Sea!

There were other almighty figures who had long been waiting for this moment to be able to bathe in the light of the sun, and thus acquire good fortune.

Almost in the exact moment that the sun rose, numerous cultivators on Planet East Victory flew up into the sky, to feel the light of the sun, to be bathed and baptized in its light.

Such people were not qualified to go to the Fang Clan to bathe in the light of the sun, and could only experience a scaled-down version of it in various other regions.

Of course, in the Fang Clan’s ancestral mansion, the East Ascension Pavilion atop Brightmoon Lake was the absolute closest location to the East Ascension Sun. Currently, that was the most desirable place to be on the entire planet.

Other than stepping out into the starry sky itself, there was no better place to bathe in the light of the sun than the East Ascension Pavilion. Of course, no one under the Dao Realm could possibly step out into the starry sky to face the sun without dying.

As such, it is easy to imagine how precious of an opportunity it was to be present in the East Ascension Pavilion.

At the same time, the Fang Clan Elders mobilized 30,000 powerful experts, who sat down cross-legged, outlining the shape of a massive spell formation. When the spell formation was activated, a huge pillar of light shot up!

The pillar of light surrounded Brightmoon Lake, stretching out to a width of 9,000 meters and then shooting from the ground all the way up into the Heavens, seemingly linking them to Planet East Victory. This beam of light made it impossible for any outsider to enter that area, and made the power of the East Ascension Sun, which had already been much stronger here than in any other area, exponentially stronger than it had been before!

Within the 9,000-meter beam of light, ninety percent or more of the people were members of the Fang Clan. Any others were Chosen who had recently come to Planet East Victory.

You could say that even if someone merely sat down cross-legged within the light, and didn’t even rise up into the sky, they would still experience incredible progress with their fleshly body. The main question was how long someone could remain in the light. If someone pushed beyond their limit, their entire body would be burned to ash.

Of course, the truly powerful experts would not be content to just sit cross-legged on the ground. They would choose to fly up into the air. The higher one flew, the closer one got to the East Ascension Sun. If one were able to reach the boundary between the planet and outer space, that person would experience unimaginable gains.

Unfortunately, throughout all the years, no one under the Dao Realm had reached such a point.

Furthermore, it was impossible to tell exactly where that point lay!

Some people said it was at 150,000 meters. Their line of reasoning was that 150,000 meters was where the sky was no longer blue, but rather, a deep violet color. Other people said that the point lay at 300,000 meters, because in that location, the sky was black, and there was little difference between that area and the starry sky itself. From there, one could look down and see the entire planet beneath one’s feet.

There were some people who said the point lay at 600,000 meters, and others even said 900,000 meters. There were many opinions. However, no one could make any definite judgements. After all, the size of the planet itself actually had a lot to do with the matter.

Therefore, the exact height of the Heavens of Planet East Victory was difficult to judge.

According to the Fang Clan, the point of demarcation between the planet and the starry sky was set at 300,000 meters!

Right now, nobody under the Dao Realm could possibly fly to that end point of 300,000 meters!

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# Chapter 933: Struggling for Supremacy!

Of course, people in the Dao Realm didn’t need to passively bathe in the the light of heavenly bodies. They could fly off the planet itself and directly face the light of the sun!

Right now, within the the 9,000-meter area around Brightmoon Lake, everyone sat cross-legged, bathing in the light of East Ascension Sun. Suddenly, Fang Wei flew out from the East Ascension Pavilion, and proceeded to shoot up into the sky without the slightest pause.

The boundless sunlight was shockingly hot. The entire world seemed visibly distorted, as if all of the moisture in the air had been completely sucked away. All of Brightmoon Lake seemed to have evaporated into a mist, and was now completely dried up.

Cracks appeared on the surface of the ground as the Fang Clan members around Brightmoon Lake soaked in the power of the sunlight and used it to strengthen their fleshly bodies to shocking levels.

When Fang Wei flew out, it attracted a lot of attention. He was a Chosen, a blazing sun of the Fang Clan. He instantly shot up to a height of 3,000 meters with incredible speed. It was there that he took a deep breath and then settled down cross-legged, seemingly transforming into a black hole that rapidly sucked in sunlight.

A commotion immediately broke out.

“Prince Wei is really deserving of his reputation!”

“He’s not just absorbing the sunlight, he’s gobbling it up! What profound understanding of the East Ascension Sun!”

Even the experts and Elders in the ancestral mansion were silently nodding their heads.

The second person to fly up into the sky was Wang Mu, Chosen of the Wang Clan. His eyes flickered with a strange gleam as he flew up into the air, his expression quickly turning into one of excitement.

“The Patriarch had a magic called Sundered Night, which was created after he gained enlightenment of the rising sun…. Today, I, Wang Mu, will contemplate the East Ascension Sun, which will improve my own enlightenment of Sundered Night!” 1

After Wang Mu, it was Taiyang Zi, who rose up into the air laughing. He was from one of the Five Holy Lands, Mount Sun, and he cultivated a magical technique that had a lot to do with the sun. Therefore, the good fortune of this day meant more to him than anyone else.

Taiyang Zi immediately flew to a position roughly 2,400 meters high. He took a deep breath, and then… completely transformed into something that looked like a sun! Everyone who could see him was instantly shocked.

Next were Fan Dong’er and Li Ling’er. The two young women flew up, one to a height of 3,000 meters, the other to a height of 2,700 meters, where they both settled cross-legged. Both of them were beautiful to begin with, but underneath the light of the sun, they were scintillating, and emanated a feeling of holiness. Anyone who saw them would feel their hearts pounding, as if they were looking at celestial beings.

Song Luodan followed closely behind. After him were the other Fang Clan Chosen, among whom Fang Donghan was the swiftest. He came to a stop at a position roughly 1,800 meters high, astonishing many clan members.

Meng Hao released Sun Hai, whose expression was somber as he stepped forward and then flew up to a height of 2,100 meters. He emanated the energy of an Emperor, causing vast quantities of sunlight to build up around him.

Of all the Chosen who flew out from East Ascension Pavilion, none stopped at a position lower than 1,200 meters. Even Fang Xi managed to make it to 1,200 meters, where he began to meditate. There were quite a few other clan members in that same position, most of whom flew up from positions surrounding Brightmoon Lake.

Meng Hao didn’t fly up. He remained sitting cross-legged in the pavilion. The heat from the outside penetrated into his body, making him feel as if he had caught fire.

It caused beads of sweat to begin to roll down his face, all of which were pitch black. It was as if there were impurities within his body that were now being forced out. At the same time, he began to absorb some of the heat, strengthening his qi passageways, toughening his bones, and increasing the power of his blood and flesh.

“East Ascension Sun!” he thought, taking in a deep breath. The heat battered his face, pouring into his body, which began to tremble. After some time past, he finally flew out of the pavilion.

The instant he appeared outside, he could hear the clamor of voices. People weren’t talking about him, though, they were focused on… Fang Wei!

“21,000 meters! I can’t believe Prince Wei reached 21,000 meters!”

“It’s only been an hour, and he’s already at 21,000 meters! the heat there could vaporize an ordinary Spirit Realm cultivator in the space of a single breath!”

“Prince Wei really deserves his reputation!”

Meng Hao heard the cries of surprise ringing out. Earlier, he had spent one hour inside of the pavilion to get used to the sunlight of the East Ascension Sun. Now, as he looked up into the sky, he could see the various Chosen up in their various positions high in the sky.

The highest, of course… was Fang Wei!

He wore white garments, and floated alone at a height of 21,000 meters, grand and magnificent. Golden light surrounded him as sunlight poured into his body.

Fang Wei’s hair floated around him, making his normally handsome appearance even more shockingly elegant and graceful. Anyone who caught sight of him would be unable to withhold a cry of praise.

The three people just below Fang Wei were Taiyang Zi, Fan Dong’er and… someone Meng Hao wasn’t familiar with. When he had been with the other Chosen earlier, laughing and chatting, Meng Hao had learned that this was the Chosen from the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto… Zhou Xin!

Seeing Zhou Xin reminded Meng Hao of someone else from the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto….

“I wonder how Zhao Yifan is doing….” he thought.

When Meng Hao had first gotten to know all of these Chosen, Taiyang Zi’s cultivation base did not allow him to stand on a level similar to Fan Dong’er. However, the magic he cultivated gave him an advantage due to being connected to the sun, and therefore, he was at the same level as the other two, 19,500 meters. Below them at the 18,000-meter mark were Li Ling’er and Wang Mu!

Song Luodan, Sun Hai and the others were all at the 15,000-meter level. Fang Donghan was among their number, and many were paying attention to him. The main reason for that was that he normally kept a very low profile in the Fang Clan, and yet on this occasion, unexpectedly made it 15,000 meters high.

Meanwhile, back in the Fang Clan ancestral mansion, many of the Elders and other powerful experts were watching events play out. The Grand Elder was one of them, and as he looked at Fang Wei’s lofty position, his face was devoid of any expression. No one who looked at him would possibly be able to guess what he was thinking.

Fang Wei’s father and grandfather sat some distance away from the Grand Elder. Both of them were smiling.

“Wei’er has been preparing for years, building up resources, all with the goal of reaching a height of 300,000 meters….”

“If anyone can do it, it’s Wei’er!”

Outside of the East Ascension Pavilion, Meng Hao watched as everyone, including Fang Wei and the other Chosen, slowly climbed higher and higher. As they did, the good fortune they acquired increased.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered.

“I haven’t kept a low profile at all in the Fang Clan, and today will be no different!

“Moreover, this sunlight will greatly benefit my fleshly body. In fact, it’s possible that… I can take my fleshly body… to the level of true Immortality!”

Meng Hao took a deep breath and then began to rise into the air. In one simple movement, he reached 3,000 meters. He stopped there for a moment to take a breath. The sunlight distorted as it engulfed him, and was then sucked into his mouth.

Because of the massive amounts of sunlight that Meng Hao was absorbing, a rumbling sound suddenly echoed out!

It was a sound created from light containing natural law being accelerated to a high speed in the process of being absorbed. It was a strange sound that first sounded like rumbling, but then, if one listened closer, sounded like an enraged roar.

As the sound spread out, it immediately attracted quite a bit of attention.

“That’s Fang Hao!”

“What was that sound just now?”

“It’s coming from around Fang Hao! The rays of light are distorted. He’s gulping them up just like Prince Wei did!”

Meng Hao ignored the buzz of conversation. His body felt like it was about to burst into flames. He trembled for a moment, then closed his eyes, relishing the feeling of becoming like an incarnation of flame. His fleshly body was on fire, and because of it, was in the midst of transforming!

“Wonderful,” he thought, opening his eyes. Flames danced within his pupils. He threw his head back and laughed, then proceeded on higher. He was now at the 6,000-meter position!

As soon as he arrived, the other clan members at the 6,000-meter position looked over at him. Fang Xi was there, and when he saw Meng Hao, he started to get excited.

Meng Hao took a second deep breath, sucking in more sunlight. The intense temperatures around him turned into a whirlpool, and he was completely inundated by sunlight.

Yet again, that strange noise emanated out!

Next, Meng Hao laughed and then proceeded on a third time, then a fourth, then a fifth!

9,000 meters. 12,000 meters. 15,000 meters!

The shocking sound echoed out yet again, three times!
RUUUMMMMBLLLE!

Everything in the area shook, and the clan members sitting cross-legged on the ground, bathing in the sunlight, began to look up, startled by the sound. When they saw what was happening, their expressions flickered with shock and astonishment.

They weren’t the only surprised ones. All of the people at the 15,000-meter position were shaken as they personally watched Meng Hao approaching at top speed. Every time he moved, he rose 3,000 meters, and creating massive rumbling sounds!

“Five steps to get 15,000 meters! Fang Hao… isn’t just astonishingly skilled in the Dao of alchemy, his fleshly body is incredibly powerful!”

“It takes a strong cultivation base to bathe in the sunlight, but even more important is a strong fleshly body to support you! Without that, if you climb too high, you’ll be instantly killed!”

In the ancestral mansion, a strange gleam could be seen in the Grand Elder’s eyes as he watched Meng Hao. Fang Wei’s father and grandfather were frowning. As for all the direct bloodline clan members, they were starting to get excited. Fang Xi’s father, 19th Uncle, was laughing happily.

Meng Hao took a deep breath as he hovered there at the 15,000-meter position. He took a moment to experience the shocking temperature, and the sunlight that was apparently capable of refining his body. He felt as if his entire person were being refined inside of some sort of furnace of Heaven and Earth.

“With Heaven and Earth as the furnace, pills can be refined, and so can people!” Meng Hao moved onward. To the shock of the other clan members at the 15,000-meter location, it only took one movement for him to shoot another 3,000 meters to the 18,000-meter position!

By this time, Fang Wei had reached 27,000 meters. Taiyang Zi, Zhou Xin, and Fan Dong’er were at the 24,000-meter position, and Li Ling’er was only 3,000 meters away from Meng Hao’s current location!

By now, all of them had noticed Meng Hao. Of course, none of them were surprised to see him climbing so high. Deep in all of their hearts, they had long since begun to consider Meng Hao to be Chosen just like them.

This was especially true of Li Linge’r, who knew that Meng Hao and Fang Mu were one and the same. Seeing him below her, she clenched her teeth and pushed on higher.

Fang Wei, at the 27,000-meter position, wore the same facial expression as usual. When he looked down at Meng Hao below him, a flicker of scorn could be seen in his eyes. He didn’t care that Meng Hao was rising higher; he chose to disregard him the way he always had.

“My goal is 300,000 meters,” Fang Wei murmured. “I don’t need to compare myself to others.

“As I continue to advance on my path, I will surpass everyone and leave them in my dust….

“I will be the person that everyone tries to catch up to. Fang Hao… your goal is most likely to outdo me. Well, you’ll have to work a bit harder. Don’t get left too far behind.” With that, Fang Wei pushed higher, stepping into the 30,000-meter position.

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# Chapter 934: Neck and Neck

The instant Fang Wei stepped into the 30,000-meter position, the Fang Clan members started getting excited.

“30,000 meters! Prince Wei is the first person to reach 30,000 meters this time!”

“It was inevitable. A hundred years ago, Prince Wei was already close to the Immortal Realm, and in the end, he reached over 69,000 meters!”

“After a hundred years of cultivation, Prince Wei is definitely going to exceed 150,000 meters!”

Discussions raged. When he was born, Fang Wei had not been the center of attention in the Fang Clan. That spot had originally been occupied by Meng Hao.

However, in the hundreds of years after Meng Hao’s parents took him away from Planet East Victory, Fang Wei slowly became the focus, and eventually, the leader of his generation of the clan.

With a status and position like that, as well as the fact that his father and grandfather were leading his bloodline into prominence, Fang Wei had become the most famous person of his generation.

After reaching the 30,000-meter mark, Fang Wei took a deep breath. Cracking sounds could be heard from his body as the boundless sunlight washed over him. When he looked down, he saw everyone beneath him, and although his expression was the same as ever, in his heart, he felt as if he were trampling on the world, proudly placing everyone beneath his feet.

“From up here, they look like ants.

“It is destiny. I am the first person to reach 30,000 meters, therefore, I am also destined to lead the pack the entire way. I will forever… leave everyone behind in my shadow.

“That is because I have only used thirty percent of my cultivation base to reach this 30,000-meter mark.” Fang Wei smiled and closed his eyes. After a few breaths of time, his eyes opened, and his cultivation base surged. A windstorm kicked up around him, inwardly shaking anyone who looked at it.

The windstorm grew more and more powerful. After three breaths of time, Fang Wei advanced, causing rumbling sounds to echo out. He picked up speed as he flew up into the sky. In the blink of an eye, he was three thousand meters higher. Then six thousand. In the time it takes to breathe in and out, shockingly, he was 45,000 meters high.

He didn’t stop there. He continued, his cultivation base surging. Golden light surrounded him, and he turned into a golden streak that shot to a height of 54,000 meters.

From that position, he overlooked all the lands, and his heart filled with even more intense pride.

All of the Fang Clan members below stared up with wide eyes. Taiyang Zi was the second to reach 30,000 meters. After him were Fan Dong’er and Zhou Xin, who reached 30,000 meters at almost exactly the same time.

Taiyang Zi let out a long cry as sunlight surrounded him. He looked like he was a sun of his own, battling to outshine the sun in the sky. Amorphous flames surrounded him, and surprisingly… he did much the same as Fang Wei had, shooting up to 45,000 meters, garnering mass attention.

However, moments later, Fan Dong’er and Zhou Xin also unleashed their cultivation bases. To Chosen like this, reaching 30,000 meters was simply a warmup. After getting accustomed to their surroundings… they would be able to acquire the true good fortune!

The higher they got, the greater that good fortune would be!

Fan Dong’er was surrounded by a magical sea that seemed to sweep her up along with it as it rose higher, to a height of 48,000 meters. At the same time, Taiyang Zi, despite his special method, was beginning to fall behind.

Zhou Xin from the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto was surrounded by sword light as he shot upward, reaching a spot somewhere between Fan Dong’er and Taiyang Zi.

Then there were Li Ling’er, Wang Mu, Song Luodan and Sun Hai, all of whom reached 30,000 meters, then unleashed their cultivation bases and began to shoot higher.

The explosive rise of the Chosen caused the Fang Clan members down below to be completely shocked. They knew that in the future, these Chosen would be the most powerful experts in the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Were it not for the fact that they had been waiting for Immortal destiny, any one of them could have long since entered the Immortal Realm. They had built up resources and prepared for years, and once they fused with an Immortality Illumination Vine, they would instantly be able to explode to the peak of the Immortal Realm.

“30,000 meters is only the first step for them. After that, they unleash their cultivation bases, utilizing indescribable energy!”

“Luckily, our Fang Clan’s Prince Wei is in first place!”

“With Prince Wei here, all of the other Chosen from the Ninth Mountain and Sea will have to hold the Fang Clan in awe!”

At the same time that the Chosen started rocketing skyward, Meng Hao advanced for the eighth time, then the ninth, and the tenth.

24,000 meters. 27,000 meters. 30,000 meters!

He moved with incredible speed, 3,000 meters per movement, quickly joining the group of people who had made it to the 30,000-meter point. There, he took a deep breath and looked down at the shrinking land beneath his feet. He saw the ancestral mansion, and all the vast lands surrounding it, including the mountain range that was the Dao of Alchemy Division.

The sunlight here was incredibly intense and hot, enough to melt a Spirit Realm cultivator. Of course, to Meng Hao… that was not enough to prevent him from advancing.

As he breathed, the heat fused into his body. Sweat poured out of him, each drop of which removed impurities from his body.

He was slowly becoming transparent, and his fleshly body was becoming increasingly powerful.

He clenched his hands into fists, cracking his knuckles as he felt himself growing stronger and stronger.

“The warmup is finished. Now… it’s time to burst out!” Eyes glittering, he took a deep breath, and then, his cultivation base began to seethe, and suddenly exploded with power. A vortex formed around him in the blink of an eye.

The vortex spread out in all directions, becoming like a massive black hole that sucked in all of the light and heat and merged it into Meng Hao’s body. In that instant, he suddenly shot up at high speed.

The sight was shocking, causing all of the countless Fang Clan members down below to gasp.

They watched as Meng Hao sped upward like an arrow loosed from a bow. Nothing could stand in his way. No obstacle could obstruct him. Rumbling filled the air as he reached 39,000 meters. 45,000 meters. 54,000 meters….

He passed Li Ling’er and the others. He passed Taiyang Zi. He passed Fan Dong’er and Zhou Xin. As he did, their eyes widened. Then he shot even higher.

In the blink of an eye, he reached 60,000 meters!

This development sent huge waves of shock through the Fang Clan members down below. Their eyes went wide with disbelief, and hoarse exclamations rang out.

“That’s… that’s impossible!”

“He exploded with speed after 30,000 meters, advancing another 30,000 meters in the blink of an eye! I can’t believe Fang Hao… is so shocking!”

“He’s the eldest grandson of the direct bloodline. Fang Hao! Back when he was here in the clan, Fang Wei was nothing. Fang Hao is the true Chosen of the Fang Clan!”

Amidst the uproar from the crowd, almost exactly at the same time as Meng Hao flew past the 60,000-meter mark, he was joined by Fang Wei!

Fang Wei was completely shocked, but his expression soon filled with determination. Without the slightest hesitation, he caused his cultivation base to surge, holding nothing back as he flew higher, neck and neck with Meng Hao.

At the same time, Fan Dong’er and the others near her looked on in shock. Then they pushed hard with their cultivation bases, flying higher. Li Ling’er and all the other Chosen were the same. Thanks to the provocation from Meng Hao, all of them pushed higher.

RUMMBLLE!

From the ground, it looked like numerous beams of light were slicing through the air. Highest of all were the two beams of light that were Meng Hao and Fang Wei, and it was impossible to tell who was in front and who was behind.

Further back were Fan Dong’er and Zhou Xin, speeding along. Li Ling’er was close behind, as was Taiyang Zi, thanks to his special technique.

As for everyone else, none were very far behind, and were working hard to catch up.

“Barely two hours have passed. And yet, each rising of the East Ascension Sun lasts for 36 days!”

“Are these people crazy, or what?!?! And look! Fang Hao is going neck and neck with Fang Wei!”

“They’re not crazy. That’s called being competitive!”

The crowds below felt their hearts trembling. Fang Xi remained at a position several thousand meters up, and even there, it was difficult for him to absorb the heat and light. Despite that, he was very excited.

He looked up at Meng Hao shooting higher and higher, and his expression was one of extreme enthusiasm.

“Coz, you definitely have to exceed Fang Wei!”

In the ancestral mansion, the Fang Clan Elders were all looking up into the sky, watching as the Chosen used this unique method to engage in battle. The Grand Elder’s face was expressionless; on the other hand, Fang Wei’s father and grandfather, who were not too far away from the Grand Elder, looked extremely grim.

All of the members of the direct bloodline were very excited.

The members of the Dao of Alchemy Division were more excited than anyone else, and were all watching the developments with rapt attention.

“That’s Alchemist Fang Hao!” people cried out. There were now more than ten tier 8 alchemists in the inner mountains who were paying close attention to the proceedings. They were smiling as they watched, but at the same time, their hands never ceased moving as they continuously concocted medicinal pills.

To the Dao of Alchemy Division, the rise of the East Ascension Sun was the perfect time to concoct fire-type medicinal pills!

Pill Elder Fang Danyun sat cross-legged on the mountain peak with the Unicorn Immortals. Shockingly, a seven-colored flame could be seen in the palm of his hand, within which a medicinal pill was beginning to form.

If Meng Hao were there, he would instantly recognize the pill that was being concocted. It was none other than… a Skypalace Sunspirit Pill!

High up in the sky, the sunlight was extremely intense. The higher one got, the more capable it was of burning away anything and everything. Fang Wei's expression was grim as he unleashed all of his power. However, he was still incapable of passing up Meng Hao. At the moment, neither of them had seized the highest position.

66,000 meters. 72,000 meters. 78,000 meters. 84,000 meters….

It was at that point that Fang Wei snorted coldly. His body trembled for a moment, and then he suddenly exploded with golden light. Within that golden light, he seemed to turn completely golden. Simultaneously, his Dharma Idol appeared behind him, and he suddenly shot up with incredible speed.

"I will always be the person you hope to exceed!" he said. Even as Meng Hao heard his words, Fang Wei shot past him. In the space of a few breaths of time, Fang Wei reached the 90,000-meter mark!

But then, Meng Hao's Dharma Idol appeared behind him as well, and his speed also increased dramatically. He also shot up to 90,000 meters in exactly the same way Fang Wei had moments before!

"You think a bit too highly of yourself," he said coolly.

As soon as Fang Wei reached the 90,000-meter mark, he paused. His looked deeply at Meng Hao for a moment, then ignored him and settled himself cross-legged to meditate.

Meng Hao's expression flickered as he realized that the sky at 90,000 meters was not blue, but almost violet. Furthermore… the sunlight here was also violet!

Apparently, 90,000 meters was a line of demarcation. Meng Hao hesitated for a moment, then crossed his legs and began to breathe deeply. A vortex formed around him as he began to absorb the indescribably hot, violet sunlight.

His fleshly body was now becoming even more powerful!

Soon, he would reach a critical point, the threshold of a true Immortal fleshly body!

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# Chapter 935: My Nirvana Fruits!

The violet sunlight contained shocking heat. It was like a violet sea of flames that submerged Meng Hao inside of it, burning him inside and out. He was engulfed in flames.

The impurities within him were being thoroughly scorched away, causing his fleshly body to draw ever closer to that of a true Immortal.

Fang Wei was also absorbing the light and heat. One by one, Fan Dong'er and some of the others arrived at the 90,000-meter level. All of them crossed their legs and began to meditate, absorbing the violet sunlight to strengthen their fleshly bodies.

Most of the other cultivators were down below, beneath the 30,000-meter mark. There were only a handful who were hovering at around 60,000 meters. The division between the various groups was very clear.

In the Fang Clan's ancestral mansion, the Elders were watching the unfolding events closely. As they did, the conversed among themselves.

"The Heavens at 90,000 meters are violet. At 180,000 meters, they become deep violet that borders on black. At 270,000 meters, they're pitch black!"

"Each of these 3 strata of height will provide shocking results in terms of fleshly body tempering. I wonder if anyone will be able to reach 180,000 meters this time!?"

"For countless years, less than thirty people have ever been able to reach 180,000 meters."

Time passed. Eight or nine people were now at the 90,000-meter level, including Meng Hao. All of them had their eyes closed in meditation as they absorbed the violet sunlight. It was also possible to see vortexes spinning around all of them like black holes as they voraciously swallowed up the heat and sunlight.

The most astonishing of all of these were the black holes around Meng Hao and Fang Wei, which were hundreds of meters wide, and absorbed all of the violet sunlight in their respective areas.

The entire time, it was high noon. The more than 60 hours that passed by were equivalent to the normal passing of three days.

When the 100th hour arrived, Taiyang Zi was the first person to open his eyes. He took a deep breath as rumbling sounds echoed out. His eyes shone with a brilliant light, and incredible heat radiated off of him as he rose to his feet.

“My body has reached its limit here at 90,000 meters. An obstacle has appeared that prevents me from absorbing any more…. The only thing I can do… is to go higher and absorb more intense sunlight and heat. Only then can I destroy that barrier and push my fleshly body to another breakthrough!” He looked around at the others near him, and his gaze eventually came to rest on Meng Hao and Fang Wei.

“To be born in the same era as them… is both a blessing and a curse.” He sighed lightly, then gritted his teeth. Eyes shining with determination, he took a deep breath and raised his right hand. A stone suddenly appeared in his palm which, despite the violet light surrounding it, still emanated bright golden rays.

“Sun Immortal Veins!” he roared, clasping the stone tightly. Behind him, an enormous Dharma Idol appeared, several thousand meters tall. Shockingly, the Dharma Idol depicted Taiyang Zi himself, and the Immortality Illumination Vine wrapping around it appeared to be burning.

At the same time, a pattern of veins suddenly spread out across Taiyang Zi’s entire body, causing him to surge with shocking power.

“When this is over, it doesn’t matter what the level of my fleshly body is! I’m going into secluded meditation, and I’m going to break through to the Immortal Realm!” Taiyang Zi’s body burned like a shooting star as he shot past the 90,000-meter level, rapidly rising several thousand meters. He reached the 120,000-meter level in the space of a few breaths, which was when he finally started to slow down. Despite that, he gritted his teeth and continued onward.

He next broke through to 150,000 meters. At 159,000 meters, he coughed up a mouthful of blood, and the stone in his hand began to crumble. His body looked as if it was about to melt, but he forcibly held it together, crossed his legs, and began to meditate.

“I still have three of these precious Divine Sunstones. However… this is the absolute limit for my fleshly body. If I go forward even one more meter, then I’ll die!” His expression was one of defiance, and yet, he closed his eyes and absorbed the sunlight madly.

Soon after, Sun Hai opened his eyes. His energy surged like that of an Emperor as he produced a crown and placed it on his head. Then, he began to rise, struggling to a height of 156,000 meters before finally coming to a stop.

Wang Mu followed close behind Sun Hai. His cultivation base roared as a strange aura appeared around him that seemed to contain elements of the rising sun. In his hand was a jade slip that seemed able to dispel any darkness of night that he might perceive around him. Shockingly, he rose to a height of 162,000 meters!

When the 126th hour arrived, Li Ling’er opened her eyes. At the same time, so did Song Luodan. Neither of them looked at the other, and yet they simultaneously produced objects from within their robes.

Li Ling’er pulled out a magical bottle that rose to float above her head. Occasionally, drops of liquid would seep out. When they splashed onto Li Ling’er, they transformed into steam that she then absorbed.

Song Luodan pulled out a Feng Shui Compass composed entirely of translucent crystal, which emanated a pulsating qi that he breathed in through his nose and mouth.

Similar to Taiyang Zi, these two were using items prepared especially for them by their respective organizations, treasures useful in resisting sunlight. Their energy surged, and they shot higher up at almost the exact same time.

“They’re Chosen, but so am I!” thought Song Luodan. “Only by trampling them beneath my feet can I succeed in treading my path!”

“Immortal destiny has appeared, and I have an Immortality Illumination Vine,” thought Li Ling’er. “I can see my path to Immortality, and I will succeed!”

120,000 meters. 150,000 meters…. At 165,000 meters, Song Luodan coughed up a mouthful of blood. His body was wreathed in flames, and he finally had no choice but to stop. Li Ling’er held on until 174,000 meters before stopping, her face pale. Blood oozed out of her mouth, which instantly transformed into a bloody steam.

Song Luodan chuckled bitterly, closed his eyes, and began to absorb sunlight. Li Ling’er said nothing. She looked at the 180,000-meter position, only a few thousand meters away, and sighed inwardly.

Her current position was the absolute limit for her fleshly body.

Time passed. When the 200th hour arrived, Zhou Xin from the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto and Fan Dong’er both opened their eyes. They, too, produced sun-resisting treasures and flew up at high speed. They passed everyone, reaching 177,000 meters before their faces went pale and they started to slow down. However, they still managed to force their way to a height of 180,000 meters before they each coughed up three successive mouthfuls of blood, then trembled and settled down cross-legged, their bodies wreathed in flames.

This scene caused all the observing Fang Clan members to tremble inwardly with shock.

“They… really deserve to be called Chosen!”

“All of them are fighting with all of their might! For their own Dao, for the path they wish to tread!”

“As Chosen, the pressure they feel and the responsibility they have are equally weighty! They aren’t willing to let others supersede them, and they’re all striving to leave behind their own mark of glory….”

When the 240th hour arrived, only Meng Hao and Fang Wei remained at the 90,000-meter mark. At this point, Fang Wei’s eyes opened, and he looked over at Meng Hao, his expression grim.

“Still haven’t reached your limit yet…? Well, that doesn’t matter. Goals are everything, and I… have only one goal. To reach 300,000 meters!” Eyes shining brightly, he rose to his feet. Unlike the other Chosen, he used no precious treasure. Instead, his energy burst out, sending golden light emanating out in all directions.

Finally, his Dharma Idol appeared!

In addition to the golden light, his body emanated the aura of reincarnation. It grew stronger and stronger until, in the end, it created a vortex around him. Fang Wei then began to rise up higher into the sky.

In one move, he rose 30,000 meters!

When he reached 120,000 meters, he began to slow down. However, Fan Dong’er and everyone else up ahead him looked on with wide eyes.

“He’s not using any magical items! He’s relying only on his cultivation base and his fleshly body!”

“He’s using a unique divine ability. That’s the aura of reincarnation…. That must be one of the Fang Clan’s special magics, One Thought Reincarnation Incantation!”

Everyone in the Fang Clan was watching as Fang Wei reached the 120,000-meter mark, including the Elders in the ancestral mansion.

“Reincarnation Second Life!” roared Fang Wei. Immediately, the aura of reincarnation that surrounded him exploded out. Rumbling could be heard as, shockingly… a second Dharma Idol appeared behind him.

This Dharma Idol didn’t look like his first Dharma Idol. It was blurry and unclear.

As soon as the second Dharma Idol appeared, Fang Wei’s body flickered, and he continued to advance, quickly reaching a height of 150,000 meters.

A hubbub of conversation rose up from down below, and shock filled the hearts of Song Luodan and the other Chosen.

“Reincarnation Third Life!” Fang Wei cried out. As his shocking call echoed about… a third Dharma Idol appeared behind him. His cultivation base roared to monstrous heights as he advanced a third time. Rumbling could be heard as he instantly reached a height of 180,000 meters!

He planned to put everyone beneath his feet!

All the crowds were in an uproar. Actually, not everyone in the Fang Clan could actually see 180,000 meters into the sky. Only the most powerful experts could do so. However, those who could see were incredibly excited, especially the members of Fang Wei’s bloodline, who were elated.

“The Reincarnation Incantation can reincarnate four lives. Prince Wei’s latent talent is so shocking that he’s already refined three lives!”

“He… he isn’t even in the Immortal Realm yet! Once he breaks through, he’ll definitely be a 90-meridian peak Immortal!!”

“With a Chosen like that, our Fang Clan is destined to last throughout the ages!”

Fang Wei hovered at a height of 180,000 meters. From this vantage point, he could see the arcing curvature of the planet, and almost seemed to be floating in the starry sky. He did not cough up any blood as he looked down at the other Chosen with their varied expressions, and at Meng Hao.

When he looked at Meng Hao, he realized that Meng Hao’s eyes were not closed. Instead, he was staring back at Fang Wei with an abstruse look in his eyes.

Meng Hao had actually opened his eyes earlier, when Fang Wei had begun to fly up. The instant their eyes met, Fang Wei could see a piercing glow in Meng Hao’s eyes, and a smile on his face.

Next, Meng Hao’s lips moved slightly, and although he didn’t speak, Fang Wei instantly knew what he was saying.

“Are my Nirvana Fruits working well for you?”

Immediately, Fang Wei’s eyes widened, and his expression turned grim.

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# Chapter 936: Meng Hao vs. Fang Wei

When Fang Wei started flying higher into the sky earlier, Meng Hao awoke from meditation, not naturally, but because he had felt the intense sensation of something calling to him, something very familiar.

That sense of familiarity came from Fang Wei.

It was a sensation like nothing else, and it came specifically from Fang Wei's second and third Dharma Idols. It was now obvious that they were calling out to Meng Hao's blood.

He had felt that there was something familiar about Fang Wei's aura from the very beginning. He'd had his speculations, but it wasn't until now that those speculations were validated. 1

From Fang Wei's second and third Dharma Idols, Meng Hao got the feeling that… they actually belonged to him.

They were… manifestations of his Nirvana Fruits!

Now that the truth had presented itself in front of Meng Hao, he was unexpectedly calm. The entire clan had witnessed the Grand Elder giving him "his" Nirvana Fruits, so bringing up the subject would be useless.

Meng Hao smiled, a cold smile that contained no anger, but rather, calmness.

He slowly stood up, then began to fly upward, relying on no magical items to resist the sunlight and heat. He put the matter of the Nirvana Fruits aside for now, and instead focused on a Daoist incantation.

Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao!

Flame Character Incantation!

A blistering heat rose up inside of him that rapidly spread throughout his entire body. The heat turned into a sea of flames that spread out from Meng Hao, raging up to merge with the violet sunlight and absorb its heat.

His Dharma Idol appeared behind him, and it was also surrounded by a sea of flames, making it look incredibly shocking.

In that moment, his fleshly body seemed to be on the verge of making a breakthrough as he madly absorbed all of the intense heat around him.

Within his mind was not just the Flame Character Incantation; he also had the Withering Character Incantation and the Self Character Incantation. These three Daoist incantations all seemed to merge together inside of him. Under the intense heat, Meng Hao's body began to wither, and yet, within that withering was an intense life force. 2

In fact, as he withered, more violet sunlight and even more intense heat were incited by the Flame Character Incantation, causing his body to recover. The withering was then focused inside of him, transforming into a true black hole.

Meng Hao's Flame Character Incantation rapidly solidified as it absorbed the vast amounts of violet sunlight, causing the incantation to become thoroughly completed.

"The Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao contains seven incantations," Meng Hao murmured. As of this moment, he gained more understanding of this Daoist magic that he had picked up in that primordial Demon Immortal Sect.

"Even so, it doesn't quite measure up to the Fang Clan's Reincarnation Incantation." Meng Hao sighed. The One Thought Reincarnation Incantation was one of the four great Daoist magics of the Fang Clan, and was famous throughout the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Those four great Daoist magics were Daos of the clan, and even Meng Hao couldn’t study them unless he exchanged enough merit points for it. Even then, he wouldn’t personally be able to master them without the help of a Patriarch-level expert.

“Fire…. Light….” Meng Hao was suddenly lost in thought, and began to see images in his mind. Within the vision, he saw a spherical mass of fire and light that was like a sun, or an eye.

It was none other than… the Essence of Divine Flame beneath the lands of South Heaven!

That was the most intense mass of fire and light that Meng Hao had ever seen in his entire life!

He closed his eyes and began to recall his experience with the Essence of Divine Flame. Things began to grow clearer as he remembered returning to the third level of the underground land. In the moment that he had acquired some of that Essence, what he had seen was not the light of a sun, but rather… the flaming eye formed by the Essence of Divine Flame!

In the same moment that Meng Hao was experiencing this vision, back in the lands of South Heaven, in the third level of that underground land, a place guarded by all the bizarre beasts, within a world of flames, the eye of the Essence of Divine Flame suddenly… opened!

The moment that the eye opened, it seemed to form a resonance with the image of the Essence of Divine Flame that existed in Meng Hao’s mind. Rumbling sounds could be heard, and Meng Hao’s energy level suddenly began to rise.

At the same time, the sea of flames around Meng Hao suddenly turned black. They swirled around him, transforming into an enormous spherical globe.

Meng Hao existed in the very center of that globe, held up by his Dharma Idol. From a distance, it almost looked like he had… become a sun!

This sun was far bigger and more realistic than the sun created by Taiyang Zi’s divine ability, and the heat it radiated was boundless.

Down in the ancestral mansion, the faces of the Elders who were watching the scene instantly flickered with shock. Even the Grand Elder, who had remained completely calm this entire time, felt his eyes going wide.

“That’s… a projection! A projection of the sun!”

“What divine ability is Fang Hao using!? I can’t believe he’s created a projection of the actual sun!”

“In all the past years, only two people have ever created a projection of the sun during the rise of the East Ascension Sun, and they were Patriarchs, tens of thousands of years ago! And yet Fang Hao… is actually doing just that!”

Deep down in the Fang Clan ancestral mansion, in a stony cavern, seven archaic old men sat cross-legged.

These seven were all incredibly famous figures. If they emerged into the outside world, they would cause a huge stir in the starry sky, and could suppress all living things.

They sat cross-legged in meditation, and looked as if no aura of life existed in them whatsoever. The color of their clothing was varied, and currently, the old man who wore a crimson robe suddenly opened his eyes.

He slowly raised his head, and his gaze penetrated through the rock and stone into the outside world.

“The aura of Essence….”

Back outside, in the 90,000-meter position up in the sky, Meng Hao slowly opened his eyes. To those looking on, it appeared as if he was surrounded by a projection of the sun. However, Meng Hao knew that this was not the case. Instead… he had used his memories of the Essence of Divine Flame, as well as the Flame Character Incantation, to borrow the power of the sun and copy its image.

He looked up at Fang Wei in his position at the 180,000-meter mark, and his expression became even more placid than before. Then, he lifted his right leg and then pushed it down, propelling himself high into the air!

It was one movement, but it caused massive rumbling to fill the air. The void rippled, and even the sun high in the sky seemed to distort. At the same time, the sun surrounding Meng Hao began to expand.

The path that stretched out in front of Meng Hao's eyes seemed to shrink, as if the intervening 90,000 meters were nothing more than a single meter!

One movement spanned a single meter… but caused him to leap 90,000 meters! 3

He passed Li Ling'er, superseded Sun Hai and Taiyang Zi, and appeared directly above Fan Dong'er!

He… moved directly to a height of 180,000 meters. When he appeared next to Fang Wei, Fang Wei's eyes widened, and he shook visibly.

Meng Hao was now radiating boundless violet light in the shape of a sun. It was a sight that shook Heaven and Earth, leaving everyone astonished. People watching from down below even had the mistaken impression that the sun had descended!

"You!!" said Fang Wei. This was the first time he had become flustered. His face flickered, and he was so shaken by Meng Hao that he involuntarily retreated backward.

Fan Dong'er was panting as she stared up at Meng Hao. She had to admit that as of this moment, Meng Hao was shocking even to her. He had formed a projection of the sun, and crossed 90,000 meters in a single movement! It was terrifying!

Zhou Xin of the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto looked on with a sharp gaze, virtually unable to believe the feeling of defeat that existed in his heart.

Li Ling'er took a deep breath as she gaped in shock. She knew that Meng Hao was Fang Mu, and she knew that with his latent talent, he was the number one figure in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Even still, she was once again completely shaken by him.

Gradually, Meng Hao's position in her mind was reaching the pinnacle, like a huge mountain that was impossible to supersede.

Song Luodan trembled and bitterly lowered his head. Taiyang Zi stared blankly for a long moment before sighing.

"It is a blessing to be able to live in the same age as him, and thus, bear witness to his actions. It is a curse… because his brilliance casts everyone else in shadow."

Wang Mu's fists were clenched tightly, and deep inside, he wanted to fight. His gaze was defiant as he repeatedly told himself that his surname was Wang, and that the surname Wang… had a very special meaning!

To be a Chosen of the Wang Clan meant that you didn't lose to anyone!

Sun Hai was shaken, and chuckled bitterly. He actually had no desire to compete with Meng Hao, and yet, he still sighed.

Meng Hao hovered at the 180,000-meter position. Here, the sky was deep violet, almost black. It was so dark that only by looking closely could you pick up the violet hues. In addition, the sunlight was vastly more powerful than at the 90,000-meter position, so much so that it seemed capable of melting the body.

Even magical items would be instantly transformed into a liquid that would quickly become nothing more than steam.

However, Meng Hao's expression was calm. He was like a black hole, furiously absorbing the sunlight and heat. The sun that surrounded him looked just as magnificent as the sun that hung up above in the Heavens.

Meng Hao turned to look at the grim-faced Fang Wei.

“Fang Wei,” he said calmly. “Do you want to have a little competition? Let’s see… who can go the highest!”

Fang Wei’s eyes widened as he stared at Meng Hao.

“We don’t even need to bet anything specific,” Meng Hao said with a slight smile. “However, the winner will get to punch the loser. Once. It’s just that… I really feel like punching you.”

Fang Wei snorted coldly, declining to say anything in response. Instead, he responded with action. The three Dharma Idols behind him suddenly exploded with power, and he himself shot high up into the sky.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as usual. As soon as Fang Wei flew up, he followed, and the two of them turned into bright streaks of light that shot upward.

In the blink of an eye, they had reached 210,000 meters!

Meng Hao’s entire body was covered in flames. The sun which surrounded him was still in place, despite the fact that the light and heat here was ten times as powerful as it had been at the 180,000-meter position. Fang Wei was trembling, and the Dharma Statues behind him fell to pieces. Gritting his teeth, he slapped his bag of holding to produce a medicinal pill, which he immediately swallowed.

It was a Skypalace Sunspirit Pill, and as soon as he consumed it, he threw his head back and roared, then shot even higher than before.

225,000 meters. 240,000 meters!

The sky was now completely black. Fang Wei’s body was in flames, and fissures were spreading out across his skin. Even with the Skypalace Sunspirit Pill, he was incapable of staying at such a height for very long.

Meng Hao's sun was beginning to collapse, and his body withered. His flesh and blood appeared to be evaporating and dispersing. The intensity at the 240,000-meter position was ten times as powerful as before, and the heat and light had reached a terrifying level. However, even as his body withered, he looked over at Fang Wei with a cold gaze.

"What's wrong?" he asked. "Can't keep up?"

To Fang Wei, this incredible heat and light was terrifying. It was the same for Meng Hao. However, there was something unique about Meng Hao; however ruthlessly he treated others… he treated himself even more ruthlessly.

Meng Hao also had a Skypalace Sunspirit Pill, and yet, he didn't consume it. He wanted to use Fang Wei's arrogance to bring him down, to openly, and without any tricks, mess with him until he was destroyed and brought to ruin!

He also wanted to damage Fang Wei's Dao heart, by defeating him without even needing to consume a single medicinal pill. It would be like a mortal blow to Fang Wei.

Considering Fang Wei's level of intelligence, how could he not understand that Meng Hao was leading him on? This was obviously… a battle for the position of number one Chosen in the Fang Clan!

As of this moment, all of the Fang Clan's experts, all of the Elders, and even the Grand Elder, were paying rapt attention!

3. Because of how I convert the measurements to meters, and also because of how Chinese uses special words for certain units of measurement (they have a unique word for 10,000), this sounds a lot cooler in Chinese. "Zhang" is about 3 meters and "chi" is about 1/3 of that, in other words, one meter. The direct translation would be: It seemed as if a three 10,000 zhang distance had become three chi! One movement was three chi… but he stepped three 10,000 zhangs!

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 937: One Punch!

Fang Wei's eyes were bright red as he glared at Meng Hao. The pride in his heart had been trampled upon; he had already consumed the Skypalace Sunspirit Pill, and yet… he was still not able to shake Meng Hao.

Even more impossible for him to accept was that from the very beginning until now, Meng Hao still had not used any external aid. He was relying only on his fleshly body and cultivation base, and yet was still capable of reaching this incredible height.

That fact was a massive blow to Fang Wei.

"I'm the number one Chosen of the Fang Clan!" he thought, gritting his teeth. "From the moment I was born, I was destined… to shake the Ninth Mountain and Sea!" He lifted his right hand, within which appeared a bone fragment.

It was covered with intricately carved magical symbols, and emanated a barbaric aura, as well as a feeling of incredible ancientness. Fang Wei violently clenched his hand around the bone fragment, which did not fracture, but rather sank down into the flesh of his palm.

Drops of blood appeared, along with a faint, bizarre power. As the pieces of the bone fragment merged into his body, Fang Wei began to tremble, and blue veins popped out on his face.

"I, Fang Wei… will never lose!" As he spoke the words, rumbling echoed out, and he once again rose higher into the sky.

Meng Hao's eyes flickered. He could have allowed his Eternal Stratum to heal him, but had not done so yet. He wanted to completely and utterly destroy Fang Wei’s self-confidence, to thoroughly crush him and drag him down into destruction.

Enduring the intense light and heat, Meng Hao also shot upward.

The two of them became beams of colorful light as they ascended. Anyone who could see them, be they the Chosen from the various clans or the Fang Clan experts, watched as Meng Hao and Fang Wei shot up into the sky with determination and roiling energy.

249,000 meters!

Rumbling echoed out at this incredibly high position. Blood sprayed from Fang Wei’s mouth; even with the power of the bone fragment, he had barely managed to force his way those extra 9,000 meters higher. This position was truly his final limit.

He had possessed only one Skypalace Sunspirit Pill. Such pills were rare, even for Fang Wei. His father and grandfather had paid a steep price to get their hands on a single Skypalace Sunspirit Pill from the Dao of Alchemy Division.

After all, the Dao of Alchemy Division could act autonomously in the clan, and not even the Grand Elder could give them orders, unless the clan was in a state of war.

In the same moment that Fang Wei couldn’t hold out any longer, the black sun surrounding Meng Hao suddenly crumbled away in layers, transforming into countless fragments that rapidly evaporated due to the intense heat.

Meng Hao was now completely exposed, and his skin began to wither up. Soon, he looked like nothing more than a desiccated corpse that might melt away into death at any moment.

And yet, his eyes sparkled as he looked at Fang Wei.

“Admit defeat?” he asked, his voice hoarse.

Fang Wei’s heart trembled as he gazed upon Meng Hao’s intense strength. He saw Meng Hao’s withered body, and to Fang Wei, it appeared as if he could proceed higher only a few hundred meters, Meng Hao would be unable to keep up, and would be killed by the power of the sun.

As he hovered there silently, a gleam of madness suddenly appeared in his eyes. He said nothing, but instead threw his head back and let out a mighty roar. His body shook as his three Dharma Idols suddenly appeared.

“Three Lives of Reincarnation! Glory of a Lifetime!” he howled, flashing an incantation gesture that caused all three Dharma Idols to superimpose. Next, an aura that appeared to be Fang Wei’s rose up, growing stronger and stronger until it reached a boundless level.

“I am Fang Wei, and I… will NEVER lose!” He clenched his teeth and once again rose up higher, surrounded by rumbling sounds. As he soared higher, his body began to wither, and the flame of his life force began to grow dim. And yet, looking every bit like a shooting star, he continued to rise higher.

252,000 meters. 258,000 meters. 267,000 meters!

Fang Wei’s blood was being transformed into mist as he pushed himself higher. Meng Hao followed silently, and his body became even more withered. His cultivation base was in full rotation, and his Dharma Idol was supporting him from behind. His energy was operating at the full peak.

Especially noteworthy was his Immortal meridian, which glowed with intense light that filled his body. A Blood Demon head materialized around him, and the Ninth Mountain appeared, as well as the Black White Pearls.

He also used A Bit of Karma, as well as various other divine abilities and magical techniques. His aura surged to its limit as he combined everything at his disposal to keep pace with Fang Wei. Soon, he too arrived at the 267,000-meter position.

It was at that point that Meng Hao coughed up a mouthful of blood. His body was now withered virtually to its limit, to the point where it seemed that if Fang Wei took only one more step, Meng Hao would be left behind and would be unable to keep up.

Fang Wei looked at Meng Hao, and his eyes blazed with the desire to fight. From the very beginning until this very moment, Meng Hao had constantly seemed to be on the verge of death. And yet, as he advanced, he was not melted by the sun.

Fang Wei had already gone all out, and had almost reached 270,000 meters, and yet, it seemed that he would be incapable of surpassing Meng Hao.

Both Meng Hao and Fang Wei hovered at 267,000 meters, and neither one of them was in the lead position.

“Fang Hao….” said Fang Wei. He gazed at Meng Hao with a look of madness. Panting, he slowly lifted up his right foot. It was a simple motion, but it caused his body to tremble violently, clearly on the verge of complete collapse.

At that point, back down in the ancestral mansion, Fang Wei’s father’s face fell, and he suddenly called out.

“Wei’er, just remain in that position and meditate! Get used to your surroundings before proceeding higher!” It wasn’t just Fang Wei’s father who had such a reaction. There were other Elders of his bloodline who all started calling out to Fang Wei to stop trying to get higher.

“Fang Wei, don’t fall into his vicious plot! Don’t be rash!”

“Fang Wei, you need to rest and adjust your breathing! Your goal has nothing to do with other people, it is Heaven itself!”

Fang Wei said nothing. Neither did Meng Hao, who simply hovered off to the side, looking coldly at Fang Wei.

Time passed. After the space of several breaths had passed, Fang Wei’s eyes suddenly filled with determination and he stared at Meng Hao.

“I know the meaning behind your actions earlier,” he said. “I also know what you’re trying to do. You want to coax me into competing with you in the hopes of delivering a blow to my Dao heart. Such things… I understand.” His eyes gleamed with the light of obsession.

“However!” he continued. “I am Fang Wei, and I won’t lose to anyone. You want to fight? Then let’s fight! You want to compete? I’ll compete with you! I’m going to move one step further, and if you’re good enough, see if you can keep up!” Eyes bloodshot, Fang Wei lowered his right foot and moved higher again.

In that instant, his grandfather let out a bellow of rage.

“Fang Wei, get back here!”

Rumbling echoed out. As Fang Wei finished moving up, blood spurted out all over his body, and his hair was burned completely away. His skin began to burst, and he appeared to be engulfed in a sea of flames.

He even began to stagger, as if he couldn’t support his own weight. However, at the same time that this was happening, Meng Hao also moved higher. Similar rumbling echoed out, and he was also inundated in a sea of flames. He also began to tremble, and yet… he remained solidly in place. Then he looked back at at Fang Wei.

Blood sprayed from Fang Wei’s mouth, and he tumbled backward.

Meng Hao expression was a complicated one. There were actually some things about Fang Wei that he felt to be worthy of praise. He had stubbornness, which was something incredibly valuable to cultivators. However, everything was a matter of perspective, and because of the way things were, Meng Hao could never sympathize with him.

“You’re simply not good enough,” he said calmly. “You even have my Nirvana Fruits, and yet you still don’t measure up.” Those words were like a sharp sword that stabbed directly into Fang Wei’s heart. His face went ashen, and he coughed up more blood.

“All you did was get one step past me!” he said, gritting his teeth as the flames surged around his body. He had only fallen back one pace, but then held his place, forcing his body to stay together as he glared at Meng Hao.

“One step?” said Meng Hao softly. It was at this point that he unleashed his Eternal stratum. It exploded out, and in the blink of an eye, Meng Hao’s withered frame began to heal. His hair grew out long, and his skin shone with a gleaming luster. All of his injuries were now completely restored!

This development caused Fang Wei’s face to fall again. His mind reeled, and the blood drained from his face as he tumbled further backward.

“Impossible! This… this….”

“Why do you think it’s impossible?” Meng Hao said coolly. With that, his body flickered, except, instead of moving up higher, he appeared directly in front of Fang Wei.

“You lose,” he said, and with that, he punched out toward Fang Wei.

Fang Wei’s three Dharma Idols reappeared as Meng Hao’s the punch descended, and the aura of reincarnation exploded out. He went all out to resist Meng Hao, and yet, at that moment, Meng Hao said four words.

“A Bit of Karma!”

BOOOMMM!!

One devastating punch slammed into Fang Wei, sending him hurtling from a height of 270,000 meters in the sky all the way down toward the ground.

One devastating punch shattered two of Fang Wei’s three Dharma Idols. Those Dharma Idols had been formed from Meng Hao’s Nirvana Fruits, and by forming ties of destiny with them using A Bit of Karma, they were instantly shattered and sealed.

The deeper the Karma, the more intense the power!

In the instant that Meng Hao's blow landed, seven or eight figures shot up from the ground below to appear around Fang Wei. They grabbed him, and immediately poured cultivation base power into him to heal him. Then they looked up angrily at Meng Hao, killing intent surging.

At the same time, more than a hundred powerful streams of divine sense immediately formed near Meng Hao. From the look of it, if he made any further threatening actions toward Fang Wei, they would exterminate him immediately.

Even more shocking, the Grand Elder's gaze shot up to the 270,000-meter position, where it hung over Meng Hao like an infinitely sharp blade, ready to cleave his life force away.

When Meng Hao sensed all of the divine sense focused on him, as well as the murderous looks being given him by the seven or eight elders down below, he simply smiled arrogantly.

He had never had any plans to wrest back his Nirvana Fruits and kill Fang Wei. If he did do something like that, it would be in a way that nobody in the entire clan could voice a word of dissent.

He had punched Fang Wei just now for the purpose of teaching him a lesson, nothing else.

Of course, it was a very tough lesson.

Ignoring all of the divine sense, the murderous looks from the seven or eight Elders down below, and the gaze of the Grand Elder, Meng Hao looked up into the pitch black sky, and his eyes gleamed with anticipation.

"I wonder… how far up I can get?!" With that, he turned and transformed into a beam of light that shot upward. Everyone down below watched in shock as he rocketed upward. Apparently… Fang Wei was nothing more than a passing distraction who, after being surpassed, wasn't worth looking back at.

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# Chapter 938: Rise of a Blazing Sun

To the cultivators down below, Meng Hao turning and heading further up into the sky made their impression of him grow even greater. As for the Chosen up in the sky with him, the increasing distance between him and them seemed to represent the vast difference in their levels, a difference that only continued to increase.

Profound sensations of utter defeat and powerlessness appeared in their hearts.

Fan Dong’er watched silently, even defiantly. After a long moment, her eyes glittered.

“He has his road, and I have my path. His road and my path might have different ends, but… the journey is the most important part!”

Zhou Xin’s eyes widened as he looked at Meng Hao. He felt incredible pressure that, for some reason, made catching up to Meng Hao become his new primary goal.

Sun Hai, Taiyang Zi, and Song Luodan all watched silently. Deep in their hearts, all of them had a similar feeling; being born in the same age as Meng Hao was both a blessing and a curse. Gradually, they began to form a sympathetic resonance with him, and yet, that resonance quickly shattered and was replaced with looks of determined obsession. This was the case even with Sun Hai.

“This is just a little contest about the sun,” he thought. “The path into the future is long; there will be plenty of other chances to outdo him.”

Li Ling’er was the only one among the group who understood Meng Hao better than everyone else. Her hands were clenched into fists, and her teeth grated together as she rotated her cultivation base and began to rise up into the sky.

Wang Mu was panting. He stared at Meng Hao getting further and further away, and the desire to fight him burned within his eyes.

Down on the ground, the Grand Elder sat there silently, as did the clan members from the neutral bloodlines. No one viewed Meng Hao with indifference, the way they had previously. Things had changed.

Looking at Meng Hao now made them feel as if they were looking at a future Paragon!

This was even true of the Grand Elder. Now, there was something different flickering in his eyes as he watched Meng Hao.

Of course, there was no need to even mention the members of the direct bloodline, who were boiling with excitement.

The only people who were grim-faced were the members of Fang Wei's bloodline. Their killing intent was strong as they looked at Fang Wei up in midair, coughing up blood. Although there were clan members next to him, healing him, the injuries to his fleshly body were so great that he was incapable of preventing his Dharma Idols from collapsing.

That collapse seemed to contain the power of some sort of natural law, as if something had been indelibly branded onto Fang Wei's soul. He could only watch as two of his three Dharma Idols shattered into countless pieces that were unable to reform.

Fang Wei's father and grandfather even teleported up to him. His grandfather scanned his wounds, and his face grew extremely unsightly.

"What a vicious little son of a bitch," he said, killing intent flickering in his eyes. "This is the power of Karma. That bastard must be connected to the Ji Clan somehow. He's sealed Fang Wei's Dharma Idols!"

Fang Wei’s face was ashen, but he remained calm. He even prevented his father from treating his injuries, and hovered there in midair, teetering unsteadily as he looked at Meng Hao far, far up above.

Meng Hao was a beam of light high up in the air, shooting higher and higher. He looked almost like a bird, wreathed in flames. He was not living within those flames, but being consumed by them, an undying phoenix with burning wings that soared high into the sky!

As he soared through the air, the essence of the Flying Rain-Dragon that had existed inside of him for so long suddenly surged into action, causing a gentle power to spread throughout his body.

270,000 meters!

276,000 meters!

282,000 meters!

Even when he reached that position, he continued to go higher. The determination in his eyes increased, and the flames that burned his body raged into a peak of intensity. Even with the healing of his Eternal stratum, he would soon be completely destroyed.

However, the impending failure of his Eternal stratum didn’t cause Meng Hao to hesitate. He immediately pulled out… the Skypalace Sunspirit Pill that he had personally concocted!

This would be his first time consuming the pill, and the first time he would rely on its power. As soon as the pill entered his mouth, his body filled with rumbling, and a boundless life force exploded out from within him. It was fiery, and contained a light and heat which stemmed from Heaven and Earth, from plants and vegetation, from the twelve 2-hour time periods in a day. That light and heat then transformed into a flame of life force.

As that flame surged inside of him, it caused his Eternal stratum to suddenly roar to life.

285,000 meters. 291,000 meters. 297,000 meters!

He flew like a phoenix reborn from within the flames, as if he had been born with the will to soar, as if he was a sovereign of the sky, a Flying Rain-Dragon!

As the Skypalace Sunspirit Pill dissolved and spread through his body, not only did it fill him with a boundless life force, it also caused his fleshly body to grow even tougher than before.

It was as if a sun now existed inside of him, a sun that radiated an everburning light and heat. It even made it so that Meng Hao seemed to form a resonance with Heaven and Earth, and with the sun that existed outside of the starry sky.

That resonance caused Meng Hao to suddenly be partially enlightened regarding certain natural laws, although they were vague and he couldn’t quite grasp them. He could sense that these natural laws contained the Dao of the sun, a Dao that became clearer the closer one got to the sun itself.

“If I had one more Skypalace Sunspirit Pill….” he thought. His eyes glittered as he used the power of the pill to begin to push himself through the final stretch to reach 300,000 meters!

RUMBLE!

He rose up like a blazing sun, the focus of all attention as he… passed the 300,000 meter mark!

Throughout countless years, and all the generations of Chosen, no one in the Immortal Realm or under had ever reached this height. From his position, Meng Hao could see the vast majority of Planet East Victory.

All of the other Chosen in midair stared with wide eyes. All of the other powerful experts of the Fang Clan were completely silent for a moment before bursting into conversation.

“He… he flew up to 300,000 meters!!”

“From ancient times until now in the Fang Clan, nobody in the Immortal Realm or under has ever reached 300,000 meters! Fang Hao is the first!”

“Unheard-of! This Fang Hao has suppressed all of the other Chosen, even Prince Wei! He’s now the complete center of attention!”

As the conversations buzzed in the ancestral mansion, the Elders’ eyes filled with strange gleams.

Of course, the Elders were able to keep themselves under control much better than everyone else. Meng Hao really was the first person in the Immortal Realm or under to ever reach 300,000 meters. However, there were in fact a few Ancient Realm cultivators who could accomplish this same thing.

And yet, this trial by fire of fleshly body tempering was good fortune set aside for members of the younger generation. The clan experts of the Ancient Realm held their training sessions in other places.

Fang Wei stared fixedly at Meng Hao’s receding figure. Watching him reach a height of 300,000 meters felt like having a massive fist slam ruthlessly into his chest. Blood oozed out of his mouth, and his expression darkened. Inside, he was nearly going mad with defiance.

“I should be up there… not him!”

As everyone was shaken mentally, Meng Hao hovered at 300,000 meters. It was impossible to breathe this high up, but with Meng Hao’s cultivation base, he didn’t need to breathe. He hovered there like a peerless Paragon.

Because of his Eternal stratum, his fleshly body was very close to that of a true Immortal. Furthermore, he tread a path that was different than everyone else, a path that even exceeded Pill Demon and his true Immortal destiny. His path… was to become a true Immortal among true Immortals!

His was a path in which he relied only on himself. He needed no Immortal destiny. He would move directly into true Immortality. In fact… among the few people who tread such a path, his was unique. He already had an

Immortal meridian inside of him, an Immortal meridian… from a primordial Daoist Rite Temple!

All of these things were reasons why he now hovered above 300,000 meters!

Here, the light and heat surrounded Meng Hao in a strange way. He couldn’t see the light, or feel the heat… he existed inside of the light, and was being smelted in the heat itself.

He slowly looked up, and began to tremble as his fleshly body was tempered to an even greater degree.

Up ahead of him was the boundless starry sky, and then beyond that, he could see… the actual, true sun!

It was an enormous, crimson sphere, seemingly in the depths of the starry sky, illuminating everything.

When Meng Hao looked at it, he could sense the Dao of the sun, much more clearly than before. However, it still wasn’t clear enough. Even flying up 300,000 meters left the sun too far away!

“My fleshly body is just a hair away from a breakthrough!!”

His eyes filled with determination. Everyone believed that he had reached the ends of the sky and could go no further. However, he charged onward, using the power of his cultivation base, his fleshly body, and the sun of the Skypalace Sunspirit Pill to support him as he flew.

303,000 meters. 309,000 meters. 315,000 meters…. His flight speed was not incredible. Time went by, and he continued higher!

Everyone down below was in a complete uproar.

“I can’t believe he’s still going!!”

“300,000 is an end mark! Going any further vastly increases the danger. At a certain point, he’s going to step into the starry sky. That’s a place where only Dao Realm experts can enter!”

“What is he doing…?”

Chosen. Clan members. Everyone was astonished.

When he reached 315,000 meters, everyone thought that he was finished. But then…

The constant cyclical interchange between his Eternal stratum and the light and heat caused his fleshly body to begin to emit rumbling sounds. A white light then exploded out from inside of him!

As soon as the light appeared, anyone who could see it gasped. Even the Chosen who felt so separated from him were instantly shocked.

“That white light… it’s….”

“That’s Immortal light!”

“That’s a type of true Immortal light of Heaven and Earth that only appears right before the fleshly body reaches the true Immortal level!”

Fan Dong’er and all the other Chosen felt their minds reeling. The Elders of the Fang Clan, and other members of the clan who could see the light, were all trembling inwardly.

Fang Wei saw the light, and an expression of disbelief appeared on his face. Even his father and grandfather felt as if they were being struck by lightning, and gaped in shock.

Many people immediately flew out from within the ancestral mansion to look up into the sky. Their expressions were first that of astonishment, then disbelief, and finally, amazement!

“Immortal light…” The Grand Elder was struck speechless, something that rarely happened.

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# Chapter 939: True Saint Fleshly Body

“I can’t believe he’s forming Immortal light!” In the stony cavern deep beneath the ancestral mansion, the withered old man in the crimson robe was watching with a gaze that blazed like fire.

“Could it be that someone from the Fang Clan… will finally be able to look down on the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea? After all these years, will there be another rarely seen… fleshly body true Saint!?”

Cultivators in the Immortal Realm who had true Immortal fleshly bodies were called Saints!

Saints are victorious, so the term itself implied that they were unrivaled in the Immortal Realm! If a true Immortal cultivation base was then added on top of that, then… that person would be a true Immortal and a true Saint at the same time. That was… a Paragon! 1

That was… an invincible Paragon of the Immortal Realm!

All of that would be preceded by light.

Immortal light!

Before the true Immortal fleshly body appeared, white light would shine out. Immortal qi would naturally exude from within that light, creating a unique color, which was none other than that unique Immortal light!

Only… when a true Saint fleshly body appeared, would it be possible… to see that light!

Within the light, Meng Hao trembled slightly. He could feel the dense Immortal qi in the light around him, a qi that did not come from the outside world, but rather, had grown inside his body.

It was as if it had been hidden in his blood vessels, concealed in his soul, obscured within his life force!

When the Immortal light appeared, it came with dense Immortal qi. Meng Hao’s fleshly body began to emanate rumbling sounds as it rose madly toward the state of being a true Immortal fleshly body.

A flame burned deep inside of Meng Hao’s eyes as an incredible power surged up within him. In that moment, he began to fly. He had long since stopped paying attention to the flow of time. From the moment he had flown out of the pavilion until now, more than half of the East Ascension Sun’s 36 days had passed. By now, only 15 days remained. And yet, Meng Hao had not stopped moving.

318,000 meters. 324,000 meters….

330,000 meters!!

The light surrounding him grew stronger and more intense!

There was more Immortal qi, and the light and heat that existed in the blackness of space had turned into something like a cocoon, wrapping around Meng Hao, waiting… to be broken open to reveal new life!

The cocoon also nourished him, making Meng Hao’s new life force grow even stronger!

His eyes glowed with an obsession to become more powerful. Therefore, he didn’t stop, but instead, pushed onward. A soaring phoenix circled around him, which was the manifestation of the will of his soul. He roared like a Flying Rain-Dragon, which was caused by the will of the sovereign of the skies that nestled inside of him.

RUMBLE!

333,000 meters!

“Still not enough!” thought Meng Hao, squinting his eyes against the blinding light around him. By now, the Skypalace Sunspirit Pill inside of him had been thoroughly absorbed. At this height, even surrounded by Immortal light, his body was still burning up. It was something that was impossible for him to deal with; even his Eternal stratum couldn’t keep him going. Unless he stopped, then when the cocoon around him broke, he would die.

“There’s another way….” he thought, his eyes glittering. He suddenly extended his hand, causing a black flame to appear in his palm.

“I can concoct a Skypalace Sunspirit Pill right here and now! I don’t have the medicinal plants, so I’ll have to use the grand alchemic Dao of creating something from nothing!”

His eyes gleamed with determination as he suddenly stopped in place. Enduring the incredible scorching heat, he held out his hand, causing the flame to grow. At the same time, the Skypalace Sunspirit Pill formula suddenly appeared in his mind.

Creating something from nothing was using one’s imagination to materialize a real medicinal pill. That pill could not be consumed by anyone else, nor could it be sensed by others. Only the person who concocted it would be able to see it and consume it.

“At this height of 333,000 meters, there is incredible light and heat. These are the optimal conditions for concocting a Skypalace Sunspirit Pill!” He closed his eyes and performed an incantation with his left hand, simultaneously imagining the medicinal ingredients he needed. Then he waved his hand, causing the light and heat to swirl around into the image of several medicinal plants, which he then grabbed with his right hand.

His right hand was like a grand furnace of Heaven and Earth, blazing hot and bright.

All of his energy was focused on the medicinal pill. He relied on the Immortal qi that swirled around him, on his mind, on his soul, on his will. He almost seemed to be having an out of body experience as he focused himself fully on creating something from nothing.

He could not fail, and he would only have one chance. He could stay here for a maximum of twelve 2-hour periods. If his pill concocting failed, he would have no other choice than to break out of the cocoon into his true Immortal fleshly body.

But that was an outcome he couldn’t accept! He knew that if he could get even higher, his fleshly body breakthrough would be even more incredible.

This was a chance, a good fortune that he was willing to fight for!

At this height, his actions weren’t visible to most of the people down below. However, everyone who could see clearly was now staring in shock, unclear as to what exactly he was doing.

Only the most powerful experts gradually began to put the pieces together and to speculate as to what was going on. Their speculations led to disbelief; it was a prospect that none of them dared to believe.

“He’s actually….”

“Concocting pills!?”

“I don’t see any medicinal plants, and yet he really is concocting pills!”

“I once heard Pill Elder talk about a legendary realm of the Dao of alchemy… they call it… creating something from nothing!”

The Fang Clan Elders’ faces all flickered with shock.

The Grand Elder was panting as he looked high up into the sky. His expression was that of terror; Meng Hao had repeatedly and continuously shocked him with his actions and achievements.

Meanwhile, in the Dao of Alchemy Division, the dozen or so tier 8 alchemists suddenly stopped concocting pills and slowly looked up, as if they were reacting to the sensation of Meng Hao's alchemy. In the space of a few short breaths, their expressions completely and utterly changed.

"That aura…."

"That's…."

"Creating something from nothing!!"

Within the Dao of Alchemy Division's inner mountains, on the mountain filled with Unicorn Immortals, Pill Elder stood there, looking up into the sky. Slowly, a smile spread across his face, a smile that grew wider until he started laughing.

The Chosen from the various sects were flabbergasted. How could they have ever imagined that Meng Hao… was able to concoct pills himself. He was already at a terrifying height, surrounded by shocking heat and light, and yet he actually… was still able to concoct pills!

These Chosen had been groomed by their sects and clans for years, and had seen many things. Some of them suddenly thought of that legendary realm of pill concocting.

"How is this possible!?!?" thought Li Ling'er, gaping at Meng Hao with wide eyes. The only thing she could hear was her own heart pounding in her chest.

Fan Dong'er, Zhou Xin, Sun Hai, Taiyang Zi, all of them were gaping with wide eyes.

"Is there anything he can't do?" thought Wang Mu, his heart filling with a sense of profound defeat.

Then there was Fang Wei, within whose expression could be seen a touch of blank confusion.

Time passed. Soon, the twelve 2-hour periods had passed. Meng Hao was trembling, and his body was withering. His energy was rapidly fading away.

He was now thoroughly immersed in pill concocting. Despite being in the middle of the rise of the East Ascension Sun, in which there were 36 straight days of noon, alchemists were naturally able to measure the passage of time through their body’s senses.

Most importantly, he was already incredibly familiar with the Skypalace Sunspirit Pill. He was able to adjust the pill formula based on his environment, so when the thirteenth 2-hour period arrived, scintillating light exploded out from the palm of his hand into the darkness that surrounded him.

The only thing that any observer could see was that resplendent light. However, what Meng Hao saw was a medicinal pill resting in the palm of his hand.

It was a Skypalace Sunspirit Pill created from nothing!

In these extreme conditions, he had used the technique of creating something from nothing to concoct a medicinal pill. The result was that he appeared to be on the verge of collapse. Although this was not his first time creating something from nothing, it was the most exhausting .

In fact, he had the feeling that if he attempted to duplicate this attempt, he would fail.

The creation of the medicinal pill marked his absolute limit. He looked at the pill laying there on the palm of his hand, radiating light like some magnificent treasure of Heaven and Earth. Without the slightest bit of hesitation, he took the Skypalace Sunspirit Pill that no one else could see, and placed it into his mouth.

As soon as the medicinal pill entered his mouth, it exploded, transforming into a brilliant sun inside of him that generated boundless light and heat. It transformed into life force that in turn caused the Immortal light around him to become even more shocking.

“He… he succeeded!” One by one, the tier 8 alchemists in the Dao of Alchemy Division rose to their feet. Pill Elder’s laughter once again echoed out from the inner mountains.

In the ancestral mansion, the Grand Elder’s face was a mass of disbelief. The other Elders in the area were silent for a moment before their eyes also began to radiate a strange light.

There was little need to mention the other Chosen, who had long since been indescribably shaken by Meng Hao.

This time, Meng Hao… was rising to prominence under his own name! He was truly stepping into the cultivation world of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Bolstered by the power of the medicinal pill, Meng Hao looked up, and his eyes burned with decisiveness.

“True Immortal fleshly body!” he said. His body rumbled, and blinding light shot out of him as he climbed higher into the sky. Days passed as he went higher and higher and higher. 348,000 meters. 354,000 meters….

360,000 meters!!

369,000 meters. 378,000 meters…. 387,000 meters!!

When he reached that shocking height, the Immortal light around him exploded out in all directions, enveloping the entire area.

It was also in that moment that Meng Hao’s fleshly body broke through the bottleneck. A distinct shattering sound could be heard that rapidly transformed into a boom like rolling thunder.

At the same time, he completely absorbed all of the Immortal qi and Immortal light, and his body suddenly surged with earth-shattering power.

The swirling Immortal qi transformed his body into something like a precious treasure. Every bit of his flesh and blood was like a true Immortal magical item. His bones became strong to an astonishing degree, and his qi passageways opened wide, allowing terrifying power to flow through them.

His hair grew long, and his body became slightly taller and more slender. His face was strikingly elegant, and his aura was enough to strike fear into the hearts of all Immortals. His entire body was like a precious gem that hovered there high in the sky, causing everyone who could see him to be completely shaken.

True Immortal fleshly body!

True Saint!

1. There is a play on words here, as well as another thing I need to explain. First of all, the two words Saint and victorious are complete homophones, meaning they are pronounced exactly the same, shèng. Incidentally the latter is the same character as in the name of the planet, East Victory. Paragon can be translated in a variety of ways, and essentially refers to a supreme entity of some sort. We’ve already seen this term appear a few times in the story, and, as is explained here, is usually used to refer to someone of supreme and unrivaled power in their Realm

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# Chapter 940: The End of the Sky

A true Immortal fleshly body meant that he was a true Saint!

This in turn meant that Meng Hao’s body was now powerful to a terrifying level. He had been baptized in Immortal light, which had then coalesced inside of him, creating…. an Immortal body!

Meng Hao clenched his fists. He could tell that if he ran into a so-called peak Immortal Realm cultivator, one punch would easily be able to rock such a person.

He could sense his might; it felt as if he had completely changed on a fundamental level. The terrifyingly powerful light and heat from before now seemed vastly weaker.

“This is the power of a true Immortal fleshly body….” He looked up higher into the sky, and his pupils glimmered with fire.

“Now it’s time to find out… how high the Heavens really are!”

Rumbling could be heard as he climbed relentlessly up into the sky.

Even at this height of 387,000 meters, the light and heat were no longer something that Meng Hao felt incapable of enduring. He rose up from Planet East Victory in a piercing beam of light.

Meng Hao was now so far up that few down below could see him. The only thing most people could see was a long streak of prismatic light that seemed to be on the verge of rattling the Heavens and the starry sky, rising higher and higher.

Meng Hao was surrounded by flames as he soared higher at top speed. If you were close up, you wouldn’t be able to see them, but from down on the ground, the clan members could see them clearly.

Meng Hao seemed to exist inside a scorching sea of flames, within which he could live eternally!

The Chosen up in midair were shaken; to them, Meng Hao seemed as if he were a mighty mountain. Subconsciously, they all simultaneously reached a similar conclusion: perhaps they would always be behind Meng Hao in this lifetime.

Perhaps they would never have a chance to outdo him, never have a chance to catch up to him. Perhaps… they would only continue to fall further and further behind!

Of course, it was impossible for them to know that one of the past Sovereigns had already classified him as… 13th in the Echelon of the entire Nine Mountains and Seas!

Fan Dong’er watched in silence. Zhou Xin said nothing. Li Ling’er, Taiyang Zi, Song Luodan, Wang Mu, Sun Hai, and all the other Chosen from the sects and clans had complex expressions on their faces. They looked at Meng Hao getting even further away from them, a blazing sun wreathed in flames.

Fang Wei trembled, and slowly, he closed his eyes, making it impossible for anyone to see the gloominess and resignation therein.

Fang Wei’s father and grandfather were on the verge of going mad. They looked at the blazing sun up in the sky, and unprecedented murderous rage welled up from the bottoms of their hearts.

The Grand Elder sat silently in the ancestral mansion, looking up into the sky. No one could tell what he was thinking, nor even guess what he might possibly be feeling.

“Fang Hao…. Fang Wei,” he murmured.

Meng Hao continued on at top speed, like a Flame Phoenix, like a Flying Rain-Dragon. The Flying Rain-Dragon core inside of him was now rapidly dissolving, and bits of the legacy’s knowledge appeared in his mind.

However, Meng Hao didn’t pay any attention to that. The only thing he was thinking about was… finding out how high the Heavens were!

His expression was that of resolute will. Rumbling surrounded him as he flew another three thousand meters until he was 390,000 meters high. And yet, he did not stop.

The pressure was shocking, the transforming light and heat was petrifying. But Meng Hao did not decrease his speed at all, nor did he pause for even a moment. He was as unimpeded as his Dao heart, seemingly untouched by any impurity.

One day. Two days. Three days…. Time passed quickly, until only a few days of the East Ascension Sun remained.

Meng Hao proceeded onward, piercing through space, heading toward the only goal upon which he kept his eye; the sun which hung outside of the starry sky!

By now, he had far surpassed all of the other Chosen, all of the other members of his generation who had sought good fortune in this trial by fire. Now, the only person left for him to supersede… was himself.

He would surpass himself! He would pursue his dreams! It was like his Dao, a Dao that sought to cross numerous mountains, to pass over rivers and seas. It was a Dao of freedom and independence, unrestrained and unfettered, always moving toward glory.

Even the Heavens could not cover him up or cause his Dao heart to fall!

One day. Two days. Three days!

393,000 meters. 399,000 meters… 405,000 meters….

And he kept going!

The other Chosen up in the sky looked on, taciturn. They saw Meng Hao, and his obsessive progress, and the same thought floated up in all of their minds.

“In the end… how high will he get!?!?”

Li Ling’er was thinking this, as were Fan Dong’er, Taiyang Zi, and Song Luodan.

The various Elders were also watching closely.

“The boundary between the planet and the starry sky is vague, and can fluctuate due to various factors. In the moment when the sun is nearest, that boundary will become clearer.”

Days later, Meng Hao was still speeding along.

417,000 meters. 420,000 meters!

He felt like he was reaching the end. The light and heat around him had reached an indescribably high level. Despite the fact that his fleshly body was in the true Immortal Realm, he still felt as if he were about to be melted into a pool of blood, and then evaporate into a bloody mist.

He shook, and his Eternal stratum worked madly to restore him and support him, to allow him to go even higher.

“I can hold on a bit longer,” he thought, his eyes narrowing as they focused ahead with firm determination.

RUMBLE!

426,000 meters!

432,000 meters!

438,000 meters!!

The sun appeared to be getting closer and closer. His eyes were crimson, and his entire body was shaking. He was now withering away, and yet… he kept flying!

The flames around him grew more boundless, and from a distance, it almost seemed as if the sky would catch fire. The flames spread out like wings that seemed to be flapping, preparing to attack the Heavens.

The lands quaked, and the hearts of all onlookers trembled.

At some point, the Grand Elder had emerged from within the ancestral mansion. He stood in the wide public square, looking up into the vast sky.

“Time is almost up….” he murmured softly.

Right now, all eyes were on Meng Hao. It wasn’t just the Fang Clan. Shocked powerful experts from all corners of Planet East Victory had all long since turned their attention to the scene that was playing out.

“Who is that?!”

“That person flew out from the Fang Clan. Could it be… Fang Wei?!”

“Even Fang Wei couldn’t fly that high! This person is getting close to the boundary with the starry sky! Once he steps out there, he’ll die unless he’s in the Dao Realm!”

As the experts of Planet East Victory were shaken, there happened to be a huge island in a sea somewhere on the planet. As it floated there, an old man with the bearing of a transcendent being was gaping up at the sky in shock.

“Fudge! That little bastard… Dammit! Dammit! The Patriarch comes all the way here to hide and he… he actually found me!?!?”

The old man was in such a bad mood that he let out a series of howls that shook the entire island.

Standing next to the old man was a shockingly beautiful young woman. She smiled happily as she looked up into the sky.

Rumbling emanated out from Meng Hao as he gritted his teeth and sped higher. 444,000. 447,000!

Meng Hao’s expression twisted with madness. From the outside, it looked as if his body were literally burning up. His internal organs were scorched, and he was on the verge of being transformed into nothing more than ash.

And yet… he didn’t stop!

447,300 meters. 447,900 meters. 448,500 meters….

Meng Hao let out a bellow as the flames engulfing him grew even stronger, inundating him completely. He flew another 900 meters, reaching a height of 449,400 meters.

By now, the 36th day was almost over. Meng Hao only had about an hour left!

“I have to get past the 450,000 mark!” Meng Hao was filled with madness and determination. By now, the only thing about him that was visible was a vague, shadowy outline.

449,700 meters. 449,850 meters. 449,970 meters…

Time flowed by. The world was silent, and the lands were still. Everyone’s attention was fixed on Meng Hao… as he arrived at a height of 449,990 meters!

He was now only 10 meters away from the 450,000 meter mark!!

Furthermore, there were only fifteen breaths of time until the rise of the East Ascension Sun ended!

Those final 10 meters seemed so close, and yet, they were the boundary between the planet and the starry sky!

How high were the Heavens of Planet East Victory? As of this moment… Meng Hao knew the answer. The Heavens… were 450,000 meters high!

He was now only 10 meters away from that height when he came to a stop, his body wreathed in flames, but his eyes shining with sharp light.

In addition to the enormous sun, he also saw a strange scene out in the starry sky. When he focused his eyes… he saw an enormous crimson Tribulation cloud. Shockingly, a gigantic yellow tree was just barely visible within that cloud.

The tree emanated an archaic aura, as if it had come into being along with Heaven and Earth, as if it had always existed within the Nine Mountains and Seas. It would not appear easily, and could only be seen under very special circumstances.

That was… something that would appear after acquiring a true Immortal fleshly body, and becoming a true Saint. It was… Saint Tribulation!

It was similar to the true Immortal Tribulation that came along with true Immortality!

Immortal Tribulation had a door, Saint Tribulation had a tree!

One movement would take Meng Hao out of the planet and into the starry sky.

One movement would cause the Saint Tribulation to descend!

Meng Hao stopped at that 10-meter mark and silently examined the distance.

In that moment, the Elders down below with profound cultivation bases looked on with incredible shock.

“Saint Tribulation!” thought the Grand Elder. His eyes closed, and his right hand clenched into a fist.

Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a threatening decisiveness, a decisiveness as sharp as a honed blade. Finally, he sighed.

“If I don’t go out into the starry sky and face the sun directly, then this whole trip will have been a waste.

“Time is almost up…. If my calculations are correct, I can endure… for ten breaths of time!” With that, he looked up, waiting for five breaths of time, and then moved forward one more time.

One movement, ten meters!

In the instant that Meng Hao moved forward, all of the observing cultivators on Planet East Victory were shocked, and cried out in surprise.

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# Chapter 941: Ten Breaths of Time With the Sun!

That final movement took him ten meters… and now, there were only ten breaths of time until the rise of the East Ascension Sun was over.

That final movement put Meng Hao at a height of over 450,000 meters. He had now stepped… out of Planet East Victory and into… the starry sky!

In that instant, he felt an indescribable wave of light and heat bearing down on him. It seemed capable of melting him to nothing in an instant. At the same time, he also saw the yellow tree in the Tribulation Cloud suddenly begin to shoot toward him.

All of these things literally happened in the blink of an eye.

In the moment that he made that final move out into the starry sky, his Dharma Idol materialized behind him, and it wasn’t 15,000 meters tall anymore, but rather 21,000 meters!

21,000 meters was comparable to a stage 7 Immortal, or an Immortal with 70 opened meridians. To most ordinary cultivators, a stage 7 Immortal would be considered the peak of the Immortal Realm.

The reason Meng Hao had a Dharma Idol 21,000 meters tall was not because he had seventy Immortal meridians. No, he still only had one. However, he was hovering on the verge of a breakthrough.

Now that he had a true Immortal fleshly body, his aura had been stimulated significantly, which caused the Immortal meridian to be further solidified.

However… even though it wasn't complete, it was enough that Meng Hao was now able to use the most powerful divine ability he had been enlightened regarding… the Paragon Bridge!!

He had begun to contemplate enlightenment of this divine ability in the Ruins of Immortality! The Paragon Bridge!

Many people had seen the manifestation of the divine ability, so if he used it now, his identity as Fang Mu would be revealed. However, he had prepared beforehand, so when he unleashed the Paragon Bridge, it did not look like a bridge, but rather, a huge tree.

The huge, ancient tree that appeared around Meng Hao was in fact the Paragon Bridge. As it materialized, it exploded with a supreme level of energy.

That burst of energy dispelled the light and the heat, and then rumbled toward the Tribulation Cloud.

When it struck the cloud, Meng Hao's entire cultivation base surged, pouring all of its power into the tree-form Paragon Bridge as it went all-out in attack!

BOOOOMMM!

A huge explosion resulted when the two massive trees collided. The Tribulation Cloud's tree trembled and then… unexpectedly collapsed, layer after layer, eventually shattering into fragments.

Simultaneously, the Paragon Bridge shook, and then faded away. The Paragon Bridge was powerful, but Meng Hao's cultivation base currently wasn't powerful enough to be able to use it to full effect. However, by going all-out with every bit of power he could, even to the point of adding in the power of his life force and soul, he destroyed the Tribulation Cloud completely.

Meng Hao trembled and coughed up a mouthful of blood. It was a completely and utterly shocking event to witness.

Never before had anyone fought back against Immortal Tribulation by destroying it completely. Furthermore, the boundless power of the Paragon Bridge was incredibly domineering.

As the Tribulation Tree shattered, and the Tribulation Cloud dispersed, bursts of Immortal qi shot toward Meng Hao. They entered his body through his pores, filling him, transforming his body so that as of this moment, he truly and utterly possessed an Immortal body. He was now a true Saint!

Immortal qi poured into him with unbridled frenzy, giving him the qualification to be in the starry sky and look at the sun. Even though it was the barest of possible qualifications, snatching himself out of the mouth of death for a few brief moments, to Meng Hao… it was still enough!

Using the nourishment of the Immortal qi, he hovered there calmly in space, ignoring the Tribulation Cloud and its tree, resisting the heat and the light. All of what he had done… was for these ten breaths' worth of time.

He stared at the huge sun, bolstered by the Immortal qi and sustained by his true Immortal fleshly body. Even still, only someone in the Dao Realm could possibly stand up to the terrifying power of the sun. Therefore, he began to melt. After only three breaths of time, his legs were completely melted. After six breaths of time, his arms and body were gone. However, his eyes remained, staring fixedly at the sun.

Enlightenment flickered in his mind. Natural law, a Daoist magic, poured into his thoughts. He quickly absorbed it, and at the same time, completely maintained his composure. This was not a disregard toward death. No, Meng Hao knew… that he wouldn't die!

After seven breaths of time, his body was a blur. By eight breaths of time, only one eye remained unmelted. By nine breaths of time, his head had collapsed.

In the moment of death, he only had one eye left, which continued to stare fixedly at the sun. He was not the least bit alarmed. Everything that had occurred since he stepped out into the starry sky was exactly as he had anticipated ahead of time. Nothing unexpected had occurred.

At last, the final breath of time… arrived!

In the moment in which Meng Hao’s consciousness was about to fade away, the huge sun began to fade. At the same time, Meng Hao could see a profound natural law. A huge shadow suddenly appeared in front of the sun, completely eclipsing it.

The shadow obscured the sun, causing everything in the starry sky to go pitch black. The light and heat faded away without a trace.

The deadly, scorching heat that surrounded Meng Hao was gone. His Eternal stratum immediately began to restore him, and in the space of a few breaths, his body once again appeared in the starry sky.

He looked up, his expression the same as it had been the entire time, calm and unruffled. He looked out into the darkness of the starry sky, and, although he saw nothing, he could sense the sun’s presence.

“The Ninth Mountain just eclipsed the sun….” he murmured. In his mind, he recalled the scene of the sun being covered up, and the natural law of the sun that he had been contemplating during those ten breaths of time.

Finally, he closed his eyes, gathered together the fragmented images of what had just occurred, and then settled himself cross-legged. In that same moment, numerous figures suddenly flew up from Planet East Victory. Fang Xi’s father was among a group of over a hundred individuals, each and every one of whom was… a powerful expert from the direct bloodline.

Their expressions were that of excitement, and as they neared Meng Hao, they realized what he was doing, and they were shocked.

“He’s contemplating enlightenment!”

“Only Dao Realm experts can face the sun in the starry sky, but this kid was able to do it, even with his cultivation base. It was only ten breaths worth of time, but to him, such good fortune is astonishing!”

“We can’t let anyone disturb him.” The direct bloodline Elders immediately took positions around Meng Hao to act as Dharma Protectors. Soon, other direct bloodline members approached in excitement and also took positions as Dharma Protectors.

Amidst rumbling, Planet East Victory resumed its previously-halted rotation. The light of the sun faded away, and night fell.

The rising of the East Ascension Sun was over, and the opportunity for good fortune had ended.

Fan Dong’er and the other Chosen left Planet East Victory with varied emotions. However, as they flew out toward the starry sky, each and every one took a long and hard look at Meng Hao.

Zhou Xin, Song Luodan, Wang Mu, Taiyang Zi, Sun Hai, Li Ling’er… all of them were the same.

As they passed by, they saw the direct bloodline members surrounding Meng Hao, and all of them murmured a sentence or two to themselves.

Zhou Xin looked at Meng Hao and quietly said, “I’m going to go back, head into secluded meditation, and not come out until I’ve reached true Immortality!”

“Unless something unexpected happens,” Li Ling’er said, glaring angrily at Meng Hao, “I’ll reach true Immortality within a hundred days!” With that, she turned and sped off in her flying shuttle.

“Fang Hao,” Fan Dong’er said through grated teeth, “based on all of the preparations we’ve made, each and every one of us will directly rise to the peak of the Immortal Realm, and open 90 or more Immortal meridians….”

“I hope you keeps working hard,” Wang Mu said, clenching his fists at his side. “Otherwise… when you step into true Immortality, you’ll leave me plenty of opportunity to exceed you!”

They left, and the focus of the Fang Clan became Fang Hao. To most people, he had now superseded Fang Wei… to become the number one Chosen of his generation.

Fang Wei remained silent as he returned to a location deep in the ancestral mansion with his father and grandfather. He refused to admit defeat, and went down to his subterranean chamber, where his eyes glinted with determination as he looked back at his father and grandfather.

“I’m going to cultivate… the One Breath Yellow Springs Incantation!” he declared.

When his father heard this, his expression flickered.

“Absolutely not!” his father replied angrily. “It’s one of the four great signature magics of the Fang Clan, but it’s not complete. It’s far, far more dangerous than the One Thought Reincarnation Incantation. You have the mark of the Sixth Patriarch on you, and will be in charge of the Fang Clan in the future. You can’t lose control of your Dao heart because of one measly defeat!”

“But it’s the Fang Clan’s most powerful Dao,” Fang Wei replied calmly. “With it, 98 Immortal meridians can be opened, which is four more than the One Thought Reincarnation Incantation. I think that will be very pleasing to the Sixth Patriarch!”

Fang Wei’s father was about to say something further when Fang Wei’s grandfather stopped him. He looked deeply and Fang Wei, and then said, “Have you thought this through clearly?”

“Very clearly,” Fang Wei replied softly, closing his eyes. “I shall cultivate the One Breath Yellow Springs Incantation. If I use this Dao to achieve Immortal Ascension, then within one hundred days, I’ll either fail and sink into the Yellow Springs, or succeed and open 98 Immortal meridians!

“Father, grandfather, if I fail, then return Fang Hao’s items to him.

“However, if I succeed, then it means he was doomed from birth to help me achieve my goals!” His eyes sparkled with a piercing light.

Fang Wei’s father did not respond. However, his eyes glittered as he nodded his head, then turned and left the hidden chamber.

Fang Wei’s grandfather held his tongue. Seeing Fang Wei’s determination, he sighed. At the same time, his heart surged with the desire to slay Meng Hao.

“It doesn’t matter whether Wei’er succeeds or not,” he thought. “Fang Hao… you won’t live past a hundred days!” Face dark, he turned and left.

Time passed. After the end of the Rise of the East Ascension Sun, all of the Chosen in all of the various clans and sects of the Ninth Mountain and Sea began to go into secluded meditation.

It was time for them… to break through to the true Immortal Realm!

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# Chapter 942: Third Divine Ability!

Seven days later, Planet East Victory had returned to its usual state. The rising of the East Ascension Sun was now a thing of the past. However, because of the amazing display of the acquisition of good fortune, the name Fang Hao rose to new heights.

All of the Fang Clan was talking about Fang Hao, and the name also began to spread to the rest of Planet East Victory.

He had a 30,000-meter Bloodline Gatebeam!

He dominated the Medicine Pavilion all the way to the seventh level!

He concocted… one of the three sacred pills, the Skypalace Sunspirit Pill!

He had a true Immortal fleshly body!

He stepped out into the starry sky to face the sun!

Word spread of Meng Hao's various deeds, and the Fang Clan was completely shaken. Other cultivators on Planet East Victory now viewed Meng Hao as a blazing sun of the Fang Clan.

During that entire time, Meng Hao remained cross-legged in meditation up in the starry sky. Facing the sun had been a shocking type of good fortune for him, especially when he saw the Ninth Mountain eclipse it. That image thoroughly shook him inwardly.

He contemplated enlightenment for seven days, during which time his body shone with bright light. When the light spread out, shockingly, his Dharma Idol appeared behind him.

The Dharma Idol was 21,000 meters tall, and when the direct bloodline clan members saw it, they stared.

That was because almost as soon as it appeared, the Dharma Idol started to grow!!

At the same time, Meng Hao’s Immortal meridian grew even more solid. Apparently, this period of enlightenment was pushing Meng Hao even closer to true Immortality.

Time passed, three more days. Meng Hao’s entire body radiated brilliant light, and his Dharma Idol was no longer 21,000 meters tall, but rather 22,500 meters.

Such height was equivalent to an Immortal Realm cultivator with 75 opened meridians, and immediately lifted the spirits of the direct bloodline clan members.

Five more days passed. Meng Hao had now been contemplating enlightenment for half a month. At that point, more light exploded out from him, and his Dharma Idol grew from 22,500 meters to 24,000 meters!

A Dharma Idol like that could shake Heaven and Earth, and caused the direct bloodline clan members to stare in excitement.

Meng Hao was now equivalent to an Immortal Realm cultivator with eighty opened meridians. That was a level of the Immortal Realm achievable only by Inner Sect disciples of certain sects.

“He still hasn’t even become a true Immortal, and he’s already comparable to those Inner Sect disciples!”

“All of you, look closely…. Hao’er’s Dharma Idol… has no Immortality Illumination Vine on it!!”

The direct bloodline clan members’ hearts trembled as they peered at Meng Hao, and then voiced expressions of disbelief.

"He's not using an Immortality Illumination Vine. Could it be… could it be that he's walking his own path to true Immortality!?!?"

"Walking one's own path to Immortality is incredibly difficult! But look, his Dharma Idol is already 24,000 meters tall!!"

"The direct bloodline is destined to rise again!"

It was at this point that Meng Hao slowly regained his senses and opened his eyes. Within his mind flashed images of everything he had learned from the sun regarding natural law. In that moment, they suddenly fused together into a divine ability.

His enlightenment of the sun, and the sight of the Ninth Mountain eclipsing it, allowed him to create yet another divine ability, his third!

He slowly lifted his hand, within which appeared a spark of light. The light became a sphere, which then sucked in all the heat in the area, causing Meng Hao's appearance to ripple and distort.

Seeing that Meng Hao was awakening initially caused the direct bloodline members to get very excited. However, their faces quickly fell and they backed away.

They had just noticed that their entire bodies had become icy cold in a very short period of time, as if all the heat was being sucked out of them.

Even more shocking was that the entirety of Planet East Victory was apparently affected. Countless streams of heat rose up from the ground, from all living beings on the planet.

The amorphous heat caused everything to distort as it shot toward Meng Hao. His expression was calm as he observed the scene; from the look in his eyes, it seemed that he was still sunk in contemplation.

The sphere of light in his hand continued to suck in the heat, faster and faster. In the end, he raised his hand, and the sphere reached a size of thirty meters. Within the sphere circulated brilliant light that emitted a shocking aura.

The aura seemed to increase in strength as it absorbed heat until it even began to absorb light.

The sphere grew larger and its aura grew more intense. All of the light and heat around Meng Hao was being absorbed, leaving everything ice cold….

Down below on Planet East Victory, the effects were even more noticeable. Gradually, the temperature on the entire planet began to drop.

Not only that, everything started to get darker. Powerful experts all over Planet East Victory noticed, and instantly sent divine sense out to investigate the cause. Soon, they saw Meng Hao, and the enormous sphere of light above him, now several hundred meters wide.

It looked like a small sun, and anyone who saw it was left feeling shocked. The aura it contained was mad and brutal, and… truly made any onlookers feel as if they were looking at the sun!!

After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, Planet East Victory's temperature dropped further, and it got even darker. The globe of light was now over 3,000 meters wide, and caused anyone who looked at it to feel a sense of impending crisis.

If the energy inside the globe were to explode out, it would leave even experts of the Ancient Realm astonished and pale-faced.

Most shocking of all, it appeared that if Meng Hao were given enough time, the sphere would continue to grow without limit. This caused many powerful experts on Planet East Victory to be filled with a sensation of vigilance. There were even streams of divine sense that converged on the Fang Clan ancestral mansion.

The direct bloodline clan members in Meng Hao's vicinity immediately began to urgently transmit messages with divine will.

“Meng Hao!!”

“Hao’er, wake up!!”

Meng Hao trembled as the surrounding clan members called out. His eyes gradually began to grow clear and bright as he regained his senses. At first he looked confused, but then he raised his head up to look at the 3000-meter sphere of light up above.

“Meng Hao, cease that magical technique!” barked Fang Xi’s father.

A sense of crisis gradually rose up in Meng Hao from the streams of divine sense, and also from the fact that he realized that he was about to lose full control the globe of light.

Eyes flickering with concentration, he let out a growl and lifted both hands up above his head. Using all the power he could muster, he exercised control of the last strand that connected him to the sphere to reverse its suction.

The sphere gradually stopped absorbing light and heat, and then started to shrink. After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, the sphere began to fade away. Sweat poured down Meng Hao’s forehead.

He utilized all of the energy in his body, and knew that even the slightest lapse in concentration would result in the sphere exploding.

After it finally disappeared, the direct bloodline descendants approached him. Smiles could be seen on their excited faces.

Meng Hao looked back at his 24,000-meter Dharma Idol, and sensed the Immortal meridian within him, and knew that it would be complete with only a tiny bit of effort.

“Soon, the day will arrive in which my cultivation base will move into the Immortal Realm!” Meng Hao’s eyes shone with determination.

“Hao’er,” said one of the direct bloodline Elders, smiling, “what magical technique was that?”

“It’s a divine ability I created after being enlightened regarding the sun….” said Meng Hao, turning to clasp hands to the Elder. He had now created three divine abilities. One was A Bit of Karma, the other was the Paragon Bridge, and the third… was this sphere of light.

“I’ll call it… Supernova Magic!” he said, his eyes shining brightly.

“Supernova Magic…. Hao’er, this divine ability of yours… is powerful! It’s able to absorb a virtually limitless amount of heat and light and create a copy of the sun, and depending on how much it absorbed, the force of its explosion would be inestimable.” The Elder gazed deeply at Meng Hao. “However, it has a fatal flaw. It would be easy to interrupt you while you use it. Furthermore, it takes too long to prepare. It only reached 3,000 meters in the time it takes an incense stick to burn. To reach 30,000… would take several hours.

“In addition, I could tell that you were not in complete control of it. If it had grown any larger, you would likely have lost control completely.

“You need to analyze this magic thoroughly before you use it again.” It only took a few sentences for the old man to analyze the magic’s strengths and weaknesses.

Meng Hao nodded, then clasped hands and bowed deeply to all of the direct bloodline clan members who had stood as Dharma Protectors for him. He felt very grateful toward them, and the sensation of being their blood relative grew even stronger.

Soon, the group of them turned into prismatic beams of light that shot back toward the surface of Planet East Victory. As they neared, Meng Hao saw numerous clan members flying out of the ancestral mansion, their faces filled with respect.

“Greetings, Prince Hao!”

This term of address caused Meng Hao to stare in shock. After blinking a few times, a warm smile appeared on his face, and he offered formal greetings to all the direct bloodline clan members. Then he made to return to his Immortal's cave.

It was in that moment of departure that the Elder who had pointed out the flaws in his divine ability moments ago transmitted a message with divine will.

"Be careful of Fang Xiushan!"

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever. He knew that Fang Xiushan was Fang Wei's father, so he nodded in response and then left.

After returning to his residence, he sat down cross-legged to meditate. After some probing, he came to the conclusion that his Immortal meridian was now more than 99% complete.

"Just a bit more," he thought. "In less than a hundred days, it will be perfectly complete, and then…." His eyes glittered with cold light. "I will become a true Immortal!"

"As far as my Supernova Magic is concerned, it has some flaws. However, once my cultivation base gets high enough, I can fix them, and then I'll have another trump card to use in battle!" He lifted his hand, and a sphere of light appeared in his palm. As it grew larger, the Fang Clan suddenly got colder. Meng Hao did nothing at first, allowing it to grow larger for a certain period of time. Then he cut off the absorbing power.

"I gained a lot during this rising of the East Ascension Sun. My Dharma Idol grew to 24,000 meters, and I gained enlightenment of the sun. Plus, my fleshly body… finally had a breakthrough and reached true Immortality!

"I wonder how strong I'll be when my cultivation base has the same breakthrough!?" Meng Hao's expression flickered with anticipation.

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# Chapter 943: Killing Intent Approaches!

Several days later, Meng Hao emerged within the clan. All the clan members who he ran into looked at him with extreme respect, and the fervor with which people had previously treated Fang Wei was now shown toward Meng Hao.

As for Fang Wei, he had apparently disappeared, and was nowhere to be found.

Fang Xi made some inquiries, and finally got a smattering of information that he immediately passed on to Meng Hao. When Meng Hao heard that Fang Wei was in secluded meditation in an attempt to break through to true Immortality, his eyes flickered coldly.

“A Bit of Karma will lock down the Nirvana Fruits inside of him that belong to me. My good fortune with the sun was a huge blow to his self-confidence, and surely cracked his Dao heart. And yet, he stood up tall after all of that.” He thought about their interchange high up in the sky for a moment, and sighed.

Meng Hao was displeased with Fang Wei, but all told, he was not guilty of any terrible crimes. In fact, Meng Hao knew that if he looked at things from Fang Wei’s perspective, Fang Wei hadn’t done anything wrong.

“The ones who are wrong…are certain other people in this clan,” he mused. As he thought back to everything that had happened since he had returned to the clan, he was struck with the increasing sensation that there was some vast conspiracy afoot.

It was a mystery involving Fang Wei, and also had something to do with the Grand Elder. Perhaps… even a Patriarch.

That was why the Grand Elder had been acting so strange. That was why everyone maintained silence regarding Fang Wei. Apparently, a Patriarch had appointed Fang Wei to a position of authority years ago, although Meng Hao wasn't completely sure of the truth behind it all.

It was as if the entire matter was taboo. No one dared to speak of it.

"Do you understand…?" That was what Pill Elder had said to him on the mountain peak. 1

"Was he warning me that there was something wrong with the Nirvana Fruits the Grand Elder gave me? Or was he hinting at something else…?" Meng Hao frowned. After considering that matter for a bit longer, he began to duplicate some Spirit Extract, which he placed onto the Nirvana Fruit.

Meng Hao had already decided that once he fully restored the Nirvana Fruit, he would definitely absorb it. He had the feeling that the benefits it would provide him would be immense, and would help him begin to unravel the enigma of the Fang Clan.

That feeling stemmed from his confidence in his ability to analyze and judge matters, as well as his keen intuition.

"Nobody has ever been able to absorb the first generation Patriarch's Nirvana Fruits. I wonder what miracles will result if I succeed?" After a while, he stopped considering the matter, and calmed his mind.

Seven days later, Meng Hao looked worriedly at the copper mirror, which had rapidly consumed all of his hard-earned spirit stones in exchange for batch after batch of Spirit Extract. That Spirit Extract had then been greedily absorbed by the Nirvana Fruit.

As he nourished the Nirvana Fruit with the Spirit Extract, it seemed to be gradually awakening, as if… it were almost completely restored.

As the copper mirror consumed all of the spirit stones he had acquired from concocting the Skypalace Sunspirit Pill, as well as what he had gotten from Sun Hai, stabs of pain filled Meng Hao's heart. It was as if he had just thrown away a vast sum of spirit stones directly into the Nirvana Fruit.

Each one of those spirit stones was enough to break Meng Hao's heart.

"Making money is so hard, so how come spending it… is so easy?" he thought with a sigh.

Even the entire Fang Clan would be incapable of producing so much Spirit Extract. After all, the medicinal plants he had used to make it were the ones he had acquired in the Ruins of Immortality, plants which were rare and, in fact, virtually extinct in the outside world.

As such, this Spirit Extract was essentially priceless. Not even the Fang Clan as a whole would be able to afford to restore this Nirvana Fruit; only Meng Hao, with his copper mirror, could manage it.

"Dammit!" he thought, gritting his teeth and then letting out a long sigh. "I need to think of yet another plan to make some more spirit stones…." He sat there with furrowed brow for a long time before finally clenching his jaw.

"Those sacred pills are not easy to concoct. They will be my last resort. I still haven't finished the seventh level of the Medicine Pavilion. I should take advantage of the fact that I'm so famous in the Fang Clan right now. Maybe I can strike it rich in one fell swoop!" Having made up his mind, he called Fang Xi over and the two of them spent some time discussing the matter. Finally, Fang Xi left in excitement to enact the plan.

It only took a few days for word to spread through the clan like stormwinds.

"Did you hear? Tomorrow, Prince Hao is going to the Dao of Alchemy Division to challenge the Medicine Pavilion!"

"Last time he went to the Medicine pavilion, he completed every level perfectly! It caused a huge sensation in the Dao of Alchemy Division."

“From ancient times until now, it’s been easier to find a phoenix feather or a qilin horn than to find someone who can make it through the ninth level of the Dao of Alchemy’s Medicine Pavilion. Each and every one is a Grandmaster of the Dao of Alchemy. I heard that Prince Hao’s goal is just that: to make it through the ninth level!”

News about Meng Hao challenging the Medicine Pavilion quickly spread through the clan, and especially through the Dao of Alchemy Division. In the end, it was like great waves rolling across the entire clan.

Meng Hao was very pleased with this sort of clan environment, and had things all worked out with Fang Xi. Fang Xi would wait outside the Medicine Pavilion area to collect spirit stones. Anyone who didn’t pay spirit stones would not be allowed to observe.

Before, it would have been difficult for Meng Hao to pull something like that off. However, after the rising of the East Ascension Sun, he was the number one Chosen in the Fang Clan, and his every word and deed was the subject of widespread attention.

“This time, I’m definitely going to make a killing!” he thought. The next morning at dawn, he woke early and pushed open the door of his residence. Just when he was about to fly into the air toward the Dao of Alchemy Division, he saw six beams of light flying toward him at high speed. They quickly arrived and surrounded him.

These six people surged with energy. Five of them were stage 7 Immortals, and Meng Hao could sense that the remaining one had a cultivation base as profound as a deep sea. He was a middle-aged man with a grim face who looked Meng Hao over and then said, “The Grand Elder has summoned you, Fang Hao. Come with us.”

Meng Hao frowned at the six men and then coolly replied, “Understood. I’ll go over a bit later.”

With that he strode forward and prepared to fly past the men.

When the middle-aged man heard Meng Hao’s response, his face tightened with displeasure.

“The Grand Elder has summoned you, and you dare to cause a delay? You’re coming with us now, or else—”

“Or else what?” said Meng Hao, stopping in place and looking at the man with an enigmatic smile. A vast coldness swirled deep within his pupils.

“Arrest him!” said the man, staring back at Meng Hao.

Immediately, the other five stage 7 Immortals transformed into beams of light, and their cultivation bases surged. Dharma Idols appeared, 21,000-meter illusory giants. Of course, none of these Dharma Idols represented the cultivators themselves; all of them were false Immortals!

They closed in on Meng Hao in the blink of an eye. One of the Dharma Idols was an enormous war drum, which emanated a rumbling like that of thunder. Two of the other Dharma Idols were vicious black dragons, which roared as they slashed through the air toward Meng Hao.

Of the final two Dharma Idols, one was a three-headed six-armed statue, and the other was an enormous crimson python with a forked tongue and sinister eyes.

The five men all attacked simultaneously, and it didn’t look like they were trying to arrest Meng Hao. Instead, killing intent flickered in their eyes, although it was faint and well-concealed. However, Meng Hao had experienced many things during his life, including two intense wars on Planet South Heaven. He had also slaughtered countless people, so killing intent like this was something he was keenly attuned to.

“Wanna kill me?” he asked with an icy cold smile. He took a step forward and clenched his right hand into a fist. It shot toward the crimson python at high speed, creating a sonic boom that echoed out in all directions. The air distorted as the power of Meng Hao’s true Immortal fleshly body exploded out.

As the boom rang through the air, the crimson python shattered, revealing the cultivator behind it, ashen face awash with shock. Before he could retreat, Meng Hao leaped forward and kicked him viciously with his right foot. Cracking sounds could be heard as it slammed into the man’s chest, and blood sprayed from his mouth. He tumbled backward.

At the same time, the other four cultivators closed in, divine abilities and magical techniques raging. Meng Hao’s face flickered with iciness. Instead of dodging to the side, he turned and transformed into a golden roc, then shot directly toward his four opponents with incredible speed. A wave of a hand caused numerous mountains to appear, which formed a mountain chain that dropped down toward them.

Next, he made a grasping motion, and a long spear appeared in his hand, the haft carved from the World Tree and the spearhead made from white bone. When he stabbed forward with it, everything darkened, and a sobbing sound rang out. The war drum collapsed into pieces, and the cultivator within it coughed up blood and fell into retreat.

Simultaneously, the head of a Blood Demon appeared, and a blood-colored halo materialized beneath Meng Hao’s feet. He punched again, and the three-headed, six-armed statue exploded. At the same time, the two black dragon Dharma Idols managed to land attacks on Meng Hao’s chest.

The two cultivators controlling the black dragons glared with killing intent. Their cultivation bases exploded with power that would be enough to fell virtually any other cultivator who was weaker than a stage 7 Immortal.

A boom could be heard, and suddenly everything went silent. The two cultivators who had just successfully landed attacks on Meng Hao stared in shock, and then gasped. It wasn’t that they weren’t aware that Meng Hao had a true Immortal fleshly body. However… in their minds, his cultivation base was not at the true Immortal stage, so therefore, they didn’t believe his true Immortal fleshly body would really be all that powerful.

As of this moment, though… they had a clear idea… of what exactly a true Immortal fleshly body was!

“So weak!” Meng Hao said casually. He glared at the men aggressively, and it was like piercing light stabbing into their eyes.

Meng Hao hadn’t even budged an inch. In fact, he didn’t even appear to be harmed at all. At the same time, the two men who had just attacked him felt a powerful counterattack surging toward them, and suddenly, blood oozed out of their mouths.

The two men were scared witless, and were about to retreat when Meng Hao reached out and grabbed one of them, then lifted him into the air and shook him back and forth. The man couldn’t control his own body, and felt massive power battering him. Cracking sounds could be heard as his bones were broken and dislocated, and he was then thrown violently toward the second retreating man.

A boom rang out as the second man was sent tumbling backward, his bones shattered and blood spraying from his mouth.

All of this took place in only a few breaths’ worth of time. Five stage 7 Immortals were seriously injured, and Meng Hao remained standing there. He then turned toward the first middle-aged man, the one with the unfathomable cultivation base.

The man’s eyes widened. He had never imagined that a true Immortal fleshly body would be so shockingly powerful. It was an exceedingly rare thing for a cultivator to have a fleshly body developed to this level, and was in fact something he had never seen before.

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# Chapter 944: The Grand Elder’s Stance

As the two of them faced off, Meng Hao’s Dharma Idol appeared, 24,000 meters tall. Combined with his true Saint fleshly body, it caused his energy to surge with intense power that only continued to increase. He then extended his right hand, and a glowing sphere materialized above it. As it floated there, the sphere seemed to suck in all of the warmth in the area and cause everything to instantly grow cold.

The man’s expression was solemn, and his eyes focused intently on Meng Hao. He sensed a feeling of grave danger when he looked at the sphere of light. And then, Meng Hao started to walk toward him. It was at this moment that…

“Hao’er, come to the main temple!” The Grand Elder’s archaic voice echoed out around them.

Meng Hao said nothing, but his eyes flashed almost indiscernibly. As for the middle-aged man, when he heard the Grand Elder’s voice, he gave an inward sigh of relief.

At the same time, his eyes emanated a sharp glow, and a murderous will gradually rose up in his heart. That was because he had realized that Meng Hao’s Dharma Idol was still standing there, and Meng Hao’s powerful energy hadn’t faded away. It was almost as if he was preparing to refuse the Grand Elder’s summons.

The man’s eyes glittered as he readied himself. He looked at Meng Hao.

Ten breaths of time passed, during which Meng Hao’s expression never changed. Finally, his Dharma Idol vanished, and his surging energy dissipated. Everything returned to normal. However, the glowing sphere remained floating there. As he began to walk forward, it drifted up toward the top of his head, sucking in all of the heat and light around it.

Meng Hao put the bone-tip spear away, and then completely ignored the middle-aged man as he flew into the air toward the ancestral mansion’s main temple.

Inwardly, the middle-aged man sighed in regret, and then reined in the killing intent in his gaze. Finally, he followed Meng Hao. As for the other five men, they had not received fatal injuries, but were still very seriously hurt. They wouldn’t be able to fully recover any time soon, so for the moment, all they could do was struggle to their feet and then consume some medicinal pills. After that, they followed along, faces pale.

Meng Hao flew the entire way, followed by the six men. Quite a few clan members saw him. Many of them had originally intended to go observe his efforts in the Dao of Alchemy Division, and were taken aback when they saw him flying toward the main temple.

This was especially the case when they saw the six men following him, five of whom were seriously injured and had dismal, ashen faces. The clan members who saw this were all shaken inwardly.

From the look of things, a violent storm was brewing under the surface of the Fang Clan, and was just barely being kept under control.

At some point, the sky above the Fang Clan had changed from its usual bright, sunny, and endlessly blue appearance. Now, black clouds gathered, and the rumbling of thunder shook the ground. Flashes that resembled silver dragons could occasionally be seen flickering in the clouds.

When the Fang Clan members saw this, they grew very quiet. They weren’t sure exactly what had happened, but they could clearly sense that the air was growing increasingly colder.

Meng Hao’s expression was calm as he proceeded forward. The sphere of light above his head continued to grow larger. Soon it was 300 meters wide, and incredibly shocking in appearance….

The six Fang Clan guardsmen behind him looked on with tingling scalps, completely astonished. No one else understood why the sky had changed color and the air was growing cold, but they knew. It was all caused by the glowing sphere of light above Meng Hao’s head!

As Meng Hao headed toward the main temple, the sphere of light continued to absorb all the heat and light around him!

“This is the divine ability he created when he faced the sun!” thought the leader of the group of six men. His eyes widened, and despite the level of his cultivation base, he still felt fear growing inside of him.

It didn’t take long before the sphere of light was 600 meters wide. Meng Hao was now outside of the main temple. The first thing he noticed was the Grand Elder, sitting there inside.

There were also numerous Elders sitting in the enormous seats that filled the temple hall. Each one of them wore calm expressions, and none of them spoke, which actually caused the temple hall to be filled with enormous pressure.

Sitting near the Grand Elder were Fang Wei’s grandfather and father. Both of them looked over icily at Meng Hao.

Killing intent flickered deep within Fang Xiushan’s eyes.

Meng Hao’s expression was as calm as ever. Without any hesitation, he stepped into the middle of the temple hall.

As for the 600-meter sphere of light, Meng Hao left it floating just outside of the temple, where it continued to absorb light and heat.

Because of the sphere, Meng Hao’s entrance into the temple hall was accompanied by icy coldness. The light even began to fade, and frost began to appear on the ground.

The surrounding Elders’ facial expressions did not change, but they had long since sent their divine sense out to inspect the sphere of light hovering outside the temple.

“Fang Hao extends greetings to the Grand Elder and other Elders,” he said, his voice neither haughty nor humble as he clasped hands and bowed deeply. He was clearly following the clan rules down to the letter.

The Grand Elder’s face was expressionless as he looked at Meng Hao.

“Hao’er,” he said slowly, “you displayed shocking talent during the rise of the East Ascension Sun. You flew up higher than any member of the Junior generation of the clan has ever flown throughout our countless years of history.

“You stepped off of the planet and into the starry sky, you faced the sun for ten breaths of time, and you received significant good fortune and enlightenment.

“All of these things make me very happy for you.” Although he spoke words of praise and encouragement, his expression was completely emotionless the entire time.

Meng Hao stood there silently and scanned the crowd. He remembered the words of that direct bloodline Elder who had warned him about Fang Xiushan. Half a month had already passed since then, and from what Meng Hao could tell, this summons could not be a good thing for him.

That was especially true when he noticed the anxiety within the eyes of the direct bloodline Elders who were present in the temple. Furthermore, Fang Xi’s father was present, and was looking nervously at Meng Hao.

“The Elders have all proposed that you be rewarded for your actions,” the Grand Elder continued, “and after much thought, I have come to the conclusion that I agree. Your reward will come in the form of access to the clan’s ancestral land, which was created by the first generation Patriarch. At one time, our ancestral land was part of the Ruins of Immortality. However, the Patriarch cut that part of the Ruins away and brought it here.”

When Meng Hao heard this, his eyes narrowed. He knew that the Fang Clan possessed deep resources, but he hadn’t been aware that the first generation Patriarch was so strong that he could take away part of the Ruins of Immortality and bring it back to the clan to serve as an ancestral land!

“The divine abilities and magical techniques of the Fang Clan were not all simply handed down by the first generation Patriarch,” the Grand Elder explained. “Instead, for generation after generation, members of our clan have entered the ancestral land he left behind. After thoroughly searching it over and over again, the various magics of the Fang Clan have slowly been collected together.

“However… there are still many magical techniques that have yet to be discovered. To find them is a matter of chance and good fortune.

“Furthermore, for countless years, any Fang Clan member who reached the Dao Realm and did not perish off planet, chose to be buried in this ancestral land when it came time for them to return to the dust. There, they would leave behind their cultivation magic and other secrets, where they remain, just waiting for a predestined successor to go in and acquire them.

“As for the first generation Patriarch’s five great Daoist magics, four of them have been located. However, the most powerful of them all, the One Thought Stellar Transformation, has never been found. 1

“In addition to all that, there are also medicinal plants and pill formulas in the ancestral land. There are even Immortal Ancient Daoist Treasures, all just waiting for their destined person to come along and take them.” As the Grand Elder spoke, his cold voice echoed throughout the temple hall.

Meng Hao listened to everything, his face as still as stone.

“Opening the ancestral land requires a significant expenditure of resources. Generally speaking, we only open it once every thousand years. However, even though the appointed time has not arrived, we are going to make an exception and open it for you.

“However….” It was at this point that the Grand Elder suddenly paused and looked deeply at Meng Hao for a long moment before continuing.

“Great danger lurks inside. That danger exists in the form of trials by fire left behind by the first generation Patriarch for his successors. The ancestral land is a bizarre place, in which various strange beings can arise.

“Therefore, to someone like you, the ancestral land might be a place of good fortune, but it can also be extremely dangerous. Although not many people have actually died in the ancestral land over the years, some have.

“You may consider… whether or not you wish to take advantage of this reward.” The Grand Elder’s final words caused Fang Xiushan’s and Fang Wei’s grandfather’s expressions to flicker almost imperceptibly. Without even thinking about it, they glanced over at the Grand Elder.

Fang Xiushan’s brow furrowed. According to their previous agreement with the Grand Elder, when the ancestral land was opened, Meng Hao would be forced to enter it whether he wanted to or not. He was not to be given a choice in the matter.

As of this moment, both Fang Xiushan and Fang Wei’s Grandfather couldn’t understand why the Grand Elder, who had always supported their bloodline, would, at the very last moment, suddenly give Meng Hao the option of whether or not to enter!

As the two of them hesitated, the Grand Elder waved his finger, causing a vortex to appear in midair in the middle of the temple. The vortex spun out, growing to dozens of meters in size. It was filled with swirling mists, within which slowly appeared the image of another world.

Gradually, that world grew clearer and clearer.

Meng Hao’s face was calm as he looked at the Grand Elder. The fact that he had been given a choice was somewhat strange. After a moment of thought, he glanced over at the direct bloodline Elders, and could see that they were also hesitating. He was now being given an opportunity that he would be hard-pressed to come across in any other situation.

At the same time, he was facing imminent danger.

“Hao’er,” said Fang Xi’s father, 19th Uncle, “you really need to consider the matter carefully. I suggest that you don’t enter the ancestral land. Wait until you’re in the Immortal Realm. In another few hundred years, then you can go into the ancestral land. That would be much better. There’s really no reason for you to enter now. Hao’er, consider things carefully.”

Meng Hao was silent for a moment before turning back to the Grand Elder, clasping hands and bowing deeply.

“Grand Elder, am I the only one who can enter on this occasion? May I choose to decline the chance to enter?”

“If you enter, you will do so alone,” the Grand Elder said slowly, his expression one of neither joy nor anger. “If you wish to decline the chance to enter, you may go to the Dao of Alchemy Division to challenge the medicine pavilion.”

Off to the side, Fang Xiushan sat there nervously. He had paid a very heavy price to arrange this matter, and if Meng Hao didn’t enter, it would be impossible for him to have Meng Hao killed.

“Bear in mind,” continued the Grand Elder, looking at Meng Hao with a piercing gaze, “all contact with the outside will be severed once you enter the ancestral land. Nothing that happens inside will be visible to any of us.”

Those words caused Fang Xiushan’s face to twitch. He looked over at his father, and saw that, although his face was expressionless, his pupils had constricted.

Meng Hao was unsure as to why the Grand Elder was taking this stance. The normal thing to happen would be for the Grand Elder to give him no choice in the matter. For things to turn out this way caused Meng Hao to look over at the vortex thoughtfully. He was just about to say that he would decline what was obviously an ambush set up by Fang Xiushan when suddenly, a tremor ran through his body. As he looked into the world inside of the vortex, his eyes suddenly went wide.

For a moment, it seemed as if he had caught sight of something completely unbelievable. However, his expression quickly returned to normal. Nontheless, inwardly, he was more shocked than if he had been struck by lightning. His heart began to pound beyond control.

Mouth and throat dry, he immediately said, “I choose to enter the ancestral land!”

1. Yes, the final characters of the name of this magic are the same characters as the novel Stellar Transformations by I Eat Tomatoes

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 945: Meng Hao's Tears

When the Elders in the temple who tended to support Fang Wei's bloodline heard Meng Hao's words, they looked over at him expressionlessly. As for the direct bloodline, anxious expressions could be seen on their faces. However, since this was Meng Hao's decision, they did nothing to persuade him to change his mind.

After all, the Grand Elder had clearly explained that there would be great danger in the ancestral land. Considering that Meng Hao had chosen to enter even under such circumstances caused 19th Uncle and the direct bloodline Elders to be able to sense his level of determination.

All they could do was sigh inwardly.

The Grand Elder looked deeply at Meng Hao for a moment, his expression revealing nothing about what he was thinking. However, the way he was looking at Meng Hao did seem… somewhat strange.

Most excited of all was Fang Xiushan. He took a deep breath and stared at Meng Hao without revealing any of the boiling killing intent in his heart. Fang Wei's grandfather frowned thoughtfully at the way the Grand Elder was looking at Meng Hao. For some reason, he had a very uneasy feeling inside.

The Grand Elder was silent for a moment, then coolly said, "Since that is your decision, then go now."

He waved his hand, and a gentle breeze rose up, wrapped around Meng Hao, and sent him toward the vortex.

"In two months, the ancestral land will automatically open again, and you may come out. During those two months… please take care of yourself."

Even as the words rang out, Meng Hao flew through the air in the wind. In the blink of an eye, he was right outside of the vortex. When he looked inside, his heart pounded madly, and a feeling of reminiscence floated in his heart.

RUMBLE!

Upon contact, he sank into the vortex as if it were water. Then he vanished. The vortex stopped moving, and then faded away from the temple hall.

In that same moment, there were nine areas in different parts of Planet East Victory which suddenly shone with mysterious black light. That light was cast up by teleportation portals, within which sat nine cold and expressionless cultivators wearing black robes.

These nine cultivators seethed with murderous auras, as if innumerable foes had been slain by their hands.

If Meng Hao were able to see any of them, he would recognize them immediately. The black robes worn by these nine men seemed to be exactly the same as the ones worn by the people who had ambushed him and 19th Uncle en route to Planet East Victory!

As they sat there cross-legged in the teleportation portals, light suddenly rose up around them, and they vanished. This was in the exact moment in which Meng Hao vanished into the ancestral land.

Another thing happened at exactly the same time. Deep underground beneath the Fang Clan ancestral mansion, seven withered figures sat cross-legged in meditation. One of them was the crimson-robed old man who had opened his eyes during the rising of the East Ascension Sun, aroused by Meng Hao's Essence of Divine Flame. At this moment, his eyes opened, and they shone with boundless ancientness.

"This kid's bloodline is strong…. He's a descendant of Eldest Brother. He must be THE Chosen of this generation of the clan." The old man's eyes flickered as he sensed the black-robed men vanishing, and then a cold light gleamed therein.

“Interesting. Someone actually dares to violate clan rules and fight inside the clan…. Not only that, but they chose to fight within the ancestral land!” The coldness in his eyes grew more intense.

“Is it Sixth Brother’s bloodline….?” The old man’s brow furrowed in thought for a while. He turned his head to look at the sixth figure sitting there meditating in the inky blackness of the stony cavern.

There were a total of seven people inside this underground lair. Originally, the old man in the crimson robe should have been asleep, and should not have awakened in this age. According to the clan rules, it was the Sixth Patriarch who was supposed to regain consciousness in this millennium.

However, Meng Hao’s Essence of Divine Flame had stimulated his aura during the rise of the Eastern Ascension Sun, reviving him. Afterward, he had planned to return to meditation, but had then changed his mind.

“Sixth Brother is in an astral projection. His soul is no longer in his body.” He thought for another moment.

“Sixth Brother has already cultivated the Reincarnation Incantation Daoist magic to the pinnacle. But… was it worth it?” The old man closed his eyes. This closing of the eyes was not a return to a state of inactivity. Instead, he quietly sent out some divine sense, which transformed into a stream of divine will that made its way through the earth… toward the ancestral land!

**

Heaven and Earth trembled as lightning and thunder danced about in the clouds, as if seeking a way to lash the earth. The ground itself was a brownish color that made it look like it was soaked with blood, and stretched out as far as the eye could see.

What parts of the land were not covered with deep cracks were choked with weeds.

A seemingly eternal air of desolation and bleakness spread out in all directions. Off in the distance, ruins could be seen, and even further off, a volcano which belched thick black smoke.

Occasionally, frightening roars could be heard echoing about, which raged across the lands like storm winds, causing everything to shake.

The mystery of this place came from the fact that it used to be part of the Ruins of Immortality. Its solemn dignity came because it was now an ancestral land of the Fang Clan.

The first generation Patriarch was buried here. Other Dao Realm Patriarchs of the clan, his descendants, were also laid to rest here after passing away in meditation.

The entire ancestral land was laid out in the shape of a straight line. The further one went in, the more danger there was. As for the brown-earthed region near the entrance, two chains of mountains were visible.

These two mountain ranges were like two stone dragons, lofty, imposing, and jagged.

Between the two mountain chains was a path, so far down from the peaks of the mountains that the sky was almost like a sliver up above. It was like a great door leading into the ancestral land, although there was no actual door present, only… an enormous statue larger than the mountains themselves!

This statue looked as if it were inseparably connected to the mountains. It was pitch black, and wore a heavy suit of armor. Its two hands rested on the pommel of a greatsword, and the statue itself seemed incomparably ancient.

The sword was dozens of meters wide, and was thrust down into the earth. Ancient magical symbols were engraved onto its surface, which seemed simple and almost crude, and yet contained profound meaning that was impossible to decipher.

The statue’s eyes lacked any expression whatsoever, making the statue itself seem completely lifeless. It almost seemed to be a mere decoration standing guard over the ancestral land.

However, from a distance, it was possible to see that the statue was looking up into the sky, staring off into the distance as if… it was waiting for something.

Any Fang Clan member who had been to the ancestral land knew about this statue. According to the legends, the origins of the statue were a complete mystery. Supposedly, it had flown here from somewhere out in the starry sky, the same year that the Ji Clan changed the Heavens and took over the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

From then on, the statue had remained in this spot, apparently guarding the ancestral land.

Over the years, rumors began to spread that the statue was not just there to guard the ancestral land, but actually, all of the Fang Clan's bloodlines.

Years and years passed, and eventually, the rumors and stories died out. In every generation of the Fang Clan, there would be many people who came and laid eyes on the statue. However, they never called to mind the absurd stories of the past. After all… they were simply legends.

As for the reason why the statue held its head up as if it were waiting for something, people had long since stopped wondering about it.

No one had any idea why this statue had come here to the Fang Clan on its own… nor what it was waiting for.

It emanated the aura of a powerful expert, an intense aura that was strong enough to shake Heaven and Earth. When Meng Hao looked at it, the feeling he got was so intense that not even the Grand Elder could compare.

This statue was so strong… that in the past, Meng Hao wouldn't have been able to even identify how powerful it was. Now, though, when he looked at the statue, he understood…. This statue's aura was almost like that of a Paragon!

Meng Hao stood in the vast land between the two mountain chains. This was the location that he had appeared in upon entering the ancestral land.

Currently, he was standing there stock-still, looking thoughtfully at the statue.

He was well aware that this trip to the ancestral land was an ambush. He also knew that the best choice had been to not come here, but instead take advantage of the opportunity given him by the Grand Elder.

In fact, originally he had no plans whatsoever to enter this place. However, after looking into the vortex and seeing this enormous statue, his heart had filled with roaring.

The roaring had soon inundated him completely, tugging at him, pulling him into distant memories.

He trembled, and his eyes flashed with reminiscence. He couldn’t even control himself as he walked forward to stand in front of the statue. He came to a stop in front of its foot, after which he reached his hand out and patted it gently.

His hand shook, and after it touched the statue, his whole body started trembling. He slowly looked up at the enormously tall statue, and then started to float up into the air.

He moved slowly, as if he wanted to take a clear look at the entire statue. Eventually, he reached its head, and looked into its eyes. It was at this point… that tears appeared in his own eyes.

“Terracotta soldier….” he murmured softly. Finally, the tears began to roll down his cheeks and fall to the ground. He remembered this terracotta soldier being about three meters tall. Even though it was now much bigger than before, he would never forget this terracotta soldier with whom he had such a connection.

The only reason he had chosen to enter this ancestral land despite all the danger… was because of this statue.

Back in the temple, when he had looked into the vortex and seen the statue, he almost couldn’t believe it.

How could he have forgotten about this statue…? How was it even possible??

This was… one of the two terracotta soldiers that had been created for him in illusory world of the Second Plane of the ancient Demon Immortal Sect, by his foster father Ke Yunhai!

He would never, ever be able to forget the life he had lived as Ke Jiusi back in the ancient Demon Immortal Sect.

“Father….” said Meng Hao, tears streaming down his face. His entire body shook, and as he looked at the statue, he wept. All of the memories of the ancient Demon Immortal Sect flooded into his mind. All of a sudden, Ke Yunhai’s stern and yet loving face appeared in his mind.

The ninety-nine bell tolls from that year seemed to echo in his ears once again. 1

He had long since assumed that he would never see the two terracotta soldiers again. He had searched for them in the Third Plane of the ancient Demon Immortal Sect, in the real world, but hadn’t found them.

There was no possible way that Meng Hao would ever have thought that he might see one of the statues here… in the Fang Clan’s ancestral land.

Ke Yunhai, knowing that his longevity was reaching its end, had created this terracotta soldier to protect Meng Hao. It was only because of it that Meng Hao had unhesitatingly entered the ancestral land, despite knowing of the dangers.

It wouldn’t have mattered if the danger had been was exponentially greater than it was, Meng Hao would never have hesitated to come here.

And the entire reason… was because of Ke Yunhai!

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Note from Deathblade: I originally translated the statue as stone soldier, and even called it a wooden soldier, once. I’m officially changing it to “terracotta soldier,” and have already gone back to change previous references.

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# Chapter 946: A Certain Object, a Certain Person

What was it waiting for?

This was a question that no one in the Fang Clan had been able to answer for generations.

Meng Hao looked at the statue, weeping, fully aware… that the statue had been waiting for him.

It had waited here alone for him for tens of thousands of years….

The reason it had flown here to the Fang Clan was because of the soul blood that had emerged from Meng Hao’s forehead to connect him to the statue. Because of that, it didn’t matter how much time separated them, or who ended up taking possession of the soldier. Meng Hao… was always its original master. 1

Years ago, before Meng Hao had even been born, the statue flew through space, guided by his blood, all the way to the Fang Clan. It had found a place where it sensed a familiar bloodline, and then chosen to wait there in silence.

This was the simple answer to the question asked by so many members of the Fang Clan.

This was only one of the two statues that had been created for Meng Hao by Ke Yunhai.

As for the other statue, perhaps it had fallen in battle at some point throughout the years. Or perhaps it was in some other distant location, standing alone and looking off into the sky just like this statue, waiting for Meng Hao to come.

Time passed by slowly, and eventually, Meng Hao sat down cross-legged on the statue’s head. He patted the surface of the statue, and his expression continued to be one of reminiscence. He recalled everything that had happened in the ancient Demon Immortal Sect, and his heart filled with sorrow.

Sometimes, a certain object will make you think of a certain person.

When Meng Hao looked at the statue, he missed Ke Yunhai. He missed the man he had called father in that ancient world.

At the same time that Meng Hao sat down on the statue, there were nine areas in the Fang Clan ancestral land where the air distorted, and nine black-robed men emerged. They immediately produced jade slips that they could use to detect bloodlines, then transformed into beams of light that shot away from their original locations.

Killing intent boiled in the ancestral land.

One of the black-robed men held the jade slip in hand, and the desire to kill gleamed in his eyes as he realized that he was the closest of them all to Meng Hao. He made no effort to conceal the level of his cultivation base. Power exploded out as he shot through the air in a beam of light, following the jade slip’s guidance.

His cultivation base caused the clouds up above to seethe, and the ground to shake. This was an Ancient Realm cultivation base, and as he sped through the air, it was possible to see nine lamps behind him.

They were wooden lamps that burned with green flames. Eight of the lamps were lit, one was extinguished.They began orbiting around the man, and they pulsed with the power of a natural law of Heaven and Earth!

The Ancient Realm is also called the Ancient Soul. Based on the accumulations and preparations made in the Immortal Realm, a minimum of nine Soul Lamps will appear upon breaking through to the Ancient Realm. More can appear depending on the profundity of the cultivator's cultivation base. To proceed through the Ancient Realm, the lamps must be extinguished one by one. The extinguishing of each lamp counts as a deadly test, and if the cultivator can extinguish all of the lamps and remain alive, then they will be qualified to step into the Dao Realm!

However, to do so is incredibly hard!

The more Soul Lamps one possesses, the harder it is to break through, and the greater the chance of death. At the same time, though, the more Soul Lamps one has… the more shockingly powerful they will be if they succeed in breaking through!

That was so much so that there were some people with ten or more Soul Lamps who, after reaching the late Ancient Realm, were qualified to fight with someone in the Dao Realm!

In any given clan or sect, a cultivator with one extinguished Soul Lamp would be considered to have the status of an Elder. The single stamp of a foot could shake everything. Just one such person would be enough to slaughter Meng Hao, but Fang Xiushan was obviously uneasy about the situation. It was impossible to say what vast price he had paid, for he had actually hired nine almighty Ancient Realm cultivators, each of them with one extinguished Soul Lamp. Clearly, he wanted no mishaps or accidents in having Meng Hao exterminated.

Meanwhile, a vague image appeared high up in the air where it was impossible for anyone to see. An old man hovered there, looking down at Meng Hao, who was still sitting on the statue's head.

This image was none other than the divine will of the Seventh Patriarch from the subterranean cavern beneath the Fang Clan.

When he saw Meng Hao sitting there abjectly on top of the statue, he gaped in shock.

"What's the kid doing?" he thought.

Meng Hao sat there atop of the statue for a while before raising his head and looking off into the distance, where he saw a figure speeding toward him like an arrow piercing through the roiling clouds.

The figure moved with incredible speed, bursting with astonishing energy that seemed capable of splitting Heaven and Earth. This was a power that Meng Hao could never fight against. Behind the figure were nine lamps, eight burning and one extinguished, which emanated a primordial will that cast strange colors into the sky.

Meng Hao's eyes widened. This was his first time seeing Soul Lamps, and after a moment of consideration, the coldness in his eyes grew more intense.

"Soul Lamps are cultivated in the Ancient Realm…." he murmured. "So, an Ancient Realm expert has appeared in the ancestral land. Fang Xiushan… is this the expression of your killing intent?" He looked at the figure that split the air as it shot toward him. It was a powerful expert wearing a black robe, and he was closing in rapidly.

He made no effort to conceal his monstrous cultivation base or his massive killing intent. A wind kicked up, spreading across the lands and kicking up dust. The wind couldn't dispel the bleak feeling that lay over the land, and in fact, made everything even more harsh and desolate.

The moment Meng Hao saw the black robe, killing intent flickered in his eyes. He immediately thought back to how he had fled from deadly pursuit in the starry sky.

"So, I guessed correctly," he thought. "It was Fang Wei's bloodline who tried to prevent me from making it back to the clan alive." His face was calm as he faced the wild wind. His robes and hair flapped in the wind, and yet, he continued to calmly pat the statue's head.

The Seventh Patriarch's divine will image floated in midair, astonished. In his opinion, Meng Hao was now facing an Ancient Realm expert with one extinguished Soul Lamp. For him to be acting so calm left the Seventh Patriarch in a state of wonderment.

“Let’s see what kind of trump card the kid has to get him out of this deadly situation,” thought the Seventh Patriarch, smiling and paying close attention. He had already decided that he would take action in the moment before Meng Hao would actually be killed.

The reason he had come here, though, was not for Meng Hao, but rather, for those people who had dared to violate the clan rules.

Screaming wind filled the air as the black-robed man shot toward Meng Hao. He was middle-aged and very skinny. His expression was calm, without the slightest bit of excitement visible. To him, killing a member of the Junior generation who wasn’t even an Immortal, was far too simple of a task.

It didn’t matter if his target had a rare true Immortal fleshly body. To him, Meng Hao was merely a member of a younger generation. In his opinion, Fang Xiushan was making a mountain out of a molehill to ask nine people to all attack Meng Hao.

By this point, he was about 3,000 meters away from Meng Hao. In a flash, that distance shrank to only a few hundred meters.

He said nothing, just extended his right hand and pointed toward Meng Hao.

In response, the land up ahead twisted as a huge fissure opened up. It looked like a vicious, evil dragon that shot toward Meng Hao.

Bizarre colors flashed, and natural law manifested. The light and the darkness in the world seemed to be in flux.

From a distance, the sky appeared to have become a huge net; as soon as the fissure appeared in the ground, the entire sky seemed to have shattered!

Meng Hao’s pupils constricted. The man’s arrival made it seem as if a stifling pressure were weighing down on the entire area, like Heavenly might. The pressure caused his blood to seethe, and his cultivation base to begin to shatter. Even his fleshly body began to emanate cracking sounds.

“So this is an Ancient Realm expert, huh…?” A strange light gleamed in Meng Hao’s eyes as the air ripped apart in response to the man’s waving finger. This man’s manipulation of the natural law of Heaven and Earth had already reached the acme of perfection; apparently, if this man wanted the air to rip apart, then the air would absolutely do just that.

An intense sensation of deadly crisis rose up in Meng Hao.

However, as that fissure snaked toward him, Meng Hao’s lips twisted up into a smile of ridicule.

In that moment, he did not move. What moved was the statue beneath him!

The statue’s eyes had previously been blank, without the slightest sign of life. But now, they suddenly began to shine with bright light that turned into consciousness. The face now flickered with expression, and its aura roiled out.

It was nothing more than an aura, and yet it caused Heaven and Earth to tremble, and the fissure that was extending rapidly toward Meng Hao suddenly vanished into nothing!

The massive net up in the sky also collapsed.

Rumbling sounds echoed out in all directions, and the ground quaked. The mountains themselves shook as Meng Hao’s statue seemed to wake up from a slumber that had lasted for tens of thousands of years. It was as if it were being resurrected from the dead.

Its aura grew stronger and stronger, growing infinitely close to the level of a Paragon. This type of Paragon was not the same type of Paragon as the title held by that white-robed woman who had appeared in that year in the Three Great Daoist Societies’ trial by fire. This was… the Quasi-Dao Realm, which was referred to by the title Paragon in the Nine Mountains and Seas!

As for why exactly it was referred to in that manner, there was a specific reason!

The terracotta soldier’s eyes were growing brighter and clearer, and its energy was surging to monstrous heights. It was as if the statue was now rising up to accomplish the mission assigned to it by Ke Yunhai all those years ago!

Its mission… was to protect Meng Hao for all time, to eternally act as his safeguard!

It was to never allow Meng Hao to come to any harm, to never experience grief, and most definitely to never be killed. That… was the statue’s mission, and the entire purpose why Ke Yunhai had created it.

Meng Hao sat on top of the statue, and he saw Ke Yunhai in his mind’s eye. His face was stern, but his eyes were filled with love. Yet again, tears appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes.

Once again… he felt Ke Yunhai’s fatherly love.

This time, it was manifested in the real world.

Cracking sounds could be heard, and everything shook. Fissures appeared in the mountain chains and then spread out in all directions.

The middle-aged man’s face flickered with disbelief and astonishment, and his mind reeled. He subconsciously stopped in place, and his eyes widened.

He was also a member of the Fang Clan, and what he was seeing left him stupefied. He watched with his own eyes as the legendary protector of the ancestral land and the Fang Clan itself, that enormous statue which had never budged over countless years… suddenly moved!

He saw Meng Hao sitting atop the statue as it lifted its right foot and took a step forward.

From a distance, the statue looked boundlessly tall and shockingly powerful. When its foot landed on the ground, the entire world quaked. At the same time, the statue’s arms moved, and cracking sounds could be heard as the mountains that were connected to the statue crumbled, transforming into nothing but rocks and dust that rolled off of the statue down onto the ground.

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# Chapter 947: Quasi-Dao Paragons

Everything was covered in a haze of dust, which only served to make the statue in the center of it all even more shocking.

It raised its other foot and took another step, causing the land to rumble, and more mountains to collapse.

The haze of dust continued to spread out rapidly in pulsing waves, creating an astonishing sight. The middle-aged man’s scalp went numb, and his mind spun. This was literally the most unbelievable thing he had ever seen in his entire life. His face instantly became devoid of blood, and he looked shocked beyond belief.

He suddenly cried out involuntarily, “That’s… that’s… that’s the aura of a Quasi-Dao Realm Paragon!”

His eyes were wide, and his heart pounded wildly.

He was well-aware how powerful a Quasi-Dao Paragon was, and what they represented. He was extremely conscientious of the fact that the Quasi-Dao Realm… was a completely astonishing Realm within the Nine Mountains and Seas. It was a realm of madness and terror, so powerful that strongest experts in the Nine Mountains and Seas had no choice but to call people in that Realm… Paragons!

The middle-aged man wasn’t the only shocked one. The old man up in midair, the manifestation of the Seventh Patriarch’s divine will, was watching with wide eyes and open mouth. He was completely astonished, and could scarcely believe what he was seeing.

“How is this possible?!?!” he thought, panting, his mind spinning. “The Dao Guardsman, is actually… moving!!” He suddenly looked at Meng Hao sitting on top of the statue's head, and viewed the look of sorrow on his face in a new light. For an instant, the rarely-shocked Seventh Patriarch's scalp went numb.

The ground quaked and mountains crumbled. A massive rumbling sound filled the air, and the haze of dust churned as boulders crashed down.

The weeds in the area were blown flat by the wind, and cracks appeared in the surface of the ground, although it was all rapidly covered over by the dust.

Up in the air, the Seventh Patriarch was panting as he stared mutely at the statue.

As for the skinny man, he couldn't be more shocked. His mind reeled as he looked at the earth-shaking statue. He could sense the aura emanating out from it, and it turned his face ashen. Without another moment's hesitation, he fled.

This unexpected turn of events was something he couldn't handle. From his perspective, killing Meng Hao should have been as simple as turning over his hand. Moments later, though, everything was completely reversed.

He suddenly realized why Fang Xiushan would hire nine experts like himself to kill a mere member of the Junior generation. Although the conclusion he reached was actually fallacious, in his mind, it was the obvious answer.

“Dammit! How could things turn out like this! Fang Xiushan, you bastard, you conned me. Y-y-you sent me, with one extinguished Soul Lamp, in here to kill a cultivator protected by a Quasi-Dao Paragon? Why didn't you tell us ahead of time that this inhuman Fang Hao could actually bring the Dao Guardsman back to life!?!?” The man retreated with all the speed he could muster.

However, in the moment that he began to flee, the statue's gaze stabbed through the haze of dust like a beam of light to land directly on the man.

In the instant the statue’s gaze locked onto him, a sound like thunder rumbled in the man’s mind. An intense sense of deadly crisis rose up, and he let out a bellow. He instantly spit out blood and unleashed a secret magic to try to flee.

He was scared. As an Ancient Realm expert, he did not often encounter frightening situations, but as of this moment, he was afraid. In fact, he was terrified, all the way down to his bones.

He knew exactly how terrifyingly powerful a Quasi-Dao Paragon was. Years ago, he had actually personally witnessed the wild and devastating power of just such an individual.

There was no way he couldn’t feel terror. The awakening of the statue shook his mind, and caused him to think back to the legends he had heard regarding the statue.

“I… have provoked a truly inhuman monster! I can’t believe… I can’t believe this is happening!!” He felt incredible regret, and swore that, if he managed to live through this, he would make things very difficult for Fang Xiushan when he got out of the ancestral land.

However, it was at this moment that the huge statue’s hands tightened on the enormous greatsword that was thrust into the ground. Rumbling and cracking sounds could be heard from the ground as fissures spread out from the sword in all directions. Suddenly, the greatsword… was pulled out from the earth!

The shocking statue’s eyes were as cold as ice as it hefted the greatsword in both hands. Then it swung the sword, which descended as fast as lighting toward the fleeing man.

The sword caused the whole world to go silent.

The avalanches of boulders made no sound. The crumbling mountains were silent. The haze of dust seethed in terrifying quietude. It was as if time itself… were frozen in place.

The fleeing man also seemed to be stopped in midair, his expression that of terror and astonishment. His pupils were frozen in place, and the nine Soul Lamps behind him were motionless. It was as if everything in the world were completely incapable of moving.

The only thing that was moving was the statue’s greatsword. As it cleaved downward, blood oozed from the man’s forehead, then trickled down his nose, then his chin. Finally, the sword passed through his torso, simultaneously shattering his Soul Lamps.

The world returned to normal. The terracotta soldier’s greatsword once again stabbed into the ground, which trembled and quaked. Sound returned… in midair, the middle-aged man’s body had been completely cleaved into two pieces, and all of his Soul Lamps were destroyed.

The man had numerous magical items, all of which were shattered, and flew out in pieces along with the man’s flesh and blood.

There was no way for him to fight back or block. He couldn’t even struggle, let alone evade.

Blood sprayed out as his Nascent Divinity, his Soul Lamps, all of him… faded away.

Only his bag of holding remained, which came to float in front of Meng Hao.

Meng Hao sat silently on the statue.

High up in the air, the Seventh Patriarch took a deep breath. Even he felt a sense of fear when he looked at the statue, and also knew how shocking and terrifying its sword was.

“That sword has its own Dao that replaces the natural law of Heaven and Earth! That sword… can sever Daos, sever natural laws, can sever… anything that exists!

“This is definitely the power of a Quasi-Dao Paragon!! However… it’s obviously nothing more than a statue! If a statue could be so powerful, then whoever created that statue… must be even more terrifying!

“I suppose… only someone in the true Dao Realm, who also possessed some rare Heavenly material or Earthly treasure, would be able to create something like this. But…with such a treasure, it would make more sense to craft some other item, something that would be of more use to a Dao Realm cultivator.” Simply looking at the statue caused the Seventh Patriarch’s heart to tremble.

He knew that Quasi-Dao Realm cultivators… were a maniacal bunch. They were madmen who could ignore anybody; they were people who nobody dared to provoke.

They were people who had prepared for years, who had transcended one deadly Soul Lamp tribulation after another, who had reached the peak of the Ancient Realm filled with hope. But after extinguishing their final Soul Lamp, they were unable to enter the Dao Realm, and would exist forever half a step away from it. Their lifespans had crumbled away, and they would be left with only a few dozen years of life. People like that… were in the Quasi-Dao Realm!

They were doomed to die, and could not be saved by anything in Heaven and Earth. Therefore, they went mad, stuck half a step into the Dao Realm, possessing a certain level of Dao Essence that earned them respect and awe. No one dared to provoke them, and everyone called them Paragons.

For tens of thousands of years, only eleven such people had ever appeared in the Fang Clan. Some of them went mad and carried out slaughters. Some of them quietly waited until their life force reached its end.

When the Grand Elder had spoken of past Dao Realm Patriarchs of the Fang Clan who were buried in the ancestral land, he was referring to… Quasi-Dao Paragons! The only one among these who was a true Dao Realm expert was the first generation Patriarch!

Ke Yunhai had also met with failure at that final step. However, his cultivation base was so terrifyingly profound that, even after his failure, even being only half a step into the Dao Realm, even with a failing longevity… he had still managed to force out many more years of life to protect his son.

At that time, his battle prowess had far exceeded the Ancient Realm, and could actually be considered to be in the Dao Realm.

As for his final Soul Lamp, that was the very lamp with the body of a dragon and the wick of a phoenix, the one he had been buried with! 1

He had actually used that lamp to make the terracotta soldiers, which had thus contained much of Ke Yunhai's life force. As a result… they were incredibly powerful!!

The Seventh Patriarch was panting as he looked at the statue in fear. He himself… was not in the Dao Realm; he was only in the Ancient Realm. However, he had summoned fifteen Soul Lamps, and to date had managed to extinguish thirteen of them.

"Only Elder Brother, the Earth Patriarch, could suppress that statue with his Dao Realm cultivation base. Nobody else could, not even Old Second and Old Third with their fourteen extinguished Soul Lamps. They only have one more lamp each to extinguish, but they still wouldn't be matches for this statue. After all, they're still merely in the Ancient Realm!"

Most shocking of all to him was that this Dao Guardsman of the Fang Clan was actually protecting Meng Hao!

"This kid actually managed to get the Dao Guardsman to move! How did he pull it off? Why was he able to do it? The fact that he was so confident before shows that he was sure ahead of time that the statue would fight for him and protect him!

"This… is absurdly unbelievable!" The Seventh Patriarch took an incredulous breath as he looked down at what was happening. There was no way for him to explain what was going on, and if his divine will wasn't here to personally witness it, then, if he had been told the story later, he would have called it nonsensical ravings.

And yet, here he was watching it happen, shocked.

Meng Hao patted the statue’s head. Gradually, the land around him quieted down. The dust faded away, and everything returned to normal. Meng Hao looked up, and returned the precious memories of Ke Yunhai to the depths of his heart. Sometimes a certain object will make you think of a certain person. His memories filled him with grief that he couldn’t somehow undo the death of Ke Yunhai.

He closed his eyes for a long moment before opening them again. The he looked down at the statue. To him, it was no mere terracotta soldier, but rather, a precious memento left to him by Ke Yunhai.

“Let’s go,” he said softly. “Come with me to take a look around this ancestral land of the Fang Clan.” The statue’s eyes shone brightly as it flew into the air and took Meng Hao further into the ancestral land.

That simple action almost caused the Seventh Patriarch’s eyeballs to pop out of his head. He very nearly cried out in shock.

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# Chapter 948: Terrifying

He gasped, and a look of disbelief covered his face as he stared at the statue taking Meng Hao off into the distance. He was well-aware of the difference between Meng Hao getting the statue to protect him, and getting it to carry him around. They were two completely different things.

One required passively responding, the other required taking action!

“He… can actually control the clan’s Dao Guardsman!!” The Seventh Patriarch was panting. Now that he knew the full situation, his mind spun, and he completely forgot about any rule-violating members of the clan. He looked at Meng Hao with shining eyes, and couldn’t help but be filled with the growing notion that Meng Hao would be a future pillar of the clan.

As Meng Hao proceeded along, he opened up the bag of holding that had belonged to the man who had just been killed. He scanned its contents with divine sense, finding a good quantity of spirit stones and Immortal jade. There were also a lot of medicinal pills, and even some jade slips. One of those jade slips was black, and Meng Hao’s face grew frosty as soon as he picked it up and scanned it.

“He was an Elder of the Fang Clan!” he murmured. The command medallion he held in his hand was a token of authentication provided by the clan, and revealed that the man from moments ago was definitely one of the clan Elders.

After all, this was the Fang Clan’s ancestral land. Fang Xiushan wanted Meng Hao dead more than anything, but he still wouldn’t dare to allow outsiders into the ancestral land. He wouldn’t have been able to bear the consequences of that.

In his estimation, when it came to killing Meng Hao, reducing the risk and aftermath was only a matter of using his bloodline's status in the clan a bit cleverly.

After grabbing the the identity medallion from the bag of holding and tossing it aside, Meng Hao pulled a jade box out. It glittered with bright light, and emanated strong Immortal qi.

After opening it, he began to pant, and his eyes shone brightly.

Inside the jade box was a tiny bell made completely of jade. It was exquisitely beautiful, and Immortal qi swirled around it. Meng Hao instantly recognized that it was an Immortal treasure of the highest quality. It was definitely no ordinary object.

He picked up the tiny bell and held it in his hand. Then, he sent some Immortal qi from his Immortal meridian into the bell, which caused it to emit a droning sound. It flew up into the air above his head, growing to a size of three meters and rotating around him, emitting countless magical symbols at the same time.

An intense pressure immediately spread out.

Meng Hao's eyes shone, and he took a deep breath.

"As far as Immortal treasures are concerned, this bell is definitely of an extremely high quality!" He could sense the Immortal might emanating off of the bell, and his eyes glittered as he opened his mouth and breathed in. In response, the bell shrunk and then turned into a beam of light that shot into Meng Hao's mouth and came to rest inside of his Immortal meridian.

Immediately, his entire body filled with the echoing toll of a bell. The bell began to emit bright light, and at the same time, his Immortal meridian grew more solid.

Meng Hao's spirits were instantly lifted. What he didn't know was that this Immortal bell had been a gift prepared by Fang Xiushan for that clan Elder. Although it wasn't an Ancient treasure, it was an extremely high quality

Immortal treasure, and with a bit of refining could have been turned into something similar to an Ancient Realm treasure.

Ancient treasures were rare, and were something that many Ancient Realm experts didn’t even possess. Even though the man had been a Fang Clan elder, he had only extinguished one Soul Lamp, and therefore didn’t qualify to acquire Ancient treasures from the clan.

Actually, Fang Xiushan had expended quite a bit of resources a few years back to acquire the tiny bell. However, for the sake of having Meng Hao killed, he had employed everything at his disposal.

“He was a clan Elder, and all he had was this one magical item?” Meng Hao seemed a bit skeptical, but then he remembered all of the magical items that had shattered in the moment of his death.

“There seem to be many unique aspects to the Ancient Realm,” he thought. He scanned the rest of the jade slips in the bag of holding, and then suddenly, his eyes came to rest on one of them. After further scanning, his face darkened.

This jade slip was a bloodline tracker. He could clearly see nine dots of light, one of which represented himself. The other eight were spread out in various directions, and were all heading towards him.

The nearest one wasn’t very far away.

“So, you actually sent nine people to kill me.” Meng Hao’s eyes were like ice as he sent out some divine will that caused the terracotta soldier to stop in place, then change directions. Suddenly, it began to speed off in the direction of the dot of light closest to Meng Hao.

“There’s no need to come looking for me,” said Meng Hao. “I’ll come to you!” He sat there cross-legged atop the statue, his eyes boiling with murderous intent. His pupils shone with an intense light like that of a razor-sharp blade.

As of this moment, his entire person seethed with the desire to kill.

He wouldn’t dare to kill anyone inside the Fang Clan itself. That was a violation of clan rules. However, in this place… he had no compunctions whatsoever. Since these people had come here to kill him, then he might as well return the favor one by one!

“This place won’t open up again for two months. That’s plenty of time for me to have some fun with you people!” Powerful killing intent flickered in his eyes, and the murderous aura which surrounded him grew stronger.

Up above, the Seventh Patriarch followed along, his excitement and interest in Meng Hao growing stronger.

The terracotta soldier moved with such incredible speed that it caused sonic booms to echo out. It shot forward, seemingly slicing a hole into the air of the ancestral land.

Meng Hao sat cross-legged up above, his hair whipping about as the powerful wind buffeted his true Immortal fleshly body.

Roughly five hundred kilometers ahead of him, a beam of light shot through the air, within which was a black-robed young man. Although his appearance was young, there was something about the way he furrowed his brow that seemed to carry an ancient will.

He was surrounded by nine lamps, which rotated around him. Just like the other man, eight were burning and one was extinguished. These Soul Lamps didn’t seem to be real, but rather illusory.

His passing caused the sky and the land to distort, and he kept his hands clasped behind his back as he proceeded.

His expression was calm, but a gleam of vigilance could be seen deep in his eyes.

“I can’t believe one of us died….” he murmured, his eyes flickering. “All we’re supposed to do is kill someone from the Junior generation, and yet somebody actually perished…. Furthermore, he wasn’t killed by something dangerous from with the ancestral land. He died a short time after making contact with that member of the Junior generation.” A strange gleam appeared in the young man’s eyes. Moments ago, one of the dots of light had vanished from the jade slip he had been observing, which left him shocked.

“No wonder Fang Xiushan wanted nine of us to come in here. This Junior… must be harboring some incredible secret!

“Whatever that secret is, it enabled him to kill an Ancient Realm cultivator with one extinguished Soul Lamp, while he himself barely counts as being in the Immortal Realm!

“However, whatever method he’s using definitely can’t be used long-term.” A cold glow appeared in the young man’s eyes, and his pupils glittered with greed. He lifted his right hand and sent divine sense into the jade slip held therein. Then, his face flickered, and he suddenly stopped in place.

“That can’t be right,” he thought, frowning. “He changed direction, and now he’s heading toward me…. And look at how fast he’s moving! Even with a true Immortal fleshly body, he shouldn’t be able to move that fast!” The young man hesitated.

“Is it just an empty show of strength, a bluff? Is he just trying to scare me off, or… does that secret technique give him the confidence to think he can kill me?” The young man’s eyes flickered a few times before filling with determination.

“It doesn’t matter. I can just check the situation out from a distance to see whether or not he’s just putting on a show.” With that, the young man hovered there in midair, coldly looking off into the distance as he waited for Meng Hao to approach.

He was being very cautious, and was even ready to flee away at top speed if necessary. He kept his cultivation base rotating, ensuring that he was at the peak of power and readiness.

After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, a rumbling sound could suddenly be heard from off in the distance. Everything began to shake.

Even the condition of the sky changed; the clouds churned, and endless bolts of lightning danced about.

The young man’s eyes went wide, and he sent his divine sense out to scan the area up ahead. It was at this point that a tremor ran through him, and his eyes went wide with disbelief. He couldn’t even breathe, and his eyes bulged. It almost looked like someone was strangling him. His mind filled with a buzz, as if someone has struck him hard on the top of the head.

He staggered backward, panting, face pale.

“That’s… that’s….” He almost didn’t dare to believe what he was seeing. “What is that!?!?”

Tens of thousands of meters up in the sky, the clouds parted as an enormous statue appeared. It was thousands of meters high, and caused the clouds to surge away from it as it descended.

Its energy was shocking and virtually impossible to describe!

Its speed was incredible, causing flames to lick the air around the terracotta soldier. It was like a shooting star!

Meng Hao sat cross-legged atop the terracotta soldier, eyes flashing with killing intent. He looked like a drawn sword that refused to be sheathed without shedding blood!

RUMMMBLLLLE!

Massive roaring sounds filled the air as the terracotta soldier screamed through the air toward the black-robed youth. As it neared, the aura of a Quasi-Dao Paragon rippled out in all directions, shaking everything.

The terracotta soldier’s eyes were icy and emotionless, and it held a greatsword in its hand. When the young man saw all of this, his face drained of blood.

“That’s the ancestral land’s Dao Guardsman!!

“It has the aura of a Quasi-Dao Paragon!!

“How… how could this be? He… he can actually control the Dao Guardsman!?!?” The black-robed young man’s scalp was tingling so hard it seemed like his head was about to explode. Flabbergasted and scared witless, he didn’t even have time to think. He immediately turned and employed all the power he could muster in a mad dash to flee.

As of that moment, he cursed the fact that he had only extinguished one Soul Lamp. He cursed the fact that he couldn’t flee fast enough. He cursed the fact that he had been conceited enough to just stand there waiting for his opponent to arrive.

He suddenly understood why that other Ancient Realm Elder had died!!

“Damn you, Fang Xiushan!! I can’t believe you sent us in here to kill a monster who can control the Dao Guardsman! You… you didn’t send us in here to kill him… you obviously sent us in here so that he could kill us!!” The black-robed young man’s heart was pounding, and his face was as white as death. Nearly frightened out of his mind by the sense of deadly crisis, he roared, spitting out blood and using all the secret magics he knew to try to get away.

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# Chapter 949: Perilous Ancestral Land

No one outside could see the things that were happening in the ancestral land.

Neither the Grand Elder nor Fang Wei's father and grandfather could see anything at all. The Grand Elder hadn't been lying when he had explained that point. It was literally impossible for anyone to observe what occurred inside.

In the Fang Clan, everything was going along as normal, except that the direct bloodline clan members were very nervous. Fang Xi was in incredibly low spirits, and was very worried about Meng Hao.

The Dao of Alchemy Division had received news of Meng Hao heading into the ancestral land as a trial by fire, and were also extremely anxious. In fact, the eighteen tier 8 alchemists all went in person to speak with the Grand Elder.

A huge argument ensued that ended with the tier 8 alchemists storming off in a fury. Not long after, the Dao of Alchemy Division announced that they wouldn't concoct pills for the clan until Meng Hao returned safely.

As word of this development spread, the entire clan was shaken. The Grand Elder then personally went to the Dao of Alchemy Division to pay respects to Pill Elder, yet Pill Elder flatly refused to see him.

It was at this point that Fang Wei's bloodline was starting to realize that Meng Hao had firmly rooted himself within the clan, and had built up such a level of power that even they were beginning to feel fear rising up inside of them.

The Dao of Alchemy Division was definitely Meng Hao’s bastion of reliance within the clan!

The whole matter was a major slip-up on the part of Fang Xiushan. The only thing he could do was spend vast resources to placate the anger and dissatisfaction of the Elders in his own bloodline regarding the losses they had suffered.

However, Fang Xiushan still had hope. As long as Meng Hao died, then the Dao of Alchemy Division wouldn’t fight against the clan over a corpse. Everything would be resolved, and his own son, Fang Wei, would once again be the number one Chosen in the clan, and his bloodline would finally be able to supersede the current direct bloodline!

However, his hope… was rapidly unraveled because of what happened next.

Fang Wei was currently sealed in secluded meditation in his secret chamber. Fang Xiushan sat cross-legged outside, his face a mass of disbelief as he looked at a crystal he held in his hand.

Within the crystal was an image of the Fang Clan’s Lifeslip Hall. There, countless jade slips that represented the lives of Fang Clan members were on display.

If a clan member died, the jade slip would shatter, immediately notifying the clan, which would then investigate the matter.

Moments ago, Fang Xiushan had been looking at Meng Hao’s jade slip, which rested among all the other countless jade slips.

As soon as Meng Hao had returned to the clan and acquired a jade command medallion, he had also left a lifeslip in the Lifeslip Hall. Currently, it glowed with bright light, and wasn’t even the least bit cracked.

On a higher shelf were the lifeslips of all of the clan’s Ancient Realm clan members. Just now, one of those jade slips had made a cracking sound and then shattered. This instantly attracted a lot of attention, and an investigation had begun.

The shattering of that jade slip caused Fang Xiushan’s heart to begin to pound.

He had paid a heavy price to arrange for nine Ancient Realm Elders to go into the ancestral land and kill Meng Hao.

“What happened in there!?!?” he thought, panting. “An Ancient Realm Elder… actually died? How!?!?

“To top it off, that damned son of a bitch is still alive!” He couldn’t even imagine what possibly might have happened inside the ancestral land.

The clan began a thorough investigation into the Ancient Realm clan member’s death. Fortunately for Fang Xiushan, he had previously arranged for all nine of the experts who entered the ancestral land to make it seem like they had left the planet to carry out clan assignments.

However, that would only delay the clan for so long. The rigorous investigation would eventually turn up clues.

“He probably died because of some dangerous situation in the ancestral land,” thought Fang Xiushan. “This was nothing more than an accident…. It won’t be much longer before that damned son of a bitch is dead in body and spirit!” Killing intent flickered in his eyes, and he couldn’t wait to see Meng Hao’s lifeslip shatter.

“Once the little son of a bitch is dead, and Wei’er makes his breakthrough to true Immortal Ascension, then… it doesn’t matter even if people do discover the truth. By that time, it won’t matter. Fang Hao’s death will be meaningless to the clan!”

Fang Xiushan took a deep breath, and his eyes filled with veins of blood.

Meanwhile, in the Fang Clan ancestral land, the black-robed young man was indignantly cursing Fang Xiushan as he fled in terror.

“How shameless!” he thought. “What a deception! Two months? Dammit! There are still two more months… before this place will open up and I can get out of here. W-what do I do?” The young man’s face was pale white as he fled. Behind him, rumbling sounds echoed out, piercing through his ears into his very heart.

Further back, Meng Hao’s statue was wreathed in flames as it shot after the young man. Meng Hao sat cross-legged atop it, and as they closed in, his eyes flickered with killing intent.

The distance between them narrowed. 30,000 meters. 25,000 meters. 15,000 meters. 10,000 meters….

At that point the black-robed young man was virtually going crazy, and was ready to pull out all the stops. He spun in place, performing an incantation gesture that caused his nine Soul Lamps to rotate rapidly and then shoot toward Meng Hao.

He was attacking with Soul Lamps that contained his own life force. From this, it was possible to see how mad and desperate he was.

When the eight lit and one extinguished Soul Lamps neared Meng Hao, Meng Hao’s statue raised its greatsword, and the explosive aura of a Quasi-Dao Paragon exploded out.

“Leave him alive,” Meng Hao suddenly said.

Instantly, the terracotta soldier switched the great sword from its right hand to its left. Then, it’s right hand shot out to grab the black-robed young man.

Instantly, everything in the area stopped moving, just like before. The black-robed young man was stuck in place, his body stiff and incapable of moving. His consciousness even began to fade.

A power surged out that was impossible to resist or fight against and seemed to envelop the entire sky. In front of the terracotta soldier, the black-robed young man with his one extinguished Soul Lamp was like nothing more than an insect.

When the terracotta soldier's huge hand reached the nine Soul Lamps, it almost seemed as if it was on a different plane of existence. It passed directly through them and, to the astonishment and despair of the black-robed young man, closed around him in the blink of an eye. As the hand tightened, cracking sounds could be heard as many of the young man's bones were crushed.

After grabbing and retrieving him, the world returned to normal. The air once again moved, and the sounds of the black-robed young man's screaming echoed out in all directions.

Blood sprayed from his mouth, and intense pain wracked his body. He was completely trapped inside the terracotta soldier's hand, his cultivation base dissipated and as weak as a mortal. He trembled, and hopelessness filled his eyes, along with the fear of dying.

"Fang Xiushan!" he screamed. "I won't let you off for this even if I become a ghost!" At the moment, he hated Meng Hao, but he hated Fang Xiushan even more.

"And you, Fang Hao," he raged, "if it weren't for our clan's Dao Guardsman, I'd kill you… it would be as easy as crushing a chicken to death!" Blood oozed from his mouth, and his eyes shone with hatred for Meng Hao.

"At the moment," said Meng Hao, his face calm. "I could crush you to death much easier than crushing a chicken."

Eyes flickering, he performed a strange incantation gesture with his right hand. Suddenly, numerous magical symbols appeared on his hand.

The magical symbols flickered, some of them white and some of them black. It almost looked like his hand had turned black and white.

A bizarre aura appeared around him, seemingly forming a stream of qi that converged on his hand and then merged with the magical symbols. Soon, everything in the area looked black and white.

Meng Hao’s hand trembled, although no onlooker would be able to tell, not even the Seventh Patriarch up in midair. All he could sense was that the black and white magical symbols on Meng Hao’s right hand contained the aura of some sort of Essence.

This was… the Sixth Demon Sealing Hex!

Meng Hao had acquired it from the sword in the Ruins of Immortality, which contained the aura of the Sixth Hex. He had continuously contemplated enlightenment of the Hex, and was now attempting to use it. However, the magic was too difficult, and although he could complete its casting, he had never successfully used it.

Much of this had to do with his lack of appropriate targets to practice on, and right now, he had just such a living target in front of him.

His eyes shone with a strange light as his right hand suddenly stabilized, and he pointed at the black-robed young man. Instantly, the black and white magical symbols merged together and shot toward him.

The man’s eyes went wide, but he was incapable of resisting. The magical symbols flickered as they slammed into his forehead, and then began to bore into his body.

Meng Hao watched closely for the space of a few breaths. The black-robed young man’s face distorted, and veins popped out on his forehead. He then let out miserable scream.

The sound of that scream even caused the Seventh Patriarch to wince.

Indescribable pain wracked the young man; it felt like his soul was being consumed and his body was being ripped away. Soon, his screams turned into something that sounded like the shrieks of an animal.

It lasted for the space of about five breaths before the young man’s body suddenly exploded into a haze of blood and gore. He was dead, in body and in spirit.

Up in midair, the Seventh Patriarch gasped. As his solemn gaze came to rest back on Meng Hao, his eyes gradually began to fill with admiration.

“Quite ruthless,” he thought. In his opinion, Meng Hao’s temper was actually very similar to his own.

Meng Hao frowned and then sighed.

“Another failure. Maybe I’m not using it correctly.” He thought back to the way the Sixth Generation Demon Sealer had used the Life-Death Hex, and how all the people he had hexed suddenly had their control of their own life or death taken away from them. Those people… had essentially become like puppets in the hand of the Sixth Generation Demon Sealer.

In the same moment that the young man died, Fang Xiushan was sitting in his place back in the Fang Clan’s ancestral mansion. His face was pale as he saw… another of the life slips shatter.

“Impossible! This is impossible! The ancestral land is just too perilous!!” Fang Xiushan was trembling, and his eyes were bloodshot.

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# Chapter 950: Scraping It Clean

In the moment that the young man died, a sharp cracking sound rang out in the Fang Clan’s Lifeslip Hall in the ancestral mansion. The sound immediately attracted the attention of all the Elders in the ancestral mansion.

As beams of light began to shoot through the air, Fang Xiushan took a deep breath and forced himself into a state of calm. Then, he also flew into the air.

It didn’t take long for multiple Elders to arrive at the Lifeslip Hall. Grand Elder Fang Tongtian was already there, hands clasped behind his back as he studied the shattered lifeslip. His expression gradually grew darker and darker.

People began to crowd into the hall, and agitated expressions appeared on their faces when they saw the shattered lifeslip.

The crowd began to converse in low tones.

“Another one… that’s two lifeslips that have shattered in the past few days. I can’t believe two Elders have perished!”

“Something strange is going on….”

“The strangest thing of all is that it was impossible to determine where exactly the first one died!”

Finally, the Grand Elder turned around and looked out at the crowd. His gaze lingered on Fang Xiushan for a moment.

Fang Xiushan’s heart thumped, but his expression was calm.

“Two Elders have died in succession,” the Grand Elder announced in a dignified voice. “And yet it has been impossible to use the power of their lifeslips to determine where exactly they died…. Where did they go?”

An Elder stepped out of the crowd, clasped hands and bowed. “According to my investigation, both of them went out alone on assignments from the clan.”

“Assignments…? Do you really believe that?” Looking irritated, the Grand Elder flicked his sleeve and started to walk out. “Continue the investigation. Find out exactly how many Elders have gone out on supposed assignments. Furthermore, find out who gave them these assignments. I want all the details! Every single scrap of information!” The Grand Elder’s voice continued to echo out in the hall even after he was gone.

Fang Xiushan felt incredible pressure as he departed along with the rest of the crowd. Suddenly, the Grand Elder’s icy voice sounded out in his ear, transmitted via divine will.

“In our clan, nothing is more important than the clan rules. Therefore, I will be sure to shield Fang Wei from any trouble. However… if a third Elder dies, you had better start thinking of a way to explain all of this to me.”

Fang Xiushan trembled silently.

Back in the ancestral land, the black-robed young man died, and the seven other cultivators with the single extinguished Soul Lamps… all stopped in their tracks.

It was impossible for them to do anything else. All of them had a bloodline jade slip, and had clearly seen the other two suddenly die as soon as they got close to Meng Hao.

The first one could be chalked up to an accident, but two…. If any of these seven still believed that to be an accident, then they didn’t deserve to be called Ancient Realm experts.

The faces of all seven men flickered with shock. They couldn’t imagine what had happened, why two of their group who were supposed to kill a member of the Junior generation, were instead themselves killed.

Their hearts were shaken, and fear of Meng Hao gradually began to build inside of them. All of a sudden, the dot of light that represented Meng Hao seemed strange and mysterious.

Suddenly, the situation on Meng Hao’s jade slip changed, and his mouth twisted into a cold smile. The seven dots of light were no longer closing in on him; in contrast, they were now speeding away from him in different directions.

“I bet you people are also stuck in here for two months. There will be plenty of time for us to have a little game of cat and mouse.” Meng Hao patted the terracotta soldier again, which turned and flew off into the distance with him.

Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed as he looked at the lands speeding by below, and gradually, a bashful expression appeared on his face. “Since I’m here, I need to get my hands on some of this ancestral land’s good fortune, no matter what.”

Up in the air, the Seventh Patriarch saw the gleam in Meng Hao’s eyes, and then nodded to himself.

“Based on the gleam in his eyes, it seems he’s going to go searching for some of the good fortune in the ancestral land. Good, this is what a descendant of the Fang Clan ought to do.” Stroking his beard, he smiled. “The kid looks a bit dainty; although he slaughters enemies ruthlessly, he’s also pure and charming. I wonder what kind of good fortune he’s destined to get here.”

This was the first time the old man had ever seen a gleam like that in Meng Hao’s eyes, and also the first time he had seen him act bashfully….

“Whenever I visit a place, I scrape it clean,” Meng Hao thought, justifying his actions to himself as best he could. “With this terracotta soldier to accompany me, if I let this place off any easier than usual, I would definitely regret it in the future!” With that, the gleam in his eye grew brighter.

Under Meng Hao’s control, the terracotta soldier flew off into the distance.

The ancestral land was laid out in a long strip, and Meng Hao’s current location was at the very beginning. After some time passed, and he had a chance to survey the lands up ahead, he sent some divine will into the terracotta soldier.

The terracotta soldier stopped, and Meng Hao rose to his feet and stared down at the ground. There below was a field of huge boulders. The surface of each boulder was carved with various images that contained natural law.

Meng Hao leapt off of the terracotta soldier and floated down into the field of boulders. As he looked around, his eyes began to shine brightly.

Up in midair, the Seventh Patriarch nodded to himself.

“Excellent. This area is nothing extremely special, but is actually very well suited to him. To gain enlightenment of some magical techniques would still count as good fortune.” The Seventh Patriarch began to smile, but then quickly gaped in astonishment and then in confusion.

Down below, Meng Hao had backed up a bit, then sent his divine will out. Next, the terracotta soldier descended and used both of its hands to reach down and pluck a boulder out of the ground.

Meng Hao’s eyes shone brightly as he quickly stored the boulder in his bag of holding, then sent the terracotta soldier to another boulder. It didn’t take long before the dozens of boulders in the area were all pulled from the ground and placed into Meng Hao’s bag of holding.

Afterwards, Meng Hao flew back up and sat down on the terracotta soldier’s head, then proceeded onward excitedly.

Up in midair, the Seventh Patriarch still hadn’t recovered from his shock. He stared at the dozens of holes in the ground left behind by Meng Hao, then gazed blankly at Meng Hao making his way off into the distance.

“What… what is he doing?” he murmured. “Didn’t he come here to contemplate enlightenment? To gain good fortune?” Meng Hao’s actions left him thoroughly shocked.

Time passed. Meng Hao caught sight of a rather small lake that looked like a mirror. As the sun glinted off of its surface, magical symbols rose up from the water.

Meng Hao waved his hand, and the terracotta soldier chopped down with its greatsword. After a few slashes, it managed to slice all of the ground surrounding the lake. Afterward, Meng Hao struggled mightily to wrench the entire lake out of the ground and then put it in his bag of holding.

He actually had many bags of holding, some larger than others. After laboriously forcing the lake into one of them, he produced yet another bag of holding. Looking around shiftily, he sat back down on the terracotta soldier and proceeded onward.

The Seventh Patriarch was panting, and his eyes were wide as he watched what was happening. He even began to tremble.

As Meng Hao continued on, he saw a small mountain, which he took!

He saw a little pagoda, which he took!

He saw a bamboo forest, which he took!

He saw a log cabin, which he took!

He saw a carved sculpture, which he took!

Everything that he saw, every location that seemed to house good fortune, was taken away by the giant hands of the terracotta soldier, and then put into a bag of holding.

Meng Hao had a vast collection of bags of holding. When he ran out of big ones, he used small ones. If something was too big, he would dismantle the object into smaller pieces and cram it in.

As he sped along, he looked a bit ill at ease, even embarrassed. Up above, the Seventh Patriarch was trembling, and his beard was in disarray. His eyes shone with disbelief, as if he simply couldn’t imagine how such a charming, innocent child… would actually do something like this!

Were it not for the fact that he actually feared the terracotta soldier, the Seventh Patriarch might have instantly slaughtered the treasonous and disgraceful Meng Hao!

“Wha… what is he doing!? He’s not contemplating any enlightenment! He’s just taking all of the various items created and collected by the past Patriarchs… and putting them in his bags of holding!!”

This was especially true considering that, at one point, Meng Hao reached a palace. The Patriarch’s jaw dropped as he watched Meng Hao quickly began to dismantle the entire palace, including the floor tiles. He moved with a precision and accuracy that made it seem as if this was something he did on a daily basis.

This finally seemed to provoke a reaction from the ancestral land. Even as he went about dismantling the palace, stripping away even the columns, leaving it completely stark and bare… roaring could be heard from off in the distance as a pack of giant apes flew toward him.

There were more than a hundred of them, and each one had a cultivation base that was similar to the peak of the Immortal realm. Their bodies were covered with thick coats of luxuriant fur, and their eyes glowed bright red. Apparently, they were the palace guards, and their eyes were fixed hatefully on Meng Hao as they charged forward.

When Meng Hao saw the apes, he didn’t have the terracotta soldier attack. Instead, he slapped his bag of holding, causing the parrot to fly out.

It had apparently been stuffed into the bag of holding for too long, because as soon as it emerged, it flew several circles in the air at top speed. The meat jelly was attached to its foot in the shape of a bell, and immediately began to let out nonstop jingling sounds.

“Lord Fifth is out again!!!

“When Lord Fifth appears, who dares to cause strife!!

“Attention, all furred and feathered concubines, Lord Fifth is here to dote upon you!” Almost as soon as the parrot appeared, its eyes suddenly went wide, and it almost forgot to flap its wings. It even began to drool as it stared fixedly at the luxuriantly furred apes.

“So many concubines….” it said, eyes shining excitedly. Suddenly feeling quite hot and bothered, it squawked and then shot toward the charging apes at top speed.

Meng Hao cleared his throat, then flew back up to sit on the terracotta soldier, which sped off into the distance.

The Seventh Patriarch’s eyes went wide as it watched the parrot and the troupe of apes, and he suddenly felt completely nauseous.

It didn’t take long before miserable shrieks rang out, seemingly filled with indescribable tragedy.

By that time, Meng Hao had reached a location where the land was black. He saw a huge coffin, atop which was a stone statue of a majestic old man!

Beneath the statue were various offerings of tribute. There were chunks of rare Immortal jade, as well as other objects seldom seen in the outside world. There were high-grade spirit stones, as well as three magical items that emanated shocking auras, and even two dark green bamboo lamps.

As soon as Meng Hao saw the coffin and the statue, his expression turned serious. He dropped to the ground, then clasped hands and bowed deeply to the statue.

“Fang Clan member Fang Hao pays respects to you, Ancestor!”

When the Seventh Patriarch saw Meng Hao acting in this way, his expression softened a bit. However, what Meng Hao said next cause him to almost go blind.

“Ancestor,” he said, his tone grave, “I’m not sure which generation Patriarch you are, sir, but… I can’t believe the other Fang Clan members behaved so shockingly. How incredible that none of the previous clan members ever exchanged any of these offerings for new ones!

“Look, sir. These offerings are all dusty! They’ve clearly been sitting here for far, far too long. Patriarch, don’t you worry. I’ll help you to switch them out. As a member of the Junior generation, this is something I simply must do.”

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# Chapter 951: Demon Sealers Appear Again!

Over many generations, clan members who came to this place would prostrate themselves in front of this coffin and statue with the utmost respect. None of them had ever even thought of having designs on the offerings.

Meng Hao was the first.

His expression was somber as, after bowing deeply, he swished his sleeve in a way that made it seem like he was truly and wholeheartedly performing a service for the Patriarch. He walked up to the offerings without the slightest hesitation.

He couldn’t help but let out a long sigh when he looked at the fist-sized chunk of Immortal jade.

“Patriarch, those other clan members who came to visit in the past were truly disloyal descendants. I can’t believe they let so much dust pile up on this Immortal jade! To leave it sitting here for so many years is really shocking!

“SHOCKING!” Meng Hao truly seemed angry as he stooped over and picked up the Immortal jade. In that same instant, a powerful aura suddenly shot out from the three magical items enshrined there.

Meng Hao didn’t seem to be fazed in the least. He actually ignored the magical items completely. He was the type of person who dared to snatch items directly from that Immortal pavilion in the Ruins of Immortality, so how could he possibly be scared of these three magical items?

He quickly put the large Immortal jade away, and then produced a fingernail-sized piece of Immortal jade to replace it. He carefully placed it onto the tribute dais.

“Patriarch, look, this piece of Immortal jade is sparkling and crystal-clear. It’s beautiful and lacks even the slightest speck of dust. Only a piece of Immortal jade like this is befitting of a Patriarch like you.” Meng Hao cleared his throat, then looked toward the other offerings and spirit stones with shining eyes.

It was at this point that the auras of the three magical items exploded out, causing incredible pressure to weigh down on the area.

“Beat it!” roared Meng Hao, glaring at the magical items. “I’m from the Fang Clan, and I have Fang Clan blood in me! If I want to tidy up the Patriarch’s grave by replacing some of the tribute items, then do you magical item spirits dare to stop me?!” The auras emanating from the magical items suddenly stopped in place.

In that instant, Meng Hao employed the fastest speed he could muster to quickly place the items and spirit stones into his bag of holding.

“How shocking! These spirit stones are all covered in dust! As a Junior member of the clan, I simply can’t tolerate such a thing!” He immediately produced some fingernail-sized, low-grade spirit stones which he somberly placed onto the tribute dais.

“Outrageous! They only placed some bamboo lamps in front of this Fang Clan Patriarch’s grave? That won’t do. As a member of the Junior generation, it is my duty to exchange these for iron lamps!” He looked at the two bamboo lamps, which glowed with mysterious light, and licked his lips.

He was just about to grab them when the auras of the three magical items exploded out again, filled with intense killing intent, seemingly incensed. It was as if they felt Meng Hao had committed an offense against morality itself.

Apparently, if Meng Hao dared to touch the bamboo lamps, the three magical items would slay him where he stood.

Meng Hao stopped, then cleared his throat in embarrassment and slowly pulled his hand back.

“What are you getting so excited for?” he said quietly. “It’s not that big a deal! I’m acting in good faith.” He eyed the three magical items covetously, then thought for a moment. Eventually, he gave up on the idea of using Karma to force a destiny connection with them. After all, this wasn’t that Immortal pavilion, in which the items had no connection to a particular master. These three magical items were clearly objects that had belonged to the fallen Patriarch, and the spirits inside of them were charged with protecting this place.

Meng Hao might be greedy, but he had principles.

“Fine then. You’re clearly very loyal to the Patriarch. I have to admire that.” Sighing deeply, Meng Hao took a few steps back. Face solemn, he clasped hands and bowed low.

Up above in midair, the Seventh Patriarch was now in a rage. Seeing Meng Hao switching out the offerings, and then hearing his words, left the Seventh Patriarch stamping with fury.

“How could the Fang Clan bloodline possibly produce such a shameless scoundrel!” he said through gritted teeth. Then he saw Meng Hao clasp hands and bow, and couldn’t help but gape again. Sensing Meng Hao’s sincerity, he looked on silently for a moment, and finally, his gaze softened. From the look of things, Meng Hao wasn’t completely beyond redemption.

“Let’s see what this little hoodlum is actually like deep down, and what sort of waves he can make in this place!” After a moment, he looked off into the distance with a wistful expression.

“The ancestral land is divided into six main areas,” he murmured. “The Dao Guardsman, the Field of Magic Enlightenment, the Quasi-Dao Patriarch

Tombs, the Nine Nethermountains, the Ancient Burial Ground, and the Misty Heaven Vault!

“Those six areas are essentially arranged in a straight line. The further one goes along, the more danger they will face. However, the good fortune… also increases!

“This particular tomb lies on the border between the Field of Magic Enlightenment and the Quasi-Dao Patriarch Tombs.

“From ancient times until now, the Nine Nethermountains have been the farthest that most clan members can make it into the ancestral land. It would be easier to find a phoenix feather or a qilin horn than to find someone who could reach the Ancient Burial Ground. As far as the necropolis in the Misty Heaven Vault, not even Eldest Brother, an almighty Dao Realm expert, was destined to enter it.

“The reason, of course, is that at the end of the Ancient Burial Ground, there is no path.

“The necropolis of the first generation Patriarch is located somewhere inside the Misty Heaven Vault, along with his most powerful magical technique… the One Thought Stellar Transformation!” Finally he closed his eyes.

He had never actually laid eyes on the first generation Patriarch. The only person who actually had was the old man in the stony cavern that the Seventh Patriarch referred to as Eldest Brother.

The other six people in thatcavern had been born in different generations. However, after extinguishing ten Soul Lamps, matters of seniority weren’t important, and because of the bloodlines that connected them all, they called each other Brother.

“The clan has experienced three catastrophes….” said the Seventh Patriarch, sighing. Because of those three catastrophes, the small group in the stony cavern were the only cultivators in the entire clan who had extinguished more than ten Soul Lamps.

In the moment that the Seventh Patriarch sighed, Meng Hao finished bowing to the stone statue, and then sped away on the terracotta soldier.

Meanwhile, something was happening that even the Seventh Patriarch didn’t notice. As Meng Hao made his way through the Quasi-Dao Patriarch Tombs, taking anything he saw that appeared to be valuable, an aura was slowly building up in the ancestral land, an aura that had never appeared there before.

The aura had actually first appeared when the terracotta soldier had caused the mountains to crumble, and then flew up into the air. When the statue then picked up all of the boulders that contained enlightenment of Daoist magics and divine abilities, the aura had grown even stronger.

Gradually, a very thin mist was building up over the lands.

Time passed. Meng Hao sat atop the terracotta soldier as it proceeded forward. As he traveled, he continued to encounter enormous tombs. Strangely, these tombs had no tombstones or writing on them whatsoever.

Meng Hao could only speculate based on what the Grand Elder had told him that this was the location where the Dao Realm Patriarchs were buried.

However, he didn’t know their names, so he found the nameless tombs to be somewhat odd. It was as if they had intentionally come here before perishing, and didn’t want anyone to know who they were.

“Weird….” thought Meng Hao. However, this didn’t stop him from carrying out his duty to tend to the tombs, and help the Patriarchs exchange their various offerings.

As Meng Hao swept the tombs of the Quasi-Dao Patriarchs clean, the Seventh Patriarch up above was finding it much harder to contain his wrath.

The only reason he could maintain his temper was that Meng Hao always respectfully bowed to the grave upon arriving and departing, and didn’t touch the tombs themselves.

A few days later, Meng Hao descended from above once again. This time, the sight of the coffin and statue caused his eyes to widen. He stopped in place and looked at the statue and the tombstone in front of it.

Up to this point, he had encountered seven tombs. None of those seven tombs had any writing to explain who was buried there, but the tomb he was in front of now did have a name!

Fang Pinqi!

The name was written in calligraphy that was as bold and flamboyant as dancing dragons and phoenixes, and emanated a boundless aura. Beneath the name was the Patriarch’s life story.

Meng Hao read over the life story of the Patriarch named Fang Pinqi, and it caused rumbling sounds to fill his mind.

The story described Fang Pinqi’s life from the moment he started practicing cultivation. When he stepped into the Immortal Realm, he was the foremost true Immortal of his generation. His path was always that of a Chosen, and was viewed as a blazing sun by the clan. When he entered the Ancient Realm, he summoned fifteen Soul Lamps.

He performed countless meritorious deeds for the sect, and even forged new paths in the Ruins of Immortality. He became the most outstanding member of his generation, and successfully accomplished the deadly task of extinguishing fourteen Soul Lamps, eventually becoming the Patriarch of his generation. In the end, despite having extinguished the final Soul Lamp, he failed to break into the Dao Realm, and became a Quasi-Dao Paragon.

However, he did not go mad like most others did, becoming evil and committing heinous acts. Instead, he maintained a tranquil heart, and lived out his final fifty years of life in peace.

During those fifty years, he still worked hard for the clan before finally closing his eyes and passing away into meditation.

That was why this tomb was inscribed with his name and story. It also contained a vivid introduction of the Quasi-Dao Realm, as well a clear description of how terrifying it was.

By the time Meng Hao finished reading the story, he was panting. Now, he understood the meaning of the term ‘Quasi-Dao Paragon’.

He thought back to the ancient Demon Immortal Sect, and how Ke Yunhai had passed away in meditation. He also thought about Ke Yunhai’s description of what it meant to be at the peak of the Ancient Realm.

“So, it turns out that between the peak of the Ancient Realm and the true Dao Realm, there is another realm called the Quasi-Dao Realm. In that Realm, one’s longevity collapses, leading to certain death. As such, people go mad, and are called Paragons by others as a form of respect. It’s almost as if people think using such a title will prevent those people from going fully mad.” He looked at the stone tablet for a moment, and then refrained from even touching any of the offerings. Instead he clasped hands and bowed deeply.

After a moment, he left. It took a few more days to finish passing through the tombs of the Quasi-Dao Patriarchs. There were eleven of them in total, only three of which bore inscriptions.

They all had different experiences, but similar endings. The inscriptions were almost like a book of comfort written for the clan, instructing them about that Realm between the Ancient Realm and the Dao Realm. The people in that realm, the Quasi-Dao Paragons, either went mad and performed horrific deeds, or were worshiped in veneration for generations to come.

“The Dao Realm….” After passing the last tomb, Meng Hao stood there and looked back thoughtfully. “The path of cultivation is one of grave danger. Life or death crises present themselves at every step. Very few people… can make it to the very end.” Meng Hao sighed, then clasped hands and bowed to the tombs of all the Quasi-Dao Patriarchs.

Just as he straightened up to leave, he felt something vibrating in his bag of holding. It was the ancient Demon Sealing Jade, which had remained silent for such a long time. The intensity of the vibration even exceeded the time when he had encountered the Sixth Generation Demon Sealer!

At the same time, Meng Hao suddenly felt an intense sensation that he was being summoned, coming from deep within the ancestral land.

“How could the League of Demon Sealers be buried in the Mountains and Seas? They tread the path of Dao Tribulation of the Nine Mountains and Seas. If they succeed… then the Mountain and Sea Realm… will return to the League of Demon Sealers!”

After hearing this, Meng Hao instantly began to tremble.

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# Chapter 952: Nine Nethermountains

“So, there are clues about the League of Demon Sealers here!!” Meng Hao’s mind spun; he almost couldn’t believe that the League of Demon Sealers was somehow connected to the Fang Clan ancestral land.

“Return…. That voice just now said the word ‘return’!!” Meng Hao began to breathe heavily as the ancient voice of the Demon Sealing Jade faded away. However, the summons that came from deeper within the ancestral land only continued to grow stronger.

That summons was the type he felt when encountering another cultivator from the League, and it was something that only other members of the League of Demon Sealers would be able to feel in this place.

Suddenly, a new voice could be heard echoing in Meng Hao’s ears. This voice was not ancient, but rather, sounded like that of a young man.

“The Nine Demon Sealing Hexes. The Mountain and Sea Realm. The Nine Hexes united as One. A concept unknown in all the skies…..”

Meng Hao’s heart began to pound uncontrollably, and the aura around him suddenly changed. It was as if countless streams of Demonic qi were shooting toward him, accompanied by the roars of innumerable Greater Demons.

After a while, the voice faded away, but Meng Hao could feel the summons growing stronger.

Panting, he eventually turned and looked further into the depths of the ancestral land. Far off in the distance, he could just barely make out nine enormous mountains.

The summons was coming… from somewhere beyond those nine mountains!

Meng Hao's eyes flickered as he thought about the similar summons he had felt in the Ruins of Immortality, and he felt somewhat unsettled. There was far too much about the League of Demon Sealers that he didn't understand. As the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer, he wanted to know… what was the actual origin and purpose of the League of Demon Sealers!

He thought back to what the Sixth Generation Demon Sealer had told him, and about the terrifying events in the Ruins of Immortality that had led to him being named 13th in the Echelon by the white-robed woman. There was something very strange about how that woman had looked at him.

Meng Hao would never be able to forget that.

He had the feeling that the League of Demon Sealers… was wrapped up in some Heaven-shaking, world-shattering secret, something that defied description, a secret that was connected to all of the Nine Mountains and Seas.

After standing there silently for a bit, Meng Hao managed to settle his thoughts. His eyes shone with determination and he gazed deeply in the direction of the summons. Finally, he turned and once again bowed deeply to all of the ancestral tombs behind him.

Up in midair, the Seventh Patriarch could not hear the call or feel the summons, nor could he sense the Demonic qi that swirled around Meng Hao. However, he could tell that something strange had just happened, and despite being unable to see what it was, it left him feeling shocked.

"The aura just now on this member of the Junior generation…." A profound gleam appeared in his eyes. As time progressed, the Seventh Patriarch continued to be filled with the sensation that Meng Hao was a person of deep secrets, secrets that he himself could not see through.

As Meng Hao made his way off into the distance, the Seventh Patriarch looked back at the Quasi-Dao Patriarch Tombs, and let out a soft sigh.

“All he did was switch out some offerings. He didn’t disturb the tombs themselves, and even bowed in formal greeting. And he didn’t touch any of the items from the tombs with inscriptions…. He might be a bit greedy, but he has a good heart, and knows how to keep himself in line….

“One day, when the time comes for me to extinguish my final Soul Lamp, if I fail…. I wonder if I will be able to preserve my Dao heart. After I perish and am laid to rest here in the Quasi-Dao Patriarch Tombs, I wonder if they will erect a tombstone for me….” The Seventh Patriarch was well aware that the entire purpose of the Quasi-Dao Patriarch Tombs was to ensure that members of the Junior generation would clearly understand the madness of the Quasi-Dao Realm. It was to serve as a warning to any of them who had the chance to attempt to step into the Dao Realm!

After leaving the Quasi-Dao Patriarch Tombs, Meng Hao sat atop the terracotta soldier, which whistled through the air at top speed. Occasionally, motes of light would pulse out from the terracotta soldier and then melt into the surrounding air. Moments later, they would reappear and return to it, almost as if it were breathing.

It was something Meng Hao had just noticed as he controlled the terracotta soldier’s movements.

As he proceeded along, the feeling of the summons would occasionally get more intense, and at other times would fade. Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, although his facial expression remained unchanged. Inwardly, he remained as vigilant as ever.

Due to everything that had happened with the Sixth Generation Demon Sealer, he currently felt proverbial alarm bells going off in his head.

As he continued forward, Meng Hao scoured the lands below for possible good fortune, and also spent some time observing the terracotta soldier. He soon realized that it had some sort of strange connection with the ancestral land.

It was as if a resonance existed between them.

This realization caused certain speculations to form in his heart. After a while, he sighed, and looked at the terracotta soldier, thinking about how he didn’t wish to part ways with it in the future.

Days later, Meng Hao’s mood gradually stabilized. The summons continued to tug at him, but he had grown used to it and ignored it. Instead of following the pull, he did his best to scrape the area clean of any good fortune.

The more things he acquired, the wider his smile grew.

Eventually, the land in front of Meng Hao turned crimson in color, and he saw nine mountains.

The Nine Nethermountains!

This was the fourth region in the Fang Clan’s ancestral land, and could be considered the depths of the lands. From ancient times until now, most people could not get past the Nine Nethermountains and into the Ancient Burial Ground.

Nine mountains towered up into the sky, and when you looked at them, it seemed almost impossible to see their tops, as if they connected the ground and the sky.

Roaring sounds could be heard drifting out occasionally from the nine mountains. They were sounds miserable and savage, shocking to the extreme.

There were many dangerous areas here, and many aspects that could easily kill you. Such fatal aspects came in the form of various beasts, as well as from the nine mountains themselves.

A thick aura of death filled the area, and from a distance, Meng Hao could see layers of gray mist swirling around the mountains. Because of the gray mists, the entire area was blurry and difficult to see clearly.

About the time that he neared the Nine Nethermountains, the parrot and the meat jelly caught up with him. Many of the parrot’s feathers were missing, and it looked disheveled and out of sorts. However, its expression was one of extreme satisfaction.

As it flew over, it didn’t even wait for Meng Hao to call out to it before it looked over at the nine mountains, heard the roaring coming from within them, and suddenly shivered. Looking extremely excited, it let out a few piercing squawks and then sped toward the mountains, brimming with energy. The meat jelly bell jingled the whole time.

“You can’t do this! It’s wrong! It’s immoral! It’s shameless! I’m going to convert you….” The echo of the meat jelly’s garrulous chatter rang out from off in the distance.

Meng Hao glanced at the parrot for a moment and then ignored it completely. This place might be full of dangers, but the parrot and the meat jelly were capable enough, and would be very difficult to kill.

In front of the Nine Nethermountains, a stone stele rose up roughly three thousand meters tall. It emanated an archaic aura that seemed to indicate that it had existed for many, many years.

There were three lines of text on the stele.

“Nine Nethermountains, filled with endless treasures. Each one of these mountains is filled with endless opportunities. Any who challenge the mountains will have the chance to get good fortune and divine abilities!

“They are a deadly trial by fire. For those under the Immortal Realm, half a mountain is your limit. For those under the Ancient Realm, you will be able to proceed through three mountains. If you can pass through all nine mountains, you can acquire the secret magic of the Nethermoon!

“Fang Clan descendants can use their bloodline to open the path through the mountains. Whether you live or die is up to fate!”

The words were not attributed to any person in particular, but they seemed to be filled with an intense pressure, indicating that any person who entered this place would be facing grave danger.

Meng Hao looked at the nine mountains, and an odd expression could be seen on his face. Gradually, his eyes began to shine, and he licked his lips. He glanced down at the terracotta soldier, which then began to shrink rapidly. In the blink of an eye, it was only about three meters tall.

“This ancestral land really is a Blessed Land for me!” To other clan members, it was a place of extreme danger. To him, though, these weren’t nine dangerous mountains, they were nine treasure mountains.

He slapped his bag of holding, producing the bloodline jade slip. After scanning it with divine sense, he smiled.

The seven Dao Realm Elders had all scattered in different directions. One of them was inside of the Nine Nethermountains. Obviously, he had tried to acquire some of the good fortune therein, but had ended up trapped and unable to extricate himself.

“Well, no need to get anxious. Just wait for me to track you down.” Meng Hao’s eyes began to shine brightly, and he cleared his throat. Immediately, the terracotta soldier began to walk forward into the mountains.

Meng Hao quickly flew up to sit on the statue’s shoulder as it began to charge forward.

“Challenge one mountain at a time, and then clear all nine of them of treasure….” These thoughts immediately filled him with excitement.

As the terracotta soldier sped along, the Seventh Patriarch sighed and looked on helplessly. When he saw the light shining in Meng Hao’s eyes, he began to murmur to himself.

“To him, these really are treasure mountains. The little scoundrel has the Dao Guardsman to protect him, leaving him free to do whatever he wants!

“Now that I think about it, if I had the Dao Guardsman to protect me when I came here for the first time, how could I possibly have left any of the treasures in these mountains to be passed on to anyone else?” There was nothing he could do, so the Seventh Patriarch calmed himself, looked at Meng Hao charging into the mountains with the terracotta soldier, and sighed.

Time passed. Meng Hao sat on the terracotta soldier’s shoulder, which wielded its greatsword the entire way as they charged into the first mountain. When they encountered restrictive spells, they would simply break through them. When they encountered beasts, they would put them down. When they encountered obstacles, they would smash them to pieces.

Nothing could stand in their way and nothing could stop them!

Things weren’t thrown into absolute chaos, but suffice to say, the first mountain was filled with miserable shrieks and roars.

“Whoah! That boulder actually has a carving of a magical technique! Pretty nice! I’m taking it!

“Who could be so immoral as to leave a bunch of Immortal jade laying around in this place! I’m taking it!

“So many spirit stones…. Hey, slow down, Onyx! Let me pick these things up, then we can keep going!”

Meng Hao’s eyes continued to grow brighter, and he quivered with excitement. He had collected quite a bit of Immortal jade and spirit stones so far, as well as a good collection of magical items. A deafening roar could be heard as he neared the mountain’s peak, heralding the approach of a two-headed giant.

The giant held an enormous cudgel in its hand, and was clearly the mountain’s boss, tasked with guarding the mountain peak. When it leapt out, roaring, the terracotta soldier’s aura surged.

The surging aura caused the previously overbearing two-headed giant to shiver, and immediately cease roaring. It stared blankly at Meng Hao, then at the terracotta soldier he was standing on, and cold sweat began to drip down its two foreheads.

After looking at them for the space of two breaths, the two-headed giant let out a plaintive shriek, then turned and fled back inside the mountain, vanishing without a trace.

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# Chapter 953: Getting the Hang of the Sixth Hex

Meng Hao looked around proudly as the terracotta soldier set foot on the peak of the mountain. From here, he could see an enormous cliff, upon which was carved a half moon.

Meng Hao’s eyes widened as the same image of a half moon suddenly appeared in his mind.

He couldn’t take the stone cliff away, nor could he duplicate or reproduce it physically. It seemed that the only thing he could do was to look at it. That said, a single glance would completely engrave the image inside of him. However, Meng Hao could also tell that the image would only last for nine days.

Nine days later, the image of the half moon would fade, and he would be unable to remember it.

“This is the Nethermoon…? So, I guess I need to gaze upon all nine mountains within nine days, huh?” Meng Hao smiled. To others, this would have been difficult, but to him, accomplishing such a task would be quite simple.

“This place really is a Blessed Land.” He sighed, then patted the terracotta soldier, causing it to fly down the first mountain and head toward the second.

From the time the Nine Nethermountains had been created by the first generation Patriarch years ago until now, something like this had never happened. As Meng Hao proceeded forward, anything that was available for the taking was placed into a bag of holding.

All obstacles, all beasts, were like dried weeds that he could crush without any effort….

Even the mountaintop bosses would cower in hiding as soon as they saw the terracotta soldier. Meng Hao was allowed to easily pass through the second mountain, and then the third….

He acquired so many legacies and magical techniques that he lost track of how many there were. Nor did he have time to keep them organized. As long as he had an available bag of holding, he would throw his acquisitions inside.

“Blessed Land!

“Once I get out of here, I might be able to trade these things for even better stuff in the clan!” Meng Hao was only continuing to get more and more excited. For the first time in this place, he was beginning to experience the sensation of being rich.

The feeling fueled his excitement, and he quickly sped onward through the fourth and fifth mountains.

At the cliff on top of each mountain was an image of a half moon. Each time Meng Hao looked at the image, the imprint of the half moon inside of him grew clearer. Gradually, an increasingly powerful pressure began to emanate out from the imprinted image in his mind.

Time passed. By the time the third day had gone by, he was at the eighth mountain.

Meanwhile, a black-robed old man stood at a position near the top of the eighth mountain, stuck in a spell formation, looking with alarm at a certain jade slip. For the past three days, he had been observing the jade slip continuously, and could clearly see the dot of light that represented Meng

Hao getting closer and closer to his own position within the Nine Nethermountains.

When he saw Meng Hao choose to start at the first mountain, he sighed with relief, and even laughed coldly. In his mind, Meng Hao most likely didn’t dare to select the mountain that he himself was on. This caused him to consider chasing after Meng Hao after all.

However, his new idea was quickly shattered to pieces when he saw, to his astonishment, that Meng Hao actually… passed through the entire first mountain in only a few hours.

After that, it took him just three days to go from the first mountain all the way to the eighth mountain, upon which he stood. This scene caused his scalp to tingle so much it seemed about to explode. His mind buzzed, and he began to get jittery from fear. He wished he could simply leave the mountain and flee.

He had no idea how Meng Hao was doing what he was doing. But actually, that wasn’t important. By this point, he was certain that if he ended up meeting Meng Hao, he would more than likely end up dead.

“What do I do? What do I do…?” The black-robed old man looked at the jade slip, and the dot of light that represented Meng Hao. It was now heading toward him with terrifying speed, causing the old man to begin to pant with alarm.

After several hours passed… he could see Meng Hao, barreling toward him from further down on the mountain. Then he saw… the terracotta soldier Meng Hao was sitting on. The old man let out a cry of alarm.

“That’s the aura of a Quasi-Dao Paragon!!

“This… this….” As soon as the old man saw the statue, he understood everything. Then he realized that the statue looked very familiar, and it only took a moment for him to realize what it was. At that point, his legs suddenly grew weak, and the shadow of death spread out across his entire body.

He began to pant as hundreds of thoughts ran through his mind. After a breath of time passed, Meng Hao and the terracotta soldier were closing in. The old man took a deep breath, then, expression somber, clasped hands and bowed deeply toward Meng Hao.

“I am Fang Daohong!” he gushed. “Greetings, Prince Hao! 1

“Prince, you must be quite shocked to run into me here. That contemptible and shameless Fang Xiushan made a lot of promises to me to convince me to come here and kill you, honorable prince. However, Fang Xiushan was unaware that I am actually upright and not given to flattery, and have always admired the exalted Fang Xiufeng! How could I possibly give aid to a villain like Fang Xiushan!?

“Therefore, I accepted Fang Xiushan’s proposal. However, my true goal was to come here and protect you, Prince! Prince Hao… um, you know, when you were small, I actually held you in my arms….”

Even as Fang Daohong spoke, the terracotta soldier came to a stop directly in front of him. It was nine meters tall, not gigantic, and yet it emanated a certain pressure, as well as a Quasi-Dao aura, that caused the old man to tremble. He swallowed hard, then forced a smile onto his face, trying to make himself look as harmless as possible.

Meng Hao sat on the terracotta soldier, looking down at Fang Daohong.

“You held me when I was a baby?” Meng Hao asked calmly.

“Yeah, that’s right!” he replied, nodding his head vigorously. “Prince Hao, I really did hold you in my arms. You were so cute when you were small! And now you’ve grown up to be so handsome….” This old man was not the type to speak flattering words, but in this situation, he didn’t hesitate at all.

Meng Hao looked at the old man thoughtfully for a moment, then nodded.

“Fine. Since that’s the case, drop your cultivation base to the Immortal Realm. I’m going to hex you with a restrictive spell. From now on, you’ll be following my orders.”

Fang Daohong was shocked to hear Meng Hao's words. However, the terracotta soldier's aura exploded out before he could refuse. It was like a mountain crushing down on Fang Daohong, and he was filled with a sense of deadly crisis that caused him to grow ashen, and sweat to pour down his face.

Inwardly, he was cursing Fang Xiushan to death. His hatred for Fang Xiushan had reached an indescribable level, and he was also filled with deep and profound regret.

Then he saw the cold gleam in Meng Hao's eyes, and his heart seized. After a moment of silence, he let out a long sigh, unhesitatingly lifted his right hand up, and then smacked it down onto his chest.

Blood sprayed out of his mouth as many of his qi passageways were shattered, and his cultivation base dropped from having one extinguished Soul Lamp, down to the peak of the Immortal Realm.

Meng Hao did not seem to be moved by this action. With the terracotta soldier present, there was no question that Fang Daohong would agree to Meng Hao's requirement. However, if Meng Hao didn't have the terracotta soldier to protect him, there was no doubt in his mind that the old man's face would be as cold as ice, and he would slaughter him where he stood.

Meng Hao did not show pity to enemies; sparing the man's life was more than enough kindness.

When he saw Fang Daohong's cultivation base drop, Meng Hao extended his right hand and unleashed the Sixth Demon Sealing Hex. Instantly, streams of black and white qi began to swirl around his hand. The two streams of qi illuminated his face with flickering black and white, making him look extremely bizarre.

Fang Daohong's scalp went numb; the black and white qi left him trembling with fear.

He hesitated for a moment and then asked, “Prince Hao… what… what is that restrictive spell?”

“Oh, it’s a hexing spell I learned a few days ago,” Meng Hao replied, glancing at Fang Daohong. “I’m still getting used to it, but don’t worry. This is the first time I’m really confident that I can succeed. In fact, if you lower your cultivation base a bit more, there’s a much higher chance of success.”

Fang Daohong’s face fell.

“You learned it a few days ago? Still not used to it? This is the first time you’ve felt confident in using it?” More beads of sweat popped out on the old man’s face. He was getting the increasing feeling that these two streams of black and white qi could suck his soul away. He even had the premonition that if the hexing failed, he would most likely die an agonizing death.

He watched as Meng Hao pointed at him, whereupon Fang Daohong threw his hands up in front of him and cried out.

“Wait, hold on….” He began to step backward, but then, the terracotta soldier raised its greatsword, which radiated killing intent. Fang Daohong immediately stopped in place.

His face was pale white as he clenched his jaw and then slapped his chest several times in quick succession. He coughed up several mouthfuls of blood. The severe self-inflicted injury caused his cultivation base to drop from the Immortal Realm down to something equivalent to the Dao Seeking stage. At that point, he stopped, looking up at Meng Hao with an ashen face and a bitter smile.

His sudden action caused Meng Hao to look at him closely for a moment, then point out with his right finger again. Immediately, the black and white streams of qi shot through the air and burrowed into Fang Daohong’s body. He trembled, fell to the ground, and began to shriek miserably. At the same time, gray magical symbols began to appear on his skin, where they circulated back and forth. Apparently, these magical symbols grew up from inside his body and manifested on his skin.

Meng Hao stared closely at Fang Daohong. This time, he had used a slightly different method to utilize the Sixth Hex. If this method didn’t work, then he would have to attempt some other way.

Time passed. Fang Daohong’s shrieks eventually grew weaker. After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, he suddenly went very stiff, and all of the magical symbols faded away. The only thing left behind was a new magical symbol, on his forehead. That magical symbol then made a popping sound as it flew out from his forehead and merged into Meng Hao.

When that happened, Meng Hao could sense a warm current flowing within him. At the same time, the image of a tiny person appeared in his mind, a tiny person whose physical appearance was exactly the same as Fang Daohong.

“Did it work?” thought Meng Hao, looking a bit shocked. After so many times trying out the technique, this seemed like his first success.

Fang Daohong stared in shock for a moment, then crawled to his feet. The overwhelming pain he had experienced moments ago was now gone. He blinked a few times, then moved his arms and legs a bit. He didn’t feel the least bit different than before.

“Prince, you… you succeeded?” he asked tentatively.

Meng Hao frowned as he studied the tiny figure within his mind. Heart thumping, he imagined smacking the tiny figure with his palm. As soon as he did, Fang Daohong let out a shriek. It was as if some enormous, invisible hand had just smacked him; blood sprayed from his mouth, and he was knocked to the ground. After struggling back to his feet, he looked around in confusion.

Meng Hao’s eyes began to shine as he imagined the old man being struck by lightning.

Nothing visible happened, and yet, Fang Daohong screamed as if he were being struck by lightning.

Meng Hao’s eyes shone even brighter as he imagined the old man being burned, drowned, trampled, crushed by a mountain….

Fang Daohong shrieked miserably as he felt his hair burning, his body being submerged in water, his muscles bruised, and, in the end, he lay pinned on the ground as if he were being crushed by some gigantic object. All of these things caused him to look at Meng Hao with terror. He knew of all sorts of hexing magics and restrictive spells, but he had never heard of anything as unbelievably terrifying as this.

He suddenly had the sensation… the Meng Hao was going to toy with him until he died.

“So, this is the Sixth Hex, huh…. The Life-Death Hex… is absolute control.” He took a deep breath and then smiled.

His smile caused Fang Daohong to shudder. The sense of humiliation he felt at that moment was intense, and that caused his hatred of Fang Xiushan to seep down into his bones!

1. Fang Daohong’s name in Chinese is fāng dào hóng. Dao is the same as “the Dao,” which could also mean “path” or “way.” Hong means “grand” or “magnificent”

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# Chapter 954: Sun and Moon in the Nine Nethermountains!

The Eighth Hex was the hexing of the body, and could even be called Bodily Cultivation Hexing!

The Seventh Hex was Karmic Hexing!

The Sixth Hex was Life-Death Hexing!

The three Demon Sealing Hexes that Meng Hao had learned spun in his mind. Each Hex had its own unique features, and each could be considered a powerful secret magic!

The League of Demon Sealers was terrifying, and as of this moment Meng Hao could say that he had experienced it personally. In fact, he got the feeling that it was very likely the Ji Clan's Karmic Severing had actually been created by imitating the Seventh Hex.

"I wonder what type of hexing magic… the Fifth Hex is!?" Meng Hao's eyes glittered, and he took a deep breath. Ignoring Fang Daohong, he sent some divine will into the terracotta soldier, causing it to leap into the air and head toward the mountain peak. As for the spell formation that Fang Daohong was trapped in, the terracotta soldier shattered it casually.

When Fang Daohong saw that happen, he trembled inwardly, and suddenly realized that the decision he had just made was definitely the correct one. Without any hesitation, he began to follow Meng Hao.

After reaching the mountain peak, Meng Hao saw the half moon carved into the cliff face, and once again, the image imprinted in his mind grew clearer.

Furthermore, the image of a half moon was now visible on his forehead.

“Nethermoon secret magic!” gasped Fang Daohong. Suddenly, he recalled how Meng Hao had charged through the seven other mountains, and then, his eyes began to fill with envy.

“Is the Nethermoon Magic powerful?” Meng Hao asked.

Fang Daohong immediately began to explain: “The first generation Patriarch left behind five great Daoist Magics and three secret magics. The Nethermoon Magic is one of those three great secret magics.

“The Nethermoon Magic becomes more destructive the higher your cultivation base gets. It can alter the sun and the moon, and can unleash power exponentially greater than your cultivation base. It’s an excellent trump card in battle!

“Back in the clan, the only way to get the Nethermoon secret magic is to pay a huge amount of merit points. In fact… there are only a handful of people in the entire clan who have mastered it!” The look of envy in his eyes was becoming more and more obvious.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, and he chuckled. He looked over at the ninth Nethermountain with anticipation. The terracotta soldier then began to speed toward the ninth mountain, with Fang Daohong flying close behind.

Fang Daohong panted the entire way. Finally, he understood how Meng Hao had been able to move so quickly from the first mountain all the way to the eighth. The clan’s Dao Guardsman could sweep through anything and everything; it didn’t matter what appeared up ahead, it was easily crushed.

Several hours later, Meng Hao reached the ninth Nethermountain. What he saw was a large group of luxuriantly furred beasts. They were in miserable condition, and their eyes were bright red as they chased the parrot.

The Parrot soared through the air, occasionally letting out a mighty squawk. It appeared to be incredibly excited, and every so often it would transform into a colorful beam of light that shot back into the group of beasts. When it emerged, it appeared to be incredibly satisfied, and would let out loud whoops of triumph.

The parrot's enthusiastic demeanor caused Meng Hao to feel a bit bad for the beasts of this ninth mountain. However, considering that the parrot had essentially cleared the mountain of beasts, Meng Hao was able to proceed through it very smoothly.

At the peak of the mountain was the final cliff, and the final image of the half moon, which caused Meng Hao's mind to tremble.

The half moon on his forehead glittered brightly and then faded away. However, even though it wasn't visible, the half moon seemed to be eternally imprinted into his memory. Flashes of enlightenment also appeared in his mind.

After some time passed, Meng Hao opened his eyes, and his aura seemed different than before. He lifted his left hand up, and the half moon appeared on his forehead. At the same time, a black half moon floated above his palm.

The sudden appearance of the moon caused an emotional look to appear on Fang Daohong's face. However, moments later, his eyes went wide when he suddenly saw… a sphere of light also appear above Meng Hao's hand.

The sphere was white, and looked like a sun. Its light reflected off of the black surface of the moon as the two of them circulated around each other above his palm. Black and white. The sun and the moon. At this moment, they let off a shocking pressure.

Even Fang Daohong could feel it, and was astonished.

"A unified magical technique," he thought. "I can't believe that he actually combined two magical techniques. Only people who have extinguished multiple Soul Lamps, who can grasp Essence transformations, and who have the image of a great Dao within them, could possibly combine magical techniques and create such powerful transformations. And yet he… he actually combined them! He isn’t even in the Immortal Realm! How can he have the image of a great Dao in his heart?”

Fang Daohong almost couldn’t believe it. To create a combination of magical techniques in this way was a very complicated matter, and even he didn’t understand much about it. All he did know was that it had something to do with the image of a great Dao, as well as the legendary Essence.

Meng Hao looked at the sun and the moon floating above his hand, and muttered to himself thoughtfully. It was at this point that suddenly, a tiny mountain appeared next to the sun and the moon.

This was none other than the projection of the Ninth Mountain, which Meng Hao had seen during his dreamlike voyage on the boat that year.

The image of the Ninth Mountain might seem incredibly powerful, but actually, it was already too weak to be useful to Meng Hao in his current state. However, its appearance now seemed to be in accord with some sort of natural law. As the sun and the moon rotated around it, it surged with even greater energy than before.

The powerful energy caused Fang Daohong to gasp, and his face to flicker.

“Th-th-that’s another sequential combination! What kind of monster is this kid!? Even with such a low cultivation base, he managed to perform two combinations of magical techniques!! How many images of great Daos does he have…?” Fang Daohong took a deep breath. He knew that images of great Daos required mysterious enlightenment. Even he, who was in the Ancient Realm, had only ever had a single great Dao appear within him. And yet, he had just personally witnessed one great Dao image after another appear in Meng Hao’s hand. It was unbelievable.

Even more shocking to him was the threatening feeling he got when he looked at the Ninth Mountain and the sun and moon!!

Fang Daohong was panting, and he looked on with wide eyes. However, it was at this point that a thoughtful expression appeared on Meng Hao’s face, causing Fang Daohong’s heart to start pounding.

"Could it be… that he… he's going to… make a third consecutive magical technique combination!?" The mere idea of this virtually blew Fang Daohong's mind.

Even as the thought entered his mind, two pearls appeared outside of the Ninth Mountain and the sun and moon. The pearls were black and white, and they began to circulate noiselessly around the Ninth Mountain and the sun and moon.

The Ninth mountain was in the center, around which rotated the sun and moon, with the two pearls orbiting in an outer ring. They didn't interfere with each other, and in fact rotated in harmony, creating a resplendent image.

An even more incredibly powerful aura then exploded out.

It only lasted for the space of a single breath before the Black White pearls faded away, the Ninth Mountain collapsed, and the sun and moon went dark. Meng Hao frowned and muttered to himself for a moment.

He didn't notice the terrified expression on Fang Daohong's face, who stood off to the side, jaw hanging and mind spinning.

"Three combinations… he really did it three times…."

Moments ago, the aura he had felt had filled him with complete astonishment. He was an Ancient Realm expert, and yet was astonished by the magical technique of a cultivator who wasn't even in the Immortal Realm yet. Such a thing was completely unheard-of!

"He still isn't a true Immortal, but he will be soon…. Once he's a true Immortal, how many meridians will he open? I'd say 90 at the least!" As Fang Daohong looked at Meng Hao, he suddenly realized why Fang Xiushan had spared no cost in trying to have Meng Hao killed.

"He's not even human…."

Meng Hao was just about to make another attempt when suddenly, the summons from the League of Demon Sealers flared inside of him with incredible intensity.

He dropped his hand and looked out from his position on the peak of the ninth Nethermountain.

From where he was standing, he could see a vast region that stretched out below the mountain in front of him. The ground was pitch black, and the sky seemed to be split in two; everywhere else it was the middle of day, but this one region lay in the darkness of night.

The area where it was night was actually the center of the region of black earth. Sitting there cross-legged was a young man with a pale face and a head of long hair which floated around him. He wore a long robe, and was surrounded by innumerable corpses whose faces were twisted and distorted, as if they had experienced indescribable suffering before they had died.

There were men and women, and there were cultivators. Some of them had the bodies of beasts, and there were some with even stranger appearances, sinister and malevolent, things that didn’t seem to be creatures from the Nine Mountains and Seas.

The corpses were dressed in ancient garments, clothing that reminded Meng Hao of the garb worn by the people in his visions back in the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple!

He had seen things just like this in his vision of the massive Heavenly war in which nine suns and nine butterflies had appeared! 1

A sense of extreme ancientness emanated out from the young man, and the area around him was filled with illusory rifts that almost looked like huge mouths that occasionally opened and closed. From the look of it, there were roughly 100,000 such rifts.

The young man was completely encircled by the rifts. As Meng Hao looked over at him, the young man looked back, and a gleam of anticipation could be seen in his eyes.

“Come….” he said, his voice soft. It seemed to be transmitted to Meng Hao through the air, floating from the depths of time, boring into his ears.

A tremor ran through him. He blinked, and when he opened his eyes, the entire area up ahead was empty. There was nothing there except the rifts in the air; not even the shadow of a person was visible.

It was as if everything Meng Hao had just seen had been an illusion!

The only noteworthy thing that he could see was an enormous stone stele, standing right in the middle of the region of night. Although it was very far away, Meng Hao could still sense the stele’s majestic aura, and could also clearly see… that it seethed with Demonic qi!

The reason that this region was different was due to the influence of this dense Demonic qi , which ensured that it was a land of perpetual night.

Meng Hao stood there silently for a moment, then looked over to make sure that Fang Daohong had not been able to see the images he had just seen. He continued to stand there in contemplation for the time it takes half an incense stick to burn before a look of determination appeared in his eyes.

Without any further hesitation, he sent out a stream of divine will. The terracotta soldier’s eyes gleamed as he carried Meng Hao forward. Rumbling filled the air as it transformed into a shooting star that sped forward at top speed.

Fang Daohong followed along as they proceeded forward.

Several hours later, the region of night was getting closer. Meng Hao could clearly see the area filled with the 100,000 rifts up ahead. He stood at the border of the entire region, and it felt like he was standing on the edge between night and day. With a single step forward, he would be in the dark of night.

The sound of wailing rose and fell within the darkness.

Almost at the same moment that he came to stand on the border between night and day, the feeling of the summons rose up again within him. It was as if a huge hand had plunged into his chest and grabbed ahold of his heart. Panting, he looked up at the illusory rifts ahead, and once again caught sight of the young man sitting there in the middle of everything.

It was impossible to see the young man’s face clearly, but his voice echoed out within Meng Hao’s mind.

“Come….

“Successor of the League of Demon Sealers…. Come….

“I am… the Fifth Generation Demon Sealer….”

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# Chapter 955: Fifth Demon Sealing Hex

Few people ever made it to the Ancient Burial Ground region of the clan’s ancestral land. For most people, the Nine Nethermountains were the limit. Over the ancestral land’s countless years of existence, even the few people that did make it to the Ancient Burial Ground had been unable to proceed any further.

It wasn’t that nobody had ever passed this stage before. However, of the very few of those who had successfully challenged this region, none were able to pass the final region, the Misty Heaven Vault. Even for those in the Dao Realm, none could progress more than a few steps into it.

Meng Hao stood at the border of the Ancient Burial Ground, looking at the darkness of night up ahead. A strange gleam flickered in his eyes, and after a moment of contemplation, he sent out some divine will, causing the terracotta soldier to stride forward and enter the darkness of the Ancient Burial Ground.

In the moment that they entered, all of the illusory rifts suddenly opened wide, like huge mouths. Instantly, the entire area was surrounded.

Meng Hao could see different worlds inside the rifts, each of which appeared to be some sort of trial by fire.

There was also an incredible pressure that emanated out of them. Some of these rifts seemed to have auras similar to the terracotta soldier.

He could sense numerous terrifying auras that caused his eyes to flicker. This was the first time he had encountered an environment that would pose a danger to him even considering the presence of the terracotta soldier.

“This place is like a maze, huh…. Getting through all these trials by fire is a matter of luck, but will also depend on one’s cultivation base.” Meng Hao’s eyes shone with determination, whereas the terracotta soldier’s glittered with a cold light. It strode forward, selected a rift, and stepped in.

Meanwhile, the Seventh Patriarch floated in midair. His brow was furrowed, but a bright light flickered in his eyes. To him, there was something different about the Ancient Burial Ground.

“Something seems off….” he thought. After looking around, his gaze settled on something in the distance, and he suddenly began to tremble.

“Huh?” He sent out some divine sense, and after a moment, his expression changed to one of surprise.

He had just discovered that at some unknown point, a mist had begun to rise up within the ancestral land. It covered everything. This was something completely unprecedented, and left him astonished. After the Ancient Burial Ground was the Misty Heaven Vault, a place no one had ever been. Apparently that was the source of this mist, and apparently, the mists in the Misty Heaven Vault were growing thicker.

This change caused the Seventh Patriarch’s eyes to narrow in thought.

Fang Daohong didn’t dare to get any closer than he was. He stayed at the border of the Ancient Burial Ground, watching as Meng Hao unhesitatingly entered the rift. He paused for a moment as he considered leaving. Then he thought back to the pain he had endured, and he realized that he didn’t dare to. He sat down cross-legged to wait in silence.

When Meng Hao entered the rift, he found himself in a majestic land, in the middle of which was a huge rift that was the exit.

As soon as he appeared in this world, numerous globes of ghost fire appeared and then shot toward him. As soon as they got close, they began to self-detonate.

Booms filled the air as the terracotta soldier swung its sword. A Quasi-Dao aura exploded out, and the self-detonating ghost fire globes couldn’t even get close before they were frozen in midair.

Meng Hao’s expression was these same as ever as he sat on the terracotta soldier. It proceeded forward, and before long, emerged from the rift back into another location within the Ancient Burial Ground, several thousand meters further in than it had originally been.

Once again, they were surrounded by numerous rifts. Just as Meng Hao had speculated, this place was a maze, with each of the rifts acting as a tunnel that led to another location.

“How exactly do you get to the end of a maze like this…?” Meng Hao thought with a frown. His eyes flickered for a moment before he closed them. His Demon Sealer’s aura then emanated out, gradually forming a resonance with the stone stele in the central position of this region.

A moment later, Meng Hao’s eyes opened. Without hesitation, he commanded the terracotta soldier to reverse direction and step into one of the numerous nearby rifts.

After entering the rift, he found himself in a world of lightning and thunder. There was no ground, only a sea, with huge waves, each dozens of meters high.

Gigantic shadows could be seen beneath the surface of the water, which would occasionally lash out, transforming into giant tentacles that attacked Meng Hao. An aura similar to the Ancient Realm emanated out from the bottom of the sea.

Meng Hao’s face was calm as the terracotta soldier extended its right hand and then pushed downward toward the surface of the sea. Immediately, a blue light emanated out from its body, and ice spread out across the water. Cracking sounds could be heard as the entire sea was transformed into a chunk of ice!

The waves were frozen in place, and the tentacles were turned into statues. Even the Ancient Realm aura beneath the surface of the water was completely sealed.

The terracotta soldier proceeded onward, flying through the air until it reached the exit. They reappeared in the Ancient Burial Ground, a bit closer to the center region.

Meng Hao didn’t hesitate at all. Relying on his strange Demon Sealer resonance, he entered a third rift.

A few days passed in which he went through rift after rift. Soon, he had passed through more than a hundred. Most of them contained an enemy or enemies who were comparable to the Ancient Realm.

There were three in which he encountered beings who were at the peak of the Ancient Realm.

However, the most dangerous situation he faced was an encounter with an illusory middle-aged man who, shockingly, was a Quasi-Dao Paragon.

That battle was world-shaking, and although the terracotta soldier won in the end, it did suffer damage.

The difficulty of the challenges he faced left Meng Hao shocked. Without the terracotta soldier, and relying only on his own power, he would never have been able to reach this point. Fundamentally speaking, this good fortune simply did not belong to Meng Hao!

Meng Hao might have thought that what he was doing was quite a challenge, but as for Fang Daohong, who was still waiting at the border of the Ancient Burial Ground, he was flabbergasted yet again. As an Elder of the clan, he was well-aware of how terrifying this place was.

There were 100,000 rift worlds, none of which were fixed in place. They could change at any time, and inside of each world, there could be enemies of the Spirit Realm, the Immortal Realm, the Ancient Realm and the Quasi-

Dao Realm. There were even some terrifying beings of the actual Dao Realm!

Their appearance within the worlds was completely random, making passage through them extremely difficult.

This place had been constructed by the first generation Patriarch in his later years, and was a place of bizarre mysteries.

“He’s gotten through more than a hundred, and each time it seems like he picks the right one and gets closer to the center!” It wasn’t just Fang Daohong who had made this judgement. The Seventh Patriarch was also watching Meng Hao’s progress through the rifts with silent astonishment.

“The little hoodlum somehow knows which path to follow? No, that’s impossible! There is no path to follow. It’s just that his luck is way too good! Not a single choice he made is a waste; every step he takes brings him closer to the center!”

As Fang Daohong and the Seventh Patriarch looked on in shock, Meng Hao entered another rift. He continued forward relentlessly until, the following day, he emerged from a rift and found himself in the exact center of the Ancient Burial Ground!

Directly in front of him was an enormous stone stele, rising tall up into the air, emanating a mysterious light!

To Meng Hao’s eyes, though, this was not a stone stele, but rather, a young man wearing a long robe, sitting there cross-legged. As Meng Hao approached, he looked up.

Their eyes met, and Meng Hao’s mind filled with roaring. At the same time, the ancient Demon Sealing Jade in his bag of holding began to vibrate.

When the young man spoke, his voice was soft.

“For you to be able to stand in front of me indicates that your cultivation base is probably at the peak of the Ancient Realm, only a hair away from the Dao Realm. You probably already have a profound understanding of the Essence.

“Years ago, when I left the Mountain and Sea Realm, someone told me that I should leave a stream of divine sense behind, to give some hope to future generations of the League of Demon Sealers….

“Therefore, I left my Daoist magic behind, sending it throughout the Mountain and Sea Realm for people to acquire…. Throughout the great Nine Mountains and Seas, my magic created numerous Ancient Burial Grounds. Each and every one of those Ancient Burial Grounds contains my magic, but only members of the League of Demon Sealers can receive my true legacy.

“What you are looking at now is just one of these locations. Throughout the Nine Mountains and Seas, there are a total of more than 90,000 such locations. Anyone can be enlightened regarding my magic, but the legacy can only be passed on four times. After that, the divine will that I left behind in the Ancient Burial Grounds will disperse amidst the Mountains and Seas, never to be seen again. Currently… this is the fourth time my legacy is being passed on.

“I am not a cultivator from the Mountain and Sea Realm, and only arrived here by accident. I became the Fifth Generation Demon Sealer due to a mishap; a chance occurrence, you might say, and was only able to stay in the Mountain and Sea Realm for a thousand years. My Hex is called, Inside and Outside.

“The countless rifts around you are like the surface of a mirror. The concept of being inside or outside of that mirror is a concept which also exists in your own heart.

“There are 100,000 rifts here, and this… is my Fifth Demon Sealing Hex… Inside-Outside Hexing!” With that, he lifted his right hand, and a tiny rift opened up in his palm, which began to rotate.

At the same time, the surrounding 100,000 rifts began to spin around, a bizarre scene that caused the Seventh Patriarch and Fang Daohong to stare with wide eyes and reeling minds.

“This is the Essence of Inside and Outside,” the young man said coolly. “When I say Inside, Heaven and Earth can be consumed….” At this point, all of the rifts opened wide, causing the entire Ancient Burial Ground, as well the rest of the ancestral land, to twist and distort. Simultaneously, outside in the Fang Clan, twisting distortions could also be seen on Planet East Victory.

It was as if some invisible, terrifying force were about to swallow up the whole planet!

A terrifying hexing magic like this caused Meng Hao’s mind to reel. How could he ever have imagined that the Fifth Hex… would actually be so powerful it could shake Heaven and Earth!?

Then the young man spoke again.

“When I say Outside, the Heavens are released….” All of the rifts suddenly shrank, sealing up. The Ancient Burial Ground, the ancestral land, the Fang Clan, and Planet East Victory all returned to normal in the blink of an eye.

All of these strange transformations happened so incredibly quickly that most people didn’t even notice them.

However, deep beneath the Fang Clan ancestral mansion, in the stony cavern, the Fang Clan Patriarchs who had been asleep suddenly trembled and then began to open their eyes.

Furthermore, in the deepest recesses of the cavern, the Earth Patriarch of the Fang Clan slowly opened his eyes. The sky faded, and the lands trembled.

“Inside and Outside. Consuming and releasing. This is my Hex…. Sit in front of me and contemplate this hexing magic. In the League of Demon Sealers… when the Nine Hexes are combined, the Mountain and Sea Realm will be returned to the Demon Sealers!

“If you are destined to leave the Mountain and Sea Realm, and I, Tian Pingzi am still alive, then you can seek me out. I owe the League of Demon Sealers, and can act as your Dao Protector.” With that, the young man closed his eyes.

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# Chapter 956: A Struggle of Generations!

A tremor ran through Meng Hao, and he began to pant. He knew that this area was somewhere he should never even have been able to step into. Furthermore, his cultivation base should have been at the peak of the Ancient Realm before attempting to accept the legacy of the Fifth Hex.

And yet, because of the terracotta soldier, here he was!

Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed, and he didn’t immediately take action. He still remembered the sense of crisis he had felt because of the Sixth Generation Demon Sealer, and thus, he proceeded with caution and even a bit of hesitation.

He did not sense any feeling of danger from the Fifth Generation Demon Sealer, and the ancient Demon Sealing Jade hadn’t acted strangely. He muttered to himself for a bit, unwilling to give up so easily.

“It’s too bad my second true self is still in the process of recovering after being destroyed. If he was here I could have him try it out first.” After a moment, his eyes shone with determination.

Rewards come only with risk, and it is better to take a gamble than to simply give up.

He decided to hesitate no longer. He walked up to the young man and bowed. Then, maintaining full vigilance, he gradually sent his cultivation base to rotating. If anything unexpected happened, he would use all of his divine abilities to flee instantly. Furthermore, he used divine will to have the terracotta soldier stand guard next to him.

As he crossed his legs and began to meditate, the young man slowly extended his arm and pushed down on Meng Hao's forehead.

The two of them suddenly seemed to be connected through ages of time and distant space.

A legacy was being passed on!

They were separated by many generations, by many years, and by the distance between them. Despite that, they were both here in the Fang Clan ancestral land, performing the bequeathment of a legacy!

A massive rumbling like a Dao river or a Heavenly sea poured into Meng Hao's forehead. In the blink of an eye, he felt as if his mind would collapse, his head explode.

His heart trembled as though lightning were exploding relentlessly inside of him. His face instantly turned ashen, and blood oozed out of his mouth. An intense sense of deadly crisis appeared. There was no sensation that made him think the young man in front of him wished him dead. It was simply that Meng Hao's cultivation base was insufficient, not strong enough to support the legacy.

However, he gritted his teeth and, expression one of determination, continued to accept the legacy that he originally should not have been able to accept given his current level of power.

His body gradually came to occupy a space between illusory and corporeal. His aura weakened, as though the flame of his life force were dimming.

Up in midair, the Seventh Patriarch stared in confusion. He was able to tell that something strange was going on with the Ancient Burial Ground because Meng Hao had entered it.

He looked closely at Meng Hao, and then, his pupils constricted as if he had just noticed something. He was visibly moved and took a deep breath.

"He's accepting a legacy!

“This Ancient Burial Ground has been here for countless years. Although not many people are capable of reaching this location, there have been a few. Those rifts are locations of trials by fire, not legacies. And yet… this kid is actually contemplating enlightenment of a legacy!” The Seventh Patriarch’s mind filled with roaring.

“But whose legacy is it that he can sense?” A profound gleam appeared in his mind as he looked in the direction of the Misty Heaven Vault off in the distance.

Time passed slowly. Meng Hao’s aura grew weaker, and the flame of his life force dimmed. Anyone who could see him personally would realize that he was accepting a legacy. However, on the bloodline jade slip, it simply looked like he was dying.

Of course, there were six other black-robed cultivators in the ancestral land in addition to Fang Daohong, and all of them were checking their jade slips. What they clearly saw was that the dot representing Meng Hao was growing weaker and darker. They also saw that Fang Daohong’s dot of light was very close to Meng Hao.

This made it very easy for them to jump to the wrong conclusion.

They all thought that Meng Hao’s light was growing weaker because of Fang Daohong.

Although the remaining six black-robed men were in general being very cautious, all of them had different personalities. Some were decisive, some were hesitant, some were anxious, and some were impulsive!

About five hundred kilometers from Meng Hao’s current location was a middle-aged man in a long black robe, whose eyes were glittering brightly. “Fang Hao definitely has some sort of valuable treasure. That’s how he was able to kill two Ancient Realm Elders in a row. Most likely, he can’t utilize the power of that magical item for a long time, because his cultivation base isn’t sufficient. And now… Fang Daohong is there…. Since he’s not dead, that means we have a chance!

The man was skinny and had a long, hooked nose, making him look especially sinister.

“A precious treasure that can enable a cultivator nearly in the Immortal Realm to be able to slay an Ancient Realm cultivator….” The middle-aged man hesitated for a moment, then looked at the bloodline jade slip again. What he noticed was that two other dots were already moving in Meng Hao’s direction, which caused his eyes to fill with determination.

“I’m the closest, so as long as I’m careful, there shouldn’t be any problems!” Without hesitating any further, the man quickly shot off into the distance.

At the same time, two other black-robed cultivators were nearing from two other directions. They were thinking the same thing as the first black-robed man, and rapidly began to close in on Meng Hao.

As for the other three black-robed men, two of them wavered back and forth a bit before deciding to play it safe. The final black-robed man… was an old man who was standing at the entrance to the ancestral land, where the Dao Guardsman had once been.

He was examining the collapsed mountains; the endless amounts of ruins and rubble that filled the area caused his mind to tremble. Unable to even think of what to say, he just looked at the scene for a while before taking in a deep breath.

“The Dao Guardsman… is gone?” he thought. Great waves of shock filled him, and he began to shiver. A look of astonishment filled his eyes as he suddenly realized that the first Ancient Realm Elder who had been killed… died in this location.

He almost immediately realized why. When the answer occurred to him, he could hardly believe it. However, that answer explained everything, as unbelievable as it was.

“How could Fang Hao have possibly taken control of the Dao Guardsman!?!?” He took out the bloodline jade slip and looked at the fading dot that represented Meng Hao. Then he looked at the three other cultivators who were rapidly closing in on him. There was no way for him to get word to the others while he was in the ancestral land, so he could only watch as the three dots began to converge on Meng Hao, drawn like moths to the flame.

“If those people die, then it will confirm my speculation that Fang Hao has somehow managed to take control of the Dao Guardsman!” The old man panted, unwilling to accept that he was correct, and yet unable to come up with any other explanation.

Time passed by quickly. It was now three days later, and Meng Hao had already been in the ancestral land for about a month. Currently, he sat cross-legged in front of the stone stele, eyes closed, completely motionless.

His aura was extremely weak, and the flame of his life force was almost on the point of being extinguished. His mind crashed with lightning and thunder as the legacy of the Fifth Hex continuously poured into him. The images he saw made him feel like he was descending into some bottomless abyss.

It was as if his mind were being forcibly distended, which led to intense, tearing pain. He felt like he was stuck in a living hell.

Because he was accepting a legacy like this with such a low cultivation base, his Eternal stratum had long since gone to work, and was in a perpetual state of support, ensuring that his mind did not collapse or explode.

As for his true Immortal fleshly body, it was immense help in keeping his mind stable.

As the legacy of the Fifth Hex poured into him, it began to form a pattern like that of a hand that continuously flipped back and forth in his mind.

Sometimes it faced up, sometimes it faced down. That cycle seemed to contain Yin and Yang, as if the entire cosmos was hidden within it! It contained a great Dao of Heaven and Earth!

The 100,000 rifts that surrounded him in the Ancient Burial Ground also went into a cyclical pattern, as if they were breathing. Occasionally they would open, other times they would close. From a distance, it looked like 100,000 eyes, continuously opening and closing.

The cycle continued for three days, never ending.

Fang Daohong had long since begun to gape at the scene. He was once again completely shaken by Meng Hao, and couldn't help but view him as a terrifying figure, a cultivator essentially in the Immortal Realm, the likes of which he had never before seen.

In fact, he had never even heard of anything like this.

"If he reaches Immortal Ascension… he'll definitely shake all of Planet East Victory!" Fang Daohong's eyes shone with a strange light, and he suddenly realized that having his life or death controlled by Meng Hao, wasn't actually… a particularly unacceptable thing.

Up in midair, the Seventh Patriarch looked down at Meng Hao, and his mind trembled even more than Fang Daohong's. His eyes shone with a brilliant light as he looked at Meng Hao, and he suddenly had the feeling that he was looking at the future of the Fang Clan.

"He already has a true Immortal fleshly body, and the Immortal qi within him has almost reached the pinnacle….

"He has absolutely no aura of an Immortality Illumination Vine on him. Or perhaps his Immortality Illumination Vine has already been fully absorbed by his Dharma Idol. In that case… this kid is going to reach Immortal Ascension in less than a hundred days!

"In the future, he will definitely become a pillar of the Fang Clan!!"

Meanwhile, outside of the Ninth Mountain, in the boundless sea among the stars, the Ninth Sea, a shocking aura suddenly exploded out.

That aura caused vast mists to roil up from the surface of the sea, which formed into the shape of countless figures that seemed to dance about gracefully. Lightning crackled up above, and a Tribulation Cloud began to form.

At the same time, an enormous Door of Immortality gradually came into view above the Ninth Sea!

The Ninth Sea had countless islands, many of which were inhabited by cultivators. Currently, all of those cultivators’ minds filled with shock, and they looked up into the air. No matter how far away they were, they could sense the Immortal qi that was roiling out.

“That’s… a Door of True Immortality!!

“Who is about to reach true Immortal Ascension!? Who is about to batter open the Door of Immortality!?!?”

As the cultivators on the various islands in the Ninth Sea were all shocked, a massive rift opened up in the surface of the sea below the Door of Immortality. From within that rift appeared another massive door, which rose up from inside the water.

Inside the door was a young woman, behind whom floated a female corpse. The woman didn’t hesitate for a moment before flying up into the air toward the Door of Immortality.

At the same time, more than a thousand cultivators also flew out of the door in the sea. There were men and women, and all of them wore extremely somber expressions as they fanned out in every direction to form a huge spell formation. Next, a hundred enormous sea dragons shot out of the door, roaring as they circled about the area to act as Dharma Protectors for the young woman. Ten old men also appeared, each one of whom emanated astonishing auras. All of them were at the peak of the Ancient Realm, and each one had extinguished a minimum of thirteen or fourteen Soul Lamps!

These… were the cultivators of the Ninth Sea God World! The Three Great Daoist Societies had deep reserves, as was plainly visible now!

The last person to appear was an old woman who wore a sea-blue robe. Her aura superseded the auras of all the other cultivators present, as if her presence could cause even the Heavens to acquiesce to her.

“Dong’er, your day of true Immortality has arrived,” the old woman said coolly. “Open that Door of Immortality, accept the Immortal qi, and achieve true Immortal Ascension!”

Fan Dong’er took a deep breath and then shot toward the Door of Immortality.

Lightning crashed and thunder boomed, and yet, it could do nothing to cause Fan Dong’er to even pause. Her body suddenly exploded with an energy that could rival the Immortal Tribulation itself.

A great event was beginning, heralding the arrival of a new generation of Chosen. Among them was someone who had suppressed her cultivation in the previous era just for the sake of becoming a true Immortal in the current era. A cultivator of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, the second to follow in the footsteps of Pill Demon and achieve true Immortal Ascension… Fan Dong’er!

As of this moment, people in sects and clans all over the Ninth Mountain and Sea used a variety of methods to observe as Fan Dong’er achieved Immortal Ascension above the Ninth Sea!

Meanwhile….

In the underworld of the Fourth Mountain, next to the Bridge of Reincarnation, a cold woman stood there, looking over her shoulder profoundly at what seemed to be the direction of the Ninth Mountain. It was as if she hoped to get one clear look at the Ninth Mountain so she would never forget it. Her long, black hair danced in the wind. She looked as graceful as a butterfly as she stepped forward into Reincarnation.

In her previous life, her name had been Xu Qing.

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# Chapter 957: Inner Devils of the Chosen!

The Door of Immortality appeared above the Ninth Sea, and Fan Dong’er rose up into the sky. In the instant in which she slammed into the door, the various clans and sects throughout the Ninth Mountain and Sea could sense a sudden change in the Heavens.

The change was not drastic; it was merely a slight strengthening in the Immortal qi of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. However, the change was like slight ripples on a glassy surface of water, and was detectable by many.

It was most obvious in the areas around the Door of Immortality in the Ninth Sea. There, the Immortal qi surged as a great Dao descended. Rumbling filled the air, Tribulation Lightning crackled, and mists churned.

Fan Dong’er was surrounded by Tribulation Lightning as she slammed into the Door of Immortality. Her eyes were filled with determination, and her heart was filled with one thought.

“Meng Hao, I absolutely must surpass you!”

Fan Dong’er was the second person in this generation after Pill Demon to attack the Door of Immortality. At the same time, the other Chosen who were in secluded meditation were preparing to emerge and attempt to break through to the true Immortal Realm. They could sense the change in the Immortal qi, but they ignored it. Eyes shining with determination, they continued with their secluded meditation.

Zhao Yifan currently sat cross-legged in a secret chamber in the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto.

“The age of true Immortal Ascension has arrived,” he murmured. “The Three Great Daoist Sects, the Four Great Clans, the Five Holy Lands, the Three Churches and Six Sects… have been building up power and resources for years, all for the Chosen who will become true Immortals.

“They all plan to use their collected resources and dammed-up cultivation to surge forth into the true Immortal Realm. It will be like the saying ‘The bird is silent, but its first song amazes all men!’” Zhao Yifan’s eyes suddenly opened.

“Opening 70 meridians is average. 80 meridians qualifies one to be Chosen. Opening 90 meridians… makes you the blazing sun of a generation!

“Fang Mu… I wonder if you will be able to enter this age of true Immortality!?” Zhao Yifan’s eyes gleamed brightly. He had long since recovered from his injuries, as well as from the psychological blow he had suffered. However, he knew that deep within his heart, a shadow lurked, weighing down on him. It had become something like an inner Devil.

Meng Hao, in his guise as Fang Mu, had become Zhao Yifan’s inner Devil!

It was with his true identity of Meng Hao that he had become Fan Dong’er’s inner Devil!

Similarly, all of the other Chosen he had encountered in the Ninth Mountain and Sea had inner Devils because of him!

On Planet East Victory, in the Fang Clan’s ancestral mansion, Fang Wei was trembling. His life force aura occasionally glittered brilliantly, and occasionally went dim. Sometimes his features twisted savagely, while at other times he wore a smile. Strange ripples undulated off of him as he absorbed Immortal qi from the nine withered old men who surrounded him.

“Fang Hao… true Immortality is upon me. If I fail, then there will no longer be a Fang Wei under the Heavens. However, if I succeed… then the instant I become a true Immortal, I will cut you down and sever this inner Devil of mine!”

On Planet North Reed, in the restricted area in the Li Clan, there was a lotus pond. The pond waters were clear, and fish could be seen swimming to and fro. Birdsongs filled the air, along with the fragrance of flowers. It was like a miniature utopia. Li Ling'er sat there cross-legged atop a lotus. Her skin was clear and delicate, and slightly flushed. She wore a simple, plain robe, but it still managed to accentuate her exquisite and alluring body.

She was also about to break through to the true Immortal Realm!

At the same time, Wang Mu, Song Luodan, Taiyang Zi, Sun Hai, and many others were in their respective sects and clans, all preparing to break through to the true Immortal Realm.

As all of these people made their breakthroughs, Meng Hao's image floated in their minds. Meng Hao… had become the inner Devil of an entire generation of Chosen.

Meanwhile, a young man sat cross-legged on an asteroid floating in the starry sky of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. He wore a black robe, and had long white hair. His features were handsome, and at the same time, ancient.

Immortal qi swirled around him, and shockingly, he held an Immortality Illumination vine in his hand.

"In the Wang Clan… Wang Mu is the blazing sun, and I have been forgotten. That doesn't matter. The only thing I need is this Immortality Illumination Vine." The young man lifted the Immortality Illumination Vine above his head and looked off into space.

"Meng Hao, I very much look forward to the day when you and I can meet again…." This young man was none other than Wang Tengfei!

At around this time, Wang Youcai, Fatty, Cheng Fan, and all of Meng Hao's other companions from Planet South Heaven who had scattered out to the various other sects, were all being informed by Senior members of their respective organizations about the matter of true Immortality. All of them were looking up into the Heavens.

“I wonder where Meng Hao is right now….” Fatty murmured, sounding a bit depressed.

In the Kunlun Society, Chu Yuyan quietly sat there cross-legged. No Immortal qi swirled around her, but she wasn’t anxious. She had a whole thousand years after true Immortal destiny appeared in which she could achieve her own true Immortal Ascension.

Although she couldn’t keep up with the first wave, she was confident that she would be able to reach true Immortality in those thousand years.

“The age of True Immortality is here….” murmured Pill Demon, who stood on a nearby mountain boulder. He looked up into the stars.

At the same moment, another person spoke those same words.

It was an old man who stood there on Planet South Heaven, in a mountain in the Eastern Lands. He looked up into the Heavens and muttered the exact same sentence.

That man… was Shui Dongliu.

Meng Hao was unaware of the stir that had been caused in the Ninth Mountain and Sea due to Fan Dong’er’s Door of Immortality. He continued to sit cross-legged in front of the stone stele in the Ancient Burial Ground, accepting the legacy of the Fifth Hex.

His aura was incredibly weak, and the flame of his life force seemed to be on the verge of being extinguished. The 100,000 rifts around him were trembling slightly, their cycles of opening and closing becoming more rapid. The Ancient Burial Ground was starting to look even more bizarre than usual.

Gradually, mist appeared on the ground; it grew thicker as it spread out through the ancestral land, into all of the regions and areas.

The mist also collected in the Ancient Burial Ground, and was especially thick in the area around Meng Hao. It covered the terracotta soldier, making it invisible even to divine sense.

Meng Hao's figure began to grow blurry.

Fang Daohong was extremely frightened. He worried that if Meng Hao died, then because of the strange hexing magic, he would also die.

As he continued to grow more and more frightened, a beam of prismatic light appeared off in the distance. It was another of the black-robed men, who shot in his general direction. Initially, his speed was not particularly fast, but at about thirty thousand meters away, the man seemed to catch sight of something that caused him to accelerate explosively.

Fang Daohong's eyes flickered as he turned to look at the man in the beam of light. He shot forward with incredible speed, coming to a stop about three hundred meters away. The man's face was grim as he looked over.

"Elder Daohong, we're all in this together, if one of us hogs everything for himself, it will be difficult to explain to the others." The man's eyes glittered as he looked further into the Ancient Burial Ground. He saw Meng Hao sitting cross-legged in meditation, mostly covered by mists. He didn't notice the terracotta soldier, which was now completely enveloped by the mists.

His eyes sparkled with avarice, then he looked back at Fang Daohong and smiled insincerely.

"If you want to go in there, I won't stop you," Fang Daohong said loftily. "However, there's no need to play with words." He snorted coldly, acting as he would under normal circumstances.

The other black-robed man's eyes flickered as he turned from Fang Daohong to look at Meng Hao. Inwardly, he was a bit hesitant. However, Meng Hao's current state made it seem like he was on the verge of death; the man was unable to see that he was accepting a legacy.

"Well, never mind then. Since you're waiting patiently, Elder Daohong, then I'll just wait with you." With that, he smiled and then sat down cross-legged.

Fang Daohong showed no reaction whatsoever to this. Inwardly, though, he breathed a sigh of relief. His life was now under Meng Hao's control, and even if he appeared to be on the verge of dying, Fang Daohong wasn't about to take any risks. In fact, he was even more nervous than Meng Hao would be; he feared that Meng Hao's death would result in his own soul dispersing.

After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, Meng Hao trembled. Blood oozed out of his mouth, and only a tiny spark remained of his flame of life force. His body was now stiff, and he looked as pale as a corpse.

The rifts around him flickered rapidly as they opened and closed. They were like 100,000 eyes blinking, and left Fang Daohong and the other black-robed man feeling incredibly shocked.

One of them was nervous. The other one waited in anticipation.

Around this time, two more beams of light sped along, apparently having detected Meng Hao's abnormal state. They shot forward with explosive speed until they appeared at the border of the Ancient Burial Ground, where they turned into two black-robed men.

As soon as they appeared, Fang Daohong's eyes narrowed. One of the men didn't pause at all, but rather, instantly shot into the Ancient Burial Ground. Taking advantage of a moment when the rifts were closed, he shot forward about three hundred meters.

Fang Daohong's heart began to thump, and the black-robed man who had arrived earlier frowned. After a moment, he also waited until the rifts were closed and then stepped forward into the Ancient Burial Ground.

The third black-robed man also flickered forward, advancing toward Meng Hao.

“Fang Hao has a valuable treasure! Let's kill him and get the treasure. We can decide what to do with it afterward!”

“Excellent plan!” After coming to an agreement, the three men waited until the 100,000 rifts closed again, and then advanced at top speed.

Fang Daohong watched in silence, coldly eyeing the three men as they proceeded into the Ancient Burial Ground. Finally, he decided to join them, although he moved slowly, ensuring that he was bringing up the rear.

Four men walked in a line, heading ever closer to Meng Hao in the center of the Ancient Burial Ground.

Enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, in which time the 100,000 rifts opened and closed. Eventually, the two fastest men reached a position about six hundred meters from Meng Hao.

Another tremor ran through Meng Hao at that point, but instead of just a trickle of blood oozing out, Meng Hao coughed up a huge mouthful of blood, and all color drained out of his face. At that point, the flame of his life force actually winked out.

In that moment, the rifts in the area all shuddered and closed, leaving a clear path all the way to Meng Hao.

With the exception of Fang Daohong, who was still extremely anxious and feared that he was about to die, the black-robed men’s eyes all glowed with greed. They had been acting very cautiously before, but that seemed to be forgotten as they exploded with speed. Rumbling filled the air as they closed in on Meng Hao.

However, when the two black-robed men in the lead were only about thirty meters away, Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly snapped open. They were bloodshot, and his gaze was as sharp as a blade, filled with naked savagery.

An indescribably terrifying aura suddenly exploded out from Meng Hao. In that instant, all of the closed rifts in the area suddenly opened simultaneously.

It was like 100,000 eyes had instantly opened and were looking at the four men!

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# Chapter 958: Strolling Through the Immortal Kingdom!

Being glared at by 100,000 cold eyes is something that would cause many people to be so terrified their hair would stand on end. These black-robed men had profound cultivation bases, and might have been able to disregard the phenomena, were it not for the fact that Meng Hao had opened his eyes at exactly the same time.

There was also a brutality that seemed to surround Meng Hao. Add the fact that he had just recently killed two Ancient Realm experts, and it caused the faces of the nearest two black-robed men to flicker.

However, they were decisive people. Killing intent flashed in their eyes. Having come this far and having no path of retreat, they decided that they might as well attack!

“He’s as weak as an arrow at the end of its flight! Killing him will be easy!”

“His precious treasure is probably difficult to activate! Considering his current state, he definitely can’t use it! Kill him!”

Their eyes flickered coldly, and their killing intent raged. Their cultivation bases surged as their nine Soul Lamps, eight burning and one extinguished, caused the aura of the Ancient Realm to swirl about. The natural law in the area was affected, and ripples spread out.

They also pulled out magical items. One of them had a jade cauldron; the other, a piece of green bamboo. Inside the jade cauldron were several flying swords engraved with dragons, and the bamboo was surrounded by arcs of crackling lightning. Both objects were clearly extraordinary.

They waved their sleeves, causing the magical items to speed toward Meng Hao, as they sped close behind. Bolstered by the power of their Soul Lamps, their killing intent surged, and their greed was impossible to conceal.

In almost the same moment that they attacked, the terracotta soldier, which was still covered by the mist, suddenly stepped forward.

The ground quaked, and some of the mist dissipated from around the terracotta soldier, making it mostly visible.

A ring-shaped ripple surged out, with the terracotta soldier and Meng Hao at the center. When it passed over the jade cauldron, the swords inside shattered as if they were nothing more than dried up twigs. The cauldron itself cracked and then collapsed.

As for the green bamboo, it was the same; it shattered into countless pieces that became nothing more than flying ash. The lightning in the bamboo was also snuffed out, and vanished without a trace.

As the ripple spread out, the pressure it emanated caused the two black-robed men's hearts to tremble. Blood sprayed out of their mouths as they fell backward in retreat, almost falling into one of the rifts behind them.

When they finally came to a stop, they looked at the terracotta soldier, and their faces fell as they were almost struck speechless.

The greatsword it held in its hand, the suddenness with which it its aura had burst out, as well as the familiarity of its figure, immediately caused the men to feel roaring in their minds, as if an enormous, shapeless hand were ripping apart their psyches.

“That’s the aura of a Quasi-Dao Paragon!!”

“There’s actually a statue here!!”

“That statue looks so familiar….”

“That’s… that’s… the Dao Guardsman!!” The two cultivators’ eyes went wide with disbelief. They felt as if a mountain were crushing down onto them; their minds reeled as they realized their lives were about to meet an uncertain end.

“This is impossible!!” They were thoroughly astonished, and now that they could sense the terracotta soldier’s aura, they had no doubt in their mind as to how the other two Ancient Realm elders had suddenly died.

“He… he can actually control the Dao Guardsman!” They no longer had any desire whatsoever to engage in battle. Their scalps were numb, and they were scared out of their minds. They thought back to how they had bravely charged into this situation, and they suddenly realized that doing so was potentially the most foolish and stupid thing they had ever done in their lives. They backed up at top speed, cursing their weak cultivation bases, and cursing all of the rifts in the area that made it impossible to escape.

The other black-robed man was also looking on with wide eyes, panting in disbelief.

Fang Daohong was the only one whose facial expression was calm. Inwardly, he heaved a sigh of relief, and his eyes began to flicker. His cultivation base had long since recovered, and he was now trying to decide how he could perform some meritorious service in aid of Meng Hao.

In the exact moment that the two black-robed men up front began to retreat, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with killing intent. The terracotta soldier raised its greatsword and then slashed it down toward one of the two men. In the blink of an eye, everything went still and quiet. Scintillating, blinding sword light appeared, slashing toward the black-robed man’s throat.

“Bring him to me, alive,” Meng Hao murmured weakly.

The world returned to normal. The terracotta soldier’s blade twisted, turning the strike from a slash into a slap. Blood sprayed from the black-robed cultivator’s mouth as his body crumpled. The terracotta soldier reached out, grabbed him, and pinned him down on the ground in front of Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s face was pale white as he reached out and pushed his hand onto the black-robed man’s forehead. He took a deep breath, and his eyes shone with the glow of blood as he utilized the Blood Demon Grand Magic.

The black-robed man’s eyes went wide, and he let out a bloodcurdling scream. When the other people present heard the scream, their minds trembled because of the indescribable tragic wretchedness therein.

The black-robed man’s body withered. His cultivation base rapidly faded away. Even his soul was absorbed by Meng Hao. Everything, even his life force, was used by Meng Hao to aid in his recovery.

It took only a moment for the screams to fade away. The only thing that remained behind was a terrifying desiccated corpse that lay motionless beneath Meng Hao’s hand.

Meng Hao’s face was no longer as pale as death. His skin had a bit of color, and his breathing was steady. His eyes shone brightly once again.

As he thought back to how he had accepted the legacy of the Fifth Hex, Meng Hao realized that he had narrowly escaped from death. He really should have died, and had only managed to survive by a fluke.

Considering the level of his cultivation base, he was really incapable of acquiring the Fifth Hex. The price he had paid was actually his life. The flame of his life force really had been extinguished, leaving him hovering on the brink of death. Thankfully, just as he was about to die… these black-robed men came, giving him a second lease on life.

He had only slightly recovered, but this caused the other two black-robed men to feel an even greater sense of deadly crisis.

“W-what technique was that!?!?”

“Damn you, Fang Xiushan! For sending us in here to kill this kid… you deserve to die a horrible death!!”

The two men retreated, looking back in fear at Meng Hao.

However, they were surrounded by rifts that made it impossible for them to escape.

Up above, the Seventh Patriarch watched with a serious expression. He slowly retracted his hand, and looked over thoughtfully at Meng Hao.

“Is that the legacy technique he just acquired?”

Back on the ground, Meng Hao slowly rose to his feet. His face was mostly back to normal, and a profound look gleamed in his eyes. He seemed to be filled with a sea of power that caused anyone who looked at him to feel as if their souls would be absorbed.

“Grab me another one,” he said calmly.

In response to his words, the terracotta soldier immediately strode forward toward the nearest black-robed man. The man howled and, having no other options, leapt into the nearest rift.

The third of the black-robed men was a bit further away from Meng Hao. He gritted his teeth and was about to jump into a nearby rift, when Fang Daohong suddenly blocked his way. The man roared in rage, and the two of them began to fight.

Booms echoed out in all directions. The terracotta soldier stepped into the rift in pursuit and emerged after the space of only a few breaths, holding the black-robed cultivator who had been trying to flee.

The man was trembling, and his face was pale. Even as he looked over at Meng Hao, Meng Hao raised his hand, causing an illusory rift to appear. That slight movement, though, caused the bit of his life force that had been painstakingly restored to be sucked towards the palm of his hand. This caused Meng Hao to immediately stop what he was doing. After a moment of analysis, Meng Hao realized why.

“Although I’ve accepted the legacy, I’m incapable of actually using the Fifth Hex. Considering the level of my cultivation base, if I try to force it, even if I use all of my cultivation base to cast it, I still can't form the Inside-Outside rifts of the Fifth Hex!

"Perhaps I'll be able to after I reach the Immortal Realm! This Fifth Hex is similar to the Paragon Bridge. I'll be able to use it as a trump card when I reach the Immortal Realm!" With that, he pushed his hand out toward the black-robed man, who was then surrounded by blood-colored light.

Miserable screams rang out as the man was transformed into a desiccated corpse. Meng Hao's face finally looked normal, and he was completely recovered. He then closed his eyes and rotated his cultivation base.

In response to this, the black-robed man who was fighting Fang Daohong looked terrified. What he was seeing was far beyond any other deadly crisis that he had ever experienced.

"This guy can't be a near-Immortal Realm cultivator," he thought. "How could someone of that level have such a terrifying divine ability!?!? Fang Xiushan, if I don't die in here, then after I get back to the clan, you and I are going to have a reckoning!!"

Fang Daohong's expression was the same as ever, but inwardly he was trembling. The mysteries surrounding Meng Hao only seemed to grow deeper. After a moment of hesitation, he looked over at the man he was fighting with.

"Fang Linhe, if you want to get out of here alive, then listen to me and don't fight back!" These words caused Fang Linhe to gape in shock. Then he thought back to how Fang Daohong hadn't died despite being near Meng Hao for so long. Suddenly, the hope for life appeared in his heart. Gritting his teeth, he allowed Fang Daohong to strike him in the chest. 1

Blood sprayed out of his mouth as Fang Daohong struck him over and over, seriously injuring Fang Linhe and causing his cultivation base to drop. Soon, it was comparable to a Spirit Realm cultivator, whereupon Fang Daohong stopped his attacks. Giving a meaningful glance to Fang Linhe, he immediately turned and bowed respectfully to Meng Hao.

“Prince, it would be quite a waste to let this man die. Why not use your restrictive spell on him? Once we get back to the clan, he and I will both want a chance to get revenge on Fang Xiushan.”

Meng Hao’s eyes opened, and he looked coldly at Fang Daohong, then at Fang Linhe, who was acting very subserviently. Without another word, streams of black and white qi appeared in his hand. After rotating around each other for a moment, he sent them flying toward Fang Linhe’s forehead. Fang Linhe screamed, then began to shudder. Sweat soaked him almost instantaneously as magical symbols appeared all over his body. Eventually, they converged on his forehead into the form of a single magical symbol that flew out of his forehead and then merged into Meng Hao. Fang Linhe then let out a weak sigh.

Meng Hao looked up at the rifts in the area, and now, they seemed familiar to him.

It almost seemed as if he could control their opening and closing.

“Let’s go,” he said. “We’re going to find out what else is past this Ancient Burial Ground.” With that, he stepped forward. Immediately, the rifts all closed, allowing him to walk directly off into the distance.

Meng Hao strode along like a monarch to these rifts that contained the Fifth Hex. He looked like he was simply taking a stroll through his own Immortal kingdom.

1. Fang Linhe’s name in Chinese is fāng lín hé. Lin means “to face” or “to overlook.” He means “river”

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# Chapter 959: A Lamp!

The scene playing out in front of Fang Daohong and Fang Linhe left them shaken mentally. They immediately followed behind, staring at the terracotta soldier next to Meng Hao. When it came to the statue, Fang Daohong was slightly less surprised, whereas Fang Linhe was completely astonished.

Up in midair, the Seventh Patriarch looked closely at Meng Hao, his expression growing more serious by the moment. Based on everything Meng Hao had done along the way, and all his unprecedented accomplishments, as long as he didn't lose his life, he would surely shake the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea one day.

"In the future, he will be the main pillar of the Fang Clan!"

Meanwhile, Fan Dong'er was still in the midst of her Immortal Tribulation, battering her Door of Immortality. In the Fang Clan Ancestral Mansion, Fang Xiushan was staring pale-faced into a crystal, observing what was happening in the Lifeslip Hall.

One after another, without even half an incense stick of time between them, the lifeslips belonging to two Ancient Realm Elders emitted cracking sounds and then shattered into pieces….

The other jade slip that he had been watching this entire time remained completely unchanged.

"Impossible…. The deaths of the previous two could be chalked up to dangers in the ancestral land. But… but a whole month has passed, Fang Hao is still alive, and two more Ancient Realm Elders are dead!

“What exactly is going on in the ancestral land? How could this be happening? What’s going on!?!?” Fang Xiushan’s eyes were completely bloodshot, and his hair was in disarray. He sat there trembling, having long since moved from his own residence to a hidden chamber.

This chamber was very close to where his son Fang Wei was in the middle of secluded meditation. At the moment, Fang Xiushan didn’t dare to set foot outside. Currently, he had no way of resolving the situation, so he had no choice but to conceal himself here.

“As long as Wei’er becomes a true Immortal, the Grand Elder will handle everything according to the clan rules. The clan is most important, so he won’t make things too difficult for me. Plus, I have father to help take care of things. This matter will soon be a thing of the past.

“Fang Hao, you shall die! If you don’t die in the ancestral land, then you’ll die at Wei’er’s hand!” Fang Xiushan’s expression twisted, and he gritted his teeth. Apparently, that outcome was the only one which could release the shock and anxiety he felt in his heart. However, he still couldn’t understand why the nine Ancient Realm Elders he had hired couldn’t kill a solitary Fang Hao. In fact, over the course of a month, four of them were now dead, while Fang Hao was still alive.

Just what had happened in there to cause this unforeseen turn of events? This was currently the source of his greatest confusion.

Even as Fang Xiushan sat there thinking, the Grand Elder was in another location in the Fang Clan ancestral mansion. He was in a rage, his face twisted in anger over what was happening in the Lifeslip Hall. He, of course, was well aware of exactly why all the Elders had died.

His eyes glinted coldly when he summoned Fang Xiushan, only to receive a reply that Fang Xiushan was in secluded meditation near Fang Wei. That caused the Grand Elder to hesitate for a moment.

At the moment, Fang Wei’s Immortal Ascension was the most important matter in the whole clan. All other matters were of secondary importance.

“Fang Wei. Fang Hao…. Let’s see which of the two of you… is the true Chosen.” After another moment of thought, the Grand Elder flicked his sleeve and left.

Back in the ancestral land, Meng Hao proceeded along. The rifts closed wherever he went, all the way until he reached the end of the Ancient Burial Ground. After having passed through regions of 100,000 rifts, he was now surrounded by thick mist.

The mist didn’t just exist in this place. The entire ancestral land was filled with it, something that was completely unheard of. Even the Seventh Patriarch was shocked.

Meng Hao stood at the edge of the Ancient Burial Ground, looking at the thick mists up ahead of him. Compared to the mist in his immediate vicinity, the mists up ahead seemed boundless, as if they covered everything, even the Heavens.

Everything was covered in endless, majestic mists.

Off to the side was another huge stone stele, upon which was written three shocking characters….

Misty Heaven Vault!

Beneath the three characters were lines of text, each one being the name of a person.

Next to each name was a number.

The first name on the list was Fang Shoudao, and next to it was the number 39.

There were nineteen names in total, and the last few names on the list all had the number 1 next to them.

The names emanated an ancient feeling, as if they had existed on the stele for many years. When Meng Hao reached the ninth name on the list, his eyes widened in surprise.

The name was Fang Danyun!

He was the Dao of Alchemy Division’s current Pill Elder!

Fang Daohong stood next to Meng Hao explaining the location in a low voice. “There is no path through the Heavenly Mist Vault.

“This is the last section of the ancestral land…. The first generation Patriarch’s necropolis is located somewhere inside, although nobody knows exactly where.

“From the moment of its creation, this place has been the end of the line for the clan members who come here. According to the rumors, nobody has ever found the necropolis within the mists. The reason for that, of course, is that there is no path inside.

“From ancient times to now, only nineteen Senior clan members have ever made it to the Misty Heaven Vault, and those numbers next to their names are how many steps they were able to take inside.”

Meng Hao’s eyes focused intently on the stele.

“Nobody’s ever been able to step into the necropolis?” he asked. As he looked at the list of names and numbers on the stele, he sent his divine sense out into the mists. As soon as it entered, it encountered an intense repelling force, and was expelled. These mists truly seemed to be like an impenetrable fortress that did not allow anything to enter.

“Prince,” Fang Daohong hurried to say, “you really shouldn’t try to go in…. This is a place where people under the Immortal Realm can’t even enter. Not even the Dao Guardsman can go in.

“If you want to enter the Misty Heaven Vault, you have to meet two conditions. First, your cultivation base has to be in the Ancient Realm or higher so that you can use your Soul Lamp to guide the way. The second requirement is that you have to possess a corporeal body.”

Meng Hao didn’t respond. He sent some divine will into the terracotta statue, and sent it forward toward the mists. However, as soon as it touched the border, the same force shoved back, making it impossible for the terracotta soldier to move forward. When he tried to force it to do so, a terrifying pressure exploded out from within the mists.

Meng Hao’s mind was shaken, and he immediately pulled the terracotta soldier back.

“Prince, your… your cultivation base isn’t in the Ancient Realm, and you have no Soul Lamp. You simply can’t proceed.” Fang Daohong glanced over at Meng Hao and stepped toward the mists.

As he did so, he inhaled deeply and nine Soul Lamps appeared around him. As they rotated around him, they slowly merged together. When they had combined into a single lamp, they floated forward to make contact with the mists. As soon as the lamp touched the mist, it sank back by a centimeter.

“Look, Prince,” said Fang Daohong, sighing slightly and stepping back to stand next to Meng Hao. “This is my limit, only a single centimeter. If you had a powerful Soul Lamp, you would be able to resist the mists and get much further in.”

Meng Hao frowned. Having gotten all the way to this point, he just couldn’t resign himself to leaving. If this was the first generation Patriarch’s necropolis, then it meant that the Fang Clan’s most powerful Daoist Magic, the One Thought Stellar Transformation, would be inside.

It was like standing in front of a mountain of treasure and being incapable of reaching it. To Meng Hao, it was a very intolerable feeling.

However, he was not the type of person to be easily convinced by what could be fallacious information. He stepped forward and, as he stood there in front of the mists, extended his right hand and pushed it forward. Immediately, a powerful force pushed back, as if there were an invisible barrier which prevented him from pushing his hand in at all.

Meng Hao tried pushing a few more times before letting out a resigned sigh. He was just about to retract his hand when his eyes then went wide as he suddenly sensed his Immortal meridian pulsing wildly in a way it never had before. It was almost as if it were reacting to something that existed inside the mists, something that was attracting his Immortal meridian.

Meng Hao had experienced such a sensation before; it was the same sort of feeling he got when the Immortal meridian had strengthened itself by consuming the massive quantities of energy from the stone steles in the Three Great Daoist Societies' trial by fire.

Meng Hao started panting, and his eyes began to glitter brightly. He had an intense premonition that if he could get into the Misty Heaven Vault, then perhaps… he could break through to true Immortality right here in the ancestral land!

Meng Hao immediately began to attempt numerous methods to succeed. After two hours passed, he finally had to admit… that it was a place he really wasn't able to enter.

"Prince," said Fang Daohong, "there's no need to keep trying. We still have less than a month before the ancestral land opens up again. There are still other places with good fortune, places that you can easily get to with the Dao Guardsman. As for this place here… without a Soul Lamp, you might as well just forget about it."

Meng Hao stood there silently.

Up in midair, the Seventh Patriarch was currently paying close attention to what was happening. He watched Meng Hao make his repeated attempts, then sighed, and his eyes flickered with disappointment.

"I guess I set my expectations too high," he thought, shaking his head. "The Misty Heaven Vault requires an Ancient Realm Soul Lamp. That's something the Dao Guardsman can't help out with. The more powerful the Soul Lamp, the further into the Heavenly Mist Vault you can get. However, not even Eldest Brother, the Earth Patriarch, could get more than 39 steps in."

Suddenly, Meng Hao looked up at the Misty Heaven Vault, and his eyes began to gleam with light of curiosity.

“You need a Soul Lamp…. A Soul Lamp to lead the way…. A lamp…. I have a lamp!” Meng Hao began to pant as he glanced back at the Soul Lamps circling around Fang Daohong. Just now, a completely preposterous idea had formed in his mind.

It was a completely absurd plan, and it involved an object he had never before thought to associate with the Soul Lamps of Ancient Realm cultivators.

Even now, it seemed like something completely improbable.

Finally, though, it reached the point where he couldn’t hold back. He just had to try, so, eyes flickering, he slapped his bag of holding… causing a bronze lamp to suddenly fly out!

This bronze lamp was none other than the one he had acquired from the temple hall in the ruins of the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple, the same treasure from which he had acquired his Immortal meridian, that now contained a flame from the Essence of Divine Flame.

Holding the bronze lamp in hand, Meng Hao took a deep breath and then slowly walked toward the wall of mist up ahead. When Fang Daohong and Fang Linhe caught sight of the bronze lamp, they gaped in shock. Were it not for the fact that Meng Hao held their lives firmly in his hand, they would most certainly be incapable of holding back from laughing at Meng Hao’s apparent insanity.

However, their expressions quickly changed to ones of open-mouthed astonishment, and they began to tremble uncontrollably.

As Meng Hao neared the mists, rumbling sounds suddenly filled the air. Strange colors flashed as everything shook. The mists began to fall apart, churning in an unprecedented fashion. All of the mists inside of the ancestral land seemed to be going crazy, and immediately, more mist began to surge out from every nook and cranny, making it so that the entire ancestral land became just like the Misty Heaven Vault.

The mist was trembling, almost as if in fear!

Meng Hao’s bronze lamp seemed to have cast the entire ancestral land into a state of awe, and the mists almost appeared to be prostrating themselves in worship!

As for the mists directly in front of Meng Hao, as soon as the bronze lamp neared them, they seemed to be torn apart with domineering force. It didn’t matter who this place previously belonged to, or who used to dwell here, as of this moment, everything was submitting to the bronze lamp.

Amidst the rumbling, the mists were torn apart… and parted down the middle!

A path was carved out… which led straight ahead!!

It was a huge path, at the end of which, shockingly… was an enormous, pitch-black temple hall!!

This sight caused Fang Daohong’s and Fang Linhe’s minds to reel, and their hearts to lurch with enormous waves of shock. They trembled violently, filled with unspeakable astonishment. Even knowing that Meng Hao had taken control of the Dao Guardsman hadn’t turned their world upside down as much as the scene that was playing out in front of them right now!

The Seventh Patriarch had been on the verge of turning away and leaving.

“Impossible!!” he said, voice quavering.

He began to tremble, and his mind filled with roaring and he almost fell out of the sky in shock. Even his cultivation base was now somewhat unstable.

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# Chapter 960: Whose Soul Lamp Is It!?

He panted, staring dead at the bronze lamp in Meng Hao’s hand. The lamp caused his scalp to grow numb, and terror washed through him as a shocking question filled his mind.

“That Soul Lamp… whose is it?!?!”

The mist in the Misty Heaven Vault seethed, spreading out to fill the entire ancestral land. The Ancient Burial Grounds, the Nine Nethermountains, the Quasi-Dao Patriarch Tombs, and even the Field of Magic Enlightenment were all submerged in endless mist.

The lands almost looked like they had become a sea of mist, concealing all, casting everything into shadow. The area around Meng Hao was the only area of light, which was illuminated by the glow of the Essence of Divine Flame.

Meng Hao was panting, and his heart pounded even more strongly than Fang Daohong and Fang Linhe, or the astonished Seventh Patriarch.

Taking out the bronze Soul Lamp had been a simple experiment, and in fact, even Meng Hao had assumed the idea to be laughable and virtually impossible.

He had always thought that it was nothing more than an ancient bronze lamp…. He had never, ever thought to compare it to the Soul Lamp of an Ancient Realm cultivator.

But now, as he looked around at the churning mists, at the path that had been ripped open in front of him, and the tunnel leading toward the pitch-black temple up ahead, his heart pounded with unprecedented intensity.

“This Soul Lamp… whose is it?!?!” That was the mind blowing question that rolled around in Meng Hao’s mind as he thought back to that year in the temple hall when he had acquired the bronze lamp.

How many years had it been there…?

He had kept the lamp alive with his own blood, and when it was extinguished, he had absorbed the black smoke that it emitted. That was what… had caused him to become different than everyone else, to have a true Immortal meridian inside of him.

“It’s actually a Soul Lamp. A mere lamp contains such shocking, domineering power that even this Fang Clan ancestral land has no choice but to submit to it!

“If this lamp is so powerful… then whatever almighty being created it must be unbelievably powerful!!” Meng Hao was panting at this unbelievable turn of events. It truly was a matter that couldn’t be pondered too deeply, for the more he thought about it, the more it astonished him.

“Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple….” Meng Hao’s eyes glowed with intense light as a new sense of determination filled him and he made a firm resolution. “I definitely need to go to the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite!” The only clues to the story behind this lamp, which he had found in the temple hall in the ruins of Planet South Heaven’s Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite, seemed to lay in the four words ‘Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite’.

From the way things looked, grabbing this bronze lamp that year had changed his entire fate in life!!

Nearby, Fang Daohong and Fang Linhe were looking on with numbed scalps, and minds that felt as if they were being struck by lightning. Their jaws hung open and their eyes were wide.

They simply couldn’t believe or even think of words to describe what they were seeing. It was as if they had been struck dumb. Then, they saw Meng Hao take a deep breath, tightly grasp the bronze lamp in his hands, and step toward the path. That image seemed to shake them to their senses.

“How could this be happening…?” thought Fang Daohong as he quietly watched Meng Hao walking toward the path in the mist. He felt like he was in an illusion, a dream or fantasy in his own mind.

Fang Linhe punched himself hard in the chest, and the resulting pain caused his eyes to widen with surprise. He felt like the world had been turned upside down. Up ahead was the necropolis of the first generation Patriarch, a place no one had ever entered, and yet Meng Hao… had casually pulled out a bronze lamp, and then… walked right into the mists.

Fang Linhe shuddered, and he was suddenly struck with a feeling of rejoicing, rejoicing at the fact that he had attacked someone as terrifyingly inhuman as this, and yet was still alive.

Up in midair, the Seventh Patriarch was also panting. In terms of both his inward disposition and his external expression, he was incapable of maintaining his calm. It didn’t matter that his cultivation base was at the peak of the Ancient Realm, he was still profoundly shaken by Meng Hao.

“Eldest Brother has a 1 Essence Dao Realm cultivation base and the status of Fang Clan’s Earth Patriarch, and yet he could only advance 39 steps into the mists. However, the lamp that kid is holding can actually scrape a path clean through the Misty Heaven Vault all the way to the necropolis!

“If you calculate that path based on the number of steps that can be taken, it must be at least 1,000!!

“It’s just a soul lamp, and yet it even exceeds the power of 1 Essence. What was the cultivation base of the person who formed that Soul Lamp? In terms of level, were they a 6 Essences Paragon? Or perhaps a 9 Essences Paragon?!

“Impossible, in all the Nine Mountains and Seas, there aren’t even any 9 Essences Paragons at all! The only people who ever entered the 9 Essences level of the Dao Realm were those three Paragons from the legendary age of the Immortal Ancient, during that Heaven-shaking, Earth-rocking war!

“I shouldn’t even be thinking about 9 Essences. Even 7 Essences Paragons don’t exist in the Nine Mountains and Seas. The highest cultivation base in this day and age is only 6 Essences!” The shock roiling in the Seventh Patriarch’s heart was impossible to describe. He looked at the scene of Meng Hao striding down the path in the mists with lamp in hand. Then, he took a deep breath, and his eyes began to shine with a strange light.

There was no greediness that arose within him. Since Meng Hao possessed the bronze lamp, he was qualified to enter the Misty Heaven Vault. To others, however, this would be the end of the line.

Although the Seventh Patriarch couldn’t help but look covetously at the bronze lamp, he did not attempt to snatch it away. He was an elder of the Clan, and furthermore, he was one of its guardian entities. Besides, he had his principles when it came to objects belonging to the members of the Junior generation.

Those were the clan rules!

They were rules that allowed the clan to multiply and grow, and to withstand the test of time!

Members of the same generation could fight and steal destiny from each other. Such things were permitted. But even if the Heavens did not care whether members of the Elder generation stole from the Juniors, it was something that was completely prohibited by the clan rules.

Although some people might brave the risks and do such things, the Seventh Patriarch was not that type of person.

“From the time the ancient first generation Patriarch passed away in meditation until now, this is… the first time his necropolis has become visible! Could it be that the One Thought Stellar Transformation will make a reappearance in the Ninth Mountain and Sea!?” The Seventh Patriarch looked at Meng Hao’s back as he walked off into the distance. He suddenly felt a premonition deep within him.

“His future prospects might not just be limited to the Ninth Mountain and Sea! Perhaps he can lead the Fang Clan to new heights of glory!”

Back on the path in the Misty Heaven Vault, Meng Hao’s heart was pounding. He held the bronze lamp in his hand as he slowly walked forward through the mists. Although it appeared as if there was an empty void beneath his feet, the ground was as solid as ever as he trod upon it.

The light of flame flickered out from the bronze lamp, and the mists on each side of him churned. Any obstructions ahead dissipated as Meng Hao continued onwards.

As he passed in further, the mists closed up behind him, blocking off the path. Any outsider, including Fang Daohong and Fang Linhe, and even the Seventh Patriarch, gradually lost sight of Meng Hao as he disappeared into the mists.

Fang Daohong and Fang Linhe exchanged a look, and could see the shock in each other’s eyes, as well as… the astonishment.

Their life or death was in Meng Hao’s hands, so to them, the more powerful Meng Hao got, the less chance they ever had to escape. However… as he increased in power, their future prospects… actually grew even more limitless.

“Perhaps Fang Xiushan has inadvertently given the two of us a chance to achieve a meteoric rise to success!!” Fang Daohong said hoarsely.

Fang Linhe took a deep breath and nodded. “If Fang Hao can get some good fortune in the necropolis, if he can become the only person in the clan who can cultivate the One Thought Stellar Transformation, then his future prospects are limitless!”

Their eyes shone with determination as they sat cross-legged outside of the Misty Heaven Vault, acting as Dharma Protectors as they waited for Meng Hao to emerge.

Back in the Misty Heaven Vault, the pitch-black temple at the end of the long path didn’t seem to be very far away. However, Meng Hao ended up walking for a long time.

One day. Two days. Three days.

On the third day, Meng Hao finally began to get close to the pitch-black temple. Although the temple was still about three thousand meters away, he knew.. that he was in the region of the necropolis!

Rising up above the pitch-black temple was an enormous statue of a middle-aged man. He wore a Daoist robe, and had an expression that was lofty and imposing, yet exposed no trace of anger, and even contained a hint of debonaire. He sat there cross-legged, eyes closed as if he were doing breathing exercises. It was merely a statue, but when you looked at it, it almost looked alive.

He looked somewhat similar to Meng Hao, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that all members of the Fang Clan had some features similar to this statue.

That was because he was none other than the first generation Patriarch.

He was the peerless, breathtaking man who had risen to become the first Patriarch of a clan!

Eighteen enormous coiling dragons could be seen on the steps leading up to the temple, each of which emanated an archaic feel. It almost looked like those eighteen dragons were actually supporting the entire necropolis with their bodies.

Simply put, it was a majestic sight!

Meng Hao’s heart trembled as he looked at the huge temple; he knew that this was the final resting place of the first generation Patriarch!

The first generation Patriarch was how the Fang Clan had come to be. It was because of him that the powerful Fang Clan currently existed in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, and there was no end to the legends and myths about him that circulated in the clan.

There was a legend that the first generation Patriarch acquired the bloodline power of the Fang Clan in the Ruins of Immortality, and had followed Lord Li in his campaign to subjugate the Ninth Mountain and Sea to quell the chaos and unify all!

There was another story that the first generation Patriarch didn’t actually die, that he had lived a fifth life, in which he disappeared to live a carefree existence.

There were various legends that spun in Meng Hao’s mind. He took a deep breath as he passed the 3,000-meter mark, approaching the necropolis itself. When he neared the steps, he looked up at the huge temple doors and bowed deeply.

“Junior generation Fang Clan member Fang Hao extends greetings, first generation Patriarch!”

As his words echoed, the temple began to tremble, and the ornately decorated temple doors began to slowly open!

It was in that exact moment that… outside of the ancestral land, outside of Planet East Victory, Fan Dong’er slammed into the Door of Immortality above the Ninth Sea, causing the door to slowly begin to open. Boundless Immortal light was set free, washing over Fan Dong’er, causing her to gradually become translucent. The holiness that she exuded grew even more intense.

She was already beautiful, but as of this moment, her beauty was beyond compare.

The cultivators of the Ninth Sea God World stared at her intently, for they knew… that the critical moment had arrived.

Now was the time to see exactly how many Immortal meridians Fan Dong’er would open!

It wasn’t just the Ninth Sea God World cultivators who were watching closely. All the other sects and clans were using various methods to observe exactly what happened with Fan Dong’er!

The old Dao Realm woman stood there quietly, looking up at Fan Dong’er with a slight smile, eyes gleaming with anticipation.

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# Chapter 961: Necropolis

Above the Ninth Sea, the Door of Immortality opened, and boundless Immortal light emanated out, completely bathing Fan Dong'er. At the same time, enormous quantities of Immortal qi exploded out from the door and bored into her body.

When the Door of Immortality opens, so do Immortal meridians. Every person is different, so the number of Immortal meridians that can be opened depends on a variety of aspects.

Take Pill Demon for example. Although the moment of his true Immortal Ascension did not come with any display of Immortal meridians, that was because he was the first true Immortal of the era. Therefore, he had gained the approval of all the Nine Mountains and Seas, and his name was engraved upon the Immortal scroll.

Those who used Immortality Illumination Vines to become true Immortals were also approved by the Nine Mountains and Seas, and their names were also recorded on the Immortal scroll, although they were viewed as lacking some of the destiny of Heaven and Earth that Pill Demon had.

However, at its root, cultivation is about defying the Heavens and contending for control of fate. The path to Immortality is one of ascension through defiance of the Heavens.

As far as Meng Hao was concerned, if he succeeded in becoming a true Immortal without using an Immortality Illumination Vine, and without acquiring the Immortal destiny to gain the approval to become a true Immortal, then his true Immortality would be completely domineering!

He would be an overbearing true Immortal who everyone had to acknowledge, whether they wanted to or not!

Currently, Immortal qi raged above the Ninth Sea. Everyone watched as Fan Dong’er’s body emitted scintillating light, and her aura exploded with power.

10 meridians. 20 meridians. 30 meridians…. The light which emanated out from her grew more intense, and shocking images like that of dragons or phoenixes swirled around her!

40 meridians. 60 meridians. 80 meridians…. Rumbling filled the air and shook the hearts of all onlookers as she reached 90 meridians! She was now the complete center of attention, and yet, wasn’t done yet!

91 meridians. 93 meridians. In the end… she opened 96 meridians!

The entire Ninth Sea was completely astonished!

As the Door of Immortality faded away, Fan Dong’er hovered there in midair, her 96 Immortal meridians emanating Immortal power. She could sense that she had been thoroughly remolded, and was now vastly more powerful than before.

She looked out into the starry sky in the direction of Planet East Victory.

“Meng Hao…. I’m a true Immortal now, and when I utilize the Ninth Sea Immortality Incantation, I can double my power. There is still a fight to be had between us, so I hope you’re able to keep up with the current generation.”

At almost the same moment that Fan Dong’er opened 96 Immortal meridians, back in the Fang Clan ancestral land on Planet East Victory, within the mist, Meng Hao was holding the bronze lamp aloft as he stepped into the open door of the necropolis.

He was now entering a place… that no one had ever entered from the moment the first generation Patriarch passed away in meditation until now!

The necropolis!

As he entered, he looked up and saw a field of twinkling stars. There was also a huge mountain, which was surrounded by four planets. Next to the mountain was a starry sea.

It was the Ninth Mountain, the Ninth Sea, and the four planets.

That was the ceiling of the enormous hall in which he found himself. Starlight glittered down onto a middle-aged man who sat atop a woven rush mat. His face was calm, without the slightest hint that he might be dead. And yet, his entire person emanated an aura of rot.

He was almost like a statue that had been sitting there motionless for countless years.

He wore a simple robe and a scholar’s hat. He sat there cross-legged, his lips turned up in a slight smile. In his hand he held a scroll of bamboo slips, and a glowing sphere of starlight hovered around him, flickering.

In addition to this, there was a pill furnace, without any cover. Inside of the furnace was a swirling mass of seven-colored mist, making it impossible to see clearly whatever was inside. Above the pill furnace, occupying Meng Hao’s entire field of view, was… a dragon.

It was… a dragon cast from bronze, its long body twisted around the columns that supported the roof. Cracks spread out from the areas where the dragon’s claws sank into the column, and its tail disappeared into the darkness. Its head hung down directly above the pill furnace, into which it was gazing with an expression of greed. Its mouth was open as if it were about to consume whatever was inside the pill furnace.

The bronze dragon was incredibly realistic, even down to the scales, making it almost look alive. Meng Hao even noticed several areas on the dragon’s body where the scales were severely damaged, as if they were scars earned from hundreds of battles.

As he looked at everything around him, Meng Hao began to pant. He almost couldn't believe that this was merely a bronze casting of a dragon; to him, it almost felt as if it were a real, flesh-and-blood dragon.

One of the reasons for that sensation was that when he looked at it, the Immortal meridian inside of him began to pulse violently and emit an aura of longing, as if it wanted to completely absorb it!

Meng Hao hesitated for a moment. In a situation like this, he would not act rashly. He scanned the huge temple hall, and then decided to skirt the pill furnace and head over to the man sitting on the rush mat. He looked at him sitting there meditating, and realized that he looked exactly like the statue outside.

"First generation Patriarch…." murmured Meng Hao. As he looked at the man, his blood began to thrum, as if it were a resonance between the two of them.

After a long moment, Meng Hao knelt down and kowtowed to the man.

"Fang Hao of the Junior generation offers greetings, Patriarch," he said, his voice sincere. Although he might have a bit of enmity toward the Fang Clan, he only had feelings of respect for the first generation Patriarch who had founded the clan.

After kowtowing, Meng Hao got to his feet and looked at the sphere of starlight hovering around of the first generation Patriarch. Deep inside the light, he could just barely make out a fingernail-sized asteroid.

As the starlight entered his eyes, Meng Hao's breathing sped up a bit. From what he could tell, this object… was probably a manifestation of the One Thought Stellar Transformation.

He tried to reach out and grab the starlight, but no matter how he attempted to take ahold of it, it did no good, as if the sphere were completely ignoring him. It just continued to orbit the first generation Patriarch.

Meng Hao thought for a moment, then abandoned any attempts to force the matter. After all, the sphere of starlight was hovering around the first generation Patriarch, so any attempt to forcibly take it away would probably involve making contact with the Patriarch's corpse, a level of disrespect that Meng Hao wouldn't show.

He took a few steps back, looking around and then floating up into the air to take a closer look at the places where the bronze dragon's claws sank into the column. After a moment, he took in a deep breath, and his expression was one of complete disbelief.

He then sank back down to the ground and glanced around vigilantly, his heart pounding.

Moments ago, he had been able to determine that the cracks had not been carved there, but had occurred naturally, as if… on some day in the past, a real dragon had actually latched onto the column with its claws.

As he continued to gaze at the bronze dragon, images began to appear in his mind. In the vision, he saw the hall, empty and peaceful. Then a dragon charged in, swirling through hall and then wrapping around one column after another. Its claws pierced into the columns as it lowered its head, eyes flickering with greed as it attempted to consume the pill furnace. It was in that moment that a powerful force rippled out, and the dragon died instantly, transforming into nothing more than a bronze statue.

As soon as Meng Hao experienced this vision, he was filled with shock.

"This necropolis sure is full of strange things…." he thought, blinking. He looked back at the first generation Patriarch, then was struck by a sudden impulse. Meng Hao walked past him, then sat down across from him, back facing the Patriarch, looking out into the hall.

His scalp instantly went numb as he realized that from this position, he could directly see the dragon's chin, and the lower part of its body. Furthermore, it appeared that… if he were powerful enough, he could use a single finger to cause the entire bronze dragon to explode.

He raised his hand and pointed in that very manner, then stood up and followed the line that his finger had pointed at. When he arrived at the place where that path intersected with the dragon's chin, and examined it more closely, he could sense something that caused his mind to tremble.

He was almost frightened out of his senses when that specific spot on the dragon's chin rippled as if with magic; apparently there was still the residue of some sort of magical technique, left behind in this spot.

That indicated… that this was the point of impact that had led to the bronze dragon being turned into a statue!

Meng Hao slowly turned around to face the first generation Patriarch. Mouth parched and dry, he forced a smile onto his face and then clasped hands and bowed.

"Patriarch," he began carefully, "I am a member of the Fang Clan, the sole descendant of the direct bloodline. I'm the only heir. Do you get what that means, sir?! Basically, if I die, then the direct bloodline will be gone!!

"Sir, you are an exalted and magnanimous person, so, um… well, I'm here, not to disturb you, sir, but rather, to acquire a legacy so that I can perform meritorious services for the clan!"

Meng Hao's speech was met with silence, so after a moment, he backed up, thought for a moment, then looked over at the pill furnace in hesitation.

"Whatever it was that caused this incredibly powerful dragon to feel such greed must definitely be a precious treasure…. Who knows how this dragon managed to charge its way in here, but it shows that it's definitely not weak. Most likely, it actually came here before the Misty Heaven Vault was created, and before the first generation Patriarch perished. The fact that the first generation Patriarch caused the dragon to remain in the necropolis shows just how powerful it was.

"And the item it desired…." Meng Hao's heart thumped as he hesitated, torn about what to do. Finally, he looked up and yet again clasped hands to the first generation Patriarch.

“Patriarch, my Bloodline Gatebeam rose up 30,000 meters, making me fit to be called the number one figure of the Fang bloodline right now. That indicates… that you and I have a very close connection, grandfather.” He blinked.

“Considering our close relationship, if you were still alive, sir, well, I think you would be very happy to see me. I have a pretty good personality, and an even temper. I’m very obedient, and always follow instructions. Pretty much everyone likes me.” Meng Hao slapped his chest proudly as he described himself.

“Patriarch, you’re a member of the Elder generation, so to see someone of the Junior generation after so many years, especially someone as outstanding as myself, must surely make you very happy. You definitely would want a member of the Junior generation like me to be handsomely rewarded.

“I actually want nothing else than the contents of that pill furnace. Why don’t you give it to me, okay? Oh, and the One Thought Stellar Transformation? I’d love to continue to develop it. Right, about that dragon, I’ll clear it out for you, how about that!?” Meng Hao, feeling emboldened, and yet also gritting his teeth, slowly approached the pill furnace and looked at the seven-colored mist inside. He then gently blew on the mist.

As soon as his breath touched the mist, Meng Hao saw that inside of the pill furnace was a jade plate, upon which was a blob of seven-colored liquid.

The moment he saw the seven-colored liquid, all of the hair on his body stood on end. As a Grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy, it didn’t matter that he had never seen a liquid like this before, his intuition instantly informed him that this was something that could not be consumed by cultivators.

It contained a shocking, violent aura which indicated that any cultivator who consumed it would be killed instantly.

It was at this moment that a thrumming sound could suddenly be heard from within his bag of holding. The jade box inside shattered, and the two Nirvana Fruits that had been given to him by the Grand Elder, the ones that belonged to the first generation Patriarch, suddenly flew out of their own volition. Seemingly striving to outdo each other, they shot toward the seven-colored liquid inside the pill furnace.

It was as if the first fruit to touch the liquid would be completely restored!

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# Chapter 962: The Number One Person of Immortal Destiny!

It happened so suddenly that Meng Hao could only watch with wide eyes as the two Nirvana Fruits shot toward the pill furnace. The one that took the lead was the one which Meng Hao had spent so many spirit stones on, and was on the verge of already being completely restored.

Meng Hao’s mind filled with roaring as he suddenly realized that the seven-colored liquid must have the same function as Spirit Elixir. It wasn’t meant to be consumed, it was meant to be used to restore Nirvana Fruits.

A Yin aura of death could be sensed within the liquid, an aura that represented the lack of life and destruction. The Nirvana Fruits had been withered for eons, and were essentially dead. However, it seemed that when they touched the seven-colored liquid, the Yin death aura would reach a pinnacle in which life force suddenly appeared!

That life force represented the restoration of the Nirvana Fruits.

The violent surge of energy from the seven-colored liquid would replenish the Nirvana Fruits, leading to a rapid increase in life force.

Meng Hao’s mind trembled; the first thought that entered his mind was that he must not under any circumstances allow the Nirvana Fruit which he had so painstakingly worked on to succeed right now. If it did, the losses he would sustain as a result would be too incredible.

He used all the power he could muster to reach out and grab the Nirvana Fruit, which was just on the verge of touching the seven-colored liquid.

Even as he did this, the other Nirvana Fruit that he had ignored all this time melt down into the liquid.

In that instant, blinding beams of seven-colored light stabbed out, and a thick, seven-colored mist spread out to cover the entire pill furnace.

The other Nirvana Fruit, which Meng Hao now held in his hand, seemed to calm down, and ceased moving. Meng Hao quickly tossed it into his bag of holding, and then backed up several paces, his facial expression fluctuating with anxiety.

He looked over at the first generation Patriarch, then back at the seven-colored mist in the pill furnace, and began muttering to himself in uncertainty.

“No one has ever been to this necropolis before…. Therefore, nobody knows that the Spirit Extract within the pill furnace can provoke such a reaction from the Nirvana Fruits…. This is the necropolis of the first generation Patriarch, and the Nirvana Fruits belong to him.

“I wonder if, after the fusion is complete, the Nirvana Fruit could be consumed?” Meng Hao hesitated for a moment; currently, he couldn’t see anything in particular inside of the pill furnace’s mist.

“If I can consume it, then it would definitely be a big win for me!” Meng Hao’s eyes shone with bright light.

“Even if I can’t consume it, losing one of the Nirvana Fruits isn’t completely unacceptable.” With that, Meng Hao took a deep breath and calmed himself down. Then, he looked up at the bronze dragon.

This time, it seemed different than before. Its greedy expression had changed into one of fear, and instead of its mouth being open in preparation to consume the pill furnace, it now looked as if someone had violently wrenched its mouth open with the purpose of distilling the essence of its life force.

That essence seemed to be formed from the frenzied terror it had experienced in the moment of death. Then, after it died, the Yin death power formed together… merging to create a drop of liquid filled with boundless Yin death and violence. That drop had then descended onto the jade plate in the pill furnace.

Meng Hao wasn't sure whether or not he was mistaken, but it seemed that as soon as the Nirvana Fruit merged into the liquid and the dense mist filled the pill furnace, some sort of natural law seemed to have been nullified, which made the bronze dragon's expression change again. This time, it seemed almost relieved, as if it had experienced a release.

Next, cracks suddenly spread out across the bronze dragon's body. They rapidly covered its entire body, to the point where the dragon gradually… began to dissipate right before his eyes!

He stared in shock, and took a deep breath as he backed up.

He looked on as the bronze dragon began to fade, transforming into strands of mist that maintained the shape of a dragon as they intertwined with each other and began to swirl around the hall.

When it got close to Meng Hao, the misty dragon head looked at him thoughtfully. Eventually, a gleam of appreciation could be seen in its eyes, after which it shot forward and slammed headfirst Meng Hao!

It instantly began to fuse into him, transforming into Immortal qi, which then surged into his Immortal meridian.

Meng Hao's mind trembled, and his Immortal meridian shook violently. It even began to resemble the appearance of a dragon as it madly absorbed the misty dragon's Immortal qi.

Cracking sounds could be heard as his Immortal meridian solidified even further, and Meng Hao's true Immortal aura grew stronger and stronger.

A strange gleam appeared in his eyes. His breath came in ragged pants as he experienced the sensation of the true Immortal Realm more strongly than he ever had before. Previously, he had been at the point of needing a hundred days to completely solidify his Immortal meridian, but now it was proceeding much faster than before.

In the time it takes an incense stick to burn, rumbling filled Meng Hao’s body as his Immortal meridian was completely formed!!

Immortal light pulsed out from him, and Immortal qi multiplied rapidly, circulating through his body, causing his Cultivation base to change completely.

He had been waiting for this moment for a long time. His journey had started in the lands of South Heaven, in the moment that he witnessed his master Pill Demon reach true Immortal Ascension. That was when his anticipation had begun to build!

From this moment on, he was not a mortal, but an Immortal.

During the Daoist Societies’ trial by fire, Meng Hao had seen the glimmer of hope. After arriving on Planet East Victory, his anticipation deepened. Originally, he thought it would take a bit longer, but now, in the ancestral land, within the necropolis, he acquired the vast, heavenly good fortune to complete that final step into true Immortality.

Were Meng Hao not in this necropolis, which was part of the Ruins of Immortality, then Immortal Tribulation would currently be forming up above, and a Door of Immortality would appear.

Only by bashing open that door would he be able to make the final leap to success by opening the rest of his Immortal meridians.

However at this moment, the Door of Immortality had no way to sense Meng Hao’s aura, no way to realize that he was about to step into the Immortal Realm. Therefore, it did not appear.

Because of that… Meng Hao’s cultivation base had actually reached an indescribably shocking level.

Lucky breaks like this were something incredibly rare. To be able to achieve true Immortal Ascension like this required three criteria; to achieve Immortality without the use of an Immortality Illumination Vine, to be in a place with both a necropolis and a piece of the Ruins of Immortality, and for that place to have sufficient Immortal qi.

Though it seemed that the three stipulations would be a simple matter to meet, it was actually incredibly difficult. Normally speaking, it would be easier to find a phoenix feather or a qilin horn than to meet the first requirement, not to mention the other two!!

They were so difficult that, although you couldn’t say they were impossible to meet, they were definitely extremely, extremely unlikely. In fact, in the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea, Meng Hao was the only person who, by a series of chance occurrences, had managed to achieve it!

Perhaps in some of the other Eight Mountains and Seas, there had been other people throughout the years who attempted to do the same thing. However, none of those people could compare to Meng Hao. That was because he had started out with a foundation for true Immortality, which was the Immortal meridian that had been given to him by none other than the bronze lamp!

It was an authentic Immortal meridian, exceeding that of all other Immortals, making him… a true Immortal among true Immortals!

Meng Hao was actually the first person in all of the Nine Mountains and Seas to come across such a lucky break!

However many extra Immortal meridians he had now would remain with him when he underwent his Immortal Tribulation on the outside, and would not superimpose with those Immortal meridians he acquired, but would increase their number!

All souls had three spiritual aspects and seven physical soul aspects, with ten meridians composing each of the ten vessels. Immortals with 100 meridians had three spiritual soul aspects, seven physical soul aspects, and ten soul vessels. People who exceeded 100 meridians were extremely rare in the Nine Mountains and Seas. In fact, such people existed virtually in legend only. Each meridian that exceeded 100 resulted in an additional soul vessel!

Meng Hao’s body filled with rumbling as his first Immortal Meridian was completed. Furthermore, thanks to the misty dragon, a second Immortal meridian was also beginning to take shape. As soon as it appeared, it began to solidify.

Good preparation leads to success. Other Chosen had already prepared themselves to their utmost limits, so, when they stepped into true Immortality, it would be a shocking event. As for Meng Hao, he had taken himself to be well prepared, but now, with this sudden lucky break, he was accumulating even more potential.

If any outsider became aware of this kind of extra preparation, it would shock the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea.

At the same time that Meng Hao sat there cross-legged, madly absorbing Immortal qi and forming a second Immortal meridian, clouds were forming in the starry sky outside of Planet East Victory. It started as a mist that rapidly formed into Tribulation Clouds alongside a shocking Door of Immortality.

A Door of Immortality ha been floating over the Ninth Sea just a short time ago, and now, one materialized over East Victory and was slowly descending toward the planet.

Countless people saw it, and it immediately led to a complete uproar. Fang Clan members looked at it excitedly, especially the clan Elders.

“True Immortal Tribulation!” the Grand Elder gasped, eyes shining brightly.

The descent of the Door of Immortality was not because of Meng Hao; rather, it was because of… Fang Wei!

Beneath the ancestral mansion, Fang Xiushan awakened from meditation, body trembling, expression one of excitement as he looked over at the stone wall next to him. Suddenly, the stone wall opened up to reveal a tall figure striding out, who was none other than Fang Wei.

His left eye was pitch black, a darkness that seemed to contain death itself. His right eye was completely white, as if it contained the vitality of daytime. His entire person radiated the aura of true Immortality.

His expression was sober and serious as he simultaneously exuded the aura of reincarnation and the icy coldness of the Yellow Springs.

“Wei’er,” said Fang Xiushan excitedly, “you….”

“Dad, I succeeded,” was the reply. Fang Wei immediately blasted a hole in the ceiling of the chamber and then flew out into the air above.

Fang Xiushan tilted his head back and began to laugh loudly. Seeing Fang Wei fly out filled his heart with excitement, and he knew that as of this moment, all of his violations of clan rules were no longer important, and could easily be swept under the rug.

Indeed, it really was true. As Fang Wei shot up into the sky, the Grand Elder caught sight of Fang Xiushan and gave him a deep look, although he didn’t say anything.

At the moment, Fang Wei was the only person flying up in midair. Seeing this from their positions down below, the Elders of his bloodline also flew up to act as Dharma Protectors. At the same time, the Fang Clan’s grand spell formation was also activated, making Fang Wei the center of all attention on Planet East Victory.

Down in the stony cavern beneath the ancestral mansion, the other six Patriarchs stirred and began to observe the scene. Although they didn’t appear in person, their divine senses locked down the whole planet.

As of this moment, Fang Wei was the focus of all eyes!

Fang Xi stood within the crowds, fists clenched, eyes filled with defiance.

“Fang Hao should be the one reaching true Immortal Ascension!

“Fang Hao, Coz, I hope you’re okay, and I hope you know that Fang Wei… succeeded with his Immortal Ascension and is now preparing to attack the Door of Immortality and open his Immortal meridians!”

Rumbling filled the Heavens as the Door of Immortality descended. All of the clans and sects in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were using various methods to observe what was happening on Planet East Victory.

If you didn’t count Pill Demon, Fang Wei was the second person in this generation after Fan Dong’er… to become a true Immortal cultivator!

“Fan Dong’er opened 96 Immortal meridians. I wonder… how many Immortal meridians Fang Wei will open?!” That was the question on the minds of all the people watching throughout the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Fang Wei looked like a shooting star as he soared up into the sky toward the rumbling Immortal Tribulation. Lightning crashed around him as he roared, eyes filled with determination as he completely ignored the Immortal Tribulation and focused completely on the Door of Immortality within the cloud.

“My goal is to open 98 meridians!” he murmured softly. “After I have my Immortal meridians, Fang Hao… you will be nothing more than an ant to me. Your two Nirvana Fruits will make me, Fang Wei, the number one person within my generation!

“However, I’m still going to crush you to death to sever the Devil in my heart!” Fang Wei’s eyes shone with pride and arrogance as he contemplated his desire to… return to the position he had occupied before the rising of the East Ascension Sun… Prince Wei of the Fang Clan!

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# Chapter 963: Fang Hao, Come Out and Fight!

As Meng Hao meditated in seclusion in the necropolis, having completed his first Immortal meridian and moved on to his second, the Door of Immortality rumbled above Planet East Victory, and Immortal Tribulation descended.

Fang Wei flew up above the land, heading into the tribulation, the focus of all eyes, not only on Planet East Victory, but in all of the sects and clans, who used various different methods to bear witness to Fang Wei becoming a true Immortal.

Fan Dong’er had opened 96 meridians, causing widespread shock. Now that Fang Wei had reached Immortal Ascension, everyone was considering the question of how many meridians he would open. His Immortal Ascension represented the potential rise of a new almighty figure within the Fang Clan.

As everything rumbled, the Immortal Tribulation battered Fang Wei, and he roared. Lightning crashed down, and he let it. The aura of reincarnation swirled around him, and the will of the Yellow Springs surged strongly.

Furthermore, a bizarre light shone in his eyes. The left one was black, the right one white, which was the manifestation of the successful cultivation of One Breath Yellow Springs Dao. As for the aura of reincarnation that swirled around him, that was from the One Thought Reincarnation Incantation!

These were signature divine abilities of the Fang Clan, and shockingly, he had cultivated two of them!

Amidst the rumbling, Fang Wei slammed into the door of Immortality, immediately opening it a crack. Boundless Immortal light began to spill out, and the Immortal tribulation grew more intense, covering everything in the sky.

Time passed. Soon, three days had gone by.

During those three days, Fang Wei's image shocked everyone. He continued to completely ignore the Immortal Tribulation, which didn't seem capable of pushing him back even the least bit. In fact, he even seemed to be gaining strength from it. Lightning filled the Heavens, and Fang Wei's presence there left everyone astonished.

"Fang Wei is the number one Chosen of the Fang Clan! He's the Fang Clan's Prince Wei!"

"The Immortal Tribulation is going to dissipate! He's about to truly open the Door of Immortality!"

"Fang Wei! Fang Wei!" Everyone in the Fang Clan was excited, and their voices quickly filled the air, turning into sound waves that rolled out in all directions.

Moments later, a shocking boom could be heard as Fang Wei pushed open the Door of Immortality. Immortal light surged out, filling the sky, the blinding beams immediately dispersing the Immortal Tribulation.

The Immortal light wreathed Fang Wei as he threw his head back and let out a long shout. His hair whipped about, and his tall frame grew even more refined as it shed its mortal constraints. He was now stepping into the true Immortal Realm.

At the same time, the Immortal light sent out boundless Immortal qi that surrounded Fang Wei and poured into his body.

Everyone down below was in an uproar as they observed the proceedings. The Grand Elder's eyes shone with brilliant light. Off to the side, Fang Wei's grandfather and Fang Xiushan both looked extremely excited.

20 meridians. 40 meridians. 60 meridians. 80 meridians!

In the space of a few breaths worth of time, Immortal light washed over Fang Wei, and he opened 80 Immortal meridians, causing intense pressure to radiate out. Rumbling echoed out from within him as the Immortal meridians writhed like vicious dragons, and emanated the power of true Immortality.

83 meridians. 87 meridians. 90 meridians!!

The Fang Clan was in a huge commotion, and all observers on Planet East Victory were trembling. The clan members of other clans were all looking at Fang Wei as he rose once again to prominence, opening 90 meridians!

However, things weren't over yet. More shocking rumbling could be heard from within Fang Wei. 91, 92, 93….

When the 96th meridian appeared, there was universal astonishment!

"Fan Dong'er opened 96 meridians, and now Fang Wei has actually done the same thing!"

"He fully deserves to be called a Chosen!"

"He… he actually seems to have a bit of energy left. Just how many resources did Fang Wei pour into his preparations!? This is astonishing!"

Rumbling sounds continue to echo out as the 97th meridian opened inside of Fang Wei!

Fang Xiushan was trembling, and his expression was one of intense excitement. He looked up into the sky and began to laugh heartily. Next to him, Fang Wei's grandfather looked very pleased. Even the Grand Elder appeared to be smiling.

The entire Fang Clan was roused into complete excitement.

However, Fang Wei wasn't satisfied. He remained in the Door of Immortality, surrounded by Immortal light, his cultivation base climbing higher and higher. He continued to rise higher as he suddenly shouted out.

“98th meridian, OPEN!!”

The instant his voice echoed out, a shocking rumbling sound could be heard. In the blink of an eye, his aura leaped exponentially, emitting a terrifying aura as he formed… a 98th meridian!

98 horned dragons appeared around him in the void, swirling gracefully, causing anyone who saw them to begin to pant.

In the moment that the 98th meridian was formed, 10,000 illusory figures appeared in the area surrounding the Door of immortality. They wore armor and held Immortal weapons, and they quickly surrounded Fang Wei and then themselves prostrated in worship.

Everyone on Planet East Victory who saw this couldn’t help but gasp, and the cultivators from the other sects and clans were completely shaken.

“The Fang Clan has produced a qilin-like prodigy!”

“98 meridians! It’s rare for even one person like that to appear every 10,000 years! Strange signs will appear whenever anyone exceeds 95 meridians, for example, the flying dragons and phoenixes of Fan Dong’er. However, Fang Wei… actually caused 10,000 ancient Immortal warriors to appear!”

“He’s been touched by the destiny of the Mountains and Seas! Destiny of the Mountains and Seas is upon him!!”

The Fang Clan was abuzz, and the rest of the Ninth Mountain and Sea was also shaken. Even the Ji Clan on the Ninth Mountain took notice.

As of this moment, Fang Wei was now the number one figure in his generation!

As the Door of Immortality slowly faded away, Fang Wei hovered in midair, his robe as pure as fresh snow, his long hair swirling about. He had been handsome to begin with, but now his demeanor was even more elegant and entrancing. His eyes shone with a pride that looked down on both

Heaven and Earth; as of this moment, he made no effort to conceal his cultivation base. He allowed it to explode out, causing the sky to tremble, and Immortal might to shake the land.

“Fang Hao, come out and fight!” he suddenly roared, his words echoing out like thunder. No one had expected these words to be the first things to come out of his mouth.

“Fang Hao, get out here and fight me!” His words echoed back and forth constantly, roaring like thunder.

It was at this point that quite a few people recalled Meng Hao. Actually, in the days following the rise of the East Ascension Sun, the number one Chosen in the clan wasn’t Fang Wei, it was Meng Hao!

No one said anything. The entire Fang Clan went quiet. Actually, not many people knew about Meng Hao entering the ancestral land. Most of them had no idea that Meng Hao was not currently inside the premises of the Clan.

Even Fang Wei wasn’t aware of the current situation!

As his voice echoed out, the clan went quiet as they waited to see if Meng Hao would come out. Fang Xi was in the crowd, jaw clenched tightly. Finally, he let out a mighty cry bolstered by all of his cultivation base.

“My Coz Fang Hao is in the ancestral land! Once he comes out, you won’t need to go looking for him! He’ll find you to do battle!” In response to Fang Xi’s words, Fang Wei’s expression remained the same as ever. However, icy coldness appeared in his eyes as he looked down at Fang Xi.

“Well then, I’ll just wait for him to come out!” With that, he shot down toward the ground, appearing just outside the main temple hall, where he sat down cross-legged.

Indeed, like he had said, he was going to wait for Meng Hao to return so that he could fight and kill him!

Even if Meng Hao hadn’t achieved true Immortal Ascension yet, Fang Wei would kill him anyway. After all, if Meng Hao didn’t achieve true Immortality, naturally he would not be qualified to be Fang Wei’s rival. To kill a lesser person such as that would clear his clouded mind.

“You’d better not disappoint me,” he thought, the killing intent in his eyes growing as he looked at the temple hall.

The fact that Fang Wei and Meng Hao were soon going to have a decisive battle attracted quite a bit of attention on the part of the rest of the clan. Earlier, many of them had taken a liking to Meng Hao, but now that they had personally watched Fang Wei become a true Immortal, their hearts wavered.

“Will Fang Hao lose…?”

“How could one even fight against a Chosen like that…?”

The expressions of the direct bloodline members were somewhat gloomy. Only Fang Xi had the utmost confidence in Meng Hao. He stood there, hands clenched into fists, completely sure that Meng Hao would never lose!

Meanwhile, Meng Hao was sitting cross-legged in the necropolis in the ancestral land. He was surrounded by swirling tendrils of mist. The misty dragon’s head was now completely absorbed into him, while the body still remained in the necropolis.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as always. He stood there unmoving, and yet, his heart was filled with crashes like that of lightning. Great waves surged through him as his second Immortal meridian solidified with shocking speed.

Ten percent. Twenty percent. Thirty percent…. It was impossible to say how much Immortal qi that bronze dragon’s body contained. After all, only the head itself was enough to cause Meng Hao’s second Immortal meridian to reach a state of forty percent completion.

It must be stated that Meng Hao’s Immortal meridians were different than that of others. Not even Fan Dong’er or Fang Wei’s could compare with his at all.

His Immortal meridians were those of a true Immortal among true Immortals!

Each and every one was like a true dragon!

As they formed, they required massive consumption of Immortal qi, to such an extent it was almost unbelievable.

“The more I build up in preparation here, the more I’ll be able to explode out later!” Meng Hao performed a double-handed incantation, and rotated his cultivation base, madly absorbing the misty dragon.

Time passed, and the dragon undulated. Meng Hao’s second Immortal meridian reached fifty percent, sixty, seventy and finally eighty percent!!

Any onlooker who could see such a thing would be flabbergasted.

Meng Hao trembled as he went all-out to absorb the Immortal qi. His second Immortal meridian rapidly reached ninety percent and then… one hundred percent!

In that moment, popping sounds rang out from within him as his second Immortal meridian solidified completely.

As of this moment, he had two Immortal meridians inside of him, a sort of preparation leading to Immortality that was without compare in the Ninth Mountain and Sea!

“I can keep going!” thought Meng Hao, panting. His heart began to pound; he had long since realized that this opportunity was the greatest good fortune he could have encountered in aid of achieving true Immortal Ascension.

He opened his eyes, and they shone with a strange light. Deep within his pupils, a flame burned, a flame that was… a fiery thirst to become a powerful expert!

“I will… become even more powerful!” He took in a deep breath, and rumbling could be heard as more of the misty dragon poured into him. As he absorbed it, a third Immortal meridian began to form!

“There is now about half a month until I have to leave this place…. When I walk out of the ancestral land, my name… will definitely spread throughout the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea!

“Dad. Mom. I’m going to astonish the entire Fang Clan. I’m going to be the focus of the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea. I know that you’re stuck on Planet South Heaven, so… I’m going to make you proud from here!”

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered like a blade, filled with loyalty and obsession. Finally, he closed them again.

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# Chapter 964: We’re Waiting!

Pill Demon opened up a new age, giving rise to a majestic prelude to a long-anticipated 10,000-year-era.

It was a 10,000-year-era that contained endless possibilities, and no one could possibly predict how far these blazings suns of various sects and clans would progress during that time.

Perhaps other blazing suns would appear, and rise up like dark horses!

For example, Wang Tengfei!

After Pill Demon initiated the prologue, Fan Dong’er lifted the curtains, allowing all to clearly see that a new age was upon them.

As for Fang Wei, he was a rising heavenly body in the first act, the center of all attention. His appearance caused everyone to realize that the age of true Immortals… had arrived.

Fan Dong’er’s rise to true Immortality shook half of the Ninth Sea, making her instantly famous. Fang Wei’s rise to true Immortality sent waves throughout Planet East Victory, and the appearance of 10,000 Immortal warriors bowing in worship to him cause utter astonishment.

However, nobody had predicted that the one who would come after Fan Dong’er and Fang Wei to become the third person to provoke Immortal Tribulation would not be some well-known Chosen from one of the sects or clans. Instead, it was an ordinary member of the Wang Clan… who happened to be located on an asteroid in the starry sky!

The Door of Immortality descended, and amidst the Immortal Tribulation, Immortal qi swirled in the starry sky. The sects and clans were bewildered as they turned their attention in that direction.

Wang Tengfei!

After experiencing shocking changes in his life, he had gained a new level of maturity. He had gone through many ordeals, and death had even appeared on his doorstep, only to pass him by. Wang Tengfei was no longer the perfect young man he had been back on Planet South Heaven.

He was now taciturn, and lacked any sort of arrogance. Because of the many things he had gone through, he ended up achieving great revelations regarding life.

He looked at the Immortal Tribulation and the Door of Immortality, and he chuckled. As he laughed, his eyes shone with obsession. At the same time, he recalled the images of the destruction of his clan on Planet South Heaven. He saw himself falling. He went from being a Chosen to being completely down and out, and in the end, helped the Patriarch fulfill his goal.

Through all of those things, Meng Hao’s shadow always seemed to loom over him. It had never faded away and couldn’t be blotted out. From the Reliance Sect onward, it was always there….

“Meng Hao….” Wang Tengfei threw his head back and laughed, then flew up into the air toward the Immortal Tribulation. Rumbling could be heard, and the stars trembled. All of the sects and clans were now focused on Wang Tengfei.

Especially… the Wang Clan!

Up to now, they had completely disregarded Wang Tengfei. He was merely from Planet South Heaven’s collateral branch of the clan. Now, the clan Elders looked at him, and their hearts quivered.

Wang Tengfei rose up like a blazing sun amidst the Immortal Tribulation. The Door of Immortality opened, and Immortal light exploded out. In the end, he opened 95 Immortal meridians!

95 Immortal meridians didn’t match up to Fang Wei, and was one less than Fan Dong’er. Even still, the matter was enough to shock all of the various sects and clans.

That was especially true because of the strange signs that appeared after he opened the 95 meridians. Although observers might not have noticed anything extremely unusual, when the Wang Clan Elders saw it, massive waves of shock rolled through their hearts.

The image that appeared for Wang Tengfei was that of some sort of heavenly body. It was not something enormous, but rather, very small, and it appeared… on his forehead!

It rotated there, emanating a shocking aura, making it seem as if Wang Tengfei’s body was now very different than it had been before.

“That’s… the mark of the Ancient God bloodline!!”

“That kid actually awakened the most powerful bloodline of our entire Wang Clan, the Ancient God bloodline!” 1

The entire Wang Clan was sent into a stir, and quite a few people flew out to act as Dharma Protectors.

In a bamboo forest that was a restricted area in the Wang Clan, there was an old man who had reprimanded Wang Mu previously. He currently squatted on a long stalk of bamboo, his body wizened, his expression one of boundless ancientness. Although he normally looked disreputable, right now, he suddenly looked much more serious, and a terrifying light could even be seen in his eyes. 2

He stared out into the stars, his expression somber.

“At long last… a descendant has appeared who is worthy of that jinx’s bloodline…. He’s definitely better and more powerful than any of the other bastards who have appeared recently.”

In the subsequent days, which amounted to a little more than half of a month, the Door of Immortality frequently appeared in various regions throughout the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Zhao Yifan opened it, and were it not for Fang Wei, he would have been the complete center of attention with his 97 Immortal meridians.

Because of him, the Three Great Daoist Societies once again became the focus of all the clans and sects.

After him, Song Luodan also stepped into true Immortality. Taiyang Zi, too, joined their ranks.

Next was Sun Hai, whose final step took him to 90 Immortal meridians. Although it was not an extraordinary number, he wasn’t very far behind all of the others, and could be considered to have made the grade for this era.

Li Ling’er also pushed open the Door of Immortality amidst the Immortal tribulation. She bathed in the Immortal light and opened 96 meridians. This clearly proved that the Four Great Clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea possessed deep resources and great power!

After stepping into true Immortality, all of the Chosen happened to do the same thing. Their eyes turned toward Planet East Victory, as if they were waiting for a certain person!

Fan Dong’er, Fang Wei, and all of the Chosen who had stepped into true Immortality were all the center of attention, and gradually, the sects and clans picked up on what was happening. Even rogue cultivators noticed.

Soon, a rumor began to spread through the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

“The Chosen are all waiting for a cultivator by the name of Meng Hao. He also goes by Fang Hao, and he’s a member of the Fang Clan!”

“On Planet South Heaven, he forced all the other Chosen into submission. Then, in the rise of the East Ascension Sun on Planet East Victory, he was the number one figure! He even looked directly into the sun for ten breaths of time!”

“He was the first person Fang Wei wanted to fight after reaching true Immortal Ascension!”

“The reason Fan Dong’er has that corpse floating behind her is because she offended him, and he forced Karma onto her!”

“Supposedly, he’s Li Ling’er’s future beloved!”

“I heard that Taiyang Zi, Song Luodan, and Wang Mu were all defeated by him!”

“According to the rumors, Zhao Yifan once said that even he wasn’t as good as Meng Hao!”

“Rumor has it that he even captured Ji Yin from the Ji Clan!”

“People say that he has a whole stack of promissory notes, and that all the other Chosen are in massive debt to him!”

“They’re all waiting for Meng Hao… to reach Immortal Ascension!”

Meng Hao’s name spread throughout the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea, even to Planet South Heaven, and everyone heard about him. Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li stood in the Tower of Tang, looking up into the stars, offering blessings to their son.

Meanwhile, Meng Hao sat in the necropolis in the blessed land. He had already formed, not just three Immortal meridians, but four, and then five! He was now working on his sixth.

The mist dragon was now more than half gone. The necropolis itself was no longer filled with mist. Meng Hao sat there cultivating, and clearly, he wasn’t finished.

He wanted something completely unprecedented. He didn’t just want to build up preparations. What he wanted was to be able to utterly explode out the instant he entered true Immortality.

He would either do nothing, or would completely amaze people in an unprecedented fashion.

Rumbling filled his body as his sixth meridian reached a state of fifty percent completion. It kept going, soon reaching sixty percent, seventy percent… eighty percent!

Meng Hao had no idea how long he had been inside the necropolis, but he didn’t want to waste any time, and kept pushing forward.

Eventually, he reached ninety, and then one hundred percent. After that, boundless energy exploded out from him. Majestic light could be seen, causing his body to become translucent, like crystal. In the blink of an eye, he almost looked like a spirit stone.

In fact, if Meng Hao could see himself right now, he… might just fall in love.

However, six meridians wasn’t the end. Meng Hao didn’t hesitate for a moment; he immediately began to consolidate the power of his cultivation base, absorb more power from the mist dragon, and then start a seventh Immortal meridian!

Meng Hao now fully realized that long, long ago, that bronze dragon had been completely terrifying. Were it not, there would not be such a shocking amount of Immortal qi preserved inside of it after the passing of ages.

Soon, the seventh Immortal meridian formed.

Outside of the Heavenly Mist Vault, Fang Daohong and Fang Linhe were waiting, unsure of exactly what was happening inside. All they knew was that not too long after Meng Hao entered the Misty Heaven Vault, the entire ancestral land became a sea of mist.

Up in midair, the Seventh Patriarch watched the changes in the Misty Heaven Vault, and gradually got the sensation that Meng Hao was making a drastic transformation, and was leaping forward to incredible heights.

Time passed. Soon, only three days were left until the ancestral land was scheduled to open. Meng Hao was in the necropolis, his seventh Immortal meridian fully formed. Brilliant light shone from his translucent body, completely illuminating the necropolis.

Meng Hao opened his eyes, and the light that shone out was completely different. There was something profound about it, like moonlight reflected on flowing water. By now, the only thing that remained of the mist dragon was its tail. Although the Immortal qi it contained was as dense as ever, there wasn't much of it left.

"I can still open… another meridian!" His eyes gleamed with madness as he took a deep breath, rotated his cultivation base, and unleashed the power of his seven Immortal meridians. Rumbling could be heard as he absorbed the mist dragon's tail.

His body almost seemed like it was about to explode as the eighth Immortal meridian began to form. An aura began to intensify inside of him, and he actually wasn't sure exactly which Realm he belonged in. However, that didn't matter.

There was only one thought on Meng Hao's mind, and that was to stockpile this power to the utter limits, and form that eighth Immortal meridian!

"If I can succeed with this meridian, then theoretically, in the end, I could open, not 101 Immortal meridians, but 108….

"However, that's just in theory. In reality it might even be possible… to exceed that number!

"No matter what happens, I've worked hard for the true Immortal Realm. I've struggled and have prepared more than anyone else! My Immortal meridians… will definitely exceed everyone else's!

"However, my goal cannot merely be to exceed any other person. My goal… for all eternity… will be to exceed myself!

“To constantly exceed myself, to continually break through my own barriers! I will always walk my own path, all the way to the end!

“Thus, the Dao of Meng Hao is a direction. Freedom! Independence! No cares or worries! What I want, the Heavens shall NOT lack! What I don’t want, had BETTER not exist in the Heavens! [3]

“Being domineering. Having freedom. This… is the Dao of Meng Hao!” Rumbling filled Meng Hao’s body as more Immortal qi rushed in, continuing to form the eighth meridian.

Ten percent. Thirty percent. Fifty percent….

Two days passed, and there was now only one day left before the ancestral land opened. Meng Hao’s eighth meridian… was now one hundred percent complete!

Eight Immortal meridians!

1. In Renegade Immortal, Wang Lin stole the bloodline of the Ancient God. Or something along those lines, I haven’t read it personally, although I’ve heard it happens relatively early on in the story. He also had a similar mark on his forehead. Anyone with better information on this please send me a message so I can make this footnote better.

3. This is the same quote as from the official synopsis of the book, which I translated a long time ago and is still floating around out on the intrawebz. I tweaked this version a little bit to (hopefully) add a bit of the feeling that was lacking in my original translated version.

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# Chapter 965: The Ancestral Land Opens!

Eight Immortal meridians caused intense power to surge through Meng Hao. Immortal qi flowed through him, and he exuded intense pressure. His eyes shone with Immortal light, like two burning lamps that ignited to life within the necropolis.

Everything now looked different to him, clearer. He could even magnify the tiniest speck of dust until he could see the entire structure that composed it.

“This feels… great,” he murmured. Eight Immortal meridians was his limit; there was no more Immortal qi in the area, making it difficult for him to make any further increases.

The mist dragon had completely vanished, having been completely absorbed by Meng Hao. The necropolis was now totally empty and quiet.

He slowly stood up, and cracking sounds could be heard as intense power surged through him.

“As soon as I leave the ancestral land, my Immortal Tribulation will appear!” His eyes shone brightly as he caused more power to explode out in a test to see exactly how much good fortune he had acquired.

Soon after, Meng Hao looked up and then glanced around. He saw that the mist in the pill furnace had already faded away; shockingly, there was now a Nirvana Fruit sitting there on the jade plate, glowing brightly!

It was as translucent as crystal, and incomparably beautiful.

A fragrant aroma began to spread out which contained a great Dao; apparently this Nirvana Fruit was now completely restored.

Meng Hao walked up to the pill furnace and looked at the Nirvana Fruit, eyes glittering. After a moment, his eyes shone with determination; he quickly reached out, picked up the fruit and held it in front of his face.

“Nirvana Fruit… the first generation Patriarch’s Nirvana Fruit.” He looked at the Nirvana Fruit and realized that, as of this moment, he had only two options.

“I’ve waited a long time, just for the sake of a Nirvana Fruit. Well, what is there to hesitate about?” He chuckled to himself silently. Finally, he turned toward the corpse of the first generation Patriarch, clasped hands, and bowed deeply. Then, without any further hesitation, he made up his mind. Now was not the time for further hesitation.

The fact that the Nirvana Fruit had been restored by fully absorbing the seven-colored liquid didn’t bother Meng Hao at all. He hefted the fruit and pushed it hard onto his forehead.

Time to gamble!

Nirvana Fruits were not eaten like other fruits. They were absorbed directly into the body.

As soon as it touched Meng Hao’s forehead, rumbling filled his body, and he felt like he was about to explode. It rapidly fused into his forehead, and disappeared without a trace. He suddenly began to tremble violently.

A massive power exploded out within him, filling his entire body and circulating through it in a continuous cycle. It rapidly found many sealed areas within Meng Hao’s body, areas he didn’t even know about, and burst them open!

Blood oozed out of his orifices, and he shook. Pores all over his body opened and expanded.

Intense pain wracked his four limbs, and yet, his eyes shone brightly.

He did not feel any sense of crisis, but rather, sensed that power surged through his body, making him more powerful than before!

His Dharma Idol appeared behind him, and then, shockingly, a second Dharma Idol appeared!

It looked different than Meng Hao’s Dharma Idol, although it was similar. This second Dharma Idol… actually belonged to the first generation Patriarch!

An even more intense power surged through Meng Hao’s body, and he began sweating profusely. However, his eyes shone brightly.

“So… this is what it feels like to use a Nirvana Fruit!

“I can form a second Dharma Idol, and my cultivation base can explode with even more power! And yet… in addition to the extra Dharma Idol, there is actually an even more important function…. It can exponentially increase the power of my Immortal meridians!

“Right now I have eight Immortal meridians. After absorbing the Nirvana Fruit, I can wield power equal to 16 Immortal meridians!

“That is the true purpose of the Nirvana Fruit!” Veins popped out on Meng Hao’s forehead. He currently only had eight Immortal meridians, but the power he was able to wield was twice as much!

“The reason Fang Wei didn’t utilize that power before is most likely because it’s only possible to do so after you reach the Immortal Realm!

“If I open 100 Immortal meridians, and also have this Nirvana Fruit, then I’ll be able to unleash the power of 200 Immortal meridians!

“The other sects and clans presumably have similar secret magics. However, considering how rare Nirvana Fruits are, it’s logical to come to the conclusion that those other secret magics do not measure up!

“Otherwise the Fang Clan wouldn’t have been able to maintain their position as one of the Four Great Clans, especially during times when Nirvana Fruits did not appear!”

Meng Hao trembled as his power only continued to increase. However, he could also sense that he wouldn’t be able to stay in this state of fusion for very long. He struggled to lift his head and then extend his right hand out toward the sphere of light that orbited around the body of the first generation Patriarch.

This time, all he had to do was grab at it, and the sphere began to tremble. A thrumming sound could be heard, and massive amounts of light exploded out in all directions. After a moment of what almost seemed to be hesitation, it suddenly transformed into a streak of light that shot toward Meng Hao, transforming into a starstone which came to rest on Meng Hao’s palm.

It sat there, flickering with starlight, beautiful to the extreme.

Meng Hao looked at the starstone for a moment, then closed his hand over it and clenched hard.

In that instant, ripples began to emanate from the starstone, which poured into Meng Hao’s mind and rapidly transformed into an incantation mnemonic composed of multiple verses.

That incantation mnemonic was none other than… the One Thought Stellar Transformation!

“No wonder nobody was ever able to acquire One Thought Stellar Transformation! It’s connected to this necropolis, and most importantly… only one person at a time can gain enlightenment of it! Once the legacy is passed on, nobody else can learn it unless that first person dies!

“That’s because One Thought Stellar Transformation is both a Daoist magic… and also NOT a Daoist magic!

“It’s a magical item… and NOT a magical item!

“It’s a type of magical item which, after being fused with, can temporarily erupt with… a will of invincibility!” Having gained enlightenment, he squeezed down on the starstone again, causing it to melt into a black liquid that covered his hand. It then rapidly spread out to cover his entire body, then bored into him. Moments later, shockingly, speckles of starlight appeared in his left eye!

The speckles of starlight were strange, and as they flickered, it almost seemed as if his left eye had become a starry sky. Frightening ripples appeared as he looked out, and anyone who met his gaze would surely be terrified.

After absorbing the starstone, Meng Hao’s body trembled again, and his eyes widened. More veins popped out on his forehead, and he looked like he was on the verge of exploding. Rumbling sounds emanated out from within him, and gradually, the Nirvana Fruit that he had absorbed started to become visible on his forehead, as if it couldn’t stay inside of him for much longer.

It was in that moment, though, that Meng Hao could clearly sense that the Nirvana Fruit was emanating traces of a Dao.

That type of Dao seemed to contain a boundless starry sky, and innumerable magical techniques and divine abilities. In fact, there were even thoughts that did not belong to Meng Hao himself. As if… they were the memories of someone else, the remnants of someone who had existed in the past!

Ancientness. Remote antiquity.

Images appeared in Meng Hao’s mind of a middle-aged man, his long, white hair whipping around him. Four Nirvana Fruits circled around him, each one emanating an aura that left Meng Hao terrified and undergoing constant transformations. Any one of them was powerful enough to split apart Heaven and Earth, to cause heavenly bodies to collapse.

This man was none other than the first generation Patriarch!

His eyes were filled with a gleam of obsession. He was surrounded by starlight, and was currently forging his way ahead toward an unsurpassable elevation.

Meng Hao wanted to see more, but couldn’t hold on any longer. His face was ashen as the Nirvana Fruit flew out of his forehead of its own volition. As it landed on the palm of his hand, blood oozed out of his mouth, and he sat down cross-legged to meditate. After a moment of recuperation, his eyes opened, and he was fully recovered and at his peak.

He took a deep breath, calmed his mind and heart, and then began to calculate time.

“Thirty breaths!

“Considering that the first generation Patriarch’s Nirvana Fruit doesn’t belong to me, and also considering the level of my cultivation base, I can only fuse with it for thirty breaths of time! If they were my own Nirvana Fruits, then I could fuse with them… for all eternity!” Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed with a strange light.

“I wonder what place the first generation Patriarch was going to in that vision. I must have been experiencing a memory. A memory that exists inside the Nirvana Fruit.

“Perhaps… there are even further uses for Nirvana Fruits!” When he thought back to the vision, he remembered that the first generation Patriarch was surrounded by four Nirvana Fruits, and that each one of them had emanated an aura that caused even the Heavens to tremble.

“Fang Wei….” After a moment of thought, Meng Hao looked up, and his eyes flashed with viciousness. Finally, he turned and bowed deeply to the first generation Patriarch, then waved his right hand, causing the main door of the necropolis to swing open, after which he strode out.

“It’s time to get out of here!”

Back outside in the Misty Heaven Vault, Meng Hao yet again produced the bronze lamp. Immediately, the surrounding mists began to vibrate, and then recede. Once again, a path opened up in front of him.

He proceeded along with much greater speed than he had upon entering, and it only took a few hours before he flew out from the Misty Heaven Vault. As he did, he saw no trace of Fang Daohong or Fang Linhe.

He could also sense that a huge vortex had appeared in a remote area of the ancestral land.

“The way out has opened!” he thought. He looked off into the distance, unsure of exactly how long the exit had been open. Obviously, Fang Daohong and all the others had already left.

Only the terracotta soldier remained waiting for Meng Hao. As soon as he emerged, its eyes glittered with a brilliant glow. Meng Hao looked back at it, his gaze filled with a reluctance to part.

Earlier, he had picked up on various clues that had led him to a certain conclusion. Now, with his increased cultivation base, he was able to see things even more clearly.

During the vast time in which the terracotta soldier had been waiting for Meng Hao, it had undergone certain transformations. It had been assimilated into this ancestral land, and would therefore be able to exist here eternally, at the peak of its power.

However, if it emerged into the outside world for too long without returning, then it would begin to decay, and would age by tens of thousands of years in a relatively short period of time.

“The only way for me to take it away would be if I had a piece of the Ruins of Immortality. If I did, I could take it with me long term.” Meng Hao flew up to sit on the terracotta soldier, after which it yet again changed shape to its enormous form, them employed its top speed to head off toward the exit.

The closer it got to the exit, the stronger the signs of dissipation got. Meng Hao sighed, and, after confirming what was happening, and despite his unwillingness to part with it, he decided that he couldn't just watch it suffer harm.

He decided to leave it next to the crumbled mountains where he had found it. His voice soft, he said, "Go ahead and change back into a statue. I promise you that one day, I'll come back here to take you away. It's too bad that once the ancestral land closes, our connection will break."

As soon as the words left his mouth, the statue's eyes glittered. It suddenly hefted its greatsword and then swung it through the air, causing a huge rift to open up, almost completely slashing the entire sky open.

Meng Hao's eyes sparkled.

"You can slash your way out of here any time you want, huh?" Meng Hao asked. "In other words, you can go anywhere you feel like, right?"

The terracotta soldier nodded, but then shook its head. Finally, it gave Meng Hao a deep look, and for the first time, spoke, in a muffled, hoarse voice.

"Fang Clan… ancestral land… five hundred kilometers… I protect you."

As soon as Meng Hao heard the voice, his heart seized. It was a voice he would never forget: Ke Yunhai's voice.

"Foster father…." In that moment, Meng Hao realized that Ke Yunhai didn't just use some of his life force from the dragon lamp with the phoenix wick to create the terracotta soldier. He had also used a strand of his soul.

After a very long moment, Meng Hao looked at the terracotta soldier one last time, then turned and headed toward the exit. After packing away the memories deep into his heart, his entire person began to radiate a harsh, murderous aura. He was like an unsheathed sword, shining coldly!

"Fang Wei, it's time to finish things between the two of us!"

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# Chapter 966: Storm Winds Gather!

The main hall in the Fang Clan’s ancestral mansion on Planet East Victory was packed tightly with members of the Fang Clan. Virtually all areas of the ancestral mansion were occupied, and there were even some who could not squeeze in and were left outside.

All of the alchemists in the Dao of Alchemy Division, and all of the apprentice alchemists, were all staring intently.

In addition to the Fang Clan, other powerful factions and cultivators on Planet East Victory had learned of Meng Hao and were now waiting.

In fact, in virtually all of the various sects and clans in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, people were looking on, waiting to find out exactly what kind of person could so capture the attention and estimation of all the famous, newly ascended true Immortals.

Meng Hao hadn’t even emerged yet, but his fame had already spread throughout all of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

People watched closely as Fang Wei sat cross-legged outside the main temple. Finally, he slowly raised his head, and his eyes gleamed with incredible coldness as he looked at the temple hall.

It was at this point that the Grand Elder, after a long moment of silence, resolutely waved his right hand. Rumbling sounds could be heard as a huge vortex appeared.

The vortex spun and then rose higher, rising up out of the main temple hall, high up into the air to where everyone could see it.

“The ancestral land is opening! Fang Hao is going to come out!”

"What's the point of him even coming out? Prince Wei wants him dead, so he'll die for sure!"

"It's too bad. His bloodline is stronger than Fang Wei's, and their latent talent is about the same, but in terms of reaching true Immortality, he was just a bit too slow…. Once you fall behind even one bit, you'll be left behind at every step. And that's not even to mention advancing from true Immortality into the Ancient Realm in the future."

The crowds were abuzz, and Fang Xi stood among them, fists clenched, expression anxious as he panted. However, he continued to have faith that Meng Hao would pull off a miracle!

"Fang Hao, Coz, you have to win!"

Fang Wei's expression was calm, but his eyes flickered with killing intent, and his desire to do battle grew stronger. Everyone could see as his gaze shifted over to the vortex like a drawn dagger.

He had waited for this day for a long time, and it was finally here. He was going to make sure that the whole Fang Clan, and all of the sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, knew that Fang Wei was the Chosen of this generation! He, Fang Wei, was the future pillar of the Fang Clan!

The humiliation he had endured during the rise of the East Ascension Sun would now be thoroughly avenged!

"Fang Hao, you are merely a stepping stone beneath my feet. Your only function is for me to step upon you as I climb to the top!" His expression was one of arrogance, and his heart filled with coldness. His killing intent grew only more intense, and he looked like a sharp, glinting sword!

At this point, time seemed to have frozen, and the entire world grew silent. Innumerable gazes were fixed upon the exit to the ancestral land!

As the vortex up in midair slowly rotated, it suddenly began to gleam with brilliant light like a sparkling body of water, and a figure appeared in the shimmering depths.

As soon as the figure appeared, countless eyes went wide, and people began to hold their breaths. Fang Wei's killing intent reached a pinnacle, causing rumbling to fill the sky. It almost seemed as if the temperature had instantly dropped!

Soon everyone began to gape. The person they were all looking at, the person emerging from the vortex… was an old man with long gray hair. He walked out excitedly, as if he had just emerged unscathed from a deadly crisis. He was trembling, as if he had experienced untold terrors in the ancestral land. He looked as though he had been holding innumerable anxieties within him, but was now able to relax. At the same time, he seemed slightly uneasy, as if he held a gloomy outlook on his own future.

"That's not Fang Hao, that's…."

"That's Elder Fang Shuiyun!"

"Why is he walking out of the ancestral land!?"

The Fang Clan members gaped in shock.

When Fang Xiushan saw the old man, he stared in shock. Then his face flickered slightly. The Grand Elder's brow suddenly furrowed.

After the old man appeared, he looked around at the crowds of clan members, and gaped. Then he saw Fang Wei sitting there cross-legged, and instantly sensed his true Immortality.

"He… reached true Immortal Ascension. Ah, Fang Xiushan… now I understand!" The old man's eyes were bloodshot as he glared fiercely at Fang Xiushan.

"Fang Xiushan," he barked, "things aren't finished between us! I won't rest until one of us is dead!" His words caused a collective gasp to rise up from the crowds. Nobody could figure out exactly what Elder Fang Shuiyun was talking about.

However, before any of them could begin to discuss the matter, the vortex behind the old man rippled, and other figures emerged. Three people walked out amidst glittering light.

None of them were Meng Hao!

The appearance of these three men resulted in further astonishment on the part of the surrounding clan members. They were also clan Elders! Everyone was bewildered, and thoughtful looks began to appear in their eyes as they began to speculate why all of these Elders would emerge from the ancestral land. Everyone had assumed that it would be Meng Hao who came out.

As soon as the three men emerged, they looked at Fang Wei, now clearly in the Immortal Realm, and then turned angrily toward Fang Xiushan. Voices icy, they spoke wrathfully, in much the same manner as the first old man, as if their resentment was now carved into their hearts, and even into their bones.

“Fang Xiushan! You deserve to die a horrible death!”

“You had better give us a good explanation, Fang Xiushan, otherwise you’re finished!”

“Fang Xiushan, how could you con us in this way!? I will never forget this enmity!”

It wasn’t that they couldn’t hold their tongues. However, everything that had happened with Meng Hao had left them completely shaken. Based on their cultivation bases and levels of wisdom, it was obvious to them that that if they made too much of this matter, the result would be unfavorable to them.

And yet… after the ancestral land had reopened, they had planned to use a special method prepared for them by Fang Xiushan to secretly make their escape. That method was not one that utilized the main exit. Imagine their rage when they found out that Fang Xiushan’s special method… didn’t work at all!

They immediately realized that Fang Xiushan had planned for them to die all along. Whether or not they succeeded in killing Meng Hao, when they emerged from the vortex, their punishment for entering the ancestral land without authorization should be death.

In their minds, Fang Xiushan had certainly thought of some way to escape responsibility. At first, none of them were sure exactly how he planned to do it. However, after bracing themselves and emerging through the exit, they sensed that Fang Wei had reached the Immortal Realm, and then everything became clear.

Because of Fang Wei becoming a true Immortal, Fang Xiushan, being his father, would definitely be able to extricate himself from any punishment.

Therefore, all of them spontaneously decided to wholeheartedly denounce Fang Xiushan!

This was why all of them emerged from the vortex, looked at Fang Wei, then turned and spoke wrathful words to Fang Xiushan.

Fang Xiushan’s face flickered yet again. He had personally requested assistance from all of these men in his efforts to kill Meng Hao. According to his original plan, when the ancestral land reopened, they should have been able to use his special method to successfully leave without going through the exit.

However, things had progressed beyond his control. Then these newly emerged Elders suddenly said what they did. Fang Xiushan’s face darkened, and his eyes narrowed coldly.

It was at this point that the Grand Elder flicked his sleeve.

“Enough. The clan will handle this matter later. Stand down, all of you!” The Elders who had just emerged from the vortex looked hatefully over at Fang Xiushan. However, fearful of the Grand Elder, all of them backed down.

In the same moment that the four of them stepped back, the vortex glittered once again, and all eyes once again swiveled over. Fang Wei also frowned and looked over.

However… as the vortex swirled, two figures emerged. Yet again, neither of them were Meng Hao. Instead, they were Fang Daohong and Fang Linhe. Originally, they had planned to wait for Meng Hao inside of the ancestral land. However, once the exit opened, and before either of them could react, a powerful wind had sprung up and swept them out of the Misty Heaven Vault. When they emerged, they found themselves directly in front of the exit.

As soon as they emerged, all eyes were fixed upon them.

“I can’t believe it’s not Fang Hao!”

“Interesting. There were actually six clan Elders in the ancestral land. How did they get in? And… what exactly was their purpose inside?!”

“Fang Hao was also in the ancestral land. Could it be… that these elders were there to harm him in some way?”

Of course, many of the clan members were intelligent people, and it didn’t take long for them to analyze the situation and come to an approximately correct conclusion.

That was especially true of the members of the direct bloodline, who were furious. Many of their Elders stepped forward, including Meng Hao’s 19th Uncle. All of them were enraged, and a rare killing intent toward their own clan members could be seen in their eyes.

Fang Xiushan smiled coldly, as if he didn’t care about what was happening at all. If Fang Wei hadn’t become a true Immortal, then all of these things would result in a heavy punishment for him. However, considering things had turned out the way they had, it was a different matter.

“Considering I’m being protected by the Sixth Patriarch, what can a single, piddling Fang Hao possibly count for!?” thought Fang Xiushan, calming his heart. Standing next to him was Fang Wei’s grandfather, who frowned slightly but said nothing.

Fang Daohong and Fang Linhe scanned the crowd silently. They did not berate Fang Xiushan, but rather, sat down cross-legged just outside the vortex, completely ignoring everyone.

This scene filled quite a few hearts with shock. The Grand Elder’s eyes widened; even he felt as if something strange was going on.

Time passed, enough for an incense stick to burn.

Suddenly, the vortex spun once again. This time, it was completely different from the previous times. Rumbling like thunder could be heard as a tall, slender figure slowly began to step out.

Before he could completely emerge, the sky above Planet East Victory filled with tempestuous lightning. Roaring sounds echoed out, as clouds piled on top of each other. Massive Tribulation Clouds had appeared in the blink of an eye.

These Tribulation Clouds were shocking to the extreme. Anyone who looked at them couldn’t help but stare wide-eyed with disbelief and shock. The reason was that these Tribulation Clouds were simply gargantuan!

They covered all of Planet East Victory!

From out in the starry sky, it looked as if Planet East Victory had turned into one giant mass of clouds. All of the Ninth Mountain and Sea was shaken as… the area covered by the Tribulation Clouds… continued to grow!

Fan Dong’er. Fang Wei. All of the other Chosen who had just stepped into true Immortality had never provoked Heaven-shattering, Earth-shaking Tribulation Clouds like this!

Compared to these Tribulation Clouds, the Tribulation Clouds they had faced were like childrens’ toys!

“W-w-what kind of Tribulation is that!?!?”

That was the question running through the trembling minds of all the observing cultivators.

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# Chapter 967: Paragon Immortal Tribulation

As of this moment, the cultivators of Planet East Victory were shocked, the members of the Fang Clan were shocked, and all the cultivators from the various sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea who were watching, were… completely shocked!

Their eyes were wide and their minds reeled as they saw the Tribulation Clouds cover Planet East Victory, and then spread out continuously.

“What… what kind of Tribulation is that?”

“How could there be a kind of Immortal Tribulation like this!?”

“Those definitely can’t be Tribulation Clouds! Could it be that there’s some sort of unpredictable, Heaven-shaking disaster brewing?”

“A Tribulation like this is simply impossible!”

Planet East Victory was in an uproar, as was the entirety of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. As of this moment, all eyes were filled with complete shock and disbelief.

That was especially true of the Chosen of the various sects and clans, who were completely tongue tied, and whose minds were filled with unprecedented roaring.

Fang Wei was completely taken aback. He stared at the Tribulation Clouds up in the Heavens, and his body began to tremble. His face fell, and he could think of only one thing to say to himself.

“Impossible!”

In the same moment in the Ninth Sea God World, Fan Dong’er stood in front of an enormous crystal, upon which she could see an image of the scene playing out on Planet East Victory. Her face was pale white, and her eyes filled with disbelief as she stared at the Tribulation Clouds on the crystal.

Actually, she didn’t even need to look at the crystal. With her divine sense, she could feel the incredible fluctuations rolling out over the Ninth Sea due to the incredible events occurring on Planet East Victory.

“Is it him…?” she thought. “Although, even if he is in the middle of true Immortal Ascension, he couldn’t possibly cause Tribulation Clouds like that to form. I’ve never even heard of anything like that. Just… how thoroughly did he prepare to burst out in such a fashion!?”

Zhao Yifan was in the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto, staring blankly up into the sky, his mind reeling. His recently mended Dao heart, which had been filled with confidence because of his recent rise to prominence, was now… beginning to crumble.

“How could this be happening…?” he murmured, trembling. “His true Immortality is… different from mine?”

At the same time, Wang Tengfei was in the Wang Clan, his hands clenched tightly into fists, veins bulging on his forehead. It was impossible for him to remain calm! “Just what is his true Immortality…?”

Regarding Song Luodan, Wang Mu, Taiyang Zi, Sun Hai, and all the newly ascended true Immortals, as of this moment, their minds and hearts were all filled with roaring.

Li Ling’er looked up into the Heavens. She had a complicated relationship with Meng Hao, and as of this moment, her mind was in chaos. She had expected that Meng Hao would reach true Immortal Ascension. However, she simply couldn’t wrap her mind around the fact that Meng Hao’s Tribulation Clouds were so incredibly unbelievable.

Chu Yuyan and Pill Demon could also sense the massive transformations in the energies of Heaven and Earth. On Planet South Heaven, Meng Hao’s parents were also watching.

As of this moment, all eyes were focused on Planet East Victory.

The members of the Fang Clan looked at the figure emerging from within the vortex of the ancestral Land in disbelief.

“Is it because of him…?” The hearts of each and every member of the Fang Clan were filled with incredible shock.

Fang Xiushan gaped, and Fang Wei’s grandfather gasped. As for the Grand Elder, his mind was reeling, and he stared in shock.

It was at this point that Meng Hao slowly stepped out of the vortex. In the moment that his right foot emerged, Heaven and Earth rumbled so intensely that it seemed as if the air itself would split. Power seemingly capable of destroying all life surged out.

It was as if some sort of Immortal God were concealed within the clouds, looking down at the lands, roaring amongst the starry sky. As the roaring echoed out, the clouds suddenly turned red, as red as fire. Instantly, everything up above was crimson.

It was the same out in the starry sky.

It was as if the clouds themselves were bearing witness to the emergence of Meng Hao, to the appearance of an unheard-of Immortal in the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

By now, the Patriarchs of the various sects and clans were waking up, emerging from secluded meditation. Even the Patriarchs of the Three Great Daoist Societies responded to the shocking events playing out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

In the Fang Clan ancestral mansion, all of the Patriarchs, including the recently returned Seventh Patriarch, were all shocked. That was even true of the one the Seventh Patriarch had referred to as Eldest Brother.

If you traced the Earth Patriarch’s bloodline back, he was actually descended from the same almighty Dao Realm expert as Meng Hao.

“He has made profound preparations,” he murmured in confusion, “leading to this explosive eruption of Immortal Tribulation. But, how come I’m unable to see the true depths of the kid’s Tribulation…? Just how terrifyingly well-prepared is he?!

“This is unprecedented! In all the ancient records I’ve read, I’ve never seen any mention of Tribulation Clouds like this when someone steps into true Immortality!”

The Patriarchs of the other sects and clans all looked into the starry sky in the direction of Planet East Victory, and various thoughts went through their heads.

Standing next to Fan Dong’er in the Ninth Sea God World was her master, the old woman who was in the Dao Realm. Currently, she was frowning.

“What profound preparations for someone who’s only in the Spirit Realm!” she thought. “Only a cultivation base with 90 or more meridians should provoke Tribulation Clouds like this. But… something strange seems to be going on. Why do those Tribulation Clouds seem to be simply too large!?”

In fact, the Patriarchs of all the various sects and clans were frowning and reaching similar conclusions as the old woman.

“There’s something strange about those Tribulation Clouds!”

“Even if this guy was more of a blazing sun than he already is, and even if he was more profoundly well prepared, it’s highly unlikely that Tribulation Clouds like that would appear! They almost don’t look like Tribulation Clouds, but rather, a strange sign!”

“Perhaps he’s using some type of secret magic?”

Gradually, the Patriarchs were able to pick up on clues that caused them to begin to make various speculations. As they stared in the direction of Planet East Victory, Meng Hao fully emerged from within the vortex.

In that instant, shocking thunder crackled, and the Tribulation Clouds churned. Countless red bolts of lightning danced about in the clouds, emanating a terrifying aura.

At the same time, the Tribulation Clouds continued to expand out into the starry sky. They sped out like a charging army, rumbling, growing larger and larger. From a distance, it looked like some bizarre Demonic sign.

Everything shook violently!

Even the Ji Clan of the Ninth Mountain and Sea was shaken. An ancient gaze pierced out from the Ninth Mountain, which then came to rest on Planet East Victory.

The gaze was filled with intense pressure as it focused on Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s expression was calm. He stood there, tall, robes whipping about, long hair dancing in the wind. His eyes were filled with a profound gleam that seemed to contain a boundless starry sky. His left eye sparkled with starlight that seemed capable of sucking away one’s soul.

As he stood there outside of the vortex, his aura seemed normal. However, the Heavens above him were bright red. And then, there were the churning, roaring Tribulation Clouds. All of it made Meng Hao seem to be like some sort of Immortal God!

Upon cursory examination, Fang Wei’s energy couldn’t even possibly compare.

Meng Hao’s aura said… that he would become an Immortal whether the Heavens agreed or not! It was a domineering power that said, “If you approve, fine. Don’t approve? TOO BAD!”

All of the members of the Fang Clan were watching Meng Hao. They looked at the terrifying Tribulation Clouds up in the Heavens, and inhaled deeply.

“Fang Hao….”

“He provoked energy and Tribulation Clouds like that, all in the instant he stepped out of the ancestral land! Fang Hao… is going to step into true Immortality!”

“Prince Wei’s true Immortal Tribulation earlier doesn’t seem to measure up. Prince Hao…. Is definitely going to astonish us!”

The members of the direct bloodline were extremely excited. Fang Xi stood there, hands clenched into fists, filled with anticipation as he looked at Meng Hao.

“Fang Hao, Coz, you definitely have to succeed!”

Fang Wei began to tremble slightly, shaken by Meng Hao’s energy, and the terrifying Tribulation Clouds up in the Heavens. He could hardly breathe.

Veins popped out on his forehead as he shot to his feet.

“Fang Hao!!” he roared.

“Do you dare to fight with me!?” His voice echoed like peals of thunder, and his eyes radiated intense killing intent. His energy surged up, as power from his 98 Immortal meridians exploded out. His Dharma Idol appeared behind him, seemingly powerful enough to support all the lands.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as usual as he looked at Fang Wei

“Just let me push open the Door of Immortality,” he said coolly. “After that, there won’t be any need for you to fight me. I’ll just take back what belongs to me.” Then he turned to look back at the Tribulation Clouds up in the Heavens, and his eyes brimmed with the desire to fight.

The moment he had been waiting so long for, was finally here!

It was now time to step into true Immortality!

Meng Hao suddenly shot up into the air, flying up into the Heavens as everyone watched.

“Immortal Tribulation! Why haven’t you made your move yet!?” Meng Hao’s expression was as calm as ever, but his desire to do battle grew even stronger. His voice echoed out in all directions, piercing the Tribulation Clouds, causing a huge indentation to appear in the layers of clouds. The power of his voice smashed into the clouds, hewing out a huge hole.

What appeared next was… A Door of Immortality with a breathtaking aura, descending from the starry sky.

This Door of Immortality was enormous, so large that Planet East Victory seemed like a toddler in front of it. Boundless Immortal light surged out, and countless magical symbols glittered on its face. The clouds scattered as the enormous door came to rest in front of Planet East Victory.

This Door of Immortality was larger than any other Door of Immortality which had appeared during a true Immortal Ascension!

When Fang Wei saw the Door of Immortality, his face went pale. The Door of Immortality that he had faced wasn’t even ten percent as large as this door!

Furthermore, when the Door of Immortality appeared, numerous gigantic palaces flew out from the clouds. They looked like heavenly palaces, and stretched out seemingly without limit. It wasn’t just the people on Planet East Victory who could see them. Everyone on the other three planets were also able to use various methods to observe.

The boundless palaces, each one incredibly huge, emanated Immortal might throughout the Ninth Mountain and Sea. The Ninth Mountain trembled and the Ninth Sea raged. All of the cultivators of the various sects and clans, even the Patriarchs, were thoroughly shocked.

In the Ninth Sea God World, the old woman standing next to Fan Dong’er took a deep breath as she finally understood.

“That Door of Immortality… Those Immortal Palaces…. I understand!” she thought. “He’s not using an Immortality Illumination Vine, he’s… reaching Immortal Ascension on his own! This kid has incredible willpower! What determination! What destiny!!”

She wasn’t the only one who understood what was happening. The other Patriarchs of the various sects and clans all reached the same enlightenment, and were completely shaken.

“If the Heavens approve, well and good. If they don’t want to, they’ll still be forced to acknowledge an Immortal who verifies their own Dao and reaches Immortal Ascension on their own. No wonder the Tribulation Clouds are so huge!

“From ancient times until now in the Nine Mountains and Seas, people who verify their own Dao in such a way are incredibly rare. Only KṢitigarbha, Lord of the Fourth Mountain and Sea, ever verified his Dao on his own, and eternally suppressed the underworld!”

In that very moment, far out in the starry sky of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, a woman in a white robe sat in an Immortal’s cave somewhere in the Ruins of Immortality. This was the same woman who had appointed Meng Hao as 13th in the Echelon. Her eyes suddenly opened, and she looked off into the distance.

“Paragon Immortal….” she murmured. A rarely seen light suddenly flickered in her eyes.

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# Chapter 968: Transcending Tribulation!

The Heavens rumbled as the red Tribulation Clouds surged, as if there were a mighty army marching within them. Booms could be heard that shook the land, filling all of Planet East Victory.

The area encompassed by the Tribulation Clouds expanded out past Planet East Victory into the starry sky. They were matchlessly large, and the minds of the cultivators from the sects and clans were filled with something like the crashing of lightning as they watched.

As for the Immortal Palaces in the clouds, they were beautiful and ornately decorated, and emanated shocking Immortal might that roiled out into the stars. Furthermore, it looked as if there were countless Immortals floating about within the Immortal Palaces.

Although they were illusory, it was the first time from ancient times until now that Immortal Palaces like this had appeared in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Even in the Nine Mountains and Seas in general, an Immortal Tribulation with Immortal Palaces like this was the stuff of legend only.

In addition, the Door of Immortality was completely shocking. It hovered there outside of Planet East Victory, enormous and ancient, with a primordial aura that seemed to represent the will of the Nine Mountains and Seas themselves.

This Immortal Tribulation, this Door of Immortality, and these Immortal Palaces were unlike anything else!

That was because Meng Hao was about to become a true Immortal among true Immortals!

Everyone on Planet East Victory watched as Meng Hao shot up into the sky like a meteor. Almost the instant he flew up, the Tribulation Clouds up above seethed with uncountable bolts of red lightning. It was like a massive web that dropped down from the clouds, which then condensed together into one gigantic red lightning bolt that seemed capable of ripping apart Heaven and Earth. The lightning bolt then shot directly toward Meng Hao.

This was Immortal Tribulation!

Anyone who looked at a Tribulation like this would feel their face fall, even Fang Wei and the true Immortal Chosen of the various sects and clans. As for everyone else, they all gasped. When compared to the tribulation faced earlier by the true Immortal Chosen, it was virtually impossible to describe how much more powerful this tribulation was.

In the stony cavern deep beneath the Fang Clan’s ancestral mansion, the Earth Patriarch sat with the other six Patriarchs and looked at the red lightning.

“Experiencing true Immortal destiny is like being selected by Heaven and Earth,” he said. “It seems difficult to become a true Immortal in that way, but actually, the will of the Nine Mountains and Seas always leaves a small chance of success. People who achieve true Immortal Ascension like this then have some of the destiny of the Nine Mountains and Seas in them!

“Using the Immortality Illumination Vine is essentially cheating, and involves no true Immortal destiny. Because of that, the Immortal Tribulation is actually more powerful. However, successfully opening the Door of Immortality results in the same approval of the will of the Nine Mountains and Seas.

“However… reaching true Immortal Ascension on one’s own is the most domineering of the three paths. It shows contempt for the Heavens, and derision of the will of the Nine Mountains and Seas. It is to be… an Immortal, in and of oneself, and a true Immortal at that. And that is why, whether the Heavens approve of him or not… they will be forced to acknowledge him!

“The Heavens are forced to acquiesce, and as such, this third type of true Immortal Tribulation offers no way out!”

The Patriarchs of the various sects and clans were all paying close attention to the goings on. Normally speaking, a Spirit Realm cultivator stepping into Immortality was not something they would deign to observe, unless it happened to be a Chosen from their own organization. The Immortal Tribulation of members of other sects or clans was not something that the Patriarchs would care about in the least.

But Meng Hao was different!

He was walking the third of the three paths, a path that stirred even the Patriarchs. They wanted to see… if he would actually be able to succeed!

What was happening now was something that they might have a chance to see only once in a lifetime.

Heaven and Earth rumbled, and red lightning shot down toward Meng Hao with indescribable speed. He hovered there in midair, his expression the same as usual, his eyes filled with the desire to do battle.

“The moment I have been waiting so long for is finally here!” Meng Hao lifted his right hand, causing ripples to spread out from his true Immortal fleshly body. His Immortal meridians rotated, and his willpower solidified as he clenched his hand into a fist.

He punched out at the red lightning, and a massive boom filled the air. The lightning instantly began to collapse. However, it only collapsed by about seventy percent, and the remaining thirty percent smashed into Meng Hao.

However, Meng Hao simply hovered there in midair, allowing the lightning to strike him. Innumerable sparks flew out, and his hair swirled around him as he threw his head back and laughed.

“Is true Immortal Tribulation really this weak?!” Meng Hao actually felt a bit disappointed. It was back when he had witnessed the Immortal Tribulation of his master Pill Demon back on Planet South Heaven, that… he began to look forward to transcending his own tribulation.

As he laughed, the Heavens rumbled and the clouds churned. Countless lightning bolts once again began to form, rapidly transforming into another, even more shocking lightning attack that shot toward him.

As it neared, Meng Hao once again laughed uproariously. The sound was so intense that it could pierce metal and crush rock. Everyone who heard it was shocked inwardly. Suddenly, Meng Hao transformed into a golden roc that flapped its wings and shot toward the lightning.

This did not seem like transcending the tribulation, this seemed like a baptism within the tribulation!

BOOOOMMMMMM!

The lightning descended, crackling around Meng Hao in golden roc form. It was like a giant globe of lightning, casting scintillating light throughout Heaven and Earth.

“Bring it on!” Meng Hao’s voice echoed out, and the golden roc shrieked as he shot toward the clouds up in the sky. Lightning crashed, a third bolt, a fourth, a fifth….

Terrifying lightning descended like rain, accompanied by shocking rumbling sounds. Meng Hao in golden roc form sped upward as fast as ever, smacking through the lightning like a sharp knife through a piece of bamboo. The lightning was like dried twigs that he easily crushed as he charged directly into the Tribulation Clouds.

Planet East Victory was filled with a sound that resembled the heartbeat of a giant. The land quaked, the planet trembled, and all the cultivators on the planet were completely shaken.

The Tribulation Clouds began to part, showing a tiny hole that Meng Hao had not quite pierced through yet. However, behind it, the Door of Immortality was clearly visible.

Unfortunately, between him and the Door of Immortality were the Immortal Palaces!

This was Meng Hao’s true Immortal Tribulation. Not only were the Tribulation Clouds vastly larger than anyone else’s, behind those Tribulation Clouds were the Immortal Palaces. If he wanted to get to the Door of Immortality, he would have to get through all those Immortal Palaces first!

Meng Hao reverted from his golden roc form, coughing up a mouthful of blood as he was shoved backward several paces. His eyes then began to shine brightly with the desire to fight.

Most of his clothing was shredded away, leaving him completely bare chested. His hair whipped about, and not a single injury could be seen on him. In the moment that he coughed up the mouthful of blood, his Eternal stratum kicked into work, repairing him instantly.

When Fang Wei saw all of this, his face grew unsightly, and his eyes flickered with killing intent. After a moment, he took a deep breath, and the killing intent grew even more intense.

Off to the side, Fang Xiushan was astonished. His hands were clenched into fists, and inwardly, he was cursing Meng Hao. What he hoped for most was that Meng Hao would perish during his Immortal Tribulation. Then, all of the problems would be resolved.

“Die, you little son of a bitch,” he growled inwardly. “Die in the Immortal Tribulation! That’s your fate!”

The Grand Elder’s eyes shone with a strange light as he stared at Meng Hao up in the sky. Then he began to pant. In the end, it was impossible to guess what he might be thinking.

The members of the direct bloodline were incredibly excited, and even the other ordinary clan members were getting worked up.

As Meng Hao fell back down a bit, the hole in the Tribulation Clouds began to close up, as if it had never existed in the first place. At the same time, an unprecedented pressure radiated out, and more lightning began to gather.

There were no chances, and no lucky breaks!

This was why it was so challenging to reach true Immortal Ascension on one’s own!

The Patriarchs of the various sects and clans all looked on with curious eyes.

In the Ninth Sea God World, Fan Dong’er breathed heavily as she looked at the crystal in front of her. She could see the image of Meng Hao slamming into the Tribulation Lightning, and the sight of the vast Tribulation Clouds caused her mind to go blank with shock.

“Master, will… will he transcend the tribulation?” she asked softly.

“Your master has never seen Immortal Tribulation like this before,” the old woman replied slowly. “I’ve only heard about it in stories. There are no opportunities for survival in this type of tribulation. Of course, since it’s Immortal Tribulation, the lightning won’t exceed the limits of the Immortal Realm by too much. However, I’ve heard that the lightning will never end. Furthermore, those Immortal Palaces blocking the way will be very difficult to get past.”

Words similar to this were being spoken in all of the other various sects and clans.

“Is this supposed to be difficult…?” thought Meng Hao, his desire to do battle swirling to new heights. He let out a roar as his Dharma Idol appeared behind him. It was only a single Dharma Idol, but it was fully 21,000 meters tall.

The moment the Dharma Idol appeared, Meng Hao flashed up toward the Tribulation Clouds. Rumbling filled Heaven and Earth as numerous lightning bolts struck down. In the blink of an eye, more than ten bolts were about to crash into him.

Crashing sounds could be heard as the lightning bolts slammed into him. At the same time, Meng Hao lifted his right hand, within which appeared a long spear. Its haft was made from the World Tree, and the spearhead was crafted from white bone. Hefting the spear, he charged up into the sky.

Everything shook as the lightning collapsed into pieces, completely destroyed. As he neared the clouds, Meng Hao roared, and his Dharma Idol reached out with both hands to grab ahold of them. Veins popped out on Meng Hao's forehead.

RUMBLE!

Meng Hao's Dharma Idol appeared to be ripping the Heavens apart. It grabbed the Tribulation Clouds and wrenched them to either side. The lands quaked, and massive rumbling filled the air. The stars shook as a huge rift was torn directly in the middle of the Tribulation Clouds.

It was as if a huge sword had simply sundered them in two. Now, the palaces behind the Tribulation Clouds were clearly visible. Immediately, Immortal light began to shine out, and the Immortals in their palaces stopped in their tracks and turned to look at Meng Hao.

It was at this point that Meng Hao lifted the spear up and then threw it violently ahead of him.

"BREAK!" he roared. The spear transformed into what looked like a lightning bolt as it shot through the rift in the Tribulation Clouds and headed toward the Immortal Palaces.

It sped through the void like a hot knife through butter. The rift in the Tribulation Clouds grew larger, and numerous Immortals flew out to meet the spear. Massive booms could be heard as many of the Immortals were destroyed. The spear itself stabbed into one of the Immortal Palaces, causing it to explode.

In that moment, Meng Hao’s speed reached an apex. He transformed into a beam of prismatic light that sped through the rift in the Tribulation Clouds.

However, it was then… that the Tribulation Clouds began to seethe and contract. Suddenly, massive pressure radiated out as numerous clouds formed together into an enormous hand, which then slapped toward Meng Hao. The huge hand filled his field of vision, obscuring everything else as it shoved him back down toward the ground.

A fierce gleam appeared in his eyes, like a bloody blade filled with ferocity.

“Trying to get in my way?”

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# Chapter 969: 30,000-meter Dharma Idol!

The Tribulation Clouds were enormous, and to anyone else in the Immortal Realm, the pressure they exuded would be incomprehensible. However, Meng Hao already had eight Immortal meridians, Immortal meridians that were simply incomparable to normal Immortal meridians.

In addition, he had his true Immortal fleshly body!

His level of preparation going into this Immortal Tribulation was unheard of, and made him preeminently qualified to face it.

When you added in his Eternal stratum, it made it so that when he looked at the enormous descending hand, a crazy idea suddenly sprang up in his mind.

Immortal Tribulation… had always been a situation in which the cultivator almost passively transcended the tribulation by madly avoiding or rushing past the Tribulation Lightning and then ramming open the Door of Immortality amidst the hail of lightning.

Everyone had used similar methods. Pill Demon, Fan Dong’er, and Fang Wei had done things in such a manner, as had all of the other Chosen who had recently stepped into true Immortality.

Upon opening the Door of Immortality, Immortal light would pour out, and the Tribulation Clouds would dissipate.

As of this moment, Meng Hao’s face filled with a wild look as his idea developed. A vicious aura rose up, transforming into a domineering air as he looked at the gigantic hand, and then punched out.

“I will walk the path of true Immortality! If the Heavens approve, so be it! If they don’t approve, too bad! That is my domineering path to Immortality! Therefore, I should handle things… in an unprecedentedly domineering way!

“For me, it’s Immortality or death!”He threw his head back and let out a long cry as he shot like a meteor toward the huge hand. When they slammed into each other, booms echoed out in all directions. The air shattered, and the huge hand collapsed. Blood sprayed from Meng Hao’s mouth, and his hair was thrown into disarray. However, his Eternal stratum surged, and then, blood-colored light swirled around him, forming a bloody mist which quickly transformed into an enormous Blood Demon head.

It flashed as it shot toward the tribulation Cloud and the endless bolts of lightning up above. In Blood Demon head form, Meng Hao slammed into the Tribulation Clouds, causing booms to echo out in all directions. Yet again, a massive rift opened up.

However, the Tribulation Clouds churned, and quickly began to repair themselves. And yet… the result of this constant cycle of destruction and repair was that the amount of Tribulation Clouds up in the starry sky was reduced!

The Tribulation Clouds were not infinite and without number. As Meng Hao destroyed them, their numbers lessened; apparently, if someone attacked them continuously, then the shocking Tribulation Clouds… would eventually completely dissipate.

Something like that had never, ever occurred before throughout all the years!

However, that didn’t mean… that it couldn’t happen!

The crazy idea that Meng Hao had just come up with was that if the Tribulation Clouds wanted to block his way… Then he would bash them into nothing! He would destroy them completely!

THAT was domineering!

That was the way to do things! When you entered true Immortality, the only option was to make a huge scene!

The Blood Demon head collapsed, and Meng Hao hovered there in mid-air, surrounded by booming lightning. Every bolt of it caused him to tremble, and yet, his true Immortal fleshly body was able to withstand it easily. His Eternal stratum continuously healed him, and his eyes shone with obsession. His cultivation base surged, and his Dharma Idol launched endless attacks against the Tribulation Clouds.

One punch! Another! And another!

Colors flashed in the sky, and the lightning surrounding Meng Hao appeared to be boundless. From time to time, blood sprayed from his mouth as he was flayed over and over. However, he didn’t hesitate for a moment as he charged forward and attacked yet again.

The clouds churned, and simultaneously, began to visibly shrink!

The sight of it caused all the members of the Fang Clan to stare in speechless shock.

All of the other cultivators on Planet East Victory who were watching couldn’t stop themselves from gasping at the shocking sight.

Fang Wei stared in amazement, and the killing intent in his eyes grew to a shocking level of intensity.

“He overestimates himself!” he thought.

Fang Xiushan stared in shock, panting, not daring to believe what he was seeing.

The Grand Elder’s eyes were wide as he watched Meng Hao. He almost felt as if he were watching Meng Hao’s grandfather, or his father Fang Xiufeng. Both of them were people who had given him such a sensation of madness.

Underneath the Fang Clan, the seven Patriarchs were visibly moved. This was especially true of the Seventh Patriarch, who was already relatively familiar with Meng Hao. As of this moment, he looked up at Meng Hao with an expression of praise and approval.

“To become a domineering true Immortal, you must have a domineering will,” said the Fang Clan’s Earth Patriarch, who was also a member of Meng Hao’s bloodline. His voice soft and his eyes contained deep praise. “This kid… might just succeed!”

The Fang Clan was shaken, and the cultivators in the sects and clans in the outside world were utterly shocked.

Fan Dong’er gasped when she sensed the madness in Meng Hao.

“I can’t believe he’s picked this way to do things,” she thought. “There’s… there’s no way it will work!”

Zhao Yifan was shaken mentally. Song Luodan stared with wide eyes. Wang Mu was panting. Taiyang Zi watched with an expression of complete disbelief.

As everyone reacted to the insanity of Meng Hao’s actions, he coughed up some more blood. By now, the lightning around him was not red, but black, and was even more powerful than before. A vicious expression could be seen on his face as he faced the black lightning, backed by his Dharma Idol, which began to grow from a height of 21,000 meters to 24,000 meters!

He was like a stage 8 Immortal fighting against Immortal Tribulation!

“Nothing is impossible!” he thought. Determination could be seen in his eyes. He performed an incantation gesture, causing numerous mountains to appear, which then shot toward the Tribulation Clouds. As they exploded, Meng Hao advanced decisively, going on the offensive with all of his might.

Massive booms filled the air. The ground quaked, and his 24,000-meter Dharma Idol battered the Tribulation Clouds, causing them to get smaller and smaller. Time passed, and it was impossible to say exactly how many black lightning bolts had struck Meng Hao. His Eternal stratum was in full operation, and his eyes were completely bloodshot.

And yet, he never ceased attacking.

The gigantic Tribulation Clouds gradually shrunk smaller and smaller. At a certain point, the black lightning bolts turned into five-colored lightning bolts, and the clouds had shrunk down by thirty percent of their original size!

This sight left all observers in the Ninth Mountain and Sea completely shocked.

Meng Hao’s hair was disheveled, but he looked as shocking as ever as he did something completely unheard of in history!

“Time to enter the realm of the… Stage 9 Immortal!” Surrounded by five-colored lightning, Meng Hao threw his head back and roared. His Dharma Idol exploded up, growing from 24,000 meters to 27,000 meters!

As of this moment, everything was shaking violently!

“That’s… a 27,000-meter Dharma Idol, similar to a stage 9 Immortal! Just how much did Fang Hao prepare for this? What type of cultivation does he practice? He hasn’t even opened the Door of Immortality, and yet his power has already reached such an incredible level!”

“Chosen! That is a real Chosen! He’s so powerful! If he steps into true Immortality, he’ll basically be invincible!”

“I remember now, he has a true Immortal fleshly body! If his cultivation base reaches the true Immortal Realm, then… He’ll be an Immortal Realm Paragon!!” Rumbling filled Planet East Victory, and all of the cultivators watching in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were completely shocked.

“Who could possibly compare to him? Not Fang Wei and not Fan Dong’er. None of the other Chosen can measure…perhaps the only one who could….”

“The only one who can compare… is Fang Mu!”

“Fang Mu! He was the one who became the number one figure in the Ninth Mountain and Sea in the Three Great Daoist Societies’ trial by fire!”

“To bust open the Tribulation Clouds and destroy them completely…. Perhaps Fang Mu could also pull it off…!”

Everyone watched in shock as Meng Hao’s 27,000-meter Dharma Idol battered the five-colored lightning with its fists. The clouds shattered and collapsed, and the lightning dissipated.

Everything went quiet. Meng Hao hovered there alone in the sky for a moment before charging at the Tribulation Clouds again. His 27,000-meter Dharma Idol ripped away at them. From the look of things, Immortal Tribulation was by no means invincible when it was up against Meng Hao.

Time passed. The clouds in the starry sky continued to dissipate. By now, they had been reduced by about forty percent. The five-colored lightning was incapable of standing up to Meng Hao’s 27,000-meter Dharma Idol. But then, the lightning became seven-colored!

The seven colors combined, and the lightning didn’t even seem like lightning any more. It appeared to contain life force, and it rumbled toward Meng Hao, seemingly incapable of being obstructed. As it neared, Meng Hao felt a sense of deadly crisis.

Without any hesitation, he unleashed his Immortal meridians. Behind him, his Dharma Idol grew from 27,000 meters to an astounding 30,000 meters! Everyone… was completely and utterly shocked!

A 30,000-meter Dharma Idol!

Golden light emanated out, illuminating the lands below. As the seven-colored lightning descended, the 30,000-meter Dharma Idol punched out.

The lightning exploded, and blood oozed out of the corners of Meng Hao's mouth. However, he continued to hover there in midair, just like before.

"Impossible!" Fang Wei suddenly rose to his feet, a look of complete shock on his face.

Off to the side, Fang Xiushan's jaw dropped, and he staggered backward, his eyes wide.

The Grand Elder was in the crowd, staring at Meng Hao's Dharma Idol, and his face flickered several times.

"It's actually… 30,000 meters…." he murmured.

The most excited of all were the members of the direct bloodline, as well as Fang Daohong and Fang Linhe. The two of them stared up into the sky at Meng Hao and his 30,000-meter Dharma Idol, and they knew that becoming followers of Meng Hao was definitely an incredible stroke of good fortune!

All of the members of the Fang Clan, all of the cultivators on Planet East Victory, were sent into a tumult.

"30,000 meters…. It's really 30,000 meters! I don't know how Fang Hao did it, but he's actually… equivalent to a stage 10 Immortal before even stepping into true Immortality!"

"Stage 10 Immortal! That's… that's a realm of legend! Even Fang Wei and the others only opened 90 or so Immortal meridians. Fang Wei himself only opened 98!"

"This Fang Hao… if he… if he manages to open the Door of Immortality, then what do you guys think? How many… meridians will he actually open? A hundred?"

The entire Ninth Mountain and Sea was completely shaken. Fan Dong'er's face fell as she stared at the crystal. She was panting like she never had before in her life. The old woman who stood next to her watched with gleaming eyes. She knew that with a 30,000-meter Dharma Idol, these Tribulation Clouds now posed no further threat to Meng Hao.

Even if the tribulation grew more intense, it was nothing more than Immortal Tribulation, and would never exceed the power of the Immortal Realm.

Zhao Yifan’s mind reeled, and his eyes grew blank.

Song Luodan stared in shock, and Taiyang Zi gaped. Wang Mu gasped. The only one who didn’t react in such a way was Wang Tengfei, whose eyes began to glow with unprecedented brightness.

Li Ling’er’s face fell, and Sun Hai’s scalp went numb.

The Chosen of the various sects and clans were completely astonished by Meng Hao’s 30,000-meter Dharma Idol.

“If he really manages to open the Door of Immortality… How many meridians will he open?!” That was the question that raged through the minds of each and every Chosen, and filled them with bitterness.

By now, Meng Hao made them feel completely powerless.

As for the Patriarchs of the various sects and clans, the same question was running through all their minds regarding Meng Hao, this peerless member of his generation. How many meridians would he open…?

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# Chapter 970: Paragon Immortal Palaces!

The 30,000-meter Dharma Idol shone with boundless golden light as it struck the seven-colored Immortal Tribulation Lightning. Meng Hao closed his eyes, and then began to merge with his Dharma Idol. When he opened his eyes, he was his Dharma Idol and his Dharma Idol was him!

A fist descended, and the Heavens rumbled. A huge gap opened up in the Tribulation Clouds, and at the same time, numerous bolts of seven-colored lightning crackled toward Meng Hao.

He did nothing to evade, instead allowing the Immortal Tribulation Lightning to strike him. He spread his arms wide, and his eyes were filled with nothing but the Tribulation Clouds.

BOOOOMMMMMM!

Time passed. The Tribulation Cloud clouds shrank down to sixty percent of their normal size. Fifty percent. Forty percent…. The seven-colored Immortal Tribulation Lightning seemed to be endless. Meng Hao's Eternal stratum worked ceaselessly, and his 30,000-meter Dharma Idol attacked relentlessly, causing Heaven and Earth to tremble as divine abilities were unleashed.

Meng Hao threw his head back and howled. At the same time, his Dharma Idol suddenly expanded in all directions. Simultaneously, Meng Hao extended his right hand, within which appeared a rift.

The rift only lasted for three breaths of time.

It was the Fifth Demon Sealing Hex. During those three breaths of time, that rift became like a black hole in the void. It emanated an incredibly shocking gravitational force that instantly sucked the Tribulation Clouds into it.

Thirty percent. Twenty percent. Ten percent!

RUMBLE!

When the rift vanished, the vast majority of the Tribulation Clouds had vanished with it. There weren’t even enough to cover all of Planet East Victory. Meng Hao hovered there in midair, face ashen, but filled with a desire to battle that was even more intense than before.

He looked up at what remained of the Tribulation Clouds up in the sky, as well as the Immortal Palaces that floated behind them. Currently, they did not emanate as much threatening pressure as before.

“Hey, Tribulation Clouds. SCRAM!” Meng Hao said coolly, waving his right hand. His Dharma Idol separated from his body, transforming into a golden beam of light that pierced through the Tribulation Clouds and then suddenly exploded.

The explosion caused the remaining Tribulation Clouds to roil, after which a roaring sound echoed out from within as the clouds… shattered into pieces that scattered in all directions.

Everyone looked on as the Tribulation Clouds… vanished!

In that moment, all of Planet East Victory went completely silent. Both the members of the Fang Clan as well as the other cultivators stared in shock at the sky which was now completely empty of Tribulation Clouds.

Transcending tribulation in this way was something completely unprecedented!

Transcending tribulation with such madness was domineering to an incredible extent!

It was as if Meng Hao was prepared to destroy anything that blocked his way along his path to Immortality.

No one had ever been able to do something like this before, because no one had ever been comparable to a stage 10 immortal when transcending tribulation.

This was… like saying, “If I want to become an Immortal, the Heavens can’t do anything to stop me!”

This was… a domineering attitude that said, “If I want it, the Heavens had BETTER have it! If I don’t want it, the Heavens had better NOT have it!”

It seemed unbelievable, but if one thought about it carefully… when someone was equipped with the battle prowess of the one hundred meridians of a stage 10 Immortal, then to that person, there was nothing impossible when it came to transcending Immortal Tribulation.

After a brief moment of silence, Planet East Victory burst into a huge commotion. Everyone in the Fang Clan was yelling in excitement.

They saw the look of madness, fervor, and obsession in Meng Hao’s eyes, and they knew that he was a member of the Fang Clan. The glory he brought to himself made them proud.

“Fang Hao!”

“Fang Hao!!”

“Fang Hao!!!”

Numerous figures flew up into the sky to sit cross-legged close to Meng Hao. None of them took any action, they just sat there… as Meng Hao’s Dharma Protectors!

The entire direct bloodline mobilized. Fang Xi looked excitedly at Meng Hao, then threw his head back and laughed. Other than the direct bloodline, most of the other people who moved out to help Meng Hao… were members of the neutral clan branches. After seeing the future prospects that

Meng Hao’s performance displayed, they were moved in an unprecedented way.

When it came to choosing between Meng Hao and Fang Wei, they chose… Meng Hao!

Fang Wei stood there silently, looking at Meng Hao. Yet again, his eyes flickered with the desire to do battle. In contrast, Fang Xiushan stood next to him, face pale, glaring at Meng Hao and roaring inwardly.

“Damn you, Fang Hao! Why did you have to show up! You already left the Fang Clan! Why did you have to come back!? Why did you have to reach Immortal Ascension!? Why!?!?

“And you, Fang Xiufeng! You were always ahead of me, always stifling me. And now, just when my own son is rising up like a qilin, your good-for-nothing child is suppressing him!!” Fang Xiushan just couldn’t keep calm. His entire body trembled, and his eyes shone with venomous hatred.

The Grand Elder stood there, silent and taciturn.

Fang Wei’s grandfather sighed softly and looked over at Fang Xiushan, his expression one of disappointment. Then he turned back to look at Fang Wei, and his expression changed to that of anticipation.

Planet East Victory was completely shaken, and the sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea were astonished. By this point, Meng Hao’s name and face were firmly fixed within the minds of countless people, and many people were thoroughly fascinated to the point of zealotry.

Of course, all of the Chosen watched in taciturn silence.

“This matter isn’t concluded yet. The Immortal Tribulation hasn’t dissipated, and the Door of Immortality hasn’t been opened. We have yet to see… exactly how many Immortal meridians he will open!”

Thoughts such as these were going through the minds of all of the Chosen who had recently ascended to true Immortality. Their eyes were all fixed in the direction of Planet East Victory and Meng Hao.

The Patriarchs of the various sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea sighed, exchanged glances with those around them, and then began to discuss the matter.

“Who of this generation can possibly match up to Meng Hao…? Perhaps only the famous star of the Three Great Daoist Societies’ trial by fire… Fang Mu!”

“Fang Mu is obviously an assumed name. Nobody knows who he really is…. However, the Ninth Sea God World accepted him as a disciple, and he still hasn’t accepted the top prize from the Three Great Daoist Societies. Eventually… he will definitely make an appearance.”

“Perhaps he is the only one who can actually compare to Meng Hao. This generation doesn’t belong to us any more, it belongs to them…”

Actually, they weren’t the only ones thinking of Fang Mu. There were many other cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea who also remembered Fang Mu’s eye-catching performance!

He took first place in the Three Great Daoist Societies’ trial by fire!

The old man from the Ninth Sea God World with whom Meng Hao had developed a good relationship that year sighed. The Patriarch from the foremost of the Three Great Daoist Societies, the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite, stared in the direction of Planet East Victory and smiled slightly, and his eyes shone with a bright gleam.

“You are connected to the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite by destiny…. Eventually, you will make your way here.”

Meng Hao floated in midair above Planet East Victory, his hair floating around him. He took a deep breath, and his Eternal stratum continued to work as he looked up into the Heavens.

There were no Tribulation Clouds. The only thing left in front of him were boundless Immortal Palaces that obstructed his path to the Door of Immortality.

The Door of Immortality hovered there behind the Immortal Palaces, emanating powerful pressure.

“The character ‘Immortal’ is made up of one person and one mountain. I should have a Dao Corroboration Mountain….” Meng Hao looked at the Immortal Palaces for a moment and then began to advance forward.

“My Dao Corroboration Mountain should be the mountain which forever remains in my memory…. Mount Daqing.

“It’s too bad that Mount Daqing is still in the State of Zhao, which was taken away by that bastard Patriarch Reliance. And right now, I have no idea where that old turtle bastard has gotten off to.

“Since that’s the case, I will just have to become my own mountain. My fleshly body will be my mountain, and my soul will represent my life. One person  , one mountain  . I… am an Immortal  !” Meng Hao’s energy surged, and his speed increased. In the blink of an eye, he was directly in front of the Immortal Palaces.

In that instant, the figures moving about inside the Immortal Palaces looked like celestial soldiers. They turned toward Meng Hao and then charged in attack. At the same time, roaring sounds emanated out of the Immortal Palaces, which also flew toward Meng Hao in attack. They apparently wanted to crush him, and powerful Immortal might surged out as they neared.

At first glance, it almost seemed impossible to count how many Immortal Palaces there were. However, there were actually 100,000, and they were illusory, not corporeal. They looked like 100,000 seal marks, crushing down toward Meng Hao. Furthermore, the Immortal Palaces actually emanated… the energy of a Paragon of the Immortal Realm!

This was a tribulation that only an Immortal Realm Paragon was qualified to transcend.

Colors flashed, and the starry sky shook as 100,000 Immortal Palaces screamed toward Meng Hao in illusory form.

Incredible pressure weighed down on all the lands, causing Planet East Victory to shake. Meng Hao was the sole focus of this Immortal Tribulation, which he could sense on a profound level. It felt like innumerable heavenly mountains were crushing down onto him.

His cultivation base surged, and his 30,000-meter Dharma Idol shone with golden light as it leveled a punch toward the first of the incoming Immortal Palaces.

As the Dharma Idol punched out, celestial soldiers vanished, and the incoming Immortal Palace began to fall apart. In contrast, his Dharma Idol trembled a bit.

Next, a second Immortal Palace was destroyed, then a third, and a fourth…. One Immortal Palace after another was crushed. Blood oozed out of Meng Hao’s mouth as he continued to attack.

Unfortunately, he was slowly being pushed back down toward the surface of the planet. The Immortal Palaces never seemed to end, and apparently, they wanted to crush Meng Hao down into the ground and grind him into pieces!

Every attack against the Immortal Palaces resulted in a backlash, making things increasingly difficult for Meng Hao. He could crush 10 of them, destroy 100, shatter 1,000. But… there were 100,000 in total!

Their energy continued to rise, and the aura of an Immortal Realm Paragon spread out. It was as if all Immortals… would be forced to kowtow to this aura!

If you didn’t kowtow, you would be crushed!

When the members of the Fang Clan saw what was happening, they grew increasingly nervous. The other cultivators on Planet East Victory were shocked. This Immortal Tribulation was something they had never seen the likes of before.

Fang Xiushan was getting excited. He stared at Meng Hao, wishing that the Immortal Palaces would become a hundred times more powerful than they already were, and completely eradicate Meng Hao in an instant.

The Patriarchs of the various sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea appeared to be visibly moved, and discussed the matter in hushed tones.

“Those are images of Paragon Immortal Palaces!”

“Only a Paragon among Immortals would be able to fight back against an Immortal Tribulation like that!”

“I’m afraid that this Fang Hao… will proceed no further than this step.”

Even as they murmured, Meng Hao punched out against another Immortal Palace. Blood sprayed from his mouth, and his Eternal stratum operated ceaselessly. His eyes grew even more vicious than before.

“They’re merely projections of Immortal Palaces with Paragon auras…. Well, I’ll just have to show this Immortal Tribulation… what the projection of a real Paragon entity looks like!

“Now that I’ve come to this point, it doesn’t matter if I expose my identity. The time has come to show the Ninth Mountain and Sea that I am Fang Mu, and Fang Mu… is none other than me!” Meng Hao took a deep breath and extended his right hand, waving it through the air to employ his most powerful Paragon Daoist magic.

“Paragon Bridge!”

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# Chapter 971: I am Fang Mu!

Originally, Meng Hao had planned to keep his identity as Fang Mu secret, as a contingency for after he left the Fang Clan. But as of this moment, he had changed his mind. Instead of keeping Fang Mu hidden away and concealed, he would make a grand entrance!

He would make sure that everyone in the Ninth Mountain and Sea know that Meng Hao was the number one Chosen of the Fang Clan. At the same time, he was Fang Mu, the number one competitor in the Three Great Daoist Societies’ trial by fire!

He was also a Conclave disciple of the Ninth Sea God World! Although this move might seem like it could put him in danger later, in actuality… being so famous was also somewhat of a protection!

Keeping things low key was fine, but if you made a move, the best thing was to shock everyone!

Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a strange light as he hovered there in midair, the center of all attention. Countless spectators all over the Ninth Mountain and Sea were using various methods to watch him as he lifted his right hand into the air and waved it toward the approaching Immortal Palaces.

In response to the wave of his hand, colors flashed, Heavenly bodies trembled, and a huge wind kicked up. Planet East Victory shook, and roaring sounds echoed out, causing all cultivators to tremble as they sensed an indescribable pressure exploding out from Meng Hao.

The starry sky shook as innumerable ripples spread out, and the aura of a Paragon rose up from Meng Hao, growing more powerful and shocking by the moment.

His gaze was like a sharp blade, filled with obsession, making him look like an Immortal divinity.

As of this moment, the faces of all the members of the Fang Clan flickered.

Deep underneath the ground, the seven Patriarchs of the Fang Clan were all shaken!

“That aura….”

“That aura is similar to that of the Immortal Palaces, except stronger!”

“That’s….” Fan Dong’er’s eyes widened, and the old woman who stood behind her stepped forward to peer into the crystal. Gradually, her eyes filled with astonishment.

“It’s him!” she thought. Even though this old woman had a Dao Realm cultivation base, she couldn’t help but gasp.

At the same time, the expressions on the faces of the Patriarchs in the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto changed. Imposing beams of sword light rose up into the sky, then swept out in all directions.

“That’s… the aura of a Paragon Daoist magic!”

“This Meng Hao, he…. Could it be that he….”

Other than the Ji Clan, the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite of the Three Great Daoist Societies was the most powerful entity in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, and they were more shocked than anyone. Inside a courtyard in the Daoist Rite temple, the Patriarchs’ energies surged as they looked toward Planet East Victory and Meng Hao’s aura.

“Pāramitā’s Paragon Bridge!”

Li Ling’er looked silently at what was happening. Everyone else was shocked, but she was calm. She had long since realized that Fang Mu… was none other than Meng Hao!

“Does this era belong to him…?” she thought, sighing inwardly.

It would be easier to find a phoenix feather or a qilin horn than to find other people in the Ninth Mountain and Sea who knew the truth about this matter. Even considering the aura he was emitting right now, most people were shocked, but hadn’t yet made the connection with Fang Mu

Meng Hao floated there above Planet East Victory, his clothes whipping in the wind, his aura rising to a terrifying degree. It continued to grow more and more intensely powerful.

After the space of a few breaths of time, the feeling he gave people of his being a Paragon grew even more intense. The Immortal Palaces roared toward him until they were only a few dozen meters away.

Meng Hao looked up, and his eyes shone with sharp light. It was in that exact moment that he waved his hand, causing his Immortal meridians to rotate and his cultivation base to explode out. The imprinted image of the Paragon Bridge that existed in his mind suddenly appeared in the starry sky.

The world seemed to go still, and everything in Heaven and Earth stopped moving. A huge bridge appeared, enormous and emanating an ancient and primordial aura. It was a boundless energy that placed it above anything in Heaven and Earth.

The bridge grew rapidly, and in the blink of an eye, it exceeded the 100,000 Immortal Palaces in front of Meng Hao, completely suppressing them.

Boundless light shone out, accompanied by innumerable magical symbols. The aura of a Paragon caused everything to shake, and the Immortal Palaces seemed cowed. Even the planet itself seemed forced to acquiesce, as if this bridge were a path to becoming a Paragon that one powerful expert after another had walked upon!

Rumbling echoed out, and the planet quaked. It was as if everything in the world suddenly went dark except… for the Door of Immortality, which hovered there high in the starry sky, equally matched and standing in stark opposition to the bridge.

In the instant that the bridge appeared, Fang Wei felt as if an invisible punch had just viciously crushed him. His face went ashen, and he staggered backward several paces, his face filling with an expression of disbelief. He stared up at Meng Hao, and the astonishing Paragon Bridge with its Paragon aura!!

“This is impossible! This… This is….” Fang Wei’s mind was reeling. He recognized the bridge, and was well-aware that it was the divine ability created by Fang Mu during the Three Great Daoist Societies’ trial by fire!

In recent days, many people had speculated that Fang Wei was actually Fang Mu. Fang Wei had been enigmatic and done nothing to dispel such rumors. He didn’t admit to being Fang Mu, but neither did he deny it. Because of that, quite a few people made speculations that led them to the conclusion that he… was actually Fang Mu!

It was only as of this moment that Fang Wei found out to his bitterness that he had essentially turned himself into a clown. The real Fang Mu was actually… Meng Hao!

He almost couldn’t believe it, and he wasn’t alone. The other members of the Fang Clan looked over at the bridge, their minds reeling.

“Fang… Fang Mu?”

“I’ve seen that bridge before! In the Three Great Daoist Societies’ trial by fire, the first place competitor Fang Mu created it as a divine ability!”

“This… don’t tell me… Fang Hao is actually Fang Mu!?!?” The entire clan was shocked. Fang Yunyi stood in the crowd, and his vision went dark. The world seemed to be spinning; he simply couldn’t imagine how Fang Mu… could be Meng Hao!

Fang Xiushan’s mind filled with roaring, and his face was pale white as he stared at the Paragon Bridge up in the sky. In the past, he had suspected that the Fang Mu from the Three Great Daoist Societies’ trial by fire was actually a member of the Fang Clan. However, he had quickly dismissed the idea that there was someone else in the Fang Clan who could possibly outdo his own son, who was the number one member of his generation.

Now that he realized that Meng Hao had been Fang Mu all along, he felt his entire world spinning in reverse.

Fang Wei’s grandfather sighed bitterly.

The members of the direct bloodline were extremely excited. No matter if it was Fang Xi or Meng Hao’s 19th Uncle, they all found the matter hard to believe. They had watched Fang Mu during the trial by fire, and now they gasped as they realized that… Meng Hao was the only one who could possibly be Fang Mu.

“Is he really… Fang Mu?”

The Grand Elder’s heart pounded violently. He was extremely familiar with the name Fang Mu.

All of Planet East Victory was shaken by the appearance of the Paragon Bridge. More and more people began to think of Fang Mu. At first, they were a bit hesitant to accept the truth. However, the Paragon Bridge was a divine ability created by Fang Mu, and a divine ability like that… could not possibly have been created a second time by someone else.

“Meng Hao. Fang Hao. Fang Mu…. He really is Fang Mu!”

As of this moment, all of the cultivators of the various sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea looked on with shock, their minds reeling.

As for the various Patriarchs, their minds trembled. This was especially true of the Patriarchs of the Three Great Daoist Societies. Fang Mu was the first place winner of the Three Great Daoist Societies’ trial by fire. After defeating Zhao Yifan, he disappeared into the Ruins of Immortality. They had assumed he died, and yet, here he appeared now, as a Chosen of the Fang Clan!

As for the other Chosen who had just stepped into true Immortality, their minds were also spinning.

“I should have guessed that he was Fang Mu!” murmured Taiyang Zi. Song Luodan stood there silently, and Wang Mu gnashed his teeth.

Everyone was completely shaken!

Meng Hao hovered there above Planet East Victory. He took a deep breath as his long hair flew about. He knew that as of this moment, his identity as Fang Mu had been revealed, and that the Ninth Mountain and Sea was surely in an uproar. However, he didn’t care.

“Yeah, I’m Fang Mu!” His eyes shone with a bright light as he looked at the Paragon Bridge that stretched out over the 100,000 Immortal Palaces toward the Door of Immortality.

Down below the bridge, the Immortal Palaces trembled, as if they couldn’t bear the weight of the Paragon’s aura that emanated out from the Paragon Bridge.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and his desire to do battle surged. He kept his eyes fixed on the Door of Immortality as he moved forward and set foot on the Paragon Bridge.

His first step caused deafening rumbling sounds to spread out through all of Planet East Victory. As the sound echoed out into the starry sky… 10,000 Immortal Palaces instantly shattered into pieces!

They crumbled into debris that scattered about and then dissipated out into the stars….

One step onto the Paragon Bridge destroyed 10,000 palaces!

It was a single step onto the Paragon Bridge, but anyone watching got the feeling that Meng Hao was stepping out into the stars. 10,000 Immortal Palaces were destroyed, sending ripples out in all directions, and completely shocking all the observing cultivators.

Heaven and Earth shook as pressure from the bridge, the will of a Paragon, demolished the Immortal Palaces. Yet Meng Hao also suffered a major backlash; he could use the Paragon Bridge, but only at great cost. He coughed up a mouthful of blood, but his expression remained one of determination as he took a second step.

The second step instantly caused another 10,000 Immortal Palaces to shatter into pieces. A huge wind kicked up that swept the debris out into the starry sky.

No one had ever seen an Immortal Tribulation like this. The Immortal Tribulations experienced by all the other Chosen were like nothing compared to what Meng Hao was going through.

At the same time, nobody had ever transcended Tribulation in such a fashion. He completely destroyed the Tribulation Clouds, and crushed the Immortal Palaces one step at a time. As of this moment, everyone was bearing witness to Meng Hao's surging energy.

When he took a third step, his aura surged out again. It was as if he was the only existence in all Heaven and Earth, a splash of color amongst black and white. At the same time, the inner backlash from using the Paragon Bridge grew stronger. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, causing the bridge to be stained a garish red as he passed.

And yet, he didn't stop for a moment. He braced himself against the inward shaking, endured the trembling of his cultivation base and the power of the backlash. He took a fourth step, then a fifth, and then a sixth!

The Paragon Bridge only had ten portions!

As Meng Hao took each step, 10,000 Immortal Palaces were destroyed. It happened a third time, a fourth time, a fifth time!

He took six steps, and his energy soared. The Paragon Bridge shone with boundless light, as did Meng Hao himself!

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# Chapter 972: Barrage on the Door of Immortality

“The will of an Immortal Realm Paragon….”

“This Fang Hao is shifting the paradigm; in the Immortal Realm, now that he’s ahead of everyone, he’ll be ahead of them every step of the way!”

“From now on, he’s going to be completely famous in the Ninth Mountain and Sea!”

Everyone looked at Meng Hao up in the sky, and their hearts were filled with the same thought: “This era belongs to him!”

Everyone in the Ninth Mountain and Sea watched Meng Hao take six steps that destroyed a total of 60,000 Immortal Palaces. The sight was incredibly moving.

As of this moment, the shattered Immortal Palaces served as a foil to Meng Hao. The Paragon Bridge was the background of the image, and the picture it all painted was now firmly etched in the minds of all onlookers.

The Chosen of the Ninth Mountain and Sea stared silently. Even Wang Tengfei was left speechless. They could only watch as Meng Hao walked forward, destroying the Immortal Palaces in the process.

Fang Wei’s face was pale white. Meng Hao’s Immortal Tribulation was shocking, and his method of transcending the tribulation was astonishing. However, Fang Wei refused to back down.

“Let’s just wait and see how many Immortal meridians he gets after he opens of the Door of Immortality!” Fang Wei’s eyes were completely crimson.

Everyone watched as Meng Hao calmly took a seventh step. Cracking sounds emanated out from his body, and blood spattered onto his clothing. His face was pale white, and his Eternal stratum worked like mad to restore him, although by now it was unable to keep up with the backlash he was receiving. His legs were shaking, but the 10,000 Immortal Palaces underneath his feet also shook, then crumbled into pieces like the ones before them had.

Meng Hao’s eyes were bloodshot. By now, he wasn’t even paying attention to the Immortal Palaces. Now that he was standing atop the Paragon Bridge, he suddenly began to experience a vision of the past. He saw all of the people who had tread the bridge in bygone years.

This bridge was a bridge that allowed people to reach the highest of heights. The bridge had been shattered, but the Paragon’s aura still was there, a manifestation of its former glory. Anyone who could reach the end of it would feel a sense of unmatched supremacy like that of a Paragon of Heaven and Earth.

Meng Hao wiped the blood from his mouth as his hair whipped around him. He watched as countless vague images of people from former times appeared and walked past him.

“I can do it too!” he murmured, stepping forward an eighth time.

The instant he took the eighth step, the Paragon Bridge rumbled, and another 10,000 Immortal Palaces were shattered. By now, there were only 20,000 left!

The ninth step!

Heaven and Earth rumbled, and all the cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea that were looking on felt their minds racing. They recalled everything that had happened in the Three Great Daoist Societies’ trial by fire. They thought back to how they had felt as they watched Fang Mu.

Right now, that same feeling returned as they looked at that very same person!

As they stared at Meng Hao, they felt like they were suffocating as they waited to see if he would reach the end of the Paragon Bridge, destroy all of the Immortal Palaces, and stand in front of the Door of Immortality.

Amidst the rumbling, Meng Hao’s eyes glowed with the desire to do battle. Another 10,000 Immortal Palaces were destroyed as he… took his final step.

The tenth step!

As he took that final step, the remaining 10,000 Immortal Palaces beneath the Paragon Bridge shattered into fragments. They were destroyed, exploded into bits that were swept out into the wind, accompanied by what sound like a roar of rage.

Apparently, they refused to accept that they were being dispersed, and were unwilling to approve of Meng Hao becoming a true Immortal in this way!

However… it didn’t matter if they approved or not. They had no choice but to accept it!

All of the Immortal Palaces were completely destroyed and eradicated. Then, the Paragon Bridge slowly faded away from beneath Meng Hao’s feet. In the blink of an eye, it was gone. He trembled as the full force of the backlash caused blood to spray from his mouth. He staggered in place, almost as if he were on the verge of falling down out of the sky. However, he forced himself to hang on, and his body trembled so badly it looked like it might collapse.

The Paragon Bridge was a trump card for Meng Hao, but considering the level of his cultivation base, it was all he could do to do take the ten steps he had. After passing over the Immortal Palaces, the full force of the backlash seriously injured him. Were his willpower even slightly weaker, he would not have been able to reach the end.

However, everything was worth it!

Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a brilliant light as he stood there in front of the majestic Door of Immortality!

Intense roaring sounds filled the air, echoing out in the Fang Clan, in Planet East Victory, and in all of the Ninth Mountain and Sea!

The members of the Fang Clan were in an uproar, and the other cultivators on Planet East Victory were equally shaken.

“He destroyed the Immortal Palaces with ten steps! Fang Hao did it!”

“He scattered the Immortal Tribulation Clouds and destroyed the Immortal Palaces! Transcending tribulation in this manner is completely unheard of! He definitely deserves his reputation as Fang Mu!”

“He’s forcing his way through the tribulation! How domineering! Perhaps that’s the nature of his Dao!”

Gradually, people were starting to get a vague understanding of Meng Hao’s Dao!

It was completely domineering, as if nothing and no one could stand in his way! Or perhaps, it would be better to say that since he truly believed that he would eventually surpass everyone else, the one person he perpetually wanted to supercede was himself!

He ignored all others and only tried to outdo himself.

Neither his personality nor what he said mattered; these were spurious. His true will… was one of complete domineering!

Freedom! Independence! Those two things were domineering as well!

The members of the direct bloodline were extremely excited. The rest of the Fang Clan was abuzz. Planet East Victory was in an uproar.

All of the other sects and clans were astonished to a profound degree by the way Meng Hao was transcending his tribulation.

“He’s in front of the Door of Immortality now! Now the only thing left to do is open it!”

“Push open the Door of Immortality, bathe in the Immortal light, and open Immortal meridians!”

“I wonder… how many meridians he will open!?!?”

All of the cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, including the Chosen and the Patriarchs, were wondering the same thing…. How many Immortal meridians would Meng Hao open up!?

“He’s already built himself up to the level of a stage 10 Immortal. He’ll probably open up 99 meridians!”

“I wonder if it’s possible… that he’ll actually open… 100 Immortal meridians!?”

The uproar continued throughout the various regions in the Ninth Mountain and Sea as everyone discussed the matter of how many meridians Meng Hao would open. By this point, everyone was wondering about it.

“How many can he open…?” thought Fan Dong’er as she gazed into the crystal.

Li Ling’er stood there quietly, but in her heart, she had already answered the question. Meng Hao would definitely open… 100 meridians!

Zhao Yifan, Taiyang Zi, Song Luodan, Sun Hai and the other Chosen were all panting.

By now, even Fatty, Chen Fan, and other people familiar with Meng Hao were now watching the scene play out in their respective sects.

On Planet South Heaven, Shui Dongliu looked up, and a smile broke out on his face.

“His era has arrived… the era of true Immortality.”

Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li stood in the Tower of Tang, looking at a huge mirror. Within, they could see Planet East Victory and Meng Hao.

Also on Planet South Heaven, on Mount Blood Demon, the previously death-like aura of Blood Demon suddenly flickered with a final trace of life force.

“At long last….” the ancient voice echoed out. “In the moment before my death, the moment I have been waiting for arrives. The time has come for me to give you my last gift of good fortune.”

Where the temple hall once existed in the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple, there was now only a crater. As of this moment, an old man suddenly appeared there, gazing up into the starry sky. Next to him was a withered Resurrection Lily, within which flickered a bit of life force.

“Immortal meridians…” the old man murmured. “You owe him some Karma, you know. Ah, forget it, I’ll just pay him back for you.” He looked down at the withered Resurrection Lily on the ground next to him.

In the Church of the Immortal Emperor, Sun Hai stood there. A young woman was at his side, staring out into the void. All of the disciples of the Church of the Immortal Emperor were all watching a huge screen, and Meng Hao’s image upon it.

“Come on, little brother, you have to open 100 meridians!” the young woman murmured to herself. She was none other than Fang Yu. Suddenly, she felt a creepy stare, which caused her to turn viciously and kick Sun Hai in the shin, causing a sharp twinge of pain. However, a doting look appeared on his face, and he turned to look at her.

“Babe, you can kick me a few more times if you want. The harder the better….”

His expression, and his wording, caused goosebumps to cover Fang Yu.

Everyone was now completely focused on Meng Hao….

He looked up at the enormous Door of Immortality. Compared to it, he was like a speck of dust.

“The Door of Immortality….” he murmured. His eyes brimmed with the desire to fight, and even as his injuries healed, he stepped forward, clenched his hand, and then punched out toward the Door of Immortality.

“Open up!” he roared, his voice echoing like thunder. A huge boom could be heard as his fist made contact with the Door of Immortality. The sound echoed out, shaking the lands. Suddenly, a crack appeared as… the door began to open!

As soon as that crack appeared, boundless Immortal light spilled out, lighting up the Heavens and shining out into the starry sky.

The resplendent Immortal light poured out from the Door of Immortality, becoming a beam that pierced out into the darkness, illuminating everything.

Although it was only a crack, the Immortal light was filled with strong Immortal qi that shot toward Meng Hao and poured into him.

His eyes shone with brilliant light. All of the cultivators watched closely, and there was no question in any of their minds as to whether or not he would succeed. They knew he could open it.

What they were concerned with was how many Immortal meridians he would end up with after the door was opened!

Meng Hao’s expression was one of determination as the Immortal qi poured into him. His eight current Immortal meridians transformed into eight dragons that swirled around him madly, absorbing Immortal qi and making him stronger.

However, a tiny crack was not good enough for Meng Hao.

His 30,000-meter Dharma Idol appeared behind him. Radiating golden light, it stepped forward. At the same time, Meng Hao transformed into a huge golden roc, which joined the Dharma Idol in bashing against the Door of Immortality.

“OPEN UP!” he roared again. As he slammed into the door again, it opened… a little bit more!

More Immortal light poured out, along with strong Immortal qi!

As of this moment, countless spectators gasped as they watched Meng Hao attacking the Door of Immortality.

An incredible power radiated out from the Door of Immortality, and as the Immortal qi poured into Meng Hao, blood sprayed from his mouth. However, his eyes shone with even brighter light than before.

He lifted his right hand, causing numerous mountains to appear. They formed together as they smashed into the Door of Immortality. At the same time, a Blood Demon head appeared, which butted against the door.

And of course there was his 30,000-meter Dharma Idol, which battered the door with its huge hands. Heaven and Earth shook, and booms rang out in all directions. The Door of Immortality slowly opened wider, causing more light and Immortal qi to surge out.

As of this point, the door had opened enough… that a person could slip through!

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# Chapter 973: Opening the Immortal Meridians

In that moment, an incredible light shone out from the Door of Immortality, which transformed into the image of an ancient head. The head looked at Meng Hao and then let out a roar that echoed out like a powerful attack. Blood sprayed from Meng Hao’s mouth, and he staggered back. As for the Door of Immortality, it slowly began to close!

Everyone in the Fang Clan was completely shocked by this. When Fang Wei attacked the Door of Immortality, it had only continued to open wider and wider. It had never shown any signs of closing back up. Everyone gasped.

“What’s going on? This Door of Immortality… is so hard to open!”

“Fang Hao’s Tribulation Clouds were different than everyone else’s, plus there were those Immortal Palaces. It’s only to be expected that his Door of Immortality is unusually hard to open!”

Fang Wei’s eyes glittered as he stared at Meng Hao, and it was clear that he wanted to fight. As for Fang Xiushan, the killing intent in his eyes grew stronger, and his expression was transforming into one of wild joy.

“He can’t open the Door of Immortality!”

The cultivators from the sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea were all shocked by what they were seeing.

“Immortal Tribulation like this, and a Door of Immortality like this, would be impossible for any other Chosen to deal with!”

“It’s hard to say whether Fang Hao… will actually be able to open the Door of Immortality!”

Outside of Planet East Victory, within the starry sky, Meng Hao was forced backward by about 3,000 meters before coming to a stop. He wiped the blood from his mouth as he looked at the Door of Immortality with a vicious gleam in his eyes.

His cultivation base suddenly exploded with power, and his 30,000-meter Dharma Idol reappeared. He fused with the Dharma Idol, transforming into a 30,000-meter giant that took a 3,000 meter step forward to appear directly in front of the Door of Immortality.

He raised both of his hands, placed them onto the Door of Immortality, and roared. Then he shoved forward violently, causing massive rumbling sounds to echo out in every direction.

The Door of Immortality trembled, sending a powerful backlash attack against Meng Hao. He shook as his Eternal stratum exploded out, restoring him even as he rotated his cultivation base and shoved again violently.

RUMBLE!

The Door of Immortality opened by another crack, causing Immortal light to shine out in the starry sky once again. Immortal qi spread out, and Meng Hao’s eyes turned red. He gritted his teeth against the backlash, and went all out, pushing with all the might he could muster.

RUMMMMMBLLLE!

The Door of Immortality slowly opened wider, causing more Immortal light to spill out. In the blink of an eye, it was just as open as it had been before. The face of the old man that had been materialized by the Door of Immortality appeared once again. He roared in rage at Meng Hao, and once again, powerful light exploded out in an attack against Meng Hao.

This time, Meng Hao was ready. Even as the force descended upon him, he stepped backward and performed a double-handed incantation gesture, then shoved his hands straight out in front of him. Immediately, his eight Immortal meridians sparkled, causing eight streams of power to flow out into his right hand. He then unleashed a punch directly toward the old man's face, causing the Immortal qi to shoot out.

In the blink of an eye, they slammed into each other, sending a huge boom echoing out in all directions. The face faded away, and the eight streams of Immortal qi swirled together and returned to Meng Hao. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and yet, his desire to fight was even stronger. He stepped forward, placed his palms on the Door of Immortality, then began to push.

The Immortal light grew stronger, and the Immortal qi more dense. Booms echoed out as the Door of Immortality opened further.

All of the things that had just happened left everyone completely amazed.

"What was that just now? Eight streams of Immortal qi?"

"What divine ability was that…?"

All areas of the Ninth Mountain and Sea were in a complete commotion. Blue veins popped out on Meng Hao's forehead as the Door of Immortality opened wide enough for a person to fit through, but not Meng Hao's Dharma Idol.

"I completely destroyed the Tribulation Clouds and shattered all of the Immortal Palaces. As for the Door of Immortality… if it remained closed, it wouldn't matter. But once I start, I'm going to open it all the way and step inside!" Meng Hao's eyes were completely bloodshot as he once again rotated his cultivation base and shoved against the door. It opened a bit more, and yet, in that same instant, he suddenly backed up.

As he did, glittering starlight appeared within his left eye. In the blink of an eye, light began to pour out of his eye, transforming into a beam of light 3,000 meters long. Then it was 30,000 meters long, enveloping Meng Hao completely. It was at this point that… five characters appeared in Meng Hao's mind.

It was the most powerful Daoist magic of the Fang Clan’s first generation Patriarch!

Rumbling rose up as the light surrounding Meng Hao began to spread out. The starlight flew out of his left eye, transforming into the starstone. The starstone rapidly dissolved, forming a liquid that shot toward Meng Hao and, in the blink of an eye, completely covered him.

In the space of a few breaths of time, even as the Door of Immortality was closing, the light that surrounded Meng Hao vanished. In his place, there was no longer his normal form, but rather, what appeared to be… a gigantic asteroid!

The asteroid was fully 3,000 meters wide, and shocking to the extreme. The void around it cracked and shattered, as if the mere appearance of the asteroid was enough to rock the starry sky.

Next, an intense aura exploded out from it. Countless motes of starlight appeared, which then descended onto the asteroid’s surface.

All of a sudden, it didn’t look like an asteroid any more, but rather, a planet!

A droning sound began to emanate out from the planet as it smashed into the Door of Immortality. Everyone watching was filled with shock as the huge stone bashed into the door.

“One Thought Stellar Transformation!!” gasped the Grand Elder, his face flickering as he stood there among the other members of the Fang Clan.

As soon as his words echoed out, other clan members gasped as they gaped in astonishment at the enormous stone.

“What?! That’s…. One Thought Stellar Transformation!?”

“That’s the first generation Patriarch’s most powerful Daoist magic, One Thought Stellar Transformation! Supposedly, you can use it to actually transform into a planet! It can basically destroy anything!”

“Fang Hao actually acquired the One Thought Stellar Transformation when he went into the ancestral Land! According to the clan’s ancient records, the most powerful form of that magical technique is that you can transform into a real planet!”

All of the cultivators on Planet East Victory and the rest of the Ninth Mountain and Sea were shocked by Meng Hao assuming planetary form. At the same time, that very planet slammed into the Door of Immortality, causing a huge boom to rattle out.

Ripples spread out in every direction; apparently the attack had contained enough energy to cause tremors to spread far and wide. The Door of Immortality shuddered, and a massive wind kicked up. In the blink of an eye, the Door of Immortality opened completely.

One swift attack, and the Door of Immortality opened wide!

It was as if a sluice gate had been opened. Boundless Immortal light spread out rapidly, filled with wildly surging Immortal qi.

In that moment, the planet vanished, and Meng Hao reappeared. His face was pale, and he coughed up four or five mouthfuls of blood as the Immortal light and qi surrounded him.

The boundless Immortal qi surged into him, filling him. His eight Immortal meridians trembled, and began to transform. Immediately, a ninth Immortal meridian began to form!

However, outside of his body, and visible outside of the Door of Immortality, what people saw was not a ninth meridian, but rather, the first meridian.

Whenever someone reaches true Immortal ascension, in the moment that they open the Door of Immortality, their Immortal meridians will cause images of Immortal dragons to appear above the Door of Immortality.

Right now, the first Immortal dragon was rapidly solidifying high above Meng Hao and the Door of Immortality, swirling in the air.

Immortal qi surged and glittered brightly, illuminating the starry sky until it seemed like daytime. Everyone watching on Planet East Victory cried out in shock.

“The Door of Immortality… opened!”

“He’s opening his Immortal meridians! I wonder how many meridians Fang Hao will be able to open!?!?”

Countless cultivators were watching as the first Immortal dragon appeared above the Door of Immortality. As it roared, a second Immortal meridian formed, then a third and a fourth and a fifth.

In the blink of an eye, boundless Immortal qi, which far exceeded what had come from the bronze dragon in the ancestral land’s necropolis, inundated Meng Hao. 10. 20. 30 Immortal meridians appeared.

30 Immortal dragons swirled through the air, roaring. Each one of those Immortal dragons was noted by the audience in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, and caused their hearts to tremble. They stared blankly, especially the other true Immortal Chosen, whose hearts were pounding.

“Those are… those are Immortal meridians?”

“How come each one of his Immortal meridians seems to be multiple times bigger than the Immortal meridians that appeared for everyone else who just achieved true Immortal Ascension!?!?”

“The level of difficulty of his Immortal Tribulation was unheard of. His Door of Immortality was so hard to open! Considering he succeeded, it’s little wonder that his Immortal meridians exceed that of others. They’re so strong!”

Everyone in the Fang Clan on Planet East Victory was completely shocked. Fang Wei watched with a pale face, staring at Meng Hao. Despite everything Meng Hao had done to fight against the Immortal Tribulation and open the Door of Immortality, Fang Wei still wanted to battle him.

Even as expressions of shock could be heard throughout Planet East Victory, the cultivators from the various sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea looked on with astonishment as Meng Hao opened his Immortal meridians.

“The strength of his Immortal meridians represents his battle prowess within the Immortal Realm,” said the old woman next to Fan Dong’er, her voice soft as she peered into the crystal. “He will be incomparable…. He experienced Paragon Immortal Tribulation, and he has become… the only Paragon Immortal!”

The Patriarchs of the other sects and clans also came to similar conclusions as they watched Meng Hao with glittering eyes and thoughtful hearts.

Meng Hao stood in the Door of Immortality, bathed in Immortal light, surrounded by Immortal qi. Rumbling echoed out in all directions as boundless Immortal qi poured into him. Cracking sounds could be heard as 40 Immortal meridians opened, and then more!

41. 45. 50….

Amidst all the rumbling, the Immortal dragons outside the Door of Immortality were now 50 in number. They flew around, roaring, causing anyone who heard the sound to be completely shocked.

However, things weren’t over yet!

55. 60. 70. 80….

80 Immortal dragons appeared outside of the Door of Immortality in a relatively short period of time. Those 80 Immortal dragons exuded shocking energy as they flew around in the starry sky.

Meng Hao’s body was surrounded by roaring. His body felt like it was being shredded as the boundless Immortal qi poured into him, causing the 81st Immortal meridian to form….

Soon, the 81st meridian was finished, after which was the 82nd. Then there were 83.

As everyone in the Ninth Mountain and Sea watched, Meng Hao reached 90 Immortal meridians!

1. I left in the Chinese characters of One Thought Stellar Transformation so you could see the “five characters” that were mentioned, despite the translation being four words

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# Chapter 974: More than 100 Meridians!

90 Immortal meridians swirled around the Door of Immortality. Each and every one of them was multiple times larger than any of the Immortal meridians of the other Chosen who had recently ascended to true Immortality. They looked fierce, the dragon scales glinting, the claws sharp as razors. Their bodies were stalwart and filled with shocking energy.

The light blazing out from the Door of Immortality was matchlessly majestic. As the Immortal qi appeared within the Immortal light, it seemed almost infinite, eternal and never-ending as it surrounded Meng Hao, boring into his pores to fill his entire body.

It was a baptism, a type similar to that experienced by any true Immortal who opened the Door of Immortality.

The more thoroughly one prepared, the deeper the resources one built up, then the more extravagant the baptism would be.

Intense rumbling echoed out of Meng Hao’s body as the Immortal qi headed toward his 91st Immortal meridian. It didn’t take very long at all for the 91st Immortal meridian to fully form.

Yet another Immortal dragon appeared outside of the Door of Immortality.

92 meridians. 93 meridians. 94 meridians…. After the time it takes an incense stick to burn, the Immortal qi pouring into Meng Hao caused 95 meridians to appear inside of him.

All of the sects and clans on Planet East Victory, as well as those out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, were completely shocked.

“95 meridians! He’s already exceeded most of the other Chosen!”

“I wonder if he’ll be able to exceed Fang Wei with his 98 meridians? Fang Wei of the Fang Clan is currently the number one true Immortal!”

As the buzz of conversation filled the air everywhere, Fang Wei stared up at Meng Hao. Inwardly, he was beginning to get nervous; he couldn’t stand the idea of someone else stealing any of his glory, and his eyes filled with a savage light as he glared at Meng Hao.

Fang Xiushan gritted his teeth; his hatred for Meng Hao had reached a pinnacle.

Of course, in sharp contrast, the members of the direct bloodline were extremely excited. They looked excitedly at Meng Hao; to them, it was as if they were looking at the hope for the direct bloodline to rise again.

RUMBLE!

Roaring sounds echoed out from Meng Hao as a 96th Immortal dragon appeared. After that was a 97th. After enough time passed for half an incense stick to burn… a 98th Immortal dragon appeared in the starry sky outside the Door of Immortality!

It started out fairly blurry, but quickly became clear. After a few breaths of time passed, the Immortal dragon was fully formed. It soared about, emitting shocking roars.

Before anyone from the Ninth Mountain and Sea could react, more rumbling sounds emanated out from Meng Hao’s body. Directly next to the 98th Immortal dragon, shockingly, there appeared yet another blurry image of an Immortal dragon.

It rapidly became visible, turning into a 99th dragon!

Instantly, the Ninth Mountain and Sea was thrown into a huge tumult, and shouts of astonishment could be heard in every direction.

The Fang Clan was completely silent for a moment, after which they exploded into complete pandemonium from the shock and astonishment, of personally witnessing… the rise of a true Chosen!

“99 Immortal meridians! He’s surpassed Fang Wei to become the number one blazing sun of the Fang Clan!”

“For years, nobody has ever reached this height! Fang Hao… is the only one!”

“99 Immortal meridians! That’s only one meridian away from the legendary great circle!” The Fang Clan was flabbergasted. As for Fang Wei, he stood there calm and quiet, eventually closing his eyes.

However, it was possible to see how he felt inside from the trembling that wracked his body. After Meng Hao opened 99 meridians, he was filled with an unspeakable disquiet. He didn’t dare to watch any longer, for fear that he might lose his will to fight.

He wasn’t the only one. As of this moment, the other true Immortal Chosen of the Ninth Mountain and Sea all closed their eyes. They… chose to pay no further attention to Meng Hao.

They had their own Daos, and their own paths. If they lost self-confidence in their ability to proceed forward, if they lost their Dao hearts, then their cultivation base would be eternally unable to progress any further.

Meng Hao had long since become a huge mountain blocking the path of all other cultivators of his generation!

Unless someone could split that mountain open, it was possible to predict that the mountain-like Meng Hao would crush all other Chosen of his generation, and continue unobstructed to the pinnacle.

Fang Xiushan’s face was pale and bloodless. In the moment that Meng Hao opened his 99th meridian, it was like an invisible fist smashing into his heart. He clearly understood that as of this moment, Meng Hao… had already soared high into the Heavens.

“Yeah, but he’s only in the Immortal Realm!” thought Fang Xiushan. Deep within his eyes, a gleam of madness suddenly sparked to life.

As of this moment, everyone was speculating as to whether or not 99 meridians would be Meng Hao’s true limit. Meng Hao’s face glowed with the light of obsession as he rotated his Immortal meridians, causing Immortal power to flow through him. After it performed a full cycle, it suddenly exploded out!

In that instant, an intense, tearing pain suddenly shot through him, and a rumbling sound once again emanated out.

It was as if yet another Immortal meridian was suddenly gouging itself into his body.

“100 meridians!” he roared.

Shockingly, all of the Immortal dragons outside of the Door of Immortality suddenly stopped in place and looked up at the shadowy, sinuous figure that had just appeared.

It looked like a shocking bolt of electricity, and its image instantly exploded like thunder into the minds of the cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

The 100th Immortal dragon formed outside of the Door of Immortality. After the space of a few breaths, it was clear to all onlookers!

It was absolutely clear that this was the 100th Immortal dragon!

As soon as it became visible, the spectators felt as if their hearts were being struck by lightning. Gasps could be heard, along with loud cries of shock and alarm that echoed throughout the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

100 meridians had been opened, and 100 Immortal dragons swirled above the Door of Immortality, causing astonishing roars to fill the air!

100 Immortal dragons joined their voices together in a shocking roar that shook the land and caused the heavenly bodies to tremble.

The members of the Fang Clan were silent as they stared in shock at the 100 immortal dragons flying outside the Door of Immortality. After a long moment, shouts of astonishment rang out.

“100 meridians…. He really opened 100 meridians!!”

“Our Fang Clan… has produced a blazing sun that opened 100 meridians!”

“Fang Hao! Meng Hao! Fang Mu! From this day forward, his name will completely shake all of the Ninth Mountain and Sea!”

The direct bloodline was going crazy, as was the rest of the Fang Clan, and even all of the other other cultivators on Planet East Victory.

They looked up at Meng Hao, and all they could see was his shadowy form wreathed by boundless Immortal light. However, their eyes were filled with fervor.

100 meridians, fully opened, was a legendary Realm that virtually no one had entered for countless years. Meng Hao… was the first!!

Fang Wei finally opened his eyes and saw the 100 Immortal dragons, and blood oozed out of his mouth. He clenched his hands into fists.

Fang Xiushan began acting abnormally; his eyes revealed a menacing glint which grew stronger and stronger.

Off to the side, the Grand Elder was shocked. His eyes grew cloudy as he thought back to the scene of Meng Hao returning to the clan, standing in East Heaven Gate, his Bloodline Gatebeam rising 30,000 meters into the air.

All of the seven Patriarchs underground had risen to their feet and were looking at Meng Hao, their expressions unprecedentedly solemn.

“This kid is a future Paragon of the Fang Clan!” the Seventh Patriarch said softly. He glanced over at the Sixth Patriarch, who looked shocked. However, a strange coldness also gleamed within the Sixth Patriarch’s eyes.

Planet East Victory was boiling with excitement, as were the sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. As for the Chosen, many who had opted to close their eyes now opened them and looked at the 100 Immortal dragons swirling around Meng Hao. Their hearts grew increasingly heavy.

“100 meridians? It is what it is! It’s a legendary Realm, but who cares? So what if he’s an Immortal Realm Paragon?!”

“This isn’t going to stop me from fighting him!”

“That’s nice. He has his Dao, and we have our paths. Nothing… is set in stone yet!” The Chosen stood there silently, their eyes flickering with the desire to fight.

“Finally… it’s over.” As everyone looked at the Immortal light inundating Meng Hao, and the shocking sight of his 100 meridians, they knew that his good fortune of opening the Door of Immortality was now over.

However, it was in that moment… that people suddenly realized, the Immortal light and qi were continuing to swirl madly around Meng Hao as he stood there in the Door of Immortality. He took a deep breath, and his eyes shone with a bright light.

“Since my identity as Fang Mu has been revealed,” Meng Hao murmured, “then a mere 100 meridians simply isn’t enough….” He threw his head back and let out a shocking cry.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE….

The shocking sounds grew more intense, spreading out in all directions as the light shining from the Door of Immortality grew more magnificent, and even more Immortal qi was released.

Anyone who could see what was happening was thoroughly shocked.

“Hey… what’s going on?!”

“Could it be that he’s going to open 101 meridians!?”

“That’s impossible! 100 meridians is already a thing of legend! How could he possibly open 101?”

Everyone looked on with disbelief and astonishment as the eight Immortal meridians that he had already possessed suddenly began to manifest on the outside!

101 meridians. 102 meridians. 103 meridians! 104 meridians!!

In the blink of an eye, he had four more meridians!

As of this moment, everyone in the Ninth Mountain and Sea who was watching, regardless of whether they were ordinary cultivators or Patriarchs of the various sects and clans, all felt their eyes go wide and fill with disbelief. Everyone went silent.

Even as they stared at Meng Hao and his 104 meridians, a 105th meridian appeared!

“Come on!” Meng Hao roared as the Immortal light and Immortal qi surged into him. The sound of his shout echoed out into the starry sky as… a 106th meridian appeared!

Blue veins popped out on Meng Hao’s face as the 107th meridian appeared!

“COME ON!” he roared. A shocking rumbling echoed out through all of Planet East Victory, piercing into the starry sky as 108 meridians appeared!!

The 108th meridian that appeared was actually… the very first meridian that he had ever formed!

By this point, the hearts of countless spectators in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were pounding madly.

What they saw was 108 Immortal dragons swirling around the Door of Immortality, fierce and savage. They also saw Meng Hao, wreathed in Immortal light. From the way he looked… he wasn’t satisfied!

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There will actually be some more about the Immortal meridians because this is not just a matter of simply opening the meridians, there are also a lot of unexplained plot points that will be resolved.

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# Chapter 975: Blood Demon and Resurrection Lily!

All cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea who were watching looked completely astonished and tongue-tied as they observed the 108 Immortal dragons soaring through the starry sky outside the Door of Immortality above Planet East Victory.

“100 meridians is a legend, but 108? This… this is the first time I’ve ever heard of someone getting more than 100 meridians!”

“No one in the past has ever done this, and most likely, nobody in the future will either!” The Ninth Mountain and Sea was in a tumult, and that shock actually spread out throughout the Mountains and Seas.

All of the members of the Fang Clan watched with gaping mouths. They knew that Meng Hao was the type of person to defy the Heavens, but when they saw him open 100 meridians, they had assumed he was finished. They could never have imagined that Meng Hao would actually… open up 108 meridians all in one shot!

“Impossible!” Fang Wei went pale. He could reluctantly accept the idea of Meng Hao using the One Thought Stellar Transformation Incantation to open 100 meridians, and use that as an excuse for why he didn’t measure up to Meng Hao. But now… 108 meridians had appeared, causing Fang Wei to completely lose self-control.

Fang Xiushan was trembling as he stood there in the crowd, and the icy aura inside of him flourished.

As far as anyone knew, the Fang Clan only had one Dao Realm expert, which was the Earth Patriarch. Currently, his eyes shone with a brilliant light as he murmured, “There’s only one explanation…. Before he started transcending this tribulation, the kid… already had 8 meridians. He experienced something just like Kṣitigarbha, the Lord of the Fourth Mountain and Sea!”

His words struck like lightning into the hearts of the other six Patriarchs present.

“The necropolis!” exclaimed the Seventh Patriarch. “I personally saw that kid enter the necropolis of the first generation Patriarch!”

Meanwhile, in the Ninth Sea God World, Fan Dong’er staggered backward a few paces, her face pale. She looked bitterly at the images in the crystal, at the 108 Immortal dragons soaring around Meng Hao. She had no choice but to admit that there had already been a huge gap between her and Meng Hao, and that after reaching true Immortality, that gap… was only widening.

“Such profound preparation and reserves,” murmured the old woman standing next to her. “In all the great Nine Mountains and Seas, the only person other than this kid to do something like this is… the number one most powerful expert, Kṣitigarbha! According to the legends, when Kṣitigarbha reached true Immortality, he opened more than 100 meridians. Very few people actually know how many, though…. After all, those events took place many, many generations ago.” A strange gleam appeared in her eyes.

As of now, all of the true Immortal Chosen were staring at Meng Hao. They had no desire to look at Meng Hao’s 108 meridians, and yet, they were unable to look away. To open so many Immortal meridians was something that shocked everyone.

That was especially the case when they realized that Meng Hao didn’t seem to be happy with only 108 meridians. All of them gasped.

“Could it be… that he’s actually planning to open more meridians!?!?”

Meng Hao was absolutely not satisfied!

Now that he had opened the Door of Immortality, he was completely confident that he could open more than 108 meridians.

“This is a rare opportunity,” he thought. “Very rare. I’ll only get this one chance….” He stared at the Door of Immortality, and realized that the glowing light was beginning to fade, and the Immortal qi was slowly beginning to dissipate.

He well knew that once this opportunity passed, it would be very difficult to get another chance like this in which he could absorb as much Immortal qi as he wanted, and then open more Immortal meridians.

That was something he was sure of based on his experiences with the slow and difficult process of opening his first Immortal meridian.

“However, it seems like 108 meridians really is my limit….” he thought, looking up at the 108 Immortal dragons flying about, which were the manifestations of his Immortal meridians.

Among those Immortal dragons, there was one that was azure in color. It looked especially graceful, and was much larger than all the other dragons. It emanated an ancient air that seemed to make it contemptuous of all Heaven and Earth. It was almost as if this dragon could make all the Heavens submit, and could force the Earth to bow in worship!

It was as if all the other dragons were following that azure-colored dragon, their roars filling all the Heavens.

The azure Immortal dragon was formed by none other than the very first of Meng Hao’s Immortal meridians, which was actually the last one to be opened!

As Meng Hao stood there silently, the Immortal light coming from the Door of Immortality faded even more, and was soon incapable of covering his entire body. The Immortal qi lessened, and the even Door of Immortality itself began to fade.

“Is it over?”

“So, his limit was 108 meridians, huh…?”

“Those extra eight meridians were his limit. Although he can’t open any more, his name is still going to rock the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea!”

As the discussions raged in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, Fang Wei stood there on Planet East Victory, and he gave an inward sigh of relief.

He wasn’t the only one. The other true Immortal Chosen all sighed deep in their hearts.

The intimidation they felt from Meng Hao only continued to grow more intense. Now that they saw the Door of Immortality dissipating, their sighs led to a stirring of their fighting spirit. All of them knew that they weren’t his match, and yet they still wanted to fight him!

The Door of Immortality grew more indistinct, and the Immortal light grew darker. The immortal qi… was virtually gone.

The starry sky was no longer bright, and as Meng Hao stood there, he looked at the 108 flying Immortal dragons, and his eyes glimmered with regret.

“It’s over…. 108 meridians.” Meng Hao sighed and turned to head back to Planet East Victory, when suddenly, a tremor ran through his body. He stopped in place and turned his head to look out into the starry sky.

He was looking… in the direction of Planet South Heaven!

In that moment… a voice suddenly echoed out in his heart. It was extremely weak, and vastly ancient. It was like the voice of an old man who was about to die, a departed spirit who had forced itself to remain in the world of the living, never allowing that last gasp to escape. Even if the flame of his life was snuffed out, he would leave behind an ember that clung on by a thread. It was as if that final remaining spark had been waiting for this moment!

“Meng Hao… I only have one breath left, and it has been waiting for this day…. Allow me to use my fading life force to gift you with one last bit of good fortune!”

When Meng Hao heard that voice echoing in his mind, he recognized it instantly. It was… the voice of Patriarch Blood Demon from Planet South Heaven!

Patriarch Blood Demon’s origins had not been made clear. However, Meng Hao knew that his terrifying fleshly body was buried under the surface of the lands of South Heaven. And in truth, in his heart, Meng Hao had already come to know the answer to the question of who he really was.

Patriarch Blood Demon… was one of the three Greater Demon generals of Lord Li, a figure referred to as a consummate expert!

“You are from the League of Demon Sealers,” continued Patriarch Blood Demon in his ancient voice. “Furthermore, you are the Ninth Generation. I can speculate… about some of what will happen to you in the future, and therefore, I will tell you now what I can of the benevolent possibilities in your future. You don’t understand right now… however, if you are able to combine the Nine Hexes in the future…. you will know how to repay me. Right now, I will do something that I hope will make you consider the question of… what Immortal meridians really are.”

When Patriarch Blood Demon finished speaking, a stream of blood-colored Demonic qi exploded out from Mount Blood Demon on Planet South Heaven. At the same time, Patriarch Blood Demon’s fleshly body, which rested under the surface of the land, dissolved, and became part of the stream of Demonic qi.

As the Demonic qi surged up into the Heavens, it transformed into a blood-colored magical symbol.

The magical symbol flickered nine times, then vanished.

In the moment that it vanished, Patriarch Blood Demon met his complete and utter end!

As he died, the magical symbol vanished, and simultaneously, Meng Hao felt the Blood Demon Grand Magic inside of him begin to rotate on its own. Rumbling sounds could be heard as a bloody light surrounded him, spreading out and… forming a 109th Immortal meridian!

It was… a Blood Demon meridian!

The previously fading Door of Immortality suddenly shook, and in the blink of an eye, was back to its previous state. The fading Immortal light suddenly exploded with intensity, covering Heaven and Earth, filling the starry sky. The Immortal qi grew stronger, descending onto Meng Hao’s body and pouring into him.

The Blood Demon Grand Magic rotated inside of him, transforming into a magical symbol, which was exactly the same magical symbol that had appeared in the moment of Patriarch Blood Demon’s death on Planet South Heaven.

It was the color of blood, and after flashing nine times inside of Meng Hao, it began to melt, transforming into a shadowy Immortal meridian.

As the Immortal qi poured into him, the Immortal meridian grew more solid, and before long, it was complete! Meng Hao trembled as… a 109th Immortal dragon appeared!

The roaring Immortal dragon was the color of blood, and completely shocking in appearance. Endless ripples spread out from it in all directions, causing the cultivators of the Ninth Mountain to be completely stunned.

However, in the moment that the 109th Immortal meridian appeared, another tremor ran through Meng Hao, as he felt a different aura rising up inside of him, forming a powerful resonance!

That resonance was coming from… the same planet that Patriarch Blood Demon had just died on!

Meng Hao looked up, and his eyes flickered as he looked at what he considered to be his true home, Planet South Heaven.

Just vaguely, he could see the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple. There in the former location of the temple hall, he saw… what appeared to be a flower.

It was… a Resurrection Lily!

When the Resurrection Lily blooms with seven colors, petals fall, Immortal Ascension, one thousand years!

Meng Hao had been plagued with a Resurrection Lily for hundreds of years. In the end, he had severed it away. However, vestiges of it still remained, like memories that were very difficult to get rid of.

It was another type of Karma, or… a type of restitution!

On Planet South Heaven, in the vast Eastern Lands, in a wild stretch of mountains, was a deep crater that was all that remained of the temple hall of the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple. An old man stood there, and next to him was a Resurrection Lily.

“My power is useless to the living….” he murmured vaguely, “but you… were bequeathed with the legacy of the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite. You took master’s Soul Lamp, and changed your destiny…. The Resurrection Lilies sowed Karma with you, and now that you’ve reached Immortal Ascension, I will represent them to pay you back what they owe.

“If you can reach enlightenment regarding Immortal meridians, then it will be good fortune for you. Whether or not you understand is all up to you.”

The man’s words were muttered somewhat incomprehensibly, as if the arrangements of the words themselves had been thrown into chaos. The old man waved his right hand, causing the Resurrection Lily next to him to transform into ash.

As the ash swirled through the air, a violent tremor ran through Meng Hao. He gasped, and for some reason, he suddenly recalled all of his struggles with the Resurrection Lily.

The memories flowed like water, and as they did, the Karma that had built up from the years of struggle transformed into an aura, into a Resurrection Lily, into… a Resurrection Lily Immortal meridian!

As soon the Immortal meridian formed, Meng Hao's hair whipped about, and his body seemed to turn into a black hole that madly sucked in Immortal qi. Intense rumbling sounds filled the air as another Immortal meridian formed!

This was… his 110th meridian!

In the moment that the meridian appeared, a 110th Immortal dragon roared into being next to the Door of Immortality.

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# Chapter 976: Dao Corroboration!

In the Nine Mountains and Seas, the Elder generation always passed down a certain tradition to the younger generation of Chosen of the various sects and clans. That tradition was that when the age of true Immortals arrived, one must remember the saying… preparation is the key to success!

By preparing well and accumulating profound resources, one could explode out with extraordinary power, and open up the most Immortal meridians possible.

Therefore, for generation after generation, people would make preparations for the time when the age of true Immortality arrived. They would hold themselves back at the peak of the Spirit Realm and wait until they could unleash all of their resources to achieve true Immortal Ascension.

Throughout all the years, that was how things were done. However, as of this moment, the Patriarchs of the Ninth Mountain and Sea were somewhat in a daze as they watched what was happening.

As they looked at Meng Hao, all of a sudden they seemed to come to an understanding.

Meng Hao also knew what it meant to prepare in advance to succeed…. It wasn't just a matter of cultivation base, nor was it simply about forming Immortal meridians in advance. It also had to do with… destiny!

Before someone attempted to achieve true Immortal Ascension, their advanced preparations involved the various destinies they encountered throughout their lives, as well as the Karma they sowed. All of those things were components to the preparation; however, there was a premise to such destiny….

“He is corroborating his own Dao to achieve Immortal Ascension….” said the Fang Clan’s Earth Patriarch, his voice light and hoarse. His expression was one of enlightenment.

The old woman next to Fan Dong’er sighed.

“Only those who achieve their own Immortal Ascension can wrest away good fortune from Heaven and Earth,” she said, “achieve true Immortal Ascension, and acquire the destiny to personally form Immortal meridians.”

In that moment, all of the Patriarchs came to the same understanding. However, that didn’t change anything. They had never personally watched while someone reached true Immortality on their own, but, they had seen far, far too many people fail.

It would be easier to find a phoenix feather or a qilin horn than to find someone who had succeeded; that was how rare they were. From ancient times until now… Kṣitigarbha was apparently the only person who had ever succeeded. Now, however, there was one more.

Although they reached this understanding, there were far more people who didn’t understand. When the 110th Immortal dragon appeared, the Ninth Mountain and Sea was thrown into chaos. It was a commotion the likes of which had never occurred before.

It paled in comparison even to the time that Meng Hao, using the pseudonym Fang Mu, had seized the title of first in the trial by fire. It was hard to say who was the first person to begin to cry out, but soon, all of the cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea were yelling and shouting.

“Th-tha’s… the 110th meridian!”

“Crazy! This is insane! How could there possibly be an Immortal Realm cultivator in the world with 110 meridians!?!?”

“Wait a second, something seems weird. Those two Immortal dragons that just appeared look different from the others. One is blood-colored! The other one… looks even more mysterious!”

The 110th Immortal dragon was very unique and, although it emanated intense Immortal light, for some reason it gave people the impression that it was related to plants and vegetation. In fact, if you looked closely, you could even see that the dragon had seven different colors circling around in its body.

Amidst the astonished cries of the crowds in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, Meng Hao stood there up in the starry sky, his heart calm as he probed these two new Immortal meridians. When he did, he could clearly sense Patriarch Blood Demon and the Resurrection Lily.

As of this moment, all of the destiny and good fortune he had built up was now exploding out.

“Now I understand that destiny is a type of preparation,” he murmured. “In light of that, what exactly are Immortal meridians…?” Even as he reached some form of enlightenment, he continued to contemplate the 110 Immortal meridians inside of him.

“100 meridians really are a limit…. Cultivators’ bodies, their flesh and blood, can only form 100 meridians.

“My extra eight meridians are actually not part of my flesh and blood. They are actually a different kind of meridian, constructed on a foundation laid by the bronze lamp’s smoke!” 1

“It looks very similar to an Immortal meridian formed from flesh and blood, but actually, they are completely different on a structural level.

“As for the other two Immortal meridians, they are also different. They were formed from the consolidation of power, one from Patriarch Blood Demon and the other from the Resurrection Lily.

“Well then… what exactly are Immortal meridians…?” Slowly, he lifted his head, and his eyes shone with a bright light.

“Immortal meridians are a type of verification! They are a declaration to Heaven and Earth that one is qualified to become a true Immortal. It’s undeniable proof; it doesn’t matter whether Heaven and Earth approve or not, in the end they WILL acknowledge you. It is also …. Dao corroboration!

“That Soul Lamp’s power opened my path to true Immortality. My flesh and blood Immortal meridians pushed me to the pinnacle. The bronze dragon’s power helped me to expand upon that original Immortal meridian. Then, the power of Patriarch Blood Demon and the Resurrection Lily helped me to open up more Immortal meridians, and also… to understand them!

“Immortal meridians acquired before true Immortality are a type of good fortune. However, all other types of preparations and magical techniques have the possibility to… become Immortal meridians!”

“That is a manifestation of power, and a kind of concrete representation of the Dao!

“Anything… can become an Immortal meridian!” Meng Hao reached enlightenment at this point, at which point something like fetters shattered within him.

It was as if there were an obstacle inside of him that had suddenly shattered. As Meng Hao raised his head, his hair whipped about, and his clothes flapped in the wind. Brilliant light began to shine out of his eyes.

“I understand….”

Meanwhile, in the Ruins of Immortality, there was an Immortal’s cave. Sitting in that Immortal’s cave was a woman, the white-robed Paragon. A slight smile suddenly broke out on her cold face. That smile was faint, yet was something rarely seen on her.

“Pretty good intuition!” she said softly.

At the same time, there was a location in the Fourth Mountain and Sea that was filled with a sinister mist, within which was concealed the Yellow

Springs, reincarnation, and the boundless underworld. This location was a resting place to which all dead souls eventually returned.

Within that mist was a palace built from richly ornamented buildings. It emanated an ancient, archaic air and dense Yin qi. Gradually, in the depths of that mist, an enormous figure became visible, who sat there cross-legged.

The figure looked like a statue, like an Immortal Divinity who exerted pressure over the entire underworld, as if he suppressed the entire Fourth Mountain and Sea. That figure's eyes seemed as if they would remain eternally closed, and yet, in that moment, they suddenly cracked open slightly.

“So, I am not alone in my Dao….” he said slowly, his voice echoing out through the Fourth Mountain and Sea.

Back outside of Planet East Victory, Meng Hao's eyes glowed, and as the cracking sounds emanated out of body, his enlightenment grew.

“Anything can become an Immortal meridian,” he thought. “Such a thing would be impossible for other true Immortals, but for someone who has reached true Immortality on their own, it is possible!

“Heaven and Earth cannot restrict or restrain me. I will not be caged by the starry sky, nor buried under the vault of Heaven!

“I don't need any approval from Heaven and Earth! True, authentic Immortals approve of Heaven and Earth, not the other way around!” Rumbling filled Meng Hao's mind. The cracking sounds grew more intense, and his body trembled even more violently. Brilliant light flickered out of his eyes as he suddenly raised his right hand and then pointed toward the Door of Immortality.

“I freely cultivated the Sublime Spirit Scripture!” Meng Hao murmured. “I reached the great circle of Qi Condensation, acquired the Perfect Foundation, the Perfect Core, the Perfect Nascent Soul! I formed Perfect Dao Fruit, and even broke through into the Eternal stratum!

“My will cannot be eradicated within an Eternity, so therefore, my Eternal stratum… will be the basis of my 111th Immortal meridian!

“OPEN!” In that moment, his Eternal stratum surged, causing numerous motes of light to appear inside of him. Those motes of light rapidly formed together, transforming into… a 111th Immortal meridian right next to his other 110 Immortal meridians!

The Door of Immortality trembled, and Immortal light surged out. Immortal qi poured into Meng Hao, solidifying his Eternal stratum Immortal meridian. The meridian grew stronger and stronger, and was soon completely formed!

At the same time, the 111th Immortal dragon appeared outside of the Door of Immortality. It was a dragon of Eternity which caused the starry sky to tremble with its roaring.

Everyone out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea stared in complete shock. When they saw the Eternal Immortal dragon appear outside the Door of Immortality, great waves of astonishment surged inside of them.

“Y-yet another… Immortal meridian?”

“Is he even human?”

“Could he be an ancient Immortal, reincarnated into modern times?”

Countless cries of shock could be heard.

The Dao Realm Patriarchs of the various sects and clans were even more shaken than the other cultivators. People like them were extremely rare, and most sects and clans only had one. However, as of this moment, all of them emerged from secluded meditation and stepped out into the starry skies to stare toward Planet East Victory.

“The Fang Clan… has produced an incomprehensibly exceptional person!” Waves of shock surged through the Patriarchs, and complicated expressions appeared on their faces.

“If he is allowed to reach his potential…the Fang Clan will flourish tremendously!”

“I’m afraid the course of future events is going to change. This matter isn’t necessarily good for the Fang Clan, and is even less beneficial for the rest of us. As for who is worst off… it’s the Ji Clan!”

“The last person to corroborate the Dao on their own was the Lord of the Fourth Mountain and Sea, Kṣitigarbha. Now another person has corroborated their own Dao….” The eyes of the Patriarchs from the various sects and clans flickered, many of them with hesitation.

It was at this point that more rumbling sounds emanated out from Meng Hao. More Immortal qi poured into him as a 112th Immortal meridian began to form inside of him.

This was a Qi and Blood Immortal meridian that he formed from his true Immortal fleshly body!

In the moment that Meng Hao achieved enlightenment on the fundamental nature of Immortal meridians, everything changed. Now, a 112th Immortal dragon roared into being next to the Door of Immortality.

Each and every one of this Immortal dragon’s scales brimmed with the shocking power of qi and blood.

It was at this point that, all of a sudden, a beam of light shot out from the peak of the Ninth Mountain. The light was gray, and it pierced through the starry sky directly toward Planet East Victory.

The gray light moved with incredible speed, and seemed to be filled with the aura of Karma. Apparently, if any living being touched it, they would be infected by Karma, which could then be… severed!

The beam of light turned into a blade of Karma Severing which, in the blink of an eye, appeared outside of Planet East Victory and then slashed down toward Meng Hao, who was right in the middle of forming Immortal meridians!

Instantly, a cold voice echoed out from the Fang Clan’s ancestral mansion beneath the surface of Planet East Victory.

“Ji Clan, dost thou dare!?”

It was the clan’s Earth Patriarch, the Dao Realm Patriarch, whose face flickered as he suddenly vanished from his position and then reappeared out in the starry sky, right in front of the gray light. He waved his right hand, causing Essence power to surge out soundlessly. It slammed into the gray light; Karma power erupted, but was shattered and then faded away.

The Dao Realm Patriarch retreated a few paces, and when he raised his head, his eyes were cold and somber. He raised his hand and pointed out into the sky, causing a massive ripple to sweep out from his finger, transforming into a shield which surrounded all of Planet East Victory.

“Anyone who dares to mess with this qilin son of the Fang Clan will fight with me to the death! Even you, Ji Clan…. Don’t force me to request the first generation Patriarch’s corpse to come out; I’ll lug him up the Ninth Mountain on my back and then only one of us will come out alive!”

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 977: Demon Sealer Meridians!

The Fang Clan's Dao Realm Earth Patriarch was a white-haired old man. He was tall and muscular, and as he hovered there in the starry sky, he emanated a powerful Essence aura that seemed capable of forcing all Heaven and Earth to acquiesce.

A gleam like that of lightning flickered in his eyes as he stared coldly out into the void. His piercing gaze tore through the starry sky all the way to the peak of the Ninth Mountain!

By this time, virtually all of the Dao Realm Patriarchs from the various sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea had emerged and were looking toward Planet East Victory. Each one was was very quiet, and did not speak. However, their eyes flickered, and their hearts were anything but calm.

The Ji Clan could be considered the Paragon of the Ninth Mountain and Sea!

In the past, certain sects had put on a show of contending with the Ji Clan, but in reality, everyone feared them. If ever there came a situation in which real fighting might occur, they would back down.

Throughout all the years, very few situations had ever arisen in which real conflict occurred. Now, however… such a situation had now arisen with the Fang Clan!

And all of it was due to a single person…

Meng Hao!

Matters that pertained to the Dao Realm were not visible to the whole of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Only peak Ancient Realm cultivators could sense some of the pressure coming from up above. No one else had any idea.

Not even Meng Hao knew that by opening the Immortal meridians as he just had, he ended up rousing killing intent in the Ji Clan. Nor did he realize that the Fang Clan Patriarch had rushed to protect him in such a domineering fashion.

The starry sky was silent for a long moment, after which the Ji Clan responded to the Fang Clan Earth Patriarch with a cold snort.

The snort turned into intense ripples that exploded out of the Ninth Mountain. The face of the Fang Clan's Earth Patriarch flickered in response. Suddenly, a cold voice echoed out from the Ninth Sea God World in the Ninth Sea.

The voice was extremely archaic, and immediately filled the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea. Of course, nobody could actually hear it except for the less than twenty Dao Realm Patriarchs from the sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea who had currently revealed themselves. However, the words caused their minds to spin.

“Fang Mu is a Conclave disciple of the Ninth Sea God World.”

In the instant that the voice could be heard, the Ji Clan's energy suddenly faltered.

Next, another cold voice rang out from one of the other Three Great Daoist Societies, the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto on Planet West Felicity. The voice almost seemed to be echoing out from ancient times as it spread out through the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

“Fang Mu was named the top candidate by the Three Great Daoist Societies!”

In response to the voice, the Ji Clan's energy faltered again. Now, it seemed to be hesitating.

In the instant that the Ji Clan paused, yet another voice rang out from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite on the Ninth Mountain. The voice was calm, but was filled with decisiveness that could sever nails and chop iron. It was a voice that was even more domineering than the one from the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto!

"Fang Mu is connected by destiny to the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite. Fighting between him and members of his generation is permitted, but Elder generations slaughtering him is NOT!"

When the Dao Realm Patriarchs from the sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea heard these voices, their minds trembled, and their eyes shone with a strange light.

"The Fang Clan by itself couldn't possibly win in a fight against the Ji Clan, but they still can't be underestimated. The Ji Clan would surely suffer serious losses. However, if you add in the Three Great Daoist Societies…."

"The Ji Clan is definitely more than a match for any given sect or clan. However, if the Three Great Daoist Societies joined forces, they would easily be a match for the Ji Clan. Now that the Fang Clan has taken a stand, if the Ji Clan doesn't resolve the situation deftly, it could result in a huge war in the Nine Mountains and Seas!"

"Most important of all is that the Three Great Daoist Societies' reserves are far too profound…. The Lords of the Mountain and Sea may change, but the Daoist societies will exist for all eternity."

The Patriarchs' eyes glittered. However, some of them had secret connections to the Ji Clan, and these looked toward Planet East Victory with cold indifference.

The Ji Clan remained silent. Gradually, seemingly after having considered the situation, their energy dissipated and an ancient voice echoed out.

“Is this really worth it?”

Then, the Ji Clan’s energy disappeared completely.

The auras of the Three Great Daoist Societies also faded away from the starry sky.

The Ninth Mountain and Sea returned to normal. Few people knew about what had just happened. However, the Fang Clan’s Dao Realm Patriarch didn’t return to his original position. Instead, he sat down cross-legged in the starry sky to stand as a Dharma Protector for Meng Hao.

As he looked at Meng Hao, who was not too far off, by the Door of Immortality, his mouth turned up into a slight smile, and his eyes gleamed with anticipation.

“Alright, kid. It’s time for you to unleash all your potential. Show us what you have, and don’t be afraid. Cultivators like us need to live for glory!”

As if by some bizarre coincidence, more rumbling sounds could be heard as soon as the Fang Clan’s Dao Realm Patriarch looked over at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s hair and clothes whipped in the wind, and scintillating Immortal light and Immortal qi swirled around him.

Meng Hao’s eyes glowed brightly as his 112th Immortal meridian was completed. Now that he understood the nature of Immortal meridians, he wanted to determine exactly how well he understood them.

If he was going to rise to prominence, he might as well leave everyone completely and utterly shocked.

“I really want to know… exactly how many meridians I can open!

“My 113th meridian will be based on Hexing magic! The Eighth Demon Sealing Hex, Bodily Cultivation Hexing… that is my 113th meridian!” Meng Hao’s right hand flashed in an incantation gesture, then waved through the air. Intense rumbling sounds could be heard, and although nobody else could see it, the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex transformed into a magical symbol inside of him. Immortal qi poured into him, and began to solidify….

Another Immortal meridian rapidly formed, which then absorbed shocking amounts of Immortal qi until it was fully formed!

Meng Hao's aura grew stronger, and at the same time, a 113th Immortal dragon appeared outside the Door of Immortality. Its roaring echoed out in all directions, shaking the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

This Immortal dragon shone with bizarre light, and if you looked at it for too long, you felt your cultivation base becoming rigid, and your body growing stiff.

All of the cultivators who saw it were filled with shock.

Before anyone could even begin to comment, though, more rumbling could be heard from Meng Hao as… he opened another Immortal meridian!

The Seventh Demon Sealing Hex, Karmic Hexing, began to send the aura of Karma out into his body. Not a bit emerged outside of him. Immortal qi was sucked in, and after the time it takes an incense stick to burn, the meridian was completely formed!

114 meridians!

Another Immortal dragon appeared, fierce and emanating a power of Karma that shook Heaven and Earth. The aura of the Ji Clan seemed to be on the verge of erupting again, but in the end, it didn't.

"OPEN AGAIN!" Meng Hao's eyes shone with determination as he used the Demon Sealing Hexing Magic to form Immortal meridians. His aura grew stronger as he then moved on to the Sixth Demon Sealing Hex, Life Death Hexing!

Rumbling emanated out from his body as all of the cultivators from the Ninth Mountain and Sea looked on with wide eyes and open jaws.

Soon, the Sixth Hex completed its meridian inside of Meng Hao, and a 115th Immortal dragon appeared outside of the Door of Immortality!

“115 meridians! J-just… just how many meridians is this Fang Hao going to open!?”

“A Chosen like this is completely unheard-of….”

“How come he can open so many meridians? The most that other people were able to open is 98! There has to be some reason! It’s impossible for someone to have prepared so well and be so talented that they could reach such an inhuman level!” The Ninth Mountain and Sea was completely shaken, and countless cultivators were in an uproar. They had been shocked as it was when Meng Hao had opened 100 meridians, but now that he had reached 115, their shock had actually turned into suspicion.

They really didn’t understand how Meng Hao could possibly have outdistanced everyone else by so much!

Amidst their excitement, the members of the Fang Clan on Planet East Victory had also begun to conjecture, and all sorts of theories sprang up, but only the direct bloodline had no doubts at all and seemed to be filled with nothing but pure excitement.

Fang Wei looked up into the sky and clenched his fists tightly.

“Is it because he reached true Immortality on his own, and corroborated his own Dao…?” he murmured to himself. After taking a deep breath, he closed his eyes again and decided to watch no further.

“It doesn’t matter how many meridians you open…. I have Nirvana Fruits, so I can still kill you!”

It wasn’t just Fang Wei who was thinking along these lines. The other true Immortal Chosen of the Ninth Mountain and Sea also picked up on clues that led them to similar conclusions. In their hearts, they felt nothing but bitterness.

“So it turns out that corroborating the Dao on one’s own has this kind of effect….”

“But to corroborate the Dao on one’s own is monumentally difficult. Meng Hao must have come across some indescribable good fortune, which is why he was able to succeed.”

“Cultivation is a matter of defying the Heavens, so who cares if he opens 115 meridians! We all have secret augmentary magics that will enable us to fight him!”

Even as discussions raged in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, Meng Hao looked up. His cultivation base surged with the power of Immortal Ascension.

Immortal power filled him with a sense of incredible might, to a degree that it was impossible to even compare to what he was like before opening the Door of Immortality.

“I can still get stronger,” he thought. “115 Immortal meridians… is not my limit!” He gritted his teeth; his eyes were shot with blood, and seemed to be filled with insanity.

“Fifth Demon Sealing Hex, Inside Outside Hex!” He lifted his right hand, within which appeared a finger-nail sized rift. He quickly clenched his hand into a fist, after which rumbling sounds filled him, along with numerous tiny, illusory rifts.

Boundless Immortal qi was sucked into him, causing him to tremble, and his face to go pale. His body seemed to be filled with rifts; after all, he could barely force the usage of the Fifth Hex. This Hex… was a Daoist magic designed to be used at the peak of the Ancient Realm.

“OPEN UP!” he roared. Rumbling and cracking sounds filled him as majestic Immortal qi continuously flowed into him. Eventually, enough time passed for two incense sticks to burn. Meng Hao endured the intense pain the entire time, after which he coughed up a mouthful of blood and then began to chuckle.

As his laughter rang out, a 116th Immortal meridian solidified!

He had forced it to open and solidify!

The Immortal meridian was unstable, but even still, it was there. Meng Hao’s aura soared up, and… yet another Immortal dragon appeared outside of the Door of Immortality.

This dragon… was both illusory and real. It was occasionally blurry, and occasionally clear. As it soared about, the void around it seemed to both collapse and bulge, causing all observers to gasp.

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# Chapter 978: An Immortal Flying Through the Sky!

“He still hasn’t reached his true limit yet…?”

“116 meridians. Does that make him Chosen? I’ve been stuck in the Immortal Realm for years now. I may just be a false Immortal, but I opened 70 meridians. He… has nearly 50 more than me….”

“As he continues to grow, the Ninth Mountain and Sea most likely won’t be his limit. He’ll probably advance even further!” As everyone watched Meng Hao, various thoughts ran through their heads, some frustrated, some emotional, some grudging, some jealous.

Fang Wei’s eyes were closed, and he refused to watch. As for the Chosen of the various other sects and clans, most of them were acting similarly. Only Li Ling’er continued to observe.

Meng Hao hovered in the starry sky, quietly probing his meridians.

116 Immortal meridians!

100 of them represented the limits of his own body. 8 were Immortal qi meridians arising from the bronze Soul Lamp.

2 had been gifted by outer forces, materializing power buried within him.

Another 2 had been formed from his own divine abilities and cultivation base, becoming meridians of Immortal magic!

The final 4 were different. They were meridians formed because of the Demon Sealers, and were not true Immortal meridians, but rather… Demon

Sealer meridians!

This was his current limit. He hovered there outside of the Door of Immortality, looking at the 116 Immortal dragons swirling gracefully in the starry sky. He had never imagined that his opening the Door of Immortality would be accompanied by such splendorous glory.

“Preparation is the key to success….” he murmured. As he said the words, he realized that upon opening the Door of Immortality, he had unleashed all of the accumulations of good fortune and destiny in his life.

He was like a flower that had bloomed at the perfect time.

“Dad, mom,” he said, looking off in the direction of Planet South Heaven, “you’re on Planet South Heaven, but can you see what I’m doing here…?

“Your son hasn’t lost any face for you. I’m right here… a blazing sun, the center of all attention.”

Meng Hao could well imagine how his current actions were shaking all of the cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. That would be especially true of the true Immortal Chosen, who would be stabbed to the heart by the number of Immortal meridians he had opened.

However, he didn’t care. His goal had never been to catch up to any other person. His only goal was to exceed himself.

“I think…. I can probably open one more meridian!” His eyes were bloodshot, but they shone with brilliant light as he stood there tall and straight beneath the Door of Immortality, like a sharp, unsheathed sword.

Almost as soon as his eyes began to shine, something happened in a sect on the Ninth Mountain.

Within that sect were countless buildings, divided into ten areas. Each area was filled with crowds of cultivators, all of them in the midst of practicing cultivation.

The entire sect seemed to form a gigantic city, which exerted suffocating pressure even from a distance. It was a sect that, from the look of it, had existed for ages.

All of the buildings seemed to exude the feeling of time, as if they had existed for years upon years. If you traced the origin of these buildings, you would find… that apparently, they were older than the era of Lord Ji or even Lord Li. They had existed for virtually as long as the Nine Mountains and Seas themselves.

This was none other than the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite!

This was the foremost of the Three Great Daoist Societies of the Ninth Mountain and Sea!

This was the only sect that could cause the Ji Clan to stand down, the most paramount sect, which existed on the Ninth Mountain itself.

In the middle of those ten areas of the sect was a huge public square paved with green stones. It emanated a primordial aura that spread out in all directions.

Currently, four old men sat cross-legged in the middle of that square. Shockingly, all of them radiated the power of the Dao Realm. Any one of these old men could completely shake the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea.

“This kid is connected by destiny to the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite,” said one of them, his voice ancient. “According to our Dao rules, if he can open 117 meridians, then we will unleash the power of the Daoist Rite and help him to create an Immortal Ancient Daoist meridian.”

The other three men nodded.

“Let’s just watch and see the extent of his good fortune. He currently has 116 meridians. Will he get that 117th meridian, and then ours, to make two more meridians…?”

“Legend has it that Kṣitigarbha of the Fourth Mountain and Sea opened 120 Immortal meridians!”

“If he opens one more, and then gets ours, that would put him at 118. It’s impossible to judge what his future will be like. Yet, it would be extremely difficult to exceed Kṣitigarbha. The kid has already reached his limit. Even if we help him by adding another, he most likely won’t be able to do so.”

“Let’s see what his destiny holds, and how much good fortune he has accumulated…. If his destiny is sufficient, it might not be impossible!”

At the same time that the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite was deciding what to do with Meng Hao, he hovered there outside of Planet East Victory, beneath the Door of Immortality, his eyes shining intensely. Veins of blood shot through his eyes, which radiated intense determination.

“I used four great Demon Sealing Hexes to form Immortal meridians. Well then, looking at all my other divine abilities and magical techniques, I wonder if I can do the same thing with One Thought Stellar Transformation?” Starlight began to shine in Meng Hao’s left eye, but no matter what method he attempted, he couldn’t get it to form into a meridian.

However, that didn’t stop him from trying to do the same thing with all the other powerful divine abilities he had mastered. He gave it a shot with all of them but, regrettably, none of them allowed him to form Immortal meridians.

All fell short, even One Thought Stellar Transformation.

“There is still one more divine ability….” he thought, slowly raising his head.

“The Paragon Bridge! I can use the projection of the Paragon Bridge to form a Paragon Immortal meridian!” Without any further hesitation, Meng Hao unleashed the power of the Paragon Bridge. In the instant the power surged out, he coughed up a mouthful of blood. The fact that he used it repeatedly in such a short amount of time caused the backlash power to increase by multiple times.

During this time, the Immortal light began to fade, as if it had sensed that Meng Hao was unable to open up any new Immortal meridians.

Soon it was completely gone. The starry sky was pitch black, and the Door of Immortality began to slowly fade away and shut. No more Immortal qi emanated out, and it looked like it would disappear into the starry sky at any moment.

“Not enough destiny.” The four old men in the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite sighed. Their Immortal Ancient Daoist meridian was not something that they would bestow lightly. They would only give it to someone who had opened 117 meridians; that was a Dao rule of the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite that had to be followed.

It was at this point that many audience members out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea let out long sighs. Meng Hao was completely inhuman, and terrifying, but now that everything was over, people began to recover from all the shock.

“116 is more than enough!”

“A collection of Immortal meridians like that is enough to scare anyone.”

“What a pity. I was really hoping to see if he could actually open… huh? Wh-what is he doing?” Even in the midst of all the discussions, cries of shock suddenly rang out in various regions.

Gasps could also be heard as everyone looked over at Meng Hao. In the exact moment in which the Door of Immortality was about to close and fade away permanently, Meng Hao suddenly raised both hands into the air.

Simultaneously, the 116 Immortal dragons that soared around him let out roars that shook everything. The starry sky trembled as the 116 dragons shot toward Meng Hao.

Rumbling echoed out as they slammed into him and then disappeared. Meng Hao’s aura then began to explode up as the power of 116 Immortal meridians was unleashed.

“Paragon Bridge, appear!” Meng Hao’s eyes were bright red as he went all-out with every scrap of power he could muster. He threw his head back and roared. His body trembled, and thumping sounds could be heard. Patches of skin exploded, and a haze of blood and gore could be seen as the Paragon Bridge materialized inside of him.

At the same time that the Paragon Bridge appeared, the indistinct Door of Immortality paused, then suddenly rematerialized. Immortal light poured out, and strong Immortal qi surged toward Meng Hao.

Boundless Immortal qi poured into his body, causing the Paragon Bridge to turn into an Immortal meridian. Everyone who was watching was astonished, and the four old men in the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite watched very closely.

Massive rumbling filled the air as Meng Hao’s mangled body was wracked by waves of intense pain. As the pain inundated him, he gritted his teeth and forced the Paragon Immortal meridian to rapidly solidify.

Ten percent. Twenty percent. Thirty percent…

Blood oozed out of Meng Hao’s mouth, and his vision grew blurry. However, he clenched his jaw and forced his 116 Immortal meridians to explode with power.

Forty percent. Fifty percent. Sixty percent. Seventy percent….

“OPEN UP!” he roared. Shocking rumbling sounds could be heard as gradually, he reached eighty percent, then ninety percent…. Finally, the Immortal meridian reached one hundred percent completion!

Heaven and Earth shook, and countless onlookers were left in a state of shock. Many people who had been sitting there cross-legged suddenly rose to their feet, their eyes wide with intense astonishment.

Amidst the crashing roars, Immortal light swirled, and a 117th Immortal meridian formed inside of Meng Hao. At the same time, a 117th Immortal dragon appeared outside of the Door of Immortality, shocking to the extreme.

Furthermore, this most recent Immortal dragon emanated the aura of a Paragon. This was none other than a Paragon Immortal dragon!

Inside the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite, the four old men looked on with strange gleams in their eyes. After exchanging glances, they began to smile with anticipation.

“Unleash the power of the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite. Merge the wills of the Daoist Rite cultivators to call upon the Immortal Divinity of the ancient Daoist Rite….”

“Bestow the meridian!”

The four men immediately began to perform incantations. Intense rumbling could be heard as four streams of shocking qi shot out into the starry sky. At the same time, a primordial will erupted out from all of the structures in the sect.

Cracking sounds could be heard as the ground between the four men tore apart to form the character ‘mouth’ .

All of the cultivators in the Daoist Rite went into a trance as they heard voices speaking into their ears. They settled down cross-legged and began to chant Daoist scriptures, the sound of which echoed out in all directions.

The ground quaked as a gigantic square cauldron flew up into the sky. Inside of that cauldron was a scroll painting that was yellowed with age, as if it had existed for countless years. The painting depicted three people.

A woman, a middle-aged man, and an old man.

The woman was incredibly beautiful, with a smile like a flower. The middle-aged man wore a light smile, and had surging energy. The light in his eyes seemed to contain all living things. As for the old man, his bearing was lofty and dignified, like that of a transcendent being, and yet, he wore a frown. If you looked closely at his brow, you would be shocked to notice… the furrowed wrinkles formed the character ‘Immortal’ !

If Meng Hao were present, his mind would definitely be reeling with shock. That was because… the woman in the painting… was none other than the white-robed Paragon from the Ruins of Immortality!

Gentle light radiated out of the painting, spreading out to fill the entire area. The sky above the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite transformed into an illusory world.

Within that world were countless life forms sitting cross-legged in meditation, listening to a sermon being given regarding the Dao, delivered by an old man who sat cross-legged at their fore.

That old man was the same old man depicted in the scroll painting. He nonchalantly waved his hand, causing an enormous Immortal character to appear.

It was virtually impossible to describe the shocking energy that emanated from this character, which seemed capable of suppressing all Heaven and Earth.

It glittered for a moment before suddenly shooting out into the starry sky, creating a beam of glistening light as it sped toward Planet East Victory and Meng Hao!

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 979: An Eruption of Good Fortune!

The Immortal character flew out, piercing through the starry sky, transforming into a spectacularly stunning beam of light.

It looked like an Immortal flying through the sky. In the blink of an eye, it appeared outside of Planet East Victory, next to the Door of Immortality, where it once again materialized into an enormous Immortal character.

The character emanated pressure comparable to that of the Door of Immortality, causing it to tremble as if it were being provoked. Ripples began to spread out as the character trembled and moved toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao's mind was spinning as he looked at the huge Immortal character, and his whole body shook. That character looked very familiar… it was just like the character he had seen unleashed by the old man in the visions he had experienced back in the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple on Planet South Heaven. 1

"The Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite…." he thought. He gaped in shock as the Immortal character approached him. It rapidly shrank until it was only a few centimeters tall, whereupon it fused into Meng Hao's forehead.

In that instant, scintillating light filled with a primordial, savage aura exploded from within Meng Hao. Right now, he didn't even need a scrap of Immortal qi from the Door of Immortality. The Immortal character immediately transformed of its own volition into an Immortal meridian, becoming Meng Hao's 118th meridian!

In the same moment, the Immortal meridian that had formed from the smoke of the bronze Soul Lamp began to glitter with a strange light, as if it were now reflecting the glory of this new Immortal meridian.

Rumbling echoed out from within Meng Hao as an 118th Immortal dragon appeared outside of the Door of Immortality, where it roared and swirled through the starry sky. This dragon was completely golden, and seemed to embody everything Immortal. Its roars shook the hearts of everyone who could hear.

“That’s… that’s….”

“Am I seeing things? Was that actually an Immortal character that just fused with Fang Hao?”

“Where did that Immortal character come from?” The Ninth Mountain and Sea was abuzz with shock, and all onlookers were astonished. Only the Dao Realm Patriarchs from the various sects and clans looked with glittering eyes toward the Ninth Mountain.

Obviously, they weren’t looking toward the Ji Clan, but rather, the other force that was qualified to occupy the Ninth Mountain… one of the Three Great Daoist Societies, the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite!

Meng Hao also looked up in the direction of the Ninth Mountain. Although his cultivation base wasn’t strong enough to allow him to see it, he could still sense it. He knew that the Immortal character did not originate from Planet South Heaven.

He also knew that outside of Planet South Heaven in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, there was another Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple, one that was not in ruins. It was in fact one of the Three Great Daoist Societies!

Meng Hao didn’t say anything, but he clasped hands and bowed deeply.

It was a bow full of gratitude. He knew that the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite had bestowed him with good fortune by opening another Immortal meridian for him. Giving him an Immortal meridian was a type of good fortune that was no simple task. Even with their deep reserves, they had surely paid a heavy price for what they had just done.

“Many thanks!” he said softly. His 118 Immortal meridians caused everything to shake, and Meng Hao knew… that everything was now over.

118 Immortal meridians was a level that Meng Hao was satisfied with. Now, he wanted to know… after the Door of Immortality closed, exactly how powerful he would be!

However, there was something Meng Hao wasn’t aware of. Floating in the starry sky outside of Planet East Victory was someone who was feeling very torn at the moment. It was none other than the Fang Clan’s Dao Realm expert, the Earth Patriarch.

He hovered cross-legged, acting as Dharma Protector for Meng Hao, and currently, his eyes were bright red, filled with a look that encompassed both struggle and hesitation.

“Damn you, Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite! What the hell do you people think you’re doing, huh?

“So you’re blessing the qilin son of the Fang Clan with some good fortune, not out of the kindness of your heart, but to undermine our clan? You think blessing him with some good fortune will fill him with enough gratitude to want to become your disciple?

“Dammit, that’s a good thing, but… but if you let everyone in the Ninth Mountain and Sea know, it will definitely cast the Fang Clan in a very bad light! What, you think we don’t have our own Immortal meridians to hand out?” The Patriarch was incensed. It was like there were two rich people, one of whom had a son. Suddenly, another rich person came along and arranged for his own daughter to marry the son, and then loudly announced that he was fulfilling a responsibility of which the young man’s father was incapable.

To a member of the Elder generation of the clan, something like this was like a slap to the face. He was now in a complete rage.

“Fudge! Stinking Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite! Our Fang Clan has existed for generations, we can do the same thing!” Enduring the pain of it, the Earth Patriarch gritted his teeth and performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, then pointed down toward Planet East Victory.

That gesture caused Essence power to erupt out. Planet East Victory quaked violently, and even stopped rotating momentarily. At the same time, a drop of blood shot out from the forehead of all of the members of the Fang Clan.

That included the Grand Elder, Fang Xiushan and even Fang Wei. They could exercise absolutely no control over the drop of blood that came out of them.

“NO!” cried Fang Wei. His eyes were wide, and his expression was one of fury. Considering the level of his cultivation base, though, how could he possibly resist? He could only watch as the drop of blood emerged and then flew away!

“Bloodline Dragon!” the Fang Clan Earth Patriarch roared. All of the drops of blood flew into the air, one for each and every member of the Fang Clan.

There were no exceptions. All of the drops of blood merged together in midair to form a Blood Dragon, which roared as it shot through the air. A drop of blood even emerged from the Earth Patriarch’s forehead, and when it merged into the blood dragon, the dragon burst into flames, causing all of the blood from the Fang Clan to be refined and tempered to the ultimate degree.

After that, the Fang Clan Patriarch gritted his teeth and then pointed toward the Fang Clan again. The Fang Clan’s Dao bell materialized and tolled loudly. At the same time, an ancient bottle flew out from inside the bell, within which were three drops of blood, one of which flew out into the air.

It was a single, tiny drop, but it caused Heaven and Earth to fill with flashing colors. A huge wind kicked up, and blood-red light shone onto the faces of all observing cultivators.

“That’s soul blood from the first generation Patriarch of the Fang Clan!”

“Crazy! The Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite pissed off Fang Shoudao so much that he actually pulled out a signature treasure of the Fang Clan! Everybody says that Fang Shoudao has a short temper and is easily provoked. Looks like it’s true!” 2

“Those three drops of soul blood must have been left behind after the Fang Clan’s first generation Patriarch passed away into meditation. Even Lord Ji would covet that!” The Dao Realm Patriarch from the various sects and clans all looked on with gaping mouths.

Deep beneath the surface of the Fang Clan, the six Patriarchs’ minds were spinning.

“W-what… w-what is Eldest Brother doing?!”

The Fang Clan’s Earth Patriarch had a vicious look on his face. After a moment of hesitation, he gritted his teeth and then waved his hand through the air. Immediately, the first generation Patriarch’s drop of soul blood shot toward the Bloodline Dragon, and then merged into it.

A boom could be heard as the dragon began to seethe again, and then rapidly shrink down to form a blood-colored character!

Fang !!

This single character emanated a shocking sensation of bloodline power, including that of reincarnation. The power of four lives of reincarnation that pulsed in the blood of the Fang Clan now shook the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea.

The Fang character glittered and pulsed with shocking power as it shot toward Meng Hao, who stared with wide eyes at what was happening, but wasn’t completely dazed. He could sense the bloodline aura coming from the character, and it set his own blood a-boil. A sensation of mutual attraction suddenly caused his heart and mind to tremble fiercely.

“What’s going on?” he thought. “The Fang Clan is actually helping me?” Meng Hao’s eyes were wide as he watched the blood-colored Fang character bear down on him and then merge into his forehead.

Rumbling immediately filled his body, and his blood seemed to grow stronger than ever. At the same time, the Fang character caused a Bloodline Dragon to form inside of him.

A 119th Immortal meridian formed, stimulated by the soul blood of the first generation Patriarch, with the blood of all members of the Fang Clan as its foundation. Therefore, it did not need any Immortal power from the Door of Immortality.

At the same time, a 119th Immortal dragon appeared next to the Door of Immortality. It emanated the aura of the Fang Clan bloodline, and caused everything in the area to shake violently.

Meng Hao could sense his cultivation base growing more powerful, and he could sense his Fang Clan bloodline become even stronger. Although he was not able to test it right now, he was sure that his Bloodline Gatebeam would no longer be 30,000 meters, but even more terrifyingly powerful.

Apparently, this was the power of Ancestral Awakening!

Next, the voice of the Fang Clan's Earth Patriarch echoed out through the starry sky into Meng Hao's ears, causing him to gape.

“Alright Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite, if you people are so powerful, then bestow another Immortal meridian to my clan's qilin son! If you do, the Fang Clan will match you!

“Come on! We'll match you one meridian for another!” As soon as the Earth Patriarch's voice rang out, the Patriarchs of the various sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea all quieted down. The four old men in the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite snorted coldly, but didn't dare to respond.

They… had no more meridians to send.

The Fang Clan Earth Patriarch looked quite proud. Although it hurt him inwardly, and although it seemed like he was acting impulsively, anyone who reached his cultivation level would be able to control their own thoughts. Seeing that there was no response from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite, he frowned.

“Not gonna send another one?” he thought. “Well, it’s too bad that we couldn’t swindle another meridian out of them. In any case, this kid has reached this point all on his own, plus he doesn’t feel much loyalty to the clan. Therefore, it was necessary to give him that drop of soul blood.”

When Meng Hao heard the words spoken by the Fang Clan Earth Patriarch, his expression was a bit strange. He looked at the 119th Immortal dragon, then back down at Planet East Victory. Although it wouldn’t be correct to say that his feelings of detachment had completely dissipated, at least he didn’t feel as much of an outsider as before.

“119 meridians,” he thought, looking back at the Door of Immortality. It was at this point that a new voice suddenly whispered in his ear, an ancient, archaic voice.

“Do you… still remember me?

“My name is… Choumen Tai!”

When Meng Hao heard those two sentences, and that name, his heart seized. He suddenly jerked his head to look out into the stars. What he was looking for seemed to be outside of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Far away on another planet, a middle-aged man sat cross-legged. His eyes slowly opened, and he smiled.

“I didn’t perish…. My clone fell onto Planet South Heaven years ago, and left you with Immortal Shows the Way. I told you that when you reached Immortal Ascension, you could use its power to cause a starry sky to descend.

“Today, I’ll give you… a bit of the starry sky of Pāramitā’s world to form an Immortal meridian, and help you to future glory….

“Remember, come to Planet Tiger Cage in the Seventh Mountain. I left a little gift for you there.

“There’s someone I want to resurrect and… I hope you can help me out with that in the future…. Therefore, I’m going to help you now.”

RUMBLE!

Meng Hao’s mind spun as he recalled Choumen Tai, the Immortal’s corpse that had fallen from the sky way back when he was a mere Qi Condensation cultivator! 3

2. Fang Shoudao’s name in Chinese is fāng shǒu dào. Shou means “protect” or “guard.” Dao is “the Dao,” or also “path” or “way”

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 980: Foster Father Sends a Meridian!

The ancient voice echoed in Meng Hao’s mind like thunder. The sound eventually turned into a series of explosive reverberations that stirred Meng Hao’s memories.

He saw scenes from events on Planet South Heaven. He saw that moment in which he stood atop the Tower of Tang in the State of Zhao, and looked upon foreign battlefield within the clouds. On the battlefield was an enormous coffin, next to which was a corpse, who suddenly opened its eyes.

Then the corpse plummeted down to the earth. Later, after his trial by fire in the Violet Fate Sect, he actually entered into the corpse. All of these images played out in Meng Hao’s mind.

In the end, the rumbling in his mind transformed into three characters, which formed a name!

“Choumen Tai!” Meng Hao looked up, and his heart trembled violently as a beam of light flew towards him from outside of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Shockingly, it came from the Seventh Mountain!

It swept across the Seventh Mountain, passed through the Eighth Mountain, then flew with indescribable speed past countless shocked cultivators to appear in the Ninth Mountain!

Presently, the starry sky above the Ninth Mountain and Sea began to undulate. The Dao Realm Patriarchs from the various sects and clans hovered in midair, watching the beam of light with unprecedented seriousness.

In the Ji Clan on the Ninth Mountain, an eye appeared that seemed capable of gazing upon the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea, and it stared at the incoming beam of light.

The light shot like a meteor directly toward Planet East Victory and Meng Hao!

The stars shook, and all living beings were astonished!

“The cultivation base of a Dao Lord. At minimum, that’s a 4 Essences cultivation base!”

“Only a cultivation base like that, something higher than a 3 Essences Dao Lord, would be able to shake Heaven and Earth in such a fashion! It’s coming from the Seventh Mountain!”

“There are only a few Dao Lords in all the Nine Mountains and Seas…. Who is this person!? That aura is completely unfamiliar!” The Dao Realm Patriarchs of the Ninth Mountain and Sea looked on with wide eyes.

The beam of light caused rumbling sounds as it split the sky, appearing directly in front of Meng Hao and then slamming into his chest.

Instantly, it fused into his body!

Massive rumbling filled him, and he stretched his arms out wide. He threw his head back and roared, and his hair whipped about wildly. The sound of the roar echoed out as qi filled his body.

That beam of light seemed to have been materialized from the starry sky of some tiny world. It was a starry sky meridian!

It rapidly fused with Meng Hao, transforming into an Immortal meridian. It was like a starry sky, complete with boundless starlight that caused Meng Hao’s aura to once again experience a breakthrough. It climbed rapidly to an extent that would shock even many Ancient Realm experts with one Soul Lamp extinguished.

When the beam of light faded away completely, a massive tremor ran through Meng Hao, and indescribable pain filled him. The starry sky meridian solidified so rapidly that it was impossible to even see.

It forced its way open with virtually no resistance. The Door of Immortality trembled, and Immortal qi poured out to assist. After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, Meng Hao opened his eyes, and shocking rumbling sounds could be heard.

120 meridians had appeared!

In the moment that the meridian appeared, another Immortal dragon arose, swirling through the air.

The 120th Immortal dragon was a Starry Sky Dragon. The dragon’s body appeared to have been formed from starlight, and when it appeared, it seemed capable of merging into the starry sky at any time. Shocking pressure emanated out as it roared along with the other dragons.

All of Planet East Victory was shaken, as was the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Each and every person… was completely focused on Meng Hao!

“Such destiny… is completely unheard of….”

“That Dao Lord from outside this Mountain and Sea bestowed him with a starry sky meridian. The level of good fortune this kid has is something I’ve only seen one or two other people possess!”

“I thought 100 meridians was his limit, and then he opened 108. At that point, I thought he was really done, but then he opened 117!”

“I figured that he couldn’t possibly exceed 117, but then his destiny erupted and the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite AND the Fang Clan both gave him a meridian, as well as a Paragon from outside this Mountain and Sea!”

The Patriarchs of the various clans didn’t say anything, but it was impossible for them to keep their hearts calm. They could never have possibly imagined that a member of the Junior generation opening Immortal meridians would cause them to be so shocked.

The Ji Clan on the Ninth Mountain also maintained silence. The eye that could gaze upon the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea vanished as if it had never appeared.

The Chosen watched the scene with blank expressions. When they saw Meng Hao successfully open 120 meridians, profound sensations of powerlessness filled them.

The distance between them and Meng Hao, seemed… to only grow greater and greater.

Meng Hao’s parents stood excitedly in the Tower of Tang on Planet South Heaven. Their eyes shone with pride as they looked at the illusory image of Meng Hao opening his Immortal meridians on Planet East Victory.

“Hao’er….” Meng Li whispered. She was elated to see her son rising to prominence, and her eyes shone with a gentle warmth.

Next to her stood Fang Xiufeng, whose facial expression was the same as ever, but whose heart was bursting with pride. He could sense that one reason why Meng Hao was doing this was for their sake.

Meng Hao wanted to prove to everyone in the Fang Clan that it didn’t matter if it was before or now, he was the number one Chosen in clan, and always would be. As for his father and mother, it didn’t matter that they were far away on Planet South Heaven, they could sense the respect coming from the clan.

120 Immortal meridians completely shook the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

It was at this moment that, in the Fourth Mountain and Sea, deep within the mists in the mysterious underworld, that enormous statue suddenly opened its eyes.

Instantly, all of the underworld went silent; time suddenly seemed to stop in the entire Fourth Mountain and Sea, which went completely quiet.

The innumerable souls being reborn in the Yellow Springs and the River of Reincarnation all stopped moving.

It was as if only that statue existed in the Fourth Mountain and Sea. A profound gleam appeared in its eyes as it stared off in the direction of the Ninth Mountain. After a long moment passed, the statue lifted its right hand and performed an incantation gesture that appeared to be a type of augury. After a long moment, a sigh could be heard.

“I can’t see his future….

“From the moment my Dao was realized until now, this is the third person whose future I have been unable to see…. However, I AM able to see his past….

“I’ll sow some positive destiny. After all, he and I will meet eventually.” After murmuring these words, the statue extended its right hand, causing a Dharmic decree to appear.

This Dharmic decree emanated a supreme will; although it seemed illusory, this was actually the highest level of Dharmic decree that could be issued in the Fourth Mountain and Sea.

Visible on the Dharmic decree was a string of text, written in large characters!

“Among the souls being reincarnated from the Ninth Mountain and Sea is a woman surnamed Xu. Send 10,000 ghosts to escort her. Give her first-rate good fortune, and a life of peace and safety!”

The Dharmic decree glowed with boundless light, then gradually faded away. The statue closed its eyes, and in that instant, the Fourth Mountain and Sea returned to normal.

That statue… was none other than the Lord of the Fourth Mountain and Sea, Kṣitigarbha!

In the year that Meng Hao had taken that boat trip through the starry sky with that mysterious old man, even he had taken Kṣitigarbha… very seriously!

Meng Hao would have no way of imagining that in the moment that he reached true Immortal Ascension, he would attract such a commotion. Apparently, his opening of the Door of Immortality was like a tipping point. All of the destiny he had built up in his life merged together to form into golden opportunity.

Choumen Tai. The Resurrection Lily. Patriarch Blood Demon. The Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite. They all formed Immortal meridians that caused him to explode with power.

Meng Hao hovered outside the Door of Immortality, and his eyes flickered with brilliant light. He could sense the boundless power of his 120 Immortal meridians. He saw the 120 Immortal dragons roaring, and could sense that he was very strong.

He slowly lowered his head and then clasped hands and bowed toward the starry sky.

That bow was a bow of thanks to everyone who had assisted him, an expression of appreciation for all the destiny and good fortune he had encountered.

All of the cultivators in the Ninth Mountain and Sea looked on silently as Meng Hao bowed. None of them could possibly have imagined that Meng Hao’s opening of the Door of Immortality would end in this way.

As everyone looked on, it appeared… as if the event was now ending!

The Door of Immortality once again began to grow blurry, the Immortal light began to fade away, and the Immortal qi began to dissipate.

However, many people had the feeling deep inside, that Meng Hao… was still going to open more Immortal meridians.

Time passed. As the Door of Immortality seemed to be on the verge of fading away completely, that feeling also began to vanish. Finally, people began to sigh.

“It’s finally… finished….”

“120 meridians is something completely unheard of….”

“In my entire long life… this is the most powerful true Immortal destiny I’ve ever seen!”

On Planet East Victory, Fang Wei’s jaw was tightly clenched. Suddenly, rumbling sounds could be heard as he shot up into the air. All of the members of the Fang Clan looked on in shock as he rose up into the sky.

“Fang Hao, it’s time for us to fight!” Fang Wei’s voice was hoarse as it echoed out in all directions. His cultivation base surged to life. He had no choice but to fight. It didn’t matter how powerful Meng Hao had become, he would still fight. He would fight in front of all eyes, including all onlookers in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. He would defeat Meng Hao in front of all of them. He would kill him!

That was the only way for him to step out from behind Meng Hao’s shadow.

In that same moment, the faces of all of the other true Immortal Chosen flickered with the desire to do battle. They were thinking the same thing as Fang Wei; whether they won or lost, they had to fight. If they lost their will to fight, then they would never again have the opportunity to stand on equal ground with Meng Hao.

Even as their desire to do battle rose up, the Patriarchs of the various sects to which those Chosen belonged silently waved their hands, causing numerous teleportation portals to appear.

All the Chosen had to do was step into those portals, and they would be able to go to Planet East Victory.

However, even as they clenched their jaws and prepared to enter the teleportation portals, even as Fang Wei's voice echoed out into the starry sky, even as the Door of Immortality was about to vanish completely….

Suddenly, a sigh could be heard echoing out among the stars. It filled the sky above Planet East Victory, and entered Meng Hao's ears, whereupon he suddenly trembled and looked up.

"Hey little brother, I'm going to take father's place to give you a meridian!" The voice was soft and ancient. And when it echoed out, an aura exploded up from the Ji Clan on the Ninth Mountain. Apparently, someone there knew where that voice came from, and it left them completely shocked.

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# Chapter 981: Illusory Soul Lamp!

The voice came from… the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect!!

It was a mysterious location in the starry sky of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, a place that opened at a set interval of years. It was not part of the Ruins of Immortality, nor as mysterious as those ruins, but due to other historical events, had become a taboo area within the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Whenever it did open up, Chosen from the various planets would travel to the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect, a place which was both familiar and strange to everyone.

It was a location originally created by Lord Li, and was where the Ji and Fang Clans had resided and flourished. It had existed for ages, during which time the so-called sects of modern times were mere denominations of the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect.

That was true of both the modern day Holy Lands as well as the Three Churches and Six Sects. Only the Three Great Daoist Societies were not part of the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect at that time.

According to the legends, a fierce creature existed there who frightened even Lord Ji, something named Night!

The stories said that Night could control the power of time, and could send people into ancient times in a dreamlike state….

Supposedly, there was also a person in the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect who lived on top of a mountain peak. Sometimes he would laugh, at other times he would cry, and occasionally, he would just stand there silently….

Now, a voice echoed out from the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect, and as soon as Meng Hao heard it, he recognized that voice. It was… Ke Jiusi!!

Because he had been a rash and impulsive person, because he had been arrogant and domineering, because he had instigated catastrophe after catastrophe, his father Ke Yunhai changed his name to Jiusi, to remind his son that instead of considering a matter three times before taking any action, he should consider it nine times! 1

Meng Hao began to tremble. He had never imagined that in the middle of opening his Immortal meridians, after all of his destiny had erupted, that his destiny from the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect… would also erupt.

Ke Jiusi. It was an unforgettable name. Even more unforgettable was… Ke Yunhai.

He was Meng Hao's foster father, someone who caused Meng Hao to finally experience fatherly love. It was a memory that he would be unable to forget for all eternity, no matter what.

Whenever he thought about Ke Yunhai, Meng Hao's eyes turned red, and he couldn't stop the tears from welling up. He missed Ke Yunhai. He missed all the things about the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect, and he especially missed the man whose fatherly love was like a mountain.

"Hey little brother, I'm going to take father's place to give you a meridian…." When Meng Hao heard those words, he knew that because of the the approval he had earned from Ke Yunhai… Ke Jiusi was now effectively his older brother.

Meng Hao looked thoughtfully out into the starry sky. The words he had just heard seemed to take him back in time.

Out in the starry sky in the vicinity of the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect, was a place covered over by mists. Deep within that mist were endless ruins… ruins in which there was no Heaven and Earth, only darkness.

There, you could just barely see… a mountain peak, atop which stood a figure in a white robe. The robes swayed, and the man seemed as quiet as eternity.

Also on top of that mountain peak was a coffin….

That white-robed man was none other than Ke Jiusi, who stood there quietly, a slight smile on his face. He looked ancient, filled with both memories and emotional sighs.

“Little brother,” he murmured, “father is gone, but… I’m here to look after you.” Even as he spoke, he waved his right hand, then pointed off into the distance. Immediately, the ruins of the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect began to quake, and for a moment, it seemed as if slumbering Night was about to rise up.

At the same time, time seemed to suddenly pass by in front of Ke Jiusi. It went in reverse, ten years, a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand… tens of thousands….

Countless buildings could now be seen, and there were no corpses. The collapsed ruins were gradually restored, and the dead people rose to their feet, once again in possession of flesh and blood bodies. The vanished Heaven and Earth were restored to perfect clarity.

The sound of chatting and laughter could be heard, and rainbows could be seen in the sky. Someone was giving a sermon about the Dao, and roaring Immortal beasts could be seen on all of the mountain peaks. There was a Flying Rain-Dragon, like a sovereign of the skies, whistling through the air.

Everything… was restored. The mountain that Ke Jiusi stood on, and even Ke Yunhai’s Immortal’s cave, were all restored to glorious splendor. Brilliant light shone up into the sky, and massive pressure weighed down on everything.

A rumbling sound could be heard as the door of Ke Yunhai’s Immortal’s cave slowly swung open. A middle-aged man stepped out, his expression serious but not angry. It was none other than… Ke Yunhai!

His aura radiated out brightly, and not the slightest bit of Death aura could be sensed on him. He had the aura of a Paragon, the type that, if it exploded out, could cow all Heaven and Earth.

Ke Yunhai walked out, then climbed up to the peak of the mountain to stand in the same position as Ke Jiusi. The two of them overlapped with each other….

It was impossible to say exactly what year it was, or what month, or what day, that Ke Yunhai stood on top of that mountain peak, superimposed with his son, to pass through years of time.

After a long moment, Ke Yunhai slowly extended his hand, and his Soul Lamp flew out. It had the body of a dragon and the wick of a phoenix, and when it landed on his palm, Ke Yunhai looked at the soul fire for a long moment, and then smiled. Then he waved his hand, and a dragon flew out, which instantly emanated a powerful Demonic sensation. Clouds and mist roiled as it roared a shocking roar that caused everything to shake.

“Demon Immortal Dragon,” Ke Yunhai said coolly.

In the same moment that Ke Yunhai spoke the words, Ke Jiusi also murmured the same thing.

“Demon Immortal Dragon.”

His motion was the same as Ke Yuhai’s as he waved his hand. The only difference was that there was no Dragon-Phoenix Soul Lamp in his hand.

“This dragon embodies the fate of the Demon Immortal Sect. It contains some of the Essence of the Ninth Mountain, and is perfectly suitable for opening an Immortal meridian.” Ke Yunhai said. He pointed out with his finger, and the Demon Immortal Dragon shot up into the clouds, vanishing in the blink of an eye.

When the dragon vanished, Ke Yunhai’s image slowly began to fade. Soon, only Ke Jiusi remained behind. During the course of the following few breaths of the time, the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect passed back through many years of time to the modern age. It once again became ruins, filled with corpses.

A sigh could be heard echoing across the lands as Night's eyes opened.

Atop the mountain peak, Ke Jiusi's eyes had filled with tears.

"Dad… I miss you…." he murmured. After a long moment, he looked up into the dark sky and pointed his finger. The clouds up above churned, then opened up to reveal an ancient dragon flying down.

It was… that same Demon Immortal Dragon.

Moments ago, that dragon did not even exist. It was the power of Night that caused it to materialize from ancient times.

"Go…." murmured Ke Jiusi. "Little brother, I'm standing in for father to give you this gift." He waved his hand, causing the Demon Immortal Dragon to roar, and then shoot through the clouds off into the distance.

As it sped off, Ke Jiusi's figure gradually began to darken, and the entire Ancient Demon Immortal Sect once again began to sink quietly into the mists….

The Demon Immortal Dragon ripped through the starry sky, and soon appeared in front of Meng Hao, outside Planet East Victory.

Meng Hao was trembling as he looked at it; he could clearly sense Ke Yunhai's aura upon it.

"Foster father…." he murmured, his heart filled with grief. Rumbling sounds echoed out as the Demon Immortal Dragon fused directly into Meng Hao. He didn't do anything to resist. He allowed it to enter him and immediately open up a murky Immortal meridian.

It was… the 121st meridian!

It was… bestowed upon him by Ke Yunhai, and presented by Ke Jiusi.

BOOOOMMMMMM!

Meng Hao’s aura exploded up wildly, far exceeding its previous level. Furthermore, it was even possible to see the vague image of a lamp behind him!!

Suddenly, the Door of Immortality, which had been on the verge of fading away, seemed to be wrenched open by some massive, invisible hand. Immortal light poured out, and Immortal qi once again exploded forth, filling Meng Hao, pouring into his 121st Immortal meridian, causing it to rapidly solidify.

Soon, the Immortal meridian was completely formed, and another Immortal dragon soared past the Door of Immortality.

The 121st Immortal dragon brimmed with a Demonic aura that seemed to pass through time itself. It was impossible for anyone to see exactly what color the dragon was, but it was possible for them to tell that it was extremely ancient, as if it had existed for countless ages.

In the same moment that this new Immortal dragon appeared, Zhixiang sat in the modern Demon Immortal Sect. The entire sect began to shake violently, and the offerings within the sect began to vibrate as if they had formed a resonance with something.

Meng Hao’s aura rose up rapidly, and all cultivators who could see the illusory lamp behind Meng Hao were shocked and felt their minds reeling. Although they had been astonished by Meng Hao multiple times, they couldn’t prevent themselves from once again being completely moved.

“Is that… a Soul Lamp!?”

“Fang Hao is powerful to an incomprehensible degree! He… he actually caused an illusory Soul Lamp to appear!!”

“It might just be illusory, but that’s definitely a Soul Lamp!”

Conversations buzzed through various regions of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

In the Kunlun Society, Chu Yuyan had been staring at Meng Hao this whole time, watching as he opened one Immortal meridian after another. Her face was flushed, and her eyes shone with a bright light.

Meng Hao had long since become indelibly imprinted onto her heart.

Pill Demon stood off to the side, smiling as all of the Kunlun Society looked at the illusory image, gasping. He shook his head, and his smile was filled with kindness.

“To be surpassed by one’s own disciple is a true joy,” he thought.

At the same time, Planet East Victory was in a huge commotion. The members of the Fang Clan watched the scene with wide eyes. Fang Xiushan staggered backward several paces. From the moment Meng Hao’s Immortal Tribulation had begun, he had been shocked over and over to the point where he was on the verge of collapse.

“Impossible. Simply impossible….” He almost couldn’t believe that he was looking at the dim lamp behind Meng Hao.

Fang Wei hovered in midair. Although he didn’t say anything, his body was trembling, and his determination to fight Meng Hao was rapidly waning.

The Grand Elder was as shocked as a wooden chicken, and his mind was reeling.

“I really was… mistaken.” It was at this point that he finally gave voice to the feeling that he had been suppressing in his heart for so long.

1. As a reminder, Ke Jiusi’s name is a play on a Chinese expression which says “think three times before you act.” The “Jiusi” could replace the first two characters of that expression to say “think nine times before you act”

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# Chapter 982: Xu Qing’s Good Fortune!

This was… the 121st meridian!

In the vast, boundless Heavens of the Nine Mountains and Seas, there had never before existed someone who opened 121 meridians, not even Kṣitigarbha with his 120!

What Meng Hao had accomplished was something that was completely without precedent!

He hovered there in midair, his energy soaring, his 121 Immortal meridians rotating madly. It was as if 121 Immortal dragons were roaring inside his body.

He slowly clenched his hands into fists, and felt the power coursing through him, and the boundless energy of his cultivation base. What he sensed… was a power unlike anything he had ever experienced before.

This breakthrough exceeded any other acquisition of good fortune that he had ever experienced.

This explosive rise of power could not be matched by any other destiny he had encountered.

It was a sloughing off of the mortal body, it was an exchange of the ordinary for the extraordinary, it was… a complete transformation of his entire life!

The Ninth Mountain and Sea was shaken, as were the four planets. Boundless ripples spread out into the starry sky. There was a legend that, when corroborating one’s own Dao, upon true Immortal ascension, the entire mountain and sea would shake. And now, Meng Hao was showing everyone… that this legend was true!

As the rumbling echoed out, Kṣitigarbha sat silently on the Fourth Mountain.

“Immortal meridians….” he murmured. “From the time the great Nine Mountains and Seas were created until now, the great circle has always been 123 meridians. No one has ever reached that level. I wonder if he will be able to?” After a long moment of silence, Kṣitigarbha raised his hand and issued another Dharmic decree.

This Dharmic decree consisted of only one sentence!

“I will take Xu Qing as my 49th apprentice!”

That one sentence was something that could change a person’s entire life! Xu Qing, who was already in the middle of reincarnation, was now certain to experience incredible splendor when she was born again, to experience the pinnacle of honor.

“That’s my big bro!” roared Fatty, grabbing onto the person who stood next to him in the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum.

“You see that? He’s Meng Hao, my big bro! Fudge! From now on, who will possibly bully me!? If anyone dares to try to steal any of my beloved concubines, I’ll have my big bro come and fight him to the death!

“Dammit! I had more than a hundred beloved concubines, but now… I only have three left!!” Fatty’s angry voice echoed out in all directions.

Wang Youcai was in Moonset Lake, his eyes closed. Of course, his eyes had been blinded, and he could only gaze at eternal darkness. However, everyone in Moonset Lake looked at him with fear and dread.

A vicious person like him was someone that nobody had any desire to provoke.

He had no eyes, but now, there was a young woman sitting next to him. Her expression was gentle as she described everything that was happening with Meng Hao and his Immortal meridians to him.

Wang Youcai said nothing the entire time. However, his mouth turned up into the faintest of smiles.

“Meng Hao, I won’t let you leave me behind….”

Chen Fan was in the Solitary Sword Pavilion, one of the Three Churches and Six Sects. Their reserves were profound, but could not match up to the Five Great Holy Lands. Chen Fan was not well known in the sect, and in fact, didn’t even have any friends. Throughout the years, nobody had really paid much attention to him. He stuck to himself to practice his sword arts, and as of this moment, was sitting by himself on a mountainside. He held an alcohol flagon in his hand, from which he took a drink. He looked up into the sky above the sect, at the huge screen which had been set up, and Meng Hao’s image upon it. He raised the alcohol flagon up into the air. 1

“Bottoms up, Junior Brother!”

People were getting excited. Some wished Meng Hao well, some were envious. Some had feelings that went beyond envy. All sorts of thoughts were going through the minds of the people in the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Meng Hao hovered in the starry sky, his eyes gleaming with a bright light of… ambition!

Before, he hadn’t been happy with only 108 meridians. Therefore, he had opened 117. Originally, he thought that was his limit, but then events unfolded, and he understood the profound result of verifying his own Dao.

At the moment, it wasn’t that he was unsatisfied with 121 meridians. However, deep in his heart, he thirsted for more.

“I can still open more!” A brilliant gleam flickered in his eyes, and his Immortal meridians thrummed. He sent divine sense into his body, whereupon he found… the first bit of good fortune that he had acquired… when he first stepped onto the path of cultivation.

It wasn’t the ancient mirror, but rather… the good fortune he had wrested away from Wang Tengfei, the legacy of the Flying Rain-Dragon!

Flying Rain-Dragons were the sovereigns of the sky, and as Meng Hao had made his successive breakthroughs in cultivation, the Flying Rain-Dragon’s legacy had fused deep into his flesh and blood, even into his soul.

He had always had a hunch that the Flying Rain-Dragon was by no means weak, and was in fact incredibly powerful!

When he was in the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect, he saw a Flying Rain-Dragon that had been subjugated by cultivators and turned into the guardian of one of their mountain peaks. However, he had always had the feeling that his Flying Rain-Dragon… should be even stronger than that! 2

The reason for that feeling was the unforgettable experience of the time when he had just acquired the legacy of the Flying Rain-Dragon, and it was attacked violently by the copper mirror. In all the years since then, he had never seen the copper mirror react so wildly. 3

Meng Hao knew the parrot well, and knew that its origin was extremely mysterious. Of course, that only caused him… to have more faith in the Flying Rain-Dragon’s power.

“Perhaps my cultivation base isn’t strong enough to unravel this mystery now. However… the legacy of the Flying Rain-Dragon was able to fuse into my Dao Pillars and afterwards, my Core . It even merged it into my Nascent Souls…. In that case, why wouldn’t it be able to… turn into an Immortal meridian!” 4

“Follow me into the Immortal Realm, and beyond!” Meng Hao’s eyes shone with intense light as rumbling sounds emanated out. His Immortal meridians exploded with power, and his divine sense, which was vastly more powerful than it had been before, didn’t expand out, but rather, swept about inside of him to arouse the legacy of the Flying Rain-Dragon!

After a moment, it found a mote of light inside of him, quite inconspicuous, a dot of brightness inside of his Nascent Divinity.

If you looked closely at that mote of light, you would see an incredibly miniscule Flying Rain-Dragon.

“Flying Rain-Dragon Immortal meridian, OPEN!” cried Meng Hao. His cultivation base roared as he poured power into the mote of light. In the blink of an eye, the light grew blinding, and exploded outward. Endless rumbling filled Meng Hao. The Immortal qi from the Door of Immortality poured madly into him and then into the mote of light.

Time passed as more and more boundless Immortal qi merged into the mote of light. The Flying Rain-Dragon inside of him gradually grew larger until finally, the dragon opened its eyes, and they shone with a brilliant glow.

That brilliant glow contained profound dignity and haughtiness. It despised everything on the land below, and domineered over everything in the sky. It had no cares or worries, and thirsted for freedom and independence.

That… was Meng Hao’s Dao!

Meng Hao’s heart trembled. He had never imagined that his own Dao would be so similar to the Flying Rain-Dragon’s nature.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

The Immortal qi grew more majestic as the Flying Rain-Dragon opened its eyes. It spread out its wings inside of Meng Hao, and massive rumbling sounds could be heard as it transformed into an Immortal meridian which rapidly grew solid!

Thirty percent. Fifty percent. Seventy percent….

Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed with a brilliant light, and he suddenly took in a deep breath, absorbing all of the Immortal qi. Rumbling sounds could be heard, after which, the Flying Rain-Dragon Immortal meridian reached eighty percent, ninety percent, and finally… one hundred percent!

When that happened, Meng Hao’s aura rose explosively!

The vague images of lamps once again appeared around Meng Hao, swirling through the air. It was impossible to clearly see exactly how many lamps there were, and yet, they were definitely much clearer than earlier.

An energy rose up from Meng Hao’s body that seemed to be Immortal, and yet not, and at the same time Ancient, and yet not.

In addition, a 122nd Immortal dragon appeared outside the Door of Immortality, and this time, it looked completely different than the other dragons. It was a Flying Rain-Dragon!

It had huge wings, its tail was a poisonous viper, and its head was shocking in the extreme!

This was a Flying Rain-Dragon, which in the Nine Mountains and Seas was known by another name. It was also called… Outsider Dragon!

The Ninth Mountain and Sea was in an uproar.

To open another meridian after the 121st was fundamentally shocking, but then, it resulted in an Outsider Dragon materializing. Everyone was completely shocked.

It was as if every time Meng Hao reached his peak, and the conclusion was in sight, he would tell you through his actions… that things WEREN’T over!

The Patriarchs of the various sects and clans all had profound gleams in their eyes as they watched Meng Hao, this cultivator of the Junior generation, who performed one shocking deed after another.

Gradually, they were coming to the conclusion that they were watching the rise of a young Paragon.

“It’s been a very, very long time… since a stunning individual like this has appeared in the Ninth Mountain!”

“The only other one… was Lord Li!”

“That’s right! The only other person like this… was Lord Li, the mysterious figure who legends say wasn’t even from the Nine Mountains and Seas!”

The Elder generation of cultivators sighed, and they wore complex expressions on their faces as they looked at Meng Hao and said nothing further.

The Chosen who were of the same generation as Meng Hao stood in front of their respective teleportation portals, collapsing mentally. They were proud people, and right now, they were being trampled on. All of their vast preparations were laughable, and the glory they had just acquired… was already becoming a thing of the past.

A young man from Planet South Heaven, a cultivator who everyone had disregarded… had, in front of their very eyes, transformed into an insurmountable mountain.

All of them felt a twinge of sympathy for Fang Wei. After all, this kind of feeling would be much stronger for him.

As for Fang Wei, he hovered in midair, laughing bitterly and trembling. Watching Meng Hao made him feel like his own existence was a joke. His eyes started to shine with madness, a madness that gradually began to overflow with jealously, and then, killing intent even more intense than before.

“None of this matters. I still have ways to kill you!” Fang Wei raged inwardly. “I’ll strike you down using your own Nirvana Fruits!”

Fang Xiushan stood in the crowds, his face pale. Suddenly, he felt regret, not for provoking Meng Hao, but for not being more ruthless before. Why hadn’t he just violated clan rules and killed Meng Hao at the very beginning?

In contrast to Fang Xiushan, his own father, Fang Wei’s grandfather, stood there calmly not too far off. He looked at Fang Xiushan, and then Fang Wei, and sighed.

“As long as a person is alive, he must have a goal. Since things have come to this point…I’ll set the plan in motion earlier than anticipated.

“Does the Fang Clan exist eternally within a raging inferno, or will it diverge from its path and rise out of that inferno like a phoenix? Everything… depends on what happens now!” Fang Wei’s grandfather, the normally taciturn old man, suddenly smiled.

It was a smile that contained an emotional sigh, but also, incredible ferocity!

Apparently, there were dark forces that had existed for unknown years in the Fang Clan… that were slowly beginning to bare their fangs!

Up in the starry sky, Meng Hao probed his 122 Immortal meridians, then looked up at the Door of Immortality. Once again, a wild look began to burn in his eyes.

“I can still… open one last meridian!” he said softly. It was at this point that he produced the bronze lamp from his bag of holding, within which burned a tongue of flame.

It was…

The Essence of Divine Flame!

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# Chapter 983: The Great Circle of the Immortal Realm!

Meng Hao’s eyes were filled with obsession and madness. He had opened 122 meridians and had walked a path no one had trod before, even in ancient times. Not even the Lord of the Fourth Mountain and Sea, KṢitigarbha, had done something like Meng Hao had when he became a true Immortal.

Meng Hao hovered there in the starry sky, the center of all attention. And yet, he still wasn’t ready to give up. Flames danced in his eyes, a reflection of the Essence of Divine Flame in his palm. It was as if the Divine Flame had become the ambition within Meng Hao’s eyes.

“My final meridian… the Essence of Divine Flame!” Meng Hao’s heart was pounding. He knew that the Essence of Divine Flame was terrifying, but he couldn’t hold back his excitement at the idea of it becoming his final meridian!

“If I can succeed in making this my 123rd meridian, then I won’t have any regrets!

“It’s a gamble, but if I succeed, I’ll have one more meridian. If I fail….” Meng Hao’s heart thumped, but his eyes quickly gleamed with obsession.

“Who cares if I fail?!” His hair and clothing whipped about as his energy began to rise up. The starry sky trembled and rumbling sounds echoed out.

“Before the world appeared, before the beginning of Heaven and Earth, before time could even be calculated, perhaps… there were no such things as Immortals. Therefore… how did the first Immortal come to be?!

“That first Immortal definitely walked his own path. He must have tried many things, and must have suffered many defeats before he finally found the correct path. The first person to succeed called himself Immortal, and that is how Immortals came to be!

“It must have occurred in that way. Therefore, I can do the same thing. I, Meng Hao, will become an Immortal in MY way!”

The majestic Door of Immortality, the boundless Immortal light, the unobstructed Immortal qi, the swirling Immortal dragons. These things served as foils to Meng Hao.

If this bit of Divine Flame were much larger, then it wouldn’t matter how determined Meng Hao was, he would be incapable of absorbing much of it. However… there wasn’t much of the flame present!

There was only a tiny bit in that bronze lamp!

“Rewards come only with risk. In life, there are many times… when the only way to acquire something is to make either a sacrifice or a huge gamble!” Meng Hao gripped the bronze lamp tightly, staring wildly at the Essence of Divine Flame therein.

As of this moment, the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea was all watching the cultivator named Meng Hao, and everyone could see the bronze lamp he held in his hand. Everyone could also see the flame that flickered inside of it.

However, even the Dao Realm experts were unable to see the bizarre properties of the bronze lamp. But they could sense that the flame inside of it contained… the power of Essence!

“Essence!! That flame in his hand is rippling with Essence!”

“Unfortunately, it’s miniscule. If there were more of the Essence, then we might be able to gain enlightenment from it.”

“In any case, whatever destiny that kid ran into before allowed him to get that Essence-containing object. Situations like this are extremely rare! Perhaps we might find some clues as to the origins of that Flame Essence on his person?” The almighty Dao Realm experts from the various sects and clans looked at the flame with brightly shining eyes.

However, it was at this point that the Dao Realm Patriarch of the Kunlun Society suddenly spoke, his voice ringing out in the ears of all his contemporaries in the Dao Realm.

“Ladies and gentlemen, this kid… comes from Planet South Heaven.”

When everyone heard that one sentence, their eyes widened, and many of them quashed whatever plans they had been making just now, and their expressions quickly turned into looks of regret. For people in the Dao Realm, Planet South Heaven was actually…

Completely taboo!

However, when the four old men from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite saw the bronze lamp, their expressions… flickered with astonishment!

They gasped, then exchanged glances. Their eyes were filled with absolute disbelief.

“I can’t believe it…. That thing actually exists!!”

“I always thought it was just a legend. But, there it is! There can’t be any mistake… the patterns on that bronze lamp mean that there can be no doubt….”

“Somebody was actually able to touch it… This… this….” The four old men felt their minds spinning, and great waves of astonishment battered their hearts.

As of that moment, all cultivators were staring at Meng Hao.

Everyone watched as Meng Hao, without any further hesitation, held the bronze lamp aloft. His expression was one of determination as he gritted his teeth for a moment, then opened his mouth and inhaled deeply.

In that instant, the flame in the bronze lamp flickered, then flew out of the bronze lamp. In the blink of an eye, it was sucked into Meng Hao’s mouth.

He consumed the Divine Flame!

When Meng Hao sucked in the Essence of Divine Flame, his mind filled with a roaring sound. At the same time, indescribable heat exploded within his throat.

Intense flames almost immediately scorched Meng Hao’s blood dry. Before he could even blink, his body was being burned into ash. No longer was it merely blue veins popping out on his face, instead… numerous fissures spread out across his body.

The fissures were red, and when they opened, it seemed almost as if lava were about to explode out from inside of him.

He let out a protracted howl, and he shook violently. His eyes filled with madness. It was as if swallowing the Divine Flame was the same as swallowing an entire volcano!

Or perhaps… he was actually becoming a volcano!

His 122 Immortal meridians rotated at full power, and boundless Immortal power surged through him. However, all it could do was keep Meng Hao alive, and couldn’t assimilate the Divine Flame.

Indescribable pain filled him as the flames roared, and he was rapidly reaching the point where he couldn’t take it any more.

Popping sounds echoed out, and more fissures tore through Meng Hao’s body. They spread out across his face and neck, and soon afterwards his entire body was covered.

Within those fissures was crimson light that seemed to indicate his body was about to explode.

Nobody could help him, not even the Dao Realm experts. This was his tribulation, his meridians, and his choice!

The only person who could help him was himself. And only by weathering this trial, only by successfully fusing with the Essence of Divine Flame, could he save himself.

“I absolutely must succeed!” The glow of fire seeped out of Meng Hao’s eyes, and he could clearly sense the wild and intense power flowing through him that was the Divine Flame!

If he didn’t already possess 122 Immortal meridians, then he would already have been completely transformed into ash. However, regardless of how unprecedented his previous gains were, he was still… approaching the point of collapse.

Right now, all of the Dao Realm Patriarchs were watching closely. The Fang Clan Earth Patriarch looked nervous, and his eyes were wide with anger.

“Bastard! Moron! Y-y-you… you seemed so smart, kid! How could you do something as rash as this? Dammit! 122 meridians is amazing. Why did you have to be so stubborn and try to open more?!” After cursing up a storm, the Earth Patriarch finally sighed and soon looked over at Meng Hao, his eyes glowing with praise.

From the perspective of the Fang Clan, he didn’t want Meng Hao to be facing any serious peril. However, from the perspective of a cultivator, he had to admit that he approved of Meng Hao’s wildness. When practicing cultivation, only by having an obsession with power that bordered on madness could one… truly become powerful.

He wasn’t the only person thinking such thoughts. The Dao Realm Patriarchs from the various sects and clans were all watching Meng Hao, and suddenly, they looked at him differently than before. They could sense his madness, and his obsession with becoming powerful.

To make such a wild bet, to risk everything in the way he was, left them moved.

The experts from the Three Great Daoist Societies felt the same way.

Fang Wei hovered in midair, mind shaking as he watched what was happening. As for his father Fang Xiushan, he was starting to look extremely excited, even joyful.

“He’s just looking to die!” he thought. “Well, the little son of a bitch is going to kill himself. Hahaha! I hope he blows up!”

The true Immortal Chosen of the Ninth Mountain and Sea saw Meng Hao’s manifestation of obsession, and various expressions could be seen on their faces.

Rumbling sounds could be heard as the fissures spread out to cover Meng Hao completely, causing him to seem like he was cobbled together from a patchwork of pieces.

There were even some places on his face where the fissures merged together, causing pieces of his skin to begin to flake off and transform into dust. Finger-nail sized wounds could be seen, within which were not flesh and blood, but rather, a sea of flames.

As more and more of his skin began to fall off, Meng Hao’s 122 Immortal meridians transformed into 122 Immortal dragons, and yet, even their 122 streams of power was not enough to stop what was happening.

Everyone watching began to pant, and their minds trembled.

Meng Hao roared, and his body shook. His vision was growing dim, and yet, the obsession in his eyes was growing more intense.

“I’m not going to fail! 122 Immortal meridians, and their more than 100 streams of power, seems incredible. However, since they’re separated, it’s naturally not enough….

“However, if those 122 Immortal meridians could all become Eternal Immortal meridians, then… my Eternal stratum would be 122 times more powerful!

“And then, I could definitely succeed!” Even as his mind spun, he considered his current predicament, and quickly came up with a solution. He suddenly trembled as all of his Immortal meridians began to change, transforming into…. Eternal Dragons!

122 Eternal Dragons exploded out, and the Eternal stratums they formed instantly shook everything.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

Meng Hao threw his head back and howled. The fissures covering his body began to shrink, and the flames inside of him rapidly began to condense, gradually forming a Divine Flame Immortal meridian.

At the same time, the Door of Immortality erupted with billowing Immortal qi, which fused into his body, solidifying the Divine Flame Immortal meridian. Simultaneously, the terrifying injuries he had just sustained began to heal.

After enough time passed for half an incense stick to burn, his body was completely restored. When that happened, his eyes shone with an intense light of confidence. Furthermore, there was an energy inside him that rose up, making him even more powerful!

“Open the Divine Flame Immortal meridian!” he murmured, waving his hand as another Immortal meridian opened up inside his body.

123 meridians!

This was… Meng Hao’s final meridian!

Another Immortal dragon began to fly around the Door of Immortality!

The 123rd dragon!

The final dragon!

The great circle!

In that moment, Heaven and Earth filled with rumbling. They sky changed colors, and the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea was shaken!

Meng Hao had accomplished what no other person had ever accomplished, and perhaps… never would! He had opened 123 meridians, and had reached the great circle of the Immortal Realm!

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# Chapter 984: 33 Heavens!

In the Immortal Realm… the number of Immortal meridians someone possessed would determine how weak or powerful they were in battle.

That was something everyone knew. However, virtually nobody knew what sort of destiny or transformations would appear when someone corroborated the Dao on their own.

That was because in the Nine Mountains and Seas, only Kṣitigarbha had ever succeeded. However, now that Meng Hao had opened 123 meridians, the Dao Realm Patriarchs, as well as the true Immortal Chosen and Ancient Realm experts, were all completely shaken, and were beginning to realize that something else might happen.

Immortals who corroborate their Dao on their own can actually transform their Immortal meridians!

This was not an ordinary transformation, but something which allowed the meridians to be merged in the form of a divine ability. In a brief moment… 120 times the level of normal power could be unleashed, a terrifying and shocking development that would strike awe into the hearts of any and all cultivators.

“Immortals who corroborate their Dao on their own do not need any sort of secret magic to be able to increase the power of their Immortal meridians when fighting. That is because such Immortals’ bodies are a secret magic unto themselves!”

“Such a thing is fearful and shocking! No wonder Kṣitigarbha came to be the Lord of the Fourth Mountain and Sea!”

“This kid… has unimaginable potential!”

The Ninth Mountain and Sea was in a commotion, as all eyes remained glued to Meng Hao.

What Meng Hao had done would surely turn into a legend, a myth!

123 meridians did not just place him in the number one position in the Immortal Realm in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Such a number was the most that had been opened by anyone in ALL the Nine Mountains and Seas!

A true Saint fleshly body, and a true Immortal cultivation base!

As of this moment, he was a Paragon! An Immortal Realm Paragon!

He was surrounded by 123 astonishing, roaring Immortal dragons. The last of those dragons was composed entirely of flame, and emanated a powerful Essence aura!

“It’s over.” Meng Hao murmured. He could sense the boundless Immortal power within him, making his cultivation base completely different than before. By way of comparison, it could be said that before Meng Hao had been a tree, and now, he was a forest!

The sense of power that flowed through his body causes his eyes to shine with bright light as he looked up. He could sense his blood boiling, and could clearly detect the Immortal qi within him.

After a long moment passed, he stretched out both hands.

“Return!” As the single word echoed out, the 123 Immortal dragons outside the Door of Immortality roared, and then shot directly toward Meng Hao. Rumbling could be heard as they merged into him, causing his energy to surge.

Finally, the Door of Immortality began to fade away. The Immortal light faded until it was gone, and the Immortal qi dried up. Meng Hao’s true Immortal Tribulation…

Had been thoroughly transcended!!

He was now an Immortal!

His long hair flew about, and he emanated the aura of an Immortal. His entire person had moved beyond the mortal form, and he was now completely different. Before, he had been handsome, but now he exuded an otherworldly air, as if his mere presence was enough to attract the attention of all onlookers.

In the same moment that the Door of Immortality faded away completely, it was suddenly possible to see a projected image around him!

Countless celestial soldiers wearing golden armor appeared. They stretched out in all directions, too many to count, and they gazed at Meng Hao briefly before dropping to their knees to kowtow.

At the same time, the numerous Immortal Palaces appeared anew, filling the area. An enormous pedestal appeared beneath Meng Hao's feet, which lifted him up to overlook everyone.

Immortal light appeared again, spreading out boundlessly, and swirling clouds filled the area.

Innumerable golden dragons swirled about up above, letting out subservient roars. From a distance, it was possible to see the celestial soldiers kowtowing, the golden dragons capitulating, and then, countless blurry figures emerging from the Immortal palaces, who then clasped hands and bowed deeply to Meng Hao.

The sky went dim, and the starry sky trembled. All of the cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea who were watching Meng Hao went completely silent when they saw what was happening.

This was… a sign!

When Fan Dong'er became Immortal, dragons and phoenixes danced. When Fang Wei reached Immortality, 10,000 soldiers bowed. In fact, signs had appeared when all of the other Chosen had reached Immortal Ascension.

Now, a sign appeared for Meng Hao as well.

However, compared to those of the others, this sign was far more majestic and shocking!

In fact, many people assumed that this the sign was the end when, all of a sudden, something else appeared in Meng Hao's vicinity… nine mountains!

These were nine mountains that caused Heaven and Earth to tremble, mountains that were like Imperial Lords!

Between each mountain was a sea, which meant that there were also nine seas!

Nine Mountains! Nine Seas! A sun, a moon, and heavenly bodies all orbiting around them!

Everyone who could see this was shaken mentally. To people who lived in the realm of the Nine Mountains and Seas, there was nothing more stunning than this image, nor would anything be able to match its splendor.

"Nine Mountains and Nine Seas…. I can't believe he caused a sign like that to appear! So corroborating your own Dao is actually this powerful!!"

"Could it be… that this represents the approval of the Nine Mountains and Seas themselves? Above Paragons are Imperial Lords! Does he have the aura of an Imperial Lord on him?!"

"From today on, the Ninth Mountain and Sea… has a new blazing sun that will surely cause all of the Mountains and Seas to tremble!!" Everyone was in an uproar as they looked at Meng Hao; they simply couldn't remain calm. From the moment he had begun to transcend his tribulation, he was completely different than anyone else, and that wouldn't stop. Even though he had already finished transcending tribulation, and the Door of Immortality had vanished, he was still shocking everyone.

Meng Hao glanced around at the signs around him, and then looked emotionally in the direction of Planet South Heaven.

“Dad, mom,” he murmured. “I’ve risen to prominence in the Fang Clan!

“Master, can you see me from where you are in the Kunlun Society?

“Foster father, can your spirit in Heaven see me, sir?

“Qing’er… can you see me?” This was a moment in which he should be extremely happy and excited. However… in reality, there was no one standing next to him with whom to share his smile.

His father and mother were on Planet South Heaven. His master was in the Kunlun Society. His foster father… had long since returned to the dust. His wife Xu Qing… was now in some unknown place undergoing reincarnation.

Meng Hao sighed, then looked up and did his best to put his emotions in order. Once again, his eyes began to shine with a bright light.

“My Immortal meridians are opened. Next… it’s time to form my Immortal souls!

“Everyone has three spiritual souls and seven physical souls. Therefore, 100 opened meridians can form 10 souls!

“Based on my understanding, after 100 meridians, each additional meridian should be able to produce another soul!

“Immortal souls… form!” he said calmly. In the moment that the words left his mouth, his Immortal meridians emitted intense rumbling sounds.

Shockingly, a huge Dharma Idol appeared behind him. As of now, it was most accurate to say that the Dharma Idol… was the soul of a true Immortal!

36,900 meters! 1

Rumbling could be heard as a 2nd soul formed, then a 3rd, and a 4th….

10 true Immortal souls all appeared, each one of which exuded shocking power that emanated out in all directions. Then an 11th, a 12th, a 13th… all appeared.

Each soul which appeared caused anyone who looked at it to shake and tremble. Ripples emanated out into the starry sky, and Meng Hao's energy rose up higher and higher.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

21 souls. 22 souls. 23 souls!

Soon, 29 souls had appeared, and then 30!

An entire collection of Immortal souls appeared behind Meng Hao. In addition to the original 10, more Immortal souls appeared due to his various aggregations of destiny and divine abilities.

31 souls. 32 souls…. In the end, there were 33 souls!!

These 33 true Immortal souls caused 33 types of incredible pressure to spread out. It was as if… 33 Heavens had appeared!

How many Heavens exist? The 33 Heavens are ultimate!

In the legends of the Nine Mountains and Seas, above the Nine Mountains were 33 Heavens. If someone could break through those 33 Heavens, they could leave the Nine Mountains and Seas.

That was referred to… as the path of the Mountain and Sea Tribulation!

Meng Hao's cultivation base roared, but he did not turn to look back behind him. He could sense the power of the 33 true Immortal souls behind him, and yet wasn't sure exactly how powerful he was.

However, he was sure… that if he went back to the ancestral land now and faced those Ancient Realm experts with one extinguished Soul Lamp, then he wouldn't even need the assistance of the terracotta soldier… to slaughter them!

Heaven and Earth rumbled as Meng Hao hovered there in the starry sky. Beneath his feet was a pedestal, and he was surrounded by innumerable kowtowing celestial soldiers. Nine Mountains and Nine Seas could be seen, including a sun and a moon. Further off, figures emerged from the Immortal Palaces to clasp hands and bow.

Behind him were 33 true Immortal souls, which transformed into 33 Heavens!

Anyone who could see what was happening was thoroughly shocked.

“33 Heavens…. No wonder he opened 123 meridians!”

“That is the limit of the Immortal Realm in the Nine Mountains and Seas. That is the true great circle!” The Dao Realm Patriarchs of the various sects and clans all understood this point. They looked at Meng Hao, and what they saw was a blazing sun of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, someone who would soon move on to even more glory.

At the same time, the true Immortal Chosen of the various sects and clans all looked on silently. From their expressions, it was possible to tell that they wished to fight Meng Hao more than anything. All of the Chosen, regardless of whether they had ever had dealings with Meng Hao, were filled with an intense desire to do battle.

“I have to fight! If I don't, I'll be eternally plagued by this inner Devil!”

“The only way to walk my own path is to dare to battle him, and defeat him! Then I can struggle for glory in this era!”

“He has the secret magic that allowed him to become an Immortal who corroborated the Dao on his own. However, we have our own secret magics, legacies passed down in our sects, which enable us to dramatically multiply the power of our own Immortal meridians. Therefore, fighting him… is not an impossibility!”

Taiyang Zi was obsessed. Song Luodan had both fists clenched. Wang Mu’s expression flickered with killing intent. Zhao Yifan had drawn his sword. Fan Dong’er’s eyes glittered brightly.

Li Ling’er, Sun Hai, and even Wang Tengfei, as well as others who Meng Hao had never even seen before, all of the Chosen who had broken through to true Immortality…

All had the intense desire to fight!

Naturally, Fang Wei was no exception. He hovered in midair, looking up at Meng Hao in the starry sky, and in his eyes gleamed with all of the desire to fight that he could muster.

“I’m Fang Wei, and in this era, Fang Hao, you can’t be allowed to be the only one who shines with glory!” Fang Wei took a deep breath and then calmed himself. Personally witnessing Meng Hao transcending his tribulation was a life-changing experience, almost like a baptism.

1. 36,900 meters is 12,300 zhang. Or if you read it directly in Chinese, it’s ONE (ten thousand) TWO (thousand) THREE (hundred) ZHANG!

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# Chapter 985: Fight!

33 Immortal souls were completely shocking. Countless celestial soldiers kowtowed, causing the starry sky to tremble. Meng Hao stood in the void atop a pedestal, looking around as the signs gradually faded away.

After they were completely gone, he was officially in the true Immortal Realm, and had reached the peak of the Realm, making him an Immortal Realm Paragon.

In that moment, the Ninth Mountain and Sea was completely silent. All observing cultivators stopped breathing as the image of Meng Hao turned into a mark which was branded onto their hearts.

It was an indelible mark that would never fade away!

It didn’t take long, though, for a hubbub to break out, especially on Planet East Victory. Everyone, including members of the Fang Clan and other clans, exploded into a huge commotion.

Cries rang out in all directions.

“Fang Hao!”

“Fang Hao!!”

“FANG HAO!!!”

Meng Hao’s name was being shouted out by innumerable mouths, echoing out in all the Heavens, rocking the lands. As of this moment, he was the blazing sun of the Fang Clan, their pride and joy.

Fang Xiushan stood in the crowd, his face a mass of ferocity. His fists were clenched tightly at his sides, and he was panting. Venomous ideas sprouted inside his mind and swirled violently.

His taciturn father bowed his head so that no one would be able to see the sinister glint in his eyes.

The Grand Elder stood not too far off, silent. He sighed inwardly.

The rest of the members of the Fang Clan were crying out with joy. Up in midair, Fang Wei hovered calmly and silently, the desire to do battle that shone in his eyes growing more and more intense.

All of the various sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea were boiling with excitement.

Far up in the starry sky, Meng Hao turned to face Planet South Heaven, dropped down onto one knee, and bowed deeply.

The eyes of all the cultivators in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were upon him as he bowed toward Planet South Heaven. What he was bowing to was not Heaven and Earth, and was not the planet itself. No, he was bowing to his father and mother!

In that moment, Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li stood in the Tower of Tang on Planet South Heaven, watching Meng Hao. His mother was extremely excited, and tears of joy filled her eyes, as well as intense pride.

That was her son!

Fang Xiufeng couldn’t keep his expression calm. A wide smile broke out on his face, the smile that comes from seeing one’s own son become like a dragon. He took a deep breath and then started to laugh.

Naturally, he was well-aware who Meng Hao was bowing to.

As of this moment, the rancor that had been building up in him after leaving the Fang Clan was finally released, thanks to his son Meng Hao. Not only had his son returned home to the clan, he had risen up to become a blazing sun.

Outside of Planet East Victory, Meng Hao rose to his feet again. The signs had faded away, and now the 33 Immortal souls also vanished.

It was then that the true Immortal Chosen of the Ninth Mountain and Sea felt their desire to fight raging, and their faces flickering with obssession.

FIGHT!

What did it matter if they were defeated? They would fight anyway!

If they did not fight, then the inner Devil that Meng Hao had become would plague them for the rest of their lives, and that Devilish image would make it almost impossible to walk their own paths.

Therefore, they had to fight!

They needed to go all out, to hold nothing back and fight!

Their only option was to confront him directly. That was the only way to ensure that they would have the chance for further breakthroughs in the future. That was the only way to guarantee that they could pursue their own Dao!

Taiyang Zi was the first true Immortal Chosen to step into a teleportation portal. He was the Dao Child from Mount Sun, one of the Five Great Holy Lands. He was one of only two members of Mount Sun who had stepped into true Immortality in this generation. He had his pride, and he had his goals and obsessions, and he would fight!

Rumbling sounds filled the air as he set foot into the teleportation portal and vanished. When he reappeared, shockingly, he was right outside of Planet East Victory. He immediately turned toward Meng Hao and began to fly toward him.

“Meng Hao!” He did not shout the name Meng Hao used in the Fang Clan, Fang Hao, nor did he shout the name he had used in the Three Great Daoist

Societies' trial by fire. He shouted his true name, the name he had used on Planet South Heaven!

His cry turned into something like a sound wave that surged out through the starry sky. Taiyang Zi then transformed into a sun that radiated boundless, scintillating light, shocking to the extreme as he barrelled toward Meng Hao.

"Let's fight!!" Taiyang Zi's eyes were bright red, and he fairly burst with power. He had opened up more than 90 Immortal meridians, and all of them surged with power. The energy of a true Immortal erupted out.

As his energy skyrocketed, sun-form Taiyang Zi instantly caught the attention of all cultivators, who were completely surprised.

"They're going to fight!!"

"They have to fight this battle. If I were a Chosen, I would attack too. I wouldn't be afraid of losing, or of dying. What I would fear… would be not daring to fight! Not daring to draw my sword!"

"This Taiyang Zi is the first person to attack! He will definitely be an extraordinary individual in the future!" Innumerable spectators were now waiting for the fight to begin.

"In this era of true Immortals, whoever manages to defeat Meng Hao… will be able to rise to the top!"

Meng Hao's eyes glittered as he looked at Taiyang Zi shooting toward him. Back when he was making his breakthrough, he had assumed people would come to fight him. However, he never imagined that the first person to do so would be Taiyang Zi, and not Fang Wei.

"Well," Meng Hao said indifferently, "you owe me some money, you know…." His expression was very calm, as if his words were completely and utterly proper, without the slightest bit of impropriety.

His words instantly caused Taiyang Zi's aggressiveness to falter….

All of the cultivators in the Ninth Mountain and Sea who were watching the event stared in shock.

“But…” continued Meng Hao, “if you want to fight, then let’s fight!” As soon as he finished speaking, brilliant light burst out of his eyes, and he took a step forward toward Taiyang Zi.

As he stepped out, Taiyang Zi roared angrily, and his aggressive energy soared up again. Innumerable magical symbols appeared on the surface of his sun-form, which transformed into shocking ripples that shot toward Meng Hao. Taiyang Zi roared, then extended his right foot and began to spin in circles in an attack on Meng Hao.

All of the power of his cultivation base burst out, just for this battle!

Behind him, an enormous Dharma Idol appeared. Shockingly, it was an image of a sun, which merged with his divine ability to make his sun-form incredibly realistic. He looked exactly like a real heavenly body, as if he had poured all of his life force into this attack.

Meng Hao’s right hand balled up into a fist, and as Taiyang Zi’s leg descended toward him, he casually struck out, almost as if he weren’t even trying!

In the blink of an eye, the fist and the leg slammed into each other.

A huge boom rose up, shaking the starry sky. The Heavens dimmed, and the wind changed direction. An intensely powerful shockwave spread out in all directions. All of the cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea watched as Taiyang Zi’s sun-form completely collapsed under the force of Meng Hao’s blow. It shattered and dissipated instantly.

It was as if Meng Hao had detonated a sun!

Blood sprayed out of Taiyang Zi’s mouth, and he flopped backward like a kite with its string cut.

Meng Hao hovered in the starry sky. His hair was not flying about, and his clothing was completely smooth and unmoving. His fist remained outstretched in that pose for a moment, and then, face calm, he slowly pulled his arm back.

One punch!

Meng Hao had crushed the divine ability of a true Immortal Chosen with more than 90 meridians as easily as stepping onto dry weeds!

The Ninth Mountain and Sea was completely silent. Although everyone had assumed that Meng Hao would win spectacularly, to witness what they just had just witnessed left them shocked. That was especially true… because although they weren't capable of assessing the full extent of Meng Hao's power, they could now make some speculations.

"That was only one punch…. He didn't even use his Dharma Idol…."

"This Meng Hao, just… just how powerful is he!?!?"

Even as everyone gave voice to their shock, Taiyang Zi managed to force himself to a stop. His face was pale, and he coughed up a huge mouthful of blood. He looked up, his face twisted with rage, and his desire to do battle even stronger than before.

"Meng Hao, our battle isn't over yet!

"Secret magic, Sacred Sun Scripture!" Taiyang Zi performed a double-handed incantation gesture, then hit various pressure points on his body, 49 times. Apparently, he wanted to continue, but had reached his limit. His face turned bright red, after which he threw his head back and roared as his energy surged up.

Moments ago, he had been filled with the power of more than 90 Immortal meridians. Now, though, ripples spread out that contained at twenty percent more than that level of power! He now had the energy of more than 110 Immortal meridians!

Secret magic!

Every sect and clan had Immortal Realm secret magics, powerful magics that could be cultivated at a heavy price, and were bestowed only upon members who qualified to study them.

In fact, Meng Hao had never been able to learn any of the Fang Clan’s Immortal meridian secret magics!

As Taiyang Zi’s energy rose up, his Dharma Idol disappeared, and in its place, shockingly, were 9 Immortal souls!

Each of those Immortal souls took the shape of a sun, making it so that Taiyang Zi was backed by 9 suns. The suns linked together, transforming into a majestic image that emanated shocking energy.

Booms echoed out in the Heavens, spreading out through the starry sky. Taiyang Zi’s eyes were bright red as he looked at Meng Hao. He suddenly pointed out, causing the 9 suns to shoot toward Meng Hao. At the same time, Taiyang Zi performed an incantation gesture, causing the power of more than 110 Immortal meridians to form an image of a bow in his left hand. He gripped the bowstring with his right hand, pulled it back, and then released it.

“Sacred Sun Scripture, Immortal Arrow Nine Suns Destruction!”

All eyes were glued on the scene playing out. Countless individuals felt their hearts pounding as a streak of golden light shot through the starry sky like a sharp arrow.

Meng Hao’s expression was as calm as ever. It didn’t matter that Taiyang Zi had unleashed a secret magic like this. Meng Hao simply sighed.

“You owe me a lot of money, which has made my life very difficult,” he said. Shaking his head, he took a step forward. As his foot descended, the 9 suns bore down on him, inundating him completely.

“Detonate!!” roared Taiyang Zi. The 9 suns exploded, creating a deafening roar that sent ripples out in all directions. At the same time, the golden arrow stabbed in through the ripples.

Taiyang Zi’s face was ashen, and he coughed up a mouthful of blood. He was now much weaker; utilizing the secret magic was far too much of a drain on him. It was at this point that his eyes suddenly went wide with disbelief and astonishment.

As the ripples faded away from the starry sky, Meng Hao became visible, hovering in the exact same position he had been before. He wasn’t injured in the slightest, and in fact, his expression hadn’t even changed. Held in between his thumb and index finger was a trembling, golden beam of light.

“Your debt is now doubled,” he said coolly. With that he pushed down, and a cracking sound could be heard as the golden light… shattered.

Taiyang Zi coughed up a mouthful of blood, staggering backward in shock. He had been prepared for the possibility that Meng Hao could defend against his divine ability, but he could never have predicted that even after draining himself to unleash a secret magic, Meng Hao would actually… defeat it with only two fingers!

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# Chapter 986: Six Experts vs. Meng Hao!

The Ninth Mountain and Sea was completely silent.

All of the cultivators who had just watched the fight between Meng Hao and Taiyang Zi were completely astonished. Even members of the Ancient Realm were a bit frightened by Meng Hao.

At the moment, none of them were truly clear regarding… exactly how powerful he was!

That was because, as far as anyone could remember, there had never been a person like Meng Hao in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. He had corroborated the Dao on his own, and had opened 123 meridians, then formed 33 Immortal souls.

“He… didn’t even use his Immortal meridians, or his Immortal souls….”

“He fought Taiyang Zi using only the power of his fleshly body!!”

“I think I get it. He has a true Immortal fleshly body, and because he has Immortal meridians and is bolstered by Immortal qi, his fleshly body is already at the peak of the Immortal Realm!!” After a moment of silence, voices began to ring out. Everyone was completely mystified by Meng Hao’s unfathomable secrets.

Taiyang Zi’s face was pale as he looked bitterly at Meng Hao. He took a few steps back, and was just about to simply leave, when suddenly, the starry sky filled with the glow of multiple teleportation portals.

This time, there were two that opened up at almost exactly the same time. The bright light of teleportation shone out, and soon, more people arrived.

Two figures emerged from the teleportation portals.

One was Song Luodan, Dao Child of the Song Clan, true Immortal Chosen of his people. The other person… was a true Immortal from the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum. He was young, and had a dark red bundle strapped to his back.

The vertical bundle was narrow and somewhat tall, and from the look of it, contained a corpse.

This was someone Meng Hao had never seen before.

“Meng Hao!” Song Luodan’s energy surged violently as soon as he appeared, and he immediately unleashed a Song Clan secret magic, which caused his Immortal meridians to explode with far more power than normal, sending ripples out in all directions.

In much the same way as Taiyang Zi, he was using a secret magic to cause his Immortal meridians to increase in power by about twenty percent. It was as if he had more than 110 meridians. Furthermore, 9 Immortal souls appeared behind him.

However, just when everyone assumed Song Luodan was finished powering up, he threw his head back and roared. Instantly, a 10th Immortal soul appeared behind him, and then another one!

With a total of 11 Immortal souls, Song Luodan’s power erupted; he raised his right hand, within which appeared a long spear.

The spear was green, and emanated a profound ancientness. As soon as it appeared, the starry sky trembled.

“Meng Hao, come and fight me!” Song Luodan hurled the spear out with a burst of energy.

At the same time, the young man from the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum stood there grim-faced and silent. He suddenly raised his right hand, causing the bundle to fly out from behind him. It rapidly unwrapped, revealing a shriveled corpse!

The corpse was completely withered, and emanated an archaic air. This was none other than… a corpse from ancient times!

The young man from the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum bit down on the tip of his tongue, then spit out a mouthful of blood. At the same time, he dropped down to sit cross-legged, and closed his eyes. He pushed down onto his forehead, from within which shot a beam of light. After fusing with his blood, it turned into a blood-red beam that entered into the corpse.

A tremor ran through the corpse as its flesh and blood seemed to revive. In the blink of an eye, it turned into a middle-aged man, whose eyes snapped open. His body rumbled, and the aura of Immortal meridians instantly surged out.

This was also a secret magic, manifest via the use of an ancient corpse. Although no Immortal souls appeared, it emanated a shocking pressure that exuded ripples equivalent to 120 Immortal meridians. At the same time, Immortal dragons appeared and began to swirl through the air.

Everyone was now paying rapt attention to what was happening!

“Wow, look at Song Luodan! He’s even stronger than Taiyang Zi! He’s also cultivated the second level of his secret magic. As for the first level, although he hasn’t made too much progress and can only increase his Immortal meridians by twenty percent, that’s still extremely powerful!”

“I heard that all the sects and clans in the Ninth Mountain and Sea have secret magics. They’re all virtually the same in that they have three levels. The first level can essentially add illusory Immortal meridians, even doubling the real ones in some cases! The second level expands the number of Immortal souls, and the last level… takes the illusory and makes it corporeal!”

“Yu Xinglong from the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum is also extraordinary. Their magical techniques are sinister and bizarre, and even though he hasn’t cultivated the second level, his advancement in the first level still increases his power by more than twenty percent, a power similar to about 120 meridians!” 1

Even as the Ninth Mountain and Sea cultivators commented on the scene playing out, Meng Hao’s voice echoed out through the starry sky.

“Danny,” he said, belittling Song Luodan by calling him a pet name, “you also owe me some money.” He looked over at Song Luodan, and frowned. His demeanor and his wording were exactly like someone from the Senior generation reprimanding a naughty member of the Junior generation.

As soon as the words left his mouth, Song Luodan’s face went purple. The matter of being in debt to Meng Hao was something he considered to be the biggest humiliation of his entire life. He let out a roar and charged directly toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao then looked over at the young man from the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum, and his eyes shone with a strange light.

“No one from the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum owes me money yet…. However, I do happen to know somebody by the name of Xiao Luo.” 2

Almost in the same moment that Song Luodan launched his attack, Yu Xinglong from the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum sent the corpse forward. Its energy surged as it attacked with Song Luodan, the two of them versus Meng Hao.

They moved with incredible speed. Song Luodan’s spear ripped through the air, sending ripples out into the starry sky as it stabbed toward Meng Hao. Booms echoed out in all directions.

A vicious gleam appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes. He took a step forward, and suddenly the starry sky seemed to shrink. In the blink of an eye, he was directly in front of Song Luodan. Once again, he lifted his right hand and punched out.

BOOM!

When the punch landed, the spear shattered, and blood sprayed out Song Luodan’s mouth. At the same time, the 11 Immortal souls behind him roared, rumbling down toward Meng Hao like eleven giant mountains. Once again, Meng Hao’s fist lashed out.

BOOOOMMMMMM!

The fist slammed into the eleven mountains, causing them to tremble and then collapse into pieces amidst massive rumbling sounds. Meng Hao’s one punch destroyed them all as if they were dried grass. Then, it slammed into Song Luodan’s chest.

Song Luodan let out a muffled grunt. Blood spurted out of his mouth as he tumbled backward.

Simultaneously, Meng Hao spun, eyes blazing as he faced the incoming ancient corpse. His gaze was like lightning, instantly stifling the ancient corpse’s surging energy.

Then… he let out another punch!

A huge boom could be heard. Meng Hao had held back a bit with Song Luodan. However, the young man from the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum didn’t owe him any money, so when he punched, he backed it with the full power of his fleshly body. The ancient corpse had Immortal power similar to 120 meridians, but that didn’t matter; it instantly shook and then simply exploded, shattering into countless pieces as it was completely destroyed.

In the moment that the corpse exploded, Yu Xinglong spat up a mouthful of blood. His eyes snapped open, and they were filled with astonishment.

“Too powerful!”

At the same time, three teleportation portals suddenly flashed into being in the area around them. Boundless light rose up, and ripples emanated out into the starry sky.

Three figures flew out from the teleportation portals at top speed, not stopping for even a moment as they headed toward Meng Hao.

One of them was Wang Mu!

As a Chosen of the Wang Clan, this was not the first time he and Meng Hao had fought. He was the youngest of these Chosen, but his ambitions exceeded that of most the others.

“Meng Hao!” he roared. As he flew out, a strange aura surged. His Immortal meridians emanated the ripples of a secret magic as his energy rose up. All of his power then focused onto his index finger as he pointed toward Meng Hao.

The second person to fly out was Xie Yixian from the Burning Incense Stick Society. 3

During the Three Great Daoist Societies’ trial by fire, Xie Yixian’s power attracted quite a bit of attention. He was a Chosen who had made it into the top 4. As soon as he appeared near Meng Hao, mists swirled out around him, forming an area that was like his own kingdom!

“Fang Mu!” Xie Yixian’s eyes flickered with the desire to do battle, and his Immortal meridians erupted with the full bolstering power of a secret magic.

The final person to appear was Chen Hao from the Bones of the Flamedevil, one of the Five Great Holy Lands. 4

As soon as he stepped out of the teleportation portal, a sea of flames erupted around him. It quickly transformed into more than 100 flame dragons, which roared as they swirled around him. Behind him, 12 Immortal souls appeared that looked like enormous flame giants.

The three people all emerged at the same time and attacked Meng Hao simultaneously.

At the same time, Song Luodan gritted his teeth, ignored the pain of his wounds, and attacked again. Next to him was Taiyang Zi, whose eyes gleamed with determination. Although these people were all Chosen, Meng Hao was so powerful that they had no choice but to join forces to fight him.

“I just have to beat him one time! Only once!” roared Taiyang Zi as he charged forward.

Then there was Yu Xinglong, whose face flickered with various emotions. Although his ancient corpse had been destroyed, he could still fight on his own. He joined in as well, his body emanating a death aura, and his Immortal meridians erupting with power as he shot toward Meng Hao.

Six cultivators joined forces to attack!

The starry sky filled with radiant light. All of the cultivators in the audience held their breath as they watched. It wasn’t that powerful people had never appeared before throughout the history of the true Immortal Realm of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, but never in any generation had there been one blazing sun who had outstripped the other Chosen so far that it required several of them working together to put up a fight.

Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed in concentration. As of this moment, even he had to take things a bit more seriously. His six opponents all had more than 90 meridians, and were utilizing secret magics. These people were the result of countless years of preparations on the part of their respective sects and clans, and were the hope for their future.

All of them were Dao Children in their sects and clans, and if Meng Hao hadn’t appeared on the scene, would be in a position of glory.

“Interesting,” said Meng Hao. His eyes gleamed with the desire to do battle, and to see exactly how powerful he was.

“The power of Immortal meridians….” he thought. His body emanated booms, 123 of them, each one of which represented the activation of one of his Immortal meridians.

“I also want to see if I, by myself, can fight back against all of these true Immortal Chosen of the Ninth Mountain and Sea!” His body rumbled as it emanated a powerful, domineering aura.

He didn’t wait for his six opponents to close in. His body flickered as he charged them!

It was time to fight!

1. Yu Xinglong’s name in Chinese is yú xìng lóng. Yu is a surname. Xing means “interest” or “desire.” Long means “dragon”

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# Chapter 987: Meng Hao’s Ambition!

However, in the moment that Meng Hao stepped forward, the energy of his six opponents surged higher. They transformed into six beams of light that shot directly toward him. As for Wang Mu, his eyes suddenly gleamed with a bizarre light, and he seemed to go crazy, causing ripples to spread out through the starry sky.

He suddenly raised his right hand, and a murky, flickering light appeared that began to suck in all of his soul and life force. It transformed into an attack… a profound Daoist magic of the Wang Clan that was incredibly difficult to master!

“Immobilize!” Wang Mu roared. His fingertip seemed to tear open the starry sky, causing all the ripples to stop in place. A terrifying power appeared which instantly wrapped around Meng Hao, forming invisible bonds that instantly immobilized him.

Although he couldn’t move, it was different than his bodily Hexing. It was as if time had been stopped in place, as if Meng Hao’s body was now suspended in eternity!

The scene which was playing out left everyone completely amazed.

However, before anyone could even react, the six attackers, including Wang Mu, transformed into something like six sharp swords. Their eyes flickered with battle lust, and their energy erupted as they attacked Meng Hao with virtually all of the life force they could muster.

Wang Mu’s aura might have been greatly weakened, but even still he attacked explosively. He lifted his right hand and an illusory finger materialized.

“Wang Patriarch Finger Attack!” Rumbling echoed out as the gigantic, illusory finger seemed to replace the starry sky and descend upon Meng Hao. Brilliant energy surged, causing everything to seem to be on the verge of transforming into ash.

Xie Yixian’s Burning Incense aura seethed, transforming into his own personal kingdom and world. Using the power of his Immortal meridians, he fueled his Burning Incense World, causing the energy from the aura to form his personal kingdom. It transformed into countless images which then crushed down towards Meng Hao.

Chen Hao roared in rage. Flames surged around him as his Immortal meridians erupted with power. His flame dragons merged together, transforming into a gigantic dragon head, which opened its mouth as if to consume all living things.

Taiyang Zi went all out with everything he had. He spit out mouthfuls of blood, causing nine suns to appear in front of him, superimpose, and then transform into one huge sun that shot forward with deadly force.

Song Luodan’s energy rocketed up. Gradually, a blade appeared above his head, the blade of the Song Clan, which was also a Dao. 1 A Heavenly blade slashed down, like the arrival of a Heavenly Dao.

Last of all was Yu Xinglong. His body was completely stiff, as he spared no expense to transform himself into an ancient corpse. The aura of reincarnation emanated out, forming an incredible power that manifested in the form of a Corpse Needle.

The needle stabbed through the air directly toward Meng Hao’s forehead.

The Ninth Mountain and Sea was completely shaken. Everyone looked on with reeling minds as the scene played out. Earlier, they had been shocked to see Meng Hao’s one punch completely defeat various Chosen, and couldn’t help but look down on the true Immortal Chosen a bit because of that. But now they were shocked to find that any one of these Chosen could single-handedly be blazing suns that could rock everything.

Now, the six of them joined forces in an Earth-shaking, Heaven-rocking attack.

“Meng Hao is going to lose!!”

In the blink of an eye, they engulfed Meng Hao. However, it was at this point… that intense booming sounds echoed out from within Meng Hao. They were like thunder and lightning, exploding and rumbling ceaselessly. BOOM, BOOM, BOOM, BOOM….

Shockingly, exactly one hundred such sounds echoed out!

The hundred booming sounds represented the power of 100 Immortal meridians unleashing all their power. Instantly, the Wang Clan’s bizarre immobilization technique fell apart.

As it collapsed, Wang Mu coughed up a mouthful of blood. It was as if his entire body had been scraped clean from the inside out. His expression was one of shock; he had never before experienced such an intense backlash from someone of the same generation as himself.

As for Meng Hao, all eyes were on him as booming sounds echoed out constantly. The power of one Immortal meridian after another erupted, causing Meng Hao’s energy to skyrocket.

“Now it’s my turn,” he said, his eyes flickering with a cold light. Moments ago, the Wang Clan’s magical technique had left him shaken. Now, his eyes brimmed with coldness as his body flickered, suddenly reappearing directly in front of Xie Yixian. As usual, he clenched his right hand and began to punch!

The first punch caused blood to spray out of Xie Yixian’s mouth. His Burning Incense World, his kingdom, collapsed into pieces, and he was sent tumbling backward.

The second punch landed in front of Chen Hao. The flames which surrounded him suddenly encountered a fierce wind, and were extinguished. The shocking flame dragon head exploded, causing Chen Hao to let out a roar of defiance. However, he couldn't stop the blood from spraying out of his mouth.

The third punch descended towards Wang Mu. Meng Hao actually had fairly complex feelings regarding the Wang Clan. However, he also feared their divine ability. When his punch made contact with the finger attack, a huge boom rang out. The finger attack collapsed, and Wang Mu spit up a mouthful of blood and passed directly into unconsciousness.

Four punches, five punches, six punches!

Song Luodan's body was covered in a haze of blood. Taiyang Zi's chest caved in, and he appeared to be on the verge of death. Yu Xinglong from the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum saw his needle collapse into nothing more than bits of ash. His face was pale as Meng Hao's punch very nearly caused him to explode. In the end, he passed out.

Meng Hao didn't kill any of them. He had no enmity with them, and knew that as true Immortal Chosen, they were fighting this battle with him because of their own Daos.

Six punches. Six enemies completely swept aside. Meng Hao hovered there in the starry sky, hair whipping about. More booms could be heard coming from inside of him, until a total of 123 rang out, indicating that Meng Hao had unleashed the full power of his Immortal meridians.

"Too powerful!!"

"Immortal Realm Paragon!" Cries of astonishment could be heard throughout the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Meng Hao's current battle prowess left everyone completely shaken.

Countless spectators were watching this battle in the starry sky closely. It was a battle of Chosen, a battle of true Immortals that would determine the future standing of the various sects and clans.

At some point during the action, a strangely ordinary ship appeared in the boundless starry sky, completely undetectable even to the Ji Clan.

An older man sat on the ship, next to whom was a young man, who was frowning as he looked out at an illusory screen which depicted Meng Hao battling the various Chosen.

“Why are they fighting him?” the young man asked. “They have to know that they’re not his match. What’s the point? Don’t these so-called Chosen of the Ninth Mountain and Sea completely overestimate their ability? If it were me, I would definitely prepare secretly to rise to prominence later! Looks like these people from the Ninth Mountain and Sea amount virtually nothing. They’re all idiots. Fools!”

“That’s because… they are Chosen,” replied the older man softly. “They can accept defeat, and they can accept that they do not measure up to others. However, if they lack even the courage to fight, the determination to draw their swords, then they will forever… be unable to lift a finger against this boy named Fang Hao.

“They are in the Immortal Realm now, and despite the huge gap, if they refuse to fight now… then in the future, that gap will only widen. Then… they would forever lack the courage to fight.” He lifted his glass of alcohol and took a sip.

“They’ll even team up to fight him?” the young man said with a cold laugh. “Whatever would it prove if they won that way?”

“It would prove that he could be beaten by peers from the same generation,” was the calm reply. “Lin’er, that is the difference between you and them. You cannot underestimate these people from the Nine Mountains and Seas.”

The young man laughed coldly. “Ah, who cares? When it comes to them, we already–” He was about to continue when the older man glared at him sternly. The young man’s heart thumped, and he swallowed his words.

No one detected the existence of the ship, as if they actually existed in a different time and space. They floated slowly through the starry sky, drifting off into the distance.

The battle was being watched by countless spectators, which was especially true considering… that what should have been a battle to showcase everyone’s glory ended up being a whole group of people joining forces to attack Meng Hao, which made things even more interesting to the onlookers.

Of course, not all Chosen teamed up to attack Meng Hao. Fang Wei hovered motionless in midair, his eyes closed as he completely ignored what was happening in the starry sky. However, he was slowly building his energy, and his aura continued to grow more intense thanks to the amalgamation of his various Fang Clan secret magics. Furthermore, he had two Nirvana Fruits inside of him, which began to pulse as if they were beating hearts.

He was waiting for his energy to reach its peak, whereupon he would battle it out with Meng Hao!

In addition to him, Fan Dong’er was also building up her energy. Then there was Zhao Yifan, Li Ling’er, as well as two other people…. One was from the Ji Clan, someone nobody else noticed because of the fact that the Ji Clan had kept the Door of Immortality concealed when it came to this person. The only thing that people knew was that she had entered true Immortality; no one had any idea of how many Immortal meridians she had. It was Ji Yin!

She was not the Dao Child of the Ji Clan. However, she was the number one figure underneath the Dao Child!

In addition to Ji Yin, there was Fan Dong’er of the Ninth Sea God World, who had by this point been forgotten by the majority of people. Also from the Three Great Daoist Societies were Zhao Yifan and Zhou Xin from the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto. Of course, there was also the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite….

There was no one who knew of what blazing sun might emerge from the Rite, nor had anyone even heard any whispers of who it might be.

Almost in the same moment that Taiyang Zi and the other five Chosen were defeated, rumbling sounds filled the starry sky as more teleportation portals glimmered into existence. Numerous true Immortal Chosen appeared from the Three Churches and Six Sects, and also from the Holy Lands.

Some of them were people Meng Hao recognized, others were strangers. There were eleven or twelve of them, and they instantly caused explosive ripples to spread out. Each one of these people were blazing suns from their respective sects, and it was without hesitation that they joined forces to attack.

They knew that they couldn’t possibly defeat Meng Hao by relying on their own strength. However, they needed this battle to result in a victory!

Therefore, they teamed up. If they could win, that would be enough to purge the Devils in their hearts, and would prove to them that Meng Hao… could be defeated in battle!

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

Massive roaring echoed out as the dozen cultivators’ Immortal meridians erupted. This was the era of true Immortals, so anyone who had risen to true Immortality, who had opened at least 90 Immortal meridians, and who had secret arts, unleashed their Immortal souls and powered up. They transformed into a dozen beams of prismatic light that shot directly toward Meng Hao.

All of them unleashed different divine abilities as they attacked Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes shone with the desire to do battle. He looked around at his thirteen opponents, and his mouth twisted into a smile. A very cold smile.

His 123 Immortal meridians were in full rotation. As his enemies closed in, Meng Hao charged forward like an explosive dragon. Massive rumbling echoed out as a completely domineering aura emanated out from him. He clenched his hand into a fist and punched.

He slashed through everything like a sharp knife through bamboo. Everywhere he went, divine abilities collapsed, secret magics were destroyed, blood sprayed about, and everything shook.

Boundless ripples spread out through the starry sky like waves over water. Roars of defiance echoed out as Meng Hao simultaneously fought all of these true Immortal Chosen!

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

The starry sky trembled and the Heavens dimmed. One punch. Another punch. ANOTHER!

Numerous enemies were sent tumbling away, blood spraying from their mouths. Bright beams of light were shattered, divine abilities were completely destroyed….

Among the audience, jaws dropped and eyes widened. Meng Hao was like a celestial warrior, and the image of him fighting was branded indefinitely into the minds of everyone in the current generation.

In the end, when all of the opponents were left ashen-faced, and when the final Chosen was sent flying backward in defeat, Meng Hao raised his hand and waved it toward the Heavens.

“A Writ of Karma!” Numerous Karma threads suddenly emerged from his body, as well as from the bodies of all of the Chosen, including the six he had fought earlier. In total, eighteen streams of Karma could be seen coming from the true Immortal Chosen.

Because of Meng Hao’s domineering cultivation base and Daoist magic, he was able to force the formation of Karma. It transformed into numerous promissory notes, which materialized in thin air and then floated down onto Meng Hao’s palm.

There was no need to write anything, nor any need for anyone to agree to the matter. That was because… they now owed him money!

His Karmic Daoist magic forced ties of destiny!

The instant that A Writ of Karma appeared, his eighteen opponents coughed up blood, and their eyes went bright red. The feeling of having destined ties and promissory notes forced upon them, and the sense that their Karma would be disturbed if they failed to pay back that debt, caused all of the Chosen to look over at Meng Hao, eyes bloodshot and seething with rage.

“Meng Hao, how dare you!!”

“Dammit, you’re too shameless!!”

The true Immortal Chosen all roared with fury.

“Shameless, huh?” he replied, his expression the same as ever, although slightly bashful. He cleared this throat continued on with an air of self-righteousness. “Well… you people wanted to fight me to solidify your Dao hearts; you were even willing to gang up on me. If you defeated me, your Dao hearts would be freed of their obstruction. In that case, I think I need to collect some interest from you. If you think about it that way, I’m sure you’ll agree….” It was just as he had said to Fang Xiufeng, that his dream was to get all of the Chosen in the Ninth Mountain and Sea to owe him money. 2

That dream… was already becoming a reality. All of a sudden, Meng Hao realized that he had actually set his ambitions a bit too low.

“I should have said that I want all of the Chosen in the Nine Mountains and Seas to owe me money!” As this grand ambition rose up in his heart, he looked up, and his long hair drifted in the wind. His energy pulsed, and it was as if his desire caused all of the starry sky to tremble. Countless ripples emanated out in all directions.

As of this moment, the Ninth Mountain and Sea had fallen silent. Everyone was speechless as they gazed at Meng Hao. The true Immortal Chosen were in a rage, and yet, couldn’t think of a single thing to say in response.

1. As a quick reminder, “blade” and “Dao” sound very similar

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# Chapter 988: Wanna Get Married, Wifey?!

Fang Xiufeng wore a strange expression as he stood there on Planet South Heaven, looking at Meng Hao’s A Writ of Karma. He also noticed Meng Hao’s expression, and couldn’t help but sigh emotionally.

Off to the side, Meng Li was chuckling. When she saw the look on Fang Xiufeng’s face, she knew exactly what he was thinking.

“This kid was a charmer from the moment he was born,” she said, laughing.

“Charmer?” said Fang Xiufeng, gaping. He hesitated for a moment. “He’s your son. Right before he left, he did say that he wanted all of the Chosen in the Ninth Mountain and Sea to owe him money….”

“When Hao’er was born, I always knew that he would set different aspirations than everyone else. As for me, I was hoping that his grand ambition would be to get all of the pretty girls in the Ninth Mountain and Sea to become his beloved concubines.” Meng Li smiled, and from her expression it could be seen how much she loved spoiling Meng Hao.

Fang Xiufeng stood there silently, shaking his head and smiling wryly. Only he knew that deep within his heart, there was something he felt somewhat indignant about, and that was the “Foster Father” Meng Hao had mentioned when Ke Jiusi gave him the Immortal meridian.

As Meng Hao’s real father, the feelings that had been on display at that moment had caused a sour feeling to rise up in his heart. He couldn’t quite accept the situation.

“You still haven’t told me why you sent Hao’er to Planet East Victory. I know it’s not just for those two Nirvana Fruits. I’ve asked you many times, and you never tell me, but this time, I want an answer!” Meng Li turned and gave Fang Xiufeng a serious look.

Fang Xiufeng looked quietly at his wife for a moment before finally saying, “You’ll know soon enough.”

Currently, the Ninth Mountain and Sea was completely silent, and everyone was staring at Meng Hao. Meng Hao, who had single-handedly defeated all of these Chosen of the various sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Some had even joined forces, and yet, had still been defeated. Many of the observers were left completely shaken.

As Meng Hao hovered there in the starry sky, he looked around at the more than ten true Immortal Chosen, who were staring at him wrathfully. Unfortunately for them, there was nothing they could do. It was at this point that another teleportation portal suddenly blazed into existence in front of Meng Hao.

Zhao Yifan suddenly walked out of the teleportation portal, accompanied by a massive pillar of sword qi which billowed up from him. The stars trembled as mighty rumbling echoed out in all directions. The true Immortal Chosen in the area instantly stared over at him.

The cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea were all watching as Zhao Yifan made his appearance.

“Meng Hao,” he said. “Or should I say… Fang Mu! Long time no see!” As ever, he wore a long, cyan robe, which rippled as he walked, and had a sword strapped to his back. At the moment, the energy that emanated off of him far, far exceeded that which he had displayed at the three Great Daoist Societies’ trial by fire. It was like the difference between Heaven and Earth.

Zhao Yifan of the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto!

Meng Hao had fought him twice before. The first time was on Planet South Heaven, when the two had been separated by quite a distance, and had exchanged a single sword attack in midair.

The second time was during the Three Great Daoist Societies' trial by fire. They had vied for first place, a battle in which Meng Hao had been forced to draw on all his battle prowess, and had even allowed a hidden Devilish will to send his heart and mind into chaos, all to be able to only injure Zhao Yifan!

Now, the two of them stared at each other, scenes from the past playing out in their mind's eyes.

"Zhao Yifan…." Meng Hao said slowly. Suddenly, the desire to fight rose up in his eyes. No further words needed to be spoken. There was no enmity between them, only… the need to do battle for the sake of their own Daos in this new era.

The surrounding true Immortal Chosen quickly grew silent and backed up. They had all been defeated, and would not attack again. Furthermore, they knew how powerful Zhao Yifan was, so their eyes flickered as they prepared for the battle which was about to take place.

The observing cultivators out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were recalling the things which had happened in the past between Meng Hao and Zhao Yifan.

"A battle between those two deserves to be the center of attention!"

"Back in the trial by fire, Zhao Yifan suffered a huge defeat. But now… he's become a true Immortal. Now that he's making another appearance, I wonder… if he'll get defeated again?"

"Going up against someone as inhuman as Meng Hao… Zhao Yifan will definitely suffer defeat!" As everyone discussed the matter, Meng Hao and Zhao Yifan faced off with proverbial swords drawn. Just when they were about to explode into action, a second teleportation portal suddenly appeared, then, immediately afterward, a third. Bright light filled the starry sky as Fan Dong’er walked out, the female corpse behind her, hair draped over its body. The incredible aura of a powerful expert instantly erupted out of Fan Dong’er.

“Meng Hao!” she said calmly, her alluring voice so icy that everything turned as cold as winter.

The corpse behind her had long black hair, and emanated the aura of death, causing anyone who looked at it to tremble.

“Eee?! Hello, Inky! I’ve missed you!” Meng Hao said, eyes shining brightly. After a moment, he continued, a bit embarrassedly, “And as for you, little sis Dong’er, it’s time you paid my money back!” His words caused Fan Dong’er’s face to immediately darken. She didn’t know why, but the instant she saw Meng Hao face to face, and heard his voice, and especially upon seeing the expression on his face… her Dao heart filled with an almost uncontrollable urge to give him several vicious kicks.

Even as she gritted her teeth, the third teleportation portal opened up behind her, and Li Ling’er slowly stepped out. She wore a long red gown, and her eyes blazed like lightning as she stared at Meng Hao. Her expression actually seemed a bit torn.

Meng Hao blinked, then smiled and said, “Heyo! Ling’er! Wifey! You’re here too? Did you want to get married or something?”

When the observers in the Ninth Mountain and Sea heard his words, their eyes went wide. It was as if their ears had been struck by lightning.

“What did he just call Li Ling’er?”

“Dammit! He dared to call Li Li Ling’er wifey?!?!”

“Now that I think about it, this Fang Hao…. Years ago, the Fang Clan and the Li Clan were supposed to have made a marriage alliance….”

As the audience in the Ninth Mountain and Sea went into an uproar, Li Ling’er stared at Meng Hao and then suddenly smiled. In that moment, the complex look in her eye faded away. She was inherently beautiful, and when she smiled, she instantly radiated a bewitching charm.

“Husband,” she said, smiling a beautiful smile, “you’ve gotten yourself involved with far too many beauties. Once you sever ties with them, then we can get married.”

Meng Hao’s eyes went wide. He had never imagined that Li Ling’er would accept his statement. When he saw the grin on her face, it made him feel that the there was something suspicious about the whole situation. He laughed it off awkwardly, then his gaze turned cold as he turned to look at Zhao Yifan.

As soon as his gaze fell upon Zhao Yifan, Zhao Yifan’s sword qi erupted, and he took a step forward, reaching his hand out, within which appeared an illusory, azure-colored sword. As his fingers closed around the hilt of the sword, he did not speak. Instead, his body bent like a drawn bow, and then he suddenly slashed the sword out toward Meng Hao.

The sword caused everything to vibrate; the Heavens dimmed, and more than ninety Sword Dragons appeared within the sword light. They rapidly merged together to form a gigantic Azure Dragon, which roared as it slashed at the void with its claws. Its long whiskers floated in the air as it charged Meng Hao. Everywhere it went, the void shattered and was rent asunder, as if this Azure Dragon could destroy any and all obstacles that got in its way.

As the Azure Dragon closed in on Meng Hao, he raised his right hand and pointed out. Instantly, massive rumbling sounds could be heard as the Azure Dragon roared to a halt, and was incapable of moving forward even a centimeter.

“Shatter,” Meng Hao said coolly. A boom could be heard as the Azure Dragon collapsed, transforming into countless glittering sparks that rapidly dissipated.

The scene that was playing out instantly caused quite a few people to recall what had happened in the Three Great Daoist Societies’ trial by fire. What was happening now was somewhat similar, except that back then, Meng Hao had used a palm, and now he was using the casual wave of a single finger.

Zhao Yifan’s eyes glittered brightly as he reached out with his right hand, causing what appeared to be an ordinary sword to appear. It was none other than… his Cloud Sealing Sword!

He took five quick steps forward, and with each step, his energy soared higher and grew stronger!

“First Sword, Felling the Mortal!

“Second Sword, Shocking the Spirit!

“Third Sword, Severing the Immortal!

“Fourth Sword, Shattering the Ancient!

“Fifth Sword, Trampling the Heavens!” With every step, his energy surged, and he would slash out with his sword. Five steps, five Heaven-shaking sword attacks. The starry sky seemed to be on the verge of collapse. Cracking sounds could be heard as a huge fissure appeared, from within which appeared a gigantic claw that lashed out toward Meng Hao.

The claw looked like the five-taloned claw of a Sword Dragon, formed from five swords. As soon as it appeared, the Heavens trembled, and the expression of all onlookers instantly flickered. The audience in the Ninth Mountain and Sea gasped.

The desire to do battle gleamed even brighter in Meng Hao’s eyes. His expression was cold as his own energy surged, and the power of 123 Immortal meridians erupted!

He had seen these same sword forms the last time he had fought Zhao Yifan, but this time, they were far, far more powerful! Furthermore, at the moment, Meng Hao wanted nothing more than to see exactly how strong he was.

He took a step forward and raised his hand. He didn’t use any sort of divine ability, just one punch, which rocketed toward the incoming five-taloned claw!

123 Immortal meridians erupted, combining with the power of his fleshly body to form an astonishing aura that instantly slammed into the five-taloned claws.

Massive roaring filled the air, and everything shook. The claw shook for a moment and then shattered into countless pieces. Meng Hao continued to advance, his hair whipping about, his aura surging.

“Zhao Yifan, it’s time to use your most powerful secret magic. Otherwise… you’re just no match for me!” Meng Hao’s voice echoed out, and the domineering tone rose with each step he took. Zhao Yifan suddenly felt an intense pressure and urgency weighing down on him. Fan Dong’er’s face flickered, and Li Ling’er’s pupils constricted.

Zhao Yifan threw his head back and roared, then performed an incantation gesture with his right hand.

“Five Cleaving Swords, Rising Sword Form!” He waved his right hand, causing his Immortal meridians to rotate at full power. His more than 90 Immortal meridians now erupted with the battle prowess of more than 110 meridians.

“First Cleaving, Swords Cleave the Heavens!” Instantly, tens of thousands of flying swords filled the starry sky above Zhao Yifan. Under the shadow of all those swords, Zhao Yifan looked like a Paragon among swords, shocking to the extreme. Now, the power of more than 120 Immortal meridians exploded out within him!

“Second Cleaving, Immortal: Why Sever the Mundane World?!” Zhao Yifan’s aura exploded up. In their previous battle, he had been forced to destroy his Dharma Idol in order to fuel the second cleaving. This time, he unleashed the form without the slightest hitch. Furthermore, using this power caused his energy to surge to something similar to more than 130 Immortal meridians!

This was a true display of the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto’s Five Cleaving Swords. It was also the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto’s secret magic for the Immortal Realm. It was actually powerful enough to create a number of illusory meridians which could surpass the normal limit of 123 meridians. However, the Immortal souls that could be formed from those meridians were still limited to one soul per 10 meridians. Furthermore, because of the constraint of 33 Heavens, the maximum number of meridians possible, including those granted by secret magics, was 330, which was considered the great circle.

Throughout countless years, no one had ever been able to achieve that!

Meng Hao raised his head, and his eyes shone with brilliant light, like a cold, sharp sword.

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# Chapter 989: That Same Feeling!

“Third Cleaving, Who Is Most Honored in Heaven!?” Zhao Yifan cried out. His Immortal meridians once again sent out incredible pressure, and soon, the power he radiated was equal to more than 140 Immortal meridians!!

As soon as this power manifested, the Heavens dimmed, and a wild wind sprang up. All of the stars in the sky trembled, and, at the same time, Zhao Yifan began to shake. Having added to his Immortal Realm power by more than fifty percent, he had reached his limit, and was in a state that he could only maintain for a short time.

“Meng Hao, prepare to receive my most powerful attack!” He threw his head back and roared, causing the tens of thousands of swords around him to merge together into fourteen Immortal souls!

These souls, formed by the illusory Immortal meridians of the secret magic, could not measure up to the souls created, one soul per meridian, after corroborating one’s Dao and becoming Immortal.

To the true Immortal Chosen of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, an inhuman cultivator like Meng Hao was someone they simply couldn’t measure up to.

Zhao Yifan’s aura surged, and his sword descended. Behind him were 14 Immortal souls, who caused the descending sword blow to become a beam of light that illuminated the entire starry sky. Everyone was dazzled by the blinding, scintillating light.

Zhao Yifan’s most powerful sword attack!

Rumbling echoed out as the sword shot straight toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s desire to fight seethed as he caused all of his 123 Immortal meridians to rotate at full power. Immortal souls appeared behind him, which was the first time he had used such a power when battling the true Immortal Chosen.

He advanced, clenching his hand into a fist to deliver, as usual… one punch!

It was as if, whatever enemies he faced, he would only use his most simple and direct method of attack. One punch!

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

Massive rumbling filled the area in the starry sky where Meng Hao and Zhao Yifan met in battle. A massive hole tore open in the void. Blood sprayed out of Zhao Yifan’s mouth. The light caused by his most powerful attack flickered and then shattered into fragments that spread out and transformed into a tempest.

Within that tempest, Zhao Yifan could be seen, smiling bitterly, coughing up consecutive mouthfuls of blood. He had lost, but his heart was not defeated. He now knew that he possessed the strength to bare his sword at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao emerged from within the tempest and then looked back at Zhao Yifan.

It was in that moment that Fan Dong’er surged into action, as did Li Ling’er. They attacked virtually at the same time. As for Fan Dong’er, the Ninth Sea materialized around her. A pulsing magical symbol appeared on her forehead. With each pulse, her Immortal meridians were increased by ten percent of their original power.

After it pulsed four times, she had added forty percent to her power, and her Immortal souls had appeared around her.

She waved her hand, causing the Ninth Sea to shoot forward, filled with countless Sea Dragons. It transformed into something that looked like a huge head, with a solitary horn sticking out of the forehead. It was a Sea Giant that instantly attempted to head-butt Meng Hao.

Its bright energy surged in all directions!

In another direction, Li Ling’er performed an incantation gesture, causing numerous trees to appear around her. Cracking sounds could be heard as the starry sky around her was transformed into a land mass. In the blink of an eye, more than ninety trees had appeared around her. She continued to perform incantation gestures, then tapped on various areas of her body. More rumbling sounds could be heard as the number of trees increased to more than 130 in total.

Either of these young women alone could not exceed Zhao Yifan. However, their combined battle prowess was such that even Zhao Yifan’s face would turn pale if he faced them in a fight.

They did not speak to Meng Hao, they simply attacked, in the exact moment in which the fight between Meng Hao and Zhao Yifan concluded.

Meng Hao turned his head, and his eyes shone with a brilliant light. He snorted coldly and caused the power of 123 Immortal meridians to explode out. All 33 Immortal souls appeared behind him, transforming into 33 Heavens, which emanated astonishing pressure!

The domineering sensation of the Immortal Realm Paragon suddenly radiated out.

“Think you can beat me? I’ll just have to put you in your place!” He took a step forward and raised his right hand, not in a fist, but in a palm. He viciously thrust his palm forward, causing the 33 Heavens behind him to shake the starry sky as they transformed into a gigantic hand, which slammed into the Ninth Sea. Huge rumbling sounds filled the air as the seawater exploded. The Sea Dragons let out shrill cries, and the giant with its horned head shattered into pieces.

As its head exploded, Fan Dong’er’s face fell, and she began to retreat. At the same time, Meng Hao advanced, causing the huge hand to rumble directly toward her.

Fan Dong’er’s eyes shone with a bright red light as she performed an incantation gesture. Instantly, the corpse behind her looked up and began to emanate an explosive, murderous aura; it appeared to be on the brink of attacking Meng Hao.

In the same instant that the murderous aura radiated out from the corpse, Meng Hao called out in a towering, dignified voice: “Inky, stand down!”

The female corpse immediately bowed its head, the murderous aura vanished, and it even retreated by several dozen meters.

Fan Dong’er stared in shock, and her scalp went numb. In that moment, Meng Hao’s attack closed in. Just when it was about to slam into her, though, he heard someone cough dryly in his ear.

That cough sounded ancient, and it obviously came from the throat of a very old woman. Meng Hao frowned, causing the hand to flip over. Instead of slamming directly into her like had just been about to, it slapped Fan Dong’er’s rear end.

“Meng Hao, how dare you!!”

As the slapping sound rang out, Fan Dong’er let out a shriek, and her face fell. Her buttocks were now uneven, and intense pain filled her trembling body. In fact, it was the most intense pain she had ever experienced in her life.

Trembling, Fan Dong’er was now on the verge of collapsing unconscious. Blood sprayed from her mouth, and she staggered backward, her hatred for Meng Hao rising to near madness.

When Li Ling’er saw this, her expression flickered, and she suddenly stopped in place. Her face was ashen, as if she were suddenly thinking about something very frightening that had happened in the past. Glaring at Meng Hao, she backed up.

“Not quite as good as my wifey,” said Meng Hao, turning to look at Li Ling’er.

Li Ling’er gnashed her teeth and performed a double-handed incantation gesture. Instantly, the 130 trees surrounding her exploded, transforming into a terrifying whirlwind which shot toward Meng Hao.

At the same time as the trees exploded, Li Ling’er spit out a mouthful of blood and retreated at high speed. Simultaneously, a cold harrumph could be heard coming from within the explosion.

“Get back here, wifey!” Simultaneously, an intense gravitational force latched onto Li Ling’er. Her face flickered as she was involuntarily sucked backward towards the whirlwind.

Within the whirlwind, 33 Immortal souls swirled around Meng Hao. They instantly transformed into 33 Heavens, which bore the brunt of the whirlwind and the exploding trees. He advanced, energy surging, backed by the powerful windstorm.

In the blink of an eye, Li Ling’er was swept up, and was being pulled close to Meng Hao. She gritted her teeth and spun to face him. At the same time, she performed a double-handed incantation gesture, after which the shocking image of a tree leaf appeared on her forehead.

The tree leaf was emerald green, and as soon as it appeared, a strong life force appeared in Li Ling’er. A magic bottle materialized in front of her, which she grabbed and threw toward Meng Hao.

“I knew you would use that move,” he said coolly, waving his sleeve. The 33 Immortal souls behind him emanated shocking power, and the magic bottle instantly shattered.

Blood sprayed from Li Ling’er’s mouth as she tumbled backward. In that same instant, Meng Hao advanced forward, spanning the distance between the two of them to appear right next to Li Ling’er. Then, he raised his hand high into the air, and, as Li Ling’er’s pupils shrank with fury blazing in her eyes, smacked his palm down onto her rear end.

This was… the third time!

Li Ling'er let out a miserable shriek as pain exploded throughout her body. Her face went deathly white, and she was sent spinning, her body shaking. She looked back at Meng Hao with intense killing intent.

"Meng Hao!!"

"Ah, what a familiar feeling," he said with a cool smile. With that, he paid no further attention to Li Ling'er. He had not even used his full power when fighting Zhao Yifan. Rather, he was taking his time to get accustomed to the various degrees of battle prowess that he could display. You could say that the true Immortal Chosen had come to fight him successively. However, this was the optimal situation for Meng Hao; he needed continuous fights like this in order to adapt to his newfound battle prowess in the quickest possible manner.

Now, he had mostly finished adapting, and his eyes glittered brightly as he looked out into the starry sky.

At this point, all of the spectators out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were looking at Meng Hao and his power. This overt display of might caused everyone in the Immortal Realm to be filled with fear, and even caused members of the Ancient Realm to stare in shock.

"He's the… number one figure in the Immortal Realm!"

"He's just fighting the true Immortal Chosen to hone himself! It's like when a mighty sword is forged from divine metal that still need to be sharpened after it comes out of the fire!"

"It's possible that the only person who could be his match is, not someone from his generation, but… someone from the Elder generation!" Discussions raged in all corners of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Meng Hao hovered there in the starry sky, looking around calmly as he said, "Chosen! Are there any of you left who dare to fight me! If not, then I have some personal matters to handle.” He looked down at Planet East Victory, and his eyes flickered coldly.

If you followed his line of sight, you would see… that he was looking at Fang Wei, who hovered in midair above Planet East Victory.

Fang Wei opened his eyes slowly and calmly.

In the instant that they looked at each other, the rumbling sound of teleportation portals could be heard, as three more portals appeared.

Meng Hao frowned, and originally planned to ignore them and head directly toward Planet East Victory. However, he suddenly stopped in his tracks and turned toward one of the teleportation portals. His eyes suddenly widened, and an expression of disbelief appeared on his face.

“You’re not dead?”

A young man walked out of the teleportation portal. He was tall and slender, and although he did not look physically imposing, anyone who looked at him would be able to tell that his fleshly body was terrifyingly powerful.

“No, I’m still alive,” he said.

Something that looked like a star rotated slowly on his forehead. However, if you examined it closely, you would see that there were several other stars in the same position, that seemed to have been sealed, causing them to flicker somewhere between illusory and corporeal.

It was…

Wang Tengfei!!

Almost in the same moment that Wang Tengfei appeared, a figure emerged from the second teleportation portal. She floated out, surrounded by a boundless mist of Karma.

Within the mist, her cold and emotionless eyes pierced out toward Meng Hao, intense to the extreme.

She was… Ji Yin!

The last teleportation portal opened, and another young man appeared. He looked like a scholar, and even carried a bamboo scroll in his hand. He looked over at Meng Hao and smiled in a way that seemed sincere, but actually contained boundless coldness. There even seemed to be a hint of jealously buried deep inside.

“Elder Brother Meng, I am Zhou Shui, from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite. My master commanded me to come here. Please give me some face by fighting with me for a bit.”

“Taking turns to fight me?” replied Meng Hao. “When will this end?! Do you really think that I won’t dare to kill people with all of your sects looking on!?” His eyes gleamed with intense coldness, but his words were even colder.

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# Chapter 990: Gods vs. Immortals!

Meng Hao glanced over the three. Although he was a little taken aback by the appearance of Wang Tengfei, he still chose to speak in this manner.

The faces of these three newcomers didn’t flicker in the slightest in response to his words. As for Ji Yin, her face wasn’t even visible.

“Elder Brother Meng, my master is from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite–” said Zhou Shui. He was smiling on the surface, but his heart was as cold as ice. Before he could finish speaking Meng Hao looked directly at him, his expression frigid.

He said nothing further, but instead, advanced. 33 Immortal souls exploded with power, and his 123 meridians rotated, surging with shocking power. Instantly, he was in front of Zhou Shui, launching a punch.

Zhou Shui’s eyes flickered with coldness as he performed an incantation gesture with his right hand. His energy rose up, causing ripples to spread out as power equivalent to 140 meridians exploded out. His Immortal souls appeared, and at the same time, a spark of flame appeared directly above his head, from within which emanated the sounds of scriptures being chanted. Instantly, Zhou Shui’s aura exceeded that of Zhao Yifan.

He quickly finished his incantation gesture and then formed his hand into a palm, which he thrust out to meet Meng Hao’s blow.

A boom could be heard, and Zhou Shui’s face fell as his entire arm vibrated. At the same time, he unleashed the full power of his cultivation base, after which a ripping sound could be heard, and the chanting of the scriptures grew louder.

“Nine Cycles Daoist Magic!” As soon as Zhou Shui’s voice rang out, the chanting of scriptures surged, transforming into strange ripples that reduced the power of Meng Hao’s attack, nine times in a row. After the ninth reduction, the attack was easily countered by Zhou Shui’s palm.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he looked over at Zhou Shui.

“Fellow Daoist Meng, is this the full power of the Immortal Realm Paragon’s attack?” he asked coolly. However, deep inside, he was shocked. Seeing what he had just seen, and feeling it personally, left him greatly shaken.

“If that’s all you have, then it’s time to see how you like one of my attacks.” With that, rumbling emanated out of his body as… 99 Immortal dragons suddenly appeared around him.

The Immortal dragons roared, causing strange colors to flash in the air, and the Heavens to tremble. This scene caused widespread shock among the cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

“99 meridians!!”

“The Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite has profound resources hidden away! I can’t believe they have a disciple with 99 meridians!!”

“That’s only one short of 100. It looks like Zhou Shui isn’t too happy to be fighting Meng Hao. If the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite had given HIM that meridian, he would have 100 right now!!”

Zhou Shui’s eyes flickered as the 99 dragons roared, and his Immortal souls appeared. Even as the ripples of the Nine Cycles Daoist Magic spread out, he took a deep breath, and what he absorbed was the qi of Heaven and Earth from the starry sky.

After taking one breath, his Immortal meridians thrummed. Immediately, the number of dragons exceeded 99. Soon there were 100, 108, 115, 127, 136… until there were a total of 148!

This scene caused everyone to be extremely shocked. Zhou Shui's aura roared into the sky, and within his eyes appeared a cold light as he looked toward Meng Hao and barked, “One Breath, Slay Three Corpses!”

Zhou Shui's eyes flickered with killing intent. He knew that he had no hope of actually defeating Meng Hao, but he still hoped to be able to fight him to a draw, and prove that he was the true Chosen of the Ninth Mountain and Sea!

As he spoke, his aura surged out, and his Immortal meridians caused strands of Immortal qi to form a huge stream of white smoke that shot toward Meng Hao.

It was only one stream, but it emanated a terrifying aura that seemed capable of slaughtering anyone in the Immortal Realm. Everyone in the Ninth Mountain and Sea was astonished.

The only person whose expression was the same as ever was Meng Hao. His mouth twisted into a cold smile as his 123 Immortal meridians caused 123 portions of Immortal power to merge together into his fist. This could be counted as a secret magic that resulted from corroborating the Dao on his own to reach true Immortality.

Yet again, one punch rocketed through the air.

When Meng Hao fought earlier, it might have seemed like he was using all of the power that his Immortal meridians could provide. However, he had actually employed no skill whatsoever in his attacks, and had relied only on brute force to crush everyone.

Now was the first time that he was using a true Immortal secret magic, unifying the power of his Immortal meridians into one force… to deliver a true Immortal Realm attack.

The one punch generated a massive wind that caused the stars to flicker. Shockingly, numerous Soul Lamps appeared around Meng Hao, causing Zhou Shui to gape in shock. His eyes went wide, and even as the astonishment washed through him, Meng Hao’s fist slammed into the stream of smoke.

A huge boom rang out as the smoke instantly collapsed. Blood sprayed from Zhou Shui’s mouth, and his body very nearly exploded. Shouting loudly, he utilized the Nine Cycles Daoist Magic, but even after reducing the power nine times, he was still sent flying backward like a kite with its string cut. Blood spurted out all over his body until he was soaked. His aura was vastly weakened, and the flame of his life force flickered on the verge of being extinguished.

“You….” he said. His face was pale, his scalp numb. Vibrations surged through his body to the point where all his Immortal meridians were about to collapse. In the midst of his astonishment, a look of terror appeared on his face, and without hesitation, he produced a jade slip which he crushed, teleporting him away immediately.

The Ninth Mountain and Sea went deathly quiet as everyone mentally replayed the image of Meng Hao’s attack just now.

“That’s… the power of the Immortal Realm Paragon?!?!”

“Strong! So strong!!That strike was comparable to the Ancient Realm!!”

“That attack… even someone in the Ancient Realm with one extinguished soul lamp… might have a hard time fighting back against it!!”

The Ninth Mountain and Sea was shaken as Meng Hao turned his head to face Wang Tengfei and Ji Yin.

Ji Yin’s face was grim, and she backed up toward the teleportation portal. Apparently, she had decided not to attack Meng Hao. It was as if she had realized that Meng Hao, as of this moment, was someone others in the Immortal Realm couldn’t beat.

Fan Dong’er’s eyes were wide, and Li Ling’er’s face was ashen. Zhao Yifan was smiling bitterly, and as for Taiyang Zi and the rest of the group of ten or so from earlier, all of them were sighing.

They now knew that earlier… Meng Hao was only fighting to get used to his cultivation base. Therefore, he let them attack him. Now… he had no need for such a thing, and if they tried to attack him again, the result would be very different.

Meng Hao was someone not to be provoked!

Wang Tengfei looked up, and the stars on his forehead flickered as he advanced by a pace.

“Meng Hao, I won’t waste your time. One punch. Just one punch!” His eyes flickered with obsession. He had been waiting for this moment for a long time, and in fact, there was no one except the two of them who truly knew all the details of their past.

Meng Hao looked at Wang Tengfei. He was still a bit shocked to find out that Wang Tengfei was alive, especially considering that he had personally seen him die at the hands of the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch.

Well aware of what Meng Hao was wondering, Wang Tengfei offered an explanation, his voice soft: “The 10th Patriarch helped me.”

Meng Hao looked back at Wang Tengfei silently, and his heart filled with complicated thoughts as he recalled how they had first met all those years ago. It was very likely that Wang Tengfei had seen the Flying Rain-Dragon that had become one of his Immortal meridians.

“Very well!” he said, nodding.

Wang Tengfei’s eyes gleamed with the desire to fight. As he looked at Meng Hao, his energy began to rise up. He possessed no secret magic, and the number of Immortal meridians that he had opened could not be considered especially outstanding in the current age.

However, he did have access to some of the deep resources built up by the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. He also had Meng Hao’s Perfect Foundation, as well as the bloodline power he had acquired in the moment of becoming a true Immortal.

That bloodline power was something shocking even in the Wang Clan because it was so rare!

It was the power of Gods!

In the Wang Clan, this bloodline power of Wang Tengfei was the power of a God!

What he walked, was not the path of Immortal Ascension. What he walked… was the path of Godly Ascension!

This battle was a fight between Gods and Immortals!

Wang Tengfei threw his head back and roared. Cracking sounds emanated out from his body, and in the blink of an eye…. he grew until he was 30 meters tall. 300 meters tall. 3,000 meters…. He looked completely and utterly shocking to anyone who saw him, and the area around him instantly filled with rifts and fissures.

He continued to grow larger with maddening speed, and within a few breaths of time, he was directly in front of Meng Hao, a giant fully 6,000 meters tall!

The sudden appearance of this giant filled Meng Hao’s mind with shock, and caused him to think back to the vision he had experienced in the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple, in which he saw a giant. That giant actually looked very similar to Wang Tengfei! 1

Both had thick, tough skin covered with magical symbols, and both had stars on their foreheads. The main difference was that the giant in his vision had more stars than Wang Tengfei!

All cultivators who saw what was happening were shocked. Wang Tengfei roared, causing a chaotic, primeval sensation to fill the hearts of anyone who heard it. His right hand clenched into a fist and he punched out toward Meng Hao.

That fist flew like a gigantic meteor, heading toward Meng Hao with shocking speed.

Meng Hao’s expression was one of concentration. He was aware that there was something special about the Wang Clan. He had been able tell that from the strange divine ability used by Wang Mu earlier. In fact, he had even experienced other strange Wang Clan divine abilities on Planet South Heaven. However, he had never imagined that the Wang Clan blood contained… the power of Gods!

“Just exactly how powerful was the first Patriarch of the Wang Clan?” he thought. He had no idea what era that Wang Clan Patriarch lived in, but he was now intensely curious about him. However, now was not the time to ponder such matters. He clenched his right hand tightly into a fist, causing popping sounds to ring out. Then, he unleashed his secret magic, causing his 123 Immortal meridians to fuse with the power of his true Immortal fleshly body.

It was as if his fleshly body was now 123 times more powerful, and as he punched out, the starry sky around him was shattered. The power contained in his fist caused the hearts of all observing cultivators to quiver.

In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao flew up to make contact with Wang Tengfei’s fist. When the two slammed into each other, a huge boom echoed out. Stars collapsed and the Heavens went dark. A massive, ringlike shockwave spread out in all directions.

Blood sprayed out of Wang Tengfei’s mouth as he was sent staggering backward. His enormous body rapidly shrank in size, and after falling back more than ten paces, he was back to normal, his face ashen. He coughed up a few more mouthfuls of blood, and his right arm appeared to be completely shattered. He looked up at Meng Hao.

“I’m definitely going to defeat you one day!” he said, sounding incredibly determined. With that, he turned, coughed up another mouthful of blood, and then transformed into a beam of light which shot off into the distance.

Meng Hao stood there silently. He slowly lowered his fist to find that his arm was trembling. Wang Tengfei’s staggering power contained a domineering force that could destroy everything. Meng Hao looked down at the back of his hand, and the wound that had been left behind there.

This was actually the first time he had been injured while fighting these Chosen.

“Godly power….” he thought, eyes flickering with anticipation.

“Now, it’s time to take care of that personal matter….” He looked down toward Planet East Victory, and Fang Wei, who hovered there in midair. Once again, their gazes locked.

“Fang Wei!” he said softly, shooting toward Planet East Victory under the shocked gazes of everyone present!

“Fang Hao!” Fang Wei’s eyes gleamed with obsession as he began to fly up to meet Meng Hao.

Down on the ground below, Fang Xiushan’s eyes flickered with a venomous, murderous intent. Fang Wei’s grandfather narrowed his eyes. Within his hand was a jade slip that he was prepared to crush at a moment’s notice.

However, he seemed to be hesitating. Once he crushed that jade slip… there would be no turning back.

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# Chapter 991: Fang Wei vs. Meng Hao!

Meng Hao had been waiting for this battle for a very long time. However, to him, it was not some destined battle of fate, but rather, merely something that would happen in the course of getting his possessions back.

In contrast, it WAS a destined battle of fate for Fang Wei.

To him, a defeat in this fight would be unacceptable. To lose would mean to lose everything, and he could not allow something like that to happen. He could not allow someone to trample upon his position as Chosen within the clan.

What most people saw was only the glory that he had achieved. They did not see how hard he had worked, earnestly and obsessively, after Meng Hao had left the clan. When Meng Hao left, it was as if a giant mountain had been removed, giving him the qualifications to rise to prominence. He had assumed that from then on, his entire life would be like that. He had devoted himself to rising to prominence, sparing no cost to reach his goal, which was… to lead his clan to greater glory.

He would propagate the name of the Fang Clan, and eventually, years later, would become a clan Patriarch.

However, all of that… changed as soon as Meng Hao returned.

“Why did you have to come back!?” The killing intent in Fang Wei’s eyes surged, and he roared. He then soared up like a shooting star, performing a double-handed incantation gesture. The aura of reincarnation roiled out from him, as did the will of the Yellow Springs. He bit the tip of his tongue and spit out a mouthful of blood mist, then began to mumble a bizarre incantation.

This was a secret magic!

A Fang Clan secret magic!

As the chant echoed out, intense loud popping sounds rang out from Fang Wei as his 98 Immortal meridians soared out and transformed into 98 Immortal dragons, which then shot toward the incoming Meng Hao.

Also, thanks to the unleashing of his secret magic, over 40 additional illusory dragons joined them. Added together, there were a total of 143. Heaven and Earth shook violently.

When being used by Fang Wei, the Fang Clan secret magic increased his Immortal meridians by roughly fifty percent!

Behind him, Immortal souls appeared, a total of 14, causing Fang Wei’s energy to soar madly.

Everything that was happening shook the hearts of the cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. They watched Fang Wei, and sighed inwardly. The members of the Fang Clan looked on silently.

“First there was Fang Hao and now there’s Fang Wei…. On the one hand, for a clan to produce two Chosen like this is a sign of future prosperity. On the other hand, if things aren’t handled with care, it will inevitably lead to one of those glorious figures being extinguished.”

“Prince Wei of the Fang Clan was their number one Chosen in the past. He opened 98 meridians and shook all of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Ah, what a pity….”

“He had one less meridian than Zhou Shui; the difference between them wasn’t much. If Meng Hao hadn’t come along… then those two, along with Zhao Yifan, would be the only three qualified to compete over the status of being the most powerful blazing sun among the Chosen!”

As the cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea sighed, Fang Wei’s cultivation base exploded with power, and he shot toward Meng Hao through the air above Planet East Victory. By this point, they were only about 300 meters apart.

The two of them looked like meteors, one streaking down from the sky, the other shooting up from the ground. Everyone in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, including the cultivators of Planet East Victory, and the members of the Fang Clan, watched with trembling hearts. Fang Wei and Meng Hao were moving so fast… that sonic booms turned into massive, circular ripples that spread out in all directions!

Then, they slammed into each other!

A huge boom shook everything, sending innumerable ripples out in all directions, causing even the Heavens to tremble. A massive wind sprang up, causing Heaven and Earth to dim, and the heavenly bodies to shake.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he launched a single punch backed with the explosive power of 123 Immortal meridians. A huge boom could be heard, and blood sprayed out of Fang Wei’s mouth as he was sent rocketing back down toward the ground.

It seemed as if victory had been determined in the first exchange. Meng Hao was now an Immortal Realm Paragon, someone who wasn’t even fazed by the combined might of ten true Immortal Chosen. They had ended up having destiny forcibly attached to them with A Writ of Karma. Furthermore, he had forced even Fan Dong’er and Li Ling’er into retreat, had outshined Zhao Yifan, and had forced Zhou Shui from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite, with his 99 meridians, to flee in fear.

Fang Wei was also a Chosen. But the things Meng Hao was able to do… he simply could not!

To the audience in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, there was just too much of a disparity. In fact, it would be most accurate to say that this battle was really a formality… a formality to officially replace a Chosen of the Fang Clan.

All of the members of the Fang Clan realized this, and therefore, no one interfered. They all just watched silently.

As Fang Wei fell down to the ground, many people sighed inwardly.

Meng Hao looked down at Fang Wei and slowly said, “Fang Wei, you’re no match for me. Now take out what belongs to me and return it. Everything is over now. If you don’t comply… then I won’t hold back any further.”

Fang Wei’s body was soaked in blood. His hair was in disarray, and his expression was one of completely viciousness. After falling down about 3,000 meters, he suddenly came to a stop and looked up, his eyes bloodshot. Glaring at Meng Hao, he began to laugh uproariously.

“Fang Hao, did you really think our battle would end so quickly?! Do you really think you can win so easily?” Shrill laughter rang out as Fang Wei suddenly flew back up into the air, his eyes filled with madness and veins of blood.

“If you want to take back what belongs to you, then you should show some skill and take them away!

“Unfortunately… I’m not going to give you that chance!” Fang Wei’s laughter was filled with insanity as it echoed out. His right hand shot up, and he slapped his palm down onto his forehead.

When that happened, a bizarre aura suddenly exploded out of him, causing his energy to skyrocket. His face twisted viciously, and blue veins popped out as he let out a piercing shriek.

Meng Hao’s eyes widened as he realized that this aura coming off of Fang Wei was actually very familiar, causing him to look at Fang Wei with a complex expression.

“My Nirvana Fruits, huh…?” he murmured. All of the cultivators in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, especially the Chosen, were gradually shifting their focus to Fang Wei, and they looked shocked.

The members of the Fang Clan looked on blankly. They could clearly see the newly added illusory dragons around Fang Wei, which increased the total number of Immortal dragons to a total of 143!

However, that wasn’t what shocked them. They gasped as they saw Fang Wei’s energy increasing rapidly. He roared, as… shockingly… more Immortal meridians appeared!

One by one, illusory Immortal meridians popped out. 153. 163. 173….

In conjunction with the appearance of these new Immortal meridians, Fang Wei’s energy soared, drawing excited discussion from all the onlookers. Zhao Yifan and all the other Chosen were dumbstruck.

“What secret magic is Fang Wei using? I can’t believe… I can’t believe he’s so strong!!”

“Inconceivable! His Immortal meridians were already increased by nearly fifty percent thanks to some secret magic. That, I can understand. But I never could have imagined that he would have another method to add even more Immortal meridians! They might be illusory, but… they’re still Immortal meridians!”

“Could it be that he used some forbidden magic? But… I’ve never heard of any forbidden magic that could unleash such unbelievable power!” The Ninth Mountain and Sea was in a complete uproar.

As for the Dao Realm Patriarchs from the other sects, they were filled with complete shock.

The Fang Clan Earth Patriarch’s face flickered with complex emotions. He understood exactly what was happening, and sighed silently.

Underneath the ancestral mansion, the six other Patriarchs looked on silently. Only the Seventh Patriarch frowned and glanced over at the Sixth Patriarch with a dark look.

On the surface of Planet East Victory, Fang Xiushan looked very excited at what was happening. All of a sudden, hope flickered in his heart.

“Perhaps Wei’er can actually win!!”

Even Fang Wei’s grandfather looked on with glittering eyes. He loosened his grip on the jade slip he had been about to crush. That was his last resort, and he didn’t want to enact the plan too early.

After all, complete preparations hadn’t been made.

Meng Hao didn’t say anything as the aura of his own Nirvana Fruits grew stronger and stronger on Fang Wei. Although the onlookers didn’t understand exactly what was happening, he understood.

“Fang Hao!” Fang Wei let out a mighty roar, and booming sounds could be heard as his clothes were shredded. His body began to expand, and in the blink of an eye he was much taller. His qi and blood surged like that of an Immortal Divinity.

The Immortal dragons around him increased rapidly. Rumbling sounds could be heard as, shockingly, more Immortal meridians appeared! 183 was not the limit! Suddenly, there were 192!

That was an increase of 49 meridians!

Everyone was now paying rapt attention to what was happening!

“He had 98 of his own meridians, used a secret magic to add 45, and then unleashed a Daoist magic similar to a forbidden magic that actually added more Immortal meridians, equivalent to half of his original maximum!”

“192 meridians! This Fang Wei… is completely Heaven-defying!!”

“I thought this battle was going to be a simple formality. I never imagine that Fang Wei would perform so shockingly. Just… how is he doing this!?!?” The Ninth Mountain and Sea was astir, and the Chosen up in the starry sky watched with wide eyes and gaping mouths. First there was Meng Hao becoming their complete and utter superior. Then something happened that they never could have imagined. Fang Wei… performed similarly shocking feats!

“I can’t believe… that all the destiny of the Ninth Mountain and Sea has ended up in the hands of the Fang Clan!”

“Two blazing suns, both from a single clan!”

“It’s too bad these two don’t get along!”

As of this moment, the Dao Realm Patriarchs of the various sects and clans looked on with glittering eyes. Meng Hao’s appearance on the scene left them moved. Fang Wei’s dazzling performance caused them to suddenly have a new understanding of the nature of the Fang Clan.

“The Fang Clan is incredible!”

“Either Fang Hao or Fang Wei could become the blazing sun of this generation!”

“This battle between these two members of the Junior generation… is turning out to be quite interesting.”

The Ninth Mountain and Sea was in a stir as Fang Wei slowly looked up at Meng Hao. He was now much stronger than before, and fully nine meters tall. His energy surged; he was surrounded by 192 roaring Immortal dragons, and was backed by 19 Immortal souls.

“Like I said, Fang Hao, our battle won’t end so easily!” He looked at Meng Hao, and his eyes brimmed with both madness and the desire to fight. Killing intent swirled as he began to advance. Heaven and Earth trembled, the wind screamed, and the heavenly bodies went dim.

“One Thought Reincarnation Incantation!” Fang Wei extended both hands and then waved them out, causing an enormous, shocking vortex to appear in front of him.

The vortex was both black and white, and as it spun, it emanated a shocking aura of reincarnation!!

Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed coldly, and his gaze fell onto Fang Wei like a sharp sword.

“You’re using what belongs to me, and yet… you’re still too weak.”

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# Chapter 992: I Haven’t Lost Yet!

When Fang Wei heard Meng Hao’s calm voice, he threw his head back and laughed. The laughter became shrill as he performed an incantation gesture, causing the black and white vortex to rotate rapidly as it began to move toward Meng Hao.

In the blink of an eye, the vortex was nearly 300 meters wide. It was spinning so fast that the black and white now merged together into a gray color, like that of death. However, within that death, there was also life.

That… was reincarnation!

Fang Wei exploded with all of the power his Immortal meridians could muster; 192 meridians became 192 Immortal dragons, which roared as they soared around the vortex, adding to its power and making it spin even faster.

Fang Wei’s 19 Immortal souls stepped forward and seemed to hurl the vortex toward Meng Hao.

The vortex grew even larger, until it was 3,000 meters wide!

Rumbling filled the air, causing all observing cultivators in the Ninth Mountain and Sea to shake with astonishment. The members of the Fang Clan were completely shocked!

As of this moment, Fang Wei… was far more powerful than anyone could have imagined, so much so that many people were starting to question their assessment of him.

“Immortal Realm Paragon Meng Hao… might lose?”

Meng Hao hovered in midair, looking at the incoming reincarnation vortex. His eyes shone with a cold light. The fact that Fang Wei could unleash 192 Immortal meridians wasn’t too surprising to him.

What surprised him was that the Nirvana Fruit inside his own bag of holding could increase his own Immortal meridians by double, whereas the Nirvana Fruits Fang Wei had could only increase his by half.

“Are my Nirvana Fruits just not as good as the first generation Patriarch’s?” he thought. “Or is it just that they aren’t perfectly suitable for Fang Wei?” Not quite willing to accept that his fruits were inferior, Meng Hao snorted coldly and then slowly raised his hand. Inside of him, 123 Immortal meridians began to thrum as he unleashed his own secret magic, fusing them all together into… the Blood Demon Grand Magic!

A blood-colored head suddenly ripped apart the air to appear in front of Meng Hao’s palm. Its expression was vicious, and it emanated a bright red glow in all directions. It did not roar or snarl, but it let out an indescribable pressure that rippled out in all directions.

This Immortal meridian Blood Demon head was incredibly powerful. Right now… the power of 123 Immortal meridians exploded out, causing the Blood Demon head to rapidly grow. In the blink of an eye, it was 3,000 meters tall!

Its growth was incredibly shocking, and in fact, the Blood Demon head rapidly reached a critical point where it transformed from illusory into corporeal!

Its expression was vicious; it had a single long horn, and blood-colored skin. Furthermore, anyone who looked at it suddenly experienced a pressure that made their own blood feel like it was suddenly going out of control. This feeling spread through all of Planet East Victory.

This Blood Demon head was so powerful that not even Blood Demon himself, when he was in the same realm in years past, would have been able to create such a powerful instance of this magical art.

The fact that Meng Hao was an Immortal Realm Paragon meant that any of his magical techniques and divine abilities could be bolstered to 123 times their original power by his secret magic! That made them… the most powerful Immortal abilities in the entire Realm!

Behind him were 33 shocking Immortal souls. 33 Heavens descended, spreading out in all directions, causing colorful winds to swirl around him.

As all of this happened, time seemed to slow down. The cultivators on Planet East Victory stopped breathing, and the observers in the Ninth Mountain and Sea stared unblinking.

Fang Wei screamed as he went all out, sending his reincarnation vortex closer and closer to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao pushed out with his hand, causing the Blood Demon head to suddenly roar, a sound which transformed into the only sound that existed in all Heaven and Earth.

ROOOAARRRR!!

The deafening sound was accompanied by surging red light as the Blood Demon head shot toward the reincarnation vortex.

3,000 meters. 1,500 meters. 900 meters…

In the blink of an eye, the reincarnation vortex and the Blood Demon head slammed into each other.

When they did, the land below seemed to roll like waves. Booms echoed out as mountain peaks crumbled and rivers exploded. Even the seas on the planet began to boil.

It was the same everywhere. Lands quaked, mountains shook. Even the Heavens seemed to be on the verge of being torn asunder. A huge rift appeared up above that rapidly spread out.

If you looked closely, that rift was actually a roiling shockwave which spread out with astonishing speed.

The reincarnation vortex was instantly shattered into countless fragments that exploded out in all directions. The Blood Demon head’s smashing attack caused the 192 Immortal dragons to let out miserable roars and begin to shatter into pieces.

In addition, the 19 Immortal souls also crumbled, one by one!

When the vortex exploded, a blast of reincarnation aura spread out, transforming into something like a mouth that… began to swallow up the Blood Demon head.

In that moment, Meng Hao’s eyes went wide and he waved a finger through the air.

Rumbling sounds could be heard as the Blood Demon fell apart, transforming into 123 Blood Dragons, which roared and shredded the enormous mouth to pieces. As they flew out, they looked dimmer than before, but not a single one was destroyed. They then began to swirl around Meng Hao, causing him to look like both a Blood Demon and a Blood Immortal!

It was a simple, direct, single attack!

Meng Hao’s strength as an Immortal Realm Paragon caused everyone in the Ninth Mountain and Sea to be shaken, and the images they were watching were firmly planted in their memories.

The wind screamed, and rumbling sounds filled the air as Meng Hao hovered there, looking down at Fang Wei. He sighed inwardly.

Meng Hao could see that Fang Wei was actually not a fundamentally evil person. He was simply too proud, and could not accept defeat.

“Hand them over!” said Meng Hao calmly as he descended toward Fang Wei, causing Heaven and Earth to rumble. Instead, Fang Wei threw his head back and laughed.

Blood spurted out of him, and he trembled as he staggered backward. His skin was in shreds, and he almost looked like nothing more than a mass of blood.

Even as he laughed shrilly, a gleam of obsession could be seen in his eyes.

“I haven’t lost yet!!” he cried. “I’m Fang Wei. How could I ever lose!?!?”

He stood there shaking, a ferocious expression on his face as he laughed shrilly. People saw his glory, but they didn’t see the endless days and nights he had spend maniacally focused on cultivation. While other people had been feasting and chatting with family, he had been out fighting and killing! When other people had been falling in love, he had remained in his secluded meditation. He had endured all the loneliness, and the relentless passage of time!

He only had one goal, and that was to surpass everyone else! He wanted to be the number one Chosen of the Ninth Mountain and Sea! He didn’t care about what his father did to others in the sect, nor what plans his grandfather had.

The only thing he cared about was becoming the future Patriarch of the Fang Clan!

Because of that, when his grandfather had offered him the two Nirvana Fruits, he hadn’t hesitated for a second. He had immediately chosen to absorb them. Because of that, when he kneeled, trembling, in front of the Sixth Patriarch, Fang Wei had chosen to agree to his demands.

He knew that his father had sent people to kill Meng Hao on his way back to the sect, but he didn’t care. To him, Meng Hao was nothing more than a brief memory.

This was true even though the Nirvana Fruits he was using belonged to Meng Hao; he simply didn’t care. After all, he had always viewed himself as the true number one Chosen in the clan. Everything… already belonged to him.

“Fang Hao, if I lose, then of course you can have what belongs to you. But as of this moment, I haven’t lost yet!” As he looked up at Meng Hao, the blood that covered his face made him look even more vicious than before.

He threw his back and laughed, and suddenly, the aura of reincarnation vanished, to be replaced… by a towering will of death!

This was the One Thought Yellow Springs Dao!

It was the second most powerful signature Daoist magic of the Fang Clan! Only the One Thought Stellar Transformation was more powerful!

To cultivate this magic, one must first die. Then, in death, they had find a sliver of life. That sliver of life would prevent the soul from dying, and cause the body to merge into the gap between life and death, then form an actual Dao of life and death.

As the aura exploded out, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. Down below, Fang Xiushan’s expression was cruel as he glared at Meng Hao. Fang Wei’s current condition filled him with pain, but his desire to see Meng Hao dead was even stronger. In fact, if he had the chance… he would directly kill him.

“Killing him will bring a conclusion to everything. Even if I descend into the underworld because of it, I’m willing!” Fang Xiushan gnashed his teeth as he continued to conceal the killing intent deep within his eyes.

Fang Wei’s energy was soaring higher and higher. He let out a cry of intense pain, but the more painful it got, the more his eyes shone with obsession, and the more his aura rose explosively.

192 Immortal dragons soared around him, slashing at the air. It was as this point that dumbfounded expressions began to appear on the faces of the cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. That was because, shockingly, more Immortal dragons began to appear around Fang Wei!!

199. 207. 213….

One Immortal dragon after another appeared, shredding the air, causing the stars to tremble. Numerous rifts were torn into the sky around Fang Wei.

221. 234…. His Immortal meridians were exploding out!

It kept going until… he reached 241 meridians!!

By this time the cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea were mind-blown. They were speechless, and the members of the Fang Clan were in a complete uproar. In the ancestral mansion, the Grand Elder looked blankly up into the sky at Fang Wei and Meng Hao, and he let out a long sigh.

“He… he actually added 49 more meridians!”

“If there was no Meng Hao, Fang Wei… would definitely be the Immortal Realm Paragon of the Ninth Mountain and Sea!”

“Fang Wei is equally as inhuman as Meng Hao! Just what method is he using to do that!?!?”

“241 meridians! There isn’t anybody who’s done that in ANY generation of Immortals in the Ninth Mountain and Sea! According to the legends, the actual complete limit is 330 meridians, but that’s nothing more than a legend!”

The Chosen out in the starry sky felt their minds spinning. They were filled with bitterness that the Fang Clan… could have Meng Hao and Fang Wei. Never would any of the cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea be able to forget the Fang Clan!

The Fang Clan Earth Patriarch hovered silently out in the starry sky. He wanted to step in and intervene, but hesitated. He knew that if he did do something to stop what was happening… he might lose both of them.

“Hao’er… did you come back to the clan for the sole purpose of Immortal Ascension? To prove yourself?” The Earth Patriarch’s eyes gleamed with a profound light.

“If so, then will those people who have been lurking hidden within the clan… finally reveal themselves?”

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# Chapter 993: Upheaval in the Fang Clan!

Fang Wei’s voice echoed out across the lands of Planet East Victory. He had 241 Immortal meridians, and 241 Immortal dragons swirled through the air around him, emitting roars which caused winds to surge, and the land to quake.

“Fang Hao!!” Fang Wei looked up, his expression fierce and filled with madness. His body continued to grow, making him taller and more muscular.

Shockingly, 24 Immortal souls towered up behind him, transforming into 24 Heavens, emitting a pressure that caused anyone who felt it to pant.

Gradually, they began to resist Meng Hao’s 33 Heavens!

This was something that had never occurred before, and was something no other Chosen could possibly accomplish. Only Fang Wei could succeed in contending against Meng Hao’s 33 Heavens!

33 Heavens was the limit for Immortals, and marked one as Paragon of the Realm. However, as of this moment, an intensely powerful energy rose up from Fang Wei.

Meng Hao’s eyes widened as the aura of the Nirvana Fruits Fang Wei possessed grew even stronger. In fact, when he closed his eyes, he could clearly sense the two Nirvana Fruits in operation in Fang Wei’s forehead.

At the same time, far beneath the Fang Clan’s ancestral mansion, the Seventh Patriarch, along with the other six Patriarchs, saw Fang Wei exploding with 241 meridians. The Seventh Patriarch was clearly shocked, and deep within the Sixth Patriarch's eyes, impossible for anyone to detect, was a glint of joy and excitement.

"He's grown up…." murmured the Sixth Patriarch, who then closed his eyes.

Up above, Fang Wei's energy surged, and 241 Immortal dragons spun through the air with him as their nucleus. Behind him, 24 Heavens caused everything to shake. Fang Wei's aura roared up. From the look of it, he was in no way ready to back down in front of Meng Hao.

After all, Meng Hao only had 123 Immortal dragons, and although each one was enormous, they were outnumbered by almost double.

However, when you looked at Meng Hao's 33 Immortal souls, and his 33 Heavens, he was just as glorious as before.

"Fang Hao, this is my most powerful state. If I'm defeated now, then I'll return what belongs to you. As payment for using them, I'll give you my life as well!" Fang Wei's eyes shone with madness as he stared at Meng Hao, and yet, within that madness was a glint of obsession.

Meng Hao's expression grew grave as he looked back at Fang Wei and nodded.

As of this moment, Meng Hao couldn't make himself hate Fang Wei anymore. The current situation was just the result of the outworkings of chance.

"Let's fight!!" Fang Wei roared, throwing his head back and laughing. He stepped forward, performing an incantation gesture with his right hand, causing a river to appear in front of him!

The river was yellow, and within it floated innumerable dead souls that let out vicious howls. In the blink of an eye, the river became matchlessly large. It was… the Yellow Springs!

This was the quintessence of the One Thought Yellow Springs Dao, a manifestation of the Yellow Springs, as if it represented the underworld and its power. A mysterious ripple spread out from the Yellow Springs, shaking all the Heavens, and rocking the minds of the cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Even more shocking was that there wasn't just a single manifestation of the Yellow Springs. Instead… there were 241! They materialized in front of Fang Wei, causing everything to shake and tremble. Even the sky above was tinged yellow in color.

Trembling, veins popping out on his face, Fang Wei waved his hands, then pointed toward Meng Hao and roared.

Rumbling filled the air as the 241 Yellow Springs shot toward Meng Hao. In the blink of an eye, they filled the entire area and seemed to be on the verge of completely overwhelming him.

Meng Hao's eyes flickered as he performed an incantation gesture with his right hand and waved. His Immortal meridians rumbled, causing his 123 Immortal meridians to manifest outside of him, not as Immortal dragons, but instead, as chains of mountains!

Chains of Immortal mountains!

123 chains of mountains descended, each one of which caused Heaven and Earth to tremble. Meng Hao seemed to be surrounded by boundless mountains, all of which emanated Immortal might as they spread out in all directions. Meng Hao stood in the very center of all the mountains, as if he was their Lord!

He faced the Yellow Springs, extending his right hand and pointing. Rumbling could be heard as all of the mountains began to rotate in the air and then shoot toward the Yellow Springs.

The Yellow Springs might be mysterious, but the mountains could suppress them!

Chains of mountains crushed down onto the Yellow Springs!

The cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea felt their chests tightening as they watched.

Rumbling rose up as the mountain chains crushed down. The Yellow Springs rose up, and the two forces slammed into each other. Each and every one of the Yellow Springs were destroyed, and all of the mountains collapsed. The scene playing out in the sky right now was like a painting. A massive, destructive explosion caused everything to shake, and even caused cracks to appear in the sky.

This was no longer the power of Immortals. Not even cultivators of the Ancient Realm who had extinguished one Soul Lamp could unleash divine abilities with this level of power. The cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea were completely shaken.

Blood sprayed from Fang Wei's mouth, and his expression was vicious as he performed a double-handed incantation gesture and then raised his arms above him, towards the sky. Eyes filled with madness, he roared,"Yellow Springs Dao!"

As his words rang out, the shattered Yellow Springs all began to swirl back towards him. Vast amounts of yellow waters transformed into a rain which flowed towards him from all directions. Then, in the blink of an eye, the water began to reform.

It turned into a majestic…. authentic Yellow Springs that caused Heaven and Earth to grow dim!!

This was not the Yellow Springs of the Fourth Mountain, this was a manifestation of Fang Wei's Immortal meridians, merged together to form his own Yellow Springs. The aura of reincarnation appeared, causing all the lands to quake, and the Heavens to grow dark.

As of now, the only thing that seemed to exist… was his matchlessly majestic Yellow Springs, fully 30,000 meters long!

If that were all there were to it, it might not be a big deal, but shockingly, 24 Immortal souls also appeared within the Yellow Springs. They might be Fang Wei's Immortal souls, but as of this moment… they were Underworld Judges of the Yellow Springs!

24 Underworld Judges, each one of which had a peak Immortal Realm cultivation base. The Yellow Springs was their weapon, and as for Fang Wei… he was like their Yama King of Hell! 1

"With the Dao of the Yellow Springs, I will eradicate the soul of the Immortal Realm Paragon!" Fang Wei cried madly, waving his hand out to point at Meng Hao.

As of this moment, all of the cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea gasped. The crowds on Planet East Victory were astonished, and the faces of the members of the Fang Clan flickered.

"Fang Wei is so incredibly powerful!!"

"So that is the One Thought Yellow Springs Dao!?"

"No wonder it's referred to as a signature Daoist magic! It materializes the Yellow Springs, establishes Underworld Judges, and manifests a Yama King…. Does that mean that the Fang Clan's first generation Patriarch actually had some connection to the Fourth Mountain?"

"This is a true battle of pinnacles, which I didn't think I would be able to see because Meng Hao was just too powerful! I never thought that I would be able to bear witness to something like this!"

The Ninth Mountain and Sea was shaken. Back on Planet South Heaven, Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li were getting nervous. All of Meng Hao's friends were also starting to feel anxious. Meanwhile, out in the starry sky was the boat that no one could see. The egotistical young man from earlier was also watching the scene with wide eyes.

For the first time, a sense of deadly crisis welled up inside of Meng Hao. He looked at Fang Wei, and had to admit… that he truly was a Chosen.

The Yellow Springs rumbled toward Meng Hao, and the 24 Immortal soul Underworld Judges inside of it all launched attacks.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. The gleam in his eyes that was the desire to do battle grew stronger, stronger than it had ever been when he had faced against the previous true Immortal Chosen.

Within his right eye, a starstone appeared, which transformed into starlight that floated out above Meng Hao’s palm. In the blink of an eye, starlight had covered his entire body.

“One Thought, Stellar Transformation!!” Meng Hao said. If you discounted his Demon Sealing Hexing Magics and the Paragon Bridge, One Thought Stellar Transformation was the most powerful divine ability that he could unleash!

Boundless starlight covered Meng Hao, making it look like he wasn’t a cultivator any more. As the boundless light spread out, as the starstone surrounded him, he transformed into a planet!

This was no ordinary planetary Daoist magic, this was formed from Meng Hao’s true Immortal secret magic, the unleashing of 123 times the power of One Thought Stellar Transformation!

This planet was 3,000 meters wide, and when it appeared, all cultivators who were watching thought back to how they had seen the same magic before, when Meng Hao used it to batter open the Door of Immortality.

“One Thought Stellar Transformation!!” The members of the Fang Clan were all dumbfounded.

At the same time, Meng Hao in planet-form shot toward the Yellow Springs. All eyes were on him… as he made the decisive final move in the fight!

The planet rumbled as it moved at top speed. Fang Wei was going all out with all of the battle prowess his cultivation base could muster, not holding back the tiniest scrap.

“DIE!!” Fang Wei roared as Yellow Springs and Meng Hao in planet-form slammed into each other.

A huge boom exploded out over all of Planet East Victory. The sky shattered and the ground boomed. Fang Wei let out a howl of defiance as his Yellow Springs were shattered. His Immortal souls exploded, incapable of standing up to the enormous planet.

Even still, the planet began to shrink rapidly, growing weaker. In the end, though, it still completely ripped the Yellow Springs into shreds, and crushed all 24 of the Immortal souls.

By the time the planet reached Fang Wei, it had shrunk down to only about 3 meters wide. It smashed into him, whereupon the cracking sound of shattering bones could be heard.

Blood sprayed from Fang Wei’s mouth, and he began to laugh bitterly as he rocketed down toward the ground. He slammed into a mountain peak, which immediately collapsed into rubble.

Fang Wei’s bitter laughter continued to ring through the air as blood oozed out of his mouth. His chest had been crushed to a pulp, his internal organs were shattered, and his soul was crushed. His life was nearing its end.

“Come on… take back what belongs to you!” said Fang Wei, using his last breath to cause his words to echo out into the air. The planet faded away, and Meng Hao appeared. As he looked down silently at Fang Wei, everyone from the Ninth Mountain and Sea also quieted down.

“It’s over,” Meng Hao said, sighing. He continued to move forward, surrounded by silence. Just when he was about to reach Fang Wei, Fang Xiushan looked up, and killing intent boiled in his eyes. Suddenly, he performed a minor teleportation. His Ancient Realm cultivation base exploded out with the terrifying power of two extinguished Soul Lamps.

“Fang Hao, it’s time to die!!” Fang Xiushan’s hand shot out, and everything shook. However, even as he closed in, Meng Hao’s 19th Uncle flickered to appear between the two of them. Instantly, the two of them began to fight!

“Beat it!” roared Fang Xiushan, unleashing his most powerful divine ability.

At the same time, Fang Wei’s grandfather was about to make a move, when the Grand Elder took a step forward and looked at him.

“Don’t do anything stupid,” said the Grand Elder. He sighed. “As for Wei’er, I will–”

Fang Wei’s grandfather didn’t speak. Before the Grand Elder could even finish speaking, he grinned. A look of determination appeared in his eyes as he suddenly lifted the jade slip and crushed it!

“That person was right. The Fang Clan needs to change a bit…” he said. “I’m only one part of the plan, responsible for the clan Elders. However, if I make a move, then everyone else… will have no choice but to act, whether they want to or not!” Fang Wei’s grandfather suddenly cocked his head, and his cultivation base exploded with power!

The Grand Elder gaped in surprise, and his eyes filled with disbelief and shock. That was because in the moment that Fang Wei’s grandfather crushed the jade slip, vicious expressions instantly appeared on the faces of roughly forty percent of the Fang Clan’s Elders. Shockingly, they instantly began to attack their fellow clan members!

The Fang Clan was facing a huge upheaval!

1. In the original Chinese, there is a slight difference in the characters Er Gen uses for the “Yama Kings” but the reference is clear, so instead of making a variation on “Yama King” I’ll just stick with the original. More information here.

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# Chapter 994: The Clan in Chaos!

The Fang Clan was in complete chaos!!

The observing cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea gaped in shock at the scene. There had been absolutely no indications that anything like this was going to happen. All of a sudden… the entire Fang Clan was thrown into disarray!

At the same time, a glowing shield suddenly appeared outside of Planet East Victory, completely covering the whole planet, sealing it off!

The entire area was now isolated, allowing no one to either enter or leave without express authorization!

Sealed inside was not only everyone from Planet East Victory, but also the Chosen from the various sects and clans. They were stuck in the starry sky, looking on in shock as the turmoil played out down on the planet below.

Miserable screams rang out from the Fang Clan, along with roars of rage and exclamations of shock.

“You… Fang Zheyi, you…”

“Fang Haitao, what are you doing? You’re my Clan Uncle!!”

“This is rebellion!! Are you really betraying the clan!?!?”

Shocking booms echoed out as roughly forty percent of the Elders in the Fang Clan’s ancestral mansion went from watching the fight between Meng Hao and Fang Wei, to suddenly attacking their fellow clan Elders. They immediately unleashed their most vicious divine abilities.

Some Elders were punched from behind; they tumbled forward, blood spurting out all over, after which they spun around with roars of rage.

Others were attacked by multiple opponents, and before they could even react, were shredded into bits. Heads flew, and their eyes filled with looks of disbelief as they were killed in body and soul.

There were some who managed to evade the deadly attacks. Their cultivation bases surged with power as they turned, trembling with rage and disbelief to face the traitors.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

In the blink of an eye, serious injuries were inflicted on more than half of the sixty percent of the Elders who were still loyal to the clan. There were many who, because they didn't have a chance to defend themselves, were immediately slaughtered!

Blood flowed throughout the ancestral mansion.

That was the situation with the Elders. However, the chaos was not limited to them. Almost all of the members of Fang Wei's bloodline spun, vicious expressions on their faces as they attacked their fellow clan members. Divine abilities exploded out as formerly neutral clan bloodlines also turned traitor. They instantly spun, employing vicious attacks on other clan members. Miserable shrieks could be heard as the entire clan was shaken, and countless individuals died.

Blood oozed out of the corners of Fang Xiangshan's mouth. She fell back in retreat as one of her Clan Sisters pursued her with killing intent.

Then there was Fang Yunyi. He was not among the traitors, so he looked around blankly as his entire world changed.

Fang Xi coughed up a mouthful of blood as he was injured by one of the other direct bloodline clan members. Fang Xi's expression was one of rage and indignation.

“Fang Shui you….”

The young man who had injured him looked on silently for a moment before attacking again, and the two began to fight bitterly.

Scenes of chaos and fighting immediately broke out in numerous locations throughout the Fang Clan.

The ground quaked, and buildings toppled. As the chaos spread, the ground ran red with blood. In the blink of an eye, countless individuals died.

Up in the sky, 19th Uncle and Fang Xiushan were fighting. Originally, 19th Uncle had only been attempting to block Fang Xiushan’s way, but now his eyes were bloodshot, and he roared with rage as he unleashed numerous deadly attacks.

Fang Xiushan threw his head back and laughed harshly, his expression one of insanity.

Everything was happening too quickly. It was in almost the exact same moment that Fang Xiushan’s way was blocked by 19th Uncle that Fang Wei’s grandfather had crushed the jade slip, and that forty percent group of Elders attacked. Up in midair, Meng Hao closed in on Fang Wei, reached out, and was about to touch his forehead.

However, it was in that same moment that, all of a sudden, an unprecedented sense of danger exploded within his heart. That sense of danger wasn’t coming from Fang Xiushan, nor from Fang Wei’s grandfather, nor from the upheavals taking place in the clan. Instead, it was coming from… Fang Wei himself!

In that instant, a look of struggle suddenly appeared in Fang Wei’s eyes, and suddenly, four pupils appeared, two in each eye. Then, those pupils merged together.

No one could see it happening except for Meng Hao. As soon as he sensed what was going on, he shot backward. In almost the same moment, rumbling sounds could be heard as the area where had just been standing collapsed. The incredible power of ten extinguished Soul Lamps of the Ancient Realm suddenly erupted out.

If Meng Hao had hesitated for even one breath of time, he would definitely be dead already.

At the same time, a hand suddenly emerged from the shattered sky, which then tapped down on Fang Wei's forehead.

"Awaken, my doppelgänger!" said an ancient voice. At the same time, Fang Wei's body trembled, and he let out a piercing shriek.

Up in midair, Meng Hao's scalp went numb, and his expression was one of surprise. It was at this point that he turned his head and saw all of the chaos that was raging in the Fang Clan.

He saw countless people dying. He saw clan members attacking each other. The sight caused his mind to spin… he was completely unprepared for something like this to happen, and his heart was suddenly trembling violently.

Everywhere he looked, corpses were piling up. Up in the sky, Fang Clan Elders were fighting deadly battles. Down below, all of the members of the clan were going mad. The smell of blood filled the air, so concentrated that there was no way of dispersing it in the slightest.

Meng Hao almost couldn't believe the sudden and violent scene he was witnessing.

Planet East Victory was completely shaken, including the Medicine Immortal Sect. Even Patriarch Reliance was stunned.

If the powers on Planet East Victory were surprised, there was no need to even mention the reaction of the various sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. When they saw what was unfolding, their minds reeled, and their eyes went wide with shock.

"This… this is impossible!"

“This is the Fang Clan! One of the Four Great Clans! How could they be suddenly struck with upheaval like this!?”

“The Fang Clan… the Fang Clan is descending into civil war!!”

“There was a clan conspiracy! It looks like almost half of the entire clan is rebelling!!”

“Something like this is going to rock the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea!!!” People were gasping in shock throughout all of the various sects and clans. They couldn’t believe what they were seeing, that there were rivers of blood flowing through the Fang Clan!

“Fang Heshan, what are you doing!?!?” the Grand Elder roared at Fang Wei’s grandfather. “You know that the Patriarchs are in the ancestral mansion in secluded meditation. An uproar like this will definitely wake them up! If even one of them comes out, he will condemn you to eternal damnation!” The Grand Elder’s hair was in disarray, he was trembling, and his eyes were bloodshot as if overcome with madness. His heart was filled with pain. This was the ancestral mansion of the Fang Clan, a place where the Fang Clan had built up resources for countless years. And yet, all of a sudden, it was thrown into revolt.

Throughout the long history of the Fang Clan, there had never been a large-scale rebellion like this. The entire matter set the Grand Elder’s blood boiling with rage as he shot toward Fang Heshan.

Fang Wei’s grandfather Fang Heshan hovered in midair, his face grim as he looked around at the chaos. He saw everything happening in the clan, and saw the countless clan members dying. He could smell the odor of freshly spilt blood.

“What am I doing?” he asked. “This wasn’t my decision. It was as that certain person said, the Fang Clan truly needs to change. And as for those Patriarchs you just mentioned…?” Fang Heshan suddenly began to laugh in a very strange fashion, and didn’t say anything further. Instead, he advanced forward and began to fight with the Grand Elder.

When the Grand Elder saw the expression on Fang Heshan’s face, his heart began to pound.

Massive booms filled the air, causing everything to tremble. Buildings in numerous locations around the Fang Clan ancestral mansion collapsed. Craters appeared in the ground as fierce slaughtering was carried out on a grand scale.

At the same time that the massive upheavals struck the Fang Clan, deep in the recesses of the ancestral mansion, in the stony cavern, the Seventh Patriarch shot to his feet, his expression one of both fury and disbelief. His entire body was trembling, and he was just about to stamp his foot and fly out of the cavern to put a stop to everything.

It wasn’t just him. In that same moment, other Patriarchs also rose to their feet. However, in that same moment…

All of a sudden, the Sixth Patriarch extended his hand and pushed forward, causing a powerful ripple to explode out. It instantly turned into a shield that prevented anyone from leaving.

“Ladies and gentleman, I really don’t want to attack you,” he said slowly. “Please wait here a moment until matters are settled up above. Then I’ll let you leave peacefully.”

“Old Sixth!” cried the Seventh Patriarch, spinning in place, his eyes blazing with killing intent. In this critical moment of chaos, they needed to act without hesitation, to resolve the matter instantly. Even the slightest slowness in their actions would lead to even more serious losses on the part of the clan.

Even as he spoke, he rushed toward the Sixth Patriarch.

“Do you really think that you can block all of us by yourself? Are you really going to rely only on Fang Heshan out there to lead the rebellion to success?” The Seventh Patriarch’s rage boiled into the Heavens, and killing intent exploded out of him. However, even as he began to move forward, a snide smile appeared on the Sixth Patriarch’s face.

"Fang Heshan of the Junior generation is just one pawn in the entire plan. As for here, do you really think I'm acting alone, Old Seventh?"

Even as the words left the Sixth Patriarch's mouth, the Seventh Patriarch's face twisted in shock as the Fourth Patriarch suddenly turned, eyes glittering with killing intent, and then attacked the Fifth Patriarch.

"Fourth Brother, what are you doing?!" Shocking booms could be heard. Everything happened too quickly. The Fifth Patriarch had a profound cultivation base, so despite being attacked unexpectedly, he was still able to rise to his feet.

At the same time, the Second Patriarch began to laugh coldly. Even as he stepped forward, the Third Patriarch's face turned pale.

The Second Patriarch was actually the second only to the Fang Clan's Earth Patriarch in terms of power. He stepped forward, his aura murderous, causing the other Patriarchs' hearts to tremble.

Of the six people present, three had turned traitor!

Shocking booms could be heard as decisive attacks were unleashed in the stony cavern. Everything trembled, and blood sprayed out of Seventh Patriarch's mouth. His expression was one of pain as he cried, "Why?!"

These six had sat in secluded meditation together for many years, and although they weren't blood brothers, in terms of their relationship with each other, it was almost as if they were. They even called each other Brother.

The person to answer the Seventh Patriarch was the most powerful among the people present, the Second Patriarch.

"Old Seventh, I really don't want to lie to you. All of this is for the sake of… the legacy of Lord Li!"

A drastic upheaval was shaking the Fang Clan. Booms filled the air, and all of Planet East Victory was shaking. The Dao Realm experts of the various sects and clans looked on with expressions of shock.

Meanwhile, the Earth Patriarch was in the starry sky outside of Planet East Victory. When he saw what was happening, a very strange look appeared in his eyes, although no one would be able to detect it. He saw the clan members dying down on the planet below, and knew that regardless of who won or lost, the clan would suffer huge losses in terms of their overall power. Even still, his eye continued to flicker almost as if he were sneering at the betraying clan members!

His body flickered as he prepared to charge back down to Planet East Victory. Considering the level of his cultivation base, anyone could tell that once he got there, it didn't matter how many rebels there were, they would be completely powerless beneath him!

However, in the moment that he seemed about to make his move, a cold smile appeared on the face of a certain person. This person had come to fight Meng Hao, but after watching his succession of victories against the other Chosen, had held back. Now, that person suddenly flickered into place directly in front of the Fang Clan Earth Patriarch.

She was the only person among all of the other Chosen… who hadn't fought Meng Hao!

She was none other than the person who everyone knew to be Ji Yin!!

However, she actually wasn't Ji Yin!

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# Chapter 995: The Ji Clan Makes a Move!

Everyone was watching as Ji Yin emerged. Ripples of the Dao Realm suddenly began to spread out from her body. That was Essence aura, meaning that the ripples emanating out from her were the most powerful possible in the starry sky!

The instant the ripples surged out, Fan Dong'er and the other Chosen felt their faces fill with shock. Regardless of who it was, none of them could ever have imagined that Ji Yin… was not actually the real Ji Yin!

This was something that neither the Fang Clan Earth Patriarch nor Meng Hao had been able to pick up clues about.

It was with complete stealth and silence that a Dao Realm expert suddenly appeared outside of Planet East Victory. It was something that caused all members of all the sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea to be filled with shock.

The Dao Realm Patriarchs were all murmuring to themselves.

"The only person who could pull this off without us noticing is… one of the Ji Clan's five almighty Dao Realm experts… Ji Xiufang!" 1

"The Ji Clan is incredible…."

The Earth Patriarch's face went cold as he stared at Ji Yin and, one word at a time, said, "Ji Xiufang!"

Ji Yin began to laugh softly as the boundless Karma which surrounded her began to dissipate to reveal the face of a middle-aged woman.

“Fang Shoudao! Long time no see! With me here, you won’t be going anywhere.” This woman was exactly who the Fang Clan’s Earth Patriarch had just mentioned, Ji Xiufang!!

The Earth Patriarch looked at her silently, his eyes flickering with killing intent. Without any further ado, he shot forward, and the two of them began to fight.

Booms filled the air, and the starry sky shattered as the Dao Realm battle shook mountains and seas.

In almost the same moment as the two of them attacked each other, three people suddenly appeared outside the layered sealing shield that covered Planet East Victory. Each one of these people emanated ripples of the Dao Realm, and as they sat down cross-legged, rumbling sounds emanated out from them. Their cultivation bases exploded out as they reinforced the shield, causing it to become even stronger.

Now, Planet East Victory was completely and thoroughly sealed inside.

The cultivators of the other sects and clans saw what was happening, and great waves of shock battered their hearts.

This made it absolutely clear that… the upheavals in the Fang Clan had something to do with the Ji Clan!! Furthermore, the Ji Clan had already made it obvious… that they were determined to come out victorious!

The Ninth Mountain and Sea was in shock. The Dao Realm Patriarchs of the various sects and clans felt coldness rising up within their hearts. That coldness was caused by the mass chaos in the Fang Clan, from the sudden appearance of Ji Xiufang, and from the three almighty Dao Realm experts outside of the shield.

Up until moments ago, nobody had noticed anything unusual about Ji Yin, and had overlooked the fact that she was the only one among the various Chosen who hadn’t fought Meng Hao.

Now that they thought about what had happened, they realized that the plan had been carried out without a hitch. If Ji Xiufang weren’t there, Fang Shoudao would have quickly resolved the chaos in the Fang Clan.

When the Dao Realm Patriarchs realized this, the chill in their hearts grew even stronger.

“The Ji Clan… is on the attack! They’ve sent four Dao Realm experts to deal with the Fang Clan. If you ignore Lord Ji, who is as old as the Heavens, and doesn’t even count as a cultivator any more, the Ji Clan has a total of five Dao Realm experts!”

“The Ji Clan’s Dao focuses on Karma. They haven’t made a move for a long time. According to the legends, when they do, they always make sure they’re one step ahead of everyone else!”

“One step ahead…. For example, the six Ancient Realm experts of the Fang Clan. The Ji Clan already made arrangements for infighting among them, making it impossible for them to participate in the larger chaos. Then there’s Fang Shoudao, who they arranged Ji Xiufang to take care of!”

“In that case, what are those three almighty Dao Realm experts doing with that shield?” As the Dao Realm Patriarchs considered the matter quickly, their faces flickered, and they looked in the direction of the Three Great Daoist Societies.

All of a sudden, powerful ripples spread out from that direction, and rumbling sounds could be heard as figures emerged, as if the sects were mobilizing!

The Three Great Daoist Societies were going to jump into the fray!

Obviously, they would not be helping the Ji Clan. They… would prevent the Ji Clan from exterminating the Fang Clan!

At this point, everyone realized the purpose of the sealing shield around Planet East Victory. It was obviously there to prevent the Three Great

Daoist Societies, or anyone else, from easily interfering. That meant that the presence of Ji Xiufang was even more important than ever!

Even as the energy of the Three Great Daoist Societies built up and the figures shot out, that energy suddenly began to fade. At the same time, the figures who had emerged suddenly returned to their respective sects.

The only people who were aware of this development were the Dao Realm Patriarchs, whose faces flickered as they observed.

Very quickly, their eyes went wide, and their minds began to spin.

In the Ninth Sea God World, just as various figures had been preparing to go to Planet East Victory to aid the Fang Clan, roughly ten percent of the disciples in their sect suddenly… turned traitor!

There were even clan Elders who participated, ensuring that the Ninth Sea God World was thrown into instant chaos.

A similar scene played out in the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto, as well as the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite. This change was incredibly sudden, and was apparently the result of years of planning that been kept secret, all for the purpose of exploding out in this moment.

Booms echoed out from the Three Great Daoist Societies. They were only small waves of internal disorder that wouldn’t last for very long. No major changes would occur, but their primary goal was… to buy time!

The whole point was to delay the Three Great Daoist Societies so that they couldn’t provide help for Planet East Victory!

When you added in the sealing shield, that delay could prove to be fatal.

In addition, there was an unspoken warning contained within this sudden turn of events.

The coldness in the hearts of the Dao Realm Patriarchs grew even stronger than before.

“The Fang Clan… is going to be eradicated! I just still find it hard to believe that a clan like that could be overthrown just like this.”

“The Ji Clan doesn’t attack lightly. And when they do attack… they strike like lightning! This is a catastrophe for the Fang Clan…. Unfortunately, I’m worried that the Ji Clan’s machinations still haven’t been fully revealed.”

“The fact that the Ji Clan was even willing to activate their sleeper cells in the Three Great Daoist Societies shows how much they want to overthrow the Fang Clan…. But in the end, what is the real purpose?” The Dao Realm Patriarchs remained silent, but their eyes flickered with growing rage, fury that the Ji Clan had even included the Chosen of all the other clans in their machinations.

After all, the entire group of Chosen was now trapped just outside of Planet East Victory!

However, it didn’t matter how angry the Dao Realm Patriarchs got; they had existed for many years, and weren’t stupid. They knew that no matter how strong the Ji Clan was, they didn’t want to make enemies of all of the sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Unless the Chosen did something on their own to seek death, they would be safe. As long as they didn’t interfere, then once the battle was over, they would be free to leave.

Miserable screams rang out in the Fang Clan ancestral mansion. The bitter fighting between clan members caused the entire area to be soaked with blood. As every moment passed, more members of the Fang Clan died.

The internal chaos caused the areas on Planet East Victory outside of the Fang Clan to become deathly silent.

Buildings collapsed. Structures toppled. The ground quaked. Meng Hao hovered in midair, looking out at what was happening, and his eyes were shot with blood. Although he didn’t feel very much loyalty to the Fang Clan, to see all the clan members being slaughtered, to see Fang Xi in such danger, caused a murderous aura to explode out from within him.

He slapped his bag of holding to produce the Lightning Cauldron. Lightning danced as Meng Hao suddenly vanished, switching places with a clan member near Fang Xi.

That moment of transposition was the exact moment in which Fang Xi was facing imminent danger from one of the other direct bloodline clan members. Even as the man reached his finger out toward Fang Xi’s forehead, Meng Hao advanced without hesitation and waved his sleeve.

A boom could be heard as the power of 123 Immortal meridians exploded out. A terrifying force smashed into the clan member who was attacking Fang Xi. Blood sprayed from his mouth for a moment before he exploded into chunks of gore.

Fang Xi laughed bitterly as he looked around, a sense of profound powerlessness filling him.

Meng Hao looked silently at Fang Xi for a moment. Then his eyes filled with determination as he began to summon the terracotta soldier. By now, even he had come to the conclusion that the clan rebellion must have been influenced by outside powers. Otherwise, the Patriarch-level experts in the clan would have appeared by now.

He had no idea about the fighting going on deep beneath the ancestral mansion, nor about the Dao Realm battle occurring out in the starry sky. But Meng Hao didn’t need to know about those things to understand that… something very bad was happening in the clan.

However, in the moment that he called to the terracotta soldier, he also felt a powerful obstructing force spreading out to cover all of Planet East Victory. It greatly slowed the opening of the ancestral land, making it impossible for the terracotta soldier to come to him immediately.

His eyes flickered with killing intent. Continuing to call to the terracotta soldier, he turned and began to slaughter his way into the crowd. He was not at the level of an Ancient Realm expert, so he only attacked opponents of the Immortal Realm, and he did so like lightning. 33 Heavens descended, and the explosive power of the Immortal Realm exploded out. Any and all traitorous clan members of the Immortal Realm who met him let out bloodcurdling screams as they were destroyed in body and soul.

He was like an Immortal of death. Rumbling sounds could be heard as he waved his right finger, causing the forehead of a stage seven Immortal clan member to explode. Then he spun, and his cold gaze flickered toward two clan members who were speeding toward him in attack, whose hearts suddenly seized in terror. Before they could even react, Meng Hao shot past them, and their heads flew into the air.

A complicated expression appeared on Fang Yunyi’s face as Meng Hao slaughtered the clan member who had been fighting him, then sped past. Meng Hao had just saved his life, and now all he could do was smile bitterly.

Explosions rang out as savage fighting was carried out.

Meng Hao was very adept at killing. On Planet South Heaven, he had killed many, many people.

Furthermore, he was extremely familiar with chaotic battlegrounds. The Lightning Cauldron flickered, and he vanished amidst rumbling sounds. In that moment, a nearby traitorous clan member appeared in the spot he had just occupied, which was then blasted by a combined attack of five Ancient Realm experts who had been trying to kill Meng Hao.

With the Lightning Cauldron, it was very difficult for anybody to pin him down in the melee. In a very short period of time, dozens of traitorous clan members died by his hand.

This was the first time he had shown such brutal savagery in the clan, and as a result, the surrounding clan members looked at Meng Hao with astonishment.

That was not even to mention the cultivators in the other sects and clans out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Despite the sealing shield, everyone could still use various methods to see what was happening in the Fang Clan. That was something the Ji Clan didn’t prevent from happening. They wanted the bitter tragedy playing out in the Fang Clan to be visible to all, as a threat.

However, it was at this point that massive rumbling sounds could be heard from the area in which Fang Wei had slammed into the mountain. Terrifying ripples began to spread out as Fang Wei’s pupils returned to normal.

The terrifying ripples then vanished. He slowly rose up from amidst the rubble, then threw his head back and laughed.

“This doppelgänger is excellent. Wonderful…. It feels great to be so young…. Although it’s weak and cannot wield the power of the Ancient Realm… this body has incredible potential. After completely fusing in the future, and turning this into my true self, the peak of the Ancient Realm will no longer be my limit!

“Fang Wei, as a descendant of mine in the clan, since you’re giving me your body, I’ll help you fulfil one of your aspirations.” As of this moment, strange ripples began to undulate out from Fang Wei. He flew into the air, spotted Meng Hao fighting in the crowds in the ancestral mansion, and began to fly toward him.

Killing intent flickered in his eyes as he closed in.

In that moment, Meng Hao sensed a prick of danger in his mind. He looked up, and his gaze locked with Fang Wei’s.

Or perhaps it would be more correct to say that his gaze locked with… the Sixth Patriarch!

1. Ji Xiufang’s name in Chinese is jì xiù fāng. Xiu means “beautiful,” and Fang means “fragrant.” This is clearly a woman’s name

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# Chapter 996: The Battle Resumes!

Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li stood in the Tower of Tang on Planet South Heaven, watching the upheaval in the Fang Clan on Planet East Victory. Meng Li's eyes were wide, and she trembled as she clutched Fang Xiufeng's arm.

"You knew this was going to happen, didn't you!?" she said, her eyes filled with anxiety at the sight of Meng Hao being in such danger. What she was worried about wasn't the destruction of the Fang Clan, she was worried about her son's safety.

Fang Xiufeng looked at the images and slowly nodded.

"You have to trust me, and you have to trust Hao'er. Everything will be over shortly." Fang Xiufeng said softly. His fatherly love was not the type that showed on the outside like Ke Yunhai's. His love was kept buried deep in his heart. He was Meng Hao's father, and would rather sustain injuries himself than allow his son to be hurt in the least.

However, everything that was happening… had to happen.

On Planet East Victory, Fang Wei's and Meng Hao's gazes locked, and an intangible rumbling sound filled Meng Hao's mind. It was as if everything in the world vanished, and the only things left behind were the two of them.

Meng Hao's eyes flickered with killing intent. There was no way he could have predicted that events would turn out this way. He could do nothing about the dramatic events playing out in the Fang Clan, and in fact, deep in his heart, he was somewhat at a loss.

A sinister grin could be seen on Fang Wei's face as he flew through the air like a shooting star, heading directly toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, crushing the dazed feeling he felt in his heart. His battle with Fang Wei was not over. His Nirvana Fruits had not been returned. In that case… it was time to continue the battle!

Eyes flashing with killing intent, he flew into the air. The two of them pierced through the crowds like meteors, rapidly closing in on each other.

Their speed was incredible, causing everything to shake. Even though all the other members of the Fang Clan were locked in battle, they all turned to look at Meng Hao and Fang Wei. The cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea also stared at the two figures as they closed in on each other.

When they slammed into each other in midair, a shocking boom echoed out in all directions, causing the air to shatter and wild colors to flash in the sky.

Meng Hao attacked with the full explosive force of his 123 meridians. 33 Heavens rumbled, and numerous mountain chains appeared. One Blood Demon head after another roared, causing Heaven and Earth to shake, and wild winds to scream.

Fang Wei performed an incantation gesture, causing a divine ability to materialize. Statues appeared, formed of reincarnation, the Yellow Springs, and some other magical technique that Meng Hao was unfamiliar with. The statues circled around Meng Hao, unleashing ceaseless attacks.

Meng Hao frowned. The terrifying Ancient Realm ripples that had been emanating out of Fang Wei had vanished. However, Meng Hao could sense that Fang Wei was much more powerful than he had been earlier.

Gradually, Meng Hao began to sense ripples inside of Fang Wei that filled him with a sense of danger.

“He’s not Fang Wei!” he thought, his eyes flickering with a cold light.

Fang Wei was bursting with an energy far more powerful than before. The One Thought Yellow Springs Dao was unleashed once again, but it was different this time. Rumbling sounds could be heard as the Yellow Springs swept out, directly attacking Meng Hao in midair.

A huge boom rattled out as over a hundred moves were exchanged in a very short time.

“That’s all you can do?” asked Fang Wei, his voice coldly sinister. “This is the Immortal Realm Paragon!?” He performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, causing the Yellow Springs to turn into something like a dragon that lunged toward Meng Hao with gaping maw.

Meng Hao’s expression darkened, but he said nothing. His hand extended as a divine ability was unleashed.

At the same time, Fang Wei’s 241 Immortal meridians appeared. However… apparently, he wasn’t finished! Suddenly… more Immortal meridians appeared!

251. 261. 271….

Massive rumbling filled the air as Fang Wei’s aura exploded up, to the astonishment of the observing cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

“Fang Wei… his Immortal meridians, they’re… still increasing!!”

“Unbelievable, this… what’s going on!?” The cultivators were dumbstruck, but the Dao Realm Patriarchs merely frowned; they were starting to piece together pictures of what was happening.

“He’s possessed….”

“After he became Immortal, he was possessed, although not perfectly. It couldn’t be; after all, people who can reach the absolute pinnacle of Immortal meridians are not commonplace in the Nine Mountains and Seas. The only possibility is that someone placed a Dao seed in Fang Wei, as a sort of a gamble. That person would be betting that as Fang Wei grew up, he would have a chance at success.”

“That’s of secondary importance. The main requirement would be that they were of the same bloodline. Furthermore, they would both have to have cultivated the same technique. Even more important than that is that they would both have to have a drop of blood from the legendary Underworld Clan!” The Dao Realm Patriarchs maintained their silence as they looked at Fang Wei with looks of curiosity and shock.

Back on Planet East Victory, Fang Wei’s Immortal meridians continued to erupt!

281. 291. 300!!

Massive rumbling sounds echoed out. Meng Hao’s eyes widened as Fang Wei’s Immortal meridians just continued to increase. Although he was shocked, it didn’t cause him to hesitate at all. He waved his hand, transforming into a golden roc. At the same time, numerous mountain chains crushed down toward Fang Wei, whose laughter rang out as his energy continued to soar.

Killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes. A domineering air surged out, and his Immortal Realm Paragon cultivation base exploded with power. The starstone vanished from his left eye, transforming into starlight in his palm. It covered his body as the One Thought Stellar Transformation manifested, transforming him into an enormous planet that shot toward Fang Wei.

Piercing whistling sounds could be heard as the planet emitted shocking pressure over everything. Rocks shattered and then rose up into the air, and the nearby battling cultivators were pushed away by a powerful force.

The 3,000-meter planetary asteroid shot through the air, filled with incredible power. In the blink of an eye, it was upon Fang Wei.

However, in that instant, Fang Wei’s eyes glittered with arrogance. Extending both of his hands, he roared.

Suddenly, his Immortal meridians burst with power as even more were added!

310 meridians!

320 meridians!

The entire Ninth Mountain and Sea rumbled. All of the members of the Fang Clan were shocked. All attention was focused on Fang Wei.

330 meridians!!

Shockingly, 330 Immortal meridians had appeared in Fang Wei, which was the complete pinnacle for an Immortal who had not corroborated the Dao on his own. When the 330 Immortal meridians appeared, 33 Immortal souls also descended behind Fang Wei. It was just the same as Meng Hao… 33 Heavens!

“DIE!” he roared, extending both hands toward the incoming planet. As he pushed out, his 330 Immortal meridians transformed into 330 Yellow Springs, which then combined into one. In addition, his 33 Immortal souls were no longer Underworld Judges, but rather, Yama Kings! An indescribable pressure that was the ultimate pinnacle of the Immortal Realm radiated out from him.

Massive rumbling shook all of Planet East Victory as two peak Immortals began to fight. When they slammed into each other, a huge boom rattled out. Cracking sounds could be heard as the planet began to fall to pieces, and the Yellow Springs disintegrated. Within a few breaths of time, an earsplitting crash rattled out as the planet exploded. Meng Hao appeared, face pale, expression extremely cold, like a sword. He coughed up a mouthful of blood as he staggered backward across the land, as if he were being shoved by some mighty force. And yet, he did not lose a bit of that sharp and blade-like quality.

“The pinnacle of the Immortal Realm. 33 Heavens. Hm….” He wiped the blood from his mouth, and the coldness in his eyes ignited into a massive desire to fight.

Up ahead, the Yellow Springs shattered, and the 33 Yama Kings collapsed. Fang Wei also coughed up blood. Furthermore, although his right eye seemed filled with madness, signs of struggle could be seen in his left eye. That was… Fang Wei’s soul, fighting back!

Suddenly, Fang Wei’s true voice rang out, filled with the truth of his own desires: “I am a member of the Fang Clan, and my dream is to lead the Fang Clan to glory. Father! Grandfather! Patriarch! If your desire is to overthrow the clan, then… I disagree!”

However, almost as soon as Fang Wei’s true voice could be heard, the Sixth Patriarch cried, “Get back down!” and rapidly suppressed him. The left eye returned to its normal state, and Fang Wei coughed up another mouthful of blood, then looked at Meng Hao.

“Fang Hao!” Fang Wei wiped the blood from his mouth and took a step forward. 33 Heavens appeared once again, and boundless Immortal power exploded out.

“What I want… is this feeling! I’ve finally done it! Finally, I have this perfect body!! This is my doppelgänger! In the future, it will be my true self. Fang Wei, you are my descendant, which means that this is an honor for you!” Fang Wei’s right hand lifted up, and 33 Heavens shot murderously toward Meng Hao.

“I’m going to help you kill this person, to achieve your desire!”

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with intense killing intent. He looked coldly at Fang Wei for a moment, then began to advance. He raised his right hand, and his own 33 Heavens appeared.

“Paragon Bridge!” he said softly.

As soon as the words left his mouth, rumbling sounds filled Heaven and Earth. Shockingly, Meng Hao’s 33 Heavens transformed into the image of the Paragon Bridge. 123 meridians manifested behind the bridge as it sped toward Fang Wei.

“Who gives a crap about that thing? Hell World!” Fang Wei waved his right hand, instantly causing the Yellow Springs to appear. In addition, an illusory slice of the underworld manifested, rapidly turning corporeal.

As the two attacked each other, Fang Xiushan ignored any potential injuries he might receive and broke away from his fight with Meng Hao’s 19th Uncle. He then performed a minor teleportation, heading directly toward Meng Hao, eyes filled with killing intent. He waved his hand, causing his Ancient Realm cultivation base to explode with the destructive power of two extinguished Soul Lamps. A gigantic hand appeared which slashed toward Meng Hao.

“DIE!”

Shockingly, he joined forces with Fang Wei to attempt to kill Meng Hao, to slaughter him in spirit and body!

At this critical moment, Meng Hao waved his right hand, and the Paragon Bridge descended to block both Fang Wei and Fang Xiushan. Booms could be heard as the Paragon Bridge began to collapse. Meng Hao shot backward, and his expression lacked any sort of alarm. Instead, it was filled with seething killing intent!

He extended his right hand, and there in his palm was a small fruit that was currently not visible to anyone but him.

It was… the first generation Patriarch’s Nirvana Fruit!

With the Nirvana Fruit in hand, his towering killing intent influenced the entire area, making everything grow cold. Fang Wei and Fang Xiushan looked at Meng Hao’s eyes, and for some unknown reason, they began to tremble.

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# Chapter 997: Fang Xiushan… DIE!

Meng Hao’s 123 Immortal meridians exploded with power, condensing the power of 33 Heavens into the majestic Paragon Bridge to block Fang Wei and Fang Xiushan.

Even as he retreated at full speed, his eyes flickered with a freezing light. He was looking at Fang Wei and Fang Xiushan almost as if they were dead.

Rumbling sounds could be heard, and Heaven and Earth shook violently. The Nirvana Fruit in Meng Hao’s hand radiated scintillating light.

This was the first generation Patriarch’s Nirvana Fruit!

It emanated an ancient aura that seemed to indicate that it had existed for countless years, and as soon as it appeared, the sensation of time inside the fruit seemed to influence everything in the area, making the region around Meng Hao look as if it were in a different era.

Fang Xiushan’s gaze met Meng Hao’s, and his heart trembled. He looked at the Nirvana Fruit for a moment, whereupon a sinister look appeared in his eyes, and his lips twisted into a cruel smile. “That’s….

“Absorb that, and I won’t even need to attack. You’ll be dead without a doubt!”

Fang Wei’s energy soared, but when he looked at Meng Hao, his heart began to pound. His gaze shifted to the Nirvana Fruit, and all of a sudden, an intense feeling of crisis exploded up in his heart.

He wasn’t actually Fang Wei; he was the doppelgänger of the Sixth Patriarch. Due to this, he recognized that fruit, and as soon as he saw it, he realized that it… was completely different from the Nirvana Fruit that he remembered!

As soon as Meng Hao pulled it out, the Grand Elder, who was battling with Fang Heshan, looked over. When he saw what was happening, his face fell.

“Hao’er, you can’t absorb that thing!!” he cried out urgently. Even as his voice echoed out, he felt deep regret in his heart for the decisions he had made.

In the same moment that the Grand Elder called out, Fang Wei’s eyes widened, and the sense of crisis within him exploded to a peak. His heart was pounding in a way that suggested that if Meng Hao absorbed that Nirvana Fruit, a momentous and shocking event would occur. He suddenly roared, “STOP HIM!”

Fang Wei took a step forward and waved his hand. 33 Heavens and 330 Immortal meridians transformed into the power of the Yellow Springs, exploding out to shake the Paragon Bridge.

At the same time, Fang Xiushan, despite his sudden, momentary hesitation, still went on the attack, exploding out with the power of an Ancient Realm cultivation base with two extinguished Soul Lamps. A shocking attack materialized, which consisted of an enormous illusory hand that slashed toward the Paragon Bridge.

The Paragon Bridge shook, and then and then began to collapse layer by layer. It was a Daoist magic that was as powerful as a Paragon, but… with Meng Hao’s cultivation base, he could only force it to materialize. Considering the fact that Fang Wei and Fang Xiushan had combined forces, it only took a moment before the bridge couldn’t hold out any longer, and began to collapse completely.

Once it was gone, there would be nothing to stand in the way of Fang Wei and Fang Xiushan, who would then instantly level deadly attacks against Meng Hao.

Meng Hao sped backward at top speed, his eyes cold. Even as Fang Wei and Fang Xiushan bashed against the Paragon Bridge, Meng Hao lifted the Nirvana Fruit and pushed it up against his forehead.

The fruit melted and sank down into his forehead, causing warmth to flow through him. His body shook and his mind trembled. He felt like was about to be torn into pieces, and blue veins popped out on his face. Blood oozed out of his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth.

As Fang Wei and Fang Xiushan blasted the Paragon Bridge, Fang Wei’s heart was pounding violently. He went all out with his most powerful divine abilities, roaring as he… finally destroyed the bridge completely, the fragments of which scattered out in all directions.

Instantly, Fang Wei shot toward Meng Hao like a shooting star.

“DIE!” Fang Wei was getting a very bad feeling about what was happening with Meng Hao, so he pushed faster, his killing intent raging.

Fang Xiushan’s killing intent also surged, and his desire to kill Meng Hao was stronger than ever. His cultivation base exploded with power, causing the enormous hand to smash toward Meng Hao, to crush him and obliterate him to wipe away the hatred in his heart.

As Fang Wei and Fang Xiushan closed in, Meng Hao was trembling, and his eyes were bright red. A wild and domineering aura suddenly erupted out from within him.

The aura caused Fang Wei to stare in shock, and Fang Xiushan’s face to fall.

Next, Meng Hao let out a shocking roar. His body suddenly began to grow larger, and at the same time, his Immortal meridians… suddenly… increased rapidly!!!

He no longer had 123 meridians. The number of meridians increased with rapid speed, as did the Immortal dragons around him. They roared as 139, 152, 171, 196 dragons appeared….

Wild colors flashed in the sky, the wind screamed, and the heavenly bodies trembled!

In the blink of an eye, he had 200 meridians!

Meng Hao’s aura also climbed wildly, almost as if he… would exceed the Immortal Realm!

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

200 meridians was not the limit. The growth continued! 213. 235… all the way to 246 meridians!

That was fully double his previous limit!!

If that were all there were to it, it might not be a big deal. However, in the moment that his Immortal meridians doubled, Meng Hao’s 33 Heavens exceeded that which was Immortal. They surpassed the great circle, erupting in such a way that all onlookers were dumbfounded to look up what appeared to be… 66 Heavens!

If you looked closely, though, you would see that they weren’t in fact 66 Heavens. There were two extremes; one was the 33 Heavens up above, the other was the 33 Earths down below. In the middle of the two was Meng Hao!

His energy soared, and a terrifying aura exploded out. Fang Wei and Fang Xiushan’s faces fell completely. Even Fang Xiushan suddenly felt a sensation of deadly crisis.

It was a type of crisis… that would lead to his complete and utter death!

Fang Xiushan’s mind spun as he hoarsely said, “Impossible! Even if his power increases, he’s still just an Immortal. I’m in the Ancient Realm! How could I possibly be experiencing such fear!?!?”

Fang Wei’s face was ashen, and his eyes widened as he gasped.

“There’s a kind of Immortal that can kill someone in the Ancient Realm…. In fact, according to legend, true Immortality is not the limit of the Immortal Realm. In ancient times, before the other Heavens and Earths in the starry sky collapsed, it was an age unlike the current age of Nine Mountains….

“Above true Immortality was another level. That was the level of… the Immortal Emperor!!

“If they look up, and wave a hand, 33 Heavens are destroyed! If they look down, and point, 33 Earths are crushed… an Immortal Emperor!” Fang Wei’s scalp went numb and his mind filled with roaring. If he were here as his true self, then even if Meng Hao became an Emperor among Immortals, the Ancient Realm was still superior to 33 Heavens and 33 Earths. It would be as easy to slay Meng Hao as lifting his hand. But now… this was just a doppelgänger, and was merely a fleshly body that was limited by the constraints of Immortal power. He… was simply no match for Meng Hao.

His mind spun, and without any hesitation, Fang Wei turned to flee.

Fang Xiushan didn’t understand things as well as the possessed Fang Wei, who was actually the Sixth Patriarch. He hesitated, and thus, took a bit longer to begin to fall back. It was exactly within those few breaths of time that Meng Hao… made a move!

He looked up, and rumbling sounds filled the air. The sensation of being ripped apart caused his eyes to be completely red, filled with veins of blood. His body grew larger and, at the moment, he seemed to be in possession of a vast, intense power. He wasn’t sure whether it was just a hallucination, but that power all of a sudden caused him to be filled with… a certain sensation.

It was as if he had reached a state in which he was the ultimate representation of every possible meaning of the word Immortal.

In that moment, the Nine Mountains and Seas trembled slightly, and ripples appeared that no cultivator could sense. These ripples massed outside of the

Nine Mountains and Seas, encircling them, causing the sun and moon to pause in their eternal orbit.

If the Nine Mountains and Seas had a will, then as of this moment, it was as if that will was looking at Meng Hao and causing these ripples to emanate out, and the sun and moon to stop moving for a breath of time, as if to welcome…. something that was appearing for the first time since the formation of the Nine Mountains and Seas… the Immortal Emperor!

In the Immortal's cave in the Ruins of Immortality in Ninth Mountain and Sea, the white-robed woman rose to her feet. She looked toward Planet East Victory, and her perpetually unchanging expression suddenly flickered.

"With destiny like this, with good fortune like this… he is worthy of being in the League of Demon Sealers of the Nine Mountains and Seas…." she murmured. When she spoke the words Demon Sealers, her eyes flickered with pain and reminiscence.

"Immortal Ancient. Nine Seals. Are you two still around? I'm… the only one left. The only one…." She sounded pained, and in fact, a tear rolled down her cheek. Finally, she waved her hand; the sun and moon once again began to rotate, and the Nine Mountains and Seas went back to normal.

At the same time, the teardrop flew off into the distance, to some unknown land. Perhaps it became part of a violet sea, or perhaps, a tear among a rainstorm.

If it had a spirit, perhaps the teardrop would awaken, and would possess a yearning and a determination to transform into a sea.

Meanwhile, on Planet East Victory, on the back of Patriarch Reliance, was a young woman. She suddenly looked up, and a blank look could be seen in her eyes, as if she had just thought of something.

Meng Hao was unaware of the things happening in the Nine Mountains and Seas. At the moment, he was just barely able to endure the tearing pain caused by the terrifying power that filled him. He knew that he could only remain in this state for a short period of time, so he quickly raised his hand and pointed toward Fang Xiushan.

In that instant, his Divine Flame Immortal meridian erupted, causing a sea of flames to appear. It covered everything, wreathing the 33 Heavens and 33 Earths with endless flames of extermination.

A massive world of flames instantly shot toward Fang Xiushan.

Fang Xiushan's face fell, and the sense of crisis within him reached a pinnacle, causing his mind to thrum. He fell back at top speed, performing a double-handed incantation gesture. Innumerable divine abilities appeared, and blood sprayed out of his mouth. His Soul Lamps appeared, spinning around him, as did countless magical items, all of which fought back against Meng Hao.

In the instant that his divine abilities and magical items shot out, the sea of flames transformed into a huge hand which, in the blink of an eye, had completely inundated Fang Xiushan.

All of his divine abilities collapsed, and all of his magical items melted. Even his Soul Lamps burst into flames!

When the extinguished Soul Lamps were suddenly ignited, Fang Xiushan let out a miserable shriek, and his eyes filled with disbelief and astonishment. His Soul Lamps melted, and Fang Xiushan let out a howl as… he was completely covered in fire.

Moments later, the only thing that remained of him was drifting ash.

He was killed in body and soul!

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# Chapter 998: The Fall of Fang Wei!

A brutal attack!

“Xiushan!!” When Fang Heshan saw what happened, his face filled with grief. He threw his head back and howled. Were it not for the Grand Elder going all out to block his way, he would have instantly charged towards Meng Hao.

As of this moment, all of the cultivators of the various sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea were staring in complete shock at what was happening. They already knew that Meng Hao was incredibly powerful, but when they saw him kill Fang Xiushan, they were completely shaken on a deep and profound level.

They looked at Meng Hao, eyes wide with jealousy.

“He’s a powerful expert who has surpassed everyone in his generation, and can even fight with people in the Ancient Realm!”

“It’s too bad that he’s going to perish because of the upheaval in the Fang Clan….”

“If he doesn’t die in this battle, then his future… will be unimaginable!” Gasps could be heard throughout the Ninth Mountain and Sea as Fang Xiushan died.

The disbelief on his face in the moments before death was clear. He was in the Ancient Realm, with two extinguished Soul Lamps. And yet, he died at the hands of an Immortal Realm cultivator. He had come to exact vengeance for his Wei’er, and in the end… had himself been annihilated.

From the moment he had learned that Meng Hao was returning to the clan, he had wanted to kill him. From the ambush out in the starry sky, to the way he had targeted Meng Hao in the clan, to the attempt on his life in the Ancestral Land, all of that proved that he and Meng Hao were as incompatible as fire and water.

Even more lamentable was that it wasn’t until the moment he died that he realized who his true enemy was. It wasn’t Meng Hao. It was the Sixth Patriarch.

Perhaps Fang Xiushan did know. Perhaps he had known all along what would happen. And yet, in his mind, perhaps… he truly felt that allowing the Sixth Patriarch to possess his son would be an honor for Fang Wei.

Perhaps his way of thinking was madness, or perhaps not. In any case, it was no longer important.

Everything was settled by Meng Hao in his current state. The wave of a hand, the unleashing of a divine ability!

Meng Hao suddenly reached a certain enlightenment.

“Perhaps… all machinations and plots can be foiled with the wave of a hand by a powerful expert? Perhaps everything can even be reversed? If so, then will all of the upheaval in the Fang Clan… be changed by the wave of some powerful expert’s hand?” Meng Hao looked around at the Fang Clan and the unceasing slaughter that was being carried out. None of the recent turns of events did anything to stop the carnage. Blood flowed everywhere, and screams of terror and rage floated about constantly. It was impossible to tell who was winning or losing, but it was clear… what would happen in the end.

The Fang Clan would be thoroughly destroyed.

Meng Hao couldn’t shake the feeling that the upheavals in the Fang Clan were simply too strange. In fact, he still wasn’t ready to completely accept everything that was happening.

The Fang Clan was one of the Four Great Clans, and at one time had in fact been the leader among those four clans. Therefore… it was hard to believe that, just like that, the clan would play out its final act.

Meng Hao looked over at the fleeing Fang Wei, and his eyes gleamed with killing intent.

“I can only stay in this state for seven more breaths of time….” he murmured. This was his most powerful state, and he could remain in it for a total of ten breaths. He took a deep breath, lifted his foot, and stepped forward.

That one step caused everything to seem to shrink. Instantly, he was directly behind Fang Wei. That was a speed that exceeded minor teleportation. That was greater teleportation!

Fang Wei was astonished to find Meng Hao suddenly right there. Meng Hao lifted his hand with indescribable speed and tapped Fang Wei.

“Detonate!” he said softly, his eyes glowing with coldness.

It was one word, but it echoed out in all directions, causing everything to shake. Divine Flame erupted around Fang Wei, prompting a wild howl. At the same time, Fang Wei performed a double-handed incantation gesture and spit out a mouthful of blood. Instantly, a blood-colored shield sprang up around him.

Shockingly, as Fang Wei stood inside the shield, the image of an old man appeared in his right eye. As he sat there cross-legged, he opened his eyes, and terrifying ripples of the Ancient Realm spread out.

Fang Wei had been completely pushed into a corner, so the Sixth Patriarch was forced to use his doppelgänger’s Essence power to fight back!

Rumbling filled the air, and Fang Wei coughed up another huge mouthful of blood. His chest sank inward, and the blood-colored shield expanded. Because of the resistance, the Essence of Divine Flame paused for a moment.

In that brief moment, Fang Wei transformed into a flickering shadow, and fell back instantly, blood spraying from his mouth, seriously injured. His scalp was numb, and the figure in his right eye was dim. This was only a doppelgänger of the Sixth Patriarch, so he had very little Essence, which he had just used to escape the deadly crisis he had been in. However, in that moment, the power he was using to suppress Fang Wei's soul also weakened.

Suddenly, Fang Wei's soul appeared in his left eye, struggling. According to the plan, Fang Wei would never have fought back. However, the dramatic upheavals in the Fang Clan led to an unexpected turn of events.

Fang Wei's soul struggled awake and began to fight against the Sixth Patriarch's possession, and over control of his own body.

"Fang Hao, kill me!!" he cried, trembling. "I told you that if I lost, you could take back what belongs to you!"

Meng Hao looked on, taciturn, expression complex. He looked at Fang Wei's eyes, then raised his right hand and waved it forward. 33 Heavens rumbled into being above Fang Wei's head.

Beneath his feet, 33 Earths appeared, transforming into a deadly snare!

Rumbling echoed out as the 33 Heavens crushed down, and the 33 Earths exploded with power. A powerful aura rose up in Fang Wei, and he coughed up blood. The old man in his right eye seemed filled with madness and terror; he was about to fight back, when suddenly a brilliant light shone out from Fang Wei's left eye.

"I am Fang Wei, Chosen of the Fang Clan. If your purpose in possessing me is to sow chaos in the Fang Clan, then I would rather… allow the bad to be destroyed with the good, and die together with you!" His true soul, which resided in his left eye, suddenly rose up and began fight directly with the Sixth Patriarch for control of his body.

He had always been matchessly proud, had always considered himself to be the only true Chosen of the Fang Clan!

“Dammit!” raged the Sixth Patriarch. Originally, it wasn’t that he didn’t want to destroy Fang Wei’s soul; rather, to perform a perfect possession, he couldn’t do so, as he needed to slowly absorb the soul. He had never been worried about doing that, and yet, he had never imagined that Fang Wei’s devotion to the clan would suddenly supercede everything. In truth, he had forgotten about Fang Wei’s incredible pride.

Fang Wei was a Chosen of the clan. He was willing to die in battle, to be possessed, or to slaughter others. He was willing to advance by hook or by crook. However, he was not willing… to betray the clan. His most important purpose was to protect the clan, and to ensure that the other clan members viewed him as a hero!

He wanted to be the center of attention, the focus of the whole clan. He wanted prestige, and he wanted to become a powerful expert. He wanted to lead the clan into glory!

In reality, he had been unaware of the true plans being laid by his grandfather.

Meng Hao’s expression was a complicated one as he held his right hand up in the air.

“Fang Hao, kill me! If I die, the Sixth Patriarch will be severely wounded. Perhaps the clan will have some hope then!! KILL ME!!”

The Sixth Patriarch was going crazy. Fang Wei’s left eye was growing dim, as his soul fought desperately with the Sixth Patriarch for control of his body.

Fang Heshan was still fighting with the Grand Elder, and when he saw the crisis Fang Wei was in, he let out a bellow of rage. Booms rang out from his body, and suddenly, a fragment of jade appeared in his hand. He crushed it violently, causing intense ripples to spread out. The Grand Elder’s face fell as he sensed the terrifying power in those ripples, and was forced to retreat.

As he fell back, Fang Heshan shot toward Fang Wei.

“Wei’er!!” Fang Heshan cried urgently.

Even as he closed in, Fang Wei’s left eye began to shine brightly again. His left hand rose, trembling, and he pointed toward Fang Heshan. In that instant, the Yellow Springs appeared, along with his Immortal souls, all of which blocked Fang Heshan’s path.

“Grandpa,” he said, his voice quavering, “sir, when I was born, do you remember why you gave me the character Wei as a name? Sir… you told me that it was because I needed to defend the Fang Clan…. Grandpa… stay your hand….” When Fang Heshan heard his words, he trembled, and grief appeared in his eyes.

“Fang Hao, you have to take my place… to protect the Fang Clan! Come on! Take back your Nirvana Fruits!” Fang Wei closed his left eye, and rumbling could be heard inside his body. A popping sound could suddenly be heard from his forehead. A split appeared, from within which two fruits emerged.

Meng Hao instantly felt a sense of intense familiarity. He lifted his right hand up toward the two Nirvana Fruits, which flew directly toward him and landed in his palm.

At the same time, Fang Wei coughed up a mouthful of blood, and his energy instantly weakened. The Sixth Patriarch let out a roar of defiance. Of his own initiative, Fang Wei shot toward Meng Hao’s divine ability. No one could prevent him from doing so, and not even Meng Hao could stop the 33 Heavens and 33 Earths from exploding violently.

In that instant, the Sixth Patriarch in Fang Wei’s right eye transformed into a wisp of smoke that shot out. However, before it could escape, Fang Wei’s soul latched onto it and dragged it back.

“NO!!” The Sixth Patriarch’s doppelgänger soul let out a howl of rage just as it was inundated by the rumbling 33 Heavens and 33 Earths.

Massive booms filled the air, and then the 33 Heavens and 33 Earths faded away. Fang Wei’s body fell down toward the ground. His right eye was completely dark; the Sixth Patriarch had been exterminated in body and spirit.

Fang Wei’s left eye was fading. The flame of his life force was snuffed out. Right before he died, he looked at Meng Hao, and his lips moved. He wasn’t able to speak the words out loud, but Meng Hao understood exactly what he was saying.

He said… “Defend the Fang Clan.”

All of a sudden, Meng Hao thought back to what it was like on Planet East Victory hundreds of years ago. He and Fang Wei were children. Fang Wei had always been stubborn, different from the other kids. He wouldn’t follow Meng Hao around, but rather, spent time alone, in the shadows, working hard, trying to win the approval of others.

He seemed gloomy, but in truth, he had worked extremely hard over the years. All of that led to the Fang Wei of today.

Meng Hao remembered when they were both six years old, and it was time for them to begin practicing cultivation. They had stood in front of all the clan Elders, and been questioned about why they wanted to be cultivators. Meng Hao’s answer had been that after he grew up, he wanted to protect his dad and mom.

As for Fang Wei, the words he had spoken with his tender, young voice seemed to echo now in Meng Hao’s ears.

“My grandpa picked the name Wei for me! I’m Fang Wei, and when I grow up, I’m going to defend the clan!”

The words Fang Wei had spoken as a child… were words that he had always remembered, even in the moment of his death!

BOOM!

Fang Wei slammed into the ground, and his aura was gone. He was dead!

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# Chapter 999: The Terracotta Soldier Arrives!

As of this moment, the Chosen outside in the starry sky stared in shock. The cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea were also dumbstruck by the scene of Fang Wei’s death.

For a Chosen to perish….

Furthermore, his actions before he had died left everyone moved. Everyone suddenly felt… unwilling to part ways with Fang Wei.

Fang Wei, Chosen of the Fang Clan!

The Fang in his name came from the Fang Clan. The Wei came from the word ‘defend.’

Misery and bleakness covered the Fang Clan in their moment of upheaval. The death of a Chosen caused everyone’s hearts to tremble. Many people couldn’t help but wonder, if they were in Fang Wei’s position, what would they do?

“Fang Wei… I will remember this name!”

“Wei… actually has THAT meaning….”

The chaotic rebellion continued to proceed in the Fang Clan. Clan members died at every moment, and the ancestral mansion was soaked with blood. The stench of gore spread out in all directions.

Fang Wei’s death caused many clan members to suddenly grow very silent and bitter. However, this was not the time to be overwhelmed with grief, so they continued fighting.

Up in the starry sky, Fan Dong’er and the other Chosen looked on silently. None of them would do anything impulsive, so they stood by while the fighting went on.

The Fang Clan’s Earth Patriarch fought with one of the Ji Clan’s five Dao Realm experts, Ji Xiufang. Their battle was shocking to the extreme. Booms rang out as Essence power was unleashed. Both of these two were 1 Essence Dao Lords, and their attacks caused the starry sky to tremble, and wild colors to flash.

“The Fang Clan is doomed to destruction,” Ji Xiufang said softly. “Fang Shoudao, you must know this in your heart of hearts. There’s no reason to keep fighting back. That kid Fang Wei had backbone, which is laudable. Unfortunately… he was simply born in the wrong clan.”

“Oh really?” replied Fang Shoudao, his voice light. He waved his hand, causing a river of stars to appear. In the blink of an eye, thousands of exchanges occurred between the two of them. The stars vibrated, and even the sealing shield around them trembled.

“The Three Great Daoist Societies won’t be coming,” said Ji Xiufang, laughing. “The Fang Clan… might have put on a good show of being powerful, but the Ji Clan has long since come to the realization that your clan’s pretense of having secret Dao Realm experts is not true. You… really are the only Dao Realm cultivator!

“What do you have, then, that will allow you to reverse fate?” Ji Xiufang’s killing intent swirled. Booms echoed out between them.

“If you’re so certain of that, then why are you trying to probe me with words?” Fang Shoudao replied indifferently. Ji Xiufang frowned in response. Actually… she wasn’t certain. After all, this was… the Fang Clan!!

In years past, they were just as glorious as the Ji Clan, and were one of the two great battle clans that had existed under Lord Li.

The Ji Clan was certain that the Fang Clan was on the decline, that they could only put on a show of glory, and were in fact weak. However, the Ji Clan could not underestimate the resources at their disposal.

That was especially true when it came to Fang Shoudao, who seemed to be completely unruffled by the rivers of blood flowing in the Fang Clan on Planet East Victory. The fact that he was remaining calm caused Ji Xiufang to feel a bit uneasy.

“He definitely has some trump cards to play. But what are they…?”

Meanwhile, Fang Heshan hovered in midair above Planet East Victory, trembling as he stared at the dead Fang Wei. Beneath the ancestral mansion, the Sixth Patriarch, who was fighting desperately with the Seventh Patriarch, coughed up a mouthful of blood.

Meng Hao maintained his silence as he looked down at Fang Wei’s corpse. He felt no excitement at having retrieved his Nirvana Fruits. Deep in his heart, he sighed. He walked up to Fang Wei’s corpse, and knelt down next to it. He put his hand on Fang Wei’s chest and pushed lightly. Fang Wei’s body vanished into Meng Hao’s bag of holding. He did not want the body to be desecrated due to the chaos in the clan. Later, he would be buried, and it would be a grand funeral!

Meng Hao stood there thinking.

“At first, I didn’t want to come here to Planet East Victory…. I wanted to go directly to the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite instead. However, father sent me here because he wanted me to retrieve my Nirvana Fruits.”

He thought back to everything that had happened since he returned, and an idea suddenly sprang up in his mind.

“In that case, these upheavals in the clan, all of this… could it be that father actually knew it all was going to happen?”

Even as Meng Hao stood there thinking, shrill laughter could be heard coming from Fang Heshan.

“Fang Hao, what are you doing!? Give Wei’er back to me immediately!”

Meng Hao turned to look at Fang Heshan, then quietly said,

“He’s my Clan Brother. My little bro didn’t betray the clan, and therefore, his corpse is not to be defiled after his death. Fang Heshan, turn back from this path.”

“There’s no turning back. Xiushan! Wei’er! I… I can’t turn back!” Fang Heshan’s hair was in disarray, his eyes bloodshot. He seemed to have gone crazy, and as he glared at Meng Hao, his killing intent boiled.

“You son-of-a-bitch! You killed Xiushan and you killed Wei’er! Why are you still alive?! Why the hell are YOU still alive!?” Fang Heshan threw his head back and laughed bitterly. His cultivation base erupted; originally, he had the power of three extinguished Soul Lamps, but as of now, he was under extreme provocation, and all of a sudden, the ripples of death spread out from him.

He was going all out, burning his own life force to suddenly extinguish three more of his Soul Lamps!!

As of this moment, he now raged with the destructive power of six extinguished Soul Lamps, causing Heaven and Earth to shake. The Grand Elder was just about to interfere, but Fang Heshan flicked his sleeve, shoving him away.

“Fang Hao, it’s time to die!!” Fang Heshan roared, transforming into a beam of light that shot toward Meng Hao with raging killing intent.

Behind him suddenly appeared three Elders from Fang Wei’s bloodline, who joined Fang Heshan in a deadly attack on Meng Hao.

19th Uncle wanted to intercept them, as did other members of the direct bloodline, but none of them were able to.

“Hao’er!!” 19th Uncle cried urgently.

It was at this point that the first generation Patriarch's Nirvana Fruit emerged from Meng Hao's forehead. His aura and his cultivation base slipped down from his previous level of Immortal Emperor, down to its original Realm.

His expression was calm, though, because… he could sense something that he had been constantly calling out to. The aura of the terracotta soldier!

It was coming!

After much calling, the ancestral land began to emanate ripples that appeared in Meng Hao's heart. He calmly looked at Fang Heshan, and his eyes suddenly shone with a cold flicker.

He didn't move a muscle. He just looked over.

Fang Heshan got closer and closer, until he was less than 300 meters away. The power of six extinguished Soul Lamps burst out explosively. It transformed into a gigantic golden lotus that emanated a shocking murderous aura. This was a golden lotus that seemed capable of exterminating any and all Immortals!

Even Ancient Realm cultivators with four extinguished Soul Lamps or fewer would be killed by it!

Rumbling could be heard as the enormous golden lotus smashed murderously toward Meng Hao….

Meng Hao didn't move. He looked forward as coldly as ever. It was at this point that, all of a sudden, cracking sounds could be heard directly in front of him, and everything started to shake. A massive rift opened up in the air right in front of Meng Hao!

It was as if someone was slashing an enormous, invisible blade through the air, splitting it apart and creating an gigantic fissure. In the same moment that the rift appeared, it was possible to glimpse… the Fang Clan Ancestral Land!

Next, an archaic and ancient greatsword noiselessly emerged from within the rift. It slashed down, seemingly capable of rending Heaven and Earth. Boundless light shone out from the blade.

The light flashed past the incoming golden lotus, which was immediately slashed in two. It fell apart instantly, and then the light moved on toward Fang Heshan.

Fang Heshan's six extinguished Soul Lamps trembled violently and began to crack and collapse, as did all of his divine abilities and Daoist magics. The light passed Fang Heshan and then bore down on the three Ancient Realm Elders, who began to tremble violently.

Their Soul Lamps shattered, and they seemed to be physically locked in place in midair. Their eyes shone with disbelief and astonishment. Even as they forced themselves to look down….

Everything was over!

The light shot up into the sky, and when it vanished, three heads flew high into the air, and three headless bodies plummeted down to the ground.

The entire battlefield went completely silent.

The three Elders behind Fang Heshan were dead!

Souls extinguished! Slaughtered!

One sword attack … killed three Ancient Realm experts!!

As for Fang Heshan, there was a long line of blood on his neck. As it turned out, it wasn't three Ancient Realm experts killed, it was four!

Fang Heshan had managed to hold onto his life for a bit longer, and prevent his head from falling off. He looked into the rift with despair and disbelief….

What had just happened rocked the Heavens, shook the earth, and completely shocked all of the cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

The members of the Fang Clan, both the traitors and the loyalists, all felt an unprecedentedly cold aura that caused them to shiver. They looked over at Meng Hao, and the rift which had just appeared, as well as the archaic sword.

Slowly, a 3,000-meter figure stepped out from within the rift.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

As it stepped out, everyone's hearts started to pound. When the figure became visible, everyone in the entire Fang Clan couldn't help but cry out in alarm and disbelief.

"That's… that's…."

"The Dao Guardsman of the Ancestral Land! It's… it's not just a statue? How come it's moving!?!?"

"The Dao Guardsman! For years and years it's stood there unmoving! According to the legends, it flew here from out in the Heavens! It's supposedly waiting for someone! Now it's actually moving!!"

"Could it be because of the rebellion in the clan!?!?" All of the clan members were shocked. All cultivators' minds spun. They just couldn't believe everything that was happening.

Simultaneously, the aura of a Quasi-Dao Paragon suddenly exploded off of the terracotta soldier.

The aura spread out, causing everything to shake. Endless rumbling sounds could be heard, and all Fang Clan members felt their hearts trembling.

Ripples that seemed capable of sweeping across anyone in the Ancient Realm swept out. That was… the madness of a Quasi-Dao Paragon!

Up in the starry sky, Ji Xiufang, who was still fighting desperately with the Fang Clan Earth Patriarch, sensed what was happening, and her eyes widened.

“So, that’s your trump card,” she said. “Well, did you really think that a Quasi-Dao Realm Dao Guardsman would be capable of resolving the crisis in the Fang Clan?”

Even as Ji Xiufang spoke, Fang Clan Earth Patriarch Fang Shoudao felt shock rising up in his heart. This development was something he hadn’t anticipated at all.

“The resources of the Fang Clan are far too deep for someone like you to speculate about,” he said. “The Dao Guardsman is naturally something that I–”

Before he could even get halfway through what he wanted to say, he suddenly stopped speaking. His eyes went wide as he looked toward Planet East Victory. Ji Xiufang had the same reaction, and stared in shock.

What they saw… was the Dao Guardsman step all the way out into Planet East Victory. As the aura of a Quasi-Dao Paragon radiated out, the Dao Guardsman suddenly… bent down on one knee and lowered its head in greeting to Meng Hao!

Everyone was flabbergasted.

“This…. This….”

“The Dao Guardsman is kneeling to Meng Hao!?!?”

“How could Karma play out like this? Just what is going on!?!?”

“Even the Dao Guardsman is going to protect him…?” Blood oozed out of Fang Heshan’s mouth, and he began to laugh bitterly. Then, blood exploded out of his neck, and his head toppled off of his body, which then tumbled down toward the ground, dead.

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# Chapter 1000: The Fang Clan’s Second Dao Realm Expert!

In the same moment that everyone was flabbergasted by the appearance of the terracotta soldier, it lifted its head and looked at Meng Hao. Apparently sensing Meng Hao’s divine will, it hefted its greatsword and began to slaughter its way into the Fang Clan ancestral mansion.

As of this moment, the traitorous clan members were completely shaken mentally, and could feel fear rising up within them. The terrifying aura of a Quasi-Dao Paragon could easily slaughter any and all Ancient Realm experts.

Without a way to fight back against the terracotta soldier, the rebellion would be almost instantly crushed.

A powerful expert could, based on strength alone, crush any and all plots and schemes!

Rumbling filled the air as the terracotta soldier went on the attack. The loyal members of the Fang Clan were extremely excited, and the traitors had no choice but to fall back against the onslaught, their scalps numb. As of this moment, the battle had reached a complete turning point.

The various sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea were also astonished, and many of them had already come to the conclusion that the terracotta soldier must the Fang Clan’s trump card.

In the moment that the terracotta soldier began slaughtering its way through the ancestral mansion, suddenly, Ji Xiufang began to chuckle, and then sighed inwardly. Even though the Fang Clan was awash with torrents of blood, they still made her feel uneasy. She had not been able to tell what Fang Shoudao was thinking, and had been ever vigilant regarding their mysterious trump card.

However, now that the Fang Clan had played that trump card, Ji Xiufang became completely confident. Chuckling, she sent out a type of divine will that… instantly caused the faces of three of the Chosen outside in the starry sky to flicker.

Almost in the same moment that their expressions changed, fissures appeared in their foreheads. In the blink of an eye, those fissures had cut down to their jaws, and then past their chests.

It was as if a sharp blade had sliced them in half! Blood sprayed out as… three unfamiliar cultivators suddenly stepped out from inside of their bodies!

When they emerged, they were no larger than infants, and yet they rapidly grew bigger. They quickly grew to ordinary size, and soon it was obvious that they were three old men!

As soon as they appeared, their energy surged, and a strong Death aura rose up from them, as if not much of their flame of life remained to burn inside of them. Apparently their longevity had left them poised on the brink of death for years.

However, the auras they emitted indicated that they were extremely powerful. The starry sky trembled, and everything went dim, because these men… emanated the aura of Quasi-Dao Paragons!

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

As they stepped out, the other Chosen such as Fan Dong’er and the others stared in shock. Their hearts beat wildly as they witnessed everything that was happening.

The three old men smiled coldly, and it was obvious that their eyes were filled with madness. They looked like three Immortal Divinities, powerful enough to shake the Heavens. Endless ripples spread out into the stars, and everything trembled as they shot toward Planet East Victory.

Their speed was virtually indescribable, and they seemed deranged, bent on destroying everything, as if they wished to release all of the darkness that they had accumulated throughout their entire lives.

It didn’t matter what the horrifying consequences of their deaths would be, they wanted to go out in a blaze of glory!

All of the sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea looked at the three men with utter shock, and felt incredible coldness rising up in their hearts.

“So this is how the Ji Clan does things, huh…?”

“Three Quasi-Dao Paragons. Their descendants… are all sects that long since became subservient to the Ji Clan!”

“Wow… just how many years in advance did the Ji Clan prepare to overthrow the Fang Clan?!”

Up in the starry sky, Fang Shoudao also saw what was happening, and a strange expression could be seen on his face that no one could possibly interpret. When Ji Xiufang saw the look, she could suddenly hear her own heart pounding in her chest.

“You’re not worried?” she asked.

“Why would I be worried?” he responded. Fang Shoudao smiled slightly, then waved his hand, unleashing a divine ability as he resumed battling with Ji Xiufang.

“Could it be that the statue isn’t his trump card?” she thought, feeling shocked. “Where is Fang Shoudao’s confidence coming from?! Why is he so unperturbed!?!?” Killing intent gleamed in Ji Xiufang’s phoenix-like eyes. “Well, It doesn’t matter, I’ll worry about it after the Fang Clan is destroyed!”

Booms filled the air as the three Quasi-Dao Paragons descended upon Planet East Victory, filled with the madness of extermination, and shocking auras. The sky went dim, the ground quaked, and rivers flowed in reverse.

From the ground, the three men looked like shooting stars exuding an air of madness. They shot toward the Fang Clan ancestral mansion, sending massive pressure out ahead of them. The ground shook, and numerous buildings collapsed. The resulting dust didn’t dare to rise up into the air, but was crushed back down onto the surface of the ground.

All of the members of the Fang Clan looked on with flickering faces. Many couldn’t take the pressure, and coughed up mouthfuls of blood.

The three old men shot like meteors toward the terracotta soldier and the loyal members of the Fang Clan. The traitors immediately went wild with joy, and booms echoed out as slaughter was once again unleashed in the ancestral mansion.

The terracotta soldier looked up, then, without the slightest hesitation, flew up and went all-out with every scrap of power it had to block the descending three old men!

Everything went dim, the heavenly bodies shook, and a fierce wind kicked up.

Meng Hao’s mind trembled as he saw the terracotta soldier flying into battle. He saw the look of madness and violence in the three old men; they almost didn’t look like cultivators, but rather, wild beasts that wanted to exterminate all living things.

It was as if they wanted to make an accounting with all of Heaven and Earth.

“Why do we have to die so soon when other people can continue to live!? Since we’re going to die, the more people we can take with us to the grave, the more glorious it will be!”

“Quasi-Dao Paragon….” thought Meng Hao, instantly understanding the situation. The reason why Quasi-Dao experts were called Paragons was… because of fear. Because… people in that realm were absolutely insane.

Because they were on the verge of death, they had no fear. All of the darkness that had built up in their hearts could explode out at any time. Each and every one of them could make all living things weep.

The three old men laughed coldly, and when they spoke, their hoarse voices were filled with incredible savagery and insanity.

“Trifling statue! Screw off!”

“Today I will be baptized in blood! Not a single one of you vile Fang Clan cultivators will be left alive! You’ll all die!”

“From today forth, there will no longer be a Fang Clan in the Ninth Mountain and Sea! There will be a new clan!”

Booms could be heard as the terracotta soldier slammed into the three old men, who joined forces in attack, unleashing powerful divine abilities. The sun, moon, and the skies above materialized, transforming into three beams of destructive light that smashed into the terracotta soldier.

Massive booms could be heard as the terracotta soldier swung its greatsword, using all of its power to fight back against the three men. The terracotta soldier was forced back over and over again. Cracking sounds emanated out from it, and its body was covered in fissures. However, it vastly diminished the speed with which the three old men were advancing.

“Terracotta soldier!!” cried Meng Hao, his eyes bloodshot. His heart hurt to see even one crack on the gift left behind by his foster father, so the fact that numerous cracks were now visible tore at his insides. Unfortunately, the terracotta soldier was not capable of simultaneously fighting back against three opponents relying only on its own power. Furthermore, Meng Hao’s cultivation base was simply insufficient to make a difference in this genocidal battle.

The members of the Fang Clan were in a state of despair. Some let out miserable shrieks and resorted to self-detonation to protect the clan. Others stood there trembling, unsure of what to do.

All types of attitudes and characters appeared within the members of the Fang Clan at this point in time.

It was then that, all of a sudden, a cold harrumph could be heard echoing from outside of the ancestral mansion, from… the Dao of Alchemy Division. Next, an incredible aura exploded out from that same region, along with a dense cloud of insects.

They turned into a bright beam of light completely made up of… Unicorn Immortals!

In the middle of all the Unicorn Immortals was a person, who, when Meng Hao saw him, caused him to gape.

It was… Pill Elder Fang Danyun!

His cultivation base exploded with power similar to that of the six Patriarchs located underneath the Fang Clan. It was the rippling power of at least ten extinguished Soul Lamps. At first, it didn't seem powerful enough to even cause the Quasi-Dao Paragons to tremble. However, as they flew out, the Unicorn Immortals began to explode. They transformed into beams of light that bored madly into Fang Danyun, causing his cultivation base to rise up with shocking speed.

In the blink of an eye, Fang Danyun actually… began to emit the aura of a Quasi-Dao Paragon!!

This was not borrowed power used to increase his cultivation base. Instead… this was the loosening of a seal! The innumerable Unicorn Immortals were actually part of his cultivation base, and were now returning to him!

Fang Danyun had reached the peak of the Ancient Realm many years ago. Unfortunately, he had failed to enter the Dao Realm, and was actually a

Quasi-Dao Paragon. However, he did not go mad, and was eventually able to disperse the power that had built up inside his body. He fused that power into the bodies of the Unicorn Immortals, causing his cultivation base to fall back down. Because of that, he was able to preserve his life force and prevent it from dispersing!

After that, he had devoted himself to the Dao of alchemy in the hopes of refining some sort of medicinal pill that would allow him to seek a new Dao despite being a Quasi-Dao Paragon!

Now that the three Quasi-Dao old men were on the attack, Fang Danyun chose to explode out with power to defend the clan. Even though this would accelerate his death, it was still his decision.

A bright beam of light shot through the air to join the terracotta soldier in fighting viciously against the three Quasi-Dao experts.

Fang Danyun’s appearance on the scene caused the three old men to stare in shock. However, they weren’t too surprised by this turn of events. They waved their hands, causing booms to fill the air as four people and one statue fought a raging battle in the sky.

Meanwhile….

It was at this point that, all of a sudden, an incredibly shocking aura erupted from… the Medicine Immortal Sect!

On Planet East Victory, there was one other force that the Fang Clan had never once been adversarial to, and that was… the Medicine Immortal Sect!

According to the stories, the Patriarch of the Medicine Immortal Sect had forsaken the Fang Clan and established his own school of thought, which eventually became the Medicine Immortal Sect. In fact, they could concoct pills using Fang Clan pill formulas that even the Fang Clan couldn’t produce.

There were actually many rumors floating around Planet East Victory regarding the past relationship between the Fang Clan and the Medicine

Immortal Sect.

As soon as the aura exploded out, it filled Planet East Victory, suppressing all cultivators. This aura… was not that of the Ancient Realm, nor the Quasi-Dao Realm, but rather… the Dao Realm!!

In response to the eruption of the aura, the three Quasi-Dao experts' faces fell. In contrast, Fang Danyun didn't seem surprised at all, and continued fighting.

All of the loyal members of the Fang Clan suddenly felt their blood boiling in excitement.

Conversely, the traitorous clan members' hearts began to tremble. These shocking changes to the situation left them completely shaken.

Apparently, all the secret weapons had been deployed!!

"Ji Clan, this battle is over!" said an ancient voice. It echoed out from within the Medicine Immortal Sect, shaking everything like thunder. This was the Patriarch who had forsaken the clan years ago. Suddenly, he appeared, a middle-aged man with a calm expression. As he strode out, all of the traitorous clan members coughed up blood and were sent flying backward.

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# Chapter 1001: The Ji Clan’s Last Secret Weapon!

The various sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea were in an uproar. The Dao Realm Patriarchs had bright gleams in their eyes, and their expressions were extremely serious as they looked over at Planet East Victory, and the middle-aged man emerging from the Medicine Immortal Sect.

“Fang Yanxu!”

“It’s Fang Yanxu! He forsook the Fang Clan and started his own school of thought! He established the Medicine Immortal Sect….” 1

“So, he’s actually reached the Dao Realm. I remember that back in the day he was an Ancient Realm cultivator….”

“So, this is the Fang Clan, huh? Their hidden resources are so profound! The Medicine Immortal Sect is something that everyone knew about, and yet their allegiance went as unnoticed as a shadow in the lamplight!!”

Up in the starry sky, a slight smile could be seen on Fang Shoudao’s face, and there was a profound gleam of meaning in his eyes. Ji Xiufang, who was still locked in combat with him, suddenly felt her eyes go wide.

“Fang Yanxu…. So HE’s your trump card! I can’t believe you were able to hold off on allowing a Dao Realm expert like that to make an appearance…. More than half of the members of your clan have died, and you even waited for us to unleash our secret weapon before making your move!” But then, Ji Xiufang looked at Fang Shoudao and smiled.

“Unfortunately for you,” she said, “when the Ji Clan makes a move, we don’t lose! This is your final trump card, right?” She smiled, a smile as cold as ice. Then, just as suddenly, she felt her heart sinking. That was because Fang Shoudao actually… was not just calm. No, he was looking into her eyes with a profound look.

The sight of it once again filled Ji Xiufang with alarm.

“You’re bluffing!” she declared. A thousand thoughts ran through her head, but she couldn’t think of any area where something had been overlooked in their plan. She was certain that the Fang Clan did not have any more trump cards, and therefore, she smiled coldly at Fang Shoudao, and began to fight once again.

Booms echoed out in the starry sky, and down on Planet East Victory, the members of the Fang Clan were extremely excited. Meng Hao looked over at the middle-aged man approaching from off in the distance, and could clearly sense the Dao Realm Essence fluctuations.

The faces of the three old men from the Ji Clan instantly fell. Although their longevity was rapidly withering away, they still had decades of life left to live. Now that they were up against a Dao Realm expert, someone who was qualified to kill them in an instant, roaring filled their minds, and they instantly fell into retreat.

In that moment, however, Fang Yanxu of the Medicine Immortal Sect laughed and closed in. He waved his right hand, and an enormous power surged toward the retreating men.

Booms shook everything as Essence power exploded out. The three men let out shrill cries, and blood sprayed from their mouths as they retreated at top speed. As for all of the other traitorous clan members in the ancestral mansion, they began trembling, and likewise fell into frenzied retreat.

All of this seemed to be a complete reversal of the previous events. From the look of things, the rebellion was about to conclude!

However, for some reason, Meng Hao felt his heartbeat increasing. It was as if… something was about to occur that would cause a monumental change in all of the upheaval in the clan .

This feeling came completely unexpectedly, and only continued to grow more intense.

Up in midair, the three Quasi-Dao experts bellowed in rage. Realizing that flight was not an option, their madness overwhelmed them and they turned and shot toward Fang Yanxu. Rumbling echoed out, and the air was shattered. Wild winds screamed, and cracks appeared in the surface of the ground.

The attacks launched by the terracotta soldier and Pill Elder added hail to snow. Blood sprayed from the mouths of the three men, and they howled miserably. One of them lost his right arm, which exploded and vanished into a haze of blood.

They lashed out with extreme power, but it was all contained and blocked. Their faces filled with despair as the shadow of death spread out to cover their hearts.

Down on the ground, the traitorous clan members were being chased down and killed. More blood spread out, and countless people died. Even those who chose to flee ended up finding no place to flee to.

Elders fought viciously. Immortal Realm clan members battled. Spirit Realm clan members went equally wild.

Everything seemed to be turning around for the loyal clan members, and yet Meng Hao’s nervous sensation continued to grow more intense. It was as if… some eruption was about to occur.

As the Patriarchs of the sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea watched the battle, their feelings, although not as intense as Meng Hao’s, did cause them to hesitate.

“The resources of the Fang Clan are extremely profound…. They definitely deserve to be one of the Four Great Clans. However, when the Ji Clan attacks, could it really be resolved so simply?”

“The Fang Clan has unleashed all of their secret weapons. Does the Ji Clan… have anything left in reserve?”

“Could it be that the three Dao Realm experts outside the sealing shield will join in the battle?”

“Not likely. The Three Great Daoist Societies… have already quelled the uprisings in their respective organizations. If those three dared to enter the fight, the Three Great Daoist Societies would definitely seize the opportunity to make a move!”

“So… what trick does the Ji Clan have up its sleeve?” The Dao Realm Patriarchs all watched closely.

“Something’s off!” As Meng Hao looked around, he realized that apparently, nobody else had the same feeling as him. He seemed to be the only one in the entire clan who thought something fishy was going on.

Up in midair, booms rang out from the battles going on. Fang Yanxu was in a position of complete superiority, and when he attacked, massive explosions resulted. The three Quasi-Dao old men were already injured, and could just barely fight back. Blood spurted out from their wounds constantly, and they were clearly on the verge of being eradicated in spirit and body.

Down below, the traitorous clan members were suffering successive defeats. They were suffering gruesome and severe casualties, and it appeared to be impossible for them to ever again seize the upper hand.

Despite that, the sense of imminent disaster continued to grow stronger in Meng Hao.

He wasn’t sure why, but subconsciously, he found himself looking around at the members of the Fang Clan in the ancestral mansion. His gaze swept about, and just when he was about to give up, his eyes suddenly went wide, and fixed upon a single person.

That was… Fang Donghan!

Back on Planet South Heaven, he had helped Meng Hao escape from an ambush. After Meng Hao returned to the Fang Clan, he had not acted with any sort of hostility. Apparently, his main goal was to incite Meng Hao and Fang Wei into fighting each other. After they were both injured, then he would be able to rise to prominence.

That was what Meng Hao had always assumed. Now, as he looked over at Fang Donghan, his heart began to pound. That was because Fang Donghan's lips were suddenly twisted into a smile of derision. Apparently,he was not among the traitors, yet no fighting had occurred in his vicinity. He stood there, apparently able to remain concealed from the views of all others, completely overlooked by everyone around him.

Perhaps you could even say that he had been forgotten!

It was impossible to say what method he had used to make all of the other clan members forget his existence….

He was visible, but anyone that looked at him couldn't remember who he was; it was a strange sensation indeed.

When Meng Hao looked at him, he could apparently sense it, and looked back. Their gazes locked on to each other, and Meng Hao's mind filled with roaring. His face flickered as an unprecedented sensation of crisis exploded out within him.

Even as that happened, Meng Hao's vision swam, and he suddenly felt as if he were entering another world. It was a world where everything was as crimson as blood. The ground was like a mass of gore, and roaring sounds filled the air. All of a sudden, countless iron chains snaked up from the ground. They were red, as if they had been stained by unimaginable amounts of blood, and they flew out in Meng Hao's direction, instantly wrapping around him to bind him up.

He was absolutely powerless to resist, almost as if he had turned into a mortal. Even more terrifying to Meng Hao was the fact that he was incredibly sleepy, as if he couldn’t even keep his eyelids open.

No matter how alarmed he became, he was incapable of controlling his own body, and was clearly on the verge of falling fast asleep.

As the chains closed in on him, all of a sudden, the first generation Patriarch’s Nirvana Fruit suddenly began to vibrate inside of his bag of holding.

A tremor ran through him, and then he began to quiver all over. He suddenly woke up, and his eyes widened. The vision he had been experiencing shattered into fragments, which then turned into a windstorm that swept about in all directions. It was as if some massive power had reached out, grabbed ahold of him, and wrenched him forcibly out of that world.

Blood sprayed from his mouth as his vision returned to normal. He was still on Planet East Victory, in the Fang Clan. He could see Fang Donghan smiling at him, a cold, deviant smile. The sensation Meng Hao got was that of unspeakable fear and terror. It was as if there was something hiding inside of Fang Donghan… some sort of towering Immortal Divinity that could crush even the Dao Realm!

Fang Donghan looked deeply at Meng Hao, as if he were somewhat surprised that Meng Hao had been able to extricate himself from that strange world.

“He’s not Fang Donghan!!” Rumbling filled Meng Hao’s mind. A single glance had thrown him into a terrifying, blood-colored world, and Meng Hao got the feeling that if he didn’t possess that Nirvana Fruit, then… he would certainly have perished!!

Even after having been pulled out, he still coughed up blood, and his chest ached, almost as if his heart had been tugged at by invisible hands. His face was ashen as he backed up, and without the slightest hesitation, he called out to the terracotta soldier with divine will.

Get back here!!

The terracotta soldier was currently fighting alongside Fang Yanxu against the three Quasi-Dao experts. However, it didn't hesitate for even a moment. As soon as it sensed the divine will, it stopped attacking and shot back toward Meng Hao.

Even as the terracotta soldier started moving, Fang Donghan tilted his head, an icy smile plastered on his face. Then, he extended his right hand and gently waved it through the air.

That movement caused Fang Danyun's expression to fall. Rumbling sounds filled him, and blood sprayed from his mouth. He tried to retreat, but before he could move very far, blood spurted out all over his body. Cracking sounds could be heard as numerous rips and tears opened up. It happened ten times in a row, and in the blink of an eye, he was drastically weakened, and even began to emanate a boundless Death aura.

From the look of it, even a Quasi-Dao Paragon… could be severely wounded by a single handwave of Fang Donghan!

At the same time, Fang Yanxu let out a powerful roar as he performed a double-handed incantation gesture. Essence power exploded out, the Essence of plants and vegetation. Countless plants appeared in his vicinity, but they immediately withered up. Fang Yanxu coughed up a mouthful of blood as he tumbled backward. Apparently, even his cultivation base… was forced back by the attack!

The wave of a hand seriously injured Pill Elder and forced Fang Yanxu back. This turn of events was too sudden, and if the terracotta soldier had not been moving toward Meng Hao, it would have fallen apart.

"You…." said Fang Yanxu, his eyes wide with disbelief and astonishment. He looked down into the crowd from up in midair, at the person who everyone had overlooked and forgotten… Fang Donghan!

"The Ji Clan is more useless than I thought…." Fang Donghan said softly. He stepped up into the air, rising up, his hair floating around him. His appearance gradually changed, and as everyone watched, he became someone else, not Fang Donghan, but rather, a middle-aged man.

“Were it not for me awakening just in the nick of time, I’m afraid all of the Ji Clan’s preparations would have been in vain.” Fang Donghan shook his head as he hovered there in midair, his body emanating boundless cultivation base ripples. He looked like… a Paragon of Heaven and Earth. The sensation of bloodline ripples emanated out from him, making it clear that he was a member of the Fang Clan, filling all hearts with rumbling.

“Is there anyone left in the Fang Clan who recognizes me?” Fang Donghan said, his voice soft but boundlessly ancient.

1. Fang Yanxu’s name in Chinese is fāng yán xū. Yan means “speech” or “words.” Xu means “ruins”

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# Chapter 1002: Who Are You!?

Because of the bloodline aura that emanated off of him, everyone in the Fang Clan, including Meng Hao, could sense that… he was definitely not from the Ji Clan. He was definitely a member of the Fang Clan. Furthermore, the bloodline sense they felt indicated that he was older than almost all of the other clan members. He was incredibly ancient.

Meng Hao was shaken inwardly. This was the same type of feeling he had gotten from the corpse of the first generation Patriarch in the necropolis!

The entire ancestral mansion was completely quiet, and all clan members stared in shock.

Out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, the Dao Realm Patriarchs of the various sects and clans were shaken. Their eyes opened wide, and expressions of shock could be seen on their faces. The feeling they got when looking at Fang Donghan was… one of complete terror and fright!

“Who…?” The Dao Realm Patriarchs all felt their faces flickering, and they began to pant. Actually, none of them had the slightest impression of Fang Donghan.

“Who are you?!” Fang Yanxu’s face was pale, and he coughed up another mouthful of blood. His body was almost entirely black, as if some sort of curse power was spreading inside of him.

“Who am I?” asked Fang Donghan. Somehow, his expression exuded incredible archaicness.

“I’m Fang Daozi. I am… the eldest son of the first generation Patriarch. Have all you younglings of the Fang Clan forgotten about me?” 1

The voice was like thunder striking against all of the Heavens.

His single statement shook all of the sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. All who heard him, all of the cultivators who were watching, felt their minds battered by waves of shock.

“He’s… he’s… the eldest son of the Fang Clan’s first generation Patriarch?”

“That’s not possible! The Fang Clan’s first generation Patriarch was of the same era as Lord Ji. He died a long time ago, and his son couldn’t possibly have lived for so long!”

“Fang Daozi…. Fang Daozi…. Now that I think about it, I’m pretty sure I’ve read about that name in the ancient records of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.”

The cultivators were in an uproar. As for the Dao Realm Patriarchs, they looked on in wide-eyed shock. However, it didn’t take long for them to place the name.

“Fang Daozi!! I remember that in the earliest generation, there was someone by that name… who was personally killed by the first generation Patriarch. The reason was never made clear!”

“That person existed in an age far, far removed from our own? Is he really still alive?”

“What level has his cultivation base reached?”

Everyone outside the clan was shocked. Strangely, however, the members of the Fang Clan stared blankly. None of them had ever even heard of this eldest son of the first generation Patriarch.

It was almost as if there were no record of him in any of the clan’s histories at all. And yet, because of the bloodline sensation they got from him, they were certain about one thing. This Fang Daozi was absolutely, positively a member of the Fang Clan.

Furthermore, he had an ancient bloodline that was completely terrifying!

The Three Great Daoist Societies were shocked by this turn of events. They could never have imagined that a powerful expert like this would be hiding in the Fang Clan. Furthermore, his identity was shocking to the extreme. On top of all of that, he was colluding with the Ji Clan.

As Fang Daozi made his appearance on Planet East Victory, the Fang Clan’s Dao bell began to materialize in midair over the ancestral mansion. Then, it started to emit boundless light, and to toll.

That was… the tolling that could be heard when a clan member appeared with a very strong bloodline. After their identity was recorded in the bell, the resonance that formed caused the bell’s tolling to ring out.

The sound shocked all of the members of the Fang Clan to the core, and confirmed that Fang Daozi… was definitely a member of the Fang Clan.

“What an annoying sound,” said Fang Daoizi, sighing. “It reminds me of that damned old man. Shut UP!” His eyes flickered with an intense light, and as he spoke, the Dao bell suddenly stopped tolling. It went completely silent.

Meng Hao stood there in the crowd, panting. He looked up at Fang Daozi up in midair, and his heart trembled. There was really no possible way he could ever have imagined that there would be such drastic upheavals and momentous events within the Fang Clan.

Obviously… these upheavals were closely connected to Fang Daozi.

The fighting between the clan members in the ancestral mansion had come to a halt. Everyone was completely shocked as they looked up into the air. Even the traitorous clan members weren’t really sure what was happening.

Pill Elder’s face was pale white, and he fell back. Fang Yanxu wiped the blood from his face and glared down at Fang Daozi.

The three Quasi-Dao experts sighed in relief. After glancing fearfully at Fang Daozi, their eyes once again filled with the mad desire for destruction, and they glanced coldly at the hosts of cultivators in the Fang Clan.

“There really isn’t anyone who remembers me?” Fang Daozi said with a sigh, his voice incredibly ancient. He then waved his hand and pointed up into the air.

His finger caused the sky to shatter. A huge boom echoed out as a massive vortex appeared. It began to spin, causing rumbling sounds to echo out as something became visible in the vortex.

Shockingly, everyone could see Ji Xiufang and Fang Shoudao fighting each other.

Ji Xiufang then started to laugh. She quickly moved, stepping into the vortex and then appearing in midair above Planet East Victory.

“Xiufang offers greetings, Senior,” she said with a sweet smile, bowing to Fang Daozi.

Fang Shoudao’s face went very dark, and he pursued her into the vortex. After emerging from it, he turned to look at Fang Daozi, his eyes icy.

“Fang Shoudao,” Ji Xiufang said, smiling, “instead of looking at this as the Ji Clan attacking the Fang Clan, it would be better to say… that the Ji Clan is just paying back a favor to a Senior member of the Fang Clan.”

Fang Shoudao didn’t respond. He clasped hands and bowed to Fang Daozi.

“Shoudao offers greetings, Patriarch Daozi.”

Fang Daozi looked over at Fang Shoudao and smiled.

“You’re a descendant from Old Third’s bloodline, right?” he said coolly. “You know, I’m very disappointed by the Fang Clan. After all these years, you only have two Dao Realm experts…. Well, since that’s the case, I’m just going to have to disband the current Fang Clan, starting today!

“A new Fang Clan will begin on Planet East Victory, and I will lead it on a different path.” With that, he waved his right hand, causing miserable screams to rise up from the members of the Fang Clan. Only the traitorous members were unaffected. Everyone else felt their blood begin to boil, as if it were literally burning.

It was the same with Meng Hao. His blood began to boil, as if it wanted to explode out of him. Fang Danyun, Fang Yanxu and even Fang Shoudao all experienced the same thing.

Because of Fang Daozi, the entire clan instantly changed.

Meng Hao trembled, but endured the pain, his eyes shining with a strange light.

“Father definitely knew all of this was going to happen. He sent me here to Planet East Victory. Therefore… there must not be any real danger. The Fang Clan… must still have one more move left.”

Fang Shoudao was trembling. Considering the level of his cultivation base, he was incapable of stopping his blood from burning. From the feeling he got, Fang Daozi was in the Dao Realm, just like him. However, there was something completely unfathomable about him.

Fang Shoudao knew that in the Dao Realm, every additional Essence caused your cultivation base to experience drastic changes. A difference of one level was enormous, and yet, despite all this, Fang Shoudao’s expression didn’t reveal the slightest bit of alarm or shock. All he did was close his eyes.

That reaction caused Ji Xiufang to stare in shock. The alarm she felt in her heart continued to grow.

“For him to be so calm indicates that the Fang Clan hasn’t played all of their trump cards. Why is he so calm even when poised on the brink of destruction!?”

Even as shock filled Ji Xiufang’s heart, Fang Daozi caught sight of Fang Shoudao’s calmness, and his heart thumped. Gradually, an idea was forming within his mind that even he didn’t dare to think was possible.

As soon as the idea flared up, he pushed it down. He was just about to wave his hand, when his body began to tremble. His face then flickered rapidly, and his eyes flashed as they sought out Meng Hao from within the crowds.

When he looked over, Meng Hao’s mind trembled. However, he clenched his jaw and looked back at Fang Daozi. Next to thim, the terracotta soldier’s eyes flickered, and it moved to stand in front of Meng Hao, exploding out with power to help protect Meng Hao. It raised its greatsword, seemingly ready to pay any price, even be crushed into dust, to keep Meng Hao safe.

It was at this point that Fang Daozi’s face fell. “No. He’s not here… he’s….”

All of a sudden, he turned to look toward the rift from which the terracotta soldier had emerged.

He was looking… through the rift into the Ancestral Land!

“Impossible!!” Fang Daozi’s eyes widened as if he was looking at something completely and utterly unbelievable. He began to pant, his casual attitude disappeared, and his ancientness suddenly seemed to vanish. Without even thinking about it, he stepped backward a few paces, his eyes turning crimson.

“Impossible!! This is completely impossible!!” He seemed to be going mad. He roared and extended his right hand, pointing toward the rift. It was at this point that, all of a sudden, three streams of Essence qi shot out from Fang Daozi, causing everything to shake. Planet East Victory trembled so violently it seemed as though it might collapse.

One of those streams was just like Fang Yanxu’s Essence of plants and vegetation. It was an Essence of boundless life force, and as soon as it appeared, the sky dimmed and a huge wind kicked up.

The origin and source of all things is Essence!!

A thorough understanding of Essence, mastery and control of the control of Essence, that is the Dao Realm!

In addition to the Essence of plants and vegetation, there was a stream of flickering lightning that emitted rumbling sounds. That was… the Essence of lightning, an indestructible lightning that could eternally destroy everything in Heaven and Earth. When it appeared, the lightning bolt seemed to replace all the light in the world.

The third of Fang Daozi's Essence streams was, shockingly… an incredibly strong aura of Death. It was the will of the underworld and the Yellow Springs, a magic of reincarnation!

It was the Essence of reincarnation!

These terrifying Dao Realm Essences shot toward the rift, as if to completely destroy it.

However, even as the three streams of Essence neared the rift, a hand slowly stretched out from within. It waved a finger, and all of the Essences vanished. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust….

The hand was incredibly withered, as if it didn't contain an ounce of blood within it. It looked like an old, dead tree, and yet, power appeared within that finger. It was a power that could shock Heaven and Earth, and shook the minds of the Dao Realm experts of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Furthermore, unprecedented ripples spread out from the Ninth Mountain in that instant. It was as if there was someone in the Ji Clan who slept eternally… but had been awoken by the sudden appearance of that hand.

Fang Daozi's body trembled, and his face went ashen. A wild look of disbelief appeared in his eyes.

"The Withered Tree Blooms in Spring Incantation 2…. Impossible. He's dead! I saw it happen with my own eyes! I felt him die! His Essence vanished, and his soul doesn't exist anywhere in Heaven and Earth. He was never reborn into the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

"I'm absolutely certain, that… he really did die that year! He couldn't possibly be alive! Who are you? WHO ARE YOU!?!?" Fang Daozi's heart was pounding, and he was filled with indescribable fear as he yelled, raving madly.

1. Fang Daozi’s name in Chinese is Fāng dào zǐ – Dao is the same as “the Dao.” Zi is “son” or “child.” Actually, the Daozi is the same as what I usually translate as “Dao Child”

2. This magic is based on a Chinese idiom which means “to get a new lease on life, to be revived

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# Chapter 1003: First Generation Patriarch!

There had been many twists and turns during these upheavals in the Fang Clan. Fang Daozi had awakened; however, even that was not as astounding to the Ninth Mountain and Sea as this current scene.

The Dao Realm Patriarchs of all the sects and clans looked on with pale faces and trembling minds. When the hand stretched out of the vortex from the Fang Clan’s ancestral Land, their minds went completely blank.

The first generation Patriarch of the Fang Clan was a person from the history of the Ninth Mountain and Sea that could never be forgotten

Long ago, when chaos reigned, he followed the mysterious Lord Li on a long campaign to vanquish all the powers of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. He started out as nothing, yet rose to a level of prominence that placed him higher than all the Heavens. He carried out a slaughter which caused all to dread him. His mad valiance stained every corner of the starry sky as red as blood!

It was during that time that they also came to know Lord Ji. They were three stunning, outstanding figures in history, Paragons of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, people who became the nightmares of an era.

They eventually gathered a following of three Greater Demons, as well as numerous other powerful experts who joined them for the purpose of unifying the Ninth Mountain and Sea. In the end, there were nine great Doyens.

When the chaos of the Ninth Mountain and Sea was finally brought to an end, the Demon Immortal Sect was founded. It was the most powerful sect in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, a force that all other powers and sects had no choice but to pay obeisance to.

During feasts and other occasions, people would often say that without the first generation Patriarch of the Fang Clan, perhaps… Lord Li's war for the Heavens would have been much more difficult. That was because there were numerous occasions on which the first generation Patriarch of the Fang Clan risked his own life to save Lord Li.

Because of all of that, the first generation Patriarch of the Fang Clan rocked the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea. Even though he had passed away in meditation long ago, the one withered hand that appeared now filled the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea with shock.

The Three Great Daoist Societies were astonished, and a huge commotion rose from the Ji Clan on the Ninth Mountain.

In fact, the will of the eternally slumbering first generation Patriarch of the Ji Clan, who had become undying by fusing with the Heavens, suddenly awoke and… looked in the direction of his old friend.

In the moment that he awoke, all of the natural laws in the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea grew calm.

It was as if, in that moment, there was nothing left in the whole Ninth Mountain and Sea other than the hand that had emerged from that rift. As the Essence power dispersed, a figure appeared, clad in a long green robe. He stepped slowly out of the vortex to become the center of all attention.

All members of the Fang Clan who saw him felt their minds rumbling, as if they were being struck by a hundred thousand lightning bolts. This person was very familiar to them. How could they not know who he was? There wasn't a single clan member who hadn't seen his picture in the past, and bowed in worship to it.

It was… the first generation Patriarch of the Fang Clan!!

Meng Hao felt as if his scalp was about explode. The shock felt by everyone else was nothing compared to how he felt. That was because Meng Hao instantly realized that this man… was the same corpse he had seen sitting cross-legged in the necropolis!

“He’s… he’s actually alive!” thought Meng Hao, panting. Then he thought back to how he had practiced cultivation in the necropolis, presumably under this man’s observation, and he suddenly felt cold sweat dripping down his back.

As soon as the man stepped out of the vortex, Fang Shoudao’s eyes went wide with excitement and reverence.

“Greetings, first generation Patriarch!” he said, immediately dropping to his knees to kowtow.

Fang Yanxu’s expression was calm. His injuries from moments ago were still there, but the alarm on his face before had been an act. Now, a look of pious zealotry could be seen as he dropped down to offer worship.

Fang Danyun similarly dropped to his knees.

All members of the Fang Clan dropped to their knees, their hearts trembling. As for the traitorous clan members, they stood there for a moment, quivering. Then one of them, it was hard to say who, dropped down to kowtow, and they all followed suit.

Suddenly, the earth began to crumble, and a huge hole appeared, which stretched all the way down to reveal the Seventh Patriarch, and all of the other Patriarchs with him, all of whom ceased fighting and dropped down in worship.

Meng Hao’s eyes were wide as he followed along with everyone else to offer formal greetings to the first generation Patriarch.

His mind was spinning as he suddenly thought about the things his father had told him before he had left for Planet East Victory. He had seemed very certain that Meng Hao would not be in any danger on Planet East Victory.

“The Nirvana Fruits were just bait to get me to come here…” he thought in a sudden moment of realization.

Ji Xiufang stared, dazed, and her entire body trembled violently as the green-robed man walked out of the vortex. She began to pant, and her mind was reeling. She had also seen depictions of the first generation Patriarch of the Fang Clan, and had heard many of the terrifying legends about him.

He was a person who… had struck even Lord Ji with terror back in the days when the two of them were contending for control of the Heavens!

It took Ji Xiufang only a split second to understand everything.

“So this is Fang Shoudao’s trump card,” she thought. “He knew all along that the first generation Patriarch was still alive. The whole time, their goal… had nothing to do with the Ji Clan. It was all for… Fang Daozi!!”

When she saw the first generation Patriarch walking out, her face drained of blood. She suddenly realized that from the very, very beginning, she herself had been nothing more than a clown. She had been completely confident that victory was already in her grasp, that all contingencies had been planned for with nothing overlooked. However… she had completely miscalculated the most important thing!

The first generation Patriarch was actually still alive!

“How could this be…? The Fang Clan’s first generation Patriarch died! Even the Essence of the Ninth Mountain and Sea confirmed it! There is no way that he could still be alive! The Essence of the Ninth Mountain and Sea belongs to Patriarch Ji! How could he possibly have made a mistake!?!?” As Ji Xiufang felt shock rolling through her, Fang Daozi gazed at the figure walking out of the rift, and mentally collapsed.

“Impossible…. This is simply impossible….” Fang Daozi was shaking hard. The person he had most feared in his entire life was none other than his father, the first generation Patriarch.

That terror was so great that, in the years during which Lord Ji fought for control of the Heavens, he had chosen to Sever his own fear. That fear was his inner Devil, and without severing it, he would have found it very difficult to advance his cultivation base ever again.

That inner Devil was actually a fetter that he had shackled himself with. During the war, he had sided with the Ji Clan, and when it came time for the Ji Clan and the Fang Clan to fight each other, he was the first person in the history of the Fang Clan… to ever betray his clan.

He would never forget the look of disappointment in his father’s eyes, that expression of sadness and guilt that covered his face. When Fang Daozi saw that, he was incredibly happy, and even started to laugh out loud.

You founded the Fang Clan? Well I’m going to destroy it! That’s because I’m going to make a new Fang Clan, MY Fang Clan!

Those were the words Fang Daozi had spoken when his father had suppressed him. He had even laughed.

The Fang Clan lost that war. The Ji Clan won, gaining control of the Heavens, and securing Lordship of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. The reason for their victory wasn’t solely because of the traitor Fang Daozi, but his betrayal had played a significant role.

As for Fang Daozi, he was eventually put down by the first generation Patriarch. Despite his grave crimes, the Patriarch couldn’t bear to kill him. He destroyed his body, letting his soul remain behind to be reborn as a new member of the Fang Clan.

By the time the first generation Patriarch passed away into meditation, Fang Daozi had been reborn numerous times into the Fang Clan. Were it not for Ji Tian’s use of Karma magic after the passing away of the first generation Patriarch, then perhaps Fang Daozi would have remained in that cycle of rebirth for all time. Life after life, never remembering who he was.

However, because of the magic of Karma, he awoke.

Then, he remembered everything that had happened, and that wild desire for the destruction of the clan burned in him once again.

He remained deeply hidden, restoring his cultivation base, not letting even a single hint out about his true identity. Eventually, he died and was reborn again. From then on, though, he awoke every time he experienced rebirth. Each time, he would continue to practice his cultivation, and gradually grew stronger and stronger.

However, he never dared to make a move. Although he had heard his father died, he wasn’t absolutely, positively certain he was dead. He also wasn’t sure whether his father had left behind any precautions before dying. However, he was patient. He waited and watched, never making a move, waiting until he was sure that he would succeed.

However, when Fang Heshan crushed that jade slip, the plan went into motion early. Fang Daozi’s hand was forced. Of course, even if the plan been carried out at some later time, the Fang Clan would still have been thrown into complete chaos because of the preparations made by the Ji Clan.

Their willingness to put the plan into action was due to the matter of the legacy of Lord Li, a legacy that even Lord Ji had not been able to acquire. The Ji Clan had suddenly calculated that destiny related to that legacy was on Planet East Victory.

Fang Daozi had waited until he was sure the Fang Clan had shown its entire hand, and was on its last legs. He was made even more confident… when Meng Hao absorbed the first generation Patriarch’s Nirvana Fruit. Because of the bloodline sensation that Fang Daozi experienced, he was finally fully convinced that his father really was dead!

Therefore, he finally chose to reveal himself, and step into the light.

He had never imagined that after all of his analyses, after all of his preparations, in the moment when he was just about to succeed, all of a sudden he would find out that his father… wasn’t actually dead!

“This is impossible! If you weren’t really dead, why didn’t you kill me earlier…?” cried Fang Daozi, trembling.

The person to answer was not the first generation Patriarch, but rather, Fang Shoudao.

“We were aware of the identities of all of the traitorous members of the Fang Clan,” he said softly, “except for you. We could have killed them at any time. However, that wouldn’t have done any good. As long as you remained alive, wiping them out would only be postponing the calamity.

“As for you, we really couldn’t figure out who you were…. Only Ji Tian could possibly pick up clues regarding the first generation Patriarch’s magical technique. Even I couldn’t determine who you had been reborn as.

“Only your death can ensure that the roots of the Fang Clan’s catastrophe would be severed.

“Therefore, we set up this elaborate scheme, the purpose of which… was to lure you out!” As he spoke, his eyes shifted over to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s face flickered. His heart was filled with complicated emotions as he looked at the rivers of blood staining the grounds of the ancestral mansion.

When the Second Patriarch, Fourth Patriarch and Sixth Patriarch heard Fang Shoudao’s words, their faces went pale white.

“Well, who cares if you’re still alive!?” growled Fang Daozi. “I might not have succeeded this time, but at least… I get to take a lot of members of the Fang Clan to the grave with me! That’s good enough!” Fang Daozi threw his head back and laughed, his expression vicious. The instant he saw his father walk out, he knew… that he was defeated.

However, what he said as true. More than half of the entire clan had been killed. Rivers of blood and mounds of corpses could be seen everywhere.

Fang Shoudao didn’t reply. He looked at Fang Daozi, his expression complex. As the Fang Clan’s Earth Patriarch, he was aware of Fang Daozi’s whole story. He also knew that Fang Daozi wasn’t aware of the whole truth of the matter, which caused him to sigh.

“Senior Daozi,” he said quietly, “this planet… is not the same Planet East Victory it used to be.”

In response, Fang Daozi gaped, and his face fell. It was as if he had suddenly remembered something which caused his jaw to drop in shock.

It was in that moment that Fang Shoudao turned to the first generation Patriarch and bowed deeply.

The green-robed first generation Patriarch, who hadn’t said a single word so far, extended his hand towards the lands around him.

Withered Tree… Blooms in Spring!

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# Chapter 1004: The Fang Clan!

“Withered Tree, Blossoms in Spring” contained two meanings. One meaning was that in the conclusion of all things that was death, there would often appear a bit of life. It was just like reincarnation, which connected life and death. It was a cycle, an endless, never-ending cycle.

Another meaning of the expression… was not that of reincarnation.

It was a meaning that pertained to a type of cycle, but not the blooming of spring; yet, it was equally about life.

Meng Hao looked on in astonishment as the first generation Patriarch waved his hand. Then, he watched wide-eyed as one of the most shocking things he had ever before witnessed played out in front of his very eyes.

What he saw was time suddenly come to a stop both inside and outside the ancestral mansion. Then, everything began to move backward!

Breath by breath, moment by moment, everything began to go in reverse. Blood that had sprayed out was returned to the body. Severed heads returned to the necks that they had left. Everyone who had toppled over in death, once again stood in place. People running forward began to speed backward. Adversaries locked in deadly fighting split apart.

Meng Hao panted as this happened to everyone in the entire Fang Clan, with the exception of himself and five other people. None of those five people seemed very surprised by what was happening.

They were: the first generation Patriarch, Fang Shoudao, Fang Yanxu, Fang Danyun and Fang Daozi.

Everyone else, including Ji Xiufang and the three Quasi-Dao experts, as well as everyone else in the Fang Clan, was affected by the magic.

Meng Hao panted as he saw fighting clan members separate and move back in time to their original positions. Even more shocking to Meng Hao was that he could actually… see himself.

He saw the entire fight with Fang Wei. He saw the deaths of Fang Wei, Fang Xiushan, and Fang Heshan, all playing in reverse. Everyone who should have been dead, was now alive.

To be able to watch such things happening led to an indescribable feeling. Meng Hao was completely rattled.

Throughout the entire Fang Clan, time flowed in reverse. The blood that stained the ground vanished, and everyone who had died appeared alive once again, until finally, everyone was watching Meng Hao and Fang Wei fighting up in midair.

Suddenly, in the blink of an eye, everything went motionless.

Meng Hao stood there, expression blank as he stared.

It was at this point that the first generation Patriarch waved his hand again, causing all of the members of the Fang Clan who had died to all vanish. The loyal ones disappeared in the blink of an eye, leaving behind only the traitorous clan members.

Even Fang Wei disappeared.

Next, the first generation Patriarch clenched his hand into a fist. Rumbling sounds could be heard as the world in front of him collapsed. As it did, numerous dots of light could be seen falling down to the ground.

Back in the ancestral mansion, the loyal clan members who had died could now be seen, their expressions blank but tinged with disbelief.

“What just happened? I remember… I remember dying!”

“What is this place? Is this… still the Fang Clan?”

“Just what exactly is going on!?” The resurrected members of the Fang Clan looked around in shock. The surrounding traitorous clan members began to tremble violently. Then, blood sprayed out of their mouths and their gazes went dark as they toppled dead to the ground.

The Second Patriarch died. The Fourth and Sixth Patriarchs… died. They all died.

There was not a single exception!

Anyone who had betrayed the clan instantly died!

It was as if their deaths were the price that had to be paid to return the dead clan members to life!

Meng Hao looked out into the crowds and saw a young man who was… none other than Fang Wei!

As Fang Wei looked around, his expression was at first blank. However, his eyes quickly grew clear, and eventually, he found himself looking back at Meng Hao. His expression was a complex one as he sighed inwardly.

The cultivators of the various sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea watched with spinning minds. Even the Dao Realm Patriarchs were trembling, and looked terrified.

“A transformation between life and death? I can’t believe that the first generation Patriarch of the Fang Clan… has actually reached such a realm!!”

“But, how come I feel that this isn’t transformation, but rather… that he actually reached back in time, grabbed those dead people, and then pulled them here. W-what kind of cultivator is he? To be able to do something like that is absolutely terrifying!!”

“How enigmatic! The Fang Clan’s first generation Patriarch is impossible to predict!!”

As of this moment, Meng Hao finally realized why his father had been so certain that he was completely safe…. Also, he was now completely sure that his father had played a part in this plan regarding the first generation Patriarch.

“Fudge!” he thought. “Of course I was completely safe. Even if I died, the first generation Patriarch could bring me back…. But… but a magical technique like that is simply too Heaven-defying! How could a Dao like that even exist!?” His heart still surged with waves of shock. For some reason, he had the feeling that the terrifying first generation Patriarch’s magical technique was something that could only be used a limited number of times.

Also, it must surely come with some sort of backlash effect, as well as… other limitations. Otherwise, the Fang Clan couldn’t possibly have lost their war with the Ji Clan!

“Could it be that it only works on Planet East Victory?” he thought, his eyes narrowing. Then he thought back to something Fang Shoudao had said.

Planet East Victory is not the same Planet East Victory it used to be…. Meng Hao’s heart trembled, and an idea suddenly popped up in his mind.

He thought about how the ultimate form of One Thought Stellar Transformation was… to transform into a planet!

His eyes went wide as he looked down at the ground beneath his feet. He almost couldn’t believe that it was true.

“So THIS… is the Fang Clan?” he thought, his mind reeling.

Almost in the same moment that the members of the Fang Clan were resurrected, Ji Xiufang’s heart filled with waves of astonishment. A critical sensation of life and death danger filled her. Without any further hesitation, she tried to flee, flying up into the air toward the starry sky. Whether or not she could succeed in escaping was irrelevant, she had no choice but to try.

She had never before seen a Daoist magic like this one, and seeing all of the members of the Fang Clan being resurrected filled her with intense fear.

It was the same with the three Quasi-Dao old men. Although they were insane, they were still capable of feeling fear. Scalps numb, faces pale, they turned and fled.

Fang Daozi stared blankly as the other clan members were resurrected, and slowly, a look of bitterness appeared in his eyes.

“It was all just a play,” Fang Shoudao said softly, looking at Fang Daozi with a look that contained both empathy and pity.

A play. A play in which even the Ji Clan had become nothing but actors, actors come to participate in a grand performance. The fact that the first generation Patriarch could be so domineering as to plot out such an enormous play caused Meng Hao to inhale deeply in shock.

However, he still had a strange feeling. Why… did the first generation Patriarch seem to… completely lack any sort of expression?

“Considering that father managed to reach the point of being able to transform into a planet,” said Fang Daozi, a complex expression flickering in his eyes, “if he had wanted to find me, it would have been a simple matter.” He looked hesitatingly toward Fang Shoudao.

“Because your father didn’t want that,” Fang Shoudao explained.

When Fang Daozi heard that, he began to shake. Then he threw his head back and burst out with bitter, uproarious laughter. He turned to look at the first generation Patriarch in his green robe, his expression one of grief, fury, and countless other emotions.

Considering who he was, and the level of his cultivation base, how could he not understand the situation? The first generation Patriarch in front of him was not his father’s true self. His father… was really and truly dead.

What had appeared right now was, not really a clone, but actually… his father incarnated as a planet, then left behind as a trump card for the Fang Clan.

He was… the soul of the planet!

It was the soul of his father in a different state of existence!

Despite being dead, despite being the soul of a planet, he still complied with the dying wishes of the first generation Patriarch and did not seek out the reincarnated version of Fang Daozi, who harbored such evil intentions toward the clan.

“After the first generation Patriarch passed away into meditation, he left behind some dying words that I came to hear after I became the Earth Patriarch. Only recently did I come to understand that those words were actually meant for you.

“He believed that eventually, the day would come in some particular generation that you would become the Fang Clan’s Earth Patriarch, and thus, he left those words behind for you.” Fang Shoudao looked at Fang Daozi with a complicated expression.

“Those words were… Everything I told you the year that I suppressed you… was true.”

“True…. True….” Fang Daozi began to laugh with even greater bitterness. He looked over again at the figure of his father, a middle-aged man in a green robe. He would never forget the year that his father suppressed him, and what he had said. Back when he and the Ji Clan both followed Lord Li on the campaign trail, the Ji Clan had sown Karma onto the newly born Fang Daozi.

That Karma was very deep, and required the expenditure of almost all of Lord Ji’s cultivation base, such that even the first generation Patriarch couldn’t detect it.

By the time he did, it was too late. He went to war with the Ji Clan, not for rulership of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, but rather, for revenge.

Fang Daozi laughed bitterly, then flew up into the air, his thoughts in chaos. He no longer wished to remain on Planet East Victory, nor to see the other members of the Fang Clan. His head hurt, and madness filled him as he shot up into the starry sky.

Meng Hao felt torn as he watched Fang Daozi. Then he turned to look at the first generation Patriarch, and couldn't help but think about Ke Yunhai and Ke Jiusi. He also thought about his own father.

"Fang Xiufeng, Fang Xiufeng," he sighed. The more he thought about the situation, the angrier Meng Hao got. "Are you really my dad…? You were willing to throw your own son into a perilous situation like this? Well, you're my dad so I can't say anything, but is mom going to let you off the hook?"

Fang Shoudao did nothing to stop Fang Daozi. He watched him attempting to leave, then clasped hands and bowed deeply toward the first generation Patriarch.

"Patriarch, please execute those who have offended our clan!"

The first generation Patriarch's expression was the same as ever as he extended his right hand and pointed up into the sky. Rumbling could be heard, and a monstrous killing aura could be sensed. Shockingly… that aura did not come from the first generation Patriarch, but rather… it exploded out from the planet itself.

In that moment, all of the plants and trees on Planet East Victory, all of the numerous buildings, all of the living things, exploded with the desire to kill. This was the wrath of an entire planet!

The intense killing intent surged up into the sky, passing Fang Daozi without hurting him in the least. However, when it slammed into the Quasi-Dao experts, the three old men were instantly killed.

Wiping them out was as easy as crushing dried weeds. They weren’t even qualified to fight back. Booms could be heard as they were transformed directly into ash. Then, the killing intent spread out further into the starry sky, where it caught up to Ji Xiufang. Her level of terror couldn’t have been any higher as the killing intent slashed toward her.

“Patriarch, save me!!” she screamed, scared out of her mind. Despite being a Dao Realm expert, compared to the killing intent of an entire planet, she was weak beyond compare!

As of this moment, all of the powers in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were being given a demonstration… of the supremely domineering power that the Fang Clan had kept hidden for so long!

They were using actions to tell everyone that the Fang Clan… was just as powerful as it had always been! Anyone who offended the Fang Clan… would be executed no matter how far they tried to run!

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End of Book 6: Fame That Rocks the Ninth Mountain; the Path to True Immortality

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# Chapter 1005: Hope Regarding the Ancient Realm!

As the killing intent of virtually the entire planet began to envelop Ji Xiufang, an ancient voice calmly spoke out from the Ninth Mountain, echoing out to fill the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea.

“Elder Brother Fang….” said the voice, seemingly filling the entire starry sky of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Planets trembled, and innumerable ripples shrank down into the form of an eye.

Within that eye, an old man sat cross-legged. He had white hair, and looked very ancient, and as he spoke, he lifted his right hand and pointed toward Planet East Victory.

As he pointed, boundless ripples spread out through the starry sky, covering Planet East Victory as if to prevent the first generation Patriarch from attacking.

Up to now, the first generation Patriarch hadn’t spoken a single word. Now, his hoarse voice echoed out, speaking a single sentence that caused the ripples in the starry sky to suddenly stop in place.

“I demand rectification!”

At the same time, Ji Xiufang screamed miserably. The sound echoed out as her head was separated from her body. Her body was then crushed into nothing but fragments, as if by a gigantic hand.

She was annihilated, destroyed in both spirit and body!

Even an almighty Dao Realm expert couldn’t stand up to a single blow from the killing intent of the first generation Patriarch!

In the moment that Ji Xiufang died, a boom could be heard as the killing intent slammed violently into the sealing shield surrounding Planet East Victory. Cracking sounds could be heard as the spell, being maintained by the combined forces of three of the Ji Clan’s Dao Realm experts, collapsed into pieces.

It shattered into countless tiny pieces that were swept up by a massive wind, which then blew them away from Planet East Victory. Innumerable fissures then opened up in the void, spreading out in a way that resembled a spider web.

The three Dao Realm experts were scared witless, and their minds filled with roaring. Their faces fell as they did everything they could think of to escape, even to the point of unleashing Essence power.

However… the killing intent from Planet East Victory was as intense as ever, enough to shake all of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

“Patriarch, save us!!” The three Dao Realm experts were so scared they felt as if their scalps were about to explode. An intense sensation of deadly crisis filled them, a feeling of fear that they had not experienced for a long, long time. It was as if… the killing intent from Planet East Victory wanted to wipe them clean away from the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Any one of these people could set foot onto any planet in the Ninth Mountain and Sea and make it tremble. A mere glance from them could send a sect rising to the top, or could destroy it. But now, they were so terrified that their hearts were trembling.

They knew that the killing intent of the Fang Clan’s first generation Patriarch… could prevent them from entering reincarnation. They would never be reborn, and would truly be erased from the world.

They could only watch as the killing intent bore down on them, three Dao Realm Patriarchs of the Ji Clan. It was at this point that more ripples spread out through the starry sky, as if some power were forcefully interposing itself between the killing intent and the three old men. The ripples formed together into a huge, illusory eye.

The eye appeared to be ancient, and as soon as it appeared, it stared fixedly at the killing intent.

“Elder Brother Fang, enough! You’re not a match for me.”

The killing intent came to a stop in front of the eye. Scintillating light spread out as it formed into the shape of a person. It was the first generation Patriarch, who hovered there, formed from countless motes of shining light that made his visage somewhat blurry.

At the same time, the old man sitting cross-legged within the eye looked over calmly at the first generation Patriarch.

“I might not be able to seal the Heavens, but I can shatter the Heavens of the Ninth Mountain and Sea,” the first generation Patriarch said coolly. As his voice echoed out, Meng Hao was standing down on Planet East Victory. Even with the level of his cultivation base, he was able to see what was happening. He looked up into the sky and saw the killing intent of the first generation Patriarch. He watched him slaughter a Dao Realm expert, and then cause the other three Dao Realm cultivators to flee for their lives. All of this caused Meng Hao’s eyes to gleam with a strange light.

“One of these days, I’m going to be just as powerful as him!” he thought, panting. When he heard the first generation Patriarch’s words, an even stranger expression rose up on his face.

“How come it seems like these two guys are playing chess? One of them knows he can’t outplay the other, but he still gives the impression that if he gets pissed off enough, he could just flip over the game board….” Meng Hao cleared his throat. For some reason he suddenly realized that he quite liked the style of the first generation Patriarch.

Up in the starry sky, the old man in the giant eye didn’t respond to the Fang Clan’s first generation Patriarch.

“The Ji Clan is not permitted to step half a pace into the starry sky surrounding Planet East Victory,” the first generation Patriarch said slowly.

The old man in the giant eye looked deeply at the first generation Patriarch, then slowly nodded. Finally, the eye flew backward, enveloped the three Dao Realm experts, and then vanished.

The matter of Ji Xiufang and the three Quasi-Dao old men wasn’t brought up…. Apparently, the Ji Clan was willing to give them up as the price to pay to the Fang Clan to end the situation.

When the giant eye faded away, the image of the first generation Patriarch also disappeared. No figure was visible, and the killing intent vanished. Everything went back to normal.

However, the Ninth Mountain and Sea was only beginning to be shaken.

All of the sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea witnessed the rise of the Fang Clan that day. They personally watched as the Fang Clan of former glory, which had remained quiet and silent for so many years, once again became one of the most domineering forces in the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Even the Ji Clan had to pay the price, which caused all cultivators to gasp. Now, they looked toward the Fang Clan with expressions of shock and fear.

The Fang Clan had remained quiet for a long time, leading many people in the Ninth Mountain and Sea to believe that their strength was just for show. Now, such notions were shattered. The Fang Clan made it very clear to everyone that they were just as domineering as they always had been!

The reappearance of the first generation Patriarch, despite him being a clone, or more accurately, the soul of Planet East Victory, caused everyone who witnessed the event to be thoroughly shaken. Furthermore, it became known that, in addition to the first generation Patriarch, the Fang Clan had two Dao Realm experts. In the end, though, it was the first generation Patriarch himself that was the most shocking deterrent.

Considering the Ji Clan was incapable of exterminating the Fang Clan, how could any of the other sects and clans possibly be qualified to be on an equal footing with them?

The Ninth Mountain and Sea was completely and utterly shaken.

The Dao Realm Patriarchs of the various sects and clans mused on the matter silently. It was now with great caution and fear that they looked toward Planet East Victory and the Fang Clan.

The first generation Patriarch had slaughtered Dao Realm experts, instilling such fear that they could only gasp in response.

“Considering the Fang Clan is like this, they fully deserve to be called… the despots of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.”

“When the Fang Clan revealed all their trump cards in that battle, and allowed everyone to see, you would think that would remove some of their air of mystery. And yet… that final trump card is simply too astonishing….”

After much thought, the Dao Realm experts sighed and returned to their various organizations.

It was in this manner that the upheavals of the Fang Clan ended. The Fang Clan was the clear winner. The fangs bared by the Ji Clan were shorn clean, and they were forced to pay the price of one Dao Realm expert and three Quasi-Dao cultivators.

At the same time, the problem of the traitors within the Fang Clan was handled perfectly. After the baptism of blood, the Fang Clan… was more stable than ever.

In addition to the presence of the first generation Patriarch, the Fang Clan also had a worthy successor. First was Meng Hao, who was already stunning beyond compare, a person the Ninth Mountain and Sea would never forget. Joining Meng Hao was Fang Wei.

The fact that Fang Wei was focused on defending the clan to the death was something that many people had noted.

Meng Hao and Fang Wei were now objects of admiration and envy on the part of the other sects and clans.

“First they have Meng Hao, who stifled all of the members of his generation! His path… will definitely stretch far and wide. And then there’s Fang Wei. He might be a bit weaker than Meng Hao, but he’s strong enough to defend the clan!”

“One will wage battle outside the clan, the other will remain inside to defend it! With the two of them, the Fang Clan will only achieve greater heights of glory….”

“No wonder the Ji Clan attacked the Fang Clan. It won’t be too long before… the Fang Clan might be strong enough to contend with Lord Ji for control of the Heavens again. After all, they’re the Fang Clan, ya know? They used to be just like the Ji Clan, a powerful clan of warriors!”

“The Ji Clan has their Karma, and the Fang Clan has their reincarnation. Two warrior clans who caused a rain of blood to fall upon the Ninth Mountain and Sea back in the day….”

The war of the Fang Clan ended. However, it didn’t take long before the various sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea sprang into action. Various Patriarchs prepared to personally take their Chosen to Planet East Victory to offer congratulatory gifts due to the appearance of the first generation Patriarch.

After the Ji Clan left, Planet East Victory returned to normal. The only thing that remained of the traitorous clan members was their blood that stained the ground, and the reek of gore that filled the air. The resurrected clan members were filled with complex feelings. Under the direction of the Grand Elder, the recovery work began.

Fang Wei stood there silently. After looking around, bitterness rose up in his heart, and he bowed his head.

The first generation Patriarch did not stay. The whole clan bowed deeply in respect as he reentered the rift to the ancestral land. In the moment before he disappeared, he turned and looked at Meng Hao for a moment.

In that moment, a tremor ran through Meng Hao, and the first generation Patriarch’s voice suddenly rang out in his mind.

“You have signs of the legacy of Lord Li on you…. The legacy of Lord Li is connected to East Victory. At the same time, it is no longer on Planet East Victory; it has already been acquired by a cultivator from this planet.

“As for the Ji Clan sowing chaos here in the Fang Clan, that also had to do with the legacy. Actually, the legacy was used simply to draw out the Ji Clan; a strategy, that’s all. However, when the time comes to activate it, if it is connected to you by destiny, then you should be able to do so.

“One Thought Stellar Transformation…. Without a bloodline clone, it’s impossible to cultivate it to the final degree!

“Nirvana Fruits… use them well. The members of the Fang Clan have four lives. If you combine them together at the right time, then you can open… the door to the Ancient Realm!

“You and I are connected by destiny, drawn together by blood…. The Ancient Realm begins with Dao Fruit, but you… if you begin with Nirvana Fruit, then you can accomplish something completely unheard of and shake the entire Nine Mountains and Seas!”

The ancient voice echoed in Meng Hao’s ears before fading away. Meng Hao trembled as he watched the first generation Patriarch step into the rift and then vanish.

After hearing the Patriarch’s words, Meng Hao’s eyes began to shine. Gradually he came to a new understanding. Before, he had been confused as to the role played by the Nirvana Fruits in the whole matter. How effective would they have been if Fang Heshan had been able to resist the urge to spring into action? If that had happened, wouldn’t it mean that the entire series of events simply wouldn’t have occurred?

Meng Hao now understood that the core element of the plan hadn’t been his Nirvana Fruits, but rather, the revelation regarding the legacy of Lord Li. That was why the Ji Clan had made their move.

“One Thought Stellar Transformation… a Daoist magic that, when cultivated to the ultimate degree, can be used to incarnate into a planet….” The starstone in his right eye glittered, causing his heart to pound even faster. According to what the first generation Patriarch had said, the Ancient Realm… was not too far away for him.

“I have two Nirvana Fruits from the first generation Patriarch, and two of my own. Nirvana Fruits can allow members of the Fang Clan bloodline to live four lives!

“Four Nirvana Fruits, when I can absorb all of them with no time limit… that… is when I will step into the Ancient Realm!” Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a bright light. The sight of the first generation Patriarch slaughtering members of the Dao Realm once again flashed in his mind.

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# Chapter 1006: The Sword and the Shield of this Generation!

Meng Hao took a deep breath, and his eyes shone with a brilliant light. After a moment, he sent some divine will into the terracotta soldier.

The terracotta soldier could not stay outside of the ancestral land for a long time. After receiving Meng Hao’s instructions via divine will, it faced him, then clasped hands and bowed. Meng Hao didn’t feel like parting with it, and yet could only watch as it entered the rift and turned into a statue once again.

“One day I’ll do the same thing as the first generation Patriarch! I’ll use a piece of the Ruins of Immortality… to take you away. That way you… can accompany me as I wage war among the Heavens!” Meng Hao made this promise to the terracotta soldier deep in his heart. It was a promise, a guarantee, much the same as the one he had made to Han Shan that year in the Realm of the Bridge Ruins. He would never forget such promises.

After the terracotta soldier entered the ancestral Land, the rift closed, and then vanished.

The sky above the Fang Clan returned to its normal state. However, the land itself seemed wasted. Signs of withering could be seen on countless plants and trees, and the spiritual energy of the entire planet had apparently been reduced.

Although the upheavals in the clan had not resulted in any overt losses, in reality, the entire planet had been weakened, not to mention the loss of all the traitorous clan members.

Meng Hao stood there thoughtfully for a moment before coming to the conclusion that the weakening of Planet East Victory must have something to do with the first generation Patriarch's awakening.

An intensely powerful entity like that, a person willing to flip the game board over rather than continue playing, who could strike fear into the heart of Lord Ji himself, could obviously not be awakened easily.

By now it was evening and, off in the distance, the sun was scattering its twilight rays over the land. The resurrected clan members were lost in reminiscence, thinking about the many people who had once existed around them. No wild joy broke out because of the resolution of the chaos in the clan.

In contrast, heavy sighs existed in the hearts of all the clan members.

The ordinary clan members felt this way, and Fang Wei even more so. It was the same with Fang Shoudao, Fang Yanxu, and Fang Danyun, who hovered silently in midair.

"It's over," Fang Shoudao said softly, looking out over the entire Fang Clan. His voice was deep and archaic, and as it echoed out, all of the clan members looked up into the sky.

"Mortal bodies can sometimes contract vile ailments. If sicknesses like that are not expunged, they can lead to death.

"Clans can also be infected with ailments!

"Yesterday, a foul disease lurked deep within the Fang Clan. If it were to explode out, it would definitely affect the entire clan! Today, that ailment was rooted out. Although our Fang Clan is now grieving and in pain, at least we now have a new lease on life!

"Tomorrow will be a new day for us! We will cause all cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea to recall the glory of the Fang Clan!

"I will no longer remain in secluded meditation. From now on, I will assume the office of Clan Chief. I will lead the Fang Clan to unparalleled heights of glory!" As Fang Shoudao's words echoed out, it caused flames to ignite in the eyes of all of the members of the Fang Clan down below. It was as if his voice carried some mysterious power that entered the clan members' hearts and caused them to burn with determination.

Fang Wei stood there silently, completely alone, with no clan members even willing to approach him. He had no friends left. His father, his grandfather, and all of the other members of his bloodline were all dead.

He was the only one who had been resurrected.

Fang Yanxu hovered in midair, looking at Fang Wei immersed in his bitterness, and sighed inwardly. He waved his finger down toward Fang Wei, causing him to shudder, and then suddenly lurch up into the air. All members of the clan watched as he flew over toward Fang Yanxu.

As Meng Hao watched what was happening, he suddenly realized that Fang Wei's corpse had long since vanished from within his bag of holding.

"Are you still willing to defend the Fang Clan?" Fang Yanxu asked calmly.

Fang Wei began to tremble. After a long moment of silence, he looked down at the other members of the Fang Clan, and at Meng Hao. Finally, he turned back to Fang Yanxu, clasped hands, and bowed deeply.

"To defend the Fang Clan has been my primary aspiration in life!"

By this point, all of the members of the Fang Clan were staring silently at Fang Wei. All of them remembered the tragic scene in which he had died; those images were engraved deeply on their hearts.

Fang Yanxu looked at Fang Wei for a long moment, and it almost seemed as if he were looking into the young man's heart. After a long moment, a slight smile appeared on his face.

“Henceforth, you will follow me. In the future… you must live up to your name and protect the clan! You will not be the sword of the clan; instead, you will become… its shield!”

Fang Wei was shaking, and tears streamed down his face as he clasped hands and bowed toward Fang Yanxu.

Fang Yanxu sighed, then turned and bowed to Fang Shoudao. Then he waved his hand and departed with Fang Wei, the two of them turning into beams of colorful light that shot away from the Fang Clan in the direction of the Medicine Immortal Sect.

Fang Danyun and Fang Shoudao watched them leave, and sighed inwardly.

Fang Yanxu was the current generation’s shield, and also its shadow!

Fang Shoudao was the clan’s sword, as well as its glory, boundless and supreme!

In every generation of the clan, there would be a blazing sun who shone with boundless light, and behind that person, there would be a shadow. That shadow was there to assist the blazing sun, to help that person accomplish many things they themselves could not, to endure more than was possible, to deal with things that could not be touched by the other. Such persons were not shining swords that garnered mass attention. Instead, they became… shields that others would eventually overlook!

A person like that had to be willing to remain silent and unobtrusive. They had to shrink from the light, give up all their status and position, abandon all glory. They were a shadow, and the shield of the clan.

In this generation, Fang Yanxu picked Fang Wei as his future successor.

It was a path that ordinary clan members might not understand. However, Meng Hao understood everything, and it caused him to tremble. His expression was a complex one as he stared at Fang Wei, recalling what he looked like as a child, and the resolute words he had spoken in his tender, young voice.

“My name is Fang Wei! I want to become a powerful expert because I’m going to defend my clan for my whole life!”

The Seventh Patriarch, the Fifth Patriarch, and the Third Patriarch, the Ancient Realm experts also watched Fang Yanxu and Fang Wei leaving, their expressions gradually flickering with understanding.

This was the Fang Clan, a place where clan rules ensured the continued glory of the clan. In each generation, there were two important people, one who existed in the light, the other in darkness. One was the sword, the other was the shield.

One basked in glory, the other was like a shadow.

Meng Hao now also understood why, although the first generation Patriarch had passed away into meditation, his clone had transformed into a planet, to defend the clan. It was because the first generation Patriarch’s true self had been the clan’s sword, whereas his clone was the shield.

Even though his true self ended up dying, his clone could continue to defend the clan throughout all eternity….

“The Fang Clan….” he murmured. Gradually, he was beginning to approve of the clan much more than he had before.

Fang Danyun bowed to Fang Shoudao, then looked down at Meng Hao with a smile. It was a smile of encouragement, praise, and even more, anticipation, anticipation that he could accomplish something momentous that was far different than what Fang Wei had done.

Smiling, he turned and left, heading back to his home in the Dao of Alchemy Division. His longevity was reaching its end, and even given the fact that he could split with his Unicorn Immortals, it would be hard for him to hold on for much longer. Yet, he was without any regrets.

He hoped to use the rest of his life to once again lead the clan’s Dao of Alchemy Division into glory.

Much about the Medicine Immortal Sect, the shield of the clan, were merely stories that had been purposefully created by the Fang Clan. However, one thing was true: of the clan’s three Holy medicinal pills, the Medicine Immortal Sect really could concoct two, something that the Dao of Alchemy Division was incapable of.

The clan members down on the ground below now burned with determination to see the clan rise to prominence. They began to reconstruct the many areas of the ancestral mansion that were in ruins, and wash away the blood that soaked the ground. It wouldn’t take long to restore them. Perhaps by the following morning… the Fang Clan would not look very different than it had before, at least not to any outsider.

Fang Shoudao watched Fang Yanxu and Fang Danyun leave, then began to leave himself. The Seventh Patriarch and the others all joined him.

Meng Hao blinked, then cleared his throat. The sound wasn’t very loud, but it was enough to echo out in the air and be heard by Fang Shoudao and the others. However, Fang Shoudao pretended that he didn’t hear it and continued off into the distance.

Meng Hao was now starting to get the sense that something fishy was going on. Although the Ji Clan had come because of the legacy of Lord Li, and would likely still have caused a disturbance even if things had not played out the way they had regarding Meng Hao…

In Meng Hao’s opinion, he had been part of the plan all along, and although he didn’t mind being used by the clan, what he did mind was… being used and not getting anything out of it!

“Hey, they should give me some money!” he thought. “I sacrificed a lot to help out! I was scared to death on multiple occasions, and suffered serious mental trauma! At the very least, they have to give me some sort of explanation, right?!”

Feeling very wronged, he stared at Fang Shoudao and the others receding into the distance, and then called out in a loud voice, “Patriarchs, hold on a moment!”

As soon as the words left his mouth, Fang Shoudao and the others' faces flickered. However, they waved their sleeves, and their bodies began to fade as they teleported away.

Meng Hao was now getting very anxious.

"Patriarchs, wait! Don't run away!! Hey, you old fogies, STOP THERE!"

Fang Shoudao and the others were about half faded away when Meng Hao suddenly burst out in anger. When the other clan members in the ancestral mansion heard his words, their hearts began to pound.

Fang Shoudao suddenly stopped in place, and his vanishing form rapidly grew clear. Realizing that he had no way to get out of the situation, he turned and glared sternly at Meng Hao.

"You little hoodlum! I'm your grandfather's grandfather! Do you really dare to call me an old fogey!?"

Thinking about how irritated he was, Meng Hao braced himself and retorted loudly: "Why wouldn't I dare? I didn't do anything wrong! I performed some heroic services for the clan just now!"

Fang Shoudao stared at him wide-eyed, then suddenly swished his sleeve. In a flash, Meng Hao vanished from his position in midair, to reappear inside of a building.

He glanced around cautiously, then backed up a few paces.

Fang Shoudao laughed in spite of himself as he sat there off to the side, looking expectantly at Meng Hao.

"You feel wronged, huh?" he said. "Go ahead and explain yourself."

"During the clan upheavals, I spilled blood for the clan!" replied Meng Hao instantly. As soon as the words left his mouth, Fang Shoudao waved his hand, causing a softly glowing light to wash over Meng Hao. Instantly, all of his wounds were healed. Actually, his wounds had already recovered by more than half, but now they were completely recovered, and even the pores of his entire body had opened up. In fact, his cultivation base was now even more stable than before.

“There you go, all healed up,” Fang Shoudao said with a slight smile. As he looked at Meng Hao with that smile, he looked like nothing more than a wily old fox.

“During the battle, I ate a ton of medicinal pills!” Meng Hao continued carefully. “I even had to absorb quite a bit of Immortal jade! AND spirit stones!” After he finished speaking, Fang Shoudao waved his hand again. This time, no softly glowing light appeared, but instead, a bright screen. Visible on the screen was a detailed accounting of everything that had happened from the moment Meng Hao had transcended his tribulation, to the end of the battle. During that time… he had not consumed any medicinal pills, nor had he absorbed any Immortal jade, let alone spirit stones.

Meng Hao’s heart trembled, but his expression was unprecedentedly solemn as he looked at fox-like Fang Shoudao. All of a sudden, he realized that he was up against a formidable opponent.

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# Chapter 1007: The Old Fox vs. the Fox Cub!

“When I was fighting those Chosen, I was fighting for the glory of the clan! I made the Fang Clan the center of attention of the whole Ninth Mountain and Sea!” Meng Hao said, staring Fang Shoudao in the eye. He had finally realized that the old man’s aura was actually very similar to his own.

“Oh, that’s a good point. Very well. Henceforth, you are the number one Chosen of the Fang Clan. Both to those inside the clan and toward outsiders, you now represent the clan itself!” Fang Shoudao waved his hand, causing a golden medallion to fly out in a beam of light and then hover in front of Meng Hao. It was inscribed with the character Fang on one side, and on the other side, the word Chosen .

Meng Hao stared at the medallion in shock, then glared back at Fang Shoudao. He suddenly had the feeling that he was being toyed with, a serious provocation in the area which he cared most about.

“My heart grows cold with disappointment to be manipulated by the clan like this!” Meng Hao said, gnashing his teeth.

Fang Shoudao waved his finger at Meng Hao, causing a warm feeling to spread across his chest and over his heart.

“Feel a bit warmer now?” he said coolly.

Meng Hao was about to flip his lid. He had never, ever met someone as shameless as this old fogey. He had already explained himself quite thoroughly, and yet had been sidestepped three times in a row.

“During the clan upheavals, I single-handedly stopped the possessed Fang Wei!” he cried. “I saved a bunch of fellow clan members! I even managed to kill Fang Xiushan!

“I was the one who summoned the Dao Guardsman to fight against the three Quasi-Dao experts! I helped make sure that your plan succeeded!

“I also killed Fang Heshan!

“In fact, the spark that lit the whole fuse was my Nirvana Fruits!

“I’ve done a lot for the clan and I demand a reward!!”

“Very well, you want cultivation resources, right?” Fang Shoudao said with a sigh. “It seems that about half of your personality is exactly the same as your grandfather.” Feeling a bit guilty, he cleared his throat. He waved his right hand, causing Meng Hao’s eyes to gleam with anticipation. Immediately, a strip of paper appeared in front of Fang Shoudao.

A few swishing sounds could be heard as Fang Shoudao then wrote his name down on the piece of paper.

“I know you’re fond of getting promissory notes,” Fang Shoudao said with a smile, “so I’ve prepared one for you. However much you think the clan owes you, go ahead and write it down yourself.”

Meng Hao gaped at the piece of paper. When he looked up, his eyes were bloodshot. He was about to continue fighting back when Fang Shoudao’s expression suddenly turned serious.

He took a deep breath and stared gravely at Meng Hao. Meng Hao, who had just been on the verge of losing his temper suddenly couldn’t help but reign it in.

“Fang Hao!” Fang Shoudao said, his voice sounding deep and extremely dignified.

“I know of everything you’ve done for the clan, and I understand that you feel wronged,” he continued, his voice now soft and archaic. “I’m even more aware of all the meritorious service you’ve provided. There’s no need to even mention anything else. The simple achievement of opening your Immortal meridians to the pinnacle has shaken the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea. Anyone who did that in any sect or clan would definitely be gifted with a precious treasure.

“It’s the same here! You are just as important to our clan as someone of the Dao Realm!

“Fang Wei will be the shield of the clan, and you… will be the sword!

“Henceforth, he will be the shadow, YOUR shadow! While you bask in glory, he will remain obscure and unknown. That is because you are the true future hope of the clan!

“Do you really think that the clan is being stingy? Withholding a reward from you?

“You’re wrong. Let me tell you, the clan would never treat a blazing sun like you with the slightest bit of stinginess. However… are you aware of the price that had to be paid to awaken the first generation Patriarch?

“The first generation Patriarch passed away in meditation long ago. What you saw earlier was only his clone, or perhaps you could say, the spirit of Planet East Victory. Normally speaking, he remains in slumber. Awakening him causes Planet East Victory to be withered up for a thousand years!

“In order to ensure that Planet East Victory will continue to rotate normally for the next thousand years, the clan has to pay an indescribable amount of resources. Right now the clan… really has no reward to give you!

“Furthermore, there is no reward valuable enough to represent how important you are to the clan. Therefore, I have already made an important decision regarding this matter.” Fang Shoudao rose to his feet and looked calmly at Meng Hao.

“I already discussed the matter with your father, as well as Fang Yanxu and Pill Elder, and the decision has been made final. From now on, you… will be the Crown Prince of the Fang Clan!” As soon as the words left Fang Shoudao’s mouth, Meng Hao’s mind began to reel.

“Crown Prince?” Meng Hao gaped for a moment. To virtually any other member of the Fang Clan, a title like that represented supreme glory. However, to Meng Hao, it represented a future of endless amounts of spirit stones and Immortal jade.

“That’s right,” Fang Shoudao continued, his expression somewhat wistful. “Currently, your cultivation base is weak. However, once you reach the Dao Realm, you will be the Clan Chief of the Fang Clan. As you know, it has been many, many years… since a true Clan Chief has arisen.” Fang Shoudao looked at Meng Hao, his expression one of anticipation and love as he extended his hand, causing a command medallion to appear.

It was violet-colored, and glowed with a strange light. Although it was merely a command medallion, it was clearly a rare Ancient Realm treasure!

“This object is the official symbol of your status as Crown Prince. Once you reach the Ancient Realm, you can refine it into a true precious treasure.” Fang Shoudao waved his hand, causing the command medallion to fly over toward Meng Hao, where it settled down into his palm. That small command medallion felt as heavy as a whole mountain.

If Meng Hao didn’t possess a True Immortal fleshly body, then he wouldn’t even be able to hold it.

“This is your home, and you are a young lord here. In the future, you will be in a position of leadership, and therefore, all of the wealth here will eventually belong to you. If the clan is facing difficulties now, such as being extremely poor, then would it really be the right thing for you to take away the resources of the clan? As a young lord of the clan, you should actually be thinking of ways to increase the clan’s wealth!” Fang Shoudao let out a long sigh, and a pained expression appeared on his face.

“If you don’t believe me, I can take you to see for yourself.” Fang Shoudao waved his hand, causing both Meng Hao and himself to vanish. When they reappeared, they were inside of an enormous tower.

“Over here is where we used to have a mountain-like collection of Immortal jade. Look at it now….

“This used to be filled with an indescribable amount of spirit stones. Now look at it….

“This area used to be packed tight with all sorts of magical items.”

Fang Shoudao led Meng Hao through the clan’s treasure-houses, and although they weren’t completely empty, they were depressingly bare. After finishing the tour, Meng Hao felt somewhat deflated.

He almost couldn’t believe that the Fang Clan, was actually… destitute.

“Now do you understand? In addition to all this, the clan also bestowed you with that Bloodline Dragon! It was formed from the blood of the Patriarch himself!” Fang Shoudao sighed.

Meng Hao stood there silently for a long moment, then also sighed. Finally, he gave up on any plans of trying to get a reward from the clan. As Fang Shoudao continued to stand there, sighing, Meng Hao turned to leave. Moments ago, he had even taken the time to peruse the treasure-house records, and knew that everything he had seen was the reality of the situation.

He had also gone so far as to scan the lands with divine sense, and could see how withered Planet East Victory was. The places that once flourished with spiritual energy were now dried up. He also closed his eyes and, based on his bloodline, could sense something that no outsider would be able to sense; Planet East Victory was very weak.

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However, in the following days, as the sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea came to visit Planet East Victory and offered congratulations, everything that he had just seen began to change.

He personally watched as all of the organizations which came to visit Planet East Victory brought significant gifts. If only one sect or clan came to visit, it wouldn’t matter. But the Three Churches and Six Sects, the Five Great Holy Lands, and even the other Three Great Clans, as well as other smaller organizations, all arrived. Meng Hao couldn’t help but stare in shock.

After doing a bit of calculating, he realized that if you added up the value of all the gifts brought by the various sects and clans, it reached a staggering total…. Although it wouldn’t be enough to fill the clan’s treasure-houses, it was enough to replenish them by about thirty to forty percent.

As Meng Hao watched Fang Shoudao smilingly receive the various guests, he was increasingly struck with the impression that Fang Shoudao was a crafty, wily fox. The old man had easily conned him, and there was nothing he could do about it. After all, everything the man had said earlier made complete sense.

Meng Hao sighed, and decided just to turn a blind eye to the matter. That was the only way to prevent himself from being incredibly irritated. However, he did not participate in the receiving of the guests, and instead stayed in his residence practicing cultivation, attempting to properly absorb his Nirvana Fruits.

If it was just a simple matter of being conned this once, Meng Hao could deal with it. After all, he was now the Crown Prince, a status which he was very satisfied with. Several days later, however, the Three Great Daoist Societies also arrived, and he heard that they had prepared an even more terrifying amount of congratulatory gifts. Each one of their gifts were comparable to the combined offerings from several smaller clans put together. This caused Meng Hao to think that something very fishy was going on.

“Elder Brother Shoudao, Hao’er is both Crown Prince of the Fang Clan, as well as a Conclave disciple of the Ninth Sea God World. Please accept these meager offerings as the gifts of introduction we would have presented upon his joining the sect.”

When the cultivators from the Ninth Sea God World arrived, Fang Xi immediately hustled over to Meng Hao’s residence, where Meng Hao was meditating, to break the news. Meng Hao was instantly enraged, and his eyes went totally bloodshot. As of now, he thoroughly understood how crafty Fang Shoudao was. He had definitely conned Meng Hao… big time.

If Meng Hao weren’t the Crown Prince, the Three Great Daoist Societies would never have prepared such gifts. It was all because of his new status that the gifts the clan was receiving were so valuable.

Meng Hao gritted his teeth and rose to his feet, then flew up into the air toward the main temple hall of the ancestral mansion, to the location where the welcoming feast was being held.

Meng Hao didn’t mind the fact that Fang Shoudao had made him Crown Prince in order to get more gifts from the Three Great Daoist Societies. What he did mind was that in such an important matter as this, Fang Shoudao, that wily old fox, had actually… not given him any share of it! Not even a lousy ten percent! UNACCEPTABLE!

Both the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto and the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite also sent representatives with extravagant gifts. However, in comparison with the gifts offered by the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto and the Ninth Sea God World, those given by the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite seemed much more simple.

In the main hall of the Fang Clan ancestral mansion, the Patriarchs of the various sects and clans were all gathered around a long banquet table, where a grand feast was spread out.

“Elder Brother Shoudao, members of any clan or sect may join the Three Great Daoist Societies. That is because the Three Great Daoist Societies are fundamentally quite liberal when dealing with outsiders. That is how we groom generations of Chosen in the Ninth Mountain and Sea.”

“Elder Brother Shoudao, the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto focuses on the sword as our Dao. Hao’er’s father Fang Xiufeng is also known for his Dao of the sword. I truly think that Hao’er would have the most success if he joined the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto!”

The Patriarchs continued to chat and laugh as the Three Great Daoist Societies began to argue and debate amongst themselves over who would get Meng Hao.

Fang Yanxu and Fang Shoudao sat in the middle of everyone. Fang Shoudao was smiling and nodding, and anyone who didn’t know him would think that he looked very kind and gentle. However, when Meng Hao looked at him, he looked like nothing more than the ultimate wily fox.

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# Chapter 1008: Why The Echelon Exists!

Meng Hao had risen to the top among the true Immortals, and was the Immortal Realm Paragon. After absorbing the Nirvana Fruits, he could leap into the legendary and ancient Immortal Emperor Realm, in which he could slaughter Ancient Realm cultivators with two extinguished Soul Lamps. He had long since shaken the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea.

When you added in his performance as Fang Mu in the Three Great Daoist Societies' trial by fire, he was clearly the most prominent figure in the Immortal Realm. As a result, each of the Three Great Daoist Societies was determined to have him.

It wasn't just the Three Great Daoist Societies. The Five Great Holy Lands and the Three Churches and Six Sects were all extremely interested in Meng Hao. If it weren't for the Three Great Daoist Societies, whose positions were proud and lofty, and the fact that Meng Hao was now the Crown Prince of the Fang Clan, meaning he couldn't join any other sect BUT one of the Three Great Daoist Societies, then all of the other groups would definitely have started fighting over him.

In addition to the Dao Realm Patriarchs from the other sects, Meng Hao saw various Chosen with whom he had fought earlier. All of them stood there silently, complex emotions swirling in their hearts.

"His father might cultivate the Dao of the sword, but Hao'er's path is different. He's already become a Conclave disciple of the Ninth Sea God World! How could he possibly join the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto?!" In addition to Fan Dong'er's master, the old woman, the other person who had come from the Ninth Sea God World was none other than the man who had presided over the trial by fire, the same one who had eventually come to praise Meng Hao so much, Ling Yunzi.

“Who cares about that?” said the representative from the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto, his tone harsh. “He never formally joined the Ninth Sea God World!” He was a middle-aged man, or at least, he looked middle-aged. In reality, his cultivation base was in the Dao Realm, and he looked as dangerous as an unsheathed sword.

Seeing that both the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto and the Ninth Sea God World were not budging an inch, the old man who was the representative from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite smiled slightly.

“Fellow Daoist Fang,” he said, “why don’t you summon Meng Hao and ask him his opinion?”

Fang Shoudao laughed heartily, but before he could say anything, the main door to the temple hall echoed with the sound of a cold harrumph. Meng Hao stalked in, instantly drawing the attention of all gazes inside the hall.

As for the Dao Realm Patriarchs, this was their first time seeing Meng Hao in person, as opposed to his illusory image on a screen. It was also the first time anyone from the Three Great Daoist Societies had personally seen Meng Hao after he had reached true Immortal Ascension.

Other than the various members of the Junior generation, all the other people in the hall were Dao Realm Patriarchs. It looked like more than half of all the Dao Realm experts in the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea were present. All of their eyes fell upon Meng Hao, causing him to feel enormous pressure. However, his expression didn’t change at all as he entered the hall. He glared coldly at Fang Shoudao, who cleared his throat a bit guiltily. Fang Yanxu sat off to the side, looking a bit helpless. He coughed dryly a few times.

Everyone was looking at Meng Hao as he stated,

“I will join….”

However, before he could finish speaking, the faces of the three Patriarchs from the Three Great Daoist Societies flickered. Intense gleams appeared in their eyes, especially the white-haired old man from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite. Normally, he looked kind and amiable, but as of this moment, his eyes shone with an extreme brightness.

When the members of the other sects saw this, they stared in shock.

The old man from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite sucked in a deep breath. His expression was very serious as he exchanged a glance with the old woman from the Ninth Sea God World and the middle-aged man from the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto. Then he turned back to Fang Shoudao and spoke gravely, "Elder Brother Fang, permit us the use of a private chamber!"

Fang Shoudao's eyes narrowed. He could tell something strange was going on, but after a moment of consideration, he nodded.

Meng Hao was a bit astonished, and quickly swallowed the words he had been about to utter.

Fang Shoudao waved his hand and immediately he, along with Meng Hao and the three old-timers from the Three Great Daoist Societies, all vanished from the main hall. Fang Yanxu was also disconcerted, but this was the Fang Clan after all, so he wasn't worried. Instead, he smiled and began to chat with some of the others who remained behind.

It didn't take long for the sound of conversation and laughter to fill the main hall once again. However, suspicions now filled the hearts of all the Dao Realm experts, even though it didn't show on their faces.

Fang Shoudao and the others reappeared within a hidden chamber in the Fang Clan. Meng Hao's eyes narrowed, and his heart filled with misgivings. He immediately stepped back a few paces.

"Fellow Daoists," said Fang Shoudao, "please explain why we need to use this private chamber!" Fang Shoudao might be an old fox and he might have conned Meng Hao, but as he stepped forward, he placed himself very close to Meng Hao. If anything untoward happened, he would go all out with his cultivation base to make sure Meng Hao stayed safe.

Despite the previous con, everything he had said was actually true. Meng Hao really was as important to the Fang Clan as a Dao Realm expert. Furthermore, appointing Meng Hao to be the Crown Prince had not been a joke. He really and truly did have that status in the clan.

Seeing Fang Shoudao act in this way finally caused Meng Hao to have the feeling that the man really was the clan's Earth Patriarch.

"Elder Brother Fang, this is our first time seeing Meng Hao in person," said the old man from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite. "On previous occasions, we only saw him on illusory screens, and could not feel… the ripples which are emanating off of him!" The old man looked excited, and breathed heavily when he looked at Meng Hao. The old woman from the Ninth Sea God World and the middle-aged cultivator from the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto looked equally moved.

Fang Shoudao frowned, taking a few more steps forward to stand directly next to Meng Hao, whereupon he stared coldly at the other three.

"For Hao'er to reach this point means he definitely has his destiny. He is the Crown Prince of the Fang Clan, and if anybody tries to steal his destiny, that person will be crossing the line and provoking the Fang Clan's wrath!" Fang Shoudao's expression was extremely serious, and his tone was icy.

Meng Hao stood behind him, staring in shock. All of a sudden, he came to the realization that the true use of being the Crown Prince was a sort of protection. His rise to true Immortality had attracted the attention of the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea, and now that he was the Crown Prince, anyone who harbored untoward thoughts would definitely be stricken with fear.

Meng Hao could sense the care and concern of the Senior generation of the clan, and his heart softened quite a bit. It even caused his perception of Fang Shoudao as a wily fox to lessen quite a bit.

“Elder Brother Fang, you misunderstand,” said the old man from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite, looking over at Meng Hao.

“Meng Hao, back when you disappeared into the Ruins of Immortality, did you by any chance… encounter a white-robed woman?” It was impossible for the old man to conceal the nervousness in his voice as he asked his question. The old woman and the middle-aged cultivator wore equally nervous expressions.

Meng Hao gaped. After a long moment of silence, he slowly nodded his head in response.

“I knew it!” exclaimed the old man, sounded very excited. Strange gleams appeared in the eyes of the old woman and the middle-aged cultivator. The old man took a deep breath and then made a clutching motion, causing a chunk of black stone to appear in his hand.

At the same time, the old woman and the middle-aged cultivator produced similar stones. All three of the rocks emanated mysterious glows as they flew together to form a large stone slab, which hovered in midair.

“Child, place your hand onto that black stone slab,” said the old man, sounding very excited. “Don’t worry, the three of us don’t harbor any ill intentions toward you.” He looked at Meng Hao with anticipation.

Fang Shoudao frowned. The Three Great Daoist Societies were acting very strange as far as he was concerned, and he was just about to intervene when Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. As for Meng Hao, he had long since speculated that the white-robed woman was somehow connected to the Three Great Daoist Societies.

Instead of placing his hand onto the stone slab, he asked, “That white-robed woman… who is she?”

“Long ago, our world did not consist of only nine mountains and nine seas,” responded the old woman from the Ninth Sea God World, her voice soft. “During that era, that white-robed woman was one of three supreme Paragons!”

Meng Hao's mind trembled, and he didn't respond. Finally, he lifted his right hand and calmly placed it onto the stone slab. He was already aware of exactly what these three people were hoping to see.

Blinding light emanated out as soon as his hand made contact with the stone slab. When the light touched Meng Hao, an ancient magical symbol suddenly appeared on his forehead.

That magical symbol was actually a number!

The number… 13!

13th in the Echelon!

When the old man from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite saw the magical symbol in the shape of a number, he threw his head back and laughed. His entire body quivered with excitement. The old woman from the Ninth Sea God World began to pant excitedly, and her expression was one of delight. As for the middle-aged man from the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto, he was also panting, and appeared to be going wild with joy.

"The Echelon! As expected, the Echelon!!"

"Meng Hao has actually joined the Echelon!! The Echelon, prescribed and maintained by a Paragon! The Echelon of the Nine Mountains and Seas!! The key to leaving Heaven and Earth!"

"He's the second from the Ninth Mountain and Sea to enter!!"

Meng Hao pulled his hand back, and the light emanating from the stone slab faded away. Fang Shoudao frowned. Inwardly, he was shocked, not because of the magical symbol that had appeared on Meng Hao's forehead, but rather, because of the excitement of the representatives from the Three Great Daoist Societies.

"Fellow Daoists, could you please provide an explanation?" he said coolly, becoming even more vigilant than ever.

“Elder Brother Fang, this matter pertains to the mission of our Three Great Daoist Societies,” said the old man. The old woman and the middle-aged man stood off to the side, the expressions on their face solemn once again. “The information we are about to share with you must not be spread beyond this room.

“Every so often, the Three Great Daoist Societies hold a trial by fire. Its purpose is to search for suitable cultivators for that very Paragon to observe as she searches for people qualified to join the Echelon.

“The Echelon determines the true blazing suns of the entire Nine Mountains and Seas. People who join the Echelon are actually qualified to become legends!

“Furthermore, the Echelon is wrapped up in an enormous mystery, a secret that affects all Nine Mountains and Seas! In fact, the origin of Lord Li himself is very likely connected to that mystery!

“For many, many years, the Ninth Mountain and Sea has not produced anyone qualified to join the Echelon. As of today… we now have a second!

“The first person to qualify for the Echelon is no stranger to you. It was actually none other than the first generation Patriarch of your Fang Clan!

“Sadly, although he met the requirements, when the time came for him to accomplish the tasks required by the Paragon, he ended up refusing to comply. He actually renounced his own qualifications.

“Elder Brother Fang, this child cannot join just one of our organizations. He… is actually the sole successor of all Three Great Daoist Societies!

“He is not a disciple, he is a successor!

“When cultivators of the Echelon appear on any of the mountains or seas, they instantly become crucially important to any of the Daoist Societies, and will be protected as such. Elder Brother Shoudao, this child’s path is definitely not limited to the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

“The fighting that goes on amongst those who wish to enter the Echelon is even fiercer than the fighting which goes on among those who wish to be Chosen. As such, we must not allow Meng Hao’s status as a member of the Echelon to spread prematurely. It won’t be long before we arrange for him to leave the Ninth Mountain and Sea and participate in… the Echelon battles of the Nine Mountains and Seas.

“Please place him in our care. We Three Great Daoist Societies are pledged to, and exist solely for the sake of, the Echelon!”

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# Chapter 1009: I’m Already Married!

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed, and he stood there, silent and unresponsive as he listened to the Three Great Daoist Societies discuss both him and the Echelon with Fang Shoudao. He didn’t mind this. As soon as he had been appointed to the Echelon by that white-robed woman, he had known that the matter would eventually come to be known by others.

Meng Hao was a cautious person, but now that the matter of the Echelon had been discovered by the The Three Great Daoist Societies, trying to conceal the truth would have been pointless. As of now, it made sense for the clan to be made aware of it too; at least then he would have a foundation of protection.

Fang Shoudao didn’t respond at first. After some thought, he finally said, “This is a weighty matter, something I cannot make a decision on by myself. How about this: Fellow Daoists, please return to the hall for now. I’ll discuss the situation with Hao’er privately, and then we’ll give you an answer.”

The representatives from the Three Great Daoist Societies exchanged glances and then nodded. In the blink of an eye, they left the private chamber and reappeared out in the main hall.

After they were gone, Meng Hao glared at Fang Shoudao, who looked back at him, cleared his throat, and then smiled.

From Meng Hao’s perspective, that smile looked far too treacherous, causing him give a loud harrumph.

Fang Shoudao cleared his throat, then eyed Meng Hao and said, “I’ll give you one percent!” He was well aware that he hadn’t brought up the matter of splitting the profits.

“Impossible! I demand fifty percent!” Meng Hao responded immediately.

Fang Shoudao frowned and then said, “All of these gifts are very important to the clan! At the very most, I can give you two percent!”

“Do you know what I’ve done for the clan? I’ve–” Meng Hao was just about to launch into a long explanation when Fang Shoudao interrupted with a loud sigh.

“Hao’er, you’re the Crown Prince of the clan!” he said, looking very disappointed. He sounded pained as he continued, “Don’t you know that as the Crown Prince, you receive special protection from the clan? That shows how much the clan approves of you! How does a piddling profit the likes of which we’re discussing now compare to that?

“This is your home!

“And right now, your home is in a very tight spot! The first generation Patriarch is sleeping, and the planet is weak. Other than the resources spent on the fundamental cultivation needs of the clan, everything else is used on the planet itself.

“Plus, we have to be on guard against the Ji Clan! In addition to all that, we have to keep some resources in reserve in case we need to awaken the first generation Patriarch again. Meng Hao… do you understand what I’m saying?

“Considering all of those things, how could the clan possibly agree to send our magnificent Crown Prince to the Three Great Daoist Societies to practice cultivation?!

“The Fang Clan is your home, and you are one of our family members! You’re even a young lord of the clan! Now is the time for you to forgo a bit of profit to ensure that the clan can have some breathing room. Can you agree to that?

“In the future, everything in the clan will belong to you, right?

“If you think this isn’t fair, then go ahead and just take all the gifts! I don’t want any of it!” With that, Fang Shoudao closed his eyes and sighed.

Meng Hao stood there silently. All of a sudden he felt like he really was putting too much emphasis on wealth, and felt a bit bad. Finally, he nodded his head.

“No, I’m fine,” he said. “Forget about it….”

Fang Shoudao opened his eyes, and the kindness in them was apparent as he patted Meng Hao on the shoulder.

“Good boy….” he said. Then he waved his sleeve, causing both of them to vanish and reappear in the main hall.

The banquet continued, and eventually, it was with much anticipation that the Three Great Daoist Societies listened as Meng Hao announced that he would join their ranks. However, Fang Shoudao, citing Meng Hao’s cultivation base as the reason, said that they would have to return in three months to accept him officially.

Meng Hao was crestfallen. Although he understood that the clan was in a very difficult situation, when he thought about the vast amount of spirit stones pouring in, not a single one of which were going to him, it filled his heart with pain.

“Ah, it doesn’t matter. The Patriarch was right. I’m a member of the clan, and should act as such.” Consoling himself all the way, Meng Hao said his goodbyes and then stepped out of the hall. Just when he was about to fly away, two bright beams of light whistled through the air toward the main hall.

Members of the Fang Clan flew nearby in escort, and as the beams of light neared, it turned out to be people from the Li Clan. One was Li Ling’er, whose face was grim and unsightly. Next to her was a middle-aged man who had the bearing of a transcendent being. His features were handsome, and his aura was extremely strong with the power of Essence.

When Li Ling’er saw Meng Hao, she gritted her teeth, and her eyes blazed with fury. In contrast, the middle-aged man’s eyes shone brightly, and he laughed heartily.

“Ah, handsome as expected,” he said. “Before, I could only observe with divine sense, but now that I can look upon you in person, kid, I have to say, excellent. Truly excellent!” The man laughed as he walked into the hall.

Li Ling’er walked past Meng Hao, glaring daggers at him. She looked extremely disgruntled, as if her life was so unfair that she were on the verge of completely losing her temper. Meng Hao stared in shock; something definitely seemed off. Instead of leaving, he stopped and looked back. The first thing he noticed was Fang Shoudao rising to his feet, and then… he heard the middle-aged man from the Li Clan laugh and begin to speak.

“Elder Brother Shoudao, after I got your jade slip, I immediately called a clan meeting to discuss the matter. Hao’er is a wonderful kid, and I’ve really taken a liking to him. In fact, the entire Li Clan agrees! We all support Hao’er, and once he becomes the Clan Chief of the Fang Clan in the future, our two clans will have a powerful alliance!

“I have come here today prepared to give a Dao Realm treasure, 100 precious Ancient Realm treasures, 1,000 Immortal treasures, 100,000,000 Immortal jades, 10,000,000,000 spirit stones, as well as numerous other items, as the wedding gift for Hao’er and Ling’er!” Laughing heartily, the man from the Li Clan clasped hands and bowed toward Fang Shoudao.

The way he listed out all the gifts he was enough to cause even the Dao Realm experts to stare in shock. Such extravagant gift-giving was something rarely seen. However, as soon as they heard the word “wedding,” everyone reached an epiphany.

Meng Hao was no longer an ordinary clan member. He was the number one Chosen of the Fang Clan, a famous blazing sun in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, and even a Crown Prince. With a status like that, any organization would offer up lavish gifts to form an alliance.

A broad smile could be seen on Fang Shoudao’s face as he walked forward, laughing.

“Elder Brother Li, you’re far too polite!” he said. “Hao’er and this lass Ling’er have been engaged since childhood! I just decided to speed up the matter a bit, that’s all.” Fang Shoudao looked over kindly at Li Ling’er.

Meng Hao stood just outside the door to the main temple, gaping in shock. His jaw hung open and his eyes were wide. He almost couldn’t believe what was happening, and he felt his mind spinning.

“He sold me off?” he murmured. He suddenly began to tremble, and rage began to burn inside of him. Generally speaking, it would be the woman who received betrothal gifts. But considering that this was the Fang Clan, they were the ones to receive the gifts. What Meng Hao was even more incapable of accepting was that… everything that Fang Shoudao had said moments ago… had clearly been a huge con that he had fallen right into.

In the end, he could accept all of that, for the clan. He could part with all the extravagant gifts, despite the pain it caused him.

However, what was happening now had nothing to do with money!

Meng Hao’s mind suddenly filled with the image of a Red Wedding, of endless slaughter. That wedding had been one of the most painful moments of his life!

He saw himself holding Xu Qing in his arms until she gradually closed her eyes and faded away. Unforgettable stabs of pain once again filled his heart.

Just barely, he felt as if he could see into the cycle of reincarnation, and all of a sudden, he heard a voice which echoed eternally in his ears.

“I’m in the cycle of reincarnation… waiting for you.”

Although Meng Hao often seemed to treat other women flirtatiously, in truth, there was a place deep in his heart where only one woman could enter.

Chu Yuyan could not enter that place, so therefore… how could Li Ling’er possibly do so!?

That was… a place for only one person. It was… a place that belonged only to Xu Qing!

Meng Hao took a deep breath. His eyes shone with coldness, and even as everyone chatted and laughed, he suddenly spoke out, his voice icy, “Patriarch. I am already married!”

As soon as his voice rang out, the entire hall went completely silent. The middle-aged man from the Li Clan turned to glance at Meng Hao, then looked back at Fang Shoudao.

Li Ling’er’s eyes brightened with anticipation.

Fang Shoudao coughed dryly and transmitted his voice to Meng Hao: “I’ll give you twenty percent of the Li Clan’s betrothal gift!”

Meng Hao’s face was extremely calm, and his eyes were icy as he stared back wordlessly at Fang Shoudao.

“You little hoodlum. Fine. Fifty percent, no more. You know that the clan is in a difficult place right now, and I–”

“Patriarch,” Meng Hao interrupted, his voice calm. “I, Meng Hao, love money. However, not everything in the world can be negotiated in terms of money and profit. I said. I’M ALREADY MARRIED!

“I have a wife, and her name is Xu Qing.” He spoke the words earnestly and very clearly.

All eyes in the main hall shifted to look at Meng Hao. With the exception of the Dao Realm Patriarchs, the other members of the Senior generation, as well as all the Chosen Meng Hao had fought with, had strange looks in their eyes. They stared at Meng Hao, their gazes shining.

Li Ling’er was very pretty, and would be the type of beloved partner that any clan would view as favorable. Furthermore, the backing of the Li Clan would enable Meng Hao to achieve future accomplishments with much greater ease, and he could definitely reach greater heights of glory.

Nobody could understand why Meng Hao would flat-out reject such an opportunity.

Li Ling’er had originally looked forward to seeing Meng Hao reject the offer. But for some reason, when she heard his explanation and saw how serious he was, she suddenly realized that he seemed very different from the scoundrel she remembered. In fact, he seemed to be hiding some great pain deep within him, a fact that caused her to tremble slightly.

“Where is she?” asked Fang Shoudao, sounding very stern. “On Planet South Heaven?” He looked at Meng Hao a bit more seriously than he had before, and his tone was very grave.

“She’s not on Planet South Heaven,” Meng Hao replied softly. “She’s in the cycle of reincarnation, waiting for me to go find her.” He could no longer prevent the grief from showing on his face. All of a sudden, he saw the vague image of a simple young woman standing in front of him, wearing a plain robe. She was the one who had taken him into the world of cultivation.

She wasn’t shockingly beautiful, but somehow, she had worked her way into his heart. He had given her a Cosmetic Cultivation Pill, and in the end, they had experienced a Red Wedding together.

She was Xu Qing.

His Qing’er….

She had sacrificed her longevity for him. She had entered reincarnation for him. As she died, she had forced a smile onto her face… for him.

In Meng Hao’s arms, she had turned from being beautiful and young into a white-haired old woman. She had withered up and closed her eyes. She had attempted to lift her hand up, as if to wipe the tears off of his face, but then that hand had slumped down lifelessly. That was… the image he saw.

“Her name is Xu Qing,” he continued softly. “She’s waiting for me in reincarnation, and we made a promise that I would go find her. She… is my wife. My… one and ONLY wife!” With that, he bowed to Fang Shoudao, then turned and flew off, his expression one of pain, grief, and bleakness.

Back in the main hall, everyone was shaken. The could sense the grief in Meng Hao, and could tell that although he usually seemed happy and frivolous on the outside, he was actually filled with a sea of sorrow and longing.

Li Ling’er shivered as she watched Meng Hao leave. As of this moment, the detestation she felt toward him was not so profound, and in fact, deep in her heart, pity took root.

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Note from Er Gen: I miss Xu Qing….

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# Chapter 1010: A Wager!

After several days of banqueting, the Three Great Daoist Societies left, as did all of the other various sects and clans. The matter of the wedding contract with the Li Clan wasn't resolved. Fang Shoudao wouldn't waver in the matter, however, and continued to press for time.

Over the course of a few days, Fang Shoudao summoned Meng Hao on multiple occasions, but Meng Hao was in a different position than he had been. He wasn't just any young lord of the clan, he was now a blazing sun.

Therefore, he completely ignored Fang Shoudao, putting the matter off by focusing on cultivating the Nirvana Fruits.

Three days later, as he sat in secluded meditation in his residence, Fang Shoudao came for a personal visit. As soon as he entered the courtyard, he sent his aura out, and Meng Hao immediately opened his eyes.

It was in that moment that Fang Shoudao appeared in front of him. His face was grave as he looked Meng Hao over. Then he let out a long sigh and sat down cross-legged.

Meng Hao sat in place quietly, not saying a word.

"She's really that important to you?" Fang Shoudao asked slowly, looking at Meng Hao. Meng Hao was actually extremely important to Fang Shoudao, so important that Meng Hao didn't even realize the extent of it.

To Fang Shoudao, the most crucial matter at hand was ensuring that the Fang Clan was able to survive over the next thousand years.

After that, he wanted to help Meng Hao grow and mature. That was one reason why he didn't refuse the Three Great Daoist Societies' proposal. He believed that in the Three Great Daoist Societies, Meng Hao would definitely acquire better cultivation magic than he could in the Fang Clan.

As for the clan’s financial predicament, that was something in which he had not deceived Meng Hao.

“She’s my wife,” Meng Hao replied, his voice soft, his head bowed.

After a moment of silence, Fang Shoudao spoke. Although he didn’t sound somber like he had when negotiating prices with Meng Hao, his tone of voice and his expression seemed far more serious and intense than they had at that time.

“Can’t you just let her go? You’re the Crown Prince of the Fang Clan. Just forget about her.

“If you can’t let go of her forever,” he said quietly, “then how about for just a thousand years? If you don’t like the Li Clan lass, then you don’t have to pay attention to her at all. All the clan wants is an alliance. It’s the same with the Li Clan. They just want an alliance.

“The marriage is just a formality.”

Meng Hao looked up at Fang Shoudao for a moment, then slapped his bag of holding to produce the Ancient Realm precious treasure that was his Crown Prince command medallion. He rubbed it for a moment before carefully placing it down in front of Fang Shoudao.

Fang Shoudao’s eyes widened, and waves of rage began to surge out inside of him. He looked at Meng Hao, his expression one of pain.

“In your heart, is that girl really more important than the entire clan?” The disappointment on Fang Shoudao’s face was clear. This was true disappointment, not an act like before.

“Patriarch….

“I don’t remember much about my early life on Planet East Victory,” he murmured. “What I do remember from my childhood is that my dad and mom left. I have a memory of searching for them in the fog, crying because I couldn't find them.

"After I grew up, I took the Imperial examinations over and over again. Back then, my dream was to be rich when I grew up.

"Eventually I ran into her, and I joined a sect. That was how came to be part of the cultivation world.

"She's actually my Senior Sister from that sect." After that, Meng Hao told Fang Shoudao everything about Xu Qing. He recounted all the stories and all the details that he could remember.

"Patriarch, there was one time in which I died. She ruined her own longevity, just to save me….

"When we got married, it was a Red Wedding, soaked in blood….

"I promised her that I would find her in reincarnation." As his voice echoed out, filled with the sensation of memories, Fang Shoudao's face gradually softened. He looked at Meng Hao for a long moment, then sighed.

"It's just a formality," he said, closing his eyes. "Why do you have to be like this?!"

"To the clan, it might just be a formality," Meng Hao replied calmly. "But to me, it would be a betrayal. Patriarch, please appoint someone else as the Crown Prince. The Li Clan doesn't want a beloved partner for Li Ling'er. All they want is an alliance. It doesn't matter who it is. Anyone could be a match for her. Why does it have to be me? So please, just appoint someone else. It would be the perfect solution for the clan."

Fang Shoudao maintained his silence. After a long moment, he rose to his feet and swished his sleeve. He did not take the Crown Prince command medallion, but instead sent it floating back into Meng Hao's palm.

"In three months, the Three Great Daoist Societies will come for you. I've already prepared 1,500,000,000 spirit stones for you to take with you to use in your cultivation. I wasn’t going to tell you about this originally, but considering you can’t accept the marriage, well… do you dare to make a little wager with me?

“If you win, then I’ll take responsibility to cancel the marriage contract!

“But if you lose, then you can’t reject the arrangements made by the clan, and you’ll go through with the formalities!”

Meng Hao stood there silently.

“Hao’er,” Fang Shoudao continued with a sigh, “if your grandfather was still here in the clan, he would definitely persuade you for me….” Fang Shoudao thought of Meng Hao’s grandfather, who was actually the person that he had most favored among the junior generations. In fact, in his view, Meng Hao’s grandfather would have eventually become the clan’s third Dao Realm expert!

A tremor ran through Meng Hao as he recalled the vague image of his grandfather, an image he would never be able to forget.

Meng Hao’s parents had left to guard Planet South Heaven for 100,000 years. As for his grandfather, he had gone to search for an Outsider to ask for help. The Outsider came, but his grandfather had gone missing, and had never made contact with the clan again.

Feeling quite bitter, Meng Hao looked up at Fang Shoudao.

“What’s the bet!?”

“Before the Three Great Daoist Societies arrive, do everything you can to earn 1,500,000,000 spirit stones. Immortal jade doesn’t count. If you can do that, from then on the clan won’t require that you do anything you don’t want to.

“You must not resort to trickery, theft, or borrowing. I won’t interfere either.”

Meng Hao stared in shock for a moment. Then, he lowered his head and made some calculations. When he looked back up, his expression was calm again. Gazing at Fang Shoudao with a slightly pained expression, he nodded.

Fang Shoudao said nothing further. He stood up, turned, and vanished.

After he left, Meng Hao began to breathe heavily. A thousand ideas were running through his head. He knew that he was a member of the clan, and that it was impossible to sever that blood connection. His parents, his grandfather, and his other relatives would not agree to him severing ties with the Fang Clan.

Furthermore… the clan had not given Meng Hao any reason to do anything that would violate the rules.

If there was a wager, he would win it!

“Three months…. 1,500,000,000 spirit stones.” Although he wasn’t aware of it, a bashful expression had appeared on his face at some point. As far as he was concerned, winning that bet… wouldn’t be difficult at all.

He put away the Crown Prince command medallion and stood up. Then he turned into a beam of prismatic light that shot away to find Fang Xi.

Two days later, word began to spread throughout the Fang Clan. It didn’t take long before all the clan members were talking about the same thing.

“Did you hear? The Crown Prince is going to challenge the Medicine Pavilion!! Last time, he got through six levels with perfect marks! The Dao bell even rang!”

“Last time he challenged the Medicine Pavilion, he got to the seventh level, where he grafted 75,000 types of medicinal plants!”

“Everyone is saying that this time, the Crown Prince is definitely going to charge all the way to the tenth level!!”

The news quickly spread, until everyone in the clan had heard about it. All of them were inwardly shaken. Lately, Meng Hao was the like the sun at high noon within the clan, and was the focus of all attention.

Everything he said or did was noticed. Besides, the glory he had already achieved in the Dao of Alchemy Division was well known. Now that he was going to be heading back there, everyone in the clan was filled with anticipation.

That anticipation reached a peak on one particular morning at dawn, when Meng Hao flew out of his residence and headed toward the Dao of Alchemy Division, his Immortal Realm Paragon cultivation base surging with power.

He was followed by numerous members of the Fang Clan, who all wanted to witness the spectacle.

More and more people started to tag along. By the time he reached the Dao of Alchemy Division, huge amounts of Fang Clan cultivators were there, filling the sky as he headed toward the Medicine Pavilion.

The alchemists and apprentice alchemists of the Dao of Alchemy Division were all very excited as they joined in the procession.

The entire Dao of Alchemy Division was abuzz. Countless beams of colorful light shot through the air as Meng Hao landed outside of the Medicine Pavilion. He looked at the huge stone stele next to the entrance, and his eyes glittered. The same two old men who stood guard outside opened their eyes. When they saw Meng Hao, they slowly rose to their feet, clasped hands, and bowed.

“Greetings, Crown Prince,” they said in unison.

Meng Hao nodded, and without further word, stepped into the Medicine Pavilion.

As he did, the entire area was packed with clan members, all of whom were waiting to watch. Fang Xi was in the crowd. He quickly sent word out via jade slip, and a moment later, roughly 10,000 clan members rose up in various positions and began to cry out.

“The Crown Prince is challenging the Medicine Pavilion! This is a grand event in the Fang Clan, and it is an honor for anyone to be able to bear witness. I personally wish to offer 100 spirit stones as a congratulatory gift! If anyone else is willing to offer a similar gift, please place it into this bag of holding!”

“That’s right! I don’t have a lot of spirit stones, but I’m willing to give fifty as a gift of congratulations to the Crown Prince!”

“Of course this is how things should work! The Crown Prince is challenging the Medicine Pavilion. As fellow clan members, it’s only natural that we should offer gifts of congratulations! Here’s 100 spirit stones!”

As the calls rang out, more people produced spirit stones to place in the bags of holding. Others hesitated, but then increasing numbers began to do the same thing.

Very soon, a terrifying amount of spirit stones had built up within the bags of holding.

When Fang Shoudao saw what was happening, he stared in shock for a moment and then smacked his forehead. His expression immediately changed.

“Dammit! How could I have forgotten…. I remember hearing about how Meng Hao charged people in the Dao of Alchemy Division to hear his lectures about plants and vegetation!” Then Fang Shoudao thought about the rewards posted for the three Holy medicinal pills, and a feeling of alarm built up in his heart.

Those three medicinal pills included first, the Skypalace Sunspirit Pill, which Meng Hao had already concocted. The second was the Sea Cleaving Heaven Defying Pill, the reward for which was 1,000,000,000 spirit stones….

The third was the Heavenly Thought Pill. The incredible reward for concocting that pill was to become the Lord of the Dao of Alchemy Division. All of a sudden, Fang Shoudao gasped. After a long moment, he managed to recover his senses, and realized that this time, he had been conned by Meng Hao.

“You little hoodlum!” he thought, laughing bitterly. However, his eyes quickly glittered.

“However, he didn’t choose to go concoct the pills,” he murmured, “but instead, to challenge the Medicine Pavilion. That indicates that he’s not completely confident in his concocting abilities…. In that case, I haven’t necessarily lost the bet….” However, he still was a bit worried, so he suddenly vanished. When he reappeared, he was in the Medicine Immortal Sect, where he went to consult with Fang Yanxu.

Not too long after, he left the Medicine Immortal Sect, and his face was very calm. Based on what Fang Yanxu told him, he was now confident in what would happen.

“Not even Fang Yanxu can concoct the Heavenly Thought Pill. As for the Sea Cleaving Heaven Defying Pill, it’s equally difficult. The little hoodlum definitely can’t concoct them relying on his own skill alone. I told him that I wouldn’t interfere, but that doesn’t mean I can’t use other methods.”

Fang Shoudao appeared to be very pleased, and looked more like a crafty old fox than ever.

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# Chapter 1011: Challenging the Medicine Pavilion Again!

Dao of Alchemy Division. Medicine Pavilion.

As soon as Meng Hao set foot inside, he was once again on the seventh level.

Last time, he passed six levels in a row, achieving the highest marks possible at each level. He passed them perfectly. Notably, on the six level, each step he took caused lotuses to bloom, shocking the outside world and causing the Dao bell to toll.

Now he had returned, and in addition to his desire to earn some money, he was filled with determination, as well as dedication to the Dao of alchemy.

“This time, I’m definitely going to go through all nine levels!” Everyone in the Ninth Mountain and Sea knew that Meng Hao was an Immortal Realm Paragon, but few people were aware that that his skill in the Dao of alchemy had reached a point of perfection that could only be described by the saying, “the pill furnace flame turned blue.” 1

The last time he was on the seventh level, he had grafted 75,000 medicinal plants and yet, his mental focus had been insufficient. If he had persisted in continuing, he would have sustained mental injuries; the concentration required to pass that level perfectly required an incredible level of mental constitution.

Furthermore, at that time, Meng Hao’s skill with plants and vegetation had not reached a state of perfection. However, he was now much more skilled regarding the numerous variations of plants and vegetation in the Fang

Clan. Furthermore, the difference between his current cultivation base and his former one was like the difference between Heaven and Earth. Meng Hao was now completely confident that he could pass all the way through the ninth floor!

Inside the Medicine Pavilion, mists swirled everywhere. The Classic of Plants and Vegetation appeared, glowing with boundless light. The first pages flipped over, and Meng Hao waved his finger, causing a single medicinal plant to appear. His eyes shone with the glow of augury, and in the blink of an eye, he began to produce new grafts.

Eventually, he began to merge the grafts together to produce entirely new medicinal plants.

Time passed.

This time, Meng Hao only used half a day to graft 75,000 medicinal plants, whereupon the mists churned, and rumbling sounds could be heard.

The rumbling could even be heard outside of the Medicine Pavilion, where a bright light shone from the entire pavilion, rising up into the air above the Dao of Alchemy Division. It was as if the light was building up pressure, waiting for Meng Hao to reach the pinnacle of the level, whereupon it would burst up into the sky. All of the alchemists in the Dao of Alchemy Division were paying rapt attention.

Fang Danyun was there on his mountain peak, looking over with an expression of anticipation.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he extended his hand and continued to graft.

80,000. 83,000. 86,000…. Eight hours later, he had grafted 90,000 medicinal plants!

Massive rumbling sounds could be heard coming from the Medicine Pavilion. To date, no one had ever been able to graft as many plants as Meng Hao had in the seventh level. He was the first one to ever do so! Currently, his name appeared on the stone stele outside of the Medicine

Pavilion, and the number of medicinal plants he had grafted was clearly visible to all of the other clan members, causing a huge commotion among them.

90,000. However, that wasn’t the end! The drain on Meng Hao’s mental faculties was barely even noticeable. His mental constitution had greatly increased compared to before. His eyes glittered, and he lifted both hands, multitasking as he used both hands to graft different medicinal plants!

Rumbling like that of thunder could be heard outside the Medicine Pavilion as the number of grafted plants next to Meng Hao’s name increased.

93,000. 96,000. 99,000…. All the way to… 100,000!

When the last grafted medicinal plant appeared, Meng Hao was surrounded by 100,000 swirling plants. They let out incredible light that spread out of the Medicine Pavilion, shooting up into the air in a brilliant beam.

The light instantly shot high up into the air above the Dao of Alchemy Division, causing everything to tremble. The entire Fang Clan was shaken, and all of the cultivators on Planet East Victory could see the light. Even the alchemists in the Medicine Immortal Sect were shocked.

As for Fang Yanxu, although he was in secluded meditation, he opened his eyes and looked over toward the Dao of Alchemy Division, clearly moved.

“He passed the seventh level perfectly….” he murmured lightly. “Well, the eighth level is so difficult it can’t even compare to the seventh. They’re completely different.”

Meanwhile, the Fang Clan’s Dao bell appeared in the air above the ancestral mansion. Immediately, its toll echoed out into the minds of all clan members with Fang Clan blood, deep and sonorous.

The toll of the Dao bell indicated that Meng Hao had passed the seventh level in exactly the same way that he had passed the sixth… perfectly!

Furthermore, it had only taken him one day!

Word rapidly spread that he had passed the seventh level perfectly, having grafted 100,000 medicinal plants. The members of the Fang Clan suddenly realized that their Crown Prince was not just a blazing sun in terms of cultivation, he was also a blazing sun when it came to skill in the Dao of alchemy!

Meng Hao had no way to hear or see the uproar in the outside world. Up ahead, light swirled throughout the seventh level, causing a staircase to appear, a staircase that led up to the eighth level!

Meng Hao took a deep breath. Eyes filled with determination, he stepped onto the stairs and began to climb up.

Immediately, all the light around him vanished, and Meng Hao found himself looking out at a huge desert. The sky stretched out limitlessly, and up ahead, he could see an azure-colored dragon. It lay there completely motionless, as if it were a corpse.

The dragon was so huge that one glance was not enough to take in the entire thing. Upon closer inspection, it could be seen that it was actually composed of countless medicinal plants that were apparently growing on the dragon’s body, using its flesh and blood as nourishment.

He was standing near the tail of the dragon, but even from there, he could sense the terrifying life force that existed inside of it. However, that life force was sealed, and was apparently being absorbed bit by bit by the numerous medicinal plants.

“This is the eighth level?” he thought. Almost at the same time, a cold, archaic voice spoke, echoing out through the entire eighth level.

“1,000,000 medicinal plants grow upon this Azure Dragon. Separate 100,000, and you can pass this level!”

Meng Hao’s eyes shone with bright light as he looked at the Azure Dragon. Gradually, a look of obsession appeared in his eyes.

“In the seventh level, you have to graft various medicinal plants. In the eighth level, you are faced with numerous grafted medicinal plants that you have to deconstruct!

“Return them into their original state, into the original medicinal plants. The level of difficulty here… is far, far greater than the seventh level!

“However, if I can pass this level perfectly, then my skill with plants and vegetation would reach an unprecedented level!

“I can’t even imagine a level of difficulty regarding knowledge of plants and vegetation that exceeds this eighth level.” Meng Hao’s heart surged with the determination to face this challenge head-on. He took a deep breath and stepped forward. As soon as his foot touched the ground, brilliant light flickered, and an illusory medicinal plant appeared in front of him, blocking his way.

He looked at it for a moment, then waved his finger, causing the medicinal plant to break apart into three distinct plants, after which it faded away.

Without even pausing, he continued forward. Every step he took caused more medicinal plants to appear. Each and every one took only a single glance before it was deconstructed.

10 steps. 100 steps. 1,000 steps. 10,000 steps….

Time passed. Meng Hao eventually took 30,000 steps, which indicated that he had deconstructed 30,000 medicinal plants. As he proceeded along, the Azure Dragon beneath his feet began to show indications that it was awakening.

From the look of it, if someone could deconstruct all 1,000,000 medicinal plants, then the dragon… would no longer be sealed, and would once again be able to fly through the Heavens.

Outside of the Medicine Pavilion, Meng Hao’s name appeared on the stone stele, among the relatively few other names that had reached the eighth level. Everyone looked on, wide-eyed, as his name quickly climbed up the list.

Booms emanated out from the Medicine Pavilion, filling the ears of all onlookers. When they heard it, it almost seemed as if the sounds could control the beating of their hearts, which caused the entire Dao of Alchemy Division to fall silent.

All eyes were completely fixed on the Medicine Pavilion.

Meng Hao proceeded forward along the Azure Dragon in the eighth level. 15,000 steps. 18,000 steps. 20,000 steps!

30,000. 40,000. 50,000….

He didn’t even pause a single time. Step after step, he deconstructed medicinal plants. Because of his skill with plants and vegetation, none of these medicinal plants were even qualified to cause him to spend time thinking.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

The sound filled the Dao of Alchemy Division, and gradually began to resemble the roar of a dragon. By this point, Meng Hao… had taken his 70,000th step!

Step by step, plant by plant. He continued onward as relentlessly as ever. 80,000. 90,000. 100,000!

By taking his 100,000th step, it indicated that he had separated 100,000 medicinal plants from the Azure Dragon, which was now beginning to glow with brilliant light, and even tremble slightly.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, and his eyes glittered brightly. Naturally, 100,000 was not his limit. If he had never come to this place, none of this would have mattered, but now that he was here… he wanted to reach the pinnacle!

A tremor ran through him, and he took another step forward. Slowly but surely, he continued onward. 100,000. 150,000. 200,000. 300,000. 400,000. 500,000!

The Azure Dragon’s trembling grew more intense, and the roars were now echoing out through all of Heaven and Earth.

The members of the Fang Clan outside the Medicine Pavilion were completely shaken as they watched Meng Hao’s name climbing up the stone stele. It had long since reached first place, but the thing that really caused the onlookers to be amazed were the numbers that stood next to his name.

Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a strange light as he continued on. 550,000. 600,000. 700,000. 800,000….

When he reached 800,000, his pace began to slow. However, at this point his energy surged even more explosively than before. He was now drawing on all of his mental constitution. His eyes glowed with a mad light of augury. The level of skill with plants and vegetation that was on display here was intense as he drew on everything to proceed onward.

830,000. 860,000. 890,000….

900,000!

The Azure Dragon roared; it was now ninety percent awake, and a shocking aura emanated out from the eighth level. It almost seemed to be pleading with Meng Hao to complete the final 100,000 deconstructions, so that it could be free to fly among the Heavens.

A tense silence reigned outside of the Medicine Pavilion as all eyes focused on the numbers on the stone stele. It was as if everyone was waiting for that number to reach 1,000,000!

Meng Hao suddenly looked up. The level of difficulty here was incredible, and his eyes were completely bloodshot. When it came to these final

100,000 medicinal plants, each one of them was made up of dozens and even hundreds of other medicinal plants.

He took a deep breath, and within him, his Immortal meridians exploded with power, fortifying his mental constitution. An intense Immortal will caused his Immortal qi to swirl, and his eyes glittered as if with starlight as he continued onward.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

91,000. 92,000. 93,000…. 97,000. 98,000. 99,000!!

Countless medicinal plants appeared in front of him, all of which he separated from the dragon. He lost track of time, and it almost seemed like the medicinal plants would never end. But then, all of a sudden, there were none. Meng Hao stopped in place.

1,000,000!!

When he finished the 1,000,000th medicinal plant, massive roaring filled the eighth level. The entire Medicine Pavilion emanated azure light as the illusory image of an azure dragon roared a shocking roar.

The members of the Fang Clan who were watching outside the Medicine Pavilion were thrown into tumult.

“1,000,000! The Crown Prince reached 1,000,000 on the eighth level!!”

“This is unheard-of! No one has ever done that in the history of the Dao of Alchemy Division!”

“The Crown Prince is a Chosen in cultivation and a blazing sun in the Dao of alchemy!!”

1. “The pill furnace flame turning blue” is a Chinese idiom based on the beliefs of ancient Chinese alchemists, who thought that when the flame of their pill furnace turned blue when concocting, it was a perfect success. It’s now an expression that means “to reach a point of perfection”

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# Chapter 1012: Opening the Essence Door

On that day, virtually every member of the Fang Clan saw an Azure Dragon fly out of the Medicine Pavilion in the Dao of Alchemy Division, then speed around Planet East Victory before eventually fading away.

As it vanished, motes of green light sprinkled down onto the lands of Planet East Victory, causing the entire planet to thrum with life force.

This scene caused the hearts of all the cultivators on Planet East Victory to tremble with shock.

In the Medicine Immortal Sect, Fang Yanxu saw what was happening and his expression flickered with astonishment. He gazed in the direction of the Dao of Alchemy Division and murmured after a long time, “So the legends about the eighth level are true…. The first alchemist to completely unseal the Azure Dragon of plants and vegetation, will free the dragon and enable it to nourish the lands.

“Meng Hao’s skill in the Dao of alchemy has reached an incredible level….”

Fang Shoudao took a deep breath. His eyes were wide as he watched the Azure Dragon fade away, and the nourishing motes of light fall down onto the planet. He even reached his hand out and allowed one of the glimmering lights to land onto his palm.

Simultaneously, the Dao bell appeared in midair over the ancestral mansion. Its toll echoed out into the hearts of all the members of the Fang Clan.

Then the hubbub of conversation broke out, in all areas of the Fang Clan. After experiencing the rebellion, the Fang Clan needed a joyous occasion like this to consolidate the clan and help them grow stronger.

On the eighth level of the Medicine Pavilion, Meng Hao watched as the unsealed Azure Dragon swirled around and then flew away. Next, the plants and vegetation disappeared into the numerous glittering screens which had just appeared.

Meng Hao did not immediately proceed to the next level. He sat down cross-legged and closed his eyes, mentally reviewing the 1,000,000 medicinal plants he had just seen, and committing them to memory.

After quite a bit of time passed, he opened his eyes, within which glowed an intense light. Having completed the eighth level perfectly, he looked off into the distance at… a door which had appeared!

There was no staircase, only a door, and that door led to the ninth level!

The final level!

“The Fang Clan’s Medicine Pavilion is truly a place where good fortune can be wrested away from Heaven and Earth. The transformations of plants and vegetation here have reached the pinnacle, especially on the eighth level.

“Well, I wonder what kind of test I’ll find on the ninth level?” He looked curiously at the door for a while before finally rising to his feet and walking over.

Eventually, he came to stand directly in front of it. Eyes glittering, he pushed it open and walked in without hesitation. This was the final level of the Medicine Pavilion.

As soon as he entered, he stopped in his tracks and stared around in shock.

An entire world stretched out in front of his eyes.

The sky was deep blue, and a golden sun hung in the sky, sending out radiant sunlight. Gigantic birds flew about in the sky.

Off in the distance, the ground shook under the feet of a giant, which roared as it ran.

Everything bore the appearance of ancient times. There was one particular plant, a small one, that was growing out from under a rock. It seemed ordinary and not even worth mentioning, but if you looked closely… it appeared as if, at some point in the past, the rock had crushed the plant. However, the plant had fought on, eventually pushing the rock aside and growing up from under its edges.

Meng Hao was a bit taken aback by everything. However, after only a few breaths of time passed, everything blurred. When things became clear again, he was standing in the same place he had been before. However, the mountains and lands around him had crumbled, even that rock. The little plant he had seen had also collapsed into pieces.

Yet, one of those plant pieces managed to fly up into the air and merge with some of the remnants of the shattered rock, which then spun off into the distance, where they landed in the middle of a pool of water and sank to the bottom.

Time passed. Years flew by, and it was impossible to tell how many. Gradually, another small plant grew up from within the pool of water. It looked different than the previous plant, sturdier and more resilient.

Meng Hao frowned. He wasn't sure exactly what he was seeing, nor what it had to do with this ninth level. He continued to watch as time flashed by. Suns rose and set. The plant would wither, then grow again, a seemingly endless cycle. Finally one day, the lands were destroyed in a seismic event, and the area where the plant was growing turned into a seafloor.

Soil became sludge, completely burying the tiny plant.

More time passed. The little plant once again grew up from within the sludge. It looked different than before, as if it were some type of seaweed. It looked almost like hair as it grew longer and longer.

Later, the sea dried up, and the plant withered and eventually disappeared. Then, a tree grew up in its place. That tree became a forest, within which was a tree that seemed to be the same tiny plant from years ago.

Time flowed. Meng Hao watched as the huge tree eventually began to grow smaller. The other trees around it withered in death, but it grew stronger and stronger until, eventually, it attracted the attention of lightning.

The lightning struck it, and it dried up. In the moment that it died, a sprout appeared, which became the only green thing in the whole world, growing up out of the dead husk of the tree.

Meng Hao stared at the sprout in shock. A powerful aura gradually began to emanate from the sprout, and after much time passed, a hand appeared in the void, which slowly reached out and harvested the tiny sprout.

“Sure enough, it became a Holy medicinal plant,” said an ancient voice, the same voice that had spoken on the previous levels of the Medicine pavilion. The images Meng Hao was seeing crumbled away.

He breathed heavily as everything faded away, and he found himself standing in a medicinal plant garden, within which grew a single medicinal plant.

It was a tiny sprout, the same one whose lives Meng Hao had seen passing by in his vision.

He stared at the sprout in shock, and a thoughtful expression appeared on his face.

“Do you understand?” asked the voice.

“What is the highest realm of plants and vegetation? No one can truly answer this question. Everyone has their own explanation!

“A tiny plant from the ancient age that experienced all sorts of good fortune… Who can say whether or not that plant will become some sort of shocking holy medicinal plant?!

“All living things are mundane, and yet, all living things can also be extraordinary!

“Cultivators practice cultivation because of their desire to shed the limitations of the mortal world. They wish to be like the carp that leapt over the dragon gate…. Plants and vegetation are similar. When concocting them into medicinal pills and consuming them, one should not solely focus on strengthening themselves, but should also strive to sense the plant’s fundamental will.

“It might seem like the plant dies in the process of becoming a pill, but who can truly say whether or not this is just a rebirth into another stage of life for them?”

As the ancient voice echoed out, Meng Hao sat down cross-legged and looked at the tiny sprout. All of a sudden, he thought about the image of the first generation Patriarch incarnated as a planet.

He became a planet, from which grew countless types of plants and vegetation….

“This….” Meng Hao murmured. He felt as if he were just on the verge of grasping something profound, but he wasn’t able to put it into words. It was as if countless threads were swirling around in his head, making it impossible to find the correct train of thought.

“Reincarnation?” he said, looking up.

Almost as soon as the word left his mouth, the entire world collapsed. The fragments then formed back together, causing another shocking vision to appear.

The vision was exactly the same as what he had experienced when he first set foot into the ninth level. He saw the world of ancient times, and he saw the tiny plant growing up from under the rock.

The vision appeared to be identical, except that this time, the hand was present, as if he was now seeing the true beginning to the story.

A voice echoed out within the vision: “Stuck under a boulder, but you still want to live and grow. Well then, allow me to give you a chance at life.”

The hand then tapped the plant lightly.

The little plant swayed, then returned to normal. The hand vanished, as if it had never existed in the first place.

The vision faded away, and the void of the ninth level appeared again. The ancient voice echoed out again.

“It’s not just reincarnation, but creation! From my perspective, the pinnacle of plants and vegetation is actually creation.” After the voice finished speaking, a door appeared next to Meng Hao, a door which led to the outside.

Meng Hao maintained his silence. The little plant had been ordinary, but because it had been tapped by that finger, its entire life and fate changed. In the end, the lightning struck it, and it became a Holy medicinal plant.

That definitely was a kind of creation.

After a long time, Meng Hao rose to his feet, clasped hands, and bowed deeply.

Suddenly, the ancient voice spoke again.

“If you had the choice, would you wish to become that little plant, or would you want to become the hand?”

Meng Hao paused and looked out into the void. Voice calm, he replied, “Neither that plant nor that hand can act of their own accord. Both are controlled by something else. I would want to become… the person who commanded that hand to alter the little plant!” With that, he turned and prepared to step through the door.

Suddenly, the ancient voice in the void laughed. It was a laughter filled with happiness and praise.

“To think that… the Fang Clan has produced someone like you. Delightful! How very delightful!” As the voice echoed out, the image of a middle-aged man suddenly appeared within the void. He looked over at Meng Hao.

“For years, none of the few people who managed to enter this place made a choice like yours.

“Your reward for reaching this ninth level is that I can answer a single question for you.”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered.

“Is there a pinnacle of skill with plants and vegetation that exceeds that of creation?” he asked.

“That’s not an easy question to answer,” the middle-aged man said slowly. “First, you must be able to understand… what the Dao is!”

“The Dao?” Meng Hao gaped.

“Why is there life? Why is there death?” The ancient voiced echoed back and forth endlessly.

“Why is there reincarnation? It’s like a circle, with the head and the tail connected, but what exactly does that mean, and is reincarnation the only explanation?

“Why are there cultivators? Why are there cultivation Realms?

“Why is there Daoist magic? Why are there divine abilities?

“How does light shine? How does darkness descend?

“Metal. Wood. Water. Fire. Earth. What are the differences between these elements?

“Fire is fire, and yet, why are there different types of heat?

“What is heat? What is cold? What does it mean when something that can only survive in the ice can be burned to death by a single drop of water?”

The ancient voice spoke with increasing speed, causing Meng Hao’s mind to tremble. Questions piled up in his mind. Each one seemed possible to answer directly, but if he actually had to answer them, he would be left speechless.

“What is the Dao?” That was the final question uttered by the ancient voice, and it left Meng Hao’s mind rumbling.

“The Essence is the Dao, the basis of everything that defies Heaven!” A bright light shone in the middle-aged man’s eyes, and he suddenly seemed very serious.

“All such unknowns are Essence. Only when you seek out the Essence, can you comprehend Heaven and Earth, understand all living things, and control everything! When you understand all transformations of Heaven and Earth, when you have defied the Heavens, when you have sealed the Earth, then what could possibly be difficult to you?!” The middle-aged man waved his hand, and Meng Hao’s mind trembled. He couldn’t stop himself from stepping into the door, and then he vanished into the void.

After he disappeared, the middle-aged man shook his head and smiled, then stepped forward into the medicinal plant garden. He sat down cross-legged and gradually transformed into a tiny sprout.

He was… the final transformation of that little plant. A tiny sprout!

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# Chapter 1013: Planning to Escape the Marriage!

“I look forward to the day when he becomes the person who controls that hand!” The sprout swayed back and forth, and faint laughter could be heard echoing out into the darkness of the void.

The option of becoming the plant or the hand seemed like a choice, but it was actually a trick question. Although there appeared to be two answers to pick from, in reality, those two answers were one and the same.

That was especially true after one’s mind was reeling after experiencing the shocking visions. Before that feeling even faded away, when one had not had a chance to digest the experience, and the heart was still unstable, whatever decision was made would clearly reveal the nature of one’s Dao, and the focus of one’s heart.

It was not a time in which random or careless things could be said. If one responded in an absurd way that did not correspond to the object of their obsession, it would be like a betrayal of oneself and result in the collapse of their Dao will.

Therefore, for someone to escape the trap and to respond that they wanted to become the person who controlled the hand was something completely remarkable. Any person who entered the ninth level of the Medicine Pavilion and faced that middle-aged man’s divine ability, and who had a cultivation base lower than him, would be incapable of speaking lies. The only thing they would be capable of of doing was speaking the truth from the bottom of their heart. That was the only way to pass the ninth level!

It required not only utter self-confidence, but also total clarity of self. Furthermore, it required those who answered the question to have an unshakable belief in their own Dao!

That middle-aged man had not seen a member of the Fang Clan like that in a long time. Therefore, he decided to provide some enlightenment regarding the Dao of Essence!

“Essence IS the Dao!” thought Meng Hao. His mind rumbled as he stepped out of the door. In the blink of an eye, he was outside of the medicine Pavilion, surrounded by tens of thousands of clan members, all of whom were looking at Meng Hao, their faces filled with excitement.

The toll of the Dao bell could be heard, filling the minds of all members of the Fang Clan.

Behind Meng Hao, brilliant light shot up from the Medicine Pavilion to illuminate everything. All of the alchemists on Planet East Victory clasped hands and bowed toward Meng Hao. The sky went dark.

That was the first time that anyone had perfectly passed through the entire Medicine Pavilion. It would definitely become a legend in the Dao of Alchemy Division, part of the mythos of the Fang Clan’s Dao of alchemy.

Meng Hao’s name was now listed in the very first position on the stone stele outside of the Medicine Pavilion!

However, all of the cheering barely registered in his ears. The words he had just heard filled his ears and continued to crash around in his mind like thunder.

“Essence… is the Dao….” he murmured.

“Comprehend Essence, and you can step into the Dao Realm!” It was as if Meng Hao’s mind had been opened further, making his understanding of cultivation clearer than ever.

“Use the Nirvana Fruits to enter the Ancient Realm. Use Essence to form the Dao Realm!” Meng Hao’s eyes shone with brilliant light as the ancient voice slowly echoed away into silence. Outside of the Medicine Pavilion, the cries of the clan members gradually grew stronger in Meng Hao’s ears.

“Congratulations, on charging through the whole Medicine Pavilion, Crown Prince!”

“Congratulations, Crown Prince!”

As the cries echoed out, Meng Hao gradually recovered his senses. Soon, he was staring around in shock. Something seemed… off. There didn’t seem to be enough people in the area. There were tens of thousands, and no more….

From what he could remember, when he entered the Medicine Pavilion, there had been hundreds of thousands, perhaps even more, spread about in all directins. Feeling suspicious, Meng Hao smiled at the crowds, clasped hands, and bowed. Then he gave Fang Xi a meaningful look, and sped off into the distance.

Fang Xi followed nervously. The two of them flew out of the Dao of Alchemy Division, and before Meng Hao could even ask him any questions, Fang Xi sighed.

“Coz, something happened. After you entered the Medicine Pavilion, the clan suddenly announced a bunch of important missions. Almost all of the clan members who came to watch immediately had to go back to the clan….” Smiling wryly, Fang Xi produced a bag of holding which he handed over to Meng Hao.

Face unsightly, Meng Hao grabbed the bag of holding and scanned it. There were quite a few spirit stones inside, but it was a lot less than he had expected. It didn’t take much thought to come to the conclusion that this was definitely a counterstrike from that old fox Fang Shoudao. He turned to stare angrily at the ancestral mansion.

“That old hoodlum!” Meng Hao growled, gnashing his teeth. “That wily old fox!!”

Obviously, the old fogey had figured out that he was being conned by Meng Hao, and had devised an ingenious counterattack.

“Well, it doesn’t matter,” said Meng Hao, forcing a smile onto his face as he clapped Fang Xi on the shoulder. “You head back now, and I’ll start working on another plan.”

Fang Xi nodded. After bowing to Meng Hao, he transformed into a colorful beam of light that shot off into the distance.

Meng Hao hovered in midair, eyes flickering, jaw clenched.

“Since you want to force my hand so badly, you old fox,” he thought, “don’t blame the Young Master for flipping over the game board!” Musing about how the first generation Patriarch had stared down Ji Tian, he turned into a prismatic beam that shot back toward the ancestral mansion.

Back in his residence, he sat down cross-legged.

After a few days passed, in the dead of night, he flickered and disappeared from within his residence and materialized outside of the ancestral mansion, where he transformed into a beam of light that shot soundlessly up into the sky.

Just when he seemed to be on the verge of bursting out into the starry sky, a powerful force bore down on him. It was like a sealing power, which spread out in all directions, forcing him to come to a stop. All he could do now was look out at the starry sky, his expression unsightly.

“So, the old fox already prepared for the possibility of me fleeing before the wedding day. From the look of things, the old fogey intentionally asked the Three Great Daoist Societies to wait for three months before coming back for me. It was all a setup!” He gritted his teeth as put all the pieces of the puzzle together. He was not happy to have been conned multiple times by Fang Shoudao. It was the feeling of being defeated by someone else in the field which you considered yourself to be most skilled at.

Meng Hao snorted coldly, and his eyes glittered. Deep inside, he was actually laughing as he turned and headed back to the clan. He settled down in the ancestral mansion, and made no further attempts to escape the marriage. Nor did he go to concoct medicinal pills. Instead, he spent all of his time poring through the clan’s ancient records, and reading through its history.

Fang Shoudao was puzzled by this behavior. During recent days, he had been constantly observing Meng Hao with divine sense. He even saw him attempt to fly away, the result of which left him feeling very pleased.

But now, he couldn’t figure him out.

“I can’t underestimate this fox cub,” he thought. “If I overlook the tiniest thing, I could end up falling into his con.” Fang Shoudao wore a very serious expression. He attempted to study the same ancient records that Meng Hao had looked at. However, he didn’t notice anything out of the ordinary, which only served to increase his caution.

An entire month passed in this fashion. Fang Shoudao was starting to get a very bad feeling. However, no matter how much thought he put into it, he couldn’t put his finger on what exactly the problem was.

Currently, Meng Hao sat cross-legged in his residence. Suddenly, his eyes snapped open, and they were shot with blood. His complexion was a bit wan as well. However, inside, he was laughing coldly.

“That’s it! I’ve figured it out!” he murmured to himself.

“During Divine Soul Nourishment, all of Planet East Victory will be covered by ripples that block Dao Realm divine sense for one breath of time. It is also during Divine Soul Nourishment that the One Thought Stellar Transformation… can be used to perform a Stellar Teleportation!

“Therefore, now is the time… to concoct some pills!” His eyes glittered for a moment before he closed them. The next morning at dawn, he rose to his feet and then shot toward the Dao of Alchemy Division in a beam of light.

For the entire past month, Fang Shoudao had been completely on edge. He knew that something was going on with Meng Hao, so as soon as he saw him fly out of his residence, he focused all of his divine sense on him. When he saw that he was heading toward the Dao of Alchemy Division, he breathed a sigh of relief.

“Hmph. What scares me is not you making your move, fox cub. What makes me nervous is when you do nothing, making it impossible to pick up on any clues. You’re just too immature.” A wide smile appeared on Fang Shoudao’s face. He was clearly very pleased with himself.

“So, it turns out he’s heading to the Pill Pavilion.” he said to himself. His eyes flashed. He was actually in fear of Meng Hao’s Dao of alchemy. However, Fang Yanxu had told him that other than the first generation Patriarch, no one had ever been able to concoct the third medicinal pill. Therefore, he wasn’t too worried.

“According to Fang Yanxu, the little hoodlum isn’t qualified to concoct the second medicinal pill. Of course, it would all depend on his enlightenment regarding certain fundamentals, an enlightenment that no one in the Immortal Realm could possibly achieve. Only those on the threshold of the Dao Realm could achieve it!

“Considering that, it seems that he simply has no way of concocting the second medicinal pill.” Fang Shoudao coughed dryly. In truth, the matter of the marriage between Meng Hao and Li Ling’er had really gotten him worried lately.

“Well, there’s nothing to be done. I’m his grandfather’s grandfather, and I love him more than anyone else in the clan. If I don’t worry about his future, then who will, right?” Fang Shoudao sighed to himself, then blinked an eye to send some more divine sense out toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao flew through the Dao of Alchemy Division, causing rumbling sounds to echo out. After a month being away, it was his grand return. As various clan members caught sight of him, they began to speculate about what exactly he was doing. Then, people began to realize that he was heading toward the Pill Pavilion, and excitement began to build.

“Could it be that after charging through all of the Medicine Pavilion, the Crown Prince is now going to challenge the Pill Pavilion?”

“The Crown Prince was already able to concoct one of the three great medicinal pills, the Skypalace Sunspirit Pill. Could it be… that he’s going to try to concoct the other two pills?!”

Even as they made their speculations, they flew into the air to follow Meng Hao. It didn’t take long before the entire Dao of Alchemy Division was astir. As for Meng Hao, he shot through the air at top speed, making no attempt to conceal his actions as he whistled toward the Pill Pavilion.

Soon, he was standing directly outside of it, surrounded by clusters of curious clan members.

What they saw was Meng Hao unhesitatingly approach the second drum, raise his fist, and strike the drum’s surface.

A sonorous boom resonated out, causing everything to shake. The entire Dao of Alchemy Division trembled, and even the ancestral mansion reverberated with the sound.

“The Crown Prince really is going to try to concoct one of those legendary medicinal pills!!”

“He already concocted the Skypalace Sunspirit Pill, now he’s going to try to make a Sea Cleaving Heaven Defying Pill!!”

The sound of the drum echoed out in all directions, causing even more clan members to approach. This was not like the Medicine Pavilion, where people couldn’t see inside. Anyone could bear witness to the concocting of the legendary medicinal pills.

Meng Hao stood outside the Pill Pavilion, hand still clenched into a fist. It was at this point that the list of rewards for concocting the medicinal pill appeared in front of him.

“Sea Cleaving Heaven Defying Pill! Whoever concocts this pill will receive a reward of 1,000,000,000 spirit stones, 1,000,000 Immortal jades, 20,000,000 merit points, 100,000 medicinal plants of your choice from the Dao of Alchemy Division, six clan Daoist magics, and one Ancient treasure. The Dao Bell will toll 18 times! The ingredient fee is 10,000,000 merit points for one set.”

In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao’s clan merit points were reduced by 10,000,000!

A jade slip then appeared in front of him. At the same time, a vast collection of medicinal plants appeared, which floated around him in the air. In total, there were 99 different plants.

Meng Hao raised his hand to take the jade slip. After scanning it with divine sense, he could see the method for how to concoct one of the Fang Clan’s three great medicinal pills, the second pill… Sea Cleaving Heaven Defying Pill!

After glancing at the formula, Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed, and he understood why it was so difficult to concoct the pill, and why nobody from the Dao of Alchemy Division had successfully done so over the years.

“The difficulty in concocting this pill comes from the grafts that are involved. There is no grafting technique, only a rough pill formula. Furthermore, the pill formula doesn’t even list the names of the plants and vegetation involved. All it does is list the degree to which certain characteristics are required of the plants.

“You need to use these 99 medicinal plants to graft 100,000 different plants that all harmonize with each other. That is the first step, Sea Cleaving.

“As for the Heaven Defying part of the pill, it seems so profound. How do you concoct that portion?” After a moment of silence, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with a bright glow, and he thought back to what the middle-aged man had said on the ninth level of the Medicine Pavilion.

“The Essence is the Dao, the basis of everything that defies Heaven!

“I understand now. This medicinal pill is difficult to concoct because… it requires Essence! That’s why Pill Elder couldn’t concoct it, and yet… Fang Yanxu from the Medicine Immortal Sect could!” Meng Hao felt as if his mind were being struck by lightning. Then, everything became clear.

“Essence…. well, I have that too!” It was at this point that his terrifying Divine Flame Immortal meridian roared to life inside of him. His cultivation base surged, and massive pressure rolled out. The surrounding clan members were shocked to discover that Essence ripples were pouring out of Meng Hao!

They might be weak, and as vastly separated from the power of the Dao Realm as Earth is from Heaven. However, it was definitely Essence power!

It wasn’t enough power for Meng Hao to reach the Dao Realm, but if all he was doing was concocting pills….

“It’s enough!” A smile broke out on Meng Hao’s face as he waved his right hand, causing all 99 medicinal plants to fly toward him. Then, they blurred as he began to graft them together at high speed.

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# Chapter 1014: Sea Cleaving Heaven Defying Pill

Almost in the same moment that Meng Hao's Divine Flame Immortal meridian exploded with power, Fang Yanxu sat in the Medicine Immortal Sect, and his face suddenly flickered. He rose to his feet, vanished, and reappeared next to Fang Shoudao in the ancestral mansion.

"That little punk actually does understand the threshold of the Dao Realm!" he said. "He's figured it out too early! Without sufficient wisdom, it's not a good thing."

When Fang Shoudao heard this, he stared in shock.

"You mean…?"

Fang Yanxu looked over at Fang Shoudao and then coolly said, "I mean that he CAN concoct the Sea Cleaving Heaven Defying Pill after all."

Fang Shoudao's expression flickered, and then he frowned.

"Why do you have to make things so hard on him?" said Fang Yanxu, shaking his head. "Loving memories are what makes our journey along the path of cultivation beautiful."

"The Li Clan was an auxiliary branch of Lord Li's clan," replied Fang Shoudao, "and the reason why the Ji Clan has no choice but to leave them be is that, just like the Wang Clan, the Li Clan did not originate in the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

"The benefit to the clan as a whole is secondary when it comes to forming a marriage alliance with the Li Clan. The most important thing about it is for

Hao'er himself. Once he steps into the Dao Realm, being in that marriage would provide him with unexpected benefits.

"He is now the only hope of my bloodline. How could I possibly allow him to fool around willy-nilly?" Fang Shoudao sighed and then made a grasping motion, causing a jade slip to appear in his hand.

"If Hao'er gets angry, then I'll just have to bear the brunt of that anger," he concluded. Eyes filled with determination, he sent some divine will into the jade slip.

Back in the Dao of Alchemy Division, everyone watched as Meng Hao stood in front of the Pill Pavilion's second drum, hair and robes whipping about. He swished his sleeve, and the medicinal plants flying about him blurred as he rapidly grafted them.

He was to use 99 medicinal plants to graft 100,000 variations. That was the first step to concocting the Sea Cleaving Heaven Defying Pill.

An expression of concentration could be seen on his face, and his eyes flickered with the glow of augury. More and more medicinal plants appeared around him.

3,000. 7,000. 10,000!

That wasn't the end. Meng Hao lifted his hand and waved a finger, causing all of the medicinal plants to split apart as he started new grafts. In accordance with the pill formula's requirements, he continued to create more and more medicinal plants that all harmonized with each other.

Doing something like this required incredible skill with plants and vegetation, skill that could only be described as terrifying. It was something that, in the entire Dao of Alchemy Division, only Pill Elder could also do.

No one else in the Dao of Alchemy Division could come close, the reason being that such a level of skill with plants and vegetation required that someone pass the eighth level of the Medicine Pavilion by un-grafting at least 500,000 medicinal plants.

Even in the Medicine Immortal Sect, only Fang Yanxu was qualified to do such a thing.

Time passed. Meng Hao’s hand was in constant motion as more and more grafted medicinal plants appeared around him.

20,000. 30,000. 40,000….

It was a dazzling sight, and all of the surrounding members of the Fang Clan were shaken inwardly. They had never seen someone concoct pills in such a way. To them, this was not a matter of simply concocting pills. This was a Dao!

The Dao of alchemy!

The alchemists were all moved, and Pill Elder stood on his mountain peak, watching intently.

50,000. 60,000. 70,000….

Meng Hao’s hands moved faster and faster, and the flash of augury sparkled in his eyes. All of his attention was focused on deconstructing, then grafting medicinal plants. Boundless light rose up, and only continued to grow brighter and brighter.

An intense aroma of medicinal plants and vegetation wafted about. It grew stronger and stronger until it filled the entire Dao of Alchemy Division. All of the cultivators who caught a whiff felt enlivened.

Time passed by slowly. Soon, a day had gone by, and Meng Hao was still deconstructing medicinal plants. During the process, he couldn’t make a single mistake. If he did, if he missed out on a single characteristic of a single plant, it would influence the deconstruction of all the other plants and vegetation.

80,000. 90,000…. On the second day, Meng Hao’s hands suddenly stopped moving. Shockingly he was now surrounded by… 100,000 medicinal plants!

From 99 plants, he had deconstructed and grafted 100,000 new, unique medicinal plants!

The surrounding members of the Fang Clan, including the alchemists from the Dao of Alchemy Division, were in shock. What they had seen was like something out of a legend. It was like observing a Dao, a type of pill concocting in which refuse was turned into a divine item!

However, nobody spoke. They only looked on, panting. Interrupting someone who was concocting pills was the highest taboo, and considering that Meng Hao was now immersed in the Dao of alchemy, the members of the Fang Clan maintained complete silence. They didn’t want to disturb him. However, their eyes were filled with excitement and approval that bordered on madness.

Meng Hao closed his eyes, then opened them a few moments later. A brilliant gleam could be seen as he extended his hands and pinched down with his fingers.

“Sea!” he barked.

As soon as the word left his mouth, the 100,000 medicinal plants which surrounded him all collapsed into pieces. All of the leaves and branches shattered into dust as if being squeezed dry and dying.

The sight of it caused everyone to gasp. However, the cultivators with strong skill in the Dao of alchemy were instantly astonished.

A wind picked up, gathering up the dust that was the remnants of the 100,000 medicinal plants, leaving behind… something formed from the sap of 100,000 plants… an emerald sea!

The green sea surrounded Meng Hao, and pulsed as if with waves, sending tremors out in all directions. It almost looked like real seawater, and although it wasn’t a boundless expanse, it was truly a sea!

The sea of plants and vegetation rotated ceaselessly around Meng Hao as he extended both hands and then violently shoved them downward.

“Congeal!”

Rumbling filled the air as the sea of plants and vegetation began to boil, then condense inward. In the blink of an eye it transformed into an enormous ball of sap in front of Meng Hao.

Almost in that same moment, Meng Hao’s Immortal meridians exploded with power. 33 Heavens appeared, and the secret magic of the Immortal Realm Paragon was unleashed. Instantly, all of his Immortal meridians transformed into Divine Flame Immortal meridians!

123 Divine Flame Immortal meridians surged with power, causing 123 beams of glowing Divine Flame light to shoot toward the sphere of sap.

They merged into each other, and Essence power emanated off of Meng Hao. His entire body trembled, and beads of sweat broke out on his face. His eyes gleamed with determination as he reached out and manipulated the sphere of sap with both hands.

It began to boil madly. Bulges and depressions rose and fell on its surface, and numerous magical symbols flickered. It was almost as if there were some Earth-shaking Heaven-shattering power inside of it.

It seemed like it might explode at any moment, but Meng Hao was constantly suppressing it.

Rumbling sounds echoed out from inside of the sphere of sap, which was now the complete focus of all attention.

The sphere grew smaller and smaller as Meng Hao suppressed it, until finally it was the size of a fist….

Unable to push the sap down any further, Meng Hao cried out, “Sea Cleaving!”

An incredible force burst out from within the sphere, causing his hands to recoil. Blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth, and he backed up. At the same time, the fist-sized sphere of sap directly exploded.

A huge boom echoed out in all directions as endless amounts of sap splashed out in all directions. It was as if the entire sky… was suddenly stained the green color of plants and vegetation!

“Did he fail?” That was the question floating in the minds of all the onlookers.

“Heaven Defying!” Meng Hao threw his head back and roared, unleashing the full explosive power of his Divine Flame Immortal meridian.

The splatters of sap suddenly stopped in place, then began to move in reverse. In the blink of an eye, all of the sap had returned and reformed in front of Meng Hao!

This sight caused the minds of all onlookers to reel. They had clearly seen the sky stained green when the sap exploded. But now, there was a defiant reversal! The Heavens changed color again as the sap completely went in reverse.

Shockingly, the sap congealed together, becoming a green medicinal pill which floated in front of Meng Hao!

The powerful, intense medicinal aroma exploded out, filling the entire Dao of Alchemy Division, reaching the Fang Clan ancestral mansion, and spreading out across roughly half of Planet East Victory.

Planet East Victory was completely shaken!

If that were all there were to it, it wouldn’t be enough to see how valuable the pill was. However, in the exact moment that the Sea Cleaving Heaven Defying Pill appeared, all of a sudden, shocking winds swept out through the sky above Planet East Victory as countless Tribulation Clouds appeared.

This was not true Immortal Tribulation, but rather… Pill Tribulation!

From ancient times until now, whenever shocking pills appeared, it would stimulate the power of Heaven and Earth and cause Pill Tribulation to appear, to attempt to eradicate the pill!

The scene caused shock to rise up in the hearts of the members of the Fang Clan. Fang Danyun’s eyes glowed brightly, and Fang Yanxu was clearly moved.

The Pill Tribulation formed in the blink of an eye, creating boundless Tribulation Clouds that caused all of Planet East Victory to tremble. The cultivators were shaken as they watched a lightning bolt descend from the roiling clouds.

“Trifling Pill Tribulation!” said Meng Hao, his expression indifferent. He had transcended Immortal Tribulation, so to him, Pill Tribulation wasn’t even worth glancing at. Even as the lightning bolt descended, Meng Hao extended his hand. All 123 Immortal meridians then transformed into the Blood Demon Grand Magic.

123 Blood Demon heads charged up. The entire sky turned bright red as the Blood Demon heads fused together, becoming a gigantic 3,000-meter head with a horn sticking out of its forehead. The massive head surged toward the lightning bolt.

A huge boom echoed out. Everyone was astonished to see the lightning bolt collapse into pieces, completely incapable of doing anything to the Blood Demon head. After that, the head continued onward, whistling through the air toward the Tribulation Clouds!

The Tribulation Clouds… were destroyed!

When that happened, the Sea Cleaving Heaven Defying Pill in front of Meng Hao burst out with brilliant light that shot up into the sky. Simultaneously, the Dao bell appeared in midair above the ancestral mansion and began to toll, shaking everything.

It was not one toll or two, but rather two sets of nine tolls each!

In total, 18 tolls rang out into the minds of the members of the Fang Clan, leaving them completely shaken!

For years and years, the Dao bell had never tolled so many times. The result was that everyone in the whole Fang Clan was left completely flabbergasted.

Meng Hao stood outside the Pill Pavilion, his hair whipping about, his eyes shining brightly. The surrounding cultivators and alchemists of the Fang Clan had looks of unprecedentedly wild reverence on their faces as they clasped hands and bowed deeply.

When they straightened up, they found that Meng Hao had not left the Pill Pavilion. Instead, he had walked forward… toward the third drum!

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# Chapter 1015: Heavenly One Thought!

The members of the Fang Clan had suppressed their comments for too long, and now everything erupted.

“The Crown Prince, he… he’s going to concoct the Heavenly One Thought Pill?”

“The Crown Prince already concocted the Skypalace Sunspirit Pill and the Sea Cleaving Heaven Defying Pill. B-but… the Heavenly One Thought Pill is the number one pill of the Fang Clan! Nobody can concoct it!”

The entire Dao of Alchemy Division was boiling.

Fang Yanxu’s eyes glowed brightly with anticipation as he looked at Meng Hao. Although he didn’t believe that Meng Hao would actually succeed, he wanted to see for himself whether a miracle would occur.

As for the methods Fang Shoudao was using to make things hard for Meng Hao, Fang Yanxu didn’t approve. When it came to making choices between love and opportunity, some people would pick the former, others the latter, and he didn’t feel it was right to interfere with such a decision.

Forcing your own choices onto others was fundamentally wrong. However, he wasn’t in a position to say anything about it. After all, Meng Hao was of the same bloodline as Fang Shoudao, and he was not.

Fang Shoudao was frowning. He was certain that Meng Hao would be incapable of concocting the Heavenly One Thought Pill. Furthermore, even if some Heaven-defying event occurred, he had already reduced the prizes so that Meng Hao couldn't make enough to win the bet.

And yet, for some reason, he had the feeling that he had overlooked something. Unfortunately, no matter how he reviewed all the details, he couldn't pick up any clues about what it might be.

"The little hoodlum is far too crafty," thought Fang Shoudao, smiling slightly. "I have to be on guard…. Although, regardless of whether he succeeds or not, he still has to pay 100,000,000 merit points."

Back in the mountains of the Dao of Alchemy Division, atop the Pill Pavilion, Meng Hao actually wasn't even thinking about the reward for concocting the Sea Cleaving Heaven Defying Pill. He was sure that Fang Shoudao would have come up with a reason to reduce the reward to ensure that he wouldn't be able to come up with all the spirit stones he needed within the time limit.

Since that was the case, Meng Hao decided that he might as well make a big show of things. By striking the third drum, it indicated that he would be attempting to do something that nobody in the Fang Clan other than the first generation Patriarch had ever done! He would concoct the pill nobody had ever concocted… the Heavenly One Thought Pill!

Neither Fang Danyun nor Fang Yanxu, nor anyone throughout all the years, had ever successfully concocted the clan's legendary Heavenly One Thought Pill!

When Meng Hao came to a stop in front of the third drum and turned his head to look around, he saw the members of the Fang Clan tightly packed in all directions, staring at him. Their eyes gleamed with passionate fervor.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. Expression somber, he clasped hands and then bowed to all of his fellow clan members.

"Ladies and gentlemen, fellow clan members. I wish to concoct the Heavenly One Thought Pill!

“Unfortunately… this pill requires 100,000,000 merit points. Right now, I don’t have enough merit points. Therefore, I would like to request that all of you give me some of your merit points, so that I can concoct the pill…

“The pill that no one other than the first generation Patriarch has ever been able to concoct… the Heavenly One Thought Pill!”

Meng Hao’s voice echoed out in all directions. If he had said something like this before concocting the Sea Cleaving Heaven Defying Pill, very few clan members would have been willing to give him clan merit points.

But now, after having just recently charged through the Medicine Pavilion, and then concocting the Sea Cleaving Heaven Defying Pill, he had long since built his momentum up to a peak. That was especially true after putting his Dao of alchemy on display by concocting the Sea Cleaving Heaven Defying Pill. To everyone who was watching, he was like something out of a legend.

Therefore, when he spoke his words, none of the surrounding clan members refused. In fact, they were all very excited to deliver their merit points to him.

They wanted to witness… something that had never happened in the history of the clan. They wanted to see whether or not Meng Hao would actually be able to concoct the Heavenly One Thought Pill.

“Crown Prince, there’s no need to be so polite! I’m more than happy to give you a few trifling merit points!”

“I don’t have much, Crown Prince, only one thousand. But you can have all of them to concoct that pill!” Voices rang out in all directions. Varying amounts of merit points were transferred to Meng Hao’s jade slip, causing the balance to rise rapidly.

It didn’t take long for there to be more than 10,000,000. Only when the number reached 30,000,000 did it begin to slow down. Yet, there was still far too big a gap before he got as many as he needed.

It was at this point that virtually all of the alchemists from the Dao of Alchemy Division stepped forward and began to give merit points to Meng Hao.

“We’re all alchemists, and our greatest aspiration in life, other than creating our own unique and unmatched medicinal pill, is to be able to see our clan’s legendary Heavenly One Thought Pill!”

“We know that in our entire lifetime we will never be able to concoct this pill ourselves. Crown Prince, since you have a chance to succeed, then how could we hold back?!”

“Crown Prince, I beg of you, you must succeed!!” As the voices echoed out, rising and falling, Meng Hao’s merit point balance exploded up. From 30,000,000, it almost instantly rose up to more than 80,000,000.

Meng Hao’s heart filled with warmth, and he clasped hands and bowed to everyone. However, his merit point balance… still wasn’t high enough.

All of a sudden, laughter rang out from the center-most mountain deep in the Dao of Alchemy Division. Then, Pill Elder Fang Danyun’s voice could be heard.

“Hao’er, allow me to give you 20,000,000 merit points!” Fang Danyun waved his sleeve, and Meng Hao’s merit points exploded up, rapidly reaching a total of 100,000,000!

In that same moment, Fang Yanxu lowered his hand. He had also been planning to give Meng Hao some merit points. After all… they were all alchemists, and they all longed to see the Heavenly One Thought Pill. It was a desire that non-alchemists probably couldn’t imagine or comprehend.

Fang Shoudao could only smile bitterly. He had never imagined that Meng Hao would be able to overcome the first major obstacle to concocting the Heavenly One Thought Pill so easily. After all, although their original agreement had precluded Meng Hao from borrowing spirit stones, it had said nothing about merit points.

Meng Hao stood there outside the Pill Pavilion in the Dao of Alchemy Division. He took a deep breath as he clasped hands and bowed deeply toward Fang Danyun's mountain peak. Then he turned, raised his hand, and struck the third drum.

BOOM!

The sound rang out throughout the entire clan. Meng Hao's 100,000,000 merit points vanished, and in front of him appeared the information about the Heavenly One Thought Pill.

"Heavenly One Thought Pill! Whoever concocts this pill will be the Lord of the Dao of Alchemy Division! The prerequisite to attempt this pill is to concoct the previous two pills. The ingredient fee is 100,000,000 merit points per set."

Meng Hao's eyes shone with a strange light when saw the words Lord of the Dao of Alchemy Division!

That was the true reason why he was doing this. He wasn't interested in the position itself. Rather, he was interested in the bit of good fortune he would receive after becoming the Lord of the Dao of Alchemy Division!

That good fortune was something that most people didn't even know about. After all… from the time the first generation Patriarch passed away into meditation until now, there had never been a Lord of the Dao of Alchemy Division. The good fortune he would acquire in that moment was something that had long since been omitted from what was taught in the clan about their history.

However, after researching the ancient records, Meng Hao had found the solution to his problem.

In addition to that, one of the reasons he was so confident that he could concoct the Heavenly One Thought Pill was because of information he had uncovered in the ancient records. There, it contained various journal entries made by certain clan members who had attempted to concoct the pill. From that information, he had gotten some clues.

Those clues had spun round and round inside of Meng Hao's mind. During the month he had spent doing his research, they had eventually formed together into a very important idea.

"Heavenly One Thought Pill…." he murmured. "Perhaps I am the only person in the entire Fang Clan who can actually concoct it." It was at that point that the twinkle of the starstone could be seen in his left eye.

"Time to carry out the plan." In the moment that his fist struck the surface of the third drum, a huge collection of medicinal plants appeared.

There was also a pill formula, which Meng Hao grabbed and and then began to study. Now, he was even more certain.

"The Heavenly One Thought Pill requires divine sense that can stretch out into the starry sky. One must pluck down a shooting star, a stellar object, then use its power to catalyze the medicinal plants, refine them for at least a few thousand years. Only then can the pill be concocted!

"That medicinal pill… is not meant to be consumed. Rather… it is an item used in cultivating the One Thought Stellar Transformation!

"The Heavenly One Thought Pill…. Actually, the starstone in my left eye… is a Heavenly One Thought Pill!

"In truth, I cannot concoct the pill, not unless my cultivation base is at the same level as the first generation Patriarch, or perhaps if I had the assistance of someone in that Realm.

"However… I already have a Heavenly One Thought Pill. Therefore, there isn't a need to actually concoct it. I can just put on a little show! That should do!" His expression was the same as ever as he waved his right hand. Instantly, the medicinal plants all trembled as he began to graft them together.

There were over 10,000 of them, and as they were grafted together, the aura of plants and vegetation rose up into the sky. Time passed, and more and more types of plants and vegetations appeared around Meng Hao. In the end, there were 1,000,000 medicinal plants swirling around him. They were packed tightly together, filling the sky, with Meng Hao at the center, completely surrounded.

These were valuable medicinal plants, and Meng Hao would naturally not just waste them. Although he didn’t intend to actually concoct a new Heavenly One Thought Pill, he did plan to further refine the one that was already in his left eye, to ensure that it was truly branded as his own.

Days passed. There seemed to be an endless amount of medicinal plants swirling around Meng Hao. Rumbling sounds filled the air as the plants then shattered, creating a sea of plants and vegetation. It shot toward Meng Hao, encircling him, wrapping him inside and preventing anyone in the outside world from seeing what was happening. It was at that point that the starstone emerged from Meng Hao’s eye and floated in front of him, radiating scintillating starlight as it absorbed the sap from the medicinal plants.

Then he performed a double-handed incantation gesture, causing the Divine Flame inside of him to explode out as he began a second refining of the pill!

The Divine Flame caused the sap to boil. He performed another incantation gesture, further refining the sap until it turned into numerous magical symbols. Using the techniques of mutual augmentation and suppression, he caused the magical symbols to fuse into the starstone. The starstone gradually began to turn black, and then emanate powerful ripples which only continued to grow stronger and stronger.

The ripples rapidly spread out into the Dao of Alchemy Division, shocking all of the alchemists.

They watched as the sap rapidly vanished. Brilliant light filled the air, shining out from the starstone that Meng Hao held in his palm. Colors flashed in the sky, as if the Heavens themselves were changing. Countless motes of starlight appeared up above, which were apparently reflections caused by the starstone.

“This is the Heavenly One Thought Pill!” shouted Meng Hao. His voice echoed out in all directions, causing widespread shock. Everyone was staring at the starstone.

“That’s… the Heavenly One Thought Pill?”

Ordinary cultivators wouldn’t be able to tell that Meng Hao was putting on a show and pulling the wool over everyone’s eyes, but Fang Yanxu and Fang Shoudao, as well as Fang Danyun, could all tell just by looking.

“Ah, so the Heavenly One Thought Pill cannot be concocted by someone who hasn’t cultivated the One Thought Stellar Transformation!” A tremor ran through Fang Yanxu as he suddenly understood everything.

“So that’s how it is….” murmured Fang Danyun absentmindedly.

Fang Shoudao stared with wide eyes. “The little hoodlum cheated! He’s cheating!!”

Almost as soon as the words left his mouth, however, the Dao bell suddenly appeared in midair over the ancestral mansion. It’s booming toll rang out in three sets of nine. That was… a total of 27 tolls!

Fang Shoudao didn’t approve, but… the Fang Clan’s Dao bell did! According to it, Meng Hao had concocted the pill!

In the moment that the Dao bell began to toll, a strange light began to glimmer in Meng Hao’s eyes. He knew… that it was time for the final step of his plan!

It wouldn’t be long before he could leave Planet East Victory!

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# Chapter 1016: Old Turtle Reliance!

The Dao bell began to toll 27 times, echoing out in the hearts and minds of all members of the Fang Clan on Planet East Victory. The fact that the bell tolled so many times caused everyone’s hearts to fill with towering waves of shock.

Skypalace Sunspirit Pill!

Sea Cleaving Heaven Defying Pill!

Heavenly One Thought Pill!

For countless years, no one had ever been able to concoct all three of the Fang Clan’s legendary medicinal pills. However, on this day… Meng Hao did it in front of everyone, giving birth to what would eventually become a myth!

He also became… the Lord of the Dao of Alchemy! 1

As the majestic sound of the toll rippled out into the Ninth Mountain and Sea, an archaic voice spoke from the bell, and its words could be heard in the hearts of everyone in the Fang Clan.

“All members of the Fang Clan must bow to the Lord of the Dao of Alchemy!”

That voice was the will of the Dao bell, the highest form of testimony, which bore witness to the rise of the Lord of the Dao of Alchemy !

All of the alchemists in the Dao of Alchemy Division emerged into the open. All of the apprentice alchemists neared. Even Fang Danyun stepped off of his mountain peak, his expression extremely solemn.

No matter what tier alchemist, everyone approached from all directions and congregated around the Pill Pavilion. All eyes were fixed upon Meng Hao, who stood there above the Pill Pavilion.

“Greetings… Lord of the Dao of Alchemy!!” It was hard to say who spoke the words first, but soon similar words were echoing out from all directions. Everyone in the Dao of Alchemy Division clasped hands and bowed to Meng Hao, from apprentice alchemists on up.

“Greetings, Lord of the Dao of Alchemy!!”

“We offer greetings, Lord of the Dao of Alchemy!!”

Fang Danyun clasped hands and bowed deeply to Meng Hao. Naturally, he was aware that Meng Hao had resorted to a bit of trickery in the end. However, that was not important considering… that the Dao bell approved!

The Dao bell was a magical instrument left behind by the first generation Patriarch of the Fang Clan, and was a signature treasure of the Fang Clan. It had not interfered in the previous upheaval and rebellion, due to the extraordinary circumstances surrounding the internal strife. Were it not for that, the Dao bell would have intervened long before the first generation Patriarch’s clone ever did.

As of this moment, the Dao bell shone with boundless, majestic light, which was full of numerous mysterious magical symbols. The symbols glowed, forming a sea of light that swirled around the entire Fang Clan.

Because of the brilliant light, the calls of those in the Dao of Alchemy Division became even more intense. They echoed out of the Dao of Alchemy Division in all directions, until even those in the ancestral mansion could hear them.

Countless voices joined together and were transformed into a call that was the unified will of the Dao of Alchemy Division.

The Lord of the Dao of Alchemy…. Only clan members who had concocted the Heavenly One Thought Pill could be bestowed with the title of Lord of the Dao of Alchemy!

Throughout all the years, the only person who had ever been called the Lord of the Dao of Alchemy was the first generation Patriarch. That is, until this day… when another emerged. The second Lord of the Dao of Alchemy!

As of this moment, the Fang Clan was abuzz, and the tolling of the Dao bell caused the clan members' blood to boil. Furthermore, it caused many of them, regardless of whether or not they were members of the Dao of Alchemy Division, to answer the call of their blood and shout out at the top of their lungs.

"Congratulations to the Dao of Alchemy Division on the arrival of the Alchemy Lord!"

"Congratulations to the Lord of the Dao of Alchemy!"

A huge clamor filled the entire Fang Clan, and echoed out to fill roughly half of Planet East Victory. There were even members of the Fang Clan in the Medicine Immortal Sect who stood there trembling, their minds reeling. One by one, they clasped hands and bowed in the direction of the Dao of Alchemy Division.

In that moment, Meng Hao's glory had reached an unparalleled pinnacle!

Even Fang Yanxu and Fang Shoudao took deep breaths, stepped forward, and then shockingly, appeared in midair above the Dao of Alchemy Division. As for Fang Yanxu, he looked seriously toward Meng Hao, then clasped hands and bowed!

Of course, he was not bowing to Meng Hao's person, but rather, bowing to what Meng Hao's new status as the Lord of the Dao of Alchemy represented!

Fang Shoudao hesitated for a moment before finally lowering his gaze and bowing to Meng Hao. He had no other choice but to do so. Despite being a Dao Realm Patriarch, despite being the acting Clan Chief, the will of the

Dao bell had spoken, and as such, no member of the Fang Clan could possibly resist!

To resist the Dao bell was to disobey the first generation Patriarch!

Fang Yanxu and Fang Shoudao, as well as the three remaining Ancient Realm cultivators who had extinguished more than ten soul lamps, including the Seventh Patriarch, all appeared and bowed.

As of this moment, the entire Fang Clan was bowing to Meng Hao.

The toll of the bell continued to echo out. 18 times. 19 times…. all the way until it had tolled 27 times, shaking all of Planet East Victory.

Then, the brilliant light shining out from the Dao bell descended onto Meng Hao, surrounding him and causing him to float up into the air toward the bell itself.

This development caused everyone to stare in shock.

Next, an ancient voice spoke out from the Dao bell, which echoed out into the minds of all members of the Fang Clan.

“The Lord of the Dao of Alchemy can ring the Dao bell one time, converging the soul, extending divine sense, and allowing the will of the clan to descend onto the body!”

The voice echoed out into the minds of all of the members of the Fang Clan, whose eyes went wide as they stared at Meng Hao within the light.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever, but his heart was pounding with joy.

“So it’s true! The dying words of the first generation Patriarch weren’t a hoax!

“I was able to find clues in the clan’s ancient records, and they turned out to be true!

“The Dao bell is not limited to chiming autonomously, but…it can be rung by others!

“And the only way to do that is to become the Clan Chief or… the Lord of the Dao of Alchemy!” Meng Hao floated through the light toward the Dao bell.

Countless clan members were looking on, and Fang Shoudao’s heart was starting to pound. He had overlooked the matter of the Dao bell, as well as the fact that either the true Clan Chief or the Lord of the Dao of Alchemy could ring it.

After all, for countless years in the Fang Clan, no true Clan Chief had appeared other than the First generation Patriarch!

If this scene hadn’t revealed itself now, he would never even have even considered that it could happen.

The foreboding sensation continued to grow stronger within Fang Shoudao. All of a sudden, he felt as if things were slipping out of his control. It seemed like something very bad was going to happen, and all of a sudden, he thought about the month that Meng Hao had spent studying the clan’s ancient records.

“Just what is the little hoodlum up to?” he thought, frowning.

All clan members watched as Meng Hao floated up toward the Dao bell, getting nearer and nearer until he was directly in front of it.

It was simply enormous. Because it usually appeared up in the air, with nothing nearby to compare it to, it normally didn’t give people a sense of its stunning size. But now that Meng Hao was right there in front of it, he looked no larger than one of the magical symbols carved on the bell’s surface.

By now, the minds of all the members of the Fang Clan were shaken.

The bad feeling in Fang Shoudao was getting much more intense.

Meng Hao stood in front of the Dao bell, took a deep breath, and then looked down at the lands below. He looked at the ancestral mansion, at the Dao of Alchemy Division, and at Fang Shoudao.

Then, he smirked, lifted his right hand, and waved to Fang Shoudao, almost as if he were saying farewell.

That instantly caused Fang Shoudao's eyes to grow wide, and his mind to spin.

"Not good!" Fang Shoudao was just about to charge forward when Meng Hao's hand formed into a fist and he… struck the Dao bell, causing it to ring.

This time the Dao bell did not ring of its own initiative but, rather, it was struck. As soon as Meng Hao's hand made contact with it, a boom echoed out that was completely different than the previous sound of its tolling. It was sonorous, ancient, filled with endless time. It sounded almost like a sigh, which instantly echoed out in all directions.

All of the members of the Fang Clan, regardless of the level of their cultivation base, as long as the blood of the Fang Clan pumped in their veins, heard a reverberation that caused their minds to go blank.

It didn't matter that Fang Shoudao had a Dao Realm cultivation base. In that moment, his expression turned vacant as the boundless sound of the tolling Dao bell filled his mind. Simultaneously, brilliant light suddenly surrounded the bodies of all members of the Fang Clan.

Meng Hao's mind was also trembling, and it felt as if all of his divine sense was being sucked into the Dao bell. Then, as the bell rang, it was dispersed outward in all directions.

It wasn't just the members of the Fang Clan who were affected. All the lands, the entire world, all of Planet East Victory, was affected. Mortals, plants, animals, all living things heard the toll of the bell, and suddenly, their minds went blank.

Meng Hao’s divine sense flowed out with the tolling of the bell; in the blink of an eye it filled all of Planet East Victory. All of the lands in the whole world suddenly appeared in Meng Hao’s mind, as clear as crystal.

He saw every area of Planet East Victory, every living thing. Considering the level of his cultivation base, it wasn’t something he could normally do. However, with the Divine Soul Nourishment of the power of the Dao bell and its tolling, his divine sense was now able to spread out virtually without limit.

As of this moment, he was the only clear-headed person on the entire planet. All other life forms went blank, even Fang Shoudao, who was now incapable of tracking or holding Meng Hao in place. Furthermore, if Meng Hao could come up with some way of teleporting far enough away, then Fang Shoudao would be incapable of finding any traces of him.

The bell tolled, echoing out in all directions, wiping out any and all traces of what would happen next!

To Meng Hao, the tolling of the Dao bell was also extremely beneficial. This good fortune caused his divine sense to expand quite a bit, and stabilize to an unheard of degree..

He saw the Medicine Immortal Sect, as well as numerous mortal cities. He saw mountains, oceans, and rivers. He saw all of the cultivators on the planet, as well as all of the plants and vegetation.

However, in the same moment that his divine sense spread out across all of Planet East Victory, as everyone else was dazed into immobility, Meng Hao suddenly gaped in shock. What he just saw… was a stretch of ocean some distance away from the Fang Clan on Planet East Victory, where there was an island floating in the water. That island happened to look just like a turtle.

In the moment that his divine sense looked upon it, the island suddenly trembled, and an enormous head appeared.

“Dammit! DAMMIT! Meng Hao, you bastard. Y-y-you…I came here to find my sweetie, not to wait for you, you little bastard! Yet you actually rang that piece of junk bell to try to catch me!?!?” The turtle started to curse and, despite everyone else being stupefied and unable to move, it flew up in exasperation out of the sea towards the sky, dragging the continent on its back as it went.

The land on its back was none other than the State of Zhao. It carried with it Mount Daqing, memories of which sprang to mind anew. Guyiding Tri-Rain was also in the State of Zhao, looking toward Meng Hao and covering her mouth as she laughed.

“Old turtle Reliance!!” Meng Hao stared in shock. He had never imagined that he would once again encounter Patriarch Reliance on Planet East Victory!

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# Chapter 1017: Pursued All The Way Out of Planet East Victory

“What are you up to? Hey! What the hell do you want!?!?” wailed Patriarch Reliance.

“I hid all the way out here and you actually found me!? Y-y-you….” Patriarch Reliance felt more aggrieved than he ever had in his entire life.

However, he was very quick, and instantly shot up into the sky. In the blink of an eye, he was off the planet and out into the starry sky, fleeing madly. The person he was least willing to lay eyes on in his entire life was none other than Meng Hao.

He thought about how he had hidden in the Milky Way Sea back in the lands of South Heaven. Eventually, he had gritted his teeth and fled Planet South Heaven to hide on Planet East Victory, nearly halfway across the starry sky of the Ninth Mountain. But then… Meng Hao had actually found him! Patriarch Reliance’s heart continued to fill with grief.

“The world is so big! How… how could you possibly have tracked me down?!?!” he roared, transforming into a beam of light.

“The League of Demon Sealers are all bastards! Damned Demon Sealers! I should have lived footloose and fancy free, but now, I’m not even free to hook up with the ladies!

“The Patriarch is brave and fierce, the number one Immortal turtle in the Ninth Mountain! Fudge! There’s no way I’ll let some little bastard make me his mount! Dammit! Impossible!

“Meng Hao you little bastard, one of these days I’m going to hide somewhere that you’ll never find me!” roared Patriarch Reliance, trembling so badly that it shook the State of Zhao.

Inwardly, he couldn’t possibly be more depressed. Naturally, he was aware of Meng Hao becoming Immortal, and had even watched the shocking scene of him opening all his Immortal meridians, which had left him numb with fright.

However, he had also felt a little bit lucky. After all, Planet East Victory was big, so he had assumed Meng Hao would never be able to find him, or that Meng Hao would even think to look for him there. This caused him to feel a bit smug, believing himself to have a profound understanding of what it meant to be hidden as well as a shadow beneath bright lamplight.

He had been extremely pleased with himself, and had even frequently bragged to Guyiding Tri-Rain about the whole thing.

Never in his wildest dreams could he have imagined that Meng Hao would use the technique of ringing that bell to multiply his divine sense dramatically, sweep it across all of Planet East Victory, and then find him.

As soon as Meng Hao’s divine sense locked onto him, he began to moan.

Meng Hao’s eyes began to shine brightly as he stared at Patriarch Reliance. Underneath the influence of the Dao bell, all other living creatures were so shocked that they were temporarily knocked senseless. As for why old turtle Reliance was able to flee and wasn’t affected at all, he wasn’t sure.

However, there the old turtle was, with the State of Zhao on his back like usual. Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed with mad joy.

“Stay right where you are, old turtle!” he roared immediately.

The instant Patriarch Reliance heard those words, he trembled and then picked up speed.

Meng Hao used his next words to frighten and upset Patriarch Reliance, “Old turtle Reliance, if you let me catch you this time, then you can forget about ever getting away! I’ve already figured out a way to use the Demon Sealing Hexes to lock you down!!”

In order to make the threats more realistic, Meng Hao remained calm and pretended as if he didn’t care at all whether Patriarch Reliance fled. At the same time, he lifted his left hand, and ripples of a Demon Sealing Hex appeared, along with a tiny rift in the palm of his hand.

“You can’t escape,” he said, his expression calm and seemingly filled with utter confidence. From the look of things, all he had to do was wave a finger, and the restrictive hexing seal within Patriarch Reliance would be activated.

His confidence and tranquility caused Patriarch Reliance’s eyes to go wide, and his mind to spin. He was bewildered, unable to determine whether or not Meng Hao was putting on an act. However, the intense feeling of the Demon Sealing Hex was like nothing he had ever sensed before, and it caused him to become extremely nervous and alarmed.

“Impossible! How could this be happening!?!?” thought Patriarch Reliance, trembling. Then he recalled the terrifying scene of Meng Hao opening his Immortal meridians to enter the Immortal Realm, and suddenly he realized… that it most certainly wasn’t impossible! And yet….

“I won’t give in!!” he howled inwardly. “No way! I’ll risk everything! I’m GOING to get out of here!”

In the blink of an eye, he was outside of the planet and in the starry sky. Fearful of being pursued by Meng Hao, he gritted his teeth and began to cast a curse.

Rumbling could then be heard as, up ahead of him, glittering light could be seen out in the starry sky. Innumerable motes of light swirled around as they transformed into a gigantic teleportation portal.

In order to form the teleportation portal, Patriarch Reliance even spat out so much blood that it formed a waterfall that surged toward the teleportation portal and stained it bright red.

“You little bastard! See you again… never!” he roared. Then his body flickered as he shot toward the teleportation portal.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered at the sight of the blood-colored portal, and he was inwardly delighted.

By now, the power of the Dao bell was weakening, and the dazed cultivators would be coming to their senses at any moment. At this point, Meng Hao smiled.

“Patriarch Reliance really is my lucky star!” he thought, taking a deep breath. Just when Patriarch Reliance was about to enter the blood-colored teleportation portal, the starstone in Meng Hao’s left eye began to glitter with starlight.

One Thought Stellar Transformation was the first generation Patriarch’s most powerful Daoist magic. In addition to allowing one to incarnate as a planet, it also contained a type of teleportation magic. That magic… was known as Stellar Teleportation.

Before reaching Immortal Ascension, Meng Hao hadn’t been able to use it. Now that he was the Immortal Realm Paragon, he could just barely manage to force its usage. His plan all along had been to wait until Fang Shoudao was in a daze due to the Dao bell. Then, he would be incapable of keeping Meng Hao locked down, an opportunity Meng Hao could take advantage of to teleport away, and which would also cause Fang Shoudao to be unable to pick up his trail.

Unfortunately, Fang Shoudao was a Dao Realm expert. Meng Hao was confident that his plan could get him off of Planet East Victory, but he wasn’t so confident in being able to elude Fang Shoudao long-term.

The rest of the plan had been to flee at top speed once he got out, then head toward the Nine Seas God World in the Ninth Sea to report in as a disciple.

Although his plan had some weak areas, he had no other choice than to give it a shot.

However, after he saw Patriarch Reliance, he went wild with joy. He could sense how incredible Patriarch Reliance was; considering the old turtle could still move under the influence of the Dao bell, he obviously wasn’t weak, and clearly had numerous ways of escaping.

Therefore, Meng Hao had used words to provoke him, to threaten him, to frighten him. The pure and charming Patriarch Reliance ended up being so terrified that he didn’t hesitate to spit out massive amounts of blood to open a blood-fueled teleportation portal.

At a glance, Meng Hao could tell that the teleportation portal was powerful, and would definitely lead to a distant location, much further than his own Stellar Teleportation could reach.

Almost in the same moment that Patriarch Reliance began to enter the blood-colored teleportation portal, glittering light covered him and began to teleport him away. It was at that point that starlight covered Meng Hao. Then a boom could be heard as he directly exploded.

Unexpectedly, his body transformed into motes of starlight, which then shot away from the Dao bell at incredible speed. When they reappeared, they were in the starry sky, right next to Patriarch Reliance’s blood-colored teleportation portal.

The motes rapidly reformed into Meng Hao, whose face was pale and cultivation base trembling. In the moment he appeared, the teleportation portal suddenly bloomed like a huge blood-colored flower, then vanished.

Meanwhile, the effects of the Dao bell were wearing off of everyone. Fang Shoudao was the first to regain his senses, and in the instant he did, he noticed that Meng Hao was not by the Dao bell, causing his face to fall.

“Not good!” he said, flickered forward to reappear in the starry sky. He sent divine sense shooting out in all directions, rapidly covering all of Planet East Victory as he searched for Meng Hao. Then, he caused his divine sense to expand out into the starry sky, and his face grew very grave as he caught sight of the location where the blood-colored teleportation portal had just vanished.

“Little hoodlum!” he said, grinding his teeth. He looked like he didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. He chuckled bitterly, and then suddenly realized why Meng Hao had been poring through the ancient records.

A flash of light appeared next to Fang Shoudao, which turned into Fang Yanxu. He also look at the location where the blood-colored teleportation portal had been. After a moment of silent consideration, he couldn’t help but laugh and shake his head.

“He actually came up with this whole plan, just to escape the marriage.” He smiled. “Nice job, Meng Hao.”

“That little hoodlum searched through the ancient records for a whole month,” said Fang Shoudao, sounding a bit helpless. “Now that I think about it, he must have found enough tiny clues to piece together some information about the Dao bell.”

Fang Yanxu sighed in admiration. “To be able to not only find so many clues in the ancient records, but also be able to piece them together and use them to come up with a plan like this shows that Meng Hao is really extremely exceptional.”

“You’re even praising him…?” Fang Shoudao said. “That little hoodlum didn’t concoct any medicinal pill! It was all a feint! His only goal was to become the Lord of the Dao of Alchemy Division so that he could ring the Dao bell. As soon as we were knocked senseless, there was no way to restrict his movement, and he had a moment of freedom.

“Although I’m not sure how he managed to teleport away, from the remnants of starlight here it’s obvious that One Thought Stellar Transformation must have some teleportation Daoist magic that we’re unaware of.

“It might be somewhat of a headache for us that he escaped, but the most important thing is the agreement with the Li Clan. There’s still one more month left… before the little hoodlum and that Li lass are supposed to get married.” Fang Shoudao smiled bitterly.

“Enough, Elder Brother Shoudao. Who else in the Junior generation of the Ninth Mountain and Sea has the skill to escape from right under our noses like he did?

“Since he’s gone, why not just let the matter be?” Fang Yanxu laughed heartily as he accompanied the flummoxed Fang Shoudao back toward Planet East Victory.

Planet East Victory returned to normal. Few people were aware of what had actually happened with Meng Hao, and those who did, did not spread word.

According to public knowledge, after becoming Lord of the Dao of Alchemy Division, Meng Hao had gone into secluded meditation in order to concoct medicinal pills.

However, there were a few people who had guessed that Meng Hao had long since fled. One of those people was Fang Wei, who currently sat cross-legged in the Medicine Immortal Sect, looking up thoughtfully toward the sky above the ancestral mansion.

“You’re probably gone by now, right…?” he thought. Fang Wei had complicated feelings regarding Meng Hao. However, he would never forget his mission. He was the shield of the Fang Clan, and his job was to protect the clan from within the shadows.

After a long moment, Fang Wei closed his eyes. He had cut away his past. After dying and then being resurrected, he had told himself… that he was no longer a Chosen of the Fang Clan.

Back in the ancestral mansion, the Grand Elder was held responsible for the rebellion, and for his poor handling of many other previous matters. His punishment was to spend a hundred years in secluded meditation. He was not allowed to emerge, and had to remain sitting cross-legged in the stony cavern. He had no idea that Meng Hao had already fled, and yet Meng Hao’s image continued to remain imprinted on his heart. Occasionally, he would think about him, and would sigh.

The terracotta soldier continued to stand silently in the Ancestral Land. In the moment that Meng Hao left, it suddenly lifted its head and stared off into the sky, waiting for something.

It was waiting for Meng Hao to fulfil his promise to one day take it away from this place.

Meng Hao was gone, but ever since he had come to Planet East Victory, he had spawned many legends and founded many myths!

When he arrived, nobody took much note. But when he left, he was the Fang Clan’s… Crown Prince!

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# Chapter 1018: Handling Old Turtle Reliance!

The Ninth Mountain and Sea. Somewhere in the starry sky.

Far, far away from Planet East Victory was a location very near the Ninth Sea. If you hovered in the starry sky in this spot and looked off into the distance, you would actually be able to see that between the Ninth Sea and the empty sky, was a stretch of shadowy ruins.

By passing through those ruins, you could arrive at the Ninth Sea itself. If you passed around them, however, it would take far, far longer.

Those shadowy ruins were none other than… the mysterious Ruins of Immortality!

It was at this point that a blood-colored glow rose up above the Ruins of Immortality. In the blink of an eye, Patriarch Reliance's enormous form suddenly flew out.

"Hahaha! Meng Hao, you little bastard! Come on! You think you can find me here, huh?!" Patriarch Reliance seemed incredibly happy, even ecstatic, as he flew out.

"It was bad luck for the Patriarch to run into you on Planet East Victory. This time, though, I'm going to hide in the Ruins of Immortality! I simply can't believe that you'll be able to track me down here!

"Hahaha! The Patriarch turns out to be the smartest one in the end. In all the Ninth Mountain and Sea, nobody is as astute and circumspect as me!" Feeling quite pleased with himself, Patriarch Reliance threw his head back and roared, then flew out across the Ruins of Immortality. However, it was at this point that he heard someone speaking behind him.

“Listen up, old turtle,” the voice said lazily. “The term ‘astute and circumspect’ is something you should wait for other people to say about you. You can’t use it to describe yourself.”

As soon as the voice rang out, a tremor passed through Patriarch Reliance. His enormous head slowly turned around, and when he looked behind him, his eyes went wide with disbelief and shock. He couldn’t help but stare at his tail, where sat Meng Hao, smiling broadly at him.

“You….” Patriarch Reliance gaped in shock. He clearly remembered that in the moment of his escape, Meng Hao should have been left on Planet East Victory. Now it was clear, however… that the damned bastard had somehow teleported here with him.

One couldn’t blame Patriarch Reliance for being so extremely nervous that he didn’t notice what had happened. Besides, Meng Hao’s One Thought Stellar Transformation and its Stellar Teleportation were extremely bizarre. His lucky break of being able to reach the teleportation portal was something Patriarch Reliance had never considered possible.

After emerging, he was too focused on what was ahead of him and was too excited at having once again evaded Meng Hao to notice that at some point, a blood-chilling figure had suddenly appeared on his tail.

“Hey, old turtle, long time no see!” said Meng Hao, waving at Patriarch Reliance, a bashful smile on his face. From the jovial way he chuckled, he looked like someone randomly meeting an old friend in an unexpected location. His appearance was very amiable.

After staring in shock for a moment, Patriarch Reliance threw his head back and roared as if he were going crazy. The entire State of Zhao quaked on his back.

“Meng Hao, this is going too far! I can’t deal with this!!

“I’ve run away from you a bunch of times now, you and your damned League of Demon Sealers. Dammit, Meng Hao, you little bastard! Y-y-you… you just push people too far!!

“I’m gonna eat you!” Patriarch Reliance was on the verge of collapsing emotionally, and his heart was wracked with grief. He was also enraged; there was nobody he wanted to see LESS than Meng Hao, and right now, in his moment of complete elation, all of a sudden, Meng Hao appeared on top of him! He was left feeling like he was about to go insane.

The more he thought about it, the worse he felt. In fact, he felt himself to be the most tragic figure in all existence.

Roaring, he opened his mouth and stretched it out toward Meng Hao, hoping to snap him up in one bite.

However, even as his mouth neared Meng Hao, Meng Hao cleared his throat and lifted his right hand up in front of him.

“Come on, Patriarch, come scratch this itch for Young Master.”

A tremor ran through Patriarch Reliance, and his enormous head stopped in place. His eyes were bright red as he stared at Meng Hao, and yet… he didn’t dare to really swallow him.

The sealing Hex inside of him was spinning, and therefore, he didn’t dare to harm Meng Hao in the slightest. If he did, the Hex would explode out violently.

As soon as Patriarch Reliance’s head stopped moving, Meng Hao walked forward and patted his head lightly.

“That’s a good turtle,” he said, laughing. “Come come, let me see if those words I carved on your back that year are still there.”

Patriarch Reliance trembled and roared in rage. He felt wronged, provoked even, and couldn’t help but cry out, “You little Heaven-damned bastard! SCREW OFF!”

He felt like he was about to explode. He swished his tail with incredible force, flinging Meng Hao out into the starry sky.

At the same time, he spun in place and then attempted to flee as fast as possible.

However, in the moment that he flung Meng Hao away, Meng Hao produced the Lightning Cauldron. Electricity danced as Meng Hao switched places with a random animal in the State of Zhao.

As soon as he appeared on Patriarch Reliance’s back, he cleared his throat, then flickered to appear on Patriarch Reliance’s head. He stamped down hard with his foot.

“What do you think you’re doing, Patriarch?! It wasn’t easy to arrange this reunion! What are you running away for!?”

Patriarch Reliance stared in shock, trembling. Eyes bloodshot, he roared; apparently his rage had reached the pinnacle, and yet there was nothing he could do. He could not use any of his divine abilities to harm Meng Hao in the least.

His aura exploded with power, transforming into waves of qi that surged out in all directions, causing Meng Hao to fly off of his head. Mist roiled out to surround Patriarch Reliance, covering his body as he tried to escape again.

Meng Hao gave a cold harrumph, then extended his hand and pointed toward Patriarch Reliance.

“Demon Sealing, Eighth Hex!”

In the instant that Meng Hao called out, Patriarch Reliance’s massive frame suddenly stopped in midair. Normally, the Hexing magic of the League of Demon Sealers would not have much of an effect on anyone who had a vastly higher cultivation base than Meng Hao, and it would even produce a backlash.

However, Patriarch Reliance already had Demon Sealing Hexing magic inside of him, and was supposed to be Meng Hao’s Dao Protector. Therefore, he was virtually incapable of fighting back against the Hexing magic.

Meng Hao hadn’t been aware of that years ago when they first met, and afterward, Patriarch Reliance had spent most of his time in hiding. But now that Meng Hao was the Immortal Realm Paragon, his cultivation base was as different from before as Heaven was from the Earth. Now, he was able to sense the restrictive Hexing magic that was already inside of Patriarch Reliance, which allowed his own Hexes to completely control him.

It was due to this that the moment Patriarch Reliance had seen how powerful Meng Hao had become, he had begun to panic.

Meng Hao cleared his throat as he caught up with Patriarch Reliance. As he neared, Patriarch Reliance began to tremble, and then recover from the Eighth Hex.

In that moment, before Patriarch Reliance could begin to roar in rage, Meng Hao waved his hand once again.

“Demon Sealing, Seventh Hex, Karmic Hexing!” Meng Hao said, waving his finger. However, there seemed to be no reaction.

“Eee? There’s no Karma?” he said, shocked. This was the first time he had ever encountered a situation in which there was no Karma. He tried again a few more times, and upon finding that he only continued to fail over and over again, a strange light began to glow in his eyes.

He was truly shocked. Patriarch Reliance, on the other hand, was so scared his blood was running cold. Thinking back to certain bad memories of the past, he bellowed in rage and then spit a beam of light out of his mouth. The light transformed into a flying dagger that slashed viciously toward Meng Hao. It seemed intent on slicing open the starry sky, completely separating Patriarch Reliance and Meng Hao.

The flying dagger looked like a willow leaf, and was seemingly ordinary. However, it emanated an ancient air, and was clearly anything but ordinary.

“Eighth Demon Sealing Hex!” As soon as Meng Hao saw the flying dagger, his eyes widened and he waved a finger. Immediately, Patriarch Reliance was once again immobilized, and his cultivation base was completely locked down.

It wasn’t that Meng Hao’s own Hexing magic was terrifying; instead, it was because of the way it riled the restrictive spell already inside of Patriarch Reliance. That restrictive spell responded to Meng Hao’s will, and exploded out with power.

The flying dagger was now no longer under Patriarch Reliance’s control, and stopped moving. When that happened, Meng Hao’s eyes began to shine. He approached the flying dagger and waved his hand, causing it to fly into his hand.

Then, right in front of Patriarch Reliance, he unleashed A Writ of Karma, binding the flying dagger to him with ties of destiny.

When the Eighth Hex faded away, Patriarch Reliance let out a howl of grief.

“My dagger! That’s been my favorite flying dagger for years!!

“You give it back to me this instant, Meng Hao! That’s my treasured dagger….

“Y-y-you, just kill me, alright?! Stealing my treasures is like ripping off my skin!

“Meng Hao! Y-y-you….” Patriarch Reliance was on the verge of tears. He couldn’t flee, nor could he hurt Meng Hao. Furthermore, every time Meng Hao unleashed Hexing magic, the restrictive spell inside of him activated, causing him to fill with the desire to weep.

Besides all that, to the miserly Patriarch Reliance, having a treasure stolen was worse than anything else.

Meng Hao was like the bane of his existence, the source of the most tragedy in his entire life. In fact, when Patriarch Reliance contemplated how his life had turned out, tears would stream down his face.

While Patriarch Reliance and Meng Hao were having their little reunion, which was tragic for one and joyful for the other, something else was happening on a planet not very far away from their current location. That planet was… the Ninth Mountain and Sea's Planet North Reed.

That was the planet occupied by the Li Clan, the Song Clan, and the Wang Clan, making it the home base of sorts for three of the Great Clans.

Currently, the entire Li Clan was garishly decorated with lanterns and banners. The whole place was infected with a spirit of joy, and everyone knew that in a month, Li Ling'er was to be married to the Crown Prince of the Fang Clan from Planet East Victory.

Although quite a few clan members were somewhat critical of the matter, the sudden wedding had been arranged by the Li Clan's Dao Realm Patriarch and, besides, Li Ling'er's marriage to Meng Hao had been agreed upon long ago. Therefore, there was no one who could change the forming of the alliance between the two great clans.

Of course, nobody in the Li Clan was aware that Meng Hao had fled the marriage. Nor was anyone aware of the actions of one particular young woman who was anxiously fleeing from Planet North Reed, heading far off into the distance.

That young woman was none other than Li Ling'er.

It was impossible to tell how she did it, but no one detected her departure. After flying out into the starry sky, she patted her own chest in relief and sped off into the distance.

"I'd marry a pig before I marry that blasted, Heaven-damned Meng Hao!" she said through gritted teeth. As it turned out, she had made the same decision as Meng Hao, to flee the marriage.

Unbeknownst to Li Ling’er, the Li Clan Dao Realm Patriarch, the middle-aged man, was actually watching her the entire time. His voice cool, he asked, “There were no mistakes in your calculations?”

Almost as soon as the words left his mouth, a black-robed man appeared behind him, illusory and somewhat blurry, making it impossible to see his features clearly.

“My clan’s augury magic cannot be mistaken.”

“The chance to leave the Nine Mountains and Seas, to reunite the Li Clan to the main branch of the clan, is completely tied to Meng Hao.”

The Patriarch remained silent for a moment, then turned and payed no more heed to Li Ling’er. His voice cool, he said, “It won’t do to force her. If she wants to leave, then leave things up to destiny.”

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# Chapter 1019: The Hunting of Li Ling’er!

“Meng Hao, give me my treasured dagger back!” howled Patriarch Reliance. Before losing the flying dagger, he actually hadn’t cared about it very much. But now that it wasn’t his anymore, countless memories about it suddenly flooded into his mind.

Every memory that surfaced filled his heart with pain.

Meng Hao pretended not to hear as he lifted his hand and waved his finger a few more times, employing the Seventh Hex. Patriarch Reliance’s scalp went numb as Meng Hao then switched to the Sixth Hex.

Glittering light could be seen as numerous magical symbols appeared on Patriarch Reliance’s body. Next, another magical symbol appeared on his forehead, a symbol which was different than Meng Hao’s own Sixth Hex.

When Meng Hao saw it, he suddenly understood everything.

“Aha! Somebody else already used the Sixth Hex on you!

“Well then, I guess I’ll try out the Fifth Hex!” Looking very excited, he performed an incantation gesture with his right hand; shockingly, a tiny rift appeared in his palm. When Patriarch Reliance saw it, he was nearly scared out of his mind.

“MENG HAO!!!” he howled miserably.

“What are you planning?” howled Patriarch Reliance. “Just what do you think you’re going to do!? You’re pushing things TOO FAR!!” His body trembled violently, and he seemed to be on the verge of going mad.

“I swear there’s nobody who bullies people worse than you! Unlucky? I’ve got enough bad luck for eight lifetimes! I was bullied by the League of Demon Sealers back in the day, and now I’m getting bullied by you!

“I ran all the way to Planet East Victory to hide from you, you know!? You think that was easy, huh? You think it was a walk in the park!?!?

“Hey, what are you doing!? You already stole my treasured dagger! W-what!? What are you doing? Come on, tell me! Do you know how old I am?! I’m your Patriarch, remember!?”

Meng Hao scratched his head, starting to feel a bit awkward.

“Alright, how about this,” he said, clearing his throat. “If you take me to the Nine Seas God World, I’ll let you go for the time being. Then you’ll have another chance to hide from me.” He still happened to have the jade slip given to him during the Three Great Daoist Societies’ trial by fire, the one that was supposed to take him to the Nine Seas God World. Unfortunately, Fang Shoudao had somehow found out about that, and had managed to negate the jade slip, making it useless.

Patriarch Reliance suddenly quieted down. After a moment of thought, he bitterly nodded his head. Of course, inwardly, he felt quite pleased, and was even laughing coldly.

“This little bastard is still a bit inexperienced. I’m adept at scheming and have deep foresight, so how could I possibly acquiesce to him!”

Outwardly, he sighed and allowed Meng Hao to stand on him as he headed toward the Ninth Sea. After flying for a short time, however, Meng Hao lifted his right hand and caused a Fifth Hex rift to appear in his palm.

“Patriarch,” he asked with an enigmatic smile, “are you trying to take me into the Ruins of Immortality?”

Patriarch Reliance suddenly trembled, and his heart filled with rage. However, when he thought about Meng Hao’s restrictive spells, he once again began to bemoan his plight to himself as he immediately changed directions to skirt the Ruins of Immortality.

Based on his current speed, it wouldn’t take very long for him to get Meng Hao to the Ninth Sea.

Meng Hao beamed at Patriarch Reliance as he slapped his bag of holding, causing the parrot to fly out. The meat jelly was attached to its foot as usual, and the jingling of a bell could be heard when the two of them appeared.

As soon as the parrot flew out, it looked Patriarch Reliance up and down, then blinked and squawked, “Eee? What a big turtle! So strange! How come he seems so familiar?

“Hey, it’s you! I remember now! You’re that big ol’ turtle from the Milky Way Sea!!” The parrot was now very excited. It flew out next to Patriarch Reliance’s head and said, “You know, I was always very curious about what you ate to get so big! You’re huge! Come come, tell Lord Fifth, and you’ll get a reward!”

Not wanting to be outdone, the meat jelly bellowed, “Hey, Lord Third has rewards too!”

Meng Hao stood on Patriarch Reliance’s head, completely ignoring the parrot and the meat jelly as they harassed Patriarch Reliance. With the two of them dogging the turtle, Meng Hao wasn’t the least bit worried about any tricks he might attempt to pull.

It was at this point that he turned back to look at the State of Zhao. A look of reminiscence appeared on his face as he took a step forward and then vanished. When he reappeared, he was on a mountain peak somewhere in the State of Zhao.

The mountain looked different than the way he remembered it. It had been moved and been transformed throughout the years, but it was still the same mountain that he remembered… Mount Daqing.

He stood there, recalling the past. He was currently standing in the same location he had been when he first stepped into the cultivation world, when he had met Xu Qing.

“Mount Daqing….” he whispered with a sigh. As he looked down the mountain, he noticed that the river that had been there once was now nowhere to be seen. He turned his head again and saw that Yunjie County had also disappeared; it would never again exist.

The only thing left was this mountain, and the memories of Meng Hao’s that it contained.

After standing there quietly for a long, long time, he stepped out off the mountain. As he floated there, he could see that same cave from long ago, which still existed on the side of the mountain.

After another long moment, he sighed and turned. Instead of leaving the State of Zhao, he went to the North Sea. Despite the vast changes to the lands, which left the entire State of Zhao different than before, this lake was still here, just as it had been.

The water was calm and mirror-like, and when Meng Hao looked at it, he recalled all the events which had occurred in connection with the lake. Eventually, he caught sight of an actual boat out on the water. It was an old vessel, and an old man could be seen at the till, who looked at Meng Hao as he steered the boat toward the shore.

A pot of alcohol was being warmed inside the boat, and a moment later, a beautiful young woman stuck her head out of the cabin and looked over at Meng Hao.

“Do you remember my name?” she asked with a grin.

“Guyiding Tri-Rain,” he replied, smiling. As he stepped forward onto the boat, the old man smiled and bowed at the waist, then continued to steer the boat out across the water. The young woman sat across from Meng Hao, lifted up the pot of alcohol, and poured a cup. 1

“Do you remember what you promised me?” she asked, her eyes glistening as brightly as the waters of the lake.

“I promised that one day, I would help you become a sea,” he said. Smiling, he raised his cup and then drained it.

The young woman smiled radiantly.

“I want to become a huge, calm sea,” she said earnestly. “I don’t want there to be any waves or tides. I want to be peaceful. Peaceful and quiet. A sea like a mirror.”

Meng Hao nodded.

“How many things have you promised to do in your life?” she asked.

“Four,” he replied.

“And how many of those promises have you fulfilled?”

“None so far.”

“In that case, doesn’t that mean I’ll have to wait a lot longer?”

Meng Hao smiled, raised his glass again, and took another drink.

Almost in the same moment that Meng Hao and Guyding Tri-Rain were reunited, something happened not too far away from where they were in the starry sky. The same ship appeared that all of the cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea had been unable to detect.

Two people sat on the ship, one older and one younger, who had watched as Meng Hao opened the Door of Immortality, and then his Immortal meridians. The old man was looking out into the starry sky, where he could see Meng Hao and Patriarch Reliance. At that point, his eyes shone with a strange light, as well as interest toward Meng Hao.

Next to him sat the young man, upon whose face could be seen a look of scorn.

“A man and a turtle,” the young man said with a sneer. “How well-suited for each other. And then there’s that parrot. They all match each other.”

“That man is no simple man,” the old man said calmly. “And that turtle is no simple turtle. As for that parrot, well… it’s not just a simple parrot either.” He looked over at the young man, and he seemed somewhat disappointed, but didn’t say anything further.

“What do you mean, not simple?” the young man said loftily. “Alright, so he opened the maximum number of Immortal meridians, and even became the Immortal Realm Paragon. However, there are tons of people like that in our Spiritstar Realm! They might not actually be Immortals, but… Immortals are worth squat!”

“He’s a true Immortal,” the old man said with a frown.

“True Immortal? What a joke! Isn’t this the same Paragon Immortal Realm that, years ago, innumerable almighty beings viewed with such desire? But now look at it! The only things left are nine mountains!

“If I wanted to kill that guy, all I would have to do is wave my hand, and he would be dead!” Killing intent flickered in the young man’s eyes. Apparently, he felt that killing Meng Hao would be as easy as crushing an ant.

“I might as well target this guy for my training…. I’m need to kill an Immortal and bring that person’s head back to the Spiritstar Realm…. I imagine they’ll make it into a battle trophy.” The young man licked his lips.
2

Cold light gleamed in the old man’s eyes as he looked over at the young man.

“He’s a true Immortal, not the type from this age, but rather, the type from primordial times. He embodies what Immortals truly are, the type that in ancient times, could descend to our Spiritstar Realm and cause everyone in the world to bow in worship.

“In the past, our Spiritstar Realm was nothing more than one of the 3,000 Realms below the Paragon Immortal Realm. When the Paragon Immortal Realm collapsed due to various reasons, the role that our world played was microscopic!

“You look down on that turtle, and think it’s ordinary. But you know what? When I look at it, it frightens me!

“I can sense some terrifying undulations coming off of that thing.

“And finally, about that man you so look down upon… don’t tell me you can’t detect that there’s something about him connecting him directly to the Nine Mountains and Seas?!?!” As the man spoke, his wording grew sharper and sharper. By the end, he was clearly rebuking the young man.

The young man sat there quietly, his face slowly growing blue with rage. He didn’t dare to backtalk, but when he lowered his head, his eyes were venomously icy.

“Although this place has crumbled down to its present level,” continued the old man, “you cannot rashly provoke the people here! Actually, I never wanted to come face the dangers of this place, but since your father insisted, I brought you here for your Immortal-Killing Baptism….

“I was forced to agree, and here we are. If you want to try to kill that man, I won’t stop you. However, your father will be able to see all the records of our journey, and cannot blame me… if you seek your own death!” As his cold words rang out, the old man waved his right hand, causing a vortex to appear up ahead. Within the vortex was an image of Li Ling’er, who was currently in the middle of fleeing from her wedding.

“This girl is a bit weaker, and is also an Immortal. Why don’t you kill her for your Baptism?” As the old man spoke, the young man looked up at Li Ling’er within the vortex, and his eyes began to shine with a strange light.

“Wow, she’s pretty. Master, you wouldn’t mind if, before killing her, I indulged in the… services… of an Immortal, would you?”

The old man frowned and looked a bit disgusted, but didn’t say anything.

The young man licked his lips, and then stepped toward the vortex.

Li Ling’er sat cross-legged atop a flying shuttle which sped through the stars. She was also heading toward the Ninth Sea, although not to the Nine Seas God World, but rather, to find an island where she could practice cultivation.

She hoped to borrow some of the power of the Ninth Sea to stabilize herself in the Immortal Realm.

She wasn’t unfamiliar with the Ninth Sea, considering that she had been there on clan training on several occasions in the past. To her, this would all be a walk in the park. However, all of a sudden, the starry sky up ahead distorted, and a vortex suddenly appeared.

An arrogant young man stepped out of the vortex, and as soon as he looked over at her, an evil and bizarre glow could be seen in his eyes, almost as if he were a hunter looking at prey.

Li Ling’er’s eyes instantly flickered with vigilance. She had never seen this young man before, but she could instantly sense that he was dangerous. Furthermore, the way he was looking at her didn’t please her one bit.

“Hello, Immortal beauty! Remember my name! I’m Zheng Linfa! You can call me Yi Fazi! 3

“Remember it because, very soon, I’ll provide you with the most unforgettable experience of your whole life! And also… the last!” the young man said with a smile. He stepped toward Li Ling’er.

2. A note about the word Realm: The word Realm used here is the one that refers to a “world” or even “dimension.” It’s the same word we’ve seen in the term “Mountain and Sea Realm” that has already appeared in the story. The Chinese word for the Realms of cultivation (Spirit Realm, Immortal Realm, Ancient Realm, Dao Realm) is different. In most situations the difference is clear from the context of the story.

3. Zheng Linfa’s name in Chinese is zhèng lín fǎ. Zheng is a family name. Lin means “forest” and Fa is a character that can mean many things including “law,” “magic,” and “Dharma.” Yi Fazi is a somewhat strange name that appears to be some sort of nickname. yī fǎ zǐ. Yi means “one.” Fa is the same character from his name. Zi means “son” or “child.” It’s a weird name, and I think it’s some sort of name/nickname pattern made up by Er Gen. You might remember a character from earlier in the book named Yi Chenzi (small-headed guy), whose name followed a similar pattern. I think there was even another minor character with a similar name. Despite consulting with several people, searching online, etc., I couldn’t find any information on the name structure, which is what leads me to believe it might be something made up by Er Gen.

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# Chapter 1020: Brushing Past!

In an area in the starry sky near the Ruins of Immortality, what appeared to be a huge land mass was cruising along. If you looked closely, you would find that it was in fact no land mass, but rather, a gargantuan turtle.

The turtle had a very sullen appearance, and his eyes shone with ferocity. He appeared to be enraged, yet didn’t dare to speak up about it. Instead, he just flew along through the stars.

Meng Hao sat cross-legged somewhere on top of the turtle, sipping alcohol. Guyiding Tri-Rain sat next to him, smiling as she kept the pot of alcohol warm.

The sweet fragrance of alcohol spread out in all directions, and Meng Hao felt incredibly at ease. When he thought about how he had successfully fled the marriage, he suddenly felt as if the whole world was full of boundless possibilities. Although he had practiced cultivation for many years, this was his personality. Although it might seem unstable, that was how Meng Hao liked it; he didn’t want to settle down in one place. He wanted to do as he pleased. In his view, when it came to the path of cultivation, sitting around doing nothing was completely boring and meaningless.

His Dao was the Dao of freedom and independence, which was the same as his personality. Everything he did in life was in accordance with his personality.

Patriarch Reliance, on the other hand, was currently so irritated that his gums itched. It was compounded by the condescending parrot, who continually squawked in his ear, trying to get him to agree to be a Younger Brother. That made Patriarch Reliance even more furious.

If that were all there were to it, Patriarch Reliance could endure the situation. However, the meat jelly’s nonstop jabbering had pushed him to the brink of collapse. The garrulous chattering was almost like a magical curse, and Patriarch Reliance wondered how Meng Hao could possibly stand to have the thing around all the time. It couldn’t be easy.

“Dammit! The Patriarch is always so unlucky!” he thought. “I have to get the little bastard to the Ninth Sea as soon as possible. Then, I’ll completely leave the Ninth Mountain and Sea and never come back!

“I refuse to believe that if I hide somewhere outside of this mountain and sea, that the little bastard will be able to find me!”

Patriarch Reliance felt quite wronged, and was snarling and raging inwardly.

He truly felt that he was being treated unfairly. In his opinion, ever since he ran into the League of Demon Sealers, his life had become as gray as ash.

“One of these days,” he blustered inwardly, “ the Patriarch is going to swallow the entire League of Demon Sealers! Fudge! I’ll give those Demon Sealers some good fortune, if you know what I mean!”

Perhaps because of his continuous internal cursing, at some point he lost track of which direction he was traveling in, and started to drift toward the Ruins of Immortality again.

Meng Hao cleared his throat and then waved his hand toward Patriarch Reliance’s rear end. At the same time, he glared, and cried out, “Whoooa!”

Although he actually unleashed the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex, the words that came out of his mouth were the same commands you would use when riding a horse.

As soon as the Eighth Hex was utilized, Patriarch Reliance ground to an instant halt. The end result was that Meng Hao truly did appear to be riding Patriarch Reliance just like a horse.

Patriarch Reliance’s eyes went wide and he began to tremble. After a few breaths of time, his body returned to normal, and he threw his head back and roared a sullen and bitter roar.

He had lived for a very long time, so how could he not understand the meaning of the word “whoa”?

“Meng Hao you little bastard, I’m Patriarch Reliance, not some horse, not some beast of burden!!”

Meng Hao cleared his throat. Having been raised as a scholar, he knew the command words for riding horses, but had rarely had a chance to actually use them. Now that he was sitting atop Patriarch Reliance, he naturally recalled all of those words. “Fine, then. Giddyup!”

As soon as he said the word ‘giddyup,’ Patriarch Reliance started moving forward without even thinking about it. Moments later, he almost exploded with rage as he realized that he was subconsciously cooperating with Meng Hao’s horse-riding commands.

“I’m gonna eat you! EAT YOU, you hear!?” Patriarch Reliance raged.

Trembling, he was just about to lift his head up when Meng Hao anxiously said, “Easy, now!”

At the same time, he tossed out a Fifth Demon Sealing Hex rift to the right side of Patriarch Reliance’s head, scaring him into instantly turning. Yet again, he subconsciously cooperated with Meng Hao’s verbal commands.

“Meng Hao!!” Patriarch Reliance threw his head back and roared. The sound echoed out into the starry sky, eventually reaching a location not too far off, where it was heard by Li Ling’er, who was currently fleeing for her life.

Blood oozed out of the corners of her mouth, and her beautiful face was as pale as a corpse’s. Her clothing was torn, and her flesh was cut in numerous locations. She almost looked as if she had been forcefully taken advantage of.

On her forehead was a jagged wound, from which blood spurted out and dropped down into the starry sky.

Her hair was in disarray and her aura weak as she pressed onward.

However, her eyes blazed with fury. How could she ever have imagined that after successfully fleeing her clan, she would encounter a terrifying cultivator like this on her path to the Ninth Sea?

The young man who called himself Yi Fazi was a complete stranger. Therefore, she was definitely sure that he was not a Chosen from any of the other sects or clans. And yet… she could sense terrifying undulations coming off of him.

Despite having a peak Immortal Realm cultivation, Li Ling'er had lasted less than half an incense stick's worth of time against Yi Fazi's divine abilities. She had immediately ended up in sore straits. Were it not for some of the life-saving techniques she had up her sleeves, she would already have perished.

"Who is this guy?!?!" she thought, biting her lip as a sense of deadly crisis filled her.

"You can't escape," said Zheng Linfa, licking some blood off of his hand. His eyes shone with a mysterious light, and he wore a slight smile. He was in no hurry. After all, his Dao Protector had said that killing this girl would end his trial by fire. Therefore, he wanted to enjoy himself for as long as possible.

Even if things got somewhat out of control in the end, he wouldn't have to deal with the aftermath. His Dao Protector would naturally take care of any difficulties that arose. In fact, as far as he was concerned, his Dao Protector was actually being too cautious about everything.

"It doesn't matter that you're an Immortal," Yi Fazi said, laughing. "You should feel honored to be my prey. You can't even imagine my status where I come from." As he spoke, he clawed his right hand out in front of him. A boom could be heard as more of Li Ling'er's clothing was ripped away. The explosion of power was so intense that if she had been slower to avoid it, she would have been seriously injured.

Despite avoiding the main blast, she still coughed up a mouthful of blood, and her face paled. Her aura was weakened even further, and her flame of life force seemed to be on the verge of being extinguished.

“He’s not a cultivator from the Ninth Mountain and Sea!!” she thought, gritting her teeth. She had already sent a distress signal to the clan via jade slip, and was confident that if she could only hold out for a bit longer, someone would come to rescue her.

“What are you running for?” said Yi Fazi. “I remember you. You’re Li Ling’er, right? You’re not just any Immortal, you’re a true Immortal! I’ve been practicing cultivation for years now, and I’ve never had the chance to taste the blood of an Immortal. It turns out to be quite sweet!” Laughing, he inhaled the fragrance of Li Ling’er’s blood, and his eyes shone brightly.

“Oh, I get it. You’re trying to buy time. You’re waiting for someone to come from your clan and save you. Well, keep on waiting and see if someone comes. See if anyone got the message from your jade slip.” Yi Fazi waved a finger, causing a violent wind to spring up. Just as it seemed about to crush down onto Li Ling’er, a green light sprang up around her, filled with countless vines that blocked the wind.

Rumbling sounds could be heard as the vines were shredded. Once again, Li Ling’er coughed up a mouthful of blood. Her vision swam, and through the pain, her eyes began to shine with despair.

Based on how much time had passed, if the clan had received her message, then… someone should have come already. Considering nobody was around, it proved that her opponent had definitely prepared well for this encounter!

“Don’t worry,” laughed Yi Fazi. “I’ll be gentle. Before you die, you’ll serve me well, and then… I’ll gently rip your body apart piece by piece. I’ll use your blood… to consecrate my Daoist magic!

“Achieve the Dao by murdering an Immortal! Seize your Immortal body to become my foundation!” Laughing, he closed in on Li Ling’er.

It was at this point that a powerful roar echoed out through the starry sky, causing ripples to spread about everywhere.

“Meng Hao!!”

The two words that comprised the roar echoed about, causing Li Ling’er’s eyes to shine brilliantly. Instantly, she headed toward the source of the sound, gritting her teeth as she flew at top speed.

She didn’t hold anything back from her cultivation base. She unleashed secret magics and even burned her Immortal meridians to achieve astonishing, temporary speed. In the blink of an eye, she had shot far off into the distance.

Yi Fazi’s face darkened. Inwardly, he was actually quite frightened. Although he didn’t care about the words that were being roared, he couldn’t ignore the fact that the roar itself contained an aura that was so frightening it made his scalp feel like it was about to explode.

It was at this point that he heard his Dao Protector’s voice in his ear.

“I’ve already deployed cloaking magic. No more fooling around. End the battle and kill the Immortal. As soon as your trial by fire baptism is complete, we will leave this Realm!”

Yi Fazi’s eyes glittered. He didn’t respond, but did increase his speed dramatically. In the blink of an eye, he transformed into a beam of prismatic light that shot in pursuit of Li Ling’er. Shocking killing intent roiled out from him.

Gradually, a black, three-headed python appeared behind him. It roared, emanating a fiendish will that was completely different from anything in the Nine Mountains and Seas.

That will was like a paramount fiendishness of Heaven and Earth!

A whistling sound echoed out, like that of an arrow piercing through the sky. Yi Fazi sped closer and closer to Li Ling'er. After ten breaths of time passed, the distance between him and Li Ling'er was reduced to only 300 meters.

It was at this point that Li Ling'er caught sight of that land mass soaring through the stars. It was Patriarch Reliance, with Meng Hao sitting on his head drinking alcohol.

"Meng Hao!!" she cried out as soon as she saw him. However, despite her loud cry, Meng Hao appeared to be ignoring her.

"He can't see you," said Yi Fazi, his voice cold. "If he could, then I wouldn't mind killing two Immortals today." He waved his right hand toward Li Ling'er, causing more blood to spray from her mouth. She could also sense that despite the short distance between herself and Meng Hao, they seemed to be separated by some sort of illusory screen, making it impossible for him to see her.

"Yi Fazi is too well-prepared to be acting alone. He has to be working with someone. Well, since Meng Hao can't see me, then I'll just forget about it. Even if he could see, it would only drag him into this situation. How could I cause trouble for him too?"

Despite being filled with bitterness and despair, Li Ling'er's eyes gleamed with determination. Even as Yi Fazi's hand strike closed in on her, she chose to detonate her Immortal meridians!

Booms could be heard as Immortal meridians emerged from her body and transformed into Immortal dragons, which then exploded. Blood sprayed from her mouth as her as the incredible power of the detonation caused her… to shoot directly toward the Ruins of Immortality!

"I'll have a better chance of surviving in the Ruins of Immortality than in the hands of Yi Fazi!" she thought, flying into the ruins at incredible speed.

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Note from Deathblade: The following is a note Er Gen included in the original release. Obviously, his release schedule back then doesn’t affect the release schedule of the translation.

Recently, I’ve been very concerned because of my daughter being sick. I haven’t said anything because I didn’t really feel like talking about it. I hope that you can understand, brothers and sisters. Thank you.

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# Chapter 1021: Pursued into the Ruins of Immortality!

Meng Hao waved his finger at Patriarch Reliance, causing him to suddenly stop. By this point, the turtle’s discontent had reached the point of detonation, and he let out a mighty roar at Meng Hao. As for Meng Hao, he rose to his feet and looked curiously off into the distance toward the Ruins of Immortality.

“Strange. I got a really weird feeling just now,” he said. Although he wasn’t sure what had caused it, he was sure that moments ago, something like a veil had passed in front of his eyes. It was as if… there was something he should have seen that had been covered up.

“What do you mean strange?” said Patriarch Reliance, sounding a bit arrogant. “A girl went by just now, calling your name. You ignored her, and she ran off into the Ruins of Immortality. Oh, there was some kid chasing her, looked like he was trying to kill her.” Patriarch Reliance looked both disdainful and pleased with himself as he spoke.

Meng Hao stared in shock.

“Yeah, that’s right!” the parrot said, sounding surprised. “Lord Fifth saw it too. You mean you didn’t see it?”

“Lord Third saw it too!” the meat jelly said, sounding very serious. “You really couldn’t see it!? Come on, stop faking. Faking is immoral. Faking is wrong!”

“I saw it too….” said Guyiding Tri-Rain, covering a smile with her hand.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he looked off into the starry sky. He glanced over at the Ruins of Immortality, muttering to himself.

“Oh right,” continued Patriarch Reliance. “Meng Hao, you little bastard, listen up. That kid just now said something like… since you didn’t want to marry the girl, he was going to help fulfill your husbandly duties for you. You know, kids these days seem really kind hearted, the type who really finds joy in helping others.” He laughed loudly, seeming very pleased with himself.

“Yeah, that’s right! Lord Third also happens to think that kid is really kind-hearted! What a good person! There aren’t many sincere people like that in the world. Such character and such morals are really worth imitating!” The meat jelly nodded its head vigorously, clearly ignorant of the reality of the situation….

The parrot rolled its eyes and then cleared its throat.

“Meng Hao, if you don’t go save her right now, she’ll truly become the plaything of that other guy. If Lord Fifth remembers correctly, that furless girl is named Li Ling’er.”

Meng Hao’s face was now extremely unsightly as he stared off into the Ruins of Immortality, and his eyes flickered with killing intent. He wasn’t sure why Li Ling’er wasn’t back in the Li Clan, but it didn’t matter. Regardless of what issues the two of them had, he had no reason to leave her to die when he was in a position to save her.

Furthermore, since her pursuer had mentioned something about fulfilling Meng Hao’s husbandly duties, well, that was something that no true man would be able to accept.

The matter of he and Li Ling’er getting married was a personal matter between the two of them. For someone to say something like that was an outrageous provocation.

Glaring at the parrot and meat jelly, he gave a cold harrumph, then lifted his foot and then stamped it down onto Patriarch Reliance.

“Alright… follow them into the Ruins of Immortality!” he said, his voice cold but his heart filled with vigilance. He knew that whatever technique had been used to obscure his vision had been something completely terrifying. What was even more frightening was the fact that Li Ling’er was being hunted, and yet the Li Clan hadn’t sent anyone to rescue her. However… Meng Hao glanced at Patriarch Reliance and thought about how he had been unaffected when everyone else on Planet East Victory had been knocked senseless. That showed how unbelievably powerful he must be in battle.

Feeling excited, Patriarch Reliance changed directions and headed toward the Ruins of Immortality at top speed. The parrot was also getting excited. It had the feeling that Ruins of Immortality were filled with all sorts of furred and feathered beasts, which made it like the promised land of his dreams.

As for the moronic meat jelly, it was easily convinced of anything in its simple-mindedness.

Rumbling filled the air as Patriarch Reliance exploded with speed. In the blink of an eye, he was already in the Ruins of Immortality, speeding in pursuit of Li Ling’er.

Patriarch Reliance was gargantuan, so as soon as he entered the Ruins of Immortality, everything began to tremble. It was as if the natural laws had been disturbed by his arrival, and were now changing.

Guyiding Tri-Rain trembled, and her expression suddenly turned blank. For some reason, she suddenly felt like something was calling her, summoning her… to a place deep within the Ruins of Immortality.

It was almost as if there were a forgotten portion of her memories that were suddenly unlocked as soon as she entered.

As soon as the small group entered the Ruins of Immortality, the old man sitting in the ship outside of the ruins frowned.

“It seems I underestimated that turtle… as well as that bird. I even underestimated that bell-like thing, and the girl on top of the turtle.” Earlier, he had recognized that Patriarch Reliance and the parrot were powerful, but now he had to admit that they were far more terrifying than he had assumed.

“For them to be able to see through my Daoist magic….” he muttered. It was something that completely exceeded what he had planned for. Originally surface plan had been to appear as if he was warning Yi Fazi, and yet intentionally provoke him into accosting Li Ling’er.

Through the death of Li Ling’er, the Zheng Clan of the Spiritstar Realm would sow a seed with Meng Hao. The old man had very much been looking forward to seeing what type of flower would bloom as a result.

But now, things were not going according to plan.

Muttering to himself, he looked over at the Ruins of Immortality, and he seemed to be recalling something that filled him with deep fear.

“The Paragon Immortal Realm of yesteryear….” he thought. Memories swirled within him, and he sighed. Finally, he gritted his teeth and headed into the Ruins of Immortality. He had no choice. He could plot against the Zheng Clan, but he definitely could not allow Yi Fazi to die in the Ruins of Immortality.

Meng Hao stood on Patriarch Reliance’s head, looking around as they sped through the Ruins of Immortality. This was his second time coming here, and things in this area looked much different than the entrance opened by the Three Great Daoist Societies.

The Three Great Daoist Societies’ entrance was an area that they had thoroughly explored, and they had taken steps to ensure that it was not dangerous. However, the current area Meng Hao was in was a place few people ever came to.

Up ahead, numerous stone fragments hung in the air. There were also shattered statues visible, and the sky was covered with fissures that seemed capable of slicing up and swallowing anything and everything.

There were even strange, Demonic voices that echoed about in the air, along with an archaic, ancient aura.

Furthermore, these were only the outskirts of the Ruins of Immortality. As they proceeded onward, Patriarch Reliance's expression grew more serious. However, he still seemed to charge forward with incredible power, blasting through any obstructions as if they were dried sticks.

The strength of his fleshly body had reached a terrifying degree, allowing them to speed rapidly through the outer region of the Ruins of Immortality.

Meng Hao's expression was grim as he rotated his cultivation base. 123 Immortal meridians exploded with power, none of which seeped out of him. 33 blurry Heavens descended, and the glitter of starlight appeared in his eyes. As he stood there, energy surging, he truly seemed to exude the will of the Immortal Realm Paragon.

"I don't want the same thing that happened before to happen again, where you people can see what's happening and I can't!" he suddenly announced coldly. He lifted his hand, and a Fifth Hex rift appeared.

Patriarch Reliance muttered something to himself, then suddenly opened his mouth and roared. The roar did not spread out in all directions, but rather, was confined to the rather small area around him.

"OPEN!"

Rumbling could be heard as everything around Meng Hao suddenly changed. He saw floating spatters of blood and other traces that someone was being viciously hunted down!

In a location not too far away, Li Ling'er's face was pale white, and blood sprayed from her mouth. She was like an oil lamp on the verge of sputtering out, her life force at its limit. She had found no hope in the Ruins of Immortality, only despair, causing her to laugh bitterly.

Yi Fazi and his black, three-headed python were right behind her. Everything trembled as a brutal aura spread out in all directions, causing ripples to surge out and push the nearby debris away.

“Feeling hopeless, are we…?” asked Yi Fazi, laughing. His eyes gleamed with an evil light as he raised his right hand.

With the wave a finger, he caused a black beam to shoot out. Everywhere it passed, rocks and canyons shattered into pieces!

A boom could be heard, and blood sprayed out of Li Ling’er’s mouth as she slammed down into a field of shattered rocks. She looked back, glaring at Yi Fazi without the slightest hint of defeat or compliance in her eyes.

She might be in a hopeless situation, and she might be about to die, but she would perish with her dignity.

“I love this kind of expression!” exclaimed Yi Fazi. “Back home, all the trophy heads of the Immortals killed by the Patriarchs throughout history have this exact same expression!

“Immortals….” He threw his head back and laughed, and his expression was one of boundless arrogance.

“Immortals must all die, and all Immortal Realms will be destroyed. Who gives a crap about the Paragon Immortal Realm and you crappy Immortals!” Killing intent flickering, Yi Fazi advanced toward Li Ling’er.

He waved his right hand in a claw-like gesture, causing an enormous power to explode out. Li Ling’er was simply incapable of fighting back or struggling. Her eyes, however, shone with determination, as an aura of extermination suddenly surged up inside her.

She had chosen to self-detonate!

“Self-detonation?” said Yi Fazi with a light smile. He quickly performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, unleashing some type of Daoist magic that caused Li Ling’er to tremble. Suddenly, the destructive aura within her dispersed. She was shocked to find that… she couldn’t self-detonate!

“I learned this secret magic a long time ago to deal with Immortals who try to self-detonate,” Even as he spoke, Yi Fazi appeared in front of Li Ling’er, lifted his right hand up, and clutched her by the neck. Then, he shoved her down onto the ground. His expression vile, he smiled and said, “Alright, be a good girl and allow me to consummate our marriage. After that… I’ll use your blood for my baptism.”

Li Ling’er was trembling, and she bit her lip as she stared back at Yi Fazi. It was at this point that suddenly, she opened her mouth, causing a brilliant light to shoot out.

Yi Fazi was shocked; at the same time, glittering light suddenly rose up around him. The beam of light flashed past his neck. It was a dangerously sharp willow leaf that had come dangerously close to slitting his throat.

“Slut!” he roared. Inwardly, he was shocked. Without the life-saving shield provided by his clan, that willow leaf would most likely have taken his head off.

Enraged, he was just about to reach in and rip Li Ling’er’s tongue out when, all of a sudden, a coldness caused him to look up and off into the distance. What he saw was Patriarch Reliance’s massive frame rushing toward him, atop whom stood Meng Hao, staring coldly in his direction.

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Note from Deathblade: Just a reminder that the following note is from Er Gen, NOT ME:

Note from Er Gen: Thank you, everyone, for your concern regarding my daughter. Thank you for your support, brothers and sisters. Thank you. We have an appointment this afternoon at the hospital, and are leaving right now. Again, thank you!

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1022: Pipe Down!

Killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes, and fury raged in his heart. There was no major enmity between him and Li Ling’er, just the normal competition that occurred between cultivators.

Regarding the matter of the marriage agreement, that was something that had been decided years ago. Although Meng Hao had fled the marriage, that didn’t mean that he was willing to stand idly by while Li Ling’er faced grave danger.

That was especially so in a situation like this, in which her aura was extremely weak. Before, she had been as proud as the Heavens, but now she was gasping her last breaths. Meng Hao’s fury burned like endless flames.

Li Ling’er had been filled with despair, and wanted to die. But when she saw Meng Hao, all of a sudden, a faint glow of hope appeared in her eyes. Meng Hao’s arrival was something she could never have predicted.

In the instant she saw him, her desire to live was immediately rekindled.

“It’s you…. Can you actually see me?” Yi Fazi stared in shock for a moment, and then a wicked smile spread out on his face, as if he couldn’t care less about Meng Hao. Suddenly, he lifted his right hand, clenched it into a fist, and punched out toward Li Ling’er’s delicate head.

He wanted to kill Li Ling’er right in front of Meng Hao!

However, in that instant, the Lightning Cauldron suddenly appeared in Meng Hao’s hand. It danced with electricity, and rumbling filled the void as he instantly switched positions with Li Ling’er.

Not even Yi Fazi had time to react. All of a sudden, Li Ling'er appeared on top of Patriarch Reliance, after which Guyiding Tri-Rain knelt down, put her hand on her forehead, and began to treat her injuries.

As for Meng Hao, as soon as he appeared in the position previously occupied by Li Ling'er, he saw Yi Fazi's fist plummeting toward him. Without a moment's hesitation, he rotated his cultivation base, causing the explosive power of 123 Immortal meridians to surge. 33 Heavens descended with terrifying power. All of it was focused directly on Yi Fazi.

Rumbling echoed out, and Yi Fazi's face fell. He jerked back, evading Meng Hao's attack, his fist transforming into an sealing incantation as he pointed toward Meng Hao. Instantly, the black, three-headed python behind him roared and then shot toward Meng Hao as if to consume him.

"I'm glad you showed up!" he laughed. "I originally wanted to use you for my Baptism, so guess what: a year from today will be your first memorial service!"

Yi Fazi threw his head back and laughed. His expression was one of rapture as he waved his hand, causing the black, three-headed python to grow rapidly. Rumbling sounds echoed out as it charged toward Meng Hao.

"He's not from the Ninth Mountain and Sea!" Li Ling'er cried weakly, her face ashen. Despite the healing from Guyiding Tri-Rain, Li Ling'er was still quite weak.

As for Patriarch Reliance, he remained off to the side, eyes shifting back and forth. Naturally, he was not assisting; in fact, he was even contemplating the fact that if Meng Hao died, he would finally be free.

He was about to slip away quietly when Meng Hao waved his hand, causing a Fifth Hex rift to appear and slowly circle around Patriarch Reliance's head. Patriarch Reliance was so frightened he started trembling, and didn't dare to move an inch.

As for Meng Hao, his eyes flickered with killing intent. As soon as he heard Li Ling'er's words, he looked at Yi Fazi, and his eyes began to glitter brightly. He performed an incantation gesture with his left hand and then pointed out.

Instantly, a Blood Demon head materialized, roaring. It wasn't just a single head, but 123 of them. They attacked… unleashing all of Meng Hao's power.

The 123 Blood Demon heads instantly merged together, turning into an even larger Blood Demon head which then shot toward the black, three-headed python. The two slammed into each other in midair, causing a huge boom, along with a massive gust of wind that blasted out in all directions. Meng Hao didn't back up, but instead advanced, appearing directly in front of Yi Fazi and then punching out.

That one punch was filled with Meng Hao's internal Immortal power, as well as all of his true Immortal fleshly body's strength. Its force was comparable to a powerful magic and contained incredible destructive power.

Dust flew up in all directions, and the void shattered. Yi Fazi's eyes went wide, and an intense sensation of deadly crisis shook him. He had known that Meng Hao was powerful, but now… he discovered exactly how powerful.

In that moment of crisis, Yi Fazi threw his head back and roared, then performed a double-handed incantation gesture. Instantly, light flowed out across his body in the shape of a suit of armor. The armor was golden, and radiated boundless light that made him seem even more like a true Immortal than Meng Hao.

Meng Hao's fist rumbled as it slammed into Yi Fazi in his suit of armor. Instantly, cracks spread out across the armor, and Yi Fazi was sent flying backward. However, in almost the same instant that the cracks spread out across the armor, they repaired themselves. Apparently the power of Meng Hao's one punch… couldn't harm Yi Fazi at all!

Meng Hao's eyes glittered with coldness.

Yi Fazi laughed arrogantly and then said, “Meng Hao, right? A true Immortal, right? Well, SO WHAT?! You can’t even break open my True Plate Armor! What makes you think you have anything powerful enough to fight me with?!

“Immortal? This is a so-called Immortal?

“Bring out some of that awe-inspiring Immortal stuff they used to have back in the day, and let me see it! Let me see what an Immortal is supposed to be!” As Yi Fazi laughed, Meng Hao stared in shock at what was being said, completely unable to make heads nor tales of what Yi Fazi was talking about.

“You don’t understand? You don’t COMPREHEND? Oh, I get it. To you people, all of these things are considered a big secret. People like you still don’t qualify to know the truth.” When Yi Fazi saw Meng Hao’s expression, he began to laugh maniacally.

“Pipe down!” Meng Hao said coolly. He suddenly flickered, transforming into a huge golden roc that shot toward Yi Fazi with incredible speed. He was on him in the blink of an eye, razor-sharp talons slashing out.

Yi Fazi laughed coldly and waved his hand to summon a magical technique. Shockingly, a black, nine-headed python materialized around him, which roared and charged toward Meng Hao.

At the same time, a magical symbol appeared in each of Yi Fazi’s eyes, as well as on his forehead. The three magical symbols merged together, transforming into a spell formation that also shot toward Meng Hao.

Rumbling filled the void as Meng Hao slashed apart the black python and beat his wings in the direction of the incoming spell formation. Suddenly, innumerable mountains appeared, which linked together into chains of mountains that resembled numerous gigantic dragons.

Booms rang out as, in a relatively short period of time, dozens of attacks were exchanged. Every time any of Meng Hao’s divine abilities landed on Yi Fazi, however, his brilliant armor would block the attack.

A ruthless gleam appeared in Meng Hao's eyes as he took a step forward. Immortal dragons roared as they shot toward Yi Fazi.

Booms rang out, and the ground of the Ruins of Immortality quaked. Countless nearby statues and other ruins were shoved backward.

Yi Fazi's face flickered slightly, and he suddenly fell back. At the same time, though, he called out,

"Heaven, master of mortals. Hell, master of Heaven. Lin, master of hell!" 1 Yi Fazi's hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, causing strange ripples to spread out across his body. Shockingly, two enormous black wings sprouted from his back, which emanated a strange glow. They seemed to fuse with the void around him, causing him to look bizarre to the extreme. At the same time, a huge black bow appeared in his hands.

"Three Masters Exterminate Immortals!" As soon as the words left his mouth, countless magical symbols appeared on his glowing armor, which merged together to form an arrow!

The bow was drawn, the arrow flew!

The void vibrated so violently it shattered. The powerful arrow ripped through the starry sky toward Meng Hao.

Seeing the arrow close in on Meng Hao cause Li Ling'er to get very nervous. However, there was nothing she could do to help. As for the parrot and meat jelly, and Patriarch Reliance, they didn't seem concerned at all.

Meng Hao snorted coldly and extended his right hand, within which appeared a long spear. It had a white spearhead, and the shaft was made from the World Tree. As soon as it appeared, strange colors flashed, and boundless ripples spread out which seemed to stir the entire Ruins of Immortality.

Meng Hao hurled the spear out, causing massive rumbling to fill the starry sky. The spear shot through the void like a white dragon, both projectiles so fast that ring-like shockwaves were formed in the void through which they traveled. In the blink of an eye they were upon each other, and as they made contact a terrifyingly loud boom blasted out in all directions.

“Meng Hao, is this your true power? None of your attacks have even been able to break through my armor. Is this really the power of a true Immortal?”

Almost in the same moment that the spear and arrow slammed into each other, Meng Hao took a step forward.

“Watch and see how I break it,” he said coolly. When he took his first step, he waved his right index finger, causing boundless light to shoot up into the starry sky. In the blink of an eye, the light formed into a fist-sized globe of light!

It was… the sun!

As soon as the sun appeared, shocking ripples spread out. However, Yi Fazi continued to laugh coldly, as if he didn’t care at all about the sun. He didn’t retreat at all, but instead, advanced and even revealed a second bow and arrow!

At the same time, Meng Hao took a second step, and waved his right hand again, causing the image of another shocking heavenly body to appear next to the sun.

It was… the moon!

The sun and the moon began to orbit each other, causing a massive energy to explode out. Yi Fazi’s eyes widened, and in that same moment, Meng Hao took a third step.

As he stepped forward, he performed an incantation gesture and pointed out. Shockingly, the illusory image of a mountain appeared between the sun and the moon!

It was… the projection of the Ninth Mountain!

The sun and moon orbiting the Ninth Mountain!

Massive energy soared up, causing Yi Fazi’s face to fall completely. All of a sudden, a sensation of indescribable crisis filled him, and instead of advancing, he began to back up.

However, in the moment that he stepped back, Meng Hao took a fourth step!

With that fourth step, he waved his sleeve. Rumbling filled the void as… a black pearl and a white pearl appeared and began to circulate around the Ninth Mountain and the sun and the moon!

Terrifying undulations caused Yi Fazi’s eyes to widen, and he fell into shocked retreat.

“Magical technique combination! Th-that’s a complex type of magic that only almighty experts can control! How are you doing this!?!?”

Even as Yi Fazi spoke, killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes. He waved his right hand, and the sun, moon, and Black White Pearls continued to orbit around the Ninth Mountain as it shot toward Yi Fazi with incredible speed.

The speed was such that Yi Fazi was incapable of evading. Gritting his teeth, he roared and performed a double-handed incantation gesture, then pushed his hand out in front of him. The glowing armor immediately began to emanate blinding light as he used all the power he could muster to block the attack.

Rumbling echoed out in all directions. The sun and moon collapsed, and the Ninth Mountain shattered. The Black White Pearls dissipated. However, in that same moment, all of Yi Fazi’s glowing armor shattered, layer by layer.

Yi Fazi coughed up a massive mouthful of blood, and alarm filled his face. Just when he was about to fall back at full speed, Meng Hao took a fifth step, his face filled with savagery and the desire to kill.

It was in that very moment than an ancient voice echoed out like thunder from further back.

“Stay your hand!”

The parrot blinked, and its feathers stood on end. The meat jelly began to tremble, and Patriarch Reliance turned his head, his expression one of unprecedented solemnity.

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# Chapter 1023: The Mountain and Sea Realm Alliance!

A strange cultivator was almost able to hunt Li Ling'er down and kill her!

Unexpectedly, no one from the Li Clan showed up to stop it from happening. The situation seemed very strange, especially considering… that the Li Clan was not very far away on Planet North Reed. In the Ninth Mountain and Sea, inquiries were rarely made when ordinary cultivators fought and killed another. However, when a Chosen died or was injured, it was always a big matter!

Very few people would actually employ deadly force against a Chosen, mostly because of the numerous ramifications that would be involved.

However, this strange cultivator clearly wanted to kill Li Ling'er. Most importantly… Meng Hao's vision had been interfered with moments ago so that he couldn't see what was happening.

Clearly, this strange cultivator was not working alone. He definitely had some almighty expert hiding in the shadows, assisting him. Meng Hao had already reached such a conclusion before coming to rescue Li Ling'er. In the end, he decided that it didn't matter; he had to rescue her any way.

Therefore, when he heard someone crying out to prevent him from landing his deadly attack on the young man, he didn't hesitate for even a moment to cry out: "Patriarch Reliance, block that man's path for a quarter of an hour, and I'll give you a hundred years of freedom!" This was only the third time he had spoken in the entire battle!

At first, Patriarch Reliance was infuriated, and he was of a mind to ignore a mere hundred years of freedom. But as he thought about it, he realized that if Meng Hao had said he would give a lifetime of freedom, it would have been completely unbelievable. But if it was only a hundred years, it actually seemed a lot more plausible.

“Fudge!” he cried. Eyes gleaming with savagery, he suddenly lifted his head and looked at the incoming old man, then roared.

At the same time as he let out that intense roar, black light flashed around him as he shot toward the old man.

That old man was none other than the person who had been accompanying Yi Fazi the entire time. His Dao Protector!

When he saw Patriarch Reliance bearing down on him, his eyes widened with fear. Not quite sure what to make of him, he waved his hand, causing an enormous, illusory creature to appear that resembled a tadpole.

It was pitch-black and had no eyes, only a gaping mouth. As soon as it appeared, it opened its mouth wide and lunged toward Patriarch Reliance as if to swallow him.

“Fudgetastic Magical Super-Attack!” Patriarch Reliance roared, shouting as he barreled forward. Even as the words left his mouth, he was taken aback, and wondered why he had said that in particular. However, it actually seemed quite appropriate.

Rumbling filled the air as Patriarch Reliance exploded with all of his power. Normally speaking, that in and of itself wouldn’t have caused the old man to pause. However, it was at this point that the old man noticed numerous beams of light radiating off of Patriarch Reliance. Instantly, his face fell, as if he had just remembered something. He appeared to be both shocked and terrified of the beams of light, and did everything he could to avoid them. As a result, he could proceed no further.

Meng Hao didn’t even look back, nor did he slow down. In the blink of an eye, he was upon Yi Fazi. He clenched his fist, his eyes flickering with killing intent, and then began to punch, intent on completely destroying the defenseless Yi Fazi.

Yi Fazi’s heart was pounding. In his own Realm, he had an incredibly high position. Were that not the case, he would never have qualified to come to the Ninth Mountain and Sea for a trial by fire, let alone have a Dao Protector to guard him.

However, his experience couldn’t possibly compare to Meng Hao’s, nor was he a match for him in terms of viciousness. Yi Fazi couldn’t imagine all of the various things that Meng Hao had experienced.

In this moment of critical danger, Yi Fazi’s expression suddenly turned to one of madness. He bit down on the tip of his tongue, then spit out a mouthful of blood, which transformed into a huge, blood-colored lake that spun toward Meng Hao.

When the lake came into contact with Meng Hao’s fist, it simply evaporated, turning into a blood-colored mist that quickly faded away. As for the fist… it passed directly through the mist to slam into Yi Fazi’s chest.

A massive boom rang out, accompanied by cracking sounds. Blood sprayed out of Yi Fazi’s mouth as his chest caved in. As he flopped backward, he felt as if there were 123 bursts of energy exploding within him. In the blink of an eye, he exploded.

However, after he exploded, Meng Hao frowned as he saw all of the bits of blood and gore form back together in midair. Terrifying ripples of power exploded out.

“Meng Hao!! I’m gonna kill you! KILL YOU!!

“You destroyed my favorite magical body! I’m going to take you… and refine you into a new magical body for myself! Meng Hao, I want you dead, DEAD, DEEAAD!”

Howls that seemed to originate from hell itself rang out from the reforming body, filled with boundless rancor and insanity.

As the words echoed out, the shattered flesh rapidly congealed back together, materializing into something that didn’t look like Yi Fazi had moments ago, but rather…

A three-headed creature with a long, undulating tail. It looked like neither a human nor a Demon!

The first head looked like Yi Fazi’s, the second was half-python, half-human, vicious and fierce. The third head was completely snake-like, complete with a flicking, forked tongue.

“Meng Hao,” he cried in a shocking, piercing voice. “I’m gonna tear you to shreds! I’ll baptize myself in your blood to complete my Immortal foundation!”

When Meng Hao saw the reformed Yi Fazi, his eyes widened. Li Ling’er also saw him, and her heart began to thump.

Meng Hao’s mind thrummed as he looked at Yi Fazi. He had never seen any entity such as this before. He had seen Demons, things like mountains or rivers personified, but those were true Greater Demons.

But he had never seen anything at all that looked like this. It was like a beast, but not. Like a cultivator, but not.

Even more shocking… Meng Hao realized that the Demon Sealing Jade in his bag of holding was suddenly vibrating at a frequency unlike anything he had ever experienced before.

Those vibrations even exceeded what he had felt when he had acquired the Fifth Hex, or when he had encountered the Sixth Generation Demon Sealer.

It was as if an enmity and hatred that could not be wiped away with the passage of time was suddenly exploding out from the Demon Sealing Jade with incredible intensity.

“A Lower Realms rebel! Bloodline of the Zheng Clan! When we Demon Sealers encounter someone like this, he MUST DIE!

“Die. Die. DIE!! DIEEE!!” Meng Hao’s mind rumbled with the ancient voice of the Demon Sealing Jade. An intense murderous aura erupted out from his Demon Sealer Immortal meridian, which immediately began to rotate.

Apparently, if Meng Hao did not slaughter this so-called Lower Realms rebel, then his Demon Sealer Immortal meridian would no longer approve of him!

This was an intense madness and hatred that Meng Hao had never felt before in his entire life.

Almost as soon as Yi Fazi’s true appearance was made manifest, the old man who was tangled up with Patriarch Reliance suddenly went berserk. “Fool! IMBECILE! Y-y-you… dammit, you already lost! Why didn’t you just go back right away! Why would you possibly be so idiotic as to reveal your true form here! Dammit! DAMMIT! You people from the Zheng Clan are all MORONS!!!”

He appeared to be completely enraged, and was trembling all over. In addition to the rage on his face, there was also terror and anxiety. It was as if Yi Fazi revealing this form would cause a Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering catastrophe.

In the same moment that Yi Fazi revealed his body, a howl could be heard coming from the Ji Clan’s ancestral mansion on the Ninth Mountain. That howl instantly echoed out to fill the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Not everyone could hear it, though. Only Dao Realm experts were able to detect the shrill and abrupt call.

It was a sound that hadn’t been heard for a very, very long time!

The shocking cry caused the faces all of the Dao Realm Patriarchs in the Ninth Mountain and Sea to flicker.

That was especially true of the Three Great Daoist Societies. Instantly, all of their Dao Realm experts flew out, their faces serious and even nervous.

The entire Ji Clan on the Ninth Mountain was equally shaken. Their Dao Realm experts began to pant as they charged out toward the rear of the Ji Clan ancestral mansion, where… at the peak of the Ninth Mountain, was a celestial pond!

Its waters were as clear as glass, and were covered by wisps of white mist. However, at the bottom of the pond, nine bronze cauldrons were visible. Each of the cauldrons emanated an air of extreme ancientness, as if they had existed within the stream of time for an indescribable length of time.

In the center of the nine cauldrons, shockingly… was an enormous Xuanwu turtle.

That Xuanwu turtle and those nine cauldrons were not items that belonged to the Ji Clan.

In fact, you could say that they did not belong to any clan or sect at all. They belonged… to the Ninth Mountain!

Any clan or sect who became the Lord of the Ninth Mountain and Sea would have control of them!

The Xuanwu turtle’s back bristled with sharp spikes, each one of which was covered by countless magical symbols. It looked incredibly fierce as it sat there, its back just barely protruding out of the water. For years, it had remained in that exact position, unmoving, as if it were a statue.

However, moments ago, the gigantic Xuanwu turtle had suddenly moved! A tremor ran through it as it rose up and howled, a terrifying howl that echoed out into the starry sky.

Everything shook, and the pond water seethed. The nine cauldrons began to shake.

The Dao Realm experts of the Ji Clan were all getting incredibly nervous. They looked at the howling Xuanwu turtle, and their faces fell.

The howl seemed to indicate that the Xuanwu turtle was enduring indescribable pain.

“What happened! Wh-why is the Xuanwu turtle howling as if in pain!?!?”

“Could it be that someone has made an incursion into our Ji Clan?!?!”

“No, I don’t think so. Now that I think about it, there’s a legend in the Ninth Mountain….”

Even as the Dao Realm experts were quivering in shock, suddenly, an enormous eye appeared in the sky above the Ninth Mountain!

Within that eye could just barely be seen the image of an old man sitting cross-legged in meditation.

In the instant the eye appeared, the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea trembled.

An ancient voice suddenly echoed out from within the eye: “Outsiders have entered the Ninth Mountain and Sea! Comply with the ancient treaty of the Mountain and Sea Realm Alliance! Slaughter the Outsiders!!”

—–

Note from Deathblade: The following is Er Gen’s note, not mine…

Note from Er Gen: If all goes as planned, I’ll return home tonight. However, my daughter’s tests at the hospital haven’t been finished. There are still some more things that need to be checked out. However, unless something unforeseen happens, I’ll be home tomorrow night, which means I’ll return to my normal schedule the day after. Thank you everyone, I hope you can understand.

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# Chapter 1024: A Paragon Slaughters a Dao Protector!

Almost as soon as the sound echoed out, all of the Dao Realm experts in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were shaken. At the same time, a shocking image appeared in their minds.

It was an image of the general location Meng Hao currently occupied in the Ruins of Immortality!

Obviously, the image was a form of guidance, telling the Dao Realm experts that the Outsiders… were in the Ruins of Immortality!

In the blink of an eye, roughly half of the Dao Realm experts suddenly stepped out into the starry sky and began to speed in that direction. Fang Shoudao was one of them. He and the experts from the Three Great Daoist Societies were among the first to head toward the Ruins of Immortality.

On Planet North Reed, the Patriarch and others from the Li Clan also headed in the direction of the location of the image they had seen.

This sudden turn of events shocked them all to the core, and was clearly not a plot by the Ji Clan. This matter… was momentous. Not even the Ji Clan would have to gall to scheme in this way.

At the same moment in which the Dao Realm experts employed their top speed to head toward the Ruins of Immortality, the old man who was facing off with Patriarch Reliance felt his scalp go numb, and his face go pale. He was well aware of the danger they were now in because of Yi Fazi revealing his true form.

“Moron! Imbecile!” the old man raged inwardly. “Accursed, Heaven-damned Zheng Clan! You were all like this back then, and now this kid is the same! Fool! Moron!!” At the same time, he was extremely apprehensive and nervous. He knew all too well what would happen after Yi Fazi revealed his true form. He also knew that even though only nine mountains remained of the Immortal World, and that it was no longer the grand entity which ruled over 3,000 Lower Realms… even still, the Paragon Immortal Realm still held powerful entities that caused his scalp to go numb.

The old man was also well aware of the deep-seated and complex hatred that the people from the Paragon Immortal Realm harbored against the other two major forces from that ancient war. However, even more importantly, he knew that what the Paragon Immortal Realm hated more than anything else was not those two other powers, but rather… all of the Lower Realms which rebelled against the Immortal World in the war!

The Spiritstar Realm was one of those Lower Realms!

The old man gnashed his teeth and completely ignored Yi Fazi. He backed up rapidly, waving his hand to cause the ship to appear. As soon as he set foot inside, he turned the ship around and began to flee.

He intended to employ the fastest speed possible to escape from this world before any of the other cultivators from the Ninth Mountain and Sea could react to his presence. Based on the level of his cultivation base, he could already sense the auras of numerous powerful experts flying in his direction.

Those people, he could afford to ignore. However, he could also sense that somewhere out there, there was an even more fearsome existence that permeated the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea.

“The Lord of the Ninth Mountain and Sea… Ji Tian! That moron Yi Fazi really screwed things up this time!” The old man’s face was grim, and he gritted his teeth as he sent the ship flying forward. Then he bit the tip of his tongue, then spit out some blood, even burning some of his longevity to achieve a temporary burst of speed. He ripped through the starry sky at incredible speed, piercing out into the void. In a flash, he was on the verge of merging into the void itself.

It was at this point that, deep within the Ruins of Immortality, in what seemed to be an ordinary Immortal’s cave, a white-robed woman sat cross-legged in meditation. She slowly opened her eyes, and they glinted with icy cold light.

It was a coldness that encompassed hatred, rage, and the desire to kill. She slowly lifted her right hand and waved her finger toward the void.

That finger caused an illusory thread to snake out into the distance. In the blink of an eye, it pierced through the entire Ruins of Immortality, slashing through the void toward the old man and his ship.

The old man hadn’t noticed anything strange happening, and was just on the verge of disappearing, when all of a sudden, his face fell. He was about to turn to look behind him when… his head flew off of his shoulders and blood sprayed up like a geyser.

The thread, like a long strand of hair, flashed past and then disappeared without a trace.

The old man’s eyes went wide and his head tumbled through the void, causing his view of the world around him to spin about. He was baffled about what had happened until the moment he died, when he suddenly realized the truth.

“Para… gon….” The old man’s head transformed into ash along with his body.

The ship was now no longer capable of merging into the void, and gradually became visible again. Patriarch Reliance glanced at it and then gobbled it up. After he swallowed it, a tremor ran through him. He looked at the vanishing strand of hair, then peered deep into the Ruins of Immortality, his expression somewhat blank.

He suddenly seemed to have recalled something important from the distant past, but no matter how much he tried to think about it, everything was vague and blurry.

Meng Hao also saw the old man die, and his heart trembled. Then he looked into the depths of the Ruins of Immortality, and recalled that woman in the white robes.

When Yi Fazi saw his Dao Protector die, his scalp went numb, his mind filled with roaring, and his expression was one of fear. He had never had any sense of awe regarding the Nine Mountains and Seas, but now… he was absolutely terrified.

“W-what… what power was that? It actually killed my Dao Protector in one blow!!” Yi Fazi was panting, and his eyes were wide as his heart pounded loudly.

All of a sudden, numerous legends regarding this place began to rise up in his mind. He began to shiver, and slowly backed up. The only thing on his mind now was to flee. All of his surging power and momentum from before now collapsed and faded away.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. For the moment, he didn’t even think about Li Ling’er. Considering Yi Fazi’s true form, as well as the words which had just been spoken, along with the intense killing intent from the Demon Sealing Jade, there was no way Meng Hao was going to allow him to get away. There were too many things he wanted to know, answers… that Yi Fazi could provide!

Meng Hao didn’t even pay attention to the opportunity Patriarch Reliance now had to escape. He instantly flashed through the air in pursuit of Yi Fazi.

Now that Yi Fazi had changed form, he had experienced an increase in both cultivation base and speed. In a short moment, he was quite a distance away. Rumbling filled the air as he also sped away at top speed.

He was scared, and the main thing he was concerned about was escaping Meng Hao. Then he would find a secluded place where he could figure out a way to return home. At the moment, he had no idea how he would do that. However, his Dao Protector was dead, and he had no desire to end up the same. Trembling, he screamed inwardly.

“Dad will definitely sense that my Dao Protector is dead! He’ll come save me! All I have to do is find a place to hide, and Dad will eventually find me!

“Damned Immortal World. Screw this place! Why couldn’t it have been completely destroyed all those years ago!?!?

“And then there’s that damned Meng Hao. I’m not such a bad guy, why does he have to push things so far!?” Cursing inwardly, Yi Fazi increased his speed. Meng Hao chased him, and the two of them proceeded deeper into the Ruins of Immortality.

Patriarch Reliance blinked a few times. Looking enraged, he made to follow Meng Hao, but actually flew slower and slower. At the same time, his voice grew louder and louder.

“Stop running! The Patriarch is definitely going to catch you!

“Still running!? You’re really pissing me off! I’m gonna chase you down with all my might!

“I’m mad as hell now!” As he roared, Patriarch Reliance’s beady eyes darted back and forth. Eventually, Meng Hao disappeared off into the distance, whereupon Patriarch Reliance did an about-face, employing his top speed to flee in a different direction.

The parrot and meat jelly were still on top of him, as was Li Ling’er. They watched in shock as Patriarch Reliance took to flight.

After a few breaths of time, Patriarch Reliance used some unknown method to appear in another area of the Ruins of Immortality. Then, he shook the continent on his back, causing the parrot and meat jelly, as well as Li Ling’er, to be flung off of him.

“SCREW OFF!!!” he roared. “From here on out, the Patriarch is footloose and fancy free! Hahaha! Yet again, the Patriarch is the smartest of all. He knows how to take advantage of all opportunities!

“Meng Hao you little bastard, you just wait! Our business isn’t finished!!

“I hereby swear that this time, you’ll NEVER find me, you son of a biscuit!!” Patriarch Reliance was virtually dancing about. He threw his head back and roared. Having tossed Li Ling’er, the parrot, and the meat jelly aside, he then sped off into the distance.

Meanwhile, in another location in the Ruins of Immortality, Meng Hao’s killing intent raged into the Heavens. His cultivation base exploded with power, and the 33 Heavens surrounded him. However, Yi Fazi was moving with incredible speed. Although they were able to fight back and forth a bit, Yi Fazi never slowed down. Nevertheless, under the relentless pursuit, his injuries began to accumulate.

Even so, he used some unknown secret magic that eventually caused his speed to accelerate explosively. There were even many points where he was about to shake Meng Hao off his trail. However, each time Meng Hao was also able to use the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex to continuously break his momentum and allow him to make up for lost ground.

Several days of chasing went by. Eventually, they reached an area where a gargantuan floating head rose up just ahead of them.

The head had eyes that looked like black holes, as if someone had dug the eyeballs out in years past. Although it was a complete head, there was actually a huge fissure which split it from the crown of the head down.

Also, a miserable and ancient will seeped out from inside of the head.

As the head neared, an incredible pressure weighed down, forcing Yi Fazi to slow down. When that happened, his face fell.

It was in that instant that Meng Hao closed in from behind. Lifting his hand, he unleashed the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex.

As soon as he waved his finger, Yi Fazi’s body trembled.

“Not good!” At the same time, killing intent erupted in Meng Hao’s eyes. He raised his right hand, causing the Star Plucking Magic to grab toward Yi Fazi.

Yi Fazi threw his head back and howled. Innumerable beams of black light began to emanate off of him, transforming into countless black bats which then shot madly toward Meng Hao.

Rumbling could be heard as Yi Fazi borrowed the force of the collision and once again shot forward. He was just on the verge of evading the Star Plucking Magic, when Meng Hao’s hand grabbed onto his wings. He wrenched viciously, and Yi Fazi let out a miserable shriek as the wings were ripped off of him. Blood sprayed out of the wounds, and Yi Fazi’s face went ashen. He staggered backward, gritting his teeth and speeding away.

Meng Hao’s killing intent hadn’t lessened in the least. The Demon Sealing Jade was vibrating more madly than ever as he put the severed wings into his bag of holding. Eyes shining as cold as knives, he once again gave chase.

It was at this same time that the Dao Realm experts began to enter the Ruins of Immortality and search for the Outsiders. The shrill cry of the Xuanwu turtle continued to echo out.

Until all the Outsiders were dead, it would never return to sleep.

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# Chapter 1025: Soulsearching Yi Fazi

The Xuanwu turtle’s intense cry echoed out through the Ninth Mountain and Sea into the ears of all individuals qualified to hear it. As the Dao Realm experts entered the Ruins of Immortality, a towering killing intent continued to surge through the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Kill the Outsiders! That was the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

Although Meng Hao could not hear the cry of the Xuanwu turtle, the Demon Sealing Jade inside of his bag of holding was vibrating with unprecedented intensity. It emanated a fervent hatred that merged into Meng Hao. It was as if… the League of Demon Sealers harbored infinite detestation towards all of these so-called Outsiders, a hatred so fierce that it could only be sated by killing any of them that he met!

Meng Hao was the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer, so the feeling was almost overwhelming. However, even without the urging of the Demon Sealing Jade, Meng Hao would still have chosen to kill Yi Fazi. Naturally, the way that Yi Fazi had provoked him and had acted completely shamelessly ensured that Meng Hao would never let him go.

Yi Fazi immediately fell back. Waving his hand, he caused the numerous black bats which had appeared moments ago to fill the sky and then descend onto Meng Hao in an attempt to halt his progress.

Meng Hao snorted coldly and performed an incantation gesture with his right hand. Suddenly, a Blood Demon head appeared, so huge that it completely covered Meng Hao. It shot forward, slamming into the bats, causing miserable shrieks to ring out. In the blink of an eye, the Blood Demon head caused a red glow to spread out, which consumed the bats.

Meng Hao turned into a red beam of blinding light which pierced through the void of the Ruins of Immortality, pursuing Yi Fazi relentlessly.

Yi Fazi's pale face was filled with an expression of terror and shock. He had known Meng Hao to be powerful, but this strength… had surpassed anything he could have imagined.

"Dammit! DAMMIT!!" Yi Fazi had long since realized that despite revealing his true self, he was still no match for Meng Hao. His time was up and he couldn't afford to get bogged down here; his Dao Protector was dead, leaving him trembling in fear. He knew that if he was incapable of shaking off Meng Hao's pursuit, then the only thing that awaited him was… death!

To be killed in body and soul!!

Yi Fazi threw his heads back and roared. His eyes were bright red, and although his wings had been ripped off, he still had three heads left. As the heads roared, black rings of light shot out from their foreheads.

Three rings of light emanated mysterious glows as he jerked his heads, transforming into light beams that shot toward Meng Hao.

"Life Force Light!" he cried, performing an incantation gesture, his eyes shining with madness.

As soon as the three black beams of light appeared, the flicker of electricity could be seen in Meng Hao's right hand. The Lightning Cauldron flickered, and in the same moment that the black beams bore down on him, he looked over at Yi Fazi and suddenly, the two of them switched places. Yi Fazi had no idea what was happening.

The beams of light screeched to a stop right in front of Yi Fazi, causing his scalp to go numb. He could do nothing but stare in shock as Meng Hao waved his hand, causing tens of thousands of mountains to appear, which rumbled as they smashed down onto Yi Fazi.

“Meng Hao,” he howled, “if you let me go, then I, Yi Fazi, will owe you a huge favor!!” He performed a double-handed incantation gesture, then stretched both hands out wide. Immediately, the three beams of black light twisted around, transforming into a black tempest that fought back against the tens of thousands of mountains. At the same time, Yi Fazi spun, changing directions and shooting off like lighting.

Meng Hao didn’t say a word. When he saw Yi Fazi changing directions, his eyes glittered, and the Lightning Cauldron once again appeared. Electricity danced, and yet, black light surrounded Yi Fazi, fighting back against the transposition power. In a rare turn of events… the Lightning Cauldron failed!

“Eee?!” said Meng Hao. Yi Fazi then exploded with speed, transforming into a colorful streak of light that immediately sped off into the surrounding ruins and corpses floating around this part of the Ruins of Immortality. Meng Hao gave a cold harrumph, waving his right hand and pointing toward the fleeing Yi Fazi.

“Paragon Bridge!” As soon as the words left Meng Hao’s mouth, rumbling filled the air. A Heaven-shaking, Earth-rocking bridge suddenly appeared. As it rumbled down into the Ruins of Immortality, boundless ripples spread out, blocking Yi Fazi’s path. Yi Fazi’s was thoroughly and completely shocked, and he suddenly stopped in place. Even the mere ripples caused him to cough up a massive mouthful of blood. A look of madness filled his face.

“Meng Hao!!” He let out a shrill cry, gnashing his teeth as he performed another incantation gesture. Black light flickered around him, and his three heads all screamed something like a magic curse. Behind him, a gigantic, illusory statue appeared. Shockingly, the statue… depicted an enormous black python. As soon as it appeared, it emanated a terrifying aura.

Apparently, this entity was some sort of spirit that had existed in this Realm in previous times. The sense of ancientness it exuded was shocking, and caused the Ruins of Immortality to tremble.

Gradually, a murderous aura built up and then exploded out from the statue.

“Ancestor, I humbly request your presence!” roared Yi Fazi. The statue rumbled, and as it grew more and more corporeal, it opened its mouth and lashed out toward the Paragon Bridge.

A boom could be heard, and the Paragon Bridge trembled and collapsed. In that same moment, though, the illusory python statue was also shattered. A massive shock wave spread out in all directions, causing innumerable ruins and corpses to be blasted away. Meng Hao was forced backward several paces, his face flickering in shock.

Blood sprayed out of Yi Fazi’s mouth, and his eyes shone with madness. The python statue might have been destroyed, but Yi Fazi was now surrounded by a gigantic stone egg that completely covered him up as he shot into the distance like a meteor.

His current speed was several times faster than his speed from moments ago.

Just when he seemed on the verge of disappearing, Meng Hao’s killing intent flared. The starstone in his left eye flickered and reappeared in his palm. It then melted into starlight, which rapidly surrounded Meng Hao as he transformed into a planet.

As soon as the planet appeared, it sped through the void with vastly greater speed than Meng Hao had used before. It crushed everything in its path, and its surging energy caused everything to shake violently.

Faster and faster, closer and closer to Yi Fazi!

As for Yi Fazi himself, the pressure weighing down on him reduced his own speed. In the space of only ten breaths of time, Meng Hao in planet-form had already caught up with him. In the blink of an eye, the planet slammed into the stone egg that was protecting Yi Fazi.

BOOOOMMMMMM!

A huge rumbling sound rose up into the sky, shaking everything. The stone egg shattered, and Yi Fazi let out a miserable shriek. Blood sprayed from his mouth, and of his three heads, the one that was human-shaped, suddenly exploded.

Yi Fazi trembled violently and staggered backward, crying out in despair, “Dad, save me!!”

Even as the sound rang out, he drew upon the flame of his life force to utilize a bizarre magical technique to project his voice through the void and outside of the Mountain and Sea Realm into the Realm from which he had come.

An instant later, a powerful and terrifying pressure began to push down onto the Ruins of Immortality!

At this point, Meng Hao in planet-form shrank down, transforming into his normal appearance and then walking forward. Coldness radiated off of him as he extended his right index finger.

“Demon Sealing, Seventh Hex, Karmic Hexing!”

The wave of Meng Hao’s finger caused countless Karma Threads to appear around Yi Fazi, Karma Threads that no other person would be able to see. However, Meng Hao could see them, spreading out and fusing into the void, where they seemed to be about to touch that terrifying pressure which was weighing down.

Before they could, the tip of Meng Hao’s finger descended, and the Karma Threads began to tremble. In the blink of an eye, they retracted, almost as if they had been locked down, and were now incapable of spreading out from Yi Fazi’s body.

“NO!!” screamed Yi Fazi, his expression one of despair. More blood sprayed out of his mouth, and he backed up further. At the same time, Meng

Hao closed in, eyes flickering with the desire to kill as he waved another finger.

“Demon Sealing, Fifth Hex!”

A rift suddenly appeared in front of Meng Hao’s finger, only a few centimeters long. However, in the instant that it materialized, a terrifying power exploded out toward Yi Fazi. It slammed into his second head, which let out a bloodcurdling scream. Then a rumbling sound could be heard as the head appeared to be swallowed up by the void, and then vanished.

“Don’t kill me! Meng Hao, spare me, and you’ll sow good fortune with the Spiritstar Realm! I’ll definitely pay you back many times over!!

“I’ll give you endless cultivation resources, endless power! Anything you want, I’ll give it to y–” Yi Fazi’s final remaining head was quivering as he pleaded with Meng Hao. His heart was filled with regret, and his despair had reached the pinnacle.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he walked forward, raised his right hand, and waved it toward Yi Fazi. Yi Fazi’s body emitted rumbling sounds as his chest caved in. His right arm exploded into a haze of blood, after which Meng Hao transformed into a golden roc. He slashed at Yi Fazi with his claws, completely shredding half of his body.

Blood oozed out of Yi Fazi’s mouth. However, despite having received such a grievous injury, he was still alive. Trembling, vision swimming, he was about to try to flee, when a strange light began to gleam in Meng Hao’s eyes.

He didn’t simply want to kill Yi Fazi. More importantly… he wanted to know the Yi Fazi’s origin, and the secrets he held within him. Therefore, he was gradually weakening him, and not just killing him outright.

Just as Yi Fazi was backing up, Meng Hao took a step forward and appeared behind him. He lifted his hand, and, eyes gleaming with a strange light… slapped his palm down hard onto the top of Yi Fazi’s head.

“Soulsearch!” This was a sinister magical technique he had learned in the ancient Demon Immortal Sect, a way to rifle through the soul and see a person’s memories.

Yi Fazi trembled, and his eye bulged as he let out the most bloodcurdling scream he had let out during the entire battle. His body shook violently as indescribable pain wracked him.

At the same time, a tremor ran through Meng Hao. As he Soulsearched Yi Fazi, memories suddenly appeared in his mind.

“This….” he thought, heart trembling. It was as if he were being struck by uncountable bolts of lightning, all of them exploding in his head and shaking his mind.

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Note from Er Gen (not Deathblade): Back to the normal release schedule. The past few days have been exhausting. Thank you for your understanding, brothers and sisters. Thank you!

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# Chapter 1026: 33 Realms; Mountain and Sea Tribulation!

As soon as Meng Hao pushed his hand down onto Yi Fazi’s head, his mind filled with rumbling sounds so intense it felt like it would explode. Numerous images and vast amounts of information poured into him from Yi Fazi’s brain. Meng Hao’s divine sense fused with Yi Fazi’s memories, and he was able to see everything clearly.

He trembled, and began to pant, his eyes shining with disbelief. Although he had prepared himself mentally, he was still profoundly shocked by what he saw in Yi Fazi’s memories.

Yi Fazi screamed miserably as he experienced more pain than he had ever experienced before in his life. Never in his dreams could he possibly have imagined that someone who was as important as he was in the Spiritstar Realm would one day be Soulsearched.

He frothed at the mouth, and his bloodshot eyes bulged out dramatically. His body twitched violently as he experienced a sensation like a giant hand rifling through his brain, grabbing things from inside of his head. The pain… was literally impossible to describe!!

His screams were enough to cause anyone to seize with terror.

Meng Hao’s hand seem to be exuding an incredibly powerful gravitational force as it latched onto Yi Fazi. No matter how violently Yi Fazi struggled, it was impossible for him to escape Meng Hao’s grasp.

At the moment, Meng Hao had no time to even pay attention to Yi Fazi’s struggling. He panted as he looked at the thoroughly shocking images playing out in front of him.

“This….” he murmured.

He was looking at… an entire world!

In this world, everything was the opposite of how it should be. The sky was below and the earth was above. All of the buildings and mountains and rivers were suspended from up above.

The sun, the heavenly bodies, the moon, were all down below!

If you stood on those heavenly bodies, or on the surface of the sun, and looked up, you would see endless lands, filled with mountains and ancient cities.

Within the cities, statues could be seen, each one depicting a nine-headed python!

Meng Hao could also see innumerable life forms. Most of them looked just like Yi Fazi, neither completely human nor completely beastly.

There were some that looked like ordinary cultivators. However, Meng Hao got the feeling that even though they wore that appearance, they were actually just like those other part-human, part-beast beings. The aura they emitted was one of complete brutality and mania. They were cold, with explosive murderous auras.

This… was not any place in the Nine Mountains and Seas.

This was… a world that existed outside of the Nine Mountains and Seas!

Although Meng Hao had never actually left the Ninth Mountain and Sea, now that he could clearly see and sense Yi Fazi’s home, he could tell that the natural law and the undulations in that world were different than what he knew.

It was a brutal place that was diametrically opposed to his own world. It was as if in this other world, slaughter was the most powerful natural law.

“What is this place?!” he thought, gasping as his mind spun. Earlier, he had been certain that Yi Fazi’s origin was mysterious, but now that he could see this other world with his own eyes, he was absolutely certain that Yi Fazi… was most definitely not a being from the Nine Mountains and Seas.

Almost in the same moment that Meng Hao caught sight of that other world, information from Yi Fazi’s memories suddenly began to crash into Meng Hao’s mind. They exploded thunderously inside of him, threatening to turn what he knew of the world upside down.

“In ancient times, the Higher Realm had Immortals!

“Where there were Immortals, Paragons were born among them. Because of the position of that Realm, and because of its incredible power, it came to be known as… the Paragon Immortal Realm!

“The Paragon Immortal Realm, the first Realm in all the Heavens and the starry sky!

“Beneath it were 3,000 other Realms that relied on the Paragon Immortal Realm to survive. From generation to generation, they worshiped the Immortal World. Countless living beings practiced cultivation with the hopes of being able to fly up and enter the Immortal World.

“Everyone sought to reach Immortal Ascension!

“Spirits Realm, Star Realm, Waterwood Realm, Deva Realm, Spiritstar Realm, Torrentfall Realm…. 3,000 Realms, all of which bowed in worship to the Paragon Immortal Realm!

“Anyone who descended from the Paragon Immortal Realm to one of those other 3,000 Lower Realms would be like a god!

“Epochs came and went, and after an incalculable amount of time passed, catastrophe struck….

“Everything that happened during that catastrophe was recorded on a huge mural that had existed for eons in the Spiritstar Realm…. On that day, in one part of the starry sky nine suns appeared, which dragged an enormous, colorful statue to sweep across the skies. The statue depicted a man whose hair was eternally white! 1

“On that day, in another part of the starry sky, nine butterflies appeared, dragging an enormous coffin that crushed the void. That coffin was carved with the depictions of all living things!

“Both of those powers were strong enough to rival the Paragon Immortal Realm, and make all of the 3,000 Lower Realms tremble in fear.

“The catastrophe had just begun… a war began in which all of the 3,000 Lower Realms turned traitor. At the critical juncture, they rebelled against the countless epochs in which the Paragon Immortal Realm had weighed down on them. They joined with those other powerful forces to destroy the Paragon Immortal Realm!

“In that war… the Immortal World was shattered. Countless members of the Immortal bloodlines died, and numerous ancient Immortals perished. The powerful Luotian Dao Immortals perished, and the nine Emperors died. The only survivors were three great Paragons, who used some unknown magical technique to form nine mountains and nine seas that became the broken remnants of the Immortal World.

“By the time the war ended, more than ninety percent of the 3,000 Lower Realms were destroyed. In the end, only 33 Realms remained, which rose to prominence and glory, acting like 33 locks, sealing the Immortal World completely!

“Later, those 33 Realms took to killing Immortals for pleasure, as a hobby. People who killed Immortals and were baptized in their blood would become famous in all of the 33 Realms!”

Meng Hao trembled as all of the information poured into his mind. He didn’t realize it, but as this was happening, Yi Fazi gradually grew weaker and stopped struggling.

Fissures began to spread out over his head, and the flame of his life force was gradually being extinguished. His soul was beginning to collapse, and his life force was being exterminated.

Gradually, his body grew cold, and his eyes turned gray.

Cracking sounds could be heard as the information in Meng Hao’s mind turned into something like a windstorm. Unaware of what he was even doing, and unable to control his own power, he instantly crushed Yi Fazi’s head into bits.

When the head exploded, Yi Fazi’s body fell down into the void and gradually became a part of the Ruins of Immortality. Meng Hao lowered his hand and made a grasping motion, collecting a ring that had belonged to Yi Fazi.

In the moment that Yi Fazi died, the screaming Xuanwu turtle suddenly quieted down. Its body no longer trembled, and it once again sank down into the pond, unmoving.

The water in the celestial pond returned to normal. No ripples could be seen on its surface, which once again resembled a mirror.

The cultivators of the Ji Clan breathed sighs of relief. At the same time, Ji Tian’s voice echoed out into the minds of the Dao Realm experts in the Ruins of Immortality.

“Fellow Daoists. Ladies and gentlemen. Please be informed… the Outsiders have been hunted down and killed.”

The massive waves of shock that had filled the Ninth Mountain and Sea now faded away. The Dao Realm experts who were already in the Ruins of Immortality stopped in place. After looking around at the mysterious ruins around them, they turned and left.

Fang Shoudao hesitated for a moment, and then also chose to leave.

The Ruins of Immortality returned to normal. Everything quieted down. The eternally drifting corpses continued their neverending journeys.

Deep within the ruins, Meng Hao looked up, and his eyes were blank. Currently, all of the information he had gleaned from the Soulsearch swirled around inside his mind.

After a long moment, a complex expression appeared on his face. Although he didn't completely believe everything he had acquired from Yi Fazi's memories, based on what he already knew, as well as his powers of reasoning, he was eighty percent confident that most of it was real.

"So, is that really the history of the Nine Mountains and Seas?" he murmured.

"The Paragon Immortal Realm…. That explains some of the strange things I heard back on Planet South Heaven.

"Immortals…." His eyes began to shine with a bright light.

"The League of Demon Sealers must have something to do with the Nine Mountains and Seas," he muttered. "In fact, there is a high likelihood that they also have something to do with those three great Paragons!" With that, he lifted his head and looked up into the starry sky.

"33 Realms, standing guard outside…. Looking down upon the Nine Mountains and Seas….

"33 Realms, 33 Heavens…." As he followed this train of thought, he recalled something that he had heard from both the Sixth Generation Demon Sealer and the Eighth Generation Demon Sealer's jade slip….

"Mountain and Sea Tribulation….

"Each generation of the League of Demon Sealers must attempt to transcend the Mountain and Sea Tribulation. Clearly, that is the tribulation destined for each generation of the League of Demon Sealers. In other words… they want to fight their way through the 33 Realms, slaughter them to break through to freedom!” Meng Hao took a deep breath. His mind trembled for a long time before he finally calmed himself. He knew that despite knowing about this secret, with the low level of his cultivation base, it would be impossible for him to completely understand it, nor do anything about it.

“The Echelon….” he thought, eyes shining brightly. Finally, he looked around, picked a direction, and began to fly. He took all of his doubts and speculations and buried them deep inside. He knew that the most important thing right now was to leave the deadly and mysterious Ruins of Immortality. He needed to get to the Ninth Sea, and the Nine Seas God World.

“I need to go to the Nine Seas God World to collect the reward owed to me by the Three Great Daoist Societies. Then, in the Three Great Daoist Societies, I can grow stronger, step into the Ancient Realm… and then begin to search for my way into the Dao Realm!

“If every generation of the League of Demon Sealers has to face the Mountain and Sea Tribulation, then I need to continue to get more powerful. Eventually, the day will come… when I will make my own attempt to break through the veil that covers the Nine Mountains and Seas! I will make my own determination… of whether the information in Yi Fazi’s memories is true or false!” His eyes shone with the gleam of obsession, and his trembling heart gradually returned to normal.

He turned into a bright beam of light that sped through the Ruins of Immortality. As he traveled, he looked at the ruins and corpses floating about, and thought about the legends regarding the Ruins of Immortality. Supposedly… they were a piece of the Immortal World that broke off during that huge war.

He flew along silently, divine sense spread out in all directions. He carefully avoided any dangerous locations, and was frequently forced to stop in place while various dilapidated statues or other gigantic creatures passed by. At the same time, images from ancient times rose up in his mind, images similar to what he was currently seeing.

Time passed. Soon, half a month had gone by.

During that time, Meng Hao passed through the center of the Ruins of Immortality. At times, he flew along with explosive speed. Other times he slowed to a crawl. At one point, he turned his head to find that, not too far off in the distance, was an area that was completely black, filled with countless weeds. Many of them… were actually rare Immortal plants that were extinct in the outside world!

As soon as he saw that area, he felt like his scalp would explode.

“Well if it isn’t….” His eyes widened.

1. Regarding the man with white hair, I suggest you click the link to the following baidu image search, look at the search terms, and then check out the first few picture results…. I’m not saying that the person in those images is being referenced here, but it’s certainly something that would have crossed the minds of Er Gen fans. Alternative search with more art here.

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# Chapter 1027: Stirring Up a Sea of Insects!

It was a land covered with endless grasses that seemed very different from the first time Meng Hao had laid eyes on it. Most of the grasses here were violet; they rose up tall and swayed back and forth gently.

Rustling sounds floated across the land, but other than that, everything was silent.

Nestled amongst all the violet grass could be seen a variety of medicinal plants. There were Sun Blossoms, Immortality Illumination Vines, and other similar plants. There were even some types of plants rarer than those.

You could say that this place… was like an indescribably valuable medicinal plant garden.

However, Meng Hao would never be able to forget how, although this quiet and peaceful place might look like a treasure trove to any other cultivator, it was actually filled with countless terrifying black beetles!

The black earth… was actually black because it was covered by the beetles. That was not even to mention the fact that… the entire area actually rested on the back of a shockingly gigantic black beetle.

It wasn't just Meng Hao. Even someone in the Dao Realm would be so scared their scalp would tingle, and they would be forced to avoid the entire area.

Almost as soon as Meng Hao caught sight of the land of violet grass, the grass swayed so much that the ground was visible in some places, and it seemed to be writhing and undulating.

Meng Hao’s face flickered, and he instantly lifted his right hand and performed an incantation gesture. Numerous sealing marks appeared on him, stacking up one on top of another, forcing his cultivation base down at rapid speed.

Within a few breaths of time, a droning sound rose up from the land. Next, the ground itself looked as if a layer of it were peeling upward as innumerable vicious, black beetles flew up into the air.

As soon as they flew up, they transformed into something like a windstorm that swept screaming up into the air. Their target was none other than Meng Hao, hovering there in midair.

Apparently, there was something on him that aroused extreme aggressiveness on their part.

Meng Hao’s face fell. He had almost forgotten that these black beetles behaved in such a way. The higher the cultivation base, the more sensitive they were, and as of this moment, Meng Hao was vastly more powerful than he had been the first time he had come here. After considering it for a moment, Meng Hao decided that it was only natural for the black beetles to be able to sense him despite the fact that he wasn’t very close.

Having reached this point in his train of thought, Meng Hao immediately fell into retreat. At the same time, he continuously sealed and suppressed his cultivation base until its aura was similar to the Qi Condensation stage. However, even then, the black beetles didn’t stop. In fact, there were more and more, vast amounts that caused Meng Hao’s scalp to go numb, and his mind to spin.

“Could it be that they’re still holding a grudge?” Shocked, he quickly retreated, but they continued to chase after him, crimson eyes filled with hatred and madness.

“Something’s off!” he thought, heart pounding. Based on his previous experiences with them, he was sure that he was far enough away that they shouldn't be continuing to pursue him.

His face flickered as he watched the black beetles getting closer and closer. All of a sudden, he realized that virtually all of the black beetles' eyes were fixed, not on him, but rather… his bag of holding!!

Gaping in shock during this critical moment, he quickly sent his divine sense into his bag of holding. However, everything seemed normal. There was nothing different about it at all. In fact, the black beetle remaining from the group he had captured the first time he was here was covered in sealing marks, and had not awakened.

“Is it because of this thing?” He quickly pulled out the beetle and threw it toward the incoming army, but… they didn't stop charging toward him.

“Why exactly are they acting like this!?!?” His face fell, and he lifted his right hand, causing his cultivation base to surge. The power of Immortal meridians exploded out toward the black beetles as he directly fought back against them. Booms rang out, and numerous black beetles died. However, the vast majority were merely wounded by his divine abilities, not killed. In fact, it seemed to just make them angrier, causing them to attack him even more frantically. Furthermore, he saw that even more black beetles were flying up, beetles that were similar to the Immortal Realm and the Ancient Realm. His heart skipped a beat.

“No, there's definitely something in my bag of holding that's attracting them. But what?!?!” Without hesitation, he began to seal all of the objects in his bag of holding, preventing their auras from emanating out. At the same time, he fell backward in retreat. Eventually, he sealed a certain ring, and all of a sudden, the black beetles stopped in mid-flight. Then they flew around for a bit, as if they were searching for something. They looked very irascible.

When he saw this happening, Meng Hao broke into a cold sweat. Eventually, the black beetles flew back to their original position in the medicinal plant garden, where they landed, once again making the ground look as if it were black.

Meng Hao hovered in midair. Not even taking time to wipe the sweat from his brow, he stared at the ring in his bag of holding. That was the ring… he had recently acquired from Yi Fazi!

“Is it this thing? Or something inside of it?” Eyes flickering, he pulled the ring out. He had only given it a cursory examination when he had acquired it. It was actually a ring of holding, and required significantly powerful divine sense to open. Meng Hao was being extra careful due to the fact that he was in the Ruins of Immortality, and had planned to wait until after he had left before opening it up. Now, though, he decided that even if it took significant effort with divine sense, that it was definitely time to open it.

Most of the holding-type treasures that Meng Hao had seen were bags of holding. It was actually his first time seeing a ring exactly like this one. After a moment, he slipped the ring onto his finger and then sent his divine sense into it.

His divine sense sense instantly went as wild as horse with the reins loose as it was sucked into the ring. After only a moment of trying to open it, Meng Hao felt like he couldn’t take it any longer.

“Don’t tell me that because this ring is from another world where the natural laws and cultivation systems are different, I have to expend much more divine sense to open it!?” Frowning, he took out some medicinal pills, swallowed them, and then spent another hour working with the ring. Finally, after pouring vast amounts of divine sense into the ring, cracking sounds began to echo out in all directions.

Next, everything inside of the ring of holding became visible to Meng Hao. After only a brief look, his eyes began to shine brightly.

There were many things inside, and at first glance, Meng Hao had no way of knowing which one was causing the black beetles to act so aggressively. At first he thought it might be the medicinal pills inside the ring. Meng Hao saw many types of pills that Yi Fazi had consumed during their chase. One by one, he took the pills out and then looked over at the black beetles in the medicinal plant garden.

Although he didn’t know the names of any of the pills, based on his skill in the Dao of alchemy, it only took a whiff for him to understand them. The result was that he was more and more moved.

These medicinal pills were clearly concocted based using a completely different system of alchemy than that which existed in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, which led to quite a bit of thought on Meng Hao’s part. After a bit more searching through the ring of holding, he found an incense stick.

“An incense stick? Don’t tell me this is what I’m looking for?” The incense stick was surrounded by a five-colored glow, which Meng Hao couldn’t identify. However, when he pulled it out of the ring of holding, there was no reaction at all from the black beetles.

He frowned, and then sniffed the incense stick. He only took one whiff, but in that instant, his Immortal meridians surged as if they had been intensely stimulated. In the blink of an eye, all of the Immortal qi inside of him was sent spinning.

“What kind of incense is this!” he thought. “One whiff caused my cultivation base to erupt….” He scanned himself with divine sense, and could tell that in this very short period of time, his cultivation base… had progressed significantly.

His eyes shone brightly as he looked at the incense stick, which he now realized was a valuable treasure.

“Incense sticks are meant to be burned. I wonder what would happen if burned this one…?” His heart trembled, but now was not the time to perform such an experiment. He carefully put the incense stick back into the ring of holding, looking very satisfied.

“This incense stick is definitely extraordinary,” he murmured. “It must be a precious treasure useful for practicing cultivation.” Next, he looked back into the ring of holding at one of his favorite things in the world, which, in his opinion, were the least likely thing to attract the black beetles.

They were black stones, stones that contained natural law. They looked very much like Immortal jade, each piece emanating a mysterious glow, and an aura of life.

Obviously, this was a type of cultivation resource from Yi Fazi’s home world, something akin to Immortal jade or spirit stones.

Meng Hao had no way to assess their value, but this ring of holding was far, far larger than any of Meng Hao’s bags of holding, leaving plenty of room to collect the stones.

In fact, there were at least 1,000,000 of the black spirit-immortal stones.

Meng Hao took one out to look at it closely, and was even more assured that his previous speculations about them were correct.

However, in almost the same moment that he took out the black spirit-immortal stone, all of a sudden, the land in the medicinal plant garden seemed to explode. Droning sounds filled the air as countless black beetles, even more than before, flew into the air. They turned hungrily toward Meng Hao and then began to fly toward him at top speed.

Meng Hao was so frightened he started trembling. With a final glance at the black spirit-immortal stone, he unhesitatingly sealed it back in the ring of holding, and then retreated at top speed.

The black beetles continued to fly around the area for a few hours before slowly and reluctantly returning to their places in the medicinal plant garden.

“So, that’s what was causing it!!” Heart pounding with fear, he looked at the spirit-immortal stones in the ring of holding, and his eyes began to shine with a strange glow. Finally, he once again began to examine the ring of holding.

There were jade slips, one of which Meng Hao took out and examined, after which his eyes went wide.

“This is….” The jade slip was imprinted with information. In fact, after further examination, he found that all of them were similarly imprinted. Each one was some type of record, almost the type of receipt a mortal would get at a bank. Essentially… they were notes that allowed one to withdraw spirit-immortal stones at pre-specified locations.

Each one of the slips was worth 1,000,000 spirit-immortal stones, and there were fully a hundred or more inside the ring of holding. After getting a basic idea of how much the jade slips were worth, Meng Hao’s eyes went red. All of a sudden, he was extremely interested in the place that Yi Fazi came from.

At the moment, though, he was most interested in the medicinal plant garden.

Looking over at the medicinal plants, he couldn’t help with palpitate with the same eagerness he had the first time he came here.

“When opportunity knocks…!” he thought, rubbing the ring of holding. When he thought about the black stones, his eyes glowed with anticipation. This time, he was prepared to make a killing!

It wouldn’t be like the first time, where he only managed to grab a handful of medicinal plants. This time, he would make significant gains, both in terms of medicinal plants, and black beetles!

That was especially true considering that back in the clan on Planet East Victory, Pill Elder had given him the first volume of the Laws of the Dao of Insects. Having studied it a bit already, Meng Hao was confident that he could subjugate some of the black beetles.

“I’m going to subdue over a thousand of them….” he thought, licking his lips. Then he thought about what it would look like if he had a trump card of over a thousand black beetles, charging in attack, and he got even more excited.

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# Chapter 1028: Stealing My Business?!?!

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he slapped his bag of holding to produce the black feather, an item he could use to change his aura or appearance, and which he viewed as a crucial part of his inventory.

However, he was also aware that these black beetles had unique characteristics. The last time he was here, it was only by using the feather and working with the meat jelly that he was able to grab a handful of medicinal plants from the area.

Meng Hao knew that the aura-changing abilities of the feather would only work on the black beetles for a short period of time before becoming ineffective.

“Unless there’s some way to continuously distract them, then the effect of the feather can be maximized,” he thought, eyes glittering. He had long since noticed that the land mass which held the medicinal plant garden did not remain in a fixed location within the void. Rather, it floated around, almost as if it were not subject to natural law. In truth, there seemed to be some sort of pattern to its movement.

After a long moment of thought, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered and he flew into the air. After calculating the trajectory of the medicinal plant garden land mass, he flew out ahead of it. Whenever he came across a stretch of ruins floating within the void, he tossed out a sealed black spirit-immortal stone onto it.

“Based on the speed this medicinal plant garden land mass is moving,” he murmured, eyes shining brightly, “it should pass by these sets of ruins in the coming days.”

He continued on a bit further, planting about ten spirit-immortal stones in various locations. Then he quickly shot back in the direction of the medicinal plant garden land mass and hid near the location where he had planted the first spirit-immortal stone. There, he waited patiently.

Time passed. Soon, after enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, the medicinal plant garden land mass appeared, floating through the void toward the stretch of ruins Meng Hao was hiding in.

Meng Hao quickly reviewed his plan, then without any further hesitation, performed an incantation gesture with his right hand and pointed at the sealed spirit-immortal stone. The wave of a finger caused the seal on the spirit-immortal stone to be removed, revealing its aura.

In the moment the aura spread out, the medicinal plant garden land mass trembled, and countless black beetles flew up madly into the air. They transformed into a black windstorm of beetles, tens of thousands in number. Eventually, they took on the shape of a huge hand which shot toward Meng Hao.

Rumbling filled the air, along with hissing sounds as the black beetles closed in on Meng Hao. It was at that point that Meng Hao whipped out the feather and activated it.

Instantly, he changed his appearance to no longer look like a cultivator. Instead, he looked like a black beetle, with an aura very similar to theirs.

In that moment, the windstorm-like mass of tens of thousands of black beetles shot into the ruins he had been hiding in. Meng Hao quickly mixed in with the beetles, heart pounding, trying to look just as fierce and vicious as them. He even roared just like they did, trying to imitate them as closely as possible as they began to fight over the spirit-immortal stone.

Moments later, the entire stretch of ruins collapsed under the explosive power of the tens of thousands of black beetles, and was then voraciously consumed.

The cracking sounds that rang out as the beetles chomped up the chunks of stones caused Meng Hao’s heart to thump. From his perspective, not even Fatty’s teeth could measure up to their mandibles.

As for the spirit-immortal stone, one of the fastest black beetles managed to consume it, whereupon Meng Hao observed as it let out agonized shrieks. Black light rose up from it, circling around as… a vague Ghost Eye became visible.

The other black beetles around it looked over with cold insanity in their eyes, as if they wished to charge over, tear it to pieces, and eat it up. However, before they could even move, the black beetle with the Ghost Eye looked up and roared. The mere threat of the roar instantly caused the other black beetles to stand down.

Meng Hao looked on with surprise. Then, lost in thought, he went along with the army of black beetles as it flew around a few times and then headed back toward the medicinal plant garden land mass.

He remained cautious as he flew along with the beetles. He would occasionally click his mandibles, occasionally roar, all to make him appear to be exactly like the other black beetles. After returning to the medicinal plant garden land mass, he was careful not to attract the suspicion of any of the other black beetles.

When everything quieted down, he remained calmly on the ground, prone, eyes shifting about. Eventually, he slowly began to sidle his way over to an area behind where most of the black beetles were, where some a Sun Blossom was growing. A flash of light could be seen as the Sun Blossom suddenly vanished.

Meng Hao was nervous, but also excited. Afterward, he began to move carefully off in another direction. When he encountered other black beetle, he would click his mandibles and roar, as if reminding the other black beetle that he… was just like them.

Unfortunately, the sound of his roar did not resemble theirs very closely. However, he was an eager study, and constantly imitated them in an effort to sound exactly like they did..

Anyone who knew Meng Hao and could watch this scene play out would definitely be extremely shocked and feel it was unthinkable. However, Meng Hao was getting very excited.

“Rich!” he thought. “I’m gonna be rich!” He crawled along past one black beetle after another, first collecting some Immortality Illumination Vines, and then catching sight of a patch of Divine Spirit Grass. Eyes shining brightly, he crawled over.

It was in this manner that Meng Hao quickly harvested seven or eight different medicinal plants. The glow in his eyes grew brighter and brighter. At one point, he turned around and noticed a tiny violet tree a few dozen meters away.

“Violet Lightning Tree!” he thought, licking his mandibles. He had just begun to crawl over when, all of a sudden, one of the nearby black beetles looked up coldly at him, as if it were hesitating about something.

Meng Hao froze nervously. He knew that one cry from the black beetle could instantly incite all of the other surrounding black beetles into a frenzy.

In order to prevent them crying out an alarm in such a way, Meng Hao had been pretending to be even more fierce and savage than them. He had taken to roaring at them threateningly, as if he were on the verge of attacking them.

Currently the black beetle in front of him was shaking as if in rage, and its expression became extremely fierce as it looked at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao glared back, taking a few threatening steps forward and roaring.

A long moment later, the black beetle backed down, making room for Meng Hao to pass. Heart pounding, he slowly walked past the beetle, then hurried over to the tiny violet tree. A glow instantly surrounded the tree, and then it vanished.

The disappearance of the tree apparently tipped the scales in some way, so that the black beetles finally noticed that something was going on. The whole land mass trembled as one black beetle after another flew into the air. Looking very agitated, they circled at a low altitude, relentlessly scouring the area.

Meng Hao also flew up into the air, pretending that he was looking for something.

More and more beetles began to fly up into the air, causing Meng Hao’s scalp to grow numb. He knew that if the bugs continued to search, they would eventually find him. His heart began to pound when, all of a sudden, up ahead in the void, he caught sight of one of the locations where he had planted a spirit-immortal stone. Immediately, he unsealed the stone and its aura.

As soon as the aura spread out, rumbling filled the air. The black beetles surrounding Meng Hao went crazy. Eyes crimson, they turned to the world outside the land mass, and charged forward, Meng Hao in tow.

Once again, a set of ruins was destroyed and consumed. Another of the black beetles consumed the spirit-immortal stone, and a Ghost Eye appeared on its back. Then, all the beetles returned to the land mass. Meng Hao once again began to scurry about, collecting medicinal plants.

Any time the black beetles detected him, Meng Hao would unseal one of the spirit-immortal stones. It was in this manner that several days passed. Meng Hao had gotten quite familiar with the routine, and had already harvested more than seventy types of medicinal plants.

Also, after having practiced his roar on numerous occasions, it was now almost exactly the same as the black beetles’.

“I’ve struck the jackpot this time!” he thought excitedly as he crawled toward a Turtle Spirit Flower. Suddenly, all of the black beetles around him suddenly began to stir in agitation, and even roar. They also began to lift their heads and look off into the sky, their eyes cold.

Meng Hao stared in shock, and without even thinking about it, joined the beetles in their roaring. As soon as he saw what they were looking at, his eyes went wide with shock. Far off in the distance, the previously placid void was now disturbed by ripples.

The ripples spread out like waves on the surface of a pond, and in the middle of them all could be seen a figure, shooting effortlessly through the void, as if… merely walking!

It was a woman wearing a long, pink gown. Her features were beautiful, and although she didn’t appear to be very old, there was a slight ancient air to her. She held a lantern in her hand, which shed light all around her as she walked forward.

She seemed to be a very cautious sort, and as soon as she arrived she looked around to make sure nothing was too suspicious in the area before relaxing a bit.

Almost as soon as the woman appeared, the black beetles, along with Meng Hao, roared and flew toward her aggressively.

However, as soon as the black beetles got close, she lifted her lantern high above her head and then opened its side to reveal the candle holder within. Resting on top of the candle holder was a tiny white branch, currently burning and letting off flickering firelight. The woman didn’t pause for a moment; she quickly sliced open the tip of her finger and splashed a drop of blood onto the flame.

When the blood hit the flame, it turned into a cloud of smoke which spread out toward the incoming black beetles. In the blink of an eye, the smoke had surrounded all of them, including Meng Hao.

Instantly, the beetles around Meng Hao stopped in place, seemingly in a stupor. Meng Hao gaped in shock until he realized that the smoke apparently had no affect on him whatsoever.

Although it had spread out very quickly, the light quickly began to die down. After a moment of calculation, Meng Hao was sure that it would only last for the time it takes an incense stick to burn.

The next thing he saw was the pink-robed young woman looking very pleased with herself as she sped down toward the land mass below. She landed on the ground, sending smoke billowing out wherever she went and causing the beetles that flew up to fall into a coma. She proceeded along carefully and began to harvest medicinal plants.

“Stealing my business?” thought Meng Hao and was instantly enraged. One of the things he hated most in life was when people stole business from him. Earlier, he had been scared out of his mind to harvest medicinal plants in this area. He had used more than ten spirit-immortal stones, and even spent several days pretending to be a bug, and in the end his effort had allowed him to pick about seventy medicinal plants. However, this young woman only used a lantern and was able to harvest ten plants in one shot! That was something Meng Hao just couldn’t accept.

“I hate cheaters! This wench is a cheater!” Enraged, Meng Hao gritted his teeth as he watched the young woman quickly harvest medicinal plants. Finally, he shot forward; the smoke that had been used to put the black beetles into a trance had absolutely no effect on him.

The instant he flew into motion, the young woman turned toward him and gaped in shock.

As she looked over, Meng Hao performed the best possible black beetle roar that he could imitate, a roar that was… remarkably true to life.

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# Chapter 1029: You’re the Insect Demon!

Almost in the same instant that Meng Hao’s roar echoed out… because of its incredible similarity to the actual call of the black beetles, the dazed black beetles in the smoke suddenly awakened and began to join him in roaring.

“Curses!” thought the young woman, her facial expression flickering. “How come one of them wasn’t affected!?!?” Glaring at Meng Hao, she backed up, then performed an incantation gesture with her right hand. Not only did she crush the tiny white tree in the lantern, she also bit her tongue and spit out a mouthful of blood.

At the same time, Meng Hao’s roar was causing more and more of the black beetles to awaken. They began to fly out of the smoke, radiating savagery and murderous auras as they charged toward the young woman.

Even Meng Hao had never imagined that he would be able to awaken the black beetles in this way. There were even some of them who appeared to approve of him, and began to fly in circles around him, as if indicating that they wished to follow his lead.

Because of this, Meng Hao now stood out quite a bit among the sea of insects. In fact, he almost looked like… one of their bosses.

Meng Hao’s heart was thumping, but he felt quite pleased with himself. As for the young woman, he wasn’t worried that she would be in any danger. After all, this was the Ruins of Immortality. The way that she had stepped out from the ripples the way she did left Meng Hao with the impression that she was in the early Ancient Realm. Presumably, she would have her own methods of getting away if necessary.

He had no plans to kill her; his only goal had been to scare her, and prevent her from stealing away his business.

At the moment, it seemed that his plan had succeeded. The black beetles were swarming toward the young woman from all directions. However, it was then that the white branch the young woman had crushed transformed into white smoke. After absorbing the young woman’s blood, it spread out around her like a shield.

Even as the black beetles closed in on her, the white smoke spread out, and the woman vanished. However… as the smoke dissipated, something else became visible… a black beetle!!

Much attention to detail had been paid in the materialization of this black beetle. In terms of both physical appearance and aura, it looked exactly like the real black beetles!

In fact, it was hard to tell whether or not it was a materialization, or real!

Meng Hao stared in shock.

The incoming army of beetles also gaped in astonishment. However, considering that they weren’t very intelligent, they had no way to understand what had happened. Meng Hao watched, furious, as the young woman in black beetle-form quickly became part of the army of insects.

Soon, everything calmed down, and Meng Hao continued to glare over at the young woman as she carefully crawled around on the ground looking for medicinal plants.

“What a disgrace!” he fumed inwardly. “She’s obviously a cultivator! And yet she abandons all dignity to turn into a bug and look for some worthless medicinal plants! Is that the kind of thing a cultivator does!?!?” He truly felt that this young woman was completely shameless.

Despite what he was thinking, Meng Hao continued to do exactly what he had done before, crawling among the sea of insects to the nearest medicinal plant and quickly harvesting it.

However, as he crawled along, he suddenly realized that he was being followed. Behind him were a few of the beetles who had started following him after he had woken them up.

That made Meng Hao stick out even more than before. Now he had a small entourage of beetles that looked almost like Imperial guards. Actually, they made it much easier to harvest medicinal plants.

At this point, there was quite a bit of distance between Meng Hao and the young woman. Not only were they not interfering with each other’s efforts, but the young woman actually had no way of knowing that she had a competitor among the sea of insects.

Meng Hao, though, was as angry as before, and furiously harvested the medicinal plants with increasing speed. If things had continued in this way for long enough, with neither of them interfering with the other, then considering the vast amount of medicinal plants in the area, Meng Hao might not have considered it stealing his business, and could potentially have accepted the situation.

However, the young woman’s methods were somewhat heavy-handed, leading to several occasions in which the black beetles were stirred up. That, of course, affected Meng Hao.

As more time passed, the black beetles were aroused more and more often. There were even some situations in which Meng Hao almost found himself in danger. In fact, with every outburst among the black beetles, some of the beetles would then start to patrol the area, forcing Meng Hao to stop his work.

The increasing severity of these interruptions didn’t seem to bother the young woman at all.

However, Meng Hao was getting to the point where he couldn’t take it any more. He waited until the black beetles calmed down, then turned and sped toward the area where the young woman was working.

Gradually the two of them neared each other, and eventually, both of their eyes came to fall on the same patch of Divine Spirit Grass.

Finally, the young woman sensed that something strange was going on. She looked at Meng Hao, and instantly recognized him as the black beetle that had discovered her presence earlier.

The moment she laid eyes on him, she clenched her teeth, then let out a threatening roar. Meng Hao’s black beetle followers immediately roared back and looked fiercely at the young woman.

Feeling he had no other choice, Meng Hao got a bit closer, and then transmitted: “Is there any way you could possibly be a BIT more careful when harvesting the medicinal plants? Maybe NOT cause such a reaction from the beetles!?”

As soon as she heard his words, the young woman in beetle-form looked over at him in shock and disbelief.

“Y-y-you’re… you’re an Insect Demon!” she said hoarsely, looking aghast. “An actual Insect Demon!!” Her initial reaction was not to assume that Meng Hao was a cultivator like herself, but rather, that he was an insect that had transformed into a Demon.

Of course, it wouldn’t be proper to blame her for having this reaction. In truth, Meng Hao’s disguise was simply too effective. From her perspective, he really was one of the black beetles. Her own ability to transform into a black beetle came from a naturally developed power of her own. It was something that, in all of the Nine Mountains and Seas, only bloodline members of her clan could do.

Other divine abilities of transformation could not possibly deceive the black beetles. She had never seen anyone do anything like what Meng Hao was doing, remaining undercover within the sea of insects. Furthermore, based on his appearance, and the fact that he had an entourage of guards, it made it so that there was no way she would ever think that he was a cultivator.

In her opinion, any cultivator who could possibly entrench himself among the black beetles, and even achieve a position as a boss, well that type of cultivator… would be simply too Heaven-defying.

“YOU’RE the Insect Demon!” retorted Meng Hao angrily, glaring at the young woman. “Everyone in your whole family is an Insect Demon!!

“Listen, I got here first, so if you want to harvest medicinal plants, fine, but at least do it a bit more carefully! Stop stirring up all the bugs! Doing that isn’t helpful for either of us!” Meng Hao clenched his jaw in helplessness. The young woman was capable of harvesting the plants, and obviously wasn’t going to leave. Plus, if they started fighting, then it would be impossible for him to continue to do his own harvesting.

The young woman stared back at him in shock. After looking closely at Meng Hao for a moment, she finally was starting to be convinced that this black beetle boss was actually a cultivator like herself.

To her, it was almost impossible to believe.

“You’re really a cultivator?” she asked. Inwardly, she breathed a sigh of relief. Actually, meeting a cultivator here was a lot better than meeting an insect who had transformed into a Demon. At this point, her eyes began to glow with coldness.

“Well, it doesn’t matter if you’re an Insect Demon or a cultivator, or whether you got here first or not,” she said coldly. “All of these medicinal plants belong to me. Leave immediately! If you dare to fight with me over them, then even if you are an Insect Demon, I’ll turn you into a squashed insect! And if you’re actually a cultivator, then I’ll turn you into a corpse!

“And as for me stirring up the insects, well that’s my business! It has nothing to do with you. Now, get the hell out of this place!” Killing intent flickered in the young woman’s eyes as she promptly ignored Meng Hao and then closed in on the same medicinal plant that they had both been heading for to begin with.

“What a blockhead!” thought Meng Hao, his eyes shining with a cold light as he too sped toward the same medicinal plant. In the blink of an eye, the two of them reached the plant. It was at this point that the young woman suddenly flashed, transforming into three separate beetles!

She rushed forward at top speed to snatch the medicinal plant. However, Meng Hao was very familiar with how to harvest medicinal plants, and despite the fact that there were three of her, she was simply too slow. In a flash of light, he quickly harvested the plant.

“Are you looking to die!?” she cursed, her eyes glittering with killing intent. She suddenly spit out a blob of smoke which rapidly spread out to cover the area around them, including Meng Hao.

At the same time, the aura-changing transformation of the black feather was sent into chaos because of the smoke.

As soon as the aura was disrupted, the surrounding black beetles buzzed into action. Even the few that had been following Meng Hao before suddenly turned ferocious, and flew straight toward him.

Meng Hao’s face fell. He had never imagined that the young woman would use tactics like this. Now that he clearly had the aura of a cultivator, and could no longer conceal himself, Meng Hao had no choice but to fly away.

As he did, the ground began to quake as tens of thousands of black beetles flew up, stared dead at him, and then charged toward him, causing a droning sound to fill the air.

The young woman in beetle-form backed up quickly, her eyes gleaming with a pleased look. Inwardly, she was laughing coldly.

Meng Hao eyed the young woman coldly. The properties of the smoke just now had left him shocked; it clearly had the ability to dissolve the effects of his transformation.

“So,” he thought, “it was because you already had a magical technique that could interfere with my transformation that you attacked so decisively. You really want to kick me out of this place, huh…?

“Well, then. Let’s just see who can kick the other person out first!” Laughing coldly as the black beetles closed in on him, Meng Hao made a grasping motion. Instantly, a spirit-immortal stone flew out of his ring of holding, which he then tossed in the young woman’s direction.

As the black stone whistled through the air toward her, the young woman stared in shock. A moment later, it landed right in front of her.

At the same time that the spirit-immortal stone appeared, its aura surged out, sending the black beetles into a mad frenzy. Rumbling filled the air as the beetles that had been chasing Meng Hao roared viciously, then changed directions. There were also many other black beetles from other locations on the land mass that began to charge toward the spirit-immortal stone, eyes bright red.

The young woman’s face fell. She could never have predicted that Meng Hao would use a tactic like this to turn the tables on her. Although her aura was not something that would stir up the beetles, because of the black stone in front of her, she was now the center of a huge maelstrom.

“What kind of stone is that!?” she thought. “It’s driving the Ghost Eye Beetles crazy! Well, it must be some kind of treasure, which means he can’t have very many of them. At the most, he might have a handful. All I have to do is evade these crazy beetles for a bit, and wait until he goes broke!” The young woman clenched her teeth, backed up, and spit out another glob of smoke, which then surrounded her.

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# Chapter 1030: Su Yan!

It was true that the spirit-immortal stones were treasures, and that he didn’t have an endless supply. He only had… about a million of them.

As soon as the beetle-form young woman spit out the mist and backed up to avoid the incoming beetles, Meng Hao laughed coldly. As he hovered in midair, he waved his right hand, sending two more spirit-immortal stones flying out in the young woman’s direction, cutting off her path of escape. As soon as the spirit-immortal stones appeared, the black beetles went crazy.

Massive amounts of beetles flew up into the air, at least 40-50,000 of them. They filled the sky and covered the land as they shot toward the young woman.

Her eyes went wide as she saw the mass of frenzied insects. By now, she was thoroughly convinced that these treasures had to be extremely rare, so, gritting her teeth, she once again fell into retreat. In her attempts to evade the black beetles, she was even forced to use greater teleportation.

“I just can’t believe that he has many more of those things!” she thought to herself, taking a deep breath. Although she began to laugh coldly, she was actually quite shocked by the black stones.

Next, Meng Hao began to throw out more spirit-immortal stones. This time, he threw out five. As they fell, the young woman’s body flickered with light as she just barely managed to escape.

The land shook as vast amounts of black beetles flew up in all directions and then charged in the young woman’s direction.

Although her heart was pounding, the young woman looked over at Meng Hao, a cold smile twisting her lips.

“How many more could you possibly have?!”

Meng Hao answered by tossing out ten more spirit-immortal stones, instantly putting the young woman in a very bad position. However, she maintained convinced that Meng Hao couldn’t possibly have many of the stones left.

“Just wait until you run out of those things. With all these bugs around, you’ll be the one to meet a dismal fate!” Gritting her teeth, the young woman continued to tell herself that all she had to do was hold on a bit longer, and then she would win. After all, she could easily conceal her aura from the beetles, whereas Meng Hao would be incapable of doing so.

Because of that, she was certain that all she had to do was endure the commotion caused by the spirit-immortal stones, and she could secure victory.

“He’s going to run out soon! He definitely doesn’t have more than a few dozen left!” She clenched her jaw as she constantly was forced to evade the crazed beetles. However, because of the sheer number of bugs in the area, she was soon completely bedraggled.

Meng Hao hovered in midair, the area around him completely devoid of black beetles. He looked down at the shocking amount of bugs down below, and the teleporting young woman, and then waved his hand, causing five more stones to fly out. Then five more. And another five….

Over the space of only a few breaths of time, Meng Hao threw out more than 40 spirit-immortal stones. Each one incited a virtual riot among the black beetles, and caused the young woman’s face to fall even more.

“Impossible! How could he still have more!?” The young woman anxiously evaded the bugs; to her, the spirit-immortal stones were exactly like weapons, shooting toward her across the lands. She had actually considered trying to grab them and put them in her bag of holding, but the crazed looks of the black beetles caused her to hesitate. She was worried that if she grabbed one, the beetles might very well rip her to shreds.

All she could do was evade. As for Meng Hao, though, as he continued to throw out the spirit-immortal stones, he was essentially controlling the black beetles, forcing them to chase down the young woman with deadly intent.

“Dammit! Dammit!!” she thought, terrified and beginning to feel regret that she had so rashly tried to drive Meng Hao away. If they had cooperated, then she wouldn’t be in any danger whatsoever.

Time passed…. 10 more stones. 20. 30. 40…. Blood oozed out of the young woman’s mouth as she continuously evaded the black beetles. By now, she was glaring up angrily at Meng Hao as he continued to chuck spirit-immortal stones at her. His supply seemed endless, to the point where her confidence was beginning to waver.

“Just how many of those stones does he have!?!?” As she watched the seemingly endless amount of spirit-immortal stones being thrown at her, her scalp gradually began to grow numb. That was especially true when the available places to teleport to in escape grew fewer and fewer. Soon, her eyes began to widen with disbelief and astonishment.

“Impossible!!!” she cried hoarsely. She almost didn’t dare to believe what she was seeing, which was 300 spirit-immortal stones flying through the air toward her like arrows.

“I’ve got plenty of these spirit stones!” Meng Hao cried out, sounding very overbearing. Inwardly, he was quite proud that he was so rich as to be able to use spirit-immortal stones to smash his opponent. It was a very domineering feeling.

Although it had been a bit impulsive to throw out more than 300 of the stones, the current volley filled the sky as they shot toward the young woman. As a result, the ground shook, and innumerable black beetles flew out. There were some who were similar to the Immortal Realm or the

Ancient Realm. Terrifying ripples spread out in all directions as more than 100,000 beetles filled the sky!!

The young woman was terrified and shocked. Never in her wildest imaginings could she have envisioned an object which would provoke this kind of reaction from the Ghost Eye Beetles, nor a situation in which Meng Hao… would have so many of them!!

Hundreds of spirit-immortal stones spun through the air. 100,000 black beetles were in a complete frenzy, roaring, their eyes bright red. They even fought amongst themselves as they charged toward the young woman, who was now certain that she was about to be ripped to pieces by the shocking onslaught.

But then she clenched her jaw tight, and her eyes shone with determination. As the black beetles bore down on her, she was suddenly surrounded by mist. In the blink of an eye, she transformed from being a black beetle into a cultivator. Then, she waved her hand toward the lands beneath her, launching a violent attack.

It was hard to say what divine ability she used to attack, but it caused an enormous tree to materialize beneath her.

It was fully 3,000 meters tall and conical, with the tip being located at the very bottom. As she waved her palm down, the tree began to descend. In the blink of an eye, it slammed into the land below like a gigantic nail, piercing down into the ground.

Massive rumbling could be heard as the gigantic nail-like tree sank down into the ground.

Next, a piercing howl could be heard coming from down below, as everything seemed to collapse. Countless medicinal plants were destroyed as the roar echoed out, shaking everything in the vicinity within the Ruins of Immortality.

Meng Hao’s scalp went numb as he saw the lands below transform into a gargantuan black beetle. Apparently, the nail-like tree had stabbed directly into its body, causing to to emit an ear-piercing howl.

Without the slightest hesitation, Meng Hao flew high up into the starry sky. As for the 100,000 black beetles, the howl seemed to drive them to their senses. They all turned, ignoring the young woman and flying directly toward the huge nail-like tree.

The pink-robed young woman’s face was ashen, and she was gasping for breath as she chose to do just what Meng Hao had done: fly away.

Two beams of light shot away off into the distance as the enraged howl echoed out. The intensity of the roar as it pierced into Meng Hao’s ears actually injured him. Blood sprayed from his mouth, and his cultivation base was began to tremble wildly, forcing him to stabilize it.

The young woman staggered a bit, blood spraying from her mouth. Her eyes were filled with terror as she looked back at the medicinal plant garden land mass and muttered something.

As for what exactly she had muttered, Meng Hao couldn’t hear.

His heart was pounding as he sped along. The young woman, aware that she had provoked a disaster, also sped along, face pale.

The sound of the howl echoed about, causing innumerable ripples to spread out. The land shook, and cracking sounds could be heard. Huge fissures spread out in all directions, each one of them hundreds of meters wide, filled with mysterious, glowing light.

There were also wisps of mist that rose up from the fissures, as well as frost that spread out across the ground.

At the same time, a droning sound could be heard, which grew stronger and more intense by the moment. Within a few breaths of time, innumerable black beetles flew up out of the fissures, turning the army of 100,000 beetles into an army of hundreds of thousands.

They seemed to blot out the sky above. They flew out, roaring, transforming into a sea of insects that resembled a gigantic, pitch-black hand that shot toward Meng Hao and the young woman.

From the look of things… the beetles wouldn’t stop until the two of them were dead.

When Meng Hao saw the vast amounts of black beetles flying out of the fissures, his scalp went numb.

“This is all your fault!” he yelled angrily. “I was just harvesting some plants! Why’d you have to try to hog everything! If you hadn’t, they wouldn’t be chasing us right now!”

“This is just what I wanted!” she replied, sounding a bit sarcastic. “What are you gonna do about it? I want the Ghost Eye Beetles to chase me, if you’ve got a problem with that, then go tell them about it!”

Meng Hao was extremely angry. As far as he was concerned, this young woman was being completely unreasonable. He snorted coldly as golden light flickered around him. His Immortal meridians exploded with power, 123 of them, emanating one hundred percent of their possible Immortal power as he transformed into a golden roc. Flapping his wings, he picked up speed, shooting off into the distance.

The young woman also used some unknown technique that caused her to blur as she increased her speed.

The two of them whistled through the air. Although they were no longer on the medicinal plant garden land mass, the black beetles were still chasing them madly. Not only were the beetles not slowing down, more and more joined their numbers.

A sea of insects like this, a tide of beasts, was something that would cause any cultivator who saw it to be shocked to the extreme.

Rumbling filled the air as Meng Hao and the young woman sped onward. The black beetles seemed to have no plans to let them go, and continued to give chase, their roars echoing out in all directions.

Meng Hao gritted his teeth and changed directions. When that happened, the sea of insects split, with one group following him and the other following the pink-garbed young woman.

However, as soon as Meng Hao changed directions, the young woman’s eyes flickered. Her body blurred even more, becoming nearly transparent. Suddenly, the beetles behind her seemed to lose track of her aura, then changed directions and buzzed through the air toward Meng Hao.

“You wanna fight with me? You’re too inexperienced! From the moment I, Su Yan, awoke on the Eighth Mountain, no one’s ever gotten the better of me! Now that I’m passing through the Ninth Mountain, there’s no way I’ll break my record!” She looked extremely pleased with herself as the hundreds of thousands of black beetles chased Meng Hao. Eyes flickering, she chose not to depart, but to follow along. [1]

“Once he’s on the verge of defeat, if I threaten him a bit more, he’ll definitely hand over the medicinal plants he harvested earlier, to save his life. Plus those black stones. I can definitely extort those out of him!” Su Yan smiled resplendently. She was actually very beautiful, which was accentuated when she smiled. However, there was also a bit of crafty intelligence to her.

That was especially the case because of the beauty mark next to her mouth, which made her even more entrancing.

[1] Su Yan’s name in Chinese is sū yān. Su is a surname which means “awaken” or “revive.” Yan means “beautiful” or “capativating.” Interestingly, the character “su” is also used when she says the word “awoke,” making for an interesting character contrast/combination in that passage

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# Chapter 1031: Trying to Control the Black Beetles

It was as Meng Hao sped away in flight that he saw Su Yan become transparent; the black beetles ignored her and began to turn their attention to him.

Su Yan wasn't completely invisible; her outline was still vaguely apparent. However, she didn't use this opportunity to flee. Instead, she followed the sea of insects, smiling. The expression on her face was something very familiar to Meng Hao.

"Profiting from my misfortune!" Meng Hao's heart went black with hatred. That was one of HIS favorite things to do, but now, the roles were reversed. He was now the subject of the machinations of others, which was something he simply couldn't accept.

"This wench is just waiting until I get tired from being chased. Then she'll try to extort things from me! She must have her eyes on my spirit-immortal stones!" When he realized this, he snorted coldly.

"Spirit-immortal stones are essentially the same as spirit stones!" he thought, grinding his teeth. For someone to try to rob his money was equivalent to targeting his life, and Meng Hao's eyes were instantly shot with blood.

As he fled, a sea of hundreds of thousands of insects whistled through the air behind him. From the look of it, they would die before giving up, and if he slowed down even the least bit, they would rip him to shreds and devour him.

That was especially true of the black beetles who were similar to the Immortal Realm or higher. They were incredibly fast and powerful, and were causing Meng Hao's head to ache. Even more nerve-wracking were the Ancient Realm black beetles.

"So, you want to profit from my misfortune huh…? Well, we'll just have to wait and see who wins in the end!" Eyes flickering coldly, he lifted his right hand, within which appeared a spirit-immortal stone.

As soon as the stone appeared, the black beetles behind him surged forward, roaring, their speed increasing slightly.

A strange light began to shine in Meng Hao's eyes as he lifted his left hand and performed an incantation gesture. Gradually, magical symbols began to appear, which began to cluster around his left hand. In the end, they completely sealed the spirit-immortal stone.

When that happened, the spirit-immortal stone flickered in an odd way.

Su Yan was still trailing behind the sea of insects, and when she saw this happening she gaped in shock. Inwardly, she began to grow wary, and slowed down a bit in her flight.

She had long since come to view the spirit-immortal stones as something very strange, and considering that she didn't know what Meng Hao was doing, it immediately put her on guard.

During the space of a few breaths of time, mysterious light began to shine up from Meng Hao's left hand. At the same time, the spirit-immortal stone began to vibrate, and the magical symbols on its surface flickered with light.

"Demon Sealing, Sixth Hex!" Meng Hao's eyes glittered with bright light. Then, he squeezed his hand down hard onto the spirit-immortal stone, causing brilliant beams of light to shoot out.

Shockingly, he had imbued the spirit-immortal stone with the Sixth Demon Sealing Hex, Life Death Hexing.

His expression that of determination, he flung the spirit-immortal stone out, causing it to transform into a beam of light that shot into the sea of insects.

It was just as if he were fishing. Fishing for black beetles!

Whichever black beetle got the spirit-immortal stone would be consuming Meng Hao’s Life Death Hex. Although the likelihood of success was not large, if he kept trying for long enough, he would surely succeed eventually.

Light flashed as the spirit-immortal stone appeared in the middle of the sea of insects. In virtually the blink of an eye, countless black beetles pounced on it, going wild in their struggles to acquire it. Soon, a rather large beetle managed to swallow it down, right in front of its countless compatriots, who glared at it covetously.

It didn’t take very long for the black beetle who had swallowed the spirit-immortal stone to begin to tremble. After a breath of time passed, a boom could be heard as it exploded into pieces.

The sight of it caused the Su Yan’s face to flicker.

Meng Hao frowned. However, he knew that the Life Death Hex’s success rate was low, and would probably be even lower since he was using it with spirit-immortal stones as bait. However, he wasn’t discouraged, and continued to make further attempts. As he fled, he threw out more and more spirit-immortal stones. Every time, a black beetle would consume it, then explode.

However, the black beetles were as crazy as ever. Despite the possibility of dying, they still wanted to eat the spirit-immortal stones.

The pink-robed Su Yan continued to follow, watching with wide eyes and gaping mouth as Meng Hao used the bizarre, wondrous black stones.

About two hours passed. Then, one particular beetle chomped up one of the spirit-immortal stones that Meng Hao tossed out, and instead of exploding, its body began to shine with brilliant light and magical symbols. Finally, one particular magical symbol appeared which shot out toward Meng Hao, then merged into him, causing his face to light up with joy.

In that instant, a tiny, illusory black beetle appeared in his mind. He knew that with a single thought, he could cause that black beetle to die.

“It worked!” he thought, licking his lips. He only had the first volume of the Laws of the Dao of Insects, which was basically an introduction on how to raise Spirit Insects. Meng Hao was already confident in the use of those methods. However, although he had looked into how to control the insects, when it came to a comprehensive understanding of the Dao of Insects, he was quite lacking.

In the end, though, that didn’t really matter; he didn’t need to study the control techniques. Since he had the Life Death Hex, he could essentially control them perfectly.

Now that he had succeeded, he was much more confident. He was no longer anxious to flee, but instead allowed the sea of insects to get close to him, and continuously threw out spirit-immortal stones.

When Su Yan saw this, her heart filled with amazement. Although she couldn’t see any signs which would lead her to the conclusion that Meng Hao could control the black beetles, she was still getting a very bad premonition. She was even starting to feel that if she didn’t take the chance to flee right now, she might find herself in serious danger.

“Just what kind of stones are those? They’re so bizarre!!” She almost convinced herself to flee, but couldn’t quite make herself do it. Gritting her teeth, she continued to follow, making sure she was fully on guard, even more so than before.

Time passed. Several days later, Meng Hao had already tossed out more than 30,000 spirit-immortal stones. By this point, he now had control of about 300 black beetles. He didn’t summon them to his side, but allowed them to remain among the sea of insects.

However, the rest of the 30,000 insects that consumed his spirit-immortal stones all died, without a single exception.

Gradually, the number of black beetles he controlled increased from 300 to 400. And then to 500….

Of course, the number of black beetles that died also increased, to a total of more than 50,000. Finally, a rumbling cry rang out from the direction of the medicinal plant garden land mass, something that sounded almost like a summons.

Moments before….

Having seen everything that she had over the past few days, Su Yan was completely shaken. She was even wondering whether or not Meng Hao might actually kill all of the black beetles.

“What kind of inhuman creature is he!?” she thought, heart pounding. She was really starting to worry that if she kept up the chase, something bad might happen to her in the end.

From the moment she had awoken until now, she had never met a cultivator like Meng Hao, someone who seemed so mysterious and unfathomable that it filled her with dread.

Just in the moment when she finally decided to leave, a roar suddenly arose from all of the black beetles, and they stopped in place.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. Based on his connection with the 500 black beetles he had control of, he could feel that they were being summoned back by the gargantuan king of black beetles that existed beneath the medicinal plant garden land mass.

It took only a moment for the insects to stop pursuing Meng Hao and retreat back to where they came from. Apparently, the death of the 50,000 black beetles caused their king to give up on the idea of killing Meng Hao.

Almost in the same moment that the sea of insects stopped pursuing Meng Hao, Meng Hao's eyes flickered coldly. He suddenly extended his right hand and began tossing out one spirit-immortal stone after another.

The black beetles were now hesitating. On the one hand, they had the enticement of the spirit-immortal stones. On the other hand, they had the call of the beetle king. A buzzing sound filled the air as the sea of insects ripped into two parts, one of which followed the summons, the other of which, composed of tens of thousands of black beetles, charged madly after the spirit-immortal stones.

Su Yan's face flickered. She had never imagined that Meng Hao would intentionally provoke the sea of insects.

However, after a relatively short period of time, the black beetles simply couldn't resist the repeated calls of the beetle king. Meng Hao was only able to get control of a few dozen more beetles before they turned and headed back to the land mass.

When that happened, Su Yan hesitated for a moment, then gritted her teeth and turned to leave. She got a very strange feeling after having seen everything that Meng Hao had done. In addition, she had an even more intense premonition that something bad was about to happen.

At the same time that the black beetles turned to leave, Meng Hao suddenly called out: "Come!"

More than 500 black beetles stopped in place, then returned to fly around Meng Hao. All of the beetles had Ghost Eyes on their backs, making them look especially vicious.

Su Yan, who was already some distance away, looked on with shock, and her mind spun. Earlier, she had felt as if something strange were going on, but she had never thought that Meng Hao would actually be able to control the black beetles. Heart pounding, she quickly did her best to escape unnoticed.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered coldly. He had endured deadly pursuit for days, all the while being followed by the pink-robed young woman, who he knew was just waiting to take advantage of him. How could he possibly let her get away so easily now?

“My turn to the be the bandit!” He waved his right hand, using the Life Death Hex to cause more than 500 vicious beetles to suddenly fly directly toward Su Yan.

Meng Hao himself descended to sit cross-legged on the back of one of the black beetles, from which position he stared coldly at the fleeing Su Yan. She was moving quickly, but the black beetles were by no means slow. 500 of them shot through the void, and from a distance, it almost looked like 500 Ghost Eyes, radiating mysterious light and sinister auras.

“How could this be happening!?” thought Su Yan, her mind reeling. “He… he can actually control the Ghost Eye Beetles!!

“According to the legends, these beetles are very difficult to bond. The only way to do so is to personally raise them from larvae, and even then, you have to utilize special methods to have the slightest chance at success!

“In this age, though, the methods for raising them have long since been lost! And yet… he’s actually controlling them!! Most important of all, what he’s controlling are not larvae, but full-grown insects!” Su Yan almost couldn’t think straight, and her face flickered with intense fear of Meng Hao.

What she feared was not his cultivation base; she could tell that he was merely in the Immortal Realm. What she feared were his 500 black beetles!

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# Chapter 1032: Chasing Down Su Yan!

Now the tables were completely turned. Su Yan fled, and Meng Hao chased her. 500 black beetles soared through the Ruins of Immortality like a black windstorm. All of them were at least a half a meter long or so, and a few of the largest were more than three meters long.

500 black beetles made a small-scale sea of insects. Although you couldn’t say that they blotted out the sky, they did cause everything to shake, and sent endless ripples out as they chased after Su Yan.

If it were just a matter of black beetles, Su Yan would have numerous ways of dealing with them and escaping. However… she wasn’t just being chased by black beetles; she was being chased by Meng Hao.

Meng Hao sat cross-legged on one of the larger beetles, eyes flickering coldly. His gaze only continued to get colder as he looked at Su Yan. After all, she was the one who had ruined his plan to harvest medicinal plants.

Not only did she attempt to steal his business, but she ended up making it impossible for him to even harvest the medicinal plants at all. Then she used the pursuit of the black beetles as a tool to try to kill him. Most unforgivable was that she had planned to take advantage of his misfortune to extort his wealth.

It had been a long time since Meng Hao had been victim of such plotting. Not even that old fox Fang Shoudao aggravated him as much as this. Some people might prefer to treat women with extra tenderness, but Meng Hao completely ignored that. With a cold harrumph, he extended his right hand and waved his finger toward Su Yan.

It was none other than the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex!

Even as Su Yan shot forward anxiously, she suddenly trembled. Her cultivation base completely stopped moving, and she screeched to a halt in midair.

Next, Meng Hao's Immortal meridians exploded with power, and his cultivation base surged. 123 Blood Demon heads appeared, roaring as they charged toward Su Yan.

Su Yan's eyes widened, and she bit down hard on the tip of her tongue. Pain flooded through her along with cracking sounds as she broke free from Meng Hao's Hexing magic. Then she turned, eyes flickering with fear, but more so, coldness.

Instead of trying to evade the 123 Blood Demon heads, she breathed in deeply, absorbing the power of Heaven and Earth. Then she lifted her right foot up and stamped it down violently, striding in Meng Hao's direction.

That first step caused the void to tremble. Her second step caused everything in the area to shake. The third step caused fissures to crack the ground for 3,000 meters in every direction.

Meng Hao's eyes widened with shock at the sight of this pink-robed young woman's divine ability. She took only three steps, but those three steps caused her energy to surge. Meng Hao's mind was sent reeling. Each of the steps seemed to trample upon his inner thoughts, causing his cultivation base to be thrown into chaos, and the flame of his life force to flicker.

Next, it was with a completely icy face that Su Yan took a fourth step. Rumbling echoed out everywhere!

When she took her fifth step, the entire world seemed to be turning inside out. Howling sounds could be heard in all directions. It was almost as if this area were turning into a different world altogether.

Her sixth step caused the crashing sound of thunder to fill the area for thousands of meters in each direction, along with an archaic, ancient aura.

Meng Hao’s magical Blood Demon heads all trembled, and were smashed to pieces by the surging energy.

It was in that moment that Su Yan took her seventh step!

“Seven Steps of the Hellgod!” Su Yan cried out the words as she took the seventh step. The void shattered, and massive roaring sounds could be heard. A huge foot appeared up above, emanating shocking energy. A boundless feeling of savagery buffeted Meng Hao as the foot stamped down toward him.

The starry sky vibrated as Meng Hao looked up, eyes wide. Then, he performed a double-handed incantation gesture and pointed toward the huge foot.

“Paragon Bridge!” He let out a muffled growl as his 123 Immortal meridians, as well as his 33 Heavens, formed into the Paragon Bridge, which shot toward the foot.

A huge boom could be heard as the bridge and the foot collided. In that instant, the void around them seemed to be torn asunder. Boundless echoes rang out as the savage foot shattered, layer by layer, transforming into innumerable motes of light that then faded away.

The Paragon Bridge also trembled and collapsed into pieces.

Meng Hao trembled, and blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth. The pink-robed Su Yan’s face was ashen, and blood also oozed out her mouth as she looked at Meng Hao in shock.

She was in the Ancient Realm, and not an ordinary Ancient Realm cultivator at that. She had her own Dao; analogous to a true Immortal relative to the Immortal Realm, she was a Chosen of the Ancient Realm. Despite having only extinguished one Soul Lamp, she was by no means weak.

In her view, Meng Hao was only in the Immortal Realm, and even if he was at the peak of the Realm, he was still much weaker than her.

Before, she had merely feared his black beetles, and his mysterious, unfathomable spirit-immortal stones. Therefore, she attacked him, hoping to at least injure him, and thus be able to escape the black beetles.

However… in their first true interchange, she found that the two of them were relatively evenly matched. That filled Su Yan with fear, and she instantly fell back into retreat.

Meng Hao remained seated on the black beetle, eyes shining with a strange light at the fleeing Su Yan. Inwardly, his heart was pounding with anticipation, not because of Su Yan herself, of course, but because of… her divine ability!

Throughout his years of practicing cultivation, Meng Hao had acquired all sorts of divine abilities and magical techniques. Not many of them left him moved, or left him with a feeling that the technique was especially powerful…. However, during the times he had fought with Wang Mu and Wang Tengfei, they had used magical techniques of the Wang Clan which had left him shaken. In fact, because of those battles, he had even gotten the idea of trying to acquire some of those magical techniques. Unfortunately, the Wang Clan of the Ninth Mountain and Sea was one of the great clans, and to acquire their Daoist magics would be incredibly difficult.

Just now, the divine ability used by this pink-robed young woman also left him quite shaken.

“What Daoist magic was that? It only took seven steps to collapse my Paragon Bridge. Theoretically, it might have something to do with her cultivation base, or the fact that my understanding of the Paragon Bridge isn’t complete, meaning I can’t fully utilize it.

“However, that just goes to show that her Daoist magic of seven steps has its own unique aspects.” Meng Hao was lost in thought for a while as he chased Su Yan. Finally, he raised his right hand, performed an incantation gesture, and then pointed at her.

That wave of a finger caused his 123 Immortal meridians to materialize into a shocking Flying Rain-Dragon, which roared and beat its wings as it shot toward her in pursuit.

Su Yan’s face flickered as she saw the Flying Rain-Dragon bearing down on her. She gritted her teeth, performed an incantation gesture, and then placed her hands on top of her ears. Then she took a deep breath, using some unknown Daoist magic that caused the sounds of thunder to echo out. A huge wind kicked up, and Su Yan almost seemed to turn into a vortex that rapidly absorbed the power of Heaven and Earth.

Next… she suddenly turned her head toward Meng Hao, opened her mouth, and roared!

That roar was loud enough to tear open the Heavens and shred the earth!

The sound of it superseded all other sounds in the world. It shredded the void, causing a massive wind to kick up. Meng Hao started to tremble, and his black beetles began to rock back and forth. Blood oozed out of his ears, and his mind vibrated so intensely that it felt as if his head was about to explode.

That roar almost didn’t seem to be coming from Su Yan, but rather a giant. It was filled with intense savagery, and an unparalleled domineering air that seemed to defy the confines of destiny.

ROOOOOAAAARRRRRRRRRRR!

Sound waves transformed into an attack that blasted toward Meng Hao. The result was that he was physically lifted up and pushed backward.

Su Yan coughed up a mouthful of blood; clearly utilizing this divine ability of roaring came at a great price. Her face was pale white as she sped forward anxiously.

“I just need to delay things a bit longer,” she muttered to herself, pushing for more speed. “If I can build up enough speed, I can break out of this place!”

Meng Hao finally stabilized himself, wiped away the blood that had oozed out of his ears, and looked at Su Yan as she fled. His eyes began to shine with an even more intense light.

“You can’t escape,” he said. “No matter what you say, I’m going to catch you!” His eyes flickered coldly, and his heart beat with excitement. As far as he was concerned, this pink-robed young woman was a treasure trove of divine abilities and Daoist magics.

It would be a big pain to try to acquire one of the Wang Clan’s Divine abilities. But he would be equally content to get his hands on some of this girl’s magic.

The wave of a hand caused all 500 of the black beetles to let out a collective roar. Their eyes were red with madness as they charged forth. Meng Hao’s cultivation base exploded with power. However, Su Yan was moving so quickly that she was already some distance off. Meng Hao snorted coldly, and extended his right hand, within which appeared the Lightning Cauldron. His eyes flickered with a Demonic glint as electricity danced about, and he vanished.

At the same time, Su Yan had almost built up enough speed to unleash another Daoist magic. Her body was beginning to grow blurry, and ripples were spreading out into the void. It was almost as if a tunnel were forming, a tunnel which she was just about to break into.

In that moment, however, countless sparks of electricity suddenly appeared all over her body. This development occurred too suddenly, and she could sense something happening that caused her face to fall.

Suddenly, she vanished, and Meng Hao appeared in her place. Of course, their speeds were different, so the moment Meng Hao appeared, the void tunnel promptly closed up.

At the same time, Su Yan reappeared in the spot Meng Hao had just been occupying… right in the middle of 500 black beetles!

The moment Su Yan appeared, the 500 black beetles immediately roared and shot toward her, radiating explosive ferocity. Su Yan was shocked to the core, and an expression of disbelief and shock instantly appeared on her face.

“That cauldron… how could it be here!?!? Is your surname Wang?” 1

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered almost imperceptibly, but he didn’t say anything. Instead, he sent his cultivation base rotating rapidly. The Essence of Divine Flame appeared, combined with the power of 33 Heavens, to shoot directly toward Su Yan.

The 500 black beetles all attacked with full force. In response, the shocked Su Yan performed an incantation gesture and waved her hand, causing divine abilities to shoot out. However, the Ghost Eyes on the backs of these black beetles began to glow, and were easily able to repel her attack, and even began to grow more ferocious.

As Meng Hao closed in, the Essence of Divine Flame caused Su Yan’s mind to spin. She was getting very anxious, but her face filled with determination as she raised her right hand. Instantly, light began to shine out from the creases in her palm, causing three palm prints to begin to appear in the air around her, surrounded by rumbling sounds.

However, before the palm prints could finish forming, the surrounding black beetles took advantage of the moment to attack. Su Yan fell back, blood spraying from her mouth.

It was at this point that, some distance behind Su Yan, two beams of light could be seen shooting through the Ruins of Immortality. Apparently sensing the ripples of magic, they headed toward Su Yan and Meng Hao.

Before the approaching figures could even be seen, a voice could be heard from them.

“My master is Meng Hao! Do you hear me? Meng Hao! He’s the ruler of the Ruins of Immortality, the Lord of the Nine Mountains and Seas! I was just joking with you, alright? Y-y-you… you’re being so petty! Why are you trying to kill us! You can’t blame me! Everything I did was taught to me by my master! Why don’t you go looking for him, alright? Aiya! How dare you attack us! Dammit! Lord Fifth is really getting pissed off! You just wait and see! My master definitely won’t let you off the hook!”

1. I saw a lot of questions on the Chinese internet about this part where Su Yan mentions the cauldron and asks if his surname is Wang. Apparently Wang Lin from Renegade Immortal had a cauldron with similar properties to this one. However, based on the answers I read in a few threads, that cauldron was clearly destroyed, so it couldn’t be the same one. However, this begs the question of why she would be saying something like this? There were various speculations about that too….

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# Chapter 1033: The Might of the Echelon!

Of those two beams of light, one contained a colorful parrot with a meat jelly in the form of a bell attached to its ankle. The bell continuously let out tinkling sounds which echoed about.

The other beam… contained a young woman. A grim expression covered her face, and blue veins popped out on her forehead. She actually looked a bit haggard, as if she were she were so aggravated she was about to go crazy. It was… Li Ling’er.

The parrot looked scraggly and somewhat gaunt as it flew through the air. Behind it was an enormous creature, tens of thousands of meters wide and terrifying to the extreme.

It was like a giant sphere, covered with endless amounts of fur which drifted about. It had a single eye that stared out with boundless coldness. Occasionally, the fur which covered the creature would form into tentacles that would slash around, destroying anything they touched. Currently, this bizarre creature was chasing the parrot and Li Ling’er.

Although the creature had a terrifying aura, and was physically shocking to look at, it wasn’t moving incredibly fast. It was almost as if it was in conflict with the natural laws that existed in the Ruins of Immortality, resulting in constant pressure weighing down on it. Therefore, as it moved along, it was surrounded by vaguely flickering light.

“I was just messing around with you!” the parrot cried angrily. “What are you being so vengeful for!?”

“Yeah, that’s exactly right! He’s being immoral! That’s wrong! Just wait until Lord Third gets a bit more powerful, I’ll definitely convert him!”

“Shut up! Shut up! SHUT UP!!” shouted Li Ling’er, who was on the verge of going crazy. Being around the parrot and meat jelly made her feel that her sanity was crumbling away.

After being flung out into the Ruins of Immortality by Patriarch Reliance, she had spent her time exclusively with the parrot and meat jelly. They had cautiously made their way through the Ruins of Immortality, trying to figure a way out.

At first, things had gone well. She could deal with the meat jelly’s constant chatter and the parrot’s extreme arrogance. After all, before giving a dog a beating, one still has to consider who its master is. Meng Hao had saved her so, naturally, she had chosen to put up with his little pets.

However… for some reason, the damned parrot seemed to have some completely perverted addictions. Li Ling’er had watched wide-eyed on several occasions in which the parrot, upon simply encountering creatures with fur or feathers, would suddenly act like a complete moron. Regardless of how powerful the creature it encountered was, the parrot would whoop with delight and speed excitedly toward it.

What happened after that was an assault on Li Ling’er’s eyes, and yet she couldn’t help but gape. She almost felt like her head was going to explode, and everything she had always believed was toppled over.

The most recent time it happened was when the parrot assaulted the gigantic sphere. Originally, that sphere hadn’t even been moving. However, after several hundred rounds with the parrot, it got as mad as a hornet. The sphere-like creature couldn’t take it any more, and let out a roar that almost shattered Li Ling’er’s cultivation base.

They had fled immediately, but the sphere had apparently endured too much humiliation, and chased them in a rage.

As they fled, they had sensed the ripples of magical techniques, and had surmised that they came from people. The parrot had then suggested they go in that direction, which they did immediately, preparing to plead for aid in this moment of disaster.

Almost as soon as they got close, Meng Hao saw the parrot and Li Ling’er, as did Su Yan. However, Su Yan’s attention was more drawn to the gigantic sphere following them.

“Mooneater!” she breathed. Her face fell and her heart began to pound. The sudden appearance of the Mooneater cut off her path of escape. In front was Meng Hao and his black beetles, and behind her was the Mooneater. She was caught in a dragnet, and the result was that she lost almost all hope.

“Dammit, how could this be happening? There are only a few Mooneaters in all of the Ruins of Immortality. Normally they just sleep, and wouldn’t wake up even if Heaven and Earth collapsed. Even if they do awake, the natural laws are different, so they don’t move around. Wh-what’s going on? Why is this Mooneater chasing those people?

“How could that woman and that parrot possibly have provoked a Mooneater into such heights of rage that it would pursue them!?” Su Yan’s scalp was numb; she was well-aware of how terrifying an enraged Mooneater could be. She was just about to try to flee, when Meng Hao blazed toward her with his Essence of Divine Flame.

Su Yan immediately performed an incantation gesture, causing a divine ability to appear to fight back against Meng Hao. It only took a moment for the two of them to be locked in a raging battle. As they fought back and forth, Su Yan suffered multiple defeats. Blood sprayed out of her mouth, and she realized that although she was well-matched with Meng Hao, she was constantly distracted by the need to avoid the surrounding black beetles. This caused her to have several close calls.

At the same time, the Mooneater was getting closer and closer. The coldness in its eyes seemed capable of destroying any living thing that it encountered.

“Dammit!!” Her face flickered as blood oozed out of her mouth. She knew that she couldn’t hold on very much longer, perhaps ten breaths of time at most. Then she would be defeated.

Gritting her teeth, her expression became one of incredible resolve. She allowed Meng Hao’s Essence of Divine Flame attack to slam into her, causing blood to spray from her mouth as she was seriously injured. However, she borrowed momentum from the attack to break out of the encircling black beetles, and then head… directly toward the Mooneater.

As she sped forward, she extended her right hand, causing all of her blood to surge. Moments later, a strange, sweet odor began to emanate off of her.

No cultivator would be able to detect anything unusual about that fragrance, but it instantly caused the Mooneater to look over. All of a sudden, a huge opening appeared on its body that almost looked like a mouth.

It looked completely savage as it opened up directly in the middle of the single eye, giving the creature two eyes. The mouth was filled with rows and rows of razor-sharp fangs, tens of thousands of them, glinting coldly. It almost seemed as if the creature’s entire body was made up of fangs!

The gigantic mouth breathed in, and Su Yan tumbled forward like a kite with its string cut, heading directly toward the Mooneater.

In the blink of an eye, she had flown past the parrot, as well as Li Ling’er, who were still gaping in sight after having caught sight of Meng Hao moments ago.

Now, the two of them, as well as the meat jelly, watched as the Mooneater open its mouth. When they saw the innumerable ghastly fangs inside, their shock turned into terror.

Meng Hao frowned. Su Yan appeared to be on the verge of being swallowed up by the Mooneater. Even if he used the Lightning Cauldron to switch places with her… unfortunately, he would then be swallowed by the enormous creature.

“What a clever plan!” he thought. He instantly realized what Su Yan was trying to do. She had obviously incited the creature into trying to swallow her up. Presumably, she had a way to get out of the creature’s mouth even if it did swallow her. She was using this as a way to escape, and also to ensure that Meng Hao couldn’t use his Lightning Cauldron. “Well, you still won’t be able to get away!”

Meng Hao was too entranced with Su Yan’s Daoist magics. Despite the sudden turn of events, his eyes still flickered as he slapped his bag of holding to produce a Nirvana Fruit!

This was not his Nirvana Fruit, it was the Nirvana Fruit of the first generation Patriarch of the Fang Clan!

Without the slightest bit of hesitation, Meng Hao shoved the fruit into his forehead. Rumbling filled his mind as it sank down into him. At the same time, he felt something swelling up inside of him.

RUUUUMMMBLE! As Meng Hao looked up, he could clearly sense his Immortal meridians exploding with power, growing stronger as his cultivation base climbed higher.

33 Heavens collapsed, transforming into boundless Immortal light that poured over Meng Hao, transforming into an Imperial robe. As Meng Hao hovered there in the void, he no longer looked like the Immortal Realm Paragon. He was a step beyond that… he was the Immortal Emperor of ancient times!

Li Ling’er’s eyes went wide. She had observed this same thing happening before, although on a screen. Meng Hao was now bursting with a powerful energy that made him capable of killing even Ancient Realm cultivators with three extinguished Soul Lamps.

However, this was her first time sensing what it was like in person, and it sent her heart pounding. Her cultivation base trembled, and her Immortal meridians felt compelled to acquiesce to Meng Hao.

Su Yan was terrified. She could never have imagined that Meng Hao would have a trump card like this. Her scalp was tingling as she pushed with everything she had to fly toward the Mooneater. She was well aware that reaching it was her only hope.

An indescribable energy rose up from Meng Hao as he stared coldly over at Su Yan nearing the Mooneater. Face expressionless, he took a step forward.

That single step took him past Li Ling'er and the parrot. He then flicked his sleeve, causing a gentle power to push Li Ling'er and the parrot backward, far away from the Mooneater.

His second step caused him to vanish and then reappear between Su Yan and the Mooneater.

Su Yan was now filled with hopelessness. She exploded out with all of the magical techniques and divine abilities she could muster. However, Meng Hao's hand snaked forward, shattering them all before… clamping onto her neck.

His hand was icy, and as soon as it touched Su Yan, her cultivation base was locked down by Meng Hao's Immortal power.

"We don't have enough enmity built up between us for me to kill you," he said. "So be a good girl, and I won't slaughter you."

Simultaneously, one of the Mooneater's tentacles shot toward them. Just when Meng Hao was about to dodge out of the way, the tentacle suddenly stopped moving. It was almost as if it had sensed something on Meng Hao, causing it to instantly shrink back.

Meng Hao's eyes glittered, and he turned to look at the Mooneater and its gaping maw, which was now only about 30 meters away. The Mooneater was actually so terrified it was trembling, and… it gradually began to back up. Slowly, its huge mouth closed.

Within its solitary eye was a terror that caused Su Yan to be filled with astonishment!

It was almost as if the thing were afraid of Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes shone brightly. Just now, when he had been on the verge of dodging to the side, he had felt something inside of him… the sealing mark placed on him by the white-robed woman when she had made him 13th in the Echelon!

The mark suddenly appeared on Meng Hao’s forehead, flashing brightly.

Meng Hao began to think about the white-robed woman’s status as a Paragon, and his heart trembled. Continuing to hold Su Yan with his left hand, he raised his right hand and made a dismissive gesture toward the Mooneater.

“Get out of here,” he said experimentally, all the while preparing to back up if necessary.

The gigantic Mooneater was trembling visibly, and Li Ling’er, Su Yan, the parrot, and the meat jelly were all watching with eyes wide. The Mooneater almost seemed to nod in response to Meng Hao before backing up and disappearing off into the distance.

Li Ling’er gaped at Meng Hao, hovering there clad in his Imperial robes of Immortal light, energy surging. He was almost like a Paragon of Heaven and Earth as he waved his hand, causing an enormous, terrifying creature to back down. That image was almost like a scene from a painting, becoming something firmly implanted in Li Ling’er’s mind, and would never go away.

The parrot blinked, and the meat jelly stared in shock.

As for Su Yan, a complex expression suddenly appeared on her face regarding Meng Hao.

“You’re… in the Echelon?!”

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# Chapter 1034: We’re Not Suited

The Mooneater slowly faded away into the sky of the Ruins of Immortality. Meng Hao hovered in midair, the energy of the Immortal Emperor slowly receding. Eventually, the Nirvana Fruit emerged from his forehead, which he then put into his bag of holding. He also placed numerous restrictive spells onto Su Yan, sealing her so that he could throw her into his bag of holding as well.

Before she disappeared, a cold smile could be seen on her face. However, the shock and other complex emotions in her eyes could not be concealed.

Meng Hao ignored that, however. Next, he turned to face the parrot and Li Ling’er.

Li Ling’er subconsciously avoided his gaze. Her past impressions of Meng Hao still remained in her mind, and currently, her heart was filled with conflicting emotions, including confusion.

She was very certain that, in the past, she had hated him to the bone. That was especially the case considering how he had humiliated her. When she had learned that it had been arranged for the two of them to be married, her initial reaction had been that she would rather die.

She hadn’t been able to even imagine how to handle being paired with Meng Hao as a beloved partner. To her, it would have been like a living nightmare.

Therefore, she had chosen to flee the marriage. Of course, she had never expected that she would end up being rescued by the very person she was fleeing.

Meng Hao could sense the conflict inside of Li Ling’er, and he looked away with a light sigh. He knew that she should have been back in the Li Clan at a time like this. The fact that he found her being pursued by Yi Fazi clearly indicated that she had left her clan.

It was easy to guess why. Considering the imminent marriage alliance, the fact that Li Ling’er had left her clan indicated that she had chosen to flee, just like he had. There was no other conclusion that he could come to.

It was at this point that the parrot cleared its throat. “Haowie, why are you butting into other people’s affairs?” it said, sounding as wise and proud as he could. “That was Lord Fifth’s beloved concubine! Lord Fifth wasn’t afraid of it! It was just my way of getting it to come out of its shell.

“Well, now that you made it go away…. Ai. Well, forget about it. Just never mind. I guess it just goes to show that there was no destiny between us.”

Currently, the five hundred black beetles were swirling around in the air around Meng Hao, and the drone of their wings echoed out in all directions. Because of that, Meng Hao still gave off the feeling that he was someone that shouldn’t be provoked, despite the fact that he no longer emanated the energy of the Immortal Emperor.

Each and every one of the insects in the small army had a Ghost Eye on its back, which emanated a sinister coldness. The bugs themselves had cold, emotionless eyes, causing a harsh aura to slowly exude.

Even an Ancient Realm expert would feel fear when looking upon these black beetles.

Meng Hao glanced back at Li Ling’er and asked, “So, that old turtle left already?”

Before Li Ling’er could answer, the bell-form meat jelly attached to the Parrot’s ankle suddenly roared, “That old bastard is completely immoral! Evil to the max! It deserves a horrible death! Lord Third solemnly swears an oath to convert it! That damnable old bastard of a turtle actually had the nerve to toss me aside and run off by himself!!

“I, Lord Third, was a fool to take pity on it earlier, and give it so much advice. Grrr! Lord Third is so pissed off! That thing is shameless! Misguided! A complete bully!!” As the meat jelly raged, it was clear that it was infuriated at Patriarch Reliance, and even felt that it had been subjected to a great injustice.

Hearing the meat jelly raging, the parrot then chimed in: “That’s totally right! That bastard pushed things too far. Dammit!” However, the parrot went a bit further, going on to make a declaration of a further aspiration. “Next time I see it, Lord Fifth is going to make sure it knows how awesome I am! I’m gonna turn it into one of my beloved concubines!”

Ignoring the two buffoons, Meng Hao’s body flickered as he moved to a nearby black beetle and sat down cross-legged. After glancing around, he looked back at Li Ling’er and then cleared his throat.

“Fellow Daoist Li,” he said, “I think there have been some misunderstandings between us in the past….”

Li Ling’er looked up at him. The word ‘misunderstanding’ caused her to think about many things, especially Meng Hao’s multiple usages of his palm. When she thought about that, she still felt humiliated and angry. She could almost sense a lingering numbness and pain in her buttocks.

“However, I did rescue you, right?” Meng Hao continued. “Although, you still owe me some money….”

Li Ling’er frowned. “That’s because you forced me to write a promissory note!” she said, word by word.

“Right, right. Well, the process isn’t important. We’re talking about Karma, so you definitely owe me money.” When he saw the look on Li Ling’er’s face in response to this, Meng Hao quickly added, “But don’t worry. You don’t need to pay me back anymore!”

Based on Meng Hao’s personality, it took quite a bit of effort for him to force those words out.

“Look, neither of us have it easy in life, so why make things harder for each other? Our clans want an alliance, and they’re willing to sacrifice us to get it. It seems obvious that the only reason we ran into each other here is because we’re both trying to get away from that marriage.

“In that respect, I think we’re both in the same boat!” A bright glow appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes as he continued, “Look, I rescued you. I also happen to know that I’m quite handsome, and a lot of girls like me. For example, take that wench that I captured earlier. She made a move on me too, but I turned her down. Then she tried to do all sorts of evil things to me. Stuff like that can’t be forgiven!” Meng Hao said, without even a hint of shame coloring his face. It was a good thing Su Yan couldn’t hear what he was saying, otherwise she would have been so angry that blood would have sprayed out of her mouth like a fountain.

“Although…” he continued somberly, “Fellow Daoist Li, you must not under any circumstances continue to misinterpret my feelings. Trust me, nothing’s going to happen between the two of us. I have absolutely no intention of pursuing you! Besides, I’m already married. The two of us… just aren’t suited for each other.”

In response to these words, the parrot stared, the meat jelly blinked, and Li Ling’er gaped in shock. She had never, ever seen someone praise themselves with such a straight face.

“YOU!” she cried, eyes wide.

“Seriously,” he said, taking a careful step backward. “We’re not suited for each other. Fellow Daoist Li, I know that the image of me surging with energy earlier definitely left you with a deep impression of me. However, you really need to control yourself. Don’t let yourself fall for me!

“Women must learn to conduct themselves with dignity in life. The two of… just aren’t meant to be.”

“Don’t worry, Meng Hao!!” Li Ling’er growled through clenched teeth. “If I had to choose between you and a pig, I would chose the pig!”

“You really mean it??” said Meng Hao, his eyes shining brightly.

“You…. Meng Hao, I, Li Ling’er, always follow through on my word!” Li Ling’er was feeling very vexed. Meng Hao was making it seem like she couldn’t wait to marry him. That was even more the case when, in response to her words just now, Meng Hao appeared to be sighing with relief. That caused Li Ling’er’s rage to flare even hotter.

Meng Hao then let out a hearty laugh. Smiling, he waved a finger at a nearby black beetle.

“Fellow Daoist Li, now that our misunderstandings have been straightened out, I’d like to express my condolences. Come come, have a seat on this bug. I’ll escort you safely out of the Ruins of Immortality.”

When Li Ling’er heard this, her fury burned uncontrollably, and she looked at Meng Hao with gritted teeth and said, “Condolences? Meng Hao, are you even able to talk without being crass? What the hell do you mean, ‘condolences’? Don’t tell me you actually believe that I, Li Ling’er, thought of you as the love of my life or something? You think that you refusing me necessitates condolences?”

Meng Hao scratched his head and sighed, his expression one of helplessness.

“Very well, then, I rescind my condolences.”

“What do you mean you rescind your condolences!?!?” Li Ling’er felt like she was about to go crazy.

“No condolences!” he replied quickly. “Even though I refused your expression of love, even though I crushed all the good feelings you had toward me. Even though from now on, all you’ll be able to do is gaze at me silently from a distance. Despite all that, I really offer no condolences! Alright? Happy?”

Li Ling’er threw her head back and howled. She gripped her hair in both hands and tugged it hard. It was almost like it was impossible to talk to

Meng Hao without going absolutely crazy.

Trembling, she thought about everything that had happened since she had left the clan, and the grief that welled up from her heart caused tears to flow out. She said nothing further. She simply sat down on the beetle's back, tears rolling down her cheeks.

Meng Hao didn't say anything more either. The parrot and meat jelly looked at each other, then began to whisper back and forth. Occasionally, they would look over at Meng Hao and Li Ling'er, and the meat jelly's expression would be one of puzzlement. In contrast, the parrot's was one of worldy-wise understanding as it apparently explained certain matters to the meat jelly.

The meat jelly nodded its head several times empathetically.

Everything quieted down. The black beetles buzzed along as Meng Hao escorted Li Ling'er off into the distance. Because of the beetles, their journey through the Ruins of Immortality went along with few hitches. Meng Hao would look around occasionally and, based on his past experiences in the Ruins of Immortality, was able to gradually lead them out from the depths of the ruins, and toward their border.

Several days later, the broken remnants of the Ruins of Immortality grew more and more sparse. Not far off in the distance, the border was visible, and beyond that, a sea.

It was not a true sea, but rather, a body of dense mists that grew so thick that they eventually sank downward, forming into a sea of mist. Meng Hao was able to sense that at its very depths, the mist was so thick that there might actually be a true sea there.

This place… was none other than the Ninth Sea!

Meng Hao's eyes glowed brightly as he stood up on the black beetle's back. The entire army of beetles didn't slow down a bit; they continued to speed along, getting closer and closer to the border.

However, it was at this point that, all of a sudden, a person appeared out of thin air up ahead.

It was a woman, wearing a white robe, and when she stepped out of the void, it seemed as if the entire Ruins of Immortality went dark. It was like the whole world, including all the light of the stars, was gathered on her person. Even the Ninth Sea off in the distance went still.

This woman seemed to be matchlessly supreme, as if in front of her, even natural law would cease to operate.

She hovered there quietly, looking at Meng Hao.

As soon as he laid eyes on the woman, Meng Hao’s mind rumbled. He instantly sent a message to the black beetles to stop moving. However, he didn’t actually need to do so: all of them were trembling, and didn’t dare to approach the woman.

“Meng Hao offers greetings, Senior!” he said, quivering, clasping his hands and bowing very deeply. This woman was the same one who had placed him in the Echelon… the female Paragon!

In that instant, the parrot ducked its head like it was trying to hide, and it looked scared. The meat jelly was uncharacteristically silent, and didn’t even open its mouth.

Li Ling’er could sense the terrifying aura emanating out from the white-robed woman, and immediately stood up and gave a curtseying bow.

The woman’s gaze passed from Meng Hao and Li Ling’er to come to rest on the meat jelly. “I recently recalled a matter from the past…. Do you still remember me?”

The meat jelly quivered.

“NO!” When it responded, its voice was archaic but light. When it spoke, Meng Hao couldn’t help but think that something was wrong. He had never, ever heard the garrulous meat jelly only speak a single word.

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# Chapter 1035: The Meat Jelly was the Lightning Emperor?

The white-robed woman remained silent for a moment, looking at the meat jelly with a complex expression, as if she were recalling the past. Meng Hao wasn’t sure why, but for some reason it almost looked like an expression of… bitter resentment.

All of a sudden, Meng Hao’s scalp began to go numb, and he subconsciously looked over at the meat jelly, then back at the white-robed Paragon. He had hoped that he had been mistaken, and that there was not really a look of bitter resentment on her face. And yet, when he looked back at her, he was even more certain than before, causing him to blink.

After a moment of silence, the white-robed Paragon slowly asked, “Is it that you don’t remember, or that you’re not willing to admit it?”

“Don’t remember,” the meat jelly replied, its voice hoarse, but lacking the slightest trace of its usual long-windedness.

“Years ago, there was a cultivator whose name was Lei Daozi 1. He was a lightning cultivator, and one of the nine Emperors. He was known as the Lightning Emperor. Did you know him?” The white-robed woman expression grew more and more complex as she looked at the meat jelly. Sometimes she remembered things clearly, other times things were a blur. However, recently, she had began to recall many things about the past.

“Never heard of him.” The meat jelly’s voice was as ancient as ever, and yet, now seemed to contain a hint of pain.

The white-robed woman looked deeply at the meat jelly for a moment, then sighed and softly said, “If it weren’t for the great catastrophe, he was the most likely to have become the fourth Paragon. Back then he and I… had an agreement.” 2

The meat jelly maintained its silence, saying not a single word.

The white-robed woman closed her eyes for a while, and when she opened them again, they were looking at the parrot. Her expression was one of revulsion, and in response, the parrot lowered its head even further and glanced around furtively. From Meng Hao’s perspective, the parrot looked very nervous, perhaps even scared.

Finally the woman turned from the parrot to look at Meng Hao. Her voice cool, she said, “Well, you’re doing well. Once you enter the Ancient Realm, you will definitely become part of my plans!” Finally, she turned to leave.

Meng Hao was not a newcomer to the world of cultivation. He was used to schemes and counter-schemes, and knew not to take everything people said at face value. Therefore, it was obvious to him that something was going on beneath the surface here. Clearly, she had only paid perfunctory attention to himself and the parrot. The true reason she had shown up was because of the meat jelly!

It almost seemed like, she had only shown up to ask it those few questions. He had long since known that the parrot and meat jelly had extraordinary backgrounds. However, he could never have imagined that they were wrapped up with the white-robed Paragon. As for the meat jelly, apparently, its past involved some inspiring and tragic tale.

Just when the white-robed woman was about to leave, she suddenly stopped in place, looked at Li Ling’er, and said, “Eee?”

As she peered over, and her eyes filled with a strange gleam.

“You look just like….” she murmured softly. She waved a finger, causing Li Ling’er to involuntarily fly through the air to hover in front of the white-robed woman.

“Are you willing to practice cultivation under me?” she asked, her tone serious.

Li Ling’er stared in shock. Based on how Meng Hao had treated and talked to the woman, she could tell that there was something unfathomably mysterious about her.

As she hesitated, she looked over and happened to see the shocked look on Meng Hao’s face. With a cold, inward harrumph, she ceased any hesitation and clasped hands toward the white-robed woman.

“Junior is willing!”

The white-robed woman nodded slightly, then turned. As she did, a cloud appeared beneath Li Ling’er’s feet, which carried her alongside the woman as she left.

Li Ling’er looked a bit apprehensive, but when she turned and saw Meng Hao’s astonished expression, she suddenly felt a great sense of contentment, and glared into his eyes.

Meng Hao truly was shocked, and had the feeling that he had been neglected. The fact that the meat jelly had a mysterious background was one thing. However, he had practiced cultivation to the level of becoming the Immortal Realm Paragon. When he absorbed the Nirvana Fruit, he could even reach the level of the Immortal Emperor. And yet, from what he could tell, Li Ling’er seemed to attract even more attention from the white-robed woman than he did.

And then there was the ‘peasant-become-king’ attitude she exuded as she stared at him hatefully. It was as if she was trying to convey that when they met again in the future, their relative positions would be very different.

Rolling his eyes inwardly, he clasped hands and bowed deeply to Li Ling’er, a solemn expression on his face, as if he couldn’t hold back from expressing his condolences to her.

“Ling’er, I apologize. It doesn’t matter if you have a new position, I still can’t take you as a wife. I’m already married, and you and I just don’t suit each other. I wish you all the best, and hope that you can someday find your own happiness.” Meng Hao sighed, and his eyes shone with an expression of condolence.

As soon as Li Ling’er heard his words, she trembled. “Shut the hell UP, Meng Hao!!”

Glaring at him, she gritted her teeth and stamped her foot. With that, she ignored Meng Hao and followed the white-robed woman off into the distance.

After they disappeared, sighs of relief could be heard coming from the mouths of both the parrot and the meat jelly.

“Now THAT was scary!” Lord Fifth exclaimed. “So, the old Demongranny has gotten some of her memories back!!” It patted its chest with its wing, as if it had just survived some harrowing experience.

“Thankfully, it seems that she only got some of her memories back, not a lot,” the parrot murmured. “Otherwise, she wouldn’t have just looked annoyed when she saw me. She would have plucked me and roasted me for dinner.” It seemed truly surprised to still be alive.

The meat jelly let out a long sigh, after which its face lit up with excitement and it said, “How was my acting!? Hahaha! Meng Hao, and you, you old pigeon, tell the truth. Was Lord Third’s acting good or not, huh? Good or not!?

“Hahaha! Hey, I almost forgot that we had a bet! Lord Third wins! Lord Third’s acting ability is incredible! However, it seems a bit wrong and immoral. Pidgeon Fifth, don’t you agree?” Now that the meat jelly was speaking, it blabbered on, apparently having held its tongue for far too long earlier and was now looking to make up for it.

“Your acting is worth a fart!” said the Parrot, smacking the meat jelly. “You almost gave it all away! You said way too much! Next time, remember than when you talk to the Demongranny, you should only say one word!”

Meng Hao stared at the meat jelly in shock. The meat jelly had now reverted to behaving like it always had in the past, and from their dialogue just now, it seemed that it and the parrot had been betting with each other about something.

Meng Hao felt a headache coming on, and wasn’t sure what to say to the two ninnies.

However, he couldn’t forget the ‘Lightning Emperor’ that the white-robed woman had mentioned. He looked thoughtfully over at the meat jelly, but didn’t ask any further questions. On many occasions in the past, he had tried to pry out information about their past, but to no avail. He had gotten used to that. Finally, he sent out his divine will, causing the black beetles to speed forward.

Several hours later, Meng Hao, along with the five hundred or so black beetles, and the incessantly bickering parrot and meat jelly, all emerged from the Ruins of Immortality. They hovered in the starry sky, and out in front of them was the Ninth Sea.

Thinking about everything that had happened recently, Meng Hao turned back to look through the Ruins of Immortality in the direction of Planet East Victory. His eyes then gleamed with determination as he turned and headed toward the Ninth Sea atop his black beetle.

“The Nine Seas God World will most likely finally give me all the rewards I earned during the Three Great Daoist Societies’ trial by fire.” A thoughtful expression appeared in his eyes as he mused about it. The Three Great Daoist Societies had all agreed to accept him as a disciple because of his being in the Echelon, and had also expressed the intention of giving him some good fortune.

He also knew that he wouldn’t be spending a lot of time in the Nine Seas God World. After picking up his prizes, he would practice cultivation for a bit, and then head to the other two Great Daoist Societies.

“The good fortune they will provide me is most likely something to help me get to the Ancient Realm as quickly as possible!” His eyes glittered. According to what the white-robed Paragon had said, it wouldn’t be until he stepped into the Ancient Realm as a member of the Echelon that he would figure into her plans.

As for the Ancient Realm, he had his own path to tread.

“Absorb the Nirvana Fruits!” he thought with a frown. After leaving Planet East Victory, he had tried to absorb the Nirvana Fruits on multiple occasions. However, he couldn’t permanently fuse with any of them, not even his own Nirvana Fruits.

Actually, not even Fang Wei had been able to stay fused with his Nirvana Fruits for very long. That was something he had been able to sense during their battle.

Meng Hao maintained his silence as he got closer to the Ninth Sea. Occasionally he would pass traveling cultivators, but when they saw him and his five hundred black beetles, they would fearfully avoid him, not daring to get close.

He didn’t want anyone to recognize who he was, so he used the black feather to change his appearance. Therefore, nobody who saw him had any idea that he was actually the preeminently famous Meng Hao of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

As he neared the Ninth Sea, he gradually heard crashing sounds like that of ocean waves. Up ahead, the sea of mist roiled unceasingly, and an indescribably boundless energy shook everything in the starry sky.

Meng Hao didn’t waste any time. Occasionally, he would attempt to absorb the Nirvana Fruits, and he occasionally brought Su Yan out of his bag of holding. He would try to have casual and friendly conversations with her in the hope of convincing her to give him some of her Daoist magics in exchange for her freedom.

However, Su Yan would only looked at him derisively and make piercing, uncompromising comments.

After several attempts, it was clear that no matter what line of reasoning he attempted, Su Yan would never agree. Finally, he had no more patience. Waving his hand, he covered her with restrictive spells, sealing her completely, whereupon he stuffed her into a bag of holding.

“I bet that if she goes through a bit of suffering, she won’t be so uncooperative!” Unless absolutely necessary, Meng Hao didn’t want to use Soulsearch. That was a very vile method, and there was no sort of unresolvable enmity between the two of them as of yet.

The best outcome, and his first choice, would be for her to cooperate and hand over some of her Daoist magics.

Several days later, Meng Hao, atop a black beetle, finally entered the border region of the Ninth Sea. That black beetle was the only one he kept outside of his bag of holding as he looked out at the mists of the Ninth Sea, a strange gleam in his eyes.

The Ninth Sea seemed boundless, almost completely without end. Mist stretched out as far as the eye could see. Everything seemed damp, leading Meng Hao to the conclusion that there really was a huge sea at the bottom of all the mist.

“Such a huge sea….” he breathed. Back in the Fang Clan, he had seen a map of the Nine Mountains and Seas, and was aware that if he passed all the way through the Ninth Sea, he would end up in the region of the Eighth Mountain.

“The Ninth Mountain and Sea is not the end of the road for me!” As he looked off into the distance, his heart filled with lofty aspirations. On his path of cultivation, he wanted to be free and unfettered. He wanted true freedom and independence.

Heaven could not block his path, and Earth could not obstruct his way!

He patted his black beetle, which let out a roar as it transformed into a black beam of light that shot into the mists of the Ninth Sea.

Almost in the exact moment that he entered the Ninth Sea, countless eyes suddenly snapped open, both in the mists that surrounded him, and the blackness of the depths of the sea.

Those eyes belonged to numerous sea beasts and Sea Demons that inhabited the Ninth Sea. Normally speaking, they did not have conflicts with cultivators, but as of this moment, for some reason they all opened their eyes and roared, and their expressions were that of murderous intent.

It was as if there was something about Meng Hao's aura that roused all of the sea beasts and Sea Demons of the Ninth Sea into a rage.

1. Lei means "lightning." Dao is "the Dao," and Zi means "child" or "son." As I mentioned before "Daozi" is also what is translated as "Dao Child" when used as a title

2. The word used here "agreement" is a very broad term in Chinese that can mean a lot of things. However, the vague implication based on the context would be some sort of romantic "agreement" or perhaps "engagement." One of the C>E dictionaries I use even has "engagement" as a definition for this word. Of course, based on the context, you can't tell exactly what she means, and it could potentially be just some other random "agreement"

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1036: Nine Seas God World!

Almost in the same moment that the sea beasts and Sea Demons opened their eyes, some of the sea beasts closest to Meng Hao began to charge toward him through the mists of the Ninth Sea at top speed.

As they sped along, they caused the mists to seethe, and faint rumbling sounds to echo out. Meng Hao sat on his black beetle, bursting with lofty aspirations. Suddenly, his eyes narrowed, and he looked up ahead into the mists.

Without any warning, a roar exploded out, and the mists surged away from him as a huge seal burst onto the scene.

The seal was fully nine meters long, with razor-sharp teeth. It almost looked like a dog 1, except that it had no fur, only scales. It sped out of the mists toward Meng Hao, bursting with energy comparable to the Immortal Realm. In the blink of an eye, it was upon him.

Its eyes were filled with incredible killing intent, as if it simply couldn’t live under the same sky as Meng Hao.

Meng Hao gaped, flabbergasted. This was his first time ever visiting the Ninth Sea, and as far as he could remember, he had never offended anyone from here, unless you counted Fan Dong’er.

The sudden appearance of this seal was completely unexpected, causing him to frown. A fishy aroma blasted into his face as he glared back coldly at the seal. When it was less than a meter away, seemingly on the verge of latching its jaws onto him, his right hand snaked out and clamped onto the seal's throat.

The seal let out a whimper as it screeched to a halt. It struggled violently, but no matter how it howled, Meng Hao's vice-like grip did not budge in the least. By now, his fleshly body strength was at the very peak of the Immortal Realm, meaning that only a handful of people were qualified to force him to use magical techniques. Most enemies in the Immortal Realm would be easily crushed by the power of his fleshly body alone.

Meng Hao's eyes flickered with coldness as he squeezed down with his hand. Cracking sounds rang out, and the seal spasmed a few times before its meters-long body went limp, its neck having been crushed by Meng Hao, and its soul completely exterminated.

As it died, it glared at him with a look of vicious madness.

He frowned and loosened his hand, allowing the seal's corpse to drop down into the sea below. It was at this moment that, all of a sudden, more roars could be heard as more sea creatures began to charge toward him from all directions. In the blink of an eye, he was completely surrounded by dozens of sea beasts.

There were all sorts of creatures, each one completely vicious-looking. As soon as they appeared, they shot through the air toward Meng Hao, staring at him with madness and hatred.

There were even the ripples of magical techniques emanating out from them, causing Heaven and Earth to rumble, and the Ninth Sea to seethe.

Meng Hao's frown deepened. Something definitely felt off. With a cold harrumph, he lifted his right hand, causing his five hundred black beetles to emerge. They instantly spread out toward the sea beasts, causing buzzing sounds to fill the air.

In the blink of an eye, roaring filled the air as the sea beasts and the black beetles began to fight. However, no matter what the sea beasts did, their divine abilities were useless against the black beetles.

When they bit viciously at the black beetles with their sharp teeth, not even a scratch was left behind. In contrast, the beetles chomped at them voraciously; in the space of only about ten breaths of time, the entire area was stained red with blood, and nothing remained of the sea beasts except for corpses. What was left behind of their bodies was quickly devoured by the black beetles.

It was a bloody scene, but when it came to scenes of carnage, Meng Hao had seen much worse. Something like this wouldn't cause him to feel ill at ease. However, the frown never left his face.

He proceeded along, sending the black beetles ahead of him. In the short span of a few hours, numerous sea beasts from the Ninth Sea attacked him with reckless abandon, almost as if they were insane.

First it was a few at a time, then a few dozen at once, then hundreds attacked him simultaneously. There was even a Sea Dragon that rose up with them from the sea floor, roaring, filled with madness and hatred as it tried to consume Meng Hao.

"This isn't because of Fan Dong'er," he thought, killing intent flickering. The black beetles slashed at the sea beasts in a frenzy, causing miserable shrieks to ring out. As for the Sea Dragon, which was over thirty meters long, Meng Hao simply stepped forward and punched its head. It instantly began to fall apart into pieces, after which its body shattered.

Soon, Meng Hao's mind was trembling. He was now surrounded by seething fog, and as he sent out his divine sense to scan the area, he could tell that almost a thousand sea beasts were charging toward him.

Some of those sea beasts were pitch-black and humanoid. Based on their aura, it was obvious that they were not ordinary sea beasts, but rather, something exceptionally vicious.

When they looked at Meng Hao, it was with towering hatred.

If that were all there were to it, it might not matter. But gradually, Meng Hao began to sense that it wasn't just the sea beasts who hated him. It was almost as if, for some inexplicable reason, the Ninth Sea itself was trying to expel him.

Off in the distance, Meng Hao saw even more sea beasts charging toward him from all directions. Nobody truly knew how many of them existed in the boundless Ninth Sea. However, he could tell that if things didn’t end soon, he would become embroiled in a huge battle, and would continue to attract the attention of even more terrifying sea beasts, which caused his scalp to go numb.

If a creature appeared that was similar to the latter stages of the Ancient Realm, he might very well die.

“Dammit, what’s going on here!?” he thought, sending the black beetle flying upward, away from the surface of the sea itself. Behind him, more than a thousand sea beasts flew out in pursuit, roaring. It was at this point that he retrieved a command medallion from within his bag of holding.

Raising it high above his head, he cried out at the top of his lungs, “Disciple Meng Hao has returned to the Nine Seas God World and requests an escort from the sect!”

As his voice echoed out, he crushed the jade medallion. Ripples immediately spread out, carrying his voice echoing out into the depths of the sea.

By now, the swarm of attacking sea beasts was very close to him. Meng Hao was no pushover. Naturally, he couldn’t simply ignore so many sea beasts. Snorting coldly, he caused his Immortal meridians to explode with power, then lifted his left hand, summoning tens of thousands of mountains and sending them crushing down toward the sea beasts.

However, it was at this point that a cold voice suddenly echoed out from the bottom of the sea.

“You’re Meng Hao?” Even as the voice rang out, rumbling could be heard, and the surface of the sea parted as a figure appeared. He stepped out to hover on the mist above the sea.

It was a man, but he had a very strange appearance. His skin was pitch-black, and although it was not covered by scales, he did have a golden fish scale on his forehead.

He was clothed in the garb of a disciple of the Nine Seas God World, just as Fan Dong'er had been the first time Meng Hao had seen her.

As soon as he appeared, he glanced around at all the sea beasts, resulting in them instantly stopping in place. Then they backed off and then vanished into the waters.

Meng Hao scanned the area with divine sense and could tell that although they had calmed down, they hadn't actually left. Furthermore, their eyes were filled with just as much hatred as before.

"Many thanks for getting me out of trouble, Fellow Daoist," Meng Hao said, sighing with relief. He clasped hands and bowed toward the man. "Sir, I am Meng Hao, ordered by the Three Great Daoist Societies to come to report for duty at the Nine Seas God World!"

From the look of it, this man was not a cultivator, but rather some being that was somewhere between a sea beast and a human. It had cultivated some unique magical technique that allowed it to take human form.

It seemed like a Demon, and yet was different from Demons.

The man stared grimly at Meng Hao, hatred flickering in his eyes, as well as revulsion, all of which he seemed to be fighting to control.

"Come with me," he said coldly. An instinctual killing intent seemed to rise up within him that he intentionally suppressed as he turned and flickered toward the bottom of the sea.

Meng Hao's face darkened. He didn't care much about sea beasts, but as for this being that was neither a human nor a Demon, he didn't understand why it hated him and wanted to kill him. After all, he had never done anything to offend the Ninth Sea.

Remaining completely on guard, he watched as the man headed down into the sea, then collected his black beetles, and followed along with a cold harrumph.

The two of them proceeded along in single file, not talking, moving at top speed. Meng Hao could sense even more types of sea beasts as they neared the sea floor, and all of them seemed to view him as an enemy.

“Why exactly are they acting like this?” he thought. Gradually, they went deeper and deeper, until Meng Hao’s face finally flickered with shock. The pressure weighing down on him as he went deeper only continued to grow more intense. However, his cultivation base automatically rotated to push back against it.

The pressure was not because of some sort of sealing magic, but rather pressure that simply pushed down from the Ninth Sea itself. Because of that, his cultivation base was restricted, much the same as if he had been carrying something very heavy. At the same time, magical techniques that would be easy to unleash on the surface, would be much harder to use here.

The deeper they went, the greater the pressure. Meng Hao was shaken as he realized that his cultivation base had already been reduced to about seventy percent of its normal level.

Finally, his eyes started to glow with excitement as he suddenly realized why the Nine Seas God World was so terrifying. If you spent long periods of time practicing cultivation there, then when you went out into the outside world, your cultivation base would explode up, and be even more powerful than before.

“The Three Great Daoist Societies really are incredible. There have to be special reasons why they have survived for so many years. Even just the special benefits provided from practicing cultivation here are enough to make the cultivators of the Nine Seas God World much stronger than those of most other sects.” At this point, he stopped fighting back against the Ninth Sea, and instead focused all of his efforts instead on enduring it.

After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, the man led them to… a place that Meng Hao found completely shocking.

Here, at the bottom of the sea, was a land mass!

It was not the seafloor, but rather, floated in the middle of the waters. It stretched far out into the blackness, making it impossible to see where it ended!

It looked enormous, like the fabled undersea palace of the Dragon King. Ornamental rocks could be seen everywhere, placed next to sprawling buildings. Bizarre and exotic flowers could be seen, as well as mountain ranges, and even rivers and cities.

There were innumerable cultivators, flying around in beams of light. Sea Dragons could be seen swimming about, causing the entire world to overflow with the sensation of life.

Nine golden gates marked the entrance to the sect, and erected above the top of the foremost gate was a sign with four words.

Nine Seas God World!

1. In Chinese the word for “seal” is literally “sea dog”

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# Chapter 1037: Hostility!

This was the Nine Seas God World, one of the Three Great Daoist Societies of the Ninth Mountain and Sea!

It had existed for tens of thousands of years, stretching back into ancient times, seemingly eternal. Apparently, it had existed for as long as the Nine Mountains and Seas themselves. People who practiced cultivation here for a significant amount of time, and then left for the outside world, would experience an explosive rise in their cultivation base.

In all of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, the only sect which was so amazing that they could practice cultivation in the Ninth Sea itself, and even lower their sect to the bottom of the sea… was the Nine Seas God World!

Because of cultivation practices like that, it was no exaggeration to say that it was a God World. That was even more so when you considered the power of Heaven and Earth which existed there. In all of the Ninth Sea, this location had the most terrifying concentration of it.

In addition, the deeper you went in, the more boundless that energy became.

Meng Hao’s mind trembled. He had been to many sects, but none of them had left him as shaken as he was now that he was looking at the Nine Seas God World.

He looked at the land mass spreading out in front of him like a continent, and he saw, not just cultivators, but other bizarre beings. They had humanoid bodies, but they were clearly another type of life form.

Each one had a life force that was reminiscent of a sea beast. Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he realized that these were unique Demonic Cultivators of the Ninth Sea!

They were not true Greater Demons, but had transmogrified during the course of their cultivation, gradually assuming their current appearances.

Even more shocking to Meng Hao was that the Nine Seas God World actually floated some distance away from the bottom of the sea itself, separated by a mass of pitch black darkness.

The further down one went from there, the greater the pressure was, and the more energy of Heaven and Earth could be found. It could be said that to cultivators… the pressure exerted by the Ninth Sea made this place like a Holy Land for cultivation.

“Nine Seas God World….” he murmured, eyes shining with a strange light as he sensed the vast majesty of the place. He could feel the pressure from the Ninth Sea, and the fact that his cultivation base was limited to seventy percent of its normal power.

His eyes slid across the nine glittering gates that marked the entrance to the Nine Seas God World. Above the main gate were the words ‘Nine Seas God World,’ and as for the other golden gates, they were actually more like stone steles than actual gates!

Furthermore, upon the surfaces of those golden gate stone steles were packed with names, each one of which glittered with golden light that was visible to all cultivators in the Nine Seas God World. The names formed a list, and on each of the stone steles, the list included 10,000 names.

On one of the stone steles, Meng Hao saw Fan Dong’er’s name, and it was listed in the 94th position. Next to the golden characters that made up her name, a string of text could clearly be seen. It said, … 24,000 meters down, 54 hours!

There were many other names that had the number 24,000 meters next to them, with a variety of different times.

Other name lists could be seen on the other stone steles, as if these were records of various trials by fire.

Meng Hao’s heart began to pound. The golden gate stone steles reminded him very much of the Medicine Pavilion and the Pill Pavilion back in the Fang Clan, as well as the stone stele he had seen in the Ancestral Land. The names all belonged to disciples of the Nine Seas God World, and their presence here indicated great honor and glory for those disciples.

A strange light began to gleam in Meng Hao’s eyes as he followed the cold-eyed man, who completely ignored him as he led the way into the sect.

Occasionally, they would encounter disciples of the Nine Seas God World. When they saw the man leading the way, they would smile and nod, and then their gazes would turn to Meng Hao.

Some of those people were Demonic cultivators, and when they saw Meng Hao, they would gape in shock. But then, just as quickly, their eyes would be shot with blood, and murderous auras would surge up from them.

Meng Hao frowned as he followed the cold-faced man into the Nine Seas God World. Almost as soon as they set foot onto the land mass, it seemed like all of the Demonic cultivators in the entire Nine Seas God World, regardless of what they were doing at the moment, simultaneously looked up and stared at Meng Hao.

Very quickly, killing intent rose up in their eyes, as well as towering rage and disgust.

There were tens of thousands of these Demonic cultivators, and the feeling of having them all stare at him was something impossible to describe. Meng Hao’s face flickered, and his eyes went wide.

That was especially so when he realized that some of the Demonic cultivators had Ancient Realm cultivation bases. When their cold gazes of hatred fell upon him, his heart began to pound.

If that were all there were to it, it might not be a big deal, but suddenly, streams of divine sense shot out from many of the residences that were visible, filling Meng Hao’s heart with terror.

From the look of things, the tens of thousands of Demonic cultivators were just barely able to keep themselves under control. In sharp contrast, the human cultivators of the Nine Seas God World were looking curiously at Meng Hao. Immediately, people began to recognize him.

“That’s Meng Hao!”

“I heard that he was accepted as a disciple by all of the Three Great Daoist Societies….”

“In the battle of Planet East Victory, virtually the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea saw him rise to prominence. He’s the Immortal Realm Paragon!” The cultivators all wore different expressions. Some were surprised, some wore cold looks, and others looked derisive.

However, regardless of the various cultivators’ expressions, when they sensed the strange behavior of the Demonic cultivators, they were all shocked.

The strange feeling of disquiet in Meng Hao’s heart continued to grow even more intense. He was more on guard than ever as the cold-faced man led him through the air across the Nine Seas God World. As they wound their way deeper in, the killing intent and ferocity of the Demonic cultivators only continued to grow stronger.

It was around this time that, all of a sudden, a cold snort echoed from among a group of Demonic cultivators, followed by a bright beam of light that shot toward Meng Hao.

It was a middle-aged man, extremely handsome, with a fish scale on his forehead. He wore a white robe, and had two red horns growing out from his forehead. He radiated a powerful, murderous aura, and moved with incredible speed. As he closed in on Meng Hao, he extended his right hand, causing ripples to spread out that formed into nine flying swords.

In the blink of an eye, the nine flying swords took on the appearance of nine crimson loaches. They roared, expressions vicious as they shot through the air. As for the middle-aged man, he had a murderous aura and an explosive cultivation base. The power of Immortal meridians emanated out, not quite 100; nevertheless, they had at least 90.

Upon seeing him attack, the faces of all the other Demonic cultivator disciples of the Nine Seas God World flickered with even more killing intent.

As for the Demonic cultivator who had escorted him thus far, the man hesitated for a moment, but didn’t berate the other Demonic cultivator or attempt to block his way. He acted almost as if he didn’t see, proceeding along as if he didn’t care whether Meng Hao was able to catch up or even got killed.

Meng Hao frowned and backed up by several paces. He waved his hand, causing a chain of mountains to appear and block the nine loach swords.

“Fellow Daoist, what’s the meaning of this?” he asked as he backed up. He really didn’t want his initial entrance into the Nine Seas God World to be marked by conflict with the cultivators here.

His opponent didn’t say a single word in response. He smiled coldly, as if he believed that speaking to Meng Hao would sully his own mouth. He performed an incantation gesture, and the air behind him rippled as a huge red hand appeared. Shocking ripples spread out as the hand shot toward Meng Hao.

The man’s cultivation base exploded with power. Despite being suppressed somewhat due to being in the Ninth Sea, it was still incredibly shocking. His killing intent was also incredibly intense.

“Fellow Daoist,” said Meng Hao, falling back further, his frown deepening. “Please inform me as to exactly what has happened. If you want to try to kill me, you must at least give a reason.”

However, the middle-aged man didn’t slow down at all. He advanced, waving his hand, causing the scale on his forehead to glitter. Instantly, he was surrounded by over a thousand fish scales, all of which glittered with cold light as they screamed toward Meng Hao in the form of a windstorm.

“Scale Slaughtering!” the man said coldly, his killing intent continuing to rise up. Apparently he wanted to slice Meng Hao into tens of thousands of pieces.

Meng Hao was so enraged that a smile broke out on his face. After arriving at the Ninth Sea, he had instantly been treated as an enemy, for inexplicable reasons. Then he got to the Nine Seas God World, and the Demonic cultivators there treated him even worse.

To put it rather bluntly, Meng Hao was the type of person to defy laws and principles, even of the Heavens. His was the Dao of freedom, something that could not accept outside fetters or grievances. Although he was retreating from his opponent, that opponent was not holding back, and was instead more intent on killing him.

“Give them an inch and they take a mile!” thought Meng Hao, his face darkening. He stopped moving backward, and instead took a step forward. He allowed the fish scales to close in on him, and to slam into his body.

Clanging sounds could be heard, and numerous disciples of the Nine Seas God World stared in shock as the fish scales did absolutely nothing whatsoever to Meng Hao. In fact, many of them shattered under the backlash of striking him.

Meng Hao’s eyes glowed coldly as he took three steps forward. A massive windstorm sprang up, and as the nine loach swords closed in on him, he lifted his right hand and struck out with a palm.

The nine swords immediately began to tremble.

“Scram!” he said calmly. That one word transformed into nine claps of thunder that sent the nine loach swords spinning away, after which they exploded.

An unmatchable energy exploded up from Meng Hao, causing his opponent’s face to fall. Blood oozed out of the man’s mouth as he was forced backward by the energy attack. However, he clenched his jaw and once again performed an incantation gesture. At the same time, Meng Hao snorted coldly, waving his right hand to summon a Blood Demon head. Although his cultivation base was somewhat suppressed, he was still incredibly powerful within the Immortal Realm. He waved his hand, causing the Blood Demon head to roar, a roar which caused the blood of many surrounding cultivators to shiver beyond their control, as if it wanted to rush out of their bodies.

The ferocious Blood Demon head shot forward toward the middle-aged man, who instantly fell backward, his facial expression flickering as an intense sensation of deadly crisis rose up in him. He had the powerful feeling that if he was even the slightest bit too slow, he would be dead.

Unfortunately, his speed obviously didn’t match up to that of the Blood Demon head, which was instantly on top of him. The man’s expression was despondent, and his eyes glittered with hatred as he screamed, “Why haven’t all of you attacked yet!?”

Immediately, a dozen or so of the surrounding Demonic cultivators stepped forward, cultivation bases surging as they attacked the Blood Demon head.

There were even more who let out bellows of rage and shot toward Meng Hao. Fully a hundred Demonic cultivators all attacked simultaneously. Killing intent was like a flood that exploded out, causing that area of the Nine Seas God World to seem like it had descended into a chaotic riot.

All of the non-Demonic cultivator disciples of the Nine Seas God World looked on with flickering faces, and some began stepping forward to stop the fighting.

However, Meng Hao unexpectedly smiled, a smile filled with killing intent. He opted to stop trying to figure out why all this was happening; after all, his opponent had tried to kill him, and therefore… things were now simple. That man would die!

This was Meng Hao’s chance… to establish his place in the Nine Seas God World!

His eyes flickered coldly as he suddenly raised his hand, within which appeared the Lightning Cauldron. Electricity danced, and a huge boom could be heard as he suddenly switched places with another of the Demonic cultivators next to his middle-aged opponent.

The man’s face fell in shock and alarm as Meng Hao reached out and tapped his finger toward his forehead.

That single finger surged with a murderous aura, and it was obvious that if he touched the middle-aged man, he would be instantly killed in body and soul, dead beyond the shadow of a doubt.

At that point, an enraged voice shouted out from off in the distance.

“How presumptuous!!”

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever, almost as if he hadn’t heard the voice. His finger continued to descend until it landed on the man’s forehead. A boom rang out… and the man trembled violently. His meridians were shattered, and his body exploded into a cloud of gore. Meng Hao waved his hand, dispersing the blood, then turned to face the newcomer.

“Do you mean that I’m being presumptuous, or that he was?” he asked coldly.

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# Chapter 1038: I Promise Not to Kill You!

In the time it takes a spark to fly off of a piece of flint, someone being attacked by a crowd of Demonic cultivators killed his opponent with precision and determination!

The surrounding cultivators of the Nine Seas God World looked on with shock, and the Demonic cultivators' eyes narrowed. Everyone was astonished by Meng Hao's lightning-like attack.

For countless years, never had a Nine Seas God World disciple been attacked and killed within the Nine Seas God World itself. Even during the insurrection caused when the Ji Clan sleeper cells revealed themselves among the forces of the Three Great Daoist Societies, all they did was sow chaos.

As for Meng Hao, although he was technically a disciple of the Nine Seas God World, the other cultivators hadn't approved of him yet, and essentially viewed him as an outsider.

His methods were vicious, and he attacked to kill. Then he simply waved away the resulting cloud of blood, leaving the cultivators of the Nine Seas God World completely stunned.

When Meng Hao turned and spoke, his words echoed out into the ears of everyone present. All disciples, both Demonic cultivators and regular disciples, could clearly hear them, and could sense the domineering arrogance within them.

They sounded like words designed to defy laws and principles, even those of the Heavens. As of that moment, everyone was left with a deep impression of Meng Hao.

At the same time, a bellow of rage echoed out from off in the distance. Meng Hao's eyes were cold as he watched a black-robed old man approaching. He strode through the air, bristling with rage, cultivation base surging. Shockingly, an enormous illusory image could be seen behind him.

The image was that of a Sea Dragon, pitch black with four razor-sharp talons. Its whiskers were long, and floated around its head, making it look especially vicious as it glared at Meng Hao with cold eyes. A wild wind kicked up, disturbing the energy of Heaven and Earth in the area.

As for the old man, at first glance he looked like a cultivator, except that on his forehead was a black fish scale. Furthermore, two black, coiled horns grew out of the top of his head, which radiated a flickering glow that made him seem terrifyingly powerful.

"You ruthless rascal! How dare you act presumptuously in the Nine Seas God World!" he said, his voice ancient and thunderous. The sound of his voice turned into massive pressure which crushed down toward Meng Hao.

Even more shocking, Soul Lamps began to swirl around him, five of which were extinguished.

"That's Elder Hai Sheng!"

"Greetings, Elder Hai Sheng!" The old man's appearance on the scene immediately energized the Demonic cultivators, all of whom offered greetings. The old man ignored them, and focused completely on Meng Hao. As he approached, killing intent swirled around him, a will of hatred that seemed to ooze out from his bones, as if he couldn't bear to live under the same sky as Meng Hao.

As he closed in on Meng Hao, he didn't hesitate for even a moment. Ignoring the surrounding Demonic cultivators, he stretched his right hand out and made a clawing motion. The Sea Dragon behind him roared, then shot past him, flying gracefully toward Meng Hao and then slashing at him with its claws.

It was a vicious attack filled with killing intent, clearly designed to rip him to pieces.

The claws even seemed to embody natural law, as if they could borrow from the power of the Ninth Sea itself. It transformed into a sealing mark which caused everything in the area to shake. The seafloor quaked, and boundless ripples spread out.

Meng Hao's eyes glittered coldly as a sense of crisis filled him. Shockingly, he transformed into a golden roc, which let out a piercing cry as it shot toward the Sea Dragon.

Moments later, the roc and the dragon collided, and a huge boom echoed out.

That one interchange caused Meng Hao in golden roc-form to spit out a mouthful of blood, increasing his speed rapidly to evade the first slash of the Sea Dragon's claws.

As he retreated, the Sea Dragon swept its mighty tail toward Meng Hao, ripping the air violently as it neared him.

If that tail strike landed on Meng Hao, it wouldn't matter that he had a true Immortal fleshly body. If he wasn't killed, then at the least, he would be seriously injured. After all, this was the attack of an Ancient Realm cultivator with five extinguished soul lamps.

All of this takes some time to describe, but occurred in only a brief moment. The tail, filled with bursting power, was just about to slam into Meng Hao. Meng Hao, face grim, transformed back from a golden roc into human-form, then waved his right hand. Instantly, buzzing filled the air as 500 black beetles appeared in front of him, using their backs to form a huge shield.

BOOOOMMMMMM!

The tail smacked into the black beetle shield, which trembled violently and then collapsed into 500 parts. However, despite being dispersed by the blow… not a single black beetle was killed.

With the help of the black beetles, Meng Hao retreated roughly 3,000 meters. Waving his right hand, he caused the 500 black beetles to swirl around him as the illusory Sea Dragon prepared a second slashing attack.

The speed of the attack caused the surrounding disciples of the Nine Seas God World to gasp. They could never have imagined that Meng Hao, who had an Immortal Realm cultivation base, could fight back against the attack of an Ancient Realm Elder.

The black-robed old man frowned, and his killing intent grew more intense as he advanced again.

Meng Hao took a deep breath as he glared at the old man. His Ancient Realm cultivation base was not ordinary. However, they were still at the bottom of the sea. If they were outside, he would be even more powerful.

Meng Hao had his speculations that if he successfully absorbed his own Nirvana Fruits, the explosive power of his Immortal Realm cultivation base might be strong enough to fight back. However… that would only be if the Ninth Sea wasn’t suppressing his cultivation base.

His eyes glittered, and as the pressure from the old man crushed down on him, he snorted coldly. However, he did not retreat. Instead, he took a step forward, then spoke out, his voice booming, “Presumptuous!?

“I, Meng Hao, am a conclave disciple of the Nine Seas God World! After returning to my own sect, I was inexplicably attacked! You, an Elder, didn’t even stop to inquire about who was in the wrong, but instead attacked with deadly force. And you say that I’m presumptuous!?

“The person I killed was the presumptuous one! I’m a member of the Fang Clan, a disciple of all of the Three Great Daoist Societies! He wanted to kill me? I bet he was actually an agent of the Ji Clan!

“I heard that not too long ago, the Ji Clan had sleeper cells in the Three Great Daoist Societies that sowed a lot of chaos. That man must have been a cultivator of the Ji Clan!

“He attacked me impulsively, and then even called on a bunch of accessories to aid in his treason! Killing me would earn him a lot of credit in the Ji Clan! Killing me would destroy the reputation of the Daoist Societies! Killing me would would accomplish his mission!” Meng Hao’s words were as sharp as daggers. With each sentence he spoke, he took a step forward, taking every opportunity to embellish his words, causing his voice to ring out loudly in all directions.

When the surrounding Demonic cultivators heard his words, they were instantly enraged, and began to shout out angrily.

“YOU!!”

“You’re shameless! SLANDERER!!”

“He wasn’t a Ji Clan agent, and we definitely aren’t accessories to treason!” Their killing intent grew even stronger, as if they wanted to chomp Meng Hao up and swallow him. Some of the more irascible ones clenched their fists and began to walk forward.

As for the ordinary cultivators, they looked hesitant. Quite a few had already pressed down on jade slips to notify Elders within the sect. The disturbance was also attracting the attention of disciples from other areas in the sect, who were now flying over to watch the events play out.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever, but inwardly, he was laughing coldly. When it came to battles of wit, he had never been defeated. Not in the Violet Fate Sect, not on Planet South Heaven as large, and not in the Fang Clan. It would be impossible to say how many people would instantly describe him as sharp-tongued.

“If you’re not from the Ji Clan, then why would attack me as soon as you saw me?!” he retorted, glancing around coldly at all the infuriated Demonic cultivators. Then he turned to the black-robed old man and coolly said, “And now, you even have an Elder joining you! It’s a classic case of the big bullying the small! Elder Hai Sheng, could it be that you want to start your own version of the torture chamber right here!? You want to use the greater power of your Ancient Realm cultivation base to kill me?

“That’s because you–” The Demonic cultivators’ eyes went bright red, but before they could finish responding, Elder Hai Sheng gave a cold harrumph, and his expression became incredibly dark. Meng Hao was speaking very loudly, causing his voice to boom out in all directions and attract a lot of attention. Elder Hai Sheng wanted to attack him, but didn’t dare to be so obvious. Therefore he could only secretly wallow in his fury that Meng Hao had blocked his previous two attacks.

When he spoke, his voice was like thunder, pushing down oppressively on everyone in the area:

“It doesn’t matter what happened. Killing people here cannot be tolerated. Men, arrest him and take him to the sect court to be held accountable!” Elder Hai Sheng could see that the crowd was only growing larger, making it impossible for him to attack Meng Hao again. He knew that, as of now, it would be impossible to kill him. Inwardly, however, he was laughing coldly.

He looked at Meng Hao, flicked his sleeve, and thought, “I might not be able to kill you this day, but I will most certainly humiliate you! Your reputation among the disciples of the Three Great Daoist Societies will be ruined! Furthermore, this will ensure that all other powers in the Nine Seas God World know that our Demonic Cultivator Horde and YOU… are irreconcilable enemies! With the Demonic cultivators taking the initiative, more and more people will be unable to suppress their ill feelings, causing more trouble for you!

“That way, you will only find yourself facing more and more enemies in the Nine Seas God World! Eventually, it will even reach the point that even the Grand Elders and Patriarchs who do approve of you, will one day be unable to protect you. In the end… you’ll definitely die here!

“That is the only way to give vent to the blood enmity that exists between us! That is the only way that we Nine Seas God World Demonic cultivators can ease the stench of your vile aura!

“And if you want to know the reason why… well, too bad! I’m not going to tell you!” Elder Hai Sheng’s face was as cold as ice, and his eyes were shot with blood, causing Meng Hao’s heart to sink.

Meng Hao was still trying to figure out why all of this was happening, but he couldn’t be certain. What exactly was it that had caused such deep-seated enmity between him and the Demonic cultivators?

“Is it the spirit-immortal stones? Or perhaps me being part of the League of Demon Sealers? Or maybe me showing up here threatens the interest of some unknown party? An old foe of the Fang Clan?” Meng Hao felt a headache coming on. Even after pondering the matter from every angle, he was still perplexed about the situation. After Elder Hai Sheng finished speaking, seven or eight disciples flew through the air toward Meng Hao, killing intent seething.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered coldly. He had already started killing people, so he didn’t mind killing a few more. Although… if he could get some more promissory notes, that would be even better!

“Since they’re not going to provide any explanation,” he thought, “I’ll just force them to owe me more money than they’ll ever be able to pay back!

“Furthermore, I can’t believe that this disturbance has gone unnoticed by those old fogies of the Nine Seas God World. They have to know what’s happening!” He was irritated, and seeing how much the Demonic cultivators wanted to kill him, he found the whole situation to be very annoying.

“Don’t you worry. As long as you do what I say, I won’t kill you!” he said coolly. Lifting his left hand, he caused tens of thousands of mountains to crush down from above.

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# Chapter 1039: I Have Proof!

Of the eight Demonic cultivators, three were female. They were extremely beautiful and charming, as it seemed most female Demonic cultivators were. Despite the murderous looks that currently warped their faces, they were extremely attractive.

Although they all had various body parts that clearly belonged to sea beasts, that wasn’t distracting, and if anything, enhanced their beauty.

The rest of the male Demonic cultivators were all equally handsome.

Currently, all eight of these Demonic cultivators were now closing in on Meng Hao.

His eyes glittered as he waved his right hand, causing rumbling sounds to echo out as the Mountain Consuming Incantation materialized into the form of a mountain chain which crushed down onto the incoming cultivators.

The eight Demonic cultivators were prepared, however. Echoing booms rang out as they performed incantation gestures, causing Immortal qi to surge out. Each and every one was in the Immortal Realm, although none were true Immortals; they were all false Immortals. They fought back against the mountain chain with divine abilities and magical techniques, as well as with their Dharma Idols.

Booms rang out in all directions. All of these Demonic cultivators were at the peak of the Immortal Realm. It was with cold harrumphs that they fought back against the Mountain Consuming Incantation, causing the mountain chain to collapse. Furthermore, they arranged themselves in a magical formation, allowing them to swap locations and increase the power of their divine abilities. In the blink of an eye, the Mountain Consuming Incantation’s mountain range collapsed into pieces.

The eight Demonic cultivators continued to charge forward, led by a beautiful woman who had no scales at all, and looked almost exactly like a normal cultivator. The only difference was that she stood inside of a gigantic shell that was far larger than her own person.

She moved with incredible speed, nearing Meng Hao, eyes flickering with killing intent. She lifted her hand to reveal, shockingly, a beautiful pearl, which was emanating glittering light.

“Solidify!” she said. Although her voice was beautiful, it instantly caused the surroundings to grow colder.

The glittering light of the pearl emanated strange power as it threatened to lock down Meng Hao.

His eyes shone with a bizarre light as he lifted his right hand in response, then pointed up into the air.

“A Writ of Karma!” Instantly, black and white light appeared on his hand, which transformed into threads that shot out. Simultaneously, Karma Threads appeared over his head.

Almost as soon as the Karma Threads appeared, Meng Hao took a step forward. Instantly, he was directly in front of the shelled female Demonic cultivator. Her expression flickered as Meng Hao’s hand reached out to tap her forehead.

The woman’s face fell as an intense sensation of crisis rose up in her heart, and her shell rapidly snapped shut to protect her.

However, Meng Hao snorted coldly, which shook her mentally and sent her cultivation base into chaos. The shell stopped in place, and Meng Hao’s finger shot into the shell like lightning to land directly onto the female Demonic cultivator’s forehead.

It was a light touch, but it was enough to bind her Karma Threads. He lifted his hand up and tied the Karma Threads that no outsider could see into a knot, linking them together. The knot then turned into a brilliant light in the middle of his palm, which was then transformed by the magical technique into a promissory note!

The female Demonic cultivator’s body trembled, and she felt as if something inside of her had been taken away without her volition. Shocked, she tried to retreat, but it took only the blink of an eye for Meng Hao to wave his hand, causing a wild wind to sweep over her. Her body was beyond her own control as she was grabbed by Meng Hao, sealed, and stuffed into his bag of holding.

“It worked!” he thought, falling back and taking a moment to examine the Demonic cultivator he had just captured. His eyes rapidly began to glow even brighter. “Demonic cultivators are great! I can sell them off as pets or even mounts. Anything people will buy!

“Their entire bodies are treasures; I could carve out random chunks if I wanted and refine them into qi and blood medicinal pills. That giant shell also has a Demon heart!!

“Excellent. Excellent. This is much better than all that seafood from the Milky Way Sea.” Meng Hao appeared to be delighted. As far as he was concerned, if the Demonic cultivators viewed him as an enemy, then he might as well treat them as seafood. All of a sudden, he felt intense regret.

“Dammit, I shouldn’t have killed that one earlier!” Even in his moment of pain, his body flickered to appear in front of one of the other Demonic cultivators. This time, it was a man whose back stuck out so far it almost looked like a camel. Actually, it was no hump, but a turtle shell. Shockingly, this Demonic cultivator had started practicing cultivation as a turtle!

“I hate damned turtles most of all!” Meng Hao murmured. The Demonic cultivator’s face fell, and Meng Hao extended his right hand. A Writ of Karma appeared again, along with intense rumbling sounds, as he forced ties of destiny. The Demonic cultivator trembled and tried to flee, but Meng Hao instantly caused a huge hand to appear and snatch toward him.

The Star Plucking Magic rotated as he grabbed the man, sealed him, and stashed him away.

He moved with incredible speed, following the same pattern. In a very short period of time, he had captured four Demonic cultivators!

This scene caused the surrounding disciples to stare with wide eyes.

“What is he doing?”

“Oh, I remember. This Meng Hao has a strange hobby of getting people to write promissory notes. He even created a divine ability that can… can force people to be tied to him via Karma!!”

“He just captured Junior Brother Jin and Junior Sister Shui!”

As for the Demonic cultivators, when they saw what was happening, they were enraged. Roars of fury could be heard as dozens of them charged toward Meng Hao.

Apparently, Meng Hao’s actions spurred all of the Demonic cultivators into a rage. After the first dozen charged him, they were followed by hundreds more, all of whom flew into the air straight toward him.

Elder Hai Shen’s eyes were bright red, as if new hatreds were being piled onto old ones. Gritting his teeth, he was just about to attack when, all of a sudden, he stopped in place and remained silent.

Even if he didn’t attack, there were hundreds of Demonic cultivators attacking. Even though they were all false Immortals, there were hundreds of them attacking at the same time, an attack that even an Ancient Realm cultivator would be forced to avoid. Energy surged, shocking magical techniques were unleashed, and killing intent filled the area.

Meng Hao might be powerful, but the sight of it caused even his scalp to tingle. He grabbed a fifth Demonic cultivator, and then began to back up. The man struggled and howled, but Meng Hao quickly sealed him and continued to retreat.

BOOM!

The place he had just been standing in shattered. Ripples spread out, and hundreds of Demonic cultivators continued chasing Meng Hao with frenzied attacks.

“Damn those old farts from the Nine Seas God World!” Meng Hao thought. “Why haven’t they shown up yet!?” He backed up under the onslaught of hundreds of maddened Demonic cultivators, sure that the old bastards were currently watching the spectacle from the sidelines.

“I killed someone before, and they still didn’t make an appearance….” he thought as he backed up. Finally, he snorted coldly.

“Well, I was in the right. If something really bad happens, the old fogies will have to take responsibility. In that case… I’m going to force them to show their faces!” Eyes flickering, he raised his right hand, within which appeared the Lightning Cauldron.

He might fear the combined attacks of all of the Demonic cultivators, but in truth, Meng Hao wasn’t the least bit frightened of fighting outnumbered. In fact, as long as he was careful, such large-scale fighting was the best type of battlefield for him.

Electricity danced, and a rumbling sound could be heard as he vanished. When he reappeared, he was right in the middle of all the Demonic cultivators, having switched places with one of their number. In the moment that he fully appeared, and before anyone could react, he reached his hand out and shoved out forcefully. A Demonic cultivator whose body was half covered with scales had its Karma tied up, and was captured.

Next, the flash of lightning could once again be seen, and Meng Hao disappeared. He showed up in another location, causing the Demonic cultivators to roar in frustration. Meng Hao was like a loach, virtually impossible to pin down. No matter how much force the Demonic cultivators used in their attacks, they were never able to keep Meng Hao in one place.

Of course, in all the chaos, Meng Hao received some injuries. Blood oozed out of his mouth, and yet, his eyes shone as brightly as ever. Often, it would only take one flash of light before he had captured yet another Demonic cultivator.

10. 15. 20….

Not much time passed before Meng Hao had captured over 30 Demonic cultivators. Finally, there was someone who couldn’t endure the situation any longer. A cold snort echoed out from the very depths of the Nine Seas God World.

It was accompanied by Heaven-shaking, Earth-rocking pressure, a pressure which changed natural law and caused the entire Ninth Sea to seethe and roar.

When that sound echoed out, Meng Hao’s face fell. Shocking pressure rumbled down as a giant finger materialized in midair, which then pushed down toward Meng Hao.

Essence aura also roiled out.

“Dao Realm!” Meng Hao’s eyes went wide. He had absolutely no way to fight back against the terrifying might of the Dao Realm. However, almost as soon as the finger appeared, a dry cough echoed out.

At long last, the old-timers from the Nine Seas God World couldn’t sit still any longer. The dry cough echoed out to cover everything, transforming into a mighty pressure that prevented all of the Demonic cultivators from attacking.

An old man appeared out of thin air. A single step forward, and he was in front of the giant finger that was pushing down toward Meng Hao. He waved his hand out to touch the finger.

Rumbling echoed out in all directions as the hand and the finger made contact. The finger trembled and then faded away. As for the old man, he staggered backward a few paces, his face a mass of white and red lines, as if his qi and blood were in chaos.

“Elder Brother Wu, there’s no reason to act thus,” said the old man. Meng Hao immediately recognized him! It was none other than Ling Yunzi! He wasn’t the only one to appear. He was followed by seven or eight disciples of the Nine Seas God World, including Fan Dong’er.

She looked coldly at Meng Hao, inwardly rejoicing at his misfortune.

As soon as Ling Yunzi showed up, all of the disciples of the Nine Seas God World clasped hands and bowed. Even the black-robed Elder Hai Sheng bowed his head.

At this point, a cold and ancient voice echoed out in all directions, replying to Ling Yunzi: “He killed a member of my Demonic Cultivator Horde!”

“Meng Hao didn’t attack first,” answered Ling Yunzi slowly. “In fact, he evaded twice. Any member of the sect who attacks a conclave disciple has committed a grave offense that cannot be absolved even if they are killed in the counterattack. Even if he had not died, he would have been immediately expelled from the sect.”

“I didn’t see any of my Demonic cultivators attack of their own initiative,” replied the cold, ancient voice. “I just saw this kid killing my people. Furthermore, he captured 33 disciples of my Demonic Cultivator Horde. Shouldn’t he immediately set them free?!”

This time, Meng Hao didn’t wait for Ling Yunzi to respond. He wasn’t worried about causing a huge ruckus. After all, he was the Crown Prince of the Fang Clan, and was a disciple of all of the Three Great Daoist Societies. If the Nine Seas God World allowed anything unfortunate to happen, it would cause a massive conflict within the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Therefore, full of confidence and courage, he flickered to appear next to Ling Yunzi, then cried, “Those 33 seafood dishes owed me money. HUGE amounts of spirit stones! They can’t pay me back, so they sold themselves to me to pay off the debt! I have PROOF!!” Even as he spoke, he lifted up his hand, within which were a stack of promissory note formed by A Writ of Karma. 1

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Note from Er Gen: Uh… I feel like eating seafood.

Note from Deathblade: I don't particularly feel like eating seafood, although there's a pretty high-end buffet near my house that has unlimited king crab legs. Okay I changed my mind, I feel like eating seafood!

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# Chapter 1040: Don’t Provoke Me!

Ling Yunzi gaped in response to Meng Hao’s words. The other disciples of the Nine Seas God World behind him also stared with wide eyes. Fan Dong’er gasped.

The other cultivators in the area felt their jaws drop and their minds reel. All of that was because Meng Hao had said the words… seafood.

Simultaneously, the surrounding Demonic cultivators’ eyes went bright red, and their desire to kill rocketed up, transforming into a tempest within the Nine Seas God World.

“He actually dared to call us seafood? He MUST be killed!!”

“Kill him NOW! I haven’t eaten a cultivator for a long time, and I want to eat HIM!!” Roaring sounds raged up into the air, echoing out in all directions.

Meng Hao laughed coldly, and his expression was the same as ever. His words had been uttered intentionally, of course. He did not believe for a moment that if he spoke politely, the Demonic cultivators would suddenly stop viewing him as an enemy that needed to be killed.

For whatever reason, they hated him and wanted him dead, a situation that didn’t seem possible to resolve. Therefore, since he didn’t have the power to fight back physically, he would use fatally destructive words as his weapon.

Sometimes, the power of one’s words were of more use than the strength of one’s cultivation base.

For example, calling the Demonic cultivators ‘seafood dishes’ was something that no other person would dare to do. In fact, because of the history and roots of the Nine Seas God World, it was most likely a term that no one had even thought to associate with the Demonic cultivators. However, Meng Hao said it, and the words echoed out for everyone to hear.

On many occasions a single sentence, or even just two words, can completely change the situation.

A perfect example was this very moment, in which the non-Demonic cultivators of the Nine Seas God World were looking around with strange expressions on their faces. Normally speaking, they viewed the Demonic cultivators as fellow sect disciples, but right now, when they looked at them, they couldn’t help but think about seafood.

“Lies upon more lies!” raged the ancient voice. Massive killing intent bore down, materializing into a huge hand that rumbled down toward Meng Hao.

From the look of it, that hand was capable of completely crushing the entire land. As it descended, the air shattered, and natural law collapsed. It was as if the fury of the Heavens were crushing down, causing Ling Yunzi’s face to flicker. At this point, a soft sigh echoed out as an old woman appeared in midair. She waved her finger toward the huge hand, causing the hand to collapse, whereupon it transformed into a huge tentacle. A muffled grunt echoed out, but the tentacle didn’t fade away. Instead, it swerved around the old woman and continued on toward Meng Hao.

The old woman did nothing to intervene this time. She merely said, “Enough, Junior Brother Wu. You know how important Meng Hao is. Don’t force me to damage our friendship.”

As she spoke, a stream of divine sense shot out from thin air. Although no physical body was present, the aura of the Dao Realm appeared, radiating intense pressure. The threatening nature of the aura was plainly evident.

This aura merged with those of the old woman and Ling Yunzi, creating a towering energy that swept out in all directions, causing all the surrounding regions of the Ninth Sea to seethe.

Almost as soon as the stream of divine sense appeared, a second stream of divine sense also exploded out from within the depths of the Nine Seas God World. This divine sense radiated a sense of madness and ferocity, and was filled with Demonic qi. This was clearly a Dao Realm Demonic cultivator!

However, even with that divine sense merging with that of the cultivator named Wu, they were no match for the old woman's faction.

Things weren't over yet, though. Almost as soon as the Dao Realm aura appeared, two more Dao Realm auras appeared from two different directions. The streams of surging energy actually formed into four factional powers.

The tentacle paused in midair, as if they all were now in the middle of a standoff.

The surrounding disciples of the Nine Seas God World looked on with flickering faces. Neither Demonic nor non-Demonic cultivators could ever have imagined that they would be witnessing a shocking scene like this.

There were only a few disciples who watched with glittering eyes; clearly, they were already aware of the complex nature of the relationships between the various factions within the Nine Seas God World.

Meng Hao's eyes widened. This brief probing on his part had already revealed the depth and caliber of the Nine Seas God World.

"I can't believe they have seven Dao Realm experts! They definitely deserve to be one of the Three Great Daoist Societies!" Meng Hao's mind trembled. He could now see that the faction represented by the old woman was the strongest within the Nine Seas God World. That was also the same faction which had insisted on accepting him as a disciple.

After a long moment, the archaic voice echoed out from within the tentacle, cold and filled with killing intent: "We can forget about the person he killed. If he just hands over my disciples that were captured, and kowtows to admit his wrongdoing, then we can put the matter to rest."

The old woman frowned. As far as she was concerned, handing over the captured Demonic cultivators would be fine. However, the matter of kowtowing to admit fault was a bit excessive. She was just about to open her mouth to respond, when Meng Hao began to laugh.

“Put the matter to rest? After arriving in the Ninth Sea, I was hunted murderously by numerous seafood dishes! Then I arrived at the Nine Seas God World, and even more seafood inexplicably attacked me! There was even one seafood dish which tried to kill me!

“After I killed him, an old seafood dish shamelessly used his Ancient Realm cultivation base to try to murder me!

“After that, a whole army of mini-seafood dishes joined forces to attack me! Then in the end, in an unbelievable turn of events, a Dao Realm expert actually tried to make a move on me! Even I have limits to my patience! You think you can just put the matter to rest? Like hell we can put it to rest!” Meng Hao’s wording was sharp and incisive, his voice cold.

As soon as the words left his mouth, the surrounding disciples frowned. Many of them believed Meng Hao to be ignorant of the height of the Heavens and the depth of the Earth. His voice didn’t match up at all to that of an almighty member of the Dao Realm.

As for the Demonic cultivators, they began to chuckle coldly, believing Meng Hao to have vastly overestimated himself.

“Screw off! You don’t qualify to speak in this situation!” said the ancient voice, which echoed about like thunder.

Even though Meng Hao stood next to Ling Yunzi, blood began oozing out of his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth due to the vibrations of the voice. However, his expression was one of ferocity as he threw his head back and laughed.

“I’m not qualified?

"I'm the Crown Prince of the Fang Clan, and in the future I'll certainly be the Clan Chief. The Fang Clan has Fang Shoudao, the Earth Patriarch, along with Patriarch Yanxu, AND the first generation Patriarch. In the battle of Planet East Victory, they cut down Dao Realm experts as easily as slaughtering chickens. You want me to kowtow to you? That's like having the whole Fang Clan kowtow to you! Even if I did kowtow, would you dare to accept it?!"

His words echoed out like thunder into all ears. Even the owner of that ancient voice, who had not appeared in person, but remained hidden in secluded meditation, was speechless.

He could afford to disregard Meng Hao, but he couldn't afford to disregard the Fang Clan. That was especially true after the first generation Patriarch of the Fang Clan put on such a display of might in the battle of Planet East Victory, and had even cowed the Ji Clan into retreat. How could he even compare?

This Dao Realm expert had personally witnessed the first generation Patriarch on the attack, and it left his scalp numb and mind spinning. Suddenly, the legends about the Fang Clan's first generation Patriarch all seemed to rise up into his mind.

He was from a generation of fierce experts, a contemporary of Ji Tian. According to the legends, in the great war in which Lord Ji became the Heavens, the first generation Patriarch of the Fang Clan was the number one killer, bathing the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea in blood!

However, Meng Hao wasn't finished yet!

"By the way, I'm not just a disciple of the Nine Seas God World. I'm also a conclave disciple of the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite, AND the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto! Did you ask the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite and the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto whether or not you could mess with me!?

"You want me, their conclave disciple, to kowtow? That's the same as having the entire Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite and the entire Sublime Flow

Sword Grotto kowtow to you! Well then, let me ask you the same thing as before. If I did kowtow, would you dare to accept it?”

As Meng Hao’s words echoed out, Ling Yunzi stood there silently. As for the old woman, she smiled slightly. She had been planning to interfere in the matter, but now, it seemed there was no need to do anything. Her eyes glowed with amusement as she watched Meng Hao.

As for the old Dao Realm expert who represented the Demonic Cultivator Horde, he continued to hesitate.

“Do you think your crappy Seafood Horde is the only power structure among all the Three Great Daoist Societies?

“You think I don’t qualify? Well then let me ask you, who DOES qualify?

“If you don’t give me an explanation right now, do you really think that the Fang Clan, the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite, the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto, and these Elder Patriarchs of the God World, couldn’t completely wipe out your Seafood Horde?” Meng Hao’s voice grew clearer and clearer, his wording sharper and more incisive. All of the surrounding disciples were gasping, and the faces of the Demonic cultivators fell.

As of this moment, Meng Hao was now the center of attention of all of the Nine Seas God World.

He stood there, jaw tilted up, his domineering will raging for all to see.

“You know what? I don’t even need to call on all those people to help. If you say the word ‘kowtow’ one more time, how much are you willing to bet that I won’t crush this jade slip and summon the first generation Patriarch of the Fang Clan himself to slaughter you where you stand?!” With that, Meng Hao held a jade slip aloft for everyone to see.

His words immediately caused an uproar. Not only did the faces of Ling Yunzi and the old woman flicker, so did the faces of the two Dao Realm Patriarchs from the Demonic Cultivator Horde.

The other two almighty Dao Realm experts from the other power factions were equally shaken. As of this moment, Meng Hao's words were absolutely the most powerful weapon he could possibly wield.

"I know you're probably wondering if I'm bluffing. Well let me explain it to your sorry ass: My first generation Patriarch personally gave me this jade slip, and then promised to appear at my side at any time, because I'm the successor of the One Thought Stellar Transformation!

"I'm also the only one in the Fang Clan to ever successfully concoct the first generation Patriarch's three Holy pills!

"Plus, I did something that almost no one else has ever done! I corroborated the Dao on my own, and I opened the maximum possible 123 meridians!

"And in fact, I'm also… in the Echelon!"

Meng Hao listed out one fact after another. The result was dead silence that lasted only for a moment before complete tumult took over. For all the years that the Nine Seas God World had existed, Meng Hao was the first person to ever excoriate a Dao Realm expert!

Furthermore, his venomous words were like a sharp sword; anyone who heard them would feel their mind rumbling.

Meng Hao had decided he might as well go all out with his words, in much the same manner as he had killed the Demonic cultivator earlier. He wanted to firmly establish his position among the various factions in the Nine Seas God World, with their complex relationships.

He didn't just want to unnerve the ordinary disciples, he wanted to awe the almighty Dao Realm experts. His words contained nothing truly secret; the Dao Realm experts could easily do some investigating and confirm the truth of what he was saying.

One of the reasons he wanted to establish his position in this way was that he did not intend to stay in the Nine Seas God World for very long. Therefore, the more domineering he could make himself, the easier and smoother things would be. Instead of starting out by being bullied, he would unsheathe his sword, making himself a giant mass of bristling spikes!

As far as whether or not people believed everything he said, that didn’t matter. The important thing was that they knew that he was important to the Fang Clan, the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite, and the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto. That would be enough.

Amidst the uproar, the tentacle up in midair suddenly vanished. A cold harrumph echoed out, but was accompanied by no words. The two Dao Realm auras from the Demonic Cultivator Horde vanished.

In that moment, the two other almighty Dao Realm auras from the other two factions stared deeply at Meng Hao, and then slowly faded away.

Just as Meng Hao had guessed, the truth of his words weren’t important. Everyone could now see how deeply he was backed by the powerful forces in Ninth Mountain and Sea, and also understood the main point of all of his words.

Don’t provoke me!

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# Chapter 1041: The Origin

Don’t provoke me!

Meng Hao didn’t actually speak the words, but based on everything he had said, the message to all his enemies was clear:

Don’t provoke me!

If you do, be prepared to deal with the consequences!

Today, I killed one Demonic cultivator and captured 33 more. Well then… if you dare to provoke me tomorrow, then I’ll do the same thing. And if you push me even further, then I’ll flip the table over and really cause a scene.

The streams of Dao Realm divine sense faded away. Meng Hao’s first day in the Nine Seas God World was a day in which his name spread throughout the entire sect. All disciples heard about what happened, leaving them with a profound impression.

Fan Dong’er looked deeply at Meng Hao for a moment, but didn’t say anything. Her expression from earlier, in which she was rejoicing in his misfortune, was completely gone. Now, her fear of him was even more deeply rooted.

The Demonic cultivators’ hatred was still there, but Meng Hao had established his position in the sect. He still wasn’t sure why they hated him so much, but it didn’t matter; he had already secured his position. There wasn’t a single Demonic cultivator in the entire sect who would dare to make a move against him.

No one in the Immortal Realm was his match. He had castigated the Ancient Realm, and even the Dao Realm was intimidated by him. The glorious scene in which he revealed his terrifying background caused the Demonic cultivators to not only fear him, but to also be jealous of him, and to curse his arrogant and despotic display.

Ling Yunzi left with Meng Hao in tow. The rest of the cultivators gradually dispersed. When Meng Hao’s vision cleared, he was in a mountain range deep in the Nine Seas God World.

His current location was a mountain, the top half of which was covered with snow; the frigid cold was evidence of the strength of the energy of Heaven and Earth here. Despite the Nine Seas God World being at the bottom of the sea, the entire land mass was surrounded by a huge invisible shield which kept the seawater out. However, the massive pressure exerted by the Ninth Sea was still there.

At the top of the mountain was a temple, which was where Ling Yunzi was taking Meng Hao. As soon as he entered, he saw that there were two other people sitting there cross-legged.

One of them was the old woman from earlier. She wore a long gray robe, and her face was a mass of wrinkles. Her hair was long and white, and her expression archaic, as if she had existed for many, many years. Her eyes sparkled with a wisdom that seemed to indicate that she could see through the hearts of men.

Of course, Dao Realm experts were all eccentrics with vast experience and unique personalities. They could tell that Meng Hao’s previous threats had been nothing more than explanations about his background. However, he had intentionally spoken them out and then let them hang in the air suspensefully. In the end, it didn’t really matter if the Dao Realm experts fully believed him fully or not, the important thing was to plant seeds of doubt and fear in their minds.

Next to the old woman was an old man with an expressionless face, wearing a green robe. As he sat there cross-legged, his gaze swept over Meng Hao, seemingly sizing him up.

His eyes seemed to contain a sharpness, an ability to thoroughly probe every aspect of Meng Hao. His eyes lingered for a moment on Meng Hao’s forehead, and his eyes sparkled.

Under the old man’s gaze, Meng Hao felt his cultivation base involuntarily rotating, and all of a sudden, his forehead flickered as the Echelon mark appeared.

When the old man saw the mark, he nodded and looked away.

“Meng Hao,” said the old woman, smiling, “you can call me Granny Nine.” Her expression was kind as she spoke to Meng Hao.

“As for the Guru sitting next to me, you should refer to him as Godmaster.”

“Meng Hao offers greetings to Matriarch Granny Nine and Guru Godmaster.” Meng Hao immediately reined in all of his domineering and arrogant manner from before, and put on a very meek and charming demeanor. He even looked a bit bashful as he clasped hands and offered formal greetings.

When they saw Meng Hao’s bashful expression, Granny Nine apparently found it very amusing. She looked at Meng Hao, her gaze kind and gentle.

Next to her, Ling Yunzi’s expression was one of approval. Years ago during the Three Great Daoist Societies’ trial by fire, he had long since come to have a good impression of Meng Hao, especially his willingness to sacrifice so much for the Nine Seas God World. It had definitely left him with a deep impression.

“This is for you,” Granny Nine said with a laugh, “consider it your welcoming gift for joining the sect.” She made a grasping motion, causing a bag of holding to appear, which she sent floating over to Meng Hao.

He blinked, then accepted it and scanned it with divine sense. Immediately, his heart began to pound with excitement. The bag of holding was filled with masses of pill formulas and jade slips. There was also a huge collection of medicinal plants, many of which were extremely rare in the outside world. The value of the contents of this bag was astronomical.

Ling Yunzi chuckled and said, “We know you’re fond of alchemy, so the three of us old-timers prepared this special gift to give you upon our first meeting. Many of the items in that bag were things that we recently took a trip to acquire just for you.”

Although his words seemed straightforward, the medicinal plants were clearly a reminder to Meng Hao of how much the three of them valued him.

Meng Hao immediately bowed again, and said: “Patriarchs, I offer profound thanks for this expression of utmost generosity and kindness.”

With no hesitation whatsoever, he quickly put the bag of holding into his robe, and as he did, he saw the three old-timers shaking their heads and smiling. Even Godmaster, whose face had been expressionless, was now smiling.

“First of all,” said Granny Nine, “allow us to apologize for what happened when you first arrived in the Ninth Sea. That was a bit beyond what we had anticipated. Originally, we would have come out immediately to resolve the situation, but because of some certain unforeseen circumstances, we were unable to. We hope that you can understand.”

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever. He was not a newcomer to the world of cultivation, and had in fact practiced cultivation for many years. He had experienced many situations of mutual deception, and knew that there were just some matters that couldn’t be pursued too seriously.

He might be able to believe that she was unaware of the reaction his arrival would provoke among the Demonic Cultivator Horde, but he was also sure that the resulting conflict had caused Granny Nine and the faction she represented to suddenly have other motives.

After all, they were the primary faction in the Nine Seas God World, and clearly, they wanted to use the opportunity to put the Demonic Cultivator Horde in place. Meng Hao couldn’t really say anything about that.

It was much the same as it had been in the Fang Clan. He had been used in a similar way back then… which was fine. However, being used in such a way should come with compensation. Therefore, after receiving the bag of holding, he quickly put any feelings of ill-will to rest.

Meng Hao was sure that if events hadn't played out the way they had, there would still have been a gift presented. However, it would most likely have contained about half of the valuable medicinal plants that it did.

Seeing Meng Hao's obedient and charming attitude, as well as his quick wit and lack of any prying into the details of what had happened, caused the praise in Granny Nine's eyes to grow even stronger.

"Now that you're here in the Nine Seas God World, I'll give you a simple rundown of the origin of the Three Great Daoist Societies," the woman began slowly. As soon as she started talking, Meng Hao's ears perked up. "These are things that we can tell you, but they must not be spread beyond this room.

"The Three Great Daoist Societies have existed eternally from the beginning of the Nine Mountains and Seas down to this day.

"As to how they were started, well, they were founded by none other than the three supreme Paragons!"

"The true names of those three Paragons have long since been forgotten. However, everyone referred to them as Paragon Immortal Ancient, Paragon Nine Seals, and Paragon Sea Dream!

"Paragon Immortal Ancient founded the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite. Paragon Sea Dream founded the Nine Seas God World and the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto.

"That is the origin of the Three Great Daoist Societies. You have met Paragon Sea Dream; she is the one who placed you into the Echelon. She is also the only surviving Paragon…." Granny Nine's voice floated out as if from ancient times, slowly lifting up the veil that covered the truth of the history of the Three Great Daoist Societies.

Meng Hao was silent for a moment. Some of these things were matters he had already guessed the truth of. However, to hear them personally out of the mouth of the Granny Nine left him quite shaken. Finally, he asked, “The Three Great Daoist Societies aren’t specific to the Ninth Mountain and Sea, are they? And what about Paragon Nine Seals? What did he create?”

“Excellent questions,” replied the woman, nodding. Her eyes shone with praise. “Each and every one of the Nine Mountains and Seas has Three Great Daoist Societies!”

Her words caused Meng Hao’s mind to spin.

“They are all called the Nine Seas God World, the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite and the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto.

“There are nine Nine Seas God Worlds, and when they are combined… that is the TRUE Nine Seas God World!” Granny Nine’s voice was calm as she spoke.

“As for Paragon Nine Seals, nobody knows exactly what he founded. However, throughout the years, various clues have been discovered, which have led to sundry speculations and rumors….” At this point, Granny Nine stopped talking, almost as if she were still in shock and disbelief over the words she was about to speak.

The person to complete the thought was not the Granny Nine, but the expressionless old man who was called guru Godmaster. “According to the rumors,” he said, “Paragon Nine Seals created… the entire Mountain and Sea Realm!”

When Meng Hao heard this, his mind filled with crashing rumbling. The information contained in what he had heard was something completely unheard of, leaving him shaken and panting.

“Paragon Nine Seals created the Mountain and Sea Realm?” he exclaimed.

“It’s merely speculation,” Godmaster said, his archaic voice echoing out through the temple hall. “There’s no way to determine whether it’s true or not. However, Paragon Nine Seals was the leader of the three great Paragons, so perhaps… during the era of the great war, he was the only one who could accomplish such a feat, to reverse the fate of the cosmos, and to leave behind a tiny strand of incense burning as a memorial for the Immortal Realm.” His voice reverberated throughout the temple.

“It is this speculation that leads us to believe that Paragon Nine Seals’ Daoist magic was none other than the Mountain and Sea Scripture!

“Whoever can acquire the full Mountain and Sea Scripture, will be the Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm! That person will lead us into battle against the 33 Heavens, and restore the Immortal Realm to its former glory!

“The world we live in is the Immortal Realm, the Paragon Immortal Realm which once ruled over all the 3,000 Lower Realms!” Godmaster closed his eyes to conceal the grief contained therein.

Meng Hao was breathing heavily. He had learned from his Soulsearch of Yi Fazi that the Mountain and Sea Realm was what remained of the Paragon Immortal Realm. However, to hear the story directly from the mouth of guru Godmaster was a different matter. All of a sudden, images he had gained from the Soulsearch floated up in his mind.

“It’s enough that you know just this much,” Granny Nine said softly. “It’s better that you remain unaware of some of the more complicated details….

“The mission of the Three Great Daoist Societies is to help the Echelon grow. The Echelon was begun by Paragon Sea Dream. All of the nine Mountains and Seas have cultivators who are part of the Echelon. As for the Ninth Mountain and Sea… we have the fewest members. The first was your ancestor, and the second is you.

“Your path is not limited to the Ninth Mountain and Sea, but rather, the entire Mountain and Sea Realm. Your competitors, are no longer the fellow members of your generation, but rather… members of the Echelon from throughout the Mountain and Sea Realm!

“The Echelon battles are brutal, and on many occasions, are not just between two opponents. Sometimes, the power of entire sects will back two opponents, even leading to huge inter-mountain wars!

“We are not asking you to be the most powerful member of the Echelon. Rather, we just hope… that you can maintain your spot! If you simply continue on down your path, then whatever price must be paid by the Three Great Daoist Societies of the Ninth Mountain and Sea… will be worth it!” Granny nine looked deep into Meng Hao’s eyes, her expression one of anticipation.

Meng Hao found it hard to remain calm. Although he had already guessed the truth about many of these things, his heart was still filled with incomparable waves of shock.

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# Chapter 1042: Trial by Fire of the Likewind Realm

There wasn’t even a slight breeze within the temple hall, but as of this moment, Meng Hao felt like there was a gale force wind buffeting his heart, giving rise to waves of shock. Rumbling sounds filled his mind, causing him to feel somewhat dazed.

“No one can say for certain what Paragon Sea Dream’s plan is for the Echelon….” Granny Nine said. Her voice floated like the wind throughout the temple hall.

“However, there is no harm in speculating. Over the years, the Three Great Daoist Societies of the Mountain and Sea Realm have pieced together what we feel is the answer. It is a simple explanation that we think comes close to the truth.

“The Echelon… is a list of Paragons!

“The only people who can join the Echelon are people who qualify to eventually become a Paragon.

“The Echelon was put in place to develop Paragons for the Mountain and Sea Realm!” Granny Nine’s eyes shone with flickering light, and her voice was filled with decisiveness that could sever nails and chop iron.

“After the great catastrophe, no new Paragons appeared within the Mountain and Sea Realm. Even Ksitigarbha, who everyone acknowledges as the most powerful cultivator in the Realm, is not considered a Paragon.

“That might seem normal,” Granny Nine said softly. “After all, to become a Paragon is a very, very difficult thing. However, the truth of the matter is… it defies logic. As for the reasons why such a situation has come to be, perhaps only Paragon Sea Dream knows.”

Meng Hao’s mind trembled.

“That is the origin of the Three Great Daoist Societies and the Echelon.” As she finished talking, she looked at Meng Hao. Godmaster sat next to her, eyes closed, unspeaking.

Ling Yunzi also sat there quietly, sighing inwardly.

Granny Nine then gave Meng Hao a deep look and continued, “As the Nine Seas God World of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, what we can do for you is exert all our power to assist you in entering the Ancient Realm!

“Therefore, we give you authority within all areas of the sect. We will open wide the doors to all of our Daoist magics and all of our resources, and to our utmost ability, make them available to you. However, those things are secondary. The most important thing….

“Is that we will open the Likewind Realm for you!”

As soon as Granny Nine mentioned the Likewind Realm, Ling Yunzi slowly looked up, and Godmaster opened his eyes.

An intense pressure weighed down on the temple as she spoke the name. Apparently, the words themselves contained some shocking power.

Granny Nine lowered her voice and said: “The Likewind Realm is a trial by fire location unique to the Nine Seas God Worlds of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“All of the Three Great Daoist Societies has their own unique worlds within the Mountain and Sea Realm!

“Each and every one of the various Nine Seas God Worlds, including ours, are qualified to make an appeal to open the Likewind Realm. Over all the years, we have only proposed to do so once, for your Fang Clan's first generation Patriarch!

"Now, after so many years have passed, we are prepared to open it a second time… for you!"

"Likewind Realm?" Meng Hao said, somewhat taken aback. He could tell that these three Dao Realm experts took the matter very seriously. However, he had never heard of this Likewind Realm before. It was completely foreign to him.

"Before the great catastrophe," Granny Nine explained wistfully, "there were 3,000 Lower Realms beneath the Paragon Immortal Realm. During the catastrophe, many of those 3,000 Lower Realms rebelled. War broke out… and in the end, almost all of them were destroyed.

"Only 33 Realms remained complete…."

"The Likewind Realm was once one of the 3,000 Lower Realms. It was one of the rebel Realms that was mostly destroyed in the great war. The bit that remained was taken away by Paragon Sea Dream. All who live there now are the descendants of those felon citizens!

"Over the years, after having been continuously groomed and trained for many years, they returned to upholding many of their former traditions. They came to hold the Immortal Realm in reverence and awe, and became the location of the Nine Seas God World's trial by fire!

"There, you can experience… how utterly supreme the Immortal Realm was in its heyday!"

At this point, a strange gleam appeared in Godmaster's eyes. Even Ling Yunzi was panting as he contemplated his desire for the glories of the past.

"The reason why the Likewind Realm became a location for a trial by fire, and in fact, the first such location for the Nine Seas God World, is because when the Likewind Realm was shattered, its Essence was thrown into chaos.

“Because of that chaotic state, the area is much easier to analyze. Therefore, to cultivators… it is the perfect location to experience the sensation of Essence.” Granny Nine’s voice seemed to contain a bizarre power as it bored into Meng Hao’s ears, causing his heart to tremble ceaselessly.

“Essence is the door to the Dao Realm,” she continued slowly. “Furthermore, traversing the Ancient Realm… is the process of continually making contact with Essence.

“That is especially true in the Likewind Realm. The World Essence can be absorbed, leading to incredible enlightenment regarding the Essence power!

“As for you personally, you will be able to directly form Dao Fruit, and use the Essence of that world to directly enter the Ancient Realm!”

When Meng Hao heard all of this, his mind reeled. He had learned about some of the matters of the past from Yi Fazi’s memories. But now that he heard Granny Nine’s explanation, he understood about the Likewind Realm.

It was… one of the worlds of the past!!

Although only half of it remained, it was still a different world!

Meng Hao took a deep breath, and his eyes shone with a strange light. His path to the Ancient Realm had to do with Nirvana Fruits. Now that he knew he could use the Essence of that world to form Dao Fruits, he was also certain that it would be of extreme usefulness in absorbing his Nirvana Fruits.

“The Likewind Realm will be opened for your trial by fire by us here in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. However… the Likewind Realm belongs to all of the Nine Seas God Worlds of the Mountain and Sea Realm. Therefore… when you go in, other Nine Seas God Worlds will also dispatch disciples to enter.

“Obviously, since they are qualified to open the Likewind Realm, they will also have arranged for qualified disciples to enter who… are also in the Echelon!

“As such, when you enter the Likewind Realm for your trial by fire, you will likely encounter… other members of the Echelon from the Mountain and Sea Realm.” As she said these things, her eyes glowed with a brilliant light.

“If you can, kill the other members of the Echelon from the Mountain and Sea Realm. However, if you aren’t able to kill them, don’t forget that protecting your own life is your main priority!”

Meng Hao looked at Granny Nine silently for a moment and then nodded. He understood that the Echelon… was like a brood of magical venomous insects which grew strong by preying on each other. Once you were in the Echelon, only by passing through numerous deadly situations alive, could one become truly powerful.

Currently, the Mountain and Sea Realm needed some extreme power. It needed… a true Paragon!

“Perhaps, what it needs is not just a Paragon,” he thought. “After all, the three great Paragons of yesteryear were only able to preserve a small memorial to the Immortal Realm and thus prevent its complete destruction.

“Perhaps… in order to resolve all of the problems that exist, what is needed… is something that exceeds a Paragon!” Meng Hao took a deep breath, and suddenly, an image appeared in his mind. He saw nine suns dragging an enormous statue. There were also nine butterflies pulling a gigantic coffin. 1

“Although we have already begun preparations to open the Likewind Realm,” Granny Nine said calmly, “we still need three months to be completely ready.

“During those three months, stay in the sect and prepare fully for the battles you will face…

“The pressure exerted by the Ninth Sea will put a heavy burden on you in terms of cultivation. You need to acclimate yourself to it as quickly as possible. Not only will it help you in the years to come, more importantly…

the fact that the Likewind Realm is half destroyed and its Essence is in chaos means that you will find similar pressure there.

“Only by getting used to the pressure of the Ninth Sea will you be able to function normally in the Likewind Realm. If you don’t, every step you take there will be an arduous one.

“In addition, don’t forget about our sect’s golden gate stone steles. Each one of them represents a trial by fire. I hope that you… can participate in every one of them! You must do everything possible to make yourself stronger during these coming three months!

“I hope to see your name on each one of those steles. You are in the Echelon, the second of your kind throughout all the history of the Ninth Mountain and Sea!” Granny Nine waved her hand, sending a bag of holding flying out to hover in front of Meng Hao.

“Inside that bag of holding, you will find the first place prize for our Daoist Societies’ disciple recruitment event!

“There were many rewards, all of which are inside. Of course, the most valuable of all… would be, secondarily, the ancient Immortal artifact, and most of all… Paragon blood!

“Before entering the Likewind Realm, you can use it to… experience what intense power is truly like!

“How far your path stretches out ahead of you depends on your good fortune.” Granny Nine gave Meng Hao a deep look that was clearly filled with hope and anticipation.

Meng Hao took a deep breath as he looked silently at the bag of holding. Finally, his eyes began to shine with a bright light, and he reached out and took the bag. Then he clasped hands and bowed deeply to Granny Nine, to Godmaster, and to Ling Yunzi.

He did not make any promises or utter expressions of thanks. At the moment, anything he said would be meaningless. Only by clasping hands and bowing could he express his sincerity and determination.

Granny Nine’s eyes glowed with praise, and Godmaster nodded. Ling Yunzi already thought well of Meng Hao, and a slight smile could be seen on his face.

“Go,” Granny Nine said, smiling. “That bag of holding also contains a jade slip key to an Immortal’s cave. It is there that you may practice cultivation in the coming three months. There is also an identity command medallion, which you can use to go anywhere in the sect.”

Meng Hao nodded. It was at this point that Godmaster suddenly spoke.

“When the Demonic Cultivator Horde asked for you to return their disciples that you captured, all you had to do was give them back, and the problem would have been resolved. Why be so uncompromising?” The old man’s face was expressionless, but his eyes shone with a profound look.

“If the result of me returning them was a reduction in the hostility shown toward me by the Demonic cultivators, then of course I would have,” explained Meng Hao. “However, that clearly would not have happened. Therefore, why should I return them?!

“I can sell all of those seafood dishes for spirit stones and Immortal jade, or use them as threats.” He smiled.

Godmaster was also smiling as he replied, “You will be safe inside the sect. However, if you go out… you must be extremely cautious. If anything untoward happens, do not hesitate to crush your command medallion. As long as you are within 1,000,000 nautical miles of the sect, I can be there within three breaths of time to provide aid!”

Then he closed his eyes and said no more. Now that he was certain about Meng Hao’s personality, he firmly approved of him.

Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed. He was just about to leave when all of a sudden, he stopped in place and turned back to look at the three old timers.

“Junior wishes to ask a question. What exactly is the reason that the sea beasts attacked me when I entered the Ninth Sea. Furthermore, why did I cause such an uproar among the Demonic cultivators when I arrived at the Nine Seas God World? Why do they hate me so much?

“It almost seemed like the level of their cultivation base didn’t matter; they instantly hated me so much that they couldn’t live under the same sky as me. I really don’t understand. Seniors, can you clear up this matter?” Meng Hao looked at the three old timers expectantly. He truly wished to know the answer to this question!

He just didn’t believe that they didn’t know the answer. Considering their status in the sect, even if they had known nothing at first, a brief inquiry would have made everything clear to them.

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# Chapter 1043: The Answer!

As soon as Meng Hao asked the question, both Granny Nine and Ling Yunzi smiled. As for Godmaster, he simply sat there silently with his eyes closed.

“And here I thought you were going to leave without asking,” the woman said with a smile.

The person to respond to the question, however, was not Granny Nine, but rather, Ling Yunzi.

“At first,” he said, “even we weren’t aware of what caused the situation. After some checking, we came to find out that it was your aura which caused everything.”

“My aura?” asked Meng Hao, his eyes widening. He instantly discarded more than half of his previous speculations.

Ling Yunzi didn’t immediately provide an explanation, but instead, began to describe Demonic cultivators: “Demonic cultivators are a unique type of life form. They are not cultivators, and yet, they are also not Demons. They originally evolved because of the unique environment of the Ninth Sea; they are transmogrified life forms.

“They seem like cultivators, but are not. They also seem like Demons, but are not. Because of that, they call themselves… Demonic cultivators!

“Demonic cultivators like this can only be found in the seas of the Mountain and Sea Realm. As for the sea beasts you encountered out in the Ninth Sea, they simply have not completely transmogrified, and are not quite sentient. However, give them enough time, and they all have the potential to become Demonic cultivators.

“The Demonic cultivators call themselves a horde, and are extremely xenophobic. Although they are physically different from the sea beasts, they consider themselves to be all part of the same horde. Even the other sea beasts which have not yet awakened to sentience are still viewed as family.

“If you harm one of their family members, even a single one, then they will be able to sense that from your aura.

“In fact, many of them have bloodline connections to other sea beasts. Because of this, it’s not hard to imagine why, in reality, the rulers of the Ninth Sea are not cultivators, but them.”

As Meng Hao listened, his jaw slowly dropped and his eyes went wide. He had considered virtually all possibilities, and yet nothing he had thought of… had anything remotely to do with this.

The truth of the matter was far, far less complicated than anything he had come up with. It wasn’t about the League of Demon Sealers, or the black-colored spirit-immortal stones, or some long-standing enmity with the Fang Clan, or some situation in which he threatened someone’s power.

Meng Hao smiled wryly as he realized the truth of the matter.

“Once they become Demonic cultivators,” continued Ling Yunzi, “They are actually not very different from cultivators. In fact, in many aspects, they are more powerful than us. In their cultivation, they can achieve Immortal Ascension, can enter the Ancient Realm, and can step into the Dao Realm.

“Throughout the years, many Demonic cultivators have left this area and gone out to other locations in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, even to other planets. There, they reproduced, giving birth to countless successive generations of their kind. Unfortunately, though, it is only in the Ninth Sea that the beasts can gain sentience and then become Demonic cultivators. In other locations, such a thing is impossible.

“Regardless of that, however, the sea beasts in the oceans of the other planets are all descended from the Ninth Sea. As such, they are all fellow horde members, and many of them are even related by blood.” When Ling

Yunzi saw Meng Hao's wry smile, a strange expression appeared on his face. He and the other two old-timers hadn't expected a reaction like this.

"I understand," said Meng Hao, sighing.

"All seafood under heaven is one big family…." he said, musing about how unfair the whole situation was for him. He was now certain that all of the countless sea beasts he had killed back in the Milky Way Sea on Planet South Heaven were definitely fellow horde members of the Demonic cultivators here. But how could he possibly have known back then that this would be the result?

Although the sea beasts were separated by a huge distance, and even multiple generations, and were obviously much weaker than the Demonic cultivators here, it was impossible for them to change their blood. If he had, like the average cultivator, only killed a few in the occasional random encounter, it most likely wouldn't have caused any stir in the Ninth Sea or the Nine Seas God World.

Demonic cultivators were like ordinary cultivators. They wouldn't start a blood feud because of a handful of non-sentient fellow horde members. But Meng Hao… had not just killed a few random sea creatures. He had killed almost all of the sea beasts in the Milky Way Sea. To the Demonic cultivators, that was almost like a genocide of an entire branch of one of their bloodlines.

Even he wasn't sure how many Demon hearts he had acquired back then.

It wasn't even possible to count how many sea beasts had died because of him. However many, it was enough to completely and utterly contaminate him with an indescribable aura. It was easy to imagine the reaction of the Demonic cultivators to anyone who showed up in the Ninth Sea with an aura like that.

Meng Hao was now feeling somewhat depressed. Were it some other reason, he could probably figure out a way to change things. After all, this was the Ninth Sea, and he had no desire to have blood enmity with the Demonic cultivators.

This was a matter of aura… and the ability of the fellow horde members to sense each other. In their view, Meng Hao's hands were soaked in blood, and it was something he couldn't do anything about.

"Can the aura be covered over?" he asked.

"Unfortunately, this type of aura cannot be concealed," replied Ling Yunzi, sighing.

"The only thing you can do is be extra careful. Try not to leave the sect. Unfortunately, it is something we could never have predicted. How could we ever have imagined that you would be infected with an aura as strong as this?" Ling Yunzi was also feeling a bit down.

"The true masters of the Ninth Sea are the Demonic cultivators," Granny Nine said slowly. "Although the Nine Seas God World holds sway here, if you trace things back to the beginning, we essentially forced our way in.

"However, legend has it that the whole reason the Demonic cultivators could achieve sentience to begin with has to do with Paragon Sea Dream. Because of that, we have coexisted throughout the years and have come to accept each other. Furthermore, the Demonic Cultivator Horde is a faction of the Nine Seas God World, both here in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, and in the other Nine Seas God Worlds in the other Mountains and Seas.

"Don't let yourself worry about it too much. The Demonic Cultivator Horde is a part of the Nine Seas God World, and as such, must adhere to the rules of the sect. Everything… is done for the Echelon

"Therefore, you can simply view this matter as another trial by fire."

Meng Hao sighed. All he could do now was nod his head, clasp hands, and bow. Then he turned and left the temple hall. As he walked out and stood there atop the mountain, a cold wind sprang up. He looked off into the distance and, from this elevation, could see most of the Nine Seas God World.

“Well, might as well not worry about it. I can’t resolve the problem, so it’s not worth stewing over.” He pulled out the jade slip key from his bag of holding and scanned it with divine sense. Immediately a map of the Ninth Sea God World appeared.

After perusing the map, he found the Immortal’s cave the three old timers had arranged for him. It was near the central district, between two mountain ranges.

He put the jade slip away, took a step forward, and then transformed into a brilliant beam of light that shot rumbling through the air toward his Immortal’s cave. As he sped through the air, he encountered various disciples of the Nine Seas God World.

If they were cultivators, they would raise an eyebrow, clearly having recognized who he was. If they were Demonic cultivators, then as soon as they saw him, they visibly restrained themselves, their eyes shining with intense hatred and killing intent.

Meng Hao simply kept his gaze fixed straight ahead as he sped along. He went faster and faster, and after about an hour, arrived in the region of his Immortal’s cave. When he looked around, the first things that stood out were two mountain ranges that looked like dragons, stretching out far and wide.

In the middle of the mountains was a huge cliff that seemed to have been formed by a seismic upheaval. Water flowed over the edge of the cliff, transforming into a towering waterfall.

Rumbling rose up from the base of the waterfall, along with massive quantities of water vapor that spread out in all directions, causing a curtain of mist to obscure the area. The water at the bottom formed a crystalline, blue pool. The energy of Heaven and Earth was very strong in the area.

Next to the pool of water was a two-story residence.

The entire area was filled with the fragrance of flowers and the singing of birds. It was like a celestial garden, filled with exotic plants and flowers, whose fragrance filled the canyon-like area surrounding the pool of water.

Cliffs rose up on all sides like impassable obstacles. Even though his place was almost in the center of the Nine Seas God World, it was secluded and peaceful.

Furthermore, considering that the residence was built into the cliff face, it was easy to imagine that it was far larger than its outward appearance. In fact, deep inside the cliff there would definitely be chambers carved into the stone.

As soon as Meng Hao laid eyes on it, he was thoroughly pleased.

His body flashed as he flew down past the waterfall and landed next to the pool of water. Numerous animals in the area were startled, and scattered in all directions. The grass and plants swayed gently at the disturbance, causing a fragrant aroma to fill the air. The sound of the falling waterfall instantly lifted Meng Hao's spirits.

"This place is great!" he thought, looking around contentedly. He walked over to the residence and looked around with increasing satisfaction, then let out a light, "Eee?" He raised his right hand and performed an incantation gesture, then pointed out. His gesture caused a wind to spring up toward a stone stele located in front of the residence.

When the wind touched the stele, it shuddered. Next, a glowing shield sprang up to cover the entire area. The sky up above was sealed off, and the waterfall was interrupted.

No more water fell down, and water began to build up on the shield. Soon, it looked like a second pool of water, floating in the air up above.

The sides of this new pool were formed by the cliff faces, and its bottom was the shield. When he saw it, Meng Hao's eyes shone brightly as he realized that this was the ultimate location for secluded meditation.

It was completely cut off from the world, and also, totally safe.

In the same moment that Meng Hao was looking around contentedly at his Immortal’s cave in the Nine Seas God World, far far away, something happened in the starry sky. That place… was not located in the Mountain and Sea Realm. Furthermore, it was a location outside of the 33 Heavens. It was located… in a different starry sky.

Visible was a projection of an ancient land mass. It was so enormous that it was impossible to describe, and it hung there in the void, emanating constant and endless pressure.

Within this projected world was… a huge coffin, as well as nine beautiful, colorful butterflies.

Surrounding the coffin was an endless sea of people, all prostrating themselves in worship.

In front of the crowds of people were three young women who were indescribably beautiful. Their eyes were filled with both hope and reminiscence as they looked at the coffin, and then down at the land beneath their feet.

In front of the three young women was an old man wearing a black robe. At his back was the illusory image of an ancient tree. Currently, his two hands were held aloft, and he was shouting loudly up into the air. It sounded like some sort of curse, although it was impossible to hear exactly what he was saying.

It didn’t take long, however, for a mass of black mist to appear in front of him. It roiled and seethed, emanating a strong aura of death.

“I found it… almost. If it is used just one more time, I’ll be able to locate it!” After a long moment, the old man coughed up a mouthful of blood, and his body seemed to wither. The tree behind him also withered, as if he had just spent a huge amount of life force to speak those words.

It wasn’t just him who paid the price to speak the words. Everyone in the sea of people around him also spit up mouthfuls of blood. The nine butterflies trembled, and of the four wings they each possessed, two fell off.

In another location within the same void in which that world projection existed, was yet another boundlessly majestic projection of a world.

Within that world existed a huge statue of a man!

In that world, there were nine suns!!

At the foot of the statue was a young man wearing a white robe. If you looked closely, you would see… that he looked exactly like the statue!!

He shook his head and smiled.

“Mother was right. Those who are reborn are always more eager than those who have already returned.” 1

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Note from Er Gen: Lots of you readers guess the answer. Pretty awesome!

Note from Deathblade: Same with readers of the translation! I saw quite a few correct guesses. Unless you were secretly posting spoilers as “guesses,” in which case you have sown vile Karma and will be punished!!!!!

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# Chapter 1044: Initial Absorption of Paragon Blood!

The people of the Mountain and Sea Realm had no way of seeing what was happening outside of their Realm.

Back in the Nine Seas God World, in the valley between the two mountain ranges, the pool of water continued to build up above the shield. At the same time, a figure stepped out noiselessly from within the residence.

Meng Hao had sensed this person earlier, and as such, his expression did not change when the young boy walked out. He looked to be about seven or eight years old, wore a red robe, and had a completely expressionless face. As soon as he stepped out, he clasped hands and bowed to Meng Hao.

“What an incredible puppet,” Meng Hao murmured, walking up to the boy and looking him over. The boy looked almost as if he had been carved out of a lustrous piece of rare jade.

Meng Hao reached his hand out and pressed it down onto the puppet. Immediately, an additional puppet mnemonic appeared in his mind.

“This Immortal’s cave must be completely unique within the Nine Seas God World,” the thought. “Only a place like this could be suitable for such a puppet. Whenever I have to deal with cultivation resources, I can just sent him out to handle things.

“Furthermore, it looks like he has battle prowess equivalent to a stage 7 Immortal.”

Meng Hao was very pleased. This Immortal’s cave far exceeded any other Immortal’s cave he had ever lived in. Regardless of whether or not the pool of water was being fed by the waterfall, it was as blue and crystalline as ever. Furthermore, the pond itself was actually made, not from freshwater, but saltwater.

“How considerate of them,” he said. Then he waved his hand, instantly causing the 33 Demonic cultivators to fly out of his bag of holding and splash into the pool.

Before they could even react, he performed an incantation gesture and then waved his finger. Popping sounds rang out as all of the 33 Demonic cultivators were sealed. All of them reverted to their original forms, whereupon they spun and began to howl at Meng Hao in rage.

“Shut up!” he growled. His voice echoed out like thunder, instantly causing all of the Demonic cultivators to tremble. Moments later, everything was quiet. The Demonic cultivators now looked like sea beasts, but they were still glaring angrily at Meng Hao.

That was especially true of the gigantic shell, which had now cracked open to reveal a pair of venomous eyes staring out at him.

There was also a huge sea turtle who looked especially fierce.

In addition to those two, there was a big shrimp, a crab, a seahorse, and others. Meng Hao looked them over, and then a grotesque idea suddenly popped up in his head.

“This pool of water almost looks like a giant pot. If I heated the water up….” He swallowed, then quickly shoved the wicked idea away. However, it was in that moment that the Demonic cultivators, who had just quieted down moments ago, suddenly lost control and began to roar again. A few of them even tried to charge at Meng Hao in attack.

With a cold harrumph, Meng Hao waved his hand, causing all of them to tremble, as if great pressure were weighing down on them. It was impossible for them to escape from within the pool of water, so once again, the sound of vehement curses rose up into the air.

Ignoring them, Meng Hao waved his right finger, causing a strand of the Essence of Divine Flame to fly out from his Immortal meridians. It landed in the water, and in the blink of an eye, the water began to bubble.

Meng Hao cleared his throat and then somewhat embarrassedly said, “If you don’t keep your voices down, there are no guarantees that I won’t boil you up and have a taste!”

His words, combined with the fact that the water in the pool was rapidly getting hotter, caused the Demonic cultivators to tremble. They looked at Meng Hao, not with hatred, but rather… terror and shock.

They had never imagined that Meng Hao would actually boil them into a stew!

Seeing that the Demonic cultivators had quieted down, Meng Hao waved a hand, retracting the strand of the Essence of Divine Flame. The water temperature in the pool instantly began to lower.

“That’s better. Now!” he said earnestly. “Remember to be good and do as you’re told. You people owe me money and can’t pay it back. That was why you handed yourselves over to me. Now, I’m going to provide you with a master to help you learn how to achieve your goal, which is… to sell yourselves!” With that, he slapped his bag of holding, causing the parrot to shoot out in a beam of black light.

The tinkling sound of a bell could be heard, along with a torrent of squawks.

“Lord Fifth is out! Lord Fifth swears to never go back into that bag of holding! Lord Fifth is free! Lord Fifth is going to… Eee?!” Even in midst of its tirade, Lord Fifth suddenly looked down at all the Demonic cultivators in the pool of water.

The bell-form meat jelly was also in the midst of howling in rage, when suddenly it realized the parrot had grown silent. It, too, looked down at the Demonic cultivators.

After staring for a moment, the meat jelly, trying to be helpful, said, “Maybe they’re taking a bath together?”

The parrot flew around in a circle, looking closely at the situation and then roared: “Moron! Idiot! Can’t you see he’s making some seafood stew? They’re not taking a bath! Dammit! How come none of this seafood has fur!?!?”

Meng Hao cleared his throat and then addressed the meat jelly: “These are all bullies. You can count if you want, there are three. Three bullies. I caught them and brought them here for you to practice your divine ability of converting people!”

The meat jelly quivered with excitement as it counted. When it was done, it looked over at Meng Hao as if he were the best person in the whole world. In the meat jelly’s opinion, it had never met a master who treated it is well as Meng Hao did.

Meng Hao smiled slightly, as if the two of them were best friends. Then he glanced over at the parrot and glared threateningly.

“I’ll pay handsomely for every one of these seafood dishes that you can get to behave. For each one, I’ll find one extremely furry creature for you.

“If you can train them all, then later, I’ll split subsequent profits with you thirty/seventy!”

When the parrot heard the words ‘extremely furry’ it instantly got very excited. It suddenly began to visualize all sorts of extremely furry creatures, and that only increased its enthusiasm. It immediately agreed to Meng Hao’s proposal.

Meng Hao promptly ignored the parrot and meat jelly as they began to torment the Demonic cultivators. He was sure that, considering how strong they were, getting the Demonic cultivator seafood dishes in line wasn’t an impossibility for them.

“Then there’s that wench Su Yan,” he thought. “I’ll wait a few more days and then hand her over to the parrot and meat jelly for education. I just can’t believe that she’ll continue to hold out after that.” Having made up his mind, he entered the residence.

The residence itself wasn’t very large. However, there was a stone door on the second floor. Behind the stone door were three chambers, each of which were relatively large.

After examining them, Meng Hao muttered to himself for a moment. Then, eyes glittering, he slapped his bag of holding, causing 30 black beetles to fly out, ten for each chamber.

Glancing thoughtfully at the Ghost Eyes on their backs, he thought, “I heard Su Yan call these things Ghost Eye Beetles….

“They like eating spirit-immortal stones. Well then, I might as well give them some more to eat… and see what kind of Ghost Eye appears in the end!” He had come up with this idea some time ago, so, clenching his teeth, he didn’t hesitate any further. He hated losing spirit-immortal stones, but he also knew that on the path of cultivation, you had to lose some to win some.

He waved his hand, causing thirty spirit-immortal stones to fly out into the three chambers. Instantly, the Ghost Eye Beetles went mad, clawing their way forward to grab the stones.

He threw out one stone per beetle in order to prevent them from fighting too much. After all, he only had 500 Ghost Eye Beetles, and wanted to avoid a situation in which they killed each other.

It didn’t take long for the Ghost Eye Beetles to consume the spirit-immortal stones, after which they sat there, motionless. However, their auras grew wildly stronger and their bodies grew tougher, as if they were in the process of absorbing energy from the stones they had swallowed.

After a moment of consideration, he decided that since the Ghost Eye Beetles were taking some time to absorb energy, he would make use of the puppet boy. Summoning him over, he handed some spirit-immortal stones over and then left some divine will instructions that the puppet continue to feed the stones to the beetles as necessary. Then he left the stone chambers and sat down cross-legged on the second floor of the residence.

He took a deep breath, and determination gleamed in his eyes as he extended his right hand. Immediately a bag of holding appeared, which he scanned with divine sense. He saw quite a collection of spirit stones and Immortal jade, as well as an incense burner.

The incense burner had an ancient feel to it, as though its aura was filled with years of time.

“This thing must be the Immortal artifact that Patriarch Granny Nine mentioned,” he thought. Ignoring it for the moment, he excitedly searched through the bag of holding to find the most precious item it contained.

A jade vial!

The vial was only the size of a pinky finger, and it contained… a drop of red fluid. It was none other than… Paragon’s blood!!

He carefully retrieved the vial from the bag of holding, then placed it onto his palm. Panting, he thought back to the Three Great Daoist Societies’ trial by fire, and how he had taken first place. For some reason it seemed like a very, very long time ago.

“I finally got my prize! But I wonder… which Paragon did this blood come from? Was it the white-robed Sea Dream, or was it Immortal Ancient? Or could it be from… Paragon Nine Seals?” He took a deep breath, and without any further hesitation, opened the jade vial. Instead of pouring the Paragon’s blood out, he slowly sent his divine sense into the vial.

Almost as soon as his divine sense made contact with the Paragon’s blood, a bloody mist rose up. In the blink of an eye, it swept back through his divine sense toward him. He was shocked, but he didn’t waver. Gritting his teeth, he sat in place without moving.

That strand of blood mist bored into his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. In the same moment, he closed the jade vial, ensuring that the rest of the Paragon’s blood remained inside. His action just now had used up only about thirty percent.

However, even that thirty percent of the drop of Paragon’s blood transformed into a massive power that surged madly through his body.

Blue veins popped out on his face, and his whole body shook. The blood mist transformed into millions of strands which bored into his Immortal meridians. Gradually, the vague power of a Dao Fruit began to form.

Moments later, it collapsed, battering around inside of Meng Hao’s body.

Shaken, he quickly produced a Nirvana Fruit and pushed it into his forehead. In that moment, the tens of millions of strands inside of him all seemed to have found their exit.

His body shook, and his aura exploded upward. All of his Immortal qi was unleashed. His energy surged as the Nirvana Fruit apparently began to fuse into his blood vessels and qi passageways.

If he absorbed it completely, that would indicate that he had fused successfully with the Nirvana Fruit. That would also mean… that he would rise up in his position in the Immortal Realm, and would be be incredibly close to being able to remain in the Immortal Emperor Realm… eternally!

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# Chapter 1045: ROCKED!

Time passed one breath at a time. He had long since passed the usual time limit for the Nirvana Fruit. However, after enough time had passed for an incense stick to burn, he still sat there, Nirvana Fruit fully absorbed. He opened his eyes, grabbed the jade vial, and was about to open it, but then hesitated.

The hundreds of thousands of strands inside of him were growing dimmer, and would rapidly vanish. Unfortunately, the Nirvana Fruit still wasn't completely fused with him, not even by half. In terms of percentages, then as of this moment, the Nirvana Fruit seemed to be about one percent fused.

"Even if I completely absorbed this entire sample of Paragon's blood," he thought, "then at most, I could achieve a four percent absorption….

"It's not that the Paragon's blood isn't strong, nor that it's fake. Rather…. this drop of blood is simply too diluted. Who knows how many dilutions it's gone through." He sighed inwardly. He knew that even if the Three Great Daoist Societies did have complete specimens of Paragon's blood, they would still be incredibly scarce.

There was no way they would give him a complete drop. It was true that he was in the Echelon. However, taking a broad view, it was impossible to say whether or not another Echelon member might come along in the future. Although the Three Great Daoist Societies valued him, they couldn't possibly give him undiluted Paragon's blood.

Even a highly diluted drop could still be considered a precious treasure! From the very beginning, all they had agreed to give him was some Paragon's blood. They had never said that it would be complete.

“If I could get a complete, full drop, then I’m certain that after absorbing it, I would then be able to completely fuse with the Nirvana Fruit, and I would truly be an Immortal Emperor!” Desire gleamed in Meng Hao’s eyes as he thought about the possibility of being able to eternally retain a cultivation base that exceeded the Immortal Realm Paragon.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, and his eyes shone brightly.

“Not complete…. Well then, I’ll just have to create my own complete drop of Paragon’s blood!” Gritting his teeth, he slowly pulled the copper mirror out of his bag of holding. He was of course concerned about how much it might cost him. In fact, he wasn’t even sure if the copper mirror was powerful enough to duplicate the Paragon’s blood.

However, determination filled his face as he looked at the copper mirror for a moment, then placed the vial of Paragon’s blood on its surface. Immediately, the vial began to sink down into the mirror.

Then, the mirror suddenly went berserk in a way it never had before. It shook wildly, flying out of Meng Hao’s hands and up into the air. Brilliant beams of light shot out in all directions, along with a shocking aura.

In the blink of an eye, the entire residence was inundated by a terrifying aura, which began to spread further out. If nothing was done about the spreading of this aura, it would go on to fill the entire Nine Seas God World, and the entire Ninth Sea. From there it would spread out to fill all of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, and eventually… the entirety of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

Outside the residence, the parrot was flying proudly through the air, looking extremely excited at the prospect of how happy its life would be after it exchanged all of the seafood for furry beasts.

Having reached this point in its train of thought, it immediately turned to all of the Demonic cultivators and roared: “Now listen well to Lord Fifth! All of you–”

However, before it could even finish speaking, a tremor suddenly ran through its body, as if some incredible power had suddenly sucked it dry. It withered rapidly, causing it to gape in shock. It suddenly turned to look toward Meng Hao and the residence, clearly astonished. Then it let out the most shrill, anxious squawk that it had ever uttered since it had begun to follow Meng Hao.

It was usually quite calm and collected. It had never reacted this strongly to anything, not even when it ran into the most luxuriantly furred or feathered creatures. It seemed so nervous that it might collapse at any moment, as if the sky were about to fall or the entire world was about to explode.

“He’s still alive!!” the parrot shrieked. Then it shot toward the residence at top speed, looking completely flustered. It went so fast that numerous feathers were stripped off of it, falling to the ground. Its body shivered with unprecedented terror.

Inside the residence, Meng Hao’s eyes widened at the intensity of the aura, an aura that seemed to either ignore or trample upon all natural laws. It was vastly domineering, as if the Heavens and the starry sky both might be crushed by its terrifying energy.

Suddenly, he could hear a pulsating voice murmuring from within the mirror. It was archaic, seemingly stretching out from ancient times, causing his mind to reel. All of a sudden, countless images flickered in his eyes.

Of all those various images, there were only three that he could see clearly. The rest were flickering blurs. However, the three images he could see caused his scalp to go numb, and his expression to fill with a look of disbelief and utter astonishment.

The first image was that of the Heavens and a starless sky. It was a picture of chaos. There were no heavenly bodies, only emptiness. Then, a beam of light appeared, shooting along at top speed. Within the flickering light, shockingly… was the copper mirror!!

As it flew along, the surface of the mirror flickered. Immediately a heavenly body appeared off to the side. It proceeded along, one after another heavenly body appeared without pause.

In the end its flickering… caused the starry sky to appear, as if it were creating whole worlds!!

It continued on without stop, as if there were no end to its movement. Eventually, however, it vanished, having created innumerable stretches of starry sky that formed countless worlds!

Meng Hao's mind reeled with shock.

The second image he saw was of the uncountable entities which inhabited the various heavenly bodies and worlds that had been created. They were not cultivators, but rather, a vast multitude of indescribable living things.

Some looked like beasts, others were liquid. Some were made of gas, and others were made of metal or stone. There seemed to be an infinite variety, and they were all currently engaged in a chaotic battle!

All of these entities were far, far more powerful than Meng Hao. They were in the Dao Realm!

Meng Hao could scarcely even comprehend how there could be so many Dao Realm entities. There were simply too many, and they were all fighting each other, fighting to acquire one object….

That object was none other than… a copper mirror!

Their battling gave rise to countless indescribable ripples. All of a sudden, the copper mirror trembled, and two pearls shot out from it, one black, one white. Each pearl then sped off in a different direction.

Meng Hao could now see that actually, those two pearls had previously been inlaid on opposite sides of the mirror. The pearls were not the primary components, but rather… just subordinate objects belonging to the copper mirror! 1

Even still, they emanated an aura that left Meng Hao feeling completely suffocated, as though the two pearls contained an indescribable, paramount power!

And yet… despite that incredible power, they were still… subordinates to the mirror!

They were mere secondary objects!

In the third image, Meng Hao saw another world. It was a world filled with corpses, corpses that had lain in place for innumerable years. The whole world felt like a graveyard.

A beam of light flew along, within which was the copper mirror. The mirror was just passing by, and yet, as soon as it appeared, something happened which caused Meng Hao’s scalp to tingle. He saw the corpses… rising up one by one. Flesh grew anew, and the blink of an eye, they were resurrected. Their eyes were filled with madness, and even more so, hope. It was as if they had been waiting for ages for this very moment.

Suddenly, a hand shot up, a hand that was mostly white bone, upon which flesh and blood was rapidly forming. The instant it appeared, blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth, and his mind trembled. The feeling he got from that hand was a feeling he had only ever gotten from one other cultivator.

And that person was… the white-robed Paragon Sea Dream!

Except, from what Meng Hao could sense, the power of that hand exceeded that of Paragon Sea Dream!

It stretched out toward the copper mirror and made a grasping motion. That grasping motion caused the starry sky to be crushed, as if the hand could shrink down the stars and the Heavens until they were tiny items that rested in its palm.

At that point, the vision ended. Meng Hao coughed up a mouthful of blood, and the images faded away.

“This copper mirror… where does it come from…?” he thought. He felt as if his whole world had been turned upside down. He looked down at the copper mirror, and the vial of Paragon's blood, which was still sinking down into the mirror.

Most shocking of all to Meng Hao was that once again, he could see that the surface of the copper mirror… was not complete!!

It was shattered, and only had one piece in place. How could he possibly forget how he had helped the mirror to acquire that piece in the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect!? 2

Everything that happened takes some time to describe, but actually happened in a flash. It was at this point that the parrot suddenly appeared, and then sped into the mirror itself. The copper mirror trembled, and the light shining out grew even more intense. At this point, the vial of Paragon's blood finally vanished inside.

The terrifying aura ceased to spread out, and instead remained only inside of the residence. After about ten breaths of time passed, it faded away completely, returning to the copper mirror, after which it could not be detected.

After the aura faded away, the parrot emerged. It was emaciated, as if it had just undergone an indescribably desperate ordeal. It smiled wryly as it looked at Meng Hao, then flopped noisily to the ground. After a moment, it struggled to rise up and fly, but could only lay there, panting.

Seeing the parrot in this condition caused Meng Hao to think of the images he had just seen, and he couldn't help but ask: "If I hadn't placed that Paragon's blood onto the mirror…?"

The parrot gaped for a moment. Sounding astonished, it replied, "What's it got to do with you? I was just careless and didn't notice that someone was using some magic on this mirror. If the copper mirror wasn't used, then it wouldn't matter. But once it was used, no matter what you duplicate, it will… Huh?"

About half way through speaking, the parrot suddenly seemed to come to its senses. It rolled its eyes shiftily and squawked: "That's right. Dammit! It's you! It’s all because of you! You owe me now!”

At the same time that the parrot was berating Meng Hao, something was happening outside of the Mountain and Sea Realm, outside of the 33 Heavens. Far out in the void of the starry sky, in the middle of the world projection with the huge coffin, an archaic voice filled with excitement and determination suddenly echoed out to fill the entire world.

“I’ve found it! It’s there… right there!!

“After all these years, hope has finally appeared. Clan of Gods, prepare to send orders down!!

“It is time to wage war! In order to awaken our clan’s Underworld God, we will once again… go to war with the Paragon Immortal Realm!!” As the ancient voice echoed out, the world projection began to shake.

At the same time, the three women who stood near the coffin exchanged glances, then nodded to each other silently.

In that instant, the entire world projection began to grow blurry. In the blink of an eye, it vanished from within the void of the Heavens.

“Unleash the power of the world. Employ the maximum possible speed of our God Realm’s true form to travel there, in order to let our true world descend!” The voices of the three women echoed out into the void, filled with a decisiveness that could sever nails and chop iron.

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# Chapter 1046: An Iron Chicken That Can Also Pluck Feathers! 1

Almost in the same moment that the world projection vanished, the three women decided that war should begin. Thus, they caused their own world to approach from its distant location, something that would take time.

In another location in the Heavens was another world, the world with the nine suns and the enormous statue. It was not real, but rather, a projection, in much the same way that the world the three women were in was a projection.

The true worlds were actually in a location far, far away….

In that projected world of nine suns, a decisive, sinister voice was also speaking, the voice of a woman.

“It will take hundreds of years for the other side to arrive. It’s the same for us…. This time, spare no cost! We must succeed!”

The woman’s voice was venomous, and seemed to be filled with a coldness and disregard for all living beings other than those that currently surrounded her. As it echoed out, the world of nine suns gradually began to distort, and then vanish.

Meanwhile, back in the Mountain and Sea Realm, in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, Meng Hao was completely oblivious to all of these things. He was currently frowning at the parrot. Finally, he gave a cold harrumph. Although he had felt a bit guilty before about what happened, seeing the parrot now caused him to glare angrily.

Before he could say anything, however, the parrot blinked, cleared its throat, and then flapped its wings as it flew up into the air. The copper mirror seemed to have lost any ability to float or fly, and clanked to the ground.

The parrot flew out of the residence, seemingly without a care in the world. However, deep in its heart was a mass of anxiety.

“Calamity… is coming. Ai, I screwed up. I never would have thought the other two powers would be so persistent!

“Screw it, I don’t care anymore. In any case, Meng Hao is the master of the mirror this time, so it has nothing to do with Lord Fifth. Worst case scenario, I’ll flee and sleep for a while again.” Finally the parrot cleared its thoughts, pushing away all these vexatious worries. Its eyes then began to shine brightly as it looked at the Demonic cultivators in the pool of water. Once again it began to envision swapping them for numerous furry concubines, and the blissful days that would ensue.

“Hahaha! Lord Fifth is back! Now, all of you listen up and behave! Lord Fifth is going to teach you a song!” The parrot whistled through the air toward the group of Demonic cultivators.

“Come, come, let’s sing together. The name of this little tune is ‘I’m a good little seafood dish!’ If you sing well, Lord Fifth has a reward waiting for you!”

Back in the residence, Meng Hao was frowning. Although the parrot had made light of what had happened, Meng Hao had practiced cultivation for many years, and was adept at analyzing matters. Everything he had seen regarding the copper mirror, plus the parrot’s expression, filled him with a sense of foreboding.

“I’m afraid… something really bad is going to happen,” he murmured. He looked at the copper mirror and thought back to the three images he had seen. Finally, he took a deep breath. More than ever, he felt that the origin of the copper mirror was shrouded in some incredibly profound mystery.

“Just where did it come from?

“Other that duplicating things, it’s definitely has other magical divine abilities that I don’t know of!

“It seems everyone wants it, even the most powerful experts. They’ll do anything to win it….

“Well, then… what exactly is it?!?! Perhaps ‘Mountain and Sea Mirror’ isn’t its real name!

“If the copper mirror is so mysterious and so powerful, then why did it end up broken?

“Also… who broke it!? And why?!” One question after another popped up in Meng Hao’s mind, seemingly without any train of logic connecting them. After a long moment of thought, his eyes flickered with bright light.

“Regardless of what mysteries lie within the copper mirror, or where it came from, I have it now. Therefore, I will inevitably be involved in whatever quarrels erupt over it.

“Based on my current cultivation base, if something like that happens, I’ll most likely be killed. I wouldn’t be able to lift a hand against the people who want it. Therefore… the most important thing for me now … is still cultivation!

“Only by becoming stronger and more powerful can I have a chance of surviving through whatever struggles are coming in the future! That’s the only way that I can ensure that my own Dao will continue on!” He closed his eyes and calmed his mind and heart. When he opened them again, he made a grasping motion, causing the copper mirror to fly into his hand. He looked at it for a moment, then, without any further hesitation, pulled out some spirit stones and Immortal jade and began to feed them into the mirror.

He did not give up on his original idea, which was… to duplicate the Paragon’s blood!!

“With enough Paragon’s blood, I can get a full, complete drop. Something like that is incredibly rare, and will help me… to successfully absorb the that first Nirvana Fruit!”

He took a deep breath, and his eyes gleamed with passion. The path to the Ancient Realm lay before him, and the only way to be qualified to open the door to that path, was to absorb and fuse all four of the Nirvana Fruits he possessed. Then he could strike the Ancient bell and light his Soul Lamps. He would use the flame of his life force like the wind of the world, to extinguish each of his Soul Lamps in turn!

Thus he would achieve a Realm in which the lamps were snuffed out, yet he still lived!

One spirit stone after another sank into the copper mirror. It was like a black hole that could gobble up spirit stones indefinitely. However, flickering light could be seen with each spirit stone it ate up.

As the rate of flickering increased, Meng Hao appeared calm on the outside, but his heart was twisted in knots. Although he was used to how the copper mirror devoured spirit stones, and also used to how he would often acquire a huge sum of spirit stones only to obediently feed them into the copper mirror…

Even so… he was still torn. His heart hurt, and gradually, he simply couldn’t remain calm any more. All of the spirit stones he had acquired from the Three Great Daoist Societies’ trial by fire disappeared into the copper mirror, leaving his face completely ashen.

His eyes were bright red, and yet, like a gambling addict, he continued to throw in spirit stones. The copper mirror glowed with increasingly intense light until finally… a second identical vial of Paragon’s blood’s appeared!

He let out a long breath. He was shaken, but shook off the urge to mourn his spirit stones and looked the two vials over closely, then began to laugh uproariously.

If Granny Nine and the others could see these two vials, they would be shocked beyond belief. In fact, they might even go mad and unleash an unprecedented catastrophe.

They were identical. Both the vial itself and the blood inside were completely identical!

This was almost like creating something from nothing, a mystical scene of something appearing from thin air that filled Meng Hao’s heart with incredible excitement. Also, he was now able to tell for certain that after acquiring that fragment of the mirror’s face from the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect, the duplicating powers of the mirror had actually become stronger.

Things that previously could not be duplicated, were now possible to duplicate!

Meng Hao could even sense that one day, if the all the fragments of the mirror were brought together and the mirror was whole, then he could even duplicate the Heavens, or an entire world Realm! He could duplicate anything.

His heart pounded rapidly, and a brilliant gleam appeared in his eyes. However, at the same time, his heart remained vigilant. He knew that if anyone found out that he had this mirror, it would mean a huge catastrophe for him!

Actually, that was something he had long since been very well aware of. From the moment he had acquired the copper mirror and discovered its function, when he had first started down the path of cultivation, he had always borne that in mind.

After packing away the duplicate vial of Paragon’s blood, he used the original to continue duplicating. Time passed by slowly. During the three days that passed, Meng Hao acted as if he were bedeviled, constantly feeding spirit stones and Immortal jade into the copper mirror.

Outside of the residence, the sound of singing echoed up into the air. The voices sounded disgruntled, and not very willing to sing, but Meng Hao didn't even notice it. He was completely focused on the copper mirror and the Paragon's blood.

When he ran out of spirit stones completely, he used Immortal jade. Eventually, he ended up duplicating seven portions of Paragon's blood. Finally, he ran out of Immortal jade. By that point, his eyes were crimson. He waved his hand, sending his identity command medallion flying out into the hands of the puppet boy, who by now had gone outside to wait for further orders. In compliance Meng Hao's divine will, he immediately flew away as if he were sentient. He passed through the shield and the pool it had formed to act as Meng Hao's representative in procuring cultivation resources from the Nine Seas God World.

The three old timers had promised Meng Hao that all of the resources in the Nine Seas God World were open to him. Although they hadn't agreed to literally give him anything he wanted, it was still an unprecedented guarantee when it came to cultivation.

Not too much time passed before the puppet boy returned with a bag of holding. Immediately, Meng Hao resumed duplicating the Paragon's blood. He would do anything in his power to fulfill his desire of fully absorbing the Nirvana Fruits.

One day. Two days. Three days.

Time passed, and Meng Hao barely ever set foot outside. All he did was work on duplicating the Paragon's blood. Soon, he didn't have seven portions, but rather, fifty. That much Paragon's blood was something that even the Nine Seas God World would have a hard time coming up with.

Furthermore, Meng Hao had laid his hands on a virtual sea of spirit stones and Immortal jade. He didn't even calculate how much it was in total. Mostly because he didn't dare to. If he did, the pain in his heart would surely cause him to cough up a mouthful of blood.

“Still not enough!” he thought, his eyes completely bloodshot. He waved his hand, sending the puppet boy out once again to get some cultivation resources. This time, the puppet boy didn’t come back as quickly as he had before. Meng Hao waited for a while, and when he still didn’t return, had no choice but to rise to his feet. Just when he was about to walk out of the residence, his face flickered as he looked toward the leftmost stone chamber of secluded meditation.

Almost in the moment that he looked over, rumbling sounds echoed out from within the stone chamber. Next, the stone door shook, and a huge crack appeared in its surface, as if some incredibly powerful force were smashing against it from inside.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he used the power of the Life Death Hex to peer into the stone chamber. What he saw was that, where before there had been ten Ghost Eye Beetles, now there were none!

Shockingly, an enormous eye had appeared inside the chamber in their stead!!

The eye was surrounded by ten tentacles, which whipped around rapidly. There was also a black glow that radiated out from it, which repeatedly slammed into the stone door.

Upon closer examination, it was possible to see that inside of the Ghost Eye was a tiny pitch-black imp, sitting there cross-legged. The imp had no eyes, a huge mouth, and strangest of all, it had a black carapace on its back! 2

Apparently, the bizarre Ghost Eye was actually created by the black-shelled imp.

Meng Hao’s eye widened as he also realized that, all of a sudden, his Life Death Hex was losing its grip!

Almost in the same moment that the Life Death Hex was weakening, a huge boom could be heard as the stone door collapsed. The Ghost Eye burst out, emitting a piercing, deafening shriek that echoed out in all directions. The

Ghost Eye then proceeded to charge directly toward Meng Hao, as if to consume him!

2. In Chinese, a beetle is literally an “armored/carapaced/shelled insect”

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# Chapter 1047: Magic Pod Soldiers!

The stone door collapsed further, transforming into a haze of fragments that blasted toward Meng Hao. Amidst the flying rubble was the Ghost Eye, screaming as it charged in attack. Apparently it wanted to consume or possess him.

There was also a blast of cold air from within the stone chamber. In his peripheral vision, Meng Hao could see that frost had built up inside, as if it were the dead of winter. Even more shocking was that the frost was green!

“It’s poisonous!” Meng Hao was a bit shocked by the weakening of the Life Death Hex. However, in the blink of an eye, he had recovered his composure. Eyes flickering, he did nothing to evade, but instead, waved his hand out in front of him.

Instantly, his Immortal meridians surged, and Immortal power erupted. Rumbling sounds could be heard as the stone door shattered completely, transforming into nothing more than ash. However, before it could dissipate, it began to spin around, becoming a whirlwind of ash with the Ghost Eye at its center.

The wind screamed around the Ghost Eye, seemingly on the verge of completely destroying it. After all, the wind was filled with Meng Hao’s Immortal power, which could even shake the peak of the Immortal Realm.

It happened so fast that it was already over before it could even be described with words. In the blink of an eye, the windstorm surrounded the Ghost Eye. In turn, mysterious light began to emanate out of it, not a beam, but a halo that spread out in all directions.

When the light met the windstorm, the windstorm was rapidly dissolved. A moment later, the Ghost Eye charged out, screaming as it closed in on Meng Hao.

“Interesting,” he thought. He could sense that the Life Death Hex was continuing to weaken, but actually, wasn’t really paying attention to that. Rather than try to reinforce the power of the hex, he wanted to see exactly how strong the Ghost Eye was.

Before the Ghost Eye could get very close, Meng Hao took a step forward and raised his hand. A huge wind sprang up as he clenched his hand and punched out. It seemed like a simple punch, but it actually possessed the condensed strength of all of Meng Hao’s true Immortal fleshly body, as well as his 123 Immortal meridians. That one punch was enough to completely eradicate anyone in the Immortal Realm.

As the punch rumbled out, the Ghost Eye screamed. It wanted to dodge, but was incapable of even moving. The only thing it could do was whip its tentacles up in an attempt to create a defensive barrier in front of it. At the same time, the Ghost Eye, which had remained open this entire time, now closed.

Shocking rumbling sounds could be heard as the tentacles were destroyed as easily as shriveled weeds. The Ghost Eye trembled and was sent tumbling backward. Its energy immediately plummeted, and it began to grow weak and dark. As for the black imp inside, it actually grew clearer.

A moment later, the Ghost Eye collapsed completely. However, the black-shelled imp wasn’t hurt at all. It let out a piercing shriek and opened its mouth to reveal a collection of sharp teeth as it pounced toward Meng Hao.

“Eee?” said Meng Hao. His expression was one of excitement as he realized that the Ghost Eye, after having consumed so many spirit-immortal stones, and then transmogrifying, had a divine ability like this. It was actually able to resist the power of one of his punches.

As the black-shelled imp approached, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. He did nothing to evade, but rather allowed it to close in on him. Then, when it reached him, the imp actually passed into his body, merging into him as if it were illusory.

At the same time, a powerful force of possession exploded out within him.

“Ah, so that’s what’s going on,” he thought, his eyes flashing coldly. He could clearly sense how the black-shelled imp inside of him was trying to destroy his soul and then take over his body, possessing him completely.

The power was overbearing, seemingly impossible to stop. However, a slight smile could be seen on Meng Hao’s face. Now that he knew what the black-shelled imp did, he had no desire for further testing. He snorted coldly, and a magical symbol appeared on his forehead, which was the weakened Life Death Hex. Suddenly, it stabilized; how could a mere black-shelled imp permanently weaken the Hexing magic of the Life Death Hexing?!

As soon as the Life Death Hex solidified, a miserable shriek rang out. The black-shelled imp trembled as it was wrenched out from inside of Meng Hao to appear in front of him. It shook, and its miserable cries intensified until, after enough time passed for half an incense stick to burn, it knelt in front of him, a pleading look on its face.

“As I suspected, it actually developed sentience!” he murmured. He waved his hand toward the black-shelled imp. Not daring to resist, it transformed into a black beam of light that shot toward Meng Hao’s palm, where it then turned into a black bean-like pod.

It almost looked like a medicinal pill, and yet, had no medicinal aroma. Furthermore, there appeared to be undulations of life force inside of it. Meng Hao squeezed it hard between his fingers, but no damage was done. Apparently, it was extremely resilient.

It wasn’t until he exerted seventy percent of his power that the black pod began to tremble. As cracks spread across its surface, a terrified stream of divine will suddenly shot out of it, begging for mercy.

After a moment of thought, he loosened his grip, then put the black pod into his bag of holding. Finally, eyes gleaming, he looked at the other two caves with keen anticipation.

“Similar to the peak of the Immortal Realm, huh…. And also sentient. That means that there’s a high likelihood that they can continue to grow!

“Just a single black-shelled imp is far, far more powerful than ten black-shelled Ghost Eye Beetles. And the entire reason for the transmogrification was those spirit-immortal stones!

“If I could get more of these blackpod imps, perhaps a few dozen….” Meng Hao’s eyes shone brightly as he imagined a scene in which he waved his sleeve, causing massive quantities of black pods to fly out. After turning into black-shelled imps, they would possess his enemies, which would then assist him in battle.

“Magic pod soldiers!” 1 he thought, eyes shining. Next, he sent his divine sense into the other two stone chambers. In one of them, the black-shelled Ghost Eye Beetles were currently in the process of consuming each other. In the other chamber, there was only one beetle left, although it was currently sleeping.

Meng Hao could sense that it wouldn’t be very long before two more blackpod imps would be emerging from the stone chambers.

Muttering to himself, he summoned five more black beetles, which he placed into the chamber with the broken door, then fed some more spirit-immortal stones. Then he waved his hand, causing a glittering shield to appear that replaced the shattered door.

It was about this time that the puppet boy flew down through the water and the shield, and then entered the residence. He clasped hands to Meng Hao, and then handed over a bag of holding.

Meng Hao immediately looked very excited, and instantly put the matter of the Ghost Eye Beetles aside. He grabbed the bag of holding, scanned it, and then his brow furrowed. There were obviously far fewer spirit stones and Immortal jade inside than had been in the bag before.

Of course, it was better than nothing. It was still a hefty sum, even if it was less than before. Meng Hao waved his hand to send the puppet boy away, then sat down cross-legged and once again began to use the copper mirror to duplicate the Paragon's blood.

Time passed, and Meng Hao's life of sitting there duplicating with the copper mirror began once again. His eyes were bloodshot, and he continuously uttered vile curses. The copper mirror's ability to consume spirit stones, and the pain that came along with it, was something that he thought he had grown numb to. However, as it turned out, he was anything but numb.

Thankfully, his supply of Paragon's blood was growing larger. About a week later, he now had eighty portions!

During that time, he had sent the puppet boy out over ten times. Each time, he came back with fewer and fewer spirit stones and Immortal jade. Right now, Meng Hao was just looking up and taking a deep breath as the puppet boy returned again.

Unfortunately, this time the puppet boy had no bag of holding, only a jade slip.

When Meng Hao jaw that it was a jade slip, he smiled bitterly. He'd already had a bad feeling about what had been happening, so he wasn't surprised when he picked up the slip, scanned it with divine sense, and heard the enraged voice of Ling Yunzi.

"No more! What do you do with all the spirit stones, boy, eat them?! Or do you just crush them into bits for fun!?!? It's only been half a month! Do you have any idea how many spirit stones and Immortal jade you've taken away!?!?

"The Nine Seas God World has been saving up Immortal jade and spirit stones for countless years, and you've already sucked away ten percent!!

“Dammit! I know I said all the resources of the sect were available to you, but… but the way you’re clearing us out is intolerable! No more! Until we open the Likewind Realm, we have no more! Do you hear me!?”

Meng Hao felt a bit awkward. Although the jade slip only contained divine sense, and Ling Yunzi hadn’t come personally, Meng Hao could imagine how enraged he, as well as Granny Nine and Godmaster, must look.

“I don’t want to waste so many spirit stones either,” he grumbled. “It hurts me too!” He was also shocked at the wastage of spirit stones and Immortal jade, and it truly did pain him inwardly. He felt a bit wronged, actually. He hadn’t actually calculated how much he had spent, not because he couldn’t, but because he was worried that if he knew for sure, he might pass out from the pain of it all.

“Besides, it was a measly ten percent, that’s all! The Nine Seas God World is so mighty, and yet so stingy!” Clearing his throat, he continued to use divine sense to examine the message Ling Yunzi had sent.

“I bet you’re not convinced, are you, kid? You think that ten percent isn’t very much. Well let me tell you, you little whippersnapper, our faction only has access to forty percent of the total cultivation resources of the Nine Seas God World. The Demonic Cultivator Horde controls thirty percent, and the other two factions control fifteen percent each.

“If you want more cultivation resources, well, we can’t give them to you. Go challenge the golden door stone stele trials by fire. Win some rewards there. Because you’re in the Echelon, the rewards you can get will be double or more. When you win those rewards, the cost is divided out among all the factions!

“If you’re skilled enough, then in the following two and a half months you can clear out all the resources of the Nine Seas God World, but at least then the other factions will lose out as well, not just ours!!” Ling Yunzi’s last words were uttered through clenched teeth. Clearly, the last half month had been one long headache for him, Granny Nine, and Godmaster.

If Meng Hao weren’t in the Echelon, they would most likely have long since descended upon him and slaughtered him and put an end to this no-good, spirit-stone devouring black hole of a glutton.

Meng Hao frowned as he retracted his divine sense from the jade slip. He looked over at the copper mirror, and then at his 80 vials of Paragon’s blood.

“I still need twenty vials!” His eyes then began to shine with a frightening light, and a glimmer of obsession. For the sake of completing the Paragon’s blood, and for the sake of fully absorbing his Nirvana Fruits, Meng Hao was even beginning to think about resorting to robbery and theft.

“I guess I should go check out the trials by fire!” With that, he clenched his jaw, rose to his feet, and walked out of the residence.

As soon as he stepped outside, he heard the sound of organized, choral singing coming from the pool of water.

“Come, come, sing with Lord Fifth. No singing out of key, now! Here we go! I was a bad kid when I was young, I’m a little seafood dish! Lalalalala! Seafood dish. Dobedobedoooo…. seafood dish.”

1. This “magic pod soldiers” is actually a Chinese idiom based on a story where some magic beans turn into an army. Technically, what I’m translating as “black pod” or “blackpod” could also be translated as “black beans.” However… I’m sorry, but that’s just TOO goofy of a translation. I can’t stand the thought of Meng Hao having “black bean soldiers.” If he did, I would be tempted to add a line before he used them in which he asked his opponent “Would you like refried beans or black beans?” Besides, a pod is defined as a “two-valved seed vessel, as that of the pea or bean,” so I say it’s close enough. In any case, if anyone wants to write a fan fiction about these guys forming a band with Lord Fifth and going on tour, I can think of lots of great band names to go along with it

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# Chapter 1048: A Wager!

As soon as Meng Hao heard the singing, he gaped. Looking over at the pool of water, he took a deep breath. His expression was one of shock as he saw 33 Demonic cultivators, haggard and gaunt, singing at the top of their lungs.

Their expressions were unexpectedly… that of extreme passion that even bordered on worship. As they stared up at the multicolored parrot, they almost looked like cultists. As for the parrot, it was belting out the song at the top of its lungs.

Most intolerable of all was that the meat jelly had transformed into a set of barrel-shaped drums, which were constantly being beaten to go along with the singing.

Meng Hao simply couldn’t imagine what the Demonic cultivators had experienced to cause them to have such devoted gleams in their eyes. As for the singing, other than the little tune that Patriarch Reliance usually hummed, Meng Hao had never heard a more jarring melody.

He was also shocked to find that when he walked out of the residence and headed toward the pool of water, the Demonic cultivators, including the huge shell that hated him down to its guts, all completely ignored him, and focused wholeheartedly on their song.

Meng Hao felt as if the entire world were in chaos. He took a deep breath and looked at the hollering parrot, and suddenly realized that he had underestimated it.

Rolling his eyes, he cleared his throat and then produced Su Yan from within his bag of holding. As soon as she opened her eyes, she chuckled coldly, and was just about to deride Meng Hao when, all of a sudden, the singing caught her attention, and she gaped in shock.

“Parrot!” said Meng Hao decisively. “I’m handing this wench over to you for training. Get her to be as obedient as all these seafood dishes! Oh right, she’s worth… one hundred furred or feathered beasts!!” Almost as soon as the words left his mouth, the parrot began to tremble in midair. It even stopped singing, and all of the few colorful feathers it had left stood on end. Its eyes shone with brilliant light.

“A hundred? Did you say one hundred?!?!” It apparently wanted to make very sure that it had heard correctly.

Meng Hao nodded somberly. “One hundred! Each and every one with luxuriant coats of fur or feathers!”

In order to get his hands on that Daoist magic, he was willing to throw caution to the wind.

Su Yan gaped in astonishment. She wasn’t quite sure exactly what Meng Hao and the colorful bird were talking about. However, she quickly began to chuckle coldly, and her expression was one of extreme derision.

The parrot, however, was very excited, and instantly threw its head back and roared.

“Don’t worry, Lord Fifth will get this wench in line!” It looked excitedly toward Su Yan, eyes shining. Off to the side, the meat jelly didn’t seem to be very pleased at having been left out.

“Can you sing? Well? Can you?” it asked angrily. “Can you count?!”

“Morons!” Su Yan said with a laugh, closing her eyes and ignoring them.

Meng Hao gave Su Yan a pitying look, then cleared his throat. Not bothering to consider how the parrot would be training Su Yan, he turned and flew up into the air.

In the blink of an eye, he shot through the shield and the pool of water, appearing suddenly in midair. Almost as soon as he emerged, he saw two beams of light flying through the air in his general direction. Within those beams of light, two cold gazes could be seen.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he watched two Demonic cultivators flying by.

They snorted coldly, doing nothing to disguise their contempt for him as they flew past and then headed off into the distance.

Meng Hao didn’t mind. The main reason he was emerging from his Immortal’s cave was for Immortal jade and spirit stones. Without further hesitation, he flew into the air toward the golden gate stone steles.

He did not intend to blindly challenge the steles. Instead, he would go learn something about them, then decide later which one to challenge first.

“I need to find the one most suited to me. That way, I’ll be able to get the rewards I need in the shortest time possible!” As for his work with the Paragon’s blood, he was determined to succeed.

On the way to the golden gate stone steles, he passed various disciples. The regular cultivators looked at him curiously. Some even smiled and clasped hands. After all, Meng Hao was famous even outside the sect, and earlier, he had talked down a Dao Realm expert. That news had caused quite a sensation in the Nine Seas God World.

However, the Demonic cultivators he encountered all bristled with killing intent. The hatred in their eyes was clear, and when they saw Meng Hao, it only continued to grow deeper.

Eventually, he came to stand in front of a towering golden gate stone stele. It shone with boundless golden light, and was carved with so many names that they seemed impossible to count. Quite a few cultivators and Demonic cultivators were gathered in the area. Any time someone touched the gate, they would disappear.

People would disappear and people would reappear. It was quite a lively scene.

A middle-aged man sat cross-legged at the base of the stone gate. His eyes were closed, as if he didn’t care about what was happening in the world outside at all. However, if anyone attempted to start a fight in the area, or if people attempting the trial by fire tried to cheat in any way, he would instantly know, and punishment would be meted out without hesitation.

Meng Hao stood off to the side, watching the scene for a while. He was just about to leave when, all of a sudden, a glittering bright red light began to spread out from one of the stone steles. The light rapidly transformed to the image of an illusory world up in midair. Within that world, a young woman could be seen, who was the source of the light!

She was beautiful, but shockingly, a white-robed female corpse could be seen floating behind her, making her even more astonishing.

Cries of envy and shock could instantly be heard from all directions.

“The name list changed!”

“Elder Sister Fan Dong’er got into the top 30!!”

“The top 100 are all Ancient Realm cultivators, although you can only make it into the rankings if you have five or less extinguished soul lamps. But Elder Sister Fan Dong’er got into the top 30 while only in the Immortal Realm! She’s definitely a true Chosen!”

Cries of shock rang out among the cultivators in the area, including the Demonic cultivators. Many people looked envious, whereas others had dark looks, or even seemed unwilling to accept what had happened.

At the same time, Fan Dong’er’s name appeared as the thirtieth name on the list.

The red light shone for a bit longer, then faded away. As it disappeared, Fan Dong’er strode out from the stone stele. Her face was a bit pale, but she looked excited. As soon as she appeared, the surrounding disciples began to clasp hands and call out in congratulations.

Fan Dong’er smiled and clasped hands in return. She was just about to leave, when suddenly, her phoenix-like eyes flashed as she caught sight of Meng Hao.

Meng Hao smiled and nodded, then turned to leave. He now knew that this stone stele trial by fire was about divine sense. Although Meng Hao was confident regarding his own divine sense, it wasn’t his strongest area. Furthermore, in previous encounters with Fan Dong’er, he could tell that the reason why her divine abilities and Daoist magics were so powerful was not because of her cultivation base, but rather, her divine sense.

“Perhaps it has something to do with the techniques of the Nine Seas God World. I really should take some time to go to the their Scripture Pavilion.” After another moment of thought, he prepared to make his way off when all of a sudden, he heard the sound of air being shattered behind him. He turned to find Fan Dong’er chasing him down.

As for Fan Dong’er, she was muttering inwardly to herself that if it wasn’t for the fact that her master had instructed her to help Meng Hao familiarize himself with the golden gate stone steles, she wouldn’t have even approached him. Thinking about her battle with him after he reached Immortal Ascension caused her heart to fill with hatred. Back when he had first arrived and gotten into conflict with the Demonic cultivators, she had felt quite pleased, and had looked forward to the scene of the Demonic cultivators tearing him to pieces.

“Congratulations on reaching the top 30, Junior Sister,” Meng Hao said with a laugh.

“That’s Elder Sister to you!” she replied. Every time she looked at Meng Hao, she felt uncontrollable fury rising up within her. It was almost as if the mere sight of his face would put her emotions completely out of control.

“There’s only one Elder Sister in my life,” Meng Hao responded coolly.

When Fan Dong’er heard this, she gaped in surprise. Instead of pressing the issue, she took a deep breath, calmed herself, and then began to speak again, her face expressionless.

“The golden gate stone steles of the Nine Seas God World number nine in total. The first is the most important, which is a test regarding the pressure of the Ninth Sea. It is one of the most important trials by fire in the Nine Seas God World.

“The other eight gates test different aspects of cultivation. For example, the ninth stone stele is a fleshly body trial by fire. This, the seventh, has to do with divine sense.

“Then there’s the fifth stone stele, which is a trial by fire of slaughter. By experiencing a true battlefield, one can achieve the Dao of slaughtering.

“The third stone stele probably won’t suit you. It is regarding the Dao of transformation.

“Each person who enters into the top 100 on a golden gate stone stele receives a reward based on what rank they achieve. Greater rewards come as you go from the top 100, to the top 50, and the top 30!” Fan Dong’er rushed through the information, as if she was planning to leave right afterwards. She was worried that if she talked to Meng Hao for too long, she wouldn’t be able to control herself and would begin another all-out battle with him.

“What about the top 10?” he asked.

“Top 10? I suggest you don’t think that far ahead,” she replied, doing nothing to hide the derision in her tone.

“Don’t even dream of getting that high. Up to now in the Nine Seas God World, no one with an Immortal Realm cultivation base has ever gotten into the top 10.

“At the very least, you need to be in the Ancient Realm with two extinguished Soul Lamps to even compete over the top 10!

“As for you, you would be lucky to get into the top 20. You might be the Immortal Realm Paragon, but there are a lot of cultivators in the Nine Seas God World that you couldn’t lift a finger to.”

As Meng Hao looked at Fan Dong’er, his expression turned somewhat bashful, as if he felt a bit embarrassed about what he was going to say.

“You hit the nail on the head,” he said. “My goal is the top 10. Do you dare to make a bet with me about it?!”

Almost as soon as Fan Dong’er saw the bashful expression on his face, she felt like her scalp was about to explode. She instantly backed up, rotating her cultivation base and going on full guard, eyeing Meng Hao with extreme vigilance.

That expression was one which caused her heart to prickle, and it wasn’t the first time she had seen it. She knew that whenever such an expression appeared, Meng Hao would be at his most wicked. Not for the first time, Fan Dong’er dearly wished she could bash his face in so hard that she never had to see it again.

“Well, do you dare?” he repeated, looking at her and blinking.

“There’s no reason to try to convince me,” she replied with a cold harrumph. “It doesn’t matter what tricks you use, I simply can’t believe that you could get into the top 10 of any of the golden gate stone steles!

“Furthermore, if you think there’s any way I’ll be making a wager with you, you can keep on dreaming!” Giving him one final derisive and scornful look, she turned to leave.

“If you win, I’ll take Inky back,” he said casually.

Those words caused Fan Dong’er to instantly stop in place. She shuddered, then turned back, her face a mass of murderous rage. She glared at Meng Hao, panting, chest heaving. She was fundamentally beautiful, but when she had a look like this in her eyes, she was even more attractive.

That corpse was something Fan Dong’er had gotten used to. She had viewed it as a way to temper her Dao heart. However, deep down, she would do anything in the hopes of getting rid of it. Not even her master could dispel the corpse, and so, her tempering had been because she had no other choice.

Therefore, how could she possibly keep her calm when Meng Hao said something like he just had? Furthermore, how could she be sure he could even do what he said?

Well-aware of what Fan Dong’er must be thinking, Meng Hao smiled and said, “I can, because I was the one who stuck you with her.”

“YOU!!” Fan Dong’er gritted her teeth. “Fine, let’s gamble!”

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# Chapter 1049: The Ninth Golden Door!

As soon as the words left Fan Dong’er’s mouth, Meng Hao cleared his throat. For some reason, it didn’t feel right to con her in this way. But then he thought about the situation with the Paragon’s blood, and the vast amount of spirit stones and Immortal jade he needed, and he realized that he couldn’t let even the smallest juicy prey escape his grasp.

“How many spirit stones do you wanna bet?” he asked her.

Fan Dong’er snorted coldly. How could she not tell that Meng Hao was confident in his abilities? Otherwise, he would never have mentioned the possibility of a bet. However, she was equally confident in being able to win, and in fact, was certain that she would. Meng Hao had never been to the Nine Seas God World, let alone entered the golden gate stone steles. However, she was very familiar with them, far more so than Meng Hao.

“Alright, Meng Hao, let’s see who cons who this time!” she thought. Her expression cold, she pretended as if she were throwing all caution to the wind. However, inwardly she was actually feeling quite complacent. This time, it wasn’t Meng Hao who had lured her into a bet, it was she who was pulling the strings.

At the same time that Meng Hao was scheming about her, she was scheming about him!

“In the interests of time, I’m only willing to bet on the first time you enter one of the golden gate stone stele trials by fire,” she said. “If you tried them all, who knows how long it would take for you to finish.

“So, only your first try counts. You can select any one of the steles, and if you can get into the top 10, then I’ll give you 100,000 Immortal jades and 5,000,000 spirit stones. Those are the stakes!

“Furthermore, you must make your first attempt at the trial by fire today! I don’t have time to sit around waiting for you.

“If you get into the top 10, you can take everything immediately. If you can’t, then you must swear an oath upon the Dao that not only will you take this corpse away, you’ll also cancel my promissory note! Plus, every time you meet me, you have to get on your knees and kowtow in greeting!” The way Fan Dong’er gritted her teeth and glared at Meng Hao made it seem like the reason she had added more stipulations was because she regretted her sudden impulsiveness, and was hoping Meng Hao would back out.

Meng Hao blinked and looked suspiciously at Fan Dong’er. Then, he slowly nodded his head.

“Alright, fine,” he said. “We’re old friends, so even though the bet is a bit unfair to me, I’ll accept it, all because of our relationship. Let’s do it!”

Fan Dong’er couldn’t conceal the bright glow in her eyes as she immediately responded, “The agreement is reached…”

“…and the Dao bears witness!” replied Meng Hao, without hesitation.

Quite a few surrounding disciples overheard what was going on, and were watching closely. That was especially true of some of the male cultivators, who looked at Meng Hao with open hostility. Apparently, they felt that any enemy of Fan Dong’er was their enemy too.

When Fan Dong’er heard Meng Hao’s response, she immediately smiled. Now, she no longer made any attempts to cover up her scheming, or the fact that she had been baiting Meng Hao. She was eighty percent certain that Meng Hao was going to lose!

When Meng Hao saw Fan Dong’er’s expression, he smiled. Considering his years of experience as a con artist, how could he possibly have failed to notice that Fan Dong’er was leading him along?

He didn’t immediately select a stone stele to begin a trial by fire. Instead, he transformed into a beam of light that shot back and forth between the other eight golden gate stone steles as he examined them.

Fan Dong’er followed along, as did other disciples of the Nine Seas God World, including quite a few Demonic cultivators. Many of those people sent messages to friends, and soon, word spread about the bet between Meng Hao and Fan Dong’er.

Fan Dong’er was the Divine Daughter of this generation of the Nine Seas God World, and was even famous in the outside world. There wasn’t anybody in the Nine Seas God World who didn’t know who she was. Couple that with the fact that she was spectacularly beautiful, and it would be impossible to say conclusively how many of her fellow disciples completely adored her. Naturally, the fact that she had a wager going with someone quickly drew a lot of attention.

Of course, Meng Hao was also famous in the outside world. In fact, his name was far more illustrious than Fan Dong’er’s. Be it in terms of his identity or his accomplishments, he was the center of much attention. Furthermore, only half a month ago, he had stood up to and even berated a Dao Realm expert. Word of that had spread throughout the entire Nine Seas God World, which made the matter of his wager with Fan Dong’er that much more intriguing.

Demonic cultivators came. Ordinary cultivators came. It didn’t take long before there were fully 10,000 cultivators following Meng Hao around and discussing what was happening. Most of them looked at him with curiosity. However, as would be expected, most of them were inclined to support Fan Dong’er.

Around noontime, Meng Hao finished his inspection of the nine golden gate stone steles, whereupon he hovered in midair, muttering to himself.

“What’s wrong, can’t decide which one to pick?” asked Fan Dong’er, sneering coldly. “Don’t try to delay things, Meng Hao. We already made the bet. You can only do the trial by fire today!”

Meng Hao turned to look at her, then smiled. His eyes flickered with a cold gleam as, without another word, he shot away like lightning. Rumbling filled the air as he headed directly toward… the ninth golden gate stone stele!

The first stone stele was a test regarding the pressure of the Ninth Sea, something he wasn’t ready for. After a bit of examination of the other trials by fire, he didn’t feel extremely confident in his ability to win the bet in any of them. However, the ninth stone stele was a trial by fire of the fleshly body. In that, he had faith!

Fan Dong’er’s eyes flickered, and inwardly, she was laughing coldly. The ninth stone stele was actually one of three that she had speculated he would select. Therefore, it was no surprise to her at all that he chose that one.

“You’re definitely going to lose!” she thought, setting her jaw arrogantly.

The surrounding disciples immediately began to discuss the matter.

“The ninth stone stele! This Meng Hao has a true Immortal fleshly body, so selecting this stone stele is actually a pretty conservative choice.”

“However, he’s also being a bit rash, wouldn’t you say? The ninth stone stele… is very hard!!”

“Him losing would be a good thing. Deflate him a bit! After all, this is the Nine Seas God World!” Apparently, none of the disciples believed that Meng Hao would succeed.

Heaven and Earth rumbled as Meng Hao shot toward the ninth golden gate stone stele, a beam of prismatic light that split the air. As he neared, it was evident that there were already a large number of disciples gathered there, clearly aware of the wager between Fan Dong’er and Meng Hao. Their eyes glittered as they watched Meng Hao unhesitatingly speed directly toward the huge stone stele.

As soon as he touched it, he vanished inside.

Subsequently, the more than 10,000 disciples outside of the stone stele all fixed their eyes on the list of names as they waited for any change. Fan Dong’er chuckled coldly. She was very calm, and completely confident that Meng Hao would be defeated.

Inside of the golden gate stone stele was an entire world which stretched out in all directions. However, there was no sky or land, just blankness. Meng Hao frowned as he realized that his Immortal meridians were apparently sealed. He could not rotate them in the slightest, making it impossible to utilize any divine abilities or magical techniques.

“My magic has been sealed off?” he thought. He sent some divine sense into his bag of holding, and found that even it was affected; nearly all of the items inside were impossible to use. Apparently the natural laws in this place restricted anything related to magic.

There were a few Heaven-defying items within his bag of holding that were still available for use. Most shocking of all was that the black pod was still emanating ripples; apparently it was unaffected by the sealing, and could still be used.

Even as shock washed through Meng Hao, popping sounds suddenly rang out from up ahead. Next, a tall figure strode out from the within the void.

It was a man wearing a mask, with a long head of flowing white hair, and a navy blue robe. Not a single cultivation base ripple emanated off of him as he approached, causing Meng Hao’s eyes to widen.

He could sense that the man had a boundless power of qi and blood within him. Although he had absolutely no cultivation base fluctuations, his qi and blood power was towering.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he realized what type of cultivation this man practiced.

“A body cultivator!”

Back when he was doing research in the Fang Clan’s ancient records, he saw information about a common type of cultivation from ancient times. Those cultivators did not cultivate special types of magic, but rather, focused on their fleshly bodies.

People like that were referred to as body cultivators!

The most unique thing about them was that their bodies did not contain the least bit of spiritual energy. However, their qi and blood could influence the workings of the world around them.

The man in front of him hadn’t reached that level yet. However, his qi and blood were still extremely vigorous, shocking to the extreme.

As soon as he appeared, he didn’t hesitate for even a moment. He strode forward, and before he was even close, his boundless qi and blood surged, transforming into an incredible pressure that crushed down on Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and he couldn’t help but smile.

“So I can’t use any magical techniques. I can only rely on my fleshly body. Well in that case, it’s time to see… exactly how far my true Immortal fleshly body can take me!” He took a deep breath, and without any further hesitation, began to stride toward the man.

As they closed in on each other, both of them clenched their hands into fists and punched out!

A boom rattled out. Meng Hao went all out with his fleshly body, giving rise to a gale force wind. When his blow landed on his opponent, a massive shockwave spread out in all directions. Meng Hao’s hair was thrown into disarray, and yet, he didn’t retreat even half a pace. The initial punch actually got him excited; it felt quite relaxing to be able to unleash such power.

As for his opponent, the man trembled, and fell back a few paces.

“Time to die!” Meng Hao roared, stepping forward and punching again.

The punch landed on nothing, but it caused the void to collapse, kicking up a huge wind that slammed into his opponent. The man’s body shook, and in the blink of an eye, he was completely shattered into bits by the force of the strike.

However, in that same moment, two more men appeared within the void. They looked identical to the first man, with navy blue robes, and masks. Their qi and blood were also incredibly powerful, and they immediately charged toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao threw his head back and laughed. He didn’t back up, but instead, went on the offensive. Booms filled the air as the two figures were destroyed. A moment later, four figures appeared, with even stronger qi and blood.

This happened over and over again. Meng Hao attacked repeatedly, and a massive energy built up in his body. It was a domineering air, a courageous madness. Rumbling could be heard as the entire world was shaken.

4 opponents destroyed. Then there were 8. After 8 were destroyed, there were 16. After 16 were destroyed, 32 appeared!

After that there were 64, 128, 256….

Each and every time, their qi and blood were even stronger. Vast crowds surrounded Meng Hao, who only continued to laugh. He almost never came across a chance like this, in which magical techniques weren’t important, and he could rely only on his fleshly body. Every time he launched a punch, wild colors flashed about.

Furthermore, his name began to rise on the stone stele’s list!

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# Chapter 1050: Celestial Warrior!

Actually, Meng Hao’s name had appeared on the stone stele in the instant he had slaughtered 64 enemies. Prominently displayed on the golden gate stone stele was a list of 1,000 names.

However, while the names of the top 100 shone with brilliant light, the names of those outside of the top 100 were darkened to the point where you couldn’t read them clearly without using divine sense.

As for Meng Hao’s name, when it appeared, it was in the 997th position!

On any other occasion, few people would have taken note of this. Most people only paid attention to the top 100. The 900 names below that might have their own bit of glory, but not enough to cause any sort of stir.

As of this moment, however, the 10,000 spectators who were staring at the stone stele immediately caught sight of Meng Hao’s name and began to cry out.

“There it is!!”

“He’s in 997th place!!”

“That was so fast! How long has he been in there?” Immediately, various disciples began to analyze the situation, and soon, they determined that from the time Meng Hao disappeared into the golden gate stone stele until the time his name appeared, less time had passed than it would take an incense stick to burn!

In fact, in the brief time in which they discussed the matter, his name leapt from the 997th spot to the 831st! And it didn’t stop there. It leapt again, from the 831st spot to the 498th!

A huge commotion rose up, and everyone was clearly shocked. Everyone was staring at the stone stele, astonished at the progress Meng Hao was making. Based on his reputation, everyone was sure that he would reach the top 100, but what was causing such widespread shock was the speed with which he was moving up in the ranks!

He was rising so quickly that everyone was mentally shaken. When fighting a hundred people, defeating them in a hundred breaths of time was a completely different matter than defeating them in fifty breaths of time. Furthermore, to be able to do so in only ten breaths of time was like the difference between Heaven and Earth!

That was how all of the disciples of the Nine Seas God World currently felt about Meng Hao. Although they could see no images of what was taking place inside the trial by fire, when they calculated how quickly he was moving up, they knew that he was bursting with momentum and energy.

Fan Dong’er’s expression flickered, but quickly returned to normal.

“The real difficulty lies in the top 100,” she murmured to herself, clenching her jaw. “He might be moving quickly in the early stages, but so what?!”

Back in the golden gate stone stele, Meng Hao was laughing out loud. His qi and blood surged like that of an explosive dragon. He advanced courageously, dispatching the blue-robed figures with constant attacks. They were like dried weeds in front of him.

After dispatching the 256 cultivators with boundless qi and blood power, Meng Hao’s eyes glowed with obsession. He was panting a bit, but his heart was filled with the desire to do battle.

“I’m definitely… going to get into the top 10! Even if it technically shouldn’t be possible for me, I can still do it!” He looked down at his bag of holding. Located inside was another item, which was the key to his confidence in being able to win the bet with Fan Dong’er.

This might be a trial by fire, and most of the items in his bag of holding were sealed. However, as Meng Hao had expected, the item that he was counting on could not be sealed. As far as the black pod, the fact that it was also unsealed had been completely unexpected.

Even as he stood there, panting slightly, the void up ahead rippled. Meng Hao was given no rest as a massive aura exploded out in front of him. Shockingly, 512 men in navy blue robes stepped out.

Each one was far more powerful than any of the previous enemies he had fought. Their qi and blood power placed them in a position similar to the peak of the Immortal Realm. However, these were not like Chosen with 90 or more meridians, but rather, more like peak Immortals with 70 meridians or so.

Even still, they were incredibly powerful. Meng Hao wasn’t sure how members of the Nine Seas God World normally passed challenges such as this; perhaps they had a special body tempering technique. In any case, his eyes glittered as he stepped forward and went on the attack again.

Rumbling shook everything as he launched his punch. Massive vibrations could be sensed as he lost track of time, and even forgot that he was in a trial by fire. He focused completely on using his fleshly body to attack and destroy.

This was the first time he had not relied on any magical techniques or divine abilities, nor on his cultivation base. This was a battle fought only with the fleshly body. His entire body was trembling, not because of muscle fatigue, but rather, because it was finally able to utilize the full potential of its power.

In fact, Meng Hao could sense that, because of the constant fighting within the trial by fire, his fleshly body was now showing signs of a breakthrough, and was becoming even more powerful!

He roared as he shot forward, letting out a powerful punch that instantly exterminated three opponents. By the time he finished with the 512th opponent, blood was oozing out of his mouth and he was breathing heavily. Then he looked up and saw, not 1,024 opponents, but rather… a single person!

He wore a long crimson robe, and as he walked forward, the void around him turned bright red. That red color was not visible to the naked eye… it could only be seen with divine sense.

It was something that came only after reaching a certain level of qi and blood power, something that actually influenced the natural law around it!

As soon as Meng Hao saw this crimson-robed figure, his eyes widened, and he could sense the threatening air exuded by the man.

“So, a true body cultivator has finally appeared!” he thought, eyes shining with the desire to fight.

From the qi and blood power emanating off of the man, Meng Hao was able to tell that he was definitely a match for the peak of the true Immortal Realm.

Meanwhile, everyone in the outside world was in an uproar. The more than 10,000 spectators outside of the ninth golden gate stone stele watched as Meng Hao’s name rose up on the list. It went from the 400’s up into the 300’s, all the way until it reached the 101st position!

As for how much time had passed since Meng Hao had started, it was only… a single hour!

To cultivators, a single hour was like nothing. And yet, that was how much time Meng Hao had used to climb all the way to the 101st position!

“This Meng Hao, just… just how powerful is his fleshly body?!?!”

“An hour! It’s only been one hour….”

“I suddenly have the feeling that he… might actually make it into the top 10!”

“Not necessarily. Maybe he used some type of secret technique to bolster his fleshly body for a temporary boost in power!” As the conversations went on, Fan Dong’er’s face was extremely unsightly. Although she didn’t want to admit it, she was actually getting quite nervous. For Meng Hao to get to the 101st position in only one hour was something extremely rare in the golden gate stone stele trials by fire.

Back inside, Meng Hao had no idea where his name was on the list, nor did he care. Because of that item inside his bag of holding, he was confident that he wouldn’t lose. Compared to what was at stake depending on whether he won or lost, the gains he was making in terms of his fleshly body were far more important.

Up ahead, the crimson-robed man stepped forward toward Meng Hao. He only took three steps, but each step caused shocking rumbling like thunder to shake everything. Meng Hao’s heart quivered as though it were being stepped on. He felt stifled, as if, when standing in front of this crimson-robed man, he couldn’t help but feel regret.

But then, his eyes flickered with the desire to fight, and his qi and blood surged, instantly rising up to fight back against the feeling. He did not retreat, he advanced, directly toward the crimson-robed man.

The man looked up, and his eyes shone with a glow like that of blood. As Meng Hao closed in on him, he also charged.

The two did not speak, nor did they use magic. They simply… fought!

Booms rang out, shaking Heaven and Earth. Meng Hao launched punch after punch, as did the crimson-robed man. They went back and forth in midair, occasionally throwing sweeping kicks into the brawl. In a brief moment, they had exchanged hundreds of blows.

Meng Hao was laughing loudly. The more he fought, the stronger he seemed to become. It was as if his true Immortal fleshly body was undergoing tempering. It was exploding past his previous level of battle prowess, leading Meng Hao to the conclusion that he had overlooked the fact that his fleshly body could only grow stronger when he used it to fight! That was the key to growing more powerful!

Fight!

Meng Hao’s desire to do battle surged. He attacked relentlessly, advanced without pause. The crimson-robed man seethed with qi and blood power, but was forced backward over and over again. It didn’t matter that he was a body cultivator who had reached the point of being able to affect natural law; he was simply no match for Meng Hao’s true Immortal fleshly body.

About a dozen breaths of time passed. Meng Hao roared, and then let out a punch that completely destroyed the crimson-robed man.

The world went quiet and peaceful, and Meng Hao hovered in midair, his qi and blood surging, growing more powerful. Shockingly, a red glow began to spread out around him!

Apparently… he was able to influence this world’s natural law!

As of this moment, Meng Hao looked exactly like a celestial warrior!

“I understand. Body cultivators need repeated bloody battles to progress!” His eyes shone with enlightenment. In any other situation outside, he could rely on magical techniques to kill the crimson-robed opponent as easily as turning over his hand. But he had no such access to magical techniques now, forcing him to temper his fleshly body. He was causing his true Immortal fleshly body… to burst out with the true power that it was capable of.

Almost in the same moment that the crimson-robed opponent vanished, Meng Hao’s name once again climbed up on the list. He didn’t know that though. What he saw was the void up ahead of him rippling as… two crimson-robed men emerged.

It was like a cycle, with 512 as the limit. Every cycle had different body cultivators, wearing different clothing, from different Realms of body cultivation.

2. 4. 8. 16. 32. 64….

There was no rest in this trial by fire. His fleshly body grew stronger, his insane desire for battle growing ever more frenzied. He coughed up blood, but it made him more powerful. Underneath the constant onslaught, his fleshly body gradually approached the point of perfection!

It was at the point when 256 crimson-robed opponents appeared that Meng Hao finally began to fall back. There were simply too many people, all of them body cultivators who could influence natural law. Meng Hao's fleshly body power was now reaching its limit.

His eyes flickered as they surrounded him, and he gave a cold harrumph. He was not averse to using cheating methods. However, he didn't want to use his final trump card so easily. Therefore, he tossed out the black pod. The imp appeared, screeching as it shot toward the incoming crimson robed opponents.

A group of crimson-robed men immediately split off to deal with the blackpod imp. The imp was ferocious, and didn't attempt to dodge. Instead, its carapace to defend itself. Although it wasn't really a match for these crimson-robed men, the more it fought, the more confident it got. When it was injured, the injuries healed. Whenever any of the opponents got near, it would attempt to possess them. However, it quickly became apparent that the crimson-robed men did not actually have the types of bodies that could be possessed. Therefore, the imp simply slashed them to pieces and consumed their flesh and blood!

In the end, the imp was able to take care of a dozen or so crimson-robed opponents, taking a bit of the pressure off of Meng Hao.

Meng Hao was actually shocked at this outcome, and split his attention between fighting the crimson robed men and observing the little blackpod imp. Time went by, and after a few dozen breaths of time, the blackpod imp was struck by one of the crimson-robed body cultivators, and was sent flying. As it flew through midair, it spit out a mouthful of blood and then let out an ear-piercing screech.

"Dagger!!" As soon as it let out the cry, its body distorted, and it transformed into a dagger which shot toward the crimson-robed opponent.

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# Chapter 1051: Top 10!

Meanwhile, back in Meng Hao’s Immortal’s cave, rumbling sounds could be heard coming from within two of the stone chambers in his residence. It didn’t take long for the two chambers to completely collapse.

Two Ghost Eyes suddenly emerged from within the cloud of dust. When they saw each other, sparks of hostility could be seen, but instead of fighting each other, they flew out of the residence, apparently intent on making their escape.

However, as soon as they emerged, they found themselves facing the parrot, who was in the middle of coaching the Demonic cultivators in their singing. The parrot stared in shock, and then immediately looked displeased.

“They look so familiar, but I can’t quite place them. Anyway, why is their fur so sparse?”

“You fool, they don’t have fur, those are tentacles!” Off to the side, the meat jelly jumped at the chance to correct the parrot. All of a sudden it felt as if it knew about everything in the world, which also caused it to feel superior to and wiser than the parrot.

“Well it doesn’t matter if its fur or tentacles,” the parrot responded angrily, “they just don’t have enough! Come, come, you two, time to practice some singing with Lord Fifth!” It flew toward the two Ghost Eyes without any hesitation.

The two Ghost Eyes emanated mysterious glows, and without hesitation charged the parrot in attack. Shockingly, the two imps inside of the eyes opened their mouths wide, as if to possess the parrot.

They all slammed into each other, and surprisingly, the parrot wasn’t hurt at all. In contrast, the two imps let out miserable shrieks. They had sensed some sort of terrifying aura within the parrot, and began to flee. The Ghost Eyes faded away, revealing the imps, which transformed into black pods as they shot backward.

The parrot looked very proud of itself, and was just about to start speaking, when the two black pods suddenly shrieked: “Dagger!”

It was a shrill sound, tinged with madness. Next, two black daggers shot toward the parrot.

The parrot gaped in shock.

“Black pods that become daggers? Pod daggers? They seem so familiar….”

Meanwhile, back in the ninth golden gate stone stele, the black pod in dagger-form stabbed into a crimson-robed body cultivator, causing him to instantly vanish. Unexpectedly, he was completely absorbed… consumed by the dagger.

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed, and he kept fighting. Not much more time passed before he was able to wipe out the remaining two hundred or so enemies. Then, the void up ahead rippled once again. 512 body cultivators appeared.

A new round of slaughter had begun. Considering how many people he was fighting now, it was impossible for Meng Hao to maintain his previous momentum. He began to edge backward, and yet, his expression was calm. Despite being forced backward, he occasionally looked over at the blackpod imp, who was battling with increasing courage. As it continued to absorb the body cultivators, it was beginning to emanate a sensation of qi and blood.

That caused Meng Hao’s awe of the imp to increase.

Outside, the more than 10,000 disciples stared in shock as Meng Hao’s name rose from 101st place to 97th, 85th, 78th, 63rd, 54th….

Finally, Meng Hao’s name appeared in the 46th position!

The golden light which shone from the name made it clear to everyone. Furthermore, in terms of time… Meng Hao reached that position only two hours after beginning the stone stele trial by fire!

Everyone was completely shaken by this. Furthermore, the glittering golden light which rose up attracted the attention of disciples in other areas of the Nine Seas God World. They came over and began to ask about what was happening, and were shocked when they found out.

The Demonic cultivators were more affected than the ordinary cultivators. They stood there with grim faces and swirling killing intent.

As for Fan Dong’er, her face was extremely unsightly, and her hands were balled into fists.

“Considering the power of his fleshly body, he shouldn’t have any problems making it into the top 30,” she thought, gritting her teeth. “But… why is he going so fast?!?!” Meng Hao had long since passed up her own name on the list, which was not unexpected. However, according to her calculations, Meng Hao should have taken a whole day to get to his current position. Instead… he used only two hours.

By now, many of the Ancient Realm experts had sensed what was happening in the ninth golden gate stone stele, and were sending divine sense over to investigate.

Inside the stone stele, Meng Hao looked around at the hundreds of crimson-robed cultivators who surrounded him, and sighed. Even with the assistance of the blackpod imp, it was not an easy thing to go up against the combined qi and blood might of these body cultivators.

“I wonder how high up I am on the list,” he thought. “Definitely not 1st. How did all those the other people from the Nine Seas God World got so high in the rankings? How did they cultivate fleshly bodies more powerful than mine?!” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered.

“Perhaps it has something to do with body cultivation itself, or perhaps… the Nine Seas God World has true body cultivators!” He hadn’t been in the Nine Seas God World for very long, but even in that short time, he had made incredible gains. Not only had his fleshly body grown stronger, but he now had some clues about the path of body cultivation.

Were it not for that, he would have long since already reached his limit. Now, however, he felt that his power was just a bit lacking.

“Although I haven’t reached the point of needing to use THAT item, still… my fleshly body power just isn’t sufficient.” He took a step back, eyes glittering.

“In that case,” he said, taking a deep breath, “let’s see what types of body cultivators are here in this fleshly body trial by fire!” Although his Immortal meridians were sealed, and he couldn’t unleash magical techniques, he had sensed earlier that the secret magic of his Immortal meridians was still accessible.

His fleshly body was modeled after a single one of his 123 Immortal meridians. Therefore, he should be able to… transform all of his 123 Immortal meridians into fleshly body power.

He truly wanted to know exactly how powerful he would become if he transformed his fleshly body that way using the secret magic.

He closed his eyes, and the crimson-robed body cultivators closed in on him. When they were almost upon in, his eyes snapped open, and rumbling sounds filled his body. It was like a giant beating on a drum, intense booms that shook the entire world.

Inside his body, 123 Immortal meridians, despite being sealed and incapable of unleashing magical techniques, were not prevented from transforming into fleshly body power. Rumbling sounds could be heard as Meng Hao’s power exploded upward. Qi and blood power surged, and massive energy rose up.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE….

The incoming crimson-robed body cultivators were instantly smashed to bits by the surging energy. They became nothing more than ash that swirled around Meng Hao.

The blackpod imp let out a shriek and immediately evaded, looking back at Meng Hao with intense fear in its eyes.

All of the red-robed body cultivators were instantly destroyed.

Meng Hao clenched his fists and looked up, and his eyes shone with a bright light. Outside, his name instantly shot up from the 40’s into the 19th position!!

From ancient times until now, only eighteen people had ever performed better than Meng Hao, and they were all Ancient Realm cultivators with at least five extinguished soul lamps.

Furthermore, their fleshly bodies were not necessarily more powerful than Meng Hao’s. After all, he had cleared the entire stage in only a few breaths of time, whereas many of the others had been forced to slowly kill all of their opponents.

The result was the same, but the process was vastly different.

The outside world was in an unprecedented level of uproar. The disciples of the Nine Seas God World couldn’t believe their eyes when they saw his name leap from the 40’s all the way to the top 20.

Meng Hao!

Fan Dong’er’s eyes were wide, and she was panting with disbelief and shock. She even gasped.

“The top 20!!”

“Meng Hao got into the top 20! Only four hours to reach the top 20!”

“It’s hard to say whether or not… he might actually get into the top 10!”

Boundless golden light rose up from the stone stele, catching even more attention. More disciples were arriving in beams of brilliant light.

Meanwhile, back in the world of the stone stele, Meng Hao hovered there, looking every bit like a celestial warrior. His energy was impossible to describe.

He was a celestial warrior, the Immortal Realm Paragon. And now, his fleshly body had also reached the level… of the Immortal Realm Paragon.

The blackpod imp was trembling as the void distorted up ahead. Soon, rumbling sounds could be heard as distortions could be seen, from within which emerged a black-robed man.

It was only a single person, wearing a black robe and a mask. However, when he appeared, his explosive qi and blood power caused cracks to appear everywhere!

A terrifying energy rose up from him, which was the power of the peak of the Immortal Realm, a level of power equivalent to Meng Hao’s before he had used the Immortal meridian secret technique. However, compared to Meng Hao’s present state… this man’s energy was far too weak.

Meng Hao advanced, extending his hand. He didn’t use a fist, but rather, just waved his arm, causing fleshly body power to shake the natural law in the area. A huge conclave depression appeared, which immediately overwhelmed the black-robed man.

“Break,” he said softly.

A boom could be heard as the black-robed man shattered. Next, 2 men appeared. Then 4, 8… all the way until 512 black-robed figures could be seen. Each and every one of them were crushed by Meng Hao.

His face was one of determination, and he attacked with lightning speed. The power of his fleshly body had already reached the pinnacle of the current generation, and even exceeded that of Ancient Realm experts. However, Meng Hao knew that this was not his most powerful state.

An even more powerful state would be one in which he could successfully absorb the four Nirvana Fruits. At that time, before he entered the Ancient Realm, he would be have the most powerful fleshly body state to ever exist in the Immortal Realm from ancient times until now.

That would be… something that might even exceed the Immortal Emperor Realm!

512 black-robed men were smashed, causing Meng Hao's name to jump from 19th place on the stone stele to 5th!!

Outside, the crowd went wild.

"5th! Meng Hao got 5th place! The only people ahead of him are the legendary Four Celestial Warriors!"

"From ancient times until now, from the beginning of the Ninth Sea and the Nine Seas God World, the top 4 of the ninth golden gate stone stele have never been surpassed. Those four names have always been there!"

"Those four people aren't like Chosen from our era! They have been in that same spot for ages! Their record has never been broken by anyone!"

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# Chapter 1052: Passing on Body Cultivation Techniques

Fan Dong’er staggered back, her face ashen.

“He’s cheating! He must be cheating!” she thought, her eyes completely bloodshot. In this particular instance, however, her accusation was completely unfounded. While it was true that Meng Hao tended to cheat and was even prepared to do so, at the moment he really wasn’t.

His continuous fighting led to continuous advancement. As a result, his current fleshly body state was becoming increasingly powerful.

He hovered in the world of the golden gate stone stele, looking at the figures in front of him as they faded away.

Then, the void up ahead distorted, and a white-robed old man materialized.

The old man wore no mask, and he was alone. He seemed almost like the center of the entire world, and yet, no qi and blood power radiated off of him. It was almost as if he were a mortal.

However, he gave Meng Hao an incredibly enigmatic feeling. Deep down, Meng Hao also sensed an indescribable feeling of crisis that left him utterly shaken.

The old man looked at Meng Hao for a moment, and then suddenly spoke, his voice ancient and archaic.

“I am the final stage of this trial by fire,” he said coolly. “Throughout history, there have only been four people under the Dao Realm who have been able to handle my first fist strike. Of those, two were able to withstand a second. Only one could handle three strikes!

“Anyone who can defeat me will find their reward from the golden gate stone stele increased tenfold! Unfortunately… no one under the Dao Realm has ever done that.” As he spoke, he began to shine with a brilliant, golden light, as if his whole body had turned metallic.

Meng Hao’s pupils constricted. He wasn’t even able to gauge how profoundly powerful this old man was, but a sensation of danger flooded through him nonetheless. It was almost as if the person standing in front of him was not a cultivator, but some primordial wild beast!

Without even thinking about it, Meng Hao reached down toward his bag of holding.

The man looked deeply at Meng Hao and then said, “Do not attempt any other methods to achieve victory. Body cultivators grow more powerful by engaging in more battle, and making the heart invincible. If one resorts to trickery, the heart will be unstable. It might seem harmless at first, but in the end, your path will become more and more narrow, until you are unable to achieve true success in body cultivating.”

A tremor ran through Meng Hao, and he was silent for a moment, as if having experienced a moment of enlightenment. The hand he had been moving toward his bag of holding slowly stopped in place. Finally, he looked at the old man, took a deep breath, and then clasped hands and bowed. When he looked up, his eyes shone with the desire to do battle. At the same time, his body surged with a bit more energy than before.

His energy even seemed a bit purer, as if some new willpower had awoken within him.

The old man nodded, his eyes shining with approval.

“First fist, Life-Extermination Fist!” the old man said coolly. Then, he slowly lifted his hand up and clenching it tight. It seemed like an ordinary fist, except that he placed his thumb between his middle and ring fingers. It poked out just a little bit, creating a small point of invulnerability!

As he punched, it was clear that there was no magical technique involved. However, a massive wind blasted out, so icy cold that it seemed to be a wind of total annihilation. As soon as the wind began to blow, the entire world turn gray, as if the fist could extinguish all life in the entire world.

Meng Hao even felt the flame of his life force flickering on the point of extinguishing thanks to the profundity of the fist. His heart trembled, and he suddenly had the feeling that if a planet were struck by this fist, all living things on it would die!

An extermination of life!

This was the Life-Extermination Fist!

Meng Hao felt like he was suffocating in a cave of ice, and yet, his desire to do battle erupted. He formed his right hand into a fist, filling it with the power of his cultivation base, his willpower, and fleshly body power. His blood thrummed as he unleashed the fist of the Immortal Realm Paragon.

BOOOOMMMMMM!

They met in midair, and when their fists slammed into each other, Meng Hao’s entire body shook violently. He coughed up a massive mouthful of blood, and was sent staggering backward 300 meters. There, he coughed up another mouthful of blood, which was pitch black.

Furthermore, as soon as the blood sprayed out of his mouth, it immediately froze solid.

Cracking sounds could be heard as a layer of ice instantly spread out to cover Meng Hao.

A moment later, Meng Hao shook, and the ice shattered. He was pale and ashen as he looked over at the old man, shaken. The destructive power of that one punch was shocking to the extreme.

Furthermore, he could even sense that the old man hadn’t used the full power of the fist.

“Extermination…” he murmured.

“The Life-Extermination Fist can exterminate all living things,” the old man said coolly. “It can destroy any creature or being. This fist strike was created for the Dao of death. By attacking with a will of death, the body cultivator can murder Gods!”

Meng Hao’s mind quivered as if struck by lightning. He took a deep breath, then closed his eyes and contemplated the meaning of the old man’s fist strike. When the old man saw this, he looked surprised, and gazed more deeply at Meng Hao. Finally, a look of praise appeared on his face.

Meanwhile, outside of the stone stele, the fact that Meng Hao withstood the first fist strike resulted in his name moving up again. Now, he was in 4th place!

Although it was only an increase of a single position, the fact that it was the top 10, or really, the top 5, ensured that the disciples of the Nine Seas God World were completely shocked.

Fan Dong’er’s face was pale white. She knew she had lost, and yet wasn’t willing to accept that. She still believed that the only way Meng Hao could reach his current ranking was if he had cheated.

Time passed. This time, four full hours passed before Meng Hao finally opened his eyes. Looking at the old man, he clasped hands and bowed deeply.

“Understand?” the old man asked.

“Kind of,” Meng Hao responded truthfully. “Well… mostly not.”

The old man laughed heartily.

“Well, it doesn’t matter. Why don’t you try out my second fist strike, the Self-Immolation Fist, also known as the Bedevilment Fist!” As soon as he finished speaking, he took a step forward and raised his right hand into a fist. His thumb’s position was normal, without the special finger positioning from the Life-Extermination Fist. It looked completely like a normal fist as he punched out.

However, as the punch rocketed forth, an energy rose up from the old man that caused wild colors to flash in the sky. A massive wind kicked up that could shake heavenly bodies. The energy itself caused blood to ooze out of the corners of Meng Hao’s mouth, and he was shoved backward relentlessly, denying him any opportunity to counterattack.

That energy was the result of the old man’s willpower, a madness and obsession that was capable of paying any price to fuel the destructive power of his fist. It was a level of obsession so high that it could turn one into a Devil. Rather than an act of self-immolation, it was like a bedevilment!

The fist strike shattered the void, crushed Heaven and Earth, and… could not be reined in without shedding blood.

Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth, and he staggered backward. He didn’t even dare to consider a counterattack; he had the intense premonition that if he did… he would be destroyed in body and spirit.

There was something fatal about the power of that fist, and yet, even as Meng Hao fell into retreat, the old man roared, “Use what you learned of the Life-Extermination Fist, otherwise… you’re dead!”

Meng Hao looked up, his eyes shot with blood, and took a deep breath. Then he clenched his fist, placing his thumb between the middle and ring fingers. Using what he had just learned about the Life-Extermination Fist, he punched out.

Beneath the power of the Bedevilment Fist, Meng Hao’s life force was flickering out. A feeling of death filled him, and yet, he used that will of death to launch the punch. It was as if something in his mind snapped, and he achieved a higher level of enlightenment. His body trembled as… he understood the true, deeper meaning of the Life-Extermination Fist!

Everything was much clearer than before.

“I understand!” His fist, which was already flying through the air, trembled slightly. Then, it surged with a mad energy that hadn’t been there before.

A huge wind sprang up, which, under the influence of his fist strike, transformed into a wind of slaughter. Everything around him iced over, and the power of extermination rose up, slamming into the Bedevilment Fist.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOMMMM!

Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and he spun backward as violently as a kite with its string suddenly cut. Great mouthfuls of blood were vomited out, and yet his hoarse, excited voice could be heard: “Life-Extermination Fist! I understand! Life-Extermination Fist!!”

The old man smiled, returning his fist to his side as he watched Meng Hao fall and cough up more blood. However, Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed with intense focus and determination as he looked back at the old man and bowed deeply.

“Please accept my undying thanks for passing on this technique to me!” he said.

“You are not a body cultivator, and have not experienced baptism in the blood of a God,” replied the old man. “Therefore, you cannot withstand my third fist strike. Go. Wait until you have become stronger, and then come find me again. Remember, we cultivators didn’t originally practice body cultivation. The purpose of body cultivation… is to slay Gods!

“If you have an opportunity in the future to slay a God, then you can be baptised in its blood. At that time, you can acquire your own battle body!” The old man waved his hand, causing the world around Meng Hao to collapse into pieces. Meng Hao felt himself spinning, and everything turned into a blur.

At the same time, an unprecedentedly brilliant light shone from the ninth golden gate stone stele. Massive rumbling echoed out to fill the entire Nine

Seas God World. All disciples of the Nine Seas God World could sense it, and especially the Dao Realm Patriarchs. All of them looked over as Meng Hao's name rose from the 4th position… all the way to the 2nd position!

Clearly, the old man felt that Meng Hao was more qualified than the person who had previously reached 2nd place by withstanding the second fist strike!

The God World was in an uproar. All cultivators were shaking, and gasps of astonishment rang out in all directions.

“2nd place! Meng Hao reached the 2nd position on the list!!”

“Of the four celestial warriors who have eternally maintained the top positions, three were pushed aside by him!”

“He definitely deserves his positions of Chosen, Crown Prince of the Fang Clan, and joint Conclave disciple of the Three Great Daoist Societies!” As the crowds raved, Fan Dong'er's face grew paler than ever.

Golden light shone up from the stele, and Meng Hao's figure gradually appeared in front of all the crowds.

As soon as he materialized, he didn't glance at anyone, not even Fan Dong'er. Instead, he turned and looked at the name which occupied the 1st position on the list. He very much wanted to know who it was that could withstand the old man's third fist strike.

“Zong Wuya!” he murmured. 1

He might be someone from ancient times, and might not even exist in the Nine Seas God World anymore. However, Meng Hao still wanted to know his name.

Anyone who had never experienced the power of that old man's fist strike would be eternally incapable of understanding how terrifying the Life-Extermination Fist and the Bedevilment Fist were to experts who practiced cultivation of the fleshly body.

As of this moment, Zong Wuya’s name was deeply imprinted in Meng Hao’s mind.

1. Zong Wuya’s name in Chinese is . zòng wú yá. Zong is a surname which is also a common character that has multiple meanings including “vertical, release, and jump.” Wuya means “boundless” or “limitless.” I often ask Madam Deathblade “What kind of name is this? What does it feel like?” When I asked her that question for this name she snorted coldly and said, “It sounds like an wuxia name”

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1053: The Demons are Provoked!

At the same time that Meng Hao appeared, the disciples in the area were thrown into an uproar. Even the disciples who hated Meng Hao couldn’t help but acknowledge that he was incredibly powerful. The position of his name on the ranking list on the ninth golden gate stone stele left a deep impression on their hearts.

2nd place!

From ancient times until now, the top 4 spots on that name list had never changed. On this day, however, Meng Hao had risen from the very bottom of the list all the way to the 2nd position!

Many people speculated that there must be a vast gap separating the 1st and 2nd positions on that list. However, only Meng Hao knew how vast that gap was. Perhaps after he completely refined the Paragon’s blood, and then used it to fully fuse with a Nirvana Fruit, then…

He would be qualified to once again challenge the ninth golden gate stone stele, and feel… the power of the fist that came after the Life-Extermination Fist and the Self-Immolation Fist… the third fist strike!

That third fist would surely be spectacular to the extreme, capable of destroying Heaven and Earth. It was likely the pinnacle of body cultivation!

Refining more Paragon’s blood required more Immortal jade and spirit stones. Now that he had reached 2nd place on the ninth golden gate stone stele, he would receive a hefty reward!

Meng Hao looked over at the stone stele, and the description of the rewards. After making some calculations, his eyes shone with anticipation.

A moment later, as the golden light slowly faded away, Meng Hao turned, flashing through the crowd like lighting toward the pale-faced Fan Dong'er.

"Cheater!" she said, glaring at him. Gritting her teeth, she pulled a bag of holding out and threw it over to Meng Hao.

She might have lost, but she could afford to lose!

At the same time, though, her revulsion toward Meng Hao grew even stronger. Expression extremely grim, she turned to leave. She was worried that if she didn't leave quickly, she would lose control and attack Meng Hao, leading to a big battle. Considering how terrifyingly powerful he was now, she knew that she had no chance of winning.

Meng Hao caught the bag of holding. After scanning it with divine sense, he smiled. In his opinion, Fan Dong'er's biggest weakness was also her biggest strength, and was something that he greatly admired. That was… she didn't refuse to accept losing, and could actually afford to do so.

Meng Hao cleared his throat. He was not the type to secretly spare people. If he had an enemy, and their differences could not be resolved, then in his opinion, there was no need to even try. And in fact… he might as well pile on a bit more discomfort.

Meng Hao had always been that way. Therefore, he smiled and said, "Junior Sister Dong'er, there are still eight more stone steles. I feel bad for winning so easily. Why don't we make another bet? What do you say?"

Fan Dong'er gritted her teeth. Not bothering to even turn around and look at him, she transformed into a colorful beam of light that sped off into the distance.

Meng Hao felt a bit bad. His words were actually somewhat perfunctory. He wasn't very confident about the other golden gate stone stele trials by fire. If Fan Dong’er had agreed to continue betting, he would have been forced to delay the matter.

Looking around at all the surrounding disciples of the Nine Seas God World, he sighed.

“Without a believable accomplice, it’s hard to get things done. If I had someone to help, I might have been able to charge people to watch. Yet another lost opportunity for profit.” Meng Hao’s heart hurt at the thought of the spirit stones, which, although they didn’t actually belong to him, represented a missed opportunity all the same.

“What a headache. Everyone else worries about cultivation, but I’m always worried about having to make money.” Feeling quite bitter, he shook his head and flew quickly over toward one of the other golden gate stone steles.

If he was going to challenge them, then he would need to study them individually. That would give him the best chance to maximize their profitability.

When Meng Hao left, most of the other disciples followed along with him. Soon, the entire group arrived at the eighth golden gate stone stele.

Shockingly, almost in the same moment that they arrived, nine beams of colorful light appeared up above, screaming through the air toward the same location. Shocking rumbling like that of thunder clouds could be heard, accompanied by the ripples of the Ancient Realm.

In the blink of an eye, the beams of light closed in on the stone stele to reveal nine Demonic cultivators!

Of those nine, seven were men and two were women. All were exceedingly attractive, and looked almost exactly like cultivators, with the exception of the fish scale mark they all had on their foreheads. Another shocking thing about them was that each and every one appeared to have three or four extinguished Soul Lamps.

These were obviously not ordinary early Ancient Realm cultivators. These were Chosen who were close to the mid Ancient Realm.

“It’s them! The nine Sea Realm Demons!! They’re actually making a public appearance! How rare!”

“Of the twenty most famous human disciples in the Nine Seas God World, the weakest is the Divine Daughter, Fan Dong’er, although she has the highest ranking. In addition to her, there are the nine Divine Offspring. They have profound cultivation bases, and although they were once Chosen, they’ve now entered the early Ancient Realm! The Demonic Cultivator Horde is similar. They have a Sea Daughter, who is analogous to the Divine Daughter. In addition, they have the nine Sea Realm Demons, who are similar to the Divine Offspring!”

Immediately, all of the Demonic cultivators in the area started getting very excited.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered when he caught sight of the nine Demonic cultivators. They looked back at him, their eyes flickering with sinister light. Each and every one of them could exert threatening pressure on Meng Hao; after all, they were all in the Ancient Realm!

There were two who Meng Hao found the most threatening. Both were men, one of whom had a triangular scale on his forehead, and whose pupils were also triangular, making him look very bizarre.

The other appeared to be the youngest among the group of nine. He was incredibly attractive, and wore beautiful clothing. His forehead had no scale on it, but rather, a mark in the shape of a Sea Dragon. He emanated the air of a ruler or king, that spread out in all directions.

He was… the number one Demon among the nine Sea Realm Demons!

Meng Hao looked away from them and proceeded to head toward the eighth golden gate stone stele. A moment after he stepped inside, the nine Sea Realm Demons did the same.

Countless eyes were fixed on the developing situation. The Demonic cultivators hated Meng Hao, a fact that had already spread throughout the entire sect. For the nine Sea Realm Demons to show up here led everyone to the same conclusion; the Demonic Cultivator Horde was making a move on Meng Hao!

It was not a direct attack, but rather, an attempt to keep his growing popularity in check, to use the trials by fire to prevent any further rise.

The contrast between them would be clear!

“I wonder what ranking Meng Hao will achieve this time!?” The surrounding cultivators were buzzing with excitement, and at the same time, were trying to maintain a balanced outlook. Although Meng Hao had proved how powerful his fleshly body was in the ninth golden gate, it was entirely possible that he wouldn’t perform well in the others.

The truth of the matter was that was exactly how it was. After enough time for an incense stick to pass, Meng Hao’s name appeared on the golden gate stone stele, flickering with shining light. His name showed up somewhere in the 100s before he appeared outside.

Almost in the same moment that Meng Hao appeared outside, shockingly, nine names that were already in the top 20 positions on the list, moved up. Highest among all the newly risen was the name Long Tianhai. Earlier, that name had been in the 7th position, but it was now in the 4th!

“Long Tianhai! He’s the number one Demon among the nine Sea Realm Demons. I can’t believe he just got into the 4th position!”

“The Demonic Cultivator Horde is favored by the Ninth Sea. In terms of cultivation and enlightenment, they have it very easy!”

“Besides, they were actually born in the pressure of the Ninth Sea. Once they leave it, their cultivation bases will rocket up like mad!”

The spectators were in an uproar as nine figures emerged from the stone stele. It was none other than the nine Sea Realm Demons, who all looked over at Meng Hao with sneers that they made no attempt to cover up.

“So, the Crown Prince of the Fang Clan turns out to be pretty lame. You would think that with his cultivation base, he would at least make it into the top 100.”

“That’s the joint disciples of all of the Three Great Daoist Societies? He’s too weak to withstand a single blow from one of us! He can’t even make it into the top 100, and yet still has the face to walk around in the Nine Seas God World!?”

“You can’t say that. Maybe he just doesn’t care about the trials by fire. He just has an overinflated reputation that he can’t live up to. If you had to blame anything, you should probably blame his arrogance and conceit!” The nine Demonic cultivators didn’t hold anything back as they uttered various derisive and mocking words.

The disciples of the Nine Seas God World were shocked, and many of them felt that Meng Hao must be extremely weak.

“Fan Dong’er accused him of cheating in the ninth golden gate stone stele. From the look of things, he really was! Otherwise, how could there be such a huge gap now!?”

The results were clear. The nine Demonic cultivators went into the stone stele at the same time as Meng Hao, and had all placed in the top 20. The best of their group had even taken 4th place. In contrast, Meng Hao was in the 100s.

Normally speaking, if you didn’t compare him to others, placing the way he did would be exceptional. After all, he didn’t go all out, he merely went in to observe a bit.

Meng Hao looked coldly over at the nine Demonic cultivators, who stared back at him with expressions of blatant provocation and mockery. As for Long Tianhai, his expression was extremely calm. However, it was calm in an arrogant way, as if Meng Hao were an ant that he didn’t even need to think about, and could crush with a mere thought.

Meng Hao didn’t say anything. He knew that there was no way to patch things up with the Demonic cultivators, and therefore, he made no attempt to do so. In fact, he even felt a bit bad about it. After all, it was his bloody slaughter which had led to the whole situation.

He maintained his silence, and didn’t say anything in response. He turned and headed toward the seventh golden gate stone stele, followed by the nine Sea Realm Demons. They all arrived shortly thereafter at the seventh stone stele, after which Meng Hao entered. The nine Demonic cultivators followed suit, clearly hoping to humiliate Meng Hao.

After the time it takes an incense stick to burn, Meng Hao appeared. This time, he performed a bit better than before, ending up in the 90s. However, moments later, golding light shone up from the names of the nine Sea Realm Demons. Although they didn’t make incredible progress, there were some in the top 20. Long Tianhai didn’t make it to 5th place, but rather 7th. Another of the nine Demonic cultivators made it into the 9th position.

It was another clear contrast!

Next was the sixth golden gate stone stele, followed by the fifth, the fourth, the third, and the second….

The nine Demonic cultivators stuck as close to Meng Hao as his own soul. Every trial by fire he entered, they entered too. The result was that they completely exceeded him… and it was as easy for them as turning over a hand.

After every single trial by fire, they would utter some derisive words, the acidity of which only continued to grow. Their words were clever, and they made no effort to conceal the fact that they were taunting him.

Meng Hao’s face grew icier. He didn’t try very hard in any of the trials by fire, and as such, didn’t allow their words to rile him. He knew that, for the moment, his level of power wasn’t sufficient to exceed them.

All he wanted to do was observe the trials by fire and get used to them. It didn’t matter if he only got into the top 100 or so. At the moment, he wasn’t ready to truly challenge them.

Soon, he had passed through the rest of the stone steles. The final trial by fire tested one’s ability to stand up to crushing pressure. After looking the stele over, Meng Hao decided not to challenge it, and turned to leave.

At this point, the nine Demonic cultivators started laughing coldly. Some of the other disciples of the Nine Seas God World were able to tell what was going on, and yet, the buzz that had built up because of his amazing performance in the ninth golden gate stone stele was now dying out. In fact, there were even people who were now suspecting him… of being a cheater!

Although Meng Hao looked like he wanted to leave, but it didn’t seem that the nine Demonic cultivators were going to let him.

“Meng Hao, what do you say to a bet? Do you dare?” one of the nine Demonic cultivators taunted, the ridicule in his tone clear as his voice echoed about.

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# Chapter 1054: Little Haowie Needs To Be a Good Boy

Meng Hao was just about to leave when he heard the words and stopped in place, his heart thumping.

He slowly turned to look back at the nine Sea Realm Demons who had repeatedly done everything they could to provoke him. Although he was truly convinced that his own excessive killing had caused this irreconcilable conflict, the regret he felt was mostly gone thanks to the actions of these Demonic cultivators.

Sometimes, it doesn’t matter who is right or wrong. Sometimes the only thing that matters… is who has the power to back up their words!

Only the powerful could back up what they said!

As soon as Meng Hao heard the Sea Realm Demon mention the word ‘bet,’ he thought for a moment and then smiled. It was a bashful smile, and a bit apologetic.

“I don’t think that’s a good idea,” he said hesitantly.

“Cut the crap!” said the Demonic cultivator. “Do you have the guts to make the bet, or not!?” Immediately, the other Sea Realm Demons started laughing. As for Long Tianhai, he looked over with cool indifference.

They didn’t know Meng Hao, so they had no idea that concealed beneath that bashful smile was a temper so violent that even words like conniption or paroxysm couldn’t describe it.

“No bets for me!” Meng Hao took a deep breath and decided to take the high road for once. He once again turned to leave.

“So it turns out that the Crown Prince of the Fang Clan doesn’t dare to make real bets,” said the seventh of the nine Demonic cultivators. “The only thing he can do is bully Fan Dong’er!” His words were venomous and cold, and instantly put Meng Hao in a bad position with the other disciples of the Nine Seas God World.

“Crown Prince?! Pshhh, weak. Seems like the Fang Clan… is nothing special after all!”

“Don’t even mention the thing about being a joint disciple of the Three Great Daoist Societies. This guy is as cowardly as a mouse!” The Demonic cultivators continued to spew increasingly vitriolic words. Their taunts were reaching the point of being direct verbal attacks.

Meng Hao once again stopped in place and slowly turned around. His face was bright red, as if he was barely capable of containing his rage as he stared at the nine cultivators, panting.

“What a bore! This guy can’t do anything other than cheat! Useless! Even when making bets, the only thing he can do is bully girls! Screw him!”

“Alright, what do you want to bet!?” growled Meng Hao through gritted teeth. He glared at the Demonic cultivators and took a few steps backward, as if he were bracing himself to do something he didn’t want to do, but had no choice but to do.

The Nine Demons of the Sea Realm looked at him with cold smiles. The person to reply was the third Demon, a woman.

“Well,” she said, “obviously we’ll bet to see if you can get into the top ten of one of the other golden gate stone steles! Without cheating like you did in the ninth stele, of course.

“As for the stakes, let’s say 100,000 Immortal jades, as well as 5,000,000 spirit stones!

“If you can’t get into the top ten, you don’t have to pay any spirit stones, you just have to get the hell out of the Ninth Sea! And if you ever step half a foot back inside, you’ll be killed in body and spirit!”

Meng Hao’s face twitched slightly, and after taking a deep breath, he started laughing loudly.

“What piddly stakes! You want to bet with me like that? Fan Dong’er and I have a long-standing friendship that you don’t even know about. Our bet from before was just for fun! If you really want to make a wager, then you have to put up 10,000,000 Immortal jades!!

“Do you have the guts to make the bet, or not!?” Meng Hao spoke the words especially loudly. After pausing for the space of a few breaths without hearing a response, he started to laugh coldly.

“If you don’t have the guts, then forget about it,” he said, quickly backing up as if he wanted to take advantage of the silence to leave.

“You’re on!” Long Tianhai said coolly, his first time speaking. “However, if you lose, you’ll have to leave behind your four limbs for us as a souvenir.” His words instantly caused the other eight Demonic cultivators to look very excited.

“You….” said Meng Hao, appearing to be very shocked. His face was extremely grim as he stared back at Long Tianhai. Finally, he took a deep breath, gritted his teeth hard and said in a cautionary tone, “What I said was 10,000,000 immortal jades PER golden gate stone stele. With eight steles, that means that if I can get into the top ten of all of them, you’ll owe me 80,000,000!”

Gasps could be heard in the crowd, from both ordinary cultivators and Demonic cultivators alike. This was an incredible, shocking wager, the types of which were rarely seen in the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

“80,000,000 Immortal jades…. Heavens! How many spirit stones would that be worth?”

“Enough to equal the life savings of an entire mid-sized clan of cultivators!”

“These people are crazy….”

Even as the crowd went into an uproar, the nine Sea Realm Demons were internally shaken by Meng Hao’s words. Even Long Tianhai’s face fell.

10,000,000 pieces of Immortal jade was a sum they could just barely scrape together. As for 80,000,000… that far exceeded their limit. Even for the Demonic Cultivator Horde as a whole, it was no small amount.

The other eight Demonic cultivators hesitated. Their plan to make a bet with Meng Hao had been come up with on the fly, and had quickly reached the point that they didn’t dare make any decisions unilaterally. All of them turned to look at Long Tianhai.

An unsightly expression could be seen on his face as he stared at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao seemingly sighed inwardly, and was just about to speak up as if he were going to give the Demonic cultivators a way out of the bet, when Long Tianhai’s eyes glittered.

“You’re on,” he said. “However, we’re going to change things a bit. If you don’t get into the top ten of all of the golden gate stone steles, then not only do you have to forfeit your four limbs, you also have to give me… your place in the Echelon!” After the words left Long Tianhai’s mouth, utter silence reigned.

Most people had no idea what the Echelon was. However, from the way the Three Great Daoist Societies treated Meng Hao, people could speculate. The matter of the Echelon was not something that could be kept secret forever, which Meng Hao knew. That was why he had taken the initiative to bring up the matter publicly earlier.

Sometimes a matter being public rather than secret can lead to certain unexpected advantages.

Deep in Meng Hao’s eyes was a flickering coldness that no one could detect as he looked at Long Tianhai. They stared at each other for a moment, and within Long Tianhai’s eyes, Meng Hao saw no trace of the coolness and disregard from earlier. Instead, he saw schemes and deceit.

“He was putting on an act earlier!” he thought, eyes glittering.

Finally, he smiled coldly and said, “Well in that case, I don’t need 80,000,000. I want 300,000,000 Immortal jades! Add in one Dao weapon, and Meng Hao will take this bet with your Demonic Cultivator Horde!” Meng Hao’s words were met with a chorus of gasps from the audience.

300,000,000 Immortal jades was an astronomical sum. It was terrifying even to think about. Even for the Four Great Clans it would be a deleterious blow to be forced to hand over so much money. As for the Nine Seas God World, their reserves might be deep, but the Demonic Cultivator Horde only had access to thirty percent of the clan’s resources. If they lost, it would be a severe blow to their foundation.

As for a Dao weapon, that was a magical item that only a Dao Realm expert could wield. Such things were rare in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, and in fact, only three existed, one of which was in the possession of the Demonic Cultivator Horde.

If they lost the bet, and the weapon, it couldn’t quite measure up to the value of a place in the Echelon. However, if they won… it would all be worth it!

The crowd was in an uproar, and the noise only continued to get louder. An incredible wager like this was enough to cause cultivators of all Realms to be filled with excitement.

The nine Sea Realm Demons all sucked in deep breaths.

Long Tianhai remained silent for a moment before a bizarre gleam appeared in his eyes. Considering that Meng Hao had mentioned the Demonic Cultivator Horde, he knew that Meng Hao had already pieced together some clues as to what was really going on.

However, he didn’t care. What he wanted… was Meng Hao’s place in the Echelon. Before Meng Hao had arrived in the Ninth Sea, he had put various plans in place. He had never imagined that one of the first things Meng Hao would do after arriving would be to immediately reveal publicly that he was in the Echelon. Now that many people knew about the matter, most of his plans were rendered unusable.

However, the stakes Meng Hao had mentioned just now were vast, and were somewhat imbalanced when compared to a place in the Echelon. It was a decision he couldn’t make on his own, so he stood there silently for a moment, apparently conferring with someone. Finally, he gritted his teeth and looked over at Meng Hao, a gleam of determination in his eyes.

“The Dao weapon is off the table. But the 300,000,000 pieces of Immortal jade… we can do!”

As soon as the words left his mouth, Meng Hao sighed with relief. He had brought up the Dao weapon as a way to test out how determined the Demonic Cultivator Horde was. If they were even willing to put a Dao weapon on the table as stakes, then… he would have immediately declined the wager. No matter how much face he lost, he would never have agreed.

The fact that the Demonic Cultivator Horde refused to put the Dao weapon up as stakes revealed that there was a possibility that the result of the bet would be upheld. This matter most likely involved the machinations of a Dao Realm expert. However, Meng Hao knew that in all matters, risks had to be taken!

His eyes shone with a strange light as he looked over at Long Tianhai.

“This is a big matter. I’ll give you my answer in a month!” Having said that, he turned and shot off into the distance. Waiting for a month gave him the option of both going on the offensive, or remaining on the defensive. Furthermore, it negated the previous comparisons that had been made between him and the nine Sea Realm Demons. Everyone was now completely focused on the matter of the wager.

Long Tianhai also realized this. His watched coldly as Meng Hao left, his eyes flickering with a gleam of killing intent.

Meng Hao transformed into a beam of light that shot back toward his Immortal’s cave. After passing down through the water and the shield, the first thing he saw was the parrot, surrounded by the two trembling blackpod imps.

The parrot started singing, after which the Demonic cultivators chimed in.

“I was a bad kid when I was young, I’m a little seafood dish, lalalalala, little seafood dish, dobedobedoooo, little seafood dish….”

Meng Hao stood there silently for a moment, staring at them, after which they switched to a different song.

“Come, come,” the parrot shouted excitedly. “Last night Lord Fifth had a dream about another song. Once we get it down, Lord Fifth is going to host a big singing contest for the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea! Alright, sing with me!” Off to the side, the meat jelly started to beat a drum enthusiastically.

“We’re all seafood, our whole family is seafood! Righteous Lord Fifth, mighty Lord Third, lalalalala, we have to make the seafood be good! Dobedobedoooo, we have to make the seafood be good….”

When Meng Hao heard this, his mind spun, and all of a sudden the world seemed like a worse place. He felt bad for the Demonic cultivators, as well as Su Yan. At the moment, Su Yan seemed to be deeply shaken. She was staring at the parrot with gaping jaw, as if… the parrot had completely turned her world upside down.

Meng Hao cleared his throat and waved his hand toward the blackpod imps that seemed to be acting like backup singers next to the parrot. Instead of resisting him, they gladly flew toward him as if he were rescuing them from a disaster. Immediately, they transformed into black pods that came to rest on his palm, after which he stowed them away in his bag of holding.

The parrot didn’t look happy. Glaring at Meng Hao, it said, “Come, come. Lord Fifth just thought of a new song. Let’s all sing it together.

“Little Haowie needs to be a good boy….”

A brutal gleam appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes as he stared at the parrot for a moment. Then he ignored it, turning and walking back into his residence. The wave of a hand caused a sealing shield to appear that blocked out all of the racket from outside.

Moments later, the puppet boy flew out to go collect his reward from the ninth golden gate stone stele, and the smaller rewards for making it into the top 100 of the other eight stone steles.

Meng Hao sat down cross-legged, took a deep breath, and then gazed at the copper mirror with a look of anticipation.

“This time, I’m pretty sure I got enough Immortal jade to complete my work with the Paragon’s blood!”

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# Chapter 1055: Which Paragon Did This Blood Come From!?

Not too much time passed before the puppet boy returned. Just as Ling Yunzi had said, a greater reward than usual was doled out to him and placed in a bag of holding.

He hefted the bag of holding, scanning it with divine sense for a moment before beginning to pant. He quickly retracted his divine sense, unable to bear looking at the contents. What was inevitably about to happen caused his heart such grief that if felt as if it were being cut in half with a knife. Therefore, he chose not to think about it.

This was a precious skill that Meng Hao had picked up recently. He sighed, gritted his teeth, and took out a vial of Paragon’s blood to begin duplicating.

Time passed. Meng Hao’s eyes were shot with blood and his hair was disheveled crazily as he fed Immortal jade and spirit stones into the copper mirror. Grimacing, he produced one duplicate after another.

Eventually, seven days passed. Meng Hao had now been in the Nine Seas God World for the greater part of a month. Finally, his bag of holding was completely devoid of all Immortal jade and spirit stones. And there in front of him was a collection of one hundred vials of Paragon’s blood!

As he looked at the blood, he began to pant. He kept telling himself not to think about how much he had spent to get this much, and yet he couldn’t stop himself. As soon as the slightest thought of it crossed his mind, his heart twisted into a knot.

“When I was young, I always wanted to be rich. After I started practicing cultivation, there were often times when I felt like a rich person. However, it always takes the mere blink of an eye for all of that to go away, and I’m destitute again.” He wanted to cry, but no tears would come. He wasn’t sure if his lifelong dream would ever actually come true.

After taking some deep breaths, his eyes filled with determination, and he produced a vast collection of medicinal pills. He put them in his mouth, and refrained from chewing them. He merely allowed them to begin to slowly dissolve.

Finally, he waved his hand and caused ten vials of Paragon’s blood to fly out. Cracking sounds could be heard as the bottles shattered, and the blood itself swirled out into the air.

Ripples began to spread out as he raised both and began to mold the Paragon’s blood together into one glob.

After it did, a terrifying aura began to spread out.

“Parrot! Meat jelly! Get over here and help stop this aura from spreading out!” His words echoed out at the same time that the parrot was encouraging the Demonic cultivators to sing. After it heard what he said, it muttered a few sentences to itself, then flapped its wings and flew over with the meat jelly to help suppress the aura of the Paragon’s blood.

Meng Hao took a deep breath as he waved his right hand, causing ten more vials of Paragon’s blood to fly out and shatter. The blood then merged into a larger sphere in front of him. The terrifying aura exploded out violently, spreading out in all directions, causing the residence around him to shake so violently it seemed it might collapse.

Meng Hao’s eyes shone brightly, and without any hesitation, he waved his hand again. Ten more vials’ worth of Paragon’s blood collapsed and then reformed. The terrifying aura increased in intensity, and cracks spread out through the entire residence. It was at this point that the parrot arrived. It no longer looked calm and collected, but rather, let out a loud howl as it went all out to suppress the aura.

The meat jelly didn’t seem very willing to cooperate, but it transformed into an enormous canopy nonetheless, which covered over the entire residence, completely preventing the aura from escaping into the outside world.

Because of Meng Hao’s proximity to the the combination of thirty vials of Paragon’s blood, the intense pressure caused him to shake violently. However, his eyes shone brightly with determination.

“Thirty percent!” he breathed. The pressure of the blood caused him to shake, and cracking sounds could be heard. His mind was spinning violently.

He gritted his teeth and waved his hand again. Rumbling sounds could be heard as ten more vials of blood shattered. The blood flew out to join the huge sphere; now it was roughly the size of an infant’s hand.

It was bright red, and shockingly, strands of gold could be seen swirling around inside, making it resplendently beautiful to the point where it tugged at the soul.

At the same time, increasingly intense pressure was cast out by the terrifying aura. The explosive power battered against Meng Hao, causing blood to ooze out of his mouth, and fissures to spread out across his skin. There was also a powerful expulsion force that threatened to cause him to explode.

His eyes shone brightly with obsession as he rotated his cultivation base, drawing on all the power of his Immortal meridians, using his secret magic to make them all Eternal. Their power surged in his body as he waved his hand again, causing ten more vials to fly out and shatter. When the blood merged into the sphere, terrifying aura erupted with further intensity.

The pressure was now so incredible that it caused Meng Hao’s entire residence to collapse into pieces. The entire structure transformed into nothing more than ash!

Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth, and his hands almost shattered. His Eternal stratum surged at full power, continuously healing him, allowing him to fight back against the intense power.

The meat jelly roared and the parrot squawked shrilly as they suppressed the aura with all of their might as well.

Meng Hao was shaking, and his eyes gleamed with madness.

“Fifty percent!” He waved his hand, causing another ten vials of Paragon’s blood to fly out. When they merged into the sphere, he sent out another ten, all the way until a total of eighty vials had been added together. It was now as large as an infant’s head, and the pressure caused colors to flash, and the sky to grow dim.

Meng Hao felt like he was the subject of an intensely powerful attack. He was shoved backward, and blood spewed out of his mouth. His Eternal stratum worked like mad, but was incapable of keeping pace with the level of destruction, not even with all of his 123 Immortal meridians combined.

At this critical juncture, he didn’t hesitate for even a moment to chomp down on half of the medicinal pills he had in his mouth. Immediately, they melted, flowing into his body with restorative energy. His Immortal power was once again restored, and he managed to bear the brunt of another aggressive blast.

The sphere of blood radiated resplendent light, as if the will of a Paragon were now awakening!

If it wasn’t for the meat jelly and the parrot blocking the spread of the aura, the entire Nine Seas God World would be going completely crazy. The Ninth Sea would be aboil, and the entire Ninth Mountain would be shaking.

However, even though the aura still wasn’t leaking out, the natural law in the area around Meng Hao was being affected. The air filled with distortions, as if another world were forming.

All of that… was because of the Paragon’s blood!

It was not merely a single portion, but eighty portions that had been merged together. It hadn’t even been refined yet, and was only an amalgamation, yet it was still a sample of Paragon’s blood that was only a sliver away from being complete!

“I can do it!” Meng Hao roared, waving his hand. Rumbling could be heard as the final twenty vials of blood flew out. Half of them shattered, and the blood in them fused with the sphere. Meng Hao’s hands were mangled masses of flesh, and he suddenly coughed up a huge mouthful of blood. However, a moment ago, he had crushed more of the medicinal pills in his mouth, causing their power to flow through his body and stimulate his Eternal stratum into frenzied action. The mouthful of blood he had just coughed up didn’t do anything to affect the fusion of the Paragon’s blood.

The meat jelly roared with increased intensity as the canopy it had formed fought to control the aura. The parrot was in midair, squawking as it caused numerous streams of magical symbols to swirl down and seal the entire area.

“Dammit! This isn’t the Demongranny’s blood! She might be a Paragon, but this drop of blood was definitely not produced by her. How could an unrefined drop of blood contain such shocking power!?!?”

“The last ten vials!” Meng Hao chomped down on all of the remaining medicinal pills, then waved his hand to cause the final ten vials to shatter. Blood flew out into the sphere, which was now the size of an adult human head!

The sphere of blood contained innumerable golden threads that interlocked with each other, forming vague magical symbols that seemed to contain the origin of the starry sky, the Essence of the world, the basis of all life!

The meat jelly was shaking violently, and fissures snaked out across its body. It looked like it was about to collapse, and it was shrieking in pain. The parrot was getting very nervous, almost like he had during the unforeseen flare-up of the copper mirror.

“It’s not the Demongranny’s blood, and it’s not old man Immortal Ancient’s either!” the parrot shrieked, staring in shock and disbelief. “Could it be… could it be that this… no way. Impossible! Didn’t he die? As soon as he died, all of his blood should have vanished from within Heaven and Earth! How could there be some left behind!?!?

“Dammit! No wonder the mirror was acting so crazy! I thought that it was because someone was casting magic on it, but that was only one part of it! The other reason was because of this blood!!”

Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth, and he trembled violently. Despite the preparations he had made with the medicinal pills, his Eternal stratum was reaching the point where it couldn’t sustain him. All of his flesh was covered with cracks and fissures, which were widening, as if he might explode at any moment.

His body was slick with blood, but his eyes were completely focused. His hands trembled as he held the the sphere of blood between them and then shoved down hard.

“Refine!!” he cried. The sphere of blood gradually began to shrink and refine. As it did, more and more golden threads became visible, until, in the end, the entire mass of blood… was golden!

Meng Hao was shaking, and more cracks spread out across his skin. He felt the flame of his life force growing dim, all because of the vast pressure cast by the aura of the Paragon’s blood. It was only a drop of blood, and yet Meng Hao was still no match for it. He was on the verge of collapsing. Even though the blood wasn’t actually fighting him… it was still powerful enough to utterly exterminate him.

It wasn’t just Meng Hao. Someone in the Ancient Realm, or perhaps even someone in the Dao Realm… would be slaughtered by this drop of blood!

Rumbling sounds echoed out, but Meng Hao endured. His body hovered on the brink of exploding as the mass of blood rapidly shrank. Soon, it was only the size of an infant’s hand.

His body was covered in cracks and tears. His two hands were nothing but bloody flesh, disfigured and misshapen. And yet, his eyes still shone with laser focus.

“Refine!!” he roared. It was a roar like the final roar before death, and as soon as it left his mouth, the sphere of blood shrank down to the size of a fingernail!

As of now, it was thoroughly and completely golden!

The incomparable aura of a Paragon instantly erupted from inside the blood.

This was… true, authentic Paragon’s blood!

It was complete, utterly rare, Paragon’s blood!

You could even say that… it actually shouldn’t exist. A drop of blood from the exact Paragon to whom the parrot had referred.

The meat jelly was screaming, and the parrot was bellowing in disbelief. Meng Hao was just barely managing to hold back from exploding when… an aura appeared which was not the aura of cultivation. It was… the aura of the League of Demon Sealers!

As soon as the aura appeared, the drop of blood began to tremble!!

A resonance was forming, almost like that of a bloodline!

“What….” Meng Hao thought, his mind trembling. Then he thought back to what Granny Nine and Godmaster had said to him. Paragon Sea Dream founded the Nine Seas God World and the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto. The Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite was founded by Paragon Immortal Ancient. As for the third Paragon, the most powerful Paragon, Paragon Nine Seals… nobody knew what he founded.

“He… founded… the League of Demon Sealers!” Meng Hao felt as if his mind were being struck by lightning.

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# Chapter 1056: The Mountains and Seas are Rocked!

This was… the blood of Paragon Nine Seals, chief among the three supreme Paragons!

Not even a single drop should even exist in the world. And yet, because of the even more mysterious and unfathomable copper mirror, this Paragon’s blood had now appeared in the Mountain and Sea Realm!

In the instant that the blood appeared, it wasn’t just Meng Hao who was shaken. The entire Mountain and Sea Realm began to tremble. It didn’t matter that the parrot and meat jelly were covering up the aura with all their might. The aura still managed to spread out invisibly. Although nobody in the Nine Seas God World could sense it specifically, there were other beings in the Mountain and Sea Realm who did, and were completely shocked.

Nine great Mountains and Seas made up the Mountain and Sea Realm, outside of which was a sun and a moon that orbited eternally around it. It was because of those two heavenly bodies that the Mountain and Sea Realm had day and night!

At the moment, both of them were trembling, something that caused everyone, even the mortals, to stare up in shock to look.

As of this moment, people were trembling in shock in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, the Eighth Mountain and Sea, the Seventh Mountain and Sea… even the First Mountain and Sea. In all the Mountain and Sea Realm, people were shaking in astonishment.

“The sun… is trembling!!”

“The moon is shaking….”

“What’s happening!? What’s causing this!?” Within the Mountain and Sea Realm, countless living beings were flabbergasted. Even the animals were prostrating themselves on the ground as if in worship. The mortals were astonished and began bowing down with looks of pious reverence on their faces.

As for the cultivators, their scalps tingled as they observed something they had never before seen; the sun and moon shaking. It left them completely astonished.

Countless experts flew out, including all of the Dao Realm cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm, and the shock on their faces was clear.

Numerous beings saw the sun and the moon shaking visibly; instead of continuing on in their orbit, they were fixed in place, seemingly immovable. It was as if some unknown aura had caught their attention, causing their will to suddenly awaken.

At the same time that the heavenly bodies ceased moving, the Seas in the Mountain and Sea Realm all began to seethe and roar; the Mountains also began to shake, and were apparently roaring.

If you looked very carefully at the sun, you would just barely be able to tell that inside of that heavenly body, shockingly, was a sword!

It was a shining sword, shocking to the extreme. It was a sword that, in the past, had shaken the hearts of countless crowds of people, and had killed innumerable enemies.

That was… the sword of a Paragon! In the past, it had caused the entire Immortal World to tremble, and during the great catastrophe, it had rocked the 3,000 Lower Realms. The other two major powers in the war shook any time they heard the name…

Nine Seals Sword!

When Paragon Nine Seals perished, his sword went missing. Now, though, it suddenly appeared in the middle of the sun. Or perhaps… it wasn't just appearing there. Perhaps…

The sun of the Mountain and Sea Realm was the manifestation of the Nine Seals Sword of the past!!

Anyone who knew anything about the history of the Mountain and Sea Realm suddenly felt their minds reeling.

"The Nine Seals Sword! Heavens! The sun is actually the materialization of the Nine Seals Sword… how could this be possible!?!?"

"Impossible! This goes contrary to everything we know about history! How could this be happening!?!?"

At the same time, a massive aura was awakening inside of the moon. Just barely, an object was becoming visible inside of it!

It was not a sword, it was… a suit of armor!

A suit of armor formed from moonbeams!!

The armor shone with glorious light that was both soft and austere. It was as if the armor had been splashed with infinite amounts of blood, as if it had seen countless battles. In the past, the name of this suit of armor had rocked the world…

Nine Seals Armor!!

Paragon Nine Seals' two great Paragon artifacts!

All of the Nine Mountains and Seas were completely shaken!

"I just remembered a legend I heard about once…." Similar words were echoing in the minds of many of the Dao Realm experts of the Nine Mountains and Seas. It was a story that all of them had taken to be completely wild and absurd.

“According to the legend, each Mountain and Sea in the Realm will have a Mountain and Sea Lord to unify that area! But… the truth of the matter is that the there is a position of power higher than that of the Lords of the Nine Mountains and Seas! A more powerful being… the Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

“The Lord of the entire Mountain and Sea Realm can exterminate a Mountain and Sea with a single thought, then create another one just as easily. That person will lead the Mountain and Sea Realm back to the former glory of the Paragon Immortal Realm!

“The legend says that when the Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm finally appears, the sun and the moon will stop moving! Light will fill the entire Mountain and Sea Realm! According to the legend… the nine Xuanwu turtles will kowtow and let out a massive roar!” Many of the Dao Realm experts of the Mountain and Sea Realm were murmuring things like this. In the Fourth Mountain and Sea, Kṣitigarbha’s eyes were shining with a strange light as he looked up into the Heavens and the starry sky.

It was in that moment that, all of a sudden, a massive Xuanwu turtle rose up from within the celestial pond atop the First Mountain, just like the Xuanwu turtle had done in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Apparently, all of the Mountains had a Xuanwu turtle like this as their nucleus.

The Xuanwu turtle opened its eyes, and it began to tremble, then let out a massive roar that filled the entire First Mountain and Sea.

That roar filled the hearts and minds of all cultivators who had been born in the First Mountain and Sea.

At almost exactly the same time, a similar roar could be heard coming from the Xuanwu turtle who sat atop the Second Mountain in the Second Mountain and Sea. Next, the same thing happened in the Third Mountain and Sea, the Fourth Mountain and Sea, and the Fifth Mountain and Sea….

Finally, the Xuanwu turtle from the Ninth Mountain and Sea joined in, and the roars combined into a unified sound that shook the entire Mountain and Sea Realm.

Countless individuals were shaken physically and mentally as the supreme Xuanwu turtles, which represented all of the Nine Mountains and Seas, suddenly rose up into the starry sky, whereupon their roars reached a fever pitch.

In the end, all of them… did something completely shocking. They turned in the same direction and bowed, as if they were offering respectful greetings to their Lord!!

The direction in which they faced, shockingly… was the Ninth Mountain and Sea!!

The entire world was shaken, and the whole Mountain and Sea Realm was filled with rumbling sounds!

As of this moment, countless Dao Realm experts were thoroughly shaken. All of them turned to look in the direction of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. As for the Dao Realm experts in the Ninth Mountain and Sea itself, they were dumbfounded.

The strangest thing of all was that no one could tell exactly which area within the Ninth Mountain and Sea the Xuanwu turtles were facing!

The roars of the nine Xuanwu turtles echoed out for a long time. The sound was archaic and icy cold, as if it was completely devoid of any emotion. It was almost as if… it were mechanical!

“The Realm Lord cometh… the Lord of all the Mountain and Sea Realm! The Nine Hexes shall be inscribed… in the moment of His return to power!”

The words spread out throughout all of the Nine Mountains and Seas, echoing into countless minds, giving rise to waves of intense shock. It was as if the entire world had been overturned. All cultivators of the Nine Mountains and Seas felt as if their minds were being struck by hundreds of thousands of lightning bolts.

“Realm Lord? The Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm?”

“What exactly is going on? What’s happening?!”

“Return? Could it be that when the Realm Lord returns, the fate of all the Nine Mountains and Seas can be controlled by just a single one of his thoughts?”

“The nine Xuanwu turtles are all facing the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Could it be… could it be that the so-called Realm Lord is in the Ninth Mountain and Sea?!?!”

Countless minds were sent spinning. On the four planets of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, in the Four Great Clans, the Five Great Holy Lands, and the Three Churches and Six Sects, all of the Chosen were astonished, and were shaking in anticipation.

All of the Dao Realm experts could see that the Xuanwu turtle in their Mountain and Sea… was looking at their own Ninth Mountain and Sea!

It was the same in the Three Great Daoist Societies!

In the Nine Seas God World, Fan Dong’er, the Demonic cultivators, the three Patriarchs, and all of the other Dao Realm cultivators, were all shocked. Of course, none of them had any idea that all of these shocking events were being caused by someone within the Nine Seas God World itself.

Also astonished were the current Mountain and Sea Lords of the Nine Mountains and Seas. All of them felt their energy surging, filling their respective Mountains and Seas with solemnity and a domineering air.

Lord Ji also appeared in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, and massive pressure radiated out from that enormous eye.

These Lords… would not be willing to easily accept someone who was placed higher than them, a Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

Meanwhile, in the Ruins of Immortality in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, the white-robed Paragon Sea Dream sat cross-legged in meditation. Li Ling’er sat next to her in exactly the same posture.

Suddenly, Paragon Sea Dream opened her phoenix-like eyes, and her expression flickered. A shocked expression appeared on her face, and she rose to her feet and stepped forward. When her foot landed, she was outside of the Ruins of Immortality, hovering in the starry sky, looking toward the Ninth Sea!

“Big brother Nine Seals’ Paragon blood….” she murmured. A tremor ran through her, and a look of utter disbelief could be seen on her face. After a long moment, she recovered her composure, and a strange gleam appeared in her eyes.

“The League of Demon Sealers. It’s him….”

As of this moment, countless figures throughout the Mountain and Sea Realm were making various speculations as to who it was… that would bring such momentous changes in the future, the Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

Some people were prepared to respectfully welcome such a person. Others prepared to kill and supplant him. Various thoughts rose up in various minds. In addition, many people left their respective Mountains and Seas to fly toward the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Everything was thrown into chaos in a single moment. An unprecedented commotion gripped all of the Nine Mountains and Seas!

Currently, Meng Hao sat in his mountain valley, experiencing the same shock that everyone outside in the Nine Mountains and Seas was feeling. He could also hear the cry of the nine Xuanwu turtles.

He was trembling, panting, his face covered with an expression of complete disbelief.

“The League of Demon Sealers…. I can’t believe it was actually founded by Paragon Nine Seals!!” Great waves of shock crashed through Meng

Hao’s heart. Never would he ever have speculated that the League of Demon Sealers… had originated with such a shocking figure!

Furthermore, he was the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer! Nine was the ultimate number, and he was the final generation of the Demon Sealers!

“I’m the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer, and this drop of blood comes from Paragon Nine Seals. He founded the League of Demon Sealers, which means… he and I are connected by destiny!” Meng Hao panted, and his mind trembled.

“The Nine Hexes shall be inscribed… in the moment of His return to power…. Nine Hexes. That means that when I possess all nine of the Demon Sealing Hexing magics, then in that moment… I will be the Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm!!” Meng Hao felt a bit dizzy. Even now, he found it… hard to believe.

However, he wasn’t struck senseless. In fact, in that moment, he was suddenly filled with a sense of impending danger!

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# Chapter 1057: Immortal Emperor Meng Hao!

Imagine a situation in which an empire has no emperor for many years. The regional government officials throughout the country have their own military forces, and occupy their positions for countless years.

Each one of those government officials will eventually come to view the area they control as their own kingdom, and themselves as kings!

That was the situation in the Mountain and Sea Realm, with the Lords of the Nine Mountains and Seas being nine kings!

The future Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm was the Emperor!

None of those various kings would want to be ordered around after such a long time. After having a taste of freedom, they would balk at the thought of someone above them telling them what to do, nor would they accept the fate of being perpetually manipulated by another!

When such circumstances arose in an empire, then… the simplest and most effective way to deal with the situation, and also the method that would benefit most of the parties involved… would be to kill the Emperor before he had a chance to return to power!

That would be the best solution for all of those kings!

Meng Hao knew that, and because he understood it… he could tell how much danger he was in, and knew that he had to be completely on guard!

Under no circumstances could he reveal his identity. If he did… then the only thing that would await him would be destruction. And he would no doubt drag the Fang Clan down with him.

It was at this point that the parrot and meat jelly began to holler.

“Dammit, Meng Hao! Hurry up and absorb it! We can’t hold on much longer!!”

Almost in that same moment, Meng Hao unhesitatingly reached out and grabbed the Paragon’s blood. Then he took a deep breath and shoved the drop of blood into the palm of his hand.

Instantly, the drop of blood merged into his hand, fusing into his body. At the same time, massive rumbling filled his mind. He could immediately sense the boundless, mighty power contained within the Paragon’s blood.

Simultaneously, the aura of the League of Demon Sealers erupted wildly. Trembling, Meng Hao quickly pulled out a Nirvana Fruit and then pushed it down onto his forehead.

Rumbling echoed out as the Nirvana Fruit fused into him, and he began to shake. The Paragon’s blood and the aura of the League of Demon Sealers merged together, causing its Paragon nature to be hidden away.

It was in this moment that a terrifyingly powerful stream of divine sense spread out from the Ninth Mountain. It covered the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea, reaching out to any and all locations, leaving no stone unturned.

That included the Nine Seas God World. The divine sense swept over it, apparently willing to pay any price in its search, even offending the Three Great Daoist Societies.

However, the Nine Seas God World was uncharacteristically silent, and did nothing to prevent it from happening.

The divine sense covered over everything, swept through all regions. It even passed over Meng Hao, and yet, it did not seem to find the aura it was looking for. Meng Hao sat there cross-legged, all traces of the aura covered up. Of course, it was not his own power that was doing the covering up, but rather, the parrot and meat jelly, as well as the combination of the League of Demon Sealers' aura with the Paragon's blood.

Because of that, Meng Hao was not revealed underneath the powerful divine sense.

After some time passed, the divine sense faded away to search in other areas.

In addition to that powerful divine sense, the Dao Realm experts in other areas of the Ninth Mountain and Sea were also making searches in their respective areas.

Everyone wanted to know… the identity of the future Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

It wasn't that nobody considered that it could be Meng Hao. After all, he was in the Echelon, and was the most famous cultivator of his generation. However… the position of Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm was far beyond his current level, so anyone who might suspect him would have only given it a moment of thought. The true object of most people's suspicion… were the people who were already in the Dao Realm.

The Lords of the other Mountains and Seas especially suspected Lord Ji. From the look of things, a massive storm was brewing!

Meng Hao remained in secluded meditation the entire time. After successfully fusing with the Paragon's blood, he used the power of the blood to absorb the Nirvana Fruit. At the same time, Paragon Nine Seals' blood caused his Demon Sealing magic to grow more exquisite. It was as if he had been the subject of… Righteous Bestowal!

He was the subject of Paragon Nine Seals' Righteous Bestowal!

It was like a form of approval, formally initiating him as the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer!

From this moment on, his Hexing magic would be even more powerful. Because of the amplification of the Paragon’s blood, the pressure he could emit would be shockingly greater. Furthermore, his understanding regarding the League of Demon Sealers was now completely different than before.

For example, when it came to the Fifth Demon Sealing Hex, the Inside Outside Hex, he had only been able to open a tiny rift before. Now, however, he could open a rift that was hundreds of times larger!

Everything… was because of Paragon Nine Seals’ blood!

Meng Hao was trembling. He could clearly sense that something was different about him. Absorbing the Paragon’s blood was like a tempering or a baptism, causing his fleshly body to become more powerful, to exceed the limits of the Immortal Realm. He was now extremely close… to having an Ancient Realm body!

All he needed was the right set of circumstances, the right opportunity, and he would be able to break through. At that point, his fleshly body would break into the Ancient Realm. Furthermore, he knew exactly where that opportunity lay; it was in the ninth golden gate stone stele of the Nine Seas God World!

Meng Hao could almost see what it would be like to withstand that old body cultivator’s third fist strike. At that time… he would step into the Ancient Realm of the fleshly body!

“I’m GOING to get more powerful!” he thought, his eyes gleaming. He continued to sit there meditating, his Immortal meridians thrumming as the Paragon’s blood seeped out into every corner of his body. Strands of golden thread quickly flew out to merge into his qi passageways.

As for the Nirvana Fruit which he had absorbed into his forehead, it rapidly melted, and when it touched the golden threads of the Paragon’s blood, it fused with them, becoming part of Meng Hao.

Suddenly, Meng Hao’s cultivation base shot upward. He was already the Immortal Realm Paragon, but it went higher than that, taking him… into the direction of the Immortal Emperor!

Every step forward he took, he made incredible advancements. He would now be permanently in the Immortal Emperor Realm, unlike before, when he could only be there for a short time by temporarily absorbing a Nirvana Fruit.

“Once I finish absorbing the Nirvana Fruit, I will eternally be within the Immortal Emperor Realm!” His eyes shone with determination. He had been waiting for this day for a very long time, and had spent countless amounts of spirit stones and Immortal jade to get here. He couldn’t even speak aloud the tally of how much he had spent; anyone who heard the number would be unable to accept it, not even someone in the Dao Realm.

Because of that massive consumption, the path that Meng Hao traveled… was completely different from that of other cultivators!

He was treading the ancient path of the Paragon Immortal Realm. Because of that… his future was limitless!

Time passed. Days. Meng Hao sat there cross-legged the entire time. Eventually, about half of the Nirvana Fruit was absorbed, placing him beyond the level of the Immortal Realm Paragon and closer to that of the Immortal Emperor.

He was getting more and more powerful!

His fleshly body reached new heights of perfection, breaking through barrier after barrier.

Similarly, his powers from the League of Demon Sealers grew stronger.

You could say that the single drop of Paragon’s blood led to an explosive growth in all aspects for Meng Hao, making him vastly more powerful!

Another two weeks passed. Meng Hao had now been in the Nine Seas God World for well over a month. Outside in the Mountain and Sea Realm, the fervent search for the future Realm Lord was still underway. There were even powerful experts from the other Mountains and Seas who made appearances.

Thankfully, everyone kept control of themselves, and no major issues arose. However… the sense of an impending storm continued to grow more intense.

During the half month that passed, Meng Hao felt divine sense sweep over his location four times. Fortunately, the meat jelly and parrot knew that Meng Hao was at a critical juncture, and did everything they could to keep him concealed. Also, from the moment that he had absorbed the blood, its aura had dissipated within him. Eventually, people stopped paying attention to him. Although he remained an object of suspicion, in truth there were over a hundred such people under suspect.

Actually, he would have been suspected no matter what the truth was.

Another half a month passed, and Meng Hao still wasn’t finished absorbing the Nirvana Fruit. There was still about twenty percent left. However, the difference between his current cultivation base, and his cultivation base before, was like the difference between Heaven and Earth.

Currently, he sat in place, cross-legged, completely motionless. Countless sparks of electricity danced around him, and although his eyes were closed, streams of white mist seeped out from between his eyelids, making him appear extremely mysterious.

His skin was whiter, and his aura explosive. Terrifying ripples rolled off of him. The Demonic cultivators in the pool of the water were in a state of shock, and when they looked at Meng Hao, terror filled their hearts.

As for Su Yan, she was also astonished by the changes she had seen Meng Hao undergoing. It left her terrified. To her, it felt as if some mysterious will were currently awakening inside of him.

“He has a terrifying aura,” she thought anxiously. “But what exactly is it…?” As far as she was concerned, Meng Hao was completely enigmatic.

Another half month passed. Meng Hao had now been in the Nine Seas God World for more than two months. Eventually, the day came… when he finally absorbed the last bit of the Nirvana Fruit. The last trace of it faded away into Meng Hao, and a tremor ran through him.

Along with the tremor were cracking sounds, and a Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering energy. In that moment, his cultivation base rocketed up to new heights of power. A massive wind sprung up around him, causing the Demonic cultivators to shake. Su Yan's eyes went wide with disbelief.

Meng Hao's energy caused his hair to whip around his head, and his robes to flap. Gradually something formed inside of him, which was… an Imperial will!

It was domineering to the maximum, towering. This was the Imperial will of an Immortal Emperor Realm!

His eyes opened, and the Demonic cultivators could hear something like peals of thunder. There were eight thunderclaps in total, each one shocking to the extreme, causing strange colors to flash about, and making everything shake!

Blood sprayed out of the Demonic cultivators' mouths, and some of them simply passed out. Su Yan found blood oozing out of the corners of her mouth, and her face fell completely.

"Eight illusory thunderclaps, shaking the Heavens!!" she said.

"This… you… you actually reached THAT Realm. This is impossible….

"Those peals of thunder are a terrifying sign that will appear when someone reaches the absolute pinnacle of the Immortal Realm. Eight illusory thunderclaps, shaking the Heavens!"

Meng Hao took a deep breath and slowly stood up. As he did, the aura of the Immortal Emperor suddenly erupted out of him, causing the entire Immortal's cave to shake. Even the Ninth Sea was trembling.

“The limit of the Immortal Realm?” Meng Hao said coolly. “Apparently, you don’t understand… the meaning of being Immortal! The limit is far, far beyond this!” His voice was calm and filled with a threatening pressure that far exceeded anything that had existed there before!

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# Chapter 1058: The Echelon Reacts!

“Any further pinnacle is still just the Immortal Realm!” Su Yan replied through gritted teeth.

“You don’t understand,” said Meng Hao, shaking his head. The mark of the Echelon had appeared on his forehead, sinking deeper into him with each pulsing flicker.

Su Yan looked at the mark silently, her feelings clearly conflicted.

Meng Hao rubbed his forehead, then turned to look at the wreckage of his residence. All of a sudden, he had realized something, something that appeared in his mind after absorbing the Nirvana Fruit completely.

“The word Immortal is extremely profound….” he murmured to himself. He suddenly raised his right hand, within which was a second Nirvana Fruit. He looked at it thoughtfully.

“I can sense that the primary function of the Paragon’s blood was to provide true approval of me as part of the League of Demon Sealers. Paragon Sea Dream has her Echelon. However, I am the sole member of Paragon Nine Seals’ Echelon.

“The strengthening of my fleshly body, and the absorption of the Nirvana Fruit were side effects.

“Furthermore, after absorbing one drop of the blood, it wouldn’t matter if I absorbed hundreds or thousands more. They wouldn’t do anything. Also, I can’t continue to use Paragon’s blood to absorb Nirvana Fruits.

“Moreover… using Paragon’s blood to do so is a huge waste.” After a moment of thought, he probed his cultivation base to sense how vastly,

vastly more powerful he was than before.

A month or so ago, he had been an Immortal Realm Paragon. Now, he was above that, an Immortal Emperor!

The current era had no such thing as an Immortal Emperor. In fact, even in the days of the Immortal World, the Immortal Emperor Realm was something rarely seen, like a level of complete perfection.

It represented a level of profound understanding of the Realm of Immortality.

Meng Hao might have only 123 Immortal meridians, but each and every one had widened and become extremely sturdy. The feeling of power he was experiencing was something he previously could only feel on a temporary basis with the aid of Nirvana Fruit. Now, he was eternally within that Realm.

The Echelon mark on his forehead glittered brightly, and was clearly more firmly implanted. Because of that, he looked completely different than before.

He even had a new strange feeling. If he closed his eyes, he could almost sense that, far out in the vast Mountain and Sea Realm, in other areas, there were… familiar fluctuations.

Those fluctuations were not coming from a specific person. Rather, it came from other people who… were like him! Members of the Echelon!

In total, there were twelve other members of the Echelon!

He was the thirteenth member, and the most recent one to be added. He was also the last member of the Echelon. Before him, there were a total of twelve. These were people from other locations in the Mountain and Sea Realm, whom Paragon Sea Dream had pulled into the Echelon.

Meng Hao had no illusions about how difficult it was to become part of the Echelon, nor how powerful its members were. After seeing the shocking and majestic sight of the first generation Patriarch, he could well imagine how powerful the other members were.

It was only after Meng Hao received the enlightenment of Paragon magic… that he had been able to join the Echelon.

Meng Hao could sense twelve fluctuations, and every one left him with a feeling like that of a Paragon. The level of power caused his heart to sink.

“Now I see. Before, my cultivation base and Realm simply did not qualify me to sense their existence. It is only now that I have reached the proper degree to do so.

“Furthermore, that means that as of this moment, not only can I sense them, they… can also… sense me!” He frowned.

By the time that Meng Hao frowned, the flurry of activity that had resulted from the events the previous month had died down. There were still many people who were paying attention to the situation, but the most tense juncture had passed.

Life went on. The sun and the moon went back into motion, almost as if nothing had happened. However, deep in the hearts of many people, questions still lurked about who the future Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm was….

In the Eighth Mountain and Sea was a location out in the void that was comprised of a vast field of skeletons that almost looked like puppets. Their eyes flickered with ghost fire as they swirled around. In the very center of all of them was an enormous palace constructed of bones.

Within that palace, a young man in a black robe sat there cross-legged, meditating. He was extremely gaunt, and his face was as pale as death, completely lacking even a trace of color. Furthermore, the flame of his life force was very dim. Suddenly, his eyes opened, and all of the skeletons surrounding the palace dropped down to kowtow. At the same time, a terrifying energy surged out from the young man.

A mark appeared on his forehead, flickering brightly. All of a sudden, he could sense something within the Ninth Mountain and Sea… the fluctuations of the Echelon!

“So, there’s actually a thirteenth member….” he murmured, and a sinister glow like that of blood appeared in his eyes.

At the same time, a massive vortex could be seen in the Fourth Mountain and Sea. A handsome young man in a blue garment sat cross-legged in that vortex, meditating. He was surrounded by ten old men, all of whom were at the peak of the Ancient Realm. Clearly, these men were the Dao Protectors of the younger man.

Roughly 3,000 meters away from him in the vortex was a young woman clad in a simple white gown. Her cultivation base was not in the Immortal Realm, but rather, the Nascent Soul stage. However, there was an aura to her that ensured that, despite being inside the vortex, she wasn’t harmed at all. She sat there, her eyes closed as she practiced cultivation.

Next to the young woman was an old lady who looked like a servant of some sort. She sat there quietly, completely ignoring the young man and his ten Dao Protectors.

After a long moment passed, the young man in blue opened his eyes and looked at the young woman in white. His eyes flickered with a mysterious light, and he suddenly approached her, after which he clasped hands and bowed deeply.

“Miss Xu, we meet again! I, Lin Cong, offer greetings to the 49th Princess of the Underworld!” 1

The young woman in white opened her eyes and looked at the young man. After giving him a slight smile, she closed her eyes again.

The young man smiled back, seemingly having taken no offense. However, when he turned away, a sinister gleam could be seen deep in his eyes. He was just about to leave when, all of a sudden, an Echelon mark suddenly appeared on his forehead, and he could sense that there was now another member of the Echelon in the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“The Ninth Mountain and Sea huh…. He’s much weaker than any of the others….” Killing intent flickered in the young man’s eyes.

Similar scenes played out one after another in other locations in the other Mountains and Seas. Just as Meng Hao had suspected, the other twelve members of the Echelon were all able to sense him.

Competition was something that came with the status of being in the Echelon itself. Plus, there were also people in the outside world who wanted to kill those Echelon members and take their status for their own. Such an attitude was even stronger among the Echelon members as well.

To them, weak people weren’t qualified to stand among them. Although nobody who was truly weak was allowed to even join the Echelon, any member who didn’t make progress quickly enough would soon be left behind, and eventually eliminated.

On the First Mountain was a young man with ordinary features. However, on his forehead could be seen a third eye. He currently sat in front of a Go board, holding a game piece in his hand, apparently lost in thought.

In front of him was a young woman wearing a long, emerald-green gown. She was so beautiful that it was impossible for anyone to compare to her. She had an alluring figure, and phoenix-like eyes that radiated a vigorous spirit. The wind slowly blew her long black hair, causing a single strand to gently sweep across her chest. The cosmetics she wore added a bit of color to her face, making her cheeks slightly rosy. She was both lithe and tender, and overall, completely attractive.

She was like a butterfly fluttering in the wind, or a fairy floating across the snow. She was the type of woman who, wherever she went, the flowers darkened, the sun and moon dimmed, and all other women somehow looked less beautiful.

She was also surrounded by Immortal qi, which slowly swirled around her, causing her to seem completely extraordinary.

“Elder Brother Chen, it looks like you’re going to lose this game too,” she said with a smile. It was a smile that made her consummate beauty even more attractive. The wind that was blowing past seemed unwilling to part with her, and instead, continued to swirl around her.

“The world is like a game of Go,” the man said lightly. “And life is like a dream. Each stone that is played must be played with extreme thought and precision…. Miss Xue’er, you truly deserve to be the number one successor of Immortal Ancient. You’ve experienced the wide world in your long travels, and the gracefulness of every step you take causes lotuses to bloom.” He looked up at the young woman and smiled slightly. 2

“Miss Xue’er,” the man said coolly, “among the twelve members of the Echelon, you came to find me first. Then you left to travel across the Mountain and Sea Realm, and now, you’ve come to find me again. It seems like I’m the chosen one.”

“Unfortunately, I can’t find anyone who can beat me at this game. Elder Brother Chen, among all the other members of the Echelon, you are the one who can hold out the longest. Since that’s the case, well….” The young woman lapsed into silence for a moment. Finally, she nodded, and was about to continue speaking when, all of a sudden, her expression flickered.

Simultaneously, the refined young man with whom she was speaking also looked surprised. An Echelon mark appeared on his forehead, and he was suddenly able to sense the fluctuations from Meng Hao in the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

“A new member. Too bad he’s far too weak.” After a moment, the man paid no further attention to Meng Hao. Instead, he looked at the young woman in front of him. Although his expression was placid, inwardly, he was a bit nervous.

The young woman didn’t say anything in response. She looked down at the Go board for a moment, then back up at the man. Finally, she stood up and waved her hand, causing the game board to vanish.

“Since a new member of the Echelon has appeared, I’m going to go extend greetings. I want to see if I’m connected to this person by destiny. Elder Brother Chen… if I have no destiny with him, then I’ll come find you again to discuss the Dao.”

“A person that weak… wouldn’t it be a waste of your time, Miss Xue’er?” the man said slowly.

“The first time I found you, Elder Brother Chen, you did not have the cultivation base you have now either.” The woman smiled, then turned and made her way off into the distance.

The man she called Elder Brother Chen sat there quietly for a long moment. Finally, a glow of self-confidence appeared in his eyes, which he then closed.

Meng Hao’s debut into the Echelon gave rise to a variety of intense reactions among the other members. At the same time, in the other Daoist Societies in the other eight Mountains and Seas, there were people who suddenly became aware that there was a new member of the Echelon!

A true member of the Echelon was difficult to produce. Someone who wasn’t qualified to remain in the Echelon, and yet received an Echelon mark, would not be accepted. Meng Hao, after successfully absorbing his first Nirvana Fruit, finally… was acknowledged as being a true member of the Echelon. Also… he was now placed within the hearts and minds of the other members.

Currently, Meng Hao was in the Nine Seas God World in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. His eyes glittered, and he muttered to himself. Finally, he put the matter of the Echelon aside, and focused fully on himself.

“An Ancient Realm expert below five extinguished soul lamps would not be a match for me!” he thought, his eyes shining as he looked down at the Nirvana Fruit in his hand.

“I wonder if it would be possible to continue and absorb a second Nirvana Fruit. If I could exceed the power of the Immortal Emperor… I wonder what Realm that would be? The mere thought filled Meng Hao with excitement. He lifted the Nirvana Fruit up and, without any further hesitation, pushed it into his forehead.

RUMBLE!

2. The Xue in this young woman’s name is xuě meaning “snow”

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# Chapter 1059: Allheaven Dao Immortal!

In the current Mountain and Sea Realm, the pinnacle of the Immortal Realm was the Paragon. After opening 123 Immortal meridians and forming 33 Heavens, one could step into that ultimate Realm of Immortality. That was the highest place in the modern age.

Meng Hao was the only one who had currently reached that level, surpassing the achievements of the most powerful of the Mountain and Sea Lords, Ksitigarbha of the Fourth Mountain and Sea.

Perhaps with the assistance of various techniques and divine abilities, future powerhouses might be able to brush against this kind of power. But Meng Hao had reached Immortality by corroborating the Dao on his own. That was a higher level that no one could match!

However… although the Immortal Realm Paragon was the highest level in the modern age, in ancient times, when the Immortal World did not consist of nine mountains and seas within the Heavens and the starry sky, there was a level higher than that of the Paragon, and that was the Immortal Emperor!

The term Immortal Emperor was not just a title, but rather, a Realm. Before, Meng Hao could enter that Realm temporarily with a Nirvana Fruit. Now that he had permanently absorbed the Nirvana Fruit, his place within that Realm was stable and, in fact, eternal.

However… the Realm of the Immortal Emperor was actually not the ultimate level. Above that Realm were two more legendary Realms. Only a miniscule number of people had actually reached those Realms. Even in the heydey of the Immortal World, it would be easier to find a phoenix feather or a qilin horn than such a person.

Above the Immortal Emperor was the Allheaven Emperor Immortal. Then, above the Allheaven Emperor Immortal… was the Allheaven Dao Immortal! 1

It was difficult to become the Allheaven Emperor Immortal, and as for becoming the Allheaven Dao Immortal… that was EXTREMELY difficult!!

The Allheaven Dao Immortal was the ultimate and absolute peak of the Immortal Realm. It was a Realm that could overthrow experts at the peak of the Ancient Realm, and even shake powerful experts of the Dao Realm!

A person like this, who actually surpassed an entire Realm, was a superpower who, regardless of where they lived or what era they lived in, would be the complete focus of all attention!

Unfortunately, Allheaven Emperor Immortals were extremely rare, even more rare than members of the Dao Realm. Allheaven Dao Immortals were even rarer! In fact, throughout the entire history of the Immortal World, from ancient times til now, there had only ever been nine! As for those nine people, even the three supreme Paragons would treat them with courtesy.

That was because, according to the ancient legends of the Immortal World, Allheaven Dao Immortals were the root of the entire Immortal World! If a person such as that became a true Paragon… they would exist as the summit of the starry sky!

In fact, it was because Paragon Nine Seals had formerly been an Allheaven Emperor Immortal that he eventually became the chief among the Paragons.

If someone was able to become a Paragon via the path of the Allheaven Dao Immortal, that… would be something that had never been done, not from ancient times until now. It was vastly too difficult. When an Allheaven Dao Immortal entered the Ancient Realm, the likelihood of failing in extinguishing their Soul Lamps, and then dying, was vastly higher than other members of the Ancient Realm. In fact, it was almost a certainty.

There was virtually no hope to survive. Because of that… it was essentially impossible to enter the Ancient Realm or step into the Dao Realm!

From ancient times until now, of the nine Allheaven Dao Immortals that had existed, five had died in the Ancient Realm, having failed to extinguish their Soul Lamps. As for the other four… they either died or went missing in the great catastrophe.

In the past, one of the Paragons had attempted to determine exactly how Allheaven Immortals appeared in the Immortal World, but were unable to turn up any clues. There was only one thing that was for certain… if someone had an ancestor who had already become an Allheaven Immortal, even just an Allheaven Emperor Immortal, then the chances of that person being able also succeed were extremely high!

Similarly, if someone had an ancestor who was… an Allheaven Dao Immortal, then that person was also much more likely to reach that same level!

It was almost like an inherited bloodline! In fact, it was said that if you searched through the most ancient of histories, you would find… that everything had its source… in nine family names! 2

Ages ago, the Paragon who had been researching the matter discovered that fact, and was instantly struck with fear, and gave up the research. It was almost as if there were some unfathomable consciousness attempting to prevent the truth from being revealed!

By now, many ages had passed since the destruction of the Immortal World. Before Meng Hao, no Immortal Emperor had ever appeared. As for Allheaven Immortals, they were naturally a thing of legend; in fact it was something that most people had already forgotten.

But now….

As soon as the Nirvana Fruit made contact with Meng Hao’s forehead, a tremor ran through him. A tempest exploded within his mind, massive rumbling that made him feel as if he might explode at any moment.

His fleshly body grew larger. In the blink of an eye, he was nine meters tall. It didn’t stop there though. He continued growing until he was fifteen meters tall, then twenty-four meters…

Even as he grew, he felt as if his flesh and blood were being ripped to shreds. He shook violently, and if it weren’t for his incredible willpower, he would be screaming. Icy, painful sweat broke out all over his body, and blood oozed out of his pores.

The blood and sweat mingled together until Meng Hao actually looked like he was made completely of blood!

Despite the pain, an incredible fleshly body power exploded out within him. He could feel himself breaking through barriers, exceeding limitations. His heart pounded and his body shook as incredible power surged through him.

Those were just the changes to his fleshly body. A moment later, a windstorm spread out within him, causing him to stagger backward. Blood sprayed out of his mouth as the intense, terrifying windstorm caused his Immortal power to surge. He suddenly realized that his physical growth just now was only the beginning; the true change was happening to his cultivation base!

ROOOOOAAAARRRRRRRRRRR!

He staggered backward, coughing up successive mouthfuls of blood. He looked like he was completely made of blood, and the windstorm raged inside of him, making him feel like he was being torn apart. All of his qi passageways felt like they were about to explode.

The power was too intense, leaving Meng Hao completely shocked. It was as if this was not the power of the Nirvana Fruit, but rather power from… his bloodline. The Nirvana Fruit was only a key that unlocked the vast and terrifying power that was locked inside of his blood!

“This….” he murmured, alarmed. Massive rumbling filled him that no outsider would be able to hear. However, to Meng Hao, it was earsplitting.

Next, he could sense that his 123 Immortal meridians were… all of a sudden fusing together to form only one single Immortal meridian!

That single Immortal meridian formed a framework inside of him that was a perfect circle!

As the circle formed, Meng Hao's cultivation base experience unprecedented, maddening growth. In the blink of an eye, he was far, far past the Immortal Emperor level. His surging energy and terrifying aura exploded to new heights.

As the rumbling echoed out, it eventually reached a point where Meng Hao couldn't handle it any more. He threw his head back and let out a terrifying howl. The howl gave vent to the tempest inside of him, sweeping across everything in the area. The wreckage of his residence was transformed into ash, and the stone chambers simply vanished. The parrot looked on with wide, disbelieving eyes.

"Allheaven Immortal! You're actually an Allheaven Immortal! Dammit, I can't believe you possess that type of bloodline, Meng Hao! Who is your ancestor!? Fang Clan. Fang Clan! DAMMIT! Why didn't I think of this before!!?" The parrot squawked anxiously, flapping its wings and causing a protective shield to form over the shocked Demonic cultivators.

The meat jelly was also trembling, and it suddenly had an impulse to bow in worship to Meng Hao, an urge that could not be wiped out within the cycle of reincarnation!

Su Yan stared in shock, her mind reeling, and her expression one of extreme astonishment.

It was at this point that Meng Hao roared again, which caused an azure color to appear around him!

That azure color was the ultimate color, and was the most respected color in the Immortal World!

That was because azure… represented the Allheaven!

And the Allheaven… represented the infinite!

As of this moment, Meng Hao was radiating resplendent, azure light, as well as the Imperial will of the Immortal Emperor. An incomparably domineering air rose up from him.

If you likened the Imperial will of the Immortal Emperor to that of an actual emperor of an earthly empire, then currently, the explosive energy which radiated out from Meng Hao… made him so domineering that he could lord over a planet as if it were a kingdom!

In one moment, the Imperial will raged. In the next moment, Meng Hao’s eyes darkened, and his body suddenly deflated. Based on the explosive energy, if he took just a single more step, he would be in the Realm of the Allheaven Emperor Immortal. However, all of that energy suddenly faded away.

The second Nirvana Fruit emerged from his forehead and smacked down onto the ground. Meng Hao’s body shrank back down from a height of roughly thirty meters, back to his normal height. His Immortal meridian also split apart and once again formed 123 separate meridians.

Everything went back to normal in the blink of an eye. Meng Hao coughed up a mouthful of blood, and he doubled over. His vision began to go black, and he began to slip into a coma.

As he faded into unconsciousness, he smiled bitterly. Doing what he had just done was a bit rash. However, when he was able to experience the Realm available when he absorbed the second Nirvana Fruit, that level of power… filled him with excitement, madness, and desire.

He didn’t know how much time passed before he woke up. When he opened his eyes, he saw the parrot and meat jelly, staring at him. They looked almost like they could see all the way through him, and their eyes were glittering brightly. They looked happy, even excited to see him.

“What are you looking at!?” he asked, gaping. The look in the meat jelly’s eyes was the same look it usually got when it saw bullies. As for the parrot, it looked the way it did when it saw luxuriantly furred or feathered creatures.

Meng Hao’s scalp tingled, and his face flickered. He looked down to see that his clothes were in tatters, but still remained covering him. He didn’t feel anything strange anywhere in his body, so finally, he let out a sigh of relief. Although he didn’t like to speak about the parrot’s unique proclivities, inwardly, he was well aware of them and was always on guard.

“An Allheaven Immortal!” the parrot said excitedly. “Yowza! I never thought you would become an Allheaven Immortal!”

“Allheaven Immortal?” said Meng Hao, staring in surprise. Then he thought back to what it felt like to absorb that second Nirvana Fruit, and he smiled.

“Not a bad name.” With that, he stood up. Cracking sounds echoed out in all directions as his Eternal stratum went to work, rapidly restoring him to his usual state.

“Meng Hao,” said the parrot solemnly, “Lord Fifth assumed that you were like all the other masters of the copper mirror. All of the masters I’ve had have never been able to take the mirror beyond the first step and into the second.

“But now… if you can become an Allheaven Dao Immortal, then you can take the copper mirror into its second state! It can become… a Battle Weapon!!”

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# Chapter 1060: Threats!

“Battle Weapon?” Meng Hao asked hesitantly.

“A weapon used in battle,” the parrot replied slowly. “A treasure that can seize the Heavens without magical techniques!” The parrot looked very solemn as it spoke. However, its next sentence revealed its true feelings.

“Obviously, it’s actually Lord Fifth that becomes a Battle Weapon. Hahaha! Keep working hard, Haowie. Lord Fifth hasn’t had a chance to be a Battle Weapon for a long, long time. I really miss that feeling of being able to penetrate all holes that I can lay eyes on….” With that, its eyes began to glow, and it shivered with so much excitement that it forgot to flap its wings and promptly fell out of the air.

Meng Hao cleared his throat and ignored the arrogant parrot. He looked over at the meat jelly, which was standing there, eyes burning with passion. Considering how uncharacteristically reticent it was being, Meng Hao could help but ask what was going on.

“Ah, you finally asked,” replied the meat jelly. “Seeing you as an Allheaven Immortal moments ago caused me to recall something from years ago. It happened long, long, long ago, so listen carefully as I explain.

“First, we need to start by clarifying some things that happened last year. Gradually, everything will become clear. Ahem… hey, no need to get anxious. We’ll go over things very slowly. My estimation is that I can finish explaining within three days.” It cleared its throat, tilted its jaw up, and began to speak.

A strange expression could now be seen on Meng Hao’s face. He was well aware that the Meat Jelly could only count to three. Furthermore, to it, the number three… was essentially limitless.

Based on Meng Hao’s analysis, the three days that the meat jelly referred to could be three days times a hundred, or times ten thousand, or even millions….

He coughed dryly and quickly sidled away. Turning toward the bare rock cliff, he waved his hand, using a magical technique to carve out a new Immortal’s cave. It wasn’t a residence like before, but there were still plenty of stone chambers inside, more than eight.

A flash could be seen as he flew inside. The meat jelly’s lips twitched slightly. Looking pained, it turned to the Demonic cultivators, and Su Yan, and its eyes suddenly brightened. It then hopped over innocently and stared at Su Yan.

“Hey there Fellow Daoist, would you like to hear my story?”

“Huh?” Su Yan was still shaken by everything that had occurred just now with Meng Hao. Her mind was still reeling, so she didn’t even think before responding to the meat jelly. The meat jelly was instantly very excited. A pop could be heard as it transformed into a tiny bell-shaped hair clip which flew up and attached itself to Su Yan, where it hung down next to her ear.

It sighed, and then began to speak. “Let’s start with that huge rainstorm from last year. Lord Third happens to remember being very curious about the rain that day. He really wanted to know exactly how many raindrops were falling. So, Lord Third started counting. One, two, three, one, two, three….”

Gradually, Su Yan began to tremble, and her facial expression slowly changed. Soon, blue veins popped out on her forehead as the meat jelly continued to count, saying the words “one, two, three” over and over again.

“Dammit, get off of me!” she growled, grabbing the meat jelly and throwing onto the ground. Unfortunately for her, her cultivation base was sealed, so she was no match whatsoever for the meat jelly…. As for the meat jelly, it wasn’t afraid of being spoken to, regardless of what was being said; it only feared being ignored. Seeing that Su Yan was suddenly engaging it in conversation, it got very excited. It quickly picked a new position and continued speaking.

The parrot rolled its eyes. In its opinion, the meat jelly didn’t set its ambitions high enough. The parrot flew up into the air and began circling around the Demonic cultivators as it went back to teaching them to sing.

A moment later, the sound of music filled the entire valley.

“I was a bad kid when I was young, I’m a little seafood dish, lalalalala, little seafood dish, dobedobedoooo, little seafood dish….”

The parrot and meat jelly were both very happy. Seven days went by. Meng Hao had now been in the Nine Seas God World for more than two months. The appointed date to enter the Windswept Realm was now only about twenty days away.

Four days earlier, two jade slips had arrived in quick succession. They were obviously imbued with incredible power, as they passed directly through the walls of his Immortal’s cave to stop in front of him, hovering and flickering with brilliant light.

After they floated down onto his palm, he glanced at them and then simply continued to meditate, ignoring the jade slips. He did not duplicate Paragon’s blood, but rather, spent the time getting accustomed to his new cultivation base, and how it affected his various divine abilities and magical techniques.

At the same time, he sent numerous Ghost Eye Beetles into the surrounding stone chambers and waited for them to transform into the blackpod imps.

By the time the seven days were up, he had eight new blackpod imps, putting the total number that he had under his control at ten.

“If I transform all of the black beetles, I should have about fifty black pods…. It’s kind of a small number, but it still qualifies as a small army.” He put the black pods away, then quickly carved out some more stone chambers, into which he threw more black beetles to begin their transmogrification. Finally, he ended his seven days of secluded meditation.

“I’m much more comfortable with the Immortal Emperor Realm,” he thought. “I just need to have a bit of practice with some of my magical techniques and divine abilities, and I’ll be good to go.” The rise in his cultivation base had been significant. Although it wasn’t quite the same as going from the Spirit Realm into the Immortal Realm, it was still a massive leap upward. A mere seven days wasn’t enough time to get completely familiar with his new state. He needed experience in battle to fully appreciate all the differences.

Finally, his gaze came to fall on the jade slips that had arrived a few days before. He picked them up and scanned them with divine sense, after which his eyes glowed with a cold light, and he started to chuckle.

The first jade slip came from the Nine Seas God World’s Department of Tasks and Missions. The God World Department of Tasks and Missions was a part of the sect specifically devoted to giving various assignments to disciples. The assignments were arranged into grades, with the highest grade assignments being the type that you couldn’t refuse to accept.

Of course, most such assignments were essentially given out as trials by fire. Although they were often dangerous, they would never exceed the capabilities of the disciples they were assigned to. Disciples needed to have a chance to go out and participate in real, live battles. On the other hand, safety was also a priority.

The first jade slip was exactly that type of assignment, something that could not be refused.

“A bloodthirsty cultivator has appeared on Seajacket Island,” Meng Hao murmured as he studied the information. “He has murdered other cultivators and slaughtered numerous sea beasts…. According to the investigation, his cultivation base is not in the Ancient Realm, but rather, at the peak of the Immortal Realm. However, his specific whereabouts are unknown, as he is difficult to track. They only know that his general location is Seajacket Island.” With that, his smile grew cold.

Naturally, he hadn't forgotten about his agreement with the nine Sea Realm Demons.

Essentially, Meng Hao was in an invincible position in terms of the stakes of the bet. If he lost, it didn't really matter. Even if he wanted to give them his place in the Echelon, it was impossible. The only way to get his spot would be to kill him two times. If they wanted to do that, then it would have to be done outside of the sect. There, it could feasibly happen. The Demonic Cultivator Horde seemed to regard themselves as having a great understanding of the Echelon. However, the truth of the matter was that they didn't know much at all. A place in the Echelon was not something that could be given away as the stakes of a bet. It was something that existed as part of a cycle of death.

Unfortunately for the Demonic Cultivator Horde, they didn't know about things like that. After all… after countless years, Meng Hao was only the second person in the Ninth Mountain and Sea to join the Echelon!

He would naturally agree to a bet that he essentially couldn't lose. The only reason he had said he would give his final answer in a month was to make the situation seem more realistic.

The appointed time passed, and he never responded, then all of a sudden, this jade slip arrived…. It seemed obvious that it was a tactic being employed by the Demonic Cultivator Horde.

The other jade slip was from Ling Yunzi, who informed Meng Hao that the assignment had been pushed by the Demonic Cultivator Horde. Opening the Windswept Realm required their cooperation, and as such, it had been impossible to refuse.

As a disciple of the sect, Meng Hao had to carry out assignments for the sect. That was the honorable thing to do, and furthermore, there was no reasonable grounds upon which to refuse.

Even though it was obvious the Demonic Cultivator Horde had arranged the assignment, Ling Yunzi was able to ensure that no Dao Realm experts would be involved, nor peak Ancient Realm cultivators. His request of

Meng Hao was that he not really leave the sect. Instead, he should take a single step outside and immediately turn back, then report that he had failed in the assignment.

If a punishment was involved because of that, Granny Nine and the others would handle it.

If Meng Hao wasn't comfortable accepting the assignment, he could refuse, and they would try to find another way to resolve the issue. However, if that happened, it would cause an indeterminate delay in opening the Windswept Realm.

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever. After a moment of thought he decided that he wouldn't actually complete the mission. He would step out of the sect, but then come back almost immediately and try to come up with some excuse to explain the matter.

What he really wanted to do was challenge the ninth golden gate stone stele again and see whether his current cultivation base could handle… that body cultivator's third fist strike!

“Although, the Demonic Cultivator Horde has most likely thought up some way to force me to accept the mission. I wonder what they'll do… Well, in any case, if I don't feel like going, they can't control me.”

With that, he left the Immortal's cave, flying up through the water to appear in midair. He didn't stop for a moment, but instead, shot directly towards the main gate of the Nine Seas God World.

As he sped through the air at top speed, numerous cultivators saw him. Strange expressions could be seen on their faces, especially the Demonic cultivators, who clearly despised him and wanted to see him dead.

News about Meng Hao's bet with the nine Sea Realm Demons had long since spread throughout the sect. Furthermore, the fact that he had said that he would provide an answer within a month, and yet hadn't sent word, caused the nine Sea Realm Demons to be furious. As a result, they had spread all sorts of nasty rumors, which many of the disciples had caught wind of.

An hour later, Meng Hao reached the main gate of the Nine Seas God World, beyond which was a pitch black world of seawater. As soon as he passed through the gate, he would be in the waters of the Ninth Sea.

He didn’t pause for a moment. He shot out of the gate and into the water, which instantly caused his entire person to be covered with icy coldness.

The instant he stepped out of the main gate, he prepared to go back into the sect. However, it was in that moment that he stopped in his tracks and looked up ahead of him.

There in the dark sea water was a familiar figure. It was… Chen Fan!

Meng Hao’s Elder Brother, Chen Fan!

A moment later, his appearance changed, and now, it was Fatty. After another moment passed, it was Chu Yuyan!

A quick succession of three people he knew all appeared in front of him. Then, the figure changed again, and now he was facing the leader of the nine Sea Realm Demons, Long Tianhai!

He stood there, smiling at Meng Hao. Then he opened his mouth and spoke. Although no words could be heard, Meng Hao could read his lips quite clearly.

“I can track down all three of them.”

They were only eight words, but they formed a mighty threat!

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# Chapter 1061: I Can’t Hurt You?!

Long Tianhai smiled lightly at Meng Hao. He had prepared long and hard to force Meng Hao to finally step out of the sect. He had investigated Meng Hao’s personality, and was very curious to see what he would decide to do now.

Meng Hao’s face darkened. He knew that the Demonic Cultivator Horde was definitely powerful enough to track down Fatty, Chu Yuyan and Chen Fan. After all, they weren’t very important people as far as the Demonic Cultivator Horde was concerned, and all it would take to find them would be a bit of time.

However, using them to threaten Meng Hao was a bit childish. Obviously, the easiest way to resolve the situation was to get Granny Nine and the others involved. It wasn’t that Meng Hao felt that his friends were unimportant.

He knew that even if he went all out and attacked Long Tianhai, it wouldn’t do any good.

The best course of action would be to immediately notify Granny Nine. That would show his view, and would settle the matter just like that. Having reached this decision, he turned to head back into the sect.

“Could it be that the results of my investigation are in error?” said Long Tianhai. “You’re so cold-hearted! You don’t even care that your old flame from your youth, and your best friends, are being threatened? Well… I guess I should show you something else.”

Long Tianhai shook his head and sighed. Then he waved his hand, causing an image to appear. As soon as Meng Hao saw the image, he stopped in place, and his eyes burned with killing intent.

The image depicted a single person. Chu Yuyan. Her face was pale, her hair was in disarray, and her lips were purple. Apparently, she had been poisoned.

She lay prone inside of a huge black shell. The mouth of the shell was as sharp as a sword, and was slowly lowering. It seemed like it wouldn’t be long before it sliced Chu Yuyan’s head completely off!

Although the image was illusory, Meng Hao was familiar enough with Chu Yuyan to be able to tell that this was no magical illusion. Nor was it some other person transformed to look like her. This was the real Chu Yuyan!

“Are you looking to die?” Meng Hao asked, killing intent exploding within his eyes. He extended his right hand and pointed toward the image. No ripples of a magical technique could be seen, almost as if nothing had happened, causing Long Tianhai to narrow his eyes in confusion and suspicion.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he seemed to study the image for a moment longer, and then without any further hesitation, waved his hand, causing a jade slip to fly back toward the sect. Then, he transformed into a prismatic beam of light that shot toward Long Tianhai!

Even if the person in that black shell was not Chu Yuyan, but Fatty, or even Chen Fan, Meng Hao would do the same thing.

Earlier, he had chosen to return to the sect because that had seemed to be the best way to resolve the situation. Granny Nine could take care of everything. After all, he had assumed that his three friends were safe in their sects. The Demonic Cultivator Horde might be malicious, but they wouldn’t have enough time to actually harm his friends, simple as that might be for them to do.

But now… it was too late. He was the one without enough time. Therefore, he simultaneously sent a jade slip to Granny Nine, and also let his rage burn to towering heights. Considering he had no other options left… he would pick the one option he had in front of him!

He attacked, killing intent boiling. Long Tianhai smiled slightly as his body suddenly flickered and began to fade away.

“It seems I overestimated you,” he said. “Apparently you didn’t notice that this is just an illusory projection! Even if I didn’t disappear, you still couldn’t hurt me. I guess there’s no harm in telling you that the Demonic Cultivator Horde didn’t originally plan to do anything to your old flame or your other friends. That was my idea, and we nine Sea Realm Demons were the ones who actually kidnapped her.” Long Tianhai chuckled and shook his head, seemingly deeply moved by his own methods.

“Go finish your assignment,” he continued. “Chu Yuyan is on Seajacket Island. Don’t worry, it’s not a trick, I can promise you that she’s really there. However, if you’re not fast enough, if you’re even the least bit too slow, she’ll die. You only have two hours….” As he faded away, Long Tianhai laughed at the sheer pleasure of seeing Meng Hao like this, and at the joy of being completely confident in his plan.

However, before he faded away completely, Meng Hao snorted coldly.

“You think I can’t hurt you?” he said, extending his hand and pointing toward Long Tianhai.

The wave of his finger unleashed his Demon Sealer’s aura. Hexing magic spread out, transforming into the Seventh Demon Sealing Hex!

Karmic Hexing!

As soon as the Hex was unleashed, a boundlessly terrifying Karmic power exploded out. Now that Meng Hao had absorbed the blood of Paragon Nine Seals, his Demon Sealing magical techniques were exponentially more powerful. Now, he was the true and authentic Ninth Generation Demon Sealer, the true successor of the League, approved by Patriarch Nine Seals himself!

Therefore, when he unleashed Demon Sealing Hexing magic, it was shockingly powerful!

It didn’t matter that he was facing an illusory version of Long Tianhai. There was still Karma. Of course, the greatest Karma was… connected to Long Tianhai’s true form.

The illusory version of Long Tianhai suddenly trembled, and his face filled with shock as he suddenly sensed a feeling of intense crisis. Not only could he sense the crisis on his illusory form; currently, his true form, hidden away in his Immortal’s cave in the Nine Seas God World, could also sense the feeling of mortal danger.

“What’s going on!?!?” Long Tianhai was in his Immortal’s cave, and hadn’t personally gone to Seajacket Island. He was a sinister and cautious person, and his plan all along had been to personally stay inside the sect. After the plan was carried out smoothly, he would emerge to finish things off.

Now, however, his face fell and his heart seized. He immediately and without any hesitation moved to sever his connection with his illusory clone.

But… he was too late!

The power of the Hexing magic caused a Karma Thread to appear on the illusory Long Tianhai’s head, a thread that connected his illusory self to his true self. It stretched out back toward the main gate of the Nine Seas God World, where it eventually led to his Immortal’s cave.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with killing intent. Considering the level of his cultivation base, how could he not have noticed that Long Tianhai was only there in illusory form? However, that didn’t matter one bit. Even though he had no way of killing him then and there, he would definitely teach him a profound and unforgettable lesson.

“I’ll show you what it means to get hurt!” he said. His fingers twisted into an incantation gesture, and the Karma Thread distorted. The illusory image of Long Tianhai responded, growing more blurry. However, the Karma Thread grew more clear!

In the blink of an eye, it had transformed into a tunnel, a tunnel leading directly toward his true form!

Shockingly, Meng Hao's Karmic Hexing had been developed to the pinnacle. In its current state… he could use Karma Threads to connect the illusory with the corporeal! In the briefest of instants, he could cause the illusory and the corporeal to transpose!

Hurt the illusory, damage the true self!

Between the illusory and the corporeal… exists Karma!

Meng Hao moved with incredible speed to suddenly appear directly in front of Long Tianhai's illusory form. Popping sounds rang out as his hand smacked onto Long Tianhai's illusory chest. He pushed down, and the illusory body began to tremble. Meng Hao's hands moved so fast they were a blur as he hit Long Tianhai nine times in a row.

In the same moment that Meng Hao appeared in front of his illusory form, back in the Immortal's cave in the sect, Long Tianhai's face fell. He lifted his right hand to try to sever the connection, but even as he did….

Outside of the main gate of the Nine Seas God World, Meng Hao's hand smashed into him nine times!

"Nine Heavens Destruction!" His face was expressionless as he uttered the name of the technique!

Booms could be heard as the illusory body was shattered. A miserable shriek rang out, a shriek filled with disbelief and wild astonishment. Simultaneously, back in the Immortal's cave, Long Tianhai sat there cross-legged, blood spewing out of his mouth. His chest was ruptured, collapsed, nine times in a row, until his entire person exploded.

Bits of blood and flesh spattered about as the power of the attack tore him into pieces. The only thing left was his head, which flew up screaming. Long Tianhai wasn’t dead. He was a Demonic cultivator, with special inborn powers and an Ancient Realm cultivation base. All of that gave him powerful regenerative abilities that caused a new body to form almost instantly. Of course, this new body was much weaker than his old body.

“Meng Hao, you’re DEAD!!!” he screamed, enraged. From the moment he had been born until now, he had never experienced such pain. However, even in the moment of his rage, a cold voice whispered in his ear.

Outside of the main gate of the Nine Seas God World, Long Tianhai’s illusory body shattered. At the same time, his new body was forming back in his Immortal’s cave, and the Karma Thread which had connected the two began to fade away.

However, Meng Hao’s murderous rage toward Long Tianhai could not be wiped away by a mere Nine Heavens Destruction attack. He stepped forward and grabbed ahold of the disappearing Karma Thread, which essentially allowed him to lay his hands on Long Tianhai’s soul.

“Demon Sealing, Fifth Hex!” he said coldly. A rift appeared in his right hand, which rapidly opened from a size of a few inches to nearly a meter long. Then, the rift and the Karma Thread both disappeared.

When the rift reappeared, it was directly in front of Long Tianhai in his Immortal’s cave. It was like a terrifying, gaping maw that instantly caused Long Tianhai to let out a scream of disbelief. Even as he backed up, the mouth chomped down, transposing Inside and Out. Half of Long Tianhai’s body was consumed by the rift, and crunching sounds could be heard as blood sprayed out in all directions.

He now had only half of a body left. Screaming miserably, his inborn abilities kicked in again, causing another bizarre regeneration to occur. However, to restore himself twice in a row in such a way caused his qi and blood to be significantly weaker, by more than half.

Although he had recovered, his face was pale, and he was trembling with astonishment. He had no idea how Meng Hao had been able to injure his true form by hurting his illusory body. In fact, if he had reacted even one bit slower just now… he would have been killed!

Long Tianhai was now terrified, for the first time ever. Meng Hao's bizarre technique gave rise to an unprecedented level of fear in his heart.

"How could he be so powerful? He's far more powerful than my investigation indicated! Dammit! It's only been a month since I saw him last! How could he have gotten so much stronger so quickly!? Could it be that he was hiding his true power all along!?!? No, that can't be. It must be that he's just really skilled with that technique!!" Long Tianhai was trembling; Meng Hao left him completely scared witless.

Outside of the sect, Meng Hao's eyes flickered with killing intent. By means of Long Tianhai's Karma Thread, he could sense Long Tianhai's position, and knew that he was still in the sect. From that, he could tell how cautious Long Tianhai was. Earlier, he had also employed Karmic Hexing in the same way on the image of Chu Yuyan to determine her exact location!

"Long Tianhai, when I return, it won't matter who's protecting you. I'm going to KILL YOU!" With that, his body flickered like lightning as he headed toward Chu Yuyan.

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# Chapter 1062: Boiling Sea!

Meng Hao shot toward Seajacket Island with lightning speed. Now that he was eternally within the Immortal Emperor Realm, he truly looked like a lightning bolt as he sped forward, dazzlingly fast.

It was a speed that even the early Ancient Realm couldn’t achieve, and was more akin to someone with six or seven extinguished Soul Lamps. And that… was while he was still under the pressure of the Ninth Sea!

If he left the Ninth Sea, his speed would be even greater!

As he shot along beneath the surface of the water, he only continued to move faster and faster, causing raging waves to roll out on the sea’s surface. Killing intent raged in his heart.

His eyes flickered with coldness. It had been a very long time since he had been this angry, since he had itched with the desire to kill. At the moment, it didn’t matter who got in his way, they would fall victim to his rage and his desire to kill.

Kidnapping friends to use as hostages was taboo in the cultivation world. Few people would dare to do such a thing. Everyone had friends and relatives, so if people engaged in such practices, it would lead to… widespread chaos.

Therefore, it was a tactic rarely employed, a bottom line not to be crossed, a principle not often violated.

But now, Long Tianhai had done just that very thing, and it caused Meng Hao to be filled with the desire to slaughter the entire Demonic Cultivator Horde.

He was not some pious and devout individual. If people left him alone, he would do nothing to them, but now, he had been provoked. Any sense of guilt he felt regarding the situation with the Demonic Cultivator Horde was now completely gone.

“You people deserve to die, and die you shall!”

His eyes flickered with coldness as he sped forward. However, that coldness could not cover up the concern he felt in his heart.

Although he had avoided developing romantic feelings toward Chu Yuyan, it would be impossible for him to deny that she occupied a place deep in his heart.

Although she only existed in Xu Qing’s shadow, and was almost invisible, Meng Hao could never forget all of the things that had occurred between the two of them. His choice was Xu Qing, but that didn’t mean he was willing to let Chu Yuyan get hurt.

After less time passed than it takes half an incense stick to burn, a rumbling sound echoed out across the surface of the sea as Meng Hao burst out into the open air. Now that the pressure of the Ninth Sea was gone, his energy rocketed up, and he glowed with the glory of the Immortal Emperor Realm.

He took a deep breath, and a sound like that of muffled thunder echoed out in all directions. The sea around him, and even the air, seemed to cave in.

It only took one breath for him to absorb all of the energy of Heaven and Earth in the area. He used this to ignite his cultivation base and, eyes glowing coldly, he shot off… moving even faster than he had when below the surface of the water!

BOOM!

A piercing scream could be heard as he shot through the air with even increasing speed!

Sonic booms spread out behind him, leaving circular clouds that shook Heaven and Earth.

As soon as he appeared, his aura spread out, and the sea beasts of the Ninth Sea detected it. It only took a moment for numerous beasts to charge toward him from all directions. The first creature to appear was a mass of tentacles that whipped toward him.

The surface of the sea was aboil as huge shapes rose up from underneath the water. It was as if an infinite number of sea beasts were now glaring at Meng Hao.

In the blink of an eye, the tentacles were bearing down on him as dozens of sea beasts charged in attack.

“Scram!” he said, not even taking the time to pay attention to them or slow down a bit. His words were like thunder, shaking all creation. Because he was in the Immortal Emperor Realm, his single word became a tempest that swept out in all directions over the surface of the sea, smashing everything it touched.

From a distance, a huge depression appeared in the sea, like a crater.

The sea beasts let out bloodcurdling screams as they were slammed into the surface of the water and destroyed. Blood spurted out everywhere and countless tentacles were shredded to pieces. Instantly, the dozens of attacking sea beasts’ blood stained the water red.

Meng Hao continued on, not having reduced his speed in the slightest.

However, it was virtually impossible to even count how many sea beasts resided in the Ninth Sea. To them, Meng Hao’s aura was something that instantly caused insane rage and hatred to burst out within them. It only took a moment for the sea to seethe as even more sea beasts raced toward him.

Among them were three who were comparable to the peak of the Immortal Realm. They were enormous in size and had surging energy.

“Looking to die?!” Meng Hao said, his eyes flickering with killing intent. He waved a finger, instantly causing hundreds of thousands of mountains to drop down from above.

These mountains were the manifestation of his Mountain Consuming Incantation. With his Immortal Emperor cultivation base, the hundreds of thousands of huge mountains linked together into a mountain chain which was far more powerful than any of the sea beasts.

“Crush them to death!” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with murder as the hundreds of thousands of mountains smashed down toward the surface of the sea. Countless miserable shrieks could be heard as the sea beasts’ bones were crushed, and their blood sprayed out in all directions.

Meng Hao sped forward at top speed, crushing anything that got in his way. The slaughter was tremendous, and yet, it did nothing to ease the fury in his heart; instead, it caused his anxiety to grow.

The fact remained that there were simply too many sea beasts in the Ninth Sea. Kill ten, and a hundred would take their place. Kill hundreds, and thousands would replace them. Kill thousands, and tens of thousands would appear!

There didn’t seem to be any end in sight. Massive rumblings echoed out, along with powerful roars. A huge shell shot up from the seafloor, surrounded by an army of seahorses. All of them slammed into Meng Hao’s hundreds of thousands of mountains.

A boom rang out as the shell was cracked, and yet did not shatter. It fought back against the mountains, during which time, countless other sea beasts flew past them to attack Meng Hao.

Meng Hao was so furious he started laughing, and then coldly said, “It’s been a long time since I’ve collected Demon hearts!”

Eyes flickering with killing intent, he performed an incantation gesture, causing the hundreds of thousands of mountains to vanish. What reappeared in their place was, shockingly, a gigantic, indescribably huge Blood Demon head.

It had crimson skin, bright red eyes, and a shocking, solitary horn. It was fully 30,000 meters tall, and was not illusory, but rather, corporeal. Now that Meng Hao was the Immortal Emperor, his divine abilities had undergone Heaven-shaking, Earth-toppling transformations.

The instant the Blood Demon head appeared, its eyes glowed bright red, and it threw its head back and roared. Suddenly, the head split into two, and then four, and then eight, and then sixteen. In the blink of an eye… more than a thousand Blood Demon heads had appeared, each one vicious and fierce. Meng Hao swished his sleeve, and 1,000 Blood Demon heads shot toward the surrounding Sea Demons.

Miserable shrieks rang out from the mouths of the sea beasts. As soon as a Blood Demon head touched a sea beast, the sea beast would rapidly wither, and would be killed in body and spirit!

Within only a few breaths of time, a massive slaughter was carried out. Thousands of sea beasts were all killed!

Numerous Sea Demon hearts flew out, which Meng Hao collected with the flick of a sleeve. At the same time, he never stopped moving. He continued to speed forward, surrounded by the numerous Blood Demon heads.

Based on what he could sense, he was getting much closer to Chu Yuyan.

“She’s just up ahead!” He shot forward amidst rumblings like that of thunder. All of a sudden, a huge arm shot up from the ocean up ahead. It was blue and covered with seaweed, and as soon as it appeared, it shot toward Meng Hao.

At the same time, the sea around him churned as countless enraged sea beasts shot out. This time, there were more than 10,000, causing huge waves to spread out across the water.

Meng Hao could see Seajacket Island off in the distance. However, the roiling sea between him and the island was filled with tens of thousands of additional sea beasts. In fact, there appeared to be almost 100,000.

100,000 sea beasts would be enough to cause any Immortal Realm cultivator to be filled with terror. Even someone in the mid Ancient Realm would begin to pant.

There were even some extraordinarily strong Sea Giants among them, whose heads broke the surface of the water to stare to stare coldly at Meng Hao.

When Meng Hao saw the 100,000 sea beasts, he smiled coldly. It was a smile filled with a brutal desire to kill.

“If all 100,000 of these sea beasts die here today, then maybe a bit of my rage can be sated!” With that, he extended his right hand, within which appeared, shockingly… a globe of flame!

The Essence of Divine Flame!

The Essence of Divine Flame was fused into one of Meng Hao’s Immortal meridians, becoming a trump card that he could use in battle. Intense, blistering heat radiated out as soon as it appeared, and the Sea Giant which had been reaching out toward him suddenly began to tremble. The other sea beasts in the area were also shaking, and an intense sensation of mortal crisis rose up in their minds.

They weren’t very intelligent, but that didn’t make them any less afraid of dying. Just as they began to back up, Meng Hao viciously tossed the Essence of Divine Flame down toward the Ninth Sea.

The Essence of Divine Flame turned into a streak of dazzling flame that slammed into the water. Sea beasts began to scream and back up, but unfortunately for them, it was too late!

The Essence of Divine Flame sank into the water, and instantly, roiling heat exploded out. The surface of the water began to steam as intense heat caused the sea water to begin to boil!!

In the blink of an eye, the temperature of the water reached an unbelievable level. This was not ordinary water, and it was not an ordinary temperature. It was so intensely hot that it could snuff out the life forces of mighty beings. This entire part of the sea was now so hot that it was beginning to evaporate.

The nearest sea beasts screamed miserably as they were boiled alive, causing their bodies to fall apart into pieces. It didn’t matter how tough their armored hides were, they became bright red!!

The gigantic shell could do nothing to fight back, and a miserable shriek could be heard as it was annihilated!

The intensity of the heat set the entire sea in the area into a boil. Bloodcurdling screams rang out in all directions. The Sea Giant screamed and the sea beasts struggled. All was in vain. It only took a brief moment… for the entire area to turn into a gigantic kettle!

The Ninth Sea was the water, and the Essence of Divine Flame provided the heat. The sea was being used to stew up some seafood!

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# Chapter 1063: Paragon Rocks the Might of the Sea!

How tragic!

As the sea around Seajacket Island boiled, and the broken corpses of numerous sea beasts floated up, Meng Hao waved his right hand, causing the sea to part. The Essence of Divine Flame flew up into his palm and disappeared.

Meng Hao didn’t even glance at the surface of the sea. With a flash, he shot forward toward Seajacket Island, which rapidly grew larger and larger in his field of view.

As he neared the island, eight mighty auras suddenly arose. Shockingly… all of them were of the Ancient Realm!

Each one had three or four extinguished Soul Lamps, and were obviously eight of the nine Sea Realm Demons. They were also Chosen of the Demonic Cultivator Horde, people who had long since left the Immortal Realm and stepped into the Ancient Realm!

Currently, they were bursting with incredible energy, almost as if they were sending a message to Meng Hao… that they were waiting for him!

Even though they had surely been watching the scene which had just played out… they were as arrogant and tyrannical as ever!

As for Meng Hao, he could tell without a doubt that Chu Yuyan was there on the island!

Furthermore, in addition to her aura, and the auras of the eight Demonic cultivators, there was an additional aura on the island!

That aura was deeply hidden in the heart of the island, almost as if it were in command of the whole area. Currently, it was coldly observing as Meng Hao neared, apparently believing that Meng Hao could not detect it.

It only took a single glance for Meng Hao to be able to tell that this person’s cultivation base… was in the Ancient Realm, with six extinguished Soul Lamps!

That counted, not as the early Ancient Realm, but the mid Ancient Realm!

As far as the Demonic Cultivator Horde was concerned, Meng Hao might be powerful, but he was still a mere Immortal Realm cultivator. The only thing they felt they needed to fear was when he absorbed a Nirvana Fruit, like he had on Planet East Victory. At that time, he had temporarily risen into the Immortal Emperor Realm, giving him sufficient battle prowess to slay two Ancient Realm cultivators.

However, they viewed that as a mere temporary boost in battle prowess. He wasn’t capable of maintaining such power for very long, which meant that they could definitely beat him!

Furthermore, as an extra precaution, they had taken even further steps to prepare.

They had set up a trap that was as dangerous as a dragon’s pool or a tiger’s den!

Meng Hao could see how well they were prepared, and could also sense the presence of a powerful spell formation on the island. Although he frowned, he didn’t slow down at all, but instead, sped up!

There are some things in life that just have to be done!

There are some people that must be saved!

Even if the road ahead passed through mountains of daggers and seas of flames… that didn’t matter!

When it came to the practice of cultivation, some people considered everything closely. They evaluated everything based on personal benefit, and for the sake of their own well-being, would bury their own hearts! Meng Hao had no use for such ways!

He wanted freedom and independence!

His freedom was a freedom to do anything he wished. His independence was being independent in his way of thinking! Perhaps, far in the future he would stand at the pinnacle of everything and look out over the Heavens and the Earth. At that time, he would be able to examine his conscience and be completely free of any guilt. He would have no regrets! His life would be completely free and unfettered by anything!

“I’m going to save her. And as for you, Demonic Cultivator Horde, as long as I live, any of you who I can kill… WILL DIE!” Killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes. Rumbling echoed out as he shot closer to the island.

The instant he entered the island’s airspace, a thunderous roar could be heard as the brilliant light of a spell formation shot up along the island’s borders. Massive pressure instantly weighed down on Meng Hao from all directions!

That pressure was pressure from the Ninth Sea! The island’s spell formation had only one function, and that was to focus such pressure. As a result, the pressure weighing down on Meng Hao was instantly greater than what he felt inside the Nine Seas God World, and was increasing rapidly.

The spell formation might seem simplistic, but it was very effective, and was perfectly targeted against Meng Hao!

Meng Hao was a newcomer. Although he had been in the Nine Seas God World for two months or so, he couldn’t possibly compare to these Demonic cultivators, who had been born in the Ninth Sea. They were extremely accustomed to the pressure, and he was not, making it his most obvious weakness!

To the Demonic Cultivator Horde, the pressure posed no obstacle to them at all, not unless they went down far enough to where the pressure reached incredible levels. However, the effect it had on Meng Hao was significant.

A boom could be heard as he suddenly felt as if countless mountains were crushing down onto him, destabilizing his flight momentarily. It was a downward force that seemed like it would shove him to the ground and prevent him from ever standing back up.

The pressure continued to mount. In the blink of an eye, it had reached a level multiple times greater than that in the Nine Seas God World. Meng Hao could even sense his cultivation base falling rapidly as a result.

And yet, he sped along as quickly as ever, gritting his teeth… as he got closer and closer to Chu Yuyan.

Suddenly, snide, mocking laughter rang out.

“So, Meng Hao, it turns out that you’re loyal and affectionate after all! Well, that’s good. If you had kept being stubborn, hiding away and refusing to agree to our wager, things would have gotten difficult for us.

“It seems such a shame to have to kill you.” Along with the laughter, eight Demonic cultivators flew toward Meng Hao in prismatic beams of light. Meng Hao suddenly stopped in place. The pressure weighing down on him was making him tremble, but his eyes were as icy cold as ever.

“Didn’t I say that we didn’t even need to use the spell formation!?” said one of them. “This brat’s cultivation base is so weak we could crush him without it!”

One by one, the eight Demonic cultivators became visible. All of them were chuckling coldly as they neared Meng Hao.

Meng suddenly laughed and said, “Apparently Long Tianhai didn’t tell you yet.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” replied one of the eight Demonic cultivators, a woman. Her cultivation base was the strongest of the group, her fifth Soul Lamp being mostly extinguished. From the look of it, she could complete extinguishing it at any moment. Her eyes flickered, as if she was suddenly experiencing an ill premonition.

Meng Hao chuckled darkly. The pressure weighing down on him was terrifying, but nonetheless, his energy suddenly shot up. A tempest kicked up around him, which spread out in all directions, causing the island to quake and the sea to froth.

The will of the Immortal Emperor was something that the Heavens could not eclipse and the Earth could not cover up. The pressure on the island was intense, but it was not the pressure of the entire Ninth Sea. It was just pressure from one small area, barely 1/10,000th of the full pressure. It was a pressure… that was matched by the will of the Immortal Emperor!

The tempest spread out, rising high into the sky and slamming into the pressure of the Ninth Sea. A huge boom echoed out.

The resulting collision shocked the eight Demonic cultivators, whose hearts began to pound.

“He’s trying to fight back against the pressure of the Ninth Sea?!”

“He overestimates his abilities! How could he possibly fight the pressure of the Ninth Sea!?” The eight Demonic cultivators were astonished, and immediately gave voice to their shock. They were just about to advance on Meng Hao when all of a sudden….

Meng Hao’s voice crackled out like thunder, echoing in all directions.

“Fight back? I won’t be fighting back against it. I’ll be OVERPOWERING IT!”

His hair whipped around him as he looked up. He was like a giant, staring in the face of the pressure. The will of the Immortal Emperor surged as he raised both hands into the air and then waved them to either side.

The tempest screamed, apparently on the verge of… overpowering the pressure of the Ninth Sea!

Heaven and Earth shook as the pressure converged by the spell formation seemed to roar in rage. Apparently, it felt deeply insulted that a cultivator dared to fight back against it. The surrounding sea raged as huge waves swept across it.

“You… are not the full pressure of the Ninth Sea! You’re just a tiny portion!” The more he trembled under the pressure weighing down on him, the more he wanted to vanquish it.

The pressure increased, and his eyes gleamed with a vicious light. He waved his hand and cried out, “Paragon Bridge!” Instantly, shocking rumbling sounds could be heard as the illusory Paragon Bridge formed. It was only one section of the boundless bridge, and yet, its aura still caused everything to dim, and the surroundings to shake violently. The pressure gathered by the spell formation suddenly wavered.

Apparently Meng Hao’s actions enraged the will of the pressure. Rumbling sounds could be heard as the pressure redoubled, intent on absolutely pulverizing Meng Hao!

The eight Demonic Cultivators’ faces fell as they watched the island around them begin to crumble. The pressure of the Ninth Sea, which had been completely invisible before, was now causing distortions and ripples to appear.

“He’s just looking to die! Now is the perfect time to strike!”

“What a moron! He’s actually fighting back against the pressure of the Ninth Sea! Plus he even raves about overpowering it!?” The eight Demonic Cultivators’ killing intent surged, and they whistled through the air in colorful beams of light as they closed in on Meng Hao.

As they neared, Meng Hao looked up. Blue veins bulged on his face, and his eyes were shot with blood. The pressure weighing down on him was intense, but not enough to make him buckle. Instead, he fought back with intense power as he did just as he said, attempting to overpower the pressure of the Ninth Sea.

He completely ignored the eight Demonic Cultivators. Instead, he lifted his right foot and then slowly stepped forward onto the illusory Paragon Bridge.

As soon as his foot touched down, intense rumbling could be heard, and an extraordinary aura erupted. Muffled sounds like thunder rolled out, and huge fissures snaked out over the surface of the island as the pressure from above distorted everything.

Cracking sounds could be heard coming from Meng Hao’s body because of the the pressure. The eight Demonic Cultivators coughed up mouthfuls of blood, as if some massive force had just stomped onto their bodies. Now they were contending with, not just the pressure of the Ninth Sea, but also the power of Meng Hao’s Paragon Bridge…. They were being affected by the power Meng Hao was using to fight back against the pressure!

Meng Hao grinned viciously as he took a second step!

Everything shook as a huge boom rattled out. Meng Hao then took a third step. Then a fourth!

The eight Demonic cultivators’ faces fell as they felt massive, unbearable power trampling them. They fell back, blood spraying from their mouths. They felt like their heads were being crushed. Each step Meng Hao took caused blood to spurt out of their mouths, and sent their cultivation bases into instability. The aggressive pressure of both Meng Hao and the Ninth Sea pushed them back so forcefully that they didn’t dare to get any closer.

“He…. he’s actually overpowering the pressure of the Ninth Sea!”

“How could this be possible!? He’s so strong!!” Their faces fell and their hearts pounded. It was virtually impossible for them to conceive that someone could vanquish the pressure of the Ninth Sea. Although it was only a small portion, it was still derived from the Ninth Sea!

Then… Meng Hao took a fifth step!

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# Chapter 1064: Annihilating the Eight Demons!

The eight Demonic cultivators raged inwardly, and their hearts trembled.

“Could it be that he was hiding his true power before? Dammit!!”

“This Meng Hao is too treacherous! He has a cultivation base like this but didn’t reveal it back at the golden gate stone stele! He did it all to draw us out!”

“Despicable! Shameless!!”

Even though Meng Hao hadn’t even made an attack yet, they could see that he was strong enough to overwhelm the pressure of the Ninth Sea. What caused their scalps to tingle most was the sense that without the spell formation focusing the pressure of the Ninth Sea, Meng Hao… it would be even easier for Meng Hao to fight them!

“Just what level is his cultivation base at? There’s no way someone in the Immortal Realm could be this strong!!”

The eight Demonic cultivators trembled as he took his fifth step. Not a single cloud could be seen in the sky, and yet peals of thunder shook everything as the Paragon Bridge clashed with the pressure of the Ninth Sea!

The brunt of the force was taken by Meng Hao. However, he was eternally within the Immortal Emperor Realm, and his strength, both in terms of his fleshly body and his cultivation base, enabled him to endure it. Besides, he also had his Eternal stratum working to restore him constantly.

However… the eight Demonic cultivators couldn't endure. They might be Chosen from the Demonic Cultivator Horde, powerful Ancient Realm cultivators, but they simply couldn't compare to Meng Hao at all!

Therefore, Meng Hao could take his fifth step, whereas the eight Demonic cultivators… coughed up more blood and were further injured.

Meng Hao's steps had been taken too quickly, and each one was like a massive stomp that severely injured the eight Demonic Cultivators five times in a row!

Three of them simply couldn't withstand it. They screamed as their bodies withered and began to collapse.

You could say that before, Meng Hao had only been able to use a small bit of the Paragon Bridge's power. Now, he was able to unleash far more of that power. Because he had entered the Immortal Emperor Realm, every step he took caused the Paragon Bridge to reveal more and more of its true, supreme power!!

The eight Demonic cultivators were reeling in shock as Meng Hao threw his head back and roared, then took a sixth step. Then a seventh!

Two quick steps in succession caused thunder to rumble. Blood oozed out of the corners of Meng Hao's mouth, the price he had to pay to unleash this power. At the same time, the island was beginning to shatter, its edges crumbling and collapsing into the sea, which was also churning, almost as if it were roaring in rage!

The pressure of the Ninth Sea twisted and distorted. It was almost as if… the incredible pressure exerted by Meng Hao was going to shatter the Ninth Sea's pressure!

To the eight Demonic cultivators, this was a huge catastrophe!

The three of their group who had already reached their limit let out bloodcurdling screams!

“NO!!” The rumbling pressure exuded by the collision of the Ninth Sea and the Paragon Bridge caused their bodies to literally explode. They… were killed in body and soul!

Of the eight Demonic cultivators, three were dead. Of the five that remained after that, three more coughed up blood and began to shake violently. Apparently they couldn’t hold on any longer; looks of astonishment and terror flickered across their faces. All of a sudden they were filled with regret. They regretted provoking Meng Hao, and could never have possibly imagined that… he was this powerful!

They were so shocked and terrified that they began to back up and get ready to run for their lives.

“He’s definitely not in the Immortal Realm! There’s no way someone in the Immortal Realm could be so powerful. He’s in the Ancient Realm! Definitely the Ancient Realm! He must have extinguished at least five Soul Lamps, maybe more!!” The remaining Demonic cultivators were all flabbergasted.

“Horde Uncle, save us!!” they called out, their voices echoing out around the island.

Currently, a middle-aged man sat cross-legged in the center of the island. He looked very much like a cultivator, except that he had a single horn growing out of his head.

The horn was pure white, as was the color of his skin!

He glared over at the battle taking place, and at Meng Hao walking on the Paragon Bridge, crushing the pressure of the Ninth Sea. He watched as only a few steps either injured or killed the eight other Demonic cultivators.

What he was seeing caused him to pant, and even gasp.

“Dammit! We misjudged his cultivation base! He can actually overwhelm the pressure of the Ninth Sea!! At this point, me stepping in won’t do any good!

“I have to wait until his power fades. If his final step shatters the pressure of the Ninth Sea, then I’ll have to flee. There’s no way I could fight him at that point. However, if the pressure is still there after he takes his final step, then… he will have reached his limit. His power will be used up, and it will be the perfect time to attack!”

The middle-aged Demonic cultivator ignored the cries for help and stared anxiously at Meng Hao.

Seeing that no Senior member of their Horde was making an appearance, the remaining Demonic cultivators felt despair rising up within them.

Even the strongest of their number, the female Demonic cultivator, and the next strongest member, the seventh Sea Realm Demon, were barely able to hold on. They watched Meng Hao’s energy rising up madly as he walked across the Paragon Bridge; the pressure of the Ninth Sea was losing its grip on him, and the island was collapsing around them. The female Demonic cultivator gritted her teeth and screamed. Her four extinguished Soul Lamps suddenly swirled into motion, and she charged forward toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao heard the cries of the Demonic cultivators. Licking the blood off of his lips, he coldly said,“You people… just don’t understand what it means to be Immortal!”

Continuing to ignore his opponents, including the female Demonic cultivator, he took another step….

Eight steps!

The Paragon Bridge shook; gradually, it was becoming more corporeal, and was also emanating an air of extreme ancientness. The surrounding waters of the Ninth Sea seethed, and more portions of the island collapsed.

The three Demonic cultivators who had reached their limit earlier let out miserable shrieks as Meng Hao took his eighth step. Then the pressure ripped them to shreds, and they were killed in body and spirit.

Nothing remained behind!

At the same time, the female Demonic cultivator coughed up a mouthful of blood, and her body began to wither up. She was incapable of advancing any further. The seventh Sea Realm Demon laughed bitterly, and his eyes gleamed with ferocity. Then, he slammed his palm down onto his own chest, detonating his entire body. Flesh and blood sprayed out, but then transformed into life force power that shot into the female Demonic cultivator.

“RUN!” That was the final thing he said before he died.

Of the eight Demonic cultivators from moments ago, seven were already dead. Only the woman was left, trembling with fear as she received her companion’s life force. As it poured into her, her fifth Soul Lamp suddenly winked out, and her cultivation base began to rise.

And yet, an increase in cultivation base at this moment… was too little, too late!

She gritted her teeth, using the additional life force and cultivation base power to back up and flee.

However, Meng Hao’s killing intent had been building up from the moment he left the Nine Seas God World. He would not allow any living enemy to escape.

In the same moment that the female Demonic cultivator turned to flee, he took his ninth step, his last step. As his foot stepped down, he shuddered and coughed up a mouthful of blood. At the same time, his body withered rapidly.

However, the explosive power unleashed by that final step caused massive quaking on the island, more than thirty percent of which had now collapsed into the sea. One chunk after another splashed into the water and sank down. The water in the area was shoved away, as if by some massive attack, causing a huge depression to appear on the surface of the sea.

The powerful female Demonic cultivator couldn’t prevent herself from letting out a miserable shriek from her position 300 meters away. Then she exploded in a haze of bone fragments and blood.

Meng Hao staggered a bit, as if he were about to fall over. The Paragon Bridge turned illusory again, and the pressure of the Ninth Sea was still there, shoving down on him explosively. It wanted to bury Meng Hao, whose body emitted cracking sounds. He was clearly in a very sorry state, so tattered that his appearance was appalling.

Just when he was about to fall over, just when the pressure of the Ninth Sea was about to inundate him, a long peal of laughter rang out from the center of the island. A figure shot out as fast as lightning to appear directly in front of Meng Hao. An explosive Ancient Realm aura of six extinguished Soul Lamps filled the area.

“DIE!” It was none other than the middle-aged Demonic cultivator, who had been waiting this whole time for this one chance. He could almost visualize himself striking Meng Hao, turning him into a cloud of blood. However, destroying his body would not kill his soul, which he would need to use special magic to extract and condense the mark of the Echelon from. However, it was still no different than a fatal blow.

The thought of being able to personally fell someone in the Echelon caused the middle-aged man to feel extremely excited.

It was at this point that Meng Hao suddenly looked up, and his eyes flickered coldly. In the blink of an eye, he was no longer withered, and in fact, a derisive smile twisted his lips.

He had been waiting for this man to show up. Although he could sense his aura before, he couldn’t see him, making it impossible to use the Lightning Cauldron to force him out. The man had remained hidden the entire time, and so Meng Hao had allowed himself to grow weaker and weaker, certain that the man would eventually show his face. The Demonic Cultivator Horde wanted his place in the Echelon. If he was killed in body and spirit by the pressure of the Ninth Sea, that would not fit with the designs of the Demonic Cultivator Horde, despite their lack of understanding regarding the details of the Echelon. They surely would not permit that to happen.

Therefore, the man had waited until he appeared to be completely weak and on the verge of being overwhelmed by the pressure of the Ninth Sea…. Then he made his move!

When he saw the cold light in Meng Hao’s eyes, and the derisive smile on his face, the middle-aged Demonic cultivator’s scalp went numb, and his heart began to pound.

“You’ll be the one dying today!” said Meng Hao, lifting his right hand up and shoving it forward. As soon as it made contact with the Demonic cultivator’s double-palmed attack, flesh and blood cultivation base power suddenly flowed into Meng Hao, causing his face to flush slightly.

Blood Demon Grand Magic!

The Demonic cultivator gasped hoarsely, and his face filled with astonishment as he backed up. Moments ago, he had felt ten percent of his life force and cultivation base being sucked away.

A moment later he stabilized himself, and killing intent flickered in his eyes. Meng Hao’s Paragon Bridge was beginning to fade away, causing the man to laugh coldly.

“Who cares if you have some trick moves,” he said. “You’re no match for me under the pressure of the Ninth Sea!”

“Pressure of the Ninth Sea?” asked Meng Hao, looking up into the sky. “The Heavens can’t eclipse me and the Earth can’t cover me up! The pressure of the Ninth Sea might as well stop dreaming about trying to suppress me!”

As he spoke, his energy spiked. Beneath him, the Paragon Bridge grew clear once again. He took a deep breath and then… stepped forward for the tenth time!

That tenth step caused the pressure of the Ninth Sea of shatter. The spell formation was completely destroyed, and the island quaked as… it shattered into pieces that began to crumble apart in all directions!

At the same time, Meng Hao's energy was now no longer restricted by anything, and rocketed up. Wild colors flashed and the wind screamed around him, violent enough to slash the Heavens!

He was like… a dragon breaking free of its cage!

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# Chapter 1065: Towering Killing Intent!

Gone was the pressure of the Ninth Sea!

Gone was the island’s spell formation!

Gone was the interference caused by the eight Demonic cultivators!

The pressure vanished, and the spell formation fell to pieces. The island was collapsing, and the Demonic cultivators were slaughtered….

The will of the Immortal Emperor exploded out fully and thoroughly!

Colors flashed and the wind howled. Meng Hao hovered in midair, clothes and hair whipping in the wind, radiating pulses of Immortal spirit. It was as if he was completely different than any other living thing in this Realm, as if he… were the Emperor of the entire Immortal Realm!

The lands he walked belonged to him by Imperial right!

If he wished, a single glance could shatter Heaven and Earth!

Every breath he took caused thunder to boom and the sea to seethe as if in fear. The air around him transformed into a huge vortex, spinning around and creating a huge depression in the sea!

The sight was overwhelmingly spectacular. The air twisted and distorted as if it were about to be destroyed, and Meng Hao’s eyes shone as if with stars, radiant and glittering.

An intense Imperial will radiated out from him, combining with the Immortal spirit to shocking effect. The middle-aged Demonic cultivator’s face was pale white as he was shoved backward beyond his own control. Trembling, he could feel his heart pounding in his chest.

Heavenly bodies dimmed as Meng Hao stood there, radiating boundless, glorious light, exploding with the most powerful energy he had ever possessed since he had begun to practice cultivation. This was his current most powerful state, the peak of his battle prowess!

Beneath him, rumbling booms filled the air as what was left of the island was wracked with shocking power, as if it were experiencing an apocalypse.

Cracks spread out in all directions, filling the remnants of the island and shattering them into smaller pieces. What had once been mountains sunk into the sea. Massive rumbling sounds could be heard, almost like the pained roars of some mortally wounded primordial beast.

As the island crumbled to bits, the chain of mountains which occupied the very center of the island teetered precariously until finally, the last remaining mountains were flattened, and the entire area became nothing more than seawater!

At the same time, the collapsing mountains revealed an Immortal’s cave which had remained underneath them the entire time. It was now exposed and open for anyone to see.

This Immortal’s cave was made up of a violet lagoon, within which was a huge black shell. Laying unconscious in that shell… was Chu Yuyan.

Before, they way the shell had been hanging over her seemed like a death sentence. But then, it ended up saving her life!

It wasn’t that the shell intended to do that; things had just happened too quickly. Before the shell could even do anything, the mountains had begun to collapse!

Of course, that is exactly how Meng Hao planned it. Because of the image shown to him by Long Tianhai, he had known all along that Chu Yuyan was inside the shell.

The shattering mountains and collapsing lands didn’t matter; she was mostly shielded by the powerful shell itself. They were all improvised tools he had meticulously manipulated to save Chu Yuyan. Now, as soon as he caught sight of her, he flashed in her direction as fast as a shooting star!

Before blinking your eyes, you would have seen him off in the distance. After blinking your eyes, you would have found that he was in the collapsed Immortal’s cave. The black shell trembled and was about to snap shut and decapitate her.

It was in that moment that Meng Hao suddenly shouted, “Hex!”

The Eighth Demon Sealing Hex was unleashed, causing the black shell to shudder to a stop. It was now incapable of closing! Meng Hao appeared in front of it, reached out, and grabbed the bottom half of the shell with one hand, the top half with the other.

His eyes flickered with killing intent as he then drew upon the full power of his fleshly body to wrench his hands in opposite directions.

A cracking sound rang out, along with a miserable shriek, as the black shell was ripped apart!

It was completely torn in two!

As the final remnants of the mountains and lands sank into the ocean, Meng Hao held Chu Yuyan in his arms and poured cultivation base power into her. Instantly, he could sense the deadly poison inside of her.

The poison was pernicious, but Chu Yuyan’s body was still fighting back against it, despite having clearly been poisoned for quite some time. Apparently, she had some innate resistance to it.

However, it was a tricky poison. After pouring some cultivation base power into her, Meng Hao realized that the poison was somewhat self-aware. It actually avoided him, and in the blink of an eye, it seemed to realize that it was no match for him in a direct fight. Therefore, to resist Meng Hao’s Immortal power, it was threatening to make Chu Yuyan’s body the battleground. Trying to force it out would surely harm her.

If things got out of hand, Chu Yuyan would end up even more hurt than she already was, and her situation would be impossible to reverse!

Even if Meng Hao didn’t do anything drastic, however, her life force would still drain away. It wouldn’t be very long before she was completely withered up, the flame of her life force completely extinguished.

Meng Hao’s eyes shone brightly, and rage began to burn in his heart.

Chu Yuyan had not yet reached Immortal Ascension, and was still in the Dao Seeking stage. However, in their attempts to snag a place in the Echelon, the Demonic Cultivator Horde had sent Ancient Realm cultivators to capture and poison her, a mere Dao Seeking cultivator!

That was not just accomplishing things by fair means or foul. That was acting with complete wickedness and villainy!

The killing intent in Meng Hao’s eyes flickered intensely. Suddenly, in the same moment that his Immortal power touched the deadly poison, blood oozed out of the corners of Chu Yuyan’s mouth, and her eyes flickered open.

The only thing she could make out was Meng Hao, standing there in front of her. As soon as she realized it was him, she blinked in surprise.

“Am I dreaming again…?” she murmured. Then she lapsed again into unconsciousness.

Those simple words caused Meng Hao to tremble. As he looked down at her unconscious form, his eyes flickered with complex emotions.

Cultivators didn’t dream. Or at least, they rarely did!

The higher a cultivator’s cultivation base, the less likely they were to experience dreams. Although Dao Seeking cultivators didn’t count for much to Meng Hao, to many people… they were the pinnacle. The next step beyond that was the Immortal Realm!

At such a level of cultivation, dreams simply shouldn’t occur. If they did, it likely indicated that the cultivator was afflicted by an inner Devil!

If she didn’t have an inner Devil, and yet still dreamed… then how intense must her thoughts and emotions have been …to cause such a thing to happen? And then there was that word ‘again,’ which seemed to indicate that it had happened more than once!

Chu Yuyan’s muttered words caused Meng Hao to understand exactly what was going on in her heart now that she had left Planet South Heaven.

He sighed and looked up. When he did, his eyes flickered with even more intense, murderous intentions. The angrier he got, the more he wanted to kill. He suddenly shot up into the air, turning around coldly to face the shocked middle-aged Demonic cultivator.

“Impossible!!” the man gasped. His face flickered and his scalp tingled to the point where it felt like it would explode. He still couldn’t believe that Meng Hao had actually overwhelmed the pressure of the Ninth Sea!

He almost didn’t even notice that the island had collapsed and that Meng Hao had saved Chu Yuyan. He suddenly realized that he was standing directly in front of someone who had shattered the pressure of the Ninth Sea. Even though his own cultivation base was clearly much higher compared to Meng Hao’s, all of a sudden he realized… that he was the one who was afraid!

In fact, when Meng Hao’s gaze locked onto him, he subconsciously backed up and then prepared to flee.

But could Meng Hao really let him go? The intensity of his killing intent was impossible to even describe. As the middle-aged Demonic cultivator turned to flee, Meng Hao threw his head back and roared. That roar was packed with the will of the Immortal Emperor, causing everything to shake violently. The air shattered as a massive wind sprang up in all directions.

As the wind screamed into motion, it caused pressure to build up, as if… it were replacing the power exerted by the Ninth Sea!

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

The Demonic cultivator trembled as the wind swept across him. Blood spurted out of his mouth, and his face went deathly pale. He currently had no will to fight whatsoever, and in fact, felt a sensation of intense, deadly crisis, caused by none other than Meng Hao.

“He’s even stronger than before! Dammit! How could he be so terrifying!?”

In a panic, the Demonic cultivator bit the tip of his tongue and spit out a mouthful of blood to unleash a secret magic. It instantly gave him a burst of speed, and yet, before it could get him very far, electricity danced around Meng Hao as the Lightning Cauldron appeared. Rumbling echoed out as he then switched places with the man.

In that moment of transposition, the middle-aged Demonic cultivator let out a hoarse shout of astonishment. Suddenly, he was no longer far off in the distance. Furthermore, the sudden burst of speed was not helping him escape, but was actually helping to hasten him toward death!

That was because directly ahead of him… was Meng Hao!

It was almost as if he had taken the initiative to charge at Meng Hao. Just when he was about to change directions, Meng Hao suddenly waved a finger.

Eighth Demon Sealing Hex!

The Demonic cultivator’s body lurched to a halt, and he hung there in midair, coughing up blood as Meng Hao strode toward him through the air, waving his finger a second time.

Demon Sealing, Seventh Hex!

Massive amounts of Karma appeared in response to the wave of his hand. It transformed into a mark which completely sealed the Demonic cultivator’s Karma. Because Meng Hao had absorbed the Paragon’s blood, his Demon Sealing magical techniques had experienced explosive changes. All of a sudden, his Seventh Hex was revealing a new transformation.

“Seal the eyes, remove sight!

“Seal the nose, remove smell!

“Seal the throat, remove speech!

“Seal the ears, remove hearing!

“Seal the senses, remove reaction!

“Seal the world, seal EVERYTHING!”

Everything… by means of Karma!

The Demonic Cultivator screamed as, all of a sudden, his entire world went blank. He could feel nothing, and sense nothing, not even heat or cold, or auras!

It was as if everything had vanished, and he was faced with pitch-black nothingness. He could not see, hear, smell, or sense anything!

“NO!!” He trembled as he realized that, not only had he lost connection with everything, but his cultivation base was also locked in place. He couldn’t flee even if he wanted to.

Meng Hao appeared in front of him, eyes bloodshot and face cold. He lifted his hand, and that hand suddenly seemed to transform into a Blood Demon head!

“Demonic Cultivator Horde, that which you have taken away from Chu Yuyan, will be taken back by me!” The words were spoken softly, but they were like an icy wind. Unfortunately for the Demonic cultivator, he couldn’t hear them at all.

Meng Hao’s hand touched the man’s forehead, and a tremor ran down through the man. His body withered up, but he was incapable of screaming. His life force, his cultivation base, everything that was him… was sucked away by Meng Hao… and transferred into Chu Yuyan!

This was none other than… the Blood Demon Grand Magic!

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# Chapter 1066: Elder Hai Sheng!

It is impossible to even describe the pain of having one’s life force absorbed by the Blood Demon Grand Magic. Only someone who has experienced it could possibly know the feeling. If you had to liken it to something, it would be like having an acidic liquid injected into your veins. As it filled your body, it would melt your flesh and blood, transforming your innards into a shapeless mass.

Then it would be slowly extracted as life force. In this case, Meng Hao acted like a bridge, delivering that life force to Chu Yuyan.

If the Demonic cultivator could cry out right now, it wouldn’t lessen the pain, he could at least vent some of the torment he was experiencing. Instead, the pain simply existed in his heart as an undispellable torment.

He… couldn’t even open his mouth. Nor could he see what was happening. However, he could feel everything that was occurring inside of him, and in fact, those feelings were amplified, causing him to experience what was essentially unspeakable torture.

If he could do anything, the first thing he would think to do would be to die instantly!

If he had a chance to do things over, if he had the power to reverse time, he would definitely refuse to participate in this plan!

Unfortunately, there are no such things as second chances!

Meng Hao’s face was like ice as he stared at the Demonic cultivator’s body slowly withering up. Soon, he was nothing more than a sack of flesh and bones, his life force drained.

Finally, Meng Hao loosened his grip, and the man began to fall down. Then the wind caught him, and he dissolved into dust…. His entire person had been absorbed by the Blood Demon Grand Magic and sent into Chu Yuyan.

Moments ago, the flame of her life force had been dim and barely flickering. Now, it was brighter. Her vitality was somewhat restored, and her face was no longer the pale of death, but rather, had some color to it.

However… Meng Hao knew that all of that was temporary. For every day that the poison remained in Chu Yuyan, she would continue to weaken, and would eventually die.

As he held her in his arms, his eyes flickered with focus and determination. He took a deep breath, then carefully placed some seals onto Chu Yuyan and the poison inside of her. Doing so would ensure that she would be able to cling to life a bit longer. Finally, he gently placed her into his bag of holding, then looked up and began to speed toward the Nine Seas God World.

It was time to do some killing!

And the first person on his list to kill was Long Tianhai!

It didn’t matter where Long Tianhai was, or who was protecting him; Meng Hao was determined to kill him. That determination would not lessen, no matter what Heaven-shaking, Earth-toppling trouble might occur as a result. He would definitely give vent to the murderous rage in his heart.

“Long Tianhai, you shall DIE!

“Demonic Cultivator Horde, I hereby VOW… that one day the Ninth Mountain and Sea will have NO Sea Demons!” His voice echoed up, piercing into the Heavens, which responded with rumbling like claps of thunder!

This was no ordinary promise, this was a vow!

Meng Hao’s killing intent towered into the Heavens, and it was in the midst of that rage that he uttered this vow!

Almost in the same moment that his thunder-like words echoed out, the entire Ninth Sea shuddered. Even the Ninth Mountain, which rested ponderously out in the starry sky, trembled in response.

The four planets also shook. It wasn’t just the Ninth Mountain and Sea, though. As of that moment, the Eighth Mountain, the Seventh Mountain, the Sixth Mountain… all the way to the First Mountain, as well as all of their respective Seas… all trembled.

That trembling caused numerous cultivators’ hearts to thump. In addition, the nine Xuanwu turtles on the tops of the Mountains of the Mountain and Sea Realm all looked up and let out a powerful howl, as if they were bearing witness to something they would fix firmly in mind!

The matter pertaining to the Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm was still on the minds of numerous entities in the Mountain and Sea Realm. Therefore, what was happening now caused all of those people to gasp.

Simultaneously, the entire Ninth Sea roared, as if the will of the sea were enraged by what Meng Hao had just said. The members of the Demonic Cultivator Horde were all born in the Ninth Sea, and were essentially its children. If Meng Hao were some ordinary cultivator, then his words wouldn’t have mattered, and would not have caused such a stir.

However… he was not some ordinary cultivator!

He was the future Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm! He was a member of the League of Demon Sealers! Although few people knew who he was, the Mountain and Sea Realm itself knew. The Nine Mountains knew, as did the Nine Seas!

Of course, though they knew of these matters, until Meng Hao formally became the Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm, there would be no direct connection between all of them. The only things in place were rules preventing them from interfering with him.

But now that Meng Hao had uttered his vow, the Ninth Sea seethed. It was completely shaken, and yet in the end… it chose to maintain silence.

Meng Hao sped through the air in a beam of light, splitting the Ninth Sea apart as he flew. At the same time, his aura caused countless sea beasts to charge in his direction with murderous intent.

As they neared, killing intent flickered in Meng Hao's eyes.

He waved his hand, causing the Essence of Divine Flame to appear. Expression icy, he coldly said, "Detonate!"

One word caused the Essence of Divine Flame to erupt. A massive boom could be heard as it transformed into a heavenly fire that rained down in all directions.

Any sea beasts which the fire touched let out miserable shrieks as they were burnt to ash. Some managed to dive down into the water, but a moment later, the flames entered the water, causing the temperature to soar. More screams could be heard, and the corpses of various sea beasts began to rise up from the depths.

Meng Hao didn't slow down at all. As he sped along, the sea around him boiled, and any sea beasts which came near him were instantly scalded to death!

It was an endless slaughter!

The sea began to turn as red as blood!

However, almost in the same moment that Meng Hao left Seajacket Island and began to speed toward the Nine Seas God World, all of a sudden, the surface of the sea up ahead of him rose up to form a massive wall of seawater, blocking his path. Next, three more walls of seawater rose up, two on either side of him, and one behind. He was now blocked from four directions.

The four walls of seawater linked together, forming a huge cage with Meng Hao trapped inside. Even his aura was incapable of escaping.

Meng Hao stopped in place and looked around, then gave a cold harrumph which echoed out in all directions. A moment later, the wall of water in front of him rippled, and a face appeared. Shockingly, it was not the face of a cultivator, but rather, an enormous Sea Dragon.

It was pitch black and matchlessly vicious, and its eyes glittered with cold arrogance as it looked at Meng Hao.

Standing on top of the dragon's head was an old man with his hands clasped behind his back. He wore the long robes of the Nine Seas God World, and his face was a mass of derision as he gazed down at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever. He recognized this old man. He was not an ordinary cultivator, but rather a Demonic cultivator, the same person Meng Hao had fought when he first arrived in the Nine Seas God World. Elder Hai Sheng! 1

"Come looking to die, you old fart?" Meng Hao said, his voice as cold as a winter wind.

"Every dog has its day, Meng Hao," Elder Hai Sheng replied, his voice cracking like thunder and filled with intense, venomous hatred. "I have to admit, the Demonic Cultivator Horde underestimated you. The Seajacket Island plan failed, and the island itself was destroyed. However, with me here… you'll die all the same!

"Don't try to escape my little death trap. It will only open up after someone gets killed. Anyone who tries to force it open, even me, will be hit with a shocking backlash. It's special that way. For the same reason, nobody outside can see what happens in here. Oh, and the natural laws have been changed so that you can't use that teleportation cauldron either!!

"And if you're thinking of trying to get Granny Nine and Ling Yunzi to come save you, well, let's put it this way; the Demonic Cultivator Horde has prepared long and hard to kill you. Granny Nine and Ling Yunzi are currently being delayed by the Demonic Cultivator Horde Patriarchs!

“Nobody will be coming here to interfere or to save you!

“Today, you absolutely, positively WILL die!” Elder Hai Sheng stared at Meng Hao, intense killing intent flickering in his eyes as he waited to see how Meng Hao would react to his words. Specifically, he was waiting for a look of despair. He didn’t just want to kill Meng Hao, he wanted to see him absolutely hopeless and terrified, whereupon he would torture him to death.

That was the only way to ease the hatred in his heart!

“Today is the day you will receive retribution for slaughtering the members of the Demonic Cultivator Horde from Planet South Heaven’s Milky Way Sea!” growled Elder Hai Sheng through gritted teeth. “I sent my only descendant to Planet South Heaven in the hopes that he would be able to acquire Immortal destiny and achieve true Immortal Ascension!

“But you, you killed him, Meng Hao, damn you! Before his mind awoke, you killed him!

“Not only did you sever his hope of true Immortal Ascension, you also severed my bloodline!” His words echoed out, causing the walls of seawater to vibrate.

“Look, you big windbag,” Meng Hao said coolly, “I’ve killed lots of people. You think I remember which one you’re talking about?” He casually took out the Lightning Cauldron and gave it a try, but sure enough, it didn’t work.

His words sent Elder Hai Sheng’s rage into the sky. Bellowing, he waved his hand, causing the Sea Dragon to roar and charge toward Meng Hao, mouth gaping. In the blink of an eye, the pitch-black Sea Dragon was bearing down on Meng Hao, preparing to consume him.

Meng Hao’s eyes glinted coldly, and he performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, then waved his finger. Instantly, everything began to tremble as hundreds of thousands of mountains began to descend. They formed together into a tens of thousands of mountain chains, which then merged together to form ten enormous mountains that smashed toward the Sea Dragon.

The Sea Dragon roared as it slammed into the ten gigantic mountains, then swept its tail in an attack on Meng Hao.

Whistling sounds filled the air. Meng Hao’s lips turned up into a cold smile as he extended his right hand and grabbed the Sea Dragon’s tail. Then he jerked his hand violently.

The Sea Dragon roared in surprise and pain as a massive force surged out from Meng Hao’s arm.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

A huge boom could be heard as the power of the Nine Heavens Destruction was unleashed. Nine successive attacks were unleashed, the last of which caused the Sea Dragon to literally explode to pieces in midair.

Meng Hao then looked over at Elder Hai Sheng and murmured, “If I absorb you, then I can give Chu Yuyan a bit more life force, and a bit more time!”

Then, he turned into a murderous arrow that shot directly toward Elder Hai Sheng’s heart!

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# Chapter 1067: Deadly Catastrophe!

Elder Hai Sheng’s mind trembled. Although he had found out about the failure of the Seajacket Island plan, had watched the life force slips of the other cultivators shatter, and knew that Meng Hao was probably stronger than they had anticipated, he hadn’t been aware of the particulars.

Now that he saw his personally cultivated Dharma Dragon shattered by Meng Hao, his eyes glittered and, unexpectedly, he smiled.

“Now this is interesting,” he said. “I didn’t think I would have to use this, but it looks like my extra preparations will pay off!” He waved his right hand, causing a jade slip to fly out from his palm. It instantly shattered, causing a black mist to stream out that formed into a black-colored head. The head belonged to an old man, an old man that was clearly not Elder Hai Sheng.

It was a strange-looking head that emanated a shocking aura. It instantly began to speed towards Elder Hai Sheng, mouth gaping as if it wanted to consume him. However, as soon as it touched Elder Hai Sheng, it fused into him. Elder Hai Sheng’s expression turned vicious; blue veins popped out on his forehead, and his facial features began to change. Suddenly, a second face appeared, overlapped with his original face!

He laughed cruelly, and looked even more bizarre than before as he strode forward. The instant he began to advance, his Ancient Realm cultivation base rocketed up, and, astonishingly… nine extinguished Soul Lamps appeared!

Meng Hao’s eyes widened. He remembered that the last time he fought Elder Hai Sheng, the man had five extinguished Soul Lamps. Now, after superimposing with that black-colored face, it was like he was a different person. He now had a stage 9 Ancient Realm cultivation base. It was as if he had survived through extinguishing nine Soul Lamps, placing him at the peak of the mid Ancient Realm!

As his cultivation base rocketed up to stunning effect, everything in the area shook. He took a second step, and he was directly in front of Meng Hao. His hand instantly shot forward toward Meng Hao’s neck.

The speed was indescribable. He moved so fast that afterimages were left in his previous position. Furthermore, the movement of his hand seemed to contain the power of natural law, as if some of the power of the Ninth Sea had converged in his hand, becoming a personal Daoist magic.

Meng Hao’s eyes were wide. After seeing the black-colored face, and the incredibly powerful cultivation base, he could tell that Elder Hai Sheng was far stronger than him. Despite being in the Immortal Emperor Realm, he still felt a sensation of deadly crisis. If an opponent like this managed to seize the upper hand in the fight, it would be very difficult for Meng Hao to reverse the situation!

The only way to win… was to seize the initiative, and keep it the entire time! That was the lone chance of securing victory!

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with killing intent and the desire to do battle! From the moment he had begun to practice cultivation until now, this was the most powerful opponent he had ever faced!

Fighting someone like this was sure to be a huge challenge for him, and would require absolute focus!

“Now I really feel like fighting!” Eyes flickering, he didn’t back up. Instead, even as Elder Hai Sheng’s hand shot out, Meng Hao shoved his own hand forward. As he did, he unleashed his own secret magic, merging his 123 Immortal meridians into a divine ability.

True Immortal fleshly body!

His palm closed into a fist, and he flew above Elder Hai Sheng.

Although he couldn’t seize control of the battle in terms of cultivation base, at the very least, he could seek to occupy the high ground. If he wasn’t able to gain that advantage in this first exchange, it would be difficult to recover from.

“My true form is a Sea Dragon!” Elder Hai Sheng laughed coldly. “The heads of dragons are magically cultivated to be their strongest points! Are you TRYING to get yourself killed!?” He could tell what Meng Hao was trying to do, but considering the level of cultivation base involved, he paid no heed. He raised his right hand, and his momentum did not stop, but grew even more powerful!

“Digging your own grave!” he said with a cold smile, then reached out with a clutching motion.

At the same time, Meng Hao’s momentum was also building. As his fist closed in on Elder Hai Sheng, it gave rise to a massive tempest, the center of which was a powerful vortex. The vortex slammed into Elder Hai Sheng’s hand, causing a deafening boom.

The tempest collapsed and the vortex fell to pieces. Cracking sounds echoed out from within Meng Hao, like breaking bones. Blood oozed out of his mouth, and he was sent staggering backward, clearly seriously injured. However, his Eternal stratum immediately spun into action.

Elder Hai Sheng stopped in place, and was actually shoved downward by several meters. However, all he did was let out a cold harrumph and then shoot back toward Meng Hao.

“No wonder the Seajacket Island plan failed…. If I hadn’t prepared well, I might not have been able to kill you. But this is the Ninth Sea, my home ground. I can borrow the power of the Ninth Sea. Even if you get stronger than you are now, you’re still dead!” Face twisted viciously, he closed in on Meng Hao and performed an incantation gesture with his right hand. Instantly, an illusory sea appeared around him, which rumbled toward Meng Hao in attack.

As it neared, a gigantic sea turtle appeared in the middle of it, which roared as it smashed toward Meng Hao.

As Elder Hai Sheng neared, Meng Hao was able to finally determine the difference between the Immortal Emperor Realm and that of a cultivator with nine extinguished Soul Lamps.

That difference was considerable… but not so vast that it left him in despair!

“You’re going to borrow power from the Ninth Sea?” Meng Hao asked coldly. The starstone in his right eye flickered, and as the giant sea turtle bore down on him, he transformed into a planet that shot forward in attack.

When Meng Hao slammed into the sea, his planet-form collapsed, and he reappeared, coughing up blood. However, in almost the same moment, he transformed into a huge golden roc that pierced through the sea and the sea turtle. He was completely soaked in blood, but his energy was even stronger than before. Radiating madness, he appeared directly in front of Elder Hai Sheng, slashing at him with his claws. A huge rumble could be heard as the two of them tumbled backward away from each other.

“You overestimate yourself!” By this point, Elder Hai Sheng was now only about thirty meters away from the surface of the sea, but he didn’t seem to care at all. He waved his hand, instantly causing one of his Soul Lamps to fly out and speed toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao continued to back up, coughing up blood, body withering. At the same time, his Eternal stratum was madly restoring him. Not pausing, he once again went on the offensive. This time, he summoned the Ninth Mountain, along with the sun and the moon, a composite Daoist magic that slammed into the Soul Lamp. The resulting explosion sent shockwaves in all directions. Meng Hao’s body was on the verge of collapse, but thanks to his Eternal stratum, it didn’t phase him at all as he charged downwards again. Next, his Dharma Idol of 33 Heavens appeared, focusing all of his power on another attack against Elder Hai Sheng.

Elder Hai Sheng snorted coldly and waved his hand. Immediately, ripples spread out, transforming into a Ghost Face, which shrieked as it pounced toward Meng Hao. As it neared, Meng Hao took a deep breath and clenched his hand into a fist.

He punched, not with an ordinary punch, but… with the might of body cultivation!

The Life-Extermination Fist!

As the fist sailed through the air, all of the life force in the area seemed to vanish, even Meng Hao’s. Everything seemed cut off, as if this fist contained a will of death, a fist to exterminate all life!

For the first time, Elder Hai Sheng’s expression flickered. However, he didn’t hesitate, extending both hands in front of him. Shockingly, a dragon scale appeared, like a shield, which Meng Hao’s fist slammed into.

A massive boom echoed out, and a huge depression appeared in the surface of the water. Elder Hai Sheng was shoved backward beyond his control, landing him in the water below.

“Life-Extermination Fist,” he gasped. “That was actually the Life-Extermination Fist….

“However, you were probably barely able to use it!” His eyes flashed with coldness, and he was just about to fly back up into the air when Meng Hao suddenly smiled.

His goal this entire time had been to get Elder Hai Sheng into the water!

Getting Elder Hai Sheng into that position was the most deadly tactic he could employ. He only did this because of his inability to use the Lightning Cauldron; were it not for that, he wouldn’t have allowed himself to be so seriously injured in such a short period of time.

If he himself had gone into the water to try to lure Elder Hai Sheng down, or perhaps used some other methods, he might have had some success.

However, all other methods contained certain flaws. That was why had chosen this particular tactic.

It was difficult to pull off, but was the best way to push him downward.

Without his Eternal stratum, Meng Hao would already have collapsed into pieces. Even with it, he was only recovering slowly. Wiping the blood from his mouth, he extended his right hand and waved his finger toward the surface of the water.

“Flame!” he said softly.

When Elder Hai Sheng saw Meng Hao’s expression, his own face fell. At the same time, flames suddenly appeared in the water beneath the enclosed trap of seawater walls. Apparently, flames had been there all along!

It was Divine Flame, the same Divine Flame Meng Hao had used to kill the sea beasts earlier. Essence of Divine Flame!

The Essence of Divine Flame erupted, shooting through the seawater walls to surround Elder Hai Sheng!

The flames rose up in the blink of an eye, turning the water into a sea of flames, a world of fire, a heaven and earth created from the Essence of Divine Flame within which elder Hai Sheng was completely imprisoned.

“Divine Flame! Impossible! I clearly saw this flame outside in the Ninth Sea! Even if it possesses Essence, it still shouldn’t be able to get into my death trap so quickly!!” Elder Hai Sheng’s face instantly filled with disbelief. The Demonic Cultivator Horde had done extensive investigations into Meng Hao in their preparations to kill him. How could they have missed something as powerful as Essence of Divine Flame?!

At the same time, Elder Hai Sheng could sense that this sea of flames could definitely hurt him. Thankfully, the injuries weren’t very serious yet, and if he escaped quickly, the effects would be minimal.

“Piddling Divine Flame. I’m not sure how you managed to pull off this trick. But your threat… is in vain! You can’t use this flame to kill me! How juvenile!” Elder Hai Sheng snorted coldly, and was just about to charge out of the sea of flames toward Meng Hao. Once he did so, Meng Hao’s gambit to trap and kill him would immediately fail.

He had one other option, which was to go downward into the sea, but that would mean he would have to break the sea wall seal, and he would suffer the backlash attack. That was something he wouldn’t do except as a last resort.

“What if you can’t get out?” asked Meng Hao, his voice cold. After absorbing the Paragon’s blood, all of his magical techniques and divine abilities had become more powerful. The Divine Flame was Essence, and because of the Essence power in the Paragon’s blood, the Divine Flame was far more powerful. That was why it had been able to pierce through the sea walls!

Unfortunately, it had only been able to pierce through them, not completely destroy them. That would have taken much longer.

Almost in the same moment that Meng Hao’s voice rang out, Elder Hai Sheng tried to escape from the sea of flames. In response, Meng Hao waved his finger.

“Demon Sealing, Eighth Hex!”

As soon as the Hexing magic was unleashed, Elder Hai Sheng stopped in mid-movement. His face fell as his attempt to escape failed completely. He was surrounded by flames, causing him to rage inwardly.

Meng Hao paid a bit of a price to unleash the Eighth Hex, causing blood to ooze out of his mouth. However, he ignored the injury and waved his right hand again to unleash a variety of magical techniques and divine abilities on Elder Hai Sheng.

Risking serious injury to himself, he shoved Elder Hai Sheng deeper into the sea of flames.

Elder Hai Sheng trembled, and was just about to recover from the Eighth Hex when Meng Hao waved his finger and unleashed it again.

This happened over and over, causing Elder Hai Sheng to roar inwardly. He was incapable of escaping, and was stuck in the sea of flames. His skin began to split, and his body began to wither. Gradually, he was beginning to sense a feeling of intense crisis, as well as incredible shock. In the next moment in which he recovered, before Meng Hao could unleash more restrictive Hexes, he bit the tip of his tongue and spat out some blood, which turned into a Blood Dragon that charged toward Meng Hao. Simultaneously, Elder Hai Sheng attempted to make another break for freedom.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered and he took a deep breath. Once again, he unleashed the Life-Extermination Fist. His body trembled, and blood sprayed out of his mouth. The fist strike instantly shattered any hopes Elder Hai Sheng had of extricating himself. The Blood Dragon was shattered, and the power of the strike slammed into Elder Hai Sheng, whereupon Meng Hao once again utilized the Eighth Hex.

BOOM!

A ferocious expression could be seen on Meng Hao’s face. He once again launched an attack, waving his hand. Even as Elder Hai Sheng recovered, Meng Hao performed an incantation gesture and summoned the Paragon Bridge. It rumbled down viciously toward Elder Hai Sheng.

“Damn you, Meng Hao!!” Elder Hai Sheng roared. He tried again to free himself but failed. The injuries caused by the sea of flames continued to intensify. All protective magical items that he used were useless. No matter what he did, he failed. Meanwhile, his skin was splitting more dramatically, and he was withering up.

What filled him with even more fear was the thought of, after being stuck within the sea of flames for too long, the Divine Flame boring into his body and burning up his internal organs!

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# Chapter 1068: Who Dares to Save Him!?

Popping sounds echoed out in all directions from within the region of scorching flames as intense pain wracked Elder Hai Sheng. Soon, his internal organs began to burn, intensifying both the pain and the sensation of crisis!

The shadow of death loomed over him, and he could sense that if this went on much longer, he… would die!

He was surrounded by a sea of flames that was rapidly burning him to ash!

He had never even considered the possibility that he might lose this battle, or that he might actually die. He hadn't arrogantly assumed that he could win with only five extinguished Soul Lamps. Instead, he had immediately attacked with his trump card, a Soul Jade given to him by a late Ancient Realm expert from the Demonic Cultivator Horde.

The fact that he was still in a state of critical danger, even after his cultivation base had risen to the level of nine extinguished Soul Lamps… caused Elder Hai Sheng's heart to tremble.

"Just what good fortune has this guy come across to become so powerful? Most importantly, it's not just a matter of raw power; he's vicious and merciless, plus extremely conniving!" As Elder Hai Sheng looked at Meng Hao, he felt an intense dread and terror rising up in him.

Meng Hao was an important person in the sect, so the Demonic Cultivator Horde had gone to great lengths to ensure that no one of the Dao Realm would be able to interfere. Furthermore, even peak Ancient realm cultivators were obstructed. Because of that, only two of the Demonic Cultivator Horde Elders had been sent out as part of the plan. That was their limit.

That was more than enough power to slaughter an Immortal Realm cultivator. Furthermore, Elder Hai Sheng had the Soul Jade as his trump card. To the Demonic Cultivator Horde, the power of nine extinguished Soul Lamps that he wielded was more than enough to clinch a victory. They assumed that nothing unexpected would happen that could upset the balance.

However, they… still underestimated Meng Hao!

Booms rang out. Meng Hao’s eyes were bloodshot as he levied shocking attacks against Elder Hai Sheng, over and over again. Elder Hai Sheng couldn’t escape, and was forced to remain within the sea of flames, growing closer and closer to death.

Every time he used the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex, Meng Hao had to pay a heavy price, and blood oozed out of his mouth. And yet, he attacked relentlessly and without stop. However viciously he treated others, he treated himself more viciously. That was the trump card he could use to secure victory against a more powerful opponent!

“Dammit!!” Elder Hai Sheng’s skin was on fire, and he was wracked with intense pain. He was almost on the verge of going mad, and the black-colored face superimposed over his own was beginning to flicker. Looking completely bizarre, he quickly performed a double-handed incantation gesture. When he looked up, the pitch black face let out a soundless roar. Elder Hai Sheng breathed in, raised both of his hands up, then shoved them out toward Meng Hao.

“Meng Hao… DIE!”

As his hands rose up, black mist poured out of his body, spreading out to fill the entire area with a sea of black fog.

Suddenly, Elder Hai Sheng was replaced by a gigantic heart. The heart was pitch black, and radiated wickedness and mystery. Furthermore, an archaic aura erupted out from it.

In unison with the aura's eruption, cracking booms as loud as thunder could be heard coming from the heart.

Ba-bump.

Ba-bump!

BA-BUMP!

The echoing sound caused Meng Hao's face to flicker. Every movement of the bizarre heart caused the sound to echo out, along with a massive power that slammed down onto Meng Hao like a mountain!

At the same time, Meng Hao's own heart was stabbed with pain. Every beat of the bizarre pitch-black heart caused strange power to stab against him like invisible blades!

Meng Hao's heart felt like it was about to be ripped in two!

His cultivation base, his body, everything felt stabbing pain. Blood spurted out as the black heart hung there in midair, battering against the sea of flames.

This bizarre magical technique caused Meng Hao to begin to pant anxiously. His face was pale white, and his heart felt like it was about to burst out of his chest. He gritted his teeth and raised his hand, ignoring the intense pain.

When he waved his hand… eleven black pods flew out.

"Magical Pod Soldiers!" he cried. Popping sounds could be heard as the eleven black pods immediately transformed into eleven black imps. They were eyeless, with vicious, gaping mouths. Piercing screams could be heard as they rushed toward the black heart.

Elder Hai Sheng was instantly shocked by what was happening. Not only was Meng Hao using a new divine ability, it was a divine ability that he had never even heard of before, turning tiny black pods into soldiers. The Demonic Cultivator Horde's investigation hadn't mentioned anything about this.

Even more shocking to Elder Hai Sheng was that, as the blackpod imps charged, their screams merged together into a shocking sound that caused the materialized black heart to begin to tremble. Then, it started fading, and the black fog that covered the sea started to retract.

Most unbelievable of all was that the pitch-black face that had appeared after crushing the jade slip earlier… let out a cry of alarm!

At that point, the blackpod imps descended onto the black-colored heart, merging into it as if to possess it!

"Impossible!" exclaimed Elder Hai Sheng, astonished.

This was the most dangerous thing about the blackpod imps; as soon as they appeared, the first thing they did was select a target to possess. It was only because of Meng Hao's Life Death Hexing that he had been able to subjugate them. Furthermore, he had brought them under control one at a time. If all eleven had come at him simultaneously, he would have a hard time getting away.

The black heart was shaking in struggle, and the black mist was roiling backward. In the blink of an eye, massive rumbling could be heard as the heart shattered. Elder Hai Sheng once again appeared in the open, letting out a miserable shriek which echoed out in all directions.

No blackpod imps were visible on his person. All eleven were inside of him, causing the pitch black face superimposed over his own to twist as if it were struggling.

"What are these things!?" he said, voice trembling with fear. Suddenly, his cultivation base changed, slowly reverting from nine extinguished soul lamps, back to its original state of five.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with killing intent as he took advantage of the situation to close in. His right hand waved, materializing a divine ability, shoving Elder Hai Sheng back down into the sea of flames.

His unstable cultivation base made it difficult for Elder Hai Sheng to fight back against the power of the sea of flames. Also, because of the huge change to his cultivation base, flames wreathed his body, and his organs burned even more quickly.

“SCREWWWWW OOOOOOFFFFFFFFFFF!” Elder Hai Sheng roared madly. The sensation of imminent death was intense, and as he roared, his body grew larger. The scale on his forehead instantly spread out to cover him, and his two horns grew longer. In only a few breaths’ worth of time, he had transformed into a Sea Dragon!

He was now a huge, 300-meter long Sea Dragon!

This was his true form!

He was a pitch-black Sea Dragon, and as soon as he appeared, he threw his head back and howled, using some unknown technique to cause his whole body to distort. Popping sounds could be heard as the blackpod imps were suddenly ejected out of him.

However… as his body grew larger, he became more exposed, and flames covered him, burning him. In the blink of an eye, many of his scales were melted, revealing bones underneath.

“Meng Hao, I’m gonna EAT YOU!!” he roared. Enraged, his body twisted and his huge head shot madly toward Meng Hao. His eyes were crimson, and a foul wind blasted out as he opened his mouth wide to consume Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever. His face was a bit pale, but as the dragon closed in on him, he took a deep breath, then clenched his fist… and punched!

One punch. Not the Life-Exterminating Fist, but rather… the Self-Immolation Fist!

A Devilish aura covered over all other auras as the punch shot forward. This was a punch that was willing to pay any price to succeed, as if this fist strike could put one on the path to being a Devil!

Colors flashed in the sky and the wind screamed. The sea walls of the death trap trembled. The attacking Sea Dragon shrank back, letting out a defiant roar as the punch landed!

BOOOOMMMMMM!

A massive, ear-splitting boom rang out. Sea Dragon Elder Hai Sheng let out a bloodcurdling scream. He ceased attacking and attempted to dive back down into the sea of flames. Meng Hao coughed up eight consecutive mouthfuls of blood, and his vision swam. He then bit down viciously on his tongue, forcing himself to regain clarity.

Terror shone in the Sea Dragon's eyes as he sank down into the sea of flames. He made no further attempts to flee, but instead sped downward toward the death trap sea wall located under water. Shockingly, he was willing to be hit with the backlash that would result from trying to break out.

Elder Hai Sheng had to escape, otherwise he would die!!

Rumbling sounds could be heard as Sea Dragon Elder Hai Sheng went mad. He battered the wall nine times before a huge hole appeared. His Sea Dragon body trembled as a massive backlash force slammed into him.

He was instantly covered in lacerations. Scales flew off in all directions, and his flesh was mangled. The backlash was intense, even leaving Meng Hao shocked.

In the blink of an eye, the Sea Dragon body was on the verge of shattering into pieces. Elder Hai Sheng let out a huge roar, and massive quantities of black mist began to pour out of him, which bore the brunt of the backlash.

That was the power of the Soul Jade. After a moment, the backlash power faded away, and Elder Hai Sheng forced his way out into the Ninth Sea.

His Sea Dragon form was severely injured, and he was about to lose consciousness. He used all of the power he could muster to swim out into the Ninth Sea.

“Mother Ninth Sea, save me!!” he implored as he sped along. He had been born in the Ninth Sea, and grown up there, so to him, the Ninth Sea was his mother!

Almost as soon as his voice rang out, nourishing power from the Ninth Sea poured into his body, healing and restoring him.

Meng Hao was not too far behind him, eyes flickering with killing intent. When he saw the Sea Dragon’s body recovering, his gaze turned as sharp as daggers, and he let out a vicious cry:

“Ninth Sea, if you dare to save him, then I guarantee, when I achieve the Dao, the Ninth Mountain will have NO SEA!”

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# Chapter 1069: The Ninth Sea is Enraged!

“What a joke!” said Elder Hai Sheng’s true form, the huge Sea Dragon. It began to laugh uproariously as it recovered.

“The Ninth Sea is the Mother of the entire Demonic Cultivator Horde! You couldn’t cause even a tiny portion of it to tremble. It’s so incredible that not even Ji Tian would dare to say something as crazy as that.

“And you, a petty, insignificant cultivator, actually dare to threaten Mother Ninth Sea?

“When you achieve your Dao, the Ninth Mountain will have NO SEA?

“How arrogant! How ignorant! Who gave you the gall to say things like that!?” Sea Dragon Elder Hai Sheng laughed scornfully, as if he had just heard the most ridiculous joke in the world.

However, almost in the exact same moment that his voice rang out, the Ninth Sea suddenly began to churn. The sound of crashing waves rose up into the starry sky!

That instantly caused Elder Hai Sheng to stare in shock.

Meng Hao was not an ordinary cultivator. Although he might seem weak to many people, the truth was… to the Nine Mountains and the Nine Seas, Meng Hao… was the future Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

From the moment he formally became a member of the League of Demon Sealers, and absorbed the drop of Paragon Nine Seals’ blood, it ensured that when he achieved the Dao, he would become the Mountain and Sea Lord!

A status and position like that meant that whatever he said… could cause Heaven and Earth to shake, the Nine Mountains to tremble, and the Nine Seas to quaver!

The Ninth Sea was suddenly silent.

Suddenly, the massive restorative power pouring into Sea Dragon Elder Hai Sheng abruptly stopped. He trembled violently, and his eyes went wide with disbelief and profound astonishment.

Born and raised in the Ninth Sea, he had risen from being a sea beast into a Demonic cultivator, and could be considered a cherished child of the Ninth Sea. In fact, any Demonic cultivator could be called a child of the Ninth Sea!

When a cherished child of the Ninth Sea was injured, the Ninth Sea could send it restorative power. That was something all Demonic cultivators knew about, and was also why they considered the Ninth Sea to be their mother!

That was also why the Demonic Cultivator Horde could occupy such a prominent position within the Nine Seas God World. They were different from the ordinary cultivators. And right now… Mother Ninth Sea heard Meng Hao's threat, and… ceased healing the Sea Dragon.

The profound meaning of such an action was mind-numbing, even suffocating, and revealed something that was shocking to the extreme.

"This is impossible….

"Who is he? Is this happening because he's a member of the Echelon? It must be because of that! That's why Mother Ninth Sea is forsaking me!" Elder Hai Sheng shivered as he came to his own conclusion on the matter. However, he was still not sure, and couldn't quite admit that such an answer was correct, or even made sense.

Without the restorative powers provided by the Ninth Sea, Elder Hai Sheng's Sea Dragon body ceased to recover. Blood flowed out, and his dilapidated form continued to flee in despair.

Meng Hao pursued, drawing closer and closer. Although he was also injured, his Eternal stratum was continuing to restore him, and gradually, his body was returning to its normal state!

His eyes flickered with killing intent, and he waved a finger to unleash the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex. Elder Hai Sheng’s Sea Dragon body trembled, and he lurched to a stop.

In that moment, Meng Hao closed in. To him, the Ancient Realm power of five extinguished Soul Lamps was definitely something he could contend with, considering he was in the Immortal Emperor Realm.

He extended his right hand, and his palm turned bright red. Suddenly, it didn’t look like a palm, but a Blood Demon head, whose gaping maw lunged at the Sea Dragon.

“Mother, save me!!” cried Elder Hai Shen, a sensation of imminent doom sweeping through his mind. He let out a miserable shriek as Meng Hao’s Blood Demon Grand Magic descended. It was in this moment that, all of a sudden, the Ninth Sea filled with a gale force wind, and huge waves kicked up. Once again, a gentle power flowed into the Sea Dragon from all directions.

Sea Dragon-form Hai Sheng, who had been hovering on the brink of death, suddenly felt his life force flourishing. Filled with joy at the power pouring into him, he shot off toward the horizon.

Meng Hao’s next punch struck nothing but air.

Looking up slowly, his eyes were shot with blood as he cried: “NINTH SEA!”

The sound echoed out in all directions, causing the sea water to seethe violently.

Jubilant laughter rang out from the Sea Dragon’s mouth. Not only had he not perished, his body was rapidly recovering. Mother Ninth Sea had not abandoned him!

“The Echelon is NOTHING. You can’t kill me this time, Meng Hao, and there’s nothing you can do about it!!

“You can only watch as I go back to the sect. You just wait, Meng Hao… I swear that not only will I kill you, I’ll also kill all of your friends!

“I know about that Elder Brother of yours named Chen Fan, and your Junior Brother Li Fugui. Don’t worry, I’ll make sure they die slowly! I guarantee that they will regret ever being born in the Ninth Mountain and Sea!

“And as for your old flame, well, HAHAHA! I know exactly how to deal with the poison, but I’m not going to tell you. That poison can only be expelled by someone in the Dao Realm, and even then, it would be very difficult. Brace yourself, Meng Hao. You’re going to have to watch as she withers away and dies!” Sea Dragon Hai Sheng’s roars of joy at having escaped from the grip of death rang out. Apparently, he was so happy that he forgot the form he was using.

The assistance provided by the Ninth Sea caused a sudden increase of speed that caused him to tumble through the air. Meng Hao smiled, a smile of fury and coldness.

“I want you dead, so you won’t be going anywhere!” The will of the Ninth Sea was vast and boundless; however, because of the laws in place, it couldn’t actually do anything to Meng Hao himself. However, if it was given a choice between Meng Hao and its own child, it would chose the latter!

To the Ninth Sea, although, it was not a situation of being given a choice… it was being directly provoked!

Although it was in awe of Meng Hao’s identity, it did not believe that Meng Hao was currently in a position to be making threats!

The future was open to far too many possibilities.

As the Sea Dragon attempted to make its escape, Meng Hao understood everything. Then, a cold smile gleamed in his eyes, and the killing intent there seethed, not toward the Demonic cultivator… but toward the Ninth Sea!

He waved his hand, causing a Blood Demon head to materialize. In the blink of an eye, it split into 123 separate Blood Demon heads, which swirled around into a blood-colored globe. Then, Meng Hao looked at the fleeing Sea Dragon, and suddenly, the Lightning Cauldron appeared. The cauldron flickered, and Meng Hao vanished.

When he reappeared, he was in the Sea Dragon's former position. Without a moment's hesitation, he lifted his hand, within which appeared a long spear with a sharp bone spearhead, and a haft carved from the World Tree. As soon as the spear appeared, Meng Hao hurled it out in front of him. He imbued the spear with all of his strength, injuring himself in the process, and spitting up blood.

The spear whistled through the air, piercing the water, backed by all of Meng Hao's Immortal Emperor will, and all of his killing intent. It moved with indescribable speed, instantly slashing through the water and tearing it apart!

Almost in the exact moment that the spear flew out, Sea Dragon Elder Hai Sheng appeared where Meng Hao had just been.

There he was, right in the middle of the Blood Demon spell formation that Meng Hao had just set up. Almost as soon as it appeared, the surrounding 123 Blood Demon heads roared and shot toward the Sea Dragon.

Everything happened so quickly that Elder Hai Sheng was stunned. As the Blood Demon heads pounced, and he let out a bloodcurdling scream.

"Mother, save me!!"

As soon as the sound rang out, nourishing power flowed out from the Ninth Sea. However… even as the power fused into the Sea Dragon's body, the long spear arrived, piercing through the air.

The speed was impossible to describe. Elder Hai Sheng’s eyes went wide as the spear slammed into his head and pierced all the way through, causing a fountain of blood to spray out. Too much force backed the blow, and the Sea Dragon’s body was sent spinning. In that same moment, the Blood Demon heads landed on him and began to absorb him madly.

The Sea Dragon should have been dead already, but the restorative power of the Ninth Sea was boundless, and had kept the flame of his life force flickering. As of this moment, however, the Sea Dragon collapsed.

In that moment in which he was passing away into death, Meng Hao arrived. He slammed his hand onto the Sea Dragon’s head, using his Soulsearch magic to rifle through about thirty percent of Hai Sheng’s memories.

By the time that thirty percent was absorbed, Elder Hai Sheng was completely dead!

Simultaneously, a burst of rage rose up from the Ninth Sea, transforming into a massive power that caused everything in the sea to tremble explosively. The power then surged down toward Meng Hao as if to slaughter him.

“How dare you!” he said, snorting. He knew that the Ninth Sea could afford to ignore him and save the Sea Dragon, but it wouldn’t hurt him. After all, he was the likely future Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

As his voice echoed out, the power surging down toward him suddenly stopped in place, blocked by some law. The rage of the Ninth Sea could only slowly dissipate.

The flame of the Sea Dragon’s life force was extinguished. Its soul was shattered into pieces. Only its body remained behind, continuing to receive nourishment from the Ninth Sea. However, even that rapidly faded away. Faced with the onslaught of the 123 Blood Demon heads, it was transformed into ash that sprinkled down onto the surface of the water.

Then, the Blood Demon heads flew back to circulate around Meng Hao, delivering the Sea Dragon's life force to him. Although some of it helped Meng Hao recover, after circulating his cultivation base, he sent most of it into Chu Yuyan inside his bag of holding.

Having done these things, Meng Hao hovered there, looking coldly around at the Ninth Sea. His expression was icy, and he spoke no threatening words before turning and speeding back toward the Nine Seas God World.

However… the will of the Ninth Sea didn't know Meng Hao's personality. When he used words to make threats, it actually left leeway for leniency. When he said nothing… it indicated that there was a difference as incompatible as fire and water.

The matter was set. The day that Meng Hao achieved his Dao, the Mountain and Sea Realm would have him…. and no Ninth Sea. For all eternity!

“Guyiding Tri-Rain, I still have a promise to fulfill. The day that I achieve my Dao, I'll help you to become a sea….

“As of today, I've already picked a good location for you. You might be a bit small at the moment, but I'll help you grow bigger. Now… just wait… for me to achieve my Dao!”

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# Chapter 1070: Slaughtering a Path Through the Sect

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed with determination as he transformed into a beam of light that sped through the water. He had one goal in mind, and that was to reach the Nine Seas God World and find… Long Tianhai!

Of the people who had attacked Meng Hao, the two Demonic cultivator Elders had already been killed. Of the nine Sea Realm Demons, only their highest ranking member was left alive. He was the one who had personally kidnapped Chu Yuyan, which further intensified Meng Hao’s desire to kill him.

“Chu Yuyan has been afflicted with Underworld Dragon Poison, so getting some Sea Dragon heart-blood is vital to treating her!” That was something Meng Hao had gleaned from Elder Hai Sheng’s memories.

It was a poison that required heart-blood from at least ten Sea Dragons to be able to dispel. The higher the cultivation base of said dragons, the more effective the antidote would be. Furthermore, Meng Hao had chosen not to seek out Sea Dragons that had not yet achieved the ability to take human form. His goal… was to get Demonic Cultivators from the Demonic Cultivator Horde.

Another thing that Meng Hao had learned from Elder Hai Sheng’s memories was that Long Tianhai’s true form was that of a Sea Dragon.

He shot back toward the Nine Seas God World at top speed, during which time his cultivation base continued to restore itself, and his wounds were healed. His Eternal stratum worked hard, and after the time it takes an incense stick to burn, he was back at his peak. Soon, a huge land mass appeared up ahead in the water.

It contained mountain ranges and even its own sky. It was… the Nine Seas God World!

Meng Hao's eyes flickered with killing intent as he pushed harder for more speed. He sped forward, nearing the main gate of the sect, and then stepping down onto the land of the Nine Seas God World.

As soon as he entered the sect, he saw three Demonic cultivators, who appeared to be waiting for him. As soon as they saw him, their faces involuntarily fell, revealing shock.

The fact that catching sight of Meng Hao didn't cause them to radiate killing intent, but rather shock, indicated only one thing….

They knew that Meng Hao had been set up to die on the outside!

The three Demonic cultivators' faces fell, and they started to back up. However, even in the moment that their faces flickered with surprise, Meng Hao's eyes flashed with killing intent. Considering that they only had Immortal Realm cultivation bases, to Meng Hao, they were already dead.

Meng Hao had already killed plenty of people on this day, and had experienced plenty of potentially deadly situations. His killing intent was now beyond abundant. He had no intentions of calming the situation down. He wanted people dead, and he wanted a big scene!

He wanted a slaughter of epic proportions, and a scene that caused Heaven and Earth to crumble!

He barrelled forward, waving his hand violently, causing the pressure of the Immortal Emperor to sweep out, along with a tempestuous wind. The three Demonic cultivators' faces flickered, and they tried to flee with all their power. Unfortunately for them, however, they were pinned down by the sweeping pressure.

Miserable shrieks rang out as the wind shredded them to pieces, causing the windstorm to rain blood.

In the moment that the three died, there were eight ordinary cultivators off in the distance who saw what happened. Their faces filled with shock as they saw that the killer was actually Meng Hao. They gasped and exchanged glances.

“That’s Meng Hao!”

“Why is he killing people? Didn’t he and the Demonic Cultivator Horde agree to a ceasefire already?!”

“Something big must have happened. He just killed three Demonic cultivators! There’s no way the Demonic Cultivator Horde will let this stand!!” Although they were shocked, they didn’t make any attempt to interfere with Meng Hao. Were he anyone else, they would have done so, and would also have notified their superiors in the sect. But considering it was Meng Hao, they instantly hesitated.

The tempest swirled, and blood rained out of the sky. As for Meng Hao, he walked out of the bloody storm and headed straight forward… following the tug of the Karma Thread directly toward Long Tianhai’s Immortal’s cave.

It only took a moment for his divine sense to spread out and lock down the position of the Immortal’s cave. Also, he was able to sense… Long Tianhai’s aura.

He transformed into a prismatic streak of light that shot forward like lightning. Any Demonic cultivators that crossed his path were instantly cut down.

It only took a short time for the entire Nine Seas God World to be thrown into an uproar. Numerous cultivators witnessed Meng Hao slaughtering Demonic cultivators, leading to widespread shock.

His feud had escalated to the point where he figured he might as well resolve the issue with killing. Since they looked at him with hatred, he would just kill them without any further considerations!

Booms echoed out, and Meng Hao's killing intent soared. Strangely, however, the strongest Demonic cultivators he met were merely in the Ancient Realm, with two or three extinguished Soul Lamps at that. No one stronger appeared, and in fact, it was mostly Immortal Realm Demonic cultivators who showed their faces.

Meng Hao's eyes flashed, and he didn't hesitate at all. The Demonic cultivators he came across looked at him with resentment and hostility, and he killed them all.

He knew that if he didn't kill them, they would try to kill him as soon as they had a chance!

If it becomes impossible to resolve things with reason, then might makes right!

Meng Hao's path of slaughter was soaked in blood and filled with bloodcurdling screams. He was like a deity of death as he drew ever closer to Long Tianhai in his Immortal's cave!!

From the moment Meng Hao had first caught sight of Long Tianhai outside of the main gate, to the slaughter of Seajacket Island, to the deadly duel with Elder Hai Sheng, to the massacre going on now within the Nine Seas God World…

Only about six hours had passed!

**

Six hours earlier….

Deep within the central mountains of the Nine Seas God World was a mighty mountain peak, atop which sat an ancient temple.

Two statues could be seen at the front of the temple, both of which held huge swords in their hands. From afar, they looked like protectors of the entire God World.

Granny Nine, Godmaster and Ling Yunzi sat cross-legged inside the temple, staring coldly at the four other Dao Realm experts who sat across from them. Two were old men who were radiating their Essence auras, and had scales on their foreheads. They were the Dao Realm Patriarchs from the Demonic Cultivator Horde. As for the other two, one was a man, the other a woman. Both had wry, apologetic smiles on their faces.

“We’re all members of the same sect,” the woman said softly. “We shouldn’t involve ourselves in the matters of the Junior generation. I hope the three of you can understand that. Why don’t we all discuss the Dao to pass the time? We don’t often get opportunities to get together like this.” Smiling, her eyes flickered as she waved her hand, causing a screen to appear in front of them. Depicted on that screen was an image… of Meng Hao emerging from his Immortal’s cave.

Ling Yunzi snorted coldly, but didn’t say anything. He understood that right now, it was not only impossible for the three of them to do anything, all of the Ancient Realm experts in the entire sect had also been prevented from interfering.

That seemed to include not just their side, but also the cultivators from the other factions. Unfortunately… the combined power of the other three factions exceeded that of Ling Yunzi, Granny Nine, and Godmaster. The other factions also controlled slightly more Ancient Realm cultivators than they did.

However, Ling Yunzi wasn’t very worried. He had already secretly warned Meng Hao to return to the sect as soon as he set foot outside, and told him that he would handle any fallout.

However, it was at that point that the screen flickered with an image of Long Tianhai facing off with Meng Hao. Everyone in the temple hall could see as the two of them started talking.

Then they saw Chu Yuyan, and Ling Yunzi’s face flickered. Granny Nine and Godmaster had similar reactions. Granny Nine’s face actually darkened with anger, and she shot to her feet. Immediately, the energy of the other four Dao Realm experts surged.

“Granny Nine, we have an agreement, don’t we?” said one of the Dao Realm Demonic cultivators, an old man with bright red hair. “Could it be that you’re actually going to break your word?

“We Dao Realm experts already promised not to interfere in the vast enmity that exists between Meng Hao and the Demonic Cultivator Horde. Most of the Ancient Realm cultivators have also been locked down. Granny Nine, if you want to start a war, then so be it!”

“Sit tight!” Godmaster said. Granny Nine paused, and then slowly sat back down.

The images continued to play out on the screen. Soon, Meng Hao and Long Tianhai had their scuffle. When Meng Hao’s energy rose up shockingly, various expressions of surprise could be seen on the faces of the Dao Realm experts.

Next was the slaughter of the sea beasts, and the boiling of the Ninth Sea, which caused frowns to appear on the faces of the Demonic cultivators. Then Meng Hao arrived at the island, where he crushed his opponents and cast off the pressure of the Ninth Sea. With nine steps, he slaughtered eight Sea Realm Demons, and drained the other Ancient Realm Demonic cultivator dry.

The island was destroyed in shocking fashion, a scene which caused the Demonic Dao Realm experts’ faces to become even more unsightly. Conversely, Ling Yunzi and Granny Nine breathed sighs of relief.

It was at that point that Elder Hai Sheng’s death trap appeared, and all of a sudden, none of them could see what was happening. Granny Nine’s heart began to pound, and her face flickered. Ling Yunzi couldn’t hold back any longer, and he stood up.

It was at this point that one of the human Dao Realm experts, the man, laughed and moved to intercept him.

“Fellow Daoist Ling Yunzi,” he said. “I’ve experienced some enlightenment recently regarding Time magic. Come, come. Let’s meditate and appreciate it together.” With that, he raised his hand, causing a resplendent beam of light to fly out that flickered with an aura of Time.

“Get the hell out of my way!” said Ling Yunzi, his eyes shining with killing intent.

The man’s face darkened, and he said, “Fellow Daoist Ling Yunzi, have you forgotten our agreement? Besides, are you really going to be so insulting as to refuse to discuss the Dao with me?”

“Sit!” Godmaster said, his eyes shining with profundity.

Ling Yunzi gritted his teeth and slowly sat back down, glaring at the screen. Not much more time passed before the death trap was broken. A Sea Dragon emerged, wailing miserably, followed by a murderous Meng Hao!

Instantly, the faces of the two Demonic Dao Realm cultivators fell. Then they saw Elder Hai Sheng die, and Meng Hao threaten the Ninth Sea.

Finally, Meng Hao sped back, entered the Nine Seas God World, and began to slaughter the Demonic Cultivator Horde!

Instantly, the two Demonic Dao Realm cultivators rose to their feet. But then, Ling Yunzi stood, laughing as he blocked their path.

“We’re all members of the same sect,” he said with smile. “We shouldn’t involve ourselves in the matters of the Junior generation. I hope the three of you can understand that. Why don’t we all discuss the Dao to pass the time? We don’t get opportunities to get together like this very often.”

“Get the hell out of my way!” said the red-haired Demonic cultivator, his voice echoing like thunder. He was just about to charge past, when Ling Yunzi snorted coldly.

“We have an agreement, don’t we?” he said. “Could it be that you’re actually going to break your word?”

The faces of the two Demonic Dao Realm experts flickered.

It was at this point that Godmaster suddenly moved noiselessly to appear next to Ling Yunzi. He looked darkly at the two Demonic Dao Realm experts and coldly said, “Meng Hao is connected by destiny to the Nine Seas God World! You can’t blame me for killing you if you step out of that door!”

Off to the side, the two human Dao Realm experts were just about to walk out when Granny Nine appeared in front of them, smiling.

“Fellow Daoists, I’ve experienced some enlightenment recently regarding water magic. Come, come. Let’s meditate and appreciate it together.” Granny Nine waved her hand, causing a drop of water to fly out. It did not glitter resplendently, and was clearly just ordinary water. Obviously Granny Nine wasn’t interested in even bothering with pretenses.

The two human Dao Realm experts looked extremely irritated, and were about to say something in response when Granny Nine’s eyes suddenly flashed dangerously.

“Have you two forgotten our agreement? Besides, are you really going to be so insulting as to refuse to discuss the Dao with me?”

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# Chapter 1071: Living Shield!

Meng Hao sped through the Nine Seas God World. He didn’t lift a finger against the human cultivators, but he massacred the Demonic cultivators. Although he didn’t necessarily recognize each and every one of them, overall, he knew who they were.

After all, in the short time he had been in the Nine Seas God World, every time he saw Demonic cultivators, they looked back at him with roiling killing intent. To him, it seemed as if the Demonic cultivators would instantly try to kill him if given the chance.

That was actually true. If it wasn’t for Ling Yunzi and the rest of his faction exerting pressure on the Demonic Cultivator Horde, any of its members would try to kill Meng Hao the instant they saw him!

It was a type of enmity that, in truth… could not be deemed as being in the wrong. And as for Meng Hao’s massacre of them in return… that was also impossible to judge as either correct or incorrect.

The crux of the matter was that they had different perspectives. Meng Hao knew that, and as such, he had originally chosen to avoid open conflict, even if they momentarily bared their fangs at him. That was all before they violated the biggest taboo in the world of cultivation.

Furthermore, he had spent most of his time in his Immortal’s cave, and any time he had emerged, he had simply ignored the murderous glares of the Demonic cultivators. He had done nothing to provoke them, and had actually felt a bit sorry about what had caused the whole situation. He even felt a bit irritated that the whole situation was beyond his control.

After all, what had happened back in the Milky Way Sea was fundamentally caused by the Resurrection Lily.

However, holding back had resulted in placing Chu Yuyan at death’s door, and had also put Chen Fan and Fatty in a position to be similarly harmed. That was something Meng Hao could not ignore!

Since he couldn’t ignore it, then decided that he might as well attack with deadly force!

Since he decided to kill… then he would make a shocking display. He would turn the matter into a bloody lesson that would be firmly imprinted on the hearts of the Demonic Cultivator Horde.

Before, he had used words to send a clear message to them: Don’t provoke me!

Now, he would use actions to tell them: Don’t provoke me!

DIE!

He waved his hand, and the long bone-tip spear appeared. With a sweeping motion, he caused a handful of incoming Demonic cultivators to explode into bits. They were killed in body and spirit, transformed into a cloud of blood. The reek of blood began to spread about as Meng Hao slaughtered his way forward like a deity of death!

Numerous human cultivators kept their distance, watching in shock, but doing nothing to interfere or to try to stop Meng Hao.

Currently, no Ancient Realm cultivators with five or more extinguished Soul Lamps were showing their faces in the Nine Seas God World. Virtually all of the Demonic cultivators Meng Hao ran into were in the Immortal Realm. Only a few Ancient Realm opponents appeared, all of whom had only two or three extinguished Soul Lamps.

To Meng Hao, these people were nothing more than… dry weeds to be crushed underfoot!

He waved his hand, causing the Blood Demon Grand Magic to appear. Rumbling could be heard as 123 Blood Demon heads formed. They transformed into a blood-red tempest that spread out in all directions.

Miserable shrieks and cries of astonishment echoed out into the air.

As he proceeded forward, nine beams of golden light suddenly closed in on him. They were all Ancient Realm Demonic cultivators with two or three extinguished Soul Lamps, arranged in a spell formation.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered when he noticed that one of the nine attacking Demonic cultivators was a Sea Dragon. With a cold snort, he waved his finger, causing hundreds of thousands of mountains to rumble down. Everything shook, and a huge wind kicked up as the nine Demonic cultivators were crushed, sending blood spurting out in all directions. Their faces filled with astonishment as Meng Hao suddenly utilized the Star Plucking Magic.

The Sea Dragon Demonic Cultivator suddenly flew through the air to be snatched by Meng Hao, who then clenched his hand viciously, causing the Demonic cultivator to revert to its true form, a roaring 300 meter Sea Dragon. Then, all of the onlookers looked on as Meng Hao efficiently slashed his hand into the Sea Dragon’s chest.

A miserable scream could be heard from the Sea Dragon. Meng Hao’s expression was placid as he shoved his hand deeper in and grabbed onto the Sea Dragon’s heart. Then he clenched his hand down viciously, causing the heart to explode. Heart-blood fused with the Sea Dragon’s soul and life force, transforming into a drop of white blood!

Then Meng Hao pulled his hand back out and put the drop of blood into his bag of holding.

“One down!”

When the crowds saw this happening, and the intense murderous aura that surged up from Meng Hao, the viciousness and coldness caused their minds to spin.

It was at this point that Meng Hao extended his hand to reveal the Lightning Cauldron. Electricity danced as he vanished. Almost in the same moment, a pillar of light slammed down toward the position he had just occupied.

A Demonic cultivator then appeared in that same spot. Before it could even react, it was completely vaporized by the beam of light.

Meng Hao reappeared off in the distance, eyes flickering as he looked around at several hundred Demonic cultivators who had flown together to form a huge spell formation. Shockingly, their combined forms created a 3,000-meter long sea beast, a gigantic sea crab!

The sea crab spell formation looked extremely strange. In addition to its two huge pincers, there were eight Sea Dragons growing out of its illusory carapace. All of them were roaring at Meng Hao, causing beams of magical light to fly out toward him.

Meng Hao blinked nine times in a row, causing his view of the world to change. He could now clearly see that of the more than 1,000 Demonic cultivators that made up the sea crab spell formation, there were eight that made up the nucleus. Those eight were all Sea Dragon cultivators.

“If I add those in, I’ll only be short one Long Tianhai!” Killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes.

The sea crab roared, and two beams of light flew out of its pincers, piercing down into the ground and then erupting out from below his feet.

Meng Hao gave a cold harrumph. He was now fairly close to Long Tianhai’s Immortal’s cave. Eyeing the sea crab for a moment, he suddenly began to switch locations with random Demonic cultivators, causing him to get closer and closer.

As he closed in, his cultivation base surged higher. His goal was to reach the giant sea crab and then strike like lightning, destroying it in one shot.

He picked up speed, and his momentum built up, but just when he was about to reach the sea crab, a bellowing roar could be heard in front of him, and a black beam of light suddenly appeared. It was like a tornado spinning toward him, which then transformed into a burly man. He looked exactly like a cultivator, except that… he had a huge turtle shell on his back! The turtle shell looked crystalline, and glittered resplendently, making the burly man look impressively powerful.

“DIE!” he roared. Surprisingly, the man did not emanate any cultivation base fluctuations. However, when he struck out with his fist, it contained Heaven-shaking, Earth shattering power.

“The Life-Extermination Fist!” thought Meng Hao, his eyes widening as he recognized the fist strike.

“A body cultivator!”

As it turned out, the burly man… was a body cultivator. He was a Demonic cultivator, and yet, he did not cultivate the path to Immortal Ascension. Instead… he pursued fleshly body Immortal Seeking. His name was also on the ninth golden gate stone stele, and although he wasn’t ranked as high as Meng Hao, he was still in the top 10.

At the same time that he attacked with astonishing power, all of a sudden, a huge wave appeared off in the distance, surging toward Meng Hao along with a cold snort which emanated from within.

The voice belonged to a woman, and was filled with power that could split metal and shatter stone. Even more shocking was that the snort itself was filled with an unbelievably powerful divine sense that sent intense pain stabbing into Meng Hao’s brain. His entire body was shaken, and he stopped in place.

The burly Demonic cultivator took advantage of that moment to slam his fist into Meng Hao, who let out a muffled grunt as he fell back seven or eight paces.

However, the burly Demonic cultivator’s face fell, and blood sprayed out of his mouth as he staggered backward a few dozen steps. He was completely astonished to find that his blow had actually ended up injuring himself!

The backlash power that came from Meng Hao caused the burly man’s scalp to go numb.

Meng Hao slowly looked up, eyes cold as he sized up the incoming wave. His eyes were immediately drawn to a woman sitting cross-legged inside of it. She wore a blue dress, and was incredibly beautiful, although cold, with a murderous aura.

Meng Hao was unfamiliar with this woman.

All of a sudden, another cold voice rang out. Fan Dong’er appeared, inky hair swirling around her as she planted herself directly in the path of the wave.

“Sea Daughter Bei Yu, I shall be your opponent this day!”

The woman within the wave was none other than… the Holy Daughter of the Demonic Cultivator Horde, the equally famous… Sea Daughter Bei Yu! [1]

Bei Yu frowned as Fan Dong’er appeared in front of her. The two women faced off in midair for a moment and then began to fight. Meng Hao looked away from them, and as he did, the burly body cultivator up ahead bellowed,

The burly man clenched his fists and declared, “You’re also a body cultivator! Do you have the guts to fight me with no magical techniques? Let’s have a fleshly body duel!!”

In response to the burly body cultivator’s challenge, Meng Hao snorted coldly and began to stride forward, his qi and blood power rocketing up. At the same time, the burly man roared and began to run forward, his own qi and blood surging. As they closed in on each other, a crafty gleam suddenly appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes. Just when they were about to slam into each other, his fist suddenly transformed into an incantation gesture, and the Paragon Bridge appeared to meet the burly man’s Life-Extermination Fist.

At the same time, the burly man’s left hand began to glow with a flickering light, which transformed into a Ghost Face. However, because of Meng Hao’s quick switch to summon the Paragon Bridge and its intense pressure, the Ghost Face gave a shriek and vanished.

That Ghost Face was an attack that could be used to limit the qi and blood of a body cultivator, and was the body cultivator’s trump card. He had never imagined that Meng Hao would actually rely on a magical technique and not his fleshly body!

The Life-Extermination Fist of the old man in the ninth golden gate stone stele could easily rock the Paragon Bridge. However, this Demonic body cultivator was not nearly as qualified. Rumbling could be heard, and blood sprayed out of his mouth. His fist exploded, and he tumbled backward shrieking. At the same time, Meng Hao didn’t slow down for a moment, but rather, shot after him.

“Despicable!” raged the burly man. “You’re a body cultivator, but you don’t have the guts to fight me with body cultivation!?!?”

“You think that I won’t use magical techniques just because you say so, smart-ass? Besides, you tried to pull a fast one too!” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered icily as his right hand shot out and performed an incantation gesture, then transformed into a fist. The fist struck out like lightning toward the man’s chest. In the moment before it struck, it transformed again, this time into a palm, which smashed into the man’s chest and grabbed him. Blood sprayed out of the man’s mouth as Meng Hao then lifted him directly up in front of him.

Shockingly, he was using the burly man as a shield with which to charge the giant sea crab!

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Note from Deathblade: The following note is from Er Gen. P.S. he lives in Mudangjiang prefecture in Heilongjiang province.

Note from Er Gen: I’m so depressed today. My wife and daughter went traveling in Harbin and left me home all alone. What to do…? What a headache! Are there any Fellow Daoists in Mudanjiang who want to go get a bite to eat?

1. Bei Yu’s name in Chinese is bèi yù. Bei means “shell”. Yu means “jade”

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# Chapter 1072: The Disgrace of the Body Cultivation World!

The burly Demonic cultivator was virtually scared witless. After having been captured by Meng Hao, he was somehow rendered completely powerless, and then placed firmly in front of Meng Hao as he charged the gigantic sea crab.

Without even thinking about it, the man began to curse: “Have you no face at all!? You’re the disgrace of the body cultivation world! You’re shameless!!”

Meng Hao ignored him completely, and in fact began to charge forward even faster. The eight Sea Dragons growing out of the sea crab’s back roared as they unleashed countless magical techniques. However, all he had to do in response was wave the burly Demonic cultivator, using him as a shield to block all of the magical techniques.

Miserable shrieks could be heard. The burly man trembled, and his back was already lacerated and bleeding. He stared at Meng Hao, terrified, and continued to curse:

“You’re gonna die a horrible death! Dammit! There’s nobody more shameless than you!!

“Fudge! What did I ever do to you, huh? I declared a fair and open duel with you and then you tried to pull a fast one on me! That wasn’t a magical technique that I used, it was a reminder to you that it’s improper for us body cultivators to use magic!”

It was at that point that Meng Hao shifted the burly Demonic cultivator's position to intercept a beam of light that then slammed into the man's back. He let out a miserable shriek, and a tremor ran through him as blood spurted out from wounds all over his body.

"I beg of you! Release me! I really can't handle this…." the burly man wailed. The fact that this was the first Demonic cultivator he had come across that immediately resorted to begging caused Meng Hao to stare in shock.

"Request denied," Meng Hao replied, shaking his head. He simply wasn't willing to part with such an excellent living shield. Tightening his grip on the burly man, he charged forward. As he closed in on the sea crab, divine abilities and magical techniques glittered in the form of numerous pillars of light that then merged together in a vicious attack.

Instantly, the entire battlefield was filled with the miserable cries of the burly Demonic cultivator. He had never experienced such intolerable pain. The sense of grave crisis that filled him left him convinced that if things kept going on this way, he would be killed.

"Please, I beg you, don't be like this! Look, we're both body cultivators, obviously we're connected by destiny! Let me go, okay!? I guarantee that I'll leave immediately. I promise…." As the body cultivator spoke, his voice grew weaker and weaker. The flame of his life force was clearly growing dim, as if he were about to die.

Meng Hao stared in shock yet again. He was sure that the man couldn't possibly be this weak. Although he might be heading toward death, he was still quite a bit away. In fact, he was far enough away from dying that Meng Hao was fairly certain he would hold out until he could reach the sea crab.

His body flickered as he dodged a magical technique, resulting in him getting slightly closer to the burly Demonic cultivator. Suddenly, the burly man lifted his head up, opened his mouth wide, and chomped out viciously toward Meng Hao's neck.

Meng Hao twisted his hand, and the burly man screamed as Meng Hao twisted his neck to the point of breaking. A loud snapping sound could be heard as the man’s teeth chomped down onto thin air. Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed coldly as he swung the man around to absorb another round of magical techniques, before finally appearing in front of the sea crab. Then, he brandished the burly man like a weapon, using him to physically strike the sea crab.

A boom could be heard, and the sea crab shuddered. The burly Demonic cultivator screamed. In his mind, his body was on the verge of collapsing, and his soul was about to be shattered.

“I can’t handle it!” the man blurted out. “I implore you, I… I can even help you fight! Just give me some medicinal pills to recover, and then I can use my powerful frame to block even more magical techniques for you!”

Even as the words left his mouth, Meng Hao swung him again, slamming him into the sea crab. Boundless light shone off of the crab as countless divine abilities were unleashed. Meng Hao immediately lifted the burly man overhead to block them.

Simultaneously, one of the sea crab’s pincers whistled down in attack. Meng Hao just managed to avoid it, when the other pincer shot toward him.

Before Meng Hao could do anything, the burly body cultivator screamed miserably. He seemed to be more nervous than Meng Hao about everything that was happening.

“NO!!” He quickly bit his tongue and spit out some blood, which transformed into a blood shield that looked very much like the crystalline shell on his back. At the same time, the shell on his back expanded, covering his entire body.

Just as he finished doing these things, Meng Hao finished swinging him around to defend against the second pincer attack, which snapped down onto the burly man.

A boom could be heard, and blood sprayed out of the burly man's mouth. He screamed, but it was weaker than before, almost as if he didn't have the breath to cry out.

"Save me…" he wept, "is there anyone… who can save me…? I… I'm still worth something…."

As soon as he heard the words, Meng Hao realized that they made sense. The burly man hadn't outlived his usefulness. He quickly waved his hand, causing several medicinal pills to fly out and enter the burly man's mouth. As soon as they melted, the man's body quivered.

In that moment in which hope shone in his heart, Meng Hao took a deep breath and then summoned all of the boundless qi and blood power he could summon. A huge wind kicked up as massive power rose up inside of him.

The burly Demonic cultivator started in shock, and then started screaming as Meng Hao lifted him high into the air. Then, Meng Hao used all the power he could muster to fling the burly man viciously toward the sea crab!

"Meng Hao, you Heaven-damned bastard! You're shameless! You're the disgrace of the body cultivation world! You deserve a horrible death!!" The burly man screamed as he turned into a shooting star. The power of his own body combined with Meng Hao's power made him look like a long spear as he shot through the air and slammed into the sea crab.

If that were all there were to it, it probably wouldn't have counted as Meng Hao being very shameless. But next, Meng Hao shot along behind the burly man, hiding behind him as they headed toward the sea crab.

In the blink of an eye, the man was directly in front of the crab's head. Glittering light shone, as if there were a shield in place, and yet it shattered, and the burly man pierced into the sea crab's body.

The spell formation that made up the sea crab shook as if it were destabilizing. Furthermore, Meng Hao followed the man as he stabbed into the sea crab. Electricity crackled around Meng Hao as he began switching places with and slaughtering the Demonic cultivators around him.

Cries of panic rang out from inside the sea crab. In the space of only about ten breaths, booms rang out, and the gigantic sea crab was more than half destroyed. Then, it exploded.

Hundreds of Demonic cultivators flew out, killing intent raging. They didn't retreat, but instead, charged Meng Hao. Meng Hao's eyes flickered coldly, and he gave a cold snort as he waved his hand, causing Blood Demon heads to materialize and start slaughtering the Demonic cultivators.

Booms rang out, and blood rained down out of the sky.

Every time Meng Hao switched positions with the Lightning Cauldron, more Demonic cultivators would die. Their miserable shrieks of death gradually blended together into a cacophony that caused each and every one of the Demonic cultivators to begin trembling, no matter how enraged they were.

The eight Sea Dragon Demonic cultivators were the main targets in this assault. He managed to get his hands on one, then two, then three… He was like a deity of slaughter, and anyone who faced him was smashed as easily as rotting wood.

Finally, his right hand snaked out to latch onto the seventh Sea Dragon. He ripped its chest open and crushed its heart, then turned and looked over at the burly Demonic cultivator.

The man was severely injured, but he looked as maddened as ever. His eyes seemed to lack any fear of death, as if it didn't matter how powerful the opponent he faced was, he would still want to fight. Even if his body was crushed into a pulp, he would still fight!

“Kill him! We Demonic cultivators can be beheaded, and we can give up our lives, but we must kill him!

“Kill him! Brothers, rise up! Kill this man!!”

His enraged roaring rose up above the other shouts echoing out from among the crowds of Demonic cultivators as he ran along. He seemed to be on the verge of attacking Meng Hao, who snorted coldly and prepared to counterattack, but then suddenly gaped.

It was not very often that Meng Hao was shocked into motionlessness on the battlefield. However, as of this moment, he really was dumbfounded, and almost couldn’t believe his eyes as he stared at the burly body cultivator.

The man continued to scream threats about being unafraid of death, and yet… he was actually not charging into battle. Instead, he was backing up…. Although he looked like he was running forward and he cried out loudly to attack, he actually started retreating at top speed….

It was something that, if you didn’t look for closely, you wouldn’t even notice….

A strange expression appeared on Meng Hao’s face. This shameless fellow was a character that, based on Meng Hao’s experiences, was on the same level as the parrot and meat jelly.

He gave a meaningful look to the burly man, then looked away and waved his hand to summon hundreds of thousands of mountains. The sun and moon also appeared, exploding out with massive attacking power, killing anything they touched.

At long last, the Demonic cultivators started to show fear.

It was hard to say which among their trembling number was the first to flee. However, in almost a single moment, all of the Demonic cultivators dispersed in chaotic flight. The burly Demonic cultivator was among them. Although he continued to cry out furiously, he was actually running away faster than anyone else.

The expressions on the faces of the Demonic cultivators were no longer that of hatred, but rather, terror and despair.

“Patriarch, save me!!”

“Where are you, Patriarch! Where are the Ancient Realm Elders!?!?”

“The Demonic Cultivator Horde is facing catastrophe!!!”

“Why!? Why are we being slaughtered inside of our own sect!?!? Oh Patriarch, where are you!?!?”

The voices rang out, filled with grief and sorrow. The Demonic cultivators off in the distance were trembling, and didn’t dare to get any closer. The ground was awash with blood and gore.

It was the blood of Demonic cultivators, representing their souls, and their hopelessness.

Almost as soon as the cries began to ring out, the final Sea Dragon could be seen speeding along among the hundreds of other Demonic cultivators.

“Dammit, this Meng Hao has something against us Sea Dragons!!” The fate of all the other Sea Dragons left him terrified and trembling as he fled. However, Meng Hao quickly teleported to his side, and then reached out. A bloody glow could be seen, and the Sea Dragon cultivator screamed as his body was ripped open. His heart flew out and was crushed by Meng Hao. When the white blood appeared, he packed it away, then turned and looked down toward three mountains which could be seen down below.

“Long Tianhai, are you gonna come out? Or am I gonna have to tear that mountain open to get you!?” When he spoke, his voice echoed like thunder.

The center mountain down below had an Immortal’s cave, within which, Long Tianhai sat trembling, terrified out of his mind.

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# Chapter 1073: Allheaven Immortal!

As Meng Hao's words rang out, he advanced toward the middle mountain peak. In the blink of an eye, he was upon it, and yet, the glittering light of a shield suddenly sprang up to block his way.

Meng Hao's eyes flickered as he clenched his hand into a fist and punched the shield, causing it to ripple.

In that exact moment, Long Tianhai sat in his Immortal's cave, a jade slip clutched in his hand. From the moment Meng Hao had begun to slaughter his way through the sect, he had been transmitting messages into the jade slip.

"Patriarch, where are you!?!?"

Unfortunately, there was no response at all from the jade slip.

Meng Hao was killing Demonic cultivators left and right. He destroyed the sea crab spell formation, causing blood to rain out of the sky, and terrifying the surrounding Demonic cultivators to the point where they wouldn't even get close to him. As for Long Tianhai, he had fallen into a state of despair.

He looked up at Meng Hao outside of his Immortal's cave, and his bloodshot eyes gleamed with madness. Finally, he gritted his teeth and crushed the jade slip.

"Wanna kill me? It's not gonna be that easy!" A flame of madness flickered in Long Tianhai's eyes. He was a cautious person by nature, and was by no means unprepared. During his fight with Meng Hao outside of the sect's gate, he had sensed how terrifying Meng Hao was, and had instantly begun to make last-minute preparations, just in case.

However, Meng Hao had shown up too soon. Everything happened in a matter of hours, which was too short of a time to complete all of his preparations. As of now, he would just have to risk using what he had on hand.

“Meng Hao, even if I, Long Tianhai, end up dying, well… I’ll take you out with me!” With that, he extended both hands and pushed them down onto the ground. Immediately, the entire Immortal’s cave shone with brilliant light, which swirled around and covered the entire mountain.

The light spread out from the central mountain to cover the other two mountain peaks as well. Next, the other two mountains began to tremble violently, and then suddenly collapsed. Countless rocks and dirt fell down, and a cloud of dust spread out as two huge Stone Golems emerged.

They roared loudly as they charged toward Meng Hao to block his way.

Astonishing ripples spread out from the enormous Stone Golems; shockingly, they were similar to Ancient Realm cultivators with three extinguished Soul Lamps.

In the blink of an eye, the two gigantic Stone Golems had clenched their hands into fists and punched out toward Meng Hao, causing a huge wind to spring up. Up in midair, Meng Hao let out a cold snort, then performed an incantation gesture, causing a tempest to spring forth from his hand. He waved a finger, and the tempest rapidly grew to a size of 300 meters, and then shot toward the Stone Golems.

When they slammed together, a boom rang out. The windstorm vanished, and the two Stone Golems shuddered and then collapsed, sending countless chunks of rock tumbling to the ground.

However, almost as soon as the Stone Golems collapsed, the rocks flew back up and reshaped into their original form. This time, however, their cultivation bases were not that of three extinguished soul lamps, but rather, five!

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, then he pinched his fingers together in front of him. All of the light in the area surged together in the palm of his hand, where it formed into the shocking image of a sun. The sun floated above his hand, sucking in all the other light within the Nine Seas God World, causing the air around Meng Hao to twist and distort.

His cultivation base rocketed up, and his 123 Immortal meridians merged together. 33 Heavens appeared, and at the same time, a violet moon materialized next to the sun.

The sun and moon began to orbit each other as the Ninth Mountain appeared. The scene was completely dazzling as Meng Hao waved his hand, causing the sun and the moon to slam into each other and explode in a massive attack that swept out in all directions.

Rumbling could be heard, along with cracking sounds from the Stone Golems. Meng Hao strode forward, and the bone-tip spear appeared in his hands. He flung it out violently, causing it to fly through the air in a beam of light. It stabbed through both Stone Golems, causing them to tremble violently and then explode. At the same time, the spear stabbed into the shield surrounding the central mountain.

The shield distorted as if were about to fall apart.

Inside the Immortal’s cave, Long Tianhai coughed up blood, and his body withered slightly. He then let out a miserable shriek as his body transformed into a 300-meter Sea Dragon, pitch black like a Black Dragon!

Especially noteworthy was the shocking white scale that could be seen on his forehead. Apparently, that scale indicated that he had a very high position, even among the Sea Dragon Horde.

He had to pay a heavy price of life force to materialize his true form!

“God World Grand Spell Formation! All plants and vegetation, all mountains and stones, become the spirit of the spell formation! I sacrifice my dragon’s blood to the spell formation! Activate!” Long Tianhai roared as massive amounts of life force drained out of him, and he visibly withered up. However, the collapsed Stone Golems outside of his Immortal’s cave… suddenly formed back together and rose to their feet.

Now… the aura of seven or eight extinguished Soul Lamps erupted out of them.

Meng Hao’s eyes widened. He was aware that Long Tianhai was cautious by nature, but he had never imagined that he would be this well prepared. Obviously, he had set up this spell formation in advance, just in case Meng Hao ended up coming here!

“So, he’s borrowing the power of the Nine Seas God World’s protective grand spell formation…?” He looked down thoughtfully at the two Stone Golems, and could tell that they were somehow linked to the Nine Seas God World.

“However, he can’t sustain them for very long. At the most… the time it takes half an incense stick to burn!” He backed up, and was about to make his way off into the distance, when all of a sudden, his mind trembled.

Ling Yunzi’s voice suddenly spoke into his ear.

“If you want to kill him, you’d better hurry up. We can’t delay them any longer.”

At the same time that the voice spoke into his ear, an enraged roar could be heard that caused everything to shake. The sound of it caused everyone to tremble; this was clearly… the voice of a Dao Realm expert.

The crowd instantly responded.

“The Patriarch!!”

“The Patriarch is coming!!”

Back in the Immortal’s cave, Long Tianhai’s eyes shone with wild joy as he sensed that the voice behind the roar was none other than the Dao Realm Patriarch of the Demonic Cultivator Horde.

It was a critical moment. Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with determination, and he took a deep breath. He could also tell that the roar came from none other than the Demonic Dao Realm Patriarch, who was currently speeding toward this very location. Although Ling Yunzi and the others had been able to delay him, unfortunately… Meng Hao wouldn’t even have the time it takes for half an incense stick to burn to finish the fight.

He thought for a moment, then extended his hand, within which appeared a Nirvana Fruit.

“If that’s how it is, then I have only one option,” he said softly. He hadn’t even resorted to using the Nirvana Fruit in his battle with Elder Hai Sheng. It wasn’t that he didn’t want to use it, rather, the power drain he would experience because of it would render him incapable of fighting after a relatively short period of time.

However, if the Demonic Cultivator Horde’s Dao Realm expert was coming, then that meant that Ling Yunzi and the others would be too. That meant that right now was a good opportunity to use the Nirvana Fruit.

“Exactly how powerful… is an Allheaven Immortal?” He suddenly very much anticipated what was about to happen. Without another moment’s hesitation, he quickly pushed the Nirvana Fruit down onto his forehead.

The first thing he experienced was intense pain. It exploded out into his body, and even though he was tough, he still couldn’t help but throw his head back and howl. It was a hoarse howl that was accompanied by an explosive rise in cultivation base!

Rumbling filled the air, and everything shook. The wind screamed around Meng Hao, sweeping across everything, crushing everything down as a huge pressure began to weigh down on the Nine Seas God World!

Meng Hao trembled, and blood spurted out all over his body. His energy began to shoot upward, past the Immortal Emperor Realm and into another terrifying level.

It didn’t stop, it just kept going higher and higher. He began to grow taller and bigger as both his fleshly body and his cultivation base rapidly grew more powerful!

Considering he didn’t know how long he could maintain this state, he didn’t wait for the growth to complete. He advanced, taking a single step that placed him in front of one of the Stone Golems. The Stone Golem roared and punched toward him, but all Meng Hao did was raise his hand and tap it.

That single finger motion caused a huge boom to echo out as the fist suddenly exploded. A moment later, the Stone Golem shattered into pieces and exploded as well.

There was more to it than that, though. Meng Hao’s simple finger attack seemed to erupt with a unique power that covered over the rubble of the Stone Golem, and… severed its connection to natural law!

The Stone Golem was forcibly scraped out from within the power of the Nine Seas God World spell formation. It was a domineering act that caused the entire protective grand spell formation to tremble, and not even dare to resist.

This was only the first step and a single wave of a finger, but it left everyone flabbergasted. Even the incoming Dao Realm experts were shaken.

Then, Meng Hao took a second step, and tapped a second time. The second Stone Golem collapsed in exactly the same fashion as the first. It didn’t even qualify to transform into rubble; it was shattered into dust! Meng Hao had no need to sever it from natural law, instead… he completely wiped it away from the Nine Seas God World!

Meng Hao hovered there, energy surging, screaming wind causing his hair and robes to whip wildly. It was as if he could stare down the entire world; the domineering air that he exuded only continued to rise.

Next, he stepped forward a third time, which caused the central mountain's shield to shatter, as if it feared him and didn't even dare to try to block his way. Next… even before he completed his third step, the mountain collapsed. Rock fragments flew out in all directions, revealing Long Tianhai there in the Immortal's cave, coughing up blood, body withered, expression that of despair.

"Patriarch, save me!!" he howled with the last dregs of strength that he could scrape from his life force. Long Tianhai's true form was that of a 300-meter Sea Dragon, but he was now so weak that he looked like a bag of bones.

Meng Hao completed his third step and appeared directly in front of Long Tianhai. Meng Hao was currently about thirty meters tall. He looked like an Immortal Divinity as he stretched out his hand… and clasped Long Tianhai's neck.

It didn't matter how Long Tianhai struggled. Meng Hao's vice-like grip was something that could ignore all divine abilities, magical techniques, and even natural laws. When he wanted to grab ahold of something… it would be grabbed ahold of!

"How dare you, Junior!" An enraged roar threatened to shatter the world. It exploded in Meng Hao's ears, causing him to stagger backward. At the same time, the Nirvana Fruit appeared on his forehead, and his cultivation base began to sink back down. Without the slightest hesitation, he sealed Long Tianhai and threw him into his bag of holding. Then, face pale, he reached his hand out to grab the Nirvana Fruit.

He did not pass out like last time. He still had a bit of energy left, allowing him to prop himself up on a nearby rock. He quickly took out some medicinal pills which he began to consume. Then, a bashful expression appeared on his face, and he looked up into the sky.

“Oh, I don’t dare, Senior!”

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1074: Tongue As Sharp As a Sword

“How dare you, Junior!”

“Oh, I don’t dare, Senior!”

This strange interchange of words echoed about in all directions….

Up in midair was an old man wearing a crimson robe, whose hair was just as red as his clothing. There was no scale on his forehead, nor a horn. However, based on his aura, it was clear that among the powerful experts, he was one who could supersede the will of Heaven and Earth, and virtually burst with the aura of a Demonic cultivator.

This was… the Demonic Cultivator Horde’s Dao Realm Patriarch!

His arrival caused all of the nearby Demonic cultivators to tremble inwardly. It was as if they finally had someone to depend on, as if they were children who, after being bullied, saw their parents suddenly show up on the scene. Actually, in terms of seniority, the Dao Realm Patriarch really was like their parent.

However… neither they, nor the Dao Realm Patriarch who swept down furiously and was prepared to snatch up Meng Hao in a single swipe, could ever have imagined that he would respond in such a way.

From the perspective of the Demonic cultivators, it would make the most sense for Meng Hao to respond in an even more unyielding fashion. How could they have ever predicted that he would say what he did just now…?

Meng Hao's voice was soft, even weak, causing strange expressions to appear on the onlookers' faces. Even the ordinary cultivators of the Nine Seas God World were the same.

The only person who had a different reaction was Fan Dong'er, who suddenly stopped fighting with Sea Daughter Bei Yu, and quickly backed up. As soon as she saw the expression on Meng Hao's face, her heart began to prickle, and she remembered how he had the exact same look on his face when they had made their bet earlier.

"Meng Hao, you rogue," she thought, "you definitely have some evil plan up your sleeve." Fan Dong'er was absolutely certain of this.

The descending Dao Realm Patriarch stared in shock for a moment, then continued to wave his hand, which seemed to interfere with natural law, and materialize a gigantic, illusory hand, which snatched toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao did nothing to dodge, and simply allowed the hand to grab toward him. Suddenly, a cold snort rang out from Meng Hao's side. Granny Nine appeared, stepped forward, and tapped the gigantic hand.

No noise could be heard, but two natural laws seemed to have collided, and massive roaring sounds echoed out in the minds of all present.

The huge hand collapsed, and the Demonic Dao Realm expert gave a muffled grunt. Granny Nine's face drained of blood, and she looked up with a cold gleam in her eyes.

"Enough," she said. "Your Demonic Cultivator Horde has raised enough of a racket already. Aren't you finished yet?" Suddenly, she made a grasping motion, causing a dragon-head cane to appear in her hand. She tapped it down onto the ground, and rumbling sounds could be heard as Essence power erupted out, with Granny Nine at the center.

Simultaneously, Ling Yunzi materialized, and Godmaster stepped out of thin air. Another Demonic Dao Realm expert appeared, as did the other two Dao Realm experts, the man and the woman.

The appearance of all these mighty Patriarchs instantly caused the rest of the disciples of the Nine Seas God World to prostrate themselves on hands and knees, hearts pounding.

Meng Hao was the only one who remained standing, leaning up against the stone cliff face.

“We had an agreement,” growled the red-haired Dao Realm Patriarch. “Therefore, regarding the things that happened outside of the sect, my Demonic Cultivator Horde was in the wrong. I’ll provide an explanation about that later. We will also do everything in our power to assist in the opening of the Windswept Realm. We will even accept the burden of all the resources necessary!” The red-haired Demonic Dao Realm expert then turned to look at Meng Hao.

“However, this boy slaughtered disciples of the Demonic Cultivator Horde, and inside the sect at that! There WILL be an accounting for this!”

Granny Nine frowned and sighed inwardly. The inner workings of the Nine Seas God World were very complex, with the different factions struggling for supremacy. Sometimes, the only thing that could be done was to sigh. Currently, her eyes flashed coldly, and she was just about to respond, when Meng Hao popped a handful of medicinal pills into his mouth and then cut her off.

“Hey, now, Senior, did you just say that the person who killed the Demonic cultivators outside the sect was ME? Hey! Why the false accusations? I didn’t kill them! Really! I didn’t. Who saw me do it?” Meng Hao looked very offended as he continued to munch on the medicinal pills, causing his cultivation base to gradually recover. Inwardly, he was smiling coldly. When going all in, sometimes flexibility was necessary. To blindly refuse to be flexible was simply stupid. Meng Hao had his principles, but those principles didn’t apply to his enemies.

His words instantly enraged the prostrated Demonic cultivators.

“I saw it with my own eyes! You killed lots of my fellow sect members!!”

“Dammit! Everyone here could see that it was you!”

The Demonic cultivators appeared to be on the verge of going mad, as if they had never seen someone act this shamefully. Meng Hao cleared his throat and spread his hands innocently.

Sighing, he said, “Even if you saw with your own eyes, that doesn’t mean much. In any case, it wasn’t me who killed them. Maybe the person you saw was simply disguised to look like me? That’s most likely what happened. In any case, you need to stop it with these false accusations!” Meng Hao seemed to be getting angry as he explained matters. Even as he spoke, he continued to pop medicinal pills into his mouth. Off to the side, Granny Nine looked at him with a strange expression, then cleared her throat and prepared to speak.

All of the Dao Realm experts up in midair, including Ling Yunzi and Godmaster, were watching the scene with odd expressions on their faces. As for the red-haired Demonic Dao Realm expert, he was incensed, and before Granny Nine could speak, smiled an icy smile.

“Never before has anyone dared to speak with such insolence to ME!” he said slowly. “You say that you didn’t kill my Demonic cultivators? Well then, let me ask you, whose Immortal’s cave are you in right now? How did you get inside? I personally witnessed you abduct Long Tianhai just now! Could it be that I was hallucinating?” His eyes flickered with killing intent, as he very much wanted to see how Meng Hao would possibly respond to this accusation. If Meng Hao tried to insinuate that he was having hallucinations, then he would quickly discover the consequences of trifling with a Dao Realm expert.

“Oh, THAT,” replied Meng Hao, smiling. He quickly clasped hands and bowed to the Patriarch with a look of extreme sincerity on his face.

“Patriarch, I think we have a bit of a misunderstanding here. Actually, Fellow Daoist Long and I became good friends the instant we met. However, we recently made a bet that had a specific time limit. I just came here today to tell him that I decided to accept the bet!

“Unfortunately, he was in secluded meditation, and I happen to be an impatient person so I let myself in. I kind of damaged his Immortal’s cave in the process. That’s my fault, Senior.” He turned to Granny Nine with an apologetic look and bowed deeply. “Patriarch Granny Nine, I’m willing to pay for all the damages!”

Granny Nine cleared her throat but didn’t say anything in response.

The red-haired old man stared at Meng Hao, and his smile grew even icier.

“If that’s really what happened, then why did you take him captive?!”

“Patriarch, I was worried that he would back out of the bet! But, now that you’re here, I can rest easy. He might try to back out, but the entire Demonic Cultivator Horde won’t back out, right?!”

Inwardly, Meng Hao was chuckling coldly. Just now, the Demonic Patriarch had arrived too quickly, leaving him no time to extract the dragon’s heart, leaving him no other choice than to take Long Tianhai captive. Clearing his throat again, he took out a medicinal pill bottle and poured the contents into his mouth. Everyone looked on with strange expressions.

“Patriarch, if you don’t believe me,” he continued, “you can ask anyone here about the wager between me and Long Tianhai. The bet was about whether or not I could get into the top 100 of the nine golden gate stone steles. If I did, he would represent the Demonic Cultivator Horde to pay me 1,300,000,000 Immortal jades and three Dao weapons!”

Almost immediately, some of the Demonic cultivators in the area who were slow on the uptake began to shout in rage.

“That’s a load of crap! The bet between you and Elder Brother Long was to get into the top 10 of the golden gate stone steles! Also, the stakes were 300,000,000 Immortal jades, not 1,300,000,000, and there weren’t any Dao weapons involved! Also, if you lost, you had to give up your place in the Echelon!!”

In response to this, the red-haired old man's face darkened. He was well aware of the matter of the bet, but he had never imagined that Meng Hao would bring it up.

Because Meng Hao had been in secluded meditation for a month and not given the nine Sea Realm Demons his response, they had spread word about the matter throughout the entire sect.

The red-haired old man stared coldly at Meng Hao. He was irritated at Meng Hao's glib use of the tongue, but he had to admit that in terms of taking advantage of the circumstances, he had never seen anybody do so quite so well as Meng Hao.

He was capable of reducing Meng Hao to a bloody paste at any time, and yet couldn't do so. Meng Hao seemed to be incredibly gifted at using all of the complicated circumstances to tie other people up into knots, even people vastly more powerful than him. Through various means, he checked them in place, ensuring that they couldn't attack.

The old man felt as though he had infinite power that he simply couldn't unleash.

He was unaware, of course, that when Meng Hao entered the cultivation world, he had joined a sect called the Reliance Sect. The theory of that sect was something that Meng Hao had long since imprinted onto his heart.

People should do everything in their power to find someone or something to rely on. Although that wasn't an absolute truth, still… when you were in a situation in which you weren't powerful enough, it made a lot of sense!

"That bet is a personal matter between you and Long Tianhai. If you lose, you have to hand over your Echelon qualifications. Set Long Tianhai free at once!" The red-haired old man seemed to be losing his patience. At this point, Meng Hao's eyes gleamed with a cold light as he stared back at the old man.

"Let's forget Long Tianhai for the moment. Patriarch, Senior, I would like to ask a question of the entire Demonic Cultivator Horde. Are you people even cultivators? Do you know what the biggest taboo among cultivators is?!

“What exactly is your relationship with us cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea? Do you think that as long as someone isn’t a member of the Demonic Cultivator Horde, you can kill them with impunity?!

“You hate me? Fine, no problem. You can make a move on me, and if I die while fighting back, then nobody will think twice. But, let me ask you, Patriarch, and the rest of the Demonic Cultivator Horde, what is the meaning OF THIS!?” He slapped his bag of holding, causing Chu Yuyan to appear in his arms.

Her face was pale white, and she was clearly unconscious and incredibly weak. It was truly a pitiful sight.

“This is a dear friend from my hometown. She joined the Kunlun Society, and is still a disciple there. However, in order to deal with me, your Demonic Cultivator Horde kidnapped her and brought her here. You put her at death’s door and even poisoned her!

“Fellow Daoists of the Nine Seas God World, if your friends or family were tortured in front of your very eyes, used as a threat against you, would you stand for it!?

“What is the biggest taboo for cultivators, the most forbidden thing in the cultivation world? It’s THIS!

“If everyone did things like this, then the world of cultivation would be thrown into chaos! I provoked the Demonic cultivators, and they kidnapped and tried to kill my dear friend! What happens if one of you provokes them? They’ll likely do the same thing, won’t they!? It’s a vicious cycle! Fellow cultivators, which of us could ever stand for such a thing!?” Meng Hao’s words echoed out into the ears of all the surrounding cultivators, who seemed to be profoundly moved.

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# Chapter 1075: The Special Fifth Golden Gate

This was their first time learning about Meng Hao's personal affairs. They all looked at Chu Yuyan and were shaken. Just as Meng Hao had said, if something similar happened to them….

It took only a moment for numerous Nine Seas God World disciples to look coldly at the members of the Demonic Cultivator Horde.

There were even quite a few Demonic cultivators whose faces flickered; clearly this was their first time learning of the matter as well.

Although things like this happened in the cultivation world, it was something that virtually all cultivators detested. Everyone had family and close friends, as well as enemies. If something like this was overlooked once, then it could very well occur again in the future… to them.

"Demonic Cultivator Horde, you owe ME an accounting! Long Tianhai SHALL die. The Echelon will NOT be taken away from me. And even if I lose the bet, you will still have to give me half of the original stakes in Immortal jade!

"That is MY accounting!" With that, Meng Hao stepped backward a few paces, placing him behind Granny Nine. Enough time had passed that his Eternal stratum had now restored his cultivation base almost to its peak.

The red-haired Patriarch had an extremely unsightly expression on his face. He had actually approved of the tactic of using Chu Yuyan. However, according to the original plan, Meng Hao would have died, and then Chu

Yuyan’s usefulness would have ended, and the entire matter would have been easily resolved.

Who could ever have imagined that despite the deadly trap they had laid for Meng Hao, he would be able to reverse the situation?

Everything was dead silent. The cultivators of the Nine Seas God World looked around suspiciously at the Demonic Cultivator Horde, having made their own judgment of the situation based on Meng Hao’s words.

Most of the Demonic Cultivator Horde maintained silence, although there were some of them who derisively refused to admit fault.

It was at this point that Godmaster’s cool voice rang out in all directions: “Let us focus on the most important matters. There is still half a month left to go before the opening of the Windswept Realm.

“Avarice regarding the Echelon was the sowing of Karma. The reaping was everything that happened just now. Fellow Daoists Chi Long and Wu Ling, you may send one additional person into the Windswept Realm upon its opening.

“The matter shall now be dropped. Meng Hao will be allowed to go through with the bet in exactly the way he mentioned. What do the two of you think?” Godmaster looked over at the red-haired old man, and the other Demonic Patriarch.

After a moment of silence, the red-haired old man stared hard at Meng Hao. Meng Hao had already left a deep impression on him, but now, he stared at him as if to affix him permanently in his memory. Finally, he snorted coldly and slowly said, “We’ll do things as you say, Godmaster. However… since the Echelon won’t be part of the stakes, then if the boy gets into the top ten of all nine golden gate stone steles, then the Demonic Cultivator Horde will give him 300,000,000 Immortal jades. But if he fails, then he won’t get a single one!”

He understood that with Granny Nine, Godmaster and Ling Yunzi present, the Demonic Cultivator Horde couldn’t afford to cause any major problems.

In this skirmish, the Demonic Cultivator Horde had been clearly and utterly defeated.

Furthermore, the defeat had caused the Dao Realm experts from the other two factions, the man and the woman, to have a change in their thinking.

The red-haired old man could now only sigh inwardly. As for the Demonic Patriarch surnamed Wu, he slowly nodded his head.

Godmaster looked over at Meng Hao. Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, but he was aware that for the matter to have escalated to this level, meant that things couldn’t be pushed any further. To do so would be counterproductive. Although the rage he felt in his heart would not be so easily dispelled, he still nodded in agreement. However, while everyone was still watching, he pulled Long Tianhai out of his bag of holding.

He gripped him by the neck and squeezed down viciously. Then, his left hand shot out and stabbed into Long Tianhai’s chest. Long Tianhai struggled, and as everyone watched, Meng Hao ripped his Sea Dragon heart out of his body.

The heart was still beating as Meng Hao crushed it, producing a white drop of fluid. The onlookers, both ordinary cultivators and Demonic cultivators alike, stared with trembling hearts.

All of a sudden, they were deeply struck by Meng Hao’s level of ferocity and brutality.

All of them were musing that, unless absolutely no other options remained, they should never provoke Meng Hao. The cultivators felt that way, and so did the Demonic cultivators, who hated Meng Hao more than ever and yet maintained their silence.

As the red-haired old man watched, his face twitched, and a murderous aura swirled around him. However, there was no way for him to vent his fury. He flicked his sleeve, turned, and left. He knew that he if he remained behind, he would eventually lose control of himself.

Meng Hao’s face was extremely calm as he retrieved the other nine drops of Sea Dragon heart-blood from of his bag of holding. He fused them all together into one larger drop, which he placed into Chu Yuyan’s mouth.

Then, he returned her to his bag of holding. Having completed these tasks, he turned and headed toward the golden gate stone steles, eyes flickering coldly.

Although he had killed some Demonic cultivators, that was not sufficient to give vent to the rage he felt in his heart. Perhaps his actions had been sufficient to cow the ordinary Demonic cultivators, but when it came to the Dao Realm experts, if they didn’t taste a bit of pain as well then they might cause him trouble down the line.

As of this moment, his wager with the Demonic Cultivator Horde was like a knife that he could twist into their side. Their Dao Realm experts would definitely feel the pain of losing their wealth!

300,000,000 Immortal jades was a vast sum that would cause anyone to pant with eagerness, even Dao Realm experts. If the Demonic Cultivator Horde lost such a quantity of Immortal jade, it would definitely be a bloody blow to them.

The mere thought of 300,000,000 Immortal jades caused Meng Hao’s heart to pound. Panting, his eyes shone with a bright light.

“I’m gonna go all out! I’ll definitely get into the top 10 of all the golden gate stone steles!” He took a deep breath and pushed faster. Whistling through the air, he quickly neared the location of the closest golden gate stone stele.

It was the fifth stele, and when Meng Hao looked over at the golden light which shone up from it, he could just barely make out a battlefield of epic proportions, filled with endless, eternal slaughter.

“Fifth golden gate stone stele. Trial by fire of slaughter. Also known as the trial by fire of the Dao heart!” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered.

He stepped forward, and in the blink of an eye, vanished into the stone stele. In that same moment, vast numbers of Nine Seas God World cultivators converged in the area. Although it wouldn’t be accurate to say that literally every person in the Nine Seas God World knew about the wager, it wouldn’t be too far from the truth. Besides, Meng Hao’s massacre, and the way he had stood up to the Demonic Cultivator Horde’s Dao Realm Patriarch, had shocked everyone.

When you threw in the astronomical wager, it ensured that it didn’t take long before the fifth golden gate stone stele was surrounded by a crowd of people. Even Granny Nine and her group, as well as the Demonic Patriarch surnamed Wu, were all hovering in midair, watching.

“To get in the top 10 in all of the golden gate stone steles… that would be incredibly difficult!”

“Meng Hao might have gotten to 2nd place in the ninth golden gate stone stele, but the other stone steles are all different. That’s especially true of the first golden gate, which emphasizes pressure!”

Everyone was already discussing the matter. Granny Nine and Ling Yunzi looked at each other, and their eyes glittered for a moment before they focused solely on the fifth stone stele.

The Patriarch from the Demonic Cultivator Horde looked on with a strange gleam in his eyes. “The fifth golden gate stone stele… is unique. A very unusual trial by fire.”

Meanwhile…. Meng Hao appeared within the world of the fifth golden gate stone stele. When he looked around, he saw a bright, beautiful world filled with birdsong and the fragrance of flowers. Spiritual energy swirled about, as if the place were a world for Immortals.

Meng Hao stared for a moment, then looked down at himself. He was wearing an unfamiliar Daoist robe. Furthermore, he was standing amongst a group of people atop a mountain, in a huge public square.

He was surrounded by tens of thousands of cultivators, packed together both on the ground and hovering in midair. A stern and somber air slowly filled the area, causing clouds to obscure the sun.

Up ahead, three figures floated in the air. They were surrounded by radiant golden light, making their features difficult to make out.

An ancient voice echoed out across the square: “Outside clans are invading who wish to destroy our world! Their evil knows no bounds, and they burst with Devilish will! They are fiendish Devils from out among the stars, and in the coming war, you disciples must slay them! The killing will never stop, and yet, there is nowhere for you to retreat to!

“Today, they shall arrive! At the same time… we have discovered that the fiendish Devils have already infiltrated our sect in disguise!” As the voice faded away, the three glowing figures up ahead waved their hands simultaneously.

Immediately, roughly a third of the group of tens of thousands of cultivators suddenly found themselves bathed in bright light. They looked shocked, astonished, as the other cultivators around them began to back up slowly.

Meng Hao noticed that there were two cultivators standing near him who were now bathed in light.

“Patriarch, this…. I’m not a fiendish Devil! I….”

“What’s going on!? Patriarch, I’m a disciple of the sect!”

They were so scared they were trembling, but at the same time, they were angry, as if they were being unjustly accused.

There was only a single response to their pleas.

“Kill them!”

Many among the crowd stood there silently. Although Meng Hao didn’t know any of these people, he did feel a sense of familiarity toward them.

Other cultivators in the area were hesitating, and only a few of them chose to actually attack.

“I’m not a fiendish Devil! I’m a sect disciple!!” Miserable shrieks rang out, as many of the disciples fled, and even more began to weep.

“Elder Brother Zhang, I’m not a fiendish Devil!!”

“Elder Sister, I’m Fan Sheng! I’m your Junior Brother….”

As the slaughter began to unfold, Meng Hao frowned. He still wasn’t sure to make of this trial by fire.

All of a sudden, one of the disciples who was bathed in light, a middle-aged man, threw his head back and laughed loudly.

“I, Chen, am no fiendish Devil! I’m a sect disciple! I don’t mind dying this day to prove that! However, I don’t need anyone to spill my blood for me. If I’m going to die! I’ll die with honor!” With that, he smashed his hand down onto the top of his head. A popping sound could be heard, blood sprayed out, and he was dead.

Everyone looked on silently. Soon more anguished laughter rang out as shockingly, more than half of the accused disciples began to end their own lives.

“If I have to die, I won’t die at the hands of my fellow disciples!”

“I might die today, but before I die, I just have to say… that I am no Devil!” Booms rang out constantly, and corpses toppled to the ground. Soon, things began to grow quiet as all of the disciples who had been accused of being fiendish Devils… were dead.

All of the remaining disciples, regardless of whether or not they had attacked moments ago, looked on with complicated expressions. Then, they turned toward the three figures up front, and couldn’t prevent the suspicion from showing on their faces.

Meng Hao felt shaken. For some reason, this trial by fire seemed very strange.

“This isn’t a trial by fire about slaughter. Nor is it about Dao heart. There… is some other purpose to it!” Meng Hao took a deep breath as he realized that the realism of the things he was seeing had caused him to almost forget who he was, and to completely immerse himself in the feeling of being a disciple of this sect.

He realized this because he was also starting to feel suspicious regarding the three figures up in the front.

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# Chapter 1076: Blind!

Everything was completely and utterly silent. The reek of blood spread out, and the ground was covered in pools of blood…. Dead bodies could be seen everywhere, the corpses of those who had refused be slain by fellow sect disciples, and had instead ended their own lives.

They demonstrated their sincerity by sacrificing their own lives!

Some had fled, but were cut down in the process.

Finally, a sigh could be heard from the mouths of one of the three figures up ahead.

“Elder Brother Li, you are also a fiendish Devil!” Suddenly, two of the three figures joined forces to attack the third. Immediately Essence aura erupted out from all of them.

Shockingly, all three of them were Dao Realm experts.

The third of the group now wore a bitter and complex expression. He offered no explanation, but instead, merely sighed and began to fight. Booms echoed out as he fell back, slowly approaching the crowd of people within which Meng Hao stood.

He looked up at the other two who were attacking him, and sighed again.

“You really think the Devils infiltrated us…? Well, there’s no need for pointless loss. I don’t even have a hundred years of life left anyway, so…

“It doesn’t matter. Regardless of what you people think, if the members of the Junior generation can kill themselves to prove their sincerity, then how could I possibly fear death!?” With that, he glanced back at the crowd of disciples, including Meng Hao, and gave them a meaningful look. It was an expression that said he couldn’t bear to part with them, and at the same time, wished them well. Then he smashed his hand down onto the top of his head.

That strike caused a tremor to run through his body. Boundless Essence aura then erupted out of him.

“I’m willing to die in body and spirit,” he said in his archaic voice. “Let my cultivation base bolster all of the disciples of the sect. Allow them… to fight against the invading enemies! Give them strength!” As he faded away, his aura spread out and merged into the bodies of the disciples.

That included Meng Hao. He felt something warm flowing through him, causing his cultivation base to rise up. In addition, a glowing light rose up around him, almost like some sort of protective shield.

Within that shield, he could feel an archaic will that filled him with regret and kindness.

Everyone stood there, reticent, hearts pounding, their suspicions growing stronger.

“Are there really enemies coming to invade?” That was the question running through all of their minds. Meng Hao couldn’t stop himself from thinking the exact same thing.

The two Dao Realm experts looked at the shields surrounding all of the disciples, and their faces flickered. They exchanged a look, and were about to say something, when all of a sudden rumbling sounds filled the heavens. The clouds collapsed as a huge rift appeared, as if some giant hand were ripping it open. Next, a bloody glow spread out in all directions!

Within the rift, it was possible to see another shocking world. That world was completely red, as if it had experienced countless ages of bloodshed, staining the whole world the same color.

More shocking was that there was a sea visible that was made up entirely of blood.

Even the sky was red. That world instantly left a deep impression on everyone who saw it.

Next, countless figures in long robes whistled through the air out of the rift. Their faces were pale, and their expressions were that of joy. There were even many who were laughing happily as they looked around.

Almost as soon as these people appeared, a voice shouted out in Meng Hao’s ears, and in the ears of all the other cultivators: “Kill them!”

Everyone hesitated for a moment, then flew up into the air toward the cultivators coming out of the rift, and began to slaughter them.

The cultivators from the rift stared in shock, and immediately began to shout out various explanations. However, they could not avoid being cut down.

Meng Hao frowned. For some reason, he got the feeling that these people weren’t invading. In fact, many of them seemed to be smiling amiably.

After a moment of hesitation, he attacked, tapping one of the enemy cultivators on the forehead. The man’s body collapsed; he seemed to be as weak as a mortal. In the moment before he died, he looked at Meng Hao, shocked.

“We have no evil intentions. We’re escaping to this place! Please, let us go….”

Meng Hao frowned and sent his divine sense sweeping out. Instantly, he saw that the people were mostly dodging out of the way and offering explanations. Meng Hao quickly realized that there were even Foundation Establishment cultivators who were only able to make it safely here by means of a teleportation portal.

Furthermore, the strongest among them weren't even attacking. They were just offering anxious explanations, and falling back in retreat. It seemed most of them were actually retreating into the rift, as if to leave this world.

The disciples in the sect army to which Meng Hao belonged began to hesitate. Everyone seemed confused, and even those who were attacking seemed to be forcing themselves. There were only a handful who were resolutely attacking with full viscousness, carrying out mass slaughter.

"Trial by fire of slaughter?" he murmured to himself.

Meng Hao hesitated, falling behind the crowd of attacking cultivators. At that point, a stern, dark voice was transmitted into his ear.

"They're fiendish Devils from out in the starry sky! Why aren't you killing them!?" The voice echoed like claps of thunder. One of the two Dao Realm Patriarchs appeared next to Meng Hao and stared at him solemnly.

"When you look at them, they seem kind and good. That's what you think, but if you trust in the sect, you'll kill them! If you don't have faith in the sect, then what is the purpose of coming to this trial by fire? If you won't slaughter for the sect, then get the hell out of here!" The man waved his sleeve, causing a massive power of expulsion to rise up around Meng Hao. It was as if the entire world was about to reject him and eject him out forcibly!

Just in the moment in which Meng Hao was about to be expelled out of the world, the cultivators in the rift suddenly stopped evading. Their kind smiles twisted viciously, and their multi-colored Daoist robes turned as red as blood!

Terrifying auras exploded out from them, and their smiles grew even more ferocious. They now looked completely and utterly different from before. Rumbling could be heard as leathery, blood-colored wings sprouted out of their backs. Now, they truly looked like evil Devils.

"Someone in this world actually knew about our plan…. What a bore! These must be surviving cultivators from one of the other worlds we destroyed!”

“Who cares? Although things might not be as fun, at least… we can still eat them all! That feeling of contentment can make up for some of the lost fun.”

“What a pity, they saw through our plan.” Sinister howls could be heard coming from the mouths of the Devilish cultivators. The ones who had died just now rose back to life and began to attack, causing a brutally evil air to erupt out.

The blood-colored world inside the rift suddenly erupted with blood-red light. Shockingly, countless souls appeared, screaming miserable screams. They seemed endless, and were apparently the souls of the people butchered by the blood-red cultivators.

What caused Meng Hao’s eyes to widen even more, and what filled the hearts of the hesitating disciples with complete shock, was that… the blood on the battlefield began to congeal together… and transform into more vicious figures.

Shockingly… they were the disciples the sect had identified earlier as being fiendish Devils! Even the ones who had ended their own lives began to rise to their feet, vicious smiles plastered on their faces.

“What a bunch of morons! How boring!”

“We just started having fun and it’s already over! How sad. I never thought that they would realize we were traitors!”

As they rose to their feet, the countless droplets of blood that constituted the remains of the Dao Realm cultivator formed back together. His mouth twisted into a taunting smile, and an intensely powerful aura rose up from him.

“Erupt,” he said. Instantly, Meng Hao and all the other people who had absorbed some of his cultivation base felt their bodies rumbling. Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth, and the warm current that had spread through his body turned malignantly poisonous. Immediately, his organs began to rot and decay.

In that moment, the same words rang out in the minds of everyone present.

The sect was right!

The sect said that these people were fiendish Devils, and they were!

The sect said that the Dao Realm Patriarch was a fiendish Devil, and he truly was!

The sect said that enemies were invading, and they really were!

The sect said that the intruders were not kind and good, but rather, fiendish Devils. They… absolutely were fiendish Devils!

Wrong! All of the disciples who hesitated were wrong!

All of this proved without a doubt that the sect had been right in everything!

Now, the slaughter truly began, and booms filled the air.

Meng Hao's mind reeled. Even as he was being expelled from the world, he suddenly raised his hand and waved a finger through the air. Instantly, one of the blood-colored Devilish cultivators coming through the rift exploded.

All of a sudden, the power of expulsion faded away.

The Patriarch surrounded by the glowing light gave Meng Hao a look, then turned away and waded into the fighting.

Meng Hao didn't say anything, but his eyes began to glow brightly. After they flickered a few times, he sighed.

"Have faith in the sect…" he murmured softly. "Well done, Nine Seas God World. In a mere trial by fire, you still manage to plant a seed like this in the hearts of your disciples. The last time I tried out the fifth golden gate trial by fire, it wasn't like this."

In the fifth golden gate stone stele, nothing else was really as important as the key to the entire trial by fire…. The message was: don’t trust in your own judgement, put your faith in what the sect tells you.

Were it not for the fact that Meng Hao had corroborated the Dao on his own to achieve Immortal Ascension, had a very strong Dao heart, and had experienced many things, then even his faith in himself would have been affected. If it had, then that seed would also have been planted in him as well.

“To pass this trial in the top 10, I have to slaughter my way to the top.” Meng Hao took a deep breath, and his cultivation base erupted with power. Now that he understood what was going on, he attacked without the slightest hesitation. He slashed his way into the battle like a dragon surrounded by a wake of blood.

Outside, Meng Hao’s name suddenly appeared on the fifth golden gate stone stele, somewhere in the thousands, flashing with light.

1,000. 700. 500. 300… all the way past 100!

It continued to climb. 80. 70. 40….

People outside gasped at how quickly his name climbed up.

Only Granny Nine and Ling Yunzi, plus the Demonic Cultivator Horde Patriarch and the other Dao Realm experts, watched the stone stele with glittering eyes, lost in thought.

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# Chapter 1077: Dao Divinity Scripture!

The main purpose of the fifth golden gate stone stele was to develop the disciples' faith in the sect. When it came to matters of what was right and wrong, sometimes it was important to accept the decisions and explanations of the sect over one's personal judgment.

If a disciple couldn't show faith in the sect, then the trial by fire wouldn't begin, and the disciple would be ejected from the fifth stone stele, just like Meng Hao had almost been.

If a disciple could show faith, well… at that point the trial by fire would begin. Then, the level of their cultivation base, as well as their depth of faith in the sect, would determine their ranking.

Moments ago, within the world of the trial by fire, the blood-colored fiendish Devils had continued to appear. Eventually, Meng Hao's name entered the top 1,000, and finally, the slaughter ended. However, the trial by fire did not end. The world around him shattered to pieces, and when it reformed, he was facing a different scene.

He was still in a sect, and was being given orders just like he had been before. This time, they were the invaders. A voice from the sect told them that this land was actually their native homeland!

They had to slaughter any resistance they met, and kill any opposing cultivators.

Things were complicated, leaving many people confused. However, in the end, what the sect said was true. This place… really was their former homeland!

The fighting went on, and Meng Hao's name rose up into the 500s. Then, everything changed again. A new world appeared, and new instructions were given by the sect.

Similar things happened when he reached the top 400, 300, 200… and even 100. Apparently, the changes occured with every move of 100 positions.

It then continued to happen with more and more frequency. By the time he reached the top 20… he had experienced many, many worlds. The one thing that remained eternally unchanging was the sect. The orders from the sect were eternal. The judgment of the sect was eternal.

This was almost like a form of brainwashing. All of these experiences told Meng Hao that, in any matter, the sect was always correct. If he had faith in the sect, the trial by fire would continue. If hesitation regarding the sect rose up in his mind, then he would be expelled.

Eventually… Meng Hao's name reached the top 10. The world fell apart in front of him, and when it formed back together, it turned into… a very familiar place.

It was… Planet South Heaven!

This was the home that existed in his memories, a place where many, many things had occurred. He had numerous memories of this place, but right now, when he saw Planet South Heaven, his heart trembled.

His ability to put on a show of faith in the sect began to wane. The power of expulsion seemed to rise up faintly.

"This place… is an Outsider Planet! The true Planet South Heaven of the Ninth Mountain and Sea was destroyed and transformed into a door! Within that door appeared a new planet!

"Destroy this place! Use its power to collapse the Stargate!"

As the voice from the sect faded away, Meng Hao looked around to see countless cultivators surrounding him. Some were familiar to him, although he couldn’t recall their names. However, he recognized that these people were fellow sect members from this phase of the trial by fire, people with whom he had charged into battle many times before!

Roars rang out as they charged toward Planet South Heaven. Meng Hao’s heart trembled as he saw the familiar mountains, rivers, and lands, as well as old friends.

“Kill everything that lives on this planet! When the Outsiders come, their bloodlines will awaken, and they will become our enemies! Destroy this planet! Wipe it out from the starry sky!” As the voice echoed out, everyone charged forward into the slaughter. Only Meng Hao remained hovering there, silent.

The expulsion force began to gather, as if countless voices were beginning to call out to him, urging him forward. After a moment, Meng Hao took a deep breath and then advanced. He vanished, then reappeared up ahead, between the army of cultivators and the crowds from Planet South Heaven. He raised both hands up into the air to stop the advancing army.

However, in the moment he tried to do so, the expulsion force gripped him, and the voice of the sect roared in his ear.

“After all those experiences, you still don’t have faith in the sect!?!?” it said, sounding pained.

“Since that’s the case, then you shall be allowed to personally witness the truth!” The voice of the sect turned into a power that Meng Hao was powerless to resist, and forced him to remain motionless out in the starry sky.

At the same time, the army of fellow sect cultivators vanished. In an instant, Planet South Heaven seemed to pass through countless years. Suddenly, it began to tremble as an incredible force exploded out. Next, Meng Hao watched as the planet slowly began to move.

As it moved, shockingly… the former position of the planet revealed a black hole!

It looked like… a door!

After the door appeared, a beam of light could be seen. As it spread out, shocking roars could be heard coming from Planet South Heaven. At the same time as the light spread out, all of a sudden, a butterfly flew out from inside the door!

The butterfly was enormous, seemingly without end. Astonishingly, numerous Outsider cultivators flew off of the butterfly, radiating murderous auras.

Wherever they passed, stars crumbled and planets shattered. Countless cultivators died screaming. The Ninth Mountain collapsed and the Ninth Sea boiled!

Before long, the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea was in ruins. Countless people died, many that Meng Hao knew, many that he didn’t. They all died….

Planet East Victory, Planet North Reed, Planet West Felicity…. all crumbled.

In the final scene, a huge Xuanwu turtle let out an agonized howl, seemingly filled with infinite grief. Then it collapsed into a mass of blood and gore.

The vision ended, leaving Meng Hao gaping. He forgot about struggling and resisting. As the vision faded away, he was gripped by the power of expulsion and ejected from the world.

In the moment before he left, the ancient, grieving voice of the sect echoed in his ears: “Now do you believe?”

A tremor ran through him, and when everything became clear, he was back in the Nine Seas God World, standing outside of the fifth golden gate stone stele. He looked up to see that his name… was listed in 10th place!

Cries of astonishment rang out in all directions, but Meng Hao still seemed to be in another world. He could barely hear what anyone was saying as he stood there in front of the stone stele for a long moment.

It was at this point that Godmaster's voice spoke into his ear: "Every person's trial by fire in the fifth golden gate begins exactly the same. However, those who reach the top 10 all experience different things…."

"What you saw could be visions of the future, or could be mere fantasies."

Meng Hao looked up at Godmaster. After a long moment of silence, he took a deep breath, and dispelled his disquieting thoughts. Whether or not he wanted to admit it, this trial by fire had left a deep impression on him.

"In the end, power is everything!" he thought. "Even if that final scene was real, if I can get strong enough, then when that butterfly shows up, I'll kill it! Then… everything will turn out different!

"Trusting the sect isn't important. The important thing… is to make yourself strong enough!" Meng Hao's eyes shone with a bright light as he clasped hands and bowed to Godmaster. Then he turned, his expression one of determination as he flew toward another of the golden gate stone steles.

The three month period was almost up, and before he left, Meng Hao wanted to get those 300,000,000 Immortal jades. He also wanted to leave an eternal mark on the Nine Seas God World.

"Other than the fifth stone stele, I want my name… to be in 1st place on all of the golden gate stone steles! If I can't do it this time around, then I'll definitely do it before I leave!" Meng Hao took a deep breath as he sped toward the seventh golden gate stone stele.

The seventh golden gate was the trial by fire of divine sense!

Divine sense wasn't necessarily Meng Hao's strong point. However, he had the first manual of the Dao Divinity Scripture, which he had cultivated in the past. According to the legends, the Dao Divinity Scripture was the supreme scripture for strengthening divine sense. However, after cultivating it, Meng Hao hadn’t felt anything particularly impressive! 1

At the very most, it had helped his divine sense a bit when he was in the Mortal Realm.

That was why the Sea Daughter had been able to stop him in place with her divine sense. 2 It was also a weakness that he needed to eliminate.

“Could it be that I cultivated it incorrectly? Or perhaps it’s not the real Dao Divinity Scripture?”

The Dao Divinity Scripture appeared in his mind as he flew forward. Not too much time passed before he appeared outside the seventh golden gate stone stele. Without the slightest hesitation, he stepped into the golden gate.

Surprisingly, as soon as he entered, his name appeared on the stone stele. All of the disciples who were gathering stared closely at Meng Hao’s name and began to speculate what rank he would achieve.

Inside the world of the seventh golden gate, Meng Hao threw his head back and roared, and his hair whipped around. The entire world was a path consisting of 10,000 stone steps. Each step represented one rank.

The first 9,000 were far too simple for Meng Hao, but the last 1,000 got increasingly difficult. Every time he took a step, he would find himself surrounded by more divine sense power, which tried to bore into and collapse his mind.

Countless thoughts poured into him, confusing him, making it more and more difficult to endure.

At the same time, the longer he endured, the faster his divine sense grew. Furthermore, the Dao Divinity Scripture swirled inside his mind, and as he proceeded forward, he gained continuous enlightenment regarding the various mnemonics.

Time passed. Outside the seventh golden gate, the disciples watched as Meng Hao's name continued to rise. This time, his progress was much slower than with the previous stone steles.

"Divine sense is his weak spot!"

"He didn't advance this slowly in either the ninth stone stele or the fifth. The only way to smoothly get through the seventh golden gate is to have strong divine sense. And yet, he's going so slow!"

"From the look of it, it will be just too hard for him to get into the top 10!" Even as the crowd whispered their speculations, Meng Hao was in the world of the seventh stone stele, trembling violently. His eyes were bright red, and yet, he was smiling.

"So, THAT'S how you cultivate the Dao Divinity Scripture!

"I understand!" Eyes flickering, he extended both hands, performing incantation gestures which caused his body to turn into something like a black hole. Rumbling could be heard as he began to absorb all of the attacking divine sense!

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# Chapter 1078: Eight Gates, All Top 10!

Meng Hao hadn’t cultivated the Dao Divinity Scripture incorrectly. However, this was not a scripture that was meant to be cultivated while sitting cross-legged in meditation. This scripture was unique in that… it was meant to be cultivated during battle, when actually utilizing divine sense.

With every clash of divine sense, the Dao Divinity Scripture would grow stronger. This was… a scripture born for the purpose of battle!

Meng Hao didn’t understand that before, so no matter how he cultivated it, the result wasn’t optimal. The last time he challenged the seventh golden gate, he hadn’t used the Dao Divinity Scripture, but had relied solely on his divine sense and had gotten all the way to the 91st position, but could proceed no further.

This time, under the bombardment of so much divine sense, he finally understood the Dao Divinity Scripture much more clearly. It was like an epiphany.

“So that’s how it is!” Even as his voice echoed out, he transformed into a black hole. As the boundless divines sense power rumbled toward him, just as it seemed on the verge of harming him, it was actually rapidly devoured by his own divine sense!

This was clearly… a terrifying way of absorbing the divine sense of others to bolster one’s own!

Meng Hao was trembling, and yet, his eyes were shining brightly. He sped forward, trembling with every step as his divine sense rocketed up madly.

“More!” he cried, proceeding forward without stop. As the divine sense power smashing down onto him grew more intense, his own divine sense grew stronger.

Outside on the golden gate, his name rose higher on the list, passing the 91st position and quickly reaching the 40th!

An uproar of shocked cries instantly could be heard from the mouths of the audience.

Even more shocking to everyone was that the golden gate stone stele’s eternally resplendent golden glow… almost seemed to be fading, as if the innate power of the trial by fire were weakening.

“The golden glow is fading. W-what’s happening!?”

Everyone was shouting.

Even Granny Nine and her group, plus the Demonic Patriarch, were staring, clearly moved.

It didn’t take long for the Dao Realm Patriarchs to guess the truth.

“He’s absorbing the divine sense power inside of the stele!”

“The Nine Seas God World has been collecting divine sense in the seventh golden gate stone stele for all these years to ensure that it remains eternally in place! But now… he’s actually absorbing it!”

“A normal Daoist magic couldn’t do that! What technique has he cultivated?”

As everyone in the outside world was making various speculations, inside the stele, Meng Hao, who moments ago hadn’t been glowing at all, was now covered with a thin veneer of golden light.

That golden light appeared when he only had 20 more steps to go!

A tremor ran through him, and he coughed up blood, and yet, his laughter grew even more maniacal. He had never imagined that this seventh golden gate stone stele would be so beneficial to him.

It could definitely be considered good fortune!

Not only did it give him a deep understanding of the Dao Divinity Scripture, but his previously weak divine sense was now rapidly becoming more powerful. By now, it was already close to ten times more powerful than it had been before beginning the trial.

Plus… it was continuing to get stronger.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and proceeded forward again. With each step, the divine sense around him grew more intense; booms continued to ring out like muffled thunder.

Soon, there were only nine steps ahead of him, and his name was already in 10th place on the seventh golden gate stone stele!

Meng Hao started to stagger a bit, and he could sense that he was reaching his limit; he was already saturated with the divine sense that he had absorbed. However, he also had the intense premonition that if he gave himself enough time to fully assimilate all the divine sense, he would become even stronger, and would be qualified… to vie for 1st place on the seventh golden gate!

In that case, he would also be qualified to vie for 1st place in the ninth golden gate!

Meng Hao's body rumbled as he vanished from the world of the seventh golden gate trial by fire. He appeared outside, the middle of an uproar as everyone looked at him in shock.

That was especially true… of a certain beautiful young woman not too far off in the distance. It was none other than Sea Daughter Bei Yu. Her name was currently listed in 3rd place on the stone stele!

She excelled in divine sense, but now, the sensation she got when looking at Meng Hao was completely different than before. His divine sense was far more powerful, and even just looking at him sent stabbing pains into her eyes.

Of the Nine Seas God World's nine golden gate stone steles, he had already completed three. Now, he sped toward the eighth.

It wasn't long before his name was climbing up the list on that stele too….

In the time it takes an incense stick to burn, Meng Hao's name reached the top 10, then climbed to the 5th position before stopping. Then he appeared again, bursting with a domineering air that seemed incapable of being halted or blocked as he sped toward the sixth golden gate stone stele.

You could say that Meng Hao's path embodied all of the various aspects of cultivation. Earlier, only his divine sense had been somewhat weak. As for his fleshly body and his cultivation base, both of them were incredibly powerful. Now that he had acquired good fortune regarding his divine sense, he was finally able to push himself to his peak.

That was also the peak of the Immortal Emperor Realm!

The Nine Seas God World was shaken, and increasing numbers of cultivators approached to bear witness to Meng Hao's madness. It had been years since anything like this had occurred, as Meng Hao repeatedly challenged one golden gate stone stele after another, and got into the top ten of each one!

"He got into the top 10 in the fifth, seventh, eighth, and ninth!!"

"From ancient times until now, there have only been four people who made it into the top 10 of all nine golden gate stone steles! Now there's going to be a fifth!"

In the beginning, the audience watching the scene hadn't been small. However, there were many people who believed that he would never be able to make it into the top 10 of all the stone steles. Now, however, as he continued to make steady progress, more and more people arrived to watch with keen anticipation.

An unsightly look could be seen on the face of the Demonic Patriarch. In fact, all of the Demonic cultivators had dark looks on their faces. They didn’t want to admit that there was more than just hatred for Meng Hao in their hearts, and yet they had no other choice.

Meng Hao shot through the air in a streak of colorful light as he headed to the sixth golden gate stone stele. The Nine Seas God World was abuzz, and countless cultivators flew from all directions to watch. Meng Hao vanished into the sixth stele, and almost immediately, his name appeared on the rankings!

It rose up rapidly, almost exactly the same as in the others. Soon, cries of shock could be heard, and the members of the Demonic Cultivator Horde looked grimmer than ever. As with all the others, Meng Hao’s name eventually reached the top 10!

When that happened, the entire Nine Seas God World, including both Ancient and Immortal Realm cultivators, were all abuzz, and focused on nothing other than Meng Hao.

The next stele was the fourth, which Meng Hao rocketed toward and disappeared into. After enough time passed for half an incense stick to burn, his name appeared in the top ten!

The clamor among the crowd grew more intense, and Meng Hao’s image was even more deeply ingrained in the hearts and minds of all the disciples.

The combination of his razor-sharp tongue, his towering killing intent, and the intense valiance on display at the moment ensured that Meng Hao had a unique air.

It was… a completely and utterly domineering air!

In the third golden gate stone stele, boundless golden light rose up when he reached 7th place!

In the second golden gate stone stele, massive rumbling could be heard as his name appeared in the 4th position! Everyone felt as if their hearts were being struck by thunder.

When Meng Hao appeared from within the second golden gate stone stele and headed toward the first, there were tens of thousands of disciples gathered to watch.

They crowded around, all watching and bearing witness to what was happening.

“The ninth golden gate! He’s already completed eight!! And gotten into the top 10 in all of them!!”

“The last one is the first golden gate stone stele. If he can get into the top ten in that one, then those 300,000,000 Immortal jades will be his!”

“For years, only four people in the Nine Seas God World have ever done this! Maybe there will now be five!”

“Not necessarily! The first golden gate is the hardest!”

The sound of countless discussions could be heard as Meng Hao arrived in front of the first golden gate stone stele, looking as firm and persistent as ever. He eyed the gate for a moment, and then took a deep breath.

“Trial by fire of the pressure of the Ninth Sea!” Without any further hesitation, he headed in!

When his vision became clear, shockingly, he found himself beneath the Nine Seas God World, surrounded by boundless sea water. In this position, the pressure weighing down from the Ninth Sea was even more intense than before.

A tremor ran through him as he sensed what felt like innumerable iron fetters weighing him down. Eyes glittering, he began to sink down.

300 meters. 1,500 meters. 3,000 meters.

6,000 meters. 9,000 meters. 15,000 meters.

The farther he sank, the more intense the pressure became. Gradually, it came to feel as if enormous mountains were crushing down on him. It didn’t take very long before he had to exert incredible force even to blink his eyes.

Everything was pitch black, and it almost seemed as if the Ninth Sea had no sea floor, as if it just stretched down and down infinitely.

Soon, Meng Hao had reached a depth of 24,000 meters. According to the list outside, this was the same position Fan Dong’er had reached. The biggest difference was that she had remained in this position for more than forty hours.

Meng Hao’s name had long since appeared on the first golden gate stone stele. It flickered as its position continued to change, getting higher and higher. The faces of the members of the Demonic Cultivator Horde grew darker and darker.

“I can still go deeper!” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he realized that he hadn’t reached his limit yet. He was different from the other disciples of the Nine Seas God World. They practiced cultivation at these depths, and gradually allowed themselves to endure more and more pressure. In contrast, Meng Hao wanted to feel the most intense stimulation possible, and then see how long he could stay in that position.

It might be dangerous, but that would be the fastest way to acclimate himself to the pressure, and would also ensure that he was ready to enter the Windswept Realm.

Meng Hao’s eyes shone with determination!

27,000 meters. 30,000 meters! 36,000 meters… and he kept going!

The pressure increased, getting more intense. However, it continued to meet with resisting power from within Meng Hao. It was as if Meng Hao, despite his fleshly body and cultivation base being at their peak, was still growing!!

By now, he could see nothing but blackness, and even his newly empowered divine sense could only spread out a short distance. He was now 60,000 meters down.

At this point, he began to shake, and he knew that this was his limit. He could tell that he was on the verge of collapsing. Trembling, he settled down cross-legged and waited to see how long he could hold on!

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# Chapter 1079: Omen of the Door of the Ancient Realm

Currently, all the disciples outside were staring fixedly at the first golden gate stone stele, and that glittering name on its surface!

Meng Hao had made it into the top 10 in all of the other golden gate stone steles, from the second to the ninth. Now, if he reached the top 10 in the first stele as well, that meant that he would have already done enough to win the bet and get 300,000,000 Immortal jades!

When people thought of that vast amount of wealth, they trembled, even Fan Dong’er. It was an enormous sum that would move anyone.

Despite being in the Dao Realm, the Demonic Patriarch’s throat instantly went bone dry. It wasn’t that the Demonic Cultivator Horde couldn’t afford to pay out 300,000,000 Immortal jades. However… it was still an immense sum to them.

With Granny Nine and the others there, there wasn’t a single trick they could pull to get out of the situation. Nor was there anything they could do to Meng Hao in the trial by fire. They could only look on with wide eyes.

Everyone watched as Meng Hao’s name continued to rise until finally it came to rest… in 15th place!

Hushed whispers could be heard, and many people began to pant.

“15th place!! Depending on how long Meng Hao can hold out at that depth, he might be able to make it into the top 10!”

“Everyone from the 15th to the 5th place remained at 60,000 meters, which is a major boundary. The difference between them is how long they can hold out!”

“If he can endure for 40 hours, then he can squeeze past the current 10th place name, who endured for 38 hours. Then Meng Hao will occupy 10th place! Only by enduring for 70 hours… can he reach 5th place!”

Time passed. 2 hours. 4 hours… soon 10 hours had gone by. Meng Hao remained in the sea beneath the sect, body shivering, eyes bloodshot. The terrifying pressure was like an intense attack that continued for every second that passed.

It wasn’t that Meng Hao wasn’t powerful, nor that he lacked a profound cultivation base. Instead, he simply hadn’t been in the Nine Seas God World for long enough, and was far removed from the cultivators who had actually been born here.

Although people like that didn’t have fleshly bodies that matched up to Meng Hao’s, and even if their cultivation bases were different than his, they had naturally adapted. To them, sinking down and enduring the pressure was a much simpler thing.

As for Meng Hao, he had to pay a much heavier price to catch up to the others in such a short period of time.

He continued to hold on, and soon, another 6 hours had passed. Meng Hao had already been sitting there cross-legged for 16 hours. Blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth, and his skin was splitting all over. From the look of it, he was on the verge of completely collapsing.

His Eternal stratum was hard at work, and his eyes were fully bloodshot. He could sense that this pressure was the limit his body could take.

Because of the intensity of it, his cultivation base was also fighting back madly, causing rumbling sounds to fill his mind.

The rumbling grew more intense, as if every beat of his heart and every surge of his cultivation base cause his whole body to shake. Although blood oozed out all over him, he could sense that he… was becoming stronger!

“When it reaches the point where I can unleash the full extent of my battle prowess at this depth, that will indicate… that I’ve completely acclimated to a depth of 60,000 meters!” His eyes glittered, and he clenched his teeth.

Soon the 20th hour had passed. 20 hours. 30 hours….

Outside of the first golden gate stone stele, the crowd was in an uproar. Because he had endured for 30 hours, Meng Hao’s name continued to rise, all the way from the 15th position to the 14th. Then the 13th, and finally… to the 11th!!

“Only 8 more hours, and he’ll reach the top 10!”

“From ancient times until now there have only been four people in the Nine Seas God World who have ever been able to make it into all the top 10s! If Meng Hao can last for another 8 hours, then… there will be a fifth!”

As the crowd discussed the matter heatedly, Meng Hao sat with his eyes closed to cover the veins of blood. He continued to endure despite what sounded like thunder pounding inside of his body. He was trembling as his cultivation base fought a desperate battle with the pressure from the outside, pressure that was trying to crush him to death.

“Just a little bit longer. I can hold out just a bit longer!” He wasn’t sure where his name was on the list, but he did know that for every hour he could endure, he would be that much more likely to make it into the top 10.

“For empowerment! And for the 300,000,000 Immortal jades!” Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly snapped open, revealing a gleam of madness. He might be trembling, and gritting his teeth to the point where they were about to shatter, but he knew that he could still hang on.

Soon the 32nd hour had passed. Then it was 34 hours. 36 hours…. all the way to 40 hours!

The atmosphere outside of the golden gate stone stele was explosive. Everyone was completely shaken, and all eyes were fixed on the name that could now be seen in the 10th position.

Meng Hao!

He had succeeded! He had surpassed the person who had previously held 10th place, and was now in the top 10!

“The top 10! Meng Hao is now in the top 10!!”

“From ancient times until now, he is the fifth person to do this!!” The crowd was in an uproar, and their clamor echoed out in all directions.

Fan Dong’er had a complex expression on her face. She couldn’t help but admit that Meng Hao… had surpassed all the other current Chosen of their generation. It was as if his overwhelming superiority enabled him to place himself far, far ahead of everyone else. He was like a vast mountain sitting in front of all the other Chosen of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, a mountain that was preeminently difficult to pass over.

The Demonic Patriarch stood there silently. After a moment, he sighed inwardly, then turned and left. He knew that there was nothing he could do now. Meng Hao had won. He had a mind to renege on the wager, but he knew that it was actually impossible to do so.

Nursing his hatred deep in his heart, the Demonic Patriarch snorted coldly, and his eyes glinted as he shot off into the distance, a streak of prismatic light.

In the moment that Meng Hao endured past 40 hours, blood spurted out all over his body. He was on the verge of collapse, and could not continue on any further. He could sense that under the vast pressure, his cultivation base was getting weaker and weaker. The more he fought back, the weaker he would get. Even the light in his eyes was growing dimmer. It was at this point that, all of a sudden, his body trembled, and a strange expression appeared in his eyes.

He had suddenly noticed that although he was like a candle on the verge of sputtering out, unexpectedly… a regenerative force had suddenly sprung up inside of him.

That power had apparently been forced out of him because of the intense pressure bearing down on him, and also because he was now in the Realm of the Immortal Emperor. At this point, all of the remaining power within his cultivation base was being forced out explosively.

Rumbling could be heard, and his eyes began to shine even brighter. The regenerative force rapidly restored him, causing his heart to tremble, and his fleshly body… to suddenly grow rapidly, even more so than his cultivation base.

The pounding of his heart sounded like thunder in his ears.

With each beat, the tears in his skin were healed, and gradually, an enormous door opened up in front of him!

That door was even more majestic than the Door of Immortality, and even more ancient. In fact, it was so archaic that it caused everything to tremble violently.

The feeling emanating out of that door was not one of Immortality, but rather, a boundlessly Ancient feeling!

The instant Meng Hao saw the door, his heart began to pound wildly; he knew exactly what it was. It was the door… that led to the Ancient Realm!

When a cultivator entered the Ancient Realm, the Door of the Ancient Realm would appear, in much the same way that a door appeared when entering the Immortal Realm. Once the door was pushed open, an enormous bell would appear!

That bell was the Ancient Bell, and once struck, it would ignite Soul Lamps. The flame of his life force would materialize the Realmwind, and in the following days and years… that wind would be used to extinguish the Soul Lamps!

Then he would enter a Realm in which the lamps were extinguished but the cultivator was not 1. When all of the Soul Lamps were extinguished, he would be at the peak of the Ancient Realm, and would have forged his foundation for the Dao Realm!

What he was seeing right now… was an omen of the Ancient Realm!

Anyone else other than Meng Hao would have long since been able to step into the Ancient Realm. However, because of the path he walked, he was different. He was not willing to try to step into the Ancient Realm until he had fully absorbed all four of his Nirvana Fruits.

And yet, here was an omen of the Ancient Realm, not because of his cultivation base, but rather…

“My fleshly body!” he thought. His eyes gleamed brightly. He had never imagined that he would be able to force out the omen of the Ancient Realm while facing the pressure of the Ninth Sea.

“I understand now!” His eyes shone with the light of understanding. Actually, his fleshly body had long since passed what could be categorized as an Immortal Realm fleshly body. However, the door to the Ancient Realm had never appeared.

This was something he could not inquire of others about. There were even some ancient records of various sects and clans that wouldn’t contain the tiniest scrap of a clue about the matter. After all… in countless years, it was extremely rare for any body cultivator to reach a true Immortal fleshly body. As for an Ancient Realm fleshly body, that was even rarer. Even if such people did exist, everyone had different circumstances, and as such, would use different methods to make their breakthroughs.

But right now, he understood how to find his own path!

“The more by fleshly body is damaged, the stronger it gets! That is my path! In that case, if I can go down further… then perhaps I can enter the Ancient Realm, and my fleshly body will be even more powerful!”

Having reached this point in his train of thought, Meng Hao's eyes glittered. He was just about to take action when he realized that the regenerative power within him was fading away. Furthermore, the boundless pressure of the Ninth Sea at this depth of 60,000 meters was actually forcing him up from his current position!

In the blink of an eye, he vanished, and when he reappeared, he was outside the first golden gate stone stele. As soon as he appeared, he coughed up a vast quantity of blood. At the same time, the pressure suddenly changed completely. Cracking sounds could be heard from inside of him. Without the pressure against him, his cultivation base suddenly exploded upward. The sound of the roaring crowd washed over him.

All of the Nine Seas God World disciples who had come to observe were completely shaken. They had personally witnessed Meng Hao's name rise to the top. They had seen something that hadn't happened for years! A fifth person successfully entered the top 10 of all of the golden gates!

Surrounded by the shouts of the crowd, Meng Hao turned around to look at the stone stele, and found that his name was in the 10th position.

"10th…." he murmured, and his eyes filled with the gleam of ambition.

"Senior Granny Nine, please give me some restorative medicinal pills!" He suddenly spun, clasped hands and bowed deeply to Granny Nine.

Granny Nine looked closely at Meng Hao, and was about to say something, when suddenly she looked up, as if she had just noticed something. It wasn't just her. All of the Dao Realm experts, including the two Demonic Patriarchs that had already left, suddenly turned with flickering faces.

"The aura of the great Door of the Ancient Realm. This…." Granny Nine gasped and looked back at Meng Hao. Deep in her eyes, a strange light gleamed. Without any further hesitation, she tossed a shining, nine-colored medicinal pill bottle down to Meng Hao.

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# Chapter 1080: Crimson Door of the Ancient Realm

It was at this point that two aura streams exploded out from the Nine Seas God World. They belonged to the Demonic Patriarchs, and they immediately shot up and then out of the Ninth Sea.

It wasn’t just them. The two Dao Realm experts from the other two factions were shaken, and also sent divine sense out to examine the situation for themselves.

Ling Yunzi looked shocked, then glanced back and Meng Hao with a profound look of anticipation.

Godmaster smiled faintly, then closed his eyes.

No one but the Dao Realm cultivators could sense the aura up above the Ninth Sea. All they saw was Granny Nine throwing the medicinal pills to Meng Hao.

The medicinal pills and the medicinal pill bottle seemed completely beyond the ordinary.

Meng Hao grabbed the bottle, opened it, and took a whiff. Based on his skill in the Dao of alchemy, he was immediately able to determine the effect of the pills. They were pills of restoration that would be considered extravagant even for cultivators of the Ancient Realm. They were something Dao Realm experts might possess, but not in number. Even one could be considered extremely precious.

Meng Hao was moved, and once again clasped hands to Granny Nine, then unhesitatingly popped a pill into his mouth.

The instant the medicinal pill entered his mouth, Meng Hao felt like he was shaking violently. His cultivation base was rapidly restored, and in the space of only a few breaths, his eyes began to shine brightly, and he was fully back at his peak state.

Furthermore, because of the way he had fought back against the pressure of the Ninth Sea, he was even more powerful than he had been before!

“I’ve won the bet, and now those 300,000,000 Immortal jades belong to me!” he murmured, taking a deep breath. Then he turned to look at the first golden gate stone stele, and a wild ambition could be seen burning in his eyes.

“And now, my fleshly body has reached a critical juncture. In that case, I might as well go for broke….

“With the exception of the fifth stone stele, I want to be 1st in all of them!” Under the shocked eyes of the disciples of the Nine Seas God World, and the cold, venomous stares of the Demonic cultivators, he once again entered the first golden gate stone stele.

The moment he vanished, the crowds of disciples went wild.

“He’s actually going back into the first golden gate? He already got into the top 10, could it be that he wants to get an even better ranking?”

“This trial by fire isn’t something that you can complete in just one shot. It requires repeated cultivation and improvement. Meng Hao… is a bit impatient.”

“Even if he challenges it again now, he won’t get higher than 5th place. He definitely won’t get into the top 4!”

Fan Dong’er hesitated for a moment. She just couldn’t believe that Meng Hao would be doing something like this rashly. In her judgement, he was a cunning person who never did things unless he knew they would benefit him. For him to make a choice like this meant that he had good reason to do so.

As the discussions went on outside, Meng Hao once again appeared in the deep sea beneath the Nine Seas God World. This time, he sank down rapidly and without the slightest pause.

Soon, he he had reached his previous limit of 60,000 meters. There, he paused for a moment, allowing his cultivation base to erupt out and fight back against the pressure. Gritting his teeth, he continued to drop down.

He wanted to advance his fleshly body into the Ancient Realm, to be more powerful. The only way to do that was to continue to sink downward. There, the pressure was more terrifying, and his body would be refined even further.

By forcing himself past that final line of demarcation, and then exploding out… he was convinced that his fleshly body would become incredibly terrifying.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

Blood oozed out of his mouth, and cracking sounds could be heard inside of him. As he sank down, the pressure became terrifying to an astonishing degree. His body rippled and distorted as the pressure battered against him.

However, he continued to sink down. 75,000 meters. 84,000 meters….

His mind filled with rumbling sounds, and his flesh was covered with splits and tears. The flame of his life force was fading, and his cultivation base was under such enormous pressure that it almost couldn’t budge.

He felt like all of Heaven and Earth were weighing down on him, and his vision began to swim. However, he continued to go all out, to spare nothing to continue on downward.

As he continued to sink to lower and lower levels, certain late Ancient Realm experts of the Nine Seas God World, who were currently in secluded meditation, suddenly opened their eyes and looked up into the sky, their expressions flickering slightly.

Soon, the mid Ancient Realm experts also noticed something happening in the outside world, and their eyes widened.

Meanwhile, Meng Hao in his madness sank down into the Ninth Sea. He had already reached a depth of 90,000 meters, and the pressure was indescribably terrifying, dozens of times greater than the pressure at 60,000 meters.

Everything was pitch black, and by now, it almost felt like he wasn’t surrounded by water, but wind!

Perhaps that feeling was just an illusion; Meng Hao couldn’t sense things very clearly. By now, the flame of his life force was swaying weakly, as if it was about to be extinguished. His body was twisted and warped, as if it might be broken at any moment.

Just as he seemed to be on the verge of losing consciousness, he suddenly let out a shout in his heart.

“This is my final limit! Let the great Door of the Ancient Realm… come!”

Almost in that same moment, even the Immortal Realm cultivators in the Nine Seas God World were able to detect that something was happening. Their faces flickered as they began to look up… whereupon everyone gasped.

“That’s…”

“The great Door of the Ancient Realm! That’s the great Door of the Ancient Realm which appears when someone breaks through from the Immortal Realm to the Ancient Realm!!”

“Someone is breaking out of the Immortal Realm and stepping into the Ancient Realm!!”

“No, that can’t be right! How come that door is crimson? It should be gray!!”

The Nine Seas God World was in chaos as voices echoed out everywhere. The entire Ninth Sea was roaring, and countless sea beasts trembled in hiding, too frightened even to peek out to see what was happening.

In the starry sky up above… countless motes of starlight had formed together into the shape of a matchlessly shocking door.

That door was completely crimson, but it radiated an ancient, primordial aura which caused the seawater to roil. It seemed to represent Heaven and Earth, the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“A crimson Door of the Ancient Realm! That represents… the Ancient Realm fleshly body!”

“That’s definitely… Ancient Realm fleshly body!” Hoarse exclamations like this could be heard coming from the mouths of the wise and knowledgeable late Ancient Realm experts in the Nine Seas God World.

Soon, more and more people began to realize what the crimson Door of the Ancient Realm meant, and soon, the whole Nine Seas God World was abuzz. Almost everyone forgot about Meng Hao; after all, witnessing the appearance of an Ancient Realm expert was much more interesting than binge-watching Meng Hao challenge the golden gates.

Fan Dong’er was the only one who, after sensing the fluctuations of the great Door of the Ancient Realm, suddenly looked at Meng Hao’s name on the first golden gate stone stele.

In that same moment… the Door of the Ancient Realm above the Ninth Sea began to emit a crimson glow, which pierced down through the water into the Nine Seas God World, and then… landed on the first golden gate stone stele! Everyone’s minds reeled.

“It’s Meng Hao!!!”

“The only person in the first golden gate stone stele trial by fire is Meng Hao!!”

“How… how is this possible!? Meng Hao is entering the Ancient Realm? An Ancient Realm fleshly body?” People cried out in disbelief and shock. Fan Dong’er staggered backward and bit her lip. Meng Hao was truly an enormous mountain blocking the way of an entire generation of Chosen, a mountain that… was now growing even higher!

Rumbling echoed out as the crimson glow pierced into the golden gate stone stele. and then appeared under the sect in the sea. In the blink of an eye, it was at the 90,000-meter mark… and was on Meng Hao!

Meng Hao’s body was twisted and distorted. His divine sense was blurry, and he was on the verge of passing out. However, when the crimson glow enveloped him, his eyes began to shine brightly, and he quivered. The intense roaring that filled him knocked him to his senses.

In that moment of clarity, he raised his head and shot upward from the 90,000 meter mark all the way until he left the golden gate and appeared once again in the middle of the Nine Seas God World.

Everyone, even the Dao Realm experts, were looking at him. Countless eyes could see him, bathed in crimson light, rising up into the air. He passed out of the Nine Seas God World’s spell formation, through the seawater… and up into the sky above the sea!

Numerous cultivators flew out of the Nine Seas God World to observe. The Ninth Sea itself was roaring, and countless people were looking up into the sky.

They saw a gigantic crimson Door of the Ancient Realm, and they could sense a will that caused them to tremble. It was a will that seemed to represent Heaven and Earth, a will that left even the Dao Realm experts in awe.

As he hovered within the red light, Meng Hao's body rapidly recovered. He rose up, higher and higher, until he was directly in front of the Door of the Ancient Realm. By the time the glow vanished, Meng Hao was back at his peak.

He could also sense his fleshly body growing incredibly powerful. Cracking sounds rang out as he rapidly grew to a height of nine meters.

He almost looked like a giant, and although he was tiny in comparison to the Door of the Ancient Realm, his explosive, surging energy could shake Heaven and Earth.

He was the subject of countless gazes who had seen Immortal Realm cultivators step into the Ancient Realm. However, no one had ever witnessed such a feat when it came to the fleshly body!

Meng Hao took a deep breath. He could sense that his cultivation base was sealed, which meant that he could only rely on the power of his fleshly body. Although the shocking transformations of heaven and earth that were about to occur weren't nearly as strong as when one's cultivation base entered the Ancient Realm, it was still considered Ancient Tribulation!

He suddenly flew toward the Door of the Ancient Realm, roaring as his hands formed, not fists, but palms, that slammed into the door. He did not rotate his cultivation base, but rather, relied only on his fleshly body to push forward.

BOOM!

The great Door of the Ancient Realm shook, and opened a sliver, causing a wind to blow out that instantly weakened the flame of his life force.

"No magical techniques. This is my fleshly body Ancient Realm Tribulation. However, my secret techniques can still be utilized!" As his voice echoed out, his Immortal meridians, despite being sealed, did not prevent him from using that personal secret technique. His 123 Immortal meridians could still be transformed into a single fleshly body meridian.

Suddenly, his fleshly body grew even larger, and an intense power erupted out of him. At the same time, both hands slammed down onto the Door of the Ancient Realm. With a huge roar, he shoved with all his might.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

Everyone watched as the gigantic Door of the Ancient Realm… opened!!

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# Chapter 1081: Summoning Soul Lamps, Stepping Into the Ancient Realm!

The crimson Door of the Ancient Realm let out an intense rumble as it opened. Then, a wind sprang up, which swept over Meng Hao, causing his life force and his soul to hover on the verge of extermination.

In the face of such danger, Meng Hao let out a hoarse shout. At the same time, his heart started to beat rapidly, and shocking fleshly body power transformed into a surge of qi that fought back against the Realmwind!

The cultivators of the Nine Seas God World who hovered above the surface of the water were all watching as this happened.

After the wind passed, shockingly, something else appeared within the crimson Door of the Ancient Realm. That was… a bell!

“The Bell of the Ancient Realm!!”

“The Bell of the Ancient Realm has appeared! When you ring that bell, you can ignite Soul Lamps. However many times you ring the bell, that’s how many Soul Lamps you can ignite!”

“Generally speaking, it’s one Soul Lamp for every five Immortal meridians that you have!!”

“This Meng Hao… he has 123 Immortal meridians. He… he can ignite more than twenty Soul Lamps?”

“The more Soul Lamps you have, the more difficult the Ancient Realm will be for you. On the other hand, you will be that much more powerful!”

As the shouts of astonishment rang out, Meng Hao took a deep breath. He was not entering the Ancient Realm with his cultivation base, but rather, his fleshly body. He actually wasn’t sure if any Soul Lamps would appear.

Furthermore, Meng Hao had no one to follow as an example. Although his fleshly body appeared to be that of a body cultivator, he was actually different from body cultivators. Body cultivators needed to bathe in the blood of a God to be able to rise up into another Realm. Furthermore, their type of cultivation was not separated into Immortal and Ancient.

Meng Hao walked a different path, a path far removed from the norm. His was not the ancient path of body cultivators, but rather, a combination of different systems of cultivation. He was walking his own path.

“Let’s find out if I’ll get any Soul Lamps or not!” Meng Hao took a deep breath. and without any further hesitation, stepped forward into the great Door of the Ancient Realm. He saw the enormous Bell of the Ancient Realm in front of him, clenched his right hand into a fist, and punched out.

The tolling of the bell echoed out, and waves surged across the Ninth Sea. Everything blurred, and the world distorted. All the cultivators felt their minds reeling.

A tremor ran through Meng Hao, and his body showed signs of withering. His life force, as well as his qi and blood, were now being absorbed, not by the Bell of the Ancient Realm, but rather, by a black-hole-like vortex that had appeared in his chest!

Meng Hao took a deep breath and closed his eyes. Moments later, a shocking image appeared in his chest!

It was… the image of a Soul Lamp! It looked like a tiny person, a person sitting there cross-legged in the position of Meng Hao’s physical heart!

“So Soul Lamps really will appear!”

“Stepping into the fleshly body Ancient Realm also produces Soul Lamps! This Meng Hao is in defiance of the Heavens!” To the spectators, shock piled upon shock until it seemed beyond belief.

That was because they realized that the tiny person that was the Soul Lamp was actually not burning, but instead, was already extinguished!

Everyone was stunned. Normally speaking, striking the Bell of the Ancient Realm caused ignited Soul Lamps to appear. Later on, those lamps would be extinguished one by one, giving the cultivator increased power.

However, Meng Hao’s Soul Lamp was already extinguished…. He was exactly the opposite of everyone else! Fleshly body Soul Lamps did not need to be extinguished, they needed to be ignited!

Godmaster’s eyes snapped open, and a slight tremor ran through him. His voice hoarse, he said, “Anti-Ancient!!”

“It’s… anti-Ancient!!” An expression of disbelief appeared on Granny Nine’s face. Ling Yunzi gasped, and looked shocked. As for the two Demonic Patriarchs, they looked like they had been struck by lightning. They trembled as they stared in at Meng Hao astonishment.

When the Soul Lamps of the Ancient Realm fleshly body appeared, that was shocking in and of itself. However, for the lamps to appear in an extinguished state caused the Dao Realm Patriarchs to suddenly remember a legendary and terrifying stage within the Ancient Realm!

That was… the anti-Ancient Realm!

According to the legend, in the heyday of the Paragon Immortal Realm, there had once appeared a person whose Ancient Realm was the opposite of the norm. Instead of extinguishing Soul Lamps, that person ignited them.

The details of that person’s life was shrouded in mystery, and subsequent generations knew little about him. All that was known was that it was forbidden to follow in his footsteps. The Paragons of the time intentionally wiped out all information about him. Later, the Paragon Immortal Realm was destroyed, and the term ‘anti-Ancient’ became a term known only to the Three Great Daoist Societies. No one outside of those sects had even heard of it.

In the moment that the Dao Realm experts were shaken, Meng Hao took a deep breath, opened his eyes and struck his fist out once more toward the Bell of the Ancient Realm.

That strike caused the bell to toll, and Meng Hao’s body to tremble. He withered some more, and a wave of weakness caused him to shudder.

A second Soul Lamp appeared, this time in his abdomen, absorbing more of his qi, blood, and life force!

“Fleshly body Soul Lamps are so powerful….” he thought. He quickly consumed a medicinal pill, then frowned when he realized that the pill… did nothing. It was incapable of restoring him. Furthermore, his Eternal stratum was sealed, and could not spring into motion to help him recover.

His eyes glittered, and he ignored the withering of his body, striking out a third time, and then a fourth!

His body withered even more, until he looked like nothing more than a bag of bones. However, two more Soul Lamps appeared, one in each of his shoulders.

Meng Hao staggered back a bit; the sense of weakness that filled him seemed to have reached a pinnacle of intensity. However, he wasn’t willing to stop with only four Soul Lamps. Gritting his teeth and growling, he punched the bell three more times! Every strike cause him to wither even more!

Instantly, two Soul Lamps appeared in his knees, and one in his forehead. By now, he didn’t even look like a person, but rather, a skeleton! His life force was weak, like a candle on the verge of being snuffed out!

This was a type of weakness he had never experienced before, and it made him feel like a feeble old man laying on his deathbed. All of his life force had been handed over to the new Soul Lamps!

Heart, abdomen, shoulders, knees, forehead: a total of seven Soul Lamps!

At this point, the will of the Bell of the Ancient Realm could sense that Meng Hao had reached his limit, and began to fade away.

“I’m not finished yet!” Seeing the bell beginning to fade away, he threw his head back and roared! Both hands turned into fists, and flew toward the Bell of the Ancient Realm. His entire body appeared to have been destroyed, vanished into thin air. And yet… two Soul Lamps suddenly appeared in his eyes!

Nine Soul Lamps!

His Soul Lamps were unlike anyone else’s. They even looked different. The Soul Lamps of others actually resembled lamps, but Meng Hao’s Ancient Realm fleshly body Soul Lamps looked like people!

Each and every one sat there cross-legged, looking very somber and dignified. They seemed threatening without appearing to be angry, and if you looked closely, you would be able to see that they looked like exact representations of Meng Hao!

Nine Soul Lamps distributed throughout his body. They did not circulate around him, but rather… existed inside!

This was the Ancient Realm fleshly body!

In almost the same moment that the final Soul Lamps appeared, the Bell of the Ancient Realm faded away, and a fierce wind blew out from inside the huge door. When it touched him, he shook, and a majestic qi and blood power poured into him.

His body soaked it in like a rice paddy after a drought. It contained boundless nourishing power that transformed into incredible life force inside of him. It nourished his blood and flesh, grew his bones, fed his fleshly body. It caused his qi and blood to experience rapid and terrifying growth.

He could clearly sense the incredible transformations occurring. Cracking sounds rang out, and he seemed to be completely shedding his previous self. His fleshly body power broke completely past the peak of the Immortal Realm, stepping into a new level, that of the Ancient Realm!

An Ancient Realm fleshly body appeared, causing all Heaven and Earth to tremble. The Ninth Sea roared, and Meng Hao could sense the nine Soul Lamps inside of him madly absorbing all of the rushing Realmwind. It was as if… they were using that power to ignite themselves!

Meng Hao could sense that with each Soul Lamp that he ignited, his fleshly body would grow even more powerful!

As the wind blew, his Soul Lamps began to show signs of igniting. In the end, however, the wind wasn’t enough to complete the job. Only the two Soul Lamps in his eyes came to life.

In that moment, Meng Hao felt like a million lightning bolts were crashing around in his mind. Shaken, he felt his fleshly body power rising explosively. The air around him distorted, and as he clenched his fists, it shattered.

It was a boundless feeling of power, giving him the confidence that he could easily slay Ancient Realm experts with numerous extinguished Soul Lamps. It made him feel like… the power of one punch could shake the entire world. Meng Hao truly felt… much more powerful!

The difference between himself now and moments before… was incredibly vast!

He took a deep breath, and his eyes began to shine with a bright light. Behind him, the great Door of the Ancient Realm slowly faded away. As it disappeared, the Ninth Sea finally returned to a state of calm.

In contrast, the hearts of the countless cultivators above the surface of the sea were anything but calm. The scene they had just witnessed was the fastest they had ever seen anyone enter the Ancient Realm, and also the most shocking!

That shock would not end, nor would it ever be forgotten. This day could be considered the day that Meng Hao truly rose to prominence in the Nine Seas God World, and was a day that would not be forgotten for countless years to come!

Meng Hao turned into a bright beam of light that shot back down into the sea, through the water, into the Nine Seas God World, and then into the golden gate stone stele to finally appear beneath the sect in the deep sea!

Great waves rolled out across the surface of the sea, and a vortex appeared deep under the water. However, the regions down below which had previously exerted massive pressure on Meng Hao now barely affected him at all.

30,000 meters. 60,000 meters. 90,000 meters. 120,000 meters….

Meng Hao surged with energy as he shot downward madly. At the same time, his name shot up in the rankings on the first golden gate stone stele. Although he was in 5th place, the name in 1st place only had a depth of 99,000 meters next to it! [1]

Meng Hao had already vastly exceeded everyone, except in the matter of the time spent. However… not every rank of depth required time spent. Anyone who could sink down past 180,000 meters would automatically shatter the records of any other name, and would be completely deserving to stand in 1st place!

Rumbling filled Meng Hao as he sank down further. 150,000 meters…. 180,000 meters. 210,000 meters. 240,000 meters…. Finally, when he reached 261,429 meters, he caught sight of the sea floor, and was completely shaken. [2]

Outside on the first golden gate, a bright golden light of unprecedented intensity shot up into the air as Meng Hao’s name reached… 1st place!

When people saw the number next to his name that represented the depth he had reached, they were thunderstruck.

1. 99,000 meters is “3 wan 3 qian zhang,” or “3 (10,000), 3 (1,000) zhang”

2. 261,429 meters is 87,143 zhang

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# Chapter 1082: The Third Fist Strike!

“First golden gate stone stele… 1st place….”

“I once heard that the absolute limit is more than 260,000 meters, but he… actually reached the sea floor! That’s a place that only truly powerful experts can see….” Murmurs of astonishment could be heard in the crowd. Fan Dong’er was in a daze, and Bei Yu was panting in astonishment.

261,429 meters!

The distance the land mass of the Nine Seas God World maintained from the bottom of the sea had always been a fixed number from ancient times until now. Furthermore, no one whose name was recorded on the first golden gate stone stele had ever reached that depth.

The rankings only contained names of Ancient Realm experts with five or less extinguished Soul Lamps. Because of that rule, no one with that amount of Soul Lamps… had ever gone so deep.

It was a position that instantly put someone at the peak, in 1st place, even if they only managed to stay there for an instant. Not even Demonic cultivators who were born in the Ninth Sea could go down so far.

The crowds outside of the first golden gate stone stele burst into a commotion. Cries of shock rang out, and the astonishment felt by the disciples of the Nine Seas God World reached a tempestuous level that swept across the entire sect.

The Demonic Cultivator Horde was equally shaken. When they saw Meng Hao's name on the first golden gate stone stele, their hearts were filled with dread.

Although they instinctively hated him, in the cultivation world, people respected the powerful. The Demonic cultivators also held this awe deep in their hearts, so despite their hatred of him, henceforth, they would no longer dare to provoke him further.

Meng Hao was using pure power to shake all hearts.

Currently, Meng Hao was now down at the bottom of the Ninth Sea. Despite the incredibly terrifying power of his fleshly body, he could still fill the indescribable pressure weighing down on him.

Because of that pressure, he would not be able to remain in this place for very long, perhaps only ten breaths of time. As he looked around, his heart was shaken to a profound level.

At the bottom of the Ninth Sea… he saw a corpse….

It was a vast, gargantuan corpse that seemed to make up the entire bottom of the Ninth Sea!

It was vastly archaic and ancient, and a huge gash could be seen splitting it apart….

Meng Hao was currently standing on the corpse's head. Visible on the forehead were… eight dim stars!

"A God…." he thought, shaken. He suddenly recalled Wang Tengfei, and great waves of shock rolled through him, causing him to stand there silently in the pressure. 1

He had already reached the point where he couldn't hold on any longer, and he gave one last look over the corpse. Then he turned, and prepared to head back up. However, it was in that moment in which he turned, that in his peripheral vision, he suddenly noticed that located on one of the stars on the corpse’s head… was a person!

It was a woman, wearing a long, violet garment. It was… a woman that Meng Hao remembered! It was… an old friend from Planet South Heaven!!

She stood there atop the corpse, her expression complex. 2

“Han Bei!!” Meng Hao thought, his eyes widening.

Everything was dark, with only the corpse letting off the faintest of light. Even with Meng Hao’s intensely powerful fleshly body, and vision as sharp as lighting, he could just barely make out the image clearly.

He began to tremble, and opened his eyes widely to look closer, but by that time, nothing was visible atop the star. It was almost as if what he had seen was nothing more than an illusion.

Before he could react, the pressure at the sea bottom forced him up. He saw the corpse fading away below him, and his eyes flickered.

“I feel like what I saw… was real! It was no illusion!

“I’m not sure what caused that to happen, but that woman… was Han Bei!” Meng Hao was lost in thought as he recalled all the things that had occurred between the two of them.

“Nine ancient family names….” he thought, eyes flashing. Then he thought back to how Han Bei had gone missing back on Planet South Heaven. After everyone had returned from the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect, Han Bei had vanished completely.

Suddenly, Meng Hao recalled how strange her disappearance was. It was not simply that nobody could find her. Actually… other than him, nobody even seemed to remember her at all.

It was something he had analyzed in the past, the fact that after the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect, nobody mentioned Han Bei at all. Regardless of whether any given person personally knew her or not, all traces of her seemed to have been wiped away.

Thinking about this now, Meng Hao realized that it was more of a feeling, or a guess. There was one way to prove whether or not his theory was right, and that was Chu Yuyan. She was someone who should remember Han Bei.

When she woke up, he would ask her. Then he would know the truth!

If Chu Yuyan remembered Han Bei, then everything Meng Hao had speculated was simply over-thinking. However, if Chu Yuyan… didn't remember Han Bei, then… it meant Meng Hao would definitely have to think it over some more.

"I'll know for sure when Chu Yuyan wakes up." Meng Hao glanced back down at the sea floor before shooting up toward the sect. He wouldn't forget the things he had just seen. Shortly, he reached the top, and vanished.

When he walked out of the first golden gate stone stele, he turned back to look at the list of names, and smiled. Then he sped toward the second stele.

The eyes of all the disciples were involuntarily glued to his back.

After stepping into the second golden gate stone stele, Meng Hao only needed the time it takes half an incense stick to burn before reaching 1st place. Boundless golden light erupted out from the stele.

This was his second 1st place spot.

The crowd was shouting and hollering. How could the disciples not realize what Meng Hao was trying to do…?

"He wants to take 1st place in all the steles!!"

"1st place in all of the nine stone steles?"

"It's not even worth talking about. From ancient times until now, the most 1st place spots taken by a single person has been six. And that only lasted for a hundred years before the spot was taken by someone else…."

“This Meng Hao, could it be… that he’s going to pull off another miracle!?”

Rumbling could be heard as Meng Hao flew through the air toward the third golden gate. This time he was even faster; he only need thirty breaths of time before his name sailed past all the other names to the 1st place position.

The third 1st place spot!!

The crowds were shaken and in an uproar. Gasps could be heard as Meng Hao emerged and proceeded… toward the fourth golden gate stone stele!

Moments later, boundless golden light rose up, staining the entire ocean the color of gold. Meng Hao… had his fourth 1st place spot!

Four steles, all of them 1st place!

The Nine Seas God World was boiling with excitement. Meng Hao really was pulling off a miracle, and his image was being unforgettably engraved into the hearts of an entire generation.

Meng Hao chose not to enter the fifth stele. That one, he didn’t need!

He shot past it toward the sixth stele, entered, and after the time it takes half an incense stick to burn, had yet another 1st place spot!

Everyone was so excited they felt like lightning bolts were crashing down all around. It had been a very, very long time since something like this had happened in the Nine Seas God World, something that set everyone’s blood boiling.

Seventh stele, 1st place!

Eighth stele, 1st place!

Meng Hao went from one golden gate to another, and other than the fifth stele, which he wanted no part of, he took 1st place in all of them!

He was followed by a crowd of excited Nine Seas God World disciples. The Demonic cultivators were ashen-faced, their hearts filled with intense fear and shock regarding Meng Hao.

He… was the first person to have ever succeeded at doing something like this in the Nine Seas God World.

It was now a certainty that his name would be an eternal myth passed down through the history of the sect!

Finally, he appeared in front of the ninth golden gate stone stele. He came to a stop and stood there for a moment. Then, face solemn, he took a deep breath, and entered.

The moment he entered, the old man's voice echoed out to fill the entire world.

"Do you believe yourself to be qualified to gain the enlightenment of my third fist strike?"

"Absolutely!" Meng Hao replied immediately.

"Very well!" As the voice echoed out, the old man appeared out of thin air. He looked at Meng Hao, and his eyes shone with praise. He began to walk forward, his voice booming.

"First fist, Life-Extermination Fist!

"After extermination, one's own life must be sacrificed!

"After self-immolation, one can… slay Gods!

"My third fist strike is called… God-Slaying!" The old man's voice thrummed with energy. He strode forward, and all of a sudden, it seemed like he was the world, and the world was him!

He neared, fist swinging. It looked like an ordinary punch, not as murderous as the Life-Extermination Fist, nor as domineering as the Self-Immolation

Fist. It seemed simple. However, it also filled Meng Hao with an unprecedented sensation of deadly crisis.

It was as if this one punch could suck in the energy of the entire world, and transform that energy into the power… to slay Gods!

“What are Gods?!” As the fist closed in, the old man’s voice continued to echo out.

“Just another name some of the Outsiders call themselves. As for us from the Immortal World, we respect their power. Therefore, if they wish to call themselves Gods, then we approve!

“It is only because we approve of them that… killing them feels so wonderful!

“Remember, Immortals are above everything. And Gods… are like treasures to make ourselves stronger! In my lifetime, I slew 92 Gods. Eventually, I was killed, but my will remained behind in this stone stele, transformed into a soul of battle!” The God-Slaying Fist closed in.

Meng Hao was shaking, as he realized that he was completely incapable of blocking this fist strike. It was an entire world condensed into one fist. Despite the fact that his cultivation base was now vastly beyond his previous level, it was still impossible for him to resist it.

“Why… should I resist it?” Suddenly, his mind trembled as an idea formed. His eyes began to shine brightly, and instead of trying to block it, he clenched his own hand into a fist and chose to imitate the old man. He decided… to unleash his own God-Slaying Fist!

The old man threw his head back and laughed. When his fist connected with Meng Hao’s, all of the power of the world poured into Meng Hao. However, Meng Hao wasn’t injured at all; instead, the power guided him to a new awareness. As the power poured into his fist, the world collapsed.

“Go, you have been enlightened!” The old man’s smiling voice echoed out as the world vanished. When everything became clear again, Meng Hao was outside of the ninth golden gate stone stele.

Behind him, the name in the 1st place position, Zong Wuya… moved to 2nd place.

Meng Hao’s name shone with boundless golden light as he moved to… 1st place!

2. In the original Chinese there is a line here which says “she was rubbing/touching (something)” but doesn’t say specifically what. I suspect it’s a typo/oversight on the part of Er Gen, and I don’t want to guess at the meaning. For example, “she was rubbing her temples” and “she was rubbing the corpse” would have very different implications

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# Chapter 1083: Lord Fifth’s Grand Ambition!

For years in the Ninth Mountain and Sea’s Nine Seas God World, the most 1st place spots occupied by any one person was six. That person earned honor and glory that lasted for many years before fading. Even to this day, there was some trace of that glory left behind.

The single remaining trace was on the ranking list of the ninth golden gate stone stele. That person was the previous 1st place spot holder… Zong Wuya. A thousand years before, he had been the number one Chosen in the Nine Seas God World. Although he had become a legend, strangely, his name was not very well known in the outside world.

But now, Meng Hao had broken his record. He had eight 1st place spots, ensuring that everyone in the sect was shaken, from the cultivators watching everything that happened in person to those who were observing from afar in secluded meditation.

Conversations immediately broke out in the crowd.

“This makes me think of… Elder Brother Zong Wuya from all those years ago….”

“His performance was just as stunning and grand. So domineering….”

“Elder Brother Zong Wuya’s achievements slowly faded away over a thousand years. As for Meng Hao’s achievements… I wonder how many thousands of years will have to pass before he is surpassed… as 1st place on the ninth stele!”

As the buzz from the surrounding crowd continued to grow louder, Meng Hao took a deep breath, clasped hands, and bowed deeply to Granny Nine and the others. Then, he turned and shot off toward his Immortal's cave.

As Meng Hao left, he heard Granny Nine's transmitting into his ears: "Seven days. In seven days, the Windswept Realm will be opened…. Make your final preparations."

He stopped in place, then turned and bowed again, before finally vanishing.

Soon after, he appeared in his valley Immortal's cave, sinking down through the water.

Almost immediately, he heard shrill cries echoing about, which happened to be the excited squawks of the parrot.

"Listen up, it's inspection time! Look lively for Lord Fifth! Come, come. We sing on my mark! Lord Fifth's future happiness all depends on you!"

The meat jelly didn't want to be left behind, so it cried out: "And Lord Third too! Lord Third's future all depends on you!"

Meng Hao looked around, a strange expression on his face. The first thing he noticed was that the group of Demonic cultivators in the pool of water looked extremely gaunt and haggard. However, their expressions were that of mad piety, as if the parrot were truly a god to them.

Even more shocking was that Su Yan looked completely different than before. Her face was pale, and she looked dazed. Apparently, the ordeal of going through these days of indescribable torment had brought her willpower to the point of breaking. She looked like she was going through the motions on pure instinct.

The parrot gave a shout, and the singing began. Everyone belted out the song in harmony, maintaining a strange cadence. Despite having prepared himself mentally, as soon as Meng Hao heard the song, he could barely force himself to keep listening for more than a few seconds.

“I’m your little, dear little seafood dish! However you love me, it’s never too much! I’m your little, dear little seafood dish! Seeeaaaaafoooooood DISH!” 1

The parrot looked around arrogantly, especially as the final verse was sung, and the pitch of the song rose up sharply. In the blink of an eye, the sky went dim, and a huge wind kicked up.

Meng Hao’s eyes went wide as he stared at all of this happening. He took a deep breath, and was unable to stop himself from admiring the parrot and meat jelly. He had handed over a troupe of hateful Demonic cultivators to the two dunces, and they had come back to him with an impassioned, fanatical singing group.

“STOP!” the parrot cried suddenly, flapping its wings to stop the singing. Not a peep could be heard from the singers. Meng Hao didn’t even dare to think about what they had experienced to cause them to behave so well.

“Look, bitches, don’t you remember what Lord Fifth told you!? You can’t sing that way! You have to have FEELING! You need to MOVE YOUR EYES!” Enraged, the parrot flew over to a sea turtle and began to beat it viciously with its wings.

“And YOU, you giant scallop! You need to shine! You hear me!? DAMMIT! You idiot!

“And the rest of you, what are you looking so happy for!? What the hell were you doing with that last verse, huh? What the hell? Lord Fifth wants the tone to rise. Do you understand? RISING TONE!”

After more enraged rebuking, the parrot finally flew over to Meng Hao, looking very apologetic, as if it had failed in its mission.

“Haowie, give Lord Fifth a bit more time. These morons don’t listen very well. In Lord Fifth’s opinion, if we try to sell them now, we’ll really sustain some heavy losses. Just leave them in my hands for a bit longer. Lord Fifth has a dream, and that dream is to have a really top-notch seafood song. I’m going to intensify the training immediately!

“The day will come when I take them out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. We’ll tour the entire Mountain and Sea Realm! We’ll travel through the starry sky! Their song will become the melody of all the Heavens!” Having found its new ambition, the parrot began to glow with bright light.

Meng Hao stared in shock. Before he could even say anything in response, the meat jelly jumped in.

“Hey, you old pigeon, why are you glowing all of a sudden?! Waahhhh! How’d you do that?! I want to glow!” It suddenly held its breath, causing its face to turn red. Then it let out a mighty bellow, after which… it suddenly began to glow with bright light as well.

Meng Hao felt a headache coming on. He quickly nodded at the seemingly insane parrot, then hastily turned and flew toward his Immortal’s cave. As he neared it, he could hear the voice of the meat jelly calling out in irritation.

“Listen, you crotchety pigeon, these seafood dishes are obedient thanks to Lord Third’s contributions! Lord Third wants bullies! Lord Third wants these seafood dishes sold and exchanged for bullies! I must convert bullies!”

“Moron! How much do you think you could sell them for? Do you even have a brain? Well, do you? You can count, can’t you!?”

“Lord Third has a brain! Lord Third’s entire body is a brain!!”

When Meng Hao heard this, he cleared his throat and stepped into his Immortal’s cave. Moments later, more angry bickering could be heard from the parrot.

“Moron! Fool! Idiot! These seafood dishes would only sell for a trifling sum! However, after they’ve completed Lord Fifth’s training, we’ll have an incredible singing group on our hands! Whatever place we go to, we can sell out huge concerts! Do you know how many spirit stones we can make? That’s the best way to handle things long-term!”

“You mean like when Meng Hao got all those spirit stones when he went to the Medicine Pavilion in the Fang Clan?”

“Obviously! Except that Haowie doesn’t count for bird crap. If he can do that, just imagine how much better Lord Fifth can do! I’ve already figured it all out. When the time comes, the two of us will be the lead singers. Even Haowie will have to come sing too. When I think of that image, I just get so excited! We need to think of a band name! Come on, start thinking of some ideas.”

Meng Hao slipped into his Immortal’s cave and waved his hand, sealing away the outside world. He truly had no further desire to listen to the parrot and meat jelly speaking to each other. As for the song… Meng Hao believed that he would feel utmost admiration for anyone who could listen to the entire thing.

Although, if the parrot actually did succeed, and the seafood song got popular, maybe he would cooperate and sing with them… for the spirit stones.

He sat down cross-legged and patted his bag of holding. A beam of light immediately flew out, which was Chu Yuyan. As he lay her down in front of him, he noticed that her face was no longer pale, but had some color to it. She still wasn’t awake, though.

He looked at her for a long time before finally sighing inwardly. Then he reached out and touched her forehead, sending cultivation base power into her, accelerating the process of dispelling the poison.

The heart-blood of ten Sea Dragons was definitely capable of dispelling the poison afflicting her. However, it wasn’t capable of doing so very quickly. The process of cleansing her qi passageways was a slow one, in which the poison was constantly broken down and transformed into something beneficial to one’s cultivation base.

After checking her thoroughly, he sat in thought for a moment, and then decided not to force the process to go any faster. Chu Yuyan’s current state wasn’t a harmful one to her, and in fact, could be viewed as a type of good fortune.

Actually, the Sea Dragon venom was both a venom and powerful tonic. With no antidote, it would be deadly. With the antidote, it was exactly the opposite.

“This catastrophe will actually help her to make a huge advancement in terms of her cultivation base, and bring her that much closer to the Immortal Realm.” Eventually, he pulled his finger back, whereupon a tremor ran through Chu Yuyan. Her eyes opened slowly, and she looked blankly at Meng Hao. Then, her eyes went wide for a moment before she closed them again, as if she were thinking.

After a few breaths of time passed, she opened her eyes again, and they were clear and bright.

She seemed extremely calm, although her voice was a bit weak as she said, “Was it you that saved me? Thank you. What is this place?”

When he saw the expression on her face, he was silent for a moment before saying: “It was my fault you got dragged into this…. We’re in the Nine Seas God World.”

Then he proceeded to explain everything that had happened.

Chu Yuyan didn’t speak. She merely listened quietly. From the look of it, she was in a very fragile state, and would only be able to stay awake for a short period of time.

After hearing the story, she smiled slightly, as if she had forgotten about everything that had occurred between the two of them in the past, and now thought of them as merely friends. She gave a nod of understanding, doing nothing to reveal what she might actually be thinking.

“I never imagined that after all these years, we would meet again like this.”

Were it not for the words she had muttered back on Seajacket Island, Meng Hao would have had a hard time detecting that she was acting strangely. Now that he was looking for it, it was plain to see that she was putting on an act. Furthermore, within her slight smile could be seen a trace of both disappointment and pride.

Back on Planet South Heaven, she had made a decision. You have your glory, and I… I have my pride.

“It doesn’t matter how it all happened,” she said. “Thank you. I will remember the kindness you’ve shown. Maybe I won’t ever be able to pay you back, but I won’t forget.” She struggled to her feet, then gave Meng Hao a curtsying bow.

Seeing Chu Yuyan act so politely toward him caused Meng Hao to sit there in quiet reticence.

“I’ve recovered,” she said softly, “so… I’ll take my leave now. You… take care of yourself.” Supporting herself by leaning against the wall of the cave, she made to leave, but was too weak. After only a few steps, she staggered, face pale, and began to fall over.

Sighing, Meng Hao reached out to steady her.

Biting her bottom lip, Chu Yuyan smiled and said, “Well don’t I look silly. I can walk, Meng Hao. Thank you.”

Brushing away his hand, she took a few steps forward, but then her body weakened, and she toppled over. Her forehead smacked into the stone wall, and because of the weakness of her body, and her lack of any of the protection of her cultivation base, it gashed her skin and blood began to flow.

She gaped in astonishment, and tears welled up in her eyes. She struggled to rise back to her feet, but couldn’t. Meng Hao stepped forward to help her.

“Thank you, but I can do it myself,” she said with a weak smile.

“Chu Yuyan!” Meng Hao growled, reaching down and helping her up.

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Note from Lord Fifth: Look, bitches, Lord Fifth is too busy training these idiots to spend much time thinking of a band name. So, he colluded with Deathblade to have an impromptu contest. Leave your idea for a band name in the comments below. The winner will receive backstage passes to our debut performance! Well, what are you waiting for!? Are you as stupid as Lord Third? Come on, think of some good names!

1. This latest seafood song is a direct reference to one of the most popular songs in China in recent years. You can find some information about it, and even hear the tune, here. I feel like I hear this song at least every other day here in China, and it makes me want to rip my ears out, so from now on I’m going to sing Lord Fifth’s version of it!

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# Chapter 1084: The Path to the Windswept Realm!

Chu Yuyan trembled and took a deep breath. Then she turned slowly to look at Meng Hao and, summoning all the energy she could muster, said: “Let. Go. Of. Me!”

He frowned.

“What, can’t keep your hands off me?” she asked derisively. “Just like that year in the volcano?”

“You’re very weak right now,” he replied calmly, releasing her arm. “Don’t be so anxious to leave.”

“Thank you for saving me,” she said, her voice even weaker than before. “As for getting kidnapped, you don’t need to feel guilty about that. It’s not like you did it personally.” She tucked a strand of hair behind her ear and then slowly edged forward, keeping her hand planted firmly on the wall to support herself.

Meng Hao did nothing to stop her.

Just when she was almost at the exit, her weakness overwhelmed her. Her vision swam, and she lapsed into unconsciousness.

Meng Hao sighed, stepping forward and grabbing her before she could fall. He then laid her down on the ground and sat cross-legged off to the side, his expression complex.

The Immortal’s cave was very quiet, which allowed Meng Hao to do a lot of thinking. One by one, various scenes of events on Planet South Heaven played through his mind.

Time passed. Two days later, Chu Yuyan opened her eyes again. By now, she had recovered a lot of her energy, but was still weak. She struggled to her feet once again, but this time, didn't mention anything about leaving. She sat down cross-legged, gazing blankly at nothing.

"Do you remember Han Bei?" Meng Hao suddenly asked.

Chu Yuyan didn't respond for a long time. Finally she turned and looked at Meng Hao with a slight frown.

"Who's Han Bei?"

Meng Hao's eyes widened. After a moment of thought, he said, "Han Bei, from Planet South Heaven. She was a disciple of the Black Sieve Sect, in the Southern Domain."

"Doesn't ring a bell," she said, looking at him, "I didn't have much contact with the Black Sieve Sect. Why?"

"Oh, nothing. I was just thinking of something that happened a while back." His face darkened as he realized that Chu Yuyan's answer didn't really help him much at all. After all… Chu Yuyan never really knew much about the Black Sieve Sect to begin with!

Therefore, it made sense that she might not know much about Han Bei. The fact that she didn't remember her now was a bit of a clue, but not true proof, nor much of an explanation about anything. After all, Chu Yuyan's position within the Violet Fate Sect had been far different than Han Bei's in the Black Sieve Sect.

It was even possible that she had never even heard of Han Bei, or if she had, never cared enough to take note of her.

Seeing that Meng Hao didn't want to discuss the matter further, Chu Yuyan didn't ask any questions. She closed her eyes to meditate. Right now, she knew that she didn't have the energy to leave; therefore, the best thing to do was to recover as quickly as possible. Then she could leave and return to her sect. She… didn’t want to look at Meng Hao, which made it difficult to know how to interact with him. Every time she saw him, she felt unsettled.

In the days following her departure from Planet South Heaven, she had often asked herself what it was about Meng Hao that she actually liked. It couldn’t just be that one incident in the volcano. Nor could it be all the things that had happened afterward. In the end, she couldn’t find a good reason. She knew that she should hate him, but no matter how much she tried, it was as if… his image was burned into her heart. Sometimes it was Fang Mu from the Violet Fate Sect, and sometimes it was Meng Hao. Sometimes it was both.

She couldn’t get rid of those images. It was almost like some type of curse.

Chu Yuyan sighed, closed her eyes, and continued to meditate.

The Immortal’s cave was once again silent. After a while, Meng Hao’s eyes glimmered as various possibilities flickered through his mind.

“Maybe I’m just reading too much into it, but… the whole situation is very peculiar.” After more thought, his eyes began to shine. Although the matter seemed relatively simple, the more he thought about it, the more complicated it got. He was finally convinced that there was definitely something extraordinary going on.

“The easiest way to discover the truth would be to just go back to Planet South Heaven. However… the Black Sieve Sect is long gone, and it would be hard to track down any survivors.

“Well, Qing’er was there. Once we’re reunited, I can ask her and I’ll know for sure. If Qing’er doesn’t remember Han Bei either, then that means… there’s definitely something very mysterious going on!”

Due to the imminent opening of the Windswept Realm, Meng Hao took the time to make various preparations. He used spirit-immortal stones on all of his black beetles, and even increased the number he fed them in order to speed up the process. In the days that passed, he sealed them away one by one into his bag of holding.

In addition to that, he was also maintaining the peak performance of his Immortal Emperor state. He was far, far stronger than before, and also had his newly empowered divine sense. Furthermore, because of all the trials and tribulations that he had experienced, his cultivation base had experienced explosive growth.

However, those were not his trump cards. His trump card was his Ancient Realm fleshly body, and the two ignited Soul Lamps in his eyes. Because of that, his battle prowess was vastly increased.

Another thing he did was organize his bag of holding. He wanted to make sure that he was thoroughly and completely prepared for the Windswept Realm. He also took out the half-burned incense stick that he had acquired along with the spirit-immortal stones. After examining it thoughtfully for a while, he carefully put it back into his bag of holding.

“I should be able to find an opportunity to absorb my second Nirvana Fruit in the Windswept Realm!” he thought, taking a deep breath.

Soon, seven days passed. At dawn, the toll of bells could be heard, filling the entire Nine Seas God World. Meng Hao’s eyes opened, and they shone brightly.

In the same moment that he opened his eyes, an ancient voice echoed in his ears. It was none other than Godmaster. “Meng Hao, the hour has arrived. Come to the mountain peak!”

Meng Hao took a deep breath and rose to his feet. At the same time, he waved his hands, causing numerous bands of black light to fly toward him. In the end, more than fifty black pods landed on his palm, which he then put into his bag of holding.

He looked over at Chu Yuyan, who opened her eyes and looked back at him.

“Take good care of yourself,” she said softly.

Meng Hao nodded and walked to the door of the Immortal’s cave. There, he stopped.

“The place I’m going to is the shattered remnant of another world. The natural laws there are incomplete, which makes investigation of them that much easier. The venom inside you will dissipate within seven days, and your cultivation base will be restored….

“At that time, you will be on the very edge of the Immortal Realm, on the verge of a breakthrough!

“Because of the chaos of natural law in the place I’m going, it’s actually a very suitable place for Immortal Ascension. However, there are also many dangers there. Do you… want to come along?”

Chu Yuyan sat there quietly, expressions of confusion and reminiscence flashing across her face. After a long moment, her expression turned to one of resolve. She had suddenly recalled something told to her once…. by Pill Demon.

Work hard at cultivation. That way… one day, if you find you’ve lost everything, you will still have a Great dao with you.

Chu Yuyan looked up at Meng Hao and said, “Thank you. I’ll go!”

He didn’t respond. He waved his right sleeve, causing an incredible gravitational force to appear. Chu Yuyan didn’t struggle; she allowed the power to pull her into Meng Hao’s bag of holding.

Finally, Meng Hao turned and exited the Immortal’s cave in a flash.

As soon as he appeared outside the door, he shot upward. As he did, he glanced down at the Demonic cultivators and Su Yan, then made a grasping motion, sealing them and pulling them into his bag of holding. “Parrot! Meat jelly! Let’s go!”

The parrot gaped in astonishment, and the meat jelly looked flabbergasted.

“Go where?”

“The Windswept Realm!”

RUMBLE!

Meng Hao shot out of the water and flew up into the sky. The parrot and meat jelly transformed into beams of light that caught up and landed on Meng Hao’s shoulder. The meat jelly was still blabbering.

“Windswept Realm? Where’s that? What kind of place is it? I’ve never been there! How do we get there, huh? Hey, why aren’t you saying anything?”

“Shut up! the parrot growled. Then it cleared its throat and was about to speak when Meng Hao interrupted: “There are bullies there. And also creatures with lots of fur and feathers.” Instantly, the meat jelly grew very serious, and the parrot, very excited. The two ninnies exchanged glances, then let out whoops of excitement.

Meng Hao flew over the lands of the sect at top speed. Soon, the same mountain peak where he had first met Granny Nine and Godmaster appeared up ahead.

The top of the mountain was covered with glittering white snow, just like before. However, there was also something new, a pillar of light rising up into the sky, shooting out of the sect, through the Ninth Sea, and up into the starry sky.

Next, six additional beams of light appeared from various locations in the Nine Seas God World, which also shot up into the sky. All of the Nine Seas God World’s spell formations were activated, unleashing incredible power in all directions.

As he looked over the scene, Meng Hao was shocked to find that a Dao Realm Patriarch could be seen sitting cross-legged within each of the pillars of light. Granny Nine was there, as were Godmaster and Ling Yunzi. Even the two Demonic Patriarchs were there.

In total, seven pillars of light were shooting up into the starry sky. There, distortions could be seen as a huge rift opened up.

Simultaneously, all of the cultivators in the Nine Seas God World, including those of the Immortal Realm and Ancient Realm, sat cross-legged in meditation, organized into a massive spell formation.

As they unleashed the power of their cultivation bases, the energy of Heaven and Earth descended, which in turn caused the energy of the Nine Seas God World to erupt explosively. The energy poured into the seven pillars of light, causing them to shine even more resplendently.

Soon, the full power of the cultivation bases of all the Nine Seas God World disciples was being unleashed, including that of the Demonic cultivators. The entire sect trembled, and the land quaked. Suddenly, the entire land mass began to rise. Every inch that it rose cause the seven pillars of light to grow even stronger. Massive rumbling could be heard, and the rift up in the starry sky opened wider.

That rift was apparently… the path to the Windswept Realm!

The entire land mass rose higher and higher, faster and faster. Soon, it was rising hundreds of meters with every movement. Sea water cascaded down off of it.

Meng Hao was shaken as he stood there watching all of this happen, his eyes shining with anticipation of reaching the Windswept Realm!

“Other than the fact that half of the world crumbled away, and many natural laws changed, everything else is a perfectly preserved replica of… one of the Lower Realms of yesteryear!

“The Windswept Realm!” he murmured.

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# Chapter 1085: Arriving in the Windswept Realm!

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

Booms like thunder filled the Ninth Sea, echoing out powerfully in all directions. The waters boiled and roared, almost as if an awakening giant were about to burst out from under the surface!

That giant… was none other than the Nine Seas God World! It rose up, 300 meters, then 3,000 meters… in the space of a few breaths, massive rumbling filled the entire Ninth Sea as a huge land mass flew up into the air!

From a distance, it looked like a gigantic island, with seven beams of light shooting up from it. The light flew up into the starry sky, causing the rift up above to grow larger and larger.

At the same time, Fan Dong’er appeared near Meng Hao on the same mountain. She was also looking up into the sky, her expression that of nervousness… and excitement!

In addition to Fan Dong’er, there were three others, two men and a woman. They looked familiar to Meng Hao, and he quickly placed them as other Chosen disciples of the Nine Seas God World.

All of them were waiting with keen anticipation.

On the other side of the mountain, more figures appeared in quick succession. Bei Yu was one of them. She stepped out slowly, flanked by three other Demonic cultivators. All of them had profound cultivation bases. One of them, Meng Hao recognized; he was none other than the burly body cultivator he had fought not too long ago.

Obviously, when the Nine Seas God World opened the Windswept Realm, it would not just be Meng Hao entering by himself. All of these people would be joining him!

Meanwhile, similar scenes played out in the Eighth Sea. There, columns of light rose up from the God World just like they had in the Ninth Sea, shooting up into the starry sky to open a huge rift. On the Eighth Sea, a huge continent appeared, upon which a group of eight people could be seen waiting in anticipation.

One of those people was extremely gaunt, and stood apart from the others. He was surrounded by countless swirling bones, and his eyes shone with a cold gleam as he smiled slightly.

“Windswept Realm. I should be able to kill to my heart’s content.”

It was the same in the Seventh Sea, the Sixth Sea, the Fifth Sea, and the Fourth Sea. As of this moment, huge land masses rose up from all of them, as well as towering columns of light which tore open rifts in the starry sky.

On the Fourth Sea, laughter rang out. A young man stood there, wearing a long black robe, laughing heartily. On his forehead, an Echelon mark could be seen, glittering brightly.

A brutally cold gleam could be seen in his eyes, and as the rift in the starry sky slowly opened up, his laughter grew louder.

Countless people stood respectfully in front of him, showing incredible reverence.

By this point, each and every member of the Echelon could be seen on the surfaces of the Seas in their respective corners of the Mountain and Sea Realm. All of them were waiting… for the Windswept Realm to open. All of these people were Chosen, and any one of them could be considered similar to Meng Hao. To the other Chosen from their parts of the Mountain and Sea Realm, they were seemingly impassable mountains.

Now, all of these mountain-like figures were going to convene in the Windswept Realm, which would be the location… of the Echelon battles!

Some Echelon members had already clashed on numerous occasions. However, for Meng Hao, this would be his first time… encountering any of them!

Echelon battles were battles of life and death. They were not expressions of mere friction between members, but a method of determining… who was the most powerful among them!

As for all of the other people who entered the Windswept Realm with the Echelon, they were secondary, mere adornments really. Of course, if they were qualified, it wouldn’t necessarily be impossible… for them to kill one of the Echelon members and even steal a place in the Echelon itself!

A young woman flew through the air near the Third Mountain. She wore a long, white garment, and was so immaculately beautiful that she could cause all other life forms to dim in comparison.

This was the same woman who had been playing Go with the young Echelon member from the First Mountain. She had left to search for Meng Hao after sensing his presence, hoping to play a game of Go with him and discuss the Dao. She was the Immortal Ancient successor, Xue’er! 1

She suddenly stopped in place and turned her head. A beautiful smile could be seen on her face, and all of a sudden, the entire world, even the entire starry sky, seemed to shine brightly.

“Looks like I can save a lot of energy and not go all the way to the Ninth Mountain,” she thought. “I’ll just look for him in the Windswept Realm.” Smiling, she headed toward the Third Sea.

She was not in the Echelon, but she was someone… who any Echelon member would view as extremely important!

In fact, anyone who could obtain her assistance would assuredly grow much more powerful than the others, and would make much more progress on the path of the Echelon. In fact, their chances of final success… would be even greater!

All of the great Seas in the Mountain and Sea Realm were boiling and roaring. Rifts opened up in the starry sky, growing larger by the moment. If there was a position in the Mountain and Sea Realm that enabled you to see all of the various starry skies, then you would be able to see that…

The rifts above all of the Nine Seas of the Mountain and Sea Realm formed a straight line. However, currently it was as if that line had been cut into nine segments, which were beginning to stretch out across their respective mountains and seas. It was obvious that soon those lines would join together to form a path… a huge rift connecting together through the entire Mountain and Sea Realm!

At that time… the Windswept Realm would be completely opened.

Everyone was waiting in anticipation.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, and his eyes glittered brightly. He could also sense that each and every one of the other Echelon members in the other Mountains and Seas was waiting just as he was.

It was at this point that Godmaster’s voice rang out over the Ninth Sea: “The will of the Ninth Sea accepts the orders once set down by Paragon Sea Dream. Let the Ninth Sea’s will… open the Windswept Door!”

Instantly, the Ninth Sea began to rumble. Huge waves surged back and forth as a sword began to rise up out of the water. It was completely formed of seawater, and in the blink of an eye, it flew up into the sky with shocking speed.

This was a sword that seemed capable of exterminating all life.

Almost in the same moment that the sword appeared, it shot toward the starry sky, where it slashed at the rift. The entire world trembled, and cracking sounds echoed out, causing the minds of all onlookers to tremble. A huge rumbling sound could be heard as the rift suddenly tore open, ripping directly toward the Eighth Mountain.

It almost looked like the starry sky was shattering. It was an assault on the eyes, causing everyone who saw it to be shaken to the verge of madness.

Simultaneously, above the Eighth Sea, countless cultivators watched as the rift from the Ninth Mountain and Sea ripped toward them. In the blink of an eye, it merged with the rift above the Eighth Mountain, whereupon a huge blade shot out from the Eighth Sea up toward the starry sky and ripped it open further!

Rumbling could be heard as the force from the blade caused the rift to rip open toward the Seventh Sea. Next, a huge pagoda flew up from the Seventh Sea, causing the rift to rip toward the Sixth Sea….

It was like a cycle. It continued on to the Fifth Sea, the Fourth Sea, the Third Sea… until the very end, when the huge rift merged with the rift above the First Sea, creating one gargantuan rift above the Mountain and Sea Realm.

In the moment that the rift opened, Meng Hao and all of the others trembled violently and felt their hearts pounding. They all knew full well that their destination was not a place in the Mountain and Sea Realm!

This trial by fire involved leaving the Mountain and Sea Realm, and going to one of the former Lower Realms!

For Meng Hao, this feeling was completely different than the feeling he had experienced when leaving Planet South Heaven and heading toward Planet East Victory.

Godmaster’s archaic voice echoed out again: “The hour has arrived. Meng Hao… it is time to leave!

“Keep in mind, you will not be the only disciple going to the Windswept Realm. There will also be cultivators from the other Eight Seas. Remember, the only person you can rely upon… is yourself!

“Even more importantly, remember that the World Essence lies in the central region of the Windswept Realm. That is what you must acquire!

“Whoever acquires the World Essence will be the victor of this trial by fire. It is only then that the great door back to the Mountain and Sea Realm will appear and you will be able to return!

“When in the Windswept Realm, you must rely on yourself, but, you will also have the support of your fellow sect members. Whatever past grievances or grudges existed will no longer apply in the Windswept Realm. I don’t care what you do to each other after you get back, even if you start fighting immediately afterwards!

“However, in the Windswept Realm, the most important thing… is that you work together!”

Suddenly, Godmaster waved his sleeve, causing a bag of holding to fly out toward Meng Hao. Inside that bag of holding was the 300,000,000 Immortal jades he had won from the Demonic Cultivator Horde!

It was at this point that one of the two Patriarchs from the Demonic Cultivator Horde spoke:

“All of you, take heed. While you are in the Windswept Realm, forget about past matters. The most important thing is to work as a team!”

After the words echoed out, Godmaster spoke into Meng Hao’s mind.

“After you get to the Windswept Realm, it’s up to you whether or not to kill the Demonic cultivators. Don’t think that the things you have experienced recently are unique to the Ninth Sea. All of the other members of the Echelon from the other Seas have experienced similar dangers!”

Similar provocative words were spoken into the ears of the Demonic cultivators.

Rumbling could be heard as Meng Hao suddenly shot up into the air. He was followed by Fan Dong'er and Bei Yu, plus the three ordinary cultivators and the three Demonic cultivators. In total, nine streaks of colorful light shot up into the rift in the starry sky.

As they neared, a powerful gravitational force appeared, which grabbed ahold of them and pulled them into the pitch black of the rift.

Streaks of light could also be seen above the Eighth Sea, the Seventh Sea… all the way to the First Sea. In each and every case, there were nine people, no more, no less.

The only exception was in the Third Sea, where the young woman Xue'er joined the group, bringing their numbers to a total of ten.

All in all, 82 cultivators shot into the rift.

Of that entire group, Meng Hao was the first to enter!

In this instance, it was the Ninth Sea which had opened the Windswept Realm, and Meng Hao was the most qualified from that location. As such, he was the first cultivator to enter the Windswept Realm.

He was in the lead, surrounded by boundless darkness. However, a wind could be felt, a wind which grew stronger and stronger. Eventually, it was like a windstorm which swept about in all directions.

Within that windstorm, Meng Hao could see countless corpses and ruins. It looked like the remains of a battlefield, from which he could sense how terrifying the war had been which destroyed all these things.

It was even more shocking than the Ruins of Immortality!

Suddenly, an enormous gravitational force appeared within the windstorm, grabbing Meng Hao, Fan Dong'er and the others, and pulling them forward.

Up ahead was a rift that bore a strong semblance to a spell formation. It was filled with an ancient aura, making it impossible to determine how long the spell formation had stood there, surrounded by the wreckage of war.

There was no time to examine his surroundings. Despite having seen the glow of magical treasures in the surrounding ruins, Meng Hao didn’t have a chance to grab any of them. He and the others from the Ninth Sea shot toward the spell formation rift, and were instantly sucked in.

In that moment, they were suddenly swept across the void and into a strange world.

Before any of them could even see clearly, Meng Hao heard trembling, awe-struck voices echoing out around him.

“We respectfully welcome all Higher Immortals!”

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# Chapter 1086: Desire in the Windswept Realm!

The Windswept Realm!

Once one of the 3,000 Lower Realms, it was called the garden of the Immortal World, and was regarded as one of the one hundred most important Realms!

Many, many cultivators appeared here who eventually ascended to the Immortal World, where they occupied numerous positions of Immortal authority. In fact, there was even an Imperial Lord who had arisen from there!

An Imperial Lord was a venerable stage that existed between the Dao Realm and the Paragon Realm!

That was in the heyday of the Windswept Realm, when it was filled with countless lands and seas, and experienced an endless baptism from the Immortal River of the Paragon Immortal Realm.

Back then, the Windswept Realm was even called Little Immortal World. Its skies were bright blue, touched with occasional Immortal Rain that virtually bathed the life forms of the lands in an Immortal will.

The enormous Immortal River in its sky was like a waterfall that fell down onto the lands below, causing an endless wind to gust. That wind would catalyze the life force flames of all living things, making the place extremely suitable for cultivation. Even mortals who lived there had extremely long lives, and it was not uncommon for them to live longer than two sixty-year-cycles.

That was how the Windswept Realm got its name.

To the cultivators of the Windswept Realm, the Paragon Immortal Realm was a fear-inspiring place. They were both inspired by its power, and at the same time, feared it. They showed extreme respect to any Immortal who descended from the Paragon Immortal Realm. To them, even the slightest word uttered by an Immortal was something of profound importance. In fact, any expression or tone of voice that could cause displeasure to an Immortal was not tolerated in the Windswept Realm.

Of course, not all Immortals were so easily displeased. Most Immortals were revered, but not intensely feared. After all, the Windswept Realm had existed for an eternity, and many Patriarchs or other members of the various sects or clans there eventually ascended to the Immortal World.

Unfortunately, all of that changed during the great catastrophe. The Windswept Realm as a whole collapsed, and more than half of its lands were lost, as if they had been swallowed up by some great beast. The fires of war swept about, and as a result, Immortal will was no longer abundant, but rather, reduced to ruins.

Most importantly of all, the Immortal River was cut off. Like the other Realms, the Windswept Realm was cut off, leaving it in isolation. As the years went by, the world slowly recovered, but that obstacle always remained.

Therefore, the people of the Windswept Realm were unaware of everything happening outside of their world. They thought that the Paragon Immortal Realm was still as eternally powerful as ever. Therefore, any Immortal who visited their Realm was met with a deferential respect that was ingrained in their blood, and was as strong as ever.

Furthermore… it had been a very, very long time since anyone from the Windswept Realm had ascended to the Immortal World. That led to hesitation on their part. As for their cultivation bases, they were limited to the Cauldron Seeking stage, making it impossible for them advance further into Immortal Ascension, which would make it possible for them to leave their world. 1

Because of all of that, any Immortal who arrived was treated with incredible respect, and was even feared. It also caused the cultivators of the Windswept Realm to thirst for the good fortune which might be available from the Immortals…. Therefore, to the people of this generation of the Windswept Realm, the recently arrived cultivators from the Mountain and Sea Realm… were like deities!

Meng Hao and Fan Dong’er, as well as the other three ordinary cultivators, plus Bei Yu and the three Demonic cultivators, all arrived in the southeastern region of the Windswept Realm, in the middle of a desert.

Rolling sands spread out in all directions, and the heat was so intense that it caused everyone to sweat profusely. Despite that, there were nearly ten thousand cultivators present, packed together tightly, prostrated on the ground in the shape of a spell formation.

There was no attacking power built into this spell formation; it was merely ceremonial, a show of respect.

It was made of men and women, children and old folks. They all prostrated on hands and knees, their expressions that of awe and reverence. Their heads were bowed, and not a single one dared to look up.

In the middle of this group of people was a huge altar, covered with numerous carvings that emanated what seemed like an eternal, untouchable power.

As of this moment, nine beams of light could be seen illuminating the sky as they shot down toward the altar. All of the magical symbols on the altar began to shine and glow, as if to receive the incoming guests.

The rumbling sounds grew more intense, and the surrounding cultivators began to tremble even harder. None of them dared to even lift their heads. One of them, an old man who was located in the ring of cultivators closest to the altar, called out in a loud voice:

“We respectfully welcome all the Exalted Immortals!”

His words echoed out for the time it takes about ten breaths of time, after which, brilliant pillars of light shot up from the altar to connect to them. Then the light slowly faded away to reveal… nine cultivators!

Meng Hao was one of them. All of the people from the Nine Seas God World shone with golden light, making them look completely sacred and inviolable. Furthermore, because their cultivation bases vastly exceeded that of the cultivators of the Windswept Realm, they emanated incredible pressure which pushed down on the surrounding crowd and caused them to tremble.

Meng Hao looked out of sorts for a brief moment before recovering. His eyes swept about, taking in the altar they were standing on, and the more than 10,000 cultivators prostrated respectfully. He also saw that past the cultivators were even more people, tens of thousands of them, all prostrated on the ground, not daring to lift their heads.

Up in front of those tens of thousands of people was a middle-aged man wearing an Imperial robe. He was also trembling as he prostrated himself. From the look of it, he was the emperor of this region or nation.

Neither Meng Hao, nor the others with him, were used to having such a large group of people prostrating in deference.

The old man who stood among the 10,000 cultivators was the first one to lift his head and look at Meng Hao and the other eight. He seemed incredibly ancient, as if he had lived for countless years. However, his cultivation base was only at the Cauldron Seeking stage.

“Exalted Immortals,” he said, “it is the inestimable honor of our Ninth Nation to welcome you here today! It has been over a thousand years since any Immortal has arrived here to bestow good fortune. Please accept the worship of our Ninth Nation’s seven great sects and three great clans!”

Behind him were ten old men, who were apparently the Patriarchs of the sects and clans he had just mentioned. They radiated respect as they slowly raised their heads to look at Meng Hao and the others, whereupon they once again bowed in worship.

“I am your servant Jian Daozi,” said the oldest of the old men, the first one to speak. “Exalted Immortals, now that you have descended to our Lower Realm, anything you need or want will be provided you. We will do anything in our power to satisfy your every desire!” His eyes burned with passion as his voice rang out. 2 3

“If we asked all of you to end your own lives, would you?” asked one of the Demonic cultivators standing with Bei Yu, his voice cold.

Meng Hao frowned in response to his words, and even Bei Yu looked displeased.

However, the old man named Jian Daozi didn’t hesitate for even a moment.

“Unless another of the Exalted Immortals interfered, all you would have to do would be to speak the word!”

The Demonic cultivator hesitated for a moment. However, both Meng Hao and Fan Dong’er, as well as all of the others, could hear the decisiveness and resolve in Jian Daozi’s words, as well as the fanatical passion.

It wasn’t just him who had such an attitude, all of the old men, and apparently all of the other cultivators… were exactly the same. Although not every single individual appeared to be madly fanatical, the reverence that shone in their eyes, the type that an inferior person would show toward a superior, caused Meng Hao’s heart to tremble.

All of a sudden, a young cultivator among the crowd couldn’t seem to hold back any longer, and lifted his head to look at Meng Hao and the other eight. When his eyes fell upon Bei Yu and Fan Dong’er, the youth seemed to be struck breathless.

Almost in the same instant that the young man looked up, the aged Jian Daozi’s face flickered with anger. Similar looks appeared on the faces of all of the other old men.

“How dare you!!” roared Jian Daozi.

The young man’s face went ashen, and a look of panic appeared on his face. He quickly bowed his head, but it was too late.

“Blasphemy against deities is a violation of the laws of the Windswept Realm!” Jian Daozi said coldly. He waved his finger toward the young man, causing light to slam into his forehead. The young man trembled and then died instantly.

This caused Meng Hao’s eyes to widen. Everyone else stared in shock.

However, that simple action didn’t finish things. One of the ten old men behind Jian Daozi immediately raised his right arm into the air and severed it. His face was pale white as he lifted his severed arm into the air and dropped to his knees.

“That young man was a member of my humble sect,” he said. “I did not instruct him well, and am thus implicitly involved. I hope my severed arm will lessen the wrath of the Exalted Immortals!”

Bei Yu was panting, and Fan Dong’er was completely shaken. Meng Hao stared in shock at everything that had happened. Even his willpower was rocked by the behavior of these people of the Windswept Realm.

The feeling was indescribable, as if, in the briefest of moments… they had all suddenly turned into true Paragons!

It would be impossible for them to experience such a feeling in the Mountain and Sea Realm, because there would always be cultivators above them who were far more powerful. Although the number of such higher powers was nothing compared to the people who were weaker than them, the Mountain and Sea Realm was simply too vast a place.

The Mountain and Sea Realm had its rules and etiquette, which were like layer upon layer of nets that entangled everyone. Such things formed natural law that didn’t permit unbridled actions.

However, the Windswept Realm was not only cut off from any other Realm, the highest cultivation bases there were not even in the Immortal Realm.

Therefore, Meng Hao and the other eight… really and truly were deities!

Power, wealth, and anything else they desired… could be had by merely asking!

If it was wealth, a single sentence could cause the riches of an entire nation to be handed over!

If it was power, then in an instant, they could be crowned an emperor!

Wherever they went in the Ninth Nation, if they fancied someone, they could take that person away. They could do exactly as they pleased, and the people below them would not only be incapable of refusing to comply, they would actually feel honored to help.

This was true from the moment they arrived. Something as astonishing as this caused the minds of Meng Hao and the others to reel. Finally, they were able to experience… what it was like.. to be completely unconstrained by any rules or customs.

In this place, they made the rules!

At this moment, similar scenes were playing out in all of the other districts of the Windswept Realm. Everyone who had arrived was shaken to the core!

The Echelon members and other cultivators from the Nine Seas of the Mountain and Sea Realm all went to different locations. However, each and every one of those locations belonged… solely to those people who occupied it.

In total, the Windswept Realm had nine nations; therefore, each of the Nine Seas occupied one of those nations.

In the center of the nine nations was the location of the World Essence, an ancient temple…. That was the goal of all of the people who had just arrived.

1. “Cauldron Seeking” is a stage in Er Gen’s other two novels, Beseech the Devil and Renegade Immortal. In terms of cultivation, it’s on almost exactly the same level as Dao Seeking, in other words, the last stage (or part of the last stage) before reaching the next Realm. “Cauldron Seeking” might not be the best translation for the other novels, but here I’m going with the most literal translation to make it sync well with I Shall Seal the Heavens

2. Jian Daozi’s name in Chinese is jiàn dào zi. Jian is a surname which is also the character for “sword.” Daozi is what often gets translated as “Dao Child”

3. What I’m translating as Exalted Immortals could just be an honorific title to use when addressing Immortals. However, it was also a cultivation stage in Renegade Immortal

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# Chapter 1087: Eradication!

The Windswept Realm had nine regions, which were occupied by the Nine Nations. All of them together formed a huge ring shape.

In the center of the ring created by the Nine Nations was… the temple!

Between each of the nations was a massive windstorm that stretched from the sky down to the land, keeping all of the Nine Nations separated, and making passage between them very difficult.

Because of the windstorm barrier, the Nine Nations were essentially sealed. Only the Cauldron Seeking cultivators could pierce through, and even then, it required a steep price.

The barriers acted like a protection, allowing the Nine Nations to slowly grow and become more powerful.

But now that the cultivators from the Mountain and Sea Realm had arrived, the barriers separating the Nine Nations were trembling, and the eternal winds were showing signs of dissipating.

Currently, Meng Hao stood on the altar in the desert of the Ninth Nation, heart thumping. He watched as the young man was executed for simply looking up, and then saw the old man sever his own arm. The old man acted with complete decisiveness, such that blood was still spurting out of the wound as he dropped to his knees in worship.

Apparently… unless one of the Exalted Immortals spoke, the man would not stop the blood from flowing.

Fan Dong’er was inwardly shaken, as was Bei Yu. The other ordinary cultivators and Demonic cultivators had similar reactions. They… could count as nothing more than the Junior generation in the cultivation world, and had not seen or experienced all the trials and tribulations that the old-timers had. The shocking scene left Fan Dong'er and the others mentally shaken.

Meng Hao stood there silently for a moment before waving his right finger. A medicinal pill flew out and landed on the stump of the old man's severed arm. In the blink of an eye, the wound healed, and the missing arm gradually began to grow back.

The old man trembled as he looked appreciatively at Meng Hao. Inwardly, he sighed with relief, and then once again bowed deeply.

"Many thanks, Exalted Immortal!"

The oldest man among all of the Windswept Realm's cultivators was Jian Daozi. Wisdom flickered deep within his eyes as he casually turned to look over at Meng Hao. Then he clasped hands and said, "Exalted Immortals, we invite you to enter the temporary Imperial residences we have set up here in the Ninth Nation. Exalted Immortals… do you plan to reside together, or… live separately?"

As he finished speaking, he waved his hand, causing glittering light to rise up from the ground in front of him. Shockingly, a map of the entire Ninth Nation suddenly appeared.

The various areas on the map were clearly labeled to indicate which ones had spiritual energy, and which ones had abundant cultivation resources. All locations that were suitable for habitation by cultivators were clearly marked.

Furthermore, the various advantages and disadvantages of each location were explained clearly.

In the very center of the Ninth Nation, not too far from its capital city, was a mountain, half of which was covered with snow, and at the foot of which could be seen a lake. Furthermore, it was possible to see that much of the vital energy of the Ninth Nation at a whole was gathered there.

In addition to that mountain, there were two other locations which could be considered superb. As for the others, most were ordinary in nature.

After glancing over the map, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered almost imperceptibly, and he looked back at Jian Daozi. Once again, he was able to perceive the wisdom and foresight which the old man possessed.

To Jian Daozi and the other cultivators, Meng Hao and his companions were all Exalted Immortals. Although they venerated all of them, it was impossible for them to determine which of the nine… maintained the most superior position.

Not only did they have no way of ascertaining such matters on their own, they could not afford to make any mistakes. If there were any misunderstandings about the seniority of the visitors from the Mountain and Sea Realm, it could lead to dire consequences. This map, and the process by which the Immortals dealt with it, would be one way to get some instant clues.

Fan Dong’er looked over the map, then glanced at Meng Hao. Afterward, she extended her right hand and pointed at one of the two lesser areas, opting not to take the most optimal location, the mountain with the National Fate.

Bei Yu hesitated for a moment, then subconsciously looked over at Meng Hao. Her eyes glowed for a moment, and she didn’t immediately make a decision.

The other three ordinary cultivators with Fan Dong’er were well-aware of their place, and picked other locations. However, with the exception of the burly body cultivator, the other Demonic cultivators looked at the map with glittering eyes. They edged slowly over to Bei Yu’s side, then looked over coldly at Meng Hao, as if they were itching for a fight.

This scene immediately revealed how much friction existed between them, something that Jian Daozi and the others instantly picked up on.

Fan Dong’er said nothing. She backed up a few paces, unwilling to get involved. The other three ordinary cultivators hesitated for a moment before also backing up, apparently maintaining neutrality as they tried to ignore the increasing tension building up between Meng Hao and the Demonic cultivators.

The burly Demonic body cultivator seemed to be inwardly conflicted. He gritted his teeth hard before giving an angry glance at the other Demonic cultivators and then backing off. He, too, chose not to get involved. He was already… incredibly frightened of Meng Hao.

Among the nine new arrivals, five chose to remain neutral. Three Demonic cultivators remained behind, including Bei Yu, all of whom glared murderously at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever, although inwardly, he maintained vigilance. These three Demonic cultivators obviously knew exactly how powerful he was, and yet they still were brave enough to bare their teeth. That indicated… that they were confident enough to go up against him, and were obviously… completely prepared.

Jian Daozi and the others watched what was happening with calm expressions. However, inwardly, they already had an answer to their original questions, causing their eyes to flicker toward Meng Hao.

Although Meng Hao didn’t look like anything particularly special when compared with the others in his group, everyone’s actions clearly showed his position and status.

“My Demonic Cultivator Horde has taken a liking to that mountain,” Bei Yu suddenly said. She pointed at the mountain with the collection of vital qi.

Anyone could look at that mountain and tell that it possessed National Aura. Furthermore, that was obviously the best place to practice cultivation, and most likely the optimal location to gain enlightenment regarding the Windswept Realm.

“What a coincidence,” replied Meng Hao, smiling. “I happened to take a liking to the same mountain.” Although he was smiling, it was a cold smile. He had done nothing to cause any problems with the Demonic cultivators; they took the initiative to provoke him. Although they might have their trump cards, Meng Hao didn’t mind showing them that no matter how powerful their secret weapons were, he could still sweep over them.

If he was willing to make a huge scene in the Nine Seas God World, then here, in a place like the Windswept Realm, with no rules or limitations, he would act even more flamboyantly!

Killing intent flickered in Bei Yu’s eyes, and the two Demonic cultivators flanking her smiled coldly. They were just about to step forward when all of a sudden… Meng Hao’s expression flickered. He backed up a few steps and looked up into the sky, apparently too busy to pay any attention to Bei Yu and the others. Fan Dong’er and all the other cultivators also seemed to sense something, and also looked up. The two Demonic cultivators’ faces flickered with confusion, and they ceased any attacks as they looked up into the sky.

In almost the exact same moment that they looked up, an indescribable pressure suddenly exploded downward, crushing down onto everything with destructive force. The entire land quivered, as if the whole Realm were trembling.

The aura seemed to be weighing down from the sky, but in fact, that was not the case. It was actually coming… from the very center of the Windswept Realm, from… the Windswept Realm’s temple!

That temple contained the World Essence of the Windswept Realm, and as of this moment, the arrival of all of these people was causing an eruption of that very aura. That eruption was weakening the barriers between the Nine Nations to the point of collapse, and at the same time, was causing a very strange aura to fill the entire world.

The wind was growing stronger, and the sun in the sky was changing color. The plants were swaying back and forth, and the animals of the Windswept Realm were howling into the sky.

Numerous fissures snaked across the sky, only to rapidly close again. Apparently, a natural law that was originally difficult to detect… was suddenly awakened by the arrival of Meng Hao and the others.

“That’s… Essence!!”

“I can sense Essence aura!!”

“This is the true Windswept Realm! I was wondering earlier why I didn’t sense much of anything different after arriving here!”

Meng Hao took a deep breath as he sensed the natural law of the world. He closed his eyes, and felt as if he could feel Essence itself.

That feeling was completely unprecedented. It almost seemed like all he had to do was reach his hand out to acquire the Essence. It was like the single move of a hand could cause ripples in the natural laws. If you likened the Mountain and Sea Realm to a solid wall, blocking everything, then the Windswept Realm… was like a net, full of holes. Because of all of those holes, the natural laws and Essence were easily visible to everyone present.

Of course, anyone whose cultivation base was not in the Immortal Realm… would be unable to detect these things!

At the same time that the World Essence of the Windswept Realm erupted, intense pressure swept out over the entire world. The pressure weighed down almost as if the entire world had been submerged at the bottom of the sea.

Thankfully, all of the people who came here from the Nine Seas God World were used to such pressure. Despite its intensity, it didn’t affect them very much, Meng Hao included.

However, Meng Hao was also aware that were it not for the three months he had spent acclimating himself to the Nine Seas God World, then he would only be able to utilize a small portion of his cultivation base.

As the pressure rose, and the vast power of natural law and Essence revealed itself, the Immortal's caves that were the temporary Imperial residences in the Ninth Nation, all began to change.

That was especially true of the mountain which possessed National Aura. As of this moment, it seemed to transform into a Golden Dragon. Apparently… that mountain was the center of all of the natural law and Essence of the Ninth Nation!

Gradually, a windstorm began to build up around the mountain. Thunder boomed as the winds swept about. Anyone could sense that this mountain was extraordinary, and that if you practiced cultivation there, the benefits would be extreme.

Earlier, Meng Hao hadn't been dead set on acquiring that mountain. But now, it was something he had to have. Eyes flickering, he looked over at Jian Daozi, and noticed that a very faint smile could be seen on his face.

"What a cunning old fox!" he thought. Meng Hao didn't mind. Without sufficient intelligence and wisdom, the weak could never survive for long in the cultivation world.

Many times, the ability to scheme was the greatest type of power.

"There's something else fishy going on," he thought. "It would be far too simplistic if Jian Daozi's scheming were limited to this." As Meng Hao stood there thinking, Bei Yu and the other two Demonic cultivators exploded with killing intent, and began to close in on Meng Hao.

However, it was in that exact moment that, all of a sudden, a clap of thunder could be heard. The sky exploded, and Meng Hao's face flickered as he suddenly sensed Chu Yuyan, Su Yan, and all of the Demonic cultivators in his bag of holding, spit up blood!

"NINE!! Nine is the limit!" a voice rang out. "Every Sea can send nine people into the Windswept Realm!!

“Anyone who exceeds that number cannot say in the Windswept Realm, and will be wiped out!!”

Instantly, Meng Hao understood.

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# Chapter 1088: The First Death in the Windswept Realm!

In the moment that Meng Hao's face flickered, the same reaction could be seen on the faces of Fan Dong'er and her group of cultivators, as well as Bei Yu and the Demonic cultivators who had been roiling with killing intent.

Only the burly body cultivator's expression was the same as ever, as if he hadn't even noticed anything. Everyone else, on the other hand, could sense reactions from things within their bags of holding.

Furthermore, a shining red sealing mark appeared on the hands of all nine of them, marks that seemed to indicate that they possessed certain qualifications.

"Dammit!!" Fan Dong'er had an extremely unsightly look on her face, as did all the others. The two Demonic cultivators were no longer even thinking about Meng Hao. They stopped in place and used every possible method available to brace themselves for what was about to come.

Obviously… Meng Hao was not the only other person to have brought others with him into the Windswept Realm!

Meng Hao's eyes flickered and he backed up a few steps. He sent some divine will into his bag of holding and quickly sealed the Demonic cultivators who the parrot and meat jelly had been training to sing.

However, despite being sealed, when the second clap of thunder rang out, the Demonic cultivators coughed up more blood, and their bodies withered.

Obviously, the sealing did no good. Thankfully, the parrot and meat jelly were not affected at all.

Meng Hao frowned as the third clap of thunder rang out. This time, he unleashed the Life Death Hexing!

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

In the blink of an eye, the Demonic cultivators inside of his bag of holding were protected by the Hexing magic. Although their faces went pale, they were unaffected, and were not in danger of being wiped out.

However… Chu Yuyan and Su Yan had nowhere to flee to. The two women coughed up blood, especially Chu Yuyan, who was already injured. Despite being more than half recovered, she was now on the verge of being exterminated by the thunder. Her injuries were aggravated, and the Life Death Hexing could not be used on her or Su Yan. After all, if Meng Hao used it, and failed… they would be killed, and he would be powerless to do anything about it!

Su Yan wouldn’t be too big a loss, and Meng Hao didn’t really care much about her, anyway. However, he couldn’t simply risk Chu Yuyan in that way.

Everyone else had reactions to Meng Hao. Fan Dong’er’s face was pale white as she slapped her bag of holding. Two people flew out, both of them young men who wore looks of surprise and shock on their faces.

As for the three cultivators behind Fan Dong’er, they all slapped their bags of holding; in total, they had brought eight people with them, all of them disciples of the Nine Seas God World!

It was the same with Bei Yu, from whose bag of holding flew two old women. Both were Demonic cultivators, with cultivation bases in the Ancient Realm, with five extinguished Soul Lamps each.

As for the other two Demonic cultivators, five people emerged to stand next to them.

At a single glance, you could see that the current group vastly exceeded the limit of nine. However, there was one aspect which was shared by all of the newcomers. None of their cultivation bases… exceeded five extinguished Soul Lamps!

Perhaps their true cultivation bases were higher than that, but at the moment, they had suppressed themselves down to the Ancient Realm with five extinguished Soul Lamps. That made it such that a single peal of thunder was strong enough to wipe them out!

“What’s going on!? The natural laws here are different than last time! Before, we could always bring extra people, as long as they had five extinguished Soul Lamps or fewer!!”

“As long as we didn’t bring too many, the Windswept Realm would never cause any interference. Why are things different this time!?”

As everyone cried out in alarm, Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. He had never imagined that virtually everyone would try to bring more people into the Windswept Realm. Granny Nine and the others hadn’t mentioned anything about the subject, nor had they provided any warnings. After a moment of thought, Meng Hao realized he had nothing to complain about.

“I’m an outsider to the Nine Seas God World,” he thought, “and everything that has happened has been for the sake of mutual gain. They need my Echelon status, and I… need that status to get more powerful.

“To prevent me from bringing a bunch of my own clan members in here, they didn’t mention the subject, which I suppose is fair play.” As he backed up, he frowned. Although he could ignore the actions of the Nine Seas God World, he was getting very nervous because of the threat to Chu Yuyan.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he looked at the mark on the back of his hand, and he instantly understood the situation.

“Nine is the limit… well in that case… as long as we don’t exceed the number of people allowed into the Ninth Nation, then there shouldn’t be any problem.” Suddenly, another peal of thunder rang out, and blood sprayed from the mouths of everyone who didn’t possess a mark. At the same time, Meng Hao flashed across the altar toward one of the Demonic cultivators with a mark on his hand, one of the ones who had been on the verge of attacking him earlier.

“That mark is the crux of things! If you have that mark, you’re qualified to be here!” Killing intent swirling, he shot forward as fast as lightning. With the wave of a hand, rumbling filled Heaven and Earth, and chains of mountains descended, sweeping across everything.

The ten thousand cultivators who were prostrated in worship surrounding the altar all remained there with heads bowed, with the exception of Jian Daozi and the other old men. Everyone else didn’t even dare to move.

Jian Daozi stood there watching silently. However, deep within his eyes could be seen a flicker of derision. As for the other old men, they stood in place without saying a word.

Similar scenes played out in the other eight nations. Apparently, virtually all of the visitors from the Mountain and Sea Realm had brought people to tag along.

However, the natural laws of the Windswept Realm had changed, causing widespread shock. Nobody was prepared for the sudden onslaught of thunder. The pressure intensified, and the people who had been brought along felt grave senses of crisis filling them. They knew that this force, intent on wiping them away, would not stop.

Chaotic fighting would soon erupt as everyone realized that each Sea could only have a maximum of nine people in the Windswept Realm!

Without some extraordinary exception, the limit could not be exceeded by even one!

Apparently the Third Sea contained an exception. Xue’er had apparently used some unknown technique to ensure that she would be permitted to stay.

Though they had just arrived, the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm began to fight each other. Bitter battles erupted, and the peals of thunder continued to echo out.

“Since this trifling Windswept Realm wants to eradicate me, I’ll just leave!” cried an enraged old man on the altar in the desert of the Ninth Nation. He was bursting with the power of five extinguished Soul Lamps as he flew up into the air to leave the altar.

As he rose up into the air, others on the altar similarly took to flight. However, as soon as the old man left the altar, a huge bolt of lightning struck down from up above.

The lightning bolt was not complete, and yet it contained natural law and Essence. It moved with incredible speed that made it impossible to evade. It slammed into the old man, and a boom rang out. Before the man could even scream, he was completely wiped out in body and soul, transformed into nothing more than ash.

The scene caused everyone else to gasp, and the cultivators who had just flown into the air suddenly stopped in place, expressions of astonishment covering their faces.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, and he smiled slightly.

“I like this place,” he said, extending his right hand and causing the chains of mountains to rumble. Blood Demon heads materialized as he began to fight. Booms rang out, and he turned into a huge golden roc. With a flash, he was slashing the Demonic cultivator’s head, after which he turned and unleashed the Life-Extermination Fist on one of the other two howling Demonic cultivators who had leaped to attack him.

The fist struck nothing but air, and yet blood sprayed from their mouths, and booms rang out. One of them exploded into pieces, and the other was sent tumbling off of the altar, after which a bolt of lightning fell and exterminated him.

Simultaneously, a stream of red qi rose up from the dead Demonic cultivator. Eyes glittering, Meng Hao reached out and grabbed it, then sent it into this bag of holding, toward the back of Chu Yuyan’s hand. It turned into a sealing mark, which instantly put her out of danger. She now had the qualifications to be in this place. He quickly sent her a large quantity of medicinal pills to help her recover.

“Meng Hao, what are you doing!?!?” cried Fan Dong’er. The altar was instantly thrown into chaos. The fact that Meng Hao had instantly resorted to violent fighting caused the older cultivators and Demonic cultivators to guess about the natural laws of the Windswept Realm, and they also began to attack.

“Can’t you see?!” Meng Hao said. “Only nine people are allowed to be here! If we don’t kill them… then they’ll kill us! It doesn’t matter which of us dies… as long as only nine remain alive, everything will be fine!

“Even if you don’t attack… those stowaways will continue to grow weaker from the thunder! Therefore… their only option is to kill us and take our places!” Meng Hao waved his hand, causing his Divine Flame Immortal meridian to erupt with power. Flames rolled back and forth, a mass of destruction.

In response to Meng Hao’s words, the two young men behind Fan Dong’er suddenly launched attacks, not against Fan Dong’er, but rather, against the other three cultivators who had arrived in the Windswept Realm by the correct method.

Booms echoed out. Fan Dong’er was helpless to stop anything that was happening. Both the Demonic cultivators and ordinary cultivators devolved into even more chaotic fighting. Bei Yu looked extremely nervous as the two old women next to her looked around angrily and then began to levy vicious attacks in all directions.

Of course… the stowaways were the most nervous of all. As the thunder continued to boom, they received continuous injuries. Their current situation was like a sword hanging over their heads!

They could see the red marks on the hands of Meng Hao and the others, and knew that they represented the qualifications to be in this place, to be immune to the peals of thunder. If they didn’t quickly earn themselves qualifications, they would die without a doubt!

Bloodcurdling screams rang out constantly, and fierce fighting raged. As more people died, more chances were presented to survive. Under such pressure of life or death, it was a matter of this isn’t about you dying, it’s about me living!

“Don’t blame me! I don’t want to do this, but… I have to keep living!” The Demonic cultivator who had brought up the idea of all the local cultivators ending their own lives, ended up dying at the hands of one of the other Demonic cultivators that he had brought along. He could only watch helplessly as he heard similarly cold words spoken to him, and then saw the red mark fade from his hand.

“DIE!!” The cultivators brought by Fan Dong’er were also killed by fellow sect members. They died, eyes wide with regret.

Miserable screams rang out constantly as the number of people on the altar slowly grew smaller and smaller. At the same time, the booms of thunder grew more intense and more frequent!

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# Chapter 1089: Who’s Fighting and Who’s Watching?

Meng Hao was in the middle of it all, fighting fiercely whoever he encountered.

The viciousness on display caused Jian Daozi and the others to go cold with fright. Jian Daozi himself gasped and stared at Meng Hao with renewed fear and awe.

Because of a unique reason, Jian Daozi had lived for a very long time, and seen many Immortals. Although his cultivation base was not very high, he was intelligent and discerning, and could tell that Meng Hao possessed strength that the other Immortals simply did not.

“He must be in the Immortal World’s feared… Echelon!” he thought, his eyes widening.

Blood flowed off of the altar in bright red rivulets, even streams, which spread out into the desert sands. The reek of blood spread out, filling the air, even covering some of the magical symbols on the altar, causing them to cast bizarre light into the air.

Fewer and fewer people could be seen on the altar. Originally, there had been more than twenty, but now, there were only eleven!

Fan Dong’er and Bei Yu were still there, but the other cultivators who had originally joined them had all been replaced, with the exception of the burly body cultivator, who managed to cunningly avoid all attacks levied against him.

Fan Dong’er was no longer flanked by three people, but two. They were both young, their faces pale white, with blood seeping out of the corners of their mouths. Pools of blood could be seen beneath their feet.

Originally, Bei Yu had been accompanied by two other Demonic cultivators. Now, there were five. Two were old women, plus three other Demonic cultivators. Those who had brought them here had been killed by other cultivators, and these were the ones who had managed to hold out until the very end.

However, thunder still boomed, and as for the number of people present… there were still two too many!

Among the eleven people present, eight had red sealing marks on the backs of their hands. Those who didn’t included one ordinary cultivator and two Demonic cultivators. All of them had ashen faces, and absolutely no sealing marks!

Those sealing marks were like a seal of life, a mark of approval from the Windswept Realm. Anyone who had that sealing mark would not be wiped away by the Heavenly thunder.

Blood flowed across the altar as everyone stood there silently, staring at Meng Hao. Fear could be seen deep in their eyes; in the battle just now, more than half of the people slain had been killed by him.

Down below the altar, Jian Daozi and the others were shocked to the core. The image of Meng Hao slaughtering his enemies was burned deep in their hearts, leaving an indelible impression.

After a few short breaths of time, fighting broke out once again; virtually everyone attacked at the same time, trying to wipe out the three cultivators with no marks on their hands.

Those three knew that if they couldn’t get one of the sealing marks, they would be wiped out by the thunder, completely eradicated!

Thunder boomed, and blood sprayed out of the three cultivators' mouths. There was no need to mention the severe internal injuries they had sustained; they were growing so weak that it seemed any of the subsequent thunderclaps could wipe them out. They began to go mad, roaring, burning life force, exploding with all the power they could muster.

It was with utter madness that they attacked the fellow sect members who they thought they could defeat!

Booms echoed out as the fierce fighting raged. The cultivators of the Windswept Realm continued to keep their heads bowed, not daring to even peep at what was happening, although Jian Daozi and his group looked on.

Meng Hao waved his hand, and the Essence of Divine Flame erupted out. He pushed his hand down onto the shoulder of one of the Demonic cultivators with no sealing mark, and instantly, the man was consumed by Divine Flame. A miserable shriek could be heard as Meng Hao pulled his hand back, and the Demonic cultivator transformed into nothing but ash.

Simultaneously, the other two with no sealing marks were killed, reducing the number of people on the altar… to only eight!

In addition to Meng Hao, there were two ordinary cultivators and five Demonic cultivators, all of whom had marks on their hands!

All of them breathed sighs of relief.

"It's finally over…."

"I can't believe the natural laws in the Windswept Realm have changed…."

Even Jian Daozi and the others below the altar assumed that everything was over. However… thunder continued to boom! Everyone's faces fell, but no one coughed up blood. However, the fact that the thunder had not ceased indicated only one thing.

There was still someone without a sealing mark! Furthermore, that person was not present on the altar itself!

“Impossible! We’re obviously the only ones left! Why is there still Heavenly thunder!?!?”

“Someone must still be hiding people in their bag of holding!!” Everyone began to look around suspiciously. Fan Dong’er gritted her teeth as she realized that there were more Demonic cultivators than ordinary cultivators, which was not to her advantage. After a moment of hesitation, she opened her bag of holding and let everyone see that it was empty of people.

The other cultivators behind her didn’t hesitate to do the same, and eventually, even the Demonic cultivators, including Bei Yu, did the same. Eventually, Meng Hao was the only one who hadn’t opened his bag of holding.

At that point, all eyes fell on Meng Hao.

“Meng Hao already got one of the other sealing marks and put it in his bag of holding!” Thunder boomed, and everyone looked at Meng Hao with vigilant eyes.

Meng Hao was the most powerful among them, a fact which had been made very clear in the fighting moments ago. At this moment, Meng Hao… was the greatest threat to all of them.

Another clap of thunder could be heard, but this time, it wasn’t just a noise. A bolt of lightning fell from the sky, slamming onto the altar with incredible destructive power. The entire altar shook, and Meng Hao dodged to the side to avoid being hit.

“Meng Hao, what are you doing!? Open up your bag of holding and kill that person!”

“If you don’t do something, then don’t blame us for joining forces to kill you!” Everyone was shocked by the booming thunder, and the bolt of lightning that had fallen. From their perspective, if Meng Hao didn’t open his bag of holding and kill the person inside, then all of them would end up dead.

Meng Hao’s eyes widened. Currently, Su Yan was inside his bag of holding, trembling. Her fear was a bit surprising to Meng Hao; originally, she had been completely unafraid of dying. Now, however, she seemed terrified of it, a total change that couldn’t help but cause a bit of suspicion to well up in his heart.

“Could it be that she has some sort of reincarnation magic, so that if I kill her, she’ll be able to resurrect herself, but if she’s killed by the thunder of the World Essence, she’ll actually die?!” Meng Hao’s eyes flashed, and then he thought about Su Yan’s other unique divine abilities, and realized that such a thing wasn’t impossible.

As he stood there thinking, the other people on the altar were increasingly shocked by the thunder and lightning.

“Let’s join forces! Even if we can’t kill him ourselves, we can at least force him off the altar. Then the thunder will help us kill that person in his bag of holding!”

People began to call out: “Attack together!”

The Demonic cultivators already hated Meng Hao, so they immediately joined together and attacked Meng Hao.

At the same time, even Fan Dong’er and the other ordinary cultivators joined together to charge Meng Hao. Meng Hao’s actions now affected all of their lives, so how could they not take action?

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. Instead of attacking, he fell back, buying time to send divine will into his bag of holding to yell into Su Yan’s ear.

“Give me one of your divine abilities, and I’ll get you a spot in the Windswept Realm!” He was determined to give this tactic a shot.

Su Yan’s face fell. Blood sprayed out of her mouth, and her expression was one of unprecedented fear. She could sense the deadly attacks from the outside, but she still wasn’t willing to give one of her divine abilities to Meng Hao.

“I’ll die first!” she responded.

“I don’t want all of them, just one will do! You have to give me some reason to help you avoid being wiped out by the Windswept Realm!” Meng Hao continued to back up as everyone attacked him. He danced back and forth, expression calm as he used divine will to try to persuade Su Yan.

Thunder struck again, and it was even more intense than last time. Two bolts of lightning fell, causing everyone’s minds to reel. Meng Hao’s face fell, and the sensation of deadly crisis grew stronger. It was as if… the next volley of lightning would definitely hit him.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. The best option right now would be to simply kill Su Yan, which would cause the lightning to dissipate. If he pushed things too much further, he would be putting himself at grave risk.

“Chances like this aren’t easy to come by… it would be a big shame to give up now.” His eyes flashed as he once again sensed Su Yan’s fear of the thunder and lightning.

Gritting his teeth, he fell back again, and once again sent out some divine will.

Su Yan could sense the will of death in the lightning, and it caused her to tremble. She didn’t fear Meng Hao killing her, but she definitely feared being eradicated by the lightning!

The sensation of imminent death grew more intense, and she could tell that another round of thunder and lightning was coming.

“If I die, you’ll die too!!” she cried. In response, Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding and pulled Su Yan out. Thunder boomed, and seven bolts of lightning coalesced up above; at the same time, he made as if to throw her out in front of him,

“I’ll only give you one divine ability!!” Su Yan shrieked as she looked at the lightning; she couldn’t hold on any longer.

“Fine! I want your Seven God Steps!” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and he pushed his divine will toward her. Su Yan knew that she didn’t have much time. Although it irked her, she had no other choice, and so she allowed his divine will to enter her mind and take the Seven God Steps Daoist magic. 1

In the moment that Meng Hao acquired the Daoist magic, the seven bolts of lightning began to fall. Suddenly, Meng Hao spun, and the Lightning Cauldron appeared in his hand. Electricity danced, and he switched places with one of the old Demonic cultivator women. As soon as he reappeared, next to one of the other Demonic cultivators, he unleashed the Life-Extermination Fist.

He moved so quickly that nobody had time to react. In the blink of an eye, thunder boomed, and the Demonic cultivator exploded into a cloud of blood and gore.

As soon as the Demonic cultivator died, the mark on his hand vanished, transforming into a red qi that then solidified on Su Yan’s hand.

In that same instant, the seven bolts of lightning vanished without a trace, and the thunder faded away.

There were now only eight people on the altar again, one less Demonic cultivator, and an additional trembling Su Yan.

If you added in Chu Yuyan, who was still in his bag of holding, that made a total of nine cultivators!

All of them had marks on their hands, indicating that they qualified to remain in the Windswept Realm!

As of this moment, the fighting stopped. No one continued to attack Meng Hao. They all backed up, looking around vigilantly, quietly, expressions of sorrow on their faces.

As they looked down at the ten thousand cultivators below the altar, and the tens of thousands of other humans arranged further off, Fan Dong’er and the others suddenly didn’t feel at all like superiors. Instead, they felt like cage fighters, with the people surrounding them being the audience, despite the fact that they didn’t even lift their heads to look.

The superiors were the show, and the inferiors were the audience. Therefore, just exactly… who were the superiors?

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# Chapter 1090: The Echelon’s Declarations of War!

At this point, it was hard to say who was actually the superior in this situation.

On the Ninth Nation’s altar, Meng Hao stood off to the side, looking up into the sky. He had already re-sealed Su Yan and tossed her back into his bag of holding. Now he stood there in the desert wind, which sent bits of dust blowing into his hair and onto his robes.

Behind him, the others stood by quietly, looking at his back, feeling fear and other complicated emotions. Even Fan Dong’er was no exception.

Meng Hao’s fierce fighting had placed him above the others in terms of power, securing his position of utmost seniority within the Ninth Nation.

Down below, Jian Daozi and the others were also looking at Meng Hao, and their eyes were filled with reverence for Immortals. Finally, they lowered their heads and dropped to their knees in obeisance.

They knew that, as of this moment, they didn’t need to worry about any order given by any of the other Immortals. Until Meng Hao left the Ninth Nation, or was supplanted by someone else, his words… were the only orders to be followed.

Meanwhile, the altar in the Eighth Nation was littered with bones. An aura of death towered up into the sky, and eight cultivators could be seen, trembling as they prostrated themselves toward a black-robed young man up in front, who sat on a pile of bleached bones. He was none other than the Echelon cultivator from the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

“You people didn’t bring many guests with you. Why didn’t you bring more? I… feel like doing some more killing.” His eyes gleamed with a brutal light as he looked at the trembling cultivators around him. Suddenly, a murderous aura exploded up from him. He was completely surrounded by corpses, none of which remained intact.

Blood stained the altar red.

In the Seventh Nation, a young man stood there with a long spear, surrounded by eight trembling cultivators. Shockingly, seven heads were impaled kebab-like on the spear.

“I don’t want to kill all of you, but who said that you could try to steal my Echelon status from me, huh? In the Seventh Mountain and Sea, I don’t dare to act too excessively, but here… you people are nothing!” The young man smiled, seemingly brimming with complete confidence in himself.

In the Sixth Nation, a boy sat cross-legged on the altar. He appeared to be only seven or eight years old, and he looked around through squinted eyes at the people who surrounded him, eight burly fellows, all of whom had cold faces.

The Sixth Nation was special. Because no one had brought any extra visitors, no thunder had appeared.

The strangest of all was the Fifth Nation. The altar there was soaked in blood, and only one person remained alive, standing on the edge of the altar. He was a bit overweight, and wore a perpetual smile on his face. However, hidden within that smile was icy coldness.

All of the other people who had arrived with him were now dead; he was the only survivor.

“Wanted to snatch my position in the Echelon?” the young man murmured. “You people simply didn’t qualify.”

Silence reigned in the Fourth Nation. Lin Cong stood there, wearing a long white robe, looking around proudly. Directly behind him were four cultivators, all of whom had vicious expressions on their faces. They were surrounded by numerous corpses.

From beginning to end, Lin Cong never made a single move. However, his four followers had directly slaughtered the other four cultivators who had come with them, as well as any stowaways they had brought along.

“I hope things get a bit more interesting here,” Lin Cong said with a slight smile.

Rivers of blood ran in the Third Nation. However, there was something different there; among the nine people present, not a single one was a member of the Echelon! Among those nine people was a middle-aged man who wore Imperial robes. He stood there with a slight smile that contained contentment and anticipation.

“I’ve been waiting for far, far too long…. At long last, the day has come. The words spoken by the Imperial Lord turned out to be true!” Even as he spoke, he looked off into the distance, toward a figure speeding through the air.

It was a woman, the tenth person to appear on the altar!

None of the ten thousand cultivators beneath the altar had their heads bowed. Instead, they were looking at the man in the Imperial robes, their eyes burning with fanaticism.

On the Second Nation’s altar, everything was quiet. In fact, it was so quiet, the mood was terrifying. There was no reek of blood, but rather, icy coldness spread out, turning the entire altar into a chunk of ice.

In the middle of that ice was a man in a blue robe.

His eyes were closed, and eight unmoving corpses lay on the ground around him.

The First Nation’s altar was the strangest scene of all. None of the figures beneath the altar were bowing their heads. No, they had been ordered to raise their heads up. They stood there, trembling with fear as they looked at a white-robed man floating above the surface of the altar.

His expression was calm, as if he were contemplating enlightenment. He was staring at his right hand, within which could be seen, shockingly… a bolt of lightning. The lightning looked extraordinary, and if Meng Hao were here, he would instantly recognize… the Heavenly lightning of a type of Lightning Cauldron!

The white-robed man appeared to be contemplating it, as if he were determining a way to control it.

With his cultivation base and his level of power, this man could be only one person: the Echelon cultivator from the First Mountain, widely acknowledged to be one of its three most powerful members!

Behind him were eight other cultivators who had arrived from the First Mountain and Sea. All of them were his personal followers; not a single one was a disciple of any other organization in the First Mountain and Sea.

These were people he had forced to capitulate during the many battles he had fought. Afterwards, they had become his followers, and even fought for him. Most surprising of all was that of these eight people who had chosen to become his followers, one of them was another member of the Echelon!

To join the Echelon, and yet choose to follow that white-robed young man, showed how incredibly powerful he was.

“So it turns out that gaining enlightenment of the Essence of lightning is much easier here than in the Mountain and Sea Realm.” After a long moment, the white-robed young man clenched his hand into a fist. Crackling sounds could be heard, and the lightning vanished, disappearing into his body. His eyes suddenly began to glow brightly.

“The Windswept Realm has been opened many times, but this is my first time here. What do you all say? Do you think I’ll be able to collect some people and items that might satisfy me? Will I be able to truly take away the World Essence?

“Although, what I’m actually looking forward to most… is searching for another member of the Echelon, most preferably a male!” The white-robed young man chuckled. He turned to a woman who was standing behind him, and ran his finger down her jaw. The woman lowered her head and smiled. As for his other followers, two were women and five were men. All of them smiled in response to the young man’s words.

The sky in the Windswept Realm gradually cleared. After the space of ten breaths of time, a cold voice suddenly rang out from the Heavens into the First Nation and all the other nations in the Windswept Realm. Apparently, the inhabitants of the Windswept Realm itself could not hear this voice, only the newcomers.

“Let the trial by fire… begin!

“The central temple is where the final decision will be made. Immortal cultivators may not enter there now. Use the Nine Nations as the game board, and the soldiers and cultivators of the Windswept Realm as the game pieces. Let the Grand War of Nine Nations begin!

“Each nation has a Seal of the Windswept Realm. Whoever acquires the most National Seals will be able to enter the central temple!

“And now… the barriers between the Nine Nations shall be removed!” The voice that spoke was ancient, and yet seemed somewhat numb, almost emotionless, as if it were a puppet. Even as the voice boomed out, the windstorm barriers separating the Nine Nations of the Windswept Realm all vanished!

Now there was nothing sealing or protecting any of the nations; they were all connected….

Furthermore, the ground began to quake as all of the natural laws and Essences of the Windswept Realm was unleashed. Spiritual energy surged, and the natural laws went into flux. Essence was revealed in a way that made gaining enlightenment seemingly simple.

Heaven and Earth lost color, and a mighty wind sprang up which screamed out in all directions.

On the First Nation’s altar, the white-robed young man laughed heartily. As the windstorm barriers fell, he could instantly sense the other Echelon auras in the Windswept Realm.

To his senses, those auras were like bright lamps in the darkness of night, clearly visible.

As he laughed, the white-robed young man’s energy surged, merging into Heaven and Earth. His cultivation base erupted, sending an incredibly powerful aura sweeping out.

He was making a declaration of war… against all of the other eight nations in the Windswept Realm!

At the same time, amidst the iciness of the Second Nation, the blue-robed man’s eyes snapped open. He looked at the corpses around him for a moment, and their eyes opened to reveal a gray glow. Cracking and popping sounds could be heard as layers of ice shattered. Energy also surged out of the blue-robed young man, another declaration of war!

In the Third Nation, the middle-aged man in the Imperial robes laughed eerily. Although he clearly had no sealing mark on him, he still emanated the energy of a sealing mark, which rose up into the sky.

In the Fourth Nation, Lin Cong looked around proudly, and his energy spiked. As of this moment, no one was willing to reveal any bit of weakness. They were all members of the Echelon, Chosen of the Mountain and Sea Realm. In the Windswept Realm, where they were completely free and unconstrained, any show of weakness would be sensed by others… and would no doubt lead to their respective nation being the first to be eradicated, and to the loss of their National Seal.

In the Fifth Nation, the smiling young man smiled even wider, and his energy flew up.

In the Sixth Nation, the boy laughed piercingly as he rose to his feet. Shockingly, his energy rose up rapidly, causing the wind to surge and the Heavens to shake.

In the Seventh Nation and Eighth Nation, the Echelon also declared war!

Meng Hao trembled and looked up into the sky. The other cultivators from the Mountain and Sea Realm could hear the words spoken by the ancient voice. However, they had no way to detect the surging energy and domineering auras of the Echelon cultivators in the other eight nations.

It was as if all of them were sending notices to the other Echelon members that they were on their way.

“A declaration of war, huh….” thought Meng Hao, his eyes glittering. He had long since left the other members of his generation of the Ninth Mountain and Sea behind. He was like an enormous mountain in their path. All of the important Chosen owed him money, and were bound to him by Karma with promissory notes.

He had long since come to the conclusion that it would be a difficult thing to find any more Chosen to get promissory notes from. But now that he could sense the energy of the other Echelon members… Meng Hao’s eyes began to shine brightly.

“These guys ought to be even richer than the people from the Ninth Mountain and Sea!” he thought, taking a deep breath and getting even more excited. Finally, he caused his own energy to surge, causing it to blaze like a signal fire. At the same time, he looked slightly embarrassed as he added A Writ of Karma into his surging energy, creating an opportunity for an initial contact of Karma, laying down the first Karma Thread connection.

You declare war? I declare a season of promissory notes!

I will make all members of the Echelon owe me money and give me promissory notes!

Meng Hao was determined to stick to his path of promissory notes, and not waver!

As of this moment, the energy of all of the members of the Echelon surged in their respective areas, then spread out until they clashed with the others.

Colors flashed in the sky, and the wind seethed. Rumbling filled the air as the energy of the Echelon members clashed.

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# Chapter 1091: The Scheming of Jian Daozi

The world rumbled, colors flashed in the sky, and the wind screamed…. At the same time, the Echelon members in each of the Nine Nations sent their energy surging, something… that no one but they themselves could sense.

However, everyone on the altars in the various Nine Nations were clearly able to tell that the air of war had filled the world!

Declarations had been made, indicating that the Echelon battles were beginning!

This place… was the long-awaited battlefield for the Echelon. Everyone else would be relegated to mere supporting roles!

Although nobody wanted to admit it, Fan Dong’er, Bei Yu and the other cultivators knew so. They stood there silently, looking at Meng Hao standing at the edge of the altar, radiating an unmatchable energy as he looked around at the people prostrating themselves down below.

All of a sudden they understood that this place… belonged to the Echelon!

If the options were to be either a bright flower or a dark, faded leaf, fate had given them no choice in the matter, and had relegated them all to be nothing more than leaves….

Fan Dong’er’s eyes glittered with an unyielding light. Bei Yu had a similar reaction. She was a woman with the same position as the sect’s Holy Daughter. She had high aspirations, and was not willing to be left in the dust by anyone.

After a while, the surging energy that were the declarations of war by the members of the Echelon located throughout the Windswept Realm… slowly faded away. Meng Hao flicked his sleeve and stepped off of the altar.

“Raise your heads, all of you!” he said immediately. His voice echoed out across the lands into the ears of all of the cultivators of the Windswept Realm, and into the minds of the tens of thousands of mortals off in the distance.

Without even thinking about it, everyone raised their heads and looked at him. As of this moment, all eyes were focused on Meng Hao. He hovered there in midair, his robes swirling, his hair floating around him. The will of an Immortal Emperor transformed into a unique aura.

It was an indescribable aura, but at the moment, it instilled everyone with the impulse to offer worship.

“Greetings, Exalted Immortal!” A chorus of voices echoed out across the lands. As the powerful sound rolled out, Jian Daozi flew up into the air, swishing his sleeve and causing brilliant light to surround him.

“Form the Grand Carriage!” Immediately, a thousand cultivators flew out from the group below and organized into a formation that resembled a flying battleship!

They were followed by another eight thousand cultivators, who also formed flying battleships, making a total of nine. It was possible to see cultivators all packed together to form the battleships, their expressions fanatical, as if serving Immortals was an unmatchable honor.

Each battleship also featured two groups of cultivators on the deck, organized in ranks, men and women. Of the male cultivators, each one was extremely handsome, the type that any woman in the mortal world would instantly fall in love with.

The female cultivators were incredibly beautiful and pure, and each one could be considered a consummate beauty.

All of them knelt there, apparently ready to fulfill any request without the slightest hesitation.

“Exalted Immortals, please, after you!” cried Jian Daozi, dropping to his knees.

“Exalted Immortals, please, after you!” the other old men cried, along with all the other cultivators.

Meng Hao stared in shock. Although he had enjoyed the feeling of being completely unrestrained in the Windswept Realm, he was still not used to situations like this.

Using people as a ship…?

“Jian Daozi, you lead the way. As for this ship… I don’t need it,” he said slowly, beginning to make his way forward. Jian Daozi stared in shock, and an almost imperceptible flicker passed by deep in his eyes. He looked at Meng Hao for a moment, then, without saying anything, flew to follow by his side.

The fact that Meng Hao refused to use the ship didn’t mean that the other cultivators had to refuse. In fact, the Demonic cultivators were currently staring in shock. Since they had been smuggled in, they hadn’t experienced the events from the initial entry. They transformed into beams of light which instantly flew over to the various ships formed from cultivators.

When they stepped onto the ships, they were immediately surrounded by the handsome men and beautiful women, who brought delicious alcohol and spirit fruits for them to enjoy. It was an indescribable feeling.

The young cultivator behind Fan Dong’er thought for a moment, then flew over to sit on one of the ships. Immediately, one of the beautiful servants stepped forward and bowed down in front of him.

The young man took a deep breath as he looked around blankly at the ship and everything else.

Eventually, even Fan Dong’er and Bei Yu boarded the ships under the fanatical gazes of the Windswept Realm cultivators. Rumbling sounds could be heard as the ships then flew up into the air.

Down below, the man who appeared to be the emperor of the Ninth Nation led the soldiers into motion. They moved slowly, but there were many of them, and they almost looked like Imperial escorts.

Meng Hao flew along at the front, silent and taciturn. Jian Daozi followed off to the side. The old man’s cultivation base was not in the Immortal Realm, so it took some effort for him to keep up with Meng Hao. Meng Hao looked over at him and waved his hand, causing a bright light to appear beneath the old man’s feet, which instantly increased his speed so that he could follow along closely.

“Many thanks, Exalted Immortal!” Jian Daozi said, clasping his hands in appreciation.

“You can stop it with the false show of respect,” Meng Hao said slowly. “It pisses me off. Furthermore… I’m Meng Hao. My surname is not ‘Exalted’ and my given name is not ‘Immortal.’” He spoke the words without the slightest bit of courtesy.

A strange expression appeared on the old man’s face. He clasped his hands and respectfully said, “I shall comply with your orders, Exalted Immortal.”

Meng Hao proceeded to ignore him. Perhaps because of how they were raised, all of the others from the Mountain and Sea Realm were probably not used to paying close attention to the people they deemed weaker, but Meng Hao, despite having such a high status, and even being the Crown Prince of the Fang Clan, had struggled up to that point from a weak and pitiful standing on Planet South Heaven. He had experienced numerous deadly circumstances, and had eventually developed extremely keen eyes. Therefore, he was easily able to detect that Jian Daozi had been scheming all along.

He could clearly see the various things the old man had done. He had never believed that the people of this world would willingly choose to be inferiors. In fact… the people of the Windswept Realm couldn’t even be called inferiors; they were more like slaves who didn’t even have control over their own lives or deaths. Their fate was completely under the control of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

The entire world was destined to flow with rivers of blood every thousand years, and the inhabitants were like nothing more than crops to be harvested. Their thousand years of rest was merely preparation… for another harvest!

“The natural laws did not change by chance!” thought Meng Hao, his eyes glittering. He would not be careless in his activities here. Furthermore, he knew many details of certain matters that Fan Dong’er and the others were unaware of.

“Exalted Immortal Meng,” Jian Daozi said ingratiatingly, “Mount Whiteseal is the Ninth Nation’s Mountain of National Aura, the source of our nation’s natural law and Daoist magic. It supports our entire world, and even has Heavenly power!

“Exalted Immortal, by selecting that mountain, you can receive the added support of the National Aura, and will definitely experience cultivation base growth to a level that you can’t even imagine.

“The legends say that the National Aura Mountain was refined from a precious treasure. Perhaps with the abilities and resources at hand as a Chosen, Exalted Immortal Meng, you will be able to acquire even greater good fortune.” The wind buffeted their faces as they flew onward, and Jian Daozi’s words were carried backward so that Fan Dong’er and the others could hear.

Meng Hao suddenly stopped in place, turned, and looked deeply into Jian Daozi’s eyes. Then, an enigmatic smile appeared on his face, and his eyes gradually shone with an intense gleam.

The look in Meng Hao’s eyes caused thumping sounds to pound inside of Jian Daozi. However, he maintained the same smile as ever, and ducked his head respectfully.

“You know,” Meng Hao said coolly. “I’ve killed a lot of people. Many of them were schemers, and when I discovered their plots against me, I removed their heads.

“For example, you used a simple map to quickly divide nine Exalted Immortals without lifting a finger. You benefited from the misfortune of others, and also gained some profound insights. Truly an excellent scheme.

“Later, when the lightning and thunder struck us, you looked surprised, but deep in your eyes, you were actually mocking us. Don’t think that nobody noticed your act. How did you come to be aware that the natural laws had changed?”

With each of Meng Hao’s successive statements, Jian Daozi looked more surprised. He started to look anxious, as if he felt there were some misunderstanding. Terrified, he was about to offer an explanation when Meng Hao continued.

“One map unleashed internal chaos,” he said coolly. “One natural law caused a deadly crisis.

“I honestly don’t care much about those things. However, just now, you tried to use that mountain to gain the upper hand again. Did you really think that you could borrow the strength of my hands to slay the others, just because I was stronger than them?” His words caused Jian Daozi’s face to grow deathly pale, and he began to tremble in terror.

“Exalted Immortal, please calm yourself. Everything was just a misunderstanding! It… it wasn’t like that at all! I….” Sweat poured down Jian Daozi’s face, and he seemed horrified, as if he were being wrongly accused of a crime he didn’t commit.

“Let me guess,” continued Meng Hao, his voice growing colder by the moment. “If I were you, I wouldn’t devise a plan which relied on only one person, even if you did end up convincing me about the mountain. After all, none of them would be likely to try to provoke me directly. What you want to do is throw out some other seeds to attract their interest.

“Those seeds of interest… will eventually give birth to a struggle over the mountain.

“Their obsession over the mountain is like a hidden weapon that would not be easily noticed. In addition to all of that, if I were you, I would definitely prepare some other knives to stick into the backs of us Immortals. That would also provide a warning that… we should not act presumptuously here!! My guess is that one of those knives will be making an appearance quite soon.”

Jian Daozi smiled wryly, as if he had valid protestations which were merely falling on deaf ears. He seemed to be on the verge of trying to concoct some explanation when, all of a sudden, something became visible off in the distance. There, a waterfall could be seen, at the base of which was a pond. Next to that pond sat a white fox.

A piece of white jade could be seen on the fox’s head, which looked completely beyond ordinary. As the fox practiced breathing techniques, it caused all of the light in the area to converge on the fox’s head.

Suddenly, one of the middle-aged Demonic cultivators from the Nine Seas God World caught sight of the white fox. His eyes went wide, and he shouted, “Divine Demon jade!!”

A look of greed and wild joy instantly appeared on the Demonic cultivator’s face. There was a flash as he flew off of the ship he had been riding and headed directly toward the fox.

“If I were you, I wouldn’t do that,” Meng Hao said, stopping in place. In response, Jian Daozi’s face flickered. The middle-aged Demonic cultivator stared in shock for a moment, then gave a cold harrumph.

He was well aware of what kind of place the Windswept Realm was, that there was nothing here that exceeded the Immortal Realm. It was a place without laws or rules, and therefore, nobody could stop him from taking something he wanted!

He sent out his divine sense and, sensing nothing abnormal, completely ignored Meng Hao and closed in on the white fox, reaching his hand out to grab to the piece of white jade.

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# Chapter 1092: Demon Mantra: Mesmeric Rebuke!

Just as the middle-aged Demonic cultivator was closing in on the white jade, all of a sudden, a cold snort could be heard echoing out from inside the waterfall.

“Scram!” someone said.

The single word seemed to invoke thunder and lightning. A shocking energy rose up, causing everything to shake. A windstorm sprang into being, which promptly slammed into the Demonic cultivator.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE….

The Demonic cultivator’s face flickered, and blood sprayed out of his mouth in a continuous stream as he tumbled backward like a kite with its string cut. He fell back several hundred meters before finally coming to a stop, his face pale, his body trembling.

Bei Yu sat on her ship, which currently hovered in midair. All of a sudden, her face flickered, and she spoke four words, one at a time. “Demon Mantra: Mesmeric Rebuke!!” 1

The other Demonic cultivators’ minds trembled, and expressions of disbelief appeared on their faces as they looked over at the waterfall.

Even Fan Dong’er appeared to be shocked.

Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed. The voice which had spoken just now used only one phrase to unleash unthinkable power. That one phrase was like a magical technique, a divine ability that could… shake the mind. Not only did it leave the Demonic cultivator’s body trembling, it also was a powerful attack on his very thoughts.

Meng Hao was familiar with the four words that Bei Yu had uttered. He knew that it was one of the three most powerful Daoist magics of the Nine Seas God World’s Demonic Cultivator Horde!

“Demon Mantra: Mesmeric Rebuke can turn one’s own divine sense into an attack on the self….” he thought. “It is impossible to defend against, and the stronger one’s divine sense, the more terrifying the results!”

Very few Demonic cultivators were able to successfully learn it. In the current generation, only Bei Yu and Long Tianhai had ever studied it, as well as the other eight Sea Realm Demons.

From the way it had been used, Meng Hao, along with Fan Dong’er and Bei Yu, could all tell that whoever was inside the waterfall hadn’t attacked with killing intent, but rather, was issuing a warning.

The Demonic cultivator hovered in midair, his face pale white, looking at the waterfall with terror. Finally he clasped hands and bowed deeply, then hurried back to his ship. The white fox hadn’t moved the entire time, nor had it even looked up. It simply continued to practice breathing techniques with the white jade.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, but he continued to stand there silently. Bei Yu hesitated for a moment, then moved forward toward the waterfall. Feeling she had no other choice, she clasped hands and bowed, then said, “I am Sea Daughter Bei Yu of the Junior generation, from the Nine Seas God World. Senior, what relationship do you have with our Demonic Cultivator Horde?”

Demon Mantra: Mesmeric Rebuke was an esoteric magic of the Demonic Cultivator Horde, something that no outsider would ever have access to. And yet, they had all seen it unleashed right here.

There was no response from the waterfall, and eventually, the white fox opened its mouth and swallowed the white jade. Then, it turned, disappearing into the waterfall in a flash of white.

Bei Yu hesitated for a moment, and finally decided not to risk going into the waterfall. Just now, the power of a single word had revealed that the cultivation base of whoever was inside… was terrifyingly powerful.

After clasping hands respectfully one more time, Bei Yu headed back to her ship. It was in that moment that Meng Hao blinked his right eye nine times in quick succession. Rumbling filled his mind as his view of the world suddenly changed completely. His vision was suddenly empowered to pierce through the waterfall where, shockingly, he saw an Immortal's cave, and a middle-aged man sitting there cross-legged. Located next to the man was a tomb!

It was as if the man had always been there, and always would be, sitting there accompanying the tomb!

As soon as Meng Hao laid eyes on him, the man in the Immortal's cave suddenly turned to look at him. As their gazes met, an expression of shock could be seen in his eyes, and he waved his sleeve, terminating Meng Hao's vision. Pain filled his mind, and his face reddened, but he quickly recovered.

Despite the vision having ended, he could still clearly picture the man's appearance, and remembered that the man had a white scale on his forehead.

"He was a Demonic cultivator!" he thought. After a moment, he proceeded forward. Jian Daozi hesitated for a moment, then followed. Soon, everyone else on the ships followed suit.

After proceeding onward for a bit, Meng Hao's hand suddenly shot out to grab Jian Daozi. Jian Daozi considered dodging, but hesitated, and Meng Hao's hand latched onto his arm.

"Exalted Immortal…." he said, sounding alarmed.

Meng Hao’s face was calm as his hand clenched down onto Jian Daozi’s arm. Cracking sounds could be heard as he then cleanly ripped off one of Jian Daozi’s fingers. The pain caused Jian Daozi to shake, but he didn’t dare to show any anger, only fear.

“That Demonic cultivator just now was one of the knives you had prepared to stick into our backs, right?” Meng Hao said coolly. Then he released Jian Daozi’s arm.

A bitter look appeared on Jian Daozi’s face, as if he wanted to explain what had happened, but couldn’t.

“You can continue to pretend as much as you want, but remember… don’t provoke me!” Meng Hao said one word at a time, staring Jian Daozi in the eye.

“Ripping off your finger was just a warning. If you dare to provoke me again… I don’t care who you have hidden here in the Windswept Realm, nor how many knives you’ve prepared… you will regret it.” At this point, Meng Hao gave a slight smile.

To Jian Daozi, however, that smile was filled with something utterly terrifying, as if the person in front of him were a fiendish monster, someone he didn’t dare to ever provoke. If he did, then… he had no idea what the consequences might be.

They didn’t encounter anything unusual during the rest of their journey. Nor did Jian Daozi speak any further with Meng Hao. As they traveled along, Meng Hao continued to take in the sights, his expression tranquil.

As for the other cultivators from the Mountain and Sea Realm, they proceeded along quietly. After what had happened to the middle aged Demonic cultivator, their aggressive attitudes seemed to have been reined in, and they didn’t impulsively try to grab any of the desirable things they saw along the way.

The Ninth Nation was not very large. After flying for about half a day, Bei Yu veered off toward the Immortal’s cave she had selected. One by one, the other Demonic cultivators also left, and eventually Fan Dong’er and her young cultivator companion departed. Soon, a city appeared up ahead of Meng Hao.

It was a city of mortals, and was also the capital city of the Ninth Nation.

Behind the capital city, a mountain was just barely visible. The top half was capped in snow, and the bottom half was emerald green. Beneath the mountain was a lake, which was fed by a river that stretched off into the distance.

The lake was as smooth as a mirror, without the slightest wave or ripple, revealing a perfect reflection of the sky.

Jian Daozi continued to accompany Meng Hao as he flew past the city and across the lake. Soon, he was directly in front of Mount Whiteseal.

As they neared, a frigid wind blew down from the mountain. It was currently summer, and the heat was oppressive, so the cold wind was incredibly refreshing. It was the kind of feeling that would cause people to instantly take a liking to this mountain that was half-covered in snow.

The feeling was reinforced by the white snow on the top half of the mountain, which formed a striking contrast with the emerald green bottom half. The thing that moved Meng Hao the most, though, was that as they neared, he could clearly sense the natural law and World Essence… growing stronger and more defined.

It was as if this mountain were the nucleus of the entire Ninth Nation, as if it was the source of all the natural law and Essence.

In addition, the mountain caused Meng Hao to feel a sensation similar to that which he had experienced from the Towers of Tang on Planet South Heaven.

It was the type of feeling that came from an object that had been the subject of worship for countless tens of thousands of years. It was an intangible energy, similar to that which came from burning incense. After congealing to a certain extent, it became the National Aura of the Ninth Nation, and eventually transformed… into a type of qi flow!

The qi flow of the Windswept Realm!

Meng Hao was becoming increasingly moved. His eyes gradually grew wider as he gazed up at the highest peaks of the mountain, from which he sensed some type of summoning.

The sensation slowly grew more and more intense, causing Meng Hao’s heart to begin to pound. His blood began to surge through his veins, and soon he couldn’t control the urge to head to the peak of the mountain and see what it was that was calling him.

Just when he was about to step forward, he stopped.

“Interesting. For some reason, I have the feeling that the purpose of the summons is to try to entice me to fly directly to the peak of the mountain….” After a moment of thought, he didn’t do so, but rather, began to ascend the stone stairs which began at the very foot.

Behind him, Jian Daozi and the other old men noticed what he was doing, and exchanged shocked looks.

Mount Whiteseal was the most sacred location in all of the Ninth Nation, a Holy Mountain that many Immortals had visited in the past. Virtually all of them had chosen chose to fly directly to the top, whereas Meng Hao chose to walk up slowly from the bottom. It was extremely rare.

Actually, ascending the mountain from the very bottom would impart an even more profound sensation regarding the natural laws and Essences that were focused on this nucleus of the Ninth Nation, as well as the National Aura.

Meng Hao began to walk up the steps, taking his time. Sometimes he even stopped to relish the sensation of the natural laws on the mountain, and the omnipresent Essences. Furthermore, he was also able to sense… the so-called National Aura which had built up on the mountain because of the years of worship.

At one point, he stretched his right hand out into the air and made a grasping motion. “Is this… the Essence of wind?” he murmured.

Although he didn’t know it, somewhere out in the Ninth Nation, a gale-force wind sprang up.

“The Essence of water…. And this is fire…. They’re all incomplete….”

Time passed as he strolled his way upward. Soon it was night, and eventually the rising sun could be seen once again. Then it was noontime. It was at this point that he passed out of the emerald green portion of the mountain and entered the snow white area. Step by step, he went onward. He immersed himself in contemplation of the mountain, in enlightenment. He forgot about walking, forgot about even moving forward.

He wasn’t aware of it, but as he proceeded along up the mountain, all of the lands of the Ninth Nation were shaking. Wind blew and rain fell. Lights flashed in the sky, and Spirit Springs erupted. Mountains vanished and then reappeared, and rivers changed course. The entire world was altered.

All of the changes occurred due to Meng Hao walking up the mountain and contemplating the world’s natural laws. As he gained enlightenment of the Essences of Heaven and Earth, he made acquisitions which manifested as transformations in the Ninth Nation.

Back at the foot of the mountain, Jian Daozi and the others had long since begun to stare with wide eyes and slack jaws. Even more so than the other old men, Jian Daozi’s eyes were now filled with profound anxiety. And what he was anxious about was clearly not Meng Hao.

In fact, Meng Hao wasn’t even aware of the fact that he had already reached the peak of the mountain!

1. The name of this magic is actually also a chengyu, a Chinese idiom. The definition of the idiom itself is: to mislead the public with rumors, to delude

the people with lies. In this case I’m pretty sure Er Gen just copied it because it has the word “demon” in it. The literal character-by-character translation would be “demon word delude crowd”

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# Chapter 1093: His Name Shakes the Echelon!

Atop the snow-capped mountain peak, a frigid wind blew snowflakes onto Meng Hao’s head. They quickly melted, taking with them some of the warmth inside of him. The resulting sensation was one of icy coldness.

The coldness caused Meng Hao’s somewhat blank eyes to suddenly clear. As he regained his senses, the incredible transformations to the lands of the Ninth Nation ceased.

“The world has invisible natural laws….” he murmured.

“On top of natural law is the omnipresent power of Essence…. Understanding something’s intrinsic qualities, and seeing its true origin, knowing EVERYTHING about it… that is its Essence.” Although his journey from the bottom of the mountain to the top had seemed to go quickly, it truth, it had taken quite a bit of time.

That contradiction actually led him to significant enlightenment regarding Mount Whiteseal and the Ninth Nation. However, he still felt as if there were some areas he hadn’t been able to probe. There was something about this mountain, this nation, and even this Realm, that was… incongruous.

It was as if there was a power of rejection, a power that, despite Meng Hao’s observations of natural laws and Essence during his trip up the mountain, ensured that his understanding was merely superficial. Now that he thought back, he realized that there was nothing profound or important imprinted in his heart.

After a moment of thought, he looked around at the snowflakes covering his field of vision and drifting down onto his body.

The ground was covered with a thick layer of snow that quickly captured any snowflakes which landed on it. They lost any ability to dance or flutter, no matter how much the wind blew to pick them up.

However, no matter how much his vision was obscured by the snowflakes, he could still see that up ahead of him was… a statue.

It was a statue surrounded by swirling snow. It depicted a man, apparently middle-aged, with a slight smile on his face. He didn't seem powerful or solemn, but a sharp gleam could be seen in his eyes that appeared to be an admonishing expression. Anyone who caught sight of the statue would be inwardly shaken.

It was the kind of feeling a mortal would experience upon facing a wild beast.

It was as if this person's wrath could cause Heaven and Earth to crumble, could shake the world, could cause all living things to bow in worship. Meng Hao took a deep breath as he looked at the statue; it almost seemed to be looking back at him.

That simple gaze caused his mind to reel, sent his cultivation base into chaos, and caused his qi and blood to seethe. He coughed up a mouthful of blood and staggered backward several paces, his face flickering.

"Just what Realm was this person in?" the thought. "It's only a statue, so it could only have a tiny percentage of the true self's power, and yet its divine will is shocking!

"Wait a second, that's not right. This feeling… is so familiar!" His eyes flashed as he looked up at the statue, and then a strange expression appeared in his eyes.

"I was called here by this statue….

“Furthermore, the power that injured me didn’t come from the statue, but rather… the entire Ninth Nation!” His eyes glittered as he turned to look out at the entire Ninth Nation.

“That was… the power of the National Fate. The reason it feels so familiar is because this place is the same as the Tower of Tang!! Or perhaps it would be better to say that the power of the Ninth Nation’s qi flow, when combined, allows this statue to radiate astonishing pressure!

“The Windswept Realm has nine nations, and each one… has a bit more than ten percent of the qi flow of the Windswept Realm!

“The reason I experienced that sensation of rejection is because… I’m not an entity of the Windswept Realm!

“Well, now that I’m here, there should be some method to get rid of the power of rejection, and attain the approval of the National Aura!” Meng Hao looked back at the statue, and his eyes came to focus on an almost undetectable mark on the back of its hand.

Without careful examination, it would be virtually impossible to clearly make out the mark. Meng Hao’s eyes shone with determination as he formed his divine sense into a magical technique and shot it out toward the mark. However, the mark seemed impossible to break open, as if some type of seal were in place that would require several hours to break through. Meng Hao pondered silently, then suddenly performed an incantation gesture with his right hand and unleashed the Fifth Demon Sealing Hex.

By now, he was very familiar with the Fifth Hex, and had been able to detect that it was useful when dealing with seals. Reverse inside and outside. Consume and spit out. It could unbind all sorts of seals!

As Meng Hao unleashed the Hexing magic, Jian Daozi and the others at the foot of the mountain looked on with fixed gazes. Jian Daozi sighed inwardly, and an imperceptible flicker ran through his eyes. Although he was incapable of making any further cultivation base breakthroughs in this lifetime, he had been able to utilize a secret magic to extend his longevity for many, many years.

In fact, he had lived for so long that he had long since forgotten exactly how old he was. Furthermore, he would never be able to forget how Immortals trampled the inhabitants of the Windswept Realm beneath their feet, humiliating them. He would never be able to forget how it felt to be treated like a slave.

“Perhaps if I hadn’t met THAT person… then I wouldn’t have such feelings,” he thought. “After all, the Windswept Realm is one of the Lower Realms of the Immortal World, and is a slave world.” He bowed his head to cover the hatred and venom that flickered in his eyes.

Soon, vigilance took over, and he looked up. All such previous looks had disappeared from his eyes, which were now filled with what appeared to be mindless veneration for Immortals.

Actually, of the countless Immortals that he had encountered, none had given him the same feeling as Meng Hao. His vigilance intensified.

“His cultivation base is profound, he is extremely cunning, and he attacks with utter ruthlessness. He… is not the type of person to be dealt with easily. However, he will most likely fall into a trance here. And even if that doesn’t happen… it doesn’t matter how strong he is, it won’t be long before the Windswept Realm’s patience will be at an end, and it will completely explode!” Jian Daozi took a deep breath, and a brilliant light flashed in his eyes before they once again returned to their previous state. He slid his hands into their opposite sleeves, then stooped over low, making himself look inconspicuous and innocuous.

“There is no member of the Echelon who will understand the statue of the Imperial Lord at a single glance. Even though some of the people who come here are aware of its secrets, and each time they come the duration grows shorter, in the end, the fastest one will take at least six hours. This Meng Hao might be incredibly intelligent, with extraordinary enlightenment, but even he would need more time….” Inwardly, he was laughing coldly as he looked up at Meng Hao on top of the mountain. Then, his face suddenly flickered, and his eyes went wide with disbelief.

It wasn’t just him. The old men behind him were staring with wide eyes, and panting.

In the moment that Meng Hao unleashed his Hexing magic on the sealing mark, he got the sensation that he was opening a door. His mind trembled, and the world shook. Countless natural laws exploded out of that door, as well as numerous Essences. They swept about, burying him, transforming into a tempest that raged in all directions.

The previously calm Ninth Nation was once again struck with incredible transformations. Mountain ranges rose and rivers changed their course. The incredible transformations caused an indescribable feeling to float up in the minds and hearts of all living creatures in the Ninth Nation.

Meng Hao’s breath came in ragged pants as the tempest swirled around him. Numerous natural laws and Essences could be seen, but soon, his eyes glittered as he realized that many of them were duplicates. The glow of augury could be seen, and soon Meng Hao was able to determine… that there were only three thousand!

Among those three thousand, the number that weren’t duplicates consisted of only… three hundred!

His eyes flickered as the tempest suddenly slowed down and began to converge in front of him in the form of a flame.

The flame danced down into the statue’s hand, as if it were a lamp, a lamp held by the statue!

The dancing flame cast strange light onto the statue, and when that light touched Meng Hao, he suddenly felt the power of rejection fading significantly.

He gazed at the flame, within which could be seen three hundred natural laws and Essences. Unfortunately, they weren’t complete, although that was the very reason that Meng Hao was able to sense them at all.

When he caught sight of those three hundred Essences, a voice suddenly boomed out like thunder in his mind.

“Three thousand Daos. Three thousand Realms. Nine Windswept Nations. Nine Nations with three hundred Daos each. They form the World Seal…. The final three hundred Daos are located in the central temple!

“Foreigners, the more great Daos you come to understand, the more enlightenment you receive, and the sooner the day shall come in which you achieve your Dao!”

The voice was profound, but Meng Hao had no time to think about it; the flame in the statue’s hand suddenly caused him to sense… vibrations coming from his Nirvana Fruit.

Those vibrations were that of desire. Meng Hao suddenly had the powerful sense that… if he could gain enlightenment regarding those three hundred Essences, then he should be able to fully fuse with his second Nirvana Fruit!

In that same moment, a beam of light exploded out from the Windswept Realm’s central temple. It shot screaming through the air, causing all cultivators in the world to stare at it with wide eyes.

It caused boundless ripples to spread out, filling the sky of the Windswept Realm, enabling everyone to see several illusory mountains, all of which had huge statues on them.

Apparently, this illusory world on display… representing unparalleled heights of glory!

Suddenly, one of the statues collapsed, sending a huge boom out in all directions. Even as it collapsed, it reformed, transforming into a new statue, a statue… of Meng Hao!

An austere voice echoed out into all minds, filling all hearts: “Meng Hao of the Ninth Nation has exceeded the previous record holder. He has materialized a statue of himself, and shall be rewarded with the qi flow of the Ninth Nation!”

“Impossible!” thought Jian Daozi, shaking. Behind him, the other old men stared with wide eyes.

As of this moment, the qi flow of the Ninth Nation seemed to fully accept Meng Hao. As it swirled around him, the power of rejection vanished completely. Panting, Meng Hao looked up into the sky.

At the same time, the other cultivators and Echelon members in the other nations were completely shaken.

In the Fourth Nation stood a handsome young man, who currently had a strange look in his eyes. Balling his hands into fists, he growled, “Meng Hao. Why does his name seem so familiar?”

In the First Nation, the incomparably proud number one member of the Echelon stood in front of a similar statue, which was also shining brightly. A ball of flame could also be seen in that statue’s hand. Clearly… he had gained enlightenment mere moments after Meng Hao had.

After looking shocked for a moment, he said, “Faster than me… interesting. Well, even if he was notified about some of the secrets of this place, the enlightenment here can only be acquired by experiencing it over time.”

A profound gleam appeared in his eyes, and he began to laugh. “I think this time I’ll be able to add another precious item to my collection. Meng Hao of the Ninth Nation. He’s from the Ninth Mountain and Sea, right? So, he must be the guy Xue’er is looking for?”

In the Eighth Nation was a young man surrounded by swirling bones. He suddenly looked in the direction of the Ninth Nation. “Meng Hao…. His surname is Meng!”

Other members of the Echelon were all similarly shocked, and for the first time, Meng Hao’s name was imprinted into their hearts. They were all members of the Echelon, and were Chosen among Chosen. How could they easily back down from a challenge!?

The desire to fight rose up intensely in their hearts, inadvertently stirred up by Meng Hao.

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# Chapter 1094: The War of the Nine Nations Begins

A massive wind surged up. It was as if the Windswept Realm was building up power, which could explode out at any moment.

Once that power erupted, the Nine Nations would be swept into war, a war between all cultivators. It heralded… the Echelon battles!

It would determine who was truly number one in the Echelon, who was the true peak power amongst them. To become an Echelon cultivator, one had to be a Chosen among Chosen in any given Mountain and Sea. They were people who could, based on their own cultivation base… challenge experts above their own level!

Blazing suns like that were people who wouldn't easily accept being inferior to others; they were people who strove to be the champion of their generation!

Actually… despite the fact that young man from the First Mountain and Sea was publicly acknowledged as the number one in the Echelon… how could the others fear him?!

The fighting would happen one way or another. Furthermore, in the Windswept Realm… this was a chance for all members of the Echelon in this generation… to experience their first true war!

The war began in the instant that Meng Hao stepped onto the mountain peak, and the light from the central temple shot into the sky, revealing the statues.

As of that moment, Meng Hao’s name spread throughout all Nine Nations, and was fixed firmly into the minds of all the cultivators from the Nine Mountains and Seas, and all of the other members of the Echelon.

It was at this point that a figure could be seen speeding along through the Fifth Nation. It was a young woman, incredibly beautiful, although frowning slightly. Behind her were eight beams of light, doggedly pursuing her with deadly intent.

Each one of those pursuing figures was in the Ancient Realm. Furthermore, these people did not have less than five extinguished Soul Lamps; rather, they were so profound as to be unreadable!

That was supposed to be an impossibility in the Windswept Realm, and yet… it clearly wasn’t!

The woman was none other than the successor of the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite, Xue’er. As she sped along, she looked up and saw the light coming from the central temple. She saw the statues and the mountains up in the sky, and she saw Meng Hao. At long last, she also heard his name.

“Is it him…?” she thought. Despite being pursed the way she was, her eyes shone with a brilliant light, and she instantly committed Meng Hao’s name to memory. Then, she continued to fly along, and her eight pursuers whistled after her as they tried to catch up.

Meanwhile, back on Mount Whiteseal in the Ninth Nation, Meng Hao took a deep breath and looked back down from the sky. The fire in the statue’s hand cast light into his eyes, filling them with a strange flickering.

After a moment passed, he smiled.

“So, I broke the previous record…. I bet that really sets off the other Echelon Chosen. Well… GOOD!

“I don’t care what other strange things there are in this Windswept Realm, or what Jian Daozi and his pals are scheming… they have nothing to do with me!

“I never imagined that I wouldn’t even need to go to the central temple to find a method for fully absorbing my second Nirvana Fruit and… stepping into the Allheaven Immortal Realm!” Meng Hao took a deep breath. His heart burst with anticipation, and intense excitement filled him.

Without any hesitation, he stepped forward and sat down cross-legged. Next, he released Chu Yuyan from his bag of holding. After looking around for a moment, Chu Yuyan was clearly shaken. She could sense how different the Windswept Realm was, and without any further prompting from Meng Hao, she sat cross-legged and began to practice cultivation. Her focus was now breaking through into the Immortal Realm.

Meng Hao nodded silently, then sent out his divine sense into the flame. Instantly, he could detect the three hundred great Daos inside, the three hundred natural laws, the three hundred Essences!

He had the sudden premonition that the more Essences he came to understand, the easier it would be to absorb his second Nirvana Fruit.

“If one nation isn’t enough, then it will have to be two. If all of the Nine Nations and their 2,700 Essences are insufficient, then I’ll go to the central temple, and use 3,000 Great Dao Essences to fully absorb my second Nirvana Fruit!” He closed his eyes and fully poured his divine sense into the flame.

At the foot of the mountain, Jian Daozi’s face flickered. Behind him, the other old men were staring reverently at Meng Hao. After a while, they began to disperse.

Time passed. A month went by in the blink of an eye. During that time, the Windswept Realm seemed peaceful and quiet. However, dark undercurrents swept about. Although fighting had not yet burst out between the ordinary cultivators, and the Echelon cultivators were still adapting themselves to the locale, the mortal armies of the Nine Nations had already begun to wage war.

The armies of the Nine Nations had long since prepared for this war, and now they began to march toward the center of the Windswept Realm… to the region of the central temple.

That area consisted of an enormous plain, at the very center of which was the temple, which was a restricted area. The grass on that plain was white, and the soil was black.

Also located on the central plain were nine towering pagodas. They were ancient and archaic, as if they had existed there for countless years.

Each one of the pagodas stood for one of the nations, around which the armies of the Nine Nations clustered. Each nation had millions of troops; added altogether, there were a total of nearly 10,000,000 soldiers on the battlefield.

Chaotic fighting instantly broke out. None of the nations allied with each other, ensuring a massive battle royale involving all nine of the nations.

Miserable screams rose up into the air, along with the cries of rage that came before death as countless soldiers were slaughtered. The blades and spears that they wielded seemed to indicate that their mission was to cover the black soil with blood until it turned purple.

Under the orders of their marshals and generals, the armies rapidly turned the entire area into a sea of blood.

There was no right or wrong in the fighting. No one questioned why it was happening. They simply fought an eternal battle, and sometimes, it seemed as if they weren’t fighting for the right to live, but the right to die!

As the casualties piled up, the nine pagodas began to glow with the color of blood. Shockingly, the brightest glow was coming from the Third Nation, from which a pillar of blood-colored light rose up 300 meters into the air.

The blood-colored beams rising up from the other pagodas were all several dozen meters high. As for the Second Nation, the Sixth Nation, and the Ninth Nation, their blood-colored beams were only about thirty meters.

The only way to get those beams of light to climb higher… was to fight and kill!

The more enemies they killed, the higher the blood-colored beam would climb!

Almost in the same moment that the blood-colored beams rose up from the nine pagodas, the Echelon cultivators on the various National Aura mountains throughout the Nine Nations all felt the qi flow and the speed of their enlightenment changing.

In the Third Nation in particular, the qi flow surged up, such that it seemed as if those who were there were receiving the aid of a divine blessing in terms of gaining enlightenment.

There were transformations in the other mountains as well. In the Second, Sixth and Ninth Nations, the National Aura was out of balance, causing the mountains to tremble. Apparently, the contemplation of enlightenment there was unstable, as if something were obstructing it.

The National Aura scattered, causing pressure to weigh down on the nations. The mortals could only vaguely sense it, but to the cultivators, it was very obvious.

That was especially true of the cultivators from the Mountain and Sea Realm, who were far more sensitive to it. Fan Dong’er, Bei Yu, and the other Demonic cultivators could all sense the incredible pressure, and their faces flickered as they looked off into the distance.

The pressure rapidly increased, weighing down over them like a sword. It was a very uncomfortable feeling that, if it went on for too long, would significantly restrict their cultivation bases.

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed as he emerged from contemplation. Moments ago, he had failed in his enlightenment; not only was the task more difficult, much of the qi flow on the mountain had scattered. In addition, some of the defensive mechanisms built into the mountain had been weakened.

“Why is this happening…?” he thought, frowning. He quickly realized that he simply didn’t understand enough about the Windswept Realm. He rose to his feet and looked out in the direction of the central temple.

Although it was quite a distance away, he could sense it, and knew that the armies of the various nations were engaged in bitter fighting. He could also sense the rising columns of blood-colored light.

After observing for a moment, he spent a moment in thought, and suddenly reached a new conclusion.

“The mortals’ war can influence the qi flow. The more people are killed, the stronger the National Aura will get. Conversely, if the mortal army of the nation is weakened… then the National Aura protecting the mountain will be influenced, as well as making it more difficult for me to gain enlightenment!”

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as they narrowed.

“But I didn’t give any orders for the Ninth Nation to send its army into battle….

“Well, no matter what, if they’re defeated on the battlefield outside of the central temple, not only will it influence the speed of my enlightenment, the defenses formed by the National Aura will also be weakened, or even disappear. If that happens… then the dangers of having the sealing mark stolen will be increased!

“Perhaps that is the whole purpose of this trial by fire?” After a moment of thought, he understood why the Mountains and Seas sent nine people. The other eight were most likely intended to be sent into battle. Although they couldn’t be used to kill mortals, they possessed many, many other methods that could let them influence the tide of battle.

“It seems I need to send some people to help with the battle. Unfortunately, I can’t go myself….” He frowned, then spent another moment to confirm his line of thinking. He couldn’t even leave Mount Whiteseal; once the process of contemplating enlightenment was begun, it could not be paused.

In order to stop, he needed to be enlightened regarding at least 100 Essences.

Currently, he had only been enlightened regarding a bit more than 80 Essences. It wouldn’t be long before he reached 100.

After a moment of thought, he reached up and sliced a cut into his forehead, causing a drop of blood to fly out.

He waved a finger, sending some divine will into the drop of blood, which then expanded rapidly, transforming into an almost exact duplicate of Meng Hao

“It’s too bad I still haven’t figured out how to repair my True Self Dao clone. The only thing I can do now is make divine will incarnation clones like this.” Sighing, he closed his eyes and sent some divine sense out to continue contemplating enlightenment of the World Essence and the great Daos. As for the divine will incarnation, he turned his head and transformed into a beam of light that shot off Mount Whiteseal and into the sky.

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# Chapter 1095: Loathing Meng Hao!

The incarnation didn’t head to the battlefield, as it didn’t possess very much battle prowess; it would dissipate after a relatively short period of time. Instead, it headed to the Immortal’s caves occupied by other cultivators from the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Similar scenes were playing out in the other nations, most notably in the First Nation, where four beams of light sped toward the central battlefield.

Clearly, the Echelon cultivators had all realized that the mortals’ war was extremely important!

Losses would result in the scattering of the National Aura, and a weakening of the defenses. If the defenses were removed… they would be in extreme danger!

In one particular mountain range in the Ninth Nation was a valley that looked like an Immortal utopia. Cultivators clustered about inside and outside the valley, staring in deathly silence at a middle-aged cultivator up ahead.

It was one of the Demonic cultivators from the Ninth Sea, who was currently reclining on a divan, surrounded by dancing female cultivators. Beautiful music drifted through the air, accompanied by birdsong and the fragrance of flowers. The entire scene was lovely.

The Demonic cultivator sighed deeply as he looked around. He still wasn’t used to the situation; during the last month everyone he had encountered had looked at him with both fear and fanatical reverence.

A single word from him could cause people to commit suicide. A single glance would cause any beautiful female cultivator he saw to approach seductively and cater to his every desire. If he got irritated, everyone trembled in fear. It was as if he were the will of Heaven, and he was completely lost within that feeling.

He had never experienced anything like this back in the Ninth Sea, nor could he ever have imagined anything like it. There were simply too many people who were more powerful than he was.

Even if he went to some remote location, perhaps he could enjoy a life like this temporarily, but someone stronger than him would eventually come along and take it all away, and then his life would return to how it usually was.

But the Windswept Realm was different, leading to a completely different mental state.

Granted, there had been some incredible pressure just now. Plus, he was a disciple of the Nine Seas God World, and understood that he had a mission in this place. However, he just couldn't hold back from indulging in the pleasures of the Windswept Realm.

As he thought about this he reached up and slowly ran his finger down the cheek of one of the beautiful women. When he saw the awe in her eyes, the Demonic cultivator laughed loudly, and was just about to say something when, all of a sudden, his face fell. He looked up and saw a beam of light flying toward him through midair, which then transformed into Meng Hao.

"Meng Hao!" The Demonic cultivator's eyes widened, and he rose to his feet, instantly on guard. Then he realized it was nothing more than an incarnation. Of course, despite being only an incarnation, it was still Meng Hao.

"Go to the central temple battlefield immediately," Meng Hao said. That simple sentence caused the Demonic cultivator's face to distort with rage.

"You don't have the right to order me around!"

“Maybe not, but I’m strong enough to kill you,” Meng Hao responded coolly. His words were filled with infinite coldness. He might be only a weak incarnation that couldn’t do anything to the Demonic cultivator, and yet his words were filled an inarguable murderous aura. “Go. That is your mission in this place. It doesn’t matter what pleasures you’ve enjoyed or how much you’ve fallen in love with them, if you forget your mission, then there’s no reason for me to keep you alive.”

With that, Meng Hao spun and shot off into the distance.

The Demonic cultivator stood there silently for a moment, then threw his head back and roared. He might be furious, but he had no choice other than to comply. He flew up into the air, waved a hand, causing clouds and mist to surround him, and headed straight for the central battlefield.

Meng Hao wasn’t worried that the Demonic cultivator might refuse to go. He was not the first person Meng Hao had approached, but rather, the second. The first Demonic cultivator had also erupted into a fury, but in the end, was too terrified to refuse. The second Demonic cultivator reacted in the same way as the first one had. In their own little worlds, they were like emperors, with complete authority over everything. After only a month of living like that, they had almost become lost in their own fantasies. It was something that Meng Hao found extremely frightening. In his opinion, cultivators, even Demonic cultivators, should not have allowed their mindset to be influenced in such a way in the space of just a month.

There were many things from the outside world that were the complete opposite here, and yet, it was happening within an unreasonably short period of time.

It was almost as if there were some bizarre power in the Windswept Realm that amplified one’s desires by multiple orders of magnitude, making them more intense and pronounced.

“Have I been influenced as well?” he asked himself, but had no answer. With a flash, he sped toward the location of the next Demonic cultivator.

His destination was a small city, within which was a blacksmith shop. A burly man was there, bare-chested, and the clang of metal striking metal could be heard as he worked with iron. He occasionally pulled a piece of iron from a furnace, examined it, then began to strike it with a hammer.

The weather was oppressively hot, ensuring that not many people were out in the streets. When Meng Hao appeared, a tremor ran through the burly man's body, and he looked up and chuckled wryly.

This man was none other than the extremely devious and cunning burly body cultivator from the Demonic Cultivator Horde that Meng Hao had exchanged blows with.

"You didn't have to come personally," the man said. "I know what my mission is. Once I finish with this sword, I'll be on my way." The man lifted up the bright red strip of metal he had been working with, then shoved it into cold water. Hissing sounds and steam rose up, and after a moment, he pulled the metal back out. It was a blade, riddled with tiny holes, yet overflowing with a murderous aura.

"You're different from all the others," Meng Hao said coolly. He looked around at the blacksmith shop, which appeared to be completely ordinary, without the slightest bit of extravagance to be seen. From what he could tell, the inhabitants of the city had no idea that this burly man was actually an Immortal.

"My desires are unique," the man said, "and unusually strong. Because of that, they are hard to fulfill." After a moment of thought, the man tossed the huge blade into his bag of holding, grinned at Meng Hao, and then walked out of the shop.

For some reason, the man's style seemed to be very different from before, causing Meng Hao to stare at him for a moment.

"I hope you stay this way," he said suddenly.

"That's the plan," was the reply. The burly man laughed loudly, then flew into the air. He quickly disappeared over the horizon. Meng Hao's eyes glittered, then he turned and vanished, to reappear directly in front of the man.

Although it had seemed that the man flew off toward the central battlefield, he actually ended up fleeing in the opposite direction. As soon as he saw Meng Hao blocking his way, he laughed heartily.

“Oops, I took a wrong turn! My mistake!” he said. Then he turned and headed toward the central battlefield.

Meng Hao watched him disappear. After a moment of thought, he looked back at the blacksmith shop for a moment, then left. He didn’t force anyone else to fight. Instead, he merely inspected the Immortal’s caves of the other cultivators in the Ninth Nation.

His incarnation was slowly fading away, and perhaps because of that, it was becoming more and more difficult for anyone to detect him.

He saw Bei Yu, surrounded by a sea of flowers. There were also countless cultivators and mortals who were tending to the flowers like gardeners, while Bei Yu practiced cultivation in the middle. Although the entire scene seemed harmless at first, Meng Hao was able to see that the seeds of desire were slowly taking root within her.

He found Fan Dong’er, whose situation was quite unique. Not a single person could be found in her vicinity, and in fact, she had placed herself in secluded meditation, choosing to have no contact whatsoever with the outside world.

He stood outside her Immortal’s cave for quite some time, watching thoughtfully. Eventually he left.

Just before his incarnation faded away, he found the only other human cultivator besides Fan Dong’er, the young man from the Nine Seas God World. In general, he appeared to be refined and even scholarly, and yet the world he had created was like a scene from hell.

The mortals there trembled, and the cultivators were in terror as they excavated Immortal Jade out of an enormous mine!

When Meng Hao saw the Immortal jade, his mind trembled slightly, and he began to pant. It was as if some enormous power had surfaced in his mind, urging him to instantly slaughter the young cultivator and take all of the Immortal jade for himself.

The impulse rose up without any warning, and was so strong that Meng Hao’s eyes were instantly shot with blood. His cultivation base surged, and he waved his hand, causing incredible pressure to weigh down on all life forms in the area. Their minds reeled, and a bellow of rage could be heard as the young cultivator suddenly flew up into the air.

“Meng Hao, what are you doing!?!?” he roared. Meng Hao’s incarnation suddenly collapsed into pieces, transforming into nothing more than ash. It wasn’t something done intentionally; rather, the incarnation had reached its limit, and the surge of Meng Hao’s cultivation base had caused any remaining life force it had to vanish.

The young man stared in shock for a moment, and then his face darkened. He looked in the direction of Mount Whiteseal and snorted coldly before floating back down to the ground.

Back on Mount Whiteseal, Meng Hao was seated cross-legged next to the statue. Suddenly, he coughed up a mouthful of blood, and his face went pale. He opened his eyes, and a shocked expression could be seen on his face.

He immediately performed a double-handed incantation gesture to ensure that his contemplation of enlightenment was not interrupted. If a backlash during the process of contemplating enlightenment of Essence did not destroy him in body and soul, it would still shatter his cultivation base.

Enlightenment like this could not be interrupted; complete focus was required.

“It’s like I wasn’t under control of myself!!” he thought, shaken. “As soon as I saw that Immortal jade, the impulse I felt was too strong. It was… indescribable. Most terrifying of all was that in that moment, I didn’t even have the inclination to fight back against it.” He took a deep breath, suddenly aware of how truly mysterious the Windswept Realm was. Furthermore, he had the feeling that he was probably being influenced in certain ways that he wasn’t even aware of, perhaps from the moment he had arrived in the Windswept Realm.

His heart had grown colder than it usually was, and the thought of that… caused him to tremble.

“Desires are amplified…. Thankfully, that was an incarnation, and it ended up self-destructing. If it had been my true form….” He could only imagine what would have happened in that case.

After a moment of silence, he once again immersed himself in contemplation. However, the vigilance in his heart remained at a peak.

Back on the mortal battlefield in the central district, the three Demonic cultivators had joined the fray, easing some of the tension. However, it didn’t take long before cultivators from the other nations arrived, and the fighting grew more chaotic. The Ninth Nation was having trouble mustering its National Aura, causing them to suffer more defeats. In fact, of all the blood-colored beams, theirs was the lowest.

It was at this point… that the gaunt youth in the Eighth Nation, the one surrounded by bones, suddenly stood up. He was the first one to gain complete enlightenment of 100 Essences.

Furthermore, he ceased any continued efforts at gaining enlightenment, and turned toward the Ninth Nation, his killing intent rising high.

“Meng Hao. Surnamed Meng…. That’s the family name I hate more than any other!” With that, a flash could be seen as he shot toward the Ninth Nation, killing intent seething.

“Either way, you’ll be the first to die. I’ll take your sealing mark, and cut you down! I, Han Qinglei, will get the glory for slaughtering someone else in the Echelon!” 1

1. Han Qinglei’s name in Chinese is  hán qīng léi. Han is a common surname. Qing is a color, which could be blue, green, cyan, azure or even black. Lei means “thunder” or “lightning”

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# Chapter 1096: Han Qinglei!

When Han Qinglei, the Echelon cultivator from the Eighth Mountain, gained enlightenment of 100 Essences, a bright beam of light rose up from the temple in the middle of the crowded central battlefield with its millions of soldiers.

Colors flashed in the sky, and once again, the images of mountains and statues appeared up above. This time, another of the statues collapsed, to be replaced by the image of Han Qinglei.

“Han Qinglei of the Eighth Nation has broken the previous record, gaining enlightenment of 100 Essences, and shall be rewarded with a blessing of qi flow!”

As the ancient voice echoed out, red light erupted up from the Eighth Nation’s pagoda. It exceeded 300 meters and rapidly approached 450 meters. At the same time, the Eighth Nation’s qi flow increased, ensuring that the Mountain of National Aura’s defenses were increased to a terrifying degree.

Currently, the cultivators from the other nations were shaken. All eyes turned toward the Eighth Nation as Han Qinglei’s name became the second to rock the entire Windswept Realm!

Meanwhile, near the central temple, the red light shining from the Ninth Nation’s pagoda was growing increasingly weak. The overall strength of the Ninth Nation was weakening, and Mount Whiteseal’s defenses were substantially reduced.

Meng Hao’s contemplation of enlightenment was going worse than ever, and he was incapable of stopping. He was now on his 98th Essence, and the enlightenment was slow in coming. All the while, he had to be very wary of the powerful influence of the Windswept Realm itself, which tried to incite his desires and lead him astray.

As the qi flow of the Ninth Nation faded, the influence of the Windswept Realm increased. Fan Dong’er and the others could sense this. Most importantly, the desires in their hearts grew more intense. If they couldn’t understand the reason behind it, they would merely grow more frenzied, more lost. However, those who eventually reached an understanding of what was happening were terrified.

That was especially true of Fan Dong’er. She coughed up a mouthful of blood in the middle of her Immortal’s cave, and her face revealed traces of panic. She had been the first among the group to sense the massive change in her inward desires, which was why she had chosen to go into secluded meditation in an attempt to gain control. As of this moment, however, the opposite was happening; she was on the verge of losing control.

As for Bei Yu, she sat in the middle of the sea of flowers, seemingly completely entranced. From the look of it, her entire body was in the process of merging into the sea of flowers, as if she herself were turning into a blossom among the sea of flowers!

At the same time, a bright beam containing countless bones shot through the air above the Eighth Nation at top speed. A day later, it reached the border between the Eighth and Ninth Nations. Without the slightest hesitation, Han Qinglei shot across the border, laughing maniacally as he burst into the Ninth Nation.

He wore a black robe, and was very gaunt; the murderous aura which surrounded him erupted explosively.

In almost the exact moment that he entered the Ninth Nation, Mount Whiteseal shook violently, and the defensive pressure of the Ninth Nation increased dramatically.

However, such pressure did nothing to Han Qinglei. Laughing uproariously, he shot out over the lands, a bright beam of light surrounded by innumerable illusory white bones. Shrill screams could be heard echoing out from the bones as he sped forward; the sky dimmed and winds swirled.

Black clouds spread out across the skies of the Ninth Nation, and all the lands were cast into shadow.

The murderous aura which erupted off of Han Qinglei was like a tempest as he shot toward Meng Hao!

As he passed along, the earth quaked, and all cultivators and living creatures in the Ninth Nation shook. From their perspective, the previously bright and sunny day had instantly turned as dark as night.

“Meng Hao, you’re DEAD!” he shouted, his voice echoing out as he increased his speed. He was like a lightning bolt that rapidly drew closer to Mount Whiteseal.

As he neared, the Ninth Nation’s National Aura dissipated even more rapidly, and the pressure grew more intense. Fan Dong’er once again coughed up a mouthful of blood, and suddenly looked off into the distance.

“What’s happening? What caused the influence to increase so much, and so quickly?!” She gritted her teeth and flew out of her Immortal’s cave. When she looked up into the air, her face flickered as she saw the roiling black clouds off in the distance.

Inside of those black clouds were countless bones, speeding toward the capital city, and the Ninth Nation’s Mountain of National Aura, Mount Whiteseal!

Fan Dong’er wasn’t the only shocked one. Bei Yu sat in the sea of flowers, an expression of struggle on her face. She forced her eyes open, and a tremor ran through her as she looked around. Then she started to struggle even harder.

In another area, in the Immortal jade mine, mad laughter rang out. It was a laughter of satisfaction and joy as the young cultivator from the Nine Seas

God World was completely lost inside of himself. As he looked around, all he saw was endless Immortal jade.

“Wealth like this will make my cultivation base vastly more powerful!!”

As for the burly body cultivator and the other Demonic cultivators on the central temple battlefield, all of them were shaken inwardly, and their desires stirred to mad heights.

Heaven wished them dead, but first, it would drive them mad! 1

In the time it takes an incense stick to burn, the roiling black clouds sped from the border of the Ninth Nation all the way to Mount Whiteseal. The clouds acted like flesh, and the countless bones formed together into what looked like real bone structures. The entire thing transformed into a huge black fist!

It was fully 300 meters wide, shooting down from the sky toward Mount Whiteseal in a deadly strike!

“Time to die, Meng Hao!” he howled, voice sinister and full of killing intent. Everything shook as the fist descended toward the mountaintop, and Meng Hao, sitting there cross-legged by the statue.

By this point, Meng Hao had just gained enlightenment of the 99th Essence, and was very close to completing the entire process of the first stage. All he needed was one more Essence, and yet, because of the fading of the Ninth Nation’s National Aura, the enlightenment was very difficult and slow in the coming.

Rumbling could be heard as the fist smashed down toward Mount Whiteseal. All of a sudden, the statue began to glow, sending out a protective shield that covered the entire mountain, Meng Hao included.

The huge pitch-black fist slammed into the shield, causing a deafening boom to echo out. Colors flashed, and the lands trembled. Intense ripples spread out, along with cracking sounds, as a huge crack appeared in the shield. It quickly repaired itself, but based on the speed with which it did so, it was obvious that the shield would only hold out for so long.

The fist shattered into fragments, but it was, after all, just formed from clouds and some bones. Han Qinglei appeared, then transformed into a black bolt of lightning which smashed into the shield.

“OPEN UP!!” he roared. Although he was gaunt, he radiated terrifying energy. His cultivation base was only in the Immortal Realm, but he was capable of rocking the Ancient Realm!

An intense power radiated out from him… causing countless bolts of lightning to spring up. Shockingly, they rapidly transformed into nine Lightning Dragons.

Mount Whiteseal shook, but Meng Hao remained there with his eyes closed tightly. He could not halt his enlightenment before it was complete, and he was focusing his mind in an attempt to speed it up as much as possible.

“Give up!” Han Qinglei roared. “You’ll die today, and the Ninth Nation’s World Seal will be mine! I’m also going to wipe out your Echelon qualifications!

“I, Han Qinglei, was the first to reach a full 100 Essences! I can kill anybody, but the main reason I’m picking you is because you’re surnamed Meng!

“After you die, remember to tell your ancestors that the person who killed you was Qinglei of the Han Clan!”

It was at this point that, all of a sudden, Fan Dong’er appeared in midair. Killing intent swirled in her eyes, and the wave of her hand caused numerous imprints of magical items to appear on her body.They rapidly expanded, as the hundreds of magical symbols grew to the size of a small mountain.

The sight was monumentally shocking.

Fan Dong’er had no choice but to show up. She knew that if she didn’t, and the attack against Mount Whiteseal succeeded, the World Seal would be taken away. The result would be that she could no longer resist the influence of the Windswept Realm without any National Aura.

She could also see that Meng Hao was at a critical juncture, and wouldn’t be able to do anything, so she had no choice but to interfere, for her own sake.

“If I can just buy enough time, Meng Hao will come out eventually. This guy might be powerful, and might be in the Echelon, but Meng Hao is too!” Gritting her teeth, Fan Dong’er closed in and attacked Han Qinglei.

Han Qinglei’s eyes flashed as he caught sight of Fan Dong’er, and he smiled.

“You think a bit too much of yourself,” he said, his voice booming like thunder. “I think I need to show you why people like you… don’t even qualify to fight the Echelon!” He waved his right index finger, sending four roaring Lightning Dragons toward Fan Dong’er.

Simultaneously, rumbling sounds could be heard as Bei Yu, no longer in the middle of the sea of flowers, also closed in at high speed. One of her eyes was confused and vacant, but the other was clear, and even before she was close, she shouted out, causing invisible divine sense power to coalesce into a needle, which stabbed viciously toward Han Qinglei.

Han Qinglei’s face flickered, and he waved his left hand, sending four more Lightning Dragons charging out. The fifth, he caused to self-detonate, borrowing the explosive power to fight back against the power of Bei Yu’s divine sense.

“How amusing. Two beauties have teamed up to fight me. I almost don’t have the heart to say so, but I can tell you that I look forward to flaying the two of you alive and revealing your true beauty; your white bones. How entrancing that will be!” Han Qinglei’s eyes gleamed with a bloodthirsty light, and he licked his lips. Suddenly, a flash could be seen as he… transformed into three people!

One was his true form, the other two were clones!

All three licked their lips simultaneously. One attacked the shield, and the other two split up to handle Fan Dong’er and Bei Yu respectively. As explosions filled the air, expressions of disbelief appeared on the faces of Fan Dong’er and Bei Yu. Despite the fact that they were both fighting mere clones of Han Qinglei, to the two of them, it felt like they were fighting someone… vastly more powerful than them!

“Is everyone in the Echelon this strong….?” thought Fan Dong’er. Shaken, she looked over at Meng Hao sitting there cross-legged in meditation.

“Hurry it up, Meng Hao!!”

1. This quote “Heaven wished them dead, but first, it would drive them mad!” is very similar to a quote from western literature. However, after a bit of research, it seems to actually be a reference to something said by Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty. None of this is really relevant to the plot of ISSTH, but since I did all the research I figured I would share the results

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# Chapter 1097: Valiant!

Han Qinglei, Echelon cultivator from the Eighth Mountain, was so powerful that Fan Dong’er and Bei Yu were both completely shaken. To them, any person who could rock the Ancient Realm while being in the Immortal Realm well-deserved to be referred to as a blazing sun.

As far as Fan Dong’er was concerned, Meng Hao was actually more powerful than those blazing suns. But now that she had met Han Qinglei, she had to admit that he was terrifyingly powerful.

The sensation she had experienced when fighting Meng Hao had now appeared for a second time.

“Are Echelon cultivators powerful… because they’re in the Echelon, or is it… their power that earns them a place there!?” Fan Dong’er couldn’t quite accept it. She was the Divine Daughter of the Nine Seas God World and before meeting Meng Hao, she had viewed herself as being above all others, the center of all attention. However, Meng Hao’s appearance on the scene had changed everything.

Even now, she could remember the first time she had met Meng Hao back on Planet South Heaven. Back then, he hadn’t been as terrifying as he was now. Furthermore, the speed with which he had risen to prominence made the entire situation difficult to accept. Before she could even come to terms with it, he was already far ahead of everyone else. Wherever he went, he became a huge mountain blocking the paths of everyone else.

A boom rang out, and blood oozed out of Fan Dong’er’s mouth. She fell back at top speed, waving her hand to cause numerous sealing marks to appear. They merged together in front of her to transform into a magic bottle, which then shot toward Han Qinglei’s hideously grinning clone.

Han Qinglei’s clone laughed coldly and performed an incantation gesture with his right hand. Instantly, a flower of white bones materialized. It spun through the air, radiating a white light as it slammed into the magic bottle. Massive rumbling could be heard as Han Qinglei shot forward. As he extended his hand, the flesh and blood suddenly transformed into bleached bones. He touched Fan Dong’er’s forehead and a boom rattled out. Blood sprayed out of her mouth, and she went pale white as freezing cold spread through her. Her vision swam, and a sensation of crisis welled up. Suddenly the air behind her shattered, and a female corpse appeared. Fan Dong’er had kept the corpse hidden up to now, but because the blow had sent her mind into chaos, she could do so no longer. Immediately, an aura of death exploded out, completely astonishing Han Qinglei. Being the cautious person that he was, he immediately fell back.

In that same instant, the space he had just occupied was inundated by countless black strands of hair, which then exploded out in all directions.

“Interesting,” the clone said, smiling. “It seems I’ll need to take things a bit more seriously.” Off to the side, his second clone was steadily forcing Bei Yu backward.

Bei Yu’s divine abilities and magical techniques caused rumbling sounds to fill the air. Her divine sense magical art sent innumerable invisible needles stabbing forward in attack. However, the mere wave of a hand by Han Qinglei’s clone caused a suit of bone armor to appear. He allowed the divine sense to strike him, and it did nothing. Then, the bone-armored clone stretched out both hands, and his fingertips turned into sharp claws which he waved through the air like the weapons of a celestial warrior. Instantly, Bei Yu was put into a very dangerous position.

Meanwhile, Han Qinglei’s true form was performing numerous incantation gestures to unleash all sorts of divine abilities. Bright, multicolored lights slammed into the protective shield, causing it to twist and warp. Cracking sounds could be heard, and more fissures spread out.

Meng Hao continued to sit there cross-legged beneath the statue. He was currently contemplating the final Essence, and at the same time, was feeling extremely anxious. However, there was nothing he could do but focus all of his power and energy on the enlightenment.

All of a sudden, Han Qinglei and his two clones suddenly stopped in place and fell back. All three figures then flew toward each other and, instead of merging together, smiled viciously and then levied palm strikes against each other's chests!

At the same time, the three figures cried out: “Three Body Dao!” At the same time, an unbelievably powerful sound like a crack of thunder rang out.

After striking each other with their palms, the three figures' cultivation bases rocketed up, and their battle prowess increased dramatically! In fact, in this state… they were apparently more powerful than Han Qinglei when he was not split into three!

“Bone Tomb Magic!” The three figures split apart and shot toward Fan Dong'er, Bei Yu, and Mount Whiteseal's shield, bursting with incredible energy.

They moved so fast that they looked like black arrows, and in the blink of an eye, one of the figures was in front of Fan Dong'er. He waved his hand, causing countless white bones to descend, which then transformed into the shape of a tomb, with Fan Dong'er stuck in the middle.

A similar bone tomb appeared around Bei Yu, and another one descended toward Mount Whiteseal.

The three Han Qingleis all cried out together: “Three Body Dao! Bone Tomb Magic! Slaughter By Time!” Their voices echoed out, seemingly ancient and filled with the aura of Time.

The three bone tombs rumbled as they began to spin. Shockingly, bone headstones appeared on top of each of them, upon which shapes began to form, as if images of Bei Yu, Fan Dong'er, and Mount Whiteseal were being etched on their surfaces!

The image of Bei Yu was the first to be completed. A miserable shriek rang out, and she coughed up a mouthful of blood. Instantly, her body began to wither, and she seemed to be crumbling under intense pressure. She was incapable of escaping, trapped in the pressure of the bone tomb as it pushed her down toward the surface of the ground.

It was… turning into a real tomb!

Inside the tomb, Bei Yu was ashen, losing consciousness, her body rapidly aging as her life force was sucked away.

Fan Dong'er struggled to fight back, but she was no match. Despite the boundless will of death from the female corpse, she couldn't fight back against the pressure. Rumbling could be heard as Fan Dong'er was forced down toward the ground, crushed by the bone tomb. Her life force slowly began to flow away, and she began to age.

"Meng Hao!!" she cried urgently, and yet, her cry was quickly cut short.

At the same time, the third bone tomb was crushing down onto Mount Whiteseal's protective shield. Because of the losing battle on the central battlefield, the shield had been greatly weakened, and so under this attack the already-fractured shield instantly fell to pieces and was destroyed.

Fan Dong'er was being crushed. Bei Yu had lost consciousness. Mount Whiteseal's shield exploded. From all of these, it was possible to see exactly how powerful Han Qinglei was, and also, how strong Echelon cultivators were!

Each and every member of the Echelon was an incredibly powerful expert, someone who was above all other blazing suns. Furthermore, the only people of their generation who qualified to fight Echelon cultivators… were other Echelon cultivators!!

"Alright, Meng Hao, let's see how you fight back this time! Killing you like this might be a bit of a bore, but considering that you're surnamed Meng, even if you aren't connected to the Meng Clan, I'm elated to have the chance to slaughter you!" Han Qinglei laughed uproariously, and killing intent roiled up from his three bodies. As Mount Whiteseal's shield shattered, he instantly pounced down toward Meng Hao!

However, in almost the exact moment that he closed in, Meng Hao's right hand slapped down onto his bag of holding. Then, he waved his hand, sending numerous black pods flying out, his eyes tightly shut the entire time.

Magic Pod Soldiers!

Popping sounds could be heard as the black pods transformed into vicious imps, who screeched as they opened their mouths to reveal long, sharp teeth. There were a total of fifty blackpod imps, and as soon as they appeared on the scene, they shot toward Han Qinglei's three bodies.

"That's all you've got?!" Han Qinglei laughed coldly. Despite his words, he was inwardly vigilant. He had in no way underestimated Meng Hao, as he knew that weaklings would never be able to get into the Echelon.

Although he wasn't sure what exactly was so special about these blackpod imps, the fact that Meng Hao had unleashed them at such a critical point in the battle led Han Qinglei to believe that they were not something to be taken lightly. On the surface, he seemed to be acting rashly, but it was actually his clone that shot forward first, while his true form held back.

The fifty blackpod imps screamed as they shot through the air toward the clone. A boom could be heard as more than thirty were sent tumbling away, although they didn't seem to have received very serious injuries.

Han Qinglei was instantly shocked, and his eyes widened. As for the dozen or blackpod imps that remained on the clone, they opened their mouths wide and began to chew into it.

Han Qinglei snorted, allowing the clone to block the blackpod imps as his true form and his other clone closed in on Meng Hao.

"Those blackpod imps are pretty impressive, Meng Hao. After I kill you, I'll collect them up as souvenirs!" Han Qinglei and his clone increased their speed as they charged toward Meng Hao.

A tremor ran through Meng Hao. He was at a critical juncture, and was just a sliver away from achieving complete enlightenment. Han Qinglei wasn’t giving him enough time! It was at this point that Meng Hao suddenly heard a deep growl, as if something which had long since been sleeping in his bag of holding were finally beginning to wake up.

It was a very familiar feeling, and after a moment of considering, Meng Hao realized that it was… the aura of his Blood Mastiff!

“Is the mastiff going to wake up?!” he thought, his mind spinning. However, what appeared was not the mastiff. Instead, as his bag of holding opened up, an archaic voice echoed out, accompanied by the sound of flapping wings.

“Yo! This mountain belongs to Lord Fifth, the Heavens belong to Lord Fifth, the Earth belongs to Lord Fifth, and this little Haowie is also Lord Fifth’s! Lord Fifth has appeared! Are ya scared?!” The parrot flew out in between Meng Hao and Han Qinglei, one wing flapping madly in place, the other pointing out accusingly at Han Qinglei.

On the parrot’s ankle was a bell, upon which the face of the meat jelly appeared, which proceeded to yell in an attempt to sound archaic as well. “That’s right! This mountain belongs to Lord Third too, the Heavens belong to Lord Third, and the Earth also belongs to Lord Third. Haowie is also Lord Third’s. Are ya scared?! Well, are ya?!”

“Screw off!” said Han Qinglei, smiling coldly. The killing intent in his eyes exploded to incredible heights. Everything shook, a massive wind kicked up, and the darkness intensified. A huge hand appeared, formed of countless bones and filled with a frigid wind. Surrounded by a sea of bones, it shot forward.

The parrot immediately flew forward and slammed into the sea of bones. The result was that several of its remaining feathers, which were already sparse, were knocked off of its body. It watched the feathers floating down toward the ground, and began to tremble. Finally, it threw its head back and let out an unprecedentedly bloodcurdling howl.

“Dammit! DAMMIT!” the parrot raged. “Y-y-you… you actually knocked some of Lord Fifth’s feathers off! AAAAGGGHHHHHH! My feathers! AAAAAGHHHHHHH! My beautiful feathers! That’s how I attract lovers…. I’m ruined, I can’t handle this! I’m gonna flip my lid! This is beyond ridiculous!!

“Summon the seafood! Seafood dishes, ASSEMBLE!”

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# Chapter 1098: Blades Clash!

The parrot was infuriated. It didn’t have too many feathers to begin with, and it believed every single one of them to be very precious. They might all be different colors, but that didn’t make them any less valuable. Together, they represented the parrot’s ability to attract other luxuriantly furred and feathered beasts.

But now some of those feathers had been knocked off, which to the parrot, was the same as being disfigured!

It was sure that lacking those feathers would result in the scorn and mockery of any furred or feathered beasts it met in the future. Therefore, its rage surged into the Heavens.

In response to its roar, Han Qinglei frowned, but didn’t pause for a moment in his charge toward Meng Hao. However, all of a sudden, numerous black beams of light shot out behind the parrot. In the blink of an eye, a large group of Demonic cultivators had appeared.

These Demonic cultivators were not in human form. Instead, they looked like an assortment of seafood. There were shells, shrimp, crabs, a sea turtle….

“It’s time to sing for Lord Fifth!” the parrot squawked. “This bastard dared to ruin some of my feathers. Crush him!”

In response to the parrot’s orders, the Demonic cultivators immediately formed up and began to sing. “I was a bad kid when I was young, I’m a little seafood dish, lalalalala, little seafood dish, dobedobedoooo, little seafood dish….”

When Meng Hao had listened to this song before, he always assumed that it was simply uncomfortably discordant. However, when the group started singing this time, all of a sudden, thunder began to rumble, and bolts of lightning instantly shot down toward Han Qinglei.

Han Qinglei’s face flickered with shock, and he fell backward in retreat, staring at the clamorous parrot and his singing seafood dishes. He began to pant in disbelief as the singing apparently began to affect the natural laws and Essence of the Windswept Realm.

A powerful energy of expulsion began to gather around Han Qinglei, causing his face to fall.

“What is that thing!?” he gasped, looking at the parrot in astonishment. Thunder crashed, and wild colors flashed in the sky. Black clouds gathered, and numerous lightning bolts converged. Han Qinglei’s scalp began to go numb.

A single glance told him that this song was completely beyond ordinary, as if it had become the Heavenly will of the Windswept Realm, and could control natural laws, and even Essence, something terrifying to the extreme.

If that were all there were to it, it might not be a big deal, but even more shocking to Han Qinglei was that the singing instantly caused moisture to build up in the area. Apparently, the song was able to materialize a sea, complete with raging waves.

“Impossible!!” he cried. The parrot looked extremely pleased with itself, and whooped out in excitement.

“Scared yet? Dammit! You dared to pluck some of Lord Fifth’s feathers! You dared to ruin Lord Fifth’s good looks! Lord Fifth isn’t gonna let you off the hook!”

More lightning and thunder crashed as the group switched songs.

“I’m your little, dear little seafood dish! However I love you, it’s never too much. I’m your little, dear little seafood dish! Seeeaaaaafooooooood DISH!”

The change in the song caused the sea to churn. Furthermore, mountains appeared up in the sky which began to crush down toward Han Qinglei. The booms from the mountains crashing against the ground almost sounded like musical instruments, pounding out a rhythm to go along with the song.

“Spell formation?! It’s a spell formation that incites the Essences of Heaven and Earth!?!? What… what kind of bird is that?!?!” Han Qinglei’s face flickered with continuous astonishment and shock as he finally realized that he was facing a spell formation. However, he had never before heard of any type of spell formation that was unleashed by singing.

He had definitely never heard… of any type of spell formation that could incite Essences of Heaven and Earth. A spell formation like that would be exceedingly rare, the stuff of legends.

Rumbling filled the air, and Han Qinglei’s face went ashen. He fell back again, avoiding the falling mountains. His mind reeled as the seafood group once again changed songs.

“We’re seafood dishes! We’re seafood dishes. Waaaaaaaaaa! Great and mighty Lord Fifth. Whoaaaaaaaaa! Great and mighty Lord Third….”

The instant the lyrics rang out, the parrot began to glow with blinding light, as if the song were boosting its power. Shockingly, Essences and numerous natural laws began to swirl around, making the parrot look like some sort of divine being. It let out a squawk, which turned into an attack like a powerful arrow that shot toward Han Qinglei.

“You dared to spoil Lord Fifth’s good looks!” it raged, its voice echoing out with thunderous, domineering power. “Lord Fifth is gonna screw you!”

However, it was at this point that the meat jelly attached to the parrot’s ankle suddenly began to speak in a very solemn tone. “You can’t curse people. Cursing is wrong. You should say that you will slay him, not that you will screw him. Screwing is wrong. Screwing is immoral!” 1

“Shut the hell up!” the parrot roared, shooting toward Han Qinglei. “Lord Fifth is gonna screw this guy!”

Han Qinglei’s face fell. “Dammit, it can actually power itself up too!!” He suddenly felt as if his entire world had been turned upside down. He had never seen a spell formation that operated on singing. Nor had he ever seen a bird as arrogant and aggressive as this. He most definitely had never seen a bird that roared about screwing things.

“Well so what if you can incite the Essence of Heaven and Earth!? That power comes from the spell formation, and those Demonic cultivators aren’t powerful enough to keep it running for long!” Han Qinglei gritted his teeth and waved his hand, sending his second clone charging toward the parrot. Then he performed a double-handed incantation gesture, causing a throne of white bones to appear. At the same time, a huge throng of skeleton warriors also materialized.

Some of the skeletons were black, and held long bone spears in their hands. They led the other skeletons in a charge against the parrot. When the two forces slammed into each other, a huge boom echoed out.

Countless bones shattered, and the throne exploded. Blood sprayed out of Han Qinglei’s mouth. Roaring, he performed an incantation gesture then waved his finger, ripping the air open. Immediately, a bone hand stretched out and swiped viciously toward the parrot.

The parrot squawked, and the singing of the seafood dishes grew more intense. As for the parrot, it attacked wantonly, piercing through the bone hand to appear directly behind Han Qinglei’s clone, whereupon it charged viciously toward his rear end.

Han Qinglei’s clone looked on in shock, and suddenly dispersed. When he reformed some distance off, the parrot let out another furious squawk and charged him again.

It was clearly a dangerous situation, but Han Qinglei’s true form simply chuckled coldly. A derisive look appeared in his eyes as one of his clones handled the blackpod imps, and the other took care of the bizarre bird.

“Nine Windswept Nations, each with 300 great Daos. The final 300 are located in the central temple. A total of 3,000 great Daos, and whoever gains enlightenment of the most will be able to enter the central temple. Now the time has come… to give me the Ninth Nation’s World Seal!” Chuckling coldly, Han Qinglei’s true form flashed through the air toward Meng Hao, extending his right hand as if to touch Meng Hao’s forehead.

“DIE!”

Even as Han Qinglei’s finger closed in on Meng Hao, all of a sudden, the tinkling of a bell could be heard coming from the parrot’s ankle. The bell vanished, reappearing between Meng Hao’s forehead and Han Qinglei’s finger in the form of a fist-sized meat jelly, which slammed into the finger.

The meat jelly was soft but also elastic. Within that elasticity was an incredible toughness which instantly blocked Han Qinglei’s finger.

A boom could be heard, and the meat jelly let out a roar. It looked angrily at Han Qinglei and said, “You’re a bully!!”

Han Qinglei stared in shock. He was quickly coming to the realization that Meng Hao had a boggling amount of bizarre items at his disposal. First were the blackpod imps, next was the terrifying parrot, and now was this strange meat jelly that had the face of an old man.

“SCREWWWW OFF!” Han Qinglei roared. He was reaching the limit of his patience. He could never have anticipated that after handling Fan Dong’er and Bei Yu, he would shatter the shield only to face so many setbacks in trying to kill Meng Hao.

His hand suddenly flashed to the side, striking at Meng Hao from a different angle. However, no matter how he varied his moves, the meat jelly always blocked him. Furthermore, it continued scream miserably and to berate him loudly.

“Bully! You’re nothing but a bully!

“Lord Third converts bullies like you! Bully! Lower your weapons and allow the great and mighty Lord Third to help you become obedient, kind, and upright!

“AAGGHH! You’re still hitting me?! Bully! Bully! BULLY! BULLY!!!”

Han Qinglei was on the verge of going crazy. Letting out a furious howl, he performing an incantation gesture, materializing a divine ability. Countless bone swords appeared which stabbed toward Meng Hao. It was at this point that the meat jelly transformed into a huge canopy which completely covered Meng Hao and blocked all of the bone swords.

“Lord Third is starting to get pissed off! What are you doing, huh? Hey, what are you doing! You big bully!”

Han Qinglei was thoroughly enraged at having been repeatedly forced to waste so much time. Eyes gleaming with a bizarre light, he suddenly clenched his hand into a fist. As he did, the flesh and blood vanished and became nothing but bleached bones.

He punched out, not with the power of the fleshly body, but with an incredibly powerful divine ability. It slammed into the meat jelly, who let out a miserable shriek. Its body shrank down defensively. Suddenly, a derisive grin appeared on Han Qinglei’s face.

Eyes glittering he said… “Time… stop!”

When those two words left his mouth, everything around him suddenly seemed to grind to an eternal halt.

Everything went quiet. The meat jelly was stuck in midair, and only Han Qinglei seemed to be unaffected. His face was pale, however; clearly, using this Daoist magic was not an easy thing for him.

The instant that time stopped, his eyes glittered with killing intent. His hand changed angles, slipping around the meat jelly’s defenses and rushing directly toward the top of Meng Hao’s head in the form of a fist.

“It’s over!” he said. However, just when his fist was about to strike Meng Hao’s head, Meng Hao’s eyes snapped open, and they gleamed with a murderously cold aura.

His right hand shot up, leaving behind afterimages as it sped to meet Han Qinglei's fist!

Their eyes suddenly locked.

One of them had a look of shock, the other had a cold gleam in his eyes.

At the moment, one of them looked vicious and cruel, and as for the other, the coldness in his eyes was like that of a sharp blade!

1. In the line about "say that you will slay him, not that you will screw him," it's kind of funny because the word for "slay" contains the character translated as "screw." Similar to English, this "screw" is kind of a slang usage, so the character in question could mean a lot of different things depending on context. Combine it with another character and it means to kill someone or get rid of them

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# Chapter 1099: Victory!

Their eyes met, their fists slammed into each other, and a huge boom echoed out between the two of them. It resonated up into the Heavens, silencing the entire world. A massive wind kicked up, and nearby mountain peaks shook violently.

The shaking caused crevices to open up in the ground. The meat jelly returned to its normal state, and, seeing that Meng Hao had awoken, quickly retreated.

Han Qinglei was hit by a huge backlash, shoving him backward. The air was ripped to shreds as a succession of nine booms echoed out before Han Qinglei finally ground to a halt, his face ashen, blood oozing out of the corners of his mouth.

Meng Hao was also shoved backward; he now hovered in midair, his face slightly flush, but his eyes as sharp and penetrating as ever!

“You’re right, it is over,” he said coolly, “… for you! I’ve had enough your crap!” He suddenly shot forward like a lightning bolt, using his unique battle style, charging Han Qinglei in an overwhelmingly domineering fashion!

His cultivation base exploded with power; moments ago during that critical juncture, he had finally gained enlightenment regarding the 100th Essence, and was able to come to his senses.

Han Qinglei’s face fell, but he didn’t retreat. Gritting his teeth, he also shot forward in attack. Booms rang out as they met in midair, exchanging hundreds of moves in a few seconds.

Meng Hao waved his hand, causing numerous mountains to descend, crushing down onto Han Qinglei. Han Qinglei performed an incantation gesture, summoning his throne of bones, along with countless other white bones, all of which formed together into a huge bone giant that attacked the mountains.

Meng Hao gave a cold snort and advanced, transforming into a golden roc. A brutal air rose up as he slashed his claws viciously at Han Qinglei. Rumbling sounds echoed out as Han Qinglei performed another incantation gesture. This time, a swarm of bone swords materialized, forming layers of walls that blocked Meng Hao and fought against him viciously.

Booms echoed out in all directions, the air distorted, and the sky dimmed. Blood sprayed out of Han Qinglei’s mouth, and Meng Hao’s golden roc faded away. However, in that same moment, Meng Hao’s right hand clenched into a fist.

The Life-Extermination Fist!

Up to this point, Meng Hao still had not revealed any hint that he practiced body cultivation. He had only attacked with divine abilities and Daoist magics. Now that he was using this fist, Han Qinglei’s face instantly fell.

“A body cultivator!” he gasped. As the fist neared him, he shrieked and quickly performed an incantation gesture, causing multiple bone shields to appear. However, no matter how many of them appeared, all of the shields collapsed, layer after layer, until the fist slammed into Han Qinglei.

BOOM!

Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and he tumbled backward, completely astonished by Meng Hao. However… he was still filled with the desire to do battle.

One punch sent Han Qinglei falling backward. Meng Hao didn’t immediately pursue him, but instead waved a finger toward the two bone tombs, causing them to explode. Fan Dong’er appeared, face pale, just having regained consciousness. On the other side, Bei Yu was completely pale and still unconscious.

“Time magic….” Meng Hao murmured. He performed an incantation gesture and waved his finger, causing the air around Bei Yu to distort. A feeling like that of Time radiated out, causing Bei Yu to immediately recover.

Meng Hao had a deep understanding of Time, but wasn’t able to actually manipulate its flow. However… what he was doing now was not that. Instead, he was simply breaking Han Qinglei’s magical technique.

“You definitely deserve to be in the Echelon like me….” Han Qinglei said. “In that case, let’s fight!” He wiped the blood from his mouth and chuckled. Eyes burning with intense killing intent, he shot toward Meng Hao in a flash of light.

This time, his two clones threw their heads back and roared, then burned their life forces to shove the blackpod imps away and knock the parrot aside. They joined Han Qinglei’s true form to charge Meng Hao.

The parrot was still furious, but after a moment of thought, it wasn’t confident enough to pursue the clone. Instead, it angrily shouted, “Haowie, crush him to death for me! That damned bastard dared to ruin Lord Fifth’s good looks! I want him screwed! In fact, why don’t you screw him for me… wait, no. Don’t screw him, I want the first go!”

A strange expression could be seen on Meng Hao’s face as he looked over at the parrot. After thinking about how the parrot had protected him just now, he cleared his throat and nodded.

Next, his cultivation base erupted with power. 123 Immortal meridians surged. 33 Heavens descended with full power. The aura of an Immortal Emperor radiated out, transforming into a tempest that rose all the way up into the sky. Meng Hao hovered in the middle of it all, his hair flying about, his eyes glittering like lightning as he exuded a massive pressure.

“You want to fight? Fine, let’s fight!” he said, his voice booming like thunder. This was the most formidable member of his own generation that Han Qinglei had ever encountered. Even as Meng Hao’s words rang out, his three bodies arrived at Meng Hao.

The three figures slapped their palms together.

“Three Body Dao!”

“Bone Tomb Magic!”

“Slaughter By Time!”

Their cultivation bases rocketed up, causing them to look like three long spears stabbing toward Meng Hao. Meng Hao’s face was calm, and he did not fall back. Instead, he took a step forward. Massive winds surged around him as he clenched his right hand into a fist and punched out.

Bedevilment Fist!

The striking fist caused colors to flash in the sky, and at the same time, a will of self-immolation to the point of Bedevilment exploded out. That fist seemed to represent the darkness of night. The sky above turned black, and the darkness of a Devil crushed down onto the lands.

BOOOOMMMMMM!

As the fist struck out, and darkness fell, Han Qinglei’s three forms transformed into a huge bone tomb. However, that tomb instantly collapsed into pieces, and the Time magic inside was shattered.

Blood sprayed out of the three figures’ mouths as they fell back. However, their will to fight was as strong as ever.

“Meng Hao, you qualify to see my complete state! Three Body Unification!” Han Qinglei threw his head back and howled. At the same time, his two clones began to glow with boundless light. In the blink of an eye, they shot toward Han Qinglei, merging into him, forming a shocking…

Three-headed, six-armed figure!

The three heads radiated an intense murderous aura as the six arms all performed incantation gestures, unleashing divine abilities and Daoist magics with unmatchable speed.

Han Qinglei transformed into a beam of light that burst with energy as he shot toward Meng Hao.

Instantly, the two of them slammed into each other. Meng Hao was a master of devious divine abilities. He attacked with ruthlessness, and even when injured, would not retreat. He was constantly on the offensive, his Eternal stratum in full operation, his secret Immortal meridian technique ensuring that the power of any divine ability or Daoist magic he used was amplified.

Furthermore, he also wielded the power of an Immortal Emperor. That made his magical techniques even more powerful. Every attack he made could cause the sky to fade. Han Qinglei was now completely shocked.

Meng Hao’s way of fighting, his constant aggressive attacks, turned into a heavy pressure that weighed on the mind, and seemed to give him more powerful momentum. Han Qinglei was being forced back, and thus losing any opportunity to land a decisive strike.

“Dammit, how can this Meng Hao be so strong!?” Han Qinglei’s face fell, and he gritted his teeth. Six arms all performed incantation gestures, causing a shocking, magical wheel to appear in front of him!

The wheel was not complete, and in fact, only about ten percent of its full state was corporeal, with the rest being illusory. Numerous magical symbols covered it, and it emanated an ancient and primordial aura.

This was the Paragon magic that Han Qinglei had used to earn his spot in the Echelon. The Wheel of Time!

This wheel had a mysterious origin, and had the power to manipulate Time. Because of it, Han Qinglei had been enlightened regarding Paragon magic, and was endowed with a mysterious might.

“Paragon magic, Dao of Time!” Han Qinglei’s hands flashed with incantation gestures, and the magical wheel began to rotate. Time seemed to flow, spinning toward Meng Hao, ripping open the air as it neared him. Shockingly, numerous images manifested by Time appeared, filling the area with countless scenes of the past eras from the surrounding lands.

“Paragon magic, huh….” Meng Hao gave a cold harrumph. He waved his right hand, and the sky trembled. A huge bridge descended, which was none other than… the Paragon Bridge!

As soon as the Paragon Bridge appeared, the magical wheel trembled, as if… it wasn’t even able to match up!

Han Qinglei’s face fell. As the two Paragon magics collided, everything trembled violently. It almost seemed as if the world was going to collapse. Intense shaking filled all of the cultivators in the Windswept Realm.

Rumbling booms could be heard as the magical wheel collapsed. Although the Paragon Bridge was slightly shaken, it continued to emanate intense pressure. Blood sprayed out of Han Qinglei’s mouth, and his body began to fall apart. Two of his heads exploded, and three of his arms were destroyed. Although he let out a miserable shriek, his will to fight had not left him.

His remaining three arms performed incantation gestures, and threw his head back and roared. All of a sudden, a bone statue appeared in front of him, emanating an astonishing aura. This was one of his trump cards, a bit of good fortune that he had acquired. Now that he was using it in battle, Meng Hao waved his hand, causing the Essence of Divine Flame to appear.

“Essence? Impossible!!” For the first time, Han Qinglei was inwardly shaken, and felt terror rising up in him. This fear was something that caused Han Qinglei to feel extremely humiliated. He was in the Echelon, and yet here he was, scared of someone else in the Echelon. He wanted to pull his emotions into check, but just couldn’t stifle his terror.

“There are a lot of things which you might think are impossible, but really aren’t,” Meng Hao said coldly. “You just lack experience.”

As he closed in on Han Qinglei, the world trembled. Fan Dong’er and Bei Yu looked on with complete shock. They knew Meng Hao, and yet were still astonished. It was as if Meng Hao… was even more powerful than they had imagined!

It was as if in this battle, Han Qinglei was completely suppressed, totally on the defensive. In fact, the awe-inspiring way he had fought against them moments ago now seemed like nothing.

Han Qinglei was forced into retreat over and over. His face fell, and soon he began to laugh bitterly. However, his eyes gleamed with focus.

“You’re strong,” he said, “much stronger than I imagined. You’re surnamed Meng… but there’s no way you could have anything to do with the Meng Clan. However… it will definitely be amusing to kill you with one of the Meng Clan’s own divine abilities!” Laughing maniacally, he extended his right hand and waved a finger through the air.

“Azure Lightning!”[1] As he spoke, his body trembled, and blood sprayed out of his mouth, as if making this attack pushed him to the boundary of his limits. Innumerable lightning bolts crackled around him, spreading out, transforming into a lake of lightning. Up in the sky, a bolt of azure lightning crackled down, connecting to Han Qinglei, causing his energy to rise dramatically.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and a sensation of imminent crisis welled up in him.

“Meng Clan….” he murmured, face flickering. As Han Qinglei’s energy spiked, Meng Hao took a deep breath and suddenly stepped forward.

That step caused everything to shake dramatically. At the same time, a massive foot appeared in the sky, crushing down toward Han Qinglei, instantly interfering with his rising energy!

Shockingly, Meng Hao was now unleashing the divine ability he had acquired from Su Yan, the Seven God Steps magic!

The second step caused the entire world to tremble, and the wind to churn violently.

Meng Hao didn’t stop. He took a third, a fourth, and a fifth step. Each step caused wild energy to surge up around him. It wasn’t his own energy, but energy from the magical technique, summoned from the void, from the world, from Heaven and Earth!

When Su Yan had used the Seven God Steps on him, Meng Hao had been thoroughly shaken. She even used it to resist his Paragon magic. That was what had originally caught his interest, and was also why he had chosen to take this particular Daoist magic from her.

Of all the Daoist magics he was familiar with, none could compare to the Seven God Steps in terms of the momentum it could unleash. This magic… was a Dao of momentum!

As he took those five steps, nothing about him looked out of the ordinary. However, for some reason, the feeling he gave off was that he existed above Heaven and Earth. Massive energy swept out and crushed down toward Han Qinglei.

Han Qinglei’s face drained of blood. His Azure Lightning was based on energy, and caused the will of lightning inside of him to form together into Heavenly might, which he could then use to crush his enemy.

But now, he was shocked to find that Meng Hao was even more powerful than that!

“Impossible!!” he gasped. Then Meng Hao took a sixth step, and finally, a seventh. He now seemed vastly higher than anything in existence. Heavenly might formed a gigantic foot that crushed down onto Han Qinglei.

“NO!!!” he cried miserably. He quickly performed an incantation gesture, causing Azure Lightning to shoot out from him toward the descending foot.

ROOOOOAAAARRRRRRRRRRR!

When they slammed into each other, the foot crushed the lightning without even pausing and kept going, stomping viciously down onto Han Qinglei. A huge boom could be heard, and the lands quaked. A gigantic footprint appeared between Mount Whiteseal and the capital city of the Ninth Nation, which sunk deeply down into the earth.

Blood sprayed out of Han Qinglei’s mouth, and his body withered. His aura was severely weakened as he stood there in the middle of the footprint. Laughing bitterly, he crushed a jade slip, which caused a mist to appear that surrounded him and carried him away rapidly.

He was fleeing, and it caused his heart to drip with blood. He was utterly humiliated by his complete and utter defeat in battle. He had been the invader in this instance, and also the one to flee. He had never imagined that he would be forced to escape via this particular jade slip during a battle with someone of his own generation. And yet, here he was, fleeing in the face of death by crushing that jade slip.

“Think you can just leave?” Meng Hao said, appearing in midair, his face somewhat pale. This battle had been somewhat difficult, but it was nothing compared to the deadly ambush set up for him by the Demonic Cultivator Horde.

With a cold snort, he waved his hand, and a strange light began to gleam in his eyes. He suddenly waved his finger toward Han Qinglei.

“A Writ of Karma!” he said, his voice echoing out, filled with sternness, austerity, and holiness….

“Call upon Karma to form ties of destiny! You owe me money!”

1. Don’t forget that Han Qinglei’s name literally means “azure lightning”

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# Chapter 1100: Fate!

Meng Hao had sown Karma with the other Echelon cultivators using A Writ of Karma when he was the first person to break through the previous record atop Mount Whiteseal. At that time, his name was spoken throughout the Windswept Realm, everyone came to know him, and invisible connections of Karma were created.

Using Karma in such a way was completely domineering. In fact, before Meng Hao created A Writ of Karma, nothing like it had ever existed.

Based on the enlightenment he had experienced at that time, and his own personality and requirements, he had created a completely unique and domineering Daoist magic, something that could forcefully create ties of destiny.

It was impossible to evade or resist. Furthermore, as long as Karma had been sown, it would definitely be reaped!

Even as he fled, Han Qinglei felt a tremor run through him. All of a sudden, he felt as if his fate were being adjusted. The abrupt sensation caused his heart to begin to thump.

He wasn't sure why, but he suddenly couldn't think about anything except Meng Hao. Meng Hao's name seemed to fill his mind, almost like a curse weighing over him.

"What's going on!?!? I owe him money?!" Han Qinglei's face fell, and he wanted to struggle, but found that he couldn't. To his terror, his mind and heart were filled with Meng Hao. Most horrifying of all were the words that were echoing out like thunder in his mind.

You owe me money.

You owe me money!

YOU OWE ME MONEY!!

The voice boomed like thunder, and caused Han Qinglei’s face to grow even paler than before.

“What magical technique is this?! Dammit!!” He was completely alarmed to realize that this was a type of magic that he had never even heard of before.

When Meng Hao waved his finger, the entire world changed in his eyes. Everything shook and time seemed to slow to a crawl. Faintly, he could see numerous Karma Threads stretching away from the heads of everyone visible. Han Qinglei himself had an abundance of Karma Threads, so many that it made it difficult to distinguish the individual threads. However, there was one thread connecting him to Meng Hao.

That thread might not bind them together very strongly, but it was there, glowing with intense light. A Writ of Karma…. The deeper the relationship between the caster and the target, the stronger the Karma Threads. The stronger the Karma Threads, the more domineering the effect of the magical technique.

“The first thing that happened was you learned my name,” Meng Hao said somberly, his expression dignified, as if he were describing some holy aspect of Heaven and Earth. “Then you were completely defeated by me. What’s happening right now can be described as Karma!

“Karma serves as destiny. Heaven and Earth bear witness. An indelible brand is created, which manifests as a promissory note. The day your debt is paid back, the Karma will be dispersed!” He waved his hand as if he were writing something, and then, colors flashed in the sky, and the wind screamed. Booms rang out, as if lightning and thunder were bearing witness to the Karma between Meng Hao and Han Qinglei.

Han Qinglei let out a miserable shriek. Despite the fact that he was surrounded by mists, and shooting away at top speed, his mind still filled with a roaring like that of thunder. At the same time that Meng Hao unleashed his magic, Han Qinglei felt a faint aura being pulled up out of his body.

It was an astonishing sensation, and also horrifying. He had the sudden premonition that Meng Hao was marking him in a way that would affect him for the rest of his life.

"NO!" he roared. However, struggling was useless. By now, he had no choice but to ignore the shame he felt. His body trembled, and he wanted nothing more than to be gone from this place. His terror regarding Meng Hao had reached a pinnacle, and for the first time, he felt complete and utter regret for ever having chosen to attack the Ninth Nation and Meng Hao.

The parrot hovered not too far off, watching the scene with entrancement. It was envious, extremely envious. Of all the Daoist magics that Meng Hao was able to wield, A Writ of Karma was the only one that it felt to be breathtakingly beautiful, and the parrot almost couldn't control itself whenever it saw it in action.

The meat jelly was also envious, and wished that it could have such a Daoist magic. If so, whenever it met bullies, it would use A Writ of Karma on them, and things would go much smoother as a result.

Fan Dong'er had an unsightly look on her face. Although she was currently on the same side as Meng Hao, when she saw A Writ of Karma in action, she couldn't help but think about certain things which had occurred in the past. 1

As for Bei Yu, she had regained consciousness earlier and had seen most of the fight between Meng Hao and Han Qinglei. Now, she watched as Meng Hao, looking like the very picture of holiness, unleashed A Writ of Karma. She almost couldn't imagine what kind of person would go to the lengths of creating a magical technique like this, just to get people to owe him money.

Not only that, when he unleashed the magic, he was filled with a look of piety….

Meng Hao actually did feel very pious right now. His righteous and reverent voice echoed out across the lands:

“Henceforth, you owe me money! The compound interest shall not be altered! One year, twofold! Ten years, a hundredfold. One hundred years, ten thousandfold! Karma Thread, form the promissory note. NOW!”

As his dignified words echoed out, Meng Hao clenched his hand viciously onto Han Qinglei’s Karma Thread. It twisted and distorted, letting out brilliant light. In the blink of an eye, the light formed together into a writ, formed from Daoist magic.

It floated gently down toward Meng Hao, who took hold of it gingerly, as if it were a precious treasure. When he saw the numbers written on the note, he cleared his throat and added it to the thick stack of other notes in his bag of holding.

In the moment that the promissory note appeared, Han Qinglei coughed up a mouthful of blood. He could clearly sense that the aura which had left him moments ago indicated that he had entered some sort of agreement with Meng Hao.

That agreement was almost like one of indentured servitude. Most importantly, he had no control in the matter, and had been forced to sign the agreement! Regardless of whether he agreed to it or not, he now owed Meng Hao a vast amount of wealth.

If he didn’t pay it back, then due to Karma, his cultivation base and his future would all be subject to unforeseen changes. A situation like this, and a Daoist magic like this, caused Han Qinglei to tremble violently. In his terror, he suddenly recalled a terrifying sort of Daoist magic.

“Fate!! This is a magic of Fate! He… he actually knows Fate magic!! This is impossible! In all of Heaven and Earth, from ancient times until now, no one has ever achieved enlightenment of the Dao of Fate!!” Blood sprayed from his mouth, and he let out a mighty roar. Finally, he pushed the mist to increasing speed, and vanished over the horizon.

“This isn’t a place where you can just casually come and go!” Meng Hao said righteously. “First of all, you interrupted my cultivation. Even if I overlook that, though, how could I possibly let you go when you owe me some money!?” With that, he waved a finger toward Fan Dong’er and Bei Yu. Two streams of qi flowed into them, causing them to shudder as their cultivation bases were completely restored. They even ended up with more power than before.

“Fellow Daoists, please head to the central temple. Kill all of the cultivators from the Eighth Nation. Weaken the defenses of the Eighth Nation’s Mountain of National Fate. Assist me as I go to the Eighth Nation to wrest away their World Seal!

“If I succeed, we can all seek to gain enlightenment together! We can contemplate the natural laws and Essences of the Windswept Realm, and solidify our path to the future!” In response to his words, Fan Dong’er and Bei Yu’s eyes glittered. They were intelligent people, and instantly understood Meng Hao’s plan. This opportunity was definitely a rare one, and besides, Meng Hao had now offered them a promise!

The two women exchanged a glance, and then nodded. Immediately, they transformed into beams of light that shot off toward the central temple, where they would work hard to assist Meng Hao.

In the moment that Fan Dong’er and Bei Yu left, Meng Hao took a step forward, heading in the direction in which Han Qinglei had fled. He employed full speed as he raced to catch up.

“Don’t run, Han Qinglei! Pay me back that money!” As his voice boomed out, the blackpod imps, the meat jelly, and the parrot all turned into beams of light that shot through the air behind Meng Hao. As for the seafood dishes, the parrot used a cosmic storage technique to tuck them away into its wings. Then, it arrogantly cried out:

“Don’t run, Han Qinglei! Lord Fifth hasn’t screwed you yet, how dare you flee!!”

Beams of light shot through the air, causing everything to shake. Han Qinglei was still fleeing, coughing up blood as the mist around him faded away. This was his life-saving magic, and was something that couldn’t be sustained long-term. It was merely a temporary boost in speed, something that would enable him to flee from a deadly crisis.

The incredible speed ensured that he was able to leave the Ninth Nation and return to the Eighth Nation almost instantly. His face was pale, and the sensation of imminent crisis still hadn’t left him. He could sense that the terrifying Meng Hao was currently chasing him down!

As soon as he entered the Eighth Nation, his voice roared out, bolstered by a magical technique.

“Troops of the Eight Mountain, come posthaste!” His voice echoed out through the Eighth Nation to all of the other eight cultivators who had come from the Eighth Mountain. Of that group, four were fighting in the region of the central temple. Their bodies trembled, and they immediately employed their top speed to leave their current locations to speed toward Han Qinglei.

Time passed. An hour later, Han Qinglei was still speeding through the air, occasionally coughing up blood. The mist that had surrounded him and hauled him along was now completely gone. Instead, four imposing beams of light surrounded him in a protective formation as he flew toward the Eighth Nation’s Mountain of National Fate.

“I need to get back to the Mountain of National Fate as soon as possible! I can use the defensive measures there to fight back against Meng Hao. That will at least give me some time to recover from my injuries!!

“Meng Hao won’t be able to spend too much time trying to catch me. If he does, he’ll leave the Ninth Nation vulnerable to attack by other members of the Echelon!

“As long as I can buy enough time, I’ll definitely be able to get through this deadly crisis!” Han Qinglei’s eyes were crimson red as he shot through the air.

It was at this point that Meng Hao suddenly appeared at the border between the Eighth and Ninth Nations. He looked like a celestial warrior, and as soon as he entered the Eighth Nation, all of the cultivators there could feel the pressure radiating off him, and they trembled.

“When receiving guests, it is improper not to return favors. Since you decided to come to my home and stroll around, I’ve decided to come to your home to collect my interest.” Meng Hao cleared his throat and looked somewhat apologetic, although he didn’t hesitate for a moment before heading immediately toward the Eighth Nation’s Mountain of National Fate.

Rumbling filled the air as he closed in. The pressure weighing down from the Eighth Nation grew stronger; by this point, Han Qinglei had reached the mountain. As soon as he set foot on it, his voice rang out:

“Defend this location to the death! Don’t allow anyone to step even half a foot inside!”

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# Chapter 1101: Slaughtering Into the National Aura Mountain!

Han Qinglei sat cross-legged on the Eighth Nation’s National Aura Mountain, face pale, coughing up mouthfuls of blood. He nervously produced medicinal pills, which he immediately consumed. Not only had his little excursion resulted in significant loss, he was now being chased by Meng Hao. However, in all of the Windswept Realm, there was no safer place for him to be than on this National Aura Mountain.

As he sat there cross-legged, his wounds slowly began to heal. At the same time, the four middle-aged cultivators from the Eighth Mountain and Sea remained outside of the mountain, both on guard, and at the same time, looking at each other in dismay. All of them were clearly shaken.

They knew Han Qinglei, and they had never encountered a member of the current generation who could outmatch him in this way.

Therefore… seeing Han Qinglei’s injuries left them completely unnerved. After all, they were aware that he had previously headed toward the Ninth Nation.

“Was it the Echelon cultivator from the Ninth Mountain who did this? Meng Hao…?”

“It must be him! Han Qinglei was heading toward the Ninth Nation, so they must have ended up fighting!” The four took deep breaths, and their expressions turned very serious.

However, they had no choice in the matter. Regardless of whether it was because of their mission, or the effect it would have on their own chances for success in the Windswept Realm, giving up was not an option.

Time passed, and the four men kept their cultivation bases rotating the whole time. Soon, a bright streak of light appeared on the horizon, and before they could even react, massive rumbling sounds filled the air.

It was none other than Meng Hao!

After entering the Eighth Nation, he had caused an enormous pressure to spread out over the entire nation, in much the same way that Han Qinglei had when he had entered the Ninth Nation. The feeling experienced by Fan Dong’er and the others was now occurring among all the members of the Eighth Nation.

The four men’s faces flickered as they looked toward Meng Hao. Before Meng Hao even made a move, the four men clenched their jaws tightly and performed incantation gestures to summon divine abilities.

In unison, the men howled: “Four Holy Beasts Formation!”

The sky flickered, and the earth quaked. These four men were not in the Immortal Realm, but rather, the Ancient Realm!

All of them had cultivation bases with five extinguished Soul Lamps, which was the absolute limit for the Windswept Realm. Their attack caused a massive wind to spring up and roaring sounds to fill the air as a huge White Tiger appeared.

The White Tiger was fully 300 meters long, and was clad in a suit of armor. It radiated a terrifying energy, along with a towering murderous aura.

Next was a Black Turtle, extremely domineering and fierce. It was surrounded by rushing black waters, which roiled up into the Heavens. A seemingly infinite power seemed to surround it as an illusory land mass appeared beneath its feet.

Next was a Vermilion Bird, surrounded by a majestic sea of flames that rose up into the sky. Last was an Azure Dragon, whose roars caused the heavens to distort. All four Holy Beasts materialized, causing lightning to dance and extraordinary energy to surge.

“Four Holy Beasts Destruction!” the four cultivators roared. Immediately, the images of the four Holy Beasts roared and leaped toward Meng Hao amidst churning, seething clouds. The speeding White Tiger was the first to arrive, bursting with a murderous aura.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, and he gave a cold snort as he stepped forward and waved his hand. Immediately, the Mountain Consuming Incantation materialized, causing countless mountains to descend, crushing down onto the White Tiger. Rumbling could be heard as the tiger was pinned in place. Meng Hao subsequently descended, then reached out and viciously smacked the tiger on the head.

The smack caused a huge tremor to run through the White Tiger, after which it let out a miserable shriek. Finally, its head exploded, and one of the four cultivators coughed up a massive mouthful of blood.

However, despite losing its head, the White Tiger wasn’t dead. After all, it wasn’t a real animal, but rather, a magical construct. It still slashed out ruthlessly at Meng Hao with its claws.

An ear-piercing sound like that of metal grating against metal rang out. However, Meng Hao wasn’t hurt in the least bit; his fleshly body was already in the Ancient Realm, so how could this White Tiger possibly harm him?

The White Tiger froze in shock, and the four cultivators defending the National Aura Mountain were astonished.

“His fleshly body….”

“Dammit, what fleshly body is that?! He actually wasn’t hurt at all by the White Tiger!”

As their hearts trembled, Meng Hao grinned viciously and charged forward, slamming directly into the White Tiger’s chest. The Mountain Consuming

Incantation was unleashed again, but this time, the mountains didn’t descend from the sky. Instead, they burst out from inside the White Tiger. A boom could be heard as the sharp mountain peaks stabbed out through its body, prompting a bloodcurdling shriek. In the blink of an eye, its massive frame was ripped into shreds by the numerous mountains.

The cultivator in control of the White Tiger coughed up more blood, and trembled violently. Cracking sounds could be heard as bones were shattered, and the man very nearly passed out.

He looked at Meng Hao with complete terror and astonishment as he finally realized how Han Qinglei came to be injured so badly. Obviously, Meng Hao was so much more powerful than Han Qinglei that… it was almost impossible to imagine!

Before they could even unleash more divine abilities, Meng Hao turned into a sharp arrow that stabbed toward the roaring Black Turtle.

The turtle was incredibly tough, surrounded by black waters, and standing on top of a huge landmass. All of that made its defenses incredibly high. However, Meng Hao pierced through all that, slamming into it and causing a miserable shriek to ring out. Cracks spread out over the entire Xuanwu turtle, and in the blink of an eye, the black water faded. The land collapsed, and the entire Xuanwu turtle exploded into bits!

It was thoroughly smashed, incapable of standing up to Meng Hao whatsoever. In the same moment, blood sprayed out of the mouth of the cultivator in control of the Black Turtle. He instantly began to shrink back and tremble, and an expression of shock covered his face.

The two remaining cultivators roared, causing the Vermilion Bird and the Azure Dragon to also roar, then swirl together in a combined attack to block Meng Hao’s progress.

It was like a dragon and a phoenix attacking together, causing their power to rocket up. The sea of flames surrounding the Vermilion Bird filled the sky, burning everything above and below, threatening to completely eradicate Meng Hao.

As the intense heat caused everything to ripple and distort, Meng Hao smiled.

“Flames?” he said. Without the slightest hesitation, he took a step forward and then performed an incantation gesture with his right hand. Instantly, a ball of flame appeared in his hand.

It was none other than… the Essence of Divine Flame!

He squeezed down, and the ball of flame exploded, sending boundless Divine Flame swirling around him. As the Vermilion Bird closed in, Meng Hao waved his hand, causing the Divine Flame to surge outward. In response to Meng Hao’s thoughts, the swirling Divine Flame also transformed into a Vermilion Bird.

Two Vermilion Birds slammed into each other in midair, sending a huge boom echoing out in all directions. Meng Hao’s Divine Flame Vermilion Bird completely vanquished the Four Holy Beasts Vermilion Bird, completely burning it up!

Vermilion Birds were born amidst flames, and despite being a magical construct, this Vermilion Bird had some of the true will of an actual Vermilion Bird. However, only a bloodcurdling scream could be heard as it was reduced to nothing but ash. The cultivator controlling it coughed up a mouthful of blood. Blood also oozed out of his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. The backlash caused flames to surround him, completely eradicating him in body and soul.

All of these things take quite some time to describe, but actually occurred in the space of only a few breaths of time. Of the Four Holy Beasts, three were now completely eradicated, leaving only the Azure Dragon behind. As it closed in on Meng Hao, he made a grasping motion, causing the bone-tip spear to appear.

This spear’s haft was crafted from the World Tree, and the bone spearhead was long and sharp. A murderous aura radiated out from it, causing everything in the area to turn as cold as the dead of winter. Meng Hao glanced at the Azure Dragon, then hurled the spear toward it. The spear pierced out, slashing a hole into the air as it sped toward the Azure Dragon.

Looking shocked, the Azure Dragon waved its tail in an attempt to brush the spear aside. However, as soon as its tail made contact, it shattered into pieces. The spear moved with shocking speed, leaving behind afterimages as it stabbed into the Azure Dragon with incredible power. The Azure Dragon could not even fight back as the spear slammed it into the ground.

A huge boom rang out as the Azure Dragon was pinned to the ground, causing a huge crater to appear.

Blood sprayed out of the mouth of the cultivator in control of the dragon, and his face turned ashen. Meanwhile, Meng Hao had already reached the National Aura Mountain, whereupon he clenched his hand into a fist and punched out.

The statue on top of the Eighth Nation’s National Aura Mountain suddenly flickered with bright light, and a bright shield appeared to block Meng Hao’s punch. The resulting backlash was so intense that Meng Hao had no choice but to fall back several paces, frowning.

Almost in that same moment, the surrounding three cultivators clenched their jaws, ignoring the incredible pressure weighing down on them and any potential injury, and charged toward Meng Hao, unleashing divine abilities the entire way.

“Screw off!” growled Meng Hao, waving his arm. Rumbling filled the air as an incredible power surged out, slamming into his three opponents. Blood instantly spurted out of their injuries, and two of them were killed instantly. The remaining cultivator’s face went pale, and he retreated in shock.

Meng Hao did nothing to pursue him. Instead, he clenched his right hand into a fist and struck the shield again. His eyes glittered, and a faint, cold smile could be seen on his face.

Inside the shield, Han Qinglei sat beneath the statue, face pale, but fully focused on recovering from his injuries.

Around this time in the Seventh Nation, the Echelon cultivator from the Fourth Mountain, Lin Cong, was standing in a bronze war chariot as it sped forward. He wore a white robe, and his expression was one of surprise. However, he also radiated indescribable power, as well as supreme confidence in himself and his cultivation base. 1

“So, you’re delivering up a plump gift for me, eh Han Qinglei?” he murmured, eyes glittering. He looked at the jade slip in his hand and laughed.

“From the fluctuations, it seems that Han Qinglei and Meng Hao are fighting already…. Well that’s fine. After the two of them have worn each other down, then I can easily snatch the World Seals of two nations. I don’t care what plot Han Qinglei has brewing, he’s not strong enough to go up against me. I’ll crush him as easily as a dried weed!”

Chuckling coldly, Lin Cong sent his war chariot speeding forward. Massive ripples spread out, and at the same time, he flexed his cultivation base, causing a domineering air to spread out. It was as if he were announcing to the world: Lin Cong is coming!

He was also using his status in the Echelon as a threat!

He emanated crushing power, and had incredible self-confidence, the result of a series of random events that had led to him fighting against the number one member of the Echelon. Although he had been defeated, that cultivator had personally told him that he was the most powerful person he had ever fought!

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# Chapter 1102: Han Qinglei’s Plot!

Meng Hao hovered outside of the National Aura Mountain, coldly eyeing Han Qinglei inside of the shield. Currently, he could only look at him with his bare eyes; divine sense could not penetrate the shield.

The only thing he could see was Han Qinglei sitting there, treating his injuries.

Meng Hao wasn’t anxious. At the moment, the shield protecting the Eighth Nation’s National Aura Mountain was intact, and would not be easily damaged. However, he was confident that the shield would soon begin to weaken.

And that was exactly what happened. In the region of the central temple, Fan Dong’er and Bei Yu instantly tipped the tide of battle in favor of the Ninth Nation. They immediately issued orders to begin a full-scale assault on the Eighth Nation. Cultivators from both sides began to fight, and the Eighth Nation began to suffer defeat after defeat. The pillar of red light shining above their pagoda began to sink down rapidly.

As it did, the shield surrounding their National Aura Mountain began to ripple. Soon, it was visibly growing thinner, causing Han Qinglei’s eyes to widen with shock. From the look of it, this was not what he had anticipated happening, and it caused him to stare murderously at Meng Hao.

When their gazes locked, Meng Hao suddenly got an uneasy feeling. Han Qinglei’s expression seemed to be the appropriate one, but Meng Hao simply couldn’t believe that Han Qinglei, being qualified to join and maintain his position in the Echelon, would be so easily defeated. People like him would definitely have tricks up their sleeves.

It would be impossible for him to have overlooked the fact that if he retreated here because of being pursued by another, that this safe haven could be weakened because of the situation on the central battlefield.

Meng Hao's eyes flickered, and he clenched his right hand, unleashing the Life-Extermination Fist onto the shield. The shield continued to hold strong, making it impossible for him to observe Han Qinglei with divine sense. Therefore, he decided that he might as well just do his best to destroy the shield; then all would be laid bare!

Booms filled the air, and the shield rippled. Meng Hao transformed into a gust of wind, battering the shield with fists and magical techniques. Soon, the shield was flickering with colorful lights, and emanating constant booms.

Han Qinglei's face fell as he looked at the shield. He knew full well that it wouldn't be able to last for very much longer, and that once it was broken open, there would be nothing stopping Meng Hao. Han Qinglei gritted his teeth, and an expression of determination appeared on his face. Suddenly, he began to laugh maniacally.

"I never imagined that I, Han Qinglei, would be forced into such a tight spot. Meng Hao… you're definitely strong enough to be in the Echelon. You might not be a match for the number one Echelon cultivator, but you're probably powerful enough to fight with Lin Cong from the Fourth Mountain.

"I didn't want to have my cultivation base breakthrough so soon, I was planning to hold off for a bit longer. I have no desire to be a first Echelon cultivator to break through to the Ancient Realm. After all, the more deeply you prepare in the Immortal Realm, the more powerful you will be after your breakthrough!

"But since you've pushed me this far, fine. I'm going to break through, and then we'll resume our battle!" Even as his words continued to echo about out, Han Qinglei performed a double-handed incantation gesture, then pushed his palm down onto his chest, causing cracking sounds to echo throughout his body. The aura of a cultivation base breakthrough exploded out, merging with the Windswept Realm as a whole.

Meng Hao’s eyes widened, and his uneasy feeling got even stronger.

“When I wasn’t attacking, his expression seemed normal. But that’s not right. As soon as I attacked, he saw the shield falling apart, and then suddenly chose to make a cultivation base breakthrough….” Meng Hao frowned, but didn’t stop unleashing attacks. More distortions appeared on the shield, and cracking sounds could be heard as fissures spread out. As the Eighth Nation suffered successive setbacks in the battle near the central temple, the red light shining from their pagoda continued to fall. At the same time, their shield grew weaker and weaker.

A boom could be heard as a huge crack spread out from where Meng Hao’s fist had just slammed into the shield, piercing halfway into it. Soon, the Eighth Nation’s beam of red light was the weakest among all of the Nine Nations. Meng Hao threw his head back and roared, unleashing the Essence of Divine Flame, causing popping sounds to ring out from the shield.

More cracks appeared, and then, in the blink of an eye, the shield collapsed into countless fragments, sending a shockwave sweeping out in all directions.

The shockwave was intense, but Meng Hao pierced through it, finally setting foot onto the Eighth Nation’s mountain. He instantly sent his divine sense sweeping out toward Han Qinglei to determine whether or not his suspicions were valid.

However, in the moment that his divine sense was about to touch him, Han Qinglei’s cultivation base erupted with the aura of a breakthrough. Colors flashed and the wind screamed, and soon, the power of the great Door of the Ancient Realm began to descend, scattering Meng Hao’s divine sense.

Although all of this seemed coincidental, it all aligned with his suspicions. Everything seemed to make sense. In fact, he could now see that nothing which was happening was coincidental, in fact… it was the opposite!

Meng Hao’s body blurred as he shot toward Han Qinglei, whose cultivation base was rising rapidly into the Ancient Realm. Seeing Meng Hao closing in, he clenched his teeth and, even while breaking through, performed an incantation gesture and waved his finger at Meng Hao. Immediately, illusory white bones appeared, which shot toward Meng Hao.

Behind the bones was a magical Wheel of Time, yet another unleashing of Paragon magic. Numerous divine abilities all struck out toward Meng Hao.

Rumbling echoed about, but Meng Hao didn’t pause for a moment. He waved his right hand, summoning the Paragon Bridge. Next was the raging Essence of Divine Flame, which swept out in all directions. The illusory white bones were shattered, and the magical Wheel of Time was destroyed.

At the same time, Han Qinglei threw his head back and roared, causing azure lightning to strike down and fuse with his body. Then he extended his right hand and pushed it out toward Meng Hao.

The gesture caused his entire right arm to explode into a cloud of blood and gore. Shockingly, a bolt of azure lightning filled with a strand of blood shot out from the remnants of his destroyed arm. Instead of shooting toward Meng Hao, though, it exploded, transforming into an azure shield that surrounded Han Qinglei, the statue, and the entire mountain.

At the same time that the azure lightning transformed into a shield, Han Qinglei threw his head back and roared. The breakthrough energy became more and more powerful, and up above, the energy of Heaven and Earth formed together into something that looked like a huge door.

“You can’t do a thing to me now, Meng Hao!” Han Qinglei cried, laughing uproariously.

However, in the exact moment that his words rang out, Meng Hao suddenly blinked his right eye nine times, causing the starstone there within to melt and then rapidly spread out to cover his entire body. In the space of a few breaths, he completely transformed into a planet.

This was none other than the Fang Clan Daoist magic… One Thought Stellar Transformation!

The sudden appearance of this technique caused Han Qinglei’s eyes to widen. He hadn’t seen Meng Hao use it in their previous encounter, and now, his heart started to pound. Before he could even do anything in response, Meng Hao in planet-form shot forward like a meteor. Anything standing in his way was like rotten wood, and he instantly slammed into the azure lightning shield.

A huge boom rang out as the shield shattered into pieces and Meng Hao burst in. The planet vanished, and Meng Hao appeared in normal form once again, directly in front of Han Qinglei. Instantly, his hand shot out and latched onto Han Qinglei’s neck.

Han Qinglei could do nothing to block him, and his breakthrough process was interrupted.

“I knew it!” Meng Hao said calmly. As soon as his hand had touched Han Qinglei, his divine sense flowed through it and swept through Han Qinglei.

“You were aware the entire time your so-called breakthrough would fail.. In fact, you never even intended to break through!

“That’s because this isn’t even your true form. You’re nothing but a clone!

“You tried to hide that fact from me with the aura of a breakthrough, plus, you kept my divine sense stuck outside your shield so that I couldn’t see the truth.”

“So what if you know?!” said Han Qinglei, laughing loudly, his expression one of derision. “My true form has long since fled! You won’t be able to find him any time soon. Besides, you don’t even have the time to go looking!”

No one in the Echelon was weak, neither in terms of cultivation base base nor intelligence!

“That’s because you intentionally lured other Echelon cultivators here, right?” Meng Hao said coolly. “With the Eighth Nation’s World Seal here as bait, plus the Ninth Nation’s seal, the other Echelon members will be trying to kill me, giving you a chance to slip away.”

His tone was tranquil, and his words calm. Han Qinglei had previously been quite smug because of his scheme, but all of a sudden, he got a bad feeling. Meng Hao was definitely completely beyond what he had expected.

“You….” He was just about to continue speaking when all of a sudden, the pressure weighing down on the Eighth Nation grew even more intense, seemingly doubling. That could only mean one thing; another Echelon cultivator had entered the Eighth Nation.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he viciously clenched his right hand. Han Qinglei’s clone instantly exploded into pieces, completely destroyed!

The pursuit and dispatching of Han Qinglei’s clone had gone quickly and cleanly. Meng Hao waved his right hand, ignoring anything that might be happening up in the sky behind him, and instead headed toward the statue, reaching out toward the flame of the World Seal in the statue’s hand to grab it!

In that instant, a deep voice echoed out like thunder, filled with killing intent and somber dignity.

“That’s not for you to take! Touch it, and I’ll wipe out your entire clan!”

In conjunction with the voice, everything shook, and a huge wind rose up. The clouds parted to reveal a war chariot emanating a black light like a will of extermination. It radiated a domineering air and an intense pressure as it rumbled down from above.

The sinister chariot was being pulled by 1,000,000 souls, all of which were screaming fiercely, shaking the entire battlefield. As the chariot neared, darkness spread out like that of night, covering everything.

Standing in the chariot was a white-robed young man with long black hair and handsome features. He seemed threatening, although not angry, and he almost looked as if he had just emerged from the Yellow Springs, an emperor of death directing 1,000,000 dead souls into battle.

Each word he uttered boomed like thunder, crashing into Meng Hao’s ears. The mere voice itself caused the Eighth Nation’s National Aura Mountain to shake; cracks spread out, and the mountain seemed to be on the verge of collapsing.

Meng Hao started laughing as he looked up at the war chariot. Then his smile turned cold, and he said, “Wipe out my entire clan? You don’t qualify!”

Even as he spoke, his hand reached the World Seal… and grabbed it!

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# Chapter 1103: The Most Powerful Path of Immortality!

“How dare you!” The clouds above the Eighth Nation churned. The war chariot ripped through the air, pulled by 1,000,000 souls, causing the darkness of night to spread out rapidly. Standing in the chariot was Lin Cong from the Fourth Mountain. He looked like an emperor of death, wielding the power of the Yellow Springs, his voice echoing out like claps of thunder.

Meng Hao’s face was calm, but inwardly, he was musing about how his previous assumption that he was at the absolute peak of the Immortal Realm had been proved wrong during his battle with Han Qinglei. Each and every person who joined the Echelon possessed different destinies and types of good fortune. They were all people who other cultivators simply couldn’t compare to. You could say that each Echelon cultivator had their own unique path, and therefore… each member was different.

The paths were different, and thus, the Echelon cultivators were all different!

Han Qinglei’s path had been somewhat discordant. He had his white bones and his azure lightning, but none of those things truly belonged to him alone. Therefore, despite the fact that he walked onto the path of the Echelon, when facing off with Meng Hao, it would be difficult to do anything except lose. Lose over and over again.

That was because Meng Hao had his own path to Immortality. That was the ancient way, the legendary and most powerful path, that of the Allheaven.

Now, he could see that this Echelon cultivator from the Fourth Mountain obviously had his own path too.

He wasn’t sure exactly what path that was, and actually, he didn’t even feel the need to know!

The path of the Allheaven Immortal was something that had already been legendary in the time of the primordial Paragon Immortal Realm. However, because many years had passed, it would have been virtually impossible for other paths to Immortality not to spring up in the other Mountains and Seas, paths which people would tread in the hopes of gaining greater power.

“Perhaps it has something to do with Paragon magic,” he thought. “After all, you have to gain enlightenment of Paragon magic in order to get into the Echelon. Perhaps… there is some additional reason for the existence of the Echelon besides accomplishing Paragon Sea Dream’s plan. Maybe it’s also to see which path… leads to becoming the most powerful Paragon in the Heavens!” Meng Hao wasn’t absolutely sure about this assessment. However, he was still about sixty to seventy percent sure that this was what was going on.

“Although, whatever other paths the Echelon cultivators tread, they will find that they are all dead ends when compared to mine. Even if they persist in walking further along those paths, they will find that the Allheaven Immortal… is the most powerful type of Immortal!

“I’m going to defeat all of them one by one, and then they’ll understand the truth!” His eyes began to glitter with a brilliant light of confidence.

That confidence… was self-confidence. He was sure that he would travel the farthest, and that being an Allheaven Immortal… was the most powerful path of Immortality!

After these thoughts flashed through his mind, he decided to spend no more time thinking. He turned his gaze away from the Fourth Mountain’s Echelon cultivator and his 1,000,000 souls, and instead retrieved the fire that represented the World Seal.

In the instant that he acquired the flame, an enraged roar could be heard echoing down from the sky. At the same time… a beam of light shot up from the area of the central temple.

The intense light caused everything to shake. It was far more intense than the light which had appeared when Meng Hao or when Han Qinglei had broken the previous records to successfully understand 100 Essences.

It was fully 3,000 meters wide as it shot through the Heavens. From a distance, it looked like a massive column connecting Heaven and Earth. Everyone in the entire Windswept Realm was able to see it, regardless of where they were!

The lands quaked, and the Heavens rumbled. The intense energy rippling out was unprecedented, vastly more powerful than on the previous two occasions. It was even possible to say that it was completely beyond compare.

The two before were like slivers of bamboo, whereas this one was as thick as an arm. Shocking peals of thunder rang out, causing all cultivators in the Windswept Realm to be thoroughly shaken.

The intense sound and shaking caused everyone near the central temple to look on with astonished expressions. The could do nothing but stare as the huge pillar of light shot up into the heavens and then transformed into a massive vortex.

Meng Hao stood next to the statue, holding the Eighth Nation’s World Seal in his hand, and looked up at the vortex, a slight, cold smile touching his face.

“So, it’s just as I suspected,” he thought. “The first person to snatch a World Seal will break the previous record and provoke a blessing!”

That was one reason why Meng Hao was so confident, and also why he had been so calm. He didn’t care who Han Qinglei got to come here, nor what other schemes he had in place. He was sure that if the first person to be enlightened regarding the National Aura received a blessing, and the first person to be enlightened regarding 100 Essences also got a blessing, then surely, the first person to win a World Seal would also receive a blessing, and a more powerful one at that.

Although it might seem like all these things happened over a long period of time, in fact, they happened almost instantly. Echelon cultivator Lin Cong from the Fourth Mountain flew through the air, causing everyone in the nation to involuntarily look up in shock.

In the sky above the central temple, the vortex rapidly grew larger. In the space of a few breaths of time, it covered the whole sky like a sheet, allowing everyone suddenly gain a glimpse of another world.

It was the same world which had appeared before, a world of mountains and statues. If you looked closely at those statues and mountains, you would see that they were split almost evenly.

Furthermore, within that world were four statues and five mountains that stuck out among all the others. Those statues were the largest statues in the world, as if all the other statues were children in comparison.

The five mountains were similarly taller than all of the other mountains, as if no one had ever been able to subjugate them and turn them into statues. The four statues and five mountains were filled with indescribable ripples of force which, if they spread out into the world, would shake everything.

Numerous mountains and statues floated about, but the four statues and five mountains stuck out the most. They were like the nucleus of the entire world. As of this moment, the first statue began to emanate rumbling sounds, and then suddenly collapsed into pieces, which crumbled down and then reformed into a new statue.

That statue… depicted Meng Hao!

Instantly, Meng Hao’s appearance was revealed to everyone in the Windswept Realm. They could also see that this statue looked completely different than the first statue that had appeared when he had broken the record and reached the peak of the world!

He was the focus of all attention, causing everyone to tremble with shock!

An ancient voice suddenly rang out: “Meng Hao of the Ninth Nation has broken the previous record. He defeated Han Qinglei of the Eighth Nation, and wrested away the Eighth Nation’s World Seal. He is the first person to win a World Seal, and will be rewarded with twenty percent of the qi flow of the Windswept Realm!”

The voice echoed throughout the entire Windswept Realm, to be heard by everyone. People gasped, and looks of astonishment appeared. This reward was even more amazing than in the previous two. This time, it was twenty percent of the qi of the entire Windswept Realm!

It was difficult to even contemplate what it meant for a single person to acquire twenty percent of the qi flow of the entire world. It was as if Meng Hao were being favored by the entire Windswept Realm.

All of a sudden, Meng Hao was surrounded by an invisible tempest, a tempest that no one could see, and only he could sense.

His mind trembled as he heard what sounded like countless voices, voices which were apparently the prayers and entreaties of countless living beings from the Windswept Realm, over the course of innumerable years.

Furthermore, Meng Hao felt the Windswept Realm’s power of rejection vanish. No longer was it trying to expel him. Instead, it approved of him, as if he were now mysteriously connected to the Realm.

That connection caused Meng Hao to begin to pant. He could only imagine how much easier that connection would make it for him to understand the Essences. However, that was secondary. At the moment, he could now sense something like the will of the Windswept Realm.

What caused him to pant even more than anything else was that the will of the Windswept Realm now viewed him with kindness, and wished to protect him!!

Twenty percent of the qi flow… indicated that any opponent who faced him directly could be struck dead by lightning!

Furthermore, if that qi flow ever reached one hundred percent….

Then, even if Meng Hao were a mortal who could wield no magic whatsoever, he would still be like an Imperial Lord within the Windswept Realm.

He closed his eyes and focused fully on connecting with the will of the Windswept Realm within the tempest.

Meanwhile, in the First Nation, the most powerful Echelon cultivator sat there cross-legged. Suddenly, his eyes snapped open, and they were filled with unprecedented focus.

“Qi flow,” he murmured. “So, this reward is qi flow too. That’s completely different than in times past!!” The cultivators sitting around him all looked very serious.

A similar scene played out in the Second Nation!

However, on the Third Nation’s National Aura Mountain was a cultivator who was not from the Third Mountain, but had an Echelon mark on his forehead nonetheless. He was a middle-aged man, and currently, he was frowning.

“I WILL lead the Windswept Realm back to prominence!” he murmured coldly, his eyes flickering with killing intent. “As the former sole Imperial Lord of the Windswept Realm, what reason do you have to resist me!?”

The Third Nation was special, but as for the Fifth Nation, the Sixth Nation, and the Seventh Nation….

All members of the Echelon, and all other cultivators, were shaken by the reward being given to Meng Hao. At the same time, Meng Hao’s name was deeply imprinted onto their hearts.

In the Sixth Nation was a young woman, currently involved in a deadly chase. Her face was pale, and she was now being pursued by even more people than before.

“Three records broken, and two of them were him!” she thought.

As she sped through the air, she looked up at the statue of Meng Hao in the sky, and a gleam of anticipation appeared in her eyes.

“Soon…. I have the feeling that we’ll be meeting soon,” she murmured. “Meng Hao… could you be the person I’ve been waiting for? If you are… then I’ll help you become the most powerful cultivator in the Echelon. That’s my mission….

“If it’s not you, well then I’ll just have to go with the Echelon cultivator from the First Mountain.”

This woman was none other than Xue’er, the successor of Immortal Ancient.

As these world-shaking events occurred, in a city of mortals in the Eighth Nation, a young student sat in a house reading a bamboo scroll. Actually, he only appeared to be reading, and was in fact trembling slightly.

He could sense all of the things happening in the world outside. You could even say that those things were happening because of him!

After a long moment, he put the bamboo scroll down and looked out of the window up into the sky. His face darkened, and after a moment of hesitation, he sighed.

“Meng Hao…. So that’s why you were so calm. You were banking on the reward from the Windswept Realm!

“Perhaps everything that happened in the battle went according to your plans. Meng Hao… the Echelon cultivator from the Ninth Mountain. I’m going to remember you!” That seemingly mortal young student was… Han Qinglei!

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# Chapter 1104: Killing You… Will Only Take Seven Steps!

Han Qinglei stood there silently, sighing inwardly. Once again, the desire to fight burned in his eyes.

He kept telling himself that he was in the Echelon, a Chosen among blazing suns. He could accept being defeated in battle, but he couldn’t accept being humiliated!

From the moment he had entered the Eighth Nation, he had parted ways with his clone, using it to distract Meng Hao so that his true form would be able to evade detection. Then he had used a secret magic to stifle his aura and escape to this place.

Without the clone to distract Meng Hao, his secret magic alone would not have been enough to escape undetected. One of the unique aspects of this technique was that the longer he used it, the more difficult it would be to see through it.

What he had needed was time, which was why he had sent his clone to take his place.

“Lin Cong is the second most powerful among the Echelon, and I’m no match for him. Meng Hao might have been able to beat me, but to defeat Lin Cong… will be extremely difficult!

“Seven current members of the Echelon stepped into the Ancient Realm in the past, but after realizing that their paths were incorrect, they intentionally lowered their cultivation bases with the purpose of breaking through again later. Each successive time they break through, they become more powerful!

“Lin Cong is so strong that it’s impossible to determine how many times he’s broken through into the Ancient Realm, only to drop back down….

“Those things don’t have much to do with me, though. Since I can’t keep hold of the Eighth Nation’s seal, it would be better to curry favor by handing it over someone else, than to give it to Meng Hao. This also means I won’t be hunted down, so one of these days, I’ll have a chance to make my comeback!” Han Qinglei’s eyes glittered, and he took a deep breath. Finally, he bowed his head and continued to hide his presence. He wanted to use another secret magic to observe the battle between Meng Hao and Lin Cong, but after some consideration, decided against it.

He felt sure that Meng Hao was no match for Lin Cong, and yet, wasn’t completely certain. Meng Hao’s calm face hovered there in his mind’s eye, and after a moment of thought, he made up his mind.

Although he chose not to observe the battle, the Echelon cultivators in the other nations all used various secret magics, and utilized significant resources, to be able to observe the battle.

This fight was not just a chance to see how strong Lin Cong was, it was also an opportunity to see Meng Hao’s battle prowess, which would help them be prepared for future encounters.

Glowing screens appeared in front of each of the various members of the Echelon. Those screens all depicted the National Aura Mountain in the Eighth Nation!

Currently, Lin Cong bore down on the mountain in shocking fashion, causing everything to shake. As he neared, his rage erupted.

“Dammit! All of that… should be mine!!

“You’re stealing the qi flow of the Windswept Realm that belongs to me. Well then… I guess I’ll just have to kill you!!” Lin Cong’s voice echoed out, and his war chariot rumbled as he bore down on Meng Hao. He extended his hand and waved a finger at Meng Hao.

Immediately, the 1,000,000 souls leading the chariot issued intense screams, then spread out like a sea of dead souls, covering everything. They transformed into a gigantic hand, which then smashed down viciously toward Meng Hao as he stood there on the mountain peak.

Meng Hao looked up, and his eyes snapped open. The invisible wind which surrounded him split apart, and despite the fact that Meng Hao clearly didn’t make a single move, dozens of lightning bolts suddenly appeared in midair. They stabbed down, smashing into the ground in front of Meng Hao, blocking the enormous, pitch-black hand of dead souls.

This… was one of the benefits Meng Hao received after acquiring twenty percent of the qi flow of the Windswept Realm!

Protection provided by Heaven and Earth!

Booms echoed out as the lightning slammed into the 1,000,000 dead souls. They screamed as the enormous hand collapsed into pieces in front of Meng Hao, incapable of even touching him.

Almost in the exact moment that the 1,000,000 souls fell apart, Meng Hao’s energy spiked through the roof!

“Killing you… will only take seven steps!” he said.

In accompaniment with his domineering words, his cultivation base rocketed higher and higher, and a domineering aura spread out in all directions. He did not retreat. He did not dance about with fancy fighting moves. He just went in for the kill!

However, when his words entered the ears of the other Echelon cultivators in the other nations, they were met with cold laughter.

“This Meng Hao is way too arrogant and conceited. He thinks he can kill Lin Cong with only seven steps? Not even the Echelon cultivator from the

First Mountain could do that! What makes Meng Hao think he can!?”

“Lin Cong is powerful. He might be quite a bit beneath the Echelon cultivator from the First Mountain, but it’s real grandstanding for Meng Hao to claim that he can kill him with seven steps!”

In the First Nation, the most powerful Echelon cultivator, the white robed young man from the First Mountain, coolly said, “It’s good to be confident, but reality won’t match up.”

Of course, Meng Hao couldn’t hear the words being spoken. However, even if he could, he wouldn’t pay them the slightest heed. His path was that of the legendary Allheaven Immortal, and in his heart, he knew that to be the most powerful path. To tread such a path required unflinching determination. Furthermore… he would crush anything that stood in his path, walk to the peak, and smash all the other Echelon cultivators. He would use his actions… to show that he was the most powerful in the Echelon!

BOOM!

Meng Hao stepped forward to begin the Seven God Steps.

Lin Cong in his war chariot threw his head back and laughed. It was an icy laughter, filled with both killing intent and fury.

Never had anyone in his generation dared to say anything like that to him before. Only seven steps… were needed to kill him? The domineering air of those words prompted Lin Cong to laugh maniacally.

“Not even the Echelon cultivator from the First Mountain would be confident enough to say something like that to me. Meng Hao, you’re the first!” By the time Lin Cong’s words finished echoing out, Meng Hao had taken his first step!

That step took him from the peak of the mountain to a position in midair. He was now in front of the chariot, causing the scattered remnants of the dead souls to tremble and flee in all directions. They were screaming, as if there were some powerful energy exploding off of Meng Hao, something that, if it struck them, would exterminate them for all eternity!

As the dead souls screamed, Meng Hao unleashed a punch.

The Life-Extermination Fist!

That fist slammed into the war chariot, unleashing a massive force onto Lin Cong. Lin Cong was just about to use some divine abilities and magical techniques, but the force interrupted him. His face fell when he heard a muffled boom coming from his war chariot, which was then shoved backward by 300 meters!

Boundlessly domineering!

In the same moment that the war chariot was thrown back, Meng Hao took a second step. His energy once again erupted, making him multiple times more powerful than before.

Heaven and Earth shook as the step landed him in front of the war chariot once again, whereupon he unleashed yet another punch!

Yet again, the Life-Extermination Fist! As boundlessly domineering as before!

Booms rang out as the war chariot, with Lin Cong inside of it, was shaken violently. Yet again, his magical techniques were interrupted. From the very beginning until now, he hadn’t even had a chance to fight back!

“He’s not just getting in lucky shots!” he thought, inwardly shaken.

You couldn’t blame him, really. Anyone who ended up fighting Meng Hao would encounter the same domineering battle tactics. He destroyed opportunities to attack, and would always aim to seize the initiative, and the first blow!

Everyone back in the Ninth Mountain and Sea had experienced that, and now, it was time for other cultivators to learn exactly how domineering Meng Hao was!

Three steps, three punches! Booms echoed out continuously as the chariot was again shoved backward!

Four steps, four punches! Massive rumbling filled the air as Meng Hao dazzlingly set out to prove that he could back up the domineering nature of his words and kill Lin Cong with only seven steps!

If he could, then his self-confidence would grow even greater, his momentum even stronger. His name would rocket to the very top of the Echelon!

Even if Lin Cong didn’t die in the end, in the future, his mental state would collapse whenever he saw Meng Hao.

Lin Cong was flabbergasted at how he was being completely subjugated!!

“This is impossible! No one in my generation has ever completely suppressed me during a fight!!”

Booms shook the sky as Meng Hao attacked with frantic madness. Four steps. Four punches!

Each one of those punches was the Life-Extermination Fist, which continuously interrupted Lin Cong’s magical techniques, making it very difficult for him to unleash any magic at all. The fourth punch caused cracks to spread out over his war chariot, which then exploded into pieces.

Lin Cong let out a bellow of rage and waved his hand, using the opportunity to try to release a divine ability. The will of death swirled around him, as if the Yellow Springs themselves were rising up from the underworld.

He had to go all-out with everything to fight back. He couldn’t allow Meng Hao to build up any more momentum, or for himself to be any further suppressed. He was suddenly shocked to realize that if things kept going the way they were, then it wasn’t necessarily impossible… for Meng Hao to actually kill him with seven steps!!

However… just when he was on the verge of unleashing his divine ability, Meng Hao took a fifth step. His energy shot up explosively, far past anything from before. The Heavens flickered, and a huge wind screamed up, making the qi flow of the Windswept Realm even more evident.

When he took that fifth step, he appeared directly in front of Lin Cong, whereupon he… unleashed yet another punch!

This was a different strike, not the Life-Extermination Fist, but rather, the blow of Self-Immolation, the Bedevilment Fist!

It was an insanity the likes of which could sacrifice anything, even one’s own life, to enter a state of mad Bedevilment, which was then materialized into a punch. As of this moment, only one thought existed inside of Meng Hao’s head.

Because he was Bedeviled, that fist possessed both form and will!

Lin Cong’s eyes went wide, and his heart filled with astonishment. He was aware before that Meng Hao was not weak; after all, he had defeated Han Qinglei. However, he had never imagined that Meng Hao would be this powerful!

From his view, Meng Hao’s power didn’t come from his cultivation base, but rather his style of fighting. It was a style that used a completely domineering momentum, it left the opponent incapable of even breathing, all the way until they were destroyed.

Meng Hao’s way of fighting was something completely unique, something he had never before encountered.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

One shocking punch destroyed Lin Cong’s divine ability as if it were a rotten log. The mad, Bedeviled fist exploded on toward Lin Cong, bursting with power.

Blood oozed out of Lin Cong’s mouth as he was shoved backward. He let out a miserable shriek, feeling completely and utterly humiliated as Meng Hao took a sixth step!

When that step landed, the world crackled with thunder. Countless lightning bolts exploded up around him as his energy flew even higher. Even the mountain down below was shaking violently; cracks appeared as if it would fall apart at any moment.

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# Chapter 1105: What Did You Just Say?!

The shattering of the sky grew even more apparent. Cracks rapidly formed and closed up, leaving behind what looked like scars. There didn’t seem to be anything out of the ordinary about Meng Hao, and yet, he had suddenly become a larger-than-life figure, like a giant who stood on equal footing with the Heavens.

A terrifying aura rose up from him as he took his sixth step, and unleashed the sixth punch!

It was the Bedevilment Fist yet again, the strike of Self-Immolation. However, this strike was delivered even more directly than before, and the domineering power of Meng Hao’s energy seemed to fuse with Heaven and Earth.

When the strike landed, Lin Cong let out a miserable scream. He bit his tongue and spit out a mouthful of blood, which transformed into majestic Yellow Springs that swept out in all directions.

Massive booms could be heard as the Yellow Springs were destroyed. Meng Hao was slightly injured, and yet, the killing intent in his eyes had not lessened.

“Last step!” he said, taking the seventh step in unison with the destruction of the Yellow Springs.

It was as if the entire world ground to a halt, and was replaced by Meng Hao. With the assistance of twenty percent of the qi flow of the Windswept

Realm, Meng Hao could fuse with the lands, as if… he were the embodiment of the will of Heaven!

The entire world began to burst; Meng Hao was like a divine spirit that represented the will of Heaven, becoming its embodiment as he fused with Heaven and Earth!

His foot landed, and it was as if the Heavens were crushing the lands beneath. His fist was like Heaven and Earth, destroying all living things. It was as if Meng Hao were the most respected entity in all creation.

That was because this was…

The God-Slaying Fist!

When the God-Slaying Fist was unleashed, the Echelon cultivators in the other nations watching the battle let out successive gasps. They had watched Meng Hao's terrifying momentum grow with each step, had seen the wild and Devilish energy building up, had witnessed his intensely domineering style. It instantly left a deep impression on everyone, and caused them to tremble in astonishment.

The Echelon cultivator from the First Mountain, the white-robed youth, felt his eyes going wide as an expression of shock filled his face. Meng Hao's way of fighting left even him astonished. Meng Hao seized the initiative and pressed forward, crushing everything in front of him like dead weeds.

All of the Echelon cultivators were completely astonished by this fist strike.

"What fist strike is that?!"

"It might not be impossible… for him to actually kill Lin Cong with only seven steps!!"

"This Meng Hao is actually incredibly strong! Han Qinglei couldn't match up to him, and it looks like Lin Cong is also going to be defeated…. He might be qualified to fight for the spot of the number one most powerful cultivator in the Echelon!!"

At this point, Lin Cong performed a double-handed incantation gesture, then shoved his hands out in front of him.

“Holy Requiem Skull!!” he roared. Shockingly, a Paragon magic appeared, an enormous, golden skull!

The surface of the skull was covered with innumerable magical symbols, tightly packed in a way that seemed to encompass a will of death that mourned for all living things.

The Holy Requiem Skull was Lin Cong’s Paragon magic. By gaining enlightenment of this skull, he was able to craft a Paragon magic, and thus enter Paragon Sea Dream’s Echelon!

Becoming part of the Echelon completely changed his destiny, allowing him to rise to prominence in the Fourth Mountain. With the secret support of Ksitigarbha, he had survived numerous deadly trials, and had defended his place in the Echelon.

All of those numerous battles gave him complete and utter control over his Paragon magic, a power which enabled him to peer ahead into the future of the battle!

He was able to find the weaknesses in all other Daoist magics, he was also able to predict what actions his opponents would take. He would then use all of that information to his advantage. Even more shocking to his opponents was that he could see visions of their future.

Because of that, and thanks to the tips and pointers given him by Ksitigarbha, the path of Immortality that he treaded was essentially the same as that of Ksitigarbha! It was a unique path of Immortality that was like striding out from death into a new life!

However, his Paragon magic required a significant expenditure of mental energy, and therefore, he rarely used it. However, having been forced into a corner by Meng Hao’s domineering style, he was left with no choice but to utilize this most powerful Paragon magic.

However, as soon as he unleashed his Holy Requiem Skull Paragon magic, Lin Cong's face completely fell. The only thing he saw in his vision was that there was no way for him to escape from the power of Meng Hao's fist strike.

There were no gaps!

There was no way to escape!

He was even able to determine that after Meng Hao's strike landed, he didn't plan to follow up with any divine abilities or magical techniques. It was as if… Meng Hao was completely and utterly confident that this fist and this step would utterly eradicate Lin Cong!

"How could this be!?" he thought, shaking mentally. He tried to back up, but Meng Hao's killing intent exploded out, as if the God-Slaying Fist were capable of eradicating all living things in Heaven and Earth!

It would land on Lin Cong, and there was nothing he could do about it!

Tears of blood seeped out of Lin Cong's eyes. After madly depleting his mental energy to use his Paragon magic at this critical juncture, he was able to glimpse a bit of the future.

The only result of that flashing vision was that Lin Cong's face fell.

He had no time to think. Eyes bloodshot, he viciously sent the gold-colored Holy Requiem Skull rumbling forward to try to block Meng Hao's incoming fist strike.

Meng Hao hadn't lost even a bit of momentum. He was backed by the will of Heaven and Earth, so no matter what tried to block his path, it would be brushed aside with ease. There was nothing that could stand in the way of his surging energy.

That was because Meng Hao's God-Slaying Fist was backed by the qi flow of the Windswept Realm, utilizing the will of Heaven to take it to the absolute peak!

Anything and everything would be reduced to rubble in the face of this fist!

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

Meng Hao’s God-Slaying Fist slammed into the golden skull, causing massive rumbling to echo out. The skull trembled and then exploded into pieces, allowing Meng Hao’s fist to slam into Lin Cong’s chest.

Cracking sounds could be heard, and Lin Cong let out a bloodcurdling scream. His body hurled backward like a kite with its string cut. All the bones in his body shattered, and in the blink of an eye, he exploded. His chest erupted in a fountain of blood, which spread out in all directions until his entire body was destroyed, with the exception of his head!

By now, all spectators in the Windswept Realm were completely and utterly shocked, filled with pounding waves of astonishment. To witness something happening that moments ago had seemed impossible, led to unparalleled stupefaction.

In the First Nation, the Echelon cultivator from the First Mountain, the white-robed young man, had been sitting there cross-legged moments ago. Now, he was standing, staring at the screen along with all of his followers, whose faces were covered with complete disbelief.

They all knew Lin Cong, and because of that, the scene which was playing out in front of them was completely astounding.

“He… he actually did it!!” the followers gasped.

The Echelon cultivator from the First Mountain looked at the screen and then suddenly smiled, although it was a smile of complete coldness. His eyes flickered with a bright light as he said, “This guy does qualify to fight me.”

In the Second Nation, on the National Aura Mountain, everything was freezing cold. Countless snowflakes swirled around a man who sat there on the mountain peak. He wore a blue robe, and he was the Echelon cultivator from the Second Mountain. His features were cold, but his eyes narrowed as he watched the ice screen in front of him, and the image of Meng Hao upon it.

He seemed calm on the outside, but inwardly, he was rocked by waves of shock.

In the Third Nation, a strange scene was playing out. One hundred cultivators sat cross-legged on the National Aura Mountain. At their head was a middle-aged man wearing an Imperial robe. His face was extremely dark and sinister.

“Is this Meng Hao a variable thrown in by the Windswept Imperial Lord…?”

The pudgy Echelon cultivator in the Fifth Nation, the young boy in the Sixth Nation, and the murderous youth in the Seventh Nation, all watched with flickering faces and trembling hearts.

Earlier, they didn’t think that Meng Hao could kill Lin Cong with a handful of steps, but now they had personally witnessed the battle, and seen Meng Hao’s power and domineering style. It instantly turned into a massive pressure weighing down on them.

Now, not a one of them dared to underestimate Meng Hao. Although they coveted his two World Seals, as of now, they were forced to weigh the risks associated with trying to take them.

You could say that Meng Hao’s battle just now had completely cowed the Echelon cultivators in the Windswept Realm.

At the same time that all the Echelon cultivators were shaken by Meng Hao, Lin Cong’s body exploded in the air above the Eighth Nation. Just when his head seemed on the verge of exploding, killing him in body and spirit, golden light suddenly began to shine up from the shattered golden skull. It transformed into a golden vortex which surrounded Lin Cong’s head, as if to teleport him away.

There was still a bit of life force left in Lin Cong’s head, thanks to his special way of practicing cultivation. As long as he still had his head, he could recover, although it came with a heavy price, including a drop in cultivation base.

In the moment that he was about to teleport away, Meng Hao’s energy suddenly rose up even higher than before, and he said, “Think you can just leave? Exterminate!”

The words were spoken softly, but in that moment, an enormous, shocking foot appeared!

The foot seemed to obfuscate the entire sky, and when it appeared, it began to crush down onto Lin Cong, shattering natural law, destroying Essence!

This was the ultimate power of the Seven God Steps!

The previous seven steps were just a buildup of momentum and energy, leading up to this explosive, exterminating attack.

An intense sensation of deadly crisis filled Lin Cong. He had experienced such feelings before in his life, but this was the most intense it had ever been. Even his battle with the Echelon cultivator from the First Mountain hadn’t been so terrifying and shocking.

There was no possible way he could have ever imagined that Meng Hao… would be so powerful!!

When he saw the foot descending, he realized he didn’t have time to complete the teleportation. He knew that he was about to die, so he let out a powerful howl that echoed out in all directions.

“Meng Hao, if I die, Xu Qing dies too!” Those words entered Meng Hao’s ears like the crash of zillions of thunderclaps. His entire body began to shake. 1

“What did you just say!?” His heart began to pound in a way it rarely did, even causing his divine ability to become unstable. The enormous foot in the sky trembled, and because of his mental instability, his momentum faltered, and his energy began to wane.

Upon leaving Planet South Heaven, he had asked his father about Xu Qing. Fang Xiufeng had told him that he left some divine will on Xu Qing to protect her during reincarnation. Finding out her final destination when she was actually reincarnated was a matter of fortune and timing, but Fang Xiufeng had assured him that he didn’t need to worry.

Even still, and even after so many years had passed, Meng Hao still worried about it occasionally. His original plan had been to wait until he left the Nine Seas God World, and then go back to Planet South Heaven to find out more about the situation. After all, she was his wife, his beloved partner. Although he didn’t often think about the matter, to hear Lin Cong say what he just did filled Meng Hao’s mind with crashing waves of shock.

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# Chapter 1106: Slaughtering Into the Fourth Nation!

In the moment that the instability of Meng Hao’s divine ability caused the enormous foot to grind to a momentary halt, Lin Cong’s head finally got its opportunity to flee. The golden vortex covered his head, then began to spin rapidly. Finally, Lin Cong’s head vanished.

The vortex then transformed into countless motes of golden dust, which then vanished as well.

Meng Hao’s face darkened as he looked at the spot where Lin Cong had vanished. His mind was still being battered by waves of astonishment. Xu Qing’s place in his heart was something that he didn’t allow anyone to touch; it was his weak spot.

Xu Qing was his wife, to whom he had sworn his vows in front of Heaven and Earth. He had watched her beauty fade as he held her in his arms, looked on as her soul entered the Underworld River. They had agreed…

To meet again after she was reincarnated.

Meng Hao could never have predicted that he would hear Xu Qing’s name come out of Lin Cong’s mouth in this place. It was something that caused his eyes to glow with infinite coldness.

This was his first time encountering Lin Cong, and he knew that it was also the first time Lin Cong had ever seen him. Therefore… for him to say Xu Qing’s name indicated that Lin Cong… had seen her in her reincarnated form!

Then he thought about where Lin Cong came from, and a tremor ran through him. “That means there’s an eighty percent likelihood that Xu Qing is on the Fourth Mountain!

“But how could Lin Cong possibly know about the relationship between me and Xu Qing?” Then he thought about Lin Cong’s Paragon magic, and the familiar aura he had sensed, and he understood everything. What Lin Cong had seen was not something that he could use to defend against the God-Slaying Fist. Instead, he saw the connection between Meng Hao and Xu Qing!

A moment later, Meng Hao’s eyes began to flicker with killing intent as he recalled Lin Cong’s words.

If I die, Xu Qing dies too!

“Lin Cong, you’re courting death!” he said, looking up. Then he took a step forward. He did not return to the Ninth Nation, but instead, didn’t hesitate for a moment as he headed toward the Fourth Nation.

As of this moment, World Seals weren’t important, and Mount Whiteseal wasn’t important. The only important thing… were clues about Xu Qing, and… what Lin Cong had just said!

Without clarifying these matters, how could he possibly return to the Ninth Nation? Even if he did, his heart would be in chaos, and he wouldn’t be able to remain calm.

Rumbling filled the air as Meng Hao slashed through the air in a beam of light, flying like a bolt of lightning. Dust kicked up as he sped faster and faster, his killing intent rising.

Soon, he was nearing the border of the Eighth Nation. He would not enter the Seventh Nation; but rather, head through the region of the central temple. After all, that was the fastest way to reach the Fourth Nation.

He had no way to know whether or not Lin Cong took this route, but there was no time to pause and consider the matter. He sped along, soon leaving the Eighth Nation and entering the region of the central temple.

When he looked down, he saw the fierce, bloody fighting, and the countless soldiers engaged in battle. The entire land was stained red with blood.

He merely glanced at it as he sped by, piercing through the air with shocking momentum. The other cultivators from the Mountain and Sea Realm saw him, and were instantly shocked.

“That’s Meng Hao!”

“That’s the Echelon cultivator from the Ninth Nation, Meng Hao!”

“Why is he here?”

Although none of these people had witnessed his battle with Lin Cong like the Echelon cultivators had, they knew that he had broken two of the previous three records. It was something that filled most of them with incredible awe and fear.

There were some fools among them whose greed and avarice was awakened as soon as they laid eyes on Meng Hao. From what they understood, if you could kill someone in the Echelon, then you could get their Echelon mark.

Not too long after Meng Hao entered the central temple region, a stream of sword light suddenly sped through the air toward him. The sword qi was shocking, filled with a murderous air, and was apparently imbued with natural law as it stabbed toward Meng Hao’s neck.

“You just showed up, why are you running away?!” someone said coldly. The attack was made by a middle-aged cultivator, but he wasn’t the only aggressor. Two other cultivators shot toward Meng Hao from off to the side.

In other circumstances, Meng Hao might be filled with a desire to hunt them down and kill them, or might just ignore them. But in his anxiety-filled state, there was only one fate in store for anyone who got in his way.

Instant death!

His eyes were bright red as he extended his hand, grabbing the incoming flying sword, then sending it speeding back in the direction it had come from.

The speed with which it moved now vastly exceeded its previous speed. Intense, incomparable energy propelled the sword forward. The sword itself could not withstand the force propelling it, and began to collapse, starting from the tip. Before it could even collapse by half, though, it stabbed into the forehead of the cultivator who had thrown it so hard that even the hilt blasted through him.

The speed was so indescribable that, despite the extraordinary cultivation base of the middle-aged cultivator, he didn’t even qualify to try to dodge it. He was dead instantly.

This scene caused the other two cultivators to gasp and fall back. Other restless cultivators off in the distance looked on with shock, and didn’t dare to attempt to get in Meng Hao’s way.

Since no one dared to block him, Meng Hao shot through the central temple region, quickly reaching the area where it bordered the Fourth Nation.

Many of the cultivators behind him looked on with shocked faces.

“He actually went through the entire central temple region?”

“How is that possible? The pressure there is incredible! Misfortune will befall anyone who enters there. Not even other Echelon cultivators would dare to go in there, and yet… he did!?”

“Could it be… because of the twenty percent of the qi flow of the Windswept Realm?” Everyone was shocked as Meng Hao sped off.

Meanwhile, Lin Cong’s head appeared on the National Aura Mountain of the Fourth Nation. The head promptly withered, causing Lin Cong to let out a howl. Blue veins popped out, and then veins and arteries began to snake down out of his neck. They grew longer and longer, quickly forming the outline of a body. His face was now pale white, but he bit his tongue again and then roared. Next, bones began to form inside of that body.

A recovery like this was one of indescribable pain, and an incredible price had to be paid…one that he could barely manage. Furthermore, he would experience a cultivation base loss that would be impossible to recover from easily.

However, all of that was better than dying.

“Meng Hao, I’m not going to let you get away with this!” he growled, his expression vicious. As his body reformed, he threw his head back and howled. Venomous rage appeared in his eyes. Just as Meng Hao had suspected, his Holy Requiem Skull had given him a glimpse, not of a way to survive the fist strike, but rather, another vision.

He had seen the Fourth Mountain, and Meng Hao, surrounded by a sea of blood and mountains of corpses. It was as if Meng Hao had traveled there amidst endless slaughter.

In the vision, he saw Xu Qing. She and Meng Hao were looking at each other, their gazes soft.

The vision not only caused him to feel jealous, it gave him the opportunity he needed.

“Faster, must go faster!

“I don’t know exactly what type of relationship Xu Qing and Meng Hao have, but seeing how nervous he got, she’s obviously his weak spot. As soon as I said her name, he just about went crazy. He’s definitely on his way here to kill me!

“I have to recover so that I can flee!” He gritted his teeth hard as his body restored itself. Time passed. More than an hour went by, during which time he continued to pay a heavy price for the recovery process.

When his body finally reappeared, he coughed up a massive mouthful of blood. This body was incredibly weak; he now possessed only about sixty percent of his original cultivation base.

This was actually the weakest he had ever been since joining the Echelon. His face was ashen as he reached up and grabbed the World Seal from the statue. He then flew off of the National Aura Mountain, eyes glittering as he was surrounded by four figures, those followers of his whom he had brought with him to the Windswept Realm.

After a moment of hesitation, a look of determination could be seen in his eyes, and he said, “Activate the Stellar Alteration Grand Magic!”

His four followers didn’t respond. However, their appearances gradually began to change until they all looked like Lin Cong. Even their auras seemed the same. Then, they sped off in four different directions.

As for Lin Cong, he picked a different direction to flee in.

Almost in the same instant that Lin Cong’s four followers sped off, incredible pressure suddenly weighed down on the Fourth Nation. The lands quaked and the air distorted; Lin Cong and his four followers all trembled.

“He’s here! How could he be so fast!? This is impossible!!” Lin Cong said, his face falling. He instantly unleashed a secret magic, dispersing his aura and fleeing at top speed.

Meng Hao’s killing intent raged as he entered the Fourth Nation. He immediately sent his divine sense out and, in the blink of an eye, sensed the five auras. He frowned, then sped toward the nearest one.

Booms echoed out through the Fourth Nation. It only took the space of ten breaths for him to reach the source of one of Lin Cong’s auras, and what he found was a cultivator who looked exactly like Lin Cong.

As soon as the cultivator saw him, his face fell, and he backed up. Meng Hao waved a finger to employ the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex, causing the man to lurch to a stop.

Next, his entire world was overturned by Meng Hao’s palm, which latched onto the top of his head.

“Soulsearch!” Meng Hao’s voice was as cold as the wind in the middle of winter. When it blew past the cultivator’s ears, the man’s head filled with indescribable pain. He began to tremble, and then screamed.

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# Chapter 1107: Goal: Number One in the Echelon!

The cultivator's face twisted, and screams of pain echoed out in all directions. Everyone who heard them was shocked to the core, and could scarcely even imagine how such pain could be possible. It was something almost beyond description. 1

At best, you could say it felt like a hand being shoved into your brain and rifling around violently. Blood sprayed from the cultivator's mouth, and he suddenly went as stiff as a board. He was dead.

Despite his death, his corpse still adhered to Meng Hao's hand, and did not fall to the ground.

After a few breaths of time, Meng Hao's eyes glittered.

"Lin Cong, huh…? So you turned your four followers into doppelgängers to try to pull a fast one on me!" He lowered his hand, and the cultivator's corpse dropped toward the ground. Before it could even land, Meng Hao had shot off into the distance.

He sent his divine sense out into a wide area, looking for Lin Cong's true form. However, Lin Cong's magical technique was strange, and Meng Hao could find no weaknesses in it. The remaining four figures sped rapidly off in different directions. Another strange thing was that their auras were all slowly fading. It wouldn't be too long before they would disappear from Meng Hao's divine sense altogether.

Lin Cong's original plan had been to ensure that there was no aura for Meng Hao to detect at all. If he did spend time searching, at most, he would find the four cultivators he had switched bodies with.

However, Lin Cong could never have predicted that Meng Hao would arrive in the Fourth Nation so quickly. Instead of crossing through the other nations, he had chosen to pass directly over the central temple.

That formed a kink in his plan!

However, everything could be resolved as long as enough time passed. Meng Hao gave a cold harrumph. He patted his bag of holding, and numerous blackpod imps flew out, which he sent screaming out in all directions. They were like black bolts of lighting, emanating murderous auras.

Under the control of Meng Hao’s divine sense, they sped out in pursuit, whereas Meng Hao did nothing. He did no pursuing whatsoever. He simply hovered there in midair above the Fourth Nation, equidistant from all of the fleeing versions of Lin Cong.

His method for determining which one was Lin Cong was a simple one. He would just wait to see what happened when the blackpod imps tried to possess the four different figures. Success or failure didn’t matter; either way he would get some clues.

Soon, he looked up.

“Gotcha!” he said, vanishing.

Meanwhile, near the border between the Fourth and Third Nations, Lin Cong had an extremely unsightly look on his face. He was surrounded by more than ten screaming blackpod imps, all of whom were trying to possess him.

“What are these things!?” Lin Cong had a powerful cultivation base, but right now, he was reduced to about sixty percent of his power. As for the blackpod imps, their possession technique was bizarre. If they failed, they would transform it into a piercing divine sense attack that Lin Cong was having a hard time dealing with. A sensation of deadly crisis welled up in him, and he began to tremble.

As the feeling of imminent death grew stronger, he began to shake even more violently.

“I’m NOT going to die here!!” Filled with regret, he sent a mighty wind blowing out to drive away the seemingly unkillable blackpod imps. Then he gritted his teeth and, despite his weakened form, once again unleashed his Paragon magic!

The golden Holy Requiem Skull materialized in front of him, not as a way to attack the blackpod imps, but as a means of trying to find a way out of his current situation!

Lin Cong’s face went pale as he realized there was no such way out.

“Impossible! Heaven never cuts off all paths! There’s always hope in every situation!” Eyes gleaming with a vicious look, he bit the tip of his tongue, causing his body to wither rapidly. His hair even turned white.

He went all out, sacrificing even his longevity in an attempt to get his Paragon magic to reveal a means of escape.

Rumbling could be heard, and Lin Cong’s body continued to wither, when finally, he found what he was looking for in the Holy Requiem Skull. After he saw it, he gaped in shock, then, laughing maniacally, viciously smacked his own chest. A huge blob of blood spurted out, which then splashed down onto the ground.

His laughter grew more and more intense as he spun around, a look of determination on his face. He then pushed his finger down onto his forehead, sending a tremor through his body. His eyes suddenly went blurry, but rapidly grew clear again. He glanced at the Holy Requiem Skull and realized that he was now missing some of the memories he had had before. Expression serious, he headed off into the distance.

Before too long, he was once again surrounded by blackpod imps. At the same time, a long beam of light appeared in the air not too far off, radiating killing intent.

“Lin Cong!” roared Meng Hao, his voice rumbling like thunder filled with Heavenly might, causing Lin Cong to shake. His divine sense was blessed with twenty percent of the qi flow of the Windswept Realm, transforming his voice into thunder from Heaven, and surrounding his body with a lake of lightning.

Lin Cong was nearly deafened by Meng Hao’s voice. His mind spun, and blood sprayed out of his mouth. After reforming his body, he had only possessed sixty percent of his original cultivation base, making it very difficult to use his Paragon magic. In fact, wasting his longevity and life force the way he had just now caused his cultivation base to drop even further, until it was at only thirty percent of its original strength.

It didn’t matter how strong he was before. With a cultivation base like that, he was like a candle flickering in the wind. Meng Hao’s mere voice shook his heart and caused blood to spray out of his mouth. There was nothing he could possibly do to fight back.

All he could do was scream miserably, and look up with an unyielding expression.

He hated Han Qinglei, and hated the fact that he had greedily tried to snatch the Eighth Nation’s World Seal. The end result had been complete ruin.

He also hated fate. The speed of Meng Hao’s pursuit had ruined all of his preparations. All he had needed was another hour, and then he would have disappeared without a trace.

But now, everything had changed, and there was nothing he could do about it.

“The Heavens want to destroy me? Well, I’m not willing to die by your hand, Meng Hao!” Lin Cong began to laugh, a loud, shrill laughter.

“You want to know about Xu Qing, well… come on!” he screamed as he hovered there in midair. “Soulsearch me if you want, scrape the information out of my brain! I don’t care!

“I just want you give me an honorable death!” He was in the Echelon, and second in power only to the Echelon cultivator from the First Mountain.

He was a blazing sun in the Fourth Mountain, and he was a proud person. Even if he died, he wanted to die with honor!

Meng Hao shot toward him like lightning. Without the slightest hesitation, he reached out and placed his hand onto the top of Lin Cong’s head.

Meng Hao wouldn’t believe anything that Lin Cong told him about Xu Qing; he needed to see it for himself!

He unleashed his Soulsearch magic, pouring his divine sense into Lin Cong’s brain. Images from Lin Cong’s life passed through his mind until finally, he saw Xu Qing!

She actually looked exactly the same as she had before entering reincarnation. She wasn’t the most beautiful woman in the world, but her face was etched eternally onto Meng Hao’s heart.

Lin Cong trembled from the indescribable pain. He clenched his teeth tightly, and didn’t groan or moan at all. His eyes began to fade, and his body was shaking. However, his subconscious mind… demanded honor!

A moment later, Meng Hao lifted his hand away, and blood sprayed out of Lin Cong’s mouth. His expression was blank, and his body was still trembling. His mind was gone, and apparently, the only thing he had left… was his honor.

Meng Hao said nothing. He now knew that when Lin Cong had said that Xu Qing would die if he did, it had been a complete fabrication. Actually, Meng Hao had already come to the conclusion earlier that such a thing wasn’t possible.

He took another look at Lin Cong, then pulled his hand back and tapped his forehead. A massive power poured through him, wiping out any life that was left. Lin Cong shuddered, and for a brief moment, his eyes became bright and lucid. Then he closed them… and died.

His corpse dropped down to the ground, but his bag of holding was snatched by Meng Hao. Inside was the Fourth Nation’s World Seal.

“Qing’er…” he murmured, “so, you’re a disciple of Ksitigarbha, on the Fourth Mountain….

“Just wait for me, Qing’er. Once I’m out of this Windswept Realm, I’m coming for you!” Then he turned and disappeared in a flash of light.

He left the Fourth Nation, passing back through the central temple region and entering the Ninth Nation. All of a sudden, a tremor ran through him, and he turned to look back at the Fourth Nation.

“Something’s off! I killed the Echelon cultivator from the Fourth Mountain. According to the natural law of the Windswept Realm, shouldn’t I be rewarded for breaking a previous record…?” Putting his thoughts aside of Xu Qing, he suddenly reviewed everything that had happened with Lin Cong. Finally, his eyes widened.

He then smacked his bag of holding and produced a promissory note. After looking at it carefully, he confirmed that it was Lin Cong’s promissory note, and then he suddenly smiled.

“These people definitely deserve to be in the Echelon. Han Qinglei had his schemes, and Lin Cong his plots. It seems that truly killing them won’t be easy.

“So, you’re not dead, Lin Cong. However, you will have no chances to rise to prominence here in the Windswept Realm. You’ll be forced to hide from me, not daring to even stick your head out!

“I may not be able to track you down and kill you, but I’ve slaughtered your heart. I’ve planted a shadow there, ensuring that I become your inner Devil!

“You’re not the first, nor will you be the last. The Windswept Realm… is the location where I, Meng Hao, will rise to prominence in the Nine Mountains and Seas! I will rise to prominence in the Echelon!

“When I leave this place, I will do so as… the number one in the Echelon!” He did not return to the Fourth Nation to continue searching for Lin Cong. Lin Cong’s life or death didn’t concern him anymore. With the status Xu Qing currently had in the Fourth Mountain, she was not somebody that could easily be trifled with.

Meng Hao flashed through the air toward Mount Whiteseal. After all of his years practicing cultivation, it was only during these battles that he had gradually formed a unique, domineering style that was all his own!

1. I have to be honest about something. In the original Chinese, it actually says that the feeling is impossible to describe. However, the following sentence then provides a description. We cleverly inserted the word “almost” to ensure that everything made sense…

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1108: Entering Allheaven Again!

Hidden beneath the domineering air, however, was something others could never detect… the con!

For example, Lin Cong’s promissory note. Even Lin Cong knew nothing about that. He had unwittingly fallen for Meng Hao’s scheme. That promissory note had come during their first battle, when Meng Hao utilized the Seven God Steps. When Lin Cong’s attention had been fully preoccupied by the surging energy created by it, he secretly went about creating the promissory note.

He did it that way intentionally, just in case he didn’t manage to kill Lin Cong, or if he escaped. That way, he wouldn’t come out completely empty-handed. At the very least, he would have a promissory note. Then, the next time they met, he could loudly declare that Lin Cong owed him money!

He would never have imagined that his promissory note habit would end up providing proof that Lin Cong wasn’t dead.

As for exactly why he wasn’t dead, the answer came to him on the way back to Mount Whiteseal.

“Echelon cultivators can be killed twice without their soul being exterminated!” he murmured, thinking back to what Paragon Sea Dream had told him all those years ago. It was a special ability unique to the Echelon.

The only way for an Echelon cultivator to truly be exterminated, was to kill that person twice, and THEN… a third time. That last kill would be their final death. In turn, whoever killed them would be half a step into the Echelon.

The rest of that half step was to travel to the Ruins of Immortality in their Mountain and Sea, and find Paragon Sea Dream. Then they could get the other half of the mark, and truly become a new member of the Echelon.

As he sped through the air, Meng Hao reached up and touched the place on his forehead where the Echelon mark was concealed.

At about the same time that Meng Hao returned to the Ninth Nation, something happened back in the Fourth Nation. During Lin Cong's flight, he had spit up a glob of blood, which had long since soaked into the ground. Now, that patch of ground suddenly trembled, and a hand stretched up.

The hand was as flawless as white jade, like that of a newborn baby. It trembled, and the earth shook for a moment before exploding out as a figure stood up.

It was… Lin Cong!

His face was pale, but his cultivation base was different than it had been earlier. Apparently… it was completely restored to its original peak. However, his body was trembling. After taking a few breaths, he roared:

"Meng Hao!" His face twisted with intense rage and hatred. "In the Fourth Mountain and Sea, in all the deadly situations I encountered, I never used up one of my lives! I never imagined that you would actually push me into a corner and kill me!

"The enmity between us is irreconcilable!" He gnashed his teeth, and he even thought about retaliating against Xu Qing after he got back to the Fourth Mountain, to use her to get revenge against Meng Hao. However, when he considered that Xu Qing was the Princess of the 49th Cavern, he realized that despite the fact that she was Meng Hao's weak spot, it was actually impossible for him to do anything to her.

The realization filled him with bitterness. He suddenly realized that, even though he was still alive, Meng Hao had become his inner Devil.

He stamped his foot down onto the ground, and then flew into the air toward the National Aura Mountain. There was no way to vent his overflowing hatred. Even if he felt that he couldn’t exist under the same sky as Meng Hao, the next time they met, all he would do was flee. He did not dare to go up against him.

Currently, he was even wondering if Meng Hao knew that he wasn’t dead.

Naturally, Meng Hao was completely aware of that fact. Currently, he was landing on Mount Whiteseal, where he sat down cross legged and flicked his sleeve to produce two tongues of flame.

These were none other than the World Seals from the Fourth Nation and the Eighth Nation.

The two flames flickered up into the hand of the statue, where they lined up with the Ninth Nation’s World Seal. The three flames made the Essences and natural laws even more majestic.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. Not wasting any time, he focused on contemplation. He had long since realized that, after taking the World Seal of the Fourth Nation, he no longer possessed twenty percent of the Windswept Realm’s qi flow, but rather, thirty percent.

As he contemplated enlightenment, time passed. The overall structure of the Windswept Realm changed due to the defeats of Lin Cong and Han Qinglei. The Fourth Nation and the Eighth Nation were routed, and were eliminated from the central battlefield.

The other six nations continued to fight their bloody battles. However, the Ninth Nation had risen to prominence in the war, causing the cultivators from the other nations to join forces against it in resistance.

Before long, the intense fighting led to a chaotic battle situation.

Fan Dong’er and Bei Yu began switching off with other cultivators from the Ninth Mountain and Sea, so that there were some of them constantly fighting, almost as if they were unwilling to return from the battlefield.

It was as if they could find peace in the fighting, and would not be influenced by their desires.

Half a month flashed by. The speed with which he was gaining enlightenment of the three World Seals was rapidly increased because of the blessing of thirty percent of the qi flow of the Windswept Realm. By this point, he had gained enlightenment of nearly 500 Essences.

And he wasn’t finished.

During the half month, the fighting in the central region changed as more Echelon cultivators gained enlightenment of their respective World Seals. The battles grew even more chaotic.

In order to snatch the World Seals from other nations, it was first necessary to weaken them, which could only be done by gaining an advantage in the central region. Under the control of the Echelon cultivators, the armies in the central region fought with increased intensity.

Occasionally, certain countries would suffer defeats, and the red beams of light coming from their pagodas would grow dim. At that point, other Echelon cultivators would enter that nation to begin fighting.

During the half month, fierce fighting went on in virtually all of the National Aura Mountains of the various nations. There were both victories and defeats, but through it all there were only two mountains that no one dared to enter!

One was the First Nation’s Mountain of National Fate, which was controlled by the Echelon cultivator from the First Mountain. No one dared to encroach on his territory.

The second nation was Meng Hao’s Mount Whiteseal, in the Ninth Nation. Although all the other Echelon cultivators were aware of how many World

Seals he had, after his battle with Han Qinglei, and then his defeat of Lin Cong, he had settled his position. None of the other Echelon cultivators were confident enough to take him on.

It was in this fashion that seven more days passed. Suddenly, a boundless light rose up from Mount Whiteseal, within which Meng Hao opened his eyes. He slowly stood up and made a grasping motion with his right hand, causing the three flames to fly over into his palm, where they vanished.

Three World Seals, 900 great Daos. 900 Essences. All of that information was burned into his heart. Although he wasn’t able to actually wield any of them, the sense of accomplishment he felt caused his aura to be completely different than before.

He looked more elegant than before, and as he stood there, it seemed as if he were connected with the whole world. The light began to fade away, and he closed his eyes. When he opened them again moments later, he suddenly produced his second Nirvana Fruit. His eyes glittered as he pushed the fruit into his forehead.

In the instant the Nirvana Fruit contacted his forehead, a familiar sensation filled him. A massive tempestuous roar filled his mind, causing him to feel as though his head were about to explode.

He began to grow taller. 15 meters. 24 meters. 30 meters. 39 meters….

His fleshly body was ripped and torn, and intense pain rushed through him that was nothing like the last time he had temporarily absorbed the second Nirvana Fruit. This time, his fleshly body was not in the Immortal Realm, but rather, in the Ancient Realm!

His Ancient Realm fleshly body rumbled as it grew. Of his nine Soul Lamps, two had previously been lit. Now, the third and fourth began to burn, and a tiny spark appeared in the fifth.

His fleshly body power was increasing explosively!

His heart began to pound loudly, and then, thunder began to boom around him, as if it were cheering him on!

A power more terrifying than his Ancient Realm fleshly body began to flourish within him.

Soon, he was 60 meters tall, and he looked like a giant, his head raised, surging energy giving rise to madly whipping winds.

ROOOOOAAAARRRRRRRRRRRR!

He trembled as a tempest raged inside of him, tearing him apart. It was almost as if his qi passageways were going to be completely destroyed.

The Nirvana Fruit was like a key that unlocked terrifying power within his blood. Once again, shocking fluctuations began to flow through his veins!

Meng Hao could clearly sense that his 123 Immortal meridians were now ripping apart and then forming back together into a single Immortal meridian!

Although it was only one Immortal meridian, it formed something like a painting, a painting which showed the outline of a perfect circle!

His cultivation base rose up rapidly, and his every breath seemed to cause peals of thunder to echo out as he sucked in all of the energy of Heaven and Earth that existed in the area.

Power like this was something that far exceeded the Immortal Emperor Realm.

The mountain shook, and the lands quaked. All of the living things in the Ninth Nation could suddenly sense the shocking and domineering power that now existed on Mount Whiteseal.

The people who could sense it most clearly were the disciples of the various sects in the Ninth Nation, especially Jian Daozi. His face fell as he and all the other cultivators of the Ninth Nation looked off into the distance with expressions of shock.

As of this moment, Meng Hao was surrounded by the color azure.

Azure represented the Allheaven! The Allheaven represented the infinite!

Radiant azure light radiated off of Meng Hao as he threw his head back and roared. The sky shook, and massive winds blew.

This time, Meng Hao was able to endure for twenty breaths of time before his body trembled, and he coughed up a mouthful of blood. He staggered backward as the Nirvana Fruit emerged and fell down into his hand.

Although he now looked quite disheveled, his eyes gleamed with obsession and excitement.

“Gaining enlightenment of the Essences really will help me absorb the second Nirvana Fruit!

“I now understand 900 Essences, which lets me stay in that terrifying state for twenty breaths of time, which is much longer than before. According to my calculations, if I can gain enlightenment of 3,000 Essences, then I should be able to… permanently remain in the Allheaven Immortal Realm!” This hope caused him to throw his head back and laugh loudly.

“Besides, the first time I tried to absorb my second Nirvana Fruit, it wasted much of the energy in my body, so much so that I couldn’t even stand up. But now… it only took thirty percent of my energy!”

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# Chapter 1109: The Echelon War Truly Begins!

As the Nirvana Fruit sank down, the shield surrounding Mount Whiteseal faded away, but the light shining off of Meng Hao grew stronger. He took a deep breath and then stepped off of the mountain and into the air.

The wind battered him, and although his hair whipped about, not a bit of his aura could be blown away. It was as if the energy belonging to Meng Hao couldn’t be touched at all by the wind, but rather, influenced the entire world around him.

“I’ve already gained complete enlightenment of three World Seals. If I want to completely absorb the Nirvana Fruit… I’ll need more sealing marks!” Meng Hao’s energy rocketed up, and he overflowed with the desire to fight. His eyes flashed like lightning as he shot off into the distance.

As he left the Ninth Nation, his goal was to slaughter his way into other nations… to defeat their Echelon cultivators and steal their sealing marks!

He would take advantage of this opportunity in the Windswept Realm to seize… his greatest available good fortune, which was to become an…

Allheaven Immortal!

He would become number one in the Echelon!

BOOM!

He turned into a streak of bright light that sped through the sky for less time than it takes half an incense stick to burn. Then, he suddenly stopped and looked down toward the ground.

He was still in the Ninth Nation, and far below, he had just noticed a vein of Immortal jade deep under the ground. The human cultivator from the Mountain and Sea Realm was still there, and although he couldn’t see Meng Hao, Meng Hao could see him.

The man appeared to be mired in madness, completely lost. When Meng Hao saw the Immortal jade, a feeling of desire suddenly rose up in his heart, but he immediately quashed it.

“I love money, but I’m my own master. I’ll never let material things control me!” he said coolly. As he crushed the invisible fetters, a shattering sound seemed to echo about in his mind. He turned away and ignored everything down below as he sped off into the distance.

In the final seven days in which Meng Hao had gained enlightenment of the World Seal, the Echelon cultivators in other parts of the Windswept Realm were all thrown into a state of chaos by the shocking events which occurred.

The First Nation’s Echelon cultivator attacked the Second Nation, completely defeating the Echelon cultivator there. Only by sacrificing one of his lives was he able to flee. Of course, the Second Nation’s World Seal was then completely undefended, and was taken away by the First Nation’s Echelon cultivator, who completely leveled the entire National Aura Mountain to get to it.

After that, the Echelon cultivators from the Fifth and Sixth Nations fought each other. The shocking battle shook Heaven and Earth, and resulted in both sides sustaining heavy injuries. In a critical moment, the First Nation’s Echelon cultivator appeared. He ignored the Third Nation’s mountain, passing directly through to the two fighting Echelon cultivators, whom he took on himself.

That battle was shocking to the extreme, and in the end, the entire Fifth Nation was destroyed. Their National Aura Mountain toppled, and in the end, both Echelon cultivators from the Fifth and Sixth Nations were defeated, and the Fifth Nation’s World Seal was taken.

No one knew whether or not the Fifth Nation's Echelon cultivator was killed, but in either case, nobody could find him after the battle. The Sixth Nation's Echelon cultivator returned to his National Aura Mountain, severely injured.

After these things happened, the First Nation's Echelon cultivator seemed to be invincible, capable of sweeping over all of Heaven and Earth, leaving everyone astonished.

Of the Windswept Realm's nine World Seals, the Echelon cultivator from the First Mountain and Meng Hao each had three. The others remained in the Third, Sixth and Seventh Nations respectively.

The war had spread out from the central region to the Echelon members themselves. It was about that time that Meng Hao reached the Eighth Nation.

He didn't pause for even a moment, speeding through the air like a meteor, passing over the Eighth Nation as he headed toward the Seventh Nation. His aura surged mightily, growing ever-stronger.

Before long, he reached the Seventh Nation, and when he entered it, intense pressure roiled out from its National Aura Mountain.

The source was none other than the Echelon cultivator of the Seventh Nation, Yuwen Jian, the young man with the incredibly murderous aura. He currently stood on the mountain peak, hand curled around the haft of a long spear, looking up into the sky with a gleam of anticipation in his eyes. 1

"It's not my custom to sit around waiting for people to come fight me," he said coolly. He took a step forward, abandoning the defenses of the National Aura Mountain as he flew directly in Meng Hao's direction.

The entire Seventh Nation trembled as Meng Hao and Yuwen Jian sped toward each other through the sky!

When Meng Hao caught sight of Yuwen Jian, he didn't slow down in the least bit. Instead, he sped up and prepared to attack.

When Yuwen Jian saw Meng Hao, he let out a cold snort. His murderous aura exploded to the sky, and just like Meng Hao, he didn’t hold back, but instead, pushed himself faster.

In the blink of an eye, the two of them collided in midair above the Seventh Nation.

A huge boom rang out, and everything shook. A massive fissure ripped open in the sky between them, and a huge shockwave exploded out.

“Meng Hao!” cried Yuwen Jian, flying backward. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, after which he threw his head back and laughed. His entire person exploded with the desire to do battle. He hefted his long spear, which thrummed as countless slain souls suddenly appeared, looking incredibly ferocious.

“Listen up, fool, I’m Yuwen Jian, Echelon cultivator from the Seventh Mountain! Meng Hao, do you dare to make a bet with me? If you win, I won’t just hand over the Seventh Nation’s World Seal, but I’ll trade it with you! The prerequisite is that you qualify to fight me! If you lose, then you have to give one of your three World Seals to me!” Yuwen Jian’s voice echoed about, and he took a step forward, a domineering air swirling around him continuously.

Meng Hao also began to stride forward, eyes glittering. From their initial contact moments ago, Meng Hao could instantly tell that Yuwen Jian’s fleshly body was at roughly the same level as his own.

“A body cultivator!” he thought, his eyes gleaming brightly. He had an Ancient Realm fleshly body, yet didn’t come close to being an authentic body cultivator. In fact, the only true body cultivator he had ever met was the burly Demonic cultivator. However, that man was an amateur, and couldn’t be considered truly powerful in terms of body cultivation.

But now… Meng Hao could sense that Yuwen Jian was a true body cultivator!

Looking him over, he could see a faintly red glow coming off of Yuwen Jian. “He must have bathed in the blood of a God!” he thought.

“Well, do you dare?” asked Yuwen Jian, his voice booming. He swept his spear out in front of him, causing a massive rumbling sound to ring out. The air vibrated, and even seemed to be on the verge of shattering, as a massive energy surged off of Yuwen Jian,

He stood there like a celestial warrior, bursting with the mad desire to fight.

“I could fart better proposals than that bet of yours,” Meng Hao said coolly. “But as for your challenge to a duel… how could I not accept!?” He clenched his right hand into a fist and then unleashed a punch.

His fist and Yuwen Jian’s spear almost instantly slammed into each other, and an ear-splitting boom rang out. The flexible spear absorbed the backlash and was deflected away, and Yuwen Jian fell back again. Blood poured out of his mouth, and when he looked up, his expression was even more maddened than before. He tossed the spear aside, licked the blood off of his lips, and stared at Meng Hao with bloodshot eyes.

“That runt Han Qinglei wasn’t a match for you, and you also defeated the sissypants Lin Cong. You’re strong, Meng Hao. But… I’m even stronger!

“Did you really think that Lin Cong was actually the second most powerful after the Echelon cultivator from the First Mountain, Dao-Heaven?” 2

“That list was made thirty years ago, and besides, being in the Echelon requires finding your own correct path. The difference in power between us members was once vast. Back then, I might not have been a match for Lin Cong. But now… I could defeat him easily!

“Even Dao-Heaven’s title of number one most powerful Echelon cultivator… is just that, a title! He isn’t necessarily the most powerful!” Yuwen Jian laughed, and his desire to do battle surged. He then charged toward Meng Hao in a blur, unleashing a vicious palm strike.

As the palm ripped through the air, sonic booms echoed out. The air around Meng Hao distorted, as if power from all directions were being sucked in by Yuwen Jian's palm strike.

Meng Hao didn't flinch back. He strode forward, unleashing the Seven God Steps. However, in that moment, Yuwen Jian smiled ferociously, threw his head back and roared.

"Sealing Magic!" he cried, causing the sky to tremble. The power of a sealing mark descended not toward Meng Hao, but the area around him.

It transformed into a cage, with Meng Hao and Yuwen Jian being locked inside. However, because of the cage, Meng Hao was unable to utilize the Seven God Steps to borrow energy from the surroundings.

"I was ready for that Daoist magic!" laughed Yuwen Jian, advancing forward again.

He roared, and his body suddenly began to grow larger. In the blink of an eye, he was fully twice as large as before, and from the look of it, half of the power of his fleshly body was now converged in his right arm. He was clearly vastly different than moments ago, and as he swung his right arm, shocking power erupted.

His qi and blood rumbled, and anyone who was sensitive to auras, even if they were some distance away, would be able to sense the towering bloody glow that rose off of him. It was like a bright lamp in the middle of the night!

"DIE!" he roared as his fist rocketed out with power seemingly capable of shaking Heaven and Earth!

Meng Hao's face was calm. Freeing himself from the cage wouldn't be difficult. However, now that he had encountered a true body cultivator like Yuwen Jian, his desire to fight boiled hotter than ever.

As Yuwen Jian closed in, Meng Hao clenched his hand into a fist and leaped forward. Instantly, an aura was unleashed that seemed capable of destroying the Heavens, and exterminating all life.

That power of extermination converged in Meng Hao’s fist, creating a true… power of Life-Extermination!

The Life-Extermination Fist!

The air around them shattered as two streaks of light could be seen speeding through the air toward each other. Then, Meng Hao’s punch collided with the power of Yuwen Jian’s fleshly body, and a huge boom echoed out.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

Heaven was rent and the Earth collapsed. Everything quaked violently. Vibrations ran through Meng Hao as he fell back several dozen paces. The shocking power from body cultivator Yuwen Jian left him shaken and visibly moved. And yet, his desire to fight grew stronger.

Blood sprayed out of Yuwen Jian’s mouth as he staggered backward several hundred meters. When he looked up, an invincible will to fight could be seen in his eyes. He threw his head back and laughed uproariously.

“Exhilarating! Alright Meng Hao, let’s see if you can handle another punch. If you survive, then I’ll happily loan you my World Seal to contemplate!”

1. Yuwen Jian’s name in Chinese is yǔwén jiān. Yuwen is an uncommon two-character surname. Jian means “strong” or “unyielding

2. Unfortunately, this is a point where because of the nature of Chinese, a minor spoiler is necessitated. Essentially, “Dao-Heaven” is a Daoist name, not this guy’s actual name. However, in Chinese, you wouldn’t necessarily know that. The two characters are , which are “Dao” and “Heaven” respectively. However, “Dao” could also be a surname, so at first sight you wouldn’t know it was a Daoist name

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# Chapter 1110: What Are You Doing!?

As Yuwen Jian’s laughter rang out in the air, he suddenly took a deep breath, and then a sound like that of a windstorm exploded up around him.

The air in the area collapsed, as if his single breath was sucking in all of the energy of Heaven and Earth around him to merge into his body.

The result was that his body grew rapidly until he was over 18 meters tall!

“Six Times Nine God Body, First Transformation!” Yuwen Jian roared as his body then explosively grew from 18 meters to a shocking 27 meters tall. He looked like a giant, hovering there in midair, exuding shocking pressure. 1

He lifted his right hand up and clenched it into a fist, which he held out toward Meng Hao. It was a simple motion, but the cracking sounds which rang out as a result caused the air to shatter. He let out another roar, and he looked like a mountain as he then charged toward Meng Hao.

He was enormous, but he moved with unbelievable speed. In the blink of an eye he was in front of Meng Hao, his enormous fist punching out with terrifying, exterminating power.

Meng Hao’s eyes glowed with a strange light. His blood surged through his veins, and his desire to fight was strong as Yuwen Jian’s fist closed in. He took a deep breath, and although his energy didn’t surge in the same way Yuwen Jian’s had, but his aura still shot up madly with that single breath.

A madness rose up, a madness like that of Bedevilment. It was a determination like nothing else, something that disregarded everything, even the shattering of all bones, in the pursuit of cutting out a swath of blood.

That entire will was focused into a single punch that rumbled through the air. This was Meng Hao's second body cultivator fist strike.

The Self-Immolation Fist! Also known as… the Bedevilment Fist!

A huge boom filled the air as Meng Hao and Yuwen Jian slammed into each other. The lands trembled, mountains collapsed, and the sky flashed. Meng Hao let out a muffled grunt and staggered backward about twenty paces. When he looked up, he saw Yuwen Jian flying through the air like a kite with its string cut, blood spraying from his mouth. Meng Hao's single punch had sent him spinning, and it looked like his body was on the verge of being shredded to pieces.

"Second transformation!

"Third transformation!

"Fourth transformation!" Yuwen Jian's voice boomed out as he fell back, and his body continued to grow larger until he was 108 meters tall. Now he really was a giant, with explosive energy. Roaring, he finally came to a stop, and then braced himself and prepared to fight back against Meng Hao's Bedevilment Fist. As he strode forward, he said, "Fifth transformation!"

Another roar could be heard as he grew even taller. By the time Meng Hao reached him, he was 135 meters tall. From a distance, Meng Hao looked completely insignificant.

However, that seemingly insignificant frame contained a power that caused even Yuwen Jian's fleshly body to tremble.

Meng Hao's eyes were as cold as ice. Yuwen Jian had said his punch from moments ago would be his last one, but here he was attacking again. Meng

Hao was losing patience. Suddenly, his fist opened up into a palm. Such a motion should have caused a drop in his momentum, but instead, shocking ripples spread out.

It was as if his palm had fused with world to become the will of Heaven!

As of this moment, outside of the sealed cage area, a massive pressure seemed to be weighing down, an awakening aura that pierced through the seal and settled onto Meng Hao.

His open palm then slowly clenched back into a fist, causing the aura to explode out like the will of Heaven, unleashing an intense, indescribable killing intent!

“God Slaying!” Meng Hao said coolly.

However, in the moment that he spoke, the attacking Yuwen Jian suddenly shivered as he felt a sensation of unprecedented deadly crisis well up inside of him. It was indescribably intense, and he had the premonition that if he went through with his attack, he would end up dead!!

“Dammit! How can he be so strong!? He must have been holding back his strength when he was fighting with Lin Cong!” Yuwen Jian’s face fell, and his surging energy suddenly faded away. He instantly backed up, shrinking down to his normal size. Then, his face extremely serious, he angrily said, “Brother Meng Hao, what are you doing! Well? What do you think you’re doing!?!? Didn’t we have an agreement? We were just comparing fighting tips, right? I can’t believe you’re using lethal attacks!?!?

“As brothers, this really pains me! We might have just met each other, but we became friends at first sight! There’s no need try to kill each other! You qualify to exchange World Seals with me! Hahaha! Brother, I already said that last fist strike was my last one, and I always keep my word.” Yuwen Jian didn’t seem to feel the least bit uncomfortable or embarrassed to switch from being arrogant and condescending to calling Meng Hao brother. His expression was one of complete sincerity, just as a body cultivator should be; he exuded an air of complete honesty and forthrightness.

“About trading for the World Seal, Brother Meng Hao, why don’t we go to the Seventh Nation’s National Aura Mountain together? Trading for the World Seal means that we won’t have to damage our relationship. Plus, you can gain enlightenment of further essences. What possible downside could there be?”

A strange expression appeared on Meng Hao’s face, and he cleared his throat as he relaxed his fist.

“That would be for the best.”

“Please, follow me!” Yuwen Jian gave an inward sigh of relief, then laughed heartily as he led the way. He and Meng Hao transformed into two beams of bright light that shot toward the Seventh Nation’s National Aura Mountain. Before long, they arrived, and since Meng Hao had been invited by Yuwen Jian, the National Aura Mountain’s defenses did not target him.

Once they arrived at the statue, Yuwen Jian made a grasping motion, causing the flame of the World Seal to float over and hover atop his palm.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he extended his hand in a similar fashion, causing a World Seal flame to appear.

The two of them stared at each other warily for a moment before waving hands and exchanging the two flames.

Yuwen Jian smiled, then nodded and sat down cross-legged. He didn’t immediately begin to contemplate enlightenment, but rather, looked at Meng Hao and waited for him to begin. After all, once the process started, there was no way to suddenly stop it. If one person started without the other, neither would feel comfortable about the situation.

Furthermore, Yuwen Jian wasn’t willing to just hand over the Seventh Nation’s World Seal permanently.

After a moment of thought, Meng Hao waved his left hand, causing blackpod imps to spread out around the area and act as Dharma Protectors. Then he sat down and looked at the flame in his hand.

Yuwen Jian took a deep breath, causing bright lights to begin to swirl around him, which transformed into a protective shield. They exchanged a final glance, and without saying anything else, simultaneously sank into contemplation.

Immediately, tremors ran through their bodies. Remaining ever vigilant against each other, both began to focus on Essences and natural law.

Time passed by. Three days later, they had both reached a critical juncture in their contemplation. Although Yuwen Jian had not previously received a blessing of qi flow from the Windswept Realm like Meng Hao had, this was his home turf, and therefore, his process of enlightenment went quickly.

Conversely, Meng Hao was not on his native Mount Whiteseal, but instead on the Seventh Nation's National Aura Mountain. That should have made his speed of enlightenment much slower, but he had the benefit of the qi flow of the Windswept Realm. Therefore, although his speed was slightly slower, it was a speed that he could accept, putting him just slightly ahead of Yuwen Jian.

However, on the fourth day, just when Meng Hao was on the verge of completion, the pressure in the Seventh Nation increased dramatically, and rumbling sounds filled the air.

Yuwen Jian's eyes snapped open, and a grim look appeared on his face.

"Someone's coming!" he growled. Being in the midst of contemplating enlightenment, however, there was very little he could do. He looked over at Meng Hao, who had also opened his eyes, and was frowning as he looked off into the distance.

Not too much time passed before three beams of light appeared, speeding through the air. In the lead position was a young man with half-black, half-white hair. He wasn't just handsome, he was beautiful, and had a glittering Echelon mark on his forehead.

He was followed by two other cultivators, a man and a woman. Both appeared to be young, but they emanated terrifying cultivation base auras.

They were in the Ancient Realm, with five extinguished Soul Lamps each. Furthermore, the feeling they gave off was not that of ordinary Ancient Realm cultivation bases. They seemed more powerful, indicating that these were Chosen.

“Dao-Heaven’s number one follower, the eleventh Echelon cultivator, Hai Qingdong!!” 2 Yuwen Jian’s face flickered, and his eyes went wide.

“Follower? Hai Qingdong?” Meng Hao asked.

“Hai Qingdong used to be like me, an Echelon cultivator from the Seventh Mountain. However, after he was defeated by Dao-Heaven, he inexplicably joined his entourage. As an Echelon cultivator, it’s a complete disgrace to become the follower of some other person!” Yuwen Jian gritted his teeth and stared at the three incoming cultivators. “Dammit, shouldn’t Dao-Heaven’s goal be the Third and Sixth Nations? I can’t believe he’s ignoring them and focusing here!” Yuwen Jian’s face flickered, and he cursed inwardly. His contemplation of enlightenment was still incomplete, making it impossible for him to fight.

“Do you have a grudge with Hai Qingdong?” Meng Hao asked suddenly.

Yuwen Jian’s face darkened further, and he nodded. “I killed him once, years ago.”

Considering that they were both Echelon cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea, there was little wonder that they had a hard time maintaining a good relationship, and had ended up fighting to the death.

Meng Hao sat there quietly for a moment while Yuwen Jian ground his teeth. Although Yuwen Jian couldn’t attack personally, he could summon help. He smacked his hand down onto the ground, and rumbling sounds echoed out through the Seventh Nation. Shockingly, numerous holes suddenly appeared all over his body, which then exploded, revealing a group of figures.

They were puppets, dozens of them, with powerful cultivation bases. Meng Hao’s eyes widened slightly, but given that Yuwen Jian was also in the

Echelon, it was only natural that he would have some tricks that he wouldn’t reveal without good cause.

Almost as soon as the puppets appeared, Hai Qingdong began to descend from above, his hair floating around him, his body radiating shocking energy.

“So, we meet again, Yuwen Jian!” Hatred gleamed in Hai Qingdong’s eyes. His voice was soft and effeminate as he floated over. His gaze then shifted to Meng Hao.

“Meng Hao? I never imagined I would find you here! Oh well, it doesn’t matter. I guess today I’ll get to take four World Seals for Elder Brother Dao-Heaven!”

Yuwen Jian’s eyes went wide, and he started cursing loudly: “Elder Brother Dao-Heaven!? What bullshit! You’re nothing more than Dao-Heaven’s lackey, you fool! How shameless do you have to be to join someone else’s entourage, huh Hai Qingdong?”

1. Yuwen Jian’s “God Body” increases his height by multiples of “zhang” with each transformation. It starts with 6 “zhang” or 18 meters, and then increases by multiples of 9 after that

2. Hai Qingdong’s name in Chinese is hǎi qīng dōng. Hai means “sea” but can also be a surname. Qing is a color, usually green, blue, cyan, or azure, but sometimes black. Dong means “east”

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# Chapter 1111: Fatality!

“Shut the hell up!” roared Hai Dongqing, looking extremely irritated. As an Echelon cultivator, the fact that he had ended up becoming Dao-Heaven’s follower was actually a very painful matter to him. Few people would ever dare to bring up the matter in his presence, not unless there was a blood feud between them. Even other Echelon cultivators wouldn’t provoke him in such a way.

Only Yuwen Jian dared to do so. Both of them started out in the Seventh Mountain and Sea, and had numerous conflicts going back throughout the years. They had long since reached the point where neither could tolerate the other being alive. The venomous words uttered just now by Yuwen Jian caused Hai Dongqing to give a cold harrumph and then step forward. The wave of his hand instantly caused an illusory sword to shoot forward.

It was an azure-colored sword that emanating blinding sword light. As soon as it appeared, it split apart into 100,000 separate swords, which soared through the air toward Yuwen Jian on the National Aura Mountain.

“Why the hell should I shut up, fool?” Yuwen Jian cursed. “You’re Dao-Heaven’s lackey! What, you’re afraid of people saying it out loud? I won’t shut up, and furthermore, I’ll say it again. You’re a lackey, a dog! Come on, dog, try to bite me!” He stuck his chin up into the air as if to say, what are you gonna do about it?

Rumbling filled the air as the 100,000 swords slashed toward the mountain, slamming into the protective shield and causing it to distort. At the same time, the two cultivators off to the side laughed coldly, waving their hands to cause two streams of qi to swirl out, one black and one white. They merged together in midair to form a gigantic spike, which stabbed down toward the mountain.

Booms rang out as the shield twisted. However, Yuwen Jian's curses continued to echo through the air.

"Come on, bite me, fool!" he raged. "Motherfudging Hai Dongqing, you bitch slut! If you have the skill, come and bite me! If you dare to come at me, then I'll screw you!"

Meng Hao remained off to the side, looking on with a strange expression. He suddenly realized that during their fight, Yuwen Jian had actually spoken to him quite respectfully. They hadn't been fighting to the death, but had they been, Meng Hao had the feeling that the harshness of Yuwen Jian's cursing could only be matched by the parrot.

Outside the shield, Hai Dongqing looked more furious than ever. Staring coldly at Yuwen Jian, he waved his hand, causing the number of illusory swords spinning around him to increase to 500,000, radiating brilliant light as they slammed into the shield.

The shield was weakening, and obviously these three cultivators were fully prepared to fight, even in the battles near the central temple.

"Slut! Charlatan!" roared Yuwen Jian. "You don't have any balls at all, you fruitcake! Why don't you use the same skills you use when you service Dao-Heaven! Come on!

"Hai Dongqing, considering we're both from the Seventh Mountain, you can tell me the truth, right? Between you and Dao-Heaven, who gives it and who takes it? I'm really curious!" As Yuwen Jian let off a constant stream of curses, he took moments here and there to lower his voice and speak to Meng Hao.

"Whenever I see this slut I can't help but curse him. Sorry for getting you involved in this, brother. If your enlightenment comes quickly, then get out of here before you get killed. Just forget about me. After all, if you stick around and I get killed, then your death won't come too long after.

"But… we might stand a better chance if we stand together. AND we'll probably die if we split up!

“Plus, if you leave, then you won’t be able to take this World Seal with you. Without someone to distract them, you’d never get away.

“Besides, since you have the Seventh Nation’s World Seal, if you leave with it, they’ll definitely chase you down.”

“Anything else you want to say?” Meng Hao said coldly.

Yuwen Jian cleared his throat. He turned to let out another string of curses at Hai Dongqing, then turned back and smiled wryly at Meng Hao.

“Of course there’s more, but there’s not enough time to explain it clearly. Anyway, go ahead and leave, brother! I’ll hold them off for as long as I can!”

Even as he spoke, a huge crack opened up in the shield. Tearing sounds could be heard as the rip expanded, causing the entire shield to ripple. Clearly, it would only be able to hold out for a little bit longer. Hai Dongqing’s bone-deep hatred for Yuwen Jian caused him to attack with increased fervor.

The male and female cultivator had profound cultivation bases. Although they weren’t in the Echelon, and the feeling they gave off couldn’t compare exactly, it was similar. They made another attack, causing two huge spikes to stab down toward the shield.

Murderous gleams could be seen in their eyes. They weren’t here to interfere with the matter between Yuwen Jian and Hai Dongqing. They were here for Meng Hao, and would surely receive an incredible reward if they killed him.

The man and the woman were both staring at him with clear killing intent, and even a gleam of avarice. They obviously wanted to take advantage of his inability to attack… to cut him down.

It was at this point that Meng Hao suddenly rose to his feet. He clenched his right hand into a fist, causing the Seventh Nation’s World Seal to fuse into his hand.

Next, he performed an incantation gesture, then waved his finger toward the shield. Immediately, numerous mountain ranges appeared outside, which smashed down toward Hai Dongqing and the other two cultivators.

“Finished with your enlightenment?” Yuwen Jian asked, eyes glittering brightly.

Meng Hao snorted coldly. Ignoring Yuwen Jian completely, he shot up into the air toward the shield. As he appeared outside, he waved his hand, summoning the Paragon Bridge.

As the Paragon Bridge descended, Hai Dongqing’s face flickered. He quickly performed an incantation gesture, causing a sword to appear that radiated an ancient aura.

The sword was broken, with only a finger-length segment of the tip remaining. However, it radiated a frigid aura that caused a huge wind to whip up as soon as it appeared. At the same time, the aura of a Paragon spread out.

This was Hai Dongqing’s Paragon magic. With a roar, he shoved both hands out in front of him, causing the broken sword tip to fly toward the Paragon Bridge.

As soon as these two grand Paragon magics appeared, Meng Hao extended his right hand, within which appeared the Lightning Cauldron. His eyes glittered, and electricity danced around him. Suddenly, he switched places with the female cultivator.

In the blink of an eye, and before anyone could react, Meng Hao performed an incantation gesture with his left hand and then waved his hand toward the male cultivator.

The Essence of Divine Flame erupted out explosively, causing the man’s face to fall. He tried to retreat, but before he could get very far, Meng Hao transformed into a golden roc, attacking in unison with the flames to slash violently at the man’s chest.

Flames engulfed the man, and he screamed miserably. At the same time, brilliant light flickered around him, and he performing an incantation gesture, causing a suit of armor to cover him. Although it provided some bit of protection, the Divine Flame still bored in, inflicting intense pain. He gritted his teeth, forcing his mind into clarity, then began to fall back. However, how could Meng Hao possibly let him flee? The golden roc flickered as he returned to human form, then clenched his right hand into a fist and unleashed the Bedevilment Fist.

A boom rang out as he struck the man's chest. The armor exploded, and blood sprayed out. A look of shock covered the man's ashen face; he quickly crushed a pearl between his teeth, and as Meng Hao's second punch closed in, his body turned illusory, and the fist struck nothing but air.

The man fell back anxiously, screaming,

"Save me!"

That pearl was a life-saving magical item, something he hadn't used for a very long time, and normally kept concealed inside of his tongue. However, it only took a few moments of battle with Meng Hao before he was forced to unleash its power.

Everything that was happening takes some time to describe, but in truth, from the time Meng Hao unleashed the Paragon Bridge to the moment he attacked the man, only enough time passed for a spark to fly off of a piece of flint. It was so quick that no one had any time to react.

Hai Dongqing unleashed his Paragon magic a bit too slowly, making it difficult to come to the man's aid. As for the woman, she was now quite some distance away. She was about to use a minor teleportation, but apparently Meng Hao had predicted that would happen. He performed an incantation gesture with his right hand and then waved his finger at the woman.

The Eighth Demon Sealing Hex transformed into invisible ripples that caused a tremor to run through the woman; she was now incapable of teleporting, or of doing anything else to interfere.

Killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes. Without speaking a word, he shot toward the man like lightning. With the wave of his hand, 123 Immortal meridians exploded with power, and 33 Heavens descended. They transformed into the paw of a beast, which slashed at the retreating cultivator.

A boom could be heard, and the man let out a miserable shriek. His chest burst into a cloud of blood and gore, and a look of complete and utter panic filled his face, as if he could sense death closing in on him. How could he ever have imagined that he would collapse like a brittle branch under the attacks of his opponent, without even the chance to fight back?

He couldn’t help but think back to the fight between Meng Hao and Lin Cong, and now he knew how Lin Cong felt. He was denied any chance to do anything, and only continued to descend into further danger.

Hai Dongqing was in a rage. His body flashed as he performing an incantation gesture, causing 1,000,000 streams of sword qi to burst out, slashing toward Meng Hao to block his path to the male cultivator.

The woman’s face was filled with a murderous look, and she looked incredibly anxious. She and the man were beloved partners, so at the moment, her heart was tearing apart. She even burned her life force to extricate herself from the Eighth Hex. Blood sprayed from her mouth as she charged toward Meng Hao.

“Stay your hand!” she screamed shrilly.

The man, who had just been on the receiving end of a series of successful attacks on the part of Meng Hao, gritted his teeth and fell back again. As long as he could hold off long enough for his partner to arrive, he would be saved. Only a few breaths of time would be sufficient.

However, it was in this moment that Meng Hao suddenly burst into action. He took a few steps, and his energy surged dramatically. The air around him distorted, causing Hai Dongqing and the female cultivator’s minds to reel.

Heavy injuries were instantly inflicted upon the male cultivator. He let out a bloodcurdling scream as Meng Hao closed in and unleashed another fist strike onto his chest.

The man’s body instantly exploded into pieces. However, he wasn’t dead yet. His Immortal soul shot out intact, and quickly made to flee. However, Meng Hao let out a harrumph.

The sound contained the power of his Dao Divinity Scripture, an intense divine sense attack that caused the man’s Immortal soul to tremble. In the same moment, Meng Hao’s right hand made a grasping motion, and the bone-tip spear appeared, which he then hurled toward the Immortal soul. Before even waiting to see the result, Meng Hao turned and let out a punch toward the shrieking female cultivator.

Booms echoed out as blow landed. Blood sprayed out of the woman’s mouth, and she was sent tumbling backward. The shockwave from the impact spread out and slammed into the incoming beams of sword qi from Hai Dongqing, causing them to stall in midair.

It was in that moment that the bone-tip spear stabbed into the forehead of the Immortal soul. It trembled, and a look of disbelief appeared on its face as the soul shattered into pieces, completely destroyed!

“NO!!” screamed the woman, trembling, her eyes filling with a look of disbelief and madness.

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# Chapter 1112: Goodwill!

The actual time it took all of these things to happen was only ten breaths!

Ten breaths of time earlier, Meng Hao had emerged from within the shield. Ten breaths of time later, one enemy was already dead!

That was a true fatality! Simultaneously taking on three people and killing one of them almost instantly!

It was quick and efficient, without the slightest bit of sloppiness to it. Meng Hao had anticipated every move up to the killing blow precisely and accurately. Not only did it show how ruthless Meng Hao was, and how rapidly he took control of the situation, the fact that he had used so many divine abilities in unison… left all onlookers shocked at the level of his battle prowess.

Yuwen Jian’s eyes widened, and he took a deep breath. He had known before that Meng Hao was strong, but he had never imagined that he could actually be… this strong. He asked himself if he could kill that male cultivator in only ten breaths of time, and realized that it would have been difficult. And that was without taking into account the two people trying to interfere.

However, Meng Hao had accomplished it all as smoothly as flowing water. Then, he spun around and attack the female cultivator, borrowing her power to also knock aside the incoming sword qi at the same time, even utilizing it to increase his speed.

“I can’t believe it…. He’s not retreating, he’s attacking!” When Yuwen Jian saw what was happening, his mind spun. All of a sudden, he realized that the most shocking and terrifying thing about Meng Hao wasn't his power, but rather, his fighting style and domineering air.

Virtually anyone else in his position would take advantage of the moment to flee, to get a bit of distance from the opponent before resuming the fight. Not so with Meng Hao. He took advantage of the situation to attack. He moved with such incredible speed that, within the blink of an eye, he was almost upon the female cultivator.

The fact that he made such a choice caused Yuwen Jian to inhale sharply. In the woman's moment of emotional instability, he chose to attack her to gain an advantage.

"However, that's also the most dangerous decision. If it were me, I would go for Hai Dongqing!"

"DIIIIEEEEEEEEE!" the woman howled madly as Meng Hao closed in. It almost seemed as if she had lost her mind, as if the only thing she could think about was killing Meng Hao, no matter the cost.

She roared as her body burst into flames, then she sacrificed her longevity, exchanging it for a momentary return to youthful vigor. She performed an incantation gesture, causing countless flower petals to swirl around her, which turned into a tempest, a sea of flowers that surged to overwhelm Meng Hao.

In the moment before he was inundated, he suddenly waved his hand, causing a host of black pods to fly out. Popping sounds could be heard as they transformed into tiny imps that sped toward the female cultivator, uttering soundless screams.

Clearly, they hoped to take advantage of her mental instability to possess her.

The blackpod imps bored into her body, attempting to forcibly possess her. She began to tremble, and then her face flickered. A miserable scream rang out, and her divine ability lost stability. In the end, Meng Hao didn't even avoid it, he simply walked through the tempest of flower petals.

Next, he turned into a golden roc. Golden light flashed as he closed in on the woman, then returned to human form and unleashed a fist strike.

A boom could be heard as blood sprayed from the woman’s mouth. She flew backward, expression twisted. The blackpod imps were all failing in their possession attempts, and yet upon failure, they would burst out of her and unleash divine sense attacks, causing the already flustered woman to descend further into madness.

All of this happened in the mere time it takes a spark to fly off of a piece of flint. Hai Dongqing’s face fell; he couldn’t simply allow Meng Hao to kill another person. If that happened, he himself would be in danger. Roaring, he performed an incantation gesture, causing nine illusory swords to materialize around him.

“Subdue Heaven! Nine Stifling Swords!” In unison with his roar, the nine swords began to emit a droning sound. Unexpectedly, in the very middle of the nine swords, the illusory image of an old man appeared. Although his face wasn’t clear, he emanated a shocking sword will that exploded out, causing the nine swords to shoot toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao frowned slightly. At first, the nine swords hadn’t seemed very intimidating. However, once the illusory old man appeared among them, they changed, as if they were suddenly intelligent. In fact, their sword aura redoubled.

He could probably dodge the incoming swords, but if he did, he would lose his chance to slay the female cultivator, giving her time to recover and force out the rest of the blackpod imps. If she and Hai Dongqing joined forces to attack together, it would be very troublesome.

These thoughts flashed through Meng Hao’s mind, and then a flash of determination could be seen in his eyes. Without the slightest hesitation, he ignored the incoming nine swords, transformed into a golden roc, and shot toward the woman, slashing at her with his talons.

The woman screamed miserably as her flesh was flayed, causing blood to spurt out everywhere. Suddenly, her eyes grew clear, and more blackpod imps were ejected out of her. However, doing so caused more divine sense attacks to be levied against her, making her tremble and cough up more blood.

Enduring the divine sense assault, the woman opened her mouth, causing a blood-colored beam of light to fly out. It immediately transformed into a blood parasol, which spread out to deflect the incoming attacks.

Meng Hao didn’t pause for a moment. He waved his right hand, causing a gale-force wind to spring up. A Blood Demon head appeared, roaring as it slashed into the blood parasol. Meng Hao in golden roc form then sped through the illusory Blood Demon head, clenching his right hand into a fist which he lashed out toward the woman’s forehead. It was at this point that the first of the nine swords, the fastest, pierced through the void into Meng Hao’s back. After stabbing into him, it vanished, transforming into a sword will that slashed around destructively inside him.

He gave a muffled grunt, and his right hand trembled, giving the woman an opportunity to try to dodge. Meng Hao gave a cold snort and continued to deliver the strike, missing her forehead, but connecting with her chest.

Blood sprayed out of her mouth, and her chest collapsed into a mass of gore. She sped back, borrowing the momentum of his blow to force out some more blackpod imps. Her eyes were now even clearer, and as she stared at Meng Hao, she waved her hand, causing a red mist to sweep out and cover her entire body. Behind Meng Hao, three more swords bore down.

Pop! Pop! Pop!

Three swords stabbed into him, transforming into destructive sword wills. Blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth, and then suddenly, his left eye glittered. The starstone therein then spread out explosively, causing him to transform into a planet that shot toward the red mist. A moment later, he had smashed through it, and was directly in front of the woman.

The female cultivator’s eyes went wide, and her hands flew out, causing numerous magical items to appear. Furthermore, a suit of armor suddenly covered her. However, almost as soon as the magical items appeared, they were crushed by Meng Hao’s divine abilities.

Her shields shattered and her armor collapsed into pieces. She appeared to be just on the verge of dying when, all of a sudden, a pendant which hung around her neck began to emanate a soft light.

Bright light covered her, which just barely took on the shape of a man, who then wrapped her up in his arms and flew backward.

That man was none other than the male cultivator Meng Hao had slain moments ago!

It wasn’t a clone, but rather a soul fragment, branded into the pendant, which then became a life-saving magical item. It was the last memory of the man that existed for her in the whole world. Once used up, it would vanish forever.

“NO!” Tears streamed down the woman’s face. Although she was retreating, her heart was already broken.

Rumbling sounds could be heard as the planet was blocked, incapable of killing the woman. Meng Hao appeared in his usual form, blood oozing out of the corners of his mouth. He sighed softly.

“I wasn’t looking to kill anybody, but you people started this fight. If I didn’t kill you, you would have killed me. Perhaps you two loved each other, but… why did you have to come here and provoke me?” He shook his head and advanced, forming his right hand into a fist. When he punched out, the illusory man who was protecting the woman began to vanish.

“Well, never mind. Even though we’re enemies, if I don’t kill you, you’ll try to kill me. Considering how you feel about each other, I’ll… help you out a bit.” With that, he stopped punching, and instead waved his hand to cause Divine Flame to explode out. It transformed into a sea of fire, which he sent to engulf the woman and the soul fragment.

The weakened woman instantly began to be burned up by the flames. Her body rapidly turned into ash, but her Immortal soul didn't vanish. Instead, both of their souls were wrapped up by the Divine Flame, which then began to carry them up into the Heavens.

"This Divine Flame will open the river to the Yellow Springs. The natural laws of the Windswept Realm might be incomplete, but it surely still has an underworld." He then punched upward toward the Heavens, causing the sky to tremble. The Divine Flame ripped open the sky to reveal a huge illusory river, pitch-black, within which flowed numerous sleeping souls.

The souls of the man and the woman entered the black river at the same time. As they sank down into the river, the man's soul fragment turned to look at Meng Hao. There was no longer any hatred in his eyes, but instead a complicated look that eventually turned into gratitude.

Then they vanished.

Meng Hao turned to look behind him. He lifted his hands, and the five remaining incoming swords ground to a halt. They radiated killing intent, but they did not advance any further.

Meng Hao's face was pale white, his cultivation base surging. Seeing Meng Hao block his swords caused Hai Dongqing's face to darken. Forcing down his shock, he let out an enraged shout and then shot forward.

Performing an incantation gesture, he caused 1,000,000 illusory swords to combine, creating a massive, astonishing greatsword. It did not slash or swipe, but instead… stabbed through the air toward Meng Hao.

As the massive greatsword stabbed toward Meng Hao, he lifted his left hand up, clenched it into a fist, and unleashed the God-Slaying Fist, which slammed into the tip of the sword.

BOOOOMMMMMM!

Starting at the tip, the entire sword shattered. In the blink of an eye, it collapsed into millions of swords images. Blood sprayed out of Hai

Dongqing’s mouth, and a look of surprise filled his face.

“Too strong!” he thought, heart pounding because of Meng Hao’s intense power. From the beginning of the fight to this moment, the pressure in his mind had continued to build until he was shaking. The fear that filled him that was the same type he had experienced when facing Dao-Heaven!

As for Meng Hao, after unleashing his God-Slaying Fist, he threw his head back and roared. His body began to grow, and cracking sounds could be heard as the five swords twisted and then exploded. At the same time, the other four swords which had stabbed into him were ejected out.

He was as powerful as a celestial warrior!

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# Chapter 1113: Killing Hai Dongqing Three Times!

Yuwen Jian was still sitting behind the shield on the mountain, and as he watched what was happening, he began to pant. By this point, Meng Hao had already made a deep impression on him.

Meng Hao looked up at Hai Dongqing, then coolly said: “And now, it’s your turn!”

His energy erupted, and the healing of his body by his Eternal stratum was plainly visible.

Hai Dongqing’s eyes went wide. He found Meng Hao’s strength to be terrifying, and his heart had long since filled with towering waves of shock. He had personally witnessed Meng Hao slay his two compatriots, using ruthless tactics and lightning-like attacks. The whole thing caused his heart to pound.

“This Meng Hao is too strong! I can’t handle him. Only Dao-Heaven could possibly take him out!” When he realized this, he immediately decided to retreat from the battle. The shadow of death seemed to fill his mind, covering every aspect of his thoughts. Without any further hesitation, and in almost the exact same moment that Meng Hao looked over at him, he turned and fled for his life.

“Think you can just leave?” Meng Hao said. He began to walk forward, and his energy spiked as he unleashed the Seven God Steps. One step. Two steps. Three steps.

With each step he took forward, his killing intent surged. Although he physically looked no different than before, the sky flashed with bright colors, the heavenly bodies trembled, and a huge wind kicked up. To Hai Dongqing, it almost felt like Meng Hao was growing larger with each step, until he was so huge he could hold up the Heavens!

Hai Dongqing’s face fell as he recognized the magic. He had personally been watching on a projection screen when Meng Hao used this art to defeat Lin Cong.

However, in this critical moment of the battle, Hai Dongqing had no time to flee very far. He quickly performed a double-handed incantation gesture, then pushed his hand down toward the ground. Immediately, his body began to tremble as countless streams of sword qi erupted out of his body. 1,000,000. 5,000,000. All the way to… 10,000,000!

10,000,000 streams of sword qi blotted out the sky, transforming into a tempest that raged across the land toward Meng Hao. It was at this point that Meng Hao took a fourth step, a fifth step, a sixth step… a seventh step!

A massive foot descended from up above, smashing down into Hai Dongqing’s sword qi tempest. As it passed through, countless streams of sword qi were shattered and destroyed.

In the blink of an eye, the 10,000,000 streams of sword qi, incapable of standing up to the power of the foot, were crushed. The foot stamped through the air, destroying all resistance as it slammed toward Hai Dongqing.

His eyes went wide from the sensation of deadly crisis. He performed an incantation gesture, causing his body to wither rapidly, with the exception of his hand, which turned translucent and crystalline. Then, he waved his finger toward the foot, his expression one of ferocity and madness.

“Paragon Sky, Daoist Magic Mountain!” he roared. Instantly, a mountain of swords materialized in front of him, emanating shocking ripples as it slammed directly into the descending foot.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOMMMM!

The mountain of swords trembled beneath the weight of the foot. Cracks spread out, and then the mountain shattered, exploding into countless fragments.

The backlash hit Hai Dongqing, and blood sprayed out of his mouth. He looked at the foot, eyes wide with despair. It descended, unstoppable, destructive, ripping his sword mountain apart and blotting out the sky. It was a huge shadow that descended onto him with a shocking boom.

It was impossible to stop, and he was incapable of holding it up. It was as if the energy of the will of Heaven were weighing down onto him, and he was nothing more than an ant. A bloodcurdling scream rang out, and he was stamped, crushed, his body exploding into bits of blood and gore that turned into a mist. He was completely killed.

The foot faded away, and the borrowed energy and momentum Meng Hao had also dissipated. However, he didn’t relax in the least. As soon as the energy faded, he transformed into a beam of light that shot toward the location where Hai Dongqing had exploded.

In the moment that he closed in, the mist of blood rapidly formed back together. In the blink of an eye, a power like that of time reversal could be sensed in the area, and Hai Dongqing once again appeared, a look of astonishment on his face. He immediately bit his tongue and spit out a mouthful of blood, which spread out to form a blood shield. At the same time, he fell back rapidly.

Terror filled his eyes, as well as an overflowing hatred.

“I can’t believe I just died! Damn you, Meng Hao, you forced me to waste one of my Echelon lives!!

“I refuse to accept this!” he roared. Despite his posturing, inside, he was shaking with fear, and retreated at top speed. Rumbling filled the air as he instantly fell back by 3,000 meters.

Meng Hao snorted coldly, but didn’t seem surprised. After fighting with Han Qinglei and Lin Cong, he had long since come to understand how the soul of an Echelon cultivator couldn’t be destroyed. That was the exact reason why he had remained so on guard after killing Hai Dongqing moments ago, and had even continued to advance.

“You don’t even deserve to be in the Echelon,” Meng Hao said. “I’ve never truly killed an Echelon cultivator before, and I’m curious to find out if there will be a reward for doing so in the Windswept Realm.” With that, he waved his right hand, causing the Blood Demon head to appear. As he shot through the air, wind buffeting his face, he took a deep breath, and the Blood Demon head slammed into the blood shield, first shattering it into pieces, and then absorbing it.

Meng Hao pierced over the lands like an arrow, passing through the Blood Demon head to appear directly behind the fleeing Hai Dongqing. As he closed in, his killing intent erupted out explosively.

Hai Dongqing’s face was ashen, and he let out a shriek as he performed a double-handed incantation gesture. His body twitched, and he opened his mouth. Shockingly, a beam of sword light shot out, which instantly transformed into five swords, each one a different color!

The five swords were all illusory, but their sudden appearance on the scene caused Meng Hao’s eyes widen.

Hai Dongqing began to chant:

“Liver constitutes wood. The Arrival of Spring!

“Heart constitutes fire. The Eve of Summer!

“Spleen constitutes earth. The Halfway Point!

“Lungs constitute metal. The End of Autumn!

“Kidneys constitute water. The Dead of Winter!”

A vicious expression could be seen on his face as he roared, performing a double-handed incantation gesture that caused the five sword lights to interlace and transform into a sword formation!

“Five organs and five elements, complementary and correspondent! The ebb of day and night, no beginning and no end!!

“Minor Five Elements Sword Formation!” He spread his hands wide, causing the five sword lights to spin around each other, transforming into a five elements sword formation that rumbled toward Meng Hao.

This was a Heavenly sword magic of Hai Dongqing’s that was equal in power to his Paragon magic. In fact, this was a special trump card that he had kept secret from everyone, up to this moment.

Not even Dao-Heaven knew that he had this technique hidden up his sleeve. In fact, the main reason he had kept it hidden was that he hoped to use it to free himself from Dao-Heaven one day in the future.

After all, no Echelon cultivator would ever willingly become the follower of another Echelon cultivator. Although he pretended not to care about the matter, he cared very much!

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as the Minor Five Elements Sword Formation shot through the air toward him. Then, he laughed, and instead of retreating, he pushed forward faster. As he and the five elements sword formation closed in on each other, he suddenly extended his palm out ahead of him.

“Fifth Demon Sealing Hex, Inside Outside Hex!” he said coolly. The Fifth Demon Sealing Hex could break through all sorts of restrictive spells and spell formations, and as soon as he unleashed it, a rift appeared on his palm.

Usually when such a rift appeared, it would consume and absorb. However, this time, it was the opposite. Everything was switched, and as Meng Hao pushed his hand forward, a rumbling sound could be heard. The five elements sword formation began to tremble, and was then shoved backward. It was as if some incredible, invisible power were pushing the sword formation out from the inside, causing it to expand.

Meng Hao appeared in just that moment. As the sword formation was spread out thin, he passed through a gap in the middle of it, shooting forward like lightning to appear in front of Hai Dongqing.

Hai Dongqing was astonished, and could hardly believe what was happening. Just when he seemed to be on the verge of going mad, Meng Hao's right hand snapped out and pressed down onto the top of his head.

Almost in the same moment, though, Meng Hao inexplicably shot backward, not even taking the time to perform an incantation gesture. Hai Dongqing threw his head back and laughed maniacally, and a rumbling sound could be heard coming from inside of him as he chose to self-detonate.

Rather than allow Meng Hao to kill him, he killed himself. A huge boom could be heard as he exploded, transforming into a tempest that swept out madly in all directions. Meng Hao was shoved backward by the shockwave. However, in the same spot where he had self-detonated, a mist of blood could be seen that once again transformed into Hai Dongqing.

This time, his face was ashen; without the slightest hesitation, he shot backward in retreat.

He was trembling, and the courage he had felt when he self-detonated was now gone. That was because he knew… that this was his last life. The next time he died, he would be completely destroyed in body and soul.

Echelon cultivators had two lives. When he had fought Dao-Heaven, there were special circumstances that led to Han Dongqing choosing to capitulate instead of giving up one of his lives. Were it not for that, he really would have died just now.

Trembling, he went all-out to flee, raising his right hand to slap down onto his chest. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and his body withered. At the same time, though, his head grew larger, giving him a bizarre and deformed appearance.

Blue veins even began to pop out all over his face.

“Air Aperture!” he roared. By sacrificing his body, he was able to enlarge his head. At the same time, an explosive influx of divine sense converged on his forehead, where it then spread out to form an invisible, enormous spell formation.

It was a teleportation portal, a bit of good fortune he had obtained years ago and imprinted on his soul. He was now using divine sense to activate it and use it to escape.

This spell formation was unique, and something that could only be used by an Echelon cultivator who had been killed twice. Were it not for that stipulation, he would have used it much earlier.

Ripples from the spell formation spread out in all directions as it prepared to whisk him away.

Killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes. Seeing how hard it was to actually kill Hai Dongqing gave him a much deeper understanding of what it meant to be in the Echelon. He stepped forward and transformed into a golden roc, bursting toward Hai Dongqing with incredible speed. As the ripples of teleportation spread out, he snorted coldly, extended his hand, and waved a finger toward Hai Dongqing.

“Eighth Demon Sealing Hex!”

The Eighth Hex was the Cultivation-Body Hex, and as soon as it was unleashed, Hai Dongqing’s cultivation base was sealed. With his divine sense locked down, the teleportation portal instantly lost the power that was driving it.

“NO!!” Hai Dongqing screamed in despair.

“This time, you’re really going to die, my first time… really and truly killing an Echelon cultivator!” Meng Hao’s voice echoed out behind him.

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# Chapter 1114: Thou Shalt Call Me… Dao Fang!

As Meng Hao's voice reached his ears and echoed about, Hai Qingdong felt a hand pat down onto the top of his head….

BOOM!

Hai Qingdong's eyes went wide as the skin on his head ripped and tore. In the blink of an eye, his entire body collapsed into pieces.

In that moment, all traces of Hai Qingdong existing in the world vanished. The teleportation portal winked out.

Having been killed a third time in a row by Meng Hao, he was now truly and utterly dead!

In the moment of his death, as the blood and gore drifted about, his Echelon mark began to glow softly, and then floated toward Meng Hao.

"Can't believe a word that Yuwen Jian says!" he thought. "Earlier he told me that he had killed Hai Qingdong once before. From the look of things, that was complete nonsense!" That notion had occurred to him earlier when he killed Hai Qingdong for the second time. Now, he gave a cold harrumph as he reached out and grabbed the Echelon mark.

The mark instantly fused into Meng Hao, causing an intense, stabbing pain in his forehead. Now a more complicated mark had appeared on his forehead, and if you looked closely, you couldn't tell that there were actually two symbols there. It looked complicated and ornate, as if it had undergone profound transformations.

At the same time, a tremor ran through Meng Hao, and he felt something like an indescribable power flowing out of the mark on his forehead. Simultaneously, his Demon Sealing Hexing Magic spontaneously began to flow, as the legacy of the League of Demon Sealers merged with the aura of the Echelon mark.

When that union occurred, Meng Hao’s body shook violently, and a massive roaring like the destruction of Heaven and Earth filled his mind. It reached out to his soul and caused an invisible beam to fly up into the sky.

Meng Hao looked up into the sky, and realized that he was surrounded by a pillar of light. The light, with Meng Hao in it, shot rapidly upward, breaking through all obstacles, emerging from the Windswept Realm and piercing out into the Heavens.

Without stopping, it rose higher and higher. In the blink of an eye it had pierced through everything to appear… in the Mountain and Sea Realm!

He now hovered at an indescribable height, looking down at nine mountains arranged together. A sun and a moon orbited around them, and there were also nine seas. Furthermore, he was even able to see all of the living things in the Nine Mountains and Nine Seas.

Beyond that, outside of the Nine Mountains and Nine Seas, seemingly attached to the Realm and yet below it, were three land masses.

One of them… was the Windswept Realm!

Meng Hao’s eyes widened as he looked from the three lower land masses up to the Nine Mountains and Nine Seas. He could see Planet South Heaven, and his parents, standing atop the Tower of Tang. He wanted to call out in greeting, but no sound came out.

He also saw his sister practicing cultivation in the Emperor Immortal Sect. He saw many familiar faces in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. He saw Fatty, Chen Fan, Wang Youcai… and in the Nine Seas God World, he saw Granny Nine and the others sitting cross-legged in meditation as they waited for the Windswept Realm to re-open.

Feeling mentally shaken, he looked over at the Ninth Mountain, and on the very peak, he saw an enormous eye that suddenly turned to stare at him in confusion.

He saw Ke Jiusi sitting in meditation in the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect. He looked over at Planet East Victory, and saw the clone of the Fang Clan Patriarch.

The clone originally was sitting there like a statue, but then suddenly he raised his head and peered through the void toward Meng Hao, looking slightly startled.

Meng Hao began to pant as he looked over all of the Nine Mountains and Seas. This was not his first time experiencing such a thing. He remembered something similar happening aboard the ship in the Milky Way Sea. 1

Right now, he couldn't help but think of the deep impression left upon him by the old man on that ship.

As Meng Hao hovered there silently, he couldn't hold back from turning his head to look toward the Fourth Mountain. He began to tremble when he saw… Xu Qing!

Obviously, she had no way of knowing that he could see her. He felt very close to her, and at the same time, oh so far away, which caused his heart to twinge with pain.

She sat cross-legged in a river of stars, with Dharma Protectors meditating close by. She looked exactly as she had before reincarnation, simple and cold.

"Qing'er…." he murmured.

Almost as soon as the words left his mouth, a tremor ran through Xu Qing. Her eyelashes fluttered as she opened her eyes. A look of confusion could be seen in her eyes.

Some of the old women sitting next to her immediately approached.

“Mistress, what’s wrong?”

Xu Qing didn’t respond at first. She just stared out into the void.

Finally, she said, “It was like… someone was calling out to me.” Her gaze eventually came to rest… in the direction of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

As Meng Hao gazed at the Fourth Mountain and Sea, deep inside that very mountain, a pair of eyes suddenly focused on him for a moment, then looked away.

Meng Hao could sense it, shifted his gaze, and found himself looking at a huge statue. An incredible pressure emanated out from the statue, which Meng Hao found completely shocking. It was far, far more powerful than the pressure of any other person he had ever encountered.

Suddenly, an archaic voice projected out from the statue: “Ah, so you’re on a mental journey, Meng Hao, my young friend. There is no need to worry about Xu Qing. I’ve accepted her as a disciple. Young friend… I wish you a safe and sound mental journey.”

After a moment, Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed. Then he looked deeply at Xu Qing one more time, before turning his attention back to the Nine Mountains and Seas at large. He saw Patriarch Reliance floating through the starry sky of the Eighth Mountain, humming a little tune, seemingly without a care in the world.

All of a sudden, a tremor ran through him. He had no hair on his body, but if he did, they would all be standing on end.

“Who is it! Who’s spying on me!!” he roared.

“Dammit, it feels like… like that little bastard Meng Hao! AHHHH!!

“The Patriarch has fled all the way here, and y-y-you… you just won’t give up, huh?!?!” After looking around for a moment, he stared off blankly into the void for a while, then suddenly began to laugh heartily.

“Oh,” he roared complacently, “so you’re way over there. Come on, you bastard scoundrel. Come get me if you can!”

Meng Hao snorted coldly, but then suddenly, his eyes went wide. Because of the current state he was in, he suddenly saw something on Patriarch Reliance’s back, in a seemingly ordinary corner of the State of Zhao.

There on Patriarch Reliance’s back, right in the middle of the State of Zhao was… a door!!

That door radiated soft light, and as soon as Meng Hao caught sight of it, his heart seized. There was something very familiar about that door, something like the aura of the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect.

“The legacy of Lord Li!!” Meng Hao’s eyes widened, and his heart began to pound as he realized that apparently, the legacy of Lord Li was actually on Patriarch Reliance’s back!

He had little time to consider the matter as he found himself rising higher up within the pillar of light, flying higher and higher up into the void above the Mountain and Sea Realm.

He brought the trembling of his heart under control as he looked up into the vault of the void, and suddenly, a gleam of anticipation appeared in his eyes. He realized that all of this was most likely happening because of the Echelon. Although he wasn’t sure exactly what was happening, he did know… exactly what the Mountain and Sea Realm was!

“33 Heavens, huh…? According to what I learned from the Sixth Generation Demon Sealer, breaking through the 33 Heavens is the Mountain and Sea Tribulation!” His eyes glittered as he began to speed faster and faster. 2

He wasn’t sure how much time passed, but eventually he broke through some sort of barrier and found himself looking at a path!

A path among the stars!

There were 33 Realms on that path, which seemed like 33 layers of successive seals that completely enveloped the Mountain and Sea Realm.

The beam of light took him along the path, and he pierced through one Realm after another. Eventually, he broke through the 33rd Realm, and it seemed like he was just on the verge of being able to see the truth about what was beyond. However, in that exact moment, a beam of golden light glittered in his eyes, until that was all that he could see.

Everything shattered!

A tremor ran through him, and the light around him began to collapse. The stream of his soul that was in the light began to recede, but before it did, a Heaven-rending Earth-crushing voice boomed out.

“Thou shalt call me… Dao Fang!”

Back in the Mountain and Sea Realm, in the Windswept Realm, on the National Aura Mountain of the Seventh Nation, Meng Hao trembled, let out a cry, and then coughed up a massive mouthful of blood. He staggered backward, his face pale white.

The mark on his forehead flickered rapidly, then slowly faded. His Demon Sealing Hexing Magic also faded away.

“What was that golden light?!?!

“And that voice. Dao Fang. Dao Fang…. Why does that name sound so familiar. Where did I hear it before!?” 3 He began panting, and before he could recall anything more about the name, a brilliant beam of light rose up from the central temple of the Windswept Realm.

It was fully 30,000 meters wide, and it shot up into the sky as if to tear open the Heavens. Indescribable ripples spread out, and once again, that world of mountains and statues opened up.

All eyes were fixed up above, including all of the Echelon cultivators. No matter what they were doing at the moment, everyone felt their hearts pounding as they looked overhead.

The entire battlefield surrounding the central temple went silent, and everyone looked in shock at the unprecedentedly bright pillar of light.

In the world up above there was a mountain hidden in the mists behind all of the other mountains and statues. It was the tallest mountain in that world, and all of a sudden… that mountain crumbled into pieces and then reformed into a statue.

That statue looked like a celestial warrior, shocking to the extreme. As soon as everyone saw the face of the statue, they were astonished to see… Meng Hao!

At the same time, a cold, archaic voice echoed out, seemingly emotionless. It filled the entire Windswept Realm, echoing out through the sky.

“Meng Hao, Echelon cultivator from the Ninth Nation, has killed another Echelon cultivator, a criminal act–”

Before the voice could finish speaking, more words echoed out, although this time, they didn’t seem to be completely devoid of emotion like before. Grim ripples spread out, and if you listened closely, you would be able to tell… that the voice actually seemed to be different than the first one!

“The reward… is an Ancient Treasure, Heavenly Champion Immortal Ax!”

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# Chapter 1115: Windswept Rebellion!

As soon as the voice echoed out, everything shook. Expressions of shock appeared on the faces of everyone who heard the words. It must be noted that in the Windswept Realm, the rewards given were always related to qi flow. Never before had a magical item been bestowed as a reward.

Especially not a magical item that was an Ancient treasure!!

Ancient treasures were magical items for use in the Ancient Realm. Although such objects were more common than Dao Realm treasures, they were still considered very rare. For example, as the crown Prince of the Fang Clan, Meng Hao had an Ancient treasure in the form of a jade pendant, which he could use to confirm his identity.

However, it was definitely a rare thing to encounter an Ancient treasure.

Therefore, when the words regarding a reward in the form of an Ancient treasure echoed out through the Windswept Realm, everyone who heard it was astonished. That was especially true of the Echelon cultivators, whose eyes were wide with disbelief.

After all, this entire trial by fire was focused on the Echelon, not for the purpose of them being killed, but for them to improve and develop via struggle and conflict.

Of course, it wasn’t impossible for one of them to accidentally be killed. However, the fact that Echelon cultivators had multiple lives revealed the truth of the matter.

Paragon Sea Dream did not wish for members of the Echelon to be permanently killed!

Fighting was hard to avoid, of course, and naturally, deadly situations would arise. However, the reason she gave multiple lives to the Echelon cultivators was for the express purpose of ensuring that they were not conclusively slaughtered in body and soul.

The Echelon cultivator from the First Mountain, Dao-Heaven, was aware of that, and as such, when he fought people, he didn’t go all out with deadly intent. Instead, he attempted to destroy his rivals in spirit.

He was well aware that Paragon Sea Dream didn’t approve of actually killing other Echelon cultivators. Therefore, he wouldn’t attempt to do so unless it benefited him directly, or he truly detested that person.

“The Windswept Realm seems different from the descriptions of past instances in the sect records….” Dao-Heaven murmured. He was currently in the Fourth Nation, looking up into the sky.

“So it was Dongqing who died, huh. Killed by Meng Hao…. This time, there are actually prizes for killing Echelon cultivators!

“Kill one, and be rewarded with an Ancient treasure. I wonder what the reward would be for killing two or three, or even… all of them? A Dao treasure?!” When that final sentence came out of his mouth, he began to pant, and his eyes filled with the glow of greed. Killing intent swirling around him, he threw his head back and laughed uproariously.

“Things are different this time and… I love it!” A murderous aura erupted out of him that had apparently been kept restrained for a very long time. Now that he could unleash it, he turned and headed off into the distance, bursting with killing intent.

Other Echelon cultivators watched the scene play out with flickering expressions. Ambition rose up in their hearts, but at the same time, sensations of deadly crisis arose as well. All of them began to pant.

The only exception was the middle-aged man who sat on the National Aura Mountain in the Third Nation. He smiled slightly.

“The time has come for things to begin. Unexpectedly, Meng Hao gained a bit of an advantage. However, he won’t be able to escape the coming calamity.”

As the other members of the Echelon, and the rest of the cultivators from the Mountain and Sea Realm, stood there in shock, something happened outside in the Mountain and Sea Realm. In the Ruins of Immortality was an Immortal’s cave, where a white-robed woman sat cross-legged in meditation. Next to her was Li Ling’er, who also meditated cross-legged.

All of a sudden, the white-robed woman opened her eyes, and they glowed with a murderous light.

“Imperial Lord of the Windswept Realm, how dare you!!”

As soon as the words left her mouth, her expression flickered.

In the Nine Seas God Worlds in the various Nine Seas, massive rumbling sounds like explosions could be heard. It sounded like some massive structure was collapsing, and the sound sent massive waves surging out across the Seas.

The sounds echoing out through the God Worlds provoked instant reactions from all of the Dao Realm experts, who were currently waiting patiently for the Windswept Realm to reopen.

“What’s happening? This… this….”

“I’m suddenly unable to sense the Windswept Realm!!”

“Not good!!”

Numerous cries of alarm rose up from the various God Worlds. The Nine Seas God World in the Ninth Sea was no exception. Granny Nine and the other Dao Realm Experts, including Godmaster and the two Demonic

Cultivator Horde Patriarchs, all began to tremble. Finally, they couldn’t endure any longer, and blood sprayed out of their mouths.

As their eyes went wide, the pillars of light stretching up into the sky shattered, and their connection to Windswept Realm was broken.

“Impossible!!” Godmaster’s face fell. He shot to his feet and looked up into the sky. “The Windswept Realm… has been struck by some massive upheaval!! Dammit! Our connection to it was actually severed!!”

Meanwhile, out in the vast darkness of the void surrounding the Mountain and Sea Realm, the vast lands of the Windswept Realm trembled slightly. A sound like cracking or shattering echoed out as the previous orbit of the entire Realm was suddenly changed, and it began to float up toward the 33 Heavens up above. Of course, nobody in the Realm itself could sense that!

Paragon Sea Dream jumped to her feet, a murderous aura swirling around her. “Imperial Lord of the Windswept Realm, are you looking to die!?”

She waved her right hand, and her Immortal’s cave suddenly faded away. When it reappeared, shockingly, it was in the void of the Mountain and Sea Realm. Then, only after-images were left behind as it shot out of the Mountain and Sea Realm and toward the lands of the Windswept Realm.

The Echelon cultivators in the Windswept Realm were all shaken. Meng Hao’s face flickered as he saw a rift suddenly open up in the sky above. A black beam shot out, within which was a shocking battle-ax!

The battle-ax emanated a boundless killing aura, and was surrounded by swirling images of vengeful spirits, who emanated soundless shrieks. Apparently, they were bound to the battle-ax, and were incapable of leaving it to enter the cycle of reincarnation.

A shocking pressure erupted from the battle-ax, and as it descended, the lands quaked, and bright colors flashed in the sky.

This was the Ancient treasure, an item that would be considered of extremely high quality even among other Ancient treasures!

Heavenly Champion Immortal Ax!

It floated down slowly to hover in front of Meng Hao, where it emanated a slight droning sound. Meng Hao’s eyes went wide, and his throat went dry as he stared at the pitch-black ax. Finally, he took a deep breath, reached out, and grabbed it.

The instant his hand closed around the haft, an explosive power surged through him. He trembled, and his hair flew up around him. He then flew up into the air, his cultivation base surging.

He swung the ax, and a black beam of light shot out of it, slamming into the ground and cutting out a huge 9,000-meter long gash. The Seventh Nation’s National Aura Mountain was right in the middle of that gash, and was cut directly into two pieces!

Its already weakened shield was completely incapable of standing up to such power, which clearly showed… how terrifyingly powerful the ax was!

Meng Hao’s heart trembled as he sensed the incredible energy inside the battle-ax.

Yuwen Jian still sat on top of the National Aura Mountain, which had just been cut into two halves. His scalp began to tingle as he stared at the two cliffs formed by blow. He felt like his head was about to explode, and a powerful sensation of deadly crisis rose up in him.

Several moments passed before the resulting windstorm died down. Meng Hao waved his hand, and the battle-ax disappeared. A strange light appeared in his eyes as began to think about the circumstances in which he was rewarded with the ax.

“There were two voices just now, not one!” he thought. “The first voice was the same as the voices from before. It was cold and emotionless, presumably because it was following orders. That must be the result of the naturals laws imposed on the Windswept Realm by the Mountain and Sea Realm!

“I killed an Echelon cultivator, and according to the first voice, that was some sort of criminal act. However… a moment later a second voice spoke, and actually rewarded me with a treasure!

“Is someone encouraging us Echelon cultivators to wipe each other out?” Meng Hao’s heart trembled. If his speculations were correct, then this turn of events surely had some connection to the way Jian Daozi and the others had looked at them when they first arrived in Mountain and Sea Realm, as well as the little tricks Jian Daozi had tried to pull off. Furthermore, Meng Hao had heard the others mention that the Windswept Realm was different this time than it had been before. He suddenly gasped.

“Could it be that some great catastrophe is about to strike in the Windswept Realm?” he thought.

His face darkened. At the same time, Yuwen Jian finally gained enlightenment of the 300th Essence from the World Seals. He then leapt to his feet and shouted at Meng Hao.

“Meng Hao, y-y-you… you just about cut me in half with that ax!”

His voice echoed out like thunder, interrupting Meng Hao’s train of thought.

Meng Hao looked down at Yuwen Jian and, voice cool, said, “My hand slipped, that was all. By the way, congratulations on achieving enlightenment. Oh, another thing. Didn’t you mention something about having killed Hai Dongqing once before?”

“I said that?” Yuwen Jian responded, sounding a bit guilty. However, he instantly slipped back into a rage. “Look, that’s not even important. You just about chopped me in two just now! Did you hear me? It was THIS close!! I didn’t do anything to provoke you! Your hand slipped? I almost lost my life! I’ve cowed the entire Seventh Mountain, fool! I’ve traversed mountains of daggers and seas of flames without getting killed, then I almost get killed because your hand slipped? You owe me for this….”

Meng Hao wasn’t really paying attention. “Sea of flames,” he thought. “Sea of flames…. I remember! Dao Fang! Beneath the Ancient Dao Lakes in the lands of South Heaven, the final level of the trial by fire overseen by those strange beasts, was the world of the Essence of Divine Flame….

“There was an eye of flame there which yelled something that included the name Dao Fang!!” Meng Hao’s mind trembled as he finally recalled the information he was looking for.

Instantly, his eyes widened, and a bright, intimidating gleam appeared in them.

Of course, from Yuwen Jian’s perspective, he had just said a few words, only to have Meng Hao suddenly fall silent and then stare at him threateningly. He began to tremble, and he remembered how strong Meng Hao had been when he had killed the two cultivators moments ago. Then he had ruthlessly cut down Hai Dongqing.

He also thought about how terrifying that ax was, and then Yuwen Jian’s face twitched with the realization of how impulsive it had been to berate Meng Hao the way he had. Meng Hao was clearly a jinx should never be provoked. A bead of cold sweat dripped down Yuwen Jian’s temple, and a wide smile broke out on his face. He quickly clasped hands and bowed several times.

“Hahaha! Brother Meng Hao, let’s let bygones be bygones,” he said cheerily. “I was just kidding around, brother. Even if you do chop, er, chop me in two, well… no problem. I have lives left, so if you do kill me, I’ll come back.” Then he laughed heartily.

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# Chapter 1116: A Meeting in the Sixth Nation!

“Dao Fang….” he thought. “Once I leave the Windswept Realm and get back home, I’m definitely going to go back to the Ancient Dao Lakes!” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered thoughtfully, and then the intimidating gleam in his eyes vanished. He looked back down at Yuwen Jian and smiled enigmatically.

How could he not have realized that Yuwen Jian could have reached enlightenment much earlier, and had intentionally dragged things out? Clearly, he had been planning something. Although Meng Hao’s use of the ax had seemed completely spontaneous, it was actually designed as a warning for Yuwen Jian.

Seeing Meng Hao’s smile, Yuwen Jian felt even guiltier. Clearing his throat, he smacked his chest heroically and said, “Brother Meng Hao, you are truly courageous and extraordinary. Hahaha. Dao-Heaven’s three hired thugs were all incredibly powerful. But in front of you, they were like hired clowns. You crushed them like weeds! You’re definitely destined to be number one in the Mountain and Sea Realm Echelon!” Although Yuwen Jian’s words were blatantly ingratiating, his expression was very sincere, as if every word were spoken from the depths of his heart. 1

“Well said, well said,” replied Meng Hao, chuckling. Then he stared evenly at Yuwen Jian. “However, Fellow Daoist Yuwen Jian, you still need to return the World Seal I loaned to you.”

Yuwen Jian’s smile stiffened, and his mind spun with hundreds of ideas. However, when he saw the look in Meng Hao’s eyes, his heart began to pound, and he once again thought about the implications of Meng Hao being rewarded for killing an Echelon cultivator.

“Dammit!” he thought. “The rewards of the Windswept Realm this time are encouraging us to slaughter each other…. I can’t provoke this jinx, otherwise I’ll find myself in a deadly crisis!” Having reached this point in his train of thought, Yuwen Jian unhesitatingly produced the World Seal and sent it back to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao grabbed it and put it away. Smiling just as broadly as ever, he didn’t say a single word about the Seventh Nation’s World Seal. Yuwen Jian had intentionally sat out of the fight, and had been plotting the whole time. Had he instead joined in to fight Hai Qingdong and the others, then Meng Hao would naturally have refrained from greedily keeping the World Seal.

However, since Yuwen Jian had clearly been up to something, then Meng Hao didn’t feel guilty at all about turning the tables on him.

Yuwen Jian smiled wryly. Although he was a body cultivator, the fact that he was not only a member of the Echelon, but had also managed to keep his place in it for so long, and at the same time managed to reach such a high level of body cultivation, showed that he was no fool. He might not be considered a genius, he was quite adept at scheming.

It was obvious to even him that Meng Hao had seen through his plan, and had used the ax as a warning. Not returning the Seventh Nation’s World Seal was an additional punishment.

“Well, that’s fine,” he thought. “Since the Windswept Realm seems to be encouraging us Echelon cultivators to wipe each other out, then those World Seals are like signal flares. The more you have, the more likely you’ll be to get killed and have them stolen away. Since I have no World Seal, as long as I’m careful, I’ll actually be much safer.”

Yuwen Jian was now feeling a lot more confident, so he clasped hands and bowed to Meng Hao. Backing up a few steps at the same time, he smiled and said, “Brother Meng Hao, it’s getting late. My place is kind of a mess right now, so I won’t keep you any longer. Take care of yourself on your way back, brother, and when you get a chance come visit again.”

Meng Hao looked at him, and Yuwen Jian instantly braced himself for something bad to happen. After a moment, though, Meng Hao merely smiled, swished his sleeve, and turned to depart.

It was in this moment, however, that a beam of light suddenly rose up from the central temple. It was rapidly expanding, spreading out to fill the entire Windswept Realm.

Shockingly, this light was just like the light from moments before… it was 30,000 meters wide!!

The massive pillar of light shot up into the Heavens, causing non-stop rumbling sounds to echo out. The sky shook, and countless ripples expanded out, filling the entire sky. Meng Hao’s eyes went wide, and Yuwen Jian’s face fell.

As the beam of light burst up into the world of mountains and statues, the tallest of the mountains, the one which was now a statue of of Meng Hao, suddenly blurred as a ghost image appeared next to it. The image then solidified into a second statue!

That second statue depicted a young man with swirling killing intent. He emanated incredible pressure that caused Meng Hao to pant. Shockingly, that statue was holding a head in its hand!

That head radiated icy coldness, despite being dead.

“Dao-Heaven!!” Yuwen Jian exclaimed. “That’s the Echelon cultivator from the First Mountain!! The head in his hand… is the head of the Echelon cultivator from the Second Mountain!!” His face drained of blood. He well knew that Dao-Heaven had long since taken the Second Nation’s World Seal from that cultivator, who had then managed to flee.

He had previously reached the conclusion that lacking a World Seal would place him in much less danger. He had never imagined that after only a few breaths of time passed, his entire line of reasoning would be overturned. The Echelon cultivator from the Second Mountain was now dead, heralding the beginning of what would no doubt be a series of bloody and chaotic battles!

It didn’t matter whether or not he had a World Seal, he was still in incredible danger!

Next, that cold and ruthless voice echoed out through the Windswept Realm.

“The reward… is an Ancient treasure! Lofty Mountain Immortal Flail!”

All of the Echelon cultivators were instantly shaken. Events were unfolding too quickly. First Hai Qingdong was killed, and then moments later, Dao-Heaven hunted down and killed someone else!

Furthermore, the reward was another Ancient treasure!

Meng Hao stared at the world up above, and Dao-Heaven’s statue. His eyes then began to gleam with an intimidating light. Even though he wasn’t sure how strong this Dao-Heaven was compared to Hai Qingdong, from what he could sense, he was incredibly powerful.

“Dao-Heaven….” he thought, eyes glittering.

Just when he was about to leave, Yuwen Jian suddenly flew up into the air and cried out, “Brother Meng Hao! Hahaha! Look, it’s getting pretty late, there’s no need to hurry off. Why don’t you stick around for a few days!?”

Yuwen Jian was scared, so how could he possibly allow Meng Hao to leave so easily? If Meng Hao stayed behind, then there would be two of them to fight against Dao-Heaven if he came looking for them.

Meng Hao ignored him and was just about to speed off into the distance when Yuwen Jian, thoughts racing, clenched his teeth and then blurted, “Meng Hao, I know of a way for you to get the Sixth Nation’s World Seal without even lifting your pinky finger!”

Meng Hao stopped and looked back at Yuwen Jian.

Seeing that Meng Hao had stopped, Yuwen Jian quickly explained, “Listen, Meng Hao. Of the nine World Seals, Dao-Heaven now has three, and you have four. The remaining two are those belonging to the Third Nation and the Sixth Nation respectively. The Echelon cultivator in the Sixth Nation is that kid Hong Bin. We went through some dangerous situations together and became friends. How about I take you to the Sixth Nation and persuade him to give you the World Seal! 2”he declared, slapping his chest.

“That way, you’ll have five World Seals, and will definitely have the upper hand!

“As long as you’re not scared of Dao-Heaven, then the Sixth Nation’s World Seal is yours!”

Meng Hao stared at him coldly. He didn’t trust Yuwen Jian very much; although they hadn’t known each other for long, he got the feeling that Yuwen Jian was about as unreliable as Patriarch Reliance.

“I don’t trust you,” Meng Hao said slowly.

Looking insulted and a bit angry, Yuwen Jian said, “Brother Meng Hao, it really hurts me to hear you say that. You know what type of person I am? I’m just like the ‘jian ’ character in my name. I’m steadfast in conduct, steadfast in word, steadfast in action, steadfast in everything!”

Unmoved, Meng Hao coolly responded, “You told me that you killed Hai Qingdong once.”

Yuwen Jian didn’t seem the least bit embarrassed about that fact. Laughing heartily, he said, “Brother Meng Hao, I’ve been wanting to reform some of my bad habits for a while now. I really managed to make myself look like a fool in front of you, brother. I’m definitely going to make some changes!”

“Your enlightenment earlier went way too slowly,” Meng Hao said.

“Hahaha! Brother Meng Hao, there’s no need to go out of your way to give me face. I wasn’t slow, I was just distracted. For that, I must apologize. From now on, I definitely won’t daydream anymore!”

Meng Hao wasn’t sure whether to laugh or cry. He looked closely at Yuwen Jian for a moment, and realized that not only were his words unreliable, but he was also extremely shameless. In terms of doing about-faces, nobody else could possibly match up to him.

Yuwen Jian’s expression was extremely sincere. Smacking his chest, he declared, “Brother Meng Hao, this time, you just have to trust me. I really am friends with Hong Bin. I saved his life once!”

After a moment of silence, Meng Hao looked at Yuwen Jian and calmly said, “If you don’t get me that World Seal, then you’ll see what happens when I really flip out.”

It was no threat. His calm words instantly caused Yuwen Jian to become nervous, and he nodded.

No more words were exchanged. Yuwen Jian led the way, and the two of them became bright beams of light that shot through the Seventh Nation toward the Sixth Nation. They moved with incredible speed, so it wasn’t long before they arrived.

As soon as they entered the Sixth Nation, intense pressure weighed down on them, a warning of sorts. The boy Hong Bin, currently sat cross-legged on the Sixth Nation’s National Aura Mountain, and as soon as he sensed them, his face flickered. The National Aura Mountain’s shield sprang up, and Hong Bin was immediately surrounded by several followers, who formed a defensive spell formation.

“Dammit,” he said out loud. “Is it Dao-Heaven? Or is it just someone passing through? Either way, keep the spell formation ready. If it’s Dao-Heaven, we can teleport out of here!” Hong Bin was extremely nervous. Currently, the two people he feared most were Dao-Heaven and Meng Hao.

Both of them had killed other Echelon cultivators, and had been rewarded with Ancient treasures. How could he not be afraid? He didn’t want his own life to be the price paid to get either one of them another Ancient treasure.

As he sat there vigilantly, two streaks of light pierced through the air outside of the National Aura Mountain. Yuwen Jian was in the lead position, and as soon as he got close enough, he urgently shouted, “Hong Bin, old pal, it’s Yuwen Jian, come to pay respects!”

Almost as soon as the words left his mouth, Hong Bin caught sight of Yuwen Jian. Instantly, his eyes blazed with anger, and he shot to his feet.

“Dammit, Yuwen Jian, you duplicitous bastard! You conned me back then and I never hunted you down about it, but now you have the gall to come looking for me!?

“Hey, who’s that behind you? That’s… dammit! I can’t believe you brought him here! I won’t rest until you’re dead, Yuwen Jian!!”

As soon as Hong Bin’s shrill voice echoed out, Yuwen Jian glanced embarrassedly over at Meng Hao. What he saw was Meng Hao looking back at him with an icy smile.

“Brother Meng Hao,” he gushed, “just give me the time it takes half an incense stick to burn. Don’t worry, I’ll definitely succeed!” In a flash, he sped toward the National Aura Mountain!

1. There is some word play in this passage that doesn’t quite translate well. Literally he says, “those three dog-legs (hired thugs/henchmen) of Dao-Heaven were all powerful, but to you they were like dirt-dogs (stray dogs/mole crickets)”

2. Hong Bin’s name in Chinese is hóng bīn. Hong is a surname which also means “great” or “big.” Bin means “refined”

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# Chapter 1117: He’s Here!

On the Sixth Nation’s National Aura Mountain, the boy Hong Bin sat grim-faced, surrounded by nine followers. His teleportation portal was ready to be used at a moment’s notice. All it required was a bit of divine will, and then he would be teleported away.

He held the World Seal of the Sixth Nation tightly in his hand as he stared coldly at Yuwen Jian. However, he did not teleport away.

Yuwen Jian hurried over until he was right outside the National Aura Mountain’s shield. Of course, without Hong Bin’s permission to enter, all he could do was hover outside and smile wryly.

“Brother Hong Bin… listen–”

“Beat it! Whoever you call brother gets struck with bad luck!” Hong Bin had a very unsightly look on his face. He glanced over at Meng Hao off in the distance, eyes wide. Originally, he hadn’t thought much at all about this latest addition to the Echelon. However, Meng Hao’s display of power in the Windswept Realm completely swept away any cavalier attitudes toward him harbored by the other Echelon cultivators.

He had defeated Han Qinglei, routed Lin Cong, and had then gone on to slaughter another Echelon cultivator.

Such achievements in battle ensured that he rose to prominence like a blazing sun, and was a person that no one would take lightly.

Hong Bin gritted his teeth and said, “I’ll let you say three more things, and after that you’d better get the hell back to wherever you came from, otherwise, I’m outta here!”

“Outta here? To where?” Yuwen Jian shouted, looking righteously at Hong Bin. “It’s not like you can leave the Windswept Realm! No matter where you run to, if Dao-Heaven thinks it’s worth it to track you down, do you really think he’ll let you get away?”

Hong Bin grimaced. He was also aware that fleeing was not a good long-term option. However, there was really no other choice. Dao-Heaven was simply too powerful.

“You can say two more things!” Hong Bin said, his face grim.

“You’re powerless to defend yourself,” Yuwen Jian continued, “and so am I, all because of this damned Windswept Realm and the changes to the rules. Don’t try to convince me that you haven’t noticed the writing on the wall. Furthermore, don’t try to get me to believe that you don’t know why I brought Meng Hao here. Cooperation could be doubly beneficial for all of us, whereas splitting up would be doubly detrimental!”

“You can say one more thing!” Hong Bin said slowly, placing his right hand on the ground, which caused the teleportation portal to rev up. All the while, he stared at Yuwen Jian.

“Fudge! I didn’t have three things to say, fool!” Yuwen Jian roared. “If you want to chicken out, then get the hell out of here!”

Hong Bin stared in shock, and his expression grew even more unsightly. He shifted his gaze over to Meng Hao off in the distance, then gritted his teeth after a long moment.

“Can he beat Dao-Heaven?”

“Maybe, maybe not,” Yuwen Jian said bitterly. “Even if you join the two of us, we still might not be able to beat him…. But, this is the only way we’ll even have a chance. The alternative is just waiting for Dao-Heaven to slaughter us all one by one!”

Hong Bin replied with silence. If Yuwen Jian had said that he was sure they could beat Dao-Heaven, Hong Bin would have teleported away immediately. Generally speaking, he didn’t trust anything Yuwen Jian said. However, for Yuwen Jian to unexpectedly respond in this way caused Hong Bin to hesitate.

“What does he want in exchange for my help!?” Hong Bin asked, looking at Yuwen Jian.

Yuwen Jian looked back silently at Hong Bin for a moment before replying, “Do you really need to ask?” After another moment, he continued, “Fellow Daoist Hong Bin, I might have conned you in the past, but you have to admit that when I did, I didn’t hurt you in any way!”

Hong Bin clenched his jaw, then waved his right hand. The Sixth Nation’s World Seal flew out, piercing through the shield and flying past Yuwen Jian toward Meng Hao.

If he was going to purchase a favor, it would be better to have Meng Hao owe him, than Yuwen Jian.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he reached out toward the incoming World Seal.

“Fellow Daoist Meng Hao,” Hong Bin said, one word at a time. “I’m not sure what this shyster Yuwen Jian told you, but since this is our first time meeting, I want to make something clear…. Dao-Heaven has started killing people, and I don’t want to end up a victim. Neither does Yuwen Jian. As for you… if you want to fight Dao-Heaven, you’ll need our help!

“At the very least, you’ll need us up until Dao-Heaven is dead!”

Meng Hao caught the World Seal. After a moment of silence, he nodded. “You’re right,” he said slowly. “So. Are you guys ready?”

Such a response from Meng Hao caught Hong Bin off guard. He had assumed Meng Hao would make some sort of confident declaration, but instead, he had responded complete contrary to expectation. Yuwen Jian’s eyes also went wide. He and Hong Bin looked at each other, and then expressions of determination filled their faces.

“Fellow Daoist Meng, you’re very frank and straightforward,” said Hong Bin. “I don’t need to prepare anything. I’m ready to fight right now!” With that, he rose to his feet, his cultivation base surging. His energy soared, and a massive wind sprang up into the sky.

Yuwen Jian’s eyes gleamed with resolve, and his cultivation base also erupted with power. A second tempest roared up into the sky, joining with Hong Bin’s to shake everything. The shocking power caused the lands to tremble and the air to distort. They were like two burning torches in the dead of night, making a declaration to every other Echelon cultivator, even to Dao-Heaven, that they… wanted to fight!!

Meng Hao took a deep breath. He put away the Sixth Nation’s World Seal and then also unleashed his power. Massive rumbling could be heard as his energy quickly surpassed Yuwen Jian and Hong Bin’s, causing everything to shake violently.

These were three Echelon cultivators, simultaneously powering up, creating a will to fight that shook everything, issuing a direct challenge to Dao-Heaven!

This was no plot, scheme, or trick. This was an open and aboveboard declaration of war!

The mortals in the Windswept Realm didn’t notice anything more than a sudden increase in the air pressure. However, the cultivators could detect the shocking transformations, the trembling of the lands and the chaos up in the sky.

As for the raging will to fight cast off by Meng Hao, Yuwen Jian and Hong Bin… only other Echelon cultivators could detect it.

Han Qinglei and Lin Cong were no longer in their original nations; both were hiding in random places in the Windswept Realm. In one particular mountain cave, Han Qinglei suddenly looked in the direction of the Sixth Nation, and his face flickered.

Lin Cong was sitting cross-legged at the bottom of a lake. When the lake water began to vibrate, he suddenly looked up, and his eyes flashed.

In the Fourth Nation, Dao-Heaven was flying at top speed through the air when all of a sudden, he stopped in midflight and looked in the direction of the Sixth Nation. A bright gleam appeared in his eyes, and a faint smile turned up the corners of his mouth. He could sense the will to fight in those three bursts of energy, and could tell that they were issuing a challenge to him.

“You want to fight? Well then, let’s fight!” he said proudly. Then, he exploded with massive speed, transforming into a Blue Dragon that roared off into the distance.

The roaring shook Heaven and Earth, causing a massive wind to kick up, and the sky to move backward. When compared to the energy of Meng Hao and the others, his energy was actually slightly greater!

At the same time, he pushed himself with greater speed, piercing through the air and leaving behind only afterimages as he shot toward the Sixth Nation with indescribable speed.

Outside of the Sixth Nation’s National Aura Mountain, almost as soon as Meng Hao and the others unleashed their energy, they felt the response from Dao-Heaven. Yuwen Jian’s face darkened.

“Dammit. He’s even stronger than before!!”

Meng Hao’s eyes went wide. He had never met Dao-Heaven from the First Mountain, but had heard his name mentioned by other Echelon cultivators. He knew that Dao-Heaven was strong, and that, thirty years ago, he had earned the title of number one in the Echelon.

In the subsequent thirty years, other Echelon cultivators would have had the chance to catch up, putting them in the position to fight him. From the way things were playing out in the Windswept Realm, though, it seemed that Dao-Heaven… was still the number one most powerful member.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, and his eyes flickered with the intense desire to fight.

Inside the National Aura Mountain's shield, Hong Bin felt his heart beginning to pound, and he started grumbling inwardly. Now that Dao-Heaven had revealed his energy, the bravery he had felt moments ago was waning.

After a moment, though, his eyes flickered, and he said, "I'm adept with Daoist magic. I'll stay here behind the shield where I'm safe, and use magical techniques on Dao-Heaven. That is how I can support you, Elder Brother Meng and Elder Brother Yuwen."

Yuwen Jian hesitated for a moment, then gritted his teeth. Determination shone in his eyes, and it looked like he was ready to throw caution to the wind.

"I'm a body cultivator, and I have my Six Times Nine God Body," he said. "Brother Meng Hao, you might be the most powerful fighter among us, but you've never tangled with Dao-Heaven. Let me take the lead in the battle. I'll buy you some time to analyze him."

Yuwen Jian's sudden statement caused Hong Bin to stare in shock. Yuwen Jian was the type of person who seemed honest, but was actually very treacherous, so Hong Bin would never have guessed that he would choose to do as he just had.

Meng Hao also looked at Yuwen Jian with a strange expression. After a moment of thought, he nodded. "Very well. It will help to have some time to study him."

The three of them spoke no more words. They sat down cross-legged, Yuwen Jian and Meng Hao in midair outside of the shield, Hong Bin inside. All three remained in their peak states as they waited for Dao-Heaven's arrival. Eventually, Yuwen Jian took out a bottle of medicinal pills and quietly consumed one. Rumbling sounds emanated out from inside of him, and he began to shine with a red glow.

“God blood?” Meng Hao asked suddenly.

“My last drop,” Yuwen Jian replied, crushing the bottle to show that it really was the last drop inside.

“How did you get it?” Meng Hao asked.

“By killing a God!” was the cool response. “Brother Meng Hao, if you’re interested, then as long as I don’t die in this fight, I’ll take you to the Seventh Mountain one day. We can take a trip to the God Domain and slay some Gods!”

Meng Hao nodded. “Deal!”

Time passed. Soon, Dao-Heaven was shooting over the sky of the Fifth Nation, causing rumbling sounds to emanate out. The ground quaked, and rifts tore open in the sky.

All of a sudden, a crimson chain appeared, wrapped around Dao-Heaven’s arm, which emanated the aura of an Ancient treasure. That was none other than his reward for killing the Echelon cultivator from the Second Mountain. Lofty Mountain Immortal Flail!

Gradually, what appeared to be images of lofty mountains appeared on the surface of the chain. Occasionally, even Immortal mountains could be seen!

Dao-Heaven shot through the Fifth Nation, face both icy and also filled with pride and self-confidence. Eventually, he reached… the Sixth Nation.

As soon as he passed over the border, incredible pressure weighed down on him.

Back on the Sixth Nation’s National Aura Mountain, Hong Bin suddenly said: “He’s here!!”

Yuwen Jian’s eyes began to shine, and he rose to his feet, looking more serious than ever.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and looked off into the distance. In that direction, he sensed a Heaven-shaking, Earth shattering power of qi and blood, rumbling in his direction!

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# Chapter 1118: Fighting Dao-Heaven!

Dao-Heaven had arrived!

The sky churned and the lands shook. It was as if the king of all the Heavens had arrived. As soon as he set foot onto the lands below, a seemingly invincible energy radiated out with each step he took.

Every step caused the land to quake, and huge footprints to appear in the ground. It was as if an invisible giant were treading forth.

Dao-heaven wore a long white robe, and had flowing black hair. He was handsome, seemingly having cast off all traces of mortality. His eyes shone like stars, and anyone who looked into them would feel as if they were being sucked into their depths.

Thirty years ago… he had been named… the number one cultivator in the Echelon, its most powerful member.

He did not wear a crown, and yet anyone who looked at him would find him kingly. He wore no Imperial robes, only a white garment, and yet he appeared to represent the Heavens.

He strolled along, seemingly in no hurry, and yet filled with icy coldness. The way he looked down at Meng Hao and the others made it seem as if they were ants to him. Apparently it was only Meng Hao himself whom he seemed to find even the least bit interesting.

“So, the three of you want to challenge me to a fight?” he said coldly as he hovered in midair. His simple statement echoed out like thunder, tearing through all obstacles to pound into the ears of Meng Hao, Yuwen Jian and Hong Bin.

Yuwen Jian’s face went pale, and he trembled as he took a few steps backward. Then he threw his head back and howled, “Dao-Heaven!!”

Roaring, he suddenly shot up into the air.

Hong Bin sat behind the shield, blood oozing out of the corners of his mouth, a look of astonishment and fear written on his face. He had never imagined that a single statement uttered by Dao-Heaven could injure him so badly. It was almost as if the shield behind which he sat was useless.

Seeing that Yuwen Jian was going on the offensive, Hong Bing gritted his teeth and performed an incantation gesture. Then he waved his finger toward Dao-Heaven, causing numerous stars to materialize up above.

The stars flickered, and then smashed toward Dao-Heaven.

In addition, multitudinous complex lines spread out around Dao-Heaven, forming spinning spell formations that seemed designed to entangle and kill him.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. Although Dao-Heaven’s words didn’t affect him very much, now that he was face to face with the young man, he could sense an incredible might emanating off of him. That might was the incredible battle prowess of Dao-Heaven’s shocking cultivation base.

“Of all the people I’ve encountered in my generation, he’s definitely the strongest!” he thought, his eyes flickering. He stepped forward, unleashing the Seven God Steps, which caused his energy to begin to rise up.

It takes a bit of time to describe all of these things, but they all happened in almost an instant. Dao-Heaven smiled indifferently, as if he didn’t even care about his three opponents.

“None of you even deserve to be in the Echelon,” he said, waving his right hand through the air. Instantly, the air seemed to rip apart and then spin toward the incoming stars. Before the stars could even get close to Dao-Heaven, they were shattered into pieces.

Next, Dao-Heaven raised his right foot up and stamped it down. A boom echoed out, followed by a shockwave that spread out with astonishing attack power. As soon as it touched the spell formations, cracking sounds could be heard, and the delicate spell formations were destroyed.

After taking that single step, Dao-Heaven pushed his right finger toward the incoming Yuwen Jian.

Yuwen Jian threw his head back and roared. “Six Times Nine God Body! Ninth Transformation!”

Rumbling sounds could be heard as his body rapidly grew larger, until he looked like a giant. Incredible power radiated off of him as he sent two fists flying toward Dao-Heaven. In the blink of an eye, his fists connected with Dao-Heaven’s finger.

In that instant, the flesh was shredded off of his hands, revealing the bones underneath. Yuwen Jian let out a miserable shriek as he tumbled backward, blood spraying everywhere. Shockingly, his two fists couldn’t stand up to the swipe of Dao-Heaven’s single finger!!

Meng Hao was shaken inwardly. He had fought Yuwen Jian, and knew that in his current state, even he would be incapable of seriously injuring Yuwen Jian with a single finger swipe.

“Impossible!” Yuwen Jian howled. “Y-you… how many times have you dropped your cultivation base back down from the Ancient Realm?!?!” It was a huge blow to him to have been seriously injured by a single finger swipe.

“Insects like you shouldn’t talk about things they don’t understand.” 1 Dao-Heaven said coolly, taking another step forward, instantly bypassing Meng Hao. It was almost like a teleportation, which placed him very close to the Sixth Nation’s National Aura Mountain shield.

“Yuwen Jian,” Dao-Heaven said loftily, “you don’t deserve to be in the Echelon. And you… Hong Bin, you deserve it even less.” He waved his finger toward the shield, causing a sun and a moon to appear. They swirled around each other as they sped through the air and then smashed into the shield.

A vicious expression appeared on Hong Bin’s face. He performed a double-handed incantation gesture, causing numerous streams of light to explode up. 10,000,000 of them spread out, creating a bright river that surged toward Dao-Heaven.

Dao-Heaven’s expression was as lofty as ever as his finger touched the shield. A boom rang out, and the shield trembled, distorting even more violently than before. Instantly, cracks spread out from the point where his finger had touched it!

“Break,” he said. The cracks expanded rapidly, and in the blink of an eye, the entire shield suddenly shattered. At the same time, Hong Bin’s river of 10,000,000 streams of light rumbled toward Dao-Heaven with shocking power.

At the same time, Hong Bin’s face went pale, and an expression of fear appeared. Without any further hesitation, he slapped his hand onto the ground, causing the teleportation portal to surge into motion. Blood sprayed out of the mouths of his nine followers as they used their life force to power the portal.

“That’s all you’ve got?!” Dao-Heaven asked calmly, not even looking at the incoming river of light. As it neared, he shot forward through the river, appearing directly on the Sixth Nation’s National Aura Mountain. Just when Hong Bin was about to teleport away, Dao-Heaven lifted his right foot up and stomped down onto the mountain.

ROOOOOAAAARRRRRRRRRRR!

A massive energy erupted out from him, causing the entire National Aura Mountain to shatter and collapse. Countless rocks and rubble tumbled out in every direction, and Hong Bin’s nine followers exploded into bits. The teleportation portal was also shattered, and Hong Bin was sent flying back, blood spraying out of his mouth, an expression of shock and terror on his face.

“Save me!” he screamed. He was in the Echelon, and was a proud person. But in this moment of critical danger, he abandoned all pride and fled.

Yuwen Jian let out a bellow of rage and attacked again.

Meng Hao also fell back. The level of power on display by Dao-Heaven had already struck him deeply. He had fought many people of his generation with cultivation bases similar to himself, but none of them could even compare to Dao-Heaven.

“So, is this the real Echelon…?” he thought, feeling shaken. After having defeated Han Qinglei, Lin Cong, and then Hai Dongqing, he had started to look down on the Echelon. As of this moment, all such feelings vanished.

“Nobody can save you now,” Dao-Heaven said casually, then laughed and transformed into a blur that shot over to Hong Bin. He raised his right hand and pointed a finger toward Hong Bin’s forehead.

The speed was so incredible that before Hong Bin could even do anything, the finger was about to tap onto his head.

It was at this point that, all of a sudden, the Lightning Cauldron appeared in Meng Hao’s hand. Electricity danced around him, and then he vanished. When he reappeared, shockingly, he was directly in front of Hong Bin. As for Dao-Heaven, he was now in the position that Meng Hao had just occupied.

Despite how powerful he was, he gaped in shock.

In that moment of shock, Meng Hao’s voice echoed out, filled with killing intent.

“Paragon magic, Paragon Bridge!!” He waved his hand, causing his cultivation base to surge with power. 123 Immortal meridians and 33

Heavens formed into the Paragon Bridge, which smashed down toward the astonished Dao-Heaven.

As for Hong Bin, there was really nowhere for him to flee to. He had just been snatched out of the jaws of death, and now he hesitated no longer. He performed an incantation gesture, causing his forehead to split open and two fish to fly out.

One of the fish was black, and the other was white. They spun in a circle, head-to-tail, creating a circle in midair. Black and white light shone out as they spun, gradually forming into a spell array. Shockingly, this spell array was Hong Bin’s Paragon magic!

“Paragon magic, Dao of Yin and Yang!”

Yuwen Jian threw his head back and roared, and brilliant red light surged up from him. By now, he had fully absorbed the drop of God blood that he had consumed earlier. Now, he could unleash his own Paragon magic.

“Paragon magic, God-Extermination Tattoo!” Yuwen Jian waved his hand, causing half of his clothing to transform into nothing but ash. Shockingly, blood swirled on both his chest and back to form a tattoo of blood!

The tattoo depicted numerous gigantic Gods being massacred in one scene after another. A murderous aura exploded off of Yuwen Jian and, astonishingly, the area around him seemed to transform into the scenes from the tattoo. The sky turned the color of blood, and a multitude of shocking illusory figures could be seen everywhere.

All in one moment, Meng Hao, Yuwen Jian and Hong Bin all unleashed their Paragon magic.

Dao-Heaven’s face flickered, and he suddenly lifted his right hand up and smacked it down onto his chest. Immediately, the sound of a thumping heart began to echo out.

Ba-dump. Ba-dump. Ba-dump…. Nine heart beats boomed out like thunder, shaking the world. Furthermore, with each heartbeat, Dao-Heaven’s energy shot higher and higher, until he was emanating an aura of the Ancient Realm!

After nine heartbeats, his power was almost indescribable. This was the aura of nine breakthroughs into the Ancient Realm, turning him into a fiendish divinity. When he threw his head back and roared, strange colors flashed in the sky.

“I have stepped into the Ancient Realm nine times before. Nine times, I forced myself back down to re-cultivate and break through again. Do you really think that weaklings like yourself could compare to me? You’re DEAD, ALL of you!” Dao-Heaven’s voice echoed with shocking pressure, weighing down heavily onto Meng Hao and the others.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and he immediately said, “You stepped into the Ancient Realm nine times, but then forced yourself back down and started over? That means you made nine mistakes, picked nine wrong paths. If your path was correct… the one time would be enough!”

Then, he sent his Paragon magic rumbling out.

1. Dao-Heaven uses a variation on a Chinese idiom which basically means that summer insects cannot discuss ice, meaning that it is impossible to speak to people of limited experience

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# Chapter 1119: Hong Bin Dies in Battle!

Dao-Heaven faced off haughtily against the Paragon magics of Meng Hao and the others. Suddenly, he took a breath, and his energy surged as he stretched his right hand up and waved it around.

“As for my Paragon magic, I have come to call it… Paragon Painting!” Even as the words left his mouth, the air in front of Dao-Heaven distorted and was ripped apart as a scroll painting flew out.

The scroll painting was pitch black and emanated a boundlessly ancient feeling. It seemed like something that had existed for countless years, and before it even opened, it emanated an incredible, murderous aura.

The power of that aura instantly caused bizarre colors to flash everywhere, and the wind to churn. It was impossible to even describe the level of power; this type of murderous aura was something that Meng Hao hadn’t encountered in his entire life.

It seemed like an aura of someone who had ended countless lives, who had exterminated worlds upon worlds, who had proven his Paragon status by means of endless slaughter!

The air rumbled and distorted beneath the power of this aura of murder. The sky turned dark, as if it were being completely covered up, as if the whole world were turning black.

The ground quaked, and the murderous aura caused fog to spring up and roil out in all directions. In a brief moment, the entire world changed.

Meng Hao’s heart was pounding, and it was the same with Yuwen Jian and Hong Bin, whose faces had fallen.

It was as if within this scroll painting hid a shocking, fiendish beast whose mere aura could suck away all the light of the world!

“Paragon Painting, open!” Dao-Heaven said proudly, performing an incantation gesture and pointing at the scroll painting. Noiselessly, the scroll painting began to open up, not fully, only about thirty percent. However, the thirty percent that was revealed gave a glimpse of the scene depicted. It was a bizarre world, a world of pitch black, and if you looked closely, you would see… a land that seemed to embody death.

Nothing else was visible except for that land, nor would it be, unless the scroll painting was opened further.

However, that tiny portion caused an indescribable power to surge out, which spread out in all directions along with the murderous aura.

Heaven and Earth seemed to be on the verge of collapse. The world seemed about to fall apart. Massive power rumbled out, sweeping toward Yuwen Jian and completely shattering his Paragon magic. When the blood-colored images of Yuwen Jian’s Paragon magic collapsed, he was flung backward, blood spraying out of his mouth.

Meng Hao felt as if a mountain had slammed into him. His body trembled, and blood oozed out of his mouth. He staggered backward thirty meters, and as he looked at Dao-Heaven’s terrifying Paragon magic, he realized that it was something he couldn’t even fight.

“Just what is painted inside of that scroll!?” he thought, heart trembling.

The worst off of the group was the boyish Hong Bin. He screamed and then coughed up a mouthful of blood as he shot backward. Before he could get very far, a blur sped through the air, which was none other than Dao-Heaven. His face was pale; apparently, the Paragon magics unleashed by Meng Hao and the others were not things that he could simply ignore, as he had their previous attacks.

They had forced him to the point of using Paragon magic to fight back. If any of his followers were present, they would surely be astonished by this. Dao-Heaven’s pride was such that he had never actually unleashed his Paragon magic during battle with members of his generation. In fact, he would only use it to suppress powerful experts of the Senior generation.

But now, Meng Hao and the others had forced him to use it. Facing their combined attack had actually filled Dao-Heaven’s heart with a sense of deadly crisis.

However, that sense of crisis led to the unleashing of his Paragon magic, which instantly turned the tide of battle in his favor. He suddenly appeared directly in front of Hong Bin, his eyes flashing with killing intent as he waved his hand in an attack.

The simple wave of a hand unleashed explosive power, transforming into a will of slaughter that slammed into Hong Bin.

Seeing that he was about to be overwhelmed, a crazed look appeared in Hong Bin’s eyes. He threw his head back and roared, choosing to self-detonate in the same moment that Dao-Heaven went in for the kill.

His eyes were bright red as his cultivation base exploded with mad power. As Hong Bin’s body detonated, Dao-Heaven’s pupils constricted. He flicked his sleeve, using his robe to defend himself. Hong Bin exploded, his body transforming into a tempest that swept out in all directions.

The massive blast shattered the sky and crushed the land. Dao-Heaven’s will of slaughter was bashed away by the force of the explosion, and Dao-Heaven’s face went pale. He was slightly injured by the impact, and yet he didn’t cough up any blood.

Hong Bin took advantage of the moment to reform from the haze of blood. When he reappeared, he shot backward at top speed.

“Save me!” he screamed. He had died once before during his time in the Sixth Mountain, and if you coupled that with the self-detonation just now, it meant that he could no longer rely on being able to come back. The next time he died, he would die for good.

In the same moment that Hong Bin cried for help, Meng Hao and Yuwen Jian went on the offensive. Meng Hao unleashed the Essence of Divine Flame, and Yuwen Jian roared as red light swirled around him. His fist shot out, causing a figure of blood to appear, a towering giant who pounced toward Dao-Heaven.

Dao-Heaven snorted coldly as Yuwen Jian's blood-colored giant closed in. He performed an incantation gesture with his left hand and pointed out. Suddenly, the Immortal Flail on his arm vanished, then snapped out from his finger, slamming into the blood-colored giant. A huge boom echoed out as the giant exploded. As for the Immortal Flail, it didn't stop, but rather, continued straight on toward Yuwen Jian.

The person Dao-Heaven was actually the most concerned about was Meng Hao, whose Divine Flame was currently bearing down on him.

"Essence…. I have that too!" he suddenly said. He spit something out of his mouth, and the flash of lightning could be seen. It was a red lightning bolt that seemed to summon lightning from Heaven and Earth. Countless lightning bolts began to fall, transforming into a sea of lightning that shot toward Meng Hao's Essence of Divine Flame.

When the two forces slammed into each other, the flame Essence and the lightning Essence both collapsed with a massive boom.

All of this takes a long time to describe, but the truth of the matter is that in the same moment that Dao-Heaven blocked Meng Hao and Yuwen Jian, he didn't pause for even a moment before chasing after Hong Bin.

"DIE!" he said, his voice cool. His right hand clenched into a fist, and he punched out. That blow contained an indescribably wild wind, an explosive tempest that bore down onto Hong Bin.

The light of despair flashed in Hong Bin's eyes, and he performed a double-handed incantation gesture, causing numerous spell formations to appear in front of him. He also waved his hand, sending various magical items flying out of his bag of holding. He even used life-saving magical items.

He didn’t spare a single thing in his defense. However, all of his spell formations and magical items were crushed by Dao-Heaven as easily as if they were dried weeds. Everything collapsed, and just as the tempest was about to slam into Hong Bin, Dao-Heaven suddenly transformed the fist into a claw, which latched onto Hong Bin’s forehead.

Dao-Heaven then coldly spoke out three words: “Heavenly Demon Devouring!”

Hong Bin immediately let out a bloodcurdling scream. His fleshly body rapidly withered away as his life force was absorbed by Dao-Heaven. Instantly, all of Dao-Heaven’s injuries were healed.

Blood sprayed out of Hong Bin’s mouth, and as death neared him, a spell formation suddenly appeared on his forehead. The spell formation then exploded, shoving Dao-Heaven’s hand away. Hong Bin was transformed into nothing but ash, with only his Immortal soul left behind. He let out a piercing cry, and a look of madness could be seen on his face.

“Yuwen Jian, Meng Hao, it would be better for you to get the reward for killing me than to let me fall by Dao-Heaven’s hand! Swear to me that you’ll avenge me by cutting him down!” Hong Bin feared death, but he was still a member of the Echelon. Echelon cultivators were proud, and when faced with death, they rarely acted indecisively. Without the slightest hesitation, he shot toward Yuwen Jian.

Yuwen Jian’s heart trembled, as did Meng Hao’s. They had all miscalculated. Dao-Heaven was so strong that even the three of them together weren’t strong enough to take him down.

“The only person who will be killing you… is me,” Dao-Heaven said with a cold laugh. His right hand made a clawing motion toward Meng Hao and Yuwen Jian. Instantly, rumbling echoed out as the air between them was shattered, transforming into an obstacle-like distortion that separated them completely.

Then, Dao-Heaven shot like lightning toward Hong Bin, his eyes shining with anticipation.

“I wonder what reward I’ll get for killing you, Hong Bin? Prepare to die!” Dao-Heaven raised his hand and grabbed out toward Hong Bin, upon whose face appeared a look of despair. Hong Bin was incapable of fleeing, and couldn’t even self-detonate. It was as if his body was completely sealed off.

Just when he was on the verge of being killed, Meng Hao suddenly pulled out the Lightning Cauldron. Electricity danced, but at the same time, Dao-Heaven let out a roar. Suddenly, a red glow spread out, covering both him and Hong Bin. Unexpectedly, Meng Hao’s Lightning Cauldron didn’t work!

That didn’t cause Meng Hao to pause for even a moment, however. He raised his left hand and waved a finger toward Dao-Heaven.

The Eighth Demon Sealing Hex was unleashed!

Dao-Heaven could be on guard against Meng Hao’s Lightning Cauldron, but could do nothing to stop the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex!

As soon as the Hexing magic was unleashed, Dao-Heaven suddenly lurched to a stop. For the second time, his face fell, and a feeling of astonishment rose up inside of him.

He was only locked down for the space of about one breath of time. However, to Hong Bin, that one breath of time was enough for him to escape the shackles of being sealed.

However, he didn’t take advantage of that moment to flee. He knew that getting away was an impossibility. Laughing bitterly, and eyes shining with determination, he flew directly toward Dao-Heaven in an attack.

“Get revenge for me!” he said, throwing his head back and roaring.

Yuwen Jian urgently cried out, “Hong Bin!!”

Meng Hao’s heart trembled.

It was at this point that Hong Bin’s Immortal soul closed in on Dao-Heaven. At the same time, Dao-Heaven was beginning to recover from the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex. A vicious smile appeared on the face of Hong Bin’s Immortal soul as he… self-detonated!

BOOOOMMMMMM!

The detonation of an Immortal soul alone would not unleash the same power as if the fleshly body exploded along with it. However… Hong Bin was in the Echelon, and as such, the detonation of his Immortal soul transformed into a power far beyond the ordinary. More importantly, the damage was increased because of his close proximity to Dao-Heaven, who was incapable of putting up a solid defense because he still hadn’t fully recovered from Meng Hao’s magical technique.

A huge, shocking boom echoed out as Hong Bin’s Immortal soul exploded into nothing more than ash. Dao-Heaven was shaken, and tumbled backward, coughing up blood. This was the first time during the fight that he coughed up blood, which splashed down onto the ground and formed a lake of blood.

“Meng Hao!!” Dao-Heaven roared, screeching to a halt in midair. His face was pale as he turned to look at Meng Hao, a murderous gleam in his eyes.

The two moments of danger he had experienced so far, had both been because of… Meng Hao!

This time, because Hong Bin had died by means of self-detonation, Dao-Heaven got no reward for killing him!

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# Chapter 1120: The Light of the Allheaven!

Yuwen Jian stared at the spot where Hong Bin had just died, his face ashen, hardly daring to believe what he had just seen.

“This is my fault….” he murmured.

“No it’s not,” said Meng Hao, grabbing him by the arm. “If we didn’t come, he still couldn’t have escaped from Dao-Heaven!” He pulled Yuwen Jian back. “We can’t keep fighting here, let’s go to the Fifth Nation!”

As Meng Hao backed up, Yuwen Jian’s expression returned to normal. Burying his guilt and self-blame deep in his heart, he looked over at Dao-Heaven, and the desire to kill flickered stronger than ever in his eyes.

He said nothing, though, and simply joined Meng Hao in retreating.

Dao-Heaven glared at Meng Hao and said, “Flee to the ends of the earth and I’ll still kill you today!”

He had been placed in mortal danger twice, all because of Meng Hao. Currently, his desire to kill Meng Hao had reached unprecedented heights. Without a moment’s hesitation, he shot after them in pursuit.

Meng Hao and Yuwen Jian fled, and Dao-Heaven pursued.

The three of them shot through the air in beams of light, sending rumbling sounds out in all directions. Dao-Heaven snorted coldly, and the air beneath his feet folded in on itself as he apparently borrowed power to gain a sudden burst in speed. This was clearly the unleashing of some secret magic. In the blink of an eye, his speed increased several-fold, and he was getting closer and closer to Meng Hao and Yuwen Jian.

Meng Hao's eyes suddenly glittered, and he said quietly, "Yuwen Jian, you go on ahead!"

Then he spun and shot back toward Dao-Heaven. Yuwen Jian's eyes flickered; he was an intelligent person, so after a moment of thought, he continued to flee.

Meanwhile, Meng Hao waved his hand, unleashing the Mountain Consuming Incantation. One mountain after another rumbled down, forming together into a mountain range that crushed toward Dao-Heaven.

Dao-Heaven's eyes flickered with killing intent as he waved his hand, causing an explosive, violent wind to spring up. It was a black wind that contained biting coldness, and when it slammed into the mountains, they shattered. Dao-Heaven once again burst forward with incredible speed, nearly ten times as fast as before, to appear directly in front of Meng Hao. He grinned viciously as he jabbed his finger toward Meng Hao.

"DIE!" The finger moved with incredible speed until it was just about to stab through Meng Hao's forehead. However, in that moment, Dao-Heaven's eyes widened, and Meng Hao became nothing more than a ghost image.

Off in the distance, a flash of golden light could be seen, which was Meng Hao speeding away lightning-fast, in golden roc form. He had long since made his escape.

"How devious!" Dao-Heaven said with a cold harrumph. He originally thought that he could succeed with a single attack. He had never imagined that Meng Hao would have prepared in advance to flee in golden roc form, using the Mountain Consuming Incantation as a distraction.

The only thing he had left behind for Dao-Heaven was a fleeting ghost image.

“You can’t get away!” he said, licking the blood from his lips and once again shooting after Meng Hao at top speed.

Meng Hao’s face had an unsightly expression. He had never encountered anyone of his generation who was as strong as Dao-Heaven. He had to admit that, even in the Immortal Emperor Realm, he was still not a match for him.

“What kind of cultivation does he practice to get so strong? He entered the Ancient Realm nine times, and then pushed himself back down…?” Meng Hao frowned. Seeing that Dao-Heaven was chasing after him, he waved his hand to summon a Blood Demon head, which roared as it shot back toward Dao-Heaven.

Dao-Heaven snorted coldly and did nothing to evade. As the Blood Demon head closed in with gaping maw, he pushed both hands out in front of him and grabbed onto the upper and lower jaw, then began to rip it apart.

The Blood Demon head let out a miserable shriek; it was no longer a mere illusory form, but even still, it was powerless to stop Dao-Heaven. This was the first time Meng Hao had ever seen anyone deal with the Blood Demon head in such a way.

However as soon as the Blood Demon head shattered, a blood mist spread out in all directions. Just as Dao-Heaven was about charge through it, his eyebrows suddenly shot up, and he unhesitatingly shoved his hand out in front of him.

As he made the motion, a fist shot out from within the mist of blood, which instantly made contact with Dao-Heaven’s palm.

A huge boom rang out, and Dao-Heaven’s face fell. He felt an incredibly powerful force surging out of the fist. He roared, and his body surged with red light as he pushed back against the fist.

The blood mist parted, revealing Meng Hao. The fist strike from just now had been his, and now that Dao-Heaven was resisting it, blood oozed out of his mouth. He backed up a bit, and his eyes went wide as he prepared to pursue. However, Meng Hao did not flee. Instead, he unleashed another punch.

One punch! Two punch! Three punches!

Meng Hao had seemingly gone mad. In rapid succession, he unleashed over ten Life-Extermination Fists toward Dao-Heaven.

The two of them flew through midair, zig-zagging back and forth as they got closer to the border of the Sixth and Fifth Nations.

Blood oozed constantly out of Meng Hao’s mouth. After reaching the seventeenth punch, his eyes flickered, and he switched to the Bedevilment Fist.

The punches were delivered with incredible speed, and even as Dao-Heaven countered with his palm, his expression flickered for the third time. His face was even paler than before, and as Meng Hao unleashed yet another punch, he fell back a pace.

As he fell back, Meng Hao shot forward, seizing the initiative. The Bedevilment Fist was once again unleashed with explosive force, once, twice, three times.

Dao-Heaven’s face was extremely unsightly. He had now been forced back by two paces, and as Meng Hao’s momentum built, he stepped back a third time.

“Are you looking to die!?” Dao-Heaven said coldly. After falling back a third time, he forced himself to step forward again. He lifted both hands into the air, stretched them out toward Meng Hao, and then ripped them apart!

“Heavenly Sundering!” he roared. As he jerked his hands apart, intense pain ripped through Meng Hao; it felt as if some intense power had entered his body and transformed into two massive hands that were trying to rip him into two pieces, starting with his chest.

In this moment of crisis, his eyes were shot with blood. He thought about using his second Nirvana Fruit, but decided against it. Now was not the time. He endured the pain, then sent his divine sense out into the area and, without any more hesitation, clenched his right hand into a fist, merging everything in the area into… the God-Slaying Fist!

God Slaying!

Rumbling could be heard as he growled and punched out. The blow caused Heaven and Earth to tremble in shocking fashion. It was as if all the heavenly bodies had been covered up, and even Dao-Heaven couldn’t help but stare wide-eyed in shock.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

The blow screamed toward Dao-Heaven, smashing into the power of his Heavenly Sundering with a boom. Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth, and he tumbled backward.

Blood spurted out of Dao-Heaven’s mouth. As the blood fell to the ground, it turned into another lake of blood. Dao-Heaven then waved his hand, causing it to bubble and boil, and then shoot toward Meng Hao. As for Dao-Heaven himself, his face was extremely unsightly, and his hands had actually been numbed.

“Thankfully I saw you use that fist strike against Lin Cong, and was able to prepare for it,” he murmured. “Otherwise, it would have been difficult to deal with.” The killing intent in his eyes flickered stronger than ever as he stepped forward to pursue Meng Hao.

Meng Hao sped backward, producing medicinal pills, which he immediately consumed. His Eternal stratum was also hard at work restoring him. Soon, he was near the border of the Sixth Nation. The Nine Nations of the Windswept Realm all had an invisible border region that existed between them.

Any time you passed through the border, your vision would swim, and you would feel pressure weighing down on you.

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed as he caught sight of traces of Yuwen Jian’s aura near the border region.

Without the slightest hesitation, he shot in the same direction as Yuwen Jian’s aura, Dao-Heaven hot on his heels. The several-hundred-meter distance between them was rapidly shrinking.

Soon, Meng Hao passed through the border region, leaving the Sixth Nation and entering the Fifth Nation.

The pressure from the Fifth Nation instantly increased dramatically. Yuwen Jian was waiting just inside the border of the Fifth Nation, and as soon as he saw Meng Hao, he needed no prompting to guess at the plan Meng Hao had in mind. He threw his head back and roared, and his body rapidly increased in size. After a moment of preparation, he began to charge forward, passing Meng Hao and heading toward the barrier region.

Almost in that same instant, Dao-Heaven roared into the same area.

“So you’re ambushing me in the border region between Nations, where the pressure is different! Parlor tricks!” Dao-Heaven laughed coldly, and without any hesitation, performed an incantation gesture and pointed out. Immediately, a black lotus appeared, which instantly exploded.

Black fog roiled out, along with an incredible force that slammed into Yuwen Jian. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and yet, he didn’t fall back, but punched out. Dao-Heaven strode forward, waving his right arm, which caused the Immortal Flail to appear on his arm again. He instantly lashed it out toward Yuwen Jian.

Yuwen Jian’s eyes flickered as the Immortal Flail closed in. Suddenly, he stretched his hand out and made a grasping motion. Rumbling could be heard as a battle-ax appeared in his hand! It was none other than the Ancient treasure that Meng Hao had acquired!

Meng Hao had delivered it surreptitiously when he had pulled at Yuwen Jian’s arm earlier, completely unbeknownst to Dao-Heaven. Yuwen Jian threw his head back and roared, then slashed at Dao-Heaven with the ax, unleashing power that could crush Heaven and Earth.

Dao-Heaven’s eyes went wide; this was something that exceeded his powers of prediction. He waved his hand in defense, and yet, almost at the same time, his face fell, not because of Yuwen Jian, but Meng Hao!

After entering the Fifth Nation, Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding and pulled out his second Nirvana Fruit. Even as Dao-Heaven and Yuwen Jian began to fight, he slowly lifted the Nirvana Fruit up and pushed it down onto his forehead.

It sank into him, and he trembled as a terrifying aura erupted out from him.

This was what caused Dao-Heaven’s expression to fall yet again.

ROOOOOAAAARRRRRRRRRRR!

Meng Hao threw his head back and roared as his body grew larger. 9 meters. 18 meters. 27 meters…. all the way to 45 meters. 60 meters…. 72 meters!

He was like a giant, with blue veins popping out on his head, his energy bursting up. He now had only one Immortal meridian, and the power of his qi and blood, as well as his cultivation base, caused azure light to shine out from him!

That azure light was a color that embodied respect. That was… the light of the Allheaven!

Dao-Heaven’s face fell, and his eyes filled with disbelief. He was panting, and inwardly, he felt the most intense sensation of deadly crisis that he had ever felt in his entire life!!

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# Chapter 1121: The Most Powerful State!

Dao-Heaven had a sudden, intense premonition that if he didn’t do something to stop Meng Hao’s aura from rising up explosively, then he could very well end up in the middle of a deadly catastrophe.

“Dammit, how could this Meng Hao be so strong!?!?” It was extremely rare for Dao-Heaven to encounter anyone who caused him to think in this way.

“Screw off!” Dao-Heaven managed to shove Yuwen Jian back, and then stepped forward amidst rumbling booms. Yuwen Jian was no match for him; even with the battle-ax, he was still forced into constant retreat. However, he didn’t shirk from fighting. Roaring, he unleashed the full might of his body cultivation power, fighting fiercely with Dao-Heaven to buy time for Meng Hao.

Meng Hao shook as he reached a height of 72 meters. All of his Immortal meridians were now fused into one, and he was surrounded by brilliant azure light.

Unfortunately, he was now distinctly aware of the fact that he couldn’t actually fight while powering up. He wanted to, but was incapable. This was his first time absorbing the Nirvana Fruit and reaching the Allheaven Immortal stage during a battle. The previous two times had been mere tests while in secluded meditation.

“Dammit!” he thought, growing anxious. However, no hesitation could be seen in his facial expression. His power continued to surge, and to anyone watching, it would seem obvious that there was more to come.

His aura rose past the Immortal Emperor Realm and he entered half a step into the Allheaven Immortal Realm. Terrifying ripples exploded off of him.

Colors flashed and the winds screamed, as if some huge eye had appeared up in the Heavens and was staring at Meng Hao.

Thunder crashed, and the sky above the Windswept Realm twisted and distorted. The lands quaked, and the mountains trembled. The whole world seemed to be changing.

Dao-Heaven’s eyes went wide when he saw Meng Hao’s power rising up without stop. Even he had to admit that what he was seeing was terrifying to the extreme. He threw his head back and roared, performing a double-handed incantation gesture that caused his cultivation base to erupt with power. A black fog appeared in front of him, which churned as it transformed into a giant, one-horned beast that charged roaring toward Yuwen Jian.

Yuwen Jian’s face fell, and his anxiety grew. He wasn’t sure what was going on with Meng Hao. Although they hadn’t laid out specific plans, according to how the situation had developed, this moment was about the time when Meng Hao should make his move.

“Dammit, what’s taking him so long!?” Yuwen Jian roared inwardly. He had half a mind to flee, but instead, gritted his teeth and faced the charging beast.

A huge boom echoed out, and blood sprayed out of Yuwen Jian’s mouth. The cracking sounds of breaking bones could be heard. Blood spurted out, and he coughed up chunks of crushed internal organs, and he was sent flying backward. His aura was weakening, and yet, he clenched his teeth, roared, and then decided to go all-out. He hefted the battle-ax and slashed it viciously toward Dao-Heaven, who was trying to rush past him.

With a cold harrumph, Dao-Heaven took a step forward without attempting to dodge the blow at all, lifting his right hand up as he used the Immortal Flail to block the descending ax.

A boom rang out, and then Dao-Heaven turned, as if to shoot toward Meng Hao. Yuwen Jian let out a roar and pounced, attempting to grapple Dao-Heaven and hold him in place. Dao-Heaven's face turned grim.

"Are you looking to die!?" His right hand clenched into a fist and he punched Yuwen Jian in the stomach. Yuwen Jian's eyes went wide as he tumbled backward amidst a haze of blood and gore.

"Meng Hao," Yuwen Jian shouted with a bitter laugh, "you owe me a life!" Even as the words came out of his mouth, his eyes gleamed with determination, and he charged again, preparing to expend one of his lives, in an attempt to block Dao-Heaven for a bit longer.

"DIE!" Dao-Heaven roared, waving his hand. The giant fog beast howled and lunged toward Yuwen Jian. Just when it seemed to be on the verge of hitting him, all of a sudden, the air in front of Yuwen Jian distorted, and a towering figure appeared.

It was none other than Meng Hao, standing there at more than 70 meters tall!

He immediately extended his hand and pushed it out toward the pouncing beast.

That motion caused the previously shocking beast to let out a shriek like a sick cat. It suddenly stopped in midair, incapable of moving a muscle, its expression one of fear and disbelief as Meng Hao reached out and crushed its head.

A boom could be heard as the beast exploded, sending bits of black fog roiling out in all directions.

"M-Meng Hao!" Yuwen Jian panted, shocked at the sight of the figure in front of him. Meng Hao glowed with azure light, and an archaic aura roiled off of him. It was almost as if… in this moment, Meng Hao was not a cultivator of the Mountain and Sea Realm, but instead, someone who had traveled through time from the primordial Paragon Immortal Realm.

He stood tall, radiating azure light. Faint, flickering magical symbols could be seen on him as he stood there like a mountain. The air vibrated and the lands trembled. The clouds up above seemed to lower themselves, as if in obeisance.

In the entire world, and in all the lands, it was as if Meng Hao were the only existence.

That was… a domineering aura that said, REVERE ME!

Meng Hao looked up at Dao-Heaven.

Dao-Heaven's face flickered with a serious expression as he stared back. Inside, he was starting to get nervous.

"Yuwen Jian, get out of here!" Meng Hao said slowly. Yuwen Jian would not be of any use in the battle to come, and if he stayed, it could be possible that Dao-Heaven might unleash something akin to the Blood Demon Grand Magic, or something even more sinister like the Heavenly Demon Devouring. That could put Meng Hao in a bad position.

Therefore, the best thing for Meng Hao was for him to leave!

Yuwen Jian stared deeply at Meng Hao for a moment, as if to affix him to memory. Yuwen Jian didn't have many friends, and even Hong Bin only counted as half a friend. However, in the brief bit of time he had spent with Meng Hao, he had already come to consider him a friend.

"I'm not going to give this battle-ax back to you if you die," he said. "So… don't get yourself killed!" Then he took a deep breath and sped off into the distance with all the speed he could muster. Dao-Heaven didn't even spare him a glance as he left; the threat posed by Meng Hao was far too great.

"Meng Hao!" he roared, and his body emanated cracking sounds. In the blink of an eye, he began to grow. His expression distorted, and when he reached a height of 60 meters, he threw his head back and roared. The sound of his heartbeat echoed out, and on the ninth beat, his energy peaked, and he strode toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s expression was calm. He could sense the power of his sole Immortal meridian, as well as the terrifying strength of his fleshly body. He began to walk forward, then clenched his right hand into a fist and punched out toward Dao-Heaven.

That fist caused the sky to flash and the wind to scream. Dao-Heaven’s face flickered, and yet he laughed viciously. As Meng Hao’s fist strike neared, he suddenly vanished, then reappeared behind Meng Hao. At the same time, two black, leathery wings spread out from his back.

Next, his hand formed a claw shape, which he slashed toward Meng Hao’s back.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever, and he didn’t even turn around. Instead, he pushed off with his feet, flying back-first toward Dao-Heaven.

Dao-Heaven’s hand struck Meng Hao’s back, causing a huge boom to echo out. Meng Hao didn’t react, but Dao-Heaven’s hand twisted in place, completely incapable of doing anything to Meng Hao. Then, Meng Hao slammed into Dao-Heaven.

An earsplitting boom echoed out, and blood sprayed out of Dao-Heaven’s mouth. He flew back like a kite with its string cut, his expression one of shock as more than half the bones in his body broke.

“Impossible! How could he be so strong!?!?” In his astonishment, sonic booms echoed out from him from the incredible speed with which he was thrown through the air as a result of Meng Hao’s vicious attack.

In the blink of an eye, he had passed across much of the Fifth Nation, and was actually nearing the border of the Fourth Nation. Subsequently, Meng Hao vanished, then suddenly reappeared directly in Dao-Heaven’s path. He extended his right hand, and boundless azure light rose up from him as he used the power of an Allheaven Immortal to wave his finger.

“I’m the number one in the Echelon!” Dao-Heaven roared. “You can’t beat me! This state of yours will only last for so long!!” Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and he wrapped his wings around his body protectively. At the same time, he performed a double-handed incantation gesture, causing a shield to appear, as well as a vast number of magical items.

A boom could be heard as Meng Hao’s Allheaven Finger pressed down onto the shield. Cracking sounds rang out in all directions, and layer by layer, the shield collapsed. Numerous magical items shattered, and then, Meng Hao’s finger landed on Dao-Heaven’s wings.

A boom rattled out as the wings were shredded to pieces, transforming into nothing but ash. Dao-Heaven screamed miserably as Meng Hao’s finger continued on. Then, he raised his right arm, apparently intending to use the Ancient treasure, the Immortal Flail, to block.

Popping sounds filled the air, which came from the Immortal Flail shattering. When it came into contact with Meng Hao’s Allheaven Finger, the Ancient treasure was incapable of doing anything against it. Dao-Heaven’s eyes went wide with disbelief.

All of a sudden, his right arm exploded into a haze of blood by the lightning-like strike of Meng Hao’s finger.

“Undying God Magic!” Dao-Heaven cried in terror. Blood-red light rose up from his body, transforming into a magical symbol which slammed into Meng Hao’s finger. The magical symbol trembled, but didn’t break, and the mighty force of Meng Hao’s finger attack sent Dao-Heaven tumbling backward.

In the blink of an eye, he had flown over the border between the Fifth Nation and the Fourth Nation. Once in the Fourth Nation, Dao-Heaven’s magical symbol finally shattered. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and his expression turned haggard. However, his desire to fight was not lessened at all. He threw his head back and howled as Meng Hao charged through the national barrier and flew toward him.

“Meng Hao, you can’t kill me! How much longer can you hold out? Once you leave that state, you’re dead!” Dao-Heaven coughed up chunks blood, and as Meng Hao closed in on him, performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, then waved his hand in front of him. Immediately, the air in front of him rumbled and shattered as a black streak of light flew out.

It was none other than a scroll painting, Dao-Heaven’s Paragon magic!

“Paragon Painting, open!”

Rumbling sounds could be heard as the scroll painting began to open up in front of Meng Hao. This time, it didn’t open thirty percent, but instead, seventy percent!

As soon as Meng Hao laid eyes on the unfurling scroll painting, it revealed a land filled with killing intent. In the middle of the land was a statue of a young man in a black robe, sitting there cross-legged. He had long hair that draped down onto the land upon which he sat.

Rising up from was an indescribably cold murderous aura.

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# Chapter 1122: I Call Him Slaughter!

As soon as the intense murderous aura appeared, it roiled out in all directions, kicking up clouds of dust. Lightning crashed repeatedly, and the entire world was stained by the aura of killing until it was black.

It was as if the statue in that scroll was no longer a painting. Furthermore, the Windswept Realm no longer seemed to be the Windswept Realm, but instead, the world inside the scroll painting.

Everything was pitch black, both the land and the sky. And yet somehow, Meng Hao could see everything clearly.

The statue was sitting there cross-legged, wearing black robes. All of a sudden, it twitched, and then slowly began to look up.

It was a simple motion, but it caused rumbling sounds to fill the entire world. The flow of time seemed to cease, and the natural laws seemed to be thrown into massive chaos. Before this person, Essences seemed to prostrate and kowtow in worship.

An intense killing aura stabbed into Meng Hao’s eyes like a sharp arrow, piercing into his mind, causing his entire body to shake. His face fell as he was suddenly filled with an intense sensation of deadly crisis.

This sensation of danger did not come from Dao-Heaven, but rather, from the black-robed figure in the painting.

“Who is he?” Meng Hao thought, his heart pounding. “Just what kind of Paragon magic is this!?” Every Echelon cultivator had different Paragon magics, and of the various types that he had encountered, only Dao-Heaven’s left him so astonished.

Meng Hao’s expression was very serious. He was in the Allheaven Immortal Realm, and knew that he was bursting with power. In fact, without this Paragon magic, Dao-Heaven would not be a match for him.

It didn’t matter that Dao-Heaven had entered the Ancient Realm nine times before. Each of those times, he had been treading the incorrect path. Meng Hao’s path was that of the Allheaven Immortal, an ancient path, and the most powerful in the Immortal Realm!

Dao-Heaven looked at Meng Hao, his eyes blazing with killing intent. “You said before that my path was wrong….

“My path was most certainly incorrect. Of that I am well aware. What you don’t know is that there is a reason why I continued to tread the same incorrect path, and then return back to the Immortal Realm. That is because the path I want… is the path cultivated by the man in my magical Paragon painting!

“I don’t know his name, nor do I know what this painting truly depicts…. But what I do know is that the painting is ordinary, the paper is ordinary, and even the wooden rollers are ordinary. The only thing beyond ordinary about it is the black-robed figure inside.

“Because of him, the ordinary paper and the commonplace wooden rollers transformed into something miraculous and extraordinary.

“He represents slaughter, and is filled with a murderous aura the likes of which I have never encountered anywhere else in my life. Because of that, I call him Slaughter, and in my heart, I view him as… my Master!”

As Dao-Heaven’s words rang out, he knelt in front of the scroll painting, his eyes burning with passion as he kowtowed deeply. After he kowtowed, the statue finished looking up, and its face was finally revealed.

It was a pale face, expressionless, and seemingly ordinary. However, within those ordinary facial features could be seen an indescribable iciness as he stared coldly at Meng Hao.

A mere look caused Meng Hao's body to shake. He felt an unspeakable pressure crushing down onto him, something superior even to the pressure of the Ninth Sea. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and despite being in the Allheaven Immortal Realm, he began to stagger backward.

He had no desire to fall back, but the gaze of the black-robed man in the scroll painting gave him no choice.

As he fell back, the pressure from the man in the painting pushed down on him to the point where it seemed he couldn't take it anymore, and would be forced to his knees, forced to capitulate, forced to offer worship!

With every step that he took back, Meng Hao roared. Finally, after seven steps had been taken, and his eyes were completely bloodshot, he forced himself to come to a stop. The price he had to pay was that a cloud of blood sprayed out of his mouth.

His knees shook so violently they felt like they might break.

"I can't believe I'm being forced into retreat by nothing more than a painting!" he thought. "Even if the person in that painting was once an almighty figure, perhaps even a Paragon, right now… he's just a painting. Why the hell… can he force me to fall back!?" Meng Hao struggled to hold his head up, and a vicious expression appeared on his face. Blood oozed out of his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. However, at the same time, his aura surged mightily.

"My Dao is that of freedom and independence!" he growled. "Other than my father and mother, there's nobody in the world… who can make Meng Hao kowtow! Who the hell do you think you are!?" He finished with a roar, and his Allheaven Immortal cultivation base spun rapidly. His only Immortal meridian rapidly expanded, forming the framework of a bridge inside of him!

He waved his right hand ferociously, and that bridge-like Immortal meridian suddenly erupted with power. Endless rumbling echoed out as it materialized… a real bridge, right in front of him!

The Paragon Bridge!

Meng Hao’s Paragon magic was a powerful Dao to begin with. Although its power had seemed rather ordinary early on, that was not because of the magic itself, but rather, because Meng Hao’s cultivation base had not been powerful enough to manifest much of it.

Now, though, in the Allheaven Immortal Realm, the unleashing of the Paragon Bridge was completely unlike before. Rumbling filled the air as the majestic bridge descended right in front of Meng Hao, causing the sky to vibrate, shattering the land.

It didn’t appear to be illusory, but rather, a true and actual bridge. It was shocking, indescribably large, as if the entire world was but a mere corner of it.

The bridge filled the sky, sweeping across everything, and it emanated the supreme aura of a Paragon. The world trembled, and the lands were terrified. By using the Allheaven Immortal Realm, Meng Hao had finally… revealed some of its true splendor and power!

And yet, there was more! Illusory figures appeared atop the bridge. Although it was impossible to see them clearly, they existed on various locations on the bridge.

These figures radiated terrifying might, and apparently, were people from the past who had qualified to stride upon the Paragon Bridge. Although they did not end up walking across the entire bridge, as former almighty figures in Heaven and Earth, they were able to leave behind some divine will.

In the same moment that the Paragon Bridge appeared, the black-robed statue in the painting looked at it, and a look of reminiscence appeared on his face. He suddenly murmured… “Heaven Trampling… Bridge….”[1]

His voice was filled with the sensation of memories, and yet, the same coldness as before.

This turn of events caused even Dao-Heaven’s face to fill with utter shock. His head jerked up in the middle of his kowtow, an expression of disbelief could be seen on his face. The scroll painting was his, and the Paragon magic was his.

And yet… even he had never before heard the black-robed figure within speak a single word!

It was as if the appearance of the Paragon Bridge had provoked some unpredictable transformation. Even as Dao-Heaven’s heart trembled, Meng Hao’s mind began to spin.

“Heaven Trampling Bridge?” he thought, staring at his own Paragon Bridge.

Shockingly, the black-robed statue in the painting suddenly rose to his feet and took a step forward, his long hair trailing behind him.

When he took that step, Dao-Heaven’s heart trembled. Meng Hao was standing directly in his path, and could see things even more clearly. It was as if the step he took contained some type of Dao, something that could bend space and shrink a huge span to the distance of an inch, something that could create something from nothing. With that step, he emerged from the painting, entered reality and appeared… on top of Meng Hao’s Paragon Bridge.

Meng Hao’s mind spun as he looked at the black-robed figure standing atop the Paragon Bridge. The young man’s expression was cold, but it was also tinged with reminiscence. He began to walk across the Heaven Trampling Bridge, step after step, passing numerous other figures, as if he wished to walk the bridge to its very end.

But then he stopped walking. He looked down at the bridge beneath his feet, and seemed to grow melancholy.

“This Heaven Trampling Bridge is incomplete….” he murmured.

“I… am also incomplete….

“That year… I stood in front of him, and her, my mission accomplished. Then I turned, heart filled with a strange pain, with sorrow, and I vanished….

“So why…? Why am I still here…?” Then he began to laugh, a laughter filled with icy coldness, and a murderous aura.

“I loved her more than you did!!” Laughing maniacally, the black-robed figure swished his sleeve. Rumbling could be heard as the Paragon Bridge collapsed. As it did, the black-robed figure trembled and faded away along with the Heaven Trampling Bridge, his expression one of reminiscence and pain.

When he reappeared, he was back inside the scroll painting, a statue once again, his head bowed.

When that happened, Dao-Heaven made a gurgling sound and vomited a mouthful of blood. A mist of blood exploded around him; apparently, the scroll painting possessed a gravitational force that absorbed nearly half of his life force. Dao-Heaven trembled, and his face went pale white.

He had used this Paragon magic on many occasions, but never had it resulted in a backlash like just now.

Meng Hao also coughed up a mouthful of blood and fell back. He could sense that his time as an Allheaven Immortal was reaching its conclusion. Eyes glittering, he reached up and patted the top of his head, voluntarily leaving the Allheaven Immortal Realm. The Nirvana Fruit emerged from his forehead and dropped down into the palm of his hand. His aura dropped, and his face turned ashen. He stood there, unmoving, staring coldly at Dao-Heaven.

“Still wanna keep fighting?” he said calmly.

Dao-Heaven panted as the scroll painting faded away. Then he looked over at Meng Hao, smiled coldly, and said, “What, are you scared? You’re beyond weak now! I could kill you as easily as turning over my hand!”

Inwardly, though, he was hesitant. He still wasn’t completely sure whether or not Meng Hao could continue fighting in that incredibly powerful state.

Hundreds of thoughts ran through Meng Hao’s head. Originally, his plan was to try to intimidate Dao-Heaven through his calmness. But then, he realized something, and came up with a new plan. Frowning, he looked over at Dao-Heaven and then held his Nirvana Fruit fruit out in the palm of his hand, where it glittered with brilliant light.

“To kill you would cost me quite a bit,” he said. “I would end up heavily injuring myself, which would make it a lot harder to get anything more out of the Windswept Realm.

“However, if you’re intent on dying, then I can help you reach your goal.”

Dao-Heaven’s eyes went wide as he looked at Meng Hao. Had Meng Hao remained calm, he would immediately have assumed he was trying to pull a fast one. However, to see Meng Hao frown the way he did made it seem like he was making this decision because he had no other choice. Suddenly, Dao-Heaven wasn’t quite sure what was the truth.

“I’ll know for sure if I just attack him!” he thought. Eyes flickering, he shot toward Meng Hao.

1. By this point, most Er Gen fans would have put some puzzle pieces together regarding who this person probably is, or at least, who he is connected to. Long story short is that Wang Lin from Renegade Immortal had a clone (specifically a Slaughter Clone), whose actual name had the Chinese character “slaughter” in it. He reached an extremely high cultivation level in RI, a level called “Heaven Trampling,” which involved nine bridges. Unfortunately, because this information is relevant to the plot of ISSTH, it necessitates these spoilers regarding untranslated portions of RI. If you want further details about cultivation levels in RI, the story of Wang Lin, the story of his clone, etc., please do it in a proper spoiler thread.

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# Chapter 1123: Dao-Heaven Retreats!

Almost in the exact moment that the murderous thoughts rose up in Dao-Heaven's mind, he shot forward. Meng Hao snorted coldly and suddenly backed up. At the same time, he decisively pushed the Nirvana Fruit down into his forehead. Simultaneously, intense killing intent flickered up in his eyes.

His cold gaze locked onto Dao-Heaven in the same way it might look at a corpse.

Rumbling sounds could be heard as the Nirvana Fruit merged into his forehead. His energy immediately shot up. This time, the effect was different than before. He wasn't immobilized as his body grew larger. Azure light flickered into being around him, and he performed an incantation gesture with his right hand. Then he waved his hand at Dao-Heaven, causing the Essence of Divine Flame to erupt out, which filled the sky.

Dao-Heaven's heart trembled, and he suddenly lurched to a stop before shooting backward. As it turned out, he didn't actually want to keep fighting Meng Hao to the death. He didn't even want to fight at all. The backlash from his Paragon Painting had left him extremely weak. Most importantly… he wasn't confident in being able to take Meng Hao out right now.

Seeing Meng Hao once again enter that terrifying state confirmed… that Meng Hao was capable of killing him.

"This magic of his has a set time limit, or maybe it's limited in the number of times he can use it. Well, whatever the limitations are, he'll still have to pay a price to use it…. That was something he wasn’t lying about!

“Even if he did kill me, he couldn’t kill my soul; I still have lives left. And actually, the Windswept Realm trial by fire isn’t over yet. If we both get severely injured… not only would other Echelon cultivators try to take advantage of the situation, we might lose our chance at getting more good fortune from the Windswept Realm!

“Besides, there’s no saying whether or not he could actually kill me in the final battle. Conversely, even if I can kill him, then I would likewise be devastated, and wouldn’t be able to recover quickly or easily.” Dao-Heaven had an extremely unsightly expression on his face. If Meng Hao hadn’t struck fear into his heart, he wouldn’t be vacillating in such a way. But now, the facts were out in the open, and he had no choice but to consider the consequences of them inflicting serious injuries on each other.

As he retreated, Meng Hao stood in place. Instead of giving chase, he looked over coldly.

“Unless you want a fight to the death, don’t come looking for me. My patience… has its limits!” Then he took a step forward, stamping his foot onto the ground. The ground quaked and the air vibrated as an incredible power surged up from him. A shockwave blasted out in all directions.

Dao-Heaven continued to flee. He was still suspicious, but he had no way to tell whether or not Meng Hao was simply putting on a show. It was hard to tell, and he was forced to simply guess.

His facial expression constantly flickered as he ran through the possibilities in his mind, and his eyes glittered. Finally, he laughed loudly.

“Are you so anxious to finish our little fight, Meng Hao? There are many paths to follow. If you want to pick this one, who am I to stop you?”

Meng Hao shook his head. Energy surging, he shot forward, leaving afterimages behind him. He waved his hand, causing Divine Flame to spread out above Dao-Heaven.

Dao-Heaven’s face fell, and he instantly performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, then waved his finger toward the ground. Black fog roiled up, transforming into a rumbling vortex. A huge hand then stretched up out of the vortex, which pushed out toward the Divine Flame.

At the moment, raging flames covered Meng Hao’s face, making it so that Dao-Heaven couldn’t see his face clearly. All he could see were his cold eyes, flickering with killing intent.

Meng Hao didn’t pause for even a second. As the Essence of Divine Flame and Dao-Heaven’s magical technique slammed into each other, he strode forward and said, “God Slaying!”

His right hand clenched into a fist, seemingly embodying the will and might of Heaven. The qi flow of the Windswept Realm converged, and his Allheaven Immortal cultivation base caused colors to flash and the wind to scream.

Dao-Heaven’s face fell as he continued to retreat, performing a double-handed incantation gesture. A portal suddenly appeared, which slammed open to reveal nine Bone Dragons. Roaring, they flew out of the portal toward Meng Hao, surging with energy.

ROOOOOAAAARRRRRRRRRRR!

Meng Hao’s fist caused the world to shatter. The nine Bone Dragons let out plaintive shrieks as they were shattered into tiny pieces. Dao-Heaven took a deep breath, and then flashed through the air, instantly falling back by 3,000 meters. Then he laughed.

“Meng Hao, fighting like this is meaningless. Since you don’t really feel like continuing, then I, Chen, will just take my leave….” Obviously, Dao-Heaven was his Daoist name, whereas his true surname was Chen. With that, Dao-Heaven fled, his expression normal, but his heart filled with vigilance.

“Based on his personality,” he thought, “if he actually stops fighting because of what I said, then I’ll know he’s trying to trick me!” As Dao-

Heaven fled, his expression and demeanor made it seem as if he truly wished to get away.

Meng Hao’s face was covered by the Divine Flame, and as such, Dao-Heaven couldn’t see anything more than Meng Hao’s eyes. Those eyes didn’t change at all, and in fact, grew colder than ever. Even as Dao-Heaven attempted to flee, Meng Hao caused the starstone in his eyes to melt, covering his body so that he transformed into a planet!

It was a planet wreathed in Divine Flame, making it look like a shooting star as it sped after Dao-Heaven.

Based on its speed and trajectory, it really seemed as if he wanted to catch up.

Dao-Heaven realized this, and his expression turned dark.

“So he really does still have enough power to stay in that Realm!!” Even as Meng Hao closed in, Dao-Heaven suddenly increased his speed. In a flash, he was a great distance away.

“Meng Hao,” he called behind him, “have you met a girl named Xue’er yet?

“If not, I should really leave you alive so that you have a chance to meet her!

“Next time we run into each other, though, that will be the day you die!” Laughing, he shot off with incredible speed.

“Pipe down!” Meng Hao said from within the planet, his voice echoing out with incredible pressure. He continued to give chase for another several thousand meters. However, considering Dao-Heaven’s incredible speed, soon there was no trace of him. Meng Hao slowly came to a stop. The planet disappeared, and his human form reappeared.

He looked no different than he usually did. The Nirvana Fruit emerged from his forehead and dropped into his hand. He hovered there in midair, expression cold, looking in the direction Dao-Heaven had fled. Finally, he gave a cold harrumph, turned, and headed off in a different direction.

He took his time leaving, and as for the direction he chose, it was none other than the Third Nation.

Not long after he disappeared over the horizon, a strand of black smoke appeared on the battlefield. It swirled together in midair to reveal an illusory image of Dao-Heaven, frowning. As Meng Hao disappeared in the distance, he let out a sigh.

“So, he wasn’t trying to trick me. After fighting me, he actually chose to go to the Third Nation! This Meng Hao… is a formidable opponent.” The illusory figure shook his head, then vanished.

Meanwhile, Meng Hao was calmly making his way across the border of the Fourth Nation and into the Third Nation.

As soon as he entered the Third Nation, he staggered to a stop and coughed up eight successive mouthfuls of blood. With each mouthful of blood, his body wasted away by ten percent. After only a few breaths of time had passed, he was so skinny that he looked like nothing more than a bag of bones. His hair had even turned completely gray.

His expression lackluster, he very nearly fell down to the ground. As he stood there, he smiled bitterly.

He actually had tricked Dao-Heaven. His final decision to enter the Allheaven Immortal Realm came at the price of burning his life force almost to the very limit. In fact, he couldn’t have proceeded much further even if he wanted to.

It was only when he reached this point, and was behind the barrier between nations, a place where Dao-Heaven wouldn’t be able to observe him, that he allowed himself to weaken rapidly. As the blood sprayed out of his mouth, he grew weaker and weaker.

“This Dao-Heaven is incredibly powerful!” he murmured. The reason he had covered his face with the Essence of Divine Flame earlier was because he didn’t want Dao-Heaven to realize that he was burning his life force. It was for the same reason that he chose to use the One Thought Stellar Transformation to become a planet in the final chase.

Furthermore, the reason he chose to come to the Third Nation was that, according to his analysis of the situation, the fact that Dao-Heaven had avoided the Third Nation on multiple occasions made it obvious that something was fishy. Picking the Third Nation nation made it seem like he was far more stronger than he actually was.

Fooling Dao-Heaven was not an easy thing. He was incredibly devious and suspicious, and made numerous probing attempts to find out if Meng Hao was trying to trick him. To Meng Hao, it was like walking along the edge of a cliff. Even the slightest misstep could have left him in grave danger.

“What a pity…. If I could fully absorb the second Nirvana Fruit, and truly step into the Allheaven Immortal Realm, then I could definitely kill Dao-Heaven. Right now, though… I’m not a match for him.” Meng Hao frowned. He had to admit that in all the years he had practiced cultivation, and among all the countless Chosen he had encountered, because of all the good fortune he had encountered, there was no one in his generation who was a match for him. He was even capable of sweeping over the Echelon.

Except for the Echelon cultivator from the First Mountain, Dao-Heaven. He was a truly formidable opponent!

After all, although Meng Hao had practiced cultivation for a much shorter time than Dao-Heaven, who had deep and profound resources at his disposal, Meng Hao also had significant good fortune, and was far beyond ordinary. Anyone who got into the Echelon was by default an extraordinary person.

Also, anyone who had a chance of being acknowledged by Xue’er, the successor of Immortal Ancient, could by no means be a weakling.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, and he produced some medicinal pills to consume. After a moment, his eyes widened as he suddenly realized something.

“How come I didn’t feel any pressure after entering the Third Nation?” Before, every time he passed through border barrier from one nation to another, there would always be pressure weighing down. The only time it hadn’t happened was here in the Third Nation.

“Dao-Heaven always seemed to avoid the Third Nation….

“There must be some mysterious secret about this place.

“However, that’s a good thing for me, since I’ll be able to focus fully on healing myself. Although, I don’t want to stay here for too long. Once I’ve recovered a bit, I’ll head back to the Ninth Nation.” He flew onward, and before long reached a mountain range, where he found a remote cave. After settling down to meditate, he sealed the cave mouth.

However, in almost the same moment that he began to meditate, his eyes snapped open. A brilliant red light had just begun to shine up from the blood-colored mask inside his bag of holding. Even the bag of holding was incapable of covering it up.

Simultaneously, Meng Hao could sense the aura of the Blood Mastiff. It had been years since the Blood Mastiff had dissipated in the midst of protecting him. Although he had sensed signs that it might awaken on numerous occasions, this was the strongest by far.

Meng Hao was delighted, and immediately took the blood-colored mask out of his bag of holding and sent some divine sense into it. As soon as he felt the Blood Mastiff, he realized that a connection and resonance had sprung up between them.

There was an aura of blood in the area, which was incredibly enticing to the Blood Mastiff. It filled it with desire and was the main reason why it was now waking up.

That blood was coming from the earth! From deep within the earth!

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# Chapter 1124: For the True Dao!

Around the same time that Meng Hao entered the Third Nation, the middle-aged man in the Imperial robes who sat cross-legged on the Third Nation’s National Aura Mountain was looking into a crystal ball that floated in front of him.

Light swirled about inside the crystal ball, and apparently, an entire world existed isolated therein. If you looked closely, you would be able to tell that within that isolated world were three people. They were screaming, and apparently wished to be able to break out of the world, but could not.

If Meng Hao were there to see them, he would be incredibly shocked, perhaps even numb. That was because… he knew two of them!

One was the dead boy Hong Bin, and the other… was the tenth Echelon cultivator Hai Dongqing!

As for the third person, it was easy to imagine who it might be. As expected, it was the Echelon cultivator from the Second Nation, the one Dao-Heaven killed.

Although those three people were already dead, their souls appeared to be sealed inside of that crystal ball. What a bizarre situation!

Suddenly, the man in the Imperial robes opened his eyes, and a mysterious light could be seen glowing within them. He slowly turned to look in the direction of the border between the Third and Fourth Nations. In the same moment, Meng Hao entered the Third Nation.

This man’s cultivation base was not incredibly high, only in the Immortal Realm. However, he had a bizarre aura floating around him that made him seem completely mysterious and enigmatic.

At the same time that he opened his eyes, numerous figures appeared around him, either standing on the mountain peak or floating above it. All of them wore black robes, with cowls that covered their heads, making it impossible to see their faces. However, all of those figures emanated the ripples of the Ancient Realm.

Of course, cultivators of the Windswept Realm were incapable of breaking through to even the Immortal Realm, let alone the Ancient Realm. And yet here were multiple powerful experts of the Ancient Realm. Furthermore, among the black-robed experts were two or three whose cultivation base ripples were stronger than the others. That indicated that they were most likely Elders from various sects and clans in the Mountain and Sea Realm, with ten or more extinguished Soul Lamps.

All of them hovered there silently, awaiting the orders of the man in the Imperial robes.

As for that very man, his expression was the same as ever as he waved his right hand, causing numerous flickering images to appear in front of him. One of those images depicted Meng Hao entering the Third Nation.

He watched thoughtfully as Meng Hao coughed up blood, his body withering. The man’s eyes flickered.

“Is the girl taken care of?” he asked suddenly.

“We sent people to kill her,” said one of the black-robed cultivators, his voice hoarse, like that of an old man. “Unfortunately, she’s very crafty, and has managed to evade them thus far. She’s still alive.”

“She’s a dangerous variable,” the man in the Imperial robes said. “Go take care of her yourself, just to be safe. Time is wasting away, so make it happen quickly!”

“For the true Dao!” the black-robed man said earnestly, clasping hands and bowing.

“For the true Dao!” responded the man in the imperial robes.

“For the true Dao!” the rest of the black-robed men chanted fervently, lowering their heads.

“Regarding Meng Hao… he counts for nothing, much the same as Dao-Heaven. They are ants in a maze, nothing more. Ignore them. If he dares to come to the National Aura Mountain, then just as Dao-Heaven, he will flee in fright and never dare to set foot back into the Third Nation again. We should tangle with the Echelon only if necessary, so leave them alone. They will become useful to us later. When we leave this mountain, then… we will achieve our true purpose!” The man smiled, gazed into the crystal ball for a long moment, and then closed his eyes.

The black-robed men maintained silence. After clasping hands and bowing, they slowly dispersed, each one heading in a different direction.

In his Immortal’s cave in the Third Nation, Meng Hao’s heart trembled as he looked down at the blood-colored mask. Then he glanced at the ground. Eyes flickering, he sent out some divine sense into the earth. After a moment passed, he frowned. His divine sense wasn’t able to locate anything unusual.

However, from the way the mastiff was struggling to awaken, he could tell that its intense thirst was increasing. Meng Hao had never sensed anything like this from the mastiff before.

It was as if, in order to sate that thirst, the mastiff would not only awaken, but do so in a transmogrified state. It would be different than before, having undergone drastic transformation.

“What is hidden down there…?” he thought. Instead of doing anything rash, he put the blood-colored mask away, closed his eyes, and continued meditating to heal his injuries.

With medicinal pills and his Eternal stratum, he recovered rapidly. After only three days, his eyes opened, and they shone with a brilliant light.

“I’m sixty percent recovered….” he murmured. “From here on out I’ll just slowly recover naturally.” During the three days he had spent recuperating, the mastiff’s thirst had only gotten stronger.

He slapped his bag of holding, and the parrot and meat jelly flew out. They looked around nervously for a moment but, seeing no danger, heaved sighs of relief.

“Don’t worry, Dao-Heaven isn’t chasing us,” Meng Hao said with a cold snort. Sometimes the parrot and meat jelly acted fearless in the face of death. At other times, they seemed like cowards. The whole thing was a huge headache for Meng Hao. He just couldn’t believe that they were unaware of the battle that had occurred with Dao-Heaven. He had even considered directly summoning them.

However, during the heat of the battle, both of them had been busy playing dead.

“Hey, you can’t blame Lord Fifth for this,” said the parrot with a guilty chuckle. “Considering Lord Fifth’s level of skill, a single glance and a few breaths of time would be all it took to wipe Dao-Heaven out thousands of times over. The problem was I really happened to be napping at the time. Hahaha.”

“Lord Third disagrees,” the meat jelly said solemnly. “Lord Third thinks that you need practice! You need to get stronger! You need more and more experience! Lord Third will never help you unless it’s absolutely, positively necessary!”

To hear the meat jelly say something like this caused Meng Hao to stare in shock. Historically speaking, the meat jelly would always just copy the parrot. It wasn’t just Meng Hao who was taken aback; the parrot was also stunned.

“Did you two get into an argument?” Meng Hao asked curiously.

The parrot cleared its throat, then glared threateningly at the meat jelly.

“Old Third is actually right,” it said, putting on an air of superiority. “It seems there’s no need for Lord Fifth to hide the truth from you. It’s true.

Unless there is an extremely deadly crisis, we won’t do anything to help you.”

“That’s right!” yelled the meat jelly. “Lord Third and this evil bird did get into an argument. Damned pigeon. Henceforth, our differences are irreconcilable!”

“What did you just say! I DARE you to say it again!” squawked the parrot, its feathers standing on end.

“I’ll say it again,” roared the meat jelly, glaring at the parrot. “I’ll even say it three times!”

Meng Hao instantly felt a headache coming on. After staring at the two of them arguing for a moment, he snapped, “Enough! If you want to argue, you can do it back inside the bag of holding. Parrot, look around and see if you can see anything strange about this place. Meat jelly, you check it out too. There’s something off here, there’s uh… some bullies!”

At first the meat jelly looked disdainful, but as soon as it heard bullies mentioned, its eyes shone brightly. It looked closely at the ground, and then suddenly gasped.

“There really are bullies! Lots of bullies!!”

The parrot looked over, and its expression flickered with disbelief.

“Fiendish Blooddriven Heaven-shunning formation!! 1

“That was an evil spell formation in ancient times, and yet people nowadays are still using it!? It operates on sacrifices, but to offer sacrifices here… this is impossible!!”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and he sent out his divine sense to merge with the parrot and meat jelly. In that instant, his mind trembled, and he suddenly saw numerous images. Deep down in the earth, far, far below, was a sprawling necropolis!

The necropolis was huge, and featured ninety-nine gigantic pits of boiling blood. The boiling blood let off a blood-colored mist that swirled up into the air.

Sitting cross-legged next to each of the ninety-nine blood pits were countless cultivators. They were of average height, and so skinny that they looked like bags of bones. They stood next to the pits, fanatical expressions on their faces as they slashed their arms with knives and poured the blood out into the pits.

Gradually, the sound of chanting could be heard, filling the necropolis.

Deeper into the necropolis were dozens of black-robed figures, sitting cross-legged in meditation. They appeared to be standing guard, and at the same time, were arranged in a protective spell formation. Meng Hao couldn’t make out the level of their cultivation bases.

Most shocking of all was that at the bottom of each of the ninety-nine blood pits was a cultivator, sitting there cross-legged. There were ninety-nine of them, one for each pit, and considering that they were submerged in blood, if it weren’t for the fact that Meng Hao was using a special vision technique, he wouldn’t be able to see them.

Meng Hao recognized one of those cultivators. It was none other than… the old man from the Ninth Nation, Jian Daozi!

Meng Hao began to pant. With the help of the parrot and meat jelly, his vision pierced down into the blood pits. What he saw was that the pits were actually shaped like funnels, and if you looked closely, there were eyelets at the bottom.

Beneath those eyelets, and beneath the ninety-nine blood pits, was a tunnel that led to another part of the necropolis.

It was smaller than the main necropolis, almost like a secret chamber connected to the larger structure up above. Both structures together almost looked like an inverted bottle gourd!

Within that secret chamber were several statues that resembled spirit creatures, including a turtle, a crane, and even a bat.

The statues were connected by a channel than linked them together, forming a circle. In the middle of that large circle, in the very center of the secret chamber, was a blood-colored block of ice!

That blood-colored block of ice contained something sealed inside of it… a blood-colored bat!

That bat looked the same in every respect as the the bat statue among the surrounding group of statues!

Currently, the block of ice was melting, and as it did, a blood qi rose up into the tunnel above, to be absorbed by the ninety-nine eyelets!

“What is all this?!” thought Meng Hao, his face flickering. When he looked at the blood-colored block of ice, he felt an aura of boundless evil buffet against him. Although he was only looking at it with divine sense, and was separated from it by the parrot and meat jelly, he could still sense it. It was an evil filled with madness and terrifying power.

It was definitely… something that cultivators couldn’t control. It was like something that exceeded the natural laws of Heaven and Earth, and even that of Essence.

“That’s… a renegade spirit….” the parrot murmured.

1. At the very last moment I started having second thoughts about how I broke down the name of this spell formation. I’m going to continue working on it, but it’s a conglomeration of a bunch of Chinese characters, the key points being that it’s something evil to do with blood

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# Chapter 1125: Take Its Place!

“Renegade spirit….” It was a term Meng Hao wasn’t familiar with. But from the way the parrot said it, it sounded like something that had a long, complicated history.

The meat jelly looked confused at first, but after a moment appeared to have recalled something, and it started to shake.

At the same time, the Blood Mastiff, who was still in his bag of holding, inside the blood-colored mask, began to struggle with an even stronger thirst, as if… it wanted to consume that blood-colored bat!!

Meng Hao’s face flickered as he retracted his divine sense from the necropolis. He sat there in the Immortal’s cave, lost in thought and hesitation. However, inside the blood-colored mask, the Blood Mastiff was emanating an intense thirst that seemed to be reaching a peak.

“So you want to eat it, huh…?” Meng Hao murmured. He suddenly clenched his teeth. If he wanted his cultivation base restored to its peak, it would take over a month, even with the combination of medicinal pills and his Eternal stratum.

However, too many things could happen in a month. There were strange goings-on in the Third Nation, and he had no desire to stay here any longer than necessary.

“Well, I’m going to help you!” The mastiff occupied a special place in his heart. He would never forget the first time he had laid eyes on it, how small it had been, and how attached it was to him. He had raised it from when it was tiny, and in the Blood Immortal Legacy Tournament, it had protected him, and had even died for him, without the slightest hesitation. In its final moments, it had merely turned back for a moment in an attempt to lick his face, as doing so one more time would make it completely content.

Images from the past rose up in his mind. How could Meng Hao ever forget his loyal mastiff!?

As soon as he made his decision, the parrot looked at him in shock.

“Are you crazy!?!?” the parrot squawked. “That’s a renegade spirit, a mysterious entity of Heaven and Earth. It looks like this particular renegade spirit is dead, but it’s definitely something that you and the mastiff are no match for!”

“These people of the Windswept Realm can use this renegade spirit,” Meng Hao replied. “Well… why can’t I?” Without any further hesitation, he stamped his foot on the ground and began to sink down into the earth.

The parrot let out another squawk and, seemingly throwing caution to the wind, followed Meng Hao. The meat jelly blinked, and then also followed along.

“Dammit, possess a renegade spirit?” the parrot muttered. “Consume it? Take its place…? Crazy! Meng Hao, you’re crazy! That mastiff is crazy too! Well, fudge! Lord Fifth is also crazy!”

As the meat jelly followed along, it also yelled, “Lord Third is crazy too!”

Meng Hao sank down into the ground, heading in the direction he had probed earlier with divine sense.

Meanwhile, out in the Third Nation, the man in the Imperial robes sat cross-legged on the National Aura Mountain. All of a sudden, his eyes snapped open. He shot to his feet, his expression one of shock, disbelief, and then rage.

“Dammit!! The renegade spirit’s blood burial site has a spell formation that obscures divine sense. The secret entrance wouldn’t even be visible to someone in the Dao Realm. This Meng Hao… how did he discover it!!?”

The man’s face flickered, and without realizing it, he began to take a step forward. However, in almost the same moment, he stopped in place, eyes fixed on the crystal ball. His expression darkened.

“Kill him and bring me his head,” he ordered coldly. “Investigate how exactly he was able to see through to the blood burial site!”

In response to his orders, seventeen or so black-robed men appeared nearby, all of whom clasped hands and said, “For the true Dao!”

With that, they turned and disappeared.

Down below the lands of the Third Nation, Meng Hao sped along, his expression ruthless, his eyes swirling with killing intent. He wasn’t fully recovered from his injuries, but he could unleash about sixty to seventy percent of his cultivation base. Bursting with explosive speed, he went deeper and deeper.

Everything was pitch black, and there was no path that could be seen. Even sending out his divine sense, he saw nothing. Soon, he reached the location he had seen with the help of the parrot and meat jelly. He came to a stop.

“It should be around here….” he thought, eyes flickering. He looked over at the parrot, who muttered to itself for a moment before shining with radiant, multi-colored light that spread out in all directions. There up ahead, Meng Hao’s could finally see the necropolis in his divine sense.

He looked at it and gritted his teeth. He knew that there was something strange going on in the Third Nation, and he was well-aware that his cultivation base had not yet been restored to its peak. Therefore, if he was going to fight… he needed to do it decisively.

He shot forward, causing muffled rumbling sounds to echo out underneath the lands. He pierced through the soil like an arrow, and when he emerged, he found that he wasn’t inside the necropolis, but rather, had just slammed into a huge, invisible barrier.

The moment his body slammed into it, a backlash attack hit him, and blood oozed out of his mouth. He backed up, and everything began to shake. Cracks spread out on the surface of the barrier.

At the same time, the cultivators inside the necropolis all heard the rumbling sounds, and could sense the trembling. They clustered around the blood pits, and the ones slashing their arms to pour out blood all looked up with expressions of shock.

Simultaneously, the dozens of black-robed cultivators with obscured faces, the ones standing guard, all rose to their feet and looked in the direction from which the sound echoed.

Outside of the necropolis, Meng Hao bellowed: “Parrot!”

The parrot seemed conflicted about what to do for a moment, but then it squawked and caused the light shining off of it to speed toward the barrier.

“Listen to Lord Fifth and OPEN UP!” it roared. The multi-colored light slammed into the barrier, instantly opening up a hole. Without the slightest hesitation, Meng Hao shot through the hole, stepping right into… the necropolis!

Everything happened incredibly quickly, which was how Meng Hao preferred to do things, to fight with decisiveness. Almost as soon as he entered the necropolis, cold snorts echoed out, and dozens of black-robed men flew into the air. All of them emanated the fluctuations of Ancient Realm cultivation bases. Their energy surged, and they joined forces in a unified attack, which sped through the air toward Meng Hao.

Almost as soon as Meng Hao began to charge forward, his face fell. “Dammit,” he thought, “the Windswept Realm isn’t limited to the Immortal Realm after all! Where did all these Ancient Realm cultivators come from!?!?”

He waved his right hand, sending the Essence of Divine Flame roaring out toward the dozens of black-robed cultivators.

A boom rang out, and blood oozed from Meng Hao's mouth as he backed up. The dozens of black-robed cultivators also backed up a bit, but it only took a moment for them to once again close in.

Divine abilities and magical techniques blazed to life, joining together and then smashing toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao's eyes glittered as the Lightning Cauldron appeared. Thunder cracked, and electricity danced, but unfortunately, the transpositioning function didn't work. Meng Hao's heart sank. Putting the Lightning Cauldron away, he didn't hesitate any longer to stride forward and meet the incoming cultivators in battle.

"Screw off!" he roared, relying on the strength of the his fleshly body to fight back against the divine abilities and magical techniques. He was like an explosive dragon, battering ahead, his right hand utilizing the Life-Extermination Fist, his left hand the Bedevilment Fist. Both fists struck out with mad, explosive power. Seven black-robed cultivators were blasted aside, blood spraying out of their mouths. Meng Hao shot like lightning toward the region with the blood pits.

"Halt!" a cold voice cried. The dozens of the black-robed cultivators once again moved to block Meng Hao's path. Three of them waved their hands and, shockingly, Sea Dragons appeared, which roared toward Meng Hao.

"Daoist Magic of the Nine Seas God World !" Meng Hao's eyes widened as he looked over at the black-robed men. Then he snorted coldly, performed an incantation gesture, and pointed out with his finger. Numerous mountains descended, linking together into a mountain range that smashed down toward the men. At the same time, he shot onward, getting closer to the blood pits. By this point he was about 300 meters away.

The entire necropolis trembled, and quite a few of the black-robed men coughed up blood. However, they continued to seek to block Meng Hao, almost as if they were deranged.

This time, they all performed the same incantation gesture, unleashing a bizarre magical technique.

“True Dao Advent!” As soon as the words left their mouths, a bizarre power of natural law sprang up. It transformed into a huge net-like cage that enveloped the surrounding area. Even as it sought to blanket Meng Hao, his face flickered and he transformed into a golden roc. As the net of natural law neared, he suddenly shot forward and slammed into the chest one of the black-robed men. A boom could be heard as the man exploded into bits. After shooting onward by about 150 meters, he returned to human form, lifted his right hand, and jabbed a finger at them.

Eighth Demon Sealing Hex!

This time, what he was hexing was not a single person, but rather, a whole group of people, plus the net of natural law which was descending down onto him.

With the wave of a finger, all of the black-robed men felt themselves shudder to a stop. The huge net also stopped in place. However, Meng Hao had to pay a heavy price; he coughed up a huge mouthful of blood. Nonetheless, he didn’t stop for even a moment, closing the remaining 150 meters in a flash, appearing next to one of the blood pits.

He waved his hand toward the air above the blood pit, and all of a sudden, all of the blood in the pit rose up and showered out in all directions. There at the bottom of the pit, an old man could now be seen.

Moments ago, he had been submerged in the blood, absorbing it, but now that he had been interrupted, he opened his eyes. Previously, his cultivation base had been at the Cauldron Seeking stage. However, as of this moment it was clear that it was climbing up. Now… he was in the Immortal Realm, despite the lack of any Door of Immortality appearing.

The old man let out a shout, and was about to start fighting Meng Hao, when Meng Hao snorted coldly. His right hand shot out with lightning speed in a clawing gesture, latching onto the man’s arm and squeezing down hard. Cracking sounds were joined by a bloodcurdling scream as all the bones in the man’s body were shattered. In the same moment, Meng Hao disappeared into the eyelet at the bottom of the pit.

As soon as he disappeared, booms filled the air, and countless divine abilities and Daoist magics slammed into the spot he had just occupied. The black-robed men surged with energy and began to speed over from all directions.

Meng Hao didn’t wait for them to show up. He immediately transformed into a beam of light that shot through the eyelet, and then into the tunnel that led to the secret chamber below.

In almost that same instant, brilliant light filled the necropolis. The dozens of black-robed men exchanged glances, then transformed into beams of light that followed Meng Hao down into the blood pit and beyond.

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# Chapter 1126: Hold the Tunnel!

At the same time, the other blood pits began to boil, as if they were being sealed. Clouds of bloody mist rose up into the air, which transformed into blood-colored swords that then hovered up above, radiating murderous auras.

The only pit with no blood sword was the pit Meng Hao had just vanished into, the one all the black-robed men were speeding toward.

Meng Hao moved with incredible speed. When he emerged from the blood pit, he found himself in a long, narrow tunnel that sloped downward into the secret chamber below. When he emerged into the chamber, blood-colored light stabbed dazzlingly into his eyes.

Inwardly, he was shocked at the indescribably evil aura that blasted against his face. It was as if countless miserable screams were echoing in his ears. Somehow, the voices seemed familiar, as if each and every one belonged to people he knew.

The effect wasn’t limited to just voices. Myriad visual hallucinations appeared, and at the same time, his body felt like it was about to collapse, as if he were in the deepest depths of the Yellow Springs.

His heart began to pound, and his blood flowed in reverse. His face fell, and his cultivation base was almost thrown into chaos, to the point where he almost lost control of it. He quickly bit the tip of his tongue, using the surge of pain to gain clarity. Face pale, he immediately fell back toward the tunnel, and only when he reached it did he manage to stave off the sensations.

Furthermore, he had the strong premonition that even remaining at the entrance of the tunnel for too long would allow the evil aura to infect him completely, and he might even lose his cultivation base!

The feeling of intuition made his eyes widen. He quickly looked around, and saw the statues surrounding him. A Xuanwu turtle, a crane, and even a deer….

“Are they all… renegade spirits?!” he thought, eyes widening. Then his eyes came to rest on the blood-colored block of ice, and he saw what was sealed inside of it, the blood-colored bat.

All of the evil aura was emanating from that blood-colored ice block, and from the blood-colored bat therein. It… was the wellspring of evil in this place!

The parrot and meat jelly looked around, their faces flickering.

It was at this point that a howl echoed out from inside Meng Hao’s bag of holding. The blood-colored mask flew out to hover in mid-air, rumbling and emanating blood-colored light. That blood-colored light indicated… that the mastiff had finally awakened.

It suddenly flew out into the open, turning to look at Meng Hao with a gaze of deep fondness. It was the same look it used to give him when it was small. In its world, Meng Hao was its master, its family, and the entire purpose of its life.

After looking at him, its eyes filled with determination, and it howled. Then it turned, transforming into a blood-colored beam that shot into the block of ice, where it began to attempt to possess the renegade spirit, to… take its place!!

If it failed, it would die!

But if it succeeded… from then on, it would be a renegade spirit!

If not for the fact that this renegade spirit was extremely weak, and perhaps had already died long ago, it would normally be impossible for the mastiff to succeed. And even in this state, no one could tell whether it had a chance.

Thankfully, it was a spirit born of blood, and therefore had the same origin as the Blood Bat, which gave it a bit better of a chance.

Rumbling echoed out, and the blood-colored ice block trembled. Strange howls could be heard echoing out, along with the sounds of a fierce battle that quickly filled the secret chamber. Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth, and he backed up swiftly. He was incapable of helping the mastiff possess the renegade spirit, so the only thing he could do was protect it in this critical moment.

Whether or not it would have the good fortune to succeed depended completely on the mastiff, not Meng Hao.

Furthermore, he couldn’t stay where he was; he had to leave. If he stayed any longer, he would be infected by the evil aura, and his cultivation base would begin to waste away.

Besides, he could hear the sound of the black-robed cultivators whistling through the tunnel behind him.

He took a deep breath and looked over at the parrot and meat jelly. The parrot instantly understood the look in his eyes.

It hesitated for a moment, then let out a squawk.

“Time to go for broke! Fudge! Lord Fifth is gonna go for it! Meng Hao, you owe me a favor, big time! Old Third, get over here and help me!” The parrot flapped its wings, causing numerous beams of multicolored light to fly out and cover over the blood-colored ice block.

The meat jelly didn’t look happy about the situation, but it flew over and let the parrot grab it. They merged together, and then unleashed a bizarre Daoist magic that enabled them to assist the mastiff and increase its chances of success.

“Even with the help of Lord Fifth, its final success will be determined by its own good fortune!” the parrot roared.

“Many thanks,” Meng Hao said. “You’ve done all that you can. The rest will be up to it…. As for me, I can’t help much. But what I can do is stop the intruders, and prevent them from interfering!” He gave a final look at the block of ice into which the mastiff had disappeared, then turned and flew out of the secret chamber and into the tunnel.

Although the evil aura still had a significant influence on, he could still forcibly resist it for a time. Of course, if Meng Hao could do that, so could the black-robed cultivators.

He wasn’t willing to risk allowing them into the secret chamber itself. After all, he had no idea what actions they might take that could affect the mastiff, and even lead it to fail.

He cared too much about the mastiff, and therefore wouldn’t make any decisions lightly. The only surefire option was holding the tunnel against the enemy!

The overall structure of the blood burial site was composed of two parts, the larger necropolis above, and the smaller secret chamber below. They were connected by this tunnel, which was Meng Hao’s current location. Already, he could see the black-robed cultivators closing in on him.

Eyes flickering with killing intent, he didn’t hesitate for a moment before going on the offensive.

“Mastiff, you’ve defended me over and over again. Now… it’s my time to defend you!” he murmured. He rotated his cultivation base, and killing intent roiled out of him. He wasn’t sure if the mastiff would succeed in possessing the renegade spirit, nor how long it would take to do so. But he did know that, at the moment, there was nowhere to retreat to. Nor did he have any desire or need to retreat.

He took a deep breath, causing his cultivation base and his Immortal meridians to surge with power. He was like a razor-sharp blade that instantly slashed into the attacking black-robed cultivators.

The tunnel wasn’t very large, making it a challenge to unleash divine abilities and magical techniques. If Meng Hao were at his peak, then killing a few dozen people like this wouldn’t be problematic at all. However, his cultivation base was only at about sixty percent of its normal level, making it difficult to fight.

It was a tough task, but he was an Echelon cultivator, and was in the Immortal Emperor Realm. He was someone that ordinary Ancient Realm experts couldn’t easily tousle with. Rumbling sounds echoed out as he attacked. A Blood Demon head materialized, and Essence of Divine Flame raged in all directions.

“You’re not cultivators of the Windswept Realm!” he shouted, speeding like lightning into the midst of the black-robed cultivators. His right hand shot out and latched onto the head of one of them, and he unleashed the Blood Demon Grand Magic. However, the power of absorption did nothing to the man.

The black robe was shredded to pieces, revealing a young man with the top of his head mangled and bloody. His face was pale as he cried out: “Our Daos are different! Your Dao is fabricated, and ours is real! You can’t do anything to us! We live and die… for the true Dao!”

Laughing, he faded away into death.

Meng Hao’s heart trembled. Then, another black-robed cultivator appeared in front of him, and he unleashed the Life-Extermination Fist. Rumbling could be heard as his opponent trembled and coughed up blood.

His cowl was destroyed, revealing his face. He was a middle-aged man who, shockingly, had a scale on his forehead! He was a Demonic cultivator!

“For the true Dao!” he cried, and then began to laugh maniacally before exploding into bits.

There was no change in facial expression whatsoever on the part of the other black-robed cultivators, nor did they speak. However, they attacked with increased ferocity, unleashing a biting wind that swept across Meng Hao. Suddenly, nine Sea Dragons roared toward him with gaping maws.

The more Meng Hao fought, the more shocked he was. He was getting a very strange feeling from these black-robed enemies.

Frowning, he summoned the Paragon Bridge, which instantly emanated crushing pressure, forcing the black-robed cultivators away. Meng Hao made a grasping motion, and the bone-tip spear appeared in his hand, which he stabbed toward the forehead of one of the black-robed cultivators. The cowl of the robe was thrown back, revealing a woman. Despite the fact that she was about to die, she showed no fear.

“For the true Dao!” she said coolly before exploding.

Meng Hao’s hair was beginning to stand on end. If by this point he didn’t realize who these people were, then he didn’t deserve to be the shrewd and cunning Crown Prince of the Fang Clan. As soon as he saw their cultivation bases, he immediately thought back to the “warning” given by Jian Daozi when they had first arrived in the Ninth Nation.

Back by the waterfall, after seeing the Demon Mantra: Mesmeric Rebuke in use, he had employed his Celestial Vision technique to observe the figure hidden behind the water.

He had begun to make speculations even at that time. Later, he saw all of the other cultivators sinking into their desires, and he suddenly became aware that it was possible to become lost within the Windswept Realm. Then he realized that… it was probably possible to stay there, to choose to not leave, to remain behind in the Windswept Realm, eternally lost therein.

Back then, he had considered that as a possibility. Now, facing these black-robed cultivators, Meng Hao received confirmation of his suspicions.

“You people… are cultivators from the Mountain and Sea Realm!” he roared. “You are from previous generations who came to the Windswept

Realm and then lost yourself in your desires! In the end, you chose not to leave!!”

The black-robed cultivators didn’t answer his accusation. Instead, they simply looked at him and said, “For the true Dao!”

Their voices were calm, and even seemed to contain some strange power that left Meng Hao in shock. Next, the black-robed cultivators shot forward in attack.

Booms rang out. Meng Hao’s eyes were bloodshot, and his clothes were spattered in the blood of his enemies. Meanwhile, up above in the necropolis, the air rippled as seventeen figures suddenly appeared. These were the people who had been dispatched by the man in the Imperial robes. Black cowls obscured their facial features, and from the ripples coming from the cultivation base of the man in the lead, he actually had ten extinguished Soul Lamps.

When the man spoke, his voice was incredibly ancient: “Hear the orders of the Emperor: kill Meng Hao; fiendish formation, return to your positions; resume the blood refinement!”

All of a sudden, all of the blood pits began to boil madly. The blood swords hovering over them flew over to the black-robed man, swirled around him, and then lined up into formation, after which they shot down into the tunnel toward Meng Hao.

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# Chapter 1127: You’re Zong Wuya!

In almost the same moment that the blood-colored swords began to speed through the air, the bubbling blood in the ninety-eight pits suddenly shrank down, revealing ninety-eight cultivators.

Each and every one was an old man, and they were all radiating blood-colored light that seemed to burst with evil. Suddenly, their eyes opened, and what could be seen was not the clarity of normal eyes, but a murky, bloody glow. It was as if they weren’t even conscious or aware of themselves, as if they had been transformed into puppets that merely followed orders or acted on instinct.

One of those old men was Jian Daozi, who no longer looked shrewd and intelligent like before. However, he didn’t seem ancient and decrepit like before either, but instead seemed to burst with the vigor of his prime.

All of them began to breathe, and when they exhaled, the air of evil around them seemed to increase.

“Kill the intruder Meng Hao!” said the black-robed man, his voice hoarse and raspy. Instantly, the ninety-eight blood-colored cultivators roared and flew into the air. Currently, their cultivation bases were no longer at the Cauldron Seeking stage; they had broken through from the Spirit Realm and into the Immortal Realm!

Although they had just broken through, the evil auras that surrounded them made them seem extremely eerie. Ninety-eight old men became beams of blood-colored light that sped through the air toward the pit where Meng Hao was located.

“You people too! Get in there!” the black-robed leader said to the other men who had come with him. One by one, they blurred away, vanishing.

The black-robed leader was the last one to do anything. It was impossible to see his face or his expression, but he seemed to be lost in thought for a moment before waving his hand and causing a black light to spread out. It spread out to cover the entire area, apparently sealing it.

Having accomplished this, the man began to slowly walk toward the pit where Meng Hao was located.

“Meng Hao of the Ninth Nation, the Ninth Mountain, the Ninth Sea….” he murmured. It was almost as if he were recalling something from the past. He sighed.

In the tunnel below the necropolis, Meng Hao threw his head back and roared as he unleashed a fist strike with both hands, killing the final members of the first wave of black-robed cultivators.

This battle was being fought with only sixty percent of his cultivation base. To defeat dozens of Ancient Realm opponents in such a way was difficult to say the least. Currently, he was coughing up blood, and his face was ashen. He suddenly looked up at the mouth of the tunnel, where a bright red glow could be seen. At that point, numerous red-colored flying swords could be seen screaming toward him, followed by the explosive, evil auras of the ninety-eight blood-colored cultivators. As soon as their crimson eyes locked onto him, they howled like beasts and charged toward him in attack.

Meng Hao’s eyes widened as he realized that the flying swords were actually sentient. Both the swords and the cultivators seemed to be operating on the same source of power as the blood-colored ice block, except on a much weaker level.

Meng Hao frowned, and then let out a cold harrumph. The starstone in his left eye melted and spread out to cover his entire body, transforming him into a planet. He then flew toward the incoming flying swords, causing rumbling sounds to echo out.

He shot forth like a meteor, taking up nearly the entire diameter of the tunnel. When he slammed into the flying swords, a huge boom echoed out, and they were sent spinning back toward the blood-colored cultivators. The entire tunnel was thrown into chaos. Although there were quite a few of the blood-colored cultivators, because the tunnel was so narrow, they were unable to scatter or dodge, and were immediately bombarded by the full force of Meng Hao’s One Thought Stellar Transformation.

When it slammed into the men, blood erupted out, and all of them were ripped to shreds. However, it was at this point that the seventeen black-robed men arrived, incantation gestures flashing in their hands.

Waving their fingers toward Meng Hao, they roared: “Star-Slaughtering Dao of Lightning!”

As soon as the words left their mouths, the rumbling of thunder could be heard. Seventeen lightning bolts then shot out from the black-robed men, merging together in mid-air to form a single violet-colored lightning bolt!

As soon as it appeared, it emanated a mighty power of expulsion. It seemed powerful enough to reject and expel Heaven and Earth, to reject natural laws, to reject Essence!

At the same time, the world seemed to be rejecting and expelling it!

Meng Hao’s mind trembled; when he looked at the violet lightning, he got the feeling that this was something which shouldn’t even exist!

It was not in accord with Heaven and Earth, did not conform to natural laws, and was not harmonious with Essence. The instant it appeared, it seemed to be a Dao from another world. This was not something from the Windswept Realm, nor from the Mountain and Sea Realm. It was a thing of pure destruction, and when it shot toward Meng Hao and slammed into his One Thought Stellar Transformation, the planet cracked and exploded. Meng Hao appeared, blood spraying from his mouth as he was sent tumbling backward.

Simultaneously, time seemed to flow in reverse for all of the blood-colored cultivators who had just exploded. They rapidly reformed, as if they were eternally unkillable, after which they immediately shot forward in attack. Furthermore, each one grabbed a blood-colored sword, making them look exactly like sword cultivators.

Meng Hao had an unsightly expression on his face. Behind the ninety-eight blood-colored cultivators were seventeen black-robed attackers. Meng Hao felt threatened, threatened to the extreme, and what was causing it wasn't the cultivation bases of these people, but the divine abilities and magical techniques they used.

Almost in the same moment that the blood-colored cultivators closed on him, Meng Hao began to stride forward, unleashing the Seven God Steps. His power rose explosively, and was even amplified because of the constraints of the tunnel. It was when he took his sixth step that he balled his right hand into a fist and unleashed the Life-Extermination Fist.

Rumbling filled the air. This strike was filled with the power to exterminate all forms of life, and was backed by the full strength of his Ancient Realm fleshly body. A tempest sprang up, which ripped through the tunnel and slammed into the eternally unkillable blood-colored cultivators. They were instantly shredded into a bloody mist, and even as they began to reform, Meng Hao passed through them to close in on the seventeen black-robed cultivators.

The cultivators quickly began to perform incantation gestures. Any one of these people who faced Meng Hao alone on the battlefield would not be his match, not without some special Daoist magic. However, when they joined forces to attack, it was a different story.

As they performed their incantation gestures, violet light swirled around them and formed into a long, violet spear, which instantly stabbed toward Meng Hao.

It moved with incredible speed, causing intense ripples to emanate out, the same type that both rejected the world around it, and was likewise rejected.

However, this time, Meng Hao suddenly waved his right hand, causing dozens of black pods to fly out. Popping sounds could be heard as they transformed into blackpod imps, which screeched as they shot toward the black-robed cultivators, intent on possessing them.

The black-robed men possessed unique and bizarre Daoist magics, but they were still just ordinary living beings with souls, and were still in danger of being possessed. Furthermore, they were in the middle of casting magic, and as such, the blackpod imps were easily able to enter their bodies.

The chances for the blackpod imps to successfully possess them were small, but actually, Meng Hao didn’t need them to succeed. When they failed, they were ejected and made divine sense attacks.

The black-robed cultivators instantly began to tremble. At the same time, the Daoist magic they had unleashed, the terrifying violet spear, began to twist in mid-flight, and then simply dissipated.

In that same moment, Meng Hao flew through the air, right hand clenching and then smashing toward them as the Life-Extermination.

Just when his blow was about to land, a cold snort echoed out from behind the black-robed men, filled with an archaic air. A shadowy figure walked out, another man in a black robe, but taller than the others. This was their leader, the last man to join the fight.

He moved with incredible speed, and was soon directly in front of Meng Hao.

“The Emperor on the National Aura Mountain sensed that someone had broken into this place. Meng Hao, you shouldn’t have done this. And by the way, that is not the proper usage of the Life-Extermination Fist.” As the man spoke, he clenched his right hand into a fist, and suddenly, a will of life-extermination exploded out in the form of a single punch.

Meng Hao’s eyes went wide. He found the man’s words to be extremely strange, but had no time to think about why. The two of them sailed through the tunnel toward each other until their fists slammed together.

A deafening boom echoed out, causing everything to shake. The necropolis itself seemed like it might collapse; cracking sounds rang out as the tunnel began to grow unstable. Blood oozed out of Meng Hao’s mouth as he was sent tumbling backward by the force of the blow.

The black-robed man was also shaken, and fell back several paces. When he looked up, his black cowl still covered his face, making it impossible to make out his features. However, his eyes shone brightly with bizarre light. He began to walk forward again, clenching his hand into a fist and unleashing another attack.

“Bedevilment!” he said coolly, his voice hoarse. He punched out, and a wildly domineering air rose up. It was as if this man were the only important thing in the world. He seemed to enter a state of Bedevilment in which he would unleash a blow capable of sacrificing everything.

Meng Hao’s face fell; the injuries he had sustained earlier had not recovered, causing him to be at a severe disadvantage. However, when he saw the black-robed man unleashing the Bedevilment Fist, he stopped moving backward and instead unleashed his own Bedevilment Fist.

A huge boom rang out when their fists met, and everything shook violently. The necropolis began showing even more obvious signs of collapsing than before.

Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth, and he was sent flying backward like a kite with its string cut. He was pushed back so far that soon he was near the entrance to the secret chamber. He was panting as he looked up at the black-robed old man. The man’s cultivation base fluctuations put him at ten extinguished Soul Lamps. Furthermore, the explosive level of his body cultivation gave Meng Hao the sensation that this man was even stronger than Dao-Heaven!

The old man strode forward, unleashing another punch. “God Slaying!”

In that exact same moment, Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly flickered, and he roared, “You’re Zong Wuya!” [1]

In response to the words, the old man trembled. Meng Hao took advantage of that distraction to take a deep breath and unleash his own fist strike.

“God Slaying!”

It was at that point that, in the secret chamber below, the mastiff let out a howl. It was a howl filled with determination, as if the mastiff had reached a critical juncture in the possession process, and was going all out. It would be reborn and replace the renegade spirit, or die in the process!

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# Chapter 1128: True Dao?

Both Meng Hao and the black-robed man unleashed the God-Slaying Fist!

It was the last of the three body cultivation fists, which combined the will of extermination, the voluntary self-immolation for the sake of bedevilment, and materialized the will of slaughtering gods. It was… the God-Slaying Fist!

Furthermore, because Meng Hao had the accumulation of the qi flow of the Windswept Realm, it also had some of the will of Heaven in it, making it the absolute peak fist attack of the Immortal Emperor Realm.

As for the black-robed man, his God-Slaying Fist came from having experienced countless bloody battles. He had honed his killing will to the extent that apparently… he had actually killed Gods, and fused that will into his fist strike. When he struck out, Heaven and Earth crumbled, and a massive wind kicked up.

The two of them shot through the tunnel like lightning, their fists on a direct collision course.

A massive, shocking rumbling sound shook everything, and that was before their fists even touched. The tunnel appeared to be on the verge of being ripped to shreds, as if it were being torn apart by two enormous hands.

Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth, but his killing intent was already raging. Roaring, he pushed forward until he and the black-robed old man actually made contact.

This was a God-Slaying Fist going directly up against another God-Slaying Fist!

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOMMMM!

The area around them exploded. Massive vibrations ripped through Meng Hao, and blood sprayed out of his mouth yet again. An indescribable and yet familiar force surged back toward him from the black-robed old man. It flowed up his right arm and then filled his entire body, which seemed as if it were about to explode.

The two Ancient Realm fleshly body Soul Lamps in Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, and then emanated brilliant light. His Eternal stratum surged to life, and his cultivation base exploded with energy, all of it to counteract the God-Slaying power.

Amidst intense rumbling, blood oozed out of his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. The massive power shoved him backward relentlessly before he finally ground to a halt in front of the entrance to the secret chamber.

However, the black-robed old man was shaken as well. Blood oozed out of his mouth as he staggered backward seven or eight paces. When he looked up, his eyes shone with a strange light, and he hunched over like a bow ready to unleash an arrow. Then he burst into movement, flying through the tunnel at incredible speed. In the blink of an eye, he was closing in on the entrance to the secret chamber, where Meng Hao was.

As he neared, he could see into the secret chamber; the parrot and meat jelly were in full view, as was the blood-colored ice block.

“So you’re here for that,” he said slowly, flicking his sleeve. Almost instantly, light streamed out of his sleeve, forming into a magical symbol which sped past Meng Hao and headed toward the blood-colored ice block.

Meng Hao began to pant, and his eyes glittered with a cold light. He waved his finger, unleashing the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex toward the incoming old man.

The Eighth Demon Sealing Hex transformed into invisible threads which instantly bound the old man up. He lurched to a halt, but after a moment, his body began to expand, and he forced himself free of the Hexing magic.

In the instant that he did, Meng Hao performed an incantation gesture and unleashed a Daoist magic onto the flying blood-colored magical symbol. Before it could get close to the blood-colored ice block, it dissipated.

The old man’s eyes glittered, and he suddenly spoke in an archaic voice: “Daos can be classified as true and false. There are fabricated Daos, and genuine Daos…. My Dao, is from outside the Mountains and Seas, a Dao above Daos!”

As he spoke, he traced a circle in the air in front of him with his right hand which, when completed, roiled with an air of chaos.

An intense power of expulsion appeared yet again. Simultaneously, a beam of light shot out from inside the circle; it was a violet light, something that seemed capable of smashing all magics, and it sped directly toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s Daoist magic was instantly crushed, and dissipated without a sound. Then the violet light began to fade. However, before it disappeared completely, it transformed into a violet hand that grabbed toward Meng Hao.

Rumbling sounds echoed out as Meng Hao fought back with all the power he could muster. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and he fell back. Behind him, cracks were spreading out over the blood-colored ice block, as a faint roar could be heard from within; an urgent, enraged roar.

As he fell back, Meng Hao’s expression turned vicious. Throughout his years of practicing cultivation, he had faced many deadly situations. Most of the time, he was able to sweep through them and come out on top. It wouldn’t be proper to call him invincible, but you could say that very few opponents were a match for him.

After arriving in the Windswept Realm, he had likewise swept forward, virtually unstoppable. He had fought Han Qinglei, Lin Cong, and had even killed another Echelon cultivator. But then he had met the intensely powerful Dao-Heaven, and his previously unstoppable momentum faltered.

Then he arrived in the Third Nation, and during the course of the battle had been forced into his current predicament. Because of his pride and self-confidence, he was feeling a bit overwhelmed, even stifled. It almost felt unfair.

“I’m in the Echelon. I’m Meng Hao, Crown Prince of the Fang Clan!

“In my life of cultivation, I have experienced much enlightenment, and have benefited from a lot of good fortune. Even Dao-Heaven will only maintain his edge on me for a short time. I will defeat… everyone! Even you, Zong Wuya!” Meng Hao’s eyes were shot with blood as he ceased any thoughts of retreating, and instead began to charge the black-robed old man.

As he did, his body flickered, and he transformed into a huge golden roc which flashed like a streak of gold toward the old man, and then slashed at him with vicious claws.

The black-robed old man sighed, once again tracing a circle in the air and pushing it forward. Violet flames burned, transforming it into a ring of fire that soared toward Meng Hao.

“Your Dao is a fabricated Dao,” the old man said coolly. “There’s no need to try to put on airs.” In the mostly destroyed tunnel behind him, the blood-colored cultivators and the other black-robed old men were approaching. Meng Hao was now completely trapped, without any avenue of escape available.

“Daos are inner paths of the heart, Zong Wuya,” Meng Hao said. “How could they possibly be categorized as fabricated or genuine?! How close-minded!” The golden roc sped toward the violet ring of fire. When they slammed into each other, the violet flames flickered brightly, and the Dao of Meng Hao’s golden roc body seemed be dispelled. The golden roc rapidly vanished, and Meng Hao returned to human form, his face ashen as he coughed up a mouthful of blood.

He was shocked to find that he was incapable of overpowering this type of violet Daoist magic.

“When a fabricated Dao encounters a true Dao,” the old man said, “the fabricated Dao becomes more illusory, and the true Dao becomes more corporeal.” He drew another circle, and it was once again violet. However, this time there were no violet flames; instead, it was a violet ring of lightning.

Rumbling could be heard as the two violet rings shot toward Meng Hao.

“Do you understand?” the old man asked Meng Hao.

Cracking sounds could be heard coming from the red block of ice behind Meng Hao in the secret chamber. More cracks had spread out across its surface, and the aura of Immortality was emanating out, and growing stronger. The roaring coming from inside was becoming more distinct, and more urgent.

A critical juncture had arrived. Determination filled Meng Hao’s eyes as he raised his right hand, unleashing another God-Slaying Fist. This time, he seemed to be holding absolutely nothing back. Despite being seriously injured, he let out three successive punches.

The first two were sent against the two violet rings, and the third one was directed at the floor of the tunnel!

Intense booms rang out. The God-Slaying Fist was the most explosive power he could unleash with his fleshly body, and although the violet rings could cause Daos to vanish, they could do nothing about fleshly body strength.

The two violet rings were instantly shattered by Meng Hao’s two fist strikes. As for his third fist strike, when it struck the tunnel, everything began to collapse. Massive amounts of dust billowed out, completely obscuring Meng Hao’s vision.

At the same time, Meng Hao dashed backward into the secret chamber!

Flickering light filled the chamber as it was apparently affected by the collapse of the tunnel outside. However, nothing had been significantly damaged. The statues were still there, and the blood-colored ice block was now completely blurry. The blood-colored bat was no longer visible inside; the only thing that could be seen was a turbid red haze.

Numerous cracks spread out across the surface of the ice block, and an intense Immortal Realm aura was emanating out. In fact, by this point, that aura was at the peak of the Immortal Realm. The howling grew more anxious, as if the mastiff were worried about Meng Hao’s safety.

The parrot and meat jelly were completely focused on assisting the mastiff in the possession process. They could spare no attention for Meng Hao, nor could they afford to let anything disturb their work.

When Meng Hao entered the secret chamber, more cracking sounds could be heard from the block of ice, and the aura grew stronger.

He began to pant. He had no time to examine the situation closely; time was of the essence. Because of all the chaos caused by the collapse of the tunnel, he had managed to buy a little bit of time. His second Nirvana Fruit appeared in his palm; due to his injured state, had been unwilling to absorb it again. However, he currently didn’t seem to have any other options.

Taking a deep breath, he lifted the Nirvana Fruit up and pushed it down onto his forehead. Immediately, rumbling sounds filled his body, and his energy spiked. He grew larger, and the azure light of the Allheaven Immortal Realm erupted around him.

Soon, the entire secret chamber was filled with the azure light, and his energy was rocketing up.

It was at this point that, back in the collapsed tunnel, the black-robed leader brushed the dust and rubble off of his clothing and began to stride forward in an attempt to reach the secret chamber.

Ten breaths of time passed, and then a massive boom could be heard. Dust flew out in all directions as the black-robed old man burst into the secret chamber in a flash of light.

In that exact moment, Meng Hao looked up. He was surrounded by azure light, and was now in the Allheaven Immortal Realm. His eyes were filled with the intense desire to fight; he took a step forward and once again unleashed the God-Slaying Fist!

That fist was now vastly more powerful than the version he had used only moments ago. Originally, the black-robed old man hadn’t paid much attention to it, but now, his face fell, and he stopped in place. Then, he also unleashed the God-Slaying Fist.

A huge boom rang out as the two of them slammed into each other in midair. This time, Meng Hao didn’t fall back. The one who fell back was the black-robed old man, his expression that of shock. At the same time, Meng Hao let out a roar like that of an explosive dragon as he charged into battle.

Once again, he relied on that same fighting style that he usually used; he seized the initiative and began to domineer his opponent!

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# Chapter 1129: The Blood Mastiff Flies!

The black-robed man’s face flickered as he was once again sent falling back. The intense level of power Meng Hao now wielded had struck fear even in Dao-Heaven’s heart. The black-robed man might have a powerful fleshly body and bizarre Daoist magic, but fighting with Meng Hao in his current state caused him to feel immense pressure.

Rumbling filled the air, and blood sprayed out of the man’s mouth. Even as he fell back, Meng Hao closed in for another fist strike.

The man’s eyes went wide, and he performed a double-handed incantation gesture.

“True Dao!” he barked. A blinding sea of violet light erupted in front of him, which became a gigantic violet hand that flew toward Meng Hao.

“Smash all magics? Dispel all Daos?” Meng Hao said with a cold harrumph. He performed an incantation gesture, and the Essence of Divine Flame appeared. Backed by the power of the Allheaven Immortal Realm, the Essence of Divine Flame spread out in all directions with terrifying power. Rumbling sounds could be heard as it slammed into the enormous violet hand.

This time, no Dao dispelling effect occurred. The violet hand was incapable of banishing the Divine Flame, and could only resist it. Rumbling could be heard as the Divine Flame began to fade. At the same time, the violet hand collapsed.

The remaining Divine Flame continued on toward the black-robed old man, instantly engulfing him. The man’s face fell, and he rapidly fell back in retreat. However, the blood-colored cultivators and other black-robed old men behind him were not so fast.

In the blink of an eye, the divine flame swept over and enveloped them. Miserable shrieks rang out. Despite possessing undying bodies, the blood-colored cultivators were destroyed nonetheless.

As for the black-robed men, they let out bloodcurdling screams as they were transformed into ash.

The leader of the black-robed men was completely shocked as he fell back. He performed another incantation gesture, causing boundless violet light to appear. It transformed into a series of Daoist magics and divines abilities, which then strung together to form a huge net which shot toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao waved his hand, letting loose another divine ability which shattered the huge net. The black-robed man’s face fell. Blood oozed out of his mouth, and he fell back again. Meng Hao was just about to go on the offensive again, when all of a sudden, his entire body spasmed beyond his control. Intense pain radiated from his forehead as the Nirvana Fruit fruit emerged and fell down. He caught it, but as he did, an intense wave of weakness swept through him.

He coughed up a mouthful of blood and staggered back a bit. He now had no offensive power left whatsoever. He felt empty, and he immediately began to simply float down toward the ground.

Seeing this, the black-robed old man quickly shot toward Meng Hao; he was on him in the blink of an eye. Shockingly, the attack he used was yet again the God-Slaying Fist.

Meng Hao smiled bitterly. He had no more energy left, and his vision dimmed. Exhaustion filled him, and despite the deadly situation, there was nothing he could do to stimulate himself.

As the black-robed man closed in, a roar of rage suddenly echoed out from within the blood-colored ice block. The ice suddenly shattered, sending chunks flying in all directions. A blood-red streak shot through the air, instantly covering Meng Hao to protect him from the old man’s fist strike.

A boom rang out, and the old man was visibly rocked. Blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth, and the backlash sent him flying backward. At the same time, a muffled grunt could be heard from within the blood-red light. Next, the blood-colored light turned into a mist, within which could suddenly be seen the mastiff’s enormous head. Scowling viciously, it lunged toward the black-robed man with gaping maw, as if to consume him.

The man’s face fell, and he retreated further, avoiding the attack. However, more blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth.

“Possession!” the old man cried. “You… you were using this beast to possess the Blood Bat?!?!”

Meng Hao panted as the awakened mastiff swirled around him, pouring life force energy into him, reviving him. When he saw the red mist around him, and the mastiff’s head, a familiar sensation filled him, and he couldn’t help but smile.

“It interrupted the fusion process to save you,” said the parrot. “It will take some luck to find another opportunity like it.”

The parrot and meat jelly looked exhausted. After glancing at Meng Hao for a moment, they streaked back into his bag of holding.

The mastiff now emanated powerful fluctuations of the Ancient Realm; it was clearly on par with a human cultivator with ten extinguished Soul Lamps.

It could have been even more powerful; opportunities to possess renegade spirits were extremely rare in the universe. However, Meng Hao was its master, its family. The only reason it wanted to get more powerful was to protect him. Therefore… if Meng Hao fell into a deadly crisis, then it would not choose to continue to power up. After all, if it lost its master, its life would have no meaning.

It was a loyal dog, and it was entirely correct to say that it lived for Meng Hao!

A gentle light could be seen in Meng Hao's eyes as he looked at the mastiff, which threw its head back and roared. Cracking sounds could be heard from inside the mist, which then coalesced to form the mastiff's body. Fierce bone spurs stuck out all over it, and its teeth were razor sharp. It was blood-red, like a gigantic and terrifying wild beast. Furthermore, it now sported two enormous, blood-colored wings!

The mastiff looked more fierce than ever, like some sort of fiendish blood god. Its eyes radiated a seemingly infinite coldness and ferocity toward the world. It was as if, to the mastiff, there was no such thing as good or evil, right or wrong. There was only… its master!

It looked fierce, brutal, and cold. Any person who lacked courage would instantly be terrified just by looking at it.

Even many of the most ferocious creatures in existence would tremble in fear at a single glance.

There was only one person who this terrifying mastiff would allow to sit on its back, who it would wag its tail for. That person was… the person who had raised it from the time it was small. Meng Hao.

He was the one and only person who could do such things!

Meng Hao sat down on the mastiff's back, and it roared. It flapped its wings, then flew up toward the surface of the land above. Everything trembled around it, collapsing, leaving behind an enormous crater as it emerged into the sky.

As it flew out, it apparently broke through some type of seal which had been in place over the area. At the same time, it grew even larger. Soon it was 300 meters long, and as it flew, it let out an astonishing roar that caused everything to shake, and caused a huge wind to spring up.

It was at this point that an enraged cry could be heard rising up into the sky. The sound came from none other than the top of the Third Nation’s National Aura Mountain.

“Kill him!” roared the man in the imperial robes. “Get that blood crystal back!”

In the moment that the mastiff flew up into the air, he was able to sense that the blood-colored ice block had shattered. He also sensed that the blood-colored bat had been consumed, and that as a result… the mastiff had taken its place!

As his roar echoed out, numerous incredibly powerful black-robed cultivators appeared around him. They almost instantly transformed into beams of light that shot toward Meng Hao.

The strongest were the three black-robed men in the lead position, especially the center-most of that group. He wore the same black robe as the others, but his face was not covered. He was a middle-aged man with no hair, and a tranquil expression that seemed to embody wisdom.

As soon as they took to flight, they emanated incredible pressure. When Meng Hao felt it, his face flickered. Patting the mastiff, he said, “Come on, let’s go!”

Immediately, the mastiff threw its head back and roared again. Then it transformed into a beam of blood-colored light that shot off into the distance.

As time passed, more black-robed cultivators converged on the area. At the same time, the black-robed man that Meng Hao had fought underground emerged from within the rubble of the crater. Instead of joining the groups of other black-robed men, he flew up toward the bald cultivator with the expression of wisdom. Shockingly… he merged into that man!

In the blink of an eye, the two became one. The middle-aged man's appearance then changed. He looked older, and yet, a Quasi-Dao aura suddenly erupted from him!!

Although he wasn't truly in that Realm, he was close enough to be considered a Quasi-Dao expert!

"Meng Hao," the man murmured. "Ninth Mountain. Ninth Sea…." His eyes flickered with reminiscence, and he sighed lightly. Then he shot through the air in pursuit, followed by all the other black-robed men.

The incredible speed with which he moved ensured that he quickly left the other black-robed cultivators behind. He was like an arrow that pierced through the sky with unbelievable speed.

As for the mastiff, it was moving so fast that it left afterimages behind as it shot through the Third Nation toward the central temple region.

Meng Hao sat on its back, consuming medicinal pills, focusing all his efforts on recovery. His Eternal stratum was hard at work as he took advantage of every moment to try to reach the highest level of power possible. Without being at that peak of his power, there were simply too many dangers within the Windswept Realm.

He could also sense the intense killing aura that was approaching him from behind.

Thanks to the mastiff's incredible speed, they quickly left the Third Nation and entered the region of the central temple.

That was also the location of the grand War of Nine Nations, and the cultivators from the various Nine Mountains and Seas. Although there weren't many people left, everyone had chosen to remain in this area. They knew that this was the area that, although it seemed dangerous, was actually the safest place to be.

Anyone who returned to the Nation from whence they came could be dragged into the fierce fighting of the Echelon cultivators, which was definitely the most dangerous possible situation to be in.

Furthermore, all of the cultivators had come to the realization that the central temple region was the most suitable location in which to control their desires.

As soon as Meng Hao entered the area, the cultivators and mortals engaged in deadly fighting all looked up at the enormous mastiff, and gasped in shock.

“What is that?!?!”

“Heavens! How could a blood-colored beast like that show up in the Windswept Realm!?!?”

Soon, the shocked mortals and cultivators realized that someone was sitting atop the mastiff.

“Look, on it’s back… it’s a person!!”

“It’s Meng Hao!” Fan Dong’er and Bei Yu were in the central temple region, and they almost immediately caught sight of the mastiff, and Meng Hao on its back.

It was at this point that the bald Quasi-Dao cultivator let out a slight sigh as he left the Third Nation and entered the central temple region.

“It’s been a long time… since I was here,” he murmured softly.

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# Chapter 1130: Muddling the Dao!

In the instant that the bald cultivator entered the central temple region, Meng Hao opened his eyes and looked over his shoulder at the man.

The man’s gaze also came to fall upon Meng Hao, and he smiled.

It was a gentle smile, filled with seemingly boundless warmth. It caused the wounds of all the mortals down below to begin to heal. Even the cultivators trembled as they felt their qi and blood flourishing.

The man proceeded forward, smiling, to appear directly in front of Meng Hao.

“Meng Hao,” he said, “you managed to commandeer the blood crystal and flee the Third Nation. It seems you have the qualifications to be awakened. There’s no need for you to remain in this fabricated world. Come with me to see the true Heaven and Earth. Then you will understand… the truth.”

The mastiff halted in midair, growling and glaring vigilantly at the bald cultivator. There was something familiar about this man’s aura, and something terrifying and stifling.

Meng Hao’s eyes widened as he looked back silently at the man. He seemed to possess no killing intent whatsoever, and the words he had just spoken were so strange that Meng Hao was somewhat befuddled.

Down below, the mortals had ceased combat, and were looking up at the black-robed man floating there in the sky. All of sudden, people began to drop to their knees and kowtow. Soon all of the soldiers of the various Nations were on their knees.

The cultivators from the various Mountains looked on with flickering expressions. This bald cultivator filled their hearts with fear, and they could sense that he overflowed with the violence of a raging sea.

However, that ferocity also seemed to be under control. The only thing he revealed was calm.

Fan Dong’er and Bei Yu felt their hearts trembling. The exchanged a vigilant glance, and then began to back up slowly.

“I don’t want to fight with you again,” the man said, looking at Meng Hao with a sincere expression. “Therefore… just come with me. What do you say? Follow, and you will face no danger to your life. In fact, you’ll even be able to acquire some good fortune.

“Because of the matter of the blood crystal, your Dao and our Dao are now similar. What is yours, is ours. There is no difference between the two. You have no reason to fear.”

Meng Hao’s eyes widened. As soon as the man used the word ‘again,’ he realized what was going on. After looking at the man closely, his heart began to pound.

“You’re… Zong Wuya!” Meng Hao said slowly.

“What you fought before was simply my clone,” Zong Wuya said softly. “This is the real me, Junior Brother Meng Hao.”

A complex expression appeared on Meng Hao’s face. He could sense the incredible pressure of the man’s cultivation base, and knew that he couldn’t fight him. Even in the Allheaven Immortal Realm, it would still be difficult for him to contend with a Quasi-Dao expert.

Meng Hao remembered seeing Zong Wuya’s name on the golden gate stone stele in the Nine Seas God World. Before he had gained enlightenment of the third body cultivation fist strike, Zong Wuya’s name had been listed in 1st place.

Later, he had investigated a bit, only to find out that there was no Zong Wuya anywhere in the Nine Seas God World.

After a moment silence, Meng Hao said, “You came to the Windswept Realm, but never left. You decided to stay behind, just like all the other black-robed cultivators. All of you are Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators who came here throughout the years but chose to remain. Obviously you didn’t succumb to your desires. Why did you stay?”

“Some people choose to stay because they get lost in their desires,” Zong Wuya said calmly. “Others stay to pursue their obsessions. As for me, I chose to stay… because of the true Dao.”

“True Dao?” Meng Hao asked.

Zong Wuya looked at him and smiled. Then he waved his hand, causing a gentle wind to spring up. It carefully picked up everyone down on the ground below, even Fan Dong’er and Bei Yu. “I’d like to discuss the Dao with my young friend here. Ladies and gentlemen, please give us some privacy. Many thanks to you.” The wind then carried them all to a location off in the distance.

With that, Zong Wuya floated down to the ground and sat down cross-legged, then looked up at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao frowned. After a moment of thought, he floated down to sit across from Zong Wuya.

A gleam of reminiscence appeared in Zong Wuya’s eyes as he slowly said, “Meng Hao, in your opinion, what is true, and what is false?”

“True and false are like inside and out,” Meng Hao replied calmly. “Without what is true, that which is false cannot exist. However, as I mentioned to you earlier, when it comes to Daos… there is no such thing as true and false!”

“Well then, in your opinion, what is a Dao?” Zong Wuya’s expression was placid, but the reminiscence in his eyes grew even stronger as they continued to discuss the Dao.

Meng Hao didn’t need to think about the answer. He immediately responded: “The Dao is the obsession in your heart, the path that you choose to follow.”

“In that case, what is your Dao?”

“Freedom and independence!” Meng Hao said, his voice filled with decisiveness that could sever nails and chop iron.

“Freedom. Independence….” Smiling, Zong Wuya shook his head.

“What is freedom? And similarly, what is independence? Is freedom being free from all restrictions? Is independence an absence of all restraint? As you sit here in front of me, Heaven and Earth restrict you. The entire world restrains you.

“Look up, and you will see the sky. The sky weighs down on you. Beyond the Windswept Realm is the void, the Heavens. There are 33 Realms, all of them are also weighing down on you. Beyond those 33 Realms, are even more Realms and worlds. All of them are also pressing down on you.” Although Zong Wuya spoke calmly, his words were as incisive as the stabs of a sword. They even seemed to be filled with a strange power, as if every word he spoke were completely and utterly correct.

As his words entered Meng Hao’s ears, he trembled. He wasn’t sure why, but he suddenly thought back to the image painted by Shui Dongliu back on Planet South Heaven all those years ago, and had to ask himself if what existed at the top of that painting was actually the sky, or not…? 1

“What about morality and principles,” Zong Wuya continued, his wording growing more cutting. “Are they not restraints? Can you ignore them? Can you trample on them? Where does your freedom come from? Where does your independence come from?” His eyes glittered, and seemed to contain matchless wisdom.

“You are weak,” he said, staring Meng Hao in the eye. “When you meet powerful people, you have no freedom, nor any independence, not unless you are the most powerful person. However, the starry sky is wide, and the Heavens are vast. Perhaps when you think you are the most powerful person in existence, wouldn’t you always be wondering if there might be other people over the horizon who also view themselves to be at the ultimate pinnacle?”

“I–” Meng Hao was about to reply, but was cut off by Zong Wuya.

“You have an incorrect understanding of the Dao. Your freedom is not a Dao, it is an obsession of yours. And an obsession… is likewise not a Dao!”

His words echoed about, causing Meng Hao’s mind to reel.

“This is actually what I wanted to explain to you. Do you know what the true Dao is? It doesn’t matter if it’s you or other people, in all of the Mountain and Sea Realm… there is only one Dao. No matter what enlightenment or thought process goes into the Daos of others, what they pursue, are all fabricated Daos.

“Therefore, your Daoist magics and divine abilities, when faced against the true Dao that I follow, will be dispelled. That is because, when faced with what is true, fabrications will naturally fade away.”

Meng Hao was panting as he looked at Zong Wuya, as if his heart was filled with waves of shock. Meng Hao had never heard words like this spoken before, words that seemed designed to subvert everything he believed in.

Zong Wuya continued: “The life you live, your thoughts, your words, the things you have heard, the enlightenment you have achieved, are all falsehoods. None of it is real; it is all counterfeit. Meng Hao, reject the Echelon, and come experience the REAL world. I will take you, and together we will leave this place. You can contemplate the true Dao, and then you will understand… what the real world is!

“Don’t tell me you have never considered why Immortals are classified as true and false? False Immortals reach Immortal Ascension by being enlightened regarding the true Immortality of others!

“What about the Ancient Realm? It’s the same!

“And the Dao Realm…? Also the same!” Zong Wuya eyes shone with a strange light. Deep inside, that look of reminiscence grew stronger, almost as if he weren’t speaking to Meng Hao, but to himself.

It was almost as if these were words being spoken to him by someone else in the past, words that had stirred his heart, that had changed his life. Now, he was in the position occupied by whoever that person had been years ago. He was speaking shocking words to change Meng Hao’s life, and in the process… strengthening his own resolve!

“You live in a Paragon’s world, and that Paragon was not the Paragon who founded the Echelon, Sea Dream. No, he was the most powerful entity in the Paragon Immortal Realm, Paragon Nine Seals!

“You live in the world he created, and therefore, all of your enlightenment, has been regarding HIS Dao. In fact, the only Dao of the Mountain and Sea Realm is HIS Dao!

“Do you know what the end result of all this will be? I’ll tell you, Meng Hao. The end result is that all of you, every single cultivator in the Mountain and Sea Realm, are all just fuel, fuel being used to power the resurrection of Paragon Nine Seals!

“In the end… he will be resurrected, and all of you… will lose yourselves for all eternity. You will become his blood, his bones, and all the other parts of his body!

“Perhaps if you become powerful enough, you might even become one of his fingers!

“Therefore, that is why I say that all of those Daos are mere fabrications. All those Daos are falsehoods. Only if you leave this place will you ever gain enlightenment of your own Dao. Then, you can understand… what it actually feels like to acquire the true Dao. Then you will clearly understand… what the Dao is!

“Give up your fleshly body, and forsake your place in the Echelon. I will take your soul to experience the baptism of tribulation. It will wipe away that which seals you to the Mountain and Sea Realm. In the outside world, there are people who have already prepared a new fleshly body for you, a true fleshly body. Enter that fleshly body, break away from that which is fabricated, and you can become… a real person!

“Only at that time will you be qualified to truly pursue your freedom and independence.

“At that time you will see the true world. There, you will see the true starry sky, not the sun and moon which are mere materializations of Nine Seals’ eyes. The magic there is not the magic of the five elements, which are nothing more than the manifestation of Nine Seals’ five organs. The rivers and seas there are not made from Nine Seals’ blood, and it is not a Mountain and Sea Realm formed out of Nine Seals’ magical item.

“Most importantly of all, you will gain enlightenment that is NOT the Dao and will of Nine Seals, NOT the natural law of the Mountains and Seas, NOT the Dao of the Mountains and Seas!

“Meng Hao, why do you refuse to open your eyes! In the real world, the most radiant symbol is none other than the butterfly! In the real world, the lands flow with the true Dao! Gain enlightenment of the true Dao, and you can even become a Paragon!

“Leave this place with me. Come with me… to experience the true Dao.” When Zong Wuya finished speaking, his eyes were shining with even more intensity than before.

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# Chapter 1131: Xue’er!

Meng Hao’s mind seemed to be reeling. Zong Wuya’s voice apparently contained some sort of bizarre power, something that could interfere with Meng Hao’s mental faculties, leaving him panting. Zong Wuya’s words were mesmerizing, and he seemed powerless to extricate himself.

“The true Dao….” he murmured, his expression blank. He seemed to be at a complete loss, as if he had lost all powers of reasoning and judgment. It was as if one part of him was filled with everything he knew about the Mountain and Sea Realm, while at the same time, everything he believed had been turned on end by Zong Wuya.

Two trains of thought seemed to run through his mind, and they were currently battling back and forth.

Meng Hao trembled, panting, his eyes shot with blood.

“Come with me,” Zong Wuya said, his voice echoing lightly. “Our plan is already underway, and nobody can stop us…. Come with me, and we can go to the true world. With new fleshly bodies, we can thoroughly awaken.

“Then you will understand that everything I’ve told you… is true. Then you will truly be able to feel… the existence of the true Dao.”

Although some people could see Meng Hao and Zong Wuya chatting, no one could hear the words being spoken. Zong Wuya had ensured that all the sound was blocked.

It was at this point that a large group of black-robed men appeared, flying toward them from the direction of the Third Nation. Zong Wuya gave them a look, and they immediately stopped in place at the border. They hovered there waiting, none of them taking even a single move forward.

Meng Hao looked up at Zong Wuya. It seemed like a struggle, but he managed to say, “I need some time to think.”

“I understand that you can’t make a decision about something like this in such a short time,” Zong Wuya said softly. “Well, I’ve explained the truth to you. The decision is yours to make….” He looked at Meng Hao, and deep in his eyes were complicated emotions, and hope, although no one would be able to detect those things. Perhaps what he hoped for was that Meng Hao would be like him, that he would pursue the true Dao. Or perhaps he was thinking something else….

Only he himself knew.

“I’ll give you some time to think. However, during that time, you are not to leave the region of the central temple itself. Meng Hao… please do take care of yourself.” With a final piercing look at Meng Hao, he turned back toward the Third Nation.

Meng Hao stared in shock, not quite able to wrap his mind around Zong Wuya’s actions, or why he had left just like that.

As Zong Wuya turned and floated up into the air, his gaze happened to pass across the border connecting the Sixth Nation and the central temple region. His gaze casually lingered for a moment on one particular soldier in the Sixth Nation’s army. That soldier was trembling, seemingly having forgotten all about the desperate fighting.

Zong Wuya looked away and sighed. Once again, the complicated emotions, and the hope, rose up in his eyes.

As he made his way off, he murmured, “Meng Hao, what decision will you make…?”

Meng Hao watched him leaving, and when he saw Zong Wuya look over, he automatically looked over toward the Sixth Nation as well. However, he saw nothing unusual. Before Zong Wuya could get too far away, Meng Hao suddenly called after him, “What if… everything that YOU believe is true, is actually false?”

Zong Wuya didn’t stop moving. He continued onward, responding in a calm voice, “Without looking into the matter, the answer will never be revealed. I’m a cultivator, and the purpose of my life is to pursue the true Dao. It doesn’t matter if I fail or succeed. Either way, my heart will be at peace!”

Meng Hao’s heart trembled as he watched Zong Wuya pass over the border into the Third Nation. He waved his hand, and the other black-robed men all bowed their heads and followed him back into the Third Nation.

Meng Hao had a strange expression on his face. He sat there quietly for a long time. Zong Wuya’s words continued to echo in his mind, and yet, they were incapable of truly affecting his thoughts. In the very beginning, he had been slightly affected, but after that, everything had been an act on his part.

The things Zong Wuya had said seemed like the truth, and virtually any other cultivator who heard them would likely feel as if their entire world had been overturned. But Meng Hao… was the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer!

He was the true successor of Paragon Nine Seals, and also the future Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

His understanding of the Mountain and Sea Realm actually exceeded Zong Wuya’s. The Mountain and Sea Realm was not Paragon Nine Seals’ body, but rather, one of his magical treasures. Furthermore, everything that Zong Wuya had described as being an illusion, was in fact real.

Also, when Zong Wuya mentioned butterflies having something to do with the supposed ‘real’ world, Meng Hao couldn’t help but recall the vision he had experienced in which he saw nine butterflies dragging a land mass. 1

“Give up my current fleshly body and go to the supposed real world to get a new one? Gain enlightenment of the true Dao? It sounds really incredible, but… it’s completely preposterous!

“It’s a pack of lies, just like the lies used to incite the 3,000 Lower Realms into rebellion. That was why they joined forces to topple the Paragon Immortal Realm!

“Perhaps the words they used were even the same… the true Dao….

“Or, perhaps that saying is another one of the traps of the Windswept Realm to incite one’s desires!” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered.

“However, Zong Wuya was being very obvious that he deliberately gave me time to think. It even seemed like he was doing it on purpose…. But why?” When it came to true or false Daos, Meng Hao was by no means at a loss. His Dao heart was steadfast, and any talk about fabricated or true Daos was simply a matter of the perspective of the person speaking.

Such talk was a method of inciting rebellion in the 3,000 Lower Realms of long ago. It was something to confuse and bewilder the cultivators from the Mountain and Sea Realm who came to the Windswept Realm. Perhaps others might believe such talk, but Meng Hao… would not!

The reason he wouldn’t believe it was not only because he was the future Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm, or his vision of the nine butterflies dragging a land mass. There was another reason. The supposed true Dao that Zong Wuya spoke of, the true Dao which could dispel fabricated Daos… was completely destroyed by Meng Hao when he was an Allheaven Immortal.

The supposed true Dao could do nothing to shake the Allheaven Immortal Realm; if it were the actual ‘true’ Dao as Zong Wuya described, then how could that be explained away?

Meng Hao was not confused in the slightest about any of these things. The only thing that confused him was Zong Wuya’s attitude.

What he actually felt towards Meng Hao was a complete mystery.

“Now that I think about it, only when the Blood Mastiff flew out from the renegade spirit chamber did the person on the Third Nation’s National Aura Mountain that Zong Wuya called Emperor sense that the renegade spirit had been possessed….

“Something is off about that….” He began to pant, and his eyes glittered as he recalled all the details.

“The emperor on the National Aura Mountain sensed that someone trespassed into that chamber…. That was the first thing Zong Wuya said!” Meng Hao murmured inwardly. Suddenly a tremor ran through him. Then he thought back to how bursting out of the crater with the mastiff felt like breaking out of some sort of seal.

“Seal… there was a seal in place, and when the mastiff flew out, the seal was broken. That’s when the emperor on the National Aura Mountain could sense that there was a change to the renegade spirit….

“In other words, the fact that he sensed nothing before then indicates that someone didn’t want him to know!

“And that person, the person who put the seal in place… was Zong Wuya!!” Meng Hao looked toward the Third Nation, panting. All of a sudden, he put all the pieces together.

“He’s helping me!” he thought, shaking inwardly.

“He chased after me, and his cultivation base is clearly far greater than mine. And yet he didn’t attack me, but instead, talked about illusions and the true Dao. Then he even gave me time to think about the matter.

“It would be more accurate to say that he didn’t give me time to think, but rather, that he gave me time to recover from my injuries!

“Besides, his arguments about the fabricated and the true Daos could actually… have been made in a completely different fashion. There was no reason to just blatantly state those things out loud. He could easily have used a more subtle approach. That would have been a much more effective way to sway the listener.

But he didn’t do that. He just said things out plain and simple. Furthermore, he spoke in a way that deliberately revealed the flaws in his argument….”

Meng Hao took a deep breath. He suddenly flew up into the air, following the exact same path Zong Wuya had taken moments ago. He made sure to do things exactly as Zong Wuya had done, both in his flight trajectory and his posture and body movement. He also turned to look back at the Sixth Nation in exactly the same way.

From this vantage point, he could see the central temple area, as well as the Sixth Nation’s army, and the soldier Zong Wuya had looked at. The soldier wore a thoughtful expression, like that which might appear when contemplating enlightenment.

It was as if this person had heard the words exchanged between Meng Hao and Zong Wuya, and was now contemplating them and, at the same time, coming to a similar conclusion as Meng Hao.

Almost in the same moment that Meng Hao looked at the soldier, the soldier looked up, and their gazes met.

Meng Hao found himself staring at a pair of beautiful eyes. They seemed to contain heavenly bodies, even a starry sky. Anyone who looked into those eyes would want to be lost in them, and to never return.

When their gazes met, Meng Hao’s mind reeled. He quickly blinked his left eye several times in quick succession, utilizing his Celestial Vision technique. He rotated his cultivation base, and his perception of the world changed. The soldier’s appearance also changed; an illusion was dispelled, and the soldier suddenly looked like a young woman.

She wore a white robe and had skin like snow. She was spectacularly beautiful, with a sweet, charming smile and stunning features.

A moment later, the image of the woman vanished, to be replaced by that of the soldier. The soldier seemed shocked to have been noticed by Meng Hao. She blinked, thought for a moment, and then began to walk over.

No one noticed her passage, almost as if they couldn’t even see her. Not even the other cultivators could detect her. It was as if to Fan Dong’er and the others, this soldier didn’t even exist.

“I was just thinking about whether or not I should finally introduce myself, Elder Brother Meng, considering the circumstances….

“But since you sensed me, then I guess it would be appropriate to do it here.” As the soldier approached, her appearance changed yet again, turning into the same beautiful young woman he had seen with his Celestial Vision.

She covered her smile with a hand, and looked at him with sparkling eyes. She seemed completely beyond ordinary, as if she had stepped out from a celestial realm. Her snow-white skin and exquisite features didn’t even seem human. A white robe covered a lithe body, a body that could cause any man who saw it to drool with desire. Because of her, all living things in the area seemed to fade and darken.

Meng Hao was dazzled, but he recovered quickly. A moment later, his eyes flashed like lightning as he gave the young woman an icy stare.

“I’ve been waiting for you for quite some time, Fellow Daoist Xue’er,” he said coolly. A flash could be seen as he flew down to the ground and calmly watched her approach.

The mastiff remained behind him. It could also sense the woman’s existence, and it stared at her with brutal, icy eyes.

The young woman looked deeply at Meng Hao. In response to him immediately addressing her by name, she simply smiled, seemingly haven taken no offense.

Her seemingly cavalier attitude caused Meng Hao’s eyes to widen.

“It seems you’ve been shadowing me for quite a while,” he said coolly.

His previous words had only provoked a slight smile from her, but this statement caused her to stop in her tracks. She looked at Meng Hao with a trace of a lively glint in her eyes, her expression gradually turning serious.

“A mere glance at my reaction led you to such a conclusion?” she said softly. “It seems I’ve underestimated you, Elder Brother Meng.” With that, she clasped hands and bowed.

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# Chapter 1132: Shamed Into Rage!

Meng Hao frowned. For some reason, he instantly disliked this woman Xue’er. She might be beautiful, perhaps more beautiful than any other woman he had ever met. But the feeling he got from her was that she was far too manipulative.

She had obviously used some special technique to secretly shadow him for who knew how long. She might just call it ‘observation,’ but her methods went far beyond the ordinary definition of the word.

Such methods left Meng Hao feeling coldly derisive. Back when he fought with Dao-Heaven, he could tell how important he thought she was. He had tried to hide it, but Meng Hao easily saw through the facade.

She was the type of woman who, even if you knew wasn’t plotting against you, would still make you want to be careful. And once you put your guard up, you wouldn’t want to relax. Xu Qing was the exact opposite. When he was with Xu Qing, he felt completely relaxed. She did not plot or scheme, and when she looked at him, all he wanted to do was smile softly back at her.

Although these thoughts ran through his head, they did not change his facial expression.

“I’m from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite,” Xue’er said. “Not the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite you’ll find in any of the Mountains and Seas. I’m the one and only true successor of the real Immortal Ancient.” She smiled at Meng Hao, a radiant smile like a blooming lily, filled with self confidence. It made her and everything around her even more eye-catching.

“Of all the Echelon cultivators I’ve met,” she continued, “the only one that came close to meeting my requirements was Elder Brother Chen from the First Mountain, and he only measured up by half. I was going to select him, but in that very moment, I felt you suddenly appear, Elder Brother Meng.

“And that’s why I came looking for you to play a game of Go.” She waved her hand, causing a game board to appear between the two of them.

The black games pieces were sitting on one side of the board, the white pieces on the other.

She didn’t say a lot, but Meng Hao could easily detect the profound haughtiness in the words, a haughtiness that was rooted in her bones. She didn’t intend for that haughtiness to come across, but it was revealed nonetheless.

“Elder Brother Meng, please, after you,” she said softly.

“I don’t do Go,” Meng Hao responded coolly.

“Elder Brother Meng, please just cooperate. I’ve come here to bestow you with some good fortune.” She looked at him earnestly.

Meng Hao frowned, and then suddenly smiled, although it was a cold smile. His eyes were filled with a profound gleam.

“I don’t know what sort of decision it is that you’re making, nor do I know why the other Echelon cultivators want to get close to you. But as for me, I’d actually like to ask you a question. What makes you think you can get me to play Go with you? Also, what gives you the confidence to secretly follow me around, then suddenly saunter up and start yakking away? Is it just because you’re some sort of successor?” He took a step forward, stamping his foot down, which caused everything to tremble. A wave of powerful pressure surged out toward Xue’er.

“Elder Brother Meng, please, calm yourself down,” she said coolly. “Attacking me would be pointless. Furthermore, you’re still injured.”

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed with coldness. “Even if I am still injured, I can still hurt you!”

He took a second step forward. Behind him, the mastiff threw its head back and roared, causing a murderous aura to spring up. The longer it glared at Xue’er, the more intense the murderous air became. Suddenly, it pounced toward her.

In that same moment, Xue’er frowned and waved her jade-like hand. Immediately, a beam of white light shot out that transformed into a white crane. It let out a melodious cry, along with the fluctuations of an Ancient Realm cultivation base.

“Elder Brother Meng,” she said coolly, “please, just sit down and play this game of Go with me, alright?” In response, Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding, and the parrot flew out. As soon as it laid eyes on the white crane, it let out a whoop of excitement and shot toward it.

The white crane stared with wide eyes and moments later, an agonized shriek could be heard. Simultaneously, Meng Hao took a third step, and his energy shot up. He clenched his right hand into a fist and punched.

“Shameless!” Xue’er said, her eyes flashing icily. When she saw the miserable situation the white crane was in, she performed an incantation gesture and then waved a finger toward Meng Hao. However, even as she waved her finger, Meng Hao’s right index finger extended, and he also waved his finger.

The Eighth Demon Sealing Hex was unleashed. Xue’er trembled, and her face fell. Meng Hao took a fourth step, a fifth step, and then unleashed a punch.

Rumbling filled the air as Xue’er suddenly dodged backward. As she did, Meng Hao snorted coldly and said, “Get back here!”

His right hand opened from a fist into a palm. He made a snatching motion toward Xue’er, using the Star Plucking Magic to grab her. Xue’er’s face fell as she felt herself being dragged toward Meng Hao. She quickly performed an incantation gesture, causing a snowy tempest to appear around her.

Meng Hao's expression didn't change at all as he took his sixth step, then his seventh. His energy surged as a huge foot appeared up in the sky, which then stamped down toward Xue'er.

At the same time, Meng Hao shot like lightning toward her.

Xue'er was panting. She had never imagined that Meng Hao, despite being injured, would still be so strong. At the critical moment, she extended her right hand, within which appeared a bell. She quickly rang the bell, causing a tinkling sound to float out. A murderous aura exploded up, and behind her, a gigantic, illusory image appeared.

It was an old man, gigantic, ancient, wearing a Daoist robe. He seemed infinitely wise, and was apparently in the middle of delivering a sermon about the Dao. His lifted his right hand into the air and waved a finger toward the incoming foot.

The Seven God Steps' gigantic foot collapsed into pieces. Ashen-faced, Xue'er waved her right hand, causing the illusory figure behind her to wave his finger again, this time toward Meng Hao.

The attack struck through the air toward Meng Hao, who trembled in response. However, the figure of the old man then faded a bit, completely astonishing Xue'er.

Seeing that Meng Hao was continuing to advance menacingly, she gritted her teeth. Suddenly a medicinal pill bottle appeared in her hand.

"Here, take these pills as compensation!" she said, throwing the bottle toward him.

Meng Hao's eyes flickered as he grabbed the bottle.

"That's an Immortal Pill," she gushed, "concocted, not from medicinal plants, but from the Essence of a great Dao. Consume that pill, and all of your injuries will be healed; you’ll completely recover. This is a show of good faith! I’m not your enemy.”

“Eee?” he said, looking at the medicinal pill bottle, his eyes glowing with a strange light. He examined it closer for a moment, then opened the top, closed his eyes, and took a whiff. After a long moment, his eyes snapped open.

“A Time Pill!” he murmured.

Xue’er’s face was just starting to look calm again when she heard Meng Hao’s words, and once again appeared to be astonished.

“I never would have thought that your skill in the Dao of Alchemy had reached such a high level, Elder Brother Meng. You’re the first Echelon cultivator… to ever recognize that pill. You’re right, it is indeed a Time Pill. Since you can identify the type of pill it is, then you surely know that such a pill can heal all of your injuries. As you can see, I’m not deceiving you.”

“A medicinal pill that adds at least a year of body transformations is indeed something very rare in modern times.” Meng Hao put the pill bottle away and ceased any aggressions. Then he called the parrot back, although the parrot didn’t seem to be too happy about that. The trembling white crane immediately fled back to Xue’er.

Next, Meng Hao floated over to the Go board, picked up a black game piece, and placed it onto the board.

Xue’er’s eyes glittered, and inwardly, she breathed a sigh of relief. This Meng Hao was a handful to deal with, and really pissed her off. However, there was nothing she could do about it. Seeing Meng Hao play a black game piece, caused her to frown slightly. She walked over to the game board, picked up a white game piece, made her move and then waited for Meng Hao to continue.

“I lose,” he said, waving his sleeve. Not giving another glance at the game board, he turned and headed toward the mastiff.

“YOU!” she roared, blue veins popping out on her forehead. She had never, ever met anyone like Meng Hao before. “I’ll have you know that forfeiting the game is also forfeiting the good fortune I have for you!”

“I’m not interested!” he said coolly, completely ignoring her.

Her frown deepened. Balling her hands into fists, she shouted,“ You might not be interested now, but let me tell you, if you win, then you’ll get my help! With my help, your path in the Echelon will be much smoother!”

“It was already easy enough even before meeting you,” he replied. He slapped his bag of holding to produce the medicinal pill bottle. His eyes glittered for a moment, but he quickly put the pill bottle away. He couldn’t quite bring himself to consume the medicinal pill inside before duplicating it.

Unable to hold back from listing all the benefits, Xue’er continued: “Y-you know, other Echelon cultivators all want my help! I’m the successor of Immortal Ancient, and my whole purpose in life is to help the Echelon. If you win, you can even have me as your beloved partner!”

“I’m already married.” Meng Hao turned to look thoughtfully in the direction of the Third Nation. He wasn’t sure how much time Zong Wuya had bought him, nor how he would resolve the overall situation with the Third Nation.

“I can make you stronger! I can make you the strongest in the Echelon! I can help you accomplish Paragon Sea Dream’s plan successfully!” Xue’er stamped her foot angrily. If Meng Hao continued acting like this, it would be impossible to accomplish the tasks laid out by her Master. She was starting to get nervous. She had traveled throughout the Nine Mountains and Seas, and had encountered an entire generation of Echelon cultivators, some of them haughty, some of them gentle, some of the domineering, some of them sinister.

However, regardless of their personalities, she had ways to deal with them. Even the most unwilling would eventually agree to play a game of Go with her. Meng Hao was completely different from everyone else. From what she could sense, the only reason he had agreed to even make one move… was to get the medicinal pill.

“Just what do I have to do to get you to play a game of Go with me?” she said through gritted teeth. “You can’t even imagine what kind of help I can give you!”

Meng Hao suddenly turned back to look at her and asked, “Are you the first generation successor of Immortal Ancient?”

Xue’er stared in shock, and said, “No, I’m–”

Before she could finish, Meng Hao interrupted her. “If you’re not the first generation successor of Immortal Ancient, then that means there were other successors before you. Throughout the years, there have also been successive generations of Echelon cultivators. Well then, how come none of them ever succeeded in the end? Why hasn’t Paragon Sea Dream’s plan been accomplished even after multiple generations?

“Becoming the strongest in the Echelon, and accomplishing Paragon Sea Dream’s plan, are both… Echelon matters! They have nothing to do with Immortal Ancient successors!

“If I wanted to be blunt,” he continued coldly, “I would just say that all the help provided by generations of people like you, ended up being a complete failure!

“You can go help whoever you think needs your help,” he concluded indifferently. “As for me, I don’t need your help.” Meng Hao swished his sleeve. Although he looked very domineering on the outside, inwardly he was feeling a bit depressed. What the hell!? I told her I couldn’t play Go, then she wants to make me play anyway? Hmph!

Meng Hao essentially grew up alone and poor. It was a difficult thing for him to even manage studying, and he had also ended up owing Steward Zhou three pieces of silver. Growing up in such poverty, how could he possibly have ever excelled at things zither performances, or playing Go? In the end… he really couldn’t play Go. She just hadn’t believed him.

How depressing!

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# Chapter 1133: What Will You Put Aside?!

Xue’er was on the verge of going crazy. She wasn’t sure what she had done to offend Meng Hao. All she had done was secretly follow him for a while, and actually had no ill intentions whatsoever.

Furthermore, she’d even given him an incredible medicinal pill just to get him to play a game of Go with her. Those were the instructions given to her by her Master, to find all the Echelon cultivators of the generation, and find the one she was meant to help.

All of the other Echelon cultivators had been easy to convince; Meng Hao was the only one who wouldn’t cooperate.

Seeing him leaving, Xue’er gnashed her teeth.

“I just want to play a game of Go!” she cried. “It doesn’t matter who wins or loses, I’ll still give you the good fortune, something that can help you escape the black-robed people from the Third Nation!

“I can help you get out of this dangerous situation!” Xue’er ground her teeth. This was the first time in her dealings with Echelon cultivators where she had started offering them her benefits before she had even made a choice.

Meng Hao stopped and looked back at Xue’er. He had known all along that if Dao-Heaven cared so much about this young woman, there must be something very special about her. Furthermore, he could tell from everything she had just said that she really was very important to the Echelon.

“Your obsession runs too deep,” he said coolly, his expression tranquil and impossible to read, even transcendent.

His words caused a tremor to run through Xue’er. Next, he clasped his hands behind his back and began to speak, his tone light. To him, this was like a debate, and going all the way back to his days debating the Dao of alchemy, he had never lost.

“The word obsession is made up of two characters, one relating to thoughts, the second to actions. If your thoughts are occupied by the game, and your actions pertain only to the game board, then… aren’t you merely searching for game pieces, not an Echelon cultivator?

“Playing Go is just a way for you to help make your decision, right? But decisions… can be made in many ways. And you seem to be obsessed with this one method. Instead of saying that you are looking for people to play the game, it would be more accurate to say… that you are stuck within the game itself.

“In the grand scheme of things, the game is insignificant, and yet you have sunk yourself into it as if it were Heaven and Earth. Because you are stuck in the game, your path has become blocked, your Dao limited. The game of Go… is for you, not for me.”

Xue’er trembled, and from the expression on her face, it seemed as if she were experiencing enlightenment. After a long moment, she took a deep breath, clasped hands, and bowed deeply to Meng Hao.

“This is my fault for being too fixated,” she said. “I also understand why you weren’t willing to play Go with me, Elder Brother Meng. If you devoted yourself to the game, you would lose yourself in the game board, and fall into that world.

“Therefore, you only played a single piece, then turned and left. It was like leaving behind a single thought in Heaven and Earth, so that the mountains remain pristine and the waters undisturbed. You left behind no ripples or waves, but instead chose to remain on the outside, observing… watching as great changes unfolded….” Eventually her voice trailed off. Finally, she clasped hands and bowed deeply to Meng Hao one more time.

“Many thanks, Elder Brother Meng!” Her expression was completely sincere, and in fact, her aura seemed even more extraordinary than before. It was as if she truly had experienced some sort of enlightenment, as if she suddenly understood more about life. Apparently, even her cultivation base experienced advancement.

Meng Hao looked startled, but then quickly recovered his calm demeanor and enigmatic expression. He smiled faintly, and a look of praise could be seen within his eyes.

He was actually shocked to see the transformation which had just occurred in Xue’er. The only reason he had made his little speech just now was because he couldn’t actually play Go. He would never have guessed that his words would actually affect Xue’er in such a way.

“Elder Brother Meng, I already understand that it doesn’t matter who wins or loses this game. However, my Master’s stipulations are hard to work around. Elder Brother Meng, please do me the favor of making your move.” Xue’er’s expression was very sincere, and all the haughtiness from earlier had vanished. She now seemed very respectful when she looked at him, as if to her, his words were the Dao.

Meng Hao was grumbling inside, and wasn’t sure what to do next. However, his expression of praise deepened. Ideas racing through his head, he looked down at the game board and then smiled slightly.

“Do you really understand?” he asked, his voice suddenly becoming very archaic as he attempted to imitate the way Zong Wuya had spoken and held himself moments ago. “You know, just now, someone asked me what the Dao is.

“My answer was that the Dao relates to the thoughts in your heart. Whatever you focus your thoughts on, that is your Dao. The Dao is shapeless, and cannot be touched; it can only be contemplated, just like life.”

Xue’er frowned; this time she didn’t quite understand what he meant.

“Life?” she asked.

Meng Hao didn’t answer her. Instead, he turned to the mastiff and stroked its fur gently. Its ferocious eyes suddenly turned soft, and it licked him.

At first, Meng Hao had simply been trying to pull a fast one on Xue’er. However, their conversation caused him to think about the cultivator in the Immortal jade mine. Then he thought about the black-robed men in the Third Nation. He thought about many things.

“Look, this is my mastiff, who I raised from a tiny puppy.

“It is not constrained by morals, nor bound by any rules. It only has its primal desires to guide it. The one thing that is not subject to that, is me. I am its family, and it is my family. Besides that, all it has is instinct. Even when it kills, it is not a matter of good or evil.

“The Windswept Realm is similar. Foreign cultivators can become forever lost here, and end up being driven into acting only on instinct.

“That is a sort of primitive freedom and independence, and that is the life that they are living.

“If you defined life as having different Realms, then that would be… the Natural Realm.” All of a sudden, it was as if he broke through to a higher level in his mind. It was as if he had truly reached a level of philosophical enlightenment that caused his eyes to glow with a strange light.

Xue’er stood there thoughtfully.

“Consider them,” he said, gesturing toward the soldiers not too far off in the distance, and the cultivators from the Mountain and Sea Realm. “Now consider yourself.

“You have a special status. You’re the successor of Immortal Ancient. You’re innately superior, with a unique identity and position, with extraordinary power and authority. What about all those soldiers and other cultivators, though? They also possess such things. The strong have their power, the weak… have their schemes.

“Between humans, the only thing we do is compare ourselves to others, in any and all matters. We compare who has the highest cultivation base, who is richer, who has the better status, who has the higher position, who has the most power, who has the best family background, who is the smartest, or who is the strongest.

“The weak with the weak and the strong with the strong, all people are constantly comparing themselves to each other. Because of these comparisons, people covet what they do not have, and what they do have, they are even more unwilling to lose.

“That is another kind of life, and most importantly, that is the type of life… that most people live. I like to call such life the second Realm, the Pragmatic Realm!

“You are in that Realm, and so am I.” By the time he finished speaking, Meng Hao’s voice was soft. He shook his head and sighed.

Xue’er was trembling, and couldn’t take her eyes off of him. The words he had spoken echoed like claps of thunder in her mind, causing her breathing to become ragged.

She understood that he was speaking from the heart as he mused about things he had seen and done. He had only come up with the idea of the first Realm after seeing cultivators who had become lost in their desires. She had also seen such lost cultivators in her time here in the Windswept Realm.

In her opinion, the concept of his second Realm came because of the struggles of the Echelon, and how the Echelon cultivators were constantly competing amongst each other. It was also in response to her words and strength.

“So… is there a third Realm?” she asked quietly.

“Of course!” Meng Hao looked over at her, his expression ever more archaic and his aura swirling even more mysteriously. His eyes glowed with bright light, like twin lamps on a moonless night.

“The third Realm is … when you leave something behind,” he said softly.

Xue’er stood there, dumbfounded.

“Are you willing to give that something up?” he asked, shaking his head slowly. “Do you accept letting it go? Are you even able…to leave it behind?

“The third Realm is the realm of abandonment. After you have something, you abandon it, or perhaps you could say… put it aside!

“Put everything aside, and you have emptiness. At that time, you… can finally explain what the Dao is!” He took a deep breath and looked at Xue’er, who was staring at him blankly. Suddenly, he raised his voice beratingly. “Don’t you get it?!

“Consider the game board. What is it? That game board is your world, and in your heart, it is your everything. When all is said and done, it has borders, limitations, creating an intangible perimeter beneath your feet, an area in your heart that you cannot leave!

“If you don’t put it aside, then you will forever remain in the second Realm. For all eternity… you will be unable to explain… the Dao!” His voice seemed to contain a bizarre power that left Xue’er shaking. Her expression was one of struggle, but after a moment, she looked deeply at him, then stretched her hand out and laid it onto the game board. A pop could be heard as the board shattered into pieces.

She closed her eyes, and all of a sudden, she seemed to relax. When she opened her eyes again, she asked, “What is the name of that third Realm?”

His lips moved soundlessly for a moment, and then he calmly said, “I call that Realm… the Dao!”

“The Dao….” After a moment of thought, she stared at Meng Hao closely, as if committing his features to memory. Then she waved her hand, causing a beam of five-colored light to fly out.

Inside of that beam of light was a five-colored crystal that glittered with radiant light. It looked like some sort of incredibly valuable treasure.

As soon as the glittering light appeared, a wind sprang up, and everything began to tremble. The world almost seemed to be unraveling. As soon as Meng Hao laid eyes on the glittering light, the Echelon mark in his forehead began to glow.

It wasn’t just him. Dao-Heaven was currently speeding through midair when, all of a sudden, he lurched to a stop. He turned to look back in the direction of the central temple, and after a moment, a look of disbelief and rage covered his face.

“The Echelon Heart. You SLUT!” he roared. “The Echelon Heart should belong to me! Nobody else qualifies to have it!!” He changed directions in a flash, heading toward the central temple area. He knew that the Echelon Heart would be going to Meng Hao, and although he wasn’t completely confident of being able to beat him in a fight, his rage offered him no other option than to go find out.

Lin Cong, Han Qinglei, Yuwen Jian and all of the other Echelon cultivators in the Windswept Realm all realized that the Echelon marks on their foreheads were glowing brightly. They could also sense the call of the Echelon coming from the central temple region.

That call was something like a thirst, felt by all Echelon cultivators. Instantly, their faces fell.

“It’s the Echelon Heart!! Could it be that Miss Xue’er finally chose Dao-Heaven?!”

“It must be Dao-Heaven. He’s going to get so much more powerful in the Windswept Realm!!”

Everyone was shaken, even Meng Hao. The mark on his forehead glittered brightly, and the five-colored light seemed to be calling out to him. He took a deep breath.

“What is that?” he asked.

“The Echelon Heart. Every generation of the Echelon will have one member who is approved by Immortal Ancient. That person will be bestowed with… the Echelon Heart!”

“Does that mean I’ve gained approval?” he asked, looking over at her.

“You can’t even play Go, and yet you caused me to break my Go board,” she replied coolly. “You have won the Echelon Heart. However, you did not win my future assistance. If you ever reach that third Realm of which you spoke, then come find me.” With that, she waved her hand, causing the five-colored beam of light to speed toward him. He reached out and caught it, and his mind reeled. In the same moment, his divine sense exploded out to cover the entire area.

“It… belongs to you,” she said, giving him another deep look. Then she turned and sped off into the distance.

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# Chapter 1134: The Echelon Heart!

Xue’er destroyed her game board, bestowed the Echelon Heart, and then vanished over the horizon.

Meng Hao remained behind, panting. Because of the stimulation of the Echelon Heart, his divine sense continued to spread out rapidly in all directions, and his body was trembling violently.

“Echelon Heart….” he thought, his eyes shining brightly. His divine sense had soon filled the central temple region and began to spread out through the Nine Nations.

As it passed the cultivators and soldiers, their faces flickered. When they looked up, they saw roiling clouds rapidly spreading out to cover the sky.

It was as if the Heavens were being obscured, and the lands covered up. The center of it all was Meng Hao. The mortals and the soldiers among them couldn’t see it, but the cultivators, especially Fan Dong’er and the others, could see a translucent tempest raging around Meng Hao.

That tempest was the cause of the clouds and the wind that were spreading out in all directions.

Meng Hao frowned. “Don’t tell me that this thing’s only function is to power up my divine sense and send it out in all directions, is it?”

He had used a bit of trickery to defeat Xue’er and acquire the Echelon Heart. However, he had not won her assistance, and right now, the exact usage of the Echelon Heart was a bit of a mystery to him.

“It can make Echelon cultivators stronger, huh….” His eyes flashed, and without any further hesitation, he closed his right hand tightly around the scintillating Echelon Heart.

He gripped it hard, and his mind began to spin as the Echelon Heart fused into the palm of his hand. As soon as it melted into him, it transformed into five auras that surged through his qi passageways. They spread out separately, filling his entire body. Four of them then disappeared, seemingly concealing themselves inside of him, vanishing without a trace. Only an orange aura remained. It shot into his mind, and then exploded.

That eruption caused blood to ooze out of his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. He groaned, and his divine sense suddenly grew to an exaggerated level, roiling out around him. In the blink of an eye, it covered everything in the Nine Nations. Soon, Meng Hao’s divine sense had covered all of the mountain ranges and rivers, even the nine National Aura Mountains. In a very short period of time, the entirety of the Windswept Realm was completely covered by his divine sense.

He saw all living things, and all cultivators. He saw Zong Wuya, who had a strange look in his eyes. He was followed by a host of black-robed cultivators.

On the Third Nation’s National Aura Mountain, he saw the emperor, whose face was flickering. He also saw Lin Cong, Han Qinglei, and Yuwen Jian, all racing toward him, as well as the enraged Dao-Heaven.

Everything was visible in his divine sense. Then, as he panted, it continued to grow, reaching out… into the void beyond!

Outside in the pitch-black void, he could see the Windswept Realm as a whole, which was currently speeding upwards.

The Windswept Realm was moving, rising upward, heading higher and higher into the void.

Meng Hao’s mind spun as he looked off into the distance and saw two balls of light, which repeatedly slammed into each other, as if they were fighting. Within one of those balls of light was the white-robed Paragon Sea Dream. The person she was fighting was a middle-aged man, a man… that looked exactly like the statue he had seen when he had first climbed the National Aura Mountain upon entering the Windswept Realm!

They fought back and forth without speaking, and yet were surrounded by complete destruction.

Meng Hao was panting. He sensed incredible danger, and didn't dare to send his divine sense out any further. He quickly reigned it back into the lands of the Windswept Realm.

"Just as I suspected," he thought, his eyes flashing. "Some momentous catastrophe has struck the Windswept Realm….

"I couldn't get involved even if I wanted to…. For now, it seems the Echelon Heart's only purpose is to allow me to see more, to allow my divine sense to cover the entire Windswept Realm. And yet, how does that help my cultivation base?" Suddenly, a tremor ran through him. "Oh, what's that…?

"Ah, it's not useless after all!! Covering the entire Windswept Realm with divine sense will allow me to contemplate enlightenment of the natural laws and Essences of this place! I don't need any World Seal, because I can sense the entire Realm as a whole. Theoretically, I should be able to directly sense the natural laws and Essences!

"Even if I don't have the required World Seals, I should still be able to do it!

"After all, the World Seals are merely manifestations of the natural laws and Essences of the Windswept Realm!" Panting, his eyes began to shine. He consolidated the power of his divine sense and immediately began to contemplate!

He already had the foundation provided him by the World Seals of the Ninth, Eighth, Seventh, Sixth and Fourth Nations. Therefore, he simply acted according to his plan and used divine sense to begin contemplation.

Rumbling filled his mind as he settled down cross-legged and began to work.

He now had access to far more natural laws and Essences that any individual World Seal would give him. Of the ones he could sense now, around half were the ones that he had already achieved enlightenment regarding from the World Seals in his possession. Now, with the ability to perceive them as a comprehensive whole, enlightenment came to him even faster than it had before.

“There are a total of 3,000 great Daos. 2,700 are located in the various Nations, with the final 300 being located in the central temple. If I can gain enlightenment of all 3,000 great Daos, then I can fully absorb my second Nirvana Fruit, and become… a true Allheaven Immortal!

“At that time, Dao-Heaven will be no match for me!

“That will also be the moment… when I can truly rise to prominence in the Windswept Realm!”

He saw many natural laws and many essences, and he immediately began to gain enlightenment. A shocking aura appeared on him, spreading out in all directions and growing stronger by the moment. The clouds churned overhead, spreading out to fill the entire Windswept Realm.

Everyone was shocked, and even Dao-Heaven lurched to a stop in midair, face flickering with disbelief. He reached out and grabbed a piece of a nearby cloud, looked at it closely, and then his face darkened.

“This is Meng Hao’s aura!!”

RUMBLE!

1,300 Essences!

Meng Hao’s hair whipped about in the air as he sat there cross-legged, the lands quaking beneath him. This was his good fortune, the greatest good fortune he had acquired so far in the Windswept Realm.

The speed of his enlightenment increased as he spread his divine sense out to contemplate and observe the natural laws and Essences.

He closed his eyes, making it impossible for anyone to see the flicker of augury contained therein. As of now, his injuries weren't important. His soul spread out along with his divine sense to cover the lands.

1,400 Essences!

1,500 Essences!

He was gaining enlightenment through brute force, violently commandeering good fortune. He was breaking through the limits previously set by the World Seals, walking…. a path of enlightenment that no one had ever walked before.

His aura grew more and more majestic, and his enlightenment was accelerating!

1,600 Essences!

1,700 Essences!

The tempest raged around him, with him at the very center.

The mastiff crouched at his side, its eyes glowing fiercely as it looked about. It would prevent anyone from getting close to Meng Hao, even someone familiar to him.

Its 300-meter frame was like a small mountain, and its eyes were the picture of brutality, seemingly representative of pure slaughter.

It was at this point that the Emperor in the Third Nation suddenly cried out, urgent and furious. When his voice echoed into the ears of Zong Wuya and the others, Zong Wuya sighed lightly. He could delay matters no further. In response to the words of the emperor, the black-robed cultivators' killing intent soared. They had been waiting for this moment for too long. They hadn't dared to say anything about how Zong Wuya had interfered with them earlier, but their hearts had long since filled with discontent.

In accordance with the orders issued, they ignored Zong Wuya and charged forth with blazing killing intent, heading directly toward the central temple region, and Meng Hao.

Zong Wuya went along, but did nothing more than enter the area and watch Meng Hao from afar, his eyes filled with complex emotions and hope.

Everything shook as the black-robed men transformed into streaks of light that shot through the sky, drawing ever-closer to Meng Hao. The mastiff roared and shot to its feet. Its 300-meter frame erupted with energy and brutality, and its eyes were shot with blood as it gazed coldly at the incoming black-robed cultivators.

Meng Hao was its master, its only family. Its purpose in life, its mission, was to protect him. It was willing to sacrifice everything for him.

It had been like that when it was small, and now that it had grown up, it was the same.

“Kill him!” Among the black-robed cultivators, there were three who were faster than the others. They performed incantation gestures, summoning a divine ability that formed a massive handprint which shot toward Meng Hao.

The mastiff threw its head back and let out a deafening roar that echoed out in all directions. It pounced toward the three enemies, and a fiendish wind sprang out. A single swipe of its paw shattered the divine ability, and then it opened its mouth wide, as if to consume the men.

A boom rang out, and the three men fell back, faces flickering with shock. One of them was too slow, and the mastiff gobbled him up. Crunching sounds could be heard, accompanied by a bloodcurdling scream. Then the scream was cut off, and the mastiff swallowed him down.

It stood tall next to Meng Hao, gazing at the black-robed men with ferocious coldness, radiating hostility.

It was at this point that Meng Hao’s mind rumbled again, and his aura surged even more majestically. He had just gained enlightenment of 1,800 Essences!

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# Chapter 1135: Leave The Rest To Me!

In the moment that Meng Hao gained enlightenment of 1,800 Daos, numerous National Aura Mountains collapsed. By now, the Ninth, Eighth, Seventh, Seventh, Fifth and Fourth Nations were all rubble. Suddenly, six pillars of light shot out of that rubble and up into the air, each one 3,000 meters wide.

The lands of the Windswept Realm were quaking, and the clouds up above churned madly. In the spots where the pillars of light climbed up into the sky, massive vortexes formed.

The six vortexes exuded a power of reversal. Were it possible to view the Windswept Realm from out in the pitch-black void, you would clearly be able to see that, despite having escaped the clutches of the Mountain and Sea Realm, the speed with which it was rising instantly dropped by more than half.

Despite being locked in combat, Paragon Sea Dream and the Windswept Imperial Lord both seemed to be shocked by this.

However, that would only be visible from outside the Windswept Realm itself. Inside the Windswept Realm, the only thing that everyone could sense was that the lands were trembling. Then, the sudden reduction in speed apparently broke something in the lands themselves. All of a sudden, everyone felt as if they were lurching up into the air. With the exception of the remaining National Aura Mountains, all of the other mountains were torn from their bases and flew up.

The same thing happened to the rivers, the cities, and all life forms. Everyone suddenly lurched up into the air.

Everything that was happening caused the people in the Windswept Realm to be filled with shock.

On the Third Nation's National Aura Mountain, the emperor threw his head back and roared.

"NO!!

"Stop him! Dammit! We haven't reached the appointed place to stop! Don't let the Echelon cultivators gain enlightenment of the Windswept Dao!" The man's face was twisted with both ferocity and anxiety. He quickly performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, causing more black-robed figures to appear off to the side. The figures clasped hands and bowed with lowered heads, then vanished, transforming into beams of light that sped toward the central temple region.

That was where Meng Hao hovered in midair, his body emitting rumbling sounds as his energy rose higher and higher. Brilliant light emanated off of him and filled the entire Windswept Realm. As of this moment, he very much resembled the mastiff when it possessed the renegade spirit. Currently, it was as if he… was possessing the Windswept Realm!

Of course, to describe it in such a way is only an illustration, and yet, it wouldn't be impossible for it to become reality!

RUMBLE!

1,900 Essences!

2,000!

2,100!

Meng Hao's hair whipped around in the air, and his energy continued to climb. When he gained enlightenment of the 2,100th Essence, the National Aura Mountain in the Third Nation began to collapse. The emperor threw his head back and let out a fierce shriek, and did everything in his power to prevent the collapse, to change what was happening. However, his face quickly fell. He was forced to dodge to the side as a pillar of light rose up from the rubble of the National Aura Mountain.

There were now seven vortexes!

The speed of the Windswept Realm’s rise was once again reduced.

“Meng Hao!” the emperor shrieked. Then he flashed through the air toward the central temple region.

Meng Hao continued to gain enlightenment.

2,200 Essences!

2,300!

The mastiff was at his side, roaring, its body shining with brilliant, blood-colored light. It held nothing back as it defended him against the black-robed attackers. Not a single one of them was able to pass it and get close to Meng Hao.

The mastiff roared, and Meng Hao was shielded by blood-red light.

The black-robed men were going mad, unleashing all sorts of divine abilities and Daoist magics. The violet light of the true Dao descended, smashing into the mastiff and riddling it with wounds. However, it continued to protect the area surrounding Meng Hao. This was the exact way it had protected him back in the Blood Immortal Legacy Tournament. It would defend him until it died.

“Damn this Blood Beast! Kill it!” No matter how the black-robed cultivators attacked, they failed, leaving them utterly flustered. Finally, they attacked the mastiff directly. The mastiff roared and slammed its paw down onto the ground. The lands shook, and blood qi swept about in all directions. One by one, the black-robed attackers were forced to fall back.

However, there were three who managed to break through, and quickly bore down on Meng Hao, eyes bursting with killing intent, performing incantation gestures all the while. However, the mastiff then let out a mighty roar and shot through the air toward them. The swipe of a paw blocked the men, and yet, their deadly combined divine ability ended up slamming into it as a result.

Blood oozed out of the mastiff’s mouth, and its body trembled violently. Then it opened its mouth wide and lunged toward them as if to gobble them up. The three men tried to fall back, but the mastiff’s roar dazed them. Before they could do anything, the mastiff’s jaws closed around them.

“For the true Dao! Detonate!”

“Detonate!”

“Detonate!”

Eyes filled with vicious madness, the three men chose to self-detonate in the same moment that the mastiff bit down onto them. A huge boom echoed out that shook Heaven and Earth. As they exploded, the mastiff let out a plaintive cry. Its body trembled on the verge of explosion before it shrank down from its previous 300-meter size to only 30 meters.

It glared at the black-robed men surrounding it. It didn’t fly out in attack, and yet, the blood-colored light emanating out from it grew more intense, transforming into a shield that surrounded itself and Meng Hao. It was like an inverted bowl that rested on top of them, sending blood-colored light high up into the air.

The surrounding black-robed cultivators all attacked in unison, causing huge booms to echo out as the shield distorted.

It was at this point that Meng Hao’s energy once again rose as he gained enlightenment of 2,400 Essences!

Next, a 3,000-meter pillar of light rose from the rubble of the Second Nation’s National Aura Mountain. Rumbling filled the air, and the clouds seethed as an eighth vortex appeared.

They sky above the Windswept Realm now featured eight prominent vortexes, beyond which was the pitch black of the void.

Apparently, the Windswept Realm's rise into the sky had now been stopped!

At the same time, more black-robed figures sped through the Third Nation, followed by the emperor.

When the Emperor saw Zong Wuya, he glared and said, “Zong Wuya, do you truly dare to hold back from attacking?!”

Zong Wuya stood there silently, opting not to respond.

The Emperor clenched his teeth and said “You–”

“Shut up,” Zong Wuya said coolly. “You, a trifling Spirit Realm cultivator, dare to raise your voice to me? I only listen to your orders for the sake of the true Dao. I'm not your slave.”

The emperor's face flickered, and he stared at Zong Wuya, huffing and puffing. However, he didn't say anything further.

More black-robed men were converging in the area around Meng Hao. They attacked in unison, causing violet lightning to fall. Soon, Meng Hao was surrounded by a sea of lightning, which constantly battered the blood-colored shield.

The shield twisted and distorted, clearly on the verge of collapsing. The mastiff was getting smaller and smaller. It shrank from thirty meters to only about three meters in size. However, it continued to hold on.

Meng Hao's energy rose higher and higher, and the light emanating out of him grew more intense.

2,500 Essences!

2,600!

He was now only 100 Essences away from a total of 2,700. It was at this point that, all of a sudden, a voice echoed out like thunder from off in the distance.

“Meng Hao!”

Dao-Heaven appeared in a beam of light that streaked across the sky toward the central temple region. Although a heavy pressure weighed down on him as soon as he entered the central temple region, Dao-Heaven had also received the blessing of the Windswept Realm’s qi flow, and as such, he could easily ignore it.

He headed toward Meng Hao with incredible speed, and as he neared, he waved his hand and bellowed, “Screw off!”

Several black-robed men who were in his way exploded into pieces, allowing Dao-Heaven to directly approach the blood-colored shield and wave his finger toward it.

The Heaven-shaking, Earth shattering finger swipe caused the shield to tremble. It seemed as if it would collapse at any moment; cracking sounds could be heard, and the shield was now covered with fissures.

The mastiff trembled violently, shrinking down again until it was barely over a meter long. Its aura was incredibly weak, but it it still continued to defend Meng Hao.

“Give me the Echelon Heart!” Dao-Heaven roared. He waved his right index finger again. When it landed, the shield would definitely collapse, placing not only Meng Hao, but also the mastiff, in critical danger.

In the moment that the shield collapsed, blood sprayed out of the mastiff’s mouth, and it shrank down to the size of a hand. Even as it stood there on shaky legs, Meng Hao’s eyes snapped open.

“Screw off!” he said. Massive rumbling caused everything to shake. A huge windstorm sprang up as his voice echoed out, slamming into Dao-Heaven. Dao-Heaven’s face fell, and he fought back ferociously. Blood sprayed out of his mouth as he was shoved backward.

The black-robed men were also shocked by this turn of events. Blood sprayed from their mouths as they were shoved away violently. In a mere moment, all the land 3,000 meters around Meng Hao and the mastiff was emptied.

Meng Hao slowly rose to his feet. He was no longer in need of contemplation. He had already gained complete enlightenment of the 2,700 Essences from the areas outside the central temple!

As of this moment, his injuries were completely healed, and he was back at his peak. Completely ignoring Dao-Heaven and the black-robed men, he looked down gently at the mastiff.

Then he squatted down and picked it up in his hand. The mastiff looked like it had when it was young. It squinted up at Meng Hao and then licked his palm.

“You rest for a while,” Meng Hao said. “Leave the rest to me.” He delivered some life force to it, and then put it back into the blood-colored mask in his bag of holding. Then he looked up.

His gaze swept over the nervous black-robed men, who slowly backed up. To them, his gaze was like lightning, and a single look was enough to strike fear into their hearts. The only person staring back hatefully was Dao-Heaven.

“The Echelon Heart belongs to me!” Dao Heaven cried.

At the same time, Meng Hao lifted up the second Nirvana Fruit and pushed it into his forehead.

With 2,700 Essences, he could not fully absorb the Nirvana Fruit, but he could fuse with it for much, much longer… long enough for a protracted battle!

The moment the Nirvana Fruit fused into him, Meng Hao threw his head back and roared. He did not increase in size like he had before, nor did he require time to complete the process. Azure light flickered, and his energy spiked, like that of a celestial warrior.

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# Chapter 1136: Meng Hao Busts Out!

Allheaven Immortal!

Surrounded by azure light, Meng Hao’s energy surged higher, and he emanated a killing will. He had been continuously held back during his time in the Windswept Realm, but now was the time to rise to prominence.

Everyone who had harmed his mastiff would now die!

He felt no apprehensions; now that he was going to go on the offensive, he would cause a scene that could topple Heaven and crush the Earth. He had been restraining himself for far too long!

“All of you, prepare to DIE!”

He sped through the air with such explosive speed that he left sonic booms behind him. A moment later, he appeared in front of one of the black-robed men, and unleashed a punch.

That punch was not the Life-Extermination Fist, it was simply an ordinary punch backed by his fleshly body power while in the Allheaven Immortal Realm.

Everything shook. This black-robed man was an Ancient Realm expert with eight extinguished Soul Lamps. However, he wasn’t qualified to even dodge or block Meng Hao. Before he could even react, the punch landed.

In the blink of an eye, he collapsed, his body shattered, and he was completely dead.

For a single punch to fell an Ancient Realm expert was something that caused all of the other black-robed men to gasp.

However, things weren’t over. After delivering the fist strike, Meng Hao flashed through the air to appear in front of another black-robed cultivator, upon whom he unleashed another punch.

The man’s face flickered with a ferocious expression, and he immediately spit a flying sword out of his mouth. Meng Hao snorted coldly and didn’t even pause. He followed through with his punch, destroying the flying sword, which shattered into countless pieces. His shocked opponent could only watch as Meng Hao’s fist slammed into him.

BOOOOOOMMMM!

Meng Hao moved like lightning. He teleported seven times in a row, and each time he unleashed one punch. Each punch was followed by miserable shrieks, and the death of a black-robed man. Seven of them exploded into clouds of blood.

This slaughter unfolded in the exact moment in which Meng Hao ascended to the Allheaven Immortal Realm.

The surrounding black-robed men were completely astonished, even disbelieving. Although they had come here to pursue Meng Hao specifically, they didn’t actually know very much about him. As of this moment, they were shocked to discover that the person they had been chasing… was actually an indescribably terrifying individual.

Even as the black-robed men’s faces fell, one of their number let out an enraged roar. “Attack together!” he cried. “Even if he were stronger than he is now, he couldn’t handle all of us at the same time!! Kill him!”

A moment later, the man’s head was flying through the air. In the moment before he died, a look of shock could be seen on his face. From behind his headless corpse, out walked Meng Hao, a sword in his hand.

A wooden sword.

“Like I said, all of you are going to die today.” His voice was cold, and a murderous aura raged up from his body.

The other black-robed men began to tremble with fear. They might be pursuers of the true Dao, but that didn’t mean that they were completely without fear of death. To see Meng Hao in such a powerful state filled their minds with shock, and they began to fall back.

However, it was at this point that the Emperor, who still stood next to Zong Wuya, looked at the men with a red glow flickering in his eyes. He performed a double-handed incantation gesture, and then waved his finger at them.

Suddenly, similar red glows could be seen in the eyes of the retreating black-robed men.

“For the true Dao!”

“For the true Dao!!”

Howls rose up like those from enraged beasts. The men had expressions of fanaticism and insanity as they all charged toward Meng Hao, violet light swirling up from them. From the look of it, they were actually burning their life forces.

There were a dozen or so who flew through the air in attack, summoning numerous divine abilities. There was a volley of violet lightning, an illusory wild beast, glowing magical treasures, and even a gigantic magical hand.

Rumbling echoed out as over ten different divine abilities and magical items filled the sky and descended toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with killing intent. He saw the Emperor off in the distance, and snorted coldly. The sword in his hand disappeared, and he took a step forward, turning into a blur that sped through the violet lightning toward the man who unleashed it. He reached out and pushed his finger into the man’s forehead, and then, without so much as a backward glance, spun and headed toward the second man. The swish of a sleeve collapsed the man’s Divine ability, and then Meng Hao reached out and tapped his forehead.

He moved again, toward the third black-robed man, ignoring his magical item, closing in, and then shoulder-butting him hard in the stomach. Then he spun, lashing out with his right foot, which kicked up a huge wind as it slammed into the heads of three successive black-robed enemies. When he appeared next, he was in front of the seventh black-robed cultivator. He punched out, instantly destroying the wild beast created by the man’s Daoist magic.

He passed through the creature, smashing his fist into the seventh man’s chest. Then he jerked to the side, using his back to slam into the eighth black-robed man. At the same time, he extended his left hand, within which appeared the bone-tip spear. He hurled it out, sending it stabbing into the forehead of the ninth black-robed man. Then, rumbling sounds could be heard as he waved his sleeve, sending Divine Flame rolling out to engulf four other enemies.

With his last movement, he appeared above the head of the fourteenth black-robed man, after which he punched down viciously with his right fist.

The air shook, and a shockwave spread out in all directions, slamming into three nearby black-robed cultivators, causing them to tremble violently and let out miserable shrieks.

To describe all of these actions takes some time, but it actually happened in the time it takes a spark to fly off of a piece of flint. Meng Hao spent no more effort than it would take to turn over his hand, and the nearly twenty surrounding black-robed men were killed in quick succession, completely destroyed. The lingering sounds of the battle continued to echo out over the battlefield.

Then everything went silent.

The remaining black-robed men looked completely shocked. They stared at Meng Hao with disbelief and terror, apparently having awoken from their madness and ardor from moments ago. Now, they edged away from him, trembling.

“W-what cultivation base does he have!?!?”

“How could he be so strong? Is he in the Quasi-Dao Realm?!?!”

“S-so fast! In a few breaths of time he actually cut down almost twenty of us!!”

Off in the distance, the Emperor’s face fell. When he looked at Meng Hao, he was filled with intense terror. As for Zong Wuya, the hope in his eyes deepened, and at the same time, he looked like he wished he could fight.

Dao-Heaven had a very unsightly expression on his face as he sped backward. He simply didn’t dare to do anything to provoke the current Meng Hao.

Even as Dao-Heaven retreated, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with coldness. Looking Dao-Heaven’s way, he said, “Now that I’m done warming up, it’s your turn.”

As soon as their gazes met, Dao-Heaven’s face fell, and he began to retreat with greater speed. He performed a double-handed incantation gesture, causing several illusory beasts to appear that charged toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao shot through the air like an arrow. He slammed through the beasts without even slowing down; they didn’t even leave a scratch on him, and his passage caused them to explode into bits.

“Dammit!” Dao-Heaven continued to back up, waving his right hand and performing an incantation gesture at the same time. The air rippled as a gigantic portal appeared. From within the portal emerged a black-colored fist that struck out toward Meng Hao.

“Break,” Meng Hao said, eyes glittering as he unleashed the Life-Extermination Fist. When it slammed into the black-colored fist, Heaven and Earth trembled, and the fist exploded. As for the portal, it instantly began to disintegrate. Meng Hao's fist passed through it and made contact with Dao-Heaven's finger.

A boom could be heard. Blood sprayed out of Dao-Heaven's mouth, and his finger exploded, sending him tumbling backward like a kite with its string cut.

At the same time, the chanting of a curse could be heard from within the portal had had just smashed.

"As a Devil Immortal, I call upon the power of my name to curse your blood–"

Meng Hao snorted coldly. Without waiting for the curse to be completed, he loosened his fist, reached into the door, and grabbed hold of what was inside: a pitch-black, three-horned, humanoid beast.

The beast gaped in shock, then let out a scream of terror and astonishment.

"Y-y-you… you can actually reach through the portal!?!?"

Meng Hao's hand flexed as Divine Flame appeared. The humanoid beast was engulfed, and let out a bloodcurdling scream. In the blink of an eye, it was burned into nothing but ash.

"Dao-Heaven!" roared Meng Hao as he shot through the air in pursuit, sending a massive shockwave outwards. He was upon Dao-Heaven in an instant and let loose another punch, and in response, Dao-Heaven shouted and unleashed all of the power of his cultivation base. The full power that came from reaching the Ancient Realm nine times was sent against Meng Hao.

A boom could be heard, and Dao-Heaven coughed up a mouthful of blood. Meng Hao continued to advance. One punch. Two punches. Three punches!

Dao-Heaven continuously coughed up mouthfuls of blood. He roared as his cultivation base surged, then bit the tip of his tongue, spitting out some blood which transformed into an entire sea. It didn't surge toward Meng

Hao, but rather, detonated. The massive unleashing of power enabled Dao-Heaven to separate himself from Meng Hao. He sped backward, face pale, coughing up mouthfuls of blood. Then he stretched his right hand up into the air; the sky flashed, and a murderous aura exploded out. Countless tendrils of black fog appeared, which formed into the shape of a scroll painting.

“Meng Hao, I only hit your blood mastiff’s shield two times!” he said through gritted teeth. “It didn’t hurt your dog!! We’re both in the Echelon. It’s the weirdos from the Third Nation who tracked you down and hurt your Blood Mastiff, not me!” He pointed an accusatory finger at the Emperor. He had no choice but to speak up and say these things, but at the same time, he gripped the scroll painting in his other hand. The scroll painting was his trump card, and also a powerful threat. He was now regretting his earlier impulsiveness, and wished he hadn’t come looking to cause trouble for Meng Hao.

It was at this point that, because of Meng Hao gaining enlightenment of the 2,700 Essences, the First Nation’s National Aura Mountain crumbled. A pillar of light rose up, the ninth. A ninth vortex also appeared in the air.

The ninth vortex ensured that the lands of the Windswept Realm were now completely stopped in place in the pitch-black void.

Rumbling filled the lands, and the Emperor was panting anxiously.

“Zong Wuya,” he said, “you can hold back, but the plan will not fail! You must understand the truth of that.” Ignoring Zong Wuya, he extended his right hand, within which appeared an earthenware pot.

The pot was the color of blood, and shockingly, nearly overflowed with boiling blood.

“Countless years of preparation have created hope for the Windswept Realm. It doesn’t matter if I’m viewed as a saint or a sinner, I will lead the Windswept Realm to escape from under the 33 Heavens. The 33 Heavens will become the 34 Heavens, and all cultivators of the Windswept Realm will receive the enlightenment of the true Dao!

“Over the countless years, it’s impossible to say how many lives have been sacrificed for this cause, for this hope! I will use your blood to help us… activate the Blood World Formation!” Howling, the Emperor viciously smashed the blood pot onto the ground.

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# Chapter 1137: Drastic Upheavals!

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. He could sense some sort of indescribably malevolent aura coming from the earthenware pot, as if it contained the willpower of all of the life forms in the Windswept Realm.

A sound like that of infinite screaming rippled out from the blood in all directions, causing the sky to flash, and the nine pillars of light rising up from the Nine Nations to dim slightly. Even the nine vortexes up in the sky seemed to be affected, and looked as though they might stop spinning!

Rumbling could be heard, and the Emperor was laughing maniacally. After having thrown the earthenware pot down, it smashed, sending blood splashing out in all directions. The intangible howling grew more intense, transforming into ripples that spread out everywhere, covering the entire Windswept Realm, twisting it, distorting it.

Meng Hao was panting. Drastic upheavals were rocking the Windswept Realm, and although he had prepared himself mentally, to see these things happening in front of his very eyes was a shocking thing.

The other cultivators from the Mountain and Sea Realm all had looks of complete astonishment on their faces.

The earthenware pot smashed, and blood splashed out in all directions. The fierce fighting of the Nine Nations’ armies had long since stained the earth red, but as this additional flow of blood spread out, everything it touched became even more deeply crimson.

“Living things, Heaven and Earth, mountains and rivers, wind and clouds… by the power in me, I summon you!” As the emperor’s shrill cry echoed out in all directions, the blood from the earthenware pot began to writhe, as if it were alive.

It was as if there was something concealed inside that blood which had now been issued a call. It was like a key that could unlock the door to these blood-colored lands!

The ground in the central temple area was shaking violently. Next, a massive amount of blood began to rise up from in the land, as if it were being called, directed.

A massive rumbling could be heard, as though countless fierce voices were crying out. More blood gushed up out of the lands, transforming everything into a world of blood.

The cultivators from the Mountain and Sea Realm, including Fan Dong’er, were all completely shocked, and had no idea what was happening.

“Windswept blood. Heavenly tears. I call upon you to awaken from your sleep of death!” The Emperor bit the tip of his tongue and spit out a mouthful of blood. His hair was disheveled, and he looked crazed.

Rumbling could be heard as the ground trembled with increased intensity. Meng Hao flashed through the air, passing by Dao-Heaven and heading directly toward the Emperor. He had the sudden intense premonition that if things proceeded as they were, a great catastrophe would strike.

Almost in the same moment that Meng Hao began to charge toward the emperor, Zong Wuya sighed and stepped forward, reaching out with his hand to block the path.

“Meng Hao, you can’t stop this from happening. Just watch.”

Meng Hao shoved Zong Wuya out of the way, causing a massive wind to kick up. And yet, he was incapable of doing anything to stop the rising blood.

“You intentionally let me live. Why?!” Meng Hao performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, causing azure light to shine out from him. Instantly, numerous mountains began to descend, the result of the Mountain Consuming Incantation. These were not ordinary mountain ranges, but rather countless azure-colored mountains, Immortal mountains, which smashed down with shocking power.

“I already know what decision you have made,” Zong Wuya said softly. “And you know mine. As for who is wrong and who is right, we’ll just have to see…. Time will answer all questions.” He performed an incantation gesture with his right hand and waved his finger. Instantly, his extinguished Soul Lamps expanded and shot up to meet the azure Immortal mountains. A huge boom echoed out, and he fell back a few paces, trembling.

“As for why I let you live… it was because… I hope that if I’m wrong, you can help me accomplish something.” His eyes were once again filled with a look of reminiscence, and complex emotions. He sighed again.

Meng Hao was also forced into retreat by the backlash. He looked up at Zong Wuya, and saw the look in the man’s eyes, whereupon he fell silent.

More and more blood flowed out. In the blink of an eye, everything was covered, making the area a river of blood. Rumbling sounds could be heard, and Meng Hao’s eyes went wide. Off to the side, Dao-Heaven looked astonished, but took advantage of what was happening to flee.

“Come forth, Windswept blood!” the Emperor cried. His right hand suddenly shot up, and he stabbed his fingers his own eye. At the same time, the sky filled with crackling lightning.

The blood that covered the lands was boiling, and continued to bubble up from the depths of the earth. The river of blood was now turning into a sea of blood!

In the blink of an eye, all the lands were covered with endless amounts of blood. Even the nine pagodas that represented the Nine Nations were covered.

This was the blood spilled by the countless soldiers who had died fighting.

“Windswept spirit, unleash the countless years of rancor, form it into your heroes….” He threw his head back and roared, lifting both hands into the air for a moment before shoving them down violently toward the ground.

The rancor caused the lands to tremble. The sea of blood roared, and then began to congeal into one figure after another. In the blink of an eye, there were too many to count. After appearing, they let out intense roars, and then stared with blood-red eyes at Meng Hao and Dao-Heaven, as well as all the other shocked cultivators from the Mountain and Sea Realm.

It was an animosity that had been suppressed for far too many years, a hatred that sank deep into the bones, permeated the blood. It had built up for generation after generation, until it became a storm.

“Activate the Nine Blood Formation!” the emperor roared hoarsely. He lifted his right foot up and then stamped viciously down toward the sea of blood. A boom rang out, and the figures congealing from the blood began to speed toward the nine pagodas, howling all the way.

Everyone watched as the blood-colored figures slammed into the pagodas and then completely vanished, having been absorbed by the pagodas, which then transformed into the color of blood.

The blood that remained on the ground continued to flow into the pagodas, which apparently possessed some shocking gravitational force. It only took a few moments for all the blood to be drained away.

The nine pagodas, having absorbed the sea of blood and the blood figures, were now crimson red and glittering brightly. At this point, nine blood-colored beams of light suddenly shot up from the nine pagodas.

They sped up toward the Heavens, piercing through the clouds to form… nine blood-colored vortexes!

Upon close examination, it was possible to see countless blood-colored figures inside of the vortexes, speeding about as if they were running!

The nine pagodas were not very far away from each other, and thus, neither were the nine pillars of light. Furthermore, the nine vortexes up above were also very close to each other. As they grew, they merged together, forming… one enormous vortex!

The cultivators from the Mountain and Sea Realm were shocked by all of this. A moment later, the shocking blood-colored vortex filled the sky with rumbling sounds, causing the lands below to quake.

The pillars of light from the Nine Nations, which had been preventing the Windswept Realm from rising up, were completely shattered by the blood-colored vortex. As it spun, the previously motionless lands trembled, then once again… began to ascend!!

From outside in the void, it would be possible to see the entire Windswept Realm suddenly rising up rapidly through the void.

“Defile the National Aura Mountains!” the emperor howled, stabbing his fingers into his other eye, leaving himself completely blind. The only thing that remained of his eyes were gaping holes flowing with blood. At the same time, ear-splitting laughter rang out.

Simultaneously, the cultivators in all of the sects of the Windswept Realm’s Nine Nations began to tremble, almost as if they were awakening from a dream. Their expressions turned fanatical, and they began to call out with loud voices.

“For freedom!!”

“For freedom!!”

“For freedom!!”

From the First Nation to the Second Nation… in all Nine Nations, in all of the various sects, the same words echoed out to fill the world.

At the same time, the cultivators of the Windswept Realm suddenly smashed their right hands onto the tops of their heads. Echoing like that of thunder could be heard. Blood sprayed out of their mouths, and they swayed unsteadily, faces ashen. There were even some who directly dropped dead.

When the blood sprayed from their mouths like fountains, it flew up into the air and then sped toward the rubble of the nearest… of the National Aura Mountains!

Instantly, the shattered National Aura Mountains were faced with numerous streams of blood, flying toward them at top speed.

The blood was being used to defile the beams of light!

The lands quaked, and the sky turned the color of blood. Dark clouds roiled, and of the beams of light rising up from the Nine Nations, one was instantly snuffed out. Then a second, a third, and a fourth….

In the space of a few breaths, all of the beams of light were extinguished!

When that happened, the vortexes they had created vanished, leaving only one thing remaining in the sky… the lone blood-colored vortex!

Rumbling echoed out as the lands of the Windswept Realm picked up speed. From out in the void, it was possible to see the lands rising up rapidly.

Because of the incredible speed, mountains and rivers collapsed, and the land quaked violently. Cities crumbled, and all the cultivators, including Meng Hao and the others from the Mountain and Sea Realm, felt incredible pressure, as if huge hands were pushing down onto them.

Fan Dong’er and the others coughed up mouthfuls of blood, and looks of astonishment could be seen on their faces.

Even Dao-Heaven was shaken inwardly. He fell back a bit, although he didn’t flee. He had the feeling that the drastic upheavals facing the Windswept Realm… were reaching a climax.

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# Chapter 1138: Obvious Bait!

Meng Hao’s face flickered, and the sensation of an oncoming catastrophe grew even stronger. His eyes glittered, and the threw his head back and roared. Rumbling sounds echoed out as his body grew rapidly from its normal size to 9 meters tall, 21 meters, 30 meters, 60 meters, 90 meters!

He was now a 90-meter-tall giant, whose body rumbled as he fought back against the invisible pressure weighing down on him. He stamped his foot onto the ground and transformed into a meteor that shot toward the Emperor.

Zong Wuya stepped forward to block his way, causing Meng Hao’s eyes to flicker as he unleashed the God-Slaying Fist with his right hand. Instantly, the two of them began to fight.

Booms echoed out, and in a relatively short period of time, the two of them exchanged hundreds of blows. Everything shook violently, and Zong Wuya’s eyes filled with a strange light. He was clearly aware that Meng Hao had just reached a level of power that could cause problems for even himself.

“Zong Wuya!” Meng Hao growled. He waved his right hand, unleashing the Essence of Divine Flame. However, Zong Wuya all of a sudden fell back, doing nothing more to interfere with Meng Hao.

Meng Hao stared in shock for a moment. However, he had no desire to fight with Zong Wuya to begin with, plus, the sensation of imminent crisis was growing more intense. He waved his hand, sending Divine Flame out in a huge blast toward the Emperor.

The Emperor laughed loudly, and didn’t even deign to look at Meng Hao, simply allowing him to approach without even dodging to the side.

A boom rang out, and Meng Hao’s face flickered. His Divine Flame, and his attacking palm, were only about a meter away from the Emperor when suddenly, they slammed into some sort of impassable barrier.

It almost seemed like the will of the Windswept Realm had sprung up around the Emperor, making him… completely invincible!

Not only that, a backlash hit Meng Hao, flinging him backward by about three hundred meters.

“No one can alter the Imperial Lord’s plan. There is no power that can interfere with the hopes of the Windswept Realm. Everything… is for the true Dao. For freedom!” He stood there, eyeless, laughing maniacally as he raised both hands into the air. His cultivation base was clearly not very high, but as of this point, there was an astonishing power of will that had come to converge on him.

“Hear me, Echelon cultivators from the Immortal World: what you want is nothing other than the natural laws and Essences of the Windswept Realm. As the Emperor… I now give them to you!” The Emperor continued to laugh as he waved a finger toward the sky. The Heavens rumbled, and the sky seemed to shatter. Rumbling sounds echoed out as the Windswept Realm suddenly seemed to lose its sky altogether.

In its place was a void, within which, if you looked closely, could be seen a blood-colored vortex, rumbling as it spun. It exerted a massive power that relentlessly pulled the entire Windswept Realm higher and higher.

Simultaneously, countless natural laws and Essences that had previously been invisible, were now revealed because of the lack of a sky overhead.

The natural laws were visible as flickering magical symbols that formed a huge net which covered everything. In the locations where the threads that made up the net intersected, colorful motes of light could be seen.

Sometimes they were transparent, sometimes they shone brightly. They were… Essences.

Natural laws and great Daos. For the first time ever… they were directly made visible to all onlookers.

All they had to do was send out some divine sense, and they would be able to see the huge net of magical symbols that represented the natural laws. Furthermore, if they touched the colorful motes of light with divines sense, they would be able to detect the presence of Essence.

“Natural laws. Great Daos. There they are, right in front of you!” said the Emperor, laughing. “Echelon cultivators of the Immortal World, you may contemplate them as much as you like. However many you get will depend on your own personal good fortune!” The man’s laughter contained derision, contempt, and most of all, disdain.

Dao-Heaven was about to leave the area, but suddenly, a tremor ran through him, and he looked up at the huge net up above. He saw the colorful lights, and began to pant. Then he sent his divine sense out in all directions and began to contemplate enlightenment.

At the same time, the other Echelon cultivators in the Windswept Realm were completely shaken. When they saw the events transpiring up above, they maintained silence for a moment, but then suddenly began to fly through the air toward the central temple area.

Lin Cong was the first to arrive, whereupon he immediately began to contemplate enlightenment.

Next was Han Qinglei, then Yuwen Jian. Finally, the pudgy Echelon cultivator from the Fifth Nation came, the one who had been seriously injured by Dao-Heaven, and had subsequently fled. He flew through the air toward one particular corner of the central temple area, then, body trembling, began to contemplate.

The Echelon cultivators quickly converged in the central temple area and began to contemplate enlightenment of the Windswept Realm’s natural laws and Essences. Meng Hao was the only one who, despite all of the natural laws and Essences, continued to feel the sense of increasingly intense crisis. He was just about to take another step forward toward the Emperor when suddenly, the eyeless man turned and seemed to look directly at him, despite his lack of eyes. Dark pits of blood stared directly at Meng Hao.

“There’s no need to get anxious, Meng Hao. I might have underestimated you, but that won’t happen again. Actually, I hope that you can get stronger…. In fact, I’ll even help you!” The Emperor lifted his right foot up and stamped it down violently, sending a huge boom echoing out through the temple region.

The final 300 Essences, which should have remained in the temple, the final prize for the most powerful Echelon cultivator, began to spread out through Heaven and Earth, thanks to the violent stomping of the Emperor’s foot.

3,000 natural laws and 3,000 great Daos. That was the complete number, and as for the final number any given cultivator could gain enlightenment of, that would depend on their personal good fortune.

A tremor ran through Meng Hao. It wasn’t just the Echelon cultivators who were contemplating enlightenment. Fan Dong’er and the others were also shaken. They immediately sent their divine sense out to contemplate enlightenment of the precious natural laws and Essences.

“You are Echelon cultivators of the Immortal World, and yet, the Immortal World treats you too harshly. Ordinarily, it would be a simple thing to acquire these natural laws and Essences. But instead, they make you fight over them.

“As the Emperor, though, I won’t be so harsh. The 3,000 natural laws and 3,000 Essences are now all available for you to immediately contemplate!

“The more the better! For each one you get, your future Dao path will be made that much easier!

“I’ve also prepared another gift for you. It’s… a true and authentic gift that no previous generation of Echelon cultivators ever had a chance to acquire!

“Any world will have 3,000 great Daos. That is a law of life, and of the Heavens. However, it is not an absolute!

“Actually, in any given world, it is also possible… for a 3,001st Essence to appear! That is one additional Essence, the most supreme of Essences, which provides unlimited opportunities. It is the ultimate Essence!

“However, to cause that Essence to appear is very, very difficult. In fact, the only time it can appear is when a world is hovering on the brink of destruction. Only then will it begin to take shape!

“That is… a Great Dao Essence, one that the Windswept Realm has been forming for countless epochs!

“It is a complete Essence, the soul treasure of the Windswept Realm. In fact, it is… the World Dao!

“Anyone who can acquire the World Dao can acquire that most paramount World Essence. With it, you can own the entire world, or even make your own world!

“Where is it located, you might ask? In the temple itself!” The Emperor laughed and waved his sleeve. Immediately, a supreme aura erupted out from the temple, causing all nearby natural laws and Essences to grow as dim as fireflies under the shining light of the moon.

All of the cultivators instantly sensed the feeling of a supreme Essence, including Meng Hao.

“The Echelon cultivator who gains enlightenment of 3,000 natural laws, of 3,000 Essences, can have a chance to fight for… that final, ultimate World Essence!

“As Emperor, have I not treated you well!? And you know what, not only have I given you Essences to gain enlightenment of, I’ll help you to speed up the process. I won’t even hold back the qi flow of the Windswept Realm!” Strange laughter rang out from the Emperor’s mouth as numerous beams of light flew down from up above onto each of the Echelon cultivators.

After receiving the light of blessing, Dao-Heaven and the others trembled. Even if they wanted to reject it, they couldn’t. The beams of light caused them to feel as if they were fused with the Windswept Realm, giving them a feeling exactly like the one Meng Hao had experienced before.

The only difference was that Meng Hao had received the Echelon Heart, whereas they were receiving the help of the Emperor. Although the result might seem the same, the two processes were completely different.

In such a state, gaining enlightenment was much easier, enabling them to acquire enlightenment of all 3,000 great Daos in a much shorter time.

Each and every one was well aware that this Emperor’s words and actions were obviously some sort of trap. He was essentially offering up bait. And yet… they couldn’t stop themselves from gobbling that bait right up.

Only Meng Hao rejected the light without even hesitating a moment, causing it to grow dim and have very little influence on him. However, he was still incapable of resisting the temptation of those final 300 Essences that he needed.

He took a deep breath and looked over at the Emperor, his eyes flashing coldly.

“Bait, huh? Fine… I’ll bite!” He sent his divine sense out toward the final 300 Essences that he needed, and immediately began to gain enlightenment. Because he already had a Nirvana Fruit inside of him, this process caused it to fuse more fully with him. With each Essence that he gained enlightenment of, the process grew more complete.

In the moment that he had all 3,000 great Daos fused into his heart, his second Nirvana Fruit would be eternally melded into his forehead. For all eternity… he would be, fully and completely, an Allheaven Immortal!

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1139: Toxic Qi Flow!?

That was the Emperor’s gambit!

Although you couldn’t say he had honorable intentions or that there were no hidden tricks in his offer, you could at least say that he had revealed his cards and placed the bait right out in the open!

It was as if he were saying, “Here’s the bait, are you going to bite?!”

Anyone with a bit of common sense would be able to see that something was going on, something big and dangerous. Most importantly, as these drastic upheavals were striking the Windswept Realm, the Emperor’s actions were completely baffling.

However… even though they knew that something was going on, none of the Echelon cultivators could resist such bait. Dao-Heaven couldn’t, nor could Meng Hao. Their entire purpose in coming to the Windswept Realm had been to gain enlightenment of natural laws and Essences.

That didn’t indicate that they would instantly acquire that Essence after gaining enlightenment of it. However, the Essence would come to exist in their heart, like a flickering flame that, when they returned to the Mountain and Sea Realm, would make their path towards the Dao Realm less confusing, and make the process much smoother.

The ancient proverb says that before painting a piece of bamboo, that bamboo must exist in your heart. It was similar when dealing with Essences, and when the time came to truly acquire their own Essences, they would have a much clearer picture of their road forward.

Most importantly, having that proverbial bamboo in their hearts would even provoke changes in their fundamental nature!

The more enlightenment they gained, the greater the number of flames that were kindled in their hearts. If they could gain enlightenment of 3,000 great Daos, and thus gain 3,000 Dao Flames in their hearts, then, when they finally entered the Dao Realm, they would be able to wield unimaginable power.

Meng Hao's divine sense roiled out as he began to gain enlightenment of the 300 Essences that had been released from the temple.

All of the Echelon cultivators were contemplating enlightenment, as were the other cultivators from the Mountain and Sea Realm. The central temple region was completely devoid of any noise other than the Emperor's wild laughter.

His heart burst with anticipation as he waited for the Echelon cultivators to gain complete enlightenment of the natural laws and Essences.

Zong Wuya stood there silently, a complicated expression on his face as he looked at the Echelon cultivators. Finally let out a light sigh.

"Essences! Natural laws! Great Daos!" Trembling, Dao-Heaven began to laugh as his energy rose, causing a windstorm to spring up around him. Because of the World Seals, he had gained enlightenment of 900 Essences. With the additional help of the Emperor, and the blessing of the Windswept Realm's qi flow, he now had been enlightened regarding 1,500 Essences. Hope was gradually forming within him, and he could virtually see himself stepping onto the path of the Ancient Realm for a tenth time.

"Who cares if it's bait? However much you send my way, I'll take it all!" he cried. Dao-Heaven's eyes shone with a strange light. He might fear Meng Hao, but having become the most powerful in the Echelon indicated that his power and intelligence far exceeded the norm. Were that not the case, he would not have repeatedly avoided the Third Nation the way he had.

Lin Cong was trembling. Like Han Qinglei, he had not acquired any additional World Seals, and was limited to the 300 original Essences from his Nation's National Aura Mountain. He had long since resigned himself to being in a hopeless situation. Now, he trembled as his enlightenment reached 600 Essences and continued to rise.

Bait and plots didn’t matter to him. He had no other choice than to do what he was doing. Cultivators lived to become more powerful, and to do so, they had to ignore danger. That was something that all Echelon cultivators were adept at.

Instead of saying that this was Lin Cong’s strong point, you could say that it was… a representation of his ambition!

It was the same with Han Qinglei.

Yuwen Jian was panting. He already had 300 more Essences than Han Qinglei and Lin Cong, and had now broken through to over 1,000. It wasn’t that he hadn’t seen Meng Hao’s actions. However, in the current situation, there was nothing more important or enticing than Essences and natural laws.

Then there was the young Echelon cultivator from the Fifth Mountain. He had been maintaining his distance cautiously, but now he looked extremely excited, and instantly sent his divine sense out in all directions.

Everyone was focused on contemplation, both the Echelon cultivators as well as Fan Dong’er and the others.

Meng Hao was also wrapped up in enlightenment. He was in the best position of all of them, and as his divine sense spread out, because of his advantages, experienced an instant breakthrough.

2,800 Essences!

Rumbling could be heard as Meng Hao’s energy erupted, forming an invisible tempest that spun around him. He was different from the others in terms of his temperament, and he immediately experienced shocking transformations. It was as if he became more confident. He stood there, seemingly far above everyone else.

The greatest transformation that was occurring was inside of him, with the partially absorbed Nirvana Fruit. After gaining enlightenment of 2,800 Essences, it was becoming almost inseparably close to him.

It was as if Meng Hao's continued enlightenment caused more and more Dao Flames to ignite, allowing him to master the Nirvana Fruit and fuse with it!

By understanding the world around him, he actually didn't even need to take the initiative to fuse with the Nirvana Fruit; it began doing so automatically!

Rumbling sounds could be heard, and his eyes looked like they contained stars, or even the world itself.

Suddenly, the Emperor's voice rang out in a mesmerizing fashion, to be heard by all of the Echelon cultivators.

"Meng Hao has already gained enlightenment of 2,800 Essences. You other Echelon cultivators had better go a bit faster, otherwise… that precious World Essence which has been building up the temple for so many years will all go to him.

"As the Emperor, I can help you, and can even lend you with more qi flow. Just call out to me, and the qi flow will be yours!"

Dao-Heaven trembled, and when he opened his eyes, they were shot with blood. He suddenly slapped the top of his head, causing his entire body to vibrate. Then his Echelon mark appeared on his forehead, and his Paragon magic suddenly appeared, not to attack Meng Hao, but to use as a stimulus for his own power. Regardless of the consequences, he wanted his divine sense to become even stronger.

"Give me that qi flow!" he roared. As his voice echoed out, the Heavens rumbled, and an intense beam of light shot down onto Dao-Heaven. It surrounded him, causing the dust in the area to float up into the air and transform into a tempest. Dao-Heaven trembled violently, but his eyes shone brightly.

Under the pressure, he was able to sense that the speed of his enlightenment had been increased by more than tenfold!

1,600! 1,800! 2,000 Essences!

In the moment that Dao-Heaven reached 2,000 Essences, he began to pant, and a gleam of obsession appeared in his eyes, as if he had suddenly caught sight of his own personal Dao!

That Dao was vague, but because of the help of the 2,000 Essences, it could now be said that he had actually found his own path!

“So that’s how it is,” Dao-Heaven murmured, trembling, his eyes burning with passion. “I never would have thought…. I need to examine it in more detail!”

After Dao-Heaven called for the qi flow, Lin Cong and the others gritted their teeth, and then began to follow suit. They unleashed their cultivation bases and went mad with divine sense. Rumbling sounds filled the air as numerous beams of light descended onto them. All of the Echelon cultivators were trembling, expressions vicious as the qi flow power gave indescribable assistance to their enlightenment.

Their speed increased dramatically, especially in Lin Cong’s case. He had nearly gone mad from being defeated by Meng Hao; it was something that his enormous pride just couldn’t accept. Currently, he was roaring, holding nothing back, and was in fact demanding even more qi flow than Dao-Heaven.

He was surrounded by a beam of light 300 meters wide, and his speed of enlightenment was almost unbelievable. In the blink of an eye, he broke past 1,000. After that was 1,200, 1,500, then 1,800. Soon it was 2,000 Essences. He was now in third place among the Echelon, behind only Meng Hao and Dao-Heaven.

“Meng Hao, I won’t be weaker than you!” he roared, face twisted viciously. His entire body was shaking violently, as if his perception of reality was being forcefully stretched and widened. His consciousness grew clearer, and his eyes shone brightly.

“My path was incorrect,” he murmured, “and treading it could never lead to the highest heights. So, that’s what was happening. It turns out Immortality… is like this!” It was unclear exactly what he had seen, but he began to laugh loudly.

Han Qinglei gritted his teeth. Seeing Lin Cong and Dao-Heaven doing what they were doing caused a feeling of competition to rise up sharply within him. He decided to throw caution to the wind, and even though it wasn’t quite appropriate to call for more qi flow from the Emperor, he did it anyway.

Rumbling could be heard as his enlightenment rocketed up. Although it hadn’t reached 2,000 yet, he was able to do exactly what Dao-Heaven and Lin Cong had done, and see his own path.

Yuwen Jian was still hesitating, unsure of what to do. It was the same with the young Echelon cultivator from the Fifth Mountain.

It was at this point that Meng Hao suddenly trembled. His aura caused colors to flash and a huge wind to kick up. A strange look appeared in his eyes as he gained enlightenment of…. 2,900 Essences!

He was now only 100 away from 3,000 Essences!

His aura was changing, becoming different. It was as if he was casting off all mortality and becoming completely extraordinary!

A more intense aura of Immortality swirled around him, making anyone who looked at him suddenly be filled with the desire to bow in worship!

Even the other members of the Echelon and the other cultivators were all affected. Beneath Meng Hao’s feet, green grass and celestial flowers sprouted up, blooming, sending their delicate aroma out in all directions. There were even Blue Lotuses among them, swaying back and forth gently.

“When someone attains the Dao, he paves the way for all others!” Fan Dong’er said breathlessly, feeling shaken as she looked at Meng Hao. “When someone achieves the Dao, Blue Lotuses sprout and blossom!!”

If there were any Dao Realm experts present to watch, they would be astonished. That was because this was an omen that even few people in the Dao Realm could ever incite!

By this point, the Nirvana Fruit was reaching the final stages of absorption into Meng Hao. It was fusing with him, with his blood, with his soul, as if… it would become an eternal part of him!

As for the visions Dao-Heaven, Lin Cong and Han Qinglei were seeing of their Dao paths, Meng Hao experienced nothing of the kind. That was because he did not call upon any of the Windswept Realm’s qi flow from the Emperor. His was a pure enlightenment of the Dao!

Perhaps because of the Echelon Heart within him, his own heart was filling with an increasing sense of deadly crisis regarding the Windswept Realm.

In fact, even if his enlightenment were going slower, he still wouldn’t call upon the qi flow.

The voice of the Emperor echoed out, filled with a bizarre power that entered the hearts of all who heard him. “Meng Hao has already gained enlightenment of the 2,900th Essence. He only has 100 left. The rest of you… had better hurry up, lest you be too late!”

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1140: Eternal Allheaven Immortal!

Outside of the Mountain and Sea Realm was an endless black void, within which the Windswept Realm was now rising up at an indescribable speed. The void twisted and distorted, sending ripples out in all directions.

Gradually, it was possible to detect that far up above in the void, there was some sort of invisible barrier. Normally, it couldn’t be seen, but now that the Windswept Realm was approaching it, ripples began to spread out over the barrier. The barrier looked like a huge net, and currently, a slight depression was visible in it that stretched out in all directions.

The giant net was just faintly visible, and it was covered by a multitude of lightning bolts, dancing back and forth amidst crashing thunder.

On the other side of the huge net were glittering lights, chaos, and apparently, other worlds.

The huge net covered the entire Mountain and Sea Realm, ensuring that it… was clamped down and sealed tightly.

Meanwhile, outside of the Windswept Realm were two globes of splendorous light that were constantly battering back and forth against each other. As they did, the void would shatter, then rapidly reform.

Suddenly, an ancient voice spoke out from one of the globes of light, and it sounded exhausted: “Sea Dream, you still haven’t recovered from your injuries. I might not be able to beat you, but I can definitely keep you pinned down for a while. Why are you making things hard for me?”

The exhaustion was not that which came as a result of the rigors of magical battle. Rather, this person had lived for a very, very long time, and his life force was growing dim.

“You are the one making things hard for me, Windswept!” Paragon Sea Dream said, her voice cold.

“I became the Lord of the Windswept Realm first. Only after that did I become one of the Immortal World’s Imperial Lords. After all these years, I’m finally leading my world into freedom. Is that so wrong?”

“That’s exactly what the 3,000 rebel Realms said back then!”

Booms echoed out as they continued to fight. Although it only seemed as if the two globes of light were slamming into each other repeatedly, if you looked closely, you would see that every time they connected, it was with power capable of shattering Heaven and Earth. Even the void was damaged. If any Dao Realm experts came too close, they would have been seriously injured by those ripples, or perhaps even killed.

As they fought bitterly, the net up above grew closer and closer to the Windswept Realm. The depression in it also became more obvious. Furthermore, it was just possible to make out the image of various enormous figures waiting behind the huge net.

One figure looked like a giant, with eyes of lightning. Another was some type of beast, with the body of a snake and the head of a dragon, and it exhaled clouds with every breath. One of the figures appeared to be wearing a suit of golden armor, as if it were a celestial warrior. It held a greatsword in one hand as it observed the battle taking place on the other side of the huge net.

There was another figure, barely visible. It was an old man mounted atop a White Ox. He appeared to be sighing.

Further off in the distance was a three-headed six-armed giant, pitch-black in color, with a shocking, murderous aura.

These were all powerful experts from the 33 Heavens, and had come here to observe the approach of the Windswept Realm, as well as the battle between Sea Dream and Windswept.

No one passed through the net to assist. They only watched. It was as if they were trying to decide whether or not the Windswept Imperial Lord, who in the past had unleashed virtually endless destruction upon the 33 Heavens, was actually… turning traitor!!

If he was, then they would allow the Windswept Realm to leave the Mountain and Sea Realm, and become the 34th Heaven!

In addition to observing the battle between the Windswept Imperial Lord and Paragon Sea Dream, they were watched as the lands of the Windswept Realm approached. As such, they could clearly see everything that was happening there, including the enlightenment regarding natural law and Essences being undertaken by Meng Hao and the others.

One of those enormous figures, the one with three heads and six arms, had an especially cold and murderous look in his eyes, and seemed to be paying especially close attention to… Meng Hao! 1

The Emperor’s words were still echoing out through the temple in the Windswept lands. Dao-Heaven and the others experienced enlightenment even more quickly, especially Dao-Heaven. He couldn’t bear to be defeated by Meng Hao, and his eyes were bright red. Although he knew he shouldn’t dare take too much Windswept qi flow from the Emperor, he gritted his teeth.

“Qi flow!” he yelled. The Emperor laughed and waved his hand. Dao-Heaven began to glow more brightly, as if he had become a source of boundless light. It was even hard to tell the difference between Dao-Heaven himself, and the beam of light around him. The light poured through him, making it seem as if his body itself were made of light.

Rumbling sounds echoed out, and Dao-Heaven threw his head back and roared. His divine sense surged out madly, ten times greater than before. In the blink of an eye, he reached 2,000 Essences.

That number increased with incredible speed!

2,400!

2,600!

2,800 Essences!

Dao-Heaven had gone mad. His energy was different than everyone else’s, and a powerful tempest surrounded him. His eyes shone with a strange gleam, and he shook violently, as if he had found his own path, his own direction to the Dao.

Simultaneously, Lin Cong threw caution to the wind and called for more qi flow. The Emperor’s laughter echoed out as he waved his hand, causing more light to descend on Lin Cong. Lin Cong was shaking, and blue veins popped out on his forehead. He then unleashed his Paragon magic, and the Heavens trembled. His speed of enlightenment was second only to Dao-Heaven’s. He quickly rose from 2,000 Essences all the way to 2,500.

After him was Han Qinglei, who quickly reached 2,000 Essences.

The Echelon cultivator from the Fifth Mountain gritted his teeth and also called for more qi flow. The Emperor’s laughter rang out continuously; more light descended, and the young man’s enlightenment speed erupted, causing him to quickly break through to 2,000 Essences.

The only one who was still hesitating was… Yuwen Jian. He could see that Meng Hao was not calling upon the qi flow, and was in fact rejecting it with his divine sense. Considering how familiar he was with Meng Hao, he had the feeling that such a decision must have been made for a good reason.

Still feeling conflicted, he gritted his teeth. His eyes then shone with determination as he refused to ask for more qi flow, instead relying only on what he already had to contemplate enlightenment.

More than ten breaths of time passed. Suddenly, Meng Hao trembled, and his eyes filled with an unprecedentedly bright light. He took in a deep breath, and everything trembled. Lightning crashed, as the aura of the entire world seemed to be sucked into him.

Rumbling could be heard as he grew higher. He was now more than 210 meters tall and growing! Incredible energy surged up from him.

3,000 Essences!

As of this moment, Meng Hao had achieved thorough enlightenment of… 3,000 Essences!!

Not one more, not one less!

In that moment, it was as if 3,000 Dao Flames were burning in his heart, lightning his path, filling his heart, blowing away all of his confusion.

His entire body radiated bright, azure light, light which represented the utmost level of respect. It represented… an Allheaven Immortal!

Massive transformations occurred within him. The second Nirvana Fruit was now completely and thoroughly a part of his bones, his blood, his soul, his everything! It was completely absorbed!

It was no longer a separate thing from him, and would never again emerge from within his forehead. Now, he was eternally an Allheaven Immortal, free from limitations. At any time or place, he could unleash… the full power of a mighty Allheaven Immortal!

Meng Hao threw his head back and roared as his body grew even larger. Soon, he was 300 meters tall, a huge giant. But then, he suddenly began to shrink back down.

Perhaps it was not a shrinking, but a compression!

That compression caused cracking sounds to emanate out from inside of him. Resplendent azure light flickered out, and his energy continued to rise, as did his cultivation base!

His 123 Immortal meridians fused together, forming a single meridian inside of him. At first glance, he looked no different from an ordinary cultivator. He appeared to be just his ordinary self. However, that was actually a sign of a complete transformation!

He looked the same, but fundamentally, he was completely different.

You could even say that, as of this moment, Meng Hao had reached a crucial milestone on his path of Immortality.

Immortal!

Allheaven Immortal!

He let out a long cry that echoed about, causing the whole world to shake. Fan Dong’er, Bei Yu, and the other non-Echelon cultivators from the Mountain and Sea Realm, were all shaking. When they looked at Meng Hao, it was as if they were looking at a holy saint, an Immortal Divinity. It would be impossible for them to look down on him, and they even felt the urge to worship him.

It was hard to say who did it first, but soon everyone, including Fan Dong’er and the cultivators from the Mountain and Sea Realm, dropped to their knees and kowtowed.

As of this moment, Meng Hao was surrounded by a pillar of azure light that shot up into the clouds. Despite all of the drastic upheavals, Meng Hao was now the complete center of attention.

Even the Echelon cultivators were affected. A strange light appeared in Zong Wuya’s eyes, and he was trembling. The Emperor gasped, and despite the fact that he had no eyes, and should only be able to see darkness, he suddenly caught sight of the azure light, and the figure therein!

Meanwhile, outside of the Windswept Realm, in the area beyond the depression in the huge net, the figures in the chaotic clouds were letting out exclamations of shock.

“That azure light….”

“An Allheaven Immortal!”

“I can’t believe there’s actually… an Allheaven Immortal in the Mountain and Sea Realm!!”

“This is impossible! The bloodlines of the Allheaven Immortals have long-since been eradicated. How could another one have appeared!?”

“Who is this person…?” Various cries of shock and disbelief could be heard beyond the huge net. All eyes were now focused on Meng Hao standing there in the Windswept Realm.

The pitch-black, three-headed six-armed figure looked on, eyes blazing with flames of hatred.

Even Windswept and Sea Dream couldn’t help but look over in the middle of their battling, to gaze upon the azure light shining up through the clouds.

That azure light seemed to be an announcement to everyone that… an Allheaven Immortal had appeared once again in the Mountain and Sea Realm, in the Immortal World!!

“Not bad,” the Windswept Imperial Lord said thoughtfully, retracting his gaze.

“He’s not just an Allheaven Immortal,” Paragon Sea Dream said coolly. Then she waved her hand, causing a massive wind to spring up as she dove back into battle.

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# Chapter 1141: The Echelon Fights Meng Hao!

Shocking azure light rose up into the sky!

Meng Hao’s body rapidly reverted from a height of 300 meters to only 150 meters. However, his cultivation base was rising dramatically.

In the blink of an eye, he then dropped from 150 meters tall to the size of an ordinary person. And yet, his energy seemed to stain the entire sky azure.

“Azure Sky….” Meng Hao murmured. His mind trembled as a new enlightenment suddenly filled his mind. This was a sign that would definitely occur when an Allheaven Immortal appeared.

At the same time, it was an innate divine ability of an Allheaven Immortal!

Azure Sky!

The Azure Sky subdues all willpower!

Even the distant Mountain and Sea Realm was shaken. After all, despite the fact that the Windswept Realm was now high up in the darkness of the void, it was still… in the Mountain and Sea Realm!

Since Meng Hao was now an Allheaven Immortal, it affected… the entire Realm.

In the Mountain and Sea Realm, the Nine Seas were roiling and roaring. Countless sea beasts were filled with excitement, with the exception of the sea beasts in the Ninth Sea. Only the Ninth Sea… was trembling in fear, and that trembling was not limited to just the sea beasts in it!

The entire Ninth Sea was suddenly struck with uncontrollable terror.

Gradually, the Ninth Sea began to change color, turning azure. Any sea beast who had showed animosity to Meng Hao in the past suddenly found that they had azure sealing marks shining on their foreheads. The marks flickered several times before vanishing. However, the intense fear of extermination still floated in their minds.

That was because of the oath that Meng Hao had made. His voice when he uttered that oath seemed to echo eternally within the Ninth Sea. 1

Similarly trembling were all the members of the Demonic Cultivator Horde in the Nine Seas God World. To them, it felt as if a horrific catastrophe was on the way, a massive calamity.

The mountain peaks were also shaking. The Nine Mountains trembled, and all the cultivators in the Mountain and Sea Realm could sense something, although it was hard for them to put their fingers on exactly what. They just had the feeling that somewhere out there, an awe-inspiring figure had just appeared.

The Mountains and Seas were shaken, and rumbling could be heard everywhere. The azure light was especially intense on Planet South Heaven, especially from all of the places there that Meng Hao had visited in the past.

It was the same on Planet East Victory, as well as with Patriarch Reliance, who was now floating around somewhere in the Eighth Mountain and Sea. He trembled as azure light shone up from the State of Zhao on his back.

Even more shocking was the Fourth Mountain, where Xu Qing sat cross legged in meditation. Suddenly, she was surrounded by shocking azure light. The old women standing guard over her were astonished, and even Ksitigarbha, the Lord of the Fourth Mountain and Sea, suddenly opened his eyes.

“Allheaven Immortal….” he murmured.

As the Mountains and Seas rumbled, the sun and the moon suddenly stopped moving, and apparently broke free from their places in the Nine Mountains and Seas, and began to fly in the direction of the Allheaven Immortal aura.

That scene caused widespread shock throughout the Mountain and Sea Realm. Back in the temple of the Windswept Realm, Meng Hao stood amidst the majestic azure light, and took a deep breath.

“The first two Nirvana Fruits that I absorbed weren’t mine, but rather, the first generation Patriarch’s,” he murmured, eyes glittering brightly. “The next one I absorb will be… my very own Nirvana Fruit!”

He took a step forward, and thunder crashed. Rumbling echoed out in all directions as that single step took him all the way to the temple, where he waved his right hand toward the temple itself and made a snatching motion.

What he wanted was… the supreme Dao which existed in the temple itself.

Rumbling filled the temple. Meng Hao’s hand was filled with Allheaven Immortal power, and yet, it couldn’t shake the temple. All it did was cause fissures to spread out, accompanied by cracking sounds.

Meng Hao frowned in displeasure. In contrast, the emperor’s face fell. He couldn’t see anything in the world except for Meng Hao, surrounded by azure light, and that most holy central temple.

“He… actually caused cracks to appear on the surface of the temple. A cultivation base like that… such battle prowess… he’s basically equivalent to the peak of the Ancient Realm! He’s just half a step away from Quasi-Dao!”

Simultaneously, Dao-Heaven roared anxiously, calling upon even more qi flow to rapidly increase the speed of his enlightenment!

2,900 Essences!

3,000!

After reaching 3,000 Essences, he threw his head back and let loose a long cry. A strange light appeared in his eyes; he had never before been so clear about his future path. His energy continued to rise, and cracking sounds emanated out from his body. His cultivation base suddenly experienced explosive growth, rising higher and higher. In the blink of an eye, it was far beyond its previous level.

By means of divine will, he had found his own path, which would change how he practiced cultivation. From here on out, he would travel the correct path, and would experience incredible cultivation base growth.

His energy soared as he transformed into a beam of light that shot toward the temple.

“Meng Hao, that supreme great Dao belongs to me, Dao-Heaven!”

He closed in on Meng Hao with incredible speed, waving his right hand to cause a huge handprint to appear. That handprint seemed large enough to support the Heavens, and it immediately began to slap down toward Meng Hao.

“Screw off!” Meng Hao said coolly. As the hand closed in, azure light burst out. Suddenly, all of the light in the entire world turned azure.

There was a flash, and Dao-Heaven’s eyes went wide with disbelief. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and he was flung backward like a kite with its string cut.

“Y-you….” he stammered, astonished. He suddenly realized that Meng Hao was vastly more powerful than he had been before. Even though he himself was also stronger, he simply couldn’t measure up to Meng Hao.

In almost the same moment that Dao-Heaven fell back, Lin Cong threw his head back and roared. A massive tempest sprung up around him as he gained enlightenment of 3,000 great Daos. His eyes shone with a bizarre light, and his energy soared along with his cultivation base. At the same time, he shot toward Meng Hao.

“Meng Hao!” he roared. He waved his right hand, causing numerous screaming ghosts to fly out, covering the sky and emanating an aura of death. They transformed into a gray mist that in turn became a long spear which stabbed toward Meng Hao.

However, in the moment that the long gray spear bore down on him, Meng Hao waved his finger. Thunderous booms rang out, and blinding azure light flashed. The gray spear collapsed into countless fragments, and Lin Cong fell back, blood spraying out of his mouth, his face a mass of astonishment and disbelief.

Meng Hao didn’t even look at Dao-Heaven or Lin Cong. Instead, he lifted his left hand and once again slapped out toward the temple. A huge boom echoed out, and the temple trembled. Cracks appeared everywhere, and it appeared to be just on the verge of collapsing.

He wanted to destroy the temple completely and forcibly take that supreme Dao out!

Dao-Heaven’s eyes flickered coldly. “We can’t let him get it!” he cried. “We should all have a chance to have it. Lin Cong, let’s attack him together!”

As far as he was concerned, now that Meng Hao had the Echelon Heart, if he also got that supreme World Essence Dao, then he would definitely be the most powerful member of the Echelon!

In fact, it could potentially even make him the most powerful Immortal Realm cultivator in all the successive generations of the Echelon!

Dao-Heaven roared, charging forward and waving his hand to summon his Paragon magic. The scroll painting unfurled, and the figure within looked up.

Lin Cong’s eyes flickered with killing intent. He had long since come to view the enmity between himself and Meng Hao as irreconcilable. Meng Hao had fractured his Dao heart, and had left behind a seemingly unconquerable shadowy version of himself. If he hadn’t been able to acquire enlightenment of 3,000 great Daos… he likely wouldn’t even have had the courage to make a move. Gritting his teeth, he roared and unleashed his own Paragon magic.

As the two of them attacked, Han Qinglei threw his head back and let loose a long cry. He was the fourth Echelon cultivator to achieve enlightenment of 3,000 Essences. Energy soaring, cultivation base rising explosively, he looked viciously at Meng Hao and flickered as he charged toward him in attack. As he flew through the air, he waved his hand, causing innumerable bones to appear around him, as well as green lightning.

“Meng Hao, it’s time for us to fight again!”

Three Echelon cultivators were all joining forces to attack Meng Hao at the same time.

Any of these three Echelon cultivators could be considered blazing suns. When they appeared on the scene, all cultivators would tremble at their strength. They had long since surpassed their own Realm. Ancient Realm cultivators, even late Ancient Realm experts, would quiver in fear upon facing them.

However, considering that Meng Hao’s current cultivation base was equivalent to the peak Ancient realm, just half a step from Quasi-Dao, that meant that all he had to do was absorb another Nirvana Fruit, and he would be able to tackle almighty Quasi-Dao experts.

In fact, if he absorbed a fourth Nirvana Fruit, and his cultivation base broke through from the Immortal Realm to the Ancient Realm, then despite being in the Ancient Realm, he would still be able to hold his own against the Dao Realm.

In the Mountain and Sea Realm, the Dao Realm experts were all people on the same level as the Patriarchs of the most powerful sects and clans.

You could say that Meng Hao had already reached a level in which he could cause just about everyone to tremble. He was a terrifying figure that nobody could afford to underestimate.

Meng Hao radiated azure light as he calmly faced the three incoming Echelon cultivators. He seemed threatening without being angry, a true Immortal of Heaven and Earth.

“Before,” he said coolly. “I became a mountain obstructing the paths of the Chosen of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Today… I will become a towering peak that stands in the way of all of this generation of Echelon cultivators in the Mountain and Sea Realm!” He shot out in a flash to meet Dao-Heaven and the others. As the four of them closed in on each other, Meng Hao waved his finger toward Han Qinglei.

Han Qinglei screamed, and his Paragon magic collapsed. Blood sprayed out of his mouth as he tumbled away.

Then Meng Hao struck out toward Lin Cong with his palm. That palm strike caused Heaven and Earth to fade, and became Lin Cong’s entire world. His Paragon magic shattered, and he was utterly incapable of defending himself. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and he screamed as he spun backward, out of control.

All of these things occurred in the time it takes a spark to fly off of a piece of flint! Then Meng Hao turned to look at Dao-Heaven, and struck out with his fist.

That fist caused everything to shatter. The statue in Dao-Heaven’s painting emanated a murderous aura, but before it could be completely unfurled, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, and he looked at Dao-Heaven and softly said, “Withdraw!”

The one to withdraw was not the painting, it was Dao-Heaven!

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# Chapter 1142: Who Requested My Presence?!

Meng Hao was not so full of himself that he would think that, considering the current level of his cultivation base, he would be able to force this terrifying painting into retreat.

Of all the magical techniques Meng Hao had seen in his entire life, this scroll painting was by far the absolutely most terrifying. That was especially true of the figure inside the painting, who abounded with a murderous aura, almost as if he… were the source of all the murderous auras in Heaven and Earth.

Meng Hao wasn’t sure how many people would need to be slaughtered, nor how many years it would take, to build up a murderous aura like that. Furthermore, it was merely an image in a painting, not the actual person it depicted. And yet, it seemed as if by simply unleashing that murderous aura, he could annihilate the entire Mountain and Sea Realm with little difficulty.

Perhaps the only type of person who could actually battle the person in this painting… would be an almighty figure like a Paragon.

In other words, the black-robed man in the painting… was also a Paragon!

At least, that was Meng Hao’s conclusion. Furthermore, whoever it was that painted this Paragon was obviously a powerful person who wasn’t to be trifled with either. That was especially true when Meng Hao remembered how the man inside the painting had murmured something about the Paragon Bridge being incomplete. That caused the hairs on Meng Hao’s neck to stand up straight.

From the very first moment he had laid eyes on this painting, Meng Hao had begun to covet it. Unfortunately… it was not some mere magical item. It was the manifestation of Paragon magic. Therefore, even if Meng Hao wanted to steal it, it would be impossible to do so.

The only way it might be possible would be to figure out where Dao-Heaven acquired it, then gain similar enlightenment and somehow make the Paragon magic his own.

Without performing a Soulsearch, though, that would be impossible. Dao-Heaven was the former most powerful Echelon cultivator, and it wouldn’t be an easy thing to perform a Soulsearch on him.

Therefore, Meng Hao would have to attempt some other method. As his fist descended, Heaven and Earth rumbled, and an intense power exploded out. It was a power backed by both his fleshly body and his Allheaven Immortal strength. Dao-Heaven’s face fell, and he was incapable of doing anything as the power slammed into him. Blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth, and he was sent flying backward, completely out of control.

Almost in the same moment that he began to fly backward, Meng Hao extended his index finger, unleashing Demon Sealing Hexing magic toward the Paragon Painting.

The Seventh Hex, Karmic Hexing!

Shockingly, he was using this Hexing magic to look for Karma Threads connected to the scroll painting, in an attempt to discover where it came from.

As his finger descended through the air, rumbling sounds could be heard. The black-robed statue inside the painting suddenly looked up, eyes cold and completely emotionless as he stared dead at Meng Hao.

That look caused Meng Hao’s mind to reel and his body to tremble. Blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth, and he was forced backward. At the same time, his Karmic Hexing landed on the painting, and immediately, countless Karma Threads appeared.

Strangely, as soon as the Karma Threads appeared, they all turned gray in color. Each and every one of them turned into dust, without a single one being left intact.

“Impossible!” thought Meng Hao, his eyes going wide. What was happening clearly indicated that everyone this so-called Paragon had ever met, or had ever known… was already dead! Either that, or every person he had ever met or known thought that HE was dead!

Because of that, the Karma Threads were all destroyed!

Furthermore, a person with absolutely all of their Karma Threads destroyed would find it impossible to stay alive. If everyone in the world, and especially everyone who knew that person, believed them to be dead, then it would influence natural laws in such a way… that it would actually kill them.

“How could someone like this even exist? Could it be that this painting depicts a dead person!?!?” Meng Hao’s heart was trembling, and he almost couldn’t accept the situation. His eyes then glowed with determination, and he gritted his teeth. Finally, he bit the tip of his tongue and performed a double-handed incantation gesture. Ripples of the League of Demon Sealers instantly erupted out of him.

He was using the power of an Allheaven Immortal to stimulate the drop of Paragon Nine Seals’ blood, the same one he had used to completely absorb his first Nirvana Fruit. By doing so, he could use his Demon Sealer’s aura to connect with Heaven and Earth, to communicate with the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Rumbling could be heard as the distant Mountain and Sea Realm began to shake. The Mountains and Seas trembled, and the sun and the moon began to emit brilliant light. It was almost as if precious treasures existed inside of them that were now forming a resonance with Meng Hao.

The sensation of the legacy of the Demon Sealers fluctuating inside of him caused Meng Hao to tremble. All of his Demon Sealing Hexing magics began to vibrate as he extended his finger toward the black-robed man in the painting.

Demon Sealing, Seventh Hex!

Ignoring the incredible cost he had to pay, he relied on his future status to call upon the assistance of the Mountain and Sea Realm to unleash his most powerful Hexing magic. As soon as it appeared, massive rumbling sounds emanated out from him. His finger descended, and all of a sudden, Karma Threads once again appeared on the man in the painting.

This time, the Karma Threads were very dim, and instantly collapsed into nothing. It almost seemed the same as what had happened last time, causing Meng Hao’s mind to reel. However, in the next moment, his eyes went wide.

What he saw was that the destroyed Karma Threads hadn’t dissipated. Instead, they grouped together behind the man. Astonishingly… they formed the outline of a person.

The person flickered a few times, and then stabilized into an image. It was the image of a man, facing in the opposite direction. He had a long head of flowing, white hair.

Furthermore, the man was surrounded by… Karma Threads! These Karma Thread were strange and almost beyond imagination, something Meng Hao couldn’t even think of words to describe.

They seemed numerous, almost infinite, to the point where Meng Hao was left in complete astonishment. He had never seen anyone who had shocking Karma Threads like this.

As the Karma Threads spread out, most disappeared out into the void. Only a few spread back down toward the Mountain and Sea Realm!

“Who is this guy?!” thought Meng Hao, panting. It was in this moment that the black-robed man in the painting suddenly shivered. He lifted his head and waved his hand, causing the image of the white-haired man behind him to vanish. The Karma Threads also disappeared.

In fact… the painting itself spontaneously shredded into bits, completely disappearing. However… the black-robed man did not disappear with the scroll painting. Instead, he walked out, muttering.

“I shouldn’t be here…. Who is it? Who awakened me? Who… requested me to come from my world to this place!?!?” His voice was filled with a strange and bizarre power, filled with matchless dignity. As it echoed out, the entire Windswept Realm shook. The sky faded, and winds screamed.

Apparently, the previous time he had appeared, he could make the decision as to whether or not people in the outside world could sense him, and had chosen to remain silent. This time, however, he chose to ask this question, causing his aura to spread out everywhere, to echo even through Karma.

Despite the fact this this was Dao-Heaven’s own Paragon magic, he let out a miserable scream. Blood oozed out of his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, and he rapidly shot backward, an expression of shock on his face.

Blood spurted out of wounds all over Lin Cong’s body, and he let out a miserable shriek as his body withered. Han Qinglei, Yuwen Jian, and even the Echelon cultivator from the Fifth Mountain and all of the other cultivators in the surrounding area were affected similarly.

Meng Hao also coughed up a mouthful of blood, and immediately fell back, a look of astonishment on his face.

It was the same with Zong Wuya, who coughed up a mouthful of blood and looked on with shock.

The eyeless Emperor was now shaking violently. He couldn’t see the black-robed man; the only thing he could see was a murderous aura that formed a vortex in the spot where the man was standing. That vortex was filled with innumerable faces and countless lives, all of them screaming, as if they wished to break out from inside.

“Sir… who are you!?!?” the shocked Emperor asked respectfully, not daring to address the man as anything other than ‘sir.’

The people in the immediate vicinity weren’t the only shocked ones. Near the Ninth Mountain, on one of the four planets, was the Wang Clan. In that moment, the blood of every member of the Wang Clan began to thrum. Their minds spun, and they coughed up mouthfuls of blood. Furthermore, in one of the Wang Clan’s restricted areas, in a grove of bamboo, there was a skinny, decrepit old man, sitting there cross-legged, admonishing several Elders who, to him, were members of the Junior generation. Suddenly, that old man began to tremble violently.

“That aura….” He suddenly vanished, reappearing out in the starry sky. Trembling, he looked off in the direction of the Windswept Realm, his expression one of shock and disbelief. 1

At the same time, not far outside of the Windswept Realm, Paragon Sea Dream’s face was extremely calm, and the Windswept Imperial Lord suddenly stopped in place and turned his head. The Windswept Imperial Lord’s expression was one of shock, and his heart filled with pounding waves of astonishment.

“Sea Dream, you knew about this, didn’t you…. Are you crazy? Why didn’t you intervene!?!?” he murmured, ashen-faced. Clearly, he… knew who this black-robed man was!!

“Crazy?” Sea Dream responded coolly, a slight smile on her face. “Perhaps. The only thing left of my home are nine mountains. All the people I was ever close to are buried underneath those mountains, and yet I remain alive….

“I have nothing left to lose. If there’s going to be disorder, then… let there be disorder in all worlds, be they the Mountain and Sea Realm or the 33 Heavens, or even the Outside world.” Buried within the smile on her face was deep grief, and even madness.

The depression in the huge net above the Windswept Realm only continued to deepen. The figures that waited in the chaos beyond were all staring at the black-robed figure, completely shaken. They appeared to be shocked, flabbergasted. Gasping, they all began to edge backward.

“It’s… it’s him!!”

“No, it doesn’t look like him….”

“Impossible. This is bizarre. What exactly is going on?!?!”

“Report this matter immediately! This is a major development!!!”

Rumbling filled Heaven and Earth, and the Windswept Realm shook violently. The black-robed man closed his eyes and began to make his way off, taking his murderous aura with him. It was as if he were a lonely soul floating off into the distance, with no place to call home. Further and further away.

Dao-Heaven wiped the blood off of his mouth and urgently cried out: “Master!!”

The black-robed man proceeded on, murmuring to himself words that were impossible to hear. He began to vanish into the void.

Dao-Heaven once again tried to unleash his Paragon magic, the result being that his eyes went wide, and blood sprayed out of his mouth. A look of despair appeared in his eyes as he realized that he couldn’t use his Paragon magic! Apparently… it had been completely wiped away!

Dao-Heaven spun and glared at Meng Hao.

“Meng Hao!!” he roared. “Give me back my Paragon magic!! Give me back my Master!!” Then he charged in attack.

Meng Hao had never imagined that his Karmic Hexing would cause such a thing to happen. He began to pant as the Black-robed man got further and further away. Heart trembling, he was suddenly able to sense that in his short interaction with the black-robed man, he had apparently created some strange Karmic connection to him.

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# Chapter 1143: Echelon Battles!

Meng Hao looked at the black-robed Paragon, and his overwhelming murderous aura that seemed to embody death. The sensation he got was that of an unmatchable Paragon, someone with incredible dignity, hidden within which was a trace of blankness. And yet, that strange confusion did nothing to lesson the man’s Heaven-shaking energy.

He got further and further away, and eventually stepped out into the void. It was at this point that Dao-Heaven’s roar echoed out.

“Meng Hao, give me back my Paragon magic! Give me back my Master!” Face twisted with rage, Dao-Heaven shot toward him, performing a double-handed incantation gesture that caused black fire to burst out all over his body. It spread out around him, making a black sea of flames, within which numerous enormous creatures appeared, roaring viciously like primordial beasts.

There were a total of eighteen beasts, which joined Dao-Heaven as he closed in. He waved his hand, and the eighteen beasts emitted shocking roars that shook Heaven and Earth so violently that it seemed everything would be ripped apart. They almost looked like they were pouncing out from ancient times to destroy Meng Hao.

At the same time, Lin Cong gritted his teeth and once again told himself that he couldn’t afford to be defeated again. Having gained enlightenment of 3,000 Essences, he had no reason whatsoever to be defeated.

He had found his path to power, had found the path which conformed most to his Dao of Immortal cultivation!

“I won’t be defeated!!

“Dao of the Yellow Springs; Open Up the Underworld!” he roared, raising both hands into the air and stretching them to either side in a ripping motion. A huge ripping sound could be heard as the air was torn asunder, and a Yellow Springs river shot out, instantly sweeping out across the sky. Within the Yellow Springs were countless vengeful souls that issued bloodcurdling screams.

At the far end of the river was an illusory city, completely sinister in appearance. It seemed to be incredibly ancient, and written above its main gate were three words.

Fengdu Ghost City![1]

The city stood strong and tall, and the Yellow Springs coiled explosively. The Underworld was opened, unleashing massive, boundless pressure, as if all of its power was being unleashed. Lin Cong gripped it like a whip and raised it above his head, causing incredible pressure to bear down on Meng Hao.

Off to the side, Han Qinglei wiped the blood off of his mouth and roared: “Meng Hao, it’s time for you to DIE!!”

Green lightning swirled around him, and his entire person began to transform into what looked like a lightning bolt. His flesh and blood withered until he was nothing more than skin and bones, and then, nothing more than a skeleton.

He sucked all the power of his flesh and blood into his skeleton, and then brandished the green lightning. His energy surged, and the lightning crackled as he lashed it toward Meng Hao. In addition to all of this, vicious poison was added to the attack, which bore down on Meng Hao’s head as if to exterminate his soul!

Three Echelon cultivators joined hands, holding nothing back, unleashing mad power.

Dao-Heaven left himself no room to fall back; he hated Meng Hao down to his bones!!

Lin Cong could not accept another defeat. He wanted to expunge Meng Hao's shadow from his heart, to use this battle to thoroughly wipe him away.

Han Qinglei's dignity and honor would not allow him to accept yet another defeat in his current state. He wanted to win, and in the end, to drink Meng Hao's blood!

Rumbling could be heard as all three cultivators closed in. At the same time, Meng Hao's eyes flashed with a cold light. He lifted his right foot into the air and took a step outside the temple. The temple itself shook violently, and began to crack apart.

Meng Hao used the power of that step to emerge into the open. He moved so fast that he left behind only afterimages as he blasted forward in the shape of a golden roc.

As the golden roc flew through the air, it flickered with light as it changed colors to azure. It was now an azure roc that suddenly appeared directly in front of Han Qinglei. Meng Hao completely ignored the green lightning as he slashed out viciously with his claws.

A massive boom echoed out as the lightning collapsed. Han Qinglei's eyes went wide as Meng Hao in azure roc-form slashed at his chest with razor-sharp claws.

Han Qinglei let out a roar and performed a double-handed incantation gesture. His body burst into flames, and his cultivation base roared with power. However, at the same time that his energy surged, Meng Hao in roc-form let out a powerful shriek and sent divine sense stabbing into Han Qinglei's head.

Han Qinglei let out a bloodcurdling scream, and blood sprayed out of his mouth. He was just about to fall back in retreat, when Meng Hao once again closed in and slashed at the top of his head with his azure roc claws.

You want to exterminate my soul? How about I exterminate YOURS!

A boom could be heard as Han Qinglei’s head exploded. Then, his body trembled violently and followed suit, exploding into bits.

Meng Hao was about to slaughter him yet again when Dao-Heaven’s Daoist magic, the eighteen primordial beasts, closed in. Meng Hao was fine with ignoring Han Qinglei, and even Lin Cong. To him, they were almost nothing. But Dao-Heaven, despite not being a full match for Meng Hao, was the most threatening of the three.

With a cold snort, Meng Hao flickered and shot toward Dao-Heaven. Razor-sharp claws raked through the air toward the eighteen primordial beasts.

A boom echoed out between the two of them, and a shockwave surged out. One attack by Meng Hao destroyed all eighteen beasts. He was like a streak of azure light that smashed them as easily as rotten wood.

Finally, the azure roc flickered, and Meng Hao’s human form reappeared, whereupon he extended his right hand and pushed it out toward Dao-Heaven.

Dao-Heaven roared and waved both arms, causing black flames to surge out, transforming into a huge hand that slapped toward Meng Hao.

From a distance, Meng Hao seemed incredibly tiny compared to that huge black hand. In fact, the two seemed almost impossible to compare. However, as the hand neared him, Meng Hao’s eyes glittered.

Demon Sealing, Fifth Hex!

Inside Outside Hex!

Within his extended palm appeared a rift, which, in the blink of an eye, became dozens of meters wide. It almost looked like an eye, which first shrank down, then rapidly expanded.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

As it expanded, the incoming hand of black fire exploded, then the flames recoiled toward Dao-Heaven’s direction as if they were being blasted backwards by an indescribably fierce wind.

Dao-Heaven’s face fell, and he immediately retreated. In that same moment, Meng Hao suddenly charged forward, waving his left hand to send an azure beam of light to block Han Qinglei’s green lightning. Next, he pierced through Lin Cong’s Underworld pressure, appearing once again in front of Dao-Heaven, toward whom he slapped his right hand.

Blood sprayed out of Dao-Heaven’s mouth as Meng Hao’s palm suddenly transformed into a fist, the God-Slaying Fist.

Massive rumbling filled the air, and Dao-Heaven immediately shot backward, his expression fierce, blood spurting out of various wounds. At this point, Meng Hao’s fist transformed into a finger which waved toward Dao-Heaven with deadly intent. Dao-Heaven’s eyes began to glow red, and his hand suddenly snaked out and latched onto Meng Hao’s arm.

“Heavenly Demon Devouring!” Dao-Heaven roared, eyes shining with madness and killing intent.

At the same time, time seemed to flow in reverse in the spot where Han Qinglei had died moments ago. Blood and flesh rapidly reformed, and Han Qinglei appeared once again, his face pale. As soon as he appeared, he fell back, looking at Meng Hao with both terror, and at the same time, killing intent.

Seeing that Dao-Heaven apparently had Meng Hao pinned down, Han Qinglei gritted his teeth, let out a roar, and charged again.

Lin Cong did the same thing. Both cultivators took advantage of the situation to shoot toward Meng Hao like lightning. The fastest of the two was Han Qinglei, who sped forward like a green lightning bolt!

Lin Cong bit down on the tip of his tongue and spit out a mouthful of blood, causing his Underworld Realm to suddenly turn blood-red, and crush viciously down toward Meng Hao.

“DIE!”

It was in this exact moment that the cultivator from the Fifth Mountain, the overweight young man, suddenly gained enlightenment of 3,000 Essences.

Rumbling filled the air as he rapidly grew in size. His aura immediately changed, and his energy spiked. His eyes flashed with light as he immediately charged into the fray, joining the other three Echelon cultivators to take on Meng Hao.

Although he had never encountered Meng Hao before, and should actually view Dao-Heaven as an enemy, at the moment… he could tell that the strongest of them all was no longer Dao-Heaven. If they didn’t take out Meng Hao right now, then none of them would ever have a chance to acquire that supreme World Essence.

However, just as the Fifth Mountain’s Echelon cultivator began to move, Yuwen Jian let out a powerful roar. Face twisted into a vicious smile, he leapt up, reaching out into the air to summon the Ancient Realm treasure, the battle-axe, which he instantly slashed down toward the fat young cultivator.

Rumbling echoed out, and the Fifth Mountain’s Echelon cultivator dodged to the side, face flickering.

“Yuwen Jian, what are you doing!?”

“Oh, nothing. You just annoy me!” Yuwen Jian replied with a loud laugh. He hadn’t gained enlightenment of 3,000 Essences, and yet had decided to stop contemplation. Without another word, he swept out another time with the axe, and fierce fighting instantly broke out between him and the Fifth Mountain’s Echelon cultivator.

Meanwhile, Lin Cong and Han Qinglei were both closing in. Dao-Heaven’s right hand was clasped onto Meng Hao’s arm, and he was unleashing the Heavenly Demon Devouring. At the same time, Meng Hao stretched out the rest of his fingers to form a palm, which he slapped down onto Dao-Heaven’s arm with lightning speed.

Even as Dao-Heaven unleashed the Heavenly Demon Devouring, Meng Hao coldly said, “Blood Demon Grand Magic!”

Rumbling sounds could be heard as Meng Hao’s body withered. His life force, his flesh and blood, and everything else was rapidly absorbed by Dao-Heaven. However, when the Blood Demon Grand Magic was unleashed, Dao-Heaven’s life force, his soul, his flesh and blood, everything about him was likewise sucked into Meng Hao’s palm.

Two very similar Daoist magics were both unleashed at the same time, causing Dao-Heaven’s face to flicker. After all the times he had fought back and forth with Meng Hao, this was his first time seeing a Daoist magic from Meng Hao that so closely resembled his Heavenly Demon Devouring.

In fact, Dao-Heaven was shocked to find that his Heavenly Demon Devouring could not quite measure up to Meng Hao’s Blood Demon Grand Magic in terms of its absorption and consumption. His face fell, and he began to howl as his cultivation base rotated in reverse, and explosive power began to build up in his arm.

Being as familiar with the Heavenly Demon Devouring as he was, he was naturally aware of how to counteract magics of this kind. Rumbling sounds began to build up between him and Meng Hao, and he suddenly shoved back. The price to be paid was that his right arm exploded into bits. Dao-Heaven sped backward, face ashen. He suddenly slammed into a random cultivator from the Mountain and Sea Realm, and before the man could react, Dao-Heaven smashed his palm into the man’s chest, once again unleashing the Heavenly Demon Devouring. The man screamed as his body withered up. At the same time, Dao-Heaven’s right arm rapidly reformed.

1. Fengdu Ghost City is a famous city in China dedicated to the afterlife

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1144: Zong Wuya Makes a Move!

A single Mountain and Sea Realm cultivator turned out to be insufficient to completely restore Dao-Heaven’s arm. Without pausing, he appeared in front of another cultivator; this time, his right hand shot out instead of his left, and the mass of mangled flesh and blood that was his right arm stabbed forcefully into the cultivator’s chest. A miserable shriek echoed out as the man’s body was almost instantly withered up. All of the power of his life force was then absorbed hungrily by Dao-Heaven’s right arm.

As that was happening, Meng Hao flashed through the air toward Dao-Heaven, closing in on him rapidly. Dao-Heaven’s face twisted with ferocity as he flailed his right arm, sending the shriveled cultivator flying toward Meng Hao.

As for Dao-Heaven, he immediately fell back, this time heading toward Fan Dong’er.

Meng Hao immediately frowned. Regardless of the history between himself and Fan Dong’er, she was from the Ninth Mountain and Sea, just like he was. He extended his right hand, within which appeared the Lightning Cauldron. Rumbling could be heard as he suddenly switched places with her.

Dao-Heaven’s face flickered in response, and his right hand rose up. As black flames roared to life, he slapped his bag of holding, causing a black tree branch to appear.

He waved the branch through the black flames, and in response, the branch grew with terrifying speed. In the blink of an eye, it became countless vines that whistled through the air toward Meng Hao.

As soon as Meng Hao appeared in Fan Dong’er’s place, he snorted, performed an incantation gesture, and pointed out. Numerous azure-colored mountains suddenly began to descend, crushing down onto Dao-Heaven, causing blood to spurt out of his mouth. He fell back, and Meng Hao followed, making a grasping motion with his hand to summon the bone-tip spear, which he sent stabbing forward.

Booms rang out as the spear pierced through the air, shredding the vines to bits and rapidly appearing in front of Dao-Heaven himself. In this critical moment Dao-Heaven bit the tip of his tongue and spat out a mouthful of blood. Astonishingly, that blood first transformed into a sea of blood, then roared and became a Blood Dragon, which opened its mouth wide and lunged toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he performed an incantation gesture with his left hand, then waved his finger. A Blood Demon head appeared, which shot toward the Blood Dragon. All the while, Meng Hao’s bone-tip spear never stopped moving, continuing on to stab toward Dao-Heaven’s chest.

Dao-Heaven let out a ferocious roar and used both hands to strike at the spear. Before the blow even landed, Meng Hao loosened his grip. An afterimage was all he left behind as he suddenly appeared right next to Dao-Heaven. His right hand clenched and then punched out with the God-Slaying Fist.

Dao-Heaven didn’t even have time to turn. He tried to dodge to the side, but Meng Hao’s eyes flashed with light as his Allheaven Immortal might crushed down.

“Dao-Heaven!” Meng Hao roared, his voice echoing like lightning. Backed by the energy of an Allheaven Immortal, his voice became a massive pressure that smashed into Dao-Heaven. Dao-Heaven’s mind instantly began to spin, and his speed was reduced significantly.

By that time, Meng Hao's fist arrived, slamming into Dao-Heaven's side, causing his entire body to tremble on the point of explosion. In the next instant, he extended his index finger and pointed down onto Dao-Heaven's forehead.

A boom rang out as a massive, bloody hole appeared in the middle of Dao-Heaven's head, piercing through from front to back. He shivered, and his eyes went dark. As his corpse began to fall toward the ground, Meng Hao prepared to kill him a second time when, all of a sudden, Dao-Heaven's corpse dissolved itself into a haze of blood that rapidly spread out in all directions.

It transformed into a single blood-colored magical symbol that began to shine with scintillating red light. The light rapidly transformed into a crimson tempest that shot away with indescribable speed. In the blink of an eye, it was 3,000 meters away, whereupon it reformed into Dao-Heaven, who coughed up a mouthful of blood and stared hatefully at Meng Hao.

Dao-Heaven's heart trembled. He had been defeated in this fight, and had even been forced to waste a life.

Meng Hao stared coldly at Dao-Heaven off in the distance. Declining to give chase, he hovered in midair for a moment before spinning and waving his sleeve as he turned to face Han Qinglei. Han Qinglei immediately stopped in place, and began to tremble and back up. Considering that Meng Hao was staring right at him, he didn't dare to get any closer.

His heart was filled with intense fear. Without Dao-Heaven pinning Meng Hao down, he knew that he was no match whatsoever. Although he knew he had one life left to spare, if he did die, considering Meng Hao's shocking desire to kill, he would likely have little chance to escape with his final life.

In fact, if Dao-Heaven hadn't been there to attack Meng Hao just now, Han Qinglei would already have been killed multiple times. He would be truly dead, with no lives left to save him. Now, he had no other choice than to flee at top speed.

As far as Lin Cong was concerned, his blood-colored Underworld Realm was in the middle of rumbling down toward Meng Hao. Meng Hao snorted coldly, then quickly took seven steps forward. His energy surged, and he waved his finger toward the Underworld Realm.

The Yellow Springs instantly collapsed, and the Fengdu Ghost City was destroyed. The entire magical technique dissipated, and Lin Cong coughed up a mouthful of blood. Body withering rapidly, he fell into retreat.

In the exact moment that he fled, the space he had just occupied collapsed with a boom. If he hadn’t fled when he had, he would have died.

Furthermore… he had already been killed once by Meng Hao in the first battle. Couple that with another life he had wasted on previous occasion, if he died here… then he would be truly dead.

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed as he prepared to give chase.

Off in the distance, the Emperor performed a double-handed incantation gesture and waved a finger toward Lin Cong. Immediately, Windswept Realm qi flow descended, enveloping Lin Cong, upon whose face a look of shock appeared. However, without any hesitation, he accepted the gift, then clenched his jaw and unleashed crackling lightning to block Meng Hao.

Meng Hao eyed the Emperor coldly. He could sense the qi flow bolstering Lin Cong, and as such, decided not to attack him. Instead, he turned and waved his hand toward the temple.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE….

More cracks spread out across the surface of the temple, and it began to teeter on the verge of collapse. From the look of it, the supreme World Essence hidden inside was now on the verge of breaking out.

At the moment, Lin Cong didn’t dare to continue fighting Meng Hao. Han Qinglei had long since lost his nerve. As for Dao-Heaven, he had regained clarity from the state of grief he had experienced after losing his Paragon magic. Now he knew that he… was now no match for Meng Hao.

Unless he had help from some outside force, he would only end up losing a second life.

Outside the central temple, Meng Hao continued to attack, emanating an aura of supreme power.

The temple was on the verge of collapse, as if it might explode at any moment. The Emperor’s face flickered; despite having lost both eyes, he was still able to see the current state of the temple.

“We’re not in position yet! We still need a bit of time. Zong Wuya, stop Meng Hao! Buy us one hundred breaths of time, that’s all we need!!”

Zong Wuya sighed softly, then suddenly vanished. When he reappeared, he was outside the temple, very close to Meng Hao. His hand clenched into a fist, and the power of his cultivation base erupted as he unleashed a blow to interfere with Meng Hao.

“Zong Wuya!” said Meng Hao, turning to look at him with a complex expression. He actually had no desire to fight with the man.

“Fight me. There’s no avoiding it,” Zong Wuya replied coolly. He performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, and his aura exploded out. Even stronger was the sensation of qi and blood which emanated out from him. Everyone present could feel the power, even Dao-Heaven, whose face fell.

Zong Wuya began to stride forward, right hand unleashing the Life-Extermination Fist, then the Self-Immolation Fist, and then the God-Slaying Fist!

RUUUUMMMMBLE! He only took three steps, but the energy unleashed by the three fist strikes that came with those steps was enough to shock any Echelon cultivator. In fact, from the perspective of Dao-Heaven and the others, Zong Wuya was not a bit weaker than Meng Hao!

“He’s at the peak of the Ancient Realm…. A single step and he could step into the Dao!!”

“After stepping into the Dao, success would place him in the Dao Realm. Failure… would make him Quasi-Dao!!”

Everyone was shaken. As for Meng Hao, his expression was a complex one. He suddenly attacked, also unleashing three fist strikes, the exact same ones as Zong Wuya. Life-Extermination! Self-Immolation! God-Slaying!!

Shocking booms echoed out as the two of them fought in the air above the temple.

Moments ago….

“Meng Hao, you asked me before what I would do if the true Dao I believe in is false….” Zong Wuya said. As the first fist strike was exchanged between them, a huge boom rang out, and they both fell back, faces ashen. Without stopping, they attacked again.

“I’m a cultivator, and I seek truth. I seek the Heavens that exists outside of the Heavens, and what I seek is simply an explanation for everything!” Zong Wuya laughed, but Meng Hao remained silent. The second fist strike, Self-Immolation, caused blood to ooze out of their mouths, and rumbling to echo out. Once again, they both fell back, only to charge forward again.

“I am Zong Wuya from the Ninth Mountain and Sea. I did not become lost in the riches, or the power, or any of the other desires of the Windswept Realm. It’s just that… when it came to the true Dao… I couldn’t refuse the chance to know the truth!

“I want to see… what exactly this true Dao is. On this path that I pursue, what I fear is not defeat. What I fear is not getting an answer!” Zong Wuya was laughing as their God-Slaying Fists slammed into each other. Booms filled the air and everything shook violently. Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth as he was shoved backward.

Zong Wuya also coughed up blood and was forced back. His laughter grew clearer and brighter, filled with all of his obsession.

“I, Zong Wuya, have lived a quiet and unassuming life. However, the Heavens can bear witness that have sought after the Dao. To those who search for the Dao, who live in the morning and die in the evening, death means nothing. I shall search for the Dao! 1

“If I am right in the end, then I will have no regrets in this life. If I am wrong, I will equally be without regret. However, there is one thing that I can’t give up on, and I must ask for your assistance to accomplish it.” He laughed loudly, lifting up his right hand and looking piercingly at Meng Hao.

“Meng Hao, since you are my Junior Brother, one who has mastered all three fists just as I have, then I shall now pass on my fourth fist strike to you!

“I am Zong Wuya, and this fourth fist was invented by me. It is my… Fist of Dao Searching!” As Zong Wuya spoke, his aura changed again. The air around him twisted, and he suddenly seemed to grow larger, so big that he could shake Heaven and Earth.

An invisible wind sprang up that swept across everything, causing the whole world to tremble.

Fan Dong’er and the other cultivators from the Ninth Sea were shocked. As soon as they heard Meng Hao say ‘Zong Wuya,’ and then heard what Zong Wuya said to Meng Hao, they immediately recalled the name they had heard about in the sect.

“That’s… the famous and resplendent Elder Brother Zong Wuya!!” Fan Dong’er muttered, staring with wide eyes.

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# Chapter 1145: When There’s Tasty Bait, the Fishes Bite!

As Meng Hao and Zong Wuya fought, the Windswept Realm continued to rise up through the void, getting ever closer to that invisible border.

The depression in the huge net grew more and more obvious; it was as if some huge, invisible hand were pushing hard into the net. In the deepest recesses of the depression, lightning crackled back and forth with increasing intensity.

Further off in the distance, the battle between the Windswept Imperial Lord and Paragon Sea Dream seemed to be heading toward a critical juncture. Sea Dream was a Paragon of past times, and had long ago sustained injuries which still hadn’t recovered, but was no pushover when going up against the Windswept Imperial Lord. In fact, the Windswept Imperial Lord’s defenses were slowly starting to crumble.

Paragon Sea Dream’s attacks caused the void to vibrate, and caused the figures behind the huge net to view the situation soberly.

“1,500,000 meters still left to go….” a voice said, murky and archaic. Currently, the Windswept Realm was moving 30,000 meters in every breath of time. It rumbled up at incredible speed, causing a sea of flames to burst out along its borders.

From a distance, it looked like a shooting star, moving relentlessly up toward the huge net, and the 33 Heavens.

1,200,000 meters!

900,000 meters!

600,000 meters!

Back inside the Windswept Realm, Zong Wuya was racing forward, his right hand filled with the power of the fourth fist strike that he had created. He was like a long streak of light that shot forward directly toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao had a serious expression on his face. He could sense Zong Wuya's obsession within that fist strike, and could also sense his sentiments about pursuing the Dao.

"Even if their body dies, they must still pursue the true Dao…. for them, it's all in search of the Dao!

"Even if that search lasts only for a fleeting moment, even if those who search for the Dao are born in the morning and die in the evening…." Meng Hao murmured. As he watched Zong Wuya closing in, he realized that this fist… was something that he couldn't fight back against.

It wasn't that his cultivation base was insufficient. Instead, it was a matter of willpower, because what he was up against was not Zong Wuya's cultivation base, but rather… his heart, which was completely focused on searching for the Dao.

If a heart like that could be defeated, then Zong Wuya wouldn't be so obsessed with the true Dao.

Meng Hao sighed softly. After all, he didn't believe in the supposed true Dao of the Outside world. He took a deep breath as the starstone in his left eye melted, covering his body. Instantly, the One Thought Stellar Transformation was unleashed, and Meng Hao transformed into a planet. Rumbling sounds could be heard as he shot toward Zong Wuya.

"That fist contains your will and your thoughts. I can't defeat it, but, I can still fight YOU!" Meng Hao's voice echoed out as he transformed into a planet, and then shot toward Zong Wuya like a meteor.

The two of them flew through the air and collided.

“What does it matter if I die while searching for the Dao!?” Zong Wuya threw his head back and laughed, slamming his fist into planet-form Meng Hao. Everything around them trembled and shook, and a massive wind sprung up that filled the entire Windswept Realm. The sea of flames caused by the friction of the Realm’s flight up into the sky grew even more intense, filling the sky, turning the whole Realm into a world of fire.

Rumbling sounds could be heard as Meng Hao’s starstone began to crack, and he was pushed backward. Eventually, the planet exploded, and Meng Hao became visible, retreating backward, blood spraying out of his mouth. He looked up at Zong Wuya with a complicated expression on his face.

Zong Wuya stood back in his original position, without having coughed up so much as a drop of blood. However, his right hand suddenly transformed into ash and then… vanished. And yet, he didn’t seem to mind. He looked up at the flames filling the sky, and the gleam of obsession could be seen in his eyes, as well as hope.

The Windswept Realm was now getting even closer to the huge net. It was now only 300,000 meters away!!

270,000 meters!

210,000 meters!

150,000 meters!

90,000 meters!

The lands of the Windswept Realm were beginning to crack and shatter; rivers dried up, and the sky was a mass of burning flames. Just beyond the flames, Meng Hao could make out that huge net off in the void, beyond which was the murkiness, and the shocking figures that waited there.

Apparently… there was no way to prevent the Windswept Realm from leaving!

30,000 meters!

In the blink of an eye, the Windswept Realm was closer than 30,000 meters. However, it was at this point that the entire Realm suddenly jerked to a halt, as if it had just run into some invisible barrier. A boom rattled out, and the lands seemed to be on the verge of complete collapse. Meng Hao and the others couldn’t prevent themselves from coughing up mouthfuls of blood.

At that distance of 30,000 meters from the net, the Windswept Realm was suddenly stopped, and seemed incapable of making it through the final stretch!

It was at this point that the Emperor’s voice rang out with anticipation and fanaticism.

“Living beings of the Windswept Realm, over countless years, you have lamented, hated, and struggled. Helpless, you have spilled your own blood and delivered forth your souls.

“Now, I call on you to return. Souls of the Windswept Realm, use my blood as the path, enter my orifices and become my spirit! COME!” His voice seemed to contain some sort of bizarre power that, as he spoke, caused blackened blood to ooze out of his eyes and ears. He began to shake violently as massive amounts of blood oozed out of all the pores in his body.

His Imperial robes quickly became robes of blood!

Even as the blood soaked him, the earth shook, the sky cracked, and the mountains shook. The dried up rivers quivered, and even the wind and flames trembled.

The entire Realm suddenly began to sway as numerous souls floated up. They bored out of the mountains, the rivers, the sky, and the flames. They came from all parts of the Windswept Realm, souls boring out of every location.

There were too many to count, and they converged from all locations, flying together into that single blood-colored vortex!

They seemed endless, infinite, and each one fairly burst with obsession, fervor, and anticipation. They poured into the vortex, which began to spin, erupting with endless soul power that then powered the vortex!

The vortex spun rapidly. Since the Windswept Realm itself couldn’t push itself that last 30,000 meters, then … the souls of the life forms which had died there throughout the countless years would pay the price to make it happen.

They would make up for that little bit of lacking power!

Meng Hao was inwardly shaken as he saw the congregated souls form into a tempest. The vortex spun rapidly, causing the Windswept Realm to tremble, and then begin to push through the final 30,000 meters.

24,000 meters. 15,000 meters! 9,000 meters!!

“33 Heavens!” cried the deaf and blind Emperor. His divine sense had long since wasted to nothing. He was like a candle on the verge of flickering out. By this point, it didn’t matter if the Windswept Realm succeeded or failed, he would die!

Of course, he didn’t care about that. As he said, he didn’t care if people called him a sinner or a saint. His actions were not for the Imperial Lord, but rather… for the Windswept Realm as a whole!

“I convinced the Imperial Lord to make a move, and you people still don’t trust me!?!?

“Well it doesn’t matter whether you believe me or not. I will offer up the Windswept Realm’s only World Essence. I beg of you, please… open the door!!” The Emperor was trembling as he raised both hands into the air. A boom could be heard as his arms exploded, sending blood spraying out in all directions. At the same time, the already cracked and ruined temple suddenly exploded into bits!

It was as if a cage had been opened, allowing that imprisoned supreme World Essence to suddenly explode out. It was a beam of light that looked very similar to the Windswept qi flow, except more radiant, filled with a bright will.

The light shot up into the sky, leaving the Windswept Realm, spanning the 9,000-meter distance and slamming into the huge net.

In that instant, the net trembled, and suddenly shone with brilliant, resplendent light. Countless lightning bolts danced, and massive roaring sounds echoed out. Massive pressure built up over the entire net, which blocked the invading World Essence from entering.

The Emperor threw his head back and laugh maniacally, whereupon his legs exploded into bits.

“Echelon cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm, you have benefited from the qi flow and Essences of the Windswept Realm, which I bestowed upon you. Now… it is time for you to pay back what you owe!” Even as the Emperor’s sinister and bizarre words rang out, his chest exploded, and a crystal ball flew out!

As soon as the crystal ball appeared, the three souls inside burst out. One of them was the 10th Echelon cultivator, Hai Dongqing. The other was boyish Hong Bin. The third was someone who Dao-Heaven instantly recognized; it was the Echelon cultivator from the Second Mountain, the one he had killed!

Three Echelon cultivators, whose souls everyone had presumed to be dead. All of a sudden, however, their souls appeared here!

Meng Hao was shocked, and Dao-Heaven could barely believe his eyes. As for Yuwen Jian, when he saw Hong Bin’s soul, his eyes instantly became shot with blood.

However, before anyone could take any action, ten beams of light suddenly shot out from the glowing pillar that was the World Essence!

Those ten beams of light resembled chains, and they shot forth with incredible speed and power. In fact, there was nothing anyone could do to block them as three of the chains instantly latched onto Hong Bin and the other two souls.

They immediately began to tremble and let out miserable shrieks. Flickering light emanated out from them as their Daos, their life forces, everything about them, were shackled tight and began to be absorbed.

Meng Hao and the others were shocked. In the blink of an eye, the rest of the chains flew down toward the other Echelon cultivators. Lin Cong and Han Qinglei were incapable of even dodging, and were instantly bound up. Yuwen Jian and the young Echelon cultivator from the Fifth Mountain were similarly caught. Dao-Heaven roared and tried to start fighting, but was incapable of doing anything other than being tied up.

Even Meng Hao was caught, despite doing his best to evade.

Rumbling filled the air as all of the Echelon cultivators who had taken the bait laid out by the Emperor were instantly shackled. Then, the World Essence began to suck away at them to bolster the shining light!

Screams that didn’t even sound like they came from human mouths instantly filled the air. These were Echelon cultivators, but they couldn’t even control their voices; they were no longer Chosen, they were now… power sources to strengthen the World Essence!

The Emperor’s scheme had finally come to fruition. After all… when there’s tasty bait, the fishes bite!!

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# Chapter 1146: What Makes You Think I’ll Give Them To You!?

The supreme World Essence was a pillar of light that shot up from the rubble of the central temple to slam into the huge net up above, causing increasingly intense ripples to spread out.

Of the ten chains spreading out from the pillar of light, nine had completely bound the Echelon cultivators inside of them, who let out bloodcurdling screams. The other cultivators from the Mountain and Sea Realm looked on with expressions of shock. Massive waves of astonishment surged through their hearts, and they scarcely dared to believe their eyes.

These were Echelon cultivators, blazing suns of the Mountain and Sea Realm. Any one of them occupied a position far above Chosen, and you could even say that they were Lords of their generation. Eventually, they would grow into the future leaders of the entire Mountain and Sea Realm.

They were so powerful that they could fight with cultivators of the Senior generation. Even the weakest of their number could look down arrogantly at all Heaven and Earth, and that wasn’t even to mention the stunning forerunners like Meng Hao and Dao-Heaven.

But now… they were chained up, even Dao-Heaven, who trembled and screamed. He had no desire to cry out, and yet couldn’t stop himself. He had gained enlightenment of 3,000 great Daos, and now he was experiencing something that felt like Soulsearching. A massive suction force was being exerted on his mind, absorbing him through the chain to feed the World Essence’s pillar of light.

However, there were a total of ten chains stretching out from the pillar of light, which meant that there was still one final chain which hadn't latched onto anything, as if it couldn't find its target.

The Emperor was laughing maniacally; his legs had exploded, and he had already lost his arm. Blood flowed out of his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. However, it was at this point that, all of a sudden, an intense light suddenly began to shine out from his forehead: the glow of an Echelon mark!

In the moment that the Echelon mark appeared, the final chain sped through the air like a snake to wrap around him.

Unexpectedly, he was the final person to be absorbed!

His face twisted as incredible pain surged through his body. However, he didn't scream; instead, he just continued to laugh uproariously, laughter filled with obsession and madness. All the surrounding onlookers were completely shocked.

Only Zong Wuya seemed unmoved, and stood there silent and taciturn. He looked up into the void, at the huge net that seemed to be on the verge of being pierced through by the World Essence light.

By this point, the lands of the Windswept Realm were only 3,000 meters away from the net!!

Rumbling filled the void as the figures behind the huge net looked on with glittering eyes. Even at this point, they still weren't ready to make any rash decisions. They continued to watch the fierce battle taking place between Paragon Sea Dream and the Windswept Imperial Lord. No matter how they analyzed it, it truly appeared as if neither party was holding back. Paragon Sea Dream was clearly weak, and still had not recovered from her old injuries. Despite that… the watching figures still hadn't emerged from behind the net to attack.

Caution. That was what these rebels from the 33 Heavens had come to view as the driving principle they would stick to after having sacrificed countless amounts of shed blood to gain their freedom!

The figures behind the huge net looked on as the Windswept Realm's World Essence light continued to absorb power from the ten Echelon cultivators, which included the Emperor. As a result, the pillar of light began to glow with even more scintillating brightness. At the same time, a huge black hole began to form within the giant net!

That black hole was like a vortex that spun endlessly and crackled with numerous bolts of lightning. Rumbling sounds filled the air as a teleportation portal formed!

Dao-Heaven was shaking, his screams growing more intense. It was the same with everyone else, including the souls of Hai Dongqing, Hong Bin, and the other Echelon cultivator. Those three should have died already, but the Emperor had used the power of the Windswept Realm to somehow capture and collect their souls.

A boom could be heard as Hai Dongqing was the first to give out. His soul exploded into bits of ash, all of which were sucked up into the chain, which then retracted back inside the pillar of light. The light grew even more intense, and the rumbling black hole in the giant net grew larger.

The next to go was the Echelon cultivator from the Second Mountain. After that was Hong Bin. Both souls exploded and faded away, after which the chains that had bound them retracted into the pillar of light. As more time went by, the other Echelon cultivators were gradually losing their ability to endure.

Blood oozed out of Dao-Heaven's eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. Lin Cong and Han Qinglei were incredibly withered, as was Yuwen Jian. The worst off was the young Echelon cultivator from the Fifth Mountain. His previously pudgy frame was now little more than a sack of bones. He was trembling violently, and his eyes were blank, as if his soul had already been sucked away.

A moment later, a boom could be heard as he exploded. There was no bloody mist that could be re-formed. He was completely dead, his life gone and sucked away by the chain.

With the death of each Echelon cultivator, the Daos of the Windswept Realm which they had acquired were absorbed by the pillar of light. When none of those 3,000 great Daos were left, then the result would be what happened starting with Hai Dongqing: complete and utter death!

Meng Hao had a vicious expression on his face. The power of the chain was not as terrifying to him as it was to the others. In fact, he was the one exception among the Echelon cultivators, the only one who wasn't screaming!

And yet, his Essences and life force were still being absorbed!

2,999 Essences!

2,998 Essences!

2,997 Essences!

The chain sucked away his understanding of the 3,000 great Daos, but it wasn't an easy task. It could only suck away one Dao at a time, the reason being… that everyone else had gotten their Daos with the help of the Emperor's Windswept Realm qi flow. However, his came with the help of the Echelon Heart. Because of the Echelon Heart, it was as if he himself was the qi flow, and had taken its place!

Although his earliest World Seal had come with a blessing of the Windswept Realm's qi flow, at that time… the Windswept Realm hadn't been fundamentally changed, and was still operating as normal!

Therefore, Meng Hao had essentially not taken much, if any, of the Emperor's bait. If he had taken some in, it was only during his acquisition of the final 300 great Daos. And even so, it had been accomplished on his own, and not with the assistance of the Emperor's qi flow.

And that was what gave him a chance to free himself from the chain!

Yuwen Jian was in the same situation. Although his screams were real, the chain was clearly not absorbing him in the same way that it was with the others.

Meng Hao looked up, his expression fierce. “I gained enlightenment of these Daos myself! What makes you think I’ll give them to you!?”

Then he threw his head back and roared. His body trembled as his cultivation base exploded with power, his own power, which he used to fight against the chain and the World Essence light.

“What’s mine is mine, and definitely not yours!” he roared, and rumbling sounds filled his body. The chain erupted with brilliant light, and all of a sudden, it seemed that Meng Hao might be able to break free.

The other cultivators from the Mountain and Sea Realm gasped in response. Also watching were the figures in the void beyond the huge net, especially the giant three-headed six-armed figure, whose eyes shone with intense killing intent.

“Perhaps these 3,000 great Daos are part of the Windswept Realm, but… in the moment I gained enlightenment of them, they fused into my heart. They… are my Daos!” Intense vibrations wracked his body, and cracking sounds could be heard as the chain shook. As of this point, it seemed incapable of absorbing anything from Meng Hao.

Not only could it not absorb anything from him, what it had already absorbed suddenly began to flow backward and merge back into him! Meng Hao began to glow with azure light, in completely awe-inspiring fashion.

2,995 Essences!

2,996!

2,997!

Meng Hao roared as boundless azure light shone off of him, a representation of the power of an Allheaven Immortal. Power erupted off of him, causing Heaven and Earth to shake violently. From the look of it, the chain was just about to break!

This development caused Zong Wuya to inhale sharply; the Emperor was also shaking, and he turned his sightless eyes in Meng Hao’s direction. Although he wasn’t extremely shocked, his expression was extremely dark. He suddenly looked up at the figures out in the void, and began to chuckle bitterly.

“At this point, you people… still don’t trust me?!

“The sole World Essence has been unleashed, all you need to do is activate the teleportation portal, and the Windswept Realm… can join you, and leave the Mountain and Sea Realm!

“We’ve already done everything that we can do. Our 3,000 great Daos have been utilized, our only World Essence has become a pillar of light! We’ve sacrificed the Echelon cultivators, and coalesced the willpower of all living things here. How come… you just won’t trust us!? What do we have to do to get you to trust us?!?!”

In response to the Emperor’s voice, the figures behind the black hole in the huge net looked on silently. Various conflicted expressions could be seen on their faces; some were hesitant, and some were smiling coldly.

Even if the black hole had appeared, and even if the teleportation portal had opened, if they weren’t willing… the Windswept Realm could not ascend!

Unless they were completely and absolutely convinced, it didn’t matter that Paragon Sea Dream was weak; they still weren’t willing to make a move, and wouldn’t dare to activate the teleportation portal.

Unfortunately… they didn’t want the Windswept Realm!

By this point, azure light swirled thick around Meng Hao. The chain was vibrating rapidly as he rapidly regained all of his 3,000 great Daos.

2,998 Essences!

2,999 Essences!

3,000 Essences!

In that moment, he raised both hands into the air and stretched them apart. Massive, shocking rumbling sounds echoed out as the chain suddenly collapsed into pieces and exploded!

As the pieces faded away, Meng Hao took a step forward, completely freeing himself from the absorbing power of the World Essence light!

Without the slightest hesitation, he shot toward Yuwen Jian, extended his right hand, and then grabbed onto the chain that was binding him.

“Break!”

BOOM!!

The chain shook for a moment as if it were about to collapse. Yuwen Jian excitedly rotated his cultivation base, joining forces with Meng Hao. The two worked together and, moments later, the entire chain shattered!!

“Many thanks to you, Meng Hao!!” Yuwen Jian said, voice filled with joy. Even as he spoke, Meng Hao was speeding toward Dao-Heaven.

“Don’t thank me. Come on, let’s save everyone!” At this critical juncture, Meng Hao’s choice was not to simply sit around and let the other Echelon cultivators die. He planned to save them!

“Save everyone?” Yuwen Jian asked, staring in shock.

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# Chapter 1147: Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao

The words were still coming out of Meng Hao’s mouth as he shot toward Dao-Heaven, whose face was twisted ferociously as his body withered up. He was the second most powerful next to Meng Hao, but he still had to struggle to lift his head up. When he did, he stared at Meng Hao, a conflicted expression in his eyes.

He watched as Meng Hao approached, grabbed ahold of the chain that bound him and shook it violently, causing a huge tremor to run through it. It seemed like it was already on the verge of exploding.

“Dao-Heaven, help me out here!” Meng Hao growled with a frown.

“Why are you saving me?” Dao-Heaven asked, feeling completely shaken, and initially holding back from cooperating. He was withering rapidly, and his Daos were being sucked away, and yet to him, his pride and dignity were more important than those things.

Meng Hao looked at Dao-Heaven and calmly said, “One day when I reach the pinnacle of everything, I don’t want to look back and find myself alone. More important than that, all of us… are from the Mountain and Sea Realm!”

His words caused Dao-Heaven to tremble and stare in shock. Then he closed his eyes for a moment, after which his cultivation base exploded with power. He and Meng Hao worked together to completely shatter the chain.

After Dao-Heaven was freed, blood sprayed out of his mouth, and he looked over at Meng Hao with an even more conflicted expression than before.

The fact that Meng Hao had chosen to do what he had left Dao-Heaven completely stunned. He would never have imagined that Meng Hao would save him for such reasons.

“Is it really true that, despite all the competition and fighting, in the end, we’re… on the same team?” he murmured. Finally, he threw his head back and laughed. Then he looked back at Meng Hao with the same complex look in his eyes. However, there was something else there, deep inside, something that had never before existed inside of him…. Admiration!

In Dao-Heaven’s entire life, he had never admired anyone, not even Paragon Sea Dream. In his heart, she was simply an expert who was vastly more powerful than him. If there was anyone he could possibly have considered himself to admire, it might have been the statue inside of his Paragon Painting. But now Meng Hao was there in his heart, someone that he truly admired.

He had to ask himself if he would have made the decision to save everyone, were he in Meng Hao’s position, but he had to admit that he couldn’t.

Suddenly Dao-Heaven turned into a blur as he, along with Meng Hao and Yuwen Jian, quickly set about saving everyone else. Lin Cong looked even more conflicted than Dao-Heaven had. When he saw Meng Hao coming to shatter the chain that bound him, he thought back to everything that had happened between them, and couldn’t help feeling a bit guilty.

In truth, there had never been any enmity between the two of them to begin with.

“Thank you,” he said gruffly. There were few people in his life to whom he had ever uttered the words ‘thank you.’

Han Qinglei was equally conflicted.

"I owe him a life!" he murmured inwardly as he watched the chain shattering. He didn't say anything, but inwardly, he realized that killing people was easy, but saving them was difficult!

That difficulty lay within the heart, within a person's capacity for righteousness. It had to do with one's mental state!

Fundamentally speaking, there were no irreconcilable differences between him and Meng Hao. The only thing that truly existed between them was competition. However, because no limitations had been placed on that competition, it had escalated to a deadly level.

As Meng Hao went about saving everyone, surprisingly, the Emperor did nothing to interfere. Zong Wuya also stood there silently. By the time Meng Hao had released everyone from the chains, the lands of the Windswept Realm were only 300 meters away from the huge net!

In fact… it was so close it seemed possible to reach out and touch it!

Furthermore… when Meng Hao looked up into the black hole, he could see a blurry figure with three heads and six arms. As soon as he laid eyes on it, his heart trembled.

"It was you who killed my son!" a voice raged. The three-headed six-armed being glared at Meng Hao from behind the huge net.

Meng Hao's eyes glittered coldly, but he didn't say anything. Dao-Heaven and the others were arrayed behind him. Whether they were willing to admit it or not, as of this moment, Meng Hao was their leader.

At the same time, the black hole formed by the solitary World Essence light was getting bigger. However, it wasn't nearly big enough to swallow up the entire Windswept Realm.

The Emperor laughed, a shrill laughter filled with decisiveness and madness. At the same time, his obsession deepened.

“My mission in life has been to lead the Windswept Realm away from the Mountain and Sea Realm and into freedom. I will give freedom to all coming generations of the Windswept Realm….

“I have sacrificed everything for that goal, and because of that, I can also give up everything. This was my mission, and my dream….

“Immortals and Devils of the 33 Heavens, you can choose to distrust me, and you can distrust the blood and souls of the lives of the Windswept Realm. You can distrust the Immortals and you can distrust everyone. But there is one thing that you people… must trust!” The Emperor’s murmured words were intermixed with bitter laughter. He suddenly bit down on his tongue, which exploded, creating a chain reaction that destroyed his entire body.

The only thing which was left was his soul, which began to chant:

“Great sacrifice….

“Soul oath….

“With my soul, I henceforth rebel against the Immortal World!

“With my blood, I henceforth leave the Immortal World!

“With my will, I henceforth defy the Immortal World!

“Henceforth, the Windswept Realm’s wind, snow, sky, land, mountains, rivers, vegetation, and all other living things… defect from the Immortal World!” As the Emperor spoke those words, the Windswept Realm began to vibrate. The rivers turned black, the mountains turned black, and the land turned black.

The wind howled, the snow roared, the land thundered, the mountains howled, the living things and even the vegetation cried out loudly!

All of the cultivators in the Nine Nations of the Windswept Realm dropped to their knees to kowtow, then lifted their heads up and reiterated the words just spoken by the Emperor.

“Henceforth, we… defect from the Immortal World!”

The wind turned black, the snow turned black, the land turned black, the vegetation withered, and at the same time, a black mark appeared on the foreheads of all of the cultivators.

It was… the mark of a traitorous rebel!!

All living things began to speak out the desires of their souls, even the mortals. As they kowtowed, their voices rang out, backed by the power of their blood: “Henceforth, we… defect from the Immortal World!

Black marks appeared on the foreheads of all living things. The cities turned black, as did all other objects within the Windswept Realm. All things… turned pitch black!

Black sky, black lands, black wind, black snow, pitch black upon pitch black….

The Windswept Realm was now completely different on a fundamental level. Deep inside, they became traitorous rebels, which immediately had an effect on the Windswept Realm’s 3,000 great Daos. Those Daos, natural laws, and Essences all became traitorous and rebellious!

The entire will of the Windswept Realm was traitorous and rebellious!

The final thing to be affected was the sole World Essence light, which suddenly turned pitch black!

As soon as the black pillar of light became visible, Meng Hao, Dao-Heaven, and the other cultivators from the Mountain and Sea Realm felt astonishment shaking their hearts. When they looked around them, they saw a world of pitch darkness!

Gradually, an archaic voice could be heard echoing out within the Windswept Realm. That voice seemed to come from the wind, lightning, snow, sky, land, vegetation, and all living things.

“Traitorous Sutra of…

“The Rebel Dao….”

That voice was actually the will of the entire Windswept Realm!

As soon as the voice rang out, the black beam of light pierced through the huge net, causing the black hole to expand even larger. As of this moment, the figures behind the huge net were powerless to do anything about what was happening. Their expressions flickered, and a fanatical greed appeared in their eyes.

“That’s….”

“The Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao! Formed from a World Essence… it’s the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao!!”

As the voices chorused out, the Emperor continued to speak from his soul, his own voice weak, yet ringing with the sound of obsession.

“33 Heavens, do you… trust us now?!?!”

A thunderous voice replied from the black hole, echoing filling the entire Windswept Realm. “We trust the Windswept Realm! The combined will of the entire Windswept Realm has formed the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao. Now… we trust you!!”

At the same time, the black hole began to rapidly increase in size.

In the blink of an eye, it was large enough to swallow up the entire Windswept Realm. This black hole was a one-way teleportation portal, making it possible for the Windswept Realm to enter the 33 Heavens, but preventing the figures from the 33 Heavens from doing anything except wait in excitement for the Windswept Realm to arrive.

The voice continued to speak out from within the black hole, and it trembled with hope and indescribable excitement.

“Windswept Realm, come… bring your… Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao and offer it up to us!

“We promise to make the Windswept Realm the 34th Heaven, and together, we will eternally suppress the Immortal World. Together, we can all enjoy the blessings of the true Dao!”

Simultaneously, the Windswept Realm rumbled as it got closer and closer to the black hole!

Meng Hao shivered and began to breathe heavily. His eyes shone with a bright light as he stared at the black pillar of light. He wasn’t sure exactly what was happening, but the complete rebellion of the Windswept Realm had caused the precious World Essence to change, becoming the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao. In response… all of the blood in his body began to boil!!

He suddenly thought back to what the first generation Patriarch of the Fang Clan had said after he had absorbed the Nirvana Fruit. He had spoken of a mystery regarding the bloodline of the Fang Clan! 1

Because of the critical danger he was in, there was no time to ponder the subject at the moment. However, the mere fact that his blood felt like it was burning caused Meng Hao to recall that there was some secret related to the Fang Clan bloodline. He wasn’t sure what it was, but the sensation he was experiencing now caused him to be filled with an incredible thirst!

He thirsted… for that Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao!

It was as if it were something of great importance to Meng Hao, and even more importantly… to the Fang Clan as a whole!

Furthermore, the third Nirvana Fruit in his bag of holding was vibrating strongly, and he had the feeling that if he could get that Sutra, then he… would be able to fully absorb the Nirvana Fruit!!

From that moment on, he would exceed the Allheaven Immortal and become… an Allheaven Dao Immortal!!

Furthermore, buried deep in the Fang Clan blood was something like the key to a great door. Once opened… the future of the Fang Clan would be one of splendor and glory!!

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# Chapter 1148: You Killed My Son, Prepare To Die!

Meng Hao's eyes were bright red. Although the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao filled him with an intense, indescribable thirst… he had no way to get it!

He was incapable of flying, and it wasn't just him. Dao-Heaven and the other Echelon cultivators, as well as everyone else from the Mountain and Sea Realm, were all similarly stuck. The Windswept Realm was now completely different than before, and all of them were feeling an incredible force of expulsion that made it almost impossible for them to move.

Meng Hao let out a growling shout. He wanted to charge forth, to grab that black beam of light, and thus, the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao. Unfortunately, he couldn't.

All he could do was look at the huge net out in the void, and the rapidly expanding black hole into which the Windswept Realm was slowly moving.

There was nothing he could do to stop what was happening, nor any way for him to get the Sutra. In fact, outside of the Windswept Realm, Paragon Sea Dream trembled. She was no longer fighting the Windswept Imperial Lord. He had turned, blood spurting out of various wounds as he fled toward the Windswept Realm. Then, he flew under it and pushed up.

Rumbling could be heard as more of the Windswept Realm was almost completely swallowed up by the black hole!

Paragon Sea Dream sighed, and then waved a finger through the air. Immediately, a white stream of light flew out toward the Windswept Realm.

It stabbed through the blackness of the Windswept Realm and then split apart, eventually landing on Meng Hao and all the other cultivators from the Mountain and Sea Realm. It even spread out through the Nine Nations to find the cultivators who hadn’t participated in the war.

One of those beams of light shot into a valley in the Ninth Nation, where a young woman currently sat ashen-faced, sweat dripping down her forehead. From the look of it, she was at a critical juncture in her cultivation, but was being interrupted by the expulsion pressure from the Windswept Realm. As a result, she was incapable of moving. That woman was none other than… Chu Yuyan!

Chu Yuyan had originally been with Meng Hao on the Ninth Nation’s National Aura Mountain. However, after being freed from his bag of holding, she had chosen not to stay on the mountain. As soon as Meng Hao begun to contemplate enlightenment of the World Seal, she had quietly left.

She had her pride, and it wouldn’t let her stick around with Meng Hao like someone who needed protection. Thus, she had departed. Eventually, she had found a valley in the mountains of the Ninth Nation where she quietly began to meditate and attempt to achieve a cultivation base breakthrough, to finally ascend from the Spirit Realm into the Immortal Realm.

And now, the white light from Paragon Sea Dream flew down and covered her.

Suddenly, Paragon Sea Dream’s voice echoed in their ears: “All of you, listen to me. Your trials by fire are over. Your excursion into the Windswept Realm has concluded. Nothing can be done to change how things are playing out. Someone went so far as to use the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao to leave the Immortal World…. The 3,000 Lower Realms of the past did exactly the same thing.

“Oh well, I guess that’s the end of it….” By the end, Paragon Sea Dream was muttering softly and sounded very disheartened. She made a grasping gesture, and all of the people who were touched by her light began to rise up into the air. Apparently, she was pulling them out of the Windswept

Realm before it entered the 33 Heavens, and was going to return everyone to the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Fan Dong’er and the others were the first to fly up into the air, followed by Lin Cong, Han Qinglei, Yuwen Jian and Dao-Heaven.

Then there was Meng Hao. He slowly rose up into the air, and was soon on the verge of being pulled out of the Windswept Realm altogether. However, his gaze was fixed on the black beam of light, which was just about to fully enter the black hole. At that point, the thirst inside him turned ravenous.

“The Windswept Realm excursion… is over…? My blood is boiling! The Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao can help me fuse my third Nirvana Fruit, and it’s right there in front of me. Is it really… not connected to me by destiny?” Meng Hao couldn’t accept it, and yet had no other options. The expulsion power of the Windswept Realm was too strong, and the pillar of light was actually the source of that power. It was pushing him away so forcefully that he couldn’t even approach it.

Furthermore, Paragon Sea Dream was pulling him inexorably away, placing him further and further away from the black pillar of light.

He roared inwardly, his eyes bloodshot as he unleashed all of the power of his cultivation base. Azure light surged out, and blood spurted out of his wounds. Cracking sounds could be heard as injuries were inflicted, all to prevent himself from getting any further away.

However, it was too hard, and he couldn’t quite manage to take a step forward toward the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao.

It was at this point that, all of a sudden, Dao-Heaven roared, “Meng Hao… let me help you!”

He was also being slowly pulled away by Paragon Sea Dream, but when he saw the look on Meng Hao’s face, he performed a double-handed incantation gesture, causing his cultivation base to erupt with power. He even burned some of his life force as he waved his finger toward Meng Hao, causing an intangible force to slam into him. It was an attack that propelled Meng Hao forward, blood spraying out of his mouth. Instantly, he flew forward several dozen meters, pushing him a bit closer to the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao.

“Meng Hao, I’m gonna help you too!” shouted Lin Cong.

“Me too!” cried Han Qinglei.

“Brother Meng Hao, let me help you too!” Yuwen Jian cried.

Lin Cong threw his head back and roared, waving his hand and causing his cultivation base to ignite. The Underworld appeared, transforming into a force of acceleration that slammed into Meng Hao. Han Qinglei coughed up a mouthful of blood, sustaining a serious injury to summon green lightning; not deadly lightning, but packed with plenty of force.

Yuwen Jian roared as he grew larger, filling himself with Godly power that he used to unleash ten punches in Meng Hao’s direction. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, but for Meng Hao, he was willing to do this.

The combined forces of all three Echelon cultivators transformed into an incredible accelerative force that landed on Meng Hao. A boom rang out as he turned into a beam of light that shot directly toward the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao. However… when he was only about thirty meters away, he slowly came to a stop, and could move no further. Once again, Paragon Sea Dream’s convergence beam began to pull him back.

“I refuse to accept this!” he roared. Blood oozed out of his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, and yet, there was nothing he could do.

It was at this point that Chu Yuyan appeared in the air above the Ninth Nation, floating up in Sea Dream’s light. She instantly caught sight of Meng Hao, and heard his defiant roar.

Her heart trembled, and she gasped. Then, she bit down on the tip of her tongue and spat out some blood. Gazing deeply at Meng Hao, she waved her hand, causing a crimson medicinal pill to fly out from within her bag of holding. Without the slightest hesitation, she popped it into her mouth.

She instantly began to tremble, and was soaked with sweat. Her cultivation base erupted with power, and she held nothing back. Blood spurted out, forming a haze around her, and she didn’t hesitate for a moment. She was going to… break through to the Immortal Realm and summon the Door of Immortality!

This was the only idea she could think of, and her way of trying to help Meng Hao. Although trying to break through to the Immortal Realm here and now was fraught with innumerable uncertainties, and probably mortal danger, Chu Yuyan didn’t worry about any of that.

Her Cultivation base surged as she rapidly grew closer to the Immortal Realm. She wanted to summon the Door of Immortality because its arrival brought with it a boundless power of Heaven and Earth. Perhaps… that power could change the power of expulsion from the Windswept Realm.

It might, it might not. But as long as it held the slightest possibility of being able to help Meng Hao, Chu Yuyan wouldn’t hesitate. Blood sprayed out of her mouth, and rumbling filled her body. She felt like she was about to explode.

Her face was pale white, but she continued on with her plan, grunting as her qi passageways shattered. The incredible pressure weighing down on her from the world itself was making her breakthrough even harder.

And yet, she did not give up. It didn’t matter that she had already flown past him, and that he hadn’t even turned to look at her. She continued on.

Once. Twice. Three times….

Just when she was about to depart completely from the Windswept Realm, massive amounts of blood sprayed out from inside her body. Heaven and Earth trembled, and even the black hole out in the void vibrated. Ripples could even be seen on the huge net.

It was at this point that… an enormous, archaic Door of Immortality began to descend from within the void. It flew down toward the Windswept Realm, slamming… right into the black hole!

Clouds and mist appeared, which roiled out in all directions. The archaic Door of Immortality exuded indescribable pressure, a pressure filled with a will of its own and the power of the Mountain and Sea Realm. As it descended, the upward movement of the Windswept Realm suddenly ceased.

Simultaneously, the expulsion power from the Windswept Realm trembled, as if it were terrified of the pressure from the Mountain and Sea Realm!

Behind the huge net and the black hole, the congregated figures began shouting in rage. Just when the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao appeared in front of them, all of a sudden something unexpected happened.

“NO!!”

“DAMMIT!!”

“I can’t believe someone is making a breakthrough right now, and summoning the Door of Immortality!!”

Some of them could hold back no longer. They unleashed divine abilities and shot into the black hole in an attempt to do something about the Door of Immortality. The Door of Immortality rumbled and distorted.

The expulsion force trembled and ceased operating, giving Meng Hao a hard-won chance. He suddenly shot forward, looking like a figure of blood as he crossed the final thirty meters. When he reached the light that was the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao, his blood vessels were boiling madly.

A smile broke out on Chu Yuyan’s face. She was now very weak, and although the Door of Immortality was present, she didn’t have the power to open it. However, she had no regrets.

“See Meng Hao, I can be of help to you!” she murmured.

It was at this point that, all of a sudden, in the same moment that the majestic Door of Immortality appeared, it almost immediately began to grow indistinct. Apparently, because Chu Yuyan couldn’t sustain her current state, because of the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao itself, and because of the actions of the figures inside the black hole, the Door of Immortality faded away in the blink of an eye.

The moment that happened, the expulsion power of the Windswept Realm once again rose up with intensity. At that point, Meng Hao's hand was only a few inches away from the light of the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao!

It was almost within his reach!

And yet, it was as far away as the Heavens!

Meng Hao could move forward no further. In fact, because of the expulsion power, he was actually slowly being pushed back. If that were all there were to it, it might not be a big deal. However, it was at this point that a huge hand suddenly appeared from within the black hole. It was ancient, covered with scales, and bursting with incredible might. It instantly began to reach toward Meng Hao, causing rumbling sounds to echo out.

It belonged to none other than the three-headed six-armed figure. He didn't dare to actually descend fully. However, he couldn't hold back from trying to kill Meng Hao, so he stretched out his arm in a deadly attack!

"You killed my son, prepare to die!!" he roared, his voice filled with a murderous aura as it echoed out. Everything shook, and the Windswept Realm was filled with violent vibrations.

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# Chapter 1149: An Arrow Rocks the Heavens!

Meng Hao's face fell. It wouldn't be impossible to extricate himself from this dangerous situation. After all, he merely had to give up on the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao, and then utilize the full power of his cultivation base to cooperate with Paragon Sea Dream. In that case, he would be gone within moments.

Unfortunately, the price to pay for such an action would be that he would forever lose the chance to get the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao. Furthermore, it would also be a waste of all the assistance provided by Dao-Heaven and the others, as well as Chu Yuyan's sacrifice.

Those were all things that Meng Hao couldn't accept!

After all, rewards came only with risk. Without the willingness to go all-out, it would be difficult to ever acquire any sort of good fortune that other people couldn't!

Meng Hao's eyes were completely bloodshot. In this critical moment, he clenched his jaw and, instead of falling back or giving up, he extended his hand, within which, shockingly, appeared… his third Nirvana Fruit, glittering and mysterious!

Without a moment's pause, he pushed it down into his forehead. It was absorbed immediately, whereupon rumbling sounds filled him, along with a shocking, explosive power.

The terrifying intensity of the eruption caused Meng Hao to instantly emanate a wild, Quasi-Dao aura, which immediately distorted everything, causing the entire area to twist and ripple.

His body trembled, and blood immediately began to ooze out of his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. His sole Immortal meridian appeared to have been wiped away, turning his insides into a black hole that began to absorb all auras in the area. Natural laws and Essences all roared toward him.

It was as if he were suddenly ravenously hungry. The sensation was difficult to endure; he felt as hungry as if he hadn’t eaten for thousands of years. He immediately wanted to consume all life, and all the energy in Heaven and Earth.

Meng Hao’s face went pale; this was his first time absorbing the third Nirvana Fruit, and he had never imagined that it would be like this, that he would be filled with an intense and unendurable hunger. His body trembled and, as if because of the hunger itself, began to wither.

In the same moment, his 33 Heavens also collapsed, transforming into countless fragments that spun through his body. The end result was that he began to emanate a sensation like that of the Dao Realm.

It was… the Allheaven Dao Immortal Realm!!

He trembled violently, and blood spurted out everywhere. Forcing himself into the Allheaven Dao Immortal Realm was actually far too much of a burden!!

However, within that intense hunger, he also sensed unprecedented power, a power the likes of which was… only half a step away from that of a Dao Realm expert, and comparable to that of a Quasi-Dao Paragon!!

Meng Hao’s eyes began to glow with a strange light, and his breathing grew ragged. Resplendent azure light shone off of him in all directions, as if he were a wellspring of azure. The sensation of the Dao erupted off of him, causing wild colors to flash and everything to shake, including the entirety of the Windswept Realm.

When the members of the Echelon, and the other cultivators being pulled away by Paragon Sea Dream, saw what was happening, their eyes went wide and they began to pant, especially Dao-Heaven. They looked on in a daze as these momentously shocking events occurred.

“So before… wasn’t his most powerful state!”

“I can’t believe… he’s so strong!!!” Lin Cong, Han Qinglei and Yuwen Jian were all astonished.

Blood oozed out of Chu Yuyan’s mouth as she watched Meng Hao. Her gaze was gentle, and her smile continued to grow wider.

All of a sudden, more of the figures beyond the huge net began to turn their attention to Meng Hao. There were even some who, when they saw the azure light surrounding him, and realized what it meant, began to cry out in shock.

“Allheaven Dao Immortal!!”

However, even as they realized that Meng Hao was in the Allheaven Dao Immortal Realm, the gigantic three-headed six-armed figure let out a cold snort. Instead of pausing or slowing down, it moved its hand faster toward Meng Hao.

“You overestimate yourself!” he said with cold disregard. It was as if to him, Meng Hao was nothing more than an ant, and that he was someone vastly more powerful, someone capable of crushing him instantly. His hand made a grasping motion, causing the void to shatter. It was as if the entire area around Meng Hao was about to collapse, burying him in death within the hand.

As the hand rumbled toward him, it was obvious that he could not dodge or resist it. His eyes began to glow with a bright light, and he threw his back and laughed. He could already tell that it wouldn’t be possible to stay in this state for very long; at the most, a few breaths of time.

Within those few breaths of time, he would not be able to do anything significant to the hand stretching out from the black hole. However, his intention was not to personally do something to it.

Meng Hao didn’t feel the slightest fear or dread going up against the massively destructive palm and the pressure it exuded. His pupils shrank as, all of a sudden, he used the power of the third Nirvana Fruit to activate the drop of Paragon Nine Seals’ blood that was inside of him!

That Paragon’s blood had not only helped him absorb his first Nirvana Fruit in the critical moment, it had also merged into his body, making his Demon Sealing Hexing Magic more powerful than before. Furthermore, he had received the ultimate honor of… Paragon Nine Seals’ approval!

Most importantly, because of that approval, the entire Mountain and Sea Realm had been shaken, and Meng Hao… had become the future Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

Stimulating Paragon Nine Seals’ blood was exactly what Meng Hao wanted to do. In this critical moment in which he refused to give up on the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao, it was the only thing he could think of to do!

“I’m the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer, the final generation of the League of Demon Sealers!

“I am Paragon Nine Seals’ successor!

“I am the future Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

“In the future, I will control the fate of the entire Mountain and Sea Realm, as well as… everything within the Mountain and Sea Realm!

“Sun and moon, it doesn’t matter whether you used to be Nine Seals’ eyes, or former magical items of his. As of this moment, I call upon the authority of my name to order you… to sever this rebel’s arm!!” These words were roared inwardly, not spoken out loud. However, in the moment that he stimulated the Paragon’s blood inside of him, a connection seemed to form between it and the Mountain and Sea Realm. It was like a passageway linking the words of his heart into all of the Mountains and all of the Seas in the Realm. He was… connected to the very will of the Mountain and Sea Realm!!

He was using his own name to call upon the Mountain and Sea Realm… to control it!

It seemed like an insane plan, but Meng Hao knew that given the situation at hand, in order to become more powerful, if he didn't do something crazy, he wouldn't succeed!!

He threw his head back and roared, stretching both hands out wide as he made his mental call. At the same time, the entire Mountain and Sea Realm suddenly trembled slightly. The nine Mountains swayed and the nine Seas roared. The Xuanwu turtles on top of each Mountain threw their heads up and howled.

It was as if the entire Mountain and Sea Realm had been hit with massive waves!

The ripples were detectable by Paragon Sea Dream, as well as the figures in the huge net's black hole and the Windswept Imperial Lord. All of their faces flickered in response.

Even more shocking to everyone was that that sun and the moon that normally orbited around the nine Mountains and Seas, suddenly stopped in place. At the same time, an indescribably murderous aura exploded out from them.

As it did, the sun and moon began to shine with resplendent light, and it was gradually possible to see that within the sun… there was a sword. However, that sword rapidly changed shape into a bow!! 1

"Hey… what's going on?!"

"Dammit, you can't just stick your hand into the Mountain and Sea Realm! You incited the killing will of Nine Seals' precious treasure!!"

“Impossible, how could a mere arm provoke such a reaction from Nine Seals’ precious treasure? It shouldn’t even be close to the threshold that sets it off!”

As everyone looked on in astonishment, the three-headed six-armed figure’s eyes went wide, and he experienced an intense sensation of danger. However, instead of pulling his hand back, he gritted his teeth and sent it even more quickly toward Meng Hao, wrapping it around him as if to crush him to death!

“DIE!!” In almost the exact same moment in which he spoke, the light shining from the sun suddenly retracted. The bow automatically pulled taut, causing countless beams of light to be sucked into it. A moment later, the bow was loosened, causing an arrow of light to shoot forth at top speed!

The light arrow moved with incomprehensible speed that exceeded even the Dao Realm. In the space of a single breath, it moved from its position far, far away in the Mountains and Seas, piercing through the void, shaking the Heavens, to appear right outside the Windswept Realm.

It moved faster than lightning, causing a sonic boom to echo out that left the figures in the black hole ashen-faced.

Blood oozed out of the mouth of the Windswept Imperial Lord as the light arrow shot toward the huge hand which was threatening Meng Hao.

The hand was just starting to clench shut, but before it could even touch Meng Hao, the arrow arrived and slashed through it.

A boom rattled out as the gigantic hand was completely destroyed. It couldn’t stand up to the light arrow at all; it was like little more than a rotten branch which instantly shattered to tiny pieces which then became ash. However, the effect didn’t stop there. It spread out and, unbelievably… pierced into the black hole. To the horror of the enormous three-headed figure, who was now five-armed and fleeing at top speed, the light continued on into his body.

“NO!! Paragon, spare me! Paragon….” The huge figure let out a miserable scream that ended in a grunt as its body exploded, transforming into nothing more than ash.

The entire world was shocked!

That three-headed six-armed individual was something like an Imperial Lord within the 33 Heavens. A powerful figure like that was destroyed by a mere arrow of light, crushed like a dried weed, eradicated from existence. It didn’t matter that he was lurking hidden within the black hole; he still met with a fate of complete eradication.

The other figures inside the black hole began to tremble violently. Expressions of terror and astonishment filled their faces, and they almost couldn’t believe what was happening. It was almost as if they were thinking about someone from the past, some terrifying figure who haunted their thoughts!

Even as everyone was shaken by the arrow, Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and he shot forward toward the light of the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao. In the blink of an eye, his hand had stretched out, and made contact with the light!

BOOM!

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# Chapter 1150: Allheaven Fang Clan!

When the arrow of light appeared, an arm was destroyed, and then an entire enormous entity was exterminated. Those things caused the light of the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao to grow unstable. It was being interfered with, including by the powerful Door of Immortality. As a result, the power of expulsion coming from the pillar of light temporarily ceased.

Meng Hao used that moment to finally reach his hand out and sink it into the pillar of light that was the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao. Almost as soon as his hand entered the light, Paragon Sea Dream's convergence beam grew a bit stronger.

The intensity was something that no observer would be able to detect, but Meng Hao could feel it, and it caused his eyes to flicker, although he didn't say anything out loud.

The light pulling at him grew more intense. However, it was in that same moment that, because of the effects of the arrow, Meng Hao had a moment to finally stretch out and touch the pillar of light in front of him!

"Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao, you belong to me!" he roared, his eyes shining with a bright light as he plunged his hand into the pillar of light.

Shocking rumbling filled the air and everything was shaking. In response to what was happening, the figures inside the black hole began to let out enraged shouts.

"NO!!"

“That doesn’t belong to you! Dammit! Let go!!”

“That belongs to the 33 Heavens!!”

Each and every one of the furious shouts rumbled like thunder, causing Meng Hao to shake, and blood to spray out of his mouth. Despite the rage of the figures inside the black hole, none of them dared to emerge from inside. What had happened moments ago with the arrow had frightened any and all courage out of them!

All they could do was use their roars of fury to batter Meng Hao. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, but he was in the Allheaven Dao Immortal Realm, and thus, he fought back. His hand didn’t stop moving, and as soon as it entered the pillar of light, he made a grasping motion as he took hold of the actual Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao.

In that moment, the blood in his body began to boil even more furiously, as though there were something inside of it that was awakening. Rumbling sounds completely filled Meng Hao’s entire mind.

His body roared as the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao was absorbed into him through his right hand.

As that happened, the pillar of light began to weaken. At the same time, the blood inside of him was completely aboil. Cracking sounds echoed about inside of him, like peals of thunder.

Suddenly, an ancient voice rang out, filled with boundless dignity, a voice that seemed to have existed within Meng Hao’s blood itself all along. However, it was only in this moment, because of the absorption of the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao, that the voice began to speak. It was as if its words echoed out from the most ancient of times to appear in the modern age.

“Nine ancient surnames; The source of the primeval; Lords of the majestic expanse; The boundless Heaven and Earth… in this era… of the Nine Allheaven Clans, the Fang Clan has taken the lead and tracked down their

Essence. In all members of that bloodline, Nirvanic Rebirth exists, and the chakras are opened!”

Almost in the same moment that the voice rang out inside Meng Hao’s mind, all of the blood in his body seemed to break down. The Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao then merged into each and every blood cell inside of him, ensuring that every drop of blood thrummed with the same bloodline power!

In that exact same moment, back in the Mountain and Sea Realm, in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, on Planet South Heaven, Meng Hao’s father was currently sitting cross-legged in a Tower of Tang, carrying out his pledge and mission of standing guard over Planet South Heaven.

All of a sudden, a tremor ran through him, and his eyes snapped open. A gleam of shock and confusion ran through him as the blood in his veins apparently began to burn. Gradually, an azure light began to rise up from within him. That azure light was none other than… the light of an Allheaven Immortal!!

Rumbling sounds echoed out in all directions. Fang Xiufeng’s cultivation base was at the peak of the Ancient Realm, and as of this moment, it was erupting with power. Heaven and Earth flashed with colors, but after a moment, everything settled down. He did not make a cultivation base breakthrough. However, inside of his body, an azure-colored Dao seed had appeared!

That Dao seed was none other than an Allheaven Dao seed. If he cultivated it, then he would be able to tread the Allheaven path, and would eventually become an Allheaven Immortal!

Fang Xiufeng’s eyes opened again, his heart trembled, and his face flickered. He was still a bit confused, and couldn’t figure out exactly what was happening.

He wasn’t the only one experiencing such a thing. In the Emperor Immortal Sect, Meng Hao’s sister Fang Yu was currently sitting in secluded meditation. Suddenly, azure light began to glow as an Allheaven Dao seed formed inside of her!

A shockwave blasted out, causing the bald Sun Hai, who was just outside her secluded meditation chamber jabbering on about his love for her, to let out a surprised shout. He was hit as if with a powerful attack, sending him tumbling away, blood spraying from his mouth.

In the Fang Clan on Planet East Victory, everyone with Fang Clan blood in their veins all experienced something similar, causing the glow of azure light to fill Planet East Victory. Fang Wei was surrounded by an azure glow, as was the Grand Elder. The Fang Clan's Dao Realm Patriarchs, and all other members of the Fang Clan, experienced an intangible transformation. It was just as the voice in Meng Hao's mind had said. Because of the Nirvanic Rebirth, the chakras were opened!

The Fang Clan was the first Allheaven Clan!

Wind screamed through the entire Nine Mountains and Seas. As of this moment, the matter was set… the Fang Clan was certain to rise to prominence. With enough time, they would even be able to rock Lord Ji. Furthermore, if even more time passed, the voice of the Fang Clan would become the most supreme in the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea, and they would absolutely become the most important clan.

That was because, the Fang Clan was now… an Allheaven Clan!

Meanwhile, Meng Hao was there in the Windswept Realm, rumbling sounds emanating out from him. The third Nirvana Fruit in his forehead did not emerge from within him. Instead, it was madly absorbing the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao and fusing it into Meng Hao.

He was shaking violently, filled with so much force that it seemed like he might explode. Simultaneously, the entire Fang Clan was changing. However, unlike all the other members of the Fang Clan, Meng Hao was not forming an Allheaven Dao seed.

He… had no Dao seed!

That was because the bloodline had been opened due to him. The chakras had been unleashed because of his name. As of this moment, from a bloodline perspective, Meng Hao had exceeded the first generation Patriarch!

He was now the one true patriarch of the Allheaven Fang Clan!

Perhaps his cultivation base wasn’t high enough at the moment, and he didn’t have sufficient status. However, because of the strength of his bloodline… he was the Patriarch!

The bloodlines of everyone in the Fang Clan had been awakened because of Meng Hao. Furthermore, all members of the Fang Clan now had Allheaven Dao seeds inside of them. Essentially, that was because of the influence of Meng Hao’s blood. He was the source of it all!

Furthermore… Meng Hao could even sense the blood of all members of the Fang Clan in the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Even more shocking was that, the best way to prove that he really was the Patriarch of the Fang Clan, was that he could actually control the life or death of all members of the Fang Clan!

He could kill any member of the Fang Clan with a single thought. His will reigned supreme over everything. That was a power that came from being an Allheaven Dao Immortal, as well as the Clan Chief of an Allheaven Clan. He had the ultimate power of life and death!

All of this takes quite some time to describe, but occurred in a very short period of time. It took only an instant for the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao to be absorbed and then fade away, having been completely sucked into Meng Hao’s hand.

The Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao was now a part of Meng Hao, a key which had unlocked his bloodline and then disseminated that power to all members of the Fang Clan, allowing them to acquire Dao seeds.

At the same time, the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao allowed him to absorb his third Nirvana Fruit, a fusion which was completely different from what had happened with his previous two Nirvana Fruits. Furthermore, the fusion process would take time.

It could take several months for Meng Hao to fully and truly… be an Allheaven Dao Immortal!

In the Mountain and Sea Realm, he would be the one and only… Allheaven Dao Immortal!

He would be a powerful expert on a similar level as Quasi-Dao cultivators. He could even fight with Dao Realm experts. From ancient times until now, that was the ultimate peak of the Immortal Realm!

In the moment that the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao vanished, Meng Hao fell back. Paragon Sea Dream’s convergence beam pulled at him, wrenching him backward. As he turned his head, he could see that everyone else had long since left the Windswept Realm.

Even Chu Yuyan had been pulled away by Paragon Sea Dream.

When he saw Chu Yuyan off in the distance, his heart filled with conflicted emotions. Without the help of Dao-Heaven and the other Echelon cultivators, as well as Chu Yuyan’s Door of Immortality, he would never have come even close to getting the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao.

His feelings for Chu Yuyan grew even more complicated, and he sighed.

Of all the people from the Mountain and Sea Realm, Meng Hao was the last to leave the Windswept Realm. Just as he was about to leave it completely, he looked back at the soul of the Emperor, and saw him smiling faintly. It was almost as if he didn’t care that Meng Hao had taken the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao.

Then he saw the Windswept Imperial Lord, who had a complicated expression on his face.

Finally, he looked at Zong Wuya, standing there in the central temple region. Zong Wuya was looking up at him, an expression of anticipation on his face. Meng Hao could also sense his focus, as if Zong Wuya could almost feel himself experiencing the true Dao.

The black hole in the huge net had long since opened up fully. Despite the fact that there was no Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao, the Windswept Realm's path was not hindered. If anything… the mere existence of the Sutra guaranteed that the Windswept Realm would have a place outside the Mountain and Sea Realm, regardless of whether or not Meng Hao took it.

Now that the Windswept Realm was gone, perhaps it would become the 34th Heaven, and perhaps not. It was really impossible to tell at this point.

In any case, to the living beings of the Windswept Realm, this counted as a success. They had finally… escaped the Mountain and Sea Realm!

Boundless rumbling sounds echoed out into the void as Meng Hao flew over the border. Then he watched as the lands were slowly swallowed up into the black hole.

Thunder and wind raged, and then the black hole gradually began to shrink. It disappeared, and the huge net began to fade away amidst crackling thunder and lightning. At that point, Meng Hao could just barely see numerous figures on the other side of the net. All of them stared at him, as well as at Paragon Sea Dream. After a moment, they vanished.

Soon, the huge net was gone, and the only thing visible… was pitch black.

The Windswept Realm was gone….

As for whether or not Zong Wuya would find the true Dao that he was looking for, Meng Hao had no way to know. However, he was very certain that one day, he would personally visit each and every world in the 33 Heavens!

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# Chapter 1151: Questioning Sea Dream!

The Windswept Realm was gone, no longer a part of the Mountain and Sea Realm. It had departed for all eternity!

Meng Hao looked out into the void, and a profound gleam gradually rose up in his eyes. Then he turned his head as Paragon Sea Dream’s convergence light pulled him over to the rest of the group, which was congregated outside of her Immortal’s cave.

No one spoke to each other. They watched the Windswept Realm vanish, and then looked on as the void returned to its placid, normal state. There was not a calm heart to be found in the entire lot. Everything that had happened in connection to the Windswept Realm had left deep impressions on them.

They had started out fighting and killing each other, and had ended up working together. When they thought back to everything they had experienced, they sighed ruefully.

Thinking back, their so-called enmities and grudges from before now seemed insignificant.

Lin Cong felt that way, as did Han Qinglei. Even Dao-Heaven felt exactly the same.

As for Yuwen Jian, he had originally come to hate Dao-Heaven because of the death of Hong Bin. However, after seeing Hong Bin’s soul, he understood that Hong Bin’s true killer was the Emperor.

They stood there thoughtfully, the events that had just occurred playing out in their minds. Those things were not matters which could be easily forgotten; they were now branded into their souls. After all, they had just witnessed something completely unheard of: an outright rebellion!

Nothing like this had happened in the Mountain and Sea Realm for countless years. However, all the people present had just gone through that very experience. In fact, had Paragon Sea Dream not used her convergence beam just now, all of them would have been taken along with the Windswept Realm to the 33 Heavens….

The Echelon cultivators were able to wrap their minds around the events better than the others. After all, their understanding of matters regarding the Mountain and Sea Realm exceeded that of ordinary cultivators. However, the other cultivators present were shaken to the core.

Heavens existed beyond what they imagined could exist. Any person who came to know about such a thing would definitely be struck by massive waves of astonishment.

Meng Hao turned away from the void to look at Chu Yuyan. She looked away, and even backed up a few steps, acting as if she had no desire to have any contact with him. He stood there silently for a moment, until all of a sudden, footsteps could be heard from within the Immortal’s cave. A woman walked out, and that woman was not Paragon Sea Dream. It was Li Ling’er. She looked different than she had before, more elegant, as if she had cast off all mortal elements.

When she walked out, Lin Cong and the others solemnly clasped hands and bowed deeply. Even Dao-Heaven bowed. However, Fan Dong’er’s and Chu Yuyan’s eyes went wide, and they stared at Li Ling’er in disbelief.

Meng Hao didn’t bow. After all, he had essentially handed Li Ling’er over to Paragon Sea Dream. How could he possibly bow to her?

Li Ling’er glared grudgingly at Meng Hao for a moment, then swept her gaze over the others.

“Hear Paragon Sea Dream’s orders,” she said coolly. “What occurred with the Windswept Realm is no business of yours. News of this matter must not be spread beyond this group. Not one scrap of news! To have been able to witness these events counts as amazing good fortune for all of you. She hopes that all of you will continue to practice cultivation and find the proper path. When all of you have entered the Ancient Realm, the time to carry out the plan will have arrived!” Then she waved her hand, and a white vortex appeared off to the side.

“Enter the vortex and you will return from whence you came!”

There were quite a few people present, including Dao-Heaven and the Echelon cultivators, as well as Fan Dong’er and the others. However… of the original group of nearly one hundred people, there were now barely over a dozen left.

All of them clasped hands toward the Immortal’s cave and bowed silently. Lin Cong was the first to approach the vortex. He stopped in front of it and turned back to look at Meng Hao.

“Meng Hao,” he said, his voice calm and sincere, “I’ll be waiting for you in the Fourth Mountain. Xu Qing… is there too. When you come, I’ll definitely challenge you to a fight. Afterward, you and I will be friends!

“When I get back to the Fourth Mountain, the first thing I’m going to do is go find Xu Qing, and tell her… that I saw you. Is there… anything you’d like me to tell her?”

“If it’s not too much trouble, Elder Brother Lin,” Meng Hao replied softly, “please tell Xu Qing… that I haven’t forgotten our agreement!” He waved his hand, causing a medicinal pill to fly out toward Lin Cong.

It was a Cosmetic Cultivation Pill.

“Please give that to her for me.”

Lin Cong grabbed the pill and nodded. Then he turned, stepped into the vortex, and vanished.

Next was Han Qinglei. He looked over at Meng Hao with a complex expression, then shook his head, chuckling bitterly.

“You might be surnamed Meng, but thankfully you aren’t connected to the Meng Clan from the Eighth Mountain….”

“Perhaps… I am,” Meng Hao replied, a strange expression on his face.

Han Qinglei blinked in shock, staring back at Meng Hao for a moment. Finally, he sighed, unsure of what else to say. He clasped hands, then stepped into the vortex and disappeared.

After that was Yuwen Jian. He walked up to Meng Hao, clasped him by the shoulders, and looked him in the eyes. Meng Hao laughed and pulled him into a bear hug.

“Don’t forget to come to the Sixth Mountain to see me,” Yuwen Jian murmured. “I’ll take you to the God Graveyard, where you can find… God’s Blood!” Laughing, he turned and headed toward the vortex.

Just before stepping in, he shouted: “Oh, I’m taking this battle-axe with me!”

Then he jumped into the vortex and vanished, as if he were worried that Meng Hao would veto the idea.

Meng Hao stared in shock. He had completely forgotten about that battle-axe, and now that it had been brought up again, a wave of pain washed through him. However, he could do nothing but chuckle wryly.

“Meng Hao!” Dao-Heaven said, looking Meng Hao in the eyes.

“I’m happy to have come to the Windswept Realm, to have been able to bear witness to Heavens beyond what we imagined could exist. Furthermore, you have helped me to understand… that a person exists beyond what I imagined could exist.

“You wiped away my Paragon magic, and after a lot of thought, I’ve come to realize that the reason… is because I wasn’t qualified to control it!

“In the end, you saved me. And yet, I will still challenge you to a fight one day. If you beat me, I’ll challenge you a second time. If you beat me again, I’ll challenge you a third time. I’ll keep on challenging you forever until I defeat you!

“Also, don’t think that you’re really the number one cultivator in the Echelon. The Echelon originally had thirteen members. However, even including Hai Dongqing, only ten came to the Windswept Realm.

“There are another three, and they… are people you need to watch out for. Those three… are completely… terrifying!” Dao-Heaven had to pause for a moment before uttering the final word, ‘terrifying’.

Considering how arrogant he was, it was obviously difficult for him to say such a thing.

Meng Hao stared in shock.

“Completely terrifying?”

“To be more accurate, they are not of the current generation of the Echelon….” Dao-Heaven looked over at the Immortal’s cave with what seemed like fear, as if he had just realized something important. Then he looked back at Meng Hao, and their eyes met. Meng Hao could clearly see a certain helplessness in Dao-Heaven’s eyes, as well as a smoldering fury. Finally, Dao-Heaven stepped into the vortex and vanished.

Fan Dong’er left, as did Bei Yu and everyone else. Chu Yuyan left too; the entire time, she avoided Meng Hao’s gaze and wouldn’t even speak a single word to him.

Finally, Meng Hao stood there alone. Instead of leaving, though, he turned toward the Immortal’s cave.

“Paragon Sea Dream, you owe me an explanation!” His tone of voice was both awe-inspiring and icy. He had never spoken to her in such a way before. The previous two times they had met, he had been cautious and solemn. Now, though, his heart burned with fury, and therefore, the words he spoke to Paragon Sea Dream didn’t contain any of the respect that they had in the past.

“How dare you!!” Li Ling’er said, clearly shocked by his words. Her eyes went wide as she stared at Meng Hao. Despite the fact that she had just shouted, she quickly gave him a series of very meaningful looks, as if to remind him not to offend Paragon Sea Dream.

Meng Hao completely ignored her hints, and glared icily at the Immortal’s cave.

After a long moment, Paragon Sea Dream’s icy voice rang out from within the Immortal’s cave. It sounded merciless and cold. “You forget your true standing. There are a lot of Chosen in the Mountain and Sea Realm. Perhaps I should get rid of you.”

“Meng Hao,” exclaimed Li Ling’er, “what makes you think you can talk to Paragon Sea Dream like that!? Apologize immediately!” She anxiously turned to the Immortal’s cave and clasped hands. “Master, please calm yourself. After the drastic upheavals in the Windswept Realm, Meng Hao was just confused and made a slip of the tongue. Please forgive him this once.”

“Consider that Ling’er has interceded, I’ll ignore this matter, Meng Hao,” Sea Dream said calmly. “However, if it happens again, then I’ll strip away your Echelon mark. If you still have the gall, try to speak to me like that a third time, then I’ll cut you down where you stand.”

Li Ling’er breathed a sigh of relief, then turned to glare at Meng Hao. She was just about to say something, when Meng Hao laughed. It was a loud laugh, filled with pride, and lacking the slightest tone of compromise. In fact, it even seemed domineering.

“I forgot my standing? You know full well where I stand, Paragon Sea Dream!

“You also knew exactly what was going on with the Windswept Realm. I don’t mind being used, but when I get used… it better not be for free!

“Even more intolerable was that when I was trying to acquire some good fortune that was mine by right, you tried to stop me!

“Paragon Sea Dream, why exactly do you think it’s unreasonable for me to ask for an explanation!?” As Meng Hao’s voice rang out, Li Ling’er’s eyes widened with shock. His words left her completely speechless.

A long moment passed in which no voice came out of the Immortal’s cave. Finally, a white light began to shine as Paragon Sea Dream emerged in her white robes. As she stepped out, the void grew brighter, and a pressure radiated out that Meng Hao hadn’t felt the previous two times they had met.

That pressure was the pressure exuded by a Paragon. It was as if a single thought from her could cause Heaven and Earth to collapse, or cause eras of time to pass. She looked coldly at Meng Hao and said, “You really do have some guts.”

Her words caused Meng Hao’s heart to tremble. He staggered backward several steps, and blood sprayed out of his mouth. However, azure light suddenly exploded off of him, stimulating the blood of Paragon Nine Seals inside of him. The entire Mountain and Sea Realm trembled, and the sun and moon stopped in place. In that instant, a will of slaughter seemed to lock onto Paragon Sea Dream!

“That’s right, I do!” Meng Hao said through clenched teeth.

A tremor ran through Paragon Sea Dream, and she couldn’t prevent her expression from turning serious as she looked at him.

“Well, I don’t know what you’re talking about,” she said calmly. Off to the side, Li Ling’er’s heart was pounding wildly. Although she hadn’t been accompanying Paragon Sea Dream for a long time, she was well aware of how easily her temper flared. She never took time to explain herself to people, and now she had uttered this one sentence. Although it didn’t seem like an explanation, the fact that she said it spoke volumes.

Meng Hao looked at Paragon Sea Dream for a moment, then suddenly said, “I met a young woman who called herself the successor of Immortal

Ancient. Her name was Xue’er. I would very much like you to explain, Paragon Sea Dream, why… you didn’t extract her from the Windswept Realm! Why did you… let her go with the Windswept Realm into the 33 Heavens!?”

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# Chapter 1152: An Act!

Paragon Sea Dream’s response to Meng Hao’s words was an icy face. She didn’t speak, and in fact, almost seemed indifferent.

“Perhaps the Door of Immortality collapsed because of the power of that black hole,” Meng Hao said, looking calmly at Paragon Sea Dream. “However, the moment it did collapse, the power of your convergence beam definitely grew stronger.” Clearly, Meng Hao had no intention of backing down. That was Meng Hao: you could use him, but you had to pay the price. He didn’t do things for free!

“In fact, when I decided to go after the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao, your main intention lay in obstructing my way!

“If you try to tell me that you didn’t know that the rebellion was going to happen, Paragon Sea Dream, well then let me tell you, I wouldn’t believe you for a second!

“Perhaps the Emperor’s betrayal was real, but don’t try to convince me that the Windswept Imperial Lord was also a traitor!” Meng Hao spoke with decisiveness that could sever nails and chop iron, and his eyes flashed like lightning. Even still, he carefully observed Paragon Sea Dream’s expression in response to his words. Although he spoke very decisively, he actually wasn’t completely confident. There had definitely been signs here and there that something strange was going on. In fact, Dao-Heaven had also picked up on them. In the moment before he left, when he looked at Meng Hao, both of them had understood the deeper meaning in his eyes. However, there was no hard evidence.

“Hogwash!” Paragon Sea Dream said. She extended her right hand, causing a fierce wind to pick Meng Hao up and carry him toward the teleportation vortex. Clearly, she meant to send him away.

As he was forced back, azure light sprang up, and his eyes glittered. His cultivation base erupted with power as he fought back. However, despite being an Allheaven Dao Immortal, when tangling with a Paragon, he was simply incapable of doing anything. As he was swept closer to the vortex, he roared and called upon the blood of Paragon Nine Seals. The Mountain and Sea Realm shook. The sun and moon trembled, and Meng Hao ground to a halt at the edge of the vortex. Even so, he was still being pushed inexorably back.

“It wasn’t just me who didn’t believe it all,” he continued immediately. “Even the 33 Heavens probably didn’t believe. That’s why, from beginning to end, they just sat around watching. Not a single one of them made a move.

“It wasn’t until the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao appeared that they got excited. That was when they started getting greedy. Considering their cultivation bases and how intelligent they are, the Windswept Realm will surely be put under strict oversight.” However, Paragon Sea Dream had already turned to head back into her Immortal’s cave. It was as if she was certain the flick of her sleeve would send Meng Hao into the vortex and away from this place, as if it were completely impossible for him to remain behind.

She saw him inching closer and closer to the vortex, and could sense the teleportation power building up. Meng Hao’s eyes flashed with determination.

“Battle Weapon!” he said, smacking his bag of holding and causing the copper mirror to fly out. Although the copper mirror seemed completely ordinary, as soon as it appeared, Meng Hao rotated his cultivation base, causing azure light to stream into the mirror. Instantly, the mirror… began to melt!

It became a bronze liquid which then began to flow out to cover Meng Hao’s hand. 1 Seemingly sentient, the liquid continued to expand until it reached his elbow. In the blink of an eye, his entire forearm and hand transformed into a meter-long blade!

It was bronze, and radiated an archaic air, as if it had existed for countless years. Gradually, it began to emanate starlight, almost like a gem, as if it were the most important object in the world!

The surface of the blade was as shiny as a mirror, and shone with icy light that seemed capable of slicing through all living things. It also emanated an air of incredible mystery.

An indescribable aura erupted from his forearm, a subtle aura that caused the teleportation vortex to emit cracking sounds, as if it were icing over and couldn’t operate.

All of the natural law and Essence in the nearby void was shattered. Invisible ripples began to emanate out, with the sharp blade being at the center. It was if wherever the ripples passed, the void was still the void, and yet, was also no longer the void!

The strangeness of what was happening caused Paragon Sea Dream to suddenly stop mid-turn. A tremor ran through her, and she turned back to look at Meng Hao’s right forearm. Her face flickered through several emotions.

“Allheaven Dao Immortal,” she murmured. “So you’ve already reached the point of activating the second state!” Her words caused Meng Hao’s eyes to flicker imperceptibly, although, he had long since come to suspect that she actually knew about the copper mirror.

Li Ling’er’s eyes were wide as saucers, and she slowly began to back up. The sharp blade on Meng Hao’s right arm filled her with shock. It was like looking at countless stars falling from the sky, and at the same time, hearing innumerable voices roaring angrily in her ears.

Meng Hao’s right forearm had transformed into a sharp blade, with nine serrations that looked like waves. It was a shocking sight, a blade that essentially had nine tips!

This was the second state of Meng Hao’s copper mirror, the Battle Weapon!!

As the parrot had said before, once Meng Hao reached the Allheaven Dao Immortal Realm, he could cause the copper mirror to reach its second state. Now Meng Hao had reached exactly that stage, although the fusion with his third Nirvana Fruit was only fifty percent complete, not one hundred percent!

An explosive sensation radiated out from Meng Hao’s right hand, something almost beyond his control. He began to pant as he suddenly realized that it now felt possible for him to slash open the 33 Heavens!

It was a feeling of intense and shocking power, a feeling that caused him to tremble, and made him feel like he was about to lose control. He forced himself away from the vortex, and then, the Battle Weapon vanished, transforming once again into a copper mirror which came to rest on Meng Hao’s hand.

He knew that although he could now turn the copper mirror into a Battle Weapon, he was still incapable of unleashing a single strike from the blade. Perhaps… that would only happen when he was equipped with the full power of the Allheaven Dao Immortal. Maybe then he would be qualified to wield the blade!

Perhaps swinging that blade would completely drain his cultivation base. However, a single swipe would definitely cause all the Heavens to lose their light, and would eradicate all life. It would shatter natural laws and crush Essences.

Meng Hao almost couldn’t wait for that time. Panting, he waved his hand, sending the copper mirror away and looking at Paragon Sea Dream, who wore a complex, confused expression.

Paragon Sea Dream had been staring at the copper mirror, and after he put it away, she continued to stand there silently.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. Eyes shining brightly, he once again spoke: “Paragon Sea Dream, I hadn’t finished speaking yet. Now that the Windswept Realm has entered the 33 Heavens, the person who will be most suspect is the Windswept Imperial Lord. In fact, I’m afraid he will lose any and all freedom. To him, having the Windswept Realm become the 34th Heaven is… a huge gamble!

“In fact, it seems almost a certainty that the gambit will fail. And yet, he still went through with it!

“And that’s because the entire thing was an act!

“Presumably, the reason you didn’t bring Xue’er back is because she is your ace in the hole!”

Paragon Sea Dream watched the copper mirror vanish, then looked at Meng Hao with a strange, complex expression. A long moment passed. Finally, she said, “Well then, why do you think I would have done all those things?” This was the first time she directly responded to his questions!

Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed slightly and he took a deep breath.

“The reason for your actions, Paragon Sea Dream, most likely has something to do with the plan you mentioned. I am quite confident that the Windswept Realm, and Xue’er, have been sent off for one purpose and one purpose only!

“To create a teleportation portal!”

After a moment of silence, Paragon Sea Dream said, “You are both right and wrong.”

She gave no indication as to which part of what he had said was correct, and which was not. However, despite the fact that she had only responded with a single sentence, it still went to show that Meng Hao had forced her to provide an explanation.

She could not ignore Meng Hao's existence. Regardless of whether it was because of his status as Nine Seals' successor, or because he was the future Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm, or because… the Battle Weapon had appeared. All of those things caused her to look at Meng Hao with a profound gleam in her eyes.

Although she didn't care much about him in terms of cultivation base, there was too much Karma on him that forced her to provide a word of explanation.

Meng Hao didn't ask any followup questions. He didn't actually want to know what part of what he had said was correct, and what was incorrect. Eyes glittering, he clasped hands and bowed to Paragon Sea Dream.

Clearing his throat, and also looking a bit uncomfortable and bashful, he then said, "All of that was merely speculation on my part, Senior. I was acting a bit emotionally earlier, and said some offensive things. Please don't take offense, Paragon Sea Dream. However, all of that was because I very nearly died on numerous occasions, and something like that is very difficult to deal with. Junior faced many life-or-death situations in the Windswept Realm, and each time, there were nineteen lamentations that flashed through my mind. Each time I thought of those nineteen lamentations, it felt like my heart was being stabbed by a knife. The first lamentation has to do with the fact that I haven't been able to get a piece of the Ruins of Immortality to take with me. If I had, I could have died in the Windswept Realm without any regrets." His expression now was completely different than before.

It was as if he had just traveled in a big, meandering circle, as if he had shown fury, indignation, and even allowed his energy to surge, all for this moment, all for setting up the words he had just uttered.

Paragon Sea Dream had a strange expression on her face as she said, "A piece of the Ruins of Immortality?"

Meng Hao cleared his throat again. Feeling a bit embarrassed, he sighed.

“Paragon Sea Dream, I would like to request that you help me with this first lamentation of mine. Every time I see the Ruins of Immortality, I can’t help but consider the past magnificence of the Paragon Immortal Realm. Then I started thinking that, if I could just have a piece of the Ruins of Immortality as a keepsake, then it would really be a big motivation in my cultivation. It would help me to progress, and to–” Before Meng Hao could finish speaking, Paragon Sea Dream waved her hand through the air, causing massive rumbling sounds to fill the air. At the same time, a giant rift was torn open.

That rift appeared to lead to another world.

It was one of the Ruins of Immortality. The Ruins of Immortality were huge, and were scattered throughout the Mountain and Sea Realm. Each and every part of was swathed in mystery. Right now, the piece Meng Hao was staring at looked almost like a continent. Suddenly, on one corner, it appeared as if an enormous hand were ripping off one section. Rumbling sounds echoed out as a 30,000-meter section of land slowly separated, and then flew toward the rift.

An ancient aura spread out, along with ripples of Time. There was also a one-of-a-kind Immortal air that caused Meng Hao’s heart to thump with excitement!

1. When you combine the character azure with copper, you get the word for bronze

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# Chapter 1153: Too Kind-Hearted, Too Honest!

The Ruins of Immortality were crumbled remnants of the Immortal World. They were a place that even ordinary Dao Realm experts couldn't make budge, let alone carve up to take away as a keepsake. All they could do would be to look at the ruins floating there for all eternity.

Only powerful experts like the Lords of the Nine Mountains and Seas might be qualified to take a chunk of the Ruins of Immortality. For example, the first generation Patriarch of the Fang Clan had taken a piece of the Ruins of Immortality to house his mausoleum.

When Meng Hao saw a 30,000-meter chunk of the Ruins of Immortality floating his way, his heart began to palpitate with eagerness, and his throat went bone dry. This piece wasn't as big as the one taken by the first generation Patriarch, but it was still about thirty percent as large, which was huge.

Forgetting anything else about it, the sheer size was such that, if you used it to crush someone, the effect would be monumentally shocking.

"What a treasure!" Meng Hao immediately stretched out his hand to grab it.

In almost the exact same moment, as the chunk of the Ruins of Immortality flew toward him through the void, causing everything to rumble and shake, and sending out shocking ripples, the piece began to shrink.

Meng Hao's eyes gleamed, and he murmured inwardly that Paragon Sea Dream really was considerate. His heart was going wild with joy. It flew down toward him, shrinking until it was the size of a hand, that then floated down toward his palm.

Then it landed, and an expression of delight appeared on his face. However, an instant later, his expression fell as he realized that he couldn’t hold it. It immediately began to drop down; although it had changed in size, its weight was exactly the same as when it was 30,000 meters wide!

This was no ordinary piece of land, it was a remnant of the Immortal World!! You could say that it was… a continent from the Immortal World!!

A huge rumbling sound echoed out, as the incredible weight caused cracking sounds to ring out from Meng Hao’s hand. Suddenly, the land mass fell out of his hand, spinning down into the void below. Although the void seemed bottomless, as Meng Hao saw the precious treasure of the Ruins of Immortality getting further and further away, his eyes became shot with blood. Without the slightest hesitation, he flew downward in pursuit.

“Just because you can’t keep ahold of it doesn’t mean I never gave it to you,” said Paragon Sea Dream. “The land in the Ruins of Immortality is imbued with the power of the former Paragon Immortal Realm. It is inherently… a precious treasure. That part I gave you wasn’t even very big, and yet it weighs about as much as… one tenth of Planet East Victory!

“Consider that your reward for what happened in the Windswept Realm. As for whether or not you can keep ahold of it, that will depend on you.” As soon as her cold words entered his ears, Meng Hao started feeling incredibly irritated.

Li Ling’er stood next to Paragon Sea Dream, a strange expression on her face. She looked at Meng Hao disappearing down below, and then back at Paragon Sea Dream. After blinking a few times, she smiled, but held back from laughing.

Meng Hao was extremely angry, and his heart fairly dripped with blood. If that piece of the Ruins of Immortality had never belonged to him to begin with, then it wouldn’t matter if it were lost. But Paragon Sea Dream had actually given it to him; the problem was that he couldn’t hold onto it. Seeing it fall away into the distance felt like a knife slashing at his heart.

There was little time to consider matters carefully. Azure light sprung up around him, and he even used the Allheaven Dao Immortal power from the third Nirvana Fruit in his forehead. He shot down with incredible speed…. As he pursued the piece of the Ruins of Immortality, he transformed into an azure roc, increasing his speed until he sped down like lightning.

“Get back here! You’re mine. MINE!” Meng Hao’s eyes were bright red, and his heart was wracked with intense pain. Perhaps because of his intense, unyielding attitude, and his incredible frustration, he shot along with explosive, incredible speed that he couldn’t normally match even if he were fleeing for his life. Rumbling sounds could be heard as he got closer and closer to the descending piece of the Ruins of Immortality.

As of this moment, he was completely focused on the piece of the Ruins of Immortality. Booms echoed out as he unleashed various divine abilities and Daoist magics. He went all out for the time it takes an incense stick to burn before finally catching up. Then, he stretched out his hand and made a grasping motion toward the descending piece of the Ruins of Immortality.

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the descending piece of the Ruins of Immortality stopped in place. With rapid speed, and not holding back the slightest bit of power, he did the same thing over and over again. It wasn’t easy, but eventually, the piece of the Ruins of Immortality transformed into a beam of light that flew into his bag of holding.

Although Paragon Sea Dream hadn’t warned Meng Hao about how heavy it was, she had said that she would give him the piece of the Ruins of Immortality, and she wouldn’t lie. Thus, although it was incredibly heavy, it had been changed by her powerful magic so that it could be stored inside his bag of holding.

Thanks to Paragon Sea Dream’s magical alteration, the land mass which weighed as much as one tenth of Planet East Victory didn’t weigh anything at all inside his bag of holding.

Meng Hao breathed a sigh of relief, then flew rapidly back up. Soon, he was back at his original altitude, only to find that Paragon Sea Dream was long gone. Both Li Ling'er and the Immortal's cave were nowhere to be seen, and the only thing that remained behind was her echoing voice.

"That mirror is inauspicious. It will harm its owner. It appeared first in ancient times, and now it appears again."

Other than the voice, the only thing in the area was the lone ice-bound teleportation vortex, which slowly started spinning as the ice thawed, waiting for him to enter. Meng Hao looked around in shock.

The Immortal's cave was gone, Li Ling'er was gone, and Paragon Sea Dream was actually… gone!

"Where are they? They left? She did this on purpose! Definitely on purpose!" From Meng Hao's expression, it looked like he was about to blow his top.

"I had nineteen lamentations! I, I… I only got to the first one! Paragon Sea Dream, where did you sneak off to? Huh? This is wrong, you hear me!? This is so unreasonable! It's not like I was being greedy! I only had nineteen lamentations, that's not very many!" Meng Hao was very depressed, and then, he was filled with regret as he realized that he hadn't spoken quickly enough. If he had known things would turn out this way, he would have mentioned all the other eighteen lamentations at the same time. That would have been the best thing to do.

"She's a Paragon, a majestic Paragon! It wasn't easy to gain this chance to ask for reasonable compensation, and in the end, she pulled a fast one!

"If I was acting super greedy, that would have been a different story, and I couldn't hold it against her for leaving. But I wasn't being greedy at all! The only thing I mentioned was nineteen lamentations! Anyone else would probably have mentioned a hundred, or even a thousand!

"Ai. The world nowadays doesn't have as many people as honest and dependable as me. That's why I end up getting bullied. These people are ridiculous! It’s like they specialize in picking on honest people!” Meng Hao was furious, but there was nothing he could do other than let out continuous sighs of regret.

“Well, at least I was able to get some of the Ruins of Immortality. When the time comes, I’ll head back to Planet East Victory and finally be able to safely take away the battle golem Stepdad Ke gave me.” Having reached this point in his train of thought, Meng Hao felt a bit better. However, he still couldn’t stop thinking about how unfair it was for Paragon Sea Dream to bully an honest person like himself.

Frowning resentfully, he stepped into the vortex, which rumbled with the power of teleportation for a moment before he vanished. Then, the vortex slowly faded away, leaving behind not a single trace.

The matter of the Windswept Realm was now completely concluded.

Henceforth, there would be no Windswept Realm in the void of the Mountain and Sea Realm. It had vanished for all eternity. The Nine Seas God Worlds would no longer be able to host trials by fire in the Windswept Realm.

Only the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite and the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto retained their unique worlds.

Meanwhile, a black-robed figure was strolling thoughtfully through the starry sky in the Mountain and Sea Realm. He passed cultivators, passed Mountains and Seas, passed through the void, and yet, no one could see him. He was like a lonely soul drifting about through the Mountains and Seas….

In the moment that the Windswept Realm entered the 33 Heavens, in a location far out in the boundless starry sky, the stars in two different areas were trembling violently as two powerful forces rumbled along.

They were far, far away from the Mountain and Sea Realm. However, the exact distance away didn’t matter, as they were… getting closer and closer!

Meanwhile, back near the border of the Ninth Sea of the Mountain and Sea Realm, ripples suddenly spread out. They grew more intense, gradually forming together into a vortex. Meng Hao stepped out and looked around. Based on the familiar sights around him, he instantly recognized the Ninth Sea.

“Finally… I’m back,” he murmured. He thought back to everything that had happened in the Windswept Realm, and he sighed inwardly. Then he looked up into the void and thought about Zong Wuya.

“I wonder whether or not he found his true Dao….” he thought, shaking his head slowly. After standing there for a moment, his eyes glittered.

“The Ninth Mountain and Sea is my home. Unfortunately… I need to leave now. Xu Qing is in the Fourth Mountain and Sea, and I need to go find her, fulfill our agreement, and bring her back here!” His eyes shone with a bright light. His trip to the Windswept Realm had brought him incredible good fortune. He had fully absorbed a Nirvana Fruit, begun the process of becoming an Allheaven Dao Immortal, and gotten some important clues about Xu Qing. Along with all of that came the qualifications to leave the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

His path, and his world, was no longer limited to the Ninth Mountain and Sea. He would go… to see a much wider and larger world!

“I need to make my stack of promissory notes MUCH thicker!” he thought, his passion rising.

“Echelon cultivators. Chosen. It doesn’t matter who. I’m going to make everyone in my generation in the Mountain and Sea Realm all owe me money! And then… I’ll get to work on the older generation! I’ll… get them to owe me money too!

“Then I’ll have become the Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm in my own style!” Meng Hao felt as though his ambitions were definitely set high. He had a huge task ahead of him, but he was sure that he could succeed.

Eyes shining, he flickered as he flew off into the distance.

“Ever since leaving Planet South Heaven, I haven’t had a chance to go back and visit mom and dad. Plus there’s my big sister…. I definitely have to go to Planet South Heaven to say bye to mom and dad before I leave.

“Planet South Heaven…. There’s also the Essence of Divine Flame there. I’m definitely going to go back to challenge that place again!” Meng Hao shot forward at top speed, a bright streak of light that headed in the direction of Planet South Heaven.

“Besides, now that I’ve decided to leave the Ninth Mountain and Sea, I should go settle some debts. I have a lot of promissory notes, and now’s the time to collect on them all!” Meng Hao was starting to feel like he was too softhearted. Whenever he saw people with no money, he would always take pity on them, and wouldn’t force them to pay back what they owed him, except perhaps some interest.

“This time, no more Mr. Nice Guy!” he berated himself. “Ah, Meng Hao, you really are far too kind-hearted!”

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# Chapter 1154: Heavencloud Bazaar

Feeling extremely idealistic and kindhearted, and sighing at how honest and sincere he was, Meng Hao looked around without the slightest flush on his face. Of course, there was no one to see him. After clearing his throat again, he turned into a bright beam of light that shot off into the distance.

What Meng Hao didn’t know was that in the very instant in which he had returned to the Ninth Mountain and Sea, all of the members of the Fang Clan on Planet East Victory felt their hearts tremble. It was as if some indescribable pressure had suddenly descended upon them. Even the Dao Realm Patriarchs who were meditating awoke from their trances.

It was a tug that came from their bloodline. It was… a power that existed in Meng Hao’s blood now that he was the true Patriarch of the Fang Clan, a power that caused faint and yet unmistakeable pressure within the clan members. With that power, Meng Hao truly controlled the fate of the Fang Clan!

As of now, Meng Hao was so powerful that it was impossible to even compare to how he was when he had first left for the Windswept Realm. He had begun to absorb his third Nirvana Fruit with the help of the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao, although the fusion wasn’t complete, and would take more time.

It wouldn’t take too long, though. At the least, a few months, and at the most, a year. When that time came, he would truly be in the Allheaven Dao Immortal Realm. Quasi-Dao experts wouldn’t faze him, and he would even be qualified to fight early Dao Realm experts!

From the creation of the Mountain and Sea Realm until this day, he was the first… to take the Immortal Realm to the ultimate pinnacle. He was the only person who, while in the Immortal Realm, could actually fight someone in the Dao Realm!

His eyes filled with anticipation, and his speed increased. Rumbling sounds surrounded him as he sped through the starry sky in the direction of Planet South Heaven.

“My third Nirvana Fruit will definitely finish fusing. Now I need to start thinking about my fourth Nirvana Fruit. When I fully absorb that one, then I’ll be in a position to try to step into the Ancient Realm!

When I open the Door of the Ancient Realm and summon Soul Lamps, then both my fleshly body and my cultivation base will be in the Ancient Realm. Then… I won’t just be able to fight evenly with experts of the early Dao Realm. I’ll… be able to beat them!” Meng Hao was starting to feel more and more confident about himself, and become even more domineering.

Although he did not quite exude a natural air of dignity, this domineering confidence gave him a distinctive awe-inspiring demeanor.

His speed gradually increased as he shot through the starry sky. Back when he first started his journey among the stars, if he had tried to travel from his current location all the way back to Planet South Heaven, it would have taken far, far too long. Even using teleportation portals, it would have taken several months.

But now, even without the use of teleportation portals, it would only take about a month. However, Meng Hao didn’t plan to do that. Naturally, using teleportation portals was the best thing to do.

Three days later, he found himself just outside of an asteroid field. Some of the asteroids were large, some were small. The largest were hundreds of thousands of meters wide, the smallest didn’t even measure a few hundred meters. There were several hundred in total, all densely packed together.

Asteroid fields like this one were relatively common in the starry sky of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. The asteroids tended to group together, making them very suitable, naturally-occurring locations to set up teleportation portals.

Because of that, the big asteroid fields tended to become places where cultivators did business. Usually, they were busy places with lots of people coming and going, bringing goods from near and far.

This particular location was a mid-sized bazaar. Although it wasn’t very large, there was still quite a crowd of cultivators present. The most prominent sight was the central-most asteroid, the largest of the group, upon which sat a huge city which could be seen even from a great distance.

People flew in and out occasionally, and a buzz of activity could be heard inside. There was even a glowing shield, forming a defensive barrier that surrounded the entire place.

The Fang Clan had a teleportation portal set up on one of the asteroids, which was guarded round the clock by members of the Fang Clan. Clan members could use the portal for free, of course, whereas non-members had to pay a fee.

Virtually all of the asteroids had similar teleportation portals set up. The Four Great Clans, Five Great Holy Lands, and the Three Churches and Six Sects, all had teleportation portals set up. Occasionally, the ripples of teleportation could be seen coming from those areas.

Some locations in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were controlled by various powerful organizations who restricted access; anyone who wanted to go to such places had to use one of the designated teleportation portals to do so. Such arrangements were important sources of income for many of the powerful groups in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, even the Ji Clan.

Because Planet South Heaven was such a unique and important place, virtually all of the powers had teleportation portals that went in that direction. However, considering how much Meng Hao hated to waste money, he would naturally choose to use the Fang Clan’s teleportation portal.

He was just about to skirt the main bazaar and head toward the Fang Clan’s asteroid when he glanced at the markets and, all of a sudden, his heart trembled. It was clearly a bustling place, filled with all sorts of shops. Some cultivators even had stalls set up to sell hand-crafted items.

In the brief time that he had been watching, numerous people had come and gone via teleportation portal, numbering into the thousands.

In addition to all that, there were also cultivators who patrolled the area and maintained order. They wore magenta robes, and all of them had significantly powerful cultivation bases, being stage 6 or 7 Immortals.

Magical combat was not permitted inside the bazaar. If conflicts broke out, the violators would be immediately expelled. In extreme cases, they might even be executed. Those were the rules in all bazaars like this one.

Of course, for such rules to be accepted by the general public, and to be able to enforce them, required significant power!

Neither the Four Great Clans, the Five Great Holy Lands, nor the Three Churches and Six Sects would interfere with the interests of the bazaars. After all, most of them were occupied by extremely powerful rogue cultivators. The weakest among them would be in the late Ancient Realm, and there were even some bazaars who were occupied by Dao Realm rogue cultivators.

This particular bazaar was formally called the Heavencloud Plaza. It was controlled by an almighty peak Ancient realm expert, who was only a half-step away from the Quasi-Dao Realm. He was known as Guru Heavencloud, and everyone knew that he could easily break through to being Quasi-Dao, or even to the Dao Realm!

However, Guru Heavencloud was very wishy-washy regarding the whole matter, and didn’t dare to try to break through. He knew that if he made a mistake, he would die. The end result was that Heavencloud Plaza remained a place that no one dared to offend. Even the Four Great Clans were careful not to do anything to disturb him. After all… even if he failed in his breakthrough, he would still end up as a Quasi-Dao cultivator.

If a conflict arose, and he broke through to the Dao Realm to deal with it, it would actually be an easier situation to handle. But if he failed and became a Quasi-Dao expert, his life expectancy would be very limited. With such a short time to live, he would go mad, as if he didn't fear death at all. A situation like that would be a big headache for all the major powers.

"I haven't been home for a long time," Meng Hao thought. "After I go back this time, who knows when the next time will be…. Dad and mom are stuck on Planet South Heaven, so I really should bring them some nice gifts…." With that, he shot toward the bazaar. As soon as he passed through the protective shield, he felt pressure weighing down on him.

At the same time, he also felt numerous streams of divine sense lock onto him. Those would be from the cultivators in the magenta robes. He could tell that if he tried to do anything untoward, they would immediately take action against him.

Of course, no matter how they analyzed Meng Hao with their divine sense, all they could sense was that he was in the Immortal Realm. They could detect an impenetrable aura on him which indicated that he was hiding something about himself, but cultivators possessed all sorts of magical techniques and items which made it impossible for others to tell everything about them with a simple scan of divine sense. Besides, it would be difficult for them to imagine that Meng Hao could possibly be a person who even their Patriarch, Guru Heavencloud, would fear.

Of course, Meng Hao was already quite famous in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. However, there were few people who would recognize him on sight. Most people had only seen his images on projection screens, and weren't too familiar with what he actually looked like up close.

These magenta-robed cultivators were no different. Some of them thought that he looked familiar, but none of them could place where exactly they had seen him before.

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever as he sensed the pressure weighing down on him. If he wanted to, he could easily push back against it, and even destroy the entire shield. However, he had merely come here to buy some gifts, so there was no need to act presumptuously. Therefore, he allowed himself to be pushed down onto the ground.

As soon as he did, the gazes which had been fixed onto him vanished, to observe other incoming cultivators. They paid no more attention to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao patted his bag of holding and cleared his throat. After winning the bet with the Demonic Cultivator Horde in the Nine Seas God World, he had quite a few pieces of Immortal jade, and had unknowingly adopted the manner of a rich person. He looked around for a moment, then began to stroll around. For the most part, he knew what kind of place this bazaar was. There were various shops and auction houses, and as for the auction houses, they didn’t have membership requirements; anyone could participate in the auctions.

In addition to the shops and auction houses, there were vendor stalls, which actually made up the majority of the establishments in the bazaar. Just about everything you could imagine could be found for sale.

After sizing the place up, Meng Hao entered one of the shops. The first thing he saw was four or five other cultivators, all of whom were accompanied by salespeople who were introducing the various magical items for sale.

As soon as he stepped in, a young woman walked up. However, before she could even speak, Meng Hao flicked his sleeve the way he remembered Steward Zhou used to do. Lifting his chin up, he coolly said, “Take me to your luxury goods section.”

The young woman looked at him for a moment, and almost immediately began to look down on him inwardly. She had seen a lot of people like Meng Hao in the past, people who thought they were rich, but, once they saw how expensive things were, didn’t actually buy anything.

Expression the same as before, she nodded and led him to one particular corner of the shop, where she clapped her hands, causing the wall to suddenly swirl. Moments later, a collection of dozens of unique magical items appeared.

“This one,” Meng Hao said, pointing at a bell. Then he pointed at another item. “And this one. That one too, and that one. These seven….”

“You have a good eye, Fellow Daoist,” the young woman said coolly. “Those seven items are all high-grade magical items. The total cost for them would be about 6,000,000 spirit stones. If you want to pay with Immortal jade, I can give you a bit of a discount….” She looked at Meng Hao, wondering whether he would dare to try to buy all seven items after hearing how expensive they were.

“Those seven… I don’t want,” he said calmly.

Inwardly, the young woman was chuckling coldly. Expression the same as usual, she was just about to continue speaking when Meng Hao said, “But I’ll take all the other ones.”

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# Chapter 1155: Mr. Moneybags!

“Fellow Daoist, w-what did you just say?” The young woman’s eyes went wide, and her heart began to thump with disbelief.

“I said those are the seven I DON’T want. The rest, I’ll take.” Meng Hao remained as cool as ever, but when he saw the look on the young woman’s face, a feeling rose up in his heart that he had never felt before. He thought back to one time in Yunjie County when he had happened to walk by a shop and catch sight of Steward Zhou buying things in just the same way he was doing right now.

The expression on that salesperson’s face, and his tone of voice, was exactly the same as this young woman’s right now.

She was panting, and even felt a bit dizzy. Throughout all the years she had worked at his place, she had seen many, many types of cultivators. However, this was the first time she had encountered anyone like Meng Hao.

“S-Senior… not including those seven, there are a total of 124 magical items on display.” Without even thinking about it, she began to explain further. “If you bought them with spirit stones, it would cost at least 40,000,000…. That would be about 4,000 in Immortal jade….”

Meng Hao lifted his chin and asked, “Well, are you selling, or not?” He currently had hundreds of millions of Immortal jades in his bag of holding, which meant that, if he wanted to, he could buy not only this collection of magical items, but actually, the entire shop, or even, the entire bazaar. He even had enough to buy the whole asteroid field.

After his escapades in the Nine Seas God World, Meng Hao was probably one of the richest individuals in all of the Mountain and Sea Realm. However, even that level of wealth didn't provide him with any comfort. When he thought about how much the copper mirror liked to consume spirit stones and Immortal jades, he was left with a constant feeling of anxiety.

Even still, the look on the young woman's face made him feel wonderful. Finally, he could enjoy the life of a rich person. Waving his hand, he sent 4,000 Immortal jades flying out, where they piled up into a small mountain on the ground.

Immortal qi instantly swelled out, filling the entire shop, making it like a celestial paradise, complete with floating mists and clouds.

To see so much Immortal jade nearly caused the young woman's eyes to pop out of their sockets. This was the most wealth she had ever seen in one place. At the same time, the other people in the shop stared over in amazement, and even greed.

There were a few cultivators who first started trembling at the sight of the Immortal jade, then looked over at Meng Hao's bag of holding. Eyes glittering, they quickly scurried off.

Meng Hao glanced at them out of the corner of his eye, and then a slightly bashful expression appeared on his face.

"Senior, please wait a moment. Just one moment, sir. This… this exceeds my authority. Junior will go ask the shop Elder himself to come over." Panting, the saleswoman quickly edged backward. However, before she could even turn, a blast of wind flew in from the courtyard behind the shop, which quickly materialized into an old man.

He was dressed in extravagant, luxurious clothing, and had the demeanor of a transcendent being. He quickly clasped hands and bowed to Meng Hao.

"I am Shui Motian. Greetings, Fellow Daoist. Please, consider me a good friend, and allow me to throw in those seven extra items as a gift." The Elder laughed heartily, quickly performing an incantation gesture and pointing. Instantly, the invisible restrictive spells on the wall vanished, and the magical items flew over to circle around Meng Hao, who instantly began to radiate the aura of jewels and treasures.

Meng Hao glanced at the Elder and nodded slightly, then made a grasping motion, causing the items to fly over into his bag of holding.

“Shui Motian, I’ll remember that name,” he said, turning to leave. The Elder nearly went wild with joy at the last of Meng Hao’s words, and he quickly followed, escorting Meng Hao all the way out of the shop, bowing and scraping the entire time.

To see him acting like this left all the salespeople in the shop in complete and utter shock. Although the transaction they had just witnessed involved a sum of money that was completely unheard-of, they still found it hard to believe that Elder Shui Motian, who was an Ancient Realm expert, would be so polite to a mere Immortal Realm cultivator.

The pretty young woman, who happened to be very close with Shui Motian, leaned over and whispered: “Elder Shui, if that guy easily forked over 4,000 pieces of Immortal jade, then his bag of holding must–” Before she could even finish her sentence, Shui Motian suddenly turned, eyes burning with rage as he slapped her across the face. Blood sprayed out of her mouth, and she staggered backward.

“Shut your mouth!” he said icily. “Do you know who that was? If you dare to say things like that, then considering his status, he could kill you, and me, and even the whole Heavenly Ink Sect! He could even obliterate the entire Heavencloud Bazaar in the blink of an eye!” He ended with a cold harrumph.

As soon as Meng Hao had produced the 4,000 pieces of Immortal jade, he had been certain of his identity. Although he had felt a sense of familiarity when he had scanned him with divine sense earlier, it took him a while before he had sudden realized who he was. It was then that he decided to offer the seven magical items as gifts.

“Who… who is he?” asked the pretty young woman.

Were it any other person, Shui Motian wouldn’t even answer her question. However, considering that she had attended to Meng Hao, he leaned over and whispered into her ear: “The Crown Prince of the Fang Clan, the only joint disciple of all of the Three Great Daoist Societies. He’s in the Immortal Realm, but can slaughter Ancient Realm experts. That was… Meng Hao!”

“That was him!?!?” The young woman gasped, and her eyes went wide. She turned her head to look for Meng Hao, but he had already disappeared from sight outside.

Suddenly, the young woman seemed to think of something, and she blurted, “Oh no, this is bad! Just now, there were some customers who snuck out after seeing his Immortal jade. They’re probably planning some sort of treachery!”

“Don’t worry about it,” said Shui Motian with a cold chuckle. “They’re just digging their own graves.” Shui Motian knew that considering Meng Hao’s identity, not even Guru Heavencloud could afford to let anything bad happen.

Meanwhile, in a relatively remote location within the bazaar, there was a building that few people liked to go near. When people did pass by it, they would glance over with anxiety and dread, then quickly bow their heads and hurry past.

Four middle-aged cultivators sat cross-legged outside the building, all of whom wore garish red robes and had cultivation bases at the peak of the Immortal Realm.

Inside the building, it was very quiet, and the only thing that could be heard was measured breathing. The cadence of the breathing made it seem as if it were in sync with Heaven and Earth, and caused the entire building to occasionally become blurry.

Currently, two cultivators were hurrying toward that very building. They stopped in front of the red-robed cultivators and kowtowed, and when they looked up, one of the two men said something to one of the red-robed men.

The red-robed cultivator immediately stood and entered the building, eyes glittering. After a moment, he emerged and said, “Go shadow him secretly, no matter where he goes. Let’s see exactly how much more Immortal jade he has. If it’s under 10,000, then it’s not worth it for his Majesty to get involved.”

The two cultivators who had just arrived looked very excited. They quickly bowed, then hurried away.

The red-robed men continued to sit there in meditation, and everything was quiet once again. On the second floor of the building, an old man sat there cross-legged. He had some brown blotches on his face, but when he opened his eyes, they glittered brightly, and the fluctuations of the late Ancient Realm rolled off of him.

“Elder Brother runs things too carefully,” he said coolly. “The whole purpose of the Heavencloud Bazaar is to make it convenient for us to practice cultivation. Since Elder Brother is in secluded meditation, I’m in charge. 4,000 Immortal jades, huh…. I don’t care who he is, with that much Immortal jade, he… will have to fork some over if he wants to leave alive!” With that, he closed his eyes again.

Meng Hao continued to stroll through the bazaar, acting very rich and imposing. He walked into every shop he saw and bought anything that looked good. Magical items, medicinal pills, medicinal plants, magical technique manuals, and all sorts of other items. He even bought things that weren’t for sale. One such item was a huge, paneled room screen decorated with a White Tiger, which he liked mostly because it looked amazing and exuded spiritual energy. He waved his hand, sending out so much money that the shopkeeper could only stare in shock.

Meng Hao pointed at a throne made of numerous flying swords and said, “This thing looks nice! I bet dad will like it. I’ll take it!”

He saw a statue made entirely from spirit stones, which in itself was actually a magical item. “This is wonderful too. I’ll take it!”

“This too!

“This armor looks pretty good. I want a thousand sets!

“These Daoist robes are nice. I’ll take them!

“How much for all of the jade scrolls in your whole shop? I want them all.” When Meng Hao thought about how his father couldn’t leave Planet South Heaven, he decided that buying him a whole scroll-shop worth of reading material would make it very easy for him to keep up on his reading.

Meng Hao wasn’t too confident when it came to things that female cultivators liked. Since he wasn’t sure what things his mother preferred, he also decided to buy an entire shop!

“This is a pretty good set of puppets. I’ll take them!”

Wherever he went, the shops nearly went mad with joy. Soon, everyone in the entire bazaar knew about the young, rich cultivator who was making the rounds.

Some people even began to follow him and keep track of how much he had spent. Eventually, he had spent the equivalent of about 1,000,000,000 spirit stones, which was about 100,000 Immortal jades.

The cultivators who had been sent to shadow him had eyes bloodshot with madness. They began to report back to their superiors, and soon, the sensation that a storm was brewing spread out through the whole bazaar.

Meng Hao apparently didn’t notice, and continued to rampantly sweep through the shops and buy everything he fancied. He even started looking through the various vendor stalls, and whenever he saw something he liked, he took it, which sometimes even included entire stalls.

He was exactly like a Mr. Moneybags. Normally, spending money gave him a big headache, but considering he was buying gifts for his parents, he didn’t mind at all.

He also bought some gifts for his sister. Soon, he had bought up nearly a third of all the items available at the bazaar, and had spent nearly 300,000 pieces of Immortal jade.

As for the two cultivators who had originally been sent to shadow him, they returned to the distant building and reported in. The old man who sat there cross-legged opened his eyes, and they shone with killing intent.

“300,000 Immortal jades…. For him to be willing to spend so much indicates that he must have more than 1,000,000 total in his bag of holding. Heavens! 1,000,000 Immortal jades….” The old man started panting, and a look of mad greed appeared in his eyes. However, he immediately began to doubt himself. Considering this mark had so much money, he was clearly someone with an extraordinary background, a person not to be trifled with casually.

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# Chapter 1156: Blood-stained Jade Medallion!

The old man was somewhat conflicted. On the one hand, he felt deeply greedy, but on the other hand, Meng Hao's background caused him to waver and suppress that greed to a certain degree. After vacillating for a moment, his eyes suddenly glittered, and he looked outside the building.

Currently, a red-robed cultivator was out there, bowing deeply with clasped hands.

"Patriarch, the mark is currently on his way to an auction. It seems he plans to participate."

The old man's eyes flickered with determination, and he shot to his feet. He then strode out of the building and headed in the direction of the auction, flanked by four red-robed cultivators. All of them had fierce expressions and radiated killing intent.

"It doesn't matter who you are or where you're from, if you have less than 1,000,000 Immortal jades, I'll leave you alone. Until I know more about your background, I won't touch you…." Having made his decision to go observe Meng Hao a bit further, the old man's eyes flashed.

Just as the red-robed cultivators had said, Meng Hao had finished his shopping spree in the shops and vendor stalls, and was now in the main auction house in the middle of the bazaar. He stood off to the side, looking at the main stage, and the items being auctioned off. Not many people were calling out bids. There were quite a few magenta-robed figures in the area, keeping track of the bids, and generally looking very threatening.

No one was allowed to make fraudulent bids, and anyone who did make a bid was required to be able to purchase the lot at the said price. Anyone who tried to cause problems would run the risk of being chased down and killed by the forces of the Heavencloud Bazaar.

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever as he stood there watching. People in the area almost immediately noticed him, and were visibly excited. Word began to spread, and soon everyone in the auction house had become aware of his presence.

After all, having been in the bazaar for a short half-day, he had already bought nearly thirty percent of all the available goods there. He was obviously incredibly rich. It would have been impossible for him not to attract attention, and that was especially the case with the female cultivators. Whenever they looked at him, their eyes gleamed, and they tried to look as pretty as possible. Obviously, they were hoping to catch his eye and have the chance to strike it rich themselves.

There were a few people who seemed to find him familiar. After a moment, their eyes would widen as they realized who he really was.

That was even true of the auctioneer, who couldn't help but glance at him occasionally and pay special attention to him.

Meng Hao seemed indifferent to the commotion as he stood there calmly; however, inwardly, he was actually feeling quite puzzled.

"Why haven't they come yet? Something's off. They followed me for a long time. They keep coming and going After reporting back in, they should have told someone all the details.

"Maybe these people aren't that adept at robbery?" He frowned. He didn't have the time to sit around waiting. After a bit of thought, he came to the conclusion that perhaps because he hadn't left the bazaar itself, the people who were after him felt it wasn't convenient to make a move….

"In that case," he thought, "I might as well just leave. That will at least give them a chance." Having made up his mind, he was just about to leave, when suddenly, the auctioneer produced a jade tray which he held aloft.

“Ladies and gentlemen, Fellow Daoists, the next lot has a mysterious background,” he said, his voice proud. “For the sake of ensuring that our bazaar remains a flourishing place, and for the purposes of gaining fame for our auction house, Patriarch Heavencloud has decided to offer up one of his rarest heirlooms!

“This is none other than a jade pendant, a medallion that is not from the Ninth Mountain and Sea. No, this medallion comes from the Eighth Mountain and Sea. On one side is carved a lightning bolt, and on the other side, the character Meng . According to our Patriarch’s speculations, this is none other than… a command medallion belonging to a member of the Meng Clan from the Eighth Mountain and Sea. Although it’s impossible to tell who exactly it belonged to, clearly, they had a high status!

“How do we know? Because this medallion, despite being an Ancient Realm treasure, is stained with blood, sealing it completely, and ensuring that it can only unleash Immortal Realm power….

“Although our Patriarch is unable to remove the seal, there are many almighty entities in Heaven and Earth. Surely someone exists out there who CAN unseal it!” He held the jade pendant out in his right hand, and it glittered with green light. Furthermore, the sound of thunder rattled out from it in all directions. It was even possible to just barely make out a green lightning bolt building up within the light that emanated out from the pendant.

Although it seemed incredible, the sensation it gave off was only that of the Immortal Realm. Even still, the pendant would clearly count as a valuable treasure to any Immortal Realm cultivator.

There was also a deep gash on the surface of the pendant, which had turned a dark purple color, as if it were filled with congealed blood. Its overall appearance was very bizarre.

“The starting bid for this item is 8,000,000 spirit stones!” the auctioneer cried out in a loud voice.

Meng Hao had originally intended to leave. But then he stopped and looked at the jade medallion, and immense waves of shock smashed through his mind.

As he looked at the jade pendant, he began to pant. How could he ever have imagined that he would run into this object at a bazaar like this?!?!

It was most certainly a command medallion of the Meng Clan from the Eighth Mountain and Sea. Furthermore, it was not the command medallion of an ordinary clan member. Meng Hao all of a sudden recalled the visage of an old man, an old man who had come to stand by the side of his heartbroken Grandpa Fang when he had experienced his first Seventh Year Tribulation.

That old man was no stranger. It was his Grandpa Meng!

He was the Grand Elder of the Meng Clan from the Eighth Mountain and Sea!

Meng Hao remembered playing with his command medallion as a child, a medallion had looked exactly like the one on the auction stage right now!

Meng Hao was panting, and his mind was spinning. He would never be able to forget how his two grandfathers had left looking for an Outsider, all to save him. That Outsider eventually came, and had explained to Meng Hao’s parents what they needed to do. However, his Grandpa Fang and Grandpa Meng… never returned.

Meng Hao would never be able to forget those matters, and he had always hoped that one day, he would be able to find them, or at least some clues regarding what had happened.

Now, looking at the jade medallion, he was filled with the intense sensation that it… was none other than his Grandpa Meng’s command medallion.

That thought caused his heart to tremble. He wasn’t sure whose blood it was that had stained the pendant, but it filled him with intense concern for his grandfather.

“50,000,000 spirit stones!” he cried out, his voice decisive enough to sever nails and chop iron. “Give me that pendant!”

As soon as the words left his mouth, deathly silence filled the air. Others who had been about to call out prices first gasped, then closed their mouths and refrained from speaking out any bids. One by one, everyone turned to look at Meng Hao.

Even the auctioneer stared in shock. In his estimation, the jade pendant was worth no more than about 30,000,000 spirit stones. However, Meng Hao had unexpectedly cried out a bid of 50,000,000.

“Um… are there any other Fellow Daoists who would like to make a bid?” he asked without even thinking about it. Nobody responded. All of the surrounding cultivators were simply awestruck by the price which Meng Hao had just bid.

The auctioneer swallowed hard and said, “Very well, since that’s the case, this lot goes to–”

He had been just about to strike down the auctioneer’s hammer, when all of a sudden…

“I bid 100,000,000 spirit stones.” An ancient voice rang out as if from the Heavens above. Everyone turned their heads to see an old man stride into the auction house, flanked by four red-robed cultivators.

He had brown blotches on his face, and he seemed threatening without looking angry. His cultivation base was in the late Ancient Realm, and he almost seemed to be at one with his surroundings. His sudden appearance on the scene caused shock among the surrounding cultivators.

“It’s Guru Heavenwind!!”

“That’s Guru Heavencloud’s Junior Brother, one of the Patriarchs of the Heavencloud Bazaar!!”

"What's he doing here? And why did he just make a bid? 100,000,000…. Could it be that this jade medallion has some shocking power or ability?!" The crowd immediately went into an uproar. The auctioneer stared in shock and immediately shut his mouth. Instead of striking down with the hammer, he clasped hands and bowed respectfully to Guru Heavenwind.

It wasn't just him. All of the magenta-robed cultivators, as well as all of the other auction attendees, clasped hands and bowed in greeting.

Guru Heavenwind smiled and nodded. Then he turned to Meng Hao, his expression one of kindness and even regret. When he looked at him, he realized that he seemed familiar, and his heart began to pound. Then, his eyes went wide as he suddenly realized who Meng Hao was.

But then he pretended to be unaware of his identity. "Young friend," he said, "I offer my sincere apologies. My Elder Brother sent his item here to be auctioned completely on accident. It should never have been put up for sale. However, the reputation of the Heavencloud Bazaar is of the utmost importance. Rather than cancel the auction, I will purchase it. I hope you can understand the situation, young friend."

Upon hearing his words, everyone in attendance laughed inwardly. Although the explanation seemed reasonable on the surface, considering that he owned the auction house, it meant that he could bid whatever price he wanted.

Meng Hao's gaze turned icy. After looking at the old man for a moment, he completely ignored him and said, "100,000 Immortal jades."

His words immediately caused everyone to gasp. 100,000 Immortal jades was equivalent to 1,000,000,000 spirit stones. Such a sum caused every to begin to pant. Although they all knew Meng Hao was rich, to hear him mention a number like that left them flabbergasted.

Guru Heavenwind trembled inwardly, but he put on a calm front and said, "We can't sell it to you, young friend. I'll offer one more Immortal jade than you."

“500,000 Immortal jades,” Meng Hao said, his voice calm.

“Young friend, please, don’t make trouble for–”

“1,000,000 Immortal jades,” Meng Hao said coldly, flicking his sleeve and rotating his cultivation base. “Give me that medallion!” His cold voice was like an icy wind that swirled from all directions, causing everyone to instantly feel colder. However, even if they were colder, they would still be thoroughly shocked by the price Meng Hao had just named.

“1,000,000 Immortal jades…. that’s equivalent to 10,000,000,000 spirit stones…. Heavens! J-just what kind of jade medallion is that!?!?”

“Crazy! They’re all crazy….”

As the crowd burst into an uproar, Guru Heavenwind felt his heart pounding, and he began to pant. The longer he looked at Meng Hao, the less he was able to control his emotions. Finally, his eyes went bloodshot.

“The Heavencloud Bazaar doesn’t allow fraudulent bidding!” he said, his voice hoarse. In response, Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding, causing one Immortal jade after another to fly out. In the blink of an eye, a mountain of 1,000,000 Immortal jades had piled up next to him.

The towering mountain caused everyone to stare in complete shock. Their minds were blank, filled with nothing but a roaring sound.

As soon as the Immortal jades appeared, Meng Hao flickered toward the main stage, and reached out to grab the jade medallion from the auctioneer.

It was at this point, however, that Guru Heavenwind, eyes bloodshot, suddenly flew into the air to stand in his way. He glared at Meng Hao and, voice hoarse, said, “10,000,000 Immortal jades and you can have it!”

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# Chapter 1157: I Won’t Buy It!

To most of the people present, a jade medallion like the one in question might be worth 20-30,000,000 spirit stones at most. Since one Immortal jade was worth 10,000 spirits stones, that put its value at a few thousand Immortal jades at most, and definitely less than 10,000.

However, Guru Heavenwind had just mentioned 10,000,000 Immortal jades, a sum equal to 100,000,000,000 spirit stones….

It was difficult to imagine or even describe that much wealth. It would be an extraordinary sum to even an entire sect or clan. As for the Heavencloud Bazaar… it would take hundreds or perhaps thousands of years to accumulate 10,000,000 Immortal jades.

For him to demand such a price… was equivalent of bald-faced robbery.

Everyone in the audience gasped in response to what was happening. They were both shaken by Guru Heavenwind’s words, and also astonished at Meng Hao’s display of wealth.

“10,000,000 Immortal jades and you can have the medallion!” Guru Heavenwind said. “Otherwise, it belongs to the Heavencloud Bazaar, and it’s none of your business what we do with it, even if we crush it to bits!” Guru Heavenwind’s eyes were completely bloodshot. He knew who Meng Hao actually was, and if the sum involved was less than 1,000,000 Immortal jades, then after mulling it over, he would likely have held back from doing anything to offend him. However, the amount of wealth involved pushed him to the point where he didn’t care about who Meng Hao was.

Wealth can drive people crazy, can make them lose their minds, especially when combined with strong desire. To Guru Heavenwind, 10,000,000 Immortal jades was worth risking his life for. Considering he had reached this decision, it was obvious that he had passed the point of considering whether or not it was worth it to offend Meng Hao, and had chosen to actually threaten him!

In fact, he no longer even cared about the Heavencloud Bazaar as a whole. From his perspective, if he could get his hands on that much money, he could flee to the furthest corners of the universe. Furthermore, he was sure that even if his Elder Brother came out of secluded meditation, he would be so moved by the amount of money involved that he would not interfere. After all, Guru Heavenwind knew Guru Heavencloud better than anyone else.

“Today, he’ll buy this thing… whether he wants to or not!” he thought. His four red-robed followers were all panting the same as him as they joined in to intercept Meng Hao.

Meng Hao hovered in midair, staring at Guru Heavenwind, his face turning cold.

“You shameless old fart!” he said with a cold snort. “I offered 1,000,000 Immortal jades, yet you won’t accept? Fine… I won’t buy it!” He looked over at the auctioneer, who was rushing to leave. Being in no mood to pay any heed to Guru Heavenwind, his body suddenly flickered. He moved with such speed that Guru Heavenwind and his four red-robed followers saw nothing but a blur. Then, a moment later, Meng Hao was behind them, speeding forward to appear on the main stage, right in front of the auctioneer.

“Give that to me!” he said, stretching his hand out. Trembling, the auctioneer unhesitatingly threw the jade medallion toward Meng Hao and then fled, unwilling to be involved in the chaos.

Guru Heavenwind’s face fell. “Meng Hao, what are you doing!?” he roared, speeding directly toward Meng Hao, eyes flashing with killing intent, energy surging.

“What am I doing? Are you blind?” Meng Hao replied coldly. “Can’t you see that I’m robbing you!?” He made a grasping motion with this left hand, and the jade medallion flew toward him. As soon as it landed in his palm, he put it into his bag of holding.

The eyes of every member of the audience went wide, especially in response to Meng Hao’s thunderous words that echoed out in all directions.

This was their first time ever hearing someone talk about robbing others with such confidence, as if it were the most righteous and proper thing to do.

Guru Heavenwind’s rage towered into the sky. As he and his four red-robed followers closed in on Meng Hao, they extended their hands to unleash divine abilities and magical techniques that combined to form a pagoda of magical treasures, which then smashed down toward Meng Hao.

“Meng Hao, how dare you throw a temper tantrum here!” Guru Heavenwind raged.

Meng Hao stood in place, neither dodging nor evading. His eyes flickered with coldness, and he waved his right hand, causing his cultivation base to erupt with power. A massive blast of force exploded out in front of him.

Rumbling echoed out, and Guru Heavenwind’s face fell. The pagoda trembled for a moment, and cracks spread out across its surface. Then it simply exploded, as if some giant, invisible hand had crushed it to pieces.

The crushed pagoda transformed into countless chunks of ash which then shot backward in a backlash attack, rushing toward Guru Heavenwind, whose face fell as he realized he was facing a power that he couldn’t fight back against. A sensation of deadly crisis instantly filled his mind.

“Impossible!!” Guru Heavenwind was completely astonished. He was in the late Ancient Realm, and in the Ninth Mountain and Sea as a whole, could be considered a powerful and important figure. And yet, when facing Meng Hao, he was filled with terror.

Earlier, he hadn't been able to see through everything about Meng Hao, although he did know that he was a mere Immortal Realm cultivator with the backing of a large clan. But now Meng Hao seemed incredibly powerful and even… almighty!

He was so strong that Guru Heavenwind could barely evade his attack. Furthermore, even his cultivation base had been thrown into chaos. Meng Hao made his eyes go wide and his entire body tremble. His heart was pounding so hard it seemed like it might simply stop beating.

He had never felt such intense pressure, not even from his Elder Brother Guru Heavencloud. Blood sprayed out of his mouth as he fell back at top speed.

He just barely managed to evade the main force of the blow. Unfortunately for the red-robed cultivators, they were not qualified to do so. A boom rang out, and blood sprayed out of their mouths. It was as if a wind of destruction swept across them, shredding their flesh and blood, turning the wind into a haze of red that left behind only their skeletons.

The skeletons remained for only a single extra breath of time before they became ash. Even their souls were completely wiped away.

Everything happened too quickly. With the simple wave of a hand, Meng Hao killed four Immortal Realm cultivators and seriously injured Guru Heavenwind. The surrounding cultivators gasped in shock, then looked over at Meng Hao with expressions of disbelief.

"This… this…."

"What cultivation base does he have? He actually forced Guru Heavenwind into retreat!!"

"But from the look of it, he's clearly in the Immortal Realm…."

"Guru Heavenwind just called him Meng Hao… Meng Hao…. I remember! He's Meng Hao, Crown Prince of the Fang Clan!! He's the sole joint disciple of all of the Three Great Daoist Societies! B-but… how could he be so strong!?!?”

Everyone was in an uproar.

Guru Heavenwind’s heart trembled as he came to the realization that he was simply incapable of fighting Meng Hao alone. Although his cultivation base appeared to be in the Immortal Realm, after he attacked, Guru Heavenwind could see that he was far, far stronger than he appeared.

Even as he fell back, blood oozing from the corners of his mouth, he suddenly roared: “All disciples of the Heavencloud Bazaar, hear my command. Kill this man at all costs!!”

The surrounding magenta-robed cultivators hesitated. Then, a few mustered their courage, roared, and charged Meng Hao.

Guru Heavenwind took advantage of this opportunity to attempt to escape.

With a cold harrumph, Meng Hao began to advance. When the magenta-robed cultivators tried to block his way, he said, “Screw off!”

His voice echoed like thunderclaps, slamming into the cultivators’ ears, causing their minds to reel and their cultivation bases to become unstable. Vision swimming, their minds went blank momentarily.

As for Guru Heavenwind, the words caused blood to spray out of his mouth, and he pushed himself faster as he fled.

“Damnation! How could he be so strong!?!?” His face was deathly white, and his heart overflowed with regret. Sweat poured down his face as he realized that, considering how viciously he had offended Meng Hao, there was no way that he would let him go.

Meng Hao sped through the air in an azure beam of light that transformed into an azure roc. An explosive wind kicked up as the distance between him and Guru Heavenwind was reduced from a few hundred meters to less than thirty.

“Elder Brother, save me!!” Guru Heavenwind cried shrilly. By now, his heart was filled with terror.

The entire Heavencloud Bazaar had been thrown into chaos. When the cultivators heard Meng Hao exploding into action, and then Guru Heavenwind screaming for help, they were shocked to the core.

Everyone in the shops and stalls where Meng Hao had shopped could see what was happening. They were shocked to hear who he was, but were even more shocked to discover that, not only did he have an incredible background, he was also terrifying in terms of cultivation base.

Of course, what they knew now was only the tip of the iceberg. If they knew that the Fang Clan was now an Allheaven Clan, and that Meng Hao was the true Patriarch of that clan, then their shock would reach a level that would be impossible to describe.

By now, the cultivators manning the various teleportation portals in the asteroid field had sensed the chaos erupting in the bazaar. Many of them were now flying over to see what was happening.

At about that time, Meng Hao in azure roc form appeared in front of Guru Heavenwind and slashed out with razor-sharp claws.

However, even as he did, a cold and sinister voice echoed out through the bazaar, filled with power, dissatisfaction, and rage.

“Harm him not, lad. I can provide an explanation for everything!” Along with the voice came a beam of sword light, bursting with killing intent. It transformed into a waterfall-like stream that surged toward Meng Hao.

It was almost as though… if Meng Hao dared to continue his attack, the waterfall would slash him to pieces!

The words implied a discussion was to be had, but from the type of attack being leveled against Meng Hao, it was clear exactly how domineering the true lord of the Heavencloud Bazaar was. This was Guru Heavencloud, who was domineering to the extreme!

However, when people tried to be domineering in front of Meng Hao… then, he would be even MORE domineering!

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# Chapter 1158: Guru Heavencloud!

When Guru Heavenwind heard the voice of his Elder Brother, Guru Heavencloud, he was instantly enlivened. Believing himself to finally have hope, his eyes flickered with killing intent, and he thought of using the opportunity to try to cut Meng Hao down in a counterattack.

However, even as the idea flitted through his mind… Meng Hao snorted coldly. The sound slammed into Heavenwind’s ears like an explosive bolt of lightning. His body shook violently, and his mind was thrown into chaos.

At the same time, Meng Hao in azure roc form didn’t slow down, but instead, bore down on Guru Heavenwind, slashing downward into the top of his head. A crunching sound was heard as his entire head was shredded to pieces.

There was no time for him to scream, nor his soul to flee. The azure roc’s talons slashed again with obliterating power down into the rest of Guru Heavenwind’s body.

A boom rang out as Guru Heavenwind exploded into pieces. Even his soul was destroyed!

Meng Hao normally didn’t attack with such deadly force. However, Guru Heavenwind had been too greedy. Meng Hao had offered 1,000,000 Immortal jades in good faith. However, instead of quitting while he was ahead, Guru Heavenwind had used the sum of 10,000,000 Immortal jades as an obvious extortion, and had even threatened to destroy the jade medallion….

Were it any other object, that wouldn’t have mattered. But this jade medallion was an important clue regarding his two grandfathers. How could he possibly restrain his killing intent? And then there was the way Guru Heavencloud had spoken to him. Had he been even a bit more polite, Meng Hao might not necessarily have resorted to deadly force.

However, Guru Heavencloud’s words, despite seeming polite, were actually extremely domineering. Clearly, the man was used to running his own personal little fiefdom here at the bazaar. Unfortunately for him, Meng Hao wasn’t used to restraining his temper around people like that.

Neat and tidy. That was how he killed. A moment later, an enraged roar echoed out, causing everything to shake. A figure appeared, flying through the air; simultaneously, the waterfall of swords fell onto Meng Hao.

A boom rang out as Meng Hao hovered in midair, completely unmoving. In fact, it was the waterfall of swords that shattered into fragments with a boom, completely incapable of harming him at all!

As the shocking roar echoed about, an old man appeared. He wore a violet robe, and looked extremely dignified. As he flew forth, boundless ripples rolled out. As soon as the magenta-robed cultivators caught sight of him, they dropped to their knees and kowtowed.

“Greetings, Patriarch!”

This was none other than the Patriarch of the Heavencloud Bazaar, Guru Heavencloud. He looked awe-inspiring, and also enraged. However, inwardly, he was shocked. The sword waterfall from moments ago had been unleashed in anger upon Meng Hao, and yet hadn’t even fazed him. However, Guru Heavencloud kept his astonishment hidden, allowing no hint of it to show on his face.

Cries of shock rang up from cultivators in the bazaar. They were amazed by the energy and pressure radiating from the violet-robed old man. These were the ripples of power of someone who could step into the Dao Realm at any time. Even if he failed, he would still be a shocking Quasi-Dao expert.

The air around him twisted and distorted, and the faint manifestation of numerous natural laws and Essences could be seen. He was boundlessly domineering, causing colors to flash up above, and the starry sky to tremble.

“You have robbed my Heavencloud Bazaar, lad, and also killed my Junior Brother. I don’t care if you’re the Crown Prince of the Fang Clan! It wouldn’t matter if your father Fang Xiufeng personally showed up, or even the Fang Clan’s Dao Realm Patriarch, Fang Shoudao, you had better provide me with an explanation, right now!” His voice brimmed with Heavenly might, booming out in all directions, shaking all of the asteroids in the asteroid field.

“I killed your Junior Brother because he tried to kill me!” Meng Hao retorted coolly. “Furthermore, he greedily tried to use something that didn’t belong to him to threaten me! That’s exactly the type of people I like to kill!

“As for robbing your Heavencloud Bazaar, I put 1,000,000 Immortal jades onto the table, and in return, you people tried to extort me! In that case… yeah, I robbed you! So what!?”

“No matter how you justify it, no matter what reasons you cite, you killed one of my people and stole my property. You have committed a grave crime. The Heavencloud Bazaar doesn’t fall under the jurisdiction of any of the sects or power groups. We are eternally neutral! However, if people try to bully us, then I, Heavencloud, can’t possibly stand idly by!” Guru Heavencloud’s voice boomed out, and his energy rocketed up. A windstorm sprang up to spin around him in all directions.

His voice fairly burst with a domineering air, as if his words were natural laws of Heaven and Earth. Here in the Heavencloud Bazaar, his words bore the power of the Heavens, and he wrote the rules!

If he said you were in the wrong, you were in the wrong! If he said that you had committed a crime, then you were guilty, whether you had actually committed the crime or not!

His echoing voice filled the surrounding cultivators with shock. They could sense his domineering air, and as for the magenta-robed disciples, they were starting to get excited.

Their eyes filled with ardor; this was their Patriarch, who brimmed with a domineering aura no matter who he was up against.

“Immediately produce the item you stole from my Heavencloud Bazaar, surrender, and admit your fault. Then send for the leadership of your clan to come and personally take you away. That is your only option here!” Guru Heavencloud spoke as coldly and as domineeringly as ever, and his strength could definitely back up this attitude. Normally speaking, he was very cautious in everything, but when he encountered situations like this, he always acted this way.

It didn’t matter who was actually in the right or wrong. As long as he was in his own domain, he was ALWAYS right!

One of the reasons why the Heavencloud Bazaar had been able to survive for so long, and even thrive, was because of this combination of a cautious and yet domineering attitude. After all… few powerful groups would be willing to force Guru Heavencloud into a corner merely because of some unimportant matters. He could step into the Dao Realm at any time, which was a huge trump card.

Furthermore, being able to step into the Dao Realm so easily meant that any powerful group would jump at the chance to recruit him, which was another trump card.

Although he could see that Meng Hao was powerful, he also believed that such power had limits. Therefore, he still looked down on him. His Junior Brother had been in the late Ancient Realm, but his cultivation base had been jumbled. If Guru Heavencloud had wished it, he could have killed him easily at any time.

It might be true that his sword waterfall hadn’t hurt Meng Hao, but considering his years of experience, he was still confident in being able to handle him. After all, he was merely the Crown Prince of the Fang Clan, which wasn’t actually a very powerful position.

Although the title sounded prestigious, all it did was make Meng Hao a figurehead. Guru Heavenwind couldn’t bring himself to believe that after the war on Planet East Victory, the Fang Clan, having suffered so many casualties, would allow a blood feud to erupt just because of a measly Crown Prince.

He simply didn’t believe Meng Hao to be so important. Even if he was the joint disciple of the Three Great Daoist Societies, he couldn’t possibly be important enough that the Fang Clan would actually go to the lengths of offending Guru Heavenwind in a way that could result in casualties.

The Fang Clan might be a big clan, but considering Guru Heavencloud’s position, he naturally knew that any sect or clan took the interests of the group into consideration, and didn’t make decisions based on one individual.

When it came to insults or backing down, the interests of the clan would be put before the interests of one person.

His analysis was actually correct, and had these events played out before Meng Hao went to the Windswept Realm, then the Fang Clan might have shown up and made a scene, but would have resolved the situation quietly in the end. That would have saved face for both parties. In the end, the jade medallion would have gone to the Fang Clan, and the Heavencloud Bazaar would have ended up with all the Immortal jade.

Guru Heavencloud had gone through similar situations before, and the end result was always the same.

Unfortunately for him, there was one thing he didn’t understand. And that was… what it meant to be the true Clan Chief of an Allheaven Clan!

Seeing Guru Heavenwind acting in such a domineering way caused Meng Hao to chuckle. Then his eyes flickered with coldness, and he glanced over to the Fang Clan teleportation portal. It was being manned by six members of the Fang Clan, all of whom looked familiar, although he couldn’t recall their names.

He could sense the faint presence of a Dao seed in all of them, although in most of them it was very faint. Only one of their number seemed to have a somewhat flourishing Dao seed; the others did not.

The entire group was in a state of shock. They had recognized their Crown Prince at first glance, and the current friction between him and Guru Heavencloud left them shaken.

“The six of you heard what Guru Heavencloud said just now, right?” Meng Hao asked coolly. “Immediately take this information and report back to the clan. Ask Patriarch Shoudao whether or not he’s interesting in taking the Heavencloud Bazaar and changing its name to the Fang Clan Bazaar.” Meng Hao’s words were actually even more domineering than Guru Heavencloud’s. Originally, he had planned to visit Planet South Heaven first, and then go back to the Fang Clan on Planet East Victory.

However, considering how events had developed, he had come up with a new plan. Since he was already planning to go pay respects to his parents, he figured he might as well bring the Fang Clan with him!

His parents couldn’t leave Planet South Heaven, but he could still honor them by having the clan itself go to them offer greetings!

As their son, this was… a truly great gift that he could offer!

By means of their son, they would receive honor and glory from the entire clan!

The six members of the Fang Clan exchanged glances, then clasped hands and bowed to Meng Hao. Three of them backed up and departed for the Fang Clan via the teleportation portal.

Guru Heavencloud did nothing to stop them. He hovered in midair, smiling coldly, waiting for the influential members of the Fang Clan to arrive. In his mind, once the entire Fang Clan got dragged into the matter, the situation would have devolved to the point that Meng Hao couldn’t resolve it alone.

Meng Hao looked at Guru Heavencloud, and his eyes suddenly gleamed with the desire to fight. Voice cool, he said: “Well, while we wait for them to arrive, I'd like to see how the great circle of the Ancient Realm… measures up to me in terms of strength!"

Voice cold, Guru Heavencloud said, "How barbaric of you, lad. You–"

However, before he could finish, his face fell as Meng Hao took a step forward.

Everything began to shake, and cracking sounds echoed out in all directions. The tempest swirling around Guru Heavencloud immediately shattered. The interference to the natural laws and Essences caused the air around him to distort.

In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao appeared directly in front of Guru Heavencloud, azure light shining. He waved a hand, causing numerous Immortal mountains to descend.

Guru Heavencloud's mind trembled as he sensed the incredibly threatening pressure radiating off of Meng Hao. Without hesitation, he lifted his right hand and waved it out in front of him. Instantly, all of his Soul Lamps appeared around him, moving in a pattern that resembled a spell formation. They instantly began to rotate, and the pattern erupted with the power of natural law, transforming into countless threads that shot toward Meng Hao.

"Alter Heavens, Transform Earth. Wind-Cloud Tribulation!" he roared. As the sound boomed through the air, Meng Hao's Immortal mountains crumbled into pieces. However, by this time, Meng Hao had taken a second step, whereupon he waved his right index finger!

The air in front of him was ripped open by a huge rift, from within which stretched out a blood-colored head. This was none other than the Blood Demon Grand Magic. However, this time, it was not just a head which appeared, but an entire Blood Demon!

It tore open the rift, causing blood-red light to spill out. Then the Blood Demon charged forward, its hands snatching out toward Guru Heavencloud.

Guru Heavencloud's expression instantly flickered with shock.

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# Chapter 1159: Forced Backward, Over and Over!

Before fusing with his third Nirvana Fruit, he could only materialize a head when using the Blood Demon Grand Magic. After everything he had experienced in the Windswept Realm though, his Blood Demon Grand Magic had advanced to an astonishing degree, thanks in large part to the third Nirvana Fruit. As the void ripped open, a full Blood Demon emerged, roaring.

The hand which stretched out toward Guru Heavencloud sported razor-sharp claws, and radiated boundless blood-colored light. Guru Heavencloud’s blood suddenly seemed to be incited to the boiling point, causing his face to flicker as he waved his finger toward the Blood Demon.

As his finger waved through the air, his forehead split apart, causing a drop of black blood to fly out. It wriggled and twisted as it sped through the air, emitting a shriek like that of a baby as it rapidly grew larger, transforming into a mosquito!

The mosquito was only the size of a hand, but it radiated a boundless murderous aura as it buzzed through the air toward the Blood Demon.

One was gigantic, the other was minuscule. However, when they slammed into each other, a huge boom rang out; apparently neither of the two could overcome the other.

The blood-colored light around the Blood Demon transformed into a sea of blood, but the mosquito was incredibly agile. It dodged to the side, and then stuck its mouthpiece in and started sucking up the blood.

“Interesting,” Meng Hao said with a chuckle. He had never seen a beast like this particular mosquito before. He quickly raised his right hand and performed an incantation gesture, then pointed in Guru Heavencloud’s direction.

Numerous Immortal mountains descended, spinning around the area and crushing down toward Guru Heavencloud. Their mere appearance on the scene caused the entire asteroid to begin to tremble.

If you looked closely, you would be able to see that on the peaks of the Immortal mountains were cross-legged figures, meditating. Those figures looked almost exactly like Meng Hao!

This was a divine ability manifested because of Meng Hao fusing with the third Nirvana Fruit and reaching the Allheaven Dao Immortal Realm.

Guru Heavencloud’s heart began to pound. The increasing threat posed by Meng Hao caused him to suddenly realize that had acted a bit presumptuously before. However, he was still fully confident in himself.

With a cold harrumph, he waved his sleeve, causing a beam of sword light to fly out, within which was a black flying sword that fairly dripped with deadly poison. As it whistled through the air, the black sword split apart into numerous ghost images. Hundreds of beams of sword light shot toward the Immortal mountains, each one of them filled with the astonishing power of Guru Heavencloud’s full circle Ancient Realm cultivation base.

Booms rang out as the sword light closed in on the Immortal mountains. Distortions spread out, and as the Immortal mountains began to collapse, the images of Meng Hao opened their eyes and looked around with cold gazes. They were like clones of Meng Hao, all of whom rose to their feet and flew directly toward the sword light.

A huge boom rang out through the air.

“I’m very curious to see how many magical items you have tucked away!” Meng Hao performed an incantation gesture and pointed out, causing beams of violet light to shoot out into the air and rapidly form into the outline of a moon!

It was… a violet-colored moon!

The moon transformed into an illusory shadow which shot toward Guru Heavencloud, rapidly shrinking down until it landed on his forehead and sank down inside. Moments later, the mark of a violet moon began to form in that very spot!

It was in that moment in that the magic of the violet moon exploded out!

An intense sensation of crisis swept through Guru Heavencloud, causing him to gasp. However, he had no time to consider the situation. Something inside him was telling him that he could under no circumstances allow the violet moon to fully form on his forehead. He immediately fell back, waving his sleeve, causing a white banner to unfurl around him. The banner transformed into numerous Cloud Dragons, which roared viciously as they shot, not toward Meng Hao, but toward Guru Heavencloud's own forehead.

In the moment before the moon fully formed, nine Cloud Dragons transformed into a protective force that exploded toward the violet moon.

Massive rumbling sounds could be heard as the nine protective dragons caused the violet moon magic to gradually dissipate.

A strange gleam appeared in Meng Hao's eyes. This was the first time he had encountered someone who primarily used magical items in battle, with few divine abilities. He took a step forward, making a snatching motion, which caused the previously pitch-black void in the area to suddenly erupt with white beams of light.

Numerous intense beams flew out of the ground of the asteroid, and shockingly, even the distant sun!

They rapidly coalesced into a hand-sized image of a sun!

This was Meng Hao's own divine ability… the Supernova Magic! 1

He tossed the sun out, sending the blinding globe of light shooting toward Guru Heavencloud. As it neared, it continued to suck in more light, growing larger and larger, until it began to send out shocking ripples that caused Guru Heavencloud’s face to fall.

Meng Hao was actually very curious about this battle style which used so many magical items; it was as equally shocking as his own numerous divine abilities.

“How could he have so many divine abilities and Daoist magics!?” he thought, his face falling. “Plus, each and every Daoist magic seems completely extraordinary!” As of this moment, he no longer dared to underestimate Meng Hao. As the globe of light bore down on him, intense feelings of crisis filled him once again. He suddenly lifted his right foot up into the air and took a step forward. Rumbling filled the air as an enormous Feng Shui compass appeared, spinning through the air and shining with boundless light. Shockingly, numerous ghostly images appeared inside the light, howling viciously as they shot toward the light of the Supernova Magic.

“Lad, I have more magical items than you can even imagine!” Guru Heavencloud said, his voice dark and sinister. What he said was true. After all, he owned the entire Heavencloud Bazaar for years, giving him access to extraordinary amounts of cultivation resources and magical items.

Rumbling filled the air as the light of the Feng Shui compass slammed into Meng Hao’s Supernova Magic. A boom echoed out, and a huge tempest exploded between the two of them. The entire asteroid field trembled violently, and the cultivators in the area gasped and retreated at full speed.

“Meng Hao!!” roared Guru Heavencloud, waving his left hand to send nine stone statues flying out of his sleeve. Their appearance was completely bizarre; they all looked like old men who, after flying out into the air, opened their eyes and began to shine with brilliant light as they shot murderously toward Meng Hao.

Guru Heavencloud’s eyes flickered, and he smacked his bag of holding. Immediately, a crimson dust appeared, which had apparently been refined from blood. The dust writhed, causing blood to immediately begin to spread out in all directions.

However, Guru Heavencloud wasn’t done. He stepped back, waving his sleeve again to send three violet medicinal pills flying out, which radiated boundless pressure as they flew the air toward Meng Hao.

All of this takes some time to describe, but actually, Guru Heavencloud completed all of these numerous actions in the time it takes to blink. All of a sudden, Meng Hao was faced with a raging, murderous aura. The light from all the various magical items interlocked to create a multicolored wave of light.

“You certainly do qualify to run a bazaar like this in the middle of an asteroid,” Meng Hao said coolly. “And no wonder the other sects and clans don’t want to offend you…. You have a lot of magical items. Well, now I’m looking forward to seeing how many Daoist magics you have.” He took a step forward, and the starstone in his eye melted. In the blink of an eye, he had transformed into a shooting star!

One Thought Stellar Transformation!

He immediately sped through the air, shattering the void, causing strange colors to flash. Booms could be heard as all the magical items which blocked his path were crushed as easily as weeds or twigs!

It started with the nine statutes of the old men, who roared in unison and tried to block Meng Hao in planet-form as he closed in on them. They began to tremble, and cracks spread out across their bodies. In the blink of an eye, they shattered into countless pieces.

Next was the blood-colored dust which had transformed into a sea of blood. It rumbled toward Meng Hao, sending tendrils of blood out to try to bind him up. However, as soon as the tendrils appeared, cracking sounds could be heard, and they collapsed into pieces.

They were completely incapable of causing Meng Hao to falter even half a step!

As for the three medicinal pills, they exploded with electricity, transforming into three violet lightning bolts. However, when they landed on Meng Hao in planet-form, the only effect was that the plant shrank down and eventually vanished, revealing Meng Hao himself, who shone with azure light as he transformed into an azure roc. With a flash, he shot forward, arriving directly in front of Guru Heavencloud!

The speed with which all of this happened is virtually impossible to describe.

“Have any more magical items?” Meng Hao asked, clenching his hand into a fist and unleashing the Life-Extermination Fist.

A massive boom rang out, and the Heavens trembled. The void shattered, and the Life-Extermination Fist, backed by the power of Meng Hao’s cultivation base, instantly caused the sensation of deadly crisis that filled Guru Heavencloud to peak.

And yet, he didn’t retreat. Instead, his eyes began to shine with a bright light.

“So, I underestimated you….” he said. Then he exhaled sharply. There was no visible reaction to his exhalation, and yet, the natural laws around him suddenly changed, and the Essences around him gradually formed together into his own personal Daoist magic.

One Breath Shatters the Heavens!

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

Meng Hao’s Life-Extermination Fist slammed into the breath of air, giving rise to shocking vibrations. Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly gleamed with a vicious light as he also declined to retreat. Instead, as the backlash power hit him, he took another step forward.

BOOM!

He sent the backlash attack spinning backward again, toward Guru Heavencloud, whose face fell as he suddenly fell back.

Every step that he fell back, Meng Hao took another step forward. One was forced backward over and over, the other advanced step by step!

So far, Meng Hao had seemed to control the entire battle! He was completely and utterly domineering!

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# Chapter 1160: The Fang Clan Arrives!

In the blink of an eye, the two of them exchanged over a hundred blows. The more Guru Heavencloud fought, the more shocked he became. He was well aware that he had lost the initiative, and had no way to get it back. Even more surprising was that he was constantly being forced into retreat by Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s domineering style was on full display as he advanced with relentless attacks. This time, he waved his hand, causing the Ninth Mountain to materialize and crush down toward Guru Heavencloud.

Everyone watching down below was astonished.

“How could Meng Hao be so strong!?!?” Astonished, Guru Heavencloud fell back, eyes flickering coldly as he prepared to launch a divine ability. However, it was at this point that Meng Hao suddenly stopped his current action and then unleashed a punch, staring coldly at Heavencloud the entire time.

When their eyes met, Guru Heavencloud’s heart went cold. He tried to dodge back, but was too late.

“Destroy!” Meng Hao said coolly.

Instantly, colors flashed and the wind screamed. Heaven and Earth shook as an indescribable force was unleashed, the explosive destructive power of Meng Hao’s fist strikes which he had been holding back until now.

Rumbling sounds echoed up into the air as Meng Hao flashed through the air like lightning. When he appeared in front of Guru Heavencloud, he used the Bedevilment Fist for the first time in the fight.

This was the fist of Self-Immolation, the Bedevilment Fist!

Blood sprayed out of Guru Heavencloud’s mouth as he was sent tumbling backward. However, even as he fell back, Meng Hao followed after in pursuit. A moment later, though, he stopped in place and dodged backward at high speed.

In that same moment, the space he had just occupied exploded in a mass of destruction. Had Meng Hao not fallen back just now, he would likely have been mortally wounded.

Seeing Meng Hao evade his killing blow caused Guru Heavencloud’s brow to furrow.

“Meng Hao, you qualify to see my most powerful state!” he said. Then he raised his right hand and pushed it down onto his forehead, causing a rumbling sound to echo out as two magical symbols appeared.

Shockingly, he was currently in a sealed state, something he did to delay stepping into the Dao Realm, and in fact, made it possible for him to attempt to step into the Dao Realm at any time he wished.

The first seal faded away rapidly, and as it did, Guru Heavencloud’s energy suddenly exploded with increasing power. He quickly surpassed the ordinary great circle of the Ancient Realm, rising up to a shocking degree.

He had no choice but to admit that Meng Hao was strong, perhaps even stronger than himself. Because of that, he had to go all out, and even go to the lengths of removing the seals and removing the pressure that kept his cultivation base restricted.

“Great!” Meng Hao said with a cold snort. “Now that the warmup is over, I guess I’ll kill you. Shouldn’t be too hard.” With that, he extended his right hand and pointed toward Guru Heavencloud, unleashing the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex.

Rumbling could be heard as Guru Heavencloud suddenly lurched to a halt. His eyes went wide with shock as Meng Hao waved his finger a second, a third, and even a fourth time.

The Seventh Demon Sealing Hex, Karmic Hexing, immediately caused Karma Threads to appear on Guru Heavencloud. They were already twisted because of his self-sealing, and now, rumbling sounds could be heard inside of him. Stabs of pain shot through him, and he felt as if he were suddenly losing his perception of the world. Even his memories began to grow fuzzy. His cultivation base began to sink down beyond his control, and apparently, his Karma Threads could be severed at any time.

The Sixth Demon Sealing Hex, the Life Death Hexing, caused magical symbols to appear all over him. Unfortunately, Meng Hao didn’t succeed in turning Guru Heavencloud into a puppet, but the resulting failure caused Guru Heavencloud to cough up a mouthful of blood. His Karma was collapsing, and his cultivation base was in chaos.

Next was the Fifth Demon Sealing Hex, the transposition of inside and outside. A rift appeared, both absorbing and erupting, creating a sharp blade that slashed at Guru Heavencloud, provoking a bloodcurdling scream as he was directly sliced in half!

Everything happened with shocking speed. Four waves of a finger caused Guru Heavencloud, who was still in the middle of powering up, to be cut down by Meng Hao!

This was the true strength of Meng Hao; to him, the great circle of the Ancient Realm wasn’t even worth paying attention to!

However, Guru Heavencloud wasn’t actually dead. Despite being cut in half, he was able to merge his two halves back together. And yet, Meng Hao didn’t give him a chance to do anything with that opportunity. He waved his right hand, causing the bone-tip spear to appear. Whistling sounds could be heard as the spear stabbed directly toward Guru Heavencloud.

A boom rang out as Guru Heavencloud exploded. His Nascent Divinity flew out of the wreckage of his body, heading down toward one of the magenta-robed cultivators. It stabbed into the man's forehead, causing him to let out a miserable shriek. His facial features twisted for a moment, then went calm, after which he looked up furiously at Meng Hao.

"Meng Hao!!" That cultivator was now Guru Heavencloud. He flew up into the air, roaring in rage. To have been cut down the way he had just now was a complete humiliation. How could he ever have imagined that he would be slaughtered so quickly?

In fact, he had even been forced to use a trump card that nobody had known about, his life-saving magic of Instantaneous Possession!

It was a possession-type Daoist magic that extremely rare, and allowed him to instantaneously possess the body of another person. Unfortunately, it was an incomplete magic, making it difficult to utilize without great difficulty.

However, in the current situation, he had been left with no choice.

Meng Hao's eyes flickered with a strange light as he looked at Guru Heavencloud. Then he smiled slightly and began to walk forward, once again on the offensive.

Guru Heavencloud was incensed. Gnashing his teeth, he shoved down on his forehead again, wiping away the second sealing mark.

In that very instant… an incredible energy suddenly exploded out within Guru Heavencloud. All of a sudden, all of his Soul Lamps appeared!

The Soul Lamps were all extinguished, and, shockingly, as they circulated around him, it was obvious… that each of those Soul Lamps was made of a tiny person who looked exactly like Guru Heavencloud!

Even more shocking was that each tiny individual had a sealing mark held in its left hand. It was as if each of those symbols contained different Daoist magics, which were being fed by the tiny figures. Furthermore, each figure also had a magical item floating above its right hand!

There were more than ten magical items, including flying swords, shields, pearls and tiny pagodas. From the feeling they gave off, all of them were high-grade Immortal treasures.

If that were all there were to it, it might not be a big deal. However, now that Guru Heavencloud had been forced into a corner, he slapped his bag of holding to produce a violet helmet.

It looked like a helmet which might be worn by an ordinary mortal soldier. However, it seemed incredibly ancient, as if it had passed through countless years of time. As soon as it appeared in Guru Heavencloud’s hands, he put it onto his head.

Almost immediately, his power skyrocketed to a shocking level, and his divine sense experienced explosive growth.

Shockingly, this helmet… was an Ancient Realm magical item!

“Meng Hao! This is my most powerful state. This… is the true great circle of the Ancient Realm. If you can defeat me like this, then I will immediately summon the Door of the Dao Realm!

“If I successfully step into the Dao Realm, then I will cut you down where you stand…. If I fail… then I will be an almighty Quasi-Dao expert. At that time, my life force will begin to dissipate, and the end of my longevity will be within sight. However, killing you in that state… will still be a simple matter!

“You need to think long and hard about whether you wish to continue to fight, or back down!” Guru Heavencloud’s heart was filled with regret. He could tell that Meng Hao was extraordinary and shocking, and now he wasn’t so certain about his judgement regarding the Fang Clan.

The words he had uttered just now had been spoken grudgingly. Originally, he had planned to save those words for someone of his own generation as a coldly uttered requirement.

But now, he had no choice but to speak them to Meng Hao, in order to remind him that he shouldn't continue to act provokingly….

It was at this point that Meng Hao's expression suddenly flickered, and he looked in the direction of the Fang Clan's teleportation portal asteroid. Guru Heavencloud sensed the same thing Meng Hao had, and looked over to see that several figures had appeared. He finally sighed inwardly with relief.

He didn't want to admit to himself that he had even done such a thing, but he had no other option. He would rather clash with the Dao Realm experts of the Fang Clan than face Meng Hao. The four finger attacks Meng Hao had just unleashed filled him with the utmost fear.

Although he was still confident, he couldn't shake the fear that lurked in his heart. Besides, it would be a great loss to be forced into an attempted breakthrough right here and now.

Despite being enraged, Guru Heavencloud seemed to force himself under control. He immediately clasped hands and bowed to the figures who were emerging from the teleportation portal.

Fang Shoudao strolled out from the glittering lights, his face grim.

Guru Heavencloud's flickered, and he suddenly chuckled coldly, projecting his booming voice out to say, "Heavencloud of the Heavencloud Bazaar offers greetings, Senior Shoudao!

"Not only have I never offended the Fang Clan, I've never skimped in my yearly tribute, not even by a little bit. Normally speaking, I accommodate the requirements laid out by your clan without hesitation. I truly respect the Fang Clan!

"Although other clans and powers have tried to recruit me, I haven't joined any of them. I'm always respectful to all of the sects and powers, and even more so when it comes to the Fang Clan.

"And what do I get in return for all of that? My Junior Brother was brutally slaughtered, and others of my disciples were violently killed. All because someone ignored the laws of the bazaar, laws which expressly forbid robbing and stealing!

“What is the meaning of such humiliation!? Senior Shoudao, could it be that the Fang Clan… really wishes to annihilate the Heavencloud Bazaar? After all, moments ago, it was your own Crown Prince who said that he wants the Heavencloud Bazaar to be renamed as the Fang Clan Bazaar!

“I could do nothing in the face of such provocation, because he’s nothing but a young lad, and the Crown Prince of the Fang Clan. Then he attacked me, and considering the level of my cultivation base and my status, I had to endure for a while. I didn’t want to hurt him, and thus, didn’t use divine abilities, only magical items.

“However, your Crown Prince was extremely overbearing and menacing. He pushed me into a corner until I could fall back no further. I could have used deadly attacks on numerous occasions, but didn’t, all because I wanted to avoid creating deadly enmity with the Fang Clan!

“However, everyone has their limits, and finally, I retreated far enough to reach mine!

“Senior Shoudao, I’ve already been forced to the point of having no choice but to make a breakthrough. Success would place me in the Dao Realm, failure, the Quasi-Dao Realm. Therefore, I want to know exactly what I did to offend the Fang Clan? Why do you want… to exterminate me!?!?

“The Heavencloud Bazaar might be small, but we’re no pushovers! Senior, please take the lead in presiding over justice!”

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# Chapter 1161: The Old Fox

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever. He ceased any pursuit of Guru Heavencloud, and looked extremely innocent and charming as he clasped hands and bowed to Patriarch Fang Shoudao.

“Junior offers greetings, Patriarch,” he said, clearing his throat, as if he wasn’t the instigator of the current predicament, and was very curious to see how Fang Shoudao would resolve the situation.

What he actually wanted to know, though was… exactly how important he was to the Fang Clan, and to Fang Shoudao.

He wanted to know if the title of Crown Prince… was actually worth something! Perhaps it was just a title, and wasn’t worth anything. Meng Hao’s attitude would be dependent on how the question was answered.

If the Fang Clan handled the situation with no regard for him, then he would simply attack. He would show the Fang Clan the true meaning of what an Allheaven Clan Patriarch was!

Fang Shoudao sent a vicious glare in Meng Hao’s direction, but then, a moment later, his eyes widened almost imperceptibly. Behind him were five or six clan Elders, including the Grand Elder Fang Tongtian, all of whom heard Guru Heavencloud’s enraged words as they walked out of the teleportation portal.

Once again, Guru Heavencloud said, “Senior Shoudao, please take the lead in presiding over justice!”

At the same time, the magenta-robed cultivators in the bazaar all clasped hands toward Fang Shoudao and joined their voices together to say, “Senior Shoudao, please take the lead in presiding over justice!”

Their conjoined voices boomed out like crashing waves, causing an unsightly expression to appear on Fang Shoudao's face. Inwardly, he was slightly suspicious about exactly what was happening. He once again looked over at Meng Hao, expression grim.

After a long moment passed, he gave a cold harrumph and said, "Fang Tongtian, you and the other Elders resolve this situation."

Fang Tongtian looked back at him in shock. Even as he stood there hesitating, one of the other Fang Clan Elders stepped forward, clasped hands, and bowed toward Guru Heavencloud.

"Fellow Daoist Heavencloud, please calm yourself. This truly was an instance of carelessness on the part of the Fang Clan. We can explain." Meng Hao had seen this old man before. He was an Elder from one of the neutral bloodlines. As the words left the man's mouth, Meng Hao's expression remained completely calm. However, his eyes turned icy cold.

"Meng Hao, immediately apologize to Guru Heavencloud, and give back the thing you stole!" the Elder said harshly. "As the Crown Prince, you must set a proper example for others! What you've done here is simply outrageous!" There were two reasons this Elder rushed to be the first to speak. The first was that he sensed that Patriarch Shoudao wasn't very pleased with the situation. The second was that he had many connections with the Heavencloud Bazaar, and wished for the situation to be resolved as quickly as possible.

From his perspective, his decision not to side with Meng Hao was quite proper. After all, the Fang Clan wasn't in a position to be antagonizing too many people, not even for the sake of the Crown Prince. Although Meng Hao had performed some incredible services for the clan, personal interests should never be placed above the interests of the group. Sometimes, it was simply necessary to back down.

He wasn't the only one who had similar thoughts. The other Elders, even the two who were members of Meng Hao's bloodline, all felt that the best way to resolve the situation was to chide Meng Hao.

One by one, the Elders began to chime in.

“Hao’er, you shouldn’t have killed anyone here. Apologize immediately! Fellow Daoist Heavencloud, this was just a matter of the Fang Clan’s Crown Prince acting a bit impulsively. Let’s drop the matter, alright?”

“That’s right. Hao’er, what are you doing just standing there? Apologize right now!”

As the Elders spoke one after another, Guru Heavencloud began to laugh coldly in his heart, and also sighed with relief that the Fang Clan members were reasonable people.

In his mind, after Meng Hao apologized, there would be no way for him to pursue the matter further. He himself would be able to sell the jade pendant to the Fang Clan, although for a higher price than before. After all, he couldn’t quite resolve himself to the idea of letting Meng Hao away completely scot-free after what he had done.

He felt certain that the Fang Clan wouldn’t be willing to antagonize people like himself lightly. After all, his cultivation base was at the point where all he had to do was make a breakthrough, and he could be a powerful enemy to any sect or clan.

Once that happened, unless they went all out to exterminate him, he would be able to cause them unending problems in the future.

Similarly, he didn’t dare to deeply offend any of the powerful clans. That was why he always tried to maintain a certain level of imperiousness in his actions. He would never exceed that level too much, but he would likewise never become more submissive.

As soon as he heard what the Elders were saying, his face relaxed, and he clasped hands and bowed to the Fang Clan Elders.

“Since this was a misunderstanding, then I’ll let it go,” he said with a light, casual sigh. “We can simply blame my Junior Brother for being too boorish, which led him to an unfortunate and terrible death…. As for the stolen item, since the Crown Prince of the Fang Clan took a liking to it, then please, take it. In fact, I don't even want to have it returned. I just hope that the Fang Clan… won't slaughter me and my people!" Although he was smiling bitterly, his heart was filled with venomous malice. In this situation, he was using a tactical retreat to advance his interests, using weakness to defeat strength. Instead of demanding that the Fang Clan strip Meng Hao of his title of Crown Prince, he would force them into doing it themselves. He wouldn't just deal him a flesh wound, he would stab him to the bone!

After all, he viewed himself to be the reasonable one. The people who had died were from the Heavencloud Bazaar. Not only had Meng Hao killed them, he had also stolen their goods. Guru Heavencloud was counting on all of that to lend weight to his demands.

In the end, it seemed to work out exactly as he had expected. In response to Guru Heavencloud's words, the group of Fang Clan Elders frowned and began to rebuke Meng Hao even more harshly.

"Hao'er, this is disgraceful!"

"Apologize right this instant, Hao'er! Do you really want to humiliate the entire clan because of your personal affair!?"

"Meng Hao, get down on your knees!" The last sentence was uttered by the first Elder who had begun speaking moments ago, the one from one of the neutral bloodlines.

Meng Hao's face had remained placid from start to finish. He offered no explanations, instead choosing to stand there looking coldly at the other members of the Fang Clan. To all the other cultivators looking on, Meng Hao seemed to be holding himself in a way that implied that even the Senior members of his clan weren't qualified to talk down to him.

But then Meng Hao heard that one particular Elder say the words 'get on your knees,' and his eyes flickered coldly.

"You're Fang who?" he said. "I forget your given name. In any case, I dare you to repeat what you just said about me kneeling. Go ahead and try it!"

The Elder’s eyes flickered with rage, and he was just about to speak when….

“Enough!” said Grand Elder Fang Tongtian, his face darkening, his voice echoing out in all directions. Although his cultivation base was not as high as Guru Heavencloud’s, it was still high enough that Guru Heavencloud wouldn’t look down on him.

“Elder Fang Shuidan, what you said just now was completely inappropriate,” he said, his voice crackling like thunder. “Have you forgotten that you are also surnamed Fang?!

“As for you, Fellow Daoist Heavencloud, don’t try to take a mile when we give you an inch. Meng Hao is the Crown Prince of the Fang Clan. You say he killed some people? Well, even if he killed the entire Heavencloud Bazaar, what would it matter?!

“You say he stole something from you? How absurd! The Fang Clan lacks nothing! We have no need to go around robbing people! Besides, Meng Hao is our Crown Prince, the future Clan Chief! If he did rob you… then you should think of it as an honor!” All the surrounding cultivators’ eyes went wide when they heard Fang Tongtian’s words. Guru Heavencloud’s eyes gleamed brightly as he glared back at Fang Tongtian.

“Don’t be such an aggravating smart-aleck,” Fang Tongtian continued, his eyes flickering with killing intent. “And don’t put on such a show of histrionics. The Crown Prince of the Fang Clan apologizing to you would be giving you plenty of face as it is. Let’s drop the matter here. And if you disagree… go ahead and say so, then see what happens!” Although Fang Tongtian was no match for Guru Heavencloud, his status in the Fang Clan was such that he could easily cow Guru Heavencloud with his words.

Fang Tongtian’s diatribe caused the other Fang Clan Elders to stare in shock. The other surrounding cultivators were even more astonished.

Even Meng Hao had a strange look in his eyes as he looked over at Fang Tongtian. If he remembered correctly, Fang Tongtian had been punished, locked away in secluded meditation because of the chaos that had broken out on Planet East Victory on his watch. For him to appear here now indicated that he must have been pardoned.

Guru Heavencloud glared at Fang Tongtian, then began to laugh in fury. He had never imagined that the Fang Clan's Grand Elder would dare to speak to him in such a way. He was so disrespectful that it almost seemed as if he didn't care at all about Guru Heavencloud.

He had practiced cultivation for ages, and in the many years after taking control of the Heavencloud Bazaar, he had had dealings with all the major sects and clans. They were always amiable, and neither he nor they ever tried to offend or antagonize each other.

They always spoke very politely to him, so this was the first time he had ever heard any person from any sect or clan talk to him in such a way.

As his angry laughter rang out, Guru Heavencloud seemed to struggle to control himself. He took a deep breath and then clasped hands and bowed deeply to Fang Shoudao.

Gritting his teeth, he angrily said, "Senior Shoudao, is this the Fang Clan's stance in this matter? You kill my disciples and steal my belongings. Do you want to force me into a corner?!?!

"Senior Shoudao, I once again ask for you to take the lead–" Before, Guru Heavencloud could even finish speaking, Fang Shoudao suddenly flicked his sleeve.

"Shut the hell up!" he said, his voice booming like thunder. The entire asteroid field shook, and the Heavencloud Bazaar trembled on the verge of collapse.

Numerous surrounding cultivators coughed up blood, and Guru Heavencloud was shoved backward, blood spraying out of his mouth, his eyes shining with shock and disbelief.

It wasn't that he had never encountered Dao Realm experts before. On the contrary, he had actually met most of them. Considering his status and cultivation base, Dao Realm cultivators usually treated him very respectfully and even kindly.

This was the first time that anyone in the Dao Realm had ever disregarded him in this way.

When Fang Tongtian saw Fang Shoudao’s burst of anger, his eyes flickered, but he didn’t say anything. However, the other Elders’ faces fell, and their hearts suddenly seized with fear. That was especially true of the Elder who had rebuked Meng Hao and told him to get on his knees. That man’s heart began to pound with confusion. From his perspective, Meng Hao had performed services for the clan, but even the Crown Prince, a direct bloodline descendant of the Fang Clan, would be forced to back down in the face of the interests of the clan as a whole. And yet… Fang Shoudao’s attitude seemed to be the opposite of that.

Fang Shoudao suddenly turned to look at the clan members responsible for maintaining the teleportation portal. “Let me ask you, when Hao’er sent word to us, what exactly did he tell you to say?”

The clan members immediately began to tremble, and one of them responded, “The Crown Prince… he said… to ask the Patriarch, you sir, whether or not you wanted to change the name of the Heavencloud Bazaar to the Fang Clan Bazaar….”

Fang Shoudao paused to think for a brief moment, then looked up and spoke, his booming words echoing out through the entire asteroid field, and even echoing out into the void beyond. “The Heavencloud Bazaar is in collusion with enemy clans! They plotted to harm the Crown Prince of the Fang Clan in order to foment civil war in Ninth Mountain and Sea. They even falsely accused our Crown Prince of robbing them, all with the intention of provoking us. This crime cannot be forgiven! Transmit orders to the entire Fang Clan. Exterminate the Heavencloud Bazaar. Leave no one alive! Henceforth, this place will be called… the Fang Clan Bazaar!”

Guru Heavencloud’s mind spun, and his face was filled with an expression of shock and disbelief.

“Senior Shoudao!!” he cried.

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# Chapter 1162: Heavencloud Steps into the Dao!

Guru Heavencloud wasn’t the only one who was shocked. All of the cultivators in the Heavencloud Bazaar were completely shaken by Fang Shoudao’s words, and could scarcely believe what they were hearing.

The title of Crown Prince was simply that, a title. And yet, the Fang Clan seemed ready to go to war, and even make an enemy of someone who could step into the Dao Realm at any time.

It completely defied reason!

Even the other Fang Clan Elders gasped in response.

“Patriarch, this….” The Elder who had reprimanded Meng Hao the most severely began to speak, his voice hoarse. However, even as the words left his mouth, other Fang Clan disciples stepped into the teleportation portal to go spread word to the Fang Clan on Planet East Victory.

“Senior Shoudao, sir, what’s going on?” asked Guru Heavencloud, his face flickering. “This was just a misunderstanding. Didn’t we already make that clear…?” His heart was now starting to thump; he actually didn’t want to be forced to break through to the Dao Realm. After all, it was a critical matter of life and death.

“The only thing that was explained clearly was why the Crown Prince of the Fang Clan attacked you,” Fang Shoudao responded immediately. “What will happen now is that you will be punished for daring to use deadly force to try to punish the Crown Prince!

“My Fang Clan’s Crown Prince, Hao’er, has incredible latent talent, and is matchless in the entire world. He is a qilin of the Fang Clan, and of all the members of the Junior generation, I favored his grandfather the most. His father, is also one of the young lads I look most kindly upon. And as for Meng Hao himself, I will risk my life for him, for the sake of protecting a Chosen of the Fang Clan!

“He is our future Clan Chief!

“He is our future Patriarch!

“He is the most, most precious person in the entire clan! The most, most, most cherished one of us. The most, most, most, most important person!” Fang Shoudao’s proud voice echoed out in all directions, causing the other members of the Fang Clan to stare with wide-open mouths. All of the other cultivators in the area were also looking on in shock.

Even Meng Hao had to clear his throat. His face was a bit flushed, not with bashfulness, but with true embarrassment….

“Anyone who dares to provoke him is provoking the entire Fang Clan!” Fang Shoudao declared. “Anyone who dares to harm him, will provoke the Fang Clan into instant action, even if that action is a war of mutual destruction!

“Hao’er is absolutely one-of-a-kind in the Fang Clan, and there’s not enough time in the day to show our care and affection for him. Heavencloud, you brat, I can’t believe you actually dared to berate Hao’er, much less slander him! I’m going to kill you!” His voice echoed out in all directions, pouring into the ears of every person present, causing them to stare in shock.

Virtually everyone who was listening got the impression… that he was actually ingratiating himself to Meng Hao. For him to say such things in this situation really seemed strange….

In fact, it was obvious that he wasn’t making this speech to the bystanders. It was clear that he was… speaking directly to Meng Hao.

However, this in itself caused everyone to be even more shocked than before. To hear such fawning words coming out of Fang Shoudao's mouth, especially to a member of the clan's Junior generation, actually revealed an even more stunning truth!

Guru Heavencloud's heart was pounding, and from Fang Shoudao's words, he could tell that there was something he didn't know about. Obviously, Meng Hao's status far exceeded that of a simple Crown Prince. He was obviously so important that Fang Shoudao was willing to publically brown-nose him. This left Guru Heavencloud shocked to a profound degree.

"And you!" Fang Shoudao continued, turning to glare angrily at the Elder who had reprimanded Meng Hao earlier. "How dare you ask the future Clan Chief, the future Patriarch, the clan's current immaculate qilin, our matchless Chosen… to kneel! Are you really surnamed Fang? Fudge! If I'd known you were this kind of person, I wouldn't have arranged a beloved partner for your grandfather all those years ago! If your father hadn't been born, then I wouldn't have to deal with you, you spineless coward!"

The Elder began to shake, and the blood drained from his face. He was just about to offer an explanation when Fang Shoudao turned back to Meng Hao, a kind, albeit strange, look in his eyes. Seemingly excited, he laughed loudly and said, "Hao'er, how do you think we should punish this bastard?"

"Patriarch–"

Before Meng Hao could say anything more, Fang Shoudao glared at him. "Don't call me Patriarch," he said. "Call me Great-Grandpa. That's a bit more cordial."

Meng Hao cleared his throat. "Great-Grandpa, allow me to take care of him."

With that, he waved his finger toward the Elder, causing the old man to instantly tremble. Although nothing happened visibly, the Dao seed inside of him suddenly vanished. Instantly, the man seemed to grow older, and his vitality seemed to wane.

Although his cultivation base was not harmed, the wave of Meng Hao’s finger had cut off his path to the Allheaven!

Even the old man didn’t really understand what he had lost. However, in an Allheaven Clan, what Meng Hao had just done was actually the most severe type of punishment!

Fang Shoudao’s heart flip-flopped, and he took a deep breath. After taking a close look at the Elder, all of his previous suspicions were dispelled, and he looked back at Meng Hao with indescribable excitement.

Then he waved his sleeve, causing the whole asteroid field to shake as a beam of light spread out to cover the entire area, completely locking it down.

At the same time, light began to rise up from the Fang Clan’s teleportation portal as hundreds of figures began to emerge. This was the Fang Clan. Even Fang Wei was present, along with Ancient Realm experts of the Elder generation.

“Wipe out the Heavencloud Bazaar!” Fang Shoudao said, waving his sleeve. Heaven and Earth rumbled, and wild colors flashed. Instantly, all of the teleportation portals on all of the asteroids were sealed, regardless of which sect or clan they belonged to.

It was now impossible for anyone from outside the asteroid field to interfere.

The cultivators who were not affiliated with the Heavencloud Bazaar were shocked, and did nothing to fight back against the Fang Clan. They were merely passers-by, and as long as they did nothing to help the Heavencloud Bazaar, they would not be affected.

The magenta-robed cultivators’ faces turned deathly pale. It was hard to say who did it first, but they all began to flee. However, the Fang Clan cultivators immediately flew out to give chase, cold smiles on their faces.

“Surrender and we won’t kill you!” Threatening voices immediately rang out from the Fang Clan, causing everything to shake, and the void to vibrate. Surprisingly, azure light was emanating out from the members of the Fang Clan. Although it was faint, everyone could see it, and it caused them to feel a pressure and a trembling within their souls. It was as if… that azure color commanded the ultimate respect!

When Guru Heavencloud saw what was happening, his face fell, and he backed up. However, even as he did, Fang Shoudao snorted coldly and prepared to attack. However, Meng Hao stepped forward first.

“Great-Grandpa, allow me,” he said, his voice echoing about. Then he shot forward and resumed fighting with Guru Heavencloud. Within a few breaths of time, the two of them had already exchanged hundreds of moves, causing rumbling sounds to echo about. Meng Hao performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, unleashing the Essence of Divine Flame, a flame sea that engulfed Heavencloud’s Soul Lamps and magical items.

Guru Heavencloud’s Ancient treasure was then hit by the azure light from Meng Hao, causing it to tremble and crack. Meng Hao charged forward, blasting out with the God-Slaying Fist.

Wild colors flashed, and a screaming wind kicked up. All of the other fighting cultivators in the area began to tremble, and when they looked over, they gasped.

It was as if all the energy of Heaven and Earth in the entire area was being sucked into Meng Hao’s fist. As his fist descended, it felt as if the will of Heaven were descending.

No matter what Guru Heavencloud tried to do to fight back, it was useless. The magical items held by his Soul Lamps shattered and transformed into ash, and his helmet was crushed. Blood sprayed out of his mouth as he tumbled backward, his body half pulverized.

When Fang Tongtian saw this, his eyes went wide, and as for Fang Shoudao, a strange light could be seen in his eyes. Although he mostly understood what had happened, and had braced himself for something like this, to see Meng Hao wielding this type of strength was shocking.

“Fang Clan, you’re forcing my hand!” roared Guru Heavencloud. Looking around, he saw that most of his Heavencloud Bazaar disciples had surrendered, and that he had essentially lost control. More members of the Fang Clan were pouring out through their teleportation portal. Guru Heavencloud began to laugh bitterly, even crazily. By now, he realized that he had offended someone who he could not afford to have offended. Regret was useless, so he roared and, without any further hesitation, pointed his finger up toward the Heavens.

“Dao!” he roared. It was only a single word, but when it left his mouth, everything shook violently. An indescribable energy of Heaven and Earth descended, swirling around him, creating a force that pushed Meng Hao away, making it impossible for him to get close.

Everyone around Guru Heavencloud was trembling under the incredible pressure that pushed down from the starry sky.

Fang Shoudao approached Meng Hao, looked up at Guru Heavencloud, and then slowly began to explain: “Watch closely. This is what it’s like to step into the Dao. I forced him into this so that you could have a chance to see for yourself what it’s like. When your time comes, this experience will prove to be quite helpful. Your future is tied to the future of the entire clan.”

“Dao!!” Guru Heavencloud roared again. Rumbling sounds echoed out, and the pressure from up above grew more intense. The void vibrated, and ripples spread out in all directions. Layers of natural laws became visible, as well as numerous Essences.

Beams of light shot up from Guru Heavencloud, rising higher up, growing more numerous and scintillating….

Guru Heavencloud’s energy rose, and the pressure of Heaven and Earth grew stronger. As of this moment, it was as if he were the center of attention of all the starry sky. Currently, not even Fang Shoudao could have tried to fight him.

Whenever someone in the great circle of the Ancient Realm stepped into the Dao, they were essentially invincible. At the same time, that person could do nothing to interrupt the process; any attempt to do so could influence their chances of success!

Failure… could not be endured!

“It’s hard to say whether he’ll succeed or not….” Fang Shoudao said with a sigh. “Stepping into the Dao is very difficult.”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he looked at Guru Heavencloud. It was almost as if he were watching himself in the future, trying to step into the Dao.

“Dao!!!” Guru Heavencloud’s final shout caused the starry sky to tremble and roil as a huge vortex formed. Within that vortex crackled countless lightning bolts, and just beyond it was what appeared to be a path.

It was impossible to tell exactly where that path led….

“That is the Dao, and also… a path!” 1 As Fang Shoudao’s voice echoed out, Guru Heavencloud shot forward, going for broke as he charged into the vortex and stepped onto the path.

1. Don’t forget that the character “Dao” also means “road” or “way”

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# Chapter 1163: Failing To Step Into the Dao!

A flash of concentration appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes as he looked closely at everything that was happening. The Dao Stepping Path was a critical juncture when stepping from the Ancient Realm into the Dao Realm. Despite all of his experience with cultivation, Meng Hao had never seen anyone step into the Dao before.

Guru Heavencloud had offended someone he should never have offended, and now had no choice but to challenge this path. That was his only chance at getting out of the situation alive.

Heaven and Earth rumbled, and the starry sky shook. Most of the magenta-robed cultivators in the Heavencloud Bazaar had chosen to surrender. Those who had not were easily swept over by the Fang Clan. By now, the Heavencloud Bazaar had truly become the Fang Clan Bazaar!

Guru Heavencloud himself was the only survivor. He was now charging toward the vortex at high speed. However, as he neared, countless lightning bolts converged and shot toward him.

It was a majestic sight. Shocking peals of thunder echoed out as the lightning bolts fell. If you looked closely, you would be able to see outlines of people inside the lightning bolts.

Although it was impossible to make them out clearly, they were clearly mighty…. Meng Hao’s pupils constricted the moment he saw them.

A boom rang out, and Guru Heavencloud shuddered, blood spraying out of his mouth. However, he was currently in a strange and bizarre state; natural laws and Essences swirled around him. He roared as he slammed through the lightning bolts and attempted to step into the vortex.

He knew that doing so was the first task he had to accomplish in order to step into the Dao. Although even greater dangers would arise after he did so, taking that first step was what would qualify him to take a second.

“If I step into the Dao successfully, then I’ll use the power of the Dao Realm to flee this place. I’ll go join the Ji Clan, and afterward, my enmity with the Fang Clan will be irreconcilable!

“If I fail, I won’t be able to flee. Therefore, I will stay here and slaughter as many members of the Fang Clan as I can. I’ll make sure they’re buried with me!” Guru Heavencloud’s plan was set. At the moment, he chose not to contemplate exactly why everything had turned out the way it did, nor did he consider that it was actually his own actions which had led to this series of events.

There was only one thing on his mind!

Kill Meng Hao!

All of his rancor was focused completely on Meng Hao, and whether or not he succeeded in stepping into the Dao, his main desire was that before he died, he be able to kill him.

He roared as he sailed toward the vortex. Booms rang out and lightning crashed. The speed of his charge gradually lessened.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he stood off in the distance, watching the scene thoughtfully.

Fang Shoudao stood next to him, eyes also focused on the vortex up in the void.

“Guru Heavencloud has been ready to step into the Dao for years now,” he said coolly as he watched Guru Heavencloud approaching the vortex. “He just never dared to take that first step. Instead, he used his situation as a form of protection…. Perhaps you could say that I'm helping him out, helping him to take that first step. Of course, there are a total of nine tribulations when stepping into the Dao. This is merely the first tribulation, the Lightning Tribulation."

Guru Heavencloud was spattered in blood, and his aura was weakening. However, the feeling he gave off was that he would burst out with power on the verge of death. He roared, and shockingly, layers of mist and cloud formed around him, which alternated between transforming into rainwater and mist. Those were… his Essences!

As for what Essences they were, nobody could tell, since they were still in the process of brewing. However, if Guru Heavencloud stepped into the vortex and then walked the path to the end, then his Essences would fully and truly form.

How far one could tread on the path, and the final Realm one ended up in, was dependant on how many Essences one possessed. Of course, the further one walked, the higher the chances of failure.

A boom echoed out, and blood sprayed out of Guru Heavencloud's mouth. At the critical moment, he performed a double-handed incantation gesture, then pushed down on his forehead. Immediately, his cultivation base erupted, and he grew rapidly until he was several dozen meters tall. Then, he shot onward toward the vortex. More lightning fell, and as it slammed into him, he began to shrink back down in size. Soon, he was only about thirty meters away from the vortex, and was already back to his normal height.

His eyes shone with a light of madness. Roaring, he went all-out, holding back nothing to charge forward. However, in the instant that he stepped into the vortex, a blast of mist shot out from inside. It transformed into a pike which pushed toward Guru Heavencloud. It barely poked him, but he let out a bloodcurdling scream nonetheless as he was sent tumbling backward.

"NO!!" As he fell back, countless lightning bolts descended, completely inundating him.

Fang Shoudao shook his head. “The second tribulation is coming, the Weapon Tribulation. This Heavencloud… has an unstable Dao heart. His essences are not converged, and his willpower is shaky. It’s not likely that he’ll succeed in the Weapon Tribulation.” Guru Heavencloud screamed as the mist pike continued to pursue him. The Heavens trembled, and Guru Heavencloud began to laugh with bitterness as he fought back desperately. At the same time, more mist shot out from within the vortex.

This time, the mist formed into eight sharp weapons: saber, spear, sword, halberd, axe, hatchet, hook and trident. As soon as they appeared, they joined with the pike, transforming into nine beams of light that shot toward Guru Heavencloud.

By this point, the surrounding cultivators were all coming to the same conclusion: Guru Heavencloud… was not going to succeed!

“I refuse to accept this!” he shrieked, fighting back with all his might. He refused to back down, despite the blood spraying from his mouth. With every wound that was inflicted on him, some of the mist of natural law and Essence that surrounded him would merge into his body, restoring him. However… that restoration ate away at his power of natural law and Essence, causing them to grow weaker and dissipate.

When they fully disappeared, then that would indicate… that his attempt to step into the Dao… had failed!

“The third tribulation is coming….” Fang Shoudao said, looking into the vortex.

Almost in the same moment that he spoke, shocking rumbling sounds could be heard from within the vortex, and four figures appeared.

Each of these figures wore a black suit of armor. It was impossible to see their facial features, but all of them emanated indescribably murderous auras that caused the faces of all onlookers to flicker with shock.

“The Mountain and Sea War Generals!” Fang Shoudao murmured, his eyes burning with fervor.

As Meng Hao looked at the four figures, all of a sudden, the Demon Sealing Hexing magic inside of him began to stir.

“Life Death Hexing?” he thought. Almost as soon as he noticed the connection, the four figures suddenly turned toward him. Within their helmets, their eyes suddenly flashed with a strange light.

As their gazes met, Meng Hao’s mind trembled. Suddenly, it wasn’t just the Demon Sealing Hexing magic that stirred inside of him, the Paragon’s blood inside of his Nirvana Fruit was also affected!

Gradually, he realized that there was some strange connection between himself and these four figures.

“It’s almost like… I can control them….” he murmured, shaken.

“What did you just say?” Fang Shoudao asked, looking at him with wide eyes.

In the same moment that Meng Hao was mentally shaken, Guru Heavencloud laughed shrilly, a laughter filled with desperation and madness. By now, he had also realized that he could not succeed. Stepping into the Dao was a difficult thing. To any cultivator of the great circle of the Ancient Realm, it was a deadly test that far exceeded the previous challenges of lamp extinguishing.

The Ancient Realm was a terrifying place for any cultivator to be. After reaching that Realm, they faced one deadly crisis after another. The only way to be free of such an existence was to successfully step into the Dao Realm.

“Meng Hao, all of this is your fault!!” Heavencloud raged. His bitter laughter was tinged with even more madness than before, and his eyes were bright red. As of this moment, he chose… what every person who failed to step into the Dao chose to do.

Instead of hopelessly trying to continue to break through, he sucked the remainder of his natural laws and Essences into his body, which would form his life force in the Quasi-Dao Realm!

Anyone who failed to step into the Dao, and instead became a Quasi-Dao cultivator, would have a severely limited longevity, which usually was linked to how many natural laws and Essences remained after their failure.

The more they had, the more longevity they would possess. If they had too few… then the number of years they had left could be counted on a single hand.

Laughing bitterly, Guru Heavencloud sucked his breakthrough aura back into his body, along with the surrounding mist of natural law and Essence.

As he retracted the aura, the nine mist weapons suddenly halted in place, ceasing their attack.

Guru Heavencloud’s body emitted rumbling sounds as the natural laws and Essence merged into him. Then, his power erupted, passing the great circle of the Ancient Realm and reaching… the Quasi-Dao Realm!!

He was now in a Realm which was still half a step away from the Dao Realm, and yet vastly exceeded the great circle of the Ancient Realm. After all, he still had natural laws and Essences.

Although they were incomplete, they were still shocking, to the point that… even single-essence Dao Realm experts would find it troublesome to fight him. After all… Quasi-Dao experts were people who lived without hope, and descended into madness!

They knew exactly when they would die, as did everyone around them. And thus, they were insane!

Bitter laughter echoed out as Guru Heavencloud’s body trembled and his aura changed. His life force faded away, and he was quickly surrounded by an aura of death!

His longevity was consumed by the natural laws and Essences. Assuming he didn’t use damaging divine abilities, or engage in combat, he would live at most about one hundred years. When that time passed… he would be dead in body and spirit, without the slightest remnant of his existence left in the world.

To mortals, a hundred years was an entire lifetime. But to cultivators, a hundred years would pass very quickly.

Of course, if he ended up fighting in battle, his remaining time would decrease even more quickly.

“Limited longevity! Enmities must be avenged! Grievances must be requited!” Guru Heavencloud laughed. It was a laughter more ugly than weeping. His eyes bulged, and the aura of death surrounding him grew even stronger. Madness filled his eyes as his deranged laughter echoed out in all directions, transforming into a tempest that caused all light to dim, and the Heavens to tremble. Boundless ripples spread out.

Guru Heavencloud’s energy was now greater than it ever had been in his entire life.

“Meng Hao!” he cried venomously, looking over at Meng Hao with boundless killing intent.

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# Chapter 1164: Eternal Patriarch!

In the next instant, Guru Heavencloud stepped toward Meng Hao. Before he could get close, Fang Shoudao snorted and prepared to make a move. But then, Meng Hao reached out and blocked his path.

“Hao’er, you….” Fang Shoudao looked at Meng Hao, and noticed the strange look in his eyes as he looked up at the vortex.

The vortex was slowing down, apparently having lost interest in Heavencloud. It began to dissipate, the nine sharp weapons having already returned back inside.

However… the four black-armored figures were still standing outside, almost as if they had forgotten about the vanishing vortex. They were all looking at Meng Hao, as if he was of incredible interest to them.

Meng Hao’s heart was pounding. He didn’t have time to pay any heed to Guru Heavencloud. The sight of the four black-armored figures caused the Paragon’s blood inside of him to seethe, and the Demon Sealing Hexing magic to churn. Shockingly, he was somehow connected to those four figures.

It was an invisible connection, but Meng Hao was clearly able to sense the confusion which existed in the four of them.

He took a deep breath and said, “Come….” The instant the word left his mouth, the black-armored figures began to move. In the blink of an eye, they appeared directly in front of Meng Hao!!

Their speed vastly exceeded that of Guru Heavencloud with his towering murderous aura. Before he could even get close, the four black-armored figures were directly in front of Meng Hao.

This development caused Guru Heavencloud to stare in shock. He might only have one hundred years of longevity left, but he still believed that there was nothing left in the world that could shock or astonish him. However, as of this moment, his heart was pounding.

“This….”

He wasn’t the only shocked one. Fang Shoudao gasped, and his eyes filled with an expression of disbelief. The other surrounding cultivators, including the members of the Fang Clan, were all gaping in astonishment.

How could they not be, considering that these four black-armored figures were… the third tribulation when stepping into the Dao!!

Now, that third tribulation wasn’t dissipating, but listening to Meng Hao’s words as if they were orders. The scene that was playing out left everyone’s minds reeling.

“This is a trick!” Guru Heavencloud roared, continuing to charge toward Meng Hao. “There’s no way that you can control the Mountain and Sea War–” However, before he could even finish speaking, he suddenly shivered as if he had just seen an evil spirit.

That was because he was currently witnessing the four terrifying armored figures suddenly… kneeling to Meng Hao!!

They bent down on one knee and lifted their right hands high into the air. That was… the most respectful form of salute that could be given in the ancient Immortal World. Anyone who used such a form of salute was showing that they were a complete inferior offering wholehearted respect to a superior!

Massive waves of shock battered Fang Shoudao’s mind as he gaped at the scene. He simply couldn’t believe what he was seeing. Actually, he knew a bit about the history of his clan, and knew of the word ‘Allheaven’.

However, there were still many aspects of the matter that were unclear to him. Even his own cultivation base had been affected by the momentous bloodline changes not too long ago. A Dao seed had appeared inside of him as well, prompting an investigation by himself and Fang Yanxu. They had even gone to pay respects to the clone of the first generation Patriarch, and that was where they had gotten their answer.

“The clan’s blood has changed; the will of the Patriarch has come. He is the source of the Dao, the Fang Clan’s eternal Patriarch!” That was what the first generation Patriarch’s clone had said. At the time, Fang Shoudao didn’t quite understand what he meant. But as soon as he laid eyes on Meng Hao earlier, his heart had been shaken to the core. There was something completely shocking about Meng Hao, some aura that filled Fang Shoudao with fanaticism, and the desire to offer worship.

Meng Hao could control the life or death of every member of the Fang Clan, and could also control the Dao seeds within their blood!

Even more astonishing to Fang Shoudao was that Meng Hao was clearly not an ordinary clan member any more. He was like a shining light, and the closer Fang Shoudao got to him, the more he felt as if his blood were boiling. Furthermore, that desire to offer worship increased dramatically!

In that first moment of shock, he thought back to what the first generation Patriarch’s clone had said.

Shortly thereafter, Meng Hao had wiped away the Dao seed in the Elder, and Fang Shoudao’s doubts were completely dispelled. At that point, he was certain… that Meng Hao was the reason for all the transformations that had occurred in the Fang Clan. He was what the first generation Patriarch’s clone had referred to as… the source of the Dao in the bloodline, the Fang Clan’s eternal Patriarch!

All of that was shocking in and of itself. But even more shocking was what had happened just now with the black-armored figures. Fang Shoudao took a deep breath, and his eyes shone with a strange light.

Hao’er can actually make the Mountain and Sea War Generals kneel before him…. He can actually control them…. That means that from now on, whenever someone from the Fang Clan tries to step into the Dao, the third tribulation… will be much easier to pass!

The surrounding cultivators and Fang Clan members were all staring in shock at the scene playing out in front of them. It was something which they would never forget.

“Hao’er, you… you can control them?” Fang Shoudao asked, sounding uncertain.

“Kill him!” Meng Hao said suddenly, wanting to know the answer himself. Eyes flashing, he pointed directly at Guru Heavencloud, his killing intent swirling.

Meng Hao’s action caused Guru Heavencloud’s scalp to feel like it was about to explode, and he fell back. He might only have a hundred years of longevity left, and was already mad, but that didn’t mean he actually wished to die.

Dying in this moment, and dying a hundred years from this moment, were two very different things. He obviously wanted to live as long as possible, so therefore, when he saw the black-armored figures rising up in response to Meng Hao pointing, when he sensed their towering murderous auras, when they began to head in his direction, Guru Heavencloud was finally… afraid.

All of the fear and terror of Meng Hao that he had been keeping under control until now finally exploded out!

“Who… who is he really? He can mobilize the entire Fang Clan for war, he can make Fang Shoudao suck up to him, and he can actually control the third tribulation Mountain and Sea War Generals!!”

The last part was the most critical aspect as far as Guru Heavencloud was concerned. When he saw that Meng Hao could control the very Dao Tribulation that he himself had failed at, his entire world was overturned. It was as if everything he knew had crumbled away.

Even as he fell back, the four black-armored figures closed in. Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering murderous auras exploded out from them. It was merely energy, and yet colors flashed and the starry sky shook. Blood sprayed out of Guru Heavencloud's mouth, and he instantly grew five or six years older.

A strange light appeared in Fang Shoudao's eyes as he murmured, "According to the legends, the Mountain and Sea War Generals were cultivators who served the Paragons, and killed hosts of Outsiders on the ancient battlefields. Supposedly, they built up stupendous killing intent, to the point where they controlled the will of death! Obviously, the legends are true!"

Quasi-Dao experts were incredibly powerful, and under normal circumstances could never be taken lightly. But when fighting the Mountain and Sea War Generals… it was a completely different matter!

Their energy alone was enough to reduce Guru Heavencloud's longevity by five or six years. That alone attested to how terrifying they were, and left Guru Heavencloud in complete terror. He performed a double-handed incantation gesture and waved his finger in front of him, causing Essence power to erupt out. Just as he was about to begin fighting, one of the black-armored figures lifted its right hand and then made a chopping motion.

That chopping motion caused the starry sky to rumble, as if it were about to be ripped apart. All of Guru Heavencloud's defenses crumbled. His body trembled, and in the blink of an eye, he aged by another twenty years!!

Blood sprayed out of his mouth as the second black-armored figure made a chopping motion as well, followed by the third figure. The fourth black-armored figure followed up with a fourth fluid chopping motion!

Guru Heavencloud was completely incapable of evading these three strikes, nor could he resist them or fight back. Rumbling sounds filled the air, and more blood sprayed out of his mouth. He immediately aged by twenty years, forty years, sixty years, eighty years!

By this point, he had only a few dozen years of longevity left. He now looked completely ancient, and was surrounded by an aura of death.

“The Mountain and Sea War Generals rebuke the Quasi-Dao Realm!” Fang Shoudao observed the four black-armored figures with gleaming eyes. He could almost see images from some ancient era, in which a vast number of these Mountain and Sea War Generals had fought with the Paragons on countless battlefields.

Meng Hao’s mind also trembled as he watched the scene play out. Suddenly, Guru Heavencloud threw his head back and laughed bitterly.

“Meng Hao, do you dare to fight one-on-one with me? If I die in this battle, at least I can die with no regrets!” He feared the Mountain and Sea War Generals, and how easily they could defeat him. He knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that he was going to die, but before that happened, he wanted to cut down Meng Hao!

Meng Hao looked away from the four black-armored figures toward Guru Heavencloud, and his eyes flickered with the desire to fight.

“You want to fight!? Allow me to fulfil your desire!” He began to stride forward, causing rumbling sounds to shake the starry sky. Shocking azure light rose up, and in the blink of an eye, he was in front of Guru Heavencloud. Immortal mountains descended, and the Supernova Magic exploded out, along with a Violet Moon. The Ninth Mountain appeared, and the Blood Demon roared. It all transformed into a maelstrom which rumbled out toward Guru Heavencloud.

He attacked relentlessly and with a completely domineering air. The wave of a hand caused the Essence of Divine Flame to rumble out, creating a burning sea of flames. Guru Heavencloud’s face went pale, and he performing an incantation gesture, summoning countless divine abilities. In the blink of an eye, he and Meng Hao exchanged hundreds of blows.

The battle was shocking, causing numerous asteroids in the asteroid field to shatter. The void vibrated, and the starry sky rumbled. At the same time, Guru Heavencloud’s longevity continued to waste away.

Thirteen years. Nine years. Six years. Three years… One year!

Ten months. Seven months. Five months. Three months…. One month!!

Twenty-seven days. Twenty days. Thirteen days. Six days…. One day!!

Meng Hao’s qi and blood surged, and his desire to fight soared. He took a step forward and punched out.

It was the Life-Extermination Fist, followed by the Bedevilment Fist, and then the God-Slaying Fist!

“DIE!” he roared, his killing intent surging.

These three fists strikes filled Guru Heavencloud with a sense of impending doom that was no weaker than what he had felt from the black-armored figures. He threw his head back and roared bitterly, attacking with all his strength. Meng Hao was half a step into the Allheaven Dao Immortal Realm, and Heavencloud was a gasping, seriously wounded Quasi-Dao cultivator!

They were like two meteors which slammed into each other, causing colors to flash up above, and a huge wind to blast out.

A massive tempest sprang up, obscuring everyone’s vision. However, when it cleared, Meng Hao was hovering there in the starry sky, looking every bit like some sort of celestial warrior!

In front of him was Guru Heavencloud, blood oozing out of his mouth as he looked at Meng Hao, his expression conflicted. He was filled with regret as his body cracked into pieces and transformed into ash that… faded out into the starry sky!

It was at this point that the four black-armored figures clasped hands and bowed deeply to Meng Hao.

Fang Shoudao and the other members of the Fang Clan suddenly felt something inside of them, an azure light which shone out, just like Meng Hao’s!

“Eternal Patriarch of the Fang Clan….” Fang Shoudao murmured excitedly.

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# Chapter 1165: The Whole Clan Pays Respects!

Guru Heavencloud was destroyed in body and soul!

When he died, the four black-armored figures bowed to Meng Hao and then transformed into beams of prismatic light that shot back into the vortex. The vortex had long since ceased rotating, and now looked like a black hole in the void. The four figures disappeared inside, and the black hole vortex vanished.

As it did, the ripples in the starry sky faded away, and the void ceased to tremble. The pressure that came with stepping into the Dao disappeared, and everything returned to normal.

However… the Heavencloud Bazaar forever had a new name. It became a new stronghold of the Fang Clan.

Fang Shoudao took a deep breath and concealed the expression of shock which had been pasted onto his face. He looked deeply at Meng Hao for a moment, then waved his hand, causing the shield to be removed from around the asteroid field. The teleportation portals were no longer sealed. Immediately, the terrified cultivators in the area began to leave.

As they did, they glanced over at Meng Hao with fear and dread. To them, Meng Hao was not some Immortal Realm cultivator, but instead a powerful expert of the Senior generation. He was an almighty figure who was completely removed from them.

As can be imagined, the departure of all those cultivators almost immediately caused the news about Guru Heavencloud offending Meng

Hao, and the resulting carnage, to begin to spread throughout the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

It also ensured that Meng Hao's name once again was talked about far and wide. All clans and sects were shaken, and everyone realized that Meng Hao was a person who could not be considered to be in the Junior generation anymore. He was on the same level as Quasi-Dao experts, or perhaps needed to be treated as even higher than that.

The Fang Clan's attitude in the whole matter explained everything. Everyone knew that if someone dared to treat Meng Hao with hostility, the entire Fang Clan would respond with explosive violence.

As for the magenta-robed cultivators who used to be disciples of the Heavencloud Bazaar, they stood there trembling, having long since surrendered. They were assimilated into the Fang Clan, who had numerous ways of ensuring their future loyalty and devotion.

The crowds departed, and soon, the only people left behind in the asteroid field were members of the Fang Clan. There were a few hundred in total, all of whom were now looking toward Meng Hao with fanatical devotion.

This was… their Crown Prince!!

He could fight with Quasi-Dao experts, and could even kill them. With a cultivation base and an identity like that, it was enough to cause the whole clan to be shaken and filled with zeal.

Most important was the Dao seed inside all of the Fang Clan cultivators. That naturally caused them to be even more respectful toward Meng Hao, although it was on a subconscious level that most of them weren't aware of.

It was a strong subconscious desire, but after witnessing the grand display of Meng Hao slaughtering a Quasi-Dao cultivator, it erupted out, causing their eyes to overflow with fanatical approval of Meng Hao.

The handful of Elders present were completely shaken. After exchanging glances, they looked around at the former Heavencloud Bazaar. Because of the scale and history of the place, it was a potential goldmine, and whichever clan member was assigned to watch over it would receive untold benefits.

It was at this point that Grand Elder Fang Tongtian spoke up, immediately addressing the most important issue at hand regarding the bazaar. “Hao’er,” he said, “who in the clan do you think would be best suited to running this bazaar?”

His words also indicated to the other Elders that Meng Hao… had the ultimate authority.

Meng Hao looked at the place in which Guru Heavencloud had vanished, then slowly turned around, clasped hands, and bowed to Fang Shoudao and Grand Elder Fang Tongtian.

“Great-Grandpa, Grand Elder, I feel that Fang Xi would be best suited to manage this bazaar,” he said with a smile. “After all, he has had limited chance to gain experience in the clan. This would be an excellent place for him to grow and mature.” Almost as soon as he had decided to rename this place as the Fang Clan Bazaar, he had thought about Fang Xi. Considering how much the place was worth, it would be far better to give it to him than anyone else. 1

“Fang Xi’s a wonderful kid,” Fang Shoudao said with a kind smile. “Let’s give it to him, then.” To him, this place was just a mere bazaar, so he didn’t even consider refusing Meng Hao. That wasn’t even to mention Meng Hao’s status, which caused even his heart to tremble.

However, it seemed that Meng Hao wasn’t interested in publically revealing the matter of his status in the clan. If word spread about that, it would send the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea into an uproar. In fact, it could even influence the balance of power in the entire Mountain and Sea Realm as a whole.

In a similar vein, Fang Shoudao understood a bit about Allheaven Clans, but not too much. He would need to confer with Meng Hao about the subject, and decide on the best way to use it to lead the Fang Clan to prominence as quickly as possible, and become a true Allheaven Clan. When he thought about that matter, it caused Fang Shoudao to treat Meng Hao with even greater regard.

“Hao’er, let’s go,” he said with a laugh. “It’s been a long time since you’ve been back to Planet East Victory. Why don’t you let your Great-Grandpa here test out your cultivation base and battle prowess?”

Meng Hao clasped his hands respectfully, looked at Fang Shoudao and said, “Let’s not rush back to Planet East Victory, Great-Grandpa. Junior would like to head to Planet South Heaven first, to pay respects to father and mother.”

Fang Shoudao stared in shock for a moment, then looked at Meng Hao thoughtfully. Finally, he smiled and nodded.

“You truly deserve to be called the qilin of the Fang Clan. Not only are you matchless and unrivaled, you’re also a filial son. Your idea is an excellent one. How careless of me! Of course we should go to Planet South Heaven first.

“Your father is the one who raised the qilin son of the Fang Clan, and even agreed to be dispatched to Planet South Heaven to stand guard. His service and contribution to the clan has involved numerous hardships. In fact, the Fang Clan… would be hard-pressed to be able to repay him.

“In fact, I hereby issue new orders. Fang Xiufeng will be the new Clan Chief!! It doesn’t matter that Xiufeng is not on Planet East Victory, all cultivators of the clan should show their respect to him!

“I will personally act as Dharma Protector to help Xiufeng make a cultivation base breakthrough, to step from the Ancient Realm into the Dao Realm!” Fang Shoudao flicked his sleeve to make the order official.

“Tongtian, send orders to the clan. Any clan member who is a stage 5 Immortal or higher will prepare to immediately leave for Planet South Heaven. All Elders will go as well, to bear witness to the bestowing of the gift of Clan Chieftainship!

"All sects and powers in the Ninth Mountain and Sea will know that Fang Xiufeng is the new Clan Chief of the Fang Clan, and demands a show of respect from the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea!"

Fang Shoudao's proclamation caused rumbling sounds to fill the minds of all members of the Fang Clan. The Elders gasped in shock. For Fang Xiufeng to be named the Clan Chief was a huge matter. After all, even Fang Shoudao was only the acting Clan Chief.

A Clan Chief was the leader of an entire clan. Both in terms of position and status, it was an exalted rank. In terms of the Ninth Mountain and Sea as a whole, such a figure was a person of extreme importance.

This act was an extreme show of goodwill on the part of Fang Shoudao toward Meng Hao. It was a way of making up for past issues, and to show how important Meng Hao was now.

In this way, Meng Hao would well and truly be the legitimate Crown Prince!

And that was just the first great gift being given. The second was that Fang Shoudao, with the help of Fang Yanxu, both of whom were powerful Dao Realm experts, would assist Fang Xiufeng to step into the Dao Realm himself!

With their help, and assuming the clan itself did not hold back any expense, it would be possible to significantly reduce the danger he would face when attempting to step into the Dao. If at that point he was still unable to succeed, it would not be the fault of the Fang Clan, but rather, Fang Xiufeng himself.

Regarding how many clans in the Ninth Mountain and Sea could afford to offer such complete support such as this, well, that number could be counted on a single hand!

These two gifts were so incredible that they caused even Meng Hao to gasp in surprise. Then he turned to Fang Shoudao, clasped hands, and bowed deeply.

The other direct bloodline Elders were very excited, and also bowed to Fang Shoudao, then turned and flew toward the teleportation portal along with Fang Tongtian.

Before entering the teleportation portal himself, Fang Tongtian turned and gave Meng Hao a deep look. He knew he had made mistakes in the past, and hoped that his current actions would make up for that.

Fang Shoudao laughed and looked over at Meng Hao. “Hao’er,” he said, “there’s no need to be in a rush. Come come, let’s you and I head off first. Once the rest of the clan mobilizes, we can all meet at Planet South Heaven to pay our respects to the Fang Clan Chief!”

Meng Hao immediately joined Fang Shoudao to enter a teleportation portal, upon which they vanished.

Naturally, Fang Shoudao had many things to discuss privately with Meng Hao, many questions that needed answering.

Despite their departure, the Fang Clan was just as aboil as before. After the clan members returned to Planet East Victory, word rapidly spread, and the entire clan surged into motion.

Although some people questioned the decision, no one dared to violate the orders given by Fang Shoudao. Furthermore, Fang Yanxu emerged from secluded meditation and used his status to oversee the unification of the clan. It didn’t take long before the Fang Clan was organized, and over 1,000,000 clan members formed ranks and entered the teleportation portals that led toward Planet South Heaven.

News about the buzz of activity spread off of Planet East Victory and quickly came to be known by all the sects and clans, leading to quite a stir.

Seven days later, the glow of teleportation rose up outside of Planet South Heaven. Numerous shining lights filled the air as the members of the Fang Clan emerged, faces solemn. As they organized themselves in the starry sky outside of Planet South Heaven, their numbers swelled until it became virtually impossible to see the group from beginning to end.

All of them wore the ceremonial attire of the Fang Clan as they hovered there, facing Planet South Heaven.

Fang Yanxu was at their fore, joined by Pill Elder. Behind them were the Elders, then the direct bloodline clan members. Last were all the other ordinary clan members, arranged in ranks. It was a grand sight that caused the starry sky to tremble and the void to shake.

It was at this time that Meng Hao and Fang Shoudao emerged from the glow of another teleportation portal. Fang Shoudao’s expression seemed the same as ever, but his eyes glowed with joy and excitement that were impossible to cover up. Fang Yanxu could see it clearly as Fang Shoudao approached. When Fang Shoudao saw him, he nodded.

One thing that Fang Yanxu immediately noticed was that Fang Shoudao was actually positioned behind Meng Hao. He was only about half a step back, which might not seem like much, but to Fang Yanxu, it was very telling.

His eyes suddenly gleamed with excitement.

Meng Hao hovered there, backed by what seemed like all of the most powerful experts of the Fang Clan. His heart surged with pride. He… had come home!

1. Fang Xi appeared too many times for me to include links. Also of the direct bloodline, he helped Meng Hao with his escapades in the Dao of Alchemy Division, and also had some interaction with the parrot and meat jelly

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# Chapter 1166: Dad, Mom, Hao’er Has Come Back!

When Meng Hao left, it was as a Spirit Realm cultivator, taken away by Fang Xi’s father. Back then, he was a stranger without any reputation, someone the Fang Clan barely noticed. Neither did the Ninth Mountain and Sea pay him much heed.

At that time, few people cared whether or not he lived or died.

He left quietly, his parents looking on sadly. Upon leaving Planet South Heaven, he had told himself something….

“One day I’ll come back, and I’ll make dad and mom proud of me!”

Today, he had come back!

His cultivation base was no longer in the Spirit Realm. Instead, it was at the point where he could shake those of the terrifying Quasi-Dao level. Even powerful experts of the Senior generation would have to take him seriously, and treat him as an almighty member of their own generation.

He was no longer a stranger without any reputation. Meng Hao was so famous that his name came up in conversation virtually every day in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. After all, he was also Crown Prince Fang Hao!

Nobody could afford to disregard him, not the Ninth Mountain and Sea, not Paragon Sea Dream, not the Mountain and Sea Realm as a whole!

He had come back, not alone, but rather, with a host of Fang Clan experts, all there to pay respects!

Meng Hao hovered in the starry sky, looking in the direction of Planet South Heaven, thinking about many things. Finally, he called out in a loud voice: “Dad, mom, Hao’er has come back!”

As his voice rang out, all of the cultivators in the sects and clans of Planet South Heaven trembled. They could all sense the massive pressure weighing down from the sky, and although they couldn’t clearly see what was out there, they felt as if they were suffocating. It was as if countless beings were up above, emanating pressure, pushing Heaven and Earth to the point of collapse.

In the Great Tang of the Eastern Lands, in a tiny city controlled by the Fang Clan, was a Tower of Tang. That was where Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li often went to look out into the starry sky and observe their children. That was where they had watched Meng Hao rise to prominence on Planet East Victory, something which had filled them with happiness, anticipation… and hope.

“Did you hear that?” Meng Li asked, quivering slightly. She looked at her husband, who looked as somber as ever, and yet at the same time, was radiant with joy.

“I heard,” Fang Xiufeng said, his tone extremely calm as he stood there. “You women are too excitable. You know how worldly-wise I am, so this is nothing new. Isn’t it just a big crowd? Why’d the kid have to make such a big deal over coming home? What a racket!” As he straightened out his clothes, Meng Li glared at him, clearly not very happy with his attitude.

“Oh be quiet,” she said. “Don’t tell me you’re not pleased that your son got your whole clan to come pay respects. Stop pretending you don’t care, you think I don’t know you?” The two of them emerged from their house and flew up into the sky.

“Women,” Fang Xiufeng muttered coolly, ignoring his wife’s words. They had just barely begun to fly up into the air when Fang Xiufeng suddenly blurted, “Wait, is this outfit alright?”

He looked down and straightened out his garments one more time.

"All we're doing is going to greet some Elders and Patriarchs, right?" Meng Li said, tongue in cheek. "Aren't you the top Chosen of the last generation in the Fang Clan? Didn't you just say that you're worldly-wise? Why are you suddenly so nervous?"

"Who said anything about being nervous?" Fang Xiufeng retorted, coughing dryly. "I've been the top fighter for years, I don't get nervous at anything. I was just thinking that I need to look good for Hao'er's sake, now that he's back. The younger I look, the better."

Meng Li covered her mouth as she laughed. Her laughter made Fang Xiufeng even more embarrassed than before. It was actually just as his wife had said. Although he maintained a calm exterior, inside, he was bubbling with nervousness and excitement.

The Fang Clan was his family, and although he had been willing to be stationed on Planet South Heaven for Meng Hao's sake, he had never forgotten that he was part of them. Not once.

Therefore, to see virtually the entire clan here to pay respects was incredibly moving.

Meng Hao's parents turned into two streaks of light that shot up into the starry sky outside of Planet South Heaven, which was the border between it and the rest of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. This was the furthest they could go from the lands of South Heaven. As soon as they arrived, Fang Xiufeng looked at Meng Hao, at the two Patriarchs standing behind him, and all the other countless clan members arrayed further back.

Fang Xiufeng could keep his composure no longer. His face reddened as he clasped hands and made to bow. However, Meng Hao hurried forward and prevented him, then knelt down in front of him.

"Hao'er pays respects to dad and mom!" he said. Even as his voice echoed out loudly, all of the Fang Clan cultivators, including the direct bloodline clan members, all clasped hands and bowed deeply.

"We offer greetings, Clan Chief!!"

As their voices echoed out in all directions, Fang Xiufeng stared in shock and disbelief. He looked at Meng Hao, and then all the familiar faces further off. Finally, his gaze came to rest on Fang Shoudao.

“Patriarch… this….”

“Xiufeng, you are rendering a great service by standing guard here on Planet South Heaven. Furthermore, you have made many other great contributions to the clan. I have already discussed the matter with the leadership in the clan, and from henceforth, you will be the Clan Chief of the Fang Clan!” Fang Shoudao gazed deeply at Fang Xiufeng, his expression somber as he also clasped hands and bowed.

“Fang Shoudao offers greetings to the Clan Chief!”

“Fang Yanxu offers greetings to to the Clan Chief!” As soon as the two Patriarchs bowed, the direct bloodline clan members immediately lowered their heads and bowed.

“Greetings, Clan Chief!”

“Greetings, Clan Chief!!”

Their voices echoed out like thunder, causing the starry sky to tremble, sending ripples out into the void. The chorus of a million voices could even be heard down on the lands of Planet South Heaven.

Fang Xiufeng was trembling, and Meng Li gaped in shock. Meng Hao finally rose to his feet and walked over to his father and mother. He gazed at his mother for a moment, then gave her a big hug.

“Hao’er, this….” Meng Li was shocked at everything that was happening and looked at Meng Hao questioningly, unable to wrap her mind around what was happening. Previously, both she and her husband had assumed the clan coming to pay respects was a mere formality, an outward display of respect shown as a gift from the clan.

However, despite guessing that there was another reason for the visit, neither of them could ever have imagined that… it was to make Fang Xiufeng the Clan Chief!

“Mom,” Meng Hao said, smiling, “I’m the Crown Prince of the Fang Clan. It’s only natural that dad should be the Clan Chief. I wouldn’t accept anyone else but him.” Although his words seemed casual, in truth, they carried a domineering air that only a select few could detect.

Fang Xiufeng’s eyes shone brightly, and he looked at Meng Hao with a somber expression. His lips moved slightly as he quickly transmitted some questions to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao hid nothing. He briefly responded with a description of Allheaven Clans and Dao seeds, after which, Fang Xiufeng trembled.

“So, it’s called a Dao seed….” Fang Xiufeng murmured. He had realized earlier that his energy was noticeably different than before, something he had previously found hard to believe. It had seemed completely outlandish. But now that he knew both the cause and the effect, Fang Xiufeng suddenly realized that it was just as Meng Hao had said; other than himself… Meng Hao would never have approved of anyone else being the Clan Chief.

That was one area that Fang Shoudao and Fang Yanxu had been worried about.

“Many thanks, Patriarchs Shoudao and Yanxu. Since the clan wishes that I be the Clan Chief, well then… I will do everything in my power to live up to the duty and obligation.” Fang Xiufeng did not refuse. Suddenly, his energy grew more awe-inspiring. His eyes shone like lightning, and as he looked around at all the members of the Fang Clan, his cultivation base erupted with power.

In the blink of an eye, it turned into a tempest which shook the entire starry sky, causing all hearts to tremble. At the same time, Soul Lamps appeared around him, instantly revealing his cultivation base to be at the great circle of the Ancient Realm!

He seemed not a bit less powerful than Guru Heavencloud; he was just a single step away from the Dao Realm. Furthermore, that step could be taken at any time he wished.

However, if he failed, he would end up in the Quasi-Dao Realm. The main reason he wished to avoid such an outcome was not because he feared death. No, he wanted to live as long as possible, so that he could strike fear into the hearts of any enemies of his son and daughter.

As his energy surged out in all directions, the clan members who had previously been hesitant to accept this new development could suddenly sense how powerful Fang Xiufeng was.

Furthermore, Fang Xiufeng was a sword cultivator. Sword cultivators were inherently powerful, so that, coupled with his cultivation base, made it so that at his full power Fang Xiufeng was clearly strong enough to fight with Quasi-Dao experts!

Even more shocking was that natural laws and Essence also swirled around him. Although it might have seemed like he didn't practice cultivation while on Planet South Heaven, the truth of the matter was that his cultivation had long since ceased to be practiced externally, and was all performed internally. The focus was no longer his fleshly body, but his heart.

Up to this day, he had never revealed the full extent of his shocking power to anyone.

Meng Hao's eyes glittered, and he suddenly waved his finger casually. No one other than Fang Shoudao could detect the meaning of that seemingly random act.

As soon as Meng Hao's finger waved through the air, the Dao seed in Fang Xiufeng suddenly exploded with power. The azure glow which already existed inside of him grew more dazzling, until it was like a beam of azure light shining up into the starry sky.

As soon as that beam of azure light appeared, Fang Xiufeng's energy grew even more powerful. Strange colors flashed, and all of Planet South Heaven rumbled. Shockingly… the power of an Allheaven Immortal was… awakening in Fang Xiufeng!

Because of that, the azure light in him grew even stronger. His cultivation base rotated and his blood surged. At the same time, an Imperial will suddenly flickered in his eyes.

When the members of the Fang Clan saw this, they were completely shocked. As for Fang Shoudao, his eyes gleamed with a strange light, and with excitement.

Apparently because of the power of the bloodline, the initial awakening of the Allheaven Immortal within Fang Xiufeng caused azure light to also shine up brilliantly from all the other members of the Fang Clan.

The starry sky shook, and the lands quaked. It was as if the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea was being shaken. Even the Mountain and Sea Realm trembled. Apparently… they were all bearing witness to the rise of an Allheaven Clan!

“Greetings, Clan Chief!”

“Greetings, Clan Chief!!” It was hard to say who began crying it out first, but soon the noise of the voices was even louder than before, echoing out like a storm.

Meng Hao, on the other hand, looked exhausted. Although the wave of his finger had seemed simple, it left him feeling drained. However, to see his father looking so powerful, and his mother so excited, made it all worth it.

Meng Hao smiled, a charming, happy smile.

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# Chapter 1167: Get Back Here, Meng Hao!

Decorative lanterns and brightly colored banners could be seen everywhere on Planet South Heaven. The members of the Fang Clan flew down from the starry sky into various districts of the Great Tang of the Eastern Land, where they used various magical powers to erect huge temple halls and altars.

Over the course of an entire month, they transformed the Great Tang into a palatial temple complex befitting of the Clan Chief of the Fang Clan. They even created numerous Immortal’s caves for the insurge of cultivators from off of South Heaven.

The Great Tang of the Eastern Lands was where the grand ceremony to appoint the Clan Chief would be held.

Furthermore, because Fang Xiufeng would stay on Planet South Heaven after his coronation, it became the Fang Clan’s second planet. It went without saying that it was now a very important place for the Fang Clan.

Fang Shoudao immediately issued orders that all available clan members participate in the renovation of Planet South Heaven. At the same time, numerous teleportation portals were set up, which connected to the enormous main teleportation portal on Planet East Victory.

You could say that Planet South Heaven was being completely transformed. Not only was the Great Tang of the Eastern Lands mobilized, the other lands were included in the great changes as well, including the Northern Reaches, the Southern Domain and the Western Desert.

Soon, the entire planet was essentially part of the Fang Clan. There wasn't a single person who could disagree with the matter, because… once Fang Xiufeng officially became the Clan Chief, it meant that the Clan Chief was standing guard over Planet South Heaven. That in turn meant that the entire Fang Clan was standing guard over it as well.

Numerous incredible changes began to occur to the four great continents on Planet South Heaven, especially the Southern Domain. Because of Meng Hao's connection to the Southern Domain, it would eventually become second in importance only to the Eastern Lands, and the cultivators there would be given an enormous amount of special assistance in terms of cultivation and in various other ways. After all, although most sects there had connections to the larger powers out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, in the Southern Domain, Meng Hao occupied the highest position!

To the cultivators of the Southern Domain, Meng Hao was more awe-inspiring than even their own sects!

As for the Blood Demon Sect, that was the place where Meng Hao and Xu Qing had been married. In accord with Meng Hao's wishes, the areas surrounding the Blood Demon Sect had been kept exactly the way they always had.

Beams of colorful light could be seen streaking through the skies of Planet South Heaven constantly as more and more members of the Fang Clan arrived. Their arrival caused the spiritual energy on Planet South Heaven not to lessen, but to grow stronger.

Regarding the Planet South Heaven division of the Ji Clan, they had long since been cowed by Fang Xiufeng. Now, they were forced into an even more subdued position.

As the members of the Fang Clan began fixing up Planet South Heaven, Meng Hao, Fang Shoudao, Fang Yanxu and Fang Xiufeng entered a long session of private talks, during which Meng Hao explained to them everything he knew about Allheaven Clans. That included the source of his own Dao, as well as the effects of the Dao seeds. He explained everything in detail and left nothing out.

Although Fang Shoudao had heard about these things once already, he got excited all the same. As for Fang Yanxu and Fang Xiufeng, both were impassioned by the things they were hearing and coming to understand.

“The Fang Clan is destined to rise to prominence,” Fang Xiufeng said. “We won’t just lord it over the Ninth Mountain and Sea, we will grow beyond it and become the most powerful clan in the entire Mountain and Sea Realm!!

“For now, all these things about Hao’er must remain top secret. Only members of the Dao Realm are qualified to know the truth!” After reaching a decision on the matter, Fang Xiufeng made the suggestion to have Meng Hao stay put on Planet East Victory.

Meng Hao smiled wryly and tactfully refused. Were it anyone else who had made the suggestion, he would have just ignored it. However, since it was his own father, he could only politely make his case from every possible angle, after which Fang Xiufeng frowned, but agreed.

It took a while, but he finally managed to finish persuading his father and then slip away to find his mother. He quickly brought out all of the things he had bought at the bazaar and handed them over. Meng Li was very pleased. To her, it didn’t matter what Meng Hao bought for her, the expression of the feelings in his heart was the most important thing.

“Oh you!” she said warmly, tousling his hair. “You always throw your money away! You need to learn to be frugal! Don’t you remember what I taught you when you were young about saving money? If you have a single copper coin, cut it in two before you spend it. The same principle applies to spirit stones.

“Furthermore, you’re too kind and considerate. Too honest! You’re a smart kid, but you need to remember what I’ve taught you. Never let yourself get the short end of the stick!

“The cultivation world is a dog-eat-dog place, and you have to be on guard at all times. That’s what I worry about the most, you know. You take after me, too kind-hearted and too honest. Not like your sister. She’s a lot more like your father, always suspicious about everything.” Meng Li shook her head, and her eyes filled with concern.

Meng Hao had a strange expression on his face, and as he listened to her talk, his face started to redden. He had to look at her closely to make sure that she wasn’t being sarcastic with him.

“Mom, I… I never get the short end of the stick,” he explained.

“Never get the short end of the stick?” Meng Li responded lovingly. “Look at all these things you got for me. I can tell from a single glance that you must have spent a fortune. Obviously you got conned.”

“I didn’t get conned! I…” Meng Hao quickly explained about everything that happened with Guru Heavencloud. Not wanting to get his mother’s hopes up only to dash them later, he left out the part about the jade command medallion. He would wait until he gathered some more clues about the matter before breaking that news to her. After he finished, Meng Li frowned at him, looking even more worried than before.

“Silly boy, why did you go and do things that way?” she said with a sigh. “You shouldn’t have just straight-up killed Guru Heavencloud. You little dummy, that’s exactly what I’m talking about when I say you get the short end of the stick. Everyone has friends and family, including that Guru Heavencloud. Even I’ve heard of him before. He had lots of rich friends. All you had to do was let him go, and he would have gone to get help from his friends. Then you could have followed him to see who his friends were.

“Then you could have robbed all of them without even having to come up with an excuse why. How great would that have been? Ai. You’re just like me, child. Too honest.” His mother finished with a bitter chuckle.

Meng Hao’s eyes widened, and he stared in shock.

“Oh, there’s another reason you shouldn’t have killed him,” she continued. “Do you know how much Quasi-Dao experts are worth? Take him to the Eighth Mountain and Sea, and you could have gotten a mind-boggling price for him. You’re just too inexperienced. Not far-sighted enough. All you could think about was some crappy bazaar. That place isn’t worth squat.

“See, when you analyze it carefully, you’ll see that you really were conned. Don’t you remember what I taught you when you were young? When you go out and see something valuable, if you don’t pick it up, it’s the same as if you lost it!

“Another thing is that the entire body of a Quasi-Dao expert is a magical treasure unto itself. Even if you killed him, you could have delivered his body over to the Fourth Mountain and Sea and earned a huge profit.

“Also, the bones of a Quasi-Dao expert can fetch a high price in the Seventh Mountain and Sea. After all, those aren’t things you run into all the time. But you went and threw all that away! Ai. Honey, you’re really too honest and straightforward.” By the time Meng Hao’s mother finished speaking, her voice was like droning in Meng Hao’s ears, and he was staring at her in shock.

After a long moment passed, he suddenly slapped his thigh. Looking extremely annoyed, he said, “You’re totally right! Dammit! How come I didn’t think of those things!?” Stabs of pain filled his heart as he thought about the vast amount of spirit stones he had lost out on.

Meng Li sighed and tousled his hair, looking just as worried as before.

“You need to think more. If you keep going on the way you are right now, I’ll constantly be worried about you being out on your own.” Even as she spoke, Meng Hao’s face suddenly twitched, and then an unsightly expression could be seen. Meng Li also seemed to notice whatever it was that Meng Hao had, and a smile broke out on her face.

“Your sister’s back. Honey, this is the first time you’ve come back since you left. You need to be more like your sister. She comes back all the time to visit, and she’s always asking if you’ve been by. Oh right, every time she comes to visit, she brings her little hubby with her.” Meng Li’s eyes suddenly flickered with a crafty gleam. Just as she finished speaking, the front door of the building they were in collapsed inward with a booming crash.

“Meng Hao, you Heaven-damned bastard!! At long last I’ve managed to track you down!” A young woman flew in through the rubble of the door, looking like an explosive dragon. Her cultivation base was profound; apparently she was a stage 5 Immortal. This was none other than Meng Hao’s sister, Fang Yu!

Thanks to Fang Xiufeng’s connections to the Emperor Immortal Sect, she had been given a spot there. After joining, she continued to grow and progress. Although she couldn’t be considered extraordinary among the members of her generation, she ascribed to the notion that slow and steady wins the race. With every breakthrough she made, her foundation grew stronger and more stable.

The blow she had just delivered caused the entire building to shake. A look of astonishment appeared on Meng Li’s face, and then suddenly she flashed off into the distance.

“You two haven’t seen each other for years,” she called out. “Why don’t you take some time to catch up? Hao’er, your sister had a fiery temper, but you’re a big boy, so just grin and bear it, alright!?”

“Grin and bear it, my ass! Get back here Meng Hao!! I promise I won’t beat you to death!! I can’t believe you foisted that bastard Sun Hai on me to get back at me. Y-y-you…. Am I your sister, or is he your sister!?” Rage burning, Fang Yu roared and shot toward Meng Hao.

“YOU’RE my sister! He’s a guy, he couldn’t be my sister even if he wanted to!” Meng Hao shot backward immediately. He actually felt a bit guilty, especially when he saw the fawning, servile baldy Sun Hai following close behind Fang Yu. Meng Hao’s smile grew even more bitter.

Back when he’d collected some interest from Sun Hai, he had loftily explained to him how to win over a girl that you had a crush on. How could Meng Hao have ever known at the time that the girl Sun Hai was talking about was actually his sister?

After finding out, he'd been planning to teach Sun Hai a lesson or two, but other matters had intervened. By the time he'd returned, Sun Hai had been nowhere to be found, which left Meng Hao with a sinking feeling.

From the way Fang Yu was yelling at him, Meng Hao instantly realized that Sun Hai had sold him out.

"Sun Hai!" he roared. He didn't dare to raise a hand to Fang Yu, but had no such misgivings when it came to Sun Hai. As he closed in, just when he was about to make his move on Sun Hai, Sun Hai suddenly clasped hands and bowed deeply.

"Sun Hai offers greetings, Brother-in-law. I will never forget the kindness you showed to me back in the day." With that, Sun Hai pulled out a bag of holding.

"Brother-in-law, these are all the spirit stones I owe you from years ago. I've even included the interest, sir. Brother-in-law, please kindly accept my payment." Sun Hai quickly tossed the bag of holding toward the shocked Meng Hao. This was the first time ever in which someone had proactively paid back the money they owed him. Without even thinking about it, he caught the bag.

Sun Hai immediately retreated to stand in front of Meng Li. With a plop, he dropped to his knees in front of her.

"Sun Hai offers greetings and well wishes, madam," he said, kowtowing repeatedly. "The trip here was made in haste, but I managed to bring a small gift. Please accept it, madam. I hope it brings you eternal beauty and never-ending youthfulness." With that, Sun Hai rose to his feet and handed a bag of holding to Meng Li.

Meng Li accepted it, looked it over, and then smiled warmly.

"You always bring me gifts when you come to visit, child. In the future, you don't need to be so courteous!"

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# Chapter 1168: Settling Karma with Old Friends

Meng Hao glanced at the bag of holding, and then looked over at the similar bag of holding in his mother’s hands. All of a sudden, he realized that Sun Hai wasn’t as annoying as he had previously thought.

However, Fang Yu was still cussing him out, causing Meng Hao to tremble in fear. He suddenly shot forward to appear directly in front of Sun Hai.

“Sun Hai, how dare you call me Brother-in-law!” he roared, his eyes flashing. “My sister is as lovely as a flower, tender and refined, unique and incomparable. If you want to fall for her, fine, but without my approval, NOBODY can marry my sister!” His hand shot out like lightning, his index and middle fingers stabbing toward Sun Hai’s forehead. Considering the level of Sun Hai’s cultivation base, if that blow landed, he would be dead beyond the shadow of a doubt.

Meng Hao attacked with such speed that even his mother was shocked. However, she quickly realized that something else was going on. She understood how her son thought, and knew that Meng Hao wasn’t the type to randomly kill people. His finger attack surely had a deeper meaning.

Seeing Meng Hao lunging toward him caused Sun Hai’s face to go pale and his mind to spin. He immediately fell back, but considering the difference in level between their cultivation bases, he was like a firefly trying to compare with the shining moon. It was basically impossible for him to evade Meng Hao. At the same time, Fang Yu was closing in on Meng Hao, looking like an explosive dragon.

“Meng Hao, stay your hand!”

“Don’t worry, sister,” Meng Hao replied, “I’ll cut down this pervert for you. From now on, you’ll finally have some peace and quiet. This is merely the duty of a younger brother.”

Fang Yu suddenly started to get even more anxious. “Meng Hao, you scoundrel, I forbid you from harming him!”

Almost in the same moment that her words rang out, Meng Hao’s fingers touched Sun Hai’s forehead. Sun Hai immediately began to shake. However, it was at this point that he suddenly received a message transmitted by Meng Hao, along with a wink.

“Elder Brother Sun, this is your chance. Go!”

Sun Hai wasn’t a stupid person, so he instantly bit down on his tongue, causing blood to spray out of his mouth. Then he let out a miserable shriek. He suddenly flew backward, intentionally sending his cultivation base into chaos to add to the effect, which caused blood to spurt out from the pores on his skin.

“Sun Hai!” Fang Yu cried, shooting toward Sun Hai and catching him in her arms. Her expression was one of extreme anxiety and guilt.

“I… I can’t hold out much longer,” Sun Hai gasped, trembling. “Before I die… I only have one wish. I–” Fang Yu suddenly frowned, and then a dark expression covered her face.

“Bastard!” she growled through gritted teeth. Then she raised her hand to slap Sun Hai. Sun Hai immediately dodged to the side to avoid the blow; obviously he wasn’t injured at all. Fang Yu was now even angrier than before. She glared at Meng Hao for a moment and then began to chase after Sun Hai.

Seeing that Fang Yu’s anger was no longer fixed on him, Meng Hao sighed in relief. Even if his cultivation base was more powerful than it was, he would never dare to raise his hand to his parents or his sister. Furthermore, he could tell from the way his mother treated Sun Hai that she and his father must approve of their relationship.

Although you couldn’t see it from how she spoke to Sun Hai, Fang Yu clearly liked him, at least mostly. Apparently, all the pain and suffering he had gone through over the past years had finally touched her heart.

Meng Li appeared next to Meng Hao and watched as the enraged Fang Yu chased Sun Hai off into the distance. Meng Li’s eyes shone with warmth and kindness as she said, “Your father and I both approve of them. Sun Hai might not be incredibly exceptional, but he’s not bad. Most important is that he truly loves your sister. The past few years, she’s constantly bullied him, but he actually seems to like it. He’s got a good temperament, that kid.

“Your father and I talked about it, and unless something unexpected happens, they should become official beloved partners in a few years.

“Now that I think about it, Sun Hai is very respectful. He’s mentioned over and over again how thankful he is for the support you showed that year.” She looked over at Meng Hao and smiled.

Meng Hao actually felt a bit embarrassed. He had been trying to pull a fast one on Sun Hai, and had never imagined that he was actually conning himself at the time. However, now that he thought about it, if Sun Hai and Fang Yu did end up getting married, and it was because of him, then that could be seen as a truly beautiful thing.

“I’m not worried about your sister,” Meng Li said, her voice soft. “But you….”

After a moment of silence, Meng Hao took a deep breath and said, “Mom, I’m planning to leave the Ninth Mountain and Sea. I’m going to go find Xu Qing… and bring her back.”

Meng Li didn’t say anything at first. However, after a moment, she nodded.

Burying her worry and anxiety, she said, “Go, as soon as your father’s ceremony is over. It’s your choice to make, and if you’re sure that’s what you want to do, then… you need to bring my daughter-in-law back here to meet us.”

A sudden breeze blew through the building, causing the leaves to rustle and lifting Meng Li's hair. Meng Hao looked over at his mother and noticed some new wrinkles on her forehead. She was by no means old, but she definitely looked different than he remembered her looking in the past.

Not even cultivators could completely escape the effects of the passing of time.

Meng Hao suddenly reached out and hugged his mother.

"Aw, honey," she said, smiling warmly, suddenly recalling what Meng Hao used to look like as a child. The two of them chatted until evening fell, whereupon Meng Hao finally took his leave.

"Mom, there's still some time before dad's ceremony. I'm going to visit a few places. I've been away a long time."

The evening wind was picking up, and dark clouds were gathering in the sky. As Meng Hao left the courtyard of the Fang Clan, the rumble of thunder could be heard, and great bean-sized raindrops began to pour down.

Meng Hao used no magic to block the rain. Soon, he was soaked through and through, and as he walked down the street, he looked around at the people scurrying about to avoid the rain. He shook his head and smiled. The rain made him think about the State of Zhao, Mount Daqing, and everything that had happened back in those days.

Sighing, he continued along. As he walked, he could sense the boundless Immortal power filling the lands of Planet South Heaven. That came because of all the visiting Fang Clan cultivators, who radiated an intangible energy.

Among all that energy were two auras that shone as prominently bright as lanterns on a dark night. Those two auras belonged to Fang Shoudao and Fang Yanxu. Planet South Heaven was a unique place that Dao Realm experts could not enter, so they had restricted their cultivation bases to the great circle of the Ancient Realm.

As he sensed all of these things, Meng Hao’s heart gradually grew tranquil. There was a lingering question that his mother had not asked him, and that he himself had not brought up. That was, if he left… when would he return?

He didn’t know. He had absolutely no idea how long it would be from the time he left the Ninth Mountain and Sea until he would be able to bring Xu Qing back to Planet South Heaven to meet his parents.

“Maybe it will happen quickly. Or maybe… it will take a very, very long time.” Meng Hao had a strange premonition that caused him to brood silently as he walked through the rain. He had lost track of time, and eventually he stopped and looked up, whereupon he noticed a distant wall. A huge gate could be seen in that wall, hanging outside of which was a lantern.

The lantern swung back and forth in the heavy wind, and the heavy, driving rain plopped onto the canvas canopy which covered the lantern, flowing together into a solid stream that then splashed onto the ground.

However, the wick inside was of unconventional design and, although the flame flickered wildly, it didn’t fade. It continued to burn, illuminating the character which was written on the canopy. It said… Ji .

This was the location of the Ji Clan on Planet South Heaven.

This was the exact place where he had once broken down a gate to collect debts…. 1

He had never imagined that his strolling would subconsciously lead him here.

“I guess it’s just destiny,” he thought. “I wonder if my old friends from all those years ago are still here.” He walked up to the door and looked at the iron rings, thinking about how he had ripped the rings off of the doors back then. He chuckled, then reached up and knocked. The sound of the knock echoed out into the courtyard of the Ji Clan.

He only knocked once, then stood there waiting patiently.

Almost immediately, the sound of a commotion could be heard inside the Ji Clan ancestral mansion. Before long, the door slowly swung open, and Meng Hao could see several hundred members of the Ji Clan lined up inside. At their head was the local Ji Clan Patriarch.

He was no longer young like he had been before. He looked much older, and as he stood there looking at Meng Hao, a strange look could be seen in his eyes. After a long moment, he sighed, clasped hands, and bowed.

“We offer greetings to the Crown Prince of the Fang Clan.”

All of the other Ji Clan cultivators bowed in unison with him. Ji Xiaoxiao was there in the crowd, wearing the clothes of a married woman. She was no longer young and pretty like she had been before. She looked old now, and she also had a conflicted look in her eyes as she looked at Meng Hao. 2

It had been years since their last meeting, and yet, Meng Hao looked as dashing as he always had, or perhaps even more handsome than before. Every move he made caused an indescribable energy to spread out, creating a pressure that weighed down on everyone. It was as if he, standing there outside the door, were the center of the entire world.

And yet, there stood Ji Xiaoxiao, long since married. An inexpressible bitter feeling rose up in her heart, and she bowed her head.

Meng Hao looked around at the various members of the Ji Clan and saw only a few familiar faces. A couple of the people he remembered fighting with in years back, plus there was Ji Xiaoxiao and Ji Tianyi.

Ji Tianyi was now middle-aged, and his cultivation base was in the early Dao Seeking stage. He had since become an elder in the clan. He looked at Meng Hao with a complicated expression.

“Ji Xuelin?” Meng Hao asked.

“He failed in Spirit Severing seven years ago. He’s dead.” The person to answer Meng Hao was Ji Tianyi. 3

Meng Hao stood there silently for a long moment. In the end, he decided that since he had just happened across this place while strolling about, he wouldn’t enter. Looking at the familiar faces one more time, he clasped hands and bowed, then turned to leave.

“Wait a moment!” Ji Xiaoxiao said through clenched teeth. As Meng Hao looked back, she threw a bag of holding over to him, which he caught.

“Those are all the spirit stones I owe you. The debt is clear now.”

“Here’s mine.” Ji Tianyi also threw over a bag of holding.

Meng Hao scanned them, then looked back at Ji Xiaoxiao and Ji Tianyi, and nodded.

“Henceforth, the debt is clear,” he said softly. The Ji Clan paid special attention to Karma. Were his cultivation base lower than theirs, they would be able to take the initiative in manipulating it. But now Meng Hao’s cultivation base had long since reached the level that all they could do was look up at him from far below. They no longer had the initiative when it came to Karma. He did.

If Meng Hao wanted, he could refuse to clear the debt. As his cultivation base grew higher, the Karma would grow even stronger, and the pressure on them greater. However, with the debt clear, they were finally free.

Having settled the Karma, Meng Hao turned and walked off into the distance.

The rain began to fall harder.

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2. Ji Xiaoxiao was the girl he met in the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect. Because of their mutual secrets, she helped him out a bit in the end. Later, he saw her in the Milky Way Sea, but didn’t reveal himself to her. When he came back to collect debts, she wasn’t present

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# Chapter 1169: Returning to the Crow Divinity Tribe!

Meng Hao felt somewhat like a stranger on Planet South Heaven as he looked around at all the familiar sights. In his heart, this was his home, the place where he had grown up, and the place where he learned about cultivation. This was where he had laughed, developed his ideals, and thrived on his youthful energy. This was also the place where he had married Xu Qing.

The rain passed, and a rainbow appeared up above in the dawn sky. Meng Hao went to various places in the vast Eastern Lands. He went to the mountains where lay the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite temple. Long ago, it had been a place of extreme danger to him. Now, nothing there was even worth paying attention to.

He walked through the mountains, through that long, narrow path, and then finally reached the edge of the crater where the temple had once stood. He stood there for a long time, thinking.

He recalled everything that had happened here, how he had taken the bronze lamp, and how everyone had chased him. The events in the subsequent days and nights had been like a sort of baptism.

That was his first time he had truly become embroiled in the affairs of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

As he stood at the edge of the crater, he sighed. Much time had passed. The mountains were still the same mountains, and there was grass everywhere just like before. However, the trees and other vegetation had changed.

Although they seemed the same at first, their colors had deepened from the ones that he remembered.

After a long while, he left.

He went to the Northern Reaches, and from there, to the Milky Way Sea. As he passed over the water, he looked down at the waves, and recalled everything that had happened there. He thought about Patriarch Reliance, the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, and the Resurrection Lily.

After crossing the Milky Way Sea, he found himself in the Western Desert. It was a vast place, and was still mostly submerged by violet seawater. The Violet Sea was tranquil and lifeless.

He proceeded along over the Violet Sea, eventually reaching the area the Crow Divinity Tribe had once called home. He sank down into the water there and looked at the mountains and valleys in the area, all places with which he was familiar.

From there, he proceeded along under the water, telling himself that he was going to take all of the details about Planet South Heaven and place them in his heart, in order to never forget. As he sped along under the surface of the Violet Sea, he eventually reached the South Cleaving Mountains, which seemed to stretch out endlessly.

Eventually, he reached something that looked like a huge wall, or a city gate. It kept the Violet Sea out of… the Black Lands.

The Black Lands were now very different from how Meng Hao remembered them. They bustled, even thrived. Numerous cultivators scurried back and forth between the there and the Southern Domain. Apparently, the Southern Domain was very accepting of the Black Lands cultivators.

Over the years, the former powerful tribes of the Western Desert, as well as the native Black Lands power groups, had all thrived and grown powerful.

Many Northern Reaches cultivators had settled down in the Black Lands, and had come to call the place home. Their path of cultivation had been cut off by Meng Hao years ago. No matter how they cultivated, they could only reach a certain height. Their fates were sealed, and they were forced to atone for the crime committed by their ancestors from the Northern Reaches, when they had invaded the Southern Domain.

The Crow Divinity Tribe was now the largest tribe in the Black Lands and also the number one power, with many other sects and clans subservient to them.

Almost as soon as Meng Hao entered, he realized that there were statues everywhere. Some were large, some were small, but all of the important groups in the Black Lands had them.

Those statues depicted… Meng Hao!

The largest of the statues was covered in spirit stones. When the sunlight fell onto it, it glittered resplendently with a multitude of colors. That statue was located on the highest mountain in the Black Lands, which belonged to the Crow Divinity Tribe.

That statue was the symbol of the Black Lands, and represented the spirit of the cultivators there.

Every so often, the members of the Crow Divinity Tribe would gather around the statue to offer worship and sacrifices. As it happened, that was exactly what they were doing when Meng Hao arrived.

He hovered there above the huge statue, looking down at all the Crow Divinity Tribe members gathered around the mountain. There were tens of thousands of them, all prostrating themselves in worship.

No one could sense Meng Hao’s presence. It was as if he existed in a different world.

Ten old men in resplendent robes stood apart from the tens of thousands of tribe members, eyes burning with passion. Raising their hands high into the air, they cried out, “Crow Divinity Tribe, bow to the Sacred Ancient!”

In response to their call, tens of thousands of tribe members bowed low and joined their voices together in worship. As the sound echoed out, the tribe members looked at the statue with gazes of awe. From the look of it, if this statue were alive, and gave them orders, they would follow those orders without question.

Meng Hao’s statue had replaced totems as the symbol of the cultivators of the Black Lands.

Meng Hao hovered there in midair, looking down at the scene playing out below. He heard the voices of the crowds, and was also just able to detect that their worship contained vestiges of the power of Joss Flame. It was faint, but it was there.

The ten old men once again cried out with loud voices, “Crow Divinity Tribe, bow to Patriarch Fifth and Patriarch Third!”

Again, the crowds bowed in worship. A strange expression appeared on Meng Hao’s face. He had noticed earlier that this particular statue belonging to the Crow Divinity Tribe had a parrot attached to its shoulder, upon whose ankle was a tiny bell.

The ceremony of offering worship continued.

Meng Hao sighed, and was just about to leave, when all of a sudden, he said, “Eee?”

Eyes glittering brightly, he hovered in place and looked back down below him.

What he saw was that the Joss Flame power which emanated off of everyone because of their fervent worship, was gathering around the statue. It then blasted up into the sky, where a vortex appeared.

Although the cultivators down below couldn’t see that vortex, Meng Hao could see it clearly.

As it spun silently, a figure slowly appeared within it. It was a young man in a black robe, whose appearance… looked very similar… to Meng Hao's!

The main difference was that he had two black wings sticking out of his back. His expression was lofty as he descended from above to land upon the head of the statue. There, he sat down cross-legged, whereupon he began to breathe in the power of the Joss Flame.

He could not see Meng Hao, but Meng Hao could see him, and knew exactly who he was. This was the creature which had been his follower for a brief period of time, the black bat!

Although he now maintained human form, he still looked the same as before. Clearly, he was here to steal away the Joss Flame sacrifice from the Black Lands.

Meng Hao glared at the bat creature coldly. At the same time, he realized that the mastiff in his bag of holding had suddenly twitched, and opened its eyes. A blood-colored gleam appeared, as well as an icy-cold aura.

"You're interested in him, huh?" Meng Hao thought. He then recalled the so-called renegade spirit that the mastiff had absorbed back in the Windswept Realm, which had also been a bat.

The black-winged young man was sitting there in meditation, absorbing the Joss Flame power when, all of a sudden, he shivered. His eyes opened, and he looked around suspiciously. Although he didn't see anything, he still felt incredibly frightened, as if Meng Hao's presence caused him to be jumpy.

He suddenly let out a bellow, causing ripples to spread out in all directions. As they neared Meng Hao, he waved his finger, which produced no reaction from the ripples, and in fact, caused them to pass right through him.

The black-robed young man frowned. Despite using a divine ability to check the area, he hadn't been able to identify anything suspicious. He wanted to just ignore the matter, but the sense of crisis he felt only continued to grow stronger.

He had been absorbing the Joss Flame here for years, and had never felt anything like this before. Finally, he gritted his teeth and flew up into the air to leave. He would rather abandon the Joss Flame than run into any dangerous situations.

However, in the same moment that he flew up, Meng Hao's eyes gleamed with a bright light, and he snorted.

The sound seemed to reach out past the illusion that masked him, transforming into lightning which crackled in the sky. The world trembled, and the black-robed young man let out a shriek. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and he was no longer able to keep himself hidden from the people down below. Almost immediately, everyone caught sight of him hovering there in the air.

Everyone was shocked, especially the ten old men. Then they saw his face, and their expressions flickered with disbelief.

"Who's there!!?" cried the black-robed young man, coughing up some more blood. "Who's ambushing me!!?" He was completely shaken, and yet, all he had heard moments ago was a clap of thunder, not a cold snort from Meng Hao.

If he had heard Meng Hao, then he would never have been able to muster the courage to speak.

"Sacred Ancient!!"

"It's the exalted Sacred Ancient! Heavens, it's a manifestation of the Sacred Ancient!!"

"Greetings, exalted Sacred Ancient!!" The tens of thousands of Crow Divinity Tribe cultivators down below were trembling in awe. The ten old men gasped loudly.

"I'm Meng Hao, the Sacred Ancient of this place!" the black-robed young man shouted. "Whoever's trying to ambush me had better show their damned face right now!" He took a deep breath, sucking in the Joss Flame, causing a bright glow to rise up from him, and making him look every bit like a majestic Immortal.

“Well that’s funny,” Meng Hao said coolly, strolling out into the open air. “If you’re Meng Hao, then… who am I?” Everyone down below could now see him.

The cultivators of the Crow Divinity Tribe stared in shock, confusion, and disbelief. They looked at Meng Hao, and then back at the black-robed young man, clearly unsure of who was real and who was not.

Actually, there was no need for them to try to guess. As soon as the black-robed young man caught sight of Meng Hao, his face fell and his eyes went wide. He began to pant with disbelief, and he let out a shout of alarm.

“Meng Hao… you… when did you get back?!” The black-robed young man’s scalp was tingling. He suddenly realized that the thunder from just now had not been thunder at all, but rather, Meng Hao. He began to tremble and back up, and then fled with all the speed he could muster.

Meng Hao’s expression was calm as he took a step toward the fleeing young man. Then, he vanished, to reappear directly in front of him.

Down below, the tens of thousands of Crow Divinity Tribe cultivators were shaking as they realized that this second Meng Hao was their true Sacred Ancient.

“Greetings, Sacred Ancient!!”

“The Crow Divinity Tribe offers greetings, Sacred Ancient!!”

As their voices rang out, the entire Black Lands trembled.

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# Chapter 1170: This Place Is My Home

As the sound echoed out, the Black Lands trembled. In another location in the Crow Divinity Tribe was an enormous altar which was permanently guarded by a massive military force. Other than their Holy Mountain, it was the most sacred place in the Crow Divinity Tribe.

Few people knew the special reason why that altar had been erected. Tribal law in the Crow Divinity Tribe dictated that the successive generations of tribe members were required to offer worship at both the Holy Mountain and that altar.

Next to the altar was a courtyard residence that seemed very ordinary, and not the least bit luxurious. However, in the hearts and minds of the Crow Divinity Tribe, that residence was just as special as the altar and the Holy Mountain.

An old man lived in that courtyard dwelling, a man who was infinitely wise, and was in fact the pillar and strength of the entire Crow Divinity Tribe. With him, the Crow Divinity Tribe occupied the utmost position of authority, and none of the other powers in the Black Lands would ever dare to offend them.

He was the former Tribe Lord of the the Crow Divinity Tribe, and although it had been some time since he had occupied that position, whenever the current Tribe Lord encountered a difficult situation, he would beg an audience with this old man.

In fact, his authority exceeded any Tribe Lord. You could say that he was actually the true power of the Crow Divinity Tribe.

When the sound of the collective voices of the Crow Divinity Tribe echoed out, shaking the Black Lands, that ancient old man was sitting in his room in the courtyard residence, meditating. Suddenly, a tremor ran through him, and he opened his eyes. His eyes were cloudy for a moment, but quickly sharpened, and he took a deep breath. He walked out of his room and into the courtyard, where he looked up towards the figure which was floating in midair above the Holy Mountain.

Simultaneously, the huge altar next to the courtyard began shaking violently, as if something inside was waking up and preparing to emerge.

Up in the air, Meng Hao looked coldly at the black-robed young man, whose face flickered as he tried once again to escape. Meng Hao waved his sleeve, causing colors to flash in the sky and a wind to kick up. A power swept over the black-robed young man, a power that he could not fight back against. The power crushed down onto him, and he let out a bloodcurdling scream. Finally, a popping sound could be heard as his body exploded, revealing a struggling black bat.

“You can’t get away,” Meng Hao said coolly, making a grasping motion with his right hand. His fingers seemed to become like five mountains that rumbled through the air toward the bat.

As the bat screeched in terror, red and black light flickered around it, apparently some sort of teleportation power. It shot off rapidly, but no matter how it tried to flee, it always found five enormous pillars closing in on it. Finally, the bat laughed miserably; it had no further means to fight back as the pillars to crush down onto it.

The pillars vanished and turned into Meng Hao’s hand, which was now holding the bat tightly. Meng Hao’s expression was calm as he looked down at the crowds below.

An ancient voice echoed up from the courtyard residence next to the altar, an ancient voice filled with excitement. “Meng Hao, your excellency, is it… is it really you, sir…?”

At the same time, a boom could be heard as the entire altar exploded, revealing a white wolf, which flew into the air. It threw its head back and howled, and when it saw Meng Hao, tears began to stream out of its eyes. It immediately flew toward him, letting out yips of delight.

“Big Hairy….” Meng Hao murmured, looking at the enormous white wolf. Then he looked down at the old man in the courtyard, who was none other than Wu Chen.

“Wu Chen….” he said. An image appeared in his mind of the young man who had followed him through the great migration in the Western Desert. Now he was an old man. As he thought about all the things that had happened back in those times, his expression softened, and he floated down toward the Crow Divinity Tribe.

“Wu Chen offers greetings, Sacred Ancient!” he said, excitedly dropping to his knees to kowtow. All of the other members of the Crow Divinity Tribe stared blankly at Meng Hao. To them, Meng Hao was no stranger. After all, for their whole lives they had offered worship to his statue.

“Offer greetings to the Sacred Ancient immediately!” Wu Chen roared. Instantly, the rest of the tribe dropped to their knees to kowtow.

The Crow Divinity Tribe was completely shaken, and soon word spread of Meng Hao’s return, and all of the Black Lands were aboil. Numerous elders and Tribe Lords from countless tribes mobilized, traveling to the Crow Divinity Tribe to pay respects.

The Crow Divinity Tribe hosted a huge banquet that lasted for three days. When it came time for Meng Hao to leave, he gave a vast quantity of medicinal pills and magical items to Wu Chen. He wanted to take Big Hairy with him, but after some hesitation, decided against it.

The Crow Divinity Tribe had been worshiping Big Hairy for far too long now, and deep feelings had long since taken root. Big Hairy’s wish was to stay here to guard over them. What Meng Hao did do was help Big Hairy to increase his cultivation base to a higher level, which gave him much more longevity.

Then Meng Hao left the Black Lands to go to the Southern Domain.

Of all the places on Planet South Heaven, the Southern Domain was the place that held the most unforgettable memories for Meng Hao. It was where he had grown up, where he had fought and killed, and the place where he and Xu Qing had become a couple. It was really where… everything had happened.

He had even fought a war for its sake!

The moment Meng Hao left the Black Lands and entered the Southern Domain, memories bubbled up. He saw mountains and rivers that he remembered from the past, and everything even smelled familiar.

It was the smell of home.

“The Southern Domain….” he murmured softly. Then, he traveled about just like any other cultivator. He went to the Rebirth Cave, the Ancient Temple of Doom, and to many other places where he had once been, including various sects and even the Song Clan.

He went to those places, but only looked around quickly, and did not stay.

Eventually, he went to the former location of the State of Zhao. The huge lake there was now surrounded by countless buildings and structures. This place had become a Holy Land, and was constantly guarded by numerous cultivators. There were even sealing spells in place to prevent people from entering.

Of course, those seals couldn’t do anything to prevent Meng Hao from entering. He appeared on the little island in the middle of the lake, where he looked around at the grass and rippling blue lakewater. Images of Xu Qing floated up in his mind as he thought back to the time they had begun their marriage ceremony on this very island.

Pill Demon had presided over it, and even Chu Yuyan had been in attendance. All of the sects and clans came to offer congratulations, and there were even many rogue cultivators who packed the area. It had been an incredibly noisy and exciting occasion.

Back then, the island had been decorated beautifully with lanterns and banners. The joy and happiness had been palpable….

Meng Hao thought about these things as he strolled around. Memories upon memories flitted up, almost as if… he had traveled through his dreams back to that jubilant day.

“Qing’er….” he murmured, his heart stabbing with pain. His vision swam for a moment, and he suddenly saw a young woman clad in bright red clothing. She stood there in front of him, looking a bit shy, but with eyes that shone like sparkling autumn rainwater. She was looking into his eyes, her gaze soft.

Meng Hao smiled back at her, and then continued to stroll around the island. Every place he went on the island was familiar, and reminded him of the home he and Xu Qing had originally planned to make here.

Time passed, and soon it was evening. The setting sun reflected on the lakewater, creating a scene of dazzling beauty that turned the island golden. Meng Hao stood on the shore, looking at the water, his expression somewhat melancholy.

All of a sudden, he heard a voice from behind him.

“Excuse me! What sect are you from? What are you doing here?” The voice sounded surprised, and also suspicious. Meng Hao turned to find himself looking at three cultivators approaching him.

Two were men and one was a woman, and Meng Hao had seen them earlier as they went about their work of maintaining and tidying the island. Considering the pious expressions on their faces, he had chosen not to disturb them, and had made his way about the island alone.

“This is a Holy Land!” the young woman said, doing nothing to mask the harshness of her tone. “You’re not allowed to be here without permission! If you’re trespassing, you’ll be severely punished. Take out your identity medallion immediately!” As she spoke, the two men fanned out to surround Meng Hao, their eyes glinting sharply.

Suddenly, the setting sun illuminated his face, and one of the men suddenly stared in surprise. He had the feeling that he had seen Meng Hao somewhere before, but wasn’t sure where. The other two had similar reactions. However, it was at this point that Meng Hao shook his head and said, “I don’t have an identity medallion.”

The three cultivator’s faces instantly darkened.

“What gall!” the woman said. “This is the Sacred Ancient’s former residence! Every cultivator in the entire Southern Domain knows that it’s forbidden to step even half a pace onto this island. You think this is just some random place? Sneaking in here is sacrilege!!” Incensed, the woman performed an incantation gesture with her right hand to unleash a magical technique. Simultaneously, she crushed a jade slip to notify her fellow sect members on the shore of the lake.

“I never took this to be just some random place,” Meng Hao replied softly. “This… is my home.”

“Your home?” said one of the men, laughing coldly, his hand flashing an incantation gesture. “Is that supposed to be a joke? This is the Sacred Ancient’s former residence, it’s….”

Meng Hao wasn’t interested in giving explanations. Shaking his head, eyes still flickering with memories, he sighed and then took a step forward, vanishing into thin air.

Almost in the same moment, three magical techniques shot forward, but hit nothing more than air. The three cultivators looked wide-eyed at the spot in which Meng Hao had vanished, then exchanged shocked glances.

“Did he look familiar to you guys?” the young woman asked.

Almost at the same time, the man standing next to her said, “Did he say this place is his home? But this is the Sacred Ancient’s former residence! Who does he think he is, the Sacred Ancient himself?” As soon as the words left his mouth, his eyes went wide.

The other man’s face fell, and he gasped with disbelief. Voice hoarse, he said, “Sacred Ancient!! He… he looked exactly the same as the Sacred Ancient!!”

Even as they stood there in shock, dozens of beams of light suddenly shot in their direction. An intimidating old man led them, and as he neared, his eyes flashed with anger.

“Who had the outrageous gall to break into the Sacred Ancient’s former residence!!?”

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# Chapter 1171: I’m Meng Hao!

The old man immediately waved his hand, and in response, the dozens of people following him split up and began to search the island. He also sent his divine sense out, but came up with nothing. Frowning, he turned to the three cultivators who had sounded the alarm and began to question them.

When they told him that the intruder looked exactly like the Sacred Ancient, the old man’s face flickered. Then they recounted how the intruder said this place was his home, he gasped.

It was at this point that a glittering jade slip flew out of his bag of holding. He grabbed it and scanned it with divine sense, whereupon a look of bewilderment appeared on his face. Gritting his teeth, he said, “We found him. He’s… in the Sacred Mansion at the center of the island!”

The old man disappeared toward the center of the island in a flash, simultaneously sending orders to his subordinates. Soon, all of the other cultivators who had spread out across the island were heading toward the building in the middle.

The three cultivators followed along nervously. They were anxious, not because someone had come to the island; rather, they were anxious about who that person was!

It didn’t take long before the old man arrived at island’s center, where he caught sight of the disciple who had just notified him about Meng Hao’s location. That disciple was kneeling on the ground in front of the Sacred Mansion, trembling.

The structure itself was actually little more than a log cabin, and didn’t look unusual in any way. In fact, many of the cultivators who had come here in pilgrimage throughout the years had often wondered why this seemingly ordinary log cabin was referred to as the Sacred Mansion. 1

Meng Hao was currently standing in the doorway, facing away from everyone on the outside, examining the inside of the cabin. Two statues could be seen inside, sitting there looking at each other.

They were dressed in long red wedding gowns, and they were holding hands and smiling. The statues had been carved with incredible grace and skill, making them look extremely lifelike.

One depicted Meng Hao. The other depicted Xu Qing….

Meng Hao stood there looking at the statues in somewhat of a daze. Memories poured into his mind like floodwaters.

Outside of the Sacred Mansion, the old man looked at Meng Hao and could sense the terrifying, indescribable pressure that existed within him. However, that pressure was not radiating out; if it were, the old man was certain that everything in the surrounding area would be instantly transformed into ash.

He took a deep breath, but didn’t dare to say anything. Instead, he stood there respectfully. At this point, it didn’t matter who this trespasser was; considering the level of his cultivation base, it would be impossible to do anything to stop him. However, the old man secretly crushed a jade slip, sending a notification to the powerful experts in his sect, telling them to hurry over.

The other disciples who had been searching the island had arrived, and stood nervously outside of the Sacred Mansion, not daring to speak.

After a long moment passed, Meng Hao asked, “Who carved these two statues?”

The old man’s heart thumped, and without even thinking about it, he replied, “It, it… was carved by all of the members of the Senior generation in the Southern Domain, people who actually knew the Sacred Ancient.”

Meng Hao turned and looked at the old man.

“And you people? Are you disciples of the Blood Demon Sect?” he asked.

The old man nodded, and was about to say something else, when he saw Meng Hao’s face. He felt as if lighting were crashing around in his mind, and he stood there in a daze. It wasn’t just him. All of the other disciples around him were also staring in shock.

Subconsciously, they all looked away from Meng Hao toward the statue behind him.

The two of them looked exactly the same!!

The only difference was that somehow, the person standing in front of them seemed to have an ancientness to him, and wasn’t a youth like the person depicted on the statue.

Panting, the old man murmured, “Sir… are you….”

“I’m Meng Hao,” was the calm reply.

“Sacred Ancient!!”

“I can’t believe… it’s the Sacred Ancient. How… how could this be possible?!”

In the midst of the exclamations of shock by the old man and his subordinates, an enraged roar echoed out off in the distance. Several hundred beams of light shot through the air, the leader being a middle-aged man. At first his face was twisted with rage, but as soon as he caught sight of Meng Hao, it filled with shock.

“Sacred Ancient!!”

Everyone was in a tumult, so Meng Hao waited in silence for a moment before saying, “I want to spend the night here alone. I would like to thank all of you for keeping this place in order for all these years.”

With that, he waved his hand, sending hundreds of bottles of medicinal pills flying out to those present.

Then he turned and walked into the log cabin, slowly closing the door behind him. Soon, lamplight could be seen in the oilpaper windows.

Outside the log cabin was deathly silence. The middle-aged man and the hundreds of other cultivators he had led here could hardly believe what was happening. Exchanging glances, they transmitted messages to each other, not daring to speak out loud. Then they all fell back a short distance and sat down cross-legged, whereupon they began to send messages via jade slip back to Mount Blood Demon. From there, word quickly spread to the rest of the Southern Domain.

As far as Meng Hao was concerned, this was one of the few occasions since he had left Planet South Heaven in which he had shown so much emotion. It was also one of the few nights he could spend in complete peace and calm. He sat in the log cabin, looking at the statue of Xu Qing, and he soon lost track of time.

In contrast, that night was a sleepless one for the entire Southern Domain. News spread to all the sects and clans that Meng Hao had been seen on the Holy Island. Soon, countless cultivators of the Senior generation, veterans who had fought alongside Meng Hao in the wars of the past, were completely shaken.

It had been years since Meng Hao had left, and although people had seen images of Meng Hao in his various escapades, this was different. The news from the Blood Demon Sect said that this was the real Meng Hao, and that his cultivation base was unfathomably high.

Most importantly, he was on the Holy Island. It didn’t matter if it was really him or not, all of the powerful experts of the Southern Domain unhesitatingly made their way there. If it was the real Meng Hao, then they would offer worship to him. If it was not him… then whoever the blasphemer was would face the wrath of the entire Southern Domain.

It was during the great war of the Southern Domain that Meng Hao had truly risen to the level of being a Sacred Ancient. In fact, he was one of three Sacred Ancients, the other two being Pill Demon and Patriarch Song.

They had been the only three peak experts left alive at the end of that war. Later, Pill Demon reached Immortal Ascension and left Planet South Heaven, becoming nothing more than a figure of legend. As for Patriarch Song, he ended the war having been seriously injured, after which he went into secluded meditation and never came out.

Later, Meng Hao also left. However, it was because of how he had sealed the experts of the Northern Reaches into the mountain called Sin of the North that the spiritual energy of the Southern Domain was gradually restored. That mountain still stood, and it was because of it that his name had reached such heights of glory.

After the war, the Violet Fate Sect and the Song Clan became Holy Lands, and along with the Blood Demon Sect, became the most powerful forces in the Southern Domain. As for the island, because of the wedding which had begun there all those years ago, the Southern Domain cultivators made it their Holy Island, a place to commemorate Meng Hao and Xu Qing.

On this night, all of the sects in the Southern Domain mobilized. The war veterans from the elder generation flew toward the Holy Island, as did people who had been born since then.

Even more surprising… deep in the Song Clan, Patriarch Song, who had been in secluded meditation for years, suddenly opened his ancient eyes. When he heard the reports of what was happening, he sat there silently for a moment, then slowly rose to his feet. Filled with ancientness and exhaustion, he left the Song Clan, taking his fellow clan members with him to the Holy Island.

The emergence of Patriarch Song sent the whole Southern Domain into a huge commotion. Overnight, all cultivators were either thinking about the Holy Island, or talking about it!

Patriarch Song arrived on the island at around midnight, flanked by numerous members of the Song Clan. One of them was a middle-aged woman. She was beautiful, but old, and it was obvious that when she was young, she would have been considered one of the top beauties of the land.

It was none other than Song Jia. 2

Because of what had occurred with Meng Hao, Song Jia had a special position in the Song Clan. She had chosen to never officially take a beloved partner, and had remained single, focused on cultivation.

As soon as the word about Meng Hao began to spread, she also emerged from secluded meditation and calmly joined Patriarch Song to come to the Holy Island.

The arrival of Patriarch Song sent all the cultivators on the island into an uproar. They bowed in respectful greeting, simultaneously clearing a path for Patriarch Song to walk directly up to the log cabin.

Patriarch Song looked at the lamplight flickering in the oilskin windows, and his dim eyes gradually sparkled with bright light. Gradually, he began to emanate a powerful energy like that of an unsheathed magical sword.

The other cultivators in the areas were now staring nervously at Patriarch Song.

“Is it my old pal Meng Hao?!” Patriarch Song suddenly asked, his voice booming like thunder. A huge wind sprang up in the sky, and the land quaked. Massive waves rolled out across the surface of the water.

After a moment, Meng Hao’s voice could be heard from inside the log cabin, sounding somewhat emotional. “Senior Song, please come in.”

The door of the log cabin slowly opened, revealing Meng Hao, looking out at Patriarch Song. His eyes seemed to be filled with memories as he recalled their times fighting together against the invading Northern Reaches army.

The instant Patriarch Song caught sight of Meng Hao, his eyes began to shine brightly. He trembled slightly, then threw his head back and laughed. It was a laughter filled with joy, and the excitement of seeing an old friend.

He walked forward, entering the log cabin, after which the door slowly closed.

“It’s really him….” Song Jia murmured, a complicated look flickering in her eyes.

The night passed slowly. More and more cultivators gathered outside the log cabin. There were cultivators from the Violet Fate Sect and the Blood Demon Sect, as well as others who had fought with him against the Northern Reaches. There were even cultivators gathering on the shores of the lake, packed tightly, their eyes filled with awe and reverence. To them, this was like a holy pilgrimage.

The fact that Patriarch Song had entered the log cabin made it clear to everyone… that this really and truly was the Sacred Ancient Meng Hao!

The news filled everyone with excitement and anticipation. The veteran cultivators who had fought with him recalled their old comrade-in-arms. As for those who had never met Meng Hao before, they merely hoped to catch a glimpse of the majestic Sacred Ancient.

No one spoke. They simply sat there quietly, waiting for the door to open.

2. Song Jia appeared on several occasions in the story so I’m not going to include links. She became Meng Hao’s official fiance after he won the contest in the Song Clan’s search for a son-in-law

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# Chapter 1172: A Sermon On The Dao, By The Sacred Ancient!

Gradually, the light of dawn filled the air. The door opened, and Patriarch Song walked out. He looked different than before. He didn’t seem like an ancient old man; he was younger, and his eyes flickered with excitement. The injuries he had sustained during the war were now healed, and he looked far more energetic than before.

He subconsciously patted his bag of holding. Inside… was an Immortality Illumination Vine, a gift given to him by Meng Hao which gave him the hope of reaching Immortal Ascension….

A few paces outside of the log cabin, Patriarch Song turned, clasped hands and bowed deeply. Then he looked back up for a moment before leaving. The members of the Song Clan were shocked at the appearance of their Patriarch. They could sense that a Heaven-shaking, Earth-toppling transformation had occurred.

Just as the Song Clan cultivators were about to leave with their Patriarch, a beam of light suddenly shot out from the log cabin toward Song Jia.

Meng Hao’s voice could then be heard once again. “It’s nice to see you, old friend. Please accept this parting gift. Use it to nourish your spirit. It will make make cultivation base breakthroughs much smoother.”

Song Clan looked at the light floating in front of her. It was an emerald green magical jade which emanated Immortal qi, and was clearly not an ordinary item.

Then she looked back at the log cabin, a complicated expression on her face. Finally, she took the piece of jade and left with the other Song Clan cultivators.

The Song Clan left, but other Southern Domain cultivators continued to arrive. By noon, there was no room left. Crowds of cultivators blotted out the sky and stretched out in all directions.

Meng Hao was done reminiscing. Sighing, he walked out of the log cabin. As soon as he appeared, the surrounding cultivators excitedly clasped hands and bowed.

“Greetings, Sacred Ancient!!”

“Greetings, Sacred Ancient!!” Their voices echoed out in all directions, reaching other cultivators who couldn’t even see Meng Hao, who in turn bowed, and began to cry out the same thing. The sound of all the voices was like thunder booming everywhere.

One by one, the most powerful experts of the various sects stepped forward to offer excited greetings.

“The Sect Leader of the Violet Fate Sect offers greetings, Sacred Ancient!!”

“The Sect Leader of the Blood Demon Sect offers greetings, Sacred Ancient!!”

Meng Hao looked around at all the cultivators, many of whom he recognized. Smiling, he sat down cross-legged on the stone steps leading up to the log cabin.

“Ladies and gentlemen, Fellow Daoists, welcome to my home. I’m pleased you could come. I haven’t been back for many years, and would like to sincerely thank all of you for your care and concern. You kept this place exactly as I remembered it.

“It is a great kindness shown to me by all cultivators of the Southern Domain. Therefore, I will speak of the Dao here, for seven days. During those seven days, all Southern Domain cultivators are welcome to stay and listen.

“I will explain how my understanding of cultivation has evolved through the various stages, and will explain how I have been enlightened.” With that, he flicked his sleeve, causing the clouds to part, brilliant sunlight to flow down, and an aura of Immortality to spread out. Almost instantly, the entire area seemed like a celestial paradise.

“After careful study,” he began softly, “I have come to find that the Dao of Heaven and Earth, and one’s own Dao, both pertain to stabilizing desires and returning to one’s true self….” He had chosen to bestow some good fortune upon the cultivators of the Southern Domain, both as a means of thanking them for caring for his former residence, and also… for the mere fact that he felt this place to be his home. It was different than Planet East Victory. 1

“Therefore, cultivation is also known as ‘cultivating truth.’ Of the two characters which make up the latter term, the first refers to the method, the second refers to the mental state….” His voice seemed to contain a bizarre power that caused it to spread out in all directions, causing every audience member, regardless of the level of their cultivation base, to slip into a strange, trance-like state. 2

“Simply put, it is very similar to how I once described to someone the different Realms of life.

“In the past, various people have asked me what the Dao is…. My responses have varied depending on the occasion, the circumstances, and the level of my cultivation base. In fact, every single time, I gave a different answer. I’m not even sure what my answer will be the next time someone asks me.

“However, there is one thing that will never change, as far as I can tell. And that is… that I don’t know what the Dao is. There are too many answers to the question. All I know… is that what I am pursuing is freedom and independence. To be free and unconstrained. That is my truth, and that is my Dao!

“In cultivating truth, what we cultivate… is the heart.” Meng Hao’s voice reverberated out as he expounded upon his understanding of the Dao, and the enlightenment he had gained regarding cultivation. The words he spoke were like seeds that became buried in the hearts of the various cultivators.

Perhaps most of them would never feel that seed for the rest of their lives. Or perhaps… some would reach a certain point in their cultivation and then receive sudden enlightenment, good fortune which would result because of the seed planted in them by Meng Hao.

You could say that what Meng Hao was giving them… was not just a chance at enlightenment, but also… a path to follow to Immortal Ascension. Given the right chances, it wouldn’t be impossible for them to follow a similar path to Meng Hao’s, and reach… true Immortality.

But even if they couldn’t, they could gain enlightenment from that seed, and break out of the Spirit Realm to become… false Immortals!

This Immortal seed which Meng Hao was bestowing upon the cultivators of the Southern Domain was very similar to the Dao seed in the blood of his clan. In any case, it was a benevolence on his part. He simply hoped that the cultivators from his home could become more powerful.

“If your heart is steadfast, it cannot be trampled by Heaven or Earth, nor can it be broken by any living thing. You will never bow your head in acquiescence, and you will be able to walk forward without hesitation. You will never stop, because cultivating the heart and cultivating the truth are both the same thing: cultivation.

“My life has been spent practicing cultivation. I started in the Qi Condensation stage, and now here I am, having experienced numerous twists and turns. My body, my mind, and my soul will merge together into an image which will become like a spirit in your heart. Observe it. Contemplate it. It can become the truth and the heart which you cultivate!” Meng Hao’s voice seemed profound and ancient. The surrounding cultivators, be they on the island itself or elsewhere in the area, were all shaken, and many were instantly enlightened.

Time passed. As Meng Hao sat outside his log cabin speaking of the Dao, more and more Southern Domain cultivators arrived. People even came from the Black Lands. The island became the complete focus of the entire Southern Domain.

As Meng Hao spoke, it seemed as if every sentence and every word that he uttered originated from nature itself, and contained a great Dao. In fact, there were even some extraordinarily talented listeners who made immediate breakthroughs.

Because of that, the spiritual energy in the area grew stronger, and more Immortal qi built up. Cultivating in that area for one day was like cultivating for a year elsewhere.

The place now truly deserved to be called… a Holy Land!

By the third day, it wasn’t just cultivators who could be seen gathered in the area around the Holy Island. Numerous wild animals appeared. Normally they would be fierce and violent, but right now they were strangely docile. They soon filled the area, and it almost seemed as if they could understand what Meng Hao was saying, and were being enlightened.

When cultivators and wild beasts could both gain Dao enlightenment at the same time, everything was peaceful and calm.

If you looked around, you might see a huge python gaining enlightenment, or an enormous liger prostrating itself in worship. Powerful beasts were rarely seen in the open, but here they were, as if participating in some naturally-occurring rite, gaining enlightenment from Meng Hao’s Dao-filled voice.

Birds circled in the sky overhead, and fish leapt out of the water of the lake as they attempted to hear more clearly. Even the grass and vegetation benefited from the Dao, and began to sway gently and emanate spiritual energy.

The Southern Domain was as shaken as if it had experienced a massive earthquake.

As Meng Hao gave his sermon on the Dao, the Fang Clan cultivators buzzed about in preparation for the Clan Chief coronation ceremony. Preparations were completed first in the vast Eastern Lands, where numerous altars and palaces were set up. Teleportation portals were also erected.

The ceremony was set to begin in three months, and invitations were already being sent out through the teleportation portals to the various sects and clans in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. The entire Ninth Mountain and Sea was abuzz with the news about Fang Xiufeng becoming the Clan Chief.

It wasn’t just an important matter for the Fang Clan. It was a big event for the Ninth Mountain and Sea as a whole. The decision of who was to be the Clan Chief could affect everyone. For example, if the Clan Chief was a person fond of fighting and warfare, then it would be possible to predict that war would soon strike the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

If the Clan Chief was calm and docile person, then other inescapable difficulties could arise.

However… before Fang Xiufeng was sent to stand guard over Planet South Heaven, he was well-known in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. He had many friends, as well as many enemies.

Virtually all of the sects and clans had interacted with him in the past, and knew him well. He was known as someone who didn’t speak much. However, when he did speak, he always followed through on what he said. He was tough and unyielding, and an old hand when it came to scheming.

He had lots of tricks at his disposal. He fought decisively, and was never sloppy. Back when Meng Hao had been small, certain clan members who coveted his Nirvana Fruit had once looked at him almost as if they wished to eat him. Meng Hao had run to his father in tears to tell him about what had happened.

That night, Fang Xiufeng drew his sword and went on a rampage. That night he killed dozens of subversive clan members, which shocked not only the Fang Clan, but the Ninth Mountain and Sea as a whole.

From that point on, everyone knew that Fang Xiufeng… was a very protective person, protective to an indescribable degree.

With a personality like that, Fang Xiufeng ended up having many friends, and at the same time… many enemies.

It could well be imagined how busy and exciting it would be on the day of the ceremony, when the various sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea came to pay their respects. It was even likely that some of his enemies would come and challenge him to battle, on the pretense of sharing fighting tips.

That was something that was permitted whenever anyone rose to the rank of Clan Chief or Sect Leader. After all, when the ceremony was over, that person could no longer pursue personal matters, but instead, had to be focused on the clan or sect as a whole.

After that day, all grudges would be dissolved.

Of course, it was only a formality. Many enmities could only be resolved with death, otherwise such a practice wouldn't exist. Anyone who qualified to become a Clan Chief or Sect Leader had to have an incredibly powerful cultivation base, and be capable of handling all opponents. Therefore, such customs also served to allow him to demonstrate his battle prowess and strike awe into the hearts of all onlookers.

1. In Chinese, he literally uses the word "hometown" to refer to the Southern Domain. That word has a slightly different meaning in Chinese than English, and doesn't necessarily refer to where you grew up, but rather, your ancestral home. For example, even though Baby Deathblade was born in China, his "hometown" would actually be San Diego, since that is where I am from

2. Er Gen usually uses the Chinese word xiūxíng to describe cultivation, although technically speaking this term emphasizes one's actions. However, there is another word which is often used in xianxia, xiūzhēn, which essentially means the same thing and emphasizes truth. Both are "real life" words that can be used to describe real Buddhist or Daoist cultivation

practices, although the latter is more associated with the xianxia fantasy world

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# Chapter 1173: Another Encounter With Shui Dongliu!

The seven days passed by in a flash. After Meng Hao concluded his sermon outside the log cabin on the Holy Island, the surrounding cultivators, beasts, birds, and even the vegetation and fish seemed to be in the midst of being enlightened.

Meng Hao slowly rose to his feet and looked around at all the beings surrounding him. After a moment of thought, he murmured, “Since we’re connected by destiny, I might as well help all of you one more time.”

He waved his right hand, causing the Immortal qi and spiritual energy in the area to churn. It then poured into the soil of the Holy Island, nourishing it, bolstering it for all eternity.

Now it was really and truly a Holy Land. For years to come, practicing cultivation for a single day there would be like spending a year elsewhere. Even the land beyond the shores of the lake was affected. The effect wasn’t as strong, but it still made the entire area incredibly suitable for cultivation.

When he finished, Meng Hao looked back at the log cabin, then turned and vanished into thin air. The door closed, leaving behind the two statues in their red robes, which would remain sealed there forever, smiling and looking into each other’s eyes.

From that day forth, the Holy Island was open for all to visit. However… the log cabin was a place that could not be entered by anyone whose cultivation base was lower than Meng Hao’s.

Meng Hao left the island and went to Blood Prince Gorge in the Blood Demon Sect, which was now a restricted area that no one was allowed to enter. If the island was a Holy Land for the Southern Domain, then Blood Prince Gorge was a Holy Land for the Blood Demon Sect.

Patriarch Blood Demon had long since passed away into meditation. Meng Hao stood outside of his cave, clasped hands and bowed deeply.

He stayed in Blood Prince Gorge for seven days, although no one in the Blood Demon Sect was aware of that fact, ensuring that the seven days passed very quietly.

During that time, he removed the black bat from his bag of holding. He performed a soulsearch, but even with the current level of his cultivation base, he was still unable to uncover any useful information. All he knew was that the black bat was consumed with a powerful desire to possess him.

In addition, he was clearly able to detect the aura… of a renegade spirit. He even called the parrot out to check.

After a bit of curious investigation, the parrot told Meng Hao that the black bat… definitely had the soul of a renegade spirit somewhere in its bloodline. That information confirmed Meng Hao’s suspicions that the renegade spirit bat the mastiff had possessed in the Windswept Realm might not have been complete. After a bit of thought, he gave the black bat to the mastiff, who was clearly ravenous.

The mastiff howled and began to absorb it.

Seven days later, Meng Hao left Blood Prince Gorge. He also… imbued the place with Immortal qi, making it a extremely suitable place for cultivation, similar to the Holy Island. He also sealed the log cabin in Blood Prince Gorge.

He wasn’t sure when he might be able to return, and deep in his heart, he hoped… that next time he would have Xu Qing with him, and somehow, everything could return to normal.

After leaving the Blood Demon Sect, he went to the Ancient Temple of Doom, where he waved his hand to create a statue. It was a statue… of the mastiff.

The mastiff was a blood spirit which had originated with the Blood Immortal. If that Blood Immortal were in Meng Hao's presence right now, she wouldn't be a match for him at all. However, Meng Hao felt it was still appropriate for him to help the mastiff create this statue, as a way of connecting it to its original ancestor.

After seeing the statue of itself, the mastiff looked around at the Ancient Temple of Doom with a complicated expression.

Eventually, Meng Hao left for the Rebirth Cave, taking the mastiff with him.

Throughout the years that Meng Hao had been away from the Rebirth Cave, cultivators continued to travel there to attempt rebirth. Unfortunately, none had succeeded, as was evidenced by the fact that there were more bones there than the last time he had been here. He proceeded in toward the depths of the cave until he found the same wall he had stood in front of the last time he had been here. He studied it, his eyes flickering.

Never for all eternity would he forget the door he had seen in this location last time, just as he had been about to leave. In that moment, it had almost seemed like an illusion which instantly faded away. However, Meng Hao was sure of what he had seen. 1

Because of the level of his cultivation base at that time, he had been unable to get an answer to the puzzle of that door. Now he was back, standing in front of that same wall, his eyes gleaming.

"I wonder if I'll be able to unearth any more clues, given the current level of my cultivation base…." He unleashed his cultivation base, causing scintillating azure light to shine out. His Allheaven Dao Immortal Realm was more refined than before, and the fusion with his third Nirvana Fruit was now more complete.

As the power of his cultivation base spread out, he waved his finger in the direction of the wall, causing the azure light to spill onto the wall, illuminating it completely.

He stared at the wall as it began to transform. It seemed to wriggle and writhe, and gradually, an archaic and ancient door appeared.

However, the door seemed unstable, as if it were shifting between being illusory and corporeal. It appeared to be exuding a sinister air, and Meng Hao was even able to detect a bit of wild energy that seemed to seep into him and boil out.

It was as if someone were erupting with rage, screaming words that he didn't understand. It sounded like the murmurings of all living things crying out in his ears. With a cold harrumph, he said, "Illusions and lies!"

He reached out and pushed down onto the door, causing a rumbling sound to echo out. However, the door didn't even budge.

He frowned and pushed on the door again, but the result was the same.

All of a sudden, an archaic voice spoke from behind him. "You can't open it…."

The voice spoke completely abruptly, and despite the level of Meng Hao's cultivation base, he hadn't been able to detect anyone behind him at all.

He spun around and saw an old man standing there. The old man had the demeanor of a transcendent being, and wore a slight smile on his face as he looked at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao gaped in shock; he instantly recognized this old man. It was none other than the man who had once painted him… Shui Dongliu!

"Senior Shui Dongliu!"

"You cannot, and must not, open that door," Shui Dongliu said, looking at Meng Hao, his eyes beaming with admiration.

“What’s behind it?” Meng Hao didn’t take the time to think about why Shui Dongliu was here. Years ago, he had told Meng Hao that anyone who existed in his memory could not have their Karma severed by the Ji Clan. After all his years of cultivation, he now realized that such an ability revealed how incredibly powerful Shui Dongliu’s cultivation base must be.

In fact, Meng Hao could tell that Shui Dongliu… was probably even more powerful than he could imagine, although he had no proof to back up that feeling, other than a hunch.

“It leads to another world,” Shui Dongliu said slowly. “Do you… want to have a look?” He waved his hand, causing a vortex to appear on the door. “Place your hand on the vortex, and you’ll be able to see.”

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. After a moment of thought, he extended his hand and placed it onto the vortex. In the instant that he touched it, his vision suddenly swam.

When it became clear, he was looking at a starry sky. It was vast and boundless, and there were no Mountains and Seas, nor were there any planets. There was only a boundless void, within which Meng Hao saw several gargantuan butterflies. The butterflies were so indescribably large that entire worlds existed on their wings!

There weren’t just worlds, there were cultivators!

As the butterflies flew through the starry sky, it was possible to detect lines stretching out behind them, connecting them to an enormous land mass, which they were dragging behind them.

That land mass was shaped like a person!!

The butterflies dragged the landmass through the starry sky, and as they passed through the void, the stars shattered, and the Heavens collapsed!

Meng Hao took a deep breath as the vision of the world faded away, and everything returned to normal. The door on the wall was still there, but the vortex was gone.

“They’re going to be here soon….” Shui Dongliu said, his voice reverberating through the Rebirth Cave.

“They’re coming from outside the 33 Heavens. When they arrive at Planet South Heaven, then South Heaven will be displaced. In that moment… the catastrophe will begin.” Meng Hao turned around again, and Shui Dongliu had vanished without a trace, although the echoes of his voice could still be heard.

Meng Hao stood there silently for a moment, looking at the door as it slowly faded away. The wall returned to normal, and Meng Hao stood there, lost in thought.

Meng Hao knew a lot about the history of the Mountain and Sea Realm, and knew that it was facing a grave crisis and catastrophe. He was also aware that… it had something to do with the copper mirror in his bag of holding.

“It’s coming, and there’s no hiding….” he murmured. “However, before it comes, there’s still time to get stronger.” Then he turned his head in the direction of the Ancient Dao Lakes, and his eyes gleamed with anticipation.

Beneath the Dao Lakes was the Divine Flame world, a place he very much looked forward to visiting again. The last time he had been there, he had braved great danger to extract a bit of the Essence of Divine Flame. In fact, that Essence of Divine Flame had become one of his trump cards.

Now, he would go back to visit the Ancient Dao Lakes again, and the Divine Flame world underneath them. This time… he would not only take away the Divine Flame, he planned to take away more, whatever he was capable of laying hands on….

To him, it was a location where he could vastly increase his battle prowess.

Meng Hao left the Rebirth Cave, filled with anticipation. He and the mastiff transformed into a beam of light that shot through the air at top speed. The clouds trembled, and colors flashed in the sky, and in the space of a few breaths of time, he had appeared in the air near the Ancient Dao Lakes.

He looked down at all the lakes, and his eyes came to rest on the largest of them. Eyes flickering with an intense, sharp gleam, he shot down from the sky like a meteor, kicking up a huge wind as he shot toward the central lake.

Closer and closer!

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# Chapter 1174: Dismemberment by Five Dragons! 1

The last time Meng Hao had come here, cultivators had been gathering in a search for good fortune. Occasionally, Dao Lakes would erupt. If Dao projections appeared, they offered a chance at enlightenment. Or if the surrounding cultivators were lucky, magical items might shoot out, which would be true good fortune.

Just as at that time, there were cultivators present at the lakes, searching for opportunities for good fortune. It was at this point that Meng Hao shot down from the sky like a meteor.

“What’s… what’s that?”

“A shooting star?”

“No, it’s a person. A cultivator! What’s… what’s he doing?” As people caught sight of what first appeared to be a shooting star, their eyes went wide and their jaws dropped. They had never even heard of someone using such a method to try to reach the central Dao lake.

After all, the pressure that weighed down on the region got more intense the closer one got to the center. Even Dao Seeking cultivators had to be careful. Furthermore, if you attempted to just fly down from up above, the effects would be even more severe; to the people present, it actually seemed like an impossibility.

And yet, that is exactly what they were seeing happen in front of their very eyes, causing everyone to gasp.

Rumbling sounds could be heard as Meng Hao shot down like a meteor toward the largest Dao lake, which was in the center of them all. He moved with incredible speed, and nothing could impede his passage. It almost seemed like there was no pressure in the area at all, although the truth of the matter was that the pressure which did exist was completely insignificant as far as he was concerned.

Meng Hao shot into the central lake, and the surface of the water virtually exploded up into the air. He shot down, and within the blink of an eye, was on the bottom of the lake where he spread his right hand out into a palm and pushed down onto the lake floor.

The sludge at the bottom of the lake writhed, and was then shoved away from Meng Hao's location, revealing a teleportation portal. Meng Hao stood on top of it, then stamped his right foot down, causing the portal to shine with scintillating light that even people beyond the surface of the lake could see.

In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao had vanished. When he reappeared, he was in the first level of the world down below, surrounded by mountains of magical items, and countless beasts who were in the process of carrying the treasures toward a huge door that hung in the middle of the air. The door itself was flanked by several huge beasts, which lay there dozing. A moment later though, they trembled as if with excitement, and opened their eyes.

When they saw Meng Hao, several of the beasts roared, but almost immediately, went as quiet as if someone had gripped their throats and covered their mouths. Their eyes went wide, and they didn't dare to make any more noise. They just lay there, staring at Meng Hao in terror and disbelief.

What they saw was azure light radiating off of Meng Hao, a light which next caused all of them to suddenly fly forward and prostrate themselves in front of him.

It wasn't just them. All of the beasts in sight dropped down in worship as soon as they saw Meng Hao. Their eyes shone with fear and shock, and they trembled in place. Meng Hao's aura filled with them with terror, as did the azure light.

Not even Meng Hao had imagined that such a thing would happen. As he glanced around thoughtfully at the Allheaven Dao Immortal light which surrounded him, the beasts joined their voices together and called out, "We offer greetings, Dao Immortal!!"

Eyes glittering, Meng Hao nodded slightly. Without saying a word, he shot past the prostrating beasts, entering the door and appearing in the second level beyond.

That was the level with a huge altar that resembled a huge mountain. There was also a beast there at the top of the mountain who was enormous, and emanated an ancient aura. After catching sight of Meng Hao, its eyes went wide with disbelief. It examined him for a few seconds, then took a deep breath.

"So, it's you again. You… have become an Allheaven Dao Immortal!!"

Meng Hao flew up to the top of the mountain and looked around. There was no sign of the Northern Reaches cultivator with whom he had challenged this trial by fire years before.

Seeing Meng Hao look around, the beast said, "He left."

Then it clasped hands and bowed.

"Greetings, exalted Dao Immortal!"

"I want to go to the next level!" Meng Hao replied calmly. This time, the beast said nothing to dissuade him. It immediately backed up, leaving the way open for Meng Hao to enter the passageway to the Divine Flame world.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, and his eyes flashed with determination. He shot forward, vanishing into the world of Divine Flame. The ancient beast remained behind, just as astonished as it had been moments before. When

Meng Hao first came here, it could never have imagined that he would end up amazing it so much.

“The first time he came, he could barely get through the second level.

“The second time he came, he was strong enough to take a bit of Divine Flame….

“I never thought that the third time he came, he would do so as an Allheaven Dao Immortal. In fact, his aura leaves me trembling and filled with fear. If he wanted to kill me… all it would take on his part would be a simple thought.” The beast took a deep breath and looked fearfully at the passageway leading to the Divine Flame world.

When Meng Hao appeared within the world of Divine Flame, he looked around and saw countless enormous pagodas, all of them surrounded by boundless Divine Flame.

In addition to the majestic flames which filled the world, Meng Hao could also see endless piles of bones. The previous times he had been in this place, his cultivation base had been too weak, and he had been in too much of a hurry, therefore, he hadn’t been able to examine them closely. But with his current cultivation base, he was not only able to see the bones scattered about below the pagodas, but could also see that the 990,000 pagodas themselves were made of bones.

“My cultivation base this time is much different than last time. I’m curious to find out what exists in this world of Divine Flame. I want to to see whether or not anything exists here that I didn’t spot last time!” Eyes flickering, he sent his divine sense out to fill this third level, the Divine Flame world. Not only could he see the vivid image of 990,000 pagodas, but, just as before, the enormous city in the middle of them all.

The city was pitch black, but covered with white vines and vegetation. Hovering in the air above it was a flame spark that seemed capable of burning for all eternity, a spark which cast boundless firelight into the world around it.

As Meng Hao's divine sense slowly spread out, he suddenly heard a familiar roar.

"Dao Fang, you must die!!

"You killed me, Dao Fang, and if I'm reincarnated, I'll definitely kill you!!

"The Immortal World is doomed to experience tribulation! The Immortal lands will grow old, and the Immortals will perish. But I refuse to give in!!

"I know the truth! No matter how long you suppress me, I won't admit defeat!

"Damned monkey! If I can get free, I'll have your hide!!

"If I'm transmigrated, I will slaughter myself out of this place! If my transmigration fails, I will fall into oblivion like all other living things, with virtually no hope of reawakening even after countless cycles of reincarnation. Therefore, I will leave a Dharmic decree for this place!

"My decree contains the Essence of my Dao flame, the last vestige of me, Huoyan Zi. I hope that countless years later, that vestige will still exist!" 2

Even with his current cultivation base, hearing the words still left Meng Hao completely shaken. The voice seemed to come from within the spark, a spark which also seemed to contain a vertical pupil inside of it.

The last time he had been here, it had been at this point that his divine sense felt as if it were being burned into ash, and he had been forced to give up. However this time, despite being shaken, he was able to continue to send his divine sense out. It passed the spark, and then proceed further on.

Meng Hao's face quickly flickered with surprise. On the previous two occasions in which he had come here, his divine sense had told him that this world was a small place. Now, though, as his divine sense spread out, he was shocked to find that this world… was actually far, far larger than he had realized!

There weren't just 990,000 pagodas!

Or perhaps it was more accurate to say that the 990,000 pagodas were simply one part of the world of Divine Flame. The world itself was divided into six regions!

Meng Hao was currently in the central region, which was surrounded by five other regions. If you looked closely, you would see that the six different regions were all connected. Shockingly, they formed… the shape of a person!!

Each region was filled with innumerable pagodas that almost seemed to weigh down like sealing marks. Most shocking of all was that each of the regions had a black city within it, above which was a burning spark!

Truth be told, that was not what astonished Meng Hao. What left him flabbergasted was that attached to each of the surrounding five regions was a war chariot. There were five war chariots, each one being pulled by an enormous, red-colored dragon. Those five enormous dragons appeared to be asleep, and as they lay there, they bore the semblance of five mountain ranges.

However, as soon as his divine sense passed over them, the enormous dragons… suddenly shivered, apparently having been stimulated. Simultaneously, an explosive, stifling power erupted out from all of them.

Meng Hao began to pant, and immediately retracted his divine sense. He waited by the exit for a bit, and after seeing that the five dragons apparently hadn’t awoken, he finally heaved a sigh of relief.

Those five dragons brimmed with an air of extermination that was even more terrifying than the Dao Realm. Meng Hao could sense that they exceeded even Fang Shoudao’s cultivation base.

Suddenly, an image appeared in his head, a vision of five roaring dragons, attached to war chariots. Those chariots were in the process of dismembering a gigantic, almighty figure!

Meng Hao took a deep breath, and his expression flickered. After standing there silently for a moment, his eyes glittered.

“Whoever Huoyan Zi was, the Essence of Divine Flame has been and will continue to be incredibly useful to me…. Therefore, it doesn’t matter how strange things get in here, I’m not going to give up on my idea of acquiring the entire Essence of Divine Flame!” The grandeur of the place filled Meng Hao’s heart with vigilance, and its bizarreness weighed down on him like pressure.

When he thought back to what he had accomplished the last time he had been here, he had to admit that ignorance was bliss. Had he known more about the situation, it would have been hard to avoid having misgivings.

1. This is a play on words. The real expression is dismemberment by five horses, a type of punishment in ancient times

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# Chapter 1175: Channeling the Spark!

Meng Hao's eyes glittered as he looked off toward the huge black city covered by white vegetation. Then he looked at the spark hovering above it, and his eyes gleamed with determination.

"No matter what, I'm going to get that spark!" he murmured. That was his goal in coming here; he wouldn't be content with merely replenishing his current Divine Flame. Although there was a lot of the stuff here, the amount he had acquired last time had been limited.

It was a mere strand of Essence. Even if he replenished it, the amount he would end up with in the end would still be limited, just as before. If he wanted more, he would need more of the Essence itself. That Essence… was located deeper in than his current location. It was located where the cities were located, and especially within those flame sparks.

Meng Hao flashed into motion as he headed deeper in. He stopped at the nearest pagoda, where he sat down cross-legged, unleashed the power of his cultivation base, and began to absorb more of the Divine Flame into the Essence which he already had.

Soon, he was completely engulfed in fire. However, the power of his cultivation base was far beyond what it had been last time he had been here. His facial expression didn't even change in the face of the Divine Flame, which he quickly absorbed.

After enough time went by for an incense stick to burn, he rose to his feet and proceeded to the next pagoda. Time passed in this fashion, and as he continuously absorbed more and more Divine Flame, the Essence of Divine Flame inside of him grew larger and more powerful.

So far, he was merely replenishing the Divine Flame, not gaining more overall Essence. It was a process which he couldn’t continue indefinitely. However, he wanted to proceed cautiously, and was using this method to get closer to the black-colored city, in order to observe the flame spark which floated above it.

It didn’t take long for half a month to go by. Meng Hao had passed through thousands of pagodas, continuously absorbing flames until his Divine Flame was now ten times larger than it had been when he had entered the place.

He could tell that the next time he unleashed the Essence of Divine Flame, its power would vastly exceed the last time he had done so, to a terrifying degree. Eventually he reached the point where he couldn’t absorb any more. Inwardly, he sighed.

He knew that he was at his limit, and if he wanted to break through to a higher level, he couldn’t just absorb the Divine Flame in the surroundings. He needed to get in deeper, and absorb the Essence itself.

“Those flame sparks seem strangely dangerous….” he thought as he sat there atop one of the pagodas, gazing at the black city off in the distance. There were still tens of thousands of pagodas in between him and the city. After a bit of thought, he proceeded onward, shooting along with such speed that he left behind afterimages. His determination was such that he ignored any feelings of crisis and charged ahead.

Divine Flame swirled around him, and even the sky was a sea of flames. However, Meng Hao flew through the fire at top speed, kicking up a huge wind as he passed, which in turn set the flames dancing. Soon he had passed more than 5,000 pagodas. Although the temperature of the flames continued to grow hotter, he didn’t slow down at all.

8,000. 10,000. 15,000. 20,000. 30,000….

Meng Hao sailed madly through the air, throwing the whole world of Divine Flame into chaos. Flames danced madly, and soon only 10,000 pagodas remained between him and the black city.

By now, the temperature was so high that sweat was dripping down his forehead, and he was panting slightly. Azure light sprang up around him as the power of an Allheaven Dao Immortal exploded out. He pressed onward, passing the final 10,000 pagodas to appear directly outside the black city!

Being this close up allowed Meng Hao to clearly sense its might and majesty. When he looked at the white vegetation which covered the walls, it filled him with a strange and odd sensation.

He took a deep breath, flashing through the air to appear atop the city wall. When he looked down into the city itself, his pupils constricted.

Instead of seeing residential buildings, he saw an enormous, sprawling structure that resembled an Imperial palace.

In the very center of the Imperial palace, in the very center of the city itself, was a collapsed temple. Shockingly, a huge golden throne could be seen in the rubble of that temple, upon which was lying… a pile of human skin!!

The skin was intact, and seemed to have belonged to an ancient old man. Apparently he had been skinned alive, and then that skin had been draped over the throne. It was a bizarre sight, and even more bizarre was that, hovering 3,000 meters directly above the throne, was none other than the flame spark!

Meng Hao's eyes went wide. More vigilant than ever, he sped forward, leaving afterimages behind. In the exact moment in which he left, a hand suddenly reached out of the flames and closed around the afterimage he had left behind, as if it had been attempting to rip his heart out of his body.

Meng Hao's eyes flickered with killing intent as he looked back at the hand of flame, which instantly began to retract back into the flames. However, Meng Hao stretched out his hand and made a grasping motion.

“Get out here!” he said, snorting coldly. The flames behind the hand suddenly trembled, and a figure was dragged out. It was a body composed entirely of fire, without facial features. Although it was shaped like a person, it was clearly no cultivator.

“Flame spirit!” he thought, eyes narrowing. The flame spirit screamed shrilly, causing the surrounding sea of flames to churn. Suddenly, hundreds upon hundreds of flame spirits appeared, brimming with brutality and rage.

Even the flame up above in the air flickered. The flame spirits then charged toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao frowned as the more than one thousand vicious flame spirits closed in on him. He extended his hand with a cold harrumph, performing an incantation gesture and then waving a finger. Immediately, numerous Immortal mountains appeared, shining with azure light as they crushed down toward the flame spirits. Miserable shrieks rang out as virtually all of the flame spirits were crushed. As they were destroyed, they transformed into Divine Flame which scattered about.

Meng Hao didn’t pause. He kept flying through the air directly toward the flame spark. As he neared it, he extended his hand and made a snatching motion. Immediately, a roar of rage could be heard from the sea of flames in the area.

“This is the Holy Land of the Five Dragons, and we are following the orders of the exalted Dao Fang, to suppress Huoyan Zi! Regardless of thine identity, begone immediately! Stay, and thou shalt be destroyed in body and soul!”

As the voice echoed out, the sea of flames churned, and a huge flame hand formed, which then shot toward Meng Hao. It looked almost like a hand which would appear in a Tribulation.

It bore down on Meng Hao as if to grab him and crush him out of existence. Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with a cold light, and he performed an incantation gesture with his left hand, then pointed out. Immediately, rumbling sounds could be heard, and a rift opened up in front of him. Blood

Demon hands appeared, which tore the rift open further, allowing the Blood Demon to charge out toward the flame hand with a powerful roar.

A huge boom rang out as the flame hand and the Blood Demon began to fight. At the same time, Meng Hao's right hand flashed like lightning, making contact with the flame spark. In that instant, his mind trembled, and cold laughter rang out from the sea of flames up above.

"Ignorant fool. So-called Immortal. Throughout the years, countless imbeciles like yourself have come from the Immortal World attempting to acquire the core Daoist teachings and doctrines of Huoyan Zi.

"In the end, none of them ever succeeded. The only thing they acquired was an early death. And now, nobody will be able to save you, either."

Even as Meng Hao touched the flame spark, something that looked like a vertical pupil opened up within the flame.

It looked at Meng Hao emotionlessly.

"Do you wish to acquire more Essence?

"Do you wish to acquire eternal life?

"Do you wish to have a Daoist magic that can exterminate the Heavens?

"Dao Fang once said that the Immortal World was doomed to experience tribulation. He said that the Immortal lands would grow old, and that the Immortals would perish. Impossible! I refuse to give in! I refuse to admit defeat!

"I can give you my Essence, I can give you my Daoist magic, and I can give you power. However, you must carry out my deepest desire. You must exterminate Dao Fang!!

"Slay Dao Fang!"

Meng Hao's mind trembled from the sheer madness of the voice. It contained boundless hatred and obsession, and as it filled Meng Hao's mind, it also seemed to influence the lands of Divine Flame around him. The fire raged higher up into the sky.

At the same time, the flame spark shrank down into his palm, fusing into his body, boring into him, becoming… a part of him!

Apparently, the flame didn’t care whether or not Meng Hao agreed; it fused into him. If it succeeded, then on some level, Huo Yanzi could be considered to have been reincarnated. Even if that reincarnation was merely as one of Meng Hao’s Essences, he would gladly accept that.

If the process failed… then Meng Hao would die. Then the flame would wait for the next Immortal to come and pass on its legacy. Eventually, someone would come who would be the successor of this Essence!

The world of the Divine Flames churned. Shockingly, innumerable flames suddenly began to surge through the air, shooting directly toward… Meng Hao!

If you could look down at the scene from up above, it would be more clear what was happening. The sea of flames was shrinking, with Meng Hao being the center. All the fire was now being sucked into him.

He was on fire, and a roaring bellow echoed out from his lips. Flames erupted out from inside of him and burned out, and he was wracked with indescribable pain. The feeling of imminent death filled him.

He knew that he had two paths stretching out in front of him now. If he succeeded, then he would be able to truly control this Essence, and would be far more powerful than before. If he failed, then he would be transformed into ash!

There was no third option!

The cold voice once again rang out from the sea of flames: “Throughout all the years, no one has ever succeeded. I’m looking forward to seeing you burned alive.” Apparently, the owner of that voice had seen many cultivators like Meng Hao die while trying to accept the legacy of this Essence.

Meng Hao’s eyes were bright red, and it was impossible to tell what part of that red was blood, and what was flame. His body was withering, his hair burning. Even his bag of holding seemed incapable of standing up to the force, and was starting to crumble. Meng Hao, sensing this, tossed it away from him. Understanding his intention, the mastiff let out an anxious howl and caught the bag.

“Trifling Essence of Divine Flame, you think you can do anything to me?!” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. He could sense the impending crisis, and yet to him, it was nothing compared to what he had experienced in the Windswept Realm!

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# Chapter 1176: Great Circle: Fleshly body!!

Meng Hao’s eyes were bright red, and his clothes were burning away, revealing his powerful body. He was undergoing a baptism of Divine Flame, and was surrounded by an endless sea of fire.

The sea of flames roared toward him, pouring into his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. A fierce expression appeared on his face as he rotated his cultivation base, closing off all of his orifices, even the pores on his skin.

“The Divine Flame might be powerful, but it’s not invincible. I’ll use this flame to refine my body, to take myself to the next level!” He waved both hands, causing his Ancient Realm fleshly body Soul Lamps to suddenly appear.

He had nine in total, but only two were currently lit. The other seven were dark.

An Ancient Realm fleshly body like Meng Hao’s was a rare thing, and was in fact in the anti-Ancient Realm. His Ancient Realm fleshly body Soul Lamps started out dark, and were then lit aflame!

As his fleshly body became more powerful, and as he practiced cultivation, he would light those Ancient Realm fleshly body Soul Lamps, one by one!

“Refine!!” he roared, causing the flames to begin to spin around him. They were incapable of entering his body, but instead, began to roast it from the outside.

He trembled, and quickly performed some double-handed incantation gestures. He wasn’t using some sort of body-refinement magic, but rather… a pill concocting technique!

Meng Hao’s Dao of alchemy was one in which he could use Heaven and Earth as his pill furnace, and his body as the medicinal pill! In that way, pill concocting techniques could be used to refine his body. However, what he was doing in this case, he was not using Heaven and Earth as the pill furnace, but instead… his own body! His body was both the pill furnace and the medical pill, as he attempted to use the power of the surrounding flames to make himself even stronger!

Shocking rumbling sounds echoed out. Meng Hao’s eyes were closed, and his body was bright red as he continuously performed double-handed incantation seals. His hands moved so fast they blurred, casting enchantments not on his surroundings, but on himself.

Even the guardian of the place, who still remained hidden, was shocked. However, he quickly began to laugh coldly.

“No one can succeed. With the curse of the exalted Dao Fang in place, there is no one in the Mountain and Sea Realm who can fuse with the flame spark of the renegade Huoyan Zi!”

Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly snapped open, and they shone with bright red light. Staring up into the empty sky, he said, “Say that again after I absorb it!”

Although he couldn’t see the person who was speaking, that guardian was as shocked as before at the energy which was rising up from Meng Hao.

He threw his head back and roared as his fleshly body underwent continuous refinement. As the flame sea around him raged, as the Essence battered him… his third Soul Lamp suddenly lit up!

When that happened, rumbling booms echoed out from inside him. His body became mightier than before, his fleshly body power having broken through from the previous level. He was now far stronger than before!!

As his fleshly body grew stronger, he became increasingly capable of withstanding the sea of flames! However, as long as he had the flame spark within him, the surrounding fire would eternally burn him. Either he would be transformed into ashes, or… he would eventually completely absorb the sea of flames.

“Refining my body was the first step. Only by getting my body to the proper level can I successfully absorb the Divine Flame. My body is like a pill furnace; if it takes too much heat, it will explode!” He gritted his teeth, and his expression twisted. He rotated his cultivation base fully, fighting back against the sea of flames which sought to bore into him, and building up Immortal power within his flesh and blood to once again refine himself!

Booms echoed out as the sea of flames engulfed him. It was almost as if it really wished to melt him into a medicinal pill!

The mastiff howled anxiously, but couldn’t get near. Meng Hao had already transmitted strict orders to it that it must not get too close to him.

Meng Hao was rapidly withering, and just when it seemed like he couldn’t take it any more, his eyes snapped open yet again. He threw his head back and bellowed as a fourth Soul Lamp flickered to life.

The lighting of that Soul Lamp gave him a bit of breathing room. His body was now almost doubly as powerful as before. His eyes glittered as he performed more double-handed incantation gestures with even greater speed, producing even more sealing marks.

“Bring it on!” he cried, waving both arms, allowing the sea of flames to once again engulf him….

Soon, his fifth Soul Lamp was burning!!

His energy soared to a terrifying degree, and that wasn’t because of his cultivation base. Instead… it came from the terrifying qi and blood of his fleshly body!

The power on display caused the hidden guardian's face to fall. Suddenly, he appeared out in the open, a middle-aged man wearing golden armor. He looked like a celestial warrior, and currently, his expression was one of complete astonishment.

He could never have imagined that Meng Hao would actually be able to last this long. In the past, nobody had ever been able to last more than ten or so breaths of time before being killed.

"The flame spark is eternal," the guardian said coldly, looking at Meng Hao as if he were a dead man. "The Divine Flame is boundless. Even if you hold on for longer, all it means is that the pain that you endure will increase."

Almost as soon as the words left his mouth, Meng Hao's eyes opened again. He looked through the sea of flames at the guardian and smiled slightly. Because of the pain he was enduring, the smile seemed especially ferocious.

"If I'm not mistaken, you can't do anything to me while I'm in the middle of absorbing the flame spark," he said. "In that case… why don't you just sit back and enjoy the show? Watch… how this flame spark is supposed to be used. Watch… how to absorb all of the flame sea in this place. I'll suck it all in. After that…. Watch as I cut you down!"

The decisiveness in Meng Hao's voice caused the guardian's face to flicker. What Meng Hao had said was correct; he couldn't interfere with the absorption process. The Divine Flame was in its most wild state, and regardless of what Meng Hao was doing, if he got too close, the flame would go even crazier.

After all, the flame spark contained the will of Huoyan Zi. Normally, that will was kept in a state of suppression. However, when it came time to pass the legacy on to an Immortal, it would erupt wildly.

Indeed, the guardian… didn't dare to get too close. He could only wait until Meng Hao died amidst accepting the legacy.

His face flickered as rumbling sounds echoed out from Meng Hao, who was now withering even more; his qi and blood having almost completely burned away. However, it was at this point that his sixth Soul Lamp lit up!!

When that happened, Meng Hao began panting raggedly. Adding a sixth Soul Lamp only meant that the time that he could endure the Divine Flame had been extended. However, he was still forced to use it for purposes of exterior refinement; he still didn’t dare to absorb it internally. If the flame raged on both the inside and outside simultaneously in his current state, he would die beyond the shadow of a doubt.

“I need to be stronger. REFINE!!” The speed of his incantation gestures increased. In order to refine his fleshly body to increased heights of power, he even went as far as to stimulate the flame spark inside of him. That in turn caused the sea of flames around him to grow more intense. Boundless fire raged around him, causing both the mastiff and the guardian to back up.

Meng Hao looked like little more than a sack of bones. However, his eyes shone brightly as his seventh Soul Lamp suddenly lit up.

In the instant that the seventh Soul Lamp came to life, Meng Hao’s fleshly body experienced an unprecedented increase in power. The sound of his heartbeat pounded like thunder. He was now several times stronger than before, so much so that if he were to now encounter the Echelon cultivator from the First Mountain, Dao-Heaven, a single punch is all it would take to cause him to cough up blood…

His fleshly body was now powerful to an incredible degree, and was continuing to grow even stronger. To Meng Hao, this world of Divine Flame was a location of incredible good fortune when it came to his fleshly body!

Of course, that came with the assumption that Meng Hao would be able to fully absorb the Essence of Divine Flame afterward. If he couldn’t… it wouldn’t matter how strong his fleshly body got, it would all be in vain!

“I can light another!” he said. He was on the verge of being completely withered up, and was panting. Although his fleshly body was at a state of incredible power, the flame of his life force was weak. The sea of flames continued to refine his fleshly body, and yet it was simultaneously consuming his life force.

The continuous increases in fleshly body power were insufficient to replenish the life force that had been exhausted. Not even the recovery power of his Eternal stratum could match the destruction wreaked by the Essence of Divine Flame. Just as Meng Hao's vision began to swim, he smacked his chest with his hand, stimulating his heart, which surged with power, causing the qi and blood flow within him to speed up. That in turn caused his fleshly body to burst with power.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

In that critical moment, his eighth fleshly body Soul Lamp lit up!!

In that instant, his fleshly body power reaching a Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering level. It had achieved the peak of the Ancient Realm, and was just a step away from being equivalent to the great circle of the Ancient Realm.

“Useless,” the guardian said, staring at Meng Hao. “What you're doing is like drinking poison when you're thirsty. The sea of flames is boundless, and moments from now, I can watch as you burn away into nothing more than specks of ash.” Although the man was actually inwardly shocked, he still believed that it was impossible for anyone to overcome the curse of the exalted Dao Fang.

Meng Hao looked up through the flames at the man.

“Well then, watch carefully,” he said, voice hoarse. He suddenly caused his cultivation base to cease any sort of resistance against the sea of flames. He opened his pores and orifices, allowing the sea of flames to suddenly wash through him with wild abandon!

Pain filled him, and he trembled violently, gritting his teeth. This type of pain far exceeded the type he had felt during the body refinement. Thankfully, his body was much stronger than before, otherwise, the sudden onslaught would have transformed him into ash within a few breaths of time.

The flame spark inside of him seemed to be calling the Divine Flame, causing it to seethe. Meng Hao was the center of it all, and it was as if the flames had suddenly found the place they had been seeking to go all along.

As they simultaneously poured into him, his cultivation base erupted with the power of an Allheaven Dao Immortal. Azure light shone out, and his third Nirvana Fruit was more fully absorbed!

When that happened, he went from being sixty to seventy percent of an Allheaven Dao Immortal to even higher. The sea of flames around him roiled as it poured into his body.

Shockingly, he was now using the flame spark to further refine his third Nirvana Fruit!

First he refined his body, and then he refined his Nirvana Fruit. This was the idea that Meng Hao had come up with, to borrow the power of the Essence of Divine Flame to grow more and more powerful, all for the purpose of fully absorbing the Nirvana Fruit!

“That azure light… it’s….” The middle-aged guardian’s eyes went wide. Although he had seen the same thing earlier, he hadn’t been paying very close attention. Now, the azure light glittered resplendently within the sea of flames, forcing him to pay it full heed. His face fell.

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# Chapter 1177: True Dao Immortal!

“Allheaven Dao Immortal!!

“Impossible!” the guardian said hoarsely. “How could there still be an Allheaven Dao Immortal in the Mountain and Sea Realm? Impossible!!” He hadn’t paid any attention to Meng Hao’s azure glow before. After all, there were many Daoist magics and defensive magical items that could cast off green or azure glows. It wouldn’t be realistic to think of Allheaven Immortals every time such a light appeared.

From what he could recall, Allheaven Dao Immortals were the stuff of legend, and only almighty figures could be counted among their ranks. As a simple guard that had been conscripted into service here, Allheaven Dao Immortals were the type of existence that was far above and beyond his station.

If Meng Hao weren’t currently engulfed in the sea of flames, shining with an azure light that outshone the Divine Flame, thus provoking a close inspection by the guardian, then he would never have recognized that it was the light of an Allheaven Dao Immortal.

A cold gleam flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes, and rumbling sounds emanated out from his fleshly body. His cultivation base soared, and his Nirvana Fruit fused more fully into him, thanks to the Divine Flame.

Soon, he had reached seventy percent!

Trembling, he threw his head back and roared. The azure light shining off of him grew more scintillating, spreading out in all directions with incredible strength that seemed capable of suppressing the Divine Flame. In fact, the flames shooting toward Meng Hao even paused in place.

However, no matter how powerful that azure light became, the flame spark inside of Meng Hao continued to pull at the Divine Flame, exerting more force, causing it to move once again. All of the flames in the entire world trembled.

Meng Hao shook violently within the sea of flames. He was reaching the point where he couldn’t hold on much longer. His body was beginning to crack, and the Divine Flame was making it difficult to rotate his cultivation base.

Were it not for the presence of the azure light, Meng Hao would already be dead.

“Allheaven Dao!” Meng Hao roared in this critical moment. His third Nirvana Fruit fused even more. More azure light emanated out from him, reaching a distance of thirty meters!

Within that thirty meters, nothing existed but a world of azure light!

By now, his third Nirvana Fruit was eighty percent absorbed!!

Normally speaking, the extra ten percent which had just fused would have taken a month of work. But now, with the burning Divine Flame, the process was completed in a flash. This could be seen as an opportunity for Meng Hao. However, that opportunity was backed by the shadow of death.

With eighty percent of the power of an Allheaven Dao Immortal, Meng Hao could relax for a moment. His Eternal stratum worked rapidly to heal his life force, and yet even still, he could sense the impending threat of doom from the Divine Flame.

“You’re going to die for sure!” said the guardian. “Who cares if you’re an Allheaven Dao Immortal? I never imagined that after standing guard here for all these years, I would eventually be able to see an Allheaven Dao Immortal burned alive right in front of me!” The man threw his head back and laughed.

“You’re getting excited a bit too early,” Meng Hao said in a grating voice. His eyes shone with determination as he extended his right hand and pushed down hard onto his forehead.

Incredible power surged into his mind, and it was almost as if he were attacking his third Nirvana Fruit. His whole body shook, and he coughed up three mouthfuls of blood. Almost instantly, the blood was scorched into a blood mist, and Meng Hao’s body withered even more. However, he was able to use the power his strike unleashed to further absorb the Nirvana Fruit.

Ninety percent!!

Ninety percent of an Allheaven Dao Immortal!

Azure light exploded around him. No longer did it reach out to 30 meters, but rather, 300 meters, an increase of tenfold. At the same time, Meng Hao’s life force exploded up, and was significantly restored.

He panted for a moment, then threw his head back and roared, a roar which caused tens of thousands of the surrounding 990,000 pagodas to collapse.

This development caused the guardian’s face to fall. He stared at Meng Hao in complete shock, almost unable to believe the things that Meng Hao was doing. All of a sudden, his confidence was beginning to waver, and he had the feeling that perhaps… Meng Hao might succeed after all.

“Impossible,” the man murmured, his eyes filling with a staunch gleam. “The exalted Dao Fang has a towering cultivation base. His curse cannot be broken by anyone in the Mountain and Sea Realm! He said that nobody can acquire this legacy, so therefore, nobody can!”

“If the curse of Dao Fang really is impossible to break,” Meng Hao said, “well then… what are you guarding, and why does this place even need a guardian!?” He extended his right hand and pushed forward, causing the Divine Flame to seethe and then suddenly stop.

Within the 300 meters of azure light, not a bit of Divine Flame existed. It had all been expelled outside the perimeter, allowing Meng Hao to finally breathe a sigh of relief.

His Eternal stratum surged, restoring his body and replenishing his life force. Combined with the power of an Allheaven Dao Immortal, it ensured that Meng Hao’s energy rose higher and higher. Colors flashed up above, and although there was usually no weather in this place, roiling clouds materialized out of nowhere, writhing in the sky.

An indescribable energy was now rising up from Meng Hao.

It was nothing more than energy, but it caused the guardian’s face to fall. He began to pant as he looked at Meng Hao, eyes wide. He could sense the soaring rise in Meng Hao’s cultivation base, and it filled him with intense fear.

The combination of explosive growth in fleshly body and cultivation base at the same time caused incredible pressure to radiate out.

Meng Hao raised his hand, and the mastiff also began to emanate an azure light. The azure light obeyed Meng Hao’s will, blessing the mastiff, giving it the added protection of an Allheaven Dao Immortal.

The mastiff let out a long howl of joy, then transformed into a beam of light that shot toward Meng Hao and flew into his bag of holding. Afterward, Meng Hao patted his bag of holding and produced a new set of clothing, which he donned. Then he looked up at the middle-aged guardian.

“It doesn’t matter if you’re a bit stronger,” the man roared, glaring at Meng Hao, “you still can’t absorb the entire sea of flames. Even if the flame spark can’t kill you, you still won’t be able to take it away!”

“You’re right, I can’t take it away now,” Meng Hao said. “But… I will soon. Don’t worry, I’ll let you watch, and then I’ll close your eyes forever!” With that Meng Hao closed his own eyes.

Instantly, an azure magical symbol appeared on his forehead, not the Echelon mark, but rather the symbol of an Allheaven Immortal.

It was circular, and was divided into nine complete sections and one incomplete section. However, that incomplete section was rapidly filling in.

In the space of a few breaths, the final ten percent of the azure magical symbol began to glow with blinding azure light.

The light was now several times more intense than before. It… almost looked like an azure sun.

Meng Hao’s cultivation base rocketed up with increasing power. Heaven and Earth trembled, and the entire world shook as ripples spread out in all directions.

At the same time, the numerous pagodas in the world began to collapse one by one under the increasing pressure of Meng Hao’s energy.

Thousands. Tens of thousands. A hundred thousand. Two hundred thousand….

As the pagodas collapsed, the whole world descended into rumbling that sounded like screeching roars that emanated from deep underground. Heaven and Earth shook violently, almost as if doomsday had arrived.

All of that was because of Meng Hao!

All of that was because Meng Hao was… an Allheaven Dao Immortal!

The azure light spread out in all directions, and as it did, the Divine Flame shot back to avoid it. In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao was the only person in the entire 3,000-meter area.

Even the guardian was forced to retreat, feeling more astonished than ever.

Meng Hao’s body emanated boundless azure light, as if he were an azure-colored sun. His energy rocketed up, his cultivation base exploded, and he felt more powerful than he ever had in his entire life.

If he met a Quasi-Dao Guru Heavencloud in his current state, he was completely confident that he could crush him as easily as dried weeds.

He could even kill… Dao Realm experts, as long as they had 2 Essences or less!

Meng Hao’s eyes snapped open, and azure lightning shot out of them, smashing through the void and slamming into the middle-aged guardian’s eyes. The lightning smashed his mind, crushing him like a wet branch.

He screamed miserably, and blood sprayed out of his mouth as he tumbled backward, accompanied by terrifying booms. A single glance forced him backward by seven steps, after which he exploded into bits.

As his Nascent Divinity flew out, it was clear a single thought on Meng Hao’s part could cause the surrounding azure lightning to destroy him.

“Like I said, I’m going to let you watch me take away the flame spark,” Meng Hao said coolly, hovering there as if he were the most supreme being in Heaven and Earth.

The guardian’s Nascent Divinity trembled in intense fear of Meng Hao. He still almost couldn’t believe that he… who had guarded this land for so long, who had a cultivation base in the great circle of the Ancient Realm, would actually… have his fleshly body destroyed by a single look from Meng Hao. Even his Nascent Divinity could be killed at any moment.

“Allheaven Dao Immortal… so this… is an Allheaven Dao Immortal!

“Back in the Paragon Immortal Realm, they weren’t Paragons, and yet, even Paragons had to respect them. No wonder they were called the most terrifying slaughter cultivators…. Allheaven Dao Immortals!!”

The man’s Nascent Divinity was trembling as he stared at Meng Hao. His mind spun, and he just couldn’t believe that he had actually seen a legendary Allheaven Dao Immortal. Furthermore… it was not an awakening Allheaven Dao Immortal, but a complete, fully awoken, completely powered up…

Allheaven Dao Immortal!

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# Chapter 1178: Peak!

The middle-aged guardian was mistaken. He had never seen an Allheaven Dao Immortal, so he didn't know… that even if you said Meng Hao was the first Allheaven Immortal, and that later there might be a second or a third or even more, Meng Hao would still be the most powerful type, an Allheaven Dao Immortal!

Furthermore, he was one of the most powerful Allheaven Dao Immortals in history.

And that was because… of his fleshly body!

The strength of his fleshly body made his Allheaven Dao Immortal battle prowess even more powerful.

"There's no need to rush the absorption of the Divine Flame…." he said softly. "I can still become more powerful!" He could sense that, based on the boundless Immortal power within him, if he wanted to, he could grow to a size of well over 3,000 meters tall.

"My fleshly body… still has an unlit Soul Lamp. I wonder… how powerful I'll be after I light all of them!" A strange light appeared in Meng Hao's eyes as nine Soul Lamps materialized around him. Eight of them were now lit for all eternity, but the ninth was still unlit.

He looked thoughtfully at that ninth Soul Lamp for a moment, then waved his right hand. Instantly, the 3,000-meter azure light vanished. Likewise, the pressure weighing down on the sea of flames vanished, allowing it to rage with fury.

Instantly, the entire area was completely engulfed in fire that obscured all else. The guardian in Nascent Divinity form couldn't even catch a glimpse of Meng Hao.

He remained within the sea of flames, eyes closed, allowing the fire to enter his body. However, he prevented the flame spark from absorbing the flames, and instead allowed them to build up inside of him.

More Divine Flame poured into him, raging, sweeping about inside of him, pouring through his qi passageways, inundating his internal organs, filling his flesh and blood. It even seeped into his bones.

Meng Hao began trembling slightly, but his expression was the same as usual. Keeping the flame spark sealed, he allowed more and more Divine Flame to build up inside of him, until he was like a being of fire. His flesh, bones, qi passageways, and the other parts of him all contained Divine Flame.

And the amount only continued to increase. If you likened Meng Hao to a bottle, then at the moment, that bottle was now more than forty percent full of Divine Flame.

And he wasn’t finished!

Bizarre light gleamed in his eyes as he sucked in the Divine Flame as if he were a black hole. None of it was allowed into the flame spark, but instead, built up inside of him. The sensation of burning increased as the flames did. Meng Hao was using this method… to temper his fleshly body!

BOOM!

Fifty percent. Sixty percent. Seventy percent!

This process of body tempering left him trembling. The difficulty was almost impossible to describe. Were it not for the fact that Meng Hao already had an incredibly powerful fleshly body, plus the power of an Allheaven Dao Immortal, then he would not have been able to take the intense heat of the flames.

However, in order to strengthen his fleshly body, and in order to take full advantage of this instance of good fortune, he sucked in more. Rumbling sounds echoed out as the boundless Divine Flames coursing through him pushed him from seventy percent to eighty!

The process continued rapidly, until he was at ninety percent!

In that moment, he shook violently and coughed up a huge mouthful of blood. Even though he was a creature of flesh and blood, he had absorbed the Divine Flame by ninety percent, causing Heaven-shaking, Earth-toppling transformations. He was almost like a flame spirit now, except with a body of flesh and blood.

“I can keep going. Bring it on!” Meng Hao eyes shone with bright light as he looked at his nine Soul Lamps. A tiny flame had already appeared on the last lamp, and it was growing larger; soon the lamp would be completely lit. Eyes gleaming with determination, he gritted his teeth and sucked in more flame.

Rumbling sounds echoed out, causing everything to shake violently. Pagodas toppled, and the sky appeared to be on the verge of being ripped apart to reveal the lands up above.

After all, this location was underground!

Meng Hao threw his head back and roared as the Divine Flame within him finally reached… one hundred percent!

Each and every part of him was now Divine Flame. At the same time, his ninth Soul Lamp flared to life!!

When that happened, rumbling sounds filled his entire body. His heart began to beat with more power than before, and even his qi and blood caused the outside world to dim. A terrifying power rose up from him, a power that had reached a Heaven-defying level!

You could say that from the beginning of the Mountain and Sea Realm until the modern day, it would be easier to find a phoenix feather or a qilin horn than to find someone with a fleshly body as powerful as this. If he took a single further step forward, he would have a Dao Realm fleshly body!

As for Dao Realm fleshly bodies… there was no need to even mention how rare such a thing was in the Mountain and Sea Realm. Even in the Paragon Immortal Realm, the only people who possessed bodies like that were Paragons!

Only Paragons could take their fleshly bodies into the Dao Realm!

That was because when the fleshly body achieved the Dao, then even if Heaven and Earth rotted away, that fleshly body would not. The only way it could be destroyed was in battle; neither the ravages of time nor the power of Heaven and Earth could destroy it.

That was the Dao Realm fleshly body!

And right now, Meng Hao was only a step away from exactly that!!

His eyes snapped open, and he threw his head back and roared, causing the land overhead to crumble; dirt and rocks fell down, and although the canopy above didn’t collapse, the middle-aged guardian outside of the sea of flames was even more shocked than before.

In response to Meng Hao’s roar, the sea of flames around him churned, and hundreds of thousands of pagodas throughout the world toppled over into pieces.

Up in the second level, the ancient beast trembled as the whole level quaked. The first level up above was the same, and even the Dao lakes beyond that were vibrating. Numerous Dao lakes erupted, shooting magical items and Dao projections up into the air, to the shock and delight of the gathered cultivators.

Within the world of Divine Flame, Meng Hao’s roars echoed out as his Allheaven Dao Immortal cultivation base exploded with power. There was no azure light though, and he now did nothing to prevent the Divine Flame from pouring into the flame spark.

At long last, the flame spark could absorb the flames it had been blocked off from before. All of the fire outside of Meng Hao surged toward him in waves.

He stretched his arms wide, allowing it to fully flow into the flame spark, which desired to consume all the fire in the world.

“Flame spark… you’re mine!” he said, waving his sleeve and rising up into the air. The sea of flames rose up with him, and from a distance, the flames formed an image that looked like a mountain. The sight would be shocking to anyone who could lay eyes on it.

If you looked even closer, it would appear as if Meng Hao had become an invincible bird, with the sea of flames being his wings as he soared through the Heavens, laying waste to everything.

All of the Divine Flame in the world began to converge, shrinking down and pouring into Meng Hao. The flame spark inside of him was shining brightly, and soon, an Essence aura began to emanate off of him.

That essence was no longer just a sliver. It was majestic and boundless, true Essence. Flame Essence. Henceforth, this would be Meng Hao’s first Essence.

Meng Hao was the only cultivator ever to be able to control Essence while in the Immortal Realm!

He threw his head back and roared, and the flame sea around him slowly shrank. It was now seventy percent of its original size, then fifty, and then forty!

It was a thoroughly shocking sight. The guardian stared at Meng Hao absorbing the flames, and his previous conviction was now completely shaken.

“The curse of the exalted Dao Fang…” he murmured. “Nobody can acquire the flame spark… how could this be happening…?” By now, the sea of flames was thirty percent of its original size!

The more Meng Hao absorbed, the more resplendent his internal flame spark became. By now, the sea of flames could barely harm him at all, and after he completely absorbed it, fire would never be able to hurt Meng Hao again.

Rumbling filled the entire world. The air shook as the sea of flames once again shrank down!

Twenty percent!!

Only twenty percent of the sea of flames remained. The eternal Divine Flame within the world region was being completely absorbed by Meng Hao. Although this was only a single one of the flame sparks, even someone in the Dao Realm would lust insatiably lust after it.

Ten percent!!

Brilliant light shone off of Meng Hao, and the flame sea continued to shrink. The Essence aura on him grew more intense, and everything around him shook violently!

In the space of a few breaths, the sea of flames shrank down into a mere strand of Divine Flame, which then merged into Meng Hao. At that point, this part of the world of Divine Flame didn’t contain even a single flame!

As of this day, the sea of flames which had existed for so long, and burned eternally… was now gone. There was no Divine Flame, and the lands below were now completely revealed, and at the same time, all of the pagodas collapsed into rubble.

100,000. 200,000. 300,000… in the blink of an eye, massive rumbling could be heard echoing out until the entire place… didn’t have a single pagoda standing in it!

Feeling completely shaken, Meng Hao closed his eyes. The flame spark inside of him had absorbed all of the Divine Flame in the entire world. As of this moment, the will of Huoyan Zi approved of Meng Hao, and did not resist him at all. Instead, it merged into him.

When that happened, the Essence aura within Meng Hao was eternally stabilized!

He slowly opened his eyes. This was his most powerful state. Allheaven Dao Immortal. The great circle of the Ancient Realm fleshly body. A complete Essence of Divine Flame!

“Impossible!!” the guardian shrieked. In the instant that he spoke, the azure lightning which surrounded him transformed into numerous azure snakes that stabbed into his Nascent Divinity. To the man’s shock, his Nascent Divinity faded away into the air. Meng Hao had lived up to his word, and allowed the guardian to witness him accepting the legacy of the flame spark!

Meng Hao hovered in midair, looking around until his gaze came to fall on the lands down below. Off in the distance, there were other lands of Divine Flame, and other flame sparks!

However, in the very moment in which he looked off into the distance, there was something that filled Meng Hao with a sensation of crisis. He spun and looked down at the pitch-black city down below, his eyes shining like blades.

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# Chapter 1179: The Curse of Dao Fang!

Without the sea of flames covering it, the black city was now much more clearly visible. White vegetation still clung to the walls, and there was still a palace in the middle.

At first, it didn’t look much different than the first time he had laid eyes on it.

Meng Hao frowned as he examined it more closely. Then his eyes widened as he realized that something had changed. The pile of human skin which had been draped on the huge throne…

was now gone!

Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a cold light, and he sent his divine sense out in all directions, backed by the power of an Allheaven Dao Immortal. Soon, his frown deepened as he realized that there weren’t any clues to be found about what had happened.

The sense of crisis still existed within him, and was growing stronger. He even had the sensation that someone was watching him.

“The curse of Dao Fang….” He thought back to what the guardian had said before dying. Now that he thought about it, he had met Dao Fang. Although he hadn’t seen what he looked like, when he experienced that mental journey out into the void beyond the Windswept Realm, he knew that he had encountered an entity that existed atop the 33 Heavens. That entity’s name was… Dao Fang!

Meng Hao didn’t have a very high opinion of this Dao Fang. After all, based on his understanding of the Mountain and Sea Realm, the 33 Heavens were the first barrier sealing the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Dao Fang was the second barrier!

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he slowly backed up. However, in that moment, the air around him suddenly seemed to be sealed, causing the exit to be completely wiped away.

On the second level of the underground world, the ancient beast gasped. It suddenly rose to its feet as it realized that the passageway to the third level had collapsed noiselessly.

Meng Hao stopped in place, frowning. The sensation of crisis within him exploded with intensity. His pupils constricted, and he looked down at the black-colored city. This time, he couldn’t hold back from gasping.

What he saw was that the color of the city itself was now changing. It was no longer black, but instead, pale white. It almost had the luster of skin. Furthermore, the white vegetation on the city walls was gradually turning brown, almost as if they were blood vessels within the skin.

It wasn’t just the city walls that were changing. The whole city, including the palace and all the surrounding buildings, was all changing color to pale white. Then, Meng Hao’s eyes widened as the entire city began to move!!

It was slowly twitching; the city walls, the palace, the land, everything was moving. Furthermore, an aura of life suddenly erupted out from the city.

It was as if the entire city was no longer an inanimate object, but a living thing!

As the city spasmed, the city wall emitted rumbling sounds. Odd cracks spread out, and the ground quaked. Shockingly, part of the city wall ripped out and began to rise up, transforming into a huge arm. Another part of the city wall also lurched, and then transformed into a second arm.

The other sections of the city wall rumbled as they transformed into legs. As they rose up from the ground, the palace also jerked as it became a torso, with the central part of the palace turning into an Imperial crown!

As for the enormous throne which was in the palace, it turned into a face!

RUMBLE!!

The entire city transformed in front of Meng Hao's eyes, becoming an enormous giant with white skin, fully 30,000 meters tall, causing everything to shake violently. It actually… didn't even look like a city any more. It looked like an actual giant!

Its body was made of flesh and blood, and the blood vessels were even visible on its skin. Its eyes glowed with coldness as it stood there looking down at Meng Hao.

When Meng Hao looked up at the face, he realized that this giant was none other than the pile of human skin he had seen earlier!!

The skin hadn't left, but had instead used some special technique to merge with the city and transform into a giant. Or maybe… the city was actually materialized from a giant to begin with!

Perhaps there was another explanation. Maybe the human skin and the city itself were both parts of the curse of Dao Fang!

Meng Hao wasn't sure which of these possibilities was correct. However, he was currently filled with a sense of deadly crisis. He knew that this giant… was a formidable foe!

He suddenly smiled, and his eyes glinted with the desire to do battle. He was now an Allheaven Dao Immortal, with a fleshly body in the great circle of the Ancient Realm, with the true Essence of Divine Flame.

All of that placed Meng Hao at the ultimate peak. He could fight with the Dao Realm, so this trifling giant only made him want to do battle, to test out his new cultivation base breakthrough. He wanted to prove… exactly how powerful he was!

A powerful voice rumbled out of the giant’s mouth, crackling like thunder, filled with awe-inspiring power like Heavenly might. The ground trembled, and everything shook. “Hand over the flame spark, and you will merely be killed. Force me to take it, and I’ll kill your whole clan!”

Meng Hao looked at the giant, smiled coldly, and then spoke equally domineering words. “Become my follower, and I won’t kill you! Refuse, and I’ll destroy you in body and soul!”

The giant looked coldly at Meng Hao, then raised his right hand and clenched it into a fist. The air seemed to be on the verge of exploding as incredible power erupted out. He punched toward Meng Hao, and his fist moved with incredible speed, seemingly encompassing the entire world.

Meng Hao snorted coldly. Instead of backing up, he also clenched his right hand, punching out with the Life-Extermination Fist.

When the two fists slammed into each other, a massive rumbling echoed out. The land between them shattered, and a huge crevice opened up. Meng Hao sailed over it, landing on the giant’s hand and racing up toward its neck. Even as he ran, he performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, causing numerous Immortal mountains to descend. Then he punched out with the Self-Immolation Fist.

The giant’s eyes flickered and it trembled. That trembling caused an explosive force to rage toward Meng Hao. The giant’s expression was cold as it reached its left hand up and flicked it in Meng Hao’s direction. The massive hand filled the sky; it was almost as if the giant were trying to swat a fly.

“To me, you’re nothing more than an insect,” the giant said coolly. The palm and fist connected, and the giant’s left arm shook. Meng Hao’s face paled, and he fell backward several paces. However, the desire to fight burned brightly in his eyes, and he threw his head back and laughed.

“Insect?” he said. Azure light sprang up around him, and the power of an Allheaven Dao Immortal erupted. Azure light spread out for 3,000 meters in all directions, and he began to grow taller. In the blink of an eye, he was 3,000 meters tall.

Although he was still miniscule compared to the giant, he was completely different than he had been before. When the giant saw the azure light, his eyes flickered, and he suddenly experienced a feeling of crisis, caused by Meng Hao. Even as his heart trembled, Meng Hao took a step forward. He might be small, but he was as quick as lightning.

He transformed into an azure roc, which was also 3,000 meters long. He stretched his wings out, growing even larger, letting out a fierce cry as he shot toward the giant and slashed at it with razor-sharp claws. The giant roared, performing an incantation gesture which caused booming lightning to surround it.

Each bolt of lightning was like a Heavenly Tribulation. As it bore down, the Essence of Divine Flame shot out of the mouth of the azure roc. This Essence of Divine Flame was far different that what Meng Hao had wielded before. It was the true Essence of Divine Flame, and its sudden appearance caused the giant’s face to flicker. He performed an incantation gesture, causing a wild wind to spring up, which transformed into a roaring Wind Dragon.

Even still, it wasn’t enough to block Meng Hao and the Essence of Divine Flame which exploded out of the flame spark. A sea of flames surrounded Meng Hao, and then spread out to envelop the giant. It was quickly engulfed in flames, and let out roars of pain. Suddenly, the giant spat out a pearl.

The pearl was black, and emanated an archaic air. Almost as soon as it appeared, it shattered, and its remnants formed into a spell formation.

“Mountain Ghost Seal, Divine Flame Lightning Spirit Hex!!” the giant roared. Meng Hao’s Divine Flame surrounded the spell formation, but then stopped, unable to attack it.

Meng Hao wasn’t surprised by this. It didn’t attest to any lack of power on the part of the Divine Flame, but rather, just went to show that as warden of this place, the giant was obviously prepared to deal with the Essence of Divine Flame. Were this any other place in the outside world, and any other opponent, he would be dead.

The azure roc flashed as it transformed back into Meng Hao. He stepped forward with a cold harrumph, performing an incantation gesture which caused the Blood Demon to emerge from its rift. It grabbed the giant’s neck, opened its mouth, and took a vicious bite. Meng Hao waved his hand, and the violet moon mark appeared on the giant’s head. Then Meng Hao took another step, and his left hand extended with the Supernova Magic.

This time, it didn’t need to absorb any light from around it. Meng Hao caused boundless azure light to stream out of his hand, pouring into the Supernova Magic, causing the star to rapidly grow larger and emanate ripples of destruction as it shot toward the giant.

Huge booms echoed out as the giant was shoved backward, heart trembling. However, Meng Hao didn’t stop there. He stepped forward again, taking three steps in a row. His energy began to rise explosively. When you added in the steps from before, shockingly, he had unleashed the Seven God Steps!

As he took his seventh step, his energy skyrocketed. Boundless azure light rose up as he punched out with his right hand. The Life-Extermination Fist, the Self-Immolation Fist, and the God-Slaying Fist, all rumbled through the air.

The three fist strikes, coupled with the Seven God Steps, backed by the peak power of Meng Hao’s cultivation base and fleshly body, were enough that… even Dao Realm cultivators with two Essences or fewer would be slaughtered!

Intense pressure caused all light to dim. Heaven and Earth trembled, and the lands cracked. Countless ripples spread out through the air, and Meng Hao shone with azure light so bright that he seemed like an azure sun!

The giant’s face fell, and he fought back with all the power he could muster. He roared, shoving both hands down toward the ground. Everything shook, and magical symbols appeared all over the giant. The magical symbols emanated a thoroughly archaic air that exploded out to resist the terrifying power of Meng Hao’s Seven God Steps and three fist strikes.

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# Chapter 1180: Most Powerful State!

The magical symbols on the giant seemed innumerable, but if you looked closely, you would realize that there were actually only nine. However, those nine symbols were constantly splitting apart into multiple overlapping copies of themselves, making it initially seem as if the symbols were without number.

Nonetheless, those nine symbols emanated an incredible aura that provoked shocking transformations in Heaven and Earth. They seemed completely ancient, and as they flickered, they caused nine protective shields to flicker into place around the giant!

The light of the magical symbol shields made the giant even more impressive than before. He pushed his hands down onto the ground, threw his head back and howled. Everything shook violently, and a massive shockwave spread out in all directions

From a distance, it looked like a raging tempest, with nine swirling magical symbols in the middle of it all. Almost instantly, the giant seemed to have entered a state of invincibility.

Meng Hao examined the nine magical symbols with furrowed brow. From those symbols, he could sense… the aura of Dao Fang! Although he had never laid eyes on Dao Fang, he had met him during his mental journey outside of the Windswept Realm and beyond the 33 Heavens. He had even been attacked by him! The feeling he had experienced back then was the exact same feeling he got from these magical symbols!

“The curse of Dao Fang….” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, but he didn’t fall back by even half a step. Instead, he charged forward, punching out with the his three fist strikes, unleashing a terrifying power onto the protective shield tempest.

From afar, he looked like an azure sun, the only light in Heaven and Earth. His fist was also azure, and seemingly filled with enough power to annihilate the Heavens and exterminate the Earth.

Rumbling echoed out, and as the fist strikes landed, the giant’s tempest shield trembled. Massive booms echoed out, and the tempest exploded. In response, the nine magical symbols glittered radiantly, but didn’t collapse. Instead, they simply shrank down a bit. Despite that, the giant had been protected, and wasn’t injured at all.

Neither was Dao Fang’s aura diminished in the least. It roiled out, transforming into a powerful pressure that crushed toward Meng Hao. He was shoved back, staggering backward seven paces before stopping in place. Then he looked up and let out a roar.

That roar caused his Allheaven Dao Immortal cultivation base to surge with power. It also converged the power of his fleshly body, whereupon he shot forward like a lightning bolt. The air vibrated and the wind screamed, all of which was caused by the magical symbols as they were crushed by Meng Hao’s charge.

The giant’s eyes flickered with killing intent, and he took a step forward, causing the ground to quake. At the same time, he lifted his right hand into the air.

“Exalted Dao Fang!!” he roared. The sound of it caused the nine magical symbols to glitter radiantly as they… converged together!

That convergence caused the aura of Dao Fang to grow even stronger. In the blink of an eye, the nine symbols turned into a suit of armor that covered the giant, making it look like a powerful deity.

It was ferocious armor, green and covered with bristling spikes and images of screaming, suffering faces which were in the midst of devouring each other. It was almost as if thousands of ghosts had been imprisoned inside of it.

On the chest of the armor was a face which looked… almost exactly like… a monkey!!

The monkey's eyes were closed at first, but then they suddenly snapped open. As the monkey stared at Meng Hao, it's eyes gleamed with a viciousness that caused Meng Hao's pupils to constrict.

With this armor on, the giant's energy rocketed up, and the power level of his cultivation base doubled.

Simultaneously, the giant roared, lifting his right hand up and the snatching out viciously. The lands quaked and shook, and numerous crevices opened up below, with the giant at the center. The lands almost looked like they would collapse.

Waves spread out across the ground, causing mountains to rise and valleys to fall, and leaving behind a massive crater. All of this happened in the short space of a few breaths worth of time.

"Return!" That simple word uttered by the giant caused the lands to begin to rise up. Countless motes of dust and ash flew out as something rose up from the ground. It looked almost like a pillar, but in fact…

It was an enormous staff!

The gigantic staff was pitch black, and it was impossible to tell what exactly it was made of. It was 30,000 meters long, a size that any mortal would consider gargantuan, but which was perfectly suited to the giant.

The giant's hand closed around the pitch-black staff, and then swung it into a fighting position. Rumbling sounds filled Heaven and Earth, and everything trembled. The giant's energy once again shot up.

As the giant hefted the enormous staff, his voice rumbled out like thunder. “I shall abide by the decree of the exalted Dao Fang. Immortals are prohibited from taking the flame spark. Any who violate the decree will have their entire clan eradicated!”

Meng Hao, even with his current cultivation base, couldn’t help but be terrified by the power which radiated off of the giant. A sense of deadly crisis filled him, and his eyes began to glow with bright light.

“I already absorbed the flame spark,” he said coolly. “My life… is not something you can just take away. As for eradicating my clan… you’re not qualified to do any such thing.” In Meng Hao’s judgement, the giant was now as powerful as a 3-Essences Dao Lord, or at the very least, the peak of 2-Essences.

He reached down and slapped his bag of holding, then cried out, “Parrot, meat jelly, get out here!”

Instantly, the parrot and meat jelly shot out in beams of brilliant light. As soon as they appeared and laid eyes on the giant, the meat jelly shrieked, “The aura of Dao Fang!”

Then it tried to fly back into the bag of holding. However, Meng Hao grabbed onto it.

“I’ll give you three bullies,” he said. “Transform into some armor!”

“Four bullies!!” the meat jelly screamed hysterically. “I want four bullies! I just recently learned that four is more than three. Four bullies, and I’ll go all out!” Meng Hao gaped in shock, then nodded.

The meat jelly’s eyes turned red as it began to glow, and then spread out from Meng Hao’s hand to cover his entire body. At the same time, Meng Hao looked at the parrot.

“Battle Weapon!” he roared. The parrot smiled bitterly. Muttering apprehensively, it turned into a beam of light that shot toward Meng Hao.

Then the copper mirror flew out of Meng Hao’s bag of holding and merged into the beam of light.

In that instant, Meng Hao’s energy rose to an indescribable degree. A massive windstorm sprung up, within which was the meat jelly as a suit of armor, gray and archaic, emanating a sense of indestructibility.

That suit of armor truly couldn’t be destroyed. As long as the meat jelly lived, the armor would hold. After all, the meat jelly… was fundamentally impossible to destroy, even in armor-form.

With this armor, Meng Hao’s battle prowess shot even higher!

Simultaneously, the parrot and the copper mirror combined on his right arm to form the Battle Weapon!

The Battle Weapon was essentially amorphous, and responded to Meng Hao’s will. Shockingly, it was now an enormous, razor-sharp broadsword, fully 3,000 meters long. It radiated sharpness, and even had pulses of strange light dancing about all over its surface. It sent out terrifying ripples that seemed qualified to destroy Heaven and Earth, as well as an aura that seemed capable of making all living things wish to prostrate themselves in worship.

This was the Battle Weapon!

Now that Meng Hao was an Allheaven Dao Immortal, his copper mirror exploded with incredible power. Although this was only the initial stage, it was still a complete and terrifying Battle Weapon!

As Meng Hao’s cultivation base rocketed up, his appearance now looked even more domineering than the giant’s.

“Mastiff!” he said, waving his right sleeve. Instantly, a blood-colored light appeared, flying out and landing on Meng Hao’s back. It was a cape, upon which could be seen a totem. That totem… was none other than the mastiff!

As of this moment, in this state, Meng Hao was truly more powerful than he had ever been since beginning to practice cultivation.

“Alright,” he said, “let’s see how many slashes you can take from my Battle Weapon!” His voice was so ice-cold that the land in the area froze over. As he stepped forward, the giant swung its enormous black staff and roared as it charged. If you looked in the giant’s eyes however, you would see a very serious look, perhaps even astonishment. It could now sense something different from Meng Hao, an intense… mortal danger!

As they closed in on each other, the Battle Weapon sliced through the air in a radiant beam of light, heading directly toward the pitch-black staff.

When it struck, the staff trembled. It didn’t begin to crack. No… it completely collapsed into pieces, having been utterly destroyed.

“Extermination Essence!!” the giant roared, its expression one of intense shock and disbelief. “What magical item is that? How could it possess the legendary power Extermination Essence?!?! Impossible! This is impossible!!”

Even as the giant shouted out, Meng Hao pressed the offensive, surrounded by scintillating light.

“NO!!” the giant howled miserably. It suddenly slapped both hands down onto its armor, causing themagical symbols to shoot out to defend against the Battle Weapon. When they slammed into each other, the magical symbols began to shatter!

The first, the second, the third… in the blink of an eye, seven of the nine magical symbols were completely destroyed!

Then… the eighth! And finally… the ninth!

When the ninth magical symbol was destroyed, the giant’s armor collapsed into fragments.

The scintillating blade then continued on toward the giant’s neck!

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# Chapter 1181: Your Words are Meaningless!

“Exalted Dao Fang, save me!!” the giant roared in terror, its heart pounding as it stared at the descending blade.

In the moment it called out, the ash that was the remnants of the magical symbols suddenly formed back together, turning into the same monkey face which had appeared on the chestplate of the armor earlier. Its eyes shone with a strange light as it stared at Meng Hao. Then it spoke in a sinister voice: “Reincarnation of Heaven and Earth. Heed me, thou shalt slay him not!”

As the voice echoed out, Meng Hao’s Battle Weapon landed on the giant’s neck. What was destroyed was not just the neck, though, but the entire giant. An indescribable force slashed into it, completely crushing and shattering it!

However, in response to the monkey’s voice, the giant suddenly burned with powerful life force, a life force that seemed impossible for Heaven and Earth to destroy!

Rumbling could be heard as it began to recover from its state of destruction. From the look of it, the power of extermination unleashed by Meng Hao and his Battle Weapon were incapable of actually destroying the giant!

As its life force flourished, the giant first gaped in shock, then went wild with joy. Roaring, it lifted both hands into the air and charged toward Meng Hao. As for Meng Hao, he actually completely ignored the giant, and instead turned to the monkey.

Voice cool, he said, “The Mountain and Sea Realm is not your Heaven and not your Earth. You don’t control reincarnation here. Therefore, your words… are meaningless!” As he spoke, his Battle Weapon exploded with intense black light that spread out in all directions. The giant suddenly trembled, and then collapsed into pieces. The fist which had been descending onto Meng Hao became nothing more than ash.

In the moment that the giant died, the face formed from magical symbols glared at Meng Hao, then began to fade away into the air. Meng Hao staggered backward, and the Battle Weapon vanished. The copper mirror and the parrot appeared again. The parrot looked very listless. After glaring bitterly at Meng Hao for a moment, it returned to his bag of holding.

Meng Hao’s armor and cape transformed back into the meat jelly and mastiff. They both looked exhausted, and he quickly put them away. His face was pale white, and he now lacked any energy to keep fighting.

It would have been difficult for him to wield the Battle Weapon with only his own might. Therefore, he’d been forced to share the load with the meat jelly and the mastiff. That was what had enabled him to stay in that most powerful of states for a bit longer.

Thankfully, it hadn’t taken too much time to defeat the giant. Even still, Meng Hao was completely worn out.

As the giant died, the magical seals in the area began to fade away, revealing the exit. Meng Hao’s face flickered as he considered whether or not to go to the other lands in the area to acquire their flame sparks. But then, the ground suddenly began to quake. The other five lands that existed in the Divine Flame world then began to rise up into the air.

As the lands shook, mighty roars echoed out from them. Meng Hao immediately sent his divine sense sweeping out, and caught sight of five churning columns of black smoke.

The black smoke rose into the air, rapidly forming together into an enormous head. That head… had the face of a monkey.

Meng Hao’s face flickered as a sensation of deadly crisis filled him that was far, far greater than anything he had experienced earlier. As it exploded out in his mind, he instantly abandoned any thoughts of trying to go to the other lands. His body flashed as he unleashed his cultivation base, transforming into an azure roc that shot toward the exit.

He performed a quick teleportation and instantly appeared by the exit. However, before he could step through, the monkey formed from black smoke suddenly howled.

That howl immediately caused the air to shatter. It filled the six lands of the Divine Flame world, echoing out, causing everything to shake. An indescribable power of destruction filled that roar, and it caused blood to spurt out of Meng Hao’s mouth.

Shockingly, the exit itself also began to rumble and collapse. At the same time, the monkey face opened its mouth and lunged toward Meng Hao.

The sensation of deadly crisis grew even greater, and Meng Hao coughed up another mouthful of blood, then stepped into the collapsing exit.

However, in the instant before it completely collapsed, a fierce gleam flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes. He was not the type of person who liked to come out on the losing end, and would always seize every opportunity that came his way. Although he was in a moment of extreme danger, he lifted his right hand and then waved his finger toward the monkey face up above him!

“A Writ of Karma! You owe me money!” he roared. Then, he vanished.

In the moment that he disappeared, the exit shattered, consumed by the enormous mouth formed by the giant land masses.

In the air above the world of Divine Flame, the monkey face suddenly trembled. Karma Threads appeared, which gradually formed together, forming a connection to Meng Hao. This was a special type of Karma, and once formed, if Meng Hao wasn’t repaid sufficiently, it could turn into an inner Devil.

“You damned bastard!! How could you have a magical technique like this!? You Immortals are all completely shameless!!” The face roared, and everything collapsed. Wild colors flashed about as the special Karma Thread Meng Hao had tied was forcibly severed. Of course, that severing caused a huge backlash which also affected Meng Hao.

Meng Hao appeared on the second level, coughing up a mouthful of blood. Before the first mouthful finished spurting out, he coughed up a second and then a third mouthful of pitch-black blood!

After that, he swayed dizzily, and instantly knew that someone had broken A Writ of Karma. He had predicted that such a thing might happen, and was also aware that a backlash would occur. However, that didn’t cause him to even pause to think about whether or not to use the technique. That was Meng Hao. If he was willing to treat himself viciously, then how much more so could he treat others viciously!?

He was willing to suffer a backlash, as long as it meant that the monkey did too!

That was his way of telling people: Don’t provoke me!!

The ancient beast on the second level looked at Meng Hao with a strange expression. It saw the entrance to the third level collapse, and apparently wanted to ask about what had happened. However, it hesitated. Based on everything, it could guess that some monumental event had occurred. However, sometimes, not knowing what had happened was far safer than knowing.

Therefore, it maintained its silence and chose not to ask any questions.

Meng Hao looked at the beast and nodded. Then he shot out from the second level’s exit, and left the underground world entirely.

Although this adventure had ended with Meng Hao being injured, he had also acquired much. His only regret was that of the six flame sparks, he had only acquired one.

“Well, there’s no hurry,” he thought. “One of these days, I’ll come back. And then… I’ll make sure that A Writ of Karma gets fully formed!” Meng Hao had already come to the rough conclusion that the monkey face was likely… Dao Fang!

Huoyan Zi had mentioned Dao Fang, who was also the same person standing guard outside of the 33 Heavens!

“If I can fully solidify A Writ of Karma, then I’ll hardly be able to wait until I leave the Mountain and Sea Realm and charge through all the 33 Heavens. When I see Dao Fang’s true self, I wonder if he’ll pay the money back first, or just attack me?” Meng Hao chuckled coldly as his body flickered, then reappeared in the plains that surrounded the Ancient Dao Lakes of the Southern Domain.

As soon as he materialized, Meng Hao took a deep breath, causing the spiritual energy of Heaven and Earth to roil toward him. He absorbed the spiritual energy and then breathed out again, completing a full cycle. His Eternal stratum was hard at work, and he also produced medicinal pills, which he immediately consumed.

As his wounds rapidly healed, he sat down cross-legged and began to meditate. The area he was in was wild and rugged, filled with wild vegetation and lacking the slightest sign of human habitation.

After sitting there for about two hours, his wounds were healed by about ninety percent. The worst injuries had been sustained, not during his battle with the giant, but in those final moments, by the roar of the monkey face.

That roar had injured his soul, and had even affected the flame spark. Thankfully, Meng Hao had been able to escape almost immediately, ensuring that the injuries weren’t permanent. Otherwise, there would have been serious and troubling repercussions.

He was about to continue the healing process when he realized that the final ten percent would require several hours. At that point, he suddenly opened his eyes and slapped his bag of holding. A jade slip flew out, and when he pressed down onto it, Fang Shoudao’s voice filled his mind.

“It’s time for you to return and help the two of us stand as Dharma Protectors for your father to step into the Dao!”

Meng Hao’s face lit up. His injuries weren’t that important. What was truly important was helping his father step into the Dao. Both to him and to the clan, that was a matter of utmost importance!

That was especially so after witnessing Guru Heavencloud’s failure in attempting to step into the Dao. Meng Hao was worried for his father, but he also knew that Fang Shoudao and Fang Yanxu were offering an incredible gift. Plus, his father was already in the great circle of the Ancient Realm. This step… was a step that had to be taken!

Meng Hao rose to his feet and transformed into a beam of light that shot toward the Eastern Lands. He was almost done with the things he needed to take care of on Planet South Heaven. Once his father’s ceremony was complete, it would be time to leave!

“Dao Realm cultivators aren’t allowed to enter Planet South Heaven…. Well then, what will Patriarch Shoudao do to allow father to step into the Dao here?” Feeling very curious about the matter, Meng Hao shot out of the Southern Domain at top speed, all the way to the Eastern Lands. It only took him the time it takes half an incense stick to burn before he was back in the Fang Clan citadel.

As soon as he got close, Fang Shoudao’s voice boomed out from inside. “Hao’er, we’ve been waiting for you! Let’s go!” Even as he spoke, he flew out of the ancestral mansion along with Fang Yanxu. Last to come out was Meng Hao’s father, Fang Xiufeng.

Fang Xiufeng looked over benevolently at Meng Hao, unable to conceal his excitement at attempting to transcend the tribulation of stepping into the Dao. Although he brimmed with anticipation, he was also very nervous.

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# Chapter 1182: Great Tang; Allheaven!

“Dad….” Meng Hao said, looking back at Fang Xiufeng. He was actually far more worried than Fang Xiufeng was.

“There’s no need to worry. With Patriarchs Shoudao and Yanxu helping, then if I fail, then I guess all my years of cultivation have been a foolish waste!” Fang Xiufeng laughed heartily, but then his expression turned serious. “I’m a cultivator, and my life… has been focused on eventually stepping into the Dao!

“From the Spirit Realm to the Immortal. From the Immortal Realm to the Ancient. From the Ancient Realm to the Dao. The further along you get, the less likely you are to succeed. However, that shouldn’t be a reason to avoid the danger, nor an excuse to not take that final step!

“I have transcended the tribulations of Ancient Realm Soul Lamp extinguishing, one by one. What does this trifling Dao Stepping Tribulation count for? If I really fail, then at least I’ll have a hundred years of longevity left that I can use to protect you and your sister. My only regret… will be that I will not be able to abide by my agreement to stand guard for 100,000 years!” With that, no further trace of anxiety regarding stepping into the Dao could be seen on Fang Xiufeng.

He could have chosen to be like Guru Heavencloud, to hold back from stepping into the Dao. He could have been cautious, and thus lived longer. Without any tribulation, there would be no risk to his life, and he could have lived in safety.

Actually, in addition to the danger of the tribulation itself, one of the main reasons that many cultivators chose to remain in the great circle of the Ancient Realm was because they couldn’t suppress that desire to remain safe and alive.

“Dad, you’re gonna succeed!” Meng Hao said staunchly. Those words were actually not uttered from the standpoint of a son, but rather… were backed by his status as the future Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Fang Xiufeng smiled. At the same time, Meng Li and Fang Yu flew up from below, joined by Sun Hai. The entire group hovered in midair, unable to keep themselves from looking nervously at Fang Xiufeng.

“Alright, alright,” Fang Xiufeng said, smiling gently at his wife and daughter. “You don’t all need to come with me. Having Hao’er along should be enough.”

Meng Li looked at Fang Xiufeng and nodded.

“I’ll be waiting for you to come back,” she said softly.

“Yes, I’ll be back for you!” he replied with a laugh. Then he turned and flew off into the distance with Fang Shoudao and Fang Yanxu.

Meng Li watched her husband leaving and, voice quavering, said, “Meng Hao, take good care of your father. I’m… entrusting him to you.”

“Don’t worry, Mom,” Meng Hao said resolutely. “Dad’s going to be fine!” He looked over at Fang Yu and Sun Hai, nodded, and then followed Fang Xiufeng and the others.

“Dad,” Fang Yu murmured, biting her lip, no longer able to suppress her anxiety. “Good luck stepping into the Dao. I’ll be praying for you to succeed!”

Fang Xiufeng’s laughter echoed back from off in the distance, filled with exuberance and determination.

The four Fang cultivators were all speeding off in the direction… of the Great Tang Forbidden Palace!!

Meng Hao had never paid much attention to the Great Tang government itself. However, ever since the year he had caught a glimpse of Emperor Tang in his Imperial City, and realized he had a profound cultivation base that was roughly the same as Meng Hao's own father, he had realized that the Great Tang was indeed extremely mysterious. 1

"So, we're going to the Great Tang!" he murmured to himself as he saw the Great Tang Imperial City getting closer. There were countless mortals there, and it was a flourishing place. Dusk was falling, but the brilliant light cast by numerous colorful lanterns made a spectacular scene. Then there was the Forbidden Palace itself, which looked like an enormous sleeping beast!

As they neared, Meng Hao was able to make out a figure sitting on the Dragon Throne, wearing Imperial robes, watching the four of them approach. 2

As Meng Hao peered at the Great Tang Imperial City, Fang Shoudao looked over at him with a kind smile and asked, "Hao'er, do you find this odd?"

"Yeah, it seems strange. Why are we going to the Great Tang? What secrets are locked up here?"

"Hao'er, the Fang Clan of the past was an Allheaven Clan," Fang Shoudao explained slowly. "Our first generation Patriarch was the last bloodline member of that clan. The clan that he founded afterward is the Fang Clan that we know today, which has played such a central role in the affairs of the Ninth Mountain and Sea." Some of these things Meng Hao already knew, and others were things which did not need to be kept secret from him now, considering his status.

"There are a few other matters that it's time to tell you. The reason that the modern Fang Clan is an Allheaven Clan is because you awoke our bloodline. That is why you are our eternal Patriarch!

“The more powerful you become, the faster that awakening will proceed. After it is complete, the Allheaven power will be unleashed with increasing efficacy!

“If you are able to step into the Dao Realm, then the Fang Clan will truly be able to rise to prominence, and be restored to its former glory!” Anticipation gleamed in Fang Shoudao’s eyes. Although Fang Yanxu was normally very taciturn, his expression was also one of excitement and anticipation, and when he looked at Meng Hao, it was with warmth and kindness.

“Perhaps you already know that Allheaven Clans… existed in the Immortal World, before the formation of the Mountain and Sea Realm. In the Paragon Immortal Realm, Allheaven Clans were the most glorious among all the clans. Even the Paragons had to treat them respectfully.

“Also, the Fang Clan was not the only Allheaven Clan. In total, there were nine!” Fang Shoudao explained slowly.

“Of course, the nine Allheaven Clans fell apart during the war, and countless of their people were killed. For example, almost the entire Fang Clan was wiped out in the war. As for the sole remaining bloodline, it was many years until the first generation Patriarch appeared here in the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

“Nowadays, descendants of those nine clans are scattered throughout the Nine Mountains and Seas. Some, like our Fang Clan, could be considered to have been reestablished. Others have completely vanished into the pages of history.

“You should know that the Fang Clan is not the only Allheaven Clan in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. There is another such clan… right here! And that clan is… the Great Tang!!” By this point, Meng Hao’s heart was pounding.

Fang Xiufeng didn’t seem surprised. He had conferred quite a bit with Fang Shoudao in recent days, and knew about all these matters pertaining to Allheaven Clans. Furthermore, because he was standing guard over Planet South Heaven, he also had a good understanding of the Great Tang.

“The Great Tang is actually the Li Clan, and not the same Li Clan as that which currently exists in the Ninth Mountain and Sea! 3

“Actually, of the nine Allheaven Clans, they were the clan that survived mostly untouched. In fact, by the time the war was coming to an end, when the Mountain and Sea Realm was formed, their whole clan was still intact. That was because they had been entrusted with a special mission. They were to use the power of an Allheaven Clan to protect the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“However, even in the early days of the Mountain and Sea Realm the war was still ongoing. In the final battle, a gap was opened, breaching the Mountain and Sea Realm. If that gap were ever to be torn completely open, the Mountain and Sea Realm… would cease to exist.

“In that critical time, the final Allheaven Clan, the Li Clan, chose to make a clan-wide blood sacrifice. Every member of the clan, men and women, old and young alike, all sacrificed themselves to make a door. That door closed the gap, ensuring that the powers of the Outside world could not enter. And thus ended a war that had lasted for tens of thousands of years!

“That gap is in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, behind Planet South Heaven!

“Therefore, from that time onward, Planet South Heaven became a very special planet in the Mountain and Sea Realm. It also came to be known as the Door of South Heaven!

“From then on, there was a new empire on Planet South Heaven, called the Great Tang. The entire Li Clan sacrificed themselves to protect the Mountain and Sea Realm, leaving behind only a single clan member to maintain their ancestral device and prevent the Outside world from entering. It was the clan’s mission, and even if there was only one person left to carry it out, that mission remained. And that… is how things have continued, down to this day.” All of these things were matters that had been revealed to Fang Shoudao after he had gone to visit the clone of the first generation Patriarch recently.

“Your father stands guard over Planet South Heaven, and the Li Clan stands guard over the Door of South Heaven!

“It is because of the special nature of Planet South Heaven that it is impossible for Dao Realm experts to enter it. Only by suppressing our cultivation bases to the great circle of the Ancient Realm can we do so. Otherwise… Planet South Heaven as a whole would view us as enemies, and would eradicate us!

“However, that doesn’t mean that it is completely impossible for Dao Realm cultivators to be here. In order for a Dao Realm expert to remain here, that person must gain the approval of Planet South Heaven. Furthermore, the only person who can make that happen, is… the Great Tang, the Li Clan!”

When Meng Hao heard all of this, his heart trembled. Although he already knew many secrets, quite a few of them were things he had been told, and did not understand based on experiencing them personally. As such, his understanding was incomplete. For example, he had been completely clueless regarding the identity of the Great Tang.

He could only imagine what it must have been like years ago for the Li Clan to watch one Allheaven Clan after another be exterminated while they, in order to accomplish their mission, were forced to hold back their power and not participate in the fighting. They must have felt torn, and at the same time, they were obviously tenacious.

When the gap opened up in the Mountain and Sea Realm, they didn’t hesitate to perform a blood sacrifice of their entire clan to create the Door of South Heaven. They sealed the gap, accomplishing the mission of their clan. What a heroic sacrifice!

Now he understood why, when first encountering Emperor Tang all those years go, he had felt such a desolate loneliness within his majesty. He was the only survivor of his entire bloodline. Their sacrifice was like a curse for him. There had been many successive generations of people like him, the Emperors of the Great Tang, all of whom were charged with upholding the original mission. For all eternity, they would protect the Mountain and Sea Realm by standing guard over the Door of South Heaven.

Meng Hao’s eyes filled with respect as he followed his father, Fang Shoudao and Fang Yanxu. They flew into the Great Tang Imperial City and toward the Forbidden Palace. The sun was just about to set, and all of a sudden, Meng Hao recalled what Fang Shoudao had mentioned about Dao Realm cultivators being unable to enter Planet South Heaven. Then he thought about the giant he had fought, as well as the monkey face.

“Without gaining approval, the Dao Realm will be exterminated?” Meng Hao asked suddenly.

“Without exception,” Fang Shoudao replied.

Meng Hao’s heart trembled, and he began to breathe heavily. Great waves of shock rolled through him, as well as doubts. As far as he could tell, there were only three possible explanations.

One explanation was that the giant and the monkey were both approved of by the Li Clan. However, that was clearly not possible. The second explanation was that the world of the Divine Flame was somehow unique. The third explanation… was a possibility that left Meng Hao feeling even more shaken. Perhaps the giant and the monkey only appeared to be in the Dao Realm, but the versions of themselves within the Divine Flame world… were actually not in the Dao Realm!

For example, Meng Hao was currently capable of slaughtering 2-Essences Dao Realm cultivators, despite not being in the Dao Realm himself. Despite that, he was not the subject of extermination by Planet South Heaven.

Although that third explanation seemed preposterous, Meng Hao could not help but come to the conclusion that it was most likely true.

2. The Emperors of ancient China usually sat on what was called the Dragon Throne

3. One reason Fang Shoudao specifically points out that they are different clans is that this Li Clan shares the same common surname Li with the Li Clan of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. It might seem confusing, but again, Li is a very common surname. For example, it’s the same surname shared by Jet Li (Li Lianjie) and Bruce Lee (Li Xiaolong). However, Jet Li and Bruce Lee are not related, nor are they from a Li Clan in ISSTH. In English, it could be likened to Will Smith and Anna Nicole Smith, who both share the surname Smith, but are not from the Smith Clan in ISSTH

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# Chapter 1183: Facing Tribulation in a Mysterious Location!

Meng Hao maintained his silence as they proceeded along toward the Great Tang. Soon, the four beams of light were just outside the Forbidden Palace. In the main hall up ahead, not a single person could be seen other than Emperor Tang on the Dragon Throne.

Everything was quiet, with pressure weighing down from all directions. The lanterns in the area were dim, casting Emperor Tang in flickering shadows that made it difficult to make him out clearly. Only his two brightly shining eyes were visible.

Fang Shoudao and Fang Yanxu walked forward and, despite the level of their cultivation bases, clasped hands and bowed deeply to Emperor Tang.

Fang Xiufeng did the same.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered like lightning, and his face was extremely solemn as he also bowed. He knew that although the Patriarchs and his father were bowing to Emperor Tang, what they were showing respect to… was the sacrifice of the Allheaven Li Clan for the entire Mountain and Sea Realm.

A clan like that deserved respect from everyone, even other Allheaven Clans. They showed their bravery in the early days of the Immortal World calamity, when the war had just begun, and also afterwards, when things were unstable. In the end, their clan-wide sacrifice… was an even greater display of bravery.

Everything was quiet, and no one spoke. After a long moment, a sigh could be heard from within the main hall, a long sigh filled with ancientness. As it echoed about, the entire hall lit up, and Emperor Tang rose to his feet from the Dragon Throne, then slowly walked out of the hall.

He was a middle-aged man wearing a Dragon robe, powerful and impressive as he stood there, as if all of Planet South Heaven would be wreathed in shadow because of his presence. It was as if he was the Lord of South Heaven!

Actually, as one of the successive descendants of the Allheaven Li Clan who stood watch here, he… really could be called the Lord of South Heaven.

Although his cultivation base wasn't at the absolute pinnacle, he was the only person on Planet South Heaven who could call upon the power of his bloodline, the will of his ancestors, to control the spell formation that had been formed by the collective sacrifice of the Allheaven Li Clan.

With that spell formation, he could cut down Dao Realm cultivators as easily as turning over his hand!

"Brother Xiufeng," he said slowly, "I'm aware of the purpose of your visit….

"It is an important matter, something which has never occurred before. I'm actually uncertain… as to whether or not it will work.

"Hopefully, it will. However, if it fails, then even if you do step into the Dao Realm, you will be instantly slaughtered by the spell formation. Even I will be incapable of preventing that from happening. This will make your experience of stepping into the Dao even more difficult, by several times. Are you… really sure you want to try it?" His voice echoed out, filled with boundless pressure that caused the clouds up above to roil, and the lands to tremble.

The words he had spoken were true; he could control the spell formation, but only in the sense that he could use it to attack. He could not prevent it from carrying out its primary function. If anything, he might be able to hold it back for a short time to allow Fang Xiufeng to flee off of Planet South Heaven after he stepped into the Dao.

However, Fang Xiufeng… couldn't leave Planet South Heaven. Things would be much easier for him if he ended up in the Quasi-Dao Realm. However, if he truly stepped into the Dao Realm, he would essentially be facing certain death.

When Meng Hao heard this, his heart trembled. He looked over at Fang Xiufeng, Fang Shoudao and Fang Yanxu, who were waiting to hear his father's response. Whatever it was, they would support him.

In truth, it didn't matter that Fang Xiufeng wasn't in the Dao Realm. He would still be considered the Clan Chief of the Fang Clan. However… although that wouldn't be a problem in the short term, it would make it inappropriate from the clan's standpoint once Meng Hao left the Ninth Mountain and Sea, and it would be inevitable that some clan members would eventually raise objections.

Therefore, Fang Shoudao and Fang Yanxu had both agreed that they would not hold anything back. They would do everything they could to help Fang Xiufeng step into the Dao…. In that case, he would be the true Clan Chief, unshakable and unmovable.

As for the particulars of how Fang Xiufeng went about doing that, it was his decision. No one, not even Meng Hao, could influence him.

Fang Xiufeng was silent for only a moment. He didn't need a long time to think. He gave a carefree laugh and then said, "Since I'm here, what's the point in backing out? Brother Li, thank you for going out of your way to help."

Fang Xiufeng's expression was calm; his eyes flashed with determination, and his heart was completely focused. He was the type of person who couldn't settle for being ordinary, and had always had lofty aspirations. The only reason he had suppressed them and agreed to stand guard over Planet South Heaven was for Meng Hao's sake.

Now that Meng Hao was finally freed from his curse, Fang Xiufeng's heroic ambitions once again soared!

"Dad…." Meng Hao murmured anxiously.

"Hao'er, father is a cultivator as well!" Fang Xiufeng said, looking back at him. His gaze was soft, and his words were spoken quietly. However, his simple sentence revealed the deep ambitions he harbored. It spoke to his pride, and revealed how focused he was on his cultivation.

As Fang Xiufeng's words echoed out into the air, Fang Shoudao and Fang Yanxu looked on with sparkling eyes, and nodded slightly.

"So you're set on doing this, Brother Xiufeng," said Emperor Tang. "I understand." Emperor Tang looked deeply at Fang Xiufeng, then turned and waved his sleeve. Colors flashed and everything shook. All of the lands of South Heaven trembled, and the entire planet seemed to shake.

The shaking was even more intense in the Forbidden Palace. A moment later, the main hall vanished, to be replaced by a huge, spinning vortex that was the color of blood!

That color came from the blood of the Allheaven Li Clan, congealed during their sacrifice. As the vortex spun, it seemed as if all of Planet South Heaven had become frozen in time as an indescribably intense pressure weighed down, covering the entire planet. Emperor Tang stood next to Fang Xiufeng, looking at him.

"In there is the secret realm of the Li Clan, the wellspring of our bloodline. Brother Xiufeng, Senior Shoudao, Senior Yanxu, and… Hao'er, all of you may enter. I will remain outside to stand as Dharma Protector!"

Fang Xiufeng took a deep breath and looked at the blood-colored vortex, eyes shining. Then he clasped hands and bowed deeply to Emperor Tang before striding forward into the vortex. Fang Xiufeng and Fang Yanxu shot forward in streaks of light as they followed Fang Xiufeng.

Last was Meng Hao. After bowing to Emperor Tang, he headed toward the vortex, and was just about to step in when the Emperor spoke, his voice soft.

“You have a good father. He’s sacrificed a lot for you.”

Meng Hao paused for a moment, then continued onward into the vortex, vanishing.

Inside the blood-colored vortex was a world the color of blood. Everything was blood-red. There were no plants, no mountains, no rivers. There was only flat, crimson ground stretching out in all directions.

However, up ahead of them could be seen a huge door, which flickered back and forth between illusory and corporeal. It was covered with a thick layer of blood that formed a howling face.

Every howl that came out of its mouth caused ripples to spread out and fill the entire blood-colored world. Every time the ripples faded, it was possible to see that, far up in the sky, there was a huge net-like spell formation!

That spell formation covered everything, and stretched out as far as the eye could see. Divine sense could not touch it, and the only reason it could be seen… was because of the flowing ripples.

This was the very door that had been formed by the sacrifice of the entire Li Clan, and the spell formation up above… was the extermination formation that covered all of Planet South Heaven!

Fang Shoudao looked around and then said, “This is the Ancestral Land of the Li Clan, and also the nucleus of Planet South Heaven!

“When stepping into the Dao in this place, there is a chance to be accepted by the spell formation, and thus avoid being slaughtered!”

Suddenly, a rumbling sound could be heard coming from the door.

The suddenness of the sound caused Meng Hao’s eyes to flicker. He looked over and saw that the blood-colored door was bulging, as if a hand were stretching out from it.

It appeared as if something was on the other side of that door, roaring, erupting with cultivation base power in an attempt to open the door!

However, blood-colored light flickered, and ten blood-red faces appeared. As they howled, the ripples grew more intense, and whatever it was that was inside the door trembled and retracted its hand.

Meng Hao sucked in a breath and asked, “What’s on the other side of that door…?”

The person to answer the question was not from the Fang Clan. Instead, the voice of Emperor Tang echoed out to fill the blood-colored world.

“Behind that door is a path, a path… that is not guarded by the 33 Heavens. It is guarded by the two major powers which waged war against the Immortal World long ago.

“That door must never be opened!”

Meng Hao nodded and took a deep breath. Finally, he looked away from the door toward Fang Xiufeng.

Fang Xiufeng smiled slightly and sat down cross-legged. Fang Xiufeng and Fang Yanxu waved their hands. Almost instantly, the light of a spell formation flared up, swirling around Fang Xiufeng. After that, Fang Shoudao and Fang Yanxu also sat down cross-legged across from each other, flanking Fang Xiufeng. Their expressions were very serious.

“Hao’er, you sit over there,” Fang Shoudao said solemnly. “Together, we will form the Trifecta Dao Formation. All you need to do is use your Dao Immortal cultivation base power to support your father.

“The Trifecta Dao Formation is the first step in helping your father in transcending tribulation. We can’t be lax in any aspect!”

Meng Hao’s expression was one of determination as he walked over to the position indicated by Fang Shoudao and then sat down cross-legged. He immediately rotated his cultivation base, causing azure light to shine up. Shockingly, azure light also began to shine off of Fang Shoudao and Fang Yanxu.

However, their light was much dimmer than Meng Hao’s.

Even still, Emperor Tang, who was watching the scene via divine sense, was shocked.

“The Allheaven Fang Clan… has been awakened…?

“An Allheaven Dao Immortal has appeared in the world, and an Allheaven Clan is once again rising to glory….” A strange light began to gleam in his eyes.

“Trifecta Dao Formation, activate!” Fang Shoudao roared. “Xiufeng, what are you waiting for? Begin stepping into the Dao!!”

As the sound of his words echoed out, Fang Xiufeng’s eyes began to glow with a piercing light. He raised both hands and pushed up into the air.

At the same time, his cultivation base exploded, as he used the full power of the great circle of the Ancient Realm to open the Dao Stepping Path!

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# Chapter 1184: Dao Tribulation!

In almost the same moment that Fang Xiufeng’s cultivation base exploded with power, the blood-colored sky overhead was ripped apart by seemingly invisible hands to reveal a starry sky.

Simultaneously, a huge vortex appeared up above, whose rotation caused the entire blood-colored world to distort as the power of the Dao Realm… descended to Planet South Heaven!

All of Planet South Heaven rumbled, and countless cultivators looked up into the sky with expressions of astonishment. What they saw was the sky distorting as a shocking vortex appeared. Its rotation caused innumerable motes of dust to float up into the air, and even the Milky Way Sea began to seethe.

Everyone from the Fang Clan sat cross-legged, expressions of anticipation on their faces as they looked up. They were filled with excitement, as they all knew that their Clan Chief Fang Xiufeng was currently transcending tribulation to step into the Dao!

Meng Hao’s mother and sister were in the Fang Clan ancestral mansion, along with Sun Hai and many others. They were nervous, and Meng Li was even clutching tightly at her garments, shivering slightly as her heart filled with numerous anxieties.

Meng Hao’s sister was acting exactly the same.

As of this point, the eyes of virtually everyone on Planet South Heaven were fixed upon that vortex!

The rumbling grew increasingly intense as a path slowly became visible…. If one could step onto that path despite all of the tribulations, then entering the Dao Realm was a possibility!!

In the blood-colored world, Fang Xiufeng’s eyes shone with a strange light. He lowered his left hand and pushed onto his dantian region, while his right hand viciously slapped his forehead. A banging sound rang out, and his body trembled. At the same time, his flesh visibly withered.

He threw his head back and roared, and all of a sudden… a ghost image of himself appeared. Shockingly, this was a type of clone, an image that looked exactly like Fang Xiufeng, which flew up into the air toward the vortex.

Fang Shoudao began to explain.

“Meng Hao, this Trifecta Dao Formation uses the cultivation base power of three people to help your father create three clones, all of them as powerful as his true form. By using these three clones to transcend the tribulation, he will have a much easier time succeeding!”

Meng Hao looked up into the sky and saw the huge vortex filled with crackling lightning, numerous bolts of which were already shooting down. Fang Xiufeng’s clone shot forward to meet the powerful lightning, lightning that was actually larger and more terrifying than the lightning that Guru Heavencloud had faced.

It was powerful enough to destroy worlds, and it transformed into a sea of lightning that smashed toward Fang Xiufeng.

A huge boom rang out. Everyone watched as Fang Xiufeng’s clone threw his head back and roared, then performed an incantation gesture to summon divine abilities and magical techniques that fought back against the lightning.

Time passed, and everyone was shocked by the astonishing events playing out in front of their eyes. After the first tribulation passed, Fang Xiufeng’s clone was injured and tired, but continued onward toward the vortex. It was at this point that rumbling sounds echoed out as the second tribulation descended… the Weapon Tribulation!

Based on what Meng Hao knew from watching Guru Heavencloud stepping into the Dao, there were a total of nine tribulations, each one successively more intense. If you could beat them all back, then step into the vortex, you would be half finished with the process. Having transcended the tribulations, you would be qualified to achieve the Dao.

Guru Heavencloud had failed in the middle of the third tribulation, and currently, Fang Xiufeng was facing the second tribulation. Various weapons materialized, sweeping forth with astonishing power. Rumbling sounds echoed out as nine of them bore down on Fang Xiufeng's clone.

Meng Hao was looking on nervously as Fang Xiufeng's clone spread his hands wide, his eyes glittering with a cold light. He then waved his hands in front of him, causing colors to flash and the sky to tremble. The nine weapons suddenly stopped in place for a moment, then trembled with energy and shot forward again.

Booms echoed out constantly, and the roars of Fang Xiufeng's clone echoed out into the ears of all the cultivators on Planet South Heaven. When his wife and daughter heard them, they became even more anxious than before.

The direct bloodline clan members of the Fang Clan were also waiting in nervous anticipation, waiting for their Clan Chief to step into the Dao!

The sky flashed as the nine Tribulation Weapons surged with power and a desire to cut down anyone who attempted to transcend the tribulation. As the rumbling echoed out, Fang Xiufeng's clone advanced relentlessly.

"Get the hell out of my way!" Fang Xiufeng's clone suddenly sucked in a deep breath. As he did, his eyes shone with cold light, and boundless energy of Heaven and Earth roiled toward him and was absorbed. Wild colors flashed up above, and Fang Xiufeng's clone began to shine with brilliant light, making him look like a blazing sun.

Suddenly, an illusory sword materialized in his outstretched right hand. He stepped out with his right foot, bending his body like a bow and then slashing down with the sword, unleashing a blinding stream of light.

The sword qi pulsed with indescribable energy, causing everything else to grow dark and blurred. Fang Xiufeng's clone, and the sword he held, were the only things that were incomparably bright and clear.

"My Dao is the Dao of the sword, and the sword is the king of all weapons! Trifling Weapon Tribulation… do you really dare to block my way!?" The clone's echoing voice was filled with incredible pressure as the sword light shone out toward the nine weapons of the Weapon Tribulation.

When they slammed into each other, a massive boom echoed out. The sword light exploded with scintillating, intense power, causing everything to vibrate. A supreme, paramount aura even rose up from the sword!

Boom! The first weapon fell into pieces!

Then the second, the third, and the fourth….

In the blink of an eye, seven weapons were turned into ash. The remaining two, however, continued to struggle through the sword light. As they neared the clone, he didn't even dodge, but let out a cold harrumph instead.

The sound of it caused the two weapons to tremble and then collapse into fragments, which then turned into nothing more than ash. They… had already reached the point of collapse, and were pushed over the edge by the mere sound.

Fang Xiufeng had successfully transcended the second tribulation. His energy soared brightly, as if stepping into the Dao was a simple matter for him!

Had Guru Heavencloud not been killed, and were now able to watch what was happening, he would be flabbergasted. After all of his own years of preparation, he had only been able to pass the second tribulation. Fang Xiufeng was clearly far, far more powerful than he had been.

Of course, much of that had to do with the Trifecta Dao Formation, which bolstered Fang Xiufeng's cultivation base and gave him three clones.

Because of that… things were much easier, and he could explode out with even more power.

By this point, the third tribulation was approaching. This was the tribulation that had rocked Guru Heavencloud, in which four black-armored figures appeared.

However, as soon as they materialized, and before they could even make a move, Meng Hao waved his right hand, sending his divine will out to the figures. Immediately, they stopped, then clasped hands and bowed to Fang Xiufeng. After that, they turned and disappeared back into the vortex.

They retreated without even putting up a fight!!

This sight caused Fang Xiufeng’s clone to stare in shock. He wasn’t the only one. All of the cultivators on Planet South Heaven who were watching the scene couldn’t help but be astonished. Even Meng Hao’s mother and sister stared, eyes wide with disbelief.

“Now nothing can prevent your father from transcending this tribulation,” Fang Shoudao said.

“That’s right,” replied Fang Yanxu. “Xiufeng has prepared well. Even I couldn’t match up to him, back when I stepped into the Dao.”

“From the look of it, being stationed here on Planet South Heaven is actually an opportunity for Xiufeng.”

As Fang Shoudao and Fang Yanxu continued to discuss the matter, the serious looks on their faces faded into a more relaxed expression.

From their perspectives, whether or not he would transcend the tribulation was now not even in question. Fang Xiufeng had already proven that he could step into the Dao even without their help. Clearly, his eventual success was without question.

What they were worried about now… was what would happen with the Planet South Heaven spell formation after he succeeded.

However, Meng Hao wasn’t so confident. For some reason, when he looked at his father’s clone up in midair, he got a very nervous feeling. It was as if something really bad was about to happen, although he wasn’t sure what.

“What’s wrong here?” he thought, his eyes narrowing. “Why does it feel like something is off…?” The misgivings inside his heart only continued to grow stronger.

By this point, the fourth and fifth tribulations were arriving. The fourth tribulation was the Five Elements Tribulation. Metal, wood, water, fire, earth. Five different tribulation powers appeared from within the vortex, which then materialized into five enormous dragons that roared as they shot toward Fang Xiufeng’s clone.

This battle was much more difficult than the previous ones. Fang Xiufeng’s clone held nothing back, wiping out one dragon directly, and then self-detonating to take out three more. Only the Water Dragon remained. At this point, Fang Yanxu roared, and suddenly, his body withered. At the same time, a ghost image stepped out of Fang Xiufeng, who was still sitting in the middle of the Trifecta Dao Formation.

This was his second clone, which flew up in a beam of sword light to slaughter the fifth and final dragon. There wasn’t even a slight pause as the sixth tribulation descended.

The sixth tribulation emerged in the form of a single character, the character Dao . It hovered there, radiating bizarre light. Anyone who could see it would notice that the character didn’t seem stable. It was constantly transforming back and forth between nine different versions. However, each one of those permutations of the character represented… the Dao!

Rumbling echoed out as intense pressure radiated out from the nine Dao characters. Fang Xiufeng’s clone threw his head back and roared, erupting with cultivation base power. Numerous sword images appeared around him, which then transformed into a Dao mist!

The Dao mist spread out in all directions, reaching 30,000 meters, which vastly exceeded Guru Heavencloud’s. It swirled around Fang Xiufeng’s clone as an illusory sword appeared in his hand, and he shot toward the nine Dao characters.

“Tribulation… begone!” As Fang Xiufeng’s voice echoed out, Heaven and Earth trembled. Sword light rose up, filled with azure light that slashed toward the nine Dao characters. Fang Xiufeng was completely confident that this sword strike… would vanquish the sixth tribulation!

That was because he… was Fang Xiufeng!

However, it was at this exact point that Meng Hao realized that his father’s clone was glowing with azure light. Suddenly, his mind began to spin.

“Dad! Suppress your Dao seed!!”

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# Chapter 1185: Allheaven Tribulation!

Almost as soon as the words left his mouth, Fang Xiufeng's sword connected with the nine Dao characters. A huge boom echoed out, accompanied by boundless, dazzling light. The sixth tribulation's nine Dao characters instantly collapsed, turning into nothing more than drifting ash.

At the same time, the azure light shining up from Fang Xiufeng grew even more blinding, as if it had been provoked by some catalyst…. As the light grew even brighter, the Dao seed inside of him began to melt.

As it did, a bit of Allheaven Immortal aura appeared, something which Meng Hao was very familiar with. It wasn't the aura of an Allheaven Dao Immortal, but rather, the first stage of an ordinary Allheaven Immortal.

At last, he realized why he'd had such a bad feeling. That bad feeling came from… the Dao seed!

If the Allheaven Immortal within Fang Xiufeng awoke at this time, and the tribulation didn't change, then it wouldn't be a problem. However… if the terrifying nature of the tribulation changed in accord with the explosive rise of an Allheaven Immortal, then Fang Xiufeng's tribulation would become much more difficult!

As the azure light flickered off of Fang Xiufeng, and the Dao seed began to melt, the vortex up above suddenly lurched to a stop, as if it had sensed something. Then, intense rumbling sounds could be heard as the vortex suddenly increase in size, by ten times!

The sight of it caused all the onlooking cultivators on Planet South Heaven to stare in shock. Of course, few of them really understood what was happening. Only select clan Elders had any clue.

Most people had never watched other Dao Stepping Tribulations. However, the Elders who had seen one were astonished as they instantly realized that something different was happening.

Meng Li could also tell that something was amiss, and her face fell.

Back in the blood-colored world, Fang Shoudao’s eyes went wide. He looked at the vortex, which was now ten times larger than before, then looked back at Fang Xiufeng, and a bitter expression appeared on his face. Finally, he let out a long sigh.

Fang Yanxu shook his head, and an expression of helplessness appeared.

“These two things are incredible boons, but when put together, they make… a complete catastrophe.”

Meng Hao’s face was extremely unsightly, and as for Fang Xiufeng, he immediately understood what was happening. His clone hovered there silently in midair, looking up at the vortex. Finally, he chuckled.

“Well, this is fine too. This way, I can truly experience Dao Stepping Tribulation. Since I’ve decided to transcend tribulation, the only way left is forward….” He began to laugh heartily. However, even as his laughter rang out, an intense rumbling could be heard coming from within the vortex.

The vastly enlarged vortex spun, as… the seventh tribulation arrived.

The seventh tribulation was that of… the copper coins!

Copper coins began to flow out of the vortex. Originally, there should only have been nine, but now, with the vortex having increased in size tenfold, there weren’t nine copper coins, there were… ninety!!

Each and every one of the coins looked exactly the same. On one side of each coin could be seen an image of the Eight Trigrams, and on the other side were characters that looked like magical symbols. Furthermore, each and every coin emanated power that could shake Heaven and Earth.

Intense rumbling filled the air as the coins descended!

“Mountain Ghost Lightning Decree Tribulation,” Fang Shoudao murmured, “the manifestation of a precious treasure of the Mountains and Seas. This Mountain Ghost Lightning Decree has Heaven-rending, Earth-crushing power!!” Up in midair, Fang Xiufeng’s clone threw his head back and laughed. Sword qi billowed up from him as he shot toward the ninety copper coins.

“The tribulation power has increased tenfold, huh? Well, who cares!?” Fang Xiufeng’s clone transformed into the image of a sword, rumbling through the air toward the coins.

In the instant that they were about to slam into each other, an archaic voice suddenly spoke out from within the ninety copper coins.

“Mountain Ghost….” it said. Immediately, the rightmost two characters on the backs of the copper coins suddenly began to shine with blinding light.

Gradually, ninety roars could be heard, shaking everything, as ninety images materialized from within the ninety copper coins. They were none other than… Mountain Ghosts!!

Mountain Ghosts were actually Mountain Gods that hadn’t been officially appointed, and thus, could not be referred to as Gods. Instead, they were called Ghosts!

Their appearances were ferocious, and they surged with energy and power. When they appeared, they immediately charged toward Fang Xiufeng with indescribable speed.

Rumbling filled the air as fierce fighting unfolded. Merely the first exchange caused Fang Xiufeng’s clone to cough up blood, and his body was half destroyed. Even still, his sword hacked through all ninety of the Mountain Ghosts, transforming them into nothing more than ash.

However, the seventh tribulation wasn’t over yet. Even as the ninety Mountain Ghosts fell to pieces, the archaic voice once again echoed out.

“Mountain Ghost lightning; kill the Ghosts and subdue the spirits; slaughter Demons and ward off evil; maintain the eternal purity of the Gods….” 1

RUMMMBLE! As the voice echoed out, ninety bolts of lightning shot out from the ninety copper coins. These lightning bolts looked completely different than the Tribulation Lightning from the first tribulation. They were filled with an aura of killing, as if they were paramount in Heaven and Earth, and represented the Dao of the Heavens to slaughter everything it considered evil!

Fang Xiufeng’s clone threw his head back and roared, causing more sword qi to explode up and slam into the ninety lightning bolts. The clone was shoved backward step by step as he sliced apart one bolt after another, blood spurting out of various wounds. By the time the sixty-third lightning bolt hit him, the clone couldn’t hold out any longer and exploded.

In that moment, the remaining twenty-seven lightning bolts shot at high speed through the blood-colored air toward Fang Xiufeng’s true self.

Meng Hao’s eyes were shot with blood, and his cultivation base exploded with power. Using the Trifecta Dao Formation, he poured energy into Fang Xiufeng, allowing him to create a third clone. As soon as the clone materialized, he shot up toward the twenty-seven lightning bolts and slashed at them with his sword.

A huge boom echoed out as the twenty-seven lightning bolts collapsed. Then he charged onward toward the ninety copper coins, sword qi raging in attack. The ninety copper coins began to fade, and yet they didn’t collapse. Instead, they swirled about in the air, merging together into a single copper coin which then vanished into the vortex.

It wasn’t that Fang Xiufeng had forced the copper coins into retreat. Instead, the fact that he had been able to endure the ordeal meant that the seventh tribulation was over. Now, the eighth tribulation appeared.

The eighth tribulation was a massive finger that stretched out from the vortex. It emanated a vast pressure, and apparently contained the amassed power of the Mountains and Seas as it launched an attack against Fang Xiufeng.

This was far different from an ordinary Dao Stepping Tribulation. The Dao Stepping Tribulations experienced by Fang Shoudao and Fang Yanxu in the past had been like children’s games compared to this!!

“Allheaven Tribulation!!” Fang Shoudao murmured, giving voice to the conclusion he had reached earlier.

When Meng Hao heard those words, his pupils constricted, and his heart filled with anxiety. He looked up at his father’s clone, and the enormous finger. The finger struck the clone, and the clone exploded into a haze of blood and gore. Then his father’s true form rose to his feet in the middle of the Trifecta Dao Formation. Without the slightest hint of hesitation, he flew up into the air.

“Dad!!” Meng Hao cried, shooting to his feet. His eyes were shot with blood, and he couldn’t hold back any longer. He had to directly assist his father in fighting back against the Heavenly Tribulation.

“Hao’er,” Fang Shoudao said, moving to block his way, “you’re not in the Dao Realm. This is your father’s tribulation, and you can’t interfere. If you do, you won’t be helping him, you’ll be harming him!” Then he exchanged a glance with Fang Yanxu, and the two of them nodded.

Decisive gleams appeared in their eyes as they raised their heads and looked up at Fang Xiufeng facing the descending finger. Then, both of them took deep breaths and simultaneously… let out an astonishing roar.

“DAO!!” they bellowed. The sound of it caused colors to flash in the sky and a huge wind to scream. Essence power erupted, and natural laws manifested. Heaven and Earth distorted as they… called upon the Dao to rebuke the Heavens!

As they joined forces, their Essences, their Daos, and their natural laws appeared around Fang Xiufeng, causing his Dao mist to instantly increase by tenfold. As it reached its peak, Fang Xiufeng shot toward the finger and slammed into it. Blood instantly sprayed out of his mouth, as well as out of the mouths of Fang Shoudao and Fang Yanxu.

However, the heavy price they paid caused the finger to tremble and then collapse into pieces. Fang Xiufeng passed through the remnants, approaching so close to the vortex that it seemed possible for him to step into it.

However, it was at this point that the ninth tribulation appeared. There was no physical manifestation to this tribulation. Instead, it was invisible. It was… the Deva Tribulation!

The blight of Deva was an invisible tribulation; anyone who attempted to step into the Dao would have to undergo the three blights of Heaven, Earth and Man!

Heaven blighted the spirit. Earth blighted the body. Man blighted the soul!

Fang Xiufeng trembled. His spirit seemed to be corroding, and he staggered in place, black blood oozing out of his mouth. Then, his body began to wither to the point where he seemed on the verge of becoming a skeleton. Simultaneously, his soul seemed to be under attack, and was rapidly melting.

He roared, and the Dao mist around him seethed as he inhaled a portion of it to restore his injuries. However, it did little to help in his attempt to transcend this tribulation. The tribulation was still there, and if he continued to breathe in the Dao mist and wasted it all, then even if he was able to step into the vortex, he would be unable to truly step into the Dao.

The true purpose of the Dao mist was to be used after stepping into the vortex. Having too little at that time could have very negative consequences.

Meng Hao was trembling, and his heart pounded with nervousness. However, there was nothing he could do. Even though he wanted to charge out into the fight, he didn’t dare to, lest he end up harming his father.

It was at this moment, however, that Fang Shoudao and Fang Yanxu both gritted their teeth, then joined their voices to say, “Thou shalt take my soul and be blessed!”

Then they pushed down onto their foreheads, causing a rumbling sound to echo out. Blood sprayed out of their mouths, and their bodies withered even more. However, their souls suddenly rose up from the tops of their heads.

Shockingly, they were using their own souls, minds, and bodies to help Fang Xiufeng! Together, they would overcome the ninth tribulation, the final tribulation!

1. The coin described here is actually a real coin used in Chinese culture. Check out this picture to see exactly what it looks like. All of the characters are the same, and the Eight Trigrams can be seen on the reverse side. For more information about the Eight Trigrams, you can read RWX’s basic primer to the Dao

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# Chapter 1186: The Murderous Intentions of the Ninth Lord!

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he also raised his hand and then pushed down hard onto his forehead. He was not in the Dao Realm, and thus didn’t dare to make a move. However, he did have the Essence of Divine Flame, which caused a sea of flame to erupt out of the top of his head, and then fly up along with Fang Shoudao and Fang Yanxu to help his father deal with the Deva Tribulation.

Even as the three of them jumped to Fang Xiufeng’s aid, all four coughed up blood. However, the weakening that Fang Xiufeng had been enduring slowed significantly.

Meng Hao’s face was pale white. His mind, body and soul were all melting rapidly, and yet his eyes gleamed with determination. He was willing to pay virtually any price to help his father.

Rumbling echoed out as Meng Hao, Fang Shoudao and Fang Yanxu split the force between them. Fang Xiufeng panted. His body was incredibly weakened and fatigued, and yet, he was now only nine meters away from the vortex!

All he had to do was span those nine meters, and he could enter the vortex and step onto the path!

However, the final nine meters were the most terrifying part of the ninth tribulation. Even without the tenfold increase in power, that final stretch was difficult enough that it proved too much for many ordinary cultivators who were attempting to step into the Dao. With the tenfold increase, it wasn’t even necessary to discuss how much more terrifying it now was.

Fang Xiufeng coughed up a mouthful of blood. With every step he took, he withered even more. His mind, body and soul atrophied. After moving forward for six out of the final nine meters, Fang Xiufeng reached his limit. It was the same for Fang Shoudao, Fang Yanxu and Meng Hao. If they continued any further, the injuries they were sustaining would no longer be temporary, but permanent.

However, even if they became permanent, Meng Hao didn't care.

"Patriarch Shoudao, Patriarch Yanxu, allow me to sustain the permanent injuries," he said. Meng Hao took a deep breath. He was just about to explode with more mind, soul and body power, to give the last bit of assistance possible to his father, when Fang Shoudao suddenly roared, the sound of which echoed throughout Planet South Heaven.

"All members of the Fang Clan will sacrifice their blood to help the Clan Chief step into the Dao!"

As his words rang out, all of the members of the Fang Clan on Planet South Heaven trembled. Without the slightest hesitation, they slapped their chests, causing blood to spray out of their mouths. The massive quantity of blood then shot up into the air.

Meng Li's blood could not be added in, but Fang Yu's could. Without a moment of hesitation, she spit the blood out, holding nothing back. After she had done so, her body teetered back and forth, and her face was bone white. However, her blood floated up into the air to join the rest.

Sun Hai rushed to hold her up. Although his heart twinged in pain at her sacrifice, he did nothing to stop her.

A vast amount of blood soared up toward Fang Xiufeng. His body trembled, and he almost seemed to be preparing to refuse the blood. He felt guilty at not being able to step into the Dao on his own, instead having to rely on the sacrifices of his fellow clan members.

Those sacrifices were not impossible to recover from, but Fang Xiufeng felt guilty nonetheless.

However, he gritted his teeth, and looked around at the seething Dao mist around him. Finally, he absorbed some of it, not to heal himself, but rather, to help Meng Hao, Fang Shoudao and all the other clan members.

“Xiufeng, stop it!” Fang Shoudao cried. “You don’t need to help us heal. Fang Yanxu and myself can do that on our own. As for the other clan members, we have plenty of medicinal pills in the clan that can help them recover. Hao’er doesn’t need any help at all. The best way you could help us is to step into the Dao!”

“Dad,” Meng Hao yelled, “hurry up and step into the Dao!” There was something else that went unsaid, which was that the great debt that Fang Xiufeng owed the clan would also be borne by Meng Hao!

Fang Xiufeng’s heart trembled, but he was a decisive person. Without any further hesitation, he used the power of the blood to cross the final three meters…. He was like the fish who leaped over the dragon gate! He stepped into the vortex and down onto the path that represented the Dao Realm!

In that instant, the Deva Tribulation vanished, and the vortex stopped spinning and went completely calm. The tribulations ceased, and Fang Xiufeng stood there alone on the path.

At the same time, ripples appeared, with Fang Xiufeng at their center. Ripples… that spread out through the whole Ninth Mountain and Sea.

These ripples resulted from stepping into the Dao, and were something that would occur any time a cultivator successfully transcended the tribulation and stepped into the vortex.

The result was that everyone else in the Dao Realm became aware that someone had reached this point!

Guru Heavencloud had not successfully entered the vortex, so nothing like this happened at that time. But now that Fang Xiufeng had succeeded, the ripples spread out instantly. All of the other Dao Realm experts in the Ninth Mountain and Sea could then sense what was happening, and sent their divine sense out to focus on Planet South Heaven.

“Fang Xiufeng is stepping into the Dao!!”

“The future Clan Chief of the Fang Clan will be in the Dao Realm….”

“Wait a second, that’s not right. How can he step into the Dao on Planet South Heaven? If I remember correctly, in order to save his son, he agreed to never step half a pace off Planet South Heaven. He even pledged an oath upon the Mountains and Seas which, if he violates, will destroy him in body and soul!”

“I can’t believe… that he’s stepping into the Dao on Planet South Heaven. How is this possible!?!?” All of the Dao Realm experts who sensed what was happening were shocked.

“It’s not over yet. He’s only halfway to a complete success. His chances of failing are still as high as before!”

“If he does succeed, after stepping into the Dao, he’ll have to take nine steps to get one Essence. Fang Xiufeng chose to step into the Dao with the sword, which is the most difficult of all Daos. Those nine steps… will be too difficult.” By now, the shocked divine sense of all of the Dao Realm patriarchs was focused around Planet South Heaven.

Meng Hao could no longer remain seated cross-legged. He rose to his feet within the blood-colored world, and his eyes were fixed up above on his father, who stood there on the path.

His Dao Stepping Tribulation was ten times as powerful and difficult as usual. Normally, he could have stepped easily into the Dao, but with the increased difficulty, it would have been impossible without the aid of the whole Clan. Otherwise, he would have ended up just like Guru Heavencloud, reduced to a Quasi-Dao cultivator with a limited life span.

That was something that Meng Hao could not accept; nor could his mother or sister.

Seeing his father standing there on the path didn’t cause Meng Hao to breathe a sigh of relief. Instead, he was even more worried than before. He could only imagine how difficult the nine steps would be, considering how much more difficult they would be than normal.

“Nine steps for one Essence,” Fang Shoudao said. “Your father’s Essence of the Dao of the sword is focused on killing, which is essentially a type of Slaughter Essence. That’s fundamentally difficult… but now, it will be even more difficult because of the Allheaven….” He sighed, looking older than ever.

“However, if he succeeds…” Fang Yanxu said, his eyes shining brightly with anticipation, “your father might just be a 1-Essence Dao Realm cultivator, but his battle prowess will be comparable to a 3-Essences Dao Lord!”

All of the cultivators on Planet South Heaven were looking at the vortex as Fang Xiufeng took his first step. As he did, rumbling sounds echoed out, filling the vortex and causing it to shake. The only people who could possibly understand what it felt like to be on that path were Dao Realm experts or perhaps Quasi-Dao Cultivators.

Meng Hao had no idea. All he could see was his father trembling after having taken his first step. Ripples emanated out from the vortex, even more violently than before, causing all of the starry sky in the Ninth Mountain and Sea to tremble.

At the same time, the Dao mist converged over the top of his head, forming something that was impossible to make out.

Then, Fang Xiufeng struggled to take a second step, and he trembled violently. When he took the third step, blood sprayed out of his mouth, and he looked like a lamp running low on oil, about to burn out.

After taking the third step, the ripples surging out from the vortex grew even more intense, shaking the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea with their madness. From the level of intensity, it seemed that if all nine steps were taken, the starry sky of the Mountain and Sea Realm itself would be shaken.

Furthermore, after taking those three steps, the Dao mist above Fang Xiufeng's head consolidated, gradually forming into a shape that resembled a sword.

However, Meng Hao wasn't paying attention to the sword; he was focused on his father. His face was currently ashen, exactly the same as the faces of his mother and sister.

"Stepping into the Dao involves nine steps, each of which is critically dangerous…." Fang Shoudao said through gritted teeth. He then lifted his right hand, and his fingers flashed with an incantation gesture. He waved his hand toward the outside world, affecting, not Fang Xiufeng within the vortex, but instead, all of the Fang Clan spell formations out on Planet South Heaven. They began to glitter and shine, and then erupted with explosive power. Shockingly, they appeared to be connecting to the teleportation portal on Planet East Victory, forming a channel.

What approached via that channel was not any cultivator… but rather…

"Dao bell, please protect the Clan Chief as he steps into the Dao!!" As Fang Shoudao's voice echoed out, the air above the ancestral mansion on Planet East Victory shimmered as the Dao bell appeared. It began to toll, sending the sound through the teleportation portal all the way to Planet South Heaven!

It passed through the void and into the vortex, and when Fang Xiufeng heard its toll, he trembled and took a fourth step, then a fifth and a sixth!

It was as if his spirit had been bolstered. His energy surged, and the ripples outside of the vortex began to surge violently. All of the Mountains and Seas were trembling, and the starry skies were shaking. All of the Dao Realm experts now became aware of what was happening.

The Dao mist above Fang Xiufeng's head was rapidly forming together to form the shape of a sword. It even seemed to have a sharp edge now, and most shocking of all was that it was the color of blood! That was an omen of… using the Dao of the sword to acquire the Essence of Slaughter!

Fang Xiufeng took a seventh step, and he shivered. His energy was now waning; the assistance from the Dao bell could only push him so far, and couldn’t help him to succeed completely. Fang Xiufeng gritted his teeth and then roared as he pushed with everything he had to take yet another step!

Eight steps!!

He was now only one step away from achieving his Dao. However, even as he lifted his foot up into the air and prepared to take that ninth step, Meng Hao suddenly heard a voice echoing through the void and into his mind.

“Citing the laws of the Mountain and Sea Realm, the Lord of the Ninth Mountain and Sea has requested that the Allheaven Dao Immortal who is currently stepping into the Dao… be destroyed. This matter is not a priority to the Mountain and Sea Realm, nor can a decision about the matter be made by the Mountain and Sea Realm itself.

“Therefore… the Lords of the Nine Mountains and Sea shall make the decision. Lords, please state your opinions.”

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# Chapter 1187: Father Achieves the Dao!

Before Fang Xiufeng could complete his ninth step, cracks spread out across his body. At the same time, something enormous was happening in the Mountain and Sea Realm that nobody on Planet South Heaven knew anything about!

That matter would determine whether or not Fang Xiufeng stepped into the Dao. It was a secret, an enigmatic event that very few people in the entire Mountain and Sea Realm were aware of!

The only people who did know were the ones at the utmost peak of power. In fact… they were the people who actually controlled the Mountain and Sea Realm!

Before the Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm appeared, they… were essentially the collective Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm. They were… the Mountain and Sea Lords of the various Mountains and Seas!

Currently, the voice that echoed out through the Mountain and Sea Realm filled the minds of those Lords!

It was a cold voice, devoid of any emotion. It didn't matter how far apart those nine people were, separated by the Mountains and Seas, they all could hear it.

"Citing the laws of the Mountain and Sea Realm, the Lord of the Ninth Mountain and Sea has requested that the Allheaven Immortal who is currently stepping into the Dao… be destroyed. This matter is not a priority to the Mountain and Sea Realm, nor can a decision about the matter be made by the Mountain and Sea Realm itself.

“Therefore… the Lords of the Nine Mountains and Seas shall make the decision. Lords, please state your opinions.”

On the majestic peak of the Ninth Mountain was an enormous eye, within which sat a cross-legged old man. Eyes gleaming with killing intent and decisiveness, he softly said, “As the Lord of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, I say… destroy the Allheaven Immortal who is stepping into the Dao!”

At the same time, all of the other Mountain and Sea Lords in the other Mountains and Seas quietly made their decisions.

After a moment of silence, the cold, emotionless voice once again rang out into the minds of the nine.

“Of the nine Mountain and Sea Lords, five agree to destroy the Allheaven Immortal. Three disagree. One abstained from voting…. In accord with the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm, the Allheaven Immortal will be destroyed!”

As soon as the word ‘destroyed’ rang out, Fang Xiufeng’s body trembled, and he coughed up a mouthful of blood. He appeared to be on the verge of collapsing into pieces.

“NO!!” Meng Hao screamed. Of everyone on Planet South Heaven, he was the only one who could hear that voice speaking. Suddenly, he charged forward, ignoring any possible danger as he shot up into the sky.

Meanwhile, back on Planet South Heaven, Meng Li trembled and likewise shot into the air. Although facing the Dao Stepping vortex involved extreme danger, she didn’t hesitate. Neither did Fang Yu, who also took to flight.

Sun Hai didn’t pause either, not even to think. As soon as Fang Yu sprang into motion… he also flew up.

If you go, so do I!

Within the vortex, Fang Xiufeng’s body was gradually breaking apart. He hadn’t completed the nine steps, and that final step would remain forever incomplete. He was breaking apart in a way that wasn’t necessarily lethal. If he wished, he could disperse the Dao mist, allowing it to be destroyed instead of his body. Then he would be left with an extremely limited lifespan.

Fang Shoudao’s face darkened, and he sat there without saying a word. He had already done everything he could; he had called upon the Dao, drawn upon his soul and asked the whole clan to join in the sacrifice….

The Dao bell had even been summoned. However, it appeared that none of that could change Fang Xiufeng’s fate.

“He should have been able to easily step into the Dao…. Allheaven Immortals, Allheaven Immortals…. An Allheaven Immortal regardless of success or defeat.” Fang Shoudao suddenly seemed to grow even older.

It was the same with Fang Yanxu. They looked at Fang Xiufeng in the vortex, and then saw Meng Hao desperately flying forward. This time, Fang Shoudao did nothing to stop him.

Because… there was no need.

Within the Heavenly vortex, Fang Xiufeng sighed. His face was covered in cracks, and his body was beginning to fade away, causing beams of azure light to shine out from him.

The feeling of imminent death caused him to sigh. Seemingly emanating an aura of death, he turned and looked at the roaring Meng Hao. He also saw his wife and daughter charging toward him.

“Oh well,” he murmured softly. “It seems I won’t be stepping into the Dao. However, I have no regrets, except… that I won’t have more time to spend with all of you….” Just when he was about to disperse the Dao mist and cease his attempt to step into the Dao, all of a sudden, a cold snort echoed out. The sound was ancient, and filled with boundless pressure. It came through the teleportation portal, from… Planet East Victory!

All of Planet East Victory was shaking, as if its will were awakening. As the planet awoke, the lands shook, and within the Fang Clan’s Ancestral Land, in the necropolis, the first generation Patriarch sat there cross-legged, and… his eyes opened!

“As an Allheaven Clan, my Fang Clan fought for the Immortal World until I was the only person left!

“And now… the Fang Clan is on the rise again. Our blood has awakened, and the glory of an Allheaven Clan is once again on the cusp of appearing…. Why should we be subjected to this arrangement!?

“If this were an ordinary stepping into the Dao, I would not interfere, not even if he were to die. But now, things have changed because of the awakening of the blood of an Allheaven Clan. As for this tribulation… enough is enough!

“If Paragon Nine Seals had not perished, even he would respect an Allheaven Clan such as mine. And you… you are nothing more than a spirit automaton, formed out of natural laws. The Lords of the Nine Mountains and Seas all maintain a portion of those natural laws, and therefore… I will not hold it against the Mountain and Sea Realm itself. But as for the rest of you, Lords of the Mountains and Seas, I will personally rectify your mistake of attempting to destroy my Fang Clan!”

The voice echoing out was not audible to everyone. The only people who could hear it were the Lords of the Nine Mountains and Seas, and considering his identity, Meng Hao!

Simultaneously, a beam of light shot out from Planet East Victory. It moved with explosive speed, rapidly transforming into nine beams, one of which headed toward the Ninth Mountain, and the other eight of which shot through the void toward the other eight Mountains and Seas!

The Ninth Mountain rumbled, and the enormous eye let out a roar of fury. However, blood spurted out from it and dripped down, causing the entire Ji Clan to be shaken.

As for what happened in the other Mountains and Seas, nobody knew. However… back on Planet South Heaven in the Heavenly vortex, Fang Xiufeng was suddenly pushed forward and… took his ninth step!

In the moment that his foot stepped down, Fang Xiufeng's eyes went wide. Everyone watching gaped in astonishment. At the same time, the Dao mist above his head fully materialized into a sword!

A… blood-colored sword!!

The sword descended down into Fang Xiufeng through the top of his head, and suddenly… he erupted with the aura of the Dao Realm!!

Ripples exploded out from the vortex, sweeping across the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea before fading away to reveal Fang Xiufeng!

He was confused about what had happened, and he wasn't the only one. Fang Shoudao and Fang Yanxu were shocked and panting. They almost couldn't believe what had happened, and all of the other Dao Realm experts who had been watching Planet South Heaven were equally astonished.

"He clearly failed…. How could he possibly have ended up succeeding!?"

"What exactly happened just now!?!?"

"Inconceivable! This is completely impossible. Throughout all the years that the Mountain and Sea Realm has existed, nobody has ever mysteriously gone from a state of obvious defeat into one of utter victory!"

However, it didn't matter what people thought or said. Fang Xiufeng… had successfully stepped into the Dao!

The cultivators from the Fang Clan weren't sure what exactly caused it to happen, but after seeing that Fang Xiufeng had stepped into the Dao, they were ecstatic.

"Greetings, Clan Chief!"

"Clan Chief, congratulations on successfully stepping into the Dao!"

“Congratulations, Clan Chief!!” Calls of congratulation swelled up, and all of Planet South Heaven was shaken. Meng Li flew up and embraced Fang Xiufeng, tears streaming down her face.

Fang Yu and Sun Hai also approached, weeping.

“Dad… you did it!” Fang Yu said, weeping and laughing at the same time.

“Congratulations, Dad!” Meng Hao said, hovering off to the side. Seeing his dad safe caused him to sigh with relief. However, hidden behind that smile was something he didn’t want his parents to see, and that was the cold, murderous feelings he held because of what had just nearly occurred to Fang Xiufeng.

Meng Hao would never be able to forget the voices he had heard. He also gained a new understanding of his identity, and how it pertained to the Mountain and Sea Realm as a whole. The rise of an Allheaven Clan was a threat to other Mountain and Sea Lords, and especially… to the Ji Clan. That was why the Ji Clan had taken such decisive, murderous action!

However, true threat of death actually didn’t come from any one cultivator, but from the Mountain and Sea Realm itself, from the powers of natural law that had tried to cut down Fang Xiufeng! From Meng Hao’s perspective, it must have occurred because the Ji Clan’s Patriarch Ji Tian had paid a high price to make it happen. If any Mountain and Sea Lord could blithely do such a thing, then no one would ever dare to challenge them to battle.

But that wasn’t the case. The Mountain and Sea Lords could be supplanted. Therefore, as of this moment, Meng Hao decided that he would make Ji Tian pay for what he had done.

“Ji Tian, one of these days, you shall die!” Meng Hao’s smile was as cold and sharp as a blade as he gazed up into the sky. He still wasn’t sure why exactly Ji Tian had chosen such a method to try to kill his father. But he had to ask himself whether or not some undying enmity existed between his father and Ji Tian.

“Is it because of me, or because Ji Tian can’t get to father because of him being on Planet South Heaven?” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. The fact that someone had tried to kill his father took things over the line. To him, that was a violation of a huge taboo, and although he looked normal on the surface, his heart raged with fury and towering killing intent.

He had never experienced rage like he was feeling now, nor had he ever wanted to kill someone as much as he now wanted to kill Ji Tian. Therefore, he decided… that it was an enmity that absolutely must be seen to its end.

Fang Xiufeng looked at his wife and daughter, then at Meng Hao. Meng Hao might be able to hide his true feelings from Meng Li and Fang Yu, but not from his father.

He looked at the rage boiling in Meng Hao’s eyes, and his heart trembled. However, before he had much time to think about it, Meng Hao smiled and once again said, “Congratulations, dad.”

Fang Xiufeng smiled and was about to respond, when suddenly his face fell. Simultaneously, Meng Hao’s face also fell. Down below, similar reactions could be seen on the faces of Fang Shoudao and Fang Yanxu!

That was because… all of the clouds completely vanished from Planet South Heaven, to be replaced… by a massive, illusory net!

That was… Planet South Heaven’s spell formation!

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# Chapter 1188: South Heaven Death Formation!

As soon as the spell formation appeared, it covered all of Planet South Heaven. At the same time, Meng Hao, Fang Shoudao, and Fang Yanxu… and all other cultivators, felt an intense, explosive burst of killing intent.

It was like a terrifying divine sense that swept across the lands, covering Planet South Heaven. Meng Hao's face fell as he sensed the horrifying power, and realized that it was something he couldn't possibly fight back against. If that power wanted to exterminate something, it could be exterminated in the blink of an eye!

Fang Shoudao's face went pale, and Fang Yanxu started trembling. Meng Li's face fell, as did Fang Yu's.

"That's the Death Formation of Planet South Heaven!!"

"Dammit, obviously the spell formation doesn't approve of Xiufeng stepping into the Dao, otherwise it wouldn't have activated!!"

"It's going to wipe Xiufeng out!!"

RUMBLE!

Heaven and Earth shook as an incredibly powerful force sprang into being, pushing everyone away from Fang Xiufeng. Nobody could resist it, not even Meng Hao, who was inexorably pushed away until Fang Xiufeng stood completely alone.

It happened too quickly. Moments ago, everyone had been congratulating Fang Xiufeng on successfully stepping into the Dao. But now, everyone was gaping in shock at the massive transformations occurring in Heaven and Earth.

Fang Xiufeng’s eyes flickered. As soon as the killing intent appeared, he pushed his cultivation base down from the Dao Realm to the great circle of the Ancient Realm.

However, the killing intent only continued to get stronger and stronger. Peals of thunder echoed out from the illusory net as it shot down toward Fang Xiufeng, filled with a shocking murderous intent which morphed into a power of extermination. In just a brief moment, the destructive power was nearing Fang Xiufeng.

If Fang Xiufeng had failed to step into the Dao and become a Quasi-Dao cultivator, then Planet South Heaven’s spell formation would not have appeared, regardless of whether it approved of him or not. After all, the spell formation only targeted the Dao Realm. Unless Emperor Tang took control of it, it wouldn’t harm Quasi-Dao cultivators.

Meng Hao’s eyes were bright red as he exploded into action. The Lightning Cauldron appeared in his right hand, and electricity danced as he attempted to switch positions with his father. However, despite the dancing electricity, the Lightning Cauldron didn’t work!

Because of South Heaven’s spell formation, it was useless!

Meng Hao wasn’t willing to give up. Eyes flashing with madness, he shot forward like an arrow, intent on piercing the net to help his father.

However, as soon as Meng Hao touched the net, he felt a massive force pushing back against him, like a power of expulsion. He heard countless screaming voices shoving him away, preventing him from entering the area within the net.

However, the net didn’t hurt him. It only prevented him from interfering with the will of the South Heaven spell formation!

Meng Hao’s face was pale, and he began to laugh bitterly. He… could do nothing. Now, as before, he could only watch, and provide no assistance whatsoever. This was his father, his blood relative, and therefore, the feeling of helplessness which filled his heart made him want to scream in rage.

Meng Hao’s mother and sister were shrieking as they watched Fang Xiufeng face this danger.

It was at this point, however, that a growling roar echoed out from the Great Tang’s Imperial palace.

“With mine own Li Clan blood, I call upon the spirit of the ancestor within the spell formation. This man… is the guardian of South Heaven. He is… from the Allheaven Fang Clan. He must not be harmed or killed…..” In accompaniment with the words, massive rumbling struck Heaven and Earth. The net seemed to pause, and at the same time, a figure materialized out of thin air next to Fang Xiufeng.

He wore an Imperial robe and an Emperor’s crown. It was none other than Emperor Tang, who grabbed Fang Xiufeng and then sped with him down toward the ground. Just when they seemed to be on the verge of touching down, boundlessly bright lightning suddenly shot down toward Fang Xiufeng, filled with intense killing intent.

After landing on the ground, Emperor Tang’s voice once again rang out with urgency, “Brother Xiufeng, the spell formation has neither been defeated, nor has it achieved victory. Had it succeeded, I would never have been able to rescue you just now. Quickly, sit down and begin to meditate. I will give you a drop of Li Clan blood. After you fully absorb it, you will contain some of the ancestor’s Daoist magic, and the spell formation will approve of you. However… you only have the time it takes an incense stick to burn!

“That short time will be a grave test for you….

“If you pass it, then you will be the only Dao Realm expert on Planet South Heaven!

“If you fail… then henceforth, you and I shall not meet again in the world of men….” Emperor Tang’s words were spoken quickly. Even as the words left his mouth, he waved a finger, first at Fang Shoudao, and then at Fang Yanxu. Both of them vanished, then reappeared next to Fang Xiufeng.

“If you two want him to survive for the time it takes an incense stick to burn, then you need to do everything you can to help him. However… remember that you must not under any circumstances use the power of the Dao Realm. If you do, not only will Fang Xiufeng be defeated, you will also die!” Having said that, Emperor Tang sat down cross-legged and waved his hand, causing a drop of blood to fly out and fuse into Fang Xiufeng’s forehead, who began meditating.

Emperor Tang’s eyes gleamed with concentration. He was just about to close them when a hoarse voice was transmitted into his ears.

“Emperor Tang, let me in too!” Meng Hao said, eyes bloodshot. Emperor Tang’s gaze flashed, and he hesitated for a moment, but then he waved his finger.

Immediately, Meng Hao vanished and then reappeared next to Fang Xiufeng.

Having done these things, Emperor Tang closed his eyes and performed a double-handed incantation gesture, utilizing a secret magic of the Li Clan to help Fang Xiufeng gain the approval of the spell formation.

The enormous illusory web continued to rumble toward them. Although it didn’t harm Planet South Heaven in the least, the killing intent within it continued to grow stronger. Strange colors flashed, and the wind blew.

Fang Shoudao’s eyes shone with a bright gleam as he suddenly flew up into the air, followed by Fang Yanxu. They immediately set to work fighting the net, not using the power of the Dao Realm, but rather, cultivation bases that had been restricted to the great circle of the Ancient Realm.

Meng Hao also flew into the air, joining the other two. Almost immediately, blood sprayed out of the mouths of all three of them. The target of the net was Fang Xiufeng, but it could still hurt them, although only to a certain extent.

That was especially true of Meng Hao, whose face was pale, and who immediately sustained terrible internal injuries. He began to tremble, but clenched his teeth and fought on, battling against the net to gain time.

Fang Shoudao roared, and Fang Yanxu's energy surged. However, no matter what they did, the result was only that the net's arrival slowed down. They could do nothing to actually stop it.

After ten breaths of time passed, rumbling filled Meng Hao, and boundless azure light shone out from his blood. The power of an Allheaven Dao Immortal exploded out as he slammed against the net, causing a huge boom to echo out. Fang Shoudao and Fang Yanxu did the same.

The sky shook and the lands quaked. The net was again slowed by the attacks. However, it continued to close in, forcing the three of them back and narrowing the perimeter.

The time it takes an incense stick to burn isn't very long, but under these circumstances, Meng Hao felt as if time had slowed to a crawl. He wasn't sure exactly how much time had already passed, but he was constantly being pushed back. His clothes were already soaked in blood, and yet the net had already shrunk to the point where it only left them with a few dozen meters of room.

It was at this point that Fang Yanxu's face fell, and he stopped fighting. Apparently, he was having trouble keeping his Dao Realm cultivation base concealed. If it were to be revealed, he would be in critical danger.

Finally, he gritted his teeth, fought back with one last powerful volley, and then shot through the net to the other side, where he hovered in the air, his face grim but his eyes apologetic.

Without Fang Yanxu, the shrinking rate of the net increased. Meng Hao and Fang Shoudao were now under more pressure, especially Meng Hao, who had been injured to begin with, and whose cultivation base was nowhere near Fang Shoudao’s. He might have his Eternal stratum, but he was shaking nonetheless, trembling as his body withered.

Fang Shoudao roared; he was now on the point of being unable to hold back his Dao Realm cultivation base. Gritting his teeth, he slapped his chest viciously, injuring himself as a way to force his cultivation base to remain suppressed.

However, that was not a long-term solution. By now, more than seventy percent of the incense stick’s worth of time had passed, and Fang Shoudao’s face was ashen, his body trembling. Despite his tactic of self-injury, he had reached his limit, and was on the verge of losing control of his Dao Realm cultivation base. He sighed.

“Hao’er, I’ve done all I can. Please… don’t hold it against me.” He looked older than ever, and his face was bitter as he flickered away. No longer able to fight the net, he was now on the outside, struggling to keep his cultivation base under control. However, the sighs he uttered were deep and profound.

Of the three that had been holding off the net, Meng Hao was now the only one left. His cultivation base was the weakest, and yet, he was able to hold out for the longest. That was because he had no Dao Realm cultivation base to reveal, and didn’t need to worry about holding back. His eyes were crimson, and he was coughing up blood continuously. However, he didn’t back down. By now, the net had shrunk down to the point where it was only fifteen meters wide!

Behind Meng Hao, his father sat cross-legged. He was not willing to give in, and even as the net shrank down, a wild look appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes. He extended his right hand and waved it, causing the meat jelly to appear.

“Protect my father!” Meng Hao said. The meat jelly immediately came to rest on Fang Xiufeng, transforming into a set of armor that completely covered him. Meng Hao’s blood was boiling as he then lifted his hand… to reveal his fourth Nirvana Fruit!

Without the slightest hesitation, he placed it onto his forehead. The Nirvana Fruit rapidly dissolved, and sounds like thunder immediately began to reverberate from within him.

He let out a piercing cry, and his body trembled as dazzling azure light shot out. An indescribable level of cultivation base power suddenly surged out, and it almost looked like a door had appeared within him.

That was… the great Door of the Ancient Realm!

It was as if it were being summoned, causing massive clouds to gather in the sky, within which was the Great Door of the Ancient Realm!

Borrowing power from the fourth Nirvana Fruit, he raised both hands up and then slammed them down toward the ground. Rumbling sounds echoed out from within him as the blast shot down into the ground, then surged back up in a backlash toward the huge net.

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# Chapter 1189: Father Must Not Perish!

As of this moment, everyone was looking on in shock as Meng Hao slammed his hands into the ground. A mist of blood spurted out of him, and his aura weakened. However, the end result… was astonishing!

The illusory net trembled, and even backed up a bit. As of now, Meng Hao's father only had 60 breaths of time left until the entire incense stick's worth of time was up!

Meng Hao knew that the enormous net was not using its full power against him, but only a tiny portion. The spell formation was only interested in killing Dao Realm cultivators who entered Planet South Heaven. That was the entire purpose of the sacrifice of the Li Clan.

To the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm, the spell formation actually offered a certain degree of protection. However, because Fang Xiufeng was violating the laws of the spell formation, he was now the subject of its deadly attack.

In the moment that the spell formation fell back, there were sixty breaths of time left. Meng Hao suddenly felt as if there were hope. But then, the spell formation suddenly flickered with light, and its killing intent erupted once more. Meng Hao could now just make out images of innumerable figures who existed within the net, all of whom seemed to be filled with determination and focus as they pushed the web forward.

It bore down with incredible speed. Even with his fourth Nirvana Fruit, Meng Hao was powerless to fight back against it. In fact, the fourth Nirvana Fruit was forcibly expelled from his body.

Trembling, he staggered backward. The net closed in, and suddenly… passed directly through him to envelope Fang Xiufeng. The meat jelly armor shuddered, but could not hold on for long. As for Fang Xiufeng, he was at a critical moment in absorbing the drop of blood, and couldn't move. The net was just about to pass through the meat jelly and land on Fang Xiufeng. Once it did so, its killing intent would reach a fever pitch and cause Fang Xiufeng… to immediately be killed in body and spirit, his soul completely departed.

"NO!!" Tears of blood poured down Meng Hao's cheeks, and his expression was fierce. He let out a maddened roar, and suddenly lifted his right hand up and pointed up into the heavens. Instantly, the drop of Paragon's blood began to rumble, as he sent a call to the sun and moon of the Mountain and Sea Realm, which vibrated in response. A beam of light shot down from them which pierced through the void and instantly slammed into the huge net.

He was now using the power of the Mountain and Sea Realm itself to resist the net.

Massive rumbling filled the air, and the net shook and was shoved back slightly by the beams of light. It wasn't that the power of the Mountain and Sea Realm was insufficient, but rather, this was Planet South Heaven, and the spell formation had been created by the sacrifice of the Li Clan. The power of the Mountain and Sea Realm wasn't willing to destroy it!

In fact, unless there was absolutely no other choice, Meng Hao didn't want to do that either. He admired the Li Clan, and respected the spell formation. But this was a critical, life-or-death moment for his father. Meng Hao's choice… would always be to place family above anything else!!

When the light of the sun and moon slammed into the net, it trembled slightly, and moved away from Fang Xiufeng. As for Meng Hao, he paid a heavy price to unleash this attack, an even greater price than he had paid to do the same thing in the Windswept Realm. After all, on that occasion, he had used the power to kill Outsiders, but now, he was causing the Mountain and Sea Realm to harm itself.

Therefore, the price he paid was heavier. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and he watched as the net shrank down again. His father was now at an extremely critical moment, and his body was trembling. As of this moment, the only thought in Meng Hao’s head was…

His father must not perish!!

In his mind, he roared, “I call upon the power of my name to order the Mountain and Sea Realm to descend!” Then he waved his finger again, and suddenly, an illusory Mountain and Sea appeared atop Fang Xiufeng.

No one could see that Mountain and Sea except for Emperor Tang, whose expression flickered.

As it descended, Meng Hao trembled. His clothes were already soaked with blood, and he was growing faint. However, in that moment his eyes suddenly shone brightly. As the Mountain and Sea descended, Fang Xiufeng stopped trembling, and the huge net was stopped. Unfortunately, in that moment, the killing intent of the net grew even more intense, and the Mountain and Sea was not willing to exert itself fully to fight it. The huge net passed through it, and then closed in once again on Fang Xiufeng.

It was as if the South Heaven spell formation would not disappear until Fang Xiufeng was dead!

Fang Xiufeng’s eyes suddenly opened, and he looked at Meng Hao with a look of kindness. Sighing, he said, “Hao’er, take care of your mother and your sister. You might be the younger brother, but you’re the man of the family now. From now on… they’ll be relying on you….”

“Dad!!” Meng Hao cried. His hair instantly turned white, and he was so withered that he looked almost like a sack of bones. However, he was completely focused; his desire to save his father had not been reduced in the slightest, and even burned hotter than ever.

“Dad, you’re not going to die! Bring on the Second Mountain!”

Rumbling could be heard as a second Mountain and Sea descended to fight back against the huge net. Seemingly mad, Meng Hao waved his finger again, causing the Paragon's blood to boil once more.

"Third Mountain!" Shockingly, a third Mountain and Sea appeared over Fang Xiufeng to fight back against the South Heaven spell formation. Rumbling echoed out as the net was once again forced back.

To fight back with the power of three Mountains and Seas was the most that Meng Hao could do with his Paragon's blood. He was shaking now, and his flesh was mangled. He… had reached his limit.

In terms of time, there were still twenty breaths left!

Booms echoed out as the net passed through one mountain after another. Soon there were only ten breaths of time left, and that was when the final Mountain and Sea vanished. The killing intent erupting from the net was maddeningly intense. By this point, the meat jelly wasn't effective at all, and from the look of it, Fang Xiufeng was just about to be wiped out.

Expression serious, he turned to Meng Hao and roared, "Hao'er, back down, now! This is my choice! Parents are supposed to sacrifice themselves for their children, not the other way around. I don't need you to save me. Back off!!" Fang Xiufeng's expression was serious, and his heart twinged with pain. Currently, the bitterness he felt far exceeded Meng Hao's.

He had no desire to perish, or to affect Meng Hao in any other way. In fact, he would rather die than do so!

Meng Hao's expression was one of determination. Completely ignoring Fang Xiufeng, he sent the Essence of Divine Flame out. It was not a sea of flames, but rather… the aura of Essence. And that aura, could also become… the aura of a Dao!

Meng Hao unleashed that aura completely, causing it to explode out with full power. At the same time, he advanced, standing directly between his father and the net, stretching his arms out wide. Shockingly, he was using his own body and his own Dao aura to fight back against the net. He was struggling to buy those final few breaths of time for his father!

The net rumbled, enveloping Meng Hao and Fang Xiufeng together. Because Meng Hao was protecting his father, he absorbed nearly sixty percent of the attack, with only about forty percent entering Fang Xiufeng.

As it did, the killing intent exploded out, and Fang Xiufeng coughed up a mouthful of blood. His soul was on the verge of being exterminated. This time, the net did not pass through Meng Hao, but instead, because of his Dao aura, it had turned from being ethereal to corporeal.

Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and his vision dimmed. The feeling of death had never been so close. Meng Hao suddenly thought of his mother, his sister, and also another woman; Xu Qing.

Regret filled him, and he wanted to say something, but was helpless. The world began to turn black.

“Hao’er!!” Fang Xiufeng was trembling, and a madness surged within him. He shot up from his cross-legged position just as the ten breaths of time had passed. The drop of Li Clan blood was now fully absorbed.

That was what Meng Hao had been fighting for. Were it not for him, the moment of Fang Xiufeng’s success would also have been his death.

Simultaneously, Emperor Tang finished preparing his Daoist magic, and unleashed it. The enormous web, which had not yet completely sliced through Meng Hao, flickered and then vanished from both Fang Xiufeng and Meng Hao.

As of that moment, the South Heaven spell formation officially approved of Fang Xiufeng!

Fang Xiufeng had successfully stepped into the Dao. However the price that had been paid… was enormous. For one, he was seriously injured. Furthermore, the injury was abnormal. Although it was not permanent, it would still require months of time spent in meditation to recover from fully.

During that time, activity had to be limited, otherwise the injuries could end up lasting for all eternity.

However, Fang Xiufeng didn’t care about his injuries at all. He immediately grabbed Meng Hao in his arms. Meng Hao’s pale complexion and injury-covered body caused tears to begin to roll down his face.

“Congratulations, Dad….” After murmuring those two words, Meng Hao lapsed into a coma.

Meng Hao didn’t know it, but after he went comatose, the entire Fang Clan was mobilized to help in his recovery. Fang Shoudao and Fang Yanxu held nothing back. Even the first generation Patriarch’s clone sent some divine will to help.

Shui Dongliu came as well, although no one was aware of it. He stood next to Meng Hao’s bed, looking down at him with an increasingly moved expression.

“So, for people who change their own destiny… anything is possible.” His eyes began to glow with a strange light. After a long moment passed, he left. His departure was not detected any more than his arrival was.

Emperor Tang also came to visit once. As he looked at Meng Hao, his heart trembled, although he didn’t allow that to show on his face. He didn’t tell anyone how he had seen Meng Hao summon the Mountains and Seas, nor how he now sensed… the aura of the South Heaven spell formation on him!

Meng Hao’s injuries were very serious, whether in terms of his body, his mind, or his soul. He had been injured so badly that he almost died, and as such, his recovery time was also significant.

However, with the full help of the Fang Clan, his injures were not the type that couldn’t be recovered from. He remained unconscious the entire time, housed safely in the Fang Clan ancestral mansion on Planet South Heaven. His sister, mother, and father were constantly by his side to care for him.

Time passed. Eventually, the time came for the grand coronation of the Clan Chief. Under the urgings of the other clan members, as well as Meng Li, Fang Xiufeng decided not to delay things any further, and prepared to begin the ceremony.

However, although he might be the Clan Chief, in his heart, he couldn’t compare at all to his son.

Eventually, the day of the grand ceremony arrived.

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# Chapter 1190: Grand Ceremony in the Fang Clan!

The Fang Clan was one of the Four Great Clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. In the past, they had struggled with Ji Tian for Lordship over the entire Mountain and Sea. If you added in the events of the battle of Planet East Victory in which the first generation Patriarch exploded out with power, it truly showed that the clan was as strong as ever, despite the loss of blood and wealth due to the internal strife which had struck them.

Although there would always be some suspicion that the clan was much weaker than they let on, given some time, they would surely be even more powerful than before.

Then there was Meng Hao’s status as an Echelon cultivator. The news of that had already begun to spread. Coupled with the fact that he was strong enough to sweep over all the other Chosen, it ensured that the Fang Clan was clearly poised on the verge of having even greater influence.

Everyone knew that the Fang Clan had the first generation Patriarch, two Dao Realm experts, and the most powerful Chosen in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. When a clan like that held a ceremony to appoint its Clan Chief, it can easily be imagined how much of a commotion it caused.

Because Fang Xiufeng had successfully stepped into the Dao Realm, the Fang Clan’s overall power was now one step higher. Aside from the Three Great Daoist Societies or the Ji Clan, no other sect or clan in the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea could match up to them in terms of combat strength.

As the ceremony got under way, numerous buildings were constructed on Planet South Heaven. Countless majestic palaces sprang up, and one mountain after another was razed. The Fang Clan's citadel was now like an enormous, sprawling beast.

There were also numerous spell formations connecting Planet South Heaven to Planet East Victory. In fact… before long, Planet South Heaven could very well become the nucleus of the Fang Clan.

Although there were certain limitations to the place, those limitations would also serve to protect the Fang Clan. By now, they controlled two planets. Obviously, their rise to power was not something that could be stopped.

Millions of Fang Clan cultivators came from Planet East Victory and spread out into various regions of Planet South Heaven. The Fang Clan's ancestral mansion was a hundred times larger than before, and it was in its central square that the grand ceremony was to take place.

On that day, starting at dawn, the teleportation portals on Planet South Heaven flashed continuously as cultivators from all of the various sects and clans throughout the Ninth Mountain and Sea arrived.

There were friends of the Fang Clan, and also enemies. It was the same for Fang Xiufeng, and many who were there came for him specifically. These people could only sigh inwardly when they thought about the rumors that had had successfully stepped into the Dao. Although many people might want to challenge him to a fight, few actually dared.

Many, many people came. The Three Churches and Six Sects were present, as well as many of the large clans. There were also countless smaller sects and even rogue cultivators who flocked to Planet South Heaven, all of whom the Fang Clan arranged accommodations for.

The Three Great Daoist Societies came, and even the Ji Clan sent people. On the surface, there was no display of the undying enmity between the Fang and Ji Clans.

The Chosen of many sects and clans had friction with Meng Hao, and yet, all of those sects and clans sent representatives. Surprisingly, though… not a single one of the Chosen could be seen. It was almost as if they had collectively decided ahead of time not to come. As for Fatty, and Meng Hao’s other long-time friends, none of their sects sent them to attend.

That was understandable. Meng Hao was now so powerful that he struck fear into the hearts of even the experts in the elder generation. If they had sent disciples of the Junior generation to the ceremony, it would have been seen as an embarrassment.

Furthermore, Meng Hao’s A Writ of Karma was now well-known in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Everyone knew that he liked to get Chosen members of his generation to owe him money through Karma. Therefore, the less they encountered him the better.

In the end, it was mostly older cultivators who showed up.

At high noon, when the sun blazed up above… the ceremony began!

Numerous beams of light flew through the air toward the central square of the ancestral mansion, where rows and rows of tables had been set up. Tables were even hovering in the air, tens of thousands of them. As the cultivators arrived, they were shown to their seats by the Fang Clan members in charge of the proceedings. The Dao bell was even teleported over, and hung high up in the sky, looking very threatening.

The Fang Clan ensured that all the tables were filled with everything from spirit alcohol to Immortal fruit. The ceremony was to last for three days, and the expenditure for such an affair was terrifyingly enormous. However, the number of congratulatory gifts was also scalp-numbing.

Fang Shoudao took charge of it all, being the one with the most experience in that regard.

On the first day of the grand ceremony, everyone watched as Fang Xiufeng emerged, offered sacrifices to the ancestors and called upon the starry sky.

Then, all sorts of rites and functions were held before that part of the ceremony concluded.

The cultivators who had come to observe the ceremony and offer congratulations were all waiting for the second day. Customarily, the three day-long coronation of a Clan Chief for a clan as powerful as the Fang would include the formality of severing enmities. That was what most people were looking forward to.

Meng Hao was still in a coma. For him, it was like a long dream. Within that dream, he visited a special world, a place where the Mountain and Sea Realm had just appeared. He saw a clan offering sacrifices to him, creating an ancestral gate, and setting up spell formations.

On the dawn of the second day, a huge banquet was set up in the main square. Fang Shoudao's powerful voice echoed out in all directions: "The Fang Clan has chosen Fang Xiufeng as its Clan Chief!

"Ladies and gentlemen, whatever debts or enmities he had with you will be ended this day. From now on, Fang Xiufeng is the Clan Chief, and anyone who dares to provoke, slander, or vilify him will face the wrath of the entire Fang Clan!" Fang Shoudao looked around slowly. He had already made plenty of preparations to ensure that nothing untoward happened.

The most important factor was that Fang Xiufeng was already in the Dao Realm. Everyone knew this, so it was hard to believe that people would come looking to die. After all, that is what would happen when challenging a Dao Realm Clan Chief.

"Let the formalities begin!" Fang Shoudao sat in place, and when he spoke, his voice echoed like thunder. Fang Xiufeng sat calmly next to him, looking very threatening despite not being angry. He seemed to be filled with an invisible energy that caused anyone who looked at him to tremble inwardly, and even left their cultivation base unstable.

Anyone in the Dao Realm who came had to suppress themselves down to the Ancient Realm, which meant that nobody could possibly be a match for

Fang Xiufeng. He was the only person present that was truly in the Dao Realm.

A buzz of conversation could be heard from the audience. Fang Shoudao waited for a long moment, but seeing that nobody stepped forward, he closed his eyes to wait for time to pass. He didn't seem surprised at all by the lack of challengers.

However, in almost the exact moment that he closed his eyes, a burly man stepped out from the crowd. He was fully six meters tall, emanated the ripples of the Immortal Realm, and caused the ground to shake with each step.

“Fang Xiufeng, there exists no enmity between us. However, I shall stand for the people to challenge you to a fight. After today, there will be no more such opportunities!”

Grinning, the man stamped his foot down violently, causing a boom to echo out as his cultivation base erupted with power. A windstorm instantly surged in the entire area.

However, that windstorm was simply too small. His cultivation base was clearly only in the Immortal Realm. To challenge the Clan Chief of the Fang Clan with a cultivation base like that caused all of the surrounding cultivators, including those from the Three Churches and Six Sects, to look on with strange expressions.

Fang Shoudao frowned, and inwardly, began to get an uneasy feeling.

“Fang Xiufeng, I challenge you!” the burly man roared. He seemed confident and at ease, but if you looked closely, you would see that he was trembling. Furthermore, a flicker of terror existed deep within his eyes.

He was like an ant challenging a giant to do battle! However, there was clearly some reason for him to be making a laughingstock of himself.

Fang Xiufeng opened his eyes and looked coldly at the man. It was obvious that the man was up to something. Otherwise, why would a nobody like him try to stir things up at a grand ceremony like this?

A Fang Clan cultivator immediately stood up and angrily cried out, “Enough of this horsing around! With your cultivation base, you’re obviously not settling enmities, you’re just causing trouble. Men, remove him!”

Fang Clan cultivators instantly flew toward the burly man.

Apparently, the man had anticipated that this would happen. He immediately fell back, gritting his teeth and placing a medicinal pill into his mouth. As soon as he crushed it between his teeth, his body began to tremble violently. His cultivation base exploded with power, and his energy rose wildly. He instantly broke through from the Immortal Realm into the Ancient Realm. The price was that his body withered rapidly. The medicinal pill he had consumed was clearly toxic, and drew on his life force to forcibly increase his cultivation base.

Considering the price he was paying, he would only be able to maintain such a state for less time than it takes half an incense stick to burn. Then he would be killed in body and spirit, and nobody would be able to save him.

“Fang Xiufeng, there’s someone who wanted me to ask you whether or not the words you spoke on Planet West Felicity were true!” With a shriek, the man coughed up a mouthful of blood and then transformed into a beam of light that shot toward Fang Xiufeng.

As Fang Shoudao looked on with furrowed brow, Fang Xiufeng’s eyes glittered, and he nodded. Then, he waved his right finger and the incoming burly man shuddered and then exploded in midair.

As soon as he died, another cultivator flew out. This man was also merely in the Immortal Realm, but he also consumed a medicinal pill, causing his energy to rocket up as he shouted at Fang Xiufeng. Fang Xiufeng sat there thoughtfully for a moment before waving his finger again.

A third, a fourth, a fifth….

One cultivator after another appeared, until the total reached forty…. All of the cultivators who had come to observe the ceremony looked on with strange expressions. The reactions were even more obvious within the Fang Clan. Anybody who saw something like this happening would be able to tell that something strange was going on.

However, things weren't over. More cultivators appeared, all of whom acted in exactly the same way. They sacrificed their lives, resulting in Fang Xiufeng's cultivation base being slowly worn down. On any other occasion, it wouldn't matter. However, Fang Xiufeng still had his Dao injury, and shouldn't even have been fighting. Perhaps one or two exchanges wouldn't matter, but this was an endless cycle. The people who were continuously attacking him might not have very high cultivation bases, but the medicinal pills they were consuming temporarily gave them explosive power.

Fang Xiufeng could kill them as easily as crushing ants….

However… even crushing ants can be troublesome if there are too many!

Clearly, someone wanted Fang Xiufeng's injuries to reach the point where they wouldn't heal. They wanted to force him to fight.

Of course, he could refuse. He could ask cultivators from his clan to take care of the problem. However, whoever had organized this would obviously have thought of such a possibility, and would surely have prepared a contingency plan.

Fang Xiufeng's eyes flickered coldly.

This was a situation in which he could not accept the help of others. This was the Clan Chief's coronation, and his challengers were only in the Immortal Realm. If he needed help from others, the Fang Clan would be criticized for years to come, and would be viewed as a joke.

Fang Shoudao's face was very dark. Although helping Fang Xiufeng would cause problems, it was only in terms of face, leading him to consider intervening. Fang Xiufeng suddenly frowned, as if he had thought of something. He was keeping his injuries under control, but if he really did end up fighting hundreds of cultivators, then eventually he would lose control, and his injuries would flare up.

It was at this point that another cultivator flew out. Before he could even get close, he cried,

“Fang Xiufeng, you boor, my cultivation base might be weak, but I’m going to challenge you too. Do you dare to fight me?!” The cultivator was trembling, and apparently, had been forced to work up his nerve even to speak. However, he was clearly willing to throw all caution to the wind.

Fang Xiufeng eyed him coldly, and was just about to wave his finger, when all of a sudden a cold voice echoed through the air to fill the square.

“You think you qualify to challenge my dad?”

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# Chapter 1191: Fighting for Dad!

As soon as the voice rang out across the square, all of the cultivators felt their hearts trembling. That was especially true of the Fang Clan cultivators, who looked up enthusiastically. Even Fang Shoudao and Fang Yanxu had similar reactions.

Fang Xiufeng rose to his feet, looking very excited as he turned to see a young man in a blue robe walking toward them.

It was none other than… Meng Hao!

His face was a bit pale, as if he had just recovered from a serious illness. He looked much weaker than normal, and very scholarly as he approached Fang Xiufeng and clasped hands in greeting.

“I can’t believe you’re awake!” Fang Xiufeng said, voice filled with love. “What are you doing here? You should be resting!”

“I slept long enough,” Meng Hao said, smiling. “I’m done resting. It’s time for a bit of exercise.” His injuries this time had been serious enough to keep him in a coma for more than a month. As soon as he woke up, he sent his divine sense out and saw what was happening, which was why he had come.

As soon as the Immortal Realm cultivator saw Meng Hao, his face fell and he backed up a few paces. “Meng Hao…. You’re Meng Hao! I challenged your father, not you. You don’t have the right to do anything!”

Hearing this, Meng Hao spun around, eyes flashing coldly as he looked at the cultivator.

“You know who I am and yet dare to speak to me like that?” he said coolly. “You might be looking to die, but if I feel like keeping you alive, I have plenty of ways to do so.

“You think I don’t have the right to fight you? This is the Fang Clan, so if I say I have the right, then I have the right!” His voice echoed out, filled with a domineering air.

As he finished speaking, he stepped forward, and was suddenly directly in front of the other cultivator. The man’s face fell, and he was about to try to flee when Meng Hao let out a cold snort. It crashed like thunder, slamming into the cultivator’s mind, prompting a bloodcurdling scream. Then, the man exploded in a burst of gore.

It was a quick and efficient kill. Meng Hao didn’t mind that blood and guts were raining down everywhere. Clearly, he did things differently than his father. His father was the Clan Chief, and had many things to consider. Meng Hao was not the Clan Chief, and his goal was to intimidate.

“Well, who’s next?” he asked coolly, waving his arm to flick some blood off of his sleeve.

His question was met by utter silence. All eyes were fixed on him. Many people present had only seen illusory images of Meng Hao, making this their first time seeing him in person. Now that they could lay eyes on him personally, his visage was indelibly burned into their memories.

From the way he spoke, and how he acted, it was easy to see how domineering he was. Many eyes widened as they realized that this was a person… who dared to defy laws and principles, even of the Heavens!

Fang Xiufeng smiled slightly, but said nothing. Off to the side, Fang Shoudao’s eyes also flickered with a smile, then exchanged glances with Fang Yanxu. Both nodded inwardly.

Meng Hao clearly knew that there were many ways for them to resolve the current situation. However, it didn’t matter how they went about it, none of those methods were truly appropriate. Considering their position in the clan and considering the circumstances, the things that were normally handled in secrecy just couldn't be done.

Meng Hao had shown up in domineering fashion and had instantly killed someone. Furthermore, the people who had had dealings with Meng Hao in the past could tell how sharp and biting his words were. After all, he hadn't met too many people who could get the upper hand on him in a debate.

Meng Hao waited for a moment, but nobody stepped forward. Voice calm, he said, "Nobody?"

"You're looking to die, child!" Suddenly, a gale-force wind sprang up, within which was a middle-aged man who was charging Meng Hao. He was not in the Immortal Realm, but rather, the Ancient Realm.

"I'm not looking to die. I'm looking for death. Your death!" Meng Hao's voice was ice-cold as he stood there and allowed the Ancient Realm cultivator's divine ability to slam into him. It did nothing, almost as if it was a light breeze blowing past him. The middle-aged man stared in shock. At the same time, Meng Hao's hand shot out as fast as lightning to latch onto the top of his head.

"Soulsearch!" Meng Hao sent divine sense out through his splayed fingers, causing the man to shake and let out a miserable shriek. He only lasted for a few breaths of time before collapsing into pieces.

Meng Hao hovered there thoughtfully for a moment, and then suddenly vanished, only to reappear among the crowd, directly in front of one of the tables, facing an old man who sat there. The man's face flickered, and he was just about to rise to his feet when Meng Hao launched a God-Slaying Fist. The old man, and even the table, were instantly transformed into ash.

Meng Hao vanished again, reappearing in a different direction, in front of a woman. She had a jade slip in her hand which she was about to crush. Meng Hao reached out and grabbed her arm.

"Let me help you with that!" he said, tightening his grip. The jade slip, and her entire arm with it, were instantly crushed. Then he waved his arm, causing blood to spray out of the woman’s mouth. Her eyes went wide with disbelief just before she was torn to bits.

In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao flashed to seventeen different locations within the crowd. Each time, he appeared in front of a different cultivator, whom he immediately killed.

After a few breaths of time passed, Meng Hao returned to his original position in the main square. The crowd was in an uproar, and there were even some cultivators who were angrily berating him.

The commotion continued to intensify; from the look of it, Meng Hao’s actions were going to lead to some sort of retributive calamity.

However, Meng Hao’s expression was calm as he said, “Fang Clan cultivators, hear the orders of the Crown Prince. Take that man, and him, and him….” Meng Hao quickly pointed out over a hundred people. As he pointed at them, glowing marks appeared on their bodies.

All of them looked incredibly shocked.

“… and kill them all!” Without the slightest hesitation, members of the Fang Clan flew toward the people Meng Hao had just indicated.

In response, the more than one hundred cultivators roared and popped medicinal pills into their mouths, causing their cultivation bases to rise explosively. However, even in such a state, they weren’t a match for the Fang Clan. Soon, bloodcurdling screams rang out and the entire group was slaughtered.

Deathly silence followed. Everyone who had been crying out in anger was now speechless. The people from the great clans and sects had maintained their calm before, but now they were all staring at Meng Hao, clearly moved.

“Ladies and gentlemen, Fellow Daoists, today is my father’s grand ceremony,” Meng Hao went on. “If you wish to resolve debts and grudges in the customary way, go ahead. However, if you try to do so in a way that defies custom… well then, I'll also defy custom." Although his face was a bit pale, his words were cold and biting. Quite a few people now had a much deeper understanding of him.

"What a class act you are, Meng Hao," a voice said. It belonged to an ancient old man who strode out, the shocking ripples of the great circle of the Ancient Realm emanating out from him. This was a man similar to Guru Heavencloud; he could step into the Dao Realm at any time!

"I have enmity with your father," the old man said, glaring venomously at Fang Xiufeng. "But since you want to stand in for him, I'll accommodate you!"

Fang Xiufeng looked back icily at the old man. He clearly recognized him, and yet hadn't sensed his presence earlier. Apparently the man had used some sort of technique or magical item to render him invisible even to those in the Dao Realm.

Even as the words left the old man's mouth, his body flashed through the air, and an illusory Eight Trigrams symbol appeared around him. It began to rotate, crackling with lightning as it shot toward Meng Hao. At the same time, the old man made a grasping gesture as he summoned a greatsword. He then performed a two-fingered incantation and roared, causing boundless, dazzling light to shine off of the sword. His cultivation base flared to life and his Soul Lamps appeared, which merged into the Eight Trigrams symbol, igniting it with Immortal Flame.

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever. As the man closed in on him, he stepped forward. Simultaneously, his energy flared, and he extended his own right hand in a plucking motion.

It was none other than the Star Plucking Magic!

Rumbling could be heard as an enormous, illusory hand appeared. It slammed into the Eight Trigrams symbol, crushing it into oblivion. The greatsword shattered, and the old man's eyes went wide with disbelief. He tried to fall back, but was too slow. The enormous hand grabbed onto him, and he let out a miserable shriek. His heart was now filled with indescribable shock and terror.

“You–” he only had time to utter a single word before he was dragged in front of Meng Hao.

He had no time to utter a second word. Meng Hao’s expression was cold as he stretched his hand out and grabbed onto the top of the man’s head. It didn’t matter that this man was in the great circle of the Ancient Realm, similar to Guru Heavencloud. Meng Hao would still Soulsearch him.

The man howled, and his eyes were instantly shot with veins of blood. Without any hesitation, he unleashed his cultivation base, which began to emanate a Dao Realm aura. Shockingly, he was going to attempt to evade death at this critical juncture by stepping into the Dao!

Before Meng Hao had absorbed the Essence of Divine Flame, he would have been powerless to do anything at this point. But now, in some respects, he could already be considered to be in the Dao Realm. Most important was that he was now a full Allheaven Dao Immortal.

Azure light flickered on his right hand as he used his own power to disperse the Dao Realm aura, making this attempt to step into the Dao… an utter failure!

Divine sense poured into the old man’s mind as the Soulsearch began.

The man quivered, then screamed, “Your majesty, save me!!”

Meng Hao’s mouth curled in an almost imperceptible smile. As the old man’s voice rang out, ripples flashed in the air behind him, and abruptly, a withered hand stretched out. It looked like it had just climbed up out of the grave, and reeked with an aura of death. Most shocking of all… it emanated a Dao Realm aura!

That aura was incredibly powerful, so powerful than even ordinary Dao Realm cultivators would have a hard time standing up to it.

Heaven and Earth shook, and a mighty wind screamed. All of the surrounding cultivators were completely shocked. This was Planet South Heaven, a place where Dao Realm cultivators couldn’t come. And yet that hand… was clearly emanating a Dao Realm aura! There could only be one explanation.

That hand belonged… to a Quasi-Dao cultivator!!

A terrifying Quasi-Dao cultivator, lingering on the brink of death, and yet powerful enough to suppress ordinary Dao Realm experts.

The suddenness of this development was such that Fang Xiufeng, Fang Shoudao and Fang Yanxu all stepped forward, eyes narrowed. However, even so there was no trace of panic in them.

“Hao’er, get back!” Fang Shoudao said urgently. He stretched his hand out into the air to drag Meng Hao back to safety.

“I was just thinking that this guy didn’t seem like the mastermind,” Meng Hao said coolly. “As it turns out… he was backed by this Quasi-Dao cultivator!” He turned to face the hand and said, “South Heaven Formation, activate!”

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1192: Enigmatic Quasi-Dao Expert!

By the time Meng Hao turned to face the withered hand, it was only seven inches or so from his forehead, brimming with a will of destruction, as well as a boundless ancient aura.

The sky went dim, the lands were cast into darkness, and the winds stilled. The entire world seemed be having the light and color sucked out of it by the hand, infected by its aura of death.

The withered hand’s skin had blotches and bruises on it, as though it were difficult for the blood to pump through the veins therein. A faint stench of decay emanated off of it, which filled the area.

The area around it seemed to be another world, a world in which that hand was like an Immortal Divinity. All it had to do was wave a finger, and all life could be taken away.

The hand appeared so quickly that nobody had time to react. However, this was the grand coronation of the Clan Chief. How could Fang Xiufeng and everyone else, even the ordinary clan members, not be prepared for unexpected circumstances?

After all… because of Planet South Heaven’s spell formation, even Dao Realm experts who came here had to lower themselves to the great circle of the Ancient Realm. However, Quasi-Dao cultivators… existed in the longevity-limited area between the Ancient and Dao Realms, and therefore didn’t need to reduce their cultivation bases. Planet South Heaven’s spell formation would do nothing against such people.

For example, had Fang Xiufeng failed in his attempt to step into the Dao, even if the South Heaven Death Formation didn’t approve of him, the net of destruction wouldn’t appear.

Fang Shoudao, Fang Yanxu and Fang Xiufeng all flew out to try to pull Meng Hao back. However, Meng Hao had already made a different decision. He looked coldly at the incoming hand, and then spoke the words ‘South Heaven Death Formation.’ In that instant, massive rumbling echoed out through the lands.

An indescribable aura suddenly rose up from the ground, the air, the mountains, the rivers, the seas, the plants and vegetation, from Planet South Heaven itself. The aura exploded out everywhere. It felt like a wellspring of killing intent!

As the killing intent converged, it covered over Planet South Heaven, becoming… an enormous illusory net!

It was none other than… the South Heaven Death Formation!

It seemed to appear slowly, but in actuality it happened in almost the exact same moment that Meng Hao spoke out the four words. Apparently… he could control the formation!

It was a development that left even Fang Shoudao and Fang Yanxu astonished and in a state of disbelief. Fang Xiufeng’s eyes went wide, as did the eyes of all the other members of the Fang Clan. As for the cultivators from the various sects and clans of the Ninth Mountain and Sea who had come to offer congratulations, their hearts trembled, and they gasped.

“That’s the South Heaven Death Formation?”

“What indestructible power! That formation can wipe out anything… This South Heaven Death Formation is amazing. But… why can Meng Hao summon it?”

“How could this be happening? Don’t tell me that Meng Hao can actually control the South Heaven Death Formation?!”

Right now, all minds were reeling because of the shocking events which they were witnessing. Meng Hao hovered there in midair, surrounded by the swirling killing intent of the South Heaven Death Formation. However… considering that he was at the very center of it all, it almost seemed true… that he could actually control the South Heaven Death Formation!

Being able to control the Death Formation meant that he could control Planet South Heaven! And that meant… that on Planet South Heaven, he was invincible!!

Some distance away in the Imperial palace of the Great Tang, Emperor Tang stood in the main hall, looking off into the distance. He was shocked, but after a moment of thought, he shook his head. Even back when Meng Hao had slipped into a coma, he had been able to detect that he had the approval of the South Heaven Death Formation. As far as Fang Xiufeng went, the formation was tentative about not killing him. But Meng Hao, who had been so willing to sacrifice himself for his father… gained its complete and utter approval!

It was as if Meng Hao's actions in saving his father had moved some ancient Li Clan ancestor within the South Heaven Death Formation…. As such, the entire spell formation approved of him to the point that it would listen to his commands.

Something else happened in that same moment. In a stretch of barren mountains in the Eastern Lands, Shui Dongliu was walking up a path cut into a cliff. He suddenly stopped in place and looked up into the sky.

“People who change their destiny….” he murmured, his eyes gleaming with anticipation. Smiling, he continued on walking.

All of the cultivators in attendance at the Fang Clan's coronation ceremony were completely shaken at what was happening up above.

The enormous illusory net covered Meng Hao, making him shine with resplendent light, as if he represented Heaven and Earth.

The withered hand was also shocked, and began to shake. Without the slightest hesitation, the hand pulled back. It even started to fade, as if it wanted to get away from Planet South Heaven as quickly as possible, and didn't dare to get any closer to Meng Hao.

"You're not going anywhere," Meng Hao said coolly. He waved his hand, instantly causing the enormous illusory net to shine radiantly. The light seemed to seal everything, and a miserable scream echoed out into the air. Not too far off in the distance, the air rippled, and a figure appeared.

It was an old man wearing a long black robe. He was surrounded by an aura of death, and as soon as he appeared, the enormous net shot toward him.

Seeing the net closing in on him, the old man threw his head back and let out a piercing howl. Rumbling could be heard as the aura of death grew more explosive. He seemed to age even more, and his legs seemed to be on the verge of transforming into ash.

He was paying a heavy price to unleash incredible power with his cultivation base, which was now so powerful that Heaven and Earth flickered with light. If that were all there were to it, it might not be a big deal, but then he waved his right hand, causing a single copper coin to fly out of his sleeve.

The copper coin was bright yellow, and had a magical symbol on one side and an Eight Trigrams symbol on the other. As soon as Meng Hao saw it, his eyes widened. He wasn't the only one. Fang Xiufeng gasped, and as for Fang Shoudao and Fang Yanxu, they had similar reactions.

"The Mountain Ghost Lightning Decree!!" Fang Shoudao said in disbelief.

That is exactly what it was… the Mountain Ghost Lightning Decree from the seventh tribulation of Dao Stepping. Normally it was a force that appeared during the tribulation, and yet here it was in plain sight. The Fang Clan recognized it, and there were people from the other sects and clans who also recognized it. Those people shot to their feet, expressions of shock on their faces. Their eyes instantly began to shine with a strange light that soon transformed into greed.

It didn’t matter whether or not the item was real or a fake; it’s mere appearance instantly shook everyone.

Although everyone could now see exactly what the old man looked like, nobody recognized him. Not a single one of the visiting cultivators from the various sects and clans knew who he was.

Fang Xiufeng frowned; the man was also a stranger to him.

That in itself was an impossibility. In the Ninth Mountain and Sea, it would be inconceivable that a cultivator could progress from the Spirit Realm all the way to the peak of the Ancient Realm in complete anonymity. Even though he had failed in transcending tribulation and ended up as a Quasi-Dao cultivator, such people were also a rarity. There simply had to be people who had previously interacted with him.

Furthermore, the people who would have had dealings with him would be people with profound cultivation bases. He simply couldn’t be a nameless, unknown figure. Besides, a Quasi-Dao expert was not the type of person that you could simply ignore or not care about.

And yet, this old man seemed to be a complete stranger to everyone. For a completely unknown Quasi-Dao cultivator to exist was strange enough, but what was even stranger was that he somehow had a Mountain Ghost Lightning Decree coin. That made him not just strange, but extremely mysterious!

Even as all eyes were focused on the Mountain Ghost Lightning Decree, Fang Xiufeng suddenly gave a cold snort. Eyes icy, he spoke in a sinister voice, “So it turns out to be old bastard Shangguan. We fought years ago in the Ruins of Immortality, and I crippled your cultivation base. How could I ever have imagined that, not only would you have come across the good fortune to restore your cultivation base, but you would also experience Dao Stepping Tribulation. Too bad you failed, and now your longevity is at its end…. Hao’er, this guy and I had an undying enmity years ago that still remains irreconcilable. Why don’t you kill him for me!?”

As soon as his voice rang out, everyone's eyes widened in shock. However, inwardly, people began to curse. From what they could tell, Fang Xiufeng had seen the Mountain Ghost Lightning Decree, and assumed people would try to snatch it, so he made up a story to prevent that from happening.

Of course, nobody could give voice to such suspicions. After all, it appeared as if this old man really had come with the purpose of going after Fang Xiufeng.

The old man threw his head back and roared, raising both hands into the air. The copper coin that was the Mountain Ghost Lightning Decree suddenly flew through the air up toward the giant net.

The old man's cultivation base surged with full power, creating a maelstrom of death that swept everything out of his way as he shot up toward the net, as if to escape Planet South Heaven.

As long as he could get away from Planet South Heaven, then the South Heaven Death Formation wouldn't be able to kill him. After all, his longevity might be limited, but he actually had some secret magic that would enable to him to live on a bit longer.

"Mountain Ghost!!

"Thunder and Lightning!!

"Ghost Slaying!!

"Energy Summoning!!" In the moment that the copper coin slammed into the huge illusory net, the old man roared. He was now at the ultimate peak of what he could manage. The copper coin flashed with bright yellow light, and suddenly, the awe-inspiring image of a Mountain Ghost appeared, stretching its hands out toward the huge net. Lightning crackled around it as it roared and charged the net.

The instant they contacted each other, a massive rumbling filled Heaven and Earth. The power of lightning transformed into a 30,000-meter Lightning Dragon which tore a huge hole into the net.

The sight shocked even Meng Hao, and Emperor Tang’s pupils constricted. It wasn’t that the South Heaven Death Formation was weak, but rather… that the Mountain Ghost Lightning Decree was an item from legend, with inexhaustible power.

Most important was that although Meng Hao could control the spell formation, he wasn’t as skilled at doing so as Emperor Tang, and couldn’t unleash its full potential.

The old man roared, transforming into a beam of light that shot toward the tear in the net.

With a cold harrumph, Meng Hao lifted his right hand up toward him and made a grasping motion.

Instantly, the South Heaven Death Formation radiated scintillating light, which converged into the shape of a huge hand that crushed down toward the old man with fear-inspiring destructive power. The old man’s eyes filled with despair as he roared again, burning more of his life force to unleash greater cultivation base power to fight back against the hand.

However, he was like a moth flying into a flame. In the blink of an eye, the hand grabbed ahold of him and crushed him to death. A bloodcurdling scream echoed out as he was destroyed in body and spirit. However, in the moment before he passed into death, he suddenly let out a venomous shout.

“Fang Clan… you people… will never become an Allheaven Clan!”

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1193: Don’t Dare to Fight?

All Heaven and Earth shook. The old man’s voice echoed about, filled with venomous hatred. Although most people didn’t understand what an Allheaven Clan was, the Three Churches and Six Sects, as well as certain other groups, were completely shocked, and looked over at the Fang Clan.

“Allheaven… Clan?”

Even as they looked over in astonishment, the enormous illusory net vanished, and Meng Hao shot up into the sky. His goal was clear; the shining yellow copper coin, which was now masterless, and slowly beginning to fall out of the sky.

He moved with incredible speed, and yet there were others in the crowd who also shot upward with lightning quickness. There were nine of them, all of whom headed directly toward the copper coin!

But then, six of those people suddenly changed directions and headed toward Meng Hao instead of the copper coin, apparently with the intention of blocking his path.

The other three pushed even faster toward the copper coin.

Fang Xiufeng’s face was calm. Next to him were Fang Shoudao and Fang Yanxu, neither of whom did anything. All of them had complete confidence in Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes shone coldly. The old man he had just killed with the help of the South Heaven Death Formation had been targeting the Fang Clan, so therefore, he intended to keep the copper coin as a battle trophy.

As he flashed through the air, his right hand flashed with an incantation gesture. Then he waved his hand, causing numerous Immortal mountains to descend, surrounded by boundless azure light. Of the group of six, three coughed up blood and immediately slowed down. The other three unleashed divine abilities and magical techniques. Instantly, the sky filled with splendid, multi-colored light, and the ripples of magic.

Dozens of enormous black lizards materialized, which roared as the charged toward Meng Hao. There was also a gigantic whip that slashed toward him like a dragon.

Last was a seven-colored rainbow, which emanated brilliant light that covered all Heaven and Earth.

Meng Hao snorted coldly and pressed forward, relying on the strength of his fleshly body to meet the divine abilities. Both hands stretched out in front of him and ripped to either side, causing the enormous black lizards to let out miserable screams as they were ripped to shreds.

Without even slowing down, Meng Hao waved his right hand, grabbing the illusory whip and sending flame out to engulf it. In the blink of an eye, the whip became a writhing serpent of fire.

Then, Meng Hao slammed into the rainbow, shattering it into countless fragments!

It all happened so quickly that Meng Hao didn’t even slow down. He was now directly in front of the three cultivators who had just launched the divine abilities. Their faces flickered with disbelief, and before they could unleash more magic, Meng Hao waved his sleeve, causing a tempest to sweep over them.

Blood sprayed out of their mouths as Meng Hao passed them by. He didn’t kill them; today was the day his father became the Clan Chief, so unless it was absolutely necessary, he wouldn’t kill anyone the way he had during the challenges earlier. He didn’t want to turn the occasion into a massacre.

A moment later, he was in front of the copper coin. As he reached out to grab it, the other three cultivators closed in, performing incantation gestures and sending out powerful attacks to block Meng Hao.

One of them summoned an enormous silver-colored bottle gourd that shot toward Meng Hao, emanating a powerful gravitational force as well as shocking screams that echoed in Meng Hao’s ears and mind.

“Screw off!” he said, clenching his left hand into a fist and punching out with the power of God-Slaying. The silver gourd trembled and then exploded into pieces, scattering the vengeful ghosts that had been contained inside of it. The resulting backlash slammed into the cultivator who had launched the divine ability.

His face fell as the vengeful ghosts slammed into him. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and his body withered as he tumbled backward. One of his fellows snorted coldly, ignoring the copper coin and shooting toward Meng Hao, eyes blazing as he burned his life force.

He was harming himself and even his cultivation base to prevent Meng Hao from taking the copper coin. The burning turned into the power of self-detonation, causing all faces to fill with shock as the man exploded.

It was like a sun detonating, causing blinding light to stab out in all directions. Meng didn’t retreat. Face cold, he waved his finger toward the expanding power of self-detonation.

“Demon Sealing, Fifth Hex!”

Inside Outside Hex!

Back when Meng Hao had acquired this Hex, his cultivation base had been too weak to fully unleash it. But now he had the power of an Allheaven Dao Immortal, and could use it in its strongest form.

A moment later, a huge rift appeared in front of him that looked like a gigantic mouth. It emanated an indescribably powerful gravitational force that sucked in the self-detonation power.

It happened with incredible speed. One moment, everyone could sense the power of the self-detonation, the next moment, it was gone.

Everyone stared in shock as they realized that there were now only two people near the copper coin: Meng Hao, and another middle-aged cultivator in a black robe.

The man was staring at Meng Hao, eyes wide with fear. He could never have imagined that so many people wouldn’t even be able to slow Meng Hao down. Now there were only two of them vying for the coin.

Two hands reached out simultaneously to grab it!

The middle-aged man’s eyes flickered as the aura of Karma suddenly emanated out from him. Instead of reaching out with his hand, countless Karma Threads shot out, swirling around him and then snaking toward the copper coin to entangle it.

“Ji Clan….” said Meng Hao, his eyes gleaming with killing intent. This middle-aged man had a cultivation base in the great circle of the Ancient Realm, but because of the bizarre nature of Ji Clan divine abilities, his power surpassed that of other people in the same Realm as him.

“That thing belongs to me!” the main cried out in a domineering voice. His Karma Threads latched onto the copper coin and jerked it toward him.

“Dog fart of a Ji Clan!” Meng Hao roared. Azure light exploded off of him. He didn’t need to perform any incantation gestures; his magic responded to his very will. The azure light transformed into an illusory blade that instantly slashed toward the Ji Clan cultivator and his Karma Threads.

In the blink of an eye, the Karma Threads were sliced in two. Blood sprayed out of the man’s mouth, and his body withered. At the same time, Meng Hao grabbed the copper coin.

Without even looking at it, he branded it with divine sense and then tossed it into his bag of holding. Then he spun, hovering in midair as he stared coldly at the Ji Clan cultivator.

The man’s face flickered as he glared back at Meng Hao. Then he snorted and started to back up.

“Did I say you could leave?!” Meng Hao said, flashing in the man’s direction and waving his right finger. The air distorted, and the sky dimmed as the area surrounding the man began to collapse.

The man’s face flickered, and he bit his tongue, spitting out a mouthful of blood to unleash a secret magic, barely allowing him to escape the attack. Enraged, he cried out, “What do you think you’re doing, Meng Hao!? You really dare to try to kill me?”

Down below, the other cultivators from the from the Ji Clan looked on with tranquil expressions. None of them seemed worried about what was happening at all, as if they were certain that Meng Hao wouldn’t dare to kill a Ji Clan cultivator in front of so many witnesses.

Meng Hao’s expression was very solemn as he said, “Today is my dad’s coronation as Clan Chief, and yet some villains showed up and tried to sow chaos. Even though I’ve killed them already, I’m still convinced that they were acting on the orders of someone else! A conspiracy!

“If it weren’t for that, how would a trifling Quasi-Dao cultivator ever dare come and do such shocking things in my house?” Even as he spoke, he began to advance toward the Ji Clan cultivator.

“I’m investigating this matter on behalf of the Fang Clan, which requires a thorough examination of this copper coin and its origins. And yet you… actually tried to stop me!?

“Not only that, you fought me over the item! Why might that be? Could it be… that the Ji Clan is behind the conspiracy? Now that the Quasi-Dao cultivator is dead, you’re worried that the Fang Clan might uncover the truth, and therefore wanted to get your hands on the evidence!

“Isn’t that true?!” Meng Hao spoke quickly and without pause, and with increasing intensity so that by the end he was practically bellowing. His words became like an explosion of thunder, after which he closed in on the man and unleashed a punch.

The Ji Clan cultivator’s face fell, and he fought back with all his power. However, blood sprayed out of his mouth as he fell back. At the same time, the Ji Clan cultivators down below rose to their feet and looked up coldly at Meng Hao.

“Meng Hao, cease this slander!” the man cried. “The Ji Clan had nothing to do with what happened. And even if we did, we wouldn’t need to hide the truth!”

“Oh? Oh, I understand. It wasn’t the Ji Clan; it was just you acting alone! So, you’re the person behind it all!

“What gall, you traitor! You wish to provoke the Fang Clan and Ji Clan into a war! I’m going to kill you right here and now, as a warning to anyone who dares to try to incite strife between the Fang and Ji Clans!!” Eyes flashing, Meng Hao shot forward. Faces falling, the other Ji Clan cultivators present were about to block him, but then Meng Hao extended his hand and unleashed the Fifth Demon Sealing Hex.

This time, it was not the Inside aspect, but the Outside aspect. A massive force exploded out, which was none other than the massively destructive self-detonation power from moments ago. Heaven and Earth distorted as the middle-aged cultivator was engulfed.

Before, the explosion’s energies were directed outwards in all directions. But now, it was being focused completely on the Ji Clan cultivator by means of the Fifth Hex.

The man couldn’t even fight back. Rumbling sounds echoed out as he was instantly killed in body and soul.

“Meng Hao!!” cried the other Ji Clan cultivators, several of whom flew up into the air, but were intercepted by members of the Fang Clan.

“Fellow Daoists of the Ji Clan, there’s no need to offer me thanks. I really had no choice but to help you. This man dared to incite violence between our two clans, and thus deserved to die!” Smiling, Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed to the members of the Ji Clan.

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1194: Cutting Them Down!

Most of the members of the Ji Clan were old, but one appeared to be a young man of about thirty years of age. He wore ordinary clothing, nothing extravagant, and yet all the other Ji Clan cultivators seemed to be following his lead.

Without looking closely, that fact would never be obvious. In fact, he even stood towards the rear, making him seem like nothing other than an ordinary clan member.

However, while the other clan members were crying out in rage, he was doing nothing more than frowning. That in itself made him stand out to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao looked over at him with a slight smile, as if nothing were out of the ordinary. However, deep in his heart was icy coldness; the killing intent he felt towards the Ji Clan had long since become extremely intense.

If it weren’t for the fact that he wasn’t confident in the Fang Clan’s ability to achieve complete victory against the Ji Clan, Meng Hao would have already begun to slaughter them. However, even though he was currently holding himself back, he would strike decisively whenever he had the opportunity to do so.

“Fellow Daoists of the Ji Clan, are you saying that I killed the wrong person?” he asked, sounding perplexed. “Why are you so angry? He was clearly trying to harm the relationship between our two clans!” The coldness in his heart grew more intense; if the Ji Clan attempted to argue with him, then he would simply use it as a reason to attack and kill someone else!

The Ji Clan cultivators glared back at him furiously, but in this case, there was no logical argument that could be used against the Fang Clan. If the circumstances were different, the Ji Clan might be able to disregard that, but on this day, during the coronation of the Fang Clan's Clan Chief, they had only two choices. One was to start a full-scale war with the Fang Clan, and the other… was simply to accept the situation.

After all, they truly had been trying to steal the copper coin!

The Ji Clan was domineering in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, a fact known by all the cultivators there. Therefore, many of their cultivators simply couldn't tolerate Meng Hao's words, and one of them was even about to open their mouth to fire back a rebuke. However, the frowning young man standing off to the side looked deeply at Meng Hao and then smiled.

"Many thanks for your reminder, Fellow Daoist Meng. Earlier, I truly seem to have overlooked that that man had such ulterior motives." The young man's voice wasn't very loud, but it contained an inherent power and dignity. He swished his sleeve, and immediately, all of the Ji Clan backed down.

Everything that was happening immediately made the young man completely conspicuous among the other Ji Clan cultivators. Now, instead of seeming completely ordinary, he seemed the exact opposite.

All of the cultivators from the other sects and powers in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were now staring at him and speculating about his identity.

"Could it be that he's this generation's mysterious, never-before-seen… Son of Ji? Ji Dongyang?"

Fang Xiufeng, Fang Shoudao and the others also looked thoughtfully at the young Ji Clan cultivator. Meng Hao hovered in midair, looking into the young man's eyes. Meng Hao's gaze burst with killing intent for a brief moment, after which the young man staggered backward, the blood draining from his face and his eyes widening.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever, although a tremor ran through his body. After returning to Fang Xiufeng’s side, he suddenly made a decision.

Ji Tian wants to kill my dad, so therefore… I’m going to kill this young man!

In that instant, the young man’s heart trembled. From Meng Hao’s eyes, it was possible to tell how incredibly strong he was, and the intense killing intent within the gaze had forced the young man backward. Turning to his fellow clan members, he growled, “Let’s go. We’re leaving Planet South Heaven!”

In response to his words, the other members of the Ji Clan began to unleash the power of their cultivation bases. As they clustered around the young man, one of their members, an older man, clasped hands toward Fang Xiufeng.

“Fellow Daoist Xiufeng, congratulations on becoming the Clan Chief of the Fang Clan. We have an urgent matter to attend to, so we’ll take our leave now!” Without even waiting for a response from Fang Xiufeng, the man flew into the air, followed by the young cultivator and all the other members of the Ji Clan. All of them transformed into prismatic beams of light that shot up into the sky.

“Dad, Patriarch Shoudao, Patriarch Yanxu,” Meng Hao said quietly, “I’m feeling a bit under the weather. Since nobody else will be offering any challenges, I’m going to go rest.” Fang Shoudao and Fang Yanxu exchanged a hesitating glance. Considering their intelligence and cultivation bases, it wasn’t difficult for them to guess what Meng Hao was planning to do.

Fang Shoudao and Fang Yanxu were hesitating, but Fang Xiufeng looked up and said, “Health comes first. Go ahead.”

His eyes flickered with killing intent. He was not the type of person who was willing to let others get the best of him, and thanks to Meng Hao, he was now certain that his previous difficulties in stepping into the Dao had something to do with the Ji Clan.

Meng Hao was his son, and he knew him well enough to know that he wasn't an impulsive person. Therefore, Fang Xiufeng supported his decision, both as his father and as the Clan Chief.

Meng Hao nodded, then shot up into the air in a streak of light.

The coronation ceremony for the Clan Chief continued. After what had just happened, no one challenged Fang Xiufeng to fight. However, observant people noticed that up in the sky, a mass of dark clouds had appeared at some point.

Apparently, the weather was changing. Rain began to fall, and clouds roiled out to cover the whole sky. If you looked up, you would see that the entire sky had been obscured, almost as if a spell formation were sealing everything.

At the same time, the same dozen or so Ji Clan cultivators were flying through the layers of clouds. Lightning crashed and boomed around them as they flew upward.

"Young Lord, why are we rushing to leave? Even though they killed one of our Ji Clan's cultivators, they still need to try to maintain the moral high ground! There's no way they would dare to openly start attacking all of us, is there?! That Meng Hao must be killed sooner or later!"

A few of them began to make sneering comments. "That's right, if they dared to attack us in the open, our Patriarch's eye would certainly see it! He can see everything in the Ninth Mountain and Sea! Even if the Fang Clan were more foolhardy than they already are, they still wouldn't dare to make a move on us!"

"That Meng Hao really does defy laws and principles, even of the Heavens," one of the older cultivators said, snorting coldly. "It's too bad there were so many other cultivators present, plus the Fang Clan backing him up. Otherwise, if he dared to act so audaciously, we would have just cut him down. He got lucky this time. Just wait until next time, when there aren't any members from other sects or clans around, we'll definitely exterminate him!"

"Would you shut the hell up!" the young cultivator said, looking around at the clouds. "Do you really think Meng Hao didn't consider all of that? You think that the other sects and powers made it so we couldn't attack him? You think Meng Hao got off lightly? Well from my perspective, those people actually saved us!

"Consider the matter dropped. Let's get out of Planet South Heaven. Dammit… I can't believe Meng Hao can actually control the South Heaven Death Formation!" The other cultivators followed along quietly, although none of them agreed with his decision.

They were the Ji Clan, and after all these years, they had grown used to being above everyone else. No matter where they went in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, all they had to do was reveal that they were from the Ji Clan, and everyone would instantly act very respectfully and even shake in fear. After all, the Ji Clan was the Lord of the Ninth Mountain and Sea!

With a position and standing like that, they never really needed to spend much time thinking about anything in any situation. They always viewed themselves as the strongest party, like Emperors. As such, why would they need to spend time considering the common people?

The young cultivator looked at his companions and sighed inwardly with remorse. He was well aware that the members of the Ji Clan were too used to being in a superior position, and had lost their ability to sense danger.

It was at this moment that they pierced emerged from the cloud layer, and found themselves at the very edges of the skies above Planet South Heaven, just a short distance away from the void of space. Suddenly, the young man saw something which caused his pupils to constrict.

"Meng Hao!!"

He wasn’t the only surprised one. The other Ji Clan cultivators’ faces fell as they caught sight of Meng Hao, standing in the air above them, eyes shining coldly, lightning crackling and crashing around him.

Voice cool, he said, “Now that nobody’s around to stop me… I’m going to cut down some Ji Clan cultivators!”

Lightning crashed and danced in all directions.

Meng Hao extended his hand and pushed it down toward South Heaven. Rumbling sounds echoed out as, all of a sudden, a huge illusory net appeared around him, which was none other than the South Heaven Death Formation.

The Death Formation net rapidly transformed into a huge hand, which radiated boundless killing intent, causing colors to flash and thunder to boom.

The young Ji Clan cultivator’s face flickered, and he performed a double-handed incantation gesture. He roared as innumerable shocking Karma Threads appeared around him, transforming into innumerable magical items that shone with dazzling light and shot toward the hand. Simultaneously, killing intent began to roil off of all the other Ji Clan cultivators, and the dozen or so of them joined together in unleashing their entire cultivation bases to defend against the hand.

When the magical techniques and divine abilities, as well as the magical items, slammed into the huge hand formed by the spell formation, they were completely powerless. They shattered into nothing, crushed like dried weeds by the spell formation hand. Rumbling echoed out as the hand then slammed into the Ji Clan cultivators.

Almost instantly, three of their number screamed and exploded into pieces, transforming into a rain of blood that fell down through the clouds.

“Meng Hao, how dare you kill Ji Clan cultivators! Our Patriarch is going to slaughter you!!” In the following instant, another three Ji Clan cultivators were killed. Blood sprayed out of their mouths, and they exploded.

The cries they let out before dying never went beyond the clouds, nor did they echo out into space. Down below, the only thing people could hear was thunder.

“Ji Tian doesn’t dare to come to Planet South Heaven!” Meng Hao said coolly. He waved his right hand, causing boundless lightning to crackle within the clouds. There was so much lightning that it seemed as if the entire world were composed of nothing else, except for a few miserable screams interspersed between the booming thunder.

The hand materialized by the South Heaven Death Formation was like Heavenly Tribulation from Planet South Heaven, something that could extinguish all life!

And Meng Hao could control the South Heaven Death Formation. That mean that on Planet South Heaven he… was exactly as powerful as Emperor Tang! Unsurpassable!

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# Chapter 1195: Eighth Life!

“Patriarch, save me!!” One of the old Ji Clan cultivators screamed as he went all-out trying to fight against the spell formation hand. However, all his magical techniques fell to pieces, and he was torn to shreds, causing blood to rain down into the clouds below.

The illusory hand burst with the power of extermination. Lightning crashed and exploded, becoming the only sound in Heaven and Earth.

A middle-aged Ji Clan cultivator, eyes bloodshot, performed an incantation gesture that caused numerous magical items to fly out of his bag of holding. However, the hand shattered them all. Blood sprayed from the man’s mouth, splattering back onto his face. He screamed as he was destroyed, completely shredded into nothing.

Two more Ji Clan cultivators performed incantation gestures, summoning magical techniques and Karma Threads. In the blink of an eye, their Karma was destroyed, and then the hand completely wiped them out.

“Patriarch, save us!!” Miserable screams echoed out, filled with astonishment and dread. Unfortunately for them, the screams were completely drowned out by the lightning.

Everything happened very quickly. Although it takes some time to describe, Meng Hao’s single explosive attack with the South Heaven Death Formation… instantly killed almost all of the dozen or so Ji Clan cultivators.

A moment later, only two were left. One was the young man, and the other was the Elder who had been in the leadership position of this group that had come to Planet South Heaven. They immediately fell back, avoiding death for the moment. However, the hand continued to rumble toward them with unbelievable speed.

“Meng Hao,” the old man roared, “is your Fang Clan trying to start a war with the Ji Clan!?!?” He waved his hand, causing cultivation base power to erupt into a windstorm that rumbled so loudly it vied with the thunder.

Meng Hao’s face was icy cold as he shoved his hand down. More rumbling could be heard as the spell formation’s hand crushed down through the clouds toward the two remaining cultivators.

Blood sprayed out of the old man’s mouth, and a look of despair covered his face as he began to collapse. In the moment before he shattered, the young man flickered into place behind him and pushed down onto his back.

“Since you’re going to die… you might as well help me!” the young man murmured.

RUMBLE!

The enormous hand continued to surge through the clouds, causing them to seethe and churn. By now, the sound had reached the ears of the cultivators down below, who heard a shocking rumbling.

They could also see the clouds shaking. Massive amounts of lightning crackled about as if they had been squeezed out of the sponge-like clouds, falling from the clouds like silver dragons.

Given that even the lightning had been forcibly expelled, huge bean-sized drops of rain also began to pour down onto the lands beneath.

However, what no one noticed was that some of that rain was the color of blood. That was because… it wasn’t rain at all, but blood, the blood of the Ji Clan! However, there was no life within that blood, and the amount was miniscule, as if the vast majority of it had been swallowed up by the clouds themselves.

What nobody down below could see was that, somewhere within the dark clouds, a blood-colored figure sat cross-legged in meditation, surrounded by a cloud of the blood that had disappeared, which it was constantly consuming.

If you looked closely, that blood-colored figure was emanating the Karmic aura of the Ji Clan, as well as a faint, murderous aura.

This was Meng Hao's Blood Clone!

It had been years since Meng Hao's cultivation base had grown so powerful that the Blood Clone was essentially useless, and had remained tucked away in his bag of holding. He had even given up on the idea of turning it into a Blood Divinity. 1

Then Ji Tian had gone and tried to kill his father, which stoked Meng Hao's killing intent and rage to the point where he decided to collect more generations of Ji Clan blood and continue his plan to build his Blood Divinity, which would have the power of Ancestral Awakening.

Thus, less blood fell down among the rain than would be expected, and what fell was in fact diluted to the point that no one could see it. In fact, only a single drop landed on the face of one of the cultivators down below, who looked up in shock after wiping it away.

Back up in the clouds and lightning, Meng Hao extended his right hand, causing the spell formation's hand to gradually disperse, leaving behind a huge handprint within the clouds.

One palm had killed the Ji Clan cultivators as if they were ants!

Although that power did not come from Meng Hao himself, at this moment he felt a sort of mightiness that could only come after one possessed the power to control Heaven and Earth, the kind of domineering feeling that came from being matchless in all of creation.

As the hand faded away, two people became visible within the handprint that was left behind. It was none other than the two people who hadn't been killed!

Of course, it would be most correct to say that it was one person, not two!

The old man’s aura was no longer present. A huge hole was now visible in his back, and it was possible to see that no organs existed inside of his body. He was an empty husk, inside of which the young man was concealed!

Clearly, he hadn’t simply hidden inside the man, but used some sort of sinister secret magic to avoid being killed by the enormous net.

Cracking sounds could be heard as the husk of the old man fell into pieces. The young man staggered back, coughing up blood. At the same time, countless Karma Threads exploded out of him, filling the area and transforming into what looked like a teleportation spell formation.

The blood spraying from his mouth fell down through the clouds to be sucked towards and voraciously consumed by the Blood Clone which was hidden there.

Of course, the young man had no idea about the Blood Clone. Even as his body began to fade, Meng Hao gave a cold harrumph.

“You’re not going anywhere!” he said, advancing, hand clenching into a fist. He punched out, causing the air to distort. However, as he closed in on the young man, Meng Hao suddenly felt a sense of crisis, and it was in that moment that the young man smiled eerily.

“You… finally got close,” he murmured. Instead of dodging out of the way of Meng Hao’s fist, he actually charged directly forward to meet it.

Rumbling could be heard as the young man’s body was shattered, causing blood and gore to spray out in all directions. However, his laughter continued to echo out in the air.

“Meng Hao, our Karma has been tied. Next time we meet… what’s yours will be mine. Remember our shared name. We are called… Ji Dongyang!” Wild laughter echoed out as the young man’s body faded away.

Meng Hao hovered there, frowning. Finally, he looked down thoughtfully at his fist and sighed.

“I wanted to kill him, but apparently, that was part of his plan….

“What a clever fellow, this Ji Dongyang. All of the Ji Clan cultivators he brought with him were being used as a smokescreen.

“And the entire reason why he dared to come to Planet South Heaven was to use a Ji Clan secret magic to bind me with Karma, and in turn unleash some sort of mysterious Daoist magic.

“I was luring him into a trap, and he was doing the same to me…. He didn’t want to be killed by the South Heaven Death Formation, he wanted to be killed by me personally….” Even as he hovered there thinking, the Blood Clone which had been hiding in the clouds below slowly floated up. It was now very different than before, more powerful, and emanating a powerful aura of Ji Clan Karma.

In fact, it even seemed to be poised on the verge of a breakthrough. With a little more progress, it would finally break through and take a step closer to being a Blood Divinity capable of Ancestral Awakening.

“If the Ancestral Awakening occurs, I wonder if… whatever appears will be as powerful as Ji Tian himself!?”

Eyes flickering, he ceased worrying about the matter of Ji Dongyang. All he could do now was be on guard against this new powerful adversary!

After putting his Blood Clone into his bag of holding, he shot back down through the clouds.

Meanwhile, in the Ji Clan on the Ninth Mountain, there was a restricted area that was a graveyard. Nine coffins were lined up there, all of them bronze and carved with complicated magical symbols.

Seven of those coffins had no lids, and were empty. Only the eighth and ninth coffins were closed tightly.

Suddenly, powerful rumbling like that of thunder could be heard, and the lid of the eighth coffin opened with a bang. A powerful aura immediately surged out from within.

A hand stretched up from inside the eighth coffin. At first, it was trembling, but then it grew steady and grabbed the side of the coffin. A person slowly sat up, then stood. His body was shriveled, like a corpse, so desiccated that it was difficult to make out his facial features.

A mark could be seen on his forehead, and despite the withered nature of his body, that mark was clearly visible. Unexpectedly, it was… an Echelon mark!!

Shockingly, this man… was an Echelon cultivator!

He took a breath, sucking in all the energy of Heaven and Earth in the area. As he did, his body rapidly regenerated. His blood and flesh wriggled, and life flooded back into him as he rapidly transformed back into a young man!

His facial features slowly filled back in, and in the end… a face appeared which no one had ever seen before!

“I still… prefer the appearance of my seventh life,” he said in a raspy voice. “He was my favorite among the Junior generation.” Then the face rapidly changed, transforming into… Ji Dongyang!

“The Karma has been bound, and my eighth life body has been awakened. I’ve also secured the host for my ninth life. Meng Hao….. Once we share the same body… then you will be my ninth life!” Ji Dongyang began to laugh, a strange and sinister laughter filled with an ancient air.

He looked up, and shockingly, a huge eye appeared up above him, within which sat an old man. The two of them looked at each other.

The most eerie thing was that if there were a third person present to observe the scene, they would find that the look in the old man’s eyes, and the look in Ji Dongyang’s eyes…

Were exactly the same!!

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# Chapter 1196: Taking Away the Terracotta Soldier!

The rest of the coronation of the Clan Chief came to a conclusion without a hitch. All sects and powers in the Ninth Mountain and Sea would henceforth treat Fang Xiufeng with incredible politeness. After all, Fang Xiufeng now represented the entire Fang Clan!

Large numbers of Fang Clan cultivators were stationed on Planet South Heaven, and permanent teleportation portals were set up, linking it directly to Planet East Victory.

This also meant that it was no longer just Fang Xiufeng who stood guard over Planet South Heaven. It became the responsibility of the whole Fang Clan, including Fang Shoudao and Fang Yanxu, and no one shirked their duty.

Protect the Mountain and Sea Realm! That… was the oath of the Allheaven Clans!

Three days after the ceremony was over, Meng Hao bid farewell to his parents and left Planet South Heaven. He wasn’t sure when he would be back in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, so he decided that he should go see some of his old friends before leaving. Some he would visit to reminisce. Others he would visit to collect money!

His first stop would be Planet East Victory!

He made use of the teleportation portal on Planet South Heaven to travel directly there. On his way to the ancestral mansion, he stopped by the Dao of Alchemy Division to pay respects to Pill Elder and visit some old friends. Then, he and Fang Shoudao opened up the clan's Ancestral Land!

He stood there looking at the enormous vortex, and the familiar Ancestral Land therein. His heart trembled as he saw the terracotta soldier in the form of a mountain, and couldn't help but think of Ke Yunhai.

"Dad…." he murmured. He stepped forward into the vortex and appeared in front of the terracotta soldier. It was currently sleeping, but as soon as he appeared, its aura awakened, and it slowly opened its eyes. Rumbling echoed out as it rose to its feet, and the power of a Quasi-Dao cultivation base erupted out.

It had been waiting this entire time for Meng Hao to come and take it away!

The day had finally come!

"I'm going to take you away," Meng Hao said. "You're going to be with me… for all eternity." He slowly lifted his hand and patted the terracotta soldier as its aura caused memories of Stepdad Ke to swirl in his head.

"There's another terracotta soldier out there somewhere, and I'm going to get that one back too." He took a deep breath and then waved his hand. The terracotta soldier instantly transformed into a beam of light that flew into the piece of the Ruins of Immortality that he'd acquired from Paragon Sea Dream!

The terracotta soldier had long since become connected inseparably with the Ruins of Immortality, although not the land itself, but its energy. The entire reason it was unable to leave the Fang Clan Ancestral Land was because without that energy, it would die.

That was the main reason that Meng Hao requested a piece of the Ruins of Immortality from Paragon Sea Dream. It was all… for the terracotta soldier. As the terracotta soldier entered his own piece of the Ruins of Immortality, Meng Hao's heart began to beat nervously. After all, his whole plan was based on speculation. However, after seeing that the terracotta soldier showed no signs of being unable to adapt, he breathed a sigh of relief.

“From now on we’ll… travel together through the Mountain and Sea Realm!” Next, his eyes began to glow as he looked in the direction of the necropolis far off in the distance and bowed. Just as he was about to leave, the ancient voice of the first generation Patriarch echoed out into his mind.

“The legacy of Lord Li was once on Planet South Heaven. Later it came to Planet East Victory. And now… it’s in the Eighth Mountain and Sea.” As the voice echoed out, a jade slip flew out of the necropolis to appear in front of Meng Hao. He reached out and took it.

“This jade slip shows the current location of the legacy of Lord Li. With this, you should be able to track it down!

“The legacy was originally intended for someone in the Dao Realm. However, considering your current cultivation base, you can still… find and acquire the legacy. It… will be of great help to you.” The longer the first generation Patriarch spoke, the weaker his voice got.

Meng Hao sent some divine sense into the jade slip, and could immediately sense something calling to him through the starry sky. It was faint, but he was now sure that if he went looking, he would be able to find the source of that call.

What he found strange was that the location of Lord Li’s legacy was not fixed within the Eighth Mountain and Sea. Instead, it seemed to be moving.

“Planet South Heaven. Planet East Victory. The Eighth Mountain….” Meng Hao’s eyes widened as he made a sudden, wild speculation.

“No way….” he murmured.

Meanwhile, in the starry sky of the Eighth Mountain and Sea, a gargantuan turtle was flying along happily, humming a little tune, surrounded by hundreds of tough-looking cultivators who were apparently guards.

As they flew along with the turtle, they cried out in loud voices:

“The Patriarch is mighty, Reliance is mighty!”

“The Patriarch is invincible, Reliance is invincible!”

Their voices echoed out in powerful sound waves, spreading out in all directions. Any cultivators who encountered them were immediately shocked.

Of course, this turtle was none other than Patriarch Reliance, who was now as free as a bird, smacking his lips proudly, looking very much at ease.

“The Eighth Mountain is way better than the Ninth Mountain. No matter where I look, there’s no Meng Hao. Without him, everything is wonderful.” Patriarch Reliance sighed emotionally as he realized that making the decision to flee from the Ninth Mountain and Sea couldn’t have been more right.

“That little bastard Meng Hao wouldn’t imagine in his wildest dreams that I’ll never again be fooling around with him in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Finally I can be footloose and fancy free in the Eighth Mountain and Sea.” Patriarch Reliance was very proud of himself, and loved how the cultivators clustered around him and called him mighty. However, it was at this point that he suddenly shivered out of nowhere.

“Eee? What’s going on? Why do I feel so jittery all of a sudden?” A strange look appeared on Patriarch Reliance’s face for a moment, but he thought little more of it and continued on his merry way.

Back in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, Meng Hao put the jade slip away with a wry expression on his face. Clasping hands to the first generation Patriarch, he then left the Ancestral Land and headed toward the teleportation portal with those speculations running through his mind.

Halfway there, he suddenly turned to find a black-robed cultivator sitting cross-legged on a nearby mountain peak.

Before, this cultivator would wear white, but later, he had become the shadow of the clan, and from then on, wore clothing as black as the night, to indicate how he would eternally exist in the darkness.

It was Fang Wei!

This location was a place that had to be passed by to get to the teleportation portal, and he had been waiting here specifically for Meng Hao.

Their gazes met, and neither said anything at first. A moment passed, and then Meng Hao smiled.

“What is the meaning of your name, Fang Wei?”

A tremor ran through Fang Wei. Meng Hao’s question brought back many memories. A bright glow appeared in his eyes. Voice low and filled with determination, he replied, “That I’m going to defend the Fang Clan!” 1

Meng Hao waved his finger, which caused Fang Wei to shake one more time. Suddenly, an intense azure light began to shine off of him.

This was the light of an Allheaven Immortal. The Dao seed inside of him was now mostly awakened, causing his cultivation base to burn with the power of an imminent breakthrough.

Meng Hao’s face paled a bit. Smiling, he flew past Fang Wei toward the teleportation portal.

A complicated expression appeared on Fang Wei’s face as he sensed his surging cultivation base and the Allheaven Immortal energy inside of himself. As Meng Hao made his way off, just before he disappeared, Fang Wei called out, “Meng Hao, I’ll wait for you to get back, and then the two of us are going to fight!”

“Very well!” was the echoing reply. Then Meng Hao disappeared into the teleportation portal in a flash of light.

“Therefore,” Fang Wei murmured. “No matter what dangerous situations you run into, make sure to get back safely!” He rose to his feet and headed back in the direction of the Medicine Immortal Sect, eyes gleaming with an unswerving determination to sacrifice anything and everything for the sake of his clan.

Meng Hao stepped out of a shimmering teleportation portal onto an asteroid field somewhere in the starry sky of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Slapping his bag of holding, he produced a thick stack of promissory notes.

“So, who should I go collect money from first? Ah, I guess it doesn’t matter. I have so many promissory notes I guess I might as well just randomly pick one!” Having made up his mind, he pulled a random note out and looked it over.

“Taiyang Zi?” he said, smiling. “Not bad, not bad. He owes me quite a few spirit stones.” Face filled with anticipation, he clutched the promissory note in his hand as he shot toward the teleportation portal leading to Mount Sun. As soon as the disciples manning the teleportation portal saw that it was Meng Hao, their faces flickered.

Ignoring them, Meng Hao stepped into the teleportation portal and was surrounded by the glowing light of teleportation.

When he reappeared, he found himself in front of a world of scorching heat. It was like a desert, and there was no starry sky up above; this was its own unique, special world.

The sky was dark, and the lands were parched. Countless mountains could be seen stretching out in all directions, all of which were spontaneously erupting volcanoes. In fact, in the moment that Meng Hao arrived, he saw a dozen or so of them belching out black smoke, and shooting out bright glowing arcs of light that looked almost like meteors.

This was Mount Sun. According to the legends, it was a fragment of lands shattered by the impact of the Immortal World’s sun when it fell from the heavens. Because it was so large, vast amounts of sun power could be found there, which was also why there were so many powerfully destructive volcanoes!

That was also why it became a unique location to practice cultivation. Gradually, it came to be called Mount Sun, and after many years, became one of the Five Great Holy Lands of the Ninth Mountain and Sea!

Different teleportation portals could be used to get into and out of Mount Sun, and all of them were manned by Mount Sun disciples. Once Meng Hao appeared, they immediately recognized him.

“That’s Meng Hao!” There were over a hundred disciples in the area of the teleportation portal, and all of them looked at Meng Hao with flickering expressions. Although they weren’t sure why he was here, they immediately pushed down on jade slips to send messages to their superiors.

Meng Hao coughed dryly and glanced around at the Mount Sun disciples, who were acting as though some powerful enemy had just shown up at their doorstep. Feeling a bit embarrassed, he gave them a bashful smile, then cleared his voice and called out, “Taiyang Zi! You owe me money! Time to pay up!!”

His voice echoed out like thunder, causing wild colors to flash in Heaven and Earth, and a massive wind to spring up. Boundless ripples emanated out and surged through the world.

Some of the volcanoes in the area quaked and then erupted, and the sky darkened as the Heavens shook. Everyone in the entire world could hear Meng Hao’s words.

The Mount Sun disciples stared with wide-open jaws. Mount Sun was immediately thrown into a huge uproar as countless disciples were flabbergasted by Meng Hao’s voice.

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# Chapter 1197: Stopping By To Demand Payment!

“Taiyang Zi! You owe me money! Time to pay up!!”

“… You owe me money! Time to pay up!!”

“… Time to pay up!!”

The world in which Mount Sun existed seemed to be filled with countless Meng Haos, all of them shouting out at the same time. The mountains shook and the lands quaked. Countless cultivators were completely shocked.

Most surprising of all were the actual words he spoke….

Almost immediately, hundreds of furious cultivators flew out from one particular mountain deep within the world of Mount Sun.

“Collecting debt?”

“Who dares to cause a ruckus in Mount Sun!?”

“Such audaciousness!”

All of the disciples headed in Meng Hao’s direction. However, before they were even halfway to his location, one cultivator after another recognized who he was, and their faces fell.

“Meng Hao…. Dammit, I can’t believe it’s him! Greedy, miserly Meng Hao!”

“Meng Hao was able to cut down Guru Heavencloud in battle, and also has a despicable Daoist magic that gets people to owe him money. It would be better to die than provoke him!”

“Ahem, well if it isn’t my bro Meng Hao. Ah, misunderstanding, misunderstanding….” Without the slightest hesitation, the group instantly turned on their heels and left.

They recognized him and knew what kind of person he was. He was such a terrifying figure that none of them were willing to stand up for Taiyang Zi.

Actually, not even Meng Hao himself was aware of how famous he had become in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Virtually all of the cultivators knew him and did their best to avoid him. It was common knowledge that anyone who tangled with him… would end up completely destitute.

Meng Hao’s cries continued to echo back and forth in the Holy Land of Mount Sun. Soon, in some of the most ancient volcanoes of Mount Sun, cultivators with the status of Elders, and even Patriarchs, opened their eyes to reveal cold, displeased gazes. These people had extremely high statuses, and had lived for many years. As such, they held no approval for a youngster like Meng Hao.

Meanwhile…. At the bottom of an enormous volcano deep within Mount Sun, a young man sat cross-legged in meditation. He was naked from the waist up, and every inch of his skin glowed bright red. Clearly it contained terrifying power. Bulging blue veins snaked across his skin like dragons, and it seemed like there was some sort of explosive force building up inside him.

On the young man’s forehead, a mark could be seen that resembled a sun.

This was none other than… Taiyang Zi!

He was just one of the many Chosen that had emerged in the long history of the Holy Land of Mount Sun. Yet his latent talent was stunning, even more so than all the cultivators who had inherited the name Taiyang Zi before him. In terms of cultivation, he had long since broken through the traditional limitations for cultivators. He was now at the peak of the Immortal Realm, but in truth, he could easily battle the mid Ancient Realm!

Immortals like that were definitely rare in the Ninth Mountain and Sea!

As Taiyang Zi sat there cross-legged doing breathing exercises, Meng Hao’s voice echoed about like thunder, reaching the depths of the world of Mount Sun. The volcanoes all trembled, erupting with lava and belching out smoke. The sky of Mount Sun quickly turned black.

Taiyang Zi’s eyes snapped open as his volcano had a similar reaction.

“Meng Hao!” He gritted his teeth in fury. He would never have imagined that Meng Hao would actually come to Mount Sun and say something like he just had.

To show up in Taiyang Zi’s home and openly demand money left him with no face whatsoever. This was especially the case considering that he didn’t believe that he actually owed Meng Hao anything. The whole situation had been forced on him. Of course, he couldn’t beat Meng Hao in a fight, so he was forced to simply endure the situation. But now, shockingly, Meng Hao had actually come to Mount Sun to settle up.

Taiyang Zi threw his head back and roared. His cultivation base surged with power, and he flew out of the volcano up into the sky, roaring out in an equally thunderous voice, “Meng Hao, you push people too far!!”

From his position just outside the teleportation portal, Meng Hao could hear Taiyang Zi, and his face lit up with delight. What he feared the most was going to collect debts, only to find the person not at home. Now that he knew Taiyang Zi was home, he realized that he was in luck.

Laughing heartily, he took a step forward and transformed into a bright beam of light that shot dazzlingly through the air toward Taiyang Zi. However, even as he closed in, a cold snort echoed out from a nearby volcano, and an enormous hand appeared, which grabbed toward Meng Hao.

“Cease this outburst, child! Get down here!” The sound of the snort echoed about, and the enormous hand blotted out the sky as it crushed down toward Meng Hao. The hand even seemed to influence the natural laws in the area, causing everything to twist and distort.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered coldly. Instead of falling back, he slammed directly into the hand, causing massive rumbling sounds to echo out. The hand collapsed, and Meng Hao remained hovering in midair, completely unharmed.

“Me get down there? How about you come up here!” He extended his right hand and made a grasping motion toward the volcano down below.

The land quaked and the volcano rumbled as a bedraggled figure was wrenched up into the air. It was an old man in the great circle of the Ancient Realm, who looked completely flustered as he glared at Meng Hao. More cold harrumphs could be heard from the surrounding volcanos as four more old men appeared, all of them in the great circle of the Ancient Realm. Their energy surged, creating a spectacular scene as they flew out to suppress Meng Hao.

“Ganging up on me?” Meng Hao said coolly, waving his right hand, which caused the terracotta soldier to emerge from his bag of holding. It instantly grew to a huge size, sweeping its greatsword through the air, destroying a volcano before stabbing into the ground, which then quaked violently.

When the Ancient Realm Mount Sun Elders felt how powerful the attack of the terracotta soldier was, their faces fell and they instantly backed up. Even still, blood sprayed out of their mouths, and shocked expressions appeared on their faces.

“Quasi-Dao!!”

“That’s the guardian of the Fang Clan’s Ancestral Land! It joined the battle when the Ji Clan invaded Planet East Victory!!”

As they backed up, the terracotta soldier looked around, and its energy soared. Rumbling filled the air, and a huge wind sprang up that filled all of

Mount Sun with the Quasi-Dao aura of the terracotta soldier.

That aura caused all Mount Sun disciples' faces to fall, and their bodies to tremble. The mad aura of a Quasi-Dao cultivation base was something they simply couldn't fight against.

Any Quasi-Dao expert was to be feared. However, what was most terrifying was that even though the terracotta soldier could explode out with Quasi-Dao power… it had no longevity limitations.

Taiyang Zi gasped, and his heart began to thump. He looked at Meng Hao, then at the enormous terracotta soldier, and then he sighed. Finally, he began to back up, and yet, he wasn't as fast as Meng Hao.

Meng Hao advanced, reaching out to grab ahold of Taiyang Zi.

"Taiyang Zi, you're going to pay me what you owe, today!!"

"You're shameless, Meng Hao! I never owed you any money!!" Roaring in fury, Taiyang Zi performed a double-handed incantation gesture, causing a divine ability to materialize and shoot toward Meng Hao.

"I have proof! Your promissory note is right here! How dare you deny the truth!" Enraged, Meng Hao punched out, sending Taiyang Zi flying back with blood spraying out of his mouth. Meng Hao was just about to follow up with another attack when the voice of an arrogant old man echoed out across the lands.

"Even if your father came here, he would treat me with respect and call me Senior. For you to come to Mount Sun and babble such nonsense might not be a capital offense, but you won't escape severe punishment.

"I suppose I'll just stand in for your father to administer some discipline. If we don't correct that personality of yours, sooner or later you're going to get yourself killed." As the voice rang out, an ancient and primeval volcano off in the distance erupted, and countless flickering magical symbols spewed out. A middle-aged man flew out, standing on a stream of smoking lava and a cloud of ash.

When he emerged, the sky churned, and the air around him became a sea of flames which emanated an Essence aura.

This man was none other than one of the three Dao Realm experts of Mount Sun!!

As far as he was concerned, it didn’t matter why Meng Hao was here, he should politely offer his respects and say some pleasantries. If that had been the case, Mount Sun wouldn’t necessarily refuse to hand over some spirit stones to resolve the issue with Taiyang Zi.

However, for Meng Hao to show up and act so tough was simply intolerable. In his mind, even if Meng Hao were stronger than he was, he couldn’t do anything to cultivators in the Dao Realm. Even the things which had happened on Planet South Heaven recently were only because of the South Heaven Death Formation.

After he finished speaking, the middle-aged man waved his finger in Meng Hao’s direction.

“I call upon my Dao to unleash the magic of the Heavens. Bind this child’s body and burn him in the flames!” In accompaniment with the man’s coolly spoken words, the sea of flames behind him surged explosively toward Meng Hao, transforming into an enormous mouth that sought to consume him.

“Well aren’t you something, Mount Sun. I came to settle accounts, which is a right and proper thing to do. But in the end, the kids refuse to admit they owe money, and the adults refuse to discuss the matter reasonably?” Enraged, Meng Hao waved his hand, causing the Essence of Divine Flame to explode out in another sea of flames. This sea of flames also filled half of the sky, and shot menacingly toward the Dao Realm Patriarch.

Rumbling booms echoed out as the two seas of flame collided and then dissipated.

Meng Hao grunted, but then took a step forward, causing his energy to rise as he charged toward the Dao Realm Patriarch. The man’s face was pale, and his eyes were wide; Meng Hao’s power left him… completely astonished.

When the Mount Sun disciples saw what was happening, they gasped. Even Taiyang Zi’s eyes were wide, and his mind was spinning. This was their first time truly witnessing how powerful Meng Hao’s cultivation base was.

“Taiyang Zi… are you gonna pay back what you owe, or not!?!?” Meng Hao took a second step, and his energy rose, causing him to emanate what felt like the might of the Heavens throughout the world of Mount Sun.

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# Chapter 1198: Repay Your Kindness!

“Enough with the ruckus!” The Dao Realm Patriarch’s eyes glinted with coldness. Although he was shocked by Meng Hao’s battle prowess, he still couldn’t believe that he himself was no match for him. Although he wasn’t of a mind to kill Meng Hao, he fully intended to teach him a lesson. Even as the words left his mouth, he took a step forward.

As his foot descended, he stretched his arms wide, causing a tempest to spring up. All of the volcanoes in Mount Sun trembled, and the black smoke in the sky seethed and churned as they gathered towards him. Even the lava that covered the surface of the ground began to rise up into the air and converge together.

In the blink of an eye, a huge sealing mark formed!

It was bright red, and filled with Dao Realm Essence power that was strong enough to shatter Heaven and destroy Earth. Fully 300 meters wide, it floated there in front of the Dao Realm Patriarch, who then waved his hand, sending the sealing mark directly toward Meng Hao.

“I’ll put you in your place and then call some adults from your clan to come take you away!” he said coolly. The huge sealing mark rumbled through the air, bursting with Essence power.

“A piddling 1-Essence Dao Realm cultivator like you dares to to try and put me in my place!?” Meng Hao responded calmly. He truly qualified to say such a thing; if he unleashed his Battle Weapon, it would certainly be possible for him to cut this man down.

But he was here to collect debt. Although this Dao Realm Patriarch was blocking his path, after some thought, Meng Hao realized that he should act in good faith, and help Mount Sun consider the gains and losses that could be had.

“I might not have a sealing mark, but I have… this!” Eying the incoming sealing mark, he extended his right hand out into the air, making a snatching motion. Heaven and Earth trembled, and the air in front of him collapsed as a land mass shot out from his palm.

The piece of land started out very small, but in the next moment, it grew to the enormous size of 30,000 meters, blotting out the sky and casting everything into deep shadow.

A boundlessly archaic aura emanated out from the land mass, as if it had existed for countless years of time. That land mass had apparently existed for innumerable eons, and even seemed to contain the will of a Paragon!!

It wasn’t the specific will of an individual Paragon, though. It was… the supreme will of the land mass itself!

This 30,000-meter stretch of land was none other than… a piece of the Ruins of Immortality, enormously heavy, and now being wielded by Meng Hao as if it were a magical item. Immediately, he sent it smashing down toward the sealing mark down below.

Apparently, there was nothing in Heaven and Earth, nothing in the Mountain and Sea Realm, no precious treasures that could remain unshaken by this land mass, and even if there were, the sealing mark was not one of them!

The Dao Realm Patriarch’s face fell as he saw the chunk of the Ruins of Immortality descending. “That’s… part of the Ruins of Immortality! This is impossible!! You…. you actually have part of the Ruins of Immortality!!”

It was a spectacular scene in which everything trembled violently. When the land mass smashed into the sealing mark, the mark trembled. Incapable of standing up to the attack, it collapsed, and the chunk of the Ruins of

Immortality continued to rip through the air and then slammed down toward the ground.

If it crashed into the ground, a large portion of the land would surely collapse. The ensuing earthquake would also cause all of the volcanoes in Mount Sun to erupt.

Everything that was happening caused the Dao Realm Patriarch to gasp. How could he ever have predicted that Meng Hao would have a piece of the Ruins of Immortality? This fact only added to his astonishment; his heart had long since begun to pound wildly with shock.

It was at this point that an ancient voice rang out from a distant volcano, filled with surprise. “So, you actually have a piece of the Ruins of Immortality!”

In the blink of an eye, an old man had appeared beneath the Ruins of Immortality. After reaching his hand up and pushing against the descending land mass, he was shoved down several hundred meters before coming to a stop.

He was able to resist the Ruins of Immortality with his power alone!!

The old man’s explosive aura contained swirling Essence power, not that of a single Essence, but rather, three!

Shockingly, this old man was… a 3-Essences Dao Lord!

After successfully collecting the power of three different Essences, one was referred to as a Dao Lord!

The old man’s energy soared, and rumbling echoed out from his hand as he floated up, pushing the Ruins of Immortality back up into the air

“Meng Hao, young friend, please put this thing away,” the old man said, his eyes gleaming with somberness.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever. If there was no one in Mount Sun who could catch his chunk of the Ruins of Immortality, then they didn’t qualify to be one of the Five Great Holy Lands.

Even still, Meng Hao was convinced that if his piece of the Ruins of Immortality were larger, then even Dao Lords would be incapable of shouldering it!

He waved his hand, and the land mass flew back into his bag of holding. Meng Hao looked at the old man and said, “I came here today to collect some debts, not to duel with magic.”

The middle-aged Dao Realm Patriarch was apparently on the verge of saying something, but the old man silenced him with a look. The middle-aged man nodded, and the old man suddenly said, “Taiyang Zi!”

His voice echoed out like thunder, causing Taiyang Zi to hurry forth and kowtow.

“Greetings, Patriarch!” he said, head bowed. Inwardly, he was completely shaken to a Heaven-shaking, Earth-toppling degree. Although he knew that Meng Hao was powerful, he could never have imagined that he was strong enough to face off against Mount Sun’s Patriarchs.

In fact, it was even appropriate to say that Meng Hao was now capable of shaking the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea. With a cultivation base like that, now that he had come to settle accounts… there was nothing Taiyang Zi could do other than smile bitterly. He wasn’t sure whether to feel honored, or to sigh.

“How much money do you owe our young friend Meng Hao?” the old man growled.

“I….” Taiyang Zi opened his mouth, but couldn’t find any words. Deep depression filled his heart, and actually, he couldn’t recall exactly how much he owed. After all, he had never admitted to actually owing Meng Hao anything.

When Meng Hao saw what was happening, he coughed dryly and patted his bag of holding. Immediately, a stack of promissory notes appeared, which he began to shuffle through.

“Oh, not much, not much,” he said, kindly deciding to remind Taiyang Zi of the amount. “Let’s see, the trifling sum of 1,000,000 Immortal jades, that’s all.”

“It wasn’t that much!!” Taiyang Zi blurted, trembling as he turned to look at Meng Hao. Even though Meng Hao’s cultivation base was so much higher than his, this was too much for him to bear.

“There’s interest on that too,” Meng Hao said, clearing his throat seriously. “Alright, never mind, just give me the original amount, 1,000,000 Immortal jades, and we’ll call things even.”

Taiyang Zi wanted to cry, but no tears would come. “You–”

He was about to continue speaking when the old man waved his hand, causing a bag of holding to fly out to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao caught it and scanned it with divine sense. Inside were 1,000,000 pieces of Immortal jade, neatly arranged.

Meng Hao immediately looked delighted. Putting the bag of holding away as quickly as possible, he clasped hands respectfully to the old man.

“Many thanks for presiding over justice, Senior. Well then… unless you have other business to discuss, I’ll take off now. I still have quite a few other places to go collect debts. Waiting for too long will give them too much opportunity to prepare, and make the accounts too difficult to settle.” With that, he turned into a beam of light that shot back toward the teleportation portal, then vanished.

Everyone in Mount Sun was completely silent, and many strange expressions could be seen. When Meng Hao vanished, there were many hearts that still blazed with rage at the utter humiliation which had just occurred.

The middle-aged Dao Realm cultivator was one of those people, and stared coldly at Meng Hao the entire time until he disappeared. Finally, he turned to face the old man.

“Elder Brother, why did you let that little bastard off the hook? Once word spreads, how will Mount Sun maintain any face?”

The old man frowned. Looking back at the middle-aged man, he sighed and said, “Don’t provoke him. He’s… a person we can’t afford to rile up.”

The middle-aged man was about to say something when the old man suddenly transmitted a message into his mind.

As soon as the middle-aged cultivator heard it, his face fell, and an expression of disbelief and shock filled face. Voice hoarse, he said, “What?!?! Is that true?”

“Your cultivation base isn’t sufficient,” the old man said softly, “but with mine, I can pick up on the clues. There’s no other explanation. So… do you really want to provoke someone like that?”

The middle-aged cultivator took a deep breath, then turned and spoke out loud.

“Disciples of Mount Sun, from now on, none of you are to have any dealings with Meng Hao whatsoever. Do not incur debts of gratitude, nor should you sow any enmity. We… must maintain a respectful distance from Meng Hao!”

Taiyang Zi stared in shock. Although he wasn’t sure what secret messages the two Patriarchs had passed between each other, from the look of things, Meng Hao was harboring some incredible secret that was powerful enough to cause the two Patriarchs from Mount Sun to fear him.

Taiyang Zi’s heart was filled with many complicated emotions. He couldn’t help but think about all the times he had interacted with Meng Hao. From the moment he had met him on Planet South Heaven down to this day, Meng Hao was always in the lead, and had transformed into an insurmountable mountain.

The speed of his ascent was incredible, such that Taiyang Zi could do nothing more than look up at him from down below.

In the following days, all of the sects and clans in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were thrown into a huge commotion. All of them heard of or experienced what it was like… to have Meng Hao come and settle accounts.

Any Chosen who had a promissory note in Meng Hao's hand would eventually find him at their doorstep, asking for money. All of the sects and clans were shaken by Meng Hao and his show of power. As a result, his debt collecting went fairly smoothly.

After all, he was not the youngster that he had been in the past. He was now so powerful that he could rock Dao Realm experts. Therefore, the trifling debt and the promissory notes prompted everyone to simply pay up.

Even Meng Hao would never have guessed that his actions of collecting debt would quickly become the conversation topic of all the cultivators in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Whenever he stepped out of a teleportation portal, everyone who caught sight of him instantly got excited. Word would spread… and countless cultivators would gather to personally watch him go to settle accounts.

It was because of this that Meng Hao happened to step out of a teleportation portal at one point, and was instantly recognized. People then began to take out jade slips to notify their sects of what was happening.

"Strange, there's no sect or clan in the vicinity of this teleportation station. This asteroid field is merely a transfer station!"

"Look, his destination is actually near the Ninth Mountain…."

People looked on in confusion as Meng Hao vanished. When he reappeared, shockingly, he was walking out of another teleportation portal in another asteroid field. He looked up into the starry sky above him at… a stretch of crumbled stone!

Those bits of stone had once been complete, and when they were, they had formed… a bridge!

That bridge had actually been constructed in the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect. It was… the all-powerful Bridge of Immortal Treading!!

In this case, it was Meng Hao who owed someone else. He owed a debt of gratitude!

“Big bro Han Shan… I’ve come to repay your kindness!” he said softly. Then his body flickered as he shot up into the starry sky.

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# Chapter 1199: The Outrage of the Bridge of Immortality!

The Bridge of Immortal Treading! 1

At one time, it was a majestic bridge that spanned the starry sky, constructed by the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect. But then… in the war waged by Ji Tian, it was destroyed….

That was the bitter, bloody war which was fought when the Ji Clan betrayed the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect. During that war, the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect was completely destroyed, and Blood Demon was seriously injured. With his life force mortally damaged, he fled to Planet South Heaven, where he was forced to divide his Nascent Divinity and become a clone.

The war also saw the body of the Frost Soil Demon Emperor destroyed, and his soul collapsed. Only a tiny aspect of his soul managed to escape, and was later reincarnated.

Mysteriously, no reports surfaced of the Withering Flame Demon Emperor having died; no one knew what fate he met by the time the war ended….

The Fang Clan led the resistance against the Ji Clan, vying with them for the Lordship of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Even after the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect was laid to waste, the fighting continued to go on for years.

Eventually, the Eighth Mountain and Sea was drawn into the conflict. Two great Mountains and Seas fought battle after battle. In the end… Ji Tian secured victory, becoming the new Lord of the Ninth Mountain and Sea!

The Mountain and Sea War ended. The civil war was over….

Such historical facts were common knowledge among cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Furthermore, the ruins of the Bridge of Immortal Treading bore testimony to the brutality and carnage of the war.

Nowadays, all that remained of the bridge was this seemingly endless stretch of rubble, floating out in the starry sky. The stones clung together, and from a distance, the general shape of a bridge was still visible.

It was part of the history of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, and cultivators were drawn there to struggle in search of good fortune. Some people entered the ruins, never to return. Others acquired the luck they sought, and from then on their life courses drastically changed.

Meng Hao had been here once as a mere Spirit Realm cultivator. This was where he had met Zhixiang, and was also where he had encountered… a benefactor.

Han Shan!

He was the reincarnation of the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect’s Frost Soil Demon Emperor…. Han Shan!

Han Shan’s wife had been eternally imprisoned within the Bridge of Immortal Treading, and Han Shan had been willing to pay any price to come to this place, find her, and awaken her from her state of sleep. Were he unable to do so, then he was willing… to remain there forever with his wife.

He gave his sword, his alcohol flagon, and his frost soil to Meng Hao, connecting them with ties of destiny. He had helped Meng Hao succeed in his efforts, and had also created a bit of hope for himself and his wife….

At that time, Meng Hao had promised that when he achieved his Dao, he would come to repay the kindness!

Han Shan knew that if Meng Hao was the type of person to honor his promises, then he would definitely come back. If Meng Hao was not that type of person… then there was nothing that could be done about the matter. Such future matters were impossible to predict. Back then, Han Shan had no idea what would happen in the end.

Perhaps if Han Shan had remained conscious, he would have occasionally thought about Meng Hao’s promise. Or maybe he would have forgotten about the ray of hope that he had given himself, which came from the opportunity he had given Meng Hao.

The truth of the matter was that Meng Hao would never forget the people who had helped him. Nor would he forget the promises he had made. Never would he forget Guyiding Tri-Rain, nor Han Shan. The promises he had made them existed eternally within his memory.

“Achieve the Dao, fulfill my promise!” he murmured, transforming into a prismatic streak of light that shot up into the starry sky.

“Although I haven’t truly achieved my Dao,” he said softly, “I can still take a shot at freeing big bro Han Shan and his wife….” When he entered the region of the Bridge of Immortality,

the excited cultivators who had been following him were quite confused. They couldn’t imagine why Meng Hao would come to this place.

“Could it have something to do with the Ji Clan? That bridge was destroyed by Ji Tian years ago!” As people made their speculations, Meng Hao passed into the bridge, shooting along without even a pause.

He was not the only person inside the Bridge of Immortal Treading. Other cultivators were there, all of them in the Spirit Realm, come from other planets to participate in various trials by fire.

It was just the same as when he had come here years ago.

Meng Hao flew through the various crushed stones that made up the Bridge of Immortal Treading, revisiting places that he remembered from the past.

He flew along silently, traveling ever deeper into the ruins.

He saw cultivators, some competing, some cooperating as they sought after good fortune. As he passed familiar places, he thought about his own experiences in the past. He did nothing to interfere with any of the cultivators he saw, nor did they even see him as he passed by. They continued on with their struggles and fights, completely oblivious.

He followed the same path he remembered taking last time. As he proceeded along, he soon realized that there was nobody else present in the locations he had visited formerly. He didn’t stop to check if there was potential good fortune available. His only goal was…

To repay the debt of gratitude.

Soon, a land mass of broken rocks appeared up ahead, and the color of frost soil became evident. Meng Hao had finally reached the depths of the Bridge of Immortal Treading, the place… where he had watched as Han Shan found his wife.

The only difference was that now that he had once again returned, there were none of the soulless Bridge Slaves in sight; all he saw was boundless frost soil. But then he spotted a cliff in the center of that soil. Sitting atop that cliff were a man and a woman.

The woman was leaning up against the man’s shoulder. Her eyes were closed, and a faint smile could be seen on her face. She seemed very content. The man’s hand was intertwined with her beautiful hair, and he was looking down at her, also smiling.

It was a tender, beautiful sight, and anyone who looked at it would be able to see how much they cared for each other.

However, they were surrounded by seemingly endless frost soil, even the cliff, all of which looked like a deep blue block of ice!

The ice did not emanate any coldness, and yet, it seemed to be sealing them, eternally preserving the two people where they sat.

Apparently, the will of his wife's soul was also sealed there….

Meng Hao walked up silently and stood next to the cliff, looking at the man and the woman. Their familiar faces instantly gave rise to numerous memories.

"Big bro Han Shan…." he said, his voice hoarse. Considering the level of his cultivation base, he could tell at a glance that Han Shan had sealed himself here intentionally.

Rather than live on soullessly, he had somehow used the power of the Frost Soil Demon Emperor to seal both himself and his wife. There they would sit, waiting quietly for a future day when they might awaken.

Meng Hao looked at the man and the woman sitting there on the cliff, and softly said, "Unless I can dispel the all outrage of the Bridge of Immortal Treading, then even if I am able to undo this seal, big bro Han Shan and his wife will have to remain here silently, year after year, unable to leave.

"The outrage of the Bridge of Immortal Treading… was born because of the Ji Clan. It would require a sacrifice of Ji Clan blood to dispel…. Unfortunately, I don't have the power to do that right now.

"I can only try to use my cultivation base to shake the Bridge of Immortal Treading. Maybe I can force it to submit…." He took a deep breath and sat down cross-legged beneath the cliff. He closed his eyes, rotated his cultivation base, and drew upon the power of an Allheaven Immortal. Explosive azure light immediately began to shine out in all directions.

In the blink of an eye, the light shone for 30,000 meters, creating an entire world of azure light. At the same time, the Bridge of Immortal Treading began to tremble. Just as Meng Hao had said, he would make an attempt using his own cultivation base, to try to shake the bridge and wipe out its outrage!

As his divine sense spread out to fill the area, his hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, and then he pushed them down onto the ground.

Massive rumbling could be heard, rolling out in all directions to fill the entire bridge, with Meng Hao at the center.

All of the stones that made up the Bridge of Immortal Treading were shaking, and soon, Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering shouting could be heard from each one.

The shouts occurred so abruptly that all of the cultivators participating in trials by fire were shocked, and their faces fell. Next, images which appeared to be souls rose up from the stones!

Those numerous souls were all parts of the soul of the Bridge of Immortal Treading!

They floated up from each stone, and then rapidly flew together, converging into… the actual soul of the Bridge of Immortal Treading!!

It floated there above the ruins of the bridge, emanating an indescribable pressure filled with outrage and unyielding hatred that descended upon Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes snapped open, shining brightly as he looked up at the vengeful soul of the Bridge of Immortal Treading.

“Ashes to ashes, dust to dust,” Meng Hao said. “There’s no reason to be like this. Don’t take your anger out on the wrong people. Please allow these two people here to leave….” His voice echoed out throughout the entire Bridge of Immortal Treading, causing all of the cultivators who heard it to stare around in wordless shock.

From what they could tell, some almighty expert had descended from the starry sky to force the bridge into capitulation!

They weren’t the only shocked ones. The cultivators who had been following Meng Hao earlier also looked around with wide eyes, completely shaken.

They could see the soul of the Bridge of Immortal Treading, and they could sense the boundless outrage and animosity radiating off of it. All of a sudden, they realized why Meng Hao had come here.

“He… he’s actually going to try to use his own power to dispel the outrage of the Bridge of Immortal Treading!”

“This bridge’s outrage will last for all eternity. The bridge hates the Ji Clan and is outraged at the Ninth Mountain and Sea. It is that very outrage which allows it to stay in the rough form of a bridge, despite having been destroyed!”

“This Meng Hao might be powerful, but how could it be so easy to dispel the outrage of the Bridge of Immortal Treading?!”

It was at this point that the soul of the Bridge of Immortal Treading, radiating boundless, sinister light, formed into an enormous face which then glared at Meng Hao.

“NO!” it roared, the single word transforming into a shockwave, a windstorm that swept explosively through the bridge toward Meng Hao.

“Your outrage has nothing to do with me,” Meng Hao said slowly. “I came here to take away these two people. If you agree, fine. If you disagree, I don’t care. I’m going to take them.” He waved his arm, causing the entire starry sky to tremble as yet another bridge suddenly appeared.

That bridge abounded with the energy of a Paragon. This was Meng Hao’s Paragon magic, his… Paragon Bridge!

He planned to use the Paragon Bridge to subdue the Bridge of Immortal Treading!

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# Chapter 1200: Absorbing the Bridge of Immortal Treading!!

Rumbling echoed out as the entire Bridge of Immortal Treading shook, and the enormous face roared. Towering killing intent rose up from the bridge, materializing in the form of eight huge hands that shot toward Meng Hao.

“DIE!” the huge face howled.

All of the cultivators participating in trials by fire on the bridge were completely shaken, and the people out in the starry sky were equally astonished. They looked on in complete disbelief as the eight arms bore down on Meng Hao from all directions.

The eight hands were born of outrage, and were filled with madness. Any one of them would be shocking on its own, and currently, they were just on the verge of slamming into Meng Hao. His eyes flashed, and he snorted coldly as he pushed his hand downward.

The gesture caused the land to quake, and Immortal mountains and Divine Flame to appear up above. The mountains slammed into the hands, causing a deafening roar to echo out. The hands fought back, causing everything to shake violently. At the same time, Meng Hao’s Paragon Bridge began its descent.

When it slammed into the soul of the Bridge of Immortal Treading, the soul issued a miserable howl, and the Bridge of Immortal Treading shook intensely.

Meng Hao’s plan was to use the Paragon Bridge to suppress the Bridge of Immortal Treading!

He wished that he could sate the Bridge of Immortal Treading's outrage with the blood of the Ji Clan, but with his current cultivation base, that was impossible.

However, once he left the Ninth Mountain and Sea, there was no telling when he might return. Although there was no time limit attached to his promise to Han Shan, the way Meng Hao saw it, if at any point he had the ability to resolve his obligations and thus free himself, he would not put it off any longer than necessary.

As the Paragon Bridge descended, the soul of the Bridge of Immortal Treading let out a frenzied shout. "NO!"

The gigantic face looked at the Paragon Bridge and screamed with grief and madness.

"The Paramita Bridge… the Paramita Bridge…." it cried. Meng Hao gaped in shock, and a tremor ran through him. As he looked closely, he suddenly realized that…

The Bridge of Immortal Treading and the Paragon Bridge… actually looked similar!

Although both were merely bridges, and would naturally have similar aspects, the feeling they gave off… made it seem like one was an imitation of the other!!

Even some of the ornamentations on the bridges were similar. Meng Hao had never noticed before, because the Bridge of Immortal Treading was in a state of collapse. However, now that the two bridges were next to each other, it was immediately apparent.

"Paragon Bridge. Bridge of Immortal Treading…." His eyes gleamed brightly.

"The Bridge of Immortal Treading built all those years ago by the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect was actually an imitation… of my Paragon Bridge. Or perhaps it's more accurate to say that it was an imitation of the bridge that I had committed to memory in the depths of my heart, the bridge from which I gained enlightenment regarding my Paragon magic…the Paramita Bridge!” Meng Hao’s eyes went wide as countless implications of this coincidence ran through his head.

He suddenly shot to his feet and waved his arm, causing the pressure from the Paragon Bridge to increase in intensity, and causing azure light to begin to emanate from it.

Rumbling could be heard as the soul of the Bridge of Immortal Treading howled in its attempts to fight back. However, under the pressure of the Paragon Bridge, the shattered remnants that formed the Bridge of Immortal Treading… were completely shaken.

From the look of things, the stones themselves were trying to free themselves from the force that kept them confined to the Bridge of Immortal Treading, attempting to fly up and be absorbed by the Paragon Bridge! It was as if… a counterfeit had met the original, and could not prevent itself from being sucked in.

Furthermore… one of the most important aspects to the whole situation was that Meng Hao’s Paragon Bridge was not complete!

What he had seen back in the Ruins of Immortality was a mere section. It was only by collecting all the insights he had gained during his enlightenment into creating his Paragon magic that he could barely produce a complete bridge. However, Meng Hao knew that he had never actually witnessed the entirety of the bridge and thus his Paragon magic, despite appearing whole, was actually incomplete!

But now… he had come across a stupendous opportunity and good fortune!

“If my Paragon Bridge can absorb this imitation that is the Bridge of Immortal Treading, and thus become complete… then it will be far more powerful than before!

“Most importantly, if I can do that, then I won’t need to dispel its outrage to free big bro Han Shan!

“That will be because, if I succeed… there will no longer be any Bridge of Immortal Treading!!”

Meng Hao took a deep breath. What a bizarre and miraculous place the world was! If he had not come back here to pay his debt of gratitude, he would never have come across this opportunity for spectacular good fortune.

“Big bro Han Shan, you don’t need to wait for me to destroy the Ji Clan to dispel the outrage of the Bridge of Immortal Treading. I can save you and your wife… today!” Eyes shining with this new enlightenment, he now felt even more confident in being able to rescue Han Shan and his wife.

Rumbling could be heard as the huge face that was the soul of the Bridge of Immortal Treading roared and struggled madly in its fight against the pressure of the Paragon Bridge. Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as moved forward and suddenly appeared atop the Paragon Bridge!

There, he took a single step forward.

In that instant, the entire Paragon Bridge trembled, and the azure light shone boundlessly. The power of the pressure increased, causing the soul of the Bridge of Immortal Treading to twist viciously and struggle even harder.

After all, the Paragon Bridge was incomplete, and Meng Hao was not yet in the Dao Realm!

Furthermore, the Bridge of Immortal Treading had existed for countless years, and although it had been suppressed, it was still explosively powerful.

Despite that power, the bridge was still fragmented, and held together only by the outrage born from its destruction. As the bridge trembled violently, suddenly, a few pieces began to rise up toward the Paragon Bridge. They were… absorbed into it, causing the pressure from the Paragon Bridge to grow stronger.

Within the azure light shone beams of whiteness, emanating out from the Paragon Bridge itself.

Apparently, those extra pieces it had just absorbed… made it more complete and real!

Meng Hao’s face brightened. Based on what was happening, it appeared that his theory was correct!

“The day that the Paragon Bridge will be completely rebuilt… is this very day!” He waved his sleeve and took a second step forward. Rumbling echoed out, and the pressure from the Paragon Bridge increased. As the soul of the Bridge of Immortal Treading howled and struggled to free itself, brilliant colors flashed about.

No matter how hard it fought, though, it was unable to prevent another piece of stone from flying up, then a second, and a third….

20 pieces, 50 pieces, 100 pieces….

Gradually, more and more stones flew up to be absorbed by the Paragon Bridge. The scene which was playing out in front of all the various cultivators left them completely astonished.

That was especially true of the cultivators who were actually on the bridgestones. They felt like they were in a living nightmare, and unprecedented levels of terror rose up in them. The image of Meng Hao standing on top of that bridge was something they would never forget for the rest of their lives.

Even if their cultivation bases rose higher and higher until they reached the Dao Realm, and they became Patriarchs, they would never be able to forget that picture of Meng Hao and his bridge.

Every step he took caused proverbial lotuses to blossom, as if he were the most supreme existence in the world!

Meng Hao didn’t want to make things difficult for those cultivators, so as the stones flew up into the air, the cultivators were picked up by a gentle force and taken to float out in the void, unharmed.

More intense rumbling could be heard as Meng Hao took a third step, then a fourth and a fifth!

Countless bridgestones rose up to merge into the Paragon Bridge, causing it to become even more majestic and real.

The pressure it radiated became even more intense and impossible to withstand, causing the Bridge of Immortal Treading to sink down and the soul of the Bridge of Immortal Treading to begin to break apart.

It had existed for many years, and could never have imagined that one day it would meet someone who would come against it with the Paragon Bridge, and could actually subdue and exert such a firm grip over it!

“NO!!” the soul howled. Its energy surged, transforming into an attack which blasted the Paragon Bridge, causing a rumbling boom to echo out. The Paragon Bridge trembled, and Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a strange light.

“Stones of the Bridge of Immortal Treading, return to the Paragon Bridge. Henceforth, you will no longer be the Bridge of Immortal Treading. Instead… you will become part of the Paragon Bridge!

“You will only have this opportunity once,” Meng Hao said, boosting his voice with his cultivation base, imbuing it with the will of the Paragon Bridge. “Bridge of Immortal Treading… hurry up and return. The time to act is now! ”

The void trembled, and the Bridge of Immortal Treading suddenly exploded.

Its bridge-like shape no longer existed, and countless stone fragments transformed into beams of light that shot from their place in the void… directly toward the Paragon Bridge!!

100. 1,000. 10,000. 100,000…. Innumerable bridgestones flew up into the air.

The surrounding cultivators were flabbergasted, and were immediately sent into a commotion.

“He’s… he’s taking away the Bridge of Immortal Treading?”

“He’s not taking it away, he’s consuming and absorbing it!!”

“This Meng Hao… he’s… he’s simply too powerful!!”

All of the stones that made up the Bridge of Immortal Treading were now floating up, and the void itself was distorted, as if the starry sky were about to collapse!

As the Paragon Bridge absorbed them, it glowed with increasingly powerful light and its energy rocketed up. The pressure grew stronger, far stronger than before. The entire starry sky trembled as boundless ripples flowed out in all directions.

Even more shocking was that the Paragon Bridge was now emanating… an aura that didn’t seem to be part of the Mountain and Sea Realm. It was as if its will were awakening!

In fact… the will of the Paragon Bridge was actually… the will of the Paramita Bridge!!

A will of Heaven Trampling!! 1

That will caused the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea to rumble. Then the Eighth Mountain and Sea was affected. After that, the Seventh Mountain and Sea, and then, the entire Mountain and Sea Realm!

At the peaks of the Nine Mountains, within the nine pools of water, nine holy Xuanwu turtles suddenly let out a powerful howl. It was almost exactly the same as when the Outsider from the 33 Heavens had appeared!!

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# Chapter 1201: Son of the Mountains and Seas!

As the nine Xuanwu turtles howled, a cold, emotionless voice suddenly echoed out into the minds of the Lords of the Nine Mountains and Seas. “The Paramita Bridge has awakened. Destroy it! Eradicate its life force. It must not become complete!!”

Simultaneously, the sun and moon flickered with explosive destructive power!

Back in the former location of the Bridge of Immortal Treading, the bridgestones continued to fuse into the Paragon Bridge, causing its energy to rise up explosively.

Meng Hao stood atop it, completely steady despite how violently it was shaking. His eyes gleamed with a strange light as he suddenly realized something.

“There are two stages to Paragon magics. The first is the illusory stage, and the second is… the corporeal stage!

“Only by advancing the Paragon magic to the corporeal stage can it truly explode with power!

“In fact, that power depends on the physical Paragon object!

“Having Paragon magic means you can join the Echelon. By advancing the Paragon magic to the corporeal, you… transcend the Echelon!!” As Meng Hao gained this new enlightenment, his Echelon mark appeared on his forehead, flickering brilliantly. As it glowed, it began to transform!

Apparently, he was moving beyond the Echelon, turning into a completely unique entity in the Mountain and Sea Realm!

The soul of the Bridge of Immortal Treading, seeing that it could do nothing to stop what was happening, let out a maddened roar. Eyes blazing, it cried, “I refuse to accept this!

“If I can absorb the Paramita Bridge, then I’ll finally be free! I can escape from this sea of bitterness and be like the fish who jumped over the dragon gate!” The face that represented the soul howled as it ceased resisting and actually shot directly toward the Paragon Bridge.

This was its ultimate decision. It would try to possess the Paragon Bridge, to take its place. Such an outcome wasn’t an impossibility. After all… it was born from the outrage of the Bridge of Immortal Treading, and was actually… a soul automaton!

The soul of the replica was trying to possess the object after which it had been fashioned, to take its place!

Rumbling could be heard as the soul of the Bridge of Immortal Treading merged into the Paragon Bridge. Meng Hao could do nothing to stop it, and in the blink of an eye, it was part of the Paragon Bridge. Everything was shaking violently as the Bridge of Immortal Treading completely vanished from the starry sky. Numerous cultivators in the area were pushed away from the vicinity, and the cultivators who had come to watch were staring wide-eyed.

There was now only one bridge in the starry sky, and that was… Meng Hao’s Paragon Bridge!

However, the Paragon Bridge was trembling as its aura rose up. The soul of the Bridge of Immortal Treading was trying to possess it in an attempt to become the soul of the Paragon Bridge!

“I can allow you to become the soul of the Paragon Bridge….” Meng Hao said.

A roaring response could be heard from the Paragon Bridge: “I don’t need you to allow me! I can do it myself!”

A powerful force battered away at the connection between Meng Hao and the Paragon Bridge, trying to separate it from Meng Hao and turn it into an independent entity.

It was attempting to do the same thing that Meng Hao had done to the Paragon Painting of the First Mountain’s Echelon cultivator, to break it away from him permanently.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, and he was about to unleash all his power to suppress it, when suddenly, an intense sensation of imminent crisis welled up in him. Looking up, he could sense a powerful force of expulsion coming from the Mountain and Sea Realm itself. A huge power was coming, a power that would destroy the Paragon Bridge that was still in the midst of awakening and being completed.

Meng Hao’s face flickered; although he wanted to put away the Paragon Bridge, because of the soul of the Bridge of Immortal Treading, he could not. Suddenly, he shot backward, moving to the location on the Paragon Bridge where Han Shan and his wife were. He quickly waved his hand to set up a shield around them, then looked out into the starry sky, his eyes shining with a strange light.

He even stopped trying to prevent the soul of the Bridge of Immortal Treading from interfering with his connection to the Paragon Bridge, and he looked up into the starry sky and caught sight of a beam of light.

That light… was caused because of the roaring of the nine Xuanwu turtles, and was… killing intent from the sun and moon!

An all-destructive arrow of light pierced through the starry sky, slamming into the Paragon Bridge to destroy it.

The Paragon Bridge started shaking, and because it was born from Meng Hao’s magic, Meng Hao also trembled and coughed up a mouthful of blood.

However, the soul of the Bridge of Immortal Treading was even more seriously wounded.

The Bridge Soul let out a bloodcurdling scream, and the entire Paragon Bridge shook. Massive destructive power washed over it, and the Bridge Soul could feel the menacing threat of death.

“Do you surrender or not!?” Meng Hao suddenly said. “Surrender, and become mine. A single thought on my part can make you the soul of the Paragon Bridge!

“Refuse to surrender, and you’ll be destroyed by the power of the Mountains and Seas!” Meng Hao was now using the power of the Mountains and Seas to threaten the soul.

“I’ll die before I surrender!!” the Bridge Soul howled. “If I die, the bridge will be destroyed, and you’ll be wiped out too!” Suddenly, a second arrow of light appeared, even more powerful and terrifying than the previous one. It slammed into the bridge, shattering the azure light, overwhelming the white light, and causing the entire Paragon Bridge to tremble and begin to fall apart once again.

The rising energy was interrupted, and Meng Hao coughed up more blood. As he fought back against the power, the Bridge Soul screamed and weakened even further. It… could not withstand a third arrow!!

“I’ll give you one last chance.” he said, eyes shining. “Yield to me, and become my Bridge Soul. I, Meng Hao, swear an oath that I will use the blood of the Ji Tian to resolve your blood feud. I will help you resolve your outrage!

“If you don’t take advantage of this opportunity, then I’ll watch as the power of the Mountains and Seas obliterates you.”

Even as the words left his mouth, a third arrow of light appeared off in the distance. It looked like a sun, and the entire starry sky of the Ninth Mountain and Sea trembled from the ripples which emanated off of it. It seemed to contain a power that could shake Heaven and Earth… that would destroy anything with a single strike!

The Bridge Soul trembled. In this critical life-or-death moment of crisis, it let out a miserable cry.

“Even if I yield to you, I’ll still be killed by that power. You’ll still abandon the bridge to save yourself. I die either way!”

“I won’t abandon the Paragon Bridge,” Meng Hao said with decisiveness that could sever nails and chop iron. “If you yield, I’ll make sure you will not perish!”

The Bridge Soul shivered. Considering it was about to be destroyed, it had little choice. It immediately opened itself up. Meng Hao unleashed his divine sense, borrowing strength from the Paragon Bridge to leave his mark on the Bridge Soul.

That mark was now indelibly branded into the soul, never to be removed!

“Now let’s see how you keep your promise!!” the Bridge Soul roared. As soon as Meng Hao marked it, it had no need to attempt to possess the Paragon Bridge, nor any reason to interfere with Meng Hao’s connection to it. The Paragon Bridge approved of the Bridge Soul, allowing it to fill the bridge. Instantly, the bridge’s power exploded with incredible might.

Now that it was marked… it became part of Meng Hao. Furthermore, there was now absolutely no way for the Paragon Bridge to leave Meng Hao’s control. Regardless of whether it was illusory or corporeal, that fact would never change!

You could even say that the Paragon Bridge, having absorbed the Bridge of Immortal Treading… now had the good fortune to one day become completely corporeal!

“The next step is to go to the Ruins of Immortality and absorb the entire section of the real Paragon Bridge!” Meng Hao thought, eyes gleaming. At long last, he understood the path of the Paragon!

By this point, the third arrow of light had almost arrived. The Bridge Soul trembled as Meng Hao stepped off of the Paragon Bridge, placing himself directly in the arrow's path. Then he lifted his right hand and pushed it toward the arrow!

That movement caused a tremor to run through the Bridge Soul. How could it ever have imagined that Meng Hao would do something like this, stand up directly to the power of the Mountains and Seas?

"He's crazy…." whispered the Bridge Soul.

However, what happened in the next moment caused the Bridge Soul to gape in complete disbelief.

That was because the arrow slowed to a stop directly in front of Meng Hao!

"I call upon the authority of my status to order you… to return whence you came!" he said softly, eyes blazing with determination. Although his hand did not possess the power to resist the arrow, his voice was like an unbreakable barrier that made his hand completely and thoroughly impenetrable. The arrow stopped as if it didn't dare to pierce through it.

A cold voice spoke out into Meng Hao's mind, echoing like thunder: "The Paramita Bridge may exist. However, to prevent anything untoward from occurring with this particular awakened bridge, it will be destroyed!"

"This bridge is my Paragon magic, nothing untoward will occur," Meng Hao said coolly.

"According to the law, the bridge may not–"

"If I say nothing untoward will occur, nothing will! Back down!" As he spoke, he caused the drop of Paragon's blood inside of him to suddenly flare up. Its aura spread out, not much, but enough to completely shock the nine Xuanwu turtles on the tops of the Nine Mountains!

The cold voice that represented the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm was also astonished!

The arrow trembled, and the cold voice fell silent. Meng Hao said nothing more. He simply stood there, and even let his hand drop to his side. Behind him, the Bridge Soul inside the Paragon Bridge was staring in shock.

After a moment, the cold voice once again echoed out into Meng Hao’s mind.

“The orders of the Son of the Mountains and Seas shall be followed!” The arrow slowly faded away, transforming into motes of glittering light that spread out into the void.

Meng Hao breathed a sigh of relief. Everything that had just happened had been a gamble, considering he wasn’t sure exactly how much control he could wield over the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“Son of the Mountains and Seas….” he thought, smiling slightly. He liked the sound of that title. As he turned, the mark on his forehead completed its transformation. Shockingly… it now depicted nine mountains, which flashed briefly before vanishing.

The Bridge Soul inside the Paragon Bridge said nothing, but it now felt unprecedented respect and awe for Meng Hao. It did nothing at all to resist him, and when he waved his hand, the bridge slowly faded away.

Now, the only thing that remained in the starry sky was a floating block of ice. Within that ice were Han Shan and his wife. They looked just like they had before, sitting there together, leaning up against each other. Gradually, the ice began to melt. After the time it takes an incense stick to burn, Han Shan shuddered, then looked up in confusion at Meng Hao.

As soon as Han Shan looked at him, a smile broke out on Meng Hao’s face. Clasping hands, he bowed deeply and said, “Big bro Han Shan, I’m happy to say that I’ve fulfilled your request!”

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# Chapter 1202: Forever and ever!

The starry sky was now completely silent. As for the Spirit Realm cultivators who had been on the bridge participating in trials by fire and who were now scattered about in space, Meng Hao assisted them, and encouraged the other cultivators who had followed him to do the same. These cultivators who had borne witness to the vanishing of the Bridge of Immortal Treading and the subsequent rise of the Paragon Bridge agreed with the request and began to send the Spirit Realm cultivators back to their respective sects

Everything was brought to a perfect conclusion, and Meng Hao repaid his debt of gratitude. Not only were Han Shan and his wife saved, but Meng Hao’s Paragon Bridge underwent shocking transformations.

Now, Meng Hao stood there, smiling warmly at Han Shan, thinking about everything that had happened so many years ago.

At first, Han Shan looked confused, but gradually, his eyes grew clear. His wife shivered as she woke up, and also looked around blankly. Then she saw her husband, and the blankness vanished, to be replaced with a gentle gaze.

It was as if… no matter where she was, or what hardships would come along, as long as Han Shan was there… she would be fine.

Han Shan slowly rose to his feet, looking around for a moment before his gaze came to fall on Meng Hao. An expression of appreciation appeared in his eyes, and he laughed. “Have any alcohol…?”

Meng Hao smiled and waved his hand. The alcohol flagon that Han Shan had given him years ago flew out. Han Shan grabbed it, threw his head back, and took a long swig.

Han Shan lowered the alcohol flagon and looked seriously at Meng Hao. “Young friend, I will remember this great kindness which you have shown us for all eternity!”

He didn’t mention anything about Meng Hao freeing him. Giving voice to thanks wasn’t important. What was important… was that he had not been mistaken to place his trust in Meng Hao.

What was important was that he and his wife had both been saved, and he now owed Meng Hao two lives. That was something that Han Shan would never forget!

Meng Hao shook his head. “I had no choice in the matter, big bro Han Shan. I had to do it! Didn’t I say I would?”

He looked at Han Shan and his wife, and could see how happy they were.

Han Shan said nothing more. He simply stepped forward and embraced Meng Hao.

“No need to draw things out, bro,” he said. “Suffice to say… if you need us, my wife and I will be there for you. Together!”

He and Meng Hao laughed heartily. Han Shan’s wife stood off to the side, watching them silently, her eyes filled with appreciation.

Soon, it was time to part, and Meng Hao suggested that Han Shan and his wife go settle down on Planet South Heaven, and even gave them the appropriate identity medallions to go there. Han Shan was not of a mind to refuse. Now that he had his wife back, it didn’t matter where they went.

Since Planet South Heaven was Meng Hao’s home, Han Shan was more than willing to go there.

Meng Hao watched Han Shan and his wife leave. Soon, the flash of a teleportation portal could be seen, and they vanished. At that point, Meng Hao turned and looked one last time at the place previously occupied by the

Bridge of Immortal Treading. Then he turned and headed toward another teleportation portal.

This time, he was not going to collect money from anyone. Instead, he was going to the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum!

The Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum was also one of the Five Great Holy Lands, and was where… his childhood friend Fatty lived.

Although, by this point, it would probably be less appropriate to call Li Fugui simply Fatty. He now deserved to be called… Big Fatty!

He was now so fat that it would take four people to wrap their arms around him. However, he was still quite lively, and his teeth were sharper than ever. The Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum had treated him well, and he was already an Immortal.

When it came to his beloved partners, he actually had quite a few more than before. No longer did he only have one hundred. Now, he had five hundred!!

When Meng Hao got to the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum and announced his intentions, Fatty came rolling out like a ball. When Meng Hao laid eyes on him, his jaw dropped.

“Biggest bro, you… you finally came to see me!!” Fatty roared, racing over to hug Meng Hao. Unfortunately, his belly was too big and his arms weren’t long enough, making an embrace impossible….

When the huge belly bumped into Meng Hao, he stumbled backward, laughing awkwardly. He looked over the spheroid that was Fatty, and started to get a bit worried. However, after scanning him with divine sense and seeing the level of his cultivation base, he felt a bit better.

“You should eat less….” Meng Hao said with a wry smile as Fatty led him into the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum. Of course, the sect itself could by no means ignore the arrival of Meng Hao, and went all out to receive him. Even one of the Dao Realm Patriarchs emerged.

Meng Hao decided to stay there for several days, during which time he and Fatty would reminisce, talking about old times and wonderful memories.

On one occasion after they had been drinking and talking for a while, Fatty started crying. He told Meng Hao that he missed his father and mother, and had even gone back to Planet South Heaven on several occasions. However, the State of Zhao was gone, and he had never been able to track them down.

He knew that even if he did manage to find them, his parents had probably long since passed on, and the rest of the members of his household would have gone their separate ways….

However, he still missed them, and in fact, as time passed, that feeling had grown even stronger. In fact, sometimes he felt like it didn’t matter that he could live for such a long time, and had such a thriving harem. He… still wished that his parents could be around.

Seeing Fatty weeping in this way caused Meng Hao to sigh. However, all he could do was sit there listening and drinking.

Apparently, Fatty hadn’t had a chance to vent in quite a while. After crying for a bit, he started chuckling again, and soon they were talking about the Reliance Sect.

That had been one of the happiest times of Fatty’s life. Eventually they started reminiscing about the vendor booth they had set up, and Meng Hao couldn’t help but laugh out loud. Fatty joined him, and soon their laughter was echoing out.

However, it was impossible to talk about the Reliance Sect and not bring up the subject of Xu Qing….

Fatty sighed. “You know, of the four of us who Elder Sister Xu took to the Reliance Sect, Wang Youcai has turned out to be the fiercest. He really shook things up over at Moonset Lake. They call him the Devil-Eyed Killer. He’s really famous….

"As for me, I'm pretty useless, although I manage to get by. But biggest bro, you… well, I don't even need to talk about that, do I? And there's Dong Hu. I'm not sure what happened to him, he seems to have vanished without a trace.

"Now that I think about it, Elder Sister Xu… had some excellent powers of foresight….

"Oh, right. Meng Hao, remember that cave back on Mount Daqing, and how you threw that vine down? Hahaha! I guess you got lucky, didn't you? Otherwise you would never have been taken to the Reliance Sect…."

Meng Hao cleared his throat. The things Fatty was talking about caused him to recall everything that had happened back then. After failing the Imperial exams another time, he had gone for a walk on Mount Daqing, sighing to himself about his life. Back then, how could he ever have imagined that heading up the mountain that day… would completely change his life!?

The world had lost a scholar that day, and gained a cultivator. And the Mountain and Sea Realm… had gained its future Lord!

When Xu Qing's name came up, Meng Hao thought about the Red Wedding, and his mood sank. He finally told Fatty that he was going to the Fourth Mountain to get her back.

Fatty could see that Meng Hao's mood was sinking, so he quickly waved his sleeve, calling to a young woman who stood off in the distance. She approached, clasped hands, and bowed to Meng Hao.

"Biggest bro, come come, let me introduce you to one of my beloved partners. This is my true love, Little Emerald…."

Meng Hao looked at the woman, smiled, and nodded. Considering that Fatty had called her his true love, Meng Hao took out a magical item and handed it over.

Seeing this, Fatty's eyes suddenly gleamed. Before Meng Hao knew what was happening….

“Biggest bro, this is the love of my life, Little Scarlet….

“Biggest bro, this is my heart and soul, Little Sweetie….

“Biggest bro, this is my….” One by one, Fatty brought out all five hundred of his beloved partners to introduce to Meng Hao, even managing to recall the different pet names for all of them. Meng Hao looked at all the women, and Fatty’s crafty smile and the exultant gleam in his eyes, and could do nothing but smile wryly as he gifted one magical item after another.

When the last beloved partner had been introduced, Meng Hao assumed the entire affair was over. But next, Fatty called a young man over.

“Why haven’t you kowtowed to your Uncle Meng Hao yet!?” Fatty said, eyes wide with anger. Then he turned and smiled at Meng Hao.

“This is my son….”

Meng Hao’s eyes went wide. He looked at the young man, and then back at Fatty. Chuckling wryly, he handed a magical item over as a gift. After that… Fatty introduced over three hundred sons and daughters….

And after that….

“Biggest bro, this is my grandson….”

Meng Hao felt numb. He had to admire how Fatty could remember the nicknames of all five hundred beloved of his partners and not make a single mistake. Neither did he forget the names of any of his sons or daughters.

Nor the more than one hundred grandchildren. Most terrifying to Meng Hao was that he soon found out that Fatty actually had great-grandchildren too…. Although the great-grandchildren were all toddlers or younger, Meng Hao couldn’t hold back from giving them gifts too.

After all, having given so many gifts already, he couldn’t stop short now.

He had originally planned to stay for several days, but by the second day, he quickly took his leave. He was worried that if he stayed any longer, the loot he had built up so carefully in his bag of holding would eventually all be divided up by Fatty’s family.

“Since I can’t take over the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum, my goal is to have my descendants do it for me!” Fatty said as he saw Meng Hao off. His eyes glittered with a strange light as he gave voice to his grand aspirations.

Meng Hao couldn’t help but admire such notions. He had the feeling that Fatty would definitely be able to pull something like that off. Eyes glittering encouragingly, he patted Fatty on the shoulder.

“Work hard, bro,” he said. “I think five hundred beloved partners is actually only a good starting point. You should really have at least five thousand. That way, you would have a great big clan!

“Think about it, you would have thousands of sons and daughters, and then when they had children, the final number would be astounding….” It might be somewhat irresponsible, but Meng Hao egged Fatty on anyway.

In response, Fatty’s eyes lit up, and he started laughing heartily.

“No wonder you’re the biggest bro. That’s a great idea! I was thinking the same thing, I’m going to start a clan!” Seeing the wild ambition flickering in Fatty’s eyes caused Meng Hao to cough dryly and then turn to leave.

There was no bitterness to this parting, only smiles. Meng Hao didn’t mention anything about when he would return again, nor did Fatty ask. Both avoided the topic.

When it came time to actually part ways, Fatty’s smile faded away, and he clasped Meng Hao by the shoulders.

“Meng Hao… we’re brothers, forever and ever!”

“Forever!” Meng Hao replied with a decisive nod. They looked at each other for another moment, then started laughing again. Finally, they turned and parted; one headed back to his sect, the other off into the distance….

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# Chapter 1203: Old Friends

After leaving the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum, Meng Hao flew through the starry sky, thinking about the old days in the Reliance Sect. After a while, he turned and headed toward another asteroid and another teleportation portal.

This time, his destination was the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto!

He was not going there to collect money either, but to see an old friend. His Elder Brother Chen Fan had joined the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto years ago!

Meng Hao was not unfamiliar with the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto. Although he had never been there, since he was the joint disciple of the Three Great Daoist Societies, then technically speaking, the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto was also his sect.

As soon as he arrived, the sound of tolling bells rang out through the sect. The Dao Realm Patriarchs came out to see him, and Meng Hao was taken to offer respects to the Sect Leader and the Patriarchs and explain the purpose of his visit.

When he finally saw Chen Fan, he looked different than before. Last time, he had seemed middle-aged, but now he looked old, with grayish-white hair and a placid expression. His cultivation base was in the Immortal Realm.

Although he wasn’t very well known among the disciples of the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto, the Elder Generation felt that he had unlimited potential!

Chen Fan sat in meditation. Wherever he went, he took a huge boulder with him, within which could be seen the faint image of a woman.

One of the Dao Realm Patriarchs of the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto stood next to Meng Hao, explaining. “He converges his love and transforms the love into a sword, a sword that can pierce the Heavens!

“The sword of your Elder Brother here is not merciless, and does not sever love. His memories of the past have filled his heart to the point where they have become his sword. His love… allows him to cultivate the Dao of the Heart-Sword!

“His latent talent is well suited to such a Dao. If he can step into the Ancient Realm within the next hundred years, then he will definitely be another Chosen of the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto!” The praise in his eyes as he looked at Chen Fan was impossible to conceal.

Chen Fan’s eyes slowly opened as he looked first at the sword laid across his knees, then up at Meng Hao. A smile appeared on his face.

It was the same smile Meng Hao remembered from the Reliance Sect, and the Solitary Sword Sect. It was a warm, caring smile, although now it seemed much more ancient.

“Little Junior Brother,” he said. As soon as those three words left his mouth, Meng Hao’s heart surged with emotion, as he remembered all the things that had happened in the past.

“Elder Brother…” Meng Hao said softly. As he walked over toward Chen Fan, the Dao Realm Patriarch smiled slightly, then turned and left, leaving Meng Hao in Chen Fan’s care.

Meng Hao first clasped hands and bowed in greeting to the boulder. He knew that the woman in that boulder was his Eldest Brother’s true love, and that she had eventually come to be Chen Fan’s entire life.

In my life, I will only love one person. I fell in love with you when you were alive. And after you died, that feeling became a memory…. If you live, I will spend my whole life with you. If you die, then I will accompany the memory of you for my whole life.

That was Chen Fan.

His naivety and obsession was why the Solitary Sword Sect chose to take him from the Reliance Sect in the first place. Back then, he didn’t hesitate at all to make his decision. If the sect was going to be destroyed, then he would choose… to die along with it.

He was naïve and obsessed. That… was Chen Fan!

Chen Fan’s expression was the same as ever as he watched Meng Hao offer formal greetings to the boulder. Since Meng Hao was his little Junior Brother, then Meng Hao was also Junior Brother to his wife as well.

Years ago, he had constantly worried about this Junior Brother of his. But then, he had watched him flourish, one step at a time, and that made him very happy. He had always hoped that Meng Hao would continue to improve, and that one day, he would reach the true pinnacle.

“On the path of cultivation,” Chen Fan said softly, “it doesn’t matter if you talk about your own heart, or the Dao. The most important thing is to be steadfast.”

Meng Hao nodded, then sat down cross-legged in front of Chen Fan. It felt just like it had back in the year they had met. Now, Meng Hao possessed a cultivation base that stood on equal footing with the Dao Realm. However, in the presence of his Elder Brother, he was still… the same little Junior Brother he had always been.

That was how it would be for their entire lives.

He told Chen Fan about his plan to leave the Ninth Mountain and Sea, to find Xu Qing and bring her back.

“I am aware of the purpose of your visit,” Chen Fan said quietly. “We are cultivators, and our lifespans are long. Heaven and Earth are large, and it’s a good thing to visit new places, and travel new paths…. There is no need to worry about us here in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. We all have our own different paths.

“You have to trust Li Fugui and myself, just as we trust you. All of our dreams… will come true eventually!” He looked over at the rock, and the faint image of the woman inside.

“Elder Brother…. If it ever becomes possible for me to do so, I will definitely… help you resurrect sister-in-law Shan Ling!” Meng Hao said softly. It was his first time he had ever said such a thing. Although he had been able to keep his promise to Han Shan, considering the level of his cultivation base, there was no way for him to resurrect someone who had been dead for so long.

“You’re thinking too hard on it,” Chen Fan said, chuckling. His eyes shone with a soft light. “To me, she’s always here.”

Meng Hao stared at Chen Fan in shock.

“When your Dao is the heart, then if you have something in your heart, it exists. If you don’t have it in your heart, it doesn’t exist.” Chen Fan waved his right hand, and something like a Domain appeared. It wasn’t very large, only about nine meters wide.

However, now that that nine-meter Domain existed, Meng Hao could see that the woman in the boulder was opening her eyes. Her life force seemed to be restored, and suddenly… she walked out from within the boulder and sat down next to Chen Fan. She looked at Meng Hao, smiling as she leaned up against Chen Fan’s shoulder.

“This….” Meng Hao said, taking a deep breath. This Daoist magic first gave him the sensation that he was looking at an illusion. However, as he examined the woman closely, she actually didn’t seem like an illusion at all.

Chen Fan looked deeply into Meng Hao’s eyes and said, “She might seem artificial to you, but to me, she is very real…. Sometimes the difference between what is artificial and what is real depends on different perspectives and different hearts.”

Meng Hao’s heart trembled as if he had just gained some sort of enlightenment. He closed his eyes and began to meditate. Three days later, he opened his eyes again. Rising to his feet, he clasped hands and bowed to Chen Fan.

“Many thanks for your advice, Eldest Brother,” he said. Although his cultivation base far exceeded that of Chen Fan’s, Chen Fan’s circumstances made him serendipitously proficient with the Dao of the real and the artificial. That was the reason that he cultivated the Heart-Sword, and was one of the reasons why the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto viewed him with such importance.

“Go. Bring Junior Sister Xu Qing back. I haven’t seen her in a long time, and I miss her.” Chen Fan’s eyes glowed with encouragement. Meng Hao took a deep breath, nodded, and took his leave.

His next destination was the Moonset Lake, one of the Five Great Holy Lands. In many ways, the place was not as beautiful as the name would have it sound. Meng Hao had never had much dealings with the sect, but he was aware that the techniques of the Moonset Lake were similar to the Dao of the Devils!

When the moon hangs high in the sky, it might be nighttime, but there is still light. However, after the moon sets, when the sun has not yet risen, there is no darker time of night.

That was the meaning of the name Moonset Lake!

Wang Youcai fit in well. He was fundamentally a ruthless person; he treated others ruthlessly, and… he treated himself even more so. In order to further his cultivation and create his own technique, to see further than he had ever been able to see… he had dug out his own eyes.

The ruthlessness of that act had caught the attention of the Elders of Moonset Lake, and was what prompted them to take him in and help him grow and develop.

Although most people assumed he lived in a world of complete darkness, there was something that nobody knew. Wang Youcai could actually see things very vividly.

The divine ability he created remained eternally fixed inside his mind. From then on, he could actually see everything, even though he had no eyes.

After arriving at Moonset Lake, his ferocity and ruthlessness were even more evident. After going through some fierce battles, both with members of his sect and with others, he had earned the nickname Devil-Eyed Killer.

The word ‘Devil’ was a term of respect. The word ‘eye’ was a reference to the two empty eye sockets on his face. And the word ‘killer’… represented how he slaughtered his enemies!

When Meng Hao came and said that he wished to visit Wang Youcai, the disciple assigned to receive visitors looked at him with a flickering expression. Apparently, in Moonset Lake, Wang Youcai’s name was even more awe-inspiring than Meng Hao’s.

And that was despite the fact that Wang Youcai was still only an Immortal!

When he was taken to Wang Youcai, he found him sitting cross-legged next to a black pond. Vicious-looking faces floated in and out of the water, swirling around Wang Youcai as they consumed parts of his flesh.

“Long time no see, Meng Hao,” he said in a grating voice. He lifted his head up, staring at Meng Hao with his two vacant eye sockets.

Meng Hao looked at him and sighed.

After a moment of silence, Wang Youcai slowly said, “There’s no reason to sigh. Everything comes with a price.”

The faces around him continued to tear at his flesh, and yet he didn’t even frown. Apparently, he was used to this.

“These are all the people I’ve killed, whose souls I extracted. I allow them to chew on me day and night. It is only in this way that I can feel their hatred, and thus, see the colorful world around me.”

Meng Hao looked at Wang Youcai and sighed inwardly. The four young men who had been taken from Mount Daqing all those years ago included himself, Fatty, Wang Youcai, and Dong Hu…. Fatty had the most carefree life, and Wang Youcai was the most vicious. As for Dong Hu, although had been missing for many years, Meng Hao had the feeling that… he was somewhere out there, shaking things up violently.

Meng Hao meditated with Wang Youcai for an entire night. The following day, he stood and turned to go, when Wang Youcai suddenly said, “Meng Hao… we’re friends, right…?”

Meng Hao looked back at him and replied, “We were friends in the past, we’re friends now, and we’ll be friends in the future.”

Wang Youcai laughed. It was grating, but not ear-piercing. This was the same bumbling young man from back on Mount Daqing, who thought that because he was the oldest, he had to take care of his friends.

“Meng Hao, you must become as strong as you can, and quickly…. The moon has set, and the sun has not risen…. The dark of night has come… and it’s impossible to say how long it will last.

“I have seen, and I can feel, that soon… great chaos… will strike!”

Meng Hao shivered. Although he knew exactly what was being referred to, he had never imagined that Wang Youcai would too. He gazed at him deeply for a long moment, then left.

Slowly, he faded away into the distance, leaving Moonset Lake behind.

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# Chapter 1204: As Of Now, It’s Called the Paragon Bridge!

Next he went to the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect. Before leaving the Ninth Mountain and Sea, he wanted to see… Ke Jiusi!

However, although he could find the location of the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect, he was unable to enter. There was an invisible barrier in place that he could not pass without trying to break it open.

He hovered quietly outside of the ruins for a while before finally clasping hands and bowing deeply. Then he turned and left.

On a mountain peak inside the rubble of the sect, Ke Jiusi stood there looking at Meng Hao leave.

Suddenly Night’s voice spoke out next to him: “Why didn’t you let him in?”

“He has Ji Tian’s Karma on him… and I have even more than he does. If the two of us met now… it would be harmful for him.” Ke Jiusi sighed, then turned his head to look out at the ruins stretching out beneath him.

“Ji Tian….” he murmured, cold killing intent gleaming in his eyes.

Meng Hao didn’t get a chance to meet Ke Jiusi again. He left and headed toward the Ruins of Immortality. He needed to get the incomplete Paragon Bridge that he had copied to make his Paragon magic. Back then, he had been unable to take away the bridge itself.

But now, his own Paragon Bridge had already transformed. Thanks to the Bridge of Immortal Treading, it was no longer illusory, but corporeal. With his current cultivation base… he would be able to use his Paragon magic and merge it with the true broken Paragon Bridge.

A prismatic streak shot into the Ruins of Immortality as Meng Hao followed the same course as last time. He saw many of the same things he had seen before. He saw broken down temples and huge disembodied heads. He saw numerous corpses, shattered lands, destroyed magical items, and the ruins of palaces, all floating out in the void….

After a long time, he reached the area where he had created his Daoist magic, and then found the location where he had gained enlightenment of his Paragon magic… the shattered bridge!

It was only a section of that bridge, but even from a distance and despite the fact that it had fallen into ruins, Meng Hao could sense the might of a Paragon emanating off of it, the incredible power of Heaven and Earth.

This bridge had once spanned the highest Heavens, and had been the object of worship by countless life forms, all of whom deeply desired to walk upon it!

But now, it was broken. Perhaps most of the bridge had faded away into the sands of time, and only this small section was what remained.

After all the years that had passed, it remained in this one spot. No one had ever been able to take it away. Not even Ji Tian could take it, much less other Dao Realm cultivators.

However, years ago, Meng Hao had forged his own Paragon magic by means of this bridge and thus had allowed it to become whole once again. It was that very Daoist magic that had earned him a spot in the Echelon.

Today, he had returned to take the bridge away!

“Are you really the Paramita Bridge?” he asked softly. “Well, I’m not completely certain what your previous name was, but I do know… that a lot of people know you.” He couldn’t help but think of the black-robed man who had emerged from the Paragon Painting in the Windswept Realm, and the expression on his face when he saw the Paragon Bridge.

“Perhaps in the so-called Paramita, even Paragons need to walk across you… to truly become Paragons…. 1

“But today, I’m going to take you away. From now on, you… belong to Meng Hao. You are my… Paragon Bridge!” Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a bright light as he began to walk forward toward the bridge. The pressure of a Paragon rumbled out, and Meng Hao began to shine with scintillating light. He waved his right hand, and suddenly his Paragon Bridge appeared.

“Merge!” he roared, performing a double handed incantation gesture and then waving his finger toward his Paragon Bridge. Instantly, the two bridges began to merge together. The roar of the Bridge Soul could be heard from the Paragon Bridge as it ensured that nothing unexpected happened during the merger.

As the process continued, the pressure radiating off of the Paragon Bridge grew stronger. Rumbling filled the air, and everything grew dim. A wind swept through the Ruins of Immortality, as if the Paragon Bridge were truly awakening!

The pressure intensified, and the Heavens trembled. The Ruins of Immortality quaked, and soon the entire Mountain and Sea Realm was imperceptibly shaking. No power of expulsion could be felt from the Mountains and Seas, and yet it seemed like a pair of invisible eyes had turned their gaze towards it, as if recalling memories of the past.

That wasn’t all… above the Mountain and Sea Realm, in the 33 Heavens, everything was shaking. Countless cultivators there were shocked, although they had no idea what exactly was happening.

In addition… outside the 33 Heavens, far out in the great expanse, was a world in which several suns were hauling a huge statue. All of the cultivators there were also astonished.

Shockingly, it was also possible to see that in the land of the statue, which was growing inexorably closer to the Mountain and Sea Realm, there was also a bridge hovering in midair. It was also a Paragon Bridge, but it was in ruins, as if it were in place only as a symbol and had lost all of its previous significance.

That bridge also began to tremble.

The voice of woman spoke out, gloomy and serious: “Someone is awakening it….”

Beneath the 33 Heavens, back in the Mountain and Sea Realm, in the Ruins of Immortality in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, Meng Hao threw his head back and roared. He suddenly flew up to stand atop the Paragon Bridge, where he first lifted his hands up into the air and then slammed them down onto the surface of the bridge.

“Merge!”

RUMBLE!!

Meng Hao’s Paragon Bridge began to descend as the merging quickened. The aura of a Paragon rose up into the air, inundating Meng Hao. Even though this was his own Paragon magic, he was still affected, and coughed up a mouthful of blood.

However, his eyes gleamed with focus. This time, he was going to take away the ruins of the Paragon Bridge no matter what! He was going to merge them with his own Paragon Bridge to make it stronger!

“MERGE!” Meng Hao glowed with azure light as the Bridge Soul of his Paragon Bridge went all out, risking its own life as it controlled the bridge, causing it to descend further in its merging into the original bridge.

This time there was a force of expulsion, which turned into a powerful backlash attack. Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth, and his Paragon Bridge appeared to be on the verge of collapsing.

Apparently, the majesty of the broken bridge would not permit anyone to take control or ownership of it!

“Meat jelly! Parrot! Get out here!” Meng Hao roared. Meng Hao wiped the blood off his lips as the meat jelly and parrot flew out of his bag of holding. As soon as they appeared, their eyes went wide.

“Y-y-you… what are you doing?!” the meat jelly said, trembling. The shattered bridge filled it with a sensation of complete terror. That bridge had once been powerful enough to affect Heaven and Earth, to shake the world. Even though that power was now broken, its aura was still there!

“It’s THAT bridge!!” the parrot squawked excitedly. “Suppress it! Fudge! Lord Fifth will definitely help you suppress it!” It transformed into a multi-colored streak of light that shot toward the broken Paragon Bridge. Meng Hao’s Paragon Bridge then increased its own pressure and began to descend once more.

The meat jelly gritted its teeth and spread out as it transformed into a flying rope. Apparently, the moronic meat jelly had decided to try to tie the broken Paragon Bridge and Meng Hao’s Paragon Bridge together!

Rumbling filled the air as the Paragon Bridges continued to merge together. Meng Hao’s cultivation base was in full rotation, exploding with the full might of an Allheaven Dao Immortal. By now, the forced merger had reached the point where the broken bridge and Meng Hao’s Paragon Bridge were now almost completely superimposed.

However, it was at this point that the power of a backlash attack, as well as the aura of expulsion both exploded out. Performing an incantation gesture, Meng Hao unleashed his Demon Sealing Hexing magic.

“You’re already broken!” he shouted. “You might have been supreme and almighty in the past, but now you’re rubble! You’re incomplete, not even half of what you used to be. With the will of my Paragon magic, and the form of the Bridge of Immortal Treading, I won’t believe that I can’t absorb you!” His eyes were shot with blood, and blood sprayed out of his mouth.

Gritting his teeth, he produced his fourth Nirvana Fruit and pressed it into his forehead.

“Mastiff!” he roared, and the mastiff flew out to form a cape.

“Parrot!” The parrot and the copper mirror instantly formed together into the Battle Weapon. This time, it was not a long blade, but rather a glove! As the glove settled on Meng Hao’s hand, he took seven steps forward, building up massive energy and then unleashing a powerful punch!

It was the God-Slaying Fist, Meng Hao’s most powerful fist strike, capable of shaking even cultivators of the Dao Realm. His Paragon Bridge was already beyond qualified to absorb the ruins of the bridge. With the power of the fist strike pouring into it, that last final distance between the two was closed!

The two bridges were completely superimposed!

At some point a woman, dressed in white, had appeared up above. It was Paragon Sea Dream, who watched Meng Hao merge the two bridges, a complex expression on her face.

In the moment that the two bridges superimposed, the broken bridge trembled, and then… cracking sounds could be heard as it collapsed of its own accord! It was just like the World Tree, which destroyed itself rather than look up and see a sky controlled by the Ji Clan. The bridge was aware that it was simply too weak to do anything to prevent itself from being absorbed.

If it were anyone else, the bridge would be able to fight back, even if it were weaker than it was right now. However… Meng Hao was different. He had the will of the Paragon Bridge, and the form of the Bridge of Immortal Treading. He had a Bridge Soul. Essentially… Meng Hao’s Paragon Bridge was… the true supreme Paragon Bridge.

Although it was not as paramount as the broken bridge had been, it was more complete!

Since that was the case, there was no way for it to prevent the merging, so the broken bridge chose to use the last bit of its aura to destroy itself! It would rather explode… than be absorbed!

Meng Hao’s face flickered as he looked at the broken bridge crumbling and turning into ash. Then his eyes shone with a shocking, icy gleam.

“You would rather destroy yourself than be absorbed, huh…? Well then, go ahead and blow yourself up. Your death will allow my Paragon Bridge to take your place, to be born anew!” Roaring, Meng Hao pushed both hands down onto the Paragon Bridge, which instantly began to shine with brilliant light. Instead of attempting to merge with the broken bridge, the Paragon Bridge would consume it!

It would consume the ancient broken bridge to give itself new life!

In the future, there would be no broken bridge. There would only be Meng Hao’s Paragon Bridge!

Rumbling could be heard as the Paragon Bridge voraciously consumed the flying ash that was the remnants of the broken bridge. As it did, its aura rose dramatically, shaking Heaven and Earth!

The Paragon Bridge truly did have new life. It was now no longer illusory in any sense of the word. It was… completely corporeal!

When it became real, the 33 Heavens trembled, and all the bridges there collapsed. The incomplete bridge in the world of the statue, out in the vast expanse, also trembled and collapsed. For all eternity… it would never again exist!!

Back in the Ruins of Immortality, Paragon Sea Dream’s soft voice echoed out,

“It used to have a name,” she said. “It was called the Heaven Tra–”

“As of now,” Meng Hao interrupted, “it’s called the Paragon Bridge!” His words were not a show of disrespect. Rather, he didn’t want to hear the former name. What he cared about was the current bridge, not what it had been in the past.

Turning, Meng Hao waved his hand, causing the Paragon Bridge to emit a rumbling drone. The Ruins of Immortality shook as the bridge faded away. Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed to Paragon Sea Dream, then turned and left.

Paragon Sea Dream hovered there, watching Meng Hao make his way off. Her eyes flickered with an absent-minded gleam.

“Back in the day, Big Brother Nine Seals… was just as imposing….”

Note from Deathblade: The following is a little anecdote from Er Gen, translasted by anonpuffs. Keep in mind that in China, virtually all cell phones are basically pre-paid, although many allow you to overdraw your account.

Note from Er Gen: Let me tell you an embarrassing story, this afternoon I made a phone call to my old lady. There was a notification that the phone card was overdrawn, so I paid 10 yuan (about U.S. $1.60 at the time) for her. Then I called a friend, and there was another notification about an overdrawn card, so I paid 10 yuan again. I ended up making 4 calls and every time the cards were overdrawn, so I got mad. I ended up paying 10 yuan every time.

Finally, I made yet another call, but outrageously enough they were overdrawn yet again. I got super mad and called customer service and let them have it. After a round of complaining, the customer service agent told me gently, ‘Sir, they actually didn’t owe any money on their accounts, it’s your card that’s overdrawn…’

1. The characters for Paramita can also be read “the other shore,” which might be relevant since we’re talking about a bridge here. Also, the “other shore” aspect plays into the meaning of the Buddhist concept of Paramita

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# Chapter 1205: Slaughter Appears Again!

Meng Hao had finished collecting debts from the Five Great Holy Lands, the Three Churches and Six Sects. He had visited his old friends and completed his Paragon Bridge. Now, the only debts left were among the Three Great Clans.

Of course, as far as the Li Clan was concerned, Meng Hao felt a bit embarrassed to go there. That left… only the Song and Wang Clans!

“Song Luodan and Wang Mu. Once I collect your debts, then I’ll leave the Ninth Mountain and Sea!” He flew out of the Ruins of Immortality, eyes flickering as he headed toward an asteroid teleportation portal. Actually, deep in his heart, there was still one other place he wanted to visit, right before he left.

Planet North Reed was far larger than Planet South Heaven. It was even larger than Planet East Victory. From a distance, it looked like an enormous blue sphere. Shockingly, it was orbited by three other smaller planetoids.

Those three planetoids housed the Three Great Clans, and even Planet North Reed itself was divided amongst those clans.

All of the sects and schools here were auxiliary branches of those very clans.

Currently, Meng Hao was walking out of a flickering teleportation portal on one of Planet North Reed’s three planetoids, the one that belonged to the Song Clan.

As soon as he appeared, he found himself facing several hundred disciples of the Song Clan. Apparently, they had been waiting for him. Almost as soon as he appeared, one of the Song Clan disciples stepped forward with a bag of holding.

“Our Clan Prince said that all of the extortion money he owes you is here!” the Song Clan cultivator said angrily. Then he threw the bag toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao blinked in response to the way the Song Clan was handling the matter. He was aware that word had spread throughout the Ninth Mountain and Sea about him going around collecting debt. It was something that clearly would not endear him to others, so the Song Clan handed over the balance of the debt immediately in order to shoo him away.

But Meng Hao didn’t care, so long as he got his money. After scanning the bag of holding with divine sense to confirm the amount inside was correct, he turned to leave. His destination was not the teleportation portal, but rather, the starry sky, and beyond that, the Wang Clan!

Currently, the teleportation portal behind him was flashing continuously as one cultivator after another showed up to watch the scene of Meng Hao collecting debt. However, what was happening now was actually fairly boring. They had hoped to see Meng Hao collecting his debts through force, not just this lukewarm scene of him accepting the money without ado.

Meanwhile, Song Luodan sat on a mountain peak some distance away, watching the events unfold via a secret magic. When he saw that everything was ending, he let out a sigh of relief. Although he felt truly wronged in the whole matter, there was nothing he could do about it. If he could settle his debt with the miserly Meng Hao and make him leave, that was all the better.

However, just as Meng Hao was about to leave, the Song Clan cultivator who had given him the bag of holding, apparently disgusted with what was happening, sarcastically said, “Our Clan Prince said that the Heavens see everything we do. If you go around extorting people like this, you’ll get your comeuppance sooner or later!”

The other Song Clan cultivators gaped in shock. Off in the distance, Song Luodan's jaw dropped, and he shot to his feet, rage building up in his face. He was willing to swear an oath that he had never said such words.

He was familiar with Meng Hao's personality, and he knew that uttering words like that would turn the situation into a disaster!

"Dammit!!" he thought, instantly flying off of the top of the mountain. He couldn't just sit around and watch what was happening; he had to go give Meng Hao an explanation. In order to raise the money he needed to pay back Meng Hao, he had borrowed from virtually every willing party in the sect. In fact, he had even taken out a loan from the sect itself. If all of that was destroyed because of a single sentence, he would be reduced to tears.

Just before Meng Hao left, right before he flew up into the air, he heard the words being spoken and then looked back at the Song Clan cultivator. He also noticed the surrounding rogue cultivators who had come to watch the show, who were all looking on excitedly. There were even some who seemed to want to thank the Song Clan cultivator for speaking up.

"Well, now, isn't this interesting?" Meng Hao said, smiling. The other members of the Song Clan were trembling, and when they saw him smiling, they edged backward, beads of sweat popping out on their foreheads. "Based on what I know about Song Luodan, he isn't that stupid. He would either grit his teeth and hand over the money, or grit his teeth and refuse.

"Whatever his choice , he wouldn't say something like that. It seems… Song Luodan's position within the Song Clan has become a bit unstable. Well, that doesn't matter. Since he and I are friends, I might be able to help him out a bit." His smile grew more radiant, and even a bit bashful and embarrassed.

His smile and his words caused the faces of the surrounding Song Clan cultivators to flicker.

"That's what the Prince told me to–"

“Song Luodan, get out here!” Meng Hao said suddenly, his voice rumbling like thunder, echoing throughout the entire planetoid.

Almost as soon as the words left his mouth, Song Luodan appeared, flashing in his direction as fast as lightning. As soon as he arrived, he waved his sleeve, causing a wild wind to spring up and wrap around the clan member who had spoken moments ago. The man was immediately sent flying off into the distance, blood spraying out of his mouth, clearly seriously injured.

“Fudge,” he roared. “How dare you try to frame me! Men, arrest him!” The surrounding Song Clan cultivators immediately flew out and grabbed ahold of the man.

Not even taking the time to ask the man who had given the orders for him to speak, Song Luodan spun and looked at Meng Hao, face grim and heart filled with bitterness. He suddenly regretted his earlier decision to try to save face by not meeting Meng Hao in person. If he had, then what had occurred moments ago would never have happened.

Meng Hao looked at Song Luodan with an enigmatic smile, waiting for him to speak.

“I never said that!” Song Luodan grated stiffly.

“I know,” Meng Hao said with a smile. “Actually, since we’re acquainted, why don’t I help you out with this situation? I’ll do it for a great price.”

Song Luodan was about to refuse, but then, his eyes glittered. “How much do you want?”

“Double what was in the bag of holding you just gave me.”

“You’re ruthless! Fine. His name is Song Luoshen, Chosen of the direct bloodline of the Song Clan. He’s trying to steal the position of Dao Child from me. Don’t kill him! Just ruin his reputation!”

Meng Hao chuckled, and then suddenly called out in a voice like thunder, “Song Luoshen! You owe me money! Time to pay me back!”

His voice seemed to contain Heavenly might as it echoed out through the planetoid, causing countless mountains to tremble. A coldly-spoken response drifted in from off in the distance.

“Fellow Daoist Meng, I don’t remember owing you anything. The person who owes you money is Song Luodan.”

“If I say you owe me, then you owe me!” Even as he spoke, Meng Hao took a step forward. His body flickered, and he reappeared off in the distance, where he launched a punch into the ground. Immediately, the land collapsed, and a figure flew out.

It was a young man, handsome, but with narrow eyes. Originally, those eyes had been glittering with venomous coldness, but now, they were bright with alarm at the sight of Meng Hao’s display of domineering might.

“Fellow Daoist Meng, what are you trying to do!?!?” the young man roared. He urgently backed up, and at the same time, dozens of beams of light began to fly out from within the Song Clan. Those would be the powerful experts in charge of guarding the area.

By now, all of the various sects and clans had gotten the news about the way Meng Hao went about collecting debt. The Song Clan didn’t want to be any further entangled with him; they simply wanted to get him to leave as quickly as possible.

However, these people had been ordered to stand guard in the area just in case something unexpected happened. Now that they saw Meng Hao making a move, they showed their faces.

“Meng Hao, you’ve been paid what you owe, what are you trying to do!?” Roaring shouts could be heard as the dozens of beams of light closed in to protect the young man from being attacked by Meng Hao.

“Song Luodan already paid me,” he replied coolly, “but this Song Luoshen hasn’t.” He waved his right hand, causing a wild wind to spring up and envelop the group. Even as their minds were shaken, Meng Hao strode forward toward Song Luoshen.

“I don’t owe you money!!” Song Luoshen cried. He was already filled with regret at trying to use Meng Hao to weaken Song Luodan. However, regret was now useless. As he shot backward, he crushed a jade slip, requesting assistance from the Clan Elders.

“You don’t deserve to owe me money, and yet you try to incite a conflict between me and Song Luodan? What a flimsy plan! I really don’t understand how someone with an intellect like yours could possibly cause Song Luodan to feel threatened.” Shaking his head, Meng Hao waved his hand toward Song Luoshen, then made a grasping motion, which caused Song Luoshen to fly toward him, trembling.

“Patriarch, save me!!” Song Luoshen screamed. Meng Hao suddenly clenched his left hand into a fist and then punched out into the air next to him with the God-Slaying Fist!

That punch caused the air to collapse. A muffled grunt could be heard as an emaciated, grim-faced old man appeared. He had been attempting to save Song Luoshen, but hadn’t been fast enough. He could now do nothing but watch as Meng Hao grabbed onto Song Luoshen.

“Meng Hao,” he said in a dark tone, “don’t push things too far. The Song Clan doesn’t want to make you an enemy, but you can’t be so excessive!” This man was emanating the aura of the Dao Realm. He was obviously one of the Dao Realm Patriarchs of the Song Clan.

Even as he spoke, another Dao Realm aura began to emanate out from the planetoid. Although no one appeared, the aura locked down onto Meng Hao.

Further off on Planet North Reed, another even more terrifying Dao Realm Aura seemed to focus its attention on what was happening.

“The struggles over the position of Song Clan Dao Child have nothing to do with me. However, Song Luoshen clearly plotted against me, and for that, he shall pay the price.” Meng Hao held Song Luoshen in hand and looked steadily at the emaciated old man, completely ignoring his Dao Realm Aura.

The old man glared angrily at Song Luoshen. It was only now that he realized that Song Luoshen had actually taken the initiative to scheme against Meng Hao, and he cursed him for his foolishness. The entire Song Clan had tacitly approved of the way Song Luodan had collected the money he needed to pay Meng Hao, and when those efforts had fallen short the clan itself had been willing to loan him money. It was easy to see from this that generally speaking, the Song Clan had no desire whatsoever to provoke Meng Hao.

But now, this idiot had gone and done exactly that. From the emaciated old man’s perspective, Song Luoshen was simply incurably moronic. If it weren’t for the fact that his bloodline was uniquely important to the safety of the clan, he would ignore the matter.

“We will definitely compensate you for this matter,” the old man said slowly. Meng Hao smiled and release Song Luoshen. He was just about to speak when, all of a sudden, a tremor ran through him, and he stared blankly over the old man’s shoulder.

The old man’s eyes widened, and he turned around, but didn’t see anything. As he frowned, he could sense Meng Hao’s eyes narrowing.

Meng Hao began to pant. Moments ago, he had seen something very bizarre behind the old man. It was a man in a black robe, with long white hair, strolling along through the void.

He had a shocking murderous aura. It was… none other than the man who had walked out of the Paragon magic in the Windswept Realm… the Paragon!

Slaughter!

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# Chapter 1206: Daoist Magic of Time!

Meng Hao could see the black-robed man, but no one else could. He seemed lonely, with the supreme air of a Paragon, and yet he radiated a boundless murderous aura as he walked past the Song Clan Patriarch and headed out toward the starry sky.

Panting anxiously, Meng Hao completely forgot about the matter of settling accounts. He instantly flashed through the air to follow the black-robed man.

In the Windswept Realm, he had personally watched this man walked out into the void and then vanish. He would never have been able to imagine that he would actually… see him again here.

The emaciated old man frowned. He hadn't seen anything unusual at all; Meng Hao's bizarre reaction caused his eyes to narrow.

"Fellow Daoist Meng…." the old man said.

Almost at the same time, Meng Hao cried out, "Senior, wait for me!" He kept his eyes fixed on the black-robed man, who was strolling off into the distance at incredible speed. Almost as soon as the words left his mouth, the black-robed man paused and then slowly turned his head to glance casually at Meng Hao.

That single glance caused Meng Hao's mind to tremble as if lightning were striking it. It didn't matter that he was an Allheaven Dao Immortal, as of that moment, his entire consciousness felt as if it were sinking into boundless slaughter.

He trembled violently, and blood sprayed out of his mouth. It felt as if some indescribable power were pounding through his mind, simultaneously… wiping away all his memories of the black-robed man!

The rumbling wasn’t just affecting Meng Hao. The emaciated old man also started trembling. That was because in the instant that the black-robed man had turned around, he was also able to see him!

That single glance caused blood to spray out of the old man’s mouth, and his Essence aura to grow unstable. His expression was one of shock before it suddenly went blank. His memories of how he had been injured just now, as well as the sight of the black-robed man, were instantly wiped away.

It wasn’t just him, it was also the other Dao Realm Patriarch on the planetoid. When the black-robed man turned and became visible, they had caught sight of him. However, his single glance sent their minds spinning, caused them to cough up blood, and made them feel like they were about to explode. It was as if a huge hand were forcibly wiping away everything about the man that existed in their minds.

The same thing happened to the Song Clan’s most powerful Patriarch, the one on Planet North Reed itself, who had been watching Meng Hao the entire time. Meng Hao’s bizarre behavior had startled him, and when the black-robed man turned around, it caused the Dao Realm Patriarch to cough up several mouthfuls of blood. His memories were also wiped away, no matter what he did to fight back. It was like he was so weak that he couldn’t stand up to a single blow.

All of these things take some time to describe, but actually happened in a brief moment. The ordinary clan members’ memories were not wiped away because they had never laid eyes on the black-robed man in the first place.

However, they saw Meng Hao and the Patriarchs coughing up blood, which, coupled with the miserable shrieks that echoed from their mouths, made the scene completely bizarre. All of the surrounding Song Clan cultivators gasped.

Meng Hao was the first to regain his senses. His eyes were completely bloodshot as the invisible hand threatened to wipe away his memories of the black-robed man. Apparently, this gaze embodied a paramount Daoist magic. The black-robed man did not wish memories of him to exist in anyone's minds. To ensure that no trace of him was remembered by anyone, he would wipe their minds clean.

However, in the moment that Meng Hao's memories were about to be wiped away, he roared, and azure light suddenly exploded out of him. The power of an Allheaven Dao Immortal surged out, and the drop of Paragon's blood inside of him seethed. His eyes shone with wild light, and he gritted his teeth as he produced his fourth Nirvana Fruit, then pushed it down into his forehead.

"My memories belong to me for all eternity! If I want them wiped out, that's my decision. Other people… don't have the right or the qualifications to touch my memories!"

He continued to cough up blood as the Nirvana Fruit melted down into him. It caused the azure light to become even more radiant and, combined with the Paragon's blood, made Meng Hao just barely capable of resisting the enormous hand, which he shoved out of his mind.

RUMBLE!

He staggered backward, coughing up another mouthful of blood, but completely clear-headed. He lifted his head up to find the black-robed man looking at him with a surprised expression.

The black-robed man stared at him for a moment, then nodded, as if he approved of Meng Hao's existence. Then he turned and began to walk off into the distance.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, gritted his teeth, and flew after him. He could sense that this man harbored no malice. That gaze from earlier could shake Heaven and Earth, but in actuality… it was apparently some sort of test.

Of those he tested, only those who managed to maintain their memories of him could qualify… to follow him off into the distance.

After a long moment, Meng Hao and the black-robed man were gone, and the emaciated old man from the Song Clan regained his senses, as did the other two Patriarchs.

They quickly communicated with each other via divine sense, and came to the realization that none of them had any memories regarding what had just happened. They only remembered Meng Hao acting strangely.

However, these were Dao Realm experts. The black-robed man might have taken action to wipe away their memories, but he didn't hide that fact. After the three of them considered what had happened, they quickly reached a conclusion.

"We saw some being that we should not have seen…."

"That terrifying entity erased whatever it was that we saw…."

After questioning some of the surrounding disciples, the three Song Clan Dao Realm Patriarchs' hearts sank, and their fear of Meng Hao increased.

From the various clues they had gathered, they came to the conclusion that whatever being it was that had erased their memories must also have some connection to Meng Hao. After all, Meng Hao had caught sight of the man before they had. Therefore… what was written between the lines was that Meng Hao knew that terrifying entity!

"Pass orders down that no members of the Song Clan are to have anything to do with Meng Hao…. He harbors too many terrifying secrets, secrets… that we should not know anything about!" Having made their decision, the three Song Clan Patriarchs officially sent their orders out. As for Song Luoshen, who had dared to provoke Meng Hao, the three Patriarchs actually didn't rebuke him at all. However, the way they ignored him left him feeling very uneasy.

Song Luodan had been watching from off in the distance. He looked thoughtfully in the direction Meng Hao had headed, and realized… that it was the planetoid controlled by the Wang Clan.

Out in the starry sky, the black-robed man didn't take very long strides, and yet every step was like a teleportation. Meng Hao drew on the full power of his cultivation base, and yet was quickly falling behind.

Seeing that he couldn't catch up, he didn't allow himself to get nervous. Instead, he keyed in on the movement of the man's legs. As he watched, he was able to detect that there was a certain cadence to the way he walked. Meng Hao began to imitate it, lifting his feet up and placing them down in a certain way.

Although he wasn't able to tell, the way he was imitating the man caused his own figure to pulse between being blurry and being clear. Every step he took caused the starry sky to seemingly shrink. When his foot landed, the starry sky would return to normal.

Without even realizing it, he was actually matching his steps to the black-robed man's, even catching up. Every time the man lifted his foot up, so did Meng Hao. Every time he stepped down, so did Meng Hao.

Time passed, although Meng Hao wasn't sure how much. On the one hand, it seemed like a moment, but on the other hand, it seemed endless. He was lost in the special cadence of walking, step after step….

Suddenly, the black-robed man stopped walking, and Meng Hao shivered as he awakened from his reverie. He looked around to find that he was still in the vicinity of Planet North Reed, although he had traveled from one of the smaller planetoids to another.

Although the planetoids were some distance away from each other, they weren't that far. In fact, you could even reach from one to another with divine sense. Considering the level of Meng Hao's cultivation base, it would only take a few breaths of time to go from one to another.

But for some reason, he felt as if a long time had just passed, which would seem to indicate that he had traveled for a very long distance. However, the situation seemed to be the exact opposite, which left Meng Hao feeling as if something strange was going on.

By now, he was sure that the state he had been in just now and that special way of walking was definitely some strange Daoist magic, and an unusual one at that. However, the facts of the matter made Meng Hao feel as if… he had overestimated the walking technique.

He couldn’t say that he was disappointed, but he did sigh inwardly. At this point he turned to look back in the direction of the Song Clan’s planetoid, and suddenly, he began to shake. His eyes went wide with disbelief and shock.

His whole body shook; it was as if all of the amazing and shocking things he had experienced in his entire life put together weren’t nearly as stunning as what he was seeing now….

He had seen many astonishing things in his years, but as of this moment, what he was seeing… was truly unbelievable!

His mind felt as if it were being struck by a million lightning bolts. His jaw dropped, and he stared in the direction of the Song Clan’s planetoid as the flicker of teleportation could be seen and a person emerged from the teleportation portal.

He was handsome and had the air of a scholar. He even seemed to glow with azure light. He watched this scholar be handed a bag of holding by the Song Clan cultivators, and then saw the young man cry out in a thunderous voice.

“Song Luodan, get out here!” What he was seeing was almost like a vision… of himself!!

He watched himself move forward and grab Song Luoshen. He saw the emaciated man make his appearance, and then saw the black-robed man appear. He saw the test administered, then saw the black-robed man strolling out into the starry sky. Then… he saw himself following, all the way… until the other black-robed man and the other Meng Hao superimposed with their real selves.

Meng Hao was shaking, and great waves of shock roared through his head.

“That walking technique wasn’t too slow,” he murmured. “It was too fast! So fast… that it can cause you to travel through time…. I can’t believe that I actually walked backward… for one incense stick’s worth of time!” The bizarreness of the Daoist magic caused his mind to rumble with sounds like thunder.

After a long moment passed, Meng Hao turned to look at the black-robed man, who was now looking down toward an area down below, situated between a mountain and a river.

Meng Hao’s heart was gripped with shock as he also looked down at the foot of that mountain, where there was a bamboo forest. Inside the bamboo forest was a vulgar-looking old man, sitting there cross-legged.

Directly in front of the old man was a young man, who happened to be none other than Wang Mu.

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# Chapter 1207: Grievous News!

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he looked at the black-robed man, within whose eyes had suddenly appeared… gentleness.

That gentleness was not directed toward Wang Mu, but rather, to the old man sitting in front of him. 1

That old man was a stranger to Meng Hao; he had never seen him before. However, the moment he laid eyes on him, Meng Hao got the feeling that there was something terrifyingly powerful about him.

Time passed; the black-robed man and Meng Hao both hovered there, looking down.

After a while… the black-robed man suddenly took a step forward. Meng Hao imitated him subconsciously, and when his foot landed, the world seemed to momentarily become magnified and his vision blurred momentarily. When it became clear, both the black-robed man and Meng Hao were now standing in the bamboo forest next to the old man and Wang Mu.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, but apparently Wang Mu hadn’t the slightest idea any of this was happening.

“Alright,” the old man said coolly, “this session of cultivation is done. Come back tomorrow.” He waved his right hand, and Wang Mu staggered backward. He looked up with an unyielding gleam in his eyes.

“I want to defeat Wang Tengfei!!”

“Then you need to work harder at cultivation,” the old man replied, his voice echoing out. Wang Mu once again staggered backwards uncontrollably, then vanished.

After Wang Mu disappeared, complete silence fell over the bamboo forest. For some reason, the ambiance of the area felt somewhat eerie to Meng Hao. Furthermore, within the silence, a slight droning sound began to rise.

Soon, Meng Hao realized that flying towards them from within the bamboo forest was… a cloud of mosquitos!

They didn’t seem any larger than ordinary mosquitos, but for some reason, when Meng Hao looked at them, his heart trembled, and a sense of grave crisis exploded up within him.

These were definitely not ordinary mosquitos, of that Meng Hao was certain. The kind of aura that was emanating from them was something he had never sensed on any beast before.

It was an aura filled with murderous intent, and a towering brutality. Most importantly, there was a sensation of profound ancientness. Based on the level of Meng Hao’s current cultivation base, he gradually reached a conclusion that caused his heart to tremble!

“These mosquitos are… more ancient than the Mountain and Sea Realm itself!” He began to pant as he stared at the mosquitos, especially one in particular that was completely gold and flying in the lead. Boundless ripples spread out from it as it flew directly toward Meng Hao and the black-robed man.

It then began to circulate around the black-robed man, buzzing with what seemed to be both joy and grief. From the way it flew around him, it seemed to want to get closer to him, and yet was separated from him, as if by some invisible barrier that it could not cross. 2

Meng Hao suddenly realized that the black-robed man seemed to have the same expression of both joy and grief.

It was at this point that a sigh could be heard coming from the skinny old man. Although he normally looked vulgar, right now, he seemed filled with complicated, melancholy emotions. He suddenly turned and looked directly at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s mind trembled. It was as if that gaze were a sharp sword that was currently stabbing into his mind, attempting to shred his divine sense into nothing. Azure light suddenly sprang up, and the power of an Allheaven Dao Immortal exploded out. Not only did it shield his mind, it also transformed a portion of his cultivation base into a swordlike gaze which stabbed back into the eyes of the old man.

“Eee?” the old man said, eyes flickering. Moments later, everything returned to normal. The old man looked thoughtfully at Meng Hao for a moment before turning his complicated gaze toward the black-robed man.

Obviously, he was completely aware that both Meng Hao and the black-robed man were standing there!

“You….” the old man said softly. Apparently, that was all he could say before he was at a loss for words, as the complex feelings within him grew stronger.

After a moment of silence, the black-robed man suddenly spoke, his voice hoarse, cold, and ancient. “Where is he?”

Although the three words he spoke were completely ordinary in nature, when spoken by him, they were filled with a shocking murderous aura, as if this man were fundamentally… formed from a murderous aura.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. Although he had no idea who this black-robed man was, if he didn’t understand what was going on between him and the old man, then he had no right to have practiced cultivation to his current level.

“They know each other!!

“We’re in the Wang Clan, and this old man is one of Wang Mu’s teachers. He also knows Wang Tengfei. That means that it’s very likely that he is also a member of the Wang Clan!!

“This black-robed Paragon is very mysterious, and clearly cannot be a cultivator from the modern era. He’s existed for ages, and certainly comes from before the time when the Mountain and Sea Realm existed. That much is obvious because of what happened with those ancient mosquitos.

“In that case, since they know each other, this old man….” Having reached this point in his train of thought, Meng Hao’s pupils constricted. In his past dealings with the Wang Clan, he had always felt their magical techniques to be bizarre. Furthermore, there was something very mysterious and extraordinary about their bloodline.

Even as Meng Hao’s mind spun, the skinny old man thought for a moment and then spoke in a hoarse voice that seemed to be filled with reminiscence.

“Back then, he left, and never came back….”

The black-robed man closed his eyes for a moment. Finally, he opened them, and asked, “What about her?”

“They left together. She never came back either.” The old man sighed. Within the complicated gaze he leveled at the black-robed man was hidden astonishment and disbelief. Unable to hold back, he finally asked the question that burned in his mind. “You… back then, didn’t you dissipate?”

The black-robed man shook his head. Declining to say anything else, he turned to leave….

“Wang….” The old man only spoke one word before stopping, as if he wasn’t sure exactly how to address the man.

However, that single word caused Meng Hao’s mind to tremble. He looked at the old man, then at the black-robed man. The character ‘Wang ,’ had two meanings of course. One carried the meaning of a king. The other… caused Meng Hao to gasp.

“He’s… a member of the Wang Clan! The Wang Clan Patriarch?” Meng Hao felt his thoughts going wild.

“If he’s a Wang Clan Patriarch, then that means… the Wang Clan definitely did not originate in the Mountain and Sea Realm. They… existed in the time of the Immortal World!” His eyes went wide, and he moved to follow the black-robed man as he left.

He took a step, and his vision blurred. When it cleared, he was with the black-robed man back up in the starry sky. The black-robed man hovered there thoughtfully, before finally looking out into the void.

It was as if his gaze could pierce the 33 Heavens and see the expanse beyond, including the butterflies dragging the land mass, and the suns pushing the statue, as they rumbled in the direction of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“They’re almost here….” the black-robed man murmured, his voice so icy that the void around him grew colder. That was not done intentionally, it was merely a result of his murderous aura.

He looked off into the distance and then began to walk. Each step he took seemed without end, and Meng Hao hurried to keep up. However, in the space of a few breaths, the man was so far away… that he knew it would be impossible to catch up to him!

Meng Hao knew that he couldn’t catch up because the man didn’t want him to. Urgently, he called out, “Senior, who are you, sir?”

“A person… who probably shouldn’t be here,” was the icy response. The black-robed man was now further off in the distance.

Meng Hao was the type of person to seize every opportunity. As the saying went, he would pluck feathers from a passing goose. Although he was awestruck by the black-robed man, he gritted his teeth and said, “Senior, look, we are bound by ties of destiny. Could you please teach me some of your Daoist magic, Senior? I mean, the reason you’re here has something to do with me, right…?”

The black-robed man paused in midstep. It seemed he rarely encountered cultivators the likes of Meng Hao.

“Spatial Bending. If you master that, and we meet again… then I guess I can pass on to you the secret to… Summon the Wind.” The black-robed man’s voice drifted out behind him as he vanished into the starry sky. 3

There was no way for Meng Hao to catch up. However, several different emotions could be seen on his face as he looked at the man leaving, and in fact, his eyes began to shine.

“So he really is a Patriarch of the Wang Clan…” The magic of Summon the Wind was something Meng Hao had seen Wang Mu unleash. He had always felt it to be extraordinary, but had never been able to acquire it. 4

“Ah well, it is what it is. Wang Mu, you owe me money, but now I’m in no hurry to get it back. Having Karma connecting me to you is the same as having Karma with the Wang Clan!” Heart filled with decisiveness, he turned, closed his eyes for a moment, then opened them and took a step. Much the same as before, he slipped into a strange state as he began to experiment with walking in that strange, prescribed fashion.

“This magic is called Spatial Bending, huh…? It seems that this is just the first step, a way to bend space-time….” Meng Hao was very excited. He could already think of many ways that this Daoist magic could be used in magical combat.

In fact, if he got familiar enough with it, perhaps he could even use it to travel through time!

At this thought, a strange look appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes as he walked off into the distance.

Time passed as he walked in that special fashion for several days. During that time, he didn’t worry about collecting any debts, nor did he stop by any asteroid teleportation portals. He was separated from the world, alone as he traversed the starry sky, getting familiar with the walking technique.

In the middle of his enlightenment, the transmission jade slip within his bag of holding vibrated many times. However, he didn’t notice that, as he was fully immersed in the strange state.

He had no idea, but during those several days, someone he knew was traveling all around looking for him, engulfed in grief.

That person went to Planet South Heaven, and then to Planet East Victory. He scoured the entirety of the Fang Clan, and then went to the Song Clan, to Mount Sun, and any other place where Meng Hao might have been found.

Unfortunately… that person did not find Meng Hao.

“Is this the working of fate…? Is he fated… to not be able to see her one last time?” The person searching for Meng Hao was Pill Demon!!

His expression was one of grief, and he sighed constantly. Eventually, he gave up the search and returned to the Mount Kunlun….

Another three days passed, and eventually Meng Hao awoke from that strange state. His eyes shone with the glow of augury, and then gradually began to flicker with joy. During the past few days, he had grown much more familiar with that strange walking technique.

It was only after awakening that Meng Hao noticed that on the transmission jade slip in his bag of holding, there were several hundred messages that had unexpectedly accumulated during the past few days….

After scanning the messages with divine sense, his mind began to rumble as if with thunder, and his body shook as if it were being struck by lightning. In fact, he almost couldn’t believe what was happening!

2. In Renegade Immortal, Wang Lin had a pet mosquito. Maybe you could even say that it was the mastiff of that story

3. Spatial Bending is the name of a magic that Wang Lin used in Renegade Immortal. It didn’t do exactly the same thing as this Daoist magic, but was very similar

4. Summon the Wind is something that has come up several times. Wang Mu used it, as did the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch back on Planet South

Heaven. It’s another of the techniques Wang Lin used in Renegade Immortal

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# Chapter 1208: Slaying Ji Dongyang Again!

Although the messages in the jade slip were all from different people, the words were virtually the same!

“Chu Yuyan’s soul is rapidly dispersing. Come to the Kunlun Society!”

They all said the same thing!

He received messages from his mother, father and sister, from Patriarch Shoudao… even from Taiyang Zi, Song Luodan, and Sun Hai….

The greatest number of messages came from… Pill Demon!

In addition, there was one message that had come through on the first day that Meng Hao had slipped into his strange trance of walking. It had come from Chu Yuyan.

“Meng Hao…. I hope that you and Xu Qing can have a safe and peaceful life together….” That single message caused Meng Hao’s heart to feel as if it were being stabbed with blades.

Meng Hao was trembling; he couldn’t quite tell what he was feeling at the moment. However, one thing he was sure about was that if Chu Yuyan’s soul was dispersing, it couldn’t be an accident. There had to be more to the story.

He had no time to sit there thinking. Nor was he even sure what exactly he should be thinking about. Only one thought filled his mind, and that was that he did not want Chu Yuyan to perish.

“How could this have happened…?” he murmured, transforming into a colorful streak of light that shot toward the nearest asteroid teleportation portal at high speed.

As soon as he appeared there, people recognized him and their faces flickered. Many of them were well-aware of how everyone in the Ninth Mountain and Sea had been looking for him over the past few days.

Immediately, sounds of discussion could be heard:

“Did you hear about Meng Hao’s old flame Chu Yuyan from the Kunlun Society…? Her soul is dispersing….”

“These past few days, everyone has been trying to find him, but sadly, nobody could. And now here he is….”

“Well, he deserves it with that vicious personality of his. A lot of people are happy to see this happening.”

Meng Hao blasted forward like the wind, but he could still hear everyone talking, and their words stabbed at his heart like sharp swords. Suddenly, he turned his head, sweeping over them with his gaze. Rumbling sounds could be heard, and one cultivator after another coughed up blood and staggered backward, their cultivation bases collapsing as they let out miserable shrieks…. Those were the cultivators who had just spoken biting words.

On any other occasion, Meng Hao wouldn’t even have acknowledged them. But now, in the throes of deep anxiety, the words they spoke crossed his bottom line.

Rumbling could be heard as he shot toward one particular destination. It was none other than the teleportation portal leading to the Kunlun Society.

However, just before he reached it, a dozen or so figures suddenly emerged from the crowd to block his path.

Based on the ripples emanating from their cultivation bases, it was obvious that these people were from the Ji Clan. Furthermore, the person leading them was… Ji Dongyang!!

Who knew how long he had been here, and now, in Meng Hao's most anxious moment, he was leading members of the Ji Clan to prevent Meng Hao from entering the teleportation portal.

"Well well, if it isn't Brother Meng? What's gotten you so anxious?" Ji Dongyang laughed heartily, eyes shining with a strange light. He almost seemed to be eyeing prey, as if he were trying to lure that prey in a certain direction, to control its growth and development.

"The dispersal of Chu Yuyan's soul has really given me a good opportunity to domesticate my prey." Ji Dongyang's smile grew more radiant, and the eyes of the Ji Clan cultivators behind him glittered with killing intent.

"Screw off!" Meng Hao roared, his face grim and his voice echoing like thunder. The Ji Clan cultivators were instantly enraged, and shot directly toward him.

"What gall! Our Clan Prince allowed you to stop and chat! How dare you say rude things!"

"Scram!" Meng Hao's expression didn't change at all as he performed an incantation gesture. Everything rumbled, and the starry sky shook. The entire asteroid vibrated as an amorphous tempest shot out toward the members of the Ji Clan.

As he flew through the air, everything around him shook violently. The tempest was like a huge mouth, bellowing in rage at the Ji Clan cultivators. Blood sprayed out of their mouths and they were sent tumbling backward. There were even a few who directly exploded, killed in body and spirit.

Meng Hao had already reached the point of disregarding everything else!

"Brother Meng, did I offend you or something? All I did was call out a greeting, and yet you dared to kill the people of my Ji Clan?" Ji Dongyang's face was grim as he took a step forward, causing explosive waves of qi to roll out in all directions. Shockingly, they transformed into a shield of light, which… completely blocked the way to the Kunlun Society teleportation portal.

The surrounding cultivators looked on silently, and even backed up. They looked at the shield with mixed feelings. Anyone who was watching this scene would be able to see what the Ji Clan was overtly attempting to do.

In Meng Hao moment of deepest anxiety, when he wanted nothing more than to get to the Kunlun Society, the Ji Clan actually blocked his path, in order to delay him even further. All of it was to make Meng Hao even more anxious than before.

In any other circumstance, he could shrug it off. But now, when he wasn't even certain whether Chu Yuyan was alive or dead, for the Ji Clan to do something like this… caused even the surrounding cultivators to feel that they were being excessive.

And yet, some of them were happy to delight in the misfortunes of others, and their eyes glinted wickedly.

Seeing that his way to the teleportation portal was being blocked caused Meng Hao's eyes to burst with killing intent. Without stopping, he charged forward like a meteor directly toward Ji Dongyang.

As he closed in, Ji Dongyang snorted inwardly, performed a double-handed incantation gesture and then shot backward, unexpectedly passing through the protective shield. Next, Meng Hao slammed bodily into the shield.

A huge boom could be heard; Meng Hao's fleshly body was comparable to a magical item, and his attack power was backed by the cultivation base of an Allheaven Dao Immortal. He was like a sharp arrow that instantly pierced through the shield.

As it shattered, he continued on toward the teleportation portal like a lightning bolt. He took no time to get entangled with Ji Dongyang; his only goal was to get to the Kunlun Society as quickly as possible.

However, just when Meng Hao was about to step into the teleportation portal, cracking sounds could be heard as it… shattered into pieces!

Ji Dongyang smiled at Meng Hao as if he were looking at a trapped animal.

“Brother Meng, how could you be so rash?” he said. “I wasn’t actually trying to stop you, I had just set up some defenses around the teleportation portal because it was too old, and in need of repair. It was already on the verge of shattering. See how much I care about you? I didn’t want any problems to occur if you stepped into it, that’s why I blocked your way.

“Well, there’s no need to thank me. It was really the right thing to do.”

Meng Hao trembled, slowly turning around, his murderous aura exploding up. Ji Dongyang continued to smile as he slowly backed up.

“Brother Meng, I did all of this with the best of intentions. I’ll take my leave now, but don’t worry, we’ll have plenty of time to get to know each other better in the future, and also… to build up plenty of Karma between us….” Smiling mysteriously, his body began to fade away.

“You want Karma? I’ll give you some Karma!” Meng Hao took a deep breath, and his murderous aura grew stronger as he shot in a beeline toward Ji Dongyang.

He moved as fast as lightning, using the exact same bizarre walking technique that he had just spent the past several days getting familiar with!

None of the onlookers could see anything strange about it, not even Ji Dongyang. He continued to smile as he faded away.

Meng Hao rumbled through the air, making a grasping motion with his right hand. Immediately, the copper mirror began to materialize. Before it could even become fully clear, it changed shape, wrapping around Meng Hao’s hand, wriggling into the shape of… a long, pitch-black sword!!

It was a wicked blade, like the weapon of a Devil, and it instantly slashed down toward the virtually invisible Ji Dongyang.

However, the direction of the slash was not the position in which Ji Dongyang was vanishing, but rather, the space in front of that!

As the blade slashed down, Meng Hao took another step. All of a sudden, all of the onlookers experienced something bizarre.

Suddenly, everything split apart as two different periods of time appeared in front of their eyes. They were like mirror images that twisted… and then turned into a strange vision.

Within that vision, the teleportation portal which had just collapsed… twisted and returned to a state of wholeness. Different versions of Ji Dongyang and Meng Hao could now be seen, like reflections. The reflection of Ji Dongyang had exactly the same expression as before, and was saying the same things. Everyone could see exactly what had just happened moments ago. Then, Ji Dongyang’s reflection began to move back to the location where he began vanishing, and also, toward the place where Meng Hao was slashing the sword down.

It was almost as if Ji Dongyang were personally delivering himself up to Meng Hao’s blade. Meng Hao’s Battle Weapon slashed through the reflection of Ji Dongyang, which didn’t stop, but rather, continued on to the vanishing Ji Dongyang, with whom it then merged.

At the same time, the teleportation portal collapsed, and Meng Hao… said the same cold words he had spoken before. Then he shot forward, formed the Battle Weapon, slashed out, and merged with his true form.

All of it happened very quickly, and made people confused as to what they were actually seeing. Everyone was shocked and dazzled.

When the true forms of Meng Hao and Ji Dongyang merged with their reflections, Meng Hao looked the same as before. However, Ji Dongyang, who was fading away, suddenly let out a bloodcurdling scream. His blurry figure was then separated into two parts!!

“What Daoist magic is that!?!?” he roared in disbelief. Then the two parts of him faded away.

The only thing that remained behind was an echoing voice filled with terror and astonishment,

An injury inflicted within the flow of time, which then merged with the present!

Meng Hao had used the strange walking technique to come up… with a battle tactic that was perfectly suited to him!

I twist time, giving me the power to go back into the past and slash you with my blade. When your reflection merges with your true form, then that injury… will become a reality!

The surrounding cultivators all gasped. If you added all these people together, the types of magical techniques they had seen collectively throughout their lifetimes were vast. And yet… none of them had ever seen anything as unbelievable as what they had just witnessed.

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# Chapter 1209: Mountains Have No Worries

A slash in the past was equally fatal in the present. A Timeshift magic like that was similar to the Time magic that Meng Hao already used, and yet it was far, far different.

One was the root, the other was the lilypad!

As Ji Dongyang faded away, Meng Hao's body flickered as he changed course toward another teleportation portal. Because of Ji Dongyang and how he had obstructed Meng Hao's path, he now had to waste even more time finding another teleportation portal to the Kunlun Society!

Almost as soon as he materialized out of that teleportation portal, he could see the Kunlun Society.

It was a cloud-wreathed Immortal mountain, boundless and majestic, filled with singing of birds and the fragrance of flowers. It was like a celestial paradise, and at first glance, nothing about it seemed out of the ordinary. However, on one of the mountain's tallest peaks, thunder and lightning crashed. Further up above, black clouds seethed, seemingly incompatible with their surroundings.

As soon as he saw that mountain peak, Meng Hao also caught sight of a figure there who seemed to be offering sacrifices. Every flick of his sleeve would cause colors to flash, and rumbling booms to echo out.

He was an old man with whom Meng Hao was unfamiliar. However, at that man's side was someone who Meng Hao knew well. It was… Pill Demon!

Meng Hao’s heart began to thump, and he instantly took to flight in the direction of that mountain peak. His arrival instantly attracted the attention of the disciples of the Kunlun Society. Furthermore, because of how he charged in, countless disciples flew out to intercept him, and numerous streams of divine sense converged on him.

“Let him come!” an ancient voice called out just as the numerous spell formations of the Kunlun Society were about to activate. It came from none other than the old man who was currently fighting back against the powerful vortex up above. Next to him was Pill Demon, who looked over at Meng Hao with mixed feelings, and sighed.

Meng Hao flew as fast as he could. In the blink of an eye, he had spanned the distance to appear in the air above the mountain peak, directly in front of Pill Demon and the old man.

As soon as he appeared, a tremor ran through his body because of what he on top of the mountain. It was… a jade coffin!

Numerous Kunlun Society disciples were arrayed around the coffin, their faces filled with grief. They sat there cross-legged, as if they were trying to come up with some sort of way… to resurrect the person in the coffin!

“You’re too late…” Pill Demon said in a quiet, hoarse voice. “Yesterday at dawn… her spiritual soul dispersed.

“I asked the Patriarch to come help re-converge the spiritual links to Chu Yuyan’s soul. Unfortunately… he was unable to to re-form that which has dissipated.”

Meng Hao was shaking, and his mind roared. What Pill Demon had just said almost didn’t seem to register as he stared at the coffin, and Chu Yuyan inside. She almost seemed to be sleeping.

Even now that he was here, Meng Hao felt that all of this was too sudden. It was so sudden that he couldn’t accept it. It seemed impossible.

“How could this have happened….” he murmured. Stabs of pain filled his heart as he approached the coffin. Immediately, the surrounding Kunlun Society disciples’ eyes went wide with rage.

“Screw off! You don’t qualify to come here!”

“Are you Meng Hao? The man Junior Sister Chu could never forget about is you? You don’t deserve to be standing here!”

“Heartless, unethical people like you are prohibited from defiling the corpse of Elder Sister Chu!!”

These Kunlun Society disciples were people who had developed friendships with Chu Yuyan during her time in the Kunlun Society. Some were her Sisters, others were people who admired her. To see Meng Hao show up here when they were so heartbroken caused them to immediately vent their rage.

When the words hit Meng Hao’s ears, his heart twinged with intense pain. As he stepped forward silently, a young man burst out from the crowd to stand in front of him, eyes bloodshot. Enraged, he yelled, “Are you a man or not? You knew how Chu Yuyan felt about you. You knew, and yet you heartlessly refused her! What do you think you’re doing here now? Screw the hell off!”

The young man extended his right hand, performed an incantation gesture and pointing toward Meng Hao. A magical technique immediately materialized and shot toward Meng Hao.

His action caused other disciples to immediately make moves of their own. Meng Hao didn’t respond at all, nor did he dodge their attacks. He just kept walking forward, surrounded by booming sounds. Finally, Pill Demon shouted, “Stay your hands! Let him pass. Nobody qualifies more than him to see Yan’er!”

His voice crashed like thunder, booming out in all directions. Chu Yuyan’s fellow disciples immediately ceased attacking. Glaring at Meng Hao, they began file past him as they returned to their places, filled with rage and grief. As they passed him, all of them made various biting comments.

“Chu Yuyan waited for you for years, until she finally perished,” one woman said icily. “What a waste!”

“I’m not sure why the link to Junior Sister Chu’s soul suddenly dispersed. But I do know that when she returned recently she was seriously injured! She never fully recovered from those injuries. Don’t tell me you’re unaware of why they occurred!”

“Meng Hao, Meng Hao…. It won’t matter how famous you get in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, don’t you ever forget for all eternity that you owe this woman far, far too much.”

Their words were like razor-sharp swords against which there was no possible defense. It didn’t matter how powerful his fleshly body was, he could do nothing to prevent them from piercing deep into his heart.

His insides ached, and his face was ashen as he silently walked forward. He let the people say what they wished to say as he neared the coffin and then looked down at Chu Yuyan laying inside.

She wore a long white garment, and her countenance was beautiful. Her skin was so delicate it seemed that a breeze could shatter it. If it weren’t for the fact that she was completely devoid of any color of blood, Meng Hao might think that she actually was sleeping.

However, the aura of death on her made the difference between life and death very clear. It was like the difference between Yin and Yang, boundless and infinite.

His mind was a blank as he stared down at her. He had never imagined that a day like this would come…. Back in the Nine Seas God World, something similar had happened, but in the end, Chu Yuyan didn’t die.

Now, though… Meng Hao lifted a trembling hand and placed it on Chu Yuyan’s forehead. After sending some divine sense into her, he began to shake even harder.

“Dead….” he murmured. His heart ached as he recalled an image from the past. It was a scene in which Chu Yuyan stood next to Wang Tengfei, as if they were a celestial couple. 1

Next, he saw Chu Yuyan and himself in the volcano, after which came everything that happened in the Violet Fate Sect. Later, they saw each other again in the Southern Domain, when he and Xu Qing got married. Chu Yuyan had been there, a complex expression in her eyes. Although she wore a smile on her face, that smile only hid her silent weeping.

All of those were memories that he would keep in his mind forever.

Proud. That was Chu Yuyan. When she realized that Meng Hao hadn’t picked her, she chose to leave. She thought that she could forget, but later, when she looked back at everything that had occurred, she had realized something.

You can choose not to fall in love with me. But I… can only choose to either fall in love with you, or fall in love with you harder.

That was why, when she saw Meng Hao again in the Ninth Sea, she was actually very happy and content. No matter how she seemed on the surface, in her heart, those were wonderful times. Back then, she had wished that things could go on like they had for a bit longer. She hadn’t hoped for an eternity, only that time would slow down for just a little bit.

Therefore, when she saw Meng Hao fighting so hard in the Windswept Realm, when she heard his unyielding roar, she didn’t hesitate or even think about what to do. In a moment which wasn’t appropriate for her to make her breakthrough, she… risked her own cultivation base and even… risked the chance of being seriously injured.

At that time, she didn’t consider what consequences there might be, she only considered… how to help Meng Hao.

And so she did what she did, even though Meng Hao hadn’t spared her a second glance at the time…

“What a dummy…. Perhaps the reason he loves Xu Qing is because she’s a dummy too….” That was what Chu Yuyan thought to herself as she sighed and stepped into the vortex after the events in the Windswept Realm.

Meng Hao’s face grew more and more pale as he thought about everything. Chu Yuyan’s smile seemed to occupy all of his memories about her, and all of a sudden, Meng Hao felt as if his heart… were cracking open.

Everything that she had done caused deep regret to well up from deep inside of him…. It was a regret so profound that it ensured he would never be able to forget this woman, not for the rest of his life.

“How could this have happened…?” he murmured, coughing up some blood.

It was at this point that a cold, enraged voice echoed out like thunder from up above.

“Meng Hao, she chose you, so I wished you well…. I hoped that she would be happy and blessed….

“But how could you be so callous, so heartless!?

“If you didn’t love her, why did you have to encourage her? If you didn’t choose her, why give her hope…? Why… did you have to steal her away from me!?!?

“MENG HAO!!” The voice was filled with endless fury, fury mixed with grief. As it descended from the sky, an enormous figure appeared up above. He had stars on his forehead, and it was none other than… the man who had awoken the bloodline of the Gods… Wang Tengfei!!

He roared furiously, causing colors to flash in the sky as he shot down like a meteor, heading directly toward Meng Hao. As he did, he clenched his hand into a fist which he struck out at Meng Hao’s chest. Meng Hao didn’t fight back as Wang Tengfei’s thunderous voice slammed into his ears.

Blood sprayed from Meng Hao’s mouth, and his face became even whiter. It wasn’t that he didn’t have any feelings for Chu Yuyan. However, between her and Xu Qing, he cared for Xu Qing more.

That didn’t mean that he wanted to treat Chu Yuyan coldly. Deep in his heart, he wanted her to be happy. He even wished that she could somehow forget about him, and find her own path to happiness.

It was something he had never really taken the time to think about before, about whether or not… he had been selfish. But now, looking down at Chu Yuyan’s corpse, hearing Wang Tengfei rage, Meng Hao’s heart tore apart. Within that pain, he finally realized that he truly had been selfish.

His voice nothing more than a murmur, he said, “Mountains have no worries, ’til hit with snowy flurries; waters feel no woe, ’til the winds do gust and blow….” [2]

2. Here’s an alternate translation of the poem: The mountains have not a care, yet the snows whiten their hair; water feels not the world’s woe, yet its face wrinkles when winds blow

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# Chapter 1210: Using Karma to Track the Soul

BOOM!

Wang Tengfei’s eyes were crimson as he launched a full-force attack, which slammed into Meng Hao, causing blood to spray out of his mouth. Despite the fact that Wang Tengfei was likewise hit with a backlash attack, he didn’t seem to care. Roaring, he flew back to attack again.

“So you also know mountains have no worries, ’til struck by snowy flurries; waters feel no woe, ’til the winds gust and blow!!” The stabbing pain Wang Tengfei felt in his heart was not any less than Meng Hao’s.

He had loved Chu Yuyan from the very beginning, and that had never changed. However… he had been too proud. Back in the early days, his pride had allowed him to turn a blind eye to her. He thought that if he could just defeat Meng Hao, if he could somehow get stronger and stronger, then it would be possible to sacrifice everything else… including Chu Yuyan!

But when he lost everything, he finally realized, to his bitterness, that he truly had nothing. From that moment on, he began to wish that Chu Yuyan could simply be happy, and live a life of laughter and smiles.

Many years went by, and he believed himself to have forgotten his love from the past. But then one day he emerged from secluded meditation to hear from his fellow clan members about what was happening with Chu Yuyan. He had then done everything in his power to come here. In the moment he arrived, he saw Meng Hao, then completely lost control and exploded with violence.

“If you didn’t care about her then why did you have to steal her from me!?!? MENG HAO!!” Roaring, Wang Tengfei attacked again. Meng Hao didn’t respond. He stood there trembling, his heart in pieces. Wang Tengfei’s words slammed into him like bolts of lightning.

He didn’t raise a hand to fight back. Wang Tengfei battered him with one fist after another. In Meng Hao’s mind, this was all his fault. The debt he owed was too profound, and he felt deep regret…. He regretted everything from the past, and now knew the mistakes he had made. He had never realized how deeply, how severely he had affected others.

“I’m sorry….” he murmured bitterly. Although the words were spoken quietly, when Wang Tengfei heard them, he stopped in place. His fists dropped to his sides, and he began to weep.

Meng Hao walked back to the coffin and looked at the beautiful Chu Yuyan laying there as if slumbering. Tears streaming down his face, he reached up and gently touched her forehead with his right hand.

The tears rolled off his face, dropping down onto Chu Yuyan’s cheek….

A moment later, he looked up at Pill Demon and the ancient old man hovering next to him in midair.

“There’s something off about Chu Yuyan’s death. Tell me why, immediately!” He spoke slowly, one word at a time, and by the time he reached the final words, his voice boomed deafeningly, causing colors to flash in the sky and a sweeping wind to spring up. The entire Kunlun Society began to shake violently.

As he spoke, his cultivation base exploded with power, pushing him to the point where he could slaughter Dao Realm cultivators. Right now, he could cut down 1-Essence Dao Realm experts, could cause 2-Essence cultivators to tremble, and could even take on… 3-Essences Dao Lords!

Pill Demon gaped in astonishment and turned to look at the ancient man next to him. That old man had not mentioned anything suspicious about Chu Yuyan’s death. Pill Demon had assumed that it was because after reaching Immortal Ascension, Chu Yuyan’s foundation was unstable, which led to the dispersal of her soul.

Pill Demon wasn’t the only one to stare in shock. Wang Tengfei’s eyes went wide, and the surrounding Kunlun Society disciples all looked up at the old man, astonished.

This old man was one of the Patriarchs of the Kunlun Society. He looked down at Meng Hao and sighed. He had long since heard about how powerful Meng Hao was, but now that he could see it for himself, he realized that Meng Hao was able to see the clues on Chu Yuyan’s corpse.

“Her spiritual soul is lost….

“When she returned last time, she seemed normal, but the truth of the matter was that she had already lost her spiritual soul. The only thing that remained behind was her physical soul. She could only last for so long in such a state. Without the support of her spiritual soul, in the end… her physical soul dispersed.

“That is why she died, and is also why I was unable to reverse the situation and resurrect her….”

The old man spoke in a low voice, and uttered no lies. He went on to explain the full process of how he had attempted to treat Chu Yuyan.

Meng Hao was trembling. Because of the level of his cultivation base, he was well aware of the ramifications of a person losing their spiritual soul. With only the physical soul remaining, one had no foundation, and at any time, that person could lose touch with reality and begin to disperse into death.

From the moment Chu Yuyan had returned, she had begun to weaken. With every day that passed she struggled against death, but unfortunately, there was absolutely nothing she could do.

She could only wait until her physical soul dispersed, and the day of her death arrived….

She knew that she was dying, and therefore… had sent that final message to Meng Hao.

“Meng Hao…. I hope that you and Xu Qing can have a safe and peaceful life together….”

Meng Hao’s eyes were completely bloodshot, and he shook from the increasingly intense pain in his heart. Based on how high his cultivation base was, it was easy for him to inspect Chu Yuyan’s corpse and confirm that what the old man had said was no lie.

“Her spiritual soul is lost…. Well, where did it go…?” Meng Hao’s eyes were filled with madness; he knew that all of this was caused because Chu Yuyan had helped him in the Windswept Realm, leading to her serious injuries. However, although her soul had been in a fragile state that could split apart at any time, when she stepped into the vortex to return home it had been whole. Meng Hao had looked at her as she had left, and could confirm that that was the case.

The problem must have occurred… after Chu Yuyan entered the vortex leading from the area of the Windswept Realm back to the Ninth Mountain. Meng Hao had also made that trip, which had taken only a brief moment.

Clearly, though, that brief moment was all it took… for Chu Yuyan to lose her spiritual soul!

“The physical soul lives because of the spiritual soul. The spiritual soul nourishes the physical soul…. If I can find Chu Yuyan’s spiritual soul, then maybe… bringing her back to life wouldn’t be impossible!” Meng Hao looked back down at Chu Yuyan, his eyes flickering with a glint of obsession as he decided that he would definitely track down Chu Yuyan’s spiritual soul!

His right hand flashed with an incantation gesture as he unleashed Karmic Hexing. He gently pushed down onto Chu Yuyan’s forehead, and yet, no Karma appeared. His eyes flickered with madness as he suddenly began to walk around Chu Yuyan’s coffin. He moved faster and faster, until ghost images of himself appeared.

First it was one ghost image, and then two, three, four….

He moved so quickly that a wind sprang up, and even more ghost images appeared. Soon there were ten, fifteen… and even more.

Meng Hao didn’t hesitate at all to use the strange walking technique, which would enable him to return… to the day before!

One day earlier, Chu Yuyan’s physical soul had not completely dispersed! 1

As Meng Hao walked, gradually, the power of time travel began to surge out. As soon as the aura appeared, it blurred the vision of the surrounding cultivators. Even Pill Demon’s eyes went blank.

It was only the Kunlun Society Patriarch whose eyes suddenly began to shine with a bright light. Inwardly, massive waves of shock battered his heart.

“The Dao… of time travel!!

“I can’t believe that Meng Hao… can actually use the Dao of time travel!!”

He wasn’t the only one who was shaken. The other Dao Realm Patriarchs in the Kunlun Society were all shaken. As they watched the scene with divine sense, they were thoroughly flabbergasted by Meng Hao.

They all watched as gradually, more and more ghost images of Meng Hao appeared, until finally, they merged together into a ring.

In the middle of that ring was the coffin and the area around it, which apparently… was moving through time. The grass swayed, and ripples spread out. Numerous figures appeared, coming and going, going and coming.

None of the spectators noticed how incredibly pale Meng Hao’s face was. This walking technique was bizarre and enigmatic to be sure, but it was incredibly difficult for Meng Hao to use it to return Chu Yuyan to the previous day.

However, no thoughts of giving up entered his mind. He moved faster and faster. Regardless of how much blood oozed out of his mouth, regardless of how his body withered, regardless of how his cultivation base trembled, he persisted.

As he continued onward, more ripples flowed through the area around Chu Yuyan, moving faster and faster. More time passed, and suddenly Chu Yuyan’s eyes opened.

It was in that moment that Meng Hao finally stopped in place. He coughed up nine mouthfuls of blood, and a patch of his hair turned white and then transformed into nothing but ash, and his entire body looked much older.

Chu Yuyan’s eyes were listless, which was how she had looked the previous day just before she died. She was not aware of the things around her, nor could she sense that Meng Hao had traveled back an entire day just to see her.

He didn’t hesitate for a moment. Still coughing up blood, he performed an incantation gesture and unleashed a Demon Sealing Hexing magic, reaching out to push his finger down onto Chu Yuyan’s forehead.

In that moment, his mind trembled, and suddenly, faint Karma Threads appeared all around Chu Yuyan.

More than half of the threads were connected to Meng Hao himself, which caused the pain in his heart to intensify. However, he knew that time was of the essence. He focused all of his concentration and began to examine the other Karma Threads, hoping to use them to locate her spiritual soul!

He held nothing back, rotating his cultivation base to the full, causing azure light to shine around him. Finally, he found one particular Karma Thread that led out into the void. He sent divine sense to follow it, going further and further until he was also in the void.

It was there that Meng Hao caught sight of a vortex, a familiar vortex that was none other than… the vortex which Paragon Sea Dream had summoned after the collapse of the Windswept Realm, allowing everyone to return to where they had come from.

It was there that the Karma Thread began to collapse. Seeing that the thread was about to vanish, Meng Hao roared, causing more Time magic to explode out. Coupled with his cultivation base and the Karmic Hexing, he once again began to walk, using the Dao of time travel.

He unleashed all of his power, until finally, he saw… two visions!

In the first vision, he saw Chu Yuyan stepping into a vortex, her face pale. That was the moment in which everyone returned through Paragon Sea Dream’s vortex.

By means of this particular divine ability, Meng Hao was able to follow Time back to its Essence to see what had happened here in the past.

What he saw was that, as Chu Yuyan traveled through the vortex, she passed by the Nine Mountains of the Mountain and Sea Realm. When she was passing by the Eighth Mountain and Sea, all of a sudden, a voice could be heard within the vortex.

“Soul, come to me!”

1. Interesting point. In the original Chinese, Er Gen actually typed Xu Qing instead of Chu Yuyan in this paragraph. It’s not the first time, either. I’ve always fixed the mistake, but this is a pretty intense scene where he yet again mixed up the names

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# Chapter 1211: Immortal Ancient Builds a Bridge Leaving the Ninth Mountain!

Actually, that vortex had not truly been created by Paragon Sea Dream. It had long existed within the Mountain and Sea Realm, a teleportation path that, theoretically speaking, could be opened by anyone in the Dao Realm. The caveat was… that the price to open it was staggering.

In fact, only Paragons could arbitrarily pay such a price. Even if an ordinary Dao Realm cultivator were to overdraw on their cultivation base, they would not be able to open that ancient teleportation path.

Therefore, most of the time the path was safe. For example, when Meng Hao and all the others used it, nothing untoward happened. However, the path was not under the protection of one of Paragon Sea Dream’s magical techniques, it was merely a teleportation path. Therefore… accidents could happen.

Also, certain accidents could occur which not even Paragon Sea Dream would be aware of.

Originally, nothing bad should have happened to Chu Yuyan. Although her soul was in a state where it could be split, as long as she returned to the Ninth Mountain and Sea and spent enough time recuperating, she would return to normal.

Unfortunately… during the process of her teleportation, someone unleashed a soul gathering magic!

Although many cultivators could use such techniques, all of them were different, leading to different results. Some could affect an area only 3,000 meters wide. Others… could actually cover an entire Realm!

Its purpose was to find departed souls and collect them together, where they could then be used by certain cultivators to craft magical items.

In the second vision, Meng Hao saw a huge land mass and a sect. That sect was built into a black cliff, upon which were written three huge characters.

Blacksoul Society!

Meng Hao saw countless souls there, converged into a massive river that flowed toward the black cliff, and an incense burner into which the souls were being absorbed.

A cultivator sat cross-legged next to the incense burner. He looked middle-aged, but had a pale face. His expression was arrogant, and from the fluctuations of his cultivation base, it was possible to tell that, shockingly… he was a 2-Essences Dao Realm expert.

As Meng Hao looked on, he caught sight of one particular soul among the others which was… Chu Yuyan!

The key to it all was not the Dao Realm cultivator, but rather, that incense burner; that was how Chu Yuyan's soul had been extracted from the teleportation tunnel.

The incense burner was surrounded by thousands of other cross-legged disciples of this sect. When they waved their arms, black bottle gourds would fly out of their bags of holding, which would then belch forth innumerable souls.

Unexpectedly, most of those souls… belonged to mortals!

Miserable screams then rang out as the souls were refined by the cultivators. Slaughtering mortals was something absolutely forbidden within the Mountain and Sea Realm, something that most people would condemn!

After all, the mortal world was the foundation of everything. If cultivators were allowed to wantonly massacre the mortals which made up their foundation, then the Mountain and Sea Realm would eventually collapse.

In fact, the laws of the Mountain and Sea Realm expressly forbade such a thing. If something like that happened, Heavenly punishment would be rained down. And yet, there was no Heavenly punishment being inflicted on this Blacksoul Society!

The vision shattered into pieces, and everything was over. Killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes, transforming into a tempest as he rose to his feet.

“The Blacksoul Society of the Eighth Mountain and Sea!” he thought. “So the laws of the Mountain and Sea Realm do not send Heavenly punishment your way. Regardless of the reason, I… will become your Heavenly punishment!” His eyes glowed coldly, both from what had happened to Chu Yuyan, and also what the Blacksoul Society was doing to the souls of mortals. Such brutality was something that Meng Hao could not accept.

Even death could not wipe out the vileness of such crimes!

A murderous aura exploded out from him, causing all of the cultivators around him to tremble. Even the Dao Realm Patriarchs of the Kunlun Society looked on with serious expressions.

None of them had any idea why such a murderous aura had suddenly sprung up from Meng Hao.

He took a deep breath, causing the murderous aura to fade away, then gazed down at Chu Yuyan. As he looked at her, he could tell that the spiritual energy of Mount Kunlun had been gathered in the coffin, ensuring that Chu Yuyan’s fleshly body would not be destroyed.

The spiritual energy of the Kunlun Society was different from that of elsewhere. It was abundant in life force, and had existed in this place for a very long time. It inherently caused life force to flourish, and would significantly reduce the decay rate of the flesh itself.

The coffin itself was also a treasured item that was in harmony with the Kunlun Society, and would further slow the process of decay. However, if it left the Kunlun Society, that could harm Chu Yuyan.

Meng Hao was well-aware that he could not take her corpse away. It wasn’t that he was fundamentally incapable of doing so, rather, it would be best for Chu Yuyan to stay here.

Eyes flashing with determination, he extended his right hand and rested it on the coffin, silently unleashing numerous magical techniques to seal it. Glittering marks appeared all over its surface, imbuing it not just with Meng Hao’s aura, but more importantly… the will of the future Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

That would ensure that Chu Yuyan’s corpse would not be defiled.

At the same time, Meng Hao waved his sleeve, causing a huge amount of Immortal jade to fly out and pile up around and over the coffin, forming a mountainous grave mound!

The grave mound of Immortal jade left Chu Yuyan completely protected. Coupled with the unique aura of the Kunlun Society, it would ensure that she remained preserved for quite some time.

Having done all this, Meng Hao waved his hand again, causing… an equally towering mountain of Immortal jade to pile up next to the first pile!

Clasping hands, he turned toward the Kunlun Society’s Dao Realm Patriarch and bowed deeply. “Kunlun Society, I hope it will not be too much of an inconvenience to ensure that Chu Yuyan’s body remains preserved. Please take this mountain of Immortal jade as a token of my deep thanks!”

The ancient old man looked at the mountain of Immortal jade. Even he was moved by the sight of so much wealth. Actually, as far as the old man was concerned, Chu Yuyan was a disciple of the Kunlun Society, and it wouldn’t have consumed much of the Kunlun Society’s spiritual energy to keep her body preserved in the first place.

Now, with all this Immortal jade added in as compensation….

The old man looked back somberly at Meng Hao and nodded. Then he said, “Young friend Meng Hao, please set your mind at ease. You have my word that as long as I live in this world, this place will be a restricted area in the Kunlun Society. Nobody will be able to step half a pace into it without Pill Demon’s express permission!”

Meng Hao once again bowed deeply to the ancient man. He knew well what was expected in return for this promise.

“Many thanks,” he said quietly. “I… owe the Kunlun Society a great favor!” Meng Hao rarely owed other people. But now, for the sake of the safety of Chu Yuyan’s corpse, he was willing to do just that.

“Well then, young friend Meng Hao… did you find Chu Yuyan’s spiritual soul?” The old man smiled in response to Meng Hao’s words. In fact, to him the most important aspect of the whole exchange was to sow the seeds of a good relationship with Meng Hao.

“I did,” Meng Hao replied, eyes shining coldly.

“Where is it?” the old man asked.

“The Eighth Mountain. Senior, I have some matters to attend to, so I’ll take my leave. I will do everything I can to bring Chu Yuyan’s soul back as quickly as possible!” He looked over at the grave mound of Immortal jade, then turned and left.

He knew that he owed far, far too much to Chu Yuyan. So much so, in fact, that he could never pay her back….

His journeys through the Ninth Mountain and Sea were now at an end. He was not in the mood to think about where his next destination was, nor did he need to. Filled with the desire to slaughter the Blacksoul Society of the Eighth Mountain, he turned, transforming into a beam of light that shot out of the Kunlun Society.

His heart was torn to pieces, and his mood was foul as he headed directly toward the Ninth Mountain!!

The Ninth Mountain was the home of the Ji Clan, but was also… the home of the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite!

His plan to leave the Ninth Mountain and Sea had originally involved flying alone through the starry sky. But now, time was too short. Xu Qing was currently healthy and safe in the Fourth Mountain, and could wait for him. Unfortunately… Chu Yuyan's soul could be refined at any moment at the hands of a cultivator of the Blacksoul Society….

When he thought about that, Meng Hao's heart ached even more, and the killing intent in his eyes grew more explosive….

As he shot off into the distance, he murmured, "Mountains have no worries, 'til hit with snowy flurries; waters feel no woe, 'til the winds do gust and blow…."

The peak of the Ninth Mountain was occupied by the Ji Clan. Further down from them was the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite. Apparently, the Dao Realm Patriarchs of the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite had long since predicted the fact that he was coming, even down to his exact time of arrival. By the time he arrived, all of the cultivators of the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite were seated cross-legged in a public square, chanting scriptures.

A huge cauldron was located in the middle of all of them, fully 300 meters tall, filled with swirling streams of smoke that formed the character 'Immortal'.

The character was faintly visible, radiating a feeling of ancientness that made it seem as if it had been transported from ancient times into modern.

Closest to the cauldron were five old men, all of whom were in the Dao Realm. The centermost of that group had white hair, and was the very Patriarch who had paid such close attention to Meng Hao during the trial by fire so many years ago. 1

He was also the one who had calculated… that Meng Hao would eventually join the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite. He had already prepared the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite grand spell formation, to help Meng Hao… open the path to the Eighth Mountain!

“I know why you’ve come….” he said.

“The Immortal Ancient will build a bridge connecting from here to the Eighth Mountain. Walk across that bridge… to pierce through the void, traverse the starry sky, and on the other side… will be the Eighth Mountain.

“I hope that your trip there… goes smoothly.” When he finished speaking, he waved his right index finger toward the huge cauldron. Instantly, the other Dao Realm experts performed incantation gestures and pointed at the cauldron as well. The chanting of scriptures from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite disciples grew louder, echoing about in all directions, transforming into a strange power that shook the entire Ninth Mountain. It was almost as if there were some massive power within the Ninth Mountain itself that was complying with the cauldron….

To explode out!

To become a bridge!

It was a bridge that pierced through the void, a majestic vortex which connected the Eighth Mountain and the Ninth Mountain through the barrier that separated them. It was a majestic bridge, shining with boundless, scintillating light.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, then bowed deeply to everyone in the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite. He was very appreciative of what they were doing, and even felt deep affection that caused him to hold the bow for several breaths of time. Then he looked up and stepped forward onto the bridge!

He followed the bridge up into the vortex in the starry sky, which he entered, taking him… far, far away!

This was… Immortal Ancient building a bridge!

To leave the Ninth Mountain!

End of Book 7: Immortal Ancient Builds a Bridge Leaving the Ninth Mountain!

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Note from Deathblade: When I originally translated the name of Book 7, I said “leaving the Nine Mountains.” I later realized the mistake and changed it. Sorry about the confusion.

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# Chapter 1212: Eighth Mountain and Sea

In terms of overall size, it was similar to the Ninth Mountain and Sea. It also had a sea, the major difference being that it wasn’t called the Ninth Sea, but rather, the Eighth Sea….

There were also four planets which orbited the Eighth Mountain, although their names were different than the planets in the Ninth Mountain. And yet, when it came to the overall system of cultivation, and the way the place was set up, it was very similar.

After all, the Eighth Mountain and Sea and the Ninth Mountain and Sea were both parts of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

However, there was a barrier between each of the various Mountains and Seas, a barrier which was extremely difficult to pierce a hole through. That made it so that the cultivators from the different Mountains and Seas couldn’t easily pass through. Unless… there was a war, and the power of countless cultivators could be converged to break through the barrier and enter the neighboring Mountains and Seas.

Another method would be to rely on an incredibly powerful cultivation base to rip open a tear that could be stepped through. However, to do such a thing required paying a heavy price, so unless some momentous situation had developed, few people would ever use that method. Besides, only Dao Realm cultivators could do so.

As for Patriarch Reliance, he had his own special methods. Even still, he had to pay a certain price to be able to break through from the Ninth Mountain and Sea and into the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

When the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite built their bridge, they converged power from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite that had accumulated for many years. It created a passageway that could ignore the barrier, and could allow someone to pass between the two mountains without any hindrance. However… it would only last for a brief period of time.

In the western region of the Eighth Mountain and Sea was a stretch of the pitch-black void in which a white fissure had suddenly opened up. Brilliant, blinding light shone out in all directions, making the fissure completely conspicuous in the pitch-black darkness.

Gradually, boundless Immortal qi began to emanate out from the fissure, the type that would cause anyone who saw it to assume that there was some sort of precious treasure located inside.

The fissure was not motionless, but rather, was shrinking; apparently, it would vanish in a relatively short period of time.

In the area around that fissure… fierce fighting was currently underway!

Booms rang out, along with bloodcurdling screams. The glow of magical techniques could be seen, sending multicolored light flashing in all directions.

Shockingly, two groups of cultivators, over a thousand in total, were currently engaged in a bloody battle. One of the groups wore yellow robes with Gold Dragons embroidered on the sleeves, whereas the other group wore white Daoist robes. Both groups attacked viciously, as if they each couldn’t stand to even live under the same sky as the other.

Occasionally, someone would even self-detonate, ensuring that the battle was a bitter one, filled with the reek of blood and gore, and of mangled corpses….

All of the cultivators had bloodshot eyes. The weakest among them were stage 3 Immortals, and each one fought without holding anything back. Above the main battlefield a smaller fight was going on between four people. Three were men and one was a woman, and all of them were in the mid Ancient Realm. The ripples caused by the magical techniques they unleashed far exceeded that of the group below.

Above them was yet another fight, between only two people!

Both were old men in the late Ancient Realm, just half a step away from the great circle. They sat cross-legged across from each other, a game board placed between them, upon which they were playing Go. However, the game they were playing was one that brimmed with a feeling of battle. Every time they placed a piece down onto the board, it would cause rumbling sounds to fill the void.

“Eccentric Watercloud,” said the old man in the yellow robe. “The entrance to this Arcane Pocket Realm was discovered by my Woodflame Society. It has nothing to do with your Watercloud Sect!” Eyes flickering coldly, he picked up a black game piece and put it down onto the board.

As soon as the piece touched down, rumbling filled the air, and an indescribably explosive force shook the starry sky.

“You spoke incorrectly, Daoist Woodflame. The Arcane Pocket Realms of the Eighth Mountain and Sea have always gone by right to whoever discovered them. As for this particular Arcane Pocket Realm… the Patriarch of our Watercloud Sect discovered it three hundred years ago. However, at that time, he didn’t have an appropriate physical body. He was forced to make a notation of its location, and wait for the next time it opened.

“Now that it has opened, the Watercloud Sect has come to claim it. You are the ones who are forcefully interfering!” The old man in the white Daoist robe snorted coldly, picked up a white game piece, and put it down. Immediately, rumbling sounds could be heard.

“Look, you old geezer,” the yellow-robed man roared angrily, “if you want to go that far, then let me tell you this, the Arcane Pocket Realm was discovered seven hundred years ago by the Woodflame Society!”

“Listen, you old coot,” the white robed man said with a cold harrumph. “I just accidentally left out the word thousand! Actually, our Watercloud Sect Patriarch discovered this place one thousand three hundred years ago!”

“Like hell! The Watercloud Sect didn’t even exist a thousand three hundred years ago!”

As the two men argued, their eyes glowed coldly. They continued to place game pieces, causing booms to ring out, shaking the entire starry sky. Below them, the fierce fighting grew even more intense.

However, it was at this point that the light shining out from the fissure grew more intense than before, covering the entire battlefield. The fighting cultivators subconsciously gasped as their cultivation bases leaped abnormally. Some of them even made significant progress, and signs of a breakthrough appeared in some of them. Interestingly, of those who now hovered on the verge of cultivation base breakthroughs, all of them cultivated flame magic!

Everyone was shocked by this, and their eyes began to shine with bright light.

Even the four mid Ancient Realm cultivators and the two old men playing Go all gasped, and their faces flickered with shock.

“That’s… a Dao-level Arcane Pocket Realm!!”

“It’s definitely Dao-level, otherwise, the Immortal qi emanating out wouldn’t have Essence in it! It can lead to cultivation base breakthroughs!!”

“That flame Essence indicates that whichever cultivator was put to rest in the Arcane Pocket Realm in the past was a Dao Realm expert with flame Essence!!”

The two old men began to murmur and eye each other murderously.

“A Dao-level Arcane Pocket Realm is a rarity in the Eighth Mountain and Sea….”

Although they had only been engaged in a battle of words before, and had held back from actually attacking, now that they realized how precious this Arcane Pocket Realm was, their cultivation base power exploded out. The game board between them shattered, sending the black and white game pieces flying out in all directions as attacks were unleashed.

The fighting intensified, and booms rang out, shaking the starry sky. Both sides were relatively evenly matched, making it difficult for either one to secure victory quickly. Furthermore… the white light emanating out from the fissure suddenly began to retract, as if it were about to vanish.

“Not good! The Dao-level Arcane Pocket Realm is about to close! Dammit! Why is it happening so fast? Could it be that all Dao-level Arcane Pocket Realms are like this?”

“It must not be allowed to close! The Dao soul hasn’t been extracted yet!!” The faces of the two old men fell as they fought. Suddenly, they looked into each other’s eyes.

“Let’s stop fighting for the moment, and send forth the bodies we’ve prepared. Let the Dao soul in the Arcane Pocket Realm make its own decision about who it belongs to!”

“Agreed!” The two old men gritted their teeth. Having no other option, and seeing that the fissure was about to fade away, the best option they had was to fight for a 50/50 chance.

They flicked their sleeves, causing their cultivation bases to erupt, using their power to separate the two groups of fighting cultivators. Then, they transformed into beams of light that shot howling toward the fissure. As they neared it, both old men cried out.

“Tong’er! Shanbin!”

“Shanshan! Muyi!”

In response to their words, four people flew out from the crowds, two men and two women. The men were handsome and the woman was beautiful.

They nervously faced the old men, clasped hands and bowed.

“Greetings, Patriarch!”

“Attempt to absorb the Dao soul into your bodies, and assimilate it. Use it to awaken the power within you. Whether or not you succeed will depend on your luck!” The four cultivators gritted their teeth, then flew toward the fissure. As they closed in, they bit down on their tongues, spitting out mouthfuls of blood that flew toward the opening.

Everyone in the area gazed fixedly at the scene which was playing out. When the four cultivators spit out their blood, a massive force exploded out from within the shrinking fissure. The opening suddenly expanded, causing brilliant light to explode out. It was so blinding that nobody could see what was inside the fissure other than light.

“It’s coming out!” the two old men cried excitedly.

RUMBLE!

As the fissure expanded, the massive force exploded out, and suddenly, a hand appeared from within the light… slowly stretching out from deep inside!

It grabbed onto the edge of the fissure, after which, a person began to emerge.

As soon as the figure appeared, Immortal power erupted out, joined by Essence, striking fear into the hearts of the other cultivators, who began to edge backward. The two old men fought back against the power, but it was almost too much for them. Their expressions were those of complete delight.

“This feeling, this aura… it’s the Dao soul!!”

“It’s coming out, it’s coming out….”

The two men and two women outside of the fissure were backing up, faces pale. They could sense that whatever was coming out of the fissure was some sort of supreme existence, something that filled them with terror.

RUMBLE!

The figure emerged fully from the fissure, a young man wearing a long white robe. He had long black hair, and looked like a handsome scholar. Almost as soon as he emerged, the fissure closed up behind him and vanished.

At the same time, the blinding light that had filled the area faded away.

The two old men stared with wide eyes at this young man, and they weren’t the only ones. The two men and two women stared in shock; this was definitely not what they had imagined a Dao soul would look like.

“Could it be that Dao Realm Souls really look like this?” That was what both old men were thinking in their confusion. The two of them had never seen a Dao-level Arcane Pocket Realm before, and therefore, weren’t really certain as to whether or not the young man standing in front of them was what a Dao soul was supposed to look like.

“Is this the Eighth Mountain and Sea?” the young man asked. Of course, he was none other than Meng Hao.

The fact that so many people were there to receive him was quite a shock, especially when he saw that the group up front was comprised of two handsome men and two beautiful women.

One of those beautiful women immediately dropped to her knees before Meng Hao and threw both hands up into the air. “Senior, please accept me as an offering!”

The other three quickly followed suit, kneeling down and raising their hands.

“Senior, please accept me as an offering!”

Meng Hao had a strange expression on his face as he looked around. When he looked over at the two old men with the highest cultivation bases, they began to tremble and back away.

“S-Senior, the offerings are all prepared,” said the old man in the yellow robe. “Those four in front of you. S-sir, whichever one you like, you can have. W-we’re too old, and not really suitable….”

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# Chapter 1213: Heavengod Alliance

A strange expression could be seen on Meng Hao’s face as he looked at the two old men, and then back down at the men and women kneeling in front of him. Having no time for delays, he once again asked,

“Is this, or is this not, the Eighth Mountain and Sea?”

The first of the women to have dropped to her knees quickly nodded and replied, “Senior, this most definitely is the Eighth Mountain and Sea.”

Hearing this, Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and he waved his hand, causing a magical item suitable for the Immortal Realm to fly over to the woman.

“Take this treasure. Can you tell me how to get to the Blacksoul Society?” he asked.

The woman looked at the magical item, eyes flickering with pleasure. She quickly took it and was about to reply when suddenly, the two old men finally realized what was going on. Expressions flickering, they advanced.

“He’s not the Dao soul!”

“Dammit, he’s obviously got a fleshly body! He’s not the Dao soul, he just got here before us and already merged with it!” The two old men simply couldn’t think of any other reasonable explanation other than Meng Hao arriving before them and stealing the good fortune which they felt belonged to them.

The two men exchanged a glance, and then their killing intent surged. “If he just merged with the Dao soul, then he’s not stable and can’t awaken it! Kill him!”

They immediately shot toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao frowned and glanced at the two old men. His gaze was like an azure bolt of lightning , like a sharp sword that stabbed deep into their brains. Their faces fell; minds reeling, they coughed up blood and staggered backward.

“Attack together! Kill him and get that Dao soul back!” Behind the two old men were the four mid Ancient Realm cultivators, who howled and attacked. All of the other nearly one thousand cultivators in the area unleashed various divine abilities and magical techniques.

Meng Hao snorted coldly. His action from moments before had been a simple warning to these people to not provoke him. He didn’t want to cause any trouble here, he just wanted to know how to get to the Black Soul Society. And yet they simply couldn’t get the message. Therefore, he decided to stop holding back. He lifted his right foot up and took a step forward.

That single step caused power to erupt off of him. A huge shockwave spread out explosively in all directions, transforming into an attack that swept over all of the nearby cultivators.

Miserable shrieks rang out, and countless mouthfuls of blood sprayed about. The cultivators all felt as if an invisible wall had slammed into them, a backlash that left them seriously injured and spinning off in multiple directions.

As the blood sprayed out of their mouths, they trembled, looking at Meng Hao with astonishment and terror. They didn’t dare to approach even half a step closer to him. The four mid Ancient Realm cultivators were even more seriously injured. Blood sprayed out of their mouths, and their cultivation bases were seriously damaged. Even their souls became unstable, causing their faces to grow ashen.

However, it was in this moment that something seemed to awaken inside of them, which Meng Hao immediately noticed. As the four of them backed up, what appeared to be the shadows of souls appeared behind them, although they were faint.

“This… this….” The two old men were equally shaken with fear. However, they didn’t give up on their idea. They continued to advance toward Meng Hao, roaring and performing incantation gestures. Their late Ancient Realm cultivation bases exploded with power, and something seemed to awaken within them too.

As that happened, illusory images appeared behind him. They weren’t Dharma Idols, but rather Soul Shadows. They weren’t the souls of the old men, but rather, the souls of two unknown cultivators who were both at the great circle of the Ancient Realm.

By merging with them, the two old men were actually able to increase the power of their cultivation bases. They rapidly rose from the late Ancient Realm to the great circle of the Ancient Realm, causing their attacks to burst with increasing power, sending ripples out in all directions.

“Well, isn’t this interesting,” Meng Hao said, eyes gleaming. This was his first time in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, and although the cultivators here practiced the same system of cultivation as in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, there were obviously some details which were different.

For example, this awakening… must have something to do with the Dao soul they had just mentioned.

After a moment of thought, Meng Hao lifted his right arm and waved his sleeve. Although the motion seemed ordinary, the faces of the two old men instantly fell.

The man in the white robe began to shake, and then vomited up a huge mouthful of blood. His body rapidly aged, and the soul behind him let out a miserable shriek as more than half of it withered away. The old man went all out to dodge away, only stopping after he had fallen back by 300 meters. It was there that he looked at Meng Hao with an expression of unprecedented amazement.

“Dao Realm!! He’s in the Dao Realm!! He didn’t absorb a Dao soul, he’s actually… in the Dao Realm himself!!”

At the same time as his voice rang out, the yellow-robed man’s face flickered. He did not cough up any blood, and yet at this point he would rather have been the one coughing up. That was because he was being wrenched through the void, Soul Shadow and all, directly toward Meng Hao.

In the blink of an eye, the man was suspended in front of Meng Hao, a look of terror in his eyes. He was completely immobilized and, being so close to Meng Hao, he could clearly sense the vast, boundless power within him. He knew that Meng Hao was powerful enough to eradicate him with a simple thought.

“S-Senior….” the old man said, trembling.

Meng Hao’s expression was calm as he measured up the yellow-robed old man. His eyes flashed like lightning, as if he could easily see through him. A few breaths of time passed, and then Meng Hao’s eyes came to fall on the Soul Shadow, which was also trembling as it sensed a force like that of Heavenly might emanating off of Meng Hao.

“Fuse the soul into the body, and use it to form blood vessels… thus… entering a symbiosis!

“Interesting. Not a bad technique. It ensures that the powerful party can avoid death and the weak party becomes more powerful. Now that I think about it, the green lightning Han Qinglei used back in the Windswept Realm was probably a secret magic derived from this method.” Nodding, Meng Hao looked away from the Soul Shadow. 1

“How do I get to the Blacksoul Society?” he asked slowly.

The yellow-robed old man immediately gushed, “The Heaven– er, the Blacksoul Society is in the north, which is quite far from here. That region is controlled by the Heavengod Society, which means that unless you’re from the Heavengod Alliance, you can’t go there. Even if you obtain a writ of passage, you’re only allowed as far as the outer borders of the Heavengod Alliance.

“Senior, if you want to obtain such a writ, that’s fine…. You can come to the Woodflame Society. Our sect has a teleportation portal that goes in the direction of the Heavengod Alliance….”

“Heavengod Alliance….” After a moment of thought, Meng Hao released the yellow-robed man and asked him to lead the way.

The old man was instantly excited, and respectfully agreed. Looking haughtily out of the corner of his eye at the white-robed man from the Watercloud Sect, he gave a cold harrumph and then led Meng Hao off into the distance along with this Woodflame Society cultivators.

The white-robed man remained behind, heart pounding. He was aware that Daoist Woodflame wanted to pander to a Dao Realm expert. In fact, he himself also wanted the same thing; however, when he thought about how terrifying Meng Hao was, he hesitated. In the end, he simply watched as the Woodflame Society cultivators escorted Meng Hao off into the distance.

After a long moment, a grim look appeared on his face.

“I simply can’t believe that Daoist Woodflame didn’t notice that this Dao Realm expert is not from the Eighth Mountain and Sea. He’s obviously from one of the other Mountains and Seas, and is obviously strong enough to break through into ours.

“People like that… always have some major plot afoot, and we can’t afford to get involved with something like that….” Murmuring to himself, the white-robed old man led his people off into the distance, and also gave orders that they were to speak nothing about what had happened. He even ordered that the entire sect was not to divulge even the slightest scrap of information about Meng Hao.

Of course, Daoist Woodflame of the Woodflame Society absolutely could tell that Meng Hao had an extraordinary background. However, he was willing to make a gamble. In the Eighth Mountain and Sea, the Woodflame

Society was a small sect that existed in the shadows of the Heavengod Alliance and the great clans. If he could acquire the favor of a Dao Realm expert, it would be of incalculable value to them.

As long as he could benefit it some way, then it didn’t matter where that Dao Realm expert came from….

Meng Hao was no fool either, and could tell what Daoist Woodflame was thinking. Therefore, as they proceeded along, he asked some questions about the overall state of the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

“Senior, there is only one alliance in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, and that is the Heavengod Alliance. It is made up of many sects and clans, and the Blacksoul Society is only one of them. The alliance as a whole is led by the Heavengod Society!

“The Patriarch of the Heavengod Society is none other than the Eighth Mountain and Sea’s… Mountain and Sea Lord! He is referred to as… Heavengod!

“In addition to the Heavengod Alliance, the Eighth Mountain and Sea also has the Three Great Daoist Societies. However, they rarely dabble in the affairs of the outside world. In fact, they’ve hardly been seen at all in recent years.

“In addition to that are the Two Great Clans, which are the Meng Clan and the Han Clan!

“The Meng Clan is on the decline, but based on their former glory, they are still considered a major player….

“As for the Han Clan, they are like the sun at high noon….

“However, neither the Three Great Daoist Societies nor the Two Great Clans can compare at all to the Heavengod Alliance….

“Of the four planets in the Eighth Mountain, the Han and Meng Clans jointly occupy one of them. The other three are controlled by the

Heavengod Alliance….” Daoist Woodflame explained everything that he knew, and in the end, gave Meng Hao a jade slip that contained a detailed map of the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

“I’m not sure about the other Mountains and Seas, but in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, we have something called Arcane Pocket Realms. There are quite a few of them, and if you can find one that has never been opened before, then you can bury a corpse inside. Once the soul has escaped the body, you can provide it with a suitable body to meld with and they become undying. This kind of symbiosis can be considered a kind of awakening for those who practice cultivation.”

Meng Hao listened to everything that Daoist Woodflame told him, but when he mentioned the Meng Clan, Meng Hao’s eyes glazed over as he became distracted by his own thoughts. After a moment, though, they gleamed as he sent some divine sense into the jade slip he now held in his hand. Instantly, a map of the Eighth Mountain and Sea appeared in his mind.

“There are no Ruins of Immortality?” he asked suddenly.

“Ruins of Immortality?” Daoist Woodflame asked, looking confused. “What are they?”

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered thoughtfully as he considered certain matters, then continued to ask questions, especially about the Arcane Pocket Realms.

A day later, Meng Hao reached the Woodflame Society, having a much better understanding of the Eighth Mountain and Sea. That was especially true of the Arcane Pocket Realms, which made Meng Hao think of the Ruins of Immortality.

“Actually, the Arcane Pocket Realms of the Eighth Mountain and Sea are really… the Ruins of Immortality. However, they are fragmented and scattered about randomly here, which is why numerous so-called Arcane Pocket Realms appear. And that is why they were used… to become graves for cultivators!

“You could even say that the Eighth Mountain and Sea is actually one huge graveyard!” Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed with understanding.

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# Chapter 1214: My Name is Meng Hao!

Meng Hao hadn’t originally planned to go the Eighth Mountain and Sea. His prime destination had been the Fourth Mountain and Sea. He had hoped to go there directly, or alternatively, to simply pass through the Eighth Mountain and Sea on his way.

If the latter was the only option, he would proceed to the Seventh Mountain, the Sixth Mountain, the Fifth Mountain and eventually… would reach the Fourth Mountain. He would pass through multiple Mountains and Seas to find Xu Qing… and bring her home.

But then the situation with Chu Yuyan developed, and he had been forced to change his mind. He could not proceed directly toward the Fourth Mountain. He owed Chu Yuyan far too much, and had no option other than to track down her soul and rescue her.

Therefore, he traveled not through, but to the Eighth Mountain and Sea!

Here, he had ties to both Patriarch Reliance and the Meng Clan. The Meng Clan was his mother’s clan, his relatives.

And as for Patriarch Reliance, when Meng Hao found out that he was in the Eight Mountain and Sea, he had long since decided that no one would be able to prevent him from acquiring him as a mount.

Once that happened, he would be able to use Patriarch Reliance’s power to effortlessly pass through the barriers between the various Mountains and Seas!

Now, he stood in the Woodflame Society’s teleportation portal. They didn’t qualify to occupy their own planet, but had instead built their sect on a huge asteroid. Because the Eighth Mountain’s political structure was a bit different than that of the Ninth Mountain, virtually all of the small sects were set up in a similar way.

“Senior, from here, you can teleport onto one of the artificial planets arrayed in the vicinity of the Heavengod Alliance. Those planets form the gateway to the Heavengod Alliance.”

Daoist Woodflame clasped hands, bowing deeply as he began to explain: “From there, you should be able to find the teleportation portal leading to the Blacksoul Society….”

Meng Hao glanced thoughtfully at the man, who during this entire time hadn’t mentioned a word about any sort of payment for the information he was giving. Suddenly, Meng Hao reached out and tapped Daoist Woodflame’s forehead, causing a bit of the Essence of Divine Flame to flow into his body.

Daoist Woodflame shivered slightly, and his face suddenly turned bright red, as if he were about to belch out flame. His eyes went wild with joy. Trembling, he immediately dropped to his knees.

“Senior, many thanks for your great kindness! I will never forget this for the rest of my life. Senior, if you have any demands, I will go through hell or high water to meet them!” Daoist Woodflame was as incredibly excited as he should be, considering that he cultivated flame-attribute techniques. Now that Meng Hao had given him some of the Essence of Divine Flame, you could say that… his path toward the Dao Realm had been opened!

A gift like that was like the gift of a new life!

“The path of cultivation is murky,” Meng Hao said slowly, “and all I can give you is a lamp to light your way. How far you go will be up to you…. It all depends on yourself. Do your best.” He swished his sleeve, causing the spirit stone formation he had set up around the teleportation portal to sparkle. As the spirit stones crumbled, the power of the spell formation caused a brilliant flash of light….

When the light faded away, Meng Hao was nowhere to be seen.

However, Daoist Woodflame was still there on his knees, kowtowing.

In the Eighth Mountain and Sea, the Heavengod Alliance had staked their claim to three of planets which orbited the mountain. That area was known as the Inner Ring!

Outside of the Inner Ring, the cultivators of the Heavengod Alliance used various Daoist magics to form countless asteroids together into numerous artificial planets.

That was referred to as the Outer Ring.

The artificial planets in the Outer Ring were not like the four great planets, which possessed Planet Souls and could give birth to true Immortals. At most, they provided a place for cultivators to live and practice cultivation.

However, they still looked very impressive and shocking.

Roughly seventy percent of the starry sky in the Eighth Mountain and Sea fell under the jurisdiction of the Heavengod Alliance. This space formed a single discrete territory and was protected by an invisible shield which non-Heavengod Alliance cultivators couldn’t pass through without having the requisite identity medallion and paying the entry tax.

The entry point was formed by a linear array of seven planets, which were the gateway to the Heavengod Alliance.

Meng Hao appeared on the third of those seven gateway planets, into an extraordinarily lively and bustling city.

There were cultivators everywhere, coming from and going to the Heavengod Alliance.

No one paid any attention at all to Meng Hao. However, a beam of light did spread out from the teleportation portal itself and sweep over him. The identity medallion he had requested from Daoist Woodflame immediately proved itself to be useful, glittering as it concealed his true identity.

Suddenly, Meng Hao heard an annoyed voice from off to the side. “Now that you’ve arrived, hurry up and move along. There are other people waiting.”

He looked over to see a cultivator wearing a blue and white Daoist robe, a robe which bore a special insignia that only cultivators from the Heavengod Alliance were authorized to wear.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he stepped out of the teleportation portal and then began to make his way through the city. At a glance, he could estimate that there were hundreds of thousands of cultivators making their way to and fro on this gateway planet of the Heavengod Alliance.

“Seven planets. Millions of cultivators….” Meng Hao murmured. “With business like this, the Heavengod Alliance can make endless profit….” The deepest impression that this Eighth Mountain had left on Meng Hao so far was of the vast enormity and power of the Heavengod Alliance.

“If Lord Ji hadn’t rebelled, and the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect were still around today… then the Ninth Mountain and Sea would be just like this.” Meng Hao sighed. Although he had prepared himself mentally before coming to the Eight Mountain and Sea, he had never imagined that things would be this complicated.

It wasn’t that his task itself was complicated; rather, it was the situation and circumstances at hand. As for the Blacksoul Society, it didn’t really matter how powerful it was by itself. Even though he had seen that 2-Essences Dao Realm cultivator, it wasn’t enough to make him care.

However, he did have to care about the Heavengod Alliance as a whole. If he really did just barged into the Heavengod Alliance’s territory and wiped out the Blacksoul Society, it would cause a huge stir in the entire Eighth

Mountain and Sea, and countless enemies would surely attempt to track him down and kill him.

“What a pity. If I had more time, I could handle things more smoothly. I could even start up a business and use its profits to set myself up a teleportation portal to make things easier.

“Unfortunately, there’s not enough time…. However, there are some things in life that you have to do, no matter the danger involved…. Some people need to be saved no matter what….

“It might be dangerous, but even still, how could a piddling Eighth Mountain and Sea compare to how dangerous the Windswept Realm was?!” His eyes flashed with coldness.

“I’m the future Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm, and this is MY Realm!” He took a deep breath and didn’t hesitate for a moment longer. Striding forward, he went about making the inquiries necessary to determine the location of the Blacksoul Society’s teleportation portal.

The amount of spirit stones he had to pay left his face grim, but he soon found what he was looking for, and moments later… was there at the Blacksoul Society teleportation portal!

The Blacksoul Society wasn’t qualified to be in the Inner Ring, and was instead located on an artificial planet. However, Patriarch Blacksoul’s fame was so far-reaching that even within the Heavengod Alliance he was highly esteemed. Therefore, even though the Blacksoul Society wasn’t in the Inner Ring itself, they were still very close to it.

Furthermore, it completely occupied its own planet, of which it was the lords!

The population of their sect was not enormous, only about 300,000 cultivators. However, all of them were very loyal to the sect, and practiced magic that was related to souls. They exorcised ghosts and consumed souls; their techniques were very unique, and in general, they were a very savage and cruel bunch.

Currently, several Blacksoul Society disciples were sitting cross-legged near the planetary teleportation portal. Suddenly, the portal flickered, and the disciples looked over coldly as a white-robed figure became visible.

It was none other than Meng Hao.

As the disciples looked at him with glinting eyes, one of them coldly barked, “Who goes there? State your business!”

Meng Hao acted as if he hadn’t even heard. He stood there on the teleportation portal, looking around. Soon, he caught sight of a pitch-black cliff off in the distance, upon which were written three characters.

Blacksoul Society!

It was exactly the same image he had seen in the vision via Karmic Hexing. Furthermore… he could see a huge incense burner by that cliff!

Although there was currently no smoke emanating out from it or being sucked in, Meng Hao would never forget what it looked like.

“This is the place….” he said, his voice soft but icy.

“Do you have no tongue? Or maybe someone cut it out. Since you won’t speak, I’ll just drag your soul out of you!” Because of the brutal nature of the techniques they cultivated, most members of other sects would treat disciples like them very politely. Seeing that Meng Hao was ignoring them, they let out cold harrumphs and immediately moved to attack him.

Instantly, enraged shrieks could be heard as several evil spirits flew out toward Meng Hao as if to devour him.

Retracting his gaze from the black cliff, he said “My name is Meng Hao….”

Then he waved his hand, causing a wild wind to spring out and surge toward the Blacksoul Society cultivators.

The words Meng Hao uttered next were spoken so low that only he could hear them: “I’m here for my best friend’s soul, and… to exterminate this sect!” 1

In that moment, the shrieking souls slammed into the wild wind, and then screamed miserably as they were ripped to shreds, completely destroyed. The cultivators behind them didn’t even have a chance to be surprised. The wind swept over them and they shuddered for a moment before their flesh and blood was ripped away from their bones, which then turned into ash. Unlike the souls they had summoned, they didn’t even have a chance to scream!

All but one of them… were instantly killed in spirit and body!

There was one who survived, though. A massive force wrapped around him, and he was dragged toward Meng Hao who, face calm, grabbed onto the top of his head and unleashed the magic of Soulsearching.

The cultivator trembled and began to froth at the mouth. The froth quickly turned red, and within the space of a few breaths of time, he was completely dead. Meng Hao released his grip, and the man transformed into ash.

“A total of five teleportation portals, huh…?” Meng Hao lifted his right foot into the air and then slammed it down. Instantly, the teleportation portal beneath him shattered into bits, as did the other four teleportation portals located in other locations on the planet.

“Seal the doors, then start killing!” Meng Hao said softly. As he looked up, he saw countless enraged figures flying in his direction. At the same time, innumerable streams of divine sense flew toward him. Meng Hao’s face was calm as he began to walk forward.

Note from Er Gen: The sect extermination has begun. Please give me your monthly vote tickets!

Note from Deathblade: Er Gen frequently solicits support, so I guess I might as well join him this time. The sect extermination has begun! Please support me on Patreon!

1. The word I’m translating as “best friend” here is a Chinese term used specifically to describe your closest friend of the opposite gender, a friend who you “love” but not in a romantic way. When I confirmed the definition in Chinese, it ends with this: “it is a very dangerous (friendship) because it you don’t excercise control, you can easily cross the line from friendship (into something else).” When I asked Madam Deathblade about the term, she threw up in her mouth and said she hates it when people use the term because it’s “fake,” and that if I ever used that to describe another girl, she would do horrible things to me

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1215: Single-handedly Rocking Blacksoul!

“What gall!!”

“How dare you invade the Blacksoul Society of the Heavengod Alliance! Who are you!?!?” Meng Hao heard numerous enraged roars filling his mind that were carried by the incoming streams of divine sense.

Were he an ordinary cultivator, such a convergence of divine sense would be enough to completely eradicate his mind.

Instead, he continued to stride forward. Voice cool, he said, “Like I said, my name is Meng Hao, and I’m here to exterminate this sect!”

When he spoke the final three words, his voice became like Heavenly might, crashing as loud as thunder, causing the combined power of the divine sense around him to instantly shatter like dried twigs!

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

Countless miserable shrieks could be heard in the distant Blacksoul Society.

“Kill him!”

“A foreigner is invading! Kill him!”

“I’m going to extract his soul and refine it into a flag, then I’ll fly that flag in the cold wind of an Arcane Pocket Realm… and let him scream for tens of thousands of years!!”

The sky grew dim, winds screamed, and the land quaked as countless cultivators flew into the air toward Meng Hao. All of them unleashed divine abilities, and in the blink of an eye, the sky was filled with innumerable evil souls, who shot screaming toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s expression was as calm as ever as he continued to walk forward. He waved his sleeve, and the sky rumbled as a huge fissure opened up directly in the path of the incoming cultivators. Red mist roiled out of the fissure, along with sinister laughter. A huge blood-colored head appeared, and the fissure ripped open wider as something stepped out.

It was the Blood Demon!

The Blood Demon roared as it charged forward, transforming into a sea of blood that surged out in all directions. When it reached the cultivators, numerous bloodcurdling screams rang out. Countless evil souls were destroyed, and many of the cultivators began to shake violently. Blood then started spurting out of their eyes, ears, noses, and mouths, and they were rapidly sucked dry.

Within the bloody mist, a blood spirit appeared. Lacking any emotion, it became a blood shadow which passed about, causing cultivators to scream as they withered away rapidly and then died.

The cultivators of the Blacksoul Society were known for their cruel techniques, and all of them were the type of people who had slaughtered so many others it was impossible to keep track of how many. They believed themselves to be the most brutal entities in existence. But what they were seeing right now left the Blacksoul Society cultivators were astonished.

When it came to brutality and viciousness, they couldn’t even compare at all to the Blood Demon and the blood spirit.

Meng Hao proceeded onward calmly, waving his hand again to cause numerous Immortal mountains to descend. The rumbling sounds were so intense that it sounded like an apocalypse had arrived to this world.

“How impudent!” A cold snort rang out, filled with matchless, awe-inspiring power. The thunderous sound caused the Blood Demon to tremble, the blood spirit to gape in dread, and the Immortal mountains to crumble to pieces.

As the sound echoed about, pitch-black smoke began to pour out from the vicinity of the black cliff. The smoke converged together into the form of a face, that of a middle-aged man, whose eyes sparkled like lightning as he looked at Meng Hao.

The Blacksoul Society only had one Dao Realm Patriarch. However, he was no ordinary Dao Realm cultivator. When Meng Hao had seen him by means of Karma Threads, he had been able to determine that he was a 2-Essences Dao Realm expert. However, from the power radiating out now, Meng Hao could tell that this was no 2-Essences expert… this was a 3-Essences Dao Lord!

He was the one who had called Meng Hao impudent, words which shook everything above and below. In fact, those words apparently could control the spiritual energy of Heaven and Earth, which formed a powerful force of expulsion against Meng Hao!

Meng Hao’s pupils constricted, and his heart sank a bit.

It was at this point that ten old men flew out to surround the smoke face. When they unleashed their cultivation bases, the shocking power of the great circle of the Ancient Realm exploded out!

Some of them headed directly toward the Blood Demon and the blood spirit, whereas others shot toward Meng Hao, expressions vicious.

In addition to this were over a hundred other cultivators in the Ancient Realm, surrounded by Soul Lamps. It was an impressive sight, and as their power spread out, it formed a large spell formation with towering energy that seemed capable of superseding the Heavens.

More and more cultivators of the Blacksoul Society were flying up to participate in this Dao Realm-level battle!

This was how powerful a sect could be!

“3-Essences….” Meng Hao said coolly. “Well, so what? Since I’ve come all this way, I’m going to end things here and now!!” He was sure of what he had seen earlier via the Karma Threads. Perhaps there was some factor he had been unaware of, or maybe the man had experienced a breakthrough in these past few days. Regardless of the reason why, Meng Hao was here, and even if he had to fight a 3-Essences expert, he would!

He took a fourth step, and his energy rocketed up, causing everything to shake dramatically. Some parts of the land even crumbled. At the same time, a roar could be heard from inside Meng Hao’s bag of holding. The Blood Mastiff flew out, causing everything around it to shake as its great circle Ancient Realm cultivation base exploded with shocking power.

There was even a host of shrieking black imps that turned into black beams of light and shot into the crowd.

Shockingly, Meng Hao was single-handedly rocking the entire Blacksoul Society!

He didn’t give voice to his goal of retrieving Chu Yuyan’s soul. That was something he could not reveal, lest he advertise his weak spot. Of course, if they agreed to hand over the soul, he wouldn’t be opposed to working out a deal with them, even if it cost him a lot financially.

But… if they disagreed and became aware of why he’d come, it would be incredibly dangerous for Chu Yuyan.

Therefore, the simplest method… was to exterminate the entire sect and take Chu Yuyan’s soul by force!

Meng Hao radiated a murderous aura that took form in the shape of black shockwave, which shot outward in all directions. Whatever cultivators were hit by it were instantly thrown into mental confusion and insanity.

At the same time, Meng Hao’s Allheaven Dao Immortal cultivation base erupted with power, bolstered by his Seven God Steps. His energy soared higher and higher as he took the fifth of those steps.

As he did, dozens of Ancient Realm cultivators closed in, joined by six experts in the great circle of the Ancient Realm. They unleashed massive, destructive power that merged together into an enormous Yama Soul that looked like it had just emerged from the underworld. It was clad in black armor, and while it looked human above the waist, from the waist down it had the body of a huge snake. Roaring, it hefted a Yama Weapon and lashed out toward Meng Hao with deadly force.

It was in that exact moment that Meng Hao’s foot touched down with his fifth step, and his energy soared even higher than before. The Heavens trembled and the Earth quaked. Numerous crevices snaked out over the ground, and one mountain after another began to crumble on the planet below.

In response to his surging energy, his cultivation base caused an explosive tempest to rise up, transforming into a barrier that the Yama Soul collided with. Immediately, the Yama Soul was sent tumbling backward. Unexpectedly… it was completely incapable of doing anything to that barrier.

It wasn’t even necessary to say anything about it attacking Meng Hao; it couldn’t even get within 300 meters of him.

The Yama Soul wasn’t the only thing sent tumbling away. The Ancient Realm cultivators all coughed up blood when they were hit by the barrier, and there were even some who exploded into bits. Those who weren’t killed in body and soul were heavily wounded as they were shoved backward.

The cultivators in the great circle of the Ancient Realm looked on with ashen, shocked faces.

“Who are you?!?!”

That was the question uttered as Meng Hao’s sixth step landed. His energy once again rocketed up, and his cultivation base expanded, causing the invisible barrier to push from 300 meters to 900. Even more cultivators were affected, including Immortal Realm disciples who were pushed back relentlessly. Many were killed, and the sounds of bloodcurdling screams filled the entire planet. By this point, anyone and everyone could tell that whoever this person was, he was astonishingly powerful!

“Dao Realm! He’s in the Dao Realm!!” Countless miserable screams could be heard, screams laced with terror. It didn’t matter how brutal and fierce these people normally were, their minds were now completely occupied by one thing: fear.

Their Patriarch might be in the Dao Realm, and considered mighty even among Dao Realm experts. Yet they were still filled with fear. Any Dao Realm expert was the type of person to strike indescribable dread into all hearts.

Almost in the same moment that people began to cry out, the enormous face formed from black smoke opened its mouth, causing a black wind to seethe out.

That black wind contained Essence power. Specifically, it was the shocking Essence of wind, and even more shockingly, it was intermixed with countless vicious souls whose howls filled the air. Concealed within the all-encompassing wind, the souls shot toward Meng Hao.

Now that his power had increased thanks to the sixth step, Meng Hao performed an incantation gesture with his right hand and then pushed it up into the air as if he were going to push the sky up!

“Essence of Divine Flame!”

Rumbling sounds filled the world as every cloud in the sky disintegrated. This Essence was not the color of blood, nor was it black, and not a single soul could be seen within it. What it was filled with… was a boundless sea of flames. The flames roiled outwards and became all-encompassing, causing the temperature in the entire world to rapidly reach a scaldingly terrifying level.

The sky formed a reservoir for the sea of flames, and the ground became the battlefield. Meng Hao was using the Divine Flame to counter the Soul Wind!

Essence power erupted out, causing the world to tremble even more violently. Since this was not a true planet, but rather an artificial one moulded together from smaller parts, the Dao Realm pressure currently weighing down on it caused it to show signs of imminent collapse. More and more cracks had spread out over its surface.

Then… Meng Hao took a seventh step!

That step caused his will to merge with the will of the Heavens, making him like a deity!

His energy surged up in an unprecedented fashion. He had never powered up to such heights before, and truth be told, he hadn’t even unleashed his Paragon Bridge yet. This was pure cultivation base power, which was terrifying enough to shake the Dao Realm.

He now began to grow larger; in the blink of an eye, he was like a giant, fully 3,000 meters tall. The sky began to collapse as he clenched his hand into a fist that then rocketed from the battlefield directly toward the smoke-face floating above the black cliff.

This was none other than the God-Slaying Fist!!

The face in the smoke looked grave; the feeling of intense crisis it got because of Meng Hao was something that only some of the oldest experts in the Eighth Mountain and Sea could match, something that he hadn’t felt in a very, very long time.

However, he could also tell that this was one of Meng Hao’s most powerful attacks, which he was only able to unleash after building up a huge amount of energy. Although the face could fight back against this attack, he didn’t see any need to actually do so. All he really had to do was wait for Meng Hao’s energy to be spent.

Eyes flickering coldly, the face suddenly backed up from Meng Hao’s fist strike and began to fade away. As it did, an astute gleam appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes.

Just as the face had almost completely faded away, his fist suddenly transformed into a palm, which made a grab for… the incense burner at the base of the black cliff!!

His primary goal had never been the extermination of the sect as he had loudly proclaimed, but rather… Chu Yuyan’s soul! Everything from before had been carefully executed in such a way that, even if his opponent evaded his blow, he would still be able to grab the incense burner.

Similarly, if the man didn’t evade, then Meng Hao was prepared with a follow-up move!

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# Chapter 1216: Fledgling Mountains and Seas!!

The smoke-face's eyes widened slightly, and then gleamed as it broke into a grin. Voice cold, it said, "So, you're here for that after all!"

As its voice echoed out, it did nothing to stop Meng Hao, but instead allowed his enormous hand to sail directly toward the incense burner at the base of the black cliff.

Meng Hao's heart sank, and he sighed inwardly. His opponent was a 3-Essences Dao Lord, so not only was his cultivation base powerful, he was surely profoundly wise and cunning. Meng Hao knew his plan had been slightly careless, so it was no surprise that the man noticed.

However, it also made things slightly more complicated.

"So you knew," he said, eyes flickering. "Why does that matter?!" Even if the man had picked up on the clues, that wouldn't make Meng Hao to give up on trying to snatch the incense burner. He gave a cold harrumph as the hand smashed through the air, causing rumbling sounds and even distorting the air until it was blurry.

Just when the hand was about to grab the incense burner, an invisible shield flickered into place. It wasn't until Meng Hao's hand slammed into it that it became visible.

The shield was not like an inverted bowl, but more like a net that filled the entire Blacksoul Society. If anyone tried to grab the incense burner, then the protective net would appear!

His right hand made contact with the huge net, and massive rumbling sounds emanated out. Almost immediately, the force of Meng Hao's blow was absorbed, causing the huge net to glitter radiantly.

Blinding light shone out, and intense rumbling could be heard. A mere power of absorption was not the only function of the Blacksoul Society's protective net. After absorbing the power, it could then release it in a backlash attack. It shot out from the huge net, converging on a single point, where it prepared to batter Meng Hao with Heaven-destroying, Earth-extinguishing power.

That point of convergence… was the exact point where Meng Hao was touching the net!

"You take my power, augment it, and then fire it back at me, huh…?" Meng Hao murmured, shaking as the power slammed into his hand. He suddenly laughed coldly.

"Well then, let's see if this protective spell formation is really qualified to stand in my way!" Eyes glittering icily, his right hand suddenly snapped open and he grabbed the net itself. Azure light exploded out in all directions, as did the power of an Allheaven Dao Immortal.

The ground quaked, and majestic crashes of thunder could be heard. Meng Hao roared and pushed forward. As he did, the net began to struggle back, and the backlash attack power grew even stronger.

"Think you can reflect this one?!" It was at this point that something new appeared within him… Paragon power!

It was… the power of the Paragon Bridge! It didn't manifest externally, but rather, inside of him. After causing the Paragon Bridge to become corporeal, this was a new way that he could unleash its power.

As the power of the Paragon Bridge exploded out inside of him, it became like a celestial bridge which connected every part of his body, causing indescribable power to flow through all of his qi passageways.

As soon as that massive power touched the huge net, it permeated its entire structure, which began to vibrate. It wouldn’t matter if the net was even stronger than it was now, it was powerless to fight back, and even began to shatter!

The smoke-face’s expression immediately flickered.

At the same time, Meng Hao roared, ripping the net upwards.

“BREAK!” His voice was so loud it could shake the Heavens and rock the Earth. The surrounding disciples of the Blacksoul Society looked on with gaping mouths. They almost couldn’t believe that Meng Hao had actually… uprooted their protective net!

The huge net was hundreds of thousands of meters wide, and as it was lifted into the air it looked almost like a cape. In addition, countless muffled booms could be heard as the entire thing crumbled. Meng Hao then tossed the net to the side, causing it to shatter into pieces which spiraled toward the cultivators of the Blacksoul Society.

“NO!!” countless terrified screams could be heard as the cultivators of the Blacksoul Society attempted to back up across the battlefield, their faces flickering with shock. However, their attempts to evade were in vain. Meng Hao was too fast, and when he sent the shattering net sweeping out, the cultivators it hit were instantly shredded to pieces.

In a brief moment, the entire battlefield was filled with the reek of fresh blood. The slaughter which was unfolding was happening too quickly, too suddenly. Before anyone could even think or react, the entire area was turned into a scene from hell!

As soon as Meng Hao released the net, his hand shot forward toward the incense burner.

It didn’t matter that his opponent had seen through his plan. And it also didn’t matter that this incense burner could potentially be fake. He would still attempt to grab it; it was something he simply must do!

However, in the moment that he was about to lay his hand on it, the incense burner… suddenly flickered blurrily, and Meng Hao’s hand snatched at nothing but air!

“Well, in that case, I’ll just have to enact Plan B,” Meng Hao said coolly. Even as his fingers closed around nothing, they formed into a fist which then… punched out toward the black cliff!

This action caused the smoke-face’s expression to fall. He had guessed at why Meng Hao had come here, and thus, what actions he would take, and had never considered… that he was actually determined to exterminate the Blacksoul Society.

He had assumed that he would use the threat of sect extermination as a bargaining chip to get what he wanted. How could he ever have guessed that Meng Hao had never intended to do any such thing!?

When a powerful expert came who threatened to exterminate the disciples of a sect, it wasn’t always an unresolvable situation. However… when someone truly set about to destroy the entire sect, that signified… that there was some enmity in place that was impossible to dispel!

“How dare you!” The smoke face roared, a sound that weighed down like Heavenly might, shaking everything in the area. More black smoke converged, but just when it was about to form the shape of a body, Meng Hao’s fist made contact with the black cliff.

“You watch and see how I dare!” he said, his voice cold and filled with determination as his cultivation base exploded out through his fist!

That explosive power was backed by all the cultivation base power of an Allheaven Dao Immortal, his peak fleshly body power, and his Seven God Steps. It even contained the mighty Paragon power built up by the Paragon Bridge inside of him!

All of that formed together… into the most powerful strike Meng Hao was capable of!

Rumbling sounds filled the air, and the black cliff shook. Cracking sounds could be heard, and then fissures spread out across the cliff. Suddenly, the black cliff, which represented the highest power in the Blacksoul Society… shattered to pieces!

As it did, countless souls suddenly flew out up into the sky. A Yellow Springs river appeared in midair, into which the souls merged as they sped in the direction of the Fourth Mountain to begin the cycle of reincarnation….

As the souls merged into the Yellow Springs river, they looked in Meng Hao’s direction with appreciative eyes, and would even clasp hands and bow….

As for the total number of souls, there were more than a billion!!

Even Meng Hao was shaken by the vastness of the number. He knew that the Blacksoul Society was savage, but he had never imaged than they would actually… be this savage!

Furthermore, many of those souls actually belonged to mortals!

“NO!!” howled the surrounding Blacksoul Society cultivators, trembling as though their faith had been toppled.

And yet, things weren’t over yet. Meng Hao’s display of peak power didn’t just destroy the black cliff. As it fell into pieces, the cracks continued to spread out. In the blink of an eye, they reached numerous nearby mountains and buildings, filling… the entire Blacksoul Society sect!

In fact… the entire planet was affected!

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

A cacophony of sound could be heard as mountains toppled and buildings were transformed into ash. In the blink of an eye, the entire Blacksoul Society collapsed. A huge crater appeared in the ground, like an enormous mouth that swallowed up the entire sect.

Everything about it that existed was completely eradicated!

As the sect was destroyed, countless souls flew out from all areas, more and more of them until they blotted out the sky. Seemingly infinite numbers of souls poured into the river of the Yellow Springs, and as they did, all of them expressed their thanks to Meng Hao.

There were so many souls that it was literally impossible for Meng Hao to determine how many there were!

The collective gratitude of so many souls caused Meng Hao to tremble; it was as if an invisible qi flow were somehow blessing him!

As the invisible qi flow built up within him, the drop of Paragon’s blood also began to bubble. Suddenly, that bubbling blood caused something to appear in Meng Hao’s mind. It was… Nine Mountains and Nine Seas, as well as a sun and a moon!

Meng Hao could see all of the living entities in the Nine Mountains and Nine Seas, regardless of whether they were in the Dao Realm or mortals, whether they were the Mountain and Sea Lord or ordinary cultivators….

This sudden development caused Meng Hao to stare in shock.

The vision only lasted for a moment, but in that brief moment, Meng Hao had a feeling like… he could actually… change the entire Mountain and Sea Realm with a single thought.

The sensation vanished almost immediately, and the image of the Mountain and Sea Realm left his mind. Afterward, it almost seemed like a hallucination.

“I am the future Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm…. Perhaps exterminating the Blacksoul Society really was as I said… representing the Mountain and Sea Realm to mete out Heavenly punishment….” Even as those thoughts went through his head, countless disciples of the Blacksoul Society around him were roaring.

In the same moment, a towering will of rage suddenly exploded out from the depths of the crater into which the Blacksoul Society was sinking. The intensity caused colors to flash in the sky and everything to shake. Even the Yellow Springs river suddenly stopped moving, and the countless souls therein began to shiver. Suddenly, shocking black fire erupted out from within the crater. It was like a sea of flames that rapidly took the shape of a face, the same middle-aged man as before.

He looked at Meng Hao with a furious expression and said, “Are you looking to die, knave!?”

Even as the roar echoed out, Meng Hao could see a figure slowly emerging from the flames.

As he did, a shocking, explosive power emanated out from him!

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# Chapter 1217: Patriarch Blacksoul!

Almost as soon as the man appeared, the surrounding disciples of the Blacksoul Society were enlivened, and began to cry out in loud voices.

“Patriarch!!”

“The Patriarch’s Dao might is completely unrivaled!!”

“Greetings, Patriarch!”

These disciples were terrified of Meng Hao, and found his savagery virtually impossible to describe. Were it not for the presence of their Patriarch, they would long since have fled in fear!

The sect was in ruins, and many of their compatriots were dead, but as long as the Patriarch was there, the sect still existed!

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as the Blacksoul Society’s only Dao Realm expert emerged from the flames. He was the 3-Essences Dao Lord… Patriarch Blacksoul!

Meng Hao’s mouth curled up into a cold smile. The vision he had just experienced regarding the Mountain and Sea Realm had caused many thoughts to rise up in his mind. All of a sudden, he began to back up.

That was the first time had retreated since he had arrived in the Blacksoul Society. In the blink of an eye, he was in the middle of the surrounding Blacksoul Society disciples. In their shock, they watched Meng Hao wave both hands through the air, summoning numerous Immortal mountains. Then, miserable shrieks could be heard as the disciples on either side of him were crushed. It didn’t matter how they fought back or resisted, their cultivation bases were far too weak compared to his, leaving them completely unqualified to resist.

It only took a moment for dozens of disciples to be reduced to a bloody mist as they were completely killed in body and spirit.

It wasn’t over yet, though. Even as the Immortal mountains descended, he performed an incantation gesture and then pointed down toward the ground below. Instantly, the Immortal mountains trembled and then unexpectedly… detonated!

Thousands of Immortal mountains all exploded, transforming into innumerable fragments that spread out in all directions. The ground shook and the sky lurched. In one brief moment, nearly ten thousand cultivators were wiped out by the power of the explosion.

As they died, Meng Hao suddenly sensed the qi flow inside of him growing stronger. This was the same sensation he had experienced moments before, and although he did not see images of the Nine Mountains and Nine seas, the feeling was the same.

It was also like… when he had received the blessing of qi flow in the Windswept Realm!

The main difference was that back then, the qi flow had been given to him by the Windswept Realm, but now… he was feeling something like… the return of a qi flow!!

It was similar to what had happened in the Windswept Realm, and yet was fundamentally different. One of those qi flows had been bestowed, while the other… already belonged to him!

A qi flow return!!

Meng Hao took a deep breath as hundreds of thoughts ran through his mind. The fact that the qi flow was returning indicated one thing: when all of that qi flow from the Mountain and Sea Realm returned to him…. he would be the Mountain and Sea Lord!

An enraged roar could then be heard from within the sea of flames. “Are you looking to die!?!?”

The sea of flames shot up into the air, transforming into a shooting star of fire. It moved directly toward Meng Hao with shocking speed, closing in on him in an instant, intent on blocking his attack.

At the same time, the might of a 3-Essences Dao Lord rose up. It quickly became corporeal, turning into something like indestructible city walls which smashed toward Meng Hao.

Generally speaking, anyone under the Dao Realm would be completely crushed by such pressure. Even Meng Hao couldn’t stop his eyes from widening. However, he was an Allheaven Dao Immortal, which was fundamentally a defiance of the Heavens, and enabled him to rock 2-Essences Dao Realm experts. Currently, his eyes flickered as the flame meteor closed in him. Suddenly, he made a grasping motion, causing the Lightning Cauldron to appear. Electricity danced, and just as the flame meteor was about to engulf him, he switched places with an Ancient Realm cultivator.

Moments ago, this Ancient Realm cultivator had been fighting the black imps off in the distance, until all of a sudden, he was in a new location. His vision swam, and then the sea of flames caused him to scream as he was engulfed. “Noooo….”

Patriarch Blacksoul showed no reaction whatsoever at having killed the wrong person, but his desire to kill Meng Hao climbed to the pinnacle. He was a cautious person, and had originally planned to use the power of the sect as a whole to probe Meng Hao and see what trump cards this daring individual held, who dared to take on a whole sect.

But now that Meng Hao had actually already destroyed the Blacksoul Society, Patriarch Blacksoul’s hand was forced, and he personally appeared. As of now, it didn’t matter what trump cards Meng Hao might have, he had to show his face.

However, after showing up to fight, Meng Hao didn’t battle him, but instead began to slaughter his disciples. That caused Patriarch Blacksoul’s rage to grow even stronger. As the flame meteor shot toward Meng Hao, the figure within the flames stepped forward, instantly spanning the distance between himself and Meng Hao. Then he stretched out his hand violently to grab Meng Hao.

That grasping motion caused the natural laws in the area to twist. The land was transformed, as if this will were the will of Heaven, as if this Dao were the Dao of Heaven, as if this Essence could shake the Mountains and Seas!

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. However, even as Patriarch Blacksoul appeared in front of him, he waved his finger.

Demon Sealing, Eighth Hex!

The hex immediately bound up Patriarch Blacksoul. Although he was able to break free almost immediately, that still bought Meng Hao some time, and also interfered with the natural laws, making his effort to supplant the will of Heaven become unstable.

Meng Hao’s Lightning Cauldron flickered again, and he switched positions with someone further back who was in the great circle of the Ancient Realm. Without any hesitation, he waved his hand, causing an intense sensation of danger to rise up in the man’s mind. Even as the man turned to charge toward him, a swath of Divine Flame suddenly sprang up and consumed him.

A bloodcurdling scream rang out as the magnificent great circle Ancient Realm cultivator was wiped out by the Divine Flame. In the blink of an eye, the charging cultivator was transformed into ash; not even his Nascent Divinity could escape, and was completely destroyed.

“Dammit!” Patriarch Blacksoul said, glaring at Meng Hao. Meng Hao was being very troublesome; especially the way he used his Lightning Cauldron, making it almost impossible to do anything to him.

Patriarch Blacksoul suddenly snorted coldly, then performed a double-handed incantation gesture and pointed toward the sky.

“Fire!”

Immediately, the land began to shake, and roaring filled the sky. A black sea of flames appeared, which began to sweep out in all directions.

Then, Patriarch Blacksoul pointed down, causing the land to tremble.

“Earth!”

The shattered lands below began to form together into a Soil Golem, surrounded by countless drifting motes of dust which swirled around it.

“Wind!”

Next, Patriarch Blacksoul stamped his foot down violently, causing rumbling to echo out as a black wind sprang up. It stoked the sea of flames, causing the fire to rise up, sending a blast of heat across the dust and rubble in the area, giving rise to a massive tempest!

“3 Essences; seal sky and land; melt the Heavens; become… a Dao Lord Prison!” As soon as the words left Patriarch Blacksoul’s mouth, the wind, fire, and earth transformed into three sealing marks which covered the entire world!

Each essence caused Meng Hao to feel increasing pressure weighing down on him. By the time the third one appeared, he was locked in place in midair. Massive rumbling could be heard as the disciples in Meng Hao’s vicinity were forcibly pushed away from him.

A tempest caused him to spin in place as Patriarch Blacksoul strode toward him through the winds. Then Patriarch Blacksoul extended his right hand, his eyes flickered with killing intent as he made to grab Meng Hao.

That gesture caused the natural law of Heaven and Earth to transform. An enormous face appeared, which was none other than Patriarch Blacksoul’s face. It felt as if the entire world were filled with Patriarch Blacksoul’s aura, as if his will had replaced the natural laws. It was as if this small portion of the universe, and its Dao of Heaven, had been completely replaced by Patriarch Blacksoul!

This was the most terrifying aspect of Dao Lords. They could become the Lords of the world in which they existed. Furthermore… they were the Lords of the Dao of Heaven there. That was why 3-Essences Dao Realm cultivators were referred to as Dao Lords!

“How will you flee now? How will you exterminate my Blacksoul Society disciples now?!”

Patriarch Blacksoul’s voice echoed out, causing the disciples Meng Hao had just been slaughtering to roar excitedly in support of their Patriarch.

Their voices joined together like thunder, and their killing intent merged and radiated out as they waited in anticipation for their Patriarch to eradicate Meng Hao.

However, even as Patriarch Blacksoul neared Meng Hao, and the hand that superseded the Dao of Heaven appeared in front of him, Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and he stretched both hands out to his sides.

Scintillating light suddenly shone out as a hand-sized clump of dirt suddenly shot out from Meng Hao’s bag of holding, and he responded to Patriarch Blacksoul. “I’ll kill your disciples and then you’ll know!”

As soon as the clump appeared, it began to grow with wild speed. Soon it was 300 meters, then 3,000 and then 30,000. It was indescribably heavy, and all of that weight instantly bore down onto Patriarch Blacksoul.

It slammed into his hand, causing a huge boom to echo out. At the same time, Meng Hao was hit with a backlash attack, causing blood to spray out of his mouth, and his body to tremble on the verge of collapse.

However, he forced himself to resist, and his eyes gleamed with a vicious expression. He looked at Patriarch Blacksoul, who was currently facing the 30,000-meter landmass, his face flickering. An intense sensation of deadly crisis exploded out within Patriarch Blacksoul as he realized how indescribably heavy the land mass was.

It was so heavy that it could even crush natural laws. It didn’t matter that Patriarch Blacksoul had replaced the will of the world he was in, that 30,000-meter land mass was like a dull blade that could cut a hole in the entire world with its weight alone.

“Th-that’s… a piece of the Ruins of Immortality!” Patriarch Blacksoul’s face fell, and he immediately fell back. However, the land mass continued to descend. Completely ignoring the tempest of three Essences, it crushed down toward the surface of the planet itself.

From down below, the land mass was like an enormous shadow, rumbling downward. All of the cultivators who saw it were completely astonished and began to cry out in alarm.

“What… what is that!?!?”

“Let’s get out of here!!”

The Blacksoul Society disciples that were currently in the shadow of the descending land mass held nothing back in their attempts to flee. However, the shadow itself seemed to have some strange, magnetic power that made it impossible for them to flee.

All they could do was scream in despair and look at the enormous darkness growing larger and larger above them. And then… they were crushed.

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# Chapter 1218: Mutual Deception!

Massive rumbling could be heard as the 30,000-meter chunk of the Ruins of Immortality crushed the Blacksoul Society disciples beneath it to death!

Simultaneously, an intense shockwave spread out from the place where it landed, filling the entire planet. A massive blast of wind surged out, engulfing Heaven and Earth.

Countless mountains were ripped up, and numerous rivers were transformed into raindrops. It was as if the entire planet had been punched!

The disciples in the periphery were smashed by the shockwave and sent tumbling out of control through the air, blood spraying from their mouths. It was an incredible spectacle!

The ground on the entire planet trembled and then sank downward; massive fissures spread out, and cracking sounds could be heard. The planet… had already been destabilized, and it was now showing signs that it would collapse. It was as if it had been pushed beyond the point where it could endure any longer, and… would begin to crumble at any moment!

The Blacksoul Society disciples on the surface were hit by a deafening roar. Blood sprayed out of their mouths; they were struck dead on impact. Those who survived were now numb with fear. Trembling, they began to scream, and soon, all of them were in full retreat.

Unfortunately for them, all of the teleportation portals had been sealed tight, but even so they chose to attempt an escape. The all-consuming shadow of death loomed within the hearts of all present.

Patriarch Blacksoul’s face fell. Never in his wildest conjectures could he ever have imagined that Meng Hao would actually possess a part of the rarely-seen Ruins of Immortality, here in the Eighth Mountain!

Even as the planet showed signs that it was beginning to collapse and the disciples of the Blacksoul Society were scattering in terror, killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes.

“Terracotta soldier,” he growled, “your presence is requested!” Instantly, the terracotta soldier appeared from within the 30,000-meter chunk of the Ruins of Immortality, which was still crushing down into the planet. It leaped into the air, transforming into a beam of light that shot out of the ruins to appear directly in front of one of the disciples of the Blacksoul Society. It waved its hand sweeping its greatsword through the air in a flash of flickering light.

Instantly, an enemy was killed!

The terracotta soldier’s eyes flickered and it attacked again.

“Quasi-Dao puppet!” Patriarch Blacksoul’s face flickered, and shot toward the terracotta soldier to destroy it. However, this time, Meng Hao didn’t fall back, but instead attacked.

He stepped forward, transforming into an azure-colored roc that shot toward Patriarch Blacksoul with incredible speed.

Patriarch Blacksoul’s eyes flickered with killing intent. He hated the terracotta soldier which was slaughtering his disciples, but he hated Meng Hao even more.

“When I kill you, that Quasi-Dao puppet will belong to me!” he said, spinning in place. The wave of a sleeve caused the power of flame Essence to erupt out, transforming his surroundings into a sea of flames. A wind sprang up, and soil materialized. The power of three Essences exploded out, transforming into visible killing intent that shot toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered almost imperceptibly. He still had not utilized his all-powerful Paragon Bridge, nor his Battle Weapon. Instead, he performed an incantation gesture, sending the Essence of Divine Flame out, backed by the will of an Allheaven Dao Immortal.

He was relying on his own power alone to fight the three Essences of Patriarch Blacksoul. Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth as he fell back. Patriarch Blacksoul grinned maliciously and advanced.

As he neared, Meng Hao waved his right index finger, causing the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex to appear. After that was the Seventh Hex, the Sixth Hex, and the Fifth Hex, all in quick succession.

Patriarch Blacksoul lurched to a stop in midair. Karma Threads appeared around him, and soul blood flew out from his forehead. A massive rift opened up in front of him, which emanated the power of the Inside-Outside Hex as it tried to consume him.

All of this happened in a brief moment. Meng Hao threw his head back and roared, and his energy surged up as he fused with the starstone in his eye and transformed into a shooting star, surrounded by scorching Divine Flame, swirling Immortal mountains, and even the explosive power of the sun and moon.

It was even possible to see the faint image of nine mountains. Meng Hao was apparently using his most powerful divine abilities to attack Patriarch Blacksoul.

They closed in with rapid speed as Patriarch Blacksoul threw his head back and roared. He waved his arm, casting off all the Hexing magics, then waved his right index finger out, tapping Meng Hao’s shooting star form.

“That Quasi-Dao puppet and these magical techniques are your trump cards, huh?” Patriarch Blacksoul said coldly. “I can crush them in an instant!” As his finger tapped down onto the shooting star, cracks spread out, and the One Thought Stellar Transformation formed from Meng Hao’s starstone collapsed into pieces.

However, as that happened, Meng Hao appeared, his right hand already transformed into the Battle Weapon!!

Shockingly, he had used the starstone to hide the transformed copper mirror. As soon as the power of the starstone fell apart, Meng Hao’s killing intent skyrocketed, as if he had been holding back and building it up. All of a sudden, his blade was flashing like lightning toward Patriarch Blacksoul.

The attack was completely unexpected, and was backed by the terrifying power of numerous natural laws. Suddenly, fear welled up within Patriarch Blacksoul’s heart.

He fell back rapidly, causing his cultivation base to explode out with its full power. He also called upon the full power of his Essences to attempt to block the blade. A massive boom rang out, and scintillating light shone out as if the Heavens were being split open. Blood oozed out of Patriarch Blacksoul’s mouth. However, a mocking gleam could be seen in his eyes.

Although the slash of the blade wounded him in a way that didn’t heal… it was only a slight wound. After all, Patriarch Blacksoul was a very cautious person. Everything he had been doing so far was an attempt to get Meng Hao to use his trump cards. He wanted to know for sure exactly what made Meng Hao so confident that he would take the Blacksoul Society on alone.

Stupid people could not practice cultivation to his level. Not knowing exactly what trump cards his opponent had left him in a state of unease….

“So this is your trump card,” Patriarch Blacksoul said coldly. “Not bad. Unfortunately, although it’s pretty good, you used it at the wrong time. Or perhaps it’s better to say that it doesn’t really matter how you use it, I have already taken precautions against something like that! You are doomed to be defeated.”

Now that he felt a bit less on edge, he smiled viciously and waved his finger through the air. Rumbling could be heard, and the air distorted as a huge incense burner suddenly appeared above his head.

“Well then, now it’s my turn to attack… and extract your soul!”

In the instant that the incense burner appeared, Meng Hao looked at it closely. After confirming that it was what he was looking for, a grin appeared on his face, along with an emotional sigh.

“Well it took long enough,” he murmured softly, “and I even had to reveal my Battle Weapon. Finally you pull it out….”

As soon as the words left his mouth, Patriarch Blacksoul gaped in shock!

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# Chapter 1219: Planet Blacksoul, Crumble!

In almost the exact same moment that Patriarch Blacksoul’s face fell, Meng Hao lifted his right hand. A strange gleam flickered in his eyes as he pointed up toward the Heavens.

“Paragon… Bridge!” he said softly. Rumbling sounds could be heard coming from inside Meng Hao himself, and suddenly, everyone could see something inside his body. Not even his clothing could cover up the bright arc of light that stretched from the top of his head all the way to his dantian region and formed… a bridge!

A spectacular bridge hidden inside his body, almost like a qi meridian. Then… the bridge materialized up in the sky….

The Paragon Bridge!

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

Massive rumbling could be heard as the sky collapsed, the space it had occupied now completely filled by the Paragon Bridge. It radiated awe-inspiring might, and a dazzling glow. The countless magical symbols which covered its surface glittered, and the bridge was so large that anyone who saw it couldn’t help but stare with wide eyes.

“What magic is this…?” The fleeing disciples of the Blacksoul Society gasped and stared, eyes wide with disbelief.

Patriarch Blacksoul was also gaping. Based on the level of his cultivation base, he knew what he was looking at and cried out in alarm.

“Paragon magic! Y-you’re… in the Echelon!!” At the same time that his voice echoed out, pressure exploded out from the Paragon Bridge, crushing down onto the lands, causing the entire world to tremble. Instantly, Patriarch Blacksoul was engulfed by massive force.

He trembled, and a look of astonishment appeared on his face. Not only was he terrified by the pressure that was crushing down onto him… his body was physically shaking.

A terrifying sensation rose up in his heart, and he sensed an indescribable feeling of deadly crisis. That sensation told him that if he tried to fight against this Paragon Bridge, there was a great risk that he would perish!!

“Impossible! Even the Paragon magic of the Echelon isn’t this powerful. This is impossible!!”

At the same time that Patriarch Blacksoul was completely shaken, a glowing beam shot out from the Paragon Bridge, a dazzling light filled with Paragon power. In the blink of an eye, it enveloped the incense burner which floated above Patriarch Blacksoul’s head.

The incense burner began to vibrate, and was then slowly dragged toward the Paragon Bridge.

“Get back here!” Patriarch Blacksoul growled. He might be experiencing a sensation of deadly crisis, and might have been shaken by the Paragon Bridge, but he was still a 3-Essences Dao Lord. He was the overlord of this world, a person who had fought countless battles throughout his life. He might be surprised, but he still let out a vicious roar, causing his divine sense to spring out and prevent the incense burner from being taken.

He had realized earlier that his opponent had come for the incense burner, and he had no intention of letting him take it.

In the instant that Patriarch Blacksoul roared, Meng Hao extended his hand and made a grasping motion toward the incense burner. The Star Plucking Magic was unleashed, which combined with the power of the Paragon Bridge, causing the incense burner to be dragged rapidly toward Meng Hao.

“That’s my treasure, the legacy of the Blacksoul Society! You think you can just take it away!?” Patriarch Blacksoul bit the tip of his tongue and spit out some blood. Then he roared, causing the incense burner to stop in place. Despite the power of the Paragon magic, it suddenly began to fly back in the direction of Patriarch Blacksoul.

Meng Hao frowned, and his eyes flickered icily. With a cold harrumph, he stepped forward and appeared on top of the Paragon Bridge, where he stamped down violently with his right foot.

The Paragon Bridge rumbled, and the light surrounding it spread out in all directions. The pressure from the bridge then increased to the absolute maximum Meng Hao was able of unleashing.

That amount of crushing force could shake Heaven and Earth!

The planet had already been in a state of imminent collapse, but now, it couldn’t endure any longer. Massive rumbling could be heard… as the surface of the planet crumbled completely!

Massive chunks of land were hurled about wildly, and intense crashing sounds could be heard as cracks spread out everywhere. Mountains were leveled, and rivers evaporated. The countless fleeing Blacksoul Society disciples on the planet were experiencing an apocalypse, and none of them possessed the wherewithal to successfully escape it.

In the blink of an eye, the cultivators began to scream as the power of planetary destruction completely pulverized them. Even more were consumed by the fissures forming in the crumbling lands around them, and some actually exploded into clouds of blood and gore from the pressure emanating from the bridge.

The few cultivators who somehow managed to evade death would suddenly find themselves facing the terracotta soldier, who swung its greatsword and slaughtered any escapees.

The entire planet that housed the Blacksoul Society was experiencing a doomsday!

The destruction of the lands accelerated, and the sky collapsed. The entire planet… looked like a clenched fist that was now quickly opening up.

“Crumble!” Meng Hao cried, pushing his hand downward.

That gesture caused the pressure coming from the Paragon Bridge to increase by a full order of magnitude, ensuring that the entire planet was completely destroyed.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

The whole planet was collapsing!

Countless fragments shot out into the starry sky as a massive force exploded out from the planet itself. It exploded, sending a huge shockwave blasting out in all directions. Without exception, all of the Blacksoul Society disciples were hit, causing blood to spray out in all directions as their bodies were shredded.

The entire planet was now reduced to countless fragments which floated out into the starry sky.

The only things that remained were wreckage, corpses, and chunks of gore….

The reek of blood hung heavy over the area, and it seemed as if it would never dissipate for all eternity.

Patriarch Blacksoul stared in shock and coughed up a mouthful of blood. His body withered a bit, and began to tremble. His mouth opened, and a strange sound could be heard, as if he had thousands of things he wanted to say, but they were all stuck in his throat.

In the moment that the planet collapsed and the blood sprayed from his mouth, the incense burner which he had been attempting to wrest control of, was wrenched away by Meng Hao and the Paragon Bridge.

In a bright beam of colorful light, the incense burner… flew toward Meng Hao, shrank down, and landed in his palm!

In that instant, Meng Hao shivered as he was sensed some familiar fluctuations coming from inside the light.

However, whether it was because they were inside the incense burner, or because of other reasons, those fluctuations were very faint. So faint, in fact, that they seemed to be on the verge of fading away completely. For some reason, Meng Hao… felt uneasy.

However, there was no time to investigate the matter now. Planetary debris was floating about in all directions, and in the middle of it all was a bridge, upon which stood Meng Hao. Beneath that bridge was Patriarch Blacksoul, trembling violently, eyes completely bloodshot, seemingly on the verge of going mad.

He looked around at the destroyed planet that had once housed the Blacksoul Society, and all of the dead disciples. The sect which he had personally built up was now fading away into the starry sky.

The sight caused him to tremble, and throw his head back and let out the most piercing of howls!

“Child, I won’t rest until you are dead!!” As the sound of his howl echoed out in all directions, his energy surged up. His hair was thrown into disarray as he went completely mad. Staring dead at Meng Hao, he charged in attack.

Essence power erupted around him, causing Meng Hao’s eyes to widen. Of course, he was well aware that his action of destroying this planet would catch the attention of the Heavengod Alliance.

In fact, he probably didn’t have very much time left before the Alliance’s almighty experts showed up.

Meng Hao sighed. He had chosen to destroy the planet because he had no other alternative. That was the only way to inflict serious damage to Patriarch Blacksoul, and thus lay hands on the incense burner.

“I’ve got to end this quickly!” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with killing intent. He quickly placed a sealing mark on the incense burner and put it away, then lifted his right hand high into the air, causing the Battle Weapon to appear once more as a shocking blade!

RUMBLE!

Meng Hao’s energy surged up and then exploded out, causing a Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering murderous aura to transform him into something like a celestial warrior!

Next, the meat jelly flew out of his bag of holding, transforming into a suit of armor. His energy once again exploded up, creating a tempest that swept all the dust and rubble around him away.

A red beam of light flew out, which was the mastiff. As it became a cape, Meng Hao threw his head back and roared, and an intense, bloody glow erupted up.

Then he lifted up his left hand, within which was his fourth Nirvana Fruit, which he pushed down onto his forehead.

As it merged into him, rumbling filled his mind, and the world around him changed. The rubble of the planet, the starry sky… all turned azure!

As Meng Hao stood on the Paragon Bridge, he suddenly breathed in sharply, which caused the Paragon Bridge to immediately flare with boundless light. A sensation of unbridled supremacy emanated from it, which was sucked in and absorbed by Meng Hao, so that it seemed as if he were….

A living, breathing Paragon!!

As Patriarch Blacksoul closed in, Meng Hao performed a tremendous downward slash toward him with the Battle Weapon!

This was his most powerful state, and his most powerful strike. He was at the pinnacle!

The starry sky seemed to lurch to a stop. Natural laws scattered. Time seemed to come to a standstill in the Eighth Mountain and Sea….

The only thing that remained within the starry sky was the long blade, radiating brilliant light as it flashed toward Patriarch Blacksoul.

Patriarch Blacksoul threw his head back and roared, waving both hands. Suddenly, he exploded, causing flesh and blood to burst about. It transformed into a blood mist, from within which surged… a seemingly endless amount of souls!

“Blacksoul Heaven Slaughter!” A droning sound could be heard as seemingly endless numbers of souls filled the starry sky, spreading out to fill nearly half of the starry sky above the Heavengod Alliance. The shocking sight caused all of the planets within the affected area to tremble. Countless Heavengod Alliance cultivators who were in meditative trances opened their eyes and looked up in shock.

In that moment, countless streams of divine sense swept through the void toward the area where Meng Hao and Patriarch Blacksoul were fighting!

The Heavengod Alliance was thrown into a huge commotion!

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# Chapter 1220: When Rivals Face Off, Victory Goes To the Brave

The blood mist formed from Patriarch Blacksoul’s body used his essence-blood to release the souls that he had refined over countless years of cultivation. The seemingly infinite amount of souls exploded out into the starry sky, where they transformed into an enormous mask. The mask of souls writhed, and shrill screams could be heard, as if the souls wished to consume all things to dispel their pain.

The screams they uttered could not be heard by living things; they were screams born of death, and resulted only in boundless, amorphous ripples!

The ripples spread out through the starry sky as if over the surface of water. As the rings expanded, natural laws trembled and fell into retreat. Even the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm seemed to flee from the affected area.

Gradually, a shocking image of the underworld appeared. The Yellow Springs could be seen, as well as the cycle of reincarnation, along with the images of countless evil ghosts.

More shocking than that was that behind the ghosts could be seen numerous… enormous tombs!

The tombs were all illusory, and it was almost as if the excessive number of souls in the area had caused them to descend. As the tombs appeared, they became a backdrop that served to emphasize the size of the mask.

Everything that was happening made the strangeness of the soul mask and its formidability seem more pronounced…. Furthermore, it had such a terrifying aura that Meng Hao’s pupils constricted.

This was the explosive power of a 3-Essences Dao Lord, someone who could shake Heaven and Earth. Meng Hao had been in mortal danger from the moment he had arrived in the Blacksoul Society, but now that level of danger increased dramatically.

The sensation of crisis he was experiencing told him that this battle, and especially this attack… could end with him perishing!

“But the danger is mutual….” he said, eyes glittering viciously. He always treated both himself and others with incredible viciousness. If he felt the inclination to back down for even a moment during this fight, then he would be dead for sure!

The only option was to reject the option of retreat and to keep fighting. After all… when rivals face off, victory goes to the brave!

Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a strange light, and he didn’t back down in the least. All of the peak level of power in him converged on the Battle Weapon, which slashed through the starry sky with scintillating light as he slashed it down.

The soul mask let out an intense roar as it slammed into the most powerful of Meng Hao’s attacks, the slash of the Battle Weapon.

A huge boom could be heard, and a massive, explosion rumbled out for 50,000 kilometers in every direction, then 500,000 kilometers. Then 5,000,000….

By now, more than half of the Heavengod Alliance could sense the ripples!

The streams of divine sense which had converged in the area were instantly distorted by the explosive outburst, and then shattered!

The surrounding dust and rubble vibrated, and then transformed into ash, which slowly faded away. The battle between Meng Hao and Patriarch Blacksoul was releasing far too much power. The starry sky trembled and began to crack apart. Suddenly, an enormous black hole appeared right between Meng Hao and Patriarch Blacksoul!

Everything shook and trembled violently!

Endless amounts of Patriarch Blacksoul’s countless screaming souls were wiped away. And yet, he used the remaining souls he had to disregard all danger and charge toward Meng Hao.

He slammed into Meng Hao, who trembled violently in response. The cape separated from his back, transforming into the mastiff, who coughed up a mouthful of blood. Meng Hao was now in far more danger than before.

There was even a voice inside of him yelling at him to flee, to escape, to stop fighting lest he be killed!

And yet, he gritted his teeth, ignored the voice inside, and continued to fight.

He knew that in this battle, he couldn’t back down. He had to fight, and keep fighting until the very end. Whoever could walk that narrow line between life and death would be the victor!

Rumbling could be heard as more and more of the souls in Patriarch Blacksoul’s soul mask collapsed. Each soul that collapsed sent pain into Patriarch Blacksoul’s mind, but he also held on. He was filled with an obsessive desire to strike down Meng Hao!

“DIE!” screamed the converged voices of all the souls in the soul mask.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

Meng Hao’s meat jelly suit of armor was torn off of him. Numerous streams of light swirled out to form together behind Meng Hao in the form of the meat jelly, who looked incredibly listless.

Meng Hao coughed up some more blood; his body was now a mass of completely mangled flesh!

And yet he held on. Patriarch Blacksoul was also trembling; despite the severe loss of souls, he used what he had left to charge madly toward Meng

Hao. From a distance, it would look like Meng Hao was hovering alone in the starry sky, surrounded by a boundless sea of souls!

He was holding on, as was the sea of souls!

However, it was at this moment that a tremor ran through him, and his fourth Nirvana Fruit was forced out of his forehead.

When that happened, Meng Hao was severely weakened. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and yet, his momentum didn’t falter. Eyes bloodshot, clearly weaker than before, he lifted his foot up and took a step forward.

That step represented his determination, and also his ruthlessness!

As he took that step, Patriarch Blacksoul’s consciousness began to blur, and yet, boundless ripples exploded out from the sea of souls!

Both of them were almost completely drained, and were waiting to see… who could hold on longer!

“DIIIIEEEEEEEEE!” screamed Patriarch Blacksoul’s countless souls. As they howled, they burst into flames, increasing their attacking power. Some of them even landed on Meng Hao and began to voraciously attempt to consume him!

As Patriarch Blacksoul continued to fight, every soul of his that died was like a powerful mental blow. And yet, he held on, his obsession burning like an undying fire.

Meng Hao was wracked with pain as the souls gnawed at his flesh and tore out bloody chunks to reveal the bones beneath. Then the souls began to chew on the bones, even boring into his body to eat his organs!

The scene which was playing out was extremely shocking; to be eaten alive in such away was something ordinary people would never be able to endure.

But Meng Hao simply frowned and ignored the souls. He rotated his cultivation base, causing his qi and blood to surge, crushing the voracious, evil souls like a giant millstone.

Soon, his entire body was a mass of bloody gore. By now, Meng Hao’s power was severely lacking, and his Paragon Bridge, which was also the subject of suicidal attack by Patriarch Blacksoul’s numerous souls, was forced back inside his body.

The instant the Paragon Bridge vanished, the souls let out piercing shrieks and pounced on Meng Hao. He was now completely engulfed by wild, ravenous souls!

The Battle Weapon began to fall apart, but just before it faded away, Meng Hao coughed up a mouthful of blood and then slashed down one more time!

“Patriarch Blacksoul, do you… have the courage to die together with me!?”

The souls which formed Patriarch Blacksoul had been rapidly fading away. From 10,000,000 to 1,000,000 to the current 100,000. A huge boom could be heard as the souls were shaken off of Meng Hao, either destroyed or sent spinning away.

Patriarch Blacksoul once again appeared, although he had no body left, only a screaming Nascent Divinity. He was now completely terrified of Meng Hao; he had never encountered someone as vicious as this. Moments ago, Meng Hao had been completely engulfed by souls, which had instantly started to chomp away at his bones and organs.

That was a type of pain that very few people could endure. And yet, even in such a state, Meng Hao made a counter-attack. That was something even more rarely seen!

“Dammit, when did someone as vicious as this show up in the Eighth Mountain and Sea?! He’s definitely not a local cultivator, he must be from another Mountain and Sea!!” Patriarch Blacksoul was trembling internally, and had apparently regained his senses from the anguish caused by seeing his sect destroyed. Finally, he began to think reasonably; without any further hesitation, he ceased any thoughts of attacking Meng Hao and simply fled.

When rivals meet, victory goes to the brave, and in this case… Patriarch Blacksoul was the one who backed down!

That wasn't what he wanted to do, but he had no other choice. His heart was pounding in fear, and his mind was filled with terror. He might be a 3-Essences Dao Lord, but right now, he was the one who was scared!

He was completely shaken by Meng Hao's viciousness, completely moved by his determination. Meng Hao's madness caused Patriarch Blacksoul to feel almost as if the person whose sect had just been exterminated was not himself, but actually, Meng Hao!

"Crazy!" he cried. "You're just a lunatic. Dammit…. You don't deserve to have me die together with you, but I swear that I will pay back the enmity of this day upon you a hundredfold!!"

Roaring defiantly, Patriarch Blacksoul's Nascent Divinity fled at top speed. It wasn't that he didn't dare to keep fighting, but rather, that he feared dying. He didn't even want to die while delivering a fatal blow to his enemy.

Seeing that Patriarch Blacksoul was fleeing, Meng Hao almost began to give chase. However, after he took a single step, he trembled and stopped in place. Roughly seventy percent of his entire body was nothing more than bones, and of those bones, thirty percent were broken and shattered.

His was completely covered with bite marks, and one of his eyes had even been ripped out. His internal organs were also severely damaged.

In terms of physical appearance, he looked horrifying.

Without his Eternal stratum constantly replenishing his life force, Meng Hao would have long since passed away….

The Battle Weapon faded away, and his body suddenly seemed to age. He coughed up a mouthful of blood, and his mangled organs shifted. Meng Hao sagged, and his aura weakened.

Based on his current battle prowess, he was not a match for a 3-Essences Dao Lord, not without the Paragon Bridge. And yet, even with the Paragon Bridge, and his various powerful divine abilities, he still couldn’t manage to cut down a 3-Essences Dao Lord. In the end… they were evenly matched!

He wanted to give chase, but it was impossible. Even more importantly, the numerous streams of divine sense in the area indicated that almighty experts from the Heavengod Alliance were currently rushing in his direction.

He had been aware all along that his actions would arouse the wrath of the Heavengod Alliance, and as of now, it would only be moments before the area was be filled with countless cultivators, who would then lock down the entire region.

He looked at the direction in which Patriarch Blacksoul was fleeing, eyes flickering coldly. Finally, he turned and left.

Moments later, numerous beams of colorful light filled the area. In the lead position was a man in a violet robe, whose aura placed him in the Dao Realm.

“Send orders to the entire Heavengod Alliance. Lock down all exit routes within Alliance territory. All Alliance cultivators in the Ancient Realm and higher are to be mobilized to kill the foreign cultivator!” The old man swished his sleeve, using a special technique to spread a message to all regions of the Heavengod Alliance.

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# Chapter 1221: A Scholar Taking the Imperial Examinations

Even as the old man spoke, a screen materialized in front of him, which began to replay the battle between Meng Hao and Patriarch Blacksoul.

At one point, the old man waved his finger, causing the moving images to pause and clearly display Meng Hao’s face. However, the old man didn’t take time to study Meng Hao. Instead, he closed his eyes and took a deep breath.

Then he waved his right hand, causing the image to vanish, leaving behind nothing more than a strand of white qi.

Voice cool, the old man said, “Appearances can change, blood can be altered, and auras can be transformed. However, the fragrance of a soul is something that can never be changed….”

A large number of cultivators had already begun to gather around him, but none of them spoke; they simply looked at him respectfully.

The old man reached out and grabbed the white strand of qi, then clenched his hand down viciously. When he opened it, a white crystal could be seen. He waved his hand, causing the white crystal to split into two parts, which then became four, then eight. In a very brief period of time, 100,000 crystals could be seen!

All but a few hundred of the 100,000 white crystals made a droning sound as they spread out in all directions, quickly vanishing into the void as they headed toward the various sects of the Heavengod Alliance.

“If you get close to the foreigner, the crystal will react…. Patriarch Blacksoul has asked it to be made known that if anyone can slay this person, he is willing… to become their slave for a thousand years!” With that, the old man turned and headed off into the distance.

The cultivators behind him clasped hands respectfully. Afterward, they grabbed the white crystals, and their eyes shone with a strange light. Finally, they dispersed as they began to search for Meng Hao.

The entire Heavengod Alliance was set in motion. Soon, news began spreading about the foreign cultivator who had single-handedly exterminated the entire Blacksoul Society, even collapsing their planet. Most important was the news about Patriarch Blacksoul himself, which spread through the Heavengod Alliance like wildfire.

Countless hearts were completely shaken. After all, the bounty offered by the Heavengod Alliance was a thousand years of servitude by Patriarch Blacksoul, who was a 3-Essences Dao Lord. That was something that both individual cultivators and even entire Sects could not possibly be unmoved by.

It was far better than some physical treasure or access to a special technique.

Furthermore, no one needed to worry about being cheated. Even if Patriarch Blacksoul wanted to back out from the agreement, the Heavengod Alliance wouldn’t fail to honor their bounty.

Most importantly… if the person who wiped out the Blacksoul Society had done so without being injured, then many people would have chosen to just sit back and watch what happened. However, according to the information provided by the Heavengod Alliance, he was actually severely injured, and could not unleash cultivation base power that exceeded the mid Ancient Realm!

Even Patriarch Blacksoul had attested to that.

As such, all of the cultivators of the Heavengod Alliance were thrown into a state of madness….

Numerous individuals sprang into action and began to hunt through the Heavengod Alliance's territory. Virtually all teleportation portals in the Heavengod Alliance were sealed, and those which could not be sealed were heavily guarded. Anyone who wanted to leave would be thoroughly inspected.

As time passed, the news about the extermination of the Blacksoul Society spread outside of the Heavengod Alliance, to be heard by the Han Clan, and the Meng Clan, and all the other sects in the Eighth Mountain and Sea. Everyone was completely shocked.

Furthermore, everyone was speculating about who this person was that the Heavengod Alliance was hunting. After a bit of investigation was done, news spread that he was not a cultivator from the Eighth Mountain and Sea, but rather, from another of the Mountains and Seas. Also… he was an Echelon cultivator with Paragon magic!

With so much news spreading about, it wasn't long… before Meng Hao's name came to be known by the powerful sects and clans.

Matters had already reached the point where no further verification was required. Meng Hao… was the person who had exterminated the Blacksoul Society!

There was one thing that Meng Hao had no way of knowing, which was that after the battle of the Windswept Realm, when all the Echelon cultivators returned to their respective Mountains and Seas… numerous powerful sects had begun keeping records and files about Meng Hao.

Currently, Patriarch Blacksoul was on one of the planets in the Heavengod Alliance, having reformed a new body. Although his face was ashen, when he saw the image of Meng Hao being shown to him on the screen, he began to shake, and his eyes glowed with madness and killing intent.

“That's definitely him!”

Two middle-aged cultivators stood near Patriarch Blacksoul. They wore unique clothing, long white robes marked with lightning symbols. Within those lightning symbols were people, who were clearly in the midst of transcending tribulation!

Daoist robes like these… were only worn by members of the Heavengod Society!

The Heavengod Society formed the nucleus of the Heavengod Alliance. They occupied the peak of the Eighth Mountain and Sea, and in fact, the Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea resided in the Heavengod Palace.

There were many rumors floating around the Eight Mountain and Sea regarding their Lord, who was Heavengod. According to the rumors, he was linked to the Meng Clan in numerous ways. However, it was also possible that those were distorted rumors caused because of the general decline of the Meng Clan in recent years.

Other rumors stated that the Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea also had Han Clan blood in his veins. Some people even claimed that the Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea… was a rogue cultivator who had reached the Dao Realm.

Currently, the two middle-aged men wearing those unique Daoist robes exchanged a glance, then put the screen away. They had been ordered to come here and show the image on the screen to Patriarch Blacksoul for verification purposes. Now that they had the answer to their question, they turned to leave.

Patriarch Blacksoul gritted his teeth and clasped hands respectfully to the two cultivators. “Many thanks, Fellow Daoists from the Heavengod Society. This man must die; he is far too vicious and sinister. He is an outrage to gods and men alike!”

His heart was filled with bitterness; because of the level of his cultivation base and his status, he should not have to be doing things like this. At the moment, though, he was like a stray dog. His soul was halfway dispersed and his cultivation base was unstable, leaving him with no other choice than to bow his head in compliance.

The entire Heavengod Alliance was now searching for Meng Hao…. And yet, as time passed, not one scrap of information about him turned up. People were starting to get impatient because of the sealed teleportation portals; it would soon reach the point where it would become a big inconvenience to the Heavengod Alliance as a whole. Furthermore, Patriarch Blacksoul could only influence the policy-making of the Alliance up to a point.

Were it not for the fact that Patriarch Blacksoul had been firm about offering himself up to be a slave for a thousand years, then the search would never even have happened, nor would there have been any bounty at all. If Meng Hao showed his face publicly, he probably would have been killed, but the teleportation portals wouldn't have been sealed for very long.

Every day that those portals remained sealed caused the Heavengod Alliance to sustain significant financial losses.

Before departing, one of the two middle-aged men turned to Patriarch Blacksoul and said, "At the most, the portals will remain sealed for ten days. If he hasn't been found by then, they will be opened again. Don't worry, though; as long as he remains in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, he'll be found eventually."

Meanwhile….

In the territory of the Heavengod Alliance, on one of the four planets that orbited the Eighth Mountain, a planet called Planet Luo River, there was a capital city of an empire of mortals. Countless mortals lived there, going about their daily lives. As evening fell, a donkey could be seen on the public highway, braying and snorting complacently as it walked along.

The donkey had virtually no fur, with only a few patches to be seen here and there. It actually looked very down and out, and yet for some reason, had a very high and mighty air to it.

A young scholar sat on the donkey, wearing a scholar’s traveling case on his back, which was filled with various reading materials. In fact, the young man was engrossed in reading as he rode along on the donkey. 1

The scholar had skin as fair as jade, and was handsome. He appeared to be a teenager, and wore a faded white garment. He and the donkey proceeded along under the evening sun.

Occasionally, some swiftly galloping horses would pass him on the public highway, leaving clouds of dust in their wake. The scholar would cover his nose with his sleeve and then wave the dust away. As for the mule, it would look very irritated, and then suddenly burst out in a fit of speed as if to catch up. However, after running for only a little bit, it would lazily slow down.

Time passed, and the rays of the evening sun were beginning to fade away. However, it was at this point that a town appeared up ahead. Apparently the scholar didn’t even notice, however, and continued to take advantage of the fading light to read the bamboo scroll he held in his hands.

Occasionally, beams of colorful light would shoot through the sky up ahead. In fact, the power of divine sense was currently sweeping across the lands, and even touched the scholar. However, it passed right over him; apparently, the mortals of Planet Luo River weren’t afraid of cultivators. Throughout the entire day, similar beams of light had appeared on dozens of occasions. Although the mortals had looked up in envy and admiration, they didn’t seem frightened at all.

Eventually, the beams of light disappeared. Finally, the scholar put down the bamboo scroll, stretched, and then noticed the town, which was getting closer and closer. He smiled, although deep within that smile could be seen a sharp coldness.

This scholar was the very person that the cultivators of the Heavengod Alliance were searching for high and low. Meng Hao!

After his initial flight, he knew that it would be difficult to completely evade the Heavengod Alliance, so he went along with his usual plan, heading to the closest of the four planets, which was Planet Luo River. With the help of the meat jelly and the parrot, and the feather they had acquired years ago, he had concealed the fluctuations of his soul and aura, transforming himself into a scholar.

There was no other identity that gave him such a sense of familiarity.

“I never imagined that I would once again become a scholar traveling to take the Imperial examinations….” he murmured. The donkey was apparently not very happy, and to make that clear, it suddenly twisted its neck in a complete circle, then continued to twist it several times until its eyes started to bulge out. Meng Hao slapped it on the rump.

“Have you ever seen any donkeys that can twist their necks around several times over?” Meng Hao growled. “Come on, let’s be a bit more realistic here. People are trying to track us down and kill us, you know. If they find us, it’ll be bad luck for the two of you as well.”

The donkey… was none other than the transformed meat jelly.

“Come on, let’s head into this town…. I refuse to believe that the Heavengod Alliance will keep everything locked down forever.” Eyes flashing coldly, Meng Hao rubbed his chest in a place where the flesh hadn’t quite grown back yet.

His cultivation base had been seriously injured because of the deadly battle. However, it wasn’t so bad that he was limited to the mid Ancient Realm, as the Heavengod Alliance presumed. Unfortunately thought, he was not back at his peak. He… still needed some more time.

“I’m going to take advantage of this chance to let my wounds heal a bit more,” he murmured. As the sun slowly dropped over the horizon, he sighed, and his face turned a bit grimmer.

The first thing he had done after arriving on Planet Luo River was to open the incense burner. However, what he had found inside was not what he had hoped for…. Chu Yuyan’s soul.

Meanwhile….

A flying shuttle was speeding along through the starry sky of the Heavengod Alliance. Countless magical symbols covered its surface, which formed together into the character Meng .

This was none other than a Meng Clan merchant ship!

A young man could be seen in that merchant ship. He was handsome, but had scars covering his face. He was currently standing there with head bowed and fists clenched tightly as the middle-aged man before whom he stood rebuked him coldly.

“Meng Chen, don’t forget that you never should even have had this chance. It’s only because of the kindness shown to me by your grandfather years ago that I managed to fight to get you this spot. Don’t forget your place! You’re just a bodyguard here, but you need to cherish that identity. If you can just keep Young Master De happy, then your bloodline will have things much easier!

“So what if he arranged to have you accompany Young Lord Feng of the Han Clan? You feel wronged or something? Young Master De already agreed. You’re going whether you want to or not.”

1. Whenever I think about traveling scholars, the first image that pops into my mind is the main character of A Chinese Ghost Story, who wears a traveling case just like this one. Here’s another picture. P.S. If you haven’t seen A Chinese Ghost Story before, you should put it on your list of movies to check out. It’s described as a supernatural/horror movie, but has a lot of wuxia and xianxia elements

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# Chapter 1222: Storm Clouds Approach

Around the same time that countless cultivators in the Heavengod Alliance were combing the starry sky for Meng Hao, someone was passing through the barrier between the Eighth Mountain and the Ninth Mountain.

Every step he took left him trembling, as if incredible pressure were weighing down on him. From the look of things, he had been traveling for a very long time to reach this point.

“It’s not that much farther… it’s too bad that with this body, passing through the barrier is quite a task….” It was a young, handsome man whose eyes glittered as if with starlight and with a sense of enigmatic profoundness.

It was none other than… Ji Dongyang!!

“Meng Hao… the Eighth Mountain and Sea is where you and I… will become one!” A strange smile could be seen on his face, and his expression was one of anticipation as he continued to struggle through the barrier.

Meanwhile, back outside the Heavengod Alliance, rumbling sounds could be heard coming from one particular asteroid field. The asteroids were collapsing into pieces and, shockingly, countless bones were flying out from inside them.

The rumbling continued, and the asteroids were destroyed one after another. Soon, the bones had accumulated to the point of being endless…. Within those bones could be seen a man in a long black robe, sitting there cross-legged, his long hair swirling around him. He was gaunt, and yet terrifying ripples spread out from him in all directions. The ripples caused a good portion of the bones to slowly form together until they were a huge throne of bones, upon which the black-robed man settled.

The rest of the bones converged next to the man to form nine enormous Bone Giants.

In the same moment that the nine Bone Giants formed, the black-robed man’s eyes snapped open. His cultivation base erupted with power, and his qi and blood surged. At the same time, a mark appeared on his forehead.

This was the Echelon cultivator of the Eighth Mountain, Han Qinglei!

When he opened his eyes, the air around him distorted, and soon, numerous figures materialized out of the void. They quickly dropped to their knees and kowtowed in front of Han Qinglei.

At a glance, it was possible to see that there were dozens of such figures, all of them kowtowing. One by one, they transmitted various messages to Han Qinglei, reporting to him what had occurred in the Eighth Mountain and Sea during his secluded meditation.

Han Qinglei’s face was expressionless. However, after hearing all of the reports, his pupils constricted, and he focused on one specific kneeling figure.

“Did you say Meng Hao?” he asked in a voice that caused the starry sky to tremble. His gaze was like lightning, completely menacing as he stared at the cultivator who had brought the news.

The man trembled, and instead of transmitting his messages, he whispered, “According to the news from the Heavengod Alliance, and some other clues, the person who exterminated the Blacksoul Society was definitely Meng Hao…. This conclusion is also based on the report you provided about the Windswept Realm, Young Lord. In fact, the Heavengod Alliance has asked that you pay them a visit to confirm some information.”

Han Qinglei sat there silently, eyes closed as he recalled everything that had occurred in the Windswept Realm. He thought back to his encounter with Meng Hao, how he had been killed, and then how Meng Hao had saved him during the final battle.

Although not much time had passed since then, the more he thought about it, the more he realized that the Windswept Realm adventure had been one of extreme danger. Even an Echelon cultivator like himself was shocked by it.

“So he actually came to the Eighth Mountain and Sea….” Han Qinglei smiled subconsciously. He actually felt no hatred toward Meng Hao, only a sense of competition.

“And the cultivators of the Heavengod Alliance are trying to track him down and kill him…. Perhaps he can tolerate that, but as another Echelon cultivator, I can not!” His eyes flickered icily. People who were not in the Echelon couldn’t possibly imagine the level of pride that Echelon cultivators felt in their standing. As for Han Qinglei, he could accept Meng Hao being defeated or even perishing, but only at the hands of another Echelon cultivator.

For non-Echelon cultivators to be hunting him down was something unacceptable.

Snorting coldly, Han Qinglei smacked his hand down onto the throne of bones. Instantly, it began to rumble, transforming into a white beam of light that shot off into the distance.

“Time to go to the Heavengod Alliance!” In response to his words, the other figures lurking in the starry sky began to power up and follow him. Soon the entire group was on their way to the Heavengod Alliance.

Meanwhile, back in the Heavengod Alliance, because of the enormous scope of the search for Meng Hao, eventually, the Chosen of the various sects in the Heavengod Alliance all emerged and joined in.

This included the Dao Child of the Heavengod Society. These Chosen were very much like the Chosen of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, people who their respective sects had spent incredible resources on to develop them into powerful experts. Any one of them possessed battle prowess that far exceeded the level of their cultivation bases.

In order to ensure that they didn’t somehow get killed while training, they still had Dao Protectors, even though they were already in the Ancient Realm. In fact, Dao Protectors would guard them all the way to the Dao Realm!

In a short time, figurative storm winds arose in the Heavengod Alliance, like a huge vortex that sucked in cultivators from the far corners of the Realm.

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Despite the momentous state of affairs in the world around him, Meng Hao was living in relative tranquility. It was a peace and quiet that he hadn’t experienced even in the Eastern Lands on Planet South Heaven. For now, he had seemingly truly forgotten about being a cultivator, and wasn’t thinking about how he was the subject of a huge manhunt. Instead, he was fully immersed in the life of a scholar.

The town had an inn, where he sat beneath an oil lamp, reading. Occasionally, a smile would flicker across his face, and sometimes he would shake his head. He appeared to be completely immersed in the joy of reading.

Every once in awhile he would rise to his feet, grab a writing brush, and write something down off to the side. He was completely and fully a scholar, just like he had been all those years ago on Mount Daqing.

“There’s still half a month to go before the Imperial examinations….” Around midnight, he blew out the lamp and crawled into bed. From there, he could look out the window at the starry sky. Everything was quiet except for the faint sound of snoring that rose from various locations in the small town.

“I never passed the exams back then, but now, I’m going to give it another shot.” As he reminisced about his past life, he sighed. Eventually, he pulled out an incense burner, which was covered with layers of magical seals.

Chu Yuyan’s soul was in that incense burner, but it was not complete. More than half of it had dispersed, leaving behind nothing more than a discarnate soul….

That discarnate soul was not enough to resurrect Chu Yuyan…. Furthermore, if it entered the cycle of reincarnation as a discarnate soul, then she would no longer be herself. Instead, she would merely be one aspect of whoever she eventually reincarnated into.

Meng Hao could not accept something like that.

“There’s always a way!” He closed his eyes, rotating his cultivation base to continue healing himself.

At dawn, he packed his bags and led his donkey out of the inn’s stable. The innkeeper chatted with him the entire way, wishing him well as he mounted the donkey, opened up a bamboo scroll, and then headed in the direction of the capital city, which was about seven days away.

Meng Hao wasn’t in a hurry. He rode his donkey along the public highway, resting at night, traveling when the sun rose. Days went by in which he enjoyed the scenery, passing by villages and farms. Although he hadn’t planned this, his travels were like a cleansing that left him much more calm and tranquil.

Beams of light occasionally shot through the sky overhead. Out in the starry sky, the cultivators searching for Meng Hao were getting more and more anxious. Despite having searched for Meng Hao for an extended period of time, they hadn’t been able to turn up a single trace.

Their only recourse was to send more people out to search. Planet Luo River was scanned with divine sense occasionally, but the Heavengod Alliance was huge, and it wasn’t an easy thing to search for a single person.

Gradually, the appointed time to unseal the teleportation portals approached. In fact, there was a bit of a backlash among certain factions in the Heavengod Alliance, who felt that locking down the entire Alliance to search for a single person wasn’t very appropriate.

Patriarch Blacksoul wasn’t willing to give in though. Gritting his teeth, he personally went to the Heavengod Society. After he left, the old man who had issued the bounty on Meng Hao sat there cross-legged, personally sending his divine sense out to aid in the search.

However, the Heavengod Alliance was an equally large place for him, and to search it required time and significant resources. Were it not for the hefty price paid by Patriarch Blacksoul, he would never have agreed to help.

Time passed. As a cultivator, Meng Hao’s journey was tranquil and enjoyable. It would have been a different story if he were mortal, considering the various dangers to be faced. At one point he encountered some bandits.

The bandits had just sacked a merchant caravan, and were in the midst of their burning, killing, raping, and plundering. As Meng Hao passed by, looked over at the bandits, and they in turn saw him. They immediately began to laugh heartily.

One particularly burly man declared, “Look, a pretty little scholar! He’s mine!”

Then, he strode forward toward Meng Hao, a vicious expression plastered on his face, his eyes gleaming with lascivious intent.

Meng Hao frowned, wondering how the Eighth Mountain and Sea could have such debauched inhabitants. As the burly man neared, Meng Hao sighed, then looked up into the sky as if to check for witnesses before giving a cold harrumph.

It was a noise that no one except for the bandits could hear. To them, it sounded like thunder; blood sprayed out of their mouths, and they instantly toppled over.

They weren’t dead yet, just unconscious. Meng Hao didn’t use any magical technique, just a snort, backed entirely by the power of his fleshly body. With that, he hopped off the donkey and picked up the nearest blade. Then he went from one unconscious bandit to another and dispatched them coolly and quickly.

After that, he returned to the donkey, which had been waiting impatiently the whole time, and continued on his way. Several days later, a huge walled city appeared up ahead.

This was the Imperial capital of this empire.

The Imperial examinations that Meng Hao was so looking forward to would be held here in a few days.

The days passed uneventfully, and soon it was time for the exams to begin. The entire capital city was bustling as students and scholars arrived from all over the empire to take the Imperial examinations.

Meng Hao was one of them. He left his donkey at the inn, straightened his clothes, then cleared his throat as he joined all of the other scholars as they headed to the exam hall. There, a court official closely examined everyone before they entered to make sure they hadn’t brought along anything to help them cheat. Eventually, Meng Hao was escorted to a small room, just big enough for him. A desk could be seen, upon which writing utensils were arranged neatly. Before opening the exam materials, Meng Hao washed his hands in a wooden basin off to the side, then took a deep breath. When the starting bell rang, he sat down in the chair and opened the exam scroll. As soon as he laid eyes on the contents, a smile broke out on his face.

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# Chapter 1223: Is This a Dream?

He didn’t begin to answer the questions right away. He first closed his eyes, as if he were carefully considering how to answer. When his eyes opened, they shone brightly. He picked up the brush and immediately began to write down the first answer.

In the same moment that his brush touched the paper, a righteous, noble aura suddenly appeared within the city, causing colors to flash in Heaven and Earth. At the same time, in the Forbidden Palace elsewhere in the city, the emperor sat there holding a Go piece in his hand. Sitting across the game board from him was a Daoist priest, a smiling old man with the air of a transcendent being.

Suddenly, the Daoist priest’s face flickered, and he looked in the direction of the exam grounds, an expression of shock on his face.

“One of the scholars taking the Imperial examinations provoked a righteous, noble aura! Which one?”

The Daoist priest waved his finger, causing water-like ripples to spread out over the game board, which vanished, to be replaced by an image of the exam grounds. 1

The Daoist priest’s gaze shifted, causing the view to pass through the exam grounds as he searched for what he was looking for. Soon, the image focused on a single room, where Meng Hao was currently writing characters down in flowing calligraphy.

The Daoist priest looked at the emperor in amazement, and then back at Meng Hao. He smiled.

“Is that kid special or something?” the emperor asked.

“Special! Very special!” the Daoist priest replied, laughing. His eyes shone with excitement which only increased as he looked at Meng Hao.

“In all my travels through the years, this is the first time I’ve seen someone who could provoke such a righteous, noble aura. It’s been decided; from now on he’s a prized seedling for the Righteous Noble Sect!” The Daoist priest laughed heartily, then rose to his feet and strode in the direction of the exam grounds. 2

It was in almost the exact same moment that the old man in the Heavengod Society happened to scan the area with divine sense.

His divine sense was in the Dao Realm already, and had also been augmented by the Heavengod Society’s ancestral treasure, making it incredibly powerful, and increasing its range. In addition to that, he had spared no effort to boost it even further in his search. As it scanned Planet Luo River, the entire planet vibrated.

Meng Hao stopped writing for a moment, and slowly closed his eyes. He had noticed the divine sense just now. Although it hadn’t stopped specifically on him, he had the feeling that he had been detected.

“What a pity. I’m not even half done with the exam….” he murmured. He looked down at the exam paper, then smiled casually. Ignoring the matter of the divine sense, he continued writing.

Back on the Eighth Mountain, in the Heavengod Society, the cross-legged old man suddenly opened his eyes. His face was a bit pale, but he waved his sleeve nonetheless. Instantly, hundreds of thousands of jade slips flew out from the Eighth Mountain, piercing through the void to head in all directions.

The jade slips appeared in in the hands of numerous cultivators, who then heard the voice of the old man speaking in their minds: “The foreign cultivator who exterminated the Blacksoul Society is currently on Planet Luo River, taking the Imperial examinations in the capital city of the Righteous Noble State!”

The jade slips were also specifically locked onto Meng Hao’s location, so that any cultivator who held them could easily find him.

Numerous figures began to speed in the direction of Planet Luo River, all of them worried that they would be late, and that someone else would be able to apprehend the prize before them.

Somewhere in the starry sky was a young man who appeared to be around thirty years of age, striding along with his hands clasped behind his back. The starry sky trembled as he walked along. Behind him, an enormous figure could be seen that bore the semblance of Heavengod, shining with boundless light.

As the young man walked along, a jade slip shot up to him, which he grabbed. Then his eyes glittered with viciousness. Smiling, he headed directly toward Planet Luo River.

In another location, a 3,000-meter blood mist surged through the starry sky. Inside were various powerful beasts, snarling as they struggled to free themselves from the mist. Soon though, cracking sounds could be heard as their bodies collapsed, and they were absorbed into the blood mist.

Suddenly, a jade slip flew through the sky and into the blood mist. Moments later, cruel laughter rang out.

“So they finally found him… interesting, very interesting….” The blood mist changed directions and headed toward Planet Luo River.

In a stretch of the starry sky not too far away from Planet Luo River, a woman could be seen flying along. She looked like an utter barbarian, a coiled whip resting at her side and a wild look in her eyes. Suddenly, several gigantic pythons materialized around her, which then carried her in the direction of Planet Luo River.

The woman was swarthy but extremely beautiful. As she neared Planet Luo River, she suddenly whistled. The sound wasn’t very piercing, but the result was that all the snake-type creatures on Planet Luo River suddenly began to hiss loudly.

All it took was a brief moment for all of the Heavengod Alliance to be shaken into action. The first to mobilize of all were the sects on Planet Luo River itself. How could they have ever imagined that the person the entire Heavengod Alliance was searching for was on their own planet?

Planet Luo River was one of the four great planets in the Eighth Mountain and Sea. In addition to the Righteous Noble Sect, there were three other sects on the planet.

Those four sects were the overlords of Planet Luo River, and occupied very important positions within the Heavengod Alliance. Currently, all four of those sects had mobilized and were headed toward the capital city.

Bright beams of light shot through the air, and all of the snakes emerged from the forests and mountains, hissing loudly. They did nothing to harm the people, but rather, headed directly toward the capital city.

Colors flashed, the wind screamed, and the ground shook. However, Meng Hao remained in his little exam room, continuing to write down his answers. He truly wanted to finish the whole exam, and thus make peace with his failures in years past.

After about ten breaths of time passed, Meng Hao finished writing the final character. He took a deep breath and blew on the exam paper to dry the ink, then put the brush down.

“It’s too bad I can’t wait until the results come in. I definitely won’t fail this time. It’s too bad that either way, I won’t be able to become a grand official to realize my dream of being super rich….” With a silent chuckle, he stood up. At that point, a wind blew outside, and suddenly something burst into the exam grounds with speed that exceeded all normal cultivators. It was… a donkey.

As soon as the donkey entered the exam grounds, everyone stared with wide eyes. The official conducting the examination gaped in disbelief as the donkey head-butted the wall of Meng Hao’s exam room, breaking it open and bursting inside.

Meng Hao laughed and jumped onto the donkey’s back, which brayed as it crashed through the opposing wall. Then, everyone watching was thrown into an uproar as the donkey then flew up into the air.

“An Immortal….”

“But… why was an Immortal taking the Imperial examinations?”

“Heavens, I can’t believe I just took the Imperial examinations with an Immortal!!” Numerous cries of astonishment echoed up into the air.

In almost the same instant that Meng Hao flew up into the air on the donkey, a bright beam of light closed in, which was none other than the Daoist priest. He had a strange look on his face; he had not recieved one of the jade slips and therefore didn’t know who Meng Hao was. Apparently, he didn’t care about that though, nor did he care whether or not Meng Hao was even a cultivator.

“Hey little bro, don’t go!” the Daoist priest blurted. “Fear not, I am Xu Ran from the Righteous Noble Sect. Um… are you interested in joining up?

“If you join our sect, you can have anything you want. The Righteous Noble Sect has a thousand scrolls of Daoist magic, three thousand magical techniques, and countless disciples. We’re ranked seventh in the Heavengod Alliance!

“We even occupy thirty percent of Planet Luo River. Come on and join us! After you do, you can do anything you want!”

As soon as Meng Hao heard the man’s words, his eyes went wide. However, before he could respond, countless shocking beams of light suddenly shot down from up above.

“Meng Hao!! It’s Meng Hao!”

“So it turns out he’s here! Kill him and you can have Patriarch Blacksoul as a slave for a thousand years!!”

“Kill him!” Numerous excited shouts could be heard as no less than a thousand cultivators began to converge on the area from all directions.

Meng Hao’s donkey shivered, then looked pleadingly up at him. Meng Hao chuckled and leaped off the donkey, which then turned into the meat jelly with a popping sound, and then flew into Meng Hao’s bag of holding.

“What a pity,” Meng Hao said, shaking his head. A cold smile appeared on his face, and as soon as he did, his aura suddenly changed. No longer did he look like a scholar, but instead a demonic fiend, bursting with energy. Everything rumbled as he waved his hand, causing the sky to fill with a boundless blood-colored light. A huge rift then opened up and the Blood Demon emerged, roaring as it charged the surrounding cultivators. Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with killing intent; he would show absolutely no mercy to these cultivators of the Eighth Mountain and Sea who were trying to kill him.

A flash could be seen as Meng Hao transformed into an azure roc, which blasted into the enemy cultivators like lightning. Immortal mountains descended, a violet moon flickered, and a sun began to suck in all the light in the area, then released it with explosive force. In the blink of an eye, dozens of bloodcurdling screams could be heard echoing out as enemies fell out of the sky.

Blood sprayed in all directions, falling down toward the earth in a rain of gore.

Of the surrounding cultivators, a few hundred were wearing green Daoist robes. They didn’t attack immediately, but instead began muttering, which then caused an astonishing explosive aura to build up that only they could see.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered; he couldn’t see the aura either, but he could sense that whatever magic these people cultivated was very unique.

It appeared to be a Daoist magic as distinctive as that of the Burning Incense Stick Society that he had encountered in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. 3

In the moment that Meng Hao noticed what they were doing, the Daoist priest was suddenly thrown into a rage. He strode forward and stood in front of the several hundred cultivators, then shouted, “What do you people think you’re doing? Wreaking havok on sect allies? You should be calling him Elder Uncle!” As soon as the words left the man’s mouth, the cultivators lurched to a stop and stared in shock. The old man leading the group stepped forward, smiled wryly at the Daoist priest, then clasped hands and bowed.

“Elder Grandfather, this man… this man is, uh, Meng Hao.”

“So what if he’s Meng Hao!?” the Daoist priest replied, glaring.

The old man hesitated for a moment, then thought about about all the muddle-headed things the Daoist priest was known for doing, then quickly explained, “Meng Hao… he’s, you know, the one who exterminated the entire Blacksoul Society?”

“Exterminated the Blacksoul Society?” the Daoist priest said, spinning around and looking at Meng Hao with an even stranger look than before.

“Hahaha! As expected of my apprentice. Excellent! Wonderful! I’ve been annoyed with those bastards from the Blacksoul Society for years now. You are obviously destined to be my apprentice. You haven’t even formally paid respects to me as your master, and you’ve already solved one of my headaches for me!”

1. I found a cool picture of a model of how the Imperial examinations were set up in ancient China. Depending on the type of test, each test taker might have their own room, where they would take the test and even sleep overnight as necessary. Check out the picture here and the article here

2. There is a lot of wordplay and room for interpretation with regard to the “righteous, noble aura,” and the “Righteous Noble Sect.” Without getting into too much boring detail, the “righteous, noble” characters could also be translated as “vast, overwhelming, expansive.” For reasons I won’t get into now, I chose to go with the “righteous, noble” interpretation. Furthermore, the first character is “hao” the same character from Meng Hao’s name

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# Chapter 1224: Be a Good Kid, My Little Disciple, Don’t Run!

A strange expression could be seen on Meng Hao’s face, but before he could say anything, the Daoist priest glared at the surrounding disciples of the Righteous Noble Sect.

“What are you standing around for? Can’t you see that your Elder Uncle is being bullied!? Why aren’t you helping him?!” The Daoist priest stamped his foot down, causing the air to rumble. The disciples of the Righteous Noble Sect exchanged wry, helpless glances.

The old man who was the leader of the bunch appeared to be on the verge of tears. He let out a long sigh, unsure of whether or not to attack Meng Hao.

Even as he was going back and forth about what to do, the sound of a whistle could be heard high up in the sky. As it echoed out, all of the snakes on Planet Luo River hissed loudly.

The sound echoed about, and the clouds churned, revealing numerous Cloud Pythons swirling through the air toward Meng Hao.

Simultaneously, countless arrow-like snakes shot up from the ground, eyes sinister, forked tongues flicking.

It wasn’t over yet, though. Up above in the sky, an even larger python began to descend. It glowed with brilliant light, and even emanated an aura similar to that of a Paragon.

All of the cultivators in the crowd were completely shaken. As for Meng Hao, when he looked up, his eyes went wide for a moment, and then he actually smiled.

“Finally,” he murmured, “I get to see… some of the local Chosen.” He was already itching to fight, so as soon as the python appeared, he instantly shot up into the sky, moving so fast a sonic boom echoed out. Relying only on the strength of his fleshly body, he slammed into the Cloud Pythons. By the time that they howled and they collapsed into countless pieces, Meng Hao was already bearing down on the Paragon-like python.

He quickly waved his hand, causing the Essence of Divine Flame to roar out, transforming into a sea of flames capable of burning everything. In response, the huge python opened its mouth and blasted out a huge air channel, making it impossible for the sea of flames to touch it, then opened its mouth to shoot a beam of light toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao smiled coolly, then clenched his hand into a fist and punched out toward the python and its gaping maw.

First fist, Life-Extermination Fist!

As the fist sailed through the air, Heaven and Earth went wild with flashing colors. A massive wind sprang up, and everything shook violently. The python let out a miserable shriek as the light shattered, and its body then collapsed into pieces.

Meng Hao threw his head back and shouted. Although the sound of it wasn’t extremely loud, as soon as it echoed out, the rest of the surrounding pythons began to tremble. Not daring to get any closer, they turned tail and fled.

“Shut the hell up!” someone said imperiously. It was the barbaric woman, riding on a five-colored beam of light that closed in on Meng Hao with incredible speed.

The woman was quite pretty, despite her swarthy skin. She had a very unique air to her, making her look very different from any other female cultivator Meng Hao had ever encountered.

“Lady Dragon-Snake!!”

“It’s Lady Dragon-Snake from the Dragon-Snake Fusion Sect! I can’t believe she’s here on Planet Luo River!”

“The Alliance’s bounty on Meng Hao is just too enticing. It even caught the attention of the Dragon-Snake Fusion Sect…. Or maybe it caught the attention of the ever-flamboyant Lady Dragon-Snake herself….”

“If she’s here, then presumably the other eight members of the Nine Claws of the Heavengod are on their way too!” As everyone discussed the matter, the old man from the Righteous Noble Sect sighed, inwardly thanking Lady Dragon-Snake for showing up and getting him out of the embarrassing situation. Now he didn’t have to decide whether or not to attack Meng Hao.

Looking at his Master out of the corner of his eye, he couldn’t help but smile wryly. Right now, the Daoist priest’s eyes were shining brightly, and the old man knew that whenever that look appeared, the Daoist priest was about to do something very muddle-headed….

Meng Hao looked at the woman closing in on him, and his eyes slowly narrowed. At the same time, a smile appeared on his face when he heard what the surrounding cultivators were saying about who she was.

“Nine Claws of the Heavengod. They must be Chosen from the Heavengod Alliance…. Excellent. I’ve collected on most of my debts from the Ninth Mountain and Sea, and now that I’m here… it’s only right and proper to make a killing in the Eighth Mountain and Sea too.” Laughing loudly, he suddenly shot directly toward Lady Dragon-Snake.

Her pupils constricted when she realized how powerful he was. However, she didn’t attempt to dodge out of the fight. Her right hand flickered with an incantation gesture, causing five-colored light to explode out in all directions, transforming into five pythons which howled as they shot toward Meng Hao.

At the same time, she waved her hand, summoning a string of bells. When she swung the string, melodic chiming could be heard. When that sound entered Meng Hao’s ears, though, it was like the roaring of the highest Heavens, and he even felt his psyche trembling.

Meng Hao gave a cold snort. He had cultivated the Dao Divinity Scripture, so as soon as the psyche-shaking sound waves hit him, he sent his divine sense out, which transformed into an invisible tempest and smashed back against them. Lady Dragon-Snake’s face fell, and blood oozed out of the corners of her mouth. Alarmed, she fell back.

Before she could do anything else, Meng Hao flashed through the air, transforming into an azure roc, which shot like lightning toward the five pythons. Of course, rocs are the nemeses of dragons and snakes, so as soon as its aura appeared the five pythons immediately shuddered. The azure roc quickly closed in and slashed its claws toward them.

Booms echoed out as the pythons, completely unable to fight back, were ripped to shreds. Meng Hao then closed in on the woman herself.

“Roc Transformation!! You’re a disciple of the Heavenly Roc Sect!” The woman’s face fell, and she fell back, quickly performing an incantation gesture with her right hand. Then she spit out a mouthful of dark blood, which transformed into a blood-colored sealing mark. The sealing mark writhed, and in the blink of an eye, had transformed into a dragon!

It was a dragon formed from black blood, which made this a Black Dragon. The Black Dragon kicked up a huge wind as it roared and shot toward Meng Hao.

“Is a magical technique like this really worthy of a Chosen?” Meng Hao said, shaking his head. If this was all she could do, this woman wouldn’t deserve to have a promissory note and owe Meng Hao money.

He took a step forward, clenching his right hand into a fist and unleashing a punch.

It was his second fist strike, the Bedevilment Fist!

As the fist rumbled through the air, the Heavens seemed to teeter on the verge of collapse. The Black Dragon had just appeared, but was already twisting and distorting. It let out a miserable shriek, as if it were about to collapse into pieces.

In almost the same moment that Meng Hao spoke, Lady Dragon-Snake rotated her cultivation base, causing more than ten Soul Lamps to appear around her, more than half of which were extinguished. Within each of those soul lamps could be seen the image of a person meditating.

All of them wore the same face as Lady Dragon-Snake, except that from the waist down they were snakes. Suddenly, they opened their eyes and looked at the Black Dragon.

“Thirteen Dragon-Snake Augmentations!” she cried in a piercing voice. A tremor suddenly ran through the Black Dragon, and its energy redoubled!

After that, it tripled, quadrupled… in the blink of an eye, the Black Dragon’s energy had increased by thirteen times. Now, it seemed absolutely, completely different from before. Furthermore, it even emanated faint traces of the Dao Realm.

Meng Hao was taken aback, but still shook his head.

“That still isn’t going to cut it,” he said. He was fed up with this fight already, so he immediately unleashed his third fist strike. God Slaying!

As soon as the God Slaying Fist was unleashing, everything began to shake. The Black Dragon, which was now thirteen times more powerful than before, let out a miserable shriek as its body was destroyed. The surrounding cultivators were shocked, and looked over at Meng Hao with wide, astonished eyes.

“The Heavengod Alliance was wrong. The power he can wield… is not that of the Ancient Realm!!”

“H-his… his injuries have healed!!”

“Before he was injured, he could wipe out the entire Blacksoul Society. Even Patriarch Blacksoul himself received terrifying injuries!!”

Even as everyone reacted with shock, Meng Hao strode forward toward Lady Dragon-Snake and extended his right hand. His eyes glittered with an intensely cold light; these cultivators had come here to kill him, so it didn’t matter if they were men or women; unless they qualified to have a promissory note, Meng Hao would not go lightly on them.

He closed in on Lady Dragon-Snake, killing intent raging. Her face fell, and both hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture. Just as Meng Hao was about to grab her by the neck, she roared, and suddenly transformed into a ghost image.

When she reappeared off in the distance, blood was oozing out of her mouth.

“Eee?” Meng Hao said. In the moment that she had performed her teleportation, he had felt fluctuations of the Dao Divinity Scripture.

He flashed through the air toward her again, and Lady Dragon-Snake’s face paled and filled with terror. Even as she backed up, she performed an incantation gesture and then fled via teleportation once more.

His interest piqued, Meng Hao suddenly waved his finger, unleashing the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex. The woman didn’t know why, but she suddenly lurched to a stop, and her eyes went wide with despair.

Even as he closed in on her, all of a sudden, a withered hand appeared out of nowhere to claw at Meng Hao.

“Quasi-Dao? Scram!” Meng Hao instantly knew exactly what type of person this was. He waved his hand, causing the aura of the Paragon Bridge to erupt out. The instant the hand made contact with him, it shattered. An old woman staggered out into the void, looking at Meng Hao with an expression of terror. Coughing up blood, she shot toward Lady Dragon-Snake, grabbed her, and fled.

That old woman was Lady Dragon-Snake’s Dao Protector, but even she was currently terrified. “Young Lady, we must flee. This man… isn’t injured at all!!”

Seeing that Lady Dragon-Snake was fleeing, Meng Hao smiled, although it was an icy smile. He suddenly waved his hand toward the fleeing Lady Dragon-Snake.

“Call upon Karma to form a binding writ. Starting today… you owe me money!” Immediately, Karma Threads appeared above Lady Dragon-Snake. Meng Hao then reached out and grabbed the brightest of the shining thread, and then placed a sealing mark on it!

Rumbling sounds could be heard as Lady Dragon-Snake coughed up blood. Her heart was now filled with an indescribable dread, especially when she saw the glowing piece of paper floating down onto Meng Hao’s palm. She suddenly felt as if she had lost something important, and her fear grew.

It was at this point that a cold snort echoed through the sky, and a writhing blood mist descended toward Meng Hao.

“Ah, another one,” he said, chuckling. Instead of standing there waiting, he suddenly transformed into a prismatic beam of light that shot up into the sky. However, from a distance it looked like he was actually trying to flee.

Just as Meng Hao was about to blast up into the sky and start fighting, the Daoist priest appeared in mid-air, beaming with a huge smile as he hollered, “Be a good kid, my little disciple, don’t run!”

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# Chapter 1225: Master, Save Me!

Just as Meng Hao was about to blast up into the sky and start fighting, the Daoist priest appeared in mid-air, beaming with a huge smile as he hollered, “Don’t go, my little disciple!”

Although his shout seemed casual, it actually caused the sky to shake violently, as if it were about to collapse. In fact, if you looked up, you would see innumerable rifts opening up.

The red mist which had been just about to shoot down, suddenly shrank back, as if whatever person was concealed inside were suddenly shaking, and going all out to retreat.

This sudden turn of events caused Meng Hao to stare in shock, and also, sadness. His original plan had been to leave Planet Luo River, and in the process, incite the Chosen in that red mist into fighting, then use A Writ of Karma to force him or her to owe Meng Hao money.

How could he ever have imagined that the Daoist priest would interfere? The level of this priest’s cultivation base caused Meng Hao’s eyes to widen slightly. He obviously had a very high position in the Righteous Noble Sect, and from the way he had shouted just now, Meng Hao could tell that he was a 3-Essences Dao Lord, comparable to Patriarch Blacksoul, or perhaps a bit higher.

That made Meng Hao even more depressed than before. Back when he couldn’t fight Dao Realm experts, he had virtually never encountered a single one. But now that he was capable of fighting them, they seemed to be popping up everywhere.

The reality of the situation was that it was because he was in a much different position now, and thus the people he encountered were different. In any of the various Mountains and Seas, the number of Dao Realm experts would never exceed several dozen. Most of them ended up as Patriarchs of various sects, and as such, were not the type of people ordinary cultivators ever encountered.

Take, for example, Patriarch Blacksoul. In a sect with hundreds of thousands of cultivators, there was only one Dao Realm cultivator, Patriarch Blacksoul!

And yet, because Meng Hao could fight Dao Realm experts, it was only natural that when he got involved in a situation, it would take the interference from them to resolve that situation.

As for this Daoist priest from the Righteous Noble Sect, he truly was a 3-Essences Dao Lord, and was one of three Dao Realm experts in that sect. In fact, he wasn't even the strongest of those three, but rather the second strongest!

Having three Dao Realm experts meant that the Righteous Noble Sect was in a very strong position in the Heavengod Alliance, a trend which was very similar to the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

"There's no need to flee, my little disciple. Come, come, return with me to the Righteous Noble Sect. With me around, nobody would ever dare to lay a hand on you!" The Daoist priest approached, staring at Meng Hao with wide eyes. Meng Hao subconsciously edged backward.

The Daoist priest didn't seem to mind. The more he looked at Meng Hao, the more excited he got because of that righteous, noble aura on him, which was apparently very special. Although the aura was fading, it was still quite apparent. In fact, it was the most clearly visible such aura that the Daoist priest had seen for many years.

"Aiii, if only I could have found you before you started practicing cultivation. I could definitely have raised you into the most powerful expert in the Righteous Noble Sect! Although, it's not too late. Come, come. Your name is Meng Hao, right? You know, if you join the Righteous Noble Sect, you can get a Daoist name!

“My Daoist name is the Noble Ran. Let me think for a second….” The Daoist priest slapped his thigh. Smiling radiantly, he said, “I got it! Your Daoist name is the Righteous Haowie!”

The disciples of the Righteous Noble Sect around him exchanged dismayed glances. All of a sudden, they were no longer looking at Meng Hao with hostility, but rather, with sympathy.

Meng Hao was turning a bit green in the face. The Righteous Haowie, the Righteous Haowie…. When he heard the name, he wasn’t sure whether to laugh or cry. Were it not for the fact that he could tell that the Daoist priest harbored no ill will against him, he would long since have gone ballistic.

“This is ridiculous!” Meng Hao said, flicking his sleeve. Face cold, he snorted, ignoring the Daoist priest and spinning to shoot up into the sky. He wanted to leave Planet Luo River, but at the same time, was wary of the Daoist priest.

Even though Meng Hao could sense that the man did not want to hurt him, it was still better to be cautious. In order to make sure the man didn’t try to stop him, he transformed into an azure roc, flapped his wings, and shot away, leaving behind nothing but a series of sonic booms.

The Daoist priest stood where he was and did nothing to block Meng Hao’s way. Instead, he looked on with a broad smile. The Righteous Noble Sect disciples behind him had strange looks on their faces as they tried to figure out exactly what their muddle-headed Patriarch was out to do.

“Well, if you want to leave, I won’t stop you. However, we are destined to be Master and apprentice, Noble Haowie. It has been fated by the Mountains and Seas. It has been fated… that within ten breaths of time, you will return.” The Daoist priest’s words were very mysterious. He stood there, hands clasped behind his back, looking every bit the transcendent being. Based on physical appearance alone, he appeared to be anything but ordinary.

Meng Hao sped along in azure roc-form, and within the space of a few breaths of time, he could see that out in the starry sky, tens of thousands of beams of light were shooting in his direction.

Boiling killing intent raged, distorting the starry sky. If that were all there were to it, it might not be a big deal. Meng Hao would still choose to leave. But soon, he realized that among those beams of light were the fluctuations of at least ten Dao Realm experts.

All of them were speeding in his direction!

Even Meng Hao’s scalp went numb at the thought of ten Dao Realm cultivators. That was not even to mention the fact that among those ten auras, two of them… exceeded the level of Dao Lords!

There was no way he could leave now! Even if he somehow got away from Planet Luo River, he still wouldn’t be able to avoid being killed eventually. Unfortunately… Patriarch Blacksoul hated Meng Hao so much that he was willing to treat himself completely viciously.

Perhaps individual cultivators might be able to ignore the idea of having him as a slave for a thousand years, but to a sect as a whole, that was too much of a temptation. They would do anything possible to make that happen!

“Heavengod Alliance….” Meng Hao said, eyes flickering coldly. With a sigh, he rolled his eyes, turned, and headed back down toward the surface of Planet Luo River.

Even as he turned back, the ten Dao Realm experts joined forces to attack. Rumbling filled the air as the power of numerous Essences materialized, transforming into a stream of brilliant light, almost like an enormous whip, which slashed through the void toward Meng Hao even as he retreated back down toward the lands of Planet Luo River.

At the same time, the rest of the cultivators pushed forward with explosive speed.

Back down on Planet Luo River, the cultivators from the four local sects had just seen Meng Hao leave. Just moments later he returned, looking very out of sorts; countless beams of light could be seen behind him in the starry sky, as well as a seven-colored light stream.

As the seven-colored light stream closed in, Meng Hao's face fell, and he quickly shouted out to the Daoist priest.

"Master, save me!!"

The transcendent-looking Daoist priest cleared his throat. Keeping his hands clasped behind his back, he slowly looked up and said, "Who is calling out for Master?"

He seemed to be refusing, but really… he was actually quite pleased with himself.

Meng Hao smiled bitterly. Behind him, the stream of light was closing in, bursting with killing intent. If it touched him, he wouldn't be killed instantly, but it would definitely reopen the wounds he had just spent all this time healing.

Gritting his teeth, he said, "I'm… I'm the Righteous Haowie, oh Master, if you don't save me right away, then I won't recognize you as my Master!"

Immediately, the Daoist priest's eyes began to shine as brightly as the sun and moon.

"Ah, fear not, my little disciple. Master is coming!"

Laughing with excitement, and looking somewhat smug, he suddenly took a step forward. When his foot landed, he was between Meng Hao and the seven-colored stream of light. Suddenly, he lifted his right hand in the air, angling his hand as if he were holding a brush, and then began to write characters in the middle of the air!

"How dare you bastards bully my apprentice! The Righteous Haowie is an upright person with a righteous, noble aura! Any enemy of his is an enemy of mine!

“You’re at the threshold of Planet Luo River, and this is the Righteous Noble Sect! Do me a favor and screw off!”

Colors flashed and the wind howled. As the Daoist priest waved his hand to write characters, magical symbols flickered, and at the same time, a righteous, noble aura suddenly exploded out from him. That in turn seemed to incite the aura of Planet Luo River itself, which surged out and slammed into the seven-colored stream of light.

Massive rumbling could be heard as the stream of light quivered and then collapsed into pieces. At the same time, the righteous, noble aura shot further out into the starry sky, becoming an invisible pillar of qi that caused the entire starry sky to tremble. The incoming cultivators were all shocked and stopped in place, not daring to get any closer.

Numerous shouts of rage could be heard after the stream of light collapsed.

“Xu Ran, you oaf, are you crazy!?!?”

“He’s always been crazy!”

“That’s Meng Hao! He’s not your apprentice, he’s the killer who took out the whole Blacksoul Society!”

“Xu Ran, is your Righteous Noble Sect actually going to violate the orders of the Heavengod Alliance!?!?”

The sound of their cries echoed out, causing the lands to quake, rivers to flow backward, and all living beings to tremble.

“I might be crazy sometimes, but not today!” the Daoist priest replied, his voice booming. “You’re the crazy ones! You might not be able to tell, but I can clearly see that Meng Hao has a righteous, noble aura. For him to have an aura like that means that anyone he killed deserved to die!

“If he exterminated the Blacksoul Society, that indicates… that the Heavens, the Eighth Mountain and Sea itself, and even the will of the entire

Mountain and Sea Realm, wished the Blacksoul Society to be eradicated!

“It doesn’t matter who he is, Meng Hao or some other Hao. Today, he’s my apprentice, the Righteous Haowie!” With that, he swished his sleeve, causing massive rumbling to fill Heaven and Earth as he once again summoned the power of Planet Luo River to surge out into the starry sky.

Of course, for him to do such a thing twice, to fight back against ten Dao Realm experts and countless other cultivators, left him with blood oozing out of his mouth.

Meng Hao was shaken. He looked silently at the Daoist priest, feeling more than a little moved. After hearing the man talking about his supposed righteous, noble aura, Meng Hao suddenly began to speculate that it actually had something to do with the qi flow of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

They were now at an impasse. The cultivators who had come to kill Meng Hao remained out in the starry sky, unwilling to enter Planet Luo River. This was one of the original planets of the Eighth Mountain and Sea, not an artificial planet created by some almighty cultivator. It had existed for as long as the Eighth Mountain and Sea had, and was one of only four planets like it. Any powerful sects on those primary planets were important parts of the Heavengod Alliance.

Furthermore… they all had secret magics that enabled them to control the power of those planets themselves!

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# Chapter 1226: The Blahblahblah Seal the Heavens Incantation

In the middle of this intense standoff, the Daoist priest threw his head back and proudly brushed his sleeve.

“Disciples of the Righteous Noble Sect, hear my command!” he said in a loud voice. “Escort your Elder Uncle back to the sect!”

The disciples of the Righteous Noble Sect were shaking in their boots. They looked up at the forces arrayed against them in the sky, then back at Meng Hao and the Daoist priest, bitter smiles on their faces. After a moment of hesitation, they sighed, clasped hands to Meng Hao, and then turned to leave.

The other cultivators present, as well as the force in the starry sky, looked on as Meng Hao and the Righteous Noble Sect made their way off. The Daoist priest looked extremely pleased with himself as he quickly caught up with Meng Hao and then walked along at his side, laughing heartily.

“The Righteous Haowie. Well, what do you think? Should we switch to another Daoist name?”

Meng Hao hesitated, looking first at the Daoist priest and then all of the disciples of the Righteous Noble Sect. Finally, he sighed.

“Uh… we don’t need to switch.”

“Alright, then it’s settled!” The Daoist priest slapped Meng Hao on the shoulder.

“Senior….” Before Meng Hao could say anything else, the Daoist priest glared at him angrily. Meng Hao smiled wryly.

“Er… M-master…. Um, the Heavengod Alliance put a bounty on my head. If I go back to the Righteous Noble Sect with you, sir, I’m afraid it would be a big inconvenience….” Meng Hao was actually feeling some reservations. Originally, he had planned to simply manipulate the Righteous Noble Sect to make use of their power. However, the way the Daoist priest actually took him under his wing had moved Meng Hao, and now he was worried about dragging the whole sect into his own problems.

“Nonsense!” the Daoist Priest said, sounding completely unruffled. “The Righteous Noble Sect is the number one sect on Planet Luo River, and super famous in the Heavengod Alliance. Why should we be scared? What are we, babies? All you did was exterminate the Blacksoul Society, right? Fine, one of these days when I’m in a good mood, I’ll go exterminate a sect too. There’s no way the Heavengod Alliance will put a bounty on MY head!”

Meng Hao was struck speechless. Although what the Daoist priest said actually made sense, if Meng Hao truly became a disciple of the Righteous Noble Sect, then technically, he would also be a part of the Heavengod Alliance. In that case, everything that had happened would be considered an internal affair of the Heavengod Alliance.

If that happened, there would be a plethora of options to resolve the situation. However… Meng Hao had the feeling that things wouldn’t necessarily play out as smoothly as the Daoist priest believed.

Most important was Meng Hao’s own status… that of a cultivator foreign to the Eighth Mountain and Sea!

Time passed. They proceeded along, led by the Daoist priest to a huge monastery that consisted of three towering mountains. Located at the peak of each mountain was a statue surrounded by clusters of pagodas and buildings. Located in the middle of the three mountains was a sprawling Daoist rite temple.

Incense smoke swirled up into the air, and the sound of tolling bells could be heard. Cranes soared in the air up above, and countless Immortal creatures could be seen lazing about, clearly at peace with the local cultivators.

This was the Righteous Noble Sect. As Meng Hao looked around, he could see the powerful aura of Heaven and Earth filling the sect. Visible within that aura was a sense of uprightness that caused the entire Righteous Noble Sect to feel both ancient and honorable!

That was just what he could see at first glance. When he narrowed his eyes and looked closer, he was shocked at what else he could sense… the qi flow of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

Shockingly, the Righteous Noble Sect had some of the qi flow of the Mountain and Sea Realm. Although it wasn't much, it indicated that this place was beloved by the Mountain and Sea Realm!

Visible on the main gate were four characters, bold and powerful. It was impossible to tell how many countless years they had existed there, but looking at them filled a person with strange feelings, as if those characters were eternal, and would never fade away.

The four characters read… Represent Heaven; Administer the Dao!

"The qi flow of the Mountains and Seas…." Meng Hao murmured as he stepped into the monastery. "A righteous, noble aura…. Represent Heaven in administering the Dao."

Almost as soon as the disciples of the Righteous Noble Sect stepped into their sect, numerous beams of light appeared in the air up above. Those were the cultivators who had come to kill Meng Hao, and were now surrounding the Righteous Noble Sect.

Even the ten Dao Realm cultivators came and occupied ten different locations equidistant from the sect. The powerful fluctuations of their cultivation bases were extremely threatening and overbearing.

Rumbling could be heard as the righteous, noble aura within the Righteous Noble Sect churned, spreading out to cover the entire sect. The sect’s grand protective spell formation was activated, causing the entire sect to suddenly blur from the perspective of those on the outside. The only things most people could see clearly were the three huge statues atop the mountain peaks.

One of those statues held a sword, another held a scroll, and the last was dressed in a scholar’s robe, and held his hands clasped behind his back as he looked up into the sky.

When the Dao Realm experts on the outside saw those three statues, their eyes widened, and they said, “The Three Righteous Noble Saints….”

As soon as Meng Hao set foot into the sect, a powerful voice instantly echoed out.

“Bring Meng Hao to see me, now!” When the other disciples heard the voice, they immediately bowed their heads respectfully. The Daoist priest was the only one whose eyes flashed angrily as he strode toward the most prominent of the three mountain peaks.

Meng Hao followed along. The two of them hurried forward to the mountain with the statue of the scholar staring into the sky. At the foot of the statue was a temple, outside of which could be seen two young boys, sitting there cross-legged. When they saw the Daoist priest, they immediately rose to their feet and clasped hands respectfully.

The Daoist priest didn’t say anything, but instead stalked past them into the temple entrance. Meng Hao was about to follow him when he turned and said, “Master will go in alone. I want to see whether my words still count for anything in the Righteous Noble Sect!”

Meng Hao stopped in place. When he looked at the temple in front of him, he could tell that there was some terrifying entity inside, emanating fluctuations that caused enormous pressure to weigh down on him.

“Three Essences makes a Dao Lord. Four, five, and six Essences are Dao Sovereigns…. The person inside that temple is a Dao Sovereign!” Meng Hao’s pupils constricted. He had faced a 3-Essences Dao Lord, had been forced to risk his life in combat, and still had not been able to eke out a victory. If he faced a Dao Sovereign, even one with only four Essences, he would definitely lose!

Each Essence in the Dao Realm created a huge disparity. The difference between a Dao Lord and a Dao Sovereign was like the difference between Heaven and Earth. Therefore, the level of difficulty of breaking through from being a Dao Lord to become a Dao Sovereign was incredible.

Furthermore, it ensured that in the Mountain and Sea Realm, Dao Sovereigns were not common. People like that… were actually qualified to vie for the position of Mountain and Sea Lord!

Meng Hao took a deep breath, and waited silently. The two boys standing guard measured him up curiously. They hadn’t left the mountain recently, so they actually had no idea who Meng Hao was or what he had done.

Time passed, and nothing could be heard from inside the temple. After a while, the two boys couldn’t hold back from asking Meng Hao some questions. One had a look of sympathy on his face, while the other looked at him with a curious expression as he asked, “Are you Patriarch Noble Ran’s new apprentice?”

When Meng Hao nodded in response, the two boys exchanged a glance, then looked back at Meng Hao. This time both of them wore sympathetic expressions. Then they began to speak in turns:

“When I was reading the ancient records… I saw that 1,700 years ago, Patriarch Noble Ran accepted an apprentice… who died two months later!”

“1,500 years ago, he accepted another apprentice who also died after two months….”

“1,300 years ago, he took a third apprentice, who also died.”

“To date, Patriarch Noble Ran has had eight apprentices, none of whom lived past three months. All of them died, and furthermore all of them died… in very strange ways.”

“What do you mean strange?” Meng Hao asked, somewhat spooked.

“One was struck by lightning. He didn’t die from the first lightning bolt, it took dozens. After he died, the sky cleared up immediately….”

“There was one who ended up spontaneously exploding while cultivating…. Oh, and another caught fire and burned to death. Another one experienced misfortune for two whole months until suddenly a meteor fell out of the sky and crushed him to death. Well, the point is, they all died in different ways.”

Meng Hao’s eyes went wide; he almost couldn’t believe what he was hearing.

He was just about to ask some more questions when the seemingly quiet temple suddenly began to emanate intense ripples, as if some dispute were underway. After enough time had passed for an incense stick to burn, the Daoist priest burst out angrily. After taking a few steps, he turned and glared back into the temple.

“You might be a Dao Sovereign, and you might be the First Patriarch of the Righteous Noble Sect, but your worldview doesn’t go past the Eighth Mountain and Sea!

“I refuse to believe that with your cultivation base, you can’t see the righteous, noble aura on this apprentice of mine!”

The temple was completely quiet. No response could be heard. The Daoist priest stamped his foot and then began to stalk off angrily. As he passed Meng Hao, he motioned to him with his eyes, which caused Meng Hao to turn solemnly and follow him away.

They left the central mountain and headed toward the mountain on the left, the one with the sword-wielding statue. At the base of that statue was another temple. After entering the temple, the Daoist priest angrily looked over his shoulder at the central mountain peak.

“Master, I think I should probably leave,” Meng Hao said slowly. He couldn’t stop thinking about the words spoken by the two boys moments ago.

“Leave? Where can you leave to?” the Daoist priest said bitingly. “The Heavengod Alliance is huge, and the teleportation portals are still sealed. If you step foot outside, hundreds of thousands of cultivators are going to try to kill you, maybe even more than that. You might have been able to exterminate the Blacksoul Society, but can you exterminate the entire Heavengod Alliance? Well, can you?!”

“Not at the moment, no,” Meng Hao replied calmly.

“Even if you could, I wouldn’t let you. If you were the kind of person to do things like that, how could I have had the face to take you as my apprentice? Besides, it’s only natural that I have a way to teleport you out of this piddling Heavengod Alliance!

“I’ve bought you two months of time, during which you’ll just stay here and try to get as many people as possible to come surround the sect. Then when the time comes, I’ll teleport you out, and things will be much safer.” The Daoist priest sighed deeply. Of course, he didn’t notice how jumpy Meng Hao got as soon as he mentioned the time frame of two months.

“It’s too bad that something like this happened right when you became my apprentice.” Suddenly, the Daoist priest seemed to go crazy. Gesticulating wildly at the people besieging the sect, he let loose a long stream of curses, after which he stamped his foot.

“Dammit. I’ve had eight apprentices throughout the years, and in the end, they all died. Now that I have a ninth, I won’t let him die no matter what.

“Righteous Haowie, the time has come for me to instruct you in the Righteous Noble Sect’s most powerful, most mysterious, most invincible Daoist magic. It’s called The Dao is in My Heart The Will is in My Eyes I

Shall Exhaust the Mountains and Seas Seal the Heavens Incantation!” The Daoist priest’s eyes were completely bloodshot, and when he spoke the final words, Seal the Heavens Incantation, he spoke them very dramatically, one word at a time.

“If you can master that art,” he continued solemnly, “then in the future, you’ll definitely be invincible in the Mountain and Sea Realm!”

“Um… Master,” Meng Hao said tentatively, “did your last eight disciples also study the… blahblahblah Seal the Heavens Incantation?”

“It’s not the blahblahblah Seal the Heavens Incantation! It’s The Dao is in My Heart The Will is in My Eyes I Shall Exhaust the Mountains and Seas Seal the Heavens Incantation! As for your other poor Elder Brothers, of course they studied it. Each and every one of them. Unfortunately… before any of them could finish, they died.” The Daoist priest looked sad, very sad, and not the least bit of that was an act.

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# Chapter 1227: Daoist Priest!

“The Dao is in My Heart The Will is in My Eyes I Shall Exhaust the Mountains and Seas Seal the Heavens Incantation!”

Meng Hao had just arrived in the Righteous Noble Sect. It was currently evening; the sun was setting off in the distance, and a cool breeze rustled through the swaying flowers and vegetation that covered the mountains. Meng Hao stared blankly at this Master of his, whose unreliability could only be outdone by Patriarch Reliance….

He listened silently as the Daoist priest began to explain the so-called something-something Seal the Heavens Incantation.

“This incantation is incredibly powerful. Super powerful. Invincibly powerful!

“Its creator is a one-of-a-kind super genius in the Eighth Mountain and Sea– no, in fact, no one else like him has existed since the creation of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

“The first requirement of the incantation is that you possess a righteous, noble aura. Then, you must have a fearless heart. You have to place the Eighth Mountain and Sea within your heart, and then do the same for all the other Mountains and Seas, until all Nine Mountains and Seas are inside of you. After that, you can… force the Mountain and Sea Realm to recognize you as its Lord!

“If you succeed, then you will have completed the first step of the incantation. After that is the second step, Sealing the Heavens. You will have to seal each one of the 33 Heavens, which will in turn cause your cultivation base to double with each sealing!

“After sealing the 33 Heavens, then, theoretically speaking, your cultivation base should be 33 times more powerful!” As the Daoist priest spoke, his expression was one of reminiscence, and he seemed profoundly ancient.

Meng Hao hesitated for a moment. Seeing how entranced the Daoist priest seemed to be, he couldn’t hold back from asking, “And after that…?”

“After that? There’s nothing after that,” the Daoist priest replied, glaring. “By that point, you’ll be invincible. You don’t need anything after that. Besides, it’s hard to imagine anything more. Impossible, really!”

After a moment of silence, Meng Hao asked, “Master, um… sir, you created the something-something Seal the Heavens Incantation, right?”

“Hahaha! So, so you live up to my expectations as my disciple, even if you’re not quite as smart as me. Excellent deduction. Since you found me out, Master won’t hide the truth any longer. You are absolutely, positively correct. Aii. Your Master has been keeping this secret for two thousand years now; at long last I can speak it out in the open.

“Righteous Haowie, listen well. The Dao is in My Heart The Will is in My Eyes I Shall Exhaust the Mountains and Seas Seal the Heavens Incantation was created by me. It is the most powerful, most mysterious, and most supreme Daoist magic in the Righteous Noble Sect!” The Daoist priest swished his sleeve and raised his right hand dramatically into the air.

Meng Hao chuckled wryly. He suddenly realized he had a headache.

The Daoist priest glared at Meng Hao out of the corner of his eye, clearly displeased. “This is when you’re supposed to cheer!”

Meng Hao stood there silently. However, the Daoist priest continued to hold the pose tenaciously. After a long, awkward moment, Meng Hao thought about how the man had protected him, and he sighed. Forcing himself to sound excited, he said, “Master, you’re so incredible!”

The Daoist priest laughed loudly, then lowered his hand.

“Just trust your Master. The Dao is in My Heart The Will is in My Eyes I Shall Exhaust the Mountains and Seas Seal the Heavens Incantation is incredibly powerful. Considering the level of my cultivation base, I can only use it at ten percent of its full power. But even that ten percent is very, very, very powerful! Way more powerful than me, you have my word on that!” The Daoist priest was bragging so hard that, though he was trying to seem high and mighty, spittle flew from his mouth.

With that he swished his sleeve, raised his right index finger into the air, and pointed straight up into the sky. “Come, come, it’s time to practice the incantation. Just watch how I do it.

“The Dao is in My Heart!” he roared, causing the words to echo out through the sect. Meng Hao couldn’t help but notice that all of the disciples in the Daoist rite temple at the base of the mountain quickly lowered their heads in embarrassment. He looked back at the Daoist priest, unable to prevent his eyelid from twitching uncontrollably.

The Daoist priest then bent his legs to form a circle… then raised his right hand up again, except this time to his forehead….

“Follow me!” he said, glaring at Meng Hao. “Come on!”

Meng Hao cleared his throat and thought once again about how the Daoist priest had personally taken him under his protection. Sighing, he bent his legs to form a circle and then, with difficulty, raised his hand vertically in front of his forehead.

“Say the words!” urged the Daoist priest.

Meng Hao gritted his teeth and finally decided to just give in. “The Dao… The Dao is in My Heart!” he roared.

The Daoist priest’s eyes glittered, and he laughed. “Good, very good. Now for the second stance.”

Next, he lifted his left hand up and held it horizontally in front of the other hand, to make the character .

“The Will is in My Eyes!” he roared. No matter how you looked at it, the horizontal position of his left hand made it so that his eyes were completely covered up.

Having no other choice, Meng Hao followed suit.

“I Shall Exhaust the Mountains and Seas!” the Daoist priest cried. He then he squatted down, and leaped high into the air, looking very much like a frog….

Meng Hao gaped with wide eyes, but finally gritted his teeth and followed along, jumping up into the air….

“Seal… the Heavens… Incantation!” Hovering there in midair, the Daoist priest stretched both hands out wide, threw his head back and roared. His voice resonated out in all directions, becoming clearly audible to even the cultivators who had surrounded the sect. Strange expressions became visible on all of their faces.

As for Meng Hao, he simply didn’t have to courage to yell out the words ‘Seal the Heavens Incantation’ so loudly. Smiling bitterly, he spoke them out much more quietly, and then splayed his arms. The entire area around him then filled with… nothing. There was absolutely no change.

“Not bad!” the Daoist priest said, looking pleased. “You keep practicing this magic for the next two months. Trust me, it’s incredibly powerful, invincible in Heaven and Earth. It can sweep across anything in the Mountains and Seas, and can even exterminate Paragons!”

Meng Hao couldn’t think of anything to say in response.

“Alright, that will do for now. You keep cultivating that on your own, I have some things to take care of.” With that, the Daoist priest waved his sleeve and headed down the mountain, quickly vanishing.

Meng Hao sighed and sat down cross-legged. Frowning, he began to consider what other options were available in escaping the Heavengod Alliance’s manhunt, as this place… wasn’t a long-term option. The Daoist priest was muddle-headed, but the First Patriarch of the Righteous Noble Sect was not, and clearly wasn’t willing to let him say here permanently.

Obviously, the Daoist priest had forcefully demanded to have even the two months of time.

“Well, that’s fine,” Meng Hao thought. “That will be enough for me to finish healing up, and get back to my peak!” Eyes glittering coldly, he took a deep breath and then began to meditate to treat his injuries.

Before too much time passed, rumbling could be heard from off in the distance, and a pillar of light shot up into the sky. Within that light was the shadow of a person who was seemingly teleporting off to some other location. Meng Hao immediately opened his eyes and looked over.

He found himself looking in the direction of the Righteous Noble Sect’s teleportation portals.

His eyes flickered for a moment before he once again began to work on his injuries.

More time passed. Soon, ten days had gone by…. During those ten days, Meng Hao occasionally went down the mountain to watch the disciples of the Righteous Noble Sect practicing cultivation, where he could sense the qi flow of the Mountain and Sea Realm, as well as the righteous, noble aura. Unfortunately, he could only spend about half of each day working on healing his injuries. The other times, the Daoist priest would drag him off to cultivate the something-something Seal the Heavens Incantation.

At first, Meng Hao was too polite to refuse. However, it quickly reached the point where he felt like he just couldn’t take it anymore. Luckily, though, nothing strange happened as a result of practicing it; no misfortune, no lightning strikes, no spontaneous combustion.

Although he wanted to refuse, every time he thought about how the Daoist priest had stood up to all of the cultivators out in the starry sky on his behalf, he simply couldn’t bring himself to say anything. So he went along, albeit halfheartedly.

But then one day when he went down the mountain, he happened to be passing through a valley when he overheard two disciples talking.

“Elder Grandfather Noble Ran has gone crazy again…. For the past ten days or so, he’s been using the teleportation portal at least ten times per day. All he does is send some random things to random places. What the heck is he doing?!”

“It costs quite a few spirit stones to use the teleportation portal, especially for sending things to the destination and back. And he goes somewhere different every time….”

“Well, there’s nothing you can do about it….” The two disciples sighed.

Shaken, Meng Hao hurried over to where the teleportation portals were located, where he saw the Daoist priest handing some spirit stones over to the disciple in charge. Apparently he was preparing to teleport some spirit creatures who were polymorphed into humanoid shapes.

Sensing Meng Hao’s presence, the Daoist priest turned. As soon as he saw Meng Hao, he laughed heartily.

“So, it’s my little disciple! Come, let’s head back and practice the Seal the Heavens Incantation some more.” He stepped forward, grabbed Meng Hao’s arm, and then sped back toward the mountain peak. Meng Hao didn’t say anything on the way, and when they reached the mountain peak, he practiced the Seal the Heavens Incantation with unusual earnestness. He performed every motion meticulously, and even cried out the words as loud as possible.

After practicing for a few hours, Meng Hao suddenly asked, “Master, why have you been using the teleportation portals so much in the past few days?”

“Why?” the Daoist priest replied, sounding surprised. “Well for you, of course! I used to say you were almost as smart as me on a good day, kid, so how could you be so dumb?

“After the two months are over, you’re going to need to teleport out of here. Since the teleportation portals are sealed, it’s impossible to leave the Heavengod Alliance directly. You can still teleport to regions that are near the exits, though. However, there are far too many methods to interfere with a teleportation, someone can even interrupt it when you’re halfway there.

“Therefore, just to be safe, I’m clouding the waters a bit. If I activate the teleportation portals multiple times a day for two months in a row, then the people looking for you are gradually going to lose their patience. Then eventually you can just slip through.”

Meng Hao’s heart trembled as he looked at the Daoist priest. This was a person he had never met before in his life, and yet had moved him repeatedly just in the past few days.

The world of cultivation was a cold place in which people constantly fought and schemed against each other; it was a dog eat dog world. However, the more the world was like that, the more precious certain acts of beauty were. They were unforgettable things, things to be engraved upon the heart and never parted with.

Perhaps there were certain qualities that remained in a cultivator no matter what level they practiced cultivation to. After all, in the end, they were people and not animals.

Meng Hao looked at the Daoist priest for a moment, then clasped hands and bowed very deeply.

In the following days, he did not practice half-heartedly any more. He would earnestly follow along with the Daoist priest in practicing the Seal the Heavens Incantation. He was convinced that it was not really a Daoist magic, but rather, something invented by the Daoist priest, a figment of his imagination.

Eventually, Meng Hao learned that the Daoist priest had not always been this way. Once, a long time ago, he had left the sect only to return heavily injured, his beloved partner dead, and his children lost to the ravages of time. He came back alone, holding nothing but a piece of black leather the size of a hand, after which he lapsed into a coma.

It was from that moment on that he occasionally became muddle-headed. As to what had happened to his family, he never talked about it. The sect made some investigations, but were never able to find any clues.

However, the Daoist priest began to occasionally sit alone on the top of the statue on the mountain peak, looking off into the sky, laughing madly, raving, tears streaming down his face.

A month into his time in the sect, Meng Hao even saw it happen once. The moon was shining high in the sky as the Daoist priest sat atop the statue, laughing or… perhaps crying.

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# Chapter 1228: Supreme Power!

It was like a frightening laughter that, if you listened to it long enough, sounded like weeping laced with indescribable sorrow.

Meng Hao stared silently at the Daoist priest sitting there on the statue, then closed his eyes. It was not a moment to disturb the man. He knew that the Daoist priest was now in his own world.

At dawn, the Daoist priest vanished, and then reappeared in front of Meng Hao, as muddle-headed and unreliable as ever.

When Meng Hao opened his eyes, he saw a lively and energetic Daoist priest standing there who didn’t seem to have a care in the world. “Come, come, my little disciple, shout loudly with your Master. The Dao is in My Heart The Will is in My Eyes I Shall Exhaust the Mountains and Seas Seal the Heavens Incantation!”

Time passed. More and more cultivators were gathering outside of the Righteous Noble Sect. They crowded the lands and filled the sky; more than 1,000,000 cultivators had been attracted to the area because of Meng Hao.

The Righteous Noble Sect felt a lot of pressure, and the sect’s protective spell formation was active day and night. No one dared to relax for a moment, and the disciples were constantly on guard.

One by one, more Dao Realm experts arrived. Eventually there were almost twenty, causing a terrifying pressure to weigh down on the entire area.

Occasionally the mass of cultivators would cause ripples to spread out across the land, and the sky would distort under their auras. The pressure was so strong that it seemed like the Heavens themselves were bearing down. No smiles could be seen on the faces of the disciples of the

Righteous Noble Sect, and on more than one occasion, Meng Hao could see hateful glances cast in his direction.

Although this was the Righteous Noble Sect, where they cultivated a righteous, noble aura, the pressure from the outside and the danger the sect was now in made it unavoidable that they feel rancor toward the person who had brought this down upon them.

Meng Hao rarely went down off the mountain anymore. He simply sat there quietly, watching the teleportation portal being activated ten times, sometimes even dozens of times, each day. It was happening with such frequency that it became mundane, and every time it activated, human-looking figures would be among the things that were teleported.

Occasionally, the teleportation portal would be used several dozen times in a row. This ensured that there was no pattern to how it was being used, and also caused the cultivators of the Heavengod Alliance on the outside who wanted to try to break the teleportation process to slowly grow completely exhausted.

Soon, there were only twenty days left of the two month period. On one particular afternoon, the Daoist priest found Meng Hao to practice the Seal the Heavens Incantation, after which he suddenly said, “Alright, enough time has passed. We don’t want anyone to be able to calculate the time exactly, so therefore, you’re leaving right now!”

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with a serious look as he slowly rose to his feet. He clasped hands and bowed deeply, then the two of them sped over to the location of the teleportation portal. This was not the first time they had gone to there together. They actually frequently did so. Not only would it make it difficult for anyone on the outside to detect what was going on, it would also confuse anyone within the sect who was paying attention and passing information to the outside.

When they got to the teleportation portal, it had already been activated, and someone was inside, waiting to be teleported away. The surrounding disciples in charge of the portal didn’t pay much attention at all to the Daoist priest and Meng Hao, who they were used to seeing here.

The Daoist priest looked at Meng Hao and began to speak in a hoarse voice: “If the teleportation goes successfully, you’ll emerge near the border of the Heavengod Alliance. The border region is too vast and can’t be sealed completely, so that will be your opportunity. You’ll need to employ as much speed as you can manage to cross the border and leave the Heavengod Alliance. Then… you’ll be safe.

“If anyone blocks your path, or destroys the teleportation path, then remember to keep heading in the same direction that the path was taking you!

“Once you step onto the teleportation portal, everything will be up to you….”

Suddenly, he flicked his sleeve, causing the teleportation portal to perform several teleportations in a row. Rumbling filled the air, and bright light rose up. But then, it suddenly stopped. After enough time passed for half an incense stick to burn, the Daoist priest suddenly barked, “Now!”

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. He stepped into the teleportation portal without the slightest hesitation. Almost immediately, he saw that outside of the Righteous Noble Sect were countless other teleportation portals being activated at the same time, as the cultivators there tried to match their frequencies to the teleportation portal inside the sect.

Meng Hao’s face flickered, but it was at this point that the Daoist priest suddenly stepped into the teleportation portal and grabbed Meng Hao by the arm.

In the instant that the teleportation portal was activated, the Daoist priest leapt off of the portal, dragging Meng Hao with him as he then flickered and shot up into the sky at high speed.

Immediately, numerous angered cries could be heard from outside the Righteous Noble Sect.

“Shameless!”

“Noble Ran, don’t tell me you’re rebelling against the Heavengod Alliance!?!?”

“Dammit!!”

More than half of the Dao Realm experts on the outside were already bathed in the light of teleportation. The Daoist priest had timed his move very craftily. Once the portals were activated, there was no way for the people inside them to leave, and they had to go along with the teleportation.

The remaining Dao Realm experts who had not entered teleportation portals bellowed in rage and shot into the air toward the Daoist priest.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. The Daoist priest hadn’t mentioned anything at all about this before. Obviously, everything he had been doing with the teleportation portals in the past several weeks, including the feint just now, had been a trap. It was all bait to lure the experts of the Heavengod Alliance away.

The Daoist priest never had any intention of having Meng Hao use the Righteous Noble Sect’s teleportation portal to escape. Doing that… was far too unsafe and had too many weak points.

However, his performance had been so realistic that many people were fooled and, no matter whether they were willing or not, got stuck in the teleportation portals and then vanished. In fact, there was an even deeper layer to this plan; because of all the activity with the teleportation portals, the cultivators of the Heavengod Alliance had long since concentrated all of their attention on the portal. In order to intercept him, massive numbers of cultivators had even been arranged to surround every teleportation node within the entire Alliance. Furthermore, they engaged the help of almighty experts whose task was expressly to cover Planet Luo River with their divine sense, laying in wait to sever any teleportation beams leaving the planet.

If Meng Hao really had tried to get away via teleportation, it would have been impossible for him to reach his destination. He would have been attacked and forcibly ejected from the teleportation beam.

Rumbling echoed out as the Daoist priest shot up into the sky with Meng Hao, moving at incredible speed. In the blink of an eye, they were outside of Planet Luo River. Meng Hao looked over at the Daoist priest, and was once again deeply moved. Behind them, angered roars could be heard as six beams of light closed in, six almighty Dao Realm cultivators.

Behind them were countless more cultivators, all of them racing to catch up with the Daoist priest and Meng Hao.

It only took a moment for the other cultivators throughout the Heavengod Alliance, the ones sent to lock down the teleportation portals or ambush Meng Hao’s teleportation beam, to be notified of what had happened. They immediately abandoned their positions and raced toward Planet Luo River at top speed.

One slight change can sometimes have a huge effect on the overall situation. The Daoist priest’s sudden action caused the entire setup put in place by the Heavengod Alliance to be ruined. Rumbling echoed out in all directions as the Daoist priest and Meng Hao entered the starry sky.

“Come with me,” the Daoist priest said, eyes glittering. He waved his hand, causing a flying shuttle to appear, upon which he and Meng Hao alighted. Then, rumbling could be heard as the flying shuttle shot out into the starry sky at incredible speed.

As soon as he landed on the flying shuttle, Meng Hao shivered and looked down at it.

“This is….”

“How could Master allow anyone to harm you, my little disciple? The Righteous Noble Sect’s teleportation portals were all being watched. Even if they hadn’t been, I would never have felt at ease letting you use them.

“The only type of teleportation portal I can trust would be one created by myself!

“This flying shuttle is actually a teleportation portal. Sit down cross-legged, and merge your mind into the shuttle. Go, quickly! The faster the shuttle goes, the more powerful the teleportation will be. I refuse to believe that these people could have predicted that I would have a flying shuttle teleportation portal!” With that, the Daoist priest waved his hand behind him. Rumbling echoed out as the six pursuing Dao Realm experts launched attacks.

The Daoist priest trembled, and blood oozed out of his mouth. He might be strong, but he was not strong enough to handle six Dao Realm cultivators simultaneously.

It was at this point that two streams of divine sense suddenly shot through the air toward them all. Shockingly, these were also Dao Realm experts. Now there were eight of them, three of which were Dao Lords. All of these people were on the level of Patriarchs in the various sects of the Heavengod Alliance, and when they combined forces, their Essence power caused the shuttle to tremble on the verge of collapse.

Meng Hao’s face flickered, and the Daoist priest suddenly threw his head back and laughed. Then, he reached down and slapped his left hand onto the surface of the flying shuttle, giving it more power. It suddenly shot forward at ten times its original speed. It was moving so fast that it seemed to be engulfed with flames; simultaneously, the teleportation portal inside began to activate. A shapeless rift opened up in front of the shuttle, and it looked as if the shuttle were about to be swallowed up by a huge mouth.

This caused the faces of all the observers to fill with shock. The Dao Realm Patriarchs howled in rage.

“You can’t get away!” one of them roared. As soon as the words rang out, it seemed like the rules of nature changed to follow suit. Essence transformed into natural law, wrapping around Meng Hao. However, it was at this moment that the Daoist priest began to laugh loudly. Eyes shining, he shouted,

“Watch closely, my apprentice. Before you leave, your Master will demonstrate… the Seal the Heavens Incantation!” With that, he bent his legs into a circle and then pointed his right index finger up into the starry sky.

“The Dao is in My Heart!” As soon as the words left his mouth, time seemed to slow to a halt, and everything stopped moving. A righteous, noble aura filled the area, and the Eighth Mountain and Sea began to tremble.

More shocking of all was that the Daoist priest’s bent legs all of a sudden looked like a tilted mountain peak!

“The Will is in My Eyes!” He moved his left hand to intersect with his right hand. His hair whipped about wildly, and a strange gleam shone from his eyes. At the same time, an indescribable aura suddenly began to radiate out from him.

“I Shall Exhaust the Mountains and Seas! Seal… the Heavens… Incantation!!” With that, his legs straightened as he leaped up and stretched his arms out wide!! 1

The Eighth Mountain was shaking so violently it seemed as if it would crumble. The Eighth Sea howled, and the starry sky distorted. Everything was in chaos. As for Meng Hao, he could see the qi flow of the Mountain and Sea Realm converging on the Daoist priest. Massive power built up in his outstretched arms and then shot out into the starry sky.

Faintly, an image of the Nine Mountains and Nine Seas of the Mountain and Sea Realm appeared, filled with supreme power!!

Everyone present was completely shocked!

1. Note: “exhaust” is not the right interpretation of the original Chinese here, but I’m still getting to the bottom of the correct interpretation and the best way to express it

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# Chapter 1229: Did I Say You Could Go?

Meng Hao watched as the Nine Mountains and the Nine Seas formed into the shape of a huge giant, apparently shaped together by the call of the Daoist priest’s magic. As soon as it appeared there in the starry sky, it waved its finger toward the enemy cultivators.

That simple wave of a finger caused the starry sky to be swept away, layer after layer. The cultivator’s faces were filled with shock and quickly fell back, even the Dao Realm experts.

Many people were aware that the Noble Ran of the Righteous Noble Sect had created the Seal the Heavens Incantation. When it was brought up in conversation, it was generally considered a big joke, and therefore, no one would ever have been able to guess that when the Daoist priest unleashed it on this day… it would explode out with a shocking, supreme power.

Blood sprayed out of the mouths of the ordinary cultivators, and the Dao Realm experts could not prevent the blood from oozing out of their mouths. The single wave of the giant’s finger was apparently backed by the power of the Mountains and Seas, and it wasn’t targeting the cultivators in order to harm them, it was actually… performing a sealing.

One swipe of a finger was sealing the Heavens!

If the Heavens could be sealed, there was no need to even mention the people under them!

That waving finger caused sealing marks to appear on all the cultivators. One by one, they coughed up blood, and were sent spinning through the starry sky, completely out of control.

“The Seal the Heavens Incantation…. This is impossible!!”

“How could the Noble Ran’s poppycock magical technique actually be… so powerful!!” Everyone was astonished.

The Daoist priest was trembling, and he also coughed up a mouthful of blood, and instantly aged significantly. In order to avoid any further trouble for the Righteous Noble Sect, he ceased any further attacks. Then he turned and looked at the resplendent beam of light which was fading off into the distance.

It was almost as if he could see Meng Hao within the light, and could tell that he was just as shocked as all the other cultivators at what had happened.

“My little disciple,” he said coolly, “this is your Master’s Seal the Heavens Incantation!” Then he remained there, hovering in midair, surrounded by the other cultivators who had all just been scattered about.

A certain aura was emanating off of him in that moment, an aura that was difficult to describe. Suddenly, he no longer seemed muddle-headed and unreliable. He looked like a transcendent being, completely beyond ordinary.

Completely ignoring the other cultivators, he turned and headed back to Planet Luo River and the Righteous Noble Sect!

In another patch of the starry sky in the territory of the Heavengod Alliance, near the border, floated an asteroid . No records from any sect contained any information about a teleportation node on this particular asteroid, but all of a sudden, it began to glow brightly. Moments later, the asteroid exploded into pieces as a stone platform appeared from within.

The platform itself was covered with cracks and the markings of a teleportation spell formation. The spell formation was currently activated and running at full power and, from the looks of it, it wouldn’t be too long until it broke down completely. Soon, more cracks appeared over its surface, and a flying shuttle flew out from inside of it.

As soon as it did, the stone platform lost its ability to hold itself together, and shattered. At the same time, the flying shuttle also transformed into ash.

Subsequently, Meng Hao appeared there in the starry sky.

Everything was quiet; not a single sound could be heard. Meng Hao turned and looked off into the distance, still thinking with amazement about what he had just seen.

“Seal… the Heavens… Incantation….” he murmured. How could he ever have imagined that the Daoist priest’s comical magical technique would be so shockingly powerful?

For one person to seal hundreds of thousands of cultivators… well, that Daoist magic was definitely no ordinary Dao, it had ascended to the level of a strategic weapon. One could even imagine how, if it was there was a great war, the Daoist priest could completely turn the tides by himself.

In all the years he had practiced cultivation, Meng Hao had never seen anything like it before, and it left his heart racing. After all, throughout the more than one month that he had been in the Righteous Noble Sect, he had practiced the technique hundreds of times at the bequest of the Daoist priest.

“There’s always something new to learn….” he murmured. “The further you travel, the more you see and experience. It’s only then that you realize that there are Heavens beyond what you imagined could exist, and likewise, people who exceed your imagination. Likewise, whatever Daoist magics you knew, there are always more powerful ones out there!” Staring off into the distance, he clasped hands and bowed deeply in his appreciation toward the Daoist priest.

Meng Hao was the type of person to remember every single individual who had helped him.

However, he also knew that now was not the time to wallow in emotions. After bowing, he quickly shot off into the distance.

“The border region of the Heavengod Alliance is dotted with artificial planets that are used as teleportation checkpoints. Other than those planets, there is nothing else but the vast border itself….

“The gateway planets will be heavily fortified, and I definitely won’t be able to get past them…. Therefore, I’ll just have to break through that endless border.” Having made his decision, he took advantage of the fact that no one was around to shoot off into the distance.

Time passed. A day later, something like a white line appeared off in the distance. At first he couldn’t quite tell what it was, but as he neared, the white line turned into a white wall. It was illusory, and spread out as far as the eye could see in either direction. Meng Hao looked it over, hesitating for a moment. Finally, a cold glint appeared in his eyes as he shot toward the wall.

He reached it in the blink of an eye, and then slammed into it with the full force of his Paragon Bridge. The wall shuddered, and cracking sounds could be heard as fissures spread out across the surface of the wall.

Just as he was on the verge of breaking through, his face fell and he suddenly stopped in place due to the intense sensation of deadly crisis that filled his mind. A beam of light suddenly appeared out in the void, spreading out as if to envelop Meng Hao and lock him in place.

“Nobody who goes berserk in the Heavengod Alliance can leave peacefully.” The owner of the calm voice was an illusory face which had just appeared in the starry sky. It was none other than the old man who had originally determined Meng Hao’s location.

Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed icily, and he gave a cold harrumph as he once again battered the white wall, shattering it. He burst through, assuming he was now outside of the Heavengod Alliance, only to find that directly ahead of him was a second white line, which was… a second white wall!

Just looking at it, it was possible to tell that there was not just a second white wall, but beyond it, a third one and a fourth one…. They went on and on, packed together one after another. Unexpectedly, there were no less than 100,000 walls!

Meng Hao's face instantly turned unsightly.

"The Heavengod Alliance is not a place where people can just come and go as they please. The Noble Ran might have helped you, but you still… have no way of escaping."

Even as the old man spoke, the light of numerous teleportations began to shine up in the area. A total of fifteen teleportation formations could now be seen, with the shadows of countless individuals forming inside of them.

Once they fully appeared, it seemed as if Meng Hao would have no other choice but to attempt to flee.

However, the old man had underestimated Meng Hao. In almost the same instant the teleportation light began to shine, Meng Hao suddenly looked over at the illusory face.

"So, it turns out you can't come here personally, nor can you actually kill me. All you can do is control the power of the Heavengod Alliance's border…." The old man's expression flickered as Meng Hao's cultivation base suddenly exploded with the power of an Allheaven Dao Immortal, and his peak fleshly body. Rumbling sounds could be heard as, unexpectedly, he didn't flee, but instead shot toward the teleportation portals.

As soon as he closed in, he unleashed the God-Slaying Fist.

The fist landed on a teleportation portal that was just about to complete its teleportation. When Meng Hao struck it, it distorted, and then the cultivators inside shouted out in astonishment.

"Break," Meng Hao said coolly. Instantly, the teleportation collapsed, and the cultivators inside began to distort as the teleportation magic was destroyed. As for the cultivators inside, only the most powerful were free from danger, and yet, even they were now incapable of completing the teleportation.

“Child!” the face roared angrily, and yet it was powerless to do anything. Meng Hao pretended as if he hadn’t heard anything at all. His body flickered as he unleashed another fist strike!

One punch!

One punch!

Rumbling could be heard as three teleportation portals were destroyed in quick succession. As for the other eleven, the people inside were materializing. Meng Hao laughed coldly, then raised both hands high into the air. As he lowered them, he cried, “Paragon Bridge!”

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

The Paragon Bridge then exploded out from inside Meng Hao, bursting through the starry sky with crushing pressure. Instantly, four more teleportation portals were destroyed, and a moment later, five.

There were only two teleportation portals which actually managed to finish their teleportation. Before they could be destroyed, the people inside of them charged out.

There were a total of about a hundred cultivators, led by two people. One of them wore a long, blood-colored robe, and the other was the young man shadowed by the Heavengod image, who had his hands clasped behind his back. After looking around for a moment, their scalps went numb, and they actually wished that they hadn’t successfully teleported here to begin with.

Of the fifteen teleportation portals they had begun with, only two had managed to teleport their passengers successfully. The two leaders’ hearts began to pound. Looking over at Meng Hao, they began to back up.

They had come here to chase Meng Hao down and kill him, but now they were the ones who were running away!

Meng Hao looked over at the enraged illusory face and said, “Since you won’t let me leave, then… I guess I’ll just stick around and have my fill of slaughtering your people for a while!”

Laughing coldly, he shot toward the newly-arrived cultivators.

The hundred or so cultivators’ scalps were all numb from the sight of Meng Hao charging them, his energy surging. The cultivators’ minds reeled, and they fell into retreat. If they had a bit more of an advantage in terms of numbers, and if they had some Dao Realm support, then they would be able to surround Meng Hao and bombard him from all sides. But now, they were facing Meng Hao by themselves, and it instantly drained their courage.

After all, the person who had completely exterminated the Blacksoul Society was the type of person who left them completely terror-struck.

“Think you can just leave?” Meng Hao asked, killing intent flickering in his eyes. He was already completely fed up with being chased, so he transformed into an azure-colored roc and shot toward the nearest cultivator. A talon that could shatter metal or rock slammed into the man’s head, and a cracking sound rang out. Blood spurted out in all directions, but by then Meng Hao had already appeared in front of another cultivator, whereupon he flapped his wings and transformed into a beam of azure light.

Everywhere he went, blood-curdling screams rang out. The young man in the leadership position was terrified, and completely regretted coming to this place as his Heavengod image suddenly shattered. A popping sound could suddenly be heard from the other young leader, who instantly transformed into a red mist.

“So, it turns out it was you!” Meng Hao eyed the red mist. Completely ignoring the young man with the Heavengod image, he shot forward in pursuit of the red mist.

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Note from Deathblade: My apologies, but the next update won’t be coming for another 24-36 hours. Details about why can be found here.

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# Chapter 1230: Initial Contact with the Meng Clan!

“It’s not me!” cried an alarmed voice from within the red mist. This was indeed the same person who had appeared a month before. At that time, the Daoist priest had ended up taking Meng Hao away, and therefore, this young man had managed to avoid meeting a calamity.

Upon this second meeting, the red mist immediately attempted to flee at top speed. However, Meng Hao waved his finger, unleashing the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex. The mist immediately lurched to a stop, and Meng Hao advanced, waving his arm, which caused the entire patch of mist to be blasted away.

Revealed inside was a young man in a red robe. Face flickering, he performed a double-handed incantation gesture and then pointed at Meng Hao. Meng Hao’s blood immediately began to flow backward, and his cultivation base rotated in reverse. He stopped in place, his face bright red.

Killing intent flickered in the eyes of the young man who, instead of fleeing, turned and lifted both hands into the air. Even as he closed in on Meng Hao, an old man materialized from thin air nearby, his face grim and also filled with killing intent.

This man was obviously the younger man’s Dao Protector.

Both attacked with thunderous speed, and yet, as they neared, Meng Hao merely smiled. That smile caused the old Dao Protector’s heart to feel as if it had been struck by lightning.

Before he could even react, Meng Hao shot forward, unleashing one, two, three fists onto him!

A boom could be heard as the man’s body exploded into fragments, and he was completely destroyed, without even being given a chance to scream!

It was an instant fatality!

The red-robed young man’s eyes widened, and he instantly began to back up. But Meng Hao was already upon him, and began to unleash the same punch he had released onto the old man.

“You can’t kill me! My father is the Blood Seal Sect’s Sect–”

Before the young man could finish speak, Meng Hao’s fist landed. A boom rang out, and the young man’s body trembled. Then he looked down at himself and saw a huge, gaping hole in his chest. The terrifying explosive power continued to flood out through his body, which then began to crack and fall apart. Moments later, he was completely dead, even his soul.

“Well why didn’t you speak up earlier…?” Meng Hao said, frowning with the realization that he probably shouldn’t have killed his person. If his father was somebody important, he surely could have ransomed him for a hefty price.

Unfortunately, the young man hadn’t spoken up quickly enough.

“I originally only had one enemy, which was the Blacksoul Society. But with so many cultivators trying to chase me down and kill me, well… let’s just see who’s the last one standing!” He flicked the blood off of his hand, and turned, eyes flickering with killing intent as he vanished.

Two days later, the hunt for Meng Hao was still going on in the Heavengod Alliance’s territory. Suddenly, he ran into a squad of about a hundred cultivators. Unfortunately for them, they had no Dao Realm expert to lead them, and therefore, after about ten breaths of time passed, they were completely wiped out.

Another day passed. In another location, he ran into three hundred cultivators. They were similarly wiped out!

The Heavengod Alliance was furious, and countless cultivators were mobilized to try to chase down Meng Hao. However, any time they were able to pinpoint his location, he was simply too fast, and by the time a Dao Realm expert arrived on the scene, he would be long gone.

On the sixth day, a group comprised entirely of Heavengod Society disciples ran into him, and was completely wiped out.

That completely enraged the cultivators of the Heavengod Alliance. However, on the seventh day, something happened which caused the number of cultivators who were pursuing Meng Hao to suddenly drop by a significant number. Even the highest ranking members of the Heavengod Alliance itself were shocked!

Meng Hao killed a Dao Realm cultivator!!

That person might only have been a 1-Essence Dao Realm cultivator, but he was in that most mighty of Realms, the type of person who could be a true Patriarch. He suddenly appeared when Meng Hao was in the middle of wiping out a group of Heavengod Alliance cultivators. Meng Hao immediately stopped attacking his current target and shot toward the Dao Realm expert. They then engaged in a fierce battle in the starry sky. Although it first seemed as if it would be a protracted fight, Meng Hao killed him after only an hour!

That completely shook everyone who was chasing him, and brought them back to their senses after the intoxicating thought of the prize for catching him. In fact, many sects even issued orders to their disciples to stop going after Meng Hao and return to the sect.

That battle clearly revealed that Meng Hao’s cultivation base had been restored, and furthermore, showed that his extermination of the Blacksoul Society had not been a fluke. Nor had he used some special method to make it happen. It wasn’t something that could only happen once… he truly possessed that level of power!

The slaughtering was instantly reduced. And yet, there were still people chasing him. The main difference was that Immortal Realm cultivators no longer joined in, and the weakest people were in the great circle of the Ancient Realm. The main strength came in the form of Dao Realm cultivators!

In the entire Heavengod Alliance, there were only a few dozen Dao Realm cultivators, about thirty percent of which were now participating in the search!

However, because of the deadly way Meng Hao was fighting back against his pursuers, the Heavengod Alliance was no longer chasing him merely because of what had happened with the Blacksoul Society. Apparently, an undispellable enmity now existed between them!

In this, Meng Hao could not be blamed; the responsibility fell squarely on the shoulders of the Heavengod Alliance.

Soon, the actual instances of death grew increasingly infrequent. It wasn't until three days later that several Dao Realm experts caught up with Meng Hao at the same time. After an intense battle was fought, Meng Hao was forced to flee.

Five days later, two more Dao Realm cultivators caught up with him. The battle was incredible, and both Dao Realm cultivators were heavily injured. However, so was Meng Hao, who was again forced to flee.

Currently, Meng Hao was staggering along somewhere near the border of the Heavengod Alliance. Blood oozed out of his mouth, and yet, his eyes shone with cold light. He looked like a lone wolf.

His injuries were serious, and his Eternal stratum was hard at work. It had been less than a month, and he had been in numerous intense fights, the most recent of which had all been fights with the Dao Realm.

1-Essence or 2-Essences were one thing, but if they teamed up, things got difficult. That was not even to mention what happened when a Dao Lord appeared. After all, Meng Hao wasn't even in the Dao Realm himself….

“There must be something on me that they can sense, but what? They’re constantly locking onto my position. Ever since I left Planet Luo River, they’ve been tracking me down so quickly!” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with killing intent. Suddenly, he stopped in place and looked up ahead at something that had just appeared out in the inky blackness of the void. Brightly glowing rifts!

Rifts, in between which floated dust and rubble…

There weren’t many of them, only a total of 33, and they formed together into a very peculiar shape that resembled the vicious face of a ghost, floating there in the starry sky. For some reason, Meng Hao got the feeling that the ghost face was looking at him.

He even caught wind of what sounded like endless screams echoing out from tombs. His face fell, and he began to back up. As he did, he couldn’t help but notice that the area encompassed by the ghost face… was expanding.

It was now larger than when he had first seen it, by about thirty percent.

“An Arcane Pocket Realm?” he thought, studying the ghost face. For some reason, looking at the ghost face filled him with a sense of intangible danger. He quickly pulled out the map jade slip from the Righteous Noble Sect, and examined it carefully. Unfortunately, there was no information whatsoever about anything special in this area.

“Something’s off….” he thought, frowning. After looking again at the rapidly expanding ghost face, and then back at the map jade slip, his brow furrowed deeper.

The map was very detailed, and was a rare item that only conclave disciples of the Righteous Noble Sect would have access to. There were even many asteroids marked on the map.

According to the map, Meng Hao’s current location should have had seven asteroids which formed together in a small bazaar.

Right now though, there were no seven asteroids to be seen, and the bazaar which had existed on them was also gone.

As Meng Hao studied the situation, his scalp began to grow numb.

“Did they get swallowed up…?” he thought, looking over at the 33 glowing rifts, and the dust and rubble floating there. He could well imagine that, previously, there really had been seven asteroids and the bazaar, and naturally some cultivators would have been present too.

However, these 33 glowing rifts had suddenly appeared and then swallowed up and destroyed everything in the area… this line of thinking caused Meng Hao’s face to fall. Furthermore, the sensation of danger he felt grew even stronger; there was even an aura of death that gradually became quite apparent.

“The Eighth Mountain and Sea is full of one grave after another. Could this also be some sort of gravesite?!”

Without any hesitation, he backed up. This place seemed far too dangerous, so he decided to simply turn and leave.

The following moment, though, before he had flown very far, he looked out into the starry sky and caught sight of a merchant ship heading in his direction.

Just when he caught sight of it, the ship suddenly stopped in place.

A complicated expression appeared on Meng Hao’s face as he noticed the magical symbols on the side of the ship, which formed together into the character Meng . “The Meng Clan….”

This was his first time seeing anyone from the Meng Clan in the Eighth Mountain and Sea. He had never imagined that it would be under these circumstances. Looking away, he made to leave again, when suddenly, a bright shield of light appeared around the ship, apparently a defensive spell formation. Simultaneously, several figures flew out from the ship to stare at Meng Hao.

One of them was a young man, handsome although someone pallid. He looked weak, as if from excessive drinking. He wore fine silks, and had a jade lip in his hand. As soon as he caught sight of Meng Hao, his face lit up, and he crushed the jade slip.

Meng Hao scanned the ship with divine sense and found that the highest cultivation bases among their number were two experts in the great circle of the Ancient Realm.

One of them stood next to the young Meng Clan cultivator, and the other flanked another young man, who was extremely skinny but had a cold gleam in his eyes.

Meng Hao could kill all of these people very easily, even if they did have a defensive spell formation in place.

When he saw the young man crush the jade slip, Meng Hao sighed. Then he turned, transforming into a beam of bright light that began to shoot off into the distance.

But then, the young man cried out, “Meng Hao, don’t even dream about leaving! Get out there and stop him, all of you! I already notified the Senior members of the Heavengod Alliance, and they’ll be here any moment. Stall Meng Hao!”

In response to the young man’s words, a dozen or so cultivators flew out from the ship. They all looked very nervous, and yet even more nervous than they, were the two cultivators in the great circle of the Ancient Realm. When they heard the young man’s words, their faces fell.

“Shut your mouth!!” one of the old men roared.

“Moron!” said the cold, skinny young man off to the side, his expression flickering with scorn.

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# Chapter 1231: Deadly Catastrophe!

Meng Hao frowned and looked over at the Meng Clan cultivators who were charging toward him. All of them were in the Immortal Realm, and there was one who had clearly just achieved Immortal Ascension, a stage 1 Immortal.

They were trembling to a man, looking at Meng Hao in abject terror. In fact, once Meng Hao swept his gaze over them, none of them seemed willing to advance.

“What are you doing?” hollered the young man, furious. “Get out there! Don’t let him get away!!” The old man standing off to the side saw Meng Hao looking his way. Trembling, he gritted his teeth and slapped his hand onto the back of the young man’s head.

The young man instantly went limp and fainted. The old man quickly hurried forward, then clasped hands and bowed deeply to Meng Hao.

“Senior, our clan’s Young Master doesn’t understand how the world works. This was clearly just a case of mistaken identity. Senior, please forgive us. Well, we’ll be on our way now…” Then he nervously called for all the clan members to return to the ship, after which it slowly began to back up.

Meng Hao could see the beads of sweat on the old man’s face, and could tell how nervous he was. Clearly he now hated the young man even more than he had before.

The young man had instantly identified Meng Hao, and so had his Dao Protector. However, as soon as the old man thought about how Meng Hao had exterminated the Heavengod Alliance’s Blacksoul Society, and then killed so many of his pursuers, even Dao Realm experts, his heart trembled.

“Brainless moron. I really don’t understand why the clan cares about him so much. I can’t believe he intentionally provoked that jinx!”

There was someone else on the ship who was looking at Meng Hao, his face pale. He seemed to be hesitating, as if something had just occurred to him that he wished to speak out loud, but didn’t qualify to do so.

He was also a young man, wearing the clothes of a royal bodyguard. His face was crisscrossed with numerous scars that stretched down his neck and even further. Apparently, those scars ran across his entire body, and actually made him look somewhat weak.

Meng Hao looked over at the cultivators of the Meng Clan. He would never have imagined that his initial encounter with them would have been like this. He glanced at the young unconscious youth and realized that he must be someone very special to the Meng Clan. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have the level of power he did.

However, the fact that he was such an idiot caused Meng Hao to feel a bit disappointed in the Meng Clan. However, it was his mother’s clan, and his grandfather’s, and because of that, he had special feelings for them. Therefore, he didn’t allow what had happened to leave him with a very bad impression.

He had planned all along to go visit the Meng Clan while he was in the Eighth Mountain, to see what it was like and also to make contact with the members of his grandfather’s bloodline.

As he watched the ship moving off into the distance, he sighed, then looked away and made to leave. But then his eyes flickered as he looked off in a different direction.

“Well since you’re here, why not show yourself?” he said calmly. As soon as the words left his mouth, the void off in the distance distorted, and three people emerged.

The first was a ruddy-faced boy wearing a white robe. He held his hands clasped behind his back, and had a third eye on his forehead. His expression was icy, and the third eye blinked constantly, simultaneously radiating a mysterious light as he walked forward. Shocking ripples radiated out from him in all directions, causing the natural laws in the starry sky to be shoved away. The Essence power was impossible to conceal.

“Dao Lord….” Meng Hao thought, pupils constricting.

The second person was an old woman, her face covered with bulging pustules. Every step she took caused her to tremble, as if she were so old she might die at any moment. However, she brimmed with vibrant life force that made her seem like an eternally inextinguishable flame.

When the old woman saw Meng Hao, piercing laughter erupted from her mouth, as if she were looking at a dead man.

The third person was none other than Patriarch Blacksoul. He looked different now; obviously he had possessed a new fleshly body. However, his soul aura, and his venomous hatred for Meng Hao, made him instantly identifiable.

“Listen up, child,” the white-robed boy said. “I’m Xuan Daozi, from the One Profound Sect on Planet Profound Turtle!” The boy’s voice was not loud, and yet it seemed to rumble out in all directions like thunder. 1

As soon as Meng Hao heard him mention the One Profound Sect, his eyes widened. Of the four planets in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, Meng Hao had heard of Planet Luo River, as well as… Planet Profound Turtle! As for the One Profound Sect, they were the number one sect on Planet Profound Turtle. They occupied a very high position, and were ranked among the top five forces in the Heavengod Alliance!

Next to speak was the old woman, whose voice was hoarse as she smiled and said, “And I’m Hong Chen, from the Church of the Dragon God on Planet Eight Designs.”

Her expression was completely vicious, and when she smiled, one of the pustules on her face popped. No liquid emerged; instead, a milky-white centipede crawled out from the broken flesh, its legs writhing in a shocking fashion.

When Meng Hao looked at the Hong Chen, his heart sank a bit. Planet Eight Designs was also one of the four great planets in the Eighth Mountain and Sea. As for the Church of the Dragon God, it was even more powerful than the One Profound Sect, and was one of the unflappable top three sects in the Heavengod Alliance!

Clearly, these two sects had been recruited by Patriarch Blacksoul. If they succeeded in the venture, and thus obtained the services of Patriarch Blacksoul, then their power would increase by an entire level. The One Profound Sect would then be able to compete directly with the Church of the Dragon God, and as for the Church of the Dragon God, they would then be just as glorious as the second-ranking force in the Alliance, the Godchild Society.

As soon as these three powerful experts appeared, the Meng Clan ship suddenly stopped moving. By this point their young leader had regained consciousness, and had ordered the ship to be stopped. Now, he was staring at Meng Hao with glittering eyes, and his Dao Protector was doing nothing to hold him back.

People exist everywhere who hope to take advantage of a crisis for personal gain, and the Meng Clan was no exception.

“I’m Meng Hao!” he said in introduction. Even if he had faced these three almighty Dao Lords of the senior generation back when he was uninjured, he still would have been killed. Therefore, there was no need to even mention what a fight now would be like, considering that he was seriously injured. In fact, even facing one of them would be quite difficult for him.

However, he still wasn’t willing to lose his pride, and therefore, when Hong Chen and Xuan Daozi formally introduced themselves, naturally, he did the same. As for where he came from, it was sufficient that they were aware of the facts; there was no need for him to state it himself.

Patriarch Blacksoul glared at Meng Hao, eyes brimming with intense hatred. Meng Hao had destroyed his entire existence, and now he wished to do the same to Meng Hao.

“Meng Hao,” Patriarch Blacksoul said, his voice booming like thunder. “Echelon cultivator from the Ninth Mountain and Sea. What a high status…. But not here! Here, you’re nothing!”

Something else happened that nobody noticed, not even Patriarch Blacksoul, or perhaps he didn’t deign to care…. On the Meng Clan’s ship, the scar-faced young bodyguard trembled in response to the words. Then his eyes began to shine with a bright light as he looked out at Meng Hao.

However, the light in his eyes quickly faded, as if whatever matter had occurred to him moments before was really an impossibility. Nobody noticed this happen; all of the cultivators on the Meng Clan ship were paying close attention to what was likely about to develop into a deadly Dao Realm battle!

Rumbling filled the air as Patriarch Blacksoul began to stride forward. He waved his right hand, causing countless souls to silently materialize. Essence power also rocked out, causing the starry sky to tremble as it all bore down on Meng Hao.

Anyone under the Dao Realm who faced a deadly attack like this would be destroyed in a single attack, regardless of the level of their cultivation base. But Meng Hao was an Allheaven Dao Immortal, and his fleshly body was in the great circle of the Ancient Realm. Because of that, despite not being in the Dao Realm, he could definitely match up with Dao Realm cultivators!

Meng Hao’s face was calm, although he really had no other choice but to remain calm. Any sort of emotion was useless at this point. This fight was going to happen, therefore… how to fight, how to defend, how to counterattack, and all other aspects of the battle were decided by Meng Hao in an instant!

He suddenly flickered into motion, raising his right hand to summon numerous Immortal mountains, and even the Paragon Bridge, which descended toward Patriarch Blacksoul to block his path.

When their divine abilities met, a tremor ran through Meng Hao, and he coughed up a mouthful of blood. However, his eyes flickered as he suddenly borrowed to force of the blow to shoot backward, toward… the 33 glowing rifts that he had seen earlier.

After observing the area earlier, he knew that it contained vast dangers, and that he might even end up dying there. But he was in a similarly deadly situation right now. Furthermore, when two deadly situations like this slammed into each other, it was possible that… the explosive result would not necessarily be death… but an elusive… chance to live!!

The people in the Meng Clan could take advantage of a crisis for personal gain, so naturally… Meng Hao could too!

In the moment that Meng Hao fell back, Patriarch Blacksoul was rocked by the Paragon Bridge. However, even as the blood oozed out of his mouth, the white-robed Xuan Daozi suddenly laughed, blurring away and then rematerializing right next to Meng Hao.

“Get back here, child!” he said coolly, reaching out with his right hand to grab Meng Hao. Next, it was as if his hand transformed into a black hole, causing the starry sky to reverse its movement, and time to run backward.

Even the Meng Clan’s ship was affected, and began to emit creaking sounds as it began to tilt over on its side.

Seeing that he was about to be grabbed, Meng Hao suddenly laughed coldly and began to walk. He was using… the time-walking technique taught to him by… the black-robed figure named Slaughter!

One step, two step, three steps. Meng Hao stepped through time, seemingly moving slowly, and yet, despite the fact that Xuan Daozi’s palm was causing time to flow in reverse, Meng Hao was still able to walk forward!

This was using Time to fight Time!

A brief moment later, and Meng Hao was already off in the distance, leaving Xuan Daozi standing there gaping. In all his years of cultivation, this was the first time anyone had evaded his Essence magic in such a fashion. His eyes began to shine brightly with disbelief as he watched Meng Hao, and especially the way he was walking.

“What walking technique is that? It contains a Dao of Time that’s even more profound… than my own!”

1. Xuan Daozi’s name in Chinese shares the character “xuan” with the name of the sect. It can be translated a lot of ways, including “profound, black, mysterious” and can be combined with another character to become “Xuanwu (Turtle).” If you read Against the Gods, you’ve seen this character translated as “profound” in certain words

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# Chapter 1232: Essence Stirs Only For the Daosource!

As soon as Xuan Daozi saw Meng Hao’s walking technique, his own Essence of time suddenly began to boil with thirst. It was a feeling that he had never, ever experienced before!

“This….” it took only a moment for the reaction of the Essence to grow stronger, and cause him to begin to tremble with excitement!

“My Essence is moving, thirsting… this… this… this matter is something which is mentioned in the histories!!

“Heavens! I… I can’t believe I’ve encountered something that exists only in legends. Where did this Meng Hao’s walking technique come from? It can actually stir my Essence up, and cause it to exhibit a powerful thirst!!

“My Essence wishes to absorb the Dao of Time in that walking technique!

“If I can gain enlightenment of it, then my own Essence of time could potentially… progress another step and form a sliver of the Daosource! According to the legends, Essence stirs only for the Daosource!

“The Daosource… is something so mysterious that only almighty Dao Sovereigns can possibly grope for understanding of it…. Only the legendary Paragons could actually aspire to such supreme heights!” Xuan Daozi’s eyes were wide, and his heart was pounding in excitement.

To Dao Realm experts, Essence was only the beginning! It was the destination of their journey, and yet, it was another starting point!

That starting point was actually where the vast majority of Dao Realm cultivators would be stuck for the rest of their lives. They searched for more enlightenment in order to possess more Essences, and thus reach the absolute pinnacle!

The first pinnacle was a 3-Essences Dao Lord, above which was the Dao Sovereign. And anyone who possessed seven Essences could rightly be termed a Paragon!

In truth, though, there was even something that not all Dao Realm cultivators understood. Only certain Dao Lords and Dao Sovereigns had heard that… becoming a Paragon was not the absolute peak of cultivation. For example, Paragon Nine Seals had nine great Essences, and yet, as strong as he was, he eventually died.

Beyond the 9-Essences Paragon, there was the Daosource Realm!

Actually… no one even knew whether the Daosource Realm was real or not. After all, from ancient times until now, be it in the times of the Paragon Immortal Realm or the current Mountain and Sea Realm, the entire Immortal World… had never produced a single Daosource Realm cultivator!

There were only stories and legends which said that the key to the Daosource Realm was that… Essence stirs merely for the Daosource!

“The Daosource! This is definitely the legendary Daosource! This is the first time since stepping into the Dao Realm that one of my Essences has moved!!” Xuan Daozi looked at Meng Hao for a moment and then suddenly shot after him. His action was not taken on behalf of his sect, which had been recruited by Patriarch Blacksoul. Rather… he was doing this for himself!

When he thought about the fact that not even the legendary Paragons could touch the Daosource, Xuan Daozi went wild with joy.

However, there was someone else who reacted even faster. In almost the exact same moment that Meng Hao used the special time-traveling walking technique, Hong Chen laughed, a hoarse, grating laugh. Suddenly, she waved her finger, causing seven of the pustules on her face to pop. Seven milky-white centipedes then shot toward Meng Hao.

“Dragon God, your presence is requested!” Hong Chen’s eyes glittered coldly, and as soon as the words left her mouth, the seven centipedes swirled around each other, as if they were forming some bizarre spell formation. A shocking aura began to radiate off of them, and at the same time, an enormous illusory figure appeared, surrounding the centipedes.

That figure was not a dragon but, rather, a huge centipede that was fully 3,000 meters long. As soon as it appeared, the starry sky shattered. The Dragon God roared and then lunged toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s heart was pounding. The Dragon God was bearing down on him, and Xuan Daozi was closing in rapidly. At this critical moment, Meng Hao was incapable of dodging. His hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, causing the Paragon Bridge to appear. As he proceeded along using his time-walking technique, Immortal mountains descended, around which swirled a sun and a moon. The full power of an Allheaven Dao Immortal also exploded out.

The meat jelly appeared, forming a suit of armor. The copper mirror materialized into the Battle Weapon. The mastiff transformed into a cape. The fourth Nirvana Fruit appeared, which Meng Hao pushed into his forehead.

It all happened in the blink of an eye, causing Meng Hao’s energy to spike dramatically. He waved his hand viciously, causing the starry sky to tremble. Even the Meng Clan’s ship began to vibrate, and its protective shield shattered. Numerous disciples of the Meng Clan coughed up blood.

The Dragon God let out a miserable howl as it collapsed into pieces. Xuan Daozi stopped his frenzied pursuit and waved his sleeve, causing his cultivation base to erupt with a powerful attack. Patriarch Blacksoul also roared as he went on the offensive.

Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth as the Paragon Bridge was sent spinning away. The mountains collapsed and the sun and moon shattered. The meat jelly armor fell to pieces, the Battle weapon faded away, and the cape reverted back into the mastiff, which spewed out blood.

Meng Hao’s fourth Nirvana Fruit was forced out of him, and Meng Hao was rapidly enveloped by a mist of his own blood. He appeared to have been seriously injured, and as he continued to flee, it was even possible to see shattered bones in the mangled mass of flesh that was his chest.

“DIE!” cried Hong Chen, killing intent flickering in her eyes as she advanced directly toward Meng Hao. Patriarch Blacksoul unleashed his most powerful Essence magic as he attacked Meng Hao gleefully.

Xuan Daozi’s face suddenly flickered.

“Don’t kill him!” he barked, stepping forward to intervene. Rumbling filled the air as he blocked the attacks of both Hong Chen and Patriarch Blacksoul, who then glared at him angrily.

“Xuan Daozi, what are you doing?”

“Fellow Daoist Xuan Daozi, you’re blocking me? What is the meaning of this!?” Hong Chen and Patriarch Blacksoul both stared at Xuan Daozi, eyes aflame with rage.

“I need him!” Xuan Daozi explained immediately. “Keep him alive, and after I’m done with him, then you can kill him. I’ll even owe the both of you a big favor!” His words immediately caused the faces of Patriarch Blacksoul and Hong Chen to soften.

Meng Hao took advantage of their brief moment of interaction to fall back even further. His face was pale, and his cultivation base had plummeted. In fact, the extent of the injuries were far greater than the ones he sustained when he had attacked the Blacksoul Society.

He was only a single person facing three Dao Lords, and he wasn’t even truly in the Dao Realm himself. He wasn’t their match to begin with, and now he didn’t even have time to flee into the 33 glowing rifts.

Off in the distance, everyone on the Meng Clan ship had been injured. As for the Young Lord, he wiped the blood off of his mouth, and his eyes flickered with greed.

“I want his place in the Echelon!” the young man roared. “Go! All of you get out there and kill him!!” Although none of the other Meng Clan disciples actually did anything… strange gleams could be seen in their eyes as they stared at Meng Hao, as if they were a pack of wolves staring at an injured tiger.

It was only the scar-faced young man who was apparently unable to conceal the concern he felt, and looked somewhat anxious.

Currently, Meng Hao was in full retreat. Xuan Daozi and the other two Dao Realm Experts had come to an agreement, and looked over at him, killing intent swirling. They closed in, completely ignoring how distasteful it was for the powerful to bully the weak, or for people to gang up on others.

Meng Hao chuckled bitterly. He had no Daoist magics which could block their attacks. He even tried to use the Paragon’s blood inside of him to summon the light of the Mountain and Sea Realm’s sun and moon, to no avail.

“I guess I was a bit too reckless after all….” he murmured. “However, I don’t regret anything. Although, it’s a real pity that I won’t be able to get Qing’er back, or save Chu Yuyan….” Meng Hao sighed as the three Dao Realm experts bore down on him. However, it was at this point that a tremor ran through him, and his eyes suddenly began to shine with a bright light.

“Wait, I actually do have one more Daoist magic!” He suddenly looked up and gritted his teeth. Then, he bent his legs into a circle and lifted his right arm in front of his face.

“The Dao is in My Heart!” he roared. Instantly, the starry sky went completely silent, as if all noise had been consumed. In fact, any noise that was emitted was completely wiped away!

Within that stifling silence, an incredible pressure suddenly weighed down. Xuan Daozi's face fell, Hong Chen's eyes went wide, and Patriarch Blacksoul gaped in shock. All three of them were Dao Lords, and were keenly in tune with Heaven, Earth, and the starry sky. All of a sudden, they could sense a will descending, something that caused their hearts to tremble with intense fear.

Meng Hao was also shaking. As he roared the words, his divine sense spread out. Although he had practiced this magical technique with the Daoist priest over and over again, nothing like this had ever happened. Suddenly, hope flared up within him, burning strong and bright.

Deep in his heart, obsession and faith melded together. As of this moment, he firmly believed that the Seal the Heavens Incantation would definitely catalyze the Mountain and Sea Realm into motion!

He couldn't sense the pressure in the area, as he was completely immersed in a bizarre state. It was as if… he had become the world. As if… he was the Eighth Mountain and Sea. As if… he was the will of the entire Mountain and Sea Realm!

When it came to the words 'The Dao is in My Heart,' Meng Hao viewed that Dao to be the entire Mountain and Sea Realm! The Mountain and Sea Realm was in his heart!

"The Will is in My Eyes!" His left arm rose up to a horizontal position, and together with his right arm, it formed the character , covering his eyes and making it impossible for him to see the world in front of him. However, what it could not cover over… was his heart and his will!

The truth is that on many occasions, it is only when you close your eyes, when you completely cover your field of vision, when you can see absolutely nothing… that you can truly feel the world!

That was exactly what Meng Hao was experiencing right now. He could feel the Nine Mountains and Nine Seas within the starry sky, and he could also sense the sun and the moon.

He began to tremble as his perception completely filled the entire Mountain and Sea Realm without hindrance of any kind. His will was now the will of the Mountains and Seas, and his mind became the mind of the Mountains and Seas!

Even the Daoist priest could never have predicted that Meng Hao would be able to so easily unleash the Seal the Heavens Incantation. In fact, it was so easy… that it was almost as if it were a Heavenly magic that had been prepared specifically for him!

Believe yourself to be the Lord of the Mountains and Seas, and seal the 33 Heavens!

However, if you actually were the Lord of the Mountains and Seas, then the magic… would be unimaginably powerful!

Meng Hao was shaking as he shifted his legs to form the shape of a mountain. Then he stretched his hands wide, as if to embrace the entire world.

“I Shall Possess the Mountains and Seas! Seal… the Heavens… Incantation!!” he roared. 1

In that instant, the starry sky trembled, and the world shook. The Mountain and Sea Realm’s Nine Seas roared, and the Nine Mountains shook violently. The sun and moon vibrated. Everything was shining dazzlingly!

The Mountains and Seas were completely rocked!

It was only in this place, and only Meng Hao who could… begin the initial sealing of the Heavens!

1. As I mentioned before, the previous use of the word “exhaust” was incorrect. The Chinese characters involved are confusing because they can be interpreted in several different ways. In the end, the structure of this part is based on an old Chinese poem, which makes the correct interpretation

clear when you understand that poem. I’ll go back to change the previous instances later

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# Chapter 1233: Initial Opening of the 33 Hells!

As Meng Hao widened his arms, the starry sky in front of him distorted, and a gigantic, blurry figure suddenly appeared, which instantly charged forward.

Massive, shocking ripples emanated out that could shake Heaven and Earth!

Patriarch Blacksoul charged toward it, letting out a powerful shout and raising his arms up, unleashing the full power of his Essences. A huge boom could be heard as his body was shredded to pieces, causing Patriarch Blacksoul to once again let out a roar.

The chunks of blood and flesh which appeared quickly turned black, and in the blink of an eye, had formed into countless souls which carried Patriarch Blacksoul away at top speed. However, the giant was still on the offensive.

Miserable shrieks could be heard coming from Patriarch Blacksoul’s souls. In the blink of an eye, the souls collapsed, and Patriarch Blacksoul was killed in body and spirit!!

The grand and magnificent Patriarch Blacksoul first had his sect destroyed, and then was himself cut down!

None of the souls escaped, all were completely exterminated by the Seal the Heavens Incantation.

As the destruction was carried out, and Patriarch Blacksoul was wiped from existence, the last thing that echoed in his mind was a voice that only he and Meng Hao could hear.

“The Mountains and Seas loathe you. Punishment: execution!”

However, the Seal the Heavens Incantation wasn’t finished!

The giant next charged toward Hong Chen, emanating massive pressure, sending out shocking and terrifying ripples, carrying with it the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Hong Chen’s face was deathly pale. She had just personally witnessed Patriarch Blacksoul’s death, and considering the level of her cultivation base, she had never imagined that Meng Hao, being seriously injured, would unexpectedly unleash a magical technique like this.

In fact, it seemed impossible to her that a cultivator could even utilize such magic. When she looked at the enormous giant, she could sense… the will of the entire Mountain and Sea Realm.

“Impossible!” she screamed, backing up as fast as possible. “This is impossible!!” However, she realized she simply had no way to escape. Roaring, she performed an incantation gesture, causing her cultivation base to surge. Essence power rumbled, and all of the pustules on her face burst, causing countless milky white centipedes to shoot out toward the giant. They screeched as they formed together into a Dragon God that was over a hundred thousand meters long. Surging with energy, it shot toward the incoming giant, and when they slammed into each other, the Dragon God screamed. In the blink of an eye, it vanished, having been completely pulverized by the giant.

Hong Chen trembled, looking on in despair as her Dragon God was completely shattered. All of her milky white centipedes were killed, transformed into nothing but ash. Blood sprayed out of her mouth, her body was lacerated into shreds, and her clothes were ripped apart. When her wrinkled skin was revealed, it was suddenly possible to see a totem tattoo!

It was none other than a Dragon God totem!

It began to shine with a brilliant light, and a Dragon God… once again appeared! This time, it was just as large as the previous one, but much less illusory! Instantly, it bared its claws and fangs then shot toward the giant.

However, even as it roared, it was completely engulfed by the giant’s attack, and was killed. That in turn caused Hong Chen’s totem tattoo to be wiped away. Instantly, her aura weakened, and her cultivation base dropped down from the level of a Dao Lord!

Simultaneously, a voice suddenly echoed out in both her mind and Meng Hao’s.

“You have cultivated the magic of the Outsiders. Since you were born in the Mountains and Seas, your life will not be taken, only the bloodline of the Outsiders which you possess will be destroyed!”

Blood sprayed out of Hong Chen’s mouth, and her face turned ashen. The giant then ignored her, spinning to charge Xuan Daozi.

Xuan Daozi’s eyes widened, and he backed up as fast as possible. However, try as he might, he was unable to escape the giant’s charge. Just as the giant was about to reach out and crush him, he lifted his right hand, within which appeared a command medallion!

It was ancient, primeval, as if it had existed for countless years. It was engraved on the front with nine mountains and nine seas. On the back, were ancient magical symbols which read…

Nine Seals!!

As soon as the command medallion appeared, Xuan Daozi screamed,

“My ancestor once performed meritorious service, and was given this death-exemption medallion by Paragon Nine Seals himself! You can’t hurt me!”

After a pause, a voice echoed out into the minds of Meng Hao and Xia Daozi. “Authorized!”

Xuan Daozi was trembling, and fear lingered in his heart as the command medallion transformed into ash. The giant’s attack still blasted out, but didn’t harm him at all.

When the command medallion turned into ash, Xuan Daozi’s heart twinged with pain. Next, the giant swiveled and charged toward the Meng Clan’s merchant ship, from within which could be heard screams of terror.

As soon as the giant turned on the Meng Clan, Meng Hao suddenly got extremely anxious. Although he could unleash the Seal the Heavens Incantation… he actually couldn’t control it. If he could, then he would definitely have wiped out Xuan Daozi and Hong Chen.

The truth was, this magic… had a will of its own. Once that will awoke, it wished to cleanse and purify all living things within the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Rumbling could be heard as the first attack hit the merchant ship. Although it didn’t harm the ship, the cultivators aboard let out miserable shrieks, evidently receiving some sort of punishment.

Although these members of the Meng Clan had eyed Meng Hao greedily earlier, they were still members of the Meng Clan. Meng Hao had no wish to see them destroyed. Besides, showing a bit of greed was no justification for the death penalty. Even more importantly, they weren’t even aware of his own connection to the Meng Clan.

His eyes widened as the giant’s attack once again threatened to overwhelm the ship, and suddenly, he forcibly reigned the Daoist magic in. He dropped his arms, causing his body to shudder, and a mouthful of blood to spray out.

His body weakened further, but he still forced the magic back in check. The Seal the Heavens Incantation seemed to be sucking away, not at his body, but at his soul.

As he pulled the magic back in, the giant turned and looked in his direction. In that moment, rumbling filled his mind, and it felt as if the giant… bore his own countenance.

He didn’t take the time to analyze the matter; as soon as the giant vanished, he unhesitatingly shot backward. Wounding himself even more in the process, he employed his top speed to shoot toward the region with the 33 glowing rifts.

He was still going to enter that land of potential death. That was because… the instant the giant vanished, Hong Chen and Xuan Daozi began to chase him once more, venomous expressions on their faces.

Xuan Daozi was a bit faster than Hong Chen. In the blink of an eye, he was bearing down on Meng Hao. Meng Hao quickly transformed into an azure roc, which increased the distance between them with a rumbling burst of speed.

Xuan Daozi snorted coldly, and was about to speed up himself, when suddenly, he stopped in his tracks. The shock and terror on his face right now was no less than when he had faced the Seal the Heavens Incantation.

It wasn’t just him. Hong Chen also stopped in her tracks, face flickering as she stared off into the distance and cried, “That’s… the 33 Hells!!”

The area encompassed by the 33 glowing rifts was even larger than before, and had almost reached the area they were in. Meng Hao in azure roc-form didn’t pause for a moment as he shot into that very area.

“33 Hells… so the 33 Hells are opening again. This is just the initial opening. According to the records of the past, the 33 Hells can appear anywhere in the Eighth Mountain and Sea. Once they do, there is an unknown, varying period of time before they become fully opened!

“It is not until they are fully opened, that they are at their most dangerous, and even Dao Sovereigns can be killed inside. Even now, during the initial opening, the place is still very dangerous….

“Dammit, the 33 Hells. They go tens of thousands of years without opening once. How could there be such a coincidence that they’re opening here and now!?!?” Xuan Daozi stared at Meng Hao. Were it not for the fact that his Essence had been so intensely moved, Xuan Daozi wouldn’t have hesitated to turn around and leave. After Patriarch Blacksoul perished, he could not become the slave of any sect or individual therefore trying to kill Meng Hao held little meaning.

However, the possibility of getting that sliver of Dao Essence had wrapped around Xuan Daozi’s heart. After a moment, he clenched his jaw and then headed directly toward the 33 Hells.

“Time to gamble!

“If I succeed, I might be able to get a bit of Daosource. Even the tiniest bit would still be worth it!

“If I fail… considering the level of my cultivation base, and that this is only the initial opening of the 33 Hells, I won’t necessarily perish!” Having made up his mind, he shot forward at top speed.

Hong Chen’s face flickered, and uncertainty could be seen in her eyes. The legends about the 33 Hells had always been talked about in the Eighth Mountain and Sea. Supposedly, there were 33 Heavens sealing the Mountain and Sea Realm from above. However, there were also 33 Hells, although, they were not seals, but graves!

Back during the great war between the Paragon Immortal Realm and the other two terrifying forces, there were certain Outsiders who could not be completely exterminated. In fact, among those, there were some who were so strong that their bodies could not be destroyed even after dying.

Despite having been killed, they weren’t really dead. Since their souls could not be destroyed, they were instead suppressed, and that was the origin of the 33 Hells.

According to the legends, the 33 Hells were jointly created by the three Paragons of past times. Paragon Nine Seals took the lead in suppressing those Outsiders who could be killed in body but not soul!

The 33 Hells were essentially a terrifying cage!

Those 33 glowing rifts represented 33 graveyards. And they, in turn, represented… the 33 terrifying Outsiders of yesteryear who had been suppressed!

The reason the 33 Hells opened up every so often was not to give people a chance to enter and explore them but rather that the sealing power inside would grow weak. Every so often, the 33 Hells needed time to replenish their power before sinking once again into concealment.

However, in the process of being opened, it was possible for people to enter them, and even seek good fortune inside. Such good fortune might be great or small, and truth be told, few people knew as much about the good fortune of the 33 Heavens as Hong Chen!

That was because the Church of the Dragon God had once been a small sect. Back then, it hadn’t even been called the Church of the Dragon God. However, because one of the Patriarchs of that sect had happened to enter the 19th Hell and encounter a Dragon God, he was able to accept a legacy… that led to the formation of the Church of the Dragon God!

“The 33 Hells are opening….” she thought, gritting her teeth. “Another storm of carnage is coming to the Eighth Mountain and Sea….” Her cultivation base had dropped, and she was now no longer a Dao Lord. In fact, she had also lost the power of the Dragon God. She had truly been weakened significantly. However, considering that Xuan Daozi had charged on ahead, her eyes flickered and she also headed in the direction of the 33 Hells.

She was not going for Meng Hao, though, but rather, the potential good fortune inside!

Right after Xuan Daozi and Hong Chen flew toward the area of the 33 Hells, the Meng Clan’s ship began to move. The Young Lord on board was very excited.

“Follow them, all of you! Go! I’ll wait for you here to bring back some good fortune from the 33 Hells. I don’t care what good fortune it is, just bring it back here and you’ll get a huge reward! Huge!

“Dammit, get out there, all of you! If anyone refuses to go, then when we get back to the clan, I’ll report you to the Clan Priest! 11th Uncle, you stay out here to protect me, but everyone else, you get in there!!” The young man’s direct order caused the dozens of Meng Clan cultivators to tremble as they flew in the direction of the 33 Hells.

One of those cultivators was… the scar-faced youth Meng Chen!

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# Chapter 1234: Greed Eyes a Body!

Meng Hao moved with incredible speed, bursting into the region of the 33 Hells, with Xuan Daozi and Hong Chen hot in pursuit. Soon, all three were speeding through the area near the rifts, which was permeated with an aura of death.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered coldly. He had chosen to enter this deathly region, and as such, was prepared for the deadly nature of the area. After looking around, he couldn’t be sure, but it seemed that only four or five of the 33 glowing rifts could be entered. Apparently the others were as yet unopened.

However, his eyes didn’t betray the slightest sign of hesitation as he shot directly toward the nearest completely opened rift.

It almost looked like a gaping mouth that sucked in life and breathed out death. As soon as Meng Hao neared it, he vanished.

Behind him, Xuan Daozi and Hong Chen gritted their teeth hard and then followed him in.

Further on back were the various trembling members of the Meng Clan. They only had Immortal Realm cultivation bases, so any Young Lord who had a brain would never ask them to participate in a struggle between Dao Realm experts.

However, this young master of the Meng Clan, who was referred to as a Young Lord, had given clear orders. Anyone who refused to comply would be severely punished once they returned to the clan.

Therefore, they could only grit their teeth and risk life and limb. There was no backing out, and therefore, it was with grieving, bloodshot eyes that they flew into the shining rift, one after another.

Not long after everyone followed Meng Hao into the 33 Hells, a collection of white bones suddenly rumbled in the same direction from off in the starry sky. They moved with incredible speed, and eventually came to a stop not far from the Meng Clan ship, revealing the figures that had been barely visible inside before. All of them had completely expressionless faces, and radiated powerful murderous auras.

When the Young Lord on the Meng Clan's ship saw the bones, his face flickered. “Han… Han Qinglei!!”

The old man standing off to the side stepped forward protectively, and the ship's shield was activated. Both of them looked nervously at the bones and the black-robed young man who sat in their midst, chin resting on his hand.

This was none other than the Echelon cultivator from the Eighth Mountain, Han Qinglei!

“Meng Clan….” he said, eyes flickering with killing intent as he glanced first at the Meng Clan's ship and then the 33 Hells.

“Where is Meng Hao?” he asked coolly, his voice echoing out in all directions.

The Meng Clan's Young Lord began to tremble. He could act fiercely toward his own clan members, and behave arrogantly in front of Meng Hao, but that was only because he didn't know the difference between Heaven and Earth. When it came to Han Qinglei, though, he was instantly filled with dread.

The person to respond to Han Qinglei was the Young Lord's Dao Protector. “Meng Hao went into that area over there,” he said. He was a cautious man who was well aware that Han Qinglei could not be underestimated. He was also aware of the deadly enmity which existed between Han Qinglei and the Meng Clan.

“The initial opening of the 33 Hells….” Han Qinglei frowned as he examined the 33 glowing rifts closely. Finally, an expression of determination appeared in his eyes. Uncharacteristically ignoring the Meng Clan’s ship, he sent the bones flying toward the 33 Hells.

All of his followers once again turned blurry as they clustered around him to follow.

Time passed. Several hours later, more beams of light could be seen flying through the starry sky in the area, which were cultivators of the Heavengod Alliance. They had come in pursuit of Meng Hao, but once they realized that the 33 Hells had appeared, cries of shock could be heard, and jade slips were pulled out to inform their sects.

It didn’t take long for the shocking news to spread throughout the Heavengod Alliance, and soon countless cultivators were flocking to the area. One powerful expert after another arrived. After all, the 33 Hells… were the most mysterious and enigmatic place in the entire Eighth Mountain and Sea!

In fact, they might even be the most mysterious and enigmatic place in the Mountain and Sea Realm as a whole!

The opening of the 33 Hells was something that would shake the entire Eighth Mountain and Sea!

Soon, more and more cultivators had gathered in the area. However, few people actually dared to enter. Apparently, Meng Hao wasn’t even that important anymore; what was more important was the good fortune to be had in the 33 Hells.

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As soon as Meng Hao entered the world of that glowing rift which was the 33 Hells, he was cut off from the outside world. He was in another world, a world where everything was gray and filled with a boundless aura of death. Rubble could be seen everywhere, as well as numerous decaying shades who shuffled about blankly, occasionally letting out howls and roars.

The powerful aura of death was concentrated enough to extinguish one’s life force. As soon as Meng Hao entered this world, he could sense it, and his skin began to gradually wither. His life force slowly began to decay, and apparently not even his Eternal stratum was useful. His injuries worsened.

Off in the distance, an enormous stone stele could be seen rising up into the air. Despite how far away it was, Meng Hao could still see the faint characters written on its surface.

“Sealing Paramita…. Exalted Celestial Sea-Dao rests here, where his soul shall be suppressed for all time!”

The characters were filled with a powerfully domineering air, and the stone stele itself seemed to form the center of this entire world. It was almost as if it was the only seal holding this world in place. Underneath all of those characters, a name could be seen.

“Nine Seals!”

When Meng Hao saw that, his mind began to tremble, and the drop of Paragon’s blood inside of him began to boil. It transformed into qi and blood that filled Meng Hao, causing his heart to begin to beat in resonance with the world itself.

Ba-dump, ba-dump!

As his heart pounded, the lands around him shook, and at the same time, the shades shuffling around suddenly stopped in place and looked up at him.

It was in that exact moment that rumbling could be heard coming from behind him as Xuan Daozi and Hong Chen arrived.

“Meng Hao, it doesn’t matter that you’ve fled to this place, you’re dead!” Xuan Daozi shrieked, flying directly toward Meng Hao.

Killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes; ignoring how it increased his injuries, he gritted his teeth and transformed into an azure roc, shooting toward the stone stele and causing rumbling sounds to fill the lands.

He could just barely tell that something was beckoning to him from there.

Meng Hao flew at top speed, and as he got closer to the stone stele, the Paragon’s blood inside of him seethed even more. That in turn caused his wounds to begin to heal, much to Meng Hao’s delight.

Simultaneously, the shuffling shades down below suddenly began to shriek, and fly into the air toward both Meng Hao and Xuan Daozi, as if to prevent them from getting close to the stone stele.

That was the moment in which the clan members from the Meng Clan began to appear, one after another, their faces pale with astonishment as they looked around.

Massive rumbling could be heard as the rotting shades shot through the air. Some were cultivators and others were beasts, but all of them were adorned in a fashion that was clearly not from modern times. Obviously, they had been involved in the same ancient battle, and had been buried alive in this place along with the one who was being suppressed here.

Even as they neared Meng Hao, his eyes flashed as he fortuitously recalled something which had happened in the past. It was in the Ruins of Immortality in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, when he had encountered… the Sixth Generation Demon Sealer.

That was when he had learned the Sixth Demon Sealing Hex, the Life-Death Hex!

He clearly remembered how the Sixth Generation Demon Sealer had encountered entities similar to these, and had used the Life-Death Hex to control them.

There were many similarities between what happened back then and what was happening right now. The main difference was that this was the 33 Hells, and that had been in the Ruins of Immortality.

Without any hesitation, Meng Hao waved his hand toward the incoming shades, eyes glittering as he unleashed the Sixth Hex.

Dozens of magical symbols appeared in the palm of his hand, which radiated scintillating light. Suddenly, identical magical symbols appeared on the foreheads of all the entities charging Meng Hao. The entities then trembled as the magical symbols flickered in sync with Meng Hao’s, then flew off of their foreheads toward him, where they converged on the palm of his hand. He then closed his hand into a fist, and suddenly… could sense the dozens of shades inside of his mind.

And he could control them!

The Life-Death Hex had never been so easy to use, but Meng Hao didn’t have time to think about it. He immediately sent out orders, causing the dozens of shades to howl and then pass by Meng Hao to charge toward Xuan Daozi and Hong Chen.

Xuan Daozi was completely shocked. He had no idea what kind of magical technique Meng Hao had just used, but he could see that the strange shades were completely ignoring him. Xuan Daozi’s heart began to thump.

Hong Chen had a similar reaction.

Meng Hao didn’t even look back at what was happening. He continued onward, putting more distance between him and them. However, he wasn’t done with his counterattack. As soon as he started moving, he would unleash the Life-Death Hexing seal on any entity he saw, and send them all back to attack Xuan Daozi and Hong Chen.

Soon, he was in the region of the stone stele, and had sent over a hundred entities back to engage in fierce fighting with Xuan Daozi and Hong Chen.

The entities had no regard for their own lives or deaths. They only followed instructions. Auras of death swirled around them as they fought with incredible fierceness. Even as the booms rang out, Meng Hao arrived at the base of the stone stele.

When he looked up, he realized that the stone stele looked almost like an enormous staff, plunged deep into the earth. It was impossible to say how deep down it went. In either case, instead of saying that it was a stone stele, it would be better to say… that it was an enormous gravestone!

“If it’s a gravestone,” Meng Hao murmured, “then this place really is an enormous grave!” Because of the call of the gravestone, and the boiling Paragon’s blood, his cultivation base was being restored even faster.

A bright glow appeared in his eyes. His injuries had been severe, so if he could recover here, he didn’t care if it was because of the gravestone or even because of some ancient corpse. He quickly shot up into the air to appear moments later at the top of the gravestone, where he sat down cross-legged.

As he sat down, the entire gravestone began to rumble, and the Paragon’s blood inside of him boiled with more intensity. Furthermore, his cultivation base was being fully restored at a terrifyingly fast speed!

As he healed, he looked out coldly at all of the dozens of shades surrounding Xuan Daozi and Hong Chen, and his eyes gleamed with killing intent.

Simultaneously, as he sat there cross-legged, in the soil at the base of the gravestone, suddenly… two greedy eyes appeared, which stared up at Meng Hao.

“It’s been a long, long time… since I’ve seen any living being in my world. Even when people came in from the outside and stood directly in front of me, I could never see them. But him… I can actually see him!! A fresh, living body…. I, Greed, must have it!”

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# Chapter 1235: Counter-Attack!

Meng Hao suddenly looked at the air behind him, frowned, and then looked down at the ground. He didn’t know it, but those eyes beneath the surface were actually staring directly into his, although Meng Hao sensed nothing out of the ordinary.

However, he couldn’t shake the feeling that someone was watching him.

He continued to ponder the strangeness of this place as he then looked back at Xuan Daozi and Hong Chen, surrounded by wave after wave of enemies. Then he continued cultivating to recover from his wounds.

Behind him in the ground, the eyes narrowed.

“How shockingly perceptive…. A body like this is perfectly suited for me. If I can possess it, then… I can finally get out of this damned place!!”

Time passed. Meng Hao’s injuries continued to heal, and he was actually already half recovered. Booms rang out from the direction of Xuan Daozi and Hong Chen as more and more shades besieged them. Unexpectedly, some of those shades even emanated the ripples of the Dao Realm, indicated that they had been Dao Realm experts when they were alive.

Their Essence power had gradually faded, but their instincts remained, and due to the constant onslaught of that aura of death, they were actually even more fear-inspiring than before. Even Xuan Daozi was alarmed.

As for Hong Chen, she was trembling in fear as she joined forces with him, unleashing all sorts of divine abilities that filled the air with the sounds of explosions.

It was around this time that a gray mist suddenly began to rise up from the ground, obscuring everything. The sudden appearance of that mist caused Meng Hao's hair to stand on end. Without the slightest hesitation, he stepped forward and left the place where he had been sitting.

Looking back, he waved his sleeve, causing the Essence of Divine Flame to slam into the spot where he had just been sitting. However, nothing happened in response.

His eyes began to shine, and inwardly he was more vigilant than ever. Moments ago, he had clearly sensed an indescribable coldness rushing towards him.

Had he not moved away, it was likely that the coldness would have frozen him solid. However, whatever it was that had caused the coldness couldn't be detected. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary at all.

Meng Hao backed up slowly, then vanished into the mist.

Unbeknownst to Meng Hao, there really was a blurry shade laying in the spot where he had just been sitting. The shade seemed to be made completely of mist, but his eyes were clear and bright. They were crimson, and they were staring at Meng Hao.

"So, he can actually sense me getting near him…." the shade murmured. "It seems his divine sense must be particularly strong. Well, that's fine. The stronger it is, the stronger I'll be after I possess him. I've been suppressed in here for far, far too long. Dammit. I must get out of here. I'll kill my way out if I have to!" The shade distorted, then flashed into the mists and vanished.

Meng Hao moved along at top speed. The intense sense of crisis he felt in this world caused him to be more vigilant than ever. As he moved along, he looked around at the mists, eyes flickering.

"This place is dangerous for me and everyone else in here. The arrival of this mist…means that the time to counterattack is at hand!" He suddenly flickered into motion, heading back in the direction he remembered Xuan Daozi and Hong Chen were fighting.

Before long, the booming sounds of battle could be heard from up ahead. Xuan Daozi’s bellow echoed in all directions, and the ripples of a magical technique spread out. However, the mist seemed to be covering up all the light, and Meng Hao couldn’t see anything clearly. However, his eyes flickered with an increasingly strong desire to kill.

Eventually, he just closed his eyes. Gradually, nineteen images appeared in his mind. They were all in different directions, and were surrounded by a gray, colorless world.

Those were the entities he had taken control of with Life-Death Hexing. The ones that were still around were now visible in his mind’s eye, and in fact became his eyes.

He flew silently through the mist slowly, threading his way through the various entities therein, and avoiding the most powerful shades of death. After a few dozen breaths of time, he shot forward with a new burst of speed. Then, his eyes opened, and they brimmed with killing intent. He sped forward, his right hand clenching into a fist. The power of an Allheaven Dao Immortal erupted out from inside of him, as well as that of his fleshly body, as he unleashed the God-Slaying Fist.

That fist strike suddenly appeared directly in front of Hong Chen!

She was in the midst of utilizing all sorts of magics to defend against the death shades who were attacking her. In the midst of her exhaustion, Meng Hao suddenly unleashed an explosive attack, causing an expression of shock to appear on her face. Before she even had time to analyze what was happening, the God-Slaying Fist was upon her.

A boom rattled out as the fist slammed into her chest, causing blood to spray from her mouth. Falling back, her eyes widened, and she shrieked, “Meng Hao!”

Even as she fell back under Meng Hao’s surprise attack, she produced magical items and prepared divine abilities to fight back. However, what came at her next through the mist was an azure roc, which slashed at her with its deadly claws.

Booms rang out, and even Xuan Daozi was shocked. He turned and was about to come over to help when over ten death shades suddenly lunged madly in the way to intercept him.

“Screw off!” Xuan Daozi roared.

Simultaneously, Hong Chen’s shrill voice could be heard once again. “Save me!” She was terrified, and couldn’t even see what was happening around her. She fell back, her chest mangled and bloody, and her head punctured in three spots, out of which a reddish-white fluid oozed.

Meng Hao wasn’t in very good condition either. Blood oozed out from wounds all over him. After all, his previous injuries weren’t completely healed, and trying to kill this old woman aggravated them. However, the killing intent in his eyes hadn’t lessened at all, and in fact, grew even more focused.

He suddenly advanced with incredible speed, sending swirling Essence of Divine Flame toward the retreating Hong Chen.

She gritted her teeth, performing an incantation gesture to unleash explosive Essence power in all directions. But Meng Hao was already in a different position, having unleashed the Paragon Bridge onto her. She screamed, her body already showing signs of cracking to pieces as she continued to flee. By now, Xuan Daozi had finished cutting down the death shades which were blocking him, and was now speeding towards them.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as his left hand reached up and pushed his fourth Nirvana Fruit into his forehead. Suddenly, his speed increased dramatically. He shot toward Hong Chen, making a grasping motion which summoned the copper mirror. Sighing repeatedly, the parrot also emerged. Without a pause, it complied with Meng Hao and transformed into the Battle Weapon.

That caused Meng Hao's energy to rocket up; hefting the Battle Weapon, he slashed it toward Hong Chen. Xuan Daozi was racing against the clock, but apparently was out of time, and could only roar in response to what was happening.

Hong Chen also roared, using all the power she could muster to defend herself. However, she had already been injured by the Seal the Heavens Incantation, and her cultivation base had declined. Thanks to Meng Hao's previous attack, she was like an arrow at the end of its flight. Meng Hao could completely ignore whatever magical items or divine abilities she used to fight back. Drawing on all the power he could from his fleshly body, he sent the Battle Weapon streaking down in a flash of dazzling light….

The screams ceased as Hong Chen's head flew off her shoulders, and her body collapsed. Just when her Nascent Divinity was about to flee, the Battle Weapon smashed into it. Yet another Dao Realm cultivator had fallen by Meng Hao's hand!

Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao's mouth, and his face was ashen. The magical items and divine abilities that had been used just now actually increased the severity of his injuries. Eyes bloodshot, he shot off into the distance.

"Meng Hao!!" Xuan Daozi roared. The sound echoed out into the mists, filling the entire world. Some distance away, the members of the Meng Clan were sustaining heavy casualties. Meng Chen was covered with blood, and in flight.

Han Qinglei was also out in the mists, proceeding along as cautiously as ever. Some of his followers had already been killed, and he himself was filled with fear by the 33 Hells.

However, these weren't the only people present; there were others. Furthermore, this was only the initial opening of the 33 Hells, so not all the glowing rifts had opened up, only somewhere between three and five. Therefore, some of the cultivators of the Heavengod Alliance on the outside chose to brave the danger and enter, although that number wasn't significant.

About twenty to thirty percent of them chose to enter the same glowing rift as Meng Hao.

Those who were brave enough to enter obviously were not weak in terms of cultivation base. At the very least, they were in the late Ancient Realm. There even some Quasi-Dao experts who were attempting to find one of the legendary items that could keep Quasi-Dao cultivators from dying.

There were also more than a few Dao Realm experts who entered various glowing rifts.

Therefore, when Xuan Daozi's howl echoed out, the other cultivators within the mists could hear his voice, and their hearts began to pound.

Meng Hao coughed up a mouthful of blood, but continued onward as fast as he could. He put the Battle Weapon away, as well as the Nirvana Fruit. His eyes were now completely bloodshot, but his qi and blood were actually flourishing.

The shade that had been following him the entire time was watching him, and growing more and more greedy.

Meng Hao was flying along, eyes bloodshot, when he suddenly ran into a death shade.

“It's been a long time since I've actually used the Blood Demon Grand Magic,” he murmured.

The shade up ahead was a cultivator, who turned, looked at Meng Hao, then howled as it pounced on him.

Meng Hao did not place a Life-Death Hex sealing mark onto him. Instead, he shot forward and slapped his hand out. His palm immediately turned blood-red, landing on the shade, which shuddered and then began to wither. In the blink of an eye, it was nothing more than ash.

Its gray aura flew out toward Meng Hao, fusing into him and actually withering him more than before. Apparently, it wasn't any help to his wounds at all.

Shaking his head, he continued onward. Before long, his eyes flickered, and he shot forward like lightning as an Ancient Realm cultivator appeared in front of him.

This was one of the cultivators who had been part of the search parties trying to kill Meng Hao. He had actually turned tail and fled when things had gone south, but now apparently he had returned. He was looking around vigilantly, so as soon as Meng Hao closed in on him, his face flickered. Before he could do anything, Meng Hao’s crimson hand snaked out and latched onto the top of the man’s head.

Before he could scream, Meng Hao clamped his hand over the man’s mouth. The cultivator trembled as he withered; his life force, his flesh and blood, his cultivation base and soul, were all absorbed in an instant.

Meng Hao’s face was now less ashen. Soon, nothing was left in his hand other than a dessicated corpse, which dropped down and turned into ash. Meng Hao licked his lips; eyes bright red, he continued on his way.

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# Chapter 1236: We’re Still Good Friends!

Meng Hao slipped through the mists like a lone wolf in the night, completely silent. The only signs of his coming were his glowing red eyes, and the fluctuations of the Blood Demon Grand Magic.

No screams could be heard, as he only targeted Ancient Realm cultivators. By means of the Blood Demon Grand Magic, Meng Hao slowly recovered, although the process didn’t go as quickly as when he had taken advantage of the gravestone. However, what Meng Hao wanted was to awaken his Eternal stratum.

With his Eternal stratum at work, his recovery would go much more quickly.

He proceeded along, absorbing other cultivators he encountered. As for the blurry shade, it kept following him, looking for the perfect opportunity to make the killing blow and possess Meng Hao.

He couldn’t see Meng Hao killing Hong Chen, nor could he see Xuan Daozi chasing him. However, he could sense the brutal air radiating off of Meng Hao, and when he unleashed the Blood Demon Grand Magic, the way it sent the qi and blood boiling caused the shade to be filled with an intense desire to possess Meng Hao.

“I, Greed, have been favored by destiny for my entire life,” the shade murmured. “When I was young, I was nearly killed when fighting my greatest enemy, until an extraterrestrial object fell from the sky and smashed him to death!

“When I ventured out into the world, I never came back empty-handed, and everywhere I went, treasure abounded. My cultivation even proceeded smoothly and without a hitch. However, when I reached the absolute peak, I met a person, a damnable bastard who deserves to die!

“Other than him, there has never been anyone who could suppress me. Even being sealed in here is a temporary thing. I won’t remain here forever.

“This person here is the greatest gift that the Heavens have ever bequeathed upon me.” The greed in his eyes grew more intense, and yet, he didn’t make a move. His earlier attack had failed, so after that he had chosen to simply follow and wait. Wait, and keep waiting…. 1

Meng Hao’s slaughter continued. By now, dozens of cultivators had died at his hand. At the moment, his hand was latched onto the top of another cultivator’s head as he absorbed him, when suddenly, all of the hair on his body stood on end. Not waiting to finish absorbing the cultivator, he shot backward at top speed.

In that same instant, a hand stretched out from the mists. It was covered with black fur, and moved with incredible speed, grabbing viciously onto the half-absorbed cultivator. The cultivator screamed, and was dragged back into the mists, whereupon crunching sounds could be heard.

“Hungry… so hungry….” A growling wail could be heard, along with a sound like that of clinking iron chains. Meng Hao retreated rapidly, an expression of surprise on his face as he sensed the terrifying aura coming from within the mists.

After a long moment, the aura faded away, and the wailing sound drifted off into the distance.

Meng Hao looked around, feeling more apprehensive than ever. Finally, he turned and made his way off to find another Heavengod Alliance cultivator to absorb. Time passed. As he went about his work, he encountered that terrifying hand on three more occasions, and one time even developed into a deadly crisis.

Feeling more vigilant than ever, he absorbed yet another Ancient Realm expert, whereupon a rumbling sound filled him, and his eyes burned with a light like that of fire.

At long last, his Eternal stratum was awakened from its state of withered sleep. It slowly began to work, restoring his life force and energy. In that moment, the blood-colored light in his eyes faded away, and his body’s wounds began to heal naturally.

It was also in that moment that a stream of divine sense swept toward him from up ahead. He backed up, but the divine sense was fast, and quickly enveloped him, scanned him, and then began to completely converge in the area.

“So, it turns out you’re here as well,” said an ancient voice. A terrifying pressure began to weigh down, causing the mists in the area to be pushed away.

Meng Hao’s pupils constricted; based on the intensity of the pressure, he could tell that this power exceeded that of a Dao Lord. Furthermore, he was familiar with this pressure; it was none other than the old man who had attempted to stop him from leaving the Heavengod Alliance to begin with.

Meng Hao knew that he was no match for this man, not even if he were completely recovered and back at his peak. Without the slightest hesitation, he transformed into an azure roc and fled.

However, the pressure was like a sharp arrow that pierced through the mists in pursuit. In fact, were it not for the mists, the old man would have been able to catch up with Meng Hao in the blink of an eye.

Even as Meng Hao fled, Xuan Daozi appeared in a different direction, eyes flickering with killing intent. He had even resorted to one of his secret magics in order to lock down Meng Hao’s position within the mists. The price he had paid was a significant amount of life force and longevity, leaving him looking like nothing more than a bag of bones, his aura weak even though his cultivation base hadn’t been reduced.

“Meng Hao, this time, you’re DEAD!” he roared, shooting like lighting in Meng Hao’s direction.

Meng Hao’s face flickered. He could tangle with Xuan Daozi for a while, but as for that old man, he was much stronger, to the point where Meng Hao was terrified of him. Gritting his teeth, he continued to flee at top speed. It was at this point, just when the powerful pressure was nearing, that a faint howl echoed out, mixed with a wailing sound.

“Hungry… so hungry….” In addition to the voice, a sound like the rattling of iron chains could be heard. Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed as he realized what the old man from the Heavengod Alliance had run into.

It was in that moment that the divine sense that had been locked onto him suddenly retracted.

However, Xuan Daozi’s killing intent continued to bear down on him. Meng Hao’s eyes glittered coldly as he suddenly spun, waving his right hand to summon the Essence of Divine Flame and Immortal mountains to fight back against Xuan Daozi.

Rumbling booms could be heard, and blood oozed out of Meng Hao’s mouth. Just when he was about to borrow the force of the blast to retreat, Xuan Daozi retracted the power, defeating Meng Hao’s effort.

“I guessed you would try something like that!” Xuan Daozi said, laughing coldly. Suddenly, his Essence of time erupted out, causing his body to grow blurry, as if he were walking through the streams of time. Meng Hao’s face fell, and he immediately utilized his walking technique. Both parties were using the Dao of Time to fight each other, causing the mists to churn and slowly form into a vortex.

The vortex grew larger and larger, and the rumbling sounds grew more intense until it turned into a massive explosion. Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth, and he tumbled off to the side. Blood also oozed out of Xuan Daozi’s mouth, but he didn’t give up. He was already injured, and yet, his eyes gleamed with excitement, and his heart was pounding; just now, his Essence had been stirred into intense anticipation.

As he saw Meng Hao trying to flee again, a cold flicker could be seen in his eyes, and he suddenly threw his head back and cried out, “To all Fellow Daoists in this place, I am Xuan Daozi. Help me stop Meng Hao! If you encounter him, notify me immediately. To express my thanks, the One Profound Sect will bestow a Quasi-Dao treasure to anyone who helps!!”

Xuan Daozi knew that Meng Hao was a slippery character; once he escaped, it would be difficult to find him again. Therefore, he chose to make an incredible promise to enlist the aid of everyone else out in the mist.

Bolstered by the power of Xia Daozi’s cultivation base, his words echoed out through the entire world, to be heard by all. Everyone’s eyes flickered. Simply notifying Xuan Daozi of Meng Hao’s presence was a much easier task than trying to kill him. All they had to do was pass word. If that word enabled Xuan Daozi to take down Meng Hao, then they would be rewarded with a Quasi-Dao treasure.

Everyone was instantly excited.

Meng Hao’s face darkened, and he proceeded along as quickly as before. However, it didn’t take long before a shadow up ahead suddenly flickered into the shape of an Ancient Realm cultivator. As soon as the man saw Meng Hao, he went wild with joy and bellowed,

“Meng–”

However, he only got one word out of his mouth before Meng Hao flashed like lightning, clamping his hand down onto the top of the man’s head and unleashing the Blood Demon Grand Magic. The cultivator trembled as his qi and blood, life force, cultivation base, and soul were absorbed by Meng Hao.

Even still, that one word caused Xuan Daozi to unhesitatingly shoot in the direction of the call, as did some of the other powerful experts.

The killing intent in Meng Hao’s eyes grew stronger. Just as he was about to flee, a jubilant cry rang out through the mists.

“Meng Hao’s right here!”

The voice was actually some distance away from where Meng Hao actually was, causing the people rushing in his direction to stop in their tracks. Even as Xuan Daozi frowned, another voice rang out: “He’s here! Hurry, he’s right here!”

Then another voice cried out urgently from another direction: “I saw Meng Hao. He’s over here!!”

Xuan Daozi gritted his teeth, turned, and headed off in another direction.

Meng Hao’s jaw dropped as he realized that there were people helping him.

There was little time to consider the matter. He immediately turned to flee, but then suddenly stopped as he sensed familiar fluctuations approaching, fluctuations that their owner was doing nothing to conceal.

“Han Qinglei….” Meng Hao said slowly as Han Qinglei floated out from the nearby mists. When they were a dozen meters or so apart, they stopped and looked at each other.

“Many thanks!” Meng Hao said as everything clicked. He looked deeply at Han Qinglei, clasped hands, and bowed.

Han Qinglei looked back at Meng Hao with mixed emotions. Meng Hao was clearly in a very bad state, worse than he had been at any point in the Windswept Realm. His injuries were severe, and his body was covered with wounds. Deep exhaustion could be seen on his face; an exhaustion that medicinal pills and the mending of his wounds could not heal. It would require time to recuperate.

Even still, among Han Qinglei’s mixed feelings was a sense of admiration. He had heard of all the things Meng Hao had accomplished recently, how he was the subject of a deadly manhunt in the Heavengod Alliance, and how he had even slaughtered Dao Realm cultivators.

Because of his accomplishments, Meng Hao’s name had long since spread throughout the Heavengod Alliance.

Han Qinglei looked at Meng Hao, his face cold as he said, “I don’t need you to thank me. As long as I’m around, the only people who qualify to kill you are other Echelon cultivators!

“I didn’t save you for your sake, but for my own! Therefore, take your words of thanks back. I don’t need them, and in fact, to accept thanks from you would be beneath my dignity. You don’t qualify to thank me. Nobody in Heaven and Earth qualifies to thank Han Qinglei. That’s who I am. In the future, I will be unrivaled and unmatched!

“One of these days, you and I will fight to the death, and in that battle, I’ll personally defeat you.” As Han Qinglei’s words echoed out, filled with arrogance and superiority, he folded his hands behind his back, and set his jaw.

Meng Hao sighed. He would never forget how Han Qinglei had saved him, but seeing how arrogant, proud, and haughty he was, Meng Hao couldn’t hold back from saying, “You know, if your smugness didn’t make me want to give you a good beating, we could probably be good friends….”

1. There’s slight spoiler information in this footnote regarding Renegade Immortal. Greed is a side character from that very novel. Although he hasn’t appeared in the translated portion of Renegade Immortal yet, I chatted with Rex about it and he mentioned that Greed should be showing up soon. If you follow RI, keep your eye out for this guy

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# Chapter 1237: Detected!

As soon as the words left Meng Hao's mouth, Han Qinglei's face flickered, and he glared at Meng Hao. However, when he thought about all the things Meng Hao had done while fighting the Heavengod Alliance, he couldn't but admire him. His expression remained icy, and he snorted coldly, but at the same time, he waved his hand, sending a jade bracelet flying over, which Meng Hao caught.

"Put that on. Not only will you become illusory, your aura will be concealed, and I can take you out of the Heavengod Alliance."

Meng Hao looked at the bracelet thoughtfully for a moment, then said, "As a cultivator of the Eighth Mountain and Sea, you must be familiar with the Heavengod Alliance's search methods. I believe there to be a seal on me, or something of the sort, enabling them to track me down no matter what I do." Meng Hao looked at Han Qinglei as the sounds of explosions echoed out from the mists around him.

"Seal?" Han Qinglei muttered. He patted his bag of holding, producing a jade slip which he studied for a moment. Then he looked back at Meng Hao.

"The Grand Elder of the Heavengod Society is adept with blood magic. The blood in your body permeates your organs and your aura. All he would need is a single drop of your blood to detect your presence. If you suspect something like that to be the case, it's most likely the work of the Grand Elder. He's using a blood tracking magic!

"That makes things a bit difficult…." Han Qinglei frowned.

After thinking for a moment, Meng Hao laughed coolly and said, “Any technique can be broken, as long as you understand how it works.”

Then he lifted his right hand and pushed it down onto his chest, causing the Essence of Divine Flame to sweep through his body, burning up his blood in the process!

That burning involved indescribable pain as every drop of his blood was scorched away. After his blood was gone, he was almost like an ordinary person hovering on the brink of death. Not even cultivators could remain in such a state for very long.

Meng Hao’s face was ashen; the burning away of his blood also caused his body to age significantly, as it was left without a single drop of blood.

But then he rotated his cultivation base, sending out cultivation base power into his body. Coupled with the intense power of his fleshly body, the blood-manufacturing in his body was stimulated. Although the process happened relatively quickly, it still involved incredible pain, as well as a shocking level of danger.

Even Han Qinglei was shocked by Meng Hao’s vicious decisiveness. He watched as the color slowly returned to Meng Hao’s face, and his life force aura was gradually restored. In the end, Han Qinglei took a deep breath and reminded himself that it would be best to never provoke Meng Hao.

Meng Hao had purified himself by getting rid of all of his old blood and replacing it with fresh blood. Meng Hao wasn’t sure whether or not that would free him from the Grand Elder’s magical technique, but it was the only method he could think of to achieve that result.

“Brother Han, I’ll still need a bit of assistance from you,” he said. With the wave of a hand, he caused a dozen or so drops of the burned blood to coalesce in his palm.

“I understand,” Han Qinglei said, nodding. Waving his hand, he caused a dozen figures to materialize around him. Each person took a drop of blood, then rapidly vanished off into the distance.

Finally, Meng Hao put on the jade bracelet, slowly turning blurry, whereupon he floated over to Han Qinglei, where he looked like nothing more than one of his other followers.

Han Qinglei cleared his throat and looked at Meng Hao out of the corner of his eyes, feeling quite satisfied. However, he knew that it wouldn't be appropriate to say anything, so he merely took a step forward, whereupon his throne of bones appeared. He sat down, and then shot off into the mists.

At the same time, Meng Hao and the other dozen or so illusory followers followed along.

As Han Qinglei and Meng Hao flew off, the blurry shade within the mists was watching with crimson eyes.

"I've taken a liking to your fleshly body, do you really think I'll just let you leave?!" The shade's eyes flickered with red light as he began to mutter some ancient curse, which caused a roar to erupt out within the mists, a roar like thunder, that left everything in the area shaking.

"Hungry… so hungry…." The sound echoed out, filled with an unyielding air, and even rage. And yet… gradually, the mists off in the distance were beginning to disperse….

In fact, within the space of a few breaths of time, the mists were completely gone, apparently because of that terrifying entity. All of a sudden, all of the nearly one hundred cultivators in the rift could see each other clearly.

The man from the Heavengod Society with the astonishing cultivation base was the most powerful person present. Panting, he turned his head and looked off into the distance. He had just been fighting that enormously gigantic, terrifying creature, and the fierce fighting had been dangerous to the extreme.

Everyone was on guard at the moment, and was looking around to size up the situation. Soon, everyone could see Han Qinglei making his way out of the place. Meng Hao was right there next to him, and when the mists suddenly vanished, his heart sank, and he cursed to himself at the sudden discouraging turn of events. He looked over at the exit, which wasn't very far away, and began to consider making a run for it on his own; it wasn't necessarily impossible to make it.

However, if he moved, it would reveal that Han Qinglei was helping him, and besides, even if he got out, he didn't have the proper status in the Eight Mountain and Sea to be able to escape the wrath of the Heavengod Alliance.

Xuan Daozi was also there, his divine sense spreading out and yet unable to locate Meng Hao. His eyes narrowed, and he gave a cold harrumph as he looked over at Han Qinglei.

Han Qinglei's expression was the same as ever, and he maintained the same speed as before as he rose through the air toward the exit. Xuan Daozi's eyes glittered, and he suddenly flickered into motion, appearing directly in Han Qinglei's path a moment later.

Glaring at him, Xuan Daozi suddenly said, "Fellow Daoist Han, why are you in such a hurry to leave!?"

Han Qinglei's expression didn't change as he looked coldly back at Xuan Daozi. Suddenly, a vicious smile appeared on his face.

"Xuan Daozi, your cultivation base might be higher than mine, and I might not be able to beat you in a fight, but that doesn't mean that killing me would be a simple task. Do you dare to try?! Do you dare to try to harm even a single hair on my head?" Han Qinglei stood up and roared, causing his energy to rise up dramatically. He was now more powerful than he had been in the Windswept Realm, and was clearly on the verge of being a threat to someone in the Quasi-Dao Realm.

After making a breakthrough, he would even be able to try his hand out at engaging a Quasi-Dao expert in all-out battle!

"Do I need to ask your permission to go places in the Eighth Mountain and Sea?" Swishing his sleeve, he sat back down on his vicious bone throne.

Xuan Daozi's face darkened. Han Qinglei had a special status in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, and Xuan Daozi had no desire to get into a dispute with him. However, Meng Hao was simply far too important, and Xuan Daozi couldn't bear to lose him. After a moment of hesitation, he looked at the Heavengod Society Elder, who stood on the ground not too far off in the distance, clasped hands and bowed.

"Zhou Shi, could you provide some assistance?!" Xuan Daozi's deep bow and his cordial expression made him seem very sincere. "I was on very good terms with Patriarch Blacksoul, as well as with Hong Chen. The three of us joined forces to chase down Meng Hao, and now calamity has befallen both of them. Only I remain, and I swear that will find Meng Hao and exact vengeance, killing him in revenge for Blacksoul and Hong Chen!" Xuan Daozi's words were spoken very sincerely, and with passion.

Down on the ground, the old man from the Heavengod Society muttered to himself for a moment, then nodded. He lifted his right hand and performed an incantation gesture, then opened his eyes to reveal a flickering blood-colored glow.

Meng Hao remained by Han Qinglei's side, expression normal, but heart filled with vigilance as he watched the Elder from the Heavengod Society.

Soon, the old man lowered his hand and said, "Interesting. He must have noticed my tracking magic, then physically disseminated to escape. He must be outside already."

As soon as the words left the old man's mouth, Meng Hao sighed with relief. Han Qinglei snorted coldly, then proceeded forward stoically. Actually, he had been very nervous just now as well, having had no idea that the mist would disperse, revealing that he was leaving.

Xuan Daozi sighed inside, and stepped aside, making way for Han Qinglei to near the exit.

"Meng Hao is devious and cunning. If he wants to escape, it's going to be difficult to find him…. Plus, it's giving him time to restore his cultivation base. If that happens, it won't be easy for me to handle him alone. However, I can’t reveal that to anyone!” Xuan Daozi frowned, and his gaze once again came to fall upon Han Qinglei’s back. He then looked at blurry images of Han Qinglei’s followers.

At first, he hadn’t paid the followers any attention. After all, Zhou Shi from the Heavengod Society had spoken his words in complete confidence; whatever he said was sure to be true.

However, as soon as he laid eyes on one particular follower among the group around Han Qinglei, Xuan Daozi’s Essence suddenly trembled. Although it was very slight, it caused Xuan Daozi’s eyes to go wide, and his heart to pound.

He had no time to consider the matter carefully, so he took a step forward and roared, “You’re not going anywhere! Get back here!”

With that, he stretched out his hand, causing an enormous hand to materialize and grab toward, not Han Qinglei, but… Meng Hao!

Meng Hao frowned. It wasn’t the Elder from the Heavengod Society who had discovered him, it was Xuan Daozi. That in itself was very telling, and caused Meng Hao to suddenly wonder why Xuan Daozi was pursuing him so relentlessly even after Patriarch Blacksoul was dead, and could not offer his services as a slave.

“That’s they key to the matter,” he thought with a sigh. Mind racing with ideas, he suddenly revealed himself, laughing coldly. Almost as soon as he appeared, Han Qinglei’s face fell, and he spun around.

“Meng Hao, it’s you! Dammit, I can’t believe you were pretending to be one of my followers!” Roaring, Han Qinglei stepped forward and waved his arm at Meng Hao.

An incredible force surged out toward Meng Hao, hitting him before Xuan Daozi could. A boom could be heard, and blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth. However, he borrowed the force of the blow to shoot off into the distance.

“Han Qinglei,” Meng Hao shrieked, “mark the words of Meng Hao: I won’t rest until you’re dead!” With that he sped away as quickly as possible.

“Han Qinglei!!” Xuan Daozi said, glaring at Han Qinglei. The act put up between Meng Hao and Han Qinglei was too obvious, and yet Han Qinglei didn’t seem to care.

Even as Xuan Daozi began to chase after Meng Hao, he cried out, “Ladies and gentlemen, Fellow Daoists, please help me capture this man. My promise from before still stands!”

The surrounding cultivators of the Heavengod Alliance looked on with flickering eyes. Many of them immediately flew out to try to block Meng Hao’s path. Two of them were actually in the Dao Realm, although they weren’t Dao Lords, just 2-Essences cultivators!

The sudden appearance of Meng Hao caused the old man from the Heavengod Society to stare in shock. Then, a strange glow appeared in his eyes and he looked more closely at Meng Hao. Finally, he understood.

“He’s definitely a vicious, decisive person,” the old man muttered.

Numerous people closed in to try to block Meng Hao’s path. The two 2-Essences Dao Realm cultivators couldn’t be evaded easily, plus Xuan Daozi was closing in with murderous intent. If Meng Hao paused for even a moment, he would fall into the snare. As he looked around, he realized that he really was in a tight spot, like a bird in a trap with its wings clipped.

It was in that moment that… strange phenomena suddenly rose up within this world of graves.

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# Chapter 1238: Possessed by Greed!

The entire world was shaking. The gray vault up above filled with clouds and mist, and the lands quaked as though a writhing dragon lurked underneath, on the verge of bursting out!

The gravestone which rose up in the very center of the world appeared to be tilting to the side, and thunder-like rumbling could be heard from the earth underneath it.

RUMBLE!

As the massive sound echoed out, everyone, including Meng Hao, felt their minds spinning.

The Ancient Realm cultivators coughed up blood, and their expressions were that of astonishment. Han Qinglei’s qi and blood were boiling, and he hovered in midair, gasping for breath. The blurry figures around him were all forced out into the open, looks of shock on their faces.

The Dao Realm experts had it a bit better off; their minds were shaken, but no blood spurted out. However, it only took a moment for another huge boom to echo out, even more boundless and powerful than the first.

RUMBLE!

That sound caused everyone under the level of a Dao Lord to cough up blood. Meng Hao’s body was trembling, and blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth. As for the Dao Lords present, their faces were ashen as waves of shock surged in their hearts.

As for the two 2-Essences Dao Realm cultivators who had been trying to block Meng Hao’s path, both coughed up blood, and their faces fell. Unable to deal with Meng Hao any longer, they looked down toward the ground and saw crevices spreading out in the soil beneath the gravestone. The two booms that had echoed out just now had come from those very crevices.

Next, a third boom could be heard. It sounded like the roar of a giant, causing the lands to shake violently, and the sky to dim. Xuan Daozi coughed up blood, and was completely astonished.

Suddenly, an ancient voice that was laced with unending venom and madness filled the entire murky world: “Nine Seals, I curse you to meet a horrific death! I curse all living things in your Immortal World to have their bloodlines severed! You can destroy my body, but you can’t destroy my soul fire! My soul cannot be destroyed by anyone who has yet to fully reach Heaven Trampling, so you can’t kill me!

“You only have a Heaven Trampling fleshly body, your cultivation is still a half step away. Therefore you can only suppress me!”

Everything shook, and soon, it was possible to see a bright light shining up from the crevices in the soil beneath the gravestone.

It was a blue light that filled the entire world, almost as if… what was buried in this place was not a cultivator, but rather… a sun!

Mind trembling, Meng Hao blinked his eyes nine times in succession, then poured the power of an Allheaven Dao Immortal into his eyes. After examining the situation closely, his eyes widened.

Shockingly, beneath the soil of the grave, he saw… that there really was a sun! A blue sun!!

The sun caused massive waves to run through Meng Hao’s divine sense, and for some reason, he recalled imagery from a scene that he had seen before. He saw nine suns, pulling a vast land mass and a huge statue through the starry sky.

One of those suns was… the same sun he was looking at now!!

They looked identical!!

Xuan Daozi’s heart trembled, and blood sprayed out of his mouth. He wanted to chase Meng Hao down and kill him, but at the moment, he couldn’t. His body was stuck in place in midair, completely incapable of moving. As for his eyes, they brimmed with excitement as he looked at the crevices, his mind reeling.

“The Daosource Realm actually exists!! Daosource! Daosource! The actual source of all Daos!! According to the basic overview I read about in the ancient records once, nine Essences makes you a Paragon. That’s a Realm analogous to the Exalted Celestials and Nine Dao Divinities of the Paramita!

“The Daosource Realm of the Immortal World does not expand one’s enlightenment outward, nor does it take an alternative route. The key to stepping beyond the Dao Realm is to continually look inward, to seek the source of the Dao!

“Expanding out beyond the Dao is the Boundless Dao of the Paramita!

“As for the alternative route to stepping beyond the Dao, that is the Heaven Trampling of the Paramita!” Xuan Daozi was trembling, and his eyes filled with unparalleled desire and madness. He had come to a clear realization of the truth of these matters, and in fact the number of people in the entire Mountain and Sea Realm who knew about these things was so few that they could be counted by hand.

Although he currently couldn’t move a muscle, neither could anyone else, not even Meng Hao.

There was only one person in this entire world who was not so intensely affected, and that was the old man from the Heavengod Society!

“An Exalted Celestial…from the Paramita!” he murmured, eyes shining brightly.

In almost the same moment that the entire world was shaken, the light shining from the crevices beneath the gravestone suddenly vanished. At the same time, an indescribable gravitational force suddenly appeared.

The intense force sucked at everything, causing the entire world to dim. Even the vault above seemed to be on verge of being pulled in. As the ground shook, the shocked old man from the Heavengod Society bit the tip of his tongue, spitting out a mouthful of blood and performing a double-handed incantation gesture. Shockingly, five Essences erupted out from him, which fought back against the gravitational force.

He was the only person capable of such an act; no one else present was even in control of their own body. Rumbling filled the air as numerous figures transformed into beams of light that shot toward the crevices and were then consumed.

The first to meet such a fate were those in the Immortal and Ancient Realms, followed by Han Qinglei. Next were the two Dao Realm experts, as well as Xuan Daozi. None of them could prevent themselves from being sucked in.

Meng Hao was trembling as he also transformed into a beam of light and was pulled inexorably inside.

However, at the same time that Meng Hao was being sucked towards the crevice, something else happened that no one else noticed. Not too far away was a blurry shade, whose red eyes shone with greed. He suddenly shot forward at an indescribable speed, and in the blink of an eye was upon Meng Hao. The exact moment that Meng Hao fell into the crevice, he suddenly… pounced, not giving even giving Meng Hao a chance to react.

In a flash… he fused into Meng Hao, becoming one with him!

In fact, the shade was so incredibly excited that it didn’t notice that the moment it fused with Meng Hao… a strange light gleamed in Meng Hao’s eyes.

A tremor ran through Meng Hao, and then he was gone, sucked in by the powerful gravitational force. Soon, the only person left outside was the old man from the Heavengod Society, who trembled as he was slowly pulled toward the crevices.

As he neared, the gravitational force increased dramatically, and a fourth roar echoed out. This old man had five Essences, making him a 5-Essences Dao Sovereign. Drawing upon that power, he threw his head back and roared, causing blood to spurt out all over his body, which then transformed into an enormous Dao character that surrounded him!

That character seemed to bestow boundless power upon him, allowing him to fight back against the gravitational force. And yet, it couldn’t completely match it, and the man was dragged even closer to the crevice.

The only difference was that the speed was reduced a bit. Soon, he was only about thirty meters away from the crevice. It was at that point that an angry sigh echoed out from within. The gravitational force vanished, and the crevice closed up without a trace.

In that instant, the old man coughed up a mouthful of blood; his hair was disheveled, and he looked to be in very bad shape. His body was a mass of mangled flesh; he had just barely been able to fight back, but his fleshly body was weaker than his cultivation and thus he had been severely injured.

“According to the legends, the Exalted Celestials of the Paramita were comparable to Paragons. If he was in a complete state, he could cut me down in an instant. Nothing remains of his body and only his soul exists in a state of suppression. That’s the only reason I had a chance to escape!” Face filled with astonishment, he unhesitatingly shot up into the sky toward the exit. 1

Even as he left, other cultivators of the Heavengod Alliance decided to enter the place to seek good fortune.

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Beneath the surface of the grave was a necropolis!

The necropolis was accessible from all sides, and was very large. The cultivators who had been sucked in were not sent to the same location, but were scattered about. Some ended up unconscious, others were still awake.

Meng Hao was among the unconscious ones. He looked almost dead as he lay there in a side chamber, a small room with ornately carved walls. In the middle of the room was a coffin with no lid, filled with boiling white mist, tendrils of which would occasionally spill out onto the ground and dissipate.

Everything was quiet in the side chamber. Meng Hao wasn’t the only person lying there. There was an Ancient Realm cultivator laying off to the side, also unconscious.

Soon, a tremor ran through the Ancient Realm cultivator, whose eyes then opened. He immediately sent his divine sense out. After ensuring that there was nothing dangerous in the immediate area, he cautiously rose to his feet, then looked around, completely shaken and terrified.

He recalled having been consumed by the crevice, and when he realized that he was most likely deep in the ground beneath the gravestone, the hairs on his body stood on end. Then he looked around, his eyes eventually coming to rest on Meng Hao.

“Meng Hao….” the Ancient Realm cultivator thought, shocked. He backed up, staring dead at Meng Hao for a moment before finally starting to search for way out of the side hall. After finding it, he made to leave, but then stopped for a moment and looked back at Meng Hao.

“So he still hasn’t woken up….” The cultivator gritted his teeth and suddenly waved his hand, sending a flying sword shooting toward Meng Hao. Shockingly, it… stabbed into his head, causing blood to flow out everywhere!

Meng Hao never moved a muscle. It was as if he were dead.

The cultivator could never have imagined that things would go easily. After staring in shock for a moment, his eyes went wild with joy.

“He’s dead? Hm, he was already severely injured before. After getting sucked in here, his injuries must have worsened, but he still shouldn’t have died….” Acting as cautiously as possible, the cultivator sent the flying sword chopping viciously toward Meng Hao’s throat.

A snapping sound rang out, and blood sprayed out in a fountain as Meng Hao’s head was severed cleanly from his body!

The cultivator gasped, and without any further hesitation, shot toward Meng Hao.

“Today’s my lucky day! He’s dead, and his bag of holding is mine!” The cultivator excitedly neared Meng Hao, reaching his hand out to grab Meng Hao’s bag of holding!

However, even as he extended his hand, a sense of impending crisis crashed within the man’s mind like lightning. All his hair stood on end, and a look of shock filled his face. He went completely stiff as he realized that Meng Hao’s hand had just shot up and grabbed onto his arm.

2. Greed’s name is actually a common Chinese word to refer to a greedy person. Literally it means “Greedy Wolf,” and that wolf aspect is somewhat relevant. However, I think that Greed sounds much better than Greedy Wolf, so I’m going with that name. If you vehemently disagree, feel free to say something in the comments

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# Chapter 1239: Body Refining!

The trembling cultivator could feel the incredible coldness radiating through Greed-possessed Meng Hao's grip. It was like being held by a block of ice, and it filled his mind with sounds like howling. He was instantly overwhelmed be a feeling of imminent death, and his face went deathly pale.

Just when the cultivator felt that he couldn't endure it any longer, Meng Hao's grip suddenly loosened. The cultivator screamed and shot backward, indescribably terrified of Meng Hao.

Ignoring the fleeing cultivator, Greed-possessed Meng Hao slowly rose to his feet. As he did, his head floated up from the ground and slowly dropped back into place on his neck. Then the flesh and bone rapidly grew back together and healed up.

His injuries were also rapidly recuperating. Cracking sounds could be heard as the broken bones in his body were set straight and linked back together.

All of this took place in the space of a few breaths of time, and then he was completely healed.

By that point, the cultivator had discovered the location of the exit of the side chamber, and was going crazily all-out in his attempt to flee.

Meng Hao shook his head slightly and suddenly opened his eyes. As soon as they opened, a blue light spilled out, cold and merciless. His eyes seemed vastly ancient, and filled with a gleam of greed. He looked up, and then vanished.

When he reappeared, he was at the exit of the side chamber, directly in front of the fleeing cultivator. Before the man could react, Meng Hao's hand snaked out and grabbed onto his neck.

A cracking sound could be heard as his neck was subsequently crushed.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, then murmured, “Ah, slaughter…. It’s been a long, long time since I’ve had some good slaughtering.

“To have a body again feels… really good.” It was Meng Hao’s voice, and yet there was something husky about it, as if it was reverberating out from countless years in the past.

“This body… is something even I haven’t seen the likes of throughout the years. It has a unique bloodline too…. Excellent. Most excellent. Even more rare is its foundation…. With a body like this, I definitely have a chance to reach Heaven Trampling.” Meng Hao’s slight smile grew even more terrifying than before.

“Furthermore, this person’s injuries were significant, making the possession process go even smoother than I imagined it would. Ah, it must be the will of Heaven that I, Greed, can finally step out into the world again!” Hoarse laughter filled the side chamber.

“From this day forward, this is my body. Since that’s the case… I think I’ll make it even more powerful than it already is!” His eyes glittered as he performed a double-handed incantation gesture, then pushed down with his finger repeatedly on locations all over his body.

Every time he pushed down, a tremor would run through him, and the spot he touched would wither. However, a powerful qi and blood force exploded out within him, causing his fleshly body , which was already at the very peak, to suddenly push toward a breakthrough!

10 times. 20 times. 30 times!

His hands sped faster and faster, depressing numerous pressure points on his body and increasing the range of the withering. Soon, he looked like nothing more than a bag of bones, and yet his fleshly body power had reached an unbelievable degree. Furthermore, as the rumbling echoed out, he continued to grow more powerful!!

Previously, his fleshly body had reached the great circle of the Ancient Realm, just half a step away from breaking out of the Ancient Realm and into the Dao Realm. However, that half a step was a vast and difficult gap to cross. Despite having considered many options, Meng Hao hadn’t been able to come up with one that would work.

But now, after being possessed and having the pressure points on his body depressed, he was getting closer and closer to having a Dao Realm fleshly body.

“What does a Dao Realm fleshly body count for?” Greed said in a hoarse voice. “I just need some God blood, and I could break through easily. It seems that this body could have grown more powerful all along; it’s just that its previous owner was inexperienced. Not so me. I won’t let things go to waste.” His hands suddenly stopped moving. As for his body, it looked almost like a skeleton.

And yet, the intense fleshly body power that radiated off of that skeleton was several times stronger than before. Although it wasn’t in the Dao Realm, in terms of power it was equivalent to it!

Meng Hao took a deep breath, then flickered into motion as he began to fly through the necropolis. As he proceeded along, he continued to refine his fleshly body. Soon, another Ancient Realm cultivator appeared up ahead.

It was an old man who, upon catching sight of Meng Hao, stared in shock. Meng Hao didn’t look familiar at all to him; his skeletal body was shocking, causing the old man to fall back without the slightest hesitation.

However, in the moment that he fell back, a vicious smile appeared on Meng Hao’s face, and he vanished. When he reappeared, he was behind the old man, lifting his hand to clamp onto the top of the man’s head.

He pressed down softly, and the man shuddered. Rumbling could be heard as he suddenly transformed into ash, as well as floating wisps of white mist.

That mist flew out and fused into Meng Hao’s body, causing a bit of flesh and blood to be restored to it.

“I can still get stronger. Now that I’m finished refining the flesh and blood, it’s time to work on the bones!” Rumbling echoed out as a boundless sea of fire rose up around him and then poured into his body. Popping sounds could be heard, and intense pain radiated through him. And yet, he didn’t so much as frown.

In fact, he began to float forward, following the corridor as his bones were refined. After the process was complete, his power once again increased dramatically.

“And finally the qi passageways….” he said, taking a deep breath. A screaming wind erupted, surging into his qi passageways, opening them, sweeping through him. He trembled, but clenched his teeth hard and endured, continued to progress forward. Suddenly, he vanished, to reappear in another side chamber, behind another Ancient Realm cultivator.

The cultivator’s scalp went numb, and as he turned around, his expression was one of shock. Suddenly, Meng Hao head-butted him, a violent collision which shattered the man into pieces.

A bang could be heard as his body transformed into ash, and a white mist appeared which Meng Hao absorbed, after which he proceeded along without the slightest pause.

After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as the refinement of his qi passageways was completed.

“And last, the blood!” His right index finger pressed down onto his chest, digging in deep, stabbing through his flesh and blood into his heart.

In response, his soul began to radiate an Essence power unique to his own soul. That was the source of the power which maintained his existence and extended his longevity, but now, it was being unleashed in an effort to further strengthen his fleshly body.

That was the Essence of his life force, and as soon as it poured into his heart, rumbling could be heard as all of the blood in his body began to boil. As it burned away and lessened, his body began to produce more blood to replace the old.

The cycle continued; gradually the regeneration of his blood could not match the speed with which the new blood was being burned away. Eventually, the regenerative process of the blood itself was affected, and the color of his blood turned deep-gold!

Less and less blood existed inside of him, until, in the end, only thirty percent remained. However, his energy had risen explosively, making him far stronger than an ordinary Dao Realm cultivator. He was comparable to… a Dao Lord!

And yet, his fleshly body still wasn’t actually in the Dao Realm!

“Now this is a perfect fleshly body,” Meng Hao said, a smile breaking out on his face. He slowly pulled his hand out of his chest, which healed up instantly, without even a drop of blood emerging from the wound.

“Now it’s time to test it out and see if it’s as strong as I think it is.” Smiling oddly, he strode forward, moving with speed that vastly exceeded what he was previously capable of. He left behind only afterimages as he shot off into the distance.

He was like a ghost in the necropolis, harvesting all forms of life that he encountered.

Currently, there were three Dao Realm cultivators in the necropolis: there were the two 2-Essences cultivators who had attempted to block Meng Hao’s path, then there was the most powerful of the three, Xuan Daozi.

All three of them were in different locations, relying on the advantage they had because of their cultivation bases to search for Meng Hao.

At this point, six Ancient Realm cultivators appeared up ahead of Meng Hao. They had banded together, and were proceeding along carefully.

Everything about this burial ground left them terrorstruck, and at the moment, they weren't thinking at all about good fortune, but rather, were merely looking for a way out.

As they proceeded along, suddenly, one of the cultivators whispered, "What was that sound!?"

The faces of the others around him flickered as they looked around in all directions.

When they saw nothing out of the ordinary, that made them even more nervous, so they picked up speed. However, it wasn't long before all of them got a creepy sensation from the fact that the only sound to be heard in the area were footsteps.

Those footsteps originally belonged to the six of them, but now they all realized… that there was the sound of a seventh set of footsteps.

The scalps of all six cultivators went numb. Transmitting messages to each other, their cultivation bases exploded with power, and they unleashed divine abilities in all directions. The glow of their magical techniques immediately revealed a skeletal figure.

Booms rang out, filling the necropolis, to be heard by quite a few of the cultivators there. However, to the six cultivators unleashing divine abilities, it was a completely shocking matter; all of their divine abilities and magical items slammed into the skeletal figure, but the only result was that they heard faint banging sounds. The figure itself wasn't hurt at all.

"Too weak," the skeletal figure said, smiling. He sped forward, his index finger flashing as fast as lightning as he stabbed into the foreheads of all six cultivators in quick succession.

It happened in the blink of an eye. The skeletal Meng Hao was now directly in front of the six cultivators, who trembled as they transformed into ash. The white mist appeared, which he absorbed, restoring more of his fleshly body. Now he looked less like a skeleton, although he was still incredibly gaunt.

"Well," murmured Meng Hao, "I'm in no hurry to test the limits of this fleshly body. It seems this fellow is sadly short when it comes to magical items. Too bad he's a pauper; his bag of holding is virtually empty." There really wasn't much at all to be seen in Meng Hao's bag of holding, only a cauldron, a spear, and a few swords.

Greed wasn't really aware of how suspicious it was that the bag of holding was so empty. Previously, it had also held a copper mirror, a parrot, a meat jelly, and an ocean of Immortal jades, promissory notes and magical items.

Now, though, all of that was nowhere to be seen.

"Ah well, it doesn't matter. This Meng Hao must have been engaged in an intense battle for quite a while. His expendable items have been used up, which is only natural. Presumably, these remaining items are quite nice. However, once I use my Essence power to refine them, they'll be even more powerful."

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# Chapter 1240: An Incredible Person!

Greed-possessed Meng Hao lifted his hand, within which appeared a long spear, which was none other than his World Tree bone-tip spear.

“Wow, this thing is pretty incredible…. The wood is rare, and the spearhead appears to have come from a Dao Realm beast…. Unfortunately, it was forged improperly, and has a lot of imperfections. Although, what’s even more important than that is… that the spear has been sealed.” Meng Hao hefted the long spear and looked at it closely for a moment before smiling.

“Interesting. It was actually sealed by a cultivator from home. It would be very troublesome for anyone here to unseal it. They might be able to forcefully wipe out the seal, but then the spear would be destroyed.

“To me, though, undoing the seal will be easy.” He waved his hand, causing a droning sound to emanate out from the spear as he flew through the necropolis, divine sense emanating out in all directions. Suddenly, he turned and headed in a different direction.

It didn’t take long before he was closing in on two Ancient Realm cultivators. Almost immediately, their faces fell. Just as they were about to retreat, the long spear appeared in Meng Hao’s hands, stabbing through the forehead of one of the cultivators, completely destroying him in body and spirit.

The spear didn’t stop; it kept on going until it stabbed through the second cultivator’s heart, causing him to explode.

In the instant that the two of them died, Meng Hao’s left hand flashed in a strange sealing gesture, which was not a magical technique of the Mountain and Sea Realm. Then he waved his finger, causing the cultivators’ souls to be forcefully extracted. Finally he clenched the souls hard in his hand, transforming them into two magical symbols, which he then placed onto the long spear.

“OPEN!” he growled. The spear in his hand shook, and then suddenly, cracks appeared all over its surface, almost as if it were shedding a layer of skin. Then, an intense aura rumbled out as the spear transformed into an Azure Dragon!

Unexpectedly, the spearhead transformed into the vicious image of a ghost with a violet body and a long horn on its head. It appeared to be an evil spirit, but was in fact a vicious beast from ancient times!

Rumbling could be heard as pressure emanated from the spear. This was an explosive change that was almost like a rebirth compared to what the spear had been like before!

“Now that’s a bit more imposing,” Greed said with a sinister grin. With that, he put the spear away and then proceeded onward, taking out the Lightning Cauldron as he did.

As he examined the cauldron, a strange gleam appeared in his eyes, almost as if he were recalling something from the past.

“It seems he and I really are connected by destiny. However, this cauldron has been refined via sacrifice.” He suddenly shoved his hand down, causing a boom to echo out as a ball of lightning flame shot out from his palm to surround the cauldron.

Cracking sounds could be heard, and fissures spread out over the cauldron. In the blink of an eye, it shattered. However, at the same time, Meng Hao performed a double-handed incantation gesture, then spit out a mouthful of blood, causing the cauldron to re-form.

“Congeal!”

In a short instant, the countless fragments of the cauldron formed back together into the shape of a cauldron, which now shone with boundless magical light. Mountains, rivers, and countless living beings could be seen on its surface, and most shocking of all was that far more lightning crackled around its surface than before.

A shocking pressure also emerged from the cauldron which far exceeded that from before. Apparently, this was the cauldron’s most powerful state.

A hoarse laugh could be heard as Meng Hao waved his hand, sending the Lightning Cauldron floating up above his head. There it turned slowly, boundless lightning forming a pool which spread out, making Meng Hao look even more incredible than before.

“Form Displacement Transposition. How could it be limited to flesh and blood?!” Laughing heartily, he strode forward, suddenly slamming into a nearby wall and punching through it to the other side.

“The Five Elements Lightning Cauldron makes its comeback starting now!” After shooting through the hole in the wall, he appeared in another corridor, whereupon he waved his finger down the hall.

Immediately, the Lightning Cauldron rumbled, causing masses of lightning transform into tens of thousands of Silver Dragons to rush forward in the direction he was pointing.

Down the corridor was a middle-aged man, one of the two 2-Essences Dao Realm cultivators. His face fell, and he let out a roar, unleashing the power of his cultivation base, which happened to be that of wood-type power. It caused an enormous tree to materialize, which shot toward the lightning.

Backing up, he performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, then waved his finger at Meng Hao. Instantly, the corridor began to tremble as stone thorns burst out from everywhere to stab toward Meng Hao.

Simultaneously, two hands formed from soil rose up and made a grab for his legs.

“Earth Essence Buries All!” roared the man. As he fell back, he waved both hands, causing rumbling to fill the air as the lands collapsed. A terrifying power then erupted out, threatening to inundate Meng Hao.

“Five Elements Lightning Cauldron,” Meng Hao said coolly, “convert the five elements into lightning! Earth to lightning. Wood to lightning. Kill him!” Rumbling could be heard as the enormous tree distorted and then collapsed, transforming into numerous bolts of green-colored lightning, which spun around and shot toward the middle-aged man.

At the same time, the earth-power was reversed, shattering and transforming into gray lightning bolts which rocketed toward the middle-aged man at an indescribable speed.

The man’s face fell, and before he could even retreat, he looked down to find that a withered hand was stabbing into his chest.

He had no idea when that hand had appeared, but it was grabbing at his heart. Although it seemed to only be gripping his heart… it felt like his soul, his life force, his everything, were being grabbed ahold of. His Nascent Divinity had no way to flee his fleshly body, as if it were sealed by that palm.

“Noooo….” the middle-aged man wailed madly. The withered hand clenched down viciously, and rumbling sounds could be heard as his heart shattered into countless pieces. The man’s body trembled, then transformed into ash. Moments later, Greed-possessed Meng Hao appeared behind him, licking his lips.

When that man died, vast amounts of white mist floated up into the air to pour into Meng Hao’s body. Cracking sounds rang out from inside of him as his withered fleshly body was restored even further. No longer did he look completely terrifying, just a bit pale.

“See Meng Hao, I’m going along with many of your wishes! I’m helping you… to exterminate everyone in here!” If anyone who knew Meng Hao could see him licking his lips as he was right now, they would definitely find it to be very bizarre.

“Next, let’s take a look at these swords.” He waved his hand, causing a handful of swords to fly out from his bag of holding. Shockingly, these were the wooden swords that Meng Hao had collected from the various corpses over the years!

As soon as the Greed-possessed Meng Hao saw them, he shivered, and a strange light began to glow in his eyes.

“These were forged in the other great landmass… for the specific purpose of killing Immortals. They are… Immortal Murdering Swords!! They are also sealed…. This Meng Hao might have an empty bag, but the items he does possess are treasures!” Licking his lips, Greed tossed the swords out into the air. Eyes shining strangely, he took a deep breath and then spit out a mouthful of flame Essence.

As soon as the fire touched the nine wooden swords, he performed a double-handed incantation gesture. Face somber, he occasionally uttered some complex spells, and tossed in further incantation gestures. After the time it takes an incense stick to burn, beads of sweat were pouring down his forehead, and his aura was weakening.

However, the swords were beginning to superimpose with each other, as if they were transforming into one single sword. When that single superimposed sword dropped down, Greed grabbed it and looked at it with a bit of disappointment.

“What a pity,” he sighed. “It’s not the structure I’m familiar with, so I can only attempt to force it back together based on memory. I can’t fully restore them to their genuine state.” Then he sucked in a deep breath, causing the superimposed wooden swords to transform into a dark beam that shot into his mouth.

“Okay, now it’s time for my cultivation base.” He took another deep breath, which caused peals of thunder to fill the necropolis, and a huge wind to spring up. His energy suddenly rose up rapidly, and the bloodline power of an Allheaven Dao Immortal exploded out. After a certain critical point was reached, the power of his cultivation base caused the Paragon Bridge inside of him to become visible.

“Is that….” Greed’s expression flickered with disbelief, and he began to shake with wild joy.

“It’s THAT bridge!! How is this possible! That’s…

“He actually has THAT bridge inside of him!!

“Good fortune! This is indescribable good fortune for me! Probably the greatest good fortune of my entire life!” Shaking, he threw his head back and laughed maniacally.

“My fleshly body power is perfect, but my cultivation base is a bit lacking. Well, that doesn’t matter, I have ways to improve this cultivation base right now!” He lifted his hand and produced Meng Hao’s fourth Nirvana Fruit, which he examined closely.

“What a pity that Meng Hao’s memories were obscured because of his incredible injuries. Thanks to his soul being damaged, I can’t see very much, and have no idea what this thing is. However, I can sense that it has the ability to increase my cultivation base.” After a moment of thought, he pushed the Nirvana Fruit down onto his forehead.

He trembled, throwing his head back and roaring as his cultivation base rocketed up. Moments later, though, the fourth Nirvana Fruit suddenly appeared back outside of his forehead; since it was impossible for him to absorb it fully, it fell back down.

“Get back in there!” Greed said, eyes flashing coldly. He performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, then pushed a finger down onto his forehead, once again using some of his life force Essence to create a seal, after which he tried to forcefully keep the fourth Nirvana Fruit inside.

The real Meng Hao would not have been able to do something like this. Not only did he not have any ability with such a sealing mark, the life force power necessary to do such a thing was something he couldn’t sustain.

But now… when the matter was being controlled by the person possessing his body, his Nirvana Fruit was forced… to once again fuse into him.

Forcefully causing the fruit to begin fusing with him caused his cultivation base to explode with power, but at the same time the life force absorption rate from the Nirvana Fruit soared.

“Life force essence!” Greed roared. Using the Essence power of his life force, he pushed the Fourth Nirvana Fruit into a state of fusion. Greed’s life force Essence could keep him alive in this land of the dead. It was the key to him being able to avoid death after he had been imprisoned here. That was normally his most prized possession, but right now, he could sense that Meng Hao’s body had so many desirable traits that he would risk anything and pay any price to enhance it as much as possible!

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# Chapter 1241: Scared Half to Death!

The flame of life force burned hot in Greed-possessed Meng Hao’s eyes, as if a sea of fire existed therein. However, that sea of flames was being reduced as the fourth Nirvana Fruit in his forehead sucked it away.

That Nirvana Fruit seemed like a bottomless pit!

When Meng Hao had absorbed the fourth Nirvana Fruit before, he had only been able to endure for a brief moment before stopping. The Nirvana Fruit had emerged from him of its own volition; had it not, he would have been sucked dry.

Furthermore, every time he used it resulted in a period of weakness afterward, a time that had to be spent in recovery. That was the obstacle preventing him from stepping into the Ancient Realm; if he could not fully absorb that fourth Nirvana Fruit, then he would never be able to do so.

However, this was something that couldn’t be rushed. Each time he absorbed a Nirvana Fruit, it required a terrifying amount of life force; furthermore, that amount increased with each Nirvana Fruit. By the time he had reached the fourth, the amount required was virtually impossible to describe.

Unless he came across some sort of good fortune that could aid him, Meng Hao had been under the assumption that it would take a very, very long time before he could truly fuse with the fourth Nirvana Fruit.

Although he wasn’t very anxious about the matter, Greed, who was in possession of his body, was.

“Dammit, what is this thing!?!?” Greed growled, eyes wide. He was a stubborn person; all he had to do was let the fourth Nirvana Fruit pop out, and he would be in no danger.

However, he was stubborn and proud, and almost refused to believe that he couldn’t succeed in this situation.

“I refuse to believe that I, Greed, can’t absorb some crappy Dao Fruit thing like this!!” He gritted his teeth, and instead of undoing the seal he had created, he caused more of his life force Essence to rumble through his body into the fourth Nirvana Fruit.

ROOOOOAAAARRRRRRRRRRR!

If the fourth Nirvana Fruit were capable of feeling emotion, it would be screaming in joy. Previously, Meng Hao had been incapable of satiating its desires, and thus had never been able to maintain a fusion. But now, with the Greed’s willing help, the fourth Nirvana Fruit… was actually being absorbed!!

As soon as the process truly began, Greed’s face flickered as about ten percent of his life force Essence was almost immediately absorbed. He hesitated, but then gritted his teeth.

“I refuse to believe!!” He drew fully on his life force Essence, pouring it into the fourth Nirvana Fruit. He could already imagine what it would be like if he fully fused with this fruit. The body he had possessed would experience a cultivation base breakthrough, and once that happened, shocking transformations would occur.

Soon, twenty percent of Greed’s life force Essence had been absorbed. He shivered, and fear began to shine in his eyes, and yet he gritted his teeth. All the way to… thirty percent, and then forty!!

When forty percent of his life force Essence was absorbed, the flame of life force in his eyes grew incomparably dim, and terror filled his eyes. As of this moment, whatever obsessive stubbornness he had was thrust to the very back of his mind.

Forty percent of his life force Essence still wasn’t enough to fully absorb the fruit, leaving Greed so frightened that his face was pale. Without any further hesitation, he reached up to undo the seal on his forehead.

“Fudge, this fruit is too freaky! I’m done fooling around with it. Done, alright?!?!

“Get OUT!” Greed roared. He no longer wished to absorb the terrifying Dao Fruit. He was scared, so he tried to force the fruit out, but… the Nirvana Fruit was already more than half absorbed. How could it possibly just stop?

Furthermore, although Greed’s actions caused the fruit to pause momentarily, there was apparently some bizarre force that caused the Nirvana Fruit to resume sucking away at Greed’s life force even more voraciously than before.

“NO!!” Greed’s eyes were wide, and suddenly, a sensation of crisis filled his heart, something that Greed couldn’t accept. He could well imagine that if he continued, and the fruit completed the fusion process, then all of his life force could very well be sucked away.

He would become the first person throughout all the years… to actually be killed by the very body he had possessed….

The mere thought of that left Greed petrified. His expression was one of astonishment as yet another ten percent of his life force Essence was rapidly sucked away.

“Fudge! What the hell is this thing?!?!” Greed shivered as he realized that only about half of his life force Essence remained. His heart felt as if it were being sliced with a sharp blade, filling him with indescribable pain.

After all, his life force Essence was his most precious possession, and the entire foundation of why his soul could not be exterminated.

Greed’s eyes were crimson, and he was shaking violently as he sped through the necropolis. The flames in his eyes were very weak, and even showed signs that they might be extinguished soon.

In his heart, he felt deep regret, regret that he had thought too much of himself, and looked down on this tiny fruit.

“But wait, there’s still another way. The stronger this body is, the more it will help me. I’m gonna go for it!” Gritting his teeth, Greed flashed through the air in a gray streak. He moved with incredible speed, the lightning dancing around his head ensuring that he could break through any wall that got in his path.

In the blink of an eye, he appeared in another corridor, where two Ancient Realm cultivators were proceeding along cautiously. Before they could react, Greed turned into a blur as he pounced on one of them.

That cultivator let out a bloodcurdling scream as his body withered. In the blink of an eye, he transformed into dust, and a white mist which instantly merged into Meng Hao’s body and was then absorbed by the fourth Nirvana Fruit.

The other cultivator was shocked, and immediately began to flee. Performing an incantation gesture, he unleashed divine abilities and magical items. And yet, they were completely useless against the gray blur that was Greed. In the blink of an eye, he burst through them, and latched onto the cultivator.

Another miserable shriek could be heard as the cultivator’s body withered away into dust. The white mist poured into Meng Hao, who then flickered, vanishing. When he appeared again, he was in yet another corridor, near another Ancient Realm cultivator, who was speeding along. A moment later, a gray blur overwhelmed him.

It was in this manner that Greed’s slaughter was carried out. He was a gray blur that sped about devouring and killing in the necropolis. No one who encountered him could escape.

One, two, three… ten, fifteen, twenty….

In a very short time, Greed-possessed Meng Hao had slaughtered numerous cultivators in his attempt to fully absorb the fourth Nirvana Fruit. Even so, it could only reduce the speed with which his own life force Essence was being sucked away.

“I need more life force!” Greed growled, on the verge of becoming unhinged. He began moving faster, killing faster, until finally, his divine sense picked up another of the Dao Realm experts that had been pulled into the necropolis.

“He’s next!” Greed’s eyes were sunken. He had killed a Dao Realm expert already, and this would be his second. He burst through a nearby wall into a corridor, a bit behind a figure who was speeding along.

Greed’s entrance caused the man to turn and look back, his eyes flashing like lightning. It was an old man, one of the two 2-Essences Dao Realm cultivators who had tried to interfere with Meng Hao outside of the necropolis.

“Meng Hao!” he said. However, he almost immediately realized that something was off. Although Meng Hao had seemed strong before, it had been nothing more than that: strength. Now, he seemed terrifying, superior in a way that caused the old man’s heart to tremble with fear.

Without the slightest hesitation, he fell back. Simultaneously, though, Meng Hao’s body was compelled by Greed to charge forward in attack.

“Dammit, how dare you run!” The maddened Greed’s words were somewhat illogical, but inwardly, he was both irritated and afraid…. In his fear of having his life completely sucked away, this Dao Realm cultivator was essentially a surrogate to take his place in death.

To see that surrogate running away left Greed enraged. He increased his speed, making it impossible for the Dao Realm cultivator to flee. Seeing this, the cultivator suddenly turned while performing an incantation gesture, a fierce glow rising up in his eyes.

“Lightning!” He roared, causing numerous red lightning bolts to suddenly shoot out from his skin. They merged together into the image of a huge lightning bolt, which then exploded out, transforming into a rapidly-expanding lightning globe. This old man was a decisive person, so he quickly bit his tongue and spit out some blood.

“Water!” he roared. A red mist spread out from the blood, as if the blood and the water were being separated. What was left behind was only a drop of water, which was also Essence formed from the old man’s life force.

That drop of water could contain entire worlds, and as the glow of lightning shone down on it, it began to emanate a seven-colored glow, within which numerous land masses could be seen. Instantly, that light shot toward Greed.

The flickering lightning swirled around the drop of water and then also shot toward Greed.

Earlier, if Meng Hao had gone up against this old man’s lightning and water Essences, he would definitely have had to unleash the Paragon Bridge. But Greed-possessed Meng Hao simply smiled.

Then… he opened his mouth and actually consumed the drop of water!

As he swallowed, a massive rumbling filled Meng Hao’s body. As for the boundless lightning, he absorbed that too!

Unexpectedly, it didn’t hurt him at all, which caused the old man’s eyes to go wide. Shocked, he was just about to flee when Greed-controlled Meng Hao laughed viciously.

“Now, it’s my turn… The Wolf Conquers All!” Greed said, his voice strange and sinister. He lunged forward in the direction of the old man, mouth wide.
1

As he breathed in, no force of absorption appeared, and yet the old man let out a miserable shriek. Rumbling could be heard as boundless white mist poured out of him toward Greed, who immediately sucked it in.

It was a bizarre sight; the old man screamed as his body withered up. In the blink of an eye, he turned into a desiccated corpse, which then collapsed into ash.

All of his life force had been consumed by Greed!

1. Quick reminder that Greed’s name contains the character for wolf

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# Chapter 1242: Blue Sun!

Thanks to the life force of the Dao Realm cultivator, Greed-possessed Meng Hao trembled. Suddenly, brilliant light began to shine out from his forehead. Although the fourth Nirvana Fruit was not completely absorbed, it had apparently reached a milestone in the process!

Rumbling could be heard as the fourth Nirvana Fruit slowly began to rotate in place in addition to its absorption of life force. Next, the third Nirvana Fruit, as well as the second, and finally the first, all spun in unison, causing an ancient aura to erupt out of Meng Hao. That terrifying aura spread out, causing the entire necropolis to shake.

That aura did not belong to Greed, but rather, the fourth Nirvana Fruit!

As the fruits rotated, and the aura spread out, the power of an Allheaven Dao Immortal also rotated at its peak. Gradually, the ripples of the Ancient Realm began to radiate out from Meng Hao.

Countless symbols appeared all over his skin, symbols that had apparently been hidden in his bloodline. Now they appeared all over him, causing an ancient, awe-inspiring aura to emanate out.

Greed was trembling in excitement.

“I bet, and it paid off big. This body is a huge treasure! With a body like this, I’m fully confident that I can eventually reach Heaven Trampling!!”

“I might not have fully absorbed this Dao Fruit thing yet, but it won’t be long before I will!

“A fleshly body comparable to the Dao Realm, and a cultivation base even more powerful than before! It won’t be long before this body erupts with…

completely extraordinary power!” Greed took a deep breath. Currently, he only had about thirty percent of his life force Essence left. However, to him, it was all worth it!

“That bridge, this exceptional bloodline, a powerful fleshly body, and a cultivation base with unlimited potential. This body is definitely worth it!” Greed licked his lips, then threw his head back and laughed.

“Once I get out of here, I’ll find some God blood to get even more powerful, and then, everyone who humiliated me in the past will find out that… Greed is back!” Greed laughed, and as he did, a white-robed figure suddenly appeared in his mind, a figure which always filled him with resentment when he thought of him.

“Just wait until I reach Heaven Trampling!” Enlivened, Greed shot through the necropolis at top speed, sending his divine sense out to lock onto… Xuan Daozi!

In another corridor in another part of the necropolis, Xuan Daozi’s eyes were wide, and his heart was uneasy. He could sense fluctuations off in the distance that left him completely unsettled. Muttering to himself, he increased his speed as he sent his divine sense out to scan a shrine hall in the center of the necropolis up ahead.

By now, nearly ninety percent of the cultivators who had entered the necropolis were dead, most of them at the hands of Greed. Some had already been wounded before entering; after being infected by the aura of death in the place, they were now at death’s door.

Meng Chen was one of those people. He currently lay in the dirt, his vision fading to black, his expression blank. His aura was growing weak, and his complexion was ashen as the aura of death caused his internal organs to slowly decay. Occasionally, black blood would ooze out of his mouth.

Even his flesh was beginning to decay. By now, not even a Dao Realm cultivator would be able to save him, the reason being that his soul was already dispersing. The aura of death slowly corroded his soul, and as it faded away, he slipped into death.

He was dying, but that was not his wish. There were still many things he wanted to accomplish. He was the only member of his bloodline to have ever gone out into the world in recent years, and he had grand aspirations. He wanted to lead the members of his bloodline back to prominence, to restore his bloodline to its former glory.

But now, all he had were regrets.

Suddenly, his lips quivered as he said, “Dad…. Mom…. I’ve been an unfilial son….”

His thoughts were somewhat muddled, and at the moment, he thought he could see the members of his bloodline, and the hard lives they lived.

He thought about many things. He thought about how excited everyone had been when they found out that he had shown the ability to cultivate. He thought about the oaths that he had sworn from the time he was young, and the first time he had left the ancestral lands. When he had set foot onto that merchant ship and received his orders from Young Lord De, he had gritted his teeth and complied, willing to pay any price for his bloodline and for his ambitions.

But now, all his humiliations, and all his grand aspirations, were nothing but memories….

“If I die,” Meng Chen murmured, “what will become of my little brothers and sisters…? What will all my other relatives do…?” Meng Chen’s vision was growing blurry; too much of his flesh was rotting away, and much of him was already being absorbed into the soil itself.

His current location wasn’t very far away from where Greed-possessed Meng Hao was speeding along toward Xuan Daozi’s position.

About ten breaths of time passed, during which time Greed got closer and closer to Xuan Daozi. At one point, when Greed passed by one particular side chamber, he suddenly stopped and looked inside. Approaching in his direction was Han Qinglei, who suddenly looked at him with an expression of delight.

“Meng Hao!” Han Qinglei’s anxiety suddenly lessened now that he had seen Meng Hao. He began to hurry over, but had only taken three or four steps when he suddenly stopped in place, his pupils constricting.

“Meng Hao, what’s wrong?” Han Qinglei could sense that something was off. There was a cold mercilessness within Meng Hao’s eyes, as well as an avarice that he could tell was completely different from the Meng Hao he remembered.

Although this Meng Hao and the other Meng Hao looked alike and their auras were the same, the different look in this one’s eyes made Han Qinglei immediately begin to back up.

Greed-possessed Meng Hao looked Han Qinglei up and down, then smiled viciously. “I can’t believe there’s another excellent fleshly body here….

“Except it’s not quite as good as the one I already have. However, it’s not good to waste. There’s plenty of excellent life force to be sucked away.” Grinning, Greed shot toward Han Qinglei.

Han Qinglei’s face fell. He was an intelligent person, and was able to detect enough clues to be suspicious. Then he heard Greed’s words, and he understood everything.

“Possession!” he said, sucking in a breath. He immediately fled backward at top speed, performing a double-handed incantation gesture that caused a green cauldron to materialize. Rumbling could be heard as he continued to retreat back at top speed. Greed grinned viciously, and his right hand shot forward in a gray blur as he made to grab Han Qinglei.

Han Qinglei’s expression was one of hopelessness; based on the level of his cultivation base, he was fundamentally no match at all for Greed.

However, even in the moment that Greed’s hand turned into a gray blur and was about to latch onto Han Qinglei, all of a sudden, it stopped moving, as if it were fighting back against Greed’s consciousness.

Greed’s face fell, and he shot backward, grabbing his right hand hard with his left, a surprised and suspicious look in his eyes. Next, his eyes flickered as he examined his body. However, he could find no trace of a discarnate soul, which led him to only one conclusion.

“Dammit, there must still be tiny fragments of his soul left!!

“However, the resistance was weak, and the soul fragments are acting on instinct alone. It seems Meng Hao and this person had some sort of friendship….”

With a cold harrumph, he caused the qi and blood in his body to begin to burn, and even sent some of the lightning flame from the Lightning Cauldron to surround him, burning him from the outside in, and then vice versa.

After about ten breaths of time passed, the flames dissipated, and Greed stopped burning his qi and blood. Feeling much better, he looked up in the direction of the fleeing Han Qinglei. He was about to give chase, when suddenly the force exerted by the fourth Nirvana Fruit grew stronger, as if it were intent on completing its fusion.

Greed hesitated for a moment, then gave up on the idea of pursuing Han Qinglei. Instead, he flew in the direction of Xuan Daozi.

Currently, the most important thing was to complete the fusion with the Dao Fruit in his forehead, and he was confident that after consuming Xuan Daozi, he would be very close to just such a conclusion.

As Xuan Daozi and Greed both sped along, they gradually neared the exact same area!

That area was none other than the huge temple in the middle of the necropolis!

The necropolis was a vast construction, all of which was built around the temple in the middle. There were dozens of side chambers, all of which were connected by tunnels. The entire structure was arranged almost like a spell formation.

Currently, Xuan Daozi had just sped through one of the more than ten entrances to the central temple, piercing through the air like lightning.

As soon as he entered, he could sense a terrifying pressure that caused him to tremble. He took a deep breath and looked around, and as soon as he saw where he was, his pupils constricted.

The central temple had nine enormous stone columns that almost looked like spikes driven into the ground. In the very middle of those nine stone columns was a raised platform, upon which could be seen… a blue-robed figure sitting there cross-legged!

It was a withered corpse that emanated a boundlessly ancient air, as if it had existed for countless years. There was absolutely no life force to be sensed on this corpse; it had been dead a long time.

However… visible on its forehead was an astonishing flame, blue in color. From a distance, it almost looked like a sun, floating within which was a face. That face had its eyes closed, and shockingly… looked very similar to the corpse's face.

Connecting the corpse to the platform were numerous iron chains. Furthermore, the giant pillars pulsed with fire that almost seemed to be refining the corpse!

On the wall behind the corpse was a fresco. Astonishingly, it depicted… a blue sun!

That blue sun was incredibly realistic, and if you looked at it long enough, it would make you feel as if you were being roasted alive.

Also within the area of the nine pillars, on the left side of the corpse, a small shield could be seen lying on the ground. It was also blue, and emanated a faint, flickering light.

On the right side of the corpse was a bell; small and a dark-colored, it didn’t look very impressive. Scattered around were piles of other magical items; however, due to the passage of time, they were in various states of decomposition. Some were apparently still usable, but none of them attracted the attention of Dao Lord Xuan Daozi.

What caught his eye… was the blue sun on the corpse’s forehead, as well as the shield and bell.

It was at this moment that, all of a sudden, Meng Hao came flying into the same area.

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# Chapter 1243: Nine Seals' Handiwork

"Meng Hao!" After seeing Meng Hao, Xuan Daozi's eyes flickered with killing intent. He had paid a huge, bitter price for the chance to obtain Meng Hao's Essence. After their initial encounter, he had pursued him into the 33 Hells. Then he had experienced the bloody battle within the mists, and finally had been sucked into this necropolis. The incredible danger of it all left Xuan Daozi filled with astonishment.

"At long last we're in a place where no one can interfere," he said in a hoarse, ghastly voice filled with killing intent. "Nor can you escape. Therefore… this is where everything will come to a conclusion between us!"

However, as soon as Greed-possessed Meng Hao entered the central temple, his eyes filled with mixed emotions and melancholy. It was almost as if he had forgotten about Xuan Daozi and the fourth Nirvana Fruit. Instead, he stood there, staring at the withered corpse.

"Exalted Celestial… Sea-Dao," he murmured, expression complex and filled with numerous emotions.

"The sea in the name represents two people. As for the Dao, the true meaning of the Daoist name given me was not Sea-Dao, but Sea-Dog." Greed seemed to be bitterly lost in the depths of his memories. Because of the profound ancientness of those memories, it was impossible for him to not emanate an incredibly ancient air.

That ancientness caused Xuan Daozi, who was in the middle of attacking, to suddenly stare in shock. He lurched to a stop, staring suspiciously, unable to determine what strange development had occurred, but deeply moved by the ancient aura radiating off of Meng Hao.

Then he heard the words spoken by Greed, and his eyes widened. He suddenly remembered that on the surface of the gravestone outside the necropolis was a name written down by none other than Paragon Nine Seals…. It read: Paramita, Exalted Celestial Sea-Dao.

Shockingly, Greed was suppressed in this very location…. Exalted Celestial Sea-Dao was actually one aspect of his soul. Years ago, he had split himself into two, one part of which remained in his fleshly body; as it had slowly withered away, that soul had condensed into the sun of an Exalted Celestial on his forehead.

The other part had been hidden away in dormancy in the surrounding area, avoiding true death. In all the years since then, that aspect of his soul had attempted to free itself on many occasions, to escape. However, he had never been able to see any acceptable host, not even when cultivators came to this place from the outside world. He had tried on numerous occasions, but had never succeeded in possessing anyone.

But then he had laid eyes on Meng Hao, which was the first time he had actually been able to see another cultivator.

Greed sighed, an ancient sigh which echoed out in all directions. The entire temple seemed to fill with wind, and caused all light to grow unstable.

The blue sun on the corpse’s forehead suddenly flared to life. At the same time, the shield and the little bell on either side of the corpse began to tremble.

The already intense pressure in the area grew stronger, explosively powerful, causing Xuan Daozi to shiver. Only Greed seemed completely unaffected.

“The cruel Paragon Nine Seals…” Greed murmured, traces of fear visible within his expression. “He had a Heaven Trampling fleshly body and a cultivation base half a step away from that same Realm…. What a pity he was the only one. If the Immortal World had another Paragon of the same level, the war might not have ended the way it did….

“Cruel. I never sensed it before, but now I can see the truth. He could have exterminated us all along but instead, he created these 33 Hells, not simply to suppress us, but to use the power of the Mountain and Sea Realm to take the 33 of us, powerful peak experts, and… refine us into pills!!

“You wanted to pass us onto your successor, huh…? You wanted to take 33 Dao Divinities and Exalted Celestials, refine them into pills, and leave them behind for your successor!” Greed took a deep breath. Shaken, his eyes began to shine with a bright light.

“Unfortunately, you could never have anticipated me escaping by splitting myself, nor could you predict… that I would possess this body! I have no idea where your so-called successor is, but as for this grand gift you prepared for him, I’m going to take it now!” With that Greed took a step forward.

However, as soon as that step landed, Xuan Daozi suddenly couldn’t take the tension anymore and he howled, shooting toward the Greed-possessed Meng Hao.

“Stop spouting mumbo-jumbo, Meng Hao! Today is the day you die!”

Flying at top speed, Xuan Daozi closed in and waved his hand, causing Essence and natural law to erupt out and bear down on Meng Hao.

In this attack, Xuan Daozi drew on all the power he could muster. Inwardly, all of the dangers of this place were weighing down on his heart, and also felt shaken by the words uttered just now by Greed. Therefore, even as his Essence and natural law shot out, he performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, causing nine reptilian scales to fly out of his bag of holding.

As soon as the scales appeared, a brutal aura exploded out, and the scales transformed into nine Scale Dragons, each one fully 300 meters long. Thankfully, the temple was a large place, otherwise they wouldn’t even have been able to move. As soon as they appeared, they roared and charged toward Meng Hao.

Xuan Daozi hadn’t even finished that attack before he performed another incantation gesture and then waved his finger. His flesh and blood instantly withered, making him incredibly gaunt, yet simultaneously causing a mist of flesh and blood to transform into a blood sword.

The sword droned like a Blood Dragon as it shot toward Meng Hao.

Next, Xuan Daozi performed a double-handed incantation gesture, causing one magical symbol after another to appear. All of them were golden, and made popping sounds as they transformed into golden-armored celestial soldiers, which formed up and advanced on Meng Hao.

Next, a strange light gleamed in Xuan Daozi’s eyes, and the killing intent within them swirled. Glaring coldly at Meng Hao, he began to mutter, then raised his right hand, which radiated a shocking black mist. The black mist swirled around, causing the air around him to distort.

He really was going all out in this attack, doing everything possible to kill Meng Hao and end the fighting that had been dragging out between them.

Greed-possessed Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with a mysterious light, and he smiled viciously. He stopped walking toward the nine stone columns, and instead turned and headed toward Xuan Daozi.

“You’re the only Dao Realm cultivator left? Well, just to make sure I don’t run low on life force, I’ll seal you before you die.”

As he took his first step, Xuan Daozi’s power of Essence and natural law descended, enveloping him. But Greed simply opened his mouth and swallowed. The Essence and natural law shuddered; it was as if Greed’s mouth had turned into a black hole, and they were sucked in and completely consumed.

Xuan Daozi’s eyes went wide, but before he could even react, the nine Scale Dragons closed in. Greed took a second step, causing rumbling sounds to echo out, shaking the entire necropolis. The nine Scale Dragons screamed miserably and shattered, transforming into white mist that Greed sucked in.

He licked his lips, eyes shining as he smiled and said, “Lovely flavor.”

With that, he took a third step, waving his finger. The blood sword lurched to a halt and trembled in midair. Greed tapped on it, and it shattered, transforming into a blood mist which spread out in all directions.

As for the incoming gold-armored celestial soldiers, they began to shake, and then fell into retreat. However, Greed waved his hand, shattering them and transforming them into a white mist which he then absorbed. The fourth Nirvana Fruit in his forehead was now significantly further along in its fusion process.

“You’re not Meng Hao!!” Xuan Daozi exclaimed. “Who are you?!?!” If he couldn’t piece the clues together by now, then how could he have practiced cultivation to this level? Shock filled his face, and his scalp felt numb. How could he ever have imagined that all of his divine abilities and Daoist magics would be completely dismantled in an instant!?

The two sentences he had just uttered were completely involuntary. He had begun to guess at the truth when he saw the expression on Meng Hao’s face when he looked at the withered corpse, and heard the words he had spoken. The terrifying possibility was something he almost couldn’t believe. But now, there was no denying it.

“Of course I’m not Meng Hao,” said Greed, voice cool and expression both arrogant and disdainful. “You can call me Exalted Celestial Sea-Dao. Although, I like my former name better. Greed!”

Xuan Daozi’s eyes filled with madness. His first reaction to encountering a terrifying entity such as this was to raise his right hand, which was now so enveloped in black mist that it was impossible to see with the naked eye.

“Profound Heavens Grand Magic!!” Xuan Daozi roared. He lowered his hand, and suddenly, the image of an enormous palm appeared, completely black. It seemed illusory, but was in fact corporeal, and it shot toward Meng Hao with incredible speed, distorting natural law and affecting even Heaven and Earth as it sped along.

A strange light appeared in Greed’s eyes; he appeared to be somewhat surprised. However, when he opened his mouth and began to suck in a breath, the gigantic black hand began to shrink, transforming into a cyclone of wind that Greed then sucked in and swallowed.

The sight caused Xuan Daozi’s heart to tremble, and he started to wonder if there was anything that this thing couldn’t eat….

He was already starting to edge backward, but there was nowhere to flee to in the huge temple.

“What makes you think I would let you leave?” Greed asked, smiling. “I was the reason you people were sucked into this place. This… is my necropolis, and yours too.” Even as Greed smiled, the surrounding walls began to rumble, and suddenly, the ten entrances all collapsed.

If it were just an ordinary physical collapse, that wouldn’t be able to stop a cultivator from bursting through. But the ripples of a magical technique spread out, turning into a seal that kicked Xuan Daozi back as soon as he got close. It was now impossible for him to flee.

Xuan Daozi’s face fell, and his heart began to tremble. Greed stepped forward, and suddenly appeared in front of him.

Xuan Daozi’s eyes widened as Greed pointed out with his finger and then tapped his chest.

Xuan Daozi screamed miserably as he shot backward. The spot Greed had just touched was now decaying, radiating a powerful aura of death. However, even as the decay spread, and the aura of death grew, his life force also increased dramatically.

“Essence of Life and Death!!” Xuan Daozi cried in shock.

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# Chapter 1244: Meng Hao Awakens!

“Smart guy,” Greed said, licking his lips, eyes shining mysteriously. “Seems like I shouldn’t just eat you. Maybe a bit of Soulsearching would help me to better understand the current state of the Immortal World.” Greed flashed toward Xuan Daozi, closing in on him no matter how he tried to evade. Yet again, he waved his finger, tapping Xuan Daozi’s chest, causing it to decay and wither rapidly.

Xuan Daozi let out a miserable cry as his life force once again flourished explosively. His face was ashen, nearly despairing. He could sense the aura of death radiating off of Greed’s finger, and yet, as that aura entered him, the destruction and death which followed actually stimulated his latent powers, causing the life force in his flesh and blood to flourish.

The pain involved in such a technique was indescribable; Xuan Daozi’s eyes were crimson, and he immediately unleashed another divine ability, and yet, it was powerless against Greed.

“Tell me, what has occurred between you and Meng Hao? From the look of it, you don’t really want to kill him, you want to get something from him….”

Greed moved with incredible speed, tapping his finger once, twice three times. Xuan Daozi’s screams echoed out, incredibly shrill, as his body continued to wither. His chest, arms, head, every part of his body that Greed touched began to rot, and didn’t ooze a single drop of blood.

As he rotted, his life force grew stronger, causing him to shiver. In the blink of an eye, Greed once again tapped him, this time on the back. Xuan Daozi’s entire body was brimming with life force. Pain spread through his body, and he felt as if he were about to go mad; knowing that he was about to die, he roared. Unexpectedly, he was choosing to self-detonate.

However, in the moment that the power of self-detonation appeared, Greed viciously tapped down with his finger. Rumbling could be heard as the power of self-detonation was suppressed. By now, Xuan Daozi's body was almost completely decayed everywhere.

His clothes were gone, and he was radiating a rotten aura of death. He looked completely vicious as the rotting spread to his organs, and his bones, and his qi passageways. Everything was decomposing.

He was an illustrious Dao Lord, a powerful expert in his Realm, but even still, he cried out, "Kill me! Kill me! I beg of you, kill me!"

It wasn't that he didn't have a steadfast heart, or that his Dao was incomplete. Rather, this pain was something that a cultivator simply couldn't bear.

"Tell me," Greed said, chuckling. "Tell me what you know. It'll make you feel good. Just so you know, you aren't the first cultivator from the Immortal World to experience pain like this. Back in the war, lots of people were able to enjoy it." Greed's eyes gleamed with the thirst for blood. He was by no means a virtuous person to begin with, and when he saw the suffering Xuan Daozi was going through, it made him feel wonderful.

"The Daosource!" Xuan Daozi shrieked. "It was all for the Daosource. When I fought Meng Hao, I saw him use a time-walking technique. It stirred my own Essence, so I was sure that if I could absorb his time-walking technique, then it might give birth to a bit of Daosource!"

As soon as the words left his mouth, Greed's pupils constricted, and his expression became unprecedentedly serious.

"Daosource… that's a supreme Realm comparable to Heaven Trampling and Boundless Dao!!" Greed was shaken. Gasping, his eyes began to gleam with the light of wild joy.

“I, Greed, have experienced countless good fortune in life. Whoever tries to kill me gets crushed by objects falling from the sky. Whatever places I go to turn out to be treasure houses. Anything that I want, I can get my hands on.

“This time, not only did I get a precious treasure of a fleshly body, I even got news about the Daosource!!

“Daosource, Daosource, the paramount Realm of the Immortal World. If I can get that… then I’ll be that much more likely to succeed in cultivating the path of Heaven Trampling!!” Greed was incredibly excited, so much so that he lost interest in torturing Xuan Daozi. No longer caring about Xuan Daozi’s terrifying rotting body, his hand shot out and latched onto the top of his head.

“Soulsearch!” Greed licked his lips as he unleashed the magical technique, too anxious to wait for Xuan Daozi to speak. He wanted to find the answers himself.

Xuan Daozi’s body began to shake, and he screamed miserably. All of the intense pain before had come from within his own body, but this pain came from his soul. Popping sounds rang out from inside of him, and his eyes bulged. The pain he was enduring now was indescribable.

Greed was panting as Xuan Daozi’s memories flitted by. He learned that the Immortal World had fallen, and the Mountain and Sea Realm had risen. He found out that Nine Seals was dead, and how the 33 Heavens existed. He learned many, many things that were different from when he had been alive.

Eventually he reached the battle between Xuan Daozi and Meng Hao, and as he stabbed into Xuan Daozi’s consciousness, it was as if he were re-experiencing Meng Hao’s walking technique.

When he saw it, Greed gaped in shock. For some reason, the technique looked very familiar to him, although he couldn’t remember exactly where he had seen it. Instead of spending time considering the matter, he sank further into the sensation of how Xuan Daozi’s Essence had stirred in that moment.

The feeling left Greed completely excited. He was suddenly hit with an intense premonition that this was the key to Heaven Trampling!

In his excitement, Greed wasn't even looking at Xuan Daozi, who was currently hovering on the brink of death, screaming miserably. However, it was at this point that Xuan Daozi's eyes suddenly glittered with an icy calmness that reached a terrifying level.

Although he seemed to be screaming, he had actually split and compartmentalized his mind. Apparently… everything from before had been an act, and he had kept his killing intent deeply hidden.

Suddenly, he spoke out in a completely calm voice: "I'm a Dao Lord. Getting killed in battle is fine, but I won't die in such utter humiliation!"

As his voice echoed out, Greed suddenly felt an intense sensation of crisis rise up within him.

In that critical moment, Xuan Daozi spread his arms wide and wrapped them around Greed, a look of contempt gleaming in his eyes.

"Profound Dao of Heaven, One Profound Magic, Across Life and Death, Essence Arises, Essence Destroys!!" As Xuan Daozi's archaic voice echoed out, he suddenly exploded, causing numerous chunks of rotting flesh and blood to spray out. His soul, his Nascent Divinity, his Essences, all collapsed.

However, because of that collapse, his soul, Nascent Divinity, and Essences were able to merge together and form a gigantic magical symbol.

That magical symbol bore the semblance of the character 'profound', and it shot toward Greed with incredible speed, then branded itself onto his chest.

Greed howled and shot backward, blood spraying out of his mouth, his face ashen. The 'profound' character sank into his chest and then vanished, merging into him, searching for Greed's soul.

Greed was shaking, and his face was flushed. Once again he coughed up a mouthful of blood. Roaring, he tried to suppress the character by waving his hand behind him in the direction of the nine columns. Immediately, the shield and bell next to the withered corpse flew into the air and floated gently above him, emanating bright glows as they assisted Greed.

Greed's Essence of life force also flowed into operation as he used ten percent of it to try to drive out Xuan Daozi's dying attack. The result was that the 'profound' character was cleanly wiped away.

However, Greed's life force Essence had dwindled down to less than twenty percent. Panting, he looked at Xuan Daozi's mangled blood and flesh, and then gritted his teeth.

He had to admit that he had been careless, and had even been a bit arrogant. After taking over this fleshly body, he had virtually lost all sense of vigilance, and in that state of pride, he had overlooked the killing intent that could lurk in the heart of a hopelessly cornered Dao Lord.

Now that he thought about it, the screams emanating out earlier due to the fleshly body pain had actually seemed a bit fake. Their entire purpose had been to lure Greed closer; in fact, the reason why Xuan Daozi had even uttered the word Daosource was to attract his attention, and lure him into performing a Soulsearch.

Once Greed began the Soulsearch, then Xuan Daozi would have his chance to unleash that deadly magical technique.

"He was willing to die to try to strike me with a fatal blow…."

Greed took a deep breath, and vigilance once again burned to life within his eyes. He could sense that he only had twenty percent of his life force Essence remaining. Suddenly, he spun to look at the withered corpse within the nine pillars, and especially the blue sun. Finally, he smiled.

"Not very many people strike me with a deep impression, but this Xuan Daozi was definitely one of them. However… he was a bit too childish. That magic wasn't capable of exterminating me. In fact, if that damned Dao

Fruit hadn’t sucked away more than half of my life force Essence, then I wouldn’t even have needed to use ten percent of it to wipe away the attack.

“Oh well, it’s all over now. I’ll undo the seal now and retrieve my Exalted Celestial sun and absorb the other half of my soul. Then, I will no longer be half of a soul, but a full, complete soul. I can fight my way through each the other 32 Hells and pick them clean one by one. By the time I leave this place… I might already be in Heaven Trampling! Even if the process isn’t complete, I’ll be at least half a step there!” Licking his lips, Greed shot toward the nine columns. Stopping in front of one, his eyes shone with anticipation as he stretched his hand out to push down onto the column, completely confident that he would be able to undo the first seal.

“OPEN!” he said, his voice echoing out. His hand turned into a gray blur as it closed in on the column. However, before he could actually touch it, when he was only an inch away, his hand suddenly stopped in place and began to tremble.

Greed’s eyes went wide with disbelief as he realized that a tiny face had suddenly appeared on his forehead. That face looked exactly like Meng Hao’s, in fact it was… the real Meng Hao!

Meng Hao’s cool voice suddenly echoed out within Greed’s mind and thoughts.

“Thank you for helping me re-mold my body, for refining my magical items, for increasing my cultivation base, for helping me fuse with my fourth Nirvana Fruit, and for giving me such a precious life force Essence. Oh, and thank you for taking care of all my enemies.”

“Impossible. This is impossible!” cried Greed. “I already consumed your soul, I cleared out every part of your body with fire. It’s virtually a completely new body. There can’t be any remnant of your soul left. This is impossible….” Greed was shaking. Although his words seemed to be those of disbelief, his sinister soul exploded out in an attempt to wipe and drive away any remnants of Meng Hao.

“Nothing’s impossible about it,” Meng Hao replied. “I was hiding in the third Nirvana Fruit, and the Paragon’s blood. Come and check if you want.” Almost in the same moment that Greed made his counterattack, and Meng Hao spoke, the fourth Nirvana Fruit suddenly erupted with an even more terrifying absorption force than it had ever shown before!

Greed’s soul trembled as his life force Essence poured forth like a waterfall.

“NO!!” he shrieked miserably. “Nine Seals! It’s Nine Seals! Nine Seals has schemed against me!!” That was because all along he had never been able to sense the tiny bit of Paragon Nine Seals’ blood. Apparently, it was simply impossible for him to see.

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# Chapter 1245: Signs of the Door of the Ancient Realm!

Greed's soul let out a miserable shriek as he attempted to get out of Meng Hao's body. Unfortunately for him, the power exerted by the fourth Nirvana Fruit was completely shocking, causing his life force Essence to rapidly vanish.

To Greed, his life force Essence was his most prized possession; it was what kept him alive, and the foundation of his soul, and was now also what made it impossible for him to escape Meng Hao's body.

Finally, he let out a vicious howl and ceased any attempts to flee. Instead, he faced Meng Hao's soul and tried to consume it. He really had no other option that to risk it all in an attempt to fight for that tiny chance at life.

However, even as he lunged, Meng Hao snorted coldly, and a blood-colored light shot out from within his third Nirvana Fruit.

That blood-colored light contained Paragon power. Rumbling could be heard as it swept through Meng Hao's body, surging toward the trembling Greed, who screamed, "Nine Seals, Nine Seals!!"

Greed was in a state of despair. By this point, how could he not understand that he had been set up by Paragon Nine Seals? Years ago, he had assumed that his act of splitting his soul had gone completely undetected. The truth was that Nine Seals had seen everything.

Greed now knew why he had been unable to see anyone else throughout all the years, not even when cultivators came into the 33 Hells to explore. He could sense them, to be sure, and even try to possess them. However, the result was inevitable failure, as if there wasn't even a host to enter.

But then Meng Hao came along. Greed believed himself to have possessed him, but now, he realized that it had all been a trap, a ruse to lead him into an even greater snare.

"Nine Seals!!" Greed howled as his life force Essence continued to be consumed by the fourth Nirvana Fruit. With Greed's help, the fourth Nirvana Fruit had already been more than half absorbed by Meng Hao. Thanks to its consumption of Greed, the process was becoming ever more complete!

Eighty percent, eighty-five percent, ninety percent!

Booms echoed out that no one could hear except for Meng Hao and Greed. To them, they seemed loud enough to cause everything to tremble. As Greed's life force Essence faded away, his struggling grew weaker and weaker.

He was now lost in despair, thanks especially to the pressure of the Paragon's blood. Soon, he was suppressed to the point where he couldn't fight back. He could only watch as his life force Essence slipped away, consumed voraciously, and his soul fire slowly began to flicker out.

Worst of all was that Meng Hao's fleshly body was far more powerful than before, like a rampart, such that the power exerted by the fourth Nirvana Fruit could grow boundlessly stronger without him needing to worry about the strain it would place on his body.

"I refuse to accept this! I refuse! I've been preparing for years! I endured the pain of splitting my soul apart, all to get free. I'm so close! So close!!" Greed's miserable shrieks echoed out within Meng Hao's mind. Meng Hao's body was shaking, and the image four Nirvana Fruits appeared on his forehead, flickering brightly. An incredible power erupted from them, filling his body.

As Greed himself was absorbed into the Nirvana Fruit, Meng Hao then acquired… Greed’s memories. They weren’t completely intact, and there were many blurry areas, but they still left Meng Hao completely shocked.

In addition to Greed’s memories, he also acquired… Xuan Daozi’s memories, which Greed had just Soulsearched. Those images were fresh, and were quickly snatched up by Meng Hao.

It was at this point that his fourth Nirvana Fruit reached a state of ninety percent absorption. As for Greed’s life force Essence, there was only a strand of it left.

“I re-molded this body with my Essence. I made it stronger! It’s the same with the cultivation base. I even sealed the Dao Fruit so it couldn’t emerge. I was the one who refined his magical items. I spared no cost….

“I destroyed his enemies, and turned them into life force which he absorbed…. I… I… I refuse to accept this! That jinx overcame me so many years ago, and what’s done is done. But now, Meng Hao does the same thing!?!?”Greed laughed bitterly as his aura dissipated. His struggles ceased, and he was completely blotted out by the Paragon’s blood inside of Meng Hao.

At the same time, the corpse sitting cross-legged in the middle of the nine stone columns suddenly trembled slightly. It wasn’t that the corpse once again had life force, but rather, the blue sun on its forehead was vibrating, causing the entire body to tremble.

As the last strand of Greed’s life force Essence was absorbed by the fourth Nirvana Fruit, as the last bit of Greed’s soul was wiped out by the Paragon’s blood… Greed’s screams were cut off; he had been completely and utterly refined!

It was at that point that the blue sun on the corpse began to shine with radiant light. Then, it suddenly dimmed. However, when that happened, a face became visible within the sun. Floating there… was none other than Greed!!

His eyes had been closed, but now they snapped open, filled with madness as he glared at Meng Hao, revealing that wild, unyielding air. He even opened his mouth and howled noiselessly.

His eyes were filled with venomous hatred, hatred toward Meng Hao and hatred toward Paragon Nine Seals, all of which had reached the pinnacle.

He had given Meng Hao incredible good fortune, only to be consumed by him. Of course, it was only part of Greed’s soul, not the entire thing. The rest existed within that blue sun.

Back when he had been suppressed by Paragon Nine Seals, he had split his soul, with one half remaining on the outside. That part had now been absorbed by Meng Hao, which constituted a grievous injury to Greed.

In fact, not even the wounds inflicted on him by Paragon Nine Seals years ago had been as bad.

Half of his soul meant that half of his life force Essence was now gone as well. To Greed, that was like half of his life!

Even as Greed’s face howled noiselessly within the blue sun, Meng Hao trembled, and the glittering image of his fourth Nirvana Fruit appeared on his forehead. It was now almost completely absorbed.

However, the key was the word ‘almost,’ since it still lacked just a tiny, tiny bit before being completely absorbed.

It was now at ninety-nine percent. The last bit would need time, not any influx of life force. Based on what Meng Hao could sense, he was confident that it would take a few months at most before… he was ready to break into the Ancient Realm!

At the same time, he could sense from the rumblings of his cultivation base that he was far more powerful than he had been before. He was even confident that if he faced Dao Lord level opponents, he would no longer only be able to fight them to a deadlock, but rather, would be able to secure victory.

Even more shocking was that the Allheaven Dao Immortal blood inside of him was boiling, which affected the Fang Clan back in the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

On that day, the Dao seeds in many fang Clan cultivators sparked to life. There were even some whose blood awoke to the point of being in the initial stages of an Allheaven Immortal!

On that day, the overall power of the Fang Clan increased by a whole level. On that day, the Fang Clan was shaken, and all of the clan members were in shock. On that day, Fang Shoudao experienced a cultivation base breakthrough!

In one short day, the Fang Clan grew far, far stronger. At the same time, on that day, countless members of the Fang Clan could sense a distant, awe-inspiring aura surging up in the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

That… was Meng Hao!

Meng Hao’s eyes burst open, and they seemed to contain the stars hidden in their depths. If you looked closely, they seemed to house vortexes that could suck in the power of all types of divine sense!

Even more shocking was that… there was lightning dancing around him that came from none other than Greed’s Essence of lightning.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, and as a result, the entire aura of the necropolis seemed to begin to spin toward him.

Meng Hao’s eyes began to gleam with wild joy. He clenched his fists together and relished the sensation of power he felt from his body, which far, far exceeded that from before.

He could sense the resilience of his bones, and how much more terrifyingly strong they were. His qi passageways were the same, and most importantly, his blood was too. Greed had paid an extremely heavy price to purify his blood, of which even a single drop now contained massive power!

Right now, he didn’t need to use his cultivation base to fight the Dao, he could use his fleshly body alone!

In fact, there would surely be some powerful experts who would wish to refine his body into a Dao Realm treasure if they could!

Meng Hao began to laugh heartily. In his opinion, this Greed really was a good guy.

In addition to what he had done with his fleshly body, he had increased his cultivation base, something that left Meng Hao smiling broadly. He rubbed his forehead, thinking about how much time he had saved with the fourth Nirvana Fruit thanks to Greed. Suddenly, he felt very appreciative. Were it not for the fact that Greed had forcefully sealed the fruit inside of him, even though he still could have taken his body back, his cultivation base progress would not have been as incredible.

“What a great fellow,” Meng Hao said. Licking his lips, he smiled and smacked his bag of holding. Eyes shining brightly, he took a deep breath and took out the long spear which had been turned into a dragon, and the superimposed swords. When he swung the long spear, the dragon roared. The pressure it now exuded was over ten times that of its previous power, as far as Meng Hao could tell in his initial estimate.

As for the superimposed swords, the murderous aura they emitted was even greater than before.

He suddenly regretted not leaving some more magical items sitting out in his bag of holding. If he had known things would end up like this, he definitely would have….

Then he looked up at the Lightning Cauldron floating above his head, and his eyes gleamed.

“Rich!” he murmured. “This time I’ve really struck it rich…. I wish I’d known earlier that lending out my body could lead to so many benefits. From now on I’ll loan it out a bit more often….” Then he looked over at the blue sun on the forehead of the corpse, and Greed’s face therein. Greed looked like he was about to go mad from the sight of Meng Hao’s glee regarding his fleshly body, his excitement regarding the transformations to his cultivation base, and his excitement at the items in his bag of holding.

All of it was too much for Greed, who let out a miserable howl. His heart felt like it was breaking, and his regret was enormous.

“Mine! All of that should be mine….

“I spared no cost to refine that body, and I wasted tons of Essence to mold its cultivation base. And I was the only one who could unseal those magical items…. Mine! All of that should rightly be mine….”

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# Chapter 1246: Cleanly and Thoroughly!

Greed wanted to weep, but had no tears to shed. He felt embarrassed, even humiliated…. And yet that humiliation soon turned to indignation as he saw Meng Hao's delighted gaze shift from the Lightning Cauldron to… the shield and the little bell.

"Those are mine!!" Greed roared, his eyes wide. However, the sound of his voice couldn't leave that blue sun. Even if he roared louder, the only thing anyone might be able to see was the blue glow of the sun intensifying a bit.

Meng Hao stared fixedly at the little shield, then took a deep breath. For some reason, he had the feeling that he… could control it.

Heart thumping, he sent out some divine will, and the shield twitched. A moment later, it appeared directly in front of him, radiating a scintillating light. Meng Hao gazed at the shield, contemplating how easy it had been to control it, almost as if it were connected to him. It made him realize that the result of consuming Greed's life force Essence wasn't simply a matter of completing his fourth Nirvana Fruit.

He could sense that his control over the shield didn't come from himself, but rather… the fourth Nirvana Fruit.

It was similar to how… he didn't directly control the Paragon's blood inside of him, the third Nirvana Fruit did.

However, the specifics weren't really important. Meng Hao's eyes gleamed as he next looked toward the bell. It flickered, then floated over to rest in Meng Hao's hand, emanating a feeling of extreme ancientness.

“Not only did you help me refine my body, you increased my cultivation base, fused my Nirvana Fruit, re-forged my magical items, and even… gave me some of your own treasures.” Meng Hao sighed and looked over at the blue sun on the corpse’s forehead, and Greed’s face, which was currently screaming silently at him.

Meng Hao cleared his throat and then clasped hands and bowed deeply.

“Many thanks, Senior,” he said. Then he put the shield and the bell away.

Greed glared at him, and truly wished to weep.

After putting the items away, Meng Hao looked back up and saw Greed staring at him with madness and killing intent. All of a sudden, memories floated up in his mind that he had just acquired.

“When he was suppressed, he split his soul into two parts, huh…?

“The 33 Hells are actually thirty-three medicinal pills left behind by Paragon Nine Seals…. Hmm, medicinal pills concocted by a powerful Dao Realm expert could rightly be called Dao pills.

“If that’s the case, then did I actually just consume half of a Dao pill?” Meng Hao murmured, looking at Greed, and his eyes shone brightly. He licked his lips. He had no way of knowing, but when Greed saw the look on his face, he suddenly shivered.

After standing there thinking for another moment, Meng Hao organized his thoughts. In addition to Greed’s memories, he also had Xuan Daozi’s memories in his head too. From those memories, he was able to see Xuan Daozi’s final moments before his death.

Although he and Xuan Daozi had been trying to kill each other, when Meng Hao saw how he had died, he couldn’t help but sigh emotionally.

“In the Immortal World, cultivators with less than three Essences are ordinary Dao Realm cultivators. Three Essences earns you the right to be called Dao Lord, which is essentially the peak of the early Dao Realm.

After that are the Dao Sovereigns, who have up to six Essences. They are essentially the mid Dao Realm.

After that is the late Dao Realm, which is… the Paragon stage. 7-Essences Paragons, 8-Essences Paragons, and 9-Essences Paragons!

“It seems that the Paragon stage is equivalent to Paramita’s Exalted Celestial, which is likewise equivalent to Paramita’s Dao Divinity….

“Furthermore, beyond Paragons, there is another legendary Realm, the Daosource!!” Meng Hao’s eyes shone brightly as he realized why Xuan Daozi had been so focused on killing him.

“Essence stirs only for the Daosource…. The Daosource Realm is similar to Heaven Trampling, which is likewise similar to the Boundless Dao?” Meng Hao was unfamiliar with these two terms. After searching through some of Greed’s memories, he understood. Exalted Celestials and Dao Divinities were cultivation base terms used by the two powers that had been involved in the war with the Immortal World.

“Daosource. Daosource…. According to the information in Greed’s memories, back in the day, Paragon Nine Seals had a Daosource fleshly body, but his cultivation base was only half a step into the Daosource Realm. So, he never counted as a true Daosource cultivator.

“In that case… exactly how powerful is the Daosource Realm? If a Daosource Realm cultivator appeared in the Mountain and Sea Realm, would it be enough to resolve the war between the three powers?!

“Furthermore… might it be possible… that there is an even more powerful Realm beyond the Daosource?” Meng Hao was nearly overwhelmed by the mass of new information.

After a long moment, he shook his head and cleared his thoughts. After looking over at the blue sun on the corpse’s forehead again, his eyes glittered. Muttering to himself, he took another long moment to still his beating heart.

“My cultivation base isn’t high enough to undo that seal and consume the rest of the Dao pill…. Since that was the purpose of the creation of the 33 Hells, then there’s no need to get anxious about receiving all the benefits.

“Once I get into the Dao Realm, I’ll come back and get all the Dao pills in one fell swoop!” Meng Hao stepped back, then waved his right sleeve, collecting all the other magical items which had been laying around in the area for countless years. After looking around one more time to make sure he hadn’t missed anything, he turned and prepared to leave.

Within the blue sun, Greed stared at Meng Hao, swearing that if he had a chance, he would definitely consume Meng Hao.

However, just as Meng Hao was about to leave, he stopped in place, then smacked himself hard in the forehead. Greed gaped in shock, wondering whether or not Meng Hao was going crazy.

Meng Hao appeared to be furious as he once again smacked himself.

“Ah, Meng Hao you fool, I know you’re rich now, but you can never forget that money comes by saving up a bit at a time. Every time you don’t earn some money, you’re losing money. Plus, once you get it, you can’t spend it frivolously!

“You got some amazing good fortune this time around, and earned quite a bit, but that doesn’t mean you can be extravagant all of a sudden!” Taking a deep breath, he reminded himself of the lessons he had been taught, then squatted down and tapped some of the floor tiles in the temple. Finally, he let out a long sigh.

“I really was being negligent. These floor tiles might not be made from Immortal jade, but they contain a Dao will within them that makes them the perfect ingredient for forging magical items. Even one of them would fetch an incredible price on the outside.” Eyes gleaming, he smacked his back of holding to produce a sword, which he edged into the corner of one of the tiles. A moment later, the sword snapped in half.

“Wow, they’re pretty tough!” Licking his lips, Meng Hao produced the long dragon spear, stabbed it into the ground, and began to pry upward. Meanwhile, Greed looked on, astonished.

A boom rang out as the floor tile flew up into the air. Meng Hao grabbed it and looked it over, whereupon a radiant smile appeared on his face. Eyes shining, he slapped his bag of holding, causing the parrot and meat jelly to fly out.

“No jabbering,” he said. “Let’s clean this place out. Just don’t touch those nine pillars.” With that, he went to work prying up the next tile.

The parrot and meat jelly had just been about to launch into a debate, but were cut off by Meng Hao. They looked around, and suddenly their eyes began to shine brightly, and they immediately began to help Meng Hao pry up the floor tiles.

One piece. Two pieces. Three pieces…. Ten pieces. Thirty pieces. One hundred pieces. Meng Hao was going mad, buzzing around like a tornado as he used the dragon spear to pry up one floor tile after another.

Greed watched what was happening, eyes wide with shock and disbelief. Meng Hao was using the very spear that he had paid such a heavy price to unseal, to run around like mad and pry up floor tiles. Greed suddenly shivered.

By now, he realized that Meng Hao was definitely not to be trifled with.

Absolutely, positively not to be trifled with. In fact, he was even more terrifying than the jinx that had sealed Greed here to begin with.

“That jinx was a killer, but this Meng Hao is more than that. He’ll take everything down to the bones!!”

Before Greed could even finish sighing, Meng Hao suddenly looked up at the walls, and his eyes shone. Hurrying over, he began to dismantle the frescoes piece by piece.

Greed’s eyelids twitched as he watched Meng Hao, and his heart was pounding. He had long since taken his own name to be an expression of his personality, but now he realized that compared to Meng Hao, he himself… was an upstanding individual.

It was at this point that Meng Hao’s eyes flashed like lightning as he started looking around again, and his gaze met Greed’s. Greed once again looked away, fearful that Meng Hao in his madness would go after him again.

“Crazy. Crazy!” Greed murmured, gaping in shock. “This guy is absolutely crazy!” The parrot and meat jelly were also collecting all of the items in the hall, with the exception of the nine pillars.

Greed stared around at the chaos; the once magnificent temple hall now looked as if it had been chewed up by a ravenous dog. It was completely bare, with only a few places left intact. Greed was shaking at how terrifying Meng Hao was.

“I really did underestimate him. He doesn’t just give up with the bones, he even scrapes up the dirt beneath the bones. He takes everything….

“This is the type of guy you can’t trifle with, never ever, ever! Now that I think about it, HE should be named Greed!” Greed took in a deep breath as Meng Hao once again seemed to be on the verge of leaving. However, it was at this point that Meng Hao turned and suddenly looked at him.

Greed shivered in shock as Meng Hao once again slapped his forehead.

“How could I have forgotten that….” Meng Hao said, sounding very angry at how dull he had become. He suddenly hurried over to where Greed was located, and a carved stone screen had been erected, which depicted a sun. Meng Hao efficiently dismantled the screen and put it into his bag of holding.

As he looked around the huge temple hall one more time, he tilted his head up and noticed the roof tiles, which he quickly helped himself to. Finally, he left with the meat jelly and parrot.

Greed watched Meng Hao leave, and then glanced around at the mess. Then, he really did start to cry. In his estimation, his necropolis must now be the poorest of all 33.

“I really did underestimate him. Not even ravenous dogs could pick the place apart as cleanly and thoroughly as this….”

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# Chapter 1247: Meng Chen Again

Meng Hao left, savoring sweet the flavor of his profits from the central temple. Eyes gleaming, he next focused on the surrounding side chambers. Of course, the meat jelly and parrot hadn’t originally cared much about wealth. The parrot liked fur and feathers, whereas the meat jelly was inclined toward bullies.

However, after being around Meng Hao for so long, he had started to rub off on them. Now, they were far more interested in money, which was quite a pleasing development as far as Meng Hao was concerned; having assistants made the plundering process much smoother.

The three of them were like locusts as they descended upon the next side chamber. Because they didn’t have to worry about the magical seals like they did in the main hall, things were much easier, and they went right to work.

The parrot flew up toward the ceiling, the meat jelly handled miscellaneous objects, and as for Meng Hao, he felt that prying up the floor tiles and dismantling the wall decorations was right up his alley….

In the end it took barely a dozen breaths of time before the three of them left. The side chamber… was completely empty, even emptier than the main hall.

If Greed were here to see what was happening, his fear of Meng Hao would surely increase.

“Rich! I’m really rich!” Meng Hao thought, his eyes shining as he madly cleared out another side chamber. It didn’t take long before the group of three had swept through all of the side chambers. The parrot and meat jelly were starting to feel tired, so Meng Hao put them back in his bulging bag of holding, which he then patted as he laughed heartily.

Then he prepared to fly off and look for the exit. Meanwhile, Han Qinglei was just down the corridor, having just cautiously entered one of the side chambers. At first, he assumed that he had taken a wrong turn and come to a different place than he expected, but just as he was turning to leave he suddenly gaped in shock at the emptiness around him and examined the area more closely.

He looked down at the ground and saw no floor tiles, nor were there any frescoes on the wall. Every single object imaginable had been cleared out. Even the glowing pearl lights up above had been taken away. Han Qinglei gasped in astonishment.

“Wh-what… what happened?!?! Who did this?” Han Qinglei wasn’t actually very familiar with Meng Hao. He only knew about how Meng Hao had acted in the Windswept Realm, so when he saw the shocking scene around him, he didn’t think to connect it to Meng Hao.

Taking a deep breath, he hurried on to the next side chamber, whereupon his face began to flicker with fear. After visiting several more side chambers, he realized that they had all been emptied out, and were in complete disarray.

Not too far off, on another side, Meng Hao suppressed his excitement at everything that had just happened, and was preparing to start searching for the exit. At the same time, he was considering how to escape from the Heavengod Alliance.

“At the most, it will take me a few months before I can break through to the Ancient Realm. For me, the Ancient Realm will be a mere stepping stone, and it should be just a quick succession of breakthroughs on my way to the Dao Realm!” Meng Hao’s eyes shone with anticipation. He had already spent far too much time in the Immortal Realm, and had progressed farther than virtually anyone else ever had.

He had made thorough preparations, and was confident that he would be able to extinguish however many Soul Lamps he needed to. The only thing he wasn't sure about was how many Soul Lamps that would entail.

"The Dao Realm is the key to everything!" Meng Hao took a deep breath and buried his anticipation deep in his heart.

"If I remember correctly, Han Qinglei is in this necropolis too." Meng Hao sent his divine sense out and quickly found Han Qinglei. Just when he was about to head in his direction, Meng Hao stopped in place. He had just noticed that in a corridor not too far off, a person was just about to become a corpse.

It was none other than Meng Chen!

"Someone from the Meng Clan…." Meng Hao scanned his face, and despite the thick aura of death which twisted it in a grotesque way, he could tell that it was the same young man he had noticed on the Meng Clan's ship.

Meng Hao remembered that when Patriarch Blacksoul had pointed out that he came from the Ninth Mountain and Sea, it made him think about the Meng Clan, and then look over at the expressions on the faces of the people on the ship.

Few of them had any reaction when the Ninth Mountain and Sea was mentioned, but this young man, Meng Chen, had looked shocked. His expression had been one of mixed emotions, including anticipation and even nervousness. Meng Hao had noticed that, but at the moment he had been in a very deadly chase, with no time to consider the matter. However, in hindsight he was now convinced that this young man knew about the connection between the Meng Clan and the Ninth Mountain and Sea's Fang Clan. 1

Meng Hao ignored Han Qinglei for the moment, and instead sped over to Meng Chen. He even used the Lightning Cauldron to bypass some walls, and appeared next to Meng Chen a moment later.

Almost immediately, he was struck by the powerful aura of death emanating off of Meng Chen. The ground in the area had already absorbed his limbs, and was slowly assimilating the rest of him, to the point where only his head was still visible above the surface. His skin was bloated and black, covered with blue veins.

However, he wasn't dead! He still had one breath of life left!

Meng Hao knelt down next to him and placed his hand on Meng Chen's forehead. After a moment, a look of sadness passed over his face. Meng Chen's cultivation base was only in the Immortal Realm. The necropolis they were in was filled with an aura of death that even Dao Realm experts would be leery of. However, Meng Chen was already completely infected, and should actually have died much sooner.

However, a bit of his own aura remained, a bit that was fueled by his unyielding drive and will. The power of that desire transformed into something like a wisp of smoke from a lit incense stick, which kept Meng Chen afloat for just a bit longer.

However, despite the fact that he hovered there between life and death, his soul was still dispersing, and his body was melting away. He would not be able to enter the cycle of reincarnation, and if Meng Hao hadn't come when he had, then it would only have been a few more hours before that final bit of his own aura was completely gone.

"Just what kind of obsession can drive a person to refuse to give in like this…?" Meng Hao murmured. He sighed, wishing that he could do something to save him, but knowing that it was impossible.

Frowning sadly, he reached out and tapped Meng Chen's forehead, sending in a bit of life force. It wouldn't save him, but would give him a bit of lucidity and help him to express his dying wishes.

Meng Chen shivered, and his bulging eyes opened; he didn't look at all handsome like he used to. However, Meng Hao's life force contained Essence power, which caused Meng Chen's dispersing soul to temporarily solidify, and his previously fading eyes to grow clear.

Unfortunately, Meng Hao knew that the brightness in his eyes… was the flicker of lucidity that came moments before death.

“If there’s anything you’d like to say, you can tell me,” Meng Hao said softly.

Meng Chen looked at Meng Hao blankly for a moment, then realized who he was. Eyes filling with anticipation, he said, “Meng… Hao….” It was difficult for him to speak, and when he did, it was in fits and gasps. “I… have an… aunt named… Meng Li, in the Ninth Mountain and Sea….”

His words hit Meng Hao like lightning, and he began to tremble.

He looked at Meng Chen with wide eyes; although he had guessed that this might be the reality of the situation, to hear Meng Chan say the words out loud caused waves of shock to beat at Meng Hao’s mind.

Instead of saying that Meng Hao had deep feelings for the Meng Clan itself, it would be more accurate to say… that he felt deep regard for his grandfather’s bloodline. In the final analysis, the reason he wanted to go to the Meng Clan in the first place was because of that bloodline!

His true relatives were the members of that bloodline, not the Meng Clan in general!

Meng Hao began to pant from the realization that this Meng Clan cultivator was actually one of his direct relatives. He once again tapped Meng Chen’s forehead, giving him some more Essence power. This time, knowing that Meng Chen was not just an ordinary member of the Meng Clan, he gave as much power as was possible.

It still wasn’t enough to save him, but it was enough to cause his eyes to shine.

“You… know… my aunt…?” Meng Chen asked, looking at Meng Hao with intense anticipation.

“She’s my mother,” Meng Hao replied softly. “My name is Meng Hao, but at the same time, Fang-Meng Hao.”

When Meng Chen heard that, he shivered, and a look of excitement appeared on his face. He knew that his aunt had gone to the Ninth Mountain and Sea to get married, and that her husband was surnamed Fang….

“So it’s really… you….” Meng Chen still hadn’t released his last breath of life. However, his eyes were growing dim, and the aura of death was overtaking him. Even with Meng Hao supporting him, any moment could be his last.

“Help the Meng Clan… and help our bloodline… rise to prominence!

“I’m… Meng Chen, and I’m… the only Immortal Realm cultivator in our bloodline… help us… rise… to prominence!” Meng Chen shivered, using all of the energy he had left to say the words ‘rise to prominence.’ After he did, black blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth, and his eyes darkened. However, he still wasn’t dead yet; he was holding on tenaciously, looking at Meng Hao, waiting for him to respond.

Meng Hao’s mind was trembling as he looked at Meng Chen, his own relative. After a moment, his eyes filled with determination, and he nodded.

When Meng Chen saw that, and the determination written on Meng Hao’s face, he smiled. The smile lasted only a moment, but based on the look in his eyes, Meng Hao could sense Meng Chen’s unswerving obsession. The look faded away, and then his gaze stiffened. His eyes stopped moving; the flame of his life force had burned out.

His body was now completely enveloped by an aura of death.

Meng Chen was dead.

Off to the side lay his bag of holding, the only thing that remained of him.

Meng Hao was silent for a while, then he sighed. He was aware that his grandfather’s bloodline was in decline, and that one of the main reasons was himself. It was the same with the Fang Clan. If his two grandfathers hadn't gone missing while trying to save him, then his grandfather's bloodline definitely wouldn't be in such a poor situation.

"The only Immortal Realm cultivator in the bloodline…?" Meng Hao murmured, slowly standing up. He stamped his foot, dispersing the aura of death, and sending the soil scattering about to reveal Meng Chen's corpse, which he carefully picked up.

"Alright, time to take you home," he said quietly. Carefully placing Meng Chen into his bag of holding, he turned and began to slowly walk away. As he did, his appearance changed… into that of Meng Chen!

"I'll take your place to fulfill your obsession," he said slowly. "I will lead the bloodline… into prominence in the Meng Clan!"

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# Chapter 1248: Leaving the 33 Hells!

“Rise to prominence.” What those words meant, and what they represented, was different now than what they had meant during his time in the Fang Clan. There, rising to prominence involved he himself flying to great heights.

Meng Hao was a member of the Fang Clan, and the Crown Prince of the direct bloodline at that. His father had a profoundly high cultivation base, and Meng Hao also had the support of the direct bloodline Elders.

Because of that, rather than saying that he had helped the direct bloodline rise to prominence, it would be better to say that Meng Hao had been demonstrating his own worthiness.

The situation in the Meng Clan… was different. Based on the level of his cultivation base, he could earn himself a high position within the Meng Clan if he wanted to. However, unless he stayed with the Meng Clan in the Eighth Mountain and Sea forever, it would do no good. Once he left, the bloodline would be left waiting for his grandfather to return, and would be back in exactly the same position they had been in before Meng Hao had arrived.

To rise to prominence with the Meng Clan meant… that the entire bloodline needed to rise, not just a single person.

Meng Hao stood there, lost in deep and somber thought. Meng Chen’s handful of words caused him to ponder the decline of his grandfather’s bloodline, and the serious crisis they were now facing. The fact that they only had one Immortal Realm cultivator said a lot.

It meant that the entire bloodline could be wiped away at virtually any time.

In fact, no one else in the clan would care at all about Meng Chen’s death, because it would have virtually no impact on the clan as a whole. But to his bloodline, it spelled out certain disaster.

Their only Immortal Realm cultivator was dead….

“How did things come to this?” Meng Hao thought. He truly didn’t understand how, in less than a thousand years, a once flourishing bloodline could experience such a decline. There was really only one possibility.

“All of the powerful experts died, leaving behind only widows and orphans….” Meng Hao trembled where he stood, his eyes bloodshot and his heart twinging with pain. He could well imagine the current situation in the bloodline, and it filled his heart with deep guilt.

He then silently made his way off into the distance, ignoring his plan to go find Han Qinglei. As of now, there was no need to rely on him to leave this place. Meng Hao would use Meng Chen’s identity instead.

After the time it takes an incense stick to burn, rumbling sounds echoed out within the necropolis, and everything began to shake as a huge rift appeared. A terrifying power of expulsion also began to rise up.

According to Greed’s memories, that was the way to leave this place. There was a small spell formation aperture which, when powered by Greed’s life force Essence, would open the exit.

As the rumbling echoed out, Meng Hao took advantage of the expulsion power to shoot out through the rift. He was followed by a shocked Han Qinglei, who quickly turned back to look at the rift leading back to the necropolis. He realized that the only people to be disgorged were himself and this other person from the Meng Clan.

Of all the other people, none emerged… not even Meng Hao.

This could only lead him to one conclusion.

“Dead? Impossible!” Han Qinglei simply couldn’t believe that Meng Hao had died inside. Suddenly, he thought back to the last moment in which he had seen Meng Hao, and how odd the situation had been.

Han Qinglei suddenly had a very bad feeling. Sighing, he turned and looked at the world around him, which was once again wreathed in mists. Roars could be heard therein, as well as the sounds of cultivators unleashing magical techniques.

He looked back at the Meng Clan cultivator who had been ejected from the necropolis along with him. The reason he could so easily identify him as coming from the Meng Clan was that all of the members of the Meng Clan who had come to this place had Immortal Realm cultivation bases, and currently, Meng Hao had suppressed his cultivation base down to that very level.

“Everyone else died, how come he’s still alive…?” Han Qinglei thought, eyes glittering. However, just as he was about to examine Meng Hao closer, an enraged roar echoed out.

“Hungry… so hungry….” The sound was joined by the clank of iron chains. A moment later, a black iron chain shot out from the mists, causing mountains to crumble down below, and destroying a few cultivators who got in its way.

The mists seethed, and soon, a giant became visible, around whose enormous belly were wrapped numerous iron chains.

Several cultivators surrounded it, including Dao Realm experts, all of whom were engaged in fierce battle.

Even though the old man from the Heavengod Society had left after Meng Hao and the others had gotten sucked into the necropolis, obviously other cultivators had entered in search of good fortune.

“What is this thing!?” Han Qinglei gasped. Although the mists made things difficult to see, it was possible to discern that the giant was actually covered by countless whisker-like tentacles, some of which were wrapped around the iron chains and the rest of which flailed about in the air. It was a truly shocking sight.

The creature was currently being besieged by numerous cultivators, many of whom appeared to be collecting the blood that dripped down from the tentacles surrounding the giant.

Han Qinglei, who had just been distracted by all the figures in the mists, turned back only to find that the Meng Clan cultivator was gone. He looked once more in the direction of the necropolis, then let out a long sigh and buried his suspicions in his heart, flying up into the air toward the exit.

Concealed in the mists, Meng Hao watched Han Qinglei heading off. Keeping his head down, he followed along, waiting a bit after Han Qinglei actually left through the exit before flying toward it himself.

It was not that he was on guard against Han Qinglei, who had actually come here to save him. The friendship he had shown was something that Meng Hao would remember. However, it wouldn’t be very convenient to meet with him in his current identity. His speculations regarding what had happened to his grandfather’s bloodline still weighed heavily on his heart.

As Meng Hao flew up into the air toward the exit, someone spun out of control through the air toward him from off in the distance. It was an Ancient Realm cultivator, who had been attacking the giant and was now coughing up blood and had a very ashen face. Just now, the terrifying giant had swiped at him, and just the ripples of pressure from the blow had very nearly killed him. He was sent spinning tens of thousands of meters away, ending up right in front of Meng Hao.

Meng Hao dodged to the side and then continued on his way up. The Ancient Realm cultivator was a middle-aged man, who wiped the blood off his mouth, glanced fearfully at the giant off in the distance, then looked at Meng Hao.

“Immortal Realm? You actually dared to enter this place as an Immortal Realm cultivator? What sect are you from?” The cultivator’s eyes flashed as he flew forward to block Meng Hao’s path.

“Screw off!” Meng Hao said icily, not slowing down a bit.

“How dare you!” the man said with a cold snort. “Are you looking to die?!” As he shot toward Meng Hao, he reached out to grab him. Meng Hao frowned, eyes flickering with killing intent at the man’s obvious ill designs. However, before the man could get close, massive rumbling sounds filled the air.

The surrounding mists began to seethe and churn. At the same time, the besieged giant suddenly became completely clear to Meng Hao’s eyes.

It was fully 3,000 meters tall and had a belly that was so fat it seemed almost like a sphere, surrounded by writhing tentacles. Were it not for the fact that it had a head and four limbs, it might look like a globe.

It held an enormous cudgel in its hand, which it waved about as it roared, “Hungry… so hungry….”

Its left hand suddenly reached out and grabbed a cultivator, then popped him into its mouth. Blood oozed out as the giant chewed the man up and then swallowed him down. All the while, the other cultivators surrounding the giant were looking on.

Meng Hao heard the miserable scream, and then watched as the man was swallowed down. Next, one of the giant’s tentacles suddenly began to glow brightly as if there were some sort of crystalline liquid flowing inside of it. Immediately, the other surrounding cultivators, even the Dao Realm experts, began to attack that very tentacle.

Booms rang out, and the tentacle shattered, causing numerous drops of crystalline fluid to scatter about, which the cultivators then snatched up.

It was at this point that a cold voice suddenly rang out in Meng Hao’s ear.

“Did you see that? Now it’s time for you to do me a favor. We’re going to use your body to trade for some of that moon elixir!” It was none other than the middle-aged man, whose hand shot out like lighting to grab Meng Hao. Meng Hao didn’t even look back at him. He simply pointed his right index finger behind him and caused him to lurch to a stop, despite not even touching him. The man's eyes went wide with disbelief as he suddenly lost all control of his body, and was rooted in place behind Meng Hao.

Astonishment filled his eyes, and waves of shock filled his heart.

Meng Hao looked back thoughtfully at the giant. Suddenly, massive rumbling filled the air as a powerful force of expulsion rose up from within the world, filling the lands.

That force of expulsion began to push the cultivators up into the air. Simultaneously, the roiling mists formed into numerous vicious faces, which roared as they shot toward the crowds of cultivators up above.

It was as if they were going to drive these people away!

Most shocking of all was that the exit up above began to shrink, as if it were closing.

Immediately, the cultivators began to shout and fly up into the air.

"Let's go, the exit's closing! Get out of here!"

"The 33 Hells are only open for a limited time. They have an initial opening, a major opening, and a final opening. Each opening last longer than the last. Let's go, we'll have more chances later. From ancient times until now, anyone who has stayed behind after the exit closes has never been heard from again!"

"It's too bad this gravesite is so barren. There was no mountain of weapons, and only one cultivator was buried here alongside the one who was suppressed…." The voices of the crowd echoed as everyone flew up toward the exit.

The giant was still roaring and attacking the crowds. The expulsion power grew more intense, and Meng Hao flashed toward the exit, dragging the middle-aged man along with him.

As the crowds neared the exit and were about to leave, the giant all of a sudden looked at all of them, opened its mouth, and roared a Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering roar. Its body swelled rapidly, and its tentacles extended rapidly. In the blink of an eye, you couldn’t see its head or its limbs; it looked like a giant, 30,000-meter sphere.

The shocked cultivators watched as over 10,000 tentacles shot up into the air like lightning. Many of the cultivators were too slow, and were caught by them, after which rift-like mouths opened up on the tentacles and swallowed them down.

Everyone was in a pandemonium; by now, the exit was only about thirty percent of its original size. Everyone shot toward it as fast as possible, speeding out of the exit; as for the tentacles, they didn’t dare to follow, and instead began to attack other people who hadn’t escaped yet.

One tentacle shot toward Meng Hao, but as it neared, his hand made a grasping motion. Instantly, the middle-aged cultivator’s face flickered with fear and despair as Meng Hao tossed him out to the tentacle. It immediately consumed him, after which Meng Hao calmly stepped through the exit. As he did, he looked back at the huge 30,000-meter spheroid giant and its writhing tentacles, as well as the ferocious visages formed by the mist.

Then, he left.

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# Chapter 1249: I’m Meng Chen!

Outside the exit, the starry sky was pitch black and stretched out in all directions. When Meng Hao emerged, he could see the other brightly shining rifts, out of which other cultivators were emerging.

Quite a number of cultivators of the Heavengod Alliance had entered the 33 Hells. Of the few remaining who were emerging now, some looked alarmed, whereas others looked delighted. Obviously, those were the people who had acquired something valuable inside. As for those cultivators, their fellow sect members quickly converged around them and escorted them away.

Other people didn’t look very happy about that, but after considering the matter, decided not to fight over the spoils.

Meng Hao mixed in with the crowds as they left the area of the 33 Hells, eavesdropping on their conversations as he did.

“It’s shut now, so the initial opening is over. The next time they open, more of the grave sites will be available….”

“The 33 Hells will open three times in a row, and the period between the openings isn’t that long…. Soon it will be time for the second opening, and in the end… the third!”

“I can’t wait for the final opening, the third. Supposedly lots of sects acquire precious treasures and Daoist magics then.”

“The level of danger always increases with each opening, though. Just now, not too many people died, but in the second opening, probably half of the people who go in won’t make it out. As for the third opening… only the truly lucky can survive.”

Meng Hao's eyes glittered, but his expression remained the same. He followed everyone as they flew along. His cultivation base wasn't very high at the moment, only in the Immortal Realm, which put him at the bottom of the pack. However, he wasn't the only Immortal Realm cultivator; there were a handful of others, ensuring that he didn't stick out too much.

He went along, maintaining a certain speed that ensured that he fell behind. The group was led by Dao Realm experts, and eventually broke out from the region of the 33 Hells.

Eventually that included Meng Hao. As he emerged, bright light shone into his eyes; the starry sky here glittered resplendently, which was a stark contrast to the pitch black near the 33 Hells.

Meng Hao looked around and saw that the area surrounding the 33 Hells was packed tight with thousands of floating battleships. There were even floating palaces which had been erected, which belonged to various sects in the Heavengod Alliance. As the cultivators flew out of the 33 Hells and went in the directions of their sects, Meng Hao looked around at the various ships until he found the one belonging to the Meng Clan. The Young Lord and his Dao Protector were there, examining everyone exiting the 33 Hells, looking for the members of the Meng Clan that had gone in.

Meng Hao's eyes glittered coldly as he caused his face to grow pale, and put a look on his face that made it seem like he had just escaped with his life. Then he lurched along as if injured as he headed toward the Meng Clan ship.

At first, it was quite a chaotic scene as everyone headed toward their various sects, but things quickly started to quiet down.

Meng Hao slowly neared the Meng Clan ship, and finally, the Young Lord caught sight of him. The Young Lord immediately looked delighted, but the Dao Protector behind him frowned and looked off into the distance. Seeing that no more members of the Meng Clan had emerged, he sighed.

Soon, the ship's shields were lowered, and Meng Hao boarded. He immediately coughed up a mouthful of blood and staggered off to the side, supporting himself on a handrail before managing to stand in place.

“How come you’re the only one who came back?” shouted the Dao Protector. “What happened to everyone else?” Among the other members of the Young Lord’s retinue present were a few people who were his long-time servants. One was a middle-aged cultivator, a butler who had recently been berating him and now looked very surprised to see Meng Chen alive.

After all, of all the clan members who had gone into the 33 Hells, Meng Chen’s cultivation base had been the weakest. And yet now, he was the only one to return.

On the other side of the ship was the young man from the Han Clan and his Dao Protector. The young man stood there looking at Meng Hao, his sinister eyes glittering with a strange light as he slowly licked his lips.

“I never thought that this guy would actually make it out alive,” the young man murmured. “Seems he’s pretty lucky….” As he looked Meng Hao up and down, his eyes gleamed.

His Dao Protector didn’t say anything. He knew what that gaze meant, and he was aware that this clan’s Young Lord had rekindled an interest in this Meng Clan cultivator….

In response to the shouting Dao Protector, Meng Hao’s face paled, and he began to tremble. Sounding very bitter, he wheezed, “Dead, all dead….”

Meng Hao wasn’t familiar with Meng Chen’s manner of speaking, so he didn’t’ say much, only a few words. He coughed up some more blood and swayed as if he were on the verge of toppling over unconscious. But then he looked over at the Meng Clan’s Young Lord, and his heart thumped.

“Dead?!” the Dao Protector yelled again. “How come everyone else is dead, and you came back alive? What happened in there? Tell me!”

Meng Hao ignored the old Dao Protector and then slapped his bag of holding to produce a silver trident, which he held aloft.

“Meng Chen has accomplished his mission!” Meng Hao declared. “I nearly died, but I managed to bring this treasure out. This was the magical item that everyone died to get….”

The Young Lord’s eyes gleamed. Striding forward, he grabbed the silver trident, tested it out a bit, and then an expression of delight filled his face. Then he looked at Meng Chen, grabbed his bag of holding and rifled through it, then handed it back.

“Not bad, Meng Chen. This will count as a bit of meritorious service for you.” The Young Lord held the trident in hand, looking more and more pleased, until he finally laughed out loud.

“Now that I’ve gotten my hands on a precious treasure, I can go back to the clan and be lavished with praise by the Patriarch.”

Meng Hao swayed back and forth, just barely managing to clasp hands, bow deeply and say, “This does not count as Meng Chen’s meritorious service alone; all of the clan members worked hard to get this trident. Of course, most important was that this was all part of the Young Lord’s master plan. That was the only way we successfully got our hands on the treasure.”

The Young Lord gaped at him for a moment, then clapped him on the shoulder and laughed loudly.

“Excellent, excellent,” the Young Lord said, clearly in a good mood. “Since you’ve made some contributions I’ll give you a reward too. You can get treated in the sick bay for three days. Men, take him away!” Men immediately came forward to lead Meng Hao to the sick bay.

The old Dao Protector frowned. Although he didn’t suspect Meng Hao of anything, he was considering how difficult it was going to be to explain the situation when he got back to the sect. Although he didn’t take time to think about how differently Meng Hao had been acting, the middle-aged cultivator off to the side who had had some dealings with Meng Chen seemed very surprised.

As for the young man from the Han Clan, his eyes were glued to Meng Hao, and began to shine even more brightly than before.

Time passed. After the three days were up, Meng Hao went to his cabin on the ship to practice cultivation. He posted a notice on the door that he was in healing, and nobody disturbed him; after all, few people paid attention to Meng Chen.

As far as life on the ship went, Meng Chen didn’t have any friends. During his time in the sick bay, Meng Hao had already sent his divine sense out to cover the entire ship. If he wanted to, he could kill everyone on board with a single thought, even the Dao Protector.

After observing things for a while, including conversations between the ordinary clan members, the interactions of the Young Lord Meng De with his Dao Protector, and the perverse fetishes of the young man from the Han Clan which caused Meng Hao to frown, he was gradually able to come to an understanding the type of tough life Meng Chen had experienced on the ship. He had also experienced certain humiliations. Because of all that, there was no one here he could be considered very familiar with, with the exception, perhaps… of the middle-aged butler.

That was the one person who had appeared to be surprised by Meng Hao showing up. Meng Hao could tell after observing the man throughout these three days that although he appeared to be on familiar terms with Meng Chen, he harbored ill intentions. Finally, one night when the man was in a meditative trance, Meng Hao sent some divine will in his direction and quietly sent his mind into chaos, killing him silently.

The man’s death caused a bit of a commotion among the Meng Clan, but the Dao Protector’s investigations indicated that the man had passed away due to an incident during cultivation, leading to widespread sighing.

The matter was quickly forgotten, and the Meng Clan ship continued to fly through the Heavengod Alliance. It was as they neared one of the exit planets that Meng Hao left the sickbay and returned to Meng Chen’s room, where he began to practice meditation.

Because of the death of Patriarch Blacksoul, and the other people Meng Hao had killed, the bounty on his head wasn’t very enticing for the Heavengod Alliance any more. Add in the fact that the 33 Hells had opened, and it ensured that few people were even talking about Meng Hao any more. The only people who were searching for him were disciples from some of the sects whose Patriarchs Meng Hao had killed.

Therefore, it was much easier to get around the previously locked down Heavengod Alliance. Most of the exits and teleportation portals were unsealed, and other than inspections performed there, not much else was happening regarding the search.

Many people assumed that Meng Hao had simply died within the 33 Hells.

In fact, not even the Heavengod Society issued any orders regarding what to do about him. Because of all that, it was a simple matter for the Meng Clan’s ship to pass through the exit planet and reach… the area outside the Heavengod Alliance!

When that happened, Meng Hao opened his eyes. He could sense the change in the starry sky, and walked out of his cabin onto the deck of the ship, where he stared back at the Heavengod Alliance, sighing.

He hadn’t been in the Eighth Mountain and Sea for very long, but he had already experienced many, many things.

He had exterminated the Blacksoul Society, been put on the wanted list by the Heavengod Alliance, had fulfilled his long-time wish of taking the Imperial examinations again, had encountered the Daoist priest of the Righteous Noble Sect, had learned the Seal the Heavens Incantation, had entered the 33 Hells, had killed Dao Lords, had been possessed by Greed, had acquired an entire body’s worth of good fortune, and had taken the place of Meng Chen on this ship.

“After I get to the Meng Clan… I’m definitely going do some incredible things!” Meng Hao smiled, and his eyes glittered. It was at this point that the languid voice of a man suddenly spoke out behind him.

“You’re going to be spending the night with me.”

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# Chapter 1250: The Way Back

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever; he didn’t seem to be surprised at all by the voice he had just heard. He turned around slowly and found the young man from the Han Clan leaning up against the bulkhead.

The young man was looking at Meng Hao with a strange gleam in his eye, almost as if he were teasing him. It was a look of derision, and at the same time, titillation. His glittering eyes almost seemed capable of piercing through Meng Hao’s garments to stare at his entire body.

In fact… as he stared, he even started to pant.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever. Although he didn’t have access to Meng Chen’s memories, his divine sense had been enveloping the ship for days now, and he knew that this young man enjoyed back door action and had even humiliated Meng Chen in the past….

“I love that look in your eye!” the young man said, panting. “I’m not waiting until tonight!” He began walking toward Meng Hao, lifting his hand up as if to grab him.

At the same time, the young man’s Dao Protector could just barely be seen behind him. Apparently, he was used to turning a blind eye to the young man’s behavior. Currently, he simply closed his eyes.

Meng Hao smiled, and although it was an icy smile, to the young man from the Han Clan, it was the most beautiful and enchanting smile he had ever seen.

“You should be happy,” the young man growled. “I usually only take people once, but you… I want you a second time!” As his hand latched onto Meng Hao’s shoulder, he licked his lips. He was just about to stick his hand into his robe when Meng Hao’s own hand shot up like lightning and grabbed the young man by the neck.

He squeezed softly, and the young man began to shake. Gaping, his face began to turn purple, and his eyes bulged, filled with an expression of disbelief and shock.

As soon as the Dao Protector saw what was happening, his face flickered. Before he could even move though, Meng Hao looked at him.

One look.

One gaze.

The man felt as if the Heavens were crushing down on him through that gaze. It was like the bright glow of a precious treasure, and it stabbed all the way into the man’s mind, where it became crashing lightning.

The Dao Protector didn’t even have the time to scream. He shook violently, and blood sprayed out of his mouth. He was instantly blinded, and then blood began to ooze out of his orifices. His qi passageways were shattered and his bones crushed. Then, he flopped over, twitched a few times, and rapidly withered up into ash, which then faded away. It all happened in the blink of an eye.

The only thing that remained of him was some white mist, which Meng Hao quickly absorbed.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. He had subconsciously drawn on the power of the fourth Nirvana Fruit with that single glance, and had not expected it to be so powerful.

The young man from the Han Clan was gaping in shock and trembling. The look in his eyes as he stared at Meng Hao was one of complete terror and astonishment, and were it not for the fact that Meng Hao’s hand was clamped onto his throat, he would be screaming.

He had always thought of himself as being quite resourceful, but in this moment of hopelessness, no amount of plans or scheming could do anything about the incredible power of the person he was facing. He simply had no way out.

If by this point he didn't realize that the person in front of him wasn't Meng Chen, then he didn't deserve to think of himself as being resourceful. In fact, because of the murderous aura coming off of Meng Hao, he was actually able to guess at who he was.

The fear in the young man's eyes betrayed his feelings, and within his eyes, a pleading look could be seen.

"There is no enmity between us, and I'm not a murderer," Meng Hao said coolly. "I wouldn't kill you just because you said something that offended me." However, Meng Hao's words didn't make the young man feel any better, and in fact, he was even more incredibly terrified than before, and the look in his eye grew more pleading.

"You seem to be an intelligent person, so presumably you know a bit about Karma," Meng Hao continued. "Meng Chen hated you, and I'm here to help him. Since you like back door action…." Meng Hao smiled. His hand turned into a gray blur which passed into the young man's body. Suddenly, the young man began to sprout fur….

The fur grew thick and luxuriant… and eventually covered his entire body. In the end, he didn't even look human any long, but rather, more like a trembling animal. Finally, Meng Hao put him into his bag of holding… next to the parrot.

With that, Meng Hao waved his sleeve, causing all the evidence to vanish. As for the young man's background and identity in the Han Clan, Meng Hao knew all about it but didn't care.

He could exterminate the Heavengod Alliance's Blacksoul Society, and then cause chaos within their borders. Why would he possibly care about some Young Lord of the Han Clan?

Actually, in terms of status, the young Han Clan cultivator didn’t come close to being as high as Meng Hao.

Waving his sleeve, Meng Hao walked back into the ship, where he sat down cross-legged in his cabin. Soon, the Young Lord of the Meng Clan discovered that the young man from the Han Clan had gone missing. However, no one worried that he was in any sort of danger; they assumed he had simply left of his own volition.

Time passed. Eventually, Meng Hao came to find out that Meng De was one of nine Young Lords of the Meng Clan, and that he was ranked toward the bottom. Although the position itself was high, the chances of him inheriting the leadership of the clan were relatively remote.

His reason for going out traveling on his own had not been because of orders from the clan. No, it had been Meng De’s idea all along. In his opinion, the cultivation resources available in the clan were insufficient. Therefore, he decided to travel to the Heavengod Alliance, purchase some goods that were restricted and not easy to find outside, then take them to some of the trading outposts in the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

He planned to use the subsequent profits to support his extravagant lifestyle.

That was why he was on this merchant ship. As for his bodyguards, like Meng Chen, they were all clan members who nobody else really cared about, who had been forced into service to Meng De.

From Meng Hao’s perspective, he was nothing more than a brainless idiot born into power. Even Fang Xi back in the Fang Clan outclassed him in all aspects. Meng Hao almost couldn’t believe that with his position as a Young Lord he was relying on these kinds of methods to try to make money.

Were Meng Hao in his situation, with status like that, he could think of countless ways to turn a profit without having to go on some trading journey.

At the same time, Meng Hao couldn’t help but feel sorry for Meng De in his idiocy.

Meng Hao had also taken advantage of his time on board to carefully Soulsearch some of the members of the Meng Clan.

He learned that his grandfather’s bloodline truly was extremely down and out; it was so bad that they had been driven out of the Meng Clan ancestral mansion, and were forced to live on the borders of the clan. Even some vassals had higher statuses than them.

Virtually everyone in the bloodline was mortal. Of the few dozen cultivators they did have, most were in the Spirit Realm. Meng Chen had been the only one with latent talent outstanding enough to make a cultivation base breakthrough. By offering worship to an ancestral object, he had been able to acquire the power of a false Immortal.

As for the rest of the Spirit Realm cultivators in the bloodline, they didn’t get picked on too much in the clan, but that was because… despite their names being on the clan genealogies, they were on the verge of being completely disowned.

To many other members of the Meng Clan, they were nothing more than servants. Actually, there was some truth to that. The several dozen Spirit Realm members of the bloodline had become very low-ranking retainers to the clan’s Young Lords and Ladies.

As for why such a powerful bloodline could fall so far in less than a thousand years, that was a question that Meng Hao could not find an answer to in the memories that he had searched. However, there was one thing he became certain of….

His grandfather’s bloodline really was nothing more than orphans and widows now. All of the Senior members of the clan were either dead, or had crippled cultivation bases, making them useless. Furthermore, when it came to males… there were very few.

If Meng Hao didn’t take Meng Chen’s place, then in another hundred years, his grandfather’s bloodline might be fully wiped out, and then… there would be no more bloodline.

The mere thought of that caused Meng Hao’s heart to twinge with pain. Even more so, it made him wonder how exactly it came to be that all the powerful experts were wiped out.

Who did such a thing!?!?

It would be very, very difficult for a bloodline like that to rise to prominence. Even Meng Hao wasn’t sure exactly how to go about it. He might be able to personally intervene to support the bloodline, and could even prop this branch of the Meng Clan up by using his Hexes to manipulate a large number of clan members to serve under this branch. However, he would surely meet resistance, and given the strength of the rest of the clan he would be forced to enact a purge by blood. If a blood purge occurred, and then another clan came along to fight the weakened Meng Clan, then it wouldn’t be impossible for the entire clan to be wiped out.

Of course, all of that was mere supposition….

Most importantly of all, Meng Hao knew that true war was coming, and that was no internal conflict within the Mountain and Sea Realm, but rather the 33 Heavens and the other two powers that were crushing down over them.

Because of that, he couldn’t stay in the Meng Clan for long. Therefore, he was now considering taking his grandfather’s bloodline away to the Fang Clan.

All of these thoughts swirled about in his mind, but as he was mulling it over he continued to observe the situation.

The ship went from one bazaar to another, selling all the goods from the Heavengod Alliance. After each transaction, Meng De excitedly squandered the profits by purchasing all sorts of things that Meng Hao felt to be completely useless.

Meng Hao watched it all coldly. His main interest at the moment was finding out whether or not the Meng Clan had been weakened so much in the Eighth Mountain and Sea that people existed who would dare to lift a hand to one of their nine Young Lords, Meng De.

If no one did, it would show that the Meng Clan was still threatening despite their fall from power. In that case, Meng Hao might be willing to resort to a blood purge to restore the position of his grandfather’s bloodline.

However, if someone did make a move… then it would show that the Meng Clan was a wilting flower. In that case, a blood purge… would only ensure the eventual destruction of his grandfather’s bloodline.

Therefore, he decided to perform a little test. In one of the bazaars, he personally walked around and flaunted some wealth. After ensuring that he had attracted some attention, he made sure everyone realized that he was with Meng De.

A few days passed, and the ship finally finished its trading route, and began to head back toward the Meng Clan. Meng Hao was in his cabin, sitting there cross-legged, when suddenly he opened his eyes. Off the distance, he saw nine black-robed men. Their faces were covered, but their eyes flickered with greed and malice.

“They’re covering their faces, which means they’re scared….” he thought. “However, they still dare to commit robbery. It seems that their fear doesn’t run too deep!”

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# Chapter 1251: The Wind Picks Up….

“One cultivation base in the great circle of the Ancient Realm. One mid Ancient Realm. Two early Ancient Realm. Five at the peak of the Immortal Realm…. A group like this would be taken seriously wherever they went. They could be overlords. In fact, in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, they could occupy an entire asteroid bazaar.

“They might even be able to start a sect. It wouldn’t be impossible.” Meng Hao looked them over a bit more closely.

“The most important thing to find out is whether or not they’re rogue cultivators. That’s the first thing. Second, are they from the Meng Clan? Third… are they concealing their faces because they’re worried about people using magic to see what happened here? Or do they simply not plan to kill anyone? Do they… not dare to kill anyone?!” Meng Hao’s expression was calm and thoughtful. He was definitely not the young scholar he had been years ago, who knew nothing of the world beyond the Imperial examinations.

The path of cultivation was a brutal one. Back in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, he had the Fang Clan backing him up. But in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, he was on his own. Add in the fact that his grandfather’s bloodline needed his care, and his help to rise to prominence, it resulted in his heart growing colder and more vicious than ever.

The parrot was perched on his shoulder, apparently savoring some wonderful memory. Occasionally it would look at Meng Hao out of the corner of its eye. It could sense the changes in him, faint as they were, and knew that the pressures of the world were altering him.

The meat jelly was flopped in front of him, stretching lazily. The mastiff, who was back to being tiny again, would occasionally bat the meat jelly around with its paws. Overall, the two of them were having a great time playing around.

After a long moment passed, the nine black-robed men gave each other knowing looks and then began to perform incantation gestures. Instantly, a shield spread out, cutting off the entire area from communication with the outside world. Killing intent then flickered in their eyes as they transformed into nine beams of light that shot toward the Meng Clan ship. Meng Hao closed his eyes.

A few breaths of time passed, after which Meng De’s Dao Protector, who was sitting there cross-legged, suddenly opened his eyes. Looking very nervous, he suddenly burst out of his cabin and looked off into the distance.

“Ambush!! Protect the Young Lord!” Although he was shouting, he kept his voice constrained so that it didn’t travel beyond the ship. Immediately, all of the members of the Meng Clan on board burst into activity.

A moment later, a protective shield glittered into place, covering the ship. Meng De rushed out, trembling and ashen-faced, followed by more than a dozen other clan members. They all stood there nervously, not a one of them bothering to notice whether Meng Hao was present or not. Everyone was looking at the nine beams of light which were streaking in their direction.

The cultivator in the lead position had a cultivation base at the great circle of the Ancient Realm, which was the same as Meng De’s Dao Protector. As for the cultivators following him, those with Immortal Realm cultivation bases were less impressive, but the two early Ancient Realm experts caused the Meng Clan cultivators’ faces to fall.

Other than Meng De’s Dao Protector, who was in the great circle of the Ancient Realm, everyone else was in the Immortal Realm, except for two who happened to be in the early Ancient Realm. That put the number of ancient realm cultivators on their side at one less than the enemy. 1

The one they were missing… was someone to counter the mid Ancient Realm enemy!!

One person could sometimes have a huge effect on a battle like this, and even determine the final outcome.

“Are they just passing by?” Meng De asked in a low voice, trembling in obvious fear. “They must be. How could they possibly have the gall to attack the Meng Clan?”

“Young Lord, these people are not just passing by,” the old Dao Protector said, frowning. He looked at Meng De and sighed inwardly.

“That’s impossible!” Meng De screeched. “How dare they! How dare they show such disrespect to the Meng Clan. When I get back I’m definitely going to report this to the Grand Elder, and he’ll exterminate their entire clan!!”

“Oh, shut up!” the old Dao Protector said, clearly annoyed. He had already attempted to make contact with the Meng Clan several times, unsuccessfully. He knew that communications had been interfered with, and was inwardly feeling quite bitter. Waving his sleeve, he caused the ship to send shining lights up into the air, forming an enormous ‘meng’ character !

“Greetings, friends,” the old Dao Protector called out, sounding quite tough. “This ship belongs to the Meng Clan. Please clear the way!” He knew the consequences that could result from showing weakness, so he bolstered his words with his cultivation base, causing them to echo out with the power of the great circle of the Ancient Realm.

The nine incoming figures didn’t even pause. Their eyes flickered with killing intent as they closed in on the ship. As they did, they performed incantations, then waved their fingers, causing the void around them to distort as a huge battle-axe materialized.

The battle-axe radiated a bloody, murderous aura that filled the entire area. It suddenly slashed down toward the Meng Clan ship, causing a boom to ring out when it slammed into the shield.

Cracking sounds could be heard from the shield as fissures spread out, cracking sounds which echoed like death knells into the ears of the members of the Meng Clan.

Meng De was shaking, and his face was the picture of terror. The other clan members behind them had looks of despair on their faces, and even his Dao Protector was shaken by how terrifying this combined attack was.

A huge boom rang out as the ship's shield exploded into fragments that swept over everything.

Several Meng Clan cultivators screamed out in agony as the shrapnel from the shield shredded them to bits.

At the same time, the black-robed men gazed down with killing intent as their leader charged toward the old Dao Protector. In the blink of an eye, the two were engaged in deadly combat, causing booms to ring out, along with the ripples of magical combat.

The two early Ancient Realm cultivators immediately attacked their counterparts among the Meng Clan, who had no choice but to fight back. Soon, all four were locked in deadly fighting, blasting out with magical techniques, causing booms to ring out.

The five enemy cultivators at the peak of the Immortal Realm immediately attacked the rest of the Meng Clan cultivators. Instantly, a slaughter was underway, and miserable shrieks rang out all over the ship.

As for the final black-robed man, the one in the mid Ancient Realm, he hovered above the ship, looking coldly at the shivering, terrified Meng De.

“What are you doing!?” Meng De shriekd. “I'll give you anything you want! You can't kill me, I'm a Young Lord of the Meng Clan. If anything bad happens here, it won't matter where you run to in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, you'll be dead!

“The Meng Clan might be in decline, but we still have our prestige. If it's money you're after, you can have it!” Meng De quickly produced a bag of holding, which he tossed out. The decisiveness with which he did so caused Meng Hao’s expression to flicker, and he suddenly started paying a bit closer attention to Meng De.

“So, he’s not completely useless after all,” he murmured. Looking back at the black-robed men, his eyes flickered. By this point, he could tell that the nine of them… were no rogue cultivators!

Rogue cultivators couldn’t attack with such fluid unity, or have this kind of combination divine ability. Furthermore, the magical techniques and items they were using all seemed similar.

“If they’re not rogue cultivators, that means the Meng Clan is still powerful enough to be threatening. However, if there are sects willing to try to rob the Meng Clan, it shows that however threatening they are, it’s beginning to be insufficient.” Meng Hao frowned. The more he learned about the Meng Clan, the more he realized how difficult of a task faced him.

It was at this point that the bloodcurdling screams ringing out on the ship began to fade away. Other than Meng De, everyone else was dead.

Out in the starry sky, the Meng Clan’s two early Ancient Realm cultivators exchanged ashen glances, then began to flee.

Before they could get very far, though, the mid Ancient Realm cultivator in the black robes let out a cold snort, then stepped out in pursuit. Moments later, two screams rang out into the void. Shortly thereafter, the black-robed man returned, a head held in each hand, which he then tossed down onto the ship.

The battle between the two cultivators in the great circle of the Ancient Realm was reaching a head. Meng De’s Dao protector suddenly roared, “Haven’t you people done enough killing!? Look, the treasure is right there, just take it! Why are you actually killing us?!?!”

Almost as soon as the words left his mouth, the black-robed man up above performed an incantation gesture, once again summoning the battle-axe.

The Dao Protector’s face fell and, despite his injuries, he began to retreat. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and he transformed into a beam of light as he attempted to escape. His mission was to protect Meng De, but when it came down to his own survival, he would always place himself first.

However, before he could even move, someone flickered into being behind him, someone that not even Meng Hao had noticed until the moment before he made his entrance.

The Dao Protector, on the other hand, hadn’t noticed at all. As soon as the person appeared, his finger slashed out, stabbing into the back of the Dao Protector’s head. A pop could be heard, and a tremor ran through the old man. Then his head exploded, and his Nascent Divinity was shattered. Black flames engulfed his body, rapidly burning him up. Within the space of a few breaths of time, he was completely transformed into ash.

The other black-robed men immediately stopped what they were doing and clasped hands in respect.

This new figure was fully three meters tall, clad in a voluminous black robe. A white mask covered his face, a mask that was decorated with countless eyes and was terrifying in appearance.

He looked coldly at the other nine black-robed men, and then stepped forward onto the ship without saying another word.

Meng Hao still sat in his cabin, watching everything that was happening. Now, his face looked very serious. He got a strange feeling from these people, especially the cloaking techniques they used, which were something he had never encountered before. However, he was still confident that he could crush them in a fight.

“From the look of it, they aren’t here to plunder….” he thought. Looking at the black-robed men, his eyes suddenly began to shine.

As for Meng De, he was trembling visibly, backing up and panting at the same time. It was at this point that the black-robed man in the great circle of the Ancient Realm slowly lowered his cowl to reveal his face. Shockingly… his face looked exactly like the dead Dao Protector’s!

One by one, the other black-robed men began to reveal their faces, which looked exactly like the various dead members of the Meng Clan!

“You….” Meng De’s face was ashen. Even if he were more of an idiot than he already was, he would be able to tell what was going on. He continued to back up, shaken, terrified as he continued to try to make contact with the Meng Clan. However, his efforts were in vain.

1. I’m pretty sure the number of Ancient Realm cultivators doesn’t match up with the original description of the ship, although that could be explained as people joining while Meng Hao was in the 33 Hells, or during the subsequent trading activity

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# Chapter 1252: Attack!

Meng Hao remained seated in his cabin, watching what was happening through narrowed eyes. Frowning, he turned his attention to the man in the mask.

“Well now, how much do we want to bet that this guy has Meng De’s face?” he murmured.

In almost exactly the same moment, the man with the mask of eyes slowly reached up and removed his mask. Just as Meng Hao guessed, his face… down to the tiniest detail, looked exactly like… Meng De’s!

They were exactly the same!!

Meng De’s eyes went wide, and he stopped in place, pointing a quivering finger at the black-robed man. His expression was one of intense fear, and then he began to laugh bitterly with the realization that he was going to die!

“Kill him,” said the man with Meng De’s face, his voice cool. “Clean everything up. We’re going… back to the Meng Clan.” Even the man’s voice sounded exactly like Meng De’s.

As the words left his mouth, one of the other cultivators who had changed his appearance to look like one of Meng De’s retinue smiled and reached out to end Meng De’s life.

However, it was in that very moment that a sigh rang out, filling the starry sky. The man with Meng De’s face looked shocked, and as did the other cultivators, who immediately began looking around vigilantly.

“Whoever’s out there with these parlor tricks, show your face!” said the fake Meng De. His divine sense spread out, and the aura of the Dao Realm suddenly exploded out. Although he only had one Essence, to Meng De, that was thoroughly terrifying.

That sigh came from Meng Hao, of course. He had no choice but to act. If he allowed these people to kill Meng De, infiltrating the Meng Clan would become vastly more difficult. Obviously, they wouldn’t just let him join up with them, and if he killed them all and went back to the Meng Clan alone, it would be very difficult to explain. Obviously, people would suspect him of being complicit in the events.

Meng Hao’s main goal was to free his grandfather’s bloodline, which first entailed getting into the Meng Clan, then understanding the situation as a whole before finally making a decision on what to do.

“This is so annoying,” Meng Hao thought, shaking his head. He took a step out, eyes flashing, and as he did, his face transformed. When he appeared out in the starry sky outside, no one could tell that he had just emerged from within the ship. It was as if he had materialized out of thin air, right in front of the black-robed men.

The man with Meng De’s face backed up, eyes widening.

“Kill him!” he ordered. The other nine black-robed men were scared, but they immediately complied, erupting with cultivation base power. Performing incantation gestures, they caused that murderous battle-axe to appear, which then slashed down toward Meng Hao.

Meng De shrank back into a corner, watching with nervous excitement.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever. Now that every aspect of his cultivation base had been raised by Greed, he didn’t even attack, he just looked at the descending weapon. Then, instead of evading, he raised his finger and flicked the axe.

He did not use any divine ability or magical technique; he relied only on the power of his fleshly body. As soon as his finger touched the battle-axe, a boom rang out. The black-robed men had vicious expressions on their faces; they were completely confident in their joint attack power. When they combined forces to use this Daoist magic, it was so powerful that it could shake the Quasi-Dao Realm. The only downside was that they could only use it a limited number of times. Even still, it had been praised by a Dao Realm expert in the past, leaving these nine men completely confident.

However, their faces were now frozen in shock, their eyes wide with disbelief and awe. Three of them even cried out in alarm.

“This….”

“Impossible!”

“He….”

To their astonishment, when Meng Hao’s finger made contact with the axe, Meng Hao wasn’t shaken at all, nor did his expression change. A rumbling boom rang out, as well as numerous cracking sounds. Those sounds all came… from the battle-axe!

The combined Daoist magic of these nine individuals, a magical battle-axe that filled them with complete confidence, was covered with cracks by its mere contact with Meng Hao’s finger. The cracks spread out, growing more dense, covering the entire battle-axe, until it shattered….

The backlash hit the nine cultivators, causing blood to spray out of their mouths. Then they looked at Meng Hao with unprecedented terror and shock. Even the man with Meng De’s face couldn’t stop his eyes from widening.

Not even a white line appeared on Meng Hao’s index finger, his fleshly body had become so powerful that this battle-axe had absolutely no chance of affecting him even a tiny bit.

Meng Hao smiled slightly, quite pleased with the power of his fleshly body. He looked up at the nine cultivators, eyes flickering with killing intent. Then he suddenly vanished, whereupon the minds of all nine men exploded with a sensation of life-or-death crisis. Without the slightest hesitation, they began to flee.

However, they were not qualified to do any such thing in front of Meng Hao. He appeared in front of the man in the great circle of the Ancient Realm and casually bumped into him with his body.

A boom rang out as his simple blow slammed into the man, causing blood to spray out of his mouth, whereupon his body exploded. His Nascent Divinity didn’t even have a chance to escape, and was also destroyed.

That was from bumping into him!

The man with Meng De’s face was astonished. Scalp numb, he fell back, transforming into a flickering shadow as he tried to escape. However, Meng Hao simply let out a harrumph.

The sound transformed into an explosive shockwave that rocked the starry sky. A tempest whipped up, sweeping across everything. Eight of the fleeing black-robed men were shredded to pieces, including their bones, organs, and Nascent Divinities. There was no need to mention their fleshly bodies. Popping sounds could be heard as they were transformed into a bloody mist that spread out into the starry sky.

“Dao Lord!!” cried the man with Meng De’s face. Although he had already guessed at how terrifyingly powerful Meng Hao was, to see the destructive result of Meng Hao’s single snort left him without any further doubts. No matter what Meng Hao actually looked like, his battle prowess… was something that only a Dao Lord could unleash.

The man’s heart was trembling; he had never imagined that upon just beginning his mission, he would suddenly run into a terrifying Dao Lord. After all, in the Mountain and Sea Realm, Dao Lords were mighty figures who could affect the entire Realm with the stamp of a foot!

Dao Lords were only one step away from being Dao Sovereigns, who were qualified to vie for the position of Mountain and Sea Lord!

The black-robed man stared with wild eyes. He was already a blur as he attempted to flee; in the blink of an eye, he was gone, and the shockwave of Meng Hao’s sound attack passed by the position he had just occupied.

When he reappeared, he was far off in the distance. Without even looking over his shoulder, he began to flee.

“What a strange Essence,” Meng Hao thought, intrigued. He took a step forward and vanished. When he reappeared, he was right behind the fleeing man. Meng Hao reached out and made a grasping motion, using the Star Plucking Magic.

Instantly, a shocking gravitational force rumbled into being, spreading out through the starry sky as Meng Hao’s hand turned into a black hole. The void distorted, countless motes of dust sped toward him, and fissures spread out.

The black-robed man’s mind was rumbling, and his astonishment reached a peak as he flew back toward Meng Hao, his body completely beyond his own control. The sensation of deadly crisis in his mind caused him to hold nothing back as he unleashed all of his Essence power to break free from Meng Hao’s grasp. Suddenly, ghost images sprang up around him.

A boom rang out as hundreds of black-robed figures suddenly began to pour out, all of whom fled in different directions. The only thing left behind in Meng Hao’s hand was a piece of skin.

“Clones?” Meng Hao murmured, looking around at all the fleeing figures. His eyes began to shine; these were obviously clones, and the sheer number involved piqued Meng Hao’s interest.

He was also shocked; given his current cultivation base, not even Dao Lords were a match for him, and yet this 1-Essence Dao Realm cultivator had eluded him twice now.

Of course, some of that was because Meng Hao had not utilized a powerful divine ability. By now, he was at the point where even a casual attack on his part was something that a 1-Essence Dao Realm cultivator couldn’t easily avoid.

Although Meng Hao was surprised, the man in the black robe was already frightened to death. He had risked everything just to escape those two times, and even still, the backlash had left him seriously injured. That was especially true of his final move of splitting into hundreds of clones, which seriously damaged his Essence.

“Dammit, he’s no ordinary Dao Lord! He must be at the peak of the Dao Lord Realm. We’ve kept track of how many Dao Lords there are in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, and he’s not one of them!!” Even as the man fled in terror, Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed with a gray glow.

He suddenly cried out, causing a huge wolf’s head to appear behind him. This was one of Greed’s magical techniques, although in Meng Hao’s hands it was more wolf-like and less greed-focused. The wolf appeared in the middle of the starry sky, radiating bloody murder, completely domineering as it opened its mouth wide and began to inhale.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE….

The entire starry sky trembled and began to shatter, converging on Meng Hao at the center. It was as if… everything in the area, including the natural laws and the energy of Heaven and Earth, were now being sucked in by Meng Hao!

The hundreds of clones screamed as they were swept up and then began to explode. In the blink of an eye, countless showers of blood filled the starry sky.

In the end, there was only one figure that didn’t explode, which then spun toward Meng Hao, who grabbed him by the neck, sealed him, and tossed him into his bag of holding.

A mighty Dao Realm cultivator was treated like a baby chicken!

Meng Hao could sense how powerful he was after being re-moulded by Greed. He was now… in a state far more powerful than a Dao Lord.

“Once I push open the Door of the Ancient Realm… I’ll be even more powerful!” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, and he turned to look back at the

Meng Clan ship off in the distance, and Meng De, who was gaping at him wide-eyed. Gradually, Meng Hao faded away.

The entire starry sky was completely silent. Meng De’s face was ashen as he stared blankly out into the starry sky. Then he looked around at the corpses on the ship. Fear still lingered within him, and grief was now welling up. Despite his age, this was his first time experiencing anything like this. Because of the terror and confusion in his heart, he didn’t notice at all that because of Meng Hao’s interference, whatever had been blocking communications had already been broken, allowing connection to the outside world once again.

Meng De began to weep, but then suddenly recalled something. After looking around at the corpses, he rushed back into the ship. It had just occurred to him that apparently… there was another survivor on board.

As of this moment, anyone left alive with him on board was like a relative!

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# Chapter 1253: This is the Meng Clan!

Before charging into the ship, Meng De really didn’t have much of a notion as to who Meng Chen was at all. The main thing he remembered was that, of all the clan members who had entered the 33 Hells, he had been the only one to come out alive.

He had also offered up an ancient magical item which had pleased Meng De quite a bit. Because of that, Meng Chen did stick out slightly within his memories.

But now, he was filled with an intense hope that nothing had happened to Meng Chen. He didn’t want to be the only living person left on the ship. When he thought about the deadly ordeal he had just been through, he was left trembling. He might be an idiot, but he wasn’t so stupid that he was beyond redemption. Despite being a silkpants, he was still able to think for himself.

As a cultivator, he was merely average, but because of the prestige of his bloodline, he had become a Young Lord. However, even that hadn’t been his choice; he had been given no options in the matter.

Right now, he wasn’t thinking about his status at all. When people have brushes with death, status is usually the last thing they think about. He just wanted someone from his clan to be there with him, someone who could share the burden of this terrifying experience.

Meng De found Meng Hao lying unconscious at the very bottom of the ship. He hurried forward, and when he confirmed that he was unconscious and not dead, Meng De was elated. He didn’t spend much time considering why Meng Hao was alive when everyone else was dead; he assumed it was because his cultivation base was so low, and had thus had simply been swept aside by the divine sense of the black-robed men. Either they didn’t care about him, or had planned to kill him later.

Regardless of the reason, Meng Chen wasn’t dead.

Meng De excitedly pulled out some medicinal pills. Normally, he was very stingy when it came to medicinal pills, but in this case he poured them all into Meng Hao’s mouth.

“Don’t die, Meng Chen,” he said, tears streaming down his face. “There’s only the two of us now, you can’t die….” Picking him up in his arms, he carried him back to the main deck. There, he used the power of his own cultivation base to slowly get the boat to limp along.

He tried over and over again to make contact with the clan, but despite the barrier having been removed, his messages weren’t going through for some reason.

Eventually, Meng Hao woke up.

When he did, Meng De approached excitedly, suddenly overwhelmed with feelings of familial connection. He immediately began to recount everything that had occurred, and before long, Meng De started feeling as if he and Meng Chen were friends.

Time passed. In Meng De’s mind, the two of them were relying on each other to survive. They took turns steering, cautiously sending the ship in the direction of the Meng Clan, fearful of running into anyone they couldn’t afford to provoke.

Meng De had never experienced any dangerous situations like this before in his life. He would frequently pull out a jade slip to try to make contact, but it never worked, so he had no choice but to spend his time with Meng Hao, fearfully flying through space.

They continued to chat to bide the time, and it eventually got to the point where Meng De didn’t hold anything back. He talked with Meng Hao about the clan, and about everything else. He even began to give Meng Hao advice.

“Meng Chen, your cultivation base is too weak. That won’t do….

“Once we get back to the clan, I’ll have them give you some techniques and medicinal pills. You need to get your cultivation base higher, at least to the peak of the Immortal Realm.

“Don’t worry, in the future, you can count on me for everything.

“Hey, when do you think we’ll get home…? Why can’t we make contact with the clan? It hasn’t worked this entire time….”

On one particular day as he piloted the ship, Meng De suddenly thought of something. He looked over at Meng Hao, who was sitting there cross-legged, and suddenly asked, “Oh right, Meng Chen, I just thought of something. The first time I saw you, your face was as smooth as a baby’s. But the next time, your nose was busted and you had all those scars.”

“You don’t know what happened?” Meng Hao replied coolly. By this point, they had been drifting in space for almost a month. Because of Meng Hao’s vast experience in life, they two of them had reached a state in which Meng Hao actually occupied the superior position. Although he didn’t speak much, whenever he did, Meng De paid earnest attention to whatever Meng Hao said.

Meng De was the Young Lord, but if anyone who didn’t know them could watch them interact, they would assume that Meng Hao was actually the Young Lord.

“Huh? No, what happened?” Meng De replied, sounding shocked.

Meng Hao looked at him and could see that he really had no idea. From this, it was apparent that it was the butler who had arranged for Meng Chen to wait upon the Young Lord from the Han Clan, and not Meng De. The butler had clearly been acting on his own.

Meng Hao shook his head and didn't say anything more. Meng De scratched his head and thought for a while, but really couldn't think of anything that had happened on the ship. However, he could also sense that Meng Hao had perhaps been on the receiving end of some sort of abuse.

"Meng Chen, uh… you know, I used to be kind of a… nasty person. Well, back then we didn't know each other. Don't worry, from now on, whatever Meng De has also belongs to you!" Meng De slapped his chest and looked proudly at Meng Hao. For some reason, Meng De had come to care a lot about what Meng Hao thought of him.

Meng Hao smiled slightly. His view of things had changed a bit too in recent days. He could see that although Meng De was a silkpants and occasionally acted like an idiot, he wasn't completely beyond redemption.

Two months later, Meng De's continued efforts to contact the clan finally paid off. Meng De was suddenly very excited, as he was finally able to report back and explain everything that had occurred.

A day later, Meng Hao could see five beams of light approaching from off in the distance. In the lead position was an old man with white hair. He looked threatening without being angry, and his cultivation base was in the Dao Realm. Although he only had one Essence, it was still the Dao Realm.

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever as he stood there next to Meng De.

Behind the old man were three men and a woman. The woman was middle-aged, but had maintained her appearance well and was pretty. However, her brow was furrowed as she flew along, and when she caught site of Meng De and the terrible condition he was in, she began to cry. Immediately, she rushed forward and hugged him.

"Mom… I'm fine," he said, although he was also weeping. Everything that had happened recently had far exceeded his capacity to accept. Without

Meng Hao there to help him, he wasn’t sure how he would have coped.

“De’er, you poor thing….” his mother said, tousling his hair. There was something different about this version of Meng De. He had lost some of that boisterous silkpants air, and gained a bit of maturity. Although his mother was happy about that, her heart still hurt.

Of the three men who had come with the old Dao Realm expert, one was in the late Ancient Realm, just a hair away from the great circle. He and Meng De looked quite alike, and after looking Meng De over, he embraced him.

“Dad….” Meng De said, sobbing.

The other two men fanned out and began to inspect the ship, occasionally taking note of the things they observed. As for the old Dao Realm expert, he looked softly at Meng De, then glanced over at Meng Hao, his gaze quite intimidating.

“When the master is humiliated, the servants are executed,” the old man said coolly. “Considering you managed to successfully keep him alive, you’ll be permitted to say some final words.” One of the cultivators inspecting the ship turned toward Meng Hao and began to walk in his direction, face stony.

Meng Hao frowned and sighed inwardly. He had overlooked the matter of face. The more people who learned about what had occurred on the ship, the worse it would be for the Meng Clan. He might be a member of the clan, but in this situation, the simplest way to handle the situation would be to eliminate him as a witness.

However, it was at this point that Meng De struggled out of his father’s embrace and leaped in front of Meng Hao. Looking pleadingly toward the old Dao Realm cultivator, he said, “Grandpa, this is my Brother!”

The old man looked at Meng Hao silently. As far as the other cultivator, he didn’t stop walking, and in fact reached out to grab Meng Hao.

Seeing what was happening, Meng De urgently cried out, “He saved my life! If you kill him, I’ll kill myself!” With that, he placed his hand threateningly on top of his own head and glared decisively at his grandfather.

Meng Hao stared in shock, as did Meng De’s grandfather. The cultivator reaching out toward Meng Hao stopped in his tracks. As for Meng De’s parents, they were equally astonished.

As far as they could remember, Meng De usually acted like a silkpants in public, but was always very compliant around them. Although they weren’t too happy about that, there was little to be done about it. But now, Meng De suddenly was losing his temper in front of their Patriarch, and even uttering threats. This actually caused his parents to be very happy.

The old man looked closely at Meng De and the decisiveness in his eyes. He knew his grandson well, and was aware that he had always had a weak personality. In fact, this was the first time he had ever acted like this. After a moment passed, the old man suddenly laughed.

“Alright, it seems you’ve learned that you should protect your followers, even standing up to me to do it. De’er, you’ve grown up.” The old man swished his sleeve, sending away the cultivator who had been advancing on Meng Hao.

Next, the old man looked at Meng Hao and said, “De’er has a lot of weaknesses, but he also has unique strengths. He was willing to defy me for your sake, so in the future, take good care of yourself.” With a final look at Meng Hao, the old man turned and took control of the ship, sending it flying through the starry sky toward the Meng Clan.

Rumbling could be heard as it transformed into a beam of light that shot forward at a speed far beyond what it had been traveling at before. Soon, it vanished.

Two days later, the ship pierced through the starry sky into the area controlled by the Meng Clan.

From a distance, the Meng Clan looked like a huge continent floating out in the middle of the sky.

There were mountains and seas visible, as well as numerous cities. It was even possible to see living creatures that had multiplied over generations and were now everywhere. It emanated brilliant light and powerful ripples, and attached to the main continent were eight smaller continents.

Each of those lands was filled with imposing buildings and structures, all of which formed an enormous spell formation.

This was the Meng Clan!

In the very middle of the central continent could be seen an enormous statue.

Strangest of all was that the statue’s face had been scraped clean, and had no facial features…. Even still, it radiated intense power in all directions.

As soon as Meng Hao felt that pressure, he was inwardly shocked.

“Feels like a Dao Sovereign…. No. Wait, that’s… the qi flow of the Mountains and Seas!!”

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# Chapter 1254: Grandma Meng!

Meng Hao was completely shocked to be able to sense the qi flow of the Mountain and Sea Realm here, and it suddenly caused him to recall the fact that the Mountain and Sea Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea was supposed to be from the Meng Clan….

However, after arriving in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, everything he had heard and seen seemed to indicate the contrary, as if his memories were incorrect.

Meng Hao had been confused by that from the beginning, especially after hearing that the Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea was called Heavengod. From then on, he had begun to speculate about the situation.

“Heavengod. Heavengod…. has no surname attached to it.” Eyes flickering, he looked at the statue, sensing the qi flow of the Mountain and Sea Realm. That was something that no one other than him could detect.

Based on the fact that the statue’s face had been scraped off, Meng Hao got the feeling that there was some secret connection between Heavengod and the Meng Clan in the past.

“We’re home!” Meng De shouted. “Finally… we’re home!! Meng Chen, we’re home!” Meng De stood next to Meng Hao, looking excitedly at the Meng Clan continent and taking in a deep breath. From the look on his face, it was as if he suddenly had a new lease on life.

“Home….” Meng Hao murmured. When he thought about the members of his grandfather’s bloodline, his eyes flickered and turned to focus on one of the eight smaller continents attached to the larger one.

According to the Soulsearching he had performed on the Meng Clan cultivators on the ship, his grandfather’s bloodline was on the smallest continent among the eight.

Soon, the ship landed on the central continent, in the huge city that surrounded the statue. That was also the location of the Meng Clan ancestral mansion.

Meng De flew out, to where hundreds of Meng Clan cultivators were all waiting to receive him. Once he appeared, they clasped hands, bowed, and said, “We offer respectful greetings, Ninth Young Lord!”

Of course, Meng De was the Ninth Young Lord, and almost as soon as he heard that greeting, he seemed to revert to his old silkpants self. He nodded slightly as people clustered around him to escort him off into the distance. His father and mother had long since departed, and just as Meng De was about to leave, he seemed to remember Meng Chen, and turned. He looked at Meng Hao with a smile, then waved his hand, sending a jade pendant flying out.

Meng Hao caught it, after which Meng De spoke in a loud voice: “I’ll come looking for you in a few days.”

Meng Hao hefted the jade pendant and smiled. At first, nobody in the area had paid the slightest attention to him, but after Meng De gave him the jade pendant, people began to take notice of him, and their eyes glittered.

Meng Hao didn’t care about all of that. He disembarked from the ship, and then looked around at all the buildings. The entire place was unfamiliar, and the architecture was much more flowing and unconstrained than the Fang Clan. It was completely domineering, though. As for the ancestral mansion, it was constructed in a circular shape, and gave off a sophisticated, courtly air.

Numerous cultivators could be seen in the ancestral city as Meng Hao walked down the streets, and he quickly noticed that most of them were in the Spirit Realm. Immortal Realm cultivators were less common; for every hundred people he saw, only a handful were Immortals.

There were no shops in the area, nor were there any inns. In fact, it would probably be more appropriate to call this place the outskirts of the ancestral mansion, rather than a separate city. However, it was so incredibly large that it was actually called a city.

It was divided into certain districts, just like the Fang Clan was. There were the districts in the east, west, south and north, within which were huge courtyard residences where important clan members from the various bloodlines resided.

There was no Central District, nor was there a mausoleum, which might be expected. However Meng Hao could sense five unique auras inside the huge statue itself. Those auras were clearly auras of the Dao Realm!

However, of those five auras, two were very dim, almost on the point of being extinguished. The other three were much more vigorous, with one of them belonging to Meng De's grandfather.

"Five Dao Realm cultivators…. Three have flourishing auras, two of them being 1-Essence, and one 2-Essences. Of the weak auras, there's one Dao Lord and another… who I can't ascertain. However, from what I can tell, that aura is on the verge of being extinguished." Meng Hao looked away from the statue, eyes flickering as he sent his divine sense spreading out even further.

It only took a moment for his divine sense to fill the entire ancestral mansion, and for all the living beings therein to appear in his mind.

He glanced back at the statue, surprised that none of the five cultivators inside had detected his divine sense, nor activated any of the Meng Clan's defenses. Meng Hao then thoughtfully began to retract his divine sense and head in the direction of the continent where his grandfather's bloodline resided.

However, in almost the same moment that he made to leave, he suddenly stopped in place. There was a scene playing out somewhere nearby that he could see within his divine sense, which he then focused on.

An older woman could be seen in a courtyard residence, face ashen as she pleaded with a cold, arrogant middle-aged man. A younger woman lay at the man's feet, covered with bruises and wounds. Her right hand was clenched tightly around something, and her face was deathly pale as the middle-aged man kicked her viciously over and over again.

"Big bro, stop!" the older woman pleaded. "Meng Ru is just worried about her bloodline relative, that's why she stole the medicinal pill. Big bro…."

"She's only a servant," the man spat, "and she actually dared to steal a medicinal pill! It doesn't matter why she did it, she deserves to die! If I don't beat her to death, then how could she serve as an example to others!" The middle-aged man's eyes gleamed with killing intent as he reached down and grabbed the young woman by the hair. She was pretty, but had a red birthmark on her face, which the man seemed disgusted by. "You're not bad except for that birthmark. How nauseating!"

"Big bro, Ru'er's older cousin is in the Immortal Realm. He's one of the Ninth Young Lord's bodyguards. All she took was a medicinal pill, you… you don't have to go so far." The older woman continued to plead anxiously, occasionally glancing down at the younger woman, who lay there, blood oozing out of her mouth.

The older woman had to way to know that, even as the words left her mouth, Meng Hao was actually only one street away in the ancestral mansion. A tremor ran through him, and he turned, his expression icy.

He had already heard that most of the members of his grandfather's bloodline were stationed in the houses of other clan members, where they worked as servants in exchange for cultivation resources. As of this moment, Meng Hao was certain that the young woman he was seeing with his divine sense was a member of his grandfather's bloodline, a younger bloodline cousin of Meng Chen.

Meng Hao didn't hesitate for even a moment. He took a step forward and vanished, his action undetectable even by the five Patriarchs.

Back in the courtyard residence, the middle-aged man began to laugh coldly in response to the words just spoken to him.

“Her older cousin? You mean that pretty boy Meng Whatshisname? Meng Chen, right? You think a bodyguard deserves to get face from me?” The man knelt down and grabbed Meng Ru’s hand. Expression icy, he began to break her fingers one by one. She trembled from the pain, but gritted her teeth and didn’t make a sound.

Soon, the medicinal pill in her hand was revealed, which was already dissolving because of the blood that had oozed onto it. The middle-aged man grabbed it and threw into a nearby pond.

Meng Ru’s eyes went wide. She hadn’t shed a single tear before this moment, not even when her fingers were being broken. But now that she saw the medicinal pill dissolving in the pond water, tears began to flow down her face.

“Aww, what’s this? Crying?” The man laughed and reached down as if to wipe away the tears. Before he could touch her face, though, a hand appeared out of nowhere and grabbed his own hand.

The man stared in shock, then let out a shriek as he saw Meng Hao standing there next to the young Meng Ru. Without even thinking about it, he took a step backward.

“Meng Chen! How dare you!!” Although the man had been frightened, after realizing who it was, he seemed to regain his courage. With a shout, he unleashed his cultivation base, which was only in the Dao Seeking stage.

“Big bro….” Meng Ru said, slowly looking up. When she laid eyes on Meng Hao, she began to weep and shake from the humiliation she had just endured.

“Get your hands off me, Meng Chen,” the middle-aged man said. “Dammit, what gall you have! If you dare to hurt me, I’ll tell my big bro, and he’ll wipe out your entire bloodline.”

“Apparently you’ve forgotten that I’m also surnamed Meng. Or is that you don’t consider us to be part of the Meng Clan any more?” Meng Hao had put some thought into the current miserable state of his grandfather’s bloodline, but to see what was actually happening made him feel like a knife was slicing away at his heart.

Meng Hao suddenly clenched his hand down, causing cracking and popping sounds to ring out. The middle-aged man screamed as Meng Hao crushed his hand into a bloody pulp. Terror washed through him, but even as the scream left his mouth, Meng Hao patted his back.

That motion caused more cracking sounds to echo out as each and every last bone in the man’s body was shattered into powder. Without a skeleton to hold him up, the man collapsed into a pile of twitching flesh.

No more sounds came out of his mouth. His current state was one of pain that far exceeded that of death. The woman standing off to the side was so frightened that her jaw dropped. The suddenness of what had occurred left her in a state of disbelief.

As for Meng Ru, she was also staring in shock.

“Big bro….” she murmured as Meng Hao helped her to her feet. He placed his hand over hers, healing her broken fingers and injured internal organs. As she regained lucidity, she began to pant as she suddenly recalled something. Grasping Meng Hao’s forearm, she said, “Big bro, hurry, we have to get back. It’s grandmother, she’s… dying….”

“Grandmother…. Grandma Meng!!!” A tremor ran through Meng Hao. Without the slightest hesitation, he picked Meng Ru up in his arms and flew off into the distance. 1

When he left, the older woman who remained behind in the courtyard finally screamed, which attracted the attention of other clan members. When they arrived, they saw the bone-less middle-aged man lying there, and they gasped.

“Who did this? This… is a cruelty worse than death!”

1. As you may be aware, there are numerous very specific forms of address for relatives in Chinese. In this case, Meng Ru specifically mentions her “paternal grandmother” which causes Meng Hao to think of his “maternal grandmother.” This would indicate that Meng Ru is an actual member of the Meng Clan, with her father having been surnamed Meng, whereas Meng Hao is related to them through his mother, but would not be considered an actual member of the clan. After all, his father’s surname is Fang. I’m going to forgo translating the literal forms of address because they tend to get very clunky, especially when used in dialogue as a form of address. Instead, Meng Hao’s “maternal grandmother” will be “Grandma Meng” or simply “grandmother” depending on the context. Please note, her surname is not Meng; in Chinese culture women don’t change their surname upon marriage. However, you can address a female by the surname of her husband in Chinese culture, assuming you use the right form of address. If I remember correctly, Meng Hao’s mom Meng Li was even called “Madam Fang” at one point. Similar forms of address exist for other relatives. I did the same thing in the past with Meng Hao’s grandfathers. Instead of referring to them as paternal and maternal grandfathers, I’ve been calling them Grandpa Fang and Grandpa Meng. I think this way makes it much more simple to understand who is being referred to, and at the same time keeps the same familial feeling as the original Chinese. By the way, astute readers might remember a few times where an “Old Lady Meng” was mentioned, a real mythological character who serves people the tea of forgetfulness in the Underworld. Meng Hao’s grandmother does not have any connection to that woman!

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# Chapter 1255: I’m Here To Defend You!

Meng Hao was enraged, but Meng Ru’s words caused his heart to tremble. It was impossible to describe what they meant to him; after all, Meng Chen’s grandmother was his Grandma Meng as well!

His Grandpa Fang and Grandpa Meng had gone missing, and his Grandma Fang had long since passed away. To suddenly find out that his Grandma Meng was still alive caused his heart to begin to pound, and he wished he could be at her side instantly.

However, he hadn’t lost his ability to think straight, so although he sped as fast as possible in her direction, he also concealed himself so that no one could detect his presence. He soon appeared in the air outside of the ancestral mansion, and then sped off into the distance with Meng Ru.

Meng Ru was in the Nascent Soul stage, so to her, her older cousin Meng Chen, who was in the Immortal Realm, was the most promising and important person in the bloodline. He had an incredible cultivation base, and was in fact the hope of the entire bloodline. Although Meng Ru didn’t understand the vast gap between the Immortal Realm and the Ancient Realm, in her mind, the speed with which they were traveling was something that should come naturally to someone like her cousin.

In fact… to her, Meng Chen was the Heaven of their bloodline!

If anyone could have observed what was happening, they would be shocked. In the space of a few breaths of time, he took Meng Ru across the starry sky to appear… directly on the continent where his grandfather’s bloodline resided.

He didn’t need any directions from Meng Ru to know where to go. He flew across the continent, sending his divine sense spreading out until he found a village on the border which almost seemed like a city of mortals. There, he identified a mansion which appeared to be filled with quite a few grieving people. In the instant that his divine sense touched the place, he noticed one room… in which he sensed an aura that had to be a blood relative.

“Grandma Meng….” he thought, trembling. He had never even imagined that his grandmother would still be alive, so at the moment, his heart was pounding in the same way that Meng Chen’s would have were he here. With Meng Ru in tow, he shot toward the village and then appeared inside the mansion.

Almost immediately, cries of astonishment could be heard in response to his arrival. As he looked around he noticed that, of the dozens of people in the residence, all were women. Not a single man was present!

“It’s Chen’er! Chen’er’s back!”

“Big bro….” Almost immediately, everyone began to get excited, and their eyes turned red as tears welled up.

Meng Hao glanced at everyone, but there was no time to examine them closely. He instantly walked toward the room where his grandmother was located. The other clan members stepped back, making a path for him as he sped forward like the wind. As soon as he entered the room, he saw an old woman lying on a wooden pallet.

Next to the old woman sat two old men, who seemed to be wheezing and in pain, as if it were difficult to even just be sitting up straight. They were very old, as if they had lived for countless years, and their auras were very weak. It even seemed a struggle for them to keep their eyes open, as if they were staying alive by sheer force of willpower.

There were also three middle-aged women in the room. They had clearly been beauties when they were young, but had been ravaged by the passing of years, and were also very weak. They also seemed to be hanging on by sheer force of willpower.

As for the woman on the pallet, she was completely covered with wrinkles, and seemed profoundly ancient. She radiated the stench of decay, and was withered to the point of being little more than skin and bones. Her aura was so weak that it seemed as if she might die at any moment.

However, despite that frail aura, the old woman had a certain strength to her. The wrinkles on her forehead seemed to bear testimony to all of the pressure she had lived with throughout the years. As soon as Meng Hao laid eyes on her, he trembled and walked forward.

This was his Grandma Meng… and the mere sight of her caused tears to spill down his cheeks. His heart hurt as he examined her body, finding more than a dozen internal injuries. Furthermore, her qi passageways were completely withered.

As soon as he entered the room, the three middle-aged women turned to look at him. “Chen’er, you’re back….” one of them said.Their gazes were kind, and they did their best to hide the grief in their expressions, but Meng Hao wasn’t Meng Chen, and as such, he could see it.

As for the two old men in the seats, they struggled to keep their eyes open as they looked at Meng Hao with kind gazes.

Meng Hao wasn’t sure who all these people were, but after laying eyes on the old men, he could guess. He also had his speculations about who the three middle-aged women were.

He immediately dropped to his knees and kowtowed, knocking his head onto the ground. Then he got back to his feet and approached his Grandma Meng, who lay there with her eyes closed. Meng Hao reached out and placed his hand onto her arm, then sent some of his life force surging into her. However, almost as soon as it entered her, it immediately dispersed. That caused a gleam of shock and anger to flicker deep in his eyes.

He quickly sent some divine sense into his grandmother, and was shocked to find that hidden inside her body were nine black spikes. They were buried deep within her flesh, and even stabbed into her soul.

Those nine nails were preventing Meng Hao’s life force from entering his grandmother’s body. Even more infuriating to Meng Hao was that inside his grandmother, he could detect… poison!

It was a unique poison designed to corrode the cultivation base and eat away at her life force. Any other person would probably be dead already, but Meng Hao’s grandmother was hanging on tenaciously, presumably because her cultivation base had been so profound.

Meng Hao pulled his hand back, eyes flashing. Next, his right hand performed an incantation gesture, and then he rapidly pushed down on her body nine times. Each time he pushed down, he did so in the location of one of the black spikes.

When he was finished, his grandmother shivered, after which he performed another incantation gesture and then pushed his hand down onto the pressure point beneath her nose, pouring more life force into her.

When the three middle-aged women saw what was happening, their eyes began to shine brightly, and they seemed surprised. However, they didn’t seem to be suspicious about what was happening. In contrast, the two old men who were sitting there in seeming discomfort suddenly trembled, and they stared at Meng Hao with wide, disbelieving eyes.

As Meng Hao’s life force slowly flowed into his grandmother, the aura of death and rot that had previously filled her suddenly dissipated a bit. Before, her soul fire had been on the brink of being extinguished, but now it burned a bit more brightly than before. Even her complexion looked a bit better.

Meng Hao pulled his hand back. He didn’t dare to pour in too much life force. His grandmother was already on the verge of dying, so if he wasn’t careful, he could easily push her over that edge.

However, he was still confident that with a bit of care, she would be able to recover fully. After he pulled his hand back, he slapped his bag of holding to produce a medicinal pill, which he then placed in her mouth. Finally, he stood up and looked over at the two old men, who were clearly very shocked.

If he wasn’t mistaken, these two old men would be the blood brothers of his Grandpa Meng, making them his granduncles. Apparently, they and his Grandma Meng were the only surviving members of the Senior generation.

As for the three middle-aged women, the fact that they were here in this room and not outside indicated to Meng Hao that they were the beloved partners of his uncles, the blood brothers of his mother.

It was at this point that Meng Hao was shocked to find that the three women, as well as his two granduncles, all had nine spikes buried inside their bodies. The main difference was that the spikes inside the women were silver and not black.

Meng Hao quietly produced some medicinal pills, which he respectfully handed to his two granduncles. The two old men looked at him. Although they were so weak that it seemed even a mortal could kill them, it was possible to see the power and dignity that still existed in their eyes as they looked at Meng Hao.

Gradually, their gazes turned kind. Opening their mouths, they consumed the medicinal pills and then closed their eyes.

Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed, then turned to leave. As he did, the three middle-aged women watched him with puzzled looks.

After leaving the room, Meng Hao’s face darkened. He looked over the dozen or so younger women outside, which included Meng Ru.

“What happened here?” he asked in a gravely voice. His words almost immediately seemed to calm the surrounding bloodline clan members.

“It was the Xu Clan…. They pushed things too far. They kidnapped Meng Han, and then sent people here to say that we had to send them grandmother’s corpse to get her back.”

“The Xu Clan has gone too far. They’ve bullied us for years, but we’re surnamed Meng! We’re actual members of the Meng Clan! They’re just a vassal clan who was given land on this continent by the clan. What right do they have to bully us like this!?”

“It wasn’t even the direct bloodline of the Xu Clan that did this, just one of their auxiliary branches….”

“Just what are they thinking? Twenty-seven members of our bloodline have already died at their hands over the years, and all in vain! Nobody speaks up for us at all… and this time, they actually threatened grandmother, who has protected us for all these years!!”

“I’m here to help Grandma Meng, and defend the clan on Meng Chen’s behalf,” Meng Hao murmured to himself. “I’ll continue to do the protecting around here.” He sent his divine will out, and then began to walk forward, quickly vanishing. When he reappeared, he was in midair, looking down at the continent below. It only took a moment for his divine sense to locate the auxiliary branch of the Xu Clan that had just been mentioned.

It wasn’t too far away, located in a good-sized city that resembled the Meng Clan ancestral mansion, meaning that it wasn’t a true city, but rather a clan stronghold.

At the main gate of the city was a sign with one large character.

Xu!

Quite a few clan members inhabited the city, and most were mortal. There appeared to be only a dozen or so cultivators, virtually all of them in the Spirit Realm. There was only one old man who was in the Immortal Realm. Even counting him, no on in the city counted as anything more than ants to Meng Hao.

Fury burning in his heart, he stepped forward and was inside the Xu Clan’s ancestral mansion. No one detected his presence, and as he went along, he didn’t hurt the mortals, but he crippled the spirit meridians that would allow them to practice cultivation. As for the cultivators… it didn't matter what they were doing at the moment, they simply exploded into clouds of gore.

As for the old man in the Immortal Realm, his head exploded even as he sat cross-legged in meditation. All of the cultivators died.

Meng Hao left, taking an unconscious youth with him, a young man who was covered with wounds as if from torture. Despite the injuries, his jaw was clenched shut, as if to indicate that he hadn't begged for mercy even once.

Killing only this handful of people didn't abate Meng Hao's fury in the least. Sending his divine sense out, he found another of the Xu Clan's auxiliary branches, and headed in that direction next.

One, two, three… Meng Hao went to a total of sixteen auxiliary branches. Not a single cultivator saw his face there; all of them exploded.

With that, Meng Hao eyed the Xu Clan ancestral mansion in the center of the entire content. He snorted coldly and was preparing to go exterminate the entire clan when, all of a sudden, his expression flickered, and he looked back in the direction of his grandfather's bloodline.

He could sense that his Grandma Meng had awakened.

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# Chapter 1256: Make a Name!

Meng Hao silently turned and headed back to the clan residence. When he arrived, he handed over the unconscious youth he had just rescued, then straightened his clothes and headed toward his grandmother’s room.

He didn’t immediately enter, but instead clasped hands and bowed deeply, then stood there with his head lowered.

After a long moment, the door opened, and the three middle-aged women filed out, glancing at him with curious expressions as they walked past. Then, an ancient voice spoke from within the room.

“Come.”

Meng Hao bowed once more, then entered, closing the door behind him.

When he looked up, he saw his Grandma Meng sitting in a chair, her complexion much improved. She seemed weaker than a mortal, but at the same time, solemn and filled with an indescribable dignity. Her eyes were dim, but when her gaze settled on someone it seemed to be filled with a certain might.

On either side of her sat the two old men, who were also much improved. They were staring at Meng Hao without the slightest expressions on their faces.

The first person to speak was his grandmother. She looked at him and slowly asked, “Who are you?!”

Her voice was not backed by the power of her cultivation base, but seemed to inherently contain something that caused the natural laws in the area to fluctuate. Anyone who heard her voice would be affected by the mysterious pressure it contained.

“Greetings, Grandma Meng. Greetings, granduncles, I am Meng Hao….” Meng Hao then dropped to his knees and began to kowtow.

The oldtimers were visibly moved when they realized that he had used the forms of address for maternal relatives….

“You…” Meng Hao’s grandmother gaped in shock. Something clicked in her mind, and an expression of disbelief could then be seen. Meng Hao rose to his feet, and as he did, his facial features transformed from Meng Chen’s into his own.

Then he produced a jade slip from his bag of holding, which he respectfully handed over to his grandmother. Next, he sent some cultivation base power into the jade slip, which then projected a screen into the air. On that screen was the face of a woman, none other than… Meng Hao’s mother.

Then, as the three oldtimers looked on, he bit the tip of his finger and dropped a bit of blood onto the jade slip. The jade slip absorbed it, turning blood-red in the process.

This jade slip had been given to Meng Hao before parting ways with his mother. She had told him that if he ever encountered any relatives from her side of the family, he could use it to prove his identity.

Meng Hao’s grandmother began shaking, and the two old men on either side of her looked incredibly excited. In fact, there had been few times in their entire lives in which they had been this excited.

“Li’er… you’re… you’re Li’er’s son. Fang-Meng Hao….” His grandmother stared at him, breath coming in ragged pants. Suddenly, a tremor ran through her, as if something had just occurred to her. “Is your mother well…?”

Meng Hao immediately stepped forward and offered his arm to his grandmother to support her. “Grandma Meng, my mother is in the Ninth

Mountain and Sea, safe and healthy.”

“As long as she’s safe and healthy, that’s what’s important….” his grandmother murmured, tears rolling down her cheeks. She raised a trembling hand to stroke Meng Hao’s cheek, her eyes shining with kindness. “You’re such a good kid. Why are you here? Where’s Meng Chen?”

Meng Hao sighed and then gave a simple recounting of how he had come to the Eighth Mountain and Sea, and then the circumstances in which he met Meng Chen.

When his grandmother and grand-uncles heard about how he had exterminated the Blacksoul Society and then slaughtered Dao Lords and other such powerful experts, their eyes went wide.

Then they heard about Meng Chen’s final words, and their eyes dimmed.

“Chen’er was also such a good kid….”

After a moment of silence, Meng Hao looked at the oldtimers and asked, “Grandma Meng, granduncles, I very much want to know what happened here? Why is our bloodline in such decline. What are those black spikes inside of you? And also… who poisoned you? Where is everyone else of the Senior generation?”

They exchanged silent glances for a moment, and then one of Meng Hao’s granduncles sighed and began to explain.

“After your Grandpa Meng went to the Ninth Mountain and Sea, he never returned. All the news we got was that it had to do with you, and that he went missing along with your Grandpa Fang.

“Your grandfather’s disappearance affected the clan a bit, but not fatally. Back then, there were seven of us brothers including your grandfather, plus many sons and grandsons. Although none of us were in the Dao Realm, there were many in the Ancient Realm. We decided not to contend for the place of Clan Chief, assuming that doing so would prevent conflict within the clan. How could we have ever imagined that everything would change overnight?

“Although news about what happened in the clan that night never spread, that was the moment the Meng Clan fell from the height of their power….

“Mysterious cultivators invaded, and were joined by traitors within the clan. A huge battle was fought, and two of our Dao Realm Patriarchs were killed. Two others were seriously injured and still haven’t recovered.

“Vast numbers of Ancient Realm cultivators died, and virtually all of the Immortal Realm clan members were slaughtered….

“Our bloodline narrowly managed to escape to this place. However, when we got here, there were nine mysterious experts waiting, apparently specifically for us. All of our other brothers died, and most of your uncles were killed. The only people left were the women and children….

“Those nine mysterious experts wanted to completely wipe out our bloodline, and the slaughter they carried out on us was far more severe than towards any of the auxiliary bloodlines. It almost seemed like their attack on the Meng Clan was targeting us specifically.

“In the critical moment, just when it seemed we would be exterminated, the ancestral statue began to glow, and emanated a powerful pressure. It turned into a voice which shouted at the nine mysterious experts, telling them to begone. Before they could be driven away, they didn’t hesitate for even a moment to kill themselves in order to transform into nine spikes. The spikes multiplied and then stabbed into our bodies, sealing our cultivation bases.

“From that day on, the Meng Clan in general was in decline, and our bloodline lost all of its cultivators. We wanted to return to the ancestral mansion, but it had already been occupied by other bloodlines, none other than the current nine bloodlines of the Meng Clan.

“We were forced to settle down here and try to restore our cultivation bases. However, the only result was that we got weaker day by day. More people died, and soon, we were barely able to hold on to life, not willing to even close our eyes lest we die. The two uncles of yours who survived could only look on in misery as the older generation was bullied, humiliated, and left gasping for life.”

After listening to the story, Meng Hao stood there silently for a moment. The explanation given was simple, and he could easily imagine how tragic the entire affair had been.

“Grandma Meng, I think your injuries will recover, given some time.” Suddenly, he thought of something, and continued, “Those nine mysterious men, did they by any chance happen to have a combined magical technique that summoned a battle-axe?”

Almost immediately, his grandmother and grand-uncles looked at him with a start, shivering.

“They did use such a magical technique,” his grandmother replied. “However, they didn’t summon one battle-axe, they summoned three! You’ve seen such a thing before?”

Meng Hao then recounted what had happened en route back to the Meng Clan, which resulted in the three oldtimers’ faces flickering.

“So, they’re coming back, huh…?” he grandmother said.

Seeing the expressions on their faces, Meng Hao couldn’t hold back from asking, “Grandma Meng, those mysterious black-robed men, is there any chance… you know where they come from?”

The three old-timers didn’t respond at first. Finally, his grandmother sighed and said, “The Seventh Mountain and Sea!”

As soon as the words entered Meng Hao’s ears, a tremor ran through him. He looked at his grandmother, and the serious expression on her face, and his thoughts raced. Finally, everything turned into four words….

“Mountain and Sea War….” he said slowly.

The three oldtimers maintained their silence.

Meng Hao’s mind trembled. As soon as he thought about the prospect of war between the various Mountains and Seas, he said, “Grandma Meng, granduncles, the Fang Clan in the Ninth Mountain and Sea has become very powerful. Seniors, I can take all of you to the Ninth Mountain and Sea, and give you a chance to rise to prominence there.”

“Hao’er,” his grandmother said, “your intentions are good, but the Meng Clan is our home. We won’t give up on it.”

As for his two granduncles, their voices were filled with decisiveness that could sever nails and chop iron as they said, “We were born here, and we’ll die here!”

Meng Hao said nothing more. Clasping hands and bowing, he once again transformed into Meng Chen. Just before leaving, he calmly said, “Grandma Meng, if there really is a Mountain and Sea War, I’ll do my best to protect you. But if I can’t, please take my advice. Leave this place, and wait for the right opportunity to stage a comeback.”

Meng Hao then walked out of the room and looked around at the various bloodline clan members in the mansion. Then he waved his hand, and massive rumbling echoed out as the entire bloodline ancestral mansion and the land around it were carved away from the landmass within which it sat.

Meng Hao cut away a vast, 30,000-meter area, after which he slapped his bag of holding, causing one piece of Immortal jade after another to fly out. Organizing them in midair, Meng Hao performed an incantation gesture and pointed out, causing the vast quantity of Immortal jade to shoot down toward the land.

Each piece that touched the ground shattered, causing boundless Immortal qi to spill out like rain. In the blink of an eye, the entire area was filled with a shocking amount of dense Immortal qi.

Meng Hao then raised his hand and made a grasping motion. Rumbling could be heard as the entire vast area was sealed, ensuring that none of the Immortal qi could dissipate.

This also made the entire area occupied by his bloodline become like a paradise for Immortals!

To cultivators, practicing cultivation in places like this had vast, indescribable benefits. Meditating here for a day was like spending a month in the outside world. However, Meng Hao still wasn't satisfied. He smacked his bag of holding again, producing even more Immortal jade. As that jade shattered, the quality of the Immortal qi grew even more profound.

Now, meditating here for a day was like spending two months outside!

The surrounding bloodline clan members were completely shocked. The three old-timers in the room, plus the three middle-aged women, all gasped and looked at Meng Hao in astonishment. Then Meng Hao's grandmother and granduncles recalled what he had said about exterminating Patriarch Blacksoul and killing the other Dao Realm experts, and were completely convinced of the truth of the matter.

There were two other nearby rooms that suddenly opened, and two men walked out. Although they didn't seem very old, their skin was withered and sallow, and their eyes were dim, making them seem very ancient. They were skinny and weak, and even smelled of alcohol, as if they hadn't seen the light of day for many days. Currently, they were staring dumbfounded at the Immortal qi.

These two men were Meng Hao's uncles… the only surviving second-generation members of the bloodline.

"Meng Ru," Meng Hao said calmly, a cold gleam in his eyes, "go find all of the members of our bloodline who serve in other households. Tell them… to come home. If anyone tries to stop you, tell me immediately!" The appearance of cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea indicated that a Mountain and Sea War was brewing. That completely changed Meng Hao's plans. He would no longer lead his grandfather's bloodline to prominence from the shadows. There simply wasn't time for that.

His new decision was to take center stage, to make a loud proclamation that no one could dare to provoke this bloodline. The time had come to make a name!

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# Chapter 1257: Sermon on the Dao!

Meng Ru nodded excitedly in response to Meng Hao's words. Meng Hao then smacked his bag of holding, and the mastiff flew out. It threw its head back and roared, transforming into a beam of red light that carried Meng Ru off into the distance.

With the mastiff to protect her, no one would be able to cause trouble for Meng Ru as she went about accomplishing her task. Meng Hao looked around the bloodline mansion, at his excited relatives, and then took a deep breath. A brilliant gleam then appeared in his eyes; time was of the essence, and since he was going to help the bloodline rise to prominence… he would do it in spectacular fashion.

Meng Ru and the mastiff flew to the central continent of the Meng Clan and called back the bloodline members who had had no other choice but to follow the orders of the other nine bloodlines.

Meanwhile, the shocking deaths of all of the cultivators in the Xu Clan's various auxiliary headquarters had caused quite a stir among the Xu Clan's powerful experts in their ancestral mansion.

Everyone was in a rage, and finally, an ancient voice echoed out from within the Xu Clan ancestral mansion.

"The bedraggled bloodline thinks it can recover its former glory? Find the culprit and execute him! If anyone gets in your way, execute them too! Don't forget that the old cripples there can't do anything to you!"

The voice crashed like lightning, causing colors to flash in the sky and the lands to quake. Instantly, dozens of beams of light shot out, followed by hundreds of other figures, all of which headed toward the location of Grandpa Meng’s bloodline.

The Xu Clan was so enraged with the bloodline that there was no need to speak words. They decided to attack immediately, and the murderous aura they emanated was incredibly intense.

At the same time, back in the central ancestral mansion of the Meng Clan, another enraged shout could be heard coming from the courtyard where Meng Hao had crushed the Dao Seeking cultivator’s bones, turning him into a pile of mush. Three old men could be seen there, their faces grim and their eyes burning with fury. Behind them were ten other clan members, all radiating intense killing intent.

“What gall!” said one of the three old men. “Their bloodline is weak to the point of dissipating. Who needs them? Now they’re just intentionally provoking calamity. Men, come with me, we’re going to crush this rebellion immediately!” With that, the old man flicked his sleeve and then flew up into the air, followed by numerous fellow clan members. All of them transformed into beams of colorful light that shot off in the direction of Grandpa Meng’s bloodline.

It took only a moment for vast proverbial winds to surge, giving rise to waves in the dead brackish water that was the declining Meng Clan. And it was all because of Meng Hao.

As those things occurred, Meng Hao sat cross-legged on a boulder in the bloodline mansion, surrounded by other members of the bloodline. They all looked very excited, and were in the middle of practicing various breathing exercises. The vast majority were female, and as they practiced cultivation, their cultivation bases slowly improved.

The person sitting closest to Meng Hao was a young man, the very same one he had just saved, Meng Han. He occasionally looked over at Meng Hao, his eyes filled with adoration and zeal.

The truth was that he wasn’t the only one; virtually everyone in the mansion looked at Meng Hao in the same way. The zeal they felt burned in their eyes; they finally had hope. This person that they were looking at had a cultivation base vastly greater than theirs. After years and years, he was the first person… to ever successfully enter the Immortal Realm.

“In the practice of cultivation, you must pass through the four Realms. Spirit, Immortal, Ancient, Dao. Each Realm bestows you with different types of power, and are all subdivided into smaller stages.

“It might seem complicated, but you must proceed forward one step at a time. The further along the path you tread, the more and more powerful you will become!

“The Spirit Realm is divided into the stages of Qi Condensation, Foundation Establishment, Core Formation, Nascent Soul, Spirit Severing, Dao Seeking, and Immortal Ascension!

“I can see that most of you are in the Core Formation stage. Not many of you are in the Nascent Soul stage, and it seems you have no Spirit Severing cultivators….” Meng Hao spoke quietly, but his voice seemed to be filled with a strange power. As it echoed about the bloodline mansion, all of his bloodline relatives listened attentively.

Some of his bloodline relatives couldn’t hold back from pointing out, “Big bro Meng Chen, don’t forget that big sis Qiao’er is in the Spirit Severing stage. And big sis Yun is too….”

“Big sis Hong is in Dao Seeking….”

Meng Hao nodded and continued.

“Core Formation focuses on forming an inner core. You can use that core to coalesce your own pure qi, which, after enough time passes, can be used to give birth to your Nascent Soul…. When I was in the Core Formation stage, I used the five elements as my foundation, making a five elements Gold Core, which then became my five elements Nascent Soul….

“… the true meaning of Spirit Severing lies, not in the Spirit, but in the Severing….

“There are three Severings, which are also Daos. Three Severings, three Daos. Afterward, you must seek answers inwardly to take the next step, Dao Seeking!

“As far as Immortal Ascension is concerned, it is actually simple; none of you really need to worry about it. You can simply imitate your ancestors and become false Immortals!” Meng Hao’s voice echoed out as he expounded upon the meaning of the Spirit Realm, explaining it in detail to his bloodline clan members.

They listened as if intoxicated; many areas which they had formerly found very confusing were now explained clearly. Furthermore, Meng Hao’s explanation was far deeper and more profound than any explanation they had received in the past.

Meng Hao’s voice also contained that strange power, something that gradually caused a type of seed to appear within the bodies of his bloodline relatives. It was a Dao Seed, not the bloodline of an Allheaven Dao Immortal, but rather… Meng Hao’s accumulated enlightenment regarding cultivation, his experiences within the Spirit Realm. It was… a Spirit Seed!

Meng Hao had a foundation in the Spirit Realm that was as rare as a phoenix feather or a qilin horn in the Mountain and Sea Realm. It would be no exaggeration to say that his understanding of the Spirit Realm exceeded that of any other person. No one had accumulated so much in that Realm, and no one had prepared more thoroughly to become a true Immortal. He had shaken the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Because of that, his understanding, and his explanation, carried profound, indescribable meaning for all of his fellow clan members.

In addition to all that, the rich Immortal qi in the area vastly exceeded normal spiritual energy. The result was that the majority of his bloodline relatives were all sinking deeper and deeper into enlightenment.

Meng Hao’s grandmother and grand-uncles stared in shock at what was happening, and then excitement began to build up on their faces. Meng Hao’s two uncles had faces flushed with excitement, not only because of what was happening to all the members of the Junior generation, but also because the Immortal qi was helping them to revert from their crippled states.

The three middle-aged women were experiencing something similar.

Apparently, all of the bloodline relatives around Meng Hao were… slowly transforming!!

Meng Hao looked around at everyone in their states of enlightenment, until finally his gaze came to fall upon the young man Meng Han, whom he had rescued from the Xu Clan.

From what Meng Hao could tell, he had better latent talent than anyone else present, and although his cultivation base was merely in the Core Formation stage, he was clearly on the verge of a breakthrough.

A smile broke out on Meng Hao’s face. He was now confident that within a few short years, his grandfather’s bloodline should be able to achieve grandeur once again, which caused excitement to stir within his heart. It was at this point that he suddenly looked up into the sky, and a cold gleam flickered in his eyes.

He waved his right hand, causing a cloud of black pods to fly out from within his bag of holding. They immediately flew off into the distance radiating murderous auras. As they flew along, popping sounds could be heard as they transformed into black imps, whose gaping maws were filled with razor-sharp teeth.

“EEEEEEEEE….” screamed the blackpod imps as they shot off into the distance.

Currently, outside of the 30,000-meter area Meng Hao had already set aside, hundreds of cultivators were flying around, radiating murderous auras and killing intent. The dozen or so in the lead had cultivation bases in the Ancient Realm, although the strongest of the bunch was only in the mid Ancient Realm. However, a group like this was not something to be underestimated, and comprised about half of the entire power base of the Xu Clan.

About thirty percent of the group was in the Immortal Realm, and the rest… were in the Spirit Realm. After all, the Xu Clan was one of eight subsidiary clans within the Meng Clan, which meant that it would be impossible for them to reach a terrifyingly powerful level. Even still, they had many powerful cultivators.

What they could see was a huge area filled with dense mist, and they could sense that within that mist was some invisible barrier. That barrier caused the eyes of the mid Ancient Realm cultivator from the Xu Clan to widen. He gasped, and his heart began to pound.

He had to ask himself if even he could breach that barrier, and as he looked closer, he realized that the mist inside was…

“Immortal qi… so much Immortal qi. It’s… it’s so dense it’s manifested physically. It’s like this area is another world, like an Immortal world!

“But… who could possibly do this!?!?” Although he was shocked, few of his fellow clan members noticed any of these clues, and their murderous aura boiled just as strongly as before.

Tempers provoked, some of the Xu Clan cultivators began to shout out in rage. “Anyone from the Meng Clan in the area had better get out here right now!”

It all happened too quickly for the mid Ancient Realm cultivator to stop, and his face flickered as, all of a sudden, a grating sound rang out from the mist.

“EEEEEEEEE….” Following the sound was a huge group of black-colored imps, moving as fast as lightning. Each one of those imps was radiating pressure equivalent to the mid Ancient Realm.

“It’s… run! Get out of here!!” The mid Ancient Realm cultivator’s scalp was numb. Although he had never encountered these blackpod imps before, he could tell how terrifying they were, and it filled his heart with an indescribable sense of deadly crisis.

He immediately fell back, to the shock of his fellow clan members. Unfortunately for them, they didn’t react quickly enough, and were quickly pounced upon by the blackpod imps.

Apparently, the imps had no inclination to possess any of these people. They simply bored into their bodies and began to chew them up. Miserable screams instantly began to ring out from the mouths of the Xu Clan cultivators.

A huge commotion was underway as more than a hundred out of the group of hundreds began to scream. Then their bodies exploded into clouds of gore and blood. As for the others present, their faces drained of blood, and they immediately began to flee.

In the blink of an eye, the blackpod imps shot out from within the gore, vicious expressions on their faces as they went on the attack again. Miserable shrieks rang out as another hundred or so cultivators were slaughtered. The blackpod imps were like Yamas from hell, out to collect lives.

Not even the Xu Clan cultivators in the Ancient Realm were capable of fleeing. No matter how they tried to fight back, they ended up screaming, and their bodies withered rapidly as the blackpod imps scraped them clean from the inside out.

The strongest of their number, the mid Ancient Realm old man, bellowed in rage as he unleashed divine abilities and magical items to defend himself. However, it did no good. Soon, one of the blackpod imps bored into him. He screamed miserably and then… exploded.

The gory scene lasted for some time. Hundreds of cultivators died, and the air was awash with the reek of blood. As for the blackpod imps, they grinned cruelly and let out fearsome howls.

Finally, they formed back together into a black cloud that vanished back into the mist.

“EEEEEEEEE….”

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# Chapter 1258: Exterminating the Xu Clan!

“Nascent Soul, Nascent Soul. The Soul aspect is physical, and as for the Nascent part of the term, it relates to the spiritual. Therefore, because what you are currently absorbing via breathing techniques is Immortal qi, which far exceeds ordinary spiritual energy… theoretically speaking, you should be able to pass through the Nascent Soul stage much more quickly!” Meng Hao’s voice was quiet as he continued to expound upon his understanding of the Spirit Realm.

He had just used a vast quantity of Immortal jade to create a huge area for the exclusive purpose of allowing these several dozen people to absorb Immortal qi. In the entire Mountain and Sea Realm, few people could accomplish such a thing. In fact, the only ones who could would be the Mountain and Sea Lords.

Even large sects who could afford it would not, primarily because… it wouldn’t be worth it. Sects always had numerous competing factions who were generally concerned with their own interests and thus wouldn’t agree to such a huge expenditure.

Meng Hao might love money, and had always dreamed of being rich. However, sentiment and honor were important things to him, and no amount of money could be more valuable to him than family.

Therefore, he didn’t think twice about the pain that usually came with spending money. As long as his grandfather’s bloodline could rise to prominence again, it would all be worth it.

As he continued to deliver his sermon, there were some in the audience who experienced cultivation base breakthroughs. At the same time, rumbling sounds could be heard. A strange gleam could be seen in Meng Hao's eyes, and he wore a slight smile as the blackpod imps came flying back. After circling around in the air a few times, they began to drop bags of holding down toward the ground. Soon, there were so many it seemed like it was raining..

The women in the bloodline mansion stared with wide eyes as all of this happened.

Meng Hao's expression was very somber as he looked back at all the women and continued to speak.

"You must all remember that we cultivators must never waste cultivation resources. If you venture out and see something, but don't pick it up, then it's the same as losing it. That's our maxim, and the most important principle we must keep in our hearts! 1

"Don't waste money, don't live luxuriously! If you have a chance to profit, then don't miss out on a single spirit stone!" The entire audience was completely focused on Meng Hao, eyes burning with zealous adoration. As soon as the women heard his words, they fixed them in their minds. Apparently, their personalities were even affected, and gradually… their eyes began to shine brightly.

Meng Hao was pleased with the look he saw in their eyes, although he didn't take the time to think of what the consequences would be of having an entire group of people molded after himself…. In any case, he truly felt that this group was becoming much more to his liking.

As for the three old timers, they were watching with wide eyes, as were Meng Hao's two Uncles.

"This…." said one of Meng Hao's grand-uncles.

"He's so much like little Lili…." Meng Hao's grandmother said with a wry smile. After a moment of thought, she allowed things to continue on as they were. “With him here, the Meng Clan… we’ll definitely need to change things up a bit.”

Outside in the courtyard, Meng Hao waved his hand, send the bags of holding flying out to hover in front of the other clan members, until each one had several.

“Alright, you hang on to these bags of holding. I’m heading out for a bit to get you some more cultivation resources.” With that, Meng Hao rose to his feet, took a step forward, and vanished. When he reappeared, he was out in the mists. The blackpod imps flew around him, looking very friendly. Meng Hao waved his sleeve to collect them up, then took another step, vanishing and reappearing high up in the sky. A cold gleam flickered in his eyes as he looked toward the center of the continent, and… the Xu Clan!

He had originally planned to exterminate the entire clan, but then his grandmother had woken up, which had caused a slight delay. However, moments ago when the blackpod imps wiped out the cultivators outside the mist, Meng Hao had been watching closely.

“Anyone who has a beef with my grandfather’s bloodline also has a beef with me,” he said coolly. Then he transformed into a beam of light which shot rumbling off toward the Xu Clan.

Deep in the heart of the Xu Clan’s ancestral mansion, within a hidden chamber, a red-haired old man sat there cross-legged. Suddenly, his eyes opened, and he shivered. A terrible feeling had just risen up in his heart, as if a huge disaster were heading his way.

His cultivation base was far beyond the great circle of the Ancient Realm, and was already half a step into the Dao Realm. In fact, he could make his attempt to complete that step at any time. However, he was very similar to Guru Heavencloud, who Meng Hao had encountered in the asteroid field back in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, and didn’t have the confidence to try to make the attempt.

Therefore, it would really be less accurate to say that he could break through to the Dao Realm whenever he wished, and more accurate to say that he could force his way into the Quasi-Dao Realm at any moment!

This man was Xu Yushan, leader of the Xu Clan. His cultivation base was why he was the clan leader, and also the reason why the Xu Clan had been able to become a vassal clan and occupy one of the continents in the Meng Clan.

“What’s going on… could it be… THAT bloodline of the Meng Clan?” The red-haired old man’s eyes flickered, and he frowned.

“Impossible. That bloodline has declined to the point where it’s almost gone. In fact, that’s why I was stationed here, to keep an eye on them and to make sure that instead of being wiped out in an instant, they slowly fade away into nothing. In a few hundred years, that mission will be accomplished.”

After sitting there in thought for a moment, his face suddenly flickered. Without the slightest hesitation or forethought, the man crushed a jade slip and then vanished.

The moment he vanished was the exact same moment that a Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering boom caused everything to shake violently.

An enormous hand was descending from above, fully 30,000 meters wide, so realistic you could see the palm lines on it. It descended with such incredible speed that flames burst out all over it, racing down to scorch the earth.

As it descended, it caused numerous pagodas within the Xu Clan ancestral mansion to crumble under the pressure. Buildings collapsed, bursting into flames, and the cultivators in the Xu Clan ancestral mansion looked up in shock. It was as if doomsday had arrived for them.

“What is that?!?!”

“An ambush!!”

“Th-that hand, who does it belong to? Heavens….” The cultivators in the Xu Clan ancestral mansion were completely shocked, and began to tremble from the explosive will of extermination which weighed down on them.

In the blink of an eye, the hand slammed down onto the ancestral mansion, crushing countless buildings and sending a huge shockwave out in all directions. The lands quaked as if they were being struck by lightning, and the entire Xu Clan was instantly transformed into ruins, replaced by the image of an enormous handprint!

Flames raged everywhere, burning everything to a pitch-black crisp….

Despite all of that, there actually weren’t very many cultivators who died. Meng Hao wasn’t a cold-blooded killer, and based on the level of his cultivation base, the divine sense laced within the palm enabled him to detect exactly who within the Xu Clan harbored evil designs toward his grandfather’s bloodline.

Those hostile cultivators were all killed, causing bloodcurdling screams to ring out from within the sea of flames. As for the other cultivators, the flames merely sealed their cultivation bases, but didn’t harm them physically.

The lands still shook violently, though, and the enormous handprint in the ground was shocking to the extreme.

Within the ruins that filled the palm print, the Xu Clan Patriarch blurred back into existence. As soon as he did, he coughed up a massive mouthful of blood. Face ashen, he looked around at the surviving clan members, and then at the ruins. Then he threw his head back and howled viciously.

As he looked up, he could see Meng Hao floating there in the air, radiating intense coldness. Considering what he had done with a single palm strike, he was clearly a terrifying individual. The Xu Clan Patriarch chuckled bitterly and asked, “Who are you?!?!”

At the same time, he didn’t hesitate to begin a cultivation base breakthrough.

“I’m Meng Chen!” Meng Hao replied coldly. Meng Hao didn’t want to drag the Meng Clan into his problems with the Heavengod Alliance, and therefore, he chose not to use his identity as Meng Hao.

The Xu Clan Patriarch laughed bitterly. He didn’t believe Meng Hao at all, but that didn’t matter. His cultivation base shot up explosively, and clouds began to form in the air as Dao Realm Heavenly Tribulation began to descend.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered in the face of the descending Dao Realm Heavenly Tribulation. He then waved his right index finger, which caused the air to distort, and wave-like ripples to spread out. Gradually the ripples transformed into an enormous wolf, completely domineering, which howled as it charged the Xu Clan Patriarch.

It was on him in the blink of an eye, before the Heavenly Tribulation could arrive. The Xu Clan Patriarch fought back viciously, but couldn’t stop himself from being swallowed up in a single gulp by the gigantic wolf.

The Heavenly Tribulation, having lost its target, immediately began to fade away, and the path which had appeared vanished.

Meng Hao waved his sleeve. Ignoring everything down below, he turned and vanished.

Time passed. Around evening, more beams of light appeared above the lands near Meng Hao’s grandfather’s bloodline. These people looked different than the Xu Clan cultivators, and were in fact from the Meng Clan.

They were from the seventh of the nine bloodlines of the Meng Clan, which was a powerful group. However, only a few of their number had come; one was in the great circle of the Ancient Realm, one in the late Ancient Realm, two in the mid Ancient Realm, four in the early Ancient Realm, and several dozen were Immortals.

A force like that was a powerful one indeed. Unless a Dao Realm expert showed up, they could wage an entire war on their own. Currently, the old man in the lead was flying along, enraged and bursting with killing intent.

As the group flew along, colors flashed in the sky and the winds screamed. Suddenly, the old man's furious voice could be heard ringing out.

"Xu Yushan, get out here right now!"

The booming voice echoed back and forth, making it sound almost like numerous voices were shouting. A huge wind blasted across the lands, sweeping away the clouds in the sky and shaking everything.

The old man hovered in midair arrogantly. In his view, the ideal way of handling this situation was to call out the leader of the vassal clan that was guarding this place and have him extinguish the rebellious bloodline that was on its last legs.

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# Chapter 1259: Imposing Grandma Meng!

The old man’s voice rang out in all directions and yet no response could be heard, causing him to frown. He sent his divine sense out, and when it reached the Xu Clan ancestral mansion at the center of the continent, a tremor ran through him, and he gasped, an expression of intense disbelief filling his face.

“This….” He immediately shot off through the air. Behind him, the other members of the Meng Clan slowly began to reveal their own shock as the Ancient Realm cultivators sent their divine sense out and realized what had happened.

Dozens of them shot through the air toward the Xu Clan, where the old man in the leadership position was hovering in midair above the ancestral mansion, looking down at the enormous palm print, and the ruins that filled it. After a moment, he closed his eyes as he focused on sensing the area. Then his eyes snapped open.

“The aura of Dao Tribulation appeared here…. But I didn’t sense any tribulation earlier. That indicates… that the tribulation vanished before it even started. It also means that Xu Yushan was killed before his cultivation base broke through!

“Other than a Dao Realm expert, the only other person who could do something like that would be a Quasi-Dao cultivator!” The old man took a deep breath and scanned the ruins. Then he waved his hand, causing one of the living Xu Clan cultivators to fly up into the air. The old man didn’t ask any questions. He was the type of person who didn’t trust what people told him with regard to important matters like this. He only trusted his own

Soulsearching. It took but a brief moment before he saw Meng Hao, and the enormous palm destroying the Xu Clan. Then… he heard Meng Hao call himself… Meng Chen!

“Meng… Chen!?!?” The old man’s eyes went wide, and he began to breathe heavily. Actually, the reason he had rushed over here in such domineering fashion was because of Meng Chen. Now that he understood the terrifying nature of the person he had come for, the old man began to shiver. Knowing that he had narrowly avoided certain calamity, the old man immediately turned to leave.

The other members of the Meng Clan were looking around in shock. Then they noticed the old man leaving, and they began to ask questions.

“Elder, where are we going now…?”

“Where else?” replied the flustered old man. “Home! We’re going home immediately!” The old man couldn’t help but look back at the palm-shaped crater once more. He shivered, already petrified of Meng Chen, even though he had never even seen him face-to-face.

Based on what he knew about Meng Chen, he was sure that this terrifying cultivation base could not belong to him. In his judgement, Meng Chen had most likely been possessed or replaced, or something of the like. In either case, he himself didn’t qualify to tangle with whoever Meng Chen really was.

A person with a cultivation base like that could kill him as easily as flipping over his hand. Someone such as that was a person he couldn’t afford to provoke, and thus, it was without any further hesitation that he sped off as fast as possible.

The other cultivators exchanged dismayed glances, then hurried to leave. The old man’s sudden flight was just now beginning to fill their hearts with fear. Feeling as if some hidden force were behind them about to attack, they started going faster and faster until they were fleeing at top speed.

The group had burst onto the scene with a towering murderous aura, and yet before they had even seen Meng Hao with their own eyes, they fled, crestfallen and terrified.

As they left, Meng Hao was sitting cross-legged in the bloodline mansion, watching them hurry off, a cold smile on his face. Their quick reaction had saved them; had they dared show any evil designs, he wouldn't have hesitated to wipe out their entire bloodline.

Regarding the matter of wiping out bloodlines, Meng Hao had already consulted with his grandmother and granduncles. According to them, the third, fourth, and fifth bloodlines were important, but as for the other five, they could be done away with at will.

Seeing the complicated expressions in the old-timers' eyes, Meng Hao had simply said, "I'll handle things, but let's wait until your cultivation bases are recovered before deciding exactly how."

Time passed. Meng Hao gave sermons on the Dao, but spent most of his time using his own cultivation base to assist his grandmother and the others in their recovery. The more he understood about the framework created by the nine needles, the more he realized that they couldn't be removed casually, not without risking the lives of the people who were affected.

He needed more time to fully understand them, and his grandmother and the others also needed more time to strengthen their bodies. Only then further action could be taken.

One afternoon a few days later, as Meng Hao was giving a sermon on the Dao, he suddenly stopped talking and looked up. A blood-colored light could be seen up in the air, which was the mastiff. On its back could be seen Meng Ru, as well as about ten other young women. Some of those women looked excited, others appeared to be torn, and some were confused.

Their return instantly caused a big commotion in the mansion. As for the young women, when they sensed the Immortal qi, they were astonished.

Meng Ru immediately found Meng Hao, clasped hands, and bowed. She looked a bit sad, and even hesitant, as if she weren’t sure of how to express herself. After a long moment, she gritted her teeth and began to speak.

“Big bro Meng Chen, I wasn’t able to bring everyone back. There were, um… three sisters who chose to stay with their masters. There were also two whose masters refused to free them. I… I was worried about making a mistake, so I didn’t dare to ask big bro mastiff to attack….” Apparently, Meng Ru felt a lot of respect toward the mastiff, and actually viewed it as a cultivator and not an animal.

“Three of them refused to return?” Meng Hao asked calmly. He wasn’t too surprised about this. There weren’t many people left in his grandfather’s bloodline, so it was only natural that there would be some people who didn’t wish to remain, and would try to strike out on their own.

It was at this point that the door suddenly opened, and Grandma Meng walked out without a single person supporting her. “Since they chose not to return, then they shall remain cut off for all eternity.”

All of the bloodline clan members present immediately bowed their heads respectfully. Meng Hao quickly rose to his feet and clasped hands.

“Chen’er,” Grandma Meng said calmly, “go bring back the final two who were prevented from returning.” After her recent days of recuperation, she was in much better spirits than before, and her eyes glittered with determination. She had long since become the pillar of the bloodline, and it had only been when her body had begun to weaken that she had begun to lose control. Now that she had recovered, she once again radiated the air of a family leader.

Furthermore, she was aware of the situation between Meng Hao and the Heavengod Alliance, and was also wary of getting the clan involved. Therefore, she declined to address him as Hao’er, and instead used Meng Chen’s name.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. Seeing his grandmother like this left him feeling quite relieved. At the very least, with her back in control of the bloodline, the task of helping it rise to prominence didn’t fall on his shoulders alone.

“What if I meet opposition?” Meng Hao asked.

“Kill them!” Grandma Meng replied immediately. Although her words were not spoken loudly, they resounded like thunder in the ears of all present. At the same time, a murderous aura began to radiate from her, something which had remained buried inside of her for too long.

“We’ve been away for too long,” said another voice. “It’s time to remind the Meng Clan who exactly we are!” Meng Hao’s two granduncles emerged from the room. They were no longer confined to their chairs, and although they looked very weak, they were clearly in much better condition than before.

All of the surrounding bloodline clan members were now looking excitedly at Grandma Meng.

“Your command shall be carried out,” Meng Hao said, clasping hands and bowing. Then he turned, leaving the mastiff to protect the bloodline clan members, but taking Meng Ru with him.

A moment later, the two of them had vanished. Grandma Meng and Meng Hao’s two granduncles watched them leave, and their eyes burned with faith and anticipation for the future.

Even as Meng Hao was working hard to help his grandfather’s bloodline rise to prominence, someone appeared in the starry sky of the Eighth Mountain and Sea. It was a handsome young man who strolled along wearing a violet robe. He was currently looking off into the distance at… the Meng Clan.

“I can sense that you’re there….” the young man said, smiling. He was none other than Ji Dongyang!

Meanwhile, a huge turtle was floating in another part of the starry sky of the Eighth Mountain and Sea, snoring as he napped. On his back was a huge continent, filled with all forms of life.

Suddenly, the turtle’s eyes snapped open as he awoke from slumber. His eyes shone like bright lanterns as he looked out into the darkness of the starry sky.

“Dammit, I just had a nightmare,” the turtle muttered. “I dreamed about that little bastard Meng Hao tracking me down in the Eighth Mountain and Sea. Hahaha. What a hilarious dream! It’s totally impossible!

“There’s no way that little punk could find me here. Dammit! Why would I have a dream like that? It’s a bad sign, an ill omen. I can’t believe I dreamed about being his mount!” That huge turtle was none other than Patriarch Reliance, who truly was frightened of Meng Hao. He let out a roar, then glanced around shiftily for a moment. Then he closed his eyes and went back to sleep.

Strangely, there appeared to be mysterious figures nearby Patriarch Reliance, figures he didn’t notice, who were apparently keeping track of his current location.

Something else was happening at around this same time in the Seventh Mountain and Sea…. All of the sects there, as well as all the clans, were mobilizing. Gradually, an enormous military force was being organized, virtually without number. In the lead position of that enormous army floated a sizeable mountain peak, the very tip of which emanated powerful ripples. Just barely visible on that mountain peak was a person sitting cross-legged, looking toward the Eighth Mountain, eyes gleaming.

The figure then began to speak softly in an ancient voice: “I don’t really want this war, but… there’s no choice in the matter. It is my mission…. Perhaps I’m not the only one either…. It’s not a betrayal; after all, there is nothing to betray. And yet… why do I feel so much pain in my heart….”

The terrifying army was filled with millions upon millions of cultivators, organized in formation so that they resembled an ancient, enormous dragon. They radiated intense murderous auras as they began to march closer and closer to the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

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# Chapter 1260: What Is The Point… Of Leaving Any Behind!?

As the army from the Seventh Mountain and Sea was picking up speed, Meng Hao was back in the Eighth Mountain and Sea. He was also being tracked by shadowy figures who occasionally materialized and then vanished. Apparently, they were watching him and keeping track of his location.

There had not been any wars between the Mountains and Seas for many years, but it seemed one was about to break out now. There were even various entities above in the 33 Heavens who were using special techniques to observe the Mountain and Sea Realm without being detected. They were looking down at the Eighth Mountain and Sea, their eyes gleaming with anticipation….

Meanwhile, outside of the 33 Heavens, out in the boundless expanse, two forces were approaching from different directions, and they were growing inexorably closer.

Apparently, war… was nigh!

Meng Hao and Meng Ru were speeding along through midair when all of a sudden, an intense feeling of alarm rose up inside Meng Hao, causing his face to flicker. Before he could react, the parrot's shrill voice could suddenly be heard in his mind.

"They're coming. Coming, I tell you! They're close, I can sense them. Dammit, they're moving a lot faster than I anticipated…. Meng Hao, they're almost here!!" The parrot sounded anxious, even terrified.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. He knew exactly who the parrot was talking about, and it caused him to slowly lift his head up to look up into the sky. It was almost as if he could see out into the vast expanse beyond the 33 Heavens.

“Well then, I guess I need to hurry up,” he said softly.

Off to the side, Meng Ru gaped in shock. “Big bro Meng Chen, what did you say?”

“Oh, nothing,” he replied, shaking his head as he continued to lead Meng Ru through the starry sky toward the Meng Clan’s central continent.

He passed through the protective spell formations without triggering any of them, and proceeded directly toward the ancestral mansion.

“The two sisters we’re going after are big sis Qiu’er and big sis Meng Fei,” Meng Ru said quietly. “Their latent talent is better than mine, and their cultivation bases are higher…. I managed to meet them and pass the news about what was happening, but I was prevented from taking them away. If it weren’t for big bro mastiff, I might have been detained as well.

“They’re both in the hands of cultivators from the first bloodline….” When she looked at Meng Hao, it was almost worshipfully. In her mind, once Meng Chen arrived on the scene, all their problems would be solved.

Meanwhile, in the East District of the Meng Clan’s ancestral mansion, there was a huge temple surrounded by nine pillars. Beneath each of those pillars was a furnace.

Those burning furnaces were causing the nine pillars to slowly heat up.

Bound to the pillars were nine young women, all of whom had ashen faces and were trembling. They looked terrified and were pleading for their lives, except for two who, although they were not spectacularly beautiful, were charming and pretty. Those two had their jaws clenched; despite the increasing temperature of the pillars they were tied to, they refused to utter any pleading words.

Sitting in the middle of the pillars and furnaces was an old man, who was currently performing double-handed incantation gestures and sending sealing marks out toward the furnaces, which were causing the furnaces to burn even more fiercely.

Surrounding the entire area was an audience of young men. The audience was clearly split into two groups, one of which clustered around a young man in a green robes, and the second group around another young man in a yellow robe. Clearly, the two of them had very high statuses, and currently, their eyes were fixed upon the old man in the middle of all the columns. They were also turning deaf ears to the pleading cries of the young women.

After a moment passed, the young man in the green robe suddenly asked, “What are we betting on this time?!”

“I bet that this time, Grandmaster Song’s pill refining will result in… her, her and her all becoming Young Beauty Pills!” As the young man in the yellow robe spoke, his eyes glittered as he singled out three young women among the nine. Two of those young women were those who refused to plead for their lives.

After a moment of thought, the young man in the green robe replied, “You made your choice pretty quickly. Well, in that case, I say that those three will fail to become pills!”

Then the two young men exchanged an icy glance.

It was at about this time that rumbling sounds could be heard as Grandmaster Song’s eyes suddenly flared with light. He waved both hands forcefully out into the air, causing the nine furnaces to blaze with fire. The pillars instantly grew hotter, and in the blink of an eye, nine flaming threads shot out of the fires toward the nine young women.

Terrified screams of desperation rang out from the mouths of seven of the young women. As for the other two, they were trembling, and clearly terrified, but still refused to make even a single sound. However, their hearts were clearly filled with regret.

When Meng Ru had told them about what was happening back in their bloodline mansion, they had instantly wanted to return, but now, it seemed that would be impossible.

Sighing inwardly, they exchanged glances, then slowly closed their eyes as the flaming threads closed in on them.

“Become pills!” Grandmaster Song threw his head back and roared, rising to his feet and throwing his hands into the air. Strange light shone out from his eyes, and yet, even as the words left his mouth, an enraged snort suddenly echoed through the air like thunder.

Cold words also rang out. “You’re the one who should become a pill!”

As the icy words reverberated back and forth, cracking sounds could be heard as the ground froze over. The nine furnaces trembled, and their flames winked out. Next, the furnaces actually exploded, and cracks began to spread out across the pillars, which then shattered.

The nine young women could now move. As soon as their feet touched the ground, they began to flee, except for the two who had refused to beg for their lives, who looked up into the air, excited expressions on their faces.

The crimson threads attached to the columns almost seemed to be self-aware, and were trying to flee in fear. However, before they could get very far, a powerful force sucked them back, twisting them together into what looked like a white medicinal pill, which came to rest in the hand of a young man who had suddenly appeared in the air up above.

He waved his arm, sending the white medicinal pill flying toward Grandmaster Song’s forehead. As it flew through the air, it crumbled, then fused into Grandmaster Song, who trembled and let out a miserable shriek. His body instantly burst into flames, and was burned into ash, all the way to the bone. What was left behind was a red medicinal pill.

The young man who had just arrived was none other than Meng Hao, followed by Meng Ru. Meng Ru was staring at the two steadfast young women, tears pouring down her cheeks. She quickly flew over and stood in front of them protectively.

This sudden development left all the bystanders completely shocked. As they edged backward, the two young men’s faces darkened.

“What gall! How dare you kill Grandmaster Song! Men, kill these people!”

“Bring me his head!” In response to their orders, the crowd of cultivators surrounding them flew into the air toward Meng Hao.

“What kind of clan are you?” Meng Hao said quietly, his eyes blazing with icy killing intent. “Refining people into pills for pleasure? You completely lack any humanity whatsoever. What is the point… of leaving any of you behind?!”

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# Chapter 1261: One Option… Amputate!

Meng Hao’s eyes were as cold as ice, but inwardly he was sighing. For a clan to decline in power was acceptable, but for the morals of its people to degenerate was sickening. Leaving them alive… was truly pointless.

By means of illustration, you could say that his grandfather’s bloodline had fallen into dire straits and was now at a point of extreme weakness, consisting of the elderly, the frail, the ill, and the crippled. The younger generation was forced into servitude, and the older generation was sick and decrepit. However, its soul was still present, and the heart was strong. They still stuck together like a family, and as such, would one day be able to rise to prominence again.

It was possible to sense that spirit within Meng Ru, Meng Chen, and the other two young women from just now. They all clung stubbornly to their hope for the future.

However, when it came to the rest of the so-called Meng Clan, Meng Hao felt quite disappointed.

“Even scum like this can be called Young Lords?” Meng Hao shook his head. During his entire life, starting in the Ninth Mountain and Sea and then in his short time in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, he had seen all sorts of Chosen, including Young Lords and Sect Princes. However, he had never seen people like he was seeing now in the Meng Clan.

“When dealing with such malignant rot, there’s only one option… amputate!” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with killing intent as the Meng Clan cultivators attacked him. He waved his right finger, causing rumbling to fill the air and ripples to spread out in all directions.

The ripples filled the area in the blink of an eye, and any cultivators they touched, regardless of their cultivation base, instantly exploded into ash.

The ripples spread, shaking everything, turning everything into dust. The two incredulous Young Lords didn’t even qualify to try to flee. In the briefest of moments, they were inundated by the ripples. Of course, life-saving magic flared to life in the form of shields as they tried to defend against the ripples.

However… they were completely useless. All they did was to buy a few breaths’ worth of time. Then the shields collapsed. The eyes of the two young men widened with disbelief, and then bangs could be heard as they were transformed into ash as well.

All of the cultivators behind them were also transformed into dust.

Soon the only people left were Meng Hao, the Meng Clan girls, and the other young women. Everyone else… was gone.

Everything happened so quickly that the young women could only gape in astonishment and stand there trembling and panting. As for Meng Ru, even if she were a stupid person who knew little about the Immortal Realm, she would still be able to understand that the power unleashed by Meng Chen just now… was definitely not that of an Immortal!

As for the other two young women from the same bloodline, their eyes were even wider. Their cultivation bases were significantly higher than Meng Ru’s, so they could pick up on even more of the clues. They looked over at Meng Hao, trembling with awe and reverence.

Meng Ru hesitated for a moment and then said, “Big bro Meng Chen… you–”

Before she could finish, one of her older cousins held out a hand to stop her from speaking.

Meng Hao looked at the three young women and nodded, his gaze gentle. Then he looked off into the distance, and once again his expression turned icy and somber. Suddenly, a powerful aura began to roil out from him, filling the area, causing the sky to dim and the lands to quake. The surrounding buildings and structures seemed incapable of withstanding the pressure, and soon creaking sounds could be heard.

Then, the creaking turned into rumbling as one building after another began to collapse. It was at this point that a few dozen beams of bright light began to shoot toward them from off in the distance. Roaring shouts echoed out, filled with fury and killing intent.

“Who are you that dares to get out of line in the Meng Clan!?”

“Are you looking to die!?” The two enraged shouts echoed out like thunder, causing two powerful shockwaves to speed toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao stood there looking coldly at the two incoming cultivators. The highest cultivation base among the two was merely in the great circle of the Ancient Realm, and the other was far from that.

“You people don’t even bother to determine who is in the right and who is in the wrong?” he said coolly. “Leaving you alive would also be pointless.” He took a step forward, vanishing. When he reappeared, he was right in front of the lead cultivator, a middle-aged man in extravagant clothing. The man’s eyes were red with rage, but the instant Meng Hao appeared in front of him, he began to shake, and his anger instantly faded half away into shock.

He had no idea what sort of technique Meng Hao had used to vanish and then reappear, but that was actually of secondary importance. Most important… was the fact that he could sense a boundless power radiating off of Meng Hao, the type of intense pressure that he would feel when standing in front of a Patriarch.

The man gasped and blurted, “You–”

The killing intent in Meng Hao’s eyes caused the man’s scalp to tingle so hard it felt like it would explode. He began to fall back, looking completely shocked by the terrifying power he sensed.

“You’re too slow,” Meng Hao said, shaking his head and simultaneously waving his sleeve. A massive tempest sprang out, transforming into a tornado that connected the sky and the land. It was so conspicuous that anyone in the Meng Clan would be able to see it.

It swept toward the middle-aged man and the cultivator behind him, moving with such incredible speed that they were incapable of fleeing. They struggled and fought back, but it only took a moment for the tornado to sweep over them, after which miserable screams rang out. It was as if a gigantic hand were using a huge brush to paint the entire tornado bright red.

The entire Meng Clan was completely shaken. Numerous cultivators were pulled out of their meditative trances, and after looking up, many of them immediately shot up into the air with expressions of astonishment on their faces.

“An ambush!!”

“Another clan is invading!!”

“An enemy clan is attacking!! Dammit, why didn’t the clan’s grand spell formation activate!?!?”

Cries of alarm spread out, and the entire clan began to stir. There were also nine figures who began to fly toward the tornado from nine different directions.

They were followed by even more figures, and as their cultivation base power surged out, it transformed into a spell formation. Instead of flying directly to the tornado, they began to circle around it; soon colors flashed in the sky as the cultivators formed a massive vortex which thoroughly enveloped the area where Meng Hao was standing!

Meng Ru was trembling in shock, as were the other two young Meng Clan women. As for Meng Hao, he looked down at them from up in the air and smiled slightly. That smile seemed to contain the power to completely ease their hearts, and the fear the three young women felt instantly faded away.

Meng Hao turned. Completely ignoring the nine cultivators leading the formation, and all the others who were following them, Meng Hao looked off into the distance at one particular cultivator who had stopped in place and wasn't moving.

He was an old man, and when Meng Hao's gaze fell upon him, he gasped and began to tremble, then started to back up.

Even as he took a step back, though, Meng Hao waved his hand. A second tornado sprang into being, sweeping through the crowds toward the old man, provoking numerous bloodcurdling screams. The old man had a powerful cultivation base, but it didn't matter. Nor did it matter what divine abilities and magical items he unleashed. He was still consumed by the wind.

Moments later, the second tornado was also stained blood red.

Meng Hao hovered in midair, looking around coldly. The two tornadoes whipped nearby, and if you looked at them long enough, it almost seemed as if two vicious wolves were lurking inside of them, peering out voraciously.

"Let's go," Meng Hao said calmly. He would not wipe out the entire bloodlines this day. He would simply comply with Grandma Meng's orders to bring the girls back. Furthermore, he could sense that although the clan's defensive spell formation hadn't been activated originally, the slaughter he had just carried out was causing rumbling sounds to rise up.

There were also ripples beginning to spread, and within them, Meng Hao could sense a terrifying power. That power was definitely… the Meng Clan's grand defensive spell formation!

As soon as Meng Hao spoke, he took a step forward, and the three young women followed him anxiously. Before they could get very far, though, nine beams of light began to close in on them.

“Don’t even dream about leaving!” roared one of the nine. In response, Meng Hao looked back at the man. This man was a Clan Elder, with a cultivation base in the great circle of the Ancient Realm, very close to the Dao Realm. However, he suddenly stopped in place, as though a powerful hand had clasped him by the throat. Face flickering with shock, he fell back, face turning ashen as he coughed up a huge mouthful of blood.

One gaze seriously injured an Elder, which caused everyone else to gasp. They could sense how terrifying Meng Hao was, but they could never have imagined… that he was this terrifying!

“Dao… Dao Realm!” whispered the Elder in a shaky voice.

Completely ignoring the nine cultivators, Meng Hao continued on his way, followed by Meng Ru and the other two young women, who were incredibly excited. When they looked at Meng Hao, it was with complete enthusiasm and ardor. To them, Meng Hao was a towering mountain of their bloodline, someone who no amount of wind or rain could ever budge.

The nine cultivators didn’t dare to try to stop him. The massive vortex spell formation also stopped in place, and the cultivators who were powering it parted to make a path for Meng Hao, looks of astonishment on their faces. As for Meng Hao, his expression was calm as he proceeded through.

Everything was extremely quiet. On the ground, numerous members of the Meng Clan stood outside of their houses and other buildings, looking up into the sky at what was happening, completely shocked. Meng De was there in a temple, looking up at Meng Hao with an expression of utter disbelief.

In another location in the Meng Clan, there were three other young women who were now looking at Meng Hao, Meng Ru, and the other young women of the bloodlines. These other three had complex expressions on their faces, and they almost looked as if they were being stabbed in the heart.

They were the bloodline relatives who had chosen not to return, and had instead opted to remain as servants to other clan members!

They had forsaken their bloodline, and therefore, their bloodline had cast them off.

It was at this point that, all of a sudden, an intense light exploded out from the enormous statue in the middle of the Meng Clan ancestral mansion.

“State your name!”

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# Chapter 1262: Activating the Clan Defense Formation

As the voice echoed out, the light shining out from the statue transformed into pressure that spread out, then converged onto Meng Hao.

Rumbling filled the air, colors flashed, winds screamed…. As Dao Realm pressure descended from above, natural laws retreated and dissipated, until the only thing present was the Dao Realm pressure.

The members of the Meng Clan looked on with wide eyes. The nine cultivators in the great circle of the Ancient Realm clasped hands and bowed deeply.

“Greetings, Patriarch!”

The cultivators in the vortex did the same, excited expressions on their faces.

“Greetings, Patriarch!”

Down below, all of the Meng Clan cultivators who had stepped out of the various houses and buildings, even the servants and cultivators with other surnames… all bowed deeply and joined their voices to cry out, “Greetings, Patriarch!”

Meng Ru and the other girls’ faces fell; they might have complete trust in Meng Hao, but deep down inside, any Patriarch… represented the most supreme and paramount power of the clan, and they were existences that were so far above them that even if they gazed upwards they would never be able to catch a glimpse of one.

The entire Meng Clan was completely shaken. Within that enormous statue were nine hidden chambers, four of which were empty. The other five were occupied by cultivators sitting cross-legged in meditation. The person who had just spoken was the figure in the eighth chamber, who now sat there with eyes open and a serious look on his face.

He was not the Patriarch from the ninth bloodline, the one that Meng Hao had previously encountered face to face. This was the Patriarch of the eighth bloodline!

Considering that the cultivators who had just been killed were members of his bloodline, he had no choice but to make an appearance.

Meng Hao stopped in place and turned to look at the statue behind him, without even sparing a glance at the Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering pressure descending toward him. Then he began to speak, his voice cool. The words he uttered were the type that anyone would think were wildly egotistical and arrogant.

“I bet you don’t even have the balls to try and fight me!” His voice was calm, but echoed out in all directions, instantly arousing the ire of the other members of the Meng Clan.

“What incredible gall!!”

“Are you looking to die?!?!”

“You overestimate yourself!” Numerous shouts of rage echoed out within the central continent. The cultivators of the Meng Clan had to admit that Meng Hao was powerful to a terrifying degree. But in their minds, if he tried to fight one of their Patriarchs, he would be defeated with a single blow!

That was the type of faith exercised in the clan Patriarchs by all clan members, both young and old.

Even Meng Ru and the other two young women were extremely nervous as they stood there next to Meng Hao, and the panic was visible on their faces.

In sharp contrast to all that was the object of the clan members' veneration, the Patriarch sitting there in the eighth chamber, whose expression changed drastically. At the same time that Meng Hao spoke, the Patriarch was able to detect fluctuations that only someone in the Dao Realm would be able to feel.

Those fluctuations filled the Patriarch with a sense of intense terror, and he knew that even if he went all out with every scrap of power he could muster, it wouldn't do any good.

The sensation he got was that he was like a tiny firefly, and Meng Hao was a burning torch!

"Impossible… what… what cultivation base does he have!?" The old man's eyes were wide; moments ago, he had been on the verge of stepping out in person, but now he was hesitating. In the end, he didn't dare to emerge and in fact… couldn't even think of words to say in response.

Meng Hao's expression was calm as he looked coolly at the statue for a moment before turning and heading off with Meng Ru and the other young women. The only reason he was backing down was because he didn't feel like making complete enemies of everyone in the Meng Clan.

"This is the Meng Clan after all," he thought. "Once Grandma Meng's cultivation base is restored, she can decide what to do." He wouldn't exceed his authority in this matter. Even if his mother was a member of the Meng Clan, he himself was a Young Lord of the Fang Clan.

There were certain things he could do if he wished, but he had to do them very carefully. Even if he had good intentions, if he went too far it could lead to misunderstandings, which he didn't want to happen.

That was why, after a bit of thought, Meng Hao decided to just back down. Behind him, the various cultivators of the Meng Clan followed after him and stared at him murderously, even mockingly. However, their expressions of outrage quickly began to die down, until in the end, not a sound could be heard. These Meng Clan cultivators' faces flickered with bewilderment, and there were even some faces that went deathly pale with astonishment.

That was because, unexpectedly, after Meng Hao spoke, their Patriarch… didn’t respond at all. It even seemed like his aura had gotten much weaker.

It was as if… Meng Hao had been completely correct about their Patriarch; he didn’t dare to show his face and fight!

That fact caused the minds of numerous members of the Meng Clan to reel in shock. As for the cultivators in the great circle of the Ancient Realm, waves of astonishment battered their minds. Earlier, they had suspected that Meng Hao was in the Dao Realm, but now, there didn’t seem to be any need for speculation. Apparently, this young man… really was in the Dao Realm!

“He… he really is… in the Dao Realm!” Gasps could be heard from among the cultivators in the great circle of the Ancient Realm as they watched Meng Hao leaving.

Meanwhile, the Patriarch in the eight chamber of the statue gritted his teeth. At the same time, he could sense that the Patriarchs in the ninth and first chambers were also awake, and yet were doing nothing.

“Dammit, they want me to probe this guy’s abilities, huh…?” A gleam of determination could be seen in the eyes of the eighth Patriarch. No person could reach the Dao Realm if they lacked courage; if they did, how could they possibly have passed the Dao Realm Tribulation?

“With the clan spell formation, I can give it a shot!” he said, gritting his teeth. Suddenly, his cultivation base erupted with power, sending the fluctuations of a 1-Essence Dao Realm expert shooting out from within the statue.

The other members of the Meng Clan saw golden light shining out, which became a golden ocean then that transformed into an enormous hand, stretching out toward Meng Hao.

Colors flashed as the golden hand filled the sky, casting shadow over all the lands beneath!

Rumbling filled the air as boundless power bore down on Meng Hao. Even as the faces of Meng Ru and the other young women went pale, Meng Hao turned, and his eyes flashed with icy coldness.

“So you do have some balls,” he said coolly. He did nothing to avoid the incoming golden hand, and in fact, leapt up toward it.

Then he slammed into it bodily and with complete disregard. Massive rumbling could be heard as the golden hand tried to crush him; and yet, as soon as it touched him, it began to tremble, and then… collapsed into pieces!

As the hand shattered, the golden ocean disintegrated. Apparently, a Dao Realm attack couldn’t stand up to a single move by Meng Hao.

When the hand collapsed, the old man in the eighth chamber of the statute trembled and then coughed up a mouthful of blood as he was sent flying backward, out of control. A moment later, he appeared outside the statue, where he coughed up another massive mouthful of blood. Face pale white, he stared at Meng Hao in complete terror and astonishment.

“Dao… Dao Lord? Dao Sovereign?” Intense fear pounded within the heart of the Patriarch of the eighth bloodline.

Equally shaken was the Patriarch of the ninth bloodline. He recognized Meng Hao from their earlier meeting, and to see him fighting at this level was completely and utterly shocking.

They were shocked, but as for the rest of the members of the Meng Clan, they were utterly dumbfounded. Their jaws dropped as they saw their Patriarch coughing up blood, whereas Meng Hao was standing there with a completely calm face. All he had done was take a step forward!

That single step caused a Dao Realm expert to fall into retreat, and to be injured. The faith of the Meng Clan cultivators in their Patriarch was completely toppled.

All faces were completely gray and ashen. Within the crowd was the young man Meng De, who had been watching all along, and had instantly recognized Meng Hao. His eyes were wide with shock as he watched everything play out.

Other than the gasps, there was no sound at all. Meng Hao looked over indifferently at the wounded Patriarch of the eighth bloodline. However, it was at this point that the Patriarch's eyes turned crimson. He suddenly threw his head back and howled, then slapped his forehead viciously with his right hand. A boom rang out, and the sky went dim. Suddenly, a massive pressure radiated out from the enormous statue. In the blink of an eye, it had filled the area, and although no one in the audience could see anything out of the ordinary, Meng Hao was able to clearly see the shield which had sprung up.

"Defensive spell formation…." he thought. However, he didn't back up. Instead, he stood in place, eyes flickering as the shield expanded out toward him and then clashed with him briefly.

That brief clash caused Meng Hao's pupils to constrict slightly. He could sense a Heaven-destroying, Earth-extinguishing power in that shield, something that he couldn't resist for very long with only his fleshly body power.

"This defensive spell formation could actually be even more powerful. It's strong enough with one person controlling it, but with more people backing it, I would actually be in significant danger." After sensing the power of the shield, Meng Hao decided not to fight it. Instead, he turned, flicking his sleeve as he took Meng Ru and the other young women away, vanishing off into the distance.

As Meng Hao left, the Patriarch of the eighth bloodline watched him go, his expression unsightly. The fact that Meng Hao had been able to stand up to the attack of the spell formation was completely shocking.

"I can't believe… that he stood up to the ancestral spell formation and wasn't even hurt…. Just what Realm is he in? He's not a Dao Lord. Could it be… could it be that he really is a Dao Sovereign? But that's impossible!!"

Back in the statue, the Patriarchs in the first and ninth chambers had very serious expressions on their faces, especially the Patriarch from the first bloodline.

“The tenth bloodline…?” he murmured quietly, face grim.

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# Chapter 1263: Removing Nine Spikes; the Seventh Sea Mobilizes!

Of course, Meng Hao was not a Dao Sovereign, nor was he equivalent to such a level. However, if he unleashed his full battle prowess, he could fight any Dao Realm cultivator under the level of a Dao Sovereign. That had to do with this fleshly body, his Paragon magic, and most importantly, the fact that he was an Allheaven Dao Immortal!

Because of that, despite the fact that he was merely an Immortal, he could still shake the Dao Realm.

“Soon all four Nirvana Fruits will be fully fused. When they become my Dao Fruit, they can help me push open the Door of the Ancient Realm and extinguish my Soul Lamps! The only thing I’m not sure about is exactly how many Soul Lamps I’ll end up with.” Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed with anticipation. Considering that he could already fight the Dao Realm, in his view the Ancient Realm was merely a stepping stone.

He hadn’t even considered the possibility of failing, and as far as he was concerned, the Ancient Realm wasn’t even very important. Of course… before Meng Hao, it had been a very, very long time since any Allheaven Dao Immortal had appeared. Virtually no one knew how difficult it was for someone like him to step into the Ancient Realm.

Meng Hao, being able to sense that his fourth Nirvana Fruit was nearing a state of complete absorption, was incredibly excited. Currently, he was whistling through the air with Meng Ru and the other young women in tow as he headed back toward the continent where their bloodline waited.

Soon, they were back. When the two young women who had just been saved saw how different everything was, they became very excited. Meng Hao went to see his grandmother and granduncles. After he told his grandmother about what had happened when he had rescued the two young women, she asked, “Hao’er, how confident are you that you can fully heal our injuries?”

All three of the oldtimers looked at Meng Hao as they waited for his answer.

He thought for a moment, then looked up and replied, “I wouldn’t dare to say 100% confident. Perhaps… 80%!”

In response to his words, his grandmother began to breathe heavily, and his two granduncles began to tremble. All three of them exchanged glances and then nodded.

“Hao’er, use whatever techniques you can. It doesn’t matter how dangerous the process is, we’re willing to risk it!”

Meng Hao took a deep breath, then nodded seriously. He had long since come to the realization that if his grandmother and granduncles could recover their cultivation bases, then considering their previous standing within the clan, the bloodline would no longer continue to decline.

Time passed. Meng Hao spent his days giving sermons about the Dao and treating his grandmother and granduncles. He also worked on the cultivation bases of his three aunts and two uncles.

As the entire group improved, their auras grew more powerful, day by day.

As for his two uncles who had previously been so down and out, their eyes burned with life and vigor. Now, they had hope!

His three aunts recovered fastest of all. Within about ten days, they already possessed the battle prowess of Immortals. His grandmother and granduncles recovered the slowest, and yet, were gradually beginning to emanate more profound pressure.

Because of the strong Immortal qi available for cultivation, all the other bloodline clan members were stabilizing their cultivation bases, and every few days, someone would make a breakthrough.

Although all such breakthroughs were within the Spirit Realm, it was still possible to see that the bloodline had excellent latent talent, and the previous hard work they had gone through in their cultivation was now leading to large numbers of cultivation base breakthroughs.

Lately, everyone in the bloodline felt full of hope, and whenever they looked at Meng Hao, it was with fervent ardor.

In sharp contrast was the ancestral mansion of the Meng Clan.

People there were as jumpy as if enemy soldiers lurked around every corner, and the slightest breeze could cause panic. During the ten days which passed, everyone in the nine bloodlines learned of what had happened, much to their shock. The defensive spell formation was constantly on, as if war were expected to break out at any time.

Another month passed, and Meng Hao could tell that his fourth Nirvana Fruit had been completely absorbed. A mere thought on his part could summon the Door of the Ancient Realm.

Furthermore, his grandmother and the others had reached a critical juncture in the healing process. On one particular day, all of the bloodline clan members ceased meditating and stood guard. It didn’t matter that their cultivation bases were relatively weak, they would still not allow anyone to disturb what was happening.

His grandmother and everyone else was out in the courtyard, while Meng Hao sat cross-legged alone indoors. Wisps of white mist rose up from his head, transforming into clouds, within which could be heard the faint sound of thunder.

After a moment, Meng Hao’s eyes opened, and they shone brightly. He began to speak, and soon his words were heard by his grandmother and granduncles. “Grandma Meng will go last. Granduncles, you will go just before her. I’ll start with everyone else.”

Meng Hao could accept that accidents might happen with the others, but he wanted to be absolutely certain of being able to successfully treat his grandmother. He would use the others to ensure that he was comfortable with the process. That was why the final person he would treat would be his grandmother.

Grandma Meng took a deep breath, eyes shining brightly as she extended her hand, pointing toward one of her two sons, who had a very excited expression on his face.

That was Meng Hao’s 7th Uncle, who took a deep breath as he entered the room where Meng Hao awaited them. He looked at Meng Hao sitting there cross-legged, then clasped hands and bowed deeply. Finally, he sat down cross-legged in front of him.

Meng Hao nodded, then reached out and placed a finger onto his 7th Uncle’s forehead. Then he rotated his cultivation base, and poured the power of an Allheaven Dao Immortal into him. 7th Uncle’s body began to tremble, and he was clearly in pain. Gradually, nine spikes began to emerge from within him.

A moment later, a pinging sound could be heard as one of the spikes fell to the ground. In that instant, 7th Uncle’s cultivation base surged with power. Next was a second spike, then a third, until eight of the spikes were removed. In that moment 7th Uncle’s cultivation base was completely restored, and surged with the power of the early Ancient Realm!

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he pulled his hand back from 7th Uncle’s forehead. As he did, a ninth spike flew out from 7th Uncle’s forehead!

7th Uncle shivered, then threw his head back and roared. His cultivation base erupted with explosive power, moving past the mid Ancient Realm. Trembling as he took stock of his body’s condition, he stood up, expression one of complete excitement as he once again clasped hands and bowed to Meng Hao, then turned and left.

The process went similarly with the second person in line, and the third, and the fourth….

Two uncles, three aunts. All five people had nine spikes stuck in their bodies, which Meng Hao extracted one by one. As of this moment, his grandmother's bloodline now had five Ancient Realm experts!

The highest cultivation base among them belonged to his 5th aunt, who was in the great circle of the Ancient Realm, just on the verge of being able to break through.

Around the same time that the spikes were being removed from the five of them, in the Seventh Mountain and Sea, past the invisible barrier which separated it from the Eighth Mountain and Sea, an altar could be seen floating in the starry sky. Suddenly, rumbling booms could be heard coming from that altar.

The huge altar had an enormous magical symbol on its surface, and it only took a single glance for one to be able to tell that it was the character Meng. Numerous stone spikes could be seen stabbing into the character, a total of nine of them. The spike in the middle was the largest, with the spikes growing smaller as they neared the edges of the character.

Furthermore, all of those stone spikes oozed blood, causing the entire altar to be stained bright red….

That was only one of the altars. There were other altars in the area… a total of nine! Apparently, this was a very important part of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, as roughly 100,000 cultivators were standing watch over the area, including nine Dao Realm experts.

About the time that Meng Hao removed the spikes from his two uncles and three aunts, rumbling sounds filled the area, and on two of the nine altars, all of the stone spikes suddenly collapsed.

The 100,000 cultivators suddenly shivered and opened their eyes. The Dao Realm experts seemed especially affected, and their faces darkened.

“Something’s happened in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, in the Meng Clan.”

“Someone is tampering with the Lord-Elimination spell formations!”

“It doesn’t matter, as long as the master formation isn’t broken, it will be nothing more than an inconvenience….” The nine Dao Realm experts’ faces flickered as they looked at the fifth altar out of the nine respectively. Then they went to action, both stabilizing the altars and also sending their divine sense out in an explosive tempest.

As the nine Dao Realm experts were working on the altars, back in the Meng Clan in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, one of Meng Hao’s granduncles walked into the room and sat down cross-legged. A serious expression flickered on Meng Hao’s face, and he placed not just a finger, but his entire palm onto his granduncle’s forehead.

Seeing the serious look on Meng Hao’s face, his granduncle laughed heartily and said, “Go all out with your cultivation base, my life isn’t that important!” As Meng Hao’s cultivation base power poured into him, he began to shake.

Meng Hao spent more time with him than he had with the previous five combined. As he extracted the spikes, his granduncle’s cultivation base rocketed up madly, and soon was in the great circle of the Ancient Realm.

“Last one!” Meng Hao said. He pulled his hand back, and rumbling sounds could be heard. Blood sprayed out of his granduncle’s mouth as the ninth spike few out of his forehead. As it did, it was possible to see a black thread attached to it, which caused Meng Hao’s eyes to flicker. He quickly cut the thread, causing a cracking sound to be heard. His granduncle coughed up another mouthful of blood, and yet, his face began to change. He no longer looked like he had just crawled out of a grave. Although he was still old, his face radiated a powerful life force, and his cultivation base progressed even further. He was now past the great circle, and was comparable to the Quasi-Dao Realm!

He laughed heartily as he rose to his feet, his energy surging, and brilliant light shining from his eyes. He was now as he had been before all of the tragedy. He looked down at Meng Hao with a gentle expression and murmured, “It’s high time our bloodline rises to prominence again!”

With that, he turned and vanished, reappearing outside, where he took a long, deep breath. Rumbling could be heard as he sucked in a massive quantity of the energy of Heaven and Earth.

When that ninth spike was extracted, and the thread was severed, back in the Seventh Mountain and Sea, the stone spikes on another of the nine altars shattered. Furthermore, the altar itself trembled, and cracks spread out across its surface. It looked like it would collapse at any moment.

The surrounding cultivators’ faces flickered, and they performed incantation gestures. The nine Dao Realm experts frowned, once again going to work to stabilize the altars. However, before much time passed, the same thing happened to the fourth altar that had just occurred to all the others.

That was when the second of Meng Hao’s granduncles had his final spike extracted, and experienced an incredible increase in cultivation base.

The nine Dao Realm cultivators’ faces flickered, and one of them roared. “Dammit, we can’t let any more of the altars be cracked. The fifth altar is the primary formation, it mustn’t be interfered with! That will influence the entire offensive. Pour your divine sense into it and stop whoever is breaking the formations!”

The other eight had serious expressions in their eyes as they performed incantation gestures and sent their divine sense rumbling out.

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# Chapter 1264: Just Where Are You…?

Something else happened when four of the altars cracked, something that occurred in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, but not in the Meng Clan. Instead, it was in the Heavengod Alliance, in the very middle of the Eighth Mountain and Sea… on the Eighth Mountain!

At the very peak of that mountain was a heavenly pool, within which was a Xuanwu turtle, sitting there with its eyes closed. Next to the pond was a temple….

Heavengod Temple!

That was where the legendary and mysterious Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea resided… Heavengod!

No one other than Heavengod could set foot into that area of the mountain peak, as it was a restricted area. Currently, there was an oil lamp burning in Heavengod Temple.

That lamp burned eternally, and despite the fact that there was no wind, the flame danced, casting flickering lights about in the temple. Also visible within the temple was a huge throne, upon which sat a mysterious-looking figure.

His face was impossible to see. He wore a black robe, and his head was bowed as he sat there, completely unmoving. However, it was possible to see that this Heavengod was wearing a mask.

On that mask was an image of an intertwined turtle and snake…. 1

As one altar after another cracked in the Seventh Mountain and Sea, the figure on the throne began to twitch… almost as if he were waking up.

Each time he did, the flame in the lamp also danced.

The figure on the throne…. was the most supreme and paramount figure in the Eighth Mountain and Sea… the Mountain and Sea Lord Heavengod. There were many, many legends about this person. Some said that Heavengod came from the Han Clan. Some said that he came from the Meng Clan. There were some people who claimed that Heavengod had always existed, and did not originate in the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Regardless of any of that, in all the years, no one had ever seen the true features which lay beneath Heavengod’s mask. What people saw never changed; he always looked exactly like this.

Gradually, other rumors spread, although few people believed them because of their utter bizarreness. According to those rumors, Heavengod… had not always existed.

According to these legends… Mountain and Sea Lords did not live forever, and in fact, all of them had limited longevity. The only reason they continued to exist was because each Mountain and Sea Lord had a unique way of fooling the Heavens to continue on existing.

Supposedly, one of the methods, the one used by Heavengod of the Eighth Mountain and Sea… was the transference of their legacy. Supposedly, when Heavengod died, he would find a successor to pass on his legacy to, and thus ensure that Heavengod existed forever in a type of transmigration.

Meanwhile, back in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, on one of the Meng Clan’s continents, Meng Hao rose to his feet and bowed deeply as his grandmother entered the room.

Meng Hao had not bowed in greeting to anyone else who had entered the room, only to her.

Grandma Meng looked at him with a kind expression on her face, nodding as she sat down cross-legged in front of him. Meng Hao took a deep breath, and a look of concentration covered his face as he sat down somberly.

“Don’t be nervous,” she said quietly. “I’ve lived for a long, long time, and experienced many things. There are few hardships which I would shy away from anymore, so even if you fail, it doesn’t matter. With your two granduncles having been restored, our bloodline is already destined to rise to prominence.

“If I die, the only thing I’ll regret is that I won’t have a chance to see your Grandpa Meng again. I can sense that he hasn’t perished, and that… he isn’t very far away.” Finally, she sighed.

Meng Hao had mixed feelings, especially considering that his grandfather had gone missing while trying to save him.

“Grandma Meng, you won’t have any regrets,” he said softly. “I’m going to succeed in this, and one day, I’m going to find Grandpa Meng too!”

His grandmother chuckled, and the kindness in her eyes grew stronger.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and performed a double-handed incantation gesture. He was now very familiar with how to extract the spikes, and was very confident in his actions. He raised both hands and placed them onto his grandmother’s forehead, then unleashed the full power of his cultivation base!

Even when treating his two granduncles, he had only used thirty percent of the power of his cultivation base. Now, he was going all out. His grandmother began to tremble, and suddenly, nine areas on her body, including her forehead, began to shine with brilliant light.

Those nine areas were where the spikes were located. As soon as Meng Hao saw the glowing light, his face flickered, and he suddenly heard nine voices roaring in his ears.

“Whoever dares to touch this spell formation will die!!” Those nine voices joined together, and their words stabbed into Meng Hao’s mind as if to destroy it.

“You overestimate yourself!” he replied with a cold snort, eyes flickering with killing intent. Because he had cultivated the Dao Divinity Scripture, his divine sense was incredibly powerful. He immediately sent it out to counter the nine wills entering his mind.

He was essentially fighting the Dao Realm now, in a one-against-nine fight!

Rumbling could be heard as Meng Hao trembled. However, his two hands remained firmly in place. As his grandmother trembled, and the light grew more brilliant, the spikes began to be forced out.

It was at this point that, back in the Seventh Mountain and Sea, the nine Dao Realm experts’ faces flickered, and they went all out with every scrap of power they could muster, and yet they were completely incapable of doing anything to the person interfering with the spell formation.

“I’m familiar with all the powerful experts in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, where did this person come from?!?!”

“It must be a peak Dao Lord, someone on the verge of becoming a Dao Sovereign! Dammit!”

“Just wait and see how long he can hold out. As long as Heavengod doesn’t wake up and make a move, he won’t have an easy time breaking the altar spell formation!” Roaring, the nine Dao Realm cultivators unleashed their divine sense again in an attempt to stop Meng Hao.

Rumbling sounds emanated as they fought, separated by a vast distance, yet no one besides they themselves could hear it.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he reached down and smacked the ground. The Lightning Cauldron appeared, floating above his head, pulsing with the power of lightning. In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao and his grandmother vanished from the room to reappear in an empty field a vast distance away.

Meng Hao’s grandmother had her eyes closed, and thus didn’t even notice that the teleportation had occurred. Almost as soon as they appeared, he summoned the Paragon Bridge, sending a massive power shooting out in nine different directions.

Intense rumbling sounds echoed out as nine ravines were carved deep into the earth, within which black flames burned.

“Looking to die?!” Meng Hao’s face was grim as his right hand flashed with an incantation gesture. Then he pressed down onto his grandmother’s shoulder, from within which popped out a spike.

His grandmother didn’t tremble, but the spike did. It also emanated a black mist which formed together into the face of an old man, who howled at Meng Hao. Meng Hao’s eyes went wide, and he quickly sucked in a breath. The face collapsed back into black mist, which Meng Hao then breathed in.

Then he bit down hard, and a scream could be heard. At the same time, back in the Seventh Mountain and Sea, one of the nine Dao Realm experts next to the altars suddenly coughed up a mouthful of blood.

“He consumed the divine sense I sent out!!”

It was at this point that, one by one, the other old men began to cough up blood. First a second, then a third, and a fourth, and a fifth….

Next, rumbling could be heard from the fifth altar as the stone spikes there began to shatter. The altar was trembling, and cracks spread out across its surface.

“Combine all of our power!” roared one of the nine Dao Realm experts. “Prevent the spell formation from being broken! The fifth altar is too important! It must not be broken!!” Immediately, the surrounding 100,000 cultivators performed incantation gestures, and began to murmur complex curse spells. Almost immediately, they began to shiver, and their bodies withered visibly.

Within the space of a few breaths of time, all 100,000 cultivators looked like nothing more than bags of bones. It was a huge sacrifice on their part, but the result was a shocking curse power that surged toward the altar.

In the Eighth Mountain and Sea, Meng Hao sat on the wide plain, hands flickering as he placed numerous sealing marks onto his grandmother. The entire time, she hadn’t trembled once, and had kept her eyes closed. It was a completely different scene from when he had extracted the spikes from the others.

That was because she was Meng Hao’s grandmother, and he was working as hard as possible to ensure that any pain she felt was reduced as much as possible.

As the spikes were removed, they emanated black mist, which turned into faces. Meng Hao consumed them all, until finally, eight spikes had been forced out. His expression was very serious as he placed both hands onto his grandmother’s forehead and then wrenched them backwards.

Shocking rumbling sounds could be heard, as if lightning and thunder were pounding the land. A black spot appeared on his grandmother’s forehead as the ninth spike flew out. It was accompanied by numerous illusory figures, all of them screaming as they spewed forth like an eruption.

This was the curse power converged by the sacrifice of the 100,000 cultivators, plus the rage of the final Dao Realm expert directed at anyone who would try to sever this connection’s power.

Meng Hao’s face turned grim, and he let out a cold snort. Then his right hand lifted into the air, and his eyes began to shine. Almost in the same moment that the curse power touched him, it exploded out into boundless black mist that instantly enveloped him.

However, it was also in that same moment that Meng Hao completely severed the ninth spike from his grandmother. The restrictive spell that had been placed upon her vanished, and the fifth altar in the Seventh Mountain and Sea shattered into countless pieces.

The other four had merely been cracked and fragmented, but now they also exploded, ensuring that of the original nine altars, only four remained intact!

At the same time, in the Heavengod Temple on the Eighth Mountain, the figure seated on the throne began to tremble violently. Almost imperceptibly, the mask flashed with light, as if the eyes behind that mask had opened a sliver. A terrifying pressure then radiated out from within those eyes!

Gradually, the figure’s mouth moved, and he said something that no one could hear, something said only to himself.

He said… “Hao’er!”

Meanwhile, back on the vast plain on the continent in the Meng Clan, Meng Hao was trembling. Then he threw his head back and roared, and cracking sounds rang out from inside of him. His cultivation base surged with power, and Greed’s life force began to emanate from his fourth Nirvana Fruit.

That was the moment in which his grandmother awoke. As she did, her cultivation base rocketed up, and her eyes opened to see Meng Hao and the black mist covering him.

“Hao’er, you….”

Within the black mist, Meng Hao took a deep breath. Just as he was about to dispel the mist, he suddenly experienced a sensation of extreme danger, coming from out in the starry sky!

“Grandma Meng, I’m fine. You head back now, I just need some time to get rid of this curse.” Eyes narrowing, he suddenly teleported out into the starry sky along with the black mist.

His grandmother’s face darkened, and she fell back a few steps. Looking up into the sky toward where Meng Hao had disappeared, she didn’t even think about her own cultivation base, but instead, began to worry about Meng Hao’s safety.

If something bad happened to him, it wouldn’t matter that her cultivation base had recovered, she would feel unending guilt. Suddenly, she thought about Meng Hao’s grandfather, and she sighed.

“Just… where are you…?”

1. In Chinese mythology, the Xuanwu turtle is often depicted as being intertwined with a snake. See this image. P.S. If I recall correctly Patriarch Reliance was initially described as looking like this type of turtle, which is why I never found it weird that his head/face could appear in the State of Zhao above his shell

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# Chapter 1265: Comeback

Meng Hao teleported out into the starry sky, where he hovered cross-legged, surrounded by black mist. At the same time, further out in the inky black and beyond the continents of the Meng Clan, a figure hovered a great distance from Meng Hao, gazing at him.

It was a handsome young man in a long black robe. His hair floated around him, and in some respects he almost seemed as if he were a part of the starry sky itself. Few people would ever be able to detect his presence.

It was none other than… Ji Dongyang from the Ninth Mountain and Sea!!

As soon as Meng Hao left for the Eighth Mountain and Sea, he had followed, and now here he was, looking at Meng Hao!

Ji Dongyang seemed a bit hesitant, but his eyes glittered. He had been watching Meng Hao for three days now, and currently, a slight smile could be seen on his face.

“This Meng Hao is one cunning, crafty character. Even if the curse power from the Seventh Mountain and Sea is tough to deal with, it shouldn’t have caused him this much of a problem….” Ji Dongyang’s eyes gleamed with decisiveness as he backed up and then vanished.

In the moment that he vanished, Meng Hao was hovering cross-legged above the Meng Clan continent, surrounded by black mist. However, his eyes were flickering as he stared in the direction in which Ji Dongyang vanished.

The curse power was not weak, but just as Ji Dongyang had said, it wasn’t anything that would cause difficulty for Meng Hao.

Three days ago, just when he had been about to dispel the mist, he had suddenly experienced a sensation of crisis coming from the direction of the starry sky. That sensation was too sudden, and was something he almost hadn’t sensed coming. Apparently, the fully-absorbed fourth Nirvana Fruit had bestowed him even keener senses than before.

Meng Hao wasn’t sure of the source of the danger, but he had decided to delay in dispelling the curse, all in the hopes of drawing out whoever it was that was a threat. However, that person was too cautious, and after waiting for three days, had given up.

After a moment of thought, Meng Hao waved his right hand, causing the black curse mist to begin to roil. A moment later, it began to converge inside of him. The three days of refinement ensured that it only took the time it takes an incense stick to burn for the black mist to vanish completely.

The only part that remained of it was a tiny black spot on the tip of Meng Hao’s finger. Shockingly, that was the refined combination of all of the curse power.

Meng Hao looked at his pitch-black fingertip and thought, “Getting rid of this curse power would be a big waste. I’m sure I can find some way to use it.”

After looking out into the starry sky once more, he swished his sleeve and vanished. When he reappeared, he was back down on the Meng Clan continent, where he became a beam of light that shot toward his grandmother’s location.

His grandmother had been waiting nervously for days, so when Meng Hao returned, she breathed a sigh of relief, her eyes radiating boundless affection. Meng Hao was her grandson, and although he might not have a strong blood connection to the others, he was still her direct relative and descendant.

After Meng Hao’s return, all of his grandmother’s people continued to make cultivation base breakthroughs. That was especially true of Meng Hao’s two uncles and three aunts, and even moreso his two granduncles. By now, their cultivation bases had returned to their previous peaks!

His granduncles were in the great circle of the Ancient Realm, and although they had not yet stepped into the Dao Realm, they could battle evenly with Quasi-Dao cultivators.

As far as his grandmother, she was also in the great circle of the Ancient Realm, but now that her cultivation base was restored, Meng Hao could sense some unique fluctuations on her. Apparently… that had something to do with the Meng Clan itself.

As of this point, everyone was making preparations… to make a comeback in the clan!

“The time has come to settle things in the Meng Clan,” Grandma Meng murmured. “What once was ours, will be ours once more.” The gleam in her eyes had been buried for too long. As she stood there with Meng Hao’s two granduncles next to her, rumbling sounds began to echo out.

“It’s time to leave. We’re… going home!” With that, she took a step forward, joined by Meng Hao’s two granduncles, two uncles, and three aunts. All of them transformed into beams of light that shot toward the Meng Clan’s central continent.

Meng Hao’s expression was calm as he followed along at his grandmother’s side. As for the other members of the bloodline, they were told to stay behind; even though their cultivation bases were higher than before, they weren’t high enough to allow them to participate in the fight that was about to take place.

Rumbling echoed out as Meng Hao and the others shot toward the main continent. It only took a short time before they arrived at the ancestral mansion.

Mixed emotions could be seen on the faces of his grandmother and granduncles, and as for his uncles and aunts, reminiscence could be seen in their eyes. They had been chased away from this place years ago, and had never imagined that they would be able to return. But now… here they were.

The only reason they could do so was because of Meng Hao, and although you couldn’t tell by the expressions on their faces when they looked at him, their hearts were filled with infinite gratitude.

The Meng Clan ancestral mansion was surrounded by a shimmering shield, which was the clan’s grand protective spell formation. Meng Hao had clashed with the shield before and knew how powerful it was. Just when he was about to advance toward it, his grandmother held out her hand.

“Hao’er,” she said softly, “I can handle this spell formation.” With that, she waved her finger at the grand spell formation.

That swipe of a finger caused the grand spell formation, which filled even Meng Hao with dread, to suddenly begin to rumble. Then, a fissure spread out across its surface.

One of Meng Hao’s two granduncles turned to explain.

“Your grandmother’s skill with spell formations is something that few people in the Eighth Mountain and Sea can match. After marrying into the Meng Clan, she was entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining and adjusting the clan’s defensive spell formation. Other than the Patriarchs, nobody else in the clan understands it better than her.

“This spell formation… is your grandmother’s most powerful precious treasure.”

Then his granduncle transformed into a beam of light that shot into the Meng Clan ancestral mansion.

Meng Hao stared in shock for a brief moment, then looked over at his grandmother and smiled as he followed her along.

Their entering the ancestral mansion threw the entire clan into an uproar. The nine bloodlines were already on guard because of what had happened earlier with Meng Hao, and now that the spell formation was rumbling and rippling, numerous people flew out to investigate.

In the blink of an eye, hundreds of beams of light were flying directly toward them.

“Meng Chen,” someone roared, “just what do you– huh?” The person speaking stopped in mid-sentence. He wasn’t the only shocked one; everyone was staring in astonishment at Grandma Meng and the others.

“Y-you’re….”

“They….”

People soon began to recognize who had just arrived, although the only ones who did were old-timers, whose faces were now filled with shock.

“Recognize me?” said one of Meng Hao’s granduncles, stepping forward. “Even if you don’t, that’s fine. I’m Meng Hong!” When his foot descended, everything rumbled violently, and the clouds above roiled. It was as if lightning were striking, and numerous booming explosions echoed out through the ancestral mansion.

Even as the ground quaked, Meng Hao’s other granduncle stepped forward, expression cold. His voice was soft like a hissing viper, causing chills to run up the spines of everyone who heard him speak.

“I’m Meng Yan. It’s been a few hundred years, but there should be a few of you who remember me.”

Gasps could be heard among the hundreds of Meng Clan cultivators up ahead.

“The tenth bloodline. It’s the tenth bloodline….”

“It doesn’t matter if you call us the tenth bloodline or the first,” Grandma Meng said coolly, “Today… we’re back.” She waved her hand, causing the entire defensive spell formation to rumble loudly. The sound was incredible, and it was bolstered by Grandma Meng's voice until the sound itself whipped around, transforming into a tempest!

It was at this point that rumbling could also be heard from within nine separate districts of the Meng Clan ancestral mansion. Numerous beams of light shot out like lightning, filling the sky above the Meng Clan with over ten thousand beams of light.

Down on the ground were even more members of the Meng Clan, who were looking up into the sky, shocked expressions on their faces as the spell formation rumbled in response to Grandma Meng's voice.

Soon, all eyes converged onto Meng Hao's grandmother. Then the shocked experts of the clan noticed that Meng Hao was standing right behind his grandmother, and they gasped.

Grandma Meng stood there stoically, looking around. To her, it was easy to differentiate between the various factions that were the nine bloodlines. With a cold snort, she began to advance, and no one made a move to interfere.

Right now, nobody wanted to offend the tenth bloodline, especially considering that Meng Hao was with them. His fight with the Meng Clan Patriarchs had struck fear deep into the hearts of all onlookers.

Before Grandma Meng got very far, she suddenly looked down at the ancestral mansion, toward one particular hall that was surrounded by smaller halls and other buildings to form something like a small city.

"This is where Hao'er's mother once lived…." Grandma Meng said coolly, a domineering air radiating off of her. "Whoever is in there now had better scram immediately…. We're taking the place back."

The faction affected was immediately enraged.

"That's pushing things too far!!"

"This is the ancestral home of the seventh bloodline! How dare you!!"

Next, a cold voice rang out from that large hall. “Liu Xiu, this is too much.”

A white-haired old man emerged, whose cultivation base was in the great circle of the Ancient Realm.

“So you still recognize little old me,” said Grandma Meng, her eyes flickering with killing intent. “Wasn’t it you who watched us getting chased away back then, and did nothing to help? Even worse, you were happy to kick us when we were down.” Waving her right hand, she caused the Meng Clan grand spell formation to converge above her head.

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# Chapter 1266: Not Strong Enough

“Kill them!” Grandma Meng said calmly. The instant her voice rang out, Meng Hao’s two granduncles transformed into beams of light that shot toward the old man outside the hall. Meng Hao’s uncles and aunts also unleashed their cultivation bases as they charged forward.

The old man’s face flickered, and the other members of the seventh bloodline roared and attacked. Instantly, shocking and fierce fighting broke out.

The wave of Grandma Meng’s hand caused a roaring to fill the air that sounded like it came from the mouth of an enormous giant. Under her control, the Meng Clan’s grand protective spell formation became numerous beams of light that shot through the air toward the cultivators of the seventh bloodline.

Miserable screams rang out; although the spell formation wouldn’t kill members of the Meng Clan, the cultivators of the seventh bloodline who were hit by the beams of light experienced an instant drop in cultivation base.

In the end, the protective spell formation became boundless light that covered the entire seventh bloodline.

It didn’t matter how many of them there were, they were incapable of fighting back. The miserable screams continue to ring out, and soon blood began to flow, filling the air with the reek of gore.

Cries of shock and disbelief began to echo about.

“She… she can actually control the protective spell formation!!”

“That’s the Meng Clan’s spell formation! She doesn’t have the blood of the Meng Clan in her, how can she control it!?”

“Is the spell formation actually the Meng Clan’s, or not?!” As the shouts of alarm filled the air, the older experts suddenly remembered something, and their faces fell.

The old man outside the hall roared in rage, and yet was no match for the granduncles. However, this was one of the nine bloodlines of the Meng Clan, and they had many powerful experts, including numerous cultivators in the Immortal Realm. All of them attacked simultaneously, causing massive rumbling to fill the air.

They might have been suppressed by the spell formation, but the cultivators from Meng Hao’s grandmother’s bloodline were few in number. Just as it seemed like they were about to be overwhelmed, Meng Hao prepared to step in. However, Grandma Meng gave a cold harrumph and pushed her hand down toward the ground.

“Sin Blade, come hither!” she said. The main hall of the seventh bloodline suddenly began to shake, and then a huge crevice opened up, out of which a black light shone. Shockingly, within that light was a black dagger!

The sight of that dagger caused the minds of the Meng Clan cultivators to reel, and their blood to suddenly surge.

“A Sin Blade… I can’t believe it’s really the Sin Blade…. Those things still exist? How could it be possible!?”

“Sin Blades are formed from thousands of years of clan blood, and are used to punish traitorous clan members. Only three were ever forged, and according to the legends, they were lost in the sands of time. But, that’s definitely a Sin Blade!”

“She… she’s not a real Meng Clan cultivator, she married into the clan. But it doesn’t matter how old she is, she shouldn’t be able to control the spell formation and also a Sin Blade!”

The old man from the seventh bloodline stared with wide, disbelieving eyes. He obviously knew what Sin Blades were, but he could never have imagined that there was one buried beneath his bloodline’s territory, and furthermore…

… could actually be controlled by this old woman!

Grandma Meng eyed the black dagger, and she seemed to be thinking about the past. With a soft sigh, she made a grasping motion with her right hand, causing the dagger to fly into her grasp. Then, she pointed it at the old man.

“By the authority conferred upon me by the Meng Clan torture hall,” she said coolly, “I hereby excise you from the Meng Clan !” As she spoke, a flickering, blood-red sealing mark appeared on her forehead. As soon as the members of the older generation saw that mark, they let out a collective gasp.

“A bloodline seal…. Now it makes sense. As the Grand Elder of the clan back then, Meng Shan would have been qualified to bestow bloodline seals like that, to pass on his legacy to others.”

In that same moment, Grandma Meng slashed the blade toward the old man from the seventh bloodline, causing black light to flare out and then stab down toward him.

He tried to fight back, but was instantly cut down by Meng Hao’s granduncles.

His head flew off of his shoulders, and his body exploded. The other members of the seventh bloodline, even the Elders, were shocked, and immediately began to flee. Grandma Meng ignored them. Then a tremor ran through her which no one except for Meng Hao noticed. He could tell that the so-called Sin Blade really was formed by a convergence of will.

That will came from the spirit of the people who had sacrificed their blood to forge the blade. Because of that, only someone with a bloodline sealing mark could control the weapon. Although nothing seemed out of the ordinary, slashing out with the blade just now had actually injured her. After all, she really wasn’t a true member of the Meng Clan.

As for how she was able to control the grand protective spell formation, Meng Hao had already picked up on some of the clues. He could sense some of his grandmother’s aura within the grand spell formation, and could also sense fluctuations from the spell formation on her.

“It’s not because of any Daoist magic. Actually… the grand protective spell formation is allowing her to control it.” Meng Hao looked thoughtfully at the Meng Clan ancestral mansion, and the tallest structure therein… the enormous statue!

That was not only where the Dao Realm Patriarchs stayed in secluded meditation, it was also the nucleus of the grand protective spell formation.

There were now no more members of the seventh bloodline in the main hall below. They had all fled.

Meng Hao remained in a position behind his grandmother, watching everything play out silently and not interfering. He would comply with his grandmother’s wishes in everything. Truth be told, he only cared about his grandmother’s bloodline; as for the rest of the Meng Clan, they didn’t matter much to him at all.

Grandma Meng turned to Meng Hao, a kind smile on her face as she said, “Hao’er, this is where your mother used to live, and today, I’m bequeathing it to you.” Then she turned, looking coldly in the direction of where the first bloodline lay, in the shadow of the enormous statue.

“That is where we used to live,” she said, proceeding forward. The other members of the Meng Clan who were in her way hesitated for a moment, then fell back to make way, the fear in their eyes clear.

Meng Hao’s grandmother could control the spell formation and the Sin Blade, plus had a bloodline sealing mark. All of that ensured that none of the other bloodlines were willing to attack. After all… they were confident that the tenth bloodline wasn't out to exterminate all of the other clan members.

However, as Grandma Meng and the others neared the district where the first bloodline was located, a growling voice echoed out from within the enormous statue.

"Enough. We're all part of the Meng Clan after all. There will be no more internecine strife within the clan. The tenth bloodline has returned, and the whole Meng Clan should be celebrating that. There's no need for fighting."

In response to his words, all of the surrounding members of the Meng Clan began to bow their heads. Grandma Meng was the only one who simply looked up at the statue, a complex look in her eyes. After a long moment, she spoke in a raspy voice, "Is that you, Patriarch Meng Yan? I'm fine with holding back from killing, but the place occupied by the first bloodline belongs to us. Tell them to clear out, and we can call an end to the matter immediately!" 1

"Impossible!" said a cold, grim voice from within the district occupied by the first bloodline. "Your cultivation base is in the piddling great circle of the Ancient Realm. If it weren't for that Junior generation expert behind you, it wouldn't matter that you can control the spell formation and the Sin Blade, you still wouldn't be qualified to cause a ruckus!"

The owner of the voice emerged, a white-haired young boy.

His face was distorted in rage, and he emanated the aura of the Quasi-Dao Realm. However, that aura was filled with a sensation of decay, as if his longevity within the Quasi-Dao Realm was almost completely expended.

That just made him seem more maddened, and as he emerged, killing intent surged. He flicked his sleeve and was just about to continue speaking, when Meng Hao interrupted.

"Pipe down!" he said, his voice cool and calm. His words transformed into a powerful, invisible force which instantly stopped the white-haired boy in his tracks. "When the adults are talking, pipsqueaks like you should keep their traps shut. If you don’t, however many hundreds of years of longevity you have left, I can end them now.” As Meng Hao’s cold voice echoed about, the white-haired boy stood there trembling, eyes bright red as he glared at Meng Hao.

Grandma Meng stood there silently, as did Meng Hao’s granduncles, uncles, and aunts. They had to admit that all of this was happening because of Meng Hao, and if it weren’t for his help, their comeback would have been impossible.

Meng Hao sighed. How could he not have come to realize the same thing himself? It became especially apparent to him when he realized that his grandmother had injured herself in the attack. Finally, he turned, clasped hands and bowed deeply to his grandmother.

“Grandma Meng, may I please take care of the situation?”

His grandmother looked back at him for a moment, then finally smiled.

“I guess there’s no need to hold you back. Alright, go ahead and take care of things.”

Meng Hao smiled, then turned, gaze calm as he looked at the white-haired boy. “Scram!”

“YOU!!” the boy cried, eyes widening, body trembling. It didn’t matter that he wasn’t a match for Meng Hao. Considering he was in front of the entire clan, he couldn’t help but yell at Meng Hao in such a way. After all, his life would be ending soon anyway, so how could he fear death?

Before he could say anything else, Meng Hao snorted coldly. Then, he flickered into motion, suddenly appeared directly in front of the young boy. There, he waved his hand, causing a massive tempest to spring up, with the boy at the center. It rapidly became a tornado, which spread out in the blink of an eye to cover the entire district occupied by the first bloodline, picking up their cultivators and spinning them around, causing bloodcurdling shrieks to ring out.

The white-haired boy was at the center of it all. Meng Hao burned with hatred because of the insulting words he had spoken to his grandmother moments ago, so he waved his hand, causing the boy to let out a miserable scream. His body trembled and then began to disappear into a haze of blood and gore. His already reduced longevity was now forcibly being scraped away. Within the space of a few breaths of time, he transformed into ash which then faded away.

Everything was deathly silent; all eyes came to rest on Meng Hao, and they were filled with fear.

That was the exact result Meng Hao had been aiming for. He couldn’t stay in the Eighth Mountain and Sea for long, and if Grandma Meng wasn’t willing to go to the Ninth Mountain and Sea, then he had to ensure that they had a strong position within the Meng Clan.

If their position was strong enough, then when he left, the bloodline would be safe. Anyone who dared to think about provoking them would definitely consider the ramifications first.

“Unfortunately, their position…. isn’t strong enough yet,” he thought. Then he looked up at the statue, eyes flashing like lightning as his gaze pierced inside to stare at the five Dao Realm experts sitting there.

1. Meng Hao’s granduncle is named mèng yǎn, whereas this Patriarch is mèng yán. As you can see, there are two different “Yan” characters, and if you look at the tone marks you can see that their pronunciation is slightly different

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# Chapter 1267: Together!

In almost the same moment that Meng Hao looked over at the statue, the three lucid Dao Realm experts inside could tell, and their faces flickered.

The Patriarch from the ninth bloodline looked at Meng Hao, then at the members of his own bloodline, and especially Meng De, who wore a very complex expression.

The Patriarch from the eighth bloodline had fought briefly with Meng Hao already, so he sat there gritting his teeth, not daring to emerge. However, his heart was filled with anticipation at the prospect of the Patriarch from the first bloodline stepping into the fray.

That very Patriarch was the last among the group of three to have awakened. He had long red hair which continuously burned with fire, and he currently sat there cross-legged, a grim expression on his face. After a long moment passed, he slowly rose to his feet and stepped forward, appearing outside the statue in front of Meng Hao.

As soon as he appeared outside, the surrounding members of the Meng Clan looked up at him. No one cheered, though; everyone stared at him and Meng Hao.

“You’re not part of the Meng Clan,” the red-haired old man said, his voice ancient and sinister.

“Whether I am or not doesn’t matter,” Meng Hao replied calmly.

“That’s true, it’s not important. Old Eighth, Old Ninth, if you don’t do something, then our Meng Clan is going to fall to a stranger this day.” Flames burst out around the red-haired old man, a manifestation of Essence of flame which caused the surrounding air to distort.

Back in the statue, the Patriarch from the eighth bloodline gritted his teeth, then finally chose to emerge. The Patriarch from the ninth bloodline, the one who had actually met Meng Hao, also came out.

Three Patriarchs had emerged, and finally, anticipation began to shine in the eyes of the Meng Clan cultivators, as well as excitement. In their minds, even if Meng Hao were stronger than he was now, he still couldn’t stand up to the combined might of these three Patriarchs.

“Just the three of you won’t be enough,” Meng Hao said, looking them over. Then his gaze shifted to the two slumbering figures that remained in the statue. “You’ve been awake for a while now, what’s the point in pretending that you’re still asleep?” he said. “You’ve lost the chance to make a sneak attack, so how about I give you the opportunity to come at me five against one?

“If you win, I’ll give you this treasure.” With that, Meng Hao waved his hand, causing the Lightning Cauldron to materialize up above. It crackled with lightning, and the aura of a precious treasure, causing the three Patriarchs’ eyes to widen, and their minds to spin.

Suddenly, two auras erupted out from within the statue. One of them was not quite at the level of a Dao Lord, but was very close. The other was very much at the Dao Lord level, and apparently was approaching four Essences. However, the little bit that he lacked meant that he was not quite powerful enough to earn the title of Dao Sovereign.

These two were the true Patriarchs of the Meng Clan, and the two of the most powerful forces that the Meng Clan had produced in many, many years.

As soon as their auras appeared, the air next to the three Patriarchs standing outside of the statue flickered, and two people appeared out of nowhere. They looked incredibly old and emanated powerful ripples, especially the 4-Essences expert. He wore a long gray robe, and emanated an air of decay. He looked deeply at Meng Hao and said, “What if you win?”

“If I win, then the five of you must swear Dao oaths to protect my grandmother’s bloodline for a thousand years.” Meng Hao stared at the almost-4-Essences Patriarch, who was one who he deemed most worthy of his attention. He was curious to see if the fully absorbed fourth Nirvana Fruit would enable him to fight four or more Essences.

“Why only a thousand years?”

“Because a thousand years from now,” Meng Hao replied calmly, “as long as I haven’t perished, no one in the Mountain and Sea Realm would dare to harm any of my relatives in the least.” Although his words seemed wildly arrogant to most of the people who heard them, the five Dao Realm Patriarchs’ expressions turned serious.

After exchanging glances, the five of them then nodded. In truth, they had no choice other than to fight. Besides, the stakes that Meng Hao had offered helped to ease the tension a bit. After all, the matter was an internal affair of the Meng Clan, and handling it in this way would be mutually beneficial.

“Very well!” said the 4-Essences Dao Realm expert. Then, he shot high up into the starry sky, followed by the four other Patriarchs. After all, a Dao Realm battle couldn’t be fought down below, lest the power of the attacks seep out and lead to widespread destruction in the Meng Clan.

Meng Hao looked over at his grandmother, and could see the care and concern in her eyes. He smiled and nodded, then transformed into a beam of light that shot up into the starry sky.

Instantly, certain members of the Meng Clan utilized various magical techniques to project an image of the starry sky down below so that the other clan members could watch the fight.

What they saw was Meng Hao appearing on the battlefield and then, instantly, the five Patriarchs attacking together!

Rumbling filled the starry sky as soon as Meng Hao arrived. The Patriarch from the first bloodline was slightly quicker than the others. An incantation gesture caused a sea of flames to burst out, which then transformed into a huge hand that reached out toward Meng Hao as if to grab him.

The Patriarch from the eighth bloodline threw his head back and roared, smacking his hands together in front of him, which caused a massive windstorm to erupt. That windstorm was backed by the power of his cultivation base and his Essence of wind. It quickly transformed into a huge tornado which swept out in attack.

The Patriarch from the ninth bloodline made a somewhat strange attack. As he performed an incantation gesture, ripples spread out from his feet, filling the starry sky and causing an enormous mirror to materialize.

Those three attacks were the most normal of the group. There were still two Patriarchs left. The one who was close to being a Dao Lord began to glow with the color of blood, a glow that contained a towering will of slaughter.

Shockingly, this was a type of Essence that was very difficult to cultivate, but very powerful… slaughter Essence!

The final Patriarch was the strongest of the group. He took a deep breath, and as he did, a green glow appeared in the void. In the blink of an eye, even his body turned green, and a ring of green-colored lightning appeared around him. This was none other than Green Lightning Magic!

This was the most powerful Daoist magic in the Meng Clan; green lightning filled the area for a thousand meters around the Patriarch, a completely different type of green lightning than that used by Han Qinglei in the Windswept Realm.

Meng Hao’s expression didn’t even flicker. Currently, his fourth Nirvana Fruit was completely absorbed, and a mere thought on his part could summon the Door of the Ancient Realm. However, even if he didn’t intend to do so, the powerful ripples of his cultivation base meant it was possible that the door might appear on its own.

“Well,” he murmured quietly, “before I step into the Ancient Realm, let’s see how powerful my battle prowess has gotten!” With that, his eyes gleamed brightly as he shot out toward the Patriarch from the first bloodline. That Patriarch performed a double-handed incantation gesture, causing the enormous, all-powerful hand of flames to speed faster toward Meng Hao.

That hand was formed completely from Essence power, and was so strong that even a Quasi-Dao cultivator who was struck by it would be completely destroyed, let alone weaker cultivators. It could even shatter massive asteroids.

It whistled through the void, seemingly capable of burning everything as it bore down on Meng Hao.

“I won’t be unfair,” Meng Hao said. “Since you’re using flame Essence… then I’ll use the same thing to beat you!” As soon as the words left his mouth, fire raged up around him, the complete manifestation of Meng Hao’s Essence of Divine Flame. As it appeared in full, it instantly began to rumble toward the first bloodline Patriarch’s flame essence.

This was fire fighting fire, and it wasn’t a matter of who could control it better. Rather, the question was… whose Essence was stronger!? Whose Essence was more terrifying!?

Meng Hao waved his hand, causing the flame Essence around him to transform into a giant fist made of flames, which then punched out toward the first bloodline Patriarch’s flame hand.

BOOOOOOOMMM….

Everything shook as the Patriarch’s flame hand exploded. Meng Hao’s Divine Flame fist also fell apart, but as it did, it revealed the image of a monkey, which threw its head back and roared.

That roar caused all of the fire out in the starry sky to seethe. The power of Divine Flame then swept up together, forming a huge mouth which shot toward the first bloodline Patriarch as if to consume him. However, in the moment before it did, Meng Hao snorted, causing the flame mouth to stop in place, let out howl of defiance, and then slowly fade away.

The Patriarch from the first bloodline coughed up a mouthful of blood and then fell back into retreat, face flickering with shock. This was the first time he had ever been defeated by a similar Essence, and were it not for the fact that Meng Hao wasn't in a killing mood, then he would have been killed beyond the shadow of a doubt!

"You lose," Meng Hao said. Then he took another step, placing him directly in front of the eighth bloodline Patriarch and his screaming windstorm, which shot menacingly toward Meng Hao.

"I can't use wind Essence," Meng Hao said, shaking his head. He allowed the windstorm to slam into him, a terrifying force that could even kill a Quasi-Dao expert. Even Dao Realm cultivators of the same level would fear that wind. However, as it swept over Meng Hao, although some wounds appeared… that was the extent of the matter. That caused the eighth bloodline Patriarch to gasp, and instantly flee.

"I concede!" he blurted, expression that of astonishment.

The main source of his fear was that he could see that the injuries inflicted by the powerful windstorm couldn't keep up with how quickly Meng Hao's body was healing itself. Wounds that took two breaths of time to inflict were completely healed up almost instantly….

"What a terrifying fleshly body! How… how do you fight something like this!?!?"

Meanwhile, the members of the Meng Clan were all watching the scene play out on the enormous projection screen.

They could clearly see Meng Hao use flame Essence to defeat the first bloodline Patriarch, and then use his astonishing fleshly body to defeat the Essence Daoist magic of the eighth bloodline Patriarch.

From the position of the audience, he almost seemed invincible!

"C-compared to last time, it seems like he's… even more powerful!!"

“What… what cultivation base does he have? He’s so young! How could he be… so strong!?!?”

This was the first time for Meng Hao’s grandmother to see how truly powerful he was. As she watched the images on the screen, a broad smile broke out on her face.

As of this moment, she didn’t care at all who was responsible for the comeback of the bloodline in the Meng Clan. Whether it was her or Meng Hao didn’t matter. That was because… he was her grandson!

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# Chapter 1268: The Door of the Ancient Realm is Coming!

In almost the same moment that the eighth bloodline Patriarch conceded, the ninth bloodline Patriarch, the old man who had met Meng Hao before, suddenly roared, raising both hands into the air and then clapping them together viciously.

“Mirror Massacre!” he yelled. Almost instantly, the starry sky beneath Meng Hao’s feet began to ripple as if with waves. Shockingly, the area beneath him then transformed into a gigantic mirror that reflected everything above it, including Meng Hao and everyone else involved in the fight.

“Eee?” said Meng Hao. He had fought with Dao Realm experts a few times, but this was his first time seeing Essence magic in the form of a mirror. He looked down at his reflection in the mirror, and the other version of himself did the same thing. When their eyes met, Meng Hao could suddenly feel a power like that of possession spreading out inside of him.

At the same time, a bloody glow was closing in on him, within which was the Essence of slaughter. It transformed into a blood-colored blade that slashed down toward Meng Hao. Meng Hao’s right hand flashed with an incantation gesture, causing numerous mountains to descend, blocking the blood blade. However, the blood blade blasted through them and a moment later, slashed Meng Hao himself!

Meng Hao looked down at the wound on his arm, and the blood that oozed out from it; apparently even his restorative powers were incapable of healing the wound.

“Slaughter Essence….” he thought with some indifference. Without a moment of hesitation, he suddenly turned and raised his hand to point behind him. Instantly, the more than 1,000 green lightning bolts which had been shooting toward him stopped in place.

But then, an ancient voice echoed out.

“Detonate!”

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOMMMM!

More than 1,000 lightning bolts exploded, inundating Meng Hao. At the same time, a red blade light shot up from within the mirror down below, slashing toward Meng Hao with an air of blood and slaughter.

At the same time, the over 1,000 bolts of green lighting in the mirror also exploded; apparently the mirror was a type of magic that could cause wounds to double in severity. Meng Hao was surrounded by explosions.

The three Patriarchs who were still in the fight were staring at Meng Hao with serious expressions, having been deeply moved by his display of power.

The three old men exchanged glances, and then one said, “Even if that didn’t kill him, at least it should have seriously injured him….”

But then their faces fell as Meng Hao’s cold voice rang out from within the green lightning. “Well, isn’t this interesting.”

A figure flashed through the void toward the ninth bloodline Patriarch. The old man’s face flickered, and he bit his tongue, spitting up a mouthful of blood.

“Second Mirror!” he cried. Another huge mirror appeared in the void, directly in Meng Hao’s path. When he flew into the mirror, he actually emerged from the location of the first mirror.

As he did, the other two Patriarchs unleashed simultaneous attacks. The blood blade turned into a blood sea, and the green lightning became lightning chains, which shot out toward Meng Hao.

“Third Mirror!”

“Fourth Mirror!” As the ninth bloodline Patriarch roared, blood oozed out of his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. Four mirrors was his limit, and as he unleashed the magic, more attacks shot out from them.

The appearance of these mirrors caused the power of the various Daoist magics aimed at Meng Hao to increase dramatically. A boundless blood sea and seemingly infinite green chains rumbled through the starry sky toward Meng Hao.

Down in the Meng Clan ancestral mansion, all of the clan members were watching excitedly. As for Grandma Meng, her eyes were filled with concern.

Just in the moment when all the other members of the Meng Clan seemed so excited, an intense rumbling sound echoed out from inside Meng Hao.

“Nice. What a useful Daoist magic you have there!” he said, sounding very enthusiastic. Suddenly, he began to radiate cultivation base power.

Astonishingly, he hadn’t been using his cultivation base at all in the fight; he had relied only on his fleshly body strength. But now he called upon the power of an Allheaven Dao Immortal. His energy rose up to towering heights, causing the blood sea to evaporate and the lightning chains to shatter.

At the same time, Meng Hao’s drawing upon the power of an Allheaven Dao Immortal caused him to experience the sensation that the Door of the Ancient Realm was coming. Although no one else could sense it, he fully understood what was happening.

The arrival of the Door of the Ancient Realm was imminent. He didn’t need to call it; it could descend on its own at any time!

Meng Hao’s expression was calm as he strode forward, waving his finger, a motion that caused his Allheaven Dao Immortal power to erupt out, and his four Nirvana Fruits began to rotate inside of him. That wave of a finger seemed capable of shattering the Mountain and Sea Realm. When it landed on the mirror, cracking sounds rang out, and fissures spread out all over its surface. Then it simply shattered.

When the first mirror shattered, the ninth bloodline Patriarch coughed up a mouthful of blood. Then Meng Hao waved his finger again, causing the second mirror to explode.

Then he waved his finger a third and a fourth time!

The third and fourth mirrors both shattered into fragments. The ninth bloodline Patriarch coughed up more blood, and his body withered. When they had first met, this man had acted completely arrogant, but now he was shivering, and his scalp was numb as he cried, “I concede!”

In almost the same moment that the two words left the man’s mouth, the void in front of him crumbled, only a few meters away from his position. That area emanated a powerful will of destruction, and the ninth bloodline Patriarch knew that if he had been any slower in conceding, the collapse would have reached him.

The mere thought of that caused him to gasp.

“His gaze. That happened merely from his gaze…. His cultivation base is definitely similar to that of a Dao Sovereign. But how come I can’t sense much Essence on him…?”

Even as the ninth bloodline Patriarch conceded, Meng Hao turned and waved his hand toward the Patriarch proficient with the Essences of blood and slaughter. Instantly, the starry sky began to shatter as a rift opened up and the Blood Demon emerged. It threw his head back and roared, which made everyone feel as if the blood in their own bodies had gone out of control. The Blood Demon then charged the Dao Realm Patriarch, emanating brutality, madness, and a thirst for blood.

The slaughter Essence Patriarch’s face fell. However, instead of retreating, he suddenly shot forward to fight the Blood Demon. Meng Hao gave a cold snort, appearing suddenly in front of the Blood Demon, whereupon he unleashed a punch.

It was none other than the Life-Extermination Fist!

As the fist flew out, the Dao Realm Patriarch’s face fell. He wanted to retreat, but had no time. The starry sky trembled, and blood sprayed out of the Patriarch’s mouth. It was only then that he fell back, face filled with astonishment and terror. However, he wasn’t giving up. As he retreated, his hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, causing nine coffins to fly out of his bag of holding, all of which emanated a sinister, cold air. At the same time, a funeral garland appeared in his hand, filled with blood-colored flowers!

“Using magical items and a puppet, huh?” Meng Hao asked, looking over at the man.

“There were never any rules that said we couldn’t use magical items,” the Patriarch replied, his eyes flickering coldly.

It was at this point that the strongest of the five Patriarchs, the one with four Essences, opened his mouth and spit out a green trident. Instantly, the starry sky trembled, and countless bolts of green lightning began to converge on him. Soon, he was shining a bright green color, which, in addition to the green lightning, made him look like an actual green lightning bolt. He hefted the trident and was just about to charge Meng Hao, when a long spear suddenly appeared in Meng Hao’s hand. The spear looked like a dragon, and emanated a terrifying aura that caused the void to vibrate and even shatter. This was clearly a precious treasure!

Even more shocking was that as soon as the long spear appeared, the funeral garland in the hand of the slaughter Essence Patriarch began to shake. Then, the blood-colored flower petals began to wilt and dry up!

As for the nine coffins, they emanated strange droning sounds that seemed to be some sort of language. As soon as the Patriarch heard those voices, his face fell.

Things weren’t over yet, though. The trident held by the 4-Essences Patriarch almost seemed scared, as if an incredibly powerful enemy had suddenly appeared. The Patriarch’s face flickered, and his heart began to thump.

This spear which could cow other treasures was none other than the weapon which Greed had unsealed. If it was the type of weapon that Greed would think was an incredible treasure, then obviously it wouldn’t be weak.

“Since you’re using magical items, then I guess I’ll use one of mine,” Meng Hao said coolly. “I happened to meet a kind-hearted person who helped unseal this spear for me. I still haven’t had a chance to get used to it, so I’m not sure if I can fully control it. Are you two sure you want to keep fighting?”

He was now convinced that his battle prowess was enough to be able to fight a 4-Essences Dao Lord. However, as for whether or not he could fight five Essences, that was a different matter.

As soon as the words left his mouth, the remaining two Patriarchs’ faces turned very unsightly. They didn’t believe at all what Meng Hao said about a kind-hearted individual unsealing the spear, especially one powerful enough to make their own treasures wither and tremble as if facing some arch-nemesis treasure. Who would believe that a person would voluntarily refine such a treasure for someone else? The more they thought about it, the more Meng Hao’s line about the kind-hearted individual seemed like complete nonsense.

Besides, if kind-hearted individuals like that really existed, why had they never run into one…?

To them, Meng Hao was using those words as an excuse. An excuse… to be able to kill them under the guise of stumbling in battle!

“I concede!” said the Patriarch adept with slaughter Essence. Gritting his teeth, he waved his hand, causing the coffins and the funeral garland to vanish.

The 4-Essences Patriarch chuckled bitterly. The green glow faded, and he put his trident away. Then he clasped hands and bowed.

“I also concede,” he said, looking at Meng Hao with a smile. “We’re all from the same clan, so there’s no need to fight to the death. As for the tenth bloodline… I admit that they are the primary bloodline, and promise to support them. What do you say, young friend. Do you agree to end things here?”

Meng Hao didn’t respond. Instead, he looked up into the starry sky, a gleam of anticipation in his eyes….

Simultaneously, the five Dao Realm Patriarchs all looked up in shock.

The Door of the Ancient Realm was coming!

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# Chapter 1269: Shocking Tribulation!

Ripples spread out in the starry sky, sweeping about, instantly covering the entire area surrounding Meng Hao.

Those ripples contained layers of Dao, and as they spread out, anyone who heard them felt as if they were listening to countless living beings whispering in their ears.

The five Meng Clan Patriarchs’ faces flickered as they looked up into the starry sky at… the origin of all of the ripples.

As of this moment, the starry sky was completely quiet, as was the Meng Clan with its central continent and nine auxiliary continents. The only thing which could be heard was the increasingly anxious panting of the audience.

The members of the nine bloodlines, regardless of the level of their cultivation base, could sense the ripples spreading out over the lands, and the indescribable pressure radiating down from the starry sky.

RUMBLE!

The lands began to tremble, breaking the silence as mountains crumbled and rivers suddenly went still.

Every face in the Meng Clan flickered, and their minds filled with roaring sounds.

“That’s….”

“What happened?”

“What’s going on? I can sense an indescribable pressure…. It’s almost like Heavenly Tribulation!!”

Grandma Meng’s eyes went wide as she looked up; she had her speculations about what exactly was happening, but almost couldn’t believe them to be true. It wasn’t just her; all the other Ancient Realm cultivators in the clan were filled with shock and astonishment.

That was especially true when they realized that all of it was happening because of Meng Hao. Then, their astonishment reached a pinnacle.

“This is impossible!”

“The Door of the Ancient Realm!? This aura and pressure clearly indicates that the Door of the Ancient Realm is coming!!”

“No way! That’s not the Door of the Ancient Realm. This pressure far, far exceeds that. If this is really the Door of the Ancient Realm, then… it’s thousands of times more powerful than an ordinary Door of the Ancient Realm!!”

“None of those things are that important. The most important thing to remember… is that this Door of the Ancient Realm is coming for Meng Chen. In that case… his cultivation base…. Could it be in the Immortal Realm!?!?” People felt like their minds were about to explode.

The five Patriarchs up in the starry sky began to fall back, faces flickering with various emotions. Finally, the shape of an enormous door became visible. An ancient, archaic aura began to spread out, and expressions of utter disbelief appeared on the faces of the five Patriarchs.

“The Door of the Ancient Realm. It’s really… really the Door of the Ancient Realm!”

“He… really is in the Immortal Realm. But I’ve never heard of any Immortal who was strong enough to fight the power of the Dao Realm!!”

“Wait, I remember… there is one type of Immortal….”

“Allheaven Dao Immortals!!” The five Patriarchs’ minds were spinning, and as they exchanged glances, each of them could tell how utterly shocked the others were.

As of this moment, every single person in the Meng Clan was having the same reaction. After everyone sensed that it was indeed the Door of the Ancient Realm, massive waves of shock pounded their hearts, and they almost felt as if they were hallucinating.

Meng Hao stood alone in the starry sky, looking up into the boundless expanse, and the majestic ripples which were spreading out. Soon, the shape began to take form… the Door of the Ancient Realm!

Meng Hao’s Door of the Ancient Realm!

By converging Dao Fruit power and pushing open that door, he could be baptized by the Mountains and Seas, gain their approval, and thus, figuratively return to ancient times. He could… search for that ancient path in which the lamps were extinguished but the cultivator was not. Become… an Ancient Realm expert!

“My Door of the Ancient Realm!” he murmured quietly. Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a brilliant light, and in almost the same moment that he spoke, a sound like muffled thunder could be heard ringing out, filled with power that could shake Heaven and Earth.

Amidst the rumbling, massive amounts of ripples spread out, and the Door of the Ancient Realm began to grow larger, larger, larger…. Eventually, clouds actually appeared in the starry sky, spreading out to cover everything.

Shockingly, figures could be seen within those clouds, people who wore clothing from ancient times, and who immediately began to emanate shocking auras.

There were even faint shouts coming from within the clouds, which grew more intense and strong as they echoed out, until finally it sounded like the Heavens were roaring. The ripples grew more intense, and the clouds seethed, covering the entire Door of the Ancient Realm, making its ancient, archaic aura even more prominent.

Soon, the area around the Door of the Ancient Realm began to twist and distort, almost as if time were flowing differently in that area, an area that was almost like another world!

Pressure suddenly exploded out, a terrifying pressure that caused Meng Hao’s face to flicker. Without even thinking about it, he fell back a bit.

His hair began to whip about, and cracking sounds could be heard from within his body. It was as if the incredible pressure from Heaven and Earth wished to crush Meng Hao out of existence. Meng Hao’s mind began to reel.

“This isn’t right!” Meng Hao’s pupils constricted, and he fell back again. As for the five Meng Clan Patriarchs, they had long since fled far off into the distance.

They were now filled with intense fear, and their faces had drained of blood.

“Th-that’s… the Door of the Ancient Realm? How come it seems even more terrifying than Dao Realm Tribulation!?!?”

“The ancient records don’t mention anything about a Door of the Ancient Realm like this. I’ve never even heard of anything like it. How can a Door like this even be transcended!?”

“This is a grand tribulation of Heaven and Earth. Not even Dao Realm Tribulation can match up to this Door of the Ancient Realm….” The five Patriarchs didn’t even think it was possible for anyone to be able to pass through a tribulation like this Door of the Ancient Realm.

They were confident that they could deal with it in their current states, and that wasn’t even taking into consideration the shocking, terrifying aura that could be felt from the clouds surrounding the door.

Meng Hao’s face looked extremely unsightly. As for the members of the Meng Clan down below, they stared with wide eyes at the door and the clouds, which were definitely the most terrifying thing they had ever seen in their lives.

They were one of a very small group of people in the Mountain and Sea Realm… who could personally witness an Ancient Tribulation that actually… exceeded Dao Tribulation!

Meng Hao’s face was exceedingly grim. He had believed all along that he would simply breeze through the Ancient Realm. After all, he was already strong enough to fight the Dao Realm. In fact, in the entire Mountain and Sea Realm, there were only a few people who might be able to beat him in a fight. Therefore, Meng Hao had considered himself to essentially be at the peak of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

But now he realized that he had been mistaken. Very, very mistaken. That mistake was not his understanding of the level of his battle prowess, but rather… the fact that an Allheaven Dao Immortal being able to defeat Dao Realm experts in battle indicated that his battle prowess was actually… a complete defiance of the Heavens!

Heaven-defying people would receive Heaven-defying punishment. Perhaps it wasn’t merely a matter of ordinary defiance. Perhaps… like everything, a price had to be paid in order to acquire anything. Meng Hao had acquired incredible battle prowess, and the price he now had to pay for that… was an indescribably terrifying Ancient Tribulation!

He looked at the clouds, and the door just barely visible within them, and he could sense death!

“This won’t just be a simple matter of opening the door and stepping into the Ancient Realm, then going through the process of extinguishing the lamps…. To me, the Ancient Realm will not be passed through casually. It will be a series of deadly crises…. As an Allheaven Dao Immortal, it’s something that must happen….” Now that he finally understood, he sighed.

“I wonder if there were Allheaven Dao Immortals in the Paragon Immortal Realm… who succeeded in getting past the Ancient Realm and into the Dao Realm?” That question caused Meng Hao to suddenly feel completely shaken by this shocking Door of the Ancient Realm. He truly wished to know whether or not a Allheaven Dao Immortal had ever succeeded.

It was at this point that rumbling sounds could be heard from within the clouds. It almost sounded like people shouting, and it caused everything to shake. The minds of all the people up in the starry sky began to tremble.

The five Patriarchs’ faces were pale white, and without any hesitation, they shot back down toward the Meng Clan continent, where they activated the Meng Clan’s grand defensive spell formation, cutting themselves off from Meng Hao.

Apparently they feared the possibility of the tribulation of the Door of the Ancient Realm pulling them in….

Although they knew that tribulations only targeted individual cultivators, and not bystanders, the terrifying nature of this Ancient Tribulation left them completely petrified.

Now, Meng Hao was the only person left out in the starry sky, facing the boundless clouds and the enormous Door of the Ancient Realm. Compared to them, he looked like nothing more than an ant.

Despite the intense sensation of deadly crisis, Meng Hao looked calm as he studied the clouds. It was at this point that his grandmother’s voice could be heard calling out anxiously from the continent down below.

“Hao’er, get down here into the spell formation!” As she cried out, an opening appeared within the spell formation shield.

The appearance of the opening caused the five Patriarchs to cry out in fear. “Absolutely not!!”

Meng Hao looked back down at his grandmother. Her clear state of anxiety warmed his heart, but he shook his head.

“Grandma Meng, this… is my Tribulation!” With that, he turned, unleashed the power of his cultivation base, and shot toward the clouds. “It doesn’t matter whether the process is difficult or easy. I’m still going to give it a shot, no matter what!

“I’ve been practicing cultivation for hundreds of years now, and I’m an Allheaven Dao Immortal. I’m not sure if there were people like me in the past, but… since I’ve gained so much, I have to pay the price!

“This Ancient Tribulation is that price, and it’s nothing more than a thorny patch on the road stretching out in front of me.

“I’ll just pluck the thorns up and keep going. If there were Allheaven Dao Immortals in the past who walked in the Ancient Realm, then I’m going to do the same thing!” Meng Hao threw his back and laughed, then shot like lightning toward the clouds.

He was directly tackling the tribulation of the Door of the Ancient Realm!

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# Chapter 1270: Weird!

To most cultivators, the Ancient Realm was just another level. By walking the ancient path, one could follow in the footsteps of their ancestors, they would search the techniques they possessed to find… the most original strand of Essence that was hidden within them.

By extinguishing one Soul Lamp after another, one could sink further and further into one’s own self, into the depths of one’s cultivation base….

In the end, in the great circle of the Ancient Realm, when Essence began to stir and life force thrived, Dao Tribulation would occur. One could tread the Dao path and enter… the Dao Realm, to become a truly almighty figure in the Mountain and Sea Realm.

During that process, each lamp that was extinguished was a deadly crisis, which made the Ancient Realm very difficult.

Meng Hao had originally assumed that his journey through the Ancient Realm would be the same. He would rely on his cultivation base to reduce the level of difficulty and make things much easier. But now he understood what the Ancient Realm meant to an Allheaven Dao Immortal… it was a truly deadly situation.

The difficulty level involved was many times greater than that of the ordinary Ancient Realm. Generally speaking, when it came to the deadly act of extinguishing Soul Lamps, the success rate was about fifty percent. When it came to Allheaven Dao Immortals though, it could be considered more like ten percent!

Allheaven Dao Immortals were vastly more powerful, and their tribulation was far more deadly.

Meng Hao took all these things which he had been thinking about and buried them in his heart as he sped forward. In the blink of an eye, he was closing in on the seething clouds.

Even as he neared, the clouds churned as a figure emerged from within them. It was a person who wore ancient clothing, and yet… completely lacked any facial features!

It was… a faceless man!

He moved with incredible speed as he closed in on Meng Hao, performing an incantation gesture at the same time. Rumbling could be heard from the clouds, transforming the energy of Heaven and Earth into numerous stone fragments which spun toward Meng Hao. The faceless man brimmed with towering killing intent, as if Meng Hao were an archenemy he could not live under the same sky with, as if he would not rest until one of them was dead.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with killing intent as the faceless man bore down on him. He didn’t slow down at all, but instead barrelled forward. When the stone fragments hit him, they shattered, and Meng Hao shot like a meteor into the faceless man.

“DIE!” he growled, grabbing the faceless man’s throat and crushing it. A bang could be heard as the faceless man exploded into pieces. However, there was no flesh and blood; instead, he faded away into streams of mist that then surged back into the cloud mass.

Next, three more faceless men flew out. When their cultivation base power emanated out, astonishingly, it was in the great circle of the Ancient Realm. Their attacks caused the starry sky to tremble, and the clouds to churn. However, Meng Hao’s only response was a cold snort as he advanced, waving his sleeve, his cultivation base surging.

The three faceless men collapsed into pieces, completely incapable of resisting Meng Hao at all. However, an unsightly expression could be seen on Meng Hao’s face. He didn’t look happy at all, and the reason was… he had just begun the tribulation, and was already facing a humanoid tribulation of the great circle of the Ancient Realm. As for what would be coming later… he could only imagine.

What caused his heart to sink even further was that there was an incredible pressure pushing at him from behind. Apparently, even if he didn’t want to try to transcend the tribulation, and attempted to flee, that pressure would prevent him from doing so.

“I’m… being forced to face the tribulation….” he murmured. He rotated his cultivation base again, and rumbling sounds could be heard as he shot toward the clouds. Next, six faceless men appeared, and this time, they weren’t in the great circle of the Ancient Realm, but rather, appeared to be closer to the Quasi-Dao Realm.

They moved so fast they looked like lightning bolts as they closed in on Meng Hao.

“Scram!” Meng Hao barked. The sound of his voice exploded out, causing the six lightning-like figures to explode, and causing even the clouds to churn.

These opponents didn’t count for much to Meng Hao, and his eyes burned like fire as he continued to press on.

“You don’t have to force me to try to transcend this tribulation…. I’ve been looking forward to it for a long time!” He took another step forward, causing the starry sky to shudder, and the roaring in the clouds to grow more intense.

At the moment, countless members of the Meng Clan were down in the ancestral mansion, eyes glued to the scene which was playing out, looks of shock written on their faces.

That was especially true of the five Patriarchs, whose eyes were wide as they watched.

“Ordinary Ancient Tribulation sends lightning out of the clouds, or perhaps five elements magic. It isn’t until the very end that the humanoid tribulation comes….”

“If your cultivation base is high enough, and you seize the moment, you might not even have to wait for those terrifying humanoid creatures to appear before opening the Door of the Ancient Realm….”

“But in this Ancient Tribulation, the humanoid figures appeared at the very beginning. How could you possibly transcend this…?” The five Patriarchs couldn’t help but share a shocked glance with each other.

Meng Hao’s grandmother was trembling from extreme anxiety. Unfortunately, there was no way for her to help Meng Hao; she could only look on as he tried to transcend the tribulation, her heart stinging as if from the stabs of a knife.

Behind her were Meng Hao’s granduncles, uncles and aunts, and all of them looked incredibly nervous.

Although not everyone in the Meng Clan felt worried for Meng Hao like his direct relatives, they were all shocked. Meng Hao had now closed about twenty percent of the distance to the clouds, and as he was speeding along, more roaring could be heard as, shockingly, twelve figures shot out at top speed.

Those twelves figures… were in the Quasi-Dao Realm!!

Meng Hao’s heart sank further.

“Twelve Quasi-Dao. Will the next group have twenty-four 1-Essence Dao Realm enemies? Then forty-eight 2-Essences? Ninety-six… Dao Lords…. One hundred and ninety-two 4-Essences? Then four hundred 5-Essences. Eight hundred Dao Sovereigns….?” As Meng Hao followed this train of thought, his scalp began to go numb.

“Impossible. This tribulation comes from the Mountain and Sea Realm, and the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm cannot be interfered with. Even I, the future Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm, must face this tribulation and experience this life-or-death struggle. But there’s no way that eight hundred Dao Sovereigns are going to come out….” Face pale, Meng Hao gritted his teeth and shot forward to begin fighting with the twelve Quasi-Dao enemies.

He transformed into an azure roc which sped forward. Immediately, the Quasi-Dao enemies began to fall apart, and yet they didn’t dissipate, but instead, self-detonated!

Shocking booms rang out, and a fierce expression could be seen on Meng Hao’s face as he shot off into the distance in an azure flash. A Quasi-Dao self-detonation creates a destructive force that would cause even Dao Lords to frown. Meng Hao swished his sleeve, causing the force to fade away. Although it looked like he didn’t need to use much cultivation base power, Meng Hao was well aware that if he kept going… he wouldn’t be able to get very far through the clouds.

“I can’t let these clouds continue to grow. I need to get to the Door of the Ancient Realm as quickly as possible, that’s my only chance!” Meng Hao clenched his jaw. Then, the azure roc threw its head back and roared. Meng Hao transformed into an azure beam that sped into the clouds, rocketing toward the Door of the Ancient Realm.

However, before he could get very far, numerous cold snorts could be heard echoing around him. Astonishingly… four faceless Dao Realm enemies appeared!

Those four faceless men were all 1-Essence cultivators, but as soon as Meng Hao laid eyes on them, his eyes glittered, and he breathed a sigh of relief.

“Only four, huh…?”

As the four faceless men closed in, he clenched his right hand and punched out. The starry sky shook, and a massive windstorm swept out, instantly shattering the four Dao Realm enemies.

As they fell to pieces, Meng Hao suddenly felt a cold chill on his spine. Without the slightest hesitation, he shot forward. However, the coldness remained at his back, almost as if… there were someone behind him, breathing down his neck.

Meng Hao sent his divine sense out, but didn't see anyone. But then, his face fell. Gritting his teeth, he spun around, and when he did, his scalp felt like it would explode. Standing there right behind him, almost touching his face, was… a white-robed woman.

She had long hair, pale skin, and listless eyes that stared dead at Meng Hao. Everything was very quiet; this woman's sudden appearance on the scene was very strange. Why couldn't he see her with divine sense?

Meng Hao's pupils constricted, and just when he was about to back up, the woman suddenly reached out and grabbed him. She moved so quickly that he couldn't dodge, and in the briefest of moments, her hand closed around his arm. Then she suddenly began to pull him further into the clouds.

Meng Hao's face flickered. The place where the woman held his arm felt ice cold, and pulses of some sort of aura of decay were boring into him. Apparently that aura wished to corrode his entire body away.

Most shocking of all was that, as the woman dragged him along, the clouds up ahead transformed into a huge mouth, which was apparently where the woman was dragging him.

A sensation of deadly crisis rose up inside of Meng Hao, and he had the intense feeling that if the cloud mouth swallowed him up, he would be completely dead in spirit and body!

"Scram!" he shouted, causing the Paragon Bridge to erupt with power. An amorphous bridge appeared outside of him, and he wrenched himself free from the woman's grasp, and fell back.

The white-robed woman looked at the Paragon Bridge behind Meng Hao, and laughed. The laughter contained something completely blood-chilling about it as it echoed out.

Meng Hao could sense how terrifying this Ancient Tribulation was, but he couldn’t flee. Gritting his teeth, he continued to speed in the direction he remembered the Door of the Ancient Realm being.

“Faster. Faster. Must go faster….” Meng Hao knew that his only chance to transcend the tribulation was to avoid spending a lot of time fighting in the clouds.

Just as he began to speed forward, four more figures appeared, figures that were far more powerful than the four he had fought moments ago.

2-Essences Dao Realm enemies!

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# Chapter 1271: Foreigners Invade!

While Meng Hao was in the middle of transcending the tribulation, something else was happening in the starry sky not too far away from the Meng Clan, although nobody could detect it, not even Meng Hao. Numerous black willow leaves could be seen floating there, each one fully 3,000 meters long. The veins of the pitch-black leaves were clearly visible on their surfaces, and it almost looked like there was blood flowing through them, giving the leaves a completely bizarre appearance.

There were dozens upon dozens of them, and on the surface of each were dozens upon dozens of cross-legged cultivators, altogether, about a thousand in total.

Each one of them was very calm, with coldly flickering eyes. They wore long black robes, and had extremely cold auras. Furthermore, closer examination revealed that the cultivation bases of these thousand cultivators was unexpectedly… in the Ancient Realm!

Some were in the early Ancient Realm, others in the great circle. If Meng Hao could see them, he would definitely find them familiar. That was because their auras were exactly the same as the people who had attacked Meng Hao and Meng De on their way back to the Meng Clan!

More shocking was that on some of the willow leaves were cultivators who radiated Essence aura. There were a total of seven, all of them Dao Realm experts!

Among those seven people were men and women, young and old. However, none of them were weak. As for the three strongest, two were Dao Lords, and one, a young boy, had a cultivation base… that could even suppress transformations in the starry sky. He… was a 5-Essences Dao Sovereign!!

4-Essences Dao Realm cultivators could be called Dao Sovereigns, but that was only the threshold of that realm. 5-Essences was a true Dao Sovereign, and 6-Essences counted as the peak. In all of the Mountain and Sea Realm, 5-Essences Dao Sovereigns and above were considered the most powerful of all experts, people who were so domineering they could vie for the position of a Mountain and Sea Lord. People like that had statuses which ensured that wherever they went in the Mountain and Sea Realm, they could cause a huge sensation.

Right now, just such a person had appeared outside the Meng Clan.

“So someone is transcending tribulation…” the boy said, “and a very bizarre Ancient Tribulation at that….

“There is something about his aura which I find completely unsettling…. Well, notify the sects in the area which come from the Seventh Mountain and Sea to make the first move. Have them ascertain the current situation.

“Our Mountain and Sea Lord has instructed that we be very careful. There are to be no slipups. After this mission is accomplished… not a single person from the bloodlines of the Meng Clan will remain!” The boy then closed his eyes.

As his voice echoed out, orders were distributed, passed out into the starry sky to numerous asteroids and floating continents in the Eighth Mountain and Sea that didn’t belong to the Heavengod Alliance. Within those sects, figures appeared who accepted the orders from the young boy.

When the orders were received, the first result was silence. But then, sighs could be heard. Next, the Patriarchs of those sects issued further orders, causing their sects to mobilize and then transform into beams of light… that flew out toward… the Meng Clan!

There were dozens of such sects, each one of which dispatched no less than a thousand cultivators. Soon, tens of thousands of cultivators were flying from different directions toward the Meng Clan, drawing closer and closer by the minute.

Storm clouds were gathering!

This was the first war to ever break out between the Seventh Mountain and Sea and the Eighth Mountain and Sea, and apparently… the first battleground would be the Meng Clan. However it ended, it would surely cause a huge sensation in the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

Furthermore, considering the army was led by a Dao Sovereign, their first target in the war wouldn’t be selected lightly. It would either be picked because of its strategic value or its overall importance in the Eighth Mountain and Sea!

In any case, Meng Hao was in the middle of transcending tribulation, and all the cultivators of the Meng Clan were completely mesmerized by it. However, anyone who was watching closely would notice that as soon as that boy issued orders… there were people in the crowd on the Meng Clan continent whose eyes suddenly flickered with nearly imperceptible light.

It was as if a wind were blowing down from the heavens, sweeping across the world… filling it.

**

RUMBLE!

Within the clouds out in the starry sky, Meng Hao was performing a double-handed incantation gesture as he faced off with the four 2-Essences faceless men. He unleashed the Mountain Consuming Incantation, causing numerous mountains to descend, emanating boundless pressure, crushing everything, sending the four faceless men into retreat.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with killing intent, but instead of taking the time to kill them, he transformed into an azure roc and shot onward. He didn’t have time for this humanoid tribulation.

However, in the same moment that Meng Hao began to move, his eyes widened as he realized that up ahead in the clouds… was a swing!

Sitting on the swing with her back to him was a young girl, swinging back and forth. Her laughter rang out like the tinkle of bells, and yet when it reached Meng Hao's ears, it caused his mind to reel.

He then craned his neck to examine the situation closer, only to find that the girl had vanished. Only the swing was left behind, gently swaying back and forth.

Meng Hao's eyes flickered but he didn't stop moving. Suddenly, as he was continuing forward, he sent the power of the Paragon Bridge exploding out behind him. In almost the same instant that it appeared, he suddenly heard hissing sounds coming from that same direction.

He looked back coldly and caught sight of the girl he had just seen, heading in the opposite direction, her head bowed. The hissing sounds were coming from that very girl.

Seemingly able to detect Meng Hao's gaze upon her, the girl suddenly looked up. When that happened, Meng Hao's eyes went wide as he realized that the girl's mouth and eyes had both been sewn shut, and that black blood was slowly oozing out from their edges….

The strange sounds coming from her suddenly caused Meng Hao's body to shiver. Then, he realized that he was being dragged along with her, his body completely out of his control.

The things that were happening were completely shocking. In his practice of cultivation down to this day, he had experienced many things. However, it was only in these clouds surrounding the Door of the Ancient Realm that he felt such shock rising up from his heart.

He tried to rotate his cultivation base, but it almost felt as if it were separated from his body. Not even the Paragon Bridge could be summoned, nor could any of his other techniques or magical items.

The only things he could operate were his Nirvana Fruits. Suddenly, wild power poured out of them as he fought back against the girl, and those seemingly unending hissing sounds.

Even as she dragged him off into the distance, the power of his four Nirvana Fruits surged out, causing rumbling sounds to echo about as some sort of connection to the girl was severed. A tremor ran through Meng Hao, and blood sprayed out of his mouth. The girl screamed, but didn’t stop moving, and soon vanished into the clouds.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. His face was pale, and despite the level of his cultivation base he still felt a sense of powerlessness in this situation. Both the white-robed woman and the girl filled him with an entirely creepy sensation. It was almost as if… his current self wasn’t actually at a level that could deal with such things.

“So this is the Ancient Tribulation of an Allheaven Dao Immortal….

“In the Ancient Realm, one must seek the path of the ancestors, search for the Essence of one’s techniques…. Well I guess that means that my version of the Ancient Realm involves searching for the source of the Allheaven Dao Immortal bloodline!

“I refuse to believe that other people see such strange things when they deal with the Door of the Ancient Realm. I have the feeling that both the white-robed woman and that girl have something to do with the secrets of the Allheaven Dao Immortal bloodline!” Meng Hao’s face was unsightly, but in his eyes persistence still shone as ever. His body flickered as he once again shot through the clouds in the direction of the Door of the Ancient Realm.

“The bizarre phenomena only happened in the clouds, after I encountered the faceless men. First were the 1-Essence Dao Realm enemies, and then the white-robed woman appeared. Next were the 2-Essences enemies, and then the girl appeared…. In that case, the next thing I face… should be 3-Essences Dao Lords!” Meng Hao shot forward like lightning, drawing ever closer to the Door of the Ancient Realm. Suddenly, the clouds up ahead seethed, and four figures emerged.

Just as Meng Hao had guessed, these four faceless men were emanating cultivation base fluctuations of… 3-Essences Dao Lords!

If Meng Hao hadn’t fully absorbed his fourth Nirvana Fruit, then when fighting any one of these faceless men, he would have only been able to fight to a draw, and would have been seriously injured at that. But things were different now. Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he proceeded onward.

Rumbling could be heard as the Paragon Bridge appeared. The power of an Allheaven Dao Immortal exploded out, and then Meng Hao appeared directly in front of one of the faceless men. He reached out and touched the man’s forehead with his finger, and the man exploded.

However, in the moment that the man exploded, Meng Hao’s face flickered and shot backward. The exploding faceless man became a mist which, instead of returning into the clouds, transformed into a mist rope that shot toward Meng Hao. At the same time, the other three faceless men collapsed into pieces and also transformed into ropes, which then snaked toward Meng Hao.

Even as Meng Hao dodged to the side, a cold voice suddenly rang out from the clouds up ahead. It was the voice of a man, and the words it spoke were simple.

“Cease all movement!”

Meanwhile, outside of the clouds that surrounded the Door of the Ancient Realm, even as the members of the Meng Clan were riveted on the Ancient Tribulation, tens of thousands of beams of light were closing in on the Meng Clan.

None of them paused for even a brief moment; the cultivators had their jaws clenched, and radiated killing intent. Soon, they were actually within the territory of the Meng Clan, which suddenly caused a red light to spread out from the huge statue in the ancestral mansion.

When the Meng Clan cultivators saw that red light, their faces filled with shock. The five Patriarchs’ faces also flickered with astonishment.

“That red light means… foreigners are invading!!”

“Foreign invaders are here!!”

As the voices rang out, rumbling sounds could be heard from the nine auxiliary continents as the clan’s protective spell formation automatically activated. It rapidly spread out to cover the entire clan, and fight back against the tens of thousands of attacking cultivators.

In the blink of an eye, countless cold voices could be heard echoing out.

“Meng Clan, blood calls for blood. The debt you owe to the House of Heaven and Earth… will be repaid today!”

“The Meng Clan is already weak. There is no place for you in the Eighth Mountain and Sea anymore. We have risen up this day to exterminate you, to put an end to that old legend that the Meng Clan will exist for all eternity!”

“The Cloudlands Sect is here to eradicate the Meng Clan!”

“The Water-Dao School is here to put an end to our grudge!”

“Even the fierce lion will grow old one day. That day has arrived, and on this day… funeral bells will toll for the Meng Clan!”

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# Chapter 1272: Retreat Is Not an Option!

Meng Hao was still in the clouds by the Door of the Ancient Realm, so he had no idea what was going on with the Meng Clan. The intense pressure weighing down on him made it so that even if he sent out divine sense, it would be shattered.

Furthermore, all of his energy was focused completely on the Ancient Tribulation. This was actually the most dangerous tribulation that he had faced in his entire life!

Even he wasn’t absolutely certain whether or not he could succeed. However, the tribulation had descended, and whether he wanted to or not, he still had to attempt to transcend it. If he failed, he would die. The only chance he had to live… was to transcend the tribulation.

Massive rumbling sounds echoed out as Meng Hao faced the greatest danger of his life. Not even in the Windswept Realm had he faced a crisis like this. Currently, he was facing four 3-Essences Dao Lords, faceless men who had transformed into ropes that were now closing in on him.

Just as Meng Hao was in the middle of dodging, a sinister voice spoke out from the clouds. “Cease all movement!”

As soon as those three words entered Meng Hao’s ears, the entire world seemed to go quiet and stop moving. It was as if they contained some boundless magical power that made Meng Hao cease all movement; suddenly, he hovered stock still within the clouds, completely motionless.

Actually, it was only Meng Hao who experienced such motionlessness. Everything else was normal, and the four ropes quickly began to wrap Meng Hao up. Two of them encircled his arms, hoisting him up as the other ropes bound his legs together, making it impossible for him to even struggle.

Simultaneously, another figure emerged from the clouds, and old man wearing a long gray robe. This man seemed completely ancient, as if even walking were difficult for him. However, his eyes shone with a brilliant light, and even avarice, as he stared at Meng Hao.

“It’s been so many years….” the old man murmured as he slowly approached Meng Hao. “At long last, the Dao Immortal Ancient Tribulation that we’ve been waiting for, has come…. You…. Are you the Dao body sacrifice offered by the later generation…? A perfect Dao body….

“I’m definitely going to succeed…. I will return. In fact, I’m already returning. Back then, we defeated those two people, but at far too great a cost. In fact, that cost was so great that we had to flee….”

As he neared, the clouds around him seemed to pass through countless years of time. They even changed colors, and behind the old man, the starry sky seemed to also pass through tens of thousands of years of time. Everything seemed to wither with age, and Meng Hao seemed to get older the closer the man got.

Even the ropes on his body began to decay. Then, the old man reached out with a skeletal hand, and tapped his finger toward Meng Hao’s forehead, his expression one of keen anticipation.

Just as his fingertip was about to touch Meng Hao, Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. A cold glow could be seen as he suddenly uttered two words.

“Battle Weapon!” Instantly, a beam of light shot out from within his bag of holding. It was the copper mirror, and as it flew out, a vigorous power erupted. The copper mirror fused into Meng Hao’s right hand, and in the blink of an eye, it had turned into a long, wicked blade!

This was… the Battle Weapon!

The sudden appearance of the Battle Weapon caused the starry sky to fill with rumbling sounds. The clouds churned, and the old man with the outstretched hand suddenly screamed. His eyes were fixated on the Battle Weapon, his expression one of disbelief and shock. Instantly, he began to fall back.

All of a sudden, he began to shout words that Meng Hao couldn’t possibly understand.

“It’s you, it’s YOU…. They said to wait for you…. I can’t believe that after all these years, it’s you….” Even as the old man fell back, a flash of killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes. Rumbling sounds filled his body as he cast off the decaying ropes, then shot forward like a shooting star toward the old man.

As they sped along in prismatic beams, Meng Hao roared and slashed out with the Battle Weapon. An explosively glowing light shot out, causing the clouds to fall back. It was a blade glow that, as it slashed out, caused the old man to tremble violently. Even as he began to fade away, he spoke in a growling voice that echoed out in all directions.

“I’ll be back…. Now that I know it’s you, you’re DEAD!”

“Blah blah blah!” Meng Hao said with a cold harrumph. The blade glow slashed through the clouds, opening up a path, which Meng Hao followed with his eyes until he caught sight of… the Door of the Ancient Realm!

Just now, he really had been rendered immobile, and had been completely restrained by the three ropes. However, in the critical moment, his four Nirvana Fruits had exploded with power, allowing him to shake off some of the effects and then unleash his most powerful item, the Battle Weapon.

Meng Hao suddenly flashed into motion, becoming a beam of light that shot toward the Door of the Ancient Realm. He could sense that time was wasting away, and that the tribulation within the clouds had already reached a terrifying level. If he didn’t get the Door of the Ancient Realm open, and get rid of the clouds, then he would surely die.

In the instant that Meng Hao charged forward, rumbling sounds could be heard, and roaring echoed out in the starry sky. Shockingly, four figures emerged from the clouds to stand in front of Meng Hao. They were… 4-Essences faceless men!

The instant they appeared, they shot toward Meng Hao. Although they had no facial features, they radiated a murderous aura that instantly weighed down onto Meng Hao.

Even Meng Hao would have to be very careful when facing four 4-Essences Dao Realm enemies. However, he was running out of time, and the clouds were becoming more terrifying by the second. Beads of sweat were running down his forehead, and his eyes were wide.

The level of danger he was now facing was completely unheard-of.

“Screw off!” Meng Hao roared, shooting forward toward one of the faceless men. Ignoring any potential chance of being injured, he slammed into him viciously. The faceless man was knocked back, but simultaneously performed an incantation gesture and waving his finger. A wild Essence power exploded out, causing Meng Hao to cough up a mouthful of blood. A vicious expression twisted Meng Hao’s face, and he was just about to take advantage of the faceless man’s backpedaling to charge past him, when two other faceless men closed in. Meng Hao’s Battle Weapon flashed with light as he slashed it toward them!

He didn’t hold back anything from his cultivation base in that attack. Explosive power burst out, and the blade glow was instantly upon the two faceless men. However, they didn’t attempt to dodge. Instead, they quickly performed incantation gestures and then pressed down onto their bodies, instigating a self-detonation!

Although Meng Hao had predicted that possibility, in the face of a self-detonation by a 4-Essences Dao Realm opponent, he had no option other than to evade. Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth, and numerous wounds were opened up. However, he had no time to pay any attention to them. As he fell back, the Lightning Cauldron appeared. Even as the final faceless man closed in, Meng Hao transformed into an azure roc and smashed through the man. Blood oozed out of his mouth as lightning then surrounded him, creating an electric lake that shot toward the Door of the Ancient Realm.

Closer and closer!

3,000 meters. 2,400 meters. 1,800 meters…. It was at this point that, all of a sudden, four more faceless men appeared in front of him. When their cultivation base power radiated out, Meng Hao's mind spun. These were… 5-Essences Dao Sovereigns!

These four were completely different from the other faceless men he had fought. These four had eyes on their faces!

Their expressions were completely merciless, and radiated boundless coldness. Each and every one of them possessed Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering energy. If any one of them could leave the clouds and emerge into the Mountain and Sea Realm, they would be powerful experts whose fame would spread throughout the entire Mountain and Sea Realm.

And now, four of them had appeared simultaneously. All they did was hover there, and they already emanated towering pressure that caused everything to shake violently.

Actually, the most powerful type of Dao Sovereign had six Essences; 4-Essences and 5-Essences merely led up to that most powerful state.

Meng Hao had already reached his limit by slaying 4-Essences Dao Sovereigns. After Greed re-molded his fleshly body, and then fully fused with his Nirvana Fruits, his battle prowess was essentially equivalent to having five Essences.

Therefore, he wasn't confident at all in fighting a 5-Essences enemy. At most, they could fight to a draw and inflict serious mutual wounds. And yet, these 5-Essences faceless men were a bit different, and Meng Hao's eyes flickered with a mad light.

"Not giving me any chance to transcend the tribulation, huh…? Well, it's not completely hopeless. After fighting all of these faceless men, it's become clear that they're not really exactly the same as Dao Realm experts in the real world. They're missing a lot, including sentience. All they have is their cultivation base… they're essentially as mindless as puppets!" Meng Hao's eyes flickered with coldness, but there was little time. The terrifying, suffocating pressure grew on both sides, and howling sounds grew closer.

Even just the howls were enough to cause Meng Hao's scalp to go numb at the thought of what other terrifying entities might exist within the clouds.

"And here I thought this was nothing more than an Ancient Tribulation…." He smiled bitterly. How could he ever have imagined that an Ancient Tribulation would be this incredibly difficult….

Gritting his teeth, a light of madness filled his eyes as he shot forward. Waving his hand, he caused numerous mountains to descend, materialized a sun and a moon, and even summoned the Paragon Bridge. He went all-out with his cultivation base, rotating it at 120%. Even his fleshly body power exploded at its ultimate peak.

He called out the meat jelly, which became a suit of armor. By now, he couldn't use the Battle Weapon, so he pulled out his dragon spear, extending it in front of him as he shot forward.

As he began his charge, the four 5-Essences faceless men looked at him, killing intent flickering in their eyes. They attacked simultaneously, using the full power of their cultivation bases to stop Meng Hao.

From a distance, Meng Hao appeared to be soaked in blood and radiating madness. He was now completely committed to his course of action, as if becoming a crazed devil were his only path to survival!

Since retreat was not an option, the only thing to be done was strive forward!

RUMBLE!

Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth as his Mountain Consuming Incantation collapsed.

The sun and moon shattered!

His Paragon Bridge fell apart, and the meat jelly screamed miserably.

Blood spurted out from numerous wounds. Meng Hao’s kneecaps were shattered as he exploded with cultivation base power. He threw his head back and howled under the combined attack of the four 5-Essences Dao Sovereigns.

“Get the hell out of my way!” he roared. The pressure bearing down on him from both sides had reached a horrifying level, and only one thought now existed in Meng Hao’s mind.

“I have to get through and open the Door of the Ancient Realm!” Blood oozed out all over his body, and half of his bones were shattered. These injuries were even more serious than the ones he had sustained in the Heavengod Alliance. Using his last bit of energy, he swung his spear viciously; it was like a long dragon that slammed into the faceless men, pushing them back and… opening up a gap.

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# Chapter 1273: Soul Extermination!

The faceless man being shaken by the long spear might have a 5-Essences cultivation base, but despite fighting back with everything he had, he was still shoved backward relentlessly.

The spearhead then morphed into a huge dragon, which emitted a shocking roar that caused the faceless man to shudder and then suddenly begin to turn to stone!

It started with his chest, then began to slowly spread out. The faceless man retreated, seemingly acting on instinct. When he got far enough away, Meng Hao was no longer locked in place by the full formation originally created by the four faceless men; a gap had been opened.

The moment that gap appeared, and before the other three faceless men could do anything to intervene, Meng Hao roared mightily, a sound that echoed out like thunder in all directions. The three other faceless men were stopped in their tracks as Meng Hao burst forward with all the speed he could muster.

He shot forward with lightning quickness, like a meteor, leaving afterimages behind him as he burst through the gap, following the dragon spear toward the Door of the Ancient Realm.

600 meters. 300 meters. 150 meters….

The door of the Ancient Realm was getting closer and closer, but even as it did, the clouds behind Meng Hao swirled and, astonishingly, four figures appeared… 6-Essences Dao Sovereigns!

The mere pressure exerted by these four faceless men caused Heaven and Earth to tremble, and the starry sky to vibrate. Meng Hao was hit with an invisible blow, causing blood to spray out of his mouth. More than half of the bones in his body were shattered, and he lost feeling in his legs. His eyes were shot with blood, and yet despite the pressure weighing down, he continued forward. He was now a mere 90 meters from the Door of the Ancient Realm, and yet the 6-Essences faceless men were still closing in, radiating mind-boggling pressure.

“One Thought Stellar Transformation!” Meng Hao roared. The starstone in his eye melted and spread out to cover his body. Layer built upon layer, and before even a breath of time could pass, Meng Hao had transformed into a gigantic meteor which rumbled forward at incredible speed. He then passed the 30-meter mark; even as the 6-Essences faceless men continued in pursuit, he appeared directly in front of the Door of the Ancient Realm.

The area around the Door of the Ancient Realm itself was twisted and distorted. Time there flowed differently. As Meng Hao closed in, a wind sprang up, and in the blink of an eye, over a thousand years seemed to have passed….

It was at this point that roaring howls could be heard coming from the surrounding clouds. They got closer and closer, as if preparing to attack. Even the mere sounds contained boundless destructive power, intense pressure that was even more astonishing and terrifying than the 6-Essences faceless men.

The clouds seethed, and it was just barely possible to see two enormous arms, both struggling to emerge from the clouds. It was even possible to see the tips of the fingers on the leftmost arm.

The fingers were crimson, and the fingertips were violet. The entire arm was covered with scales, and on each of those scales were innumerable flickering magical symbols. Even just one of the fingertips on one of the hands was filled with the power to completely destroy souls. Apparently, nothing under the starry sky could possibly shake it, and it could rip anything and everything to pieces.

The clouds acted like restraints on the finger, which was currently struggling to break free, and a powerful howling sound even echoed out.

The crisis had reached a pinnacle, and if things stretched out any longer, the only thing that awaited Meng Hao was the end of his life, the destruction of his soul!

This Ancient Tribulation had become so difficult that he couldn’t even comprehend it. Meng Hao couldn’t imagine how any Allheaven Dao Immortal in the past had ever been able to fight back against this deadly tribulation!

However, there was no time to ponder the matter now. He would either open the Door of the Ancient Realm, and earn a chance to keep living, or… die!

“How could I possibly die here!?” Meng Hao roared in his meteor form. Filled with determination, courage, and even madness, he slammed into the Door of the Ancient Realm.

“OPEN UP!” he roared. His voice sounded like muffled thunder coming from within the meteor. It was a roar that coalesced the power of his soul, transforming into life force power that propelled the asteroid forward with even greater power.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOMMMM!

A huge boom rang out into the clouds surrounding the Door of the Ancient Realm, reaching even the starry sky beyond. It was even audible on the battlefield of the Meng Clan.

The Meng Clan ancestral mansion was surrounded by a colorful, glittering shield, which rippled from the magical attacks being levied against it by tens of thousands of cultivators.

The spell formation had held this entire time. Occasionally, it would flicker with bright light, and colorful beams of light would shoot out to attack the invaders. Currently, the fighting had reached a deadlock.

The massive boom which had echoed out just now from the cloud-filled starry sky caused both sides to stop and look up. Everyone was completely shaken. In some ways, they were bearing witness to Meng Hao transcending tribulation. In fact, they were fighting directly beneath that tribulation, and couldn’t help but be shocked to the core by what was happening.

Within the clouds, Meng Hao in meteor-form was bashing himself into the Door of the Ancient Realm with all his might. As the boom echoed out, his meteor form shattered, revealing his true form, coughing up blood and trembling violently. All the bones in his body were broken, and his internal organs were mangled. In his entire life, he had never been wounded this badly.

Even more terrifying was that as each second passed, Meng Hao’s hair grew grayer, and then even began to turn white. His body was incredibly weak, and was now beginning to wither away. His flesh became more and more emaciated, and he began to look extremely old.

The enormously huge door shuddered, and then oh-so-slowly… opened just a bit, revealing a thin sliver of light.

“Still not… all the way open…?” Meng Hao said with a bitter chuckle. He looked at the door, and the sliver of light, and his eyes shone with an unyielding gleam.

Almost in the same moment that the sliver of light appeared, the clouds in the area began to churn as if they possessed a will of their own. Apparently, the light from that huge door could dissipate the clouds, so suddenly, a powerful, apprehensive howl echoed out, filled with madness.

An entire legion of faceless men all charged Meng Hao. The enormous finger within the cloud fought back against the restraining power of the clouds as it shot forth in attack.

A will of soul destruction existed within the flickering light that emanated out from the fingertip, and it grew more intense and shocking by the moment

Meng Hao could sense that if that finger touched him, he would definitely be killed, and his spiritual soul and physical soul would both disperse.

If he didn’t open the Door of the Ancient Realm, he would die. Therefore… he ignored the killing intent coming from the forces outside the door. His eyes were filled with an intense, unyielding glow, and deep within, flickering flames ignited, filling him. As of this moment… Meng Hao was burning his own soul!

Burning the soul was a huge price to pay in exchange for… an explosive increase of power to batter against the door a second time.

“OPEN!” Meng Hao roared. The burning of his soul caused intense pain, and his eyes were completely bloodshot. However, he didn’t care about any of that pain. He only had one thought on his mind…

Open that door!

“OPEN! OPEN! OPEN!” he roared, lifting both hands into the air and shoving them toward the door. Meng Hao was like an ant compared to the massive door, but the power he was unleashing could shake Heaven and Earth. Suddenly, an image appeared behind him, like an ancient giant, stretching its hands out to shove against the door.

BOOOOMMMMMM!

The Door of the Ancient Realm opened a bit more. More light spilled out through the sliver, spreading out, causing the faceless men who were charging from behind to let out shrill shrieks.

One by one, they began to decay and fall apart, transforming into black smoke. Looks of shock appeared on their faces, and they fell back.

Meng Hao’s eyes were crimson, and his soul was aflame. He roared again, exploding with power. It looked like he was just about to truly open the Door of the Ancient Realm, to conclude the tribulation, to succeed… as an Allheaven Dao Immortal, and acquire the true good fortune that came with stepping into the Ancient Realm.

But then, all of a sudden….

That crimson, scaled finger with the violet fingertip broke out of the clouds, rumbling directly toward Meng Hao with Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering power and insane killing intent.

As it neared, the light spilling out from the door slammed into it. That light might be capable of terrifying the faceless men and forcing them into retreat. But this finger was far, far more terrifying, and when the light touched it, even though it began to melt, a howl rang out and… it just pushed on through, ignoring the light to reach out and tap Meng Hao!

Meng Hao chuckled bitterly. There was nothing he could do to fight back. Even were he at his peak, he wouldn't be confident in being able to handle the finger. That wasn't even to mention the fact that his soul was currently aflame, meaning that it was already starting to disperse.

"So I'm gonna die, huh…?" he murmured, fully able to sense the soul-destroying power. However, it was at this point that he suddenly seemed to recall something important. A tremor ran through him, and his eyes began to shine brightly.

"Perhaps… there's hope after all!" Almost in the moment that the thought occurred to Meng Hao, the terrifying finger slammed into him.

A massive tremor ran through Meng Hao, and then he exploded. The burning wreckage of his soul completely shattered.

Meng Hao was dead!

In the moment that he died, the Door of the Ancient Realm shuddered, then slowly began to fade away. The clouds around it began to thin, and the terrifying finger retracted. Cold laughter rang out from within the clouds.

Everything was over.

Meng Hao had gone all-out in his Ancient Tribulation, but had only been able to open the door a crack, a sliver. In truth, if Meng Hao had still had some power left in reserve, and if he had been able to batter the door just one more time, perhaps… combined with the energy from the two blows he had already delivered… It would not have been impossible… for him to actually open the Door of the Ancient Realm.

Not too far away from Meng Hao, the boy stood on the black willow leaf. When he saw what was happening, he said, “It’s over. He was strong, and yet he still died in the tribulation. This Ancient Tribulation could not be matched by even Dao Tribulation. Well in that case, the time has come to go all-out and exterminate the Meng Clan.”

Then, he prepared to charge into battle. However, it was at that point that his face suddenly flickered.

“This….”

Suddenly, just outside of the Door of the Ancient Realm, in the very spot where Meng Hao had died… something strange was happening!

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# Chapter 1274: Opening The Door of the Ancient Realm!

“As an Echelon cultivator… you shall be given… two… lives!”

Outside the Door of the Ancient Realm, after the enormous finger withdrew, the mangled gore and spattered blood that had been spreading out suddenly began to reform with indescribable speed.

It coalesced together into… Meng Hao!

His soul had just been destroyed, and yet it suddenly flared to life again. Meng Hao’s eyes opened, and deep inside could be seen traces of the passage of time.

That was because the place where his body had exploded was right outside the Door of the Ancient Realm, where time flowed differently. Naturally, because of that, the newly reformed and resurrected Meng Hao had a body which contained the essence of the passage of time!

It was not Essence, but rather something more like a seed… a seed of the Essence of Time!

From ancient times until now, the Essence of Space and the Essence of Time were similar to the Essence of Life and Death in that they were very difficult to acquire. The only chance to do so was through incredibly rare good fortune.

As of this moment, it was by means of complete and utter coincidence that Meng Hao now had… a seed of the Essence of Time inside of him.

The moment he opened his eyes, he knew the truth. The two Echelon lives given to him by Paragon Sea Dream did not make his soul indestructible, but rather… branded him with a sealing mark, which split his soul into three parts. Each of those three parts grew in parallel as he progressed in his cultivation. Because of that, he could actually die two times before being truly exterminated!

That applied not only to his soul, but also to his flesh and blood. It was a unique natural law, a magic of the type that Meng Hao couldn’t even begin to comprehend. It was… the power of a Paragon!

In almost the exact instant that Meng Hao’s eyes opened, the Door of the Ancient Realm, which had been fading away, suddenly flickered with light and formed back together. The disappearing clouds seethed, and the retreating figures let out howls of disbelief.

Countless faceless men charged madly forth, and the huge finger once again stretched out toward Meng Hao, accompanied by an enraged howl.

However, Meng Hao had already died once; how could he possibly die a second time? Having been re-formed and resurrected, his face was icy. The feeling of death he had just experienced was something he never wished to feel again. Even as the faceless men and the enormous finger closed in on him, a cold smile twisted his lips.

He had not merely recovered his soul and his fleshly body, but also… his cultivation base!

His right hand lifted up, and then he smacked it down hard onto the Door of the Ancient Realm. That blow was backed by the explosive cultivation base of an Allheaven Dao Immortal, his powerful fleshly body, his Paragon Bridge, and the combined power of all of his divine abilities. That power converged into his palm as he delivered a third blow onto the surface of the Door of the Ancient Realm.

RUMBLE!

When his hand made contact, the door rumbled, and that sliver which had appeared suddenly trembled as the door… began to open!

As the door opened, dazzling light spilled out, as well as whispering voices that seemed to come from ancient times, voices which filled Meng Hao’s ears and also echoed out into the surrounding area.

The faceless men let out miserable screams as the light enveloped them, rendering them incapable of getting any closer. They stared at the Door of the Ancient Realm as it continued to open, and they continued to melt!

In that same moment, the finger, with its power of extermination and boundless howl, continued onward toward Meng Hao, melting and being shredded by the light as it went. However, just before it touched him, Meng Hao let out a cold snort, and stepped across the threshold of the door.

It was only one, single step!

However, it was like the difference between Heaven and Earth. As soon as he was inside the Door of the Ancient Realm, the finger stopped moving. It hovered there directly in front of Meng Hao, not an inch away from his face.

However, that inch was like the vast gap between the sky and the land, something completely and utterly impossible to pass.

“I’ll make sure you pay the price for trying to exterminate me,” Meng Hao said lightly. “I might not be a match for you right now, but one day I will be. I’ll drag you out of those clouds and then make sure you die a painful death!” Despite the calmness of his voice, the cold resolve therein was impossible to miss.

“Door of the Ancient Realm, open!” he said, flicking his sleeve. Boundless light began to radiate out from the Door of the Ancient Realm. The beams were like sharp swords that swirled around, dispersing the clouds. The faceless men that were able to escape into the clouds would disappear along with them as they faded away, but any who were caught outside by the swords of light would be stabbed through, provoking miserable screams as if they were dying in body and spirit. It only took moments for them to transform into nothing more than ashes.

The gigantic finger trembled, and a defiant roar echoed out from the clouds. The finger retreated, vanishing within the clouds. In that same moment, Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed coldly as he… stepped back out of the door.

If there were people present to watch what was happening, they would be completely shocked, and find his action outrageous. Anyone else in his position would surely be walking further into the Door and completing their entrance into the Ancient Realm.

But Meng Hao almost seemed to disregard the widely-open door. Not even the owner of that enormous finger could ever have predicted that he would meet someone like this during the transcending of tribulation.

Meng Hao was the type of person who repaid every slight he received. He wouldn’t go out of his way to provoke people, but when people provoked him, he wouldn’t simply let them off. That was especially true considering that this person had taken one of his lives. As far as Meng Hao was concerned, an enmity had been created that made it impossible for the both of them to exist under the same Heavens.

As soon as he stepped out of the door, the copper mirror appeared, transforming into the Battle Weapon with shocking speed. This was Meng Hao’s most powerful weapon among all of his magical items. His Allheaven Dao Immortal cultivation base went into overdrive, bursting with power. Every bit of muscle and blood in his fleshly body radiated an intense and terrifying strength.

Inside of him, the Paragon Bridge connected him to Heaven and Earth, and outside, the image of the bridge itself appeared, causing the entire starry sky to dim and tremble, and fill with roiling flames. Meng Hao’s legs then began to move in an odd cadence as he walked through Time, heading toward the retreating finger, and then slashing out with his blade!

BOOOOMMMMMM!

Meng Hao looked like a celestial warrior with surging energy that caused the starry sky to tremble. Because the clouds were disappearing, Meng Hao's current appearance was suddenly revealed on the projection screen down below, making him visible to all the cultivators of the Meng Clan. Their minds spun as they saw both Meng Hao, and the resplendent Door of the Ancient Realm behind him!

As for all of the invading cultivators from the other sects who were outside of the shield, they could also see, and their eyes went wide.

From their perspective, Meng Hao's silhouette was wreathed with the light shining out from the door, which was almost like a cloak. His Battle Weapon was raised, visible to everyone as it viciously slashed toward the enormous finger!

A massive cascade of light sliced through the starry sky, causing everything to shake violently as an indescribably powerful force exploded out. Next, the finger… despite being in a state of retreat, was still slashed by that cascade of light!

“Sever!” Meng Hao roared. A massive rumbling sound could be heard as the very tip of the finger was completely severed away!!

The piece cut away was only about three meters long. Compared to the rest of the enormous finger, it was insignificant. However, it was still part of the entire structure, and as it was cut off, blue blood flowed out. A miserable shriek could also be heard from within the disappearing clouds, a shriek filled with unprecedented madness and intense pain. To that entity within the clouds, who had existed for countless years, this was the first time… he had been injured!!

For far too long he had existed in the clouds and unleashed deadly tribulation upon Allheaven Dao Immortals who attempted to enter the Ancient Realm. Today, he had finally been injured!

“You're DEAD!” howled an ancient voice. “I hereby curse you…. You shall die, for when the time comes to extinguish your Ancient Realm Lamps, I will return!!” Then the finger and the clouds vanished completely.

Only the Door of the Ancient Realm remained in the starry sky, casting resplendent, dazzling light out in all directions. Suddenly, the fighting down below stopped as everyone looked up in shock at Meng Hao.

His face was pale as he put the Battle Weapon away. His actions just now had been risky, but that was just how Meng Hao was. Not taking advantage of a situation was the same as incurring a loss. If he didn't take the chance to strike back, then he wouldn't be Meng Hao.

Meng Hao then looked at the three-meter slice of severed finger, and his eyes glittered. All of a sudden, a variety of curse-type Daoist magics flitted through his mind. He made a snatching motion, and the slice of finger flew into his bag of holding.

With that, he turned to face the Door of the Ancient Realm, and began to stride forward. When he entered the door completely, it shook violently, and massive amounts of radiant light shone out. Ancient voices echoed out into the starry sky as Meng Hao sank into the brightness. His listless cultivation base was restored and then, rumbling sounds could be heard as it… began to ascend.

This was the ascension from the Immortal Realm into the Ancient Realm!

He closed his eyes as he detected a sensation of ancientness spreading out from within him, an aura that emanated the unique fluctuations of the Ancient Realm.

Everything was quiet, both in the Meng Clan and among the invading sects. Even the crowds waiting on the gigantic willow leaves were watching Meng Hao.

They had borne witness to a terrifying Ancient Tribulation, and all of them knew deep inside that they couldn't possibly have been able to successfully transcend it. And yet, the man standing right there in front of them had!

The young boy stood there silently. He was a 5-Essences Dao Sovereign, and yet even he wasn't confident that he could succeed in such a tribulation.

“Allheaven Dao Immortal….” the boy murmured, a torn look appearing in his eyes. “Next, he will actually begin to enter the Ancient Realm. He will absorb the light of the Door of the Ancient Realm, and form… his Soul Lamps!

“I wonder how many Soul Lamps he will end up with…. Throughout all of history, the most ever converged was 29, by none other than Ksitigarbha from the Fourth Mountain and Sea! The more Soul Lamps there are, the more powerful one will eventually become, and yet, the more deadly the danger is.

“However, if cultivators feared death, then what would be the point of practicing cultivation to begin with? Considering this person’s personality, he will definitely open an extreme number of Soul Lamps….” The boy’s eyes flickered as he then lifted his hand and pointed toward the Meng Clan.

“Pass down orders. Exterminate the entire Meng Clan. Disturb this individual’s thoughts. If his mind is clouded when he ignites his Soul Lamps, then he will never reach the pinnacle. That is the way to cut off his path to the future. Reduce the number of lamps, and thus make him even weaker if he steps in the Dao!”

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# Chapter 1275: Drastic Upheavals in the Meng Clan!

As soon as the words left the boy’s mouth, the dozens of enormous willow leaves transformed into black beams that shot toward the Meng Clan. The black-robed cultivators atop the leaves had eyes that glittered with cold killing intent as they powered up their cultivation bases to the absolute peak.

The beams were like dozens of sharp arrows, screaming through the starry sky at incredible speed. In the blink of an eye, they were outside the shields surrounding the Meng Clan continent. Without even pausing for a moment, they slammed directly into the shield.

BOOOOMMMMMM!

As the sound reverberated out, the Meng Clan’s shield distorted, as if it were about to collapse. Cracking sounds could be heard as fissures spread out across its surface.

Seeing that the shield was about to collapse, the five Meng Clan Patriarchs roared, performing incantation gestures that caused a red glow to spread out from the spell formation. That red light caused the teetering shield to once again grow stable, and even resume counterattacking.

Numerous beams of blood-red light shot out toward the besieging cultivators. At the same time, rather than being resigned to their fate, the Meng Clan cultivators followed the commands of the five Patriarchs and borrowed the power of the spell formation to charge into the tens of thousands of enemy cultivators and began to fight them.

In the blink of an eye, the level of brutality on the battlefield increased significantly. Casualties were severe, and the reek of blood wafted out immediately. Bloodcurdling screams could be heard as… the slaughter began.

The cultivators from the random invading sects weren’t difficult to deal with, as they had varied cultivation levels, and were, generally speaking, much weaker than the Meng Clan. The Patriarchs of those sects were a different story though, and even more important was the fact that the black-robed cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea had intensely murderous auras, and were obviously famous individuals where they came from. When they attacked, the Meng Clan resistance was crushed like dry weeds, and the Meng Clan cultivators were pushed backward across the battlefield, over and over again.

Thankfully, the shield still held, ensuring that any members of the Meng Clan who were injured could quickly retreat from combat. The Meng Clan defenses were holding, and yet even as they held on tenaciously, all of a sudden, something happened in the nine smaller continents attached to the Meng Clan’s main continent. With the exception of the Xu Clan, which Meng Hao had exterminated, four auxiliary clans on the other continents all rose up in rebellion!

At first, the Meng Clan merely experienced some inner turmoil. However, in almost that same moment, all of the cultivators in the Ancient Realm and above who came from the Meng Clan’s seventh, fourth and third bloodlines suddenly shivered. Then, black glows appeared in their eyes, and cold smiles twisted their lips. They turned, and instantly began to attack their fellow clan members.

“You…”

“What are you doing!?!?”

“You’re rebelling! You traitors!!”

Booms shook everything as the Meng Clan… was thrown into utter chaos!

Miserable shrieks rang out continuously, along with roars of disbelief. The Meng Clan was now in complete chaos. Not only were foreigners invading, internal strife had struck as well. The clan was on the verge of being overthrown.

Meng Hao was still up in the starry sky, standing there in the Door of the Ancient Realm, surrounded by boundless light. He was like a black hole, ravenously absorbing the light shining from the door.

Every beam of Ancient light that he absorbed caused his cultivation base to experience Heaven-shaking, Earth-toppling transformations as his Immortal power was transformed into Ancient mana! 1

Ancient mana was a unique source of power for Ancient Realm cultivators, a power that filled their bodies and could explode with force that far exceeded the Immortal Realm.

“Ancient Tribulation is the first step,” Meng Hao murmured. “After that, the light of the Door of the Ancient Realm is absorbed and transformed into Ancient mana…. That is the second step.

“The third step is to ignite the Soul Lamps. Only then can one truly be considered to be in the Ancient Realm.” At this point, he glanced down calmly at the Meng Clan, and saw the chaos unfolding, and the invading foreigners.

Truth be told, whether or not the Meng Clan as a whole survived didn’t have a lot to do with Meng Hao personally. What he cared about was his grandmother and the rest of her people.

In the same moment that he looked down, the boy on the black willow leaf down below looked up, and he and Meng Hao locked eyes. It was then that Meng Hao realized that they were attacking at this moment to sow chaos in his heart.

The boy did nothing to hide that, and in fact, a gleam of sinister provocation could be seen in his eyes.

Meng Hao shook his head. A glance at the Meng Clan’s spell formation confirmed that it would not easily be shaken; his grandmother and everyone else was currently safe behind its protective barrier.

Meng Hao looked away, ignoring the boy. Spreading his arms wide and throwing his head back, he allowed the light from the Door of the Ancient Realm to pour into him and spread even faster throughout his body.

As that happened, the Immortal power within him became Ancient mana. Simultaneously, the four Nirvana Fruits inside of him also began to transform, becoming… Dao Fruits!

“Ancient Realm cultivators have Dao Fruits, which serve as the foundation for stepping into the Dao Realm in the future. That is because Essence… blossoms from Dao Fruit!” Even as Meng Hao muttered to himself, rumbling sounds could be heard as roughly thirty percent of his Immortal power was converted into Ancient mana. At the same time, his first Nirvana Fruit began to emanate Dao fluctuations from his forehead.

Gradually, the shape of the Nirvana Fruit began to change and it began to glitter as if it were now filled with innumerable magical symbols, indicating that it was… a Dao Fruit!

As soon as that fruit appeared, Meng Hao’s cultivation base ascended to greater heights, and began to emanate intense cultivation base fluctuations.

“When all four Nirvana Fruits transform into Dao Fruits, then I can begin to ignite my Soul Lamps.” Meng Hao suddenly waved both arms, opening his mouth as he transformed into a black hole that began sucking in all of the door’s light.

As the light poured into him, the Door of the Ancient Realm began to grow dim, a sight shocking to all who were watching.

“His Ancient Tribulation was even more difficult than a Dao Tribulation,” murmured the boy on the black willow leaf, “and yet tribulations also count as incredible good fortune. After transcending it, the resulting transformative powers will be incredible!

“He has a bizarre cultivation base. Just how much Immortal power does he have inside of him? Usually it only takes the space of a few breaths of time to transform all of your Immortal power into Ancient mana….”

The boy’s pupils constricted. Filled with shock, he waved his hand, causing a black sea to erupt out from him. As it grew larger and larger, howling sounds emanated from it, and a gigantic scorpion emerged.

The scorpion roared as it scuttled rapidly across the surface of the black sea water toward the Meng Clan and its shield. When it slammed into the shield, massive rumbling sounds echoed out, and the shield trembled. During that time, Meng Hao had converted thirty, forty, and then fifty percent of his Immortal power into Ancient mana.

When he reached fifty percent, his second Nirvana Fruit finally transformed into a Dao Fruit. With two Dao Fruits, Meng Hao’s cultivation base once again ascended rapidly.

He was experienced transformations inside and out, incredible good fortune, which was… truly an indescribable cultivation base breakthrough!

He was stepping from the Immortal into the Ancient!

Meng Hao threw his head back and roared as more Immortal power was converted: sixty percent, seventy percent, eighty percent.

When he reached eighty percent, his third Nirvana Fruit transformed into a Dao Fruit. Meng Hao’s aura became even more ancient, and he began to emanate an archaic air; it seemed that at this moment he could sense the true nature of his bloodline and had acquired the strength of his ancestral forefathers.

Meng Hao’s fleshly body power was getting even stronger, and his eyes were shining brightly. He was now trembling violently, and also growing more and more gaunt. However, his Allheaven Dao Immortal aura was also growing more powerful.

"In the Ancient Realm," Meng Hao murmured, "one follows the path of one's ancestors, gropes for the nature of all living things. Searching, seeking… for the Essence of all life, for the qualifications to step into the Dao!

"Because I am an Allheaven Dao Immortal, in addition to searching for the Essence of all living things, I also… must search for the true meaning of my bloodline." He swished his sleeve, causing rumbling sounds to emanate out. There was no longer much light coming from the Door of the Ancient Realm. It was so dim that it appeared to be on the verge of winking out. As Meng Hao sucked in another breath, the light surged toward him, absorbing into his skin, pouring into his body.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

He threw his head back and roared as the final twenty percent of Immortal power inside of him was transformed into Ancient mana. At that point, his fourth Nirvana Fruit finished transforming into… a Dao Fruit!

Rumbling echoed out from inside of him as the Ancient mana flowed through him. The four Dao Fruits in his forehead began to shrink and then expand. With each cycle, the Ancient mana within him would also surge explosively, giving Meng Hao a sense of… just how powerful he now was!

"The Ancient Realm…." he murmured. It was at this point that rumbling sounds echoed out as the Door of the Ancient Realm actually shattered into countless fragments. However, instead of fading away, the remnants of the door transformed into a sea of flames.

Seven-colored flames, like the fire of purgatory, swirled around Meng Hao.

The time had come… to ignite the Soul Lamps!

It was in this same moment that the boy down below performed a double-handed incantation gesture and then waved his finger at the scorpion. The scorpion roared, its energy surging as it grew even bigger than before. In the blink of an eye, it began to emanate a terrifying aura as it increased in size until it was as big as the continent itself.

Then, it clutched the protective shield with its claws and began to stab its legs slowly down into it.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

Massive rumbling could be heard as the Meng Clan’s protective shield shook violently. The members of the Meng Clan inside, including the five Patriarchs, were all aghast and attempted to counteract the attack. Even as they tried to repair the damage, the crowds on the dozens of willow leaves, as well as the cultivators from the random sects, all joined forces to attack. Shocking rumbling echoed out as numerous dazzling magical techniques were unleashed.

Then, a massive explosion could be heard as the Meng Clan’s shield… exploded!

1. I just want to offer some behind-the-scenes information here. I really went back and forth about how to translate this term, and settled on Ancient mana. Part of the decision was based on a Patreon poll that nearly 400 members of the Heaven Sealing Sect participated in. However, I also got opinions from some others. For the record, RWX actually voted against Ancient mana, not because of the accuracy but because of the feel (correct me if I’m wrong about that assessment RWX heh heh). In the end, I actually like it and think it not only conveys the meaning of the Ancient Realm “source of magical power,” but also sounds cool. And yes, Meng Hao will have to turn his cards 90 degrees to the side from now on to use any of his divine abilities or magical techniques

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# Chapter 1276: Igniting the Soul Lamps!

Cracking sounds rang out as the gigantic scorpion’s claws completely shattered the shield and then slammed down into the Meng Clan ancestral mansion, creating several deep craters!

At the same time, the vicious scorpion’s enormous head lowered down until it was right in front of the crowds from the Meng Clan. Then, it shuddered briefly and then sprayed a sea of black water.

At the same time, the invading cultivators surged in. The Meng Clan cultivators were thrown into pandemonium. Not only was fierce fighting going on with the rebellious clan members, the invading cultivators were now joining in on the slaughter.

Miserable shrieks rang out, the land quaked, and colors flashed in the sky. Furthermore, rumbling echoed out as the black willow leaves shot downward with shocking speed.

As the leaves stabbed down into the land, the black-robed men transformed into a thousand black beams of light that instantly joined the battle.

“Kill them! Leave no one alive!”

“From this day onward, there will be no Meng Clan in the Eighth Mountain and Sea!”

The sounds of explosions filled the air, and slowly, expressions of hopelessness appeared on the faces of the Meng Clan cultivators. Then, they began to fight back as if they had gone mad. It wasn’t that none of them had thought of surrendering; in fact, some had attempted to do just that, but the result was… they had been slaughtered in response!

Their enemies did not want captives, they wanted to exterminate the entire clan.

Thankfully, the invading cultivators’ target was clearly the central continent; as for the surrounding smaller continents, although the flames of war burned there, they were much weaker. As for the continent occupied by Grandma Meng’s people, because the Xu Clan no longer existed there, virtually no invading cultivators went there.

The main force was levied against the Meng Clan ancestral mansion.

It was in this moment of chaotic fighting that Meng Hao’s grandmother, granduncles, and other relatives all waded into the fight. However, they didn’t attract much attention.

That privilege went to the Meng Clan’s five enraged Patriarchs, who were fighting five black-robed Dao Realm experts from the Seventh Mountain and Sea.

That battle of ten shook Heaven and Earth, and was far more shocking than what was happening with the Ancient Realm cultivators.

“Getting nervous?” said the boy, who hovered in midair above the battlefield, looking up into the starry sky at Meng Hao, eyes flashing coldly. He hoped that attacking in this way would force his opponent’s hand. For some reason, his subconscious was nagging him, telling him that if Meng Hao transcended his tribulation, then events would change in unpredictable ways.

Meng Hao’s eyes shone with coldness as he looked down at what was happening. Unfortunately, he was at a critical juncture, and could not afford to be distracted. Eyes flickering, he waved his hand, causing the Blood Mastiff to appear, roaring. As it flew out, it was joined by his blackpod imps, who shot through the air, vicious expressions on their faces. Then he waved his hand, causing a rift to open, out of which leaped the Blood

Demon, joined by Meng Hao’s Blood Spirit. In the blink of an eye, all of them shot down into the battle. 1

At first, it seemed as if their focus was slaughtering enemies, but Meng Hao’s orders were actually that they defend Granda Meng and the rest of the bloodline.

“Help me buy some time….” he murmured as he hovered there in the sea of flames formed by the remnants of the Door of the Ancient Realm.

“Soul Lamps, ignite!”

RUMBLE!

All of Meng Hao’s Ancient mana burst out, almost like an attack. It surged out of the top of his head, causing a tongue of fire to ignite in that same position and remain floating there!

As soon as the flame emerged, it flared up fiercely; soon, the image of something like a bowl appeared beneath it. In the blink of an eye, it formed… a Soul Lamp!

As soon as the lamp formed, Meng Hao could clearly sense a strand of his soul, joined by some of the power of his bloodline, peeling away to… merge into the lamp!

“The flame is my soul, the basin is my bloodline. This Soul Lamp is like a clone!” That was the first sensation Meng Hao got. In fact, he could also tell that as soon as the Soul Lamp appeared, it did much the same thing he did and… began to absorb the energy of Heaven and Earth that existed in the area.

“So that’s how it is. Soul Lamps are really clones. After separating from the original body, they can continue to advance in cultivation. Furthermore, with every Soul Lamp that is extinguished, it’s like that clone is absorbed back in, redoubling your power!” Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed with enlightenment. Taking a deep breath, he once again caused the Ancient mana within him to explode out!

A second Soul Lamp appeared, then a third, a fourth, and a fifth….

Every time his cultivation base erupted with power, he would form another Soul Lamp. Soon, he was surrounded by a total of 9 Soul Lamps. And he was still going!

As he continued with this process, the flames surrounding him were no longer enveloping him completely, enabling the crowds down below to clearly see him igniting his Soul Lamps.

“9 Soul Lamps…. He’s already ignited 9 Soul Lamps. Just… how many lamps will he ignite in the end!?!?”

“The number of Soul Lamps you can ignite has to do with your Immortal meridians. I’m not sure how many Immortal meridians he opened when he reached Immortal Ascension, but from the look of it, he’s probably going to ignite at least 20 lamps!!”

People on both sides of the battle were taking the time to look up and observe what was happening. Although this was not the first time for most of the combatants below to experience someone making a breakthrough in the middle of a battle, it was their first time seeing someone transcending tribulation in the middle of a clan extermination.

“Already igniting his Soul Lamps….” thought the boy as he hovered there. A cunning gleam appeared in his eyes, and he suddenly shot through the air toward where the five Meng Clan Dao Realm Patriarchs were fighting. He waved his hand, and immediately, the ninth bloodline Patriarch coughed up a mouthful of blood, and fell backward.

“Not that one…?” the boy thought, letting out a cold snort. Meng Hao apparently wasn’t reacting to his attack on the ninth bloodline Patriarch at all.

Of that, the boy was certain, the reason being because of his unique Daoist magic that allowed him to see the truth and falsehood within a person. That was the nature of the sixth Essence which he was currently studying; if he succeeded in his endeavor, he would become a 6-Essences Dao Sovereign.

As a 6-Essences Dao Sovereign, you could say that he would be virtually invincible!

For all intents and purposes, the level of 6-Essences Dao Sovereign was the limit for cultivators. For years and years, no one had ever been able to break through from six Essences to seven, to become an early-stage Paragon.

After all, Paragons, even early-stage Paragons, were still supreme beings!

Certain that Meng Hao would not intervene on behalf of the ninth-bloodline Patriarch, the boy was forced to change his tactics. Instantly, he disappeared in a flash toward the next Meng Clan Patriarch.

In almost that same moment, Meng Hao hovered out in the starry sky, cultivation base bursting with power as he ignited a 10th Soul Lamp. After that was number 11, 12, and then 13….

With each lamp that appeared, more of his soul and bloodline power emanated out. Despite how it was spilling out of him, he was not growing weaker. Quite the contrary. That power from his bloodline, and his soul, were actually naturally recovering!

Furthermore, his existing Soul Lamps were rapidly gobbling up the surrounding energy of Heaven and Earth. From the look of it, if they reached the absolute pinnacle, then they would actually be as strong as Meng Hao himself, or maybe even stronger.

“So this is the Ancient Realm….?” Meng Hao was shaken inwardly from the sheer fearsomeness and power of the Ancient Realm. He had slaughtered Ancient Realm cultivators in the past as if they were ants, but now he had to admit that the Ancient Realm… was a Realm in which cultivators would most definitely experience drastic transformations!

With each Soul Lamp that one extinguished, once could reabsorb its soul and bloodline power, causing oneself to double in all aspects.

With ten Soul Lamps, you could experience tenfold growth. With twenty Soul Lamps, twentyfold growth!

Meng Hao took a deep breath, and his eyes shone with a strange light. Although he knew that the more Soul Lamps he had, the more danger he would face… he still wanted to get more.

Each additional Soul Lamp represented another factor of power in the future, assuming he could successfully extinguish it.

“Essentially, if my current cultivation base counts as ‘one’, then each of my current Soul Lamps will have the potential to grow to equal that ‘one’. The only thing I don’t know is if, once I absorb my first Soul Lamp, will the remaining Soul Lamps stay at that same level, or will be able to break through by absorbing even more energy from Heaven and Earth and become equivalent to ‘two’?

“If the latter is true, then the Ancient Realm… is definitely a major dividing line!

“Although cultivators in this Realm are all technically in the same Realm, the weaker ones are vastly weaker than the stronger ones. It all depends on the foundation; the moment you ignite those Soul Lamps, that is when your power is determined!

“Step into the Ancient Realm weak, and in the end, you will still be weak!

“Step into the Ancient Realm powerful, and in the end… that explosive, multi-factored growth will make you powerful to a terrifying degree!

“The Ancient Realm. Ah, the Ancient Realm….” Finally, Meng Hao threw his head back and roared, bursting with even more cultivation base power, causing more Soul Lamps to appear, all the way until he had… 18!

And he wasn’t finished!

Meanwhile, the boy down below had passed from each of the five Patriarchs to the next, seriously injuring them all. When he injured the final one, Meng Hao seemed to suddenly get ever so slightly nervous, but the boy’s Essence told him that it was merely an act on Meng Hao’s part.

“You might be able to disregard the Meng Clan as a whole, but there are definitely people here that you care about.” The boy laughed coldly, then waved his hand, causing one of the Meng Clan cultivators to fly up, whereupon he grabbed him by the head and began to perform a Soulsearch.

That was the point in which Meng Hao ignited his 19th Soul Lamp!

“I can still ignite more!” Meng Hao’s eyes were crimson, and he was trembling violently. 19 Soul Lamp indicated that his cultivation base had burst out with power through the top of his head nineteen times. Not even Meng Hao could completely ignore such pain.

“IGNITE AGAIN!” he roared, bursting with cultivation base power. Pain filled him, then surged toward the top of his head. Rumbling sounds echoed out as yet another tongue of fire appeared and transformed into… his 20th Soul Lamp!

In that instant, the Meng Clan cultivator being held by the boy let out a bloodcurdling scream. Blood oozed out of his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, and then he exploded. As for the boy, a strange gleam appeared in his eyes.

“It seems I was in secluded meditation for too long, and allowed my powers of deduction to grow rusty. I can’t believe I wasted so much time coming to such a simple conclusion.” Smiling faintly, the boy suddenly shot toward Grandma Meng, eyes flickering coldly.

1. The Blood Spirit is Meng Hao’s upgraded Blood Clone

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# Chapter 1277: Battling a Dao Sovereign!

In almost the same moment that the boy began to close in on Grandma Meng, Meng Hao was up in the starry sky attempting to ignite his 21st Soul Lamp. Suddenly, his eyes flickered, and he looked down toward the Meng Clan ancestral mansion.

“Looking to die!?” he said, his voice echoing like thunder. Suddenly, he vanished, reappearing between the boy and Grandma Meng, still surrounded by the sea of flames.

It happened so quickly that the boy could never have anticipated it happening. Meng Hao’s speed was completely shocking, and the very instant that he appeared, he clenched his right fist and let loose a punch.

The Life-Extermination Fist!

As the fist rocketed out, the boy’s eyes gleamed, and he placed both hands together to perform an incantation gesture, then blew out a gust of air. Immediately, the black sea around him swept out to meet Meng Hao’s fist.

BOOOOMMMMMM!

The fist slammed into the materialized sea, instantly shattering it. Seawater sprayed out in all directions, and the boy fell back, an expression of shock on his face.

Even as he retreated, Meng Hao’s 21st Soul Lamp appeared.

“Oh?” Meng Hao thought, eyes flickering coldly. “So it works that way too, huh?” Then he punched out again.

Bedevilment Fist!

A huge boom could be heard, and the ground quaked. A huge rift was torn open in front of Meng Hao, and cracking sounds echoed out. The boy’s face fell, and an intense sensation of crisis welled up within him.

“Dammit, he still hasn’t transcended the tribulation. How could he be so strong!?” The boy didn’t hesitate for a moment. He made a grasping gesture, causing an enormous turtle shell to appear in the air in front of him. Eight ancient magical symbols could be seen on the surface of the shell, and yet when Meng Hao’s fist hit it, it exploded into pieces.

In conjunction with the explosion, the boy’s face went ashen, and he fell back yet again. However, his eyes flickered strangely.

“Eight Sealing Mountains!” As soon as the words left his mouth, the eight magical symbols on the remnants of the shattered turtle shell flickered, causing a mountain to suddenly appear above Meng Hao’s head, which then began to descend.

Next was a second mountain, a third and a fourth, all the way until eight mountains could be seen, all of which crushed down onto Meng Hao. Meng Hao’s legs trembled, and cracks radiated out on the ground down below. However, he simply began to chuckle, causing his cultivation base power to erupt out through the top of his head.

BOOOOMMMMMM!

The eight mountains then collapsed into pieces, causing the boy’s eyes to widen with shock. It was also in that very moment that three more Soul Lamps appeared!

22. 23. 24!

24 Soul Lamps swirled around Meng Hao, flames flickering, causing him to emanate a profoundly ancient energy that made him seem like an Emperor straight out of ancient times.

Moments ago in the Meng Clan ancestral mansion, the members of the Meng Clan had been sustaining heavy casualties. However, then Meng Hao had appeared, launched two fist strikes, ignited numerous Soul Lamps and caused flickering flames to illuminate his surroundings. The result was that the battlefield went completely silent. Both the invading cultivators and the Meng Clan cultivators all began to back away.

When they looked at Meng Hao, their eyes were filled with terror, although for the members of the Meng Clan, that terror also contained… a bit of hope!

“Dammit,” thought the boy. “What momentum! Can I… even stop him? Just how many Immortal meridians did he actually open when stepping into the Immortal Realm!?” His eyes flickered with killing intent and suddenly, he stopped retreating and instead advanced, waving both arms out in front of him. A shocking whistling sound could be heard, and the air around him distorted as an enormous scorpion appeared. It was pitch black, and immediately let out a howling screech as it leapt toward Meng Hao.

As it bore down on him, Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed. He took a step forward, causing the Ancient mana within him to explode out in the form of another fist.

It was none other than… the God-Slaying Fist!

Heaven and Earth flashed with bright colors, and a howling wind kicked up. All of the surrounding cultivators coughed up blood and fell into retreat. Countless buildings and structures were transformed into ash, and even the distant sun and moon went dim. When the God-Slaying fist was unleashed, it lead to boundless slaughter.

The boy let out an agonized shriek and simultaneously performed an incantation gesture. As for the scorpion, as soon as it made contact with Meng Hao, an enormous boom rattled out, and the air distorted so badly that no one could see what was happening.

When everything returned to normal, people could see the scorpion shattering into pieces. The boy was in full retreat, blood oozing out of the corners of his mouth. As for Meng Hao, he hovered in midair, energy surging, surrounded by three more Soul Lamps than the 24 he had already ignited!

He now had 27 Soul Lamps!!

“Ksitigarbha of the Fourth Mountain ignited 29 Soul Lamps,” the boy thought, face falling as he fell back. “This man… has already ignited 27 Soul Lamps. From the look of it, he still has more to go!

“Dammit, I slipped up. I should never have interfered or tried to force his hand. I essentially helped him to ignite his Soul Lamps!”

Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a bright light, and he licked his lips. During his brief exchange with the boy, he could tell that igniting Soul Lamps while fighting was actually much easier….

He wasn’t sure why, and was fairly certain that other people wouldn’t experience a similar thing in a state like his, but he did know that this was an opportunity that wouldn’t come again. As such, he didn’t take the time to try to figure out what was happening. Instead, he shot directly after the boy.

“Dammit,” the boy yelled to his subordinates, “all of you get out there and kill that old woman and everyone with her!” The boy’s terror regarding Meng Hao was growing, and he was feeling very disheartened. He just couldn’t reconcile himself with the fact that he had actually helped Meng Hao by fighting him.

The invading cultivators from the random sects hesitated, but the black-robed men from the Seventh Mountain and Sea didn’t. They instantly flew toward Grandma Meng and the others.

Grandma Meng and the others were completely outnumbered, and couldn’t possibly match up. At this point, killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes and he roared, “How dare you people!”

His voice was like Heaven-rending, Earth-crushing lightning. At the same time that he called out, he waved his hand, causing a massive quantity of black mist to surge out. Seething, it formed into a huge black hand which shot toward the black-robed men.

The black-robed men were initially shaken just by Meng Hao’s voice. Some of them began to bleed from their eyes, ears, noses, and mouths, then went stiff. Some directly exploded, down to their Nascent Divinities, and as for the others, before they could recover, the black mist palm smashed into them.

As the hand passed along, the black-robed men screamed and rapidly began to wither away.

“A curse! That’s curse power!”

“That’s the curse power of our Seventh Mountain and Sea! How does he know how to unleash it…? Nooooo….”

Miserable screams rang out as the black-robed men who had been converging on Grandma Meng all were transformed into black liquid, which then showered down onto the ground. Everyone who saw this happen gasped, especially when people heard the words uttered by the men before they died. That left the Meng Clan cultivators completely shaken.

“The Seventh Mountain and Sea….”

“They’re from the Seventh Mountain and Sea! Heavens! Cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea are actually here, and there are so many of them. Could it be… that a Mountain and Sea War is starting!?!?”

Although the members of the Meng Clan were shocked, the clan rebels and the invading cultivators didn’t seem surprised at all, as if the matter wasn’t even a secret. Actually… they had been aware all along that the Seventh Mountain and Sea’s army would soon be coming to the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

A war between two great Mountains and Seas was beginning, and this day… was merely the first battle in that war.

Ignoring everything else, Meng Hao advanced toward the boy, whose face darkened as he looked back at Meng Hao.

“Do you really think I’m scared of you?” the boy said. “Since you’re looking to die, then even if you are in the middle of igniting your Soul Lamps, I… can still kill you anyway!” Gritting his teeth, he suddenly began to emit a green glow. At the same time, green grass sprouted beneath his feet, which rapidly grew to cover the entire area. In the short span of a single breath, the area surrounding the boy… became a huge grassy plain.

Enormous trees then began to rise up, and at the same time, a powerful plant-like aura began to fill the entire area.

On each and every bit of vegetation visible, faces could be seen which were none other than… the face of the boy!

“Get ready to be killed!!” the boy said. At the same time, the faces on the grass, trees, flowers and other types of vegetation all howled.

If that were all there were to it, it might not be a big deal, but at the same time, rain began to fall in the starry sky. The rain was black, and it rapidly formed into a huge sea. All of the drops of water in that rain and sea, shockingly, also had the boy’s howling face on them.

“Time to die!!”

The matter wasn’t over yet. The boy waved his sleeve, and immediately, he began to grow vastly larger. His black hair spread out, superseding the starry sky, creating a field of black that was like the dark of night!

His eyes then began to grow brightly, forming a contrast with the darkness. It was… light!

Of course, it was all illusory. All of the faces and the plants, the black rainwater, the light and darkness, and the boy’s enormous frame, none of it was real. Any cultivator would be able to see that it was all illusory. Furthermore, although some pressure emanated from these things, it wasn’t very strong!

It was at this point that all of a sudden, the enormous boy said one single word, a word that caused everything… to change.

“Reality!”

RUMBLE!

The plants became real, the black rain became real, the darkness became real, the light became real!

This was the boy’s fifth Essence. Reality!

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# Chapter 1278: Essence of Reality!

The boy’s first four Essences were extraordinary to begin with. His Essence of plants and vegetation was not common, and his Essence of rain was unexpectedly black, indicating that it contained poison. Those two Essences alone were rare.

From the nature of these Essences, it could be imagined that just with these four the boy would occupy a position at the pinnacle of 4-Essences Dao Sovereigns. This was without even mentioning his fifth Essence, the Essence of…

Reality!

That fifth Essence was able to thoroughly transform his other four Essences, immediately conjuring forth from them a power that could shake Heaven and Earth. Currently, rumbling sounds were echoing out, and the starry sky was vibrating. A boundless cultivation base power was now erupting out from the Essence world that the boy had summoned.

“In the entire Mountain and Sea Realm,” the boy said, “there are only four cultivators who are 6-Essences Dao Sovereigns!

“The most powerful is Ksitigarbha of the Fourth Mountain and Sea, who is at the peak of six Essences. Rumor has it that he’s less than half a step away from becoming a 7-Essences Paragon. As for the other three people, they are the three great Doyens who were entrusted with the three classic Daoist scriptures!

“When it comes to 5-Essences Dao Sovereigns, there are a few more than the 6-Essences Dao Sovereigns. However, even in all of the Nine Mountains and Seas, there are no more than fifteen. Among those fifteen, I might not be the strongest, and am weaker than the Mountain and Sea Lords!

“However, even still, it doesn’t matter that you’ve stepped into the Ancient Realm as an Allheaven Dao Immortal, and have a bloodline that reaches back to the Paragon Immortal Realm… you still aren’t a match for me!”

The boy’s eyes glittered coldly as his voice echoed out. His Essence world rumbled as it surrounded Meng Hao. Boundless greenery grew at an astonishing rate, sending out an intense power of plants and vegetation. Then there was the seemingly infinite black rain, each drop of which emanated astonishing pressure onto Meng Hao.

As for the darkness, it was even more terrifying, completely covering Meng Hao, turning him pitch black, as if he were being assimilated by the night.

And then there was the Essence of light, which was a power that could actually dispel darkness. It was slowly vaporizing Meng Hao; whereas before it had been illusory, with the Essence of reality, it was now truly capable of harming him.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOMMMM!

The cultivators of the Meng Clan, as well as the invaders, were so shocked by what they were witnessing that they completely forgot that they had just been fighting and killing each other.

All eyes were completely fixed on the battle between Meng Hao and the boy!

“5-Essences Dao Sovereign… that boy… is actually a 5-Essences Dao Sovereign!” The five Patriarchs of the Meng Clan were shaking in fear and astonishment. Although all of them were in the Dao Realm, this was actually their first time ever seeing someone brandishing five Essences simultaneously.

Although they had previously fought Meng Hao, the battle prowess he had put on display had only led them to speculate about the true limits of his power. However, now that five Essences really were on display, it was impossible to even describe how truly shaken they were.

Nowadays in the Mountain and Sea Realm, Ksitigarbha of the Fourth Mountain and Sea was a 6-Essences Dao Sovereign, but the other eight Mountain and Sea Lords were all at the 5-Essences level. The weakest of them all was Lord Ji of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, who hadn’t even reached the 5-Essences level!

As such, it was possible to say that 5-Essences cultivators were peak almighty experts in the Mountain and Sea Realm. Any one of those people were the type who were powerful enough to destroy vast swaths of the starry sky.

In the Seventh Mountain and Sea, the most powerful people were two 5-Essences Dao Sovereigns, one of whom was the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, and the other was none other than his boy, Xiao Yihan!

Only an almighty expert like him was capable of leading the vanguard in the invasion of the Eighth Mountain and Sea, to begin the Mountain and Sea War!

Another reason that only he qualified was that… the reconnaissance carried out by the Seventh Mountain and Sea throughout the years had long since revealed to them that in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, there was only one almighty expert who had reached the level of 5-Essences, and that was the Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea. After him, the next strongest were only 4-Essences experts!

The next most powerful expert after the Lord of the Eight Mountain and Sea was the Chief Dao Protector of the Heavengod Society, who was technically at the 5-Essences level. However, in Xiao Yihan’s opinion, his fifth Essence was actually borrowed from the Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea, and was not something he had personally gained enlightenment of. Therefore, Xiao Yihan wasn’t worried about him at all.

“Still not dead!?” Xiao Yihan roared, eyes flickering coldly. The appearance of Meng Hao threw a wrench into their understanding of the power structure of the Eighth Mountain and Sea, which was not something that he could just accept casually. In order to ensure that the Mountain and Sea War went as planned, Xiao Yihan now wanted to kill Meng Hao more than ever.

“If I don’t kill him now, and he goes on to successfully extinguish his Soul Lamps, then his battle prowess will only continue to increase. He might even exceed the level of the Mountain and Sea Lords!

“So this is an Allheaven Dao Immortal…. Back in the Paragon Immortal Realm, the ultimate terrors, the most powerful of all… were the Allheaven Dao Immortals!

“Thankfully, from ancient times until now, not a single Allheaven Dao Immortal has ever stepped into the Dao. All of them died in the process of extinguishing their Soul Lamps in the Ancient Realm. This man will be no exception. However, if I don’t kill him now, he will definitely be a thorn in our side later!” Xiao Yihan looked on with coldly gleaming eyes as his Essence world crushed down like a millstone onto Meng Hao, bent on completely obliterating him!

Rumbling sounds echoed out, and the starry sky vibrated. Meng Hao was also shaken; he could sense how the plants were trying to suck away at his life force in order to grow, and how the poison in the black rainwater was trying to eat away at his soul.

Most shocking of all was the power of darkness, which seemed to disregard how powerful his fleshly body and cultivation base was as it began to assimilate them. That in turn ensured that when the boy’s power of light assailed him, it was like ten thousand swords stabbing at his heart, filling him with intense pain. Meng Hao felt as if he were being swept over by floodwaters, as if he couldn’t move, as if his blood had stopped flowing. Countless wounds covered his skin, and he was even starting to fade away, as if the power of the five Essences were wiping him out of existence!

Meng Hao roared inwardly; the Essence world could put pressure on his body, but not his Soul Lamps!

In the critical moment of crisis, rumbling filled him as his cultivation base climbed up again and again! In the moment of deadly danger, Meng Hao's 28th Soul Lamp flew out of the top of his head like a blossoming flower!

And that wasn't it! It was at this point that a 29th Soul Lamp also appeared!

Then, the 30th! Now, a total of 30 ignited Soul Lamps were swirling around Meng Hao, letting off brilliant light. The darkness was dispelled, the light was shoved away, the black rain was cut off, and the vegetation was severed away.

Blood oozed out of the corners of Meng Hao's mouth as his body rapidly recovered. He suddenly looked up at Xiao Yihan, who was now frowning.

"You're definitely strong," Meng Hao said. "My profound thanks for helping me to understand… what a 5-Essences Dao Sovereign is like!" As he wiped the blood from his mouth, he realized that he was now much more certain of the true level of this battle prowess.

"I'm curious," Meng Hao asked. "That old man from the Heavengod Society also has a 5-Essences cultivation base. Why is the difference between the two of you so great?"

If any other person asked this question of Xiao Yihan, he would never answer. However, Meng Hao was so threatening that, even though his cultivation base was not at the same level, his battle prowess was. The terrifying fact that he was an Allheaven Dao Immortal caused Xiao Yihan to consider for a moment, and then say, "You mean the Chief Dharma Protector of the Heavengod Society? He's really at 4-Essences. His fifth Essence is borrowed."

"Got it," Meng Hao replied, nodding.

Before transcending the tribulation, Meng Hao had believed that his cultivation base was sufficient to fight against a 5-Essences Dao Sovereign, but now he realized that his judgement had been based on the very Chief Dao Protector in question.

Most accurately speaking, before he transcended the tribulation, his battle prowess was comparable to the peak of the 4-Essences level, about half a step or so away from the true 5-Essences level. Therefore, during the actual process of transcending the tribulation, when he had faced the four 5-Essences faceless men, he had only been able to handle one of them. After all, they were not truly cultivators, and were actually slightly weaker than real 5-Essences cultivators. Had he been facing someone like this boy, he would not have been able to get past them.

Having transcended the tribulation and ignited his Soul Lamps, his cultivation base rose, his Immortal power was converted to Ancient mana, and his Nirvana Fruits became Dao Fruits. At that point, he was truly equipped to battle 5-Essences Dao Sovereigns.

“In all of the Mountain and Sea Realm,” he thought. “there are only about fifteen 5-Essences Dao Sovereigns… including most of the Mountain and Sea Lords…. As for the Lords, most of them are at the peak of the 5-Essences level, just a hair away from 6-Essences…. Apparently, I’m still half a step behind people like that. This must be the case, because it seems that Xiao Yihan and I… are about even.” Meng Hao frowned. The root of the problem lay with the Soul Lamps. After all, Soul Lamps really just represented the potential for future power.

“Assuming I’m close to the level of the Mountain and Sea Lords, then as I successfully extinguish my Soul Lamps, then I will quickly bridge that gap!” Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a bright light as he began to stride toward Xiao Yihan.

Xiao Yihan’s eyes widened. He had already begun to view Meng Hao as a powerful opponent, so seeing him advance in this way caused him to immediately fall back. His hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, causing his Essence world to collapse.

As that happened, the fragments of the Essence world formed into five hands. Each of those hands was made of Essence, and they grabbed toward Meng Hao, causing the starry sky to shake and rumbling sounds to echo out in all directions.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as the copper mirror suddenly flickered in his right hand. It spread out, covering his hand, transforming into the Battle Weapon. At the same time, he performed an incantation gesture with his left hand, causing the Paragon Bridge to rumble out to defend against the five huge hands.

A massive boom rang out, shocking everyone. The Paragon Bridge slammed into the hands, causing radiant light to explode out. At long last, the Paragon Bridge was able to erupt out with something approximating its original power.

Rumbling sounds continued to echo out as the five hands and the Paragon Bridge pushed at each other, clearly in a deadlock. Xiao Yihan’s face flickered, and he suddenly looked over at Meng Hao and screamed.

That scream caused the void in front of Xiao Yihan to shatter, layer by layer, and then sweep toward Meng Hao. When the sound wave attack hit him, he trembled, and was apparently incapable of moving any further forward.

Meng Hao snorted coldly, unleashing explosive cultivation base power as a 31st Soul Lamp appeared over his head. Simultaneously, he lifted his right hand up and then chopped it down toward Xiao Yihan.

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# Chapter 1279: Prime Lamp!

The chopping motion caused the starry sky to shudder as an indescribably intense beam of light slashed out. The scream-turned-soundwave was completely outshone. The blade’s glow slashed down on it, cutting it in two, after which the light cascaded toward Xiao Yihan.

A vicious expression appeared on Xiao Yihan’s face, and his hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture. Then he spat out a glob of white mist, which transformed into a white feather. That feather didn’t attempt to block the Battle Weapon, but rather, shot directly toward Meng Hao.

Shockingly, Xiao Yihan was choosing to end the battle in mutual destruction!

The Battle Weapon landed on Xiao Yihan, and he instantly began to shake, and then shattered into pieces. However, what shattered was only an exterior surface. It was as if that boy had merely been an outer skin! A roar echoed out as the spot previously occupied by the boy was now occupied by a young man!

That young man appeared to be about twenty years old, and his features were similar to that of the boy. He wiped the blood off of his mouth, then looked venomously over at Meng Hao.

The shattered skin around him, were it formed back together, would definitely be able to form the shape of a boy!

Simultaneously, the white feather shot toward the top of Meng Hao’s head with indescribable speed. He was incapable of dodging or evading, any more than Xiao Yihan had been able to avoid the Battle Weapon.

The feather seemed to merely be floating down toward him, but the reality was that it felt as if the entire starry sky had converged on that one point and was crushing him!

Meng Hao's body trembled, and blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth as he was shoved downward beyond his control. Xiao Yihan in young man form looked on, killing intent flickering in his eyes, then took a step forward.

However, in the moment that he took that step, Meng Hao's cultivation base erupted with power over and over again! The feather on top of his head shot upward as if a fountain were propelling it, and Meng Hao's 32nd Soul Lamp shot out!

A Soul Lamp that was the color of blood!

As soon as it appeared, all of the starry sky was stained red. Furthermore, strands of blood connected the blood-colored Soul Lamp to the top of Meng Hao's head. Even more shocking was that its sudden appearance apparently caused Meng Hao to begin withering away!

It seemed as if this was the limit to the number of Soul Lamps that Meng Hao could ignite. The instant the blood-colored Soul Lamp appeared, it became the Prime Lamp among all the other Soul Lamps!

Most importantly, this lamp looked completely different from all of the other Soul Lamps which had appeared. In addition, the energy of Heaven and Earth that surrounded Meng Hao and supported him as he ignited his Soul Lamps started boiling in an unprecedented fashion. It began to surge toward him with mad speed, some of it pouring into Meng Hao's body, the other portion entering the Soul Lamp!

The Soul Lamp became like a blood-colored black hole, sucking in the energy of Heaven and Earth and the Essences which existed in the starry sky.

RUUUUMMMMMMBLE! A huge sound rose up around Meng Hao, and the Soul Lamp's flame burned brighter and brighter. As for the feather, it was pushed further and further away. Apparently, it couldn’t stand up to the power of the blood-colored Soul Lamp, and caught on fire.

The burning feather rapidly began to fade away. In the blink of an eye, it turned into ash, which then began to dissipate. That removed any pressure from weighing down on Meng Hao, and his blood-colored Soul Lamp began to shine even more brightly.

Because of the whole series of strange transformations of Heaven and Earth that led up to this point, as soon as that unique Soul Lamp appeared everyone could see it very clearly, including the members of the Meng Clan and the invading cultivators.

“Prime Lamp! That’s a Prime Lamp!!”

“When igniting Soul Lamps in the Ancient Realm, the final lamp to be ignited is the Prime Lamp!”

“Once the Prime Lamp appears, it means… the igniting of Soul Lamps is over!!”

“32 Soul Lamps. Heavens! None of the ancient records mention anything like this. This is definitely something that didn’t happen even in ancient times!!” In the fight between Meng Hao and Xiao Yihan, things had been happening too quickly for people to consider the ramifications of Meng Hao igniting so many Soul Lamps.

Now that they thought about the blood-colored Soul Lamp for a moment and realized what it was, they began to gasp and utter exclamations of amazement. Massive rumbling echoed out, and the entire Eighth Mountain and Sea vibrated.

Meng Hao’s act of stepping into the Ancient Realm was causing tremors across all of the Eighth Mountain and Sea. Furthermore, back in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, all of the members of the Fang Clan could feel their blood boiling as a pulsing, gentle power erupted inside of their qi passageways.

When the Patriarch grew, the bloodline clan members also grew!

Meng Hao himself had become the source of the Fang Clan bloodline!

Back in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, Meng Hao was trembling. From the moment his blood-colored Soul Lamp appeared, he sensed that it was different from all of the other Soul Lamps. It was connected to his bloodline, and… it almost felt like he could transform into the lamp, and similarly the lamp would be able to reform his body!

As soon as it appeared, the flames of the other Soul Lamps raged even brighter, and Meng Hao's injuries immediately improved. In this state of igniting Soul Lamps, he had special protection from Heaven and Earth!

However, Meng Hao could also sense that the energy of Heaven and Earth that had been fueling the ignition of his Soul Lamps was now fading away. Apparently, it was exactly as the crowds were speculating. This newest Soul Lamp… would be his final one!

However, Meng Hao wasn't quite convinced. He could sense that even after the blood-colored Soul Lamp appeared, astonishingly… there was still another Soul Lamp stirring inside of him!

"So, the blood-colored Soul Lamp is not my Prime Lamp. The true Prime Lamp is still inside, waiting to be ignited….

"If I truly want to ignite that Prime Lamp, I need more power, more pressure to force it out. Otherwise… it will remain dormant inside of me forever!" Meng Hao had the intense premonition that the true Prime Lamp inside of him was not something that could be underestimated. Even the energy of Heaven and Earth around him couldn't sense it…. That would definitely be his most powerful Prime Soul Lamp!

Xiao Yihan suddenly stopped in place. Instead of getting any closer to Meng Hao, he stared at him and then began to laugh.

"So your Prime Lamp has appeared. That means no more Soul Lamps will be appearing. 32, huh…. Definitely powerful. However, I've been waiting this entire time just for your Prime Lamp to appear!” His eyes flickered with killing intent, and his lips twisted in a cold smile. He sent out his divine sense, and could immediately sense that the energy of Heaven and Earth was fading away. Feeling assured that Meng Hao could not ignite any more Soul Lamps, he took a deep breath.

Although they were out in the starry sky, as he inhaled, a massive windstorm appeared around him. Even more shocking was that a portion of the energy of Heaven and Earth that had been sustaining Meng Hao’s ignition of the Soul Lamps began to be sucked away, as if it couldn’t resist the power being unleashed by Xiao Yihan.

Boundless power was sucked up by Xiao Yihan, it was formed together into… an arrow!

It was a colorless arrow, completely invisible to anything other than divine sense, and it contained terrifying power.

Next, all of the black willow leaves down below near the Meng Clan ancestral mansion began to vibrate and emit loud rumbling sounds. Then they were uprooted and flew up into the air, rapidly growing smaller as they neared Xiao Yihan. Unexpectedly, they circulated around him and then transformed into… a meter-long black bow!

He reached out to grab the black bow, nocked the invisible arrow, and then pulled the bow back until it formed the rough shape of a full moon!

“This is my most deadly weapon, son. Today is the day you perish!”

An intense sensation of deadly crisis rose up in Meng Hao’s mind. It was like a voice roaring loudly inside of him, telling him that whatever happened next, he was mostly likely going to die!

However, at the same time, Meng Hao could sense that the true Prime Lamp inside of him was growing more solid. It felt as if it were thirsting… for the power being built up by Xiao Yihan!

“This 33rd Soul Lamp… is my Prime Lamp. Therefore….” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with determination. There was little time for contemplation. Almost in the same moment that Xiao Yihan pulled the bowstring back, Meng Hao’s cultivation base rocketed up. Ancient mana filled his body, and his fleshly body power was at its peak. He summoned the meat jelly to form armor, pulled out the Battle Weapon, and called upon the blood-colored Prime Lamp. Then he summoned his Paragon Bridge and took a step forward to stand on the bridge itself, whereupon he faced Xiao Yihan and attacked!

“First arrow!” Xiao Yihan said with a cold smile. He loosed the arrow, whereupon green qi began to stream out of his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, which was absorbed by the arrow, transforming it from being invisible into being green!

Rumbling could be heard as the green arrow transformed into a beam of green light that shot toward Meng Hao, leaving behind a trail of afterimages of plants and vegetation that then bloomed and flourished.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he slapped at the incoming arrow with both hands. A boom rang out. Meng Hao could not halt the force of the arrow; blood spurted out from his hands, and the arrow stabbed onward, piercing into his chest!

However, because Meng Hao’s attack had deflected it, the place it struck was not his heart, but simply flesh. It stabbed through, accompanied by a huge boom. At the same time, the power of plants and vegetation exploded out, and green grass instantly sprouted from Meng Hao’s wound as he coughed up blood.

Meng Hao seemed injured, but the truth was that he was very excited. He had actually let himself be injured by the arrow, and had intended for it to stab into him. As it did, the true Prime Lamp inside of him began to seethe as it madly absorbed the force of the blow.

“Second arrow!” Xiao Yihan said, apparently not having noticed what was happening. Smiling coldly, he once again pulled back on the bowstring.

This time, black water streamed out of his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, transforming into a black rain arrow, which he immediately let loose!

Next was a third arrow, and then a fourth!

One was an arrow of darkness, the next, an arrow of light. They turned into two beams which shot directly toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao looked up at the three incoming arrows, and his eyes gleamed brightly. He could sense that his final Soul Lamp… was about to ignite!

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# Chapter 1280: Paragon Soul Lamp!

This was a completely unheard-of Soul Lamp. The starry sky shook because of the completely astonishing… true Prime Lamp!

Fundamentally speaking, it should never have appeared. Were it not for Xiao Yihan, perhaps Meng Hao would have been able to ignite that 32nd blood-colored lamp, but he would never have reached 33 lamps!

Xiao Yihan had actually been attempting to prevent Meng Hao from igniting his Soul Lamps. How could he ever have imagined that the exact opposite had occurred… he had actually been the biggest factor in helping Meng Hao open his 33rd Lamp, his true Prime Lamp.

“I can tell that once this 33rd Soul Lamp appears,” Meng Hao murmured, “everything… will change significantly.” At the same time that Xiao Yihan’s second arrow rumbled toward him, Meng Hao raised both hands to perform an incantation gesture. Then he pushed out toward the black rain arrow. Although he slowed it down, he didn’t stop it. The arrow stabbed relentlessly into him, then spread out, becoming millions of black drops of rain that filled his body.

The black rainwater almost seemed self-aware; it burrowed into his flesh and blood, bored through his body, merged into his qi passageways, filled him completely with destructive power.

However, that power caused his final Soul Lamp to emanate a brilliant glow which then began to absorb the quivering black rain.

By now, Xiao Yihan could tell that something was going wrong. However, his arrows of darkness and light were already flying toward Meng Hao at top speed. A moment later they stabbed into him.

BOOOOMMMMMM!

Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s chest, which virtually exploded. Bones were visible, as was his beating heart. The wound seemed very serious, and yet, a smile broke out on Meng Hao’s face, and he even started laughing.

Xiao Yihan’s face completely fell with disbelief. He was shocked, astonished, could hardly believe that he was sensing… the aura of another Soul Lamp inside Meng Hao!!

“Th-this… is impossible! His Prime Lamp already appeared. It’s impossible for another Soul Lamp to emerge. Unless… unless the lamp from before wasn’t actually his Prime Lamp!!

“But that’s even more impossible. That blood-colored lamp was clearly his Prime Lamp!!”

Even as Xiao Yihan’s face fell, the Soul Lamp aura on Meng Hao didn’t just seep out, it erupted explosively. The four arrows which had just struck him completely vanished, having been absorbed by the new Soul Lamp.

Meng Hao threw his head back and roared and then, a beam of light appeared above him which was… azure!!

That light caused massive transformations in Heaven and Earth; the starry sky trembled, and the energy of Heaven and Earth, which had been fading, suddenly grew strong again, surrounding Meng Hao, turning into a vortex of power that poured into him. This was the power he needed to ignite his 33rd Soul Lamp!

Meng Hao’s roar echoed out as the azure light above him grew more and more intense. Everyone watching was flabbergasted, and uncontrollable fear exploded out from deep in their souls.

That included the members of the Meng Clan and the invading cultivators. No matter the level of their cultivation bases, be they in the Immortal Realm, the Ancient Realm, or even the Dao Realm, as of this moment, everyone was involuntarily struck with awe.

Even Xiao Yihan, who had started out as a boy and was now a young man, could not suppress the reverence that grew in his heart.

“That… that azure color….” he muttered, shivering. Everywhere in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, all regions were filled with rumbling sounds. At the same time, the Xuanwu turtle in the celestial pool on the Eighth Mountain lifted its head and howled.

In the Ninth Mountain, the Seventh Mountain, the Sixth Mountain… in the entire Mountain and Sea Realm, the Xuanwu turtles in the celestial pools on all of the Nine Mountains trembled, threw their heads back, and howled.

The howls of the Nine Mountains’ Xuanwu turtles shook the entire Mountain and Sea Realm, and everyone in it.

In fact, in the starry sky of the Eighth Mountain and Sea, Patriarch Reliance, who was floating along comfortably, also shivered. Suddenly, he felt as if he couldn’t control his own body, as though his blood was somehow being awakened by something. He also… lifted his head up and howled!

Unexpectedly, his howling combined with the howls of the nine Xuanwu turtles, joining together, as if… there were a Tenth Mountain and a tenth turtle!

The sun and moon flickered and stopped orbiting. The Nine Mountains shook, and the Nine Seas churned. The azure light above Meng Hao grew more and more clear, until in the end, it was possible to see an azure flame there, within which was the figure of a cross-legged cultivator.

That cultivator wore a long azure robe, and although he resembled Meng Hao, if you looked more closely you would be able to see differences. Apparently, that azure-colored flame contained a bit of aura.

That was… the aura of a Paragon!

Meng Hao’s 33rd Soul Lamp flared to life, and shockingly… it was the will of Paragon Nine Seals’ blood inside of him that transformed… into a Soul

Lamp!

It was… a Paragon Soul Lamp!

“Paragon Soul Lamp!!” Xiao Yihan thought, heart trembling. His eyes went wide with disbelief and shock as he suddenly recalled a legend, something that he had once read about in the ancient records and had assumed was an impossibility.

“He’s… he’s….” Xiao Yihan’s scalp went numb as he watched Meng Hao. Then he looked at Meng Hao’s head and the azure Paragon Soul Lamp hanging over it, and realized that he could sense something on both Meng Hao and the Soul Lamp. It was… the aura of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

He backed up slowly, and then without the slightest hesitation whatsoever, turned tail in retreat, vanishing without a trace.

Even as he fled, Meng Hao suddenly looked up and said, “33rd Soul Lamp, ignite!”

He waved both hands, causing his cultivation base to erupt with power as the azure Soul Lamp floated up from the top of his head to float above in the starry sky.

Soon, the only color that could be seen in the starry sky was azure!

Because of that azure light, all of the other Soul Lamps dimmed, even the blood-colored Soul Lamp. Not only was it clear that this lamp was the sovereign over the others, it also caused Meng Hao to emit a stifling pressure that suppressed everyone whom it swept over, making it extremely difficult for them to rotate their cultivation bases.

It was as if the appearance of this azure Soul Lamp had caused something to awaken in Meng Hao… the aura of the entire Mountain and Sea Realm!

It came from the legacy of the League of Demon Sealers, and was… the pressure that came from the Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm! Although it wasn’t very powerful at the moment, the more profound Meng

Hao’s cultivation base grew, the stronger the aura would get. In the end, even a single look from him would cause a 6-Essences Dao Sovereign’s cultivation base to be thoroughly suppressed.

This was… the Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

An image appeared in Meng Hao’s mind, an image of the Mountain and Sea Realm. He had the intense sensation that he… could stretch out his hand and take the entire Realm into his hand.

Then, he decided to do just that; he stretched out his hand, and it felt as if he were holding up something invisible. That motion caused the Eighth Mountain and Sea to tremble, as well as all of the other Mountains and Seas. Even the sun and moon shone with brilliant light, and trembled… with anticipation!

It was only a brief moment, but that was all it took to almost instantly drain Meng Hao’s cultivation base. He immediately pulled his hand back, and gradually, his cultivation base was restored.

33 Soul lamps circulated around him, emitting soft light. All of them were continuously absorbing the energy of Heaven and Earth, and constantly growing stronger.

“The Ancient Realm….” Meng Hao murmured. As of this moment, he truly was in the Ancient Realm. The next step would be the experience of slowly extinguishing all of his Soul Lamps. After reaching the great circle, he would… break through as an Allheaven Dao Immortal into the next Realm, the Dao Realm!

Meng Hao could already sense that he… despite not being in the Dao Realm, was already able to gain enlightenment of Essence, even to acquire it….

Furthermore, he had a gut feeling that these Essences pointed toward… his Demon Sealing Hexing magic!

“I’m a member of the League of Demon Sealers, and my Essences will be my Demon Sealing Hexing magics!” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered.

“I just wonder if, after extinguishing my 33 Soul Lamps, I’ll be able to acquire nine Essences. If I do, the realm that I’ve broken into… will it still be considered the Dao Realm…?

“Or is it possible… that… I could reach that Realm which Paragon Nine Seals only managed to step halfway into… the Daosource Realm. Then I myself could become… a source of Essence!” Meng Hao’s face shone with enlightenment. Although he was actually speculating, he at least had a direction to aim in.

“Since I’m an Allheaven Dao Immortal, and no one like me has ever successfully completed traversing the Ancient Realm, then I must surely travel a different path from others, and thus be able to increase my chances of passing through the Ancient Realm!

“To Allheaven Dao Immortals, the Ancient Realm is actually an entire set of Ancient Tribulations. For me that means… 33 Ancient Tribulations!” His eyes flickered as he looked at his 1st Soul Lamp, and had the feeling that with a mere thought on his part, he could easily extinguish it.

At the same time, all of his Soul Lamps seemed as though they were somehow connected.

Meng Hao looked away, flicking his sleeve and causing his 33 Soul Lamps to enter his body. Then he turned and looked back at the Meng Clan and all the invaders and traitors.

As soon as he looked at them, they began to tremble.

It was at that point that, all of a sudden, a muffled roar echoed out in the Eighth Mountain and Sea. It came from far off, and gave rise to powerful ripples, and a tempest that swept across the entire Eighth Mountain and Sea!

All of the cultivators were shocked, and in that moment, the Heavengod Alliance was thrown into astonishment.

The sound came from the border region between the Eighth Mountain and Sea and the Seventh Mountain and Sea. Suddenly a huge rift opened in the barrier between the two Mountains and Seas. Lightning danced and the wind screamed as numerous figures shot through the rift, radiating killing intent. In an instant, it was clear that the number of cultivators was vast… and they were all entering the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

These were none other than the cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea!

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# Chapter 1281: Take No Prisoners!

The Seventh Mountain and Sea was coming!

The entire army didn’t arrive immediately. However, the first wave of invading cultivators immediately began to reinforce the rift between the two Mountains and Seas.

That gap was how they could enter the Eighth Mountain and Sea, and as soon as they appeared, they began to set up numerous spell formations, almost like garrisons. They also attacked the rift itself in an attempt to open it wider.

Even more impressively, a large group of Seventh Mountain and Sea cultivators joined forces to summon an enormous nine-headed dragon. It was pitch black, and when it roared into the gap, it began to grow in size, causing the rift to rip open wider and wider.

Winds screamed, echoing out through the entire Eighth Mountain and Sea, carrying with them the voice of the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea.

“I am the great Sima Dao, Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea! Today… I declare war on the Eighth Mountain and Sea! All ye, shall either surrender, or die!” His voice was as cold as ice as it rang out through the entirety of the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

Of course, the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea would not leave his home Mountain and Sea at this time. He would wait until the majority of the warrior cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea were deployed before making his appearance.

However, he would most certainly call out… and declare war!

His shocking words caused the Eighth Mountain and Sea to tremble. All cultivators and all sects heard him, and they were left in a state of shock and disbelief.

“This…. This….”

“The Seventh Mountain and Sea is invading!!”

“A Mountain and Sea War. A legendary Mountain and Sea War! I can’t believe it’s actually going to happen right now!!”

“This is too sudden. How could this be happening? The Seventh Mountain and Sea is actually inciting a Mountain and Sea War. But we’ve hardly had any dealings with them at all!”

Everyone in the Eighth Mountain and Sea was shocked, especially the Heavengod Alliance. Orders were immediately dispatched calling for everyone to assemble as quickly as possible.

The auxiliary branches of the Heavengod Alliance were included in that, as was the other of the Eighth Mountain and Sea’s great clans, the Han Clan. Grand protective spell formations were activated, and all stations were manned.

A great storm was coming!

These preparations began in the very instant that the Seventh Mountain and Sea began to come through the rift. At the same time, back in the Meng Clan, the invading cultivators were cowering in front of Meng Hao. But then they sensed what was happening, and their expressions flickered with excitement and even joy.

“Reinforcements from the Seventh Mountain and Sea are coming!!”

“Hahaha! The Mountain and Sea War is about to begin. We’re on the side of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, and they’re definitely going to win the war!”

“You in the Meng Clan, war will soon be upon you! Why haven’t you surrendered yet?!” The shouts of the invading cultivators turned into sound waves that rolled out across the cultivators of the Meng Clan, including Grandma Meng and the five seriously injured Dao Realm Patriarchs. The Patriarchs’ faces fell, completely draining of blood.

As for the traitorous members of the Meng Clan, they threw their heads back and laughed uproariously. They sounded arrogant, and in very high spirits. They had just been quite cowed by Meng Hao, and now that the reinforcements from the Seventh Mountain and Sea were on the way they had gained their confidence back. In their minds, the threat of Meng Hao was not so deadly now.

They firmly believed that both the Meng Clan and Meng Hao would now be struck with indecision, an indecision which… would ensure their own safety.

The invading cultivators weren’t stupid. The first to fall back were the black-robed men from the Seventh Mountain and Sea. They knew that since reinforcements had come, they were already in the superior position. Since they could not wipe out the Meng Clan immediately, they needed to consider their own safety first.

In their minds, since the Meng Clan was hesitating, it was the perfect chance to retreat. Certainly, the Meng Clan wouldn’t dare to pursue them now.

That was what the other invading sects were also thinking, as were the traitorous Meng Clan cultivators. Soon, everyone was falling back, preparing to leave.

Actually, their predictions were completely correct. The Meng Clan cultivators, including the five Dao Realm Patriarchs, stood there silently, not daring to continue the fight or attempt to prevent their enemies from leaving. When they thought about the imminent Mountain and Sea War, and the arrival of reinforcements from the Seventh Mountain and Sea, the entire Meng Clan was struck with stifling pressure.

However, the invaders had miscalculated regarding one person in particular, and that was… Meng Hao!

“Did I say you people could leave?” he said coolly, hovering there in the starry sky. The Meng Clan was worried about the Seventh Mountain and Sea, as was the Heavengod Alliance. Meng Hao, on the other hand, couldn’t care less.

The only people he cared about in the Eighth Mountain and Sea were his Grandmother and her people. Whether or not everyone else lived or died didn’t have anything to do with him. Nor could he really do anything to stop what was happening. He knew that soon, a massive and shocking war would strike the Mountain and Sea Realm. The two ancient forces outside of the 33 Heavens were coming, and that war… was unavoidable.

The words he had just spoken were like an icy wind that filled the invaders’ hearts with shock. They looked back at him.

A cold voice rang out from within the crowds, “The reinforcements from the Seventh Mountain and Sea are already here. You’re going to have your hands full defending your Meng Clan, do you really think you can spare the effort to stop us from leaving?”

Meng Hao’s expression was calm as his eyes scanned the crowd.

It only took a moment to find the cultivator who had just spoken, and the power in Meng Hao’s gaze suddenly rocketed up. A moment later, the man exploded. Meng Hao then leaped forward, waving his hand to summon the howling Blood Demon, which instantly slashed into the enemy forces.

The blackpod imps screeched as they began to unleash slaughter. The Blood Spirit and the mastiff also joined in, murderous auras raging.

“You had the gall to invade this place, so you won’t be leaving. I don’t really care about some war between the Eighth and Seventh Mountain and Sea, but I can tell you that I hate traitors.

“Whether you are a traitor to your clan or a traitor to the Mountain and Sea in which you live, it’s all the same.” Meng Hao’s voice was cold as he once again waved his hand, unleashing his Ancient mana to summon numerous mountains, which began to descend from all directions.

These mountains no longer surged with Immortal qi, but rather, had an ancient and archaic feel to them, as if they had existed for many, many years. These were ancient mountains, and as they appeared, they sent powerful ripples out into the starry sky.

Meng Hao looked coldly out at the Meng Clan cultivators, including the five Patriarchs. When his gaze fell on those Patriarchs, they immediately began to tremble. “Meng Clan,” he roared, “what are you doing standing there!? ATTACK!”

They had seen Meng Hao’s terrifying Ancient Tribulation, had watched as Xiao Yihan fled on his heels, and had personally witnessed Meng Hao’s horrifying power. Gritting their teeth, they decided to comply with his orders.

Roaring, the five Patriarchs charged forward. “Cultivators of the Meng Clan. ATTACK! Slaughter all of the rebels and invaders!”

The other clan members hesitated for a moment, then joined voices in a powerful battle cry as they shot forward in attack.

The battle resumed. However, this time, the Meng Clan was not in the weak position. Instead, the blood of the rebels and invaders flowed. Miserable screams rang out as endless lives were cut short.

Meng Hao took a step forward and vanished. When he reappeared, he was in front of a black-robed man, one of the old Dao Realm cultivators who had come along with Xiao Yihan. As soon as Meng Hao materialized, the old man bit his tongue, spraying out a mouthful of blood as he fell back at top speed. However, even as he did so, Meng Hao waved his finger.

It was simple motion, but the result was that the starry sky shook as an invisible force coalesced around the man, instantly weighing down on him with incredible pressure.

It was like the power of the Mountains and Seas themselves smashing down onto the old man, invoking a bloodcurdling scream. Even as the sound left his mouth, he was crushed to a bloody pulp.

“Mountain and Sea power,” Meng Hao murmured. He could now more clearly sense the power of the Mountain and Sea Realm inside of him, and also knew how to control some of it.

When the other Dao Realm experts saw what he had just done, they were shocked. Just as they began to flee, Meng Hao turned to look at them and stepped forward, appearing in front of another Dao Realm expert. He waved his hand, causing an explosive wind to shoot out. Wherever it passed, screams rang out and powerful experts were wiped out of existence regardless of how they tried to defend themselves.

“Run! Run away!!”

“A jinx! This guy is an evil jinx!!”

“Dammit, the Seventh Mountain and Sea is going to wipe out the Meng Clan eventually!!” As the screams rang out, the beleaguered invaders and the Meng Clan traitors were overwhelmed by the fear of being killed, and could think of only one thing: how to escape.

Soon, only half of the original force of tens of thousands remained behind. Everyone was scattering, fleeing as quickly as they had ever moved, even using secret magics. The Meng Clan cultivators were hard-pressed to catch them, and soon, the invaders had completely scattered.

“When I wage war, I don’t leave survivors,” Meng Hao said coolly. He stamped down with his right foot, causing a sea of flames to roar out. It was none other than Essence of Divine Flame, and it rapidly spread out with complete mercilessness.

It only took the blink of an eye for the Divine Flame to sweep out, surrounding the fleeing cultivators. It moved far, far faster than they could, and soon formed a ring around them.

Meng Hao waved his hand, and the ring of fire transformed into a flaming wall, completely trapping the enemies and locking them down. Now, all avenues of escape were sealed off.

“Take no prisoners,” Meng said, his voice cool. He waved his sleeve, causing a fierce wind to kick up. At the same time, the Meng Clan cultivators’ eyes turned bright red, and they charge forward in attack.

Miserable screams rang out without end, and the sounds of slaughter rose up. Meng Hao focused on the Dao Realm experts, and let the members of the Meng Clan handle the general slaughter, which also served the purpose of getting them used to fierce fighting and warfare.

One side fought brilliantly, the other screamed in terror. This was not a large-scale battle, but considering how mismatched the forces were, it only took a few hours for the traitors and invaders to be… completely put to death!

The Meng Clan had paid a heavy price, and suffered many casualties. However, the survivors had experienced the baptism of battle, and had been transformed. Although they still felt fear, the fire of slaughter burned in their eyes. Soon, quietness spread out across the battlefield, and slowly, all of the members of the Meng Clan turned to look at Meng Hao.

It was hard to say who said it first, but soon, everyone was kowtowing toward Meng Hao.

They joined their voices together and called out from the bottoms of their lungs, causing everything to shake. Surrounded by the mangled corpses and skeletons of their enemies, they shouted out in the starry sky: “Greetings, Patriarch!”

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# Chapter 1282: Cleansing the Lands With the Fire of War!

Even the five wounded Patriarchs were staring at Meng Hao with looks of awe. His valiant and terrifying performance, and his deadly decisiveness, caused even their hearts to grow cold with fear.

Grandma Meng was there in the crowd, and she was also completely shaken. This was her own grandson who had shocked her over and over again.

“I’m not your Patriarch,” Meng Hao said coolly, looking out at all the members of the Meng Clan. “Neither am I Meng Chen. My name… is Meng Hao.

“I’m from the Fang Clan of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.” His words caused all of the Meng Clan cultivators to stare in shock. Suddenly, the five Patriarchs recalled a certain matter, and their eyes went wide.

All eyes were on Meng Hao as he began to walk toward his grandmother. People respectfully made way for him, and soon he was standing directly in front of her. An emotional look could be seen on her face as Meng Hao gazed at her softly, clasped hands and bowed deeply.

“Grandma Meng,” he said.

When the members of the Meng Clan heard him address her in the manner of a maternal grandmother, they turned their shocked gazes upon her. After a moment of thought, people began to clasp hands and bow to her.

Even the five Patriarchs did so.

After this battle, Meng Hao's grandmother and her people truly became the primary bloodline. Those who remained alive in the Meng Clan, regardless of what bloodline they came from, voiced not a single word of dissent. In fact, they all approved, from the bottoms of their hearts.

The five Patriarchs felt the same. It made sense, considering that the Seventh Mountain and Sea had arrived, and a Mountain and Sea War was beginning. The fact that a terrifying figure like Meng Hao was there to take the lead made them feel as if they were being protected by a magic talisman.

With that talisman in place, the Meng Clan could be safe in the war, and in fact had an incredible advantage that would help them in moments of life and death. At this point, personal position and power within the clan had ceased to be important.

Strength was everything!

Grandma Meng didn't reject Meng Hao's words, and as such, became the acting Clan Chieftess, taking the place of the missing Grandpa Meng, and able to wield his authority. Numerous orders were transmitted. The Meng Clan had survived the battle, expelled the traitors, and now had a new lease on life.

The nine auxiliary continents were reorganized and transformed into a new clan spell formation. The ancestral mansion was also completely renovated.

Meng Hao chose to go into secluded meditation there in the Meng Clan. Although he was itching to go to the Fourth Mountain and Sea, right now the Meng Clan needed him.

Before beginning his meditation, he looked out into the starry sky. It was almost as if he could see Xu Qing, oh so far away in the Fourth Mountain and Sea. He sat there quietly for a moment, then closed his eyes, crossed his legs, and began to perform breathing exercises.

According to the Seventh Mountain and Sea's original plan, the Meng Clan should have been wiped out by now. It was a big defeat for the invaders, and when Xiao Yihan returned to the location where their main force was garrisoned, the rift between the two Mountains and Seas, he reported what had happened. After his report was given, few questions were asked about Meng Hao, nor did anyone try to press the matter.

Meanwhile, in the Heavengod Alliance, nearly 50,000 cultivators had already gathered together into an army. Numerous powerful experts were given command positions, and they soon left the Heavengod Alliance and headed… toward the very rift where the Seventh Mountain and Sea was encamped.

The true first battle between the Eighth and Seventh Mountains and Seas was about to begin, and it was the focus of much attention. The Han Clan and the Meng Clan both dispatched cultivators to observe first hand what would happen in the battle.

It didn’t take long; the fighting started three days later, right outside of the rift.

Cultivators had been pouring out nonstop through the rift from the Seventh Mountain and Sea, and by now they had force 60-70,000 strong. When the fighting started, it was incredibly intense.

No one held back, and the sounds of battle raged constantly. The Eighth Mountain and Sea went all out, mobilizing some of their ultimate weapons and magic treasures, as did the Seventh Mountain and Sea, and the fighting went on for seven days straight. Booms filled the starry sky, and as the seven days passed, the reek of blood spread out through nearly half of the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

Countless people died on both sides, even some Dao Realm experts. Occasionally, people chose to self-detonate, sending the sounds of explosions out in all directions.

The bitterness of the fighting was unmatched….

After seven days, the Heavengod Alliance… suffered a major defeat!

Of the 50,000 cultivators who had marched into battle, only about 2,000 returned. The casualties suffered by the Seventh Mountain and Sea were visibly less. In fact, cultivators seemed to be constantly pouring in from the Seventh Mountain and Sea, until tens of thousands of reinforcements had arrived.

That first battle completely rocked the Eighth Mountain and Sea. The sects of the Heavengod Alliance were badly shaken. What had been fought was a true battle, and the resulting loss was a very heavy blow to the Heavengod Alliance.

If that were all there were to it, it might not be a big deal. But the cultivators of the Seventh Mountain and Sea took advantage of their victory to dispatch a force of 70,000… to slaughter their way into the Heavengod Alliance.

The war… had truly begun!

Outside of the Heavengod Alliance, the Han Clan was on complete lockdown, and had cut off all communication with anyone on the outside. They focused not on attacking the enemy, but only on protecting themselves. However, the only result of that was that a month later, the Seventh Mountain and Sea attacked them.

An entire division of the Seventh Mountain and Sea’s army was sent against them.

The flames of war raged in the Eighth Mountain and Sea. There was endless slaughter and bitter fighting. Especially significant was that the cultivators of the Seventh Mountain and Sea were adept at using curse power. Furthermore, they had body cultivators, all of whom seemed virtually indestructible, and whose valiant power led to wholesale slaughter.

The cultivators of the Seventh Mountain and Sea also used enormous beasts in battle. Those beasts could unleash shocking power, and had a huge influence on the fighting.

The only force that didn’t seem to be affected at all was… the Meng Clan. It was as if the Seventh Mountain and Sea viewed their territory as a restricted area. Throughout the month during which the Mountain and Sea War was fought, the Meng Clan was like a utopia. Unexpectedly… not a single cultivator from the Seventh Mountain and Sea entered that area.

Although they would occasionally pass by, whenever they did, their faces flickered and they would hasten past as quickly as possible.

This point was not lost on the Han Clan and the Heavengod Alliance. Although they were shocked, there was no time to investigate the matter, not in the face of the deadly offensive of the Seventh Mountain and Sea.

Meng Hao took it all in stride. He remained in a hidden chamber set aside for him in the Meng Clan, meditating. That chamber was of course located within the huge statue in the middle of the clan, a place where Meng Hao could sense even more of the qi flow of the Mountain and Sea Realm than before. It was of great assistance to his practice of cultivation.

He wasn’t worried at all about the war going on outside; he was focused on cultivation, and on experiencing the difference between Immortal power and Ancient mana.

He also spent time observing his 33 Soul Lamps. With every moment that passed, they grew stronger, and Meng Hao’s desire to begin to extinguish them grew stronger as well.

Although the Meng Clan was not participating in the war, they were gathering intelligence about what was happening on the outside. Those intelligence reports were passed on to Meng Hao, which he would examine to stay up to date on what was happening. After all, Meng Hao was well-aware that everything that had occurred so far was merely the beginning.

“I’m afraid the true war… is almost here,” he murmured, thinking about how nervous and fidgety the parrot had gotten in recent days.

Things were peaceful and quiet in the Meng Clan. The clan members focused on cultivation, although they would occasionally look up into the starry sky, their eyes glinting coldly.

Time passed. Another half a month went by. Soon, the war between the Seventh and Eighth Mountains and Seas had been going on for two months. No longer were tens of thousands of cultivators involved, but rather, hundreds of thousands. And then millions.

The starry sky rumbled constantly, to the point where it even echoed out in the Meng Clan. The reek of blood spread out everywhere. The energy of Heaven and Earth was thrown into chaos, something that any Immortal Realm cultivator could detect.

Eventually, almighty experts in the other Mountains and Seas could sense that a Mountain and Sea War was underway in the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

In fact, Meng Hao was even able to sense that the qi flow of the Mountain and Sea Realm as a whole was slowly dissipating, almost as if from sorrow.

“Is it sorrow because, despite the impending arrival of the Outsiders… there is war within?” Meng Hao murmured. “Yet you aren’t putting a stop to it… Is it that you feel the same as me, that the greater war cannot be stopped and therefore, this Mountain and Sea War is like a crash course to acclimate us to the ways of warfare?” He looked down at a jade slip, which had just been delivered by someone from the Meng Clan, a report about the war situation during the last month.

Half a month before, the teleportation planets of the Heavengod Alliance had all been destroyed, and a million cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea had begun to fight their way to the center. The cultivators of the Heavengod Alliance experienced one major battle after another. Soon the war came to a deadlock, and both sides hunkered down, as if they were building up towards one final battle, a battle the conclusion of which could be predicted by no one.

However, smaller battles continued to be fought constantly.

Five days ago, the Han Clan… had been breached. After sustaining heavy casualties, the survivors had fled, but were being pursued relentlessly by the Seventh Mountain and Sea.

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Meng Hao looked up silently into the starry sky and thought about Han Qinglei, and then, his eyes suddenly flickered.

Off in the distance, near the border of the area controlled by the Meng Clan, he saw a force of several hundred cultivators flying along at top speed. There were men and women, young and old, and all of them were injured, with looks of grief and hopelessness on their faces. Occasionally, blood would spurt out of various wounds. They were being led by two old Dao Realm cultivators, both of whom had ashen faces, and appeared to have suffered grievous injuries.

Astonishingly, Han Qinglei was right behind those two old Dao Realm cultivators, a vicious expression on his face. Although he radiated killing intent, his complexion was unusually dark, as if he had been infected by a curse. His body was also very gaunt, and apparently, still in the process of being withered up.

These people were the Han Clan cultivators who had managed to flee after their clan had been destroyed.

Behind them were three enormous beasts, each one fully 3,000 meters long. They were gigantic spiders, emerald green in color and completely vicious.

Sitting atop each of the spiders were more than a thousand cultivators, whose faces were filled with coldness and contempt as they pursued the cultivators from the Han Clan. On the central-most spider, a young man sat on an emerald green throne. One of his legs was resting on the back of a trembling young woman who knelt in front of him on all fours, and his arm was wrapped around another woman, a female cultivator.

The young man’s eyes glowed with emerald light, and cruelty.

“Hear the words of the Young Lord,” he said, a cold smile twisting his lips. “I want Han Qinglei alive. As for everyone else, feed them to the giant Demon beasts!”

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# Chapter 1283: Marquis Lu!

The young man in the emerald-green robe sat atop a huge spider, which could apparently understand the words he spoke. As soon as the words left his mouth, it roared, and a rapacious gleam appeared in its eyes.

The other two spiders also roared, which caused the energy of the entire group to surge.

Not too far off, the fleeing Han Clan cultivators heard the three roars, and their faces fell. There were even some faces which were filled with complete and utter hopelessness.

One of the two old Dao Realm cultivators next to Han Qinglei anxiously said, “Qinglei, are you sure about what you said? I must know! If you’re wrong, then we’re dead for sure. The Han Clan… will truly be exterminated!”

“The Meng Clan is our only hope,” Han Qinglei said through gritted teeth. “Once we get there, we’ll be safe!” After the invasion of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, it didn’t take long before nearly everyone in the Eighth Mountain and Sea learned that the Meng Clan was not fighting in the war.

Also, the armies of the Seventh Mountain and Sea wouldn’t even set foot into the area controlled by the Meng Clan. Most of the sects and clans found this unthinkable, and some even came to the conclusion that the Meng Clan had betrayed the Eight Mountain and Sea.

When the Han Clan was attacked and destroyed, Han Qinglei had watched in shock as virtually the entire Senior generation of the clan died in battle. Several of the most powerful Patriarchs were killed, and only the two 1-Essence Patriarchs had survived, both heavily wounded. They managed to lead the few survivors into escape. Of course, that slight bit of hope was granted to them only because the clan's most powerful Patriarch died to buy it for them.

However, there had been nowhere for them to run. In the boundless sea of stars, there was no hope to be found. The Eighth Mountain and Sea was fully immersed in the flames of war, with no safe haven to be found anywhere….

In that critical moment, Han Qinglei thought about the Meng Clan!

He also thought about how he had never been able to track down Meng Hao in the 33 Hells, only a random young Meng Clan cultivator. However, he refused to believe that Meng Hao could be so easily killed. After contemplating the matter later, he grew more and more sure that the young man he had encountered… was definitely connected to Meng Hao.

Then, the Meng Clan unexpectedly didn't fight in the war. Then, word began to leak out that a huge battle had been fought there just when the Seventh Mountain and Sea had arrived. That only further fueled Han Qinglei's speculations.

With nowhere else to go, he decided to bet that Meng Hao was indeed in the Meng Clan. He was gambling that everything which had occurred with Meng Clan was because of Meng Hao.

When the surrounding Han Clan cultivators heard Han Qinglei's words, they exploded with all the speed they could manage. Rumbling sounds could be heard as they flew toward the Meng Clan's territory, the three gigantic spiders hot on their tails and growing closer by the moment.

It was only when Han Qinglei and the others reached the border of the Meng Clan's territory, that they realized the Meng Clan was surrounded by a ring… of floating bones.

Those bones had been magically organized, as if to form a literal border. This… was the true border of the Meng Clan's territory, and those bones were naturally the bones of the enemies which had invaded them.

As soon as Han Qinglei saw these bones, his mind trembled. The other Han Clan cultivators gasped. However, it was without the slightest hesitation that they all passed into Meng Clan territory.

In that instant, the three gigantic spiders sped towards them from off in the distance, then screeched to a halt at the border. Suddenly, looks of hesitation appeared in their eyes as they looked at the Meng Clan continents off in the distance.

Seeing that the spiders had stopped, the young man in the emerald-green robe frowned. Next to him was an old man who suddenly spoke in a low voice, “Young Lord, that… is the Meng Clan. Our Mountain and Sea Lord issued orders that we shouldn’t provoke the them lightly.”

The young man snorted. He looked at the bones, then looked at the rest of the Meng Clan’s territory, and at Han Qinglei and the others fleeing off into the distance. Then, a cold flicker appeared in his eyes.

“The Mountain and Sea Lord said not to provoke them lightly. He didn’t say to never provoke them. Onward!” The old man hesitated in response to the coolly-spoken words. For a moment, he thought of intervening, but then considered how powerful the forces of the Seventh Mountain and Sea already were in this early stage of the war, and decided that breaching the borders of the Meng Clan probably wasn’t a very big deal.

Rumbling sounds echoed out in response to the young man’s words, and the three spiders immediately advanced into Meng Clan territory, where they madly pursued Han Qinglei and the others. In the blink of an eye, they were bearing down on the small group.

When the Han Clan cultivators realized that their pursuers didn’t care about retaliation from the Meng Clan, their faces flickered. Before they could even react, the three giant spiders opened their mouths and spit out massive quantities of spider silk, which instantly transformed into a massive net that threatened to envelop the Han Clan cultivators.

The young man in the emerald-green robe looked on with a merciless gleam in his eyes. As for the other cultivators of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, they radiated intensely murderous auras.

The two Patriarchs from the Han Clan turned with bloodshot eyes, roaring as they prepared to fight back. However, it was at this point that suddenly… a cold snort echoed out through the void. Instantly, the descending spiderweb began to tremble and emit cracking noises. Moments later, it exploded.

The three spiders let out agonized shrieks, and didn't dare to advance any further. In fact, they even started backing up. The cultivators on their backs were shocked. Not only had that cold snort shattered the spiderweb, it left their minds reeling, and some of them even found blood oozing out of their mouths.

The Young Lord's face flickered, and suddenly, three old men appeared next to him. All of those men were in the Dao Realm, and their faces were grim as they stared at a young man who was currently materializing up ahead in the void.

That young man wore a long white robe, and looked like a scholar. However, there was also a certain ancientness to him. It was, of course, Meng Hao.

“Meng Hao!” exclaimed Han Qinglei.

“Brother Han,” Meng Hao said with a slight smile. “I trust you've been well since we last met.” He clasped hands and bowed.

The other Han Clan cultivators also clasped hands and bowed to Meng Hao, except for the two Patriarchs, who simply looked at him, then looked around the area. When they confirmed that Meng Hao was alone, their hearts sank, and they were just about to say something when the Young Lord in the emerald-green robe rose to his feet and spoke in a cold voice, “What outrageous gall you have! How dare you interfere with our Seventh Mountain and Sea. Meng Hao… I'll give you two choices. One, get the hell back to your Meng Clan, and I won't exterminate your people.

“Two, I wipe you and your clan off the map this very day!” This so-called Young Lord’s voice was cold and sinister, and his words were wildly arrogant. In the months that he had been in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, he had seen far too many local cultivators do nothing but tremble in fear when they faced him.

Because of that, his heart had swelled with arrogance. Although he knew that his own Mountain and Sea Lord had given orders not to provoke the Meng Clan, he still looked down on them.

As soon as the words left the young man’s mouth, the Han Clan cultivators’ faces flickered with fear, and they thought back to the fierce fight that had ensued when their clan was attacked. This Young Lord had only been in charge of only one of many divisions in the battle to exterminate the Han Clan, however the fact that this corps contained a force of 3,000 cultivators meant that its battle strength was quite potent .

Furthermore, the Seventh Mountain and Sea clearly had the upper hand in the war, which ensured that the Young Lord was even more threatening.

The 3,000 cultivators on the backs of the spiders all rose to their feet and rotated their cultivation bases. A murderous aura exploded out, transforming into a tempest. As for the three old men surrounding the young man, they frowned, but also unleashed their cultivation bases. Those three old men were 1-Essence cultivators, not Dao Lords, but considering they represented the Seventh Mountain and Sea, almost no one in the Eighth Mountain and Sea would dare to provoke them.

“Pipe down!” Meng Hao said coolly, waving his right hand. That simple motion caused a massive pressure to weigh down from the starry sky. When the pressure slammed into the Young Lord, he screamed miserably. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and his expression instantly changed from one of arrogance to one of astonishment.

It was as if the starry sky itself was crushing down on him. In the blink of an eye, he was on the verge of being squeezed into a shapeless mass. However, it was at this point that a gray light erupted out from him, which attempted to fight back against the pressure of the starry sky.

That gray light transformed into the image of a middle-aged man, a man in black war armor. Behind him stretched a huge starry battlefield filled with countless fighting cultivators.

“Anyone who dares to harm my dear son is seeking an early death!!” roared the man. Shockingly, he erupted with the power of a 4-Essences Dao Realm expert.

Meng Hao’s face was completely expressionless, and he didn’t even bother to look at the man. In fact, the man’s voice was still echoing out when the gray light was shattered into pieces, and the Young Lord was crushed by the weight of the starry sky, transformed into nothing more than a bloody pulp.

It happened so quickly that the surrounding cultivators could do nothing but stare in shock.

“Y-you….”

“You actually dared to kill the son of Marquis Lu! You….” The thousands of cultivators on the spiders could barely speak they were so shocked. The three Dao Realm experts’ faces went pale, and without the slightest hesitation, they charged toward Meng Hao.

They were well aware of how terrifying Marquis Lu could be, and they knew that if they didn’t kill Meng Hao immediately, then the three of them would suffer his wrath. As they flew out, their cultivation bases flared to life.

“Kill this man, all of you!” The three old men’s voices were laced with a secret magic that caused the three spiders to instantly roar, then pounce toward Meng Hao. The cultivators on their backs also flew out, unleashing a variety of divine abilities and magical techniques as they tried to kill Meng Hao.

The Han Clan cultivators gasped in shock as they watched Meng Hao standing up to 3,000 cultivators single-handedly.

Meng Hao looked calmly at the incoming cultivators, the three Dao Realm experts, and the three vicious spiders. His eyes flickering coldly, he slowly raised his right hand into the air and then…

Viciously clenched it!

A boom rang out, and the starry sky shuddered. It was as if an enormous hand thousands and thousands of meters wide was stretching out into the void… to grab the 3,000 cultivators!

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# Chapter 1284: The Power of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

In that one astonishing moment, Han Qinglei and the other Han Clan cultivators were completely shaken. Meng Hao’s gesture caused an enormous illusory hand to appear in the starry sky, stretch out to cover the entire area occupied by the cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea, and then clench down viciously.

A boom could be heard, and the void shuddered. Looks of shock appeared on the faces of all the cultivators, and many of them began to scream.

Each and every one, regardless of the level of their cultivation bases, felt an intense, indescribable pressure weighing down all over, mixed in with a power of expulsion.

It was as if the starry sky had rejected them, and wished to expel them. It was as if they were being rejected… by the Mountain and Sea Realm!

The cultivators with cultivation bases lower than the Ancient Realm simply couldn’t take the pressure. Screams rang out as their bodies distorted under the pressure, until they didn’t even look human. Then they exploded into clouds of gore!

Next were the early Ancient Realm cultivators, who began bleeding out of their ears, eyes, noses, and mouths. After holding on for a short time, expressions of terror and despair flickered on their faces, and they were crushed to pulp.

Bitter laughter rang out, as well as angry roars and even pleas for mercy. Those came from the mid Ancient Realm cultivators. Seeing everyone around them with lower cultivation bases than themselves being crushed to bloody paste, and smelling the reek of gore, caused their hearts to explode with intense feelings of hopelessness. Many of them unleashed divine abilities or magical items. But the divine abilities were destroyed as soon as they appeared, and the magical items shattered.

These cultivators lasted for only a few breaths of time before they were crushed into a jumbled mixture of bone and bloody flesh.

Next were the late Ancient Realm cultivators and those in the great circle. Before they could flee, they were also destroyed in body and spirit. As for the three enormous spiders, cracking sounds echoed out from them, and their legs began to twist. As their bodies were squashed into indiscernible shapes, green blood oozed out.

And last… were the three Dao Realm experts. They watched wide-eyed as the 3,000 cultivators were reduced to bloody pulp, and boundless ripples emanated out into the starry sky. They were in a hell of gore, and they started trembling and coughing up blood; they too were being crushed under the pressure.

“NO!!” One of them began to laugh bitterly as he reached the point where he couldn’t hold on any longer. He produced all of the magical items he possessed, and even spit an enormous bell out of his mouth as he tried to fight back. But all of his magical items were crushed, and his body began to distort.

The other two Dao Realm cultivators laughed bitterly as they chose to self-detonate. Flight was impossible, as the starry sky had already been locked down tight. There was simply no chance for them.

Rumbling filled the air as the two Dao Realm Patriarchs’ power of self-detonation was overwhelmed by the gigantic hand, and then crushed.

All of this takes some while to describe, but actually happened in the time it takes to blink an eye. The area previously occupied by 3,000 cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea was transformed into a mist of blood as all of them were crushed to death!

Countless cultivators and magical items were squashed together along with the bodies of the spiders, forming a huge bloody paste, a swirl of green, white, and red fluid. The sight was spine-tinglingly shocking.

Han Qinglei’s face was ashen, and the two Han Clan Patriarchs, despite having participated in many bloody battles, began to shiver and look over at Meng Hao with dread.

Everyone else was staring with wide eyes and open mouths. Some of the women even vomited. When they looked at Meng Hao, their eyes flickered with the fear that you might expect to see if they were staring at a fiendish, bloodthirsty beast. Meng Hao was even more terrifying than the Seventh Mountain and Sea.

“What power was that…?” Han Qinglei murmured. He looked at the horrifying bloody paste, then back at Meng Hao, and realized to his bitterness that at some point, Meng Hao had long since surpassed him. Surpassed him to the point where he could never catch up.

“The power of the Mountain and Sea Realm,” Meng Hao said quietly. Ever since entering the Ancient Realm and igniting his Paragon Soul Lamp, it had become much easier for him to sense the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Before, he had been forced to stimulate the Paragon’s blood inside of him to summon the power of the sun and moon. Now, he didn’t need to do that. A mere thought on his part could unleash the power of the Mountains and Seas.

Although he couldn’t use much, he was certain that as his cultivation base grew, and more importantly, as his Demon Sealer’s aura grew stronger, the day would come when a single thought on his part could determine ultimate life or death in the Mountain and Sea Realm.

That was because he was… the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer, and also… the Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

Meng Hao smiled at Han Qinglei and said, “Brother Han, welcome to the Meng Clan. You’ll be safe here. Please, follow me!”

Mixed emotions could be seen in Han Qinglei’s eyes. After a moment, he clasped hands and bowed deeply to Meng Hao, then followed him, along with the rest of the Han Clan cultivators, back to the Meng Clan ancestral mansion. After formally meeting Grandma Meng, the survivors from the Han Clan were given some land in the ancestral mansion on the central continent, a place where they could multiply and rebuild.

In the following days, Meng Hao spent most of his time cultivating in the huge statue, although he would occasionally visit Han Qinglei to reminisce about old times.

The land that had been given to the Han Clan had a frosty lake in it, which was filled with Jadefrost Fish. Jadefrost Fish happened to have a lovely flavor that Meng Hao fell in love with as soon as he tasted it, so he often spent time at that lake, fishing with Han Qinglei.

It was a quiet respite from the brutal war which was being fought outside in the Eighth Mountain and Sea. Han Qinglei often grew absent-minded, and sometimes even forgot about the war outside.

“Brother Meng, mm… with the level of your cultivation base, why is it that you’re not helping the Eighth Mountain and Sea drive out the invaders from the Seventh Mountain and Sea?” It was a question Han Qinglei had pondered for some time, and had even tried to refrain from thinking about. But one day, as he sat next to the frosty lake with Meng Hao, fishing, he finally gave voice to it.

Meng Hao didn’t answer at first. He cast his line out into the lake, and almost immediately a jade-colored fish bit the hook. He reeled it in, and it turned out to be well over a meter long. He handed it over to a nearby Meng Clan cultivator, who placed it into the fish basket.

“Brother Han,” he said quietly, “this war… is not going to end. Furthermore, even if the Seventh Mountain and Sea hadn’t made a move, one of the other Mountains and Seas would have….” After entering the Ancient Realm, something had changed about Meng Hao’s voice, and it somehow seemed more ancient.

He sighed and looked up into the sky, toward the border of the Mountain and Sea Realm, the 33 Heavens. “I’ll make my move, but now is not the time.

“Did you ever notice that the starry sky has an end? And that that end is slowly getting closer?” Meng Hao’s words caused Han Qinglei to gape in surprise. He suddenly looked up into the boundless sky, and the endless stars, and began to breathe deeply.

“You mean… the 33 Heavens?!”

After a quiet moment passed, Meng Hao looked out at the frosty pond and calmly said, “I’m afraid that before too long, the 33 Heavens will likely descend.”

Han Qinglei’s face fell. He had been among the group that had gone to the Windswept Realm as Meng Hao had. He clearly remembered what the 33 Heavens represented, and knew that there were terrifyingly powerful experts there.

“Well… what are you going to do?” Han Qinglei asked bitterly. Before, he had taken the invasion of the Seventh Mountain and Sea to be some shocking and profound thing. But now he realized that it was merely a prelude. And yet, the Han Clan had almost been wiped away in that mere prelude. Now that he thought about it, that it was a prelude that seemed to foreshadow a true doomsday. If war broke out with the 33 Heavens… then he wasn’t sure what he would do. He suddenly looked confused.

Meng Hao looked over at Han Qinglei, and then, his expression completely earnest and serious, said, “Get stronger! It doesn’t matter what war we’re talking about, the invasion of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, war with other Mountains and Seas, or even the arrival of the 33 Heavens. Even… the return of the two powers who destroyed the Paragon Immortal Realm oh so long ago. What you need to do in any and all cases… is get stronger!

“War cannot be avoided. Perhaps paradise exists somewhere, but definitely not in the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“The true war will come sooner or later. And we will all be fighting in it.” Meng Hao’s eyes slowly began to shine with a brilliant light. Finally, he tapped his finger down onto the ground, causing a ripple to spread out and eventually fill the entire continent.

It was something he had done frequently in the past months. Despite being in secluded meditation, he had often sent his divine sense out, fusing his cultivation base with the lands, outlining an enormous spell formation.

That spell formation was something Meng Hao didn’t actually understand completely. However, he understood the most important aspects. The power created by the framework of that formation was Meng Hao’s… power of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“Almost finished,” he murmured to himself.

Han Qinglei sat there silently.

“I still don’t understand, though,” he said finally. “You could do something in the war right now. With your cultivation base, you could stop it! If fewer people died, then the Mountain and Sea Realm would be more powerful in the future!

“Furthermore, the enemy is surely spying on us. They know about the chaos and war. What’s the point of fighting among ourselves!?”

Meng Hao was silent for a moment, then finally said, “It’s not the right time. The right time is coming. Soon.”

He actually didn’t explain the reason why he was not fighting in the war.

Only he knew that the reason he wasn’t fight was because… he wasn’t alone here in the Eighth Mountain and Sea. He had the Meng Clan to look after.

Even if he didn’t care much about all the other members of the Meng Clan, he cared about his grandmother. And his grandmother and her people cared about the clan in general. If Meng Hao went out and fought in the resistance against the Seventh Mountain and Sea, he would definitely suffer retribution at their hands. And in the end… he was only one person.

Even if he could personally escape the retribution of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, the Meng Clan could not. As long as the Meng Clan existed, if Meng Hao stepped in… then the clan would run the risk of being exterminated.

That was why he had not stepped in, and the Seventh Mountain and Sea surely realized that. Therefore… that was why they had chosen not to provoke him, and why they had been able to maintain an equilibrium.

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1285: The Spell Formation Stirs!

Meng Hao might be the future Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm, but as far as he was concerned, the Heavengod Alliance wasn’t very important. They had even tried to track him down and kill him, so in some respects, they even counted as an enemy.

In fact, were it not for the invasion of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, after Meng Hao’s identity was revealed within the Meng Clan, perhaps the Heavengod Alliance would have besieged them.

Whatever happened, Meng Hao didn’t have strong feelings for this place. After all… it wasn’t the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

And yet… there was someone in the Heavengod Alliance that he cared about, his Master the Noble Ran, who had passed the Seal the Heavens Incantation on to him. Furthermore, after entering the Ancient Realm, he had begun to vaguely sense certain fluctuations from the Eighth Mountain, which he knew belonged to the Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

Those fluctuations seemed very familiar, and in fact reminded him of… the aura on his Grandpa Meng’s command medallion, which was tucked away safely in his bag of holding.

He hadn’t mentioned any of those things to his grandmother, because he actually did plan to eventually fight in the war, both for the Noble Ran, and for… those familiar fluctuations he felt coming from the Eighth Mountain.

Because of those things, he felt that he had no choice but to join the war effort.

However, before he jumped into the fray, he needed to make sure that there was nothing that could be used against him. That was why, for the preceding two months, he had been constantly pouring power from the Mountains and Seas into the ground, to make… a spell formation!

Of course, all of these were things that Han Qinglei would have no way of knowing.

Meng Hao didn’t want the Meng Clan to become… the next Han Clan. He didn’t want his grandmother to worry about such things either, nor did he want her to feel the pain of seeing fellow clan members die. Most importantly, he didn’t want to see her hurt even a tiny bit.

His Grandma Meng was a relative, one of the people he cared most about in the world.

“Soon. The spell formation will be finished soon,” he murmured to himself, looking out into the sky.

Another half a month passed, during which the war in the Eighth Mountain and Sea intensified. Reports came in on a daily basis from various members of the Meng Clan, each of which Meng Hao studied in minute detail.

The Heavengod Alliance had finally begun a counteroffensive… which was still under way. Both sides were taking heavy casualties.

One of the most important bits of news was that among those killed were not just 1-Essence or 2-Essences Dao Realm experts. There were already Dao Lords among the dead.

Many of the sects in the Heavengod Alliance were no more. One planet after another was destroyed. If the Heavengod Alliance met complete defeat, then the remaining cultivators would have no choice but to fall back to the Eighth Mountain itself.

Recently, more and more voices were pleading for the Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea to come out.

Unfortunately… he never appeared.

The only people who did appear were cultivators of the Heavengod Society. In fact, the Chief Dharma Protector of the Heavengod Society convened a war council to coordinate the fighting.

The number of cultivators coming through the rift from the Seventh Mountain and Sea was growing increasingly fewer. However, there was a burning life force within that rift that even Meng Hao could sense from his position in the Meng Clan, and it was growing more and more distinct.

It was a vigorous life force, a flame that could light up the entire starry sky. And it was slowly getting closer to the Eighth Mountain and Sea. It belonged to an entity who occupied a position of supreme power, and had a terrifying cultivation base. Because of that, passing from one of the Mountains and Seas to another was a slow process for this person.

That person was none other than… Sima Dao, Mountain and Sea Lord from the Seventh Mountain and Sea!

Meng Hao could sense him just as much as he could sense that awakening entity on the Eighth Mountain.

Simultaneously, both that entity and Sima Dao could sense the existence of the person entrenched in the Meng Clan… Meng Hao!

Three days later, Meng Hao’s eyes snapped open, and at the same time, the surrounding nine continents of the Meng Clan began to emit droning sounds that sounded like earthquakes, as if some incredible power were rising up from the lands.

It was a big shock to all members of the Meng Clan, and no one had any idea what was happening, not even the five Dao Realm Patriarchs, who immediately sent divine sense out.

What they discovered shocked them; the nine continents were filled with a Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering power, a power which was building up toward an inevitable eruption.

“Is the Seventh Mountain and Sea coming!?!?”

“What’s going on!?” Everyone in the Meng Clan was astonished, including Han Qinglei and his people.

As the alarm spread, Meng Hao emerged from secluded meditation and appeared within the ancestral mansion, in his grandmother’s courtyard. The moment he appeared there, his grandmother walked out, looking quite apprehensive.

“Hao’er, what’s happening?” she asked. In the recent days, she had been administering affairs in the Meng Clan, and had transformed them into a clenched fist; they were no longer in a state of disorganized chaos like before.

Now that Meng Hao had come out, the five Patriarchs hurried over, along with other powerful experts from the various bloodlines.

Han Qinglei wasn’t a member of the Meng Clan, but because of his relationship with Meng Hao, the Han Clan wasn’t excluded, and they also hastened over to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao looked around at everyone, then finally turned to his grandmother, clasped hands and bowed deeply.

After Grandma Meng saw the complex expression in his eyes, she understood what he was thinking, and she shivered. “Hao’er, you….”

Meng Hao looked up at his grandmother and began to speak softly, “Grandma Meng, I failed to comply with one of your previous orders, and took it upon myself to take care of a certain matter.

“The Eighth Mountain and Sea has been struck with war. It’s a war that I normally wouldn’t fight in. I would rather stay here to protect the Meng Clan. However… because of a certain person, I must intervene.

“However, if I do fight in this war between two great Mountains and Seas, then the Meng Clan will also get dragged into the matter, and could end up being wiped out by the Seventh Mountain and Sea….

“Grandma Meng….”

Grandma Meng looked at him silently for a moment, then sighed softly. How could she not have come to realize what had been going through Meng Hao’s mind lately? She actually had no desire to see him fighting in the Mountain and Sea War either. He might be very powerful, but in her eyes, he was still only a member of the Junior generation.

It might be a selfish decision to ask him not to fight, but to Grandma Meng, family was more important than politics, and the Meng Clan was more important than the Eighth Mountain and Sea. However, she had overlooked his feelings in the matter, and therefore, after another long moment passed, she spoke, her voice somewhat hoarse, “I understand. You… already made your decision. If you want to go, then go. Can I help in any way?”

Somehow, Grandma Meng seemed much older after those words left her mouth.

Meng Hao looked at her for a moment. Then, smiling slightly, he stepped forward and embraced her.

“Grandma,” he said softly, “I want to send the Meng Clan to the Ninth Mountain and Sea. There is no war there yet, so all of you will be safe.”

Grandma Meng was quiet for a moment, then slowly nodded. At the same time, she reached out with her wrinkled hand and gently stroked Meng Hao’s cheek, her eyes glowing with love. “You’re a good kid. You’ve done so much for me already. Perhaps my previous decision was a bit selfish. But… you have to promise me that you’ll stay safe….”

Meng Hao nodded, then looked back at the others present, and his face darkened a bit.

“Ladies and gentlemen, I’m going to send all of you to the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Let me remind you, though, that as long as I live, if you dare to harbor any evil thoughts regarding the people I care about… you will regret it."

Meng Hao's words caused everyone to suck in a deep breath, even the five Dao Realm Patriarchs. Although they were struck deeply with fear, they were also quite moved by the fact that Meng Hao planned to send them to safety in the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

"Brother Han, how about the Han Clan go to the Ninth Mountain and Sea. What do you say?"

Han Qinglei's jaw dropped in response to Meng Hao's words. All of a sudden, he understood what Meng Hao had said half a month before about waiting for the right time to fight in the war.

It wasn't that he planned to hold back forever. He really was… waiting for the right time. And that time… was now.

"Many thanks!" Han Qinglei said, clasping hands and bowing deeply. For the Han Clan, the chance to go to the Ninth Mountain and Sea was an amazing opportunity. After all, they were no longer in a position to fight in the war.

Of course, it was difficult enough for one person to pass between two Mountains and Seas, let alone an entire continent and all its people like Meng Hao claimed he would do. Everyone was completely shocked.

"It doesn't seem possible! That's a huge amount of people, plus a continent. This…."

"Piercing through will expend an incredible amount of power. In fact, it's incalculable!"

"The Ninth Mountain and Sea…."

Everyone looked at Meng Hao with even more alarm than before. If Meng Hao really could do as he said he would, then he would be even more awe-inspiring to them than he already was.

As long as he was alive, no one would ever dare to challenge his grandmother’s position or authority.

Meng Hao looked over the crowd for a moment, then took a deep breath and raised both hands into the air. In almost the exact same instant, the power of the Mountains and Seas exploded out from within him. It was as if a fuse had been lit, which resulted in an enormous pillar of light shining up from one of the nine smaller continents. It shot up into the starry sky, sending out boundless ripples.

Next, a second continent exploded with light, then a third and a fourth….

Pillars of light shot up from one continent after another, radiating intense power from the Mountain and Sea Realm, power that Meng Hao had been building up for months. Obviously, he didn’t have the power on his own to send a whole continent of people to the Ninth Mountain and Sea, so he had chosen to use the power of the Mountain and Sea Realm to accomplish that task.

Even with that extra help, he had spent months in preparation, so it was possible to imagine how much of a price the Seventh Mountain and Sea must have paid to invade the Eighth.

Almost in the same instant that Meng Hao unleashed the power of the Mountains and Seas, as the pillars of light shot up into the starry sky, suddenly, tens of thousands of cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea appeared, radiating killing intent.

The person in the lead position was a middle-aged man… the same man whose son Meng Hao had killed… Marquis Lu of the Seventh Mountain and Sea!

The man’s face was grim, and his murderous aura seethed. As he closed in on the Meng Clan, he spotted the distant pillars of light.

“You killed my son, so I’ll wipe out your whole clan! I don’t care what a whit about the orders of the Mountain and Sea Lord. He might have let you off the hook because of your friendship, but… you should never have provoked me!”

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1286: Seeing the Meng Clan Off!

Nine pillars of light shot up from the nine continents surrounding the Meng Clan ancestral mansion. As they pierced into the starry sky, they sent out boundless ripples, causing everything to shake.

When Marquis Lu and the others arrived, it was as the eighth pillar of light exploded up.

“This….” Marquis Lu gaped in shock, his eyes wide. Considering the level of his cultivation base, after examining the situation, he could sense the terrifying power within those pillars of light.

Marquis Lu’s eyes glittered as he glanced down at a totem tattoo on the back of his right hand. Steeling himself, he gave a cold snort and then waved his sleeve. With that, he shot forward, followed by tens of thousands of cultivators. The entire army transformed into beams of light that shot toward the Meng Clan.

As they closed in, the murderous aura they emitted caused the starry sky to shake. The aura was so intense that it seemed as if it were on the verge of taking physical form and freezing everything in the area.

“Meng Clan, whichever one of you killed my son, get the hell out here and face me!” Marquis Lu’s voice boomed like thunder, echoing out in all directions as his energy rocketed up. His cultivation base was that of a 4-Essences Dao Sovereign, and as soon as it radiated out, the natural laws in the area shattered.

By this point, the people in the Meng Clan ancestral mansion could hear his roar, and could sense the vast coldness. Their faces flickered.

Meng Hao’s expression was as calm as ever as he looked into the starry sky outside of the Meng Clan continents, then turned his attention back to what he was doing. His hands remained lifted up, and a strange gleam could be seen in his eyes as the manipulated the power of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Nine pillars of light raged up into the starry sky. In that moment, a gigantic vortex appeared in the sky above the Meng Clan ancestral mansion, far, far above, at the apex of the pillars of light.

The vortex was vastly enormous, and was already beginning to spin faster and faster. In the blink of an eye, boundless rumbling sounds could be heard echoing out, and a vast pressure began to weigh down.

Marquis Lu’s face flickered, and he lurched to a halt, as did all the cultivators behind him. Then their eyes filled with shock as they saw the terrifying vortex appear overhead.

“What are they doing?!”

“What kind of spell formation is that?” The pressure weighing down on the group was completely shocking. It was almost as if there were some huge, invisible hand pushing them inexorably backward. Soon, the vortex was spinning so fast it looked like a black hole, sending out powerful ripples that the cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea couldn’t endure, forcing them backward.

Gradually, even Marquis Lu was affected by the pressure. Considering the level of his cultivation base, he was the last one to finally be pushed back, accompanied by massive rumbling sounds.

Meng Hao floated up into the air above the Meng Clan continents, out into the starry sky where he looked back down at everyone, and especially his grandmother.

Then his right hand flashed with an incantation gesture, and he waved his finger.

That wave of a finger caused one of the nine continents surrounding the Meng Clan ancestral mansion to shatter into pieces, transforming into nothing but dust. Then, the pillar of light which had been attached to that continent exploded into countless motes, which then began to rise up into the vortex.

RUMBLE!

The vortex spun faster and faster, and the power and pressure within it grew more intense, causing Marquis Lu’s face to fall.

Next, the second continent exploded, then the third and fourth. They all transformed into ash, and the pillars of light attached to them turned into motes which were sucked into the vortex.

The pressure from the vortex increased again, and Marquis Lu was shoved backward, as were all of the cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea behind him.

“This….” Marquis Lu’s throat and tongue were dry. As he stared at the shocking vortex, he suddenly realized what it most likely was, although that seemed impossible.

RUMBLE!

The fifth continent fell to pieces, then the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth. The pillars of light shattered, sending countless motes of light up into the air; the pressure from the vortex increased dramatically yet again.

Now, the only thing that remained of the Meng Clan was the ancestral mansion and the continent upon which it stood. The members of the Meng Clan felt their hearts pounding; the terrifying vortex caused their minds to reel until they went blank.

Even the five Dao Realm Patriarchs were shocked, and felt their hearts thumping.

It was at this point that Meng Hao’s eyes began to glow. He performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, then waved his finger toward the final main continent.

“Open the path between the Mountains and Seas!” Meng Hao’s voice echoed out, causing wild colors to flash in the sky. The ash from all of the continents mixed with the motes of light and began to swirl together into the huge black hole.

In the blink of an eye, the black hole had absorbed the power of all of the continents, and all of their combined power from the Mountain and Sea Realm. As it did, it reached what seemed to be its maximum capacity, so when Meng Hao issued the order, the vortex exploded with an indescribable, shocking aura.

The intensity of that aura caused the minds of all living creatures to tremble, and their souls to shiver. Off in distance, Marquis Lu was staring at the black hole, and the huge beam of light which had just appeared within it.

That light… moved with indescribable speed as it stretched out across the starry sky toward the barrier between the Eighth and Ninth Mountains and Seas, where it then ripped open a rift!

This was an even more shocking scene than the one which had played out when the Three Great Daoist Societies created the Bridge of Immortality.

It was an amazing sight as the beam of light pierced through the barrier, going directly… from the Eighth Mountain and Sea to the Ninth.

In the Ninth Mountain and Sea, the entire starry sky lit up, and the cultivators there looked up and trembled. Regardless of whether it was the Fang Clan or the other sects and clans, everyone had the same reaction.

“What’s happening!?’

“What… what is that?!?!”

“What’s that light? It looks like… maybe some kind of valuable treasure is appearing?” A buzz of conversation filled virtually all locations within the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

However, it was at this point that in the Fang clan, there were some, including Fang Xiufeng, as well as the Grand Elder and certain others, who could tell that within that light… was a bit of Meng Hao’s aura!

Back in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, Marquis Lu saw all of this happen. Falling back again, he looked blankly at the black hole vortex, and the beam of light.

“H-he …opened t-the… the barrier… between the Mountains and Seas. His plan is to send the Meng Clan’s continents and clan members all the way to the Ninth Mountain and Sea.” With his cultivation base and powers of discernment, Marquis Lu was completely shaken by Meng Hao’s tactics and abilities, and his mind was left reeling.

He was well aware of the enormous cost that was required to open the barrier between Mountains and Seas. The Seventh Mountain and Sea had prepared for an incredibly long time, and had paid an astonishing price, to tear open that rift. But here Marquis Lu was, watching Meng Hao do exactly that same thing all on his own. How could he not be shocked?

Meng Hao looked up at the black hole and the beam of light. Then he spread both hands wide and roared. Instantly, the Meng Clan’s entire ancestral mansion and the continent it was on rumbled up into the air. It was as if a giant were shouldering it… hoisting it directly toward the vortex.

Dust flew about, and everything quaked. Meng Hao was completely focused on the Meng Clan ancestral mansion as it rose higher and higher, drawing ever closer to the vortex.

Soon, it was just on the verge of reaching the vortex, and then Meng Hao murmured, “Grandma, please get there safe and sound.”

With that, the Meng Clan ancestral mansion sank into the vortex, which seemingly gobbled it up. In the blink of an eye, the black hole vanished into the beam of light.

The beam connecting the two Mountains and Seas then began to vanish, starting from the side in the Eighth Mountain and Sea. Or perhaps it wasn’t vanishing, but disappearing into the distance!

It was soon gone from the Eighth Mountain and Sea, and appeared in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. There, the starry sky rumbled, and the void distorted.

Meng Hao had successfully sent the Meng Clan off.

The Meng Clan used to reside in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, but now, nothing remained behind. The starry sky quieted, and the ripples faded away. Meng Hao hovered there alone, looking off in the direction of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Further away in the distance, Marquis Lu hovered there in shock. At some point, he had begun to sweat, and he suddenly realized that in trying to wipe out the Meng Clan, he had been courting death.

Now he realized why his Mountain and Sea Lord had issued orders not to provoke the Meng Clan. It wasn’t because he and Meng Hao were friends. No, it was because… he truly didn’t want to provoke them!

That was because, hidden in the Meng Clan, there was a supreme entity, a powerful expert who was so strong… that even Marquis Lu didn’t dare to trifle with him.

He had… power to open the barrier between Mountains and Seas, to send an entire continent of clan members all the way to another Mountain and Sea. He was… a shocking, almighty expert.

“Retreat!” he said without any hesitation. Then he flickered into motion, followed by the other cultivators of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, whose murderous aura had transformed into expressions of astonishment.

They didn’t care about the fact that they were running away with their tails between their legs.

Anybody could tell that whatever fetters had been holding this consummately powerful expert back… were now gone.

It was as if a ravenous primordial beast had suddenly been uncaged!

Rumbling could be heard as the cultivators of the Seventh Mountain and Sea retreated en masse. However, in that exact same moment, Meng Hao looked away from the Ninth Mountain and Sea, turning so that his gaze fell upon… the cultivators of the Seventh Mountain and Sea.

“You just showed up,” he said calmly, “don’t run away yet!”

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# Chapter 1287: Outsider!

As soon as the words left his mouth, the starry sky grew incredibly cold, as if invisible ice was spreading out rapidly in all directions. Wherever it passed, the fleeing cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea were filled with intense coldness, causing their souls to tremble.

Now that he didn’t have to worry about the Meng Clan, Meng Hao turned to look at the cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea, and his killing intent exploded out. He actually didn’t have any personal vendetta with these people, and in fact, as the future Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm, it would probably be appropriate to let them off a bit lightly, and not kill them all.

After all, there was a greater war coming, and the stronger the Mountain and Sea Realm was in general, the better. However, despite being aware of that, Meng Hao didn’t choose that course of action.

He was not a hero or a leader, he was just an ordinary cultivator, a former scholar who had always dreamed of being rich.

Had they not provoked him, he could have let things drop. But they had attempted to exterminate the Meng Clan, which was something he couldn’t tolerate. In fact, he didn’t even want to tolerate it.

He snorted coldly and took a step forward. When his foot fell, an incredible pressure began to weigh down, covering the entire area in the blink of an eye.

Rumbling sounds could be heard, as if there were invisible collisions up in the starry sky. The thousands of cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and

Sea all coughed up huge mouthfuls of blood, and expressions of complete astonishment and terror covered their faces.

None of them dared to fight back. They remained in place, trembling and looking with terror at Meng Hao, not even daring to make the slightest of movements, let alone flee.

Marquis Lu’s face fell, but then he gritted his teeth, causing violet light to radiate out from him. It quickly enveloped him, whereupon he burst into movement, apparently intending to break out from the pressure crushing down from Meng Hao.

“Did I say you could leave?!” Meng Hao said coolly. He took another step forward, vanishing, then reappearing directly in front of Marquis Lu. He waved his hand.

RUMBLE!

An incredible force exploded out from Meng Hao, which transformed into a tempest. When it slammed into Marquis Lu, blood sprayed out of his mouth, and he tumbled backward like a kite with its string cut. A fierce expression could be seen on his face as he managed to stop in place, then glared at Meng Hao, flames of madness dancing in his eyes.

“I’m one of the three Marquis of the Seventh Mountain, Lu Yunli!” he shrieked. “If you dare to harm me, the Seventh Mountain will hunt you down and kill you, no matter where you run to!”

Meng Hao’s only response was to take a third step forward, and then unleash the Life-Extermination Fist, shooting forward and slamming his fist into Marquis Lu’s chest.

A boom echoed out as Marquis Lu’s chest caved in, causing blood to spray out as he fell back. Cracking sounds could even be heard as a layer of magical cloth armor, which had previously been invisible, shattered.

That was one of his life-saving magical items, something which had enabled him to sweep unrivalled across the battlefield when fighting the

Heavengod Alliance. He had even relied on it to kill some of the Dao Realm experts of the Eighth Mountain and Sea. And yet, Meng Hao shattered it with a single blow.

“All of you, attack immediately! Kill him!” Marquis Lu cried urgently, face ashen. The other cultivators of the Seventh Mountain and Sea around him hesitated, but about a thousand of them gritted their teeth and charged forward. They quickly formed into groups of nine, arranging themselves in special formation. Those spell formations then grouped into nines to create a grand spell formation!

Rumbling could be heard as dozens of spell formations appeared in the starry sky, which then shot toward Meng Hao. Brilliant lights flashed, and the ripples of divine abilities spread out. However, Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he made a grasping motion, which tore a rift open. The Blood Demon roared out, instantly charging toward the spell formations. Surrounded by the sounds of explosions, Meng Hao pierced through the spell formations and began to chase down Marquis Lu.

Madness could be seen in Marquis Lu’s eyes. The fact that Meng Hao could simply disregard the spell formations caused that madness to grow more intense. Throwing caution to the wind, he threw his head back and roared.

“You made me do this!” he roared, extending his hand and causing the totem tattoo there to radiate violet light. It grew more and more intense, and in the blink of an eye, violet qi suddenly began to swirl around. Astonishingly, it transformed into… an enormous head.

It had eight horns on its head, its skin was greenish-black, and its face resembled that of a human. As soon as it appeared, a shocking energy burst out, causing the starry sky to tremble. Furthermore… the face emanated an aura that was not of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

It was… an Outsider!

An Outsider from the 33 Heavens!

As soon as Meng Hao saw it, he could tell where it came from. At the same time, he could sense the Mountain and Sea Realm stirring with hatred, with the desire to destroy Outsiders, to destroy anything with that blood running through their veins.

The Outsider threw its head back and roared, causing the starry sky to shatter, and a massive tempest to spring up and spin toward Meng Hao. Simultaneously, the head shot away from Marquis Lu's hand and headed toward Meng Hao as if to consume him.

"DIE!" screamed Marquis Lu, his face twisted with madness. This was his trump card, something that sucked away at his longevity every time he used it, forcing him to be very cautious about how he utilized it. It was also the entire reason he had charged into the Meng Clan's territory with complete disregard for Meng Hao.

In his mind, the totem tattoo essentially made him invincible to 4-Essences enemies, and enabled him to fight it out with 5-Essences cultivators. In fact, during the fighting against the Heavengod Alliance, he had even fought to a draw with the Heavengod Alliance's Chief Dharma Protector.

Because of that, he was incredibly confident, and his killing intent was currently surging. Now that he had sent the enormous head against Meng Hao, he was sure that Meng Hao was as good as dead.

"This totem tattoo is a precious treasure that my Mountain and Sea Lord bestowed upon me. It draws upon the soul of a Heavenly Devil from the Outside world and gives me the power to fight against five Essences! It doesn't matter who you are, you're DEAD!!

"After you're dead, the rest of the Eighth Mountain and Sea will accompany you to the Yellow Springs, and the Meng Clan that escaped to the Ninth Mountain and Sea will still be exterminated. Even the Ninth Mountain and Sea will be destroyed!

"In the coming war, nobody will be safe. You're dead no matter what!!" Marquis Lu threw his head back and roared madly, drawing upon his longevity to power the totem. Stabbing pain filled his mind, making him go even crazier, to the point where he began to lose his grip on consciousness.

And yet he still maintained control. Performing an incantation gesture, he made the gigantic Outsider’s mouth open wide. Its eyes shone with a red light as it made to devour Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, and he snorted coldly. As the Outsider’s head closed in on him, he extended his hand and pointed at it.

It was none other than the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex!

Meng Hao had known that his Demon Sealing Hexing magic was especially effective on Outsiders. As soon as he finished waving his finger, he waved it again to unleash the Seventh Demon Sealing Hex. Then came the Sixth Hex and the Fifth Hex.

Four waves of a finger caused the Outsider to scream miserably. Black mist began to roil out from inside of it, as it twisted and distorted, howling, “Nine… Seals… Hexing… Magic…. DAMMIT!!”

It began to corrode, sending black mist out in all directions. Marquis Lu was shaking, and began to wither as his longevity was rapidly sucked away. However, instead of fleeing, he charged Meng Hao, face twisted with madness.

“Well, aren’t you interesting,” Meng Hao said, eyes flickering. He then reached out and made a grasping motion, but instead of utilizing the power of the Mountain and Sea Realm he unleashed the Star Plucking Magic.

His Ancient Mana flowed, and his 33 Soul Lamps burned brightly. Combining the power of his fleshly body with that of his cultivation base caused Meng Hao to explode with battle prowess equivalent to five Essences, and that was without the power of the Mountains and Seas!

It was… a terrifying power that was second only to that of a Mountain and Sea Lord. Rumbling could be heard as the Outsider screamed, its face twisting as it sped uncontrollably toward Meng Hao.

If Meng Hao managed to grab it, then he would have the soul's life or death within his control. However the face suddenly screamed and began to turn blurry; apparently, it had chosen to self-detonate.

As the face exploded, it used that power to break free, blocking the hand of the Star Plucking Magic and simultaneously transforming into a stream of black mist that began to shoot back toward Marquis Lu.

Meng Hao swished his sleeve, causing a tempest to spring up. The power of the self-detonation instantly faded away, and Meng Hao took a step forward toward the black mist.

The black mist moved so fast that Marquis Lu didn't have any time to react. It streamed into his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, causing him to tremble and then let out a bloodcurdling scream, as if he were being possessed.

Meng Hao's eyes glittered coldly as he closed in. He was just about to perform an incantation gesture when Marquis Lu, face covered in black mist, let out an insane howl.

His energy then spiked, and his skin began to turn green and sprout scales. His head split open as eight horns grew out. Furthermore, his lips split in half so that his mouth was in the shape of a cross. In the blink of an eye, he grew to a height of thirty meters.

Vicious-looking spikes even pierced out through his clothing. Shockingly, what was standing in front of Meng Hao now was no longer a cultivator, but a humanoid beast!

It was… an Outsider!

The faces of the other cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea fell, and they began to back up. Clearly, even they had not known the true origin of Marquis Lu's totem tattoo.

There were only a few dozen whose faces flickered with what seemed to be panic, but which Meng Hao saw through to the zeal and devotion toward this version of Marquis Lu that was hidden beneath.

“You’re dead! DEAD, I tell you!!” The beast-form of Marquis Lu threw his head back and howled, causing his energy to rise higher and higher. Then, his eyes turned red, and he seemingly lost all control of himself, descending fully into madness as he charged Meng Hao.

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# Chapter 1288: Seizing All Opportunities!

In almost the same instant in which Marquis Lu turned into a beast, Meng Hao could sense a rage welling up from the Mountain and Sea Realm, which grew clearer by the second. It would be impossible for others to sense how intense it was, or perhaps they would even believe it to be a figment of their imagination, but in any case, it affected people subconsciously, filling them with a loathing toward Outsiders.

Of course, Meng Hao could plainly detect this rage, which filled him with the desire to slaughter this Outsider. At the same time, he could sense the fluctuations of the Outsider's actual body, which were coming from… the 33 Heavens beyond the starry sky.

"The rage of the Mountain and Sea Realm, huh?" Meng Hao looked at the roaring Outsider, whose surging cultivation base exceeded that of the 5-Essences Xiao Yihan. "It's a possession, and at the same time, not a possession…. It's the projected image of a powerful expert from outside in the 33 Heavens, which possessed Marquis Lu. However, the reason it was able to possess him so quickly was that he's actually been this thing's host body for quite some time already." Meng Hao's eyes flickered as he advanced, using the power of his fleshly body to slam into the Outsider.

A boom rang out, and then they separated. Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao's mouth, and it was the same with the Outsider. Furthermore, the Outsider's chest had caved in, and was leaking violet blood.

"A powerful fleshly body. However, this is only a portion of the power of the Outsider's real body…. Now that I think about it, whichever Outsider in the 33 Heavens is controlling this thing must be someone famous." Meng

Hao’s eyes glittered. Performing an incantation gesture, he sent the Essence of Divine Flame exploding out, instantly enveloping the Outsider.

The Outsider roared, causing numerous huge wooden logs to appear, the surfaces of which were carved with mysterious magical symbols. The loges also erupted with Essence power as they shot to meet Meng Hao’s Essence of Divine Flame.

After a moment of thought, Meng Hao waved his hand, causing the Divine Flame to dissipate. Then he performed an incantation gesture and pointed out with his finger. Instantly, numerous mountains began to descend. Meng Hao didn’t stop moving, though; he unleashed one magical technique after another, all of which slammed into the Outsider, as he attempted to get a better understanding of its body and cultivation base.

The Outsider roared under the bombardment of divine abilities. Then its eyes flickered and it extended its hand toward Meng Hao, making a grasping gesture. That gesture caused Meng Hao’s heart to tremble, and he suddenly vanished. A moment later, the spot that he had occupied collapsed under a sudden onslaught of flame lightning.

That wasn’t the end of it though. Even as Meng Hao reappeared off in the distance, the Outsider’s eyes flickered with killing intent, and it threw its head back and roared, splaying its hands wide above its head, almost as if it were worshipping the sky above.

It was at this point that the starry sky began to tremble, and an aura which clearly did not come from the Mountain and Sea Realm began to spread out in all directions. The aura then began to congeal and take shape into the form… of a gigantic basilisk lizard!

It was fully 30,000 meters long and had towering energy. Meng Hao could sense the killing intent of the Mountain and Sea Realm explode to new heights. However, for some reason, it was being suppressed, and was unable to be released. It did not provoke the same type of transformations that had occurred in the Mountains and Seas when the Outsider appeared back in the Ruins of Immortality.

“True self, obliterate!” the Outsider roared. The scales on its body shattered, causing blood to spray out. The blood then shot out into the void, and in the blink of an eye, converged onto the right eye of the shocking basilisk. That scarlet-colored eye appeared to gleam with intelligence.

The eye turned to look at Meng Hao, filling his mind with intense pressure that caused his face to flicker.

“Paragon… Not 9-Essences, but at least 7-Essences,” he thought, shaken. A sensation of deadly crisis rose up, and his eyes flickered. He then made a grasping motion, summoning the power of the Mountains and Seas to defend himself.

It was at that point that a red beam shot out from the lizard’s eye, filled with terrifying destructive power. It shot directly toward Meng Hao, slamming into the converged power of the Mountains and Seas.

Rumbling echoed out as terrifying ripples spread out from the red beam. The power of the Mountains and Seas faded away, and the red glow in the huge basilisk’s right eye faded away.

Meng Hao waved his right hand, summoning the Paragon Bridge, which rumbled down to smash onto the body of the basilisk. As the his battle prowess erupted, he waved his right finger through the air, causing the power of the Mountains and Seas to slash into the Outsider, sending blood spraying about everywhere.

That wave of a finger caused the starry sky to tremble. Marquis Lu, in the form of an Outsider, trembled and then let out a bloodcurdling scream. Performing an incantation gesture, he unleashed all of the power he could to fight back. However, a moment later, what seemed to be an enormous invisible finger appeared, apparently converged from the power of the Mountains and Seas, which pressed down onto him.

Blood sprayed out of his mouth as he fell back, his arms shattered, his chest caved in, exploding in a mass of blood and gore. As for the basilisk projection, it was crushed by the Paragon Bridge, and began to howl as it faded away.

“It would be a real pity to let you die like this,” Meng Hao said. Even as Marquis Lu in Outsider-form began to collapse into pieces, Meng Hao appeared next to him and reached out to grab the top of his shattering head. It was a Soulsearch!

However, what he was Soulsearching was not just Marquis Lu’s soul. Rather, he was also using it as a bridge… to connect to the soul of the almighty expert above in the 33 Heavens.

That expert might be a Paragon, but Meng Hao would still perform the Soulsearch anyway. He wanted to know… exactly how much of a difference there was between his divine sense and that of a Paragon!

RUMBLE!

Marquis Lu’s head trembled, and his eyes were fixed on Meng Hao. As of that moment, Meng Hao could see all of his memories, and at the same time, he could sense a faint and fraying thread connecting Marquis Lu to the 33 Heavens above the starry sky. Without a moment of hesitation, he began to follow that thread.

In almost the exact same instant that he began to follow the thread, his mind trembled, and he sensed a powerful will on the other end, something that he couldn’t match up to by even ten percent.

He only made brief contact with that entity via divine sense, and yet the backlash almost destroyed him. He shot backward, eyes gleaming. He wasn’t thinking about how he had almost been destroyed, nor was he thinking about his injuries. Instead… he was thinking about the rare chance he had!

It was an opportunity to dramatically increase the power of his divine sense!

A roar was echoing out from that towering divine sense, as if the Soulsearching Meng Hao had instigated was an unprecedented provocation of the Paragon in the 33 Heavens.

Divine sense rumbled out, shooting directly toward Meng Hao to eradicate him.

All of these things take some time to describe, but this battle of divine sense actually happened in an instant. Meng Hao’s divine sense began to collapse almost immediately, and he followed the tiny remaining thread back into the Mountain and Sea Realm.

At the same time, the divine sense from the 33 Heavens’ Paragon followed him!

Blood instantly sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth, and his face went deathly pale. He shot backward, and Marquis Lu’s head exploded into a haze of blood. At the same time, that boundless divine sense power shot out from the blood toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as killing intent exploded out from all directions, enveloping everything. The divine sense was instantly suppressed, and simultaneously the thread connecting it to the 33 Heavens was severed due to Marquis Lu’s death.

The pressure of the entire Mountain and Sea Realm had severed the divine sense from its true form. Next, Meng Hao, eyes glittering, suddenly opened his mouth and sucked in a huge breath.

As he did, rumbling sounds echoed out, and the divine sense was absorbed into his body. His mind felt like it was about to explode, and blood oozed out of his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. However, at the same time, the power of the Dao Divinity Scripture rotated madly within him.

After cultivating the Dao Divinity Scripture, Meng Hao had long since come to realize that it was actually a supreme Daoist scripture designed to allow the person who cultivated it to consume the divine sense of others and make it their own.

However, this time, he was consuming the divine sense of a Paragon. Although it was only a bit of the entire thing, to Meng Hao, it counted as a significant increase. He was shaking, and blood was pouring out of his orifices. A mist of blood surrounded him, and pain wracked his body; he felt like he was about to explode.

He coughed up one mouthful of blood after another, and his body shook so violently it felt like it would collapse. His Eternal stratum operated madly, forcing him to stay alive. Over and over again, blood sprayed out of his mouth, and he hovered on the brink of collapse.

He was a mangled mass of blood, and the flame of his life force was teetering on the verge of being extinguished. And yet, his eyes were shining brightly.

Then, a roar echoed out from beyond the starry sky, from the 33 Heavens, a roar of rage that could destroy Heaven and Earth.

A moment later, Meng Hao shuddered, and then the collapse of his body stopped. The Paragon’s divine sense had been forcefully absorbed and suppressed, but only temporarily; he needed to quickly find a suitable place to go into secluded meditation and fuse with it.

His eyes were shot with blood, and his body was incredibly weak. However, his divine sense had experienced explosive growth, and was at least twice as powerful as before…and he had just begun the absorption!

With that vastly more powerful divine sense, he looked over at the cultivators of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, who stood there trembling, not even daring to look at him. Most of them had heads bowed, and were kneeling in worship.

Meng Hao wiped the blood off of his mouth, then coldly looked up into the depths of the sky. Just now, he had experienced a brush with death; consuming the divine sense of a Paragon had been a very risky thing to do.

Even the Paragon out in the 33 Heavens had never even considered that someone would do something so wildly insane. That was because that person didn’t know Meng Hao, and didn’t know his philosophy that not acquiring something was the same as losing it.

Meng Hao was the type of person who, when encountering a Paragon who he couldn’t kill, would scheme to take that person’s divine sense.

“Rewards come only with risk. How true, how true!” Meng Hao licked his lips.

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# Chapter 1289: Extinguishing the First Lamp!

Meng Hao ignored the reverence being offered by the cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea. He turned and vanished, killing no one. The fact that they had all been so shocked by the sudden appearance of an Outsider was very telling.

However, there had been some whose eyes had revealed looks of devotion, although they had pretended to be surprised. As for those people, a moment later their heads all exploded, and they were killed in body and spirit.

The survivors looked around in shock, then slowly dispersed. None of them went back to the battlefields in the Heavengod Alliance. To them, seeing Marquis Lu turn into an Outsider was a huge shock. Because of the seed of hatred toward Outsiders which had been planted in their hearts, they began to speculate as to the implications of what had occurred.

When Meng Hao reappeared, he was far off in the distance, where he yet again coughed up a mouthful of blood. The Paragon’s divine sense had once again burst out within him, breaking past its suppression. The Dao Divinity Scripture then began to operate madly, consuming the divine sense. Meng Hao gritted his teeth as blood spurted out of his wounds, and his body hovered on the brink of collapse.

He then struggled to perform a teleportation, reappearing on an asteroid some distance away. He quickly bored his way into the heart of the asteroid, where he sat down cross-legged, closed his eyes, and began to meditate.

Before slipping into deep meditation, he quickly set up layer upon layer of restrictive spells around himself. If anyone had been watching, they would have even seen the asteroid distort, and then seemingly vanish. In reality, it had merely been cloaked.

No one would be able to detect the asteroid or Meng Hao unless they had a cultivation base and divine sense superior to his.

Seven days passed by rather quickly. During that time, Meng Hao experienced numerous near-death encounters. His body almost collapsed several times, and was barely held together by his Eternal stratum, as well as the consumption of medicinal pills.

He became quite gaunt, until he was almost nothing more than skin and bones. However, his eyes shone brightly, the reason being that during the seven days, his divine sense grew vastly more powerful!

In fact, by now, it had experienced threefold growth compared to before!

Such explosive growth in divine sense enabled Meng Hao to be much more confident regarding the use of his cultivation base, and also helped him to understand his divine abilities and magical techniques much better. Not only was he able to control and use them better, but, more importantly, the increase in divine sense led him to the position… where extinguishing the Soul Lamps of the Ancient Realm was now a distinct possibility!

After the seven days passed, Meng Hao opened his eyes. His body was no longer hovering on the brink of collapse. He was weak, and yet, the flame of his life force now burned hotter than ever, and was much more stable.

“Finally, it’s all been consumed,” he said slowly, eyes shining with intense brightness. “My divine sense is now thirty percent that of the divine sense of a Paragon….”

A smile twisted his face as he waved his sleeve, causing 33 Soul Lamps to suddenly appear around him.

After examining them for a moment, he gritted his teeth and closed his eyes. Rotating his cultivation base, he began to heal himself; because of the increase in his divine sense, his Eternal stratum was now much more powerful, which made him recover even faster.

This time, it only took a single day to recover from his gaunt state. Now, his cultivation base and his fleshly body were completely recovered to their peak state, as was his soul and divine sense.

Finally, he opened his eyes and looked at his first Soul Lamp. That lamp was at its peak, and was the first of the lot to have ceased absorbing the energy of Heaven and Earth

Meng Hao studied the lamp for a while, and the decisiveness in his eyes slowly began to turn into hesitation. After a while though, the decisiveness returned, and he made his decision.

He would… extinguish his first Soul Lamp, and experience that reversal of life and death that occurred along with the extinguishing of Soul Lamps.

“I have to extinguish these Soul Lamps eventually anyway. I’m now unprecedentedly powerful in terms of my fleshly body and my divine sense. Furthermore, I can tell that power of one’s divine sense and the strength of one’s soul are critical factors in extinguishing Soul Lamps.

“At the same time, I can test out… if extinguishing the first Soul Lamp will have some effect on the other Soul Lamps’ capacity to absorb the energy of Heaven and Earth.” Meng Hao eyed the first Soul Lamp, then clenched his jaw and unhesitatingly waved his hand in the direction of the lamp.

The first Soul Lamp immediately began to sway back and forth, and the flame inside began to flicker, as if it could be extinguished at any moment. That effect was the result, not of Meng Hao’s actual waving of the hand, but rather, the fact that all his willpower was focused on extinguishing the lamp.

Only when one’s will and body are aligned, can the lamps be extinguished!

“Extinguish!” he said softly. As the words left his mouth, the flame of the first Soul Lamp… winked out!

In the moment it was extinguished, Meng Hao trembled. The Soul Lamp was absorbed into his soul, and also connected to his blood, as if it had become part of his very life. In that moment, though, the shadow of death completely covered him.

Meng Hao began to shiver as the flame of his life force rapidly darkened. His vitality waned, on the verge of winking out, and his cultivation base couldn’t rotate. Even the power of his divine sense was difficult to operate, and his thoughts began to fade.

An aura of death gradually began to emanate out from him, growing stronger and stronger. His soul also withered, and his fleshly body seemed to decay.

It was a strange sight; Meng Hao seemed to be hovering on the verge of death, his aura becoming weaker and weaker.

If anyone could observe him in that moment, that is what they would see.

The truth of the matter, though, was that although Meng Hao’s eyes were shut, he was looking at… a different world. The inside of the asteroid was completely gray, and in fact, everything that he could see was also gray.

He rose to his feet and was shocked to find that his body remained in the same position as before, sitting there cross-legged. What had risen up was apparently his soul, which was in the process of dispersing.

He stepped forward and looked back at his fleshly body sitting there in meditation. He could see that his body was withering, and that his blood was wasting away. He saw the thick aura of death, and realized that his soul was dispersing. All of that made Meng Hao feel as if he were right at death’s door.

“So this is what it’s like to extinguish the Soul Lamps of the Ancient Realm….” he murmured. It was back in the Fang Clan that he had learned about extinguishing Soul Lamps. What he had learned was that every Ancient Realm cultivator experienced something different in the moment of extinguishing. Not only every person, but every single lamp was different.

However, throughout all the years, a certain general set of rules become clear to cultivators.

“My extinguishing of Soul Lamps in the Ancient Realm will be comprised of the Seven Desolations!” he murmured, eyes shining.

“Every five lamps brings one Desolation. Few people experience the Fourth Desolation, and even rarer is the Fifth Desolation. Some people only experience the Third Desolation…. The further along you get, the more dangerous they become….

“The First Desolation is also called the Desolation of Delusion….

“Well then, this must be the Desolation of Delusion.” Meng Hao walked back, sat down cross-legged in the same position as his fleshly body, and attempted to re-connect his soul.

However, nothing worked. It was as if his body were rejecting his soul. Meng Hao frowned, then stood up again. His fleshly body was even more withered than before, causing his expression to turn grim. He suddenly flickered into motion, appearing outside of the asteroid. When he looked around, he saw nothing but endless fog, swirling and churning. Everything was completely silent.

“The Desolation of Delusion,” he murmured, “The Desolation of Delusion…. Where does the ‘delusion’ part come in…?” He turned to look back in the direction of the asteroid, and suddenly realized that the asteroid had changed. It was now a huge, crimson heart, thumping and writhing. Countless faces could be seen on its surface, all of them howling at Meng Hao. Furthermore, those faces… looked familiar.

They were all the people he had killed in his life.

He looked coldly at the faces, and began to back up slowly. In that instant, a huge hand appeared, covered with blood-colored scales. It shot out from within the heart, rumbling toward him as it sought to crush him, causing everything in the area to shatter.

Its power caused the surrounding fog to writhe, and as it stretched out, it was joined by a vicious voice that echoed out from inside the heart.

“Meng Hao… I’ve been waiting for a long time…. Didn’t I say that when the time came to extinguish your Soul Lamps, I would come back!?” The roar echoed out in all directions, and the heart began to shrink. In the blink of an eye, it shattered, disappearing along with the hand.

However, the cold voice continued to echo out.

“I’ve erased the projection of your fleshly body. You’ll never find the path back now. You’re stuck here. Soon, your fleshly body will wither up completely, and your blood will run dry. Your divine sense will vanish, and your soul… will dissipate within this place.”

Meng Hao’s face darkened, and he waved his sleeve. Instantly, the shattered pieces of the heart which had been flying about stopped falling down.

“The Desolation of Delusion is this entire place….” he thought. “A desolate, illusory world which appears after extinguishing the first Soul Lamp. My soul was pulled in here, and if I can’t get it back into my fleshly body before my body withers up, then I’ll definitely die. Whoever thought that the extinguishing of the first Soul Lamp would be like this?

“If I hadn’t consumed that divine sense from the 33 Heavens’ Paragon, then this might have been a bit of a difficult situation. But now….” Meng Hao laughed coldly. After all, despite being only a soul, his divine sense was still there. Suddenly, that divine sense exploded out, sweeping around him in all directions.

In the blink of an eye, his divine sense spread out to cover an area the size of what his previous divine sense could reach at its very limit. To him, however that was merely thirty percent of his total divine sense.

“Again!” he said, sending his divine sense sweeping out even further in all directions, sending out boundless ripples that caused the fog to seethe.

“Gotcha!” he said, eyes glittering. Astonishingly, he had just caught sight of an asteroid off in the fog, an asteroid which was the location of his fleshly body.

“Impossible!!” someone roared madly from within the fog. It was the same voice that had spoken just now, which was also the same voice he had heard during his Ancient Tribulation.

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# Chapter 1290: Returning to the Heavengod Alliance

“Nothing’s impossible,” Meng Hao said with a cold snort. His divine sense exploded out, and the fog within it seethed as though some gigantic, invisible hand were stirring it. It only took a moment for all of the fog to begin to spin around.

If it were possible to view the scene from high above, it would appear as if all of the fog in the world had transformed into a vortex, breaking the silence and causing rumbling sounds to echo out in all directions.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he hovered there in the center of the vortex, his body seemingly ethereal and illusory. At the same time, a powerful aura emanated out from him, the power of his soul, combined with the power of his divine sense!

By this point, Meng Hao’s divine sense was at forty percent of the power of a Paragon.

Such power might not seem like much, but in truth, it had already reached a shocking level. After all… the power of the divine sense of a 5-Essences Dao Sovereign was only ten percent of that of a Paragon. Even the various powerful Mountain and Sea Lords would at most have thirty percent. Only 6-Essences Dao Sovereigns, at their very peak, could come close to forty or fifty percent.

Right now, though, Meng Hao already had the divine sense of a 6-Essences Dao Sovereign, and when it exploded out, wild colors flashed in Heaven and Earth, and the starry sky trembled. After all… a 6-Essences Dao Sovereign was the most powerful entity in existence beneath a Paragon!

Furthermore, Paragons were incredibly rare. For the most part, 6-Essences Dao Sovereigns could be considered invincible.

Meng Hao’s divine sense rumbled out, and his energy soared. He strode forward, and when his foot fell, he was directly back in front of the asteroid!

All it took was a single step!

In that instant, a furious roar echoed out from within the void, and the huge hand with red scales stretched out to crush Meng Hao.

“Just what I was waiting for,” Meng Hao said with a cold snort. As the hand closed in on him, Meng Hao raised his arms, and his eyes flickered with a cold gleam of killing intent.

“Detonate!” As soon as he uttered that single word, this entire world which was suffused with his divine sense exploded out with destructive power that began to tear away at everything, starting at the borders, with Meng Hao’s location in the center.

From a distance, it would look as though the edges of the vortex were collapsing, layer by layer, growing closer to the middle. Even the body from which the huge hand extended, which was hidden within the void, was being enveloped by the destructive power of Meng Hao’s divine sense.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOMMMM!

Massive, shocking rumbling could be heard, and the scaled hand didn’t even have a chance to reach Meng Hao. A miserable scream rang out as it was overwhelmed by divine sense, and then shredded to pieces.

At the same time, not too far off from Meng Hao, within the void, an enormous figure became visible. It was just an outline, and was impossible to distinguish clearly, but it was fully 30,000 meters tall, with two horns growing out of its head. It was crimson, and was apparently a unique Greater Demon. As Meng Hao’s destructive divine sense overwhelmed it, it howled.

“I’m gonna kill you!!” it shrieked, fighting back against the power of Meng Hao’s divine sense, and even taking a step forward as if to approach him.

Meng Hao’s expression was cold as he waved his hand at the figure.

“Scram!” All he said was a single word.

However, when that single word left his mouth, the power of his divine sense became even more explosive. Now, it didn’t spread out in all directions, it was completely focused on a single point. Instead of shattering his surroundings, he used all of that power to create a tempest which swept over the enormous figure.

Massive rumbling sounds echoed out, and the huge creature howled miserably. It was no longer trying to approach Meng Hao, but instead was being shoved back relentlessly by the tempest that was Meng Hao’s divine sense.

“I refuse to accept this!” the creature roared furiously. However, it couldn’t prevent itself from being forced backward, and in the blink of an eye, it was far, far off in the distance.

“You refuse, and so do I,” Meng Hao said coolly. “Next time… you don’t need to come looking for me, I’ll come find you.” With that, he strode toward the asteroid, floated inside, and then found his fleshly body sitting there cross-legged.

His body was withered to an extreme degree, and abounded with an aura of death. He was clearly on the verge of dying.

Meng Hao didn’t hesitate for a moment. He quickly approached his body and then sat down cross-legged in the same position. His mind rumbled, and then he fused.

Back in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, within that asteroid that no one could see, the cross-legged Meng Hao suddenly trembled. Then his eyes snapped open, and their previously listless gray color changed to a bright gleam. At the same time, his fleshly body reverted from its withered state, and the aura of death vanished from his blood and flesh. His life force gradually began to surge.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, then slowly closed his eyes. His first Soul Lamp was now completely extinguished; a wisp of smoke curled up, which almost seemed to possess intelligence as it swirled into his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. In that instant, the extinguished Soul Lamp erupted with a shocking aura that filled Meng Hao.

He shivered as his fleshly body was fully restored, and his blood began to flow vigorously. At the same time, his cultivation base rose up. Everything expect the physical aspect of him was rapidly increasing in power.

It was the same with his soul and his divine sense. Everything rocketed up. His divine sense increased, although not doubling as he had expected but, rather, increasing by a fraction. Even still, Meng Hao’s energy had now reached a completely shocking level.

His aura climbed, and he virtually thrummed with the sensation of increasing power.

Three days passed by in the blink of an eye.

Suddenly, the void distorted as the previously invisible asteroid once again became visible. Then, it collapsed, although no sound emanated out at all. The entire massive asteroid noiselessly… transformed into ash, as if it had disintegrated.

Floating within that ash was a cross-legged figure, Meng Hao. He was surrounded by 33 Soul Lamps… 32 lit, 1 extinguished!

Ripples spread out from him that caused the starry sky to tremble, but then quickly vanished. His eye snapped open, and they glowed brightly, and for some reason, even the starry sky seemed to brighten.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, causing massive amounts of the energy of Heaven and Earth to rumble into him. Then, he slowly breathed out.

“The Ancient Realm…” he said softly, “This is where cultivators can advance by leaps and bounds, a place where the rotten can be changed into the magical. What a mystical Realm!” With that, he rose to his feet, whereupon cracking sounds echoed out from inside him.

Meng Hao looked over the rest of the 32 lit Soul Lamps, then slowly shook his head. “Unfortunately, it’s not as I had speculated before. The remaining Soul Lamps will not become more powerful as I do.”

Finally, he waved his sleeve, causing the Soul Lamps to grow blurry and fade away.

“I need to finish things here in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, and then get to the Fourth Mountain and Sea as quickly as possible… to bring Xu Qing back.” He turned his head to look off in the direction of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, except, what he was looking at was not that Seventh Mountain and Sea, but rather, several Mountains and Seas beyond… to the Fourth Mountain and Sea.

“According to the memories of Marquis Lu… war… is not just being fought here.” After reviewing the information he had gleaned from the Soulsearch, he realized that the Seventh Mountain and Sea wasn’t the only Mountain and Sea within the Realm which was invading a neighbor.

“The Sixth Mountain and Sea has also started a Mountain and Sea War.

“The Seventh Mountain and Sea invaded the Eighth with more than one purpose in mind. They also want use this location as a spot from which to march on to the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

“As for the Sixth Mountain and Sea, they have invaded the Fifth Mountain and Sea with exactly the same goal in mind… to lock down a position from which to attack the most powerful of all the Mountains and Seas, the Fourth!” After a moment of thought, Meng Hao took a step forward, heading in the direction of the Heavengod Alliance.

Without having to worry about the Meng Clan, he was free to act however he wished. In his view, the best way to end the war was not to simply prevent the cultivators of the Seventh Mountain and Sea from attacking the Eighth Mountain and Sea. Instead… he needed to go to the rift between the two Mountains and Seas, to face the ever-nearing Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea!

His eyes flickered thoughtfully as he got closer and closer to the Heavengod Alliance. As he did, he could sense familiar fluctuations coming from the Eighth Mountain, which was located within the territory of the Heavengod Alliance.

Several hours later, Meng Hao was at one of the entrances to the Heavengod Alliance. The planet that had once existed there was gone; it had become nothing more than rubble filled with corpses and ruins.

This was a place the Seventh Mountain and Sea had long since attacked and breached. It had also become their command center, and the ruins stretching out bore strong semblance to the Ruins of Immortality.

Both were the crumbled remnants left behind by war.

Meng Hao looked around and then proceeded into the territory of the Heavengod Alliance. As he went along, he could sense the ripples that were the remnants of magical techniques, as well as the all-pervasive sensation of blood and gore.

Off in the distance, he saw a few dozen figures making their way through the ruins and rubble, searching for cultivators who were feigning death and killing them, then looting their magical items and bags of holding.

As soon as Meng Hao appeared, those figures saw him, and almost immediately, their eyes flickered with killing intent. They sent their divine sense out, and when it reached Meng Hao, they could tell that he was only in the Ancient Realm, and vicious smiles broke out on their faces.

“So it’s a leftover cultivator from the Eighth Mountain and Sea. Kill him!” As soon as the words rang out, the dozens of cultivators powered up their cultivation bases, and their killing intent surged. Their eyes were red from the months of killing they had already participated in. Unfortunately for them, their cultivation bases didn’t qualify to be able to detect how truly terrifying Meng Hao was. Thinking him to be just another cultivator who had survived the recent battle, they closed in to finish him off.

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# Chapter 1291: Who Said It Was a Worthless Incantation?

It was almost as if Meng Hao didn’t even notice those incoming cultivators. He proceeded along as before, but then casually waved his hand. Instantly, the dozen or so cultivators began to tremble. Their faces went slack, then they toppled over and became a part of the surrounding ruins.

Meng Hao didn’t kill them, but rather dispersed their consciousness, putting them into a state of sleep from which they would awaken in a few months.

As he traveled through the Heavengod Alliance, he noticed many places where planets had once existed which were now nothing more than rubble. Everything was in ruins, and corpses could be seen everywhere, cultivators from both the Eighth and the Seventh Mountain and Sea.

Meng Hao’s face was very grim as he went along, getting deeper and deeper into the territory of the Heavengod Alliance. Up ahead, he could sense Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering ripples, and could even hear the sounds of screaming mixed in, along with massive explosions.

That was clearly… where the front lines of the battle were.

His divine sense expanded out, spreading out through virtually the entire Heavengod Alliance. In that whole area, there were only two people he cared about. One was the Noble Ran, and the other… was on the Eighth Mountain.

In fact, those two people were the entire reason why he had come here to begin with.

With his divine sense, Meng Hao could see that half of the former Heavengod Alliance's territory was now in complete ruin, and was controlled by the Seventh Mountain and Sea. By now, their cultivators numbered in the millions, and had been divided into four main armies which stabbed into the Heavengod Alliance from four different directions.

The cultivators of the Heavengod Alliance were also split into four main armies to defend against the various offenses. However, it was obvious that they were being forced inexorably back, and would eventually be defeated. There was little hope of achieving victory.

Not too far away from Meng Hao, in the starry sky of the Heavengod Alliance, in the most bloody and bitter of the four battlefields, a shattered planet was transforming into a black hole, and had begun swallowing up many of the surrounding cultivators.

A grand battle was being fought here, with more than 700,000 cultivators on each side. It was a spectacular, sprawling fight, and at any particular moment the shrill cries of the dying could be heard.

Explosions echoed out constantly, and the glow of magical techniques rose up high into the starry sky. Terrifying ripples spread out chaotically, and the entire scene was one of disorder.

Higher up was where the Dao Realm experts were fighting. Meng Hao could see the Chief Dharma Protector of the Heavengod Society, as well as… the boy Xiao Yihan. The two of them were locked in a Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering battle.

Clearly, the Chief Dharma Protector was no match for Xiao Yihan. However, he wore a green suit of armor that boosted his power to the point where he could at least hold his own.

There were more than a few Dao Realm experts in the battle, and wherever they fought, massive booms and explosions echoed out.

Meng Hao caught sight of the first Patriarch of the Righteous Noble Sect, who was in a very sorry state and seemed to be on his last legs. Meng Hao continued to scan the battlefield until he finally found the Noble Ran.

Shockingly, he was up against two Dao Realm experts from the Seventh Mountain and Sea, who were attacking him in unison. It was a breathtaking battle, and unfortunately, he was weakening by the moment. His body a mass of wounds and injuries, and his face was completely ashen. He looked like an oil lamp running low on fuel, sputtering on the verge of being extinguished.

As soon as Meng Hao caught sight of him, his eyes flickered coldly, and he took a step in that direction.

On the battlefield itself, the Noble Ran was laughing bitterly. Booms rang out, and blood spurted from his wounds as he was forced back relentlessly. His injuries were many and serious; in the past months, he had been in so many fights he had lost count.

Despite fighting so bitterly, the mad advance of the Seventh Mountain and Sea was unstoppable. The Righteous Noble Sect… was no more. Vast numbers of disciples had been killed, and the third Patriarch was dead. Only the Noble Ran and the first Patriarch remained.

“Perhaps this battle… is where I will perish,” thought the Noble Ran as he performed an incantation gesture, once again fighting back against his two Dao Realm opponents. One of those opponents was a middle-aged man, the other was elderly. Their cultivation bases were at the same level as his, and they attacked with complete viciousness. They clearly wanted to kill the Noble Ran more than anything else, and in response to his move, they unleashed their Essence power, creating a huge mountain of ice, within which was sealed a black eyeball.

As the mountain sped toward the Noble Ran, it melted, creating a powerful blast of freezing air. Cracking sounds could be heard as everything froze over and was covered by layer after layer of frost. Simultaneously, the black eyeball flew out, becoming a black beam of light that shot toward the Noble Ran.

He laughed bitterly as the freezing ice spread out over his body, and the black beam of light closed in. Finally, he bit his tongue and spit out a glob of blood, which transformed into a blood mist that blocked the black light.

Rumbling sounds could be heard, and a stubborn gleam appeared in the Noble Ran's eyes. He took a deep breath and then said, "The Dao is in My Heart!"

Instantly, the ice covering him cracked and then shattered away.

The two Dao Realm experts he was facing began to laugh coldly.

"That move again? Noble Ran, we've fought back and forth numerous times, and this isn't the first time you've tried to use that Seal the Heavens Incantation, and it never works! Anybody can see that it's a completely worthless incantation!"

"The Seal the Heavens Incantation is a complete joke. I've heard people say that you got it to work once, is that right? To tell you the truth, I really look forward to seeing that happen. I want to see this 'Seal the Heavens Incantation' that you supposedly used to block tens of thousands of opponents at the same time." The two Dao Realm experts continued to laugh coldly. Instead of unleashing attacks, they merely hovered there, looking at the Noble Ran with cold cynicism.

Their words stung, but the Noble Ran's eyes gleamed with stubbornness. He had succeeded, albeit only once. However, that one time in which he had succeeded had given his apprentice the chance to escape.

That one success was something he would never forget.

The Seal the Heavens Incantation is not worthless!!

"The Will is in My Eyes!" roared the Noble Ran, then gritted his teeth as he assumed the proper pose, to further mockery from his opponents.

"I Shall Possess the Mountains and Seas, Seal the Heavens Incantation!" The Noble Ran threw his head back and roared, splaying both arms out wide and then waving them out. However… absolutely no magical technique appeared.

The Noble Ran's eyes faded, and he coughed up a mouthful of blood. He chuckled bitterly, and yet deep inside he still believed that the Seal the Heavens Incantation was not worthless.

"How many times have you tried to use that magic? Every single time you prove that it's a completely worthless incantation!"

"What a pity. We've still never even seen this so-called Seal the Heavens Incantation." The two cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea shook their heads and then began to speed toward the Noble Ran, pulsing with killing intent.

In his bitterness, the Noble Ran slowly began to speak, more to himself than to anyone else, "It's not a worthless incantation, it's the Seal the Heavens Incantation, which I created myself…. The Seal the Heavens Incantation!

"I succeeded once before…." he murmured. He had paid an unimaginable price to create the Seal the Heavens Incantation, and the memories of what had occurred were something he didn't like to recall. It was an incredible pain that he kept hidden away deep in his heart.

RUMBLE!

As the two Dao Realm experts closed in, they joined forces to unleash a powerful magical technique. The image of a huge black centipede appeared, a vicious creature which opened its mouth as if to consume the Noble Ran.

"Take your worthless incantation with you into death!"

However, it was at this point that an icy cold voice suddenly echoed out across the battlefield, exploding into the ears of the two Dao Realm cultivators.

"You people want to see the Seal the Heavens Incantation? Well then, I'll give you that chance right now…. The Dao is in My Heart!" As soon as the words “The Dao is in My Heart” echoed out, massive rumbling filled Heaven and Earth and everything shook. At the same time, a shocking aura spread out to fill the starry sky.

The two Dao Realm experts’ faces fell. The voice from just now had pierced into their minds, causing them to tremble physically. They looked up into the starry sky and saw a figure approaching.

That figure wore a long robe, and his descent caused the more than a million fiercely fighting cultivators on the battlefield to be filled with shock. As for his words, they echoed about like the crash of thunder.

This new arrival was none other than Meng Hao!

When the Noble Ran saw him, he began to tremble, and his eyes filled with happiness. He began to laugh, and the look in his eyes turned to that of excitement.

“My little disciple, my little disciple….”

“The Will is in My Eyes!” Meng Hao said, which was the second line of the incantation. His voice echoed out, booming like thunder, causing the two Dao Realm experts from the Seventh Mountain and Sea to cough up blood. Looks of shock and disbelief flashed across their faces.

They weren’t the only ones. The other Dao Realm experts in the area all looked over in astonishment. Of course, what was most shocking to them was not just the power of Meng Hao’s voice, but the fact that all of a sudden… an indescribable pressure had begun to weigh down on them.

That boundless pressure felt like an enormous mountain crushing down onto their backs.

It was… the power of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

The first Patriarch of the Righteous Noble Sect looked on in astonishment. The other Dao Realm experts on both sides of the battlefield felt their minds spinning. As for the Chief Dharma Protector of the Heavengod Society, when he recognized Meng Hao, he immediately gasped.

However, the one who was most shocked wasn't him, it was… the boy Xiao Yihan. He looked at Meng Hao with wide eyes for a moment before turning around and fleeing.

That was the reaction of the Dao Realm experts. As for all of the other million or more cultivators on the battlefield, the power of the Mountains and Seas caused them to tremble, and their minds to reel. Instantly, all of the fighting completely stopped. All because of a single person!

"I Shall Possess the Mountains and Seas…." Meng Hao said, the third line of the incantation. The entire starry sky was filled with booming sounds like those of war drums, sounds that caused everyone present to be completely shaken. Their minds buzzed as the power of the Mountain and Sea Realm seemed to become even stronger than before.

It was as if massive power had built up and was now being released, creating a pressure that overwhelmed the minds of everyone present. It was a pressure that didn't just affect their cultivation bases; it actually caused everyone to stop breathing.

Only the Noble Ran was smiling. As for the two Dao Realm opponents he had been fighting, their faces were ashen, and their minds spun out of control.

The entire world, the entire starry sky, seemed to converge upon Meng Hao. They watched as Meng Hao… spoke the third line, stretched his hands out wide, then waved them toward the starry sky, simultaneously speaking the final words of the incantation.

"Seal… the Heavens… Incantation!"

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# Chapter 1292: Are you… My Grandpa Meng?

Rain began to fall in the starry sky.

Or perhaps it would be more accurate to call it the tears of the Mountains and Seas…. Tears for the battle, tears for the crumbled ruins, tears for the slaughter, tears because of the mutual destruction unleashed by the cultivators of the Mountains and Seas.

The tears began to fall in the instant that Meng Hao said the final words of the incantation. They fell from the starry sky down onto the battlefield, splashing onto all the cultivators there.

It was a gentle rain that seemed to contain no force whatsoever. The cultivators first stared in shock, but then began to relax. The pressure from moments ago had been shocking to the extreme, but in contrast, this rain seemed completely powerless. The Dao Realm experts from the Seventh Mountain and Sea, who had been so nervous moments ago, now had strange expressions on their faces.

The two who had been fighting with the Noble Ran even chuckled.

“Seal the Heavens Incantation? This is the Seal the Heavens Incantation?”

“How droll. What an amusing magical technique.” Their nervousness instantly began to fade away. After breathing sighs of relief, they then began to laugh loudly.

However, they backed up nonetheless. Although they did not fear the Seal the Heavens Incantation, the sudden addition of Meng Hao onto the battlefield was definitely fear-inspiring.

The Chief Dharma Protector of the Heavengod Society sighed inwardly, and the other almighty Dao Realm experts of the Eighth Mountain and Sea looked on with grim expressions. There were only three people on the battlefield who had different reactions. One was Meng Hao, and another was the Noble Ran.

The Noble Ran was laughing, a laughter filled with happiness and excitement.

The third person who was acting completely differently was the boy Xiao Yihan, who was fleeing at top speed, and in a flash had exited the battlefield. Of everyone present, he understood Meng Hao the best, and was completely terrified of him.

As for Meng Hao, he was completely calm as he closed his eyes. The Noble Ran’s laughter continued to echo out as he too closed his eyes.

The moment that Master and apprentice closed their eyes, the entire starry sky began to shake. The falling rain then erupted with a power that could shake Heaven and Earth. As it surged out, the gentleness from before became a burning madness.

It was as if the Mountain and Sea Realm had suddenly gone from being incredibly sad to being exceedingly furious!

It was furious that the living beings in the Mountain and Sea Realm would slaughter each other, furious that the 33 Heavens had completely sealed the Mountain and Sea Realm. It was furious at anything and everything!

RUMBLE!

A raindrop exploded, bypassing the cultivators of the Eighth Mountain and Sea to slam into the cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea. Their faces fell as the power of that raindrop’s explosion hit them like a mountain.

RUMMMMBLLLE!

One raindrop after another began to explode, filling the battlefield with intense explosions. In the blink of an eye, the whole battlefield was collapsing as the boundless power of the Mountains and Seas erupted out violently!

Bloodcurdling screams rose up from the cultivators of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, as nearly a million cultivators coughed up huge mouthfuls of blood. That blood merged together into an entire sea of blood which swept out like floodwaters!

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

Things weren’t over yet. The explosions continued as all of the rain detonated. The power of the Mountains and Seas… was thoroughly unleashed; it was like a giant, roaring across the battlefield. Each time it waved its arms, blood sprayed from mouths and cultivators were sent spinning through the air.

The Dao Realm experts from the Seventh Mountain and Sea wore expressions of shock; they could clearly sense the power of the Mountains and Seas, and could tell that it was incensed!

“What… what power is this?!”

“I can feel the rage of Heaven and Earth, this… this is shocking!!”

“Heaven and Earth is furious, the Mountain and Sea Realm is rejecting us! I can even sense my Essence trembling!!” Cries of alarm rose up, filled with disbelief and astonishment. The Dao Realm cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea were being suppressed by the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm itself. Rumbling echoed out as blood sprayed out of their mouths, and they were sent tumbling through the air.

This shocking scene played out all over the battlefield. Blood sprayed out of the mouths of all of the cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea, and they began to fall back, albeit not voluntarily; they were being shoved backward by a massive force.

All across the battlefield, the cultivators of the Eighth Mountain and Sea looked on with gaping jaws. The Chief Dharma Protector of the Heavengod Society was astonished, and the first Patriarch of the Righteous Noble Sect was shocked. All of the Dao Realm experts of the Eighth Mountain and Sea were aghast.

That was not even to mention the other cultivators who were not in the Dao Realm. Everyone was flabbergasted.

“This power… it’s the power of the Mountain and Sea Realm, the will of the Mountains and Seas!”

“The Seal the Heavens Incantation… the Noble Ran’s Seal the Heavens Incantation can actually control the entire Mountain and Sea Realm!!” Looks of disbelief began to appear on the faces of the Dao Realm cultivators of the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

A huge gap now existed between the two sides on the battlefield. However, no one was killed. The cultivators of the Seventh Mountain and Sea were injured and shocked, and their cultivation bases were suppressed, but no one was killed.

Even still, what was happening was completely astonishing.

The two Dao Realm experts who had been fighting the Noble Ran were included in that. Their faces were masses of shock and fear, and when they felt the power of expulsion pushing against them, a deep sense of unease rose up in their hearts.

Both of them felt as if they were under attack by some monstrous power, and were sent flying backward accompanied by intense rumbling sounds.

Even as they tumbled back, Meng Hao’s eyes snapped open, and they blazed with killing intent. Voice cool, he said, “As for you two. You shall die!”

It was not a request. It was a command, uttered with extreme calm.

The instant the words left his mouth, the two Dao Realm experts screamed miserably as the power of the Mountains and Seas shredded them to bits. Blood and gore spattered out, and although their Nascent Divinities appeared and tried to flee, they were quickly destroyed by the power of the Mountains and Seas.

Those two deaths caused the cultivators on both sides of the battlefield to gasp. Now that the two sides had been forcibly separated, everything went silent. The Noble Ran opened his eyes, and a wide smile broke out on his face.

That smile was one of happiness and contentment, and when he looked at Meng Hao, his eyes glowed with deep gratitude.

Meng Hao looked around the battlefield, then slowly said, “Who said the Seal the Heavens Incantation was a worthless incantation?”

No one responded. Not a single cultivator dared to say a word. Everyone from both the Seventh Mountain and Sea and the Eighth was completely shaken, and when they looked at Meng Hao, it was with deep awe and dread.

Anyone who could draw upon the power of the Mountains and Seas was someone completely terrifying. Someone like that… was similar to the Mountain and Sea Lords. They wielded power that ordinary people did not possess. Not even Dao Sovereigns were awe-inspiring enough to command the power of the Mountains and Seas, not unless they became Mountain and Sea Lords.

Were it not for the fact that the Dao Realm experts from the Seventh Mountain and Sea were sure that the Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea was slumbering and had not awoken, they would have believed Meng Hao to be the Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea!

Meng Hao’s gaze swept across the crowds, then came to rest on the Noble Ran. Clasping hands, he bowed deeply.

“Greetings, Master.”

“Wonderful. Wonderful!” the Noble Ran said excitedly, laughing, but also staggering a bit from weakness and his internal injuries. Meng Hao hurried forward and held out an arm to help support him. As soon as he touched him, a gentle power sprang out from within Meng Hao and began to course through the Noble Ran, healing his injuries.

As of that moment, all eyes were on the Noble Ran, and as for the cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea, their expressions were those of dread.

When the Noble Ran felt his injuries healing rapidly, he looked at Meng Hao and mused that he really had made the right decision in taking him as an apprentice. In fact, for Meng Hao’s sake, he had offended everyone in the entire Heavengod Alliance.

“Master, I can’t stay,” Meng Hao said quietly. “There’s an important matter I have to attend to. Master, please take this jade slip. If… this Mountain and Sea is ever overrun by the enemy, please use it to borrow some of the power of the Seal the Heavens Incantation. Go to… the Ninth Mountain and Sea. That is my home.” He handed the Noble Ran a jade slip that could be used to pierce through the barriers between Mountains and Seas, one of several that he had made at the same time that he had set up the spell formation in the Meng Clan.

The Noble Ran smiled kindly and nodded, accepting the jade slip. He looked very content, as well as deeply proud. From this moment on, no one would ever dare to say that the Seal the Heavens Incantation was a worthless incantation!

To say that it was worthless was to say that the entire Mountain and Sea Realm was worthless!

Meng Hao once again clasped hands and bowed deeply to the Noble Ran. Then he looked around at the surrounding cultivators and said, “Anyone who dares to harm my Master, regardless of their status or the level of their cultivation base, will have their entire sect or clan exterminated by me!”

Everyone, both those from the Seventh Mountain and Sea as well as those from the Eighth, all heard him, and their hearts trembled.

A threat from someone who was similar to a Mountain and Sea Lord was a threat that even a Dao Sovereign had to take seriously.

Meng Hao once again clasped hands to the Noble Ran, then made his way off the battlefield. The only reason he had come here was because of the Noble Ran. He resolved the situation, healed his Master’s injuries, then said his parting words, certain that his Master would now be safe regardless of what happened in the war.

After Meng Hao left, neither side on the battlefield felt like fighting any more, and gradually dispersed, faces filled with awe and other mixed emotions.

This was the first time since the Mountain and Sea War began that… a battle ended in such a way.

News quickly spread among both sides, and soon, everyone in the Eighth and Seventh Mountains and Seas were aware of how terrifying the Seal the Heavens Incantation was. They learned of Meng Hao, and also… that there was someone else in the war who was not to be provoked… the Noble Ran.

No cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea dared to venture into the interior of the Heavengod Alliance. As for Meng Hao, he proceeded along through the starry sky, getting closer and closer to the Eighth Mountain.

As he neared, it became more and more clear that the shocking fluctuations coming from the top of the Eighth Mountain… were filled with a familiar aura.

A few more hours passed, and Meng Hao arrived at the foot of the Eighth Mountain. Looking up toward the peak of the mountain, he murmured, “Sir… are you my Grandpa Meng…?”

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# Chapter 1293: Storm Clouds Approach

Describing Meng Hao's thoughts at this moment would be a very difficult thing to do. He stood there silently at the foot of the Eighth Mountain for a long moment before taking a step forward and beginning to climb.

Considering the level of his cultivation base, there was really nothing to cause him any hesitation. However, he couldn't stop thinking about how important this was, and how much he wanted his Grandpa Meng to be at the top of the mountain.

Although he had his suspicions, he still wondered why his grandfather had come to be the Mountain and Sea Lord. Although, in the end, that part wasn't really important. What was important… was that his grandfather was still alive.

Deep in the memories of his childhood, he could recall the images of both of his grandfathers, how they had cradled him in their arms, how they had smiled happily, and how they had even devolved into angry arguments over whose turn it was to hold him.

Even more unforgettable was how his Grandpa Meng and Grandpa Fang had left together to search for a way to save him. After leaving… they never returned. Because of that, both of their bloodlines, which had once stood at the pinnacles of their respective clans, entered a state of decline.

Meng Hao was deeply moved, but also felt very guilty. Therefore, even if he had to pay a heavier price than he already had, he would willingly do so to protect his Grandma Meng and her people, and with no regrets at that. He had led the Fang Clan to prominence, but as for the Meng Clan, all he could do was protect them as best he could.

“It might be you, it might not,” he murmured. “I’ll find out when I get there….” After more time passed, he slowly began to walk up the Eighth Mountain. As he did, many memories swirled through his mind.

This was one of the great Nine Mountains, and it was actually the first time he had stepped onto one of them.

It was huge, so huge that a mortal could spend a lifetime climbing it and never reach the top. In fact, even among cultivators, there were few people who could ever reach the true peak of the mountain. However, this proved to be no obstacle for Meng Hao. As he walked along, time passed, although he wasn’t sure how much. Soon he was halfway up the mountain, where he saw the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite.

It looked just like the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite on the Ninth Mountain, except that it was completely sealed, not by outside forces, but from the inside.

Meng Hao looked at it and could sense that there were cultivators inside, including several extremely powerful auras. In the same moment that he was studying them, they were doing the same of him.

A long moment passed, after which Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed. Then he proceeded along, slowly approaching the peak of the mountain.

Eventually he found himself standing in front of an enormous stone stele, upon which were written the words…

Heavengod Society!

As he looked at the words, he could sense the archaic feeling of many years upon the stone stele, as if it had experienced a baptism of time. He passed the stele, whereupon he caught sight of a narrow path. A path that led… to the peak of the mountain!

It was a peaceful little path with no people on it. Not a sound could be heard anywhere. He followed the path until he saw a body of water that was like a celestial pond.

Within that water was a statue of a Xuanwu turtle. Actually, despite the fact that it looked like a statue, Meng Hao could tell that within that Xuanwu turtle was… a spark of life, as well as… the aura of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

In that moment, the Demon Sealing Hexing magic inside of him trembled. Meng Hao felt almost as if something were calling to him. All of a sudden, the Xuanwu turtle opened its eyes and looked at him.

One man. One turtle. As they looked at each other, Meng Hao’s mind reeled. It was as if he was looking directly at the Mountain and Sea Realm itself. A long moment passed, after which Meng Hao finally settled his thoughts. Then, the Xuanwu turtle slowly bowed its head, indicating… that it was offering him its allegiance. It was offering formal greetings… from the Mountain and Sea Realm to its one and only Lord.

Past the celestial pond was a palace. It was not luxurious, but rather, built into the mountain itself. The front gate was closed, and everything was quiet and peaceful.

Meng Hao gaze lingered on the Xuanwu turtle for a moment before he walked past it toward the palace. He stood quietly outside the gate for a moment, then raised his hand and pushed it open.

No sound could be heard as the gate slowly swung open to reveal a modest hall, lined with rows of statues on either side, which were clad in black armor. Further up ahead on a huge throne, a person sat cross-legged.

He wore armor, and his face was covered. A majestic, boundless power flowed inside of him, something that exerted stifling pressure even on Meng Hao.

The pressure was like a boundless force, an endless sea, quiet and yet profound. It was the type of power that, when it erupted out, could destroy the Heavens and extinguish the Earth. In addition to all that, Meng Hao was also able to sense… the fluctuations of the Mountain and Sea Realm itself.

They were fluctuations that could topple mountains and drain seas, and were apparently capable of focusing the power of the Mountains and Seas into a pressure that could destroy anything and everything.

Meng Hao stood outside the hall. He didn’t set foot inside, but instead examined the armored figure who sat there cross-legged on the throne. Meng Hao’s vision could pierce through the armor to see what was inside; the face of a very, very old man.

The fluctuations Meng Hao felt were familiar, and so was that face. Furthermore, the command medallion in his bag of holding began to show strong signs that it was homing in on the man. All of Meng Hao’s suspicions were now confirmed. Trembling with excitement, he was now sure… that the person in front of him was none other than his Grandpa Meng!

“Grandpa….” he said. Although he had been prepared for this outcome, it was hard to suppress his excitement. He had been hoping to find his two grandfathers for many years now, and at long last, he had found one of them.

After a long moment passed, Meng Hao took a deep breath, and his eyes glittered brightly. He could tell that there was something off about his grandfather. Although his cultivation base seemed to be alive and bursting with power, that was only the exterior. Inside, his true cultivation base wasn’t even moving.

Apparently… there was something about his grandfather which was missing, something that would normally be able to stir his cultivation base into motion. Apparently, this body’s soul… was sleeping.

After another long moment passed, Meng Hao closed his eyes and sent some divine sense out into the hall, as well as the surrounding area. Soon, it had covered the entirety of the Eighth Mountain. Time passed. Finally, Meng Hao opened his eyes, and they shone with a strange light.

“His soul is gone….” he murmured. It was a somewhat familiar situation. Soon, his eyes widened.

“I experienced something like this in the Desolation of Delusion…. Grandpa Meng’s soul isn’t in his body, it’s somewhere outside…. However, it still exists. From the look of it, there’s only one explanation…. Grandpa Meng’s soul has merged into the Eighth Mountain and Sea. His soul… is everywhere!

“It’s as if he took a mental journey through Heaven and Earth, but then… forgot to return.” No other person would be able to reach such a conclusion so quickly. However, Meng Hao was the type of person who could fight with Mountain and Sea Lords. Because of his familiarity with the power of the Mountains and Seas, he was quickly able to detect the various clues.

He thought back to the nails which had been stuck in his Grandma Meng and the others, and everything he had experienced in the process of removing them.

“Use the bloodline as the curse, and the relatives as the spell,” Meng Hao murmured. “Seal the soul, thus ensuring that it cannot find the path to return. The soul can only drift about in the Eighth Mountain and Sea as it gradually loses its consciousness, acting on instinct alone….” A bitter expression appeared on his face, but after a moment, his eyes began to shine. He clasped hands and bowed deeply to his grandfather, then closed the temple gate and left the Eighth Mountain!

“I’ve already broken the bloodline curse,” he murmured, floating through the starry sky, eyes shining brightly. “I’ve also ended the part of the curse cast by means of his relatives. Grandpa Meng now has what he needs to awaken. He just lacks… a strong catalyst!

“If he has that, his soul will instinctively… return to his body.” He now had a new direction: the rift connecting the Seventh Mountain and Sea to the Eighth.

“There could be no stronger catalyst than the intense ripples which would result from a battle with another Mountain and Sea Lord.

“If I really want to end the invasion of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, then the simplest way to do so… is to kill the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea!

“As the saying goes, if you want to catch bandits, first catch their ringleader. If the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea dies, then the war will be over.” With every sentence that Meng Hao uttered, the look in his eyes grew sharper.

“The Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea….” he said, his eyes gleaming with decisiveness. With that, he took another step forward, and then vanished. When he reappeared, he was outside of the Heavengod Alliance, near the border between the Eighth and Seventh Mountains and Seas. That was where… the rift was.

The Seventh Mountain and Sea had already heavily fortified the area with hundreds of thousands of cultivators and countless spell formations.

In fact, there were actually four Dao Realm experts stationed in the area. One of them was just as famous as Marquis Lu had been in the Seventh Mountain and Sea. He was also a Dao Sovereign, Patriarch Chi Yan.

Of the other three, one was a Dao Lord, and the other two were 1-Essence Dao Realm experts!

With those four in place, along with hundreds of thousands of other cultivators and countless restrictive spells and other spell formations, it had become a place that no cultivator of the Eighth Mountain and Sea would be able to breach easily. Furthermore, if someone tried to break through the defenses, but didn’t succeed quickly, then the rest of the main army that was currently invading the Heavengod Alliance, as well as numerous other almighty experts, would surely hasten back to flank them.

However… Meng Hao was not just any cultivator!

As soon as he appeared in the area, he did nothing to disguise the fluctuations of his cultivation base. He circulated his Ancient mana to explosive effect, and even sent the aura of the Paragon Bridge emanating out. The power of the Mountains and Seas swirled around him, causing a Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering tempest to spring up. As the tempest spread out, the starry sky distorted, and a boundless sea of stars appeared. It was an explosive power that could topple mountains and drain seas, causing the sky to grow dim, and massive rumbling to rise up.

Instantly, the cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea awoke from their meditative trances, and their expressions flickered. At the same time, a powerful roar echoed out from the region of the rift.

“Who goes there?!” The sound echoed out like thunder as a red-haired old man appeared. When his eyes opened, they looked completely bizarre; each eye had two pupils!

Behind him was a pitch-black ox, fully 3,000 meters tall. Almost instantly, its eyes blazed with the fire of the underworld as it stared at Meng Hao.

Strangely, the fire that burned within the eyes of that pitch-black ox seemed to also burn within the dual pupils of the red-haired old man.

The result was that anyone who looked at either the old man’s eyes, or the ox’s, would suddenly feel their vision swimming.

Three other old men sat off to the side, and when their eyes opened, the Essence aura of the Dao Realm erupted from them.

As Meng Hao approached, he looked around at the hundreds of thousands of cultivators, then looked at the red-haired old man and calmly said, “I’m not interested in slaughtering more wrongdoers. Send these other cultivators away.”

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# Chapter 1294: I’m Waiting For You!

As soon as the red-haired old man’s gaze met Meng Hao’s, the man’s mind reeled, and an intense sensation of deadly crisis exploded up inside of him, as though a voice was screaming inside of him.

The sensation of crisis caused the old man to begin to tremble. He felt almost as if he were facing the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea. Although he seemed calm, beneath the surface, he was terrified.

The red-haired old man’s dual pupils constricted, and he immediately waved his hand dismissively.

“Withdraw!” he said.

That single word caused all of the cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea to be filled with shock. They began to back up, opening up a path in front of Meng Hao.

The old man frowned, then barked, “I said to withdraw!”

His voice echoed out like thunder into the ears of the hundreds of thousands of cultivators, whose minds spun. Almost immediately, they began to scatter away from the region of the rift.

The other three Dao Realm experts frowned in response to the red-haired old man’s words.

“Patriarch Chi, this isn’t very appropriate,” said the almighty Dao Lord.

“Shut your mouth!” the old man roared. “I don’t need you criticizing my orders.” He leveled a glare at the Dao Lord, then turned towards the rest of the cultivators and frowned again.

“Withdraw further! Get five thousand kilometers away from here. Without my authorization, none of you are to set foot into this area. Go, now!” The booming of the old man’s voice echoed within the minds of the hundreds of thousands of cultivators. They had no way to sense how terrifying Meng Hao was, but they could not afford to disregard the orders of the red-haired old man.

Soon, the hundreds of thousands of cultivators were in full flight. Soon, that five thousand kilometer area around the rift was completely empty except for the four Dao Realm experts, the leader of whom was the red-haired old man.

The old man stared at Meng Hao as he slowly rose to his feet.

His condescending manner caused the Dao Lord he had just rebuked to snort coldly, and his eyes to flicker with venomous hatred. However, the Dao Lord wasn’t in the mood to get into an altercation, so he said nothing. But then, he looked more closely at Meng Hao, and just like the red-haired old man, he could sense the terrifying fluctuations hidden within him, and his eyes went wide.

The other two 1-Essence Dao Realm cultivators’ expressions also became serious. As soon as the red-haired old man rose to his feet they also stood up, gathering the power of their cultivation bases to summon various magical techniques and items as if they were facing up against a mighty opponent.

Meng Hao’s expression was calm as he looked over this red-haired old man. The old man had complied with Meng Hao’s wishes to send the hundreds of thousands of cultivators away, which left Meng Hao with a somewhat favorable impression of him.

He could tell that some level of benevolence existed within his heart, and that he realized having all of the other cultivators around when they were fighting would do little good.

In the end, those hundreds of thousands of cultivators would definitely end up being killed or simply fleeing. Allowing them to leave now was actually the best way to keep the forces of the Seventh Mountain and Sea at top strength.

The red-haired old man looked at Meng Hao, his heart full of caution, then asked, “Who are you, your Excellency?”

“Meng Hao,” was the calm response as he walked forward. Almost immediately, the spell formations and restrictive spells burst out loudly, filling the area with brilliant light as they were completely activated.

However, in that exact moment, booms rang out as the restrictive spells collapsed and the spell formations exploded in brilliant flashes of light.

As Meng Hao advanced, all of the restrictive spells and spell formations were destroyed.

It was as if the mere pressure and energy coming off of Meng Hao turned into a power that could counteract anything, could crush all resistance like dried weeds.

The red-haired old man’s face fell, and the eyes of the Dao Lord next to him went wide. The other two 1-Essence Dao Realm experts felt their hearts beating out of control.

All of this takes some time to describe, but actually happened in the briefest instant. As the Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering roaring booms filled the area around the rift, a blinding light spread out in all directions that seemed bright enough to light up the entire starry sky. When that light faded away, it almost seemed as if the previously glorious light of the starry sky was now gone.

The only thing left behind were ripples that spread out into the distance, filling a five thousand kilometer area…. As of this moment, all of the spell formations in the area… had been completely destroyed!

The hundreds of thousands of cultivators outside of the five thousand kilometer area could sense what had happened, and their minds filled with shock. That was especially true of the Ancient Realm experts. Despite having left the area, their divine sense enabled them to observe what was happening, and when they saw Meng Hao simply take a few steps, and use the pressure emanating from him to destroy all of the spell formations, their minds filled with raging waves of shock.

“What… what cultivation base is that?!?!”

“Dao Realm, and definitely not an ordinary Dao Realm cultivation base!” Everyone was astonished, and the four Dao Realm experts’ hearts were pounding.

Accompanied by ear-splitting booms that caused everything to grow dark, Meng Hao suddenly appeared only 300 meters in front of the group of four.

However, he didn’t stop there. He continued to advance casually, not even looking at the red-haired old man or the others. Instead, he was staring at the rift which had been torn open in the starry sky, and the beast which was still holding the rift open.

That beast did not look like it once had when it had pried the rift open; it had transformed into creeping vines which covered both sides of the rift, preventing it from closing up.

As Meng Hao got closer to the rift, he could sense an astonishing life force approaching, getting nearer and nearer. He could tell that it wouldn’t be very long before that life force reached the rift and stepped into the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

As Meng Hao neared the rift, the steps he took didn’t appear out of the ordinary, and yet the red-haired old man and the others could sense a terrifying rumbling.

The level of terror they felt increased with each step, and the booms grew louder. The 1-Essence Dao Realm experts’ faces were ashen, and blood began to ooze out of their mouths. Their expressions were those of complete terror as they were forced to step back in retreat.

Next was the Dao Lord, who also began to fall back, and finally, the red-haired old man.

They had no choice but to do so; as Meng Hao got closer, it felt to them as if a massive millstone was approaching, and if they didn't fall back, they would be destroyed, crushed into nothing but paste.

RUMBLE!

Meng Hao slowly advanced, and the group of four fell back again. Next, the Dao Lord began to bleed from the mouth. When Meng Hao was about 150 meters away, the pressure was so intense, and their fear so great, that it was as if all the Heavens were bearing down on them.

Cracks began to echo out from inside the bodies of the 1-Essence Dao Realm cultivators as they began to fall apart. The Dao Lord's face was now magenta, and his blood could hardly flow through his veins.

The red-haired old man was trembling, and to him, it felt as if he were standing within the shadow of death.

They let out powerful roars, and their eyes filled with looks of madness. They knew that if they didn't do something about this pressure then they would soon lose any ability to resist it, and if Meng Hao took even a few more steps, they would be crushed to death.

The red-haired old man threw his head back and roared, fully rotating his cultivation base. Rumbling booms could be heard as he transformed into a beam of light that shot toward Meng Hao. His hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, and a bizarre light shone from his pupils, causing the void ahead of him to distort. The pitch-black ox also threw its head back and bellowed, lowering its head to charge Meng Hao with its horns.

It was a spectacular and shocking scene!

As of this moment, the red-haired old man’s cultivation base was bursting with power. He waved his hand, causing Essence power to surge out. Four streams of essence could be seen: wind, rain, thunder, and lightning!

The wind was like a storm, the rain was the Essence of water, the thunder was a roar, and the lightning crackled and danced. The four streams of Essence formed into the pattern of a spell formation which could shake Heaven and Earth.

The old man was the type to either not attack, or attack with his most powerful Daos. In addition to what he had already done, all of a sudden, his hair suddenly flew out, transforming into a crimson sea which covered the entire area. It rapidly became a blood mist, which was the Essence the old man was currently exploring, his fifth Essence. Although he hadn’t completed the process, it still bolstered the power of his other Essences.

Behind him, the Dao Lord trembled in madness, performing an incantation gesture to unleash a divine ability. A beam of light shot toward Meng Hao at incredible speed, piercing through the starry sky. Simultaneously, the image of numerous sword projections became visible around the Dao Lord.

Almost in the blink of an eye, there were more than 10,000 of them!

His murderous aura was so strong that everything shook violently. Shockingly, behind each sword projection was a vicious spirit, which propelled the swords toward Meng Hao, making it seem as if Meng Hao was not facing one opponent, but rather 10,000 sword cultivators.

Last were the two 1-Essence cultivators. Their cultivation bases were relatively limited, and because of the pressure from Meng Hao, they paid the steepest price of the group. Blood sprayed out of their mouths, their eyes were bloodshot, and their jaws were tightly clenched. Neither of them had more than one Essence, but even still, they combined their power to produce the image of a sun.

Meng Hao looked at his four opponents, and then stepped down with his right foot. When he did, he passed the thirty meter mark to appear directly in front of the group.

As he stepped down, the starry sky rumbled, and an astonishing power exploded out from him. His right hand reached out to tap one of the pitch-black ox's horns. The ox let out a miserable shriek and collapsed into pieces. At the same time, the wave of Meng Hao's hand caused the red-haired old man's Essences to be obliterated. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and he was sent spinning away.

Meng Hao turned, snorting coldly. The sound echoed out, slamming into the 10,000 sword projections, shattering them. The sword cultivator Dao Lord coughed up a mouthful of blood, and was already on the point of being killed, all by a mere snort. He instantly fell back.

As for the two 1-Essence Dao Realm cultivators, all it took was a mere look from Meng Hao. His gaze was like a sword that shattered their sun image, and left them coughing up blood and fleeing in retreat.

"Considering none of you have Outsider totem tattoos, I won't kill you," he said coolly. Then, he was in front of the rift. The red-haired old man and the others were completely shaken, and were now looking at Meng Hao with unmitigated awe.

Ignoring them, Meng Hao looked at the rift, eyes glittering. Then he sat down cross-legged.

"I'm waiting for you," he said calmly.

The only response was an icy cold harrumph, echoing out slowly from within the rift.

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# Chapter 1295: The Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea Arrives!

Meng Hao sat down cross-legged outside the enormous rift, waiting for the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea to arrive. For Meng Hao, this coming battle would be a true test of his battle prowess.

The person he wished to fight was one of the Lords of the Nine Mountains and Seas, someone that countless cultivators viewed with awe. He was the Mountain and Sea Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, and although he might not be the absolute most powerful among the Mountain and Sea Lords, he was still incredibly strong.

To Meng Hao, this would be a very important fight, considering that it was critical to helping his Grandpa Meng awaken from slumber. It was also key to ending the Mountain and Sea War. If he could defeat the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea in battle, then the war with the Eighth Mountain and Sea would be over.

Meng Hao wasn’t completely confident in being able to win. His current battle prowess was equivalent to the 5-Essences level, and his divine sense was even beyond that. However… he would be facing a Mountain and Sea Lord!

Although his opponent would also be at the 5-Essences level, in terms of experience and cultivation, anyone with the status of Mountain and Sea Lord was years beyond Meng Hao. Within his Realm… he was essentially invincible when fighting anyone other than other Mountain and Sea Lords!

Furthermore, his five Essences would surely be extraordinary, the type that could send the entire world into darkness upon their unleashing.

Even though Meng Hao had already extinguished his first Soul Lamp, he still wasn’t completely confident that he could win. After all… the nine Mountain and Sea Lords were the most esteemed entities within the entire Mountain and Sea Realm.

To become a Mountain and Sea Lord, one had to experience endless slaughter and conquer countless enemies. It was a long path of fighting and struggle to secure the position of being the Lord of one of the great Mountains and Seas.

“But I still want to meet this powerful expert… and fight him!” Meng Hao’s eyes burned with the desire to do battle. Taking a deep breath, he slowly brought his urge to fight under control, then closed his eyes and calmed his heart.

The time had come to focus his energy!

That focusing of energy ensured that not a single ripple of power emanated out from him.

Days began to pass. On the first day, a muffled rumbling sound began to echo out from within the rift, causing the entire starry sky to distort briefly.

Meng Hao didn’t open his eyes, but his heart thumped a bit faster for a moment before finally calming down.

On the second day, the muffled rumbling turned into five distinct booms. On the third day, those booming sounds rang out more than ten times. Meng Hao grew calmer, until even the sound of his heartbeat faded away from his consciousness. It was as if strength built upon strength, and the booming sounds were like a gentle breeze brushing against a towering mountain. 1

On the seventh day, the booming rang out ceaselessly. The starry sky outside of the rift was completely twisted and distorted, except for the portion where Meng Hao sat, which didn’t seem to be affected.

The red-haired old man and his fellows, who were still there in the area surrounding the rift, did not leave. They remained several thousand meters away, sitting cross-legged, watching the scene play out. As the seven days went by, the anticipation in their hearts rose, and they began to breathe heavily. After witnessing Meng Hao’s terrifying level of power, they had the deep desire to watch this coming battle.

It didn’t matter whether Meng Hao won or lost in the end. In the cultivation world, the law of the jungle prevailed, so any cultivator who dared to challenge a Mountain and Sea Lord to battle was a person deserving of deep respect.

Even the fact that they were enemies could not suppress the respect and awe that came from meeting someone truly powerful.

Further off in the distance were the hundreds of thousands of cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea. They had set up camp there, nervous, but also unwilling to leave.

They were all waiting. Waiting… for the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea to emerge from the rift!

Meng Hao’s expression was completely calm, and he almost didn’t seem to be breathing. His energy was completely focused inward, without the slightest bit leaking out. It was almost as if he had become one with the starry sky; he was so calm that it was almost impossible to detect his existence.

The thunder-like booms that shook the Heavens didn’t seem to affect him at all. He was so calm that he was like a still, waveless sea in a painting. He was simply waiting… waiting for the wind and storms to arrive, like a volcano preparing to erupt.

A massive pressure gradually filled the area around the rift, growing more intense. The pulsing frequency increased, and eventually it became clear that the two opponents were a counterpoint and foil to each other.

One embodied action, the other embodied calm!

Such action could shatter the highest Heavens, such calm was the stillness of a world in ruins!

Another day passed, and the sounds emanating from the rift grew even more intense. At the same time, Meng Hao became so still and calm that not a single trace of his aura was detectable….

It was at this point that, amidst the intense rumbling sounds, a tall and imposing figure appeared… within the rift.

It was a middle-aged man wearing a long white robe. His hair floated around him, and he looked threatening without being angry. His clothing seemed simple, and yet anyone who looked at him would be able to tell that he commanded supreme and ultimate respect.

He walked as if strolling, and yet every step he took caused countless booming sounds to echo out. It was as if his cultivation base was so powerful that, as he walked, he destroyed all obstacles in his path. His simple footfalls were the source of all the incredible booming sounds during the past days.

Almost as soon as he appeared within that enormous rift, intense pressure radiated out, sweeping across everything. The rift trembled, and opened wider. Ripples tore through the starry sky, ripping it up layer by layer. Several thousand meters away, the red-haired old man and his fellows all backed up, faces flickering as they clasped hands and bowed.

“We offer respectful greetings upon your arrival, Lord White!”

Further off in the distance, the hundreds of thousands of cultivators were getting very excited, and they too clasped their hands and bowed in the direction of the rift.

“We offer respectful greetings upon your arrival, Lord White!”

The Ninth Mountain had Lord Ji. The Eighth Mountain had Heavengod. The Seventh Mountain had Lord White, Sima Dao!

The voices of all the cultivators joined together, creating a powerful sound wave that shook Heaven and Earth. That, combined with the pressure radiating off of the white-robed man, caused the entire Eighth Mountain and Sea to shake.

Meng Hao, of course, was the main focus, but as the pressure crushed down onto him, his eyes remained closed and unmoving.

If you likened that boundless energy to pounding waves on a raging sea, then Meng Hao was a reef within that sea, remaining completely motionless regardless of how the sea howled.

If you likened the pressure coming from the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea to a wild tempest, then Meng Hao was a quiet, unmoving mountain in the midst of the wind!

At the same time, in the temple atop the Eighth Mountain, the masked Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea suddenly trembled, as if he a catalyzing force had suddenly prodded him. It was as if his consciousness was now beginning to converge in the area, and he was attempting… to awaken.

The entire Eighth Mountain and Sea was shaken, except for Meng Hao. His aura, his soul, everything about him, was completely focused inwardly. He was as calm as placid waters, and was still like a motionless sea in a painting.

The Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea was still inside the rift, and the two of them had not officially met, and yet they had already used the clashing of their dispositions as their first skirmish.

A cold snort echoed out from the rift as Lord White suddenly lifted his right foot and then stepped out of the rift.

The intense pressure weighing down on the Eighth Mountain and Sea caused everything to shake. The starry sky twisted, and numerous planets trembled. Back on the Eighth Mountain, the Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea trembled, this time more intensely than before.

A calm voice then echoed out from within the rift to spread out through the entire Eighth Mountain and Sea, “You are the first person to ever dare to stand in my way…”

It was in that moment that his foot stepped completely out from the rift, placing Lord White half way into the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

Despite only being half way through the rift, the starry sky was trembling so violently it seemed it might collapse because of the power of the Mountains and Seas that was erupting off of Lord White.

As the starry sky shook, the cultivators of the Eighth Mountain and Sea on all of the Heavengod Alliance’s battlefields felt blood oozing out of the corners of their mouths. Their faces flickered, and regardless of their specific locations, they could sense the explosive pressure coming from above. It was like a mountain, crushing down, making it difficult for them to even rotate their cultivation bases.

It was exactly the opposite with the cultivators of the Seventh Mountain and Sea. Their faces lit up, and they could sense, not pressure, but power coming down from the starry sky above and melding into their bodies. Instantly, their battle prowess began to increase.

“Lord White has come!! We offer respectful greetings upon your arrival, Lord White!”

“We offer respectful greetings, Lord White!!”

“The Seventh Mountain and Sea is definitely going to win the war. Lord White is here!!” The cultivators of the Seventh Mountain and Sea were shouting in excitement, causing their voices to echo out across the battlefields in the Heavengod Alliance.

In comparison, the cultivators of the Eighth Mountain and Sea felt their energy waning rapidly. Now that they were facing cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea whose energy was rocketing up, their faces went pale, and they subconsciously began to back up. Almost instantly, the

Eighth Mountain and Sea cultivators were in a position to be completely routed on numerous fronts.

“… And you will be the last,” continued the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, his voice grim as he… completely stepped out from within the rift!

“Lord White!” Several thousand meters away, the red-haired old man and the other Dao realm experts all clasped hands and bowed, their eyes shining with excitement.

“Lord White!” roared the hundreds of thousands of cultivators off in the distance.

“Lord White!” shouted all of the cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea.

RUMBLE!

Although the cultivators of the Eighth Mountain and Sea could not actually see the arrival of the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, their hearts were trembling.

RUMBLE!

On the Eighth Mountain, the Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea in the palace was now shaking continuously, and it seemed as if the eyes beneath his mask might open at any moment.

RUMBLE!

Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly snapped open, and suddenly, what had been the placid image of a sea in a painting transformed into a violently erupting volcano. That will to fight which had lurked deep inside of him exploded out, causing colors to flash in the sky, and the starry sky to fill with rumbling sounds. Numerous layers of ripples instantly shot out to fill the entire Eighth Mountain and Sea!

Meng Hao’s willpower, his energy, his everything, all merged into an indescribable pressure that crushed down toward the Lord of the Seventh

Mountain and Sea!

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOMMMM!

“So you’re the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea? I’ve been waiting for you for quite a long time!”

The Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea’s eyes widened. The volcanic pressure which erupted from the formerly completely calm Meng Hao caused Lord White’s energy to falter a bit, as if he had suddenly met his match. Massive rumbling rose up between the two, and the starry sky seemed to be on the verge of being torn apart.

All of a sudden, the cultivators of the Eighth Mountain and Sea who had been backing up just now felt much more relaxed, and their excitement began to build.

1. The last line in this paragraph is a huge nod to Jin Yong, the father of wuxia novels. It’s actually a mnemonic from the Ning Yang Manual, a powerful martial arts manual in the Jin Yong universe. If you haven’t read the Condor Trilogy, you should put it on your reading list. It should be considered part of the Old Testament for wuxia fans

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# Chapter 1296: THAT Spear!

“Is that the Mountain and Sea Lord, Heavengod?”

“That’s definitely him. Only Heavengod would have the energy to sweep across the Eighth Mountain and Sea like that!” All of the cultivators from the Eighth Mountain and Sea were getting very excited.

Moments before, the feeling of being suppressed by the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea had overwhelmed them, but now that feeling was gone. However, despite all of the excitement, the Chief Dharma Protector of the Heavengod Society, as well as the other Dao Lords in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, were all completely shaken. Looks of bewilderment could be seen on their faces as they looked out into the starry sky at the source of the ripples that everyone else assumed to be coming from their Mountain and Sea Lord.

“That’s not… the exalted Heavengod….” thought the Chief Dharma Protector, his heart trembling. He could sense that Heavengod was currently on the Eighth Mountain, and was still slumbering. In fact, all of the other Dao Lords of the Eighth Mountain and Sea all had similar sensations.

“If he’s not the exalted Heavengod, then… who is he…?” That was the question running through the minds of the Chief Dharma Protector and the other Dao Lords. Then they all began to tremble as they… a certain person popped into their heads.

It was someone who had unleashed a shocking Daoist magic in battle recently, clearing the entire battlefield….

“Meng Hao!” said the Chief Dharma Protector, gasping. As soon as the name left his mouth, his heart filled with mixed emotions. As of this moment, he was certain that the person emanating an energy similar to that of a Mountain and Sea Lord was none other than Meng Hao.

The cultivators of the Eighth Mountain and Sea were filled with excitement, but those from the Seventh Mountain and Sea were completely shocked. The huge disparity in their energy from moments ago was now gone, and very quickly the fighting resumed.

However, the fighting that did go on was not very intense; no one seemed to be very interested in fighting at the moment, and the fact that the battlefield had calmed down gave everyone a chance to focus their attention on that location off in the distance… where a fight was about to begin that would determine the fate of two of the great Mountains and Seas!

It was… a battle of Mountain and Sea Lords!

If Lord White was defeated, then the tide of battle would completely turn in favor of the Eighth Mountain and Sea. If the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea was actually killed, then the cultivators from that Mountain and Sea would be decimated, and the Seventh Mountain and Sea would suffer an unrecoverable loss.

However, if Lord White won, then the Eighth Mountain and Sea… would no longer exist.

Everyone was waiting… to see how this battle would play out!

RUMBLE!

Outside of the rift, Meng Hao’s energy skyrocketed. The Paragon Bridge inside of him surged madly, and his cultivation base surged into rotation. His Soul Lamps flew out, his aura radiated out, and the power of his divine sense caused the starry sky to shake.

And then, he took a step forward.

That step was like the eruption of a volcano. Meng Hao’s energy solidified around him, forming something like an impregnable wall which then crushed out toward Lord White.

Lord White stared at Meng Hao with a strange light gleaming in his eyes. His expression was not the least bit contemptuous, and in fact, he felt the situation to be a grave one. He could tell that Meng Hao was an incredible threat to him.

Seeing that manifestation of Meng Hao’s energy speeding toward him, Lord White waved his hand, causing blinding white light to spill out, subsequently transforming into 1,000,000 sword projections, which proceeded to pierce out in all directions. Massive rumbling sounds echoed out as Meng Hao’s converged energy was stabbed through countless times, and then collapsed.

In the middle of that collapse, Lord White strode forward, waving his finger toward Meng Hao, sending the 1,000,000 sword lights flowing toward him like a rumbling river.

From a distance, it looked like a river of stars sweeping along with the power to destroy entire worlds!

Shockingly, each beam of sword light contained terrifyingly destructive Dao Realm power that, when combined together, caused wild colors to flash in the starry sky.

Meng Hao’s pupils constricted, and yet, he didn’t back up. Instead, he took another step forward, clenching his hand into a fist and unleashing a punch.

It was none other than the Life-Extermination Fist!

The starlight shattered, and the sword beams distorted. Meng Hao’s punch created an enormous vortex which rumbled as it spun, destroying the sword lights. From a distance, it seemed that the flow of that starry river had suddenly been obstructed.

However, things weren’t over yet. Meng Hao took a third step, unleashing the Bedevilment Fist.

It was as if one willingly underwent bedevilment, a complete and eternal descent into madness. The Bedevilment Fist was backed by Meng Hao’s energy and determination, smashing into the remaining sword lights, causing intense rumbling to rise up as more than half of them were completely shattered.

Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed as he took a fourth step, and… the God-Slaying Fist made its appearance!

The will of the God-Slaying Fist could merge with Heaven and Earth and fuse into the starry sky, converging the power of one’s fleshly body. A cultivators with an indestructible Allheaven cultivation base could thus destroy the Heavens, extinguish the Earth, as a God of Slaying!

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOMMMM!

The starry sky shuddered and began to be torn apart layer by layer. The remaining sword lights shuddered, and then were shoved backward toward Lord White as if by some mad wind.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with killing intent; without a moment’s hesitation, he took a fifth step, performing an incantation gesture with his right hand that caused the Blood Demon to appear and lunge toward Lord White with gaping maw.

Lord White’s pupils constricted. Snorting coldly, he said, “Interesting. You deserve for me to take you a bit seriously.”

Next, he performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, then pushed down onto his chest. In conjunction with the pressing down, icy coldness appeared all around him, along with an aura of Essence.

However, this was not the Essence of ice, it was something else… something that could influence the power of Essence belonging to others. It was… emotionless extermination!

The key to being emotionless was to extinguish the seven emotions and six pleasures, to make oneself as cold as ice, and transform that into a will of extermination. As the finger waved through the air, Meng Hao shuddered as all of his blood suddenly iced up. Lord White's finger seemed to press down onto Meng Hao's soul, to wipe away all of his emotions!

Family love, friendship, romantic love….

In an instant, they seemed to be peeled away, separated from him, as if they were about to vanish. Meng Hao threw his head back and roared, causing a boundless light to shine off of him. The Paragon Bridge suddenly exploded out into the open, becoming a Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering bridge that emanated an intense, archaic air.

As soon as the bridge appeared, everything began to shake, and Lord White's Essence of emotionless extermination suddenly grew still.

In that brief moment, Meng Hao's eyes glittered with coldness, and he shuddered. His starstone melted, and he transformed into a meteor, the manifestation of none other than the One Thought Stellar Transformation. Instantly, he swept out toward Lord White with incredible speed.

He was… trying to clinch the victory right now!

In the blink of an eye, he was closing with an explosive power that caused Lord White's brow to furrow. Then, Lord White extended his right hand and pushed out into the air.

The power of his peak 5-Essences cultivation base converged into a huge palm that rumbled through the air toward the meteor and then grabbed down onto it!

The clenching hand seemed like it could even crush a planet within its grasp, and cracking sounds could be heard as fissures spread out across the meteor's surface. However, before it could get any closer to Lord White, when it was still over a hundred meters away, it suddenly exploded.

In its place appeared an azure streak of light, moving with indescribable speed out from the rubble of the meteor. As it pierced through the enormous hand, it became clear that it was a huge azure roc!

In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao was almost directly in front of Lord White, baring claws that were sharp enough to slice metal and shatter rock. Even as he slashed out with his claws, the Mountain Consuming Incantation summoned numerous huge mountains which crushed down from above.

That still wasn’t enough, though. Shockingly, a long spear suddenly appeared next to Meng Hao in azure roc-form. That spear was the same spear that Greed had unsealed, with the World Tree haft and the dragon tip.

That spear rumbled through the air directly toward Lord White’s forehead.

All of this takes quite some time to describe, but actually took place in the time it takes a spark to fly off of a piece of flint. Normally speaking, considering the level of the cultivation bases involved, a fight between Meng Hao and Lord White could last for months or even years.

After all, this level of fighting was rarely seen in the Mountain and Sea Realm, and there was even the likelihood that the entire Eighth Mountain could be destroyed in the process.

However… assuming one party was willing to go all out, then the length of the fight could be shortened drastically. Right now, the person going all out was Meng Hao. The situation was one in which Lord White assumed that he wouldn’t do such a thing, wouldn’t risk his life so blithely, yet that was exactly what he did.

Not even Lord White could have guessed that this would happen. He frowned, and killing intent slowly filled his eyes. However, there was no time to ponder the matter. He immediately waved his right hand, causing his five fingernails to shatter and form into five crescent moons, which radiated a shocking curse power as they shot toward Meng Hao.

Rumbling filled the starry sky as Meng Hao’s Mountain Consuming Incantation collapsed. The Paragon Bridge began to shake, and his azure roc-form’s claws collapsed. Even as blood and gore spattered about, Meng Hao appeared and grabbed onto the spear. Then, the speed of the spear increased dramatically, and the tip stabbed toward Lord White’s forehead, until it was only about seven inches away!

Lord White’s eyes widened as an intense sensation of deadly crisis rose up within him. He opened his mouth and roared, a shocking sound which instantly caused a huge illusory projection to appear behind him, which was also roaring at Meng Hao.

The power was like a tempest, causing all light to dim!

The dragon on Meng Hao’s long spear roared, but compared to the giant, it was weak. Lord White’s roar caused the spear to begin to shatter, and within moments… it was nothing more than ash!

“Too weak,” Lord White said coolly, although inwardly his heart was pounding with anxiety.

It was in that instant that the spear in Meng Hao’s hand trembled.

“Demon Weapon, Lonelytomb!” Meng Hao said.

RUMBLE!

The collapse of the spear revealed that there was actually… another spear hidden inside of it!!

That spear was pitch black, and seemed to be congealed from numerous souls. It was… Demon Weapon Lonelytomb, a precious treasure that was unique to… the Demon Sealers!

As soon as the spear appeared, Meng Hao’s energy surged, and the spear shot onward toward Lord White’s forehead.

Everything so far had been connected. First was his explosive opening attack, then his near death, the collapse of the meteor, the destruction of the mountains, the dispersal of the dragon spear. Apparently… all of that had been building up to… this spear attack!

Lord White’s face completely fell!

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# Chapter 1297: An Extraordinary Showdown!

Everything had happened in the briefest of moments!

Lord White, Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, with a peak 5-Essences cultivation base, had experienced untold slaughter, but he could never have imagined that Meng Hao… would be so ruthless!

Meng Hao had attacked him over and over again, allowing himself to be wounded, his starstone to be shattered, his azure roc to be destroyed, and he himself to suffer serious internal injuries to the point where blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth.

All of that was… simply for the chance to unleash this shocking spear!

Meng Hao hadn’t hesitated at all to be wounded for that chance, and that was because he understood the gap that existed between himself and Lord White. Although that gap wasn’t huge, to cultivators of this level, it was the type of thing that could mean the difference between victory and defeat, between life and death!

And what Meng Hao wanted was not just victory or defeat, but rather… to kill his opponent and come out alive!

It had nothing to do with enmity or hatred. The only way to end the war was to kill Lord White. With him dead, Grandpa Meng would be safe. Furthermore, the explosive ripples that would be unleashed prior to his death were exactly what was needed to bring his grandfather’s soul back.

Therefore he chose to use this spear. In fact, Meng Hao’s personality was such that he didn’t even hesitate to waste the precious spear that had been unsealed by Greed!

The destruction of that spear had been the feint needed to unleash Demon Weapon Lonelytomb, which now shot directly toward Lord White’s forehead, bursting with power. Lord White had no time to react or even do anything before… the spear stabbed directly into his flesh!

A ripping sound could be heard as his flesh was torn apart, and then cracking sounds echoed out as his skull was shattered. Demon Weapon Lonelytomb stabbed directly into Lord White’s forehead!

However, as that happened, no look of relief appeared on Meng Hao’s face. Instead, his expression flickered, and his pupils constricted.

That was because, even as Lord White’s forehead was pierced, and his eyes dimmed, he suddenly spoke.

“Green Emperor’s Eternal Incantation.” In the same moment that the words left his mouth, an aura erupted out of him that Meng Hao found very familiar.

Unexpectedly, it resembled… the aura of the Eternal stratum!

As that aura erupted out, the flesh on Lord White’s forehead began to wriggle. Simultaneously, that aura spread out into Demon Weapon Lonelytomb and then toward Meng Hao.

To Lord White, the aura was a restorative power, but to Meng Hao, it was like a surging wild beast. At the same time, his own Eternal stratum roared madly. Apparently, these two different auras were as incompatible as water and fire!

After all, Meng Hao’s Eternal stratum had been acquired by walking the road of Perfection to the very end. Then, through a series of chance occurrences, he had managed to merge it with the Eyeless Larva. However, in the most fundamental of ways, it actually had some connections to the Mountain and Sea Scripture.

Just as Meng Hao was about to put his spear away, Lord White grabbed it, then stared into Meng Hao's eyes. A vicious gleam could be seen in his own eyes, and the Eternal aura around him grew stronger. Shockingly, an illusory ancient scripture suddenly appeared behind him, upon which were written three characters!

Mountain and Sea Scripture!

As the ancient scripture opened, Lord White's aura began to grow stronger.

Almost in the same moment that the protection of the ancient scripture appeared, Meng Hao's Eternal stratum began to surge with even more madness. Suddenly, a piercing cry like that of a silkworm began to echo out from inside of him, and behind him, a shocking illusory image appeared.

It was… the Eyeless Larva!!

This was the first time since the Eyeless Larva had become a part of his Eternal stratum that it ever appeared in this way. As soon as it became visible, it turned to Lord White and howled. 1

Lord White's face flickered with shock as he suddenly realized that Meng Hao had also… cultivated some of the Mountain and Sea Scripture!

“An incomplete Mountain and Sea Scripture, huh?” Lord White said with a cold snort. However, he was still shocked. He could sense the explosive violence within his Green Emperor's Eternal Incantation, and how it wished to attack the Eyeless Larva behind Meng Hao, and fight with it to the death.

Meng Hao's eyes went wide as he realized that his opponent intended to take away his Demon Weapon. He was not the type of person to let something like that happen lightly, so instead, he uttered a single word.

“Detonate!” As soon as the word left his mouth, Demon Weapon Lonelytomb exploded with a huge bang. Once again, Lord White was injured, and yet, with his Eternal aura at work, he quickly began to recover.

Lord White looked deeply at Meng Hao. Without saying another word, he fell back to give himself time to heal and buy some more time. Earlier, he had not underestimated Meng Hao, but now… he wanted to kill him more than ever. It had been a very, very long time since he had experienced the sensation of imminent death that he had moments ago.

Were it not for the profundity of his divine ability, then with the way he had been stabbed in the forehead just now, while it wouldn't have killed him, it would have resulted in a grievous injury.

After the Demon Weapon exploded, it transformed into streams of black mist that swirled back to collect together near Meng Hao.

"The Mountain and Sea Scripture…." Meng Hao said, an unsightly expression on his face. From what he understood, the Mountain and Sea Scripture was a combination of the three classic scriptures of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Apparently, Lord White had actually cultivated the Mountain and Sea Scripture, but to a far higher level than Meng Hao. After all, Meng Hao had used fragments of the actual scripture, and then relied on his own deductive powers to make alterations as he had seen fit. 2

However, Meng Hao had the feeling that if his Eternal stratum could merge with the Green Emperor's Eternal Incantation of his opponent, then… his own Eternal stratum would increase by a whole level!

"I wonder if there is something beyond the Eternal…?" Meng Hao thought, his eyes shining brightly. All of a sudden, he had yet another reason to kill Lord White!

The wound on Lord White's forehead was rapidly healing up, and it seemed as if it would only be moments before it was completely restored. Meng Hao's eyes flickered, and he took two steps forward, which were his sixth and seventh steps respectively.

The instant that his seventh step landed, Meng Hao's energy spiked. Something like a roar echoed out to the ends of the starry sky as a terrifying foot suddenly appeared. It was like a planet descending from above, causing massive rumbling sounds to echo out as it crushed down toward Lord White!

This was none other than the ability he had learned from Su Yan, who was still in his bag of holding… the Seven God Steps! 3

As soon as that huge foot appeared up in the starry sky, Lord White's face fell yet again, filling with disbelief.

"The Seven God Steps? That's impossible!!" Shockingly, he recognized this particular Daoist magic of Meng Hao's. Instantly, Lord White bit the tip of his tongue and spit out a mouthful of blood.

That blood rapidly expanded, instantly transforming into a sea of blood, which seethed out across the starry sky to slam into the incoming foot.

In the resulting massive explosion, Meng Hao's energy surged, and the killing intent in his eyes intensified. Next, his left hand flashed in an incantation gesture, and the meat jelly appeared. Muttering disconsolately, it transformed into a set of armor which covered Meng Hao. Then, Meng Hao extended his right hand, and the copper mirror transformed into a beam of multicolored light as it, along with the grumbling parrot, transformed into… a pitch black Battle Weapon!

The instant the Battle Weapon appeared, Meng Hao's desire to fight exploded out. The starry sky went dark, and the void trembled. Meng Hao's murderous aura rose to shocking heights as he slashed his blade out toward the fleeing Lord White.

"DIE!!" he roared.

The sensation of deadly crisis that exploded up within Lord White was impossible to describe. In fact, the sensation far, far exceeded the feeling he had experienced when Meng Hao had gone all-out to attack him with Demon Weapon Lonelytomb.

And yet, there was something different about it: Demon Weapon Lonelytomb had appeared completely unexpectedly, giving him no time to react. In this moment, although the sensation of deadly crisis was more intense, at least he had a moment to prepare.

Unfortunately… Lord White was still in the middle of utilizing his Green Emperor’s Eternal Incantation to restore himself. He couldn’t unleash his peak level of power, causing a vicious, intense gleam to appear in his eyes.

Glaring at Meng Hao, he roared, “Extermination!”

In that moment, Essence fluctuations appeared, which were none other than the ripples of the Essence of extermination!

“Power Essence!” He wasn’t finished yet, though! As soon as the Essence of extermination appeared, a second shocking Essence aura roiled up inside of him. The void around him distorted, and boundless ripples spread out through the starry sky from his second Essence… the Essence of power!

That was not the power of the fleshly body, but rather… power incited from within the starry sky!

“Curse!

“Land!

“Time!!” Lord White knew that this was a moment of extreme crisis, and as of this moment, fully realized how difficult it was to deal with Meng Hao. Furthermore, he also knew that he had lost out on an opportunity to seize the initiative. He had given that to Meng Hao, who was clearly extremely domineering. Once he got going, he kept going without stop!

Lord White had encountered people who fought like this in the past, and he well knew that once Meng Hao built up enough momentum, it would be difficult to stop him, and he would only continue to grow stronger.

“Five Essence Dao!” Lord White cried, spreading his hands out wide in Meng Hao’s direction and then pushing forward. His clothes and hair whipped about, and his cultivation base exploded out, merging with the starry sky, connecting with the Heavens, drawing upon the boundless energy of Heaven and Earth, sucking it into his body.

It was like he became a huge black hole which consumed the energy of Heaven and Earth. It poured into his body, which became like a transfer point for that energy, which he then sent out… to become five different Essences!

This was a way of using Essence that was completely new to Meng Hao. Instead of utilizing the powers of the world via force, it drew upon the power of Heaven and Earth to manifest power within oneself. The latter was definitely more domineering than the former!

“Either die, or screw the hell off!!!” roared Lord White. His five Essences became five natural laws, filling the entire world, sweeping through the Heavens, instantly enveloping Meng Hao!

A will of extermination that could erase emotions and obliterate the soul!

A magical Essence of power that could crush the body and smash the mind!

A Dao of cursing that could defile the blood and eradicate blood vessels!

An Essence of land which could bury corpses and sever qi passageways!

The quintessence of time, the ultimate of the five Essences, which could reach through Time to slaughter the enemy!

The starry sky trembled, and within that world of Essence and natural law, blood oozed out of Meng Hao’s eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. However his eyes were shining brightly, and his desire to fight was no less than before. Hefting the Battle Weapon, he… slashed it out in attack!

It was an extraordinary showdown!

The red-haired old man and the others had long since retreated from their position 3,000 meters away. They were now 30,000 meters away, where they sent their divine sense out to observe the fierce fighting going on between Meng Hao and Lord White. All four of their faces were completely pale, and their hearts were battered with waves of shock.

2. As a brief reminder, Meng Hao got the Sublime Spirit Scripture way back in the Reliance Sect. It set him on the path of Perfection, which eventually led to the Eternal. The Sublime Spirit Scripture was described as one of the three great classic scriptures, along with the Dao Divinity Scripture and the Heaven Severing Scripture. P.S. This line in the original Chinese actually contains a mistake which I fixed. If any of you are reading along in Chinese as well, you will probably notice this

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# Chapter 1298: Reproaching Seal!

The pitch black Battle Weapon sliced through the starry sky, turning into a beam of mysterious light that could sever all things, extinguish all auras. It slashed into Lord White’s five unleashed Essences, starting with the Essence of extermination. Meng Hao shuddered as the meat jelly armor absorbed the brunt of the force. The Battle Weapon sliced like a sharp knife through bamboo as it destroyed the Essence of extermination and continued onward.

In the blink of an eye, Lord White’s magic of the Essence of power closed in. It was capable of disrupting all sorts of power, be they of the fleshly body or the cultivation base. It was like Lightness-in-Heaviness, and at the same time, Heaviness-in-Lightness. The intense disparity caused Meng Hao to cough up a mouthful of blood. His face paled as the meat jelly armor shivered.

“Sever!” Meng Hao roared, his eyes completely bloodshot. Disregarding any injuries, he used all of the power of the Battle Weapon to slash down. Rumbling sounds filled the starry sky, which seemed to be on the verge of being sliced apart. The Battle Weapon sliced through the Essence of power like a hot knife through butter!

However, the Dao of the curse Essence then became a boundless fog that completely surrounded Meng Hao. His body began to wither, and the meat jelly armor let out a plaintive cry; cracking sounds began to emanate, as if it were on the verge of shattering.

Lord White’s Essences were far beyond those of ordinary 5-Essences Dao Sovereigns. They were terrifying to a degree that Meng Hao had never seen before!

“You’re definitely not weak,” Lord White said in a sinister voice. “However, in the end… you have too few Essences. As an Allheaven Dao Immortal, you are powerful, but you cannot truly defy the Heavens, nor can you defy me!” The curse power mist roiled, swirling around Meng Hao as if it wished to burrow into him through the pores on his skin.

A vicious expression could be seen on Meng Hao’s face as the Battle Weapon slashed out with scintillating, mysterious light. Ignoring the serious injuries that were being inflicted on him, Meng Hao slashed through the curse power, toward Lord White!

However, there was still plenty of Essence power in between them. Next was the Essence of land, which filled the space between them with what seemed to be planets and continents.

At this point, the meat jelly armor shattered into pieces, which then reformed into the shape of the meat jelly. It seemed extremely weak, and immediately transformed into a gray light that shot back into Meng Hao’s bag of holding.

He lost the meat jelly armor, but in the moment before it disappeared, it still helped him to resist the power of the Essence of land. Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth, but he still shot forward like lightning, like a shooting star, slamming into the Essence, slicing through with the Battle Weapon, backed by all the power of an Allheaven Dao Immortal.

The starry sky trembled, and everything dimmed. As the Battle Weapon slashed out, massive pressure exploded out, allowing Meng Hao to blast through the planets and continents to appear directly in front of Lord White.

However, it was in this moment that Lord White’s final Essence erupted out. It was none other than Timeshift magic, which caused the world to distort and run in reverse. It was like a wind of time, which caused all of the other four Essences which Meng Hao had already vanquished… to suddenly appear again!!

“No beginning, and no end. That is Time. Since you cannot defeat my five Essences magic, then you do not qualify to be my opponent!” As Lord

White’s voice undulated out, Meng Hao once again coughed up a mouthful of blood as his internal injuries flared. He could no longer sustain the Battle Weapon, which vanished, returning to the form of a copper mirror, which flew back into Meng Hao’s bag of holding.

In that moment, the five Essences magic was restored, forming something like the image of a world up in the starry sky.

This was Lord White’s five Essences world, a world in which the flow of time was distorted, in which lands rumbled, in which the power of extermination threw everything into chaos, in which extermination and curses flowed through Heaven and Earth, and which pulsed with the Essence of power. It was a shocking world which seemed capable of sweeping over anything.

It immediately began to rumble through the air, crashing down toward Meng Hao.

A sensation of deadly crisis surged up inside of Meng Hao. His eyes were bloodshot, and inside, he was sighing. However, in that very instant, the will to fight burned even hotter in his eyes.

“If a sudden onslaught won’t work, then… I’ll change styles!” Flames danced within Meng Hao’s eyes. As the shocking Essence world crushed down toward him, he performed a double-handed incantation gesture, which instantly caused the fluctuations of the League of Demon Sealers to spring up inside him.

“The League of Demon Sealers can seal Greater Demons of Heaven and Earth. I wonder if perhaps… Essences can also be sealed?” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with a strange light as he became more convinced that his idea would work. Without any further hesitation, he performed an incantation gesture and then waved his finger toward the incoming Essence world.

Eighth Demon Sealing Hex!

RUMBLE!

Meng Hao’s cultivation base, life force, soul, divine sense, everything that was him flowed into the Demon Sealing Hexing magic which he was unleashing.

That image of a world, which seemed so impossible to fight back against, all of a sudden seemed to slow down. Although no observer would notice this, Meng Hao could sense what was happening. As soon as he unleashed the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex, countless, innumerable strands of light appeared to entangle the Essence world, causing it to falter.

“Its working!” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and even as a look of shock appeared on Lord White’s face, he performed another incantation gesture and then waved his finger again.

Demon Sealing, Seventh Hex!

Demon Sealing, Sixth Hex!

Demon Sealing, Fifth Hex!!

Karma. Life-Death. Inside-Outside. Three Hexing magics all erupted out of Meng Hao, flowing out through his finger. Instantly, the starry sky went silent, and the Essence world experienced a Heaven-shaking, Earth-toppling transformation.

It stopped in place, and was now surrounded by a boundless gray mist, which writhed and seethed as numerous magical symbols appeared on its surface. That was none other than the manifestation of the Life-Death Hexing.

Simultaneously, Karma Threads appeared on the Essence world, spreading out into the void, connecting it to who-knew-how many people. Most of those threads connected it to Lord White, and yet, as of this moment, the Karma Threads were merging together to transform into numerous sealing marks!

This was Karmic Hexing!

Finally, a massive power of expulsion descended from the starry sky onto the Essence world. Suddenly, the Essence world experienced a bizarre transformation. First it increased in size dramatically, then it shrank down, as the power of the Inside-Outside Hex exploded out.

“Impossible!” Lord White cried hoarsely.

Meng Hao had experienced a sudden stroke of inspiration, and now his eyes were shining brightly as his four Hexing magics descended onto the Essence world. It was at this point that the Demon Sealing Jade within his bag of holding began to speak in its archaic voice.

“Demon Sealing Hexing magic can seal the Greater Demons of Heaven and Earth. This is Righteous Bestowal!

“Demon Sealing Hexing magic can seal the magic of all living things. This is the Reproaching Seal!”

Meng Hao’s mind spun as the voice echoed out within him. He then raised his right hand, and his eyes shone mysteriously as he pushed out toward the Essence world.

“Reproaching Seal!” he said.

As soon as the two words left his mouth, a Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering sound erupted out, causing the starry sky to tremble. At the same time, an enormous magical symbol appeared, which then shot down onto the Essence World, sealing it!

Sealing the Essences!!

Instantly, the entire Essence world went silent, almost as if it had been turned into stone. No ripples emanated from it, and its aura was gone. Lord White, who was hovering not too far off, experienced a backlash, and coughed up a huge mouthful of blood.

“This….” He didn’t recognize the Demon Sealing Hexing magic, but it remind him of something that had left him with a deep impression long ago, and that was….

“The Dao of Lord Li!!” Lord White’s face flickered as he realized that his connection with his Essence had been severed. Although it wasn’t anything permanent, at the moment, he was completely incapable of unleashing Essence power.

Meng Hao was equally shaken. He looked at the sealed Essence world, and could sense the intense fluctuations of the Demon Sealing Hexing magic inside of him. Gradually, the glow in his eyes grew brighter.

Now, Lord White was looking at Meng Hao, not just with fear, but with the intense desire to kill him.

“Even without Essence, I can still cut you down!” he said, waving his sleeve. His right hand then shot out toward the starry sky in a clawing motion. Instantly, five rifts were torn open.

“Five Venoms of the Seventh Sea, sow chaos in the skies of the Mountains and Seas, disturb the peace of all living things!” Lord White bit the tip of his tongue and spit out a mouthful of blood. Instantly, it became a blood sea which shot up toward the five rifts and then poured into them. Next, thumping sounds began to emanate out.

Apparently, there were entities inside of those rifts who were breaking through a barrier, attempting to pass through the rifts. With each thump, the starry sky trembled. Suddenly, cracking sounds could be heard as two spindly antennae burst out from within one of the rifts. They were followed by… a vicious bug which scuttled out rapidly. Soon, a 30,000-meter, pitch-black centipede appeared in the starry sky!

As soon as it appeared, it let out a shocking screech which caused all hearts to tremble!

Next, cracking sounds echoed out from the second rift as a 3,000 meter, crimson-red, three-horned viper popped out, its forked tongue flickering, its eyes gleaming coldly. It threw its head back and howled as, all of a sudden, countless eyes appeared all over its body!

Next, cracking sounds could be heard from the third, fourth and fifth rifts, as more creatures emerged. There was an enormous scorpion, surrounded by swirling black mist, and a violet toad as big as a mountain.

Last of all was… a 30,000-meter long lizard with rugged scales that dripped with slime. It was a completely shocking sight!

“Five Venoms, kill this person!” Lord White’s eyes flickered, and the five venomous creatures roared as they charged toward Meng Hao.

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# Chapter 1299: Know This: The Mountain and Sea Realm is Mine!

As the Five Venoms charged Meng Hao, Lord White backed up and urgently shot toward the Essence world that was frozen in place up above, in an attempt to restore his sealed Essences.

His heart was filled with vigilance; he almost felt as if he were fighting with his hands and feet tied. From the moment he had arrived in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, Meng Hao had interfered with him at every step. He almost felt as if he were being led down a path by his opponent, and had no choice but to follow.

It was a truly humiliating feeling. In the final analysis, the reason things had turned out this way all stemmed back to how Meng Hao had not held back in any way when he had attacked with that spear!

Although Lord White hadn’t actually been at risk of being killed by that spear, it had lost him the initiative in the fight!

Right now, Meng Hao’s eyes were glittering. He had already paid an enormous price to be able to fight with Lord White, and although he hadn’t killed him, he had already forced him to use some of the Mountain and Sea Scripture.

Because Meng Hao held the initiative, he was able to slowly gain an advantage, and had luckily managed to seal his opponent’s Essence. Even though it had come at heavy price, and he had suffered serious injuries, it was all worth it!

It was all because he had managed to control the rhythm of the battle this entire time. He had never given his opponent the chance to take the initiative. Therefore… he would definitely not give him the chance to do so right now!

“You want to restore your Essences? What makes you think I’ll let you!?” Meng Hao eyed the Five Venoms briefly, but he had no time to deal with them; his target was only Lord White.

“It seems I haven’t been using my Demon Sealing magic as much as I should. I’ve clearly underestimated it.” Eyes flickering, he suddenly slapped his bag of holding, whereupon a roar echoed out. Then, the mastiff appeared in a beam of blood-colored light, flying out in spectacular fashion.

Next came an entire host of blackpod imps.

Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a strange light. Now that he knew his Demon Sealing Hexing magic could seal Essences, he figured he might as well see the result… of using his current cultivation base to perform Righteous Bestowal!

“Righteous Bestowal!” Without any hesitation, he extended his right hand and then pointed out toward the mastiff. Instantly, the ripples of Demon Sealing Hexing magic began to emanate out from inside of him. The mastiff’s body trembled, and then its energy exploded up. It began to grow larger, and its cultivation base power rose up rapidly.

In the blink of an eye, the mastiff actually broke through from the great circle of the Ancient Realm into the Dao Realm!

Back in the Windswept Realm, Meng Hao had helped the mastiff consume the bat spirit. However, in order to help save Meng Hao, the mastiff had interrupted its breakthrough, leaving it stuck in the great circle of the Ancient Realm.

Now, with the aid of Righteous Bestowal, its cultivation base was able to continue to rise. It threw its head back and roared, then charged toward the

Five Venoms. Next, Meng Hao looked at the blackpod imps, and unleashed another Righteous Bestowal!

Immediately, the blackpod imps began to transform drastically, allowing Meng Hao to sense a bit of the power of the Mountains and Seas on them. Of course, that was a power that only Meng Hao could detect. No one else, not even a Mountain and Sea Lord, could do so.

Meng Hao was quite shocked. After examining the mastiff a bit closer, he realized that he could sense the aura of the Mountain and Sea Realm surging within it! “So this is how Righteous Bestowal works. I can actually bestow them with the right to be acknowledged by the Mountain and Sea Realm, and allow them to borrow some of its power!”

The mastiff and the blackpod imps slammed into the Five Venoms; booms immediately began to shake the starry sky as a ferocious battle erupted.

Next, Meng Hao charged toward Lord White!

Lord White’s pupils constricted, especially aftering seeing Meng Hao use Righteous Bestowal. Sighing, he realized that his plan of distracting Meng Hao with the Five Venoms while he himself unsealed his Essence, was a failure.

Lord White’s expression suddenly turned calm. Sighing deeply, he looked at Meng Hao and said, “There is no enmity between us, we just have differing viewpoints…. Well, it doesn’t matter. You might be strong, but as a Mountain and Sea Lord, I’m above your ability to deal with…. Since you keep trying, though, then… I’ll just help you see the true power of a Mountain and Sea Lord.”

His sigh caused the starry sky to tremble, and sent powerful ripples exploding out from his body. In the blink of an eye, they spread out to fill the entire Eighth Mountain and Sea.

“I am the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea….” he said softly, and suddenly, an illusory image appeared above his head. It was an image of a mountain, and of a sea!

When that image appeared, it emanated a shocking power. Rumbling sounds echoed out, and a mysterious light shone from Lord White’s eyes as he raised his right hand up high, causing an intense burst of the power of the Mountain and Sea Realm to appear!

At the same time, Lord White began to emanate explosive pressure. Cracking sounds could be heard, the starry sky trembled, and the void distorted as the aura of the Mountain and Sea Realm grew ever stronger upon him.

Furthermore, the image of the mountain and the sea above him grew clearer and clearer.

As that happened, the starry sky of the Seventh Mountain and Sea seemed to drain, the void there grew dark, and life force was even sucked out of the heavenly bodies. Fissures spread out on the Seventh Mountain, as though the life were being extracted from it.

In the Seventh Sea, the sea beasts were trembling as their bodies visibly withered, and the sea itself began to dry up as its power and life force, the foundation of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, were pulled away… to Lord White!

A Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering white light began to shine off of him, a boundless glow that radiated throughout the Eighth Mountain and Sea, and instantly caught the attention of the other Mountain and Sea Lords within the Realm.

Lord White seemed immeasurably large, and the image of the mountain and sea above his head was now completely crystal clear. Looking at Meng Hao, he pointed his finger and said, “You’re strong, but in the end… you’re just an ordinary cultivator. I have transcended the identity of a cultivator, and have come to wield the power of one of the nine great Mountains and Seas. I… am the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea!

“In the Mountain and Sea Realm, no one can stand up to a Mountain and Sea Lord. I am the one who decides who lives and who dies.

“I call upon the power of the Mountains and Seas to crush you!”

As his voice echoed out, the aura of the Mountain and Sea Realm seethed around him, transforming into a white sun, which radiated indescribable pressure as it shot toward Meng Hao.

It was the type of attack that could not be sidestepped. It was backed by the power of the Mountain and Sea Realm, guided by the will of one of the great powers in the nine Mountains and Seas, the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea!

Lord White sighed softly. “For various personal reasons, I don’t wish to waste any more of the power of the Mountain and Sea Realm than this. After all, I have existed in this Realm… for many, many years.

“Since you are dying at the hand of the Mountain and Sea Realm, you can at least die without any regrets.” With that, Lord White waved his sleeve, causing the pressure of the Mountain and Sea Realm to increase dramatically.

Meng Hao looked at Lord White. “The Mountain and Sea Realm…?”

He laughed, and his eyes began to shine. Actually, his main strategy for this fight had two parts. The first part had been the spear gambit. After that, he had simply been waiting for his opponent… to draw upon the power of the Mountains and Seas.

“You want to use Mountain and Sea power in my presence?” Meng Hao waved his right hand, and suddenly, boundless amounts of Mountain and Sea power erupted out from within him. Immediately, Meng Hao’s aura began to rise dramatically.

Lord White gaped in shock, his eyes wide with disbelief.

“This….”

He had never, ever seen anyone other than a Mountain and Sea Lord unleash such a shocking amount of Mountain and Sea power. Furthermore, Meng Hao was clearly not a Mountain and Sea Lord. As such, Lord White's heart began to pound, and his face fell.

Meng Hao's eyes flashed as he continued, "You say you're the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, but do you know who the entire Mountain and Sea Realm belongs to?"

Even as the words left his mouth, rumbling sounds echoed out as, shockingly… nine mountains appeared above his head!!

In addition to the nine mountains, there were also nine seas!

Nine Mountains! Nine Seas!

Although they were blurry and illusory, and far from the clear image of the mountain and sea above Lord White's head, the instant they appeared they caused the entire starry sky, the entire Mountain and Sea Realm, to rumble.

An intense pressure suddenly sprang out from Meng Hao.

Lord White's face completely fell yet again, and he began to tremble. Without even thinking about it, he immediately began to back up, his heart battered by waves of intense shock. Eyes wide with disbelief, he said, "That's… that's…. Impossible! You're… you're actually the…."

Lord White's mind was reeling. Considering his level of willpower, there were few things that could ever strike him speechless. But now, he was more shaken than he had ever been.

"This is MY Mountain and Sea Realm," Meng Hao said coolly, reaching out his hand and making a grasping motion toward Lord White.

That grasping motion caused massive rumbling to echo out in Heaven and Earth. The starry sky shook violently as the power of the Mountains and Seas exploded out of Meng Hao. Powerful pressure surged toward Lord White, and an intense sensation of deadly crisis erupted within him. Without any hesitation, he bit his tongue and spat out a mouthful of blood. Then he threw his head back and let out a bitter howl.

“Seventh Mountain and Sea!” Instantly, the power of the Seventh Mountain and Sea erupted out. The Seventh Sea grew dry, and the Seventh Mountain shook. The starry sky of the Seventh Mountain and Sea was on the verge of shattering, as even more Mountain and Sea power converged and shot toward Meng Hao.

In the celestial pond atop the Seventh Mountain, the Xuanwu turtle let out a bitter howl, a howl filled with pain and madness. Lord White used the increased amount of Mountain and Sea power to form another white sun, which was clearly surpassed the level of power of any of the previous attacks he had used against Meng Hao during the battle.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE….

The starry sky fractured into pieces, and a massive boom filled the entire Eighth Mountain and Sea. Blood sprayed out of Lord White’s mouth, and his body was sent spinning backward. His clothes were torn, and more blood sprayed out of his mouth before he finally came to a stop over a thousand meters away, looking completely bedraggled. When he looked up, his eyes shone with intense killing intent.

What he saw was Meng Hao, coughing up blood, also falling backward by hundreds and hundreds of meters. There was now nearly 3,000 meters between the two of them, and both of them saw the intensely murderous expressions in each others eyes.

RUMBLE!

Both of them flew forward in attack, unleashing a chaotic storm of divine abilities and magical techniques.

More intense booms rocked the Eighth Mountain and Sea as, in the following moments, they exchanged thousands of volleys. Each attack caused the starry sky to dim, and yet, they held nothing back.

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# Chapter 1300: A Projection of Dao Fang!

RUMBLE!

Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth as Lord White’s divine abilities merged with each other and slammed into him. He had no choice but to fall back, his injuries worsening. By now, it was clear that his Eternal stratum’s regenerative power could not match the magnitude of his injuries.

As for Lord White, he had his Green Emperor’s Eternal Incantation, which was truly a mighty asset. In fact, to Meng Hao’s consternation, it ensured that even though Lord White was in a difficult situation, he still was not at the end of the line.

Killing intent swirled in Lord White’s eyes, but secretly, he was shocked and even terrified. His mind had been racing after everything he had just seen, and he had actually been able to put the pieces of the puzzle together and thus… identify who Meng Hao really was.

“Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm! The one and only Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm…. If I can kill him, it will certainly be a huge detriment to the Mountain and Sea Realm. That would definitely count as an incredible meritorious service! I’ll receive incredible rewards!” The killing intent in his eyes grew even stronger. As soon as his attack had battered Meng Hao away, he suddenly raised his hand.

“Mountain and Sea Scripture!” he roared. Instantly, the ancient Mountain and Sea Scripture was projected behind him, radiating a mysterious light. Lord White suddenly clenched his hand into a fist, and then opened it.

“The Mountains have three Daos. First Dao, Man-Mountain!” Lord White performed a double-handed incantation gesture, causing the aura of the Mountain and Sea Scripture radiating from him to surge. When the words ‘man’ and ‘mountain’ left his mouth, his speed increased by an indescribable level, and he shot forward to appear directly in front of Meng Hao. Then he raised his hands up and shoved them forward.

That motion caused his body to transform into a mountain. His cultivation base surged, and a Heaven-destroying, Earth-extinguishing power slammed into Meng Hao.

Meng Hao didn’t even have a chance to dodge. Rumbling sounds echoed out, and blood sprayed out of his mouth. His chest caved in, and even as he shot backwards, a bloody gleam appeared in Lord White’s eyes.

“Second Dao, Earth-Mountain!” With that, he vanished again, to reappear beneath Meng Hao. There, he transformed into an even more majestic mountain, which instantly shot upward toward Meng Hao!

His speed was so great that Meng Hao was yet again incapable of evading. The mountain slammed into him, shattering his bones and sending blood spraying out of his mouth. His life force weakened, and despite the fact that he wanted to either dodge or defend himself, he simply couldn’t.

“Third Dao, Heaven-Mountain!” The instant his voice rang out, he appeared up above Meng Hao as a mountain even more enormous and shocking than the previous two!

Then, he crushed down onto Meng Hao!

BOOOOMMMMMM!

Blood sprayed from Meng Hao’s mouth. His cultivation base was crushed, and his fleshly body was on the verge of falling apart. Even as the Heaven-Mountain faded away, Meng Hao tumbled backwards like a kite with its string cut.

Lord White’s eyes widened. “Still not dead!?!?”

The three Mountain Daos were peak Daoist magics of the Mountain and Sea Scripture. He rarely used them and, when he did, it always resulted in the death of his opponent.

But clearly, Meng Hao, despite being seriously injured, was not dead. This caused Lord White to frown, and his killing intent to rise.

However, things weren’t much better for Lord White, and blood was currently oozing out of his mouth. The Mountains and Seas’ Three Daos and Three Magics were actually extremely difficult for him to control. “The Seas have three magics….”

Meng Hao was alarmed as he struggled to stay on his feet, and he immediately consumed some medicinal pills. His Eternal stratum was on the verge of being depleted, and his injuries were so severe that his organs were all shattered. In fact, his bones were only being kept from collapsing into fragments by sheer force of willpower. Whether it was his fleshly body or his cultivation base, Lord White’s three attacks had virtually annihilated him.

Those three mountains left him in complete astonishment. He had never seen Daoist magics so shocking, and although they seemed relatively simple, their deadly attack power was beyond belief.

“So that’s the Mountain and Sea Scripture, huh…?” he thought, panting. Then, he realized that apparently Lord White was about to unleash some other, similar Daoist magic. Shaken, he took advantage of this time when his opponent was preparing his next attack to suddenly walk in a very strange fashion.

Then, a brutal gleam appeared in his eyes as he murmured, “Withering Flame!”

Instantly, his body began to wither, as if he were burning his blood, transforming it into a flame that then raged outside of his body.

It was at this point that Lord White, eyes flickering with intense killing intent, unleashed his magical technique.

“First magic, Commoner’s Magic. The Commoner’s lot is his body, exterminate the body to exterminate the magic!” Lord White extended his hand and pointed his finger at Meng Hao. Instantly, the illusory ancient book behind him began to vibrate, and then, suddenly, Lord White actually vanished. When he reappeared, he was right in front of Meng Hao, towards whom he reached out with his finger.

That finger contained a bizarre magic, and Meng Hao sensed that if it touched him, his body would be broken and exterminated!

However, just before the finger touched him, Meng Hao’s bizarre walking method suddenly caused the Dao of Time to be unleashed, and by the narrowest margin, he walked past Lord White, avoiding his finger attack. At the same time, a bizarre gleam appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes.

“Demon Magic!” As soon as the words left his mouth, he began to emanate strange fluctuations, which merged with the flames, causing a stream of qi to fly out that rapidly formed a vortex.

Within that vortex, it was just possible to hear the sound of a beating heart that shook Heaven and Earth.

“Second magic, the Minister’s Magic. The Minister inherits the bloodline, exterminate the blood to exterminate the body!” Roaring, Lord White waved his finger again, this time moving even faster. If this finger attack landed, then he would definitely destroy Meng Hao’s blood.

However, in the moment before it landed, Meng Hao’s shocking time-walking technique once again enabled him to barely avoid the danger. Lord White’s face darkened, and he turned around to unleash the third magic!

“Third magic, the Emperor’s Magic. Everything under Heaven belongs to the Emperor; where his words reach, the Emperor’s Magic is boundless!!” As he spoke, he unleashed the third finger attack, and instantly, his finger tapped down onto Meng Hao’s forehead!

It was as if this moment… had been fated to occur from the beginning!

A tremor ran through Meng Hao, and in the instant that the finger tapped onto his forehead, he spat, “True Self Dao!”

As the words were spoken, a blurry image appeared behind him that looked exactly like him in every respect!

BOOOOMMMMMM!

A massive boom rang out as the Emperor’s Magic caused the non-illusory version of Meng Hao to be instantly killed. First his soul was destroyed, then his blood withered away, and finally his body collapsed into a pile of mangled gore.

As for the illusory version, it rapidly backed up.

At the same time, a strange gleam appeared in Lord White’s eyes. Performing an incantation gesture, he spread his arms wide.

“Star-Chain Eight Soulbanes, cut off the path of all souls being reborn!” As soon as the words left his mouth, eight beams of red light shot up into the air, transforming into eight chains of blood which completely locked down the entire area. In the blink of an eye, rumbling filled the air as the entire starry sky was locked down!

Within that area, the chains cut off everything. They exploded with the intensity of rumbling lightning and shot toward the illusory image of Meng Hao.

“Even if you have a rebirth magic that lets you send out a bit of your soul at a critical moment, you have been fated to die this day. My Eight Soulbanes is specifically designed to cut off the path of unattached souls. Your soul body will now be transformed into ash!” Lord White was nearly purple from the effort it took to unleash the Mountain and Sea Scripture.The Three Daos and Three Magics of the Mountains and Seas were enormously powerful, and were incredibly high level techniques. In fact, rumor had it that they were collectively a Paragon magic, which meant that even Lord White was not qualified to unleash them easily. Every time he did, he had to pay an enormous price.

A boom rang out as the eight chains of blood, bursting with the power of soul-extermination, landed on the illusory version of Meng Hao. However, they ended up passing right through him without hurting him in the least.

This scene caused Lord White to stare in complete shock.

“That’s not a soul body?”

Even as Lord White’s face fell, that illusory figure suddenly turned completely clear. It was actually the real Meng Hao!

Both in terms of his facial features and his physical frame, he looked exactly like the person Lord White had just killed. However, this was no soul body, but rather, a genuine fleshly body, though it seemed somewhat gaunt, as if it had lost a lot of qi and blood!

Because it was a fleshly body, the Eight Soulbanes were completely useless against it!

That was because, in the moment before death, Meng Hao was well aware that he could not do any more to fight back against the Three Daos and Three Magics of the Mountain and Sea Scripture. Therefore, he chose to use another method, something that would have a similar effect as the Green Emperor’s Eternal Incantation. And that was none other than the Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao!

He simply… created a body substitution!

In the critical moment, he used some of his own qi and blood, along with the Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao, to create a clone, a clone which could stand in his place to die!

“Dammit!!” Lord White’s face fell, and he had to force himself to not cough up a mouthful of blood. The level of anger and frustration inside of him was impossible to describe. He had just paid an enormous price to unleash the Mountain and Sea Scripture’s Three Daos and Three Magics. In terms of his longevity and the state of his body, both were a far cry from what they had been before.

He had been absolutely certain that Meng Hao was already dead, and had even unleashed his Eight Soulbanes. How could he ever have imagined that Meng Hao would have a body substitution magic!?

Now he was experiencing the same thing as Meng Hao had earlier when he had gone all out, regardless of the price, to make his killing move with the spear, only to be defeated by the Green Emperor’s Eternal Incantation.

“This kid has GOT to die!” Lord White growled, glaring at Meng Hao. Gritting his teeth, he threw his hands up toward the starry sky, and a strange light gleamed in his eyes.

“Star-Chain Eight Soulbanes, lock down the starry sky. Oh great Dao Fang, please descend to help me… destroy everything!” As soon as the words left his mouth, the locked down section of the starry sky suddenly shuddered. Next, a roar of rage echoed out from within the void as an enormous figure suddenly appeared behind Lord White.

It was an enormous monkey holding a huge staff in its hand. Its eyes were crimson, and as soon as it looked over, Meng Hao’s mind reeled with shock.

He had seen this figure before!!

An unsightly expression appeared on his face. He had managed to escape the deadly situation moments ago, but he had now lost the initiative. He was seriously injured, so badly that every move he made caused his entire body to teeter on the verge of collapsing.

As soon as he saw the image of that monkey, he instantly knew who it was. It was… Dao Fang!

Dao Fang, who had suppressed the Essence of Divine Flame!

However, as soon as the image of Dao Fang appeared, the Essence of Divine Flame inside of Meng Hao suddenly erupted beyond his control. It flowed out from him, spreading out to fill the area, with him at the center, creating an entire world of flame.

Gradually, within that sea of flames, a shocking will converged.

“Dao Fang must die!!” roared a voice filled with rage, enmity, and madness. At the same time, the Divine Flame began to form into a person.

It was a middle-aged man, wearing a set of flame armor, who was roaring at the image of the monkey.

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# Chapter 1301: Victory!

Meng Hao didn’t know this man formed from the converged Essence of Divine Flame. However, there was something very familiar about him, and then Meng Hao recalled some of the things that had occurred in the land of Divine Flame.

The enormous eye there had been surrounded by raging fire, as if it had been the soul of the sea of flames.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, as he came to the conclusion that this man was most likely… the same man whose enormous eye existed in the world of Divine Flame.

He was the same almighty expert from ancient times who had been imprisoned on Planet South Heaven in the Ninth Mountain and Sea by… Dao Fang!

In the same moment that this man appeared, back in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, beneath the surface of Planet South Heaven, the world of Divine Flame quaked as all of the Divine Flame there erupted out, setting the entire world aflame.

The enraged roaring there was echoed in the Eighth Mountain and Sea by the man standing in front of Meng Hao, forming a resonance.

“Dao Fang, you must die!!”, the man howled. It was as if the obsession which fueled this man’s soul could never be eradicated. The projection of Dao Fang which had been summoned by Lord White began to tremble with both rage and enmity as he took a step forward. The sea of flames rumbled and churned as the man therein waved his hand, causing crashing flames to surge out like waves across the sea, directly toward… the projection of Dao Fang.

Meng Hao's mind was reeling, and as he narrowed his eyes, they began to glow with brilliant light. Off in the distance, Lord White was completely shocked. No matter how he considered the matter, he would never have imagined that the stream of Dao Fang's divine will would not instantly eradicate Meng Hao, but also… that Meng Hao would have an astonishing soul hidden on him!

Both that soul and Dao Fang exploded with astonishing energy that was not the energy of a Dao Sovereign, but actually exceeded that! It was… the energy of a Paragon!

RUUMMMMBLLLLLE!

A massive eruption of sound shook the entire Eighth Mountain and Sea. The eyes of Dao Fang's projection glowed with a strange light as he strode forward, brandishing that gigantic staff and then smashing it down toward the middle-aged man.

The man roared, eyes flashing with enmity as he performed a double-handed incantation gesture and then raised his hands up into the air, summoning a massive flame head, which grinned as ferociously as an evil spirit. With an unyielding roar and unmatchable madness, it shot forward in an attack that contained tens of thousands of years of hatred.

When they slammed into each other, the entire starry sky shook, and a massive shock wave swept out in all directions. When it hit Meng Hao, blood sprayed out of his mouth, and he staggered backward. As for Lord White, he was also seriously injured, and coughed up blood as he was shoved away.

However, even as they both fell back, even as the man in the flames began to fight with Dao Fang, both Meng Hao and Lord White ground to a halt and then instantly charged toward each other.

Their battle was not over. Despite the fact that both of them were like oil lamps on the verge of flickering out, even though both of them were seriously injured… they would still fight!

RUMBLE!

As they closed in on each other, the glow of magical techniques rose up, and the ripples of divine abilities spread out. The power of the Mountains and Seas was unleashed by both sides, and they even collided physically. In an instant, they exchanged thousands of volleys.

Their injuries worsened, and both of them were coughing up mouthfuls of blood. The bloody wounds which covered their bodies were a sight to see; not even the Green Emperor's Eternal Incantation that Lord White possessed couldn't keep up.

After a moment, echoing booms rang out as the two of them fell back. They were spattered with blood, and their faces were twisted into vicious expressions. Lord White was gritting his teeth, and from the look in his eyes, he was throwing caution to the wind. He had already used virtually every technique and method he could think of, but was unable to take down Meng Hao. In fact, it was even possible to say that Meng Hao was… the most powerful opponent he had fought in his entire life!

"On this day, you will die!" he roared, hair flying about in disarray. He suddenly made a grasping motion, summoning nine pitch-black swords!

As soon as the nine black swords appeared, they began to emanate an acrid odor. At the same time, countless vengeful ghosts began to swirl around them, letting out inaudible screams.

"With life comes death, with death comes life! Curse power can kill with a word, and its highest level is… Death Curse Magic!" Lord White's eyes gleamed with madness. As far as he was concerned, this Death Curse Magic was even more terrifying than the Three Daos and Three Magics of the Mountain and Sea Scripture. In fact, the Death Curse was something that even he, the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, had only unleashed once before in his entire life.

That was he had become a Mountain and Sea Lord. In that battle royale, he had used this magic in a critical moment to secure victory. However, the price he paid… was that from that moment on, his cultivation base was eternally stuck at the 5-Essences level. Any progress beyond that would be extremely difficult.

Right now, he was using the curse magic a second time!

He didn't hesitate at all. The madness in his eyes grew more intense as he waved his hand; a droning sound then filled the air as one of the nine black swords shot toward him and stabbed him in the chest!

When the sword stabbed into him, Lord White let out an intense roar. At the same time, his divine sense erupted out explosively. Next, a second sword, a third sword, a fourth, and a fifth sword all stabbed into him one after another, one for each of his limbs. At this point, Lord White's divine sense was raging upward nonstop, to the point where even Meng Hao was shocked.

As of this moment, Lord White's divine sense was close to thirty percent that of a Paragon!

Things weren't over though. The sixth sword, seventh sword… and finally the eighth and ninth swords all stabbed into Lord White. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and his flesh was a mangled mass of gore. Blood began to ooze out of his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, and yet, his divine sense had reached a pinnacle; it was now at fifty percent of that of a Paragon!

The terrifying divine sense erupted out, shaking the starry sky. At the same time, Lord White's face twisted in an insane smile as he looked at Meng Hao and then said, "Death Curse!"

Instantly, his divine sense exploded out, materializing into an astonishing curse, a complex, pitch-black magical sealing symbol which shot toward Meng Hao. The curse power's foundation was divine sense, so the stronger the divine sense was, the stronger the curse would be.

Furthermore, Lord White, with the nine black swords stabbed into him, now had divine sense that was equivalent to fifty percent of a Paragon’s divine sense. Because of that, when facing the 5-Essences level, the Death Curse… was invincible!

Intense rumbling echoed out as it closed in on the grim-faced Meng Hao, whose eyes shone with a strange light. As the curse neared him, he took a deep breath and then… erupted with divine sense!

RUMBLE!

Meng Hao’s divine sense swept out across Heaven and Earth with mad intensity.

RUMMMMBLLLE!

He instantly went all out, fighting back with his own divine sense, which was at forty percent of the level of a Paragon.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth, and oozed out of his eyes, ears, and nose. He was shaking violently, and yet, his divine sense still managed to hold up to the Death Curse. Off in the distance, Lord White coughed up a huge mouthful of blood, and his eyes filled with disbelief. He could sense how strong Meng Hao’s divine sense was; it was clearly powerful enough that it could resist his Death Curse!

“This is impossible!” he cried. Unable to believe what was happening, he threw his head back and roared. The Death Curse Magic was not something he could sustain for very long, and if it didn’t hit its target, the resulting backlash was something he wouldn’t be able to stand up to.

It was in this very moment that, atop the Eighth Mountain, Meng Hao’s grandfather, the Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea, was shaking violently. The battle between Meng Hao and the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea was acting as an enormous catalyst to him!

In fact, his aura was now radiating off of the Eighth Mountain with increasing intensity.

However, Lord White was too preoccupied to notice that. As the saying goes, once you start riding a tiger, it’s not easy to get off its back. He began to laugh maniacally, then took a deep breath and performed a double-handed incantation gesture, after which he slapped his own forehead.

“Mass Cloning! Converge the Joss Flame power of the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, utilize it to… transform!” As Lord White’s voice echoed out like thunder, a ghost image suddenly sprang up as he transformed from one person into two. Those two became four, and then eight, and then sixteen….

Meng Hao’s pupils constricted as Lord White rapidly created more than a hundred clones, each one of which emanated terrifying ripples and then… all began to self-detonate.

The power of those self-detonations bolstered the Death Curse Magic. Lord White’s divine sense grew even more powerful, resulting in the magical sealing symbol growing rapidly larger and even more pitch black.

“DIE!” roared all of the collapsing versions of Lord White, clone and true self alike.

However, in the moment that the Death Curse Magic crushed Meng Hao’s divine sense and was just about to land on him, he closed his eyes.

“The Dao is in My Heart. The Will is in My Eyes…

“I Shall Possess the Mountains and Seas… Seal the Heavens Incantation!” In the critical moment of this decisive battle, in the last insane attack, Meng Hao unleashed his Seal the Heavens Incantation!

The power of the Mountains and Seas rumbled down, and the will of the Mountains and Seas merged with Meng Hao’s divine sense. The starry sky then erupted with power, with Meng Hao being the center of it all!

The starry sky collapsed and the void shattered. The Eighth Mountain and Sea shuddered, and the incoming Death Curse Magic was suddenly faltered. Fissures spread out across the surface of the pitch black magical symbol, until finally, the combined power of the Seal the Heavens Incantation and Meng Hao's divine sense caused it to shatter. Cracking sounds rang out as it exploded into countless pieces!

BOOM!

The Death Curse Magic collapsed into numerous magical symbol fragments which swept out towards Lord White, instantly piercing into him.

Lord White let out a miserable shriek as the backlash power instantly withered him. Vast quantities of his blood were evaporated, and the shadow of death instantly enveloped his mind. However, there was nothing he could do to fight back; in fact, he could hardly even struggle.

"No, I am Lord White, I am the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, I can't die here…." Even in that moment, however, his body began to collapse, and there was nothing he could do to stop it.

As of this moment, Meng Hao knew that he had secured victory. Coughing up a mouthful of blood, his consciousness began to fade. The victory he had just won had been a very, very difficult one!

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# Chapter 1302: Critical Juncture….

It was a heavy price to pay, and despite how strong Meng Hao was, he still ended up being seriously injured. His consciousness was fading, and blood oozed out everywhere. Just when he was about to move to consume Lord White's Mountain and Sea Incantation, his mind reeled, and he turned to look at Lord White.

In that moment, Lord White was collapsing, hovering on the verge of death. However, an aura that was not of the Mountain and Sea Realm suddenly emanated out from him. It only lasted for a moment, but it managed to propel Lord White toward the rift that connected the Seventh Mountain and Sea with the Eighth. In the blink of an eye, he was on the verge of entering the rift.

Things had been going hazy for Meng Hao, but now he forced his head to clear. Without the slightest hesitation, he then took a step toward Lord White; he absolutely could not allow him to escape!

This had been a bitter battle, and Meng Hao was well aware that the victory he had eked out had come by chance, and definitely had not been a certainty from the outset. If the two of them fought again, he was not convinced he would be able to win again.

As Lord White neared the rift, killing intent boiled in Meng Hao's eyes. He then stretched his right hand out toward Lord White and made a grasping motion.

It was none other than the Star Plucking Magic!

He was using the absolute last scrap of energy that he had left to unleash this magic. Rumbling could be heard as Lord White suddenly began to tremble. He was already half-covered with fissures as Meng Hao latched onto him and began to drag him back.

It was in that moment that the shattered and bleeding Lord White suddenly opened his eyes, within which could not be seen even a trace of madness or despair. In fact, they were icy cold to the point where… they shone with merciless clarity.

Apparently, everything he had just done had been an act. His true intent had been to wait for Meng Hao to get so close that he couldn’t evade the next attack.

“In the end… you’re still just a bit too immature,” Lord White said quietly. As of this moment, the feeling he gave off, both in terms of his energy and his words, were completely different from moments ago. He was not possessed. No… this was the true him!

The Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea!

His eyes were icy cold as he extended his right hand and performed an incantation gesture. Then he grabbed out in Meng Hao’s direction, causing the starry sky to tremble as an indescribable, shocking power erupted out.

Despite his complete calm, blood sprayed out of his mouth, and his face went ashen. Perhaps he had been keeping the true nature of his personality hidden beneath the guise of insanity, but as for his injuries… they were very real. He had been seriously injured almost to the breaking point, and this attack was powered by the last bit of power he had.

He only had enough energy to make this one final attack. However, the way he had lured Meng Hao in, and his intense desire to kill him, showed how profoundly sinister Lord White was, and how adept he was at scheming!

He might be on the verge of lapsing into unconsciousness, and he might have run almost completely out of energy, but he could still eke out a victory in the end!

Meng Hao’s face fell, and bitterness welled up in his heart as his Star Plucking Magic was destroyed by Lord White’s grasping attack. Blood oozed out of the corners of Meng Hao’s mouth, and his vision swam. He had no power to fight back, and as the attack closed in and became clearer, an unyielding gleam appeared within Meng Hao’s eyes.

However, all of a sudden, a loud squawk echoed out from within Meng Hao’s bag of holding. At this critical juncture, a multi-colored beam of light suddenly flew out, which was none other than… Lord Fifth!

Lord Fifth looked extremely pleased, and even let out a domineering squawk.

“Every time there’s a critical moment, Lord Fifth takes the field to turn the tables!” the parrot howled, flapping its wings. “Hahaha! Lord Fifth has a fever, and there’s only one cure! I’ve been waiting for this day for a very, very long time.” All of a sudden, the Demonic cultivators from the Ninth Sea popped out.

It was a grand scene as they settled into formation… and prepared to sing.

“Come, come, sing together with Lord Fifth!”

The parrot’s shrill voice echoed out in all directions, as did the completely shocking seafood song.

“I’m a seafood dish, I’m a seafood dish….”

As the seafood song echoed out, indescribable ripples appeared, which shot in the direction of Lord White’s attack. When they slammed into each other, Lord White’s attack shattered, transforming into infinite motes of light which slowly dissipated. It was at this point that the seafood song began to reach a climax.

“… I was a bad kid when I was young, I’m a little seafood dish! Lalalalala! Seafood dish. Dobedobedoooo. Little seafood dish! Hey you, in the white robe, come, come, sing along with Lord Fifth!” Suddenly, the parrot flapped its wings, looking almost infatuated. Within the rift, Lord White’s eyes went wide, and he stared in complete and utter shock, his mind becoming a complete blank.

As the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, he held a position of supreme respect. He had assumed there was nothing he hadn’t seen in his life… but he had never seen a parrot like this, who left him feeling completely overwhelmed. Then he heard singing that was so horrible it was impossible to even describe.

Even more astonishing was that after the parrot spoke, and as the singing echoed out, Lord White almost couldn’t stop himself from joining in to sing along. It was a sensation that left him feeling as though his head would explode.

Before he could do anything, the ripples caused by the singing rumbled into the rift, inundating Lord White. He suddenly shivered, and then opened his mouth and began to sing.

“I’m your little, dear little seafood dish…. AAAAGGHHHHHH!!” Lord White only sang half a verse before he began to scream miserably. His eyes were wide with fear as he realized that his wounds were too serious, and he was beginning to lose consciousness. At this point, he knew that he would not be able to kill Meng Hao, so he gritted his teeth, causing that same aura from before to erupt out, the power that was not of the Mountain and Sea Realm. It wrapped him up and then dragged him into the rift.

Even as he vanished, he shouted out one more time in rage, “I’ll be back!!”

“Hey!” the parrot said, glaring. “Why are you leaving? Fudge, can’t you give Lord Fifth some face?” The parrot’s heart was actually thumping in complete fear, and now that Lord White was fleeing, it secretly breathed a sigh of relief.

Letting out another angry squawk, it put the seafood dishes away and then puffed out its chest and looked back at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s aura was already recovering, but he was still incredibly weak. Looking at the parrot, he chuckled, then glanced back at the rift, eyes flickering murderously.

It had been a difficult battle, even more difficult than Meng Hao could have anticipated. Although it seemed like he and the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea were evenly matched, Meng Hao knew that he was weaker by just a bit.

“I couldn’t quite kill him….” he thought, sighing. He had gone all out with every bit of power that he could, and right now, his face sank with that realization. However, his eyes continued to flicker with cold killing intent.

He knew that Lord White was also seriously injured, and that it would take him some time to recover. When he did, he would return to the Eighth Mountain and Sea, whereupon their battle would continue.

Unfortunately, Meng Hao was not convinced that he would be able to come out on top next time.

A sense of crisis began to well up inside him, and he suddenly looked off into the distance, eyes glittering.

“When I used the Demon Sealing Hexing magic, Lord White blurted something about the Dao of Lord Li….

“I need to get my hands on the legacy of Lord Li as soon as possible. Only then will I be able to get a bit stronger before Lord White returns. Only then… will I be able to cut him down!”

A while back when he had been igniting his Soul Lamps, his divine sense had spread out explosively, filling the Eighth Mountain and Sea. At that time, he had caught sight… of Patriarch Reliance!

He took a step, and was off in the distance. Although his mind was a bit foggy, he forced himself to hang on, and let none of that state show on the outside. Inwardly, his defeated Eternal stratum was slowly awakening again.

“A month,” he murmured. “I need a month before I’ll recover fully.” He frowned as he realized that although he needed a month, Lord White would surely recover more quickly than that.

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The Eighth Mountain and Sea had already begun to rejoice. Although people weren’t able to actually see the battlefield, they could sense that the pressure from the Seventh Mountain and Sea had vanished from the starry sky.

As that happened, the Seventh Mountain and Sea’s cultivators’ faces went ashen, and their expressions were that of horror. Although they didn’t want to believe it, there was only one explanation for the reason why the aura of their Mountain and Sea Lord had vanished.

Their Mountain and Sea Lord… had been defeated in battle!

It didn’t take long for that realization to sweep across the cultivators of the Seventh Mountain and Sea. Their morale instantly dropped, and their fighting spirit plummeted.

Contrariwise, the Eighth Mountain and Sea cultivators were bursting with power and excitement. Roaring, they went on the offensive, and instantly, fierce fighting broke out. This time, the ones to be beaten back over and over were not the cultivators of the Eighth Mountain and Sea, but rather, the Seventh!

Booms echoed out as the fighting once again resumed!

On the Eighth Mountain, Meng Hao’s grandfather, the Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea, was no longer trembling, but was calm. Apparently, his eyes were on the very verge of opening….

Meng Hao sped away. The red-haired old man and the other nearby hundreds of thousands of cultivators had long since backed up to an even further vantage point. The shocking battle they had witnessed left them trembling, and they simply watched as Meng Hao left.

They could sense that he was weak, but none of them dared to try to test him out….

Not even the red-haired old man had the courage to do so. He wouldn't attack Meng Hao unless his injuries were even worse than they were, or perhaps he was unconscious.

As Meng Hao left, he breathed a sigh of relief.

After reaching a point some distance away, where no one could see him, he stopped, blood oozing out of the corners of his mouth. He quickly consumed some medicinal pills, then closed his eyes and rotated his cultivation base.

In the same moment that Meng Hao closed his eyes, an intense sensation of deadly crisis suddenly welled up in him. He turned his head to see a young man stepping out of thin air.

As soon as he recognized who the young man was, Meng Hao's eyes gleamed with an intense light.

The young man looked excited, but kept his distance. When he realized he had been spotted, he clasped hands and bowed.

"Brother Meng, at long last we meet again. Thank you for giving me this chance. I've been waiting a very, very long time for this. I never imagined that in such a short period of time, you would… become so strong!!"

This newcomer was none other than… Ji Dongyang!

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# Chapter 1303: Possessing and Consuming!

“Should I call you Ji Dongyang, or should I call you… the Ji Clan Patriarch?!” As Meng Hao looked at Ji Dongyang, his eyes narrowed, and his heart filled with vigilance. The sensation of deadly crisis continued to grow, to an extent that it was even clearer than when he had been fighting Lord White.

After all, Meng Hao was now at his absolute weakest, and the fact that Ji Dongyang was making his appearance right now proved one thing: he had been waiting and watching for quite some time. It would have been impossible for him to come across an opportunity like this based on chance alone.

One thing that led Meng Hao to suspect Ji Dongyang’s true identity was how he had been able to follow him and spy on him for such an extended period of time without being detected. Therefore, Meng Hao had given voice to his guess as to who this person really was.

Furthermore, Ji Dongyang had slipped up and revealed a bit of vital information, perhaps because of his excitement at finally gaining the opportunity he had been waiting for. If he knew the truth, that Meng Hao had guessed who he really was based on a single sentence, he would be completely flabbergasted.

Ji Dongyang gaped for a moment, then chuckled and realized it didn’t matter that Meng Hao knew who he was.

“Nowadays I prefer to go by Ji Dongyang, but in the past I was known as… Ji Tian!”

The instant the words left Ji Dongyang’s mouth, Meng Hao’s pupils constricted. Ji Tian was none other than the Ji Clan Patriarch, a powerful expert from the same era as the first generation Patriarch of the Fang Clan. In the struggle for the Lordship of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, he had come out on top.

“There’s no need to try to buy time to heal. Your injuries are too serious to recover from in a short period of time. Even I would have to worry about Lord White, considering the level of his battle prowess. In fact, if I fought him, I would definitely lose.

“As for you, you’ve made me very, very happy….

“Deciding that you would be my ninth life was definitely the best choice I could have made…. Come now, Meng Hao, become one with me. Become my ninth life. Then I will restore things to how they once were, taking the Ninth Mountain and Sea to fight back against the 33 Heavens and to resist their return.

“Sacrifice yourself, and you will help not just me, but the entire Mountain and Sea Realm! I can even promise you that I will take good care of the Fang Clan….

“Everything that is yours… will be mine.” Ji Dongyang laughed heartily, and his eyes sparkled. However, he still didn’t get close to Meng Hao. The battle he had just witnessed from a distance had left him completely shocked.

Meng Hao’s face was very grim, but he didn’t respond. He merely hovered in place, looking coldly at Ji Dongyang.

Meng Hao didn’t move, nor did Ji Dongyang do anything rash. They stared at each other for about ten breaths of time, after which Ji Dongyang frowned, then suddenly took three steps toward Meng Hao.

As those three steps fell, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with killing intent, and he began to stride toward Ji Dongyang. That sudden movement caused Ji

Dongyang’s heart to tremble with surprise, and without even thinking about it, he fell back.

However, in the moment that he retreated, Meng Hao suddenly did the same thing, and in the blink of an eye, was far off in the distance.

Ji Dongyang’s eyes flickered coldly, and he gave chase, sighing inwardly with relief. As he closed in, he extended his right hand, performed an incantation gesture, and pointed out. Instantly, a black stream of light shot toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao also sighed inwardly. He knew that dealing with Ji Dongyang would be difficult; for him to have reached the level he had indicated that he was the type of person who tested the waters before making a move. Obviously, he was an extremely cautious person.

Furthermore, Meng Hao was not in a position to be wasting energy. His injuries were very serious, and he had only just begun to recover. Frowning, his eyes flickered as he waved his hand toward the black beam of light, shattering it.

A boom echoed out, and the backlash caused blood to ooze out of his mouth. Behind him, Ji Dongyang laughed softly.

“Brother Meng, don’t be so anxious. We still have plenty of time left. Your injuries are severe, and I’m patient. I’ll just wait until you can’t hold out any longer and pass out.

“Of course, you can always turn and fight if you want. I can guarantee that… before you manage to kill me, you’ll lose consciousness. So you should really consider… whether or not you want to fight me.” Ji Dongyang’s eyes glittered as he looked at Meng Hao for a moment, then performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, causing ten beams of black light to shoot toward Meng Hao, each one filled with Karmic power.

Meng Hao didn’t do anything in response, other than shoot off with increased speed. In the blink of an eye, he had increased the distance between them and was shooting, not in the direction of the Heavengod

Alliance, but rather… toward the rift connecting the Seventh and Eighth Mountains and Seas!

He was now following exactly the same path Lord White had when he had fled.

Meng Hao moved with incredible speed, shooting past the red-haired old man and the other cultivators of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, who looked on in shock.

Ji Dongyang was hot in pursuit, face flickering in surprise. He had already made plans for what to do, regardless of whether Meng Hao attacked or not. If he didn't attack, he would force him into fighting. If he fought, then he would run him ragged. However, he had never predicted that Meng Hao would actually choose to enter the rift.

If he did that, he would be teleported to the Seventh Mountain and Sea. Doing that would put him in a situation of extreme peril, but it seemed Meng Hao felt the chances of survival were slightly better there.

Of course, the danger would be the same for Ji Dongyang. His chances of surviving… would be small. After all, if he went to the Seventh Mountain and Sea, his clone would be two Mountains and Seas away from his true self, adding latency to his reaction time, which could end up proving fatal.

Thus, his original plan had been to possess Meng Hao while in the Eighth Mountain and Sea. However, when the Seventh Mountain and Sea invaded, and Meng Hao had chosen not to leave, he had to delay his plan.

"Dammit!" Ji Dongyang's face flickered, and rumbling sounds echoed out as he pushed forward toward Meng Hao with greater speed. Even as Meng Hao closed in on the rift, killing intent flickered in Ji Dongyang's eyes, and he reached out and made a grasping gesture. Countless Karma Threads swirled out to form a huge hand which grabbed toward Meng Hao.

However, the hand was slow, and Meng Hao was already halfway into the rift. He seemed to be on the verge of escaping, and in this most critical of moments, Ji Dongyang had no time to think, no matter how cautious he wished to be. If he hesitated for even a moment, Meng Hao would vanish. Gritting his teeth, he surged with cultivation base power, and in conjunction with power from the Ninth Mountain and Sea, his energy spiked, and the majesty of a Mountain and Sea Lord erupted out.

The extra power came in the blink of an eye, and he transformed into afterimages as he shot toward Meng Hao, who was now eighty percent into the rift.

“Possession!” Ji Dongyang howled. His body seemed to be melting, and his soul was on the verge of flying out to possess Meng Hao. However, in that very instant… just as he was opening his mouth to spit out his soul, Meng Hao suddenly turned back, a derisive expression on his face. His mouth twisted into a cold smile, and from the look on his face, it seemed he had no plans whatsoever to flee. In fact, it appeared that everything had been a ruse to lure Ji Dongyang into a trap!

This was a tactic that he had just picked up from Lord White.

Ji Dongyang’s eyes went wide

“The Wolf Consumes All!” Meng Hao roared. Meng Hao truly did have only a tiny scrap of energy left inside of him, and the question had been how to use that scrap. And yet, this last bit of energy would be able to decide whether he won or lost against Ji Dongyang.

What he did was use that scrap of energy to stimulate Greed’s life force Essence, which existed within his Dao Fruit. Instantly, the image of an enormous, Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering Heavenly Wolf appeared behind him, which threw its head back and howled!

Even as Ji Dongyang attempted to possess Meng Hao, the wolf attempted to consume Ji Dongyang!

One was attempting to possess, the other was attempting to consume, and it was impossible to determine who would succeed. Ji Dongyang’s soul pierced into Meng Hao, all the way to his sea of consciousness, and simultaneously, Ji Dongyang's body transformed into life force quintessence which was consumed by the Heavenly Wolf.

Rumbling could be heard as Ji Dongyang vanished. A tremor ran through Meng Hao as an explosive power rose up from within him, propelling him away from the rift, whereupon he vanished.

Neither Meng Hao nor Ji Dongyang had any desire for any further consuming or possessing to play out in front of the cultivators of the Seventh Mountain and Sea. Both of them simultaneously teleported away. In the blink of an eye, they were gone, to reappear once more in a remote corner of the starry sky of the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

Meng Hao looked like a corpse as he floated there, his body occasionally emitting pulses of life force. Occasionally, rumbling could be heard, and at the same time, the injuries he had sustained in his battle with Lord White healed up, the result of the restorative powers gained by Meng Hao from consuming the life force of Ji Dongyang.

At the same time, his internal injuries were also healing rapidly!

However, there within Meng Hao's sea of consciousness, a Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering battle was unfolding between the powers of consuming and possessing! The struggle had reached a critical moment, and whoever lost would definitely die!

Furthermore… it was certain that the price paid by one of them dying, would help the other party to grow stronger.

Ji Dongyang, in his craftiness and malevolence, had waited for this very specific moment to attack Meng Hao, when he was extremely weak in terms of cultivation base and divine sense. Therefore, if all had gone according to plan, Ji Dongyang would have been able to possess him with relative ease.

Ji Dongyang had prepared for a very long time for this one moment of possession. He had studied Meng Hao extensively, and was aware of his fearsome divine sense and extraordinary cultivation base. He knew that he was the future Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm, which, although terrifying in some ways, actually fueled his obsession. He had waited oh-so-patiently to possess Meng Hao, and just when he thought Meng Hao would escape his clutches and that everything had been for naught, the moment he had waited for had arrived; Meng Hao fought Lord White and ended up being in an extremely weak state.

That had been a moment of extreme excitement!

However, in all of his careful planning, there was the one area… in which he had slipped up.

Despite the fact that he had gone to the extent of following Meng Hao into the 33 Hells, he had not been able to follow him into the necropolis therein. In that moment of extreme crisis when everyone was sucked into the necropolis, he, like the Chief Dharma Protector of the Heavengod Society, had chosen to flee. Therefore, he had no idea about everything that had occurred with Greed.

Therefore, he had no idea about the very power which Meng Hao drew upon at the last moment, the life force Essence of Greed. Greed's Essence could consume everything, including Ji Dongyang's life force and his soul. Even the possession power he had unleashed was consumed!

"NO!!" Several days later, something like an illusory howl of rage echoed out inside of Meng Hao. A tremor ran through him, and his eyes opened. As for his mouth, it had the same smile of derision that it had before.

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# Chapter 1304: Old Turtle Reliance!

At the same time, massive rumbling sounds echoed out from the Ninth Mountain. The whole mountain trembled as a will awakened, spreading out to fill the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea.

An enormous eye appeared above the Ninth Mountain, which seemed to burn with fires of rage. However, the flames soon died down, and within the pupil of the eye, the image of an old man became visible. He was sitting there cross-legged, a grim expression on his face. After a moment passed, though, he suddenly started laughing.

“I’m not sure whether I should thank you or hate you….” the old man murmured.

“The fact that I did not succeed comes as no surprise, and yet is also contrary to expectation…. Had I succeeded, I would have no longer been myself. That strand of my will which usurped my true self would have become unprecedentedly powerful. I could have instantly transformed from being the weakest of the Mountain and Sea Lords, to being in the position to challenge Ksitigarbha.

“However, although the failure has lost me that chance, now that the strand of will has been destroyed, I… have finally regained full control of my faculties.” There was an ancientness to the man that seemed to suggest that he had been asleep for a long time, but was now awakening.

“Meng Hao….” he murmured, looking thoughtfully off into the distance. After a long moment passed, he closed his eyes once again.

Meanwhile, back in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, Meng Hao opened his eyes as something like the rumble of thunder echoed out inside of him. At the moment, his injuries had recovered almost completely.

Ji Dongyang's possession had failed, and in fact, he had ended up being consumed by the life force Essence of Greed. He actually ended up becoming a wellspring of power to fuel the recovery of Meng Hao's wounds. In fact, Meng Hao liked to think that Ji Dongyang had delivered himself up as an aid to his recovery, instead of a real attempt at possession.

It wasn't that Ji Dongyang hadn't made his move at the correct time, or that it was not a critical point for Meng Hao. Rather, in a divine sense battle for possession, the slightest mistake could lead to death, and Ji Dongyang had made just such a mistake.

Meng Hao's eyes shone with a brilliant light as he recalled what had occurred in the divine sense battle. Finally, his eyes glittered, and he flickered into motion and vanished.

He did not spend any more time pondering the matter of Ji Dongyang. Although he had come out on top in the battle of possession, Meng Hao had still been in danger. He had never liked the Ji Clan to begin with, but after what had just happened, he was certain that he would meet with Ji Tian again one day, and settle things once and for all.

"Time is of the essence right now. The Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea will definitely be returning. Before he does, I need to get stronger. That's the only way to secure victory!" Meng Hao appeared in the starry sky, a thoughtful look on his face as he sent his divine sense rumbling out. In a short period of time, it spread out to cover the entire Eighth Mountain and Sea.

Everything that existed in the Eighth Mountain and Sea was now visible to him in his mind. He saw cultivators fighting in battles. He saw countless corpses and ruins. He also saw a certain something far off in a remote corner of the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

It was a huge land mass that almost looked like an island. There were mountains and rivers, cities and sects, mortals and cultivators all existing on that piece of land hanging in the starry sky. It seemed to be floating completely aimlessly among all of the mountains which existed there. On that huge land mass was a certain mountain that held an eternal place in Meng Hao’s mind. It was… Mount Daqing.

Beneath the land mass was an enormous turtle, who supported it on his back. He was currently yawning lazily as he floated along, a smile on his face. Then he began to hum a little tune which echoed out in all directions.

In the instant that Meng Hao’s divine sense swept over the turtle, the turtle shivered and stopped humming. His turtle eyes went wide, filling with a look of disbelief. He suddenly turned to look out into the starry sky and then… let out a miserable shriek.

“That divine sense… dammit! It’s you! You little bastard! Ahhhhhhhh. The Patriarch fled all the way here and y-y-you… you actually found me!!”

That turtle was none other than Patriarch Reliance.

His previously good mood suddenly turned wretched. He had just been feeling incredibly comfortable and at ease, but now he was shaking, overwhelmed with frustration, sadness, madness, and irritation.

In order to get away from Meng Hao, he had left Planet South Heaven and gone to Planet East Victory. Then he had fled to the Ruins of Immortality, and had finally pierced through the barrier between the Ninth Mountain and Sea to the Eighth. He had assumed that he would never see Meng Hao again in his life. How could he ever have imagined that he would actually… be found yet again?

“Dammit, DAMMIT!” roared the turtle, eyes bulging. “You intolerable bully!! The Patriarch can’t deal with this anymore!!” A very uneasy feeling had risen up in his heart; Meng Hao’s divine sense seemed so powerful it could cause him to explode. He threw his head back and let loose a long cry, causing rumbling sounds to echo out as his speed increased tenfold, and he shot off into the distance.

He felt truly wronged, and couldn’t think of any sin he had committed to earn him this fate….

“Dammit, dammit, DAMMIT! The League of Demon Sealers is full of bastards! All bastards, I tell you!

“All those years ago, that psycho didn’t think that beating me up by himself was enough, so he had to find a whole group of psychos to help beat me up. Bastards, bastards, BASTARDS!!

“Fine, if you want to beat me up, I don’t care. But you went so far as to seal me!? I refuse to give in! The Patriarch refuses to give in!!” Even as Patriarch Reliance sped along, he roared out his grievances.

It was at that point that a bright light could be seen flickering on top of his head, where a young woman was seated. Laughing softly, she patted Patriarch Reliance’s head and said, “Calm down, Patriarch. Isn’t it a good thing to reunite with old friends?”

“Good thing, my ass! The League of Demon Sealers is full of bastards. That little bastard is a bastard among bastards!” Utterly discomfited, Patriarch Reliance took a deep breath, causing the starry sky to tremble. Boundless energy of Heaven and Earth poured toward him and was sucked in, whereupon he exploded with even greater speed, turning into a bright beam of light that shot off into the distance.

In another distant location, Meng Hao’s eyes glittered.

“Gotcha,” he said, snorting coldly. He was so familiar with old turtle Reliance that he couldn’t be any more familiar. They had even fought each other more than once in the past.

“Let’s see how you try to escape this time!” Meng Hao took a step forward, then vanished. When he reappeared from the teleportation, he was far off in the distance and immediately saw the panic-stricken Patriarch Reliance fleeing.

“Don’t even dream of running, you old turtle!” he roared in a frightening tone.

“There’s no need to see me off, you little bastard!” shouted Patriarch Reliance, trembling. He even went so far as to spit out some of the quintessence of his soul to unleash even greater speed, piercing through the void.

Meng Hao’s expression was very serious, but a hint of laughter could be seen in his eyes. Every time he recalled what had occurred between him and this old turtle, it all seemed as if it had happened only yesterday.

His time in the Reliance Sect was something very precious to Meng Hao, and those years had somehow turned into his most idyllic memories.

Now that the turtle was fleeing with even greater speed, Meng Hao gave a cold harrumph, then extended his right hand and made a grasping motion as he unleashed the Star Plucking Magic. Instantly, the turtle’s little tail was grabbed.

Rumbling sounds echoed out, and Patriarch Reliance’s scalp felt like it was about to explode. The sensation of having his tail grabbed filled him with rage. A brutal gleam appeared in his eyes, and he turned his massive body around with stunning agility. Then, a vicious expression could be seen as he opened his mouth to gobble Meng Hao up.

“I’ll give you some good fortune, you little bastard!”

“Mm-hmm,” Meng Hao didn’t even try to dodge to the side. He simply hovered in place. Patriarch Reliance’s gaping maw lurched to a stop, and a grieving, maddened look appeared in his eyes.

“Meng Hao, you little bastard, we’re going to fight to the death, right here, right now!” he roared. His energy spiked, and it looked like he really was going to go all-out in a battle to the death.

Meng Hao’s expression was very serious, but then suddenly, his jaw dropped as he realized that although Patriarch Reliance seemed to be infuriated, and just on the verge of fighting to the death, the truth of the matter was that he was actually backing up. This felt very familiar to Meng Hao, and he suddenly recalled that bizarre body cultivator back in the Ninth

Sea, who had done the exact same thing. Patriarch Reliance and that body cultivator were actually very similar in this regard. 1

Patriarch Reliance was instantly on the run again, and had already put quite a distance between them. He was going all out… to flee! Furthermore, a complacent gleam had already appeared in his eyes.

“So, the little bastard doesn’t quite measure up to the Patriarch in terms of intelligence. Haha! He thought I was going to fight him to the death, but it turns out my real plan was to run away!” Even as Patriarch Reliance was rejoicing in the midst of his escape, and was beginning to feel quite pleased with himself, a boom rang out, and the void up ahead of him shattered. A huge rift opened up, and a tempest burst out, blocking Patriarch Reliance’s path.

Patriarch Reliance’s beady eyes went wide, and he quickly changed directions. However, it only took a moment before the same thing happened, whereupon he changed directions again.

Meng Hao, of course, was right on his tail, leisurely following him around and waving his finger, causing the starry sky to distort and shatter. Patriarch Reliance’s heart was beginning to pound in shock, and he suddenly howled, “How come you’re so powerful, you little bastard? Psycho! The League of Demon Sealers is full of psychos!!”

All of Patriarch Reliance’s paths were blocked. Finally, he waved his tail, and suddenly everything around him began to tremble. Apparently, he had been building up his power, and was now about to burst out in one final attempt to free himself.

However, even as he powered up, he unexpectedly didn’t flee, but instead charged Meng Hao. Inwardly, he was so arrogant that he actually believed himself powerful enough to personally handle Meng Hao.

Roaring, Patriarch Reliance closed in on Meng Hao. “Hmmmphhh! The Patriarch is the smartest yet again! When you think I’m going to fight to the death, I flee. Then, when you think I’m going to flee, I decide to stake my life!”

Seeing this new development caused a strange expression to appear on Meng Hao's face. It was definitely true that he was having a hard time keeping up with Patriarch Reliance's train of thought. Just when he seemed to be on the verge of escaping, he would attack. Meng Hao smiled bitterly and then extended his hand. Rumbling sounds could be heard as a huge illusory hand appeared, which grabbed viciously toward Patriarch Reliance.

A boom echoed out as the hand grabbed onto Patriarch Reliance and began to squeeze. However, Patriarch Reliance let out a roar, causing golden light to glitter out from his body, shattering Meng Hao's illusory hand.

"Hah! The Patriarch is invincible!!" he roared. "Are you scared yet, Meng Hao, you little bastard?!" He glared at Meng Hao, the whiskers on his face floating about in bizarre fashion, making him look very intimidating.

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# Chapter 1305: Legacy Door!

Meng Hao sighed at the sight of the blustering Patriarch Reliance, and suddenly felt a headache coming on. “I never smacked you on the head when you were little, did I?”

Unfortunately, Meng Hao’s words only served to rile up Patriarch Reliance even more. His eyes turned bright red as he apparently remembered something, whereupon he roared, “Meng Hao you little bastard, I’m going to end things between us right now! Take THIS!”

Howling, energy surging, Patriarch Reliance began to move his relatively stumpy legs in a special pattern. His eyes began to glow brightly as, unexpectedly, his qi and blood began to flow in a unique way, as if he really were going to go all-out in a fight to the death.

However, what actually happened was that an enormous teleportation portal popped into existence around him. In the blink of an eye, it activated, teleporting Patriarch Reliance away.

Even as he vanished, his smug laughter echoed out, along with the following words: “The Patriarch is out! Don’t bother to come looking for me ever again, I’m sick of you!”

Meng Hao could only imagine how pleased Patriarch Reliance must be with himself at the moment. A strange look on his face, Meng Hao took a step forward and then vanished.

In another stretch of the starry sky of the Eighth Mountain and Sea, Patriarch Reliance’s massive form suddenly appeared, along with ringing laughter.

“I, the Patriarch, am intelligent, dashing, extraordinary, and completely invincible! Did that wimpy little Meng Hao really dare to try to compare himself to me?” Patriarch Reliance looked extremely proud, as though he were standing at the pinnacle of all intelligence, looking down at everyone else far, far below.

However, even as he was sighing emotionally, a dry cough could be heard coming from off to the side.

Patriarch Reliance gaped in astonishment.

“Hallucinating,” he said. “I must be hallucinating. How come that cough sounded so much like that little bastard?” Heart thumping, Patriarch Reliance looked to the side to find Meng Hao right there next to him. His eyes widened.

In terms of size, Meng Hao was like nothing compared to Patriarch Reliance’s enormity. But that didn’t stop him from reaching out, grabbing one of Patriarch Reliance’s whiskers, and then flinging him out through the starry sky, sending him spinning round and round.

Then, a huge boom could be heard as he landed not too far off in the distance.

Patriarch Reliance roared in rage, then shot back toward Meng Hao, mouth wide open to devour him. But then Meng Hao snorted coldly, and Patriarch Reliance let out a yelp and closed his mouth.

“Aaaahhhhhh! I’m going crazy! Dammit! Dammit! I can’t fight you, can’t run away from you, can’t even eat you! The League of Demon Sealers is full of bastards! I’m going to kill all of you people!!” Patriarch Reliance’s roars transformed into sound waves that rumbled out through the starry sky. At the same time, he backed up at top speed, shaking his back slightly.

“Disciples of all generations of the Reliance Sect, get out here and kill this guy!” When Patriarch Reliance shook his back slightly, it was like an earthquake as far as the State of Zhao was concerned. Almost immediately, hundreds of people flew out, after which they stared at Meng Hao in astonishment. It was hard to say who did it first, but after a moment of gaping, they began to clasp hands and bow to him.

“Greetings, Junior Patriarch!”

“It’s the Junior Patriarch? Greetings, Junior Patriarch….”

These people actually recognized who Meng Hao was. After all, Meng Hao had encountered this group of people back in the Milky Way Sea on Planet South Heaven. Back then, Patriarch Reliance, believing himself to be a profound schemer with incredible foresight, had publicly acknowledged Meng Hao’s Patriarchal status, all in an attempt to divert his suspicions. 1

When Patriarch Reliance saw all of the cultivators clasping hands and bowing to Meng Hao, the rage in his heart burned hotter than ever. Now, instead of trying to consume Meng Hao, he tried to crush him with his head.

By this point, he knew that he wouldn’t be able to escape. Meng Hao was so fast that it left him sighing, so the only thing he could do now was ram Meng Hao with his body, which at this moment seemed as big as a planet whizzing through space.

“Stop fussing,” Meng Hao said with a frown, then smacked out with his right hand.

An intense slapping sound echoed from Patriarch Reliance’s head, and he was sent staggering backward. Angered to the point of madness, he roared, “Who’s making a fuss? I’m perfectly calm! Y-y-you… you tyrant!

“In all my years of roaming the Mountain and Sea Realm, the worst thing that ever happened to me was running into you bastards from the League of Demon Sealers. You people are so unreasonable!!” Patriarch Reliance appeared to be on the verge of tears. By now, he could sense how powerful Meng Hao was, and his heart was pounding as a result. However, he still didn’t want to give in. Eyes burning with decisiveness, he opened his mouth and roared, causing innumerable magical symbols to flicker all over his body. Apparently, he was attempting to break through the seals on his body.

Rumbling could be heard as a massive energy burst out, something that caused even Meng Hao’s eyes to widen.

“Back then, the people from the League of Demon Sealers had to team up to seal him,” Meng Hao said softly. “It seems Patriarch Reliance really is remarkable.” With that, he slapped his hand out again.

A boom rang out as Patriarch Reliance was once again sent spinning. At the same time, his enraged roar echoed out.

This time the sound was multiple times louder than his previous shouts. It transformed into a roaring windstorm that swept out. Simultaneously, a huge, terrifying image was projected behind him.

“You and me are going at it to the death!” he raged. “You piss me off so much! SO MUCH!” The countless, densely-packed magical symbols flickered brightly, looking almost like a huge net covering Patriarch Reliance.

However, Patriarch Reliance’s energy spiked, and the golden magical symbols began to separate from him and float out into the starry sky, as the shocking energy on Patriarch Reliance grew even stronger.

As the starry sky rumbled and shook, Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a strange light. This was not his first time getting into a showdown with Patriarch Reliance. However, on the previous occasions, his cultivation base had not been powerful enough, and he hadn’t pushed Patriarch Reliance into such a corner. Now, the old turtle had no options left, and was really going crazy!

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he performed an incantation gesture with his right hand and then pointed at Patriarch Reliance.

“Eighth Demon Sealing Hex!”

Instantly, Patriarch Reliance ground to a halt. At the same time, the golden magical symbols floating around him blazed with light and then pressed back down onto him. Patriarch Reliance went stiff, and his eyes widened as he glared furiously at Meng Hao. However, there was simply nothing he could do against the Demon Sealing Hex.

“Now that’s a good boy,” Meng Hao said, stepped forward and patting Patriarch Reliance on the head. Patriarch Reliance glared at him angrily, but was incapable of even moving, and could only make slight whimpering sounds.

Meng Hao felt a bit bad, so he looked at Patriarch Reliance and said, “Patriarch, I have my own problems to deal with. Just stop struggling. You know, even becoming my mount wouldn’t be too embarrassing, right? Look, how about this? Just let me get Lord Li’s legacy, and then if you don’t feel like coming along with me after that, you can just go on your own way.”

Patriarch Reliance looked up in thought, and even Meng Hao could tell that he was planning something. However, he ignored that and flickered into motion, appearing down on Patriarch Reliance’s back. The hundreds of cultivators that had flown up all continued to bow to him respectfully from a distance, not daring to get near him.

Meng Hao looked around before stepping forward to appear in one of the low-lying areas in the State of Zhao, on the shore of a lake. Guyiding Tri-Rain was standing there looking very charming, and as Meng Hao approached, she smiled.

Their gazes met, and they laughed happily.

“I haven’t forgotten about my promise to you,” he said. “I will help you become a sea one day.”

“Oh, I’ve already become a sea,” she replied, covering her smile with her hand.

Startled, Meng Hao looked out at the lake, and then looked at Mount Daqing off in the distance. Finally, he nodded thoughtfully. Then he suddenly sank down into the ground, moving downward into the depths of the State of Zhao. Down and down he went, sending his divine sense ahead to lock down onto a certain position at the very bottom of the State of Zhao, where it actually met with Patriarch Reliance's back. There… was a door!

However, as Meng Hao got close to it, Patriarch Reliance's body suddenly shuddered as he violently cast off the Eighth Hex. At the same time, a violent energy began to build up.

Rumbling could be heard as the golden magical symbols seemed to once again be on the verge of being cast off.

The lands trembled, a sensation Meng Hao could clearly experience considering how far down he was. Frowning, his right hand flashed with an incantation gesture. This time, the wave of his finger unleashed the Seventh Demon Sealing Hex. Patriarch Reliance once again roared, body trembling. However, Meng Hao's Seventh Hex formed a resonance with the hex inside of him, and once again he was stabilized.

"Don't get so excited," Meng Hao consoled calmly. "I'm just here to take the legacy. After that you can go. I've known for years that you were here in the Eighth Mountain and Sea and still never came looking for you to be my mount." With that, Meng Hao took a step forward toward the door.

A faint light surrounded the door, and as Meng Hao neared it, he could sense familiar fluctuations. It even seemed as if something were calling to him!

Those fluctuations were those of the League of Demon Sealers, and the calling seemed to send his Demon Sealing Hexing magic into sudden motion. In fact, the ancient Demon Sealing Jade inside of his bag of holding was also vibrating.

"Definitely the League of Demon Sealers…. In that case, I wonder… what generation Demon Sealer Lord Li was?!" A strange light shone in Meng Hao's eyes as his previous speculations were confirmed by at least seventy percent.

However, even as Meng Hao neared the door, and the sensation of a resonance grew even stronger, Patriarch Reliance once again began to struggle mightily, as if he had been pricked. As he roared, the golden magical symbols once again began to shake, as if… they were just about to collapse.

Even more shocking was that a powerful aura was rising up within Patriarch Reliance. Unexpectedly… it was similar to the Dao Realm, and it was rising rapidly!

1-Essence. 2-Essences. 3-Essences Dao Lord….

Amidst all the rumbling, Meng Hao frowned. If he couldn’t get Patriarch Reliance to calm down, it could affect his attempt to acquire the legacy.

“Patriarch, calm down. Be a good boy.” Meng Hao stamped his right foot down, shattering the connection between Patriarch Reliance’s shell and the land mass above it. As that happened… a pitch-black turtle shell was revealed, as well as numerous shocking spikes which were imbedded therein!

Furthermore… something else was visible on the turtle shell, off in the distance. It was… something that had slowly been twisted over time as Patriarch Reliance had grown up. It was… a line of writing.

As soon as Patriarch Reliance realized what was happening, he roared in fury and embarrassment: “Hey, don’t look at that!!”

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# Chapter 1306: Third Generation Demon Sealer!

Patriarch Reliance was intensely angry and embarrassed. Shaking, he roared as he attempted to cast off Meng Hao’s Demon Sealing Hexing magic. It was possible now to see how enraged he was because of the characters written on his back….

Meng Hao gaped in shock as he studied the line of characters which had been warped and faded over time as Patriarch Reliance grew up. Soon… a strange expression appeared on his face.

“Meng Hao’s turtle….” he read. His eyes went wide, and he cleared his throat. He almost couldn’t believe what he was seeing. Then he thought about what had happened with his Wooden Time Sword and Stepdad Ke’s terracotta soldier, and gradually he understood. 1

Everything that had happened back in the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect had seemed illusory, but the truth was… by means of the divine ability of the Demon spirit Night, it was actually real. As of this moment, Meng Hao felt completely shaken.

“So it turns out that the turtle I saw in that pagoda in the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect really was the young Patriarch Reliance?” Even as Meng Hao pondered the matter, Patriarch Reliance roared in rage.

“I figured it out a while ago, Meng Hao you little bastard! Long, long ago I somehow ran into you, and y-y-you… you actually had the audacity to carve words into my back!!”

The expression on Meng Hao’s face grew more wry as he realized that, in addition to the turtle’s pride, the main reason Patriarch Reliance didn’t want to become his mount could very likely be… the words he himself had carved onto his back.

Perhaps if someone else had become the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer and had tried to make him a mount… then Patriarch Reliance wouldn’t have refused so vehemently.

Meng Hao’s thoughts were in a jumble. As of this moment, he had gained a deeper understanding of the Dao of Time and grasped onto some ideas regarding it, but at the same time clear enlightenment evaded him.

Meng Hao cleared his throat and said, “Ahem. Listen, Patriarch, being stubborn isn’t a good personality trait, you know.”

Ignoring the roars of Patriarch Reliance, he performed an incantation gesture with his right hand and then waved his finger a few more times. Instantly, Demon Sealing Hexing magic was unleashed, landing on Patriarch Reliance and causing him to shiver. The golden magical symbols surrounding him flared with bright light, completely suppressing him.

In that moment, Patriarch Reliance was immobilized, hovering in the starry sky and unable to do anything except whimper, which caused an intense feeling of unfairness to well up in his heart.

Meng Hao flashed into motion; in the blink of an eye, he was in front of the door, and then he stepped into it. As he did, the fluctuations of the League of Demon Sealers inside of him exploded out.

The call and resonance grew to a shocking level, and Meng Hao’s mind reeled. At the same time, the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex, the Body Hexing Magic, was unleashed. Next was the Seventh Hex, Karmic Hexing. After that was the Sixth Hex, Life Death Hexing. Finally came the Fifth Hex, the Inside Outside Hex.

For the first time, the four Hexing magics… solidified within Meng Hao’s mind!

They transformed into four magical symbols which shone with brilliant light. As they floated there in Meng Hao’s mind, his vision began to swim. A moment later, though, it cleared, and he was inside the door!

He saw… a strange world!

It had a yellow sky that spread out in all directions. The clouds were black, and roaring sounds could be heard therein, as the occasional flickering shadows of enormous beasts about could be seen moving about.

No plants or vegetation could be seen on the ground, which was pure white and stretched as far off as the eye could see. It gave a peculiar impression that nothing here was real. Off in the distance was an enormous statue of a middle-aged man sitting cross-legged in meditation. It was so gigantic that despite being seated cross-legged, the man’s body reached as high as the sky, seemingly bracing up Heaven and Earth!

Although the statue didn’t seem to be very far away, when Meng Hao sent his divine sense out, he found that despite its current level and the level of his cultivation base, he was unable to even touch the statue. Apparently the statue was much farther away than it actually seemed.

Just looking at it, he could see that both of the statue’s hands were locked in incantation gestures, and that a slowly rotating magical symbol floated above each hand. Furthermore, roiling mist could be seen at the statue’s forehead, pulsing with a boundless life force that could shake Heaven and Earth.

After looking around at his surroundings, Meng Hao was shaken. These lands, this world, everything here was clearly vastly different than what was on the outside. Everything seemed so different that the feeling of unreality seemed even stronger than before.

After a moment of thought, he looked back at the statue with an even keener gaze than before.

“Lord Li….” he murmured softly. Almost as soon as he laid eyes on the statue, he had been able to tell… that this was the former Mountain and Sea

Lord of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, Lord Li!

Although Meng Hao had never seen him before, his heart was telling him that this statue depicted none other than Lord Li!

His heart was filled with mixed emotions as he looked at the statue. Lord Li was a legendary figure in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, a person who represented the former glory of a bygone era.

Back in when he was alive, Patriarch Fang and Patriarch Ji had both been subservient to him, as well as the Archdemons, plus Ke Yunhai and his contemporaries as war generals. Because of all of that, the Ninth Mountain and Sea, while not the most powerful force in the Mountain and Sea Realm, was most assuredly not viewed as being weak. 2

“Lord Li issued a decree regarding the Heavens….” Meng Hao murmured, recalling something that Ke Yunhai had told him. 3

After a while, Meng Hao took a deep breath, then clasped hands and bowed deeply to the statue of Lord Li. As the Crown Prince of the Fang Clan, and having been born and raised in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, it was only proper for him to pay respects to the former Lord of the Ninth Mountain and Sea!

After offering formal greetings, Meng Hao looked back up and then gaped in shock.

He had no idea why, but now that he looked at the statue, it didn’t look like a middle-aged man, but rather, a woman. Although she wasn’t spectacularly beautiful, she seemed kind and gentle.

Meng Hao looked more closely, and suddenly, the statue seemed to be a man once again. It was really difficult to tell the difference.

Meng Hao pondered thoughtfully. According to the legends, Lord Li’s true origins were shrouded in mystery. However, even more mysterious was he himself. No one actually knew whether he was a man or woman; in fact, not even people who had been his closest companions truly knew.

Even as Meng Hao frowned, the entire world suddenly filled with a sound like murmured whispering. It floated about, filling Heaven and Earth, brushing past Meng Hao’s ears.

“In the past… I gained enlightenment regarding all life, and issued a decree regarding the Heavens….

“The Sublime Spirit Scripture. The Heaven Severing Scripture. The Dao Divinity Scripture…. What has been passed down in the world are only fragments. The three scriptures, when combined, become… the Mountain and Sea Scripture.

“The Mountain and Sea Scripture has nine volumes, and each one of the Lords of the Nine Mountains and Seas has one of those volumes….

“Then there are the three great Doyens, who have passed down their legacy for tens of thousands of years, all for the sake of the destined holder of the Scriptures….

“Heaven and Earth are everlasting, the starry sky is boundless. I come from a distant place, and am not a cultivator of the Mountain and Sea Realm…. However, because a fragment of my obsession remained unquenched, I desired to borrow these skies to live….

“My obsession then resided in the Mountain and Sea Realm, and I gained enlightenment of the Dao of Nine Seals. I encountered the Second Generation Demon Sealer, and was redeemed. I learned of the difference between right and wrong, and I became… the Third Generation Demon Sealer!

“As a Demon Sealer, I eventually walked the path of a Paragon. I looked into the past to observe the First Generation, Nine Seals. I came to understand his Dao, and to know him as a person. Eventually I achieved my ambition of reaching the Daosource…. I pursued the Dao of reality, and experienced the Immeasurable Tribulation of life….

“Here I leave some divine will, on the back of a sly devil, as a remembrance for the League of Demon Sealers…. The legacy that I shall pass on is not the Mountain and Sea Scripture, it is not an ordinary cultivation method, it is not an almighty expert, it is not Karma magic, it is not a figure of destiny. I shall pass on… the League of Demon Sealers!

“This has launched a new era, and fulfilled my ultimate desire.” When the undulating voice reached this point, everything began to tremble, and the magical symbols floating above the statue’s hands suddenly exploded with Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering light.

Meng Hao trembled as the words and the magical symbols caused his Demon Sealing Hexing magic to fluctuate thousands of times more powerfully than before. The magical symbols formed from the manifestation of the four great Hexing magics in his mind suddenly made him realize what the two magical symbols held by the statue were. They were… two great Hexing magics of the League of Demon Sealers!

“One is the Hexing magic of the Second Generation Demon Sealer, the other is… the Hexing magic created by Lord Li, the Third Generation Demon Sealer!!” Meng Hao gasped as he came to understand the full meaning of the words spoken to him so long ago by the Demon Sealing Jade.

“The First Generation is the Ancestor,” he murmured, “the Second Generation is the Inheritor, the Third Generation is the most powerful!” A tremor ran through him as he took a step toward the statue. However, even as he did, the magical symbol in Lord Li’s left hand flew out, radiating dazzling light as it then merged into the ground. 4

At the same time, Heaven and Earth distorted. The black clouds roared, and the sky screamed. The lands quaked as numerous primordial beasts appeared up above, roaring as they flew toward Meng Hao. Everything in Heaven and Earth seemed to radiate a hostility targeted specifically toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s foot paused in mid-stride; as soon as he stopped, rumbling sounds filled the sky, and the land directly beneath his feet began to sink down. At the same time, the lands far away began to stretch up, as if

Heaven and Earth were merging together to form a sphere, collapsing and closing in on itself!

And Meng Hao was about to be crushed inside!

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

The clouds collapsed, and the primordial beasts howled as they attempted to escape. And yet, many of those beasts were crushed to pieces, creating a rain of blood that fell down onto the ground. The Heavens above also began to distort as if to connect with the rising portions of the Earth. Everything was shrinking, and massive pressure weighed down. Meng Hao coughed up a mouthful of blood as he looked around, his eyes flashing.

“Is this a test? Or is this how the legacy is passed on?” He looked around, but couldn’t immediately find any method of escaping this place.

While all of that was happening, while Meng Hao was on Patriarch Reliance’s back attempting to gain the good fortune of the legacy, an incredible power was exploding out in the rift between the Seventh and Eighth Mountains and Seas, shattering the void and causing Essence power to lash about chaotically.

All of that was happening because of Lord White!

His face was grim and twisted with pain as he sat cross-legged within the void, healing himself. Occasionally he would growl as layered scales appeared all over his body, which would then disappear moments later.

His aura was gradually growing stronger, and his injuries were healing rapidly. Every so often his eyes would open, and they would radiate with hatred and indescribable killing intent.

“Another month, and then I’ll be completely healed. Next time I encounter him, he’s dead!

“I know all his tricks now, so next time… he shall die!”

Rumbling sounds echoed out as Lord White closed his eyes, covering up the killing intent. However, a murderous aura continued to radiate out, filling the entire area, causing an explosive windstorm to surge around him.

2. After going back and checking, I realized that I wasn't consistent with how I translated the titles of the three Demons who worked for Lord Li. They were only mentioned a few times, and I've since gone back and changed those references. In all references, they are now Archdemons

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# Chapter 1307: Hex Enlightenment

Within the world of the door on Patriarch Reliance’s back, everything was turning upside down. Heaven and Earth were connecting, becoming an enormous sphere. Inside that sphere, Meng Hao felt incredible pressure weighing down on him, causing cracking sounds to echo out as if he were about to collapse.

Rumbling sounds echoed out as everything shrank down at rapid speed. Originally, he couldn’t even see the ends of this Heaven and Earth, but in the next moment, the border was visible only 5,000 kilometers away.

The shrinking of Heaven and Earth would apparently be completed within the space of a few breaths of time.

Either he would successfully pass the test and acquire the legacy, or… he would die here, undeserving of the League of Demon Sealers. Although there were no spoken words to explain this, the shocking sight of the destruction of Heaven and Earth made it very clear what was happening.

Meng Hao’s eyes were bright red as Heaven and Earth shrank down rapidly. He had little time to think, and in fact, the edges of the sphere were now only 3,000 meters away. The speed with which they were moving was unthinkable, and the rumbling sounds completely inundated Meng Hao.

Pain stabbed through him, and the sensation of death reached an indescribably intense level. Just as Meng Hao seemed to be on the verge of being eradicated, his eyes suddenly snapped open, and they glowed with enlightenment!

“My obsession resided in the Mountain and Sea Realm, and I gained enlightenment of the Dao of Nine Seals. I encountered the Second

Generation Demon Sealer, and was redeemed. I learned of the difference between what is correct and what is incorrect, and I became… the Third Generation Demon Sealer! Within the words spoken earlier by Lord Li, there were two specific words that were the key!

“Correct and incorrect!”

The Hexing magic of the Second Generation Demon Sealer had something to do with what is correct and what is incorrect. If you combine the so-called correct and incorrect with what is happening right now, then you could actually replace them with two other words!!

“Real and unreal!” Meng Hao’s eyes glowed with bright light. As the pressure weighed down on him, a thousand thoughts ran through his head, and suddenly, his eyes flickered.

Suddenly, Meng Hao said, “The Second Demon Sealing Hex, Real-Unreal Hexing!”

In that instant, Heaven and Earth rumbled, and the sphere they formed completely covered him. They would not tolerate resistance, and yet, Meng Hao did not struggle or fight back.

RUMBLE!

Heaven and Earth had become one!

Meng Hao’s mind reeled as he realized that he couldn’t feel his body. It was as if it had been destroyed in that moment in which Heaven and Earth became one. Only his soul existed, floating there as he looked around blankly. Then he looked down and saw that his fleshly body was nowhere to be seen. The sphere formed by the combination of Heaven and Earth had turned into a tiny dot, which was now beginning to expand. It grew larger and larger, and gradually, primal chaos could be seen inside of it.

It had a Heaven, and an Earth. There were living beings and creatures, all mixed together. As it grew larger, it became endless, and then everything separated.

Part of it sank down to become land, and part of it floated up to become the sky….

Primordial beasts could be seen everywhere, flying about in the sky, crying out with piercing screeches that echoed about. Soon, trees became visible on the land, which grew tall and mighty.

Mountain ranges rose up, and rivers appeared. Somehow all of it seemed intensely real to Meng Hao.

“Do you understand?” asked a placid voice. A man appeared out of thin air to stand in front of Meng Hao.

It was none other than the man carved in the statue, Lord Li!

When he looked at Meng Hao, though, Meng Hao got the sensation that Lord Li wasn’t actually looking at him. It was a very odd feeling.

“The Second Generation Demon Sealer’s Hexing magic is that of the real and unreal….” Lord Li continued, “After searching for the legacy of the First Generation Demon Sealer’s original Hexing magic, he gained enlightenment of the Real-Unreal Hexing.

“What is real is unreal. What is unreal is real. With a single thought, what is unreal can be taken as real, and what is real can be taken as unreal….”

Meng Hao took a deep breath, and his eyes gleamed with enlightenment. This was not his first time encountering such a thing. Back when he fought the 5-Essences Xiao Yihan, he had seen the boy unleash the Essence of reality.

After looking around one more time, he slowly closed his eyes and sat down cross-legged. He then sent his divine sense out to seek enlightenment in Heaven and Earth, to find that spark of understanding of the Real-Unreal Hexing that had flashed through his mind moments ago.

Time passed, although he wasn’t sure how much. Finally, his eyes opened, and a smile could be seen on his face. Meng Hao extended his hand.

Although it was illusory, it seemed real, and yet, at the same time, was real, and seemed illusory. Gradually, his entire arm, and then his whole body, experienced the same type of transformation. Meng Hao let out a long sigh.

“Real becoming unreal,” he murmured. “Unreal becoming real. It’s simply a type of transformation…. The Real-Unreal Hex can turn real things illusory, and vice versa. What a powerful Hex…. In fact, only Paragons could truly control it.” He looked up at the projection of Lord Li which had been standing there this entire time. Rising to his feet, he clasped hands and bowed.

“Many thanks, Senior. I understand now.” As soon as he said that he understood, the image of Lord Li seemed to suddenly become more lifelike, and he smiled.

“That is the Second Generation Demon Sealer’s Hexing magic. As for mine… it is very different. I will show it to you. As for whether or not you will be able to understand it, well, that is up to you.

“Let me ask you a question. Do you truly understand the difference between what is real and what is unreal?” With that, the image of Lord Li looked deeply into Meng Hao’s eyes, then suddenly vanished.

Only his voice remained behind, floating about gently before fading away: “My obsession has ended, and I shall now pursue the path of my true self. If you and I are connected by destiny, then we might meet again. Or perhaps… that will only come after countless eons.”

Meng Hao frowned, looking around him once more. Unfortunately, he could find no traces whatsoever of the Hexing magic to which Lord Li had referred.

“The Third Generation Demon Sealer’s Hexing magic….” he thought, looking somewhat confused. Finally he closed his eyes and began to seek enlightenment of his surroundings.

Time passed. Several days later, Meng Hao opened his eyes, and yet still had no idea of what to do. The only thing that he could sense was that the world he was in seemed like something from ancient times.

Also, he could confirm that this place… was not illusory, but was indeed real.

He looked down and could see that he had no body, only a soul. After considering the matter for a moment, he began to fly, to examine the land, the sky, and the vegetation….

More time passed. A month. Meng Hao was starting to get anxious because of the passage of time, which he could clearly sense. According to his speculations, the passage of time in this world was no different than that in the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“I need to figure out a way out of here. Based on how much time has passed, Lord White of the Seventh Mountain and Sea will most likely have fully recovered by now!” Meng Hao sent his divine sense out to search for an exit.

However, another whole month passed, and he still had no idea what was going on. More anxious than ever, he waved his right hand, summoning a divine ability. Everything began to tremble, portions of Heaven and Earth collapsed, and yet no exit could be seen.

Apparently, this place was a trap, and he was now stuck here permanently.

One month. Two months. Three months…. Meng Hao was starting to go mad. Booms rang out constantly as he attempted to free himself. He unleashed the Demon Sealing Hexing magics, and yet, none of that did any good.

He howled, demanding for Lord Li to appear, but Lord Li had long since left. There were primordial beasts in the world, but considering how much Meng Hao was raging, none of them dared to show their faces.

Despite Meng Hao’s deepening anxiety, time passed relentlessly.

A year. Three years. Six years….

Meng Hao watched time passing by, lonely and also worried about his Grandpa Meng. However, there was nothing he could do except experience the stabbing pains in his heart.

“Six years have already passed….” he murmured bitterly. He could only hope that his own judgement regarding the passage of time was somehow incorrect, and that time moved differently here than in the outside world.

However… ten more years passed. Meng Hao could feel his soul aging, and his body trembling. Because of that, he now had the feeling that his previous speculation had indeed been correct, that time here and time in the outside world… passed at the same speed.

A hundred years went by, and Meng Hao had become calm. Except, that calmness was a facade. Deep in his heart, he was worried about his Grandpa Meng, the Ninth Mountain and Sea, Xu Qing, and especially the 33 Heavens and the other two terrifying forces approaching the Mountain and Sea Realm. The worry in his heart was impossible to dispel.

“What’s going on…?” he thought bitterly. Throughout the hundred years which had passed, he had tried everything he could think of, but nothing worked.

500 years later, Meng Hao was truly calm.

After that much time had passed, whatever happened on the outside world was over and done with, and could not be changed.

Most of the time, he wasn’t even conscious. He spread his divine sense outwards ever further, and would go for long periods without retracting it.

1,000 years passed. Then 1,500. Then 5,000….

Eventually, Meng Hao lost sense of the passage of time. Whether it was 50,000 years or 100,000, he didn’t really know. He was no longer truly conscious. The only thing that remained behind were the tiny strands of thought that were diffused throughout the world.

He had seen the world transform, had seen animals live and die, had seen the grand passage of time. He had even seen humanoid creatures come into being. They hunted the wild beasts, gradually learning their habits, and eventually began to develop. Meng Hao sent his thoughts out into the world, whereupon the living beings learned how to practice cultivation.

More time passed, although it was impossible to tell how much. The cultivators of the world grew more numerous, and their cultivation level grew higher. They began to war with each other, and the resulting dead were innumerable.

More time passed. After the wars passed, life flourished again, and everyone prospered. Then there was war again, and after that, prosperity. It happened over and over again until one day a hail of fire descended from the sky above.

The world burned, transforming into ash, as if everything that had been built up was being knocked over and was now starting over from scratch. Meng Hao was not conscious, and yet his thoughts were everywhere, observing everything.

Life appeared again, prospered, and then devolved into war. Again, everything was destroyed by fire from Heaven. It was like a cycle.

Meng Hao no longer thought of things in terms of the passage of time, but in terms of cycles.

One cycle after another, over and over. Meng Hao saw endless life and death, endless joy and sorrow. He was like a visitor, or a passerby, until it reached the point that he didn’t even know what it was that he was watching. The cycles continued until the 10,000th cycle arrived.

When the 10,000th cycle was destroyed by fire from Heaven, when everything was destroyed, the world didn’t vanish. Instead, it continued to burn. Rumbling sounds could be heard as everything shook and shattered. Meng Hao’s thoughts, which had been scattered throughout the world for so long, suddenly began to converge back together.

As the world was destroyed, he slowly began to regain lucidity….

It was as if the cage he had been trapped in for such a long time, was collapsing.

The rumbling lasted for a long time, until Heaven shattered and Earth collapsed. When everything was gone, Meng Hao finally… opened his eyes!

There he was in the world of the door on Patriarch Reliance’s back. However, the sky had vanished, and the land was nothing but a void. The only thing that existed was the statue of Lord Li, smiling at Meng Hao, seemingly asking him a question.

Do you really understand?

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# Chapter 1308: Searching For The Present Life!

Meng Hao was looking at the statue, and yet his eyes were blank, lacking even the slightest spark of focus. He had experienced 10,000 cycles of destruction by fire from Heaven, cycles which had contained innumerable years.

If you took one of those cycles and split it into 10,000 parts, then perhaps the amount of time he had lived in the Mountain and Sea Realm wouldn't even count as one of those parts. To him, it was almost as if… the Mountain and Sea Realm were illusory, and everything he had experienced in the world of cycles was the real life.

What was real? What was unreal? He knew, and yet could not distinguish clearly between the two.

Meng Hao was as confused as ever, his eyes were completely without focus. Everything about him was still wrapped up within that world, unable to return. Before, he had believed that he understood the Real-Unreal Hexing, but apparently, that was of no assistance to him now.

If nothing interfered, Meng Hao might sit there cross-legged until his fleshly body withered and his soul faded away. Then, he would be completely and utterly dead.

Because… he could not find what was real within the unreal.

He would remain lost in the sands of time, unable to find his present life.

Days passed, and his body began to slowly wither. His complexion grew pale and old, and his life force began to fade. His eyes remained as blank as ever.

Seven days later, he looked like little more than skin and bones. His soul was beginning to disperse, and his life force was growing weaker by the moment. He was like an oil lamp just on the verge of going out forever.

Half a month passed…. The flame in that oil lamp was sputtering, as if it would wink out at any moment. Although it still burned, it was growing weaker. Eventually, on the twentieth day after Meng Hao returned, the flame of his life force went out.

And yet, in that moment in which death loomed, Meng Hao’s body suddenly shivered. As the flame went out, a gleam of struggle appeared in his eyes.

That struggle was very, very weak, and yet it caused the flame of his life force to spark slightly. Then, the struggling increased. A sound rang out inside of Meng Hao, a roaring that caused his body to sway gently. Veins of blood seeped into his eyes; he was awakening!!

The struggle lasted for three more days. During that time, he never stopped trembling. The flame of his life force continued to burn, and his soul began to boil. His eyes gradually grew more and more focused.

Three more days passed. It had now been a total of twenty-seven days since Meng Hao returned. Gradually, sound emerged from his mouth, shaky and unclear, and yet, it was clearly his voice.

“I… am… Meng… Hao!”

He began repeating the same thing over and over. Clearly, it was a strain. He was only saying four words, and yet it caused his entire body to shake violently. Soon, as he repeated the words, they grew clearer and more distinct!

“I… am… Meng Hao!

“I… am Meng Hao!”

In the end, he could finally say all of the words in succession.

“I am Meng Hao!!”

In that moment, his mind filled with rumbling sounds. It was like Heavenly thunder that caused his entire world to tremble. At long last, a spark of focus could be seen within his eyes.

That spark indicated that his consciousness… had returned!

When that happened, the statue of Lord Li remained exactly the same as before, and yet somehow, his smile seemed to contain approval. The magical symbols above the statue’s hands suddenly flew toward Meng Hao and then merged into his forehead.

The first to enter him was the Second Generation Demon Sealer’s Hexing magic, the Real-Unreal Hexing!

As it merged into him, his entire body was filled with rumbling sounds.

“This is the real and the unreal. Find the unreal within the real, find the real within the unreal. When you can do that, then you… have acquired the Second Demon Sealing Hex!

“Within the countless years of illusory life, you managed to find that drop of reality in an ocean of the unreal. Henceforth, the Real-Unreal Hexing… will pose no confusion for you!”

Rumbling filled the magical symbol as the state of his consciousness grew stronger. Then he began to pant as the second magical symbol merged into his forehead.

“This is my Hexing magic, which I have come to call… Present-Ancient Hexing!

“Time is incalculable. Heaven and Earth are limitless. Gain enlightenment of the years which have passed since ancient times. Observe the Heavens being destroyed. Experience catastrophe after catastrophe. Return to the ancient to seek the present….

“You have done this, and thus you qualify to acquire my Third Demon Sealing Hex!

“There is one huge regret I have in my life, and that is… I was not destined to combine the nine hexes. In the past, I was able to deduce that at some time in the future, the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer would be able to converge the fate of the entire League of Demon Sealers, to reverse victory into defeat, to gain enlightenment of all of the other eight hexes, and then create the Ninth Hex….

“That person… would be someone even I would look up to… the ultimate pinnacle!

“Nine Hexing magics, beyond compare in all the Heavens!”

The regret-filled voice echoed out in Meng Hao’s mind and body like thunder, although he was the only one who could hear it. His body was no longer trembling, and his eyes were open. And yet somehow, as he looked up, it almost looked like… he was opening his eyes again!

His opened eyes were now completely clear and focused. Within his mind, memories of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, the Eighth Mountain and Sea, and the Mountain and Sea Realm suddenly exploded out. They grew more and more profound, filling him, until the boundless time of that other Heaven and Earth were gradually suppressed. Soon, his old memories were his everything!

Meng Hao said nothing. He simply felt the six Hexing magic symbols that floated in his mind. They were the Eighth, Seventh, Sixth, Fifth, Third, and Second Hexing magics!

Now, all he lacked were the Fourth and First Hexes!

Once he gathered those two great Hexing magics, then he would be able to create… that which was fully of him, the final Ninth Hex!

After a long moment passed, Meng Hao looked at the statue of Lord Li, then slowly rose to his feet. Mixed emotions could be seen in his eyes, including sorrow and reminiscence.

“Lord Li, Third Generation Demon Sealer,” he murmured. “How incredible….” This had been one of the most challenging experiences of his entire life. Although it might have seemed a simple thing, the level of difficulty involved was something only he could understand.

It was something more terrifying than death. Death… was merely an end. However, losing oneself, forgetting everything you cared about, everything that mattered to you, was something that could be counted as the most bitter torment for a cultivator.

Similarly, being lost in an illusory world, and being unable to find true life, could be considered a profound form of grief.

“The real and the unreal. The present and the ancient…. I understand now,” Meng Hao said softly as he looked at the statue of Lord Li. Finally, he raised his hand and waved it out in front of him.

Instantly, the pitch-black illusory world around him shattered, transforming into innumerable fragments. At the same time, the statue of Lord Li also collapsed into bits and pieces!

A huge boom rang out as the entire world fell apart.

However, after it shattered, things didn’t dissolve into a haze. Instead… a yellow sky appeared, with black clouds and white land. Off in the distance, the statue was still visible.

Strangely, a magical symbol floated above the statue’s right hand, and yet its left hand… was completely empty. That magical symbol was actually the entire sky up above!

Now it was clear what was truly real!

The second world which he had experienced… had been illusory and unreal!

Rumbling could be heard as Lord Li’s smile, while seemingly unchanging, seemed to suddenly contain profound surprise, and then praise.

“You understand,” said a voice, echoing out softly throughout the world.

In that instant, the magical symbol floating above the right hand vanished, as did the magical symbol up above in the sky. They both transformed into beams of light which shot down toward Meng Hao and merged into him.

Meng Hao didn’t dodge or evade. He allowed the two glowing magical symbol to approach, merge into him, and then cause the Second and Third Hexes within him to become absolutely complete!

All of a sudden, it occurred to Meng Hao to ask a question. “If I hadn’t seen what was unreal about that second world, and instead left through the door after returning, what would I have seen?”

“I don’t know,” the voice replied softly. Although it seemed weak, the reality was that it was coming from very, very far away.

As the voice got further and further away, the boundless life force mist on the statue’s forehead flew down toward Meng Hao, enveloping him, nourishing his body.

It only took a moment for him to recover from his withered state. His soul was more powerful, and his divine sense experienced additional growth. Now, his divine sense was not forty percent of that of a Paragon, but rather fifty percent.

In the briefest of instants, he reached his ultimate peak!

However, Meng Hao wasn’t paying attention to those physical transformations. Instead, he was pondering the question he had just asked. After a while, he chuckled hoarsely as he realized that there was no explanation. Since that was the case, there was no point in continuing to seek an answer.

He clasped hands and bowed once more, then turned. However, he didn’t leave yet. Instead, he summoned his 33 Soul Lamps, which began to swirl around him.

Meng Hao looked at his second Soul Lamp. His voice cool, he said, “Extinguishing Soul Lamps in the Ancient Realm consists of Seven Desolations…. The First Desolation is that of the illusory. For me, that shouldn’t pose any problem now. I should be able to extinguish all of the first five lamps… as easily as flipping over my hand!”

“Second lamp, extinguish!” The instant the words left his mouth, his second Soul Lamp winked out, as if it had been blown out with an invisible breath of air!

Green smoke appeared, and before anything illusory could even appear, Meng Hao breathed it in through his nose. Rumbling filled his mind and body.

His cultivation base exploded up, his divine sense increased, and his fleshly body grew stronger. Although it wasn’t a complete redoubling, he was still growing much stronger.

A windstorm sprang up around him, raging through the world, even as his eyes came to fall upon his third Soul Lamp.

“Third lamp, extinguish!”

RUMBLE!

His third lamp went out, and the First Desolation of delusion began. However, because of his new ability to find the real within the unreal, and the unreal within the real, to return from the ancient and seek the present… this Desolation collapsed with a single blow!

From ancient times until now, when Allheaven Dao Immortals extinguished Soul Lamps, they involved one shocking battle after another, and required extreme caution. There had never been a situation like Meng Hao's, in which he completely crushed the Desolations. They were like rotten logs which could be smashed instantly!

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# Chapter 1309: Cultivation Base, Erupt!

In the instant that his third Soul Lamp was extinguished, the others flickered as though a wind had passed by.

“The Seven Desolations….” Meng Hao said coolly, closing his eyes. He could sense the rumbling within him, the explosive rise of his cultivation base, and the increase of his divine sense by ten percent!

Right now, his divine sense was equivalent to sixty percent of that of a Paragon!

“If I extinguish the other thirty Soul Lamps, then my divine sense will be three times as powerful as a Paragon’s! Even if it’s only three times as powerful as a 7-Essences Paragon, that’s still a terrifying level of power.” Meng Hao’s eyes opened, and they shone brightly. He took a deep breath as the rumbling sounds continued to echo out within him. Everything about him was still growing stronger, his cultivation base, his fleshly body, and his soul.

“To me, the Ancient Realm is no longer just a waypoint. Instead… it is a time of unprecedented transformation!” He swished his sleeve, causing a wind to spring up in all directions. He sent his divine sense out into the area, and could sense that he was now sixty to seventy percent more powerful than before!

“And I can get even stronger!” he said, eyes glittering. He looked at his fourth Soul Lamp, and then inwardly instructed it to be extinguished!

As the flame vanished, green smoke rose up, which rushed into Meng Hao’s nose, causing further intense rumbling sounds. His cultivation base shot higher, causing a wind to spring up that filled the entire world.

His divine sense grew again, rising from its previous level of sixty percent all the way to seventy percent!!

His fleshly body issued cracking sounds, and his soul felt as if it would burst out from inside of him. Scintillating light shone out from his eyes, as if they had become the source of all the light in the world.

The First Desolation of the Seven Desolations created illusory visions that were completely meaningless to Meng Hao. They couldn’t shake him in the slightest.

This might be the Ancient Tribulation of an Allheaven Dao Immortal, but it was incapable of comparing with Meng Hao’s experience regarding the real and the unreal, nor could it contend with the Meng Hao who had searched through infinite time to find his present life!

A single look on his part could cause all illusions to shatter as if they had never even existed. They were smashed into smithereens!

When his fourth Soul Lamp was extinguished, Meng Hao’s energy rocketed up. At the same time, just as he was about to extinguish the fifth lamp, a furious roar echoed out from the fourth lamp. The air distorted, and a huge hand became visible. It pierced through the rift between the illusory and the real, stretching out to grab Meng Hao.

“DIE!!” roared an enraged voice. Meng Hao was not unfamiliar with this voice or this hand. The owner of that voice was none other than… that entity which Meng Hao had encountered before, which hid in the Ancient Tribulation clouds, and had come to hate Meng Hao deep within its bones during the First Desolation.

It had been waiting for Meng Hao to return to the Desolation of Delusion, but could never have imagined that he would do so having experienced such transformations. Furthermore, there was only one more Soul Lamp left, and once it was extinguished, the First Desolation would be completely concluded. It would have no other chance to do anything to Meng Hao after that, so right now, it was incredibly anxious. Therefore, all it could do was attack now to prevent Meng Hao from extinguishing that lamp.

“I’ve been waiting for you for a while now,” Meng Hao said as the huge hand bore down on him. He extended his right hand as quickly as lightning. In fact, it moved so quickly that it looked like his hand was still at his side, when in fact it had already grabbed onto the huge hand which was trying to grab him.

That hand was much, much smaller than it had been back when he was transcending his Ancient Tribulation, or when he had been inside the First Desolation. It was now only about three meters wide, and currently it had ground to a halt, completely immobilized by Meng Hao, unable to budge at all.

A flustered and exasperated roar echoed out, a roar that even contained disbelief. Meng Hao snorted coldly, then waved his right hand, causing his cultivation base to burst with power. Cracking sounds rang out, accompanied by a miserable shriek. Meng Hao then jerked back on the hand he was holding, causing a shadowy figure to be yanked out of the fourth Soul Lamp.

It was like a dragon formed of black mist, which twisted and jerked as it was pulled out. A cry of alarm could be heard as Meng Hao clenched down with his right hand. Rumbling sounds could be heard, and the mist began to shrink. It was almost as if Meng Hao’s hand had become a black hole. In the blink of an eye, he had sucked all of the mist into the palm of his hand.

“Do you want to live, or die?” Meng Hao asked coolly, looking coldly down at the mist within his palm. The foggy ball churned and seethed until a terrified face came to be visible within. It looked surprised, shocked even. However, it seemed to still be holding onto its dignity, and Meng Hao’s words caused it to let out an unyielding, hate-filled roar.

“You really want to die?!” Meng Hao began to close his hand into a fist, causing cracking sounds to ring out. The black mist appeared to be on the verge of shattering, and a miserable shriek rang out. All of a sudden, under the pressure of imminent death, the entity within the mist finally chose to submit.

“Too late,” Meng Hao said, clenching his hand down hard. A boom rang out, and the mist collapsed as easily as a wet log. An anguished roar of despair rang out, filled with curses, as black strands floated out between the cracks of Meng Hao’s fingers. They looked like vipers as they shot toward Meng Hao himself.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he waved his sleeve, causing the black viper-like strands to shatter, transforming them into ash.

At the same time, the final Soul Lamp of his First Desolation, the fifth of his 33 Soul Lamps, suddenly went dark.

When that happened, Meng Hao inhaled the green smoke, which caused his eyes to shine with a strange light. He threw his head back and roared; rumbling could be heard as his cultivation base rose up explosively, his soul surged within him as if it wanted to burst out, and his divine sense expanded rapidly!

His divine sense now swelled past seventy percent and reached… eighty percent of the level of a Paragon!

When Meng Hao sent out divine sense that was eighty percent of that of a Paragon, the surrounding world began to shake on the verge of collapse.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, and his eyes shone brightly. His current state was far beyond his previous peak, and as of this moment, he was completely confident in being able to secure victory over Lord White!

He rose to his feet and quickly absorbed all of his Soul Lamps, then turned and stepped out of the world. He emerged from the door, and was back on Patriarch Reliance’s back. The first thing he heard was Patriarch Reliance roaring angrily, and then he saw an enormous head lurching toward him. An acrid odor blasted against his face as a huge mouth opened as if to consume him.

Of course, it was Patriarch Reliance, who had long since freed himself from the Hexing magic Meng Hao had laid upon him. He had been waiting for Meng Hao to reappear, and as soon as he did, reflexively tried to consume him.

Meng Hao's expression was the same as usual. He completely ignored the mouth, vanishing from Patriarch Reliance's back and reappearing out in the starry sky. Patriarch Reliance's mouth snapped down onto nothing, whereupon he swiveled his head and roared at Meng Hao.

"Meng Hao, you little bastard, you're nothing but an intolerable bully!"

Meng Hao looked back at Patriarch Reliance and smiled.

"Alright, enough is enough," he said. "Quit it with the act. You're free to go. However, if I need you, you'd better come." Meng Hao actually felt strong emotions regarding Patriarch Reliance. Flicking his sleeve, he turned to leave.

However, Patriarch Reliance didn't seem ready to give up. Roaring, he charged toward Meng Hao.

"Hey, get back here!"

As soon as the words left his mouth, Patriarch Reliance regretted them. He began to shiver, and then began to curse himself inwardly for being so muddle-headed. However, considering that he had already let the words slip, he couldn't just back down. That would be far too embarrassing. Therefore, he continued to act as angry as before. But then, Meng Hao stopped in place, and Patriarch Reliance began to tremble.

Meng Hao turned back to look at Patriarch Reliance, a contemplative expression on his face. "Oh? You don't want me to leave? Could it be that you really do want to become my mount?"

Patriarch Reliance instantly began to tremble. His entire facade and demeanor was just about to crumble away, when he realized that Guyiding Tri-Rain was standing there on his back, giggling. Feeling embarrassed, he cleared his throat, and tried to sound wizened and profound as he said, “Well, no matter what you say, I’m still your Patriarch. Therefore, before leaving, you should at least kowtow to me. If you don’t, well, hmph.”

Patriarch Reliance had to force himself to not tremble, and in fact, it took all the courage he had just to say those words. Glaring at Meng Hao, he slowly began to back up.

Meng Hao chuckled. He could tell exactly what Patriarch Reliance was thinking at the moment, and considering how good of a mood he himself was in, he simply clasped hands and bowed.

“Keep safe and sound, Patriarch. May I take my leave now?”

“Hmmphhh! Take thy leave!” Patriarch Reliance instantly felt very pleased with himself, and suddenly had the feeling that there must be something about him that the little bastard Meng Hao feared. Instantly, his confidence increased.

Meng Hao’s smile didn’t change, but suddenly his cultivation base rumbled to life, and his divine sense spread out. Patriarch Reliance was so frightened he instantly shuddered intensely, and his eyes went wide. Without even thinking about it, a fawning expression appeared on his face.

“Hahaha, hahaha, I was joking! Meng Hao, young friend, you… you go ahead and take off now….” By this point, Patriarch Reliance didn’t care that Guyiding Tri-Rain was secretly laughing. His scalp was numb, and he just wanted to Meng Hao to be gone as quickly as possible. He was also cursing his careless remark from earlier.

With that, he backed up, instantly transforming into a beam of colorful light that shot off into the distance, reviling himself inwardly that he couldn’t use more power to put distance between himself and Meng Hao even faster.

Meng Hao watched Patriarch Reliance leaving, a soft gleam in his eye. He had to admit that Patriarch Reliance was the source of many fond memories. From Mount Daqing to the Reliance Sect, all of them were precious parts of his past.

After a long moment, Meng Hao turned away. At that point, a bleakly murderous air sprang up around him, and his gaze turned as sharp as a blade. Then, he began to head toward the rift between the Eighth and Seventh Mountains and Seas.

“Lord White,” he said softly, “this time, you will definitely meet your end!” With that, he vanished.

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# Chapter 1310: Let Me Help You!

Meng Hao currently had divine sense with eighty percent of the power of a Paragon. Because of that terrifying level of divine sense, his divine abilities and magical techniques now vastly exceeded their previous level.

When you added in the fact that he had extinguished five Soul Lamps, acquiring boundless power, it ensured that Meng Hao’s battle prowess, although not quite on the 6-Essences level, still surpassed Lord White’s. He was now at the peak of the 5-Essences level, less than half a step away from being equivalent to the 6-Essences level!

With the exception of Ksitigarbha in the Fourth Mountain and Sea, no one in the Mountain and Sea Realm who was under the level of Paragon could now pose a dangerous threat to Meng Hao in battle. That incredible sensation of power filled him with self-confidence, and at the same time enabled him to feel something that existed within the Mountain and Sea Realm… the Essence of Heaven and Earth.

Meng Hao appeared silently out in the starry sky. He raised his hand and made a grasping motion, causing a huge vortex to appear. As it spun soundlessly, Meng Hao reached in, as if he were attempting to grab something.

But then his brow slowly furrowed, and after a moment passed, he slowly pulled his hand back.

“Still can’t do it, huh…? Chu Yuyan’s soul dissipated into the Mountain and Sea Realm, but given the current level of my cultivation base, I still can’t pull it back together….

“It seems I need to have a deeper understanding of Essence.” He closed his eyes for a while to feel the transformations in the starry sky around him, then proceeded along. The vortex slowly faded away, as if it had never existed.

“Essence….” he murmured. The next time he appeared, he was near the rift. This time, because of his vastly more powerful divine sense and its effects on the void, no one could detect his return, not even the red-haired old man, let alone any of the other cultivators of the Seventh Mountain and Sea.

“Even without entering the Dao Realm, I can still come to understand Essences….

“Because of the Hexing magic of the League of Demon Sealers, and the Allheaven Dao Immortal blood in my veins, my path of cultivation is different from that of others….

“Cultivation like mine is something very rare, or perhaps… even something that has never been seen before.

“My true cultivation base is in the Ancient Realm, with five extinguished Soul Lamps. However, my battle prowess… is already greater than that of the Mountain and Sea Lords.

“My Essence of Divine Flame came from elsewhere, and is not truly mine….

“My path of cultivation… is the type in which reliance on others is not an option. I must walk… in my own way.

“Essence…. Essence….” Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a strange light as he proceeded along toward the rift. Without the slightest hesitation, he stepped inside. Instantly, the starry sky became a hazy void.

In the moment that he entered the rift, the red-haired old man and the other three Dao Realm experts with him all shivered. Their eyes opened, and they looked over at the rift.

“Strange, I just felt some fluctuations from the rift….”

“It was almost as if… someone just entered it?”

“Impossible. Unless it was the exalted Lord White, or that… that man who… no, impossible. Even that man… would not be able to pass by us unseen.”

The red-haired old man and his fellows all frowned, but quickly calmed down and forgot the matter. It wasn’t that they couldn’t put more thought into what they had just sensed, but rather, that they didn’t want to. This Mountain and Sea War had not lasted for particularly long, but not even the previous wars described in the historical records had been as bitter, and those records went back for centuries upon centuries. Although similar wars had been fought, none could quite compare to this one. And by this point, the cultivators of both armies were exhausted.

That was especially true of the small group who had witnessed Meng Hao’s battle with Lord White. They felt especially haggard.

Inside the rift, Meng Hao proceeded along calmly. He was in no hurry. As far as he was concerned, there was no more danger for him in this war, and what occupied his thoughts most was his future.

“I wonder… what my Essences will be…?” He suddenly stopped in place, a thoughtful expression on his face.

“Nine Demon Sealing Hexes…. Nine Essences. Is that really the limit of the Paragon Realm…?

“If so, and I am able to use all of my Demon Sealing Hexing magics as Essences… well then, when that happens, I, Meng Hao… will become the most powerful Paragon in existence!

“In fact, I will already have become a Paragon when I get seven Essences, and right now I’ve already mastered six Hexing magics, which means six Essences.” Having reached this point in his train of thought, Meng Hao’s eyes shone with unprecedented brightness.

He had found his path!

This was… his unique path of cultivation!

“When I combine the Nine Hexes into one, that will also be when my nine Essences combine with each other, then in that moment… as the Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm, I will also… be able to break through from the Paragon Realm into the Daosource Realm!” It was as if his eyes had been opened. His face lit up with a smile, and his expression was one of anticipation.

“To me, the Dao Realm is actually not very important, considering I can step into it any time I want. I originally thought that passing through the Ancient Realm would be the easy part, but it turned out that it is actually the true basis of allowing me to continuously grow stronger.

“When I combine the Nine Hexes, and the Nine Essences fuse together….” Meng Hao then looked down at his bag of holding, where Chu Yuyan’s discarnate soul was.

“At that time, I should be able to put Chu Yuyan’s soul back together…. I owe her far too much.” Meng Hao sighed, clearing his thoughts and looking off into the void ahead of him. He could sense that, not too far off, a figure was moving rapidly toward the exit of the rift. Based on how fast this person was moving, it would only take about a day for him to emerge into the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

“Lord White….” Meng Hao said coolly. “You’re going a bit too slow. Allow me to help you out a bit.”

He sent out his divine sense, which was eighty percent as powerful as a Paragon’s. The entire void within the rift began to tremble with terrifying fluctuations as Meng Hao, eyes shining with bizarre light, reached his right hand out, grabbed down, and then jerked it back.

At the same time, he flew backward, seemingly towing something behind him. Since he hadn’t ventured in too far to begin with, he immediately arrived at the rift’s exit.

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The figure that Meng Hao had detected speeding through the void was a man in a long white robe. His expression was both grim and proud.

That man was none other than… the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, Lord White!

His cultivation base had been completely restored, and had even made some advancement. His eyes glittered brightly, seemingly containing the sun, moon, and stars swirling around inside of them. His energy was surging, and his aura was bursting with power.

Although he didn't seem to be moving very quickly, every step he took caused him to flash along with incredible speed. His mouth was twisted with a cold smile, and killing intent gleamed in his eyes.

"This time, it won't matter whether you're there waiting at the exit or not, I'm going to strike you down!

"Actually, I hope you are waiting for me. That way killing you won't waste too much of my time. Then I can slaughter the rest of the Eighth Mountain and Sea to accompany you in death!

"As for the Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea, he's a sacrifice that I prepared for the 33 Heavens. Offering up a Mountain and Sea Lord will definitely ensure that the 33 Heavens will descend!

"Furthermore, I've determined the location of your home, the Ninth Mountain and Sea…. Don't worry, I'll make sure to exterminate everyone in your entire clan and bloodline!

"If you really do have the guts to sit waiting for me at the entrance, your fate will be the same as if you had fled. After all… there is nowhere for you to run, and nowhere for you to hide, in all Heaven and Earth.

"You. Shall. DIE!

"The 33 Heavens are coming!

“I feel bad for the Mountain and Sea Realm. But this… is the fate of the Paragon Immortal Realm!” Lord White’s eyes glittered, and his energy surged. He was completely self-confident, especially because of the two streams of light which swirled around him. One contained a short sabre, the other, a short sword. Both were precious treasures that, despite appearing to be ordinary in nature, were so powerful that even Lord White was leery of them.

In addition to all that, the mark of a green leaf could be seen on his forehead, flickering with scintillating light. It emanated the fluctuations of the Green Emperor’s Eternal Incantation, ensuring that a powerful life force flowed through him constantly.

Considering what he already knew about Meng Hao, and his current preparations, Lord White was completely confident!

That was not even to mention the glittering mark which could be seen on the back of his hand. That mark depicted an evil spirit, grinning maliciously.

Rumbling sounds echoed out as Lord White continued along at top speed.

However, even as he was brimming with self-confidence, a huge boom rang out from the void up ahead of him. Everything seemed to shatter and churn, as though some terrifying entity were moving toward him with indescribable speed.

Lord White’s eyes went wide, and his face fell with shock. Shaken, he prepared to dodge to the side. After all, he had opened up this path, so generally speaking there shouldn’t be any danger here. What was happening now left him deeply shaken.

“What is that?!?!”

Even in the moment that Lord White started in shock, and the void up ahead of him shattered, a huge hand appeared, barreling toward him with irresistible force and indescribable speed. In the blink of an eye, it was directly in front of him.

No amount of resistance or struggling on his part did any good, nor did he even qualify to try to dodge. Before he could do anything, the hand grabbed onto him.

As soon as it touched him, his eyes went wide with disbelief and shock. Based on what he could sense, that hand was formed from divine will, a terrifying divine will that caused him to cry out in alarm and babble incoherently.

“Paragon!!

“It’s Paragon Sea Dream!!

“No, wait, this isn’t Sea Dream’s aura…. She couldn’t be here! The 33 Heavens already sent people to pin her down!!

“If it’s not Sea Dream, then who is it? Who could it be!?!?

“There couldn’t possibly be a second Paragon in the Mountain and Sea Realm!!” Indescribable astonishment gripped Lord White’s heart, and before he could even consider the matter further, the huge hand began to drag him forward.

RUUMMMMBLLLLLE!

The entire void shook violently. Normally speaking, it would have taken a full day for Lord White to reach the exit of the rift at the speed he had been maintaining. But right now, it only took a few breaths of time before the huge hand dragged him… all the way out into the Eighth Mountain and Sea!

RUMBLE!

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# Chapter 1311: Crushing!

Meng Hao emerged from the rift before Lord White by about ten breaths of time. Although the red-haired old man, his fellows, and the other cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea off in the distance were all swept over by a wild blast of air as soon as he appeared, sending all of them tumbling backwards, they still didn’t immediately detect Meng Hao.

“What’s happening?”

“This… this….” The red-haired old man and his fellows had looks of shock on their faces as they were shoved backward. Rumbling could be heard coming from the rift itself. And then the rift… all of a sudden seemed to be on the verge of collapsing completely.

Fissures spread out in all directions, and it began to break apart, causing widespread astonishment among everyone present.

What happened next, though, virtually blew the minds of all the observing cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea. Each and every one watched with their own eyes as their own Mountain and Sea Lord, Lord White… flew out of that collapsing rift.

Before any of them could get excited, they gasped with disbelief. That was because it was very clear from their vantage point that Lord White… was not flying out of the rift on his own. Instead, he was struggling and shouting, and a look of fear and shock could be seen on his face.

From the look of it… he was actually being dragged out by some huge, invisible hand!

“This….” all of the cultivators of the Seventh Mountain and Sea looked on in utter shock.

Lord White was roaring in anger, but deep inside he was flabbergasted. Even as he struggled, his voice rang out for all to hear.

“Which Paragon is it? Paragon Sea Dream? It must be you!!”

Even as Lord White blustered, a calm voice suddenly echoed out. “It’s not Paragon Sea Dream. It’s me!”

Ripples spread out from the collapsing rift, and Meng Hao appeared for all to see.

“Meng Hao!!”

“I can’t believe it’s him! This… he….”

“He was only missing for a month. I can’t believe he’s even stronger than he was before!!” The red-haired old man and his fellows gasped in shock, and Lord White’s pupils constricted. He almost couldn’t believe what he was seeing.

“Impossible!” A tremor ran through Lord White. The huge hand that had just grabbed him had vanished, and he could now move again. Without even thinking about it, he backed up, looking at Meng Hao with complete disbelief.

“Lord White, we meet again,” Meng Hao said with a slight smile, looking calmly at Lord White the entire time. “You were going too slow, and I didn’t feel like waiting for you, so I decided to help you out a bit.”

Although Meng Hao’s words were spoken with a smile, they caused Lord White’s scalp to feel as if it were about to explode. An intense sensation of deadly crisis exploded up within him, the most intense feeling he had ever experienced in his entire life, and it was caused by none other than Meng Hao!

Lord White still almost couldn’t believe that the Meng Hao he had faced a month ago, who had caused him to feel fear, but not deadly crisis, was this same person. It was as if he had completely transformed. Lord White felt as if he were dreaming, as if the scene playing out in front of him was a hallucination.

“Impossible….” It almost seemed as if the word ‘impossible’ was the only word he could say, over and over again. It went to show how completely shocked he was, how this scene was so unimaginable that it almost couldn’t happen even in a dream. How could Meng Hao have experienced such a terrifying increase in power?

He would never be able to forget the despair and shock he had felt at having that huge hand grab him. That was the divine sense of a Paragon, which completely exceeded his own. He had previously assumed that the original plan had gone awry, and that Paragon Sea Dream had appeared. But now that he realized the sense of crisis was caused by Meng Hao, he truly wished that all of this could be nothing more than an illusion. In fact, he would rather Paragon Sea Dream be the one who had arrived.

His confidence was now completely shattered, and all his preparations were now completely useless.

Even worse was the fact that the rift behind him was collapsing, causing him to gasp. Now Meng Hao’s plan was obvious; considering that he was cutting off the path of retreat, he obviously planned… to cut Lord White down once and for all!

That was why Meng Hao had entered the rift to begin with!

By destroying that rift, he made it impossible for the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea to retreat, trapping him in the Eighth Mountain and Sea. Even if he wanted to flee, there was nowhere to flee to! The graveyard-like Eighth Mountain and Sea would become his final resting place!

Lord White began to shake, and the sensation of deadly crisis within him grew even more intense, until it felt like raging waves battering at his mind. Without even a moment of hesitation, Lord White transformed into a beam of white light that flashed toward the collapsing rift.

Although entering a collapsing rift like that gave him only a 50/50 chance of surviving, as far as he was concerned, that was better than staying put!

He could well predict that if he did not pick that 50/50 chance, then the only thing waiting for him was a 0/100 chance!

RUMBLE!

In the very moment in which Lord White fell back, Meng Hao snorted coldly and waved his hand. Heaven and Earth rumbled, and the starry sky trembled, as his divine sense spread out, crushing down onto Lord White.

Lord White let out a miserable shriek, and blood spattered everywhere. Then, the rift behind him collapsed completely, cutting off even that 50/50 chance he had to survive!

“Meng Hao, you push people too far!!” Lord White’s eyes were completely bloodshot as he spun around, threw his head back and roared. His hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, causing an ancient scripture to materialize behind him.

“The Mountains have three Daos, Man-Mountain, Earth-Mountain, Heaven-Mountain!!” Lord White held nothing back as he unleashed his divine ability, revealing how incredibly terrified he was at this moment.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE….

Three Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering mountains appeared, which crushed toward Meng Hao, the Man-Mountain from the front, the Earth-Mountain from below, and the Heaven-Mountain from above. The power of those three mountains was enough to slay celestial beings and destroy gods!

Rumbling could be heard as the three mountains smashed toward Meng Hao. Before he had extinguished five Soul Lamps, facing this magic had been very difficult, and he had been forced to rely on the Withering Flame Demon Magic True Self Dao to create a surrogate which had died in his stead.

Right now, though, Meng Hao's eyes were shining brightly, and his expression was very calm. The wave of a finger caused the Man-Mountain to shudder and then collapse into pieces. Without stopping, Meng Hao waved his finger down, and then up.

It was as if he could buttress all creation, as if… in all Heaven and Earth, he was the most respected of all beings!

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE….

The Earth-Mountain shattered, and the Heaven-Mountain collapsed. The starry sky shuddered as rubble blasted out in all directions. Blood sprayed out of Lord White's mouth, and an expression of terror and madness appeared on his face.

"You're no match for me anymore." Meng Hao said coolly, speeding toward Lord White. As he did, the pressure of the starry sky began to weigh down, as if the power of the Mountains and Seas itself was Meng Hao's aura. Everything shook, and Lord White fell back, blood spraying out of his mouth.

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# Chapter 1312: Lord White Turns Outsider!

“The Seas have three magics, the Commoner’s Magic, the Minister’s Magic, and the Emperor’s Magic!” Lord White roared. Three natural laws descended that seemed to supercede all other natural laws, affecting all minds as they crushed down onto Meng Hao.

A strange light shone in Meng Hao’s eyes as he waved his hand, summoning the Paragon Bridge. This Paragon Bridge was different than the bridges he had summoned before; the towering will of a Paragon swirled around it as it fought back against the three Sea magics, which subsequently shattered.

Meng Hao’s face paled a bit, but almost immediately recovered. Then he frowned.

“It seems my biggest weakness now is this body of mine,” he murmured inwardly. Although his fleshly body had experienced growth when he extinguished his Soul Lamps, that growth was not incredibly significant. His fleshly body had already almost reached its total limit, and could not really make any more progress without a complete breakthrough.

Considering how much energy he had built up in preparation for the breakthrough, once it occurred, his fleshly body would rapidly increase in power afterward.

However, before the breakthrough, all of that energy was essentially useless.

“The Dao Realm fleshly body requires… the blood of ancient Gods.” He then thought back to that trial by fire in the Nine Seas God World, and the words spoken to him by the old man who had passed on the three exterminating fist techniques.

“Ancient God blood….” Then he recalled that back in the Windswept Realm, Yuwen Jian from the Seventh Mountain and Sea had told him that there were ancient Gods where he came from.

Even as these things flashed through his mind, blood was spraying out of Lord White’s mouth from the backlash of his attack. His hair turned white, and his body withered. His entire aura weakened in the blink of an eye, and his Green Emperor’s Eternal Incantation immediately exploded into action.

However, he was bitterly aware that he had nowhere to flee to, no path of escape. The only tiny chance he had to survive was to go all out and fight to the death.

Lord White threw his head back and laughed maniacally, performing a double-handed incantation gesture and simultaneously spitting out some blood. He did not use his Death Curse Magic, which Meng Hao had already overcome in their last battle. Meng Hao’s divine sense was now as powerful as a Paragon, so using the Death Curse Magic against him would do little good.

Gritting his teeth, Lord White waved the index fingers of both hands toward Meng Hao. Instantly, the sabre and the sword that were swirling around him flared with red light and black smoke, which seemed to connect up into the 33 Heavens beyond the limits of the starry sky. It was like a Devilish flame that caused the Mountain and Sea Realm to rumble, and a power of expulsion to rise up.

However, even as that power of expulsion appeared, Lord White threw his head back and roared, Suddenly, a crown-like object appeared atop his head, flickering with dazzling light that instantly caused the Mountain and Sea power to settle down.

That crown was the symbol that marked him as a Mountain and Sea Lord. With it, he was able to stifle the expulsion power of the Mountain and Sea Realm, and thus allow him to temporarily borrow power directly from the 33 Heavens!

“DIE!” he howled. The sabre and the sword hummed in unison, radiating intense killing intent as they shot toward Meng Hao!

Lord White knew that although the sabre and sword were powerful, they were not enough to kill Meng Hao. Laughing bitterly, eyes aflame with madness, he decided to go all out in one final attack. This was an attack that would end with either Meng Hao dead, or himself!

He raised his right hand up high, and the evil spirit totem tattoo on it seemed to come to life. Its eyes blinked open, causing an intense, vile aura to fill the starry sky.

Barely audible was the sound of roaring coming from the 33 Heavens beyond the limits of the starry sky, which pierced through the barriers to settle onto the battlefield where Meng Hao and Lord White were fighting!

That roar did not come from Dao Fang, who had appeared during their last battle!

It came from some other spirit!

Meng Hao’s expression flickered, and a strange light appeared in his eyes. After a moment of thought, he turned somberly to face the sabre and sword, and then reached out and made a grasping gesture. Instantly, the sabre and sword began to vibrate.

The short sabre then began to shine with dazzling light, and then suddenly dissolved into a liquid which spread out to avoid Meng Hao’s grasp. Then it transformed into the outline of some gigantic beast.

It was a vicious lizard, covered with innumerable spines that glittered with cold light. The lizard roared as it attacked Meng Hao.

As for the short sword, it also dissolved, turning into a Silver Dragon, which howled as it charged forward.

Meng Hao snorted coldly, looking away from Lord White to the incoming lizard and Silver Dragon. In the same moment, his divine sense exploded out, turning into a crushing power that weighed down on the starry sky.

Everything distorted as a huge rift was torn open. The gigantic lizard trembled and then let out a bloodcurdling scream as it was torn to pieces.

As for the Silver Dragon, the exact same thing happened to it. It didn’t even qualify to fight back, and was instantly shredded.

The sabre was destroyed and the sword was crushed!

They were precious treasures that Lord White had prepared specifically to use against Meng Hao. But now, Meng Hao had divine sense that was eighty percent as powerful as that of a Paragon’s, which caused the void to distort and the starry sky to crush down.

Meng Hao waved his sleeve, sweeping away the fragments of the sabre and sword, dispersing them.

In that same instant, Lord White howled, a sound that could shake Heaven and Earth. Simultaneously, the roaring coming from the 33 Heavens beyond the starry sky caused everything to shake.

The vicious spirit on the back of Lord White’s hand grinned ferociously. Even as Meng Hao turned his attention to it, it materialized into an evil ghost, which didn’t attack Meng Hao, but rather, turned and burrowed into Lord White’s body.

Lord White spasmed, then threw his head back and roared.

ROOOAARRRR!!

His body began to grow, and in the blink of an eye, he was 30 meters tall, then 300 meters. His eyes were crimson, and radiated madness. Apparently, his mental faculties were crushed in that instant, and he went completely mad.

Numerous spines grew out of the pupils of his eyes, and scales rapidly spread out over his skin, giving him a completely shocking appearance. His face twisted with pain as he beat his chest with his fists. At the same time, his spine extending, causing a huge tail to appear, which was covered with viscous bodily fluid.

Two brutish horns sprouted out of his head, and his aura exploded out to a Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering degree.

That aura was definitely not the aura of the Mountain and Sea Realm, but rather the aura of the Outsiders from the 33 Heavens!!

This was not the first time Meng Hao had seen something like this happen. Back when he had fought Marquis Lu, something similar had occurred. However, the energy Lord White was giving off now was beyond compare to what he had seen before.

And yet… there was no power of expulsion from the Mountains and Seas. That crown still glittered on his head, which apparently caused a peculiar willpower to fill the area, isolating him from the Mountain and Sea Realm, so that it couldn’t even sense him!

Clearly, Lord White’s status had something to do with why this was happening!

“Die, Die, DIE!” Lord White roared. Apparently, Lord White had some strange connection to the 33 Heavens, a connection that Meng Hao could sense. Although this caused him to frown slightly, it was not some huge shock.

After his fight with Marquis Lu, it was easy for Meng Hao to come to the conclusion that Lord White must have a similar magic at his disposal. Of course, the price involved was incomprehensible, so much so that Lord White wouldn’t use it unless it was his only chance at survival. In fact, that heavy price was also why he had chosen to flee during their last battle.

But now, the rift was gone, and Meng Hao's power left him in complete despair. He knew that today… he had a 0/100 chance of surviving unless he went completely all out!

ROOOAARRRR!!

Lord White turned into a black beam that shot toward Meng Hao with incredible speed, piercing through the starry sky. In the blink of an eye, he was in front of Meng Hao, stretching out his claw-like hands toward him.

RUMBLE!

His claws shredded the starry sky with destructive power. Although that explosive power did not equal the 6-Essences level, it was immeasurably close.

As the claws neared, Meng Hao's eyes flickered, and his divine sense roiled out. The power of eighty percent of a Paragon's divine sense crushed down onto Lord White, instantly causing him to grind to a halt, trembling.

In that instant, Meng Hao's right hand lifted up, and the copper mirror appeared, transforming instantly into the Battle Weapon. This version of the Battle Weapon was vastly sharper than before, and looked different as well. The murderous aura which surrounded it was greater, and the blade glow which flickered out shoved Lord White back thirty meters, howling.

A gaping wound appeared in his chest, but strangely, no blood flowed out from it. Roaring madly, he charged in again, whereupon Meng Hao snorted coldly and sent his divine sense crushing down once again.

A boom rang out as Lord White was once again halted in place by the terrifying pressure from Meng Hao. Try as he might to fight back, it was useless, and he was left trembling.

Meng Hao's eyes flashed, and he took a step forward. The Battle Weapon slashed through the starry sky, sending out dazzling light that seemed to rend the starry sky.

Massive power slashed down onto Lord White, cutting him cleanly into two pieces. Yet again, no blood sprayed out, although he let out a bloodcurdling scream.

However, what was truly bizarre was that the two halves of his body wriggled and transformed into two versions of Lord White, which then charged madly toward Meng Hao from two different directions.

Meng Hao frowned, sending divine sense out and attacking with the Battle Weapon again. However, the only result of his slashing attack was that there were now four Lord Whites!

“Won’t die and can’t be killed?” Meng Hao’s eyes flashed coldly as he put the Battle Weapon away and then performed an incantation gesture and pointed out. Immediately, the Paragon Bridge rumbled out, emanating the power of the 6-Essences level, which completely shattered the four Lord Whites into a pulp.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE….

However, even as they shattered, Meng Hao’s frown deepened. There in front of him, the countless dust-like fragments formed back together, and this time, there weren’t four Lord Whites, but rather… dozens!

“Die, Die, DIE!” All of the Lord Whites howled and charged at Meng Hao from all directions.

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# Chapter 1313: If You Dare Kill Him, The War Starts!

Meng Hao looked at the multiple versions of Lord White, his eyes flickering with scintillating light.

“Can’t be killed and won’t die. Is that because of your life force?” Meng Hao suddenly waved his hand, summoning the copper mirror once again. This time, however, he didn’t form it into the Battle Weapon, but instead reached his left hand deep into the mirror itself!

The copper mirror was like a black hole that completely swallowed up his hand. At the same time, the mirror trembled, as if some enormous power was stirring within. Roars and howls echoed out, the mere sound of which caused the faces of the numerous versions of Lord White to flicker. Furthermore, the area which had previously been cut off from the Mountain and Sea Realm by Lord White was now showing signs of collapsing.

“Demon Weapon Lonelytomb…” Meng Hao said softly, eyes shining, “the time has finally come for you to truly appear in the world!” Based on the level of his current cultivation base, he was able to sense that… he could at long last completely and fully pull out the fragment of the mirror he had acquired in the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect, as well as that which was inside of it, Demon Weapon Lonelytomb! 1

Furthermore, this was not the incomplete Demon Weapon which he had pulled out in the last fight with Lord White. This was… the complete, authentic Demon Weapon Lonelytomb!

The world inside the copper mirror was something no one on the outside could see. Deep within the mirror was an ancient battlefield, filled with so many broken corpses that they were heaped together like mountains. In the middle of all of that was a seething black mist, inside of which was a long black spear that radiated brutal madness.

It also pulsed with an intense murderous aura, which caused rumbling sounds to echo out. It was as if the number of souls killed by this spear throughout the years literally couldn’t be counted….

All of a sudden, an enormous hand reached down out of the Heavens of that world, which was none other than Meng Hao’s hand. It pierced through the black mist and wrapped around the Demon Weapon Lonelytomb.

An intense drone of excitement exploded out of the spear, as if it could sense the fluctuations of the League of Demon Sealers. It had been waiting for far more than 10,000 years… for a cultivator from the League to come release it into the world once more!

The hand wrapped around Demon Weapon Lonelytomb and then pulled it up into the Heavens….

Out in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, Meng Hao’s hand slowly emerged from the copper mirror, which was trembling and emanating dazzling light that spread out in all directions.

There was also a vast quantity of black mist which roiled out, filling the entire area with a towering murderous aura, as if countless discarnate souls were screaming and wailing in anguish.

Rumbling sounds could be heard as Meng Hao’s hand emerged, clutched within which was a long black spear. At long last, Demon Weapon Lonelytomb… had returned to the Mountain and Sea Realm!

It was nine meters long, completely pitch black, and surrounded by swirling black mist and the images of countless vengeful spirits. The murderous aura it emanated contained shocking pressure that made everything rumble. It was as if all the life in the starry sky was being sliced to pieces to be consumed by the newly-arrived Demon Weapon Lonelytomb!

Even more shocking was that after consuming that life force, the Demon Weapon's murderous aura grew even stronger. It needed more, it thirsted for more, causing Heaven and Earth to shake violently.

The dozens of versions of Lord White began to struggle violently, expressions flickering with astonishment and shock.

"An undying, unkillable life force…?" Meng Hao said, lips twisting into a cold smile. He took a step forward, and Demon Weapon Lonelytomb transformed into a black bolt of lightning that shot out.

It was only a spear, but when it stabbed into the forehead of one of the Lord Whites, it pierced directly through him, withering his body. In the blink of an eye, he shattered into pieces, his life force completely and utterly consumed by Demon Weapon Lonelytomb.

The Demon Weapon, which had previously been pitch black, all of a sudden had a blood-colored glint to it that even bordered on violet!

In the same moment, the rest of the versions of Lord White finally managed to shake off the Hexing magic, and began to scatter, fleeing in all directions.

"You can't escape," Meng Hao said coolly. He didn't pursue them, though. Instead, the bloody glow surrounding the Demon Weapon transformed into a beam of blood-colored light, which sped out into the starry sky. The starry sky trembled as the barrier erected by Lord White shattered. Instantly, the power of the Mountains and Seas could sense the presence of an Outsider, and as a result, the entire Mountain and Sea Realm began to shake violently.

Atop the Nine Mountains, the Xuanwu turtles in the nine celestial ponds threw their heads back and roared. The Mountains and Seas shook, and all of the Mountain and Sea Lords could suddenly sense the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

"Outsiders must be executed!!" These words rumbled out into the minds of all of the Mountain and Sea Lords. On the Ninth Mountain, Ji Tian's eyes shone with a strange glow as he looked in the direction of the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

On the Eighth Mountain, Meng Hao’s grandfather, the Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea, was shaking violently. His hands were quivering, and a shocking aura was erupting up within him as his eyes slowly opened!

In the Sixth Mountain and Sea, countless cultivators were massed together into a huge army that was marching forward into a rift that connected to the Fifth Mountain and Sea. It was not just in the Eighth Mountain and Sea that a Mountain and Sea War was being fought, nor was the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea the only traitor!

There was another traitor… the Lord of the Sixth Mountain and Sea!

War had broken out in the Fifth Mountain and Sea, and the two Lords of those respective Mountains and Seas were both bursting with power. Although they had not yet begun to fight, they were now facing off.

It was in that moment that they heard the voice of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

The entire Mountain and Sea Realm was shaking, and countless faces flickered with shock. An astonishing power was building up, converging on Meng Hao’s location in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, and then crushing down onto the fleeing Lord White.

That was Meng Hao’s entire goal. He wanted to sever the power that Lord White was able to wield because of his status as the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, that allowed him to block the will of the Mountains and Seas. Once his Outsider aura spread out and was detected, killing him would be a very simple task.

In fact, Meng Hao didn’t even need to attack at this point. The power of the Mountain and Sea Realm would kill Lord White for him!

Amidst rumbling sounds, Lord White let out a miserable scream as the will of the Mountains and Seas descended. However, even as he was about to be shredded out of existence, the starry sky shook as a massive pressure descended from the 33 Heavens up above.

At the same time, a huge golden net appeared, which covered the entire Mountain and Sea Realm. Beyond that net could be seen numerous land masses stacked up like a pagoda. Clearly visible on the first land mass, the one nearest to the Mountain and Sea Realm, were mountains and rivers, as well as a group of cultivators with stern, arrogant expressions on their faces.

This was the 1st Heaven of the 33 Heavens. Similar scenes could be seen playing out on the 2nd Heaven, the 3rd Heaven, and all of the other various land masses that were stacked higher up. Furthermore, it appeared as if the cultivators there had just begun to gather, and that it would most likely take many years for them to finish massing their forces together.

After all, each and every one of those Heavens was comparable in size to the Mountain and Sea Realm itself!

Beyond that huge golden net, was a figure clad in golden battle armor, floating above the 1st Heaven, staring down at the Mountain and Sea Realm. Suddenly, he cried out in a furious voice. “Mountain and Sea Realm, if you dare to kill someone from our 1st Heaven, then the war will begin early!”

That figure looked like a cultivator, except that his body was covering in scales, and a long tail stretched out behind him. Two vicious horns sprouted from his head, and his eyes were icy cold.

“Allow him to return, and I’ll pretend none of this ever happened. The Mountain and Sea Realm will then have years to prepare. The war between us is coming, and it will end with the eradication of either the Mountains and Seas or our 33 Heaven!

“Do you want that war to start now, or years from now? All rests on a single sentence from you, the Mountain and Sea Realm!”

Massive rumbling accompanied the voice, which pierced into the Mountain and Sea Realm and exploded out in the Eighth Mountain and Sea. However, the echoing voice could also be heard by all cultivators in the entire Mountain and Sea Realm.

In fact, any cultivator in the Mountain and Sea Realm who looked up would be able to see the huge net spreading out up above, and the 33 land masses beyond it!!

The entire Realm was completely stunned!

Although rumors about the 33 Heavens had long since begun to spread, and many people knew about them, as of this moment, everyone was astonished to be able to hear the words spoken by the golden-armored Outsider from the 1st Heaven.

It was brazen intimidation!

He was openly threatening the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm; if it dared to slaughter Lord White, then the result would be the premature outbreak of a war of eradication!

Meng Hao was shaking, and brilliant light flickered within his eyes. He had never imagined that killing Lord White would provoke such a reaction from the 33 Heavens, to the extent that they were willing to wage war ahead of schedule!!

Suddenly, the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm froze, and ceased in its attempt to kill Lord White. At the same time, the remaining versions of Lord White all merged back together into his original form. His face was pale, and he was trembling, but the fact that he had just escaped with his life caused his eyes to shine with incredible joy, even elation!

The will of the Mountain and Sea Realm was silent. The Xuanwu turtles on the Nine Mountains grew quiet. None of the Mountain and Sea Lords spoke. All cultivators, regardless of whether they were fighting on the battlefield or were in a location of peace and quiet, were completely shaken, and stared up in confusion at the starry sky above.

None of them were ready for such a war, and in fact, most of them hadn’t even been aware that a war was coming.

And yet… the 33 Heavens, despite not being fully prepared, had already begun to gather forces. If they still needed years to prepare, then so did the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Meng Hao was also silent. This was a decision that had to do with the survival of the Mountain and Sea Realm itself. His first inclination was to let Lord White go, and avoid an early outbreak of war.

After all, he hadn't made adequate preparations to fight against the 33 Heavens right at this moment.

A cold snort rang out from the 33 Heavens, and a huge black hand pierced down through the golden net. It descended to the Eighth Mountain and Sea, grabbed Lord White and then slowly pulled him up.

The decision had been made. The Mountain and Sea Realm didn't dare to attack, didn't dare to start the war early. That was a war which would decide the fate of all lives in the Realm, and no one was confident enough to start it yet.

However… that was when something completely unexpected happened!!

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# Chapter 1314: FIGHT!

The hand which had grabbed Lord White and was pulling him up out of the Mountain and Sea Realm suddenly became entangled by some invisible power which forced it to grind to a halt. An enraged roar then echoed out from the 33 Heavens to fill the ears of all cultivators down below.

“Mountain and Sea Realm, what are you doing?! Do you truly dare to start the war early!?!?”

All of the Mountains and Seas were completely shaken. Even the cultivators of the Seventh and Eighth Mountains and Seas who were locked in combat, as well as those in the Sixth and Fifth Mountains and Seas, all went quiet.

Fighting ceased, and all hearts felt enormous pressure weighing down on them. And yet, the main feeling was that of confusion.

All of a sudden, an ancient and icy voice echoed out through all of the Mountains and Seas, filling the minds and hearts of all cultivators. “All ye in the Mountain and Sea Realm… I am the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm, its spirit automaton….”

Each and every cultivator in the Mountain and Sea Realm could hear the voice as clear as crystal.

“Oh so many years ago, there was no Mountain and Sea Realm in the Vast Expanse. There was only the Paragon Immortal Realm, standing tall and eternal within the flow of time. It led the 3,000 Lower Realms, and all of its cultivators were Immortals….

“But then… catastrophe struck….

“The 3,000 Lower Realms… rebelled. Other foreign powers threw the Immortals into chaos, slaughtered the Imperial Lords, and exterminated the Dao bloodlines. The Paragon Immortal Realm fell….

“Paragon Nine Seals… created the Mountain and Sea Realm, forging new lands to keep the memory of the Paragon Immortal Realm alive. That is how the Mountain and Sea Realm came to be….” The voice of the Mountain and Sea Realm echoed out, filled with a strange power that suffused the entire Realm and poured into the ears of all cultivators. Even as the Mountain and Sea Realm spoke, the cultivators saw images in their minds. Visions.

Within those visions were images of the true events from the past. They were images that seemed to spring up from the very souls of the people who saw them, drawn up by the voice which filled their minds.

Within those visions, the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm, regardless of the level of their cultivation bases, be they Qi Condensation or Dao Realm, could clearly see the Paragon Immortal Realm of yesteryear. They saw the peace and tranquility there, and then they saw the 3,000 Lower Realms rebelling. They saw the terrifying foreign powers invading the Paragon Immortal Realm. They saw… the Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering war which resulted.

They saw countless cultivators dying miserable deaths. They saw many who, in their last moment of life, would shout that they would live for the Immortal World, and that they would die for the Immortal World. Then those cultivators chose to self-detonate and end in mutual destruction with their enemies.

The cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm saw the blood of their ancestors in the visions. They witnessed the glory of the Paragon Immortal Realm, and its fall. They witnessed the countless corpses and brutal carnage that stretched out into the starry sky.

Everyone began to tremble as the voice of the Mountain and Sea Realm slowly faded into the background. What filled their minds were the images that had been hidden in their blood and in their souls, images that revealed to the trembling Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators, their true origins.

They understood. As of this moment, everyone understood!

No one doubted whether the images might be illusions. On an instinctive level, they knew that their visions were real. It was as if these images were memories, memories of their ancestors that were embedded in their souls and in their blood. From generation to generation, those memories were passed down, indelible and impossible to wipe away!

It was as if they could hear the shouts of their ancestors coming from within their own blood.

“Never forget! We are the people of the Paragon Immortal Realm!”

“Fix our former glory into your hearts!!”

“Our children and grandchildren, all generations, must forever remember that our true enemies are the 33 Heavens, and those beyond the 33 Heavens!!”

“They are our enemies now, and will be our enemies to time indefinite!!”

A massive roaring sound exploded out into the minds of all the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm. The visions left them trembling, their eyes bloodshot, their blood and souls surging not only with the memories passed down by the ancestors but also… with their rage and madness.

What bitterness!

They saw the collapse of the Paragon Immortal Realm, they saw countless deaths, they saw the starry sky become a sea of blood, and they saw the vicious brutality of the rebels.

Death… endless death….

Eventually, the visions began to change. After seeing countless almighty experts from the Paragon Immortal Realm give up their lives for the sake of family and homeland, they saw Paragon Nine Seals create the precious treasure that was the Mountain and Sea Realm. He knew that he would die in the process, but he didn’t care. To stop the war, to protect his home, he created the Mountain and Sea Realm.

He took the broken remnants of his people and placed them into the Mountain and Sea Realm. There, they multiplied and became many, and eventually life once again thrived. Gradually, a new Immortal World came to be.

However, the war was not over!

Everyone was trembling, even Meng Hao. He already knew about all of these matters, but he had never seen the visions. However, his eyes were bloodshot, not because the rage and hatred of his ancestors, but rather… because he did not wish, and was not willing, to allow his own people to wade through the same sea of blood he was seeing in the visions.

Eventually, the voice of the Mountain and Sea Realm once again echoed out, seemingly sighing, seemingly reminiscent, and yet filled with obsession and towering hatred!

“Most of the 3,000 Lower Realms were destroyed. In the end, only 33 remained. They sealed the Mountain and Sea Realm, and they… are the 33 Heavens which hang over all our heads.

“On this day, the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea has rebelled, as has the Lord of the Sixth Mountain and Sea. After the passage of countless years, that most ancient of wars, is starting again….

“And it will be a war of complete extermination….”

As the voice rang out into the minds of the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm, the visions changed once again. This time, they saw the battles which had been fought recently in the Eighth and Fifth Mountains and Seas!

They saw cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm killing each other, and they saw the rebellion of the Mountain and Sea Lords!

When the cultivators from the other Mountains and Seas saw this, their eyes were shot with blood. As for the cultivators from the Eighth, Seventh, Sixth, and Fifth Mountains and Seas, their minds felt as if they were being struck by lightning. All of the cultivators on the various battlefields were struck mute.

They began to shake, and their eyes filled with grief. All of them felt like screaming from the bottoms of their hearts:

Wrong! We were wrong!

There should never have been any Mountain and Sea Wars. Even if their own Mountain and Sea Lord rebelled, they would not!!

They were cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm, and they all carried the blood of their ancestors. Their enemies were not the people of the Mountain and Sea Realm, but rather, the 33 Heavens!!

One cultivator after another began to cough up blood, and many even shed bloody tears….

The cultivators from the other Mountains and Seas were filled with bitterness, and couldn’t even speak. Everyone was unprecedentedly quiet. As of this moment, the visions, coupled with the somehow familiar feeling rising up in their blood, caused the hatred for the 33 Heavens which existed in their souls to become incomparably clear.

Finally, at long last, they understood everything.

“I am only a spirit automaton. The decisions about whether or not to fight, and when exactly to fight, are not mine to make. Therefore, I hereby request that all cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm tell me what you wish to do.

“Do we fight now? We are not ready, but then again, neither are our enemies. Or… do we wait? Years from now, both sides will be prepared, and then we can fight.

“All of you… tell me your wish.” After the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm finished speaking, it went completely silent.

The entire Mountain and Sea Realm was quiet. Everyone stood there silently, thinking, contemplating whether or not to fight.

If they fought, they would have the advantage. If they did not fight, they could spend more time preparing.

The right to decide did not lie with the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm, nor with the 33 Heavens. Instead, it lay with the people of the Mountain and Sea Realm itself. The silence caused the people of the 1st Heaven up above to suddenly grow very nervous. Even the Outsider in the golden armor felt his heart pounding.

He could never possibly have imagined that forcing the Mountain and Sea Realm’s hand in this way would have such a result. Based on his understanding of the people of the Mountain and Sea Realm, he had been convinced that they would chose to wait and prepare. But now… he wasn’t sure.

“Dammit!!” he growled, his heart racing. The 33 Heavens were in no way prepared, which was in fact, one of the main reasons why they had incited internal friction by means of the Sixth and Seventh Mountains and Seas. They wanted the Mountain and Sea Realm to be in chaos. Then, they could spend years preparing, and by the time the two mysterious forces backing them arrived to wage war, they would fight alongside them in an ultimate and final battle.

However, even as the golden-armored Outsider stood there, shaking inwardly, a voice suddenly rang out in the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“Fight!!”

That voice crackled like thunder, ringing out from within the Fourth Mountain and Sea to fill the starry sky. It was only one word, but it then gave rise to a chorus of responses from that same Mountain and Sea!

That voice belonged to none other than… the Lord of the Fourth Mountain and Sea, Ksitigarbha!

It was one word, one completely domineering word, filled with ultimate decisiveness!

An explosion of voices filled the Fourth Mountain and Sea, joining Ksitigarbha’s voice. The Fourth Mountain and Sea was going wild, and the cultivators there began to roar at the top of their lungs.

“Fight!!”

“Fight!!!”

Next, the Lord of the Fifth Mountain and Sea threw his head back and roared.

“Fight!!”

After that, people began to cry out in the Third Mountain and Sea and the Second Mountain and Sea. Killing intent exploded out, shaking the starry sky.

“Fight!!”

Next, an ancient voice suddenly echoed out from within the First Mountain and Sea.

“Fight!!”

The entire starry sky, the entire Mountain and Sea Realm, was aboil. Countless voices joined together from all parts of the Realm. As they echoed about boundlessly, they were joined by a voice from the Ninth Mountain and Sea, which belonged to none other than Ji Tian!

“Fight!!”

As the Mountain and Sea Realm shook, Meng Hao’s grandfather, the Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea, who sat atop the Eighth Mountain, fully opened his eyes. When he did, power exploded out that shook the starry sky, and caused the Heavens to tremble. Shining light like the stars emanated out from his eyes as he slowly rose to his feet. Then, his voice booming like thunder, he spoke a single word.

“FIGHT!!”

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# Chapter 1315: Lord White Falls, The Battle Commences!

“Win or lose, we’ll fight!”

“Since they’re not ready either…we have to strike now!”

“It’s just war, isn’t it?! Even though we don’t know how long it will last, it’ll happen eventually anyway; we might as well get on with it!”

Numerous shouting voices rose up from all parts of the Mountain and Sea Realm. As they echoed out, Meng Hao remained silent, and yet, his eyes flickered with an intense desire to do battle.

“Perhaps after some preparation I could focus even more of the Mountain and Sea Realm’s power,” he thought. “However… by that time, the two other terrifying enemies will have arrived.

“Since that’s the case, why not fight now? If we can wipe out the 33 Heavens before the other two forces arrive… perhaps victory won’t be an impossibility!” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. Now was not the time for silent contemplation. He looked up into the starry sky at the golden-armored hand which was still holding Lord White. He did not cry out that he wanted to fight, but instead, sent his divine sense roaring out, bursting with power equivalent to eighty percent of that of a Paragon.

If the war was starting, then Lord White could be of significant aid to Meng Hao’s Eternal stratum. Therefore… he could not be allowed to escape. Meng Hao’s divine sense rumbled toward him….

The golden-armored Outsider from the 1st Heaven had an expression of shock on his face. The reaction of all the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm caused him to subconsciously fall back, simultaneously trying to drag Lord White out of the Mountain and Sea Realm. However, it was in that same moment that Meng Hao's divine sense closed in.

Meng Hao's divine sense transformed into an enormous blade capable of sundering the Heavens, which then slashed viciously at the arm, moving at incredible speed.

"You're like a grain of rice fighting back against the sun and moon!" the golden-armored Outsider said with a cold snort. Dazzling golden light then began to shine off of his hand, as if he was simply going to ignore Meng Hao's divine sense, and would continue to extract Lord White.

However, even as his words echoed out, Meng Hao's blade of divine sense smashed into the golden light, which instantly distorted, and then began to tremble, apparently on the verge of shattering!

"That's…." the golden-armored Outsider shouted in alarmed disbelief. His eyes had gone wide and his mind was reeling.

Meng Hao's divine sense blade pierced the golden light and then made contact with golden-armored Outsider's enormous arm. Cracking sounds echoed out as the golden armor shattered, revealing a long scaled arm.

The arm trembled as Meng Hao's divine sense blade bit into it. The arm was apparently not even qualified to resist; in the blink of an eye, it was completely severed!!

Meng Hao's eyes glittered with killing intent as he stared at the severed arm and then shouted out in a thunder-like voice, "All invading Outsiders shall DIE!"

A massive roar echoed back in response from the 1st Heaven. The golden-armored Outsider's eyes went wide as the pain from his severed arm exploded out in his body. His heart began to thump as he realized that Meng

Hao had accomplished this using only his divine sense; such a level of power left him completely terrified.

“Paragon!” shouted the golden-armored Outsider. “That’s the power of a Paragon. Y-you’re… you’re a Paragon!!”

The other Outsider cultivators from the 1st Heaven all gasped, and their faces flickered.

Back in the Mountain and Sea Realm, the severed arm’s hand slowly loosened its grip on Lord White, who turned to face Meng Hao with complete shock and despair on his face.

“All who betray the Mountain and Sea Realm shall DIE!” Meng Hao hefted Demon Weapon Lonelytomb, then blasted toward Lord White as fast as lightning. In the blink of an eye, the spear stabbed into Lord White’s forehead.

A miserable scream echoed out, and complete disbelief could be seen in Lord White’s eyes. He stared blankly at Meng Hao for a moment before his head completely exploded, followed by his entire body!

The Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea was dead!!

As Lord White died, the crown that he had worn began to fall. Cracking sounds could be heard as it then shattered into innumerable pieces. Simultaneously, Lord White’s palace on the Seventh Mountain was transformed into ash, as if it had been crushed by an enormous hand!

The only thing that was left behind there in the starry sky was a solitary crown, which floated down to rest atop the Seventh Mountain. There it waited… for a new Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea to appear!

In the celestial pond atop the Seventh Mountain, the Xuanwu turtle’s eyes glowed with a white light. Apparently, the connection that had sealed it to the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea was now gone.

Boundless power of the Mountains and Seas began to spread out from the crown, filling the Seventh Mountain and Sea. At the same time, all of the cultivators who had been born in the Seventh Mountain and Sea could feel that power, and also could tell that…

Now that the Lord had lost his position, everything under Heaven was up for grabs!

Meanwhile, back in the Eighth Mountain and Sea…. In the moment that Lord White died, his corpse transformed into vast quantities of qi and blood, some of which was then absorbed by Demon Weapon Lonelytomb. However, most of that power actually transformed into strands of white mist, which Meng Hao then absorbed through his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth.

Furthermore, in the spot where Lord White had died, a green leaf appeared, which began to emanate resplendent light, as if a magical technique were forming. In that same moment, Meng Hao’s Eternal stratum began to operate at full power, pulling the leaf toward him. A moment later, he completely absorbed it.

Meng Hao’s entire body trembled, and he felt a boundless life force erupting out within him. Although his fleshly body didn’t experience a breakthrough, the sudden buildup of energy left him shocked.

He had the intense premonition that, if he used God blood to achieve a fleshly body breakthrough, then the power of his fleshly body would exceed that of a Dao Lord, and step directly into the Dao Sovereign level!!

In fact, he could also tell that his 6th Soul Lamp… was apparently on the verge of being extinguished!

Even as Meng Hao cut down Lord White, the shocking sounds of battle began to rise up in the Mountain and Sea Realm. Meng Hao could also sense the fluctuations of a towering power rising up from the Eighth Mountain. As of that moment, Meng Hao knew that his Grandpa Meng… had finally awoken.

At long last, the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm once again spoke!

“Fight!” It was a single word, but the instant that it rang out, the nine Xuanwu turtles on the nine Mountains all threw their heads back and roared. Next, both the sun and moon of the Mountain and Sea Realm blazed with intense, dazzling light!

Shocking rumbling sounds echoed out as nine beams of light shot up from the Nine Mountains, then slammed into the golden net up above. The net instantly began to shake, and then… started to collapse!

As the net collapsed, the 1st Heaven of the 33 Heavens, regardless of whether or not it wished to… began to descend!!

Now, what could be seen beyond the starry sky was not a boundless expanse, but rather, an enormous land mass.

The 33 Heavens shook as countless streams of powerful divine sense exploded out. Shocking ripples also emanated out from the 1st heaven as a cold, ancient voice rang out.

“War! Since the Mountain and Sea Realm desires this war to come early, well then… we shall fight!!” As the voice echoed out, countless roaring sounds rose up from within the 1st Heaven. Next, figures could be seen emerging from the 2nd Heaven, the 3rd Heaven, from all of the 33 Heavens; more people wished to join in the battle!

However, even as that happened, the sun and moon of the Mountain and Sea Realm sent two beams of radiant light shooting up into the 33 Heavens, toward the spot where the 1st Heaven and the 2nd Heaven connected!

RUMBLE!

The two beams of light instantly pierced through that connection, apparently cutting the 1st Heaven off from the other 33 Heavens. Immediately afterwards, another huge net appeared, completely enveloping the 1st Heaven and separating it!

The other figures descended from beyond the 1st Heaven were temporarily halted in place. Enraged roars could be heard, and the 33 Heavens began to shake as the voices of countless cultivators echoed out. Back in the 1st Heaven, all of the Outsiders maintained their silence. However, it didn’t take very long before they began to fly off of the land mass and charge toward the Mountain and Sea Realm!

The war… was really beginning!

The battlefield was not one location within the Mountain and Sea Realm, but rather… the entire Realm!

The Outsider cultivators from the boundless 1st Heaven scattered out in various directions. These Outsiders from the 1st Heaven were vicious in appearance, and looked nothing like ordinary cultivators. They looked more like beasts, beasts which radiated shocking murderous intent.

At the same time, all of the lands in the Mountain and Sea Realm were springing into action. Soon, the fighting had already broken out in full force.

The Seventh Mountain and Sea was almost instantly transformed into a sea of flames. Few cultivators had been left behind there, ensuring that the Outsiders from the 1st Heaven met little resistance. Instead, most of them focused on fortifying the area to serve as their base.

Clearly, the 1st Heaven had been preparing for this invasion for years!

A similar scene was also playing out in the Sixth Mountain and Sea!

The fighting immediately intensified. However, there had already been wars playing out in both the Eighth and Fifth Mountains. Although the forces present in those wars had sustained casualties, each front currently contained the combined power of two Mountains and Seas. Furthermore, because of what Meng Hao had done in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, the fighting there had not been as intense, and thus the armies there were still relatively intact.

Now that the true war was beginning, all of the cultivators there fought back enthusiastically, and the booming sounds of battle echoed out.

As for the other Mountains and Seas, there had been no fighting going on. The only thing they lacked was time to organize themselves. However, the Outsiders from the 1st Heaven were equally unprepared, so chaotic fighting immediately broke out.

In the First Mountain and Sea, the Echelon cultivator Dao-Heaven took the lead in the fighting, and as for all the other sects and clans there, they had no other choice than to join in.

It was the same in the Second Mountain and Sea and the Third Mountain and Sea. The only exception… was the Fourth Mountain and Sea!

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# Chapter 1316: Outsider Paragon!

The Fourth Mountain and Sea had been preparing for a very, very long time. Perhaps it would even be appropriate to say that they were always in a state of preparation. Almost as soon as the Outsiders arrived, the starry sky of the Fourth Mountain and Sea began to rumble. Numerous buildings appeared, which seemed to be Yama King palaces from the underworld. In addition, a boiling Yellow Springs appeared, sweeping across the Heavens.

Before the Outsiders could even start fighting, miserable screams rang out as heavy casualties were inflicted. They couldn’t even set foot into the Fourth Mountain and Sea!

Countless enraged cultivators charged out from the Fourth Mountain and Sea, roaring in rage. “DIE!!”

Most unusual of all, however, was not the Fourth Mountain and Sea, but rather… the Ninth Mountain and Sea!

Almost in the same instant that the Outsiders arrived there, a beam of dazzling light shot out from some unknown region, sweeping out to cover that entire Mountain and Sea. It completely passed over the cultivators, but as for the Outsiders, they were instantly shredded to pieces.

The war between the Mountain and Sea Realm and the 33 Heavens had now fully erupted!

At the same time, the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm spread out to cover the whole Realm, crushing down onto the Outsiders. They roared as cracking sounds emanated out. In that moment, their fleshly bodies, their cultivation bases, everything about them was suppressed. Almost instantly, their battle prowess was reduced to sixty percent!

That was one terrifying aspect of the Mountain and Sea Realm. It wasn't just a place for the Immortal World to gradually recover. After all, it had been created during a time of war, and therefore, everything about it… was designed to be used in warfare!

"Mountain and Sea Realm!!" An enraged roar could be heard coming from the 1st Heaven as an emaciated figure appeared, whose every step caused the Mountain and Sea Realm shake.

The aura of a Paragon emanated out from his body, spreading out in all directions to shake everything!

Apparently, the pressure coming from the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm had little effect on this figure. When he first appeared, he was very skinny, but as he neared, he grew larger. In the blink of an eye, he was 300 meters long, then 3,000 meters, and soon… he was fully 30,000 meters tall!

He bore the appearance of some fiendish beast, covered with scales, with a long tail stretching out behind it. He even had a horn sticking out of its head, which radiated a spectacular energy.

Furthermore, black flames flickered around him, and his eyes were bright red. Everywhere he looked, the starry sky twisted and distorted, and as he looked down at the Mountain and Sea Realm, all living beings there trembled, with the exception of the two entities who this being actually feared!

One of those entities was in the Fourth Mountain and Sea, while the other was in the Eighth Mountain and Sea!

One was Ksitigarbha, and the other… was Meng Hao!

The reason he took Ksitigarbha so seriously was because of how his energy surged so mightily there within the Fourth Mountain and Sea. His glory bordered on that of a Paragon, and was enough to shake the highest Heavens, to spread shock throughout the Mountains and Seas!

The reason he took Meng Hao seriously was because of how he had just slaughtered Lord White. After all, Lord White… was an Outsider from the 1st Heaven, one of this beast’s people!

“Trifling Mountain and Sea Realm!” said the enormous 30,000-meter creature. “My people have long since completely dominated the 1st Heaven!

“The time has come, my generals. Imperial Lord Mandilo, Exalted Devils, the time has come… for a sacrifice of blood!

“Sacrifice the blood of the Immortals of the Mountain and Sea Realm to the Heavens, and offer up their ghosts. Take all life in this place… and transform it into ash!” His voice echoed out to fill the entire Mountain and Sea Realm.

In response to his words, countless Outsiders flooded out from the 1st Heaven behind him, radiating killing intent as they spread out into the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Whether it was in terms of cultivation base or ability to slaughter, this second wave of Outsiders far exceeded the first. They were clearly the elite and most powerful fighters.

Booms rang out in all directions, shaking the Mountains and Seas as even more fierce fighting erupted!

Furthermore, there were three figures which slowly emerged, three Outsiders. It was impossible to tell if they were male or female, as they were completely covered in scales. Their eyes glowed red as if with fire, and the leader among the three was fully 3,000 meters tall, and surrounded by flames, as well as shocking fluctuations, fluctuations that could be second only to that of a Paragon.

He was… an Imperial Lord!!

A Quasi-Paragon!

Behind the Quasi-Paragon were two other Outsiders, also with glowing red eyes and cruel grins. Their cultivation bases also shook Heaven and Earth; they were clearly equipped with the power of six Essences!

One of them wore golden armor, except that one of its arms had been destroyed. This was the Outsider who had attempted to take Lord White away. As soon as he appeared, his eyes locked onto Meng Hao in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, and they flickered with killing intent.

These two were not Paragons, nor were they Imperial Lords. However, with six Essences, they stood at the pinnacle of power, and any one of them could unleash a complete catastrophe onto any battlefield.

The 1st Heaven of the 33 Heavens was the first land which sealed the Mountain and Sea Realm. For tens upon tens of thousands of years, it had served as the first barrier, and therefore, it was no surprise that it housed powerful beings like this!

The hearts of tens upon tens of thousands of cultivators in the Nine Mountains and Seas were completely shaken. Everyone looked up into the starry sky to see the Paragon up above in the 1st Heaven.

His aura was terrifying to an indescribable level as it spread out through the Mountain and Sea Realm!

His energy could shake Heaven and Earth, as if a single thought on his part could eradicate any living creature he laid eyes upon.

Such powerful divine sense caused even Dao Realm experts to tremble as if… they were facing something completely without equal.

“Paragon….”

“That’s… the power of a Paragon….”

“The 33 Heavens…. Just how many Paragons do they have…?”

Even the Mountain and Sea Lords were shaken. Despite the blessing of power from the Mountains and Seas, everyone was still so shocked that they almost lost their will to fight.

The 30,000-meter long Outsider Paragon suddenly extended his right hand and then shoved it out toward the Mountain and Sea Realm. Instantly, the starry sky filled with rumbling sounds, and began to peel and shatter.

Paragon power erupted out, surging toward the Fourth and Eighth Mountains!

Shockingly, he was first sending out his divine sense to try to eradicate his two greatest threats!

“Remember that thou hast been exterminated by Eegoo. No matter how many tens of thousands of years have passed, I will not change my true name!” As the Outsider Paragon’s hand descended, Heaven and Earth shook violently.

The Mountain and Sea Realm trembled, and its cultivators could sense a shocking pressure emanating down from the starry sky, a pressure which easily shoved aside the power of the Mountains and Seas, and then shot directly toward Meng Hao.

Contained within that pressure was a will of extermination that clearly intended to shred him into pieces, to destroy him in body and spirit.

Meng Hao’s pupils constricted as an intense sensation of deadly crisis welled up within him. That sensation of crisis sent his cultivation base aflame, and he knew that if he was struck by this Paragon’s attack, then he… would be killed beyond the shadow of a doubt!

Thankfully, Paragon Eegoo’s power was not focused completely on attacking Meng Hao. Instead, it was split into two parts, one of which was focused on destroying Meng Hao, the other of which… was speeding down toward the Fourth Mountain and Sea, toward a spot deep within the countless Yama King palaces, toward a patch of pitch-black dirt in the underworld, where an enormous 3,000-meter tall statue sat there cross-legged.

That statue… was none other than the Lord of the Fourth Mountain and Sea, Ksitigarbha!

He was the most powerful of the Mountain and Sea Lords, and also… the most powerful person in the Mountain and Sea Realm under the level of Paragon!

Innumerable souls flew around the statue. After all, the Fourth Mountain controlled the underworld of the entire Mountain and Sea Realm, and therefore, the Lord of the Fourth Mountain and Sea was also the Mountain and Sea Realm's Lord of the Underworld!

Even as the crushing power of the Outsider Paragon closed in, the statue's seemingly eternally closed eyes suddenly snapped open. Cracking sounds could be heard, and fissures spread out all over the surface of the statue as it slowly raised its right hand, then viciously jabbed out with its finger.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

Massive rumbling sounds echoed out as Ksitigarbha's body collapsed layer by layer. As it shattered and dissipated, the pressure from the Outsider Paragon suddenly lurched to a halt, incapable of proceeding.

The statue dissipated, and Ksitigarbha's true form was revealed. He was an ancient old man, tall and clad in a long yellow robe. As he stood there, a shocking energy pulsed out of him, and he raised his right hand to perform an incantation gesture. Instantly, the Fourth Mountain and Sea began to tremble, and the sound of chanting scriptures began to emanate out from the Yellow Springs up above in the starry sky, and the countless Yama King palaces. Simultaneously, Joss Flame power began to converge upon Ksitigarbha.

A boom echoed out as the Outsider Paragon's pressure was crushed by Ksitigarbha's finger jab. At the same time, Ksitigarbha's face paled a bit, although it quickly recovered. Then, his eyes began to shine with a strange light as he suddenly looked up, and then raised his right hand into the air.

“To be struck, but not strike back?” he said coolly. “That is not the Dao of Ksitigarbha.” His voice thrummed with a strange cadence, and as the words left his mouth, he pushed his hand up into the air. Immediately, the Yama King palaces and the Yellow Springs, coupled with the boundless Joss Flame power, rumbled up, transforming into an enormous hand which shot up into the starry sky toward the Outsider Paragon, as if to grab him!

It didn’t matter that he had a powerful cultivation base, or that he was a Paragon. Since he struck out at Ksitigarbha, how could Ksitigarbha not strike back? Once an attack was made, it meant the time had come to draw swords!

“Hmm?” The Outsider Paragon’s eyes widened as he looked down at the Fourth Mountain. “He himself wields the power of a Dao Sovereign… but by converging tens of thousands of years of Joss Flame, he can actually unleash… the might of an Imperial Lord….”

Even as the Outsider Paragon was reeling in shock, back in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, the Paragon’s might was still bearing down on Meng Hao. Eyes shining brightly, Meng Hao raised both hands wide into the air, summoning the Paragon Bridge. His divine sense also exploded out with eighty percent of the power of a Paragon. Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering power slammed into the Paragon’s pressure, fighting back against it.

When they slammed into each other, a massive boom rang out like a clap of thunder. The starry sky trembled, even darkening because of the blinding light of the Paragon Bridge. At the same time, numerous figures could be seen walking across the bridge, from whom terrifying auras could be sensed!

The Outsider Paragon was completely and utterly shocked.

He had to admit that he had underestimated the Mountain and Sea Realm. He had originally anticipated being able to eradicate both opponents at the same time, only to find that one was more shocking than the other!

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# Chapter 1317: Killing Intent of a Paragon!

The sudden appearance of the Paragon Bridge completely shocked the Outsider Paragon; in fact, he recognized it! Back when the great catastrophe occurred, he had not been at the Paragon level, and thus did not play a large role in what happened. However, he had seen this very bridge before, when it was crushed by an attack by the all-powerful Nine Seals and his Mountain and Sea Realm.

Even thinking about that bitter war left him trembling. Although Nine Seals had long since been destroyed in body and spirit, when this Outsider Paragon thought about him, he was left shaken.

He did understand it back in those days, but later came to the realization that if Nine Seals had felt like abandoning the Paragon Immortal Realm, no one could have prevented him from leaving.

In fact, the two terrifying forces who fought in the war years ago would not have been capable of such a feat, not without unleashing their Ancestral Souls. However, the price to paid for such an act was so high that even those two powers would be hard-pressed to bear the costs. 1

It was with mixed feelings that Eegoo looked at the Paragon Bridge, and the figures on it. Those figures were shocking, but what was even more astonishing to him was the power of Meng Hao's divine sense.

However… even the fact that Meng Hao's divine sense was eighty percent as powerful as his own didn't cause his mind was to reel.

What did that, what caused him to begin trembling, what caused his eyes to suddenly widen… was that he had just sensed something within Meng Hao's divine sense…. He had sensed… familiar fluctuations!!

Those fluctuations left his heart pounding and his mind spinning!

"Nine Seals…. Those are the fluctuations of Nine Seals. This man… is Nine Seals' successor!" Eegoo felt as if infinite lightning bolts were slamming into his mind. He raised his hand, sending Paragon power to blast away the gigantic hand summoned by Ksitigarbha. Then, killing intent flickered within his eyes as he turned his attention to the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

There was no way that he… would permit another Paragon Nine Seals to appear!!

9-Essences Paragons like that were vastly removed from his own level as a 7-Essences Paragon. Although both were called Paragons, the difference between them… was even more dramatic than the difference between 4-Essences Dao Sovereigns and 6-Essences Dao Sovereigns!

"This kid must die! If I don't kill him, then the possibility exists that he will become the second Nine Seals. He could… potentially exterminate all of the 33 Heavens!" The Outsider Paragon's mind was spinning as he extended his hand and made a vicious pinching gesture toward the Eighth Mountain and Sea. The power of his cultivation base exploded out, the full might of his Paragon power!

The Eighth Mountain and Sea trembled, and all the cultivators there, including the Outsiders, began to bleed from their eyes, ears, noses and mouths, as they felt intense pressure weighing down on them.

Apparently, this Outsider Paragon was even willing to sacrifice the lives of his own people in order to wipe out Meng Hao. He was attempting to crush the starry sky of the Eighth Mountain and Sea, and all living things therein!

However, it was at this point that a beam of white light shot out from within the Ninth Mountain and Sea. It split the starry sky like a white waterfall as it rose up, whistling through the air toward the 30,000-meter-tall Outsider. When it reached his hand, it exploded, instantly sending the Outsider Paragon's hand rebounding backward!

"I've been waiting for you!" The voice belonged to that of a woman, and it was as cold as ice. It was none other than… Paragon Sea Dream!

Outsider Paragon Eegoo looked up, and his eyes swirled with killing intent. "Sea Dream!! You've managed to stay alive by means of a secret magic all these years, but your Essences have been destroyed. Your cultivation base is like nothing compared to back then. If you force yourself to fight, it will only hasten your death. If you had avoided resisting us, then I would have let you be. After all, the destruction of the Mountain and Sea Realm has nothing to do with you. And yet, you still dare attack me?!"

Paragon Sea Dream appeared off in the distance, slowly striding forward. Her voice cold, she said, "Back when I achieved my Dao, you were nothing more than an ant.

"Later, when I was a Dao Sovereign, I encountered you, dying, whereupon you dropped to your knees and pleaded with me to prevent you from getting sucked into the cycle of reincarnation.

"After I became a Paragon, you didn't hesitate to run your clan into the ground, all so that you could acquire a Celestial Emperor Flower. Why? To fawn on me in the hopes that I would give you the magic you needed to break through to the Dao Lord level.

"And now you, a member of the Drakewyrm Tribe, dare to bare your fangs in front of me?"

The Outsider Paragon's face flickered in response to Sea Dream's coolly spoken words. Every sentence that came out of her mouth seemed to dredge up bad memories in the Outsider, causing the killing intent in his eyes to intensify.

"If you want to die," Eegoo said, "then I'll fulfill your desire!" The Outsider Paragon knew that, thanks to Sea Dream's interference, killing

Meng Hao was now an impossibility. Furthermore, despite the words of contempt he had spoken toward Sea Dream, he still feared her.

After all, when he was still just a child, Paragon Sea Dream had been one of the Paragons of the Paragon Immortal Realm. She had an incredible standing, and could unleash shocking magical abilities so far above his own as to be utterly incomparable.

Rumbling could be heard as the Outsider Paragon attacked, and he and Paragon Sea Dream began fighting in the starry sky far up above the Mountain and Sea Realm!

Their battle caused the entire world to tremble, the Heavens to flash with colors, and the starry sky to grow dim.

In almost that same moment, the Outsider Imperial Lord’s eyes flickered away from Meng Hao and focused onto the Fourth Mountain. Snorting coldly, he transformed into a beam of light that shot in that same direction!

His target was Ksitigarbha, who was able to wield the power of an Imperial Lord!

As he neared, Ksitigarbha looked up, and the boundless Joss Flame power transformed into a huge vortex, which shot toward the Outsider Imperial Lord, instantly enveloping him.

Shocking booms rang out as the two of them began to fight!

As for the remaining Outsider Dao Sovereigns, their eyes flickered with brutal gleams.

One of them, the one in the golden armor, slowly said, “This kid from the Eighth Mountain and Sea is mine!”

The other one laughed, then closed his eyes, whereupon his body twisted and distorted, becoming five separate streams of green smoke that shot in five different directions through the void.

The destinations of those streams of smoke: the First, Second, Third, Eighth and Ninth Mountains!

Their targets were not ordinary cultivators, but rather… the Mountain and Sea Lords of those very mountains!

Shockingly, he was using his own power to simultaneously fight against five Mountain and Sea Lords!

Rumbling sounds echoed out from those five mountains as powerful magical techniques suddenly exploded into being.

The golden-armored Outsider Dao Sovereign was the one who had already clashed with Meng Hao, just moments ago. He licked his lips, and killing intent swirled in his eyes as they locked onto Meng Hao’s position within the Eighth Mountain and Sea. He wasn’t sure why his own exalted Paragon leader specifically wanted Meng Hao dead, but he didn’t care. Considering that his cultivation base was at the Dao Sovereign level, cutting down someone at the 5-Essences level, even if they were at the peak, would not be very difficult.

The thing he cared about the most was that Meng Hao had killed his Junior Tribesman Lord White, someone who had made heroic contributions to the 1st Heaven!!

Because of all Lord White’s services, the tribe had already arranged that for his bloodline to be awakened upon his return, which would enable him to rise to the level of a Dao Sovereign. They had even made preparations to appoint him as a tribe Elder.

But before that could happen, he had been cut down right in front of the golden-armored Outsider.

This Outsider wanted nothing more than to kill Meng Hao, and that desire was growing stronger. The only thing he needed to be mindful of was Meng Hao’s terrifying divine sense, but by this time, he had already taken precautions against it.

Grinning, he strode forward, then slashed out at the starry sky, which shattered apart as he bore down on the Eighth Mountain and Sea, bursting with killing intent.

“So, how do you want to die, kid? I’ll let you decide.”

Sinister laughter rang out as the Outsider Dao Sovereign picked up speed. From a distance, he looked like a golden shooting star, piercing through the starry sky in Meng Hao’s direction.

A strange light appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes; his blood was already pumping. His cultivation base erupted as he strode forward. One step. Two steps. Three steps…. In the blink of an eye, the Outsider Dao Sovereign was upon him, but by that time, he had already taken seven steps.

When the seventh step landed, his energy spiked, increasing exponentially. At the same time, his divine sense shot out, and the Paragon Bridge rumbled down. Then, Demon Weapon Lonelytomb suddenly appeared in his right hand!

The power of Meng Hao’s fleshly body converged on the spear, along with energy from his cultivation base and magical techniques. That rumbling power seemed to freeze the starry sky, and the killing intent became completely focused.

“Not bad….” the Outsider Dao Sovereign said, pupils constricting. Suddenly, he opened his mouth and roared, sending out monstrous sound waves. Astonishingly, the image of a giant appeared behind the Outsider Dao Sovereign. The power of six Essences also erupted out, forming a tempest. At the same time, a statue appeared in his hands.

That statue depicted a lizard, and as soon as it appeared, a strange aura erupted out which began to suppress Meng Hao’s divine sense!

It took only a moment for his divine sense to drop from eighty percent of the power of a Paragon, to half of that!

Then, the windstorm began to fight back against the power of Meng Hao’s spear.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE….

Massive sounds tore at the starry sky. After extinguishing five Soul Lamps, Meng Hao could unleash incredible power that was only a hair away from the 6-Essences level. However, when facing a true 6-Essences cultivator, that simply wasn’t enough!

As his divine sense was suppressed, the feeling of deadly crisis in his heart grew more intense.

The Paragon Bridge collapsed, and Demon Weapon Lonelytomb recoiled backward. Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth as the backlash hit his cultivation base, scattering it. His fleshly body was slashed viciously, sending blood and gore flying about.

The Essence tempest surrounding the Outsider Dao Sovereign weakened a bit. Although he had been capable of suppressing Meng Hao’s attack just now, he had been forced to go all out to do so. That was especially because of the bizarre Demon Weapon Lonelytomb, which caused him to frown.

He took a step forward, flickering to appear in front of the seriously wounded Meng Hao. Eyes glittering with a cruel light, he didn’t attempt to kill him, but instead opened his mouth wide and lunged toward Meng Hao’s head.

“I’ll eat you and absorb your power!” Bizarre light shone in the eyes of the golden-armored Outsider. However, in the same moment that his jaws were about to latch onto Meng Hao, Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly flickered. Although his injuries had seemed severe, the combination of the Eternal stratum and the Green Emperor’s Eternal Incantation transformed into something like an undying, unkillable secret magic! He recovered almost instantly!

Then, he clenched his hand into a fist and began to punch the Outsider Dao Sovereign!

Life-Extermination Fist!

Bedevilment Fist!

God-Slaying Fist!!

BOOOOOOOOOMMMM!

Those three fist strikes slammed into the Outsider Dao Sovereign, who had never expected that Meng Hao would have a secret magic that would enable him to recover so quickly. His eyes went wide, but he was too slow to avoid Meng Hao’s successive blows.

Blood sprayed out of his mouth as he was sent tumbling back. Enraged, he was just about to counterattack, but unfortunately, he was not familiar with Meng Hao’s fighting style. Once Meng Hao won the initiative… he never let go!

1. The Ancestral Soul is something that comes up in both Beseech the Devil and Renegade Immortal, mostly toward the latter parts of both stories

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# Chapter 1318: Battling a Dao Sovereign!

It didn’t matter who Meng Hao was fighting, once he seized the initiative, that opponent would definitely have to pay a heavy price.

It was the same with Lord White, and with all of the people Meng Hao had fought before.

People who knew a bit about him would be aware of this, and would do everything they could to avoid losing the initiative… not even once!

Even in the moment that the golden-armored Outsider Dao Sovereign’s rage flared, and he prepared to counterattack, Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed brightly, and he waved his finger, unleashing the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex!

Although using this Hexing magic on someone with a cultivation base far higher than his own would lead to a powerful backlash, Meng Hao ignored the blood that oozed out of the corners of his mouth and unleashed it anyway. Immediately, the golden-armored Outsider Dao Sovereign lurched to a halt in midair, face flickering!

Then, Meng Hao’s energy ignited, and the copper mirror flickered out, transforming into the Battle Weapon, which Meng Hao slashed down viciously!

As the rumbling sounds echoed out, the Outsider Dao Sovereign felt a sensation of intense crisis explode up inside of him. He could sense that even though he was a Dao Sovereign, he was still only an inch away from death.

He had been prepared for Meng Hao’s divine sense, and had quickly suppressed it. However, he had never imagined that Meng Hao’s proficiencies would include things other than divine sense!

The current attack which was being leveled against him seemed as shocking as a lightning bolt from the Heavens.

“Dammit!!” howled the golden-armored Outsider Dao Sovereign. Ignoring whatever injuries might result, ignoring the pain of the organs inside his body being crushed and his qi passageways shattering, he burst out with power to lunge backward by three meters!

The glittering glow of a blade then passed right by him!

Meanwhile, on top of the Eighth Mountain, another shocking battle was beginning. An illusory figure shot past the celestial pond, and as it did, it glanced down at the Xuanwu turtle, grinned coldly, and waved a hand. Instantly, the Xuanwu turtle’s howls shook the entire Eighth Mountain.

The figure’s pupils constricted slightly, but it shot past the celestial pond nonetheless, heading directly toward the temple beyond. As it neared, it approached the door and prepared to barge in. And yet, almost immediately, it fell back.

In that moment, the door exploded into pieces as countless sharp blades spiralled out, transforming into an explosive rain that surged toward the illusory figure.

Then, a tall man emerged from within the shattered remnants of the temple door. He wore a breathtaking suit of armor, and as soon as he emerged, he unleashed a fist strike that could shake Heaven and Earth. The void in the area suddenly converged, forcing that illusory figure to actually appear in person. It was none other than the Outsider Dao Sovereign who had split himself into five incarnations.

The person who had forced him to appear was, of course, none other than Meng Hao’s grandfather, the Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea!

"So, it turns out you really were telling the truth, Senior Outsider," murmured Grandpa Meng, clearly speaking only to himself. "I awoke from slumber on the very day my grandson rose to prominence, the same day… that the starry sky shattered and the 1st Heaven descended.

"Did you set up this entire situation? Or are the Fang and Meng Clans just one piece of the bigger picture…?" When he looked up at the Outsider, his eyes flickered with killing intent, and he began to run forward.

"What armor is that?!" the Outsider said, face falling. "Dammit… that armor… what is it with that armor?!?!" He once again backed up in retreat, but he wasn't as fast as Grandpa Meng. The Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea shot forward and unleashed a punch!

A boom rang out as the Outsider tumbled away like a kite with its string cut, blood spraying out of his mouth. He flew back for 5,000 kilometers before finally grinding to a halt, his face flickering with shock as Grandpa Meng once again appeared directly in front of him.

"Dammit, you think I'm afraid of you or something?!" the Outsider Dao Sovereign growled through clenched teeth. Suddenly, he began to grow. In the blink of an eye, he was 300 meters tall, with a long tail that shattered the starry sky as it whipped toward the Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

Similar battles began to play out on the First, Second, Third, and Ninth Mountains. Compared to the battles being fought on the first three of those mountains, the one on the Ninth Mountain was especially strange.

The Outsider's clone was simply hovering above the mountain, not moving. In front of him floated a huge eye, and the two of them were staring at each other as they fought a battle of divine will!

Furthermore… it appeared as if the Lord of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, Ji Tian was actually… attempting to possess the Outsider Dao Sovereign's clone!

At the same time, countless battles had broken out within the Nine Mountains and Seas. The cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm were fighting back savagely against the Outsiders. Virtually all of the Dao Realm fighters had appeared, and massive booms filled the entire Mountain and Sea Realm. Almost the entire Realm was a battlefield now!

The will of the Mountain and Sea Realm continued to bolster the people with power, simultaneously maintaining the barrier that separated the other 32 Heavens from the 1st Heaven. The 1st Heaven was now trapped, unable to receive any aid from the other Outsiders.

One reason for this was that the power of the Mountain and Sea Realm could not be weakened by anyone other than an Outsider Dao Sovereign with six Essences or more!

The battle raged, causing both roars and screams to echo out into the vast expanse.

Back in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, Meng Hao’s Battle Weapon glittered like the sun and moon as it slashed toward the golden-armored Outsider Dao Sovereign.

Blood sprayed out of the Outsider’s mouth as the armor covering his chest shattered, and a huge wound appeared. A will of extermination poured into him, provoking an enraged roar. However, fear welled up in his heart; if he hadn’t paid an extreme price to avoid the attack just now, thus losing the initiative, he would definitely have been killed.

Meng Hao frowned, then waved his hand, causing numerous mountains to appear. A rift was torn open in the void, and the Blood Demon emerged, roaring, and the Essence of Divine Flame converged and shot toward the Outsider.

However, all of those things were distractions. The true killing blow was coming from Meng Hao’s left hand, from which exploded the power of the Mountains and Seas!

He was the future Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm, and he was only able to use a bit of the power of the Mountains and Seas, but nonetheless, it transformed into a huge hand which grabbed out toward the Outsider Dao Sovereign.

Meng Hao then transformed into a beam of light, hefting the Battle Weapon and then unleashing another attack. All of this conformed with Meng Hao’s style of fighting… always attack!

As the hand formed from the power of the Mountains and Seas descended upon the Outsider Dao Sovereign, his eyes widened. Suddenly, all of the scales on his body rose up, and he let out a howl. The scales then shattered, transforming into a windstorm of 6-Essences energy which exploded toward the power of the Mountains and Seas.

Booming sounds rang out as the Mountain Consuming Incantation, the Blood Demon, and the Essence of Divine Flame all shot forward. Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with killing intent as he then waved his left finger.

The Seventh Demon Sealing Hex!

Instantly, Karma Threads appeared atop the golden-armored Outsider’s head. They rapidly formed together into a sealing mark, which then crushed down onto him. At this point, Meng Hao performed another incantation gesture, unleashing the Sixth Demon Sealing Hex.

The Sixth Hex was the Life-Death Hexing, which caused a gray magical symbol to appear on the Outsider’s forehead. Then the magical symbol exploded, sending blood spraying out of his forehead. At the same time, however, a gleam of ridicule appeared in the Outsider’s eyes.

That look caused Meng Hao’s heart to flicker with fear. Simultaneously, the Outsider Dao Sovereign spoke two words in a sinister voice!

“Self Essence!” Almost immediately, the six streams of Essence power within the tempest merged together into one. A black sea of flames then rumbled out in all directions.

The tiny bit of power from the Mountain and Sea Realm faded away within the black sea of flames. The mountains melted, and the image of the Blood

Demon dissipated. Then, the black flames took shape into an enormous creature, something like a lizard, which howled as it charged toward Meng Hao.

It was a moment of critical danger. Roaring, Meng Hao viciously attacked the flame lizard with his Battle Weapon. Meng Hao was like a bug compared to his gigantic opponent. However, his powerful Battle Weapon instantly slashed down onto its head, slicing it open!

A shriek rang out. However, this black flame lizard was formed from the Essence of Self, and was so powerful that it was only seriously injured and not killed.

The black flame lizard roared, ignoring the intense pain it was feeling as it attempted to consume Meng Hao.

Meng Hao's eyes flickered, and the Battle Weapon vanished. In its place appeared Demon Weapon Lonelytomb, which he violently hurled out. Demon Weapon Lonelytomb transformed into a beam of Demonic light which pierced directly into the black flame lizard.

The lizard shuddered, staring at Meng Hao for a moment before it suddenly exploded. However, that explosion caused a mountain of black flames to charge toward Meng Hao like 10,000 horses, instantly inundating him.

Even as the flames enveloped him, Meng Hao's eyes flashed from the sensation of intense deadly crisis. In that moment, the Lightning Cauldron suddenly flickered into being above his head. Electricity danced, and he suddenly switched places with a 5-Essences Outsider not too far off in the distance.

That 5-Essences Outsider appeared exactly where Meng Hao had been, and didn't have time to react before the black sea of flames consumed it. A bloodcurdling scream lingered in the air as it was completely destroyed.

At the same time, the Outsider Dao Sovereign coughed up a mouthful of blood as Meng Hao's Seventh and Sixth Hexes inflicted more damage.

“Dammit!!” he roared in extreme frustration. He was clearly far more powerful than Meng Hao, and yet after losing the initiative, he had suffered setback after setback.

Even as he roared, he flickered into motion. The black sea of flames recoiled into itself, once again turning into a lizard, although it was much weaker than last time.

The black flame lizard threw its head back and roared, then eyed Meng Hao with a deadly gaze as it charged forward in attack.

Meng Hao sighed inwardly, knowing that he had lost the initiative.

Without the slightest hesitation, he shot backward, unwilling to tangle any further with this Outsider Dao Sovereign. Based on the current level of his cultivation base, turning an extended battle into a victory would be very difficult.

Even though his Hexing magic could suppress his opponent temporarily, now that he would be expecting it, the Hexing magic wouldn’t be of much use. The best way to use the Hexing magic was in a surprise attack; furthermore, the backlash for using it against someone so powerful was something he could only endure one or two times. More than that would leave him seriously injured.

As he retreated, the Outsider Dao Sovereign threw his head back and let out an enraged roar as he gave chase. He wanted to kill Meng Hao more than he ever had before. Furthermore, the humiliation he felt from having nearly died just now ensured that he would not underestimate Meng Hao.

Quite the opposite, in fact. He was now more vigilant than before. By now, magical items were swirling around him which would prevent Meng Hao from using the Eighth Hex on him.

“Think you can just leave?” the Outsider Dao Sovereign roared, eyes gleaming with killing intent. As one of the two Dao Sovereigns of the 1st Heaven, he had an incredibly high position. If he couldn’t kill Meng Hao, it would be a complete and utter embarrassment!

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# Chapter 1319: The Reserves of the Mountains and Seas

The battle between the 1st Heaven and the Mountain and Sea Realm was now fully underway. There was no longer a massive field of stars stretching out above the heads of the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Instead, it had been replaced by an enormous land mass, which was like a roof of black clouds that blanketed everything. In some areas, lightning could even be seen dancing about, and occasional peals of thunder would echo out in all directions. The land mass stretched out to cover the entire Mountain and Sea Realm, exerting intense pressure down onto it.

Paragons were fighting!

In the starry sky that separated the 1st Heaven and the Mountain and Sea Realm, the 1st Heaven’s Paragon was fighting a Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering battle of life and death with Paragon Sea Dream.

Paragon Sea Dream wanted to take the fight to the 1st Heaven, whereas the Outsider Paragon wanted the shockwaves of their battle to hit the Mountain and Sea Realm. The fierce fighting between them shattered the starry sky, and caused massive winds to sweep through the void.

Daos were shattered, and natural laws destroyed!

Second only to the Paragon battle was the fighting in the Fourth Mountain and Sea, where Ksitigarbha was fighting the Outsider Imperial Lord Mandilo. The Fourth Mountain and Sea was like a sea of flames as rumbling echoed out between the Yama King palaces and the Outsider’s black flames. After converging boundless Joss Flame, Ksitigarbha was on equal footing with the Outsider Imperial Lord!

Of the four most powerful cultivators from the 1st Heaven, two had already been pinned down. Of the other two, the Dao Sovereigns, one had split into five clones in an attempt to kill the great Mountain and Sea Lords. However, to do that was turning out to be easier said than done, and he had also come to find himself in a tight spot.

That left only the golden-armored Dao Sovereign, whose battle with Meng Hao had become one of the pivotal fights in the Mountain and Sea Realm.

At the same time, other Dao Realm experts from the 1st Heaven were fighting the Patriarchs of the various sects and clans of the Mountain and Sea Realm. Fierce fighting was unfolding everywhere, and the battlefields stretched without limit. Furthermore, Outsider Chosen had also joined the fighting, vicious grins on their faces as they fought, with seemingly no one capable of resisting them.

But then the Chosen from the various sects and clans of the Mountain and Sea Realm joined the fray to fight back.

Massive booms echoed out, and the Mountains and Seas all shook.

In the First Mountain and Sea, Dao Realm battles were being fought like everywhere else. At the same time, Outsiders and Mountain and Sea cultivators of various cultivation Realms were all engaged in bitter combat. On one battlefield was an Outsider cultivator in a black robe. His skin was covered in black scales, with one white scale visible on his forehead. He had an Ancient Realm cultivation base, and yet his battle prowess put him even higher than that.

“Paragon Immortal Realm? They can’t even stand up to a single blow. If we had known this, we wouldn’t have needed to rely on all 33 Heavens. Our 1st Heaven alone would have been enough to dominate them. And now, the third among the seven bloodlines of the Drakewyrm Tribe, the most powerful bloodline from Drakemount, will definitely accumulate the most kills in this battle!” No matter where this Outsider Chosen went on the battlefield, no one was capable of fighting back against him, causing his arrogant sneer to widen. However, it was at this point that a white beam of light shot toward him from off in the distance.

“You sure can talk big!” shouted a voice from within the beam of light. A cold snort echoed out as a white-robed young man became visible. It was none other than the Echelon cultivator from the First Mountain, Dao-Heaven. As he neared, he unleashed an explosive attack, causing the Outsider Chosen’s face to flicker and then turn very serious.

On the Second, Third, and Fourth Mountains… in fact, in all of the Mountain and Sea Realm, similar scenes were playing out.

In the Fourth Mountain, the shockwaves blasting out from the battle between Ksitigarbha and the Outsider Imperial Lord filled a wide area. However, there were still Outsiders pouring in to fight with the cultivators of the Fourth Mountain.

Among the army of cultivators from the Fourth Mountain and Sea was a woman who stood there calmly, surrounded by a host of guards, fellow cultivators tasked with protecting her. She was not spectacularly beautiful, but rather, was cold and cheerless. However, starlight sparkled in her eyes as she constantly sent orders out to the forces on all of the fronts of battle in the Fourth Mountain and Sea. She was singlehandedly coordinating the entire war effort, drawing upon the power of the Fourth Mountain and Sea to its very limit.

This woman who was in charge of all the strategy and tactics was none other than… Xu Qing!

Not only did Ksitigarbha have a profound cultivation base, he was also an amazing teacher. After taking Xu Qing in as his apprentice, he had instructed her well, and her cultivation base had advanced by leaps and bounds. Furthermore, she had also revealed unusual talent in strategy and tactics.

In the Seventh Mountain, most of the cultivators had followed the orders of Lord White to invade the Eighth Mountain and Sea. However, some people had chosen not to fight, and among them was the Echelon cultivator Yuwen Jian!

Currently, Yuwen Jian was roaring as he fought madly against the Outsider Chosen who had invaded the Seventh Mountain.

In the Ninth Mountain and Sea, the Fang Clan, the Li Clan, and various other great sects and clans had all mobilized and joined the fighting. Sun Hai and Fang Yu, along with all the other famous Chosen, were all soaked in blood as they fought fierce battles.

As of now, the power of these Chosen was the most spectacular thing in the Mountain and Sea Realm, next to those of the Dao Realm.

Meng Hao’s father was the Clan Chief of the Fang Clan, and yet could not leave Planet South Heaven. However, the planet’s spell formation was in full operation, and any Outsiders who dared encroach upon the area were destroyed.

The war was not going as badly as many people had predicted it would for the Mountain and Sea Realm. In this explosive early onslaught, things were not going smoothly for the 1st Heaven. The power with which the Mountain and Sea Realm was fighting back left the Outsiders completely shocked.

However, any optimism was temporary at best. After all… there were 33 Heavens, and this was merely the power of the 1st Heaven. Of course, the 1st Heaven was among the more powerful of the various 33 Heavens. When you added together all of the Paragons in the 33 Heavens, there were only six. Even still, that made the 33 Heavens shockingly powerful.

Most importantly, although there were only six Paragons, when it came to Dao Realm and Ancient Realm cultivators, the 33 Heavens completely outnumbered the Mountain and Sea Realm by several times, making them far more powerful.

However, the reserves available to the Mountain and Sea Realm were not limited to what could be seen at the moment. After all, the will of the

Mountains and Seas, as well as Paragon Sea Dream, had been well aware all along… that the war with the 33 Heavens… was unavoidable!

How could they possibly not make advanced preparations!?

As the fighting broke out, powerful ripples began to spread out from the Three Great Daoist Societies of the Nine Mountains and Seas as they began to build up power!

In addition to all of that, among the 33 Heavens, there was a Realm which was both guarded against and also viewed with importance… the 34th Heaven… the Windswept Realm!

After slipping away from the Mountain and Sea Realm, and thus being freed from the sealing and restrictions there, the Windswept Imperial Lord, the same one who had fought Sea Dream years ago, most definitely would have had the chance… to become a Paragon!

Even as all of these other events were playing out, in the First, Third, and Fifth Mountains, there were three areas which were somewhat set apart from all of the fighting going on around them. Three ancient temples floated in the starry sky. Each one of those temples had a signboard above its main gate, upon which words could be seen, written in calligraphy as bold as dancing dragons and phoenixes.

Sublime Spirit Temple!

Dao Divinity Temple!

Heaven Severing Temple!

Within each of the three temples sat an old man and a young man!

The old men looked like statues, and the young men looked like Chosen!

Within those three temples, the three seemingly young men all began to kowtow to the old men, and then speak.

“The Mountains and Seas are in chaos. Please, begin the fighting!”

“Master, as a first generation Echelon cultivator, I have been sealed until this moment. Master, please remove the seals and allow me to fight!”

“Our Heaven Severing branch exists for the express purpose of fighting this war. Doyen, please remove the seals for me!”

The three old men did not respond. It was as if they… were awaiting further orders.

Within the Ninth Mountain and Sea, on Planet South Heaven, the Li Clan spell formation sent powerful ripples out in all directions. At the same time, on the peak of a distant mountain, an old man in a white robe stood there silently, looking up into the sky at the enormous land mass that was the 1st Heaven. A strange light flickered in his eyes.

“And thus the war beings….” he murmured. That old man was none other than Shui Dongliu.

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Rumbling sounds echoed out through the Eighth Mountain and Sea as Meng Hao shot along like lightning. The Lightning Cauldron floated above his head, dancing with electricity as he suddenly switched positions with an Outsider.

Behind him was the enraged golden-armored Outsider Dao Sovereign, whose eyes were bright red. Normally speaking, he would be fast enough to be able to catch up with Meng Hao. However, Meng Hao was using Form Displacement Transposition. Even the powerful ripples which blasted out through the starry sky, throwing everything into chaos, did not affect him at all.

Actually… a chaotic battlefield was the perfect place for Meng Hao to slip along like a ghost!

Wherever he went, there were living things that he could switch places with, leaving the pursuing golden-armored Outsider completely befuddled.

Meng Hao was scheming as always. He actually could have gotten further away from the golden-armored Outsider Dao Sovereign, but instead, he kept within a fairly set distance. That ensured that the chase continued, and the Outsider didn't divert his attention to other places on the battlefield.

"Can you do anything other than run away!? Well, we'll see how long you can keep it up!" The Outsider Dao Sovereign's black flame lizard suddenly roared, dispersing into a sea of flames that swept forward at incredible speed.

Within that sea of flames were innumerable magical symbols, whose flickering caused the flames to increase their speed dramatically. Meng Hao quickly teleported away, just barely avoiding the searing heat of the flames.

An unsightly expression appeared on his face. The battle prowess of a Dao Sovereign helped him to see how lacking he was in certain areas.

"What a pity. If I could make a breakthrough with my fleshly body, then my battle prowess would definitely be enough to fight a Dao Sovereign, even if I haven't extinguished any more Soul Lamps." Meng Hao teleported again, and a cold laugh rang out from within the flames. Suddenly, the Outsider Dao Sovereign appeared in the flames, his body rapidly growing until he was 3,000 meters tall, a giant looming up into the starry sky.

He stamped his foot down into the flames, and a black lightning bolt appeared in his hands. Scales once again spread out across his body, and his tail grew longer. Two horns protruded from the top of his head, and the void around him twisted as intense pressure radiated out.

"You killed my Tribal Brother, and now, I'll destroy you in body and spirit!" The golden-armored Dao Sovereign roared and took a step forward, unleashing some unknown divine ability upon Meng Hao.

Meng Hao fell back, and rumbling sounds echoed out as the two of them shot through the starry sky of the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

"I could lose this guy if I really wanted to. But then he would just start fighting somewhere else…." Frowning, Meng Hao sighed inwardly. "I might not be able to kill him, but… I could trap him, or seal him. And that wouldn't be impossible, especially in the right place, at the right time….

"We're in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, which is also the location of the Heavengod Alliance…." Meng Hao's eyes flickered as he suddenly thought of the perfect place!

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# Chapter 1320: Returning to the 33 Hells!

The 33 Hells!

The place Meng Hao planned to go was none other than… the 33 Hells!

After the 1st Heaven descended and the Mountain and Sea Realm exploded into war, he came to the realization that the Paragon's blood in his Dao Fruit was boiling. That also gave him the sensation that his cultivation base, his enlightenment, his everything… was on the verge of advancing by leaps and bounds!

Actually, that feeling wasn't limited to just him. All of the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm felt the same thing. It was as if… the arrival of war prompted the Mountain and Sea Realm… to unleash years of reserves which had been built up for the purpose of empowering its people.

However, that also caused Meng Hao's heart to sink. He well knew that the fact the Mountain and Sea Realm was doing this meant… this war would be extremely difficult.

"Live for the Mountains and Seas, die for the Mountains and Seas!" Meng Hao's eyes flickered with determination. He had no idea what the future would bring, nor what his life would be like later on.

Even more of an unknown was what would happen to his family and friends throughout the course of the war. Would they survive…?

He was not a person who fundamentally liked fighting and killing. He just wanted to have plenty of money and be able to live a peaceful and wonderful life with his family and beloved partner.

It was a simple dream, but to make it into a reality was no simple thing.

Meng Hao understood himself, and knew the truth…. He was not some wildly ambitious person. His ideals were not far-reaching, nor did he have aspirations to shake Heaven and Earth.

His Dao and his heart were both focused on freedom and independence, on avoiding being constrained or held back.

He held no unquenchable thirst to constantly acquire a stronger cultivation base. In fact, if he had anything that could count as a true obsession, it would be his simple desire to be rich.

In this life, he had simply gone with the flow and found his own type of happiness. He loved conning people, and he loved collecting promissory notes…. To him, that was happiness. But when the 1st Heaven descended, all of those beautiful ideals were swept out of sight because of the Outsiders. When Meng Hao saw the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm fighting and dying, his heart grew dark and quiet.

The pain he was experiencing made all of his dreams seem like childish fantasies. It was as if he had awoken, or perhaps… grown up.

“If the Mountains and Seas did not exist, then what would be the point of my own, solitary, existence…?” Determination flickered within Meng Hao’s eyes. It was a sudden and intense determination and hope that his cultivation base could become even more powerful.

It was not because he wanted to become rich, nor because of his simplistic ideals. Instead, it was because… of his home!

The Mountain and Sea Realm was his home….

His home had been invaded, and his people were already fighting and soaked in blood. He was the future Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm, the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer, and the successor of Paragon Nine Seals. He… had to get stronger!

“I can’t even kill an Outsider Dao Sovereign….” he thought, eyes glowing coldly. Without a moment’s hesitation, he shot as fast as possible into the Heavengod Alliance.

His divine sense had been suppressed, making it impossible to send it ahead to scan his destination. However, that did nothing to prevent him from unleashing lightning-like speed.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE….

He became a scintillating beam of light that shot along, followed close behind by a sea of flames. The 3,000-meter tall Outsider strode along, pursuing him relentlessly. Considering his status and battle prowess, to be unable to kill Meng Hao was a complete humiliation.

That was especially the case considering he had personally witnessed Meng Hao cut down his Junior Tribal Brother. Because of that, his hatred soared to the Heavens.

They shot along, piercing through the starry sky, shattering the void. Wherever they passed, shocked Outsiders and Mountain and Sea cultivators alike got out of the way and didn’t dare to approach.

Booms rang out as the 3,000-meter-tall giant unleashed magical techniques that were bizarre, completely different from the type seen in the Mountain and Sea Realm. Occasionally, he would transform into a beast which lunged at Meng Hao, gobbling up everything in its path, or slashing at him with razor claws that seemed to appear out of thin air.

Most shocking of all was his long tail, which he swept around in a completely domineering fashion. It shattered the starry sky, sending shockwaves out that left Meng Hao completely shaken.

Blood oozed out of the corners of Meng Hao’s mouth, but he managed to nimbly avoid the blows. Even still, he could feel his cultivation base growing unstable.

More than ever, he could sense… the slight gap that existed between himself and the Dao Sovereign level, a gap that could prove fatal…however small it might be!

“Drakewyrm Earthfire; Heavens Forget!” Seeing that the numerous attacks he had unleashed were incapable of even touching Meng Hao, the 3,000 meter tall Outsider’s eyes flashed with red light as he roared, performing a double-handed incantation gesture that instantly caused the roaring sea of flames beneath his feet to rise up and transform into the form of an enormous Earthfire lizard, which opened its mouth and spat a column of flames out toward Meng Hao.

The flames moved with indescribable speed, instantly surging over Meng Hao. Even as blood sprayed out of his mouth, the meat jelly appeared.

It let loose a torrent of curses as it transformed into a defensive barrier that protected Meng Hao from the scorching flames. Although it hovered on the verge of melting, it managed to hold out until the end of the attack. Afterward, Meng Hao guiltily sent the meat jelly back into his bag of holding, then gritted his teeth and continued on.

“Dammit, dammit, DAMMIT!!” the Outsider raged. Unwilling to give up, he continued to chase Meng Hao.

With enraged shouts echoing behind him the entire time, Meng Hao eventually reached the territory that had once been the Heavengod Alliance. After speeding along, he soon reached the location of the entrance to the 33 Hells.

It was a pitch black region that seemed capable of consuming anything and everything, a region which emanated an aura of rot that caused the Outsider Dao Sovereign’s eyes to flicker.

“This aura….” he thought, heart trembling.

Meng Hao didn’t hesitate for a moment before charging in. Although the 33 Heavens hadn’t actually opened, as soon as he entered the area, Greed’s life force Essence stirred into action and began to spread out.

Instantly, powerful ripples sprang up in the void, distorting everything, as if the opening were just about to begin. Meng Hao suddenly stopped in place, then turned around with cold eyes to look at the Outsider Dao Sovereign outside of the region of pitch black.

“You’ve been chasing me for long enough. If you want to fight, well then… let’s fight here!” Meng Hao’s voice echoed out, filled with deadly antagonism. Then he wiped the blood from his mouth, and the murderous gleam in his eyes grew even more intense.

The 3,000-meter tall Outsider looked on with flickering eyes, then snorted coldly. The aura in this area was bizarre, but considering the level of his cultivation base, he didn’t hesitate to step in and charge toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao reached out with his right hand, and Demon Weapon Lonelytomb appeared. Without any hesitation, abandoning all thoughts of fleeing, he charged forth and began to fight the 3,000-meter giant.

Booms rang out as they exchanged thousands of blows in the blink of an eye. Meng Hao summoned numerous mountains, the Blood Demon, his mastiff, and the Paragon Bridge.

Demon Weapon Lonelytomb screamed as it stabbed through the air, and Meng Hao unleashed his three fist strikes, each one more dreadful than the last.

The Outsider also performed incantation gestures. Its scales lifted up, and a windstorm sprang into being. Essence power exploded out, transforming into incredible pressure. The black flames surged, forming into a black flame lizard that roared as it tried to consume Meng Hao.

Rumbling echoed out, and blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth as he was battered backward relentlessly. As for the Outsider Dao Sovereign, his face flickered as Demon Weapon Lonelytomb stabbed a bloody gash into his chest.

Although his wounds healed rapidly, Meng Hao, despite being injured more severely, was actually healing even faster. Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with starlight as he transformed into a meteor which shot dazzlingly through the starry sky. As he closed in, the Outsider performed a double-handed incantation gesture, then waved his hands, causing the black flame lizard to butt out with its head.

A boom could be heard as the meteor shattered. However, even as that happened, Meng Hao in azure roc-form shot out like a bolt of lightning, piercing through the lizard and appearing directly in front of the Outsider Dao Sovereign.

The Outsider’s face flickered, and just when he was about to fall back, azure-colored talons slashed out with the strength to shatter metal and stone.

“Looking to die?!” the Outsider Dao Sovereign said, eyes gleaming with ferocity. He allowed Meng Hao’s roc claws to dig out his right eye, ignoring the resulting pain as his own right hand shot out to grab viciously onto the roc.

A boom rang out as the azure roc was crushed. However, no blood and flesh exploded out, only countless motes of light. Meanwhile, a figure was speeding off into the distance.

“DIE!” screamed the Outsider as Meng Hao fled. A blood-colored light rose up from the Outsider as a boundless aura of death converged upon it. Astonishingly, this was Death Curse Magic!

A boom could be heard as a sealing symbol appeared in front of Meng Hao. Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth as he was forced back. He uncontrollably coughed up mouthful after mouthful of blood as his chest began to rot and his life force faded. A powerful aura of death began to consume him.

“You took my eye and killed my Junior Tribal Brother. Don’t worry, after I kill you, I’ll refine your blood to find everyone related to you, and kill them all!” The 3,000-meter Outsider flickered into motion, lifting his right hand up to transform the sea of flames into a huge statue which struck out toward Meng Hao with its palm.

That palm caused the aura of death that permeated the area to roil and emit rumbling noises, the starry sky to tremble, and the Heavens to fade.

However, it was at this point that Meng Hao’s mouth twisted into a derisive smile. The Outsider suddenly felt a profoundly uneasy feeling spring up in its heart, but before it could do anything, a gigantic rift suddenly appeared in the void beneath Meng Hao’s feet.

As soon as that rift appeared, Meng Hao shot inside.

The 3,000 meter giant shivered as a sensation of deadly crisis rose up in its heart. That sensation came from within the rift itself, wherein in the Outsider could sense… the fluctuations of a shocking aura.

He had the premonition that if he entered that rift, he would be facing some deadly situation. Without any hesitation, he turned to leave.

However, even as he did, Meng Hao reached out with his right hand, unleashing the Star Plucking Magic. Rumbling sounds echoed out as the Outsider Dao Sovereign was viciously dragged backward.

The Outsider’s eyes burned with rage, and he unleashed all the cultivation base power he could muster to break free. Even as he fell back, breaking away from Meng Hao’s Star Plucking Magic, Meng Hao’s derisive smile grew wider.

“Form Displacement Transposition!” he said softly.

Rumbling could be heard as he and the Outsider Dao Sovereign switched places. The Outsider was still moving backward, but now, he was moving backward into the rift. Although his face fell and he stopped almost immediately, he was still some distance away from the exit!

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# Chapter 1321: Grandfather and Grandson Reunite!

“YOU!!” The Outsider Dao Sovereign’s face fell immediately. He had no idea where he was, but he could sense that the aura of death in this place was indescribably powerful.

He could also tell that within the aura of death was a type of powerful sealing. And yet, even that wasn’t the most frightening thing. Most frightening of all was that he could sense dozens of auras in this place that were terrifying even to him!

Each and every one of them was equivalent to a Paragon’s!!

Furthermore, those auras were filled with chaos, with greed, with a hunger for anything living, as if they were lying in wait for his qi, blood, and cultivation base.

Suddenly, he realized what this place was, and his heart was battered by waves of intense shock. “The 33 Hells!!”

He knew what the 33 Hells were; a place where Paragon Nine Seals had sealed other Paragons long ago. In fact, the 33 Heavens had long since carried out detailed investigations regarding the 33 Hells, and had come to the conclusion that… to the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm, it was a place where good fortune or great catastrophe were equally possible. However, to anyone not from the Mountain and Sea Realm, it was a place of certain death!

As of this moment, he felt as if he had become food to be devoured by these 33 Hells!

“NO!!” he roared in rage. He shot forward in an attempt to fly out of the opening. But how could Meng Hao be willing to let him do so? He had set this entire situation up to trap this Outsider, and had gone to great lengths to lure him inside. How could he possibly let him emerge?

“With the exception of the successor of Paragon Nine Seals,” said Meng Hao, “or someone else with his approval, no one can use this place to increase their cultivation base. This Outsider Dao Sovereign… is definitely going to die in there!” His eyes glittered as Greed’s life force Essence exploded out within him. The 33 Hells suddenly trembled. A dense mist poured out, and the sound of clanking iron chains could be heard, along with angry roars.

Meng Hao waved his right hand, summoning the Paragon Bridge. As it crushed down, Greed’s life force Essence exploded out. Not only did the mist within the rift grow thicker, but the ground at the base of the stone stele therein also split and cracked, and an enormous gravitational force sprang up.

The Outsider Dao Sovereign’s face flickered with astonishment, and he let out a roar of fury. He was now shaking, going all out with every bit of power he could summon to try to escape. However, an iron chain whipped through the air, wrapping around him. Then, the mists churned, as if a giant were approaching, and simultaneously the Outsider was dragged in.

The shocking gravitational force pulled on the Outsider, making it impossible for him to flee. He stared with wide eyes as the rift slowly began to close. Madness flickered in his gaze, as well as a towering, venomous hatred.

“NO!!”

Even as he roared, rumbling sounds echoed out as a blood-colored light sprang up. It was a shield that emanated the aura of a Paragon. With that protection, he was able to break free from the giant’s iron chains and shoot up into the sky.

However, even as he neared the rift… it closed up!

RUMBLE!

The Outsider Dao Sovereign roared, and his eyes shone with fear as he looked back down into the mists below him. Apparently, the mists themselves weren’t affected by the gravitational force. As he looked, he suddenly realized that a pair of greedy-looking eyes had appeared therein.

What caused him to tremble even more than before was that he could sense that after this world had been closed off from the outside… it was as if the entire place had awoken. A voice suddenly spoke out as if from far beneath the ground, accompanied by laughter that filled with hope and yearning.

“Flesh and blood… a soul… a cultivation base….

“If I consume him, I can extend my life for another 10,000 years….

“It’s been a long, long time since I tasted a Dao Sovereign….”

Massive rumbling could be heard as the trembling Outsider Dao Sovereign roared, pouring all of the power he could, even his life force, into the blood-colored Paragon shield.

His eyes were bright red as he battered the Heavens he saw above him, hoping to break open an exit and flee before he was consumed.

Outside of the 33 Hells, Meng Hao’s face was pale. He wiped the blood from his mouth, then flickered into motion. After leaving the 33 Hells, he looked back at the pitch black region, and his eyes flashed coldly.

“Hopefully the Outsider Dao Sovereign will be killed by this place and become nothing more than fertilizer for it. Then, when I come back later, I can absorb that power to help me to get stronger…. If he isn’t killed, at least he’ll be trapped for a while.” When he thought about the blood-colored shield the Outsider Dao Sovereign had used, and the intense aura it had emitted, it was clear that it was a protective item gifted by a Paragon.

“Even if he can figure out a way to escape, it won’t happen any time soon. By that time, I should be prepared to cut down a Dao Sovereign in battle.”

Meng Hao’s eyes glowed brightly as he turned away from the 33 Hells. Now that his divine sense was no longer being suppressed, he sent it out to fill the entire Eighth Mountain and Sea.

What he saw were cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm fighting fiercely with the Outsiders from the 1st Heaven. Because of the previous war between the Seventh and Eighth Mountains and Seas, the cultivators were familiar with battle, and had concentrated their attacks on two fronts.

Other than those two fronts, the other main battle was being fought… on the Eighth Mountain itself!

The Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea and one of the five incarnations of the Outsider Dao Sovereign were fighting back and forth, shaking the entire Eighth Mountain. As the ripples of magical techniques spread out, Meng Hao almost immediately caught sight of his Grandpa Meng beating back the Dao Sovereign clone over and over.

“Grandpa….” he thought, vanishing. When he reappeared, he was on a battlefield filled with cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea, and Outsiders from the 1st Heaven. As soon as he appeared, his cultivation base surged, and his divine sense swept out. Fully half of the nearby Outsiders let out miserable screams as their heads exploded.

Meng Hao snorted coldly, then vanished again. This time, he appeared on a battlefield with cultivators of the Eighth Mountain and Sea. Again, his divine sense swept out, provoking miserable shrieks as one Outsider after another exploded.

Such a vast number of deaths instantly filled the Outsiders’ hearts with shock and fear. However, Meng Hao didn’t even pause. He vanished again, reappearing at the peak of the Eighth Mountain.

The moment he appeared, his grandfather was unleashing an attack backed by the power of the Mountains and Seas. The Outsider Dao Sovereign’s clone coughed up some blood and fell back. However, Meng Hao appeared just behind him, eyes flickering with killing intent as he clenched his fist and punched out with the God-Slaying Fist.

Rumbling booms echoed out as the clone’s face flickered. He had no time to evade, and the fist strike struck him directly on the back. Half of his body instantly shattered, and he let out a miserable shriek. He shot away from Meng Hao, his body healing, but his aura severely weakened.

When he turned back and saw Meng Hao, his face fell.

“If you’re not dead, then what happened to Long Linzi?”

“Oh, so his name was Long Linzi?” Meng Hao replied coolly. He took a step forward, and as he did, the Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea, Meng Hao’s grandfather, approached. After seeing it was Meng Hao, he breathed a sigh of relief, and his eyes shone with love and reminiscence.

Years had passed, but he had never imagined that his young grandson would grow up to be like this.

The Outsider Dao Sovereign’s face fell again, and a gleam of disbelief flickered in his eyes. He was well aware of Long Linzi’s true battle prowess, and although it was somewhat weaker than his own, he was now split into five parts. On the other hand, Long Linzi had attempted to kill this very same person without splitting himself apart. Therefore, Long Linzi had been able to use all of his battle prowess.

And yet, he had been defeated!!

By this point he could sense that Long Linzi’s aura had vanished. This caused the clone to gasp, and without the slightest bit of hesitation, he began to flee. Too many miscalculations had been made in this attack.

He had underestimated this Mountain and Sea Lord…. In fact, his clones were suffering setbacks all over the Mountain and Sea Realm. Worst of all was this Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea, who had successively defeated him again and again.

As for the cultivator who had just appeared, the actual level of his cultivation base seemed low. However, he had defended himself against the attack of a Paragon, and not even Long Linzi had been a match for him. The

Outsider Dao Sovereign clone could think of only one thing to do, and that was to flee.

“Did I say you could leave?” growled Grandpa Meng. He stamped down with his right foot, causing the starry sky around the Outsider Dao Sovereign to distort as a huge sealing mark appeared.

At the same time, Meng Hao extended his right hand, performed an incantation gesture and pointed out with his finger. It was the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex! Although Meng Hao had not been a match for Long Linzi, this was merely a Dao Sovereign’s clone, and killing him would be as easy as flipping over his hand!

As soon as Meng Hao waved his finger, the clone stopped in place, a shocked look on his face. Simultaneously, Grandpa Meng looked over in surprise at Meng Hao and said, “Eee?”

Meng Hao waved his finger again.

It was the Seventh Demon Sealing Hex, Karmic Hexing!

Rumbling could be heard as blood sprayed from the Outsider’s mouth. His Karma was thrown into chaos, prompting a miserable scream. Next was the Sixth Hex, which caused a gray sealing mark to appear on his forehead. Then a boom rang out as the mark shattered, disintegrating his head. However, he wasn’t dead yet. He quickly recovered, but was even weaker than before.

After that came the Fifth Hex, the Inside-Outside Hex. Cracks spread out all over his body, and a bloodcurdling scream rang out as the clone collapsed into pieces.

Things weren’t over yet, though. Even as he collapsed, Meng Hao unleashed… the Second Hex!

Real-Unreal Hexing!

Even as his collapsing body began to re-form, and he fled off into the distance, all of the shattered remnants of his body were transformed from being real… into something unreal!

A wretched shriek rang out in the moment before he died. Everything about him transformed into ash; this Outsider Dao Sovereign clone was absolutely no match for Meng Hao!

Meng Hao's battle prowess might not be on par with Ksitigarbha's, but he could still be considered a peak expert in the Mountain and Sea Realm!

"Well done!" Grandpa Meng said, laughed heartily. The love in his eyes was clear as he looked at Meng Hao .

Meng Hao turned excitedly, clasping hands and bowing as he said, "Hao'er offers greetings, Grandfather!"

Grandfather and grandson looked at each other, and their hearts filled with emotions and memories that would be difficult to describe without using many, many words. Eventually, Meng Hao asked about his Grandpa Fang.

After a moment of silence, Grandpa Meng sighed and said, "He… is not in the Mountain and Sea Realm.

"I complied with the instructions given by Senior Outsider, and successfully became the Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea. Unfortunately, I've been asleep ever since then. However, your Grandpa Fang is a born warrior, with latent talent exceeding even your father's. Senior Outsider took a liking to him, and gave him some very important responsibilities…."

After a moment of silence, Meng Hao looked at his grandfather and asked, "Who is this Outsider you refer to?"

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# Chapter 1322: Arriving in the Seventh Mountain!

“He calls himself… Shui Dongliu,” Grandpa Meng said slowly.

As soon as Meng Hao heard that name, his jaw dropped, and his eyes filled with a strange gleam. He stood there quietly for a moment as numerous connections were made in his mind. All of a sudden things seemed much clearer. He nodded.

“Grandpa, I sent Grandma and the Meng Clan ancestral mansion to the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Unfortunately, the 1st Heaven descended right afterwards; furthermore, the Lord of the Ninth Mountain and Sea and I have a beef with each other….”

“The Lord of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, Ji Tian? How dare he!” Grandpa Meng’s eyes flashed with coldness. “After I take care of things here in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, I’ll go to the Ninth Mountain and Sea, and if Ji Tian is devoted to the Mountain and Sea Realm, then I’ll go easy on him. Otherwise….” Killing intent flickered in his eyes.

Meng Hao instantly felt a little bit better. He could sense from the cultivation base fluctuations that Grandpa Meng was even stronger than Lord White, being more than half a step into the 6-Essences level.

The only reason he hadn’t been able to immediately vanquish the Outsider Dao Sovereign’s clone was because he had just awoken and was still clearing his head. However, he was already reaching the point of being able to unleash the full power of his cultivation base.

Grandpa Meng looked at Meng Hao, and although he wasn’t sure exactly why Meng Hao didn’t want to go to the Ninth Mountain and Sea himself, he could tell that his grandson was someone who exceeded the Mountain and Sea Lords within the Mountain and Sea Realm. “You’ve grown up, and you have an astonishing cultivation base,” he said. “The Mountain and Sea Realm is unstable now, and all cultivators have the same mission. You follow your heart and do whatever it is you need to do!

“Don’t worry about the Fang Clan in the Ninth Mountain and Sea,” he said. “The Eighth Mountain and Sea… is already in ruins. I’ll gather the survivors and go to the Ninth Mountain and Sea. That is where we will take our stand against the Outsiders.”

Meng Hao stood there silently for a moment before clasping hands and bowing deeply to his grandfather. He looked off in the direction of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, and from what he could sense in his blood, he knew that the Fang Clan cultivators were not in any great danger at the moment. Feeling somewhat at ease, he turned and transformed into a beam of light that shot off into the distance.

His destination was the Fourth Mountain and Sea. Leaving the Ninth Mountain and Sea behind, his purpose was to bring Xu Qing home. Now that war had broken out, he was feeling… more and more uneasy.

That unease had begun to grow as soon as the 1st Heaven had begun to descend.

Back on the Eighth Mountain, Grandpa Meng stood there looking at Meng Hao making his way off into the distance. A loving expression could be seen on his face, and also… traces of how profoundly he hated having to part with his grandson.

“Senior Outsider once said that when the Mountain and Sea Tribulation arrives, everything will be transformed into dust….” he said softly. “However, there is something special about the Ninth Mountain. It will eventually become the only mountain left….

“He even said that he wasn’t sure if any of the Mountains and Seas would survive the catastrophe. He said that all he could do was search for a certain… hope.

“Apparently the hope he was talking about… was Hao’er.” Looking away from Meng Hao, he sent his divine sense out, and quickly caught sight of some Outsiders. Eyes flickering with icy killing intent, he sprang into motion.

Meng Hao sped along through the starry sky of the Eighth Mountain and Sea. Soon, he reached the rift where he had fought Lord White. By now, that rift had collapsed, leaving behind only faint traces.

Meng Hao hovered there, eyes flickering as he took a step forward. Although he seemed to be just strolling along, he was actually walking in a circle. He moved faster and faster, until the Essence of Time began to emanate out. The void distorted, and the starry sky was affected. Soon, a blurry vortex appeared, which spun around and around as it grew.

It went from 30 meters, to 300 meters, until eventually, Meng Hao could be seen only as ghost images. Innumerable copies of Meng Hao could be seen as the vortex rumbled out to 3,000 meters.

As the power of time travel exploded out, many people from the Eighth Mountain and Sea sensed what was happening. It was at around this time that a rift suddenly appeared within that vortex!

This was none other than the rift which had connected the Seventh and Eighth Mountains and Seas.

In almost the exact same instant that the rift appeared, the countless reflections of Meng Hao which were spinning around the vortex transposed, once again forming a single version. Then, he stepped into the rift and vanished.

After he disappeared, the vortex faded away, and soon… the rift quickly vanished, and the starry sky returned to normal.

Within the rift that connected the two Mountains and Seas, Meng Hao was a beam of bright light that moved with speed far exceeding Lord White’s. In virtually the blink of an eye, he was already on the other side.

Soon, he could sense the aura of the curse power which was unique to the Seventh Mountain and Sea. Without the slightest hesitation, he burst out through the exit portal.

Almost immediately, a cold snort echoed out.

“Someone has appeared. It seems my calculations were correct. These Mountain and Sea Realm aboriginals really are trying to escape from the Eighth Mountain and Sea through here.

“Well, now that you’re here, don’t try to run.” Almost immediately, the magic of a divine ability rumbled toward Meng Hao, and black flames instantly surrounded him.

As soon as he saw the flames, he could tell that this was an Outsider’s magical technique, backed by the cultivation base of a Dao Lord. Although powerful experts of that realm could rock their surroundings with the mere stamp of a foot, to Meng Hao, they were like insects that could be killed as easily as flipping over a hand.

His eyes flickered coldly as he suddenly sucked in a deep breath, inhaling the black flames through his nose and mouth. Then he looked around, even as gasps rang out in reaction to what he had just done.

The rift entrance to the Seventh Mountain and Sea was very near the Seventh Mountain, and the entire area was littered with corpses. Eight Outsiders were present, and shockingly, their cultivation base fluctuations were that of the Dao Realm. Clearly, they were lying in wait to slaughter anyone who appeared here. But now, after seeing Meng Hao simply inhale the Essence flames that the Dao Lord had unleashed, they all gasped, and their faces fell.

That was especially true of the Outsider Dao Lord, whose eyes went wide. Mind reeling, he immediately fell back, but in that same instant, Meng Hao appeared directly in front of him, reached out, grabbed him by the throat, and threw him to the side.

His scales shattered, and his flesh and blood turned into a gory mass. A bloodcurdling scream echoed out as he was completely shredded into pieces.

Immediately, the other Outsiders began shaking all the way down to their tails, and instantly tried to flee, using all the power they could muster.

“Dao Sovereign! He’s a Dao Sovereign!!”

“I thought Ksitigarbha from the Fourth Mountain was the only Dao Sovereign in the Mountain and Sea Realm! But he’s fighting with the Imperial Lord! He can’t be here at the same time! Who is this guy!?!?”

“Dammit, we just ambushed a Dao Sovereign!!” The eight Outsiders were completely taken aback. Filled with terror and shock, scales shivering and tails shaking, they tried to flee.

However, Meng Hao sent his divine sense out, a single thought that filled the entire area. Instantly, the Nascent Divinities of all of the 1-Essence and 2-Essences Outsider Dao Realm experts were shattered. Their minds were wiped away, leaving behind soulless corpses which toppled down out of the starry sky.

As soon as Meng Hao’s divine sense swept out, he saw everything in the Seventh Mountain and Sea floating in his mind, and the seemingly endless amounts of Outsiders present.

He saw numerous black cubes floating in the starry sky of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, the largest of which were 30,000 meters wide, and the smallest of which were only a few hundred meters wide. The Outsiders were pouring in and out of these cubes; apparently, they were some sort of military stronghold.

Black flames surrounded the cubes, and lightning crackled on their surfaces. The starry sky around them was also distorted, as if the cubes were organized into some sort of spell formation!

The Seventh Mountain and Sea should have been occupied by cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm. However, what was visible now were mostly Outsiders. Few native cultivators could be seen, and the majority present were dead. Most of the cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea were actually in the Eighth Mountain and Sea. The ones who had remained behind were for the most part low level, making it extremely easy for the Outsiders to occupy the place.

Meng Hao’s face was grim, and his fury toward the Outsiders only continued to grow. They didn’t even spare the mortals; to them, it didn’t matter if someone was a cultivator or not, anyone from the Mountain and Sea Realm was guilty!

Of the four great planets in the Seventh Mountain and Sea, three were already shattered and in ruins. Because of that, the curse power that normally filled the Seventh Mountain and Sea was now in complete chaos.

“Lord White, even death can not atone for your crimes!” Meng Hao growled, eyes bloodshot. As he examined the situation with his divine sense, he noticed that there was a force of over 10,000 Outsiders attacking the final planet, the largest planet of the Seventh Mountain and Sea.

There were still tens of thousands of cultivators left alive on that planet. Those fighters were the last remnants of the cultivators of the Seventh Mountain and Sea….

Even in the brief moment in which his divine sense swept over the planet, Meng Hao could see many cultivators of the Seventh Mountain and Sea choosing to self-detonate instead of being killed. In the last moments before they died, the words they shouted echoed within Meng Hao’s divine sense.

“Live for the Mountains and Seas, die for the Mountains and Seas!!”

Booms echoed out around that group of tens of thousands of cultivators as they fought to defend the planet and all the lives on it.

Among those cultivators, Meng Hao caught sight of… the Seventh Mountain’s Echelon cultivator, Yuwen Jian!

Yuwen Jian was completely soaked in blood, and had been severely injured. Despite that, he roared in rage as he fought against the enemy. He was a body cultivator, and the weapon he wielded was the very same valuable treasure he had taken from Meng Hao years before. He was currently surrounded by a host of enemies with whom he was desperately fighting. 1

Currently, a Dao Realm Outsider was laughing coldly while shooting toward Yuwen Jian in a beam of light. Even as he closed in, Meng Hao snorted coldly, causing his divine sense to vibrate. Instantly, the Dao Realm Outsider who was attacking Yuwen Jian let out a miserable shriek and then exploded, killed instantly!

At the same time, Meng Hao took a step forward, vanishing as he headed towards the fighting.

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# Chapter 1323: War Requires Spirit!

Of the four planets which orbited the Seventh Mountain, three were destroyed, and had become nothing more than fields of swirling rubble and dust hanging in the starry sky

The only remaining planet was the one known as Tiger Cage. 1

Currently, Yuwen Jian and the tens of thousands of cultivators who were the broken remnants of the forces of the Seventh Mountain and Sea were there on Planet Tiger Cage, fighting a deadly battle with the Outsiders.

The fighting was bloody and bitter, and occasionally the booms of self-detonation rang out. Sky and land were both as red as blood, and the vicious and maddened Outsiders were fueling divine abilities with their own life force, causing black seas of flame to scorch everything in their paths.

Massive fissures were spreading out across the surface of the planet, and the cities and life forms there were all trembling. To them, it was as if the end of days had come.

Even the sky seemed to be on the verge of collapsing, and as the cultivators and the Outsiders fought, the only thing they seemed to have in common was that they were all engaged in a life-or-death struggle!

Yuwen Jian was actually not the strongest cultivator among the tens of thousands of survivors. However, because of his status as an Echelon cultivator, his words carried much weight, and he was currently leading a large group of cultivators into battle.

He was soaked in gore, to the point where it almost seemed like he was clothed in blood itself. His skin was crisscrossed with wounds, and his eyes were completely bloodshot. He looked completely and utterly fearsome.

However, beneath that fearsomeness lurked sadness and despair.

“Live for the Mountains and Seas, die for the Mountains and Seas!!” Yuwen Jian threw his head back and laughed, and in response, the cultivators at his back let out mighty roars. Murderous auras sprang up; they might be fighting a losing battle, but they would still kill as many Outsiders as they could.

There was no path of escape…. In the Seventh Mountain and Sea, all the areas which formerly pledged allegiance to Lord White had already fallen into enemy hands. The cultivators had watched as three of their planets were destroyed, and countless lives were sacrificed. The Seventh Mountain and Sea was relentlessly taken over by the Outsiders, and the local cultivators could do nothing but fume in rage.

Now, the only reason they had left to live was to fight. Even if they only had one breath left to breathe, they would use it to kill one more Outsider!

A boom rang out, and Yuwen Jian coughed up a mouthful of blood. He was facing a coldly sneering Dao Realm Outsider, who bore down on him as fast as lightning. The Outsider’s right hand flashed with an incantation gesture, and black flames spread out to form a huge mouth which shot out to consume Yuwen Jian.

Yuwen Jian laughed bitterly. When he had faced Dao Realm Outsiders before, there had always been Dao Realm experts of the Seventh Mountain and Sea to lock them down. But now, all of those Dao Realm experts were either dead or seriously injured. Yuwen Jian was staring extermination in the face! His eyes flickered with madness as he glared at the Dao Realm Outsider and prepared to self-detonate.

The other cultivators under his command also stared with bloodshot eyes and prepared to follow him in self-detonation. The self-detonation of a single cultivator wouldn’t do anything to a Dao Realm expert, but if ten of them detonated, or a hundred, or a thousand, it would be a different story!

The massive accumulation of force in such an explosion was power that would shock even a Dao Realm expert.

The Outsider’s eyes widened, and he frowned. Just when he was about to take defensive measures, a Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering divine sense suddenly exploded out.

It was a divine sense bursting with killing intent, hatred, and madness, and as it erupted out across the battlefield, the Dao Realm Outsider’s eyes went wide, and he shouted in alarm.

“Dao–” All he could utter was a single word before his head exploded and his body shattered. In almost the same instant, numerous other Outsiders on the battlefield screamed miserably, expressions those of terror as they subsequently exploded.

From far up above in the starry sky, the battlefield almost looked like a field of blooming flowers of blood….

The surviving Outsiders were shocked and terrified. They immediately tried to escape the planet, leaving the cultivators of the Seventh Mountain and Sea standing there in shock. However, their hatred could not be diminished, and they immediately attacked the fleeing Outsiders.

Yuwen Jian was trembling, but had no time to think, and immediately joined in the slaughter.

It was at this point that a new figure appeared on the battlefield. It was Meng Hao, who had just teleported in. Immediately, he extended his right hand and made a vicious clawing motion.

The power of the Mountains and Seas erupted out. Although it wasn’t a vast amount of the power, not even enough to fight Dao Sovereign experts, any of the Outsiders under that Realm would be crushed as easily as dried twigs!

Rumbling sounds echoed out as an enormous illusory hand appeared in the starry sky. Boundless ripples emanated from the majestic hand as it clawed down toward the Outsiders.

The starry sky trembled, and numerous rifts were slashed open. In the blink of an eye, the area in the starry sky occupied by the Outsiders was completely crushed!

RUMBLE!

Miserable screams and roars of rage alike were suddenly cut off. A moment later, the huge hand vanished, and all that remained was drifting ash.

The battlefield went silent, and the cultivators from the Seventh Mountain and Sea looked around, stunned. Yuwen Jian turned his head, and through the crowds he spotted Meng Hao.

“Meng Hao….” he said, a smile breaking out on his face. Unfortunately, it was a smile that was bitter and even hollow.

Even though more than 10,000 Outsiders had just been killed, no cries of joy rang out, and no excitement could be seen. The cultivators of the Seventh Mountain and Sea simply stood there quietly.

When they turned to face Meng Hao, there almost didn’t seem to be any life in their eyes, as if their souls were already dead.

They well knew that the number of Outsiders currently in the Seventh Mountain and Sea was completely incalculable. Despite having won a victory in this battle, the next battle… would likely result in the complete extermination of the Seventh Mountain and Sea.

They silently clasped hands and bowed to Meng Hao, then began to disperse to carry their fallen comrades away, and to expunge the area of the sordid blood of the Outsiders.

Everything was as still as death….

As Meng Hao looked around at the listless cultivators, he felt as if his heart were being stabbed.

Yuwen Jian grimaced from the pain of his injuries as he approached Meng Hao. Then he looked around at all his comrades, and bitterly commented, “They’re like this because we have no hope. Meng Hao, do you really think that we can… win this war?”

He seemed confused, and from the way he asked the question, it almost seemed as if he were inwardly searching for some way to pull himself together and rise to the situation. Even if whatever he found was a false hope….

Meng Hao had seen war before, but he had never experienced anything like he had just now. His heart hurt, but he was infinitely moved. He looked around at the tens of thousands of cultivators of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, and he saw how exhausted they were. He saw how despair had taken hold in the depths of their hearts, and he saw how much they hated the Outsiders.

He suddenly felt the urge to speak. Although he wasn’t sure what he should say, it was as if there were a voice deep inside of him desperate to cry out, to rally the people around him.

“Fellow Daoists of the Mountains and Seas! I am Meng Hao, Echelon cultivator from the Ninth Mountain and Sea!

“I don’t know for sure whether or not we’ll win this war. But what I do know is that as we speak, Paragon Sea Dream is fighting the Outsider Paragon, right up there!” As he spoke, his voice began to grow impassioned, and he pointed up toward the heights of the starry sky.

“I also know that the Lord of the Fourth Mountain and Sea, Ksitigarbha, is fighting the Outsider Imperial Lord!

“All of the other Mountain and Sea Lords are fighting with incarnations of an Outsider Dao Sovereign. Furthermore, just moments ago, I managed to trap their other Dao Sovereign in the 33 Hells. If he doesn’t die there, then at the least, he’ll be unable to emerge for some time!

“Another thing I know is that as of this moment, I, Meng Hao, am the only cultivator who can fight at the Dao Sovereign level that is currently not fighting!

“I don’t know whether or not we can secure victory in this war. But… the Mountain and Sea Realm will not be overthrown easily!

“We are the descendants of the Paragon Immortal Realm, and we have lasted all the way down to this day. We are the Mountain and Sea Realm, and the war has only just begun. How could we possibly lose hope now?!?!”

Even as Meng Hao looked out at the cultivators of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, his heart bursting with powerful exhortations, a fierce fight was raging above Planet South Heaven in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. The Li Clan spell formation covered the entire planet, ensuring that any Outsiders who approached were destroyed before they could set foot on Planet South Heaven.

The sky rained with the blood of the Outsiders. Of course, that blood was filthy to the point that it could harm cultivators, and even devastate the earth. Therefore, it was not allowed to touch down onto the ground, but was dissipated into a mist before the very eyes of the cultivators of Planet South Heaven.

Standing atop a distant mountain was Shui Dongliu, who was staring up into the sky, a perpetual look of sorrow in his eyes.

At some point, an ancient ship had come to appear off to the side, floating there in the air. It was a ship that no one could see, almost as if… it didn’t exist.

An old man sat cross-legged at the prow of the boat with his back to the world, as if he had forsaken all Heaven and Earth.

If Meng Hao were here, he would instantly recognize this ship and this old man. He had boarded this same ship back when the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch had stolen his Dao foundation, leaving him on the brink of death.

The ship had taken him on a dream-like voyage through the Mountain and Sea Realm, a voyage which had opened Meng Hao’s eyes to the wider world. 2

Whether it had been intentional or not, the old man on the ship had healed Meng Hao’s injuries, and given him a bit of life force that had enabled him to keep living for a time.

Right now, that very same ship was floating in midair in front of Shui Dongliu.

Shui Dongliu stood there at the peak of the mountain, and the old man on the boat sat there with his back turned to the world. Although their eyes had not made contact, it clearly seemed as if they were looking at each other.

Suddenly, an ancient voice could be heard as the old man on the ship spoke. “Is all this necessary…? Your hope has always been doomed to fail.”

This was apparently the first time this man had ever truly spoken, and his voice seemed to echo out from the depths of time itself. As he spoke, the ship upon which he sat seemed even more illusory than before.

Shui Dongliu didn’t respond. Instead, he continued to stare off into the distance.

After a long moment passed, the old man on the ship sighed. Then he and the ship slowly faded away.

In almost the same moment that the ship and the old man vanished, Shui Dongliu suddenly turned his head. Someone was approaching him silently from behind, a young man in a black robe. His expression was calm, and his features extraordinary, but he had an astonishing murderous aura roiling off of him. He was none other… that the person who had taught Meng Hao the time-walking technique…. Slaughter! 3

He looked coldly at Shui Dongliu, and killing intent flashed through his eyes.

“I pondered the matter for some time…. I should have dispersed, so why was I brought back? It wasn’t until seeing you that I understood.

“One time. I’ll help you… only one time!” With that, Slaughter looked deeply at Shui Dongliu, then vanished into thin air.

Shui Dongliu stood there thoughtfully. The entire time, he hadn’t spoken a single word. Soon, the sun set, night fell, and the moon shone, casting a long shadow behind him.

“Deliver the people, lose the world,” he murmured softly. “Lose the people, deliver the world…. The choice has long since been made.” A strange, anticipatory light slowly began to gleam in his eyes.

“The Mountain and Sea Realm is at war, and now the spirit of the people must rise!”

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# Chapter 1324: The Agreement of Planet Tiger Cage!

Back in the Seventh Mountain and Sea, the previously listless eyes of the cultivators began to flicker with light as passion stirred in their hearts.

They suddenly recalled the image of Meng Hao slaying the Outsiders with one blow; couple that sight with what he had told them just now, and a certain title began to ring out in their minds and hearts.

Dao Sovereign!!

What Meng Hao had done, and what he had said, made it clear to these cultivators exactly how strong he was in battle. Battle prowess like that would be vitally important in the Mountain and Sea Realm’s war.

There were too many things that these cultivators didn’t understand, and the terrifying power of the 33 Heavens was something they didn’t even want to think about. They were in such despair that they would cling desperately to even the slightest scrap of hope.

As of this moment, hope was now kindling in their eyes. To them, a cultivator like Meng Hao represented the absolute pinnacle of the Mountain and Sea Realm, and if he said that he hadn’t lost hope or faith, then they believed him!

“It is we of the Mountain and Sea Realm who called for this war,” Meng Hao continued. “Therefore, this… is not a war being waged upon us by the 33 Heavens. No, this is us… waging war on the 33 Heavens!

“We will break open those 33 Heavens so that the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm can look up and see the true starry sky above our heads!” As Meng Hao spoke, the light in the eyes of the surrounding cultivators grew brighter.

However, words alone were not enough. As Meng Hao looked out at the crowds around him, a wild notion suddenly sprang up inside him.

He knew that what he was seeing right now was not an isolated incident. Whichever Mountain and Sea one went to right now, one would surely find similar thoughts of despair running through the hearts and minds of the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Perhaps the degree of despair would be different in different places, and perhaps some people could suppress the despair and turn it into killing intent. But some would surely tremble in fear and lose their will to fight. If that happened, then the war… truly would be a hopeless one.

As he realized how difficult this war would be, he suddenly gained understanding of a simple truth. War… needed heroes, and at the same time, did not!

The reason it needed heroes was because they could rouse the spirits of their comrades!

Simultaneously, the reason heroes were not needed was because… a single person can never determine victory in a war. Even with someone as powerful as Paragon Nine Seals… the people were delivered, but the world was lost.

War required unity. A people needed unity!

It was only by means of unity that the cultivators of the Mountains and Seas could rise up. Only with a burning spirit… could they fight back against all odds, and have the fortitude to fight to the death with the 33 Heavens.

“There’s something I need to do….” he murmured softly. Usually, he didn’t think of himself as the Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm. That was something that would happen in the future, not at this moment.

“Perhaps that’s the wrong attitude,” he thought. “If there is no future… then there will be no Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm….” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he looked up into the starry sky toward the 1st Heaven. The crazy idea that had just occurred to him just now was growing stronger. Taking a deep breath, he decided to let the notion percolate for a while.

With that, he turned and headed out across Planet Tiger Cage with Yuwen Jian.

Behind him, the spirits of the cultivators seemed to have lifted. As they watched Meng Hao leaving, sparks of fire appeared in their hearts and began to burn steadily.

One could well imagine what would happen as those sparks burned hotter and brighter. The hearts of those cultivators would ignite, and eventually, the same thing would happen throughout the entire Mountain and Sea Realm. In the end, either they would be burnt by those flames, or the enemy would!

Cracks and crevices covered the surface of Planet Tiger Cage…. All of the lands were covered with rifts that were only growing larger and wider with time. As of this moment, the planet seemed to be teetering on the verge of collapse.

Apparently, the carnage of the war in the Mountain and Sea Realm was focused initially on the Sixth and Seventh Mountains and Seas. As Meng Hao looked around at Planet Tiger Cage, his eyes flickered with the desire to kill.

Furthermore, his rage toward Lord White still lingered, despite the fact that he had already cut him down.

“Now that I think about it, there is still one more traitor among the Mountain and Sea Lords,” he thought. Heart filling with icy coldness, he looked off into the distance for a moment, then turned to Yuwen Jian.

“Brother Yuwen, back in the Windswept Realm, you mentioned that the Seventh Mountain and Sea has… God blood?” Although Meng Hao was planning to merely pass through, there were still some important things here for him.

God blood was something critical for making breakthroughs with the fleshly body. After his recent breakthroughs, his current fleshly body level had actually become an encumbrance. If he could make a breakthrough, then based on the foundation he had built up, he would experience an incredible rise, and immediately reach the level of a Dao Sovereign.

At that time, considering the level of his cultivation base and his terrifying divine sense, he would truly be equipped… with the power of a Dao Sovereign!

After acquiring the Green Emperor’s Eternal Incantation from Lord White, he had made major progress with his Eternal stratum. Even still, he could tell that his fleshly body needed to become more powerful before he could be confident in facing the Flesh and Blood Desolation, which was the Second of the Seven Desolations of Ancient Realm Soul Lamp extinguishing.

The crazy idea which had come to him required that he have battle prowess truly equivalent to the Dao Sovereign level. Only then could he be confident enough to make that idea a reality.

“Of course we do!” replied Yuwen Jian. “In the Vale of the Godgrave. However, it’s already been occupied by the Outsiders….

“Brother Meng, if you want to go, then I can take you there!” Yuwen Jian’s eyes gleamed brightly. 1

“Not yet,” Meng Hao replied softly. “I have a bit of unresolved Karma on this planet. Brother Yuwen, please wait while I take care of something.” With that, he took a step forward and then vanished.

Yuwen Jian hovered there silently for a moment, his eyes burning with a will to fight.

“We’re both in the Echelon,” he thought, “but Meng Hao has already reached the point where everyone looks up to him. And yet I… still haven’t passed through the Ancient Realm. It’s hard to say how long this war will last. I must step into the Dao Realm!” Yuwen Jian’s eyes shone with a flicker of determination.

As Meng Hao flew along above the lands of Planet Tiger Cage, he felt an aura spreading out from inside of him. It came from deep in the recesses of his cultivation base, where there existed a white diamond-shaped object!

“Planet Tiger Cage. Choumen Tai….” Meng Hao murmured. He had never forgotten about that Immortal’s corpse which had fallen out of the sky back when he was on Planet South Heaven. That Immortal was none other than Choumen Tai, and they had come to an agreement that Meng Hao would return his legacy to Planet Tiger Cage. 2

At that time, the gift given to him by Choumen Tai had been like a precious treasure. Now, it was relatively insignificant. However, Choumen Tai had mentioned that by returning his legacy to his home on Planet Tiger Cage, Meng Hao could acquire some good fortune.

Of course, Meng Hao didn’t care too much about that. After all, there was little good fortune that he could acquire now that would be of much help to him. Based on Choumen Tai’s cultivation base level back, there was nothing he could bestow upon Meng Hao now that would be of any use.

Meng Hao had come, not because of any potential good fortune, but rather, to keep a promise.

As he proceeded along, he cast his senses inward to observe the fluctuations of the diamond inside of him. Soon, a mountain appeared up ahead….

It was cracked and crumbling, but hadn’t fallen apart completely, and when Meng Hao scanned it with divine sense he found an Immortal’s cave which had long since been abandoned. Layers of dust covered everything in the Immortal’s cave, but deep within its recesses was a spell formation. At the very center of the spell formation was a small column of inky jade the size of a hand. On top of that column was a diamond-shaped slot.

As soon as Meng Hao got close, his own chest began to radiate light as the diamond-shaped legacy bestowed upon him years ago by Choumen Tai suddenly flew out.

It moved with incredible speed as it flew through the cracks in the side of the mountain, entering the Immortal's cave, lowering itself down toward the spell formation and settling into the diamond-shaped slot.

Meng Hao didn't follow the white diamond. Instead, he hovered outside the mountain, watching. Moments later, his jaw dropped.

"This…." His eyes flickered as he took a step forward and then suddenly appeared inside of the mountain. Having scanned the mountain with divine sense, he was certain there was nothing unusual lying in wait. Considering the level of his divine sense, there would be few things in existence which could conceal anything from him. Earlier, his divine sense had revealed that the spell formation was emanating fluctuations that seemed to indicate it was searching for an appropriate apprentice upon whom to bestow a legacy.

But now, after the diamond sank down into the slot, the spell formation immediately altered. Instead of preparing to deliver a legacy, it was… summoning something!?

Meng Hao hovered outside of the spell formation, face darkening. As he studied the spell formation, he could sense the power of summoning, something that was completely ignoring the 33 Heavens above and was instead stretching out to some unknown location.

This was Meng Hao's first time seeing a spell formation like this, and was definitely his first time seeing anything which could pierce through the seal of the 33 Heavens.

Because that diamond-shaped legacy had fed him power for so many years, it also contained a bit of his own aura. Furthermore, that bit of aura appeared to be transforming the summoning power in some way that even Meng Hao didn't understand.

“This is no legacy…. Choumen Tai, who exactly are you?!” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, and he let out a cold harrumph. Although what was happening was unexpected, considering the level of his current cultivation base, he could simply destroy the spell formation if he wanted to. That might be a violation of his previous oath, but the current Mountain and Sea Realm could ill afford an unknown and unexpected hazard.

He had come here because of his promise, to repay Choumen Tai for the good fortune he had bestowed. But now, his face was grim. He would rather incur Karma and sully his oath, than permit this spell formation to cause any harm to the Mountain and Sea Realm!

He reached his hand out, causing a massive burst of power to build up. Just as it was about to blast down onto the spell formation, a voice suddenly spoke out in Meng Hao’s mind.

It was a voice filled with a pleading tone. It was… Choumen Tai.

“Please allow me to have some hope…. Please, I have no desire to hurt you or do anything to harm the interests of the Mountain and Sea Realm. Please… allow me my hope….

“The person I want to resurrect, he…. is my master….

“Years ago, he sent me away into the cycle of reincarnation. I experienced many, many things. Eventually I awoke and remembered my home, and who I was back then. I remembered that he… had extinguished his own soul fire.

“I want to resurrect my master. That is my sole purpose in life. Please, allow me to have my hope…. If you do… I can help you in this Mountain and Sea War!!” 3

Nothing Choumen Tai said moved Meng Hao at all. He sent his cultivation base power out, and the spell formation began to emit cracking sounds as the summoning was interrupted. However, it was at that point that Choumen Tai said one last thing, which caused Meng Hao to suddenly stop.

“I, Choumen Tai, pledge on my own life, that if you preserve this spell formation, I will devote my life to the Mountain and Sea War!”

Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed. “How can you help?” he asked.

When Choumen Tai responded, his voice seethed with manic determination. “I can help you… to seal a 7-Essences Paragon, and make that person your puppet!”

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# Chapter 1325: Meng Hao’s Heart….

Meng Hao was quite shaken. Even after leaving Planet South Heaven and traversing the Mountain and Sea Realm, he had never forgotten the kindness Choumen Tai had shown in blessing him with good fortune, nor the agreement they reached regarding Planet Tiger Cage.

He had always planned to return Choumen Tai’s legacy to Planet Tiger Cage. However, he could never have imagined that the so-called legacy was actually a sham. It had all been a ruse.

Meng Hao hovered there silently. He could accept being swindled, but he couldn’t accept the existence of a spell formation like this, not if there was even a chance that it could harm the Mountain and Sea Realm. He was responsible for the Mountains and Seas, and had already borne witness to the tragedy of war. Furthermore, that warfare had already changed him.

He had grown up.

Therefore, his first reaction upon seeing this spell formation was not to be concerned about the Karma he would sow if he broke his oath and destroyed it.

However… at the same time, Choumen Tai’s words had moved him. In fact, his mind was spinning, and his eyes glowed with bright light.

“I, Choumen Tai, swear an oath upon my soul that if anything I have said is untrue, then… no matter if I live or die, I will never again see my master!” The madness in Choumen Tai’s voice was growing, and the sincerity of his determination made his pleas seem even more intense.

In fact, as he spoke, Meng Hao could sense the vague fluctuations of a powerful oath, and could also detect Karma building up within the mountain peak and the spell formation.

All of that indicated that the words spoken by Choumen Tai were true.

Meng Hao said nothing at first. He was not a cold and ruthless person, and Choumen Tai had bestowed good fortune upon him in the past. If he could choose, he would rather not destroy the man’s hope. Furthermore, he had sworn an oath upon his soul.

“How is it that you can do such a thing?” Meng Hao asked.

“It doesn’t matter how I can do it,” replied Choumen Tai. “Just point out a 7-Essences Paragon, and I’ll take care of the rest!” From the sound of his voice, Choumen Tai seemed to be throwing caution to the wind. A Heaven-defying technique like that would surely come at a heavy price, a price too difficult to even comprehend.

“Whenever or wherever you are, as long as I still live, all you have to do is catalyze this sealing mark… and you can perform the sealing!” A mysteriously-glowing magical symbol floated out from within the mountain to hover in front of Meng Hao.

The symbol flickered and danced, and constant fluctuations rippled about inside of it. It was actually impossible to see clearly, and numerous transformations existed within it. Meng Hao eyed the magical symbol for a moment, and then his eyes flickered with determination. He waved his sleeve, gathering up the magical symbol and then looking at the mountain for a long moment before turning to leave.

Meng Hao could now tell that the reason why Planet Tiger Cage still remained intact within the Seventh Mountain and Sea, the reason why it had not been destroyed, was not because of Yuwen Jian and the other cultivators with him. More importantly… it was because of the spell formation inside this mountain, and the remaining power of Choumen Tai, which protected the entire planet.

Because of that power of protection, even though the surface of the planet was riddled with cracks and crevices, it still remained in one piece, as the spell formation protected both the mountain and the planet.

Meng Hao took a step, and was already far off in the distance. “Just what sort of entity could inspire one of its servants to be so devoted, to become completely obsessed with resurrecting it…?”

Even as he left, a blurry figure appeared within the middle of the spell formation. It was Choumen Tai, and he seemed to be fading away. He was staring into the spell formation itself, trembling, eyes filled with anticipation and reminiscence.

“For the sake of others, you closed your eyes for all eternity….” he murmured. “After I returned, I could never find you….” Choumen Tai’s voice seemed to be filled with grief as he slowly sat down in the spell formation.

“Please return… my master….”

As Meng Hao made his way off into the distance, he found that the meat jelly had emerged from his bag of holding at some point. It was perched on his shoulder, looking back at the mountain. Then the parrot flew out, landed on his other shoulder, and also looked back.

It was a rare occasion when these two living treasures weren’t making a ruckus.

The meat jelly sighed and said, “Perhaps to that entity, Choumen Tai eventually ceased to be simply a servant. Meng Hao, do you think that one day, if you meet your end, I’ll be like Choumen Tai, and do everything I can to try to resurrect you? Ai. That is a question very worthy of consideration…. Fifth Bro, what do you think?”

Meng Hao stopped in place. The meat jelly’s words just now were definitely the type to make one feel touched, but to hear them coming out of the meat jelly’s mouth was quite strange.

“Lord Fifth was actually pondering a different question…. If Lord Fifth ever meets his end, Meng Hao… would you feel sad? Would you try to resurrect me?” The parrot looked over at Meng Hao, its expression very serious.

“Yes!” Meng Hao replied softly. The parrot and meat jelly had followed him for so long that in his heart, he no longer viewed them as simple servants.

“Well, Lord Fifth won’t die and can’t be killed, so you’ll never have that chance. Hahaha!” The parrot laughed heartily, but as it laughed, a trace of sorrow and grief could be seen in its eyes. However, it quickly passed, and the parrot quickly reverted to its usual simple-minded state.

Meng Hao didn’t say anything further. A knot had taken root in his heart… an uncomfortable notion that he didn’t dare to contemplate or ponder. The reason being that he wasn’t sure which side to pick.

He had an inkling of the Karmic cause of the war of the Mountain and Sea Realm, that it was actually being fought because of… the copper mirror!

If he simply handed the copper mirror over… could the war be ended?

It was a question Meng Hao didn’t dare to consider. His family lived in the Mountain and Sea Realm, as did his friends, his Masters, and all other living things…. But on the other hand, the copper mirror had been with him from his earliest days in the Reliance Sect. It had accompanied him and allowed him to grow from being a mere scholar to his current pinnacle.

As for the parrot, although Meng Hao pretended to not care very much about it, the truth was that after all these years, he had become very attached to it, and could never bear to part with it.

“Do I forsake the parrot,” he thought, “or forsake the Mountain and Sea Realm…? Perhaps the only choice I can make… is to forsake myself.”

Meng Hao sighed inwardly. This was the question he didn’t wish to ponder, because he knew that one day, he would be forced to make that decision.

Who knew what cruel realities he would need to face when the time came to choose?

“I have to get stronger!” he thought, his eyes glowing brightly. He took a deep breath as he forced himself to stop thinking about that painful question. Then, he transformed into a beam of light that shot off into the distance.

The meat jelly sat silently on his shoulder, and although the parrot seemed completely oblivious to anything, it was uncharacteristically quiet as it transformed into a multi-colored streak that flew into the copper mirror in Meng Hao’s bag of holding.

Meng Hao continued along quietly, sighing the entire time as he contemplated the enigma that was fate. As of this moment, he was consumed with worry for his family and a deep yearning to reunite with Xu Qing.

Eventually, he made his way back to Yuwen Jian, who was sitting there cross-legged waiting for him. Instead of wasting time with words, Meng Hao simply looked at him and uttered a single sentence.

“Take me… to the place you mentioned, the Vale of the Godgrave!”

Yuwen Jian’s eyes shone with a bright light. Taking a deep breath, he nodded and rose to his feet. Meng Hao flicked his sleeve, and the two of them transformed into bright beams of light that shot off into the starry sky at top speed.

Normally speaking, Yuwen Jian would never be able to keep up with Meng Hao, so Meng Hao lent him some energy, and they proceeded along to the location Yuwen Jian indicated.

“I need to get stronger, that way I can slaughter my own path out of the enigma of fate!” There was something murderously bleak about Meng Hao now. His previous air of youth and naivete had been wiped away, and the only thing that remained was the grief and pain that came from seeing tragedy play out in the Mountain and Sea Realm.

The Seventh Mountain and Sea was now almost completely in the hands of the Outsiders, who continued to pour in, filling the starry sky with their pitch black cubes. Increasing pressure radiated out in all directions.

Soon, Meng Hao and Yuwen Jian appeared in the southeastern part of the Seventh Mountain and Sea, in a location that was very quiet. Off in the distance was an area full of hundreds of black cubes. They floated about in the starry sky, lightning dancing across their surfaces. It was just possible to see the images of Outsiders passing into and out of the cubes.

They almost seemed to be forming a spell formation….

“The Vale of the Godgrave is up ahead,” said Yuwen Jian. “It’s a spatial rift within which rest the ruins of an ancient battlefield. Countless strands of divine will exist inside, which can kill you before you even notice them….

“The Vale of the Godgrave is one of the most dangerous places in the entire Seventh Mountain and Sea. The last time I went in, I only managed to travel a short distance. By chance, though, I managed to get a drop of impure God blood. Even that was enough to instigate an incredible breakthrough in my fleshly body!”

Yuwen Jian was under the protection of Meng Hao’s divine sense. As they hovered there in the starry sky, no one other than perhaps a peak 6-Essences Dao Sovereign or a 7-Essences Paragon would be able to detect their presence. “After the 1st Heaven descended, this was the very first place to be occupied by the Outsiders!

“I suspect that quite a few of the Outsiders have already gone inside. Presumably they are also interested in getting God blood….”

Meng Hao looked calmly off into the distance. He could sense the fluctuations of powerful experts coming from many of the black cubes. Furthermore, the spell formation formed by the cubes contained shocking power in and of itself.

The area surrounding the Vale of the Godgrave was completely filled with Outsiders. Although there were no 6-Essences experts there, there were definitely 5-Essence experts. Meng Hao had already identified four with his divine sense.

And that didn’t count any Outsiders who had entered the Vale of the Godgrave, which was beyond the scope of what Meng Hao could survey with divine sense.

Meng Hao turned to look at Yuwen Jian and said, “Brother Yuwen, this place is clearly very dangerous. I think you should wait for me here….”

Yuwen Jian hesitated for a moment before determination gleamed in his eyes and he shook his head.

“The 33 Heavens aren’t even sparing the mortals in this war. Clearly, they plan to wipe us all out…. They want to exterminate the bloodlines of all living beings in the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“As the saying goes, if the nest is overturned, none of the eggs survive!” Yuwen Jian clenched his hands into fists. “I need to get stronger! I need to have a cultivation base breakthrough! I have a body refinement magic which can use God blood to sacrifice some life force in exchange for a hundred years of a Dao Realm fleshly body!

“I, Yuwen Jian, am an Echelon cultivator. Even if I can only live for a hundred years after stepping into the Dao, I have to live up to my place in the Echelon!” Yuwen Jian’s eyes shone brightly, and his pupils seemed to flicker with flames.

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# Chapter 1326: Entering the Vale of the Godgrave!

“Brother Meng, I’d like to request… that you let me go with you into the Vale of the Godgrave!

“Don’t let me be a burden; you can even ignore me. I only request… that you get me inside. Once there, we can part ways, and I’ll go off on my own to search for my good fortune!

“This is my choice, so whether I live or die has nothing to do with you, Brother Meng. I won’t infect your Karma. I, Yuwen Jian… just want a chance to search for my path of good fortune!

“If I live, fine. If I die, fine…. I was born in the Mountain and Sea Realm, and I grew up in it. I’ll give my blood, my cultivation, everything about me… to repay that debt!” Yuwen Jian’s bitter smile was tinged with madness. The things he had seen and experienced recently in the Seventh Mountain and Sea were hundreds of times more tragic than what Meng Hao had seen so far.

He had witnessed three planets destroyed, and had watched as innumerable lives were ended. He saw one sect after another exterminated, wiped out by the Outsiders.

He had even seen people being eaten alive.

Out of all his family, his clan, and his sect… he was the only survivor. Therefore, he now lived for revenge!

Meng Hao looked silently at Yuwen Jian for a moment, then turned to leave.

“Just keep up,” he said. Then he transformed into a beam of light that shot off into the distance. Clearly, he was choosing, not to sneak in, but to fight his way through in broad daylight.

After all, this was the Mountain and Sea Realm, not the Outsiders’ 1st Heaven!

RUMBLE!

The instant Meng Hao charged forth and began to fight, Yuwen Jian rapidly began to grow larger in size. Apparently there was a bit of God blood inside of him, pumping through his veins, leading to a shocking growth in fleshly body power. Astonishingly, it took only an instant for Yuwen Jian to turn into a huge giant that took a step forward, following Meng Hao into the fray.

Two men, two Echelon cultivators, two beams of light, shot forth like unsheathed swords. Rumbling sounds echoed out as the two of them stabbed into the Outsiders’ spell formation.

Meng Hao’s cultivation base was so powerful that only Dao Sovereigns could hope to stand up to him. In the moment that he began to fight, vast numbers of Outsiders began to pour out from the black cubes and charge toward him in attack.

At the same time, shocking fluctuations began to emanate from the cubes as streams of divine sense sped forth to attack him.

Further off in the distance were three Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering 5-Essences auras that instantly veered toward Meng Hao to block his path.

Meng Hao gave a cold harrumph. Killing intent flickered in his eyes as he looked at the hosts of the incoming Outsiders, with their vicious expressions and murderous auras. Waving his sleeve, he summoned the Paragon Bridge, which crushed down onto them.

Instantly, bloodcurdling screams rang out, and the starry sky around Meng Hao shattered. This one single attack crushed everything in its path.

No less than a thousand Outsiders were instantly smashed, their fleshly bodies shattered, their Nascent Divinities destroyed.

All of the other Outsiders who witnessed this gasped, and their faces fell. Instantly, they began to back up in shock.

“Dao… Dao Sovereign!!”

“Dammit! In the Mountain and Sea Realm, Dao Sovereigns are supposed to be as rare as phoenix feathers or qilin horns. How could there be one here!?”

“Why haven’t the two exalted Dao Sovereigns from our 1st Heaven come to stop this person!?!?”

The shocked Outsiders were so terrified that they didn’t dare to get any closer. In fact, they backed up to let him pass. As for Yuwen Jian, even though he had an incredibly high opinion of Meng Hao, and had even seen what he did earlier to the Outsiders attacking Planet Tiger Cage, witnessing this left him shocked.

Looking at Meng Hao’s back as he led the way, Yuwen Jian realized that although he wasn’t necessarily physically imposing… there was something spectacular about him.

It was as if… the war for the Mountain and Sea Realm… might not necessarily end with them being wiped out!

However, even as the Outsider cultivators backed up, the streams of divine will emanating from the hundreds of black cubes came together into a shocking convergence that blasted toward Meng Hao.

This amalgamation of divine will was so powerful that even Dao Sovereigns who encountered it would likely shy away in fear. It transformed into an enormous face which filled the starry sky and lunged toward Meng Hao as if to consume him.

“So what if you’re a Dao Sovereign, screw off!!” The voice which shouted out was not the voice of a single Outsider, but rather the conjoined voices of hundreds of them!

The sound of it echoed out, rocking the starry sky, causing the void to tremble, and crushing down with a will of complete defiance.

“Scram!” screamed the conjoined voices of the Outsiders. As for all of the other Outsiders who were observing from off to the side, their eyes began to glow brightly as they waited for Meng Hao’s momentum to be broken, and for him to be forced backward.

Meng Hao’s expression was calm, but his eyes flickered coldly. It was at this point that his own divine sense exploded out toward the face converged from divine will.

His divine sense transformed into a huge fist which punched out viciously!

BOOOOMMMMMM!

The fist slammed into the face, shattering it into pieces, and causing a boom to ring out that shook Heaven and Earth.

Cracking sounds rang out as fissures snaked out through the starry sky. They were like dragons shooting out in all directions, and when they hit the Outsiders, screams rose up. There was no chance for the Outsiders to flee, and many of them were instantly ripped apart.

At the same time, miserable shrieks echoed out from the hundreds of black cubes. Rumbling sounds could be heard as each and every one of the black cubes shattered, and the Outsider cultivators inside were eradicated.

From a distance, the scene which was playing out was completely and utterly shocking!

More gasps could be heard as the surviving Outsiders fell back even further, so terrified of Meng Hao that they were shaking. Before they had come to the Mountain and Sea Realm, they had viewed themselves as above everyone, and looked down derisively at the Mountain and Sea Realm. They couldn’t wait for the chance to start slaughtering the Immortals for fun.

But after seeing Meng Hao’s terrifying performance, memories from their ancestors were slowly being unlocked inside of them, memories that had been sealed within their bones, hidden within their souls.

Memories of how their ancestors had been conquered by the Paragon Immortal Realm.

Meng Hao’s face was cold as he looked around. Due to the sheer number of Outsiders present, it would be difficult to kill them all, even with the current level of his cultivation base. However, as he glanced about, all of the Outsiders upon whom his gaze fell backed up, trembling.

He snorted coldly, advancing again, and no one dared to get in his way this time. They all fell back to make way for him. However, as he passed by, they would form ranks once again behind him. It was almost like Meng Hao was surrounded by a huge circle of empty space.

Despite the fact that he was clearly surrounded, the ones who were terrified were the Outsiders, not him.

Yuwen Jian followed directly behind Meng Hao. The scene which he was watching unfold in front of his eyes had his blood pumping.

Glancing around coldly as he proceeded along, Meng Hao eventually caught sight of a dilapidated altar up ahead. It looked ancient, as if it had survived through countless years of time, leaving it corroded and falling apart.

It wasn’t complete; only about seventy percent of its original structure remained. And yet, the starry sky around it rippled and distorted, emanating fluctuations that contained incredible pressure.

Gradually, it became obvious that this altar… was an entrance, leading to some other dimension beyond.

It was clear that previously, the altar had not been out in the open like this. Various restrictive spells and other obstacles had obviously been in place. However, after the Outsiders arrived, they had cleared the area, leaving the altar hovering out in the open in the starry sky.

In front of the altar were three Outsider cultivators with grim faces. They hovered there, staring at Meng Hao, emanating fluctuations of the 5-Essences level.

Although they were a far cry from a Mountain and Sea Lord, they were close to the level of the boy Xiao Yihan.

They looked on with flickering eyes as Meng Hao approached. The one in the middle had a horn jutting out of his head, and if you looked closely you could see that it wasn't black, but violet.

He took a step forward, and then it became clear that he did not have the same murderous aura that the other Outsiders did. He clasped hands and bowed to Meng Hao, saying, "I am Long Daozi, of the Dao Tribe of the 1st Heaven. Greetings, Dao Sovereign Meng."

Meng Hao looked back coldly. The fact that this person knew who he was came as no surprise. In the initial moments of the invasion, he had clashed with the Outsider Paragon Eegoo of the 1st Heaven. Although most people in the Mountain and Sea Realm had not been able to see what happened, the Outsider experts certainly were watching, and had seen the events unfold.

The violet-horned Outsider's eyes shone with a strange light as he slowly began to speak. "Dao Sovereign Meng, based on your cultivation base and powers of perception, you are certainly aware that the Mountain and Sea Realm… cannot possibly win this war. Even if the 1st Heaven isn't a match for the Mountain and Sea Realm, there is a 2nd Heaven, and a 3rd Heaven, and in the end, 33 Heavens. There is no hope for the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“Although we 33 Heavens wish to destroy all life in the Mountain and Sea Realm, we also respect the powerful experts here. Fellow Daoist Meng, if you would agree to follow the orders of the 1st Heaven, to join us in our campaign, then I can guarantee the safety of you and your clan, and can promise that you won’t be harmed.

“A wise man submits to the circumstances. Fellow Daoist Meng, surely you understand the truth of that old saying.

“Not only can your clan be saved, but anyone else you wish can join us as well. The 1st Heaven won’t kill them. All you need to do is become a Dao slave of the 1st Heaven.

“Compared to freedom… what meaning is there in death?”

In response to his words, Yuwen Jian remained silent. Although he trusted Meng Hao, the offer made by this Outsider was something that would stir even his heart, albeit only a bit.

After all, he had no clan left. He had nothing. However, back when his clan and sect had still existed, if he had been given this choice, he couldn’t be sure what he would have chosen. That line of thinking caused a spark of fear to rise up within him.

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# Chapter 1327: Nothing More Than a Demonic Beast!

“Trying to seduce me… into being a turncoat?” Meng Hao asked coolly. His expression was calm, but a flicker of derision could be seen in his eyes. “You don’t qualify to try something like that.”

Only an Outsider who was out of the loop would talk to Meng Hao in such a way. If this person had been Paragon Eegoo, who was aware of who exactly Meng Hao was, he would never have uttered such words.

Back in the days of the Paragon Immortal Realm, even when the entire world had crumbled into pieces, its people, despite being broken and dying in the Mountain and Sea Realm, refused to bow their heads in compliance to the 33 Heavens. If that was the case back then, how much more so would it be the case now, when the Mountain and Sea Realm had grown strong, and was carrying on the legacy of the Paragon Immortal Realm!?

To bow one’s head in compliance would be a betrayal of one’s people, one’s home, and one’s everything…. To become a Dao slave, where life and death were not under one’s own control, where one had no freedom… what would be the point of being alive?!

When Yuwen Jian heard Meng Hao’s response, he suddenly felt very calm.

As for the violet-horned Outsider, he gazed deeply at Meng Hao for a moment, then laughed softly, as if he wasn’t very surprised. Then he and the other two Outsiders stepped back to make way.

“If that is your wish, Dao Sovereign Meng, and considering that we can’t stop you, then we will permit you to enter the Vale of the Godgrave. Please, go ahead.” The violet-horned Outsider smiled and gestured for Meng Hao to walk past.

Yuwen Jian breathed a sigh of relief. The pressure he felt from these three 5-Essences Outsiders made him realize how insignificant he was. Although he felt relieved, he gritted his teeth petulantly and told himself that even if it was more risky, he had to get into the Vale of the Godgrave.

However, just when Yuwen Jian was about to proceed forward, he realized that Meng Hao hadn’t moved an inch.

A strange expression had appeared on Meng Hao’s as he looked at the three Outsiders, and he began to laugh.

“Did you three practice your cultivation wrong and turn into retards? Or were your brains always defective?” He suddenly took a step forward, and when his foot landed, his energy surged wildly, as if a giant had stomped down onto the starry sky. It was like the crashing of an ocean of waves!

“This is the Mountain and Sea Realm, not the 1st Heaven! Everything here belongs to the Mountains and Seas, not you people. Just because you’re standing around here, doesn’t mean I need your permission to come and go, does it?”

The three Outsiders’ hearts began to quiver. It felt as if mountains were crushing down onto them, as if the Heavens were suppressing their hearts. Their faces fell and they quickly backed up.

“You think that when I show up, you can just ‘step back and make way’ for me?

“The Mountain and Sea Realm and the 1st Heaven are at war. As for you three… what makes you so confident that I won’t just kill you?” Meng Hao threw his head back and laughed. Then he took three steps forward, each one of which caused him to erupt with extraordinary power. The sheer towering majesty was almost impossible for onlookers to take in, and the pressure he emanated crushed down with infinite force. A tempest sprang up, sweeping in all directions, and crushing might bore down onto the three Outsiders.

The mere upsurge of energy caused everything to shake violently, and the three Outsiders' minds were reeling as blood sprayed out of their mouths. The scales on their bodies even began to explode as they fell back a great distance.

"Meng Hao, how dare you!!"

"If you only stuck to killing some of our lesser tribe members, then whatever… they aren't in the Dao Realm, so they don't count as successors in the 1st Heaven. But if you kill us Dao Realm experts, your clan will definitely be placed on the 33 Heavens' list of clans to be exterminated!"

"You're going to get your whole clan exterminated, Meng Hao! Do you really dare to attack us?!?!"

"Pipe down!" Meng Hao said coolly, his energy crushing down with a booming sound. The three 5-Essences Outsiders trembled, and one experienced a complete explosion of all the scales on his body, after which his entire tail shattered. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and when Meng Hao took a fifth step, he screamed and exploded.

A majestic 5-Essences Outsider was crushed like a twig by Meng Hao's divine sense and cultivation base power!

Only two remained! The violet-horned Outsider was holding out better than the other, who coughed up a mouthful of blood as his flesh was shredded.

Even as he let out a despairing howl, Meng Hao took a sixth step.

RUMBLE!

The Outsider's body twisted, as though some enormous hand were squeezing down on it. It was crushed into a pulp, completely dead. With six steps, Meng Hao had killed two powerful enemies, to shocking effect.

The violet-horned Outsider’s face was pale, and he let out a howl as he suddenly began to grow. His appearance completely changed; astonishingly, what now appeared in front of Meng Hao was a 3,000-meter long black lizard!

His long black horn glowed with violet light, and he looked boundlessly fierce. This was the true form of the Outsiders from the 1st Heaven!

They looked less like cultivators and more like… animals!

At the most, they were like Demonic beasts!

The 3,000-meter long lizard roared mightily as flames burst out from his body. However, instead of charging Meng Hao, he fled in the opposite direction at high speed.

“I guess I gave you too much credit,” Meng Hao said, eyeing the lizard coldly. “You’re just an animal, and yet I tried to explain things to you as if you were a cultivator.” With that, he took a seventh step.

The instant that seventh step descended, Meng Hao’s energy reached an indescribable level. The power of the Mountains and Seas rumbled out, filling the entire area. It was as if the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm had been driven away by Meng Hao and his power!

The only thing present was Mountain and Sea power, with none of the Realm’s will. It was as if that power… was under the complete control of Meng Hao’s will!

His will was… superseding the Heavens and replacing the Dao!

“Superseding the Heavens and replacing the Dao? This… this is impossible!!” The violet-horned lizard was filled with terror and shock. What he was seeing was so impossible that he couldn’t think, and his heart filled up with complete despair.

All of a sudden, he experienced a vision. Images rose up, the memories of his ancestors which were concealed in his blood. He saw his ancestors in one of the Lower Realms beneath the Paragon Immortal Realm. He saw them… acting as mounts for Immortals.

In the end, that was the last thing he ever saw, as Meng Hao’s surging energy superseded the Heavens and replaced the Dao. It became an explosive will of destruction that, in the blink of an eye, completely crushed the gigantic lizard’s soul out of existence!

BOOM!

He was completely and utterly eradicated!

The other surrounding Outsiders gaped in shock at what they had just witnessed, and trembled as they stared at Meng Hao in complete and utter terror and disbelief.

“Scram!” Meng Hao said, glaring at them. He was well aware that, considering the vast number of Outsiders present, it wouldn’t be an easy task to simply wipe them out, not even with the aid of the power of the Mountains and Seas.

Right now, these Outsiders were completely shaken, so the best thing to do wasn’t to kill them, it was to plant a seed inside of them.

That seed was a seed of terror, a seed that would eventually topple their hearts!

His voice was like a cudgel that swept out and slammed into the hearts and minds of the Outsiders. It was like a bolt of lightning that destroyed their courage and wiped away their will to fight. Fear of Meng Hao overwhelmed them, and screams could be heard as they scattered, fleeing in uncoordinated chaos.

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# Chapter 1328: Vale of the Godgrave!

Yuwen Jian watched blankly as all of this happened. He gazed at the spot where the three Outsiders had just died. He looked at the other Outsiders, who were fleeing madly in all directions. Finally, he looked back at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s expression was grim as he eyed the retreating Outsiders, and then took a step toward the altar.

Yuwen Jian hesitated for a moment before saying, “You know, it might waste a bit of time, but we could still kill at least thirty percent of these fleeing Outsiders.”

Meng Hao turned and replied, “Killing people isn’t as effective as killing hearts! The key to war is not just victory in battle. It lies within the spirit….

“They’ve lost their courage, because I crushed their hearts. Without spirit, these Outsiders will become the first stepping stone in raising the morale of the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm.”

Yuwen Jian revered Meng Hao, but still had an opinion to express. “Only one victory, or an impressive display by one powerful person… is probably not enough to make that happen.”

“You’re right. And that’s why I need to get into the Vale of the Godgrave as soon as possible, to get that God blood.” Meng Hao stepped onto the altar and looked up into the starry sky, and the giant land mass that was the 1st Heaven.

In that moment, a flickering flame of madness could be seen in his eyes.

“Let me ask you a question,” Meng Hao murmured softly. “Imagine what would happen if the Outsiders from the 1st Heaven looked up and saw their entire world shattering into pieces and then falling down out of the sky. After that, do you think that their spirits, their hearts, and their courage… could remain intact?” His words were spoken in a quiet tone, but the meaning behind them was astonishing enough to rock Heaven and Earth!

Yuwen Jian gasped. “You….” He felt almost as if he had been struck by lightning, and could hardly speak.

Meng Hao closed his eyes. “The key to winning a war… is destroying your enemy’s spirit! To these Outsiders, the 1st Heaven is their home, and their spirit….” With that, he vanished into the altar.

Yuwen Jian was trembling, not from fear, but from excitement and anticipation. Meng Hao’s words echoed in his mind, and he could truly imagine what it would be like if he was in the middle of fighting the Outsiders, then suddenly looked up to see the 1st Heaven crumbling into pieces and falling out of the sky. To him, it would be something completely exhilarating and galvanizing.

In sharp contrast, the Outsiders would find it… an utter catastrophe!

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The Vale of the Godgrave!

It really was a shattered portion of an ancient battlefield. That was the only thing which existed there. Not even the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm could be detected. It was as if the only thing that existed in this place was an all-pervasive will to fight.

In almost the exact same instant that Meng Hao entered the dimension, he heard the sounds of countless voices echoing in his ears like thunder.

“FIGHT!!”

It was a voice belonging, not to any individual entity, but rather, the dimension itself, and the powerful will to fight that had existed in this place for countless years.

It was like an undying soul throwing its head back and howling, consumed with the desire to slaughter its way through the Heavens, the starry sky, and all lands.

If Meng Hao's divine will were not as strong as it was, being at eighty percent of a Paragon's, that will to fight would have incited him to instantly attack something. But now, it was simply a slight stimulation that hardly affected him.

However, as soon as Yuwen Jian appeared, he began to shake, and his face drained of blood. Meng Hao waved his hand, and Yuwen Jian recovered. After looking around, he turned to face Meng Hao.

"Brother Meng, I can do this myself!" With that, he clasped hands, and then sped off in another direction, eyes gleaming with determination and decisiveness. Meng Hao watched Yuwen Jian leave the area of protection he had offered, and could see both the difficulty with which he did so, and also the mad desire within his soul that drove him to such lengths. Meng Hao sighed.

Yuwen Jian had his own path to follow. Meng Hao understood that, and thus would not intervene. He turned his head and looked off into the distance.

The soil here was black, and littered with countless corpses.

Some had already petrified into stone, while others were still in a state of decay. In fact, the further one proceeded into the depths of the valley, the more slowly things seemed to be rotting and decaying. The Vale of the Godgrave was ring-shaped, with the outer areas being safer, and the danger increasing the closer one got to the center.

If that were all there were to it, it might not be a big deal, but thunder boomed in the air up above, and countless lightning bolts crashed down, almost like a rain of lightning. And yet, what boomed loudest in his ears was not thunder, but rather, that echoing call to fight in battle!

This place was like a Heaven-shaking and Earth-shattering sea of lightning, within which could be seen shadowy figures fighting each other. Normally, the rain of lightning which was pounding down would destroy everything beneath it, but in this case, the battle was so awe-inspiring that the effects of the lightning were negligible, whereas the intensity of the combat wreaked havoc upon all Heaven and Earth.

In one location, Meng Hao spotted an enormous giant made of lightning, which crackled with boundless electricity as strode to and fro fighting invisible enemies.

Further off, he saw war chariots flying about. As the lightning fell, it pierced through the chariots, and yet they passed through the sheets of lightning as if they weren't even there.

There were cultivators too, locked in magical combat, the sound of which transformed into a call to battle that caused everything to tremble.

On the ground could be seen enormous, 3,000-meter long beasts, as well as cultivators wearing crude, ancient robes. There were also mighty mountains and rivers which seemed to be in a constant state of flux, rising, falling, and changing course with every passing moment.

Most disturbing of all were the illusory cities that popped in and out of existence, a sight that filled the heart with shock.

However, what was more surprising than all of that was what existed in the very center of the valley. After sending his divine sense out to cover everything, Meng Hao was able to see that there in the center… were two mountains!

Except, they weren't actually mountains, but giants! Each giant was fully 300,000 meters tall, with rough skin that was covered in complex magical symbols. Most notable were the stars which could be seen on their foreheads.

Those stars were gray, as if they had lost all life force. Even still, the corpses of these two giants had not rotted away, but instead, had transformed into mountains.

Apparently, some sort of magical technique had been used on them, shrinking them down to only a portion of their true size.

As soon as Meng Hao saw the two giants, and the rest of the dimension, he immediately thought back to the Ruins of Immortality in the Ninth Mountain, to that enormous tree he had seen… and the land mass beneath it… which was the corpse of a giant! 1

The feeling Meng Hao got from the aura of that corpse was very similar to the feeling he got from these two giants. The only difference was the disparity in size.

“Are these… Gods?” Meng Hao flickered into motion, entering into the world of lightning. He walked along casually, expression calm. With every step he took, endless amounts of lightning crashed down, and yet none of it even touched him.

The illusory war chariots sped toward him with a towering desire to fight, but Meng Hao didn’t dodge. He let them come, and they passed right through him.

As he walked along, he saw shocking beasts roaring, giants swinging their fists, and countless other creatures and beings.

He saw corpses beneath his feet. At first most of the corpses were petrified stone, but more and more rotting corpses appeared, until everything was a mass of putrefying flesh.

Soon, he was passing through from the outer region of the Vale of the Godgrave into the central area. None of the illusory entities here had any effect on him.

Neither did the explosive pressure, which felt like nothing more than a cool breeze to him.

Occasionally he would stop in place to observe the illusory fighting going on around him. Often, his eyes would then flicker as if he had gained new enlightenment. After a few days passed, Meng Hao was in the central region of the Vale of the Godgrave, where he caught sight of a corpse.

Although it was buried in the ground beneath his feet, the entire area was being struck by so much lightning that some of the skin had become visible. It was a giant, at least 30,000 meters tall.

Meng Hao knelt down and smacked the ground with the palm of his hand. A boom echoed out, causing the soil in the area to disintegrate and reveal the enormous corpse.

He placed his right hand on top of the giant's head, and in the blink of an eye, the giant's face turned crimson. A moment later, it then turned pale as a drop of blood flew out of its forehead and into Meng Hao's hand.

He looked thoughtfully at the golden drop of blood.

Finally, he shook his head and said, "Too many impurities. Not pure blood." With that, he put the golden drop of blood away and proceeded along. Eventually he reached the very center of the Vale of the Godgrave. This area could be considered a restricted area for cultivators, a place where very few people could ever enter.

Seven days passed, during which time Meng Hao traveled to many places within the Vale of the Godgrave, searching high and low until he had collected fully a hundred drops of impure blood.

He had even inspected the two gigantic corpses, from which he extracted some high quality God blood. However, all of that was not enough to experience the breakthrough he was aiming for.

On the other hand, Yuwen Jian had found his good fortune, and his fleshly body was currently experiencing Heaven-shaking, Earth-toppling transformations.

Meng Hao searched even longer, but couldn't find any more God blood. His face darkened, and he felt disappointed, but at the same time, suspicious.

"I refuse to believe that the Outsiders would have the Vale of the Godgrave so heavily locked down, and yet not send any of their forces inside. There must be Outsiders in here, with the ones on the outside acting as Dharma Protectors.

"Well then, where are they?" Meng Hao flickered into motion, flying up into the air until he reached a high point where he could look down on all the lands below.

What he saw caused him to tremble, and a strange light to shine in his eyes. What he saw was that the lands that comprised the Vale of the Godgrave were actually about the same size as the giant upon whose back had grown the enormous tree in the Ruins of Immortality in the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

In fact, the Vale of the Godgrave was actually a bit larger than that….

However, what was most shocking to Meng Hao was that the shape of the land itself… resembled a face!

The highest mountain was the nose of that face, and the deepest valley was formed by the mouth!

Furthermore, in the forehead position, eight stars were visible, very faint, but still flickering with light! Each one of those stars was emanating fluctuations that caused Meng Hao to tremble. [2]

"That's it!" he said, eyes shining brightly.

2. This footnote contains some spoilers regarding Renegade Immortal. Yes, these are the same ancient Gods referred to in RI. In that novel, the cultivation system is based on stars, and an 8-star God would be somewhat analogous to the Dao Lord or Dao Sovereign level in ISSTH

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# Chapter 1329: Breakthrough!

From such an incredibly high position, Meng Hao could now look down and see the Outsiders. There were three 5-Essences experts among them, surrounded by hosts of other Outsiders. Furthermore, they were not milling about chaotically, but rather, had gathered in three specific areas.

By chance, those three areas happened to be locations on the head of the God, where the stars existed!

Meng Hao spotted Yuwen Jian in another part of the Vale of the Godgrave, trudging along toward a lightning-filled area, where something like a corpse could be seen.

That corpse was profoundly ancient, and if one looked closely enough, one would see that it was actually… the finger of a God!

Perhaps that was the location of Yuwen Jian’s good fortune.

Meng Hao looked away from all of that for a moment. Everything he had seen in this dimension left him profoundly shaken.

This world, this Vale of the Godgrave, was actually a head! The head of a God!

Despite only being the head, Meng Hao could tell that it was even larger than the corpse he had encountered back in the Ruins of Immortality in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. That in and of itself left Meng Hao deeply shaken.

“This… is one of the Outsider… Gods?” His eyes shone with a strange light as he looked down at the enormous land mass which was formed by the head. All of a sudden, he saw images in his mind, a vision of these so-called

Gods, seemingly as tall as the Heavens, whose enormous bodies were virtually impossible to fight back against!

In their hands, planets could be crushed to pieces, and the mere brush of their fingers could wipe cultivators out of existence!

Such unequalled power was completely shocking to Meng Hao, causing the thought of doing battle with beings like this in the future to become even more agonizing than before. At the same time, he refused to be cowed so easily, and felt his heart surging.

“Who cares about these Gods?!

“They can still perish, which means that winning the war against them is still possible. They aren’t invincible!” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered brightly, and his energy rose up, creating a vortex around him which swept out through Heaven and Earth.

“If I can absorb the power of the God’s blood right here and now, then I can achieve a fleshly body breakthrough. I can rise from the peak of the Ancient Realm into the Dao Realm!” Back when he had completely extinguished all five Soul Lamps, the qi and blood which he had built up became stuck in a fleshly body bottleneck, making a breakthrough impossible.

However, once he did achieve a breakthrough, that power would explode out and push him explosively into the Dao Realm.

Meng Hao had been waiting for a long time for this day to arrive. He took a deep breath, and without any further hesitation, made a beeline for the enormous God’s forehead, toward the first star thereupon.

In that location, a huge lake could be seen!

Meng Hao flew like a meteor, causing rumbling sounds to echo out, distorting Heaven and Earth as he passed along. Wind screamed and thunder crashed. Nothing, be it illusory or corporeal, could do anything to hinder his progress.

He pierced through every obstacle, and a brief moment later, he was in the air above the vast lake. Not pausing for a moment, he shot down into the lake itself.

Almost as soon as he entered the water, a massive rumbling sound could be heard. The surrounding land shook violently, and the mountains vibrated as all the lake water shot up into the air, forming something like a column that rose high up into the air and then dispersed into a mist.

Now a crater could be seen down below, deep and filled with faint, flickering light. However, that light was profoundly ancient, and contained an indescribable power of qi and blood.

A strange gleam shone in Meng Hao’s eyes as he shot down toward the center of the crater and then sat down crosslegged. Then he stretched his hands out to either side and slapped them down onto the ground.

RUMBLE!

The ground quaked violently, and the sludge at the bottom of the lake vibrated for a moment before transforming into ash. Numerous crevices appeared in the land, most noticeably beneath Meng Hao. In the center of that crevice could be seen the light of… an enormous… star!!

That star actually spread out to cover the entire area of the lake, and emanated an incredibly ancient aura which began to speed toward Meng Hao. His hair whipped around him, and his clothing flapped wildly. At the same time, a bright light appeared in his eyes as he experienced the sensation of his fleshly body power rising rapidly.

“So it really has been here all along!” Meng Hao lifted his hand up and then chopped it down into the ground. The power of his cultivation base exploded out as he shot, spear-like, down toward the star.

As the ground trembled, Meng Hao frowned and then snorted coldly. The parrot flew out, transforming into the Battle Weapon, which he stabbed down. As he did, the Battle Weapon extended, piercing further down into the earth.

The ground was shaking with unprecedented intensity, as if a soundless roar were echoing out through Heaven and Earth. After Meng Hao pulled the Battle Weapon back up and emerged out of the soil, a drop of golden blood rose up through the gap to float in front of him.

As the blood drop rose up, the land sank and withered, as if it had lost some of its life force. As for the star, it seemed to grow dim.

Meng Hao looked at the golden drop of blood and took a deep breath. Then, without any hesitation, he reached out, grabbed it… and shoved it into his forehead.

RUMBLE!

As soon as the golden blood touched Meng Hao, it coursed into him, filling him with sounds like rumbling thunder. His expression twisted, and he began to tremble as his body experienced Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering transformations.

His heart rate increased dramatically, and his blood pumped rapidly through his system. Even his bones emitted cracking sounds. It was as if he were being reborn, as if his flesh and blood were twisting around each other to pump out more power.

Amidst echoing rumbles, Meng Hao threw his head back and let out an astonishing howl. At the same time, his body grew, and his qi and blood surged. The land around him trembled, and far off in the distance, both Yuwen Jian and the Outsiders could sense a shocking aura which stirred their souls, coming from the direction of Meng Hao.

“This… is the feeling I was going for….” Meng Hao’s eyes were bright red, and a vicious expression could be seen twisting his face. However, a gleam of excitement was visible in his eyes as he felt the level of this fleshly body increasing, and sensed the indications of an imminent breakthrough.

His bones were transforming, becoming stronger and more resilient!

His flesh and blood were experiencing constant advancement, and a terrifying level of power was surging through him. It was a mad power that could destroy vast swaths of land; every beat of his heart sounded like the crash of thunder.

“Still need some more….” By this point, he had grown to nearly thirty meters tall, making him look like a mountain. Every inch of of his flesh exuded a terrifying power.

There were even magical symbols which bulged out all over his skin, radiating an ancient air as his body’s energy rocketed up.

A strange light gleamed in his eyes as he suddenly used the tiniest scrap of cultivation base power, not to teleport, but to leap up into the air. The ground beneath his feet shattered and collapsed in on itself as Meng Hao shot like lightning toward the location of the second star.

It only took a moment for him to bear down on what was a convergence of masses of Outsiders, who were arranged in formation around a violet-horned 5-Essences Outsider.

The second star was actually located in a vast plain. The Outsiders had obviously been here for some time, and had excavated a huge pit, at the bottom of which the violet-horned Outsider sat cross-legged, absorbing the thin strands of blood-colored qi that were seeping up from the dirt.

As he absorbed the blood-colored qi, he slowly became more powerful, and an aura similar to Meng Hao’s was even beginning to build up within him.

It was at this point that rumbling sounds filled Heaven and Earth, and a blur shot through the air at an indescribable speed, heading directly toward the pit in the middle of the plain.

It was none other than Meng Hao!

When he landed, the ground shattered, and countless shocked Outsiders were hit by a powerful shockwave.

Rumbling sounds rose up, along with miserable shrieks, as the shock wave swept over the Outsiders, instantly reducing over a thousand of them into ash.

Further out, the Outsiders who were able to avoid the brunt of the blast coughed up blood, having sustained serious injuries. Some were even sucked down into the collapsing ground.

Meng Hao’s expression was tranquil. Intense pressure radiated off of his thirty-meter frame as he completely ignored the dying Outsiders around him. A red glow could be seen in his eyes as he turned his head to look at the violet-horned Outsider sitting off to the side.

Even as he turned his head, the Outsider’s eyes opened, and without a moment of hesitation, he ceased absorbing the blood-colored qi and shot backward in retreat.

“Think you can just leave?” Meng Hao said with a cold laugh. In the moment that the violet-horned Outsider fell back, Meng Hao suddenly shot forward at incredible speed. In the blink of an eye, he was in front of the Outsider, who suddenly found Meng Hao’s hand gripping his neck.

Even as the Outsider bellowed in rage, the power of Meng Hao’s cultivation base and fleshly body exploded out through his hand. The Outsider tried to fight back, but his resistance was like a blow struck with of a rotting weed. Meng Hao disregarded it completely, and clenched down with his hand.

The Outsider didn’t even have a chance to speak.

A boom could be heard, and the violet-horned Outsider’s eyes bulged. Then, his entire body exploded, and all of the blood-colored qi which he had absorbed spread out, then bored into Meng Hao.

Meng Hao lifted his right foot up into the air and then stamped it down. A boom echoed out as the land shattered, and a drop of golden blood flew up. He quickly grabbed it and pushed it into his forehead.

This was his second drop of God blood, and it was not ordinary God blood, but rather, soul blood!

As it was absorbed into Meng Hao, he threw his head back and roared. His entire body, including his bones, his flesh and blood, and his internal organs, vibrated violently. At this moment, his Ancient Realm fleshly body… broke through!

Intense reverberations echoed out that could shake Heaven and Earth. Meng Hao’s fleshly body power skyrocketed to such an extent that traces of numerous natural laws became visible around him.

They were spreading out from his body, and they directly affected the world around him.

“So, this is a Dao Realm fleshly body?” he said, eyes glittering. He took a deep breath as his body grew once more, this time to 300 meters!

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# Chapter 1330: Dao Lord Fleshly Body!

“I can still get stronger!” Meng Hao suppressed the energy of qi and blood building up inside of him, not permitting it to fuse with his fleshly body. Instead, he looked off into the distance, his eyes gleaming with a bright light.

As he shook his body out to limber it up, cracking sounds echoed out. A terrifying fleshly body power emanated out from him, and Meng Hao could sense that he was already several times stronger than before.

Ignoring the surviving Outsiders in the area, he once again leapt up into the air. The ground beneath him shattered, swallowing up the Outsiders like a giant mouth. Miserable screams echoed out, but then vanished almost immediately. In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao sped through the air toward the location of the third star.

This place was a tall mountain, and as soon as Meng Hao landed there, it shattered and collapsed. A huge crater opened up below, and a drop of golden blood flew up. Meng Hao grabbed it and, without pausing for a moment, absorbed it and then shot toward the fourth star!

He appeared a moment later in the fourth area, where a swamp stretched out in all directions. As soon as he appeared, he slapped his hand down toward the swamp.

The swamp was instantly destroyed, and the God blood concealed deep down below was extracted, shooting into Meng Hao’s forehead.

Meng Hao threw his head back and roared, and rumbling sounds could be heard as he grew even taller, instantly reaching 600 meters. His fleshly body now radiated incredible power; he could tell that he was now at the level of a Dao Lord!

“Dao Lord fleshly body!” Meng Hao licked his lips. The good fortune he was acquiring here was incredible; it was power that could rend the Heavens and crush the Earth! It was as if he were being completely reborn! To him, the Vale of the Godgrave was a place to completely reach a higher level!

He took a deep breath, which caused wind and thunder to scream, and everything to darken. With that, he stamped his foot down, and as the land was destroyed, he suddenly appeared at the location of the fifth star.

There were also Outsiders here, and they seemed prepared to face a powerful enemy. Their cultivation bases exploded with power, sending the entire area into chaos, exerting incredible pressure with a wide array of magical techniques and divine abilities. Numerous shocking shields surrounded a wizened 5-Essences Outsider, who was sitting there cross-legged, absorbing vast quantities of qi and blood. As he did so, his gaunt frame radiated an increasingly terrifying power.

Even as Meng Hao closed in, rumbling sounds could be heard as the Outsider’s fleshly body suddenly broke through to the Dao Realm!!

Only the best of the best among the Outsiders had been sent into this place to acquire the good fortune of God blood, to increase their fleshly bodies to incredible levels.

The Outsider experienced the fleshly body breakthrough at almost the same moment that Meng Hao arrived. When Meng Hao landed, the ground shattered, blasting away in layers as a boundlessly domineering air spread out. All of the Outsiders’ divine abilities and magical techniques were shattered as a massive windstorm kicked up. Miserable screams rang out as the vast majority of the Outsiders, unable to stand up to the power, were killed.

Meng Hao turned and reached a claw-like hand out toward the wizened Outsider. However, in that same moment, the Outsider opened his eyes, which shone with brilliant light. He shot backwards, simultaneously unleashing a fist strike to meet Meng Hao’s palm.

A boom rang out. Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever, but the Outsider coughed up a mouthful of blood, and a shocked expression appeared on his face. He immediately began to retreat at top speed.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered coldly as he looked at the fleeing Outsider. Having sensed the level of his opponent’s fleshly body, he chuckled coldly, then unleashed his own fist strike!

The Life-Extermination Fist!

This version of the Life-Extermination Fist was completely different than the one he had been able to unleash before. Instantly, all of the life force in the surrounding 30,000-meter area was sucked away.

A 30,000-meter area became a field of death!

The Outsider let out a wretched shriek, and attempted to fight back. However, his life force was inexorably sucked away. Soon, the entire area had absolutely no life force in it, almost as if the natural laws in the area had been changed, as if… life was incompatible with this area!

All of the pressure of this field of death weighed down onto the Outsider; rumbling sounds could be heard as he let out a bloodcurdling scream, and then exploded!

As he exploded, his qi and blood dissipated. However, the bits of God blood within him shot toward Meng Hao, boring into him as if he were the lodestone of all God blood.

Rumbling echoed out from inside of him as he grew even taller, and the power of his fleshly body increased until it was very close to the 4-Essences level. Then he flickered, shooting like lightning toward the location of the six star.

As Meng Hao sped along, this part of the Vale of the Godgrave began to collapse, as if he were taking away whatever power it was that supported the head, as if the existence of this part of the dimension was now completely meaningless.

Rumbling could be heard as the collapse spread. By that time, Meng Hao was at the location of the sixth star.

Here could be seen another huge lake, except that instead of water, it was filled with lightning!

As Meng Hao neared, the power of that lightning exploded out, converging together and surging toward him as if to overwhelm him.

“Eee…?” Meng Hao said. Eyes flashing, he looked at the lake of lighting, and did nothing to avoid it. Instead, he plunged into the middle of it all. Rumbling could be heard as the lightning slammed into him. He shook his arms and legs, and the lightning collapsed.

However, it seemed endless, slamming into him relentlessly, over and over again. Meng Hao snorted coldly, then clenched his right hand into a fist and unleashed a fist strike onto the ground directly beneath the lake of lightning.

It was not the Life-Extermination fist, it was the Bedevilment Fist!

The Bedevilment Fist had been unleashed onto the land!

The ground trembled, and crevices spread out. Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with a red glow, and his cultivation base rotated madly. Combined with the power of his fleshly body, it put his energy… at something past what Lord White had been. In fact, it was no weaker than Ksitigarbha. This was the power of… a 6-Essences Dao Sovereign!

Rumbling rose up, and the ground collapsed. A gigantic crater appeared that was far larger than any of the previous craters, and the lake of lighting was completely swallowed up!

Since the troublesome lake of lightning was attempting to block his progress just like the land was, Meng Hao decided to wipe them both away simultaneously!

The lake of lightning faded away, and Meng Hao lifted his right hand, causing a golden drop of blood to rise up from the lands below, which he grabbed.

Almost as soon as he touched the golden blood, a roar of rage suddenly seemed to echo out from down below.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. Even as the roar echoed out, he pushed the golden blood into his forehead. A tremor ran through him, and the signs of an imminent breakthrough once again erupted out.

Rumbling sounds echoed out as Meng Hao grew to a size of, not 600 meters, but 1,200 meters. He threw his head back and roared, causing all light to dim. Ignoring the roar of rage directed against him, he shot toward the area with the seventh star.

That location was covered by a dense forest, much of which had already been felled by the more than 10,000 Outsiders in the area. Moments ago, all of them had been in the midst of kowtowing in the direction of a huge crater, in the middle of which was an aged Outsider with dull scales. He sat there cross-legged, constantly absorbing the blood-colored qi from the ground.

As of this point, his relentless absorption seemed to have drained the area of at least ninety percent of the qi there.

In the same moment that Meng Hao destroyed the lake of lightning, this Outsider Patriarch’s eyes snapped open, and they radiated with ancient and boundless cruelty. Suddenly, he said, “Sacrifice!”

As the words left his mouth, the surrounding Outsiders unhesitatingly… unleashed their cultivation bases in order to self-detonate!

The self-detonation of over 10,000 Outsiders created a towering force, which then transformed into a blinding light that obliterated everything in a 5,000 meter radius. At the same time, much of that power was absorbed by the Outsider Patriarch by means of some unknown technique.

Meng Hao arrived in almost the exact moment that all the Outsiders self-detonated. The blast itself would have seriously injured him were it not for the fact that his fleshly body had just experienced a breakthrough into the 5-Essences level.

Even as Meng Hao closed in, a figure shot up from within the blast of the self-detonations, slamming a fist into Meng Hao's chest.

Meng Hao lurched to a stop, a strange glow in his eyes. However, he didn't retreat, but instead advanced, slamming forward in an attack. A muffled grunt rang out from the mouth of the shadowy figure who had just attacked him, and Meng Hao laughed coldly as he went in for another attack.

Massive crashing booms rang out as the two of them exchanged hundreds of blows. Soon, the shadows which cloaked the figure began to slip away, revealing the Outsider Patriarch.

By this point, however, he didn't seem as old as he had before. He had more life force, and his fleshly body power, which was at the Dao Lord level, when combined with this 5-Essences cultivation base, made him similar to a Dao Sovereign!

"No wonder you chose the Seventh Mountain and Sea…. Lord White turned traitor, plus you planned to use this place… to produce three experts on the level of a Dao Sovereign." Meng Hao's eyes flickered with the realization that, if he hadn't come here for the same purpose as these Outsiders, and arrived just in the nick of time, then they would have succeeded in their efforts, which would have been a catastrophe for the Mountain and Sea Realm.

The Outsider Patriarch's eyes flickered with killing intent, and yet inwardly, he was afraid, and backed up. He knew that he was not a match for Meng

Hao, and therefore, since he couldn’t get any more God blood from this area, he decided that he might as well just leave.

Even as he began to back away, killing intent flared within Meng Hao’s eyes, and he flickered into motion towards the old Outsider.

The Outsider Patriarch laughed derisively as he raised his right hand up into the air and made a ripping motion, causing a huge rift to be torn open in the sky. “If I feel like leaving, nobody but a Paragon can stop me!”

Instantly, he shot toward that exit rift at top speed.

At the exact same time, a power of emptiness suddenly erupted out from him. It was none other than Essence power!

“Essence of emptiness!” the old Outsider said slowly. “Heaven and Earth are not real. Nothing under a Paragon can stop my teleportation magic.” With that, he began to fade away into the rift.

A moment later, Meng Hao’s attack reached him, and it passed directly through him.

“Well, isn’t this interesting,” Meng Hao said, eyes flickering. He attacked again, but this time he performed an incantation gesture and then pointed up toward the Heavens.

“Demon Sealing Hexing magic, hex this dimension! Eighth Hex!

“Seventh Hex!

“Sixth Hex!

“Fifth Hex!

“Third Hex!

“Second Hex!

“Let’s see how you get away now!” The entire dimension was shaking in response to the wave of Meng Hao’s finger. It was at this point that the Outsider Patriarch’s face completely fell.

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# Chapter 1331: God Curse!

The Eighth Hex ceased all movement in the dimension. Everything went still and quiet. As for the Seventh Hex, it sealed the dimension's cycle of Karma, freezing it within all memories.

The Sixth Hex locked down life and death, replacing reincarnation, making the entire dimension like a tree without roots.

The Fifth Hex threw everything into chaos. Inside became out, the universe twisted, Heaven and Earth went dark, and all light faded!

The Third Hex caused the river of time in the dimension to slow to a halt. Time had no boundaries, no limits, no end, and yet the flow of time was stopped.

The Second Hex caused the emptiness to become reality!

Amidst massive rumbling sounds, the Outsider's face fell, and his body was forced out of its illusory state. The entire dimension went quiet as Heaven and Earth were sealed.

As he appeared in the flesh, the Outsider was shocked to find that he couldn't move. He was only able to hover there, motionless, his heart overwhelmed with fear as he looked at Meng Hao.

"What magical technique is this…? This isn't full Essence, but it contains the power of Essence. Furthermore… if this becomes true Essence, then this person… he'll… he'll….

"He has the foundation of a Paragon!! His fleshly body is already at the 5-Essences level, and with a cultivation base foundation like this… he….

“If this kid isn’t stopped, he’s definitely going to become a Paragon!”

Even as the Outsider reeled in astonishment, Meng Hao advanced with lightning-like speed. As he did, he extended his index finger, which stabbed into the Outsider’s forehead. Despair and rage boiled up in the Outsider’s eyes, and then, his life force was exterminated.

In the moment that the flame of his life force was snuffed out, the Outsider’s true form became visible in front of Meng Hao: a 3,000-meter-long lizard.

The lizard radiated an aura of death, but that couldn’t cover over his incredible ancientness. It was impossible to tell how many countless years this Outsider had lived, and yet, even as his lizard body trembled, a drop of golden blood appeared on his forehead.

Within that golden blood were flecks of black, which were vile impurities from the Outsider himself. Meng Hao waved his hand, causing the golden blood to begin to burn. After the impurities were expunged, the golden blood flew toward Meng Hao and fused into his forehead.

Rumbling sounds could be heard as Meng Hao grew taller. Although the growth wasn’t very dramatic, the power his fleshly body radiated was more terrifying than ever. Everything around him distorted, as if the natural laws were being expelled. At the same time… a burst of 5-Essences fleshly body power erupted from within him.

“Almost at the 6-Essences level!!” Madness gleamed in Meng Hao’s eyes. 6-Essences was the peak of the Dao Sovereign level. For a long time, Meng Hao’s fleshly body had been one Realm higher than his cultivation base. However, it had eventually become stuck between the Ancient Realm and the Dao Realm. Without God blood, that was a difficult gap to bridge.

But now, he was able to reach a Dao Sovereign fleshly body in one fell swoop. Because of that, Meng Hao’s battle prowess was virtually incomprehensible. Now, he was now in a position to actually tangle with Paragons!

As of this moment, he truly was the most powerful expert in the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Meng Hao took a deep breath as he released the dimension from the grips of the Hexing magic. To seal an entire world in this way was not something he could sustain for more than a few breaths of time. Even still, it was something completely Heaven-defying.

Meng Hao could now clearly sense that his cultivation base and battle prowess were far beyond what they had been when the war had started. He was now incredibly powerful!

Rumbling sounds could be heard as Meng Hao shot toward the region of the final star.

This area was different from all of the other areas.

It was not a mountain peak, not a plain, not a lake, but rather… an enormous statue!

A boundless mist covered the statue, which depicted a middle-aged man, standing atop a star. He was dignified and imposing, with a river of stars in his right hand, and a barbaric and domineering aura.

As Meng Hao closed in, the statue’s aura suddenly erupted into chaos, causing the mist to churn. At the same time, the statue’s eyes suddenly turned golden.

The statue’s eyes radiated explosive light, and its voice was matchlessly cold and sinister as it said, “Those not of the God Clan may not possess God blood! Anyone who steals God blood will be cursed for all time by the Gods, and will be exterminated!”

A majestic divine will erupted from the statue, a wave of hatred that swept out in all directions, enveloping everything, including Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s face fell as the divine will swept over him, distorting everything in the world. It was as if the power of time travel were being unleashed, as if everything were becoming illusory. In the blink of an eye, everything became clear again, and the world from before was gone.

There was no statue, no Vale of the Godgrave, no… Mountain and Sea Realm!

Stretching out in front of him was an endless starry sky, within which floated an enormous, shocking land mass, so large that it seemed comparable to the starry sky itself.

Thousands of other smaller land masses floated beneath that main enormous land mass, upon which a war was raging. The flames of combat burned, and the sounds of fierce fighting rang out. Divine abilities thundered, giving rise to massive waves of sound.

“This….” Meng Hao’s mind was reeling as he looked at the huge continent. Although this was his first time seeing it in this specific way, there was a voice calling out from within his blood telling him that this was… the Paragon Immortal Realm!

Rumbling could be heard, and Meng Hao spotted a giant. It was huge, almost as big as the entire land mass, and behind it were more giants, all striding forward.

The giants were so terrifying that the single sweep of a fist could slay a thousand cultivators, and the wave of a finger could destroy the Heavens and extinguish the Earth.

The land masses that were the Lower Realms shattered one after another, but at the same time, the Paragon Immortal Realm was trembling violently. Fissures of destruction spread out, and yet the Paragon Immortal Realm continued to fight back violently.

God blood rained out of the heavens as the giant Gods were felled. Meng Hao’s mind was reeling as he saw one of the Gods, who had eight stars on its head, suddenly turn to look at him.

For some reason, this God’s facial features seemed familiar. Meng Hao’s pupils constricted, and his mind rumbled as he realized… that it was the exact same God whose head made up the Vale of the Godgrave.

“God Curse….” murmured the 8-star God, killing intent flickering in his eyes. He suddenly veered out of the ranks of his fellows, bursting through the surrounding cultivators to head in Meng Hao’s direction. Meng Hao was some distance away, but because of the enormity of the God, it was almost impossible to seem him clearly with one glance. For someone that huge, it only took one step to reach Meng Hao!

He strode across the entire starry sky to appear right in front of Meng Hao. A screaming sound could be heard, like a wild wind that caused heavenly bodies to tremble…. And that was merely the God raising its hand. Its index finger extended, causing powerful ripples to spread out in all directions as it pierced through the starry sky.

Rumbling sounds echoed out from the boundless destructive power emanating out from that enormous finger. It completely filled Meng Hao’s field of vision, cutting off the starry sky, cutting off the entire world.

An intense sensation of deadly crisis exploded up within Meng Hao, a sensation which seemed completely realistic. It didn’t matter than Meng Hao had his Real-Unreal Hexing; to him, this felt absolutely real, and not false!

“But… that’s impossible!!” he thought. “What magical technique is this? This can’t be real! This is an ancient war, and even if I was sent here somehow, it would be as an observer. My real body couldn’t be here!” Meng Hao’s face flickered, but there was no time to consider the situation at length. As the finger closed in on him, he shot backward, unleashing the full power of his cultivation base and fleshly body. Unfortunately, all of that was useless!

In the critical moment, Meng Hao then performed an incantation gesture and unleashed Demon Sealing Hexing magic!

He didn’t utilize all of the Hexes, but rather… the most powerful… Third Hex!

Present-Ancient Hexing!

The Dao of Time was unleashed, causing Meng Hao’s body to blur. He suddenly seemed to fade into the river of time, and the incoming finger passed through him.

A boom rang out, and blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth. He felt himself weakening to the point where he was about to collapse into pieces. However, the Green Emperor’s Eternal Incantation helped him recover, and he fell back at top speed, eyes glittering.

“It’s real, and also not real… illusory, and yet not illusory. It’s a dreamscape!! If you die in a dream, you can die in real life!” Having received inspiration in the nick of time, he suddenly extended his hand. Without any hesitation, he performed an incantation gesture to unleash Karmic Hexing, then touched his own forehead.

Instantly, his Karma Threads appeared. Among the hosts of threads, he found one that looked different than the rest, the one that had appeared after absorbing the God blood, the Karma Thread connecting him to this God!

The God might be dead, but because of the connection of this Karma, he was still able to unleash his Daoist magic.

Meng Hao grabbed ahold of the Karma Thread, and was just about to rip it apart, when the God suddenly looked at him. He had no time to attack, so instead, he opened his mouth and roared in Meng Hao’s direction!

The roar of a God!

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

The roar shattered everything between the God and Meng Hao. An incredible power of extermination roared toward him, inundating him. In that same moment, Meng Hao snapped the Karma Thread.

RUMBLE!

Everything went dark. Time passed. Eventually, things grew clear again, and Meng Hao was no longer in that ancient starry sky. He was back in the Vale of the Godgrave.

The golden light in the eyes of the statue had faded away, and yet, an unyielding roar could be heard echoing about as the statue collapsed.

Meng Hao’s face darkened, and he coughed up a mouthful of blood. He was rapidly recovering, but even simply thinking about the danger he had just been in left him trembling.

“Not willing to let me steal the God blood huh…?” Meng Hao looked at the shattered statue, and could sense that the God blood which had been there before was now gone. That very blood was what had been used to fuel the divine ability which had transported him back to ancient times.

Meng Hao began to chuckle coldly, then waved his sleeve. Killing intent sprang up in his eyes.

“Well, even without the eighth drop of God blood, I can still… acquire a Dao Sovereign fleshly body!”

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# Chapter 1332: Extinguishing the Sixth Lamp!

Meng Hao’s voice echoed out into the crumbling remains of the dimension. Because the eight regions where the stars were located had collapsed, the entire world was falling to pieces.

The land sank in, and an enraged roar filled the air. Lightning continued to crash constantly, as if the end of days had arrived.

As for Meng Hao, he floated there slowly in the air, neither touching the land nor rising high up into the sky. His hair floated around him, and his clothes rippled. At the same time, a bizarre light shone within his eyes.

“It’s time to converge… the qi and blood that I built up when extinguishing my Soul Lamps!” He swished his sleeve, then tapped his right index finger onto his chest.

That motion seemed to open up a stoppered hole of qi and blood inside of him. Rumbling echoed out, along with a furious sea of qi and blood power that exploded out ferociously.

His physical frame, which was now hundreds of meters tall, looked even more majestic than before. At the same time, his fleshly body power rose rapidly. Although it didn’t experience the same increase it had when absorbing God blood, it was still incredibly powerful.

His heart began to beat faster and faster. His bones became stronger and more resilient. His flesh and blood buzzed with power, and increasingly intense rumbling sounds filled him.

As of this moment, the level of his fleshly body increased yet again, passing into the mid 5-Essences level.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he lifted up his right hand again, this time pressing down onto his forehead. Rumbling could be heard as the second wave of qi and blood hidden within him burst out, filling him completely and causing his fleshly body power to rocket up.

“Still not enough!” He performed an incantation gesture with his right hand and then pressed down onto his dantian. Qi and blood power erupted out, surging through him. He grew larger and larger; by now, he was nearly 1,800 meters tall, and was terrifying to behold.

By now, his fleshly body was in the late 5-Essences level.

“I still have two batches of reserve power to unleash,” he said, eyes shining brightly. He had qi and blood built up from five extinguished Soul Lamps, and so far, had unleashed three of those batches. Now, it was without any hesitation that he performed an incantation gesture and pushed down on the top of his head.

Rumbling sounds echoed out, and Meng Hao’s vision swam. At the same time, an incredible power of qi and blood exploded from the top of his head. As it filled his body, he threw his head back and howled. He grew taller, reaching 2,100 meters in height. He was trembling, his flesh and blood felt as if it would split apart, and his heart seemed to be on the verge of exploding.

Heaven and Earth twisted, and the air around him trembled as a violent aura expanded out.

As of this moment, Meng Hao’s fleshly body strength was equivalent to the peak of the 5-Essences level. He was only a step away… from being at the 6-Essences Dao Sovereign level!

Once that happened, and he combined his fleshly body power with that of his cultivation base, his explosive battle prowess would put him at the peak of the Dao Sovereign level. Although he couldn’t be considered half a step into the Paragon level, he would be very close to that!

“Last one!” he roared. Performing a double-handed incantation gesture, he simultaneously pushed down onto his chest and dantian. All of his power was unleashed, and it surged through him like an ocean.

He was now 2,400 meters tall. At the same time, his skin ripped and tore, causing blood to shower down. Pain blasted through him, and were it not for his incredible willpower, he would definitely be unable to endure.

He let out an intense howl as he reached 2,700 meters in height. The sensation of power that completely filled him left Meng Hao convinced that if he faced Lord White right now… he could defeat him with a single punch!

One punch could shake the starry sky. One punch could shatter heavenly bodies. One punch… could kill Mountain and Sea Lords!

Heaven and Earth were filled with rumbling sounds, and the dimension shook violently. Meng Hao could now sense… a Dao!!

It was the Dao of power, a Dao of Heaven and Earth, something that he could just barely touch….

However, he was still in the 5-Essences level. He was able to sense that his fleshly body was still not in the 6-Essences level. Were it in the 6-Essences level, he wouldn’t just be touching that Dao, he would be grabbing onto it!

Only with power like that could he stand in the presence of a 7-Essences Paragon and be qualified to remain alive. In fact, he might even be able to strike fear into the heart of such a Paragon!

“I can’t believe a 6-Essences fleshly body is so difficult to attain…. However, the words already left my mouth. I’m definitely going to acquire a peak Dao Sovereign fleshly body!”

RUMBLE!

As the qi and blood power coursed through him, Meng Hao's body experienced continuous growth. By this point, he was fully… 2,997 meters tall!

It was a gap of only three meters, but that gap was like the difference between Heaven and Earth. That small gap of three meters would be as difficult to cross as the preceding 2,997 meters! 1

"Ancient Lamps, come forth!!" Meng Hao eyes shone with a gleam of madness as he waved his sleeve, causing the air around him to vibrate as 33 Soul Lamps suddenly appeared.

5 were extinguished, 28 were burning. The light cast upon Meng Hao made him look like an Immortal Divinity. He swished his sleeve, eyes coming to rest on the 6th of the Soul Lamps.

"I've already passed the First of the Seven Desolations. Next is the Second Desolation, that of the fleshly body. I should be at the point of being able to extinguish this 6th lamp!" Eyes gleaming with determination, and not hesitating for even a moment, he waved his hand toward the 6th Soul Lamp.

"Extinguish!"

His divine will erupted, and rumbling sounds could be heard as the 6th Soul Lamp went out. Instantly, vast quantities of green smoke appeared, which Meng Hao instantly absorbed.

In the moment that the smoke entered his body, he began to shake. He suddenly felt as if his body were corroding. However, the intense withering sensation caused Meng Hao to smile.

There was pain, but he had experienced worse pain than this in the past.

Usually, the Seven Desolations were something that would be passed with extreme caution in secluded meditation, with a Dharma Protector on the outside. However, as of this moment, Meng Hao was quite confident in being able to pass the first tribulation within the Second Desolation.

His fleshly body was so incredibly powerful that the Fleshly Body Desolation couldn’t shake it at all. His body continued to corrode, and his marrow vanished. It was as if there were a black hole inside of him sucking away at him, causing him to constantly wither.

However, the withering didn’t bother him at all.

By this point, the dimension around him was crumbling completely. The lands were shattered, Heaven and Earth destroyed. The Vale of the Godgrave was falling apart. Meng Hao took a deep breath; the withering of his flesh could do absolutely nothing to harm the power of his cultivation base and fleshly body. He reached his right hand out and made a grasping motion, grabbing onto Yuwen Jian. Then, he flickered into motion, crossing through the air to suddenly appear outside the Vale of the Godgrave, in the starry sky of the Seventh Mountain and Sea.

Almost as soon as he appeared outside, the power of tribulation rumbled down, which was none other than the fleshly body Dao Tribulation that came when one’s fleshly body stepped into the Dao!

However, there was something strange about the tribulation. Because of the war between the Mountain and Sea Realm and the 1st Heaven, or perhaps because of the mere presence of the 1st Heaven, the Dao Realm Tribulation didn’t come!

Meng Hao frowned, pondered the situation for a moment, but then put the matter aside. Because of his current fleshly body, transcending tribulation wouldn’t be difficult for him anyway, not even with the Second Desolation inside of him.

Behind him, the altar that was the entrance to the Vale of the Godgrave cracked and then fell apart. The dimension which contained the Vale transformed into nothing more than ash.

Yuwen Jian was unconscious, but he pulsed with the aura of God blood. Even more noteworthy was that his index finger was now different than it had been before, and contained terrifying fluctuations.

“So that is the good fortune he sought,” Meng Hao thought. Looking away, he flicked his sleeve, vanishing along with Yuwen Jian. When he reappeared, he was back on Planet Tiger Cage. After delivering Yuwen Jian to the cultivators there, he left. With a final glance at the planet, he flashed out into the starry sky.

He could clearly sense the terrifying fleshly body power inside of him, which vastly exceeded what he could unleash before. As he traveled along through the starry sky, he clenched his hands into fists, and everything around him trembled as powerful ripples spread out.

“The Desolation will continue for a bit longer… then it will end.” Based on Meng Hao’s current trajectory, it was obvious that his destination was the Fourth Mountain and Sea.

He had a burning desire to see Xu Qing. After he did, he would then attempt to accomplish something that would rock the Mountain and Sea Realm, as well as all of the 33 Heavens!

If he succeeded, the spirit of the Mountain and Sea Realm would rise, and his name would spread throughout the 33 Heavens. Then, everyone would know that in the Mountain and Sea Realm, there was a cultivator named… Meng Hao!

He looked up into the starry sky, then proceeded along, a beam of brilliant light that shot off into the distance. Soon, he was closing in on the barrier that separated the Seventh and Sixth Mountains and Seas. To Meng Hao, that barrier wasn’t even worth mentioning. He pierced through, almost immediately finding an exit, which he blasted through to enter the Sixth Mountain and Sea.

This was his first time in the Sixth Mountain and Sea, and although he was not familiar with the place, there was definitely an aura here that was very familiar. That was… the aura of Outsiders!

Similar to the Seventh Mountain and Sea, the Sixth Mountain and Sea had been almost fully occupied by the Outsiders.

As he entered this Mountain and Sea, Meng Hao’s body withered up even more, and he looked even more gaunt. However, his battle prowess was no less than before, and in fact, was increasing. The end of the Desolation was approaching!

When that happened, his fleshly body power would erupt, and he would fully enter the Dao Sovereign fleshly body level!

By now, he wasn’t even paying attention to the Desolation. He sent his divine sense out into the starry sky, and could almost immediately detect countless black cubes. There was still fighting going on here, most especially in one particular region, where a truly bizarre conflict was underway.

There could be seen a middle-aged man in a long violet robe. Red light swirled around him, and his eyes were closed. His face was pale, as if he had been seriously injured, and he sat there cross-legged and completely motionless.

Outside of the shield which protected him was an Outsider, who was currently attempting to break down the shield. Assisting the Outsider was an old man. The old man’s expression was tranquil, but when he looked at the other man inside the shield, his eyes flickered with avarice.

Meng Hao recognized this Outsider. It was one of the incarnations of that Outsider Dao Sovereign!

And this version was clearly a clone!

As for the old man assisting him, he was emanating a remnant of the power of the Mountains and Seas, ensuring that Meng Hao could instantly identify him.

This man was a traitor, just like Lord White had been. He was… the Lord of the Sixth Mountain and Sea!

1. 2997 meters is 999 zhang. The final gap is only 1 zhang

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# Chapter 1333: Was I So Wrong?

The Lord of the Sixth Mountain and Sea looked at the violet-robed man behind the shield and coolly said, “Lord Wu, you must surely know you can’t succeed. Why keep trying?” 1

Off to the side, the Outsider Dao Sovereign’s clone smiled, and a flicker of derision appeared in his eyes.

The violet-robed man inside the shield, Lord Wu, didn’t respond. His eyes were tightly shut, and his face was pale white. Based on the cultivation base power swirling within him, he was obviously trying to achieve a breakthrough.

Earlier, he had been fighting with the Lord of the Sixth Mountain and Sea, and the two of them were evenly matched. But then the Outsider Dao Sovereign’s clone suddenly appeared and, when he joined forces with the Lord of the Sixth Mountain and Sea, they were just too powerful. Lord Wu had been forced to put his own status as Lord of the Fifth Mountain and Sea on the line; he had shattered his Mountain and Sea crown to create the shield which was currently keeping him safe. Then he took advantage of the brief respite from the fighting to attempt to force a breakthrough.

He knew that the only way to be able to continue fighting would be to break through from the 5-Essences level to 6-Essences. If he couldn’t… then the Mountain and Sea shield he created would eventually fail, and he would be at their mercy.

Now that he was inside the shield, he had few options. In fact, he was trapped, and the Lord of the Sixth Mountain and Sea and the Outsider Dao Sovereign clone had far too many methods of slowly refining him.

In fact, that was exactly what they were doing right now. Black flames emanated off of the clone, surrounding the shield. The raging inferno caused cracking sounds to ring out; Lord Wu was slowly being refined into a medicinal pill.

The Lord of the Sixth Mountain and Sea laughed. “You might have destroyed your Mountain and Sea crown, but you’re still a Mountain and Sea Lord. After refining you into a Mountain and Sea pill, I’ll consume you and once again be able to wield the power of the Mountains and Seas!”

As soon as the 1st Heaven descended, he had been stripped of his status as a Mountain and Sea Lord. However, if he could consume Lord Wu, then he would once again be able to unleash Mountain and Sea power!

When Lord Wu continued to ignore him, the Lord of the Sixth Mountain and Sea gave a cold snort. “Stubborn fool!”

Lord Wu’s eyes snapped open, and he glowered at the old man. “I might be a stubborn fool, but that’s better than being like you… a traitor to the Mountain and Sea Realm!”

During the course of their battle, it had become clear that the Lord of the Sixth Mountain and Sea was not an Outsider, but rather, was a cultivator of the Mountains and Seas!

When the Lord White of the Seventh Mountain and Sea defected, that was a completely different matter. He was an Outsider in disguise, who had plotted and schemed his way into his position. The Lord of the Sixth Mountain and Sea, however, was a complete and utter traitor!

“Traitor?” The Lord of the Sixth Mountain and Sea stood there quietly for a moment, then threw his head back and laughed. It was a sinister laugh, filled with madness and obsession. “That’s right, I am a traitor. So what?!

“Considering my latent talent and good fortune, if I hadn’t been born in the Mountain and Sea Realm, and hadn’t been held back by my status and bloodline, then I could have long since stepped into the 6-Essences level. In fact, I might even be a Paragon!

“I’ve practiced cultivation for 33,000 years. I’m a Mountain and Sea Lord at the peak of the 5-Essences level. Yet what does that get me?

“The Mountain and Sea Realm is sealed by the 33 Heavens, cursed. Held back! The highest cultivation base is the peak of the 5-Essences level. Was turning traitor for the purposes of increasing my cultivation base really so wrong?

“Cultivators practice cultivation for themselves. Who cares about one’s family and one’s people? Everything can be cast aside in the pursuit of a great Dao. To further my cultivation, I cast off all past Karmic ties!

“Besides, the Mountain and Sea Realm… can’t possibly win this war. A wise man submits to the circumstances. Can you really find fault with my choice?” As the Lord of the Sixth Mountain and Sea spoke, his voice grew louder and louder until he was shouting. It was almost as if he wasn’t speaking to the violet-robed Lord Wu, but rather, himself.

The Outsider clone stood off to the side, laughing, and the scorn in his eyes grew deeper. Apparently, that scorn was directed, not just at Lord Wu, but also at the Lord of the Sixth Mountain and Sea.

The Lord Wu looked at the Lord of the Sixth Mountain and Sea, the pain in his heart visible on his face. “With our home gone and our people gone,” he said, “what is the point of existing?”

He had known the Lord of the Sixth Mountain and Sea for ten thousand years, and had considered him a close friend. And yet, this was how things were ending.

“You say we’re sealed, and that’s true,” he continued, “but that doesn’t mean we’re without options. Look at Ksitigarbha! He’s the perfect example!”

“Ksitigarbha? He controls reincarnation. The Fourth Mountain is unique. That’s the only way he can sidestep the sealing of the 33 Heavens, by means of the power of reincarnation. Considering he has his own Dao, he can even step into the Daosource!

“In all of the Mountain and Sea Realm, who can do that besides him? Nobody! Not a single person can step into the true Dao Sovereign level!

“Well, there are those old-timers, but their qi and blood is on the decline, and they can only explode with power by harming their longevity. What good is that?!

“As for me, I will leave the Mountain and Sea Realm. I will become a cultivator of the 33 Heavens. I might lose my position and my freedom, but… at least I will have a great Dao!

“It won’t take long. In a few thousand years, when the Mountain and Sea Realm is gone, I will still be here. At the very least, I’ll be a true Dao Sovereign, but if luck is with me, I might be a Paragon! I will definitely have an important place in the 33 Heavens!” The Lord of the Sixth Mountain and Sea began to laugh loudly.

Lord Wu could only look on bitterly. No matter how rapidly his cultivation base rotated, the gap separating him from the 6-Essences level was too great.

Actually, this was not the first time he had faced such a situation. It was over 10,000 years ago that he had first reached the point of being able to break through. However, despite trying on multiple occasions to do so, he had always failed.

Even now, when everything was at stake, when he was stuck in a corner, he was still unable to force his cultivation base past that point. The sealing of the 33 Heavens was always there, radiating invisible pressure, which of course was why they were so arrogant.

The Outsider clone laughed heartily, a laughter filled with cruelty and scorn. He loved being able to watch two Mountain and Sea Lords in such a mutually destructive scenario. One had turned traitor, the other was trying to break through. He just loved it!

In the past, Immortals had always seemed so aloof and remote. But now, he could cause them to live or die on a whim. It was a wonderful feeling, and he couldn’t get enough of it.

Laughing, the Outsider Dao Sovereign’s clone turned to the Lord of the Sixth Mountain and Sea and said, “All cultivators who capitulate to the 33 Heavens will be qualified to make cultivation base breakthroughs. Fellow Daoist Cang, perhaps it won’t be too long before you’re on equal footing with me. 2

“Finish refining this man and then consume the resulting Mountain and Sea pill. Help us to wipe out the rest of the Mountain and Sea Lords. That will earn you quite a bit of merit.”

The Lord of the Sixth Mountain and Sea, Lord Cang, took a deep breath. Then, it was with excitement and other mixed emotions that he clasped hands and bowed to the Outsider.

More cracking sounds could be heard as rips and tears spread out across Lord Wu’s shield. He then began to laugh bitterly as he realized that he had failed once again.

“Like I said, there is no way you can succeed,” Lord Cang said coldly. “What a stubborn fool. Other than Ksitigarbha, nobody in the Mountain and Sea Realm can become a true Dao Sovereign!” With that, he swished his sleeve, apparently ready to begin consuming Lord Wu.

However, even as the words he had just spoken continued to echo out, a cold voice suddenly spread through the starry sky.

“You think that Ksitigarbha is the only one who can become a true Dao Sovereign?”

The voice came as a complete surprise to Lord Cang, and even the Outsider clone, neither of whom had sensed anyone approaching. The Outsider Dao Sovereign’s jaw dropped, and he turned his head.

Lord Cang’s eyes went wide. Cultivation base rumbling, he spun around.

Even Lord Wu suddenly looked up.

The gazes of all three immediately locked onto a figure who was approaching through the starry sky.

It was a handsome young man in a long green robe, with flowing hair. He almost didn’t look like a cultivator, but rather, a scholar. In fact, if he were wearing a scholar’s traveling case, people would most likely think he was on his way to the Imperial examinations.

It was none other than Meng Hao!

As he approached, no ripples spread out into the starry sky. And yet, naturals laws were wiped clean as he passed, and an indescribable pressure radiated off of him.

He almost seemed like an enormous ocean, backed by huge waves which could crush down on anything.

The first one to recognize him was the Outsider Dao Sovereign, whose face flickered as he said, “Meng Hao!”

In the entire Mountain and Sea Realm, the only person he feared, other than Paragon Sea Dream and Ksitigarbha… was this very person. Meng Hao!

Back on the Eighth Mountain, one of his other clones had been killed by the combined efforts of Meng Hao and the Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

As for Lord Cang, this was his first time ever laying eyes onto Meng Hao. After sensing the fluctuations of Meng Hao’s cultivation base, his eyes narrowed. “Peak of 5-Essences?”

Although Meng Hao was not a Mountain and Sea Lord, he still had the power of the Mountains and Seas on him. And despite his lack of Essences, Lord Cang’s senses were telling him that Meng Hao was at the peak of 5-Essences.

In the moment that Meng Hao appeared, the Outsider’s eyes flickered with killing intent, and he could sense the towering murderous aura emanating off of him.

It was a murderous aura that no one else would be able to detect, a murderous aura directed… at Outsiders!!

The only way to disperse such a murderous aura was… to kill countless numbers of Outsiders!

“Are you looking to die!?” the clone said. Leaping into action, he performing an incantation gesture, sending a black sea of flames out, filled with Essence power. It became a huge black flame python, which lunged toward Meng Hao with gaping maw.

“If you were here in your true form, I might be worried,” Meng Hao said coolly. “But you’re just a clone. You think you can stand in my way?” With that, he waved his arm.

It was a casual gesture, but when his cultivation base rotated and his fleshly body power was unleashed, shockwaves spread out into the starry sky. The huge flame python seemed to slam into an invisible obstacle; it let out a miserable shriek and then completely exploded.

The clone’s face fell, and his heart began to thump. However, he didn’t back down. Instead, he flickered into motion, the scales on his body rising up and transforming into a windstorm. Lightning crackled and danced, thunder boomed, wind screamed, and rain went wild. A sea of flames roared up, and the power of emptiness raged, causing his body to turn illusory and merge with the powerful, killing attack.

The power of wind, rain, thunder, and lightning transformed into four vicious dragons. At the same time, the black flames turned into a face which shook the starry sky as it bore down on Meng Hao.

——

Many apologies!

2. Lord Cang's surname is a real Chinese surname which can also mean "blue-green" or "cold." This is also the only time he is referred to by name, but to make things smoother I'm going to do the same thing with him as with Lord Wu. (see above footnote)

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# Chapter 1334: Dao Sovereign!

Lord Cang could sense the pressure radiating off of Meng Hao. This was also the first time he had ever seen this Outsider Dao Sovereign clone act in such a way. Therefore, he immediately joined him in the attack.

His heart was thumping; he knew that he couldn’t afford to underestimate Meng Hao, who left him in complete fear and trepidation.

Without the slightest hesitation, he performed an incantation gesture, causing Essence power to erupt out. All five of his Essences were unleashed, the most powerful being the last, the Essence of light!

What was drawn upon was not the brightness of light, but rather, the speed of light! As the Lord of the Sixth Mountain and Sea, what he had always excelled in was speed!

He closed in rapidly, waving his hand, causing his Essences to transform into divine abilities. Colors flashed in the sky, the stars trembled, and an enormous Essence hand appeared, which grabbed at Meng Hao.

Both he and the Outsider were holding nothing back in their attack upon Meng Hao. They even used magical items. As for the Outsider Dao Sovereign, each and every one of his scales was just such a magical item, filled with shocking power that, when combined, could destroy heavenly bodies.

The former Lord of the Sixth Mountain and Sea had magical items in the form of two pearls, both of which were crimson. They swirled around him, transforming into two red meteors that shot forth, emanating incredible pressure.

Rumbling echoed out as these two powerful experts simultaneously tried to kill Meng Hao. Meanwhile, Lord Wu sat anxiously behind his shield.

However, Meng Hao’s expression never changed from its usual calmness. He eyed the two approaching enemies, then smiled. All of a sudden, he found himself thinking about how he had entered that ancient illusory world within the Vale of the Godgrave, and had seen that enormous God, who had roared at him in fury.

“The roar of a God….” he murmured softly. As the Outsider and the old man closed in, his eyes suddenly shone with a strange gleam, and he opened his mouth. All of a sudden, the power of his fleshly body exploded out, unimpeded by either the Second Desolation or the power raging from the extinguishing of his Soul Lamp.

ROOOAARRRR!!

A mighty roar erupted from Meng Hao’s mouth. However, no sound could be heard. Apparently… his voice was too loud for there to be sound, so loud that no natural law could affect or resist it. The starry sky shattered, and the Heavens seemed to be on the verge of vanishing. In fact… this sound completely exceeded the level that could be heard by either cultivators or Outsiders.

A shockwave ripped out, shredding the void as Meng Hao let out a roar that originated in ancient times, but echoed out in the present.

In the blink of an eye, innumerable ripples appeared, distorting the void in front of him, transforming into a tempest that sent everything shaking as it slammed into the Outsider Dao Sovereign and the Lord of the Sixth Mountain and Sea.

BOOOOMMMMMM!

The Outsider clone coughed up a mouthful of blood. He felt as if he were about to be ripped apart, and he screamed. However, that scream was completely drowned out by the powerful roar, forcing him to revert to his lizard form, which was thousands of meters long. That was the only way he could make a stand, and yet, he was still shoved backward relentlessly.

As for Lord Cang, he was even less equipped to deal with the roar. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and his flesh and blood were instantly mangled, to the extent that his legs were shredded to pieces. Even the bones were transformed into nothing but ash.

It was only thanks to the incredible speed with which he retreated that he was able to escape as he did. Had he been any slower, he would have lost more than only his legs.

Violet-robed Lord Wu sat behind the shield, mind spinning, eyes wide. He could do nothing but stare at the valiant and terrifying Meng Hao, at the utterly bedraggled Lord Cang, and at the wretched Outsider Dao Sovereign clone.

It was also in this moment that the clone’s magical items, the scales, all cracked and shattered into ash, completely destroyed.

The Lord of the Sixth Mountain and Sea’s two pearls were also shattered, and transformed into a red powder that instantly faded away.

“6-Essences… Dao Sovereign!!” The Lord of the Sixth Mountain and Sea felt his mind spinning. All thoughts of his injuries faded away, and he didn’t even notice his magical items being destroyed. His mind was battered by enormous waves of shock as he stared at Meng Hao.

He simply couldn’t imagine how any cultivator could unleash such shocking and terrifying power unless they were a 6-Essences Dao Sovereign.

As he shook, he couldn’t help but recall the words he had just spoken about 6-Essences Dao Sovereigns. And yet, here he was facing just such a person!

“This is impossible. Impossible! The Mountain and Sea Realm is sealed. Ksitigarbha used the power of reincarnation to bypass the seal, but other than him, nobody can break through it….”

The Outsider clone was also trembling as he looked at Meng Hao, his eyes flickering with terror. He was even considering whether or not he would have the confidence to take down Meng Hao with his true form.

Such power was virtually unimaginable. Compared to what he remembered of Meng Hao back in their encounter in the Eighth Mountain… he was now at least ten times more powerful.

“How could this be possible!?!?”

Even as these three powerful figures were reeling in shock, Meng Hao’s face suddenly went pale, and he coughed up a mouthful of blood, not because he was injured, but rather, because the Second Desolation tribulation had reached a critical point, and was about to conclude. Once it concluded, his fleshly body… would truly enter the 6-Essences Dao Sovereign level!

It seemed that his attack just now had drawn on his fleshly body’s power, thus giving the Second Desolation an exploitable opening. However, Meng Hao didn’t care. His fleshly body was so powerful that he could still control the tribulation even when attacking. Not even the power of extermination from his sixth Soul Lamp’s Desolation could cause much of a problem.

“Sorry, I’m not a Dao Sovereign yet,” Meng Hao said coolly.

In that moment, the Outsider Dao Sovereign’s eyes flickered. “He’s injured! Attacking like that actually injured him. If we keep going, we can worsen the injuries! He will die today!”

The former Lord of the Sixth Mountain and Sea had been in a state of despair, and had lost the will to fight. However, after seeing Meng Hao cough up some blood, his eyes flickered, and hope once again burned inside of him. Without any hesitation, he shot forth in attack.

Lord Wu of the Fifth Mountain and Sea suddenly let out a powerful roar as he attempted to break out of the shield to assist Meng Hao.

However, it was in that moment that Meng Hao smiled coldly. Instead of backing up, he took a step forward, clenching his right hand and unleashing a fist strike upon the Outsider clone.

Rumbling could be heard as the Life-Extermination Fist sucked up the life force of everything in the area, then slammed into the Outsider, who then tumbled backward, his body on the verge of collapsing.

Meng Hao licked his lips in anticipation. Because of how he had just unleashed his fleshly body power, the Desolation inside of him once again surged. However, a mere thought on his part suppressed it down to almost nothing.

“It’s almost over,” he said. Laughing, he turned, flexing his hand as he suddenly appeared in the path of Lord Cang.

The old man’s expression flickered, and his eyes went wide. He had no time to unleash a divine ability, nor any time to fall back. Biting his tongue, he spit out some blood, which transformed into a blood mist. Inside that mist could be seen countless vengeful spirits which screamed as they charged Meng Hao.

However, Meng Hao’s fist passed right through them, almost as if it existed in a different time and space. Filled with a will of Bedevilment, the fist appeared directly in front of Lord Cang.

With one fist, Heaven and Earth were shattered!

The Lord of the Sixth Mountain and Sea’s entire body exploded, leaving behind only his head, which let out a miserable howl as it fled in the opposite direction.

“I’ll let you live for the moment,” Meng Hao said softly. “I want you to see for yourself that in the Mountain and Sea Realm… it’s not impossible to become a Dao Sovereign!” With that, he looked up into the sky, then raised both hands aloft, as if he wished to embrace the stars.

Then he took a deep breath, causing a wind to kick up, and the entire Mountain and Sea Realm to tremble!

It was in that moment that the very last scrap of the Second Desolation faded away. Meng Hao had completely extinguished his 6th Soul Lamp, pushing his flesh and blood into that last, final step.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE….

Meng Hao began to grow larger. 30 meters. 300 meters. 600 meters!

900 meters. 1,200 meters. 1,500 meters….

Massive rumbling sounds could be heard. The majesty of what was happening caused Lord Cang to be rendered completely speechless, and the mind of the Outsider Dao Sovereign to reel in shock.

The entire Mountain and Sea Realm was shaking, as if it were bearing witness to something that hadn’t happened for countless years. The appearance… of a second true Dao Sovereign!!

It might only be a fleshly body Dao Sovereign, but that was a Dao Sovereign nonetheless!!

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE….

Meng Hao rapidly increased in height. 1,800 meters. 2,100 meters. 2,400 meters. 2,700 meters!!

It kept going and going. As he grew larger, his aura rocketed up, filling the Sixth Mountain and Sea and even stretching out into the adjacent Mountains and Seas.

As of this moment, the Nine Mountains were shaking!

As of this moment, the sun, moon, and other heavenly bodies were shining radiantly!!

As of this moment Meng Hao was rising from 2,700 meters all the way to 2,790 meters! Then 2,910 meters! Then 2,997 meters… only three more meters!

3,000 meters!!

3,000 meters. The true Dao Sovereign level!!

It was in that moment that the nine Xuanwu turtles all began to howl. The will of the Mountain and Sea Realm, which had spread out to fill the entire starry sky, began to stir. Everyone who was fighting in the war, regardless of which side they were on, could sense that something consummately powerful was in the Sixth Mountain and Sea!

“From now on, I, Meng Hao, am a true Dao Sovereign!” Although Meng Hao spoke softly, his voice cracked like thunder. He stood there, 3,000 meters tall, skin covered with magical symbols, radiating infinite power!

He clenched his fists, almost as if… he were grabbing onto the starry sky, grabbing onto… destiny!

Grabbing onto Heaven and Earth!

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# Chapter 1335: Xu Qing, I’m here!

The Nine Mountains and Seas were shaking. The nine Xuanwu turtles in their celestial ponds were howling, and the will of the Mountains and Seas, which had formerly been spread out in all parts of the Mountain and Sea Realm, was now converging upon Meng Hao!

At the apex of the starry sky were two figures locked in combat. One of them wore white robes, and was none other than Paragon Sea Dream. Her face was ashen, but as she performed her incantation gestures, shocking, explosive power was unleashed upon her opponent, the Outsider, 7-Essences Paragon Eegoo.

Even after all the time that had passed, they were still fighting!

However, as soon as Meng Hao’s entered the true fleshly body Dao Sovereign level, Sea Dream’s eyes began to shine with a strange light. As for Paragon Eegoo, his face completely fell.

“This is impossible!! Ksitigarbha was able to break through because of his mastery over reincarnation. But Meng Hao, he…. Dammit! He’s Nine Seals’ successor! The future Lord of the Mountains and Seas!!”

“Oh, you didn’t know?” Sea Dream said coolly, preventing the Outsider Paragon from breaking free of combat.

At the same time, back in the Fourth Mountain and Sea, Xu Qing was there, coordinating a deadly counteroffensive against the Outsiders. All of a sudden, her heart trembled, and she looked in the direction of the Sixth Mountain and Sea. After a moment, a warm smile broke out on her face.

There was another battlefield in the Fourth Mountain and Sea, where a spectacular, astonishing fight was underway between Ksitigarbha and the

1st Heaven's Imperial Lord!

That Imperial Lord's cultivation base was clearly the most powerful of anyone except for the Paragons, being at the peak of the 6-Essences level. He was half a step into the Paragon level, and yet Ksitigarbha was also completely extraordinary. The wave of his hand could cause numerous underworld palaces to descend. His incantation gestures unleashed the mighty power of reincarnation. The Yellow Springs which flowed beneath his feet made it seem as if he could control all life or death.

He was able to fight the Imperial Lord on equal footing, although that was mostly because of his control of external forces, and because he had the home field advantage. Even still, it was obvious why for countless years Ksitigarbha had been known as the most powerful person in the Mountain and Sea Realm!

As of this moment, Ksitigarbha could also sense Meng Hao's explosive Dao Sovereign energy coming from the Sixth Mountain and Sea. Even as the Outsider Imperial Lord's face flickered, Ksitigarbha's eyes gleamed, and he threw his head back and laughed uproariously.

It had been years since he had noticed how extraordinary Meng Hao was, and at that time he had chosen to sow good will with him. He had taken Xu Qing as his last and final apprentice, and she had not let him down. In the end, she had proven to be a rare genius when it came to strategy and tactics, and had been appointed as the commanding general of the entire Fourth Mountain and Sea. And then Meng Hao had gone and become a true Dao Sovereign.

Ksitigarbha's boisterous laughter made the Imperial Lord's mood sink even further.

Meanwhile, back in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, on Planet South Heaven, Shui Dongliu was still standing on that mountaintop. Suddenly, he turned his head in the direction of the Sixth Mountain and Sea, and a smile broke out on his face.

“At long last the day has arrived. Dao Sovereign fleshly body…. Perhaps there is hope in this Mountain and Sea Realm war after all….” Sighing, he flicked his sleeve. “Mountain and Sea Realm, begin analysis and replication!

“What a pity nothing like this happened back in the first war. If it had, perhaps the Paragon Immortal Realm would not have been defeated so tragically….”

Back in the Sixth Mountain and Sea, the 3,000-meter-tall Meng Hao threw his head back and roared. Mountain and Sea power descended, filled with will of the Mountains and Seas, which swirled around Meng Hao and then bored into him.

It was probing him, analyzing him, a sensation which Meng Hao found very strange, and yet did not interfere with. Instead, he simply looked down at Lord Cang of the Sixth Mountain and Sea and the Outsider Dao Sovereign clone.

The clone’s face was ashen, and his scalp was tingling. Without the slightest hesitation, he began to fade away in escape. He knew that he was no match for Meng Hao now. Meng Hao’s terrifying power left him in complete despair.

“Dao Sovereign fleshly body. Dammit! That’s even more difficult to deal with than a Dao Sovereign cultivation base. How… how did he do this? Wait. There’s God blood aura. He absorbed God blood!!” The clone was almost gone. Trembling, he realized that even if he were here in his true form, he still wouldn’t be a match for Meng Hao.

After all, Meng Hao’s full power wasn’t just reliant on a powerful fleshly body. His cultivation base, his magical techniques and divine abilities, all of them were terrifying.

However, just when the clone thought he was about to escape, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, and he raised his right hand in a grasping motion. A rumbling sound could be heard as the void around the clone shattered and caved in, as if a giant, invisible hand were crushing down on him!

“Meng Hao, the 33 Heavens will exterminate your entire clan! We’ll wipe out everyone in the Mountain and Sea Realm!!” A miserable shriek rang out, filled with unending hatred, as the Outsider Dao Sovereign clone was completely obliterated.

Meng Hao ignored his cries, turning instead to look at Lord Cang.

“Dao Sovereign….” the man said bitterly. He had a hard time even uttering the words, considering what he himself had said just moments ago, that it would be impossible for another Dao Sovereign to appear in the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Right now, he was standing directly in front of none other than a Dao Sovereign.

He suddenly felt completely at a loss. For the sake of his own cultivation base, he had betrayed his home and his people. And now, that all seemed… like a mistake.

In his bitterness, Lord Cang closed his eyes and asked himself if everything he had done had been worth it. No answer came.

In almost the same moment that he closed his eyes, Meng Hao extended his right hand and waved his finger toward the head that was all which remained of Lord Cang. A boom echoed out as that head was crushed out of existence. The Lord of the Sixth Mountain and Sea was completely and utterly dead.

Off to the side, Lord Wu emerged from within the shield. It was with mixed emotions that he watched Lord Cang die. Finally, he sighed.

“What a waste….” he said, shaking his head. Then he looked at Meng Hao, clasped hands and bowed deeply.

“I am the Lord of the Fifth Mountain and Sea. Greetings… exalted Dao Sovereign!”

Just when Meng Hao was about to respond, he said, “Eee?”

He suddenly realized that the will of the Mountains and Seas had suddenly ceased to suppress the invading Outsiders, and instead was completely focusing on him.

It was as if the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm was inside of him… replicating his fleshly body!

It wasn’t a complete and perfect copy, but rather, about eighty percent pure. When it was finished, it dispersed, then once again spread out to cover the entire Mountain and Sea Realm. Suddenly, each and every cultivator of the Mountain and Sea Realm suddenly… began to experience fleshly body transformations!

In that brief instant, all of the cultivators’ fleshly bodies experienced a complete redoubling of power!

It didn’t matter the level of their cultivation base or fleshly body. This advancement had nothing to do with their own power. It was a blessing from the Mountain and Sea Realm, like a massive field of influence, within which all the cultivators’ fleshly bodies were completely changed!

The characteristics of Meng Hao’s fleshly body were now being passed on to all of the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

As of that moment, the countless cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm on the numerous battlefields suddenly gaped in shock. They could sense the sudden change, and were instantly enlivened.

Even Lord Wu, who was standing directly in front of Meng Hao, suddenly trembled as the blessing strengthened him too.

“Is that the power of the Mountain and Sea Realm?!” Meng Hao thought. A tremor ran through him, and as for Lord Cang, he stood there gaping for a moment before excitement rose up in his heart.

Meng Hao was equally excited. He knew that this transformation was the key, not just to fighting this first battle with the 33 Heavens, but also the final war with the two foreign powers.

“Am I the only one who can do this? Is it because I’m the future Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm? Or because I’m the successor of Paragon Nine Seals? Or… is it because of my Allheaven Dao Immortal blood?” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. There was no immediate explanation. Looking down at Lord Wu, he clasped hands, then slowly shrank in size back to that of an ordinary person.

They did not spend time in idle chatter. Lord Wu immediately headed to the nearest front of battle. As a Mountain and Sea Lord, he had his own important responsibilities. Meng Hao also had his own matters to attend to, and transformed into a beam of colorful light that shot off into the distance.

He sped along toward the Fifth Mountain and Sea, unobstructed. He could pass through the barriers between Mountains and Seas even when he was in the midst of the Desolation tribulation. There was no need to even mention what he could do now that he had a Dao Sovereign fleshly body. Within the Mountain and Sea Realm, his fleshly body was definitely at the absolute peak!

A single step took him through the barrier, and he appeared in the Fifth Mountain and Sea, where bitter fighting was underway. However, because of the blessing bestowed by the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm, which came from Meng Hao’s Dao Sovereign fleshly body, the gap between the Outsider cultivators and the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm was ever shrinking.

Meng Hao could tell that with his current fleshly body power, he could crush and ignore natural law. He could alter the starry sky and even bend space and time.

“So this is what a 6-Essences Dao Sovereign is like, huh….” he murmured. “One Essence beyond that is the Paragon level.” It was as if his own body were a starry sky, with his organs being the heavenly bodies. It was like an endless cycle.

It was as if, even if Heaven and Earth were to be destroyed, he would not be!

It was as if, even if Heaven and Earth were to wither away, he would not!

Stepping into 6-Essences made one’s longevity equal to the Heavens!

Stepping into the true Dao Sovereign level made you incomparable!

Meng Hao didn’t tarry in the Fifth Mountain and Sea. He sped along, and was soon nearing the Fourth Mountain and Sea.

As the barrier approached, his mood rose and fell constantly. At long last… he was approaching the Fourth Mountain and Sea. At long last… he would be able to see Xu Qing again.

Back when everything started, when he left the Ninth Mountain and Sea, how could he ever have imagined that the road would stretch to this extent? War had begun, the 1st Heaven had descended, and the Mountain and Sea Realm had been thrown into chaos.

At the same time, he could never have imagined that with fleshly body power like this, he would be able to traverse the Nine Mountains and Seas as easily as if he were walking across the courtyard of his residence.

“Xu Qing, I’m here….” he murmured. A single step, and he was across the barrier. He was in… the Fourth Mountain and Sea!

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# Chapter 1336: Reuniting As Planned

The Fourth Mountain and Sea controlled the cycle of reincarnation in the Mountains and Seas. Everyone who died in the Mountain and Sea Realm would enter the Yellow Springs, which became the river of reincarnation that led to the Fourth Mountain and Sea. There, the newly arrived spirits would be guided into the cycle of reincarnation, where they would eventually find a new home.

There were many myths and legends regarding the Fourth Mountain and Sea. It was a mysterious place, one that most people could never fully comprehend. The only thing most people knew was that the Mountain and Sea Realm’s peak expert resided there.

His name was Ksitigarbha!

He was the Lord of the Fourth Mountain and Sea. He controlled the underworld, and he controlled reincarnation. Even among Mountain and Sea Lords, he held a preeminent position. And that was because essentially… he controlled the lives of everyone in the Mountain and Sea Realm!

The Fourth Mountain and Sea was an important node which allowed the Realm to form a complete cycle.

This was Meng Hao’s first time coming to the Fourth Mountain and Sea, and as soon as he entered, he could sense a very faint, and yet very pure, aura of death.

Or perhaps it would be better to say that it was not an aura of death, but an aura of Yin.

At first glance, nothing seemed out of the ordinary. The starry sky and the vast expanse seemed the same, and yet if you looked closely, you would see that the whole world appeared to be gray.

Meng Hao looked around silently, then sent his divine sense spreading out to cover the entire Fourth Mountain and Sea. However, there was one region in particular in which two powerful beings were fighting bitterly.

That was the location where Ksitigarbha was fighting the Outsider Imperial Lord. Meng Hao's divine sense immediately provoked a reaction from both of them. As for the Outsider Imperial Lord, he reacted with rage, and he clearly wished to break free from the fight to try to slaughter Meng Hao.

However, Ksitigarbha prevented that. Furthermore, he spoke in a completely calm tone that brimmed with self-confidence.

"So, you're Meng Hao!" the Outsider said.

"Fellow Daoist Meng," came the voice of Ksitigarbha, "I can handle this Outsider!"

Meng Hao smiled. When war descended, flowers would bloom on all parts of the tree, not just on one branch.

Furthermore, one person alone could not change the entire war. No, that required a group effort.

Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed toward Ksitigarbha, then focused his divine sense on where the cultivators of the Fourth Mountain and Sea were battling the Outsiders.

Millions of Outsiders could be seen, as well as millions of cultivators from the Fourth Mountain and Sea. What was being fought was a spectacular and unprecedented battle.

Meng Hao saw Xu Qing there, surrounded by rings of guards. She hadn't been injured in the slightest, and in fact, was constantly sending orders out to all parts of the battlefield. Because of that, the cultivators of the Fourth Mountain and Sea occupied the clear advantage on this front.

Although he was a vast distance away from Xu Qing, when Meng Hao looked at her, she could sense it. She turned her head and looked off into the distance, and somehow, her gaze met his.

In that moment, Meng Hao's heart trembled. As he looked at Xu Qing, numerous memories rose up within him. There was the time on Mount Daqing, when they had met for the first time. Then the time in the Reliance Sect when he had given her the Cosmetic Cultivation Pill. In the Black Sieve Sect's ancient Blessed Land, he had found her, trembling and helpless.

Outside of the Black Lands, where Choumen Tai had descended from the sky, the two of them had killed the Ji Clan Quasi-Array cultivator, and when they parted, tears had welled up in her eyes.

Meng Hao would never forget any of those things.

In the Rebirth Cave, when he was dying, Xu Qing took care of him, even sacrificing her own life force for him, all to give him a chance at another life. Even if her own soul dispersed, she was willing to pay that price for him. She even allowed herself to be imprisoned in the Black Sieve Sect.

During their Red Wedding, Meng Hao held her in his arms, watching her fade away. He cradled her as she passed into death, and the entire time, she only cared about her dream of marrying him.

Meng Hao trembled as the memories flitted through his mind like wind and lightning, causing his whole world to shake.

He had come to keep his promise. He had come! 1

He had promised to find her, even if he had to travel to the furthest reaches of the Mountain and Sea Realm. No matter what dangers he faced, he would find her and would once again stand at her side.

She promised to wait for him. If a life or a lifetime was not enough, then she would wait for him through all lives and lifetimes.

Other than his parents and sister, there was no one in his life for whom he would do so much. There was no woman whom he would worry so much about, nor anyone that could occupy such an eternal place within his heart.

Although he didn’t realize it at the time, back on Mount Daqing, when he saw her, the desire had already been planted within his heart… to be with her forever, through all lives and lifetimes.

Elder Sister Xu….

She was not spectacularly beautiful, but in Meng Hao’s eyes, in his world, she was the most beautiful thing in Heaven and Earth. She didn’t have a complicated heart, and the source of that was not any lack of intelligence, but rather, the fact that she liked things to be simple. And so did he. When he was most tired, most exhausted, simplicity was a quiet harbor within which to rest his soul.

Her smile, her voice, her eyes, everything about her, were firmly rooted in his heart, and made him smile.

“I know in my heart that the person I fell in love with is not just a fond memory, but you,” he murmured. “The real you. I know… that I love you.” With that, he took a step forward.

Unbeknownst to him, someone had appeared behind him at some point, a shadowy figure clad in a long black robe. That figure was now watching him make his way off into the distance.

It was none other than Slaughter.

When Slaughter saw how Meng Hao looked at Xu Qing, a flicker of reminiscence appeared in his eyes, as if he were considering some matter from the past. As if he was being reminded… of himself.

As Meng Hao walked forward, the world vanished. Heaven and Earth faded away. Natural law dispersed. Only one person remained. His wife, Xu Qing.

He had come from afar, passing through each of the great Mountains and Seas. He had proceeded along through the starry sky, step by step, and was now walking onto the battlefield. There were Outsiders who were in his path, but it wasn’t because they were trying to stop him; rather, he happened upon them as he proceeded toward the heart of the fighting.

A destructive power surrounded him that caused any Outsiders who approached within 30,000 meters of him to scream and explode.

Meng Hao paid them no heed. He proceeded along, surrounded by shouts of astonishment. As the Outsiders fell back from him, a strange scene developed on the battlefield.

With every step he took, he was surrounded by empty space, as the Outsiders fled from his presence.

The cultivators of the Fourth Mountain and Sea looked on with vigilance. Even though Meng Hao’s arrival caused the death of the Outsiders around him, they were still cautious.

There were only two people who had different reactions. One was the Echelon cultivator of the Fourth Mountain and Sea, Lin Cong. The other was, of course, Xu Qing.

Lin Cong stood in the crowd, wearing a gray robe. As he thought back to everything that had occurred in the Windswept Realm, he sighed. A wry smile could be seen on his face, and mixed emotions filled his eyes as he sighed. 2

“So, he finally came.”

Xu Qing was smiling radiantly. She stood there in the army of the Fourth Mountain and Sea, in the command pavilion, watching as Meng Hao approached. She remembered everything that had occurred, just as he did.

Those memories could not be wiped away from her because of her reincarnation.

She had always believed that one day, her beloved companion, her husband, would come from the distant Ninth Mountain and Sea to find her. It didn’t matter how long it took or how far away he was. It wouldn’t even matter if a war was being fought. Nothing would be able to stop him.

He would definitely come.

And now, he had.

Xu Qing bit her lip and took a step forward, much to the shock of the surrounding cultivators from the Fourth Mountain and Sea. Some of them wanted to stop her, but as Meng Hao neared, they suddenly lost the ability to control their cultivation bases.

The battlefield went quiet, and soon only Meng Hao and Xu Qing were there, looking at each other, slowly drawing closer.

Time seemed to slow down. The Outsiders and the cultivators of the Fourth Mountain and Sea both watched as Meng Hao approached. Xu Qing stepped out of the command pavilion, and the two of them… were soon standing together.

“I came,” he said, reaching out to grasp her hand. This was his wife, and his lifelong love.

“Yes,” she replied, her face flushing a bit. It took a bit of courage on her part, but she resisted the urge to look down shyly. Instead, she allowed her joy to radiate out, and she looked into Meng Hao’s eyes and smiled. This was indeed the happiest moment she had experienced since being reincarnated.

When Meng Hao saw Xu Qing smile, he couldn’t stop himself from smiling. His hands tightened around hers, and hers around his. It was as if neither of them wished to ever let go.

However, they both knew that the time they could spend with each other was short. No matter what they wished inside, they would have to let go. Xu Qing had her duties, and Meng Hao had his mission.

This was not the time and place. If only things could go back to how they were before, before the deadly war broke out in the Mountains and Seas….

Meng Hao sighed.

Xu Qing looked around at all of the cultivators from the Fourth Mountain and Sea, and the Outsiders, and slowly loosened her grip. “I can’t go with you right now….

“Wait for me…. If the day ever comes when this war ends, then we… can go home together.” Xu Qing suddenly stepped forward and wrapped her arms around him, resting her head on his chest to hear his heartbeat.

After a long moment passed, she looked up at him and said, “I’ll wait for you, and you wait for me. We’ll both be on the lookout for each other.”

Xu Qing bit her lip, then pulled away from Meng Hao’s embrace and returned to the command pavilion.

As Meng Hao looked at Xu Qing, he realized that there was something different about her from before. Much like himself… she had grown up, she had become mature.

Meng Hao’s heart was calm. Xu Qing had her duties, and he… had his mission. After looking at her deeply one last time, he waved his hand, sending a bit of divine will swirling out to surround her. He took a deep breath, and then looked up into the sky at the vast landmass up above that was the 1st Heaven.

Gradually, the warmth in his eyes faded away, to be replaced by icy coldness!

The air around him grew icy, and his aura, sharp and dangerous.

“There’s something I have to go do,” he murmured. “Something… that will lift the spirits of everyone in the Mountain and Sea Realm!” Rumbling sounds could be heard as he suddenly shot up into the air, leaving the battlefield. He became a streak of light like a shooting star, passing out of the Fourth Mountain and Sea, up into the vast expanse above. He was now heading toward the 1st Heaven, which had superseded the starry sky of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

He was going to destroy the 1st Heaven!

Few people noticed how he was flying up into the sky. However, it was certain… that a massive, storm would soon shake Heaven and Earth!

A storm was coming, a storm which would be caused by none other than… Meng Hao!

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# Chapter 1337: Destination: First Heaven!

Meng Hao was a blur that shot from the Fourth Mountain and Sea up into the starry sky, toward the land mass that was the 1st Heaven. Not a single regret could be found in his heart. He was completely determined, maddened, enlivened with the idea of enacting the rise of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

He was attempting to do something that could shake Heaven and Earth!

He was attempting to destroy the 1st Heaven, the home of the invaders. He was attempting to set the blood of the Mountain and Sea Realm aboil. All of the cultivators locked in battle would be able to look up and see… the destruction of the 1st Heaven!

Some people might think that an act like that would have little meaning, and couldn't compare to Meng Hao slaughtering Outsiders on the field of battle using his cultivation base. However, the truth of the matter was that this plan… was utterly and profoundly meaningful.

Currently, the people of the Mountain and Sea Realm were in the midst of despair. After having been suppressed for tens upon tens of thousands of years, they had then been invaded. They had long since lost the dignity they had once had during the days of the Paragon Immortal Realm. In that age, its cultivators had been valiant, but when complete and utter catastrophe struck, it was as if their Dao hearts had been shattered. After the initial catastrophe, they were then completely sealed by the 33 Heavens, stifling any recovery that their Dao hearts might have experienced.

After two such mighty blows, their valiance waned, and they didn’t dare to take the fight to their enemy….

For a people to rise up, their spirits needed to be kindled. And it was the same when the time came for a homeland to ascend.

Meng Hao knew that he was only one person. Even if he became a Paragon, the course of such a monumental war was something he couldn’t change on his own. He needed to stir the minds and hearts of the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm. He needed to awaken within them… the valiance that had once existed in the Paragon Immortal Realm!

Back in those days, there had been a saying. “Any who assault the Immortal World will be put to death!”

When Meng Hao destroyed the 1st Heaven, similar words would once again be heard in the Mountain and Sea Realm. “Any who assault the Mountains and Seas will be put to death!”

The Mountain and Sea Realm was on the brink of annihilation. Looming directly behind them was a bottomless chasm. There was nowhere to retreat to.That meant that the only thing to do now was rise to prominence!

Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a bright light. His mind, his thoughts, his cultivation base, everything about him was completely focused. He was like a shooting star, like a flaming torch, like a brilliantly shining lamp!

He was a lamp that did not seek to illuminate the starry sky of the Mountain and Sea Realm, but rather… sought to kindle the spirits of the cultivators therein!

Kindle a fire that would exist forever and never be extinguished!

He rose higher and higher, flew faster and faster. He was a beam of light, scintillating brilliantly, the center of all attention! The first people to notice him were the cultivators of the Fourth Mountain and Sea.

They stared blankly at Meng Hao as he rose up, and at first, no one was really sure what he was doing. However, as he picked up speed, the people down below realized that he was heading… not toward the starry sky itself, but toward the spot where the starry sky ended, toward that which weighed down upon the hearts and minds of all Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators.

The 1st Heaven!

“What… what is he doing…?”

“He’s heading toward the 1st Heaven!!”

“This… this….” Gasps could be heard from within the huge army of the Fourth Mountain and Sea. Every moment, more and more cultivators’ faces flickered with astonishment and shock.

Xu Qing stood atop the altar, trembling, her head tilted up to look at Meng Hao climbing up into the sky, charging toward the Heavens. A strange flicker could be seen in her eyes, which slowly turned into a bright glow. Although she was worried, she suddenly felt an incredible sense of pride.

This was the love of her life. Her man!

The forces of the Fourth Mountain and Sea were soon in a complete uproar.

“He’s heading for the 1st Heaven!!”

“He’s going up to… destroy the 1st Heaven!!”

“But… can he do it?”

Equally shaken were the Outsiders, who stared blankly at Meng Hao, almost unable to believe what they were seeing.

Also in the Fourth Mountain and Sea were Ksitigarbha and the Outsider Imperial Lord, who were fighting fiercely, causing rumbling booms to echo out. Ksitigarbha’s eyes suddenly began to shine brightly as he realized what Meng Hao had in mind.

The Outsider Imperial Lord gaped, and his face flickered.

At the same time, Paragon Sea Dream was fighting with the Outsider Paragon Eegoo. They also noticed what Meng Hao was doing; Paragon Sea Dream's face broke out into a wide smile, and Paragon Eegoo's face fell.

At this point, Meng Hao reached such an incredible speed that he was like an arrow, backed by Mountain and Sea power to shoot rapidly toward the 1st Heaven.

However, only the cultivators of the Fourth Mountain and Sea could see him. He was currently too far away from the other Mountains and Seas for anyone there to spot him. However, as he flew along, his eyes glinted, and he suddenly waved his right hand. Suddenly, a ball of light flew out. This was none other than his own Supernova Magic, which immediately began to suck in all the light around it, and thus grow even brighter. 1

He wanted all of the cultivators in the entire Mountain and Sea Realm to witness what he was doing.

One little sun was not enough, so he waved his hand, and dozens of little suns appeared. There were more than a hundred of them swirling around, shining with increasingly scintillating light.

“Still not enough!” Meng Hao growled. As he continued to shoot toward the 1st Heaven, he performed a double-handed incantation gesture, then waved his hands out in front of him, causing more little suns to appear.

100, 300, 500, and soon, Meng Hao was surrounded by 1,000 little suns!

1,000 little suns, absorbing Heaven and Earth, sucking in all the light of the starry sky. They rapidly grew larger and more dazzling, until Meng Hao himself actually looked like a sun!

Majestic light shone out, to the point where the cultivators of the Third and Fifth Mountains and Seas could look up into the sky and see a new sun!

The cultivators in the Third Mountain and Sea were in the midst of fighting the Outsiders, and yet everyone looked up in shock.

“What’s that…?”

“A sun? That’s not possible. But it really does look like an actual sun or moon….”

At the same time, cultivators in the Fifth Mountain and Sea looked up and gasped in disbelief.

“Wait, no…. there’s a person inside!!”

“Impossible!”

The Outsiders were equally taken aback.

Up in the starry sky, down beneath the 1st Heaven, Meng Hao was surrounded by 1,000 spheres of light. His expression was one of unswerving determination as he came to the conclusion that 1,000 little suns wasn’t enough. He needed more. He threw his head back and roared, pushing onward with greater speed and yet simultaneously waving his hand, causing another 1,000 little suns to appear!

2,000 little suns were shining radiantly. They were now densely packed together, each one of them emanating blinding light. However, from a distance away, the light of those 2,000 small suns merged together… to make them look like the glow of one enormous sun!

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the 2,000 little suns swirled around Meng Hao. He flew higher and higher, away from the Mountain and Sea Realm, growing ever closer to the 1st Heaven. Soon, the cultivators in the Second and Sixth Mountains and Seas could see the brightly shining sun up above.

Although it currently looked like little more than a dot of light, within the pitch blackness, it was extremely conspicuous!

In the Second Mountain and Sea, the cultivators and Outsiders were fighting a particularly bloody battle, and the reek of gore had permeated the entire Mountain and Sea. The vast army of cultivators had suffered setback after setback, and the roars of the Outsiders filled the entire starry sky above them.

However, even as despair wrought at the hearts of the cultivators, in the moment when they had no hope, and were bitterly convinced that they were going to lose the battle, all of a sudden, a bright dot of light appeared up above. That light became the only thing the cultivators of the Second Mountain and Sea looked at.

“That’s…”

“That dot of light. Heavens! Considering how far away we are, that dot of light must actually be enormous!”

“What’s going on…?” The cultivators of the Second Mountain and Sea were completely abuzz!

Although they couldn’t actually see Meng Hao, somehow they could all sense that within that light was someone emanating an incredible willpower, and utter determination!

The Sixth Mountain and Sea was equally in an uproar.

“That light is heading in the direction of… the 1st Heaven!!”

“Considering how far it is away, the fact that we can see it moving up means that its true speed… must be mind-boggling!!”

Although the Lord of the Sixth Mountain and Sea had been killed, the violet-robed Lord Wu of the Fifth Mountain and Sea was now fighting in the battle, and at long last, the cultivators were able to launch successful counter-attacks against the Outsiders.

Lord Wu was the first one to look up into the starry sky. His jaw dropped, and he instantly began to tremble.

“It’s him…. He’s going… to destroy the 1st Heaven?” His eyes began to shine, and suddenly a surge of indescribable excitement rose up within him.

Soon the other cultivators of the Sixth Mountain and Sea caught sight of the light up above, and they were completely shaken. Although not everyone could immediately discern where that dot of light was heading, people quickly began to deduce the truth.

“He’s heading toward the 1st Heaven?”

Even as the cultivators in the Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Mountains and Seas were staring fixedly at the dot of light, it suddenly grew twice as bright as before!!

Along with the eruption of brightness, the light also grew in size. That was because the number of little suns surrounding Meng Hao had increased from 2,000 to 4,000!

“There’s a person inside that light!!” By now, virtually all of the experts in the great Mountains and Seas were able to discern what was happening. Their hoarse exclamations were heard by those around them, and soon everyone’s minds were spinning.

It was at this point that the cultivators in even further Mountains and Seas could see that high up above the Nine Mountains and Seas, there in the starry sky… was a sun!

Although it wasn’t the true sun, by now, everyone could see it….

A sun above the Mountain and Sea Realm!

In the Seventh Mountain and Sea, Yuwen Jian suddenly opened his eyes. He had been sitting there in meditation, but when he heard the exclamations ringing out, he looked up into the sky and then suddenly felt as if he were being struck by lightning.

Yuwen Jian couldn’t quite see who it was inside that light, but… his intuition told him exactly who it was! “It’s Meng Hao. It’s definitely him! He’s going to lift the spirits of an entire people by destroying the 1st Heaven!!”

Shaking, he shot to his feet, panting excitedly, eyes burning with anticipation.

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# Chapter 1338: Dao Tribulation Comes!

The dot of light couldn’t illuminate every inch of the starry sky, and yet… as of this moment, it was visible to all cultivators from the First to the Seventh Mountains and Seas!

In the Seventh Mountain and Sea, Planet Tiger Cage was in an uproar. It was the same in the First Mountain and Sea. There, Echelon cultivator Dao-Heaven stood in the midst of his army, looking up at the brilliant dot of light, and was completely shaken, as was everyone around him.

From the First Mountain and Sea all the way to the Seventh, the cultivators were looking up at the brilliant dot of light as, all of a sudden, it erupted with even further brilliance!

Massive rumbling sounds echoed out as the dot swelled in size by double!

It was in that moment that the number of little suns surrounding Meng Hao increased from 4,000 to 8,000!!

8,000 little suns, radiating intense light. Although that light couldn’t match the light of a real sun, it was the most dazzling heavenly body visible!

The cultivators were in an uproar, and the Outsiders were shaking inwardly as intense feelings of foreboding rose up inside of them.

The Outsider Dao Sovereign who had split apart into numerous incarnations was shaking, and his eyes shone with astonishment as he stared at the light. The Outsider Imperial Lord who was fighting Ksitigarbha also felt his heart pounding.

It was the same with the Outsider Paragon Eegoo.

In sharp contrast, Ksitigarbha, Sea Dream, and the various Mountain and Sea Lords seemed to be suddenly inspired, and burst out with all the power they could muster to prevent any of their Outsider opponents from breaking free of the battle.

Roars echoed out, and booms filled the air. When the number of little suns around Meng Hao increased to 8,000, the cultivators in the Eighth Mountain and Sea could finally see the sun up above!

Cultivators and Outsiders alike felt as if the battle going on in the Eighth Mountain and Sea was like a giant millstone crushing down onto them. But then, the cultivators noticed that bright light, and their jaws dropped.

“What’s that?”

“How could there suddenly be a spot of light? Hold on… it’s rising up into the sky at incredible speed!”

“Could it be some sort of magical item? It looks like it’s heading toward… the 1st Heaven?”

As the crowds burst out into a commotion, Meng Hao’s grandfather, the Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea, suddenly shivered. He looked up, and when he saw that light, his eyes suddenly flickered in surprise.

“Hao’er’s aura…. That’s Hao’er….” He threw his head back and laughed uproariously at the sudden feeling of joy which swept through him. As he continued to watch the dot of light rising up, his eyes began to gleam with anticipation.

Suddenly, the number of little suns around Meng Hao once again increased dramatically. No longer were there 8,000. Instead, there were 10,000. The light of 10,000 little suns merged together as they rocketed toward the land mass up above. At long last… the light became clearly visible in the Ninth Mountain and Sea!

Pill Demon saw it, and the members of the Fang Clan saw it. Meng Hao’s parents saw it, and his Grandma Meng and her people saw it. Fatty, Chen Fan, Fan Dong’er, Sun Hai, Fang Yu, and everyone else he knew… all cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea could see it.

The flames of war burned just as hot in the Ninth Mountain and Sea as everywhere else, and the fighting was just as bloody and bitter. However, as soon as that light became visible, the people who were familiar with Meng Hao… could sense that it contained his aura!

“That’s… that’s Meng Hao!!”

“Heavens! How… how is this possible? Wait, how come looking at that light suddenly makes me think of Meng Hao?!”

“Could it be that it’s really Meng Hao!?!?”

The crowds were exploding into a huge commotion. On Planet South Heaven, Shui Dongliu stood atop that mountain peak, still looking up into the sky. Suddenly, he began to laugh, a laughter filled with happiness and anticipation.

“It seems I picked well…. He who shall counter the tribulation… Meng Hao.” A warm expression could be seen on Shui Dongliu’s face as he continued to laugh, and stand there, waiting.

As of this moment, all of the cultivators in all of the Nine Mountains and Seas were watching.

At the same time, Meng Hao was drawing ever nearer to the land mass that was the 1st Heaven. He was now approaching the highest point in this region of space, and his speed caused rumbling to echo out as he closed in.

His eyes burned with determination as he got closer and closer!

However, even as he neared the 1st Heaven, the figures of a vast number of Outsiders suddenly appeared, flying out from it to meet him. In addition to that, numerous shields sprang up to protect the land mass.

This land was the home of the Outsiders, so it went without saying that they would have protections in place for it. More and more Outsiders kept approaching, bent on stopping Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s lips twisted into a cold smile. Just when he was about to attack, he suddenly frowned. Simultaneously, the Outsiders who had just flown out suddenly fell back into retreat. That was because, all of a sudden, the explosive power of Dao Tribulation had appeared!

This was Meng Hao’s Dao Tribulation, his fleshly body Dao Tribulation!

The tribulation had appeared before but hadn’t fully descended. Instead, it had been hidden away, which as far as Meng Hao could tell was because the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm had helped him to get rid of it.

But now, here it was again. That could only mean… that this was tribulation, not from the Mountain and Sea Realm, but instead, from the 1st Heaven!

“It is its own world, with its own life forms,” Meng Hao murmured. “Naturally, the 1st Heaven has a will just like the Mountain and Sea Realm. Tribulation is caused by a disturbance in Karma. It saw the Tribulation Karma which was sown upon me, and therefore, took it upon itself to ensure that there was a reaping?” He understood, and yet wasn’t afraid. Instead, he began to laugh.

In his life, he had transcended Heavenly Tribulation on numerous occasions. Each one of those occasions had been of incredible difficulty, and yet now, he was completely confident that he could crush this instance of Heavenly Tribulation as easily as a dried out log!

Rumbling could be heard as Tribulation Clouds built up, massing together in front of Meng Hao. The rumbling of Tribulation Lightning could be heard as countless lightning bolts suddenly shot toward Meng Hao.

Virtually all of those lightning bolts appeared to be humanoid in shape, and filled with power that could destroy the Heavens and extinguish the Earth. As they closed in, they transformed into a sea of lightning that spread out wide in all directions, completely enveloping Meng Hao and his 10,000 suns. Down in the Nine Mountains and Seas, all of the cultivators could see what was happening.

“Not good! The 1st Heavens is a complete world, with its own Tribulation power!!”

“If that dot of light is Meng Hao, then he’s going to be defeated….”

“Dammit, could it be that the 1st Heaven is really impossible to fight!?” Cultivators were crying out in alarm all throughout the Nine Mountains and Seas. They were nervous, anxious, worried, and all of those feelings arose because of Meng Hao.

Of course, there were some people in the crowd who looked on coldly. After all, all sorts of people existed within the Mountain and Sea Realm. Naturally, there were some who believed that once disaster struck, everyone would die!

There were even some sects and clans who actually weren’t going all out in the fighting, but were instead hiding their true strength, looking for an opportunity to escape from the Mountain and Sea Realm. In fact, there were even some people who were secretly planning… to surrender to the 33 Heavens.

However, those people were in the minority. The vast majority of the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm were unyielding. They had their dignity, and would never give in! Those cultivators were the ones who were nervously looking up into the starry sky.

The Outsider Imperial Lord who was fighting Ksitigarbha suddenly began to chuckle with scorn.

“Tribulation Karma has been sown, and yet he dares to try to trifle with our 1st Heaven? He’s definitely courting death!”

Similar words were uttered by Paragon Eegoo to Paragon Sea Dream. The Outsider Dao Sovereign clones who were battling the Mountain and Sea

Lords were the same. All of them were sighing in relief.

Some people were anxious, some people were derisive. However, it was in that very moment that Meng Hao, facing the boundless Tribulation Lightning, suddenly raised his hand. Eyes gleaming, he performed an incantation gesture and pointed out.

“Hex!”

Eighth Demon Sealing Hex!

Rumbling could be heard as the power of his fleshly body exploded out. His cultivation base surged, and the Eighth Hex was unleashed, backed by the power of the Mountains and Seas. Instantly, everything began to shake violently. As Meng Hao waved his hand downward, all of the Tribulation Lightning in the starry sky suddenly stopped moving.

Seventh Demon Sealing Hex!

Meng Hao waved his finger again, this time unleashing Karmic Hexing, severing the Tribulation Lightning’s Karma, and then swishing his sleeve.

Fifth Demon Sealing Hex!

Inside-Outside Hex!

Go back from whence you came!

Meng Hao waved his sleeve, and instantly, all of the Tribulation Lightning swiveled, changing directions to shoot toward the very Tribulation Clouds they had emerged from, moving at a speed which defied imagination!

Massive booms rang out as the countless Tribulation Clouds collapsed into pieces. It was a Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering sight as the Tribulation Lightning bolts smashed into the clouds, completely and utterly pulverizing them!

This sight provoked a collective gasp from cultivators and Outsiders alike. Eyes went wide and jaws dropped in disbelief.

“What?!?!” exclaimed the Outsider Dao Sovereign incredulously.

All of the Outsiders were completely and utterly shaken by Meng Hao. That bright spot of light was now nothing less than a complete nightmare for them!

It was at this point that enraged howls could be heard from the land mass that was the 1st Heaven. More Tribulation Clouds roiled out, converging together into one gigantic cloud mass that seemed bent on completely eradicating Meng Hao!

Massive pressure emanated out from the Tribulation Clouds, which surrounded Meng Hao and caused the starry sky to shake. As the enraged howling continued, it was possible to see an enormous claw taking shape inside of the Tribulation Cloud.

That claw was pitch black and covered with scales, like the claw of a lizard!

After all… this Tribulation was not from the Mountain and Sea Realm, but rather from the world of the 1st Heaven.

The claw was covered with boundless Tribulation Lightning, the intensity of which vastly exceeded that from before. The claw shot toward Meng Hao, and as it did, more and more Tribulation Clouds converged in the area, causing the Tribulation to become even more majestic and boundless than before.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever, and his eyes shone with a bright light. Without pausing for a moment, he shot toward the Tribulation Cloud and the lightning-covered claw. As he neared, he suddenly spoke in a voice which sounded like booming thunder.

“Did I say you could converge here? Disperse!”

Massive rumbling could be heard as the Second Demon Sealing Hex appeared. Real-Unreal Hexing erupted out toward the Tribulation Cloud, transforming what was real into what was unreal, and transforming the unreal to the real! All Meng Hao had to do was think!

As of this moment, he changed the Tribulation, which was real, into something unreal. The converged Tribulation was instantly dispersed!

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# Chapter 1339: 10,000 Star Detonation!

As of this moment, all eyes were completely fixed upon Meng Hao!

Even as the words left his mouth, he flicked his sleeve, unleashing the Second Demon Sealing Hex. Rumbling sounds filled Heaven and Earth, and the starry sky trembled. Simultaneously, the land mass that was the 1st Heaven was also shaking, as were the previously awe-inspiring Tribulation Clouds!

The gigantic lizard claw, and its boundless Tribulation Lightning, suddenly became illusory, and began to fade away. Moments later, the seemingly infinite Tribulation Clouds also… began to fade away.

After becoming illusory, all Meng Hao had to do was speak a single word, and his will caused everything to transform from being real to not! To the shock of cultivators and Outsiders alike, as of this moment, Meng Hao’s fleshly body Dao Tribulation… was over! It had been concluded using a method none of them had ever seen or heard of before.

“Impossible!!” The Outsider Imperial Lord fighting Ksitigarbha suddenly let out a miserable howl. He simply couldn’t believe what he was seeing. As far as he was concerned, it was a complete impossibility, and yet, here it was occurring right in front of him!

He suddenly burst into motion in an attempt to go stop Meng Hao, but in response, Ksitigarbha laughed coldly, causing underworld palaces to descend and the Yellow Springs to sweep out. The river of reincarnation surged, making it completely impossible for the Outsider Imperial Lord to do anything.

Elsewhere in the starry sky, a similar situation was occurring with Paragon Sea Dream. She went all-out with her cultivation base, even incurring serious injuries to herself, to prevent the maddened Outsider Paragon Eegoo from breaking free. Eegoo bellowed in rage, eyes burning with killing intent as he sent divine sense roiling out to crush Meng Hao, and yet he couldn’t get past Sea Dream.

“Sea Dream, I don’t want to kill you! Don’t walk into your own death!!”

“Don’t make me laugh!” Sea Dream responded, yet again obstructing his path.

The Nine Mountains and Seas, which moments ago had been completely silent, suddenly burst out into a huge commotion. The cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm were crying out and cheering, their voices merging together into a sound wave that surged out in all directions. As for the Outsiders, they were completely shocked, and yet, their will to fight was not reduced, and they continued to do battle.

And yet… everyone, including the Outsiders, was still watching Meng Hao as he closed in on the 1st Heaven.

He shot onward at top speed, surrounded by 10,000 little suns which radiated intense light.

Closer and closer!

Countless Outsiders flew out from the 1st Heaven and charged toward Meng Hao. Numerous scintillating shields were set in place.

However, as the Outsiders approached, Meng Hao’s hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture; then he stretched his hands wide and clapped them together violently, sending a burst of cultivation base power out directly into the Outsiders, and directly toward the 1st Heaven!

“Suns, detonate!” he roared. Instantly, the 10,000 suns surged into action, flying directly toward the Outsiders and the shields protecting the land mass that was the 1st Heaven!

BOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

10,000 suns all detonated!

Each and every one of those little suns had been bolstered by Meng Hao’s cultivation base power, and as such, their combined power was completely and utterly shocking. A massive explosion rippled out that shook lands and rocked mountains, that destroyed Heaven and Earth, that directly ripped apart the starry sky!

A terrifying shockwave then began to spread out in all directions.

That shockwave was so huge that it was visible even in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, and it filled all hearts with shock.

The vast numbers of Outsiders who had flown out to stop Meng Hao, regardless of their cultivation bases, were swept over by the shockwave caused by the detonation of 10,000 suns. Bloodcurdling screams rang out as their bodies were transformed into ash. Even the Nascent Divinities which attempted to flee were completely eradicated.

Rumbling could be heard as the shockwave then slammed into the shields protecting the 1st Heaven. In the blink of an eye, the shields began to shatter bit by bit. They immediately began to repair themselves, but were clearly weakened. However, in the end the shields were too strong; even the detonation of 10,000 suns could not completely destroy them. And yet, a tiny opening had appeared.

That was all Meng Hao needed. He waved his arm, and the Battle Weapon appeared, transforming into a black beam that stabbed directly into that weak spot, preventing the shields from recovering.

All of this happened so quickly that no one could react. Meng Hao moved as fast as lightning, sweeping the Battle Weapon out so that a huge rift was torn open in the shield, and the land mass that was the 1st Heaven. Then, he stepped through that rift… to the surface of the 1st Heaven!

By this point, the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm had been whipped up into a frenzy. As for the Outsiders, their faces were ashen and filled with dread.

The Imperial Lord roared, the Paragon howled, and the Dao Sovereign's incarnations were trying unsuccessfully to merge back together.

In the instant that Meng Hao set foot into the 1st Heaven, he bolstered his voice with his cultivation base and cried out, "Mountain and Sea Cultivators, fight to the death!"

In response, all of the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm joined their voices together in response. It almost seemed planned, but it wasn't.

The first to respond was the Fourth Mountain and Sea. The cultivators who clustered around Xu Qing were already chomping at the bit. The 1st Heaven hadn't been destroyed yet, but Meng Hao's sudden explosive success had kindled the spirits and souls of all of the cultivators there.

Once the 1st Heaven was actually destroyed, that spark which had been lit would explode into an inferno.

"Mountain and Sea Cultivators, fight to the death!" The shouts of one cultivator after another in the Fourth Mountain and Sea rang out, like the bellowing of war horns calling everyone to a final battle. As they did, they charged forth, smashing into the surrounding Outsiders.

Soon, such cries filled the air throughout the Fourth Mountain and Sea. The eyes of all cultivators were shining brightly, and everyone felt as if they were bursting with incredible power.

Soon, all of the voices in the Fourth Mountain and Sea joined together into one mighty call.

"Mountain and Sea Cultivators, fight to the death!"

Meng Hao was using one simple phrase to bring all of the Nine Mountains and Seas into one united Mountain and Sea Realm!

As the voices echoed out in the Fourth Mountain and Sea, similar cries rose up in the Third and Fifth Mountains and Seas. Massive waves of sound were crashing out, and were joined by the Second, First, Sixth, and Seventh Mountains and Seas!

All voices cried out, filled with passion and inspiration.

“Mountain and Sea Cultivators, fight to the death!” That one phrase embodied the spirit of the Mountain and Sea Realm. There would be no retreat. Enough was enough! They had been suppressed to the limit, and now was the time… to give voice to their rage!

They did not agree to be exterminated. They did not agree to die. They did not agree for the Mountains and Seas to vanish. This was the voice of a people who did not agree to back down.

This was the voice… that marked the awakening of a people!

“Mountain and Sea Cultivators, fight to the death!” Finally, the voices could be heard in the Eighth Mountain and Sea and then… the Ninth Mountain and Sea. All of the Nine Mountains and Seas, the entire Mountain and Sea Realm, was filled with one unified voice!

The ordinary Outsiders trembled. The Dao Sovereign was shocked. The Imperial Lord was shaken. The Paragon was flabbergasted!!

As of this moment, the people of the Mountain and Sea Realm were using their battle cry to tell the Outsiders: We are not to be underestimated! You might have suppressed us for tens upon tens of thousands of years, but we are still… the Mountain and Sea Realm!

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# Chapter 1340: To Exterminate this World!

At the very end of the starry sky, within the 1st Heaven, Meng Hao looked around… at a world that was very different from what he had imagined. He saw mountains and rivers, plains and oceans.

The spiritual energy here was abundant, ten times more so than in the Mountain and Sea Realm. In fact, there wasn’t just spiritual energy, there was abundant Immortal qi, making the entire place seem like a celestial paradise.

Luxuriant vegetation covered the surface of the land, and a blue sky stretched out in all directions. Cities and other edifices were everywhere, although they floated about in the air instead of being constructed on the ground. Immortal mountains could be seen, as well as waterfalls of stars that seemed to connect Heaven and Earth.

The edifices were all exquisitely constructed, and gargantuan. They were ancient, filled with a boundless sense of time and history. Statues could be seen, and precious materials were available everywhere.

“So, this is the 1st Heaven….” Meng Hao thought, feeling a bit shocked. Suddenly, a cold light flickered in his eyes, and his cultivation base erupted. Fleshly body power surged out, and he began to grow taller; in the blink of an eye, he was 3,000 meters tall!

He had a Dao Sovereign fleshly body which could shake Heaven and Earth, and taking a mere step could shake lands and rock mountains. When his cultivation base power spread out, the Paragon Bridge appeared, radiating a pressure of extermination that caused the sky to flash with brilliant colors.

There were Outsiders here guarding the 1st Heaven, hordes of them, and yet, none had very high cultivation bases. It was with complete shock that they all looked toward Meng Hao.

An ancient voice suddenly spoke from off in the distance. “Who are you?!?! What are you doing?!”

Clouds and mist roiled together to form into a huge face that stared at Meng Hao.

“I’m Meng Hao,” he replied softly, “from the Mountain and Sea Realm. I’ve come today to exterminate this world!” With that, he clenched his hand into a fist and punched down toward the ground.

That single fist strike caused the entire world to shudder and crack as the power of extermination spread out.

It was none other than the Life-Extermination Fist!

The power of that blow caused the lands of the 1st Heaven to shake. The shaking wasn’t violent at first. It was like the shaking caused when a mayfly alights onto a leaf. However, at the same time, all of the plants and vegetation nearby on the surface of the land instantly withered and died!

It was as if the life force had been sucked out of them! A gray shockwave spread out from Meng Hao’s fist, and everywhere it passed, things withered!

The Outsiders’ faces fell when this happened, and the ancient face was filled with shock. However, before it could say anything, Meng Hao swished his sleeve, and a boom could be heard as the mist-face collapsed.

Meng Hao’s eyes were now shining with a cold glint. To him, no cultivators lived here, only animals. From what he could tell, virtually all of the Outsiders in this world, including the ones with the power to take humanoid shape, were all just lizards!

Although the buildings and the environment looked like the Immortal World, Meng Hao knew that it wasn’t. This place… was more like an animal den.

“Animals like you want to exterminate the Mountain and Sea Realm?” Meng Hao shook his head, then unleashed another punch toward the land beneath his feet, then pulled his hand back and punched again. The second punch was the Bedevilment Fist, and the third was the God-Slaying Fist. As the lands trembled, the Paragon Bridge crushed down, causing cities and edifices which floated in the air to shake violently. Then, Meng Hao’s divine sense spread out, filling the entire world. His will superceded the will of the world itself, crushing down, unleashing unmitigated destructive power.

He was a windstorm, causing mountains to crumble wherever he passed. The lands disintegrated, and the rivers flowed backward. Oceans roared, and vast crevices opened up, causing cracking sounds to fill the air as they spread out. It was as if countless dragons were burrowing out through the soil, shaking the entire world.

Meng Hao took a step forward, appearing in front of one of the floating cities. He looked at it for a moment, and then his eyes flickered with determination. This was not the time for mercy and kindness. He suddenly recalled the destroyed planets within the Mountain and Sea Realm, and how the viciously grinning Outsiders hadn’t even spared the mortals.

“How animalistic, but then again, you really are just animals!” His right hand clenched into a fist, and he punched out. Rumbling sounds echoed out, along with bloodcurdling screams, as the enormous city was completely destroyed.

Meng Hao’s divine sense had long since confirmed that within the 1st Heaven, all of the Outsiders were lizards. Furthermore, as a species, none of them lacked cultivation bases in the way that mortal humans did. No, all of these lizards, from birth, had the power of a cultivation base.

Because of that, there was no question as to whether or not to wipe them out.

He took a step forward, and as he did, he exterminated everything he saw. The land turned gray as the life force was sucked away, and the feeling of death spread out everywhere.

Gradually, Meng Hao could detect a howling sound coming from deep within the land, something that originated, not from any Outsider, but from the will of the world itself!

It could sense his determination to kill everything, which was why it had sent the Tribulation Lightning against him. Now that he was here in person, it was doing everything it could to try to expel him.

The power of expulsion grew stronger, and yet, Meng Hao completely ignored it.

With his Dao Sovereign fleshly body, divine sense that was eighty percent as powerful as a Paragon’s, and the cultivation base of an Allheaven Dao Immortal, although he couldn’t completely disregard such expulsion power, he could definitely fight back against it!

Rumbling could be heard as cities collapsed and statues were destroyed. Countless Outsiders let out miserable shrieks as their scales exploded and they were annihilated. Meng Hao was like a god of death, wreaking destruction and slaughter wherever he went.

Suddenly, a roar echoed out, which came from none other than what had previously manifested as the face of an old man. It was an enormous, ancient lizard, which shot toward him from off in the distance. The power of a 5-Essences cultivation base rippled out, and yet before he could even get close, Meng Hao gave a cold harrumph, and the lizard lurched to a stop in midair, blood spraying out of his mouth. Meng Hao hadn’t even waited for it to get close before unleashing a fist strike!

A boom rang out as the ancient lizard was completely and utterly destroyed!

Cries of misery could be heard ringing out from all corners of the world. There was a constant stream of pleas for mercy, as well as curses.

Meng Hao looked at the sky and the land, then waved his hand, sending out Divine Flame. “You supressed us, you sealed us, and you invaded us. If you want to assign blame… blame Heaven and Earth for being cruel, or blame life for being unfair.”

Wherever the Divine Flame passed, destructive power burned everything away.

The Blood Demon roared, smashing lizards wherever it went.

Mountains and rivers were demolished, the skies shattered, and numerous buildings and cities fell out of the air. More and more cracks and crevices snaked out across the lands, which shook and began to collapse.

From the position of the 1st Heaven itself, what was happening wasn’t very clear. However, down in the Mountain and Sea Realm, it was obvious!

Any cultivator of the Mountains and Seas could look up at the 1st Heaven, which had superseded the starry sky, and could hear the booms echoing out, and see the dust and ash spreading out. In fact, there were even chunks of rock and rubble which were beginning to fall down.

With every boom, the lands shook. There were even entire sections which were crumbling. The cracks spread out, and there were even some vast slabs as big as asteroids which began to fall down.

“The 1st Heaven is about to collapse!!”

“It’s really… really going to be destroyed!!”

“It’s Meng Hao. It’s him!”

“He attacked the 1st Heaven with the purpose of completely destroying it!!”

“Mountain and Sea Cultivators, fight to the death!” The cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm were going wild, and their eyes gleamed with determination. Their wild shouts, their killing intent, and their will to fight caused the Heavens to grow dim.

The Outsiders were trembling in shock as they saw their home shattering into pieces. All of a sudden, their will to fight was replaced with utter dread and terror.

One side was empowered, the other side was demoralized. The balance of battle was instantly overturned!

The sounds of fierce fighting rang out as the cultivators of the Nine Mountains and Seas began to fight back with a vengeance!

The Imperial Lord howled, the Paragon raged, the Dao Sovereign was in a frenzy. And yet, there was nothing they could do to stop what was happening!

The Heavens were collapsing!

The Earth was shattering!

The spirits of the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm were rising. The inextinguishable spark of faith that burned within their hearts had been kindled by Meng Hao, and now, it was beginning to burn brightly!

In the Eighth Mountain and Sea, Patriarch Reliance was floating above a battlefield filled with mountains of Outsider corpses. He was looking up into the starry sky, at the crumbling land mass that was the 1st Heaven.

After a moment of silence, he began to laugh loudly.

“That’s my disciple! The Ninth Generation Demon Sealer! Meng Hao! Incredible!

“I ran from you for years, unwilling to be restricted, unwilling to become someone’s mount. But now, you little bastard, what you’ve done, and what you’ve said have convinced me…

“Henceforth, I am willing to be Meng Hao’s mount!

“I, the Patriarch… am completely willing, and will never have any regrets!” Patriarch Reliance threw his head back and howled, then shot up into the starry sky. Now that he had made his decision to be Meng Hao’s mount, he would fulfil the ancient agreement. He would be the Dao Protector of the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer without the slightest hesitation. Therefore, he flew up into the air to go meet Meng Hao.

Guyiding Tri-Rain was there on Patriarch Reliance’s head, giggling with happiness. She had been waiting for this day for a very, very long time….

At the same time, a middle-aged man could be seen standing atop Mount Daqing, there on Patriarch Reliance’s back, also looking up into the starry sky. He was suppressing the fierceness of his own gaze, but if he weren’t, it would be completely shocking.

He did not emanate the fluctuations of the Dao Realm, nor the Ancient Realm. He was not an Immortal, nor some type of spirit. In fact, he appeared to be mortal, without any cultivation base fluctuations at all.

And yet, he seemed incredibly dangerous.

“I, Dong Hu, have been taking care of this treasure for my entire life. It was not destined to be mine, which means that I have been preparing it for someone else. I realized that many years go, but by then, I had already become the spirit of the treasure…. But what does that really matter?” Astonishingly, that middle-aged man was none other than Dong Hu!

Back in the very beginning, there were four boys who had been taken by Xu Qing to the Reliance Sect: Meng Hao, Wang Youcai, Fatty, and Dong Hu!

After all of them were separated, Xu Qing entered the cycle of reincarnation, Wang Youcai lost his eyes to gain ultimate enlightenment, Fatty gained numerous wives and concubines, and Meng Hao made a meteoric rise.

As of this moment, Dong Hu was standing on Mount Daqing, there on Patriarch Reliance’s back as he charged up into the starry sky!

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# Chapter 1341: The Dao Sovereign Escapes!

Meng Hao was battering the land mass that was the 1st Heaven. Massive cracks and fissures were spreading out, and it was hard to tell how much longer the 1st Heaven would be able to hold together. Meanwhile, down in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, rumbling sounds echoed out from the region of the 33 Hells.

Then, the starry sky seemed to shatter as a huge rift opened up. A bedraggled figure trudged out, a figure who radiated both madness and venomous hatred.

He immediately coughed up a massive mouthful of blood, after which flames of insanity ignited within his eyes. Then he threw his head back and let out a piercing howl.

“Meng Hao, I hereby swear to wipe out your entire clan!!”

It was none other than the golden-armored Outsider Long Linzi who Meng Hao had lured into the 33 Hells, one of the Outsiders’ two Dao Sovereigns!

Currently, not a scrap of golden armor could be seen on him. He was in very sore straits, and was clearly fatigued. However, his energy level was no less than before, and in fact, he was slightly stronger. It was impossible to tell what torments he had endured within the 33 Hells, nor how he had managed to escape. However, the price he had paid was clearly unimaginable.

Were that not the case, he wouldn’t be so consumed with resentment.

As soon as he appeared, his divine sense spread out, whereupon a tremor ran through him. He heard the shouts and cries coming from the cultivators of the Eighth Mountain and Sea, as well as his fellow Outsiders, and looked up into the sky. Then, he saw his home, the land mass that was the 1st Heaven, beginning to crumble.

What filled him with more fury than ever was that he could clearly sense the aura of Meng Hao, whom he hated with a passion and couldn't wait to tear apart with his teeth.

“Meng Hao!” he growled, throwing his head back letting out a mindbogglingly powerful roar that filled the entire Eighth Mountain and Sea. All cultivators and Outsiders felt their minds trembling as Long Linzi transformed into a beam of bright light that shot up into the air.

Paragon Eegoo was still in the middle of battling Paragon Sea Dream. He hadn't been very anxious earlier, but was now considering paying any price, no matter how severe, to break away from the fight. However, as soon as he sensed Long Linzi's aura, his eyes began to shine with a strange light. The Imperial Lord who was fighting Ksitigarbha had the same reaction.

The three incarnations of the other Dao Sovereign breathed sighs of relief, and then let loose powerful streams of divine will, which sent ripples out into the void.

“Kill Meng Hao! Stop him!!”

“Regardless of the price, he must be cut down!!”

The shocking level of their divine will spread throughout the entire Mountain and Sea Realm, causing all cultivators to sense it. Those cultivators' faces instantly flickered, and anxiety sprang up in their hearts. Meng Hao had become the symbol of their spirit, the spark that fueled the flames in their eyes.

If the 1st Heaven truly fell, then that spark would grow into an inferno which could inundate Heaven and Earth. But… if the 1st Heaven didn't fall, and if Meng Hao died, then those flames would not do a lick of damage to anyone except themselves.

Countless numbers of cultivators watched anxiously as everything shook. As for Long Linzi, he knew exactly what his mission was. The safety of his homeland, and his enmity toward Meng Hao, became one, filling him with an explosive madness that caused him to disregard even his own safety.

“Meng Hao!” Long Linzi let out a mighty roar as he shot with incredible speed toward the 1st Heaven. As he neared, the land mass up above continued to break apart. There were even some places along the borders that were falling. Scattered fragments of stone were falling down through the starry sky, which were then set aflame by the friction of entering the region of the Mountain and Sea Realm. Soon, the starry sky was like a sea of flames.

Everyone watching was filled with complete and utter shock. Long Linzi even began to burn his own life force, causing flames to burst out around him as he shot toward the 1st Heaven.

In the same moment that he was about to set foot into the 1st Heaven, Meng Hao was hovering there in midair, looking at the mass of flames around him. Miserable shrieks rang out in his ears as the lands cracked and crumbled. Cities fell in ruin, and numerous buildings collapsed. Mountains became plains, and plains became rifts and valleys.

He could sense the power of expulsion coming from the world, as well as the bitterness of the world’s will as it howled in grief. Inwardly, Meng Hao sighed, then suddenly looked off into the distance.

A moment later, his eyes came to rest on Long Linzi, who had just burst into the 1st Heaven like a lightning bolt. This was his home, where he had grown up and practiced cultivation. He had many wonderful memories of this place, and everywhere he looked he could see places where he had spent time.

But now, looking around caused him to tremble, and his vision to turn red as if with blood. He wanted to say something, to shout out, but no sound would come. He began to pant, and the feeling of fury and madness within him was completely overwhelming.

“Y-you… you maniac!! I can’t believe you’re willing to destroy my people, my tribe, all the cities… the entire world! We might be at war, but how could you go so far!?!?” Long Linzi’s maddened eyes were completely bloodshot, and were even shedding tears of blood. His heart felt as if it were being stabbed. In all directions, he only saw destroyed cities, and countless numbers of his people dead or dying.

He smelled the blood of his fellow tribesmen, and could see piles of corpses and ruins….

“Meng Hao!!” he roared. Filled with hatred and madness, he transformed into a beam of light that shot toward Meng Hao, causing everything to shake.

“So you do understand that there are limits to the wars of cultivators. Mortals should be left alone.” Meng Hao looked scornfully at Long Linzi. Voice cool, he said, “I’m not sure about all of the other cultivators in the Mountains and Seas,” he continued, “But I live by the motto… an eye for an eye, blood for blood!

“Today, the extermination of the 1st Heaven is only the beginning!” Meng Hao’s voice was as cold as ice as it echoed out. At the same time, he clenched his right hand into a fist and then punched out toward Long Linzi.

He was 5,000 kilometers away, but he still unleashed the Life-Extermination Fist!

A will of extermination exploded out, sucking in all of the life force in the area, the life of the 1st Heaven. That fist strike shook lands, rocked mountains, and caused colors to flash in the air as it rumbled forth.

Long Linzi’s eyes widened. Although he was completely enraged, he was still in command of his senses. As soon as Meng Hao attacked, his heart began to thump. Even though the power of the fist strike came purely from

Meng Hao’s fleshly body, it still filled him with a sensation of intense danger.

Without any hesitation, he performed a double-handed incantation gesture and then pointed toward Meng Hao. Instantly, Essence power exploded out, becoming a six-colored vortex that slammed into Meng Hao’s fist strike.

RUMBLE!

Heaven and Earth were trembling, as was Long Linzi as he staggered backward, blood spraying out of his mouth. Meng Hao also fell back, and although every step he took was upon the air itself, the ground below quaked in response, and after a few steps, it exploded.

The ground collapsed for 3,000 meters in all directions as a huge hole appeared in the earth. Rocks and rubble fell down toward the Mountain and Sea Realm as a crater was opened up that pierced through the entire 1st Heaven.

In fact, if you looked down into that breach, you would be able to see the Mountain and Sea Realm down below.

That was how Meng Hao fought: borrowing the force of an attack against him to unlesh his own bombardment.

Long Linzi roared, and his hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, causing six Essences to erupt out. They instantly transformed into six ferocious lizards, which radiated fearsome wills of extermination as they charged Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, and he laughed coldly. His right hand flashed with an incantation gesture, and then he waved it out, summoning the Paragon Bridge. When the Paragon Bridge descended onto the six Essence lizards, a massive rumbling boom echoed out as everything was destroyed.

Long Linzi looked at the shattered lands that were his home, and screamed. Then, laughing bitterly, he began to burn his life force to explosively increase the power of his cultivation base. In the blink of an eye, he pierced through the air to appear in front of Meng Hao. His hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, and flames leapt out to form a gigantic mouth which lunged toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao had no time to dodge. He simply watched as the black mouth of flames bit down onto him.

Black flames raged as everything was ripped open: the sky, the land, and the air. But then, rumbling sounds could be heard as the black flames collapsed, and Meng Hao walked out, holding the Battle Weapon.

He didn’t pause for even a moment before charging Long Linzi. The Battle Weapon was incredibly powerful, but was also quite draining. Although Meng Hao was careful with how he drew upon his cultivation base, when the time came to attack, he never hesitated. And now, the Battle Weapon was slashing down toward Long Linzi.

In that instant, however, a tremor ran through Long Linzi, and he suddenly threw his head back and howled. Blood sprayed out of his mouth as his body unexpectedly split apart like a cicada shedding its carapace. Shockingly, only one of those bodies was hit by the Battle Weapon!

The other body fell back in full retreat, black light flickering around him. Although his aura had diminished, he was completely uninjured.

“How many times can you attack like that?!” Long Linzi roared, a windstorm kicking up around him.

Meng Hao frowned, performed an incantation gesture with his left hand, and then pointed toward Long Linzi. It was the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex, and yet, as soon as the Hexing magic was unleashed, Long Linzi threw his head back and roared.

“Mother of lizards, will of the 1st Heaven, safeguard me!” as Long Linzi roared, a shocking will arose from within the crumbling 1st Heaven. It instantly descended upon Long Linzi, fighting back against the Hexing magic, completely negating it in shocking fashion!

Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed, but he didn’t hesitate. He put the Battle Weapon away and then clenched his fist to unleash the Bedevilment Fist.

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# Chapter 1342: Earth Shatters!

Long Linzi was sent tumbling backward with a boom. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, but a vicious expression could be seen on his face as he began to perform an incantation gesture. However, even as he did so, Meng Hao snorted coldly and transformed into an azure roc.

As the roc closed in, talons ripped through the air toward Long Linzi.

Even as those talons closed in, rumbling sounds echoed out from Long Linzi as he abandoned his humanoid shape and transformed into a black lizard. Roaring, he swept his tail through the air, shattering it as it bashed into the roc.

The azure roc shattered, and blood oozed out of the corners of Meng Hao’s mouth. However, he didn’t slow down. Instead, his right hand clenched into a fist and he punched Long Linzi directly in the chest!

This was none other than the God-Slaying Fist!!

It converged his will with the will of Heaven, turning into a fist strike that could exterminate everything!

Massive booms rang out as the fist absorbed half of the life force of the entire 1st Heaven, unleashing both a spirit of Bedevilment and a will of God-Slaying. Long Linzi screamed miserably as he was sent tumbling backward. His flesh and blood were mangled, his scales shattered. He slammed into the ground, which quaked as a huge crater opened up!

As that crater crumbled open, Meng Hao once again began to grow in size until he was 3,000 meters tall. Then he took a step forward, leaping into the crater and slamming another fist toward Long Linzi.

However, as the fist was unleashed, Meng Hao frowned. Long Linzi body was somewhat blurry, and he even let out a cold snort.

“Not real?” Meng Hao murmured, his expression calm. However, his right hand didn’t slow down, but instead sped up as it rocketed toward the illusory figure. The full power of his fleshly body and his cultivation base backed the fist strike as it passed through the illusion and slammed into the earth behind it.

The resulting boom shook the entire land mass. Several massive craters formed that penetrated all the way through to the other side of the land mass, sending massive amounts of rubble tumbling down toward the Mountain and Sea Realm.

As for Meng Hao himself, he followed the collapse of the crater down, evading the vicious tail strike which swept out from Long Linzi.

As the tail screamed past his head, Long Linzi roared viciously, then changed tactics, reaching out with his hands to grab Meng Hao.

“You don’t need to come after me,” Meng Hao said coolly. The Lightning Cauldron suddenly appeared above his head. Lighting danced, and he turned in the direction of Long Linzi, instantly switching places with him via Form Displacement Transposition.

The moment they switched locations, Meng Hao unleashed his divine sense, which was eighty percent as powerful as a Paragon’s.

A boom could be heard as it crushed onto Long Linzi, shoving him downward. Divine sense that powerful should have been enough to seriously injure him, and yet an enormous statue suddenly appeared behind him, which surrounded Long Linzi and also resisted the divine sense.

As it fought back, it pushed aggressively toward Meng Hao. Just when Meng Hao was about to counterattack, a sacrificial power suddenly rose up from within the Fourth Mountain and Sea.

That sacrificial power caused Long Linzi to grow rapidly, and also increased the level of his cultivation base. He then threw his head back and howled as he shot toward Meng Hao at top speed.

Meng Hao frowned. He could tell that the Outsider Imperial Lord who was fighting with Ksitigarbha in the Fourth Mountain and Sea could not extricate himself from the fight. Instead, he had unleashed this secret magic, taking some of his own cultivation base and imparting it upon Long Linzi.

Rumbling echoed out as flames erupted around the incoming Long Linzi. Then he performed an incantation gesture, and the huge statue’s eyes opened. It glared at Meng Hao with a look like death itself, completely locking down the area surrounding him.

“Die!” howled Long Linzi, barreling forward to slam his head into Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s right hand shot up, and the meat jelly appeared. Knowing exactly what Meng Hao wanted, it simply sighed and transformed into a wide rubbery membrane.

A mighty thwacking sound echoed out as Long Linzi slammed into the meat jelly and was then propelled backward, the force of his blow dispersed. Trembling, Long Linzi let out a roar, and yet, it couldn’t drown out the cry of pain that rang out from the meat jelly’s mouth.

“OWWW! That hurt like hell! Lord Third gives up! I give up!” The meat jelly rapidly shrank back down, transforming into a beam of light that shot back into Meng Hao’s bag of holding.

As for Long Linzi, the backlash sent stabs of pain throughout his body, setting his qi and blood aboil, and temporarily freezing up his cultivation base.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. Even as Long Linzi fell back, he extended his right hand and waved his finger to unleash the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex.

Long Linzi lurched to a stop; they were no longer in the 1st Heaven now, but rather, underneath it. Therefore, Long Linzi could no longer benefit from the blessing of the will of the 1st Heaven, and thus, the Demon Sealing Hex immediately succeeded.

Almost as soon as Long Linzi lurched to a stop, the Battle Weapon appeared in Meng Hao's hand, which he slashed out.

"Let's see how you escape this time!" he said. Killing intent flickered in Meng Hao's eyes.

This slashing blade was moving too fast for Long Linzi to be able to defend against. No escape magic could be used, and he was also locked in place by Meng Hao's Hexing magic.

However, it was at this point that, in another part of the starry sky, the Outsider Paragon who was fighting Sea Dream suddenly let out a powerful roar, causing a blood-colored light to shine from its body.

Instantly, a similar blood-colored light began to shine from Long Linzi. Apparently, some sort of strange connection had sprung up between the two of them!

"Blood Symbiosis?" Sea Dream said coldly. "Eegoo, you really dare to unleash this magic while fighting me?" She immediately attacked the Paragon. However, because of the blood-colored light, Meng Hao's attack was already doomed to fail. Long Linzi vanished, reappearing off in the distance a moment later. Meanwhile, Meng Hao's Battle Weapon slashed a massive rift into the void.

Off in the distance, Long Linzi glared at Meng Hao, his lips twisting into a smile. However, instead of heading toward Meng Hao again, he turned and shot toward the Mountain and Sea Realm. Meng Hao simply watched him go, eyes cold.

"Meng Hao, since you dare to exterminate the 1st Heaven, I'll just start exterminating cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm! Let's see… whether or not you choose to save them!" Long Linzi was already coughing up blood, and in a completely bedraggled state. Roaring, he shot toward the Mountain and Sea Realm, hoping to force Meng Hao to stop attacking the 1st Heaven!

You want to wipe out the 1st Heaven? I’ll slaughter your Mountain and Sea cultivators! Let’s see which of us is the most ruthless, and who gives in first!

The maddened Long Linzi rapidly picked up speed.

“Do you care more about this dying land mass than the living cultivators of the Mountains and Seas? What’s your choice, Meng Hao?”

Meng Hao’s pupils constricted. The effective power of his cultivation base was already past the 5-Essences level, and was fully in the 6-Essences level. However, Long Linzi was at the same level. Although there was some difference between them, that difference wasn’t vast. Furthermore, Meng Hao’s most powerful asset, his divine sense, was something his opponent was already equipped to defend himself against.

Most relevant was that he had received blessings from an Imperial Lord and a Paragon. Because of all those terrifying enhancements, he had numerous ways to avoid death. Were that not the case, he would already be dead, cut down by Meng Hao’s Battle Weapon.

An unsightly expression appeared on Meng Hao’s face. Suddenly, he transmitted a message. “Choumen Tai, can you turn this Outsider Paragon Eegoo into a puppet?”

Choumen Tai’s ancient voice immediately echoed back in response. “To guarantee success, it must be done when the Paragon is personally attacking you. I only have one chance to pull it off, and in this situation the likelihood of success is less than thirty percent.”

In all of Meng Hao’s calculations, he had never anticipated that Long Linzi would escape from the battle at such a critical moment. Now that he thought about it, it most likely had something to do with the Outsider Paragon.

Only that Paragon would be able to save Long Linzi and then use him to pin Meng Hao down.

Meng Hao had no choice. Rationally speaking, he should just continue to attack the 1st Heaven. However, his heart wouldn’t let him do that.

Sighing softly, he was about to make his choice when his eyes suddenly widened. Looking down toward the Mountain and Sea Realm, he saw a bright beam of light shooting with incredible speed… directly toward Long Linzi!

“Patriarch Reliance….” Meng Hao thought, completely shaken.

It was none other than Patriarch Reliance, howling as he flew along at top speed.

“Hey, you wimpy little lizard, Patriarch Reliance is here to put you in your place!” Patriarch Reliance roared, suddenly growing even more gargantuan in size as he barreled toward the Long Linzi.

At the same time, a tremor ran through Patriarch Reliance, and rumbling sounds could be heard as innumerable magical symbols appeared all over him. When Patriarch Reliance wasn’t attacking Meng Hao, those magical symbols could actually bolster the power of his cultivation base. Furthermore, the fluctuations of sealing marks being released suddenly emanated out.

Patriarch Reliance’s biggest secret was something that no one except for Meng Hao knew about.He had been alive since the days of the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect. When he and Meng Hao had clashed in the past, the cultivation base power he had unleashed was already in the Dao Realm. There was even a brief moment once where he had emitted the fluctuations of a Dao Lord.

Patriarch Reliance was one tough cookie, and the fact that he was now on a collision course with him filled Long Linzi with fear. Now, thanks to the interference of Patriarch Reliance, he was unable to engage in any form of slaughter in the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Meng Hao laughed loudly. Now, it was without any hesitation that he shot back toward the land mass that was the 1st Heaven. To the grief of the will of the 1st Heaven, rumbling could be heard as more cities fell, and more statues were destroyed. Mountains and rivers vanished, and the entire land mass began to show signs that it was going to fall completely!

Chunks of rubble began to drop down as fissures spread out across the entire land mass. Rumbling sounds could be heard as huge sections of land began to tumble down.

All of the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm watched as the land mass that was the 1st Heaven began to shatter into pieces!

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# Chapter 1343: Heaven Collapses!!

Spirits were stirred!

As of this moment, all cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm felt their spirits rising in unprecedented fashion!

“Mountain and Sea Cultivators, fight to the death!!” In all of the Nine Mountains and Seas, the cultivators were whipped into an excited frenzy. They immediately launched vicious counterattacks against the Outsiders. At the same time, their hearts were filled with anticipation. Anticipation… at the thought of the Heaven which loomed over them falling to pieces.

They were waiting. Each and every one of the Mountain and Sea cultivators was waiting!

They were waiting… for Heaven to collapse!

Afterward, that Heaven would never again block the gazes of the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm as they looked up into the sky. Layer by layer, the sealing of the 33 Heavens would be destroyed, and the Mountain and Sea cultivators… would be able to look up into the true starry sky, and see the true Vast Expanse!

It would be just like in the days of the Paragon Immortal Realm, when they were valiant and indomitable in spirit!

The Outsiders were in a daze, trembling as they looked up at the shattering land mass that was the 1st Heaven. For the first time, they truly felt fear, and the dread regarding the Paragon Immortal Realm which had existed deep in their blood, and was now gradually seeping out.

Countless Outsiders were shaking in fear, and although they were still fighting, still struggling against the Mountain and Sea cultivators, that was only because they still held hope that… the land mass above would not collapse!

The Imperial Lord roared, and the Paragon raged. Wild colors flashed in Heaven and Earth, and massive rumbling sounds could be heard. The 1st Heaven was shaking violently, and more pieces were beginning to crumble away!

The will of the world that existed in the 1st Heaven let out a scream of boundless grief, as if it were dying….

Shockingly, corpses were now falling down through the cracks that spread throughout the 1st Heaven. There were also the crumbled ruins of buildings, and even large swaths of entire cities.

The whole world was completely shaken!

“NO!!” Despondent howls rang out from several different locations among the Mountains and Seas, where the incarnations of the Outsider Dao Sovereign were.

Those various incarnations had been fighting the Mountain and Sea Lords, but now they were trembling and losing the will to fight. Their eyes were bright red, and in their madness, tears of blood were seeping down.

That was because they had just caught sight of a city falling down out of the sky. Only about half of it was left intact, and that city was actually the personal fiefdom of the Outsider Dao Sovereign in the 1st Heaven. It also… was the home of many of his relatives!!

But now, the city was collapsing, and thus, one could imagine the fates of all of those relatives.

“Meng Hao!!” howled the incarnations of the Outsider Dao Sovereign, which then went all out, paying any price, even burning their life forces to try to break out from being pinned down by the Mountain and Sea Lords.

Of course, the Mountain and Sea Lords weren’t in the same position as the Outsider Dao Sovereign, and weren’t willing to burn their life forces. In the brief moment of hesitation in which they tried to decide what to do, the Dao Sovereign’s incarnations burst free.

Beams of burning light shot through the air to converge together into a unified figure, which was the complete Dao Sovereign!

Although his incarnations had been severely injured, and two had been cut down by Meng Hao, burning his life force quickly returned him to his peak. Throwing his head back and howling, he shot toward the 1st Heaven, brimming with hatred and madness.

As of this moment, all Outsiders could see what was happening, and were shaking in anticipation of their Dao Sovereign preventing their home from being destroyed!

Tears of blood streaked down the Outsider Dao Sovereign’s face as he shot through the air toward the 1st Heaven. However, in almost the exact same instant that he took to flight, massive, jaw-dropping rumbling sounds echoed out from the 1st Heaven, shaking the entire Mountain and Sea Realm. The noise was so loud that cultivators and Outsiders alike felt as if their eardrums would burst at any moment. All of them stopped fighting and looked up toward the 1st Heaven.

What they saw was a massive crack splitting the entire land mass, as a chunk that comprised nearly ten percent of the entire structure… suddenly begin to split off, accompanied by grating sounds as loud as thunder.

A massive chunk of the overall land mass, as piece large as the starry sky of any of the Mountains and Seas, slowly… began to sag down!!

As that chunk slowly tilted to the side, all buildings and structures atop the land mass crumbled. However, it was also possible to see areas where the chunk was still connected to the main land mass.

It was in that moment that Meng Hao appeared. He raised his right hand and unleashed a fist strike. To the shock of everyone, that blast… cut all connections with the main land mass.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

A full ten percent of the entire land mass began to fall down toward the Mountain and Sea Realm. It was incredibly enormous, so big that it seemed capable of crushing anything beneath it. However, it was then that the will of the Mountains and Seas swept out, shredding the lifeless chunk into countless clouds of rubble, which exploded out into the starry sky like blooming flowers and then slowly floated downward.

The Mountain and Sea Realm went completely silent. The Outsiders stared with wide eyes.

The Outsider Dao Sovereign was trembling, and then let out a miserable howl filled with despair, hatred, and even… regret!

Whether he regretted splitting himself into multiple incarnations, or regretted marching out to battle, and the war itself… only he could know.

Then, rumbling sounds echoed out as a second chunk of the landmass began to split off. Then a third, a fourth, and a fifth….

Seas of flame raged in the starry sky, illuminating the entire Mountain and Sea Realm. By now, the land mass was completely riddled with massive cracks. One chunk after another began to break off and fall down toward the Mountain and Sea Realm.

A long moment passed, and then the loudest boom of them all echoed out, a boom which rocked the whole Mountain and Sea Realm, and the entire 1st Heaven.

BOOOM!!

It was like a sudden clap of thunder that roared out into the starry sky, and even caused the Mountain and Sea Realm to vibrate…. Then, gasps began to rise up into the air.

The 1st Heaven… was completely collapsing!

All cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm could see that it was completely and utterly broken into countless pieces.

Rubble fell down, as if the 1st Heaven were a mirror which had been shattered. Not a single piece of land was qualified to remain floating up above in the starry sky….

All of the shattered, crushed and broken remnants fell down out of the sky.

Heaven collapsed!

That collapse was only a collapse of the 1st Heaven, but as of this moment, it was a huge blow to all Outsiders within the Mountain and Sea Realm. They were trembling violently, and none of them could even speak. Their eyes were filled with blankness and despair….

Their home was gone….

Their home, which had flourished for tens upon tens of thousands of years, was now gone….

Their fellow tribe members were gone….

In the past, countless relatives had lived quiet lives up in the 1st Heaven, but now they were gone. The 1st Heaven was destroyed, shattered into pieces. Cities, rubble, and corpses fell down like rain. Everything… was no more.

Despair washed through the Outsiders, and they no longer had any will to fight. They were trembling, and terrified….

In sharp contrast, the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm were enlivened, and completely ready to do battle!

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# Chapter 1344: Another Encounter With World Essence!

Meng Hao had truly done something that shook Heaven and Earth…. A mighty act!

He could not illuminate every inch of the starry sky of the Mountain and Sea Realm, but he could cause light to shine within the eyes of all cultivators there, to gleam within their hearts and their divine will!

That light was the spirit of the Mountain and Sea Realm, the rise to prominence of an entire people!

He destroyed the 1st Heaven to crush the hearts of the Outsiders, and to give hope to the Mountain and Sea cultivators, to stir their hearts!!

We can do it!

We can still secure victory!!

Rumbling echoed down from above, and at the same time, the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm roared. Their impassioned cries swept out like tempests; not even the sounds of the 1st Heaven's destruction could drown them out!

"The 1st Heaven… is collapsing!!"

"The 1st Heaven… is no more!!"

"He did it! Meng Hao… actually did it!!" People were shouting and crying, and their tears glistened under the flickering light of the flames overhead;

the light their eyes shone with was that of hope, of inspiration, and of determination.

Within the Seventh Mountain and Sea, on Planet Tiger Cage, the cultivators were all trembling with excitement. Their hearts had been dead, but now that the 1st Heaven was collapsing, it was as if they had been resurrected.

In the Nine Mountains and Seas, the cultivators on all of the battlefields had been repressed for far too long. Now that the 1st Heaven had collapsed, they erupted out, exploded, and their rising spirits filled the entire Mountain and Sea Realm.

“Meng Hao, Meng Hao!” It was hard to say who said it first, but soon everyone was chanting his name. All of the voices in the Mountain and Sea Realm joined together into a thunderous cry.

The sound of their conjoined voices rose up through the starry sky, until even Meng Hao could hear them.

“Meng Hao, Meng Hao!”

“Meng Hao, Meng Hao!!”

The Mountain and Sea Realm was astir in a way it had never been before. The cultivators were bursting with excitement, and as for the Outsiders, they were trembling in despair and utter terror.

Although they didn’t completely understand, they could sense that the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm were different than they had been before. They were more valiant, more unyielding, and more terrifying!

It was as if a unified people was finally rising up!

It was as if the Mountain and Sea Realm had been a sleeping giant that anyone could humiliate freely. But now, that giant… had opened its eyes. It was… awake!

That awakening caused Heaven and Earth to flash with colors!

That awakening caused the starry sky to be completely shaken!

The crumbling 1st Heaven up above was like a sacrificial offering which was now awakening the Mountain and Sea Realm!

In the Ninth Mountain and Sea, everyone in the Fang Clan was cheering. Fang Xiufeng couldn’t be more excited as he watched Meng Hao, his heart bursting with intense pride. He wanted to shout out to all cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm, “Meng Hao is MY son!!”

All of the Chosen who Meng Hao had dealt with in the past, be it Fan Dong’er or Ji Yin, couldn’t help but be swept up in the excitement. Although they had some mixed emotions, they weren’t thinking about the things that had happened in the past. In their eyes, they saw… a blazing sun, lifting the spirits of the people…. Meng Hao!

In fact, there were even some cultivators who looked over at those Chosen and suddenly realized that owing Meng Hao money wasn’t necessarily such a bad thing….

If Meng Hao asked, there would be hosts of people who would elatedly write promissory notes for him….

To be connected to him by Karma could be considered good fortune!

Xu Qing was smiling, Fang Yu was smiling, and Meng Li was smiling. A smile could even be seen on the face of Li Ling’er. As of this moment, all cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm felt something different inside of them that hadn’t been there before.

On Planet South Heaven, Shui Dongliu watched the Mountain and Sea Realm rise up, watched hope appear, and he threw his head back and laughed.

“With this spirit, then… even if the Mountains and Seas are defeated, then as long as a single cultivator remains alive, then the spark will burn, and the bloodline of the Mountains and Seas will be passed down for all eternity!”

Shui Dongliu laughed heartily, a laughter of pure happiness. He knew that as of this day, victory and defeat… were not important.

Up in the starry sky, Meng Hao hovered there, looking down at the entirety of the Mountain and Sea Realm. At the same time, the cultivators down below were looking up through the shattered remnants of the 1st Heaven at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao felt as if he should say something, so he thought for a moment, then spoke. “I am a Mountain and Sea cultivator!”

He bolstered his words with his cultivation base and divine sense, causing them to echo out, starting with the Fourth Mountain and Sea, then spreading to the Third, Second, First as well as the Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth and Ninth.

Gradually, everyone in the Mountain and Sea Realm was shouting the exact same thing!

“I am a Mountain and Sea cultivator!!”

“I am a Mountain and Sea cultivator!!”

“I am a Mountain and Sea cultivator!!” The sound rolled out as each and every cultivator shouted from the bottoms of their heart, shouted words that contained their lives, their wills, and their pride!

Even more shocking was what happened next. There on Planet South Heaven, Shui Dongliu threw his head back and lifted both hands up into the air. In response, the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm began to boil and rumble explosively. Massive amounts of the energy of Heaven and Earth, which had been stored up for years, now spread out through the entire Mountain and Sea Realm, boring into the bodies of all cultivators.

One by one, people began to roar as they experienced cultivation base breakthroughs!!

They had been suppressed for far too long, but now, the seal of the 33 Heavens was weakening. Now that the Mountain and Sea Realm had been stimulated, the cultivators began to soar!

Henceforth… the 33 Heavens… were now 32 Heavens, and their seal had lost one of its layers!

As the rumbling sounds echoed out into the ears of the Outsiders, they shook, and began to edge backward. They no longer had any will or faith to fight whatsoever.

Even the Outsider Dao Sovereign Long Linzi who was fighting Patriarch Reliance was shaking.

"Perhaps… we were mistaken. A Mountain and Sea Realm like this, an extension of the Paragon Immortal Realm itself, is something… that we cannot subjugate… that we cannot destroy…."

The Outsider Imperial Lord fighting with Ksitigarbha also began to shake. His cultivation base put him on the cusp of being a Paragon, and therefore, he could see even more of what was happening. He could see the Mountain and Sea Realm awakening, and he could see its aura slowly rising up from deep within.

Outsider Paragon Eegoo, who was fighting Paragon Sea Dream, felt intense bitterness in his heart. As a Paragon, he could see the entirety of the Mountain and Sea Realm, and understood everything that was happening. He could also sense that terrifying aura rising up, the pride which had been passed down all the way from the Paragon Immortal Realm.

The Immortals from the era of the Paragon Immortal Realm had been valiant, proud without being arrogant. They had been powerful, but not cruel, and had thus subjugated numerous Lower Realms, sweeping across all Heaven and Earth, dominating the starry sky!

It had been a very, very long time since Paragon Eegoo saw an aura like this, and yet… here it was on this day. Yet again, he felt that aura taking root.

“This kid might not love fighting,” he thought, “and he might not understand troop movements and formations. Nor does he excel in the art of war, or of military campaigns. However he… has mastered the quintessence of war!

“Ordinary people think that war is about subjugation. Some more intelligent people realize that it is about death and destruction. However… the truly wise know… that war is about destroying the spirit of your enemy….

“Any given world, and any given people, have a spirit that leads to the most terrifying kind of willpower. Back in the days of the Paragon Immortal Realm, that spirit was suppressed, and that willpower altered, forced to hole up here. It was sealed up, not just by the 33 Heavens, but by the people themselves.

“But now, everything has changed…. That kid, must die!” The Outsider Paragon’s eyes flickered with cold light.

It was at about this time that bitter laughter could be heard not too far away from Meng Hao. It was the Outsider Dao Sovereign, who had now converged his incarnations back together, who had burned his life force to try to prevent the 1st Heaven from collapsing. However, he had acted too late. Now, his mind was completely shaking. Rumbling sounds echoed out as he shot murderously toward Meng Hao, raving in madness.

“You destroyed my home, and you destroyed my people!” he shrieked as he closed in at top speed. “You wiped out everything that was ours, Meng Hao!!”

“You wiped yourselves out,” Meng Hao said calmly. He was just about to launch an attack, when all of a sudden, he turned to look at the collapsing 1st Heaven.

He could sense… the aura of Essence!

“World Essence!” he thought. Eyes glittering, heart surging with elation, he thought back to the World Essence of the Windswept Realm. The enormous land mass that was the 1st Heaven also had Essence, although it vastly exceeded the Essence from the Windswept Realm. After all, this was one of the surviving, unbroken remnants of the 3,000 Lower Realms.

Therefore, it was only natural… that this place had World Essence! 1

World Essence was a supreme Dao, a complete Dao based on an entire World. As such, different worlds had different types of World Essence!

Years before, Meng Hao had experienced numerous deadly situations, all to acquire the World Essence of the Windswept Realm. After acquiring it, he had been able to unlock his Allheaven Dao Immortal bloodline, and had even been able to plant the Allheaven Dao seed within the blood of the entire Fang Clan!

That World Essence had affected Meng Hao in a profound way. In fact, later on, the only reason why he eventually rose to the heights he had, to be able to slaughter Dao Lords and Dao Sovereigns, was because of his Allheaven bloodline. And that… was because of the Windswept Realm's World Essence, the Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao!

As of this moment, Meng Hao was completely shaken. He could sense the Allheaven Dao Immortal blood inside him boiling, as if it were consumed by incredible thirst. He suddenly had the intense premonition that if he could get that World Essence, then he might have a chance to further awaken his Allheaven Dao Immortal blood!

He could even sense that the World Essence of the 1st Heaven was something very different than the Windswept Realm's Traitorous Sutra of the Rebel Dao. If he could gain enlightenment of it, the results would be extraordinary!

It could help cultivators gain enlightenment of great Dao relics of Heaven and Earth.

The 33 Heavens had tolerated the Windswept Realm only because of its World Essence which they coveted.

Right now, as the land mass that was the 1st Heaven collapsed, it was possible to tell that this World Essence was far more powerful than the Windswept Realm’s. Furthermore… it was now seeping out through the shattered cracks that riddled the 1st Heaven.

Meng Hao didn’t hesitate for a moment. He flickered into motion, avoiding the Outsider Dao Sovereign to suddenly appear in the location of the World Essence.

When that happened, an intense Essence aura rumbled out toward Meng Hao. His mind suddenly grew a hundred times clearer, and he became a hundred times more agile. The feeling of a great Dao, of a powerful Essence, was even more explosive than before.

Most importantly, his powers of deduction were now vastly beyond what they had been.

Even his bloodline experienced strange transformations, signs of absorption and change!

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# Chapter 1345: Hexing Magic Essence!

As soon as Meng Hao sensed the World Essence, he began to absorb it. The World Essence around him began to move, and then became visible for all to see.

Countless motes of light, emanating soft glows, floated out from the 1st Heaven and spread out to fill the entire area. From a distance, it was possible to see one hundred thousand of them, forming together into the shape of a lizard.

As for Meng Hao, he was located where that lizard’s heart would be, where the World Essence was most dense!

At this point, the Outsider Dao Sovereign gasped, then cried out, “World Essence!!”

The Outsider Paragon fighting Sea Dream saw the lizard-shaped World Essence, and his eyes filled with grief.

That was not the Essence of just any world, that was the World Essence from where he had been born, and grown up. Were it given enough time, it could actually become… a real living being!

All of the cultivators and Outsiders could see what was happening, although not everyone understood it.

Of course, thanks to the events which had occurred in the Windswept Realm, the Echelon cultivators from the various Mountains and Seas knew exactly what they were looking at, and their jaws dropped. It only took an instant for them to realize that this was World Essence.

Meng Hao’s heart was pounding. Based on the level of his current cultivation base, being able to sense this World Essence filled him with an intense desire to acquire it. Furthermore, he knew that World Essence was extremely precious, especially to him.

He was currently in the very middle of all of the World Essence, and every breath he took caused vast amounts of it to flow into him. His thinking grew quicker, his powers of deduction stronger, and even his willpower seemed to increase. It was if he were becoming more at one with Heaven and Earth.

It was at this same point that the Outsider Dao Sovereign, eyes red, life force burning, suddenly had a strange feeling. He wasn’t sure if it was an illusion or not, but after seeing Meng Hao begin to absorb the World Essence, he almost thought he could hear the World Essence screaming.

This was the Essence of his home, the homeland of his heart, the mother of lizards!

“Meng Hao!” he roared. He flickered into motion, shooting into the World Essence in an attempt to stop Meng Hao. However, as he closed in, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, and he dodged to the side, clearly not interested in tangling with the Outsider Dao Sovereign. Instead, he went all-out to continue to absorb the World Essence.

When he couldn’t dodge to the side, he used the Lightning Cauldron and Form Displacement Transposition to put distance between the two of them as he continued to absorb the World Essence. As for the Outsider Dao Sovereign, considering that Meng Hao wasn’t of a mind to do combat, there was little he could do.

After all, although it might seem as if they were on the same level in terms of battle prowess, the truth of the matter was that Meng Hao was now just a bit stronger than the Outsider Dao Sovereign!

Were it not for the fact that the World Essence seemed unstable, as if it might fade away at any moment, then Meng Hao would definitely have already attacked and killed him, and then continued the absorption process later.

Unfortunately, there was no time for that. His body flashed as he dodged a black sea of flames, after which he took in a deep breath, causing massive amounts of World Essence to rumble toward him.

As the World Essence shrank down, miserable screams echoed out that could be heard nowhere else except in the minds of the Outsiders.

It was as if the World Essence was begging its people, begging all lizard cultivators, to help it!

Throughout the Mountain and Sea Realm, the Outsiders were trembling, and expressions of grief could be seen on their faces. However, there was nothing they could do….

Meng Hao continued to absorb the World Essence, and his eyes began to glow with increasing brightness. He almost looked like a sun, radiating a dazzling, boundless light of understanding.

He could clearly sense his thoughts racing faster than ever before; he could detect things that he had never been able to detect before, and could also feel the indescribable enlightenment of a Dao.

It was as if the great Daos of Heaven and Earth were all there in front of him, and all he had to do was pick one and attempt to understand it. Then… it would be able to grow into an Essence which belonged solely to him.

This was not like the Divine Flame, which was an external entity, and not his own!

What he was able to do now actually came from his experiences back in the Windswept Realm. There, he had laid the foundation by coming to enlightenment regarding 3,000 great Daos. That became the sowing of Karma, and today he was able to reap it!

“Understanding Essence….” he thought, his eyes flashing.

“I don’t need to gain enlightenment of any outside Essence. 3,000 great Daos. 3,000 Essences. Nobody can have all 3,000…. I only need enlightenment of nine Daos!

“Those nine Daos aren’t anything I need to jealously attempt to acquire from others, but rather, things which exist inside of me…. There are definitely no Essences more suitable to me than the Nine Demon Sealing Hexes!

“I came up with this idea before, to use the Demon Sealing Hexing magics as my Dao Realm Essences. If each one of the Hexes can be an Essence, then… when I get all nine Hexes, I will have nine Essences. And that is when I, Meng Hao… will step into the pinnacle of the Paragon level!” Meng Hao’s eyes were shining brightly, and his heart was pounding. As of this moment, he didn’t hesitate at all. He went all out with every scrap of power he could muster to gain complete enlightenment of… the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex!

Body-Spirit Hexing!

In the instant that Meng Hao made his decision to seek enlightenment of the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex, rumbling sounds filled his mind as all of his mental faculties focused completely on that Hex!

His mind filled with a roaring like the crash of endless thunder as he analyzed the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex, focused on it, broke it apart and dug into it!

He contemplated why the Hex could cease the movement of the cultivation base, and he pondered how it could even control Essence. He analyzed why the Hex was even capable of locking down Nascent Divinities!

He even analyzed how the Eighth Generation Demon Sealer… created this particular Hexing magic!

Without the World Essence, it would have taken Meng Hao a very, very long time to do something like this, and would have required constant research and contemplation. But now, the World Essence almost seemed to make time move differently; it was as if 10,000 years passed by for Meng Hao with a single thought, benefiting him with all of the understanding he would come to in such a time!

As he continued to analyze and ponder, screams echoed endlessly within the minds of the Outsiders, and they knew that the motes of light that were the World Essence were being uncontrollably absorbed by Meng Hao.

In the blink of an eye, 30,000 motes of light had been sucked into him.

His powers of deduction became more profound, and he could analyze things faster. His eyes gleamed so brightly that anyone who could actually see him would be shocked.

It was at this point than an aura of enlightenment began to rise up from him, to merge with Heaven and Earth, as if he were becoming one with the world!

This type of enlightenment was something that all cultivators dreamed of. It was… Dao enlightenment!

“NO!!” screamed the Outsider Dao Sovereign, eyes flashing with madness. Suddenly, his body collapsed, spreading out into the starry sky to form a crimson sea of blood, upon which raged black flames.

The red and the black mixed with each other, turning into violet. This was apparently some sort of spirit dissolving grand magic; the Outsider Dao Sovereign was willing to abandon his fleshly body and his Dao foundation, to burn all of the power of his Nascent Divinity, to turn into a sea of flames that swept magnificently toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao did nothing to dodge or evade. His eyes shone with a strange light as the sea of blood surged toward him. Then, he waved his finger.

That wave of a finger didn’t unleash the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex, and yet a powerful ripple spread out, causing the sea of blood to lurch to a stop. However, it took only a moment to recover. Rumbling sounds echoed out as violet waves roared, sending blistering heat out toward Meng Hao, along with the power of extermination.

“DIE!” screamed the Outsider Dao Sovereign from within the sea of blood, causing a massive pressure to erupt out, spreading out in all directions and then crushing down onto Meng Hao.

This insane attack by the Outsider Dao Sovereign converged all of his willpower, and burned his cultivation base away in exchange for an attack that caused even Meng Hao to feel a twinge of fear.

A boom could be heard, and blood oozed out of the corners of Meng Hao’s mouth. His entire body was on fire as he staggered backward. And yet, he seemed to be completely ignoring that fact; a blankness could now be seen in his eyes, a blankness that came from deep and profound contemplation.

It was almost as if he didn’t see the danger which was right in front of him.

“DIIIIEEEEEEEEEE!” The sea of blood transformed into a huge face, which was none other than that of the Outsider Dao Sovereign. He glared at Meng Hao with intense hatred, howling as the sea of blood suddenly began to swirl, emanating an even more terrifying aura than before as it shot toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao sat within the sea of flames, frowning, his eyes filled with the gleam of augury.

“No, it’s not just a simple Hexing magic,” he muttered. “The Essence… is hidden within the Hexing magic…?” Suddenly, Meng Hao’s eyes glittered.

“I need more World Essence!” Completely ignoring the sea of blood bearing down on him, he suddenly took a step forward.

As his foot descended, the entire world seemed to superimpose upon itself. Then it split apart, as if he had walked into a different dimension, as if he were no longer within the Mountain and Sea Realm.

He was now outside of the sea of blood, which crashed onto his former position with a loud rumbling sound. At the same time, more of the World Essence surged toward Meng Hao.

10,000. 20,000…. In the blink of an eye, he had absorbed more than half of the World Essence!

His mind was now roaring, and his powers of deduction exploded, as he mentally broke apart the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex, until finally… he saw the Essence of the Hexing magic!

“Space….” A tremor ran through him.

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# Chapter 1346: Essence of space!

Meng Hao saw countless dimensions of space, all of them different sizes. Some were blurry, others were clear. They transformed into countless threads, threads that Meng Hao was very familiar with; every time he unleashed the Eighth Hex, these threads would appear, bind whoever was the target of the magic, and seal their cultivation base as well as their Nascent Divinity.

Originally, Meng Hao had assumed that the threads were natural laws of Heaven and Earth. But now that he could see them clearly, he understood that they… were definitely not natural or magical laws!

They were dimensional spaces!

Numerous dimensional spaces superimposed over each other and then exerted pressure onto a cultivator to seal their cultivation base and Nascent Divinity!

“Yes! This is how to truly lock someone down! Shackle the cultivation base with numerous dimensional spaces! In fact, it might be less appropriate to call it locking them down, and more appropriate to call it… a sealing!” Meng Hao’s mind was reeling, and his eyes shone with a strange light as the surrounding World Essence continued to pour into him.

The entire starry sky shook, and the Outsider who had transformed into a sea of flames seethed as he once again bore down on Meng Hao. However, instead of slamming into Meng Hao, he passed right through him.

It was as if Meng Hao was now hovering, not in the Mountain and Sea Realm, but in some other dimensional space. The only thing which remained behind was a shadow, an image which everyone could see but not touch!

As of this moment, Ksitigarbha’s heart was pounding. The Outsider Imperial Lord he was fighting felt his mind trembling, and he gasped as he looked toward Meng Hao with complete astonishment.

It wasn’t just them. Paragon Sea Dream and the Outsider Paragon Eegoo were also shocked.

The Mountain and Sea Lords, as well as the other Dao Realm experts of the Mountain and Sea Realm, all felt as if their minds were filled with crashing lightning as they realized… that they could sense the aura of Essence on Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s expression was calm, but the glow of augury in his eyes radiated dazzlingly, and the World Essence around him roared as he absorbed it with complete abandon.

60,000. 70,000. 80,000!!

Mere moments later, Meng Hao had absorbed more than 80,000 motes of light. Furthermore, he had entered a state in which something new was now floating in his mind…

Essence formed from space!

Why did the world have space, and what exactly was it?!

With the help of the World Essence, Meng Hao was able to analyze the subject, and to seek enlightenment of it. As of this moment, he had reached an unprecedentedly high peak. Rumbling could be heard as boundless light shone out from him to spread through the entire starry sky.

As of this moment, all cultivators and all Outsiders were completely shaken.

The Outsider Dao Sovereign was doing everything he could think of, but was incapable of even touching Meng Hao. All he could do was watch as

Meng Hao hovered there in the starry sky, and then closed his eyes.

He was now truly gaining Dao enlightenment!

“What is space…?” Meng Hao murmured. The sound of his voice echoed out, causing the starry sky to shake. Although his eyes were closed, in his mind, he could see numerous dimensional spaces, spreading out in all directions, stretching out over such a vast area that they seemed limitless.

“Length… is space….

“Height… is space….

“Breadth… is also space….

“Size, can also be an expression of space….” Among the countless dimensional spaces, he saw that they could be described in terms of length, height, breadth, and overall size. And yet all of that seemed to be only a portion of what space was. Those were all… descriptions of space.

However, Meng Hao still didn’t understand everything clearly. There was something he was missing, something he hadn’t grasped. His brow furrowed as he subconsciously continued to absorb more World Essence power.

He needed to increase his powers of augury and understanding… to gain enlightenment of the true meaning of the Essence of space!

As of this moment, he had completely forgotten about the sea of flames, about the Mountain and Sea Realm, about the war. He was completely and utterly immersed in Dao enlightenment.

The rest of the world was completely shaken. Both the Mountain and Sea Realm and the Outsiders had been in an uproar, but now they were silent. Even the Imperial Lord and the Paragon said nothing.

At long last, the Outsider Dao Sovereign who had been trying every method possible to kill Meng Hao finally had no choice… but to stop unleashing his magic.

It was pointless….

As Meng Hao sought Dao enlightenment, the area around him distorted, occasionally expanding, occasionally contracting. Sometimes it would bulge upward and downward, and sometimes it would sweep out to the left or right.

The Outsider Dao Sovereign was trembling in his form of the flame sea. He couldn’t affect Meng Hao at all, and in fact, was prevented from even getting close to him. The closer he got, the more unstable the void became, until destructive rifts even began to open up. In the end, he simply fled.

Currently nothing in existence could get close to that area, with the exception of Meng Hao, who was now gaining enlightenment of the Essence of space.

Meng Hao’s body was also in a distorted state of transformation. Rumbling could be heard as he expanded, then shrunk. In one instant he was as tiny as a mustard seed, in another, as huge as the Heavens!

The Outsider Paragon looked at Meng Hao with mixed emotions, and then bitterly muttered, “The Essence of space…. From ancient times until now, numerous almighty experts have sought enlightenment of it. However, those who succeeded are as rare as phoenix feathers or qilin horns….”

Sea Dream’s eyes shone with a strange light as she watched Meng Hao, and a smile slowly broke out on her face.

Everyone simply watched as Meng Hao hovered there with his eyes closed, the same as ever, seeking enlightenment. As of now, his state exceeded that of the Eighth Generation Demon Sealer when he actually created the Eighth Hex. At that time, he had only needed to understand the initial aspects regarding length, height, breadth, and size. With that, he had been able to create the Eighth Hex.

On the other hand, what Meng Hao was contemplating was beyond that. He was contemplating the very Essence of space!

That was an Essence filled with endless possibilities, and Meng Hao wanted to know all of them!

Normally, that would be virtually impossible, but with the aid of the World Essence, it was quite the opposite. Currently, rumbling sounds echoed out as Meng Hao continued to absorb more World Essence like mad.

By this point, Meng Hao had absorbed roughly ninety percent, 90,000 motes of light!

He only continued to absorb them faster and faster. At this point, his augury and contemplation of enlightenment had reached the pinnacle. The final 10,000 motes of World Essence light were sucked into him, whereupon his mind felt as if it had been split open by a massive boom that was so loud it was impossible to describe.

Amidst the rumbling, his eyes snapped open, and although an abstruse gleam could be seen therein, there was nothing else that was vastly different. And yet, at the same time, the contrast between the blackness of his pupils and whites of his eyes was more distinct than ever!

His eyes now sparkled in a way that seemed to indicate that they were filled with a great Dao of Heaven and Earth.

“So, that’s the Essence of space….” he said, smiling slightly. He could feel the Essence of space fading away within him, and could also sense his enhanced powers of augury and deduction dissipating. He sighed.

In almost the same instant that Meng Hao’s eyes opened, the instability in the surrounding void faded away. Furthermore, his body returned to the Mountain and Sea Realm. When the maddened Outsider Dao Sovereign saw that, his sea of flames form seethed, and he shot toward Meng Hao.

“Space… is nothing more than countless threads, formed together into a pattern. The patterns formed by those threads… are space!” Meng Hao shook his head, then waved his hand, causing a circle to appear beneath his feet.

“I am currently within space,” he said, looking down. Then he smiled as his enlightenment deepened. As for the sea of flames that was the Outsider Dao Sovereign, it appeared to be on the verge of consuming Meng Hao, but to the Dao Sovereign’s utter shock, he realized that the flames were stuck to the outside of the thread that formed the circle!

“Th-this… this….” The Outsider Dao Sovereign’s heart was battered by waves of shock, as were the hearts the other Outsider Dao Sovereign and the Paragon.

“Space! He actually gained enlightenment of the Essence of space!”

Meng Hao’s expression was calm as he looked at the circle formed by the thread, within which he stood. Then he smiled. “As for these threads… doesn’t the Essence I have gained enlightenment of consist of more than just the threads themselves?

“Within these threads are length, height, breadth, and size. They are limitless, and that is space…. They are flat, but actually….” He waved his right hand, causing a thread to stretch out from the circle, and then pass over him. In the blink of an eye, the circle of threads was no longer flat, but had transformed into… a sphere!

“With an additional thread, it is no longer a circle, but a sphere, like a world…. It’s too bad my enlightenment is insufficient, and I can’t sustain it for very long.” Even as Meng Hao murmured to himself, the sphere collapsed, and he sighed lightly.

“In my eyes, the world is just a canvas.” Meng Hao looked up at the shocked Outsider, who was still a sea of flames. Then Meng Hao waved his right hand, causing the flames to suddenly lock into place. Then they began to transform; no longer were they surrounding Meng Hao, but instead, they were now spreading out to form a static image of flames within the starry sky, like a painting!

Then he waved his hand, and four threads appeared, surrounding the flames, almost as if they were a picture frame.

“This, is space,” he said, his eyes flickering with a cold light.

Rumbling could be heard as the sea of flames trembled. Inside, the Outsider Dao Sovereign was howling bitterly. The fire seemed to be on the verge of slipping out of the shackles, of bursting out from within the threads that held it. And yet, it could not. Finally, the flames converged together, transforming into a lizard of fire. It began to butt its head against the threads, and yet that did nothing. It… could not free itself. It was completely sealed within what Meng Hao had created… the picture frame.

The starry sky was like a canvas, and anyone who could control the Essence of space could use their hands like a brush. With a few strokes, threads could be formed together into an outline. What was within that outline… was space.

If that canvas was folded, the subsequent cracks that were created were dimensional rifts. Furthermore, if the canvas could be formed into a sphere, then that space would be… a world.

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# Chapter 1347: A Cold Glow in the Eyes!

Meng Hao chuckled and suddenly raised his hand into the air, slowly clenching his fist in the direction of the painting within which hung the Outsider Dao Sovereign. It was as if he were crumpling a piece of paper into a ball; the canvas he had just created instantly transformed into ash.

The Outsider Dao Sovereign within let out a miserable cry, and was then completely destroyed.

The task left Meng Hao’s face slightly pale, and inwardly, he sighed. Because of the World Essence of the 1st Heaven, he had gained enlightenment of the Dao of the Eighth Hex’s Essence, which was even stronger than Meng Hao had imagined it would be. Although it was very draining, it only served to make him more convinced that his idea of using the Hexing Magics as the basis of his Essences was the correct course.

“Unfortunately, considering my current cultivation base, I can only use this magic once per month.” That limit to the usefulness of the magical technique was the only thing that Meng Hao was disappointed in. It was based completely on the level of his cultivation base and the Essence power he could wield.

After all, his true cultivation base was actually in the Ancient Realm, with six extinguished Soul Lamps.

“With the Essence of Space, I can seal the 6-Essences level. That’s my limit. If I were fighting an Imperial Lord, losing would be a possibility. And as for a Paragon….” Meng Hao shook his head. He was well aware that everything was dependent on the rise of his cultivation base, and his control of more Essence power.

In fact, his enlightenment of the Essence of Space could be likened to a vastly deep pit, at the bottom of which was a tiny lake. Eventually, though, that deep pit would become… a boundless sea of stars!

Furthermore, enlightenment of the Essence of the Eighth Hex was just the first benefit Meng Hao had gained from the World Essence. There was also a second!

And that was… transformations to his blood!

Meng Hao could clearly sense that, after absorbing the World Essence of the 1st Heaven, his Allheaven Dao Immortal bloodline had experienced a strange change. Although that change wasn't large, it was a fundamental one that could shake the Heavens and topple the Earth.

He wasn't sure exactly what that change entailed, but he could sense that his Allheaven bloodline… was vastly different.

He now knew that there was some completely extraordinary and astounding secret locked within the Allheaven bloodline, something that could perhaps raise him to unprecedented heights.

After that change occurred, his Allheaven Dao Immortal blood would experience another awakening, and he had the intense premonition… that he would reach an unbelievable level.

Perhaps that level was a Realm that had never been seen before!

As for what that Realm was, Meng Hao didn't know, but he did know that if he wanted to elicit such an awakening in his Allheaven blood, then he needed to absorb more World Essences.

After the World Essence of the 1st Heaven had been completely absorbed, a slight sliver of awakening could be detected.

In almost the exact same instant that Meng Hao finished absorbing the World Essence, and his Allheaven Dao Immortal bloodline showed signs of another awakening, something happened back on Planet South Heaven. Shui Dongliu's eyes suddenly flickered, and a tremor ran through him.

"Ever since that kid changed his fate, I've been unable to see his future," he murmured. "However, I have the feeling that he… has the chance to become… something above and beyond everything else… To reach the supreme Realm! 1

"Perhaps, something even higher than that…. Perhaps he can become that which was legendary even in the Paragon Immortal Realm, that which people put faith in from the beginning of creation until now… the Immortal!

"In the Vast Expanse that is the starry sky, there is the God and the Devil, but no Immortal…." Shui Dongliu was trembling, and a look of keen anticipation and focus could be seen in his eyes as he peered out into the starry sky toward Meng Hao.

"The Immortal…. From the moment that word came to be, no person, no entity, has ever become the true Immortal…. The Immortal stands alongside the God, is on equal footing with the Devil…. Eternal in the starry sky!

"The uninformed think that the two great powers are coming because of a precious treasure. One of them seeks the return of the God, the other wishes to resurrect the Devil….

"However, the truth is that their purpose is not limited to those things. They wish to stop… the birth of the Immortal!

"By seizing the power unleashed by the birth of the Immortal, and combining it with that of their precious treasures, they can at long last accomplish their true ambitions!"

Out in the starry sky, floating in the vicinity of Meng Hao, was something no one could see. It was a ship, upon which an old man sat cross-legged, staring silently at Meng Hao. Mixed emotions could be seen in his eyes, as well as the gleam of enlightenment.

Not too far off in a different direction was Slaughter, dressed in a black robe, hovering there like an unsheathed sword. Although he was surrounded by a profoundly murderous aura, no one could sense him as he remained in place, studying Meng Hao thoughtfully.

At the same time that Meng Hao gained a bit of enlightenment regarding the transformations to his bloodline, and a spark of anticipation rose up in his heart, something happened down in the Mountain and Sea Realm, where everyone was still reeling in shock from the sight of Meng Hao destroying the 1st Heaven and absorbing its World Essence.

An astonishing, deafening roar rose up from the direction of the Fourth Mountain and Sea, and at the same time, a power like that of a Paragon suddenly erupted out. Simultaneously, Ksitigarbha bellowed, and yet was incapable of preventing a certain figure from bursting out from the Fourth Mountain and Sea.

It was none other than the Outsider Imperial Lord!!

He was at the peak of the 6-Essences level, half a step into being a Paragon!

Originally, Ksitigarbha had been able to pin him down, but clearly he was now benefiting from the aid of the Outsider Paragon, who couldn’t break free from Sea Dream, and had apparently decided to help the Imperial Lord to break free. Now that Imperial Lord was bursting with his peak level of power, taking advantage of the fluctuations caused by the appearance of Meng Hao’s Essence to break free from Ksitigarbha and charge forth in attack.

He was a sea of flames that shot through the void like a meteor, bursting with intense cultivation base power as he closed in on Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and he momentarily glanced off in a different direction, which was none other than the location where Paragon Sea Dream was fighting the Outsider Paragon. Unfortunately, he was currently unable to transmit any information to Sea Dream, so he looked back at the Imperial Lord and then, instead of retreating, advanced.

The Outsider Imperial Lord looked completely awe-inspiring, and his eyes were bursting with mad killing intent. Based on the fluctuations of his cultivation base, he was completely going all-out with his Essence power. The sea of flames transformed into a vortex, and after that, materialized five successive vortexes, each one larger than the one before it.

Six vortexes could be seen, all of them emanating Essence power that shook the starry sky and caused all onlookers to gasp.

This terrifying power exceeded that of a Dao Sovereign; it was the most shocking level of power that existed beneath a Paragon’s.

The power within any one of those vortexes was more than half of that of a Dao Sovereign, and in fact, two vortexes together could easily crush that level. When you added six of them together, the Essence power they emanated would enable the Imperial Lord who wielded it to crush any Dao Sovereign!

This was the power of an Imperial Lord!

Even Ksitigarbha, who could rely on the river of reincarnation and the sea of the Yellow Springs, who had countless Yama palaces from the Fourth Mountain, and who could draw upon the Joss Flame power of innumerable dead souls, would not be able to fight back against the Outsider Imperial Lord in this state.

In this situation, the reality was that the Outsider Imperial Lord now had enough power to wipe out Ksitigarbha. As he charged forth at top speed, he didn’t rely on any magical technique or other tricks. Instead, he drew upon terrifying Essence power as he prepared to completely crush Meng Hao.

Extending both hands, he then clapped them together viciously. Rumbling sounds could then be heard as the first of the vortexes passed through him and shot toward Meng Hao.

As Meng Hao closed in, his hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, summoning numerous mountains. He transformed into a huge azure roc, and then shot like lightning toward that incoming vortex.

A massive boom echoed out as the vortex collapsed, and Meng Hao’s mountains shattered. At the same time, his azure roc form continued to speed toward the Outsider Imperial Lord. At the same time, the second vortex screamed forth to appear directly in front of Meng Hao.

The resulting boom sent colors flashing through the sky and caused the stars to shudder. Meng Hao’s azure roc form collapsed, and he appeared in his normal form, clenching his right hand into a fist and unleashing a fist strike!

The vortex trembled, and then cracking sounds rang out as it collapsed into pieces. Meng Hao’s face was ashen, and he backed up a bit. It was at that point that the third and fourth vortexes closed in. The destructive power of extermination erupted out as the full power of an Imperial Lord was unleashed.

Meng Hao’s face flickered. His fleshly body power was now thrumming at its peak, and his cultivation base exploded out. The Paragon Bridge appeared, and Divine Flame blasted out as he unleashed three successive fist strikes!

Life-Extermination Fist!

Bedevilment Fist!

God-Slaying Fist!!

Three fist strikes were joined by the crushing Paragon Bridge and the rumbling Divine Flame. The third vortex collapsed, and at the same time, Meng Hao coughed up a mouthful of blood. Then he fell back, relying on the strength of his fleshly body to bear the brunt of the terrifying fourth vortex and its Essence power.

A boom rang out, and blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth as he tumbled backward like a kite with its string cut. The direction in which he fell seemed to be in accord with the Outsider Imperial Lord’s plan. Unexpectedly, it was the direction leading toward where the Outsider Paragon was fighting Paragon Sea Dream.

Meng Hao’s face fell, and he was apparently on the verge of trying to change directions when the Outsider Imperial Lord snorted coldly. Killing intent raging, he sent the fifth vortex flying forward in shocking fashion.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as his Green Emperor’s Eternal Incantation worked like mad to heal his injuries. At the same time, he raised his right hand and unleashed Demon Sealing Hexing magic. Rumbling could be heard as streams of Hexing magic shot out, bolstered by the power of the Mountains and Seas as they bore down on the fifth vortex.

Seventh Hex, Sixth Hex, Fifth Hex, Third Hex, Second Hex!

His Eighth Hex had become Essence, but the other five Hexing magics turned into sealing marks which absorbed the power of the Mountains and Seas, causing them to grow in size to 3,000 meters as they neared the fifth vortex.

As they slammed into the vortex, they were wiped out one by one, and Meng Hao coughed up successive mouthfuls of blood. He fell back again, the backlash power wreaking havoc upon his body. However, the fifth vortex also collapsed.

At the same time, deep within his eyes was something that no observer would be able to detect, a cold, grim anticipation.

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# Chapter 1348: Enslaving a Paragon!

When the fifth vortex collapsed, its attack power blasted out in all directions. Within the blood that sprayed out of Meng Hao's mouth were chunks of internal organs, and he was yet again sent tumbling backward toward the Paragon battlefield. By now, he was only about 30,000 meters away!

"Today, I'll kill you as a sacrifice to the 1st Heaven!" roared the Outsider Imperial Lord. His eyes were bright red as he strode forward, sending the sixth and final vortex rumbling forward!

From the fact that Meng Hao could withstand the attack of the fifth vortex, it was possible to see how powerful he was. He was already far beyond the level of a 6-Essences Dao Sovereign. However, when facing an Imperial Lord who was halfway into the Paragon level, he didn't quite seem to be able to match up.

The sixth vortex was the most majestic of them all, and it was currently causing the starry sky to twist and distort. All laws of nature and magic were ripped to shreds as the vortex shot toward Meng Hao. As it bore down on him, his eyes were bright red. He lifted his hand, summoning the Battle Weapon. The meat jelly appeared, forming a suit of armor, and the mastiff became a cape. Meng Hao threw his head back and roared, rapidly growing to a height of 3,000 meters. At the same time, the Battle Weapon grew longer, and its appearance more fearsome.

Meng Hao didn't fall back. He knew that there was no avoiding this attack. Therefore, he hefted the Battle Weapon and then slashed it out toward the sixth vortex!

“Cleave!” he bellowed. The Battle Weapon shone with brilliant light, becoming a dazzling beam that slashed down into the sixth vortex. Massive rumbling sounds echoed out as the entire vortex was completely cleaved in two!

However, Meng Hao paid a steep and bitter price as a result. The Battle Weapon vanished, the armor shattered, and the meat jelly let out a miserable scream. The Blood Mastiff howled in anguish, and the parrot was left shivering in pain. As for Meng Hao, his body shook violently as most of his bones were shattered. At the same time, nearly half of his flesh exploded into a cloud of gore and blood.

His consciousness went dim, and he almost looked like a skeleton. In addition to all that, he was sent spinning backward toward where the Paragons were fighting, until he was less than 3,000 meters away!

The Outsider Imperial Lord stilled his cultivation base and then looked up with a vicious smile.

“Now, you’re dead for sure!” The words spoken did not come out of the mouth of the Imperial Lord, but rather, came from behind Meng Hao. The speaker was none other than… Outsider Paragon Eegoo!

His booming voice was laced with rage as he suddenly broke away from Sea Dream and shot toward Meng Hao. Sea Dream could only keep him locked down to a certain extent, and 3,000 meters was within that area!

Meng Hao was now within that 3,000 meter distance. However, it was at this point that a slight smile suddenly appeared on his face, as if… he had been waiting for just this moment!

Ksitigarbha’s face drained of blood, and Sea Dream frowned, as if she found the situation very strange. However, there was no way to change what was happening, and definitely no way to stop it. The Outsider Paragon and Imperial Lord were joining forces to try to kill Meng Hao!

Obviously, not even the Imperial Lord was confident in being able to slay Meng Hao on his own. Therefore, he chose the most simple and direct way to deal with the situation, which was… force Meng Hao close enough to the Paragons, force him into that 3,000-meter range in which the Paragon would have a chance to make a move!

Meng Hao appeared to have completely lost the initiative in the fight, having been forced back step by step until he was in a position of extreme danger. In fact, the Outsider Imperial Lord, fearful of Meng Hao's Lightning Cauldron, had even prepared a special technique just to counteract it.

Therefore, he couldn't help but wonder why it was that Meng Hao still hadn't attempted Form Displacement Transposition.

And then the Imperial Lord saw the slight smile on Meng Hao's face, and suddenly felt his heart thump. His face flickered as a sense of deep foreboding suddenly welled up from the depths of his heart.

However, he couldn't think of where the problem lay. Why would Meng Hao be smiling in the middle of such a deadly, critical situation?

"Is it his Essence of Space? Impossible! Not even Essence could be used to defend against the attack of a Paragon!

"Then what could it be…? What is making this kid smile!? He even seems like he's been waiting. Just now, it seemed like I was forcing him to get closer to the Paragon battlefield, but now, it seems almost like… he was heading there on purpose!!

"Something's wrong. Something's definitely wrong!!" The Outsider Imperial Lord's face flickered, but no matter how he considered the problem, no answer revealed itself.

Although the Outsider Paragon couldn't see Meng Hao's smile, as a Paragon, he had lived for countless years. How could he not have noticed the indications that Meng Hao had done this on purpose? However, even he wasn't sure exactly why Meng Hao was confident enough to do that.

“Well it doesn’t matter what trick you’re trying to pull, nobody can get this close to a Paragon… and survive!” Paragon Eegoo snorted coldly. He was completely confident, a confidence born from the mere fact that he was a Paragon.

He strode forward, clenching his right hand into a fist and then slamming it down toward Meng Hao!

Paragon power exploded out; this fist strike was strong enough to destroy, not just Meng Hao, but the void itself. It was as if it would destroy the starry sky and completely obliterate the entire area in which Meng Hao existed!

The power of a Paragon could suppress Essence, could dominate anything and everything. Paragon Eegoo was completely confident that, with the exception of an 8-Essences Paragon, no one could possibly have a hope of saving Meng Hao.

In fact, even if there were an 8-Essences Paragon, that person would have to be in the immediate vicinity to have the time to do anything.

He was sure that on this very day, Meng Hao… would die!

It took only the blink of an eye for the power of the Paragon’s fist to cause blood to spurt out all over Meng Hao’s body. The starry sky around him shattered as an indescribably shocking power rumbled toward him.

The cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm were crying out in alarm. In contrast, the Outsiders were overjoyed. They hated Meng Hao for destroying their homeland, and yet they feared him. Therefore, to see what was happening now left them elated.

The Mountain and Sea Lords were all stunned, and had various expressions on their faces. Grandpa Meng was trembling, and it seemed as if tears of blood were about to pour down his cheeks. In the Fourth Mountain and Sea, Xu Qing’s face was ashen, as if everything had lost meaning to her.

Ksitigarbha stood there, taciturn, and back in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, all of the Chosen were gaping in shock. They simply couldn't imagine a situation in which Meng Hao actually died!!

Fang Xiufeng threw his head back and howled. All of the members of the Fang Clan were crying out in grief and rage. And yet, none of them could do anything.

Sea Dream was the only one who reacted differently. The same frown could be seen on her face, but she made no move to interfere. In fact, when she looked at Meng Hao, a thoughtful expression appeared.

The power of a Paragon was crushing down toward Meng Hao, and the void around him was shattering. An unprecedented sensation of deadly crisis rose up within him, and even as the Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering power bore down on him, he turned to face the enormous form of Outsider Paragon Eegoo.

He almost seemed to be studying his opponent.

The Outsider Imperial Lord's heart was now filled with anxiety, as though there were a voice inside of him screaming that something was very wrong!!

However, having thought everything through, he sent his divine sense out, and couldn't detect anything suspicious in the area.

It was in that very moment, when Meng Hao seemed to be on the verge of completely collapsing, that he laughed. Despite his shattering body, he laughed in a way that seemed to defy Heaven and Earth.

Within his laughter was a power that few people would be able to comprehend, but as soon as Paragon Eegoo heard it, his face filled with disbelief. In fact, the astonishment and terror visible in his expression… exceeded what had appeared there when the 1st Heaven had collapsed!!

"You…." he said hoarsely. He suddenly raised his right hand in front of him and fell back at top speed.

This scene caused all of the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm to gape in shock. The Outsiders were stunned. Ksitigarbha’s eyes went wide, and Paragon Sea Dream was panting, as though she couldn’t believe what she was seeing.

Clearly, what she found unbelievable wasn’t the fact that the Outsider Paragon was fleeing, but rather, something else!!

In almost the same moment that the Outsider Paragon began to flee in alarm and frustration, Meng Hao’s hoarse voice floated out.

“You can’t escape, Paragon Eegoo.”

When the Outsider Imperial Lord heard those words, his mind reeled, he stared in complete incredulity, and even began to shake.

The idea of a Paragon fleeing like this was simply unimaginable. Paragon Eegoo even seemed terrified, an expression that the Imperial Lord had never seen on the face of a Paragon.

“This… this….” he thought, trembling. Without even thinking about it, he began to edge backward. All of a sudden, he realized that Meng Hao was wrapped up in far too many secrets; terrifying, incomprehensible secrets.

Even as Meng Hao spoke, Paragon Eegoo let out a miserable shriek. This was the first time he had ever lost his composure in this way, and the first time he had ever been completely terrified. In fact, this was the first time since becoming a Paragon that he had truly feared for his own soul.

“Who are you!?!? You’re not a cultivator from the Mountain and Sea Realm! Who are you!?!?!?

“I, Eegoo, a Paragon, refuse to surrender!!

“You… just who are you exactly!?!?” Paragon Eegoo’s shrill voice echoed out, backed by the cultivation base of a Paragon, to fill the entire Mountain and Sea Realm. The starry sky trembled, and the Mountains and Seas shook. Countless cultivators and Outsiders all coughed up blood.

No one could see clearly what was happening except for Paragon Eegoo, Sea Dream, and Meng Hao. What was visible to them was a shadowy, misty form in front of Meng Hao. It was impossible to see what exactly was inside that mist, but it radiated a sensation of indescribable terror.

Then, gray threads began to spread out from the mist toward Paragon Eegoo, moving at incredible speed as they began to wrap him up!

Then they started boring into him, transforming into magical symbols that flickered on his skin, although they were invisible to virtually everyone.

No voice emanated out from the mist in reaction to the screams of Paragon Eegoo, only more gray threads. It was almost as if they were locking down his Karma, making it impossible for him to escape. At the same time, an increasing number of flickering magical symbols appeared on him!

“Come to me,” Meng Hao said with a faint smile, his voice somehow completely awe-inspiring. “Henceforth, I am your master, for all eternity….” His body was rapidly healing thanks to the Green Emperor’s Eternal Incantation, and a strange light could be seen in his eyes.

As the words left his mouth, Paragon Eegoo shivered, and then slowly plodded back toward Meng Hao.

To everyone watching, it was a completely bizarre sight!!

The Outsider Imperial Lord’s mind was spinning, and his face was as pale as death. Without the slightest hesitation, he began to retreat. He was filled with complete and utter terror of Meng Hao, and wanted nothing more than to get as far away from him as possible!

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# Chapter 1349: The Unyielding Soul of a Paragon

Paragon Sea Dream’s eyes flickered as she looked at the misty figure in front of Meng Hao. Waves of shock battered her heart; not even she would ever have imagined that Meng Hao would be able to call upon assistance such as this!

He could actually turn a Paragon into a puppet!

Enslave… a Paragon!

Although Eegoo was only in the 7-Essences level, that was a level that was considered powerful even in the days of the Paragon Immortal Realm. In those days, there had been one 9-Essences paragon, one 8-Essences Paragon, and one 7-Essences Paragon which was Sea Dream herself.

The current 33 Heavens had five Paragons, and although Sea Dream couldn’t be sure of the exact cultivation base of each and every one, she did know that they had no 9-Essences Paragons. If they did, then the war would have broken out much earlier. In fact, the 33 Heavens had been holding back for that specific reason. 1

As such, a 7-Essences Paragon would clearly be an immense asset on the battlefield. If Meng Hao could turn one into his slave, then it meant the war with the 33 Heavens… wasn’t a hopeless struggle!

“A full 7-Essences Paragon is comparable to the combined power of five of the Heavens!” Sea Dream was panting. Despite the level of her willpower, and how incredibly long she had lived, even she was shaken, and a gleam of anticipation appeared in her eyes.

Ksitigarbha had the same reaction, and his eyes were shining with a strange light. The sudden reversal in events left him both shocked and yet intensely excited.

As for the other Mountain and Sea Lords, their hearts all surged with excitement, with the exception of Ji Tian, who sat there reticently.

Then, there was Shui Dongliu. Startled, he slowly lowered his right hand. Were it not for this sudden change, he would have been forced to intervene. By now, it was clear that Meng Hao was absolutely critical to the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“That is good fortune which belongs solely to him….” Shui Dongliu murmured, a wide smile visible on his face.

At the same time, cultivators in other parts of the Mountain and Sea Realm were able to deduce what was happening, and they began to go wild with joy and disbelief.

“Enslave… a Paragon!?!?”

“Heavens, Meng Hao actually… actually figured out a way to enslave a Paragon!!” As the cries rang out, even the Mountain and Sea cultivators who weren’t able to see exactly what was happening were shaken, and could hardly believe what they were hearing.

As for the Outsiders, their blood connections made it much easier for them to discern what was happening up in the starry sky. The terrified cries of their Paragon caused expressions of despair to appear on their faces. Although they might otherwise have gained desperate strength from their grief and rage over the loss of their homeland, at this moment they had lost all hope and were doomed!

They could sense the Imperial Lord fleeing, and could hear the screams of the Paragon. When you added in the fact that their home had been destroyed, the shadow of defeat instantly enveloped their hearts.

They… had been defeated.

Thoroughly and utterly defeated. They were defeated, and had nowhere to retreat to. The invasion of the 1st Heaven had turned into a complete disaster!

Before invading, they had scorned and disdained the Mountain and Sea Realm. But now they had to admit that, even if the Mountain and Sea Realm were weaker than it was now, the 1st Heaven would never have been able overcome it.

This was where the Paragon Immortal Realm lived on, the same Paragon Immortal Realm which had once been the Higher Realm, far above them!

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the Outsiders trembled and began to fall back in retreat. However, the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm had the exact opposite reaction. Exuberant shouts rang out as their blood began to boil.

The 1st Heaven had collapsed, and the spirits of the Mountain and Sea cultivators had risen up!

Seeing a Paragon on the verge of being enslaved gave them hope! At long last, the slumbering Mountain and Sea Realm was opening its eyes. It was awakening!

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

Up in the starry sky, Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a strange light as he looked at Paragon Eegoo slowly approaching him. At the same time, his Green Emperor’s Eternal Incantation was rapidly healing him.

It was then that an unyielding roar erupted out of Paragon Eegoo’s mouth. He had finally managed to suppress the terror inside of him, and his unyielding heart was now bursting with power.

“I am a Paragon!!” he howled. A tremor ran through him as he tried to fight back against the gray threads which had him bound up. Then, he ground to a halt and stared at the misty figure in front of Meng Hao.

Although he had stopped moving toward Meng Hao, he was trembling, and then blood began to spurt out all over his body. However, he remained in place, unmoving.

He turned to look at Meng Hao, and a blazing pride erupted out from inside of him. “I’ve practiced cultivation for tens upon tens of thousands of years. I have a longevity the same as that of Heaven and Earth. I am a Paragon, subjugator of countless worlds, worshipped by innumerable living beings. How… could I possibly let you enslave me!?”

He was shivering, and blood oozed out all over him, and yet he remained in place, relying on his life force and his very dignity to resist the illusory figure in front of Meng Hao that was attempting to enslave him.

His right hand trembled as he lifted it up and waved his finger viciously toward Meng Hao, and yet that simple movement caused his face to go deathly pale as he discovered that the gray threads were interfering with his cultivation base, making it impossible for him to unleash its power.

That grayness, and that figure in front of Meng Hao, caused his heart to be filled with terror.

Suddenly, he chuckled bitterly, and then threw his head back and let out a bitter howl.

“I am Eegoo. I watched the destruction of the Paragon Immortal Realm. I helped the 33 Heavens rise to prominence. I witnessed the sealing of the Mountain and Sea Realm. I fought in this bloody battle to wipe out all life in the Mountain and Sea Realm!

“I’ve lived for tens upon tens of thousands of years! I have practiced cultivation to the level of a Paragon!

“I am a Paragon. Paragon Eegoo!” The deafening sound of Paragon Eegoo’s bitter laughter pierced out to fill the entire Mountain and Sea Realm, and even higher up into the 32 Heavens above.

Ripples filled the starry sky, which was caused by the attempts of the other 32 Heavens to break through the barrier and enter the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“Heaven can’t make me bow, Earth can’t make me drop to my knees, and the starry sky can’t make me lower my head. My will is the Dao of the Heaven, and my body is limitless in the Vast Expanse!” Paragon Eegoo roared as his body rapidly grew in size. In the blink of an eye, he was 3,000 meters high, then 15,000 meters, then 30,000 meters!

As a 30,000-meter giant, he looked like a deity. Meng Hao’s pupils constricted as he sensed the unyielding will of this Outsider Paragon, a willpower that apparently could not be wiped away by either Heaven or Earth. Suddenly, the gray threads of Choumen Tai’s magical technique began to unravel.

To enslave a Paragon might sound easy, but the truth was that all Paragons were blazing suns within Heaven and Earth. They represented the convergence of luck and destiny… and thus could not easily be made slaves!

Their willpower, their thoughts, and their hearts, surpassed the Heavens!

Rumbling sounds could be heard as more and more of the gray threads began to snap. Deep in his heart, Meng Hao couldn’t help but admire this Paragon’s willpower, his fighting spirit, and his unyielding heart.

With all of that, he truly deserved the title of Paragon!

It was at this point that the blurry figure in front of Meng Hao let out a cold snort. Suddenly, ten times as many gray threads as before exploded out, then a hundred times more than that. They began to wrap around the 30,000-meter-tall Paragon in an even more complicated fashion than before. It took only a moment before the Paragon was not only back under control, but also beginning to kneel toward Meng Hao.

“I refuse!” Paragon Eegoo shrieked. Blood oozed out of his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, and he was shaking violently. And yet, he remained standing, as if not even the vast Heavens and Earth could force his legs to bend.

Cracking sounds rang out, and blood sprayed out of his mouth. And yet, he still didn’t bend a knee. A vast quantity of scales appeared all over him, each one of them radiating intense ancientness. He seemed to be on the verge of transforming into an ancient and archaic lizard!

However, the gray threads continued to bore into him, causing magical symbols to appear, and there was nothing he could do to stop it.

Meng Hao was visibly moved, but remained silent, mixed emotions playing out in his eyes.

“If the Mountain and Sea Realm and the 33 Heavens weren’t at war… then this Paragon would truly be deserving of worship by all life.” Meng Hao sighed, and then addressed Paragon Eegoo directly.

“If you will support the Mountain and Sea Realm, then I will spare the lives all of your people from the 1st Heaven!”

Paragon Eegoo shivered, and despite the pain coursing through him, the look in his eyes was as unyielding as ever. He even began to laugh.

“The Mountain and Sea Realm will definitely be exterminated. As long as only one of my people remains alive in the end, then years from now, we will make a comeback!

“I am Eegoo! I am a Paragon now, and I will be a Paragon in death!

“You want me to submit? You want me to be your slave? The only slave you will have is my body, not my soul!” As he laughed uproariously, the signs of an imminent self-detonation appeared.

There was no madness in his eyes, only endless pride. He would rather die than bow his head and lose his dignity!

Rumbling could be heard as destructive fluctuations began to emanate out from him. However, because he could not unleash the power of his cultivation base, the destructive blast would not sweep out into the Mountain and Sea Realm to wreak mass destruction. He would only be able to harm himself. But that way, even if he died, his body would be useless to Meng Hao.

Even as Meng Hao frowned, Choumen Tai’s voice suddenly echoed in his mind. “Paragons can’t be forced to submit unless you erase their souls.”

“Then erase his soul!” Meng Hao said decisively, staring at Paragon Eegoo.

In the moment that he opened his mouth, the gray threads which bound Paragon Eegoo suddenly turned black, and began to emanate a strange light. It turned into a destructive power that poured into Paragon Eegoo, a power of soul annihilation. In the very moment in which he was about to self-detonate, massive rumbling sounds echoed out as some unknown method was used…

To erase his soul!

Muffled rumbling could be heard as the threads faded away. The blurry figure in front of Meng Hao now seemed weak beyond compare. Finally, a faint voice spoke. “I’ve fulfilled my promise…. I shall sleep now, until the moment when my master is resurrected…. I hope that you can keep your end of the agreement….”

Gradually, the weak voice faded away into nothing.

The blurry, misty figure also vanished. In the same moment, Paragon Eegoo’s body shivered, and his eyes went completely and utterly blank.

The ripples of self-detonation faded away, and he lowered his head as he knelt in front of Meng Hao.

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# Chapter 1350: Full Scale Counterattack!

What was kneeling was the body of a Paragon, not the soul.

However, that act of kneeling caused all of the Outsiders in the Mountain and Sea Realm to go deathly quiet. Their minds went completely blank, as blank as death.

With the exception of the professional soldiers or the especially warlike individuals, most of the Outsiders, regardless of which tribe they came from, were fighting for their homes, their people, and especially for more cultivation resources.

Therefore, the collapse of the 1st Heaven caused the minds and hearts of all the Outsiders to tremble. They were left blank and terrified, and filled with regret. Their home… was gone.

Their fellow tribe members were dead….

There was no point to the war anymore. Given enough time, their thirst for revenge would eventually spur them to hold nothing back in fighting. However, before that could happen, their Paragon had been enslaved, a huge blow that crushed their will and reduced their morale to the freezing point.

Off in the distance, the fleeing Imperial Lord suddenly stopped and forced himself to look back. What he saw was the towering 30,000-meter tall Paragon kneeling in front of Meng Hao, and his mind reeled.

“Defeated….” he muttered in a hoarse, despairing voice. The events leading up to the destruction of the 1st Heaven had caused him to fly into a rage, and even put his life on the line in a mad attempt to intervene. Although most of the other Outsiders had been at a complete loss, he had been quick to regain control of his thoughts and jump on the offensive.

But then he watched their Paragon be enslaved, and he was filled with bitterness. He even regretted his decision to flee, and felt guilty. With all the complicated thoughts assailing him, all the Outsider Imperial Lord could do was chuckle bitterly.

A strange expression could be seen on Sea Dream’s face as she looked at the enslaved Paragon. Although she was excited, she couldn’t help but sigh. She was also a Paragon, someone who stood at the pinnacle of Heaven and Earth, so she knew how difficult a task it must have been for that mysterious figure to force Eegoo to yield.

In sharp contrast to the Outsiders were the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm. After a brief moment of silence, they exploded out with an exuberance that could shake Heaven and Earth. It started in the Fourth Mountain and Sea and quickly spread all the way to the First and Ninth Mountains and Seas. Soon, the voices of the entire Mountain and Sea Realm were crying out in a powerful voice.

“Victory belongs to the Mountains and Seas!”

“Victory belongs to the Mountains and Seas!!”

“Victory belongs to the Mountains and Seas!!!”

It was impossible to say who said it first, but soon those words rang out throughout the entire Mountain and Sea Realm. Everything began to shake as orders were delivered to begin fighting back against the Outsiders.

In all of the Nine Mountains and Seas, the cultivators counterattacked!

Few of the remaining Outsiders possessed a will to fight. Their eyes were blank, and they trembled in fear. The 1st Heaven was destroyed. Their home was gone. Their tribe members were dead. Their Paragon had been enslaved. Everything that had happened filled them with complete despair.

When the Mountain and Sea Realm began to fight back, and the excited battle cries rose up, Meng Hao looked at the kneeling 30,000-meter-tall Paragon, and his eyes filled with a complicated expression. He sighed.

Then, he clasped hands and bowed deeply.

That bow was a bow toward the unyielding soul of the Paragon. For a moment, he felt pity that Eegoo's soul had been erased, but then the complex look in his eyes was replaced with coldness. When experts were enemies, they could respect each other, but they could never back down!

Sometimes, the only option was death!

One party died, or the other died. In war, pity could not be tolerated, nor could compassion, and especially not weakness. Besides, this battle… was only the beginning.

"In any case, I don't need your soul. I just need your Paragon body. Although that makes your battle prowess slightly lower, you're still a Paragon!" Meng Hao flickered into motion, flying up to land atop the 30,000-meter Paragon's head. Now that he had control of this body, a mere thought on his part could make the Paragon puppet do anything he wished.

In the same moment that Meng Hao landed on the head of the Paragon puppet, the puppet slowly rose to its feet, energy surging out in all directions.

As of this moment, Meng Hao was completely shocking in every aspect. Not only did his cultivation base place him at the highest level in the Mountain and Sea Realm in terms of battle prowess, now that he had a Paragon puppet, he was at the absolute pinnacle.

However, none of that could compare to what Meng Hao himself now symbolized. After destroying the 1st Heaven, and enslaving a Paragon, he… was now the symbol of the spirit of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

His eyes glittered as he turned to look at Sea Dream, toward whom he immediately clasped hands and bowed. Looking at her caused him to feel quite regretful and apologetic. Voice soft, he said, “Senior Sea Dream, back then… I was ignorant and naïve. I was only thinking about myself, not the Mountains and Seas. Senior, I hope that you aren’t too deeply offended by what I said.”

With that, he clasped hands and bowed again. Just as he had said, years ago he hadn’t cared much at all about the Mountain and Sea Realm, which led to his altercation with Sea Dream after the events in the Windswept Realm.

Now that he thought back to that time, he realized that he had indeed spoken a bit too harshly. 1

Sea Dream smiled slightly, which was something she rarely did. It made her look like a beautiful, blooming peony flower. Warmth and kindness filled her gaze as she looked back at Meng Hao. To her, he was merely a member of the younger generation, a child really.

“You just go take care of whatever it is you need to,” she said.

Meng Hao nodded, and without any further hesitation, sat down cross-legged and closed his eyes. Then, he sent out some divine will, causing the Paragon puppet’s eyes to shine, almost as if they were Meng Hao’s.

After sending his divine will into the Paragon puppet, it was like his own body, completely under his control. At the same time, it emanated the terrifying aura of a Paragon.

Of course, Meng Hao himself had divine sense that was eighty percent as powerful as a Paragon’s, which ensured that he could easily unleash eighty percent of the power of Paragon Eegoo. With a single step, the Paragon puppet stepped across the starry sky to appear in front of the Outsider Imperial Lord.

“Submit, or perish!” Meng Hao said through the mouth of the Paragon puppet. The voice crashed out, echoing throughout the Mountain and Sea Realm.

The Imperial Lord laughed bitterly as he looked at the Paragon puppet version of Eegoo standing in front of him, a Paragon who had once been one of his own people. His eyes gleamed with madness, and even a desire for death. If Paragon Eegoo would rather die than yield, then as an Imperial Lord, he would not make the same mistake he had before in backing down.

“You destroyed my home! You killed my people! And now you think I’m going to submit to you? Even if I perish, I’ll turn into a vengeful ghost that will curse your Mountain and Sea Realm for generations to come!” The Imperial Lord threw his head back and laughed, unleashing the explosive power of his cultivation base and causing six vortexes to appear behind him.

A strange expression appeared on Meng Hao’s face as he stared at the Imperial Lord for a moment, then said, “You words seem very righteous, very unyielding, and very hateful….”

The thunderous boom of Meng Hao’s voice caused the Outsider Imperial Lord’s energy to suddenly falter.

Without waiting to engage in any more rhetoric, Meng Hao sent the Paragon puppet’s hand out, and immediately, the starry sky around the Imperial Lord was shattered. The Imperial Lord’s body began to vibrate, and blood sprayed out of his mouth. He fell back, waving his hand to send countless magical items flying out. The six vortexes behind him shot through him toward Meng Hao, who sent the Paragon puppet’s fist flying out in a fist strike.

“It seems you’ve forgotten that the invaders in this war came, not from the Mountain and Sea Realm, but from the 33 Heavens!” As Meng Hao’s voice echoed out, the fist crushed the void and shattered the starry sky. All of the magical items were reduced to powder, and the six Essence vortexes were destroyed. Then the blow landed on the Outsider Imperial Lord, whose legs exploded. Having escaped death, he once again fell back in retreat.

“This war wasn’t the idea of the Mountain and Sea Realm, it was yours!” How could Meng Hao possibly let this Outsider off the hook? His words crashed out like thunder, causing the Imperial Lord’s mind to tremble, as he realized that Meng Hao’s words, despite being difficult to accept… were true.

This war really had been instigated by the 33 Heavens, and they really were the invaders.

“Yeah, well so what?!” howled the Imperial Lord. “We haven’t even destroyed the Mountain and Sea Realm yet, but then you went and wiped out our people!? You’re the ones who exterminated our home first!!” No longer concerned about whether what he said made sense, he transformed into his true form, a gigantic lizard thousands of meters long and covered with raging black flames. Then, he charged toward Meng Hao and the Paragon puppet. “The Mountain and Sea Realm is definitely going to be wiped out!!”

“As for whether the Mountain and Sea Realm will be wiped out,” Meng Hao replied coolly. “I can’t say for sure. But what I do know is that you… are going to die, right now!” With that, the Paragon puppet’s hand performed an incantation gesture, then waved out, causing the full power of a Paragon to explode out, sealing the entire area like a cage and then crushing down with incredible pressure.

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the Imperial Lord began to shake. Blood oozed out of his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, and the black flames which covered his body were extinguished. His scales exploded, and he screamed bitterly. Then, the pressure caused his entire body to explode as he was completely killed!

After killing the Outsider Imperial Lord, Meng Hao felt weak; personally controlling the Paragon puppet was quite draining. As he sat there on the Paragon puppet’s head, his eyes suddenly snapped open, and he looked down at the Mountain and Sea Realm. A bit of divine will sent the Paragon puppet down into the Mountains and Seas. Wherever it appeared, the Outsiders who saw it were filled with despair. Some felt insanity, some felt bitterness. They were now fighting a hopeless fight and apparently… there was nothing they could do about it.

They were the invaders, but now they were feeling what it was like be the invaded. That… was the double-edged sword which is war.

“This first battle with the 33 Heavens can now be concluded!”

The most powerful Outsider remaining from the 1st Heaven was the Long Linzi, who was fighting with Patriarch Reliance. As of this moment, he trembled and began to flee. Snorting coldly, Patriarch Reliance immediately gave chase.

The Outsiders from the 1st Heaven were in complete chaos.

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# Chapter 1351: The 1st Heaven Acknowledges Allegiance!

The Mountain and Sea Realm counterattacked with full force. The flames of war climbed high into the sky, in a way that was different from before. This time, it was not the Mountain and Sea cultivators who suffered defeat after defeat, it was the Outsiders.

In the First Mountain and Sea, Echelon cultivator Dao-Heaven led the army of cultivators into battle. On every front, the Outsiders were routed and crushed. Many of them didn’t even dare to fight back. Anyone could see that at this moment, the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm wore expressions of utter self-confidence, and that their fighting spirit was indomitable.

Sometimes in battle, practicers of cultivation were known to self-detonate, to literally explode in a final burst of grandeur for their people. However, such acts were born of grief and desperation, and led to nothing but death.

Using tactics like that could cause the enemy to respect or even fear you, but could not make that enemy feel powerless.

In sharp contrast… when an entire people was bursting with confidence and spirit combined, they became truly fear-inspiring. As of this moment, that was exactly how the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm were!

Upon awakening, they were filled with a madness, with a majesty that caused the Outsiders’ minds to tremble. It wasn’t that the Outsiders never thought to go all out in a mad scramble to fight back, or that they didn’t consider resorting to self-detonation. Those things… were useless.

They tried. As the Mountain and Sea cultivators fought back, Outsiders self-detonated, or went all out in various attempts drag their opponents with them into mutual destruction.

And yet… none of that did any good!

In the Second Mountain and Sea, fierce fighting raged. As for the Third Mountain and Sea, it was completely filled with the stench of blood. The cultivators there had experienced something like a baptism in blood. Their eyes shone brightly, glowing with confidence, with hope, with ferocity, and with madness.

The hatred they felt surpassed the hatred within the hearts of the Outsiders, as did their confidence. When it came to their hope, even their hope was something the Outsiders could never match.

Rumbling could be heard as the battle for the Fourth Mountain and Sea neared its conclusion even more quickly. Under Xu Qing’s leadership, and with the return of Ksitigarbha to the battlefield, the grand army there swept across the enemy with virtually no resistance.

However, Ksitigarbha himself did not join in the fighting unless necessary. It was the same with Meng Hao, who despite having a Paragon puppet and peak 6-Essences battle prowess, also held back.

Sea Dream and the other Mountain and Sea Lords were the same. Unless facing powerful Outsider experts, they merely observed the battle.

They allowed the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm to do most of the fighting, to help them understand that now, the true war was beginning. Only by bathing in the blood of the enemy could the cultivators truly be qualified to grow into seasoned veterans.

It was the same in the Eighth and Ninth Mountains and Seas.

The Outsiders had nowhere to run to. Upon their initial invasion, they had established nine main camps in the Nine Mountains and Seas. Originally, they had been in the superior position in the fight, which made those camps like nine sharp blades stabbing down into the Mountain and Sea Realm, threatening to slice it into pieces.

However, such troop placement was why they were now hovering on the brink of being exterminated completely. They were scattered, surrounded, with only the Sixth and Seventh Mountains and Seas being united and relatively free of Mountain and Sea cultivators. Those two locations had been their primary base of operations, and now, they were their last point of refuge.

Within the span of seven days, the First, Second, Third and Fourth Mountains and Seas all clinched victories, completely cutting off and surrounding the Outsiders, killing nearly eighty percent of them.

Blood spread out through the starry sky, and fierce fighting raged everywhere. The cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm fought with upright fearlessness. Xu Qing shone with her own type of glory, and in the end, the Fourth Mountain and Sea was where the greatest slaughter of Outsiders was carried out. Next, they turned to help the cultivators in the Third Mountain and Sea.

After that, they all joined forces in grandiose fashion. Under Xu Qing’s leadership, they marched toward the Fifth Mountain and Sea, their target being… the Outsider encampment that stretched through the Sixth and Seventh Mountains and Seas.

As for the Eighth and Ninth Mountains and Seas, after wiping out the Outsiders on the field of battle, they joined forces and invaded the Seventh Mountain and Sea.

The fighting dragged on for several months. However, during those months, everything changed in a monumental and even spectacular way.

Eventually, the day came in which the final battle began in the Sixth and Seventh Mountains and Seas. Meng Hao fought in that battle with his Paragon puppet, leading to both grief and despair among the final resisting Outsiders.

The strongest among their number was Long Linzi. The bitter agony which engulfed him was too difficult to put into words.

The cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm were like floodwaters smashing into the Outsiders. With Paragon Sea Dream, the Paragon puppet, Ksitigarbha, and Meng Hao himself leading the armies of cultivators into battle, the Outsiders in the Seventh and Sixth Mountains and Seas were powerless to fight back.

“Acknowledge allegiance, or perish!” said Meng Hao. As his voice echoed out across the battlefield, the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm ceased attacking, and instead began to echo his words.

Their voices were grand and filled with unswerving determination. This was the spirit of a people on the rise. It was almost as if they were back in the Paragon Immortal Realm, in the position to look down on all creation.

“Acknowledge allegiance, or perish!”

“Acknowledge allegiance, or perish!!” The sound of their voices filled the Mountain and Sea Realm, echoing about with intense pressure that caused the Outsiders to tremble even more than before.

Meng Hao did not want to completely exterminate the Outsiders. That would be a waste. If they chose to acknowledge allegiance, then not only would the overall power of the Mountain and Sea Realm not be reduced any further, but it would actually grow.

That in turn was the true hope for the entire war.

In response to Meng Hao’s words, Paragon Sea Dream nodded slightly. Apparently, if Meng Hao hadn’t spoken the words himself, she would have. As for Ksitigarbha and the other Mountain and Sea Lords, although each one had slightly different ideas about how to go about things, Meng Hao was a paramount figure in the Mountain and Sea Realm, and they would listen to him.

In fact, the incredible fleshly body power of the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators was thanks to Meng Hao, so of course they wouldn't go against his wishes.

The Outsiders didn't need much time to think. The most powerful of their number, the golden-armored Dao Sovereign Long Linzi, laughed bitterly and dispersed his cultivation base power. Then, bowing his head, he said, "I acknowledge allegiance!"

They really had no choice but to acknowledge allegiance. It was either that… or die as a people.

When Long Linzi's words echoed out across the battlefield and throughout the Seventh and Sixth Mountains and Seas, the Outsiders heard them, and they sighed. They, too, dispersed their cultivation base power and bowed their heads.

There were a few who refused, and they were quickly subdued and summarily executed. Their flowing blood bore witness to a grand victory on the part of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

It was a victory in which the 1st Heaven collapsed, a Paragon was enslaved, an Imperial Lord was killed, and of two Dao Sovereigns, one was killed and the other surrendered. Nearly seventy percent of the invading force was killed….

However, the Mountain and Sea Realm had also paid a grievous price. Nearly forty percent of the Mountain and Sea cultivators had been killed, most of them in the initial battles.

If Meng Hao hadn't destroyed the 1st Heaven and awakened the spirits of the cultivators, then enslaved their Paragon before giving the Outsiders any time to regroup, then even more of the Mountain and Sea cultivators would be dead.

The first phase of the war was over….

Although there were cheers of victory, massive pressure still weighed down on the shield created by the will of the Mountains and Seas. That shield separated them from the 32 Heavens, and right now there seemed to be some enormous figure pushing down onto it.

Everyone knew that the 32 Heavens would be coming for them soon. The will of the Mountains and Seas could only hold them off for so long, and when they came, it would be with force that far exceeded that of the 1st Heaven.

This time… a far larger army would be coming against them!

Could the Mountain and Sea Realm prevail…?

That was the question all the cultivators in the Mountain and Sea Realm were pondering. However, when they saw the enormous Paragon Puppet, and Meng Hao on its head, their eyes shone with brilliant light.

An ancient voice suddenly rang out into the minds and hearts of all of the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators. It was none other than the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm itself.

“Three months…. At the most, we have three months…. At that time, the 32 Heavens will break through the barrier and descend upon us! This time, it will not just be a single Heaven….”

Next, the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm asked a question which reverberated out in all directions. “Should we activate Mountain and Sea Siege Mode?!”

A look of surprise appeared on Meng Hao’s face, and Ksitigarbha suddenly looked up. However, Paragon Sea Dream turned to look at the Ninth Mountain and Sea, and after a long moment spoke, her voice cool.

“Activate Siege Mode!

“Mountain and Sea Lords, hear my orders. Immediately evacuate all life forms from the planets in your Mountain and Sea. Take them to the Ninth

Mountain and Sea, which will now serve as our command headquarters!

“Mountain and Sea cultivators, return to your respective Mountains and Seas and await further orders. We will work together in concert with the Mountain and Sea Siege Mode… to once again battle the 32 Heavens!

“Mountain and Sea Siege Mode takes one month to activate; it was prepared by Paragon Nine Seals for the express purpose of being used in this war!

“In Siege Mode, the entire Mountain and Sea Realm will be transformed from a horizontal layout to a vertical one. All of the Mountains and Seas will be lined up on top of each other!

“The First Mountain and Sea will be our first line of defense. The Second Mountain and Sea, our second. After eight lines of defenses is the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

“Fellow Daoists from all Mountains and Seas, we have three months…. This war will determine the fate of our Realm. As for me, I have only one thing left to say… Mountain and Sea Cultivators, fight to the death!” After Paragon Sea Dream’s words faded away, the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm were silent for a moment before their voices erupted out in unison.

“Mountain and Sea Cultivators, fight to the death!” The sound of their voices shook the entire Realm.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, and within his eyes flickered the desire to do battle. He looked up at the starry sky, and the void which existed beyond the barrier. That was where the 32 Heavens were, and from that barrier emanated numerous ripples.

“The war really has begun….”

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# Chapter 1352: Crown Prince of the Mountains and Seas!

The entire Mountain and Sea Realm was transforming. Although one might initially assume that such a huge transformation would happen slowly, it was actually visible to the naked eye! As such, one could well imagine how rapidly the transformation took place!

The change was happening at a speed which all cultivators could perceive, and yet did not cause any sense of unease or disorientation. Originally, the Mountain and Sea Realm was laid out in a horizontal line, from the First Mountain and Sea all the way to the Ninth. It was like a giant laying there, with the sun and moon orbiting the entire Realm.

But now, that giant… was slowly standing up!

The First Mountain was rising high up into the starry sky, as was the First Sea. Even as intense rumbling sounds echoed out, the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm adhered to Paragon Sea Dream’s orders. Under the leadership of the various Mountain and Sea Lords, the occupants of the mortal worlds were all transported to the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

The Mountain and Sea Realm buzzed with activity, and was changing by the moment.

There was no time for Xu Qing to reunite with Meng Hao. She had put on an extraordinary display of her command of strategy and tactics, and as such, was whisked away by Paragon Sea Dream. She, along with Li Ling’er, were appointed by Sea Dream as the Two Great Holy Daughters of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Meng Hao sent the Paragon puppet high up into the starry sky, and tasked it with standing guard against any early incursions by the 32 Heavens. At the same time, it sent divine will out through the entire Mountain and Sea Realm, constantly exerting a slight pressure to cow any potential double-crossers.

After all, despite the awakening of the spirit of the people, when it came to ultimate survival, there were some cultivators, and even some entire sects and clans, who weren’t completely loyal. They didn’t understand what it meant for all the eggs to be lost when the nest was overturned. They wanted to preserve their strength either to join everyone else in a comeback or, if things looked bad, to surrender and attempt to somehow impress the 32 Heavens.

Of course, with the Paragon puppet there, such double-crossers didn’t dare to take any action.

Everyone in the entire Mountain and Sea Realm was at work, busily preparing for war. Time was of the essence, and unless something unexpected happened, they had at most three months….

Unexpectedly, Meng Hao experienced a rare situation in which he was left with nothing pertinent to do, so he strolled amidst the starry sky, watching the Mountain and Sea Realm transform. The First Mountain and Sea led the rise as the Mountain and Sea Realm slowly transformed from a horizontal layout to a vertical one. At the moment, that left it tilted at an angle.

“It starting to look… a bit unfamiliar,” Meng Hao thought reticently. Finally, he sighed. He had known for a long time that war was coming. However, to him and all the other cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm, that war had arrived too suddenly.

It had started with the sudden outbreak of violence between the Seventh and Eighth Mountains and Seas. Then came the conflict between the Fifth and Sixth Mountains and Seas. After that was the decision to start the fighting the 33 Heavens ahead of schedule. That decision had been the right one, and yet it didn’t change the suddenness of it all.

Meng Hao felt somewhat blank inside, even uncertain about the future. However, he couldn’t give voice to such doubts. He couldn’t allow anyone to see anything except staunch confidence and faith.

Sadly, the truth of the matter was that… he wasn’t confident.

Wherever he went, the cultivators who saw him clasped hands and bowed, looks of deep reverence in their eyes no matter which Mountain and Sea they came from.

Meng Hao now symbolized the spirit of the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators. To many people, he also symbolized hope.

Meng Hao put aside the pressure he felt, allowing a faint, self-assured smile to appear on his face. He would nod at people and then proceed along. He passed through the Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Mountains and Seas. Finally… he ended up in the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

This was his first time back since he had left, oh so long ago. Looking out at the Ninth Mountain and Sea, his heart finally grew calm. However, there were still many things left for him to accomplish.

“Chu Yuyan’s soul….” he thought, pain stabbing at his heart. As he walked through the starry sky, there was really no other place that he wanted to go to other than home.

Planet South Heaven.

There were vast numbers of cultivators garrisoned on Planet South Heaven now. Because of their connection to Meng Hao, the Fang Clan was well known not just in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, but throughout the Mountain and Sea Realm. Everyone was aware that Meng Hao was the Crown Prince of the Fang Clan.

Meng Hao’s return caused a big stir. The entire Fang Clan emerged to receive him, and a ceremony was held that surpassed the kind which would be held for even a Clan Chief. Only Patriarchs received such treatment.

Of course, it wasn’t just the Fang Clan that went out to receive Meng Hao. All of the sects and clans on Planet South Heaven made appearances. Even the Emperor of the Great Tang could be seen.

As soon as Meng Hao appeared outside of Planet South Heaven, he saw tens of millions of cultivators lined up to welcome him. The looks on their faces were those of excitement, enthusiasm, and worship.

In almost the same instant that he appeared, tens of millions of cultivators clasped hands and bowed deeply.

“We offer respectful greetings upon the return of the Crown Prince!”

“Respectful greetings upon your return, Crown Prince!”

“Crown Prince, the divine abilities you unleashed in the battle with the 1st Heaven are without parallel!!”

Ever since Meng Hao destroyed the 1st Heaven and enslaved the Outsider Paragon, the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators had come to view him… as a Crown Prince, not just of the Fang Clan, but of the entire Mountain and Sea Realm.

As their voices boomed out, Meng Hao looked over the group, and eventually his gaze came to fall on a separate group of people who stood behind everyone else, within the actual borders of the planet.

There, he saw his father, his mother, his sister, and the familiar faces of the Chosen he had interacted with in the past.

Meng Hao saw his father smiling, a smile of excitement and pride. He saw the kindness in his mother’s face, as well as pride that only a mother could feel.

Meng Hao looked back at the cultivators congregated outside of Planet South Heaven, then clasped his hands and bowed deeply to them.

“What I did in the battle with the 1st Heaven is what any other Mountain and Sea cultivator would have done. I alone cannot determine the outcome of this war. If we want to win, we of the Mountains and Seas must fight together!”

Due to how powerful of a warrior he was in battle, Meng Hao didn’t need to add any extra power to his voice. The words alone radiated passion and ardor.

It was when the fighting broke out with the 1st Heaven that Meng Hao came to understand that he no longer had the luxury of thinking about only himself. He had a responsibility to bear, and that responsibility had already begun to weigh down on him.

As his words echoed out, the tens of millions of cultivators outside of Planet South Heaven once again clasped hands and bowed. Meng Hao proceeded forward, and they parted to create a path for him.

Everyone watched as he strode forward and then entered Planet South Heaven. As Meng Hao looked at his father and mother, and the various Patriarchs, he suddenly felt as if the powerful spirit that had driven him in battle had somehow transformed into a deep exhaustion which threatened to overwhelm him.

Home. The place where it was truly possible to relax….

Meng Hao stepped up to his father and mother, then dropped to his knees and kowtowed.

“Dad, mom… I’m back.”

Countless cultivators looked on as Meng Li stepped forward and lifted Meng Hao to his feet. She looked at him for a moment a flicker pain in her eyes, and then pulled him into a warm embrace.

It was at that point that a huge cheer rose up from Planet South Heaven. In the hearts of the Mountain and Sea cultivators, Meng Hao was a supreme being. However, in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, and especially among the cultivators on Planet South Heaven, he was something beyond that. He was… THEIR Meng Hao!

Meng Hao was back!

Planet South Heaven was shaken, as was the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea. In the following half month, countless cultivators came to visit Planet South Heaven in the hopes of meeting Meng Hao. As for Meng Hao, he did his best to meet with as many as he could.

Although he was exhausted and only wished to rest, he couldn’t disappoint the cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

When Meng Li realized what a strain it was putting on him, she erupted like a thunderclap, and refused to let any visitors through the front gate. Fang Xiufeng then began to stand in for Meng Hao to receive the guests, after which the crowds waned.

At long last, Meng Hao had some personal time. He was able to spend some time with his mother and sister, to truly enjoy the happiness of being with family.

He did not meditate, nor did he practice cultivation. He didn’t even leave the Fang Clan to visit all the places he was familiar with on Planet South Heaven. He stayed in the ancestral mansion, slowly allowing his heart to grow calm.

He was only now coming to realize that the way the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm viewed him had changed. Fan Dong’er and all the other Chosen he knew treated him… differently.

Occasionally, even his father would look at him with a reverence in his eyes that had never been there before. It left Meng Hao feeling somewhat bitter, and even sad.

And then there was his sister. When they were both young, she had promised that she would always protect him. And yet, she had also changed. She loved him more than ever, but when she looked at him, he could see the awe in her eyes. 1

There almost wasn’t a need to even mention Sun Hai. He had long since come to revere Meng Hao, but now, he looked at him, not just with reverence, but with fanatical zealotry.

His mother was the only one who didn’t seem to have changed. To her, it didn’t matter what Realm Meng Hao was in; even if he was a Paragon, he would always be her son.

As he spent time with his family, he would sometimes look off into the distance, where he knew Xu Qing was. Occasionally, he would ponder the matter of Chu Yuyan’s soul….

As for everyone else he knew, it wasn’t that he didn’t want to see them. Rather, in this moment of incredible crisis for the Mountain and Sea Realm, he simply didn’t have the mental energy to think about too many things at one time.

Meng Hao got the feeling that he was changing. He was becoming quieter, and even spirit stones somehow didn’t seem as important to him as they had in the past. Now, his thoughts were occupied more and more by the Mountain and Sea Realm….

“If I could have my way,” he thought, “I would live in an era in which there was no war….” Sighing, he felt more tired than ever.

Another half month passed. The Mountain and Sea Realm Siege Mode was completely activated. The First Mountain and Sea was at the apex, with the First Sea being in the highest position, followed by the First Mountain. After that was the Second Sea and the Second Mountain….

The entire Mountain and Sea Realm had risen up like a giant that propped up Heaven and Earth!

The sun and moon no longer orbited around the Realm, but were motionless in guard positions on either side. Although that left certain parts of the Mountain and Sea Realm in perpetual day, and other parts in perpetual night, in this critical moment, that wasn’t something that people worried about.

At the same time, the vast numbers of mortals who lived in the Mountain and Sea Realm had been transported to the Ninth Mountain and Sea, which was now… the most important place in the entire Realm!

In the instant that the Mountain and Sea Realm Siege Mode was completely activated, the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm spoke out into the minds of all cultivators, seemingly emotionless.

“My interference with the 32 Heavens cannot be maintained for much longer. In a month and a half… they… will come.”

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# Chapter 1353: I Demand An Explanation!

The voice echoed out into the minds of all of the cultivators in the Mountain and Sea Realm, and regardless of what they were doing, they stopped in place. The entire Realm went silent.

Soon, eyes began to shine with the desire to fight. The bewilderment and fear that had existed in those eyes were now replaced by a brilliant glow that reflected their spirits.

Although they maintained their silence, they went back to whatever important tasks they had been working on with renewed haste.

In accord with the requirements of Paragon Sea Dream and the Mountain and Sea Lords, the First Mountain became the first line of defense. Furthermore, innumerable spell formations and restrictive spells were set up, until the entire place was like a gigantic restrictive spell formation.

As for the denizens of the First Sea, they were also part of the war, and their survival was also on the line, so they held nothing back in their preparations.

Each successive Mountain and Sea was an additional line of defense, after eight of which was the nucleus, the headquarters of the entire Mountain and Sea Realm.

As the Mountain and Sea Realm prepared for war, Meng Hao sat cross-legged in the Fang Clan ancestral mansion. Another half month passed before he chose to leave.

There was someone he wished to see on Planet South Heaven… as well as someone on the Ninth Mountain!

The first person was… Shui Dongliu!

He had recently learned from his Grandpa Meng that Shui Dongliu was the Outsider he had known of for some time. After thinking about everything that had happened throughout the years, and putting many pieces of the puzzle together, Meng Hao was increasingly certain that there was more to Shui Dongliu than met the eye.

In fact, he even had the feeling that there was some monumental secret connected to Shui Dongliu, a secret that perhaps… had something to do with the entire Mountain and Sea Realm.

“Shui Dongliu used a single sentence to get my grandfather to become the Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea. Just… who exactly is he?

“According to what Grandma Meng said, my Grandpa Fang isn’t in the Mountain and Sea Realm. Could it be… that he’s in….” Meng Hao looked up. His gaze seemed to pass through all eight lines of defense, out into the starry sky, to the 32 Heavens.

During his more than one month on Planet South Heaven, Meng Hao had frequently sent divine sense out to cover Planet South Heaven in search of Shui Dongliu. He was certain that Shui Dongliu was there, somewhere.

However, he hadn’t been able to turn up even the slightest clue about his actual location. In the end, he sighed. Trusting in his own senses, but having no other recourse, he bid farewell to his parents and everyone else. Upon leaving, he hovered just outside of Planet South Heaven and looked back down.

“Don’t want to see me, huh?” Meng Hao said coolly.

In that same moment, back down on a high mountain peak on Planet South Heaven, Shui Dongliu was looking up into the sky at Meng Hao.

Apparently, he could see Meng Hao, but Meng Hao couldn’t see him.

Meng Hao hovered there for some time before his eyes glittered. He quickly blinked his left eye nine times in a row, causing his view of the world to change and magnify. Soon, he could see all of the lands below in complete detail.

Suddenly, he vanished. Shockingly, when he appeared… he was standing on the mountain peak directly in front of Shui Dongliu.

Shui Dongliu didn’t move a muscle, although a look of surprise could be seen in his eyes as he looked at Meng Hao.

Except… Meng Hao could see nothing in front of him at all. He got a very strange feeling from this mountain, as if it were somehow connected by Karma to Shui Dongliu.

After standing there silently for a moment, Meng Hao suddenly smiled in a relaxed fashion. Finally giving up on the idea of tracking down Shui Dongliu, he clasped hands and bowed deeply to the air in front of him.

“Senior, since you don’t wish to meet with me, then I’ll take my leave. I will never forget the kindness you have shown me. I’m not sure what your plan is, Senior, but… the Mountain and Sea Realm is weak now, so please… don’t play with fire and get burned!” The words he spoke were icy, and a bitter coldness emanated from him. Even the Paragon puppet up in the starry sky radiated a coldness that seemed to lock down onto that mountaintop.

With that, Meng Hao looked up and made his way out into the void, paying the mountain no more heed. There, he transformed into a beam of light that left Planet South Heaven.

As he made his way off, Shui Dongliu continued to stand there, and a flicker of praise could be seen in his eyes. After a moment passed, he smiled.

“So, kid,” he murmured, his smile deepening, “you’ve finally grown up… grown some teeth too, I see. You know what it means to protect your home. Excellent. Excellent….

“As for the Mountain and Sea Realm, let’s just say… I care about it more than you do. More… than anyone.”

Outside of Planet South Heaven, Meng Hao proceeded along through the starry sky. Throughout the Ninth Mountain and Sea, cultivators were crafting planets and landmasses in numerous locations, filling the starry sky.

Gathered upon those planets and landmasses were all of the mortals of the Mountain and Sea Realm, and all of the bloodlines of all the cultivators….

There was only one Mountain and Sea Lord here, though, and that was Ji Tian. Paragon Sea Dream had personally come to visit him and appoint him as guardian of the place.

Meng Hao looked out at this vastly changed Ninth Mountain and Sea, and eventually, his gaze came to rest upon a certain mountain…. The Ninth Mountain!

Meng Hao wanted to meet a certain person and put an end to the Karma which tied them together. That person was none other than Ji Tian!

Ji Tian had interfered when Fang Xiufeng stepped into the Dao, and had attempted to possess Meng Hao in the Eighth Mountain and Sea. Because of things such as these, the Karma between them was varied and strong.

Meng Hao proceeded through the starry sky toward the Ninth Mountain, then began to walk up the steps leading to the peak. Soon he was there, at the highest part of the Mountain.

He saw a celestial pond, within which was a sleeping Xuanwu turtle. Sitting cross-legged next to the pond was an old man in a violet robe. His eyes were somewhat clouded, and yet bright, and boundless Karma was visible upon his person.

In the instant in which Meng Hao saw him, he knew that this was the man he had come to see… Ji Tian!

He was a former subordinate of Lord Li, a powerful expert from the same era as the first generation Patriarch of the Fang Clan. He was also the Lord of the Ninth Mountain and Sea!

Ji Tian was not alone. A young man and a young woman stood behind him. Meng Hao was unfamiliar with the man, having never seen him before, but could see that he had an extraordinary cultivation base in the mid Ancient Realm. When he looked at Meng Hao, the awe in his eyes was evident, and although he was apparently trying to hold back from revealing it, Meng Hao could see it clearly.

As soon as Meng Hao laid eyes on the young woman, he recognized her. It was Ji Yin, and as soon as she saw him, a complex look could be seen in her eyes, and her expression darkened. 1

Ji Tian's expression was the same as ever when he looked up at Meng Hao. It was almost as if he considered him to be an old friend. He smiled, and in a casual tone said, "You've come."

Meng Hao looked at Ji Tian, expression calm as he approached and stood before him. Then he looked down at the Xuanwu turtle in the pond water, and his eyes suddenly glittered.

"So you can see it?" Ji Tian said, smiling. "In that case, there's no use trying to hide the truth. The only question is, will I be able to calm your anger, Crown Prince of the Mountains and Seas?"

Meng Hao stood there silently, eyes flashing. What he saw was that there were innumerable powerful Karma threads binding Ji Tian to the Xuanwu turtle, creating a connection between the two of them that vastly exceeded the connection between an ordinary Mountain and Sea Lord and Xuanwu turtle. In fact, the life forces of Ji Tian and the Xuanwu turtle seemed to be bound together.

Furthermore, it was not a situation in which Ji Tian was in the dominant position, with the Xuanwu turtle being bound to him. Instead, the Xuanwu turtle was dominant!

If the Xuanwu turtle died, Ji Tian would perish. However, if Ji Tian died, it wouldn't have any negative effect on the Xuanwu turtle at all. In fact, if Ji Tian died, the Xuanwu turtle would be able to absorb the power of his cultivation base, and thus have an explosive increase in battle prowess.

The way Meng Hao saw it was that this was an oath sworn by Ji Tian that he would live or die with the Ninth Mountain and Sea!

Meng Hao examined the situation for a very long moment before turning to look Ji Tian in the eye. "Why have you done this?"

Ji Tian looked back at Meng Hao and began to speak slowly, sounding as proud as the Lord of the Ninth Mountain and Sea should. "That is the wrong question to ask, Crown Prince. Let us make things clear. I have a grudge with your Fang Clan. Furthermore, although there are many sects and clans in the Ninth Mountain and Sea who venerate me, most of them fear me, but don't respect me.

"However, after becoming the Mountain and Sea Lord, I have committed no depraved acts of inhumanity! Perhaps I haven't lead the Ninth Mountain and Sea into riches and glory, but I haven't led it into decline either!

"As a matter of fact, Chosen have appeared here, one after another. I never had a single one of those Chosen killed, no matter what sect or clan they come from, nor have I engaged in any wholesale slaughter!

"It's true that the Ji Clan has grown large and powerful thanks to the Immortality Bestowal Dais I created, which allowed many people to become false Immortals by means of my name. However, in the end, I have done nothing to harm the Ninth Mountain and Sea. If anything, I gave more people the hope, and the chance, to reach Immortal Ascension.

"As for the Fang Clan, the only reason I ever targeted them was because of the old enmities that exist between our two clans.

"Despite that, from the very beginning until now, when you still haven't stepped into the Dao, I never made a move to attack you… with the exception of that one time in the Eighth Mountain and Sea."

Meng Hao thought for a moment, then responded in a cool voice, "Nice soliloquy, but it's not enough. I demand a complete explanation."

Ji Yin couldn't hold back from jumping in. "Meng Hao, y-you're pushing things too far. What the Patriarch did to you and your father wasn't his true wish. He actually–"

"That's enough," Ji Tian said, waving his hand to interrupt Ji Yin. He looked at Meng Hao, and he seemed to have come to a decision.

"I can give you that complete explanation, Crown Prince." With that, he rose to his feet and waved his hand, causing a rift to appear in front of him, which he immediately entered.

Meng Hao glanced over at Ji Yin. Based on what she had just said, he already had an idea of what was going on. He strode forward into the rift, then appeared in a small dimension.

The surroundings weren't very large. It was a sepulcher.

"Crown Prince, the explanation I owe you lies in here," Ji Tian said, his voice hoarse.

Meng Hao looked around, and was instantly moved. Within the sepulcher were eight coffins, none of which contained bones, only piles of skin.

There was also a strong Karmic power that caused Meng Hao's eyes to glitter. It only took a moment of extrapolation on his part to determine the general function of this place, although he couldn't determine the specific grand magic at play.

"Clone possession," he said. "Crafting the perfect body…. Eight possessions were like eight lives, and from the look of it, Ji Dongyang was your eighth life. He wanted to possess me in order to become the ninth life!

“Therefore, what you want to tell me is that the divine magic you unleashed actually took control of you. The ‘you’ that I encountered before wasn’t really you. Furthermore, after cutting down Ji Dongyang, the magic was broken, and you recovered control?” Eyes glittering, he looked over at Ji Tian!

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# Chapter 1354: The 32 Heavens are Coming!

Ji Tian stood there for a while without responding. Then he sighed, looking around the sepulcher with mixed emotions.

“Ke Yunhai was the hero of an entire generation…. His reincarnation magic worked for Ke Jiusi. But even though I obtained the same magical technique, I couldn’t get it to work right.”

Meng Hao’s mind reeled as he realized why this magical technique seemed so familiar. It was obviously… the same legendary transmigration technique Ke Yunhai had mentioned! 1

“Crown Prince, does this explanation of mine meet with your satisfaction?” Ji Tian asked slowly.

Meng Hao waved his hand, causing the dimension they were in to shrink down until it was nothing more than a dot of light in the palm of his hand. Then, he and Ji Tian reappeared back out on the Ninth Mountain.

Ji Tian had made things very simple. He knew that he had offended Meng Hao and the Fang Clan far too deeply. That was in fact why he had connected his life force to the Ninth Mountain’s Xuanwu turtle. Such an act clearly demonstrated how determined he was to fight for the Mountains and Seas. Then, he had actually handed over to Meng Hao the very pocket dimension which was inextricably bound to his own life.

All of that showed that he was placing his life in Meng Hao’s hands. If Meng Hao wanted to, he could easily use the pocket dimension to torture him endlessly, even kill him.

After providing all of these things to Meng Hao, Ji Tian stood quietly off to the side, waiting for Meng Hao to make his decision.

Meng Hao thought for a moment, then gave Ji Tian a profound look. If there were no war in the Mountains and Seas, then he would definitely kill Ji Tian on the spot. But now….

A profound gleam flickered in his eyes as he turned, taking the pocket dimension with him as he left the Ninth Mountain.

After Meng Hao left, Ji Tian seemed to age, and much of his energy drained away. After standing there bitterly for a moment, he sighed.

He knew that he had just sidestepped a huge catastrophe. Before Meng Hao had destroyed the 1st Heaven, he had felt confident in being able to personally prevent him from taking action. But after what happened with the 1st Heaven, and after he enslaved the Paragon, Ji Tian was filled with an unprecedented level of fear.

At that point, he realized that all the preparations he had made would be useless in dealing with Meng Hao. The only way to have a shot at living… was to place his life in Meng Hao's hands.

Even then, he only had a sliver of a chance!

After resolving matters with Ji Tian, Meng Hao proceeded along through the starry sky, observing the Mountain and Sea Realm preparing for war. His heart grew calm, and his will to fight grew stronger. He was like a sword being sharpened, a sword that, when it was unsheathed, could sever the Heavens.

The preparations continued, and one by one, various projects were completed. The eight lines of defense were set up, and the Nine Seas were filled with astonishing restrictive spells.

The Mountain and Sea cultivators were also organized into armies. Roughly thirty percent were sent to the First Mountain and Sea, with the rest being sent to the other Mountains and Seas, where they would wait to relieve troops on the battlefield or act as reinforcements.

Ancient treasures from various sects and clans were distributed, and large numbers of cultivators were stationed on the sun and moon, which were in and of themselves precious treasures no weaker than Paragons!

During the battle with the 1st Heaven, the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm had been solely focused on maintaining the barrier against the other Heavens. Therefore, the sun and the moon had not been used. Now that the barrier was breaking, and the 32 Heavens were coming, the sun and moon… were ready to explode into battle!

Ksitigarbha was stationed on the moon. Considering the level of his cultivation base, as well as the fact that he commanded the river of reincarnation, the sea of the Yellow Springs, as well as numerous Yama King palaces, the moon was the best place for him to unleash his peak power. Most of the power of the moon was focused, not on attacking, but defending!

The brightest glow of all came from the sun! The person who had been appointed to that station was… Meng Hao!

As per Paragon Sea Dream’s orders, Meng Hao was to take control of the sun, and would wield the Mountain and Sea Realm’s most deadly weapon!

As for the paragon puppet, Meng Hao sent it to the peak of the First Mountain, where it had a perfect view of the First Sea, and would be able to observe all of the battlefields which would make up the first line of defense.

Conveniently, Meng Hao’s incredible divine sense made it possible for him multitask, and thus personally control the incredible power of the Paragon puppet. To him, it was a perfectly suitable thing to do, although to anyone else it would be impossible.

Everyone took everything very seriously, and soon, a powerful will to fight pervaded the entire Mountain and Sea Realm. With the Siege Mode activated, the Realm was like a razor-sharp sword.

The most important aspect of the Siege Mode was that everything surrounding the entire Mountain and Sea Realm was locked down by its will. The only way in or out was through the First Sea and the First Mountain!

If the 32 Heavens wanted to exterminate all life in the Mountain and Sea Realm, then there was really only one way to do it. They could not resort to trickery like the 1st Heaven had, and try to divide the Mountain and Sea Realm.

All cultivators in the Mountains and Seas, regardless of whether they wanted to or not, were ready for war. Some of them were thinking of themselves, but most were thinking of their clans and their sects!

Perhaps few people were worried about the Mountain and Sea Realm as a whole, but everyone had a clan or sect, as well as a family, and all of those existed within the Mountain and Sea Realm!

It was now only about three days until the 32 Heavens were expected to break through the barrier. Everything was still and quiet, although the will to fight and the killing intent in the Realm grew stronger and more pervasive.

Meng Hao made his way through the starry sky until eventually he… reached the sun. There were 100,000 cultivators posted there, arranged in both military and spell formations.

The minimum cultivation level among those cultivators was the Immortal Realm, with about thirty percent being Ancient Realm experts. They did not come from one particular Mountain and Sea, but had been picked from all of them. These people all cultivated fire-type techniques, and with them present, the power of the sun would be even further increased.

As soon as Meng Hao arrived, the 100,000 cultivators clasped hands and bowed deeply, fanatical gleams shining in their eyes.

“Greetings, Crown Prince of the Mountains and Seas!

“We shall live and die with the Mountains and Seas! We are willing to give our lives and souls for the Crown Prince!” The voices of 100,000 cultivators joined together into a powerful roar that echoed out, and within their eyes burned passion, and an intense desire to do battle.

Meng Hao looked at them, looked at the sun, and then clasped hands and bowed deeply. He made no speech, but instead stepped forward into the nucleus spell formation at the center of the sun, where he sat down cross-legged and closed his eyes.

Now that Meng Hao had arrived, all of the 100,000 cultivators sat down cross-legged.

Meng Hao had previously believed this sun to be huge, definitely larger than a planet, and most likely as large as one of the Mountains of the Realm. But now he realized that actually… it wasn’t very big.

The reason it seemed so spectacular was because of the dazzling, majestic light which constantly shone off of it, and the intense heat which made it impossible for ordinary cultivators to even get near it.

In fact, these 100,000 cultivators were wearing a special type of armor provided by Paragon Sea Dream which allowed them to stay on the surface of the sun. As for Meng Hao, considering the current level of his fleshly body, he needed nothing of the sort.

Numerous powerful spell formations could be seen which had apparently existed since time immemorial. As the 100,000 cultivators sat down cross-legged onto those spell formations, they merged into them, becoming part of the formations.

Meng Hao, of course, sat down cross-legged at the spell formation in the very center.

When he sent his divine sense out to cover the entire sun, he could sense a power there that could shake Heaven and Earth.

It was not his first time sensing that power. Back in the Windswept Realm, he had used his drop of Paragon’s blood to summon the light of this very sun, and the energy he had sensed at that time was the same as the energy he sensed now!

With his divine sense unleashed, he could utilize the spell formation, and with a mere thought, could merge into that power, and even… control it without the slightest interference!

Meng Hao could also sense that deep within the recesses of the sun was… the true precious treasure that this spell formation could unleash.

“According to the legends,” he murmured, “Paragon Nine Seals created the Mountain and Sea Realm, and then used his two Battle Weapons to make the sun and moon…. As for the sun, it focuses on battle, and the moon focuses on defense.” With that, he looked over in the direction of the moon, which was on the opposite side of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

That was where Ksitigarbha was stationed, who Meng Hao had still not met in person. He was the most peerless expert in the Mountain and Sea Realm, and he was tasked with using the moon to coordinate the defenses in battle.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and looked away. Then he sent his divine sense throughout the sun, linking himself with the 100,000 cultivators.

With that, he closed his eyes and began to wait.

Time passed. One day. Two days…. The cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm were itching to fight, and their killing intent shook Heaven and Earth. Everyone was now completely focused on the starry sky up above.

By now, boundless ripples were spreading out through the starry sky, as well as crashing booms, all from the barrier created by the will of the Mountains and Seas. Something terrifying was bashing at that barrier, causing the starry sky to burn, and sending crevices snaking out!

As the crevices grew wider, the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm calmed their spirits. No one spoke. They stood there silently. Waiting.

Waiting for the 32 Heavens to attack!

It was in that moment that Paragon Sea Dream’s voice suddenly echoed out in Meng Hao’s mind.

“Meng Hao….”

Meng Hao opened his eyes.

“The sun is extremely important, and is in fact the key to the war. The sun… must not be lost! The Tailuo Redthunder Formation was one of the most powerful spell formations back in the days of the Paragon Immortal Realm.

“Paragon Nine Seals himself set up the formation, and having built up energy for tens upon tens of thousands of years, it can unleash supreme power. However, that power is limited. It can attack only nineteen times at one hundred percent strength. Eventually, the formation may break, and at that time, there is something you must remember. When it comes to the power of the sun, the spell formation is the first layer, the structure of the sun is the second layer, and the precious treasure in the nucleus is the third layer!

“Hold on for as long as you can…. This war is going to go on for a long time….”

Paragon Sea Dream’s voice echoed away into nothing. Meng Hao sat there silently. He didn’t respond to her words, but his eyes shone with a sharp, brilliant light. As for his divine sense, he sent some of it out toward the peak of the First Mountain where… the Paragon puppet sat cross-legged.

In the instant his divine sense poured into it, the Paragon puppet’s eyes opened, and they glittered brightly as it slowly looked up.

That was the moment in which a Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering explosion rang out through the Mountain and Sea Realm. Up above in the starry sky, visible to all, was a huge black scorpion claw, slashing down through the barrier up above!!

The barrier was ripped open, and rumbling sounds like thunder filled the starry sky of the entire Mountain and Sea Realm.

The rift which had been opened in the barrier was thousands of meters wide, and on the other side was an army of Outsiders so large it was impossible to number. Countless eyes stared toward the Mountains and Seas, filled with greed and ruthlessness.

The 32 Heavens… were coming!!

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# Chapter 1355: Paragon Xuan Fang!

The rumbling was so intense that the heavenly bodies shook. The scorpion pincer retracted, then appeared once again in another area off to the side. More booms could be heard as a second huge rift was ripped open.

Meng Hao watched silently, as did all of the other cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm. Their cold eyes were fixed on the starry sky up above as they awaited orders from Paragon Sea Dream.

The gigantic scorpion pincer appeared again and again, and soon ten rifts had been slashed open into the barrier in the starry sky. The strangest thing was that the ten rifts did not connect at all.

With every slash of the pincer, the barrier grew weaker and weaker, until the final slash was delivered, whereupon a blast of energy surged out from the pincer.

Everything trembled, and a huge shockwave surged out, although it seemed as if the source of that blast was actually beyond the barrier itself!

After all, the scorpion pincer itself was more than 30,000 meters long, so it could only be imagined how gigantic the scorpion itself was!

The aura emanating from the scorpion pincer spread out in all directions, and the pressure of a Paragon superseded that of Heaven and Earth, dispersing everything in its path as it descended toward the Mountain and Sea Realm, a will unto itself!

“Heathens of the Paragon Immortal Realm, henceforth all of ye… shall cease to exist!

“All Immortals shall perish!

“All Immortal bloodlines will be cut off!

“All memories will be expunged!”

Massive rumbling echoed out in concert with the voice, causing the Mountains to shake and the Seas to seethe. The minds of all the cultivators in the Mountain and Sea Realm shook.

That was the will of a Paragon, and not that of a 7-Essences Paragon…. No, this was… an 8-Essences Paragon!!

The Mountains and Seas were trembling. The lands shook and mountains were rocked as Heaven and Earth crumbled. The enormous scorpion pincer gradually retracted, as if the Outsider Paragon were temporarily incapable of actually descending into the Mountains and Seas, but first needed to widen the passageway before its true form could come.

As the pincer pulled back through the huge 3,000-meter rift it had just opened, a sea of countless Outsiders began to swarm through. Their eyes blazed with greed and a thirst for blood, and their laughter rang out in all directions.

At the same time, countless Outsiders began to fly out from the other rifts.

“The flesh and blood of Immortals…. I haven’t savored that flavor for a long, long time….”

“Immortals, huh? So this is the Immortal World we’ve been suppressing for so many millennia? They actually managed to wipe out the 1st Heaven?”

“Hahaha! Attack!!”

Screams that could twist the mind and heart echoed out as huge waves of Outsiders poured out. For the most part, they looked completely different than ordinary cultivators. Some had scaly skin, others had bone spurs protruding out all over their bodies. Some of them even looked like enormous crocodiles.

There were Outsiders that had human bodies but the heads of lions, and others with even more bizarre appearances. At a single glance, it was possible to tell that these beings were from outside the Mountain and Sea Realm.

When Meng Hao saw them pouring through the rifts, he frowned, and wondered why the Paragon Immortal Realm had ever ruled over Lower Realms filled with Outsiders such as these.

It was at this point that Paragon Sea Dream’s icy voice suddenly rang out in the minds of all Mountain and Sea cultivators.

“Fight!”

It was one word, but it was a word that called for a battle to the death. The resolve of the cultivators exploded like a whirlwind, and their hearts burned as if with fire.

Rumbling could be heard as the cultivators on the first line of defense attacked, unleashing their most powerful divine abilities. The starry sky trembled as the might of millions of cultivators exploded out. Instantly, the starry sky was not black, but instead filled with a riot of dazzling colors.

Countless divine abilities and magical techniques emanated scintillating colors, and were backed by the will and resolve of all the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm. It was like an ocean of magic that surged with fatal power toward the Outsiders. And this… was just the first showdown!

The fighting exploded in an instant. The Outsiders also unleashed their most profound divine abilities, some of them moving so fast they were mere blurs. Others laughed maniacally as they grew to incredible sizes, using their natural armor-like flesh to fight back. Some even transformed into multiple clones.

However, there were quite a few who were immediately cut down by the raging ocean of magic that blasted into them. This time, the Mountain and Sea Realm had entered its Siege Mode, and the spirits of its cultivators burned with passion. They were completely and utterly prepared for battle.

The ocean of magic swept over the Outsiders, and even as it began to fade away, another wave surged out from the First Mountain and Sea.

As Meng Hao sat cross-legged in the sun, he refrained from attacking. This precious treasure of the Mountain and Sea Realm could not be squandered casually. It was impossible to say exactly how long the war would last, and Meng Hao wanted to ensure that each attack he unleashed… would inflict maximum damage on the invading 32 Heavens.

His Paragon puppet was also waiting to attack. Currently, the only fighters on the field of battle were the cultivators from the First Mountain and Sea.

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the initial advance of the Outsiders was shoved back, making it impossible for them to descend into the Mountain and Sea Realm. However, despite being sent spinning back by the ocean of magic, the number of Outsiders was vast, and more and more of them poured out of the ten rifts. Furthermore, additional rifts were now opening up.

As the forces of the Outsiders swelled in number, they were slowly able to push back against the ocean of magic unleashed by the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Meng Hao frowned in thought. Then, the sun’s spell formation began to flicker with light as he prepared to launch an attack. However, it was at this point that a cold snort echoed out from within the rift, and a new figure appeared.

It was a lion-headed Outsider, and as soon as he appeared, he exploded with the aura of an Imperial Lord. As he advanced, his aura transformed into an enormous circular shield of light!

The shield of light grew larger and larger as he advanced, until it was fully 3,000 meters in diameter. This was what the Outsider Imperial Lord used to defend against the ocean of magic.

Meng Hao's eyes glittered, and without hesitation, he took action. The boundless light of the sun became the most dazzling light on the battlefield. A beam of light shot out, and if you looked closely, within that beam of light was a glowing arrow!

The arrow pierced through the void to appear directly in front of the lion-headed Imperial Lord. His light shield instantly shattered, and the Imperial Lord's face fell. Pupils constricting, he shot backward. However, the arrow's speed hadn't been reduced in the slightest.

Just as the arrow was about to slam into him, the lion-headed Imperial Lord threw his head back and roared. At the same time, his body rapidly expanded and changed shape into that of a golden lion. He then butted his head into the light shooting toward him from the sun.

Intense, blistering light radiated out from the Outsider Imperial Lord, and he let out a miserable shriek. Just when he was on the verge of being wiped out of existence, he suddenly spit a marionette out of his mouth. It was hard to tell whether the marionette was laughing or crying, and apparently, it was taking the place of the Outsider Imperial Lord's soul as it cracked into pieces.

After the marionette was destroyed, the Outsider Imperial Lord's body grew blurry and then vanished. When he reappeared near the border of the one of the rifts, he was trembling, and was clearly much weaker than before. Enraged, he turned to look in the direction of Meng Hao and the sun.

Meng Hao's expression was calm as he snorted coldly. At the same time, the Outsider Imperial Lord suddenly looked back in the direction of his destroyed marionette to find that the light arrow had reformed. It then shot forth at incredible speed, and before he could react, it stabbed into his forehead.

A boom rang out, and a look of disbelief flashed across his face in the moment before he exploded. In the lasts moments before he died, the only thing that filled his mind was disbelief that he was dying after having just stepped foot onto the battlefield. Then, he was completely wiped out of existence!

Countless cultivators within the Mountain and Sea Realm saw this happen, and they were instantly enlivened.

Upon the death of the lion-headed Imperial Lord, another astonishing stream of aura pierced out from within one of the rifts. It was a second Imperial Lord who moved so fast it was difficult to see him. Only when he stopped moving was it possible to see that his appearance was not humanoid. Instead, he was a 3,000-meter-tall ant.

He was pitch black and emanated a boundless black glow that fought back against the ocean of magic. Even as he looked over warily at Meng Hao, a third Imperial Lord appeared!

Shockingly, this third Imperial Lord… was not an Outsider, but a cultivator. He emanated profound ancientness, and wore a long white robe. He was an old man who had apparently lived for countless years, and emanated boundless cultivation base ripples. As soon as he appeared, he looked down at the Mountain and Sea Realm with a complex expression. Seemingly reminiscent, he finally snorted coldly, waving his right hand to cause a crimson flame phoenix to appear, fully 3,000 meters long. Instantly, it shot toward the ocean of magic.

Two Imperial Lords were now attacking simultaneously, causing the ocean of magic to begin to vibrate. After a long moment, just when it seemed as if it couldn’t sustain itself for any longer, the invading Outsiders built up enough troops to unleash a magical ocean of their own.

Meng Hao quickly prepared the sun’s spell formation for a second attack. In the blink of an eye, another light arrow shot out, toward… the white-robed Imperial Lord who was… clearly a cultivator who had originally come from in the Mountain and Sea Realm.

However, it was at this point that the starry sky trembled. Everything shook as a huge hand stretched out from one of the rifts. It was completely golden, and covered with boundless fur that floated about elegantly. That hand stretched out with incredible speed to simply grab the second light arrow Meng Hao had just shot from the sun!

The hand clenched down viciously, and the light arrow shattered.

Meng Hao's eyes flickered. He hadn't used the full power of the sun in his previous two attacks, only about sixty to seventy percent. Even still, the only type of person who could crush those arrows would be a Paragon!

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# Chapter 1356: Plot To Fragment the Heavens!

Massive rumbling could be heard as the light arrow collapsed into pieces. The Paragon’s enormous hand stopped in place, then opened slowly, causing a drop of blood to drop down. That blood drop sizzled, and then exploded into a boundless sea covered with innumerable magical symbols. It descended like a millstone toward the ocean of magic unleashed by the huge army of Mountain and Sea cultivators.

Meng Hao’s pupils constricted in response.

“He definitely deserves to be a Paragon. He clearly has copious experience in battle, and is adept at changing tactics in the middle of fighting. He actually took the drop of blood that resulted from being struck by the light arrow and turned it into a powerful attack….”

There was no time for Meng Hao to stop what was happening. Frowning, he watched as the Paragon’s sea of blood shoved down onto the ocean of magic, instantly causing its light to fade wherever they connected.

Simultaneously, the two Imperial Lords also attacked. Rumbling sounds could be heard as, for the first time, the Mountain and Sea Realm’s ocean of magic was suppressed, and began to fade away.

It was also at this point that the rifts in the starry sky were relentlessly ripped open wider and wider. Vast quantities of Outsiders appeared. There were no less than a million at this point, and their expressions were all fierce and vicious as they charged toward the First Mountain and Sea.

The rifts only continued to open wider, and it was possible to see that even more Outsiders were waiting beyond. They kept pouring through the openings without stop.

Furthermore, behind all of those Outsiders was… a land mass!

It was… the 2nd Heaven. This 2nd Heaven was clearly larger than the 1st Heaven, and beyond it, Meng Hao could see the 3rd Heaven, the 4th Heaven, and the 5th Heaven….

Each of the 33 Heavens was larger than the one before it, with the smallest being the 1st Heaven, and the largest Heaven being… the 33rd Heaven.

Rumbling could be heard as the 2nd Heaven… battered the barrier, causing the rifts to grow larger, and allowing more and more Outsiders to enter the Mountain and Sea Realm.

From the look of it, the barrier wouldn't stay intact for very much longer.

Meng Hao looked back toward the rifts, and his eyes flickered as he caught sight of the Paragon who had just shattered his arrow. He was enormous, and golden-colored, with the head of a lion, the type of figure to be the subject of all attention.

Golden light shimmered off of him, and Meng Hao could even sense that this lion-headed Paragon possessed terrifying, world-destructive power.

Sensing Meng Hao's gaze, the lion-headed Paragon looked over, and his lightning-like eyes pierced through the void to land on the sun, and Meng Hao. Voice cool, he said, "I am Xuan Fang."

Meng Hao snorted coldly as he sent his divine sense out to defend himself.

Xuan Fang's eyes glittered. Ignoring Meng Hao, he turned to face the Paragon puppet which waited on the First Mountain. His expression was mixed as he extended his hand and pointed toward the First Mountain and Sea.

“Let the war of extermination begin!” In response to his words, countless Outsiders roared and charged toward the First Mountain and Sea, unleashing numerous magical techniques and divine abilities.

The army that comprised the first line of defense for the Mountain and Sea Realm was separated from the Outsiders by the First Sea, but they still fought back directly with various magics. However, the number of Outsiders was vast, and more were pouring in by the moment. Their charge was relentless and awe-inspiring, and their advance drew them ever closer to the First Sea.

The seawater boiled and screamed, and began to vaporize into a mist, as if it were being eternally wiped away.

Unexpectedly, Paragon Xuan Fang stayed in place, an enigmatic smile on his face as he studied the Mountain and Sea Realm. Then he shot up into the starry sky and stretched out both hands, as if he were going to grab hold of the expanse and rip it apart.

Rumbling sounds could be heard as the barrier in the starry sky was ripped open even wider.

Apparently, a tipping point had been reached, as massive rumbling could be heard, and the barrier was became completely inundated with cracks and tears, and then shattered into pieces like a mirror.

As it did, everything that was up above was then revealed. All of the… 32 Heavens!!

Now that the barrier was down, the Mountain and Sea Realm and the 32 Heavens were connected. Both sides… could look directly at each other.

However, it was in that moment that all of the Outsiders from the 32 Heavens suddenly grew blurry and then faded away. Shockingly, they returned back to the land masses from whence they had come! This strange development caused Meng Hao’s heart to begin to thump. Something strange was happening, and although he wasn’t sure what it was, it seemed like something big was about to occur.

Paragon Xuan Fang’s expression flickered with scorn as he looked coldly at the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“I have to admire your little plot. But… I couldn’t care less about it!” In almost the exact same instant that Xuan Fang’s words echoed out, Meng Hao’s heart trembled from the intense foreboding that was growing stronger by the moment. Suddenly, all of the shattered remnants of the barrier began to emit a droning sound as they spun around to form a huge tempest. Then, they began to rise up toward the 32 Heavens.

At the same time, Paragon Sea Dream’s voice echoed out into the minds of the Mountain and Sea cultivators.

“Attack!!”

Rumbling sounds echoed out, starting from the Ninth Mountain and Sea and then moving to the Eighth, the Seventh, and all the way to the First Mountain and Sea, as the Mountain and Sea cultivators unleashed explosive divine abilities and magical techniques. They rocketed up, then shot out from the First Mountain and Sea in an ocean of magic which exceeded the ferocity of the previous oceans by ten times. It shot out toward the tempest, merging into it and thus experiencing an exponential growth in size and power.

That indescribably powerful force was heading directly toward… the 32 Heavens.

This was the Mountain and Sea Realm plot that Xuan Fang had referred to, something that had been enacted by Paragon Sea Dream, but originally planned out by Paragon Nine Seals.

It really was a plot. Although it wasn’t possible to tell from the perspective of the Mountain and Sea Realm itself, from the direction of the 33 Heavens, it was easier to distinguish. The barrier which had been erected by the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm, once shattered, would clearly be able to unleash a shocking attack.

That shocking attack, that intense tempest, would combine all of the magical techniques of the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators to create a power similar to that of a Paragon, which would then be used to strike at the 2nd Heaven!

The massive tempest swept out to cover the 2nd Heaven, smashing its mountains and buildings, then moving on to batter the 3rd Heaven, the 4th Heaven, and then the 5th Heaven.

As of this moment, Meng Hao had already unleashed two powerful attacks, leaving him with less than sixteen left. However, he didn’t hesitate to add the power of one more light arrow into the huge tempest, making it even more glorious than before.

Meng Hao could also sense that there were likely more tricks hidden within the shattered barrier, so despite the sense of foreboding he had, he still chose to chose to join in.

The windstorm screamed, backed by the madness of the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators, by the explosive power of the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm, as if they wanted to bash all of the 32 Heavens to pieces!

However, even as the windstorm blasted into the 6th Heaven, and before it could charge on toward the 7th Heaven, blinding light shone out to cover the landmass that was the 7th Heaven. It then covered the 8th Heaven above it, and the 9th and onward all the way to the 33rd Heaven. Then, all of those Heavens began to fade into blurriness.

At the same time, a barrier appeared, cutting the connection between the 6th Heaven and the 7th Heaven.

Simultaneously, a gigantic scorpion appeared in the vast expanse above the 7th Heaven. It was blurry, but its eyes glittered with oppressive coldness as it stared down at the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“The tactics of Nine Seals, carried by Sea Dream. Our 33 Heavens have no choice but to face the power of your plot. As it turns out… that power of extermination is as terrifying as ever.

“However… tens upon tens of thousands of years have passed. We are different than we used to be. In the past, you might have been able to blast through all 33 Heavens, to open up a path for the Mountain and Sea Realm to flee. But now… you shall be stopped at the 6th Heaven.

“That Mountain and Sea Siege Mode might seem like it is intended to converge power for defense, but there is no question that its shape is that of an arrow. In all likelihood, Paragon Nine Seals planned this out all those tens of thousands of years ago. His plan for the final battle was actually… to open a corridor to make your getaway.

“I wonder how many cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm actually knew about this little plan? Based on what I know of your personality, Sea Dream, my guess is… that you didn’t tell anyone!” The scorpion’s laughter rang out through the Mountain and Sea Realm as it slowly disappeared.

His words were filled with sinister malevolence, and when they entered the ears of the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm, their hearts trembled with shock. Not even Meng Hao had been aware that Sea Dream would do something like this.

Although he could disregard the allegation of the scorpion-shaped Paragon if he wanted to, after some thought, he realized that what he had said didn’t seem like a complete fabrication.

If Meng Hao was affected in such a way, then it could only be imagined how the rest of the Mountain and Sea Cultivators felt. They couldn’t help… but suddenly lose a bit of confidence regarding the war. After all… even their Paragon wanted to escape, not fight to the death….

The sensation of hope they had felt after Meng Hao destroyed the 1st Heaven and enslaved a Paragon… suddenly faded a bit thanks to the words of the scorpion-shaped Paragon.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, and his heart sank. He knew that cultivators who could reach the level of Paragon were by no means weak, and would also be profound schemers.

As the scorpion-shaped Paragon disappeared, and the 7th through 33rd Heavens faded into a state of invisibility, the land masses of the 6th, 5th, 4th, 3rd, and 2nd Heavens all began to descend.

Although they were broken and in ruins, the Outsiders on them clearly had ways to defend from the attack just now. All of them boiled forth, tens of millions of them, backed by their land masses as they charged in attack.

There were also numerous black cubes which spread out from the five land masses, no less than a million of them.

At this point, Paragon Sea Dream’s cold voice echoed out into the starry skies. “What a pack of lies! You think a measly Scorpion Tribe Priest like yourself can understand the ways and means of Paragon Nine Seals…? Cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm, the 7th Heaven and all the other Heavens have unleashed their Heaven Concealing sorcery. For the next year, they will be incapable of emerging from their current state. Nor will they be able to fight us. They will only be able to watch!

“They have abandoned the 2nd through 6th Heavens. Their armies are alone! Outsider cultivators of the Lower Realms, did you know that? Did you know that you have been forsaken?”

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# Chapter 1357: Throw Myself Out as Bait!

It didn’t matter whether or not Paragon Sea Dream really had planned to flee with the Mountain and Sea Realm, or whether or not she felt the war to be hopeless. As of this moment, her echoing words not only solidified the hearts of the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm, it was also a rhetorical counterpunch that caused the Outsiders who remained behind in the 2nd through 6th Heavens to turn very grim-faced.

Meng Hao breathed a sigh of relief, then looked toward the Ninth Mountain with a complex expression. Deep in his heart, he was convinced that Paragon Sea Dream really had intended to lead the Mountain and Sea Realm into flight.

However, now was not the time to ponder the matter. He settled his thoughts and then focused completely on the spell formation, causing brilliant sunlight to shine out into the starry sky.

Meanwhile, as if giving their reply to Sea Dream’s words, the millions of black cubes floating in the starry sky suddenly erupted with boundless lightning, which then lashed downward and bombarded the Mountain and Sea Realm’s first line of defense. If that were all there were to it, it might not be a big deal, but in addition, the surging energy of a Paragon also erupted out from the 6th Heaven.

A hoarse voice could be heard, filled with seemingly infinite pride, “Still as slippery with words as ever, Fellow Daoist Sea Dream. How amusing.”

The 33 Heavens originally had five powerful Paragons. Of those, one had been enslaved by Meng Hao. That left four, and now… two were present to fight!

The words spoken by this Paragon instantly filled the Outsiders with confidence. After all, if the 32 Heavens sent two Paragons to support them, then how could it be as Sea Dream said, that they had been abandoned?

Their fighting spirit soared. Roaring, millions upon millions of Outsiders charged toward the First Sea, whose waters boiled and bubbled as countless restrictive spells exploded out. The First Mountain and Sea was the first line of defense, and the cultivators there had no time to think or ponder. They could only begin to fight!

Millions of cultivators charged forth in attack. Countless scintillating beams of light shot through the First Sea, joining the power of the restrictive spells and spell formations to unleash carnage upon the Outsiders.

The First Sea seethed as innumerable Outsiders poured into the battle. In the blink of an eye, miserable shrieks and cries filled the air, and countless grievous injuries and even deaths occurred. The First Sea almost instantly turned crimson, making the entire sea look like… a sea of blood.

As for the Paragon who had just spoken out from the 6th Heaven, he did not appear in body. Clearly, his only goal had been to put pressure on the Mountain and Sea Realm, and to calm the Outsiders. Even more so, he wanted to buy time.

Time was needed for the 7th through 33rd Heavens to emerge from the special state created by the magic they had used to evade the destructive tempest.

As for the Outsider Imperial Lords, their number had increased from four to six, and they were making a grand display in battle.

Out in the starry sky, Xuan Fang’s eyes glittered as he looked over at the six Imperial Lords, then pointed in the direction of the sun.

“All of you–” However, before he could finish speaking, his expression flickered. “Not good….”

In that same instant, a glowing shield exploded out from the moon. Ksitigarbha was using all the power he could unleash to utilize the moon's spell formation power. The moon was devoted to defense, and now it created a shield that covered the Mountain and Sea Realm, including the First Sea.

That shield locked down the Mountain and Sea Realm, and at the same time… cut off all of the Outsiders who were within the First Sea from the others!

It was as if the Outsiders' huge army had suddenly been cut apart!

One portion was isolated in the First Sea, with the majority of the army being stuck outside. At the same time, Meng Hao sent divine will into the Paragon puppet that was waiting atop the First Mountain. Suddenly, it looked up, its eyes flashing.

The puppet's face was expressionless, but when Xuan Fang saw it, his face fell. The puppet rose to its feet, the pressure of a Paragon exploding out from the First Mountain to fill the First Sea. Then, it took a step forward.

"Eegoo, what are you doing!?!?" Xuan Fang roared from the other side of the shield. He took a step toward the shield, clenched his hand into a fist, and struck out. The entire shield shook as though it might break at any moment. However, Ksitigarbha's eyes gleamed viciously, and blood oozed out of the corners of the mouths of the 100,000 cultivators under his command. As a result, the shield stabilized, and showed no further signs of being breached.

Xuan Fang roared with fury as he battered the shield again, but it did no good. He stared viciously at Meng Hao's Paragon puppet as it took a step forward, then unleashed a fist strike toward the First Sea.

That fist strike contained Paragon power that could shake the Heavens. The entire First Sea sank down, and the Mountain and Sea cultivators were pushed back by an enormous force. In contrast, the Outsiders' faces flickered with shock and despair.

"NO!!"

"Th-that's… that's Paragon Eegoo. How… how could this be possible!?!?'

"Paragon Eegoo has turned traitor!!"

Massive rumbling echoed out as the fist strike descended. The Outsiders began to cough up blood, and cracking sounds mixed with miserable shrieks could be heard as their bodies began to fall to pieces.

After the fist strike landed, a powerful shockwave surged out in all directions like a massive tempest. As it passed over the Outsiders in the First Sea, their bodies were flayed into masses of blood and gore. Their flesh became ash, and their bones were shattered into fragments, leaving nothing behind!

Their magical items, their bags of holding, everything about them was completely destroyed, until nothing was left behind but wisps of smoke.

However, the blood that filled the First Sea remained behind. Not a bit of it faded away, and in fact, it grew thicker, until the First Sea emanated a stench that struck fear into the hearts of the Outsiders on the other side of the shield.

One single punch exterminated all of the enemy forces in the First Sea.

The power of a Paragon, once unleashed… could exterminate Heaven and Earth.

The Paragon puppet slowly looked up, and its eyes were clearly not that of Eegoo, but Meng Hao. The icy madness therein, freezing killing intent which stabbed out of the Mountain and Sea Realm's shield toward Xuan Fang.

Xuan Fang shivered, and his face darkened, but the killing intent in his own eyes burned brighter than ever as he then turned to look in the direction of the sun, and Meng Hao.

“As long as this kid remains alive,” he thought, “this war will be ten times as hard to win!” After a moment, he looked away. Without speaking another word, he turned his attention back to the shield. He was confident that he would be able to break it open, but he also knew that even if he did, his army wouldn’t be willing to casually step into the First Sea.

And yet, if he didn’t break the stalemate, then despite being able to buy some time, the morale of the troops would be significantly damaged. Furthermore, that would also give time for the Mountain and Sea Realm to make further preparations.

Xuan Fang’s eyes glittered. “We can’t let them dictate the tide of battle. To break this stalemate, I need… to throw out some bait! An Imperial Lord wouldn’t be enough. Only by offering myself up as bait can I force the Mountain and Sea Realm into making a move, whatever it is!”

After a moment of silence, the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm suddenly began to cheer, and their excitement grew. At the same time, the shield began to fade away.

As it did, the Outsiders stared at the bloody First Sea, and just as Xuan Fang had predicted, none of them dared to enter it. Although they clearly outnumbered the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators, they were the scared ones.

None of them dared to enter, but Xuan Fang did. He shot through the vanishing shield at high speed, and in that same moment, Ksitigarbha suddenly rose to his feet from where he sat inside the moon.

“He actually dares to enter?!?!” he thought, eyes shining with a strange light. However, he hesitated. That hesitation came as he considered whether or not to activate the shield again, trapping the Outsider Paragon inside, and then using the power of the Mountains and Seas to kill him!

Accomplishing that… could potentially end the battle much earlier!

It wasn’t just Ksitigarbha who was hesitating. Sea Dream was frowning, and as for the rest of the Outsider army, they were stunned. However, some of the Outsiders were already beginning to roar, and charge forth to fight.

The six Imperial Lords were also shaken. The only person who seemed unfazed was the other Paragon in the 6th Heaven.

Meng Hao began to breathe heavily; the decisiveness being shown by Xuan Fang caused an icy coldness to glitter in his eyes.

“Offering himself up as bait?”

There was no time for lengthy consideration. Xuan Fang shot into the First Sea and appeared directly in front of the Paragon puppet. As he closed in, he performed an incantation gesture and pointed out, causing the surrounding sea of blood to solidify, almost as if it were being frozen by indescribable coldness.

“Seal!” Sea Dream barked in response, countering his move. Her eyes flickered with a fierce gleam. There was really no choice in the matter. If Xuan Fang was brave enough to offer himself up as bait, and the Mountain and Sea Realm was too cowardly to bite, then how could they possibly continue to fight the war?

Sea Dream normally planned things out carefully, but this situation was different.

Even as Sea Dream’s voice continued to echo out, and before she could act on her decision, the light of the sun around Meng Hao blazed brightly. He had made his choice too, which was… to take the bait!

Ksitigarbha took a deep breath as his cultivation base surged with power. The river of reincarnation appeared, along with the sea of the Yellow Springs, and the numerous underworld palaces. The 100,000 cultivators on the moon all erupted with cultivation base power, pouring it into the spell formation, which Ksitigarbha then manipulated, causing the shield to spring up, covering the Mountain and Sea Realm, completely trapping Paragon Xuan Fang!

In the same moment that the shield appeared, the sun blazed with intense light as an attack was unleashed. An arrow of light shot through the starry sky, and at the same time, Paragon Sea Dream suddenly shot to her feet in the Ninth Mountain, then took a step forward to appear on the battlefield.

Rumbling could be heard as Meng Hao’s Paragon puppet began to fight with Xuan Fang. Even as the spectacular battle began to play out, the sunlight arrow was closing in.

Unexpectedly, Xuan Fang didn’t attempt to evade the arrow. In fact, he didn’t even pay any heed to Paragon Sea Dream.

“Do you people really think I threw myself out as bait to get revenge for the millions of my fellow clan members who have died already? Or perhaps because of this Eegoo puppet?

“Oh, no. No… I came here,” he suddenly looked toward the sun and smiled coldly, “for YOU.” Laughing, he reached up and grabbed the light arrow, crushing it with his hand. A massive boom rang out, and blood oozed out of his mouth as he seemed to be on the verge of exploding. However, a strange light then began to flicker within his eyes.

“Dao of Time, return to the origin, trace this light back, and converge my true form!” Even as he spoke, Xuan Fang vanished!

When he reappeared, he was on the sun, a black pearl in his hand, which he then slammed downward!

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# Chapter 1358: Battling Paragon Xuan Fang!

It was as if he had searched for the origin of the arrow, followed the light arrow back, used some incomprehensible divine ability to travel back in time by several breaths. Furthermore… Paragon Xuan Fang himself had traveled back in time!

The injuries that had just been inflicted on him by the light arrow suddenly faded away as he appeared on the surface of the sun!

Massive rumbling sounds could be heard, and the whole sun began to vibrate. The sudden turn of events caused Meng Hao’s eyes to narrow.

“The Essence of Time!!” Meng Hao had fought many people in his life, and although he might not have as much experience as Xuan Fang, he came close. Therefore, it was without the slightest hesitation that he reacted. In fact, his physical reaction was even faster than his mental reaction, as his cultivation base exploded with power, taking the power of the spell formation formed by the 100,000 cultivators and sending a vicious attack out.

That attack contained the full power of the sun, becoming a beam of light that shot, not directly toward Xuan Fang, but toward the black pearl.

That pearl gave Meng Hao a very bad feeling.

The golden light which emanated off of Paragon Xuan Fang had faded some. Clearly, using the Heaven-defying Timeshift magic was not something he could easily do. In fact, most likely, he wouldn’t be able to unleash the same magic again any time soon; in that respect, it was similar to Meng Hao’s Essence of Space.

In any case, Paragon Xuan Fang’s sudden appearance on the sun not only caused Meng Hao’s eyes to widen, Paragon Sea Dream was clearly shocked.

Paragon Sea Dream instantly drew upon her full power to teleport over to the region of the sun. Meng Hao also used divine will to call his Paragon puppet over to help extricate himself from the danger!

Amidst rumbling sounds, brilliant light shot toward the pearl that Paragon Xuan Fang was slamming toward the surface of the sun.

Xuan Fang snorted coldly, then suddenly let go of the black pearl, allowing the light of the sun to slam into it. A huge boom then echoed out as the pearl was completely shattered.

As that happened, black mist spread out, which Meng Hao could instantly tell was filled with some sort of incredible sealing power. Thankfully, it had been destroyed before being fully unleashed; had it been used, even a Paragon would have been hard pressed to undo the sealing effect.

Clearly, the pearl had been a precious treasure that only a Paragon could wield!

As soon as the black pearl shattered, Paragon Xuan Fang suddenly flickered into motion. In the blink of an eye, he was off in the distance. However, he was still on the surface of the sun, and shockingly, another black pearl could be seen in his hand. A vicious grin could be seen on his face as he completely ignored the incoming Sea Dream and Paragon puppet.

“When I attack, I plan things meticulously,” he said coolly. “Things rarely go awry when I make a move!” With that he viciously threw the black pearl down toward the surface of the sun.

“Why does he insist on slamming that thing into the sun…?” thought Meng Hao, frowning. Suddenly, an idea popped into his head, and at the same time, the Lightning Cauldron appeared. Electricity danced as Meng Hao teleported out of the spell formation. Xuan Fang's jaw dropped as, in the blink of an eye, Form Displacement Transposition caused him to switch places with Meng Hao.

Meng Hao waved his hand, and just as the black pearl was about to slam into the surface of the sun, he scooped it up.

As soon as he touched it, he understood.

"He doesn't want to seal this moment in time, and he doesn't want to use the pearl to kill me, he wants… to seal the sun!" With that, he looked up, and his pupils constricted as he realized that Paragon Xuan Fang… had produced a third black pearl.

This time, Xuan Fang didn't speak. In almost the same instant that Meng Hao laid eyes on him, he didn't throw the pearl down, but simply crushed it.

As the pearl was crushed, thick black mist exploded out, instantly swirling out to cover the entire sun, creating something like a unique Domain.

It was at this point that Meng Hao's Paragon puppet closed in and unleashed a fist strike upon the black mist. However, the power of that strike disappeared as quickly as a stone ox thrown into the ocean. Furthermore, there was no reaction whatsoever from the mist.

As for Paragon Sea Dream, as soon as she was close enough, she waved her finger, sending Paragon power exploding out. However, it did nothing to the mist except cause it to shudder and loosen slightly.

"Those are Gloompearls!!" An extremely unsightly expression appeared on Sea Dream's face. Gloompearls were not something from the 33 Heavens. Back when the Paragon Immortal Realm faced complete catastrophe, one of the two major enemy forces created them with the express purpose of ensnaring powerful experts of the Immortal World. Once their power was unleashed, it couldn't easily be dispelled.

At the very least, it could trap everything inside of it for a quarter of an hour.

During that quarter hour, whatever was inside the mist was completely cut off from the rest of the world!

Even as Sea Dream’s face flickered, Paragon Xuan Fang was within the mist, eyes flickering with icy killing intent. Although he initially appeared to be going after the Paragon puppet, in the blink of an eye, he changed his target to Meng Hao. But then, just when everyone thought he was actually trying to kill Meng Hao, he unleashed a Gloompearl to lock down the sun!

He had even prepared three pearls, all to ensure that the power of the sun could not be unleashed. That would remove one of the major obstacles to the invading army.

However just when people thought they knew what Xuan Fang was trying to do, he suddenly changed tactics again. Instead of trying to keep the sun sealed, he targeted Meng Hao. The truth was that few people would be able to guess… exactly what his goals were.

Right now, the sun was cut off because of the mist. Sea Dream and the Paragon puppet were on the outside, trying to batter their way in, trying to undo the seal. Meanwhile, Meng Hao was inside, facing incredible danger.

“I have a quarter of an hour to kill you, and that’s all I need!” Xuan Fang laughed loudly, erupting with the cultivation base power of a Paragon as he took a step forward toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s face darkened. Xuan Fang was turning into a real headache; not only was his cultivation base incredibly powerful, his ability to scheme ran deep and profound. He was proving much more difficult to deal with than Eegoo.

Even as Xuan Fang bore down on him, Meng Hao backed up, sending out divine will to gather the power of the spell formation. Rumbling sounds could be heard as brilliant light exploded out, transforming into a light arrow that shot toward Xuan Fang.

Xuan Fang roared and performed a double-handed incantation gesture, causing an enormous golden lion to appear behind him. The lion rapidly grew in size, covering Xuan Fang and taking the hit of the arrow instead of him.

A boom rang out as the light arrow pierced into the image of the lion, which distorted, and then, before it could even roar, shattered into pieces. The light arrow, despite dimming somewhat, continued to stab toward Xuan Fang, who then reached out and grabbed it. As he crushed his hand down, the light arrow collapsed, and Xuan Fang backed up a few steps, his face pale and yet covered with an expression of scorn.

“The treasures passed down by Nine Seals are truly powerful. Unfortunately, you can only unleash a limited bit of its power. Perhaps if you struck me over and over again in quick succession, you would have a chance to kill me. However, you can only unleash the power with the help of that spell formation, and those 100,000 cultivators. What a joke!

“Besides, for the next ten breaths of time at the minimum, you will not be able to unleash the power of this sun!” Even as he spoke, Xuan Fang launched himself toward Meng Hao, golden light flickering around him as he clenched his fist and punched out.

“Your fleshly body has the signs of fleshly body cultivation. Let’s see how well you cultivated it!”

The fist strike was powerful enough to shatter mountains and crush the earth. The sun trembled, and boundless golden light radiated out as a gigantic lion appeared within the fist strike, roaring as it charged toward Meng Hao.

Paragon power dispelled the natural laws in the area, causing the 100,000 cultivators to cough up mouthfuls of blood. There were even some who exploded into showers of blood and gore.

Meng Hao’s cultivation base suddenly teetered unstably, and he staggered backward. At the same time, Paragon Sea Dream’s voice echoed urgently from beyond the mist, sounding almost as if it were coming from a different time and space.

“Meng Hao, just hold on for a quarter of an hour!! That’s the longest it will take us to break this seal.”

The danger was intense, leaving Meng Hao’s heart pounding. He might be as powerful as the peak of 6-Essences, capable of fighting with Imperial Lords. However, the difference between that and a Paragon, was too vast. He was currently trapped, with nowhere to flee, and no choice but to fight to the death.

In this critical juncture, Meng Hao dismissed all notions of coming up with a clever idea. Instead, his mind thrummed with the desire… to fight!

“A quarter hour….” he thought, eyes flickering with killing intent. Then, he sent his divine sense rocketing toward Xuan Fang in a vicious attack. Instead of falling back, he fought back against the pressure, taking a step forward and unleashing his own fist strike!

Life-Extermination!

Everything shook violently, and a tempest sprang out in all direction as Meng Hao’s fist strike slammed into Paragon Xuan Fang’s. A huge boom could be heard, and blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth. However, his expression was extremely vicious as he took another step forward and unleashed a second fist strike.

Bedevilment Fist!

No survival without Bedevilment! Meng Hao laughed uproariously. Massive energy was unleashed by the fist strike, causing a deafening boom to ring out. Even Paragon Xuan Fang was taken aback. Meng Hao coughed up more blood, and cracking sounds could be heard coming from within him.

He might have a Dao Sovereign fleshly body, but Xuan Fang was a Paragon, with an even stronger fleshly body, one that vastly exceeded Meng

Hao’s

“You really want to die?!” Xuan Fang laughed coldly. Rotating his cultivation base, he caused intense pressure to spread out. The golden lion roared, completely suppressing Meng Hao’s Bedevilment Fist, and then appearing directly in front of Meng Hao himself.

It was at this point that Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a brilliant light as he… unleashed a third fist strike!

It was none other than… the God-Slaying Fist!

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# Chapter 1359: Oh So Devious!

Merge my will with that of the Heavens. My fist arouses the sun, becoming a fist of light!

As of that moment, Meng Hao’s will converged in the form of the God-Slaying Fist. Advancing courageously and with complete determination, he unleashed the powerful blow.

When it slammed into Paragon Xuan Fang’s fist, massive booms rang out. A tremor ran through Meng Hao, and his right arm distorted. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and he was sent tumbling backward as though he had been struck by a powerful blast.

However, at the same time, Xuan Fang’s eyes flickered with astonishment. Although he appeared to have been unfazed, the five fingers of his right hand were tingling in pain, and he couldn’t even stretch them out. An injury like this wasn’t something that would cause him to cough up blood. And yet, his finger bones were crushed, and the other bones in his arm were fractured. However, the intense pain only caused the killing intent in Xuan Fang’s eyes to deepen. Once again, he closed in on Meng Hao.

“Wish you could get away?” Xuan Fang chuckled. However, even as he closed in, Meng Hao suddenly stopped in place and looked up, his eyes gleaming with ferocity as his Green Emperor’s Eternal Incantation operated at full speed.

“The thought never crossed my mind,” he replied icily. Azure light shone out as he transformed into an azure roc, which then shot toward Xuan Fang at high speed. A piercing cry rang out, and at the same time, numerous mountains descended, along with the Paragon Bridge, which erupted with intense power.

Rumbling could be heard as Paragon Xuan Fang laughed coldly, choosing not to evade, but instead to step forward and make a grasping motion. Immediately, golden light sprang into being in front of him, within which flickered innumerable magical symbols. A spell formation was formed, which radiated the power of the stars, causing the five elements to be thrown into chaos, and strange lights to flicker.

The spell formation immediately shot toward Meng Hao, causing his mountains to shatter and destroying his azure roc form. Azure light scattered, and Meng Hao's human form emerged, looking completely bedraggled. His chest was a mass of blood and gore, and even organs were visible.

Without the incredible effort of the Green Emperor's Eternal Incantation, which constantly healed him, Meng Hao would already be dead. Even with it, he was clearly in a no-win situation.

"Now this is a Paragon…." he thought, eyes flickering with an unyielding gleam. His fight with Eegoo hadn't been nearly as intense as this. Right now, he was trapped, and had no other choice but to face the terrifying might of a Paragon.

And this was just a 7-Essences Paragon!

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the golden spell formation bore down on Meng Hao. He threw his head back and roared, causing brilliant light to shine off of the Paragon Bridge as it fought back.

The pressure from the Paragon Bridge caused the golden spell formation to tremble, and finally break into pieces. Then the Paragon Bridge continued to crush downward toward Xuan Fang.

Xuan Fang's eyes widened. He suddenly looked more closely at the Paragon Bridge, and his expression flickered. Backing up, he performed a double-handed incantation gesture, then placed his finger onto his forehead. Instantly, golden light erupted from the top of his head, transforming into a golden lion. An expression of avarice appeared on Xuan Fang's face, and he began to laugh.

“I can’t believe it’s THAT bridge…. I’ll take it!” The golden lion was a sliver of Xuan Fang’s psyche, and as it flew out, it began to swirl around the Paragon Bridge, attempting to use the power of a Paragon to sever the connection between it and Meng Hao.

Meng Hao had no time to try to stabilize the connection. It was a critical moment of deadly crisis, but Meng Hao was confident that as long as he himself didn’t die, the bridge couldn’t be taken away from him. Even as Xuan Fang was backing up, Meng Hao suddenly teleported back into the spell formation in the middle of the sun. There, he performed an incantation gesture and pointed out, causing scintillating light to swirl out from the sun.

Shockingly, he had already been fighting with Paragon Xuan Fang for more than ten breaths of time, which meant that the sunlight arrow could once again be unleashed. Rumbling sounds could be heard as intense light shot toward Paragon Xuan Fang. Because of how close he was, that light landed on him almost instantly.

It stabbed into his forehead, causing Xuan Fang to shudder and then cough up a mouthful of blood. His energy waned slightly, and although he wasn’t dead, a grievous wound could be seen on his forehead, which immediately began to heal up.

It only took a moment of analysis on Meng Hao’s part to come to the conclusion that Xuan Fang hadn’t come out unharmed. He was clearly using some sort of secret magic to suppress the harmfulness of the wound. In the future, he might suffer an incredible backlash because of that, but at the moment, his battle prowess was not decreased at all because of the wound.

“Dammit!” thought Meng Hao, his face darkening. At the same time, Xuan Fang gave a sinister laugh and charged toward Meng Hao. As he closed in, he waved his hand, causing a golden sea to spread out in all directions, then bash toward Meng Hao within the spell formation.

“Don’t even mention that quarter hour. You won’t even last long enough to fire another of those light arrows.”

Paragon Sea Dream was outside of the mist, her face pale as she realized that Xuan Fang was completely intent on killing Meng Hao. Even she didn’t believe that Meng Hao could last an entire quarter of an hour against him….

It was actually just as Xuan Fang had said. Meng Hao couldn’t hold out for that long, not unless he… sacrificed the 100,000 cultivators and allowed them to die in his place to buy time.

“Xuan Fang!” Sea Dream roared, battering anxiously at the mist. At the same time, the divine sense which Meng Hao had sent to drive the Eegoo puppet was slowly fading. The puppet was already becoming sluggish, and it wouldn’t be long before the divine sense completely faded away. Then the puppet… would lose most of its power, and be able to fight only with its basic instincts.

If that were all there were to it, it might not be a big deal. However, the Outsider army on the other side of the shield was getting stirred up, and was now trying to break through. At the same time, the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm were completely shocked by what was happening with the sun.

Even more relevant was that, in the 6th Heaven outside of the Mountain and Sea Realm, a cold laugh rang out, which belonged to none other than the second Paragon.

If he didn’t understand how to take advantage of the opportunity Paragon Xuan Fang had created, then he didn’t deserve to be a Paragon himself. As he stepped out from the 6th Heaven into the starry sky, no one could see what he looked like, as he was covered by a rippling field of darkness. He looked coldly out at the Mountain and Sea Realm, and the shield, then at the battlefield that was the sun.

His lips twisted into a cold smile, and a merciless cruelty radiated out from him. He did not speak, but instead raised his right hand and performed an incantation gesture. Instantly, the rippling darkness around him twisted and distorted, then began to expand outward. Clearly, he was gathering his power.

The aura of a Paragon erupted out from him as… the land mass that was the 2nd Heaven began to vibrate.

It suddenly began to move, as though some giant, invisible hand had grabbed it, and was sending it… hurtling toward the barrier protecting the Mountain and Sea Realm!

The sight of an entire land mass smashing toward the Mountain and Sea Realm's shield was something that provoked shock on the part of both the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators and the Outsiders.

Most nervous of all were the Outsiders from the 2nd Heaven itself. However, they didn't dare to give voice to such feelings, and could only watch as the land mass, which had already been smashed by the tempest earlier, suddenly began to crush toward the Mountain and Sea Realm's shield.

It seemed to be moving slowly, but the truth was that the power it contained was enough to shake Heaven and Earth!

As of this moment, the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm were now witnessing… what a Paragon truly was!

A Paragon was a person who could influence the tide of an entire battle. They could use an entire massive land mass like a weapon to unleash unimaginably destructive power. In fact, were it not for certain limitations, a Paragon might even use the starry sky itself in that way.

The land mass that was the 2nd Heaven was the smallest among the five land masses present, but it was still difficult to put into words exactly how large it was. Even the mere pressure exuding from it was enough to shatter the starry sky. Instantly, the Mountain and Sea Realm's shield began to show signs of buckling.

Ksitigarbha's face was ashen, but he threw his head back and laughed uproariously. At the same time, he produced a medicinal pill bottle. After a moment of hesitation, he popped the contents into his mouth, and then his cultivation base exploded with power. Blue veins popped out on his face, and a vicious-looking green horn suddenly protruded from the top of his head.

His skin began to change color, turning green, and he grew to a size of 300 meters tall. His Daoist robe was shredded to pieces as his energy rocketed up. As of this moment, his energy was no longer that of a cultivator, but was instead that of… a Demon!

He lifted his right hand and then slapped it down onto the ground, using his life force, using everything he had, to fight against the incoming 2nd Heaven land mass.

The 100,000 cultivators on the moon all smiled bitterly as they also delivered up their life forces, their cultivation bases, their souls, pouring them into the spell formation to assist Ksitigarbha, to assist the Mountain and Sea Realm, to fight back against the enemy!

As of this moment, the sun and the moon were both in situations of deadly crisis. Moments ago, the Mountain and Sea Realm had held the upper hand, but now, it was the opposite. All of that was thanks to… Xuan Fang!!

Of the 33 Heavens’ five Paragons, Xuan Fang’s cultivation base was not the highest. However, in this critical moment in the war, the 33 Heavens had sent him, and were clearly intensely confident that under his leadership, the five Heavens’ worth of Outsiders could shake the Mountain and Sea Realm. At the very least… they could easily cause the fighting to last for a year.

Back on the sun, Xuan Fang was laughing. He took a step forward toward Meng Hao, who was still in the spell formation, and said, “There’s no harm in revealing my true plan now. My true goal is not Eegoo, or the sun, and not even you. Instead… it is something I haven’t even personally seen… your moon!”

The surrounding cultivators were coughing up blood, and yet none of them abandoned their posts. Just like the cultivators on the moon, they unleashed their cultivation bases and their life forces. Even if they died, they would buy time for Meng Hao.

They would bear the brunt of Xuan Fang’s Paragon power to help Meng Hao.

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# Chapter 1360: Six Hexes Combine!

100,000 individuals were all thinking the same thing. Their life forces connected to the spell formation, and their souls thrummed with unyielding ardor. Their cultivation base power made them as one, as they fought together to protect Meng Hao.

Xuan Fang laughed coldly, then stomped his foot down. Instantly, everything began to shake violently, and an intense rumbling sound could be heard as the 100,000 cultivators coughed up mouthfuls of blood.

Meng Hao was in the middle of the spell formation, mind reeling. He couldn’t simply sit there and ignore what was happening. He knew that he wasn’t a match for a Paragon, and also knew that all he had to do was close his eyes and wait for enough time to pass. If enough time was bought it might be possible… to hold out for that full quarter hour until the mist dispersed.

At that time, he might be able to make it out alive!

However… Meng Hao did not choose to wait. Performing an incantation gesture, he ceased to draw upon the power of the sun. If he continued to do so in his current state, it would deplete the life forces of the 100,000 cultivators even faster than before, which was something he wouldn’t do.

He strode forward, leaving the spell formation and heading toward Xuan Fang, who laughed loudly, eyes shining with scorn. He had actually been worried that Meng Hao would hole up and try to burn time.

As soon as Meng Hao took action, Xuan Fang suddenly vanished, and then re-appeared right in front of him. Then, he raised his right hand, sending power slamming into Meng Hao that he couldn't possibly defend against. Meng Hao instantly staggered backward, blood spraying out of his mouth.

"Crown Prince!!"

"Crown Prince!!!" The cries of the 100,000 cultivators rang out in anguish.

As Meng Hao hovered there, his Green Emperor's Eternal Incantation worked constantly to prevent his body from collapsing. However, under the pressure of a Paragon, he couldn't hold out for very long, and besides, his wounds had already reached a critical level.

Once again, Xuan Fang closed in, raising his right hand high, killing intent flickering in his eyes as he grabbed at Meng Hao's head.

"Just die, would you!?"

Even as Xuan Fang reached out to grab him, Meng Hao performed an incantation gesture with his right hand and then waved his finger.

Demon Sealing, Eighth Hex!

However, in the same moment that the Hexing magic was unleashed, and Xuan Fang stopped in place, the magic was shattered. The backlash slammed into Meng Hao, causing blood to spray out of his mouth. Even though it seemed as if he were staggering backward, suddenly, Time rippled in front of Meng Hao. Everything changed, causing a look of shock to appear on Xuan Fang's face. His eyes widened as Meng Hao suddenly vanished, then reappeared behind him.

Xuan Fang turned and lunged toward him, but ended up passing right through Meng Hao, as if he were nothing more than a shadow.

"Time!" Xuan Fang's eyes once again widened.

This was not some trivial change in time, but rather, contained the power of time travel. Apparently, Meng Hao had appeared several breaths of time before, right behind Xuan Fang!

This was none other than the strange time-walking technique that Meng Hao had learned from the black-robed Slaughter. When he reappeared, he was still directly behind Xuan Fang, and suddenly, his right hand transformed. Shockingly… the Battle Weapon appeared, which he raised high above his head as he took a step forward, seemingly walking from the past back into the present!

A shocking blade then slashed down!

Xuan Fang had no time to dodge. The blade slashed from the past into the present, making it impossible to evade. For the first time, a sensation of crisis filled Xuan Fang’s mind. Although it wasn’t a situation of deadly crisis, it was still something very rare for him to experience.

Rumbling could be heard echoing out in all directions as a bright flash of light descended onto Paragon Xuan Fang. Although he couldn’t completely dodge, he managed to move slightly, ensuring that the blow didn’t land on his forehead, but rather on his left shoulder!

A boom echoed out, and blood splashed as Paragon Xuan Fang’s left arm was completely severed. Xuan Fang fell back at top speed, face ashen, eyes flickering with killing intent toward Meng Hao. In the next instant, his severed arm exploded, transforming into a sea of golden blood which then swept out toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao trembled; he had already sustained serious injuries, and now he was coughing up more blood. His consciousness was starting to fade, and he was laughing bitterly. And yet, an unyielding gleam flared up in his eyes, and he sprang into motion, ignoring the damage he sustained in the process.

In the instant in which he burst into motion, Paragon Xuan Fang’s right hand flashed with an incantation gesture, and stabbed out viciously with his finger, causing a long golden blade to appear. The blade slashed out with ferocious speed, and before Meng Hao could even react, the meat jelly flew out and blocked the blade.

A miserable shriek rang out as the meat jelly was sent flying back, clearly weakened. However, it didn’t return to the bag of holding, but instead started to drag Meng Hao back into the spell formation.

“You’re not going anywhere!” Paragon Xuan Fang said, his voice sinister and cold. All he had left was his right arm, which he stretched out toward Meng Hao. As he extended his fingers, Essence power erupted out.

Five Essences rumbled out, swirling together. Moments later, a sixth Essence appeared, and then a seventh. With the addition of the Essence of Time, the enormous hand that had been created was filled with completely unpredictable power. Once this hand was unleashed… it was certain to strike its target!

Meng Hao’s face was deathly pale. In this critical moment, he shoved the meat jelly away, then suddenly reached his right hand out toward the incoming hand, toward Xuan Fang, then pointed his finger!

Demon Sealing, Eighth Hex!

Rumbling sounds could be heard as the huge hand ground to a halt. However, it only lasted for a moment before it lurched into motion again. As a result, blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth because of the intense backlash. That was one of the reasons he had hesitated to use the Hexing magic before. If he tried to use it to tie up a Paragon, not only would he fail, he would also end up hurting himself.

When he had fought Eegoo, Choumen Tai had been in the process of enslaving him, which meant that the Hexing magic was possible to use. But now he was fighting a full Paragon, and it wasn’t that his Hexing magic had a problem, but rather…

“My cultivation base is too low!” Meng Hao laughed bitterly and gritted his teeth. As the hand closed in on him, he unleashed his Essence of Divine Flame, then performed an incantation gesture with his right hand and waved his finger multiple times.

“Demon Sealing, Seventh Hex!

“Sixth Hex!

“Fifth Hex!

“Third Hex!

“Second Hex!”

If he was going to risk his life, then he might as well go all out. His eyes gleamed with madness as he unleashed all of his Hexing magic. Everything shook violently, and Xuan Fang frowned as the qi around him was thrown into chaos, and a profoundly disturbing sensation rose up.

Meng Hao was trembling, and his body was collapsing into a bloody mass because of the backlash from the Demon Sealing Hexing magic. What he really wanted to do was use the Seal the Heavens Incantation, but that relied on the power of the Mountains and Seas, and considering that he was now isolated and cut off, it was impossible.

Instead, he had to risk death to… combine his Demon Sealing Hexing magics into one attack!

Combining nine Hexes was the ultimate transformation a Demon Sealer could perform. But right now, Meng Hao only had mastery of six Hexes. He was missing the First Hex and the Fourth, and had yet to create his own Ninth Hex.

However, there was nothing else he could do at the moment. More than half of the quarter hour had passed, but that meant that half of that amount of time still remained. He simply couldn’t hold on any longer. Meng Hao threw his head back and howled, pushing with all the power he had. His flesh and blood exploded, his bones shattered, all in his effort to fuse his Hexing magics together.

Massive rumbling sounds echoed out, and everyone on the sun was filled with shock. Xuan Fang gasped in astonishment at the sudden drastic transformations!

As of this moment, the entire Mountain and Sea Realm was trembling. The hosts of cultivators out in the starry sky were shocked, and the Outsiders were shaking. Even the Paragon from the 6th Heaven was astounded.

Sea Dream, and everyone else present, felt themselves trembling.

In sharp contrast was Shui Dongliu, who stood on Planet South Heaven, looking anxiously in Meng Hao's direction. His eyes were filled with concern, and even… turmoil!

Massive energy was rising up from the sun. Meng Hao shook violently as, all of a sudden, a sphere of light appeared in front of him. The light was in chaos, as six powers swirled around therein. It almost seemed as if that sphere of light were thinking, as if some entity inside of it was on the verge of bursting out.

The intense pressure caused Paragon Xuan Fang's face to flicker, and suddenly, he felt a sensation of deadly crisis. Without the slightest hesitation, he began to speed backward.

Even as he fell back, Meng Hao unleashed all the power he could muster, drawing upon even his life force, to push the turbid sphere of light forward. He was trembling, his flesh was being shredded to pieces, revealing his bones, which then shattered.

Rumbling could be heard as the sphere was pushed fully away from him. However, he was now completely drained of power. Even as he collapsed, the meat jelly scooped him up and carried him back inside the spell formation.

At the same time, the sphere of light shot toward Xuan Fang. As it closed in, Xuan Fang screamed. A sensation of deadly crisis overwhelmed him, and he suddenly began to grow in size. In the blink of an eye, he was 30,000 meters tall. Then, he instantly shrank back down, turning into a shocking golden lion.

His eyes flickered with the gleam of augury, as he drew upon his life force to unleash a magical technique that he hoped would help him identify the weakness in the magic he faced.

Death!

Death!

Death….

Xuan Fang’s face was a mass of shock and terror. In a very short time, he performed more than ten thousand augury calculations, but no matter now he analyzed it, the end result was always the same. Death!

“This is impossible! Just what type of divine ability is this!?” Xuan Fang was trembling as he fell back further. Unfortunately for him, the surrounding mist, which he had put in place to trap Meng Hao, now left him trapped!

“Incomplete! It’s an incomplete magic! That means I have a chance. He must have injured his soul to use it. Clearly this is a Dao in the midst of percolating, which he is drawing upon early!

“Until he completes the Daoist magic later, it won’t matter if he survives this day, he won’t be able to use it again until then!!” Xuan Fang’s eyes flickered.

“I still have a chance, and that is… in the shadows of Time!!”

Roaring, his body flickered into motion as he unleashed his Dao of Time with all the power he could. His body turned blurry, and in the blink of an eye, his Undying Soul appeared.

“I have lived for tens upon tens of thousands of years. Perhaps I have no hope of getting eight Essences, but even still, I have the ability to leave behind a soul at the end of every sixty-year-cycle. This is the ultimate magic of Time. Unless you destroy each and every one of those souls of mine, then you can never destroy my true soul!” Xuan Fang’s eyes were bright red. This was a magic he would only use if he had no other choice, if his life were truly in great danger!

This was a life-saving magic that he could use… only once in his life!

As of this moment, he was pushed to his very limit. If he didn’t use the magic now, then he would die beyond the shadow of a doubt.

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# Chapter 1361: Risking It All In Battle!

Xuan Fang quickly became blurry, as if the Time around him were distorting. Gradually, it was as if tens upon tens of thousands of years flitted by, countless eons, and countless… images of Xuan Fang!

This was a consummate life-saving magic that Xuan Fang had acquired after becoming a Paragon and mastering the Essence of Time. It represented all of the sixty-year cycles through the tens upon tens of thousands of years of his existence.

A magical technique like this could only be described as terrifying, and with it, he could even escape unharmed from 8-Essences Paragons!

Only by destroying all of the souls which he had left in the stream of time, could he be fully destroyed. As long as one of those souls remained, he would be able to immediately and fully recover. Unfortunately for him, a consummate magic such as this was something that he could only use once in his entire life.

If he abused it, the backlash caused by the great Dao of Time would transform him into an aspect of Time itself. His consciousness would fade away, and he would become an Essence slave!

By this point, sixty percent of the quarter hour had passed. It was already impressive enough that Meng Hao had been able to fight against the battle prowess of the 7-Essences level for so long. Even more impressive was that Meng Hao had forced Xuan Fang to unleash a consummate magic like this. Even if Meng Hao lost in the end… he had fought in epic fashion!

Paragon Xuan Fang threw his head back and roared, completely unleashing the full power of his consummate magic. He could not evade the chaotic, soul-locking sphere of light, so he faced it directly, stretching his arms out in front of him and viciously jabbing forward with his fingers.

Massive booms rang out as everything in the space around Xuan Fang twisted and distorted in the direction of the sphere, then slammed into it, instantly crushing it.

“I’m betting on the fact that this magic is incomplete. I’m betting… that such an incomplete magic is insufficient to destroy all of my souls throughout Time.” Xuan Fang threw his head back and roared as his Essence of Time made contact with the turbid light sphere, resulting in a blinding explosion!

Strangely, light did not shine pass the 300-meter border of the sphere. However, the area inside of it became like another sun, filled with scintillating, dazzling light.

Within that 300-meter area, Paragon Xuan Fang’s expression twisted ferociously. The turbid sphere of light vanished, and became six streams of smoke that bored into the Essence of Time. Within those tens upon tens of thousands of years of Time, the six streams of smoke began to eradicate Paragon Xuan Fang’s souls.

No sound could be heard, and yet within the twisting Time that surrounded Paragon Xuan Fang, numerous flashes of extermination could be seen as more than ten percent of his souls were wiped out!

The loss of ten percent of his souls caused an unsightly expression to appear on Paragon Xuan Fang’s face. However, that number quickly increased to twenty percent, than thirty, forty, and even fifty….

When the destruction passed fifty percent, Paragon Xuan Fang’s eyes shone with intense terror, astonishment, and even disbelief. He refused to believe that he would perish this day, and refused to believe that he had miscalculated. Furthermore, he refused to believe that his most powerful life-saving magic, which could only be used once in a lifetime, was incapable of standing up to an incomplete Daoist magic!

“Impossible!!” he roared. Instantly, his blood surged in his body, causing the qi and blood of the souls within the rippling Time to erupt with intense soul power.

At the same time, the six strands of smoke were beginning to run out of power after having exterminated fifty percent of Xuan Fang’s souls. However, they still managed to spread out, increasing the destruction to sixty percent. Only then did they begin to show signs that they would fade away.

Soon, seventy percent of the souls had been eradicated, and the six streams of smoke were now fading away. They pushed hard, but in the end, couldn’t quite exterminate eighty percent of Xuan Fang’s souls before… completely vanishing.

When that happened, Meng Hao coughed up a huge mouthful of blood, then sagged in exhaustion. His face was completely drained of blood, and the backlash from what had just occurred shattered his internal organs and left his entire body vibrating. His cultivation base was teetering, and his consciousness was fading.

He had lost…. He didn’t even have the energy to chuckle bitterly. He knew that he had been completely and utterly defeated.

He had never failed in such bitter fashion before. Even his desperate fight with Lord White of the Seventh Mountain and Sea had ended in victory. However, on this day, despite having done everything in his power, he was left without the slightest hope of victory. Meng Hao’s heart swelled with bitterness and pain.

The Green Emperor’s Eternal Incantation was still working, but without sufficient time, he wouldn’t recover enough to even lift his hand and unleash a divine ability.

Besides, as of this moment… time was like a sharp blade hanging over Meng Hao's neck. Only about seventy percent of the quarter hour had passed, and to hang on for any longer would be extremely difficult.

Because the battlefield on the outside was obscured by the covering of mist, and because Meng Hao could not allow distractions during his battle with Paragon Xuan Fang, he could only get a general sense that the situation on the outside… was equally discouraging.

Xuan Fang was some distance away from the sun's spell formation itself, trembling. The 300 meters of light around him was quickly fading away, along with Meng Hao's Daoist magic that was the combined six Hexes. Soon, Paragon Xuan Fang himself was revealed.

He was in extremely bad condition, his hair disheveled, his body soaked with sweat. A complicated expression could be seen on his face, as if he had just experienced a near-death catastrophe. Then, he turned to look toward the spell formation, and Meng Hao sitting there, completely drained of energy.

"In the 33 Heavens, the only people who could force me into a situation like this would be the two 8-Essences Paragons. But now, another person like that exists… you." Xuan Fang gave Meng Hao a profound look, then clasped hands and bowed.

"This bow is a bow of respect to you. I have no choice but to kill you, but at the same time, you have my admiration.

"Different mindsets have led to this war, and have thus our battle here. I understand you had no choice in the matter. However, despite being a Paragon, I'm only at the 7-Essences level, so I had little choice myself.

"Meng Hao… I will remember your name. And now the time has come… for you to leave this world forever." Xuan Fang took a deep breath. Of all his souls that existed within the stream of time, nearly eighty percent had been destroyed. However, as long as even a single one remained, he could not be truly killed.

The main thing he regretted was it was a magical technique… that he could never again unleash. If Meng Hao somehow managed to unleash that incomplete Daoist magic a second time, then… he would die beyond the shadow of a doubt.

Meng Hao sat there silently, sighing inwardly. It was a critical moment of life or death, and yet, he felt no fear. Instead, he thought about his life after his parents went missing, about being a scholar in Yunjie County, about the Imperial examinations, and about the events on Mount Daqing which had led to him entering the world of cultivation and the Dao.

His life flashed before his eyes, images of his family, his wife, his friends….

Rumbling sounds echoed out as Xuan Fang took a step forward to enter the spell formation itself. Just when he was about to reach out and exterminate Meng Hao, an enraged roar echoed out, from none other than the 100,000 cultivators that Xuan Fang had completely disregarded this entire time.

ROOOAARRRR!!

No words were spoken, no explanations were given. There was only… a furious cry that echoed out from the depths of their souls.

100,000 cultivators’ eyes were all completely bloodshot as they unleashed the power of their cultivation bases, and even their life force, to fight back against Paragon Xuan Fang. They would not allow him to enter the spell formation, and they would not allow him to harm Meng Hao!

Xuan Fang’s eyes flickered, and he snorted coldly, stomping his foot down viciously. The entire sun shuddered as a massive wave of power shot out toward the spell formation and Meng Hao!

Meng Hao had not received numerous injuries, but the injuries he did receive had been extremely grievous. Therefore, it was the 100,000 cultivators who absorbed the powerful attack.

Blood sprayed out of their mouths, and there were some whose bodies withered to the point of collapse.

This sudden development wrenched Meng Hao out of his reverie regarding past memories. To see 100,000 people refusing to yield, determined to give up their own lives rather than allow him to be killed, caused his entire body to tremble.

Xuan Fang was also moved. Inwardly, he sighed, unsure of what to say at this point. However… he continued to press the attack as viciously as ever. His killing intent rocketed up as he took eight steps forward, forcing his way through the spell formation toward Meng Hao. With each step he took, the spell formation trembled violently.

The 100,000 cultivators coughed up more blood, and some even withered away into death, allowing the spell formation to draw upon them until they were killed, all for the purpose of… protecting Meng Hao!

Perhaps it would be most accurate to say that what they were protecting was, not just Meng Hao, but their home!

For some groups of people, the destruction of their homeland will lead, not to a thirst for revenge, but to hopelessness and confusion. However… there are some people whose spirits cannot be exterminated. For a people like that, when the critical moment arrives in which the survival of their homeland is on the line, then the only choice will be sacrifice! Those were the type of people whose vengeance would live for all eternity even after their homeland was destroyed.

Sacrifice oneself to defend one’s home!

Wars are never truly fought over resources. Or perhaps it is most accurate to say that when wars are fought over resources, then regardless of how many casualties are suffered, they are relatively tame…. The true brutality of war comes when the goal is to crush the spirit and will of an entire people!

Only by wiping out the spirit and the will of a people… can that people be truly exterminated!

When exterminating a people, what is exterminated is not just life, but the heart and soul of the entire people!

In the opening stages of the war between the Mountain and Sea Realm and the 33 Heavens, Meng Hao had ignited a fire. He had burned the land mass that was the 1st Heaven to illuminate the eyes of the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm. He had awakened… the spirit and the soul of the people.

When that happened, the war changed. Perhaps the 33 Heavens could exterminate the people of the Mountain and Sea Realm, but… they could not exterminate the souls of its cultivators!

As of this moment, every step Paragon Xuan Fang took resulted in one cultivator after another making the ultimate sacrifice. Blood flowed, and bodies withered. They used their deaths… to buy time!

“You… don’t need to do this….” Meng Hao said through bleary eyes, his body trembling. He looked around at the group of cultivators around him. They were people he had never even seen before the war started. They were strangers. They had their own families, sects, loved ones, even children. But now… it was without hesitation that they gave up their own lives to slow Xuan Fang’s steps.

Bodies withered, and souls faded away. They were like candles in the wind, sputtering on the verge of being snuffed out. Finally, a desperate howl echoed out from Meng Hao’s mouth.

A blood-colored flicker appeared in his eyes, and a flame suddenly burned within him as he looked up at Xuan Fang. As of this moment, Meng Hao… had played all of his cards! There was only one thing left to do.

He waved his hand, drawing fully upon the power of his life force to summon all of his 33 Soul Lamps.

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# Chapter 1362: Extinguishing Four Soul Lamps!

Of his 33 Soul Lamps, six were already extinguished. The other 27 still burned. Of the Seven Desolations, he had completely passed the First, and had experienced one tribulation in the Second Desolation, leaving four more lamps before that Desolation was passed.

In the past, whenever he extinguished Soul Lamps, he had only done so after being completely confident of the outcome. But now… it was a critical moment. Tens of thousands of cultivators were dying to protect him. Therefore, despite lacking complete confidence, he felt that he had no other choice.

As one cultivator after another withered up and died, Meng Hao gritted his teeth, and his eyes gleamed with determination. The flame which burned inside him only continued to grow hotter as it prepared to burn, not himself, but others.

Without any further hesitation, he lifted his right hand and pointed at his 7th Soul Lamp.

“Extinguish!” he said, pushing out with all of the power he could muster, unleashing the last scrap of his divine will to crush down onto the 7th Soul lamp. It was like a wind had gusted past the lamp. The flame flickered, and then… was snuffed out.

A curl of smoke floated up, which instantly bored into Meng Hao through his mouth and nose. As it spread out through his body, he began to shake, and blood oozed out of his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. His cultivation base began to rumble, and his fleshly body filled, first with numbness, then stabs of pain.

It was almost as if his body was a combination of both Yin and Yang, with one half being icy cold, and the other scorching hot!

His cultivation base was now growing. Before, it had been almost completely spent, but now it was recovering. As it did, his body withered rapidly under the simultaneous freezing and scorching of Yin and Yang.

In the blink of an eye, he was nothing more than a pile of flesh and bones. Furthermore, the sensation of deadly crisis within him soared to incredible heights. It almost felt like… his body was about to be transformed into nothing more than ash.

Paragon Xuan Fang's eyes glowed brightly as he looked at Meng Hao's Soul Lamps. Although his expression remained neutral, inside, he was being battered by massive waves of shock.

"His cultivation base…." Despite being shocked, he began to walk faster. The will of a Paragon spread out, and more of the 100,000 cultivators withered, many of them transforming into ash.

Of the 100,000 people, only half remained alive!

However, not a single one of that remaining group chose to give up. It wasn't that they lacked a fear of death, but rather, they understood that Meng Hao… was more important than all of them added together!

For the Mountain and Sea Realm, for their families, for their friends… they were willing to die to prevent Meng Hao from perishing!

"You people are looking to die!" Paragon Xuan Fang roared, pushing forward, unleashing his cultivation base, sending a divine ability roaring out. There were now 50,000 cultivators left, and even as blood spurted out of their various wounds, Meng Hao chuckled bitterly. He wasn't sure whether or not he would die, but he did know that the power of one extinguished Soul Lamp was not enough to recover his cultivation base. His eyes gleamed with cold light, and he clenched his jaw viciously.

“Extinguishing a single Soul Lamp doesn’t count as risking it!” His divine will exploded out to extinguish his 8th Soul Lamp!

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the flame flickered, then suddenly winked out. Smoke poured into Meng Hao’s body, and he lifted his head up and let out a piercing howl. Then he slowly rose to his feet, his energy rapidly returning to its previous heights. Simultaneously, the intense sensation of imminent danger exploded up within him.

His body had already been extremely withered, but now it got even worse, to the point where nothing seemed to remain behind other than skin and bones. And yet, his eyes shone with indescribable intensity.

He leaped up into the air, his energy soaring, surrounded by rumbling sounds. He flew out from the center of the spell formation toward Xuan Fang, whose face instantly fell. At the same time, Xuan Fang clenched his hand into a fist and unleashed a punch.

Meng Hao’s expression was vicious, and his overall appearance completely ferocious. The Second Desolation would not be immediately fatal, which gave Meng Hao time to take three steps forward and use his God-Slaying Fist to meet Paragon Xuan Fang’s punch.

A massive boom echoed out as the two fists slammed into each other. A tremor ran through Xuan Fang; he might be a Paragon, but his short battle with Meng Hao had left him completely and utterly shaken. His qi and blood were set aboil, and his eyes burned with killing intent. Just when he was about to unleash another attack, Meng Hao coughed up a mouthful of blood. Then, a wild gleam appeared in his eyes, and he waved his hand toward his 9th Soul lamp. Unexpectedly… he was planning to extinguish that Soul Lamp too!!

“Are you crazy!?!?” Xuan Fang blurted in shock. He had never seen anyone successively extinguish one Soul Lamp after another. Doing that was courting almost certain death! Eyes glittering coldly, he asked, “Are you that set on killing me before you die?”

Just when he was about to launch another attack, he realized that after extinguishing his 9th Soul Lamp, Meng Hao was actually… extinguishing the 10th!!

When both of those Soul Lamps were extinguished, their smoke poured into Meng Hao’s nose and mouth, filling his body and causing his cultivation base to rise explosively. At the same time, his battle prowess reached a completely shocking level.

He had just extinguished four Soul Lamps in one effort, which filled him with four times the power he had commanded when initially igniting his Ancient Realm Soul Lamps. Right now, his cultivation base and battle prowess exceeded that of an Imperial Lord!

He was now only slightly behind a Paragon in terms of power. In terms of his divine sense, it also experienced explosive growth. Now, it wasn’t eighty percent as powerful as a Paragon’s, it was… equal to a Paragon’s, or even slightly more powerful!

With divine sense power like that, coupled with his cultivation base and battle prowess, it was possible to say that Meng Hao… was now completely qualified to fight to the death with a Paragon. At the same time, his Green Emperor’s Eternal Incantation surged into action, constantly restoring him, ensuring that his battle prowess was truly at its peak!

Unfortunately, the aura of death which surrounded him was incredibly strong, and was soon reaching its peak as well. In addition, the Second Desolation was so intense that his already emaciated frame was… beginning to completely rot.

Blisters appeared all over him, which let out an aura of rot after they popped. There were even some places where his flesh had turned into a bloody mush, revealing… blackened bones!

Those bones had long since been tainted by some sort of curse power. However, Meng Hao ignored all of that, striding forward at increasing speed until he was right in front of Paragon Xuan Fang. There, he lifted his right hand and performed an incantation gesture. The Mountain Consuming Incantation exploded out, causing Xuan Fang's face to flicker. He could see how terrifying Meng Hao was at this moment, and thus, he didn't hesitate at all to snort coldly and fall back into retreat.

He didn't want to have anything to do with Meng Hao at the moment; as far as he could tell, Meng Hao was doomed to die, and therefore, there was no reason to continue fighting him and join him in death.

Besides, in his current state, Meng Hao was completely fear-inspiring, even to Xuan Fang.

"Trying to run away?!?!" Meng Hao said, lips twisting into a smile. As of this moment, he didn't care if he was dying. The only thing he was concerned with right now… was making sure Xuan Fang died with him!

He was convinced that Xuan Fang had no more soul-saving magics left. There was no way for him to evade death. Besides, Meng Hao had the Echelon mark left by Paragon Sea Dream, which meant that he was more than qualified to battle with this 7-Essences Paragon!

Although eking out a victory wouldn't be easy, neither would it be easy for the Paragon to slay him!

Rumbling echoed out as Meng Hao picked up speed, transforming into a black roc. And yet, this roc was also little more than skin and bones. It was as if it had just climbed up out of the grave, completely ferocious in appearance, with a strong aura of death surrounding it as it slashed its claws toward Xuan Fang.

Xuan Fang's face flickered as he sent out all of the Essence power he could muster. Meng Hao in roc-form slammed into him, and the roc shattered, revealing Meng Hao himself, who staggered backward, coughing up blood. Virtually all of his flesh and blood were destroyed, with nearly half of him being nothing more than bones. And yet, Paragon Xuan Fang was also coughing up blood. In the face of this maddened Meng Hao, he didn’t hesitate at all to yet again fall back into retreat.

Regardless of anything, there was no way he would give Meng Hao a chance to drag him along into death.

It was at this exact moment that the quarter hour ended. Suddenly, the surrounding mist began to roil, and then, in the blink of an eye, vanished.

“Heaven is helping me!” laughed Xuan Fang, his eyes glittering. With that, he flew off of the sun, content with having made a huge accomplishment within the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“Meng Hao is going to die, and the Mountain and Sea Realm’s shield will soon shatter!”

Almost as soon as the mist vanished, Meng Hao could see that beyond the First Sea, and beyond the shield, the 2nd Heaven was bearing down.

The shield was twisting, sinking in, covered with countless, madly flickering magical symbols. Paragon Sea Dream was not in the vicinity; she could not abandon the shield only because of Meng Hao. Now, she was below the shield, using all her power to bolster it.

Meng Hao’s Paragon puppet had lost its connection to his divine will when he was in his fierce fight with Xuan Fang. Now, it had nothing left but its instincts as it hovered there beyond the region where the mist had been.

It was at this point that the land mass that was the 2nd Heaven smashed into the Mountain and Sea Realm’s shield. A huge, ear-splitting boom echoed out through the entire Mountain and Sea Realm, causing all the cultivators’ minds to reel, and their ears to fill with piercing pain. It was the same with the Outsiders beyond the shield that protected the First Sea.

When Meng Hao saw all of this, some of the madness in his eyes faded away. He watched as the huge land mass bashed into the shield, which then shattered into countless fragments.

When that happened, blood sprayed out of Paragon Sea Dream’s mouth, and she suddenly seemed to age. On the moon, blood sprayed out of the mouths of 100,000 cultivators as their bodies were shredded and transformed into nothing more than ash.

Ksitigarbha’s Demon form collapsed, and he returned to his previous cultivator appearance. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and he sagged in exhaustion; apparently, his Dao foundation was now unstable.

The already cracked land mass that was the 2nd Heaven now entered the Mountain and Sea Realm, transforming into countless meteors that hailed down. At the same time, the millions upon millions of Outsiders waiting outside the First Sea let out excited roars as they charged in.

The tide of battle… had completely shifted!

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# Chapter 1363: Sealing a Paragon!

In the First Sea, the Mountain and Sea cultivators were already engaging in fierce fighting with the Outsiders. Unending rubble from the shattered 2nd Heaven rained down, some of it piercing down to land on the Mountain and Sea below it, and even the planets there.

Incredible casualties resulted!

The war was no longer balanced…. The situation was now anything but that, and it was all because of… Xuan Fang!

The reason why the Mountain and Sea Realm was now in such an unfavorable position was because of… Xuan Fang!

As of this moment, a cold smile could be seen on Xuan Fang’s mouth as he sped along, intent on leaving the Mountain and Sea Realm. His plan had worked. Meng Hao was destined to die, and the Mountain and Sea shield was broken. Of course, he had been seriously injured in the process, and he now needed to leave the Mountain and Sea Realm to recover. Control of the war effort would now be handed over to the other Paragon.

However, even in the moment in which he hoped to flee, a rotting, skeletal figure appeared, which was Meng Hao. Laughing a grating, maniacal laugh, he smiled and said, “Paragon Xuan Fang, you threw yourself out as bait, so why are you in such a hurry to leave? You might be a Paragon, but you can’t just waltz in and out of the Mountain and Sea Realm whenever you feel like it.” Even as he spoke, Meng Hao reached out and crushed some unknown object with his right hand. Simultaneously, the Lightning Cauldron appeared above his head, and electricity danced. Rumbling echoed out as Paragon Xuan Fang, regardless of whether he was willing or not, suddenly switched locations with Meng Hao. It was Form Displacement Transposition!

As soon as he reappeared, he frowned and let out a cold harrumph. However, only a moment later, his face fell as he realized that a thick mist was spreading out around him.

“Gloompearl!! You can use Gloompearls too!?!? Right, your aura of death!!” Xuan Fang’s face fell as he remembered that, when fighting with Meng Hao earlier, Meng Hao had taken one of the Gloompearls. Xuan Fang had forgotten that point, but now it was obvious what was happening. Normally, Gloompearls could only be used by means of a special technique. The only way someone unfamiliar with that technique could activate a Gloompearl was if they had an intense aura of Death surrounding them.

And of course, that was exactly the state Meng Hao was in, enabling him to use the Gloompearl!

Paragon Xuan Fang’s heart began to pound, and his expression was very grim.

The mist seethed, completely locking him in place where he was. He would now need a full quarter hour before he could move.

“Well, you won’t be able to cause a big stir within a quarter hour. Let me guess, Meng Hao. You plan to give your last bit of life to Sea Dream. Or perhaps use the Eegoo puppet to try to kill our other Paragon. Right?

“You won’t succeed in a mere quarter hour.” Even as his sinister voice echoed out from within the mist, the 6th Heaven’s Paragon suddenly stepped down into the starry sky. After glancing in the direction of Meng Hao and Xuan Fang, he sent his cultivation base power out to block Sea Dream and the Paragon puppet.

He actually wasn’t worried about Xuan Fang; he was concerned about Sea Dream and the Eegoo puppet. As far as Meng Hao went, he had confidence in Xuan Fang’s methods, and was sure that Meng Hao… would soon die.

Sea Dream was shaken as she looked over at Meng Hao and his intense aura of death. At the same time, Meng Hao’s divine will once again connected with the Paragon puppet, and its eyes began to glow. However, Meng Hao’s divine will was rife with an aura of death, causing the puppet to also be surrounded with the same aura.

In response to Paragon Xuan Fang’s words, Meng Hao merely smiled, and didn’t say a word. Considering his current state, that smile looked completely ferocious. Meng Hao knew that right now, it would be impossible to kill Xuan Fang, and therefore, all he wanted to do was lock him down temporarily.

In this critical moment of danger for the Mountains and Seas, the balance of the war needed to be restored. Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a strange light. With that, he extended his right hand toward the area that contained the mist, and then waved his hand slightly.

As he did, a thread appeared, a horizontal thread, down below the mist. Then, Meng Hao made a second stroke with his hand, then a third, and a fourth….

The four threads connected to form a circle that completely surrounded the mist. Inside that mist, Paragon Xuan Fang’s face flickered as he sensed the fluctuations of Essence.

“That’s… the… the Essence of space!!”

Even in the moment in which surprise filled Xuan Fang, the eyes of the other Paragon went wide. That Paragon didn’t move in to help, but instead, raised a hand high up toward the 3rd Heaven, and pointed.

It was in the same moment that the aura of Essence exploded out from the circle in front of Meng Hao. It was the power of Spatial Sealing!

Meng Hao couldn’t use his Essence of space for a long period of time, but because he had extinguished four Soul Lamps, causing an explosive growth in his cultivation base, he was able to unleash power formidable enough to seal a Paragon!

Of course, Meng Hao was not powerful enough to completely banish him. This was only a sealing, and a temporary one at that, but it would definitely last many times more than a quarter hour.

“Seal!” he said, his voice grating. As it echoed out, the circle flashed with light, and began to solidify. Paragon Xuan Fang let out a maddened roar. Even as the seal was completed, he apparently burned his life force to send the circle flying out with an incredible burst of speed. It shot toward the darkness-cloaked Paragon, who quickly reached a hand out and grabbed it.

Meng Hao sighed. Paragons were hard to kill, which was something he now had deep understanding of thanks to experience. However, the circle had solidified, and the seal created by the Essence of space was completed. That seal would not be easily unraveled without first spending many months working at it.

Even when the seal was opened, Paragon Xuan Fang had burned his life force, and before that, had been seriously injured. Even if he was still at the Paragon level at that time, his battle prowess would be reduced by at least half!

Most important was not Paragon Xuan Fang’s cultivation base, but rather, his tactics. What he had done caused Meng Hao to burn with the desire to kill him. At least trapping him for several months would prevent further unexpected situations from arising in battle.

All of the cultivators and Outsiders who were fighting near the First Mountain saw what happened, and were shaken. When the Mountain and Sea Realm’s shield was broken, the balance of battle was disturbed, but now that Meng Hao had sealed Paragon Xuan Fang, everything changed, and the fighting was evening.

As for the Paragon puppet, now that it was under the control of Meng Hao’s divine sense, its eyes flickered, and it shot toward the First Sea, clearly intent on using its Paragon power to slaughter more Outsiders.

Now… the balance of battle had actually shifted in favor of the Mountain and Sea Realm. If the remaining Outsider Paragon wanted to save the

Outsiders in the First Sea, he would have to face the combined might of Meng Hao, the Eegoo puppet, and Sea Dream.

If he did that, he would definitely end up dead or seriously injured.

Considering the situation, the darkness-cloaked Outsider Paragon sighed. He was not like Xuan Fang, with his crafty battle plans. Having no other options, he had to rely on his own methods, and the truth was that the moment Xuan Fang had been sealed, he had already made his decision.

With the wave of a finger, the land mass that was the 3rd Heaven began to rumble as if it were about to move toward the Mountain and Sea Realm. Apparently, he was going to use the same technique as before, sending the entire 3rd Heaven in a crushing attack onto the Mountain and Sea Realm.

From the look of things, he didn't even care about the Outsiders who were currently still in the 3rd Heaven. His mood had gone foul, and he chose to use his own style to fight this war. At the same time, his voice echoed out into the starry sky.

“The power of a Paragon will once again be unleashed on the battlefield. I will pay any price, including the destruction of the 3rd, 4th, 5th, and even the 6th Heaven, to strike at the Mountain and Sea Realm.”

As his voice echoed out, the Paragon puppet stopped in place, and a strange light began to gleam in Sea Dream's eyes as she looked up. As for Meng Hao, he was losing consciousness, and a will of death was taking grip upon his body. He knew that he couldn't hold on much longer, and yet he gritted his teeth and looked up at the Paragon puppet from the 6th Heaven.

“Mountain and Sea Paragons,” the Outsider Paragon said, his voice ringing with determination, “hold back from fighting, and I will hold back from unleashing the land mass attack!”

As his words rang out, Paragon Sea Dream's face flickered. For a long, tense moment, she hesitated, apparently unwilling to yield, and yet, in the end, she flicked her sleeve and gave Meng Hao a meaningful look. Under the direction of Meng Hao's divine will, the Paragon puppet fell back.

The Outsider Paragon from the 6th Mountain breathed an inward sigh of relief. The truth was that he didn’t want to destroy the 3rd through 6th Heavens. He wasn’t adept at leading wars, and therefore, he simply wanted to buy time until the 7th Heaven and the others arrived.

He wasn’t aware of it, but if Xuan Fang were present, he would be incensed at such tactics. Xuan Fang didn’t care about life or death, and would definitely have gone to the length of destroying the land masses in order to prevent Meng Hao from recovering. He would not have given the Mountain and Sea Realm the slightest bit of breathing room, or the slightest chance to gain an advantage.

By slamming those five land masses into the Mountain and Sea Realm, it would likely destroy all of the Mountains and Seas, and would force the Mountain and Sea Realm to draw upon whatever deep reserve powers they were holding back. In that case, they wouldn’t need to wait for the 7th Heaven and the others to arrive in order to clinch a victory!

For decisive people, hesitation and delay were not options. That could lead to a drop in the Outsiders’ morale.

Most important of all… was that the decision of this second Paragon actually bought time for the Mountain and Sea Realm. Using the 2nd Heaven to attack had been an unexpected twist, but now, the Mountain and Sea Realm would definitely prepare for such a thing to happen again. As such, further threats of using all the other land masses themselves would be somewhat hollow, and following through on such threats, less effective!

That, of course, was why Paragon Sea Dream had pretended to be so torn after hearing the Outsider Paragon’s words, and also the reason she gave the meaningful look to Meng Hao. After all, this decision was a good thing for the Mountain and Sea Realm!

The war continued. Bitter fighting went on in the First Sea, but the Paragons didn’t participate. Meng Hao couldn’t hold on any longer. After coughing up another mouthful of blood, he lapsed into a coma.

As he fell down out of the sky, Paragon Sea Dream shot forward to catch him. The aura of death which surrounded him was thick, and his body was rotting away. His organs, his bones, and his flesh… were all turning into ash.

Grief covered Sea Dream’s face, and she was just about to begin to treat his injuries, when an ancient voice echoed out from behind her, a voice which caused her to tremble.

“Let me handle this.”

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# Chapter 1364: Demon and Immortal!

The war of the Mountain and Sea Realm continued. The sun had lost Meng Hao, so Paragon Sea Dream arranged for the Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea, Meng Hao’s grandfather, to temporarily take control. The 100,000 cultivators were reinforced, and under Grandpa Meng’s control, the sun once again became a powerful weapon and threat.

The army of Outsiders did not enter the First Sea en masse to fight. They were split into five divisions, each one of which was directed by an Imperial Lord. In addition to that, various Dao Realm experts were also placed within those forces. Currently, the group fighting with the Mountain and Sea cultivators in the First Sea consisted of the first division of several million Outsiders.

The First Sea was almost completely dried up, and so stained with blood that the redness would never be expunged. The reek of gore filled the air, and the brutality of battle caused the starry sky to grow dark.

Even the dazzling glow caused by the unleashing of divine abilities and magical techniques was darkened by the sea of blood. Only hoarse shouts and shrill screams could be heard echoing out constantly across the battlefield.

The only reason that the first line of defense hadn’t been broken was because the darkness-cloaked Outsider Paragon was a cautious person, and his deepest instinct and inclination was to keep buying time.

Were it not for that, he might have resorted to using the land masses to strike the Mountain and Sea Realm. In fact, if Paragon Xuan Fang hadn’t been sealed, the battle being fought would have been a hundred times more brutal.

Actually, it was because of the cautious decisions being made by the other Paragon, that Sea Dream chose to utilize one particular stratagem ahead of schedule, long before the second division of Outsiders launched an offensive….

The Mountain and Sea cultivators who made up the first line of defense, despite having reinforcements to relieve them, were gradually growing exhausted.

Furthermore, the First Sea was on the verge of being completely dried up. The Mountain and Sea cultivators were pushed back relentlessly, and soon, the second division of Outsiders began to advance into battle.

Even as that second division set foot into the First Sea, Paragon Sea Dream's eyes glittered. Without any hesitation, she performed an incantation gesture, sending an order out to Xu Qing. In turn, Xu Qing suppressed her concern for Meng Hao, and excitedly passed the order along to the army.

Soon, magical symbols began to glitter throughout the sea of blood that was the First Sea. Waves kicked up, and then the First Sea… unexpectedly… self-detonated!

Although not much sea water was left in it, it was still a sea. Most importantly, the First Sea had its will, which was really a part of the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm as a whole. In fact, the self-detonation of the First Sea was, most accurately speaking, a detonation of the will of the First Sea.

Rumbling could be heard as the water in the First Sea began to bubble and seethe. Then, destructive power exploded out from every drop of water, from every wave, from every part of the entire sea!

BOOOOMMMMMM!

The resulting explosion caused the entire Mountain and Sea Realm to shake, even the planets. After a moment of shock, the Paragon from the 6th Heaven took a step forward, and then looked grimly in the direction of the First Sea.

A terrifying shockwave was spreading out, starting from the very middle of the First Sea. There, a black hole appeared, which immediately sent out a terrifying gravitational force. It was like the power of Heaven and Earth itself were sucking in the sea of blood, as well as numerous Outsiders.

The Outsiders were thrown into complete chaos. Their first and second divisions were crying out in alarm as they began to spiral toward the black hole. As for the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm, even as the gravitational force appeared, something exceedingly powerful grabbed ahold of them and pulled them out of the First Sea.

The black hole almost appeared to be breathing. It sucked in a huge breath, and then… the true power of self-detonation appeared. Massive rumbling could be heard as a huge blast swept out across Heaven and Earth.

Everywhere it passed, Outsiders screamed as first their flesh and blood was flayed, then their bones were crushed, and finally, their Nascent Divinities were transformed into ash.

The intense power of self-detonation exploded out, and in the blink of an eye, it covered the entire area of the First Sea, completely enveloping the forces of the first and second divisions of Outsiders.

Few were able to flee. Not even ordinary Dao Realm experts or Dao Lords were qualified to do such a thing. Only those few who were in the 4-Essences level managed to avoid being enveloped by the insanity of the explosion.

Heaven and Earth trembled, and the starry sky shook. Outside of the Mountain and Sea Realm, the rest of the army was shaken, and stared in terror and shock. Even the six Imperial Lords gasped.

The force of the self-detonation lasted for three full days, during which time the Mountain and Sea cultivators stood on one side of the sea, silent, and the Outsiders stood on the other side, shocked.

After three days, the reverberations of the explosion died down. The First Sea… would never be seen again for all eternity. The Mountain and Sea Realm had lost one of its seas, although along with it went all the Outsiders inside of it.

The rest of the Outsiders stood there silently, as did the Mountain and Sea cultivators. The First Sea… was gone. For the first time in the war, the Mountain and Sea cultivators felt what it was like to lose one of their Mountains or Seas.

The sensation… left them in a bit of a daze.

Soon, though, the fighting continued. The third division of Outsiders was ordered into action by their Paragon. This time, two Imperial Lords joined in the fighting, as well as numerous Dao Realm experts, all of whom began to advance upon the First Mountain.

Only half of the Mountain and Sea Realm's first line of defense remained. The entire First Mountain turned into a battleground, and soon the fierce fighting caused the entire mountain to be stained red with blood.

Even as the rumbling of battle echoed out, Meng Hao remained in a coma, completely unaware of what was happening around him. He was like a drifting soul in a strange world.

That world had no sky, no land, no trees or plants, no mountains or rivers. There was only… a faint mist, within which could be seen… two enormous statues.

The facial features of the statues were obscured, but one thing that Meng Hao could sense was that the statue on the left pulsed with a Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering Demonic qi!

As the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer, Meng Hao could sense how powerful that Demonic qi was. Furthermore, it clearly contained some of the aura of the Mountains and Seas. There was something strange about it, something multifarious. Even moreso, it possessed a frenzied desire to kill which, contrary to expectation, was not deranged and mad, but cold and calculating.

The aura which surrounded the statue made it extremely bizarre, and even though Meng Hao couldn't see its face, he was certain that its expression was both ferocious and benevolent. It was the type of face that seemed to be crying, and yet laughing at the same time. It was as if the statue actually had a thousand faces, making it impossible to tell what emotion truly lay within.

It was… a Demon. Because of its multifariousness, it became Demonic, and this statue seemed as if it were the world's sole and perfect exemplar of a Demon.

As for the statue on the right, when Meng Hao looked at it, he could sense an Immortal qi so concentrated that it caused everything in the area to tremble. It was as if this were the perfect expression of all Immortals, as if this were the only Immortal that existed in the world!

Meng Hao looked silently at the two statues, and then glanced around at the world which surrounded him. He felt bewildered, unsure of where he was, and confused regarding exactly what these two statues depicted.

Even as Meng Hao began to question what was happening, an ancient voice spoke to him, a voice which seemed to echo out from primeval times, to fill the world in which he stood.

"This place… exists inside your heart of hearts."

His mind trembled, and he looked up, but could not see the owner of the voice. It was as if the voice was everywhere and nowhere.

"Look at these two statues. One is the Demon, the other is the Immortal…. In the Paragon Immortal Realm, a birth was foreordained… the Vast Expanse's one and only… Immortal….

“That is why the Allheaven bloodline emerged….

“However, there were certain people who did not wish for the Immortal to be born. They wanted to supplant that position. That is because, although the Immortal and the God complement one another… the Immortal is above the God, and can also suppress the Devil!

“The God and the Devil cared not, but their descendants cared. Thus, the Heavens were reversed, Karma was altered, and time was rifled with. They were willing to pay any price… and they succeeded! Yet, they also failed. Furthermore, they were unaware that… because of the changes wrought by the mix of success and failure, they unwittingly caused something to happen which should not have. The Immortal… became the Demon….

“That is because the world in which the Immortal was to be born, was a world that existed before the Allheaven bloodline had appeared. That world… was a world which suppressed the 3,000 Greater Demons. It was… the Paragon Demon Realm!

“The Demon is multifarious and bizarre. Changeable…. It is not righteous and noble like the Immortal. It cannot suppress the Devil, nor can it shake the God…. However, what it can do… is topple the Vast Expanse!

“And now, the time has come for you to ask yourself, if you had the choice, would you become… the mighty and powerful Immortal? Or would you become… the Demon which can topple the Vast Expanse?!”

As the ancient voice echoed out, it was possible to tell that there was no power of compulsion within it. It simply wished to hear an answer to the question.

Meng Hao maintained his silence. He looked over at the left-hand statue which represented the Demon. Before, the face had not been visible, but now, it suddenly was.

What Meng Hao found himself looking at… was his own face!

He had towering Demonic qi, and eyes that glowed with a redness that would never be extinguished. There was no haughty conceit, no extreme domineering air. There was no righteous nobility, and there was no dignity. However, there was a multifariousness, a changeability, a bizarreness. Furthermore, within those red eyes there was the sensation… of a hatred as fathomless as a sea of blood, something that wished to destroy the entire world.

And yet, deep within the eyes, concealed beneath the thousand multifarious, changeable faces were bitter memories and complex emotions… which could not be discovered, nor felt by others….[1]

When Meng Hao looked at the statue of the Demon that had his own face, his heart trembled. He could sense the grief within this Demon, as well as an unyielding heart. There was also madness and hatred.

Meng Hao quietly turned to look at the statue of the Immortal….

This statue also bore his face, a face tranquil, calm, and otherworldly. Its gaze seemed warm, but in truth, it was incredibly cold. It was as if, in its eyes, everything in Heaven and Earth could be expressed in terms of natural law, as if this Immortal were above everything and everyone, the only Immortal in the world.

All memories, everything about the past, were like impurities from former lives. Everything that happened while treading the path of Immortality would be left behind, severed, not allowed to be a hindrance or restraint of any kind.

This Immortal was neither ruthless nor sentimental. He was neither selfish nor selfless. There was only a certain separation from the past, as if, when looking back and recalling old memories, he was unaffected, and would merely sigh lightly.

Once again, the ancient voice echoed out. “There is no need to speak your answer out loud. As long as it exists in your heart, that is enough….”

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# Chapter 1365: The Daoist Societies Make a Move!

No one except for Meng Hao knew whether he had picked the Demon or the Immortal.

Upon awakening, he found that several months had passed. He was currently back on the sun, and his Paragon puppet was sitting cross-legged next to him, acting as Dharma Protector.

The surrounding 100,000 cultivators were operating the spell formation alone, and off in the distance, the flames of war flickered brightly on the First Mountain. The Outsiders had fought their way nearly to the peak of the mountain, and the overall state of the battle was one of incredible ferocity.

Virtually all of the Mountain and Sea Lords were out in the starry sky, fighting. Paragon Sea Dream was also there, and her eyes flashed like lightning as she observed the battle. The First Mountain… was on the verge of being overrun.

There were no longer six Outsider Imperial Lords. Two had been killed, cut down by Grandpa Meng by means of the sun. However, he hadn’t used two arrows to accomplish that, but four!

The sun currently had only seven light arrows left to unleash!

Of the four remaining Imperial Lords, two were currently participating in the battle. However, they weren’t unleashing widespread destruction upon the Mountain and Sea cultivators. Instead, they acted like sharp blades, cutting open paths for the other Outsiders to pour into the First Mountain.

They were skirting Sea Dream’s bottom line, but weren’t crossing it. They were well aware of that, and knew that as long as they didn’t cross that bottom line, then the Paragons wouldn’t join in on the fighting.

Unfortunately, without the help of a Paragon, the Mountain and Sea Lords were no match for the two Imperial Lords, not without teaming up, and even then they would have a hard time keeping them under control.

Out in the starry sky, the final division of Outsiders was arrayed in ranks, waiting to join the battle, eyes flickering with killing intent as they stared at the Mountain and Sea Realm.

The fighting had proceeded in this fashion for more than seven months.

In another five months, the 7th Heaven and the other Heavens would emerge from their current state, and could join the fighting.

When Meng Hao opened his eyes, everything was blurry at first. However, the sound of the battle being fought helped him to focus his thoughts, and soon, his eyes glittered with bright light as he rose to his feet.

Of the surrounding 100,000 cultivators, roughly half had fought with him in the earlier battle against Paragon Xuan Fang. When Meng Hao stood up, those cultivators looked over with eyes that burned passionately.

“The Crown Prince has awakened!!”

“The Crown Prince is awake!!”

The 100,000 cultivators’ loud cries echoed out in all directions, and soon, the entire sun was glowing even more brightly than before. There were even many cultivators fighting on the First Mountain who could tell that a new pair of eyes had turned in their direction.

As Meng Hao rose to his feet, countless images flashed through his mind of the events leading up to him losing consciousness. He also remembered an ancient voice speaking out in the moment before his vision had gone completely black.

That voice seemed to contain all of the ancientness of the entire world.

“Who was he…?” he thought. Looking down at himself, he saw that the aura of death was gone, and that his wounds were healed. He was even a bit stronger than before. Based on his cultivation base, his battle prowess was now such that he exceeded an Imperial Lord. He could definitely fight Paragons now.

The sensation of being in control of so much power caused Meng Hao to gasp. When he thought back to the insane battle with Xuan Fang, he couldn’t dispel the lingering fear within his heart. His choice to extinguish four Soul Lamps had been a deranged decision that could have only been made in the face of certain death.

He sent his divine sense sweeping out across the battlefield, and then, the sun blazed with light as an arrow shot out toward the First Mountain. Before any of the fighters on either side could react, that arrow stabbed into the head of one of the Imperial Lords!

The sun’s light arrows could injure even Paragons, let alone Imperial Lords. This was not the first Imperial Lord to be killed by such an arrow.

The sudden fatality shook the battlefield, and was a message to all of the Outsiders that… Meng Hao was back.

The Outsider Paragon from the 6th Heaven was sitting cross legged out in the starry sky. During the past months, he had been working hard at unraveling Meng Hao’s Essence of space, and was on the verge of freeing Xuan Fang. Suddenly, his eyes opened, and when he looked at the Mountain and Sea Realm, he caught sight of Meng Hao.

He instantly frowned. During the course of working to breaking through the Essence of space, he had confirmed that Meng Hao wasn’t dead, but he had never imagined that he would make his comeback so soon. Only a few months ago, he had been hovering on the brink of death, and yet now, he was fully recovered, and even stronger than before.

The instant Meng Hao woke up, the sun blazed dazzlingly, and an Outsider Imperial Lord was killed. The army of Outsiders was shaken, but their killing intent was as strong as ever. Furthermore, the First Mountain was already completely soaked in blood.

Meng Hao didn’t unleash the power of the sun again. Even as he stood there, Sea Dream looked over at him with flashing eyes, and then suddenly, her voice spoke in his mind.

“Send the Paragon puppet to attack!”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. He knew exactly what Sea Dream wanted to happen, so without any hesitation, he sent out his divine will, causing the Paragon puppet’s eyes to open. It instantly rose to its feet, eyes blazing as it took a step forward and then shot toward the First Mountain!

The Mountain and Sea Realm was breaking the agreement that had been put in place… they were attacking with a Paragon!

Almost in the same moment that the Paragon puppet began to move forward, the Outsider Paragon’s face flickered, and he gnashed his teeth. He still needed more time to safely unravel the Essence of space, and after all of the months that had passed, he still hadn’t managed to take the First Mountain. He knew that he was not a strategist, and that if Xuan Fang were here, the situation would be different.

Now that Meng Hao was making a move in violation of the agreement, the Outsider Paragon, gritted his teeth and then unleashed so much cultivation base power that he injured himself. His spirit turned listless as he coughed up his own life-essence blood onto the Essence of space seal. By using a secret magic, and simultaneously drawing upon his longevity, he hoped to speed up the process of unraveling the seal.

Rumbling could be heard as his life-essence blood splashed onto Meng Hao’s Essence of space, which then shuddered and began to emit cracking sounds! Then, it simply collapsed!

Xuan Fang shot out like lightning, and without even the slightest bit of hesitation, pointed his finger up at the 3rd Heaven and unleashed all the power he could muster.

The 3rd Heaven began to tremble, then slowly tilted over and began to descend toward the Mountain and Sea Realm.

As of this moment, the balance which had been maintained over the past several months was completely disrupted. The reason Meng Hao was so important was not because of his control over the power of the sun, but rather… that he could completely disrupt the balance that existed between the Mountain and Sea Realm and the Outsiders.

In fact, Paragon Sea Dream had been waiting for months for Meng Hao to return just for this express purpose.

Once the Paragon puppet shot toward the First Mountain, incredible pressure instantly exploded out from it. At the same time, the 3rd Heaven began to pick up speed as it headed toward the Mountain and Sea Realm. As for Paragon Xuan Fang, his hair was disheveled and his face ashen; overall, he looked to be very bad shape.

A pained look could be seen in his eyes. During the months in which he had been trapped, the Outsiders had lost their control over the flow of battle, and Xuan Fang knew that a critical moment had arrived.

“Mythdragon, help me! We’ve lost the initiative, and if we don’t get it back… then this battle… is lost!” In response to his words, the Paragon wreathed in darkness resolutely performed an incantation gesture and point up toward the land mass that was the 3rd Heaven.

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the 3rd Heaven trembled, picking up even more speed as it headed toward the Mountain and Sea Realm.

At the same time, Xuan Fang didn’t hesitate at all to send the 4th Heaven into motion. Two land masses of enormous, indescribable size, both emitted ear-piercing rumbling sounds as they smashed down toward the Mountain and Sea Realm.

By that point, the Paragon puppet had already set foot onto the First Mountain. First he clenched his hand into a fist and then punched out toward the army of Outsiders. Heaven and Earth shook, and screams rang out from the Outsiders. Simultaneously, the two land masses were bearing down on the defenseless Mountain and Sea Realm.

The 3rd Heaven had already reached the former location of the destroyed First Sea, and yet for some reason Paragon Sea Dream’s expression hadn’t changed at all. It was at this point that a cold snort suddenly echoed out from within the Mountain and Sea Realm.

A blue, illusory sea suddenly appeared over the First Mountain, above which hovered an enormous violet gate. Written on that violet gate were four words.

Nine Seas God World!!

Swirling beneath the gate were 100,000 Sea Dragons, which lifted the gate high up into the air. The sight was completely shocking, and caused the eyes of the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators to grow wide. Cries of shock instantly began to ring out.

“It’s the Nine Seas God World!!”

“The Three Great Daoist Societies’ Nine Seas God World is here!!”

“The Three Great Daoist Societies are making a move!!”

There were no sects or clans in the entire Mountain and Sea Realm who could compare to the Three Great Daoist Societies. Some groups could rival their power in an individual Mountain and Sea, but the the Three Great Daoist Societies existed in all of the Nine Mountains and Seas. When they combined their forces, then they truly deserved to be called… the most powerful sects in the Mountain and Sea Realm!

Perhaps their cultivators weren’t the most powerful, but they had been building up resources for countless years, storing up precious treasures which were now about to be unleashed. In fact, as soon as the Nine Seas God World gate appeared, it opened, and eighteen coffins appeared!

Magical symbols glittered on the surfaces of the coffins, and as they flew out, they transformed into eighteen beams of light that sped toward the 3rd Heaven!

As they flew along, the coffins began to crack and crumble, revealing eighteen corpses. As the corpses appeared, their eyes opened, and they erupted with boundless cultivation base power and divine sense!!

“Demonic cultivators of the Lower Realms, how dare ye!”

“My life was dedicated to defending against the Lower Realms’ Demonic cultivators. How dare ye provoke the Immortal World!!”

“Back down!”

As the enraged corpses shouted out, the power that erupted from them was… the power of Imperial Lords!!

Shockingly, these were… eighteen Imperial Lords from the Immortal World of yesteryear!

Meng Hao was completely shaken, but was quickly able to determine that these corpses, despite having the power of Imperial Lords… were only the remnants of Imperial Lords who, in the moments before dying, allowed their discarnate souls to be turned into puppets, all for the purpose of unleashing one final attack. Once they made that attack… their souls would disperse for all eternity.

“The Mountain and Sea Realm’s resources and tactics are being revealed one by one,” he thought. As he looked out at the Mountain and Sea Realm, he realized that at this point in the battle… all the cards were being played.

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# Chapter 1366: Advancing the Decisive Battle!

Out in the starry sky, the two Outsider Paragons, Xuan Fang and Mythdragon, looked shocked. Mythdragon was hesitating, but Xuan Fang merely sighed, and a cold gleam appeared in his eyes as he pointed a finger up toward the land mass that was the 5th Heaven.

“Fellow Daoist Mythdragon, please lend me a hand once more.”

Mythdragon sighed within his cloak of darkness. “Fine, I’m useless when it comes to strategy. Just tell me what to do.” With that he rotated his cultivation base, whereupon a faint roar like that of a dragon echoed out. At the same time, numerous faint, shadowy forms appeared and began to swirl around him as he helped Xuan Fang set the 5th Heaven in motion.

The huge land mass that was the 5th Heaven emitted enormous rumbling sounds, and then began to crush down toward the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Meanwhile, the power of the eighteen Imperial Lord corpses was erupting out. Their discarnate souls were burning away, allowing incredible power of Heaven and Earth to be directed toward the 3rd Heaven.

Massive rumbling sounds echoed out, and brilliant colors flashed. Cracks began to spread out across the 3rd Heaven, and soon it began to crumble and collapse.

The eighteen corpses transformed into eighteen beams of blade-like light that shot toward the 4th Heaven. Shockingly, as they closed in on the land mass that was the 4th Heaven, they chose… to self-detonate!

BOOOOMMMMMM!

The eighteen corpses used the last bit of life force they had to explode. The starry sky vibrated, and the 4th Heaven, unable to avoid the blast, was hit head on. In the blink of an eye… the entire land mass… crumbled! Unable to maintain a solid form, it shattered and then… transformed into smoke and ash!

Even as the crumbling fragments of the 3rd Heaven continued to fall down toward the Mountain and Sea Realm, several beams of sword light suddenly appeared from down below. Suddenly… nine swords shot out from within the Mountain and Sea Realm!

Converged upon those nine swords was the wills of the cultivators of the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto of their respective Mountain and Sea. Precious treasures from the Paragon Immortal Realm, they slashed out toward the fragments of the 3rd Heaven, completely destroying them!

The brilliant sword light which filled the Mountain and Sea Realm caused everything else to grow dark.

Meng Hao still stood there on the sun, watching as all of this happened, his heart pounding with excitement. At the same time, the land mass that was the 5th Heaven was still under the control of Xuan Fang and Mythdragon as it smashed down toward the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“We need to force the Mountain and Sea Realm to pull out everything they have. The 7th Heaven and above can’t join the battle, but they can see what’s happening….” Xuan Fang’s eyes glittered as he drew upon all of his cultivation base to send the 5th Heaven in after the 3rd and 4th Heaven.

The 5th Heaven was far larger than all the previous Heavens, and as soon as it began to descend, the starry sky was crushed. Massive rifts snaked out everywhere, and yet at the same time, an old man suddenly flew out from the First Mountain.

That old man had the demeanor of a transcendent being, but if you looked closely, you would see that he was actually transparent. He was illusory, and not real. Even as he appeared, the sound of scriptures being chanted could be heard echoing out from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite temples in the Nine Mountains of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

The chanting filled the entire Mountain and Sea Realm, and a strange power rose up, almost like a summoning. Apparently, it was that illusory old man who was being summoned.

Meng Hao instantly recognized him. It was the same old man who had given sermons on the Dao back when he himself had been in that abandoned temple of the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite, the same man who could write the character Immortal into the air with his finger.

Now, that old man floated out into the void as if he had been transported from ancient times into the present. Mixed emotions could be seen on his face, and he sighed as he extended his hand, pushing it toward the incoming 5th Heaven.

That simple motion caused the entire 5th Heaven land mass to shudder to a stop. Then… to Meng Hao's complete disbelief, the entire land mass began to dissolve, transforming into nothing more than ash.

It happened too quickly for anyone to even react. A simple gesture by that old man caused the land mass that was the 5th Heaven to… completely vanish.

Then, the figure of the old man began to fade away. At the same time, countless cultivators in the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite temples in the Mountain and Sea Realm coughed up blood, the price that they had to pay for the summoning.

"Imperial Lord corpses. Deadly Dao Realm treasures. Paragon projections…. The Mountain and Sea Realm's resources run incredibly deep!" Xuan Fang stared at the disappearing old man from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite, then took a deep breath, whereupon his eyes flickered with a gleam of madness.

“We won’t be able to drag this fight out until the 7th Heaven and the others arrive. Fellow Daoist Mythdragon, as of this moment, we have only one choice… put everything on the line, lest the both of us perish this day!” Xuan Fang rose to his feet, then looked in the direction of the 6th Heaven, and stamped his foot down viciously.

Instantly, the 6th Heaven began to tilt onto its side. Paragon Mythdragon stood there silently, sighing. He knew that the battle had been lost, and that it was because of him. Therefore, without any hesitation, he also stamped his foot down, his eyes flickering with killing intent.

The land mass that was the 6th Heaven emitted rumbling sounds as it slowly began to move toward the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“The combined power unleashed by five of our land masses is not enough to break through even their first line of defense,” said Xuang Fang. Based on the resources the Mountain and Sea Realm has at hand… we aren’t well enough prepared to win.

“However, I refuse to only use part of what we have at our disposal. Fellow Daoist Mythdragon, we must hold nothing back. Let us see… if we can break through this line of defense! Let us see if the Mountain and Sea Realm has any tricks left to defend themselves….

“The more resources they draw on now, the easier it will be for the 7th Heaven and the others to prepare to counter them in the months to come. That will lead to the Mountain and Sea Realm being defeated in even more expeditious fashion.” Xuan Fang’s eyes glittered coldly as he and Mythdragon sent the 6th Heaven barreling toward the Mountain and Sea Realm.

At the same time, the final division of millions of Outsiders followed the directions imparted by Xuan Fang’s divine will, surrounding the 6th Heaven, joining it to crash into the Mountain and Sea Realm.

The decisive battle… was being fought ahead of schedule!

It only took a moment for the Mountain and Sea Realm to brace itself. Even as the 6th Heaven began to descend, the 100,000 Sea Dragons beneath the Nine Seas God World gate roared and flew up to meet it.

However, as they closed in, killing intent flickered within the eyes of Paragon Mythdragon of the 6th Heaven. He waved his right hand viciously through the air, and the howl of a dragon could be heard coming from the darkness which surrounded him. Suddenly, an evil, pitch-black dragon roared out, fully 30,000 meters long. Its appearance instantly caused Heaven and Earth to shake violently, and elicited a howl of rage from the 100,000 Sea Dragons.

The explosive roaring sounds caused everything to shake, and at the same time, Paragon Mythdragon erupted with Paragon power. After all, despite not being adept at strategy, he was very adept… at slaughter!

As soon as he waved his hand, the roaring of the evil black dragon caused the Sea Dragons to begin to tremble. In the blink of an eye, their flesh was flayed off of their bodies, and they were transformed into bones, which then collapsed into ash.

The black, evil dragon then shot toward the gate of the Nine Seas God World.

However, it was at this point that the gate suddenly slammed open, and an enormous, 30,000-meter Sea Dragon flew out. This Sea Dragon had no flesh, and was made completely of bone!

As soon as it flew out, the shattered bits of flesh and blood from the other Sea Dragons, as well as the ash from their bones, instantly flew over to cover the bones of the gigantic Sea Dragon. Now that it had a body of flesh and blood, it charged toward the evil dragon, roaring.

At this point, Paragon Sea Dream flew out to join the Paragon puppet, which was still under Meng Hao’s control. Meng Hao also sped out of the sun and headed toward the battlefield.

The nine swords from the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto then ripped through the void toward the 6th Heaven land mass.

Further in the depths of the Mountain and Sea Realm, the sound of chanting scriptures once again rose up from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite. This time, a middle-aged man appeared out of thin air. His eyes were blank, and he held a long spear in his hand. He instantly stepped forward and began to slaughter the Outsiders.

At the same time, Paragon Mythdragon took a step forward, transforming into three incarnations, one of which headed toward Paragon Sea Dream, and the other toward the Paragon puppet.

The last incarnation became a black beam of light that sped toward the nine swords. The black light around him shattered, transforming into a hail of shrapnel that spiraled toward the nine swords, then reformed into a sealing field which trapped them.

Without the black light cloaking him, Paragon Mythdragon was now revealed for all to see. He was huge, with three heads, two of which had their eyes closed. The eyes of the middle head glowed with bright red light as he stared toward the middle-aged man whom the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite had summoned.

Soon, the glow of magical techniques rose up into the sky.

As all of that was happening, Xuan Fang began to pick up speed as he headed toward Meng Hao.

With all the main powerhouses of the Mountain and Sea Realm locked down, there was no way to stop the 6th Heaven. A massive boom echoed out as it slammed into the First Mountain. The mountain trembled, and cracking sounds emanated out as crevices were ripped open. Then, the land mass continued to smash down into the First Mountain until… it was completely obliterated!

By this point, most of the land mass that was the 6th Heaven was destroyed. Endless amounts of rubble then began to rain destructively toward the rest of the Mountain and Sea Realm. Instantly, the spell formations of the Second Sea were activated, causing the Second Sea to collapse as it blocked the falling rubble.

Mountains were being crushed and Seas were being obliterated!

Even as the Second Sea collapsed to block the rubble raining down, Ksitigarbha was sitting cross-legged on the moon. When his eyes opened, they glowed with icy coldness, and he immediately activated the defensive shield, despite the injuries inflicted upon himself by doing so.

A glittering shield appeared above the Second Mountain, upon which smashed the remnants of the falling rubble, which then turned into ash.

No further destruction was carried out; the danger posed by the 6th Heaven was neutralized!

“That’s it…?” Xuan Fang said, sighing. Behind him, the final division of Outsiders was charging into the Mountain and Sea cultivators. Instantly, fierce fighting broke out. At the same time, complete silence filled everything behind the Second Mountain. No more special methods or techniques were unleashed. “Still don’t feel the need to use more of their reserves? Well, in that case….”

Xuan Fang performed an incantation gesture with his right hand and pointed in Meng Hao’s direction. However, just when Meng Hao was about to make a move, Xuan Fang pulled back, laughing.

“I don’t care what methods the 7th Heaven or all the other Heavens have at their disposal, they’re not going to be here any time soon. Therefore… since the Mountains and Seas won’t reveal any of its other resources, then… this kid, and that sun and moon, must be destroyed!

“Activate the Immortal-Imprisoning Formation!!”

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# Chapter 1367: No Choice But to Descend!

As soon as the words left Xuan Fang’s mouth, glittering light appeared on the 7th Heaven, and then the 8th and the 9th, all the way to the 33rd Heaven.

There were still several more months left before they could emerge from their current state. However, they could hear the words uttered by Xuan Fang, and could also see everything clearly.

In fact, they had been closely observing the battle as it played out over the past few months, and had already begun preparing special ways to deal with the Mountain and Sea Realm based on what they had seen. Also, they had long since come to the realization of how important the sun and moon were!

From what they could tell, the most important between the two was not the sun, but the moon!

Of course, with Meng Hao in position on the sun, considering his battle prowess and the fact that he controlled a Paragon puppet, he was fully qualified to tie down two Paragons in battle.

A Mountain and Sea cultivator like that was someone the 33 Heavens couldn’t afford to disregard, and they had long since placed him on their list of priority targets to kill.

After hearing Xuan Fang’s declaration, the powerful Outsider experts from the 7th to the 33rd Heaven, including the two 8-Essences Paragons, were all completely focused on how things were playing out. Whether it was because of the effort to kill Meng Hao and Ksitigarbha, for the overall strategy of drawing out the battle, or even more importantly, for the safety of Xuan Fang and Mythdragon, what was happening now was of utmost importance.

That was also why Xuan Fang had taken immediate, seemingly maddened action after being unsealed. Attacking with all the land masses ensured that he had nowhere to retreat to. Thus… the forces which remained from the 33 Heavens would not hesitate to do everything they could to come to his aid.

Only then could this battle not be called a complete failure for him.

“As long as I can destroy the sun or the moon, then… this battle won’t have been a total failure.” The starry sky then began to tremble as a beam of light emerged from the main force of the 33 Heavens, which then shot down toward the Mountain and Sea Realm.

It moved with incredible speed, and yet, even as it neared, another beam of light rose up from the Ninth Mountain. Those two beams of light shot toward each other, and then collided outside of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

As rumbling booms echoed out, an enraged roar echoed out from the 33 Heavens. That light which shot down was blasted into countless shards of light which were now incapable of forming the Immortal-Imprisoning Formation Xuan Fang had spoken of!

At the same time, large numbers of cultivators poured out from the Second Mountain to charge into the Outsiders, and began to fight bitterly.

Paragon Mythdragon simultaneously began to fight the Paragon puppet, Paragon Sea Dream and the Nine Seas God World Sea Dragon. He was also keeping the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto at bay, and was even pinning down the middle-aged man from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite.

Of course, he payed a heavy price to do all of that as, almost instantly, blood sprayed out of his mouth. And yet he didn’t back down; rinning viciously, he slapped his hand onto his head.

A boom rang out as black light erupted out from him, causing his battle prowess, and that of all his incarnations, to leap to new heights.

“Dragondemon Bodysnatching!?!?” said Paragon Sea Dream, her eyes flashing. “That’s an innate divine ability of the Mythdragon Clan, which allows a battle soul to possess the body, making it impervious to divine abilities and magical techniques! However, once the bodysnatching ends, all the wounds he seemingly avoided will suddenly flare up!

“That means he’s seeking to die in battle!! His delays led to their defeat, so he’s going to put his life on the line….”

Off in the distance, Paragon Xuan Fang saw what was happening, and after a moment of silence, threw his head back and laughed. Eyes flickering with determination, he shot toward Meng Hao. As for Meng Hao, his eyes glittered, and instead of backing up, he advanced, and soon the two of them were battling back and forth with booming divine abilities.

Meng Hao was in a slightly inferior position. His cultivation base qualified him to fight with Paragons, but not necessarily to win. However, delaying Xuan Fang was nothing difficult.

As for Mythdragon, he was being beaten back by the various methods employed by everyone he was fighting.

“Of you two Paragons, one will definitely die here,” Meng Hao said coolly, his eyes flickering with killing intent. This was not his first time fighting Xuan Fang, and in their last battle, he had been pushed to the very limit. But now, he had fully recovered, and was even stronger in terms of battle prowess.

Booms rang out from within the army of Outsiders, as well as screams. The Mountain and Sea cultivators were unleashing carnage, and their numbers were swelling as more cultivators joined in the battle.

The number of Outsiders from the 2nd to the 6th Heavens vastly outnumbered the group from the initial battle with the 1st Heaven.

However, in terms of the damage they were wreaking upon the Mountain and Sea cultivators, it didn’t match up at all.

Meanwhile, the forces in the 7th to the 33rd Heavens up above could sense what danger Xuan Fang and Mythdragon were in. Roars of rage echoed out as they attempted to extricate themselves from their current state. However, that state was like a double edged sword; although it had enabled them to escape catastrophe from the sudden attack of the Mountain and Sea Realm, it also left them completely and utterly sealed.

In the final analysis, they had never anticipated that the combined power of five land masses… couldn’t even break through the second line of defense in the Mountain and Sea Realm. Furthermore, they were losing so badly in the battle below that they were virtually being massacred.

Booms rang out as the 7th through 33rd Heavens all bashed against the invisible sealing barrier. On the battlefield, the Mountain and Sea Realm clearly had the advantage, and the Outsiders were dying in droves. They were shoved back again and again, and seemed incapable of fighting back against the Mountain and Sea cultivators.

In front of the Second Mountain, the Second Sea had collapsed, and in its place was a sea of blood.

As for Paragon Mythdragon, after utilizing his bodysnatching technique, he was going all out. However, his heart was filled with bitterness because of the failure of the Immortal-Imprisoning Formation. Had it succeeded, he would not be in such a bad situation.

He currently had all of the top experts of the Mountains and Seas locked down, but the price was that he himself was stuck in an unimaginably deadly situation.

“Xuan Fang, hurry up!!” Mythdragon roared. Xuan Fang was already going all out with his cultivation base. Paragon power erupted out, and yet he was unable to break free from the fight. Not only had he been weakened, Meng Hao had already fought a deadly battle with him before. Meng Hao was used to his fighting tactics, and therefore, breaking free from the fight was not something that Xuan Fang could do quickly.

No matter what he tried to do, he simply couldn't get away.

Meng Hao transformed into an azure roc, which whistled through the starry sky, slashing its deadly talons out in attack. He used the One Thought Stellar Transformation, as well as his Supernova Magic.

He even unleashed his Demon Sealing Hexing magic, and the backlash wasn't as bad as it had been in the past.

At the moment, the two Outsider Paragons could not flee, and there was no one there to save them. The 7th through 33rd Heavens were getting very anxious. If things kept going as they were, then they needed to be prepared… for one of their Paragons to perish.

The 33 Heavens originally had five Paragons. Eegoo was essentially dead. If they lost another, they might still be able to secure a victory, but the price would be one they were hard-pressed to pay.

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Currently, Shui Dongliu was on Planet South Heaven, outside the Ninth Mountain, looking up coldly into the starry sky. He appeared to be hesitating, as if he had a very hard decision to make.

After a long moment, he murmured, "If you take a step back, you realize that there is no one… who cannot be sacrificed. Even me…. Since that's the case…." He took a deep breath and then slowly lowered his hand.

"Since that's the case, I will allow you people to open a breach ahead of schedule. That way… you'll be able to send someone in. However, the price you will pay is that the overall time before the rest of you can emerge from the sealed state will be extended…. Most importantly… those two experts who were possessed by the two powerful forces, they who now have the power of 8-Essences Paragons… will be unable to descend before the seal is completely removed.

“This will make things very dangerous for Ksitigarbha, Sea Dream, and the Three Great Daoist Societies. It will be even more dangerous… for Meng Hao….” After a long, thoughtful moment, Shui Dongliu sighed.

“In the end, the 33 Heavens don’t count for much. It is those two possessed Paragons… who are the powerful enemies we can’t handle right now!”

Outside of the Second Mountain, intense fighting was going on. Mythdragon was suffering successive defeats, and didn’t seem like he could hang on much longer. He had already used the bodysnatching technique multiple times, and was now on the verge of collapsing.

Xuan Fang could do nothing to push Meng Hao away and break free, and was getting more and more anxious.

However, it was at this point that a huge boom echoed out in the starry sky. It was hard to say what price had been paid by the 7th to 33rd Heavens, but suddenly, everything from the 16th Heaven and below started to flicker, as if the sealing power were becoming unstable. Then, bright lights flashed as the 7th through 16th Heavens… suddenly materialized in the starry sky!

Apparently, the 17th Heaven and above had taken on the sealing power which had been restraining the 7th through 16th Heavens, allowing those Heavens to break free!

Rumbling sounds could be heard as the 7th Heaven descended, followed by the 8th, the 9th… all the way to the 16th Heaven. In total, ten Heavens rumbled down out of the starry sky toward the Mountain and Sea Realm.

At the same time, ten beams of light shot out from those land masses, causing rumbling sounds to echo out as they closed in on the Mountain and Sea Realm. One of those beams of light shot toward Mythdragon, instantly ending his battle with the Mountain and Sea experts and dragging him away. The second beam of light burst onto the scene of Meng Hao and Xuan Fang’s battle, creating a huge wave of qi that separated the two of them.

Meng Hao was violently shoved backward toward the Mountain and Sea Realm's sun. Even as blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth, the fourth beam of light shot with incredible speed toward the sun. There was nothing Meng Hao could do except watch as the beam of light slammed into the sun, instantly transforming 100,000 cultivators into ash….

As for the sun, it began to tremble, and then fissures spread out across its surface in completely shocking fashion!

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# Chapter 1368: Reversals!

Meng Hao’s eyes went wide at the shocking scene, and he let let out a miserable howl. “NOOO…!!”

At the same time, the fifth beam of light shot toward the moon. Of course, the moon was designed for defense, so although it was shaken, and the 100,000 cultivators there coughed up blood and withered dangerously, they didn’t die.

Cracking sounds emanated out as crevices opened up all over the moon; it appeared to be on the verge of imminent collapse.

Next, the remaining five beams of light spread out to cover the entire Mountain and Sea Realm as a whole. They weren’t being used as an attack, but rather… as a seal!

Powerful rumbling echoed out. Heaven and Earth trembled. The starry sky went dim. Sea Dream and the others felt their faces fall as the five beams of light covered the whole Mountain and Sea Realm… cutting it off completely from the sun and the moon!

As of this moment, the sun and the moon were now outside of the Mountain and Sea Realm. The development occurred so quickly that all Meng Hao could do was laugh bitterly at the realization… that this was simply how war worked!

Life was the weakest of all things in a war, and could be snuffed out in a single attack…. Of the 100,000 cultivators who had been stationed on the sun, half had paid a heavy price to help him buy time in his earlier battle with Xuan Fang. They and Meng Hao… were comrades-in-arms.

Meng Hao’s eyes were bright red, and yet, he had no time to ponder the matter at the moment. Even as the five beams of light formed together into the huge seal, Meng Hao sent divine will out to his Paragon puppet. Instantly, it performed a teleportation, bursting out from within the seal to appear at his side!

At the same time, tens of millions of Outsiders poured out from the 7th to 16th Heavens, along with countless vicious-looking war chariots.

The 7th through 16th Heavens were like an inverted pagoda whose converged force caused intense pressure to weigh down through the starry sky.

It was almost as if a gigantic, invisible hand were crushing down onto the Mountain and Sea Realm, causing all of the Mountains, Seas, and planets to tremble.

The five beams of light which had shot out from the ten land masses were like a huge cage, trapping everything from the Second Mountain to the Ninth Mountain, completely separating them.

They were now isolated, impossible to aid, a sudden change that caused the faces of the Mountain and Sea cultivators to fall. Mixed emotions could be seen on Sea Dream’s face as she tried in vain to break past the barrier.

For the time being, the Three Great Daoist Societies’ efforts were for naught. Although the Mountain and Sea Realm would be temporarily shielded from any attacks, Meng Hao and Ksitigarbha were now completely isolated in a dangerous situation.

The sun and the moon had been of incredible aid throughout the war, and the 33 Heavens could sense how threatening they were. Now, they had descended with the intent of destroying that very sun and moon at any price.

Meng Hao fell back into the sun’s spell formation. He was completely alone; not even corpses had been left behind. The only thing that existed was a pervasive aura of death, and the souls of the dead, which refused to disperse. Meng Hao sat there silently, and his eyes began to glow with intense killing intent.

As the Paragon puppet appeared next to him on the sun, he looked off into the distance at the waves of tens of millions of Outsiders swarming out from the ten land masses. Even as they began to fill the starry sky, Xuan Fang and Mythdragon were retreating into the Outsider army.

Xuan Fang was in slightly better condition, whereas Mythdragon was a mass of blood and wounds. He was clearly severely wounded, and could barely stand. Even as he consumed medicinal pills, several Imperial Lords helped him to return to the land masses to recover.

He was so grievously injured that he could barely maintain consciousness. After finally reaching the 16th land mass, he coughed up a mouthful of blood and then closed his eyes in meditation, surrounded by Outsider guards.

It wasn’t that he didn’t notice Meng Hao’s murderous gaze coming all the way from the sun. Instead, he didn’t deign to care. Although Meng Hao was powerful enough to arouse his caution, in the current situation, Meng Hao had to consider his own survival, and thus Paragon Mythdragon didn’t pay him any heed.

Paragon Xuan Fang threw his head back and laughed uproariously. Inwardly, he was elated at what had occurred. Ten land masses had appeared, and tens of millions of Outsider reinforcements had arrived, including ten Imperial Lords. Although there were no Paragons, as far as Xuan Fang was concerned… the current reinforcements were enough.

“It’s enough for me to destroy the sun and moon, and then at least half of the rest of the Mountain and Sea Realm. It’s also plenty to be able to last until the 17th Heaven and the others arrive.”

Eyes flickering with killing intent, Xuan Fang reached his hand out toward the moon and pointed.

“Imperial Lords, destroy that moon, and all the cultivators on it!” Even as the words left his mouth, the newly arrived Imperial Lords shot toward the moon with bursting energy and murderous auras. They were joined by a force of millions of Outsiders, all of whom charged toward the moon!

On the moon itself, Ksitigarbha’s face returned to its normal placid state. He even began to chuckle, although it was a hoarse, pained chuckle. However, the burning fire in his eyes had not lessened.

He took a deep breath and closed his eyes, and as for the 100,000 cultivators who surrounded him, despite their withered state, in which they hovered on the edge of death like candles flickering in the wind, none of them said a word. They looked down in the direction of the Mountain and Sea Realm, clearly reluctant to part from it into death, and yet at the same time, sending it their well wishes….

Then, the 100,000 cultivators closed their eyes, appearing to give the last bits of their life force as a sacrifice to the Mountain and Sea Realm. As they fueled the defensive powers of the moon, rumbling sounds echoed out, and numerous beams of light appeared to completely surround the moon. As they did, the divine abilities of the Outsider Imperial Lords, as well as the magical techniques of the millions of other Outsiders, bore down and seemed to be on the verge of completely engulfing the moon.

Blood oozed out of the eyes, ears, noses, and mouths of the 100,000 cultivators, and their bones began to shatter. Ksitigarbha continued to chuckle bitterly, and yet, a look of increasing madness was seeping into his eyes.

On the other side of the field of battle, Xuan Fang was eying the sun with killing intent. He had already fought Meng Hao twice. The first time had been an incredibly bitter fight. The second fight had gone on for longer, and yet wasn’t as bitter. However, because of Meng Hao, he had been unable to rescue Mythdragon, who had ended up being trapped in an incredibly dangerous situation.

“Our third battle. This time, either you die, or I die!” Flicking his sleeve, Xuan Fang sent out divine will instructions to the surrounding millions of

Outsiders, whereupon all of them charged toward the sun, radiating intensely murderous auras.

Paragon Xuan Fang followed behind them, performing a double-handed incantation gesture that caused some strange magical technique to begin to build up.

Meng Hao sat there silently. He had not possessed the initiative during this battle, which did not conform to his personality. His eyes flickered, and he sent divine will out to the Paragon puppet, which instantly stood up, killing intent flickering in its eyes. It took a step forward, shot toward Xuan Fang, but then unexpectedly passed by him and headed toward the main group of the Outsider army behind him.

And then it kept going, in the direction of… the 16th Heaven. Its goal, Meng Hao's goal, was the heavily wounded Paragon Mythdragon.

You want to kill me? How about… I kill your Paragon!

As Meng Hao sat there cross-legged within the spell formation, he looked at Xuan Fang, eyes ice cold as he said, "Are you going to save him, or not?"

At the same time, rumbling sounds could be heard from within the Mountain and Sea Realm, as an intense power rose up from within the Ninth Mountain, which shot up toward the seal covering the Mountain and Sea Realm. When it slammed into the seal, the seal twisted and distorted, sending brilliant light shining out.

At the same time, Paragon Sea Dream and the Three Great Daoist Societies all attacked. And yet, something else happened at the same time. Within the Mountain and Sea Realm were three temples out in the starry sky, temples that no one could see. Within each of those temples were an old man and a young man.

Right now, those old men were opening their eyes, almost as if they had been summoned, as if orders had been delivered to them.

“Take my magical item and assist the masses to break that seal open!” The exact same words came out of the mouths of all three old men, and as they echoed out into the temples, the young men looked up, their eyes flickering with the desire to do battle.

They had been waiting for this war for a very long time.

Rumbling sounds could be heard as the young man in the first temple looked up, and a suit of blue armor spread out over his body, covering even his face. A long blue spear materialized in front of him, which he grasped. As he did, an intense energy surged up from him.

It quickly reached the 6-Essences level, and then a bit higher than that, although that energy didn’t seem to come from the young man himself, but rather, from the suit of armor and the spear.

He took a step forward, suddenly appearing outside of the temple, where he became a blue streak of light that shot up toward the seal.

At the same time, in the other two temples, other streaks of light appeared. One was crimson, and inside of it was a figure in blood-red armor, with a blood-colored sword and a colossal murderous aura.

In another direction was a bright yellow beam of light, within which was a figure wearing bright yellow armor. In that figure’s hand… was a bamboo scroll. Shocking divine sense swirled around him as he flew up with incredible speed.

Booms rang out as these three figures smashed into the shield. Astonishingly, these three figures were emitting three different auras. That of… the Sublime Spirit Scripture, the Dao Divinity Scripture, and… the Heaven Severing Scripture!

The three classic scriptures of the Mountain and Sea Realm were all in play!

The seal shook violently, and cracking sounds rang out, as if it might collapse at any moment.

Within the Mountain and Sea Realm was another figure who was violently head-butting the seal. It was none other than Patriarch Reliance. Back when the Mountain and Sea Realm had entered its Siege Mode, he had disappeared somewhere. Now, he suddenly reappeared, and as he battered the seal, he muttered, “That little bastard most likely isn’t dead. If he really was, then I would be free, but… I still feel like having him alive is a bit better.” Sighing, he bashed into the seal again.

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# Chapter 1369: Sun, Detonate!

At the same time, all of the cultivators in the Mountain and Sea Realm unleashed their divine abilities to batter against the seal, which began to weaken and crack. However, the 33 Heavens had paid an incredible price to put this seal in place; it was clearly something extraordinary in nature. Despite cracking, it did not fall.

Outside of the Mountain and Sea Realm, booming sounds echoed out from the moon as the Imperial Lords and the other Outsiders attacked it relentlessly. The moon quivered on the verge of being destroyed, causing Xuan Fang to begin to laugh coldly, and completely ignore the Paragon puppet, which was slaughtering its way toward the 16th Heaven. Instead, he stood in place, both hands flashing in incantation gestures as a bizarre aura built up around him. Soon, countless illusory figures became visible in his vicinity.

As that happened, the divine abilities of millions of Outsiders descended onto the sun like a sea of magic, engulfing it. The sun did not have the defensive powers that the moon did, so as soon as the sea of magic hit it, it began to crack and split. The entire sun seemed to be on the very brink of collapsing.

There in the midst of the sea of magic was Meng Hao, who began to laugh in the face of the terrifying attack. His eyes burned with fire because he knew that this attack… was something the sun could not withstand; it would be broken!

It was all thanks to the terrifying beam of light which had struck it. That grievous blow ensured that the sun was now incapable of surviving for much longer….

“Since that’s the case, instead of simply letting you destroy this sun… I should use it to kill more of you Outsiders!” Meng Hao threw both hands up and then slammed them down onto the surface of the sun.

The blow was backed by the rotation of his cultivation base and the power of his fleshly body, and the impact caused the sun to tremble, then suddenly explode into pieces!

BOOOOMMMMMM!!

Shrapnel that was the remnants of the sun exploded out in all directions, creating a powerful attack that slammed into the sea of magic. When those two forces collided, a terrifying shockwave blasted out into the starry sky. It was like the roar of a giant as dazzling light shot out everywhere. The whole scene resembled a destructive apocalypse!

As the light and heat of the sun’s self-detonation spread out, the sea of magic was enveloped. The millions of Outsiders were powerful, but the destructive power of the sun was something they simply couldn’t fight against.

After all, this sun had illuminated the Mountain and Sea Realm for tens upon tens of thousands of years. Considering it had heated the Realm for so long, it was impossible to even imagine how hot it was. Most important was that the sun had actually been created from a treasure belonging to Paragon Nine Seals. As such, its detonation was shocking beyond imagination!

The massive sound of the explosion filled the Heavens, and the dazzling light it created lit up everything. Everyone in the Mountain and Sea Realm, and all of the Outsiders beyond the area of the explosion, stared at what was happening in complete shock.

The scene playing out in front of them could rightly be described as the most insane thing any of them had witnessed.

The sun was exploding!

BOOOOMMMMMM!

The detonation was not something that just ended immediately. It was an ongoing process in which intense light and heat continuously blasted out in all directions. The sea of magic was completely engulfed, and the surrounding Outsiders had no time to flee. They were swept over, their flesh and blood torn from their bodies as they were incinerated into ash!

Because of the blinding light, some people simply closed their eyes. Others braved the piercing rays of light to watch. Countless miserable screams began to rise up as rank after rank of Outsiders were wiped away as if by an enormous hand of light.

It was at this point that Paragon Xuan Fang finished his double-handed incantation. He looked up, and a callous smile could be seen on his face. He was the type of person who understood war, and although he would not dare to say that no one in existence could match up to him, he was certain that among the five great Paragons, he was the most skilled strategist.

“In war, there is only victory and defeat,” he said coolly. “There is no such thing as right or wrong. To gain victory… I am willing to sacrifice anything. If it comes down to it, I will even sacrifice myself. Since the spirit of the Mountain and Sea Realm has risen up, then fate has been sealed…. Either you people will die, or us!” Suddenly, he waved his finger in the direction of the masses of dead Outsiders.

Along with the wave of his finger came his voice, filled with a strange tone as it echoed out into the starry sky.

“Your souls are the spell, your blood is the sacrament. The world is Vast, the stars are the Expanse. Converge the will of severing into… a blade!”

As his voice echoed out, countless screaming, vengeful souls rose up, which were the dead Outsiders. Their blood, which should have been completely wiped away by the light and heat, now began to swirl up, merge together, and shine with a bizarre light!

As for the blood which had already faded away, the odor of gore which it left behind rapidly transformed into an illusory sea of blood.

Then the screaming Outsider souls then sank down into the sea of blood, as if they were refusing to die.

The bitter, venomous cries of the souls echoed out into all creation, as if they wanted to overturn the starry sky itself. The converged screams of millions of Outsiders became… the most intense of hatreds!

“Form your hatred into a blade, and use that blade to sever… all mental connections!” Xuan Fang’s voice boomed like thunder, and his expression was completely vicious as he raised his hand up into the air. As he did, the churning sea of blood formed together into the shape… of a blade!

A huge blade!

A blade formed from endless hatred!

Paragon Xuan Fang lifted the blade high up and then slashed it down toward Meng Hao!

“Fellow Daoist Eegoo, today I shall help you… be severed free!”

Even as Meng Hao looked up, he realized that the blade of hatred only seemed to be slashing toward him. Its real target was the space just in front of Meng Hao.

There in front of Meng Hao was something that no one could see, and in fact he hadn’t noticed up to this point…. A thread!

It was a thread that Xuan Fang could only see after employing a bizarre magical technique. It was… the thread connecting Meng Hao to his Paragon puppet!

By means of that thread, and by means of divine will, Meng Hao could control the Paragon puppet. More importantly, that thread did not actually belong to Meng Hao himself, nor had he created it. It came from… Choumen Tai!

The blade was descending to sever… that thread!!

If it succeeded… Meng Hao's divine will connection to his Paragon puppet would be severed!!

The blood and souls of millions of Outsiders had transformed into a blade, which had been Paragon Xuan Fang's plan all along. Although his actions had seemed to change arbitrarily, the truth was that everything had been done to try to gain the greatest possible advantage for the Outsiders.

His choice in this moment was not to try to cut down Meng Hao, but rather, to sever that thread. In addition to gaining an advantage for the Outsiders, it would also resolve the problem of the Paragon puppet trying to kill Paragon Mythdragon!

A boom rang out, and Meng Hao's pupils constricted as he sensed the connection between him and the Paragon puppet being cut!

Having control of the Paragon puppet suddenly taken away felt like having a limb severed. It was as if the sensation of control was still there, except that the limb was gone.

At the same time, the Paragon puppet, which had been charging toward the 16th Heaven, suddenly shuddered. Its eyes grew blank as it slowed down and stopped moving.

"A soul blade created from the souls of millions can sever all divine will. Meng Hao, without Eegoo… you are doomed to die!" Xuan Fang began to laugh uproariously. He had always believed himself to be shockingly adept at scheming, and this proved that he was right. His ability with scheming and strategy was truly causing incredible problems for the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Without him, the battle would have been much simpler, and the losses sustained by the Mountain and Sea Realm would have been much more manageable. But now, the sun had exploded, and the moon was in grave danger.

And yet, after Meng Hao's eyes went wide for a moment, a strange expression appeared on his face. Paragon Xuan Fang loved to scheme, and loved to come up with ideas and plans that no one could see through. Meng Hao already knew that. It was at this point that… Meng Hao blinked, and then cleared his throat.

The thread had been created by Choumen Tai, and although Meng Hao wasn't completely sure of exactly how terrifyingly powerful Choumen Tai was, the mere fact that he could turn a Paragon into a puppet… showed that he was completely beyond the ordinary, and definitely had other terrifying abilities at his disposal.

The agreement with Choumen Tai had been that Meng Hao would have a Paragon puppet, but now… the connection had been severed by someone else, and he had lost the puppet. Most important of all, Choumen Tai needed Meng Hao's willing aid to be the seed of hope which would lead to the return of his Master. That was why, not only had Choumen Tai refrained from doing anything to harm Meng Hao's interests, he had also given him the puppet – not just to comply with their agreement, but also as a way to protect him.

After all, Meng Hao's life or death had a lot to do with whether or not Choumen Tai would succeed or fail in awakening his Master. And of course, Meng Hao was aware of all of that.

As such, it was easy to imagine that the person who would be most incensed that the thread had been severed… wouldn't be Meng Hao, but rather Choumen Tai. He might be slumbering, but he would definitely awaken because of something like that!

It was at this point that Meng Hao said: "Choumen Tai… the thread was severed!"

Xuan Fang's laughter continued to ring out as he began to advance toward Meng Hao. However, it was then that his face fell, and his heart suddenly trembled. He suddenly had a very bad premonition, a strange feeling in his heart that something disastrous was about to happen.

At the same time, a voice suddenly rang out from the mouth of the motionless Paragon puppet.

“You really dare to sever the thread I created?” The Paragon puppet suddenly turned, and its eyes were glowing bright red. It appeared to be completely and utterly enraged. As of this moment, this was not the Paragon puppet, this was… something which had been buried deep inside of the Paragon puppet…. A fragment of Choumen Tai’s soul!

His voice was filled with a murderous aura, and echoed with madness. Few people could actually hear the voice, but Paragon Xuan Fang could, and his eyes widened. Then his heart began to thump as he slowly turned to look at the Paragon puppet.

Then… his face fell!

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# Chapter 1370: Bow In Hand!

In almost the same moment that the Paragon puppet’s eyes fell on Xuan Fang, an indescribably shocking divine sense exploded out from it.

The divine sense was not flexible, but rigid. It was also boundlessly ancient. However, it was so majestic that Xuan Fang couldn’t help but gasp in disbelief.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered in response to this change in the Paragon puppet. At the same time, the power of the exploding sun was weakening after destroying millions of nearby Outsiders.

Because Meng Hao was in the middle of the spell formation, he wasn’t hurt very much at all. Instead, his eyes glittered with killing intent as he looked in the direction of the 16th Heaven, and then back at Xuan Fang, whose face had completely fallen.

It had been a long time since Meng Hao had conned anyone, although in truth, this was not a case of him conning Xuan Fang, but more a case of Xuan Fang setting himself up for failure.

Meng Hao had always had his speculations regarding Choumen Tai’s true level of power, and Xuan Fang’s actions now were only giving him a deeper understanding.

“The Mountain and Sea Realm… has so many mysterious entities…. Choumen Tai, that old man on the boat, and also Slaughter, who walked out of Dao-Heaven’s scroll painting. Then there’s Shui Dongliu….” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. He had the intense premonition that, as the war reached its climax, as the 33 Heavens and the Mountain and Sea Realm headed closer and closer to the final battle, all of the secrets would be revealed, like a scroll being unfurled.

“In all of this… who exactly are the enemies, and who are the friends…. And who was it that saved me before? Was it Shui Dongliu? What exactly are his plans here in the Mountain and Sea Realm?” Meng Hao sighed inwardly. After awakening from his coma, there had been no time to ask Paragon Sea Dream about such matters. However, he had long since developed the feeling that the truth about the Mountain and Sea Realm was covered by a mist-like gauze, which made it impossible to see everything clearly. However, it seemed to him that there was someone behind the scenes influencing everything that was happening in the war.

He himself was only a pawn in this war. Perhaps everyone was, including the Outsiders. They were pawns, with no idea who the chessmaster was…. It was brutal, but that was war.

It had been a long time since that bashful smile appeared on Meng Hao’s when he was conning someone. The war had broken out suddenly, forcing him to mature, to grow up. He didn’t want to think about what it would be like to watch his family or friends dying in battle in front of him, or what that would turn him into.

He didn’t dare to contemplate such pain!

Therefore, the only thing he could do was make sure that any likelihood of such an outcome… was thoroughly wiped away!

“This time, one of these two Paragons will definitely perish!” As the murderous aura spread out from Meng Hao, his eyes suddenly went wide, and he looked down at the spell formation beneath his feet.

The sun was gone, but… there was still something else that remained behind.

It was in that exact same moment that the Paragon puppet’s eyes locked onto Paragon Xuan Fang, and its enraged voice echoed out into the starry sky. “Was it you who severed my thread?”

Paragon Xuan Fang’s heart began to pound as he sensed something locking down on him, something locking onto, not just his body, but his mind and his soul.

The voice which had just spoken was filled with killing intent and murderous intentions. There was a brutality to it, something that made the starry sky around it turn icy. At the same time that the voice rang out, the Paragon puppet vanished, then reappeared directly in front of Xuan Fang.

Xuan Fang didn’t hesitate at all to fall back at top speed, his heart filled with an intense sensation of imminent crisis. However, no matter how fast he tried to flee, he couldn’t match the soul fragment of Choumen Tai which had been sleeping inside the Paragon puppet.

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the Paragon puppet extended its right hand and made a grasping motion. In reality, it was manipulating the flow of time, reaching backward a few moments into the past.

“Get back here!” said the icy voice which echoed out of the Paragon puppet’s mouth. Then, the puppt’s hand wrenched backward.

Off in the distance, Paragon Xuan Fang had been fleeing, but then his face flickered as he sensed an enormous hand in front of him, grabbing at his soul, pulling him toward the Paragon puppet.

“You’re not Eegoo, and you’re not Meng Hao! Who… who are you?!” Paragon Xuan Fang’s face flickered as he bit down on the tip of his tongue, spitting out a mouthful of life essence blood and simultaneously performing a double-handed incantation gesture. That mouthful of blood became an entire sea which spread out in all directions and transformed into a blood-colored magical symbol.

“Break!” It was a critical moment in which there was no time for contemplation. Xuan Fang attacked without any consideration for the negative ramifications to himself. Everything around him twisted, and the blood-colored magical symbol exploded, sending out a huge shockwave that he used to shake free of the Paragon puppet’s time-traveling hand. Then he shot back at top speed, mind reeling and heart pounding from the realization of how powerful the Paragon puppet was.

In fact, he was now coming to the conclusion that severing Meng Hao's connection to this puppet might have been… a big mistake.

"Dammit, this is no puppet! There's a soul supporting it from the inside! This is a discarnate soul possession!!" Having come to this conclusion, Xuan Fang's face looked more unsightly than ever, and the sensation of crisis within him grew even more intense.

However, no matter how he tried to flee, the sensation only got worse. He didn't feel like he was breaking free from anything. On the contrary, he felt more locked down than ever, incapable of extricating himself.

Then, the Paragon puppet's eyes flickered, and its hand clenched into a fist before punching out.

BOOM!

The fist strike causing rumbling sounds to fill the void as an explosive force suddenly appeared right in front of Paragon Xuan Fang. Despite how powerful he was, blood sprayed out of his mouth, and he fell back, a look of shock on his face. Then he looked at the Paragon puppet, and suddenly seemed to have realized something, and his face fell.

"Y-you're… you're not a cultivator from the Paragon Immortal Realm. Y-you're… from the Barbarian Devil Realm!!"

"Barbarian…." A gleam of reminiscence could be seen in the eyes of the Paragon puppet before it then took another step forward and launched another blow at Paragon Xuan Fang. Booms rang out as Xuan Fang fell back, blood spraying out of his mouth. 1

Meanwhile, back in Meng Hao's position, the detonation of the sun revealed something completely shocking. There, numerous strands of light formed the outline of a spell formation design.

Within the heart of that spell formation was… a bow!!

It was an azure bow, floating in the nucleus of the spell formation, emitting boundless light. This was… Paragon Nine Seals' precious treasure!

Furthermore, Meng Hao was currently located above that spell formation… directly facing that bow!

The sun might have exploded, but the sun was only the outer shell.

Meng Hao paid no heed to the battle ensuing between Xuan Fang and the Paragon puppet. Instead, he looked down at the bow, his eyes glittering. Then he reached out, as if to grab it!

As soon as he reached out to touch the bow, it shuddered, as if in response. At the same time, the Paragon's blood inside of his Nirvana Fruit began to boil in an unprecedented fashion. Then bow then began to slowly rise up toward Meng Hao.

Simultaneously, within the sealed Mountains and Seas, all of the Mountains began to shake, and the Xuanwu turtles in the celestial ponds began to howl as if because of some intense provocation. At the same time, the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm also seemed to erupt explosively.

Patriarch Reliance's eyes went wide, as if he too could sense what was happening, and unexpectedly, he threw his head back and roared. At the same time, wave-like ripples filled the area around Guyiding Tri-Rain, and as for Mount Daqing, although it seemed to be just an ordinary mountain, all of a sudden… a completely extraordinary aura began to stir within it.

Also on Patriarch Reliance's back was Dong Hu. A pearl floated in front of him, which radiated dazzling light. Dong Hu looked at it thoughtfully, and then looked up into the vast sky.

"My life has been devoted to preparing this treasure for someone I don't know. Is it possible… that the fated master of this object is him…?"

As these things occurred, the cultivators who wielded the magical devices of the three Doyens redoubled their efforts, joining the Mountain and Sea cultivators to relentlessly attack the quivering seal which covered the Realm.

It was also in this moment that rumbling sounds could be heard as the bow emerged from the spell formation… and came to rest in Meng Hao’s hand.

The bow was azure, the string was black, and there no arrows!

However, there was a boundless ancientness which erupted from within it.

It was as if in the moment he grabbed ahold of the bow, all of the qi and blood inside of Meng Hao erupted. The starry sky vibrated, and wild colors flashed. Meng Hao’s hair flew about, and his energy rocketed up.

However… his body instantly began to wither as his qi and blood were rapidly absorbed by the bow.

Meng Hao’s eyes grew bright, and he took a deep breath. Then he looked up toward the 16th Heaven, his eyes flickering with killing intent.

“Xuan Fang is pinned down by the Paragon puppet. If I join in, then it might be possible to kill him. However, it would be better to take down Paragon Mythdragon when he’s injured. There won’t be another chance to do that….

“Yes, I’ll kill Mythdragon!” He made his decision in a split second, then took a step forward and transformed into a beam of light that shot toward the rest of the land masses up above.

As he flew up, the majestic spell formation which surrounded him followed. His feet remained on the spell formation, and his hand grasped the azure bow. He was like the sun itself, rising with majestic splendor toward the land masses in the starry sky.

The ordinary Outsiders, and their Imperial Lords, were all shaken, and quickly flew forward to try to stop Meng Hao. Paragon Xuan Fang’s eyes went wide, and although he instantly grew very anxious, there was nothing he could do but watch Meng Hao fly up.

As of this moment, the Outsiders were all astonished!

As of this moment, the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm were all staring at Meng Hao as he rose up into the sky like a sun!

Meng Hao’s father, Xu Qing, his fellow clan members, his friends, and all of the other cultivators who were watching, no matter how far away they were, could see the sun-like figure transforming into something like an arrow of light that shot toward the land masses up above!

“I am not indispensable to this war,” Meng Hao murmured. “If I weren’t here, there would be someone else who could take my place, and follow a similar path as mine….

“I can be a game piece. I can lack my own will. I can be a sacrifice. I just hope… that my family lives, that my wife lives, and that my friends live….”

With that, he drew the bowstring back!

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# Chapter 1371: Paragon in Terror!

He was going to kill a Paragon!

Kill Outsider Paragon Mythdragon!

As he pulled back on the bowstring, qi and blood surged through his body, as though the azure bow were sucking away at his life force. It began to shine with dazzling light, light that was none other than the convergence of his life force, and everything that was him.

It was also the light of his very soul!

Draw the bow, converge the light, form an arrow!

A dazzling spell formation appeared beneath his feet, and he took a step forward, his eyes flashing like lightning. When he released his grip on the bowstring, the string instantly began to vibrate with a shocking noise that left all the Outsiders' minds reeling.

It was a noise that could rip apart the Heavens, a noise that resonated in the minds of all cultivators and Outsiders, a noise which represented death and killing!

Anyone with an unstable mind would find their thoughts in complete disorder, and would feel terror rising up within them. Such people would even find their cultivation bases thrown into chaos, wrested completely beyond their control.

That sound could destabilize Dao hearts!

As Meng Hao released his grip, the bowstring began to propel the arrow formed from the light of his life force. It instantly seemed to suck in all the light in the area, turning the starry sky black, and making the dazzling arrow the center of all attention.

“Kill him!” Meng Hao growled as the light arrow began to speed forth. At first, it wasn’t necessarily very impressive. However, in the blink of an eye, it grew from 30 meters long to 300, then 3,000, and then 30,000!!

It took only a split second for the 30,000-meter-long light arrow to begin rumbling toward the millions of Outsiders who were trying to block the way to the other land masses, a group which included Imperial Lords.

Heaven and Earth went dim, a massive wind kicked up, and the Outsiders’ minds were completely shaken.

“This….”

“That bow….”

“This cultivator….” Massive waves of shock battered at the hearts of the Outsiders. Meng Hao was like an Immortal Divinity; the glowing spell formation beneath his feet illuminated him, and the azure bow was so striking that the Outsiders couldn’t help but stare at it.

The Outsider Imperial Lords who were trying to block Meng Hao were shaken, and then roared as they transformed into their true Outsider beast shapes, unleashing their cultivation base power as they sallied forth to try to destroy the light arrow.

However, a moment later, the light of the arrow engulfed them, and booms rang out, mixed with bloodcurdling screams. The Imperial Lords were completely incapable of blocking the arrow, and after it passed by… they were all dead!

Gasps could be heard as the light arrow then blasted into the Outsider army itself. Wherever it passed, scorching light gave rise to miserable shrieks. Countless Outsiders were directly incinerated as the huge arrow cut a gaping path through the army!

Over a million Outsiders. A host of Imperial Lords. None of them were capable of doing a single thing to stop the arrow from piercing through the army. Rumbling sounds could be heard as it shot toward the 16th Heaven, and then hit it!

The entire 16th Heaven began to shake, and vast crevices snaked out. It only took a moment for the entire land mass to be on the verge of collapsing.

Meng Hao himself transformed into a beam of light that followed the arrow. He shot through the path that had been carved out through the army, and as he closed in on the 16th Heaven, he once again began to pull back on the bowstring.

“Mythdragon!” he roared, voice bursting with killing intent, a shockingly murderous aura radiating out from him. After firing that first arrow, he was somewhat emaciated, and yet that murderous aura of his was as stupendous as ever!

As he pulled back on the bowstring with his right hand, his qi and blood boiled, as once again a vast amount of it was sucked away. Meng Hao now looked extremely gaunt, and yet the second arrow formed completely, whereupon he loosed the string. The arrow of light show out, bursting with energy that could shake Heaven and Earth, filled with a viciousness that could exterminate anything and everything.

The arrow split open the starry sky as it shot toward the 16th Heaven, locking down onto an area in the very center of the land mass!

There, Mythdragon was completely absorbed in recovering from his injuries. Suddenly, his eyes opened, and within them could be seen shock and apprehension. Gritting his teeth, he suddenly turned blurry, and a second image of him appeared. One of those images then stepped forward: his clone.

The clone emerged from Mythdragon’s Immortal’s cave, outside of which several dozen Dao Realm Outsiders stood guard. All of them were pulsing with energy as they looked up into the sky at the incoming light arrow, behind which flew Meng Hao.

By this point, though, there were few people who could do anything to save Mythdragon; on the same token, there was no one who could help Meng Hao. Apparently this land mass was fated to be the location of their final showdown!

Outside of the land mass itself were millions of Outsiders, all of whom unleashed various divine ability, creating an ocean of magic that rumbled toward the 16th Heaven.

However, in terms of the time frame involved, such an attack wouldn’t do much good unless Meng Hao took an unusually long time to kill Mythdragon.

Meanwhile, countless Mountain and Sea cultivators were in the Mountain and Sea Realm, beneath the seal, watching as Meng Hao single-handedly fought his way through the Outsider landmasses, all for the purpose of… killing a Paragon!

Everyone, whether they knew Meng Hao personally or not, was shaken. In fact… all of the Outsiders from the 17th Heaven all the way to the 33rd Heaven, who were watching but unable to descend into battle at this exact moment, were equally shocked.

By now, Meng Hao was the most majestic and glorious Mountain and Sea cultivator in the war! In addition to him, there was Ksitigarbha. Their use of the sun and moon respectively had made them thorns in the sides of the Outsider army.

“If I can buy enough time,” thought Mythdragon, “then this Meng Hao… will have to face the deadly threat of the ocean of magic unleashed by the others!” Mythdragon’s clone threw his head back and howled, then flew out to meet the light arrow. The numerous Outsider experts who were serving as Dharma Protectors all howled as they reverted to their true forms, then gathered in formation around Mythdragon’s clone to defend against the light arrow!

BOOOOMMMMMM!

The light arrow plowed into the Outsider Dharma Protectors, causing booms to echo out, along with miserable cries. They unleashed various divine abilities, but nothing did any good. Regardless of the levels of their cultivation base or fleshly body, they were instantly transformed into ash!

Then that ash faded like wisps of smoke within the light of the arrow!

Only Mythdragon’s clone remained. He quickly performed a double-handed incantation, transforming into a huge black dragon. Roaring, he head-butted the light arrow, which faltered. Mythdragon’s clone howled as he erupted with the aura of a Paragon. He might just be a clone, but he was still a Paragon, and his unleashing of power caused the arrow to begin to fade away.

It was at this point that a cold snort echoed out. Meng Hao, instead of falling back, once again began to pull back the bowstring, unhesitatingly unleashing a third arrow, and then a fourth!

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

The third arrow shot forth in spectacular fashion, causing the clone’s eyes to widen in despair. Gritting his teeth, he then opted to self-detonate.

The burgeoning self-detonation of a Paragon clone instantly caused the land mass of the 16th Heaven to begin to crumble, sending fragments blasting out in all directions. The second arrow was destroyed in the self-detonation, but most of the third arrow remained, and as it closed in on the source of the clone’s self-detonation, even more explosive self-detonation power erupted out.

Massive booms echoed out as the entire land mass was completely destroyed. Within the rubble, Mythdragon’s true self flew out from his secluded meditation chamber, blood oozing out of the corners of his mouth. He looked elderly and weak; he had just reached a critical juncture in healing his serious injuries, and had then been interrupted, sacrificing more than half of his blood and essence to make a clone. All of that left him unprecedentedly weak.

In fact, this was the weakest he had ever been since becoming a Paragon, and also the most dangerous situation he had ever faced.

“Meng Hao, I’m going to exterminate your entire clan!!” Mythdragon roared, his eyes crimson. Bleeding from numerous wounds, he fell back into retreat. And yet, Meng Hao’s fourth arrow was hot on his heels.

From the look of it… that arrow would not stop until he was dead!

“Go ahead and try that,” Meng Hao responded to Mythdragon’s retreating figure.

Even as the words left his mouth, the fourth light arrow suddenly exploded, blasting onto Paragon Mythdragon with full force.

Shockwaves spread out into the starry sky, and Paragon Mythdragon let out a bloodcurdling scream. However, he wasn’t dead yet. Although he was coughing up blood, he still managed to scramble away in flight, simultaneously transforming into a 30,000-meter long Black Dragon. And yet, that Black Dragon was a mass of mangled gore, with a severely weakened aura that was on the verge of dropping out of the Paragon stage.

“Save me, Xuan Fang!!” Mythdragon shrieked as he fled. Fear had blossomed in his heart; this was the most desperate situation he had ever been in since becoming a Paragon, and also the most terrifying.

The feeling of imminent death was even greater than when he had simultaneously fought Sea Dream and the Daoist Societies!!

“Nobody can save you,” Meng Hao said softly. “This Mountain and Sea War has reached the point… where the blood of a Paragon is needed to cleanse the Heavens.” Although his body had been weakened to the point where he was little more than skin and bones, his eyes shone with even more brilliant killing intent than before.

He looked at the bow in his hand, then suddenly laughed. Eyes cold and grim, aura bursting with murder and madness, he began to pull back the bowstring back. But then, he slowly loosened his grip.

“It would be quite a pity for him to die like this….” A crimson glow rose up in his eyes, and he suddenly took a deep breath. Boundless blood-colored light exploded out from him as the Blood Demon gradually formed behind him. Unlike previous occasions, the Blood Demon superimposed with Meng Hao, merging into him.

Blood-colored light exploded up from Meng Hao, and he threw his head back and roared. His eyes were bright red, filled with a bloodthirsty, icy light. He took a step forward, and then transformed into a huge sea of blood that shot toward the Paragon!

He planned… to use the Blood Demon Grand Magic… to consume Mythdragon!

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# Chapter 1372: Mythdragon Perishes!

Mythdragon was a mass of blood and gore. He had just managed to avoid being killed by the fourth arrow, but the sense of power and majesty he felt from that arrow was as immense as ever. If he were at the peak level of his power, then he would have been able to significantly minimize the damage. But now… he could do no such thing.

Miserable, bitter laughter rang out from Mythdragon as he fled at top speed. The sensation of deadly crisis in his heart hand not lessened, and in fact, he had the feeling that he might not be able to make it out of this situation alive. However, even as bitterness and anguish rose up in his heart, he saw Meng Hao suddenly lower his bow.

But then, Meng Hao began to glow with a blood-colored light, and emanate a sensation of madness, even a thirst for blood.

The sight caused Mythdragon’s heart to tremble. Meng Hao closed in, and the ocean of magic followed close behind, but was incapable of catching up to him.

Meng Hao was surrounded by a massive glow of blood. Having fused with the Blood Demon, and unleashing the Blood Demon Grand Magic in this way, he now didn’t look like an Immortal Divinity, he looked like a Demon Immortal!

All of this takes quite some time to describe, but actually happened in the briefest of moments. Meng Hao was now bearing down on Mythdragon, who clenched his teeth viciously. He knew that he could not escape what was about to happen, and quickly turned to face Meng Hao’s charge.

The two slammed into each other, and the sea of blood that was Meng Hao swept over Paragon Mythdragon as the Blood Demon Grand Magic was fully unleashed.

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the ocean of magic closed in. Mythdragon screamed, breaking free from the ocean of magic, which then transformed into a blood-colored roc. With a piercing cry, the roc began to chase Mythdragon.

Numerous blood-colored mountains appeared, as well as the Paragon Bridge, which also emitted a blood-colored glow. Blood sprayed out of Mythdragon's mouth, and finally, his cultivation base power dropped from the level of a Paragon to that of an Imperial Lord.

At this point, there was little he could do to fight back against Meng Hao. He could only laugh bitterly as Meng Hao in roc form grabbed onto him and unleashed the Blood Demon Grand Magic again.

In the blink of an eye, boundless qi and blood power was sucked out of Mythdragon's body, to be madly absorbed by Meng Hao. Mythdragon struggled, but there was no stopping what was happening. Beneath their feet, the 16th Heaven was collapsing rapidly, and at the same time, the ocean of magic was barreling toward them.

Off in the distance, Xuan Fang watched silently, sadness flickering in his eyes. He knew that Mythdragon… would not be able to escape. Although Xuan Fang was adept at strategy and warfare, there was nothing he could do to help Mythdragon in this situation.

Even Xuan Fang himself felt a sensation of deadly crisis. He was having a difficult time dealing with the attacks of the Paragon puppet, and was in full retreat, coughing up blood the entire time.

At the same time, the seal over the Mountain and Sea Realm was beginning to show signs of crumbling beneath the combined bombardment of the Three Great Daoist Societies, the three young men who wielded the Doyen treasures, the ordinary Mountain and Sea cultivators, Paragon Sea Dream, and Patriarch Reliance.

Once that seal was broken, the Mountain and Sea cultivators would burst out upon an Outsider army which now lacked Paragons. Losing Paragons meant certain defeat!

The greatest danger was now to the moon. It was surrounded by Outsiders, none of whom were backing down in the slightest. There were also Imperial Lords there who were dead set on destroying it. It didn’t matter if their Paragon was dead, or even the rest of the army, they would accomplish their mission.

They would ensure that the moon… ceased to exist.

All aspects of the war seemed to have reached a vital linchpin moment!

The first to fall was not Meng Hao or the Paragon puppet. Despite the fact that Ksitigarbha was fighting it out to the bitter end, the moon couldn’t evade or dodge, and was surrounded by Outsider cultivators. Their combined attacks finally caused the moon to collapse, sending countless fragments and rubble out in all directions.

BOOM!!

The moon… was no more….

As it collapsed, Ksitigarbha coughed up a mouthful of blood. Even as his bitter laughter rang out… a second boom rang out.

It was the second explosion to ring out in this critical moment. This time, though, the sound emanated from the seal over the Mountain and Sea Realm. The beams of light which had descended from the 17th Heavens and above, were collapsing due to the combined power of all the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators!

Cracks spread out in all directions, eventually joining together until the seal looked like a giant, shattered mirror. Heaven and Earth went dark, and the starry sky shook, as countless Mountain and Sea cultivators burst out, brimming with madness and killing intent.

The Three Great Daoist Societies, Paragon Sea Dream, numerous Dao Realm experts, the three young men wielding the Doyen treasures, all burst out from within the Mountain and Sea Realm.

However, it was in that moment that a third explosion rang out, from the location where Meng Hao and Mythdragon had been fighting. Mixed within the booming explosion was an unyielding roar.

That roar came out of the mouth of Mythdragon, who was completely enveloped by the sea of blood. His fleshly body was withering rapidly as his qi and blood, cultivation base, and soul were all being rapidly absorbed!

It wasn’t that he hadn’t attempted to self-detonate. Meng Hao’s time-walking technique, coupled with the serious injuries that had been inflicted, dropped Mythdragon’s power below that of a Paragon, and he simply couldn’t!

He could only watch, wide-eyed, as Meng Hao’s Blood Demon Grand Magic sucked away his qi and blood, his cultivation base, and his soul!

“I won’t… give in!!” Mythdragon’s woeful laughter echoed out until it ended with a muffled grunt. The enormous black dragon closed its eyes as it sank down forever into the sea of blood.

As of this moment, a Paragon had perished!!

More accurately speaking, this was the second Paragon to die in the war between the Mountain and Sea Realm and the 33 Heavens. The first could be considered to be Eegoo, who had been transformed into a puppet.

The surrounding Outsiders were in shock as they watched Mythdragon die. Then, terror began to rise up within their hearts and minds.

“Paragon…. Our Paragon… perished?”

“Th-this… is impossible….” The Outsiders were completely flabbergasted. The forces who were in the 17th through 33rd Heavens were dumbstruck, and even the powerful experts.

The sea of blood seethed as Mythdragon vanished, after which the blood began to congeal, growing smaller and smaller until it was the shape of a person with Meng Hao's face.

His face was pale, he was emaciated, and he bubbled with swirling curse power. However, he completely ignored that as he looked up at the seal that had constrained the Mountain and Sea Realm, which was now crumbling, and the massive swarms of cultivators charging out into battle. Then he looked over and saw the moon collapsing.

Finally, he turned to look at Xuan Fang, who was bearing the brunt of a fist strike from the Paragon puppet. Blood sprayed out of Xuan Fang's mouth, and bitter laughter rang out. Suddenly, even as the Paragon puppet closed in on him, Xuan Fang suddenly… began to initiate self-detonation!

Xuan Fang was choosing to blow himself up!

He was well aware that, just like Mythdragon, he was destined to perish. He also knew that if he died fighting, he might be able to kill some enemies in the process. But that wasn't how he wanted to end things.

Taking a few enemies out wasn't satisfactory to him; he wanted his death to bury the whole Mountain and Sea Realm!

Madness gleamed in his eyes. Because of his mastery of the Essence of Time, it was essentially impossible for anyone to prevent him from self-detonating. The Paragon puppet's eyes flickered, and it suddenly backed up. The soul light that originated with Choumen Tai vanished, and the puppet was once again completely connected to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao looked on with a grim expression on his face.

Xuan Fang's mad laughter filled the starry sky, echoing out in all directions.

He didn't want to admit it, but he knew that he had been defeated. Completely and utterly defeated. In fact, his defeat could not be any more thorough. The nail in the coffin was that Meng Hao was now reconnected to the Paragon puppet!

The discarnate soul which had appeared had locked Xuan Fang down, and he had finally come to understand how brutally decisive Meng Hao was. He could only laugh bitterly. Before the battle had begun, neither he nor any of the other Outsiders in the 33 Heavens could possibly have imagined… that the war would be this difficult.

In their minds, this war would be one in which the 33 Heavens exterminated the Mountain and Sea Realm. They wouldn't even need the help of those two other powerful forces. They could do it all by themselves.

But now… the fighting had reached the point that Xuan Fang was struck with a sudden feeling….

"Is it possible that the 33 Heavens… will actually completely lose?" Xuan Fang could sense that Mythdragon's spiritual soul and physical soul had both dispersed. Looking over at Meng Hao congealing out of the sea of blood, he said, "Meng Hao… you've beaten me in this battle!

"I made two mistakes. The first is that I should have risked everything to strike you down that first time. I should have struck hard and ensured that you were completely and utterly dead! I knew that you were important, but I mistakenly took you too lightly….

"My second mistake was underestimating the Mountain and Sea Realm. We should not have split up our forces….

"Hear me, my brothers in the 17th through 33rd Heavens. You must remember everything that you have seen happen here. When you descend, do not split up your forces. Attack in unison. Go all out to destroy the Mountain and Sea Realm!!

"Spare nothing. Do not vacillate because of thoughts of living or dying. If you do… victory cannot be certain. As for the two 8-Essences Paragons, I hope that my death in this battle… will be avenged by the two of you. Take Meng Hao's head and place it as a trophy upon my grave!

"To all of my people who are here fighting the Mountain and Sea Realm right now, there is no retreat in this battle. If you retreat… you will die.

There is no home to return to. Your homes… have all been destroyed!

“If you want a chance to live, then you must fight to the bitter end! In that case, even if you die, it won’t be long before the rest of our people come to avenge us!

“In war, there is no right or wrong. There is only victory and defeat!!

“I am Paragon Xuan Fang, and I hereby sacrifice myself to help the 33 Heavens destroy the Mountain and Sea Realm!!” Xuan Fang threw his head back and laughed, then swished his sleeve. Blinding light began to radiate off of him, as well as powerful ripples. Then, the explosive beginning of the self-detonation began to erupt.

At the same time, the other Heavens which were under his control began to move, transforming into what looked like sharp blades that… began to stab down toward the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Vicious, suicidal grimaces of madness appeared on the faces of the millions of remaining Outsiders. As the land masses descended from above, they charged murderously toward the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“Use these land masses to crush the Mountain and Sea Realm. That was my plan all along, and will make my name infamous for all eternity. Therefore… I shall build that infamy to an even higher level right now!” Xuan Fang threw his head back and laughed with deranged madness.

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# Chapter 1373: Mountains Crumble, Seas are Destroyed!

Using the land masses as battering rams against the Mountain and Sea Realm truly was an act of madness. It was a strategy that Xuang Fang had begun to unfold with the 2nd Heaven, and had then entrusted to Mythdragon to fully carry out. However, the price to pay was a steep one: the wrath of the entirety of the 33 Heavens.

Only if the plan resulted in a grand victory could it have potentially been accepted. But now… Xuan Fang would never see any such victory; he was moments away from perishing.

“After I die… the true deluge will come!” Xuan Fang’s laughter rang out, filled with madness. Since he had already sacrificed the 2nd Heaven and the other land masses in a deadly attack, he didn’t object to sending everything else to crush the Mountain and Sea Realm at his hour of death.

This was the only way left that he could deal an unprecedentedly critical blow to the Mountain and Sea Realm, and thus, buy a chance for the 17th Heavens and beyond to gain victory.

“This… is all that I can do,” he said. He waved his sleeve, sending the land masses down toward the Mountain and Sea Realm, surrounded by millions upon millions of Outsiders.

Then, Xuan Fang closed his eyes, whereupon a Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering power of detonation was unleashed!

BOOOOMMMMMM!

Xuan Fang exploded. This was not a partial Paragon self-detonation like what had occurred with Mythdragon’s clone. This was a full and complete Paragon self-detonation. His cultivation base had not dropped, and although he had sustained injuries, he still had the full cultivation base of a Paragon.

He was even able to add his own Essence into the explosion. The starry sky was set aflame, the Heavens shook, and the entire Mountain and Sea Realm vibrated.

The power of the self-detonation did not just blast about wildly. Instead, Xuan Fang managed to direct the power of the blast into a propelling force which sent the Heavenly land masses down toward the Mountain and Sea Realm with indescribable speed.

Although the Mountain and Sea Realm had prepared to be battered by Heavenly land masses, this barrage was unlike anything that had happened before. This time, the land masses were being propelled by the force of Xuan Fang’s self-detonation, making them like deadly blades that stabbed down with incredible force.

The war was now erupting with unprecedented intensity!

Booms echoed out continuously. The starry sky trembled, and the lands quaked. Upon the land mass closest to the Mountain and Sea Realm, the seas evaporated and the mountains crumbled. The entire mass of land crumbled and then burst into pieces.

The Three Great Daoist Societies attacked in unison, drawing upon their most profound Daoist scriptures, unleashing their most shocking Daoist magics. The Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite spared no cost to summon numerous Dao projections to fight against the incoming land masses.

The Sublime Flow Sword Grotto formed a majestic sword formation of 1,080,000 flying swords, which whistled up to meet the land masses.

The Nine Seas God World had sustained the most casualties of all, and yet called upon equally terrifying resources. Countless Sea Dragons flew out, along with innumerable cultivators. Numerous God World gates appeared which, upon opening, unleashed one giant after another.

The giants then linked arms, forming a huge wall that braced for the impact of the land masses of the various Heavens.

The disciples of the three Doyens also put everything on the line, joining forces to unleash a shocking attack with their magical items!

Paragon Sea Dream’s face was pale white, and blood was oozing out of her mouth. Ignoring any negative effect it would have on her already serious wounds, she flew out toward the land masses and began to attack them.

The Paragon puppet was now under Meng Hao’s control, and it also launched forth.

Then there were Meng Hao and Ksitigarbha. As of this moment, they were doing everything they could to block the incoming land masses.

The land masses of the various Heavens were being blasted apart. And yet, the fragments and rubble continued to shoot down at incredible speed, piercing into the Mountain and Sea Realm. Wherever they passed, mass destruction was wreaked. Cultivators were smashed to death like ants beneath mighty hands of destruction. Miserable screams rang out constantly.

Vast hosts of cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm joined forces, unleashing a sea of magical techniques that rose to meet the land masses. And yet… there was nothing they could do to stop the onslaught.

BOOOOMMMMMM!

A massive remnant of one of the land masses, despite being broken and in ruins, was still mighty enough to evaporate the Third Sea, and even slam into the Third Mountain.

The Mountain began to crumble!!

The Sea was destroyed!!

Light arrows shot out from Meng Hao’s location, slamming into the various Heavenly land masses, bashing them to pieces. However, there was only so much he could do. Even with the added efforts of the Three Great Daoist Societies, Paragon Sea Dream, and everyone else, only about seventy percent of the land masses could be destroyed, which wasn’t enough to save that Mountain and Sea.

Soon, the Third Mountain was in a state of complete collapse. The Mountain and Sea Realm was in chaos. Countless cultivators couldn’t hold back from screaming in agony as they watched the Third Mountain crumble into rubble. Tears streamed down cheeks, especially among the cultivators who were originally from the Third Mountain and Sea.

Their home… was gone….

The Xuanwu turtle atop the Third Mountain died an agonizing death. The Third Mountain vanished, and the sound of its destruction rang in the ears of the Mountain and Sea cultivators. More and more of them began to weep.

Next was the destruction of the Fourth Sea!

It transformed into nothing more than a mist. Then came the Fourth Mountain…. The Fourth Mountain and Sea represented reincarnation, and the underworld. But now, it was shattering into nothing.

Henceforth, there would be no sun or moon in the Mountain and Sea Realm. Nor would there be any reincarnation….

More people began to weep, and yet, those tears led to even more unswerving determination.

The apocalyptic rubble of the various land masses incinerated the Fifth Sea before it finally came to a stop. Xuan Fang had resorted to self-detonation, ending his own life, and yet unleashing an unprecedented level of damage and destruction onto the Mountains and Seas.

The number of cultivators who died was impossible to count….

Furthermore, the Mountain and Sea Realm had gone all out with its power to block the attack; had it not, then the destruction would not have stopped at the base of the Fifth Mountain!

The Mountain and Sea Realm would have sustained even more severe casualties.

Now that the bombardment of the Heavenly land masses had ended, the army of Outsiders poured in. The war had reached a fever pitch with such rapidity that people had almost no time to consider how to react.

Cultivators and Outsiders alike were unable to process it all.

And yet, the fighting did not stop. The millions upon millions of Outsiders were met by countless Mountain and Sea cultivators, whose tears flowed as they fought back against the onslaught.

Paragons attacked. Dao Realm experts attacked. Imperial Lords held back no divine abilities. As soon as the two sides met, blood flowed. Everything was stained with red, and the starry sky glowed with crimson light.

The flames of war raged in front of the Fifth Mountain. Blood flowed like seawater, and the din of slaughter rang out constantly. By this point, the Paragon-level fighters were limited in what they could do. After all, the Outsiders were many… but there were also Mountain and Sea cultivators on the battlefield, and it could be difficult to distinguish between the two.

Furthermore, the Outsiders attacked with complete insanity, ensuring that the fighting was close and fierce. The battlefield soon turned into a vast sea of blood.

Meng Hao was there on the battlefield, and wherever he went, death followed. His eyes were crimson as he glared at the surrounding Outsiders, and by this point, he had no need to unleash magical techniques to carry out slaughter. He transformed into a sea of blood that washed over them and absorbed their life force.

Sea Dream was there, as was the Paragon puppet. Both of them were using similar tactics as Meng Hao to unleash the power of Paragons to dispatch the Outsider Imperial Lords, which were now all dead. The Mountain and Sea cultivators fought with madness, and the Outsiders with complete viciousness. The slaughter being carried out was shocking.

When those on the front lines grew exhausted, there were others behind them to who were happy to continue the fight. The battle stretched on outside of the Fifth Mountain, and it was hard to say when it would end.

The number of Outsiders was dropping at a horrific rate. With the Three Great Daoist Societies, the Doyen disciples, and the combined power of all the other Mountain and Sea cultivators, they ensured that, despite facing millions upon millions of Outsiders, their superior position made them like a grindstone that crushed all of the Outsiders who charged the Fifth Mountain.

The entire time, the 17th through 33rd Heavens looked on reticently. They did not interfere in any way, but simply watched, observing the tactics and methods of the Mountain and Sea Realm, committing them to memory and using augury in order to prepare ways to deal with and neutralize them.

Eventually, the fighting ended. A vast sea of blood now existed outside the Fifth Mountain. The bedraggled remnants of the Outsider army began to fall back, and the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators let them go, too exhausted to pursue.

Meng Hao’s vision was fading, and his cultivation base was drying up. He bit the tip of his tongue to regain some clarity, then looked down to find his clothing so soaked with blood that it was sticking to his body. It felt disgusting.

He looked up into the starry sky for a moment before sitting down cross-legged and closing his eyes to focus on healing. When he did that, the sound of the weeping of the Mountain and Sea cultivators drifted into his ears.

They wept for their homes. They wept for their friends and family who had fallen in battle. They wept because of the grief which filled their hearts.

Bitterness washed over Meng Hao as he realized that the war wasn’t over. And yet, despite all odds, the Mountain and Sea Realm… had eked out another victory!!

They had survived against the 1st Heaven’s onslaught, resisted the 2nd through 6th Heavens, and blocked the 7th through 16th Heavens. The price they had paid was immense. Four entire Mountains and Seas had been destroyed, and countless cultivators had died. The sun and moon had been lost. And yet… they had still come out victorious!

Despite all that, little joy could be found in the hearts of the fighters. Everyone was exhausted. Xu Qing, many members of the Fang Clan, and other faces familiar to Meng Hao had all participated in the battle. Now that the fighting had stopped for the moment, everyone was lost in their own thoughts and feelings.

When they looked up into the starry sky, it was with mixed emotions. Everyone knew that the war wasn’t even half over. Soon, they would face… the 17th through 33rd Heavens.

That would be… the final battle!

The final battle for the Mountain and Sea Realm! The enemy would be prepared to counter the techniques they had used in the fighting thus far. Furthermore… even more powerful Paragons would be coming.

At that time….

One side would be wiped out, or the other would!

By means of Xu Qing, Paragon Sea Dream sent orders out into the various Mountains and Seas regarding how to rest and reorganize. The sea of blood outside the Fifth Mountain was filled with restrictive spells, as was the Fifth Mountain. The Mountain and Sea Realm sprang into action. Most cultivators buried their tears and focused on carrying out the tasks assigned to the various sects and clans by Paragon Sea Dream.

The Fang Clan was completely mobilized, as were all of the Mountain and Sea Lords.

It was at this point that Meng Hao received a request from Paragon Sea Dream….

“The 33 Hells… should be opened. Meng Hao… I will pick 33 Chosen from the Mountain and Sea Realm to go with you into the 33 Hells and acquire the legacies therein!

“You must become stronger! Furthermore, the 33 Chosen I select must search within the 33 Hells for their own personal… Dao!

“It is there that Paragon Nine Seals… left incredible good fortune behind for the later generation of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

“You and the Chosen will have ten months. After ten months pass, the 17th through 33rd Heavens will descend, and the final battle for the Mountain and Sea Realm will begin….”

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# Chapter 1374: Returning to the 33 Hells!

“Of course… the 33 Hells contain falsehoods and danger….” After a moment of silence, Sea Dream went on to elucidate to Meng Hao the various dangers to which she referred.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and after hearing her description, he nodded his head.

Time passed.

For the time being, the warfare ceased. The cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm, hearts filled with grief and reticence, carried out the orders of Paragon Sea Dream, making preparations in various areas… to meet the onslaught that was coming in ten months!

Everyone was preparing for that final battle, causing profound pressure to weigh upon the hearts of everyone in the Mountain and Sea Realm. It was as if… they would either die in silence, or explode with savagery!

Some people contemplated whether or not the Mountain and Sea Realm would even exist by the time the war ended. However, such lines of thinking were like a bottomless pit that left one feeling frozen, without even the strength to continue breathing.

Because of the destruction of the sun and moon, the Mountain and Sea Realm was left with only the blackness of empty space.

Within that darkness, the mortals sat trembling in fear, and even the cultivators felt pressure weighing down on them.

After carrying out the tasks assigned by Paragon Sea Dream, many of the cultivators chose to return to their family and friends. Such time spent with loved ones was something to be cherished at a time like this.

There were some male and female cultivators who had been close friends for years, and yet had developed more deep feelings that they never had the courage to reveal. Now, hearts were bared, and declarations of love were made.

There were some people with longstanding grudges and enmities who chose to finally let such hard feelings go….

It was as if people were preparing for their own deaths, and cherishing the time they had left.

Some people pondered why this war was happening. Half of the 33 Heavens had been destroyed, and half of the Mountain and Sea Realm was lost. The number of Outsiders and Mountain and Sea cultivators who had died was vast.

Why… were they fighting…?

What was the purpose of this war? What was the purpose of the dying? What was the meaning of it all?

However, such questions weren't really important. What was important was that the war would continue, and the fragile balance between life and death… would reveal the true difference between darkness and light.

The Mountain and Sea Realm rested and recovered. As various parties made final preparations for war, Meng Hao met with the 33 Chosen whom he would lead into the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

The majority of those 33 Chosen were strangers to him. The rest, he was familiar with, for example, Ji Yin. None of the Chosen from the Three Great Daoist Societies were participants.

To Meng Hao’s delight, Chen Fan and Wang Youcai were among those present. Although Fatty wasn’t there, to have these two long-time comrades present helped Meng Hao to recall some of his former wonderful memories, despite the pressure that weighed down on his heart.

The rest of the cultivators from the other Mountains and Seas were people who Meng Hao didn’t recognize. However, they knew exactly who he was, and as soon as they laid eyes on him, their eyes burned with zeal.

None of these Chosen had cultivation bases in the Dao Realm. All were in somewhere in the Ancient Realm, some being in the early stage of that realm, some at the very peak.

As soon as they met, all of the Chosen clasped hands and bowed.

“Greetings, Crown Prince!”

“Greetings, Crown Prince of the Mountains and Seas!”

Chen Fan wore a smile as he looked at Meng Hao, and it seemed as if he were thinking back to events in the Reliance Sect.

Wang Youcai had long since lost the use of his eyes. However, his murderous aura made him almost look like the living dead. Despite his lack of eyes, he seemed to be looking at Meng Hao. After a moment passed, he clasped hands and bowed.

Li Ling’er’s emotions were the most mixed of all. Recently, more than one person had asked about the marriage engagement between her and Meng Hao. The way she had fled that marriage years ago now seemed very childish. Later, she had watched as Meng Hao rose to prominence, and seen his dazzling display of might in the war of the Mountains and Seas.

She sometimes wondered what would have happened if she hadn’t fled that marriage….

Even though Meng Hao had also chosen to flee, in terms of the law and of morality, she was technically Meng Hao’s beloved partner.

Ji Yin had even more mixed feelings. Originally, she had viewed Meng Hao as being inferior to her. Eventually, she took him to be an equal. But that was a long time ago. Eventually, he had risen to the same level of her own clan Patriarch, someone to whom she had no choice but to bow her head.

She had once believed that such a level was the absolute limit. But then war had broken out, and she came to realize that Meng Hao… had long since exceeded the level of a Patriarch.

He was the type of person toward whom anyone and everyone would bow their heads.

Meng Hao looked around at the Chosen, and then slowly began to speak.

“I have been to the 33 Hells before,” he said. “It is a location that Paragon Nine Seals prepared for the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm. There, he left incredible good fortune in the form of thirty-three powerful experts, sealed therein since of the war of the Paragon Immortal Realm.

“Those experts’ fleshly bodies were destroyed, but their souls remained behind. They are like wellsprings of power, and if you can absorb them, your cultivation base will advance by leaps and bounds!

“However, the process is not as simple and easy as it sounds. There is great danger.

“If you fail in your effort, you will perish…. Furthermore, even if you succeed, and your cultivation base experiences incredible growth, the price you will pay… is that in the future, you will find it very difficult to make any further advancement with your cultivation base!

“You will essentially be terminating any future possibilities. However, in exchange… your cultivation base will be no less powerful than that of a Dao Sovereign. In addition, if you are willing to sacrifice some of your longevity, to part with some of your own life force Essence, then… you can acquire a cultivation base power that exceeds that of a Dao Sovereign. However… that will only last for a single sixty-year-cycle, after which you will die forever.”

Upon hearing this, the thirty-three Chosen gaped in shock. This explanation was somewhat different from their previous understanding. However, after seeing the serious look on Meng Hao's face, they could sense… that he was telling the truth.

The thirty-three Chosen remained silent, but none of them backed out.

Meng Hao looked out at the group, then said, "Upon entering, I will escort all of you. We will go together to acquire the good fortune that exists within the 33 Hells. Another matter to consider is that within the 33 Hells are thirty-three Outsider beasts, which will be released when the 33 Hells dissipate." Much of the explanation that Meng Hao was giving was information that had been given to him by Paragon Sea Dream.

"There is still time to back out now. However, if none of you wish to do so… then let us proceed into the 33 Hells!"

Meng Hao could see the determination and decisiveness within those thirty-three pairs of eyes. They didn't need to speak a single word for him to understand what was going on in their minds.

If the Mountain and Sea Realm ceased to exist, then there was no need to talk about any type of future whatsoever. Taking this good fortune was a gamble, as well as a huge self-sacrifice, and yet it gave the Mountain and Sea Realm a chance to survive.

Without another word, Meng Hao flicked his sleeve, transforming into a beam of light that carried the entire group toward the 33 Hells of the Eighth Mountain and Sea. As they neared that region of complete darkness, Meng Hao relied upon the power of his current cultivation base to forcibly open the entrance.

Upon entering, the thirty-three Chosen found themselves within a boundless mist, beneath which broken and shattered lands were just barely visible, a place where intense magical battles had been fought.

Gradually, a huge figure became visible within the mists, which seethed as a mighty roar echoed out. Suddenly, a long iron chain flew out in the direction of Meng Hao and the others.

At the same time, a voice rang out which shook the minds of all present: “Hungry… hungry… so hungry….”

For everyone behind Meng Hao, this was their first time coming to this place, and the incredibly shocking figure left their minds on the verge of lapsing into unconsciousness.

Meng Hao snorted coldly, waving his finger in the direction of the iron chain.

“Screw the hell off,” he said.

The snort echoed like thunder, leaving the crowd behind him shaken. His words seemed to carry the weight of natural law, and as the iron chain closed in, it began to tremble, and then simply exploded.

Meng Hao’s voice was like an arrow that pierced the mists, transforming into countless invisible magical symbols that shot toward the enormous figure. Then he waved his finger back and forth, causing the entire world to rumble around them, and the mist to churn. Gradually, all of the mists began to move off to either side.

Soon it was revealed… exactly what had been lurking there in wait!

It was a giant, covered in iron chains, roaring. Based on the look in its eyes, it was sentient, and it trembled beneath the force of Meng Hao’s gaze.

“This is the first Outsider beast within the 33 Hells,” Meng Hao said coolly. Then, he proceeded forward, followed by all the Chosen.

They passed by the giant, who roared the entire time, and yet whose eyes were filled with dread. Clearly, what it feared was not the thirty-three chosen, but rather, Meng Hao.

It feared Meng Hao, and the intensely murderous aura upon him!!

It was an aura that no one else could detect without a sufficient cultivation base. However, those who could sense it would be able to tell… that he had cut down Paragons!

Meng Hao led the group toward the central stone stele of the first area, and when they reached the edge of the rift leading inside, the giant behind him suddenly spoke in a somewhat garbled voice, “You… have killed… Paragons?”

“Yup. I killed one, enslaved another, and forced a third to self-detonate. You are far from being a Paragon, so don’t worry, I won’t kill you.” With that, Meng Hao stepped into the rift. The crowd behind him exchanged speechless glances, and then hurried to follow.

Li Ling’er wore a strange expression, and Chen Fan chuckled hoarsely. Wang Youcai’s lips quivered. Although none of them said anything, Meng Hao’s words seemed exceedingly audacious to them….

As for the chain-wrapped giant, he gasped in fear, shock filling his face. His simple brain was not one that was inclined to mind games. He could sense the aura on Meng Hao, and could understand his words, and was left shivering. Finally, he bowed his head.

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# Chapter 1375: I’ve Been Waiting!

As he entered the rift, Meng Hao explained, “The souls which have been sealed in the 33 Hells are all devious rogues. As for the Outsider beasts, they have varying degrees of intelligence, but we’ll just overawe them with words and threaten them with my cultivation base, they’ll back down.

“This will make it much easier for us to deal with them.”

Most of the group responded with thoughtful expressions, except for those few who knew Meng Hao. Strange looks could be seen on their faces, and they coughed dryly, but refrained from saying anything.

“Simply put, you have to terrify them!” After emphasizing that point, he led the group into the necropolis. Based on what he remembered from the last time he was here, he quickly led them toward the main temple. As he proceeded along, he could see out of the corner of his eye that everything was as he had left it: bare and almost completely cleaned out. He took that in stride, of course.

However, everyone else looked around with wide eyes. Every single necropolis chamber they passed, they saw broken down walls devoid of frescos, and floors which had been completely cleared of tiles. Many areas were so lacking in decoration that they almost seemed to have been gnawed clean by dogs….

Gasps could be heard coming from the mouths of the Chosen.

“Not good! Someone’s actually been in here before!!”

“W-what brutality! Whoever came here before cleaned everything out! Everything’s gone….”

“I can’t believe that they didn’t even spare the floor tiles….”

“Dammit, don’t tell me it was the Outsiders!!”

The Chosen were all shaken by what they were seeing, even Li Ling’er and the others who knew Meng Hao. Only Chen Fan hesitated for a moment, then glanced over at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao was in the lead position, and when he heard the things everyone was saying, he couldn’t help but feel a bit embarrassed. Instead of launching into an explanation, he merely increased his pace, leading the gasping, astonished group all the way to the central necropolis temple, where Greed was sealed.

When they arrived, the Chosen burst into a commotion at the sight. This was the largest necropolis chamber of all, and also the one which had been most thoroughly looted. With the exception of the very central-most area, everything had been completely and utterly cleared out.

“This is preposterous!!”

“There’s not even a spot of mold left behind! Dammit, this was definitely the Outsiders!!” The Chosen were all completely incensed. However, it was at this point that a face suddenly appeared within the ball of soul fire in the central area. That face appeared to be completely enraged.

“Dammit, it’s you again…. What are you planning to do this time!?!?

“You scammed away a bunch of my life force Essence and looted all of the funerary objects in my necropolis. You even dug up the floor tiles and stole the frescoes! Dammit, you bastard, you left nothing behind. What do you want now!?!?

“Meng Hao!!” A begrieved howl echoed out through the entire necropolis. The group behind Meng Hao gasped and shifted their gazes to look at him. It was almost as if they were truly seeing him for the first time, and strange expressions appeared.

They had been incensed at whoever it was who had gone so far as to even scrape up the floor tiles of all the areas they had passed. How could they ever have come to the conclusion that the culprit was actually… Meng Hao?

“This…. This….”

“Ahem… the exalted Crown Prince truly is formidable….”

Everyone began to chuckle wryly, and when they glanced at Meng Hao, odd looks could be seen in their eyes. Gradually, the image of Meng Hao which they had built up in their minds was being subverted.

Suddenly feeling a bit down, Meng Hao frowned and gave a cold harrumph as he strode over toward the ball of soul fire. In response, a scream echoed out from within the fire.

“Stay away, dammit! Get back, you shameless bastard. You’re even more shameless than the jinx from way back when!!”

Meng Hao looked back at the Chosen and explained: “I already absorbed some of this soul fire a few years ago. What’s left is just a fragment. It won’t help you people now.” With that, he extended his right hand. Ignoring the screams from the face, he made a grasping motion, causing the soul fire to be dragged over into his hand. That in itself caused the sealing columns which surrounded it to collapse.

Then Meng Hao clenched his hand tightly into a fist, causing the soul fire to disappear into his palm. After absorbing it, he stepped into the previously sealed area. Clearing his throat, he hesitated for a moment. After a moment of thought, he ignored the people behind him, produced a flying sword, and proceeded to pry up all of the floor tiles, even as everyone watched.

The Chosen stared with slack jaws at the incredible proficiency with which Meng Hao quickly cleared out the entire area, even going so far as to collect up the collapsed columns. Then, after brushing off his sleeves, he suddenly stamped his foot down onto the ground, causing a rift to appear.

“Alright, let’s go to the 2nd Hell.” As Meng Hao stepped into the rift, the Chosen exchanged dazed glances. Meng Hao’s behavior just now had completely toppled any previous notions they had about what he was like. After a short moment of hesitation, they followed him into the rift.

In the 2nd Hell, they once again bore witness to Meng Hao’s domineering personality….

“Can you sense my murderous aura? Well let me tell you. I killed a Paragon, enslaved another, and then forced a third one to self-detonate!” In the 2nd Hell was an Outsider beast formed completely from flames. Currently, it was trembling in the face of Meng Hao’s aggressiveness. Considering the pressure and aura that radiated off of him, the beast was completely terrified.

Then, the Chosen watched as Meng Hao scraped the 2nd Hell’s necropolis completely clean…. It was as if a gale wind had passed, leaving behind not even a single blade of grass….

Habits like that, and such personality traits, could not simply be changed….

Meng Hao then realized that doing everything on his own was taking too long, so he quickly called the other Chosen over for assistance. “Come come, we don’t have much time,” he said. “Give me a hand here. Help me clear this place out.”

Chen Fan laughed loudly and quickly stepped forward to help. Li Ling’er covered her mouth, and Ji Yin’s face darkened. Wang Youcai’s lips continued to twitch. As for the other Chosen, they exchanged embarrassed glances, and yet couldn’t bring themselves to refuse, and quickly began to help.

This was something the likes of which they had never done before. All they could do was sigh inwardly, and tell themselves that maybe the reason Meng Hao was so powerful was because he did things like this.

After scraping everything clean, they eventually reached the central necropolis temple of the 2nd Hell. The soul fire there was much more powerful than Greed’s, and as soon as the group entered the hall, an incredible pressure exploded out. However, Meng Hao merely snorted coldly. Unleashing his cultivation base, he stepped forward and suppressed it.

With Meng Hao’s current cultivation base, bolstered by the blessing of the power of the Mountains and Seas, coupled with the restrictive spells within the necropolis, it was a simple thing for him to suppress the souls here. Roars echoed out from the soul fire, and yet there was nothing it could do to fight back.

It was here that one of the thirty-three Chosen was left behind to absorb the good fortune that was the soul fire of a powerful expert from the past. If this Chosen failed, he would die, but if he succeeded, his cultivation base would advance by leaps and bounds. If he went so far as to sacrifice some of this longevity, then he would leap past the Dao Sovereign level to become an Imperial Lord for a full sixty-year-cycle!

After leaving one of the Chosen behind, Meng Hao led the group into the 3rd Hell. Then the 4th Hell and the 5th Hell…. As they went along, he cowed the Outsider beasts with his tale of killing and enslaving Paragons, of forcing them to self-detonate.

At first, the Chosen stared in shock, but eventually, they got used it, and finally grew indifferent. Furthermore, the nervousness they had felt upon entering the 33 Hells gradually faded away.

After watching Meng Hao suppress one soul fire after another, and leaving behind various Chosen to absorb them, they gradually grew very much at ease.

In the end, Meng Hao didn’t even need to say anything. As soon as his murderous aura spread out, the other Chosen would jump in to help proclaim his words.

“He killed a Paragon, enslaved another, and forced a third to self-detonate! Scared? Well screw the hell off!”

Eventually, Meng Hao didn’t even need to organize the efforts to clear out the necropolises. The strange feeling the Chosen had at first was long gone, and now they were very familiar with the process. In the end, they even exceeded his expectations, finding certain areas that he hadn’t noticed, and clearing them away. Meng Hao could help but sigh in praise.

Eventually the weight of their burden, and the wariness they had felt when they had first entered this place, was completely gone. Now, their journey into the 33 Hells seemed more like a vacation….

7th Hell. 8th Hell. 9th Hell….

The number of Chosen who were following Meng Hao grew fewer and fewer. At each soul fire, he left behind a Chosen, who would laugh and say goodbye to Meng Hao and the group. However, behind their laughter was staunch determination and decisiveness.

“Crown Prince, I’ll be fine here. I hope you clear even more things out than we have so far! Fellow Daoists, I wish you luck in acquiring your good fortune….” It was in such fashion that farewells were made at every soul fire location.

Time passed. 15th Hell. 16th Hell. 17th Hell…. Eventually, they passed through the 31st Hell. Then the 32nd. And finally the 33rd!

It took roughly a month for Meng Hao to pass through all 33 Hells. By that time, there were no Chosen in his company. In a few of the soul fire locations, the soul fire was far too formidable for a single Chosen to absorb, and he had left behind more than one.

Therefore, by the time he reached the 33rd Hell, he was alone. The 33rd Hell was in the deepest region of the void, and upon entering, Meng Hao saw a young man sitting cross-legged atop a mountain peak.

He wore a green robe, and gave off an icy feeling. Apparently, whoever this was, it wasn’t his true form, but rather, a clone!

An alcohol flagon rested in front of him, from which he would occasionally sip. Down below, at the base of the mountain, there was a wide valley, which was completely empty.

As Meng Hao approached, he looked around with flickering eyes, until his gaze eventually came to rest upon the young man. For some reason, this place felt different than the other 32 Hells. There was no necropolis, no Outsider beast, no soul fire. There weren’t even any seals or restrictive spells. It was as if Paragon Nine Seals hadn’t left any restraining measures here at all.

The green-robed man on the mountain seemed very strange to Meng Hao. He was obviously a clone, and yet his cultivation base was unreadable. In one moment he seemed to seethe with unending rage, and in the next, he seemed calm and peaceful.

The young man looked up at Meng Hao, and his eyes flickered with ancientness. “So you’ve finally come… I’ve been waiting a long, long time for you….”

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# Chapter 1376: The State of Clear Water….

Meng Hao's eyes glittered as he stared at the green-robed young man. Saying nothing, he walked forward and then appeared on the mountain peak.

"I've been waiting for you for a long time," the young man murmured. "In fact, it's been so long I've lost track of exactly how much time has passed…. I just vaguely remember that I fought a man once. We had a wager going, and if I lost, I promised to do a favor for him.

"I promised to wait here for someone… to give that person my Hexing magic."

Meng Hao's eyes began to shine as he said, "Your excellency is…?"

"I've forgotten. This isn't my true form, it's only a clone. I forgot what my name was. I only remember… that place." The young man shook his head and pointed down toward the valley at the base of the mountain.

Meng Hao looked down in the same direction, but didn't see anything other than the valley itself.

"Can't see it? Well… that's nothing unusual. My Hexing magic has many names. Back then, that man I fought told me that he had a similar Hexing magic, although it wasn't as close to its fundamental Essence as mine.

"He speculated that, years later, someone from among his successors might be able to use his First Hex to unravel the other Hexing magic he had. However, because of the bizarre nature of that particular Hexing magic of his, it seemed unlikely that it could be passed down from generation to generation.

“Therefore, he hoped that I would be be able to wait here for the right person, and pass on my Hexing magic to him.”

The young man smiled, looked Meng Hao calmly in the eyes, and said, “After all the years that have passed, you are the first person to ever come to me. Apparently, you are the person I’ve been waiting for.

“Come.”

Meng Hao studied the young man for a moment, then smiled. He felt no fear, nor any reason to defy him. He approached, and as he did, the young man’s eyes glowed with praise. After Meng Hao came to stand directly in front of him, the young man said, “Now, take another look.”

Meng Hao turned to look back at the valley at the foot of the mountain. In that very instant, light and color exploded in his eyes.

The once empty valley now had a walled city inside of it. Apparently, it was an entire country, complete with a Forbidden Palace, nobility, and commoners!

The city itself was populated by over a hundred thousand people.

Most shocking of all to Meng Hao was that among all those people, regardless of whether they were young or old, man or woman… from the Emperor down to the common people, everyone had exactly the same aura!

That aura also matched the green-robed young man’s. Perhaps ordinary cultivators wouldn’t notice this phenomena without deep study. However, Meng Hao noticed it, and in that same moment, the ancient Demon Sealing Jade within his bag of holding began to vibrate.

Soon, Meng Hao realized that all of those more than 100,000 people… were clones!!

They were all clones of the young man in the green robe!

Meng Hao took a deep breath as he studied the city down below. The Emperor was studying various reports, the concubines were bickering in the harem, the ministers were enjoying life, the common people were spending time with their families, and the streets were abuzz with activity.

Street peddlers called out, people ate and drank, people argued and fought, people laughed and joked. The voices merged together into a cacophony that made the entire city seem incredibly realistic. In fact, it was almost impossible to believe that the entire place… was actually populated by an entire world of clones.

Furthermore, the name of the city was written above the city gate.

It was three characters long.

State of Clear Water!

“This Hexing magic isn’t something that was passed down to me by my Master. I gained enlightenment of it myself. Not even my Junior Brother could use it. Ah, well, it doesn’t matter. I’ll pass it on to you to resolve this bit of Karma. 1

“Whether or not you can master it will depend on your luck.” The young man shook his head and smiled. Paying no more attention to Meng Hao, he turned and floated up into the sky.

“I’ve already forgotten how many years have passed. Finally, I can live up to the agreement. And now… the time has come for me to leave. I’m only a stream of divine will, really nothing compared to my true form. I’ve been gone a long time, and I miss some of those old faces from the past.

“Well, I’m off then.” The young man waved his sleeve, and as he floated higher into the air, he gradually began to glow blurry. Soon he turned into countless motes of green light which spread out and then vanished.

Meng Hao looked back down at the valley, and realized that everything was becoming blurry. He immediately sat down cross-legged and focused his mind. He watched as the figures down below began to fade away. The city began to dissipate, and even the words “State of Clear Water” vanished. Soon, the only thing left behind was the valley.

“Hexing magic. Demon Sealing Hexing magic….

“With the exception of the Hexing magic I need to create, I’ve collected all of the others except for the First and the Fourth. Clearly, this isn’t the First, which means that it must be… the Fourth Hex!”

Meng Hao’s mind trembled. Based on his current cultivation base, he actually didn’t need much qi and blood, or energy of Heaven and Earth to step into the bottleneck that would come before a breakthrough. Right now, he actually had two paths available to him. One path was to completely pass through the Ancient Realm.

The other path was to collect all the Hexing magics and then turn them into Essences.

One of those paths involved cultivating the bloodline of the Allheaven Dao Immortal. The other was that of the Hexing magic of the League of Demon Sealers. They were both valid paths, although the first one would take more time, and would require more cultivation base, qi and blood. Yet what all that yielded was merely an increase in the chances of successfully extinguishing his Soul Lamps.

As far as the second path went, it required enlightenment and good fortune.

Meng Hao sat there silently, looking down at the valley. Finally, he closed his eyes, and everything which he had seen earlier appeared in his mind. As he began to analyze it, he slowly slipped into a trance.

Most people would have a difficult time understanding a Demon Sealing Hexing magic by just looking at it once. But Meng Hao was different. He was the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer, and already had command of six different Hexing magics. Furthermore, he had already successfully turned the Eighth Hex into the beginnings of Essence.

To him, as long as he had the basic elements of a Demon Sealing Hexing magic, and the right direction, then he would be able to come to an understanding of it.

Time passed. While Meng Hao analyzed the Fourth Hex, the thirty-three Chosen within the 33 Hells all reached critical points within their processes of absorbing and understanding the soul fires and the good fortune they contained.

The 33 Hells were very quiet. Simultaneously, time slowly passed by outside in the Mountain and Sea Realm. The war preparations were mostly complete, and the cultivators cherished the last bit of time they had before the rest of the 33 Heavens descended, spending time with their dearest and most loved friends and family.

Up above in the starry sky, the 17th through 33rd Heavens were gradually becoming visible, and it even seemed possibly to see the apex of the starry sky.

Beyond the 33 Heavens, in the void of the Vast Expanse, were two land masses that vastly exceeded the 33 Heavens in size, which were approaching with indescribable speed.

Their goal was obviously the Mountain and Sea Realm!

By this point, they were very close….

In fact, it was possible that they might arrive… just as the war was finishing.

More time passed. Four months went by, four months of waiting beneath a sky that had no sun or moon. Four months of waiting… for the truly abysmal pitch black that was coming.

All thirty-four individuals within the 33 Hells were at critically dangerous moments of their transformations. The previous silence was broken by the occasional scream or howl.

The process of acquiring the good fortune there was a painful one for the thirty-three Chosen. After all, during the process of trying to absorb the soul fire, they also had to ward off possession attempts.

Furthermore, because of the restrictive spells in place, if they were possessed, they would be instantly killed.

The exact process was different for everyone, but regardless of how it went, it involved pain. By now, each and every one of the Chosen was bedraggled, with disheveled hair that made them look almost like ghosts. However, they clenched their teeth and continued on with bloodshot eyes.

“I can’t fail….”

“I have to succeed!”

“If I have to sacrifice my longevity, and end up with only a sixty-year-cycle of life, then I’ll do it to protect my clan….”

“I refuse to die in this place! If I’m going to die, I want to die fighting the Outsiders!!”

Explosions could be heard, as well as screams, causing the 33 Hells to be filled with tumult.

In the very depths of the place, in the 33rd Hell, Meng Hao sat cross-legged on a mountain peak, looking down into the valley. Gradually, he came to see a valley that was no longer empty. Instead, the vague outline of a city was taking shape….

However, that city was not the State of Clear Water, but Yunjie County instead. There was a mountain there, beneath which was a flowing river. People could be seen within the city, vague images without faces. However, as Meng Hao’s enlightenment deepened, the figures’ appearances gradually became more and more clear.

There were men and women, old people and young. They looked different, and yet every single one… had Meng Hao’s aura. In fact, if he wished to, he could instantly become any of those figures.

They were his clones!

The Fourth Hex, was… a Mass Cloning Hexing magic! Its name was… the Self Hex!

Massive amounts of clones, massive amounts of one’s own self!

By unleashing it to the limit, any one of those clones could become the seed for a new life. With those clones, reincarnation could never be destroyed. As long as one of them existed, one’s consciousness could be awoken.

Meng Hao lost track of time. Lost track of everything. He immersed himself in the Hexing magic. Eventually, more and more people appeared in the city, and he began to give all of them unique consciousnesses.

Only by possessing a unique consciousness could they truly think.

Furthermore, all of the clones possessed an invisible thread that connected them to Meng Hao. He was like the center, with countless nodes spread out to form a web. Everything within that web was an extension of him.

Gradually, the people in the city began to live their own lives, to the point where a newcomer who looked at the scene would have a hard time telling that it wasn’t real. However, Meng Hao still wasn’t satisfied. As he continued to analyze and gain enlightenment, as the Demon Sealing Hexing magic became more clear, more and more versions of Yunjie County appeared. Gradually, those cities all formed together to become a vast country….

By the time the tenth month arrived, there was no longer a country surrounding him, but rather, three countries…. Within each of those countries lived countless people, all of whom… were Meng Hao.

It was at this point that among the thirty-three Chosen, some died, and some… emerged!

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# Chapter 1378: 8-Essences Arrive!

The first to emerge was none other than Wang Youcai!

In the beginning, he was not among the most powerful of the group of Chosen; quite to the contrary, his cultivation base had been the lowest. He was even the worst in terms of latent talent. However, his willpower and determination was something that left even Meng Hao impressed. The entire Ninth Mountain and Sea had witnessed his vicious tactics, and were left rattled.

In order to join a powerful sect, and in order to pursue the Dao, he had dug his own eyes out, all in order to fix within his mind that final image, that final Dao projection he had seen before losing his sight.

He acted the same within his sect. However viciously he treated others, he treated himself even moreso. When others in the 33 Hells had cried out in anguish because of the pain, his reaction had been to laugh.

He laughed viciously the entire time he absorbed the good fortune of the soul fire, and did not hesitate to sacrifice some of his longevity and life force Essence in exchange for an incredible advancement in cultivation base!

He completely passed beyond the Ancient Realm and stepped into the Dao Realm. He became a Dao Lord, a Dao Sovereign and finally, an Imperial Lord!

In the end, the will which existed in the soul fire was also moved by Wang Youcai’s ruthlessness and relentlessness. Eventually, it too began to laugh, and almost willingly allowed its life force to merge into Wang Youcai.

After breaking through and then emerging, he transformed; his hair was white as if with age, but when he sent his cultivation base power surging out, everything went dark, and the entire world of the 33 Hells shook.

More people emerged after Wang Youcai, but few had made such incredible progress. It wasn’t until Li Ling’er emerged, with hair as white as Wang Youcai’s, that another aura similar to an Imperial Lord’s radiated out.

Li Ling’er’s appearance had changed. She was no longer young; instead, she looked like an old woman. She had forsaken her youth and beauty in exchange for a shocking cultivation base. In sixty years, she would die, but that was her choice!

In contrast to what Meng Hao would have predicted, Chen Fan did not choose to sacrifice his life force. Nor did he even reach the level of a true Dao Sovereign, but rather, the 5-Essences level. He emerged slowly, a seemingly emotional expression on his face, almost as if he were hesitating about something.

Ji Yin, on the other hand, chose to make the same decision as Li Ling’er!

As the Chosen flew out, energy surging, the entire 33 Hells trembled. Of the entire group of, twenty-four emerged, with the other nine… being forever interred within the 33 Hells. They had failed in their attempt to acquire good fortune, and were dead for all eternity.

As for the twenty-four Chosen who did acquire good fortune, eight of them had chosen to sacrifice some of their longevity. That group acquired cultivation base power equivalent to an Imperial Lord. Of the rest, more than half were now as strong as true Dao Sovereigns, with a few being at the 5-Essences level or so.

Regardless of the final outcome for each individual, their fates had completely changed now that they had successfully emerged. As they came out, the hells crumbled behind them, layer by layer. Then, they collectively chose to wait for Meng Hao.

During the ten months that had passed, all of these people who had obtained good fortune had been unable to sense the progress of those around them. Now, when they sent their cultivation base power out, they could tell that Meng Hao… was still in the deepest 33rd Hell.

As the various Hells collapsed, Outsider beasts emerged, but didn't dare to even get near the group which was waiting there.

Several more days passed, but Meng Hao still hadn't come out. As they waited there silently, they could tell that Meng Hao's aura was gradually fading away, which caused them to frown and look to the cultivator among them with the most powerful cultivation base, Wang Youcai.

After a long moment passed, Wang Youcai turned and headed toward the exit of the 33 Hells, simultaneously speaking to everyone behind him. "Let's go. The fighting outside will begin soon. Waiting here is pointless. The good fortune Meng Hao seeks will surely be greater than ours; naturally, he needs more time than us.

"I only have a single sixty-year-cycle of life, and I don't want to waste any of it. I want to fight!" Despite the fact that his eyes were nothing but dark pits, they somehow seemed to glitter with a strange light. Even as his words continued to echo about, he vanished through the exit.

The other Chosen looked around silently, then clasped hands and bowed to the collapsing Hells. Finally, they turned and flew out. Li Ling'er sighed inwardly and followed them. As for Chen Fan, he seemed to be in somewhat of a daze. Looking down at the Hells, it seemed as if he were peering into their deepest depths, but if one looked closely, one would see that he was actually gazing at the place where he had acquired his good fortune, the 19th Hell.

"How… should I choose what to do…?" he thought bitterly. Looking away, he concealed the confusion inside of him and flew away.

Meanwhile, out in the Mountain and Sea Realm, the final battle with the 33 Heavens was beginning!

The starry sky was shaking, and various areas were being ripped open. Soon, the land mass that was the 17th Heaven became visible in complete detail!

Above it was the 18th Heaven, the 19th Heaven… all the way to the 33rd Heaven. They were all visible now.

Massive pressure weighed down, along with shocking energy. Rumbling filled the starry sky of the Mountain and Sea Realm as the 17th Heaven… began to descend, as did all of the other Heavens, all the way to the 33rd!!

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

The starry sky was torn to pieces as a massive tempest sprang out in all directions. Two figures emerged from the Heavens, a man and a woman. In terms of appearance, they didn't seem to be Outsiders at all, but rather, ordinary cultivators.

However, their eyes shone with an indescribable coldness, as if all other living things were nothing more than ants to them.

Indescribable pressure radiated out along with them, and as they descended, the Mountains trembled and the Seas churned. Countless cultivators coughed up mouthfuls of blood.

It was Paragon pressure, and not that of the 7-Essences level, but… the 8-Essences level!!

These were the two strongest Paragons in the entire 33 Heavens. These were… 8-Essences Paragons!!

Behind them was a huge army of Outsiders from the 17th through 33rd Heavens. From the mere look of it, this army seemed unending, filled with tens of millions of Outsiders, all of them exceedingly powerful.

There were even some enormous magical items that flew out from the armies. There were statues, tens of thousands of meters high, there were enormous trees and freezing coffins. Even more shocking was that toward the back of the army was an enormous red sun!

In addition to all that, there were other legendary types of Outsiders. Most astonishing… were the giants, tens of thousands of meters tall. From the look of it, those giants could grow even taller than they were now. They had stars on their foreheads, and radiated intense, ancient auras.

There were other vicious-looking entities who had leathery wings, and were extremely conspicuous among the other forces.

Further off in the distance were tens of thousands of Black Dragons, and beyond that, a sea of flames.

This time, the 33 Heavens were holding nothing back. All of their power was being unleashed in their attempt to destroy the Mountain and Sea Realm. They wanted to strike fear into the hearts of the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators, and considering the vast size of their army, and the presence of their Paragons, it really didn’t seem as if the Mountain and Sea Realm had any chance of coming out on top.

Suddenly, a cold, ancient voice rang out into the starry sky. The Outsiders heard it, as did the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“Kill them all… leave no one alive.”

It was one of the two 8-Essences Paragons, the woman. In response to her words, the huge army of Outsiders let out a roar that could shake Heaven and Earth. Then, they poured toward the Mountain and Sea Realm like floodwaters.

As for the female Paragon, she turned into a beam of light, her energy sweeping about as she closed in on the shield which had been formed over the past ten months to protect the Mountain and Sea Realm.

The single swipe of a finger caused cracking sounds to emanate out from the shield, which then shattered. Countless fragments of the shield exploded out in every direction, whereupon the Paragon took a step forward… to appear on the Fifth Mountain! There, she stamped her foot, causing rumbling sounds to echo out. Then, in the blink of an eye… the mountain collapsed.

The cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm stared in shock at this sudden development.

However, it was in the same moment that cries rang out from different areas within the Mountain and Sea Realm. Suddenly, three temples appeared in the vicinity of the female Paragon. Within those temples were three old men. They were none other than… the Doyens!!

The three great Doyens of the Mountain and Sea Realm were no longer hiding in the shadows. They appeared all at once to suppress the female Paragon. At the same time, Meng Hao’s Paragon puppet was joined by Paragon Sea Dream to also attack the same Paragon.

Further off in the distance, the Three Great Daoist Societies gathered their disciples and magical devices, drawing fully upon all of their resources to meet the army of Outsiders.

Beyond that position, Xu Qing sat in a command pavilion, constantly sending out orders into the army of Mountain and Sea cultivators, coordinating the deadly battle with the Outsiders.

The members of the Fang Clan, as well as other sects and clans, all appeared on the battlefield to fight. There were even people from the Wang Clan.

The chaotic final battle was now underway. However, up in the starry sky, there was another 8-Essences Paragon, the man. His expression remained calm as he turned his gaze to the depths of the Mountain and Sea Realm, to Planet South Heaven in the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

“So, it’s you,” he said softly. He took a step forward, vanishing. Unexpectedly, when he reappeared, he was in the heart of the Mountain and Sea Realm, directly outside of Planet South Heaven.

In almost the moment he appeared, Planet South Heaven’s spell formation erupted with killing intent. The 8-Essences Paragon completely ignored it, though, stepping forward to appear on a certain mountain peak on Planet South Heaven.

That mountain peak was where Shui Dongliu stood. He spun around to face the 8-Essences Paragon, and when their eyes met, no words were spoken. They both vanished, and in the wake of their departure, a massive boom echoed out, which completely leveled the mountain and the lands beneath their feet, leaving behind only a huge crater!

That crater led to the core of Planet South Heaven, where a flaming sea of magma existed.

It was in this exact moment that, back in the collapsing 33 Hells, Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly opened. He looked around to see all of the cities and the people in them, and suddenly, everything stopped moving. Gradually, the scene around him transformed into shimmering motes of light which floated toward Meng Hao and them merged into him. His eyes then began to glow with shining light.

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# Chapter 1379: Incredible Power

“The Fourth Hex… Self Hexing!” Meng Hao watched the world vanishing in front of him, and all of the various clones of himself fading away. Finally, he rose to his feet.

His cultivation base had not experienced any transformations, but now, he no longer had six Hexing magics, but seven!

“I’m now only two Hexing Magics away from the full nine. One of them is the original First Hex, and the other is my own Ninth Hex, the final one!” As Meng Hao thought back to all the different times he had acquired Hexing magics throughout his life, he sighed.

Turning, he waved his hand, causing his Soul Lamps to appear. He had a total of 33, with 10 of them being extinguished and 23 still burning.

“There are Seven Desolations, and I have already passed the first two. Now, after having consumed the power of Paragon Mythdragon, I can start the Third Desolation!” Meng Hao’s eyes shone with a bright light as he focused on his 11th Soul Lamp.

“The Third Desolation, the Desolation of the heart….” After a moment of thought, Meng Hao extended his right hand and pointed at the Soul Lamp. A wind blasted out, and the flame was extinguished, transforming into green smoke that poured into Meng Hao’s eyes, ears, nose, and mouth.

As he closed his eyes and sat down quietly, there were no changes to his fleshly body or to his soul. However, his heart… felt as if an enormous hand had begun to squeeze down on it.

Thump-thump!

Meng Hao’s face paled as pain stabbed into his heart. In addition to the pain afflicting the actual organ, his figurative heart also filled with pain. It was like endless grief and loss that turned into complete emptiness.

Sweat began to pour down his forehead, and he began to tremble. There were no hallucinations, but the pain made him feel as if the entire world was dead, and he was the only thing left in Heaven and Earth.

“No….” he murmured. Suddenly, he threw his head back and bellowed, a sound filled with intense pain. It was as if he could not bear such loneliness, and wished to tear apart the Heavens and everything else.

The 33 Hells were still in a state of collapse, but when his powerful cry echoed out, a blast of energy erupted out above him, smashing into the lands above him, creating a huge vortex.

Countless ruins and pieces of rubble swirled into that vortex, with Meng Hao at the very center of it. There were also dozens of Outsider beasts, all of them trembling as they looked at Meng Hao. Apparently, the pressure and emotion radiating off of him were affecting them.

“The Seven Desolations… sounds impressive, but they are truly only seven tribulations, seven torments.” Meng Hao opened his eyes and then slowly reached up to rub his chest over the location of his heart.

“The Third Desolation, the Desolation of the heart….” Sighing, he stood. His cultivation base had increased by a bit. Before, he had already exceeded the level of an Imperial Lord, and yet was still a step away from the Paragon level. With this current increase, he couldn’t quite complete that step, but he was immeasurably close.

As he looked around, his energy surged, encompassing all of the collapsing 33 Hells, and all of the Outsider beasts, and causing incredible pressure to weigh down.

“Acknowledge allegiance, or die!” he said, not by means of his voice, but by means of divine will. All of the surrounding Outsider beasts could immediately detect his words.

They had already been terrified by the murderous aura Meng Hao emitted, having killed a Paragon. In response to his words, they maintained silence, and eventually bowed their heads.

In that instant, Meng Hao transformed into a beam of light that shot toward the exit, followed by the roaring group of Outsider beasts from the 33 Hells.

“The ten months have passed,” he murmured. “The fighting must have already resumed outside….” He increased his speed, and moments later, shot out of the exit.

By the time that Meng Hao burst out from within the 33 Hells, fierce fighting had erupted within the Mountain and Sea Realm. Tens of millions of Outsiders were attacking viciously. Because of the numerous Dao Realm experts present, as well as the giants, the Mountain and Sea Realm was being pushed back in successive losses.

It was in that exact same moment that Wang Youcai and the others returned from the 33 Hells. Without the slightest hesitation, they waded into the fighting, finding the powerful experts among the Outsiders to do battle with.

The addition of these more that twenty Chosen, in concert with the Mountain and Sea Lords, ensured that the disparity between the two forces’ elite-level cultivators was not as great. Now, the Mountain and Sea Realm’s retreat slowed.

An 8-Essences Paragon destroyed the Fifth Mountain with the stomp of a foot, and yet that very same Paragon was now being pinned down by Sea Dream, the Paragon puppet, the three great Doyens, and others. However, they were not her match. The female Paragon snorted coldly and then performed an incantation gesture, causing an enormous vortex to sweep out in all directions.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

Blood sprayed out of Sea Dream’s mouth, and the same thing happened to the three great Doyens. The Paragon puppet’s chest caved in. Everyone was forced to retreat, being completely incapable of standing in the way of the 8-Essences female Paragon.

“What a bunch of insects!” she said. A single step took her past the entire group into the Sixth Sea, where she reached out and pushed her hand down viciously.

Instantly, a ball of green flame appeared in her hand, which rumbled down into the water. It only took a moment for the entire Sixth Sea to begin to boil and dry up!

Countless denizens of the Sixth Sea screamed in agony as they succumbed to the heat and died.

The Sixth Sea was destroyed!

The entire battle now seemed somewhat one-sided. Although the Mountain and Sea Realm had evened the odds in terms of the elite-level cultivators, the 33 Heavens were fighting with everything they had at their disposal. The giants’ skin was incredibly tough, and every stride they took forward was something the Mountain and Sea cultivators were powerless to stop. If they tried, they were crushed into pulp.

The army of tens of millions of Outsiders pushed the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators back with deadly force. Miserable screams rang out as the Mountain and Sea cultivators were powerless to do anything except retreat. Gradually, a distinct sensation of despair began to grow within the hearts of the forces of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Faced with this level of power, it was as if their previous preparations had all been for naught.

“This war has gone on for long enough,” said the 8-Essences Paragon, her voice cool. “Today… it ends.” She took another step forward, toward the Sixth Mountain. Her goal was clear; she wanted to destroy each Mountain and Sea in the Realm as quickly as possible.

When that happened, only the cultivators would remain, and they could be easily dealt with.

Sea Dream and the others watched with bloodshot eyes, and although they tried to interfere, they couldn’t even get close. However, just when the 8-Essences Paragon seemed on the verge of setting foot onto the Sixth Mountain, the 17th Heaven suddenly shuddered, as though some enormous force were separating it from the other Heavens and sending it toward the Mountain and Sea Realm.

However, if you looked closely, you would see that it wasn’t heading toward the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators, but rather… the Outsider army.

This sudden twist caused the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators to stare in shock. The Outsiders were equally astonished. Even the female Paragon stopped in her tracks, spinning around to look at the land mass that was the 17th Heaven.

“I should have known that there would be sleeper agents in the 33 Heavens!” she said, her face darkening. She took another step, this time heading toward the 17th Heaven. Then, she reached out and made a violent grasping motion, causing an enormous boom to ring out as the entire 17th Heaven was shattered. The whole land mass instantly collapsed into ash.

Even still, the 8-Essences Paragon was unable to determine who it was that had done such a thing. Frowning, she scanned the battlefield, but could turn up no clues.

“It wasn’t Windswept, he’s under strict surveillance. If it wasn’t him, then who was it?

“Well it doesn’t matter. With power like ours, we can crush anything that gets in our path.” Snorting coldly, the female Paragon waved her right hand toward the sun that existed within the army of Outsiders. Instantly, that huge sun radiated boundless light, shrinking down as it shot in her direction. It then swirled around her, quickly transforming into a set of armor.

With that armor, the 8-Essences Paragon’s battle prowess rose even higher. She quickly performed a double-handed incantation gesture, then waved her hand out at her army, causing the Outsiders to be stimulated by some unseen force. One by one, they threw their heads back and howled. Their eyes began to glow red as their battle prowess increased, and they then resumed fighting with increased ferocity.

Rumbling sounds could be heard as the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators suffered instant setbacks. The casualties were severe as they were relentlessly shoved backward across the battlefield.

The female Paragon then turned and headed back toward the Mountain and Sea Realm. Once again, she appeared above the Sixth Mountain, which she struck with a palm. The Sixth Mountain began to vibrate, and moments later, its Xuanwu turtle shattered. As its agonized scream rang out, the entire Sixth Mountain… was destroyed!

The Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators were shaking and in complete despair, and some began to rave. The first to do so were powerful experts from the Three Great Daoist Societies, who unleashed all of the divine abilities they could; some even self-detonated.

However, in the moment that the Sixth Mountain collapsed, three dazzling beams of light shot out from within the rubble of the mountain. Instantly, they locked down onto the position of the female Paragon, where they transformed into a triangular sealing mark, completely trapping her!

“That’s all you’ve got?!” she laughed coldly, seemingly taking it all in stride. In her original attempt to destroy the Sixth Mountain, the sudden development had occurred with the 17th Heaven, leaving her no choice but to destroy it. At that time, she had guessed that the Mountain and Sea Realm was now resorting to calling upon sleeper agents within the 33 Heavens to try to delay her. In that case, they would most certainly have other tricks planned.

Therefore, the sudden appearance of this sealing mark from within the crumbling Sixth Mountain was nothing surprising. However, even in the moment in which she prepared to cast off the sealing mark, the three

Doyens, who had only just made their appearance in the battle, suddenly blurred and disappeared from their current locations. Shockingly, when they reappeared, they were positioned at the corners of that triangle!

“I am the Sublime Spirit Doyen!”

“I am the Dao Divinity Doyen!”

“I am the Heaven Severing Doyen!”

“Our mission has been to wait until your arrival, and use our lives, use our Daos, to seal you tight!!”

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# Chapter 1380: Three Scriptures Seal the Almighty!

“We didn’t take action before, and even when you first made your appearance we only focused on defense!”

“Today, we three will repay our debt to the Mountain and Sea Realm!”

“Three Scriptures Seal the Almighty!” These three Doyens were extremely mysterious figures. For countless years, they had never made a single appearance. The scriptures they cultivated had been disseminated in the world, but had not actually been created by these individuals. The Doyens were merely the guardians of the scriptures.

The three old men sat down cross-legged and closed their eyes, whereupon the magical symbols of the scriptures began to swirl around them and form a sealing mark!

They planned to use the power of their scriptures to seal this female Paragon!

“We shall sacrifice our longevity to power the three classic scriptures and seal you. It will not be an eternal seal, but it will last long enough to alter the state of this battle!”

The 8-Essences Paragon frowned and waved her right index finger. However, she was incapable of breaking open the sealing mark. Meanwhile, Paragon Sea Dream and the Paragon puppet burst back onto the battlefield, using their Paragon power to completely change the state of the battle.

“You really think you can change the tide of battle like this?” the 8-Essences Paragon said with a laugh. Even as her laughter rang out, a seemingly unremarkable Outsider inside the army suddenly began to tremble, then looked up and screamed. Then, his body began to swell, and unexpectedly, he began to absorb numerous surrounding Outsiders. Within the space of a few breaths of time, he had transformed into a huge ball of flesh fully 3,000 meters across, which hovered there in the starry sky.

That ball of flesh actually had facial features, and if you looked closely, it resembled a head. When the eyes opened, they glowed with coldness. At the same time, laughter rang out.

“Interesting. It seems that I need to make an appearance after all.” The ball of flesh then rapidly shrank down into the shape of a person.

It was a middle-aged man wearing a long red robe. He was very odd-looking, with an extremely large head that seemed disproportionate to his body. A twisted smile could be seen on his face, and a murderous aura sprang out as he took a step forward toward Sea Dream and the Paragon puppet.

As he appeared in front of them, Paragon Sea Dream’s face fell, as did the faces of all the other powerful experts. Even the three great Doyens’ eyes widened.

“This aura…. You’re not cultivators of the 33 Heavens. You’re from… those other two powers!!”

At this point, more than ten other Outsiders within the huge army began to roar, grow in size, and absorb nearby Outsiders. Soon, more than ten powerful experts had appeared on the battlefield.

Although their cultivation base fluctuations didn’t put them at the Paragon level, based on their battle prowess, they were equivalent to Imperial Lords. As soon as they appeared, they began to laugh as they charged toward the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators.

Their auras were very strange. Clearly, they weren’t Mountain and Sea cultivators, nor were they cultivators from the 33 Heavens. There was even a force of expulsion pushing against them, although it was incapable of actually driving them out!

That was because they had not come as their true selves, but instead, had used their souls to perform a sort of possession, and thus force their way in.

Shockingly, one of these new arrivals possessed one of the giants, who suddenly grew far larger than before. Throwing his head back and howling, he charged forth into battle; as he did, the stars on his forehead began to spin, causing an intense murderous aura to flare up.

In the briefest of moments, the Mountain and Sea Realm once again began to suffer heavy losses.

The Seventh Sea was no more, and the Seventh Mountain… was being besieged by millions upon millions of Outsiders. It didn’t take long before that same mountain began to collapse into pieces. Once again, the battle was completely out of balance.

As of this moment, there were only two Seas and two Mountains left in the entire Realm!

It was a moment of grave crisis, and seemingly impending destruction. Millions upon millions of Outsiders were now under the leadership of numerous powerful experts, who led them into the Eighth Sea. However, it was at that point that a light arrow suddenly shot out from the Eighth Mountain, which almost instantly appeared in front of the giant with the stars on his forehead.

Roaring, the giant clenched his right hand into a fist and punched out at the arrow.

A huge boom echoed out as the light arrow shattered. However, the giant let out a muffled groan as he staggered backward. Simultaneously, his right arm exploded, and much of his body was severely damaged. Blood sprayed out of his mouth even as a second light arrow closed in. However, that arrow didn’t slam into the giant, but rather, the Eighth Sea itself!

The Eighth Sea had long since been laced with restrictive spells, which were now activated by that light arrow, causing the entire Sea to begin to roar. Countless rings of light appeared on the surface of the water, which rose up and then exploded in shocking fashion.

Instantly, miserable shrieks began to ring out as countless Outsiders were shredded to pieces by the explosive restrictive spells.

Of course, those deaths didn’t count much when compared to the size of the Outsider army as a whole, and couldn’t even be called a serious blow. The effect on their morale was significant though.

“Who are you?!?!” bellowed the armless, seriously injured giant, throwing his head back and roaring. All of the other powerful experts who had recently appeared also turned to stare at the Eighth Mountain.

There, a bright light appeared, which shot out from the Eighth Mountain at top speed toward the battlefield.

It was none other than Meng Hao!

Shockingly, he was followed by scores of Outsider beasts. It was impossible to determine how, but he had somehow incited them to follow his orders. Roaring, they shot toward the battlefield with vicious expressions on their faces.

The tide of battle was constantly shifting in numerous unexpected ways. Of the two 8-Essences Paragons, one had begun to fight Shui Dongliu, after which the two of them had vanished. As for the other, she was temporarily sealed in place by the three Doyens.

Paragon Sea Dream and the Paragon puppet were currently fighting a desperate battle with the large-headed cultivator.

Meng Hao’s appearance on the scene changed things once again. He stopped the advance of the Outsider army, and yet simultaneously, was now facing the charge of the more than ten recently arrived powerful experts, some of whom were giants.

As Meng Hao began to fight them, the army itself once again began to march into the Eighth Sea. Before long, the sea itself was vanquished, and the army proceed onward toward the Eighth Mountain.

It was at this point that a light sigh suddenly rang out, and someone flew out from the Ninth Mountain and Sea to appear in front of the Outsider army. Shockingly, behind this person could be seen an illusory world, almost as if he had come from within that world itself.

“I’ve come to help, little brother,” said an ancient voice, filled with warmth and kindness. This person was a young man, whose expression was that of extreme loneliness. It was as if he should never have appeared in this day and age, and yet, here he was.

It was none other than… Ke Jiusi!!

He had come from the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect, which had long since faded away into history, to appear on this battlefield. As soon as he appeared, another sigh could be heard from the illusory world behind him. That sigh came from… true spirit Night!

As the sigh echoed out, Night apparently opened his eyes within that illusory world. In that very instant, fully a million Outsiders suddenly vanished. When they reappeared, they were in an era of time that no one could see. They were back in the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect, during its most flourishing and golden era. Instantly, fighting broke out!!

Ke Jiusi was not the only person to appear at this critical moment in the battle. A Daoist couple suddenly flew out from the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Behind the woman were countless cultivators who had blank expressions on their faces, and yet seemed filled with madness and insanity. As for the man, every step he took caused freezing ice to spread out through the starry sky. It was as if he was walking upon frost soil!

These two were none other than… Frost Soil Demon Emperor Han Shan and his wife!!

“Meng Hao, young friend, I’ve come.” Han Shan’s appearance on the scene caused ice to spread throughout all Heaven and Earth.

Although his cultivation base was not very high, his debut filled the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm with a new desire to fight, with new braveness. After Han Shan, Lord Ji appeared, as did Grandpa Meng.

Then came the experts of the Fang Clan.

All of the various sects from the Ninth Mountain and Sea joined in. Meng Hao even saw Fatty. Although he was obviously frightened, he instantly flew into battle with the Outsiders. And then there was Meng Hao’s Master… Pill Demon, who also began to fight in this final battle with the Outsiders.

There were many familiar faces who all came to the Eighth Mountain to fight….

The Eighth Mountain was the battlefield, and it was filled with Outsiders and Mountain and Sea cultivators. Bitter and deadly fighting caused rumbling explosions to echo out constantly. Faced against such an endless sea of Outsiders, everyone put everything on the line to fight.

Meng Hao was shaken, but there was no time to ponder his apprehensions. He was incapable of going to personally help the people that he knew, and was instead forced to fight these powerful experts who were clearly not from the 33 Heavens. Their divine abilities and techniques were things that he had never seen before.

That was especially true of the giants, whose formidable fleshly body power was absolutely terrifying.

Booms rang out, and people were dying left and right. Meng Hao’s eyes were bloodshot as he called upon the full level of his cultivation base to levy one deadly attack after another. He used the Mountain Consuming

Incantation to summon numerous mountains, and he transformed into an azure roc, with infinitely sharp talons.

The Blood Demon appeared, roaring, and the Paragon Bridge descended to crush all. Meng Hao was almost like a phantom who flickered back and forth to fight more than ten enemies at once.

A boom rang out as one of the giants coughed up blood. A look of disbelief could be seen on his face as his chest caved in under one of Meng Hao's fist strikes. His heart was shattered, and blood sprayed out everywhere, completely soaking Meng Hao.

"God blood? Not very pure, but good nonetheless." Sensing the extraordinary nature of the God blood, Meng Hao flickered into motion, once again leaping into the fighting. Spitting some blood out of his mouth, he faced off against the dozen or so enemies and then began to laugh heartily. Waving his hand, he summoned the copper mirror, which transformed into the Battle Weapon. Then the meat jelly flew out and became a suit of armor.

"Alright, bring it on!" Meng Hao roared, laughing madly, a ferocious expression on his face. His friends and family were all fighting bitterly, how could he not stand by their side!?

Off in the distance, the Three Great Daoist Societies were fighting with all the power they could muster. The boom of self-detonation occasionally rang out, as the Mountain and Sea Realm fought with utter madness. By now, they had fought the Outsider army to a standstill, and were no longer suffering successive defeats.

The Outsiders were finally facing the true madness of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

Suddenly, a voice rang out from the collapsed ruins of the Sixth Mountain. "This is all useless. This time, you people will be completely wiped out!"

It was none other than the female Paragon. By now, the three Doyens who surrounded her were withering away into skin and bones. However, they still held on. It was at this point that their disciples flew toward them, sitting down behind them cross-legged to support them with their own longevity!

“How long can you keep me pinned down?” the Paragon asked. “Your three classic scriptures are extraordinary. Paramount Daoist scriptures from the Paragon Immortal Realm. Unfortunately, your cultivation bases are not at the Paragon level. Therefore, how could you possibly keep me sealed for any length of time? In fact, are you even capable of holding on right now? The moment that I’m free, is the moment that the Mountain and Sea Realm… will face complete and utter destruction!”

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# Chapter 1381: Fierce Killing!

The 8-Essences Paragon remained within the triangular sealing mark. As she looked out at the Mountain and Sea Realm, she spoke, her voice cool, “The Mountain and Sea Realm is doomed…. All bloodlines will be wiped out. Nothing will remain. The fact that you have been able to keep fighting till this point shows that the 33 Heavens truly underestimated you people.

“However… with absolute power like ours, you will fade away into the passage of time. The glory of the Immortal World should have become nothing more than ash. The fact that you are still gasping for life will merely ensure that, through all history, Immortals will be scorned and derided.”

As her words echoed out, they could be heard by all of the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“I’m curious. Did you people actually think that there was still hope for you? After the 33 Heavens are the other two great worlds, the Devil Realm and the Immortal God Continent. Those two great powers are immeasurably close….

“What makes you think your trifling Mountains and Seas could possibly fight them? Your bloodlines will be expunged. Your minds will be erased. None of you… will survive.”

As the 8-Essences Paragon looked out at the Mountain and Sea Realm, nothing she saw there was worthy of her gaze, not even Meng Hao. Instead, she focused on a location that only she could see, between the Eighth and Ninth Mountains. There, the other 8-Essences Paragon was fighting someone who even she could not completely fathom. He was also the only person who could strike fear into her heart.

As for the other mysterious experts who existed, either they didn’t wish to make a move against her, or for various other reasons were content to simply observe what was happening.

“Shui Dongliu…. You are simply a body possessed by a discarnate soul. In that case… what exactly are you trying to accomplish? This war was obviously fated to play out this way.” The 8-Essences female Paragon frowned. The fact that she couldn’t unravel this mystery caused doubt to bubble up in her heart.

The war of the Mountains and Seas continued. The Eighth Mountain shuddered as the Outsider army fought bitterly with the Mountain and Sea cultivators. Heaven shook and the Earth quaked. The starry sky was shattered, and even the Eighth Mountain itself was beginning to crack and crumble.

Paragon Sea Dream and the Paragon puppet were still fighting the large-headed expert, who fought in a very bizarre fashion. He was adept at using fleshly body techniques, and was able to single-handedly take on both of them, and even prevent them from slipping away to fight elsewhere.

In other areas, vicious Outsiders fought bitterly with the Mountain and Sea cultivators.

Meng Hao was also in great danger, surrounded by more than ten enemies, including giants. Roars filled the air, and the glow of magical techniques rose up. Meng Hao’s hair was completely disheveled, and he was going all out with everything he had at his disposal. The Life-Extermination, Bedevilment, and God-Slaying fists shook the starry sky. Finally, he overwhelmed one of his opponents, who coughed up blood as he was completely annihilated.

Meng Hao was gasping for breath as he turned and split the starry sky with the Battle Weapon. A brilliant cascade of light flashed out toward two enemies, who were completely shocked as their heads flew off of their bodies.

Meng Hao’s hands were shaking; the price he had paid to be able to kill three individuals in quick succession was that he was blasted by the divine abilities from the rest of the group. Even worse, he was hit by a fist strike from the giant.

BOOOOMMMMMM!

Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth, but thanks to the meat jelly, he wasn’t grievously injured. Even as he began to recover, thanks to the Green Emperor’s Eternal Incantation, his eyes glimmered with brutality, and he extended his left hand, unleashing the Star Plucking Magic to grab one of the enemy cultivators. Even as he was about to crush the man’s throat, the other surrounding enemies unleashed numerous divine abilities.

In the time it takes a spark to fly off of a piece of flint, Meng Hao laughed viciously and refused to retreat. Ceasing his attempt to drag the cultivator toward him, he lunged forward and head-butted the man in the forehead.

A boom rang out, accompanied by a bloodcurdling scream, whereupon the man’s head exploded. Meng Hao was completely soaked in blood and gore, making him look thoroughly vicious as he threw his head back and howled. The surrounding enemies exchanged glances, then suddenly flew up into the air and unexpectedly began to merge together!

Their bodies were apparently formed by strange powers, and had been pieced together from other bodies. Now, they began to merge together. Even the giants joined in, and in the blink of an eye, all of them transformed into a single new entity!

It was a colossal giant, fully 3,000 meters tall, which immediately began to emanate a crushing pressure. Most shocking of all was that the giant had eight faces on different parts of its body.

Those eight faces belonged to the eight people who had formed the body, six of whom were cultivators and two of whom were giants of the God tribe.

Howling, the giant began to charge toward Meng Hao, right hand spinning through the air with explosive speed to almost instantly appear in front of him. Meng Hao’s eyes widened, and he immediately summoned the Paragon Bridge to defend himself.

A huge boom echoed out, and blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth. Even as Meng Hao staggered backward several paces, the giant also fell back, trembling, all eight faces letting out roars.

Meng Hao wiped the blood from his lips, and his eyes flickered with killing intent.

“Paragon level power?”

The giant ground to a halt and glared at Meng Hao for a moment before bursting forward again. As it closed in on Meng Hao, he suddenly opened his mouth wide and unleashed a mighty roar upon Meng Hao.

The roar of a God!

A shockwave burst out into the starry sky, tearing rifts open. At the same time, the sound waves coming from the giant’s mouth turned corporeal as they blasted toward Meng Hao.

When they hit him, blood oozed out of his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. The meat jelly armor began to crack and crumble, although it held on and continued to protect Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s right hand quivered as he was shoved back. The sound was so intensely powerful that, were it not for the meat jelly, his organs would already have been crushed into a paste.

The giant then strode forward, unleashing a palm strike. Meng Hao, being unable to dodge, met it directly. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and he was flung back. More cracks spread out across the meat jelly armor, and yet it continued to hold fast. Meng Hao felt bad about that, but in this critical moment of life or death, he had to stay focused on the giant.

“I’ve seen a divine ability like that before….” he thought, his eyes flickering with killing intent.

The roar didn’t last for very long. However, as soon as it faded away, the giant roared again, and the explosive sound wave once again closed in on Meng Hao.

Even as the second sound wave closed in, the starstone in Meng Hao’s eye flickered, spreading out to cover his entire body. As the roar bore down, he transformed into an asteroid, which braced up against the sound and then began to move toward the giant.

Under the power of the sound wave, the asteroid began to transform into ash, shrinking down rapidly. By the time it was only about thirty meters away from the giant, the asteroid form collapsed, and Meng Hao appeared. However, he quickly transformed into an azure roc, which shot onward at incredible speed.

In the blink of an eye, the azure roc was flayed into chunks of gore and blood, but it managed to continue on. Despite the giant falling into retreat, Meng Hao was now less than ten meters away from it!

That distance… was enough!

Even as the azure roc collapsed, the giant’s pupils constricted with fear. It was at this point that Meng Hao’s human form stepped out from the remains of the roc. A murderous aura erupted out as he hefted the Battle Weapon and slashed it down viciously toward the retreating giant!

Within the scintillating blade light, the image of a parrot could be seen. The parrot seemed determined, begrieved, even maddened. It was the first time Meng Hao had ever seen it in such a state. The sound of the screaming blade caused the giant’s eyes to widen with disbelief, and then the blade slashed into it.

RUMBLE!!

The giant staggered back, simultaneously collapsing into countless pieces. Numerous miserable shrieks could be heard as the five of the eight bodies which had formed the giant transformed into ash and powder. Simultaneously, roars of disbelief could be heard echoing out from one of the land masses speeding toward the Mountain and Sea Realm out in the Vast Expanse.

Meanwhile, the three people who had not been killed were now staring at Meng Hao's blade in terror. Without any hesitation, they began to flee.

Meng Hao's face was pale white as he instantly gave chase. His speed was incredible, and he caught up with one of them almost immediately, unhesitatingly grabbing the man and unleashing the Blood Demon Grand Magic. Instantly, he began to absorb his qi and blood, as well as his soul, which in turn increased the effectiveness of the Green Emperor's Eternal Incantation.

The cultivator screamed, and almost instantly withered up. In the blink of an eye, he became a dessicated corpse. At the same time, Meng Hao visibly recovered, then turned to pursue the other two cultivators.

Each one cried the same thing. "Save me!"

They fled at top speed, shocked expressions on their faces. These were not cultivators from the 33 Heavens. They had possessed bodies to come here, and were not the type of people who could be killed easily. If they died, they would be resurrected back in their homeland. After all, what had come here were not their full souls.

And yet, they had just watched this stranger use his bizarre blade to kill five of their compatriots. Most terrifying of all was that not only did their soul fragments perish here, but their true forms perished as well!

Even more terrifying was that this person could absorb their qi, their blood, and their souls. That left them completely shaken and in fear.

"He can really kill us!!"

“How could this be possible!?!?”

In their terror, they fled at top speed. Meng Hao was just about to give chase when suddenly his expression flickered, and he looked up in the direction of the shattered Sixth Mountain.

There, the three Doyens who were keeping the 8-Essences Paragon sealed were now in a state of extreme withering. That was especially true of the Heaven Severing Doyen, who had apparently already run out of life force.

“You can’t keep me sealed here,” the female Paragon said coolly. Then, she slowly reached out toward the sealing mark itself.

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# Chapter 1382: Three Scripture Spikes!

The parrot had once mentioned that as far as it knew, cultivating the three classic scriptures of the Mountain and Sea Realm could lead to becoming a Doyen. Meng Hao had always wondered exactly how powerful Doyens were, as he had never met such legendary figures.

It had seemed… that they were figures who existed above the Mountain and Sea Lords.

However, that was merely what the legends said. In this battle, the appearance of the 8-Essences female Paragon enabled Meng Hao to finally see the three great Doyens, and now he could sense… the auras of Imperial Lords upon them!

Doyens were comparable to Imperial Lords!

In fact, Meng Hao couldn’t help but notice that there was something strange within the fluctuations emanating from the three Doyens. However, by the time he had shown up on the battlefield, the three Doyens were already in the midst of sealing the female Paragon. Plus, he himself was involved in a deadly struggle, and the intensity of the fighting made it impossible for him to study them closely. However, deep in his heart, that suspicion remained.

He distinctly remembered the Parrot saying that within the Mountain and Sea Realm, the Sublime Spirit Scripture had its Sublime Spirit Doyen, and the Dao Divinity Scripture had its Dao Divinity Doyen. However, the Heaven Severing Scripture… had never given rise to a Heaven Severing Doyen! 1

And yet, it was very obvious that, as of this moment, there was indeed a Heaven Severing Doyen, although he seemed to be the weakest of the three, and apparently, had already withered away into death. In fact, it seemed that his death was causing the seal to weaken, and prompt the 8-Essences Paragon to probe for a way to break it.

Although Meng Hao hadn’t put too much thought into such matters back then, at least now he was able to bear witness to… the power of the Doyens!

The 8-Essences Paragon’s words were still echoing out when she reached out to touch the sealing mark. Instantly, the triangular seal began to collapse. As it did, the entire area around her was thrown into chaos, which was to be expected. Because of the power contained in the seal, as it shattered, the innumerable threads which held the Paragon in place began to shudder.

They couldn’t hold on for long, and as the seal crumbled, those threads began to vanish one by one. The area that was maintained by the Heaven Severing Doyen was the first to become devoid of such threads.

Next were the areas controlled by the other two Doyens, who were now in a state of extreme withering. In fact, the three young disciples behind each of the three Doyens were now virtual corpses as well.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

As the seal fell apart, the 8-Essences Paragon was preparing to step out into the open. Once she did, she would unleash her 8-Essences cultivation base, and considering that there was no one to stand in her way, the battle would quickly be over. The Mountain and Sea Realm would not even be able to last long enough to see the arrival of the Immortal God Realm and the Devil Realm. The Realm would be crushed, and all of its people eliminated.

However, it was at this point that the Sublime Spirit Doyen suddenly opened his eyes, and they shone with a bizarre light. The disciple behind him also opened his eyes, and his expression was one of complete calm, as though this was a moment which he had prepared for his entire life.

“Wei’er,” the Doyen said, “you took me as your Master when you were seven years old. I feel that over the years, I… never treated you as well as I should have.”

“Master, I have no regrets,” the corpse-like young man replied. “If there really is another life after this one, sir, then I hope I can still call you my Master!”

Without the slightest hesitation, he suddenly collapsed into pieces, sacrificing all of his life force, even his soul, to become boundless scripture power, which then fused into his Master, the Sublime Spirit Doyen.

In that instant, the Sublime Spirit Doyen’s flesh and blood once again grew strong, and his eyes began to blaze. He quickly returned to the peak state of his power. However, just as quickly, he began to wither again, as all of that qi and blood, all of his soul power and cultivation base, everything that was him, began to converge on his forehead.

A popping sound then rang out as his forehead burst open, and a blood-colored spike flew out!

Countless scriptural symbols swirled around that spike, which was none other than the Sublime Spirit Scripture. That spike was made from bone, and was the combination of everything that the master and apprentice has sacrificed. All of that formed together into… the Sublime Spirit Spike!!

As soon as that spike appeared, the Sublime Spirit Doyen closed his eyes in death. As he died, his expression was calm, although touches of sadness and guilt could also be seen….

Although the Mountain and Sea Realm found no fault with him, nor did his apprentice, he felt regret for how he had treated that apprentice.

“If there is an afterlife….”

RUMBLE!

The Sublime Spirit Spike formed by the Sublime Spirit Doyen and his apprentice then shot toward the 8-Essences Paragon with indescribable speed.

The female Paragon’s face flickered for the first time. Because of the chaos of the crumbling sealing mark which surrounding her, she was inhibited, and the terrifying spike had her completely cornered!!

She simply couldn’t escape!

Apparently, sealing her was only one aspect of the trap which had been laid for her. The truly explosive part of the plan was to be carried out when the seal was broken. That plan was… self-sacrifice!!

A massive boom echoed out as the spike drove its way into the 8-Essences Paragon’s chest, in the region of her heart. The vicious stabbing of the spike elicited a miserable shriek, which was the exact moment in which the Dao Divinity Doyen opened his eyes.

As the Dao Divinity Doyen sighed, his apprentice behind him gave a carefree laugh. “Master, there is no need for you to feel regret. I am a caretaker of the scripture, and have known all along how things would end. I have long since prepared myself. Master, you gave me my life, and the only regret I have is that I won’t be able to care for you any longer.

“Master, let me take the first step….”

The apprentice exploded, transforming into countless scriptural symbols which shot toward his Master, the Dao Divinity Doyen.

The Dao Divinity Doyen’s body instantly recovered. Sighing quietly, he nodded his head, and then without any hesitation, allowed his own body to wither as his qi and blood, his life force, his soul, his everything, converged on his forehead.

Rumbling sounds echoed out as a spike suddenly flew out.

It was… the Dao Divinity Spike!!

The spike contained boundless divine sense as it shot forth, causing Heaven and Earth to shake violently. The sky faded and a wind screamed as it shot toward the 8-Essences Paragon. She had already been pinned down by the remnants of the sealing mark, and had been unable to avoid the Sublime Spirit Spike. Now that the Sublime Spirit Spike was stabbed into her, how could she possibly avoid… the Dao Divinity Spike!?

A bang rang out as the spike stabbed into the Paragon’s forehead, directly into her brain!

A bloodcurdling scream rang out from her mouth, and a tremor ran through her. Her hair was in complete disarray as she fell back. She managed to break free of the sealing mark, and then rotated her cultivation base like mad to try to push the two spikes out of her, two spikes which filled her with a sense of extreme danger.

However, it was at this point that the completely withered Heaven Severing Doyen suddenly opened his eyes.

He was not dead!

As he opened his eyes, there was something very different within them, as though he was no longer the Heaven Severing Doyen, but rather, someone else!

He looked over at the fleeing 8-Essences Paragon, and sighed. As he sighed, the withered youth behind him transformed into countless scriptural symbols which then poured into the Heaven Severing Doyen.

The young man died without saying a single word. However, his eyes were filled with decisiveness and determination, and not the slightest bit of hesitation could be seen in his actions.

As the Heaven Severing Doyen absorbed those symbols, a sound like a sharp inhalation of breath could be heard. At the same time, the old man’s aura suddenly grew even stranger than before.

In fact, it seemed as if his cultivation base were rising, causing that strangeness in his aura to become more intense.

“I… am not actually the Heaven Severing Doyen!” he said softly, as if he were giving voice to his memories. An expression of sadness appeared on his face as he slowly turned his head to look first at the Ninth Mountain and Sea, then at the forces of the Fang Clan within the army, and finally… at Meng Hao.

That glance was one which contained a reluctance to part; as well as profound sighing and sadness. And when he looked at Meng Hao, it contained love, as if he were looking at his own progenity.

“Hao’er, you’ve grown up….” he murmured.

Meng Hao wasn’t sure why, but when he saw the eyes of the Heaven Severing Doyen, he felt his heart trembling. He began to shake, and even pant, as… a familiar sensation rose up sharply within him.

“That’s….” He felt like lightning was striking at his mind. This person should have looked like a stranger, but as of this moment, as those eyes seemed to pierce into his memories, he remembered images from when he was a child. He remembered an old man holding him gently, and that man’s eyes suddenly seemed exactly like these eyes.

“Grandpa Fang…!” he cried out.

As of this instant, everyone in the Fang Clan was reacting to the Heaven Severing Doyen looking at them. Their faces flickered, filling with disbelief and shock as they looked back at him.

Suddenly, the Heaven Severing Doyen’s face began to change. Now, it looked very similar to Fang Xiufeng’s, and also similar to Meng Hao’s. His face… seemed threatening without being angry!

He was none other than… Meng Hao’s Grandpa Fang. Fang Xiufeng’s father! The previous Grand Elder of the Fang Clan, a man who excelled in both terms of latent talent and powers of understanding. His name was… Fang Hehai! 2

Years ago, he and Meng Hao’s Grandpa Meng had gone looking for an Outsider to help save Meng Hao. That Outsider had returned, but they never did. It wasn’t until Meng Hao went to the Eighth Mountain and Sea that he found out that his Grandpa Meng was the Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

At that time, he had always wondered… where his Grandpa Fang was. His Grandpa Meng had even told him that he wasn’t in the Realm.

Meng Hao had previously speculated that perhaps his Grandpa Fang… had been hiding somewhere in the 33 Heavens.

But as of this moment, after seeing the face of the Heaven Severing Doyen, his mind reeled as he realized… that this absolutely was the same man who existed in his memories. His Grandpa Fang!

“But why did Grandpa Meng say that he wasn’t in the Realm?” That was the question that immediately popped into his mind.

It was in this moment that Heaven Severing Doyen, Fang Hehai, looked away. Filled with ferocious determination, he looked at the retreating 8-Essences Paragon, and then his forehead exploded.

“Heaven Severing…. Spike!”

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1383: The Staff of Dao Fang!

The three Doyens' true purpose had been to deal with an 8-Essences Paragon from the 33 Heavens. They struck out, sealing that Paragon, and yet that was only one part of their purpose. The true killing blow came in the form of the three spikes!

By using the scriptural power within themselves, as well as the assistance of the custodians of the scriptures, their apprentices, they transformed into three scripture spikes. When those spikes stabbed into someone, that person's cultivation base would be sealed. Even an 8-Essences expert who was struck by them would find their cultivation base severely dropped, if not for all eternity, then at least for a significantly long period of time!

That person would drop from the 8-Essences level to the 7-Essences level, and perhaps even cease to be a Paragon.

Moments ago….

The danger felt by the 8-Essences Paragon caused her to tremble. She had considered every angle to the situation, but had never imagined that the Mountain and Sea Realm would be equipped in such a way. Nor could she ever have imagined that these Doyens, who were comparable to Imperial Lords, would just sit and watch countless Mountain and Sea cultivators die, and would do nothing as the First through Seventh Mountains were destroyed.

Such patience was terrifying, and left the 8-Essences Paragon completely shaken.

And that was because she had no idea how many other tricks the Mountain and Sea Realm was patiently waiting to reveal!

It was even possible to say that the longer the Mountain and Sea Realm kept fighting, the worse things were going for the 33 Heavens, and the more likely that they might eventually lose.

As the 8-Essences Paragon fell back, she looked at the Heaven Severing Doyen, and what drew her attention most was his aura. Previously, she had taken him to be dead, and could never have imagined that it had all been a trick!

“This is all a trap! A trap prepared for countless years to target an 8-Essences Paragon!!

“This man is the Heaven Severing Doyen, and at the same time, is not. What died before truly was the person who had cultivated the Heaven Severing Scripture to the point where he was on the very cusp of reaching the Doyen level.

“But this man here… is a discarnate soul who was placed into the body of the Heaven Severing Doyen by means of some grand magic. He is like a second life; should the Heaven Severing Doyen actually die, then the discarnate soul would possess the body, and thus still be able to wield… the Heaven Severing Scripture!!”

The 8-Essences Paragon’s face fell as she realized all these things. However, it was at this point that the voice of Heaven Severing Doyen Fang Hehai’s voice echoed out through the Heavens.

“Heaven Severing Spike!”

His forehead exploded open in a mass of crimson blood as a spike burst out, filled with scriptural power that could end the Heavens and crush the Earth. It flew out with incredible speed, and at the same time, Fang Hehai’s body withered rapidly, until his aura was completely gone.

In the moment before his eyes shut… he looked over at his grandson, his most cherished descendant, and the person who made him more proud than anyone else.

He had no desire to part ways, and his gaze was filled with both sadness and well wishes….

Finally, he closed his eyes.

Rumbling echoed out as the spike shot toward the 8-Essences Paragon with incredible speed. As for Meng Hao, he was trembling. That was his own grandfather, who had gone missing for years all because of him.

“Grandpa….” he murmured, tears welling up and spilling down his cheeks. Up to this point in the war, countless Mountain and Sea cultivators had felt the pain of watching friends and family die. Now, it was Meng Hao’s turn.

“No….”

Wails rose up from within the Fang Clan. Eyes turned red as tears poured down their faces. According to the ancient saying, ‘lead the people like your family.’ The Fang Clan members couldn’t help but think of that saying as they watched what was happening.

Rumbling could be heard as the crimson Heaven Severing Spike bore down upon the 8-Essences Paragon. She already had two spikes stabbed into her, throwing her cultivation base into chaos. Therefore, she was incapable of evading the final spike as it stabbed into her dantian, causing a miserable scream to echo out from her mouth. However, at the same time, a look of determination flashed in her eyes.

She had no time to ponder the matter in full. She was not a cultivator of the 33 Heavens; she and the other 8-Essences Paragon had both come by means of possession. However, she was not a discarnate soul, she was a full and complete soul.

She had stayed behind after the defeat of the Paragon Immortal Realm, in order to stand guard within the 33 Heavens. Her mission was to be prepared to make an early attack should the item sought by the two powers suddenly appear. If that happened, she was to wipe out the Mountain and Sea Realm and then wait to receive the two other powers.

But now, those two powers were still on their way, and her cultivation base was suddenly suppressed. The battle was dragging on, and the resources at the disposal of the Mountain and Sea Realm left her terrified.

Having no other choice, she screamed two words at the top of her lungs.

“Dao Fang!!”

Even as the Heaven Severing Spike stabbed into her, she called the words out, almost as if she were uttering a curse. If you looked at her mouth, it would seem like numerous sounds were emerging, but what echoed in the ears of all that could hear were only two characters!

Dao Fang!

In the moment that those two characters echoed out, backed by her curse-like delivery, at the very apex of the starry sky from whence the 33 Heavens had descended, a sinister voice suddenly rang out to fill the entire Mountain and Sea Realm, causing it and all of the Heavens to shake.

“I require a sacrifice from you.”

The Heaven Severing Spike stabbed all the way into the 8-Essences Paragon’s dantian in the same moment that the voice echoed out. A tremor ran through her, and her cultivation base began to drop. Instantly, one of her Essences was sealed, putting her at the 7-Essences level. Even then, she continued to weaken, until she was only a hair away from dropping completely out of the Paragon level!

Her face was pale as she spit out a mouthful of her blood, causing some of her soul’s longevity to fly out, lowering it by sixty percent.

The sacrificed portion of her soul’s longevity transformed into numerous threads which shot up into the starry sky toward its very apex. Then, the 8-

Essences Paragon began to laugh.

“Mountain and Sea Realm, you are doomed to be destroyed!”

Suddenly, at the highest point in the starry sky, a deep golden light flooded out. If you looked closely, you would see that it was a staff!

A gargantuan, shocking staff, which whistled down through the void toward the Eighth Mountain and Sea!

It was as if some unimaginably large giant were wielding that staff, causing the entire starry sky to tremble and shake. Massive rumbling sounds filled the entire Eighth Mountain and Sea as they shook violently and began to crumble. Finally, they exploded.

One strike of a staff destroyed an entire Mountain and Sea!

“Eee?” said a sinister voice, which sounded somewhat surprised. “How come the Mountains and Seas seem so much weaker?” When the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm heard the voice, they were completely shaken, and looked up into the starry sky to see an enormous figure approaching the Mountain and Sea Realm.

He held a staff over his shoulder, and as his features became clear, he was revealed to be… a humanoid monkey!!

His raging, murderous aura caused the starry sky to be thrown into chaos. A vortex of stars seemed to form around him, causing shocking energy to radiate out.

A single strike from his staff shattered the entire Eighth Mountain and Sea, and left the Mountain and Sea cultivators completely shaken. There were even some who began to cry out in despair.

Meng Hao’s mind was spinning as he stared at the monkey, who was none other than… Dao Fang!

He stood guard outside of the 33 Heavens, maintaining the last barrier imprisoning the Mountain and Sea Realm. After the summons and sacrifice of the 8-Essences Paragon, he was able to descend in person.

Heaven and Earth trembled, and the starry sky shook. It now seemed as if the Mountains and Seas could be completely wiped out at any moment. However, it was at this point that a voice suddenly rang out from within the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

It came from a spot in the void of the starry sky where, all of a sudden, two people appeared. One was Shui Dongliu, and the other was the second 8-Essences Paragon from the 33 Heavens.

It was the middle-aged man who didn't seem to be an Outsider at all. As soon as he appeared, blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth, and his face was deathly pale as he fell into retreat, staring at Shui Dongliu the entire time. His expression was one of agitation, fear, and even disbelief.

“Nine Seals! It's you! I can't believe you're still alive!!”

Even as the man fell back, a thunderous voice spread out in all directions, which belonged to none other than Shui Dongliu. “Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators, return to the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Prepare for the final battle!”

His voice seemed to carry a strange power, and as soon as the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators heard it, they instantly trusted it. Without hesitation, they began to fall back, even Paragon Sea Dream and the other powerful experts.

As the Mountain and Sea Realm's forces began to retreat to the Ninth Mountain and Sea, the 8-Essences female Paragon seemed inclined to stop them, but was unable. As for the 8-Essences male Paragon, his eyes flashed, but fear lingered in his heart, and he did nothing to interfere.

However… the newly arrived Dao Fang's lips twisted into a cold smile. The staff which he carried slung over his shoulders suddenly flashed out toward the cultivators who were retreating into the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

The staff was a deep gold color, and moved with incredible quickness. As it bore down on the Ninth Mountain, it grew longer and longer, until it was on the very brink of smashing down onto its target.

It was at this point that a cold snort echoed out, and Shui Dongliu took a step forward to appear atop the Ninth Mountain. He extended his hand and waved his sleeve, causing rumbling sounds to fill the air. The Ninth Mountain trembled as a boundless power flowed out from Shui Dongliu's sleeve, slamming into the staff.

BOOOOMMMMMM!

It was as if the staff had been blocked by some powerful force. It was incapable of moving any further down, and was in fact sent rebounding back. Dao Fang's pupils constricted as the staff vibrated in his right hand. Shui Dongliu had used only his own strength to block that staff, and although his face was a bit flushed, he seemed none the worse for the wear. The truth was that his qi and blood were churning, and his soul was unstable, and yet, his eyes were calm as he sighed inwardly.

"I'm… finally getting old…." he thought.

After his attack was repelled, Dao Fang did not make another move. He glanced coldly at the Mountain and Sea cultivators in their retreat, then looked back at the Ninth Mountain, which was now the final stronghold for the forces of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

As of this moment, all that remained… were the Ninth Sea and the Ninth Mountain.

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# Chapter 1384: Driving a Wedge!

The Mountain and Sea Realm was quiet. All of the surviving cultivators were gathered in the Ninth Mountain. There were only a few million, but those few million had survived a brutal war, and were the elite among the elite. Every one of them, regardless of the level of their cultivation bases, lived now after having braved endless carnage.

These were no longer amateurs when it came to battle. They had gained spirit and hope, and yet all of that… seemed to be wavering now.

How could they win…?

How could they even fight…?

Outside of the Ninth Mountain and Sea was an army of Outsiders tens of millions strong, who had the Mountain and Sea Realm completely surrounded. Further off in the distance were the 18th through 33rd Heavens, like enormous beasts that struck fear into the hearts of those who beheld them.

Most salient of all was the fact that leading this army of Outsiders were not just two 8-Essences Paragons. With the addition of the monkey Dao Fang, they now had three!

Three 8-Essences Paragons…. For all intents and purposes, the moment such a force had been revealed, the Mountain and Sea Realm was already defeated.

The world was lost, and the people were on the verge of being broken. The silent pressure weighing down on the Ninth Mountain and Sea made it seem like a dormant volcano…. No one spoke. Millions of cultivators looked silently at the scene surrounding them; virtually all of them were recovering from the wounds that riddled their bodies.

Did hope… even exist anymore…?

That unanswerable question continued to fester in the minds and hearts of everyone.

The war had turned truly bitter when the First Mountain and Sea was destroyed, and after that, one Mountain and Sea after another crumbled, until now, all that was left was the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Meng Hao looked out at that very Mountain and Sea, and his heart hurt as he realized that what he was looking at… really was his home.

But as the war raged on, death… became unavoidable. Family and friends alike were about to become nothing more than dust.

At some point, Xu Qing emerged from the crowd to stand at Meng Hao’s side. When he saw her, he reached out and clasped her hand. It felt cold.

As she gazed calmly into Meng Hao’s eyes, it seemed as if the mere act of holding his hand was the most important thing in the world.

The members of the Fang Clan also made their way to stand by Meng Hao’s side. His family came. His friends came. In this moment when all that remained of the Mountain and Sea Realm was the Ninth Mountain and Sea, for many people, Meng Hao was the standard-bearer of them all.

Further off in the distance, Patriarch Reliance sighed, carrying the State of Zhao with him as he also drew close. Also there in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were the Li Clan and the Wang Clan, cold and desolate, just like all of the other various sects and clans present.

Meng Hao could sense his sister’s aura on Planet South Heaven; she was with his parents.

As the Mountain and Sea Realm stood there in its silence, Paragon Sea Dream’s voice suddenly echoed out.

Looking up at Shui Dongliu, and doing nothing to prevent anyone from hearing her, she said, “You’re… really Nine Seals….”

When the Mountain and Sea cultivators heard her words, they also looked up into the sky. Even though not everyone could see what was up above, the bleakness in their hearts suddenly faded, and gradually, hope began to burn again.

They had all heard of Paragon Nine Seals, and throughout the events of the war, they had become more convinced than ever that he was a magnificent, glorious individual. To hear his name now suddenly filled them with deep anticipation.

Meng Hao looked up at Shui Dongliu, waiting like everyone else to hear his answer.

Shui Dongliu didn’t say anything at first. But then, after a moment had passed, he nodded his head and said, “Yes, I am Nine Seals!!”

The instant he spoke those words, all of the cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea were stirred into excitement. It was as if they had been resurrected from the dead, as if they once again had hope.

Nine Seals was a legend in the Mountain and Sea Realm, the Paragon who had actually created the entire Realm. In fact, he could rightly be called the ultimate Patriarch of every cultivator of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

Although everyone was excited, there were some people who reacted differently, including Meng Hao, Ksitigarbha, Sea Dream, the Mountain and Sea Lords, and select other individuals who were especially wise and perceptive.

“He’s actually not Nine Seals,” Meng Hao thought, sighing inwardly. He didn’t speak the words aloud, but because of the Paragon’s blood inside of him, he knew that Shui Dongliu… was definitely not Paragon Nine Seals.

There was something odd about how Sea Dream had worded her statement, as if her purpose in asking it was to get him to agree with her, and thus stir the passions of the Mountain and Sea cultivators.

If he went along with Sea Dream’s words, it would prove that he really wasn’t Nine Seals. If he denied her words to be truth… then the possibility still existed that he might actually be Nine Seals.

Meng Hao understood that, as did some of the others, although no one pointed it out aloud.

Numerous sea denizens who floated on the surface of the Ninth Sea first looked out at the scene beyond the Mountain and Sea Realm, then turned to look silently toward the Ninth Mountain. The entire Ninth Sea was currently blanketed by its will.

Even as Shui Dongliu’s words stirred the hearts of the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators, the voice of the 8-Essences male cultivator rang out from within the ranks of the Outsider army.

“Immortals of the Mountains and Seas, you… have lost this war. There is no need to continue the fighting. I can represent the 33 Heavens to offer you a chance at survival.

“Surrender. Abandon all resistance. Willingly allow us to seal your cultivation bases and become our slaves. This war… is over.

“If you surrender, some of you may be executed, but the majority will survive. Some sects and clans may be allowed to continue to exist. You might have no freedom, but perhaps… that in itself is a sort of luxury. In any case, you have no other options.

“Fight, or surrender? I will give you the time it takes an incense stick to burn to think. For those of you who wish to surrender, you do not need to state that desire out loud. Doing that might get you killed on the spot…. After the time it takes an incense stick to burn, the 33 Heavens will begin the final charge. Fellow Daoist Xuan Yin, Fellow Daoist Dao Fang, and myself, will also join in to attack the Mountain and Sea Realm full force!

“During the fighting, any who wish to surrender can simply switch sides and fight the Mountain and Sea Realm. We will accept that as your form of surrender!” Eyes glittering, the 8-Essences Paragon waved his hand, causing a stick of burning incense to appear.

What savagely malicious tactics!

By offering such hope to the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators, he also sowed discord among them. When it came time to fight, the cultivators would have to worry, not just about the Outsiders attacking openly, but about their fellow comrades-in-arms. No one could say for sure… what choice people might make in a moment of mortal peril.

Meng Hao’s pupils constricted as he realized that, even among the Fang Clan, there were people who appeared to be hesitating in contemplation. Although such expressions quickly vanished, it was impossible to tell whether their temptation had been dispelled, or merely concealed.

The Mountain and Sea Realm was deathly quiet. The cultivators couldn’t help but ponder the words of the 8-Essences Paragon. It was a critical juncture, and with the threat of death looming overhead, the idea of becoming a slave, despite being repugnant, was a way to stay alive.

Sea Dream said nothing. Shui Dongliu didn’t say a word. The Ninth Sea was completely silent.

The incense stick burned, and time passed. The silence became pressure weighing down on everyone. If Shui Dongliu hadn’t just stated that he was Nine Seals, then the Mountain and Sea Realm would likely have already dissolved into chaos.

When faced with life or death, one’s choices can easily become irrational….

However, even Shui Dongliu claiming the identity of Nine Seals did not have a huge impact. After all, the overall situation… seemed to be a completely hopeless one.

It was at this point that Shui Dongliu spoke, his voice both ancient and exhausted.

“Life and death are important things to everyone. Ensuring that one’s traditions and values can be passed on to future generations is something important to all sects and clans…. To me, being able to pass on the Joss Flame power and the bloodlines of the Mountain and Sea Realm… is also very important.

“Therefore, considering we have fought this war down to this point, any individual, any clan or sect, who wishes to surrender to the 33 Heavens may do so without my interference. I won’t kill you. It is your decision to make.

“Make your decision now, and I won’t question it. Everyone has their own fate, and I dare not interfere with that. However… once this moment passes, and the fighting begins, anyone who turns traitor on the battlefield can rest assured that even if I die, I will be sure to take those traitors with me into death, along with the Mountain and Sea Realm! Therefore, those of you who wish to surrender will leave the Mountain and Sea Realm post haste!” Shui Dongliu’s voice contained no viciousness, but instead, an unswerving decisiveness that everyone could detect.

Silence filled the Mountain and Sea Realm. The army of Outsiders looked contemptuously at the cultivators, as though the current turn of events were splendid entertainment.

Then, just when the incense stick was about to finish burning, a sigh rang out from the Ninth Mountain and Sea, from within… one of the great clans… the Wang Clan!

“I speak for the Wang Clan…. We choose to surrender!

“The earliest ancestor of the Wang Clan was not from the Mountain and Sea Realm, and only ended up here by accident…. Therefore, this war of the Mountains and Seas is something we shall not participate in.” The words spoken by the Wang Clan Patriarch caused most of the Wang Clan cultivators to sigh in relief.

However, a few of their number were clearly furious. One of them was Wang Mu, who tried to charge out from the ranks of the Wang Clan. Before he could, an ancient-looking hand reached out and grabbed him.

“NO!!” Wang Mu’s eyes were completely bloodshot as he screamed in defiance. However, the old man behind him sighed, then rendered him unconscious with a palm strike.

In that same moment, a beam of light shot up from within the Wang Clan, as a tall, elegant young man appeared. It was none other than… Wang Tengfei. Although he had his grievances with Meng Hao, in this moment, when the survival of the Realm was on the line, his choice was to stand with the Mountains and Seas.

However, the Wang Clan would not permit it, and he was prevented from leaving.

At the same time that the Wang Clan chose to surrender, the skinny old man in the Wang Clan’s bamboo forest sighed.

“How embarrassing….” he muttered. Shaking his head, he closed his eyes. He would not fight in the battle, but he wanted to see if the Mountain and Sea Realm… might be able to make a comeback. 1

After a moment of silence, a bitter voice spoke out from the ranks of another of the great clans, the Li Clan. “I speak for the Li Clan…. We surrender….”

When that voice echoed out, Li Ling’er, who was currently standing next to Paragon Sea Dream, began to tremble.

Tears flowed down her as she cried, “Patriarch, w-what… what are you doing?! We are cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm! I… I can’t believe… I’m even related to you!”

Note from Deathblade: Fellow Daoists, at this late stage in the novel, the theme of “you can’t trust what characters say” has been pretty well established. Don’t we all remember the Meng Li / Resurrection Lily incident? Don’t be so quick to just believe what you hear the characters say. I continue to see comments which quote or reference character dialogue as though it were a definitive explanation of cultivation ranks, plot points, history, etc. Just as in real life, the characters in Er Gen’s novels can be wrong, can lie, can make mistakes, etc.

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# Chapter 1385: Life or Death for the People of the Mountains and Seas!

However, no one responded to Li Ling’er. Instead, more declarations of surrender began to ring out in the starry sky.

“I speak for the Heavenly Dao Sect….”

“I speak for the Sen Clan….”

In the moments before the incense stick finished burning, one voice after another spoke out within the Ninth Mountain and Sea. With the exception of the sects from the Ninth Mountain itself, and some of the staunchest sects from the other Mountains and Seas, everyone seemed to be choosing to surrender….

Every voice that spoke caused Meng Hao to sink further into silence, until… suddenly a calm voice rang out, ancient and womanly. As soon as Meng Hao heard that voice, he looked up.

“I am the will of the Ninth Sea, and I… choose to leave the Mountain and Sea Realm. I choose… to surrender.”

In total, seven sects and eleven clans chose to surrender, as well as tens of thousands of individual cultivators. The final number of cultivators exceeded a million.

The moment that those clans and sects chose to surrender, their only option was to follow the command of Shui Dongliu and leave the Mountain and Sea Realm. Staying behind was not a possibility.

They were betrayers, and the Mountain and Sea Realm would not tolerate their presence in the final battle.

Gradually, they began to make their way out of the Ninth Mountain, taking their resources and their experts with them.

They did not delay or move slowly; they left as quickly as was possible.

The vast number of people involved left the power of the Mountain and Sea Realm reduced by nearly thirty percent. The sight of so many cultivators taking flight caused those who remained behind to tremble inwardly; they had assumed that only a small number of people who would actually surrender.

Who could have imagined that so many would give in…? After all, even one person surrendering would be a serious blow to the morale of the Mountain and Sea Realm as a whole, especially considering that the final battle was about to be fought.

Even the Outsiders had never expected so many people to surrender. When they saw what was happening, contemptuous looks appeared on their faces, and some of them even began to laugh. A wide smile could be seen on the face of the 8-Essences male Paragon. The main reason he had attempted to drive a wedge into the forces of the Mountain and Sea Realm was because of his fear of Shui Dongliu.

Although the Outsider army seemed to have the upper hand, deep in his heart, he knew that he had to reduce their power somehow.

And then the will of the Ninth Sea spoke out, causing the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators' minds to reel. The Ninth Sea was a part of the Mountain and Sea Realm, so for it to surrender….

The meaning behind such an act was profound, and many people didn't dare to even contemplate it. That was because… the Ninth Sea declaring surrender indicated that the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm as a whole had been so weakened by the destruction of the other Mountains and Seas that it was unable to maintain control over the Ninth Sea.

If you likened the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm to the commander in chief, then the Nine Mountains and Nine Seas were like generals. Now, sixteen of those generals were dead, and the commander in chief was so weak that of his remaining two generals, one of them chose to turn traitor.

Apparently, not even Shui Dongliu had considered this would happen. An intense light began to shine in his eyes as his gaze came to rest upon the Ninth Sea, and then, he sighed.

Meng Hao trembled as he stared at the Ninth Sea, at the waves lapping across its surface, and the heads of the various sea denizens sticking up out of the water. As the Ninth Sea slowly began to move off, Meng Hao suddenly shouted in a voice like thunder, “Is this because of me?!”

It was a question that perhaps should not have been asked, and yet, he couldn’t hold back from doing so.

After a long moment of silence, the will of the Ninth Sea spoke back.

“You’ve grown to the point that I regret being so stubborn back then. But… even if you didn’t exist, I would still make this choice. I am the only Sea left in the Realm. If the Mountain and Sea Realm itself were strong, then I could bow my head to its authority. But now… the Realm is about to disappear, and I don’t want to be buried along with it.” With that, the Ninth Sea flowed away from the Ninth Mountain like a retreating tide, until… the two of them were completely separated.

As traitors left, the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators who had chosen not to surrender felt as though their hearts were being stabbed by knives. By this point, their morale had reached rock bottom.

And then, the incense stick stopped burning….

However, the final battle didn’t begin immediately. The sects and clans who had surrendered, as well as the random cultivators, flew out in various directions, keeping their distance from each other.

As they dispersed, the 8-Essences male Paragon hesitated for a moment before making the call for the final battle.

The surrender of the Ninth Sea was something he took very seriously. It was with icy eyes that he examined the remaining cultivators of the Mountain and Sea, and saw how dejected they looked.

It was in that exact same moment that someone in the Mountain and Sea Realm shouted out in rage that the traitors should be chased down and killed. Some people even began to demand of Sea Dream, Shui Dongliu, and Meng Hao, that they be allowed to do so.

Sea Dream and Meng Hao maintained bitter silence, but Shui Dongliu waved his sleeve.

“If they want to go, let them go. From now on, they have nothing to do with the Mountain and Sea Realm!” Although his voice seemed calm, the 8-Essences male Paragon could detect the pain and disappointment therein.

Then, he began to laugh.

Time passed as all of the cultivators who had chosen to surrender left the Mountain and Sea Realm, and neared the Outsider army. Finally, the 8-Essences Paragon waved his hand.

“Let the final battle begin!”

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!!

Instantly, the Outsider army which surrounded the Ninth Mountain roared, and then charged toward it, bursting with killing intent and ferocity.

Soon, the front lines of the Outsider army crossed paths with the surrendering Mountain and Sea cultivators, who were trembling. Mixed feelings could be seen on their faces; after all, the Mountain and Sea Realm had once been their home….

However, even as the Outsider army swept past the surrendering Mountain and Sea cultivators, a lone cultivator threw his head back and laughed.

“My name is Zhao Tianliang! Live for the Mountains and Seas, die for the Mountains and Seas!!”

Without the slightest hesitation, he self-detonated. However, the sound of the explosion didn’t attract any attention from the army at large. Neither did his final shout before death.

But…. After that, more self-detonations occurred. Within the army of Outsiders that surrounded the Ninth Mountain, 1,000 self-detonations erupted. Then 10,000. Then 100,000!!

With each self-detonation, a voice cried out, defiant, begrieved, and maddened.

“My name is Sun Youhai! Live for the Mountains and Seas, die for the Mountains and Seas!!”

“My name is Chang Yi! Live for the Mountains and Seas, die for the Mountains and Seas!!!”

Rumbling echoed out that could shake Heaven and Earth. Self-detonations occurred that could strike fear into the hearts of celestial beings. Tens of thousands of explosions transformed into a mighty, destructive power. At one point, an entire sect chose to unleash all of their madness by means of self-detonation!!

“My name is Zhou Sheng! Fellow Daoists of the Mountains and Seas, if you manage to stay alive, commemorate this sacrifice that I make this day!!”

“My name is Liu Wenyu. If anyone survives this war, please… avenge my death!!”

Massive rumbling sounds echoed out as the entire sect self-detonated. The madness of the Mountain and Sea cultivators left the Outsiders completely shaken. As for the cultivators who stood on the Ninth Mountain, their hearts were trembling.

It wasn’t just sects who made such a choice. Next, an entire clan suddenly scattered in all directions and then self-detonated, regardless of the level of their cultivation bases. As they exploded, they called out their names, and although they were loathe to part with the Mountains and Seas, their rage toward the Outsiders caused the power of their sacrifice to shake the starry sky!

“On this day, our Heavenly Dao Sect destroys our Dao. Mountain and Sea cultivators, remember what we have done this day!!”

“Our Sen Clan started this war a million strong, and now, only nine thousand remain. Our clan has been almost completely wiped out. Now, all nine thousand of us self detonate. Our bloodline will be wiped away, and yet we hesitate not. Mountain and Sea cultivators… avenge our deaths!!”

“The Li Clan… are the descendants of Lord Li. Perhaps we are not cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm, and perhaps we shouldn’t even be here. But… this is our home! Today… we willingly destroy our Dao! Young Ling’er, you had no need to curse me, your Patriarch!!!”

Massive booms echoed out. This shocking turn of events threw the entire Outsider army into utter chaos. Even the 8-Essences male Paragon’s face fell; he could never have imagined that this would happen. At the same time, the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm were trembling, and their morale erupted from the depths of despair.

The desperate and bitter voices which echoed out caused the blood of all the cultivators of the Mountains and Seas to boil. Their eyes were crimson as they began to roar with madness.

The words of her Patriarch echoed in Li Ling’er’s ears, and she shook as she watched her own Li Clan dying.

As of this moment, even more self-detonations were occurring!

“Our Wintergate Sect shall destroy our Dao. Let Heaven and Earth bear witness, let the starry sky testify, that the blood of our sect shall curse the 33 Heavens to die a horrible death!!!”

“How could the Clearsky Society possibly betray the Mountains and Seas!? DIIIEEEEE!!”

“I, Dao Yunali, am a cultivator of the Mountains and Seas. Remember my name, you villainous Outsiders!!”

Booms rang out as the self-detonations went on without end. From a distance, the glow of explosions lit up the starry sky of the Ninth Mountain, like countless blooming flowers. The only difference was that those flowers… were flowers of blood!

Meng Hao was trembling. As of this moment, he could sense that this was all part of Shui Dongliu’s plan. It had been obvious to him from the moment Shui Dongliu had mentioned allowing everyone to leave. Even still, he couldn’t help but be moved.

All of a sudden, he remembered something he had heard long ago, and now, the true meaning occurred to him.

After the Heavens were changed, the World Tree refused to surrender, and instead destroyed itself in the starry sky! 1

It was a Dao. It was the culmination of all types of natural and magical laws. Perhaps… it was the true Dao, the final evolution, which transformed… into an illusion, and yet truly existed… the Dao!

Suddenly, Shui Dongliu called out, “Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators, if we don’t fight now, then when will we!?!?”

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# Chapter 1386: Fighting Will Cleaves Heaven and Earth!

Shui Dongliu’s words seemed to cleave Heaven and Earth, to open up a massive door. The cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm, with all their pent up madness caused by everything that was happening, now burst out in a murderous charge!

The final battle had begun!

The battle, and in fact the war, had already been lost by the Mountain and Sea Realm. However, despite losing… they still had their dignity. Even if they died, they would make the enemy feel pain, a pain that would last for a lifetime, and make it impossible to forget the dignity and spirit of the Mountain and Sea Realm, and… how terrifying it was!

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

The self-detonations continued. However, not all of the defectors were secretly loyal. Some of them really were betraying the Mountain and Sea Realm. However, because of the chaos unleashed by the double-dealing, even the traitors were fell upon by the Outsiders.

The Ninth Sea, who truly had turned traitor, was not affected.

Neither was the Wang Clan. Just when it seemed they were about to be overwhelmed, a beam of sword light descended, separating them from the army. That was the handiwork of the 8-Essences male Paragon. Even as he grimly and furiously watched events play out, he took time to protect the Wang Clan.

As for all of the true traitors, after being attacked by the surrounding Outsider army, none of them chose to self-detonate, and yet… they didn't prolong their lives much longer than those who did.

The scene outside of the Ninth Mountain was one of utter chaos. Even as the voices continued to ring out, followed by the booms of self-detonation, the rest of the Mountain and Sea cultivators charged out into battle. Their eyes were completely bloodshot, and they had long since reached a state which was impossible to describe in terms of morale.

According to an old saying, an army burning with indignation is bound to win. However, the Mountain and Sea cultivators were not simply burning with indignation. They were burning with madness and insanity. To them, the whole world was blood, and anything that was not that same bloody color would be savaged by them until they were.

These cultivators had no fear of death, and given the chance, they would self-detonate in the moment before dying. They did so with no hesitation or shying back, and their shouts struck fear into the hearts of the Outsiders.

"I killed one of these fools, but that's not enough!!"

"Hahaha! I killed five Outsiders, that's good enough for me, I can die happy!!"

"Father, we'll be reunited soon!!"

"I used to be afraid of dying, but now I realize… that there is nothing to fear in death! Bring it on, you damned Outsiders. Bring it on!"

"DIE!!"

Roars echoed out, and explosions rocked Heaven and Earth. The cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm had gone mad. There were millions of them going up against tens of millions of Outsiders, and yet… it was the Outsiders who were being pushed back!!

All of the Outsiders’ scorn, mockery and cruelty vanished, to be replaced by shock, confusion, and astonishment.

They were completely shaken by the madness of the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators, and in fact couldn’t understand this level of dedication. The mercilessness and bloodthirsty way that the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators fought left them flabbergasted.

It was almost as if the tide of battle had completely shifted in the opposite direction.

Every single cultivator of the Mountain and Sea Realm joined in the fight. Only the mortals did not. Among that fighting force was… Ke Jiusi, Meng Hao’s Master Pill Demon, Sun Hai, Taiyang Zi, the Echelon cultivators, and other familiar faces.

There was Chen Fan, Wang Youcai, Fatty, Li Ling’er, Ji Yin… the Patriarchs of the Fang Clan, and also… Fang Wei. And even more.

By this point in the war, there was no need for troop formations or complicated strategies. Xu Qing gritted her teeth, left Meng Hao’s side and began to slaughter her way into the army of Outsiders. War was not the time to ruminate over matters like love and romance.

Meng Hao was also there. The three Outsider Paragons, as well as all of their Imperial Lords, were battling their way onto the Ninth Mountain. Shui Dongliu was fighting, as was the Paragon puppet, Ksitigarbha, the Mountain and Sea Lords, and Paragon Sea Dream, who was burning her own life force!

In addition to all that were the various Chosen who had acquired good fortune in the 33 Hells. They were the ones holding off the Imperial Lords, while Shui Dongliu single-handedly handled Dao Fang. That particular battle caused the entire Ninth Mountain to shake and eventually start to show signs of crumbling.

Sea Dream, the Paragon Puppet, and Ksitigarbha were running on fumes as they pinned down the 8-Essences male Paragon. As for Meng Hao, he brimmed with infinite killing intent as he fought the person who had brought about the death of his Grandpa Fang… the female Paragon with the weakened cultivation base.

FIGHT!!

Heaven and Earth wept, and the starry sky wept tears of blood. On the various planets, the mortals more or less understood that some shocking event was occurring beyond the sky. After all, it had been some time since they had glimpsed either the sun or the moon.

From up above, countless dots of light could be seen, which were lanterns the mortals were using to light the endless night as they prostrated themselves to the Heavens, and offered up prayers.

From the beggars to the Emperors, everyone was doing the exact same thing….

This was a war of complete genocide. If the Mountains and Seas were defeated, it wouldn't just be the cultivators who died. The mortal world would also cease to exist….

Not even the Outsider Paragons could ever have predicted that the final battle would be so brutal, and yet, that was exactly how things were playing out.

The cultivator with the unusually large head sped across the Ninth Mountain, causing headaches for the powerful experts of the Mountains and Seas wherever he went. Although his cultivation base seemed comparable to the people he was tangling with, he rarely spent time in open fighting.

The overall situation was only getting worse for the Mountain and Sea Realm. On all fronts, it was essentially the same. Although Meng Hao was able to force the female Paragon back across the battlefield, he couldn't kill her. Furthermore, the interference from the large-headed cultivator was only causing his murderous aura to burn hotter.

Everyone was struggling to hold the line, however, it wouldn’t be long before a breach was opened, and the Outsiders burst in like a flood!

The armies clashed, and the millions upon millions of Outsiders were relentlessly pushed back. However, there were simply too many of them. The berserk fighting state of the Mountain and Sea cultivators could only last for so long. As the self-detonations continued, and as the cultivators grew wearier, casualties mounted on both sides.

Over and over again, cries rang out across the battlefield of: “Live for the Mountains and Seas, die for the Mountains and Seas!” It was the battle cry of the Mountains and Seas, and apparently, as long as those words could be heard echoing out, the Mountains and Seas would not fall. The moment the words ceased to be heard, it would mean the Mountain and Sea cultivators were all dead.

On one part of the battlefield that Meng Hao couldn’t see, was Taiyang Zi. Soaked in blood and screaming savagely, he was not just fighting, he was unleashing complete savagery. However, in his madness, he was losing strength. His magical techniques were exhausted, his divine abilities spent, his magical items used up. And yet, he lunged forward and savagely buried his teeth into the neck of an Outsider. That Outsider had a higher cultivation base than him, but in its shock, it could do nothing more than let out a bloodcurdling scream.

Taiyang Zi ripped at the Outsider’s throat with his teeth, ignoring the violent blows of other enemies blasting into him as he did so. Mad ruthlessness gleamed in his eyes, which were completely devoid of any regret.

In the end, when he began to lose consciousness because of the unceasing attacks of the surrounding Outsiders, he suddenly smiled.

“Live for the Mountains and Seas, die for the Mountains and Seas! I am Taiyang Zi!!” A boom rang out as he self-detonated. Although the power of the explosion wasn’t enormous, he didn’t hesitate for a moment in his decision!

The Outsider whose throat he had been slashing at was ripped to shreds by the explosion. The other surrounding Outsiders managed to avoid death, but were seriously injured. Moments later, an enraged wave of Mountain and Sea cultivators surged in to take advantage of the situation.

The Outsiders’ fear was visible in their eyes. From their perspective, these Mountain and Sea cultivators were not Immortals; they were a race even more savage than that.

On another part of the battlefield, where the Three Great Daoist Societies were making their stand, Fan Dong’er was there, her hair in disarray as she fought. She no longer looked anything at all like a Divine Daughter; she seemed out of her mind as she fought with complete and utter ruthlessness.

She had been a proud person, the Divine Daughter of the Nine Seas God World. But then came the defection of the Ninth Sea, which was a huge blow to the God World from the Ninth Sea. Fan Dong’er couldn’t wrap her mind around it. The Ninth Sea was her home….

The Ninth Sea hadn’t just taken away the sea beasts which resided in it; many of the Nine Seas God World disciples had left with it, even some of the Patriarchs. Their departure had caused the glory and splendor of the Nine Seas God World to fade into nothing.

Fan Dong’er didn’t leave with them. She stayed with some of the other Senior members of the sect, and the rest of the disciples, to slaughter their way into the Outsider army. She was exhausted, and was soaked in both her own blood and the blood of the enemy.

Her once beautiful face had been slashed by a magical blade, opening up a grisly wound that made her look even more ferocious. Normally speaking, she wouldn’t have been able to last this long in the fight. However, a corpse floated behind her, whose hair flew out to defend her constantly.

Fan Dong’er laughed bitterly as she continued to fight. And yet, her exhaustion only increased. She cut down one more Outsider, and that Outsider’s dying counterattack shattered most of her heart’s blood vessels.

“Am I going to die now…?” she thought, coughing up a mouthful of blood. As she began to lose consciousness, she looked toward the Ninth Mountain and just barely managed to catch sight of Meng Hao.

“Goodbye….” she said. Sighing, she was just about to self-detonate when the white-robed corpse behind her suddenly looked down at her with a benevolent expression. Sighing, the corpse’s hair suddenly flew out, wrapping Fan Dong’er up in a cocoon which sank down into the starry sky.

If there was a bottom to the starry sky down below, then that is where they went…. No one else on the chaotic battlefield took note of their departure.

Further off in the distance was a middle-aged cultivator, who threw his head back and laughed maniacally. He was covered in so many wounds it seemed impossible that he could still be alive. Numerous flying swords were stabbed into him from all angles, and he was completely soaked in blood. Despite all that, he looked as ferocious as ever as he slaughtered his way into the Outsider army, laughing the entire time.

“I am Song Luodan, you bastards! Dao Child of the Song Clan! I defeated Meng Hao once before. Why don’t you Outsider scumbags do me a favor and just DIIEEEE!”

Song Luodan was now in the Ancient Realm, but he fought with such brutality and power that the surrounding Outsiders were completely terrified, and tried to avoid him at all costs. As he slaughtered his way through the battlefield, Outsider corpses began to pile up around him. Eventually, his energy weakened and his aura disappeared. He came to a stop, surrounded by a multitude of corpses. He looked almost like he was simply resting there silently for a moment, silent.

However, after a bit of time passed, the shocked Outsiders began to edge closer.

At that point, one of the Outsider Elders sighed with mixed emotions and murmured, “He’s finally dead….”

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# Chapter 1387: Planet South Heaven In Peril!

The Mountain and Sea cultivators fought on, along with Sea Dream and the Paragon puppet. Sea Dream hadn’t accomplished much in the fighting so far. Her cultivation base had long since been in a state of atrophy, and it was only with the support of the Paragon puppet that she managed to continue fighting without suffering defeat.

As for Shui Dongliu, his attacks caused the starry sky to tremble as fantastic lights flashed about, accompanied by roaring booms.

Meng Hao’s eyes abounded with killing intent as he fought the 8-Essences female Paragon. Because of the Three Scripture Spikes, her cultivation base had dropped to the level of an Imperial Lord, and even seemed to be slipping toward that of a Dao Sovereign.

Meng Hao attacked without mercy. His Paragon Bridge descended, the crushing power of which left the female Paragon coughing up blood. She tried to flee, but then he unleashed his Demon Sealing Hexing magic!

The Essence of space began to form as he tried to seal her, but it was in that exact moment that the large-headed cultivator suddenly appeared and unleashed a bizarre magical technique. Booms rang out, and the blood drained from Meng Hao’s face as his Essence of space was suddenly interrupted.

The shocked female Paragon coughed up blood; moments before, she had felt the shadow of death looming over her.

That didn’t cause Meng Hao to pause, though. Even as he fell back, he unleashed the Fourth Hex, the Self Hex, causing a multitude of clones to appear, all of which charged toward the female Paragon in shocking fashion.

The Paragon’s scalp went numb as she retreated in the face of countless Meng Hao clones all unleashing the God-Slaying Fist!

The convergence of so many God-Slaying Fists caused the starry sky to tremble, and filled the entire area with a towering murderous aura.

“NO!!” she screamed. Unwilling to be defeated, she bit the tip of her tongue and spit out some blood, unleashing a secret magic that instantly caused her to grow blurry. At the same time, she produced a vast quantity of different magical items, holding nothing back as she then used even more secret magics to avoid the deadly fist strikes.

It was in that exact same moment that the large-headed cultivator popped up yet again. Simultaneously Meng Hao suddenly performed an incantation gesture with his left hand and jabbed it toward the man.

“I’ve been waiting for you to show up!” he said.

Hexing magic was unleashed, and yet, a strange gleam appeared in the eyes of the large-headed cultivator. Even as the power of Meng Hao’s Hexing magic closed in, he suddenly split into two.

One version ended up trapped by the fetters of the Hex, whereas the other took a step to appear by the side of the female Paragon. Then, his body began to wriggle and shrink, except for his right hand, which grew larger as it apparently converged all of the power of his flesh and blood. Even as his body became completely out of proportion, a vicious expression could be seen on his face as he threw his own fist out to meet the God-Slaying Fist.

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!

Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth, but the same thing happened to the large-headed cultivator, who simultaneously dragged the female

Paragon away. Despite having been rescued, she was also coughing up blood, and the seriousness of the injuries caused her to stare hatefully at Meng Hao.

“You really remind me of my old Master,” said the large-headed cultivator, staring at Meng Hao with a serious expression as he wiped the blood from his mouth. 1

The female Paragon was currently not a match for Meng Hao, but because of the interference of the large-headed cultivator, Meng Hao was incapable of killing her.

Killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes as he leapt back into the fight with the two of them.

As they fought, the dazzling shine of magical techniques spread out in all directions.

The fighting going on elsewhere was just as bitter. That was especially the case with Sea Dream, whose face was completely ashen as she tenaciously refused to stop fighting. The current battle involved the absolute peak fighters among both the 33 Heavens and the Mountain and Sea Realm. The starry sky twisted and distorted. Few words were exchanged; everyone knew that in this battle, one side would be wiped out, or the other would!

Originally, fighting like this should have been glorious and dazzling within the starry sky. However, the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators were fighting with their last blaze of glory, causing the starry sky to darken and fade!

In this moment, the true glory belonged Song Luodan, and the other cultivators like him!

Then there were the cultivators who chose to self-detonate. They called out their names before becoming like bright stars shining out, casting light out once more into the starry sky.

However, that light didn’t last long. More and more cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm fell in battle, and soon the Outsiders were able to bypass them and start advancing upon the Ninth Mountain itself. In turn, Mountain and Sea cultivators fell back to try to stop them.

The battleground was gradually shifting from being outside of the Ninth Mountain to within its very borders.

The Outsiders had finally made it to the last of the Mountains. The starry sky was shattered, and the Ninth Mountain was quaking. Its Xuanwu turtle was howling miserably, a howl filled with grief and unyielding madness!

Meng Hao’s heart was trembling, and intense grief filled the hearts of Sea Dream and the other powerful experts. Ksitigarbha was laughing bitterly. Everyone knew that utter defeat was inevitable.

However, deep within their hearts, there was still a glimmer of hope. Although that hope was vague, it hadn’t disappeared completely, and clung to life like a candle flickering in the wind.

Even as the army itself fought closer to the Ninth Mountain, Meng Hao and the other experts blocked the Paragons of the 33 Heavens. Of course, that also meant that they themselves could do nothing more in the fighting.

Both sides were tying each other up.

All of them could do little more than watch as the Outsider army slowly and inexorably made its way toward the Ninth Mountain.

Soon, the four great planets were under attack!

The first to be destroyed was Planet West Felicity. The entire planet was bombarded by countless Outsider divine abilities and magical techniques, until it finally collapsed into nothing more than rubble. Heaven and Earth shook violently as countless lives were snuffed out.

Next was Planet North Reed. After the Outsiders poured into the planet, it became nothing more than crumbled ruins in the starry sky.

The sight was like a sharp knife stabbing into the hearts of all the surviving Mountain and Sea cultivators. Some began to laugh bitterly. They had already given up on the idea of surviving. Ignoring all feelings of exhaustion, they turned and went back to slaughtering the Outsiders.

However, the Outsider army was vast, and the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm were dying left and right. Although their madness struck fear and shock into the hearts of the Outsiders, in the end, the Mountain and Sea Realm's forces were too small.

Eventually, a third boom rang out within the space around the Ninth Mountain. Meng Hao watched with his own eyes as… Planet East Victory was transformed into ash….

"Impossible!!" Meng Hao's heart was trembling, and his eyes were bright red. He was still in the middle of fighting the large-headed cultivator and the 8-Essences female Paragon, and could hardly believe that what he was seeing was actually happening.

There in front of his very eyes, Planet East Victory exploded.

"The Seventh Mountain and Sea was destroyed, meaning that Planet Tiger Cage is gone. That's impossible! And Planet East Victory was fused with the first generation Patriarch! How could he possibly be destroyed?

"This is impossible…." Meng Hao's heart trembled as he then watched the Outsider army fighting its way toward Planet South Heaven. At that point, he began to grow more anxious than ever.

Although his heart was connected to Planet East Victory, his true home was Planet South Heaven!

"There's still hope!" Looking around at the shattered Ninth Mountain, he saw the hopelessly outnumbered Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators fighting against all odds. He watched the planets falling, and his heart was stabbed with pain.

"There must be hope….

“The Windswept Imperial Lord hasn’t appeared yet, nor has the successor of Immortal Ancient. Where is the Windswept Realm…?

“If they haven’t shown up yet, then there’s still hope….”

The flames of war burned ever closer to Planet South Heaven!

Planet South Heaven was Meng Hao’s home, and was occupied by the Fang Clan. Now that Planet East Victory was gone, everyone from the Fang Clan was charging madly back in the direction of Planet South Heaven.

As countless divine abilities were unleashed by the horde of Outsiders, Planet South Heaven’s spell formation appeared to defend the planet.

At the same time as the spell formation activated, numerous figures appeared outside of Planet South Heaven. One of them was Emperor Tang himself, backed by an army of puppets clad in black armor.

There was also Fang Xiufeng, Meng Li, Fang Yu, as well as all the other members of the Fang Clan who stood guard on Planet South Heaven. Their eyes gleamed with determination; they had pledged their lives to Planet South Heaven, and would die with it!

“I swore an oath to stand guard over Planet South Heaven… for 100,000 years!” Even as Fang Xiufeng’s voice echoed out, grim and determined, the army of Outsiders surged forth in attack.

At the same time, all of the members of the Fang Clan, as well as numerous other cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm who were connected to Planet South Heaven in a multitude of ways, raced over to fight both on Planet South Heaven itself, and in the skies beyond it.

Meng Hao’s eyes were completely bloodshot. Roaring, he turned to break free from the fight with the female Paragon and the large-headed cultivator, heading toward Planet South Heaven with all the speed he could muster, to join his friends and family.

His parents and sister were there, and all his fellow clan members. Fatty, Chen Fan, Wang Youcai, and Sun Hai were all racing in the same direction, as was Xu Qing.

In addition, there were Pill Demon and Ke Jiusi!

Planet South Heaven was Meng Hao’s weak spot. To him, it was the most important and meaningful place in the entire Mountain and Sea Realm!

Even Patriarch Reliance roared in fury as he fought his way toward Planet South Heaven, a place which was inextricably tied into his memories.

Massive rumbling sounds echoed out. Planet South Heaven did not collapse like Planet East Victory had, thanks to the bloodline spell formation of the Allheaven Li Clan. The spell formation fought back against the endless hordes of Outsiders, and yet, it was starting to fade.

Emperor Tang laughed bitterly as he waved his hands, sending the innumerable black-armored puppets out to attack. They were joined by numerous vengeful ghosts which flew out from the spell formation.

Among those ghosts were men and women, elderly and young. These were the Li Clan cultivators who had sacrificed their own lives oh so many years ago. In life, they had been tasked with defending the Mountain and Sea Realm, and they would do the same thing in death.

Planet South Heaven was shaking as the entire place turned into a shocking battlefield.

Meng Hao wanted to return to Planet South Heaven, but there was someone who disagreed!

“Think you can just come and go as you please?” said the female Paragon, eyes flickering with killing intent. Meng Hao had fought her relentlessly up to this point, putting her in numerous deadly crises. Although she now knew that he was an extremely powerful opponent, she still wanted to see him dead.

Recalling what Paragon Xuan Fang had said before he died, the female Paragon’s desire to kill Meng Hao grew even more intense. As soon as she realized that he wanted to leave, her desire to stop him exploded out.

“You aren’t going anywhere! I’m going to force you to watch as everything you care about… is completely destroyed!” Even as the female Paragon began to chase Meng Hao, the large-headed cultivator hesitated. Although he had followed along with the plan to come to fight in this battle, he hadn’t spoken much so far, which indicated the true feelings in his heart.

He sighed, but after a moment passed, chose to cooperate. Using his incredible speed, he shot after Meng Hao to block his path.

It was in that moment that rumbling sounds echoed out from Planet South Heaven. Meng Hao caught sight of his father and mother surrounded by Outsiders, coughing up blood. He saw Fatty and Wang Youcai, and all of his other friends, arriving on the scene. He saw Xu Qing laughing bitterly. He saw Patriarch Reliance roaring in fury, and he saw the alchemic flame within his Master Pill Demon flickering as it charged up to self-detonate.

Meng Hao was fearful, terrified, and his heart was being torn to pieces. A vicious expression appeared on his face as he let out a roar that caused Heaven and Earth to dim: “Screw off!”

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# Chapter 1388: We Mountain and Sea Cultivators!

The large-headed cultivator and the female Paragon were now facing the wrath of Meng Hao; simultaneously, they unleashed Essence power that transformed into a sea of light that blocked his path.

Rumbling sounds rose up as Meng Hao shot forward and slammed head first into the sea of light, allowing it to envelop him as he fought his way forward.

The female Paragon was shocked, and the large-headed cultivator was visibly moved. They had just joined forces to unleash a shocking attack, but instead of evading, Meng Hao was trying to force his way through it.

Booms could be heard as an asteroid formed around Meng Hao, which shattered after only a few breaths of time. Then he became an azure roc, which shattered just as quickly. Finally, the meat jelly appeared, gritting its teeth as it transformed into a suit of armor. It was only at that point that Meng Hao burst out from within the sea of light!

“Want to pass? Never!” A venomous gleam appeared in the female Paragon’s eyes, hatred for how Meng Hao had threatened her life during the recent fighting. She knew that he was powerful in terms of battle prowess, and that if he got past her, he would have a big influence on the fighting over Planet South Heaven. Therefore, she steeled herself in an attempt to block Meng Hao’s path.

Neither Paragon Sea Dream, the Paragon puppet, nor Shui Dongliu were capable of forming clones, and thus were completely tied down fighting Dao Fang and the other 8-Essences Paragon. Ksitigarbha and the other

Mountain and Sea Lords and powerful experts, as well as Wang Youcai and the other Chosen who had recently become Dao Sovereigns and Imperial Lords, were also caught up fighting their counterparts among the Outsiders.

Planet South Heaven was in critical danger!

The starry sky trembled as the Ninth Mountain teetered on the verge of collapse. This was absolutely the most critical moment of danger so far!

On Planet South Heaven itself, everything was shaking and rumbling. The seas and rivers ran red with blood. Emperor Tang’s black-armored puppets were fighting fiercely, as were the ghosts of the Li Clan. Because of them, the power unleashed by the spell formation was even more shocking than before. At the moment, all Outsiders who attempted to break through the battle lines to enter Planet South Heaven were cut down.

Unfortunately, despite how the Outsiders were cut down, and despite the vast power of the spell formation itself, it was impossible for it to deal with the sheer numbers involved.

The Outsider army was too vast, and as they charged to their deaths in the spell formation, it began to grow dim.

Meng Hao’s parents were completely spattered in blood. His sister was fighting with every ounce of strength she could muster, and Sun Hai stood by, protecting her. There were even a few times in which he sustained serious injuries to keep her safe.

Meng Hao saw all of this happening. He even saw his Master Pill Demon fighting ferociously, his alchemic flame burning bright. Although his cultivation base wasn’t incredibly high, the medicinal pills he summoned allowed him to bolster the other Mountain and Sea cultivators with his own alchemic flame!

Fatty wept bitterly as he fought. Of his once flourishing group of beloved partners, more than half were dead. Fatty was enraged to the point of madness, eyes bloodshot as he took vicious bites out of the enemy forces.

Chen Fan was taciturn, and trembling. Although he was fighting and killing the Outsiders, his mind seemed to be in another place. It was as if some important and weighty matter had filled him with conflicting thoughts, as if he couldn’t see through things clearly, and was struggling with a decision.

Then there was Ke Jiusi, who was able to lock down significant swaths of the Outsider army. In fact, because of Night’s divine ability, some of the Outsiders’ most powerful experts were sucked away into ancient times to fight!

To see everyone he knew in such bitter situations caused Meng Hao to tremble. His eyes burned with flames as he burst out of the sea of light, ready to fight. The large-headed cultivator instantly appeared in front of him and punched out with all of the power of his flesh and blood.

A boom rang out, completely shaking Meng Hao. However, the counterstrike from Meng Hao was just as devastating. Both parties fell back, blood spraying out of their mouths.

At the same time, the female Paragon uttered a magical curse, causing the sea of light to twist and seethe, then explode out with power that inundated Meng Hao.

“Want to get past here… I don’t think so!” The female Paragon chuckled coldly, backing up as she performed a double-handed incantation gesture, causing the sea of light to expand. Moments later, Meng Hao roars could be heard from within.

“You… just don’t know when to back down,” the large-headed cultivator said slowly.

However, even as the words left his mouth, a new sound echoed out with the roaring in the sea of light. Suddenly, booming sounds like that of a huge drum could be heard!

Boom!

BOOM!

BOOM!!

It was almost as if a giant were walking about within that sea of light. After the sound echoed out seven times, the sound of the roaring reached a level that was difficult to put into words. Then, a colorful beam of light shot out from inside the sea of light.

It was none other than Meng Hao!

He was covered in blood, but as he shot out, the starry sky trembled, and an indescribably murderous aura exploded out, seeming to freeze everything. The large-headed cultivator gritted his teeth, sending his cultivation base into full rotation as he slammed toward Meng Hao.

Even as the boom of their collision rang out, the female Paragon suddenly bit the tip of her tongue and spat out some blood. Her hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, and she suddenly seemed to age as she unleashed a strange Daoist magic that caused the glob of blood to transform into a sea, a second barrier after the sea of light!

After slamming into the large-headed cultivator, Meng Hao ignored any subsequent injuries to fly around the man, only to find a sea of blood now standing in his way.

A boom rang out, and the sea churned. The female Paragon let out a miserable cry, and her hair was thrown into disarray. She was shaking, and her skin was covered in rips and tears. However, the sea of blood held, and would not allow Meng Hao to pass!

“You shall not pass!!” the woman screamed. Meng Hao was stuck inside of the sea of blood, his face pale, his body trembling. It was at that point that, without the slightest hesitation, he produced the Sun Bow and drew upon his life force to unleash two arrows!

The first arrow pierced through the sea of blood, destroying more than half of it. The second arrow shot toward the female Paragon herself, causing her eyes to widen as she fell back. This in turn caused the large-headed cultivator, who had initially been focused on blocking Meng Hao's progress, to change his plan and move to save the female Paragon.

All of this happened in the time it takes a spark to fly off of a piece of flint. After shooting the two arrows, Meng Hao's body was significantly withered, but his eyes gleamed with determination. Ignoring everything else, he unleashed the top speed he could muster to shoot toward Planet South Heaven!

Unfortunately, he was a bit too late!

Outside of Planet South Heaven, Fang Wei was laughing. His eyes gleamed with ferocity, madness, and slaughter. He had lost his right arm, his left arm, and both his legs. However, he still had his torso!

"I am Fang Wei. The Wei in my name means to defend. Defend the Fang Clan!!"

As he fought on madly, other members of the Fang Clan chose to self-detonate, sending explosive power out to bury the Outsiders!

The Grand Elder fell in battle!

Fang Yanxu was there, hair in disarray, drenched in blood. Letting out a piercing cry, he self-detonated!

One Chosen after another fell in battle. There were many faces familiar to Meng Hao, and some which were strangers. However, as their voices rang out in the moments before their deaths, they became like swords that stabbed Meng Hao in the heart!

His parents were injured, Fang Yu was injured, Xu Qing was injured. Wounds crisscrossed Chen Fan and Sun Hai. Booms filled Planet South Heaven as the last of the black-armored puppets was destroyed!

Emperor Tang laughed bitterly as countless Outsiders blasted away at the Li Clan spell formation. Clearly, it was on the verge of complete collapse.

“The Li Clan is one of the Allheaven Clans,” he said. “Back then… we sacrificed our lives to create this spell formation. Today… we will make another sacrifice. Why wouldn’t we die for the Mountain and Sea Realm!?

“We Mountain and Sea cultivators live and die for the Mountains and Seas!” Emperor Tang’s laughter grew louder and louder as he charged into the fighting, joined by the countless Li Clan ghosts from the spell formation.

One living cultivator led the ghosts of his clan into a deadly offensive, slaughtering their way into the army of Outsiders, killing one after another after another!!

In the end, Emperor Tang’s laughter rang out as he decisively shouted out in a voice that echoed through all Heaven and Earth!

“We Mountain and Sea cultivators live and die for the Mountains and Seas!”

BOOOOMMMMMM!

When he chose to self-detonate, the last living member of the Li Clan exploded, after which all of the ghosts… also began to explode. In truth, the ghosts themselves could not self-detonate. What was exploding… was Planet South Heaven’s spell formation!

The Li Clan ghosts, the structure of the entire South Heaven Death Formation, were all exploding!

The spell formation shook all of the lands, sending out a shockwave that blasted away all wind and clouds!

The spell formation itself became resplendent light, and a screaming tempest that raged out in all directions. The Outsiders in the army were astonished, and those looks of shock were the last expressions to appear on their faces for all eternity!

The blast rattled out, transforming one Outsider after another into nothing more than ash. The huge boom caused all fighters in the war to turn their heads to look.

Outsiders and Mountain and Sea cultivators alike couldn’t help but look over.

What they saw was the shockwave of the spell formation spreading out in a ring, wiping out more than forty percent of the Outsider army around Planet South Heaven!

The Li Clan was an Allheaven Clan, a remnant of the true forces who had fought in the original war of the Paragon Immortal Realm. They swore to defend the Mountain and Sea Realm, and on this day, they lived up to their oath of tens upon tens of thousands of years!

Each and every member of the clan died. Not a single successor to the bloodline remained!

A wave of grief swept up into the hearts and minds of all of the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“We Mountain and Sea cultivators live and die for the Mountains and Seas!” Those words echoed out into their minds, affixing themselves there for all time.

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# Chapter 1389: Stand Behind Me!

Outside of Planet South Heaven, there were still millions of Outsiders who were trembling after having just survived a horrific catastrophe. It was something they would never be able to forget.

However… now that the spell formation was gone, Planet South Heaven… had lost its defenses. Gradually, the Outsiders’ eyes began to glow red. It was hard to say who began the charge, but soon, the entire army was raging toward Planet South Heaven!

It was also in this moment that, at the very apex of the starry sky, in the location where the 33 Heavens came from, things had been very silent since the descent of Dao Fang. But now, the starry sky there began to distort, as though a force of killing intent was pushing its way in!

At some undetectable location in the starry sky bordering the Mountain and Sea Realm in the Vast Expanse, a huge land mass was rumbling along, crushing anything that got in its way.

Dragging that land mass along were nine huge suns, radiating dazzling light!

They were coming!

Back on Planet South Heaven, the remnants of the spell formation were dissipating. As the millions of Outsiders barreled forth in attack, cracks and crevices began to appear on the surface of the planet.

Planet South Heaven was on the brink of collapsing!

All of the cultivators on the planet were coughing up blood, and up in the sky, countless Outsiders appeared and began to fight viciously. From the look of things, all creation on South Heaven… existed in the shadows of the Outsiders.

Planet South Heaven was now in a moment of indescribable crisis. Meng Hao’s father Fang Xiufeng coughed up a mouthful of blood as a hail of flying swords stabbed into him. When Meng Hao saw that happen, the entire world seemed to grind to a halt.

Even as he burst out from within the sea of blood, these were the images which filled his eyes.

“NO!” Eyes bloodshot, he performed a double-handed incantation gesture, blasting a path through the Outsider army. Countless Outsiders screamed miserably as they were transformed into ash.

Meng Hao shot with indescribable speed through the path he had created, arriving at Planet South Heaven just in time to catch his father as he began to fall down after having been stabbed through by numerous flying swords.

At the same time, he unleashed a vicious blow onto the lands down below.

BOOOOMMMMMM!

The ground quaked, and yet, was not destroyed. Instead, the power rebounded, shooting up into the sky, causing a massive force to slam into the Outsiders. Miserable cries could be heard from the Outsiders in the area as massive pressure slammed into them, causing them to explode.

Instantly, all Heaven and Earth was filled with a rain of Outsider blood!

The Outsiders who were still off in the distance gasped. Looking at Meng Hao in astonishment, they began to back up, not daring to get close at all.

Meng Hao’s hair was whipping around his head. He was like a volcano erupting with a murderous aura so intense it darkened everything.

Fang Xiufeng was critically injured, but it wasn’t a fatal blow. Seeing Meng Hao appear so suddenly, he smiled, a smile filled with warmth, pride, and delight.

The arrival of Meng Hao caused excitement to ripple through the members of the Fang Clan, and all the other cultivators on Planet South Heaven began to cry out passionately.

“Meng Hao!!”

“Crown Prince!!”

“The Crown Prince is back!!’ Countless cries echoed out. Tears streamed down Meng Li’s face as she helped Fang Xiufeng out of Meng Hao’s arms. There was no time for Meng Hao to reminisce. Seeing the bloodshot eyes of Xu Qing, Fatty, Chen Fan, Sun Hai, and his sister Fang Yu, and the wounds which covered them, Meng Hao’s fury rose to new heights.

Without speaking another word, he turned and unleashed his magical techniques and divine abilities. The Paragon Bridge rumbled out, and the Mountain Consuming Incantation caused countless mountains to appear. The nearby Outsiders were incapable of evading; considering the disparity between their cultivation bases and Meng Hao’s, vast casualties were inflicted.

Meng Hao seemed completely maddened as he charged out to unleash more slaughter. However, it was at this point that the large-headed cultivator and the female Paragon came speeding over from off in the distance. Venomous hatred flickered in the Paragon’s eyes as she performing an incantation gesture, then hit herself on the top of the head. Instantly, a violet pearl shot out from her mouth, which transformed into a violet sea.

The large-headed cultivator frowned, and then his body distorted as an intense level of power erupted off of him, which merged into the violet sea as it shot toward Meng Hao.

A vicious expression twisted Meng Hao’s face as he lifted the Sun Bow and fired three arrows!

Shooting three arrows caused him to cough up blood and lose vast quantities of life force. Three arrows was his limit. Three shocking arrows. The first was like a dragon that shot toward the large-headed cultivator, and when it slammed into him, blood sprayed out of his mouth as he was sent tumbling backward. Simultaneously, the second arrow closed in on him.

The third arrow stabbed through the violet sea toward the female Paragon, causing her eyes to widen. However, the large-headed cultivator was unable to extricate himself from his own danger to rescue her, so she had no choice but to grit her teeth and let the arrow stab through her. Instantly, she exploded.

However, it didn’t result in her death. After exploding, she reformed, whereupon her face was ashen, and the hatred in her eyes toward Meng Hao was even greater than before.

“I’m going to skin you alive!!” she screamed. The life-saving magic she had just used came at a price, and that price was that she would never again be able to attain an 8-Essences cultivation base!

Because of the three spikes that had been stabbed into her, she had already been placed in a situation where it would have been difficult to return to the 8-Essences level. However, the life-saving magic she had just used fractured her Dao foundation, ensuring that it would never be possible!

Simultaneously, blood sprayed out of the mouth of the large-headed cultivator, whose body was half destroyed after dealing with the second arrow. However, he quickly began to form back together, and at the same time, a powerful gravitational force appeared, which shredded tens of thousands of nearby Outsiders to pieces. In the blink of an eye, he absorbed them, and was back at his peak level of power.

“You’ve already reached your limit with those arrows,” he said. “I didn’t really want to kill you today, but we’re on different sides. Please forgive me.” After a moment, the large-headed cultivator sighed and then began to stride toward Meng Hao.

The female Paragon’s hair was completely disheveled, and she was filled with unending venom. Once again, she slapped her forehead, spitting out a mouthful of blood that was mixed with chunks of internal organs. The blood rapidly transformed into a corrupt and defiled sea of blood which was far stronger than any of the other seas of blood she had produced.

Shockingly, she even managed to pack some of her sealed and weakened Essence into the sea of blood, making it burst with a power that rivaled the 8-Essences level.

That was something she normally wouldn’t ever do, not even if the 33 Heavens were about to lose the entire war. After all, she cared mostly about herself, and as long as there were some way to escape the situation, she would take it. But now, her Dao foundation has been crushed, dooming her to never again reach the 8-Essences level. Her hatred had reached the level of insanity, and she therefore didn’t hesitate to spit out her sealed Essence, all in exchange for the chance to unleash… an 8-Essences divine ability!

“Corrupt your heart! Defile your Dao foundation! I call upon my life force magic to decimate your blood and send your soul into eternal destruction!” Gritting her teeth, she glared at Meng Hao and the surrounding members of the Fang Clan.

“And not just you, but your whole clan! Do you really think I wasn’t aware that the damned Heaven Severing Doyen was connected to you people by soul and blood?!” That was one of the main reasons for her hatred for both Meng Hao and the Fang Clan.

Even as the words left her mouth, the corrupt, defiled sea of blood shot toward Meng Hao so quickly that he had no chance to avoid or dodge it!

Meng Hao instantly unleashed all of the power of his cultivation base, and yet it did nothing to the sea of blood. The Paragon Bridge, and even his Hexing magic were all powerless to prevent it from boring into the pores in his body.

The intense pain caused him to let out a bloodcurdling scream. His eyes bulged, and blue veins popped out all over his face. However, this divine ability had been unleashed by the female Paragon at the cost of a huge sacrifice, and was something he couldn’t match up to.

The corrupt and defiled blood vanished into him, filling every part of his body. Instantly, it began to cancel out his own blood, to attack his heart, to defile and corrupt his internal organs.

He had already been weak and injured, but now he was shaking even more violently, and his consciousness was fading. He almost seemed incapable of standing upright, and did so only by sheer willpower. Inside, he was screaming and struggling against the effects.

“Kill them all!!” the female Paragon said. Then she coughed up a mouthful of blood and sat down cross-legged, using her divine sense to manipulate the corrupt and defiled blood inside of Meng Hao. She planned to wipe him away for good!

Clearly, she wished to vent her hatred for the Heaven Severing Doyen upon the entire Fang Clan. That hatred, coupled with the fact that Meng Hao had injured her so severely, ensured that she was devoted to the idea of destroying his Dao foundation.

Roaring battle cries rang out as the Outsider army once again charged forth in attack.

The large-headed cultivator sighed quietly, and chose not to do anything. He stood off the side, watching everything play out. Deep within his eyes, he seemed somewhat confused, as if he were pondering whether or not this war should ever have been fought.

Outside of Planet South Heaven, near the Ninth Mountain, Mountain and Sea cultivators were self-detonating, dying, and being shoved back across the battlefield as countless Outsiders continued to fill the Ninth Mountain.

The Ninth Mountain was teetering, filled with countless invisible cracks and fissures which left it on the verge of being completely destroyed.

The Mountain and Sea Realm was left with a single, crumbling mountain, and a broken planet.

Meng Hao was trembling in the sky above Planet South Heaven as the female Paragon personally attempted to erode his Dao. As his blood was burned away, he continued to inch toward unconsciousness. Even his cultivation base was falling.

Laughing bitterly, Meng Hao coughed up a mouthful of black blood filled with countless vile chunks of flesh.

Gritting his teeth, he looked around at his compatriots, then rotated what was left of his cultivation base and said to them, “Stand behind me!”

With that, he strode forward to fight against the Outsiders!

Note from Er Gen: I know there are some Fellow Daoists who aren’t very happy with this war. It’s also been exhausting to write it. However, the events of the war were finalized in my original outline for the story. Thankfully, we will be reaching the conclusion of the war soon, and I won’t be writing anything like this again in the story.

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# Chapter 1390: Farewell, My Hao’er

Meng Hao was already having trouble standing. The Outsiders were on the verge of killing his family, his friends, and all the other cultivators on South Heaven. He clenched his jaw and drew upon all the energy in his body to unleash a deadly attack, all to defend the people he cared about.

Everyone began to cry out.

“Hao’er!!”

“Meng Hao!!”

“Crown Prince!!”

Xu Qing wept, and walked up to Meng Hao to help support him. However, Meng Hao pushed her to the side and reached out to grab an Outsider who had been sneaking up to attack her from behind. He grabbed the Outsider by the throat, and then cracking sounds echoed out as its neck was crushed.

“Get behind me!” he said, panting. Then his hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture as he once again unleashed destruction upon the Outsider army.

And yet, there only seemed to be more and more Outsiders, and Meng Hao was getting weaker and weaker.

Off in the distance, the Paragon puppet’s eyes flickered, and energy erupted off of it as it tried to head in Meng Hao’s direction, only to be blocked by the other 8-Essences Paragon. Paragon Sea Dream was also locked down, and couldn’t get close to Planet South Heaven.

Shui Dongliu sighed, and a conflicted expression appeared on his face for a moment before fading away.

“Everything is for the Mountain and Sea Realm,” he murmured in a voice that only he could hear. He sighed inwardly. “The seal on Planet South Heaven cannot be unraveled by a Mountain and Sea cultivator, only the Outsiders. Plus, the right propelling souls are still required…. It’s almost time. Almost time….” Even as he waved a hand to unleash another attack upon Dao Fang, he looked up at the very end of the starry sky up above.

A miserable cry rang out on Planet South Heaven. Meng Hao was trembling, and his cultivation base was dropping rapidly. The 8-Essences female Paragon had paid an incredible price to unleash a divine ability that he could scarcely defend against. The power of that divine ability was relentlessly attempting to corrupt his blood and defile his body.

Everything began to go blurry, and countless voices were crying out in his ears. There were angry roars, boastful taunts, miserable shrieks, and bitter weeping.

“Die….” he said softly. He once again burst out toward the surrounding Outsiders, leaving behind a trail of blood and death. Outsider corpses were piling up everywhere.

His left arm was broken, but he had his right!

He gritted his teeth as his cultivation base continued to drop. Waving his right hand, he summoned numerous mountains. With each step he took, gale-force winds swept about, and the attacking Outsiders were destroyed.

He was protecting the people he cared for and loved. He didn’t want to see his friends and family hurt. His mind was empty, devoid of any thoughts except… that determination.

Countless Outsiders roared as they attacked, and even though he was slipping closer toward unconsciousness, his desire to kill was no less. His right arm was broken, but he merely gritted his teeth in response. His legs were crushed, but he ignored the pain. Defiant, shocking roars echoed out in all directions.

The Fang Clan cultivators, Fatty, Meng Hao’s parents, and all the other Mountain and Sea cultivators unleashed attacks in all directions. Thanks to the protection being offered by Meng Hao, some of them were wounded, but none were in danger of losing their lives.

However, the price paid by Meng Hao was that his cultivation base continued to drop dangerously.

The large-headed cultivator hovered there silently. Next to him was the female Paragon, brow furrowed in concentration as she directed her divine ability. Meng Hao was burning his life force. Exhaustion engulfed him like floodwaters. His vision was now not just growing blurry, it was also darkening.

He wasn’t sure how many Outsiders he had killed, but it seemed like no matter how many he cut down, more appeared in their place. He was weak beyond belief. He attempted to summon his Soul Lamps, to extinguish them as a way to recover. However, because of the corruption of his blood, his Soul Lamps were defiled, and he could not summon them!

He began to headbutt the Outsiders, causing black blood to spray out of his mouth. His cultivation base continued to fall.

Behind him, all those he was protecting were injured, maddened, and begrieved. Tears streamed down their faces as they looked at Meng Hao there in front of them, as solid as a mountain.

An endless field of Outsider corpses stretched out in front of him, beyond which was the seemingly infinite army. They looked at Meng Hao with fear and shock. He was no longer equivalent to a Paragon; his cultivation base had dropped, and he was teetering on the verge of collapse. However, the intense murderous aura which radiated out of him could shake Heaven and Earth.

As he stood there surrounded by death, energy surging, the Outsiders were so frightened that they didn't dare to advance any further. Conflicted expressions could be seen as they looked at Meng Hao. Cultivators like him were rare in the 33 Heavens, but after invading the Mountain and Sea Realm, they had seen one after another.

And now, they were facing Meng Hao.

For the moment, the battlefield went silent, and although Meng Hao's eyes were somewhat blank, he managed to quietly say, "Qing'er, bind my wounds."

Xu Qing approached, tears streaming down her ashen face. She ripped a strip of cloth off of her garment, and as all of the nearby Outsiders and Fang Clan cultivators watched, she wrapped it tightly around his broken right arm.

Seeing her tears, he murmured, "Don't cry. Tighter now, otherwise it might slip."

Xu Qing bit her lip and quietly bound the other arm, making sure the bandages were tight.

Even as the Outsiders stood there, terrified and unwilling to advance, the female Paragon's eyes opened and she cried out shrilly, "Kill them all!!"

Her voice, and her status, ensured that the Outsiders only hesitated for a moment before erupting with powerful roars. Then, the army surged like floodwaters toward Meng Hao.

Planet South Heaven trembled, and crevices opened up all over its surface. Apparently, it was on the very brink of collapsing.

As Meng Hao stood there, fighting to clear his vision, the mastiff flew out from his bag of holding, roaring as it charged into the Outsiders.

The Blood Demon ripped open a rift and emerged, and Meng Hao's Blood Spirit appeared, both of whom attacked the Outsiders viciously. Meng

Hao’s legs were shattered, making it impossible to walk, but he stood there like a mountain, allowing the virtual sea of Outsiders to bash into him. And yet, he didn’t fall!

His right hand shot out to lock around the neck of one Outsider, while his left fist slammed into the chest of another. Outsiders were launching divine abilities at him from all directions, but even as they slammed into him, he head-butted another Outsider.

This disturbing scene left the Outsiders completely shocked. The mastiff was fighting like mad, a streak of red light flying about. Soon, there were simply too many Outsiders, so the mastiff grabbed Meng Hao with its teeth, sustaining severe injuries as it dragged him back toward the Fang Clan cultivators.

Blood oozed out of the corners of Meng Hao’s mouth. His cultivation base had already dropped below the Immortal Realm. His fellow clan members, his family, and his friends were all weeping from the tragedy of what was happening.

“I….” Meng Hao struggled to rise to his feet, when all of a sudden a hand clasped softly onto his shoulder.

It was Fang Xiufeng. He had sustained serious injuries, and yet his hand still radiated intense pressure as he looked down at Meng Hao.

“Hao’er, allow father to step in. If you survive this, make sure to take care of yourself in the future….”

With that, Fang Xiufeng took a deep breath and, without giving Meng Hao a chance to say or do anything, strode forward toward the Outsiders. He was Meng Hao’s father, and he wouldn’t sit idly by while his own son fought for him. He was Fang Xiufeng!

He had been the greatest Chosen of the Fang Clan! He was the Clan Chief! But what he was most proud of was that he… was Meng Hao’s father!

“Today is the day that the Mountain and Sea Realm dies, and the Fang Clan dies. You want to wipe us out to end a blood feud. Well, if even a drop of Fang Clan blood survives, then no matter how many years pass, we will get revenge!” As Fang Xiufeng strode out, vast numbers of Fang Clan cultivators joined him to attack the Outsiders!

Earlier, Meng Hao had been protecting them. But now, they would protect Meng Hao!

Rumbling echoed out as the slaughter began. By this point, the cultivators of the Fang Clan had reached a state of madness that exceeded that of any of the other Mountain and Sea cultivators in the fight so far. The boom of self-detonations began to ring out.

Blood oozed out of the corners of Meng Hao’s mouth, and his vision faded even more. He heard the countless miserable shrieks echoing in his ears. Everything seemed to be moving in slow motion. He saw fellow clan members self-detonating. He saw… his father there in the middle of the Outsider army, slaughtering the enemy. However, he was already wounded, and suddenly, an Outsider landed a heavy blow on his chest.

He fell back, killing the Outsider, but unable to avoid a flying sword which stabbed into his heart!

The sword stabbed through him, causing a spray of blood to erupt out of him like a fountain….

Meng Hao was shaking, and his eyes were wide. As he watched everything happen, he wanted to make everything stop, but was unable to change anything.

As the sword stabbed through Fang Xiufeng, he let out an indomitable roar, and then… he looked back at his wife.

He looked at his daughter, and he looked at his son. In the past, he had intentionally looked at his son with awe and reverence, something that a father normally wouldn’t do. But he was willing to do just that. He was willing to set the example for others. He knew that Meng Hao was actually soft-hearted, and that he needed to learn about the bitterness of war. He needed to grow up in a way that could only be done in the most bitter of battles.

He had come to the realization long ago that he… wouldn’t be able to stand by Meng Hao’s side forever. Eventually, the day would come when he wouldn’t be there, and when that happened… he hoped that his son could be strong.

His love for Meng Hao was just like Ke Yunhai’s love for Ke Jiusi. It was profound, and filled with hope.

Today, he stepped out to fight knowing that he would die. He knew that considering the level of Meng Hao’s cultivation base, he shouldn’t be in such danger right now. Fang Xiufeng knew that it was only because of himself, and the other clan members. He didn’t want to be a hindrance to Meng Hao, and because of that, because of the incredible danger Meng Hao was facing, Fang Xiufeng chose to ensure that no such hindrance existed.

“Your path still stretches far out into the future….”

As father and son gazed into each other’s eyes, Meng Hao’s heart felt like it was tearing apart. He felt confusion gnawing at him, and fear.

“Dad….” he mouthed.

Fang Xiufeng smiled, then closed his eyes.

Farewell, my Hao’er….

When he opened his eyes, they shone with a bright light as he chose to… self-detonate!

His injuries were severe, so he knew that even if he didn’t self-detonate, he would die in the fighting. Instead, he would tell everyone: I am Fang Xiufeng! Live and die for the Mountains and Seas!

The boom that echoed out was not an unusual sound on the battlefield. But to Meng Hao, it was as if all Heaven and Earth were shaking!!

It was a sound that reaved the Heavens and sundered the Earth. Meng Hao’s entire world was completely shaken.

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# Chapter 1391: I Don’t Need Any Of It

“No….” Meng Hao was trembling as tears of anguish rolled down his cheeks. His world was crumbling. This was the second time he had experienced the pain of a father passing away. The first time had been with Ke Yunhai, and now, it was with his true father, Fang Xiufeng.

Memories from his childhood rose up in his mind; how his father had slaughtered Fang Clan cultivators to protect him, and how he had agreed to be stranded on Planet South Heaven for 100,000 years for him.

He remembered reuniting with his parents, and the look in his father’s eyes as he passed on his sword technique, simultaneously cowing all of South Heaven.

He remembered his father’s quiet encouragement when he had finally left Planet South Heaven.

He remembered how tall and strong his father seemed, like a mountain in his heart….

He remembered how, after becoming the Crown Prince of the Fang Clan, he had taken the whole clan to pay respects, and the tears of pride which had glistened in his father’s eyes.

He remembered how, after his cultivation base had reached towering heights, and the war had broken out, his father had looked at him with such awe and reverence. Back then, he didn’t understand that, and had even felt hurt, and alone. But he had buried those feelings, and focused on being strong. Now, in that single look that his father gave him, Meng Hao realized that it had all been done intentionally by his father.

He realized that his father chose to die because, at this critical and deadly crossroads in the war, he didn’t want to become… a hindrance to his son.

He hoped that his own death would give Meng Hao a chance to survive.

He love for his son was clear, and profoundly deep.

Everything he did was for his son, for Meng Hao….

A father is often stern, and doesn’t express his love for his children. But when the critical moment arrives… he will sacrifice himself, even if all that gives them is a bit more time to flee for their lives.

Meng Hao was trembling, and his hands were clenched tightly into fists. His heart was broken, and as his tears spilled down his face, they began to turn red. A strange sound began to echo in his throat, and it was hard to tell whether it was weeping or laughter, despair or rage.

Off in the distance, Fang Wei’s head flew off of his shoulders as he was decapitated…. In the moment before he was killed, his glaring eyes seemed to shout I am Fang Wei, I will defend… the Fang Clan.

Countless members of the Fang Clan wept with madness as they fought. One after another self-detonated, using that power to batter at the Outsiders.

Fang Yu was attacking like mad, just as everyone else was. Sun Hai was by her side. She was the true love of his life, and he would protect her even if he died doing so. Shielding her with his body, they slaughtered their way into the Outsiders.

Meng Hao’s mother was standing there in a daze, her hand extended as if she were trying to grab hold of something. However, there was nothing there…. She watched as her husband transformed into a blazing inferno, then into ash, taking numerous Outsiders with him into death. Trembling, she smiled.

It was a poignant smile, a soft smile, and at the same time, her eyes filled with both understanding and determination.

“When we got married, you said… that we would live together and die together….

“During Meng Hao’s Seventh Year Tribulation, you said that together we would defy fate.

“That night, you went, sword in hand, to cut down the vile clan members who persecuted Hao’er. You thought that I wasn’t watching, but I was. You returned, soaked in blood, and wept softly as you looked over Hao’er as he slept.

“In the Tower of Tang, you stopped me from going to save him, but I knew that at the same time, your heart was breaking. You were struggling just like I was, and I knew because when you held my hand, your hand was shaking even harder than mine.

“When Hao’er brought the clan to pay respects, you put on a casual front, but I know that you were more excited and proud than you had ever been.

“When Yu’er brought Sun Hai to meet us, I know that you had already run a thorough investigation on him. You wholeheartedly approved of your son-in-law, because you realized how sincere his feelings were for Yu’er.

“To ensure that everyone revered and respected Hao’er, you had to pretend that you were awestruck. I know that you did that… for Hao’er….

“You aren’t the type of person who is good at expressing himself, but I know that you love Hao’er and Yu’er just as much as I do….

“We were married on Planet East Victory, and sent to stand guard on Planet South Heaven. We spent many years together, but today, you’ve gone…. And I’ll go with you, because I remember that oath we made on the day we were married.

“We live together… and we die together!”

Even as the booms echoed out on the battlefield, Meng Li turned to look at Meng Hao and Fang Yu, and she smiled. She was loathe to part with them, but she understood the meaning of Fang Xiufeng's death. And so, she began to walk out onto the battlefield.

"Hao'er, Yu'er, flee from this place. It doesn't matter how, get away… Flee, and live."

Meng Hao trembled as he watched his mother walk out into the Outsider army. As they swept over her, a sudden explosion ripped through their ranks.

Blue veins popped out on Meng Hao's face and neck. His eyes were bloodshot, and he was shaking so hard that wisps of smoke began to rise up from his head.

"Dad…. Mom…." Tears flowed down his face. He wanted to cry, and at the same time, to laugh. He wanted to howl in anguish, and roar in rage. However, all the sounds were stuck in his throat.

In that moment, Meng Hao's world seemed to stop moving. His blood ceased flowing. Everything went still.

The only sound that could be heard was the beating of his heart, which pounded like thunder. It filled his mind, as if it wished to burst out from within him, to sweep through the starry sky and put an end to everything!

Suddenly, the cold voice of the female Paragon echoed out. "This planet will be destroyed. That man who just died was your father? And that woman who died with him was your mother? How amusing."

Her words were like a key that unlocked the cage within which Meng Hao had been festering. He suddenly began to laugh, a laughter filled with misery, dementia, and defiance!

"Gone…? Are they really gone…?

“You people, should die. You… shall die. You… MUST DIE!” As Meng Hao laughed, tears of blood streamed down his face. He was shaking harder than ever now, and at the same time, a terrifying aura erupted out of him.

When the female Paragon heard his laughter, she shivered uncontrollably, and her heart seized. For some reason, she even felt a bit frightened.

When the large-headed cultivator heard Meng Hao’s laughter, his pupils constricted.

Meng Hao slowly looked up, his eyes shining with grief as he looked out across the battlefield. “You want to corrupt my Dao? You want to defile my blood? You want to befoul my soul….?

“I was fighting back before. I didn’t want that defilement. But now I think, maybe that was a mistake….

“Who cares about a bit of befoulment!?!?” Eyes shining with coldness and insanity, he embraced the grief, and suddenly, the look in his eyes transformed into something bizarrely shocking.

“Who cares about some defilement? I don’t need my Dao. I don’t need my blood. I don’t need my soul. I only need… to kill you people!” Even as the words left his mouth, it was without the slightest hesitation that he stopped fighting back against the corruption and defilement within his blood. In the blink of an eye, he began to shake as the power of the curse transformed his blood, stained his soul, washed over his bones, and besmirched his Dao foundation.

All of a sudden, the aura which erupted from within him was no longer that of the Immortal Realm or the Ancient Realm. Instead, it was some type of fusion, an indescribable, unspeakable aura.

It was a multifarious aura. Moments ago, it had been completely ordinary, but now it was almost diabolical. Before, it was pure and clean, but now it was corrupt and defiled!

Black veins spread out across his face, and then his entire body. His hair grew incredibly long, and shrill laughter rang out as he stood there shaking.

As the laughter filled the air, he shattered his Dao foundation, and his Immortal meridians!

The surrounding Outsiders were completely and utterly shocked. They could sense something terrifying within Meng Hao, something that was neither Immortal, God, nor Devil. It was like a mutation!!

A shocking aura which had mutated out from an Immortal!

“You… you….” the female Paragon said with a gasp. She seemed astonished, even incredulous. She was sure that her corruption magic shouldn’t do anything like this. After unleashing it, the victim should have turned into a pool of defiled blood, but now… although Meng Hao clearly was being corrupted… he wasn’t dying, but instead was undergoing some strange transmogrification.

“How could this be!?” she thought. Her scalp was tingling from the bizarre, indescribable sensation she was now getting from Meng Hao.

It was almost as if Heaven and Earth were being affected, as if the starry sky were being influenced. All Immortals, all Gods, all cultivators, everything in existence could sense the incredible pressure coming from Meng Hao.

“What… what is that?!”

The large-headed cultivator’s eyes went wide, and he began to pant as he started at Meng Hao, his mind reeling.

Rumbling could be heard as Meng Hao slowly looked up. His eyes were now bright red, not from being bloodshot, but because, in his pain and anguish, they had actually turned crimson.

They were like gemstones, but if you looked at them long enough, they seemed like seas of blood.

He had bright red eyes, skin covered with black veins, and long pitch-black hair. As he stood there, all creation seemed to be trembling, and ripples were surging out through the starry sky. At the same time, a sensation of utter terror began to rise up in the hearts of the Outsiders.

It was as if… some sinister and mysterious pressure had suddenly begun to radiate out from Meng Hao.

“The only person who knows what choice I made back then,” he murmured, “is me.” With that, he waved his hand, and his Soul Lamps suddenly appeared.

They were different than before; these Soul Lamps burned with a mysterious, blue-violet flame!

The blue-violet fire made no noise as it burned, and yet the entire starry sky shook.

Both on Planet South Heaven and outside of it, Outsiders and cultivators alike, everyone, even the Paragons, even Shui Dongliu, felt a terrifying sensation!

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# Chapter 1392: Happy Now?

There was a Devil.

And there was a God, who was half of an Immortal.

Furthermore, there ought to have been a true Immortal!

The Paragon Immortal Realm was to be the birthplace of that Immortal. Apparently it had been foreordained that at some point in history, the Immortal would open his eyes, and stride forth to reach the ultimate peak of existence.

The Immortal was above the God, and could suppress the Devil!

That was the legend which was spoken of. However, the truth was… what was being produced by the Paragon Immortal Realm right now, was not the Immortal.

It was…

The Demon!

The Mountains and Seas were the birthplace, and all the resources of Heaven and Earth were called upon to instigate this change with the Immortal. He had watched his family self-detonate, and the starry sky shook. Amidst laughter and tears, the Immortal became… the Demon!

“The Demon…” murmured Shui Dongliu, looking in the direction of Planet South Heaven. “Now the Aeon Span has its Demonic qi….” 1

The chaotic aura radiating off of Meng Hao could most rightly be described as… Demonic qi! Because the Immortal had transformed, it was…

Demonic qi!

As of this moment, Demonic qi raged beyond control!

“Now… are you happy?” Meng Hao said, laughing a laughter that seemed like weeping. It was filled with something bizarre and subversive, and a towering rage that shook everything in the Heavens. Fear gripped the hearts of the Outsiders, and as for the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm, their hearts welled up with grief and sorrow.

“Now… are you at ease?!” Meng Hao waved his sleeve, and everything in Heaven and Earth trembled as his energy rocketed up.

As Meng Hao began to stride forward, his bizarre laughter contained an indescribable multifariousness, a madness, a coldness, the epitome of all contradiction.

Even as he took his first step forward, several of his Soul Lamps winked out, and the Fourth Desolation began, the Desolation of the Soul.

Normally speaking, the Desolation of the Soul was a tribulation that would be extremely difficult for Ancient Realm cultivators. However, Meng Hao’s soul had already been defiled, so to him, this Desolation counted for little. Both life and death were simply different types of transformations.

The Desolation of the Soul was gone in an instant!

Of his 33 Soul lamps, only 18 were still lit!

Originally, the smoke that came up from the Soul Lamps upon being extinguished should have been green. But now, it was black. As the smoke shot toward Meng Hao, he absorbed it, and his hair grew even longer than before. More black veins snaked out across his skin. His eyes were bright, and he looked even more bizarrely Demonic than before!

As he stepped forth, he spoke, voice soft: “If you people are happy now, at ease, then that means it’s time for me to be happy and at ease. It’s time for all of you to die.”

As the female Paragon hovered there, her pupils constricted with astonishment. She began to back up, and at the same time, hit her hand down onto the top of her head.

Instantly, a swath of mist appeared above her, which transformed into a bell. The bell tolled, causing vibrations to spread out in all directions. Next, the female Paragon lifted her hand up to strike the top of her head again, but before her hand could fall, Meng Hao's laughter filled her ears. It was like the sound of crying, filled with incredible bizarreness.

"Hitting yourself? Let me help."

Even as the words left his mouth, Meng Hao shot toward the female Paragon. The large-headed cultivator's heart began to pound; gritting his teeth, he shot toward Meng Hao to intercept him, unleashing a fist strike.

However, Meng Hao's body distorted, and unexpectedly… he passed right through the large-headed cultivator, as if he didn't even exist. Completely ignoring him, he bore down on the female Paragon.

"NO!!" she screamed, her eyes widening. Meng Hao's right hand then lifted up as he prepared to do exactly as he had said, and hit her head.

When he struck her, a boom echoed out, and the female Paragon's head actually exploded. Blood, brain matter, and rotten filth exploded out in all directions. And yet, Meng Hao didn't stop hitting!

"I noticed that you hit yourself a few times. Allow me to help hit you a few more times." He continued to strike her again, and again, and again.

Her body was collapsing, and she was dead, but he kept smashing his palm down over and over again, crying and laughing at the same time.

Booms filled the air, and everyone watched as the female Paragon's body was beaten into a bloody pulp by Meng Hao! Gasps rang out.

Her screaming soul flew out from her destroyed body, but before she could flee, Meng Hao's hand shot out to grab her. She had already managed to put some distance between the two of them, but it was almost as if Meng Hao controlled all of Heaven and Earth, and his hand instantly closed around her.

“Do you really dare to kill me!?!?” she screamed, clearly terrified. Meng Hao looked at her with a bizarrely Demonic smile that seemed to contain infinite weeping.

“No, I don’t,” he said softly. Then, as all of the Outsiders watched, as the large-headed cultivator and the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm looked on, Meng Hao took the female Paragon’s soul and popped it into his mouth. Simultaneously crying and laughing… he began to chew!

He chomped down viciously over and over again as he ate her soul!

Her bloodcurdling screams echoed out clear for everyone to hear, and they were left trembling.

The members of the Fang Clan stood there quietly. Fatty and Meng Hao’s other friends, as well as his sister, watched with sadness in their eyes. This Meng Hao seemed like a complete stranger to them, and yet they knew why he had changed in such a way.

The only person who didn’t have such a look in her eyes was Xu Qing. Her expression was one of staunch determination; she was not shaken at all.

Meng Hao looked around, chuckling and whimpering, his expression enough to strike astonishment into the hearts of all onlookers. Then he turned his gaze toward Xu Qing and said, “Want some? It’s yummy!”

Xu Qing didn’t hesitate for a moment before nodding.

If you are the Immortal, I will join you. If you become the Devil, I will join you. If you become the Demon, I will join you!

Meng Hao looked at Xu Qing and laughed. It was hard to tell what he was thinking as he did, but tears could be seen in his eyes. However, those tears didn’t spill. Not a drop fell down.

The surrounding Outsiders were trembling, and without even thinking about it, they began to back up. The large-headed cultivator's heart was pounding, and just as he was preparing to flee, Meng Hao suddenly turned to look at him.

"And what about you?

"Why were you helping her? I can tell that you have a powerful Karma Thread attached to you. It's too bad it's so faint. It's also too bad that you chose to come looking for death!" As he spoke those last words, Meng Hao's face twisted viciously. A moment ago, his expression had been a mixture of laughing and crying, but now it was distorted in rage. He looked purely fiendish as a black fog suddenly erupted out from inside of him.

Then, he shot toward the large-headed cultivator.

The large-headed cultivator's scalp tingled as he fell back as fast as he could. However, he couldn't match Meng Hao in terms of speed. In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao had overtaken him, and they were both surrounded by black fog.

Screams echoed out, along with Meng Hao's bizarre weeping laughter. Occasional booms could be heard, which caused all hearts to tremble.

It was impossible to tell what was happening inside of the black fog. Not even Shui Dongliu could see through it.

The rest of the battlefield was dead silent.

All eyes were fixed upon the black fog. Soon, a figure barrelled out. It was the large-headed cultivator. His eyes had been ripped out of their sockets, and one still dangled there, swinging back and forth. His ears had been torn off, and he was covered with wounds. Most shocking of all was that a gaping bite mark could be seen on his neck, which spurted with blood.

His face was twisted with fear, and he screamed as he fled. Apparently, whatever had happened inside that fog left him completely and utterly shaken.

Everyone looked on at what was happening, completely flabbergasted. Finally, Meng Hao emerged from the fog. He appeared to be injured, and blood was seeping down his chin. However, his laughter and weeping continue to echo out. He spit out a mouthful of blood, and his eyes seemed to glow even redder than before.

Chuckling and whimpering, he said, “I can’t actually beat you now, but if you get close enough, I… will eat you!”

When the fleeing large-headed cultivator heard his words, he shivered, clearly scared out of his mind.

“And then we get to you people,” Meng Hao said, turning his head toward the Outsiders surrounding Planet South Heaven. They were all trembling, and it was hard to say who did it first, but they all began to flee. All of the Outsiders near Planet South Heaven took to flight, surging away from the planet like a receding tide.

Meng Hao’s weeping laughter filled the air as he shot toward the retreating army. Instantly, screams began to rise up as countless Outsiders met their end. Those who were far away, he killed. Those who were near, he ate.

Blood spread out everywhere, and the gruesome sight of the battlefield filled the Outsiders with such extreme terror that they fled en masse.

One single person drove an army of millions of Outsiders away from Planet South Heaven!

Meng Hao’s clothes were drenched in blood, and the most piercing sound on the entire battlefield was his weeping laughter. His aura was bizarre and multifarious, and it left Paragon Sea Dream and everyone else completely rattled.

As for the rest of the army of Outsiders around the Ninth Mountain, the ones who hadn’t attacked Planet South Heaven, they were looking at Meng Hao with astonishment and terror.

“A lunatic. He’s completely insane!!”

“His dad and mom died, his clan members were killed, and it drove him crazy!!”

“What is he? The Demon? Is he the legendary entity was supposedly going to be born in the Paragon Immortal Realm… the Demon?”

“Dammit, this is the Demon that the Immortal God Realm and the Devil Realm were hoping would appear when they changed things!? They’re going to be sorry!!” As the Outsiders trembled, the 8-Essences male Paragon looked at Meng Hao, and an incredible coldness rose up within him!

Even Dao Fang was panting as he stared at Meng Hao. He had to admit that, as of this moment, Meng Hao’s energy was completely astonishing.

“One person can’t win a war,” Meng Hao said, “but… you people have pushed things too far!” Laughing and crying, his hair whipping about him, looking more bizarre than ever, he bared his teeth and looked at Dao Fang and the 8-Essences Paragon. “I can’t beat you people now, but what I can do… is eat you!”

With that, he took a step forward, looking more bizarrely Demonic than ever!

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# Chapter 1393: Guilty Because of the Fang Clan!

“Who told you to provoke me? Does this make you happy? Are you at ease now?” Meng Hao’s strange voice echoed out across the battlefield, causing all Outsiders to tremble. Even the most powerful experts were shocked.

“Parlor tricks!” snorted the 8-essences Paragon, suddenly advancing toward Meng Hao. Paragon Sea Dream was about to try to intercept him when, to her shock, the Paragon puppet held out its hand to block her path.

Sea Dream gaped as she looked at the Paragon puppet to confirm that its eyes really were those of Meng Hao.

At the same time, the large-headed cultivator was shaking as he fled, trailing black fog. However, he was far enough from the battlefield, and people were so focused on Meng Hao, that nobody was paying any attention to him anymore.

As the 8-Essences Paragon closed in on Meng Hao, the power of all his Essences erupted out. However, in almost the exact same instant, Meng Hao clenched his fist, and suddenly, his aura changed. No longer was he laughing and crying. Instead, he seemed completely and utterly domineering.

That domineering air placed him as the most important entity in existence. As he unleashed his fist strike, it was as if the Vast Expanse itself would bow to his energy!

As they closed in on each other, Meng Hao’s energy erupted as he unleashed one God-Slaying Fist after another, after another! He threw his head back and roared, taking seven steps and unleashing a punch with each step.

It was none other than the Seven God Steps, which caused his energy to rocket up, until he took his seventh step and unleashed his seventh punch, whereupon his domineering air spiked. It was as if he had superseded the starry sky, become the center of all attention, as if he were so utterly mad that he would kill his opponent even if he died in the process.

This was in such sharp contrast to the previous laughing and crying that the 8-Essences Paragon could never have predicted that something like this would happen. In the blink of an eye, the two met and began to fight.

Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth as his aura changed once again. It was no longer domineering; it was now murderous! Apparently, he was completely oblivious to his injuries, like a wild animal who didn’t even care if his body collapsed. He pounced toward the 8-Essences Paragon with shocking speed, mouth gaping as he attempted to take a bite out of the man’s head!

The Paragon was astounded and fell back immediately, but Meng Hao’s mouth still landed on his arm, and a huge chunk of flesh was ripped off. Meng Hao then turned to look at him, his eyes red, his hair flying about, and he looked like nothing more than a rabid beast!

“You….” the Paragon said, heart thumping. Meng Hao began to chortle as he leapt forth in attack yet again, ignoring any injuries, and ignoring any possibility of dying. He seemed completely and utterly insane, his eyes shining with brutal ferocity, totally oblivious to life and death, completely willing to end in mutual destruction. The Paragon was deeply alarmed.

“Insane!” he cried, backing up. “You’re completely insane!” However, Meng Hao’s aura then changed again. A pure, righteous and noble Immortal qi erupted from within him. However, he still looked just as ferocious as before, like a fierce beast, and… when an Immortal is enraged, the Heavens collapse, and Earth is shattered!

Meng Hao stood there in grand fashion, Immortal qi flowing around him, Essence power swirling as he performed an incantation gesture and unleashed numerous magical techniques. Mountains descended, the Paragon Bridge crushed down, and a windstorm screamed, transforming into lightning. Magical techniques flew out at high speed, making him almost like a sea of magic as he charged toward the Paragon.

The Lightning Cauldron even appeared, and after performing a teleportation, an azure roc slashed at the Paragon from behind in a vicious attack.

The man’s face fell, and just when he was about to counterattack, Meng Hao suddenly loosened his fist, allowing the man to strike him. His right arm exploded into a cloud of gore, and half of his body was destroyed, and yet, he accomplished his goal of getting close to the Paragon.

Chuckling and whimpering, he ferociously… bit down onto the Paragon’s throat and ripped the flesh out!

The man screamed miserably, flinging Meng Hao away from him and shooting backward, simultaneously clasping his hand down over the wound on his throat. He wanted to speak, to say something, but the sound wouldn’t come out. As of this moment, his expression was one of complete stupefaction and terror.

It was rare for him to find an enemy on the battlefield who he truly feared, but as of this moment, he was terrified of Meng Hao.

That was even more so the case when Meng Hao licked his lips and began to close in on him again. The man’s scalp was tingling so hard it felt like it might explode, and he suddenly recalled what Meng Hao had said only moments ago.

I can’t beat you people now, but what I can do… is eat you!

“What is he, dammit!?” he thought. “The Immortal God Realm and the Devil Realm induced a change in the Immortal, but what exactly appeared in its place?! He’s even more terrifying than the Immortal!!”

He stared at Meng Hao, raging inwardly, and was just about to fall back when suddenly, his face flickered. He looked down at some of his wounds and noticed that they were black, and that the blackness was spreading.

“A curse!!” he exclaimed, face flickering.

“No, not a curse. That’s just my hatred.” Meng Hao chuckled, whimpered, and then charged forward. The Paragon’s face turned grim, and he let out an enraged shout as his body began to wither. At the same time, his Nascent Divinity emerged, leaving his body behind and fleeing, unwilling to have any further contact with Meng Hao.

“Insane!” he cried. “You’re completely insane!!”

Laughing at the sight of the fleeing Paragon, Meng Hao turned to look at Dao Fang and said, “Don’t get near me.”

Dao Fang shivered and began to back up, his scalp numb. If Meng Hao’s cultivation base were significantly weaker than theirs, it wouldn’t be so frightening, but he was clearly just a hair below them!

All of the bizarre multifariousness, and the pressure weighing down from his aura, made it difficult for them to unleash their full potential. Most importantly, they simply weren’t as vicious as Meng Hao!

He was so insane that he didn’t even care if he died, as long as he could bite down on some flesh and blood. Dao Fang couldn’t shake the scene of the terrifying look on the face of the female Paragon’s soul as it was devoured.

He suddenly had the feeling that the Immortal God Realm and the Devil Realm… had made a mistake!!

Perhaps the true Immortal possessed power that placed it above the God, a power that could suppress the Devil, but it was still possible to defeat that Immortal in battle. In contrast, this Demon, despite having just been born, despite not being strong enough yet to throw the Vast Expanse into chaos, had already shown… how potentially terrifying he was!

That was even more so when… Meng Hao's arm began to regrow in front of all eyes, and rapidly reappeared like new.

That left Dao Fang completely shaken.

As of this moment, the Paragons were fleeing the battlefield, the large-headed cultivator was fleeing, and the army was also fleeing. All of that… was because of the sudden transformation, the sudden birth of… the Demon!

Meng Hao technically wasn't very powerful at the moment, but for all intents and purposes, he might as well be!

His laughter drifted out, becoming crying, and he trembled. In the madness of that laughter, he seemed to be laughing at himself, and crying for his relatives.

Everyone who heard it sank into silence, Outsiders, Mountain and Sea cultivators, and Shui Dongliu alike.

"Meng… Meng Hao…." Fang Yu said, trembling in Sun Hai's arms. She looked at her little brother, at Meng Hao, and her heart twinged with pain. Their parents were gone, and Meng Hao was now her only blood relative.

Fatty wept as he looked at Meng Hao. He wanted to say something, but wasn't sure what. All he knew was that looking at Meng Hao like this filled him with pain.

Then there was Chen Fan, and Meng Hao's Master Pill Demon, and further off in the distance, Ke Jiusi, who had a torn look in his eyes.

Everyone who was still alive on Planet South Heaven was watching Meng Hao. They saw his Demonic qi, they saw how terrifying he was, and they saw that laughing, crying expression.

"Shui Dongliu, maybe you're really Nine Seals, and maybe you aren't. Whoever you are, your machinations swept up me, my Grandpa Meng, my Grandpa Fang, and my parents. The Mountain and Sea Realm is in ruins, and Planet South Heaven is virtually destroyed. I have become the Demon. Presumably, the time has come to carry out your final plan.” Meng Hao looked up into the starry sky, his voice resonating oddly as he gazed at the Heavens.

The starry sky trembled as Shui Dongliu appeared. In another direction, Dao Fang and the 8-Essences Paragon were consumed by terror, and began to flee, allowing Paragon Sea Dream and Meng Hao’s Paragon puppet to approach Shui Dongliu.

The Paragon puppet’s eyes were bright red; Meng Hao’s transformation had affected its aura as well. It stood there, eyes filled with a bizarre, Demonic gleam as it looked at Shui Dongliu.

Shui Dongliu remained silent for a long moment, a torn expression on his face. Finally, he clasped hands and bowed deeply to Meng Hao.

“I’ve made many plans, and many preparations, and many are dead and gone because of them. I implore you… to let all of that go. As for me… my conscience is clear when it comes to the Mountain and Sea Realm. I only feel guilty about… the Fang Clan.

“Your Fang Clan is an Allheaven Clan, with an extraordinary bloodline. After arriving in the Mountain and Sea Realm, your first generation Patriarch acquired Heaven-defying good fortune which changed the Allheaven bloodline. Because of the multiple lives offered by the Nirvana Fruit, the Fang Clan bloodline became the most suitable for my designs!

“Furthermore, you are the epitome and culmination of the Fang Clan bloodline. Therefore–”

“Therefore,” Meng Hao cut in, “my so-called Seventh Year Tribulation was actually orchestrated by you!” He swished his sleeve, and the odd way his voice seemed to contain both laughter and crying was enough to cause anyone who heard it to feel unsettled.

After a moment, Shui Dongliu nodded. “Your Seventh Year Tribulation was caused by me. I was the one who arranged for your Grandpa Meng to become a Mountain and Sea Lord. And it was I who extracted your Grandpa Fang's soul and placed it into the Heaven Severing Scripture.

"I also arranged everything that happened with your parents. I was the one who sent them to stand guard over Planet South Heaven. That was because their souls were the most likely to become the propelling souls!

"Even the enmity between the Ji Clan and your Fang Clan was set up by me…. Your cultivation of the Hexing magics of the League of Demon Sealers was my doing. My purpose in all of this was for you to become… the new will of the Mountains and Seas, or perhaps, the Immortal! However, along the way, you changed your own fate.

"Throughout my life, I never let the Mountains and Seas down. I did let the Fang Clan down…. However, your Grandpa Fang isn't really dead, and in some ways, your parents aren't dead either!

"Soon, if my plan succeeds, I will destroy myself in front of you. I will dig out my heart, and offer my life as a sacrifice to the blood of the Fang Clan.

"If my plan fails… then I will still wipe out my own soul fire to help you get what you want!"

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# Chapter 1394: Slaughter Slashes the Immortal Gods!

“All of my plans were centered around the Fang Clan’s… Nirvanic Rebirth!” Even as the words left his mouth, Shui Dongliu suddenly looked up toward the apex of the starry sky, and a mad fire seemed to be burning in his eyes!

It was in that exact same moment that the highest point of the starry sky suddenly distorted and twisted, and the starry sky even seemed to melt. Then, it spread apart to reveal… a portion of the Vast Expanse beyond.

There was also an enormous land mass speeding forward, a continent!

The land mass was gargantuan, and was filled with innumerable mountains and seas. Up in front were nine huge suns, dragging it along. Rumbling sounds echoed out in all directions as it approached the Mountain and Sea Realm at incredible speed!

It was none other than… the Immortal God Continent!

This was one of the two major powers which had destroyed the Paragon Immortal Realm, the Immortal God Realm!

Each of those nine suns emanated the aura of a Paragon. Thunderous rumbling echoed out, the starry sky melted, and the Ninth Mountain shook. Even just the mere pressure which was weighing down was enough to threaten to destroy the Ninth Mountain.

The Mountain and Sea cultivators’ minds were spinning as they stared in shock at what was happening. As for Meng Hao, he looked up and stared at the source of the chaos in the starry sky… the enormous, shocking land mass.

An enormous statue was visible on that land mass, depicting a man with a calm expression and ordinary features. However, the pressure that radiated off of him was impossible to describe.

Almost in the same instant that Meng Hao saw the statue, his eyes narrowed. This statue looked familiar to him. It looked… exactly like the statue of the black-robed Slaughter from Echelon cultivator Dao-Heaven's Paragon magic! The only difference was that apparently, the two of them had different personalities!!

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the nine suns all appeared within the starry sky of the Mountain and Sea Realm. Behind them, innumerable cultivators could be seen on the land mass, patiently waiting in battle formation, apparently completely prepared to wage war.

Scintillating energy filled the air, as though this land were the king of all Heaven and Earth, to whom myriad worlds would prostrate, with boundless Immortal qi and towering Godly power. It could shake the Vast Expanse, change time, and alter space. It could even look down upon the great Daos of Heaven and Earth. From the look of it, not even the Vast Expanse could cause this world to feel fear!

It was as if it… were the pinnacle force in the starry sky.

Compared to it, the 33 Heavens were like nothing!

Suddenly, an icy cold voice echoed out from the huge land mass, to fill the whole Mountain and Sea Realm. “Paragon Immortal Realm, hand over the precious treasure, destroy your Immortal meridians, and become a Lower Realm. You have no hope of winning this war!”

A moment later, the voice of a woman could be heard, somewhat suspicious, but also, seemingly pleased! “Hmm, what is that aura…? Demon….”

Chuckling and whimpering, Meng Hao swished his sleeve, and as he looked up at the boundless land mass up above, his eyes glowed with a more intense redness than before. He licked his lips, and an air of madness began to emanate out.

“Are you people happy now too?” he murmured. “Are you at ease?”

The descent of the huge land mass caused the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators to awaken from their shock from what had just occurred with Meng Hao. The astonishing land mass caused them to feel pressure like Heavenly Might. Despair instantly rose up in the hearts and minds of the cultivators, and simultaneously, the army of Outsiders began to tremble, quickly edged backward, and then dropped to their knees to kowtow.

The 8-Essences Paragon had a very serious look on his face, and inwardly, he was sighing with relief. He really had no desire to tangle further with Meng Hao in combat. Meng Hao was like a nightmare, and thus, he couldn’t be happier to clasp hands and bow deeply to the incoming land mass.

Only Dao Fang reacted differently. His eyes flickered with a strange light, and he didn’t so much as bend his waist as he stood there. In fact, a slight glimmer of displeasure appeared in his eyes.

It was at this point that Shui Dongliu began to laugh loudly, and his eyes glittered as he watched the Immortal God Continent descending, and more specifically, one corner of it that was already completely within the starry sky of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Even as his laughter echoed out, he suddenly spoke.

“You owe me! One attack! Sever the corner of that land mass!” Even as Shui Dongliu’s voice echoed about like thunder, a black-robed figure appeared at the apex of the starry sky, right near the corner of the land mass that was jutting into the Mountain and Sea Realm.

He was blurry, making it impossible to see his face clearly. However, as soon as he appeared, an enormous murderous aura roiled out, shaking

Heaven and Earth. Even the huge land mass began to vibrate.

The black-robed man calmly lifted his hand into the air, then chopped it down toward the huge land mass.

It was impossible to determine exactly the quantity or nature of the divine abilities and magical techniques he used. But that simple chopping motion caused the entire land mass to shake violently. Countless cultivators immediately began to cry out in alarm, and numerous shocking defensive mechanisms were unleashed, defenses that even a Paragon would be hard-pressed to obliterate. In fact, those defenses were what had made this land mass virtually invincible on its journeys through the Vast Expanse.

But now, they seemed to do no good. They could do nothing to defend against this blow, and in fact, an enormous crevice opened up on the corner of the land mass that was inside the Mountain and Sea Realm’s starry sky.

The crevice grew wider, turning into a vast gulch. Mountains toppled, seas were parted, and plains were shattered!

In the blink of an eye, that huge corner of the land mass, which was larger by far than any of the 33 Heavens, began to completely tear away from the land mass as a whole!

The land mass… was being split apart!

The entire world was completely shaken!

The Outsiders’ jaws dropped, and the 8-Essences Paragon stared, eyes wide with disbelief. Even Dao Fang was so shocked that his fur stood on end.

Only Meng Hao reacted differently. The flames of madness in his eyes burned bright, and he began to cackle uproariously.

That chopping motion severed an entire section of the huge land mass, which was something that caused the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm and the forces of the 33 Heavens to gasp in incredulity.

The cultivators of the Immortal God Realm were dumbstruck, and the entire land mass was completely shaken. For something like this to happen went completely beyond the expectations of the cultivators there, and they didn’t even have time to react to it.

Rumbling sounds could be heard as the severed corner of the land mass lost its ability to sustain flight, and began to fall down toward the Mountain and Sea Realm. The countless cultivators on that corner instantly flew out, and at the same time, the black-robed man turned to leave.

The entire time, he hadn’t spoken a single word, neither had anyone seen his face. The Immortal God Continent had only just appeared, and was already severely damaged, leaving them in a complete rage.

“Think you can just leave?!?!” someone roared as more than ten figures charged toward him. Shockingly, nine of those figures were the ones within the suns, and the entire group all erupted with Paragon power.

As they closed in, the black-robed man frowned and stopped in place. Then he turned his head, allowing the Paragon level experts to see his face. It was none other than Slaughter.

In that moment, the numerous Paragons felt their minds spinning, as though countless lightning bolts were striking them. They all lurched to a stop, gasping, expressions of complete disbelief covering their faces as they began to cry out.

“Patriarch!!”

“What… what..? The Patriarch!?!?”

“It’s the Patriarch!!!” Even as their shocked voices rang out over the Immortal God Continent, more figures emerged and sped toward the area. There were men and women, old-timers and youngsters, but all of them were extremely powerful.

Slaughter didn’t do anything more than look at them before striding off and vanishing.

“Success or failure will be determined by this one opportunity!” Shui Dongliu said, swishing his sleeve and looking in the direction of the rest of the land masses belonging to the 33 Heavens. “Windswept! When do you plan to make your move if not now!?!?”

As soon as the words left his mouth, the 8-Essences Paragon’s face flickered, as did those of the other Outsider experts in the army. They had been aware that Windswept could be a traitor, and had even prepared for such an outcome. However, Shui Dongliu’s words seemed to be filled with complete and utter confidence.

It was at this point that rumbling began to echo out from the 33 Heavens, as all of the land masses began to tilt on their sides. It was impossible to determine how the Windswept Imperial Lord was doing this, or how he had slipped free from the guard of the Outsider experts. However, it didn’t really matter what price he had paid, or how Shui Dongliu might have helped him.

What mattered was that the 33rd Heaven, the 32nd Heaven, the 31st Heaven… in fact, all of the remaining Heavenly land masses, began to rumble and shoot toward… the severed corner of the enormous land mass which was falling down through the starry sky.

This scene caused the Mountain and Sea cultivators’ hearts to tremble. A collective gasp could be heard from the Outsider army. The 8-Essences Paragon was enraged, and even the monkey Dao Fang was astonished.

The experts from the Immortal God Continent had exactly the same reaction, and quickly tried to unleash their power to interfere. However, Slaughter’s strike had not just severed the corner, it had also contained some sort of sealing power which was just enough to prevent the experts from the Immortal God Continent from doing anything.

It was in that exact same moment that the Heavenly land masses began to slam into the severed corner of the Immortal God Continent. Intense rumbling sounds echoed out that could shake Heaven and Earth as the severed portion of the land mass was crushed into rubble. Simultaneously, the Heavenly land masses were also destroyed, transforming into nothing more than ash.

The collision caused all of the Immortal qi which had been part of that corner of the land mass to be released into the Mountain and Sea Realm, Immortal qi that was so powerful it was difficult to put into words.

The land masses of the 33 Heavens which were destroyed also unleashed an aura which merged with that Immortal qi, filling the starry sky of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

As soon as those auras merged, a huge blast resulted, which ripped open part of the starry sky, and beyond it, the Vast Expanse.

This was what really mattered!

What really mattered… was this unprecedented blow struck by the land masses!

Amidst rumbling sounds, an enormous hole was opened up. Instantly, the starry sky trembled, and the Outsiders were thrown into shock. The 8-Essences Paragon was astonished, and the experts on the Immortal God Continent let out incredulous shouts.

“They’re opening the seal! They’re going to make a run for it!”

From the look of it, that hole opened up into a tunnel!

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# Chapter 1395: The Mountains and Seas Erupt!

The seal was the most critical factor in Shui Dongliu’s plan. In addition to the 33 Heavens and Dao Fang, there was something else suppressing the Mountain and Sea Realm… a seal left behind by the two powerful forces which had fought the Paragon Immortal Realm!

That was the key, and that seal’s name was… the Aeon Span! It actually didn’t exist within the Mountain and Sea Realm itself, but outside of the 33 Heavens. Also… only the arrival of the Immortal God Continent, and the pressure which came with it, could make the invisible Aeon Span appear in the starry sky of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

This was the very moment that Shui Dongliu had been waiting for!

Tearing open that seal required a blow from a powerful land mass, like what had just happened. In addition, the auras of both the 33 Heavens and the Immortal God Realm needed to be fused with… Demonic qi!

Those three types of energy, when merged together, could weaken the Aeon Span. Missing even one of them was unacceptable. But with all of them together, along with the force produced by continents colliding… a hole could be opened.

That was the purpose of Windswept’s traitorous act, and that was the purpose of Slaughter severing a corner of the land mass.

All of that was necessary to break open the seal. It required meticulous planning, and the perfect amount of elements involved. It required calculating exactly how many of the Heavenly land masses were required, as well as the exact size of the corner of the Immortal God Continent that needed to be severed.

Shui Dongliu had prepared for countless years for this very moment. He had sent many people to attack the 33 Heavens, to die fighting Dao Fang, all to measure the exact extent of the Aeon Span!

In the end, all the scattered information that had been gathered were pieced together to form a precise answer to the question. And that was merely the first phase of Shui Dongliu’s plan!

Suddenly, his words rang out to the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“What I cared about regarding this war was neither how each battle in the war progressed nor whether we would ultimately be victorious,” he murmured. “Rather… I cared about how to preserve the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“From the very beginning, I needed to accomplish three tasks. The first task… was to draw out the war until the Immortal God Continent arrived. Yes, I was sure that they would be the first to arrive!

“The second task was to preserve the true resources of the Mountains and Seas until their arrival. Even at the cost of innumerable lives, it was important to save the final salvo for the critical moment!

“Because of that, many, many cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm were sacrificed. All for the future. There was no one above sacrifice. All of you, and even me. All of that sacrifice was necessary to fuel the third phase of my plan.

“You can’t blame me for keeping so many cards up my sleeves. I hid everything, and deceived everyone.

“The third task I needed to accomplish in this war… was the part of the plan that involved Planet South Heaven and the Fang Clan.

“There is a seal in place on Planet South Heaven that Mountain and Sea cultivators cannot affect. It was necessary for me to use the Outsiders to destroy it. Don’t forget, Planet South Heaven is also known as the Door of South Heaven…. The power to propel the wings could not come from Fang Xiufeng and his wife alone. Every flap of the wings drains massive amount of soul power. Those souls… are the souls of the ninety-nine percent of the Mountain and Sea cultivators who have died in the fighting. In the end, they had to die, and they had to die before the Immortal God Continent arrived. If they died too late, there wouldn’t be enough time to absorb them and propel the wings.” Shui Dongliu’s voice seemed to be filled with grief, a grief which was reflected in the glow of his eyes.

“I’m sorry…I’ve been keeping so much hidden from you. The price to be paid was the lives of ninety-nine percent of the Mountain and Sea Realm. If we succeed, then the Mountain and Sea Realm can escape from this war, and fly to freedom!

“If we fail… then my Dao will be destroyed, and I will fight to the death!!” Shui Dongliu flicked his sleeve. As the hole opened up in the starry sky, the surrounding Outsider army was shocked, and the powerful experts from the Immortal God Continent instantly went on guard. Then, Shui Dongliu raised his hands high above his head.

“Mountain and Sea Realm, awaken!!” The instant the words left his mouth, a Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering power erupted out from Shui Dongliu. Energy surged out as the second phase of his plan… was unfurled!

As his energy erupted out, and his voice echoed through the starry sky, the pressure weighing down from the Immortal God Continent actually caused… the crumbled Ninth Mountain to suddenly… emit massive rumbling sounds and… reappear whole within the starry sky!

The Ninth Mountain stood just as it had before! Within the celestial pond, the Xuanwu turtle howled, but this time, it didn’t just make noise. This time, shocking energy erupted off of the body of the Xuanwu turtle itself.

At the same time, the Eighth Mountain, Seventh Mountain, Sixth Mountain, Fifth Mountain… all of the mountains which had been destroyed in the war, reappeared for all to see, erect within the starry sky, radiating intense energy.

When the First Mountain appeared, all Nine Mountains could be seen. It was as if they hadn't even sustained a scratch of damage; apparently, what had been destroyed were mere projections. This was Shui Dongliu's plan; to completely fool the Outsiders, as well as the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

The Mountain and Sea Realm had not been destroyed!

Next, the First Sea appeared, then the Second Sea, the Third Sea and so on, until eight Seas could be seen, pulsing with boundless power that caused the starry sky to tremble. The Outsiders were flabbergasted, and couldn't believe what they were seeing.

There was one Sea missing, the Ninth Sea. It really had turned traitor, and was now sitting there uneasily among the Outsider army!

Within the same army, the 8-Essences Paragon's face turned grim to the extreme.

Off to the side, the monkey Dao Fang's eyes were glowing brightly with shock and fear. “Now it makes sense! When I destroyed that Mountain with my staff, I couldn't help but wonder why the Mountains were so weak. No wonder! And here I thought the Mountain and Sea Realm was weak. How could I ever have imagined… that I was so far from the truth!?”

Dao Fang clenched his right hand into a fist. The feeling of being completely and utterly made a fool of filled his eyes with murderous rage.

Meng Hao's laughter suddenly ceased, and no sounds of crying could be heard. He was suddenly very quiet, as though his aura had returned to its normal state. However, his eyes were just as red as ever, indicating that henceforth, he was not an Immortal, but… a Demon!

He looked at the newly re-formed Mountain and Sea Realm, which seemed even more intensely real than the Mountain and Sea Realm which he knew.

There was a boundlessness to it, something that seemed to conform perfectly with the boundless domineering nature of Paragon Nine Seals, who had created it.

Although this development was surprising, after thinking about it for a moment, Meng Hao realized that it was all within the purview of predictability.

However, things weren't over yet!

The resources of the Mountain and Sea Realm weren't limited to this. The destroyed sun and moon suddenly reappeared, and all of a sudden, Meng Hao realized that the bow he had… was not the true precious treasure. It was only a projection!

When the sun reappeared, the bow projection turned into a beam of light that shot back to the sun itself. Furthermore, the precious treasure that Ksitigarbha had acquired from the moon did the same thing as it returned to the moon!

The sun and the moon began to shine with brilliant light, filling the starry sky with boundless radiance!

The surviving cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm stared with overt shock. It was as if the pressure weighing down on the Realm had finally reached the point where it couldn't be sustained any more, causing the whole world to erupt. Rumbling could be heard as the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite appeared. It was as if Time were changing; an enormous coffin rose up, glittering with Immortal light. It slowly began to open, and a withered hand reached up from within and grasped the side of the coffin. Then, an old man pulled himself to his feet.

Instantly, the aura of an 8-Essences Paragon erupted out, causing a gasp to rise up from the Outsider army. The Outsiders' 8-Essences Paragon stared with wide eyes, and Dao Fang's pupils constricted.

"Daoist Immortal Ancient!" said an ancient voice from the Immortal God Continent. The old man standing up from within the coffin was none other than Daoist Immortal Ancient, who was second only to Nine Seals in the Paragon Immortal Realm! His cultivation base was at the 8-Essences level, but he actually stood on the very cusp of 9-Essences!

As that happened, one of the other Three Great Daoist Societies, the Nine Seas God World, summoned numerous God Doors. As they opened, countless figures appeared, clad in brown armor, radiating ancient, murderous auras. Apparently, they had been asleep for a very long time, but had now awakened, and were slowly appearing.

Dozens of them could be seen, and each one erupted with the pressure of an Imperial Lord. It was an ancient, primeval aura that not even Wang Youcai and the other newly raised Imperial Lords could match up to.

Next was the Sublime Flow Sword Grotto. Massive rumbling could be heard as one billion swords materialized, which shot forth to swirl around the Mountain and Sea Realm. Each one of those one billion swords contained an ancient soul, which were none other than the souls of the cultivators who had died when the catastrophe struck the Paragon Immortal Realm.

They had been sleeping up until this moment, but now they were awake!

Things weren’t over yet. The Mountain and Sea Realm continued to rumble as three temples appeared, which shone with boundless light, and the power of scriptures. These were the temples of the three great Doyens, and also… the origin of the three classic scriptures!

It was also in this very moment that a completely shocking will swept through the starry sky. It was none other than… the will of the Mountains and Seas. It had been slowly weakened from the beginning of the war, until it finally dispersed. But as of this moment, it had formed back together to shocking effect. It was far more powerful than it had been before; this was the true and authentic will of the Mountains and Seas!

The pressure weighing down caused all of the Outsiders in the Mountain and Sea Realm to reel from astonishment, blood spraying out of their mouths. Regardless of the levels of their cultivation base, they fell back in shock.

That was even more true of the 8-Essences Paragon and Dao Fang, both of whom looked completely crestfallen.

“This… this….” the 8-Essences paragon muttered. And yet, the Mountain and Sea Realm’s resources were still abundant, and continued to erupt out!

A roaring sound echoed out from the First Sea as the sea water churned. Shockingly, a huge giant rose up from the depths of the sea floor. It was enormous, and its body was covered with countless glowing white designs. Heaven and Earth cowered beneath it, and most notable of all was that its face had three eyes!

It extended its hand and made a grasping motion, and in response, a beam of light shot out from the First Mountain, within which was a gigantic battle-axe. The giant grabbed the battle-axe and then let out a powerful roar.

Cries of shocked alarm rang out from the Immortal God Continent. “A Three-eyed God!!”

The Three-eyed God tribe was from one of the few Lower Realms who had chosen not to rebel. Their battle prowess was strong, and in fact, they had fought fiercely with the God tribes of the Immortal God Continent.

The resources of the Mountains and Seas exploded out…. Rumbling sounds echoed out as Heaven and Earth dimmed, the starry sky trembled, and everything shook violently!

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# Chapter 1396: Devil Realm World-Butterfly!

Next, beams of light shot out from the Second Mountain, and as the Second Sea churned, a war chariot appeared, completely vicious in appearance and emanating a boundless glow, as well as ghastly coldness. Apparently, this war chariot could pierce the souls of Paragons.

In the blink of an eye, the Third, Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Mountains, and their respective Seas, all unleashed powerful resources. Some of them came from the Mountains, some from the planets themselves.

Astonishingly, a completely domineering river of reincarnation flowed out from the Fourth Mountain!

Soaring energy and countless roars echoed out from within the Mountain and Sea Realm, causing widespread shock among the Outsiders. From the Nine Mountains, the nine Xuanwu turtles roared forth, energy surging, eyes brimming with killing intent that caused the starry sky to tremble.

It was also in this moment that, outside of the Ninth Mountain, Planet South Heaven began to rumble.

Shui Dongliu’s eyes shone with a bright light. “And now, the third phase of the plan shall begin. The butterfly beneath Planet South Heaven… shall be released!”

He quickly performed a double-handed incantation gesture, then threw his head back and howled.

The sound echoed out, causing Planet South Heaven to tremble. It had already been on the verge of collapse, but now it completely fell apart. Massive rumbling sounds could be heard as it collapsed into clouds of rubble that spread out in all directions, revealing 100,000 motes of black light inside. Instantly, they shot out, howling with ferocity and a thirst for blood.

It was as if a cage had been opened, unleashing a massive beast. Those motes of light were actually 100,000 monstrous Devils! During the catastrophe that had befallen the Paragon Immortal Realm, they had been taken captive in battle. Then, their minds were replaced and filled with an understanding of only one thing… killing!

100,000 terrifying howls echoed out, and 100,000 pairs of crimson eyes burned. Originally, they had no formation or order, but then the will of the Mountains and Seas took control, sending one group toward the army of Outsiders, and the other toward the apex of the starry sky, and the Immortal God Continent.

Things weren’t over yet, though. After the 100,000 Devils were released from within the rubble of Planet South Heaven, something else appeared within the darkness. It was… a butterfly!!

When the butterfly flew out, it didn’t seem very large. However, in the blink of an eye, it began to grow like mad, until it was huge. Soon, it was as big as a planet, and even then, it didn’t seem like it had reached its limit.

The instant the butterfly appeared, the army of Outsiders erupted into pandemonium. A look of incredulity appeared on the face of the 8-Essences Paragon, and Dao Fang gasped as though his mind were being struck by lighting. The Immortal God Continent was also shaken, and when the powerful experts there saw the butterfly, their pupils constricted!

“Devil Butterfly!!”

“A Devil Realm World-Butterfly!!”

“When the Devil Realm came, one of their World-Butterflies was supposedly destroyed. Who could ever have guessed that it didn’t actually die, but instead, was imprisoned here? Its mind was erased, and it became part of the Immortal World!!”

“They… they actually want to use this World-Butterfly to… break free from the battlefield!!”

“But that’s impossible! In the grand scheme of things, Devil Realm World-Butterflies are vitally important. There were only nine of them, and even if the Immortal World subjugated one, it would be extremely difficult to control!”

“Wait, look closely, that butterfly… is actually dead!!”

Countless voices erupted out in discussion. By this point, people were able to deduce Shui Dongliu’s true plan. He planned to use this World-Butterfly as the new version of the Mountain and Sea Realm, to pass through that tunnel to leave the battlefield!

If he succeeded, then the Mountain and Sea Realm would have neither won the war nor lost it. However, it would gain a chance to survive, to develop, and to thrive once more!

As soon as the butterfly appeared, it became clear that, just as people were saying, it was actually… dead. Its eyes were blank, and there didn’t appear to be even the slightest sign of life force upon it. It truly was dead!

But then, the butterfly’s wings began to slowly fill with life force, and then were propelled first down, and then up.

Meng Hao had long since waved his sleeve and extracted everyone from the crumbling and ruined Planet South Heaven. He now hovered in the starry sky, looking down at the ruins, a laughing-crying expression on his face as he looked at the 100,000 Devils charging into battle, and the huge butterfly.

When his gaze came to rest on the butterfly itself, his heart suddenly seized. He stopped laughing, stopped crying, and even the redness of his eyes flickered. There was a familiarity to the aura on the butterfly, something that he would never be able to forget for his entire life.

“That’s….” A tremor ran through him. Off to the side, Fang Yu’s eyes went wide as she stared at the butterfly, shivering.

“Dad… and mom!!” As Meng Hao stared at the butterfly, he could clearly sense the aura of his father, Fang Xiufeng, upon the left wing of the butterfly. Furthermore, the right wing contained the life force of his mother, Meng Li!

Just as Shui Dongliu had said, his parents weren’t actually dead. In a certain way, they had been given new lives as the wings of this butterfly. Every flap of the wings of that butterfly was like an embrace shared between them.

Gradually, Meng Hao caught sight of the image of his father and mother holding each other. Then they turned to look at him, their expressions warm and kind. They were even smiling, and it was a smile that caused tears to well up in Meng Hao’s eyes.

By this point, he was absolutely sure beyond the shadow of a doubt that he really was sensing the auras of his father and mother!

It was also at this point that Shui Dongliu’s voice echoed out again.

“Mountain and Sea cultivators, come immediately to the Mountain and Sea Butterfly. Henceforth, the bloodline members of the Fang Clan are the guardians of the Mountains and Seas!” The moment Shui Dongliu’s voice rang out, the wings of the butterfly separated, whereupon a boundless gravitational force erupted out, grabbing ahold of all of the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

The instant that force wrapped around them, they were pulled from all directions toward the butterfly. In the blink of an eye, they vanished into the wings, and when they reappeared, they were in a new world.

This was the new Immortal World!

All of the people who were standing near Meng Hao, including Xu Qing, Pill Demon, Fatty, Fang Yu, Sun Hai, and even Patriarch Reliance, were instantly absorbed into the butterfly, to appear within that new world.

As for Meng Hao, he neared, but did not step onto the butterfly itself. He remained off to the side to stand guard, to defend this world that contained his loved ones, his friends, and the Fang Clan.

The butterfly began to pick up speed as it shot… toward the hole in the starry sky!

Shui Dongliu, Sea Dream, Ksitigarbha, the Paragon puppet, and all of the other backup reserves of the Mountains and Seas flew in formation around the butterfly, guarding it… as it made its break toward the tunnel.

It was in that exact same moment that a roar rose up from the Outsider army as they prepared to block the way. The 8-Essences Paragon took a step forward, and a vicious expression appeared on Dao Fang’s face as he hefted his staff and began his charge.

However, before they could even get close, Meng Hao suddenly turned his head to look at them, and then licked his lips, causing both the 8-Essences Paragon and Dao Fang to stop in their tracks.

At the apex of the starry sky, what was left of the Immortal God Continent once again continued its descent. The suns screamed forth, along with the figures inside of them, as they shot toward the butterfly.

There were other powerful experts from the Immortal God Continent who also charged forth, so many that it was impossible to count.

They could not permit the Mountain and Sea Realm to make a comeback. They could not allow the Mountain and Sea Realm to escape!

But then, Shui Dongliu flicked his sleeve, and an obsessive gleam of determination appeared in his eyes.

“Life and death will be determined in this moment!” he roared. The wills of the Eight Seas erupted forth, bolstered by the Xuanwu turtles to create a force so shocking that everything trembled. In concert with the power of the Nine Mountains, and the will of the Mountain and Sea Realm itself, a huge spell formation began to form!

The Mountain and Sea Grand Aegis!

As soon as the dazzling light rose up, the backup forces of the Mountain and Sea Realm began to virtually froth at the mouth as they prepared to fight the intercepting enemies, to defend the butterfly as it sped toward the tunnel.

When the two sides clashed, massive booms rang out, and intense fighting began. The powerful experts from the Immortal God Continent had power to destroy the Heavens and extinguish the Earth, which they unleashed to full effect upon the backup reserve of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

But then, from within the rubble of Planet South Heaven, hoarse laughter rang out in all directions, and a boundless sea of flames suddenly lit up the darkness as it shot out into the starry sky.

Within that sea of flames was a face, a face that Meng Hao didn’t recognize. However, he did recognize its eyes…. It was none other than… the Essence of Divine Flame which had been suppressed beneath the surface of Planet South Heaven!

“Dao Fang, you shall die!!” the face howled. Now that it was free, the Divine Flame caused everything around it to shake as it sped murderously toward Dao Fang.

The Mountain and Sea Grand Aegis formed from a massive convergence of various wills, becoming a complex pattern that attempted to slaughter any of the Immortal God Continent cultivators or other Outsiders who attempted to break through.

The Mountains and Seas followed the butterfly, and within the boundaries of the spell formation, Meng Hao and the other powerful experts of the

Mountains and Seas provided defense. In the middle of it all was the butterfly.

The combined power of the Mountain and Sea Realm was focused on defending the butterfly and getting to the tunnel.

However, the real danger to them as they made their charge did not come from the Outsider army. After all, Shui Dongliu's brutal plan had made it seem all along like the Outsider army had the upper hand. However, the truth was that while the Mountain and Sea cultivators were losing their lives, the true power and reserves of the Mountains and Seas had never been unleashed.

It was harsh, but according to Shui Dongliu's plan, everyone was expendable. Because of that, the Outsider army couldn't so much as get close to the Mountain and Sea Grand Aegis without being destroyed.

The real danger, the real reason why Shui Dongliu had been willing to sacrifice everyone in order to keep the true reserves safe… was the Immortal God Continent.

Rumbling echoed out as four of their suns unleashed boundless pressure which crushed down. Within those suns were four figures, each one of which burst with the matchless power of an 8-Essences Paragon.

Behind them were countless cultivators of the Immortal God Continent, who were unleashing divine abilities that no one in the Mountain and Sea Realm had ever seen before. In addition, they possessed matchless dignity and seething killing intent.

In the blink of an eye, fighting broke out. At the same time, massive rumbling could be heard from the Grand Aegis as it rotated to full power. Then the will of the Mountains and Seas rose up, ensuring that even if the spell formation took damage, it was quickly repaired. The butterfly continued to get closer and closer to the tunnel.

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# Chapter 1397: I Shall Bestow You With Ultimate Good Fortune!

The Grand Aegis was so incredible that not even an 8-Essences Paragon would be able to break through it in a short period of time. Not the 8-Essences Paragon from the 33 Heavens, nor the other five 8-Essences Outsider Paragons, could do anything except be blocked outside.

As the battle commenced, a cold snort suddenly echoed out from the Immortal God Continent as a beautiful woman appeared. She seemed cold and detached, and wore a long violet robe. As she strode out, a young man could be seen following along beside her. Mixed emotions could be seen on his face as he looked silently at the Mountain and Sea Realm.

The woman immediately extended her right hand and shoved her palm out toward the Mountain and Sea Grand Aegis.

That gesture caused her face to redden slightly, but the massive force that erupted out shook the starry sky, and sent the minds of all cultivators eeling. Even the 8-Essences paragons were in awe of her aura.

Hers was the aura of… 9-Essences!!

9-Essences Paragon!!

A huge boom rang out as her attack slammed into the Grand Aegis, which instantly began to crumble. Normally speaking, the spell formation should not have been damaged so easily, but unfortunately… it was missing the power of one Sea.

That was something that Shui Dongliu hadn’t figured into his plans, and never had the time to compensate for. His original plan had called for the Grand Aegis to hold out until they reached the tunnel, or at least… until they got closer than they were now.

The most he could do now was make them pay a heavy price to break through the spell formation!

Even in the moment that it crumbled apart, a backlash force erupted out from it.

Shui Dongliu threw his head back and howled, “Mountain and Sea Seal!”

Instantly, the shattered remnants of the spell formation shot toward the female Paragon and began to form a seal around her.

Even as she frowned in response, another cold snort rang out that seemed filled with complete ancientness. Accompanying it was an ancient figure who emerged from within the Immortal God Continent.

It was an old man, wearing a white robe, with long white hair and eyebrows that made him seem extremely dignified. He held a string of prayer beads in his right hand, and as he strode out, his eyes shone like the Heavens.

Simultaneously, as the Mountain and Sea Grand Aegis shattered, the five 8-Essences Paragons instantly burst in, followed by countless other powerful experts.

“You people aren’t going anywhere!”

Even as the hosts charged in to attack, the old man known as Daoist Immortal Ancient opened his eyes. His body seemed devoid of life force, and rife with an aura of death. However, his cloudy eyes suddenly began to glow brightly, and he took a step forward, completely ignoring the other 8-Essences Paragons to head directly toward the old man in the white robe and white eyebrows.

The two of them immediately began to exchange blows that rocked Heaven and Earth.

At the same time, the Three-eyed God roared and charged forth to block the path of an 8-Essences Paragon, standing firm to prevent him from even getting close to the butterfly!

A bizarrely Demonic glint appeared in Meng Hao's eyes as he took a step forward. No laughter or crying could be heard, but his eyes burned with crimson light, and he erupted with a shocking aura as he began to fight ruthlessly. Massive rumbling sounds echoed out as he licked his lips, the desire to consume the enemy growing stronger within him.

As of this moment, the Mountain and Sea Realm truly had reached the most critical of junctures!

Booms rang out across the battlefield. One billion flying swords turned into a rain of destruction. Tens of thousands of former Imperial Lords, the river of reincarnation, and 100,000 Devils fought like mad to defend the butterfly from the Immortal God Continent.

Meng Hao's eyes flashed with crimson light as he fought his way toward the nearest 8-Essences Paragon. As he closed in, his aura transformed until he was like a wild beast, oblivious to matters of life and death. That 8-Essences paragon was one of the suns of the Immortal God Continent, with an incredibly high position. However, he had never encountered a cultivator like Meng Hao before, and within a split second, Meng Hao had torn a huge chunk of flesh off of him. His rage erupted, and just when he was about to strike back, he found himself facing a shocking God-Slaying Fist!

Paragon Sea Dream started laughing, and a cold gleam appeared in her eyes. Without any hesitation, she began to burn what remained of her dwindling longevity in exchange for more cultivation base power, which she immediately unleashed in combat.

Fighting broke out everywhere, and off in the distance, even more cultivators were approaching from the direction of the Immortal God Continent.

Shui Dongliu roared, and his sleeves whipped about as he went up against the other 8-Essences Paragons. Protecting the butterfly as it continued to speed toward the tunnel was the most important thing.

Even as the butterfly's head began to enter the tunnel, the sealed female Paragon began to break free. Her bonds crumbled, and she took a step forward, entering the Mountain and Sea Realm and reaching out with her right hand to grab the butterfly.

"Get back here!"

Rumbling echoed out as a massive force surged toward the butterfly, which began to tremble. At the same time, the corpse of Daoist Immortal Ancient, who was fighting the white-robed old man, looked back at the butterfly, then unhesitatingly closed his eyes and self-detonated.

He moved with such decisiveness that the white-robed old man's eyes widened in shock. He tried to back up, but the power of the self-detonation swept over him like floodwaters, and began to spread out through the entire starry sky.

Wherever it passed, Outsiders and cultivators from the Immortal God Continent let out bloodcurdling screams as they were wiped out of existence. Then, the power began to wash over the Mountain and Sea Realm, although it did not harm any of the forces of the Mountains and Seas. Instead, it was targeted directly at the 9-Essences female Paragon!

Her face fell; even someone as powerful as herself had no choice but to evade. She immediately loosened her grip on the butterfly and fell back.

In that same instant, the power of self-detonation transformed into a propelling force which then shoved the butterfly toward the tunnel.

"Immortal Ancient!!" cried Shui Dongliu, grief filling his eyes. He knew that the Immortal Ancient which had appeared was already dead, and couldn't last in the fight for very long. The fact that he might choose to self-detonate at a critical juncture was something that Shui Dongliu had long since taken into consideration. In fact, he himself might do just that; in all the plans he made, the only true mistake came… from not predicting that the Ninth Sea would turn traitor.

In the past, he had taken into consideration the potential betrayal of cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm. However, he never thought that the Ninth Sea would actually make such a decision. It wasn't that he didn't know about the friction between Meng Hao and the Ninth Sea; he had taken that to be a small matter. Actually, from an objective standpoint, it seemed obvious that there was a more important reason for the Ninth Sea's betrayal.

"It wants to become an independent will…." Shui Dongliu thought bitterly. The Ninth Sea's betrayal became the flaw in the Mountain and Sea Grand Aegis, ensuring that it could only last for a short time before being destroyed.

The price to be paid to make up for that weakness, was a life. And unfortunately, the life of Daoist Immortal Ancient was not enough….

It was in this critical moment that beams of light filled the starry sky as the 8-Essences Paragons once again closed in. In addition, there were two 9-Essences Paragons from from the Immortal God Continent.

But the Three-eyed God threw his head back and laughed uproariously. Eyes gleaming with determination, he leaped forward unhesitatingly and chose to self-detonate. The blast surged out, propelling the butterfly further into the tunnel, until it was halfway inside.

Next, the war chariot exploded, then the ancient Imperial Lords. As of this moment, they all chose to self-detonate. The one billion flying swords, and the other forces which made up the backup reserves of the Mountains and Seas, all did the same thing.

BOOOOMMMMMM!

The resulting explosion caused blinding light to spread out over the battlefield. At the same time, the nine Xuanwu turtles, as well as the Eight Seas, all added power to the butterfly's movement.

The incoming Paragons were swept over by the force of the self-detonation blasts, and at the same time, the butterfly was pushed all the way into the tunnel.

It seemed as if they were on the verge of escaping, as if within the space of a few breaths of time the Mountain and Sea Realm would be gone, as if the Immortal God Continent had absolutely no time with which to react.

However… it was within those few breaths of time that everything would be decided!

Hordes of cultivators charged forth from the Immortal God Continent. The tunnel was vibrating, as though the butterfly's escape was impossible to prevent.

In Shui Dongliu's plan, the next few breaths of time were supposed to be covered by the protection of the Grand Aegis. However, the betrayal of the Ninth Sea turned that plan into nothing more than a dream.

"Even the slightest mistake must be compensated with a massive price," Shui Dongliu said softly. "So many lives have already been sacrificed. Now, it's my turn." With that, he took a step forward, and suddenly, he seemed completely different than before.

In a mere instant, he was no longer an old man, but instead, young and strapping. He took a deep breath, then extended his hand toward the Mountain and Sea Realm.

"Shrink!" he said. That single word caused the entire Mountain and Sea Realm, all of the Nine Mountains and the Eight Seas, to shrink down into the form of a magical item which came to rest on Shui Dongliu's palm. Then, he tossed it away behind him, whereupon all the surrounding cultivators, including Meng Hao, Ksitigarbha, Paragon Sea Dream, and others, were all shoved toward the tunnel, along with the shrunken Mountains and Seas.

Struggling wasn't even an option. Meng Hao and the others were flung toward the tunnel. As for the shrunken Mountain and Sea Realm, it headed toward Meng Hao, transforming into a shining seed which merged into his forehead.

Meng Hao’s mind began to rumble as he looked out at Shui Dongliu, who hovered there in the starry sky, just outside the tunnel. Shui Dongliu was alone, preparing to block all oncomers, to buy the time for the butterfly which had been lost by the Ninth Sea!

Shui Dongliu’s voice echoed with seemingly infinite power as he said, “Meng Hao, I owe the bloodline of the Fang Clan. Today, I will repay what I owe you!

“I’m giving you the Mountain and Sea Realm!

“Take it, and also take… my Beginning-Ending Hexing magic. This is… the League of Demon Sealers’ First Generation Hex. Take my cultivation base, and take my Dao!

“This is the final phase of my plan. Use my cultivation base and my Dao for the sake of the Paragon Immortal Realm, to become… something that surpasses Nine Seals… surpasses Paragons… surpasses Immortals and Devils, and is above all else… the ultimate powerful expert!”

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# Chapter 1398: The Starry Sky of the Vast Expanse

The tunnel shook as the butterfly flew along, surrounded by Meng Hao and the other powerful experts. Countless vortexes appeared; explosive power was gathered which dramatically increased the speed of the butterfly. However, despite that sudden outburst of speed, when they looked back, they could still see Shui Dongliu standing outside of the tunnel like a mountain.

Meng Hao’s red pupils flickered with mixed emotions as he watched Shui Dongliu suddenly growing much larger. He was no longer older, but rather, a young man.

His hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, causing a shocking aura to rise up around him. There was also brilliant light, all of which was… the power of a 9-Essences cultivation base, which roared to life inside of him.

However, he seemed incapable of actually making a move. His cultivation base rocketed up, but all he could do was stand there, as if to use himself… to block the entrance to the tunnel. If anyone on the other side wanted to enter, they would have to destroy him first.

It was in that exact same moment when he began to grow larger, and his cultivation base grew more powerful, that in some mysterious fashion, he formed a connection to the Mountain and Sea Realm seed within Meng Hao’s body!

It was like a spiritual consecration, like the transmission of a Dao, causing Meng Hao to shake, and his mind to rumble. Boundless understanding of the Dao of Heaven, complete confidence regarding the cultivation base, and deep comprehension regarding various magical techniques, all passed into Meng Hao from Shui Dongliu.

If that were all there were to it, it might not be a big deal, but a boundless cultivation base power, as well as life force Essence, all poured into Meng Hao. Trembling, he let out a howl as shocking and monumental changes occurred inside of him.

Outside of the tunnel, the frustrated howls of the people from the Immortal God Continent could be heard.

“He’s passing on his Immortal Dao!”

“He’s using himself as the seed, then self-immolating to help someone else ascend….”

“That’s a magical technique left behind from the Paragon Immortal Realm. But originally, it was completely malevolent. You could consume another person to help ascension. But this guy… he’s using that magic in the opposite way!”

Amidst the buzz of conversation, the 9-Essences female Paragon frowned for a moment, then snorted and took a step forward. The old man with the white eyebrows and robe sighed, and continued to advance. As for the other 8-Essences Paragons, they all kept moving forward.

It took only a moment for rumbling sounds to fill all ears as they closed in with deadly force on Shui Dongliu. Shui Dongliu chuckled, and his eyes shone brightly as he looked at the virtually all-powerful cultivators of the Immortal God Realm.

“We Mountain and Sea cultivators… live and die for the Mountains and Seas!” His hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, summoning a divine ability. Drawing upon himself, he burned his own body and unleashed his cultivation base, partly to block his opponents, and partly to give to Meng Hao.

Blood sprayed out of his mouth as he sustained countless injuries. However, he didn't shrink back in the slightest. He stood there outside of the tunnel, laughing just as before.

"I am not Nine Seals, although my body contains a stream of Nine Seals' discarnate soul…. I'm not sure whether he used me to gain another life, or if I used him to return to the world…. The question of who I actually am is something I've pondered for countless millennia. Perhaps I've known the answer all along. I was originally a Mourning-Death soul…. In the end, though, it doesn't matter. It's all the same…. 1

"I called back the clone to slash the Gods, and stop the enemy within the Mountains and Seas. I discussed the Dao with Extermination, and asked about the Heaven of all living things. 2

"I spared no effort. I did everything I could…. Perhaps some people will hate me, and perhaps some will denounce me. But when it comes to the Mountain and Sea Realm… I will never, ever have any regrets. I have lived my life for the Mountain and Sea Realm, and now I will die for it. My wish is fulfilled, and I have absolutely no regrets!

"We Mountain and Sea cultivators live and die for the Mountains and Seas!" As Shui Dongliu laughed, a look of madness gleamed in his eyes. Just before he was about to be completely destroyed by the enemy, he made the same choice that so many other cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm had made when they were on the verge of dying.

Self-detonation!

By means of self-detonation, he would injure those who were giving chase. By means of self-detonation, he would pass on his legacy with burning speed to Meng Hao, to deliver to him… superlative good fortune!

Shui Dongliu was self-detonating!

As soon as that happened, the vortexes in the tunnel spun faster than ever, inreasing the butterfly's speed dramatically. It took only a moment for it to shoot far off in the distance. It was also in that moment that Meng Hao's mind filled with the crash of infinite thunderclaps. He shook visibly as countless Daos filled his thoughts, provoking frenzied growth within him.

Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and his vision swam for a moment before he passed out. Paragon Sea Dream quickly caught him. Then she, along with everyone else atop the butterfly, looked back with mixed emotions at the blinding, scintillating lights flashing near the entrance of the tunnel.

However, it didn’t take long before a huge boom echoed out from that very area. A moment later, vast numbers of Immortal God cultivators poured in. At the same time, their huge continent also reached the tunnel itself. Moments later, the tunnel itself began to crumble into pieces.

In that very instant, the butterfly was rapidly sucked out to the end of the tunnel.

Time seemed to slow until it was impossible to tell how much had passed. When things returned to normal, they were in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, shooting out from a vortex which had just appeared.

When the Mountain and Sea cultivators looked out, they saw an endless starry sky. The Vast Expanse. There were no planets or Heavenly bodies, only layers of pulsing mist.

Behind them was where the Mountain and Sea Realm had formerly been located. Looking back, they could see a blurry vortex, within which were countless dots of light.

This was the first time most of these cultivators had seen the outside world, and it looked very unfamiliar.

Meng Hao was still unconscious, but a shocking power seemed to be brewing within him, stirring and rumbling.

The butterfly quickly shot out into the Vast Expanse. However, it didn’t take long before rumbling sounds echoed out from the very location it had just emerged from. The vortex which had been ripped open suddenly grew larger, then exploded as a gigantic land mass emerged.

Then, that vortex, which was connected to the former location of the Mountain and Sea Realm shattered, vanished for all eternity.

What had just emerged was none other than the Immortal God Continent, which immediately cast countless enraged and murderous auras out in all directions.

“The boundless starry sky of the Vast Expanse! They won’t be able to escape!”

“When the Immortal God Continent chases someone, they can’t escape!”

“Meng Hao! The name of the successor is Meng Hao!”

After a moment, they determined the direction Meng Hao and the others had taken, and went all out in pursuit.

Even as the Immortal God Continent gave chase, a lone ship appeared within the Vast Expanse. It hovered there, an old man on the prow, who suddenly opened his eyes and looked off into the distance.

After a moment passed, he shook his head and sighed.

“If they knew the truth about it all, would they do this?” he murmured. Perhaps the only person who knew which “they” he referred to… was him.

Another moment passed, and then the ship began to fade away. The old man continued his never-ending journey. Apparently, his stop in the Mountain and Sea Realm had just been a brief respite from a lifelong journey. Now, he made his way off into the distance once again.

“Perhaps we will never meet again. And yet, that Demon… seemed quite interesting.” He sighed, and his eyes glittered thoughtfully.

Even as the ship disappeared, an emaciated cultivator appeared off in another direction. Hovering at his side was an enormous mosquito. Both of them looked off into the distance.

The cultivator had a wretched appearance, but at the moment, he was frowning in apparent hesitation.

“Is this war really necessary? Lunatics. They’re all lunatics…. It was all to prevent the Immortal from appearing, all to transform him into the Demon….” If Wang Mu were here, he would instantly recognize this gaunt old man. He was none other than his Master, who had taught him the ways of cultivation in the bamboo forest of the Wang Clan.

After a moment passed, the gaunt cultivator sighed.

“The jinx has been gone for many, many years, gone to parts unknown. And yet, the same type of thing is happening again. Ah well, forget it. I’m not getting involved.” The emaciated cultivator shook his head, then began to make his way off into the distance. Perhaps from his perspective, what the Immortal God Continent was doing was a bit excessive, maybe even vile. Yet in the end… it wasn’t anything fatally wrong.

Even Slaughter appeared, looking off into the distance. Apparently, even he felt that what was happening was relatively meaningless….

It was possible that, at this point in time, there was no one who understood… what type of explosive tempest would arise because of the events playing out.

The Immortal had become the Demon, and the Demon… could become the pinnacle of the Vast Expanse!

The pursuit was underway. The final events of the war which had just played out caused mixed feelings to rise up in the hearts of the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm regarding Shui Dongliu.

Shui Dongliu had given the Mountain and Sea Realm hope. When they were mired in the depths of hopelessness, he had provided a slight chance for survival. That tiny chance had grown larger and larger, until survival now was a distinct possibility.

Although it seemed possible that the butterfly might still meet destruction, the truth was that the instant it had emerged from that vortex into the Vast Expanse, the Mountain and Sea Realm… had already escaped the fate of certain destruction.

As of this moment, the Mountain and Sea Realm was in control of its own fate!

There were no fetters and no seals. There were no 33 Heavens, and no Dao Fang. There was no Aeon Seal. There were no two powers crushing down on them from above.

It could even be said that the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm had finally acquired true freedom. Tens upon tens of thousands of years had passed since the Paragon Immortal Realm, and during that time, they had never possessed… freedom.

They were being chased, but as far as the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm were concerned, they still had their freedom.

The downside was that the cost of that freedom had been immeasurable. As for the handful of cultivators who actually remained behind, when they thought about that seemingly impossible chance which Shui Dongliu had procured, they were filled with mixed feelings, including both hatred and respect.

Ninety-nine percent of the cultivators had died. In exchange for that, every flap of the wings of the butterfly caused more of the dead souls of the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators to fade away.

In fact, it might be better to say that the wings were not being propelled by Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li, but rather, by the lives of the Mountain and Sea cultivators.

1. The Mourning-Death Clan and the Mourning-Death souls are from the novel Beseech the Devil. I don't really know much about them, I just know that they existed in that novel and were relevant in the later parts of the story.

2. You might remember a while back I said that the man on the boat seemed like he might be Old Man Extermination from Beseech the Devil. This seems to confirm that

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# Chapter 1399: The Butterfly Flies!

Shui Dongliu self-detonated to block the path of the enemy, all to buy just a bit of time for the butterfly, to help Meng Hao successfully lead the Realm to survival. When it came to his choices and actions, no one could judge whether they were completely right or wrong, or whether in the grand scheme of things he had done good or evil.

The only thing that remained behind were complicated thoughts and emotions.

Everyone stood there silently as the butterfly sped out into the Vast Expanse.

Meng Hao was still unconscious, as he had been ever since the final moments in the tunnel. He could not stay in the world which existed inside the butterfly. When the others tried to take him inside, the butterfly began to tremble as if it were about to disperse. Therefore, they were forced to leave him outside, atop the body of the butterfly itself.

Sea Dream, Ksitigarbha, and everyone else remained in his vicinity as Dharma Protectors. There were two other figures near him, a Daoist couple. It was none other than Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li.

They didn’t look the least bit incorporeal. They were as solid as if they were real, and they sat next to Meng Hao, looking softly at their Hao’er. In their eyes, Meng Hao would always be their little baby.

“Hao’er, we didn’t leave. Wake up and you can see us….”

“Hao’er….”

The others around Meng Hao looked at his parents with expressions of deep respect. Even Paragon Sea Dream had clasped hands and bowed deeply to them when they had appeared.

Everyone knew that the butterfly itself belonged to the Fang Clan, and that the two souls propelling the wings were none other than this husband and wife.

They had not died, but had been reborn into a new, eternal form of life.

The butterfly was still flapping its wings, carrying its group of homeless wanderers off into the Vast Expanse.

Behind them was the Immortal God Continent, gave chase at top speed, drawing ever closer. In a different direction out in the Vast Expanse was another land mass, deathly silent, being pulled along by several huge butterflies. That land mass was currently changing its course to head toward Meng Hao’s location.

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Meng Hao was dreaming. Within that dream, there was endless lightning and thunder. He heard laughter and weeping that seemed to rip everything asunder. As the lightning crashed around him, black veins could be seen snaking across his body. Something else was visible, a distinct symbol.

A Hexing magic!

A Hexing magic of the League of Demon Sealers!

Meng Hao had already mastered the Second through Eighth Hexes. Now, he was surrounded by lightning that apparently came from Shui Dongliu’s First Hex, which was in the process of fusing into him, enabling him to gain enlightenment of the First Demon Sealing Hex, the Beginning-Ending Hex!

All living things are affected by the cause and effect of Karma, by life and death. All things have a beginning and an end!

In addition to the Hexing magic, Meng Hao was surrounded by a vast sea. That sea was like a cultivation base, filling his world with enormous crashing waves that he was actually able to absorb.

His cultivation base was rising unceasingly, and his mind was seething with countless Daoist magics which were capable of rocking all creation, of altering the Heavens.

It was hard to say how much time passed before the lightning within that world faded. When it finally happened, Meng Hao closed his eyes and sank down into the depths of the cultivation base sea. Within those depths were nine tiny mountains, between which were eight seas that remained unfused with the cultivation base sea.

Meng Hao settled cross-legged amidst the nine mountains and eight seas, eyes closed in meditation. He appeared to be seeking enlightenment; his face was occasionally twisted with struggle, occasionally blank with confusion, occasionally beaming with joy. There were constant changes, and at the same time, the sea around him was gradually shrinking down.

The surrounding nine mountains and eight seas seemed to be connecting to Meng Hao in some mysterious fashion, and were even shaking in concert with his heartbeat.

Eight complex symbols gradually appeared on his forehead. The last of those symbols was only half complete, and still in the process of growing. These were Meng Hao’s Hexing magics. When that last symbol was complete, it would indicate that Meng Hao could wield all eight generations of Hexing magic!

The rest of the symbols all had varying levels of Essence aura emanating off of them, as if they might burst forth with Essence aura at any time.

Surrounding Meng Hao were 33 Soul Lamps, of which 18 were burning and 15 were extinguished. Of the 18 burning Soul Lamps, one was the Prime Lamp; were it to be destroyed, it would result in Meng Hao’s death!

All of a sudden, one of the 18 Soul Lamps suddenly went out.

As more time passed, more of the lamps were extinguished. Each time that happened, black smoke would rise up and pour into Meng Hao’s body.

His cultivation base, his aura, and his fleshly body all experienced incredible growth!

The good fortune from Shui Dongliu was doing just as he had intended: it was transforming Meng Hao into a consummate peak expert!

Although the process was somewhat slow, and might last a long time, it was a process that would not stop!

At the same time, the Immortal God Continent was closing in on the butterfly. There, Paragon Sea Dream looked at Meng Hao for a long moment, and then finally made a decision.

She rose to her feet, looked out at the Vast Expanse with an expression of sadness, and then softly murmured, “Everyone from that generation… has gone. Now, it’s my turn, the most useless of them all.

“I can sense the Devil Realm up ahead, and the Immortal God Realm chasing us.

“I am the most good-for-nothing of the Paragons. My cultivation base isn’t sufficient, and my skill in strategy is lacking. I’ve been able to do very, very little….” She stood there for a moment silently.

“I watched the Mountain and Sea Realm be destroyed, and I watched her appear. I watched as the butterfly soared out into the starry sky, and now I watch as the enemy pursues us. What else can I do…?

“I’ve lived a long time in this life of mine, and yet still, I’m useless. The only thing I ever had was my plan with the Echelon. Well, now is the time to accomplish my purpose with that plan!

“The hope of the Mountain and Sea Realm lies, not with me, but with him.” She turned her head to look at the unconscious Meng Hao. Then, her eyes flickered with determination, and she reached her hand out and pointed at one of the butterfly wings.

The gesture instantly caused two people to vanish from within the world of the butterfly wing. They were the only two remaining Echelon cultivators other than Meng Hao, and a moment later, they reappeared in front of Sea Dream.

One of them was the Echelon cultivator from the First Mountain, Dao-Heaven! The other was the Seventh Mountain’s Echelon cultivator, Yuwen Jian!

They had not yet recovered from the injuries they had sustained in the war, but as soon as they appeared and realized where they were, they looked over at Meng Hao, and then clasped hands and bowed to Paragon Sea Dream.

She looked at them silently for a moment, then softly said, “Are you two ready?”

Dao-Heaven and Yuwen Jian had looks of staunch determination on their faces as they nodded deeply. They had already lost everything. Their homes. Their clans. As for friends, they only had a few left. All that truly remained in their hearts was a throbbing hatred.

“Well then,” Sea Dream continued, “it’s time to execute the Echelon mission…. I worked on this plan for many, many years, the only strategy I ever came up with. In a moment, I will unleash a reincarnation magic, which will be fed by your life forces. I will send one of you to the Immortal God Continent, and the other to the Devil Realm!

“There, you will be like seeds planted to overthrow the enemy. Your futures will be bleak, and you might even die in the process. There is an even greater likelihood that my plan has no hope of succeeding at all, and that you will be able to do nothing to topple either of those two great powers.”

Sea Dream closed her eyes and murmured to herself, “However… it’s still worth trying.” With that, her eyes sparkled; she slowly extended her right hand and tapped Yuwen Jian’s forehead. His body began to tremble, and the Echelon mark on his forehead radiated scintillating light that cascaded around him. It gradually covered his entire body until Yuwen Jian… transformed into ash!

Then he disappeared!

The strand of his soul which was left was propelled by means of Paragon Sea Dream’s life force Essence out into the Vast Expanse. There, it would look for a path to reincarnation, a way… to find its way through the void to the Devil Realm.

“Let my memories guide you. Let my life force be your path. Take power from my cultivation base to enter the cycle of reincarnation. I… was part of the great catastrophe that struck the Paragon Immortal Realm. Back then, I managed to leave a mark in the Devil Realm…. Go, Echelon cultivator!”

Rumbling sounds echoed out as Yuwen Jian’s soul vanished into the Vast Expanse, following a strange path to enter the reincarnation cycle of the Devil Realm. The magical technique being used was something beyond description. However, this was truly Paragon Sea Dream’s sole plan. Even the scheme with Windswept had been arranged by Shui Dongliu, and had not been carried out by herself.

Dao-Heaven’s eyes flickered with bright light. Then, he took a deep breath and closed his eyes.

In almost that same moment, the Echelon mark on his forehead began to shine, surrounding his body with light. Then, he vanished from the butterfly.

After accomplishing these things, Paragon Sea Dream coughed up a mouthful of blood and seemed to wither. She had already been burning her life force back in the fight for the Mountain and Sea Realm, and had accomplished her plan only by means of sacrificing some of her Essence. Now, she was like an oil lamp on the verge of sputtering out.

“Finally, it’s my turn.” Smiling, she waved her sleeve and took a step forward to appear out in the Vast Expanse, off of the surface of the butterfly. There, she stretched both arms out wide, causing rumbling sounds to echo out from inside of her. At the same time, an invisible fire began to burn away at her.

There wasn’t the slightest bit of hesitation in her actions. She knew that her soul would disperse, that she would not enter the cycle of reincarnation, and that her Dao foundation would be destroyed. Even still, she took every scrap of power that she had, every bit of life force, and burned it hard and fast.

In that moment, she once again looked like she had when she was young. Her body trembled as shocking fluctuations emanated out, transforming into a destructive vortex around her.

She was not choosing to self-detonate. Instead, she was burning all her remaining cultivation base to become divine sense power that spread out in all directions!

She was using her death to find a direction for the Mountain and Sea Realm and the butterfly to travel in, a direction where safety would exist for later generations!

She was a Paragon, always and forever!

Perhaps she didn’t have the ultimate cultivation base, and perhaps she wasn’t the most capable. But the sun and the moon and all the Heavens could bear witness that her heart belonged to the Mountain and Sea Realm!

Rumbling could be heard as her divine sense spread out, backed by the burning of her cultivation base and life force. It spread out into the boundless expanse, seeking, searching everywhere for the slightest chance of survival for the Mountain and Sea Realm.

She could sense the ever-nearing Immortal God Continent, and the approach of the Devil Realm. As her divine sense continued to spread out unceasingly, her body withered rapidly. In the end, she began to fall apart. Her legs transformed into motes of light that began to dissipate.

And yet, she didn’t give up. All to find hope for the Mountain and Sea Realm….

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# Chapter 1400: Green Coffin Vortex!

Sea Dream’s divine sense spread out further and further. Everything from her waist down had transformed into motes of light. It was then that, shockingly, she noticed… a vortex, spinning somewhere far, far away.

It was a vortex larger and grander than the space once occupied by the Paragon Immortal Realm, and within it could be sensed an intense, terrifying pressure that was no less powerful than that exerted by the Immortal God Continent.

There was indescribable danger inside, and within the cracks and crevices that riddled the swirling vortex, it was just possible to discern that in the centermost region… was a coffin!!

The coffin was green, and inside of it was the corpse of a woman who almost appeared to be sleeping.

Next to the coffin was a stone stele, upon which was a line of script that Paragon Sea Dream could just barely read.

“The entire starry sky owes me a debt, and likewise… I owe you a debt. You could awaken from slumber if you wished, but you do not. Well then… I will use this starry sky, transformed into the Vast Expanse, to accompany you in death.”

That vortex was a place that had nothing whatsoever to do with the Mountain and Sea Realm, the Immortal God Continent, or the Devil Realm. It was another world, a world that had seen the passing of countless ages.

Apparently, it had even existed back in the days when there was no Immortal God Continent or Devil Realm!

Apparently, the reason why the Vast Expanse existed to begin with… was because of that world!

Sea Dream had never seen this woman before, but as soon as she laid eyes on her, her mind reeled. Somehow, she was filled with the sensation… that this was the place where the Mountain and Sea Realm could find its chance at survival!

The vortex itself was bizarre in appearance; it consisted only of the colors black and white, and also contained some sort of timeshifting magic, which made it so that Paragon Sea Dream couldn't examine it for very long. A moment later, her divine sense was on the verge of running out, so she retracted it. By now, everything below her neck had transformed into light.

"That's the place. That… is where the Mountain and Sea Realm has a chance to survive!!" She seemed excited as she pulled back her divine sense, and yet, it was in that same moment that the Vast Expanse churned as the Immortal God Continent appeared not too far away in the distance.

However, Paragon Sea Dream continued to smile as her head transformed into motes of light. Those motes of light then propelled the butterfly ahead with incredible speed, and with it all of the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Rumbling could be heard as the butterfly shot away from the Immortal God Continent, which continued to pursue relentlessly, despite the distance between them.

The motes of light were all that remained of Paragon Sea Dream, and they were about to fade away. She quickly pushed the butterfly toward the vortex she had discovered with her divine sense, and passed on the information about it to Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li.

"Go there…. That is where… hope exists!"

The butterfly changed its course, speeding rapidly in the direction indicated by Paragon Sea Dream.

At this point, the motes of light that were Sea Dream began to fade away. She watched as the butterfly disappeared off in the distance; smiling, she offered it all of her well wishes.

She was Sea Dream, who had stood guard over the Mountain and Sea Realm ever since the final battle of the Paragon Immortal Realm. Now, she was dying.

Shui Dongliu gave the last bit of his life force to buy hope for the Mountain and Sea Realm, and now Sea Dream did the same thing. She gave her life to point the Realm in the right direction.

“Big bro Nine Seals, I’m coming to join you….

“I’m the most useless of everyone. I was useless back then, and now… I’m just as useless…. I didn’t even kill an Imperial Lord, let alone a Paragon. Completely useless.

“To all you children of the Mountain and Sea Realm, I truly hope… that you can live quiet and safe lives.” Smiling, Paragon Sea Dream faded away into the Vast Expanse… for all eternity.

Of all the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm on the butterfly, the only one to witness her passing was Ksitigarbha. When she was gone, a look of deep sadness appeared in his eyes.

As for Meng Hao, he was currently in that other world in his mind. Because of the sea of his cultivation base, he was growing more powerful. Of the Soul Lamps which surrounded him, a total of 20 were extinguished!

Of the Hex marks on his forehead, the one which represented the First Hex was more than half complete!

Essence was growing rapidly within the eight marks. The Demonic qi and Immortal qi within him, as well as all other types of energy, were rapidly fusing together, transforming into… a completely bizarre aura.

His heart was now beginning to pound. Thump thump. Thump thump. Thump thump….

With every beat of his heart, it felt as if lightning were crashing in his brain. Gradually, the effect spread outside of his body, causing bursts of lightning to appear in the Vast Expanse beyond the butterfly.

Time passed, although it was hard to say exactly how much. The butterfly shot through the Vast Expanse in the direction Paragon Sea Dream had indicated, drawing ever closer to the vortex she had discovered….

One day, the murkiness of the Vast Expanse lessened. Ahead of the butterfly, a huge vortex had become visible. It was so large that, although it was a vast distance away, it looked very close.

This was none other than… the location Paragon Sea Dream had seen with her divine sense!

In the same moment that the vortex became visible, the Vast Expanse filled with rumbling sounds as the Immortal God Continent… appeared once again!

The starry sky of the Vast Expanse was so vastly large that no one could truly say how large it was. Or perhaps it would be more correct to say that people who did know the answer to that question were incredibly rare.

To most cultivators and even other life forms, the starry sky that was the Vast Expanse… was essentially unending. After all, most beings wouldn’t be able to travel to the ends of the Vast Expanse, not even the Immortal God Continent.

In the end… it was too large.

Nor could anyone clearly explain how many vortexes or floating land masses existed. However, everyone knew that wherever vortexes existed in the Vast Expanse, civilizations could be found!

Even if they were extinct, evidence would remain of their existence, remnants that could give a glimpse into their former glory.

As for the land masses that floated about, they were always places of great danger, locations of either powerful experts, or the shades of the dead.

However, the Vast Expanse was so large that the space between such land masses was incredible. It was even possible to travel for tens upon tens of thousands of years and never run into a single one. As for the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm, they had traveled far and wide within the Vast Expanse. Although they had never traveled far enough to grasp the overall shape of the Vast Expanse, whenever they encountered other forces, they always came out on top!

In fact, they knew much more about this newly appeared vortex than most others would.

Almost as soon as the Immortal God Continent appeared, the voice of a woman echoed out from the land mass, passing through the Vast Expanse into the ears of the people standing on the back of the butterfly.

“There are three restricted areas within the Vast Expanse, mysterious locations within which lurk profound secrets relating to the creation of the Vast Expanse itself. The place you are traveling toward is one of those three. It is called… the Green Coffin Vortex!”

Ksitigarbha’s expression was one of vigilance. Standing next to him was the Paragon puppet, which had been reduced to a very simple state of consciousness due to Meng Hao being in a coma. Wang Youcai was also present, as were Ji Yin and others, such as the Mountain and Sea Lords and Ke Jiusi.

These people were the most powerful experts in the Mountain and Sea Realm!

They were guarding Meng Hao, and as such, their faces were grim as they stared out at the Immortal God Continent.

The woman's voice echoed out once more: "Choosing to go to a place like that is essentially choosing… to die!"

Even as she spoke, certain cultivators from the Immortal God Continent were flying out into the Vast Expanse.

Some of those cultivators were like suns, and emanated shocking fluctuations. In the rear position was the same cold woman who had appeared back in the Mountain and Sea Realm, whose cultivation base fluctuations were those of the 9-Essences level.

She was the one who had just spoken.

"According to the legends," she continued, "the black and white vortex which spins there outside the Green Coffin Vortex contains a Dao of Time. It is a great Dao that did not just appear randomly. It was forcibly acquired and left there to feed the woman inside the coffin.

"As for who exactly that woman is, nobody knows. Years ago, my husband came here and observed this place for a long time, and in the end, said only one thing.

"He said that the person in that coffin is the origin of the starry sky that became the Vast Expanse!" Eventually, the 9-Essences woman's eyes came to rest on Meng Hao, who was unconscious on the back of the butterfly.

"We have reached the point where the hostilities should cease. There is no need for you to proceed any further. Our entire purpose for starting this war was, first, to prevent the rise of the Immortal, and second, to acquire a mirror."

The woman looked at the butterfly, her expression cold as she said, "The funny thing is that both of those reasons were originally unconnected. But now, they are inexorably intertwined. Just hand that man over, and allow yourselves to be sealed. Then… you can be on your way.

"In the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, 9-Essences Paragons… are the most powerful of beings. If you want to stay alive in the Vast Expanse, then no matter where you go, you will need a 9-Essences Paragon.”

Her words cause incredible pressure to weigh down on the Vast Expanse, and left the butterfly trembling and incapable of moving.

“Do you people disagree?” A moment later, the woman waved her right hand, causing an incredible force to surge down. Just when she was about to take a step forward, her heart suddenly thumped as she realized that Meng Hao had just twitched.

“Is he waking up?” she thought, smiling, her eyes glittering coldly. “How amusing. I’m also curious to see… the true strength of this Immortal who became the Demon.”

She pointed out at the butterfly.

“Don’t leave a single one alive!”

As the words left her mouth, the surrounding cultivators of the Immortal God Continent charged in attack. The four suns radiated boundless light as they shot toward the Butterfly, closing in almost instantly.

Sadness appeared on Ksitigarbha’s face, and everyone else had bloodshot eyes. As the cultivators of the Immortal God Continent closed in, a beam of light shot out from the butterfly, a divine ability which transformed into a shield.

However, it could only protect them for a moment before it began to crumble and collapse. At that point, Ksitigarbha launched himself forward to attack, along with Wang Youcai, the Paragon puppet, and everyone else.

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1401: Wake Up, Wake Up!

“They won’t withstand a single blow!” The four Paragons in the suns were the quickest. One of them was a crimson-haired middle-aged man with a cold smile. As he strode forward, he waved his hand, resulting in Ksitigarbha and the others coughing up mouthfuls of blood as they spun backward beyond control. A few of them even directly exploded.

It took only a moment for it to be apparent that there was nothing the Mountain and Sea cultivators could do to block the advance. It was simply impossible to compare the Mountain and Sea Realm and the butterfly to the Immortal God Continent.

The crimson-haired man strode forward and stepped onto the butterfly itself, causing a tremor to run through it. He instantly headed toward the unconscious Meng Hao, and a flicker of scorn could be seen in his eyes as he reached his hand out to grab the top of his head.

At the same time, the other suns and other cultivators of the Immortal God Continent were closing in. In only a moment, they would burst into the world which contained the survivors of the Mountain and Sea Realm, and put them all to death.

In the moment in which the crimson-haired man was about to grab Meng Hao, the butterfly’s wings shivered, and Meng Hao’s parents suddenly appeared to block his way.

“You think a bit too much of yourselves,” the man said, smiling. His energy surged, transforming into a powerful attack which headed directly toward Meng Hao’s parents, to wipe them out of existence.

The destructive power in his hand was enough to eradicate anything and everything, and it was now only moments away from slamming into Meng Hao.

It was absolutely a moment of incredible danger.

The crisis Meng Hao faced was being shared by his parents, by Ksitigarbha and the others, and by everyone living inside the world of the butterfly!

Meanwhile….

In the world inside Meng Hao’s mind, lightning and thunder crashed. At the same time, countless copies of Meng Hao were joining their voices together to shout out in a powerful roar.

“Wake up! Wake up! Wake up!!”

As the voices echoed out endlessly, more and more versions of Meng Hao appeared, filling the entire world, roaring at him in an attempt to awaken him.

It eventually pierced into the remaining cultivation base sea, entering the ears of Meng Hao’s true self, causing him to tremble. Then his eyes opened!

Meanwhile, back out in the real world, where Meng Hao lay on the butterfly’s back, his eyes… also opened!

As his bright red pupils appeared, an explosive aura surged out, causing the Vast Expanse to shake, and the starry sky to tremble.

Shockingly, as everything quaked around him, lightning bolts appeared, transforming the area into a lake of lightning. It almost looked as if the Vast Expanse were furious.

An intense pressure began to weigh down that was difficult to put into words. It filled the entire area, crushing down onto the cultivators from the Immortal God Continent who were attempting to break into the butterfly world. All of them coughed up blood, and then uncontrollably dropped to their knees and began to kowtow.

Even the 8-Essences paragons were shocked to find that they were trembling.

The entire world was completely shaken!

The starry sky was vibrating, and the Vast Expanse was howling!

The Immortal God cultivators who were trying to cut down Ksitigarbha and the others felt their cultivation bases weakening, and then some of them began to explode!

And that was what happened when Meng Hao merely opened his eyes and unleashed his energy!

The intensity of the power caused the face of the cold-eyed 9-Essences Paragon to drop.

As for the crimson-haired man in front of Meng Hao, his scalp was completely numb, and he was shaking in his boots. His cultivation base was unstable, and the attack he had just unleashed on Meng Hao’s parents was completely destroyed.

An indescribably majestic air radiated off of Meng Hao, causing everything around him to vibrate.

The crimson-haired man, who was an 8-Essences Paragon sun from the Immortal God Continent, couldn’t stop himself from looking at Meng Hao. As soon as their eyes met, the man’s face fell, and his mind began to spin. It felt like red daggers were stabbing through his eyes into his brain. Any resistance on his part was crushed like twigs as the pain stabbed into him, sending his sea of consciousness boiling, causing his cultivation base to grow unstable, and filling him with a sensation of imminent death.

“This….” Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and his entire body shook violently as he subconsciously took a step back in fear of the complete and utter bizarreness of Meng Hao.

In the moment he fell back, Meng Hao took a step forward, and before the man could dodge, viciously head-butted him in the forehead.

Meng Hao’s eyes were bright red as he slammed into the man, instantly turning the top of his head into a mash of blood and gore. He screamed and struggled, but then Meng Hao smiled and once again butted his head forward.

“Didn’t you just say that we wouldn’t withstand a single blow?” He grabbed the man’s robe and slammed his head into him again.

“Didn’t you just say that we overestimate ourselves?” Meng Hao grinned, and blood soaked his head as he bashed it into the man over and over again. Finally, the 8-Essences Paragon’s head exploded, and his body was destroyed. His Nascent Divinity flew out, looking at Meng Hao in shock.

Meng Hao let the man’s Nascent Divinity fly away, and turned to look at the other forces who had already landed on the butterfly, then waved his hand.

“Screw off!” he growled.

Rumbling sounds erupted out as the lighting surrounding him sent the midst of the Vast Expanse seething. Incredible pressure radiated out from Meng Hao, and shocking power filled his voice. Instantly, the cultivators from the Immortal God Continent who were on the butterfly coughed up blood, and then began to explode one after another. In the end, not a single one could remain on the butterfly’s back.

The Immortal God Continent was buzzing as countless cultivators flew out, eyes filled with disbelief as they stared at Meng Hao. In addition to the original 9-Essences female Paragon, there was also the white-robed, white-eyebrowed old man who had fought Daoist Immortal Ancient, and who was now looking at Meng Hao with a very serious expression.

“He’s 9-Essences….” Those were the words coming out of the mouths of the bedraggled cultivators who had survived their brush with Meng Hao’s power.

“That’s… that 9-Essences power. How is that even possible!?!?”

“How could he be 9-Essences? Shui Dongliu used Immortal Dao Transference to consecrate him. But… even if he passed on everything to this guy, it’s not likely that he would be able to… to have 9-Essences power!!”

“Most importantly, you can tell that he’s actually not finished with the process!! If… if he ever completely absorbs that legacy, just think of how strong he’ll be!!”

The cultivators of the Immortal God Continent felt as if they had been struck in the head. Their minds were spinning as they looked at Meng Hao with complete disbelief.

9-Essences! Only 9-Essences could possess energy like this, and only 9-Essences could destroy the fleshly body of an 8-Essences Paragon as easily as flipping over a hand!

Only 9-Essences could stand firm and unthreatened within the Vast Expanse!!

Shui Dongliu killed himself as the price to give Meng Hao unmatchable good fortune. That was not only to pay back the debt he owed to the Fang Clan, it was also… to ensure that someone remained behind after he died to protect the Mountain and Sea Realm!

And that was the exact role which Meng Hao had chosen to play: the guardian of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

His eyes glowed red as he slowly turned and looked at the hosts of cultivators from the Immortal God Continent. His sudden appearance on the scene left Ksitigarbha and the other forces on the butterfly stirred and excited. Meng Hao’s parents appeared, along with Xu Qing and others from within the world of the butterfly. All of them were paying close attention to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao stood in front of the group, tall, his hair floating around him, looking as powerful as a mountain. Behind him on the butterfly were his parents, Fang Yu, Xu Qing, and other friends and family, the surviving cultivators from the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Facing Meng Hao was the vast and boundless Immortal God Continent, as well as a seemingly neverending force of cultivators. There were multiple 8-Essences Paragons, countless Imperial Lords, as well as two paramount figures who were the pillars of their army… the two 9-Essences Paragons!

Meng Hao looked at them, his seething Demonic qi causing the Vast Expanse around him to fade, the starlight to gleam. Seemingly endless amounts of Demonic qi flowed out of him, and at the same time, his cultivation base continued to rise.

Before accepting Shui Dongliu's legacy, he had been capable of fighting with Paragons. Then he became the Demon, and his battle prowess had increased dramatically, to the point where he could battle 8-Essences Paragons. But now, thanks to the preeminent good fortune given him, his Hexing magics were complete. Although he was missing the Ninth Hex, in some ways, his collection could be considered finished.

Then there was the cultivation base and Essence power from Shui Dongliu, which helped him to advance by leaps and bounds!

Finally, there were his extinguished Soul Lamps, which pushed him even higher. As of this moment, he had… battle prowess that was no weaker than the 9-Essences level!

With all of that… Meng Hao still hadn't reached his peak. He still had room for progress with his cultivation base; he still had more than 10 Soul Lamps which had not been extinguished. He had yet to create his Ninth Hex, and although all of the other Hexing magics had Essence to some degree or another, he still needed more enlightenment.

One could only imagine how powerful he would be when he reached the true pinnacle. It would be something incomparable. After all, he was… the Demon!

He had transformed from being an Immortal, to being… the Demon!

There is a God who is the acme of all Gods. There is a Devil who is the ultimate expression of Devils. There is also an Immortal, who is like an Emperor among Immortals. And there is also… the Demon!

The pinnacle of all Demons!

As of this moment, the Vast Expanse was completely silent. Demonic qi rolled out of Meng Hao as he stood there, looking coldly at the crowds from the Immortal God Continent. A smile twisted the corner of his mouth, a brutal smile which caused icy cold to fill the hearts of anyone who looked at it.

No one spoke. Even the 9-Essences female Paragon looked at him with cold, flickering eyes. Then she took a step forward, and Meng Hao smiled.

He reached up and pushed down onto his forehead, causing a group of Mountains and Seas to fly out. Nine Mountains. Eight Seas!

It was… the Mountain and Sea Realm!

As of this moment, he held the Mountain and Sea Realm in his hands!

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# Chapter 1402: I Shall Possess the Mountains and Seas!

Meng Hao had the Mountain and Sea Realm in his hands. He flung it out, simultaneously sending his mind and will into it. Rumbling sounds echoed out as the Mountain and Sea Realm Grand Aegis appeared, surrounding, not Meng Hao, but the butterfly!

It enveloped the butterfly, protecting it along with all of Meng Hao's relatives and friends. Then Meng Hao took a step forward and transformed into a beam of light that shot directly toward the icy 9-Essences Paragon.

As they closed in on each other, performing incantation gestures the whole time, the domineering aura radiating off of Meng Hao grew even more intense. In the briefest of moments, it was as if countless screaming voices had suddenly filled the void of the Vast Expanse.

A boom rang out, and then they separated. A split second later, they were locked in fierce combat. Meng Hao waved his hand to summon numerous mountains. He transformed into an azure roc, which radiated a bizarre energy that made it seem like a Demon as it screamed in for an attack.

Shockwaves blasted out in all directions. Grinning, Meng Hao performed an incantation gesture and unleashed Hexing magic. The Eighth Hex erupted out, and the wave of his finger caused the icy woman to stop in place for a moment. In that instant, Meng Hao's Seventh Hex appeared.

Next was the Sixth Hex, the Fifth Hex, and the Fourth Hex. A world of black and white appeared, which encompassed countless ages of reincarnation. A great Dao of Time appeared that could transform the Vast

Expanse. The icy woman's face flickered, and the white-robed, white-eyebrowed old man took a threatening step forward.

At the same time, the old man's voice rang out in all directions: "Destroy the World-Butterfly!"

The surrounding Immortal God cultivators hesitated for a moment before resuming their charge. Under the leadership of the 8-Essences Paragon, they began to batter the shield.

Booms echoed out as Meng Hao single-handedly fought against two 9-Essences Paragons. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and as he fell back, the Lightning Cauldron appeared above his head. Electricity danced as he switched positions with one of the Immortal God cultivators. When he reappeared, he was right next to an Immortal God Imperial Lord. His hand instantly shot out, and the Imperial Lord let out a scream as Meng Hao's fingers stabbed into his eyes. Meng Hao unleashed curse power to imprison his soul, then dug his eyes out of his head, grabbed his body, and lifted it over his head.

Next, he physically threw him toward an 8-Essences Paragon who was charging toward him from off to the side. A boom rang out, and the 8-Essences Paragon was shaken, but only a moment later, he was closing in on Meng Hao.

"Screw off!" he roared, unleashing divine abilities and Essence power. However, in the same moment, Meng Hao vanished yet again, appearing unexpectedly next to another 8-Essences Paragon. His aura was different this time, brutally violent, and as he pounced on the Paragon, black fog roiled out, covering the two of them.

A bloodcurdling scream rang out, and even as the icy Paragon hastened over, the fog faded away. Meng Hao was nowhere to be seen, but the 8-Essences Paragon's remains were left behind, mangled and ripped apart as if by a wild animal.

Meng Hao appeared off in the distance, holding the man's Nascent Divinity in his hand. Eyes flickering with crimson light, he popped it into his mouth and began to chew slowly. Then he reached out with his right hand, and the Vast Expanse trembled as the Battle Weapon suddenly appeared.

It was not pitch black this time, but rather, bright red. In fact, if you looked closely, you would see that Meng Hao's hair was no longer black, but violet!

Furthermore… the roots of his hair were actually red!

Despite the vast force arrayed against him, Meng Hao had killed several people in quick succession, which left the icy female Paragon very grim-faced. To the majestic Immortal God Continent, killing a 9-Essences Paragon wasn't anything incredibly difficult, and yet Meng Hao was so bizarre and multifarious that it was impossible to lock him down.

It was at this point that a beam of light brimming with insane destructive power shot out from the Immortal God Continent, piercing through the Vast Expanse, cleaving apart the starry sky, destroying natural laws as it bore down on Meng Hao. The fluctuations from the beam of light were otherworldly, causing Meng Hao's eyes to widen. Apparently, this light was not emitted from any object or cultivator, and yet, the bizarre sensation it gave off was palpable.

Without any hesitation, Meng Hao performed a Form Displacement Transposition and vanished. The position he had just occupied in the starry sky suddenly shattered and transformed into a black hole. All of the cultivators who were nearby were instantly transformed into ash.

Meng Hao's eyes flickered toward a certain mountain on the Immortal God Continent, upon which was a vicious-looking war chariot. What made him frown even more was that somewhere there on the Immortal God Continent, he could sense… two more 9-Essences auras!

It was at this point that another beam of light rocketed out, and this time it was heading, not for Meng Hao, but for the Mountain and Sea Realm Grand Aegis!

Rumbling sounds could be heard as the Grand Aegis collapsed. And yet, in that same moment, Meng Hao performed a double-handed incantation gesture.

“Mountain and Sea Seal!” he said, causing the collapsed fragments of the Grand Aegis to sweep together and envelope the nearby Immortal God cultivators, where it turned into a shocking sealing mark!

It even enveloped the cold woman and the white-haired old man.

In the moment the seal formed, Meng Hao flashed into motion, returning to the butterfly.

“Let’s go!” he said. The butterfly’s wings flapped, and as they sped along, Meng Hao looked back coldly at the Immortal God Continent, and the group stuck in the sealing mark. Flicking his sleeve, he sent the Mountains and Seas out in front of him in formation.

“When someone hits you,” he growled, “you hit back!”

A mysterious, incisive light appeared in his blood-colored pupils as he said, “The Dao is in My Heart….”

A light shone out like an icy blade!

He raised his hands into the air and splayed them wide. A strange resonance could be heard in his voice, which caused the Nine Mountains and Eight Seas to suddenly increase dramatically in size!

The Mountains grew larger, and the Seas churned. In the blink of an eye, the Nine Mountains in front of him were completely and utterly shocking, the ultimate depictions of any type of mountain!

Each and every one of those mountains was a world unto itself, and radiated a sharp and incisive will.

Years and years ago, Paragon Nine Seals used this same precious treasure to destroy the Heaven Trampling Bridge, to fend off the Immortal God

Continent and the Devil Realm, and prevent those two powers from harming the survivors from the Paragon Immortal Realm.

Now, in Meng Hao’s hands, the Mountain and Sea Realm erupted… with the true power which it held within!

Nine majestic Mountains were like nine swords that could shake Heaven and Earth! As the power of those mountains radiated out, the faces of the crowds from the Immortal God Continent fell.

The cold woman trapped in the Mountain and Sea Seal looked on with constricting pupils, and the white-robed old man was clearly shocked. Immediately, they began to confer.

“I can’t believe that Shui Dongliu’s legacy contains the secret to controlling the Mountain and Sea Realm! Impossible!!”

“Back when Nine Seals died, he managed to send out a discarnate soul. His death completely rocked us, shaking our foundation to the point where we couldn’t destroy the Mountain and Sea Realm. However, even at that time, we were able to join forces to destroy the magic he used to control the Mountain and Sea Realm!”

“There isn’t anyone who can truly control the Mountain and Sea Realm, that terrifying conglomeration of the fury of the Immortals! Not even Nine Seals’ discarnate soul within Shui Dongliu was able to do anything other than exercise basic control!”

Even as these two Paragons were reeling in shock, Meng Hao waved his hands, and his eyes flickered with intense focus, with a deep longing for the Mountain and Sea Realm, and with a deep hatred for the enemy!

“The Will is in My Eyes!” His cultivation base erupted with power as the second sentence left his mouth. Simultaneously, the Eight Seas began to churn and seethe, and in the blink of an eye, they had become seas of stars which shook the Vast Expanse. They merged with the Nine Mountains to erupt with… indescribable pressure!

The instant that pressure appeared, the hosts from the Immortal God Continent coughed up mouthfuls of blood, and even the land mass itself began to quiver. Mountains fell into ruin, and the courses of rivers altered!

One city after another on the land mass collapsed into rubble!

It was like the end of days!

This was the true power of the precious treasure that was the Mountain and Sea Realm!

Meng Hao had not acquired this magical control method from the legacy of Shui Dongliu. That legacy had given him ordinary magical techniques from the Mountain and Sea Realm, and nothing that could help him exceed Shui Dongliu.

But what he did have was… the Seal the Heavens Incantation!

When he had unleashed that incantation within the Mountains and Seas, it led to incredible power. However, at that time, the Mountain and Sea Realm had still been under the general control of Shui Dongliu, which made it difficult for Meng Hao to use it. In fact, back then, it was almost useless. It was only later that he came to understand that the true Seal the Heavens Incantation could only be used properly after the Mountains and Seas had returned to the form of a magical item!

Like now!

This was the Seal the Heavens Incantation!

It had been created by his Master in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, a divine ability or Dao that was the laughing stock of the masses. And yet, that magical technique was no simple divine ability, it was actually… a control method for the entire Mountain and Sea Realm!

The correct way to use it was not to a cultivator, but the Mountain and Sea Realm itself, to unleash its truly deadly aspects as a precious treasure!

No one knew what experiences the Noble Ran had gone through to create this particular divine ability. After its creation, he had spent the rest of his life extolling its virtues. In the end, he passed it on to Meng Hao, who eventually proved that… the Seal the Heavens Incantation was not a worthless incantation!

After the true war of the Mountain and Sea Realm broke out, Meng Hao never ran into the Noble Ran again. In fact, now that he thought back, it seemed as if… the Noble Ran hadn’t even been present during the fighting.

However, now was not the time to contemplate that matter. Meng Hao waved his arms, and the Mountains and Seas erupted with shocking pressure. He took a deep breath as he suddenly understood what it meant to say… the Dao is in My Heart!

That Dao referred, not to Essence, not to natural laws, nor to magical laws. It was shapeless, and existed in the heart, and it didn’t matter if you were Demon or Immortal. It was all the same!

The Dao is one’s heart, and however deep your heart was, that was how profound your Dao would be!

Furthermore, he now understood that ‘the Will is in My Eyes’ referred to the outer manifestation of the Dao. Whatever he looked at… had a Dao, or was a Dao!

“I Shall Possess the Mountains and Seas….” He flicked his sleeve, and the Nine Mountains rumbled as they tilted on their side to point toward the Immortal God Continent!

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# Chapter 1403: The Supreme Seal the Heavens Incantation!

The Eight Seas erupted with power. Although they were clearly seas, the shocking power seemed like flames of madness that spread out in all directions. The mist of the Vast Expanse shied away as a huge whirlwind sprang up.

In the moment that the whirlwind appeared, a terrifying aura began to spread out, causing all living beings who sensed it to tremble inwardly.

At the same time, two figures emerged from the Immortal God Continent. They were two old men, both of whom radiated the demeanors of celestial beings!

The entire Immortal God Continent was astir now. Countless cultivators were meditating to build up energy, and the entire land mass was like a giant awakening from slumber. Countless shield layers sprang up.

In almost an instant, incredible defenses were in place!

At the same time, the eyes of the enormous statue in the middle of the land mass suddenly began to shine brightly.

It was at this point that Meng Hao stretched his hands out and spoke out the final words of his incantation.

"… Seal the Heavens Incantation!!"

He roared the words at the top of his lungs, and at the same time, his cultivation base erupted. His Demonic qi flowed out to merge with the Mountains and Seas, causing a shocking development to occur. As the Nine

Mountains and Eight Seas hovered there in the Vast Expanse, an enormous figure took shape, a figure whose face was Meng Hao’s!

However, that figure also sported a wicked horn protruding from the top of his head, making him completely shocking to behold!

He seemed to be both laughing and not laughing, crying and not crying. Anyone who saw him would feel coldness rising up from deep within the heart. Even the mist of the Vast Expanse shot away in all directions, not willing to come into contact with him.

Explosive rage and bizarre evil filled the aura that emanated off of the illusory figure, to an extent which vastly exceeded Meng Hao’s own aura. Meng Hao then viciously shoved out with both hands, sending the astonishing Nine Mountains toward the Immortal God Continent

The Eight Seas rumbled as they spun in the form of a vortex. As that vortex grew in size, it was possible to see the images of countless souls within the Seas, vicious and thirsty for blood.

As for the enormous figure which existed above all of them, he seemed to be wielding the Mountains and Seas themselves in a powerful attack!

The sight was completely shocking, and if someone could paint the image, it would be something people assumed was a myth from primordial times. It was almost as if that figure were treating the Mountains as a mount, and the Seas as his Demon Weapon, to slaughter the starry sky.

The Immortal God Continent trembled, and the sealed cultivators had looks of astonishment written on their faces as they let out shouts of shock. In the blink of an eye, one of the Mountains, the Fifth Mountain, actually stabbed into the sealed area, leaving behind a trail of blood as it shot toward the Immortal God Continent.

Next were the Fourth and Sixth Mountains. Then the Third and Seventh Mountains!

Amidst the rumbling, the Nine Mountains looked like nine spikes that pierced through everything. The Immortal God Continent's four 9-Essences Paragons managed to stop one Mountain each, but that left three Mountains which smashed into the structure of the Immortal God Continent!

The Vast Expanse shook as a massive roaring sound ripped out. The defensive shields twisted and distorted as all power was called upon to aid the defense. Countless people were shrieking, and miserable screams rang out everywhere.

The land mass trembled as if judgement day had arrived. The cultivators there were now experiencing… the same madness that had been unleashed countless years ago by Nine Seals when he wielded the Mountain and Sea Realm!

As the Nine Mountains blasted forward, the Eight Seas, in the form of a Demon Weapon, hurdled toward the land mass.

When the last Mountain pierced the defensive shields, the Immortal God Continent's defenses were broken. The lands quaked, and rifts spread out everywhere across the land mass. But then, the eyes of the statue in the middle of the entire land mass flickered.

A terrifying pressure erupted out, unleashing a shockwave that instantly filled the entire area. When it passed over the Nine Mountains, they shattered. The Eight Seas were destroyed. And yet, they didn't vanish, but instead transformed into countless bits of rubble which rained down onto the Immortal God Continent.

The cultivators on the Immortal God Continent began to cry out with furious roars.

Meng Hao watched all of this happening from his position on the butterfly, and could see the flickering light in the eyes of the statue.

"These Gods… are half Immortal, huh?" he murmured. His heart was filled with vigilance as the butterfly flew away urgently. His connection to the

Mountain and Sea Realm remained. He was the one and only owner of the precious treasure, and that could not be wrested away from him.

As such, the Mountains and Seas did not truly vanish. Although they had just been destroyed, moments later, they reappeared in front of him, the same Nine Mountains and Eight Seas as before.

As Meng Hao stood there on the butterfly, flying off into the distance, an angered roar echoed out from the Immortal God Continent, which was from none other than the icy female Paragon. Her murderous aura skyrocketed as she instantly gave chase.

“I’ve experienced the pain of watching flames of war engulf my home,” Meng Hao said. “Unfortunately for you, all of that… is just beginning.” He smiled slightly, then extended his hand and pointed toward the Mountains and Seas. Instantly, the Mountains and Seas shrank down and converged upon each other to form the Mountain and Sea Bow!

He held the bow in his left hand and drew the string back with his right. Killing intent flickered in his eyes as the energy of the bow surged, and the power of the Mountains and Seas transformed into an arrow!

When he loosed the string, that arrow shot forth like a thunderbolt!

But then, without even pausing for a moment, Meng Hao drew the bow again and shot a second arrow, and then a third!

Three arrows can kill Gods!

Four arrows can cut down Immortals!

Five arrows… are Heaven-defying!

Five arrows. Five beams of light. They transformed into a sea of brightness which distorted the Vast Expanse as they rumbled along.

They contained a will of extermination, and Meng Hao’s killing intent, with boundless Demonic qi. Instantly, they appeared in front of the cold female

Paragon, and were moving with such speed that it was difficult to put into words, so fast that she was incapable of evading.

Based on Meng Hao’s current battle prowess, wielding the Mountain and Sea Bow in this way allowed him to unleash power that even this cold woman feared.

At the same time, it was a difficult thing for Meng Hao to use the bow for a sustained period of time.

Rumbling could be heard as the woman waved her sleeve. Since she couldn’t move in any direction, she decided that she might as well give up any ideas of dodging. Performing an incantation gesture, she caused a towering iciness to spread out from her, freezing the starry sky and the Vast Expanse. Layers of ice built up around her, from within which she glared at Meng Hao standing there on the butterfly.

When their gazes met, the layers of ice expanded outward, instantly coming into contact with the five light arrows.

Unexpectedly, the ice didn’t shatter, but actually spread out to envelop the five arrows. At the same time, the layers of ice expanded outward to form the image of a woman’s hand, which stretched out toward the butterfly as if to grab it.

From a distance, the sight was completely shocking. The ice hand almost seemed capable of plucking away stars or moons. The Vast Expanse shook violently as the hand suddenly appeared right behind the butterfly.

Meng Hao stood on the butterfly, coldly observing this enormous hand of ice. Then, a smile appeared on his face, as if he didn’t care about it at all.

As the ice hand closed in, what appeared to be the beginnings of layers of ice started to form around the butterfly. By this point, the ice hand was only about 300 meters away from Meng Hao.

However, the five light arrows which had been locked down earlier could only be suppressed for so long. Suddenly, they exploded, sending dazzling light out and ripping numerous rifts open within the ice hand. That in turn made it impossible for the hand to reach Meng Hao, and it finally shattered.

As that happened, the dazzling light caused by the explosion of the five arrows sent powerful ripples out in all directions, obscuring the area between Meng Hao and the woman, making it impossible for them to see each other.

The ripples eventually faded away, but by that time the butterfly was gone. As for the icy Paragon, her face was grim as she looked off into the distance, the killing intent in her eyes growing more and more intense.

At the same time, the white-robed, white-eyebrowed old man, as well as two other ancient and profound looking individuals stood there together, looking silently off into the distance.

“Perhaps our plan was mistaken…. If the Patriarch knew about what we were doing in this war, he might not approve.”

“It’s useless to jabber like that. If we get our hands on that mirror, we can call him back. Besides… ‘the Immortal is above the God, and can suppress the Devil.’ That saying… has been floating around for a long time. The fact that the Immortal could become the Demon is something everyone could predict might happen.”

“The Demon….” The female Paragon sighed, then gave a cold harrumph. “It doesn’t matter. Now that things have reached this point, we can’t just give up. He might have battle prowess equivalent to the 9-Essences level, but he won’t be the first such person we’ve killed throughout the years. After him!”

She waved her sleeve, and after a bit of time passed, the Immortal God Continent began to once again rumble through the Vast Expanse in the direction Meng Hao had fled in.

This time, it moved even faster than before, as if they were unleashing some incredible power that had remained untapped before. That power pushed the land mass forward with speed that defied imagination.

The Immortal God Continent had been building up resources for countless years, giving them a profound level of power that was enough to shake anyone in the Vast Expanse. What they had revealed so far was only a tiny portion of that. Their true resources came in the form… of people who had existed since that ancient generation, and had even been famous back then.

For example, there was a tiny country that existed somewhere in the recesses of the Immortal God Continent. It was a city-state that was not very large, with a population that couldn't be considered huge. However, its monarch was a kind man, and that country was called… the State of Clear Water!

In another area, in the capital city of a vast empire, a huge, muscular man sat in the Imperial palace, gulping down alcohol and watching a dance performance. Although he was laughing heartily, there was a certain melancholy within him. 1

The Immortal God Continent sped through the boundless Vast Expanse. Far up ahead of them, also within the Vast Expanse, was a writhing black mist. Within that mist were several enormous butterflies, which were speeding along, dragging a land mass behind them. Visible upon that land mass was a gigantic coffin, which was surrounded by countless kowtowing individuals who were chanting scriptures.

As the sound of the scriptures floated out, endless roaring could also be heard. It transformed into a maddening power, as well as a savage, barbaric feeling that spread out in all directions. That land mass was also speeding along as fast as it could.

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# Chapter 1404: Immortal, God, Demon, Devil, Ghost!

As the butterfly flew along, Meng Hao stood there on its back, blood oozing out of his mouth. Although he had seemed impressively mighty in the fight just now, the truth was that his cultivation base was unstable, a result of being interrupted during the process of absorbing the good fortune from Shui Dongliu.

He was still incapable of entering the world within the butterfly. He wasn’t sure exactly why, but whenever he tried to enter the wings, the butterfly would begin to tremble on the verge of collapse.

As the wings of the butterfly, Meng Hao’s parents looked into the matter, as did Ksitigarbha and others. They came to the conclusion that Meng Hao’s aura was currently incompatible with the butterfly because of not having completely absorbed Shui Dongliu’s good fortune. After the process was complete, and his various auras were in balance, there should be a way to enter.

That matter in and of itself wasn’t of great concern, and didn’t affect Meng Hao’s ability to defend the butterfly. Therefore, he sat cross-legged on its back, looking out at the Vast Expanse, an expression of reminiscence occasionally appearing on his face.

He thought back to the Mountain and Sea Realm, to Shui Dongliu, and to all the faces he remembered from there. The pain in his heart was hard to suppress. It was true that his parents hadn’t perished, and some of his relatives had survived. There was even hope for the long-term survival of the Mountain and Sea Realm. But when he recalled the past, he almost wished that the present could be nothing more than a mere dream.

It caused him to sigh deep in his heart.

He didn’t understand why things had turned out this way, but that didn’t matter. His only option was do everything he could to protect the butterfly as it continued to head toward the location Paragon Sea Dream had discovered at the cost of her life.

“That is where the hope of survival exists….” Looking off into the distance, he could just barely make out an enormous black and white vortex, within which swirled a Dao of Time.

Inside the world of the butterfly, the surviving remnants of the Mountain and Sea Realm quietly went about creating a new home for themselves. Of the entire Mountain and Sea Realm, only a few hundred thousand cultivators remained.

Those cultivators had fought a bitter war, had watched their society crumble, and had gone through countless heartaches. And yet, they were as focused as ever. Their spirits had not been extinguished, and if things went on, that spirit would be passed down to countless future generations.

At times, Xu Qing emerged to accompany Meng Hao. Wang Youcai, Fatty, and others also came out. Chen Fan didn’t appear. Meng Hao clearly remembered him being among the group transported into the world of the butterfly, but later, he was nowhere to be found.

After pondering the matter, he recalled how he had caught a glimpse of Chen Fan leaving the 33 Hells, and the confusion which had been visible in his eyes. Apparently, Chen Fan had encountered something within the 33 Hells that was… a good fortune unique to him.

In the past, Meng Hao might have attempted to investigate the matter. But now, the people of the Mountain and Sea Realm were physically and mentally exhausted, and Meng Hao himself didn’t have the energy to think about it too much.

Patriarch Reliance was there in the world of the butterfly, as were Pill Demon and Ke Jiusi.

Time passed. While the people went about constructing their new home, Meng Hao sat cross-legged on the back of the butterfly. He didn’t slip into a meditative trance, nor did he practice cultivation. Instead, he kept his divine sense focused on his surroundings, and remained constantly on guard.

The danger was still far from over.

He could sense that two powerful energies had locked onto the butterfly. One of them was further up ahead, mysterious and unfathomable; that was no doubt the Devil Realm, which still had yet to lay eyes on. Behind them was the pulsing killing intent of the Immortal God Continent.

As the two land masses drew closer, it was as if a huge net had been stretched out, which was now closing in over the butterfly.

However, the two land masses couldn’t precisely pinpoint the location of the butterfly. Meng Hao’s Demonic qi distorted everything, making that impossible. Were it not for that, he was certain that they would teleport over within moments.

Meng Hao sat there quietly as the butterfly got closer and closer to the vortex which held hope for the Mountain and Sea Realm. As the journey continued, Meng Hao was able to peer out into the Vast Expanse for the first time ever, and he saw many strange and bizarre things.

At one point, he saw what appeared to be a swarm of broken statues, whose faces were impossible to make out, flying along.

It was only at first glance that they looked like statues. Upon closer examination… it became clear that they were some sort of strange life form.

Thankfully, they didn’t appear to be malicious, and didn’t even spare a glance for Meng Hao and the butterfly as they flew off into the distance.

Another time, Meng Hao’s eyes snapped open when he sensed something completely shocking. Looking up, he saw that, not too far off in the Vast Expanse, a wriggling mist had appeared. Bursts of intense coldness pulsed off of it as it began to follow the butterfly.

Moments later, gray eyes appeared within the mist. When they realized that Meng Hao's crimson eyes were staring back at them, and sensed the malice within his gaze, the mist fell back and then faded away.

Meng Hao frowned. The mist gave him a very strange sensation, as though there were countless life forms within it. He also had the feeling that if it weren't for the 9-Essences pressure within him, the mist would have continued to follow the butterfly… waiting for a chance to pounce on it in attack.

Those were only some of the bizarre entities which Meng Hao saw in the Vast Expanse as they traveled along. He also saw a pack of wolves…. They were real wolves, just like wolves from the mortal world, except that they lurked within the Vast Expanse. To them, the Vast Expanse was a forest that made up their habitat.

He saw the corpse of a giant, which had long since begun to rot, and was being slowly eaten by a horde of countless disembodied heads.

Among those heads were men and women, young and old, all of whom were slowly gnawing away at the corpse.

This giant was different from the Three-eyed God, or the God Tribe of the Immortal God Continent. It had two heads, and a long tail.

More than half of it had been consumed, but by looking at its bones, it was possible to tell that in life, it had been… comparable to an 8-Essences expert.

When Meng Hao neared, the heads stopped chewing and slowly looked over at the butterfly with cold, detached eyes. However, as soon as they caught sight of Meng Hao, strange expressions could be seen, and they quickly turned back to eating.

Some things were quite fear-inspiring, but there were other things which Meng Hao simply didn't understand. At one point, he saw a stone palace floating out in the Vast Expanse. Upon passing it, eyes popped opened upon on the stones which made up the palace. They looked curiously at Meng

Hao, and at the same time, the sound of countless shouting voices could be heard.

“Dammit, you’re squishing me! That hurts! Ow!”

“Shut up! I’ve always been on top of you! It’s not like I want it that way. There’s somebody on top of me who’s squishing me too!”

“Aaahhhhh! I’ve been turned into a stone! This is so weird….”

Apparently, the arguing voices came from the stones themselves, which continued to squabble as the palace floated off into the distance.

Eventually, the butterfly got so close to the vortex that it was possible to say that it had actually arrived at its final destination! It was then that a person suddenly appeared!

This was the first time a human had appeared within the Vast Expanse. It was an old man in a woven rush raincoat, who sat cross-legged on a boulder, floating there in the Vast Expanse. That boulder had eyes, and it was currently shouting out in a rage.

“You damned old codger! Get off me! You’re not allowed to sit on me. Aaaghhhh! This is a disgrace! This is a humiliation. I-I-I, I don’t even have a husband yet! That’s it. We’re fighting to the death, you and I!”

As the boulder screamed, the old man snorted coldly and continued to dangle his fishing pole out into the Vast Expanse.

As the butterfly passed by, Meng Hao assumed that this entity would be like all the others, that it would merely look over and then ignore him. However, it was in that moment that the butterfly trembled, and changed course… to head toward the hook dangling from the old man’s fishing line!

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, and he shot to his feet. Even as he sent his divine sense out, he heard his parents’ voices echoing in his mind.

“Hao’er, we’ve lost control of the butterfly….”

The redness of Meng Hao’s eyes increased in intensity, and his Demonic qi roiled as he stared at the old man.

The old man looked up at Meng Hao and smiled. It was a strange smile, and even as it touched his face, his forehead split open, and a black horn jutted out. His body continued to split, and soon his whole body was covered with cracks. Then, his body exploded, revealing… a green figure with a solitary horn!

He pulsed with a chaotic aura, and as he looked at Meng Hao, he began to laugh uproariously.

“When the Vast Expanse is thrown into chaos, Heaven and Earth will once again be at hand!

“When the universe collapses, the great Dao will reappear!

“Who will be above the God and the Devil… to Seal the Heavens!?

“So this is what it was all leading up to…. So that’s how it was…” The green-colored entity laughed, then abruptly pointed out at the butterfly.

“Ah well, since this moment is upon us, I might as well help you, and sow a bit of good will.” Laughing, he waved his finger, and the butterfly trembled. Unexpectedly, ripples spread out from its wings into the starry sky, and a timeshift magic appeared. The trembling of the butterfly seemed to push the starry sky to the point where it might shatter, as if it had been building up with power that was about to explode, and if it did, would unleash shocking speed that could break free of all obstructions.

A timeshift magic appeared around the green-colored entity, and it seemed to Meng Hao that from the moment he had looked at him, time had been flowing differently around him.

Apparently, he did not come from this time period, and had in fact used the strange fluctuations of time in the area to come to this point.

As the figure grew more and more blurry, Meng Hao suddenly asked, “Who are you?!”

“You don’t know me, and maybe you never will.”

Laughter continued to ring out as the green-colored entity vanished without a trace…. The only thing that remained behind was his voice, which seemed to contain a tone of relief as it echoed out into the Vast Expanse.

“Who created the white pearl!?

“Who created the black pearl!? 1

“Who carved out the Four Great Realms…. Who turned the starry sky into the Vast Expanse…? 2

“And who… created that mirror…? Who gave up the Immortal to become the Ghost!?

“He was the beginning. You are the end. So, that’s how it is… Immortal. God. Devil. Demon. Ghost. I get it now…”

1. About the white pearl and black pearl. To be perfectly honest I ran out of time to thoroughly investigate this, so what I’m about to say should be taken with a grain of salt. Long story short is that I saw some stuff online about these pearls being references to pearls which appear in Renegade Immortal and Beseech the Devil respectively. I did a bit of digging but couldn’t come up with anything conclusive about the subject. This is not the type of thing I can escalate to Er Gen, so for now, take this info as it is. If I get more conclusive info I’ll share it later

2. Spoiler information to follow: The Four Great Realms were mentioned in previous novels. Apparently, one of them is the place where Wang Lin existed, and another is where Su Ming existed

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# Chapter 1405: Wiping the Paragon Bridge from the Dao!

As the sound of his voice faded away, Meng Hao’s heart trembled. At the same time, the butterfly exploded out from within the timeshift magic!

It was as if enormous energy had built up, the eruption of which destroyed the whole area in exchange for a blessing of Time, resulting in an incredible burst of speed.

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the butterfly shot forward with indescribable speed, speeding across the starry sky to appear… directly above the vortex that Paragon Sea Dream had determined contained hope for the Realm!

The butterfly was right there over the very center of the vortex, at the source of all its power!

The power of the vortex caused Meng Hao’s Demonic qi to scatter, instantly revealing the butterfly to the tracking magics of the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm.

Because of that sudden surge of energy, the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm both began to vibrate, and ghost images popped up around them as teleportation power was unleashed. Then, they vanished.

Meng Hao’s mind trembled as the timeshift magic raged around the butterfly, pushing it inexorably downward toward the wild tempest that was the vortex. When you compared the butterfly to the vortex itself, it was completely miniscule.

The sight caused Meng Hao's pupils to constrict. As he stood there on the butterfly's back, he couldn't stop thinking about the words spoken just now by the green-colored entity. However, there was little time to contemplate the matter deeply. Lightning crackled endlessly within the mad tempest of the vortex that drew ever nearer.

Down below, at the center of the vortex, was what appeared to be a black hole filled with infinite rifts, within each of which was another world.

At the most inward depths of the black hole… was a green-colored coffin. When added to the black and white color that made up the vortex, that green made the entire thing three colors!

Although it seemed as though the coffin wasn't very far off, the truth was that after entering the vortex, it was still an incredible, even immeasurable distance away.

"The enemy forces will be here at any moment!" Meng Hao thought, eyes flickering. He poured his cultivation base into the butterfly, and as its wings flapped, it headed into the vortex.

It was in that very moment that, not too far off in the distance, the void rippled, and then a huge rift silently opened up. What came out was not the Immortal God Continent, but instead, a roiling black fog. As the fog spread out, a land mass that was just as large as the Immortal God Continent appeared, emanating a tremendous pressure.

Leading the land mass were several brightly colorful butterflies. As for the continent itself, a huge coffin could be seen there, surrounded by countless cultivators prostrated in worship. Slowly, those cultivators began to look up, to peer out of the land mass… toward Meng Hao and the butterfly!

"The Devil Realm Continent!" Meng Hao said, his heart sinking. Before another moment could pass, the void in the other direction ripped open, and the Immortal God Continent appeared.

Boundless killing intent locked down onto Meng Hao, as well as the butterfly.

An incredible crisis was developing, for Meng Hao, for the butterfly, and for the living beings of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Countless cultivators began to pour off of the Immortal God Continent, and leading them all were the same people who Meng Hao had tangled with before… the four 9-Essences Paragons. “This time, you won’t get away!”

As that happened, a cold snort echoed out from the Devil Realm Continent as a rugged-looking man appeared, leading a vast, endless group of Devil Realm Continent cultivators.

There were also three beams of light that shot out, emanating energy that could shake Heaven and Earth. Meng Hao even caught sight of a giant rising up on the land mass, whose aura contained a matchless  domineering air.

Meng Hao sank further into silence as he saw the seemingly infinite hordes of cultivators. The sight of that coupled with the two vast land masses was a huge weight crushing down onto his heart.

Meng Hao looked up at the vast army of cultivators, and then spoke out in a loud voice: “Why…? What do you people want? You want to stop the Immortal from appearing  Well, there is no Immortal any more. You want that certain object? Well I have it right here! I’ll stay behind. Let the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators go!”

The one to answer Meng Hao was the cold female Paragon. “Who said there’s no Immortal? As long as the bloodlines of the Mountain and Sea cultivators remain unsealed, the foundation for the Immortal will always exist!

“As for that object… of course we know that you have it!”

Based on her biting words, it seemed she wasn’t interested in any sort of discussion with Meng Hao. Waving her hand, she shot forward at top speed, followed by the three other old men. Even as they closed in, the muscular man from the Devil Realm Continent looked on with flashing eyes. It only took him a moment to put the pieces together regarding what had already occurred, and then he also began to advance on Meng Hao.

Rumbling sounds echoed out as numerous powerful experts and countless other cultivators charged toward Meng Hao. They were like a tidal wave, backed with destructive power that could destroy anything and everything.

Meng Hao's face fell and he gritted his teeth. Then, he reached out and shoved the butterfly, imbuing it with power to give it a bit more speed. As it shot toward the black hole in the center of the vortex, Meng Hao unhesitatingly stepped off of its back, hovering there alone to face the incoming forces of both of the two great powers.

Back on the butterfly, Xu Qing wept, and Ksitigarbha stood there with hands clenched into fists. Fatty cried out in anger, and everyone else was trembling. These were people who had watched Shui Dongliu die, had watched Paragon Sea Dream die, and now, they were watching Meng Hao do the same thing that Shui Dongliu had. He was standing there alone to protect them.

"Stay alive…." Meng Hao said. "I'm not going to die. And one day, I'll come back for all of you…. My family, my beloved, my clan, my friends, my Mountain and Sea Realm!" Roaring, Meng Hao lifted his right hand up and then hit the top of his head. Instantly, the precious treasure that was the Mountain and Sea Realm appeared.

Rumbling echoed out as the Mountain and Sea Realm Grand Aegis appeared, covering the entire area. Meng Hao's hair whipped about him as his energy rocketed up. Demonic qi swirled around him as he single-handedly began to fight against the enemy.

It was all to buy time for the butterfly, the butterfly which bore the weight of all the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm into the black hole that Paragon Sea Dream had indicated… was where hope lay.

"DIE!" Meng Hao threw his head back and roared. His eyes were bright red, and directly behind him could be seen the enormous image of a

Demon, also roaring. In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao slammed into the cold woman from the Immortal God Continent.

A boom could be heard as blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth. And yet, he lunged out in a headbutt. The cold woman’s face fell, and she fell back, yet in that very same moment, Meng Hao’s right hand made a grasping motion, and the Battle Weapon appeared. Within was the parrot, silent, and taciturn. Although the parrot hadn’t spoken out loud for a long time, there it was in the Battle Weapon, looking almost berserk.

The meat jelly appeared and transformed into a suit of armor. At the same time, the mastiff roared, becoming a bright red cape. The armor was white, and the Battle Weapon radiated madness. The image of the Demon had bright red eyes, and as Meng Hao hovered there with hair whipping around him, a murderous air swirled around him.

As he clashed with the hosts from the Immortal God Continent, the Battle Weapon wreaked havoc with every swipe and slash. Then, the rugged, muscular man from the Devil Realm Continent began to walk forward. One step. Two steps. Three steps….

He took a total of seven steps, and with each step, his energy rose higher and higher. He was like some sort of battle deity, roaring as he closed in on Meng Hao with a fist strike.

“Seven God Steps!” he roared.

Meng Hao spun, clenching his left hand into a fist to unleash the God-Slaying Fist.

A massive blast surged out in all directions when they met. Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth, and as for the muscular man, he also retreated, blood oozing out of his mouth. He was just about about to close in for another attack when he realized that Meng Hao had spun around and was attacking the Immortal God Continent forces.

The man frowned, then gave a cold snort. Next, the forces of the Devil Realm Continent surged forward, joining in with the Immortal God

Continent’s forces to attack Meng Hao.

Chaotic battle instantly erupted. Meng Hao left swaths of death wherever he passed. He moved with incredible speed, his aura changing constantly. One moment it would be domineering, the next, brutal. He grabbed an Immortal God cultivator and viciously absorbed him. Now that he had become a Demon, the Blood Demon Grand Magic was even more explosively powerful and efficient.

The Lightning Cauldron appeared, and he quickly teleported to another location, where a large group of cultivators was pursuing the butterfly. A vicious expression could be seen on Meng Hao’s face as he waved his sleeve, causing the cultivators to cough up mouthfuls of blood. Some were even instantly killed and transformed into ash.

Meng Hao was already soaked in blood, but he was laughing, a laughter filled with madness and a desire for slaughter.

From the moment the butterfly had begun its true flight into the vortex until now, only a few dozen breaths of time had passed. However, during that time, Meng Hao had single-handedly locked down the entire enemy force, ensuring that the butterfly could draw ever closer to the black hole.

“Are you looking to die!?” roared the cold woman from the Immortal God Continent. Her murderous aura swirled, and as she closed in on Meng Hao, she was joined by her three fellow 9-Essences compatriots.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with red light. Without any hesitation, he waved his right hand, causing numerous mountains to descend. Essence magic was also unleashed as he fought back.

At the same time, the three old men advanced, clearly not aiming for Meng Hao, but rather, the butterfly.

However, even as they attempted to pass by Meng Hao, he laughed loudly, and then waved his right arm with violent force.

The void trembled, and everything shook. The Paragon Bridge appeared, provoking immediate reactions from the cold woman and her three companions. Mixed emotions could be seen on their faces, but they didn’t pause for even a moment. Meng Hao began to laugh loudly.

“Now, I will wipe out my Paragon Bridge from my Dao for all eternity…. Detonate!” Meng Hao’s laughter echoed out as the Paragon Bridge trembled. Cracks spread out across its surface, unleashing blinding light. Then, the bridge exploded!

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# Chapter 1406: For Hope!

This time, the bridge truly did explode, caused by Meng Hao forcibly wiping it away from his Dao. The shocking power blasted out, causing the three old men's faces to fall. They immediately had to abandon any ideas of continuing on, and instead, fell back.

Not including the muscular man, the forces of the Devil Realm Continent had three cultivators with 9-Essences cultivation bases. One was a woman, and two were men. One of those men, and the woman, were middle-aged, with the other being an old man who wore a voluminous robe and held a bone cane in one hand. All three of the 9-Essences Paragons shot toward the butterfly with all the speed they could muster.

"Nobody's getting past me!" Meng Hao roared. He reached out with his right hand, and a bow appeared. Ignoring any potential injuries that the cold woman could inflict, Meng Hao fell back. Not taking the time to even wipe the blood from his lips, he unleashed ten arrows in quick succession!

Ten shocking beams of light shot out toward the group of one woman and two men.

Massive booms rang out. Those ten arrows were backed by Meng Hao's life force, and when they exploded, the powerful blast forced the group of three to fall back in retreat just like the three old men from the Immortal God Continent had.

At the same time, a beam of light shot out from the Immortal God Continent, speeding toward Meng Hao in blinding fashion. The attack had been timed just as he had just unleashed ten arrows, which gave him literally no time to prepare or dodge.

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the light enveloped Meng Hao within it.

Blood spurted out of wounds all over his body, and he was flung backward like a kite with its string cut. His aura was weakened, and yet, as the light faded, he teleported into the crowd of enemies. His hair was disheveled, and his chest was a mangled mass, but as he staggered to a stop he began to laugh, a shrill laughter that almost seemed like wailing.

He faced a seemingly endless group of cultivators, including at least eight 9-Essences experts. All of them were incredibly powerful, and although none were at the peak of the 9-Essences level, merely being in the 9-Essences level at all qualified one to ride roughshod over virtually anything in the Vast Expanse.

Almost as soon as Meng Hao teleported away from his original location, the eight 9-Essences cultivators instantly headed in his direction. Behind them were the two great land masses. Once again, a beam of bright light shot out from the Immortal God Continent, and at the same time, a roar echoed out from the Devil Realm Continent as an ancient Underworld Dragon appeared.

Meng Hao was shaking, but laughing just like before. He extended his right hand again, and the Sun Bow began to radiate boundless, dazzling light, as if it were a sun!

“No other options now. Fine… Detonate!” Meng Hao’s laughter rang out as the bow, the precious treasure forged by Nine Seals himself, radiated intense light, then suddenly went still for a moment before… exploding!

The bow transformed into a seemingly unending wave of shrapnel that exploded out in all directions. Meng Hao controlled the direction of the blast with his cultivation base, sending it tearing into the sea of his opponents.

Insane, unending power spread out in all directions. Even the eight 9-Essences experts could do nothing, and were halted in their tracks.

As that happened, Meng Hao transformed into an azure roc, which charged forward. He only lasted for a moment before the roc was destroyed, and he was revealed, coughing up blood. However, in that moment he had managed to severely injure one of the old men from the Immortal God Continent.

The starstone glittered in Meng Hao’s eye, transforming him into an asteroid which almost immediately crumbled to pieces. However, the result was that he managed to latch his teeth onto the head of the cold female Paragon.

She let out a miserable shriek and shoved Meng Hao away from her, but he managed to leave her scalp bloody and mangled. Having been disfigured in such a way caused her fury to surge.

Meng Hao was coughing up blood, and his internal organs were ravaged, yet he spun and once again began to unleash carnage. Everywhere he went, countless enemies died. The Lightning Cauldron above his head flickered, and Form Displacement Transposition helped him to block the advance of the enemy forces.

Apparently, it was just as he said, that he wouldn’t allow anyone to get past him!

By this point, the butterfly was on the verge of entering the vortex. Rumbling could be heard as the beam of light from the Immortal God Continent closed in, passed by Meng Hao to strike out toward the butterfly. At the same time, the Underworld Dragon from the Devil Realm Continent roared, radiating a boundless, sinister aura of death. It was like a wind of from the underworld that covered over Meng Hao and began to rot away at his entire body.

Meng Hao once again flickered, vanishing. When he reappeared, he was in front of the beam of light, which he blocked physically with his own body.

A boom rang out, and blood spurted out of his wounds. The injury which had just been inflicted threatened to render him unconscious. And yet, his vision filled with red, and he began to laugh maniacally.

“You destroyed my Mountain and Sea Realm, you destroyed my home, you destroyed my clan, and you destroyed countless lives….

“One day, I will get my revenge for all of that. I will inflict the same pain that I feel back onto all of you, bit by excruciating bit!”

As his bitingly venomous words rang out, the eight 9-Essences experts all had various reactions. Some sighed, some grew silent, and some appeared even more murderous than before. Others had various other mixed emotions. However, none of them ceased to attack. They simply couldn’t allow Meng Hao to stay alive, nor could they allow the butterfly to escape.

This war had been going on for many years. The first casualties had occurred tens upon tens of thousands of years ago, and therefore, it made little sense to suddenly just let the enemy get away!

As the eight enemies closed in, followed by a sweeping flood of ordinary cultivators, Meng Hao shakily rose his hands and then spread them wide.

“Eighth Hex, Body-Spirit Hexing!

“Seventh Hex, Karmic Hexing!

“Sixth Hex, Life-Death Hexing!

“Fifth Hex….

“Fourth Hex…. Third Hex…. Second Hex…. First Hex!” Eight shining symbols appeared on Meng Hao’s forehead, which then began to swirl together into one image.

“Eight Hexes… combined!” Meng Hao roared as numerous Hexing magics appeared around him, fused together, and then transformed into an enormous vortex. The vortex rotated, rapidly growing larger as it rumbled toward his eight opponents.

Their faces fell as they unleashed various divine abilities; the void around them shattered, and the starry sky trembled as an aura of complete extermination exploded out.

Meng Hao staggered backward, coughing up blood, and yet, it was the same with his eight opponents. All of them were injured in various ways. Behind Meng Hao, the butterfly had already begun to enter the black hole. Instead of passing into any of the rifts, it headed directly toward the deepest region, and the green coffin.

It was at this point that a sigh rang out from the Devil Realm Continent, an ancient sigh of someone who had existed for countless, unending years.

“I had no desire to fight…. There are too many people opposed to this war, so… I’ve maintained my silence. But now, it doesn’t matter who is right and who is wrong. Since things have escalated to this point… I might as well do something.” As the words echoed out, a huge hand shot out from the Devil Realm Continent, a hand seemingly capable of pulling down the entire starry sky. Its target was the butterfly, which was now entering the black hole.

It gently grabbed onto the butterfly, making it impossible for it to continue onward. Even as it struggled, it slowly began to be pulled back out from the black hole.

An aura which exceeded all of the other 9-Essences cultivators erupted out. It was also a 9-Essences aura, and the others could not compare to it in the slightest. If you divided up the 9-Essences level into early, mid, and late stages, then this old man was clearly in the late 9-Essences stage!

Seeing the butterfly in such danger cause a bitter smile to appear on Meng Hao’s face. But then his eyes shone with determination, and he waved both hands out, summoning the Mountain and Sea Realm with its Nine Mountains and Eight Seas.

“The Dao is in My Heart!

“The Will is in My Eyes!

“I Shall Possess the Mountains and Seas… Seal the Heavens Incantation!” Roaring, he waved his hands, and the Nine Mountains shot forward. Eight Seas exploded into motion. Massive power surged out, some of it toward the eight opponents he had been fighting, and some of it toward the huge hand from the Devil Realm Continent that was grasping the butterfly.

A sigh rang out from the Devil Realm Continent, and the hand transformed into a palm which struck out at the Nine Mountains and Eight Seas. As it closed in, the hand grew immeasurably larger, until it was just as large as the entire Mountain and Sea Realm. When it landed, the Mountains and Seas rumbled, then were summarily destroyed!

A huge shockwave blasted out that even the eight 9-Essences experts feared. And yet, without the slightest pause, they continued to fly toward Meng Hao, who was coughing up mouthfuls of blood.

The Mountain and Sea Realm had been destroyed by a single palm strike. That was not because the Mountain and Sea Realm itself was not powerful, but rather, because Meng Hao's cultivation base was insufficient to unleash its full power.

"My Mountain and Sea Realm…." Meng Hao said. "If I, Meng Hao, can live long enough, then the day will come when I will reforge the Mountains and Seas. If I can't make enough Mountains, then I'll take mountains from the Immortal God and Devil Realms. If I can't make enough Seas, then I'll use your blood as a substitute!

"So… Mountain and Sea Realm, DETONATE!!" Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao's mouth as his bitter words echoed out. At the same time, tears welled up in his eyes. The Mountain and Sea Realm was a precious treasure to be sure, but it was also his home.

He was destroying his home to bury his enemies, all to make sure that his loved ones could stay alive….

BOOM!

A sound echoed out that was difficult to put into words. It was as if the entire world were roaring in fury as it fell into death. The Mountains of the Mountain and Sea Realm were destroyed!

The Seas of the Mountain and Sea Realm shattered!

This was a true collapse in every sense of the term, a true explosion!

The starry sky in the vortex fell apart, and the vortex itself even seemed to stop rotating momentarily.

The destruction of the Mountains and Seas unleashed a deadly power that swept out through the Vast Expanse. The old man who had just spoken out from the Devil Realm Continent shouted in fury and shock, but then, the voice was simply overwhelmed into nothing.

Countless cultivators from the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm were instantly transformed into ash. Even the eight 9-Essences experts coughed up blood and unleashed life-saving divine abilities to protect themselves.

As for the butterfly, as the Mountain and Sea Realm exploded, it flapped its wings and shot through the black hole, carrying the Mountain and Sea cultivators toward the source of hope, the green coffin!

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# Chapter 1407: How Could I Possibly Close My Eyes!?

The area around the vortex in the Vast Expanse was in complete chaos. Numerous auras from the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent spread out in all directions. The forces which had revealed themselves earlier from those two land masses had seemed strong, but were actually only a portion of the full strength of either force.

As of this moment, the explosion of the Mountain and Sea Realm had unleashed a shockwave that apparently exceeded that of the ordinary 9-Essences level, forcing the two powers to unleash their true strength.

Numerous streams of divine sense spread out, none of which were weaker than that of the old man who had just launched the massive palm strike from the Devil Realm Continent!

Apparently, the resources at the disposal of these two powers were so profound that they defied imagination. Such shocking power was what made them so terrifying, and was also why Nine Seals, who was more than half a step past the 9-Essences level, had died all those years ago.

Although everything was in chaos, and the forces arrayed against Meng Hao were all affected by the blast, there were two people who, not being at the center of the blast, and possessing powerful enough cultivation bases, were able to force their way forward to attack Meng Hao.

One was the rugged, muscular man from the Devil Realm Continent, and the other was the cold woman from whose head Meng Hao had ripped out a chunk of flesh. Those two were a bit more powerful than the other eight, and thus, were now able to bear down aggressively on Meng Hao.

However, even as they closed in with killing intent, Meng Hao suddenly slapped his bag of holding, pulled a woman out by the throat and held her up into the air.

“If you get any closer, I’ll kill this woman!”

As soon as the muscular man saw the young woman, his eyes widened, and he stopped in place without even thinking about it. His eyes were filled with shock and even disbelief.

“You…”

That young woman was same one that Meng Hao had captured years ago… Su Yan. As soon as he saw the muscular man using the Seven God Steps, Meng Hao had deduced that Su Yan was somehow connected to the Devil Realm Continent.

The cold woman from the Immortal God Continent didn’t stop at all, though. If Meng Hao couldn’t stop her, it could well be imagined the dangerous threat she would instantly pose to the Mountain and Sea cultivators in the butterfly.

The butterfly was vanishing into the black hole, passing by rift after rift. As it did, the cold woman’s murderous aura flared, and she began to summon a huge hand of ice to grab the butterfly.

Meng Hao had nothing to block her with, and was in fact having trouble even staying in an upright position. His vision swam, and his life force was fading rapidly. Without the last scrap of Demonic qi within him, he would already have been destroyed.

In this moment of great danger, Meng Hao chuckled and shot backward. A wild light of madness flickered in his eyes as, without any prelude or warning, all of his Soul Lamps suddenly appeared.

20 extinguished, 13 lit!

As of this moment, what he was planning to do, though, was not to extinguish lamps… but to detonate them.

“Detonate!” he cried hoarsely, voice still filled with ferocity despite his current state of weakness.

Fighting up to this point had left Meng Hao drained and lacking in energy. He had used virtually every trick he had at his disposal, and although the fighting hadn’t lasted for very long, that short period had been one of incredible and shocking bitterness.

He had destroyed the Paragon Bridge and the Sun Bow. All of his various divine abilities had been defeated. He had combined his Hexing magics, unleashed the Seal the Heavens Incantation, and by now, all of those magics had faded away. He had even detonated the Mountain and Sea Realm. Those actions had blocked his opponents again and again, allowing the butterfly to proceed into the black hole toward the green coffin.

In fact, the butterfly had almost passed the point of no return.

Therefore, how could Meng Hao possibly let all his hard work be for nothing? He wasn’t even sure what name this cold woman went by, but he did know that… he would die before he let her get past him!

As his voice echoed out, all of his extinguished Soul Lamps exploded into a hail of rubble!

Detonating Soul Lamps was similar to detonating one’s cultivation base. The massive force turned into an attack that swept toward the cold woman to block her path. Her face fell and, gritting her teeth, she unleashed the coldness within her to form layer upon layer of blue ice. As soon as they appeared, she instantly sent them shooting forward toward the destructive power sent out by the 20 exploding Soul Lamps.

BOOOOMMMMMM!

The entire area had already been thrown into chaos because of the detonation of the Mountain and Sea Realm. Now, the power of the exploding Soul Lamps, when it slammed into the ice attack of the cold woman, caused a massive boom to echo out in all directions.

The ice shattered, and blood sprayed out of the woman’s mouth. However, she was strong enough to slough off the power of Meng Hao’s exploding Soul Lamps, and once again advanced aggressively.

“I’m not done,” Meng Hao said. “You’re not getting past me!” His vision was swimming, but his mouth was twisted by a strange laughing-crying smile, and his eyes burned with a soul fire that seemed to reflect the mysterious, blue-violet flames of his other 13 Soul Lamps.

“Detonate!”

As soon as he opened his mouth, his burning Soul Lamps began to explode. The first lamp, second, third, fourth… all the way to the sixth Soul Lamp successively exploded. These unextinguished Soul Lamps unleashed even more shocking power than the others, even more chaos, even more madness. Furthermore, their destruction was profoundly damaging to Meng Hao.

And yet, he didn’t care. By this point, the only thing he cared about was the Mountain and Sea Realm butterfly.

BOOOOMMMMMM!

The cold woman’s face fell, and then blood sprayed out of her mouth. Her hands flashed with numerous incantation gestures; divine abilities and magical techniques swept about in all directions to counter the detonation of Meng Hao’s Soul Lamps. The seventh Soul Lamp, the eight, and then the ninth exploded!

As the explosions went on, black blood oozed out of Meng Hao’s mouth, and also from his ears, nose, and mouth. By this point, his internal organs were shattered, and his life force was destroyed. He only had a sliver of Demonic qi left, and yet, he forced his eyes to remain open!

“Until the Mountain and Sea Realm and the butterfly are safe, how could I possibly close my eyes!?” Meng Hao spit out some blood and then started laughing.

Booms rang out as the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth Soul Lamps exploded. The cold woman roared in rage as her path was continuously blocked, and yet she could do little more than watch as the butterfly disappeared into the black hole. Soon, it would pass the point of no return, a point where no one could reach in and take it out.

“The foundation of the Immortal must be cut off!!” the woman screamed. Blood surged through her veins, and her face turned scarlet as she drew upon all her power to suppress the power of Meng Hao’s exploding Soul Lamps, and take another step forward.

Meng Hao was still laughing. As of this moment, he only had one Soul Lamp left!

That was… his Prime Lamp, the most important of all the Soul Lamps. The Prime Lamp was a Soul Lamp which could not be treated lightly; if a cultivator took a wrong step with it, the result could be a deadly catastrophe.

In fact, it was even said that as long as the Prime Lamp remained, it wouldn’t matter if all of the other lamps were destroyed. After all, the Prime Lamp was both the root and the seed, of everything!

Meng Hao’s laughter rang out, and the cold woman’s laughter rang out as she pushed forward. Then, a vicious flicker appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes as… he chose to destroy his Prime Lamp!!

He detonated his Prime Lamp!!

The resulting explosion dwarfed the explosions of the other Soul Lamps. A massive force ripped at the void, creating a Heaven-destroying, Earth-extinguishing power that completely engulfed the cold woman.

An agonized scream rang out as her body was shredded into oblivion. Her soul flew out, and also seemed to be on the verge of being destroyed when a beam of light shot out from the Immortal God Continent and swirled around it protectively. Now that she was safe, the woman's soul glared back at Meng Hao.

She found herself looking into eyes as murderous as ever despite the fact that they were sinking into death.

Blood flowed out of Meng Hao's mouth. His Soul Lamps had all been destroyed, indicating that his cultivation base and his life force had been eradicated. And yet, he was still smiling, the reason being that the butterfly had already passed the point of no return in the black hole.

He wasn't sure if what he was seeing was real or not, but he felt as if he were watching as the butterfly alighted atop the green coffin, with all of his friends and family with it…. Then, a force of time spread out to cover it, and brilliant colors flashed.

Meng Hao's smile finally turned soft and warm. He was tired, so tired that he didn't even have the energy to keep his eyes open. Gradually, they began to shut.

The rumbling around him, the shouts of rage, gradually faded away into the distance….

But then he heard a shrill cry, desperate and angry, echoing in his ears, and within the Vast Expanse around him. It was at that point that he realized… that it was the parrot. A tremor ran through Meng Hao; there was a grief within that cry that caused him to shake, and even as his vision swam, he saw the parrot actually come into view.

As far as he could remember, he had never seen the parrot act this way, act so grieved….

All of its feathers were standing on end, and its expression was one of sadness. Tears of blood flowed out of its eyes, and its cry of pain echoed out clearly within the starry sky.

It seemed to be in a state of despair, in a madness wrought from sorrow.

It was hard to say when the parrot had flown out, but there it was, along with the copper mirror, right in the middle of the starry sky. Almost immediately, the powerful experts from the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent noticed.

When they saw the copper mirror and the parrot, their eyes began to gleam with strange light.

At the same time, the meat jelly appeared. Weeping, it transformed into armor which surrounded Meng Hao. Without hesitation, it began to send its life force into him.

“Don’t die, Meng Hao! Don’t you die! I still have a lot of things to tell you, lots of things to say! You can’t die, it’s wrong! It’s immoral! It’s incorrect….”

The mastiff was seriously injured, but it also appeared, using its body to prop up Meng Hao. Although its life force was also fading, its eyes were completely focused. Even if it died, it wouldn’t permit its master to be hurt any more.

The mastiff felt that way. The meat jelly felt that way. And the parrot felt that way!

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# Chapter 1408: The Parrot’s Choice!

As of this moment, the war was truly over. The Mountain and Sea Realm belonged to Meng Hao, but was destroyed.

The hope of the Realm was with the butterfly, which had now reached the green coffin within the black hole of the vortex. Upon its fluttering wings, countless faces could be seen, looking disconsolately toward the Vast Expanse outside of the black hole, almost as if they hoped to see Meng Hao off in the distance, even though they couldn’t.

For the moment, the Vast Expanse was very quiet.

Meng Hao’s vision was blurred, and he was on the brink of completely losing consciousness. By now, the voices and sounds in his ear seemed distorted and stretched out, as if they were reaching him from long ago or far away.

If the parrot hadn’t just called out in its shrill voice, he would already have closed his eyes completely. Instead, he forced them open. He could sense the madness of the mastiff, the sorrow of the meat jelly, and the pain of the parrot.

A weak smile appeared on Meng Hao’s face, although it was a smile of regret and apology.

“Don’t mind me… you… are all free now.”

The instant he spoke those words, the mastiff trembled, threw its head back, and roared. Then it latched its teeth onto his garment, as if it knew that releasing Meng Hao would mean parting from him for all time.

The meat jelly was in a similar frenzy. It was pouring all of its life force, all of its being, into Meng Hao. Although its body was rapidly turning a dull gray, it refused to give up in its attempt to keep Meng Hao alive.

Laughing bitterly, the parrot looked around at the Vast Expanse, and then its eyes gradually filled with determination.

Meng Hao was now surrounded by countless cultivators from the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent. The destruction of the Mountain and Sea Realm had affected these two forces in a profound way. The land masses were riddled with cracks, and were it not for the deeply profound resources they had at their disposal, they would have likely collapsed.

As the 9-Essences experts approached, the parrot flew out, eyes gleaming with decisiveness!

It was not fleeing or hiding like it usually did. As it flew out, dazzling, multi-colored light began to shine out from it!

The copper mirror appeared behind it, ancient and primitive in appearance. It radiated a feeling of profound mystery, as though it contained innumerable secrets, secrets which could drive people mad, and make the mirror the focus of all creation.

At the same time, the parrot let out a shrill cry as it glared at the surrounding cultivators. Then, it glanced out at the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent.

The parrot’s cry caused the surrounding cultivators’ faces to flicker, especially the 9-Essences experts. Their faces fell completely as they sensed that because of the parrot’s shrill cry, the copper mirror was… cracking!

After watching the Mountain and Sea Realm be destroyed, and seeing the choices that Meng Hao had made, the parrot was filled with mixed emotions. In fact, it almost couldn’t even face Meng Hao now, because as far as it was concerned, the reason all of these calamities had occurred was itself.

“If it weren’t for me, the Mountain and Sea Realm wouldn’t have been destroyed….

“If it weren’t for me, Haowie wouldn’t be dying….

“If it weren’t for me, none of this would have happened….

“The meat jelly was right. I’m the reason for all of this. I’m immoral. I’m wrong. I… shouldn’t even exist.” The parrot laughed bitterly, and the mirror crumbled. The surrounding cultivators were flabbergasted, and the 9-Essences experts immediately began to rush toward the parrot.

They weren’t the only ones. Ancient auras which existed on the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent immediately shot out to fill the area around the copper mirror in an attempt to prevent it from exploding.

And yet, their cultivation levels seemed insufficient to prevent that from happening. No matter what any of them did to attempt to stop the process, the self-detonation which had been initiated by the parrot and the copper mirror could not be halted.

As the parrot drew everyone’s attention, the meat jelly, who was still covering Meng Hao and delivering its life force to him, was staring at the parrot and trembling. But then, it suddenly seemed to hear words being spoken to it, a message from the parrot.

What are you doing? Get out of here!! The message was not transmitted by divine sense, nor was it spoken audibly. It was a feeling, a sensation that came from the connection formed between the meat jelly and parrot after all their years together.

The meat jelly smiled bitterly, but didn’t hesitate for even a moment. It understood that the parrot, which it had pestered and argued with throughout so many lives, had chosen to die. It was dying, sacrificing itself, to buy time so that the meat jelly… could protect Meng Hao… and take him away.

“Haowie, you’ve treated me so well…” the meat jelly said, smiling. Many chaotic memories flashed through the meat jelly’s mind, and there were even images that didn’t seem to be its own memories. Usually, it chose to suppress such memories, to ignore them. It preferred to mindlessly argue with the parrot, to chatter endlessly at Meng Hao, to haughtily act like it was ancient and wise.

But right now, after seeing the decision being made by the parrot, the meat jelly smiled, and unleashed a warm and gentle light. As the light spread out, it transformed into a shocking power of teleportation.

Astonishingly, it was drawing upon its full life force to summon an incredibly powerful teleportation magic. It was a teleportation that would whisk Meng Hao away safely, but the price to be paid was the meat jelly’s life itself.

It was the type of teleportation that the meat jelly would normally never even think to utilize. But right now, with Meng Hao hovering on the verge of death, and the parrot having made its choice, the meat jelly had made its choice, completely willingly.

A tremor ran through Meng Hao. He was now wavering back and forth between unconsciousness and lucidity. He could see the anguish of the parrot, and could sense what the meat jelly was doing. He couldn’t stop the shaking which wracked him. He wanted to stop them, but couldn’t open his mouth. His injuries were too severe, and he could do absolutely nothing to prevent any of it from happening.

Tears welled up in his eyes, and his crimson pupils were seas of anguish.

“My friends….” he muttered, and yet only he could hear those words.

A boom could be heard as the meat jelly’s teleportation light exploded out. The cultivators of the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent could both sense what was happening, and sent one stream of will to stop the parrot and copper mirror, and another to prevent the meat jelly from completing the teleportation.

The mastiff howled and leaped forward to intervene, but was completely incapable of fighting the incoming stream of will. Blood sprayed out of its mouth, and it was sent tumbling back. And yet, it tenaciously stuck by Meng Hao's side to protect him. As for the stream of will, its target was the meat jelly.

It was at this point that the parrot's self-detonation process paused momentarily, and it cried out in a shrill that shook Heaven and Earth: "Let him go!!

"Let him go!!

"Let him leave this place! Lord Fifth is willing… perform the mind erasure!

"I know you people want the copper mirror. Lord Fifth also knows that none of you can separate me from it. So today, I'm willing to be erased!" Even in this moment, the parrot still didn't forget to call itself Lord Fifth.

"If you people don't want Lord Fifth to destroy the mirror, let him go, otherwise… I'll blow it up, and none of you will ever lay a hand on it!!" The parrot's shrill squawk caused the hearts of all the surrounding cultivators to tremble.

The parrot almost seemed worried that they wouldn't believe him. In that moment, it began to crumble into pieces. Its spirit and its mind fell apart. Just as it said, it was willing to allow its mind and thoughts to be erased, willing to no longer be a sentient entity. Instead, its mind would become… a spirit automaton!

When that happened, the stream of will which was attempting to grab the meat jelly and Meng Hao suddenly stopped in place.

That was when the unleashing of the meat jelly's teleportation power reached its climax. The meat jelly itself turned completely gray as it lost all of its life force. It, together with Meng Hao, began to grow blurry. Then, rumbling sounds echoed out as the process of teleportation began.

It was then that, all of a sudden, the rugged, muscular man from the Devil Realm shot toward Meng Hao, his eyes flashing. His target was not Meng Hao, though, but his bag of holding. Earlier, Meng Hao had pulled Su Yan out to threaten him, and she was still inside.

That muscular man’s hatred toward Meng Hao for his treatment of Su Yan had turned into profound killing intent. At this moment, he neared the teleportation perimeter, then reached his hand out.

“Stop them!!” a voice cried out. The approaching stream of will began to emanate ripples, but at the same time, the parrot’s entire body burst into flame.

Even as the muscular man reached his hand out, the power of teleportation erupted out. Rumbling could be heard, and in almost the exact same instant, Meng Hao and the meat jelly vanished.

The muscular man’s hand latched down onto nothing but thin air. He stamped his foot angrily, and looked up, his eyes completely bloodshot.

At the same time, the parrot chuckled. Its mind was fading, and the last thing it saw was Meng Hao vanish. Its eyes glimmered with the reluctance to part ways, with well wishes, and with an emotional sigh.

“We’ll probably never meet again….” it murmured. Then it closed its eyes.

A moment later, it opened its eyes again, and within the dazzling, multi-colored light that surrounded it, what people saw was no longer a garish parrot, but rather… the copper mirror spirit automaton, emanating a supreme Dao and the aura of a Paragon!

Its eyes were cold, so cold that they seemed capable of freezing the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, of burying all memories and thoughts.

A shocking pressure radiated out in all directions, causing all hearts to tremble. Even the 9-Essences experts were shaken, and the rugged, muscular man felt fear rise up in his heart when the mighty gaze of the parrot fell on him.

It was as if that gaze could read all thoughts and see through all hearts.

That gaze was above all else, like the most supreme of beings. It was like the ruler of the Vast Expanse, that could look down upon all life, which would then prostrate in worship.

Behind it was the copper mirror, which radiated a boundless, supreme aura. Ripples spread out into the Vast Expanse, which then transformed into a vortex. All of the cultivators present couldn't help but feel a sense of complete and utter awe.

A profoundly cold and ancient voice then spoke from the parrot's mouth: "I come from the Vast Expanse Society. I have traveled through tens upon tens of thousands of worlds….

"Tell me… your wish."

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# Chapter 1409: My Mountain and Sea Realm!

“Bear in mind, I can only grant one wish,” the parrot said coolly. “After that wish, I will sleep. Then I will travel the starry sky, and only after visiting tens upon tens of thousands of worlds will I awaken once more…. Only at that time can a second wish be granted!” The copper mirror glittered with scintillating light as the parrot’s words echoed out into the Vast Expanse.

As of this moment, the pressure radiating from the parrot caused the Immortal God Continent to tremble, and the Devil Realm Continent to shake. All of the surrounding cultivators were panting, and their hearts were thumping nervously. The 9-Essences experts forcibly reigned in their cultivation bases, and as for the most powerful experts of the two land masses who had either remained silent this whole time, or sent out streams of will, they too were shaken mentally.

They could sense that both the parrot and the copper mirror… had a slight trace of the will of the Vast Expanse upon them. That was a will that they couldn’t even attempt to cause to tremble. Only… a Transcendent cultivator could comprehend it!

As for Transcending, that was something that, throughout countless years, only a few people had ever done in the Vast Expanse, in the starry sky, in the Four Great Realms, or in the countless other Realms.

Those who failed to Transcend could only gaze up for all eternity upon those who had.

The words uttered just now by the parrot caused everyone on the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent to suddenly look at each other with hostile expressions.

There was only one wish!

The parrot had not lied; the most powerful hidden experts among the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent were people who could not be easily fooled. After a moment of silence, the wills from the two land masses met and began to confer.

As for what conclusion was reached, most people had no way of knowing. All they knew was that three days later, the copper mirror transformed into motes of crystalline light which faded away into the Vast Expanse.

Of course, some of the 9-Essences Paragons were unwilling to allow the butterfly and the remnants of the Mountain and Sea Realm to remain inside the vortex. They tried to enter, but could make no headway and were forced to back out.

The Devil Realm Continent even resorted to imitating the Mountain and Sea Realm by using their World-Butterflies to enter the vortex. However, for some unknown reason, all such attempts failed. Most important was that the black hole which led to the green coffin was filled with a boundless and chaotic flow of time. Upon entering it, time flowed differently than in the outside world. The rugged, muscular man even stepped inside, but when he realized that tens of thousands of years could pass by in a single moment, he was forced to retreat.

The most ancient beings from both land masses sent their divine sense inside to investigate, and then eventually notified their people that this place… was not accessible to anyone who had not Transcended.

The question of how the World-Butterfly had managed to enter was something no one could answer. The only explanation that made sense… was that someone had granted it entrance.

Eventually, the two great land masses gave up on their efforts. They formed 33 land masses, which became the new 33 Heavens. Those 33 Heavens were then used to form a seal just like the one which had been placed over the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Groups of cultivators from the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent stayed behind to stand guard, as well as some of the Outsiders who had survived the recent war.

Outside of the 33 Heavens, Dao Fang sat cross-legged, sighing deeply, mixed emotions visible on his face. Laying his staff down in front of him, he closed his ancient eyes and continued to stand guard. In the future, any cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm who attempted to fly out from the 33 Heavens would be killed by him.

Beyond Dao Fang, the Aeon Span was reestablished and linked to the Vast Expanse. Now, there was… a new Mountain and Sea Realm.

Apparently, there was a beginning and an ending in everything, like a never-ending a cycle.

No one could enter that Mountain and Sea Realm, and its cultivators could not leave. Soon, the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent departed, returning to the places from whence they had originally come. Whether it was the Immortal God Realm who got the wish, or the Devil Realm, at the moment no one knew.

Neither of the two great powers cared very much about where exactly Meng Hao had ended up being teleported to. As far as they were concerned, he was already dead, and was most likely nothing more than a corpse floating somewhere in the Vast Expanse.

Even still, both powers dispatched groups of cultivators out in various directions to search for that corpse!

Time passed as it always did in the Vast Expanse….

Apparently, everything that had happened was relatively negligible when it came to the starry sky of the Vast Expanse as a whole. A Realm had been destroyed. A world had changed locations.

The Vast Expanse was still the Vast Expanse. The vortex still emanated green light, and countless species of living beings went about their daily lives as was dictated by natural law, hunting, gathering, living. The Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent were as domineering as ever.

From the look of things, the disappearance of one person really wouldn’t change the course of all existence.

Ten years passed. A hundred. A thousand…. Time flowed like water, and the result was that many people forgot what had occurred in the past. In the 33 Heavens outside of the Green Coffin Vortex, successive generations of cultivators never learned about that ancient person named Meng Hao.

They forgot about the world which had been destroyed, and they forgot about the various events which had taken place. All they remembered was that they were to stand guard, and that there was a butterfly inside of the vortex. Many people took to calling that butterfly… the Mountain and Sea Butterfly.

There were some who would sigh as they recalled the events that had occurred a thousand years before. One of them was Dao Fang. He would wake up occasionally, and when he did, he would either look down at the butterfly in the Green Coffin Vortex or look up at the Vast Expanse. Sometimes… he would recall how the parrot had erased its own mind, how the meat jelly had willingly died, and how the blood-colored mastiff had stood guard relentlessly. He would even think about… that certain person who had exploded with madness, all for the sake of a single Realm.

Within the Green Coffin Vortex was a green coffin, upon which was a peaceful and calm butterfly. Two land masses existed inside that butterfly, as well as a statue of man who was the subject of constant worship.

“Our Realm is called… the Mountain and Sea Realm!” It was not uncommon for words like this to be heard in those two land masses, when people explained the name of the Realm in which they lived.

“Many years ago, the Mountain and Sea Realm was known as the Paragon Immortal Realm, which ruled over 3,000 Lower Realms….

“The first catastrophe which struck was tens upon tens of thousands of years in the past….

“Back then, the 3,000 Lower Realms rebelled, and helped two powerful outside forces to invade. Paragon Nine Seals rose to prominence then, as did Paragon Sea Dream, and Paragon Immortal Ancient. There were other powerful experts who joined the resistance, to protect our homeland.

“During that war, the Paragon Immortal Realm was destroyed. Paragon Nine Seals drove the invaders away, and created a precious treasure, the Mountain and Sea Realm, which became the home of later generations.

“That was the first war which was fought….

“The second war occurred a thousand years ago. The two powerful forces which had destroyed the Paragon Immortal Realm returned. Of the original force of 3,000 rebel Realms, only thirty-three remained, which were the 33 Heavens. They were the ones who started the second war.

“During that war, Paragon Shui Dongliu’s terrifying strategy was revealed, which bought the Realm a chance at survival!

“During that war, Paragon Sea Dream sacrificed her life to find the direction we needed to travel in!

“Most importantly… during the fighting, our greatest Paragon, Paragon Meng Hao, rose to the highest heights. He acquired Shui Dongliu’s legacy, the most consummate of legacies. He became the Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm, and he led us as we fought our way to freedom!

“His clan, the Fang Clan, is the most powerful and supreme clan among us today!

“Paragon Meng Hao’s father and mother became the wings of the Mountain and Sea Butterfly, and flew us to where we are now….

“During that war, Paragon Meng Hao single-handedly fought both of our powerful enemies. He stood up to all of their cultivators, buying us time so that we could have a chance survive….

“During that war, he destroyed his Soul Lamps and wiped out his Daoist magic. He even detonated the precious treasure that was the Mountain and Sea Realm. During that war, he fought with a parrot, a suit of armor, and a Blood Mastiff.

“At the end of the war, he left to parts unknown. But the Mountain and Sea Realm still exists!

“Our Mountain and Sea Realm will exist forever, and its legacy will never end, not for all eternity. In the past, we were the Paragon Immortal Realm, and then, we were the Mountain and Sea Realm. As of now… we are… Meng Hao’s Realm!

“He is not the Immortal. He is the Demon. The Demon of the Mountain and Sea Realm. Our Demon Sovereign!!

“One day, our Demon Sovereign will return in all his madness, just as he promised. He will take us… to destroy the new 33 Heavens. He will take us… to wipe out the homelands of those two enemies of ours. He will take us… to get revenge, even if that means toppling the entire starry sky of the Vast Expanse!!!

“Revenge. Revenge! REVENGE!!”

Throughout the years, that was how the children of cultivators in the world of the butterfly educated their children. As they told the story, they would clench their jaws, and tears would stream down their faces as they recounted the bloody and violent tales of the past!

Fatty rose to prominence during that period of a thousand years, as did many more of Meng Hao’s past acquaintances. Somehow, even Wang Youcai was still alive. The razor-sharp thirst for vengeance bubbled within them. However, they buried their killing intent and focused on building up new resources, and on waiting… for the moment when they could get their revenge!

They were waiting for Meng Hao to return, their Demon Sovereign!

They… refused to believe that Meng Hao was dead!

There was a certain woman who most certainly did not believe him to be dead. She resided in the Fang Clan, and had an extremely prominent position there. She was Xu Qing, the wife of the Demon Sovereign!

With her and the Fang Clan there, the spirits of the Mountain and Sea cultivators in this world would burn eternally.

That spirit was the legacy of an entire people, and was something that burned unquenchably within them.

Every night, on the highest mountain peak within the Mountain and Sea Butterfly, when the moon which had been created would superimpose with the mountain, Xu Qing could be seen standing there.

She would look up into the sky, as if she were waiting…. Always waiting….

“After I was reincarnated, you waited for me for hundreds of years…. Now, I will wait for you until the end of time and space….

“Meng Hao, wherever you are, you haven’t perished, have you…? I can sense you. You… are out there somewhere!” she murmured.

A year passed. Then another. And another….

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1410: Bronze Replaces the Heavens

Book 9: The Demon Sovereign Returns; the Peak of the Vast Expanse!

The Vast Expanse.

Endless. Immeasurable. Perhaps it had an ending point, but up til now, no one had ever reached it, except perhaps someone who had Transcended.

It was too large, and contained too many worlds and Realms. There were too many peoples within it, too many dangers. There were vortexes which contained inexplicable, indescribable forms of life, or legends which had long since been reduced to nothing more than ruins.

In addition to that, there was dust, which was actually the most common sight in the Vast Expanse. Within that dust could be found corpses, rubble, even magical items. In fact, anything could be found within the dust, if you searched for it.

At this moment, in some indeterminable location within the Vast Expanse, a corpse could be seen floating there. It was impossible to say how long it had been there. It was completely withered up, although it had not rotted. It wore a suit of armor which was cracked and broken, and completely gray in color.

Next to the corpse was a withered-up dog, which despite appearing to be dead, apparently refused to leave its master’s side.

Neither the corpse nor the armor showed any signs of life, as if they had been dead for a very, very long time.

A hole had been punctured in the corpse’s bag of holding, and almost everything which had once been inside had long since scattered out into the Vast Expanse. Years ago, a woman had escaped from within, only to find that she had no idea where she was.

As for exactly how the bag of holding came to be broken open, she didn’t know. She only remembered that after it was opened, she was suddenly free on the outside. Then she caught sight of the person she hated more than anyone else, wearing a suit of armor that flickered dully.

A moment later, a wind swept through that part of the Vast Expanse, carrying everything away. Even the woman was swept far off into the distance.

As for the corpse, it also floated along within the wind. If you looked closely, you would be able to see a bronze lamp on the corpse’s forehead. When the corpse’s bag of holding had broken open some time ago, the bronze lamp didn’t drift away like most everything else inside, but instead had slowly floated over to the corpse’s forehead.

In the past, that bronze lamp had changed the fate of the person who was now this corpse!

Even Shui Dongliu had been unable to fathom or comprehend the details.

Back when the corpse was alive, and had Soul Lamps, this bronze lamp had never made an appearance, nor did it even shine. But now that the corpse lacked any Soul Lamps at all, the bronze lamp finally appeared.

Long ago, the person whose corpse this was had actually speculated that this lamp, which had changed his fate, which he had taken from an Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite temple, was possibly… a Soul Lamp belonging to some unknown individual.

He wasn’t sure who, nor did he have the means to speculate. 1

Back when the bronze lamp emerged from the bag of holding, it floated out and began to fuse into the corpse’s forehead, which was something that even the corpse would never have been able to predict would happen.

Time went by. Every year, the bronze lamp would sink a bit further into the corpse’s forehead. Ten years passed. Then a hundred. Then a thousand. By that time, the bronze lamp wasn’t visible at all, as it had completely sunk into the corpse’s forehead.

Perhaps it was because of that bronze lamp that, over the course of the thousand years which passed, not a single entity of any sort approached the corpse, but instead preferred to avoid it.

Not only did the lamp preserve the corpse, it ensured that it had the chance to one day open its eyes again….

At some point throughout the years, a miniscule scrap of aura had appeared on the corpse. It seemed like the aura of an Immortal, yet also resembled a Devil. It was strange, multifarious, and bizarre. Anyone who had fought in the war of the Mountain and Sea Realm would quickly identify it as… Demonic qi!

It was the aura of that legendary entity from the Mountain and Sea Realm, the Demon Sovereign!

This corpse was none other than Meng Hao!

After being teleported away by the meat jelly, he had lapsed into unconsciousness. However, in the final moment before that had happened, images from throughout his life passed through his mind. In the end, he saw the parrot wiping away its mind. He saw the meat jelly sacrificing its life to teleport him to safety. Those images broke his heart, and left him reeling mentally. And yet, there was nothing he could do to stop them. He could only watch.

Tears of blood streamed down his face. After being teleported away, and just before passing out, he had smiled, an anguished smile, a smile that contained insanity and an unwillingness to die.

He would go to any lengths to recover, although he wasn't sure how to. He thought about the Nirvana Fruit from his bloodline, and he also thought about the bronze lamp in his bag of holding.

Using his last scrap of energy, he managed to pull out the bronze lamp. Then he used a unique secret magic that he had acquired from Shui Dongliu's legacy, a technique which made it possible to possess another person's Soul Lamp. It was an unsettling magic which even Shui Dongliu might not have remembered, and wouldn't have trusted to work. Actually, it didn't come from Nine Seals, but from the other part of the soul that made up Shui Dongliu.

In the moment that Meng Hao unleashed the magic, he lost consciousness. After that, everything was a blank.

Over the course of the thousand years, his body had withered continuously. His life force had long since faded away, and everything about him had dispersed. The only thing that remained was the bronze Soul Lamp, which continued to fuse with him. One day, when the bronze lamp was fused fully into his forehead, a Heaven-shaking, Earth-toppling change occurred within him.

Rumbling sounds filled him as the bronze lamp gradually took over the position of his lost Prime Lamp. As the Prime Lamp, it then began to re-mould his qi passageways, and reconstruct his cultivation base!

With each day that passed, his atrophied flesh would pulse with a bit more qi and blood. His internal organs had once been completely desiccated, but now they were recovering. A few days later, his heart thumped for the first time in a thousand years. Around him in the Vast Expanse, the starry sky vibrated, causing countless life forms hidden in the area to flee in terror.

The sound of the heartbeat continued to echo out as blood flowed through his body. Gradually, that ruined blood began to recover!

Soon, his body wasn't withered anymore, and he even seemed to be breathing.

His blood flowed, and the bronze lamp slowly began to burn, sending boundless green smoke throughout his body. It eventually reached his cultivation base, which caused life force to ignite within him.

A powerful aura suddenly spread out which caused the Vast Expanse in the area to shake. Meng Hao had built up so much power that his eyelids fluttered, as if he would soon… open his eyes.

As he grew stronger and stronger, the aura within him became more terrifying. A vortex rose up around him, a vortex that might not match up to the chaos unleashed upon the Vast Expanse by the copper mirror and parrot all those years ago, and yet, was still shocking.

However, after a few breaths of time, the aura faded into weakness. Meng Hao's body gradually grew still, and the strength faded from his eyes. He became peaceful and unmoving.

Apparently, that burst of power wasn't enough to awaken him. He needed more strength to open his eyes, more life force; at the moment, he simply didn't have enough.

Therefore, he needed to wait a bit longer….

Gradually, his body withered up again, and his heart stopped beating. His blood dried up, and his aura faded. He now looked no different from the corpse he had been earlier. However, there was a spark of life within him that hadn't been there before, flickering and burning ever so slowly.

Time passed. Ten years later, Meng Hao was still floating out in the Vast Expanse. One day, a flying shuttle suddenly appeared.

A pile of miscellaneous items could be seen piled up in the back of the shuttle, and a closer look made it obvious that most of them had been collected from within the dust that filled the Vast Expanse. There were even a few dessicated corpses among the random objects.

A pretty young woman sat cross-legged in the flying shuttle, although she was dressed up in a way that made her seem older than she was. Apparently, she didn’t want people to guess her true age.

Her cultivation base was not weak, though; only powerful people would ever dare to fly around alone in the Vast Expanse. Based on the fluctuations which rippled out from her, she was in the Dao Realm.

Behind her sat a young man, who seemed much weaker than her, and was acting very subserviently. He would occasionally look out at the Vast Expanse, his expression both curious and nervous. Eventually, his expression became one of distracted curiosity; when the young woman soon noticed, she immediately began to reprimand him.

“Don’t forget this time!” she said sternly. “When we get there, you have to act tough! Put on a good show, and don’t make any mistakes with your story!

“Remember, you are the heir of the Yun Clan. You are a legitimate descendant of what was once the most glorious clan in this part of the Vast Expanse! The great Vast Expanse School is looking for a son-in-law for their Holy Daughter, and she’ll definitely pick you!

“They are a powerful force that can even tangle with the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm. Supposedly, they know the secret of how to access the teleportation portal that leads out of the Vast Expanse!” The young woman’s eyes gleamed with anticipation.

The young man glanced downward. Voice somewhat feeble, he said, “B-but, the Yun Clan is just a small clan. They were famous years and years ago, not now. Plus… I’m not really a legitimate descendant.”

“Shut up!” the young woman barked, glaring at the young man, who quickly bowed his head deferentially. “So what! The first generation Patriarch of the Yun Clan had a marriage agreement in place with the Vast Expanse School. It doesn’t matter what year or what generation, the heir of the Yun Clan can become the beloved partner of one of the Holy Daughters of the great Vast Expanse School. The Yun Clan fell into decline years ago, and only exists in the mortal world now, so there’s no way they can fulfill their end of the marriage agreement. But who cares? I managed to buy a copy of the agreement, and I also have our clan’s precious treasure that lets me wield 2-Essences power. We’ll definitely succeed!

“Besides, we won’t be dealing with the upper ranks of the Vast Expanse School. Whoever we meet with, they’ll have to maintain face, so as long as the marriage agreement stands, I can just wait until a lot of people are around, then pull it out for everyone to see. The Vast Expanse School might be strong, but they also have to be reasonable. Even if they don’t abide by the agreement, they’ll still be sure to compensate us in some way!” Even as the young woman spoke, she continued to scan their surroundings. Suddenly, she turned her head to look off into the distance, where she saw a corpse floating within the dust, not too far from the flight path of the flying shuttle.

“Eee? That ancient corpse is fully intact, plus it has a dog with it.” With that, she reached out and made a grasping motion, pulling Meng Hao over to her. After looking him over, her eyes glittered.

“Not bad. Not bad at all. With all these corpses and other random things to help pay for expenses, this trip won’t have been a waste after all.” Smiling, she quickly threw Meng Hao and the mastiff into the back of the flying shuttle to join the other random objects and corpses she had collected from the dust of the Vast Expanse. Proceeding onward, she continued to rebuke the young man.

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1411: The Vast Expanse Bell Heralds the Arrival of a Paragon!

The young woman was so focused on rebuking the young man that she didn’t notice what happened when she threw Meng Hao into the back of her flying shuttle. His eyelids twitched, although he didn’t quite yet have the strength to open his eyes.

Furthermore, the young woman didn’t notice that after Meng Hao landed in the back of the flying shuttle, various tiny vortexes opened up around him. Then, the mist which surrounded them formed into strands which began to seep into the flying shuttle!

The strands of mist circulated inside of the shuttle and then began to enter into Meng Hao. More and more of the mist vanished into him, like a river pouring into a dry channel.

Apparently, Meng Hao’s injuries were so severe that he lacked the power to even absorb the mist of the Vast Expanse on his own. However, there was something about the flying shuttle that helped him to gradually begin building up the power he lacked to open his eyes.

Time passed, and for some reason the flying shuttle seemed to be going faster and faster. Eventually, the young woman, despite being so involved in berating the young man, finally noticed the increase in speed. At first, her jaw dropped, but then she began to laugh heartily.

“See, little brother? It’s no wonder the great Vast Expanse School has such a reputation. The starry sky in their territory is obviously blessed with some sort of Essence that has increased our speed. I bet that Essence can even identify hostile forces. The more hostile you are toward them, the slower you'll move. The less hostile, the faster!" Having reached this conclusion, the young woman laughed again. Behind her, the young man stared in shock. In his estimation, that wasn't what was happening at all, and yet, he didn't dare to open his mouth. Instead, he nodded and pretended to be in awe of the young woman.

He knew that his sister wasn't the sharpest tool in the shed, but he also knew that deep down, she was a good person. Not only did she enjoy it when people looked at her fawningly, more importantly, when she was happy, she spent less time rebuking him.

Burying his reservations, the young man began to think about everything that had happened on their journey. They had encountered other flying shuttles along the way, and although his sister had never paid any attention to any of them, he had. Eventually, his attention was drawn to the collection of corpses and other objects in the back of the flying shuttle.

He looked at the corpse of Meng Hao, and suddenly realized that their flying shuttled had begun to move faster at almost the exactly same time that his sister picked up that very corpse.

However, considering the level of his cultivation base, he didn't notice anything out of the ordinary about it. No matter how he studied it, it didn't look like anything other than a corpse. A few days later, the young man stopped worrying about it so much, although he would still cast occasional cautious glances back at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao was already awake.

However, what had awoken was not his body, but his soul. After being pulled onto the flying shuttle, and absorbing some of the power of the Vast Expanse, he reached a state in which he felt almost as if he were observing everything around him in a dream state.

His soul hurt. He thought back to the Mountain and Sea Realm, to his father and mother, to his sister, to Xu Qing, and to so many other familiar faces.

He thought back to the butterfly, and how it had eventually landed on that green coffin.

He thought back to the parrot, and then the meat jelly, which was now devoid of any traces of life. All of that was in the past now. The only companion he still had to accompany him was the mastiff.

The mastiff wasn’t dead. It had been asleep the entire time, hibernating. Even in its sleep, it still stood watch over him. It had paid a heavy price, and was even now only capable of sleeping.

“This enmity… must be avenged!!

“Mountain and Sea Realm… I will return to you!!

“Mom and dad, sister, Qing’er… wait for me….” Meng Hao’s soul stared out of the flying shuttle into the distance. He had no idea where the Mountain and Sea Butterfly was, not even in which direction it lay. He could only trust his feelings to guess where it might be.

The pain he felt was something which would not subside, and had already changed him. He was colder now, and more silent.

He could tell that the only reason he was alive right now was because the mastiff had protected him, and the meat jelly had sacrificed everything for him. Most importantly, though, was what he had done just before losing consciousness. He had… taken out the bronze lamp!

The mysteries surrounding that lamp were unfathomable. It had replaced all of his Soul Lamps; instead of having thirty-three, he had only one. However, after the lamp’s aura had melded with his Demonic qi, and the resulting pressure was even more terrifying than all of his other 33 Soul Lamps added together. “This bronze lamp… just who exactly did it belong to?”

During the process of studying the changes and transformations inside of him, Meng Hao eventually noticed the brother and sister duo on the flying shuttle. The older sister was thick-headed, and the younger brother was weak but shrewd. Meng Hao looked them over, then ignored them. The young man occasionally glanced back at him, but Meng Hao chose to remain still and silent.

However, were it not for this brother and sister, and the help of their flying shuttle, a random coincidence that allowed him to absorb the mist of the Vast Expanse, then it would have taken far, far longer for his soul to awaken.

That was something Meng Hao wouldn’t forget.

His injuries were so numerous that even after a thousand years of absorbing the bronze lamp, more time was required to restore his cultivation base.

For now, he could only bury his thoughts of spilling a sea of blood to gain vengeance. But he knew… that the day would come when he would get his revenge!

Months went by in which he maintained silence. Normally, the trip taken by the flying shuttle would have gone on longer, but now, it was rapidly coming to an end. Up ahead could be seen… an astonishingly large heavenly body!

It was not a land mass like the Immortal God Continent or the Devil Realm Continent. It was a planet!

This planet could definitely be listed among the astonishing heavenly bodies like the Immortal God Continent. However, if the lands on the planet were unwrapped and laid out flat, they would definitely dwarf that very land mass.

It was simply gargantuan, so large that it could only be taken in fully from a distance. In fact, it was so big that it almost seemed to be propping up the starry sky of the Vast Expanse.

If you compared the Mountain and Sea Realm to this planet, it would be like comparing an ant to an elephant!

Surrounding the planet was a dark yellow ring. Shockingly, if you studied that ring closely, you would find it was made up of countless asteroids, large and small. Simply looking at the planet was terrifying, and would leave one completely shaken.

Innumerable beams of light could be seen flying into and out from the planet, making it look even more dazzling.

“See that? That’s Planet Vast Expanse! Heavens! How could there be a planet so big? Compared to the land mass that we come from, it’s simply enormous. You could fit our home inside of it ten thousand times over! A hundred thousand. Maybe a million….” The young woman’s tone was quite grandiose when she began speaking, but in the end, she trailed off into silence as she stared at the huge planet in front of her.

The young man next to her was also staring with wide eyes.

Neither of them noticed that behind them, Meng Hao had just stirred. Although he still couldn’t open his eyes, his soul was also staring at Planet Vast Expanse, and within the eyes of his soul, a strange fire had begun to burn.

The young woman took a deep breath, and her eyes began to shine. “No wonder they say that it can vie for a place among the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm…. Wow, the Planet Vast Expanse!

“This is the home of the legendary… Vast Expanse School, which was created at the same time as the Vast Expanse itself, and has the only teleportation portal leading out!

“Little brother, I’ve decided. You definitely have to marry that Holy Daughter!” The young woman’s eyes shone with determination, and she flicked her sleeve, sending the flying shuttle closer and closer to Planet Vast Expanse.

However, as the flying shuttle got closer, a bright shield suddenly sprang up, sweeping out to cover the whole planet, and the starry sky which surrounded it. Every cultivator that it passed, regardless of the level of their cultivation base, was instantly locked in place in the starry sky, incapable of moving even an inch. Shocked expressions appeared as everyone wondered what was happening.

It was at this point that the sound of an ancient bell began to toll from somewhere on Planet Vast Expanse. The austere, sonorous sound swept out into the starry sky, pushing away the mist of the Vast Expanse and causing intense pressure to weigh down.

Dong!

Dong!

Dong!

As the sound of the bell rang out, cultivators of the Vast Expanse School on Planet Vast Expanse were all completely shaken. The tolling continued, it soon wasn’t just the ordinary cultivators who were surprised. The powerful experts who made up the inner strength of the Vast Expanse School also looked up.

When the bell tolled for the fourth time, numerous faces flickered in shock. By the sixth toll of the bell, there were 8-Essences Paragons who began to fly out toward the starry sky surrounding the planet.

However, even as they were flying out, the seventh tolling of the bell could be heard. Somewhere on Planet Vast Expanse, in a sprawling temple, an old man suddenly opened his eyes, and the aura of a 9-Essences Paragon erupted out from him. He instantly stepped out into the starry sky, followed by more powerful experts from Planet Vast Expanse. There were countless beams of light that flew out with incredible speed.

More than a million cultivators had been locked down in the starry sky outside of Planet Vast Expanse, and all of them were shocked and unable to move. And yet, the tolling continued.

Of the group of people frozen in place, most didn’t understand what the tolling of the bell indicated, and therefore, took things mostly in stride.

However, the people who did know the meaning of the bell couldn’t stop their eyes from widening in shock and terror.

“That bell… it’s the Vast Expanse Bell!!”

“When a Paragon who isn’t a member of the Vast Expanse School arrives… the Vast Expanse Bell will toll!”

“Three tolls means a 7-Essences Paragon. Six tolls indicate 8-Essences. More than that means… a 9-Essences Paragon!!”

“The bell tolled seven times! That means… that a 9-Essences Paragon is here!!” The people outside of Planet Vast Expanse who understood the significance of the tolling bell were completely shocked. They began to look around, and soon, all eyes came to fall on the flying shuttle, which was the only object in the starry sky that hadn’t been locked in place!

Upon that very flying shuttle, the young man’s eyes were wide, and he was looking around in astonishment at all of the cultivators locked in place. His sister also looked around in shock, but then, began to laugh.

“Little brother, it’s time to act tough. It seems the marriage agreement with the Yun Clan is still in effect. I haven’t even brought out the jade slip yet, and the Vast Expanse School has already noticed and started ringing the bells to welcome us.” Although the young woman’s eyes were open wide with delight, the young man’s legs were trembling.

“Sister, I don’t think that’s what’s….” Before the young man could finish speaking, they caught sight of the numerous beams of light shooting out from Planet Vast Expanse, and could sense the terrifying levels of their cultivation bases. The young woman only got more excited.

“Little brother, look, they’re coming to receive us!” she said excitedly, taking a deep breath as the crowd of people drew nearer.

The young man behind her was flummoxed. He was weak, but very intelligent, and could tell that something strange was going on!

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# Chapter 1412: Reeling Them In!

Moments ago, when the shield sprang up around Planet Vast Expanse, the thick-headed young woman quickly gathered up all of the items and corpses, including Meng Hao, and put them into her bag of holding. She did it so quickly her younger brother had no time to intervene.

In her simplistic way of thinking, everything she had collected was worth keeping. And yet, she feared that people might look down on them for collecting so many miscellaneous items, which could eventually cause problems when it came to the marriage agreement.

Seeing the numerous incoming beams of light, the young woman got very excited. She quickly straightened her garments and put on a very haughty expression. Then she looked back at her nervous younger brother. Glaring, she said, “Look tough! Remember, you’re the heir of the Yun Clan!”

There was no time to say anything else, as the beams of light flew at top speed and came to a stop in front of their flying shuttle.

In the lead was a man wearing a violet-gold robe. His hair was long and white, and he bore the semblance of a celestial being, with eyes that sparkled as if with lightning. He looked the brother and sister duo over, only glancing briefly at the young man before focusing his attention on the young woman. Then his eyes widened slightly.

Behind him were tens of thousands of other cultivators, all of them wearing very serious expressions, almost as if they had come to meet a powerful enemy.

The pressure weighing down from all of these powerful experts was incredible. Although they kept their power in check, the starry sky was still trembling, and everyone nearby could feel the weight of the pressure. The young man on the flying shuttle was shaking and could barely stand up straight. His blood was boiling, and he almost felt as if it were about to explode.

From the look of it, if these people let much more of their aura out, this young man’s body, and those of many of the other cultivators in the area, would be shredded to pieces, killing them instantly.

His older sister had it a bit better off, but was still gritting her teeth and trembling in body and mind. However, she didn’t seem to have lost any of her enthusiasm. Apparently… she couldn’t see the fierce gleams in the eyes of these powerful experts from the Vast Expanse School.

Clasping hands and bowing deeply, she said, “I am Yun Shan of the Yun Clan. This is our clan’s current heir, Yun Feng. Senior members of the Vast Expanse School, greetings!” Then, she quickly pulled out her Yun Clan identity medallion and held it high above her head.

Behind her, Yun Feng nervously clasped hands and bowed his head, cursing inwardly.

In response to Yun Shan’s words, the eyes of the experts from the Vast Expanse School glittered. The old man in the leadership position frowned. He looked closer at this girl who called herself Yun Shan, gaze lingering on her bag of holding as he completely ignored the identity medallion.

After a long moment, he said, “Yun Clan….”

The entire time, his eyes were focused on her bag of holding, as if his gaze could actually pierce inside and see Meng Hao. After a moment, his eyes glittered, and he suddenly shook his head and laughed.

“Unlock Vast Expanse. Extend the Starpath. Summon the million disciples. Unveil the Vast Expanse Skyway. Welcome the honored guests!” Apparently, when this man spoke, his words were followed like law. The other powerful experts of the Vast Expanse School bowed their heads as rumbling sounds suddenly emanated out from Planet Vast Expanse.

Shockingly, two giants appeared, who bore glittering starlight on their shoulders as they strode forth. In turn, that light began to form into a pathway.

At the same time, numerous beams of light appeared behind the giants. Astonishingly, a million cultivators appeared, all of whom wore the uniforms of Vast Expanse disciples. They fanned out to stand on either side of the path of stars, and as they did… a Skyway formed, lined by a million disciples.

All of the rogue cultivators out in the starry sky stared with wide eyes. There were some among them who weren't aware of the significance of the bell tolling seven times. But everyone knew what it meant when Planet Vast Expanse was unlocked in such a way, with starlight-bearing giants emerging, and a million disciples forming a road.

“That's the Vast Expanse School's most prestigious welcoming ceremony!”

“It's been years since the Vast Expanse School did this. Just where exactly did that brother and sister team come from?!”

“A million disciples forming a road…. The Vast Expanse School would only hold this ceremony for someone incredibly extraordinary!!” Everyone was completely shaken.

“Please, after you!” said the man in the violet-gold robe, flicking his sleeve and stepping aside. He smiled lightly as he spoke, but his eyes were glued on Yun Shan's bag of holding. The other experts from the Vast Expanse School looked on with thoughtful expressions for a moment before they also stepped aside, leaving the entire path of starry light stretching out unhindered in front of the flying shuttle.

Yun Shan's eyes were wide as saucers as she stared at the scene. It was something she couldn't have imagined happening, not even in her dreams. And yet, it was playing out right here in front of her. Despite her usual thick-headed personality, even she couldn't help but feel a bit suspicious.

“Was the Yun Clan really that incredible in the past?” she said to her brother. “I can’t believe a down-and-out clan like them… would actually cause the Vast Expanse School to hold a ceremony like this.

“Hmm. I guess the Yun Clan must have a lot of big secrets that I never found out about. Later on, I’ll have to spend a few spirit stones to run a more thorough investigation into them.” Of course, her train of thought led her to a strange conclusion, like it usually did. Looking very excited, she immediately stepped onto the path.

She walked along as arrogantly as ever, occasionally chattering to her younger brother.

“Come on, follow me. Keep your head up. Don’t forget, we’re from the Yun Clan, and you’re the heir!

“See how seriously they take us, little brother? The Vast Expanse School! Hahaha!” Although Yun Shan was nervous, her eyes sparkled brightly, and as she walked along, the disciples of the Vast Expanse School bowed respectfully. As for all of the rogue cultivators who had been locked in place earlier, they could do nothing but watch jealously as she entered Planet Vast Expanse.

Her brother walked along behind her, more nervous than ever. Something very strange seemed to be going on, especially when he realized that the Vast Expanse School hadn’t even checked their Yun Clan identification medallions. The reason for that most likely had nothing at all to do with the conclusion his sister had reached.

However, there was nothing to be done about the situation now. The old man in the violet-gold robe followed not too far back, and behind him were the tens of thousands of other powerful experts of the Vast Expanse School.

Yun Feng’s scalp tingled as he walked nervously behind his sister, following closely by the forces from Planet Vast Expanse. “This… this isn’t a welcoming party,” he thought, “this… is a security escort!”

As they proceeded through the starry sky, they eventually reached… Planet Vast Expanse itself!

Planet Vast Expanse was gargantuan, so big that you couldn’t see from one end to the other. The location in which they arrived featured a boundless land filled with mountains, more than a million of them, with even more hidden beneath the fog and clouds which spread out everywhere.

There were towering palaces which rose up from the peaks of the mountains, giving the entire place the feeling of a majestic, preeminent sect. Chain bridges connected the million mountain peaks, making it easy to see the borders of what was apparently the preeminent Vast Expanse School!

As soon as Yun Shan and Yun Feng entered the planet, they saw the million mountains, and their minds began to spin. Off to the side, the old man in the violet-gold robe smiled and began to explain.

“There are many cultivator clans on Planet Vast Expanse, but when it comes to sects… there is only the Vast Expanse School! In fact, all of those other clans exist only because of the Vast Expanse School.

“The Vast Expanse School is the very foundation of Planet Vast Expanse, and we have eight temple complexes, with the complex you are looking at now being the eighth.

“As for the lands of our sect, everything under the sky belongs to us!

“However, the true sect is inside of Planet Vast Expanse. Actually, the planet is hollow, and furthermore… is even larger on the inside than it is on the outside. That is the true core of the Vast Expanse School.”

The brother and sister duo couldn’t help but gasp as the old man’s voice echoed out. They saw the boundless mountains, they saw the numerous pagodas and palaces, they saw the countless cultivators flying to and fro. At first, they had assumed that what they were looking at was the entirety of the Vast Expanse School, but now they realized that it was only… a small portion.

This was one of only eight outer temple complexes.

“If the outer temple complexes are like this,” thought Yun Feng, “then I can only imagine how astonishing the inner core is beneath the surface of the ground….” He was left panting, and for the first time, a gleam of desire appeared in his eyes.

Even as the young man was shaken, his sister suddenly began to laugh.

“Not bad. Not bad at all,” she said. “The Vast Expanse School truly deserves its reputation as the ultimate Daoist society. The Yun Clan definitely falls short, although only by a bit.” Although her face was a bit ashen, she tried to look unimpressed. The sound of her brother’s rapidly increasing heart rate was turning into a quite a headache, though.

The old man in the violet-gold robe laughed lightly. Then he spoke a single sentence, a sentence that contained such power that the air in the area suddenly locked everything in place, motionless.

“The ceremony has been completed, the sect has been assembled, and the formalities have been spoken. Fellow Daoist, the time has come for you to show your face!”

The old man’s eyes glowed as they came to stare fixedly at Yun Shan’s bag of holding.

At the same time, rumbling could be heard, and a powerful wind kicked up as numerous spell formations formed. The million disciples swirled through the air, lining up to form an even larger grand spell formation.

The tens of thousands of powerful experts flanking the man in the violet-gold robe all unleashed explosive energy which cased the sky to dim and everything to shake.

Down below, countless auras erupted out from the million mountains, making the entire place seem like the underworld!

The eruption of energy caused blood to spray out of Yun Feng’s mouth as he teetered on the brink of unconsciousness. His sister stared in shock, and also coughed up blood, her face turning pale white and filling with confusion and shock.

She looked around at all the surrounding cultivators radiating powerful energy and realized that she had never seen so many powerful experts gathered together in one place.

“Seniors, you….” she said, forcing the words out of her mouth.

Of course, the old man in the violet-gold robe was being careful not to push things too far. After all, he could kill this brother and sister team with a single thought. After a moment, he frowned. Considering the level of his cultivation base and his age, he was adept at judging character, and at detecting when people were putting on an act. From the look of things, this brother and sister duo had no idea what was actually going on.

The old man’s heart thumped; reaching out with his right hand, he made a grasping gesture, causing Yun Shan’s bag of holding to fly out toward him. Instead of grabbing it, though, he simply waved his sleeve.

A bang rang out as the bag of holding burst open, causing countless random objects to spill out everywhere, including corpses….

The old man’s eyes flickered. Ignoring the miscellaneous objects, his mind trembled as his eyes came to focus on one corpse in particular!

As soon as he saw it, his eyes began to shine with unprecedented brightness!

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# Chapter 1413: So, Are You Going To Sell This Corpse?

In the moment that all the corpses spilled out, shocking ripples began to spread in all directions from that one corpse in particular. As a result, the faces of the one million Vast Expanse School disciples turned deathly white, and blood sprayed out of their mouths. Shocked, they began to back up.

At the same time, their cultivation bases were thrown into complete chaos, something they had absolutely no control over.

The faces of the tens of thousands of powerful experts flickered, and their minds spun, as if they were suddenly facing a powerful foe. It was as if, all of a sudden, they were surrounded by mountains of corpses and seas of blood, from within which countless howls emanated out to completely inundate them.

It was a thoroughly shocking development which caused everything to vibrate and shake.

The indescribable energy coming from the corpse swept over everyone, becoming an intense pressure that caused even the one million mighty mountains down below to tremble. The lands quaked as dust and dirt first floated up into the air, and then were slammed back down again. The chain bridges which connected the mountain peaks were swaying back and forth, and countless disciples felt as if their minds were being struck by lightning.

The energy which had previously been emanating out from the million mountains was, as of this moment, being crushed down as if by a huge hand, completely disintegrated.

Everyone in the area gasped in shock. Only the brother and sister team didn't feel any pressure. However, they could see what was happening, and the thick-headed sister turned to look at that one particular corpse, the blood draining from her face in the process as she recalled how she had picked it up along the way.

"What… what kind of corpse did I pick up…?" she murmured inwardly. She saw the million disciples coughing up blood, she saw the lands trembling, she saw the mountain peaks shaking, she saw the astonishment of the tens of thousands of powerful experts, and she saw the blinding light shining from the eyes of the old man in the violet-gold robe.

One thing she didn't notice was that the mastiff which she had picked up along with the corpse was nowhere to be seen.

As all of this happened, countless gasps and cries of shock and alarm could be heard.

"That's… that's…."

"A Paragon corpse! That's the corpse of a Paragon! Heavens! A 9-Essences Paragon corpse!!"

"No wonder the Vast Expanse Bell tolled. There aren't many 9-Essences Paragons to begin with in the Vast Expanse, and yet somehow, these two people from the Yun Clan… happen to have the corpse of one in their bag of holding!"

"That corpse is a precious treasure!" In the midst of all the commotion, the old man in the violet-gold robe suddenly flicked his sleeve, causing numerous sealing marks to appear and float down onto Meng Hao's corpse. As they settled onto him, everything in the area slowly returned to normal. However, everyone in the area was still in an uproar.

The old man eyed Meng Hao's corpse, then looked over at the young woman who called herself Yun Shan.

"From whence cometh this corpse?" he asked.

“F-found… I found it….” she stammered.

Her words caused everyone to stare wide-eyed with shock, as if what she were saying was unimaginably outrageous. Soon, strange expressions appeared on the faces of the cultivators in the area. As for the old man, he felt as if a lightning bolt had just struck his mind. After staring in shock for a moment, he smiled wryly.

Although he had appeared to remain calm earlier, his heart had actually been surging with tsunamis of astonishment. There weren’t a large number of 9-Essences Paragons in the Vast Expanse. Each and every one was a consummately powerful expert, people… who ordinary folk would be lucky to simply catch a glimpse of. And that was when they were alive. After they died… it would be easier to find a phoenix feather or a qilin horn than to see such a corpse.

9-Essences experts had a longevity that was virtually unending. They would never just pass away into meditation. Either they would try to Transcend into the Daosource Realm, or they would fail in their attempt, and be destroyed in body and spirit. In the latter case, they wouldn’t leave a corpse behind.

Another possibility was that they might be killed in battle. However when 9-Essences Paragons fought, it would be unlikely that the defeated party would be behind as an intact body. Most of the time, the final result was a smashed and mangled corpse. Because of all of that, the intact corpse of a 9-Essences Paragon was something exceedingly rare.

The old man in the violet-gold robe spent a moment in thought. He recognized the sequence of cause and effect here. Obviously, this brother and sister team had found this corpse in their journeys. After arriving at Planet Vast Expanse, it attracted the attention of the spell formation, and caused the bell to ring. His previous assumption that someone was hiding in the young woman’s bag of holding was simply a mistake.

Everything made sense now. Except for one thing. A dead person shouldn’t have attracted the attention of the spell formation and caused the Vast Expanse Bell to ring.

“He still has a bit of life force left in him,” he thought. “He must have been in a bitter fight, then somehow managed to flee at a critical moment. He was so severely injured that his soul nearly dispersed. He’s likely in a state of recovery which will last for thousands of years.” A flicker of greed appeared in the old man’s eyes. Smiling, he reached out his hand to take the corpse; as for the brother and sister duo, he couldn’t care less about them.

But then, he frowned as he noticed something on the corpse.

“Hmm, Karma Threads….” he thought. “Well that makes things a bit troublesome. His soul is mostly dispersed, but he still has some connections to this brother and sister, some bit of gratitude linking them together.”

As the old man considered what to do, everyone else in the crowd looked on with strange gleams in their eyes. No one seemed to be paying attention to the brother and sister.

Yun Shan was trembling. As of this point, she was terrified, and filled with regret. She wished she had never picked up that corpse, and wished that she had never brought her little brother here to try to con their way into a wedding.

However, even as she trembled in fear, her younger brother sighed and clasped her hand. Normally, his grip was weak, but right now, it was firm.

She looked over in shock at her brother, who forced himself to ignore his fear as he nodded back at her.

A moment later, the old man in the violet-gold robe looked at them with glittering eyes. Smiling, he said, “So, are you going to sell this corpse? I want to buy it.”

Yun Shan gaped in shock at the man’s request. She was just about to reply when her brother took a step forward. Standing in front of her, he clasped hands and bowed to the old man.

“Senior, I am Yun Feng. I’ve come to the Vast Expanse School today to ask for the hand of the Vast Expanse Holy Daughter in marriage. This corpse isn’t for sale. It’s a betrothal gift!” Yun Shan was in complete and utter shock. The words spoken by her younger brother just now, and the way he carried himself, seemed completely out of character.

The old man looked at Yun Feng, eyes flickering with amusement at his words.

“Well, you’ve got guts. Fine. Join the Vast Expanse School, and I’ll send you directly to the Inner Sect.

“As for the marriage, I’ll give you a chance at that. If you can reach the Dao Realm within two thousand years, then I’ll arrange for you to marry the Vast Expanse Holy Daughter of the current generation at that time!”

Yun Feng hesitated, but his sister was clearly elated. Their entire purpose in coming to the Vast Expanse School was to profit in some way. If her younger brother could become a Vast Expanse School disciple, then that would be the hugest profit imaginable. She was just about to step in and accept, when her brother said, “What about my sister…?”

“Her cultivation base isn’t bad,” the old man replied immediately, “but her foundation is already solidified, making it impossible for her to cultivate the magic of the Vast Expanse School. However, Inner Sect disciples can recruit attendants. Just have your sister be one of your attendants.” As the old man finished speaking, he studied Meng Hao’s corpse, and saw that the Karma Threads connected it to the brother and sister team had unraveled, indicating that the debt connecting them had been resolved. The old man swished his sleeve, collecting up Meng Hao’s corpse and carrying him off into the distance.

The rest of the cultivators also departed, the images of what they had just seen still playing out in their minds. Soon, a few disciples approached Yun Shan and Yun Feng to begin the formalities of accepting them into the Vast Expanse School. As they walked along, the young man looked around, somewhat in a daze. On the other hand, his sister couldn’t look any more happy; as far as she was concerned, they had struck a goldmine.

She glanced over at her younger brother, and her eyes gleamed with praise and anticipation. In her eyes, her brother had just grown up quite a bit, as was evidenced by the clever and decisive way he had just spoken up.

It was only Yun Feng himself who knew the truth. Moments ago, a voice had spoken in his ear and told him exactly what to say.

“That voice which told me what to do… could it have been… that corpse?!” A blank look could be seen in his eyes as he nervously followed the Vast Expanse School disciples off into the distance.

Meanwhile, on one of the million mountains that made up the eighth temple complex, the old man in the violet-gold robe strode along, unable to conceal the delight in his eyes. Soon, he was in a location deep within the million mountains, in front of a teleportation portal. Without the slightest hesitation, he stepped into the portal.

It rumbled and then shone with brilliant light, after which the man disappeared. When he reappeared, he was beneath the surface of Planet Vast Expanse, in the core of the Vast Expanse School.

The inside of Planet Vast Expanse had its own starry sky, complete with a sun and moon, as well as planets. Each one of those planets emanated the aura of a powerful expert, all of whom were apparently in secluded meditation.

Also located in the inner core of the planet was a sea of flames, buried within which was… half of a planet!!

That half-planet was mostly broken and shattered, and emanated a sensation of time and rot. Numerous pagodas and temples adorned its surface, and it emanated an ancient air.

The old man in the violet-gold robe immediately sped in the direction of the sea of flames, and the half-planet therein. As he neared, his voice echoed out, “Fellow Daoists, please have a look at what I’ve brought for you!”

Laughing, he waved his hand, sending Meng Hao’s corpse floating out to hover above the buildings down below.

As soon as it appeared, the sealing marks which had been placed on him vanished, allowing shocking fluctuations to surge out and cover the entire half-planet. Countless people down below were astonished, and six streams of 9-Essences aura suddenly swirled out to surround Meng Hao, accompanied by six people.

“The corpse of a Paragon!! Old Fifth, where did you get your hands on this?!”

“It’s not completely dead, there’s still the remnant of a discarnate soul….”

“A Paragon corpse like this is something incredibly rare. Unfortunately, although the corpse is intact, its innards are withered into almost nothing!”

“It doesn’t matter if its withered! With the resources at the disposal of our Vast Expanse School, we can restore this corpse to peak power in no time! With this corpse, we can carry out the plan to receive the Ninth Paragon earlier than expected!!”

The old man in the violet-gold robe laughed excitedly. It was at this point that a stream of divine sense that was terrifying even to these seven people suddenly exploded out from the half-planet. As it filled the area, the old man and the other six Paragons clasped hands and bowed, serious expressions on their faces.

“Greetings, Sect Leader!”

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# Chapter 1414: Refining a Paragon Corpse!

That terrifying divine sense was similar to the one from the archaic old man from the Devil Realm Continent. It was in the 9-Essences level, but was at its very peak!

That peak level qualified one to attempt a breakthrough to the Daosource Realm. Of course, powerful souls like that were very rare. For countless years, very few people had ever been able to reach the peak of 9-Essences. In fact, even in an enormous sect like the Vast Expanse School had only ever produced four.

However, those four had all reached a position only one step away from the Daosource!

Unfortunately, from ancient times until the current day, people who could take that final step were as rare as phoenix feathers or qilin horns. In all of the Vast Expanse, there had only ever been two or three… who had completed that step!

All of the others died.

Those who chose not to take that final step, and remained at the peak of 9-Essences, had virtually limitless longevity. Although it wasn't correct to say that they would exist for as long as all Heaven and Earth, they were close to such a level. They had shockingly profound levels of knowledge, and the longer they practiced cultivation, the more powerful they became. However, the Vast Expanse Tribulation came for them once every ten thousand years, and each time it came, it was more terrifying than the last time, until it managed to destroy them.

Because this was so, when it came to comparing those at the peak of 9-Essences, unless someone had a rare, unique Essence, then strength would be determined by who had practiced cultivation in that level for the longest time.

The powerful divine sense enveloped Meng Hao, boring inside of him, inspecting every inch of his being. The other seven Paragons remained off to the side, somber expressions on their faces.

After enough time passed for half an incense stick to burn, it slowly retracted, and then an ancient voice echoed out.

“This person received the legacy of a Daoist magic in a previous life, which artificially propelled him to the 9-Essences level. However, the result was significant damage that would be difficult to notice upon cursory examination. Even though he is still alive, it would be so difficult for him to make further progress that to do so would require something akin to defying Heaven.

“This person experienced profound sorrow and grief in life, and apparently went through a huge catastrophe. Most likely, he witnessed the destruction of his homeworld. Everyone else died, with him being the sole survivor. Even his narrow escape left him with only a discarnate soul.

“The level of rancor within him is profound, and his previous obsessions still linger. His mind was strong, and his fleshly body even stronger. He even commands some sort of Essence magic that exceeds my comprehension. Very interesting.

“All of those things are secondary, though. Most interesting of all is his aura. It is neither Immortal nor Devil, and it differs from the Vast Expanse. It contains fluctuations the likes of which… I have never seen before.

“Considering everything I have revealed, it is likely that the seven of you have already guessed who he is!” As the ancient voice echoed about, the seven Paragons, including the old man in the violet-gold robe, had thoughtful looks on their faces.

A moment later, one of their number, a middle-aged cultivator, suddenly spoke, his eyes glittering as he said, “One thousand years ago. The Mountain and Sea Realm. Meng Hao!”

In response to his words, the eyes of the other Paragons flickered. The old man in the violet-gold robe looked over at Meng Hao’s corpse. Then they began to discuss the matter.

“It’s most likely him. A thousand years ago, the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent attacked the Mountain and Sea Realm, which was the evolved version of the Paragon Immortal Realm. It is said that the only thing which survived was a World-Butterfly, which entered the Green Coffin Vortex. A Dao was passed on to Meng Hao, pushing him into the 9-Essences level. But then he was seriously wounded, and even as he hovered on the brink of death, he was teleported away.”

“So, it’s him. Even to this day, the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm have people searching the Vast Expanse for him. If we….”

“It doesn’t matter. We just want his body, we’re not trying to help him awaken!”

The powerful divine sense once again spread out, and the ancient voice spoke, as cold as ice. “Leave him here. Just now, I felt some sort of reaction from the ancestral relic. Keeping it under control makes it difficult for me to divide my attention. Once it has stabilized, I’ll come back to wipe the discarnate soul out of the corpse. Then, we can refine the body using the resources of the Vast Expanse School. After all of its injuries have been healed, and the body is stabilized, then… the fleshly body vessel will be prepared, and we can summon the Ninth Paragon.

“As for the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent, they will never be able to find the corpse in here. Besides, even if they knew about it, would they really be willing to start a war with our Vast Expanse School?” The ancient voice was filled with a domineering air, and even as it began to fade away, the other seven Paragons exchanged glances and then began to laugh. Then, they clasped hands and bowed before returning to their various locations of secluded meditation.

Since the Sect Leader himself said he would handle Meng Hao’s corpse, they weren’t worried at all about anything unexpected happening.

After they all left, Meng Hao’s corpse remained there hanging there in midair, still and unmoving.

His soul was hidden within the wick of the bronze lamp that rested inside of him. The little bit he had allowed to emanate to the outside just now had been to attract the attention of the Paragons of the Vast Expanse School. He was making a gamble now, gambling that he wouldn’t be discovered, that he could use this place to remain concealed from the forces which sought him, and simultaneously, restore his cultivation base.

He also needed to continue to practice cultivation, and seize an opportunity to step into the Daosource Realm as early as possible.

All of those goals were things he hoped to accomplish in the Vast Expanse School.

He would make use of the resources of the Vast Expanse School to heal his injuries, and perhaps even incite the Vast Expanse School into a war with the Immortal God Realm and the Devil Realm. Even if he couldn’t pull off a war, he would still need a place with abundant resources to practice cultivation in the way he desired.

Actually, upon awakening, he had little concept of what the Vast Expanse School was. However, when he was on the flying shuttle, he had found that the closer he got, the more his bronze lamp would tremble and even emanate fluctuations that were complementary to Planet Vast Expanse. At that point, Meng Hao had made his decision.

The bronze lamp was mysterious and unfathomable. He wasn’t sure exactly where it came from, but he could tell that it definitely had something to do with Planet Vast Expanse.

With his soul hidden in the wick of the lamp, the old man in the violet-gold robe had been unable to detect his presence. However, the powerful divine sense of the Vast Expanse School’s Sect Leader left Meng Hao shaken with the threat it posed.

That divine sense was able to inspect every aspect of his body, and had even passed over the location of the bronze lamp several times. However, the lamp itself was something that even the terrifying Sect Leader couldn’t detect, which dispelled the lingering feelings of fear Meng Hao had because of the man.

A few days later, that same terrifying divine sense exploded out and enveloped Meng Hao. This time, it studied him for an entire hour, examining him in every aspect. It also completely wiped away the soul fragment that Meng Hao had left outside of the bronze lamp.

In effect, he was murdering Meng Hao; were it not for the bronze lamp, then any chance he had of fully awakening would have been forever erased.

After the hour passed, the divine sense slowly retracted. Meng Hao’s corpse was then gripped by a powerful force which pulled it down toward a wide platform, atop which was an enormous cauldron!

It was a medicine cauldron, fully 3,000 meters tall, like a looming mountain. An everburning, seven-colored flame roared beneath it, and inside was a sea of medicine. The powerful force which gripped Meng Hao instantly threw him into the middle of the cauldron.

As that happened, the old man in the violet-gold robes flew over, along with the other six Paragons. They hovered to a stop above the cauldron, then waved their sleeves as they tossed numerous precious medicinal plants inside. In response, the medicinal brew inside began to bubble and boil.

“It has begun,” said the ancient voice. “The soul is completely wiped away, leaving the body an empty husk. Heal the wounds and restore the body to a state of perfection, and then we can use it.” The seven Paragons had very serious expressions on their faces as they sent out the power of their cultivation base, causing the pores all over Meng Hao’s skin to open and begin to absorb the medicinal ingredient extracts.

Rumbling sounds echoed out. Inside the bronze lamp, Meng Hao’s soul couldn’t feel the burning sensation that existed outside of his body, but he could sense his wounds rapidly healing.

His spirits instantly lifted, and yet he maintained full vigilance.

Time passed. Nineteen days later, so much of the medicinal brew within the huge cauldron had drained away that the cauldron was almost empty. Meng Hao was like a black hole; despite the vast quantity of pure medicinal plants he had absorbed, his injuries were only healed by about thirty percent.

“Simply extraordinary! Not even all those medicinal plants could heal him?”

“It doesn’t matter. The resources of the Vast Expanse School are profound. Virtually limitless! However much he needs to absorb, that’s how much we’ll provide. It just goes to show the incredible potential in this corpse!” The Paragons laughed heartily. Not concerned at all about this development, they went to find more medicinal plants to throw into the cauldron.

Rumbling could be heard as the medicinal brew rose higher within the cauldron once again. Meng Hao was completely submerged. His fleshly body was growing stronger, and the dangerous instabilities caused by being prematurely awoken from the process of absorbing Shui Dongliu’s legacy were slowly being neutralized.

As he remained hidden within the bronze lamp, Meng Hao licked his lips. Although he wasn’t aware of it, a bashful expression had appeared on his face, and he seemed a bit embarrassed.

Another month passed….

“Still not recovered? Ah, it’s fine. Keep providing him materials to absorb!”

“I grew this Heavenrose Grass for 30,000 years. I’ll give it to him. All for the benefit of the Ninth Paragon!”

“Years ago I fought a desperate battle to gain this Cloud Dragon bone…. Ah, whatever. The arrival of the Ninth Paragon is critical for our Vast Expanse School!”

The seven Paragons didn’t seem very happy, but they gritted their teeth and began to produce all sorts of various precious materials from their collections, which they threw into the cauldron to continue the refinement process.

Meng Hao’s body was now almost completely recovered. The dangerous instabilities had been mostly neutralized. However, the bronze lamp which no one could see was like a ravenous black hole when it came to absorbing resources!

In fact, it had absorbed more than half of the various precious materials so far. That caused its flame to grow brighter and brighter, and gradually, Meng Hao could sense that the bronze lamp itself was awakening!

More and more materials were absorbed, until finally, the entire cauldron was rumbling, and the energy of Heaven and Earth in the area was also sucked in.

“The process is almost complete. The energy of Heaven and Earth is being absorbed. Things will be over soon.”

“We paid a high price, but the result is an incredibly powerful Paragon corpse. It will all be worth it when the Ninth Paragon arrives.”

The seven Paragons were laughing heartily, and looked very much at ease. In recent days, they had been constantly pouring cultivation base power into the cauldron. To finally see an end in sight to all the wastage caused them to sigh in relief.

Time passed. One month. Two months. Three months….

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# Chapter 1415: Vast Expanse Dao Body!

The starry sky which stretched out over the half planet trembled as boundless energy of Heaven and Earth surged into the enormous cauldron. All seven Patriarchs, including the one in the violet-gold robe, had extremely unsightly expressions on their faces. There was no need to even mention the wastage to their cultivation bases which had occurred over the past three months. Virtually all of the medicinal plants they possessed had already been thrown into the cauldron, and yet Meng Hao's corpse… still hadn't fully recovered.

"A pit! That's not a corpse inside that cauldron, it's a bottomless pit!" Their hearts ached, and yet the Sect Leader, wherever he was in the depths of the land, hadn't spoken a single word about the matter, so it would be bad form for them to stop. Enduring the pain, they continued.

Meng Hao, on the other hand, was more excited than ever. He was like a fish back in water, his injuries fully recovered, the instabilities negated.

And yet, he just couldn't bear to let so much energy of Heaven and Earth go to waste, not to mention all of the legendary medicinal plants, all of which were things that had been extinct in the Mountain and Sea Realm. He was in a constant state of being remoulded; his fleshly body was growing stronger, and his cultivation base was rising.

The bronze lamp was burning brighter than ever as it absorbed the energy of Heaven and Earth, and the valuable, precious materials. As it grew stronger, it in turn helped Meng Hao to grow, causing incredible transformations within him as he grew more powerful.

As the process continued, Meng Hao’s body became more and more suitable… to act as the vessel for the bronze lamp!

Before, his body had been most suited to the 33 Soul Lamps, but now, it was transforming in a way that would allow it to wield the power of that one bronze lamp!

That rebuilding process required that his qi passageways be broken down and then reconstructed. Light from the bronze lamp forged new qi passageways, which spread out to fill him. New blood vessels stretched out, and the pumping of his heart grew stronger. Every part of him was affected, until his body began to shine like a precious gem!

There was even a certain ancient feeling that appeared, as though Meng Hao’s body had become a valuable, precious stone from ancient times. There was a chaotic, primeval Dao that seemed to fill him, to permeate every aspect of his flesh and blood, and to swirl around him.

His body seemed more ancient, its aura more primeval, and at the same time, he looked younger!

Even as Meng Hao was being transformed by the bronze lamp, something was happening in the lands below, where the half-planet existed. There could be seen a crimson sea.

It was not blood, but was made from something that contained a powerful fire element. Within that crimson sea of fire was a huge turtle shell, upon which an old man sat cross-legged.

The turtle shell was like a sealing mark, which was apparently suppressing something that existed underneath the crimson sea of flames. The flames churned, and occasional beams of light would seep up from down below, as though whatever was being sealed underneath was attempting to break free.

The old man’s face was pale white as he expended all possible effort to maintain the suppression of the seal. Because of the intensity of his work, he was unable to sense what was happening in the outside world.

He had no idea what had happened recently. The ancestral relic beneath the sea of flames had become active to a degree that far exceeded its activity in the past. In the past, it would occasionally become very animated every once in awhile, but such events would only last for a few days.

In contrast, this time it had remained active for several months!

Up above, Meng Hao continued the absorption process. The ancient air about him grew more prominent, and caused the starry sky above him to rumble with such intensity that the fluctuations spread out into the rest of Planet Vast Expanse!

The Heavens trembled, and clouds roiled. From a distance, it even looked as if a layer of distorted vortexes had appeared atop Planet Vast Expanse!

The brother-sister duo of Yun Shan and Yun Feng couldn’t see these things, but if they could, Yun Feng would likely be reminded of what he had seen back on the flying shuttle!

The only difference was that the flying shuttle was small, whereas Planet Vast Expanse was… huge!

Over the course of the passing months, visiting cultivators on Planet Vast Expanse couldn’t help but sense that something strange was happening. That was especially true of the last half month, during which the distorted vortexes appeared outside of the planet. Any who neared them would find their bodies being withered away rapidly. That terrifying fact ensured that few people dared to get close to them.

Even the mist of the Vast Expanse in the area seemed to have been affected, and began to flow ceaselessly. Eventually, the effect stretched out even farther. If it were possible to look down at the Vast Expanse from an extremely high vantage point, then Planet Vast Expanse would look every bit like a black hole.

That black hole was surrounded by a slowly spinning vortex which affected the entire area around it, and grew larger and larger as time went by!

Out in the Vast Expanse were countless bizarre entities who were now trembling. When they cast their gazes in the direction of Planet Vast Expanse, they could sense that something terrifying was slowly awakening there!

Time passed. Two months later, the seven 9-Essences Paragons were on the verge of losing their tempers. They had fully unleashed their cultivation bases, and had produced virtually all of the precious materials they possessed. They were now empty and drained, and yet Meng Hao’s body in the cauldron was still withered, although it seemed to have improved slightly.

“Dammit, what is this thing? How can this corpse absorb such quantities of resources!”

“All of those resources were extremely precious and valuable. How is this even possible!?!?”

“By this point, there’s no point in complaining. We need a big burst of energy to restore the corpse. Otherwise, everything else will have been a huge waste!” The seven Paragons gritted their teeth helplessly. As the saying goes, if you ride a tiger, it’s hard to get off. They produced jade slips and sent various messages. Soon, numerous beams of light appeared from the main areas of the sect as cultivators brought more precious materials to feed into the huge cauldron.

“This is Dragonleaf Shoot…. We only have 350 grams of it in the entire sect!”

“Why did you even bring this Pinegod Cone here? It’s… it’s… alright, fine!” The seven Paragons felt their hearts twinge with pain; it had only taken a short six months or so for the precious materials they had spent countless years gathering for the sect, to disappear into the cauldron.

The cauldron thrummed, and inside, Meng Hao’s body was actually reverting from its withered state. However, he was continuously suppressing those effects. In some ways, he was feeling a lot of pressure himself.

His fleshly body was getting stronger, and his cultivation base was rising. Gradually, everything began to stabilize. Within the precious materials were some things that could be categorized as Essences of all living things. When those items merged into Meng Hao's forehead, the Hex marks there gradually filled with more Essence power.

His body was being completely remoulded, completely transformed!

Surprised, Meng Hao let out a sigh. "I can't keep this up much longer…. Those guys are crazy! They're throwing so much stuff in that even the bronze lamp can't absorb it quickly enough."

More time passed, a half month. Outside of the cauldron, the seven Paragons' hearts raged with flames of fury. The resources of the Vast Expanse School were drawn upon once more. By this point, the energy of Heaven and Earth in the starry sky was showing signs of being dried up. The seven Paragons couldn't take it any longer.

"Dammit! I give up! I'm gonna drag that corpse out and cut it open to find out what's going on!"

"This is no cultivator, and definitely not Meng Hao! I checked into Meng Hao earlier, and he's a cultivator. What we have here is some all-consuming beast!"

"I quit!!" The seven Paragons couldn't hold back their rage any longer, and shot toward the huge cauldron. Before they could get close, though, the cauldron itself began to emanate thunderous rumbling sounds. The energy of Heaven and Earth ceased moving toward it, and the medicinal brew suddenly went completely still.

Then, Meng Hao slowly rose up from within the shaking cauldron, to hover there in midair. He emanated shocking pressure that filled the entire planet, and spread out even further, causing the starry sky above Planet Vast Expanse to flash with strange colors.

It was at this point that the distortions which surrounded Planet Vast Expanse spread far and wide. Rumbling sounds could be heard as the mist in the boundless vortex was affected in numerous regions.

Countless living beings cried out and began to shake as looks of terror spread out on their faces. There were even certain ancient entities which not even the Vast Expanse School would dare to provoke, who were awoken from sleep, with looks of astonishment on their faces.

“Vast Expanse… Dao Body….”

Rumbling sounds filled the entire Vast Expanse, as it was filled by a gargantuan, indescribable vortex. Several shocking auras rose up from the Immortal God Continent, which looked off into the distance with somberness and shock.

The same thing happened on the Devil Realm Continent, in which several streams of divine sense looked off into the distance in disbelief.

Within the Green Coffin Vortex, the butterfly’s wings fluttered as a bit of the mist of the Vast Expanse entered into the world of the butterfly, and could be sensed by many.

On the peak of the tallest mountain, tears streamed down Xu Qing’s cheeks, and she smiled.

“I just sensed it…. You’re out there….”

As the shocking events played out in the Vast Expanse, back above the half planet inside Planet Vast Expanse, Meng Hao floated there, the center of all attention among the surrounding disciples of the Vast Expanse School.

A fragrant aroma even spread out from him, and his body truly looked as if it had been moulded from precious gems. His facial features were the same, but in terms of his overall appearance, it was vastly different.

Anyone who looked at him would be shaken, as if they had just laid eyes on the most perfect treasure in existence!

As for the seven 9-Essences Paragons, they stepped forward, their eyes glowing with strange light as they examined Meng Hao.

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# Chapter 1416: Welcoming Light!

Meng Hao's current physical appearance was difficult to put into words. It was matchlessly scintillating, and as he hung there above the enormous cauldron, dazzling, jewel-like light spread out that seemed capable of outshining all other gems or treasures.

Shocking fluctuations spread out in all directions from him, which caused even more vortexes to appear outside in the Vast Expanse.

As of this moment, the old man in the violet-gold robe, as well as the other six Paragons, were gasping. They couldn't help but stare at what had sucked away the better part of a year, as well as countless precious materials from the sect and even their own cultivation base power. What had been moulded… was a Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering fleshly body.

It was at this point that, deep in the lands down below, the old man on top of the turtle shell finally opened his eyes. The sea of flames had finally calmed down; whatever it was that had agitated the ancestral relic inside of the sea of flames had finally vanished.

The old man looked exhausted, but when he sent his divine sense out and saw Meng Hao, his jaw dropped, and his eyes began to shine.

"Vast Expanse… Dao Body!!" he murmured in disbelief.

He wasn't the only shocked one. The other seven Paragons were equally astonished as they sensed Meng Hao's treasure-like body, and as they studied the fluctuations emanating off of him, they quickly realized what it all signified.

"Vast Expanse Dao Body!!"

Gasps rang out, along with expressions revealing mixed emotions. There were even some within whose eyes appeared glints of greed.

Considering that 9-Essences Paragons were feeling greedy, it was easy to see how rare a Vast Expanse Dao Body was!

Of course, this Dao Body was actually not referring to a specific type of fleshly body, but was more a general classification!

Any fleshly body with the right qualifications and potential, after reaching a certain point, would incite changes in the Vast Expanse that the Vast Expanse itself had to suppress. At that time, it could be called a Vast Expanse Dao Body.

The seven Paragons' eyes were glittering, and all the lands around them were trembling. The old man on the turtle shell sent his divine sense out to form a clone, which, as soon as it appeared, caused the other seven Paragons to bury their feelings.

The divine sense clone wore a long white robe, and looked exactly like the old man back on the turtle shell. As he stood there studying Meng Hao, he raised his right hand and touched the corpse's forehead. At that point, boundless divine sense exploded out into Meng Hao.

This time, he spent even more time examining him than last time. An hour later, he lowered his hand. He had just used all of the divine sense power he could muster to thoroughly inspect Meng Hao inside and out, to confirm that there was no trace of a soul inside. Feeling a bit more relaxed, he turned to look at the other seven Paragons.

“You people don't want to Transcend?!” he asked, a stern gleam in his eyes. His voice wasn't loud, but it contained a shocking pressure that spread out in all directions, causing the other Paragons to sink further into silence.

“Even I can't help but covet this Vast Expanse Dao Body. I might not be able to possess it, but I could turn it into a puppet that would be an extremely helpful asset, to say the least.

“But would that be worth forsaking Transcendence?!

“Our Vast Expanse School is an offshoot of the Vast Expanse Society. And what is our purpose in this starry sky? !?! Have you forgotten?! 1

“Within the necropolis of the first generation Patriarch of the Vast Expanse is the method for Transcendence. That is the mission of the Vast Expanse School!

“After all of these years and years of searching, we’ve finally found hope. Now all we need is for the main sect on the outside to send Paragon Heaven-Eye down to us. Supposedly, he only recently stepped into the 9-Essences level, but he has a Dao eye. This Vast Expanse Dao Body was prepared expressly for him, and will play a vital function in the overall plan!

“If we can find the secret of Transcendence inside the Patriarch’s necropolis, then all of us will have the same hope to Transcend. The Vast Expanse Society on the outside, the main sect, is not easy to get into, but if we Transcend, then we will be able to leave the Vast Expanse at any time. When that happens, we will definitely have extremely high positions within the Vast Expanse Society!

“When you compare Transcendence to a piddling Vast Expanse Dao Body, I don’t even need to explain which is more important!” He swished his sleeve, causing Meng Hao’s body to fly out to the central region of the half planet, where… nine primitive-looking altars rose high into the sky.

Meng Hao’s corpse came to rest on the ninth of those altars, where it lay unmoving.

“Make preparations! Contact the Vast Expanse Society on the outside. In three days, we will prepare to receive the Ninth Paragon!” With that, the old man’s clone body vanished. Everything was very quiet, and the old man in the violet-gold robe took a deep breath.

“The Sect Leader is right. After all these years of preparations, and all of the waiting, when hope for Transcendence is finally right in front of us… a

Vast Expanse Dao Body is not even worth thinking about!” Sighing, he clasped hands to the others and then walked away.

The others remained silent for a moment, but soon wry smiles appeared on their faces. Shaking their heads, they suppressed the greed they felt for the Vast Expanse Dao Body, and returned one by one to their secluded meditation, where they had three days to restore their cultivation bases back to their peak.

Those three days passed by in a flash. The starry sky outside of Planet Vast Expanse had returned to normal, the majestic vortexes had faded away, and the visiting cultivators returned to their normal affairs. However, the strange signs and portents which had occurred were firmly fixed into the minds of all. For those people, no amount of investigation or inquiry revealed any clues about what had happened.

After the third day, eight beams of light shot through the air of the half-planet toward the nine altars. In the lead was the Vast Expanse School’s Sect Leader. Usually, his time was occupied suppressing what was underneath the sea of flames, and he rarely came out. But now, he was here with his true self, which sat down cross-legged on the first altar.

The other seven Patriarchs, including the old man in the violet-gold robe, landed on the various platforms, then performed double-handed incantation gestures as they rotated their cultivation bases.

Simultaneously, innumerable Vast Expanse School disciples appeared in their location on the half-planet. As they sat down cross-legged, they appeared to be organized into an enormous spell formation. Furthermore, countless asteroids outside of the planet itself were also meticulously organized, causing flickering light to radiate out, and the starlight to fill with dense energy of Heaven and Earth.

Even more Vast Expanse School disciples were visible elsewhere on Planet Vast Expanse, sitting in meditation at the behest of the sect itself. Gradually, the auras of all of the disciples merged together into a whole.

On this day, all cultivators on Planet Vast Expanse who were not members of the Vast Expanse School were prohibited from flying in the air. Any violators would be executed immediately without question.

On this day, Planet Vast Expanse was locked down. No one was allowed to enter!

On this day, all of Planet Vast Expanse thrummed with energy, and rumbling sounds emanated out from it into the starry sky.

Furthermore, a beam of light shot out from the inner part of Planet Vast Expanse, from the turtle shell atop the sea of flames in the half-planet!

According to rumors, the Vast Expanse School had a teleportation portal which connected to outside of the Vast Expanse. In some ways that was true, and in some ways that was false. What was true was that there really was a spell formation. The false part was that… only a Transcendent cultivator could use that teleportation portal to leave!

However, to do that, a Transcendent cultivator wouldn’t actually need the aid of such a spell formation.

The true purpose of the teleportation portal was to receive people from the outside, to lock down a position for such people, to transport souls!

This connection between the inside and the outside of the Vast Expanse enabled powerful experts from the outside to send a soul body inside. It was too difficult for a fleshly body to survive the process. It would be destroyed in order to keep the soul body whole and safe as it entered the Vast Expanse.

The cost to operate the teleportation portal was astronomical. Furthermore, both the Vast Expanse School on the inside and the Vast Expanse Society on the outside had to pay a huge price.

Because of the huge cost, it took eras and eras of preparation. In fact, throughout all the years of the Vast Expanse School’s existence, it had only been used a few times.

Amidst rumbling sounds, brilliant light rocketed off of the turtle shell in the sea of flames. It pierced through the lands to appear outside of the half-planet, amongst the nine altars. The altars absorbed the light, and then eight of the people atop the altars unleashed their cultivation bases, adding to the teleportation power.

Meng Hao lay on the ninth altar. From within the bronze lamp, his soul looked out coldly at what was happening. He knew that this would be the final test. If he could pass it safely, then from now on, he would be the Ninth Paragon of the Vast Expanse School.

Not only would he have a new identity, he would gain the protection of the Vast Expanse School. That was critical as far as he was concerned.

“I’ll exterminate this incoming soul, and when I open my eyes, I will be Meng Hao, and also… the Vast Expanse School’s Ninth Paragon.” He examined the bronze lamp that he was hiding in, and smiled. This mysterious and powerful lamp was the main reason why he was so confident in this gamble.

“I have no deep enmity toward you people. If you want to assign blame, then you should blame… yourselves for trying to possess my body!” His eyes flickered as he sank further into the bronze lamp and waited… for his enemy to arrive.

The ninth altar flickered with bright light that converged into a pillar which shot up off of the half-planet and into the inner starry sky. At the same time, the half-planet began to move in rotation, and the asteroids which filled the starry sky began to emanate dazzling light.

Countless voices could be heard chanting scriptures, which emanated off of the half-planet; at the same time, the pillar of light appeared above the lands of Planet Vast Expanse.

The sound of the chanting scriptures bolstered the light; the lands of Planet Vast Expanse were shaking, and the mountains were trembling. The sea of flames became still as the light shot out into the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, rising higher and higher until no one could see it.

At that point, everyone on Planet Vast Expanse began to tremble. Countless life forms bowed their heads, and looks of intense focus appeared in the eyes of the disciples of the Vast Expanse School. As for all the other cultivators, they were completely shaken.

Everyone was now waiting!

Meng Hao’s soul remained in the bronze lamp, eyes shining with a mysterious, incisive light!

“The critical moment has arrived. If I succeed, I can settle down in the Vast Expanse School, and will have a greater hope of getting my revenge. If I fail….

“I won’t fail! Even though the Sect Leader of the Vast Expanse School most likely still has suspicions about my soul, I… won’t fail!” Within Meng Hao’s eyes, a red, Demonic glow could be seen!

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# Chapter 1417: Who Cares If You Know!?

In the same moment that the pillar of light rose up off of the planet and out into the Vast Expanse, there were three areas on Planet Vast Expanse itself where heart-pounding fluctuations were emanating out.

The first location was a garden that looked like a celestial paradise. In one particular valley was a lake, next to which a young man sat cross-legged, wearing a long golden robe. He looked up, and as he did, his previously ordinary pupils suddenly distorted into oval shapes.

“Yet again someone descends. Is it really so easy for these kids of the younger generation to find the Patriarch’s necropolis?!

“If the method for Transcendance were so simple, then after all these countless years, wouldn’t there be more than just four or five people who have succeeded?”

The second location was far, far away from the first. It was an ice cave, filled with fluttering snow. A woman stood there silently, looking up into the Heavens, and the pillar of light. Her eyes seemed to contain reminiscence, as well as other mixed emotions. After a moment, it all transformed into a light sigh.

“I have no desire to search for the Patriarch’s necropolis, nor to Transcend. I only wish… to return home.”

Gradually, the woman disappeared behind the masses of snowflakes.

Coincidentally, the third location was almost the opposite of the second. It was a scorching desert, where a violet sandstorm raged. If one looked closely, it would be possible to make out the vague image of a person walking through that sandstorm.

When the pillar of light rose up, that person looked up, and then began to cackle shrilly.

“Ah, another. I wonder who it is this time?”

The lands of Planet Vast Expanse quaked as the pillar of light sent wild ripples out into the sky. It was hard to say whether or not it was because of Meng Hao’s Vast Expanse Dao Body, but many beings within the Vast Expanse were now paying close attention to what was happening.

It was at this point that a figure suddenly appeared within the pillar of light. It was a discarnate soul whose fleshly body was crumbling around it. Apparently, the soul was struggling to make its way down.

Apparently there were invisible barriers blocking its way, and as the soul descended, it began to disperse. However, in the very center of the soul was a violet eye, which emanated an air of madness, and continued to follow the pillar of light toward Planet Vast Expanse!

During the process, more of the soul dispersed, but at the same time, it increased its speed. Gradually, thunderous booms began to echo out from within the pillar of light.

Soon the soul was quite close to Planet Vast Expanse. However, at that point it seemed to run into some incredibly powerful obstacle, and the soul began to fully disperse. An unyielding roar echoed out, and then, eight figures appeared in the area surrounding the soul.

Closer inspection would reveal that those eight figures were none other than the Sect Leader and the other seven 9-Essences Paragons. They unleashed massive power to break the barrier down, causing the violet eye to gleam with excitement as they then escorted it down toward Planet Vast Expanse.

They moved with incredible speed, destroying any and all barriers which appeared. By the time the group actually reached Planet Vast Expanse, the soul had dispersed, leaving behind nothing but the eye.

The eye radiated madness, but also pain. It was covered with countless cracks and crevices, and was hovering on the verge of collapse. Apparently, the other eight Paragons could do nothing about that other than increase their speed and usher the eye toward the fleshly body they had prepared for it.

At the same time, the cultivators on Planet Vast Expanse saw what was happening, and their minds were filled with utter shock.

The sounds of scriptures being chanted by the cultivators of the Vast Expanse School seemed to contain a strange power which filled the area, which fused into the pillar of light and helped the eye to resist the collapse.

Rumbling echoed out as the violet eye reached Planet Vast Expanse, passed down through the lands into the inner planet, and then appeared in the air above the ninth altar, where Meng Hao lay stretched out.

By this point, the eye was almost completely covered with cracks, and seemed as if it might collapse at any moment. However, it was in that very moment that it slammed into Meng Hao’s forehead and began to bore into him.

When the eye finally merged into Meng Hao, the Paragons on the other eight altars all reacted in the same way.

“Success!!” they cried, opening their eyes and laughing coldly.

The only one who didn’t respond in that way was the Sect Leader, who snorted coldly as his eyes opened.

“Fellow Daoists,” he said coolly, “activate the Soulseal Formation. Help the Ninth Paragon suppress the discarnate soul in that body!” He waved his hand and then pointed toward Meng Hao laying there on the ninth altar.

The other seven Paragons didn’t seem surprised at all by the Sect Leader’s command, almost as if they had been prepared for this. Chuckling coldly, they simultaneously unleashed cultivation base power, sending ripples out in all directions. With the Sect Leader taking the lead, they combined their power to form a sealing mark which descended onto Meng Hao.

Inside the bronze lamp, Meng Hao’s soul had been preparing to attack the violet eye as soon as it entered. But then his face fell, and he looked around to find a barrier trapping his soul and preventing it from emerging.

It was at this point that the Sect Leader began to speak.

“Fellow Daoist, I don’t care who you are, but it’s safe to assume you’re Meng Hao from the Mountain and Sea Realm. Although I can’t tell where your discarnate soul is hiding, nor do I have any proof of its actual existence…

“I still believe that your arrival was far too coincidental!

“You just so happened to come in the exact moment when we needed a corpse?

“Perhaps it really was a coincidence. Perhaps it was even a coincidence that you consumed a vast amount of precious materials belonging to the Vast Expanse School. However, it strikes me that there’s too little of your soul left, and it put up too little of a struggle. This, of course, might just be a coincidence due to the severe injuries you sustained, which caused you to be so weak.

“It’s possible that you heard my discussions with my fellow sect members here, and that was why you never revealed any traces of your presence. Of course, there is another possibility, and that is that your soul truly has dispersed in all aspects.

“However, the presence of so many coincidences all at the same time is too suspicious. Perhaps I’m being a bit paranoid, but I believe that there is a high likelihood that your soul has not, in fact, dispersed!

“You have been waiting for this very moment to wipe out the Vast Expanse School’s Ninth Paragon, and take his place!

“Therefore, we came prepared. That ninth altar you are on also serves as a suppressor of souls, and is effective on any soul that does not cultivate the magic of the Vast Expanse School!

“Regardless of whether or not you are still there inside your body, and regardless of whether or not I’m paranoid, now that the seal has been activated, I can rest at ease.” As the old Sect Leader’s voice echoed out, the combined effort of the eight Paragons caused the power of the Soulseal Formation to crush down. That in turn allowed the violet eye to take root inside of Meng Hao, to spread tendril-like soul strands throughout his body.

At the same time, a violet mark could be seen on his forehead. It began to open up, taking control of everything, revealing… a violet eye!

Almost as soon as it appeared, a fierce gleam could be seen in the eye. Then, it closed, and even more soul strands went into Meng Hao, filling his qi passageways, his heart, his mind, his everything.

Inside the bronze lamp, Meng Hao’s soul frowned. He watched coldly as all of this happened, and could feel the effects of the soul sealing carried out by the Sect Leader and the others.

“So, they were ready for me,” he thought, eyes flickering. However, he didn’t seem very surprised. After all, people who practiced cultivation all the way to the 9-Essences level were sure to be extraordinary in terms of wisdom and foresight.

“Well, in that case… I’ll just have to go with my backup plan. If it turns out I can’t erase this other soul, then I’ll… consume it!”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as the bronze lamp suddenly flared with light and then… a crack opened up on its surface. In the instant that the crack appeared, the soul strands of the Ninth Paragon tried to force their way in. Meanwhile, the faces of the Sect Leader and the other Paragons flickered.

Although they had had their suspicions, they hadn’t dared to make a determination as to whether or not Meng Hao was truly still in his body. After all, the most rigorous inspections hadn’t turned up the slightest evidence of that.

But now that the bronze lamp had opened up a bit, and the soul strands of the Ninth Paragon shot toward it, the eight Paragons could sense what was happening.

“So, he really is still around!” Cold, grim expressions appeared on their faces, and they sent their divine sense pouring toward Meng Hao’s body to help the Ninth Paragon suppress Meng Hao’s soul.

However, before their streams of divine sense could enter Meng Hao’s body, the bronze lamp flashed, and a power of expulsion erupted out, blocking the eight streams of divine sense outside of the body!

Their faces fell. As for Meng Hao, he now had a bit of extra time. His soul unhesitatingly shot out toward the soul strands belonging to the Ninth Paragon. Instantly, the two intertwined, and began to try to consume each other.

At the same time, Meng Hao’s Demonic qi erupted out, and his soul transformed. The multifariousness of the Demon caused his own soul to be indistinguishably mixed with the soul strands. That in turn caused his ability to consume them to increase dramatically!

The soul strands could sense the incredible danger, and tried to fight back. However, it was impossible to tell which were which!

The Sect Leader and the other eight Paragons had grim faces as they looked on. They could sense that the souls of Meng Hao and the Ninth Paragon were intermixed, but there was nothing they could do to intervene.

“How could this be happening!?!?”

“Dammit!!” Gleams of rage appeared in their eyes. The Sect Leader looked extremely grim, and yet, couldn’t help but sigh with a bit of admiration.

“No wonder this Meng Hao was able to tangle with the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm…. He used his own body as bait for our Vast Expanse School. He set up a sinister scheme, and even anticipated that he would be discovered by us. I was simply too self-confident.

“This is a battle between souls, and one will end up consuming the other. We cannot interfere. Victory will be decided by which among their souls is the strongest.”

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# Chapter 1418: Ninth Paragon!

The Sect Leader of the Vast Expanse School, along with the seven other Paragons, were all sitting cross-legged on the altars, looking very grim-faced.

Although they couldn't directly help the Ninth Paragon, the Soulseal Formation was still in place, exerting pressure onto Meng Hao's soul.

Because the formation only targeted cultivators who did not cultivate the magic of the Vast Expanse School, it was the most effective tool at their disposal. Unfortunately for them, when they tried to send their divine sense into Meng Hao, a powerful force rebuffed them. That only served to make Meng Hao seem more mystifying to them.

Of course, it was all because of the bronze lamp. Furthermore, it forced them to rely only on the general sensation they felt to understand what was happening. They couldn't directly observe. When you added in Meng Hao's multifarious Demonic qi, it meant that what they sensed was often wrong.

Plus there was the fact that they couldn't even tell exactly where Meng Hao's soul was hiding, which made it difficult for them to judge exactly how effective the Soulseal Formation was.

It was just as the Sect Leader had said: everything would come down to who was stronger: Meng Hao, or the Ninth Paragon.

One of them had shocking natural talent, and had relied on his own cultivation base to become a 9-Essences Paragon in the Vast Expanse Society. He even possessed a Dao eye, which could cause shocking transformations in Heaven and Earth. The other had been propelled to the 9-Essences level via legacy, and yet regardless of whether it was in terms of his status or his background, he had reached the pinnacle of his home Realm. He had experienced countless dangers, had watched his world be destroyed, and had battled with both the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent.

As for which one of these two souls was stronger… the Sect Leader and the other Paragons had no way to say for sure.

They could only wait.

Days passed one by one. Soon, half a month had gone by.

From the outside, there didn’t seem to be anything special about Meng Hao. However, inside, a vicious battle was being fought with the soul of the Ninth Paragon. The bronze lamp ensured that the effects of the Soulseal Formation were blocked, allowing Meng Hao to fight with complete viciousness, a viciousness that the Ninth Paragon couldn’t even come close to matching.

Even more important was that Meng Hao’s soul was backed by his Demonic qi. Its maddening, multifarious nature was completely terrifying, and was a constant pressure on the Ninth Paragon.

“Dammit. Dammit!!” the Ninth Patriarch howled, although the sound was confined within the body. How could he ever have imagined that something like this would happen immediately upon his arrival?

All of his grand aspirations, his wild ambitions, his complex machinations, and even his dream of Transcendence, were now being utterly shaken. In fact, he was even able to sense that his consciousness was starting to fade.

Gradually, he had to admit that when it came to this battle of mutual consumption… he was not a match for Meng Hao!

He wallowed in his bitterness as time passed. Meng Hao’s soul now controlled more than half of his body. In contrast, the Ninth Paragon was only growing weaker and weaker. Eventually, it reached the point where he was on the verge of being completely consumed.

“Give me a chance to live!” he wailed. “There is no enmity between us!!” Shaken, he refused to accept the idea of dying in this way.

In almost the same moment that his words echoed out, Meng Hao’s soul paused for a moment, then swallowed what remained of the Ninth Paragon’s soul, leaving behind only a tiny strand, like a flickering spark.

“You’re right, there is no enmity between us,” Meng Hao said coolly. “I won’t kill you. I’ll leave you with this tiny soul seed. One day in the future, I’ll give you your freedom!” Even as his voice echoed out, memories and Daoist magics belonging to the Ninth Paragon exploded out within his soul.

The power of his soul increased with maddening rapidity. In the blink of an eye, it broke past its previous limit. After all, consuming the soul of a 9-Essences Paragon counted as incredible good fortune. Although it didn’t quite match up to what had happened with Shui Dongliu, it came close!!

It was possible to imagine that, once Meng Hao regained complete control over himself, with his Vast Expanse Dao Body and increased soul power, then his battle prowess would exceed that of an ordinary 9-Essences Paragon. He wouldn’t quite be at the peak, but he would definitely be in the mid 9-Essences level!

Meanwhile, the eight Paragons were still there on the altars, staring at Meng Hao with looks of vigilance and hesitation on their faces.

After half a month of observation, they could tell that there was no longer any chaos within Meng Hao. Clearly, one of the souls had consumed the other!

Furthermore, the soul which had emerged as the winner was now much more powerful!

“Which one of them was victorious?” said the old man in the violet-gold robe, his voice soft. The others were unwilling to offer any speculation.

“The Soulseal Formation isn’t doing anything now. The Ninth Paragon must have succeeded….”

“If he did, then the Soulseal Formation would automatically cease to have any effect. However, if Meng Hao succeeded, and absorbed the Ninth Paragon’s soul, then he would also become equipped with the characteristics of Vast Expanse techniques, and the result could possibly be the same.”

Even as everyone hesitated, the Sect Leader’s eyes glittered. “We’ll know the answer soon enough!”

Killing intent swirled in his eyes, and deep inside, he sighed. As soon as he had laid eyes on Meng Hao, he had come up with the idea of using his corpse instead of the other 8-Essences Paragon corpse they had prepared. After all, a 9-Essences corpse would ensure that the Ninth Paragon’s Dao eye would retain the majority of its power.

Then the Vast Expanse Dao Body had appeared, and he was even more convinced to go through with his plan. Even though there was something suspicious about the corpse, he was confident that they could handle the situation.

Actually, if it hadn’t been for the bronze lamp, the entire sequence of events would have been within his complete control.

Killing intent swirled amongst the other Paragons. If it turned out that the Ninth Paragon’s soul had been consumed in front of their very eyes, the sheer magnitude of such an affront would cause their desire to kill Meng Hao to grow even more intense.

The same thought was running through all of their minds. “I truly hope that the Ninth Paragon was victorious!”

As the eight Paragons looked on silently, Meng Hao continued on with the process of fully assimilating the soul. He saw the Ninth Paragon’s life, his techniques, his Dao eye, and his memories. However, he saw nothing regarding the world beyond the Vast Expanse. It was almost as if all information regarding the outside had been sealed, and though Meng Hao could sense its existence, he had no way of unlocking and viewing it.

However, he was made aware of the Vast Expanse School's plans regarding the necropolis. Not a bit of that information was withheld.

Time passed. The consumption and absorption process took an entire month. Afterward, when Meng Hao had fully assimilated the Ninth Paragon's soul, he unleashed his own soul to completely fill his body.

As that happened, he was flooded with the sensation of being able to control his own body again. His heartbeat was no longer slow and monotonous, but thrummed with life and energy, and his qi and blood flowed more and more quickly. Furthermore, his aura ceased emanating out, but was contained inside of him.

However, this indicated that Meng Hao's battle prowess was completely different from before, and the pressure experienced by the other eight Paragons was now even more intense.

The Sect Leader and the other Paragons all kept their eyes fixed fully on Meng Hao. They knew that the answer to their question would soon be revealed.

One breath of time passed. Then another, and another….

Meng Hao's finger twitched, and his eyelids trembled. After ten breaths of time passed, he had gathered enough strength that… his eyes opened!

When that happened, the surrounding eight Paragons all unleashed their power. A shapeless tempest sprang up, transforming into a power of extermination that could be sent crushing down onto Meng Hao at a moment's notice.

However, Meng Hao's expression didn't even flicker. He opened his eyes and looked up at the starry sky, blankly at first, but then with more and more lucidity.

His mind filled with countless memories of the Mountain and Sea Realm, ending with the destruction of the Realm itself. He remembered the

Mountain and Sea Butterfly fluttering toward the green coffin. He remembered the parrot wiping its mind.

Meng Hao saw all of that, and then buried it deep within him. What could be seen on his face now made him look very different from before. There was no smile, and no warmth. There was only… icy coldness.

His entire person was like a block of ice!

He seemed completely ambivalent toward the storm of killing intent around him as he slowly rose to a sitting position, looking around coldly at the other Paragons.

The Paragons had been paying very close attention to everything about Meng Hao. They noticed the blankness in his eyes, and then saw them turn lucid. They could tell that he was reminiscing about the past, and they could see how cold he had become.

However, none of those things told them much. If the awakened soul was Meng Hao, it would make sense for him to look blank, then lucid, then recall memories, then turn icy cold.

However, if it was the Ninth Paragon, it would have been the same. He would have looked blankly around at the new world, then grown lucid as he realized where he was. No doubt, he would recall memories of his time outside the Vast Expanse, as well as the fight between himself and Meng Hao. In the end, he would look around at these Paragons who had dragged him into an almost fatal ambush, and of course his expression would be icy!

“Who are you?!” asked the Sect Leader. In addition to the killing intent, other mixed emotions could be seen in his eyes. Even now that Meng Hao was awake… he wasn’t sure who he was.

Meng Hao turned, eyes icy as he stared at the Sect Leader. “Who do you think I am?”

Their gazes met, and the Sect Leader’s eyes began to glow as his divine sense surged into a mighty, crushing force.

“You’re Meng Hao!!” In response to his words, the other Paragons’ faces flickered, and their killing intent surged, becoming corporeal as it bore down destructively on Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he faced the combined killing intent of eight Paragons. Suddenly, a flash of light could be seen on his forehead, a violet streak that opened up to reveal an eye!

It was none other than the Ninth Paragon’s Dao eye!

When the Dao eye opened, everything in the entire world went still. A consummate pressure radiated out, allowing him to stand up to the combined killing intent of all of his opponents.

In response, their faces flickered. Simultaneously, Meng Hao rose to his feet, and as he did, wild colors flashed in the sky and a huge wind kicked up.

It was as if a primordial and ancient will were awakening!

“I’m the Ninth Paragon!” he said, his voice booming like thunder.

The Sect Leader’s eyes flickered as he examined the Dao eye. Inwardly, he sighed and buried his suspicions deep within his heart. Suddenly, he laughed.

“Ah, you truly are the Ninth Paragon of our Vast Expanse School!” The other Paragons looked on silently. Mixed emotions could be seen in their eyes as they looked at the Dao eye, but after a moment, they also began to laugh.

“Welcome, Ninth Paragon. Welcome to the Vast Expanse!”

Who you really are doesn’t matter. As long as you have that Dao eye, and can wield its power… then you are the Ninth Paragon!

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# Chapter 1419: Putting Down Roots!

Whether or not he was really the Ninth Paragon didn’t matter. The Sect Leader of the Vast Expanse School, as well as the other 9-Essences Paragons, had never actually met the Ninth Paragon, so naturally, there were no feelings of friendship between them.

The only reason they needed him was to help with their plan. Furthermore, the most important thing was the Dao eye, which would be of incredible usefulness to them.

That was why they had hoped that the incoming Ninth Paragon would be even stronger in terms of cultivation base.

Now, regardless of whether or not the person they were looking at was Meng Hao or the Ninth Paragon, he had the Dao eye. With that, nothing else really mattered.

If he was the Ninth Paragon, then things were well and good. If he wasn’t, then he would have to act like him!

The Sect Leader knew that, and thus he sighed. The other 9-Essences Paragons also knew, and so reacted with mixed feelings.

Meng Hao was aware of that fact as well. That was why he hadn’t been surprised at all by the killing intent he saw when he opened his eyes. And that was also why he had opened the Dao eye on his forehead.

When that Dao eye appeared, all danger faded away!

Believe me? Fine! Don’t want to believe me…? You have no choice!

As he stood there on the ninth altar, looking at the Sect Leader and the other Paragons, he smiled. It was a warm smile, devoid of the coldness from earlier. Then he clasped hands and bowed to the others.

“Many thanks to you, Fellow Daoists. I will do my best to help with the Vast Expanse School’s plan.” His simle and his words spoke to his current attitude.

In response, the Sect Leader’s eyes flickered, and he laughed again. “Come, come, you’ve just arrived, and therefore don’t know much about our Vast Expanse School. Allow me to introduce everyone.”

With that, the Sect Leader jovially introduced the other seven Paragons.

One of them was the old man in the violet-gold robe who had purchased Meng Hao’s corpse. His name was Shangguan Hong, and as he smiled and clasped hands to Meng Hao, a profound gleam could be seen in his eyes. 1

Meng Hao smiled broadly in return, and seemed to have missed the look in the man’s eyes. After all the formal greetings were done, the Sect Leader arranged for Meng Hao to be escorted to the temple on the half-planet which had been arranged ahead of time for the Ninth Paragon.

After Meng Hao left, the smiles of the faces of the Sect Leader and the other 9-Essences Paragons turned grim. They remained standing on the altars, silently watching Meng Hao disappear into the distance.

After a long moment passed, Shangguan Hong cleared his throat and said, “Well… that’s it?”

Complex expressions could be seen on the faces of the others.

“There’s no evidence. No way to prove whether or not he really is the Ninth Paragon….”

“Not necessarily. But what would be the point in it? Whether he is or isn’t doesn’t matter. If he’s not, and prefers to maintain a cover, it doesn’t hurt us. If we expose him as a fraud, though, it could harm our own interests.”

“Hmph. I can’t believe we wasted all those resources to end up like this. Maybe we should contact the Vast Expanse Society and have someone else sent down….”

“We spent far too many years accumulating all of those resources. It’s not possible to rebuild the collection any time soon. Besides, if the Vast Expanse Society learned of this matter, who knows how they might deal with us.”

After a bit of discussion, everyone quieted down and looked over at the Sect Leader.

He closed his eyes for a few moments, and when they opened, they were shining brightly.

“As long as he helps us carry out the plan, then it doesn’t matter who he is, he counts as the Ninth Paragon. Going forward, keep this matter between us.” Having finished speaking, he turned and headed back to the turtle shell above the sea of flames to continue his watch.

After he left, he left single sentence floating behind him. “Notify the sect, spread word, and prepare for the ceremony to officially welcome the Ninth Paragon.”

The other seven Paragons exchanged faint smiles. Strange gleams were buried deep in their eyes. Even after meeting Meng Hao and measuring him up, none of them felt any hatred toward him, or desire to kill him. In fact, they even admired him a bit.

“The ultimate figure of an entire Realm, someone who has tangled with both the Immortal God Realm and the Devil Realm. If he was able to make a comeback after dying… then he can’t be underestimated, nor should he be provoked.”

“How crafty and vicious. And also decisive. If he had made the slightest mistake, a huge battle would have erupted.”

“And yet he managed to hit the nail on the head with that Dao eye. In the end, he basically put himself in an unassailable position.”

“You all might think he is Meng Hao, but in my opinion, the Ninth Paragon would have done just the same.” Some of the Paragons sighed, and others smiled. After exchanging a few more words, they dispersed.

Everything slowly went back to normal in the starry sky of the half-planet.

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A Vast Expanse School disciple respectfully led Meng Hao to the palace which had been set aside for the Ninth Paragon.

The palace encompassed an area of 300,000 meters, taking up almost an entire plain on the north side of the half-planet. It even had special secluded meditation facilities just for the Ninth patriarch. At first glance, it looked like a vast city.

It was spectacular to behold, complete with mountains, rivers, numerous lakes, and countless buildings. It was like a celestial garden, and at the very center was a towering pagoda, beneath which was an austere temple.

The pagoda was so high it seemed to touch the clouds. From a distance, it was possible to see that there were nine cities like this on the half-planet, which of course corresponded to the nine Paragons of the Vast Expanse School.

Just outside of the city was a placard with calligraphy as flamboyant as dancing dragons and swirling phoenixes.

Ninth Paragon.

This was where Meng Hao was to live. The city was inhabited by 100,000 disciples who served as his guard force. Among their number were three Imperial Lords, seven Dao Sovereigns, dozens of Dao Lords, and over a hundred ordinary Dao Realm experts. The rest were either in the Ancient or Immortal realms.

That group in and of itself was enough to leave Meng Hao completely shaken, and gave him a hint as to the resources at the disposal of the Vast Expanse School.

In addition to the 100,000 guards were other members of their clans, as well as other ordinary disciples. All in all, the population of the city as a whole was well over a million.

At the moment, Meng Hao was seated cross-legged within the temple. Ten individuals stood there respectfully in front of him. These were none other than the three Imperial Lords and seven 6-Essences Dao Sovereigns.

There was something interesting about the Imperial Lords. Meng Hao wasn’t sure how many Imperial Lords the Vast Expanse School had in total, nor how the considerations were made in their assignments. In any case, the Imperial Lords assigned as his guard were all women.

The three of them were all spectacularly beautiful. As cultivators who had reached the Dao Realm, that was no surprise. With the exception of people with odd perversions, who wanted to be extremely ugly, all cultivators of this level were exceedingly good-looking. As for these three, they all seemed to be natural beauties, far beyond the ordinary.

If it were only the Imperial Lords who were women, it might not have been something unusual. However, all seven of the 6-Essences Dao Sovereigns were also women. Meng Hao couldn’t help but be a bit surprised at that. It wasn’t until he searched through the memories of the Ninth Paragon that he found the answer.

Back in the Vast Expanse Society, outside of the Vast Expanse, the Ninth Paragon had been fond of cultivating magic that required male and female cultivators. The more female vessels he had to drain, and the higher their cultivation bases, the more exciting he found the process.

Obviously, the Paragons from the Vast Expanse School were aware of that, and had made special arrangements. However, as of now, all of those special arrangements were somewhat meaningless.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he sat there in the temple, twirling a jade slip through his fingers. Within that jade slip were 100,000 souls, which ensured that Meng Hao had no need to use his cultivation base to keep all of his guards under control. With a single thought, he could kill all 100,000 of them.

“This Vast Expanse School is quite interesting,” he murmured to himself. He looked up at the ten women in front of him, and most especially the three Imperial Lords.

Of those three, one seemed cold and icy to an extraordinary degree. Based on what Meng Hao knew about cultivation, he guessed that her personality had been affected by the techniques she cultivated, which were surely based on ice and coldness.

Another of the women had a warm smile on her face, and looked at Meng Hao with awe and respect. Earlier, she had been the one to explain to Meng Hao all of his powers within the sect, and also how the sect was organized into its various factions.

The third of the Imperial Lords had a stony face and seemed very somber. However, deep within her eyes was a revulsion for Meng Hao. Clearly, she was not happy at all at being assigned this position by the sect.

As for the seven 6-Essences Dao Sovereigns, most of them looked nervous. To them, he was the Ninth Paragon, someone far, far above them, and someone whose words were to be taken as commands.

“Alright, keep going,” Meng Hao said coolly, smiling at the warm Imperial Lord.

She nodded and continued her explanation. “In addition to the 100,000 guards and 1,000,000 ordinary disciples, you have a section of land to the far north, set aside for raising starbeasts.

“Also upon our holy planet are 10,000,000 spirit fields under your control, tended by over 100,000,000 spirit peasants. In addition to that is a vein of Earthflame, which is one of the three ultimate alchemic resources on Planet

Vast Expanse. The medicinal pills and magical items it produces account for thirty percent of the total yield for the Vast Expanse School.” The Imperial Lord smiled at Meng Hao. When she spoke, her voice was like the the call of songbirds.

“You also possess a continent on the surface of Planet Vast Expanse, your majesty, which is known as the Vast Expanse Ninth Sect. That is where your Dao palace is located, and is also one of the temple complexes of the Vast Expanse School. There are hundreds of millions of disciples there, not to mention countless mortals.

“You are the ultimate authority within the Ninth Sect, and not even the other Paragons can interfere with your orders there. Even the exalted Sect Leader must request your permission before calling upon the resources there.

“In addition, of the 3,000,000 cities on the surface of Planet Vast Expanse, you exercise control over 300,000. You also control 131 businesses, including famous establishments like the Grand Banquet Pavilion, Celestial Benevolence Hall, and the 10,000 Treasures Mansion. In total, the branches of all the business you own number in the millions.

“Then there are your holdings off of Planet Vast Expanse. They include 97 cultivator clans and 64 land masses. Those are only the things which can be numbered. You have countless other interests which are too vast to calculate.”

“Among your direct subordinates are five 8-Essences Paragons and ten 7-Essences Paragons, stationed in various locations. As of now… they are all en route back here to pay their respects to you.”

After hearing the woman’s explanations, Meng Hao felt a bit out of sorts. He could never in his wildest imaginations have guessed that the Vast Expanse School’s Ninth Paragon… would be given so much wealth.

1. Shangguan Hong’s name in Chinese is shàngguān hóng. Shangguan is an uncommon two-character Chinese surname. Hong means “grand” or “magnificent”

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# Chapter 1420: A Direction for Transcendence!

“And that is just ten percent of what is officially part of the Vast Expanse School as a whole.” The warm way she looked at Meng Hao never changed from beginning to end, not even when he ended up looking a bit dazed from her explanation.

As for the other Imperial Lords, the one was still cold-faced. As for the other, her disgusted gaze now seemed to contain a trace of scorn, although she apparently thought she was hiding it well.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered faintly. As of this point, he had a relatively overall idea of how powerful the Vast Expanse School was. At the very least, it was vastly larger and more powerful than the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“Considering that the three peak powers in the Vast Expanse are the Immortal God Continent, the Devil Realm Continent, and this Vast Expanse School,” he thought, “it leads me to believe that in my battle with the former two, they weren’t using all of their strength. Or perhaps there were some factions within them that chose to remain neutral.”

Meng Hao closed his eyes in thought for a moment, and when he opened them, he looked calmly at the ten women in front of him, then waved his hand dismissively. Finally, he closed his eyes again.

They all bowed their heads and left. After departing the temple, they all went their separate ways to their various residences.

Everything in Ninth Paragon City was quiet, as though pressure was weighing down on everyone. The 100,000 cultivators who were stationed in the city were all very nervous.

There was a sun and moon in the inner planet, and soon night fell. The sky was black, with a field of glittering stars. Silence reigned. In the temple, Meng Hao finally opened his eyes.

After a moment of silence, he slowly rose to his feet and walked forward. Then he vanished. When he reappeared, he was far above the palace, on the towering pagoda which looked out over Ninth Paragon City.

A wind blew, sending his hair flying about, and his robes rustling. There he stood, looking down at the scene below for some time before lifting his head to gaze off into the distance.

He felt like a stranger here, and everything seemed unfamiliar. The terrain was unfamiliar, the people were unfamiliar, and even the starry sky up above was unfamiliar.

Meng Hao felt very lonely. He had always thought of himself as being strong, but when he thought back to everything that had occurred with the Mountain and Sea Realm, all he saw was a sea of blood, and countless familiar faces, screaming as they died. Gradually, he began to tremble.

He had once believed that his Dao was that of freedom and independence, that it was like a journey upon which all difficulties and setbacks were merely sights to be seen along the way. After looking at those sights, he could move on; his road stretched out into the beyond.

But now, with the Mountain and Sea Realm destroyed, with so many people dead, with the parrot and meat jelly having sacrificed everything so that he could have a chance at another life, it was impossible to view all of those past events as mere sights to see while on a journey.

If they really were just scenery, he would rather stay to enjoy them, and not continue on the journey.

He stood there, heart aching as he thought about the meat jelly in armor form, which he had long since removed and put back into his bag of holding.

Quite some time passed before he managed to get his emotions under control.

“Wait for me…. I will definitely return!

“When I do, I’ll take all of you away. We’ll leave the Green Coffin Vortex, and establish the Mountain and Sea Realm in the starry sky once again!

“And I will definitely do everything I can to bring back those of you who have been lost!” A fierce glint appeared in his eyes, which he eventually buried, returning to a state of calm.

Even the redness of his eyes faded. Even close examination would not reveal the bizarre crimson glow in his pupils.

“My Soul Lamps were destroyed,” he murmured, “and now this bronze lamp has become my Prime Lamp.” The wave of a hand caused the bronze lamp to appear, radiating its aura of primordial ancientness.

“Because of all the precious materials provided by the Vast Expanse School, it was able to remould my fleshly body into a form suitable for it.” He looked thoughtfully at the bronze lamp.

“The lamp is burning, and I can sense that if I extinguish it, my cultivation base, and everything else about me… will experience explosive growth!

“From what I can tell, once that explosion occurs, based on the foundation I’ve built with my cultivation base, it will increase by double, triple, or maybe even… tenfold!” These were the conclusions he had reached after further study of the bronze lamp.

After another moment of silence, eight magical symbols appeared on his forehead. His cultivation base rumbled with power as a shocking energy erupted out. He reached his right hand out and placed it onto the lamp in an attempt to extinguish the flame.

The flame flickered, but no matter how much cultivation base power he threw at it, would not be extinguished.

“Still not quite there yet…. I need the Essences of all eight Hexing magics to be complete.” After looking thoughtfully at the dancing flame within the bronze lamp, he gradually retracted his cultivation base power.

“Of the Essences of the eight Hexes, I’ve only gained full enlightenment of the Dao of the Eighth. The other seven Hexes are incomplete. However, the overall process won’t be difficult. Once I finish absorbing Shui Dongliu’s legacy, and spend some time in secluded meditation, I can definitely complete all of the Hexes.

“But what is most important, and what will give me the power to extinguish this lamp, is the missing… Ninth Hex!

“Of the Nine Hexes of the League of Demon Sealers, I have already acquired the first eight. As for the Ninth Hex, I’ll need to create that one.” Meng Hao looked out into the night, his eyes glittering.

“From what I can tell, my future path is clear. I must complete the Essences of the eight Hexes. I must gain enlightenment of the Ninth Hex. I must then combine all the Hexes and use that power to extinguish the bronze lamp. Then I will use the power of the bronze lamp to break through the Paragon level and step into… the Daosource! Transcend!” Brilliant light shone within Meng Hao’s eyes, making him look like a blazing sun.

“If I Transcend, toppling the Immortal God and Devil Realms will be as easy as flipping over my hand!

“If I Transcend, resurrecting my dead friends from the Mountains and Seas will be no challenge!

“If I Transcend, I can reunite with the parrot and the meat jelly. Time can be reversed, and the Mountain and Sea Realm can be reverted from a state of destruction… to its former glory!

“Transcendence. Entering the Daosource. At that point I… will become Essence. I will be a supreme and paramount Dao of Heaven and Earth!” Meng Hao was panting, and his mind spun.

“Daosource. Daosource. From ancient times until now, only a few people have ever Transcended into the Daosource Realm!”

“The Immortal God Continent is powerful because countless years ago, one of their people Transcended. It’s the same with the Devil Realm.

“I, Meng Hao… can also do the same!

“The bronze lamp is my hope for Transcendence. It is like the key to open a great door! Acquiring the Essences of the full group of eight Hexing magics will not be difficult. The true difficulty lies in the Ninth Hex!

“I must gain enlightenment to create that Ninth Hex….” Meng Hao’s eyes shone brightly; he had already come to a vague conclusion regarding that Ninth Hex. “The Seal the Heavens Incantation will be my Ninth Hex!!”

He looked off into the distance as the darkness of night began to give way to the bright glow of day, illuminating his entire person.

The arrival of the Ninth Paragon was a huge matter for the Vast Expanse School. All of the millions upon millions of disciples in the sect were very excited. Of course, news about the matter rapidly spread throughout Planet Vast Expanse as well as the starry sky. In the following months, many of the powers in the region of the Vast Expanse School learned of the matter.

Endless streams of people came to offer congratulations, ensuring that the whole sect was abuzz with activity. Far more cultivators came and went than usual.

As the Ninth Paragon, Meng Hao actually remained undisturbed. He tasked the three female Imperial Lords with handling all matters. Even when other

Paragons who were under his command came, he remained in secluded meditation.

That only served to make his subordinates more nervous. After all, Meng Hao was one of the nine most important people in the entire Vast Expanse School, and also had a terrifying cultivation base. At the same time, all of the outstanding individuals who made up the forces under his command were anxiously trying to determine what he liked and didn’t like.

That was the only way for them to ensure that matters went smoothly in the days to come.

The grand ceremony was held several months later. It was a huge affair that involved all of Planet Vast Expanse, and included all the cultivator clans affiliated with the Vast Expanse School, as well as the other land masses in the area.

The ceremony itself lasted for a month, but Meng Hao only made one appearance in which people actually had the chance to lay eyes on him. Even though he only showed his face once, the coldness and pressure that radiated off of him was enough to give everyone a feeling of being stifled.

That was especially true of the Paragons under Meng Hao’s command.

They waited for quite some time in Ninth Paragon City before Meng Hao received them individually. After their audience, each and every one had unsightly expressions on their faces, eyes filled with both hesitation but also a sliver of anticipation.

What Meng Hao had issued to them was his first order after becoming the Ninth Paragon!

“Use all available resources to expand our influence, beginning immediately. Within a thousand years, I want my forces to increase by several times at the minimum!”

The orders were quickly passed down. Whether or not people understood them or even approved, within the domain of the Ninth Paragon, his words were commands!

Whether or not people wanted to comply… they had to!

The forces of the Ninth Paragon immediately went wild with activity. They began to expand, to invade, to raid, and to multiply.

Meng Hao didn’t care how they went about it. He only cared about the Mountain and Sea Realm, and his revenge. He didn’t want to rest all his hopes on his Transcendence. Therefore, he would prepare… for the possibility that he wouldn’t Transcend; if that happened, he still needed to possess the wherewithal to get his revenge.

He needed more people. He needed more power. He needed to prepare to make his future declaration of war.

——

Note from Er Gen: Recently I’ve been planning some of the upcoming scenes. Book 9 is very important; there are a lot of mysteries to reveal, and situations to resolve. I need more time working with my general outline, so much so that I’ve been working on it almost every day, either getting rid of things or adding things.

Because of that, my writing has slowed down and the updates have been coming later than usual. I hope you can understand, brothers and sisters.

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# Chapter 1421: Provocation!

When Shangguan Hong and the others learned of what Meng Hao was doing, they did nothing to stop him. The Sect Leader contemplated the matter briefly, then chose to ignore it.

As long as Meng Hao's actions didn't affect them or their plans, then he could do as he pleased. As long as he didn't do something to endanger the entire Vast Expanse School… then they didn't care what he did.

Furthermore, Meng Hao was careful in his actions. He only used his own forces, and he only expanded into areas that the Vast Expanse School didn't already control.

As his forces began operations, he chose to go into secluded meditation in Ninth Paragon City, and would only receive sporadic updates regarding affairs on the outside.

Time passed. In the blink of an eye, ten years had gone by.

During that time, Meng Hao left Ninth Paragon City on only one occasion. The rest of the time, he remained in secluded meditation while his forces focused on expanding via war and other methods.

Soon, the Ninth Paragon's fame grew in the Vast Expanse as a whole. Eventually, open recruitment began, and vast amounts of new disciples swelled the ranks.

During the ten years that passed, the Paragons under Meng Hao's command were like sharp blades that cut down anyone in their path. As for the 100,000 cultivators who made up his main force, any time they fought in battle, they would overwhelm the opposing force.

Although there were no Paragons among the 100,000 cultivators, they were all elite experts, and could also form together into a huge spell formation.

As for the three female Imperial Lords and seven Dao Sovereigns, the ten years passed for them in relative comfort. Originally, they had been under the impression that being selected as guards for the Ninth Paragon meant that they were fated to become vessels to be drained in his cultivation practice. The truth was that throughout the ten years, the number of times they actually saw Meng Hao could be counted on a single hand.

A few other important events occurred during that time.

On one occasion, something like a sandstorm sprang up around Meng Hao's location of secluded meditation. A figure appeared within that sandstorm, who spoke in an ancient, raspy voice.

"You're not the Ninth Paragon."

Even as the words echoed out, a burst of peak 9-Essences power could be detected. Meng Hao opened his eyes, his expression calm as he faced the power of the peak 9-Essences level. At that point, the Dao eye on his forehead opened up, and the Essence power of his eight Hexing magics arose. It was with three eyes that he looked out into the sandstorm.

Massive rumbling echoed out into the rest of the half-planet, after which the owner of the raspy voice laughed.

"But I happen to like your personality and hostility. Even more so, your focus and determination." As his words echoed out, the sandstorm faded away, and the figure left the inner planet. When he reappeared, he was back in the desert on the surface of Planet Vast Expanse. His face was a bit pale, but his eyes glittered brightly.

"Mid 9-Essences," the old man murmured. "And yet he can face me directly, and even leave me shaken…. His control over the Dao eye is at a level of perfection!"

A voice suddenly spoke out in front of him. "Many thanks."

That voice belonged to none other than the Sect Leader of the Vast Expanse School!

On that one occasion in which Meng Hao left Planet Vast Expanse, he went to visit a battlefield upon which his forces fought. They were fighting a fierce group whose most powerful expert was a fierce beast at the peak of the 8-Essences level, a vicious Black Dragon. Because of it, this division of the Ninth Paragon cultivator army had been fought to an impasse.

Among Meng Hao's subordinates there was an 8-Essences Paragon, who had been so seriously injured that he had been left with no option other than to send word back to Planet Vast Expanse asking for assistance.

When Meng Hao appeared, he extended his right hand and waved a finger, causing the starry sky to be crushed, and the Vast Expanse to fill with rumbling sounds. All life forms in the area trembled, including his own cultivators and the enemy horde. One by one, they dropped to their knees, as though massive weights had landed onto their shoulders. Any who refused to kneel were crushed to death in body and spirit.

As for the Black Dragon, it let out a powerful shriek as its flesh and blood was flayed into a mass of blood and flesh. Terror appeared in its eyes as it prostrated itself in submission.

Meng Hao turned and left. The cultivators under his command watched him leave, and their eyes began to glow with unprecedented fanaticism. That was especially true of the 8-Essences Paragon, who let out a gasp. He had seen 9-Essences experts fight before, but the terrifying display put on by Meng Hao just then made him realize that the Ninth Paragon was no ordinary 9-Essences cultivator!

On the final day of the ten year period, Meng Hao sat cross-legged in secluded meditation in Ninth Paragon City. Suddenly, his eyes snapped open, and a glow like starlight could be seen. Anyone who was able to look into his eyes in that moment would feel lost, as though they were sinking eternally into the boundless starry sky.

Floating outside the door of his secluded meditation facility was a white jade slip that emanated a soft light. It was that very jade slip which had awoken Meng Hao from his secluded meditation.

“Has the day finally come?” he murmured. He reached out with his right hand and made a grasping gesture. Outside of the building, the white jade slip vanished.

In the moment that it reappeared in his palm, his mind filled with the archaic voice of the Sect Leader’s peak 9-Essences voice.

“Old Ninth… the time has come. We must head to the necropolis!”

Meng Hao’s fingers closed around the jade slip. His expression was the same as ever, but a glint of light passed through his eyes. Ever since the sandstorm rose up around his secluded meditation facilities and the figure appeared with its raspy voice, Meng Hao knew that the plan the Vast Expanse School had been working on for so many years had finally reached a critical moment.

As for Patriarch Vast Expanse’s necropolis, Meng Hao very much anticipated exploring it. He was curious about this supposed method left behind by the Patriarch… to Transcend from the 9-Essences level.

By now, he had been the Ninth Paragon for ten years. Perhaps the Sect Leader had intentionally waited ten years so as to be able to observe him. Although Meng Hao wasn’t sure of the conclusion the Sect Leader had come to after such observation, it appeared as if Meng Hao had gained approval.

“Let’s go see what this Patriarch Vast Expanse’s necropolis is like. He founded the Vast Expanse School, and was himself a Transcendent cultivator, one of only a few within this starry sky.

“Based on the ancient records of the Vast Expanse School, it seems… that Patriarch Vast Expanse was… the first person to ever Transcend, even before the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent existed!” A profound gleam appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes as he thought back to many years ago, when the Mountain and Sea Butterfly was speeding through the Vast Expanse, and he had encountered that old fisherman.

“He was the beginning, and I am the end. Was the beginning he referred to… Patriarch Vast Expanse? 1

“And was that entity within the Green Coffin Vortex also connected to Patriarch Vast Expanse somehow?

“During the past ten years, I have studied the histories available within the Vast Expanse School, and apparently, Patriarch Vast Expanse existed countless, countless years ago. It seems… that he could very well be from the same era as that old fisherman.

“Regardless of all that, there’s still the mysterious origin of this bronze lamp. It wasn’t until after I entered the Vast Expanse School that it began to change. That indicates there’s some sort of relationship between them.

“Patriarch Vast Expanse….” After some more thought, Meng Hao unhesitatingly stepped forward and then vanished. When he reappeared, he was in midair above Ninth Paragon City.

This was only his second time emerging, and even as he began to head toward the location of the main temple, he looked down at the city below and said, “Summon Su Yi and Xin Yue from Ninth Paragon City. Immediately.”

As his voice echoed out, the people below trembled and kowtowed respectfully. The three female Imperial Lords hurried out and offered respectful greetings.

These three women all had different personalities, and that hadn’t changed in the ten short years which had passed. The cold woman was still cold, the scornful woman still failed to hide her scorn, and the warm woman was still just as warm. No different emotions could be seen on their faces.

As for Su Yi and Xin Yue, they were the two 8-Essences paragons under Meng Hao’s command, the two most powerful cultivators among his forces, and he planned to take them with him on this trip to the necropolis.

Ignoring the three Imperial Lords, Meng Hao proceeded forward, and soon arrived in the location with nine altars. Four people had arrived ahead of him.

One was Shangguan Hong with his violet-gold robe. Upon catching sight of Meng Hao, he smiled slightly and nodded. The other three opened their eyes, and when they saw Meng Hao, they smiled. From the expressions on their faces, nothing seemed out of the ordinary at all.

Beneath those four altars could be seen various 8-Essences Paragon subordinates, sitting there cross-legged. When they saw Meng Hao, they immediately rose to their feet and offered greetings.

Meng Hao smiled, clasped hands, and then sat down cross-legged on the ninth altar to wait.

Before long, the other 9-Essences Paragons arrived, along with the powerful experts who were their subordinates. After all the formal greetings were extended, everyone sat down. Then, rumbling sounds could be heard as a powerful divine sense spread out, and a rift opened above the first altar.

An old man strolled out from within the rift; he was tall, and had long, flowing white hair. His appearance instantly caused incredible pressure to weigh down.

This was none other than the Sect Leader of the Vast Expanse School, who was at the peak of 9-Essences!

What had walked out just now was no divine sense clone, but rather, his true self.

Shangguan Hong and everyone else, including Meng Hao, quickly rose to their feet and clasped hands. “Greetings, Sect Leader!”

The 8-Essences Paragons were the most hasty of all to offer greetings. The Sect Leader nodded slightly and clasped his hands to return the greeting. Then he waved his sleeve and slowly began to speak. “The hour has arrived, ladies and gentlemen…. There is no need for me to emphasize the importance of what we are about to do. We have scouted the perimeter of the Patriarch’s necropolis on numerous occasions, and know of the path that leads to the inner regions.

“Our goal is to reach the absolute center of the necropolis. Hopefully, we will be able to reach that goal. If we don’t, then we will at least do our best to explore and map more regions inside!”

The eyes of all present began to shine brightly.

The Sect Leader took a deep breath and then waved his sleeve, looking very serious. Instantly, the nine altars began to vibrate as a teleportation process was initiated.

It was at this point that two beams of light shot toward the altars; it was none other than Meng Hao’s subordinates, the two 8-Essences Paragons. However, the teleportation process had already begun, making it impossible for them to approach. Anxious expressions could be seen on their faces as they looked toward Meng Hao on the ninth altar.

Before Meng Hao could say a word, the Sixth Paragon on the sixth altar spoke up. He was a middle-aged man with a long, hooked nose. Voice cool, he said, “Whose people are you? You’re late. Leave.”

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# Chapter 1422: Leave My Mark!

As soon as the Sixth Paragon spoke, coldness spread out in all directions. It wasn’t frost, but rather was something that cut off the area from the outside. Beyond that barrier, Meng Hao’s two subordinates, the 8-Essences Paragons, were shocked. Moments ago, they had been speeding forward, but now they were being pushed back.

It was as if some powerful repelling force had grabbed them, and even as they attempted to push forward, was pulling them backward. The result was that they felt like they were being ripped into pieces.

Their souls and their bodies seemed to be on the verge of separating, and the void around them looked as if it were about to be torn apart. Rumbling sounds filled the air, and blood sprayed out of their mouths. Xin Yue’s eyes glittered coldly, and as for Su Yi, her expression was one of anger, and she let out a roar as she attempted to force her way forward.

These two were proud women, and to be disgraced in front of the Ninth Paragon was unacceptable. If Meng Hao himself did this to them, maybe they could accept it, but from anyone other than the Ninth Paragon, it was treatment they could never put up with.

“You think a bit too much of yourselves,” the Sixth Paragon said with a cold snort, raising his right hand. However, in that very moment, an aura filled with infinitely colder killing intent exploded out from Meng Hao on the ninth altar.

“Those are my people,” he said as he began to stride forward. Each step caused thunderous booms to ring out. At the same time, intense power erupted out from his head, transforming into a vortex that spread out rapidly. Colors flashed and the wind screamed, and in that same moment, he appeared in front of the Sixth Paragon and unleashed a fist strike.

He didn’t need any divine abilities to deal with this Sixth Paragon. He used his most direct method, punching. Everything shook as Meng Hao’s fist rocketed out, seemingly a black hole that caused the starry sky inside of the half-planet to tremble, and the lands around them to quake. It was as if this fist strike were backed by the power of this starry sky itself.

The Sixth Paragon’s eyes widened, and he extended his right hand to meet the fist strike.

BOOOOOOOOOMMM!

As the fist strike landed, Meng Hao touched down onto the sixth altar, where he stood completely unmoving. The Sixth Paragon looked like he was standing in the middle of a violent windstorm; his hair and clothing whipped about, and he was trembling visibly. All of his skin which was visible seemed to sink into itself.

As the boom continued to echo out, the Sixth Paragon coughed up a mouthful of blood and staggered backward uncontrollably. When he came to a stop about thirty meters back, he forced himself to hold in the next mouthful of blood that he had been about to cough up, and then looked up, a vicious expression on his face. Roaring in anger, he spread his arms wide, and a massive eruption of Essence power occurred. An enormous, amorphous blade formed which seemed capable of slashing through anything and everything.

“Old Ninth,” he yelled, “are you looking to die?” The other Paragons were simply watching the events unfold, strange gleams flickering in their eyes. Meng Hao’s fist strike just now had been shocking to behold, and yet none of them had done anything to interfere. As for the Sect Leader, he frowned and then looked over at the Sixth Paragon with an expression of displeasure.

Almost as soon as the Sixth Paragon spoke again, Meng Hao waved his right hand, causing a powerful force to explode out. A windstorm formed, which smashed a hole into the tunnel being created by the teleportation power. That in turn allowed his subordinates to enter.

His two subordinates looked very shaken, although Su Yi took everything in a bit easier. This was actually her second time seeing Meng Hao fight, as she had been observing when he dealt with the Black Dragon earlier.

As for Xin Yue, this was her first time seeing Meng Hao in action, and it caused waves of shock to pound at her heart. His shocking fist strike seemed capable of destroying an entire world, and left her panting.

As for the hole he had opened to let them in, it seemed to have been made in an almost casual fashion. Both of the women could only gasp in response. Without any hesitation, they flew into the area with the altars to appear standing next to Meng Hao.

“Greetings, Paragon, we arrived late,” they said, clasped hands and bowing.

“I decide whether you’re late or not….” he said coolly. Then he strode forward to once again stand directly in front of the Sixth Paragon. “It has absolutely nothing to do with you, Sixth Paragon. Do you think I need you punishing my subordinates? Do I look like I need your help? Who the hell do you think you are?! I think I need to leave my mark on you to help you remember what happened here today.”

As Meng Hao spoke, the Sixth Paragon’s eyes flickered with killing intent. He waved his arms, sending Essence power exploding out, which transformed into a huge pitch-black head.

Seeing that the two of them were about to start fighting, Shangguan Hong stepped forward. With him were three other Paragons, who stood between Meng Hao and the Sixth Paragon.

“Old Ninth, just forget about what happened.”

“Old Sixth, you’re in the wrong here.”

“Just forget about all of this. We’re supposed to be on our way to the necropolis. Just cool down for now. If you really have so much energy to spare you can put it into getting into the necropolis.”

A flicker of hatred passed through the Sixth Paragon’s eyes, and despite the interference of the other Paragons, he pointed out with both fingers, causing the pitch-black head to roar as it closed in on Meng Hao.

Shangguan Hong and the others looked on with flickering expressions, but before they could do anything, Meng Hao suddenly stepped forward. In the blink of an eye, an azure roc appeared, which then slammed into the pitch-black head.

A boom rang out as the pitch black head of Essence collapsed. Meng Hao in azure roc-form then became a beam of azure light that shot directly toward the Sixth Paragon.

The Sixth Paragon’s face fell, and he was just about to fall back when a fist shot out from the light and slammed into his chest.

The Sixth Paragon was knocked completely off of the altar, blood spraying out of his mouth the entire time. Before he could even react, green light flickered, and Meng Hao was on him again, unleashing another fist strike.

Then a third, a fourth, and a fifth!

Booms rang out as the Sixth Paragon was shoved backward over and over again. His chest was caving in, and he screamed miserably. His three 8-Essences Paragon subordinates hesitated, but realized that they had little choice other than to fly out to try to stop Meng Hao.

But then Su Yi and Xin Yue stepped forward to stop them.

“Scram!” Before the two groups could meet up, Meng Hao snorted coldly from within the azure light. He then appeared in bodily form and waved his sleeve, causing Divine Flame to blaze out toward the Sixth Paragon’s three subordinates. Their faces fell, but they were incapable of evading, and were sent tumbling back 3,000 meters, blood spraying out of their mouths.

As for the Sixth Paragon, he was completely shaken. How could he ever have imagined that Meng Hao would be so incredibly powerful?

He was being attacked so viciously he could do nothing but retreat, and didn’t even have a chance to fight back. He didn’t get the feeling he wasn’t a match for Meng Hao, but rather that he had lost the initiative and had no chance to actually fight back.

By now, regret was building up in his heart, and he wished hadn’t made an attempt to test Meng Hao.

“Dammit!!” he roared as Meng Hao closed in again. Booming sounds rang out as he sent out divine abilities, only for them to be instantly destroyed. Next came some magical items. They didn’t last any longer than the divine abilities.

The other Paragons watched what was happening with strange, thoughtful gleams in their eyes. As of this point, they were starting to gain an understanding of just how powerful Meng Hao was.

And that was exactly what Meng Hao wanted; to establish himself!

Coldness flickered in his eyes as he raised his right hand again. Shockingly, the power of space could be detected, slowly building up in power; it was none other that the Eighth Hex’s Essence of space, of which he had gained enlightenment.

When the Sect Leader saw what was happening, his pupils constricted; he took a step forward and waved his sleeve.

“Enough! How far do you plan to take this fight?!”

The Sect Leader was at the peak of the 9-Essences level, so the wave of his arm caused an incredible force to build up between Meng Hao and the Sixth Paragon, shoving them apart.

The Sixth Paragon actually breathed a sigh of relief at being given a way out of the situation. He looked over at Meng Hao with killing intent flickering in his eyes.

Unfortunately for him, he was still underestimating Meng Hao!

“Like I said, I need to leave my mark on you.” Even as his cold voice rang out, the Dao eye on his forehead opened up, and a boundless will erupted out. The entire starry sky shook, and all minds began to reel.

In that instant, the power of the Dao eye caused the divine ability just unleashed by the Sect Leader to be frozen in place in front of Meng Hao. Meng Hao then shot forward at a speed far surpassing anything from before.

In the blink of an eye, he was right in front of the Sixth Paragon. The Sixth Paragon’s mind was spinning, and wanted to fall back, but felt as if he were stuck in mud; he was simply too slow. His pupils constricted as astonishment filled his eyes.

The Sect Leader’s face fell, and he bellowed, “Old Ninth, stay your hand!”

He took a step forward to appear next to Meng Hao, whereupon he flicked his sleeve. That motion blocked Meng Hao’s hands and feet, and was just about to pull him away, when Meng Hao grinned. His aura changed, and a brutal air erupted out of him. Although his hands and feet had been immobilized, his head had not!

He stretched his head out and bit down viciously onto the Sixth Paragon’s neck, ripping out a huge chunk of bloody flesh.

Blood sprayed out of the Sixth Paragon’s neck, and he screamed. He clamped his hand down onto his neck and shot backward. By now, there was no killing intent in his eyes toward Meng Hao, only intense astonishment.

Of all the people he had fought in his life, this was the most brutal person he had ever encountered. He actually bit a chunk of flesh out of him! As far as he was concerned, this Ninth Paragon was completely mad.

Meng Hao calmly swallowed the chunk of flesh and then said, “That’s my mark.”

Then he wiped his mouth and walked back to the ninth altar. As he did, the surrounding cultivators watched him, their minds reeling. Even Su Yi and Xin Yue were left gasping.

They would never be able to forget the brutal display put on by Meng Hao this day.

“This guy… should never be provoked!”

“Crazy! He’s completely insane….” The Paragons were left gasping, looks of intense vigilance on their faces.

The Sect Leader’s face was extremely unsightly, and his mind was being battered by waves of shock. He stared at Meng Hao, and then looked over angrily at the Sixth Paragon. Finally, he headed back to the first altar, his face very grim.

The Sixth Paragon silently returned to his altar, his face pale, terror gleaming in his eyes as he looked over at Meng Hao.

He wasn’t afraid of cultivators with a higher cultivation base, but rather those who were completely insane. And Meng Hao was the most insane person he had ever encountered among 9-Essences cultivators.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he stood there, hands clasped behind his back as if nothing had happened. Behind him, Su Yi and Xin Yue looked at him with awe in their eyes.

A moment later, the teleportation power was unleashed, and rumbling could be heard as a pillar of light rose into the air, and they all vanished.

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# Chapter 1423: Necropolis Ghost City!

In the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, there were certain extremely mysterious locations. One, for example, was the Green Coffin Vortex. In such locations, the magical laws of the Vast Expanse were different, making it difficult for cultivators to enter them, even 9-Essences experts.

Although Meng Hao hadn’t known it originally, he came to be aware that such places were said to be created by Transcendent cultivators.

Only someone who had Transcended could create a location that could cause problems for 9-Essences Paragons. Furthermore, such locations were few and far between in the Vast Expanse; there were only a few in existence.

Supposedly, some of those locations were related to the Vast Expanse Society. Others were connected to the Immortal God Continent. The rest had to do with the Devil Realm. Apparently… all the forces which had produced a Transcendent cultivator were connected to such places.

Some such places were well known, while others were kept secret by various powerful factions, and held their respective organizations’ greatest secrets. They were secrets that wouldn’t necessarily endanger those groups if they came to be known, but were kept hidden anyway.

Patriarch Vast Expanse’s necropolis was just such a place.

The exact location of the necropolis was unknown, and the only way to enter it was via the nine altars on the half-planet of the Vast Expanse School.

In the past, people had speculated that the necropolis was not even located within the starry sky of the Vast Expanse. Some said that it was a location in some other world… where there was no Heavenly Dao.

Because there was no Heavenly Dao, magical techniques were thrown into chaos in such places. Sometimes, certain magics couldn’t even be used. For example, some locations were places incompatible with the aura of the Vast Expanse, which some people cultivated.

When Meng Hao and the others appeared, he looked around and saw a starry sky stretching out.

It was a real and true starry sky, with none of the mist that was pervasive in the Vast Expanse.

There were nine land masses floating out in front of them. Upon closer examination, it was possible to see that they were connected by bridges, although the bridges were not stable; they were constantly swaying and swinging back and forth.

Surrounding the nine land masses was a seemingly infinite field of drifting asteroids. Occasionally, they would emit strange fluctuations which provoked sensations of intense danger.

There were no paths visible.

“Now that we’re here, we don’t have much time,” said the Sect Leader. “Only one month. Follow me, and be careful not to lose your way. Don’t touch anything you see, whether it’s a painting or a person or anything else. If you do… even those of you with nine Essences will perish.” With a final look at everyone, he flickered into motion as he flew out into the starry sky.

Everyone else followed along as if they had done so before. Meng Hao was the only one who seemed more cautious than ever as he followed along.

His two subordinate Paragons followed him, looking around vigilantly.

The group was soon speeding along through the asteroids. The Sect Leader seemed to have mastered some method of travel that ensured they didn’t encounter any restrictive spells. Nor did any of the floating asteroids enter their path of travel. However, the result was that the Sect Leader’s face was a bit pale. His eyes shone with the glow of augury; clearly, leading the group in this way was not an easy task.

Time passed. Four hours later, Meng Hao noticed one of the 8-Essences Paragons up ahead suddenly stop in place and turn to the side with an expression of shock and disbelief.

This man could shake the Vast Expanse with a single stomp of a foot, and would count as the pinnacle of existence in virtually any world or Realm. And yet, before anyone could warn or remind him of the dangers of the place, his body deflated like a popped balloon. In the blink of an eye, he withered up into a pile of dessicated flesh.

His bones, flesh, and everything about him melted, and then vanished without a trace. Not even his soul had a chance to flee. He died without even making a cry of alarm….

The only thing left behind was his skin, which slowly floated away into the starry sky.

Meng Hao was completely shaken, and everyone else felt their scalps tingling in shock. No one spoke. As they watched the pile of skin float away, laughter could suddenly be heard, at which point they noticed that, unexpectedly, the pile of skin was smiling.

“If you want to stay alive, don’t randomly look around,” the Sect Leader said. “Keep your eyes on the person in front of you. We will follow this path for three days, and if all goes well, we will pass through this perimeter region into the first land of the Patriarch’s necropolis.” With that, he proceeded onward without another word.

Meng Hao said nothing, but his eyes flickered. Then, he proceeded along, keeping his eyes on the cultivator in front of him.

Time passed. A day later, and after a bit of calculation, Meng Hao came to the conclusion that they had already traveled seventy percent of the distance, and that they would soon be nearing the first land mass.

For the most part, the journey was frightening but not dangerous. However, another 8-Essences Paragon died. He wasn’t transformed into a pile of flesh. Instead, he began to suddenly rot.

At first, he didn’t notice. Then the person behind him cried out in alarm. The 8-Essences Paragon spun around, and when he looked down at his body, his eyes fell out of their sockets. Everyone watched as he dissolved into a mass of blood that dropped down into the depths below.

Meng Hao’s vigilance grew. The surrounding asteroids would occasionally pulse with a faint light, and yet everything was absolutely silent. As silent as death.

The Sect Leader moved slower and slower, until finally it reached the point where he needed to make long calculations before each movement. After a bit of observation, Meng Hao came to the conclusion that the Sect Leader’s methods of augury and calculation had to do with the movement patterns of the asteroids.

Even as he contemplated the matter, a cry of alarm could be heard behind him from Su Yi. Meng Hao spun and saw the beautiful Xin Yue, head turned to the side, expression blank as she apparently spoke to some unseen person. Her expression flickered, and then she nodded, and a rapturous look of joy appeared on her face.

Even as she nodded, her body began to wither up. Meng Hao frowned, reached out, and tapped her forehead.

A tremor ran through her, and the withering slowed but didn’t cease.

Su Yi’s expression flickered with anxiety, and she was about to unleash some sort of magic to provide aid, when suddenly her expression also turned blank. She turned to the side in disbelief, then reached out into the void as if to grab something. Then she also started to wither up.

Meng Hao’s frown deepened, and he quickly opened his Dao eye. His aura spread out, turning into a vortex that swept out in all directions.

At the same time, the Sect Leader and the other Paragons turned to look at what was happening. The Sect Leader’s face fell, and after a moment of hesitation, he gritted his teeth and made his way toward Meng Hao. The other Paragons’ faces flickered with hesitation, but seeing that the Sect Leader was approaching, they did the same.

However, before anyone could get close, Meng Hao suddenly raised his hand and said, “Stay back. I should be able to handle this.”

His expression was somber, and even as he spoke, a murderous aura began to rise up from him, which rapidly turned into a raging tempest.

The Sect Leader and the other Paragons were people who were no strangers to slaughter. However, after seeing Meng Hao’s murderous aura, their pupils constricted. That was especially true of the Sixth Paragon, who gasped.

It was a murderous aura so intense that ordinary people couldn’t compare to it. Not even this group of Paragons contained someone who came close.

“How many people has he killed…?”

“I’ve never met someone who has slaughtered so many!!”

“Is this Ninth Paragon some sort of jinx, or what…?” Both the 9-Essences Paragons and their 8-Essences subordinates were all completely shaken.

“So,” thought the Sect Leader, “he really is… Meng Hao!” It was as if that murderous aura which surrounded Meng Hao contained innumerable screaming souls.

Moments ago….

Meng Hao’s face was very serious as he looked around with his third eye, and saw a completely different world!

Within the void of the starry sky was an enormous city. The asteroids around them were actually buildings in that city, and the entire place looked incredibly ancient, as if it couldn’t even exist in modern times.

What left Meng Hao even more shaken was that, unexpectedly… they were surrounded by countless figures. There were men and women, old and young, and all of them were cultivators. They were everywhere, and although most of them were simply walking to and fro, some would occasionally turn to look curiously at Meng Hao and the others.

The figures were blurry, their faces pale, their bodies devoid of life force. In fact, what filled the entire area was a boundless aura of death.

Several women were standing next to Xin Yue, smiling as they tugged at her garments. It was as if they were trying to get her to become one of them. The same thing was happening to Su Yi.

Shockingly, there were even some figures next to Meng Hao who were reaching out to grab him!

He took a deep breath as he realized that this place… was actually a Ghost City!!

Considering the level of his cultivation base, he was able to tell that all of these figures were ghosts, and there were so many of them that it would be impossible to count their number.

A brief moment after Meng Hao’s third eye opened and he looked around, all of the ghosts in the entire city stopped what they were doing and turned to look at him. Countless gazes came to be fixed on Meng Hao, whereupon strange glows rose up in their eyes. Only a brief moment passed before they began to scream noiselessly, and then rush madly toward Meng Hao.

To be surrounded by so many ghosts left even Meng Hao feeling like he was in the middle of a curse, his life force fading, an aura of death threatening to engulf him.

That was the moment in which his murderous aura suddenly erupted out fully, creating a vortex which swept out in all directions.

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# Chapter 1424: The Ghost Masses Offer Worship!

“Vast Expanse… Dao Body….” No one could hear the murmuring voice except for Meng Hao. Even as the voice brushed against him, his murderous aura exploded out into a vortex which swept the ghosts away from Su Yi and Xin Yue.

However, there were simply too many of the ghosts, so many that Meng Hao’s scalp was numb. As they closed in on him, he reached out, grabbed Su Yi and Xin Yue, and shot toward the Sect Leader.

Even as he sped into motion, he looked around and saw that more figures were appearing in the countless buildings which made up the city, figures which were even more powerful than those he had already seen. There was one path that had no ghosts on it at all, and further off in the distance, far far away, Meng Hao spotted an enormous altar which rose high up into the sky!

The altar was so enormous that it was clearly visible despite being a huge distance away. Looking at it more closely, it appeared to be hovering in the void above the first land mass.

The number of ghosts on the first land mass was so large it was impossible to count. Further off, the other eight land masses were difficult to make out clearly.

Gradually, Meng Hao realized that on the ninth land mass, the land mass furthest away from him, there was a huge throne, upon which sat a person!

That person’s gaze pierced through the boundless starry sky to fall upon him. Apparently… this was the person who had spoken the words ‘Vast

Expanse Dao Body' moments ago. Now, it began to speak again.

"The catastrophe comes. Peak of the Vast Expanse. You are the end….

"Allheaven fears the Immortal…. 1

"You… have finally come…." As the voice echoed out, the ghosts seemed to go even crazier. At the same time, the bronze lamp within him began to flicker.

It all happened in the briefest of instants. As Meng Hao retreated from the ghosts, he could sense madness within them, and yet, they didn't seem malevolent. Somehow, they seemed anxious. Now was not the time to ponder the matter. As his murderous aura shoved the ghosts away, he closed his third eye. In that moment, everything vanished, although he could still sense an incredible coldness building up in the area.

"Let's go!" said the Sect Leader. Everyone began to move, although things were so chaotic, it was impossible to tell exactly which direction they were going. As they sped along, the cold aura behind them continued to grow.

However, because Meng Hao had closed his third eye, the ghosts apparently couldn't detect their presence. After an hour, they emerged from the coldness, their expressions grim. As for Su Yi and Xin Yue, they looked guilty as they followed along silently behind Meng Hao.

Other Paragons immediately gave voice to their fury.

"Dammit, what were you doing? Do you know how much danger we were in just now!?"

"How reckless! You nearly scared us to death!!" Although they couldn't actually see the ghosts, they understood that they had all just experienced a brush with death. Had the cold aura overwhelmed them, they would never have escaped, and would have remained within it forever.

Meng Hao didn't offer any explanation, but he did clasp hands and bow to everyone.

Considering his cold disposition up to this point, the fact that Meng Hao made such a gesture caused the faces of most of the other Paragons to soften. However, their expressions were still somewhat grim; the group was now on an unknown and incorrect path.

All of them knew the potential consequences of taking an incorrect path.

Meng Hao's apologetic clasping of hands was enough to silence most of the other Paragons. However, the Sixth Paragon let out a cold harrumph. "All brawn and no brains! You should have let those two subordinates of yours just die! Saving them got us lost. They deserved to die!"

Normally speaking, he would never have spoken in such a way after the battle he had just experienced with Meng Hao. But now that Meng Hao had earned the ire of the entire group, it was like throwing fuel onto the fire.

"That's right, Old Ninth," chimed in the Eight Paragon, his voice cold. "Simply clasping hands in apology isn't enough. This is a big matter! You got us all lost, and you know what a dangerous position that puts us in!"

The words uttered by these two caused the other Paragons to frown.

The Sect Leader looked over at Meng Hao with furrowed brow.

Meng Hao looked back at him and said, "Many thanks for your assistance back there, Sect Leader."

Actually, the Sect Leader hadn't provided him with much assistance at all, but Meng Hao could tell his attitude in the matter. The fact that he had turned back at all spoke volumes. Furthermore, the other Paragons, with the exception of the Sixth, had all been moving to help him. He wouldn't forget that, and it served to increase his good will toward the Vast Expanse School in general.

"What did you see just now?" the Sect Leader asked.

"A Ghost City," Meng Hao replied. "This entire place is a city, with the asteroids being buildings. We were surrounded by endless hordes of ghosts.

This place… is a Ghost City that is invisible to the eyes of the living.”

Having heard this, the Sect Leader suddenly reached out and made a grasping motion. A rift opened up, and a profoundly ancient jade slip appeared, which he handed over to Meng Hao.

“Take a look. Is that the city you saw?!”

Meng Hao took the jade slip and scanned it. An image appeared in his mind, the vague image of a city that he instantly recognized as the Ghost City he had seen!

“None other.”

When the Sect Leader heard that, a strange expression could be seen on his face. Looking somewhat excited, he asked, “Did you happen to notice a path…?”

Meng Hao thought back to everything he had seen, and recalled that one particular path which was devoid of ghosts. He nodded.

The Sect Leader looked around quietly for a moment at the asteroids, mixed emotions on his face. Finally, he spoke to the group as a whole, his voice little more than a murmur.

“The legends say that long, long ago, this place was a city, a city so huge that the nine land masses were only the central part of the city itself.

“Back then, it was known as the City of Saints.

“One day, the city disappeared overnight. Virtually everyone died…. Countless lives, countless cultivators, countless beings, all dead…. Their deaths were very bizarre and mysterious, and happened in complete silence.

“Only Patriarch Vast Expanse and a few other people survived. They left together, after which the Vast Expanse Society came to exist outside of the Vast Expanse.

“Years later, Patriarch Vast Expanse returned, and chose to turn this place into his necropolis.

“According to most legends, he eventually perished here. Of course, other rumors state that he didn’t die, but rather, stayed behind alive to accompany the bones of his companions from the past. Supposedly, countless years passed, after which he departed, leaving behind the method for Transcendence.

“In all the legends, the starry sky looked different back then. Supposedly, when the grieving Patriarch Vast Expanse buried his companions, he transformed the starry sky into the Vast Expanse, for the purpose of accompanying his friends in death.

“The city you saw was the former City of Saints…. Old Ninth, please lead us along the path you saw. That is the way to get to the necropolis.” He sighed after recounting the story to the group. Most of the people present had heard the stories before, but this was Meng Hao’s first time. After a moment of silence, he thought of the world of the Ghost City, and of the figure he had seen on the ninth land mass.

Finally, he nodded and turned to look off into the distance. Then, he led the way, with everyone following as he headed off into the void.

At first, he had to choose his way carefully and with much thought. But about two hours later, he began to pick up speed. No more strange incidents or deaths occurred, making it seem certain that no ghosts were on the path they traveled.

The Sixth and Eighth Paragons didn’t look very happy, but as for all of the other Paragons, their eyes glowed with excitement. Soon, they were getting very close to the first land mass.

However, it was at this point that, all of a sudden, a cold aura suddenly appeared. Everyone could sense it, and before anyone could even react, it increased in intensity by a hundredfold, then a thousandfold, then ten-thousandfold and even more.

As boundless, icy coldness surrounded them, several aura streams appeared that struck fear into the heart of even Meng Hao, and caused the Sect Leader's face to fall.

Meng Hao stopped in place, as did everyone behind him.

"Nice job, Meng Hao!!" yelled the Sixth Paragon. Not bothering with matters of face, he directly spoke Meng Hao's name.

The Eighth Paragon frowned and glared at Meng Hao, eyes flickering with killing intent. "Dammit, you're not leading the way, you're sending us to our deaths!"

The other Paragons' faces were grim and icy, and they began to rotate their cultivation bases.

"Enough!" the Sect Leader roared. Inwardly, he was sighing; the mission was a failure. Furthermore, even retreating would likely result in injury and loss, especially to the 8-Essences Paragons, who would survive only if they were lucky.

The coldness which had risen up caused everyone's hearts to thump. The Sect Leader sighed bitterly.

"The plan is cancelled. Let's fight our way out. We'll recover and rebuild resources to come back another time." With that, he prepared to leave. The Sixth and Eighth Paragons glared spitefully at Meng Hao, and Shangguan Hong and the other Paragons sighed.

But then, Meng Hao's eyes gleamed, and he suddenly said, "Hold on a moment!"

The Sixth Paragon spun in place, glared at Meng Hao, and smiled coldly. "What are you going to do? Don't tell me you want to stop us from leaving. What, you want us to stick around here to be killed? Meng Hao, your heart is twisted and evil. Do you really think we weren't aware that you consumed the Ninth Paragon?"

“Shut your mouth,” the Sect Leader barked. “Old Ninth, forget about the matter. I should have explained things in more detail ahead of time. We can come back again another time.” Although the Sect Leader was irritated at this turn of events, he still tried to keep things civil.

Meng Hao ignored the Sixth Paragon. “No, listen, I have the feeling… that these ghost harbor no ill will toward me.”

Even as he spoke, his third eyes opened.

At the same time, the Sixth Paragon howled, “I can’t believe you still dare to open your Dao– wait, what…?”

Before he could even get through half of his sentence, the rest of his words stuck in his throat. His eyes went wide as he looked around.

He could sense that, as of this moment, the coldness… was actually emanating a sensation of… subservience!! The powerful entities therein that filled him with such fear, were actually… acknowledging allegiance!!

He wasn’t the only one who realized this. All of the Paragons could pick up on the clues. Expressions of disbelief appeared on their faces. As for Meng Hao, when he looked around at the world, he saw innumerable ghosts, all of them dropping to their knees to kowtow!

And they were kowtowing to him!

It was like watching a wave run across the surface of the sea as countless ghosts dropped down onto their knees….

What a shocking turn of events!

Their previous madness had contained no killing intent, and their rush toward Meng Hao had not been because they wished him harm. Instead, they could sense on him… the aura of their grand leader.

1. This is the same Allheaven as in Allheaven Immortal, Allheaven Dao Immortal, Allheaven Clan, etc. It’s been a long time since the term was introduced, so I’m going to repeat the explanation of what it means.

“Allheaven” could be transliterated as “Luotian,” and is a concept from real Daoist mythology. Among all the various heavens that exist, it is the absolute highest heaven. Luo is a character which can be translated a lot of ways, but in this situation basically means “net.” The idea is that this heaven stretches out to cover over all the other heavens like a net. However, instead of calling it Net Heaven (sounds like a bad internet cafe or perhaps a fishing shop), I will use “Allheaven.” Incidentally, I’ve also translated the character luo as “sieve” in the past, most notably in the name of the Black Sieve Sect”

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# Chapter 1425: Allheaven Fears the Immortal!

“Uh….” Although the Sixth Paragon couldn’t actually see what was happening, considering the level of his cultivation base, he had a keen ability to detect and sense auras. As of this moment, all of the cultivators near Meng Hao could sense that the freezing aura… was acknowledging allegiance!

The Sixth Paragon’s eyes went wide. Despite his strength and willpower, he was still shaken, and gasped. The Eighth Paragon had the same reaction, and stared around in complete disbelief at what was happening.

The other Paragons all had similar reactions. Strange glows could be seen in their eyes as they looked over at Meng Hao. What was happening now left them more shaken than when Meng Hao had fought with the Sixth Paragon.

The Sect Leader sucked in a deep breath, glanced at the surroundings, and then looked back at Meng Hao. Suddenly, he had the feeling that all of the decisions he had made about Meng Hao, both earlier and just now, had been correct!

“Not even the real Ninth Paragon would have been able to do this,” he thought. “This is something that exceeds the powers of the Dao eye!” As of this moment, the Sect Leader had absolutely no question at all about Meng Hao’s true identity. At the same time, he completely approved of him.

The Sixth Paragon began to speak without even thinking about it: “If you could have done this before, then why did you wait until just now? You–” The other Paragons nearby him began to edge away and put as much space between them and him as possible.

Before he could even finish speaking, Meng Hao snorted coldly and said: “Shut the hell up!”

He glared at the Sixth Paragon, and although the words he had spoken were not filled with much force, they were infinitely cold. The Sixth Paragon’s mind spun, and he was about to say something else, when his face fell. Off to the side, the Eighth Paragon took a deep breath.

Rumbling sounds accompanied Meng Hao’s voice. When an emperor is furious, the officials will likewise be enraged. In much the same way, the surrounding ghosts seemed to lift their heads and emit enraged howls as they turned to stare at the Sixth Paragon!

Although the Sixth Paragon couldn’t see that, the intense feeling he was experiencing caused him to bite back his own words. Without even thinking about it, he stepped back a few paces, his face pale. An intense sensation of deadly crisis was currently raging inside of him.

He had the clear and distinct sensation that Meng Hao could control his very life and death with a single thought.

“How could this be happening!?!? He… he can force the ghosts to acknowledge allegiance, and can also control them!?!? This… this is impossible!”

Even as the Sixth Paragon was shaking and panting, the Sect Leader took a step forward and looked at Meng Hao.

“Old Ninth, some light punishment is in order. After all, we’re all on the same side. There’s no need to allow internal strife to ferment.”

After a moment of silence, Meng Hao looked coldly at the Sixth Paragon. “In the future, keep your mouth shut when I’m talking. If you don’t, I’m perfectly fine with having someone replace you as Sixth Paragon!”

The Sixth Paragon’s face drained of blood, and although a look of venomous hatred appeared in his eyes, he said nothing in response. However, the killing intent within him grew even more intense than before.

“And then there’s you!” Meng Hao said, turning to look at the Eighth Paragon.

The Eighth Paragon took a deep breath. Forcing a smile onto his face, he clasped hands and bowed, declining to offer any words in accompaniment.

Seeing such a reaction caused Meng Hao to frown. The meaning behind the words he had just spoken had been clear, and the fact that the previously aggressive Sixth Paragon suddenly acted in this way was very telling.

“To be chided by me like that,” he thought, “and refrain from saying anything in response indicates there is someone backing them who exceeds their power level. But who…?” Meng Hao thought back to everything that had happened so far, and also recalled that the Vast Expanse School had a total of four experts at the peak of the 9-Essences Level. The Sect Leader was one, but there were three others in addition to him.

One of them was the man with the raspy voice who had spoken to him when he was in secluded meditation. As for the other two, Meng Hao had never met them.

His eyes flickered, and then his expression returned to normal. He looked around at the ghosts and waved his hands, experimentally sending out a stream of will. Instantly, the ghosts up ahead parted ways to reveal a path!

Meng Hao could tell that this path… was the same path he had seen earlier, which had been devoid of ghosts!

Without any further delay, he led the group onward. The Sect Leader went along right behind him, and the other Paragons followed along. They proceeded for about half a day, during which time they made more progress than the Sect Leader could have made in two days, and those would have been two days fraught with danger.

Eventually, they reached the end of the path. A huge, shocking land mass spread out in front of them, deathly quiet and filled with ruins.

There were no living beings. Everything was as silent a graveyard.

The ghosts had also been following Meng Hao, but having reached this location, they stopped and looked off into the distance. Apparently, none of them were willing to enter the land mass.

Meng Hao turned back and looked at them. Although his Dao eye was now shut, he could still sense their presence. For some reason, he had the strange sensation that the bronze lamp, which was part of him now, was experiencing a feeling of sorrow.

“They must have been kowtowing to the previous owner of the bronze lamp…. Now that I think about it, perhaps this bronze lamp once belonged to… Patriarch Vast Expanse.” After a moment, Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed deeply to the ghosts.

The other Paragons watched what was happening, and various thoughts ran through their minds.

Between the end of the path and the land mass itself was a bridge, swaying there in the starry sky. One end was attached to the land mass, and the other connected to an enormous asteroid, which was fixed unmoving within the starry sky.

There was a cold wind blowing that smelled of rot and decay. It was impossible to tell where it came from or where it was going; it was as if it existed eternally, and was the reason the bridge was swaying back and forth. It was very strange.

Meng Hao stood there in front of the bridge for a moment, and then turned to the Sect Leader. Further behind were Su Yi and Xin Yue, who were completely on guard. Even they could sense that the bridge contained a strange and bizarre aura, which left them unsettled.

“So we’ve made it back to the bridge again….” the Sect Leader said. “We saw this same bridge twice before. This is the third time….

“The last two times, we took a different path, a more dangerous path, to get here.” The Sect Leader looked at the bridge with both excitement and determination.

“The previous two times we tried to cross it, we were blocked in the middle. The last time, we only made it about seventy percent of the way across. Many of our subordinates died, as did most of the clones we had created.

“Old Ninth, the entire reason we requested your presence was because of your Dao eye…. Please, use it to take a look at the bridge, and you’ll understand.”

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed with decisiveness as his third eye opened up on his forehead.

In that instant, the world changed. The bridge was still a bridge, but on the other side, the land mass bustled with cultivators.

There were countless buildings, and innumerable cultivators….

Now, the figure which Meng Hao had seen on the distant ninth land mass was much more clearly visible. It was a man sitting on a huge throne. He was looking directly at Meng Hao, and his voice was even clearer than before.

“ Allheaven… fears the Immortal….

“… Does not want the Immortal to appear… wants the Demon to arrive….

“The variations of the Demon are like the variations of Heaven….

“The appearance of the Demon requires grief…. If you die, everything will be over….”

Meng Hao was shaken mentally by this voice which only he could hear, and when he heard the word ‘Demon’ uttered, his mind reeled.

After a moment, his eyes glittered, and he looked away from the vague figure, allowing his gaze to come to rest on the bridge. Shockingly… he saw unending gore, masses upon masses of it formed into the shape of a bridge that dripped with blood. It was a shocking sight.

He saw countless arms stretching out, which occasionally performed incantation gestures, filling the bridge with the fluctuations of restrictive spells, some powerful, some weak.

Surrounding the bridge was a blood-colored mist. Occasionally, eyes would appear briefly within the mist, and they stared greedily at Meng Hao and the rest of the party.

Most shocking of all was that beneath the bridge was no void, but rather an abyss. Down within that abyss was a three-headed giant, currently climbing up from the depths below. It occasionally bellowed in rage, the sound of which transformed into a tempest that caused the bridge to sway back and forth.

Almost in the same moment that Meng Hao caught sight of the three-headed giant, its three heads looked up, and six pairs of eyes came to rest on Meng Hao. Their gazes locked, and Meng Hao felt his mind reeling as an intimidating will swept through him.

His eyes glittered with cold light, and he snorted, stamping his foot down and sending his divine sense crushing down. The entire bridge swayed, and the three-headed giant let out an enraged roar that only Meng Hao could hear, before looking away.

“This bridge is made from flesh and blood. It’s surrounded by a mist, and below is a three-headed giant, eyeing us the way a tiger eyes its prey.” As the words left Meng Hao’s mouth, very serious expressions could be seen on the faces of the group behind him.

The Sect Leader nodded and said, “This bridge is the only way onto the first land mass. Once you begin to tread it, it is possible to step off of the bridge onto either side. But if you do so, and remain off the bridge for too long, you will most certainly die.

“There are restrictive spells on the bridge, and a false step could potentially lead to eternal destruction. A single misstep might be harmless, but as more and more false steps are accumulated, increasing levels of spell power will build up which will explode out at certain spell nodes. If that happens, we will never make it to the land mass.

“That is why we need your Dao eye, Old Ninth, to see through everything hidden in the void. Help point out the way to avoid the powerful restrictive spells. In those places where we must pass through the spells, please help us select the weakest ones.” With that, the Sect Leader clasped hands and bowed deeply to Meng Hao.

“This is what we request of you, Fellow Daoist. If we succeed, then I will guarantee you a place in the lineup to gain Transcendence enlightenment.”

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# Chapter 1426: Bombardment of Killing Intent!

Meng Hao could sense the Sect Leader’s sincerity. As his words echoed out, the ripples of a Dao oath could be seen, indicating that he was swearing upon his own Dao that his statements were true.

With the exception of the Sixth and Eighth Paragons, the other Paragons had no enmity with him. Although none of them were friends either, they still clasped hands and bowed.

Meng Hao studied the bridge for a time, then nodded. By this point, his interest in the necropolis was no less than that of the Sect Leader’s.

“Many thanks!” the Sect Leader said in response. He took a deep breath and waved his hand, whereupon one of his 8-Essences subordinates stepped forward. After clasping hands to the group, he walked up to the edge of the bridge, and then looked over at Meng Hao.

After a bit of study, Meng Hao identified a place on the bridge that had weak fluctuations. “Nine meters in is a weak restrictive spell that can’t be avoided.”

Further observation revealed numerous similar locations on the bridge. However, there were other areas with fluctuations so powerful he was left shaken.

The bridge was not an inanimate object; it was alive, and the fluctuations of the restrictive spells grew more intense the further one went along the bridge. Apparently the fluctuations were like flowing water that could provoke transformations amongst each other.

The source of all of the restrictive spells… were the arms that stretched out from the flesh and blood that made up the bridge, which were constantly performing incantation gestures and unleashing magical sealing marks!

The 8-Essences cultivator stepped forward and alighted onto the nine-meter position that Meng Hao had pointed to. A faint shattering sound echoed out, and the cultivator shivered. However, after a moment, he regained his composure.

At the same time, Meng Hao could sense that the footfalls of the 8-Essences cultivator caused the red eyes within the mist to lurch toward him. However, before they could get close, they were sent spinning away with unyielding howls.

“Ahead, twenty-seven meters!” Meng Hao said. The 8-Essences cultivator immediately advanced to the second location indicated by Meng Hao. At the same time, Meng Hao moved forward, becoming the second person to actually step onto the bridge. That was the best way for him to be able to see the situation most clearly.

In the instant he stepped onto the bridge, his third eye revealed that all of the countless arms suddenly paused, then resumed their incantation gestures with increased speed.

Other than that, there was no change. Meng Hao looked around, then began to speak.

“Up ahead, twenty-one meters. Then another thirty-three meters. Then twelve meters. Twenty-four meters. Ninety meters. Fifty-one meters….”

Behind him came another 8-Essences Paragon, and then more of the group. By the time that first 8-Essences cultivator reached the final location indicated by Meng Hao, there were already several people on the bridge.

In addition to Meng Hao, there were even two 9-Essences Paragons among the group.

Clearly, these people didn’t place a lot of trust in Meng Hao, and thus chose to stagger the 8-Essences and 9-Essences Paragons. Doing so ensured that, even if Meng Hao did have some evil designs, he would only be able to take action once or twice before people caught on.

As far as the subordinates were concerned, the hope of Transcendence made it worth the risk!

To 7-Essences Paragons, Transcendence was something far removed from their current level. But for 8-Essences experts, it was far more meaningful. Although they couldn’t actually Transcend, gaining enlightenment of the method would help them advance by leaps and bounds, and maybe even break through to the 9-Essences level.

Time passed. Meng Hao’s third eye was gradually growing bloodshot, and the mental strain was increasing. The restrictive spells on the bridge were constantly changing, which in turn required constant adjustments on Meng Hao’s part. At first, things went quickly, but the process eventually went slower and slower. By this point, the first cultivator to have stepped onto the bridge was about thirty percent across.

On several occasions, the surrounding mist would surge toward the cultivators, but before it could get close, was rebuffed. The roars from within the mist grew more intense, and Meng Hao’s third eye more bloodshot. The 8-Essences Paragon up ahead of him was proceeding with an ashen face. Suddenly, he stepped a bit out of line, whereupon he coughed up a mouthful of blood and began to wither up. The mist around him cackled with joy, and surged toward him. In the blink of an eye, he was on the verge of being consumed.

In that moment, Meng Hao reached out with his right hand and made a grasping motion, grabbing the 8-Essences cultivator and sending him back in the line. Another of the subordinate Paragons gritted his teeth and flew forward to take the vanguard position.

The 8-Essences Paragon who Meng Hao had just saved cast an appreciative glance in Meng Hao’s direction. Meng Hao nodded and proceeded to make more observations. Then, the group continued on their way across the bridge.

Thirty percent. Forty percent. Fifty percent. Sixty percent…. Several days later, they were seventy percent across the bridge. The Vast Expanse School had never gotten past this point in their previous efforts.

By this point, one 8-Essences Paragon after another had been sent to the vanguard position. Eventually, it reached the point where that position was occupied by the clones of the Sect Leader and the other most powerful experts.

Those clones were even more powerful than the 8-Essences Paragons, enabling them to stay in the vanguard position for longer periods of time. Soon they crossed the eighty percent mark, and a few days after that, had reached the ninety percent mark!

The first land mass was no longer a distant sight; it now stretched out in front of them in all its grandeur.

Excitement could be seen on the Sect Leader’s face, and it was the same with everyone else. They yearned to cross the entire bridge… and enter the necropolis of Patriarch Vast Expanse, there on the first land mass.

More time passed. The howling within the mist grew more intense, and it often surged toward the cultivators. But because they had Meng Hao leading the way, and were both bypassing the most powerful of the restrictive spells and suppressing the weak ones, the mist never had an opportunity to touch them.

After passing the ninety-nine percent point, the person in the lead position was less than 30,000 meters from the end of the bridge. To a mortal, it would be a vast distance, but to cultivators like this, it was a distance that could be spanned in a single step, if not for the restrictive spells in the way.

“We’re almost there!”

“The necropolis of the first land mass is right up ahead!!”

“We’ve been waiting years for this day, and now it’s upon us!” Everyone was very excited. As for Meng Hao, his third eye was in significant pain. Using it for such an extended period of time was apparently a serious drain on his cultivation base, and he had even been taking opportunities to rest along the way.

Now that there were only about 30,000 meters left, Meng Hao began to close his third eye for some rest and recovery, when all of a sudden, an intense sensation of imminent danger exploded up within him. The source of that danger was a shadowy figure within the depths of the abyss below.

It was none other than the three-headed giant!

Throughout the entire trip, Meng Hao had not been able to catch a single glimpse of the giant he had seen at the outset. He had looked for it, but found no trace. But now, here it was again.

No one else could see it, but they could sense an unprecedentedly cold air rising up. Meng Hao’s third eye snapped back open, and the exhaustion which had been visible therein was now gone.

Meng Hao was profoundly observant and insightful, and had long since come to the conclusion that the three-headed giant was simply waiting for the right moment to make a move. During the journey so far, the occasions on which Meng Hao rested because of exhaustion had actually all been an act. During the entire time, he had kept himself at peak battle readiness.

The three-headed giant roared, and the cold wind grew even more icy than before, transforming into a wild tempest that knocked Meng Hao off the bridge.

He ground to a halt out in the void, the snorted coldly, performing an incantation gesture with his right hand and then waving his finger toward the three-headed giant. A powerful force slammed into the giant, sending it flying back down into the abyss.

Meng Hao didn’t pursue it. Instead, he turned back toward the bridge. However, it was in that moment that something very unexpected happened!

The Sixth and Eighth Paragons suddenly joined forces to unleash an Essence divine ability that rocketed directly toward Meng Hao.

This sudden turn of events caused the Sect Leader’s face to fall. He was about to step forward and intervene when a shadowy figure appeared next to him and reached a hand out to block his path. It was none other than the man in the sandstorm who had visited Meng Hao when he was in secluded meditation.

“Sha Jiudong, what are you doing?!” Even as a grim expression overtook the Sect Leader’s face, the other Paragons’ faces flickered. Meng Hao had offered incredible assistance to them on their journey, and that was especially so for the 8-Essences Paragons. Meng Hao had saved all of their lives, and as such, the current development left them enraged. However, there was little time for them to put thought into the matter. 1

Just when they were about to take action, a figure materialized behind the Sixth and Eighth Paragons, a young man in a golden robe, who radiated golden light.

He was another of the four peak 9-Essences experts from Planet Vast Expanse!

Killing intent swirled in his eyes as he glared at Meng Hao and extended his right hand. Golden light surged around him, and rumbling sounds could be heard as an invisible power erupted out. That was the power of the peak 9-Essences level, and when it combined with the divine ability unleashed by the Sixth and Eighth Paragons, it created a force that could crush anything in its path.

Even as killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes, the roar of the three-headed giant once again echoed out from below as it shot upward, reaching out to grab Meng Hao.

Descending from above was the combined attack of three Paragons. Below was a seemingly invincible three-headed giant. Surrounding him was the mist, which thanks to his third eye, he could now see was surging toward him.

By this point, the entities in the mist hated Meng Hao with a vengeance. If he weren’t around, they would have been able to consume any number of cultivators from the bridge, and would have eaten to their hearts’ content. But now, they hadn’t succeeded even once. Roaring, they shot through the starry sky toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s face darkened. Although he had been prepared, the plot against him was excellently laid. Even still, he didn’t panic. The truth was that from the moment the Sixth Paragon had begun to provoke him, he had guessed that there was some other powerful figure backing him.

Snorting coldly, eyes swirling with killing intent, he performed a double-handed incantation gesture and unleashed Demon Sealing Hexing magic. He was confident that doing so could reverse the setback. Although he might not be able to fight his opponents directly, he could at least get back onto the bridge and into a position where he could be aided by the Sect Leader and the others.

However, it was at this very moment that intense fluctuations began to emanate out from the bronze lamp. At the same time, Meng Hao could sense something calling to him from deep within the abyss, something that wanted to him to come down!

“Allheaven fears the Immortal…. Come… come… come….”

1. Sha Jiudong’s name in Chinese is shā jiǔ dōng . Sha is a surname which also means “sand.” Jiu means “nine,” and dong means “east.”

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# Chapter 1427: All Ye Shall Call Me Allheaven!

Meng Hao’s mind was reeling. The fluctuations emanating from the bronze lamp grew stronger, and it reached the point where he knew that if he missed this opportunity, it could have grave ramifications in the future.

Even more shocking to Meng Hao was that in his moment of hesitation, it almost felt as if the bronze lamp were going to burst out of him and fly down into the abyss of its own accord.

He didn’t hesitate for even a moment longer. Casting a cold glance at the intense golden light shooting toward him from the golden-robed young man and the Sixth and Eighth Paragons, and looking around at the greedy, brutal figures within the mist, he suddenly shot downward. The light and the mist passed over the spot he had just occupied, and at the same time, he slammed into the giant.

A huge boom rang out, and the three-headed giant screamed miserably. Blood oozed out of Meng Hao’s mouth as he shot downward into the abyss, ignoring the bridge completely.

Of course, to all of the other cultivators on the bridge, it didn’t look like Meng Hao was intentionally heading down into the dark void below. Instead, it seemed as if the golden-robed young man and the other Paragons were forcing him to do so.

“Sha Jiudong! Jin Yunshan!” roared the Sect Leader, enraged. His cultivation base surged as if he were preparing to fight with the other two.[1]

However, Sha Jiudong and Jin Yunshan didn't seem willing to engage in fighting. They immediately fell back, whereupon the three of them began to confer via a method only they could participate in. Eventually, the Sect Leader's face flickered with disbelief and other mixed emotions.

"Impossible," he murmured.

As for what happened after that, Meng Hao didn't care enough to pay attention. As he whistled through the void down into the depths of the abyss, he recalled what the Sect Leader had said about the ramifications of being off of the bridge for an extended length of time. Death would be the result, and as of now, Meng Hao was already seeing evidence of why that was the case.

Astonishingly, the mists around him were growing thicker and thicker, and they were growing ever closer to him. Lurking within those mists was an aura that left his heart pounding.

However, as the mists neared, the bronze lamp within Meng Hao suddenly let out a soft glow. It passed outside of Meng Hao's body, surrounding him, and when the mists touched it, countless screaming voices could be heard, as if their owners were being melted away by the light.

Meng Hao settled himself. Following the tug of the bronze lamp, he continued downward. Behind him, the three-headed giant roared, apparently not frightened of the lamp at all as it pursued him relentlessly.

The further down he went, the more intense the fluctuations of the bronze lamp became. Before long, Meng Hao caught sight of land down below.

Most accurately speaking, it was a strip of land jutting out from the larger first land mass. Visible there was a statue which had apparently been standing, tucked away, for countless years.

It was tens of thousands of meters tall, and at first glance it almost looked like a mountain.

It depicted a young man clad in a long robe, who was gazing upward. A vicious expression twisted his face, and a brutal air radiated out from him. It almost seems as if he were roaring in rage, and there were even blue veins visible, bulging out all over his face. Upon further examination, Meng Hao realized that he actually resembled the figure he had seen via his third eye, the person sitting on the throne on the ninth land mass.

However, this statue had a stubborn, unyielding expression, as well as an intense focus in his eyes that seemed to be boundless resentment.

Faint tendrils of mist seeped out from him, which was in fact the source of the shocking mist which filled the abyss.

Visible on the statue’s forehead was a rift, into which someone had stabbed a sword.

Whatever force was causing the bronze lamp to be stirred into action was coming from within that rift.

Next to the statue was a cliff, although closer examination revealed that it was no simple cliff. It was actually an enormous… gravestone.

Written on the gravestone was a single line of text.

“My first clone, felled by Allheaven.”

Beneath the line of text was the name of the person who had written it. Unexpectedly, it was… Patriarch Vast Expanse.

Meng Hao felt shaken as he looked at the statue. Although the statue seemed to have been carved out of rock, when he looked closer, it actually seemed to have been formed from flesh and blood.

Before he could study the statue any further, the three-headed giant appeared. Roaring, it launched itself at Meng Hao, its eyes glowing with turbid red light.

Meng Hao frowned and rotated his cultivation base. A vortex appeared around him, which rapidly transformed into a wild tempest. He stepped forward, punching out with the God-Slaying Fist.

A boom rang out. Based on the current level of Meng Hao's battle prowess, that fist strike would cause an ordinary 9-Essences expert to cough up blood. However, all it did to the three-headed giant was send it staggering backward by a few hundred meters. Roaring, it attacked again.

"That's some thick skin," Meng Hao thought, frowning. Killing intent swirled in his eyes as he unleashed another attack. One punch, two punches, three punches. In the blink of an eye, he unleashed dozens of fist strikes. Intense booms rang out, until finally, the three-headed giant coughed up some blood. However, the brutal gleam in its eyes was even more evident than before.

"Looking to die?" Meng Hao growled, waving his sleeve. Numerous mountains appeared out of nowhere, each one of which exuded shocking power as it crushed down onto the three-headed giant. Even as blood spurted out of various wounds, the giant's three heads let out piercing cries which became an indescribably powerful sound wave that battered against Meng Hao.

A tremor ran through him, and his face paled. And yet, he took a step forward, then another. He took a total of seven steps, each of which caused his energy to rise. Then, when the entire abyss seemed to be shaking violently, his finger slashed out like lightning.

That finger swipe slammed into one of the giant's heads, causing it to instantly explode. The giant let out a bloodcurdling scream, and the other two heads suddenly seemed to be struggling. For a moment, the giant's eyes became clear, but then a moment later, a turbid red glow took over. The giant stopped moving, looked at Meng Hao, then launched another attack.

A boom rang out as massive power blasted toward Meng Hao. He fell back several paces, simultaneously performing an incantation gesture with his right hand. Then he waved his finger, unleashing the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex.

Instantly, the Essence of space descended. The now two-headed giant trembled, and then began to struggle against the effects, but that was when Meng Hao closed in and waved his finger again.

A huge boom rang out as another of the giant's heads exploded. There was only one head left, but now, the turbid glow in its eyes was gone. Instead, they glowed brightly, without a trace of red, and its pupils were now visible.

"Allheaven…" the giant suddenly said. "Allheaven…" Then it howled, and a pained expression twisted its face. It grabbed its remaining head with its hand as if it were slipping into insanity.

"If you think you can control me, well stop dreaming!" the giant screamed. "I'm the subordinate of Vast Expanse, the God Titan!"

As the giant roared, an air of brutality and infinite madness radiated out, accompanied by a feeling of profound ancientness.

A moment later, his clear eyes once again stirred with a turbid glow. He looked down at Meng Hao almost as if for the first time, and an expression of disbelief appeared in his eyes.

"Master… is that… is that you…?" he said. Trembling, he began to charge once again in attack. "Kill me! I'm your God Titan, and I'd rather die than be controlled by Allheaven. Kill me, Master!"

Roaring, the giant headed directly toward Meng Hao, apparently making no defensive preparations whatsoever.

Meng Hao was taken aback. As the giant closed in, its attack built in intensity until a windstorm raged around it. By now, the turbid redness had completely retaken its eyes.

Meng Hao didn't hesitate at all. His finger shot out again, tapping the giant's forehead a third time.

A boom rang out, and a massive wound pierced through the giant's head. As it spread out, filling his body, he trembled. And yet, the turbid glow was now gone, and his eyes were completely clear.

He looked at Meng Hao, his expression one of pain and reminiscence. “So you’re not my Master…?” he murmured. “Well, thank you anyway….

“Allheaven. Allheaven.” Laughing loudly, he closed his eyes, and his body collapsed.

Everything went silent. Meng Hao hovered there quietly for a moment, frowning. The giant’s actions had been odd to say the least, and had become even more odd once the turbid glow left its eyes.

“Who is Allheaven? Allheaven fears the Immortal?” Something seemed off. After looking at the rift in the statue’s forehead again, he approached it to examine it further.

“Killed… by a single sword strike,” he murmured. The statue itself was enormous, so naturally, the rift was as well. It appeared to be at least thirty meters tall.

“The fact that the clone of Patriarch Vast Expanse was interred here by the Patriarch himself… The city and the land masses that became the Ghost City…. The Sect Leader’s description of the legends…. And then this three-headed giant’s words. What mystery is at work here?

“Obviously, it has something to do with the bronze lamp inside of me.” Numerous speculations ran through Meng Hao’s mind. After some more thought, his eyes began to glow, and he flickered into motion. Following the stirrings of the bronze lamp, he entered the rift, and thus, the interior of the statue.

There was no flesh and blood, only a stone tunnel. At first, the tunnel sloped downward, but soon it changed direction and headed upward. As Meng Hao sped along, he felt the fluctuations in the bronze lamp growing ever stronger, and the call from earlier, ever closer.

Several hours later, he came to a stop. Up ahead, the tunnel led into a stone cavern, on either side of which could be seen frescoes carved into the wall.

The frescoes themselves were what immediately caught Meng Hao’s attention.

They depicted scenes from countless ages past. Innumerable living beings were depicted, and even wild beasts. All of them were prostrating themselves in worship toward the sky, toward a figure who was approaching, bathed in light.

That figure looked down on all creation…. His upraised right hand held within it a stretch of starry sky, within which could be seen countless heavenly bodies….

As he stared at the frescoes, Meng Hao’s mind and soul, everything about him, seemed drawn to the images. He almost seemed to sink into the world depicted in the frescoes.

It was as if he had become one of those prostrating figures. He could sense how ancient the world around him was, and could detect the boundless nature of Heaven and Earth. Within his ears rang the voice of that figure which looked down upon all creation.

“All ye living beings shall call me… Allheaven.

“Because of mine existence, there is the universe, and thus the starry sky, and thus the heavenly bodies, and thus all of ye people….”

1. Jin Yunshan’s name in Chinese is jīn yún shān. Jin is a common surname which also means “Gold.” Yun means “cloud” and shan means “mountain”

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# Chapter 1428: The Passing of Ages in Frescoes

Time passed, and soon Meng Hao began to tremble. His eyes grew clear, and he backed up a few steps, panting, waves of shock pounding his heart as he looked at the visions from the frescoes.

“Allheaven….” he murmured. Countless questions bubbled up in his heart, but after some thought, his eyes glittered as he left the stone chamber and proceeded along down the tunnel.

Even as he shot through the tunnel, on the bridge connecting to the first land mass up above, several figures were speeding along. With Meng Hao present, that final 30,000-meter stretch would not have taken long for the cultivators of the Vast Expanse School to pass, and would have been quite safe.

But with Meng Hao gone, the group finally experienced the true danger of passing through that region. After only traveling 15,000 meters, they had already experienced several casualties.

Even the 9-Essences Paragons had experienced losses; all of their clones had been destroyed, and their true selves were in bad condition. In the final 15,000-meter journey, everyone drew fully on their most powerful abilities and trump cards to stay alive.

With all of that, they eventually managed to reach the very end, although by that time, three more people had perished.

Even that was only because the Sect Leader and the other two peak 9-Essences cultivators had gone all out. Otherwise, there would have been even more casualties. In the end, all three peak 9-Essences cultivators ended up ashen-faced from the effort expended.

Although no words were exchanged, fury built up in the hearts of many. The stark difference between Meng Hao’s presence, and the lack thereof, caused many in the group, including the Sect Leader, to feel increasing rage toward the two other peak 9-Essences experts, as well as the Sixth and Eighth Paragons.

When they finally stepped off of the bridge and onto the land mass, grim expressions could be seen everywhere.

After a moment of silence, the Sect Leader glanced around, then looked icily at the other peak 9-Essences experts, and the Sixth and Eighth Paragons. “We walk different paths. I won’t be traveling with the four of you.”

The others snorted coldly, then followed after him.

“Very well, that’s fine,” said Jin Yunshan, smiling. “Our mutual goal is the Transcendence Dais, which means they will also head there eventually. However, there must be other good fortune to be had in this place besides the Transcendence Dais.

“Since that’s the case, we can split up here and meet back up again at the Transcendence Dais.” With that, he waved his sleeve, sending a jade slip flying out to both the Sixth and Eighth Paragons. Then, he turned and left.

Sha Jiudong shook his head and headed off in a different direction.

The Sixth and Eighth Paragons exchanged a glance, then left with their subordinates.

Meanwhile, back in the tunnel deep below the surface of the land mass, Meng Hao was speeding along. A few days later, he arrived at a second stone chamber.

As soon as he entered, he looked around and found that this place also had frescoes on the walls.

The frescoes depicted numerous starry skies, each of which was filled with one Realm after another…. There were countless heavenly bodies, countless worlds, countless forms of life.

The living beings were born and died in a ceaseless cycle of reincarnation. It was almost as if time were passing in some unique way within these frescoes. There were no written words to explain what was happening, but Meng Hao could tell that what was being depicted was the passage of endless time.

The figure known as Allheaven gradually began to glow with light. The light grew more and more intense, until eventually, his entire person was a shining beacon. Then, unexpectedly… he began to fade away.

The first things to disappear were his legs, then his body, and then his head. Soon, the only part of him remaining behind to prop up the boundless starry sky was his right hand. Everything else was gone.

Eventually, his palm and thumb vanished, leaving behind only four fingers encircling the starry sky. Gradually, all the light was absorbed into those fingers, ensuring that they… didn’t fade away, but rather, began to thrum with life force. Four unique auras began to stream out of them, indescribable auras that actually seemed more powerful than the figure itself when it was whole!

When Meng Hao saw what was happening, waves of shock battered at his heart.

“How could this be happening….?” he murmured.

“This… this….” Despite Meng Hao’s level of willpower, he was panting. Of those four fingers, the second had an aura that he realized was familiar…. It was a God-like aura. After a moment of confirmation, he was certain that this aura was the same as that of the statue on the Immortal God Continent.

Furthermore, the third finger of the statue radiated the same sensation as the wild and barbaric Devil Realm Continent. A Devil-like aura!

And then there was the first finger. Its aura was like an Immortal’s, and yet was not. It was rife with death, with the same aura as that in the necropolis of Patriarch Vast Expanse! It contained the same fluctuations as those in the Ghost City!

And the final finger… had a Demonic aura, which was exactly the same as Meng Hao’s!

“Ghost, God, Devil, Demon!!” he thought, his mind reeling as he returned from the vision he had experienced when looking at the world in the frescoes. He began to pant as he looked at the images once again, and yet couldn’t enter that special vision he had just been in.

His face was pale white as he stood there for a long period of time, regaining his composure. Finally, he looked up, and his eyes were shining.

“That figure was Allheaven. Perhaps he is not a living being, but… some unique entity. Because of him, the starry sky exists, the heavenly bodies exist, all life exists…. Allheaven, Allheaven….

“Clearly, he died, and was not a being that could last for all eternity. In the end, everything about him became four fingers, which are distinguished by the Ghost, God, Devil and Demon. But what about the Immortal…?

“Where is the Immortal…?” After a long moment of silence, Meng Hao flickered into motion, flashing down the tunnel, burning with the desire to lay eyes on the third set of frescoes.

A few days later, he was still speeding through the ancient tunnel. It almost felt as if he were passing through years of time until finally, there up ahead… was the third stone chamber.

His pupils constricted, and his heart began to beat faster and faster. Almost as soon as he burst into the third stone chamber, he looked around for the frescoes.

As expected, there was a third set of frescoes!

When he laid eyes on them, his mind spun, and he sank into the world depicted therein.

This time, the world within the frescoes depicted a place Meng Hao had seen before. It was a city, in the very middle of which were nine land masses…. This fresco depicted… the necropolis of Patriarch Vast Expanse.

However, this was before it had become a Ghost City, back when it was still a thriving place of the living. There were countless buildings and structures, as well as innumerable cultivators. It was a bustling and flourishing place, clearly in its golden age.

He saw a young man who looked very much like the statue of Patriarch Vast Expanse's clone that he had seen. Perhaps this young man… was Patriarch Vast Expanse himself!

He was sitting cross-legged in the air as countless lightning bolts struck down. Apparently, he was in the middle of facing Tribulation. Down below in the city, countless cultivators were looking on, faces filled with anticipation.

Powerful fluctuations emanated off of the young man, and when Meng Hao sensed them, he was visibly shaken. Those fluctuations exceeded the 9-Essences level, and were half a step into Transcendence. Even more shocking was that this young man's aura… contained Immortal qi!

Absolutely pure Immortal qi!

He was attempting to Transcend, to pass this tribulation as the Immortal!

Meng Hao was panting as he looked at the city and the young man. It was then that he realized that the starry sky of the Vast Expanse that was depicted in this fresco had no mist in it. Instead, it was filled with countless bolts of Tribulation Lightning, seemingly endless amounts that crashed down toward the young man.

As of this moment, Heaven and Earth, the starry sky, and the entire fresco seemed to flash with blinding lightning. Apparently it was completely unwilling to let this person Transcend as the Immortal!

As the destructive Tribulation Lightning descended toward the young man to wipe him out, he rose to his feet and extended his hand as if to blot out the Heavens.

In that moment, a beam of light fell from above, ripping the starry sky apart. A finger descended, a finger that Meng Hao recognized as… one of the four fingers he had seen in the second set of frescoes!

That finger overtook the starry sky, and its descent caused everyone in the city, regardless of the level of their cultivation bases… to begin to tremble violently. Then, they were destroyed in body and soul, completely eradicated! The only ones who survived were the young man and a handful of other people!

One finger exterminated all of the life in that huge city.

One finger took a thriving world and transformed it into a place of death and corpses.

One finger caused a Realm that was bursting with life force to, in the blink of an eye, be filled with nothing but an aura of death!

The next thing that Meng Hao saw was that young man hovering there amidst the boundless aura of death, letting out a cry filled with the most profound anguish.

Then, the fresco changed. Unexpectedly, the corpses… all began to come to life again. However, their faces were twisted with bizarre smiles, as if they weren’t themselves any more. Then, they began to fly up into the air toward the young man, as if to kill him.

The young man’s bitter laughter began to transform into wretched wailing.

The vision ended there. It took Meng Hao a long moment to recover. When he did, he took a deep breath, and proceeded along. He wanted to see the fourth set of frescoes. He had the intense premonition that whatever was depicted on them would be… something profoundly shocking and mysterious.

Whatever secret was locked therein might even have something to do with him!

He thought back to the destruction of the Mountain and Sea Realm, to the Demonic qi which had appeared on him, and how it had been said that the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent didn’t want the Immortal to appear in the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“Similar. Very similar. The only difference is that Patriarch Vast Expanse tried to Transcend as the Immortal, whereas in the Mountain and Sea Realm, the Immortal had only just appeared….

“Was it really the Immortal God and Devil Realm Continents who wanted to destroy the Mountains and Seas, or was it… someone else!?!?

“Why is there no text description, and why is it only possible to view the images in the fresco once…?

“What is being guarded against?

“Allheaven destroyed that whole world….” As Meng Hao flew along toward the fourth stone chamber, his mind spun with countless ideas and thoughts. At the same time, his face grew more and more grim.

By now, he was getting the feeling that the destruction of the Mountain and Sea Realm… might not have been such a simple affair. Apparently… there was some profound secret at play!

And Meng Hao was uncovering a bit of that secret from these wall frescoes!

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1429: A Deep Look at the Vast Expanse!

Meng Hao’s face was grim as he shot through the tunnel at top speed. If there were someone capable of seeing everything beneath the surface of that first land mass, they would see that within the long tunnel, there were four stone chambers.

Meng Hao was currently heading upward through the tunnel toward the surface of the lands, and at the same time, he was rapidly approaching the fourth stone chamber, which was also the final chamber.

His eyes were bloodshot, and he moved at incredible speed. Countless thoughts and ideas ran through his head, and they grew increasingly disorderly. He was getting even more anxious.

Some days later, the fourth stone chamber appeared up ahead of him. He slowed down, coming to a stop just outside the chamber. He stood there quietly for a long moment, taking the time to calm his mind and heart. Then, he stepped into the chamber, eyes glittering.

He absolutely had to see what the frescoes in this fourth chamber depicted.

As soon as he stepped into the chamber and looked at the frescoes, his vision swam. When things became clear, he was looking at pitch blackness.

Everything was completely and utterly black, without even a glimmer of light. It didn’t feel like an infinite blackness that stretched out endlessly. Rather, it was like an obstacle, blocking the way ahead, almost like… the end of the starry sky.

Within that darkness, he saw four pillars that seemed to prop up the world. Emanating out from the pillars to spread out in all directions were shocking fluctuations.

When he saw the pillars, he suddenly realized something, and began to pant. He spun, and was shocked to find that behind him was… an enormous maelstrom.

The maelstrom was so gargantuan that at first glance it looked like a huge sphere. However, closer examination revealed that the maelstrom was actually made up of endless clouds and mist.

As he looked at the spherical maelstrom, he even noticed some places which looked familiar.

“I’m outside… the Vast Expanse….” he murmured.

Suddenly, a desire rose up within him. He focused on one particular area of the maelstrom, and his vision zoomed in, passing through layers upon layers of mist before coming to rest on an area within the Vast Expanse that was rife with an aura of death.

A vortex could be seen there, spinning slowly. As Meng Hao looked at it, he saw… an area that was tattered and torn, filled with corpses, ruin, wreckage, and ash.

“The Mountain and Sea Realm….” he thought, heart stabbing with pain. It was the former location of the Mountain and Sea Realm. But everything that had happened there was nothing more than the past.

After a long moment passed, Meng Hao looked away. Following the tuggings of his heart, his gaze passed in another direction, to a location where a powerful sealing magic was located. A monkey sat cross-legged outside of it, completely oblivious to Meng Hao’s gaze.

Beneath the monkey were… numerous land masses, thirty-three in total. They were the 33 Heavens, like thirty-three walls, beneath which was a vortex. Inside the vortex was a green coffin, upon which rested a butterfly, whose wings floated gently up and down.

The instant he laid eyes on the butterfly, his heart thumped. He could just barely make out his father and mother there, nestled in each other’s arms. His vision zoomed in again, and next he saw a world.

There were many familiar faces in that world. His sister, Sun Hai, and Fatty….

On one particular mountain, he saw a thin woman who was Xu Qing.

He wanted to see more, but inwardly, exhaustion was taking root. His vision swam, and then zoomed back out, as if he were being expelled from the starry sky of the Vast Expanse.

In the last moments before his vision completely faded away, he suddenly looked over at the Vast Expanse School. There, outside of Planet Vast Expanse, was an area where the starry sky was damaged and in ruins. There was no Vast Expanse mist there, only a rift. After looking into that rift, he saw nine land masses that formed into a necropolis!

He was unable to see himself in the stone chamber in the first land mass, but he was able to see a scattered group of people. There was the Sect Leader, the golden-robed young man, the sand-wreathed figure, the Sixth and Eighth Paragons, and all the others….

He could see that in the very center of the first land mass, where the Sect Leader was currently located, was an altar which emanated a unique aura that resembled Transcendence!

Meng Hao was left reeling as his consciousness and sight returned to their original location.

He took a deep breath as he looked at the spherical maelstrom again. Then, mind spinning, he turned once more to look at the four astonishing pillars.

He knew exactly what those four pillars were. He had seen them in the vision from the second set of frescoes. They were the four fingers left behind by Allheaven after his death!

In the vision from the third set of frescoes, he had seen one of those fingers destroy a thriving world and kill all of the lives within it.

“So I am outside the Vast Expanse, and this spherical maelstrom is the Vast Expanse, within which I exist.” Panting, Meng Hao suddenly thought about something he knew which apparently conflicted with what he was seeing.

“The Vast Expanse School is a branch of the Vast Expanse Society, which exists on the outside. The Ninth Paragon even came from there. But if I am outside the Vast Expanse right now, then where is the Vast Expanse Society…?

“Perhaps I’m in a different time…? But then why would I be able to see the Mountain and Sea Butterfly, and everything else in the Vast Expanse?” Meng Hao frowned. He wanted to get closer to the four pillars, to study them, but when he tried to move, everything turned blurry. After things got clear again, he wasn’t near the four pillars, but back in the fourth stone chamber.

In that moment, the bronze lamp inside of him quieted down. The sense of being called faded away, as if what had been reaching out to the bronze lamp was none other than this fourth set of frescoes.

Now that he had laid eyes on it, the bronze lamp became calm once again.

“If you really are Patriarch Vast Expanse, then the message you wished to pass on to me by leaving these frescoes… has been received.” After a moment, Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed deeply.

Now that he had experienced the visions within the frescoes, he was filled with a deep skepticism regarding the Immortal Gods, the Devil Realm, the Vast Expanse, and the destruction of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

There was also a name he would not be forgetting. Allheaven!

And there was that saying, ‘Allheaven fears the Immortal!’

Meng Hao took a deep breath and rose to his feet. After closing his eyes, he calmed himself, then took the skepticism, the doubts and the misgivings, and tucked them away deep inside his heart. When he opened his eyes, they seemed just like they had been before he had experienced the visions. With that, he left the chamber.

Proceeding along, he soon reached the end of the tunnel, where a staircase led up to ground level. As he emerged, he looked around to find ruins stretching out around him in all directions.

He was on the outer edge of the first land mass, an area filled with broken buildings and ruined structures. Everything was quiet, except for a whispering breeze which occasionally picked up the dust and carried it off into the distance.

Before experiencing the visions, Meng Hao’s third eye had enabled him to see the Ghost City as it was in the present. But now, after having seen it when it was flourishing and alive, looking around at what remained of it caused him to sigh. Subconsciously, he looked up into the sky.

“That finger descended from above. One finger… wiped out all life here.” As Meng Hao stood there quietly, he realized how insignificant he was, and at the same time, was as focused and determined as ever.

After another moment passed, Meng Hao turned, transforming into a beam of light that shot at high speed across the surface of the land mass. This location was no longer unfamiliar to him; after seeing this world in his vision, he had come to know it well, as well as where the others were located within it. In fact, after looking at the ruins and the mountains around him, he quickly determined his exact location.

“The Sect Leader and the others are at the altar in the center of the land mass. Apparently… that is their target destination.

“The aura of Transcendence….” As he flew along, his eyes glittered coldly, and he turned to look toward the east. “I remember that the Sixth Paragon was in that area. He shouldn't be very far off."

Snorting coldly, he changed directions to head toward the location of the Sixth Paragon.

Meng Hao's personality wasn't the type that thrived on hatred and revenge. However, the Sixth Paragon had provoked him three times, and the last time had been with killing intent.

Therefore, Meng Hao would kill him, along with the Eighth Paragon and… the golden-robed young man!

It was a decision he made without the slightest hesitation or misgiving. After experiencing the visions he just had, he seemed calm on the inside, but was actually deeply anxious. That anxiety in turn unleashed a deep skepticism within him, something that stemmed from his guilt over the destruction of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

That skepticism and that anxiety filled him with the desire to kill!

At the moment, the Sixth Paragon was one of the targets on his list.

Meng Hao shot through the air like lightning, doing nothing to mask his aura. His cultivation base surged with power, becoming a raging tempest that formed into a face. It was a ferocious resemblance of his own by about seventy percent. However, this face had a horn protruding from its forehead, and appeared to be as cold as ice. It was brutal, and shockingly Demonic.

Off in the distance, the Sixth Paragon was traveling through the ruins with his sole surviving subordinate, an 8-Essences Paragon. He was heading toward the central altar, but was simultaneously searching for other good fortune. Suddenly, his face fell, and he looked up to see the shocking face that resembled Meng Hao's speeding toward him, bursting with a murderous aura.

"Dammit, you're actually not dead!!" His face fell as he sensed the killing intent coming from Meng Hao. His scalp tingled as he thought of the madness with which Meng Hao fought. Gasping, and without the slightest hesitation, he pulled out a jade slip to contact the golden-robed young man and the Eighth Paragon. Then he turned, leaving behind afterimages as he went all-out in an attempt to escape.

Even as the Sixth Paragon fled, Meng Hao’s voice echoed out like thunder behind him, “You brought this upon yourself, old man!”

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# Chapter 1430: Crushing the Sixth Paragon!

As the rumbling sounds echoed out, the Sixth Paragon’s face fell. Even as he teleported backward in retreat, the space he had just occupied was crushed and destroyed.

The ground quaked and crumbled as a huge crater opened up. As Meng Hao shot forward like lightning, the vicious Demon face which surrounded him picked up speed. In the blink of an eye, it was bearing down on the Sixth Paragon, radiating Demonic qi which caused everything to shake, and bright colors to flash in the area.

The Sixth Paragon’s pupils constricted, and he waved his hand out in a grasping motion. A long banner appeared in his hand, upon which were depicted the images of numerous roaring, wild beasts. Among the countless types of creatures, there were even dragons!

“All-Consuming Beast Swarm!” he screamed, waving the banner through the air. Instantly, the countless creatures inside the banner surged out, roaring. It was a sea of beasts which swept out toward the fierce Demon face.

In the blink of an eye, the two forces slammed into each other, resulting in a massive explosion which shattered the surrounding ruins and crushed the air. It was almost like two enormous mountains had collided, causing the ground to quake and a huge cloud of dust to rise up!

BOOM!

Meng Hao was shaking visibly, but at the same time, the Sixth Paragon coughed up a huge mouthful of blood, and his banner was shredded to pieces.

It was a critical moment in the fight. The Sixth Paragon took advantage of it to speed off, coughing up blood the entire time. Then, popping sounds could be heard as numerous ghost images appeared. Tens of thousands of shadows resembling the Sixth Paragon all began to scatter in different directions, making it almost impossible to determine which was his true self.

The Sixth Paragon had tangled with Meng Hao in the past, and had long since come to fear him. Therefore, he had no intention of fighting a protracted battle, and immediately attempted to flee.

Meng Hao let out a cold harrumph, and opened his third eye. The world changed into that of the Ghost City, wherein countless figures could be seen. At the same time, Meng Hao was instantly able to determine which among the tens of thousands of shadows was the Sixth Paragon’s true self.

“You can’t get away,” he said coldly. As his voice echoed out, he flickered into motion, reappearing directly in front of one of the shadows. Then, he unleashed a fist strike.

It was the God-Slaying Fist!

A boom rang out as the shadow shattered, and the Sixth Paragon emerged from within, face ashen. He immediately fell back at top speed, a vicious expression gleaming in his eyes. However, before he could escape, Meng Hao waved his finger, unleashing the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex.

Because of Meng Hao’s current battle prowess, the Eighth Hex was now strong enough to affect even 9-Essences Paragons. The Sixth Paragon’s face fell as he suddenly lurched to a halt. Although he recovered almost immediately, a brief moment of immobility like that could be an eternity in a fight like this.

A boom rang out as Meng Hao launched another punch toward the Sixth Paragon. However, in that instant, the Sixth Paragon's skin turned bright red, and a glow like that of blood emanated out, transforming into a shield which blocked the punch.

Meng Hao's fist slammed into the blood-colored shield, causing the shield to distort, and the Sixth Paragon to stagger backward.

However, even as he did, Meng Hao launched another fist strike, then another. Booms echoed out as the blood-colored shield struggled to hold. When the third successive fist strike hit it, the shield shattered, and the fist landed onto the Sixth Paragon's chest.

Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and a sensation of numbness swept over him like flood waters. Even his cultivation base teetered unstably, and his soul trembled.

"Dammit, Jin Yunshan is obviously aware that I need help, but isn't responding. Old Eighth is the only one on the way. He's not too far away, but still needs time to get here!!

"This Meng character is not only a lunatic, he also excels at seizing the initiative in battle. I can't even use a full eighty percent of my power because he never gives me a chance to do anything!" As Meng Hao closed in again, the Sixth Paragon let out an enraged roar. By this point, he knew that it wasn't very likely he would be able to extricate himself from the fighting. Clearly, Meng Hao was completely focused on exterminating him.

In that case, it would be better to die fighting than to run away. In fact, his only hope lay in drawing out the fighting long enough for the Eighth Patriarch to arrive. Then the two of them could either fight or flee together. Either way, they could change the situation.

"Meng Hao, you push things too far!" he howled. His body was still bright red as he performed a double-handed incantation gesture. Instantly, billowing clouds appeared behind him as he unleashed all of his Essence power. It transformed into a huge black head which lunged toward Meng Hao as if to swallow him whole.

Meng Hao’s expression was icy cold as he flickered into motion, a streak of azure light that transformed into an azure roc. The roc slammed into the black head, piercing through it and destroying it. The Sixth Paragon let out a miserable shriek as blood spurted from various wounds. Even as he prepared to fall back, the azure roc teleported, appearing directly in front of him and then shooting forward to blast through his body.

It was an intense, deadly situation. The Sixth Paragon let out a roar of rage, hands flashing in a double-handed incantation gesture that caused all of the light around him to vanish. Everything turned black as he called upon his ninth Essence, that of the darkness of night.

The darkness of night was capable of crushing all light, of superimposing the color black onto everything and anything. All existence could be wiped out. This Essence magic was the Sixth Paragon’s trump card, and having been forced into the corner he was in, he unleashed it without any warning.

However, even as the Essence exploded out, causing Heaven and Earth to turn dark, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. He could sense the boundless killing intent that surrounded him. His body felt as if something else were controlling it, as if a boundless coldness was surrounding him and trying to bore inside of him to wipe away his soul.

Meng Hao suddenly laughed and said, “Someone once tried to corrupt my body, to defile my soul. I let her, so that she could be happy and at ease. And now you’re trying use a similar Essence magic against me….

“This Essence of the darkness of night can cover over Heaven and Earth. However, the Demonic qi within me can cover over the Vast Expanse….” With that, Meng Hao ceased struggling, and allowed the darkness of night to enter his body. However, the process went too slowly for his taste, so he opened his mouth and intentionally sucked it in.

Almost immediately, the darkness of night began to tremble. In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao had turned into a black hole. Everything trembled as boundless darkness… poured into his mouth!!

The sight was completely shocking, leaving the Sixth Paragon feeling as if he had been struck by lightning. His eyes shone with disbelief and shock as he watched Meng Hao sucking the darkness of night into his mouth. Meng Hao’s hair whipped about as he began to emanate an aura that the Sixth Paragon had never encountered before in his entire life.

It was an evil aura, a multifarious aura. It was like an Immortal, and yet also like a God, and at the same time, like a Devil. It changed back and forth rapidly, causing Heaven and Earth to tremble. As of this moment, Meng Hao was like the Dao of a world, and when he flicked his sleeve, everything began to collapse.

Even more shocking to the Sixth Paragon was that he suddenly realized that his ninth Essence… was vanishing from inside of him.

“C-consuming… consuming Essence? Y-y-you…” The Sixth Paragon was scared out of his mind. Eyes gleaming with rage, he howled as he fell back. As of this moment, he abandoned all thoughts of tangling with Meng Hao. Instead, he tried to escape with all the speed he could muster, leaving a series of afterimages behind him as he fled.

Meng Hao’s mouth twisted into a grim smile. Even as the Sixth Paragon began to flee, Meng Hao took three steps forward, each one of which caused everything to shake violently.

After three steps, his energy had risen to a level that seemed to supercede the entire world. Suddenly, a sensation of indescribable deadly crisis filled the Sixth Paragon.

“He’s going to kill me!!” he thought. He slapped his hand down onto his head. A droning sound filled his mind as he unleashed an unknown secret magic. Green smoke rose up from his red skin, increasing his speed dramatically. In the briefest of instants, he was 500 kilometers away.

Killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes as he took four more steps. With each step, Heaven and Earth trembled. The fourth step took him 500 kilometers forward. Then he took the fifth and sixth steps, which were as equally grand and dramatic.

The Sixth Paragon’s face was ashen, and the sensation of deadly crisis grew more intense. He had completely lost any fighting spirit, and could sense the trump card that was his ninth Essence fading away, which caused his scalp to tingle. Then he sensed Meng Hao’s energy rising, and his mind began to reel as he realized that it almost felt as if he were fighting a peak 9-Essences cultivator like the Sect Leader or Jin Yunshan.

“Dammit!” he shrieked. “That’s… that’s the Seven God Steps of the Devil Realm!!” He knew that the most powerful explosion of energy from the Seven God Steps came from the seventh step. That raised one’s mind, life force, cultivation base and everything else to a higher level. In the blink of an eye, it would lead to an explosive, exponential increase in battle prowess.

As Meng Hao took that seventh step, the Sixth Paragon’s vision turned red. However, in that moment of deadly crisis, a beam of light appeared off in the distance, shooting toward them at high speed.

The Eighth Paragon had arrived!

“Old Ninth, what are you doing? How dare you attempt to harm fellow sect members. Stand down immediately!!” The Eighth Paragon’s voice echoed like thunder, and rumbling sounds caused even the clouds to vibrate as he shot forward.

The Sixth Paragon’s eyes went wild with joy, and he immediately sped in the direction of the Eighth Paragon. It was in that moment that Meng Hao completed his seventh step!

Heaven and Earth shook. The sky took the shape of Meng Hao’s face, and the lands turned black. A profoundly murderous aura filled the area, converging upon Meng Hao’s right hand in the form of the Eighth Hex Essence!

It was… Spatial Hexing!

Shockingly, he was preparing to completely and thoroughly seal the Sixth Paragon, to seal the space around him, to seal his cultivation base, and to seal… his life!

As soon as the sealing mark appeared, the incoming Eighth Paragon’s face fell.

“Meng Hao, are you looking to die?!?!” By this point, he didn’t even call Meng Hao by the title of Ninth Paragon, but rather, by his true name!

The Sixth Paragon’s mind was spinning, and he was completely overwhelmed by the sensation of crisis. It was as if Meng Hao had superseded the entire world, and as his right hand descended, the Sixth Paragon screamed.

“You’ll never seal me, Meng Hao!!” Apparently throwing caution to the wind, he chose to do the only thing he was capable of doing at this juncture… detonating one of his Essences!

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# Chapter 1431: One Flees, Terrified!

The Heavens roiled as boundless clouds and mist converged, forming an enormous hand that blotted out the sky. It was as if this hand had replaced the Heavens, radiating an enormous, destructive sealing power!

Apparently, when this hand descended, it could seal one’s cultivation base, life force, soul… everything!

The Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering sight caused the Sixth Paragon’s mind to reel. An unprecedented feeling of danger rose up in his heart; he was very well aware that unless he came up with some powerful countermeasure, he would definitely die!!

9-Essences Paragons were essentially invincible, with the exception being things within places like this necropolis, or perhaps the old eccentrics who were peak 9-Essences Paragons. And yet, as of this moment, the shadow of death loomed large within the heart of the Sixth Paragon.

He let out a miserable howl. At this critical point in the fighting, it was without hesitation that he chose to… detonate one of his Essences!!

The cost would be enormous. Over the course of the next ten thousand years, he would slowly revert in power from 9-Essences to 8-Essences.

He was detonating an Essence in exchange for a chance to survive. If he could just avoid this deadly sealing mark, then he could join forces with the Eighth Paragon. At the very least, his cultivation base drop would result in being able to live!!

“Meng Hao!” the Sixth Paragon howled, his voice tinged with venomous rage. Even as his voice echoed out, he spread his hands wide, causing a black and white windstorm to kick up. As it spun, it turned gray, and terrifying pulses of Essence aura appeared. They were so powerful that they could cause any 8-Essences Paragon to tremble; that was how far the Sixth Paragon was willing to go in his madness to defend against Meng Hao.

It was a shocking sight to see the windstorm whipping through the air toward the enormous Heavenly hand.

When they slammed into each other, it was like the land below smashing into the sky above. Above the Heavenly hand was Meng Hao, clothes whipping about, murderous aura radiating out, and expression icy. Down below was the Earthly windstorm, beneath which was the maddened Sixth Paragon, his hair and clothing in disarray.

BOOOOOOOOOMMM!

All of this takes some time to describe, but actually happened in the space of a few breaths. In the blink of an eye, the enormous hand and the wild windstorm… slammed into each other.

The resulting explosion seemed loud enough to destroy Heaven and Earth. It was as if everything in existence were being ripped to shreds!

The Sixth Paragon screamed miserably as he detonated that single Essence. Although it was only one, to him, detonating that one Essence was like detonating all nine. Rumbling sounds rose up as the windstorm roared like a dragon, attempting to consume the hand.

No matter how madly that windstorm screamed, though, the Heavenly hand which contained Meng Hao’s sealing mark continued to shove downward. The windstorm shattered, and the power of the Sixth Paragon’s exploding Essence transformed into a shockwave that blasted out in all directions. A huge crater opened up down below, and although the hand was not completely destroyed, four of the fingers were wiped away in the explosion.

The final finger proceeded onward unhindered. However, it had lost its power of sealing. The Sixth Paragon coughed up blood, and he suddenly seemed to age by a thousand years, leaving his face pale. He felt unprecedentedly weak, but a vicious expression appeared on his face, and his eyes radiated hatred as he back up, laughing.

“You can’t kill me, Meng Hao! I won’t forget the enmity which you have sown this day!!” The hatred for Meng Hao which had been building up in the Sixth Paragon had reached a pinnacle. However, even as he spoke, he borrowed force from the explosion, and drew upon all the power he could muster, to shoot toward the Eighth Paragon.

Likewise, the Eighth Paragon was speeding toward him. Once the two of them joined forces, then even Meng Hao with his current level of battle prowess would not be able to fight them.

Meng Hao knew that, the Sixth Paragon knew it, and so did the Eighth Paragon.

Seeing that the deadly battle was about to conclude, even the Eighth Paragon sighed with relief. In his estimation, unless Meng Hao was a complete fool, he would realize that he couldn’t continue fighting. If he did, he would be putting himself in a very bad position. After all, the shockwaves which would spread out because of a fight against two Paragons would eventually be detected by the other Paragons, and when that happened, the fight definitely couldn’t continue.

Because of that, there was no possible way for the Eighth Paragon to be able to imagine what happened next. What he saw could not possibly have been more of a shock to him.

What he had taken to be a complete and utter impossibility, was suddenly completely possible!

Meng Hao hovered there in the sky, looking coldly down at the retreating Sixth Paragon, as well as the Eighth Paragon, both of whom were racing toward each other at top speed.

“If I say that I’m going to kill you, then kill you I shall,” he said, voice cool and calm. His words were very similar to the ones he had spoken some time earlier to the Sixth Paragon about leaving his mark on him.

As his voice echoed out, the Sixth Paragon's heart began to pound strangely within him.

It was at that point that Meng Hao lifted his right foot and then took a step forward. When his foot landed, the Essence of time erupted around him. He began to walk forward in a bizarre fashion, and as he did, the Essence of time around him began to grow stronger. In the blink of an eye, the world around him was affected, as was time!

As he took his final step, he vanished. Simultaneously, time began to move backward in the area. Not even the willpower of the Sixth Paragon could do anything to resist the effect. A moment ago, he had been speeding toward the Eighth Paragon, but now it was the opposite. He still had the same look of joy on his face, and his heart was still thumping as he suddenly began… to move backward!!

From the perspective of the Eighth Paragon, it looked like he was retreating. In the blink of an eye, the Sixth Paragon was pulled far away from the Eighth Paragon.

Next, the explosion caused by the collision of the Essence detonation and the Heavenly hand was suddenly sucked back in. It was as if everything within the stream of time were being affected!

It was at this point that Meng Hao suddenly appeared in front of the Sixth Paragon. It was as if Meng Hao could simply walk through time to any point of his choosing. The sight caused the Eighth Paragon to suddenly stop in place, scalp tingling in shock, crashes like thunder echoing in his mind.

"Time… the Essence of time!! No, the Essence of time doesn't have an aura like that. That's… that's…." The Eighth Paragon sucked in a deep breath. His mind spun as he watched Meng Hao appear in front of the Sixth Paragon, then reach out and touch the man's forehead. Then his hand moved, tracing a box in the air around the Sixth Paragon.

A boom rang out as the Sixth Paragon trembled; from start to finish, he was completely incapable of resisting what was happening. It was almost as if he didn't even see Meng Hao right there in front of him.

He didn’t fight back at all as light from Meng Hao’s hand covered him. His body was sealed, his cultivation base was sealed, and his soul was sealed. Everything about him was sealed!

Rumbling could be heard as the Sixth Paragon transformed into… a painting, which floated down onto Meng Hao’s palm!

As Meng Hao took hold of the painting. His cheeks were a bit flushed, but his eyes were icy cold as he turned and looked at the Eighth Paragon.

The Eighth Paragon’s mind was spinning, and he began to tremble. A look of utter incredulity covered his face, and terror exploded up inside of him.

“That’s… that’s a bit of Daosource aura, in the form of the Essence of time!!” The Eighth Paragon shook as icy coldness spread up his spine and filled his body. Then he screamed and fled.

Actually, this man was well aware of how powerful Meng Hao was. Even before entering the necropolis, his fight with the Sixth Paragon had utterly proven how terrifying he was. As such, the Eighth Paragon had no desire to offend him. However, because of the orders of the golden-robed young man, Jin Yunshan, he had had no choice but to attack and try to kill Meng Hao on the bridge.

He, as well as everyone else, had assumed Meng Hao to be dead. After all, nobody could fall into that abyss and survive. How could he ever have imagined that Meng Hao would still be alive!?

After receiving the message from the Sixth Paragon requesting help, he had come over as quickly as possible. Upon arriving, he had witnessed a battle that was completely and utterly shocking. Then he saw Meng Hao take the impossible and make it completely possible. And he also saw something that he was sure exceeded Essence, a bit of Daosource mixed with the Essence of time, to create… a terrifying sealing mark!

“Planning to run?” Meng Hao asked coolly. As soon as the words left his mouth, the Eighth Paragon’s right hand shot up, and he struck the top of his head. Rumbling sounds could be heard as his body withered up; massive amounts of life force exploded out, and he even sacrificed some of his longevity in exchange for a blinding burst of speed. In the blink of an eye, he was a huge distance away.

He was afraid, terrified even. All Meng Hao had to do was say one thing, and the Eighth Paragon went all out to flee. After all, he had witnessed the fate of the Sixth Paragon.

Meng Hao stared in shock. The Sixth Paragon’s method of fleeing couldn’t even compare to the Eighth Paragon’s. He was gone without a trace, and obviously, it wouldn’t be possible to catch up in a short period of time.

Meng Hao frowned. Obviously… he terrified the Eighth Paragon so much he had simply fled.

“Well, there’s no rush. I’ll settle accounts slow and steady. He can run, but I know where everyone is heading anyway.” After a moment, Meng Hao snorted coldly and then took a step forward, heading to the location he had seen when outside of the Vast Expanse: the central region where the golden-robed young man and everyone else was waiting.

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# Chapter 1432: Transcendence Dais!

After experiencing the destruction of the Mountain and Sea Realm, Meng Hao had become more hateful and vindictive. His heart festered with rancor, and the thirst for revenge burned in his blood. Much of that was because he had been defiled, transformed from Immortal into Demon, and had become somewhat extreme and even paranoid.

The current Meng Hao was a completely different person than the young scholar who had stood atop Mount Daqing in the State of Zhao.

His bashfulness was nowhere to be seen now; there was only viciousness. He smiled less frequently, and was filled with icy coldness. His was a world that had long since been overtaken by a murderous aura.

That was not his wish, nor his fundamental nature. But fate had taken hold, and the things he had experienced were like a merciless blade that slashed away at him, completely transforming him.

Sealing the Sixth Paragon was only the beginning. He planned to put an end to all of those who had shown hostility to him. As such, he would not let the Eighth Paragon off the hook. Even though the man had only attacked him once, to Meng Hao, once was enough. He would not give him a second opportunity to do so.

Another person on Meng Hao’s list of people to kill was the golden-robed young man, Jin Yunshan. Although Meng Hao wasn’t completely certain that he qualified to attack someone of such a level right now, that didn’t matter.

He wasn’t of a mind to investigate why things had happened the way they did. To him, only one thing was important: If you don’t mess with me, I won’t mess with you. But if you do mess with me, then I will wipe you out of existence!

Meng Hao’s face was grim as he sped through the air in a beam of bright light. He moved so fast that the only sound heard was something like the crack of thunder; he was actually not visible within the beam, which resembled an arrow as it shot forward.

He split the sky, moving faster and faster, the sound of his passage echoing back and forth. Invisible shockwaves spread out, causing the land to shake and the air to distort.

It was a grand and amazing sight!

As he chased down the Eighth Paragon, he was able to determine that the man was most definitely heading in the same direction Meng Hao wished to head… toward the center of this first land mass of the necropolis!

As time went on, Meng Hao moved faster and faster, and the evidence of his passage was detectable far and wide.

The Eighth Paragon was up ahead, shaking in his boots. He was completely terrified, and was using all the power at his disposal to flee at top speed. He continued to unleash secret magics, causing his body to wither up, but propelling himself forward at maddening speed.

“Dammit, dammit, DAMMIT…!” he cursed inwardly. He couldn’t be more regretful of what had happened, how he had provoked Meng Hao. He could never have imagined that Meng Hao would actually possess a bit of the aura of the Daosource. Although it was only a sliver, to someone in the 9-Essences level, that was a profoundly threatening force.

“He’s going to kill me!!” That was the thought which continued to run through the man’s head. Meng Hao wanted to kill him so much that there was no other option for him other than to flee. He didn’t even dare to turn around and try to launch a preemptive counterstrike. He had to rely on the burning of his life force to gain greater speed. His only hope was to reach the location of the Sect Leader and Jin Yunshan, the place where everyone was to meet back up. If Meng Hao tried to kill him in a location such as that, it would be extremely difficult considering how many people would be there to interfere.

Rumbling could be heard as the Eighth Paragon bit his tongue, spit out some blood, and accelerated once more.

Behind him was Meng Hao, his expression icy, pursuing him relentlessly.

It wasn’t that the Eighth Paragon had forgotten to try to send distress signals via jade slip. He had. However, he quickly realized that sending such messages was like throwing a stone statue of a bull into the sea. Not a single reply ever came back.

His heart was filled with bitterness, and also dread.

A moment later, lightning crashed down around him. Howling, he passed through the lightning, coming out on the other side coughing up blood. Without even looking back, he pushed onward.

Meng Hao appeared moments later. He collected the lighting up, a cold smile on his face as he continued to chase down his prey.

Time passed slowly. Hunter and quarry slowly drew closer and closer to the central region.

In the middle of the first land mass was an ancient altar, fully 30,000 meters in height. The four corners were decorated with fierce dragon carvings, and it almost looked like a pagoda, stretching high up into the sky.

It was pitch black in color, and emanated a sensation of an ancient era. It was almost as if it had existed within the stream of time for countless years. Ripples pulsed out from the altar, merging into Heaven and Earth, making it seem as if it were part of the entire land mass upon which it stood, and yet somehow in sync with the necropolis itself.

The people from the Vast Expanse School were located in various locations surrounding the black altar, looking at it excitedly. There on the altar itself, three people sat cross-legged. One of those people was the young man in the golden robe, Jin Yunshan!

Another was gaunt and sallow, surrounded by a layer of swirling sand which made it difficult to see him clearly. It was none other than Sha Jiudong!

The last person was the Sect Leader himself.

The three of them sat at the highest point on the altar, various expressions flashing across their faces. Occasionally they appeared to be wild with joy, while at other times they looked confused. Sometimes they would even tremble. Gradually, all of them were beginning to form tiny bits of… Daosource aura!!

The other cultivators from the Vast Expanse School were discussing the goings-on.

“According to the ancient records, the necropolis has nine land masses, each one of which has a Transcendence Dais. Any cultivator who seeks enlightenment on that altar can begin to grasp the path to Transcendence!”

“Those records were absolutely correct!”

“The Sect Leader, along with Fellow Daoists Sha and Jin, were the first to step onto the altar. They’ve already been seeking enlightenment for far longer than five days!”

“During that time, the Daosource aura on them has gradually grown stronger. This place… definitely contains the method for Transcending!!”

“In the ancient records, it says that the altars in each of the nine land masses of the necropolis can add ten percent to one’s chances of Transcending. If you add the altars from all the different land masses together… then doesn’t that mean that if you gained enlightenment in all nine, then… you would have a ninety percent chance of Transcending successfully, and entering the Daosource Realm!?!?” Everyone from the Vast Expanse School stood outside the altar, eyes glittering with fervor. This was the entire reason they had come to this place: Transcendence.

To be more accurate, the method for Transcendence was by means of the nine altars within the necropolis!

It was at this point, when the Sect Leader and the other two peak 9-Essences experts were in the process of seeking enlightenment, and their Daosource aura was growing clearer and stronger, that a beam of light appeared off in the distance, closing in on the area with maddening speed. At the same time, a desperate voice echoed out.

“Help me!! Fellow Daoists, please help me!!!” The voice sounded desperate and weak. Upon closer examination, the Eighth Paragon could clearly be seen, hair in disarray, body gaunt and withered. His eyes were bloodshot, and his aura unstable as he screamed for help.

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# Chapter 1433: Killing With Witnesses!

His voice completely shattered the mood in the area. The people from the Vast Expanse School all turned their heads, and when they saw that it was the Eighth Paragon heading in their direction, their faces flickered.

What caused such a reaction was not just the desperate state the Eighth Paragon was in, but something else, something shocking that wasn’t immediately noticeable.

They had been studying the altar so intently that they didn’t notice what else was happening in the area. Apparently… their divine sense had been sealed, and their five senses interfered with, although that in itself was to detect.

It wasn’t a divine ability from Meng Hao, but rather, some strange effect that came from standing near the altar!

It was because they were near the altar that they hadn’t received any of the messages from the Eighth Paragon!

“It’s Old Eighth!”

“He was in the same area as Old Sixth. What did he run into that left him in such bad condition!?!?” Everyone was shaken. The terrifying nature of the necropolis left a lingering fear within their hearts. And yet, it was in this moment that they caught sight of another beam of light off in the distance!

There within that beam of light was Meng Hao, looking like a fiendish killer!!

“It’s the Ninth Paragon!!”

“He’s not actually dead!!” Everyone was shocked, but there was little time for them to ponder why he hadn’t perished after falling into the abyss. Here he was, chasing down the beleaguered Eighth Paragon, clearly intent on killing him.

The Eighth Paragon let out a miserable shriek as the air around him distorted, and a boom rang out, causing blood to spray out of his mouth. Afterward, he shot toward the group with even greater speed.

“Help me!! He killed Old Sixth. I saw him do it! He killed Old Sixth!!” His voice rang out, filled with unprecedented levels of anxiety and nervousness. A few of the other Paragons had already stepped forward and were preparing to stop Meng Hao. There was no way they would just look on while the Eighth Paragon was killed. They had done the same thing with Meng Hao, and it had nothing to do with favor or disfavor.

When they heard the Eighth Paragon’s claim that the Sixth Paragon had already been killed by Meng Hao, their faces flickered, and they all flew forward to intervene!

“Old Ninth, stay your hand immediately!!”

“We’re all Paragons of the Vast Expanse School. We’re here to search for the good fortune of Transcendence. There’s no reason to be fighting and killing each other!!”

Even as they flew forth to block Meng Hao, Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and he looked over at Jin Yunshan among the group of three on the altar. Meng Hao could sense the profoundly ancient nature of the altar, and could also detect the traces of Daosource aura on them.

That in itself caused his mind to spin. Seeing this location from outside of the Vast Expanse, and actually being here to feel it, were two completely different matters. Now he realized that the reason the Sect Leader and the others had come to the necropolis, the so-called method of Transcendence they were looking for, was this altar!

“Ah, so these altars are the way to Transcend!” he thought. In the entire Vast Expanse, only a few people had ever reached that ultimate pinnacle, Transcendence.

For there to be a location such as this, which aided in the seeking of enlightenment of Transcendence, caused Meng Hao to come to the conclusion that the other land masses must also have similar altars. Nine land masses meant nine altars.

If that was the case, then… how did the altars come to be created?!?!

Many questions popped up in Meng Hao’s mind, causing his eyes to flicker. However, there was no time to ponder the matter. He quickly reached out with his right hand and pointed at the fleeing Eighth Paragon.

That gesture caused Demon Sealing Hexing magic to appear. Rumbling sounds could be heard as the Eighth Paragon trembled, during which time Meng Hao flickered into motion. Azure light rose up from him, which suddenly turned black. He transformed into a black roc, shooting lightning-like through the air to appear right behind the Eighth Paragon.

At that point, it didn’t matter that the other Paragons were trying to intervene. None of them could move as fast as Meng Hao just had. Without any hesitation, he slashed out at the fleeing, weakened Eighth Paragon.

A boom rang out, and the Eighth Paragon let out a bloodcurdling scream. Blood spurted out of various wounds, but he continued to shoot toward the altar.

Meng Hao was in hot pursuit, but the other Paragons seemed to be on the verge of arriving and blocking his path. Meng Hao’s eyes flickered coldly, and his cultivation base surged. Essence power erupted out, transforming into a vortex, a windstorm that swept out in all directions. At the same time, Meng Hao’s cold voice could be heard, “Ladies and gentlemen, I have no enmity with you. But this Eighth Paragon tried to do me harm. It’s a personal matter, so please don’t meddle. I demand that this man die!”

His voice echoed out from within the windstorm with complete and utter determination.

The other Paragons, including Shangguan Hong, frowned, and subconsciously stopped in place. In that moment, Meng Hao shot forward with a burst of speed, yet again closing the gap between himself and the Eighth Paragon.

The Eighth Paragon stared in shock. Trembling, he looked to his last source of hope, the golden-robed young man on top of the altar.

“Fellow Daoist Jin, save me!!”

Roc-form Meng Hao snorted coldly. As he closed in, he performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, and unleashed numerous Hexing magics. Blood sprayed out of the Eighth Paragon’s mouth as the Hexing magics landed on him. Gritting his teeth, he pushed onward toward the altar. Just when he was about to set foot onto the altar itself, Meng Hao’s right hand flashed with another incantation gesture, and he waved his finger. That was when the Hexing magic began to literally explode!

Eight Hexes were combined together, although it happened inside of the Eighth Paragon’s body, and was not visible! Furthermore, this was not something Meng Hao had done only in this moment; he had been preparing the Hexing magic and sending it into the Eighth Paragon during the entire chase.

He wanted to kill the Eighth Paragon, and he wanted to do it right in front of the golden-robed Jin Yunshan, as a warning to all of the other people in the Vast Expanse School. It was a warning which said… Don’t provoke me!

Now, the moment had come to accomplish that goal. The Eighth Paragon screamed as numerous flows of qi battered about within him. His body began to swell, and the shadow of death exploded out within him.

His expression was one of terror and astonishment as he wailed, “Fellow Daoist Jin!!!”

As soon as the words left his mouth, Jin Yunshan’s eyes opened. They glittered like freezing blades as he turned to stare at Meng Hao.

“Do you dare?!”

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# Chapter 1434: Battling Jin Yunshan!

“I’ve heard that a lot in my life, you know,” Meng Hao said coolly. “When the critical moment arrives, people love to say ‘do you dare?’ Apparently, they think it actually stops people from doing something.

“I always answer in the same way….”

His right hand flashed with an incantation gesture, and then he waved his finger toward the Eighth Paragon. It was as if a fuse had been lit. Rumbling sounds echoed out as the Eighth Paragon’s body swelled even larger, and then exploded with a huge bang.

Blood and gore splashed everywhere, becoming a rain that fell down onto the altar. It didn’t touch the Sect Leader, but landed all over Sha Jiudong and Jin Yunshan!

Jin Yunshan’s face couldn’t be grimmer as he stared at Meng Hao, killing intent swirling in his eyes.

“Why don’t you say it again.” Meng Hao hovered in midair, looking coldly at Jin Yunshan. Truth be told, the only reason the Eighth Paragon fell so easily was because the long chase gave Meng Hao plenty of time to prepare. The end result was that he cut him down quickly and efficiently. Meng Hao said he would kill him, then followed up immediately!

It was all because he had buried his Hexing magics inside the man one by one, resulting in that final shocking scene.

Silence reigned. Shangguan Hong and the other Paragons looked on silently, mixed emotions visible in their eyes as they looked at Meng Hao. Just now, Meng Hao had used his actions, not just his words, to explain to everyone what exactly it meant to be domineering!

Jin Yunshan suddenly laughed in a very sinister fashion. As the sound echoed out, he slowly stood, eyes growing even icier as he stared at Meng Hao.

“You killed the Sixth and Eighth Paragons, so now you want to kill me?” Colors flashed in the sky and a huge wind kicked up. Everything twisted and distorted as an enormous, 5,000-kilometer windstorm appeared.

Everyone from the Vast Expanse School had serious expressions on their faces as they slowly backed up, not daring to get close to the enraged Jin Yunshan.

They were all aware that although Jin Yunshan looked like a young man, he had actually practiced cultivation for ages upon ages, and was in fact on almost equal footing with the Sect Leader.

He had an unstable personality inclined to fits of rage, and was incredibly vicious. The louder he laughed, the more infuriated he was.

“That’s exactly what I want,” Meng Hao said coolly.

When Jin Yunshan heard Meng Hao’s response, it was as if he had just heard the most hilarious joke in the entire world. He threw his head back and laughed uproariously. At the same time, lightning crackled in the sky and thunder boomed. Jin Yunshan suddenly stepped forward, turning into a blur of afterimages. The space between him and Meng Hao seemed to collapse, and countless rifts opened up.

Jin Yunshan moved so quickly that apparently the air couldn’t withstand the speed and was destroyed. In the blink of an eye, he was directly in front of Meng Hao.

“You’re just a stray dog with no home to go back to, and you dare to challenge me to a fight?!” Jin Yunshan reached out and stabbed his finger toward Meng Hao’s chest.

His finger immediately erupted with the intense power of a peak 9-Essences cultivation base. Jin Yunshan did not underestimate opponents in battle; he unleashed all of the power he had at his disposal.

Although he seemed to be in a fury, he was actually in complete control of his emotions. He realized that Meng Hao had killed the Eighth Paragon in an attempt to rile him mentally. To cultivators of this level, something like that could prove to be fatal!

In fact, the words he had spoken to Meng Hao just now had likewise been intended to sow chaos.

Meng Hao remained completely calm in response to the unleashing of the finger attack. He extended his right hand and waved his sleeve, causing Essence of Divine Flame to erupt out, combined with Hexing magic as well as the power of his fleshly body. The Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering power that resulted was a blow struck by an entire world. A huge boom echoed out, and Meng Hao staggered backward several paces. Even as he looked up, Jin Yunshan’s eyes flickered with killing intent, and he closed in for another attack.

“The peak of 9-Essences… is pretty impressive.” Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed with the desire to fight. He burst into motion, and in the blink of an eye, was fighting all out with Jin Yunshan.

Massive booms rang out. Meng Hao was like a monster. Sometimes he was completely domineering, and pressed the attack viciously. But in his multifariousness, he would then dance away like a wisp of smoke. A moment later, a brutal aura would rise up, like some monstrous beast.

Jin Yunshan attacked with the power of the peak of 9-Essences. Although he didn’t use any majestic divine abilities, his cultivation base and fleshly body, in fact, everything about him, was in the great circle of his level; all of it merged together, allowing him to deliver attacks that could shake Heaven and Earth.

In the blink of an eye, the two of them had exchanged so many volleys that it was impossible to keep track of how many. Blood was oozing out of Meng Hao’s mouth as he fell back. As for Jin Yunshan, his face was a bit ashen as he glared at Meng Hao, the killing intent in his eyes growing more intense. Apparently, he wasn’t too surprised at Meng Hao’s level of battle prowess. To him, it was only natural that Meng Hao would be beyond the ordinary 9-Essences level, considering that he had already killed the Sixth and Eighth Paragons.

“You overestimate yourself!” he said with a cold snort. Killing intent flickered as he waved his right hand. In response, boundless golden light shone as numerous razor-sharp golden thorns shot out.

Upon closer examination, they weren’t thorns, but were actual beams of golden light. In the blink of an eye, Jin Yunshan summoned a golden sun around him, which grew larger and more majestic by the moment. Everything began to shake violently; it was as if this sun had supplanted the sun of this entire world!!

“Dao of a Golden Sun; Magic of an Exalted Celestial!” Jin Yunshan spread his arms wide, causing massive amounts of the energy of Heaven and Earth, as well as the aura of the Vast Expanse, to surge toward him. His energy rocketed up, and grave expressions could be seen on the faces of the group from the Vast Expanse as they once again backed away, unwilling to get caught up in the power on display.

Even as they backed up, Jin Yunshan’s hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, and he shoved them out violently. Rumbling sounds echoed out as the golden sun began to twist and distort, transforming into… a seemingly endless cloud of golden flying swords!

It seemed impossible to count the number of swords, and everyone present felt their scalps tingling in shock at the sight. The 9-Essences Paragons reacted a bit less dramatically, but the 8-Essences Paragons gasped.

From the look of it, there were hundreds of millions of them!

Hundreds of millions of golden flying swords shot out, swirling through the air to form the image of what looked like a sun.

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# Chapter 1435: Heaven Ripping!

A cold smile could be seen on Jin Yunshan’s face as he spread his arms wide, sending the hundreds of millions of flying swords up into the air. Then, he lowered his hands and pointed his finger at Meng Hao.

The flying swords began to vibrate loudly, the sound of which merged together into a shocking sound wave that sent everything shaking as the swords… shot directly toward Meng Hao.

It almost looked as if the entire sky was nothing but flying swords. Unending swords and sword light poured down onto Meng Hao as if to slice him to bits!!

A sense of crisis loomed within Meng Hao, but that was no surprise. In fact, it caused the desire for battle to grow more intense within his eyes. He wanted to fight, to fight someone extremely powerful, to fight many powerful people! That was how he would transform himself.

Almost in the same moment that the hundreds of millions of flying swords bore down on him, azure light sprang up around Meng Hao, which then turned black. He vanished, and when he reappeared, he was an enormous black roc!

The roc rapidly grew larger. 300 meters. 3,000 meters. 30,000 meters. In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao was a huge black roc over 30,000 meters long. Then, a piercing cry could be heard as all of the feathers shot off of his body and swirled out into the air. Although there weren’t hundreds of millions of them, there were at least a million!

A million feathers spun in the air, becoming a tempest that spread out to meet the hundreds of millions of flying swords.

When they clashed, the resulting boom cracked the sky and shattered the land. The roc feathers were like rowboats on a stormy sea, battered relentlessly by the flying swords.

However, even as the tempest of feathers was whittled away, Meng Hao let out a powerful roar, sending some of his life force aura into the feathers.

“Mourning-Death, Divine Augmentation!” This was a divine ability he had gained from Shui Dongliu when absorbing his good fortune. 1

It was not the type of divine ability that would unleash a deadly attack. Instead, it allowed him to split his divine sense into a million portions, each of which entered one of the feathers.

In the blink of an eye, each one of the million feathers trembled and then suddenly expanded. Roc heads sprouted out, and then… they transformed into huge rocs!!

Each and every feather transformed, filling the sky with a million huge rocs. The previous tempest increased in size by a thousand-fold, completely blotting out the sky!

The hundreds of millions of flying swords rumbled as they slammed into the rocs. The Heavens shook as the swords and the rocs began to fight a majestic battle!

It was difficult to put into words how shocking this display of divine abilities was!

The flying swords had the advantage of numbers by far, but the incredible power of the rocs ensured that it took hundreds of flying swords to take down just one!

Massive rumbling booms filled the sky, as though a war were being fought. Even as the destruction was carried out, Meng Hao suddenly appeared, blood oozing out of various wounds, but a vicious expression covering his face. He suddenly lifted his hand up, and a painting appeared!

It was none other than the painting he had created when he sealed the Sixth Paragon. Without the slightest hesitation, Meng Hao ripped that painting in half!

What appeared as a result was not the Sixth Paragon, but rather, his life force, his cultivation base, his Essences, and his soul. Everything that was the Sixth Paragon flew out and was absorbed by the numerous rocs, unexpectedly… massive booms rang out, and the world quaked. The group from the Vast Expanse School all gasped; this was the loudest noise which had echoed out since the fighting had begun. The rocs collapsed, and the hundreds of millions of flying swords all shattered!

At the same time, a massive shockwave blasted out, sweeping across all creation.

The shockwave shoved Meng Hao backward, coughing up blood, his face pale. However, his eyes were brighter than ever as he stared at Jin Yunshan, who had an unsightly expression on his face as blood seeped out of the corners of his mouth!

Jin Yunshan was completely and utterly shaken. Although he had known all along that Meng Hao's battle prowess was incredible, he had never imagined that he would be this strong, or that he would be able to put up such a good fight.

After all, Jin Yunshan was not just in the peak of the 9-Essences level, he was at the great circle, which meant that his cultivation base and battle prowess were such that he could crush all other 9-Essences cultivators!

Not only was he shaken, everyone from the Vast Expanse School was flabbergasted.

"Is this going to be the induction of a new sage…? There are only four peak 9-Essences experts on Planet Vast Expanse, and yet the Ninth Paragon is actually fighting back against Jin Yunshan!"

"Even I wouldn't have been able to stand up to that Exalted Celestial Magic, the hundreds of millions of swords…." Even as everyone was reeling in astonishment, Jin Yunshan threw his head back and laughed.

The laughter was icy and vicious, and filled with intense killing intent, which became a sinister, murderous aura.

“Throughout all these years, you are the first person who is not in the peak of the 9-Essences level to force me to use my second divine ability. Meng Hao… you can die with a smile on your face.” Golden light began to shine from Jin Yunshan’s eyes. He threw his hands into the air, causing a terrifying, indescribable power to radiate out of him.

The crushing power contained a horrifying aura, and if you looked closely, you would see that he was sending all of his cultivation base power into his hands!

His hand were gradually turning golden, as if they weren’t the hands of a cultivator, but were actually made from pure gold!

“This divine ability is something I picked up years ago from the Immortal God Continent. It’s called… Heaven Ripping!” With that, he extended his hands toward Meng Hao and made a ripping gesture! 2

Rumbling echoed out, and the Heavens shook. Meng Hao’s pupils constricted. As Jin Yunshan’s hand pulled apart, Meng Hao felt as if he were suddenly locked in place, fused with the air.

And then, intense pain exploded out within him. Rumbling filled the air as a huge rift were tearing open, starting from above Meng Hao and stretching down. Apparently, a power capable of ripping open the starry sky was now trying to rip open Meng Hao!

1. As a brief reminder, half of Shui Dongliu was a Mourning-Death soul, a type of being that comes from Beseech the Devil

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# Chapter 1436: Fourth Fist Strike: Devil-Butchering!

At this critical moment in the fight, Meng Hao suddenly unleashed a fist strike!

It was none other than the Life-Extermination Fist!

One fist strike could not shake the air which held him tight, so Meng Hao unleashed the second fist strike, the Bedevilment Fist, and then the third, the God-Slaying Fist. Three punches were unleashed in quick succession, making one unified attack. As the power exploded out, he broke free from being locked in place and took a step forward.

In almost that exact moment, the air around him was ripped apart.

At the same time, an explosive power shot toward Meng Hao from behind. It was still… the power of Heaven Ripping!

Apparently that power wouldn’t stop until Meng Hao was ripped to pieces!

Meng Hao evaded, but the Heaven Ripping power continued to close in on him. The air collapsed and shattered, and it almost seemed like Meng Hao would be incapable of escaping.

Down below, Shangguan Hong and everyone else gasped, sober expressions on their faces. It wasn’t that they had never seen peak 9-Essences experts in action before. However, every time they did, they couldn’t help but realize how weak they themselves were.

Seeing that Meng Hao had escaped once again, Jin Yunshan called out in a voice that brimmed with murderous intentions, “Still not dead?!?!”

His hands emanated boundless golden light as he once again made a ripping gesture.

Rumbling sounds surrounded Meng Hao, and a sensation of deadly crisis filled him. However, he felt no fear. In fact, that sensation of danger provoked something from within the legacy of Shui Dongliu.

“The Three God-Slaying Fists aren’t enough. I need… a fourth fist strike, and maybe even a fifth!!” Countless thoughts buzzed in Meng Hao’s mind, and at the same time, the flickering glow of augury could be seen in his eyes.

“The first fist is Life-Extermination. The second fist is Self-Immolation. The third fist is God-Slaying. Well then, the fourth fist… should be Devil-Butchering!

“Devils are like the dark night. The Devil-Butchering Fist is like a dispelling of the darkness!” Meng Hao’s breath came in ragged pants as he thought back to the divine ability the Sixth Paragon had unleashed. That combined with previous enlightenment from past years, as well as a magical technique from within Shui Dongliu’s legacy. Gradually, the outline of an idea formed in his mind.

There was no time for lengthy contemplation. As the Heaven Ripping power built up around him, Meng Hao’s right hand clenched tightly into a fist!

“Fourth fist strike, Devil-Butchering!” Meng Hao roared as he punched out. As the fourth fist strike was unleashed, his fist sent out black ripples which filled the area. Unexpectedly, it turned the entire area around him as black as night!

Then, within that pitch blackness, his fist began to shine with light!

It wasn’t white light, but rather, red. It was as if nighttime had skin, and it was being ripped off to reveal the flesh and blood beneath. This was the fourth fist strike that Meng Hao had just now gained enlightenment of, the Devil-Butchering Fist!

It was not using dawn’s light to dispel the darkness of night, rather it was skinning nighttime alive! This was true butchery!

Booming sounds rang out as the light spread outward. Everywhere it passed, the darkness of night was flayed in shocking fashion. It collapsed, and even Jin Yunshan’s Heaven Ripping magic was completely destroyed. Meng Hao’s fourth fist strike bore down on Jin Yunshan, and the golden light which had fed his power was also flayed!

Booms rang out as Jin Yunshan let out a miserable shriek. His hands were trembling, and blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth as he subconsciously backed up. When he looked up at Meng Hao, his eyes shone with disbelief.

“What divine ability is that!?!?” Astonishment gripped his heart. His Heaven Ripping ability was one of his trump cards, something that people normally could never break. In fact, this was the first time anything like this had ever happened!!

In the past, some people had powered their way through it, but this was someone breaking it on a fundamental level.

Even as Jin Yunshan fell back, Meng Hao emerged from the pitch black area, looking more than ever like he wanted to fight. His eyes glowed with red light as he strode forward, sending booms ringing out into the air.

“You’ve had your chance with your divine abilities. Now it’s my turn.” With that, he pointed his finger directly at Jin Yunshan, unleashing the Hexing magic of the League of Demon Sealers. It was none other than the Eighth Hex!

Instantly, space was locked down tight, causing Jin Yunshan’s face to fall, and a sensation of imminent crisis to well up inside of him.

Jin Yunshan didn’t hesitate for a moment. His eyes glowed brightly as he bit his tongue and spit out a mouthful of blood. As the blood flew through the air, it transformed into a blood-colored sealing mark, which flew up and landed on his forehead.

Rumbling could be heard as an aura appeared which could shake Heaven and Earth. As it exploded out from Jin Yunshan, it became countless bolts of lightning, each and every one of which were the color of gold!

These were golden lightning bolts from a Gold Tribulation!

At the same time, fluctuations began to emanate out from the ancient-looking blood-colored symbol. They were fluctuations which seemed to contain the passage of countless years of time, as though this symbol had existed before time even began. The fluctuations were so powerful that even the Vast Expanse outside of the necropolis began to tremble. At the same time, clouds began to descend.

Outside of the necropolis, clouds were building up; roiling, seething clouds that were simultaneously shrinking downward toward the necropolis.

In the blink of an eye, those clouds burst through whatever invisible barriers kept the necropolis hidden. Then, they appeared behind Jin Yunshan, where they began to converge into even more golden lightning bolts.

“My ninth Essence is Vast Expanse Tribulation Lightning! I spent years gaining enlightenment of Tribulation Lightning, and even consumed the mist of the Vast Expanse to complete it. If I Transcend into the Daosource Realm, I can become the incarnation of the Vast Expanse’s Tribulation Lightning. Then, all beings within the Vast Expanse will fear my Tribulation Lightning!” Jin Yunshan threw his arms out wide as more and more Tribulation Lightning built up around him. At the same time, the aura of his ninth Essence roiled about!

Meng Hao’s pupils constricted. He could sense how powerful this ninth Essence was, and could even tell that the lightning bolts had some vague will of their own!

He wasn’t sure why, but an image popped up in his mind, something he had seen on the frescoes in the tunnel. He thought of… Allheaven destroying a world with his finger!

At this moment, Meng Hao realized that the aura of the lightning, although not completely identical to the aura of Allheaven’s finger, was very similar!!

“Tribulation Lightning strikes! Nine Essences fatality!!” Jin Yunshan threw his head back and roared, throwing both hands up to point at Meng Hao. Instantly, the lightning formed from the Vast Expanse, his ninth Essence, roared forth. Countless lightning bolts converged, transforming into an enormous golden finger that could shake Heaven and Earth. Mists swirled around it as it shot toward Meng Hao.

Everything shook, and the sky went dark!

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# Chapter 1437: Sealing the World-Slaughtering Finger!

Lighting was a relatively simplistic Essence. Many Dao Realm experts would gain enlightenment of it as their first Essence. One of the reasons for this was that it was relatively easy to understand. Because of that, Essence of lightning was not uncommon in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse. Even in the Mountain and Sea Realm, or other worlds, Dao Realm experts with the Essence of lightning were nothing rare.

However, people who transformed the Essence of lightning the way Jin Yunshan had done for his ninth Essence… were as rare as phoenix feathers or qilin horns.

From this, it could be seen how grand Jin Yunshan's aspirations were!

As he said, his ninth Essence was not merely the ordinary Essence of lightning. No, his was Tribulation Lightning of the Vast Expanse. If he did manage to Transcend into the Daosource Realm, and become a Dao, then if his suppositions were correct, he could represent the Vast Expanse as the lord of Tribulation Lightning!

At that time, his level of power would be unimaginable. Although it was currently just speculation on his part, he was confident that he could do exactly that!

At that moment in the fight, he could sense how strangely powerful Meng Hao's Demon Sealing Hexing magics were. Therefore, Jin Yunshan didn't hesitate for even a moment to call upon his ninth Essence!

Endless Tribulation Lightning merged together into the shape of a huge finger that seemed capable of destroying everything. Some of the Vast Expanse could even be sensed upon the finger itself, as if anything who opposed this finger also opposed the Vast Expanse!

Rumbling could be heard as the finger smashed down toward Meng Hao. From a distance, it looked as if it were destroying the starry sky and shredding the Heavens. Even as the vicious lightning bore down on Meng Hao, his hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, unleashing Hexing magic.

“Seventh Hex!!” The Seventh Hex exploded out, combining with the power of the Eighth Hex which had just been utilized to lock down onto the finger. Gradually, two threads could be seen, wrapping around the finger!

Based on the current level of his cultivation base, Meng Hao could now combine the eight hexes, which was his most powerful divine ability. Everything shook violently, and the entire land mass beneath them quaked as the finger rumbled inexorably toward Meng Hao, radiating power that could destroy worlds.

Meng Hao was shaking, and blood sprayed out of various wounds, as if some invisible pressure were crushing down onto him. He flickered into motion, and every step back caused the ground beneath his feet to crack and shatter.

“DIE!!” roared Jin Yunshan; the pressure increased, and the lightning finger continued to descend toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes were crimson. He couldn’t stop thinking about the vision from the fresco, but there was no time to contemplate the matter in detail. It was a critical juncture, and all he could do was perform a double-handed incantation gesture to unleash another Hexing magic.

“Sixth Hex!

“Fifth Hex!!”

The finger was now 30,000 meters away from him. As of this moment, the Sixth and Fifth Hexes landed on it with a boom. The two Hexing magics created two more threads which swept out to connect to the Seventh and Eighth Hexes, further binding the finger!

The finger drew ever closer to Meng Hao, whose eyes widened as world-level destructive power exploded out. It was as if the Vast Expanse didn't even exist any more, and the only thing in the world was this enormous Tribulation Lightning finger!!

Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao's mouth. He was completely locked down, the ground beneath his feet was being destroyed, and yet he didn't flinch. His hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture as he launched more Hexing magics. The Fourth Hex appeared, and then the Third, creating two more threads which wrapped around the huge finger. As of this moment, six threads were wrapped around it, criss-crossing over each other to form something that looked like a net!

A boom echoed out as Meng Hao was shoved down again. A huge crater opened up beneath him as the finger neared to a distance of only 6,000 meters!

The finger was so large it could supercede the starry sky, and yet it was targeting Meng Hao and Meng Hao alone. It didn't affect anyone else present at all.

Rumbling could be heard as the finger then closed in to a distance of 3,000 meters. It was at that point that the Second Hex appeared, adding another thread to the net entangling the finger, making the net look ever more dense.

The bones in Meng Hao's body were beginning to emit cracking sounds, but he continued to stare at the finger with ice-cold eyes that radiated killing intent. His Demonic qi was normally kept hidden inside of him, but now it exploded out, and his pupils turned bright red. Furthermore… an aura erupted out of him that was like an Immortal, but not. Similar to a Devil's but also dissimilar. Comparable to a God, but different.

It was Demonic qi!

As the Demonic qi spread out, the will of the Vast Expanse which existed on the finger suddenly seemed to seethe, and at the same time, the first land mass that they were on shuddered and began to transform.

Meng Hao could sense the transformation, but didn’t have the time to study it. His expression was vicious as he looked up at the finger and then began to laugh, a laughter which contained madness, murder, and impetuousness.

There was something in Meng Hao’s aura that caused Jin Yunshan’s heart to start pounding for some unknown reason. He wasn’t the only one. Everyone who was watching the fight suddenly felt particularly uneasy.

It was in this moment that, all of a sudden, the Sect Leader opened his eyes and shouted, “Jin Yunshan, enough!”

“Nobody can stop me from killing this man!” Jin Yunshan roared in response. “Daoist Vast Expanse, I refuse to believe that you haven’t sensed the killing intent directed at him from the necropolis itself!

“Killing him is conforming to the will of Patriarch Vast Expanse!!” He performed another incantation gesture, unleashing more power. Disregarding the fact that he was overdrawing his own power, he pushed the finger past the 3,000 meter mark until it was only 150 meters away from Meng Hao.

Blood poured down Meng Hao’s body from the wounds which had been inflicted. He trembled as he stood there, red with madness. By this point, the finger seemed on the verge of touching him.

“First Hex!” he growled, waving his finger. At long last, the First Hex transformed into a thread which landed on the finger.

As of this moment, eight Hexing magics had transformed into threads, which in turn made an enormous net!

This was the moment Meng Hao had been waiting for. He spread his arms wide, and his eyes gleamed with the desire to do battle. From the moment the battle had begun until now, he had not shown an ounce of fear. His desire to kill Jin Yunshan had not been reduced by one iota.

“Eight Hexes, combine!” His hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, and then he waved them out. Instantly, the eight intercrossed threads that formed the net suddenly began to shrink. As they did, they cut everything in their path. It didn’t matter who stood in their way, Tribulation Lightning, Vast Expanse mist, flesh and blood, souls. Everything would be cut!

Rumbling could be heard as the eight Hexes exploded into action. Meng Hao’s Demonic qi also erupted out, pouring into the Hexing magics, transforming the eight threads into objects sharp enough to cut anything in existence. In the briefest of moments… they sliced through the finger, which was only thirty meters away from Meng Hao’s head. The finger… was instantly chopped into pieces! The lightning transformed into endless sparks which scattered about in all directions!

“Impossible!!” Blood oozed out of the corners of Jin Yunshan’s mouth, and his expression was one of disbelief and astonishment.

“You don’t qualify to kill me!” Meng Hao said, flicking his sleeve. As the lightning dissipated, all the fetters holding him back vanished. Instantly, he flew forward in shocking fashion.

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# Chapter 1438: Void Divinity Conversion!

As of this moment, it wasn’t just Jin Yunshan who was in a state of shock. The Sect Leader, who was still there on the altar, was astonished at the sight of Meng Hao’s eight Hexes combined.

He was well aware of how terrifying Jin Yunshan’s ninth Essence was. In fact, if he were in Meng Hao’s place, he would have been forced to rely on his own ninth Essence to negate it.

And yet Meng Hao unexpectedly… didn’t even use a ninth Essence at all. Instead, he had used what appeared to be eight restrictive spells. The shocked Sect Leader couldn’t help but wonder what other secrets Meng Hao must be harboring.

“Those eight restrictive spells must be his first eight Essences. And yet, he only needed those eight Essences to deal with Jin Yunshan’s ninth Essence…. This Meng Hao is inhuman!!” The Sect Leader took a deep breath. Never could he possibly have imagined what the truth was. It wasn’t that Meng Hao didn’t want to use a ninth Essence: he hadn’t even gained enlightenment of a ninth Essence.

Jin Yunshan was just as shocked at Meng Hao’s eight Hexes as the Sect Leader. Despite not having unleashed a ninth Essence, he left them completely and utterly flabbergasted.

“He’s still hiding his true strength!!” The other cultivators of the Vast Expanse School couldn’t help but gasp. The fight which was playing out in front of their eyes left them even more intensely aware of how powerful

Meng Hao was. In fact, he was so terrifying that… he could probably alter the face of Planet Vast Expanse, giving it not four supreme powers, but five.

“I refuse to believe that you can fight me and not have to use your ninth Essence!” Jin Yunshan’s face was twisted in an unsightly expression. By now, he held no scorn whatsoever for Meng Hao’s battle prowess. Although Meng Hao was a bit weaker than him overall, the difference between them was negligible!

He knew that if Meng Hao had unleashed a ninth Essence, he would already be in a very difficult situation. However, even being put in a tight spot like that was preferable to what was happening now, which was that he had already gone all out with everything he had, and yet Meng Hao was still able to hold back some of his power.

The thought of that caused Jin Yunshan’s murderous aura to grow even more intense. He flickered into motion, transforming into a beam of golden light that shot toward Meng Hao, who also shot forward. In the blink of an eye, the two of them slammed into each other with a boom and started fighting.

Meng Hao transformed into a huge roc that flickered with black and azure light. Jin Yunshan waved his hand, causing a sun to spread out, which shot countless golden beams of light out in attack.

In the space of a few breaths, the two of them exchanged hundreds of volleys. Meng Hao performed an incantation gesture and pointed out, causing numerous mountains to crush down onto Jin Yunshan.

Jin Yunshan let out a cold harrumph and waved his hand. The sun detonated, sending out destructive power that shredded the mountains to pieces. In response, Meng Hao performed an incantation gesture, sending boundless Essence of Divine Flame out in a powerful attack, destroying the air between the two of them.

The battle was so intense that the entire world was affected, even the starry sky. Meng Hao and Jin Yunshan fought back and forth in midair, and the explosions caused everything to shake and distort.

A closer look would reveal that Meng Hao was bleeding out of his mouth, and yet, Jin Yunshan's face was pale white. He was a bit stronger than Meng Hao, but not strong enough to overwhelm and kill him.

“Dammit!!” A boom echoed out, and Jin Yunshan shot backward, glaring at Meng Hao. Then, he started laughing, a cold laughter filled with incisive killing intent. “Meng Hao, I demand to see exactly what your ninth Essence is!”

Eyes glowing brightly, he performed a double-handed incantation gesture and then pushed both of his hands down.

“Next, I will unveil the most powerful magic I have. It even exceeds the Dao of my ninth Essence! Let's see if you can handle it, Meng Hao!” He raised his right hand and pointed his finger up into the sky.

In the moment that he raised his finger up, a stream of Essence shot out, transforming into a beam of light. It shot up and… merged into the sky!

Next, he pointed down, and a second Essence shot out from him and merged into the ground.

As the two Essences merged with the sky and the land, Jin Yunshan himself seemed as if he were doing the same thing. Although he still hovered there in midair, visible to the naked eye, if one scanned the area with divine sense, they would not be able to detect his existence.

Meng Hao stopped in place, his eyes widening. The sense of crisis raging through him now far exceeded that when Jin Yunshan had unleashed his ninth Essence.

Back on the altar, the Sect Leader's pupils constricted. “The Void Divinity!”

Next to him, Sha Jiudong looked on silently, eyes glowing from deep within.

The other cultivators from the Vast Expanse School were all visibly shocked. “It really is the Void Divinity…. That's Jin Yunshan's most powerful trump card. He hasn’t used it for ten thousand years.”

It was at this point that Jin Yunshan waved his sleeve, sending a third Essence out, not into Heaven or Earth, but into the wind!

The wind in the world became a part of Jin Yunshan, and as it swept about, it became a tempest that connected the sky to the land.

“Void Divinity!” cried Shangguan Hong. “It’s Jin Yunshan’s Dao of the Void Divinity!” Everyone else suddenly began to recall Jin Yunshan’s legendary trump card, and their expressions flickered as they backed up even further.

According to the stories which were told about the Void Divinity, it was a magical technique that was powerful to a terrifying degree.

The sensation of deadly crisis in Meng Hao’s heart was only growing more intense by the moment. His intuition was telling him that if he didn’t interrupt the magic in this very instant, then its power would continue to grow explosively.

His two eyes glittered as his third eye opened. In that instant, his view of the world changed.

When he saw what was surrounding Jin Yunshan, his expression turned grim. He could see Jin Yunshan’s body dispersing, merging into Heaven and Earth, becoming a part of the world. Meng Hao could tell that if he got close to him, he himself would also be sucked in by the power of Heaven and Earth, and be dispersed.

Even as Meng Hao studied Jin Yunshan with his third eye, Jin Yunshan’s expression twisted viciously, and he let out a powerful roar. Suddenly, his fourth Essence expanded out, merging into one of the five elements that existed within this world. Fire!

Instantly, the temperature around him began to increase, as the fire elements in the world began to be taken over by Jin Yunshan.

Things weren’t over yet. His fifth Essence began to merge with another of the five elements, metal. A killing will filled the entire world, and at the same time, a sixth Essence spread out. All of the withered and dried up wood and vegetation within the world suddenly quivered, and then began to fill with life. Each and every plant and bit of grass was becoming a part of Jin Yunshan.

Even more outrageous was that his seventh Essence merged into all of the water in the world. Rivers raged, and the blood within the veins of everyone present began to tremble.

Seven Essences. Metal, wood, water, fire, earth. And then there was the wind. It was as if everything in the entire world belonged to Jin Yunshan. Next was his eighth Essence. As he waved his hands, it exploded it and merged into… the light!

Light was boundless, everywhere and all present. As of this moment, it seemed as if Jin Yunshan didn’t even exist. Then, his ninth Essence of lightning began to spread out, and his fleshly body began to turn transparent.

Nine Essences, all merged into the world around him. As of this moment, Jin Yunshan, his body, his cultivation base, his blood, his soul, everything about him had become part of the world around him. He was one with sky and the land!

He was the sky. He was the land. He was the wind. He was the five elements. He was lightning. He was… the world!

RUUMMMMBLLLLLE!

“Meng Hao!” Jin Yunshan howled. Although the words came out of his mouth, they seemed to resonate everywhere. All locations, all rivers, every part of the world was filled with his desire to kill. Flame creatures, plants, mountains, lightning; it exploded out from everything!

It was almost like the roar, not just of Jin Yunshan, but of the entire world.

Meng Hao inhaled sharply, and as for everyone else present, they were shaking.

“Meng Hao, this is my… Void Divinity Conversion!” Jin Yunshan lifted his right foot up and then stamped it down. As he did, Heaven shook and Earth trembled. The world shook, and a shocking force exploded out. Jin Yunshan was the lord of the entire world, its spirit. The world was his body, and with a thought, he could set everything into motion!

The stamp of his foot was like the world stamping its foot, causing everything to shake violently.

The world shuddered, and the lands quaked. Jin Yunshan’s right hand clenched into a fist, and then he punched out!

From Meng Hao’s perspective, that punch was like all of the power in the entire world converging into one spot. It contained lightning, the five elements, the sky, the land, everything! And it was all striking toward Meng Hao.

As the fist slammed into him, Heaven and Earth shattered. Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth, and he flew backward.

“Still not ready to unleash… your ninth Essence?!” Jin Yunshan’s killing intent had reached the pinnacle. He took another step forward, and the world shook as he slapped his right hand toward Meng Hao!

The world trembled as all of the power it contained formed together. A tempest sprung up, blasting against Meng Hao before he could even stabilize himself. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and he fell back, cracking sounds emanating out of his body, his flesh mangled and torn.

“You still don’t qualify to see my ninth Essence!” he growled. As he looked up, his eyes glittered, and his third eye shone brightly. Intense light spilled out, like a torch on a moonless night. That light transformed into… a calling!

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# Chapter 1439: The Call of the Emperor

The call came, not from Meng Hao himself, but from the bronze lamp inside of him. At the same time, he opened his third eye, causing brilliant light to shine out, filling the world!

Something else happened that was extremely telling. As the light and the call spread out, Heaven and Earth began to shake, and Jin Yunshan could do nothing to stop it!

Jin Yunshan's face instantly fell!

Meng Hao hovered in midair like a divine spirit, majestic light shining out from this third eye. Using that third eye to look at the world around him, he saw so many ghosts that they seemed infinite in number. Back when they were alive, they had lived in a thriving world that ended when it was destroyed by Allheaven's finger.

As such, it could be said that the true masters of the necropolis were these ghosts!

When Meng Hao opened his third eye, sending out divine will in the form of brilliant light, it coupled with the call from the bronze lamp to spread out silently through the entire land mass. In that moment, all of the ghosts which had previously prostrated themselves in worship to Meng Hao suddenly shivered and looked up, confused expressions in their eyes.

"Who is it… that calls to us…?"

"That's the aura of the Emperor. The fluctuations of the Emperor…."

“The Emperor… is calling to us!”

Their voices could not be heard by the living, nor could the ghosts themselves even be seen. However, the living beings present could sense the fluctuations emanating out because of the ghosts.

Only the ghosts themselves could hear their voices, which grew louder and louder until they were like a gigantic sound wave.

Even the ghosts which were not on the land mass were shivering, and gleams of excitement could be seen in their eyes!

Their howls filled every nook and cranny of the enormous continent, along with an icy aura. The ghosts took to flight, sending out coldness that could freeze anything and everything. They were beginning to go mad because of the call they felt from their Emperor.

“The Emperor…. That’s the aura of the Emperor. He’s calling to us!!’

The seemingly infinite numbers of ghosts outside of the land mass caused cracking sounds to ring out as ice spread out to cover the ruins in the area. Innumerable hordes of ghosts surged forth like a shocking wave to sweep across the bridge that connected to the first land mass.

Countless howling voices rose up. “Anything which blocks our path to pay greetings to the Emperor shall be destroyed!!”

A terrifying, piercing cry rang out from the mists that surrounded the bridge. Before the mists could disperse, the icy coldness and hosts of ghosts crushed them.

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the bridge trembled. The arms of blood and gore that made up the bridge were frozen, and within the space of a few breaths of time, the bridge itself was nothing more than ice as the ghosts outside rushed onto the land mass.

Even as that happened, more and more ghosts began to appear within the ruins on the surface of the land mass itself. At first, they looked confused, but when they felt the call coming from Meng Hao, their hearts stirred with excitement. Soon, all of the ghosts within all of the ruins and districts looked up and began to cry out.

“It’s the Emperor!!”

“The aura of the Emperor…. The Emperor isn’t dead after all, he’s come back!!”

“The Emperor… is calling to us!!”

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

All of the ghosts both on the land mass and outside of it were surging toward the central region, where Meng Hao was.

Within the ruins of a certain temple, a shocking aura suddenly appeared, along with a vague, blurry figure. He looked different than the other ghosts, more ancient. As he looked off into the distance, a powerful energy surged off of him.

“The Emperor… is back!” he murmured. He made a grasping gesture with his right hand, causing a Soul Pike to appear in his hand. Then, he transformed into a blast of cold air that shot off into the distance.

In another area was a river, which began to churn as a vicious face rose up from within it. When its eyes opened, they looked around blankly for a moment before filling with excitement.

“The Emperor…. It’s the Emperor….” Trembling, he flew out of the water. This ghost was fully 30,000 meters long, causing everything to shake as he flew at top speed in the direction of Meng Hao’s calling.

In a location even further off was a towering mountain, atop which stood a man in a flowing white robe. He was a ghost, and yet he still possessed his own will and mind. Shivering, he turned his head and looked off into the distance with an expression of disbelief. Then he started laughing in mad excitement.

“He’s not the Emperor, but he represents the Emperor….” He flew into motion, icy coldness spreading out from him as he headed off into the distance.

Scenes like this played out in numerous locations all over the first continent. As the ghosts took to flight, rumbling sounds filled Heaven and Earth, and the entire world shook!

Within the first land mass of the necropolis, icy coldness spread out. In fact, if one could look down from a high vantage point, it would look like the entire land mass was turning into ice!

The ruins iced over. The mountains froze. The rivers turned solid. Countless plants and even the wind itself began to freeze up.

As the world trembled, the people standing outside of the altar felt icy coldness, and astonishment rising up within them.

“What’s happening!?”

“Something’s wrong. Things got freezing almost instantly!”

In their shock, they looked around and saw snow swirling about in the air. However, this snow wasn’t white, it was black! Of course, what Meng Hao was seeing wasn’t snow, but rather, countless ghosts!

Before, he had never truly called upon the ghosts within the necropolis, not of his own accord. He hovered there in midair, arms spread wide as boundless iciness spread out. Cracking sounds filled the air as countless ghosts swirled around him.

None of the living beings could see the ghosts, but they could sense what was happening. They could detect the countless shocking auras building up around Meng Hao, and could tell that there were invisible figures surrounding him.

However… Jin Yunshan was different. Because of the Void Divinity state he was in, he was fused with the world itself. He was the world, and the world was him. Therefore, he could see all of the countless ghosts flying around him and Meng Hao.

Then, he watched in shock as the ghosts began to prostrate toward Meng Hao, eyes burning with passion and excitement.

“Greetings, Emperor!!”

“Greetings, Emperor!!”

“Greetings, Emperor!!”

Countless voices rose up in a cacophony that shook the starry sky, a massive sound wave that boomed like thunder.

“Impossible!!” Jin Yunshan was astonished to the ultimate degree, and was shaking violently. What was happening was completely and utterly shocking.

He almost couldn’t even believe what he was seeing.

More and more ghosts appeared, filling the area for tens of thousands of kilometers in all directions, all of them prostrating with zealous fanaticism!

There were even some entities which were shocking to Jin Yunshan on an individual level, which likewise prostrated to Meng Hao. Jin Yunshan was so shaken that his forehead began to drip with sweat.

Meng Hao was being worshipped by an innumerable group of ghosts, as if he were their Emperor. His eyes were cold as he looked around, and the cultivators who met his gaze were completely shaken mentally. It was as if they were being struck by lightning, or frozen into ice.

Shaking in astonishment, the Sect Leader rose to his feet, and off to the side, Sha Jiudong gasped in shock.

They were both in the peak of 9-Essences, and although they were not in the midst of the Void Divinity Conversion and could not see the ghosts, their divine sense could clearly detect the countless ghosts which Meng Hao had called from both within and without the land mass.

The entire area was completely and utterly filled with ghostly spirits!

And then there was the freezing temperature, which caused both of them to inhale sharply. If they had such a reaction, it was hardly necessary to detail how Shangguan Hong and the other 9-Essences cultivators reacted, or the 8-Essences Paragons. All of them felt their minds spinning in astonishment!

The battle between Meng Hao and Jin Yunshan had reached a complete and utter peak.

Jin Yunshan's scalp tingled with numbness; he simply couldn't find a way to believe that even his Void Divinity Conversion had not forced Meng Hao to use his ninth Essence, but instead… prompted him to summon an army of infinite ghosts!

“Who are you?!?!” he shrieked. As his voice echoed out, Meng Hao extended his right hand. He could clearly sense that as of this moment, although he wasn't truly the Emperor of this land, he was the commander of these legions of ghosts.

The world didn't belong to him, but that didn't matter. He could simply conquer it!

He lowered his hand, and the swish of his sleeve sent his will out to the countless ghosts. The ghosts then looked up at Jin Yunshan, screamed, and charged toward him.

Jin Yunshan's mind trembled, and the sensation of deadly crisis which filled him grew even more intense. He had no time to think of what to do. He could only grit his teeth and unleash all of the power of the Void Divinity Conversion, sending the power of the world to fight back against the ghosts!

However, there was one thing he hadn't considered. Although he had already used the Void Divinity Conversion to become the world itself, that world, both before the great catastrophe which had struck it, and after… had always belonged to this group!

In the past, they had been cultivators, but now they were vengeful ghosts!

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# Chapter 1440: The Five Potentates!

The shocking scene which was playing out in front of the cultivators of the Vast Expanse School was something that they would never be able to forget for the rest of their lives. It signified that a fifth Potentate had appeared on Planet Vast Expanse!

Before this moment, the planet had four peak 9-Essences cultivators, like four Potentates who no one could possibly shake. Each one of them were at the pinnacle of existence.

That group of four consisted of Sha Jiudong, Jin Yunshan, the Sect Leader, and Immortal Bai Muchen. They were the most powerful experts on Planet Vast Expanse, and were all on the cusp of reaching Transcendence.

All other 9-Essences cultivators had no choice but to bow their heads in deference to them.

But after this battle between Meng Hao and Jin Yunshan, in which Meng Hao transformed into a black roc, in which he unleashed the combined eight Hexes, everyone was completely shaken.

Most shocking was what was playing out right at this moment.

The world itself attacked, and countless ghosts screamed. Up to now, Jin Yunshan had mostly maintained the upper hand, but at the moment, blood was spurting out of his wounds as he was battered by an unending stream of ghosts. He was tottering on the verge of collapse, and the Essences which he had dispersed into the world were now experiencing an intense force of expulsion!

The wind was expelling them, the five elements were expelling them, and it was the same with the land, the sky, and the lightning. The entire world burst with a force of expulsion.

Rumbling could be heard as blood sprayed out of Jin Yunshan’s mouth. He tumbled backward, countless ghosts battering at him in complete madness. The air around him twisted and distorted, and Jin Yunshan’s face was completely ashen as he cried out miserably. There was literally nothing he could do to change what was happening.

The sensation of deadly crisis within him had reached a fever pitch. There was nothing he could do to fight back, and in fact, he couldn’t even struggle. He might have become the world, but these ghosts were the collective master of that world!

And the Emperor of those ghosts was Meng Hao. Meng Hao’s will represented the will of all the ghosts.

Massive booms rang out.

As the surroundings were physically shaken, Jin Yunshan was mentally shaken. The Essence he had inserted into the wind was being ejected, and before he could do anything to solidify it, a boom echoed out in his mind, and blood sprayed out of his mouth as that Essence was gone.

In the blink of an eye, his control over the world was no longer harmonious, and the wind did not belong to him.

“Who are you?” Jin Yunshan cried, looking at Meng Hao with complete disbelief. “Just who exactly are you?!?!”

As he fell back, the ghosts continued to attack him with complete insanity.

It wasn’t that he hadn’t been aware of what happened in the void outside the land mass, when the masses of ghosts rushed forth to offer worship to Meng Hao. The main difference was that the sheer numbers involved couldn’t be compared to each other any more than the light of a firefly could compare to that of the full moon.

He simply couldn’t fathom how Meng Hao was possibly capable of such a thing. Even more terrifying was that the number of ghosts only continued to increase, which caused Jin Yunshan’s scalp to tingle in fear.

It was then that the land began to quake, and Jin Yunshan felt the Essence he had inserted into it being shaken in violent fashion.

Then, the fusion between himself and the land was violently ripped apart. Jin Yunshan felt as if his mind were being torn, and he yet again coughed up a mouthful of blood.

Unfortunately for him, there was absolutely nothing he could do to stop any of the things that were happening. He could only look on as his third Essence, which he had sent into the plants, was forcibly ejected.

Then, his murderous fourth Essence, which had merged into the world’s fire, experienced the same thing. After that was the water in the world.

After those Essences were rejected, the tearing sensation that he felt grew more intense, until he felt completely disharmonious with the entire world!

The ghosts were screaming as they swirled around. Among the army were some especially terrifying figures who swept the ghosts forth in attack, giving Jin Yunshan no choice but to continue to fall back.

Then, his eighth Essence, which he had merged into the sky, was slashed at as if by an invisible blade, cleaving it away. Then was his ninth Essence, which was in the lightning. Jin Yunshan coughed up a massive mouthful of blood, and his body sagged listlessly. He was no longer mostly transparent, but instead, had been completely rejected by the world.

He almost looked as if he had been crushed by a gigantic foot.

His most powerful trump card, the Void Divinity Conversion, was crushed like a wet twig by the simple wave of a hand by Meng Hao. He didn’t even have the power to fight back.

“If you weren’t in this place, you couldn’t do any of this!!” Jin Yunshan shrieked. After having been rejected by the world, Jin Yunshan fell back again, and yet the ghosts didn’t stop attacking him.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with the desire to kill, and he extended his right hand and then pointed toward Jin Yunshan. That caused the ghosts to go mad with even more killing intent than before, and rumble toward Jin Yunshan in attack.

“NO!!” he screamed. An extraordinary sensation of deadly crisis raged within him. His hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, causing countless shield layers to spring up around him. The shields shattered one by one, and he was shoved backward, an unyielding and yet despairing look on his pale face.

Actually, he had spoken correctly just now. Meng Hao would have had a very difficult time dealing with his magical technique were he not in this specific location. Furthermore, he would have been forced to pay a steep price to do so, not simply wave his hand casually as he had just done.

Rumbling echoed out as the shields surrounding Jin Yunshan collapsed. It was at this point that the Sect Leader suddenly flew into motion to appear next to Jin Yunshan. He waved his sleeve, unleashing his peak 9-Essences cultivation base power to protect him against the murderous ghosts.

At the same time, Sha Jiudong leaped forward, appearing on the other side of Jin Yunshan. His expression was somber as he similarly waved his hand, unleashing cultivation base power that caused a massive sandstorm to rise up to defend Jin Yunshan.

But even the combined power of all three of these powerful experts was not enough to rattle the endless army of ghosts. They began to fall back under the battering of the ghosts, their qi and blood boiling, their cultivation bases trembling.

“What are the rest of you doing?” barked the Sect Leader, his voice urgent. “Are you just waiting to see Fellow Daoist Jin get killed!?!? Old Ninth, stay your hand!!”

Shanguan Hong didn’t say anything, but bitterness filled his heart. He and the others present gritted their teeth and flew out to appear around Jin Yunshan. They poured their own power into the defense effort, unleashing their cultivation bases, creating an intense tempest of force to block the ghosts.

That combined force managed to halt the ghosts momentarily. However, these ghosts represented the life force of the entire land mass, and also contained some entities which were extremely powerful. As they continued to attack the tempest of power, it began to flicker like a flame on the verge of being snuffed out.

Meng Hao hovered there in the air, a bit unsettled at how things were proceeding as he watched everything that was happening. The ghosts of the necropolis were inherently powerful, which Meng Hao assumed had something to do with the cause of their deaths.

“Old Ninth, we need Fellow Daoist Jin!” the Sect Leader said, looking up at Meng Hao. “His magical techniques and divine abilities will help us in the land masses beyond this one. If he perishes here, it will be far, far more difficult to reach the ninth land mass.”

Jin Yunshan maintained his silence. His face was ashen as he looked at Meng Hao, mixed emotions clearly visible. Although he didn’t want to back down, he knew that if he didn’t, it was highly likely that he would perish.

Finally, he sighed. He was a decisive person, and although he could tell that Meng Hao seemed unwilling to rest until he was dead, he ignored that, clasped his hands, and bowed to Meng Hao. He spoke no words, simply relying on his actions to explain his attitude.

Meng Hao frowned. While it was true that he wanted Jin Yunshan dead, and to do that would be a difficult thing once they left the necropolis, the truth was if he actually killed him right here and now, it would earn the ire of everyone else from the Vast Expanse School. That was not an outcome he would willingly choose.

Even as he considered the matter, the Sect Leader gritted his teeth and once again spoke out.

“Old Ninth, I can understand that you have some misgivings. Therefore, I hereby swear a Daoist oath that if Jin Yunshan provokes you again, I will stand by your side to crush him!”

“As do I,” Sha Jiudong said. As of this moment, he had no choice other than to adjust his appraisal of Meng Hao. This battle had proved that he truly qualified to stand on equal footing with the other four Potentates.

Jin Yunshan smiled bitterly and nodded his head.

Seeing all that, Meng Hao still wanted to kill him, but after considering the matter, he quashed the idea.

“Since that’s the case, we’ll let the matter drop,” Meng Hao said coolly. “However, I can’t let things go as simply as that. I almost got killed just now. Fellow Daoist Jin, I demand penance.”

Jin Yunshan sighed inwardly. He knew that Meng Hao had the upper hand now, and that there was nothing he could do to fight back against him. Gritting his teeth, he made a grasping motion, causing a bracelet to appear out of thin air.

“Take this, Fellow Daoist Meng. This should make up for what happened here.” He waved his hand, sending the bracelet flying out of the tempest to hover in front of Meng Hao. Meng Hao scanned it with divine sense, and found that it contained a holding pocket filled with countless Immortal jades, as well as numerous other precious materials. After looking it over, he nodded and put it away.

With that, he waved his sleeve, causing the ghosts to retreat, bowing to him the entire time.

Meng Hao hovered there like the Emperor of the entire world. The group from the Vast Expanse School would never forget what had just occurred.

This battle had propelled Meng Hao from being the Ninth Paragon into being one of five Potentates of Planet Vast Expanse.

His position was now just as high as the Sect Leader’s. In fact, his battle with Jin Yunshan ensured that none of the powerful experts of the Vast Expanse School would ever dare to offend him, at least not within the necropolis.

Meng Hao was powerful outside the necropolis, but once inside, he had shown that he was… the monarch!

The army of ghosts made him invincible to anyone who had not Transcended.

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# Chapter 1441: Transcendence Dais!

After a quiet moment, Meng Hao put the bracelet away, and slowly, his killing intent faded. Everyone breathed sighs of relief. Jin Yunshan’s expression was very unsightly, but contained no hatred. He silently made his way a bit off into the distance, where he sat down cross-legged to meditate.

Sha Jiudong and the Sect Leader shared a hesitant look, then headed over to Jin Yunshan’s side, where they also sat down. It appeared as if they were there to offer protection, but even Jin Yunshan knew that they were also there to keep him in check if necessary.

They would protect him if Meng Hao’s killing intent suddenly ignited again, but they would likewise make sure that Jin Yunshan didn’t do anything to the detriment of Meng Hao.

The fight just now proved that Meng Hao had the right to be one of the Potentates, and neither Sha Jiudong nor the Sect Leader had any desire for anymore negative repercussions. The best thing was that the matter be dropped.

The ghosts didn’t disperse. After Meng Hao closed his third eye, they remained floating in the area, seemingly ready to spring into action the moment Meng Hao called them again.

“Fellow Daoist Ninth Paragon,” said the Sect Leader, “this matter stemmed from Fellow Daoist Jin’s hot-headedness. That’s true of both the incident on the bridge, and what happened here.

“However, he wasn’t completely in the wrong. There’s been a bit of a misunderstanding here. Even I was able to sense that there is a certain lingering will within the world of the necropolis. I personally do not think that it is the will of Patriarch Vast Expanse, but Fellow Daoist Jin was convinced that it was.

“Fellow Daoist Ninth, I think it’s safe to assume that you sense it too. It’s a killing intent that is directed at you….

“That is one of the reasons why Fellow Daoist Jin attacked you. He was under the belief that the will of Patriarch Vast Expanse wanted you dead. He believed that by killing you, he could please the Patriarch, and perhaps be benefited in the seeking of enlightenment.” It was in this manner that the Sect Leader explained why exactly Jin Yunshan had attacked Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s expression flickered upon hearing the explanation. After a moment of thought, he sent some divine sense into the land. Then, he nodded thoughtfully, although he declined to comment.

The Sect Leader didn’t seem to want to discuss the matter further. Changing topics, he pointed at the altar.

“Fellow Daoist Ninth Paragon,” he said with a smile, “this altar is the location of Transcendence here in the necropolis. There are nine lands here, each one of which has an altar just like this one.

“Supposedly, the altars are connected to Patriarch Vast Expanse, and were actually created by him countless years in the past. As for the specific details of the matter, even after combing through the ancient records, I wasn’t able to find many clues.

“However, Transcendence is definitely possible here. Before you arrived just now, Fellow Daoists Jin, Sha and myself managed to acquire a bit of enlightenment. However, we’re still quite a ways away from a breakthrough.” As he spoke, he approached Meng Hao, seeming very much at ease. It was a sharp contrast from only a few moments before.

Although he had treated Meng Hao well in the past, he now viewed him as more of an equal, and his tone of voice was far more sincere than before.

“Time is very limited right now. Fellow Daoist Ninth paragon, why don’t you try to gain some enlightenment from the altar? It’s impossible to say how lucky you will get, but you should try. As for the other Fellow Daoists, if you don’t mind, I hope… that you can allow them to step onto the altar as well, to try to reach enlightenment. After all… we don’t have much time.” With that, the Sect Leader clasped hands and bowed. Meng Hao thought for a moment, then nodded.

“That will be fine,” he said with a slight smile. Waving his sleeve, he flew over to the altar. He immediately noticed how that there were certain strange properties to the altar, something he hadn’t taken note of before. Without any hesitation, he sat down cross-legged in the very middle.

Even as he did, the other cultivators from the Vast Expanse School took deep breaths and followed. They looked beyond excited at their chance. Before, they had only been able to wait outside of the altar as they stood as Dharma Protectors for the three Potentates. At that time, they hadn’t been permitted to even get close, but now, they had their chance to step onto it. Although Meng Hao was there on the altar, none of them had offended him, so as long as they acted respectfully, they would not incite any of his killing intent.

One by one they flew over. After clasping hands and bowing to Meng Hao, they all chose locations to sit down cross-legged and meditate. In addition to Shangguan Hong and the other 9-Essences Paragons, there were the subordinates, the 8-Essences Paragons. All of them came, even Meng Hao’s two 8-Essences subordinates.

His two subordinates had a bit of a different standing now. As the subordinates of the Ninth Paragon, they felt the least pressure of anyone. They sat down cross-legged on either side of Meng Hao, to stand as Dharma Protectors as he sought enlightenment.

The Sect Leader’s expression was very solemn as he sat down cross-legged between Jin Yunshan and the altar. Although it seemed like a random position, both Meng Hao and Jin Yunshan could read between the lines.

He was demanding stability, and no fighting!

Jin Yunshan sighed inwardly. Actually, he had long since quelled any notions of trying to fight Meng Hao. The ghosts still existed, and he knew that if he made a move, he would most likely be killed in body and spirit.

“I wonder how many days this Meng Hao will be able to continue to seek enlightenment on the altar,” he thought. “This place is not as simple as it appears on the surface. The longer you sustain the effort of seeking enlightenment, the more you will gain. However, everyone has their limit. He might hold the higher ground in terms of fighting, but the altar requires personal enlightenment and good fortune. It has a lot to do with cultivation base level as well. I bet Meng Hao… will last no more than five days!” He snorted coldly. He himself had lasted for seven days on the altar before reaching his limit. Even if Meng Hao hadn’t appeared when he did, he would still have awoken from his seeking of enlightenment.

The Sect Leader and Sha Jiudong had lasted for similar lengths of time, seven days. At the moment, Jin Yunshan wasn’t the only one who was pondering how long Meng Hao might last. Sha Jiudong was thinking about the same thing.

Even the Sect Leader was contemplating the matter. Although his expression was placid, his eyes gleamed with thought as he looked over at Meng Hao.

The altar was completely silent as dozens of people sat down cross-legged and closed their eyes to seek enlightenment.

As soon as Meng Hao’s eyes closed, rumbling sounds filled his mind as he was connected to the altar.

He instantly sensed his thought processes speeding up, whereas his qi and blood began to slow. Even his cultivation base became extremely calm. However, his divine sense and his mental faculties all began to spin at ten times their normal speed.

Apparently, meditating on this altar focused one’s power in a way that made it easier to grope for understanding regarding Transcendence.

It was as if he were gazing at the starry sky, at the heavenly bodies, at the transformations of the world, at the flow of time, at the beginning and end of all living things. He was looking at everything.

It was his first time experiencing visions such as these, but it was not his first time experiencing such a mental journey. Actually, this experience was very much like what he had gone through when looking at the frescoes in the tunnel!

The Hexing magics inside of him, which were in the midst of turning into Essences, experienced a sudden acceleration in the process. After a long moment passed, Meng Hao reigned his thought processes in. Inwardly, he was shaken.

“This altar serves to bless the power of one’s enlightenment. It can be used to propel one from eight Essences to nine, and can also aid in moving from 9-Essences into Transcendence…. At the moment, the most important thing for me is not Transcendence, but rather, the creation of my Ninth Hex, and subsequently, my ninth Essence!

“I will use this altar to… gain enlightenment of my Ninth Hex!” Rumbling filled his mind as he focused his thoughts, cast aside any distractions, and focused completely on seeking enlightenment of the Ninth Hex!

This was not his first time contemplating that particular Hex. Quite the contrary, he had long since begun to make preparations for it!

“My Ninth Hex… will be… molded upon the Seal the Heavens Incantation. It will form… the Seal the Heavens Hex!” Meng Hao felt as if thunder were crashing inside of his mind. As his thoughts focused, the aura of Transcendence rose up within him. Gradually, a wind sprang up, which began to swirl around him.

His mind was completely occupied with seeking enlightenment regarding the Seal the Heavens Hex. He would take the Seal the Heavens Incantation and elevate it from being a magical technique or divine ability, into being a Hexing magic. Once that was branded into his soul, it would become… the Ninth Demon Sealing Hex!

Normally speaking, if he wanted to successfully accomplish such a task, it would take a very long time. However, with this altar, he could increase that speed exponentially.

Time passed. After the first day went by, different fluctuations were emanating off of different cultivators. The 8-Essences Paragons were radiating auras of the 9-Essences level, and the 9-Essences Paragons were emanating a feeling of Transcendence.

Various expressions were flashing across their faces. Some people seemed enraptured, some confused, some regretful, some grim.

On the second day, some of the 8-Essences Paragons began to tremble and sweat profusely. Pained expressions could be seen on their faces, but they held on bitterly.

On the third day, all of the 8-Essences Paragons were clearly on the verge of giving up. Only the 9-Essences Paragons were still completely focused on enlightenment.

On the evening of the third day, one of the 8-Essences Paragons opened his eyes, and blood oozed out of his mouth as he flew off the altar. He looked back at everyone else on the altar, his expression conflicted as he sighed inwardly. However, after a moment, his eyes gleamed. Having endured for three days, his gains were significant.

Soon more 8-Essences Paragons opened their eyes and then flew off of the altar, blood oozing out of their mouths. After enduring until they couldn’t do so anymore, they had no choice but to remove themselves from the area of the altar.

By midnight on that third day, all of the 8-Essences Paragons had awoken from their trances and left the altar.

Left behind were only seven people: Meng Hao, and the other 9-Essences Paragons of the Vast Expanse School.

Jin Yunshan’s face was calm, but inwardly he was laughing coldly. “He’ll hold out for two more days at the most. As for everyone else, they’ll awaken tomorrow.”

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# Chapter 1442: He Won’t Last Five Days!

Jin Yunshan was definitely not the only person paying close attention to what was happening on the altar. The Sect Leader and Sha Jiudong were similarly focused.

The surrounding 8-Essences Paragons were also paying close attention, with occasional looks of envy flickering across their faces, as well as anticipation.

“The Ninth Paragon is definitely going to hold on for the longest. I just wonder how many days that will be….”

Time proceeded to flow onward. By the time the fourth day arrived, three of the group of seven were trembling, clearly on the verge of opening their eyes. Whether or not they were willing, the aura of awakening grew more and more intense upon them.

“The Seventh, Fifth, and Fourth Paragons have cultivation bases slightly weaker than the others. I’m afraid they won’t last for longer than four days.” Whispered conversations were taking place among the surrounding audience.

Meng Hao’s expression was calm, but in his mind, the enlightenment regarding the Seal the Heavens Hex had placed him into a very perilous situation. Thanks to the increased power of enlightenment, he now fully comprehended the Seal the Heavens Incantation. If anyone were able to see inside of him, they would see a shocking sealing mark gradually forming.

Surrounding that sealing mark were eight other magical symbols that looked very similar to it. Those were the other Demon Sealing Hexes. From the look of it, the Ninth Hex was now about seventy percent complete.

There were threads that snaked out from that ninth sealing mark, which spread out to fill Meng Hao's body. As they did, they made contact with… strands of Immortal qi within him that had been severed during the process of being defiled and becoming the Demon.

Every thread that spread out from the sealing mark completed one of those threads of Immortal qi. The more Immortal qi that filled him, the stronger the sensation of Transcendence grew.

Apparently, the appearance of the Ninth Hex could help Meng Hao to proceed along the path of Immortality which had previously vanished!

The mark of the Ninth Hex gradually caused more and more Immortal qi to converge, causing him to radiate the air of an Immortal!

Time passed by, hour by hour. Soon, half of the fourth day was gone, and the three trembling 9-Essences Paragons slowly opened their eyes. After exchanging mutual glances, they sighed and removed themselves from the altar.

They had made various gains, but were the first among the 9-Essences Paragons to have to leave the altar. Although that lost them a bit of face, there was nothing they could do about it. Outside of the altar, they sat down cross-legged and continued to observe the other four who had remained behind.

Of those four, three were trembling, with Meng Hao being the only person who looked the same as before.

As the fourth day ended, and the fifth day approached, another of the 9-Essences Paragons opened his eyes. At first, a blank look could be seen, but soon he sighed and left the altar.

In almost that exact moment… the fifth day arrived.

As of this moment there were only three people left on the altar, including Meng Hao!

Among the nine Paragons, the Second and Third Paragons were second in power only to the Sect Leader. The fifth day had arrived, and they might be trembling, but having reached this point in their search for enlightenment, their auras of Transcendence were strong.

“The fifth day has arrived!! There are only three left. I wonder which one will last the longest!”

“The Sect Leader lasted for seven days, as did Fellow Daoists Jin and Sha. Seven days is the limit.”

“I’d be willing to bet that the Second and Third Paragons both awaken today. As for the Ninth Paragon… he might last for six days. In fact, seven days isn’t necessarily an impossibility!” Even as everyone discussed the matter, Meng Hao suddenly trembled visibly.

Although the movement was slight, everyone was paying close attention, and instantly noticed.

“What? Could it be that the Ninth Paragon is going to awaken now?!?! B-but… it’s only been five days!”

“His fight with Fellow Daoist Jin proved that he qualifies to be one of the Potentates. How could he awaken after only five days?” Everyone seemed shocked, but Jin Yunshan’s lips were turned up in a cold smile. He was certain of his judgement in the matter. After reviewing his battle with Meng Hao over the course of the past few days, he was more convinced than ever that there was something very strange about Meng Hao’s cultivation base.

That strange aspect was that he didn’t seem to truly have nine Essences. If he did, Jin Yunshan was confident that he would have been able to force him to use it.

“Perhaps he simply used some special technique to unleash the battle prowess of the 9-Essences level,” he thought, “but in reality, his cultivation base is only at the 8-Essences level! If that’s true, then he doesn’t qualify to be one of the Potentates!” Jin Yunshan’s eyes flickered, and his cold smile grew wider.

Sha Jiudong and the Sect Leader also had strange expressions on their faces as they studied Meng Hao. They were quite shocked that he was already showing signs of awakening even though it was only the fifth day.

Time passed. Soon, half of the fifth day had gone by. The Third Paragon coughed up a mouthful of blood, and then opened his eyes. After a moment passed, he shook his head, and yet his expression was one of excitement as he rose to his feet and left the altar.

Not long after that, the Second Paragon sagged listlessly. His body was extremely withered, and the aura of awakening upon him was strong, and yet unexpectedly… he calmly continued.

That caused a buzz of conversation among the onlookers, especially when they realized that Meng Hao was trembling even more than the Second Paragon was, and the aura of awakening upon him seemed to surpass the air of Transcendence. Strange looks appeared on their faces.

“What’s going on? The Ninth Paragon can’t even hold on on for five days?”

“Could it be… could it be because he sustained internal injuries?”

“There’s another possibility. What if the reason he never used his ninth Essence is because… he doesn’t actually have a ninth Essence?!” Everyone present was a Paragon, adept at analysis and skilled in scheming. It wasn’t long before everyone was contemplating the matter in such a way.

If Meng Hao really did awaken on the fifth day, then his newly-acquired qualification to be one of the Potentates would become a matter of skepticism. Although no one would say anything out loud, once he got back to the sect, he would be faced with many difficulties.

It was at this point that Meng Hao began to tremble even harder than before, and the aura of awakening grew stronger and clearer. Even his mind was battered with waves of shock.

“Why is this happening?!?!” he roared inwardly. “This is impossible!!” His divine sense was completely converged onto the sealing mark of the Ninth Hex. That mark had come to be ninety-nine percent complete on the previous day, and the threads spreading out from it had filled his body. The Ninth Hex was almost complete, and his cultivation base was poised on the brink of rising.

However, even in that moment of keen anticipation, the sealing mark of the Ninth Hex unexpectedly… began to break apart!!

Closer examination confirmed that it was true. The sealing mark really was breaking apart, without any warning or indication as to why. Over the course of a few hours, more than half of it collapsed, causing rumbling sounds to fill Meng Hao.

That was the reason why he was shaking; at the same time, a powerful force was apparently attempting to wrench him out of his state of enlightenment.

Meng Hao’s reserves of power ran deep. He had Shui Dongliu’s legacy, and even more importantly, the bronze lamp. As that powerful force attempted to force him out of enlightenment and into awakening, the bronze lamp began to emit a soft glow, which negated that power. However, he continued to tremble, and blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth.

Everyone watched as this happened. Meng Hao shook violently, and in the end, blood began to drip down off of his chin.

It was in that moment that the Second Paragon suddenly coughed up a mouthful of blood and shivered. As the blood oozed down, he sat there for a moment, then struggled to his feet. However, instead of looking as though he had been defeated, he threw his head back and laughed uproariously. As he stepped off of the altar, astonishingly, he emanated… the aura of the peak of 9-Essences!

That aura instantly attracted the shocked attention of everyone in the area.

The Sect Leader, Sha Jiudong, and Jin Yunshan all looked over. The Second Paragon truly had acquired good fortune from the altar. Although he hadn't reached Transcendence, his cultivation base had advanced by half a step, placing him at the peak of the 9-Essences level.

Instantly, expressions of congratulations began to ring out. The Sect Leader smiled and clasped hands meaningfully.

The excited Second Paragon took a deep breath, then suddenly looked back over at Meng Hao, and within his eyes flickered the desire to do battle. If Meng Hao could become one of the five Potentates, then he was confident that he could do the same.

That was especially true considering the fact that despite Meng Hao being the only person left on the altar, he was shaking visibly. That was the source of the Second Paragon's confidence, and was also why everyone else was paying such close attention to what was happening.

Jin Yunshan suddenly chuckled.

"He won't be able to last longer than five days," he said. "We're only a few hours from being finished here." As his voice echoed out, Sha Jiudong frowned, and a look of doubt appeared in the Sect Leader's eyes.

Everyone looked on silently, unwilling to speak. All eyes were focused on Meng Hao. Time passed.

Meng Hao's mind was in chaos. He glared at the motes of light which were the shattered bits of his Ninth Hex, as they slowly floated out into his body. After some thought, he began to calm his thoughts.

"There were no faults in either my plan or how I carried it out. Transforming the Seal the Heavens Incantation into my Ninth Hex was the right decision.

"Furthermore, during the process of enlightenment, my understanding of the Seal the Heavens Incantation went far past the previous level. I even managed to converge the Hex smoothly. So why did I fail in the end?

“I need to try again, and determine the reason. What caused the conversion of my Ninth Hex to fail!?” Having made his determination, he didn’t hesitate to start gathering together motes of light that were the Ninth Hex, simultaneously drawing upon the power of the altar to speed up the enlightenment process.

As the motes of light gathered, the sealing mark of the Ninth Hex gradually began to re-form. This time, Meng Hao went about the process with more caution. Every breath of time that passed, he was completely focused, and made sure to avoid any mistakes. After reaching various levels of enlightenment, he used the resulting knowledge in the creation of the Ninth Hex.

Time passed. Two hours. Four hours…. Rumbling could be heard inside of him, and once again he began to tremble. It was then that… the fifth day ended!

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# Chapter 1443: Difficulty Completing the Ninth Hex!

When the fifth day passed, Jin Yunshan did not look happy at all. In fact, it was almost as if he had just been slapped by an invisible hand.

A few hours before, he had boldly asserted that Meng Hao wouldn’t last for five days. But here Meng Hao was, still sitting there, and calmly at that, with no more trembling.

The scene left him very grim-faced. As for everyone else present, strange expressions could be seen on their faces.

Regardless, the suspicions people had regarding Meng Hao were now deeply rooted within them; even if he lasted for six days, they would still have their misgivings.

Unless… he could pull off a miracle, something so astonishing that it would drive away any lingering suspicions. If Meng Hao did so, then his status and grandeur would reach an unimaginable level.

“Six days is his limit!” Jin Yunshan growled. His words were met with silence as everyone focused on watching Meng Hao.

Two hours passed. Four hours. Six hours…. Ten hours. Twelve hours. As the fourteenth hour passed, the grimness in Jin Yunshan’s face deepened. Everyone else had strange expressions as they watched Meng Hao. What was happening with his ninth Essence left many of them rattled.

Soon, sixteen hours had passed. Then eighteen. Finally… twenty-four hours went by. A collective gasp could be heard.

“Seven days!!”

“Something strange is going on with the Ninth Paragon. He was clearly on the verge of waking up, but then he lasted for an entire additional day!”

“True, but seven days is probably his limit.”

As people discussed the matter, Jin Yunshan’s face was as pale as ash. He couldn’t feel more gloomy. He had openly said five days was Meng Hao’s limit, only to have him last six days. Then he said six days was the limit, and he lasted for seven.

He also noticed people glancing furtively at him, causing rage to explode up in his heart.

“Seven days! That’s definitely his limit!” he growled through gritted teeth.

Everyone seemed to agree with him. Although no one said so out loud, the consensus was that Meng Hao would last for seven days.

Even the Sect Leader seemed to hold the same opinion. As for Sha Jiudong, he closed his eyes and stopped watching. Instead, he inwardly pondered whether or not Meng Hao… really had a ninth Essence.

Everyone continued to wait. Ten hours passed. Then sixteen hours. It didn’t take long for twenty hours to go by. By this point, Jin Yunshan couldn’t remain seated. He rose to his feet, an expression of disbelief painted on his face.

He wasn’t the only one. Sha Jiudong opened his eyes again, and the Sect Leader was staring. All three of the peak 9-Essences cultivators looked on with minds reeling.

If they had such a reaction, there was little need to wonder how the others were responding. Looks of astonishment could be seen on all faces.

“The seventh day is about to pass. Don’t tell me… he’s actually going to last for eight days!?”

“That’s impossible! The Sect Leader only lasted for seven days, as did Fellow Daoists Jin and Sha!”

People were still discussing the matter when the twenty-fourth hour passed by, and… the eighth day arrived!

As of this moment, Jin Yunshan, the Sect Leader, Sha Jiudong, and everyone else were completely flabbergasted. Eight days was longer than anyone present had maintained their position on the altar.

If Meng Hao had maintained a calm disposition the entire time, it might not have been as shocking. But he had almost woken up in the middle of the process, only to continue onward resolutely. Everyone who was watching felt as if their minds were under attack by shock.

Jin Yunshan felt like he had just been slapped in the face again. His eyes went wide as the eighth day began to go by.

Six hours. Twelve hours. Eighteen hours…. Soon another twenty-four hours had passed. Meng Hao had endured for nine days!

“Impossible!!” Jin Yunshan exclaimed. The Sect Leader’s eyes were as wide as saucers, and Jin Yunshan was panting. In the audience, jaws dropped in shock.

Meanwhile, inside of Meng Hao, the sealing mark of the Ninth Hex was once again ninety-nine percent complete. Vast amounts of Immortal qi were streaming out into various parts of his body, connecting them to the sealing mark. As a result, the feeling of an Immortal was growing stronger inside of him!

It was possible to imagine what would happen if he finally succeeded. When the Ninth Hex was completed, it could completely reverse Meng Hao’s path, and change the Demon… back into the Immortal!

Meng Hao was so focused on the matter that he could even detect that as the Hex reached a state of completion, his cultivation base was changing. It was transforming back into what it had been in the Mountain and Sea Realm, what he had cultivated all along… the path of Immortality!

Forming the sealing mark was drawing fully upon Meng Hao’s concentration and powers of enlightenment, and he was sure that he hadn’t made any mistakes.

The aura of a ninth Essence also appeared, merging with the other eight Hexes, which made Meng Hao even more certain in his judgement.

Without any hesitation, he proceeded to make his attempt at completing that final bit. Rumbling could be heard as the sealing mark of the Ninth Hex… unexpectedly collapsed again!!

A tremor ran through Meng Hao, and blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth. The same power which had exploded out before once again appeared, except with even more intensity than before.

The bronze lamp flickered, and blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth. It took supreme effort, but he managed to force himself to remain in the state of seeking enlightenment. His mind felt as if it were being pounded by thunder, and inwardly, he was raging.

“Something or someone doesn’t want me to complete my Ninth Hex!!” During this second attempt at finishing the Ninth Hex, he had been paying very close attention, and was now certain that, in the very moment of completion, certain fluctuations had appeared within him that would be very hard to detect unless you were looking for them.

Those fluctuations had interfered with the appearance of the fully formed Ninth Hex, and led to his second failure.

Although Meng Hao’s eyes were closed, they were completely bloodshot. He gritted his teeth, and once again drew upon the power of enlightenment offered by the altar. He fully rotated his cultivation base, and the light of the bronze lamp poured energy out into all parts of his body. It was as if he had become one with the altar itself.

Rumbling sounds could be heard as the enlightenment power of the altar exploded out, filling Meng Hao. The aura of Transcendence grew stronger, like a tempest that raged around the altar.

His repeated attempts resulted from an unwillingness to fail again. However, to everyone else, what was happening was utterly shocking.

The crowd outside the altar watched the aura of Transcendence grow on Meng Hao, and could sense an intense level of pressure radiating out from him.

Everyone began to edge away, even the Sect Leader. The aura of Transcendence, and the powerful tempest, were things that could shake Heaven and Earth.

Wild colors flashed in the air, and to everyone watching, it almost seemed as if Meng Hao were in the process of Transcending.

It was a feeling that left their scalps tingling with shock.

“Impossible!!” Jin Yunshan murmured, his eyes wide.

Shock filled his person as he and everyone else waited another day. The ninth day concluded, and the tenth day began. Then… the eleventh day, and the twelfth.

“T-twelve… twelve days?”

“How inhuman can this Ninth Paragon be? How could anyone last for twelve days?!?!”

“Just what level is his cultivation base? The peak 9-Essences experts only lasted for seven days, but he actually… has lasted for twelve days!? And from the look of it, he’s going to keep going!!” Everyone was abuzz, thoroughly shaken by Meng Hao.

Of course, however shaken they were, that feeling was not going to be reduced. It was only going to grow more intense!

Thirteen days. Fourteen days. Fifteen days….

When the sixteenth day arrived, Meng Hao had surpassed all expectations and pulled off that miracle!!

He had done something that no one else could even come close to doing, something… truly miraculous!!

Whatever suspicions people had harbored regarding Meng Hao were completely and utterly dispelled. Even the Second Paragon, who had recently stepped into the peak of the 9-Essences level, was so shaken that any desire he had to challenge Meng Hao to a fight were completely gone.

Jin Yunshan refused to believe that, after enduring for sixteen days, and having begun to emit such a strong aura of Transcendence, Meng Hao didn’t have a ninth Essence.

“Dammit, he was actually holding back even more than I thought in our fight!! He did it all on purpose! He was using me to establish his place, and he let me go so that he would have an excuse to kill me if I ever made another move on him!!” Having reached this conclusion, Jin Yunshan began to tremble inwardly. Finally, he forced himself to regain his composure. However, he was filled with bitterness, and couldn’t help but muse about how sinister Meng Hao was.

The Sect Leader’s face was unprecedentedly serious. He was completely shaken, even more so than when Meng Hao had been fighting Jin Yunshan. In fact, he was thinking exactly the same thing that Jin Yunshan was.

They weren’t the only ones. Sha Jiudong had also reached this same conclusion, and his fear of Meng Hao had reached an even higher level than before.

Meng Hao had no way of knowing how frightened everyone was because of his actions. He only knew that his third attempt at forming the Ninth Hex had resulted in yet another failure.

However, this failure was met with complete calm. This time, he had not been focused on actually forming the Ninth Hex, but rather, on determining… who it was who was trying to stop him!

In the moment that the Ninth Hex collapsed, he was sitting there cross-legged on the altar, and a tremor ran through him. His eyes suddenly opened, and they were completely bloodshot as he looked up into the starry sky of the Vast Expanse. His expression was one of fury and madness as he said, “So, it turns out it was you all along!”

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# Chapter 1444: Swear an Oath!

Sixteen days.

The fact that Meng Hao had remained on the Transcendence Dais for sixteen days left the audience completely and utterly shaken.

Jin Yunshan. Sha Jiudong. The Sect Leader. All of them were completely jarred.

Then Meng Hao opened his eyes, radiating the aura of Transcendence, and everyone felt their hearts trembling. Those blood-colored eyes contained an unspeakable ferocity, giving them the sensation that they were looking some wild beast from ancient times.

Meng Hao had not Transcended, and in fact, his Ninth Hex had collapsed three times in a row. However, when the third collapse occurred and Meng Hao opened his eyes, his consciousness left the Transcendence Dais. At the same time, a powerful air of Transcendence filled the area, becoming a raging vortex that spun wildly around him.

The vortex rose higher and higher until it seemed to connect to the Heavens. It was a completely shocking sight.

As the boundless winds screamed, the Sect Leader’s face flickered, and he fell back. Jin Yunshan and Sha Jiudong didn’t hesitate to do the same, as did everyone else in the crowd. Even as everyone retreated to a position 30,000 meters away from the altar, they could feel the wild aura raging up from that location.

Rumbling echoed out in all directions as the cyclone of wind shot so high it seemed to slash into the starry sky of the Vast Expanse itself.

In the middle of the cyclone was Meng Hao, who was looking up into the Heavens, eyes wide. It was as if he could see through the Vast Expanse and beyond, as if he were staring at an entity that no one else could see.

“It was you….” he said, his eyes crimson. He had been puzzled by the first collapse of the Ninth Hex. He had been shaken by the second. But the third… had corroborated his suspicions, and provided the answer which he sought.

He had confirmed that there really was something surreptitiously interfering with his cultivation. It was like some omnipotent force which was preventing the Ninth Hex from appearing.

Perhaps the more accurate description would be to say that it was not impeding the Ninth Hex, but rather, preventing Meng Hao… from transforming from the Demon back into the Immortal.

And the reason for that was…

“Allheaven fears the Immortal,” he murmured in a grim voice. Now he understood everything. If he hadn’t passed through that tunnel, and seen all of the visions regarding Allheaven, if he hadn’t seen Allheaven destroy a world with a single finger, he would never have been able to piece together the true reason why his Ninth Hex was being interfered with.

Because he had, he was now able to determine definitively that the aura of the force preventing the completion of the Ninth Hex… and the aura he had felt when Allheaven destroyed that world in the fresco… were exactly the same.

They were exactly the same type of power.

In fact… because of the three failures of the Ninth Hex, Meng Hao had discovered something terrifying. Unexpectedly, the power of this so-called Allheaven apparently had the same origin… as the Demon.

Instead of saying that Allheaven had interfered, leading to the collapse of the Ninth Hex, it would be more accurate to say that the deed was done by both Allheaven and the Demonic power inside of him.

“Allheaven….” he murmured. He had many questions regarding Allheaven, many misgivings. And no answers. In fact, deep in his heart were many speculations which had arisen because of what he had seen in the fresco visions. Speculations regarding the Mountain and Sea Realm, the Immortal God Continent, the Devil Realm Continent, and Planet Vast Expanse.

Unfortunately, there were no answers to the many questions he had. Nor were there even any clues or evidence to analyze. There was even a bit of disbelief within Meng Hao’s heart. After all, he was no newcomer to the practice of cultivation. He was well aware that many times, the things you saw with your own eyes weren’t even real.

But as of now, he was certain about the existence of Allheaven.

Within the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, there was definitely some entity with the name… Allheaven.

Furthermore, there was some connection between this entity called Allheaven, and himself. At the very least… Meng Hao was certain that there had been something pushing him along in the transformation from Immortal into Demon.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with killing intent as he shot to his feet. In that instant, the sky filled with intense rumbling, and the cyclone began to crumble, as though some incredibly powerful destructive force were descending.

The aura of Transcendence shattered, and the altar began to shake violently. The intense pressure descending made it seem like the power of the entire starry sky of the Vast Expanse was crushing down.

Everyone from the Vast Expanse School coughed up blood, even the Sect Leader, Sha Jiudong, and Jin Yunshan. Shocked expressions could be seen on their faces as they fell back even further than 30,000 meters.

The entire first land mass seemed to be filled with an intense but soundless screaming, causing everything to shake violently.

Meng Hao stood there on the altar facing the intense pressure, and he coughed up a mouthful of blood. The pressure was trying to get him to submit. It pushed down on him, causing his legs to tremble, as if it were trying to get him… to kneel to the Heavens.

But there was more to it than that. From Meng Hao’s perspective, it was as if this pressure were trying to get him to swear an oath that he would never again attempt to transform from the Demon into the Immortal.

His face was extremely grim as the pressure increased. He was shaking visibly, and his bones creaked on the verge of breaking.

But then he suddenly threw his head back and laughed and laughed uproariously. His eyes glowed bright red as his Demonic qi surged.

“Threatening me?” he chuckled. His hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, and at the same time, his third eye opened. Instantly, the surrounding ghosts became completely visible.

Beneath the Heavenly pressure, the countless ghosts were trembling. And yet, expressions of insane viciousness could be seen on their faces, unyielding glares of hatred.

Even Meng Hao could sense that the aura of the pressure weighing down now was exactly the same as when Allheaven had destroyed this world. How could this host of people who had been killed by Allheaven not also detect that very same thing?

“I, Meng Hao, have practiced cultivation free from guilt my entire life. I pursued the Dao of the Mountains and Seas. Even you, Allheaven, do not qualify to levy threats against me!” Mad laughter rang out as Meng Hao waved both of his arms out in front of him.

When the surrounding ghosts sensed Meng Hao’s will and determination, they threw their heads back and let out bitter howls. None of the other cultivators present could see the ghosts, but they could sense the sudden influx of intense coldness they caused.

There were so many ghosts it was impossible to tell how many there were, and they were all howling together in one unified voice which rose up into the Heavens. They didn't know why they had become ghosts after having been killed by this pressure. Nor did they understand why they were more powerful in death than in life. But they did know that, even though they had been unable to fight against this power when they were alive, now that they were dead… they would most definitely fight it!

It was impossible to say which ghost did it first, but soon, all of them were flying toward the cultivation base tempest which swirled around Meng Hao. In the blink of an eye, countless ghosts were flying through the air toward him, causing the tempest to become bigger and stronger.

Vast, uncountable numbers of ghosts surged forth, causing the tempest to rapidly expand. 300 meters. 3,000 meters. 30,000 meters. 300,000 meters. 3,000,000 meters. 30,000,000 meters….

It spread out seemingly without end, with the altar at its center. Eventually, it covered the entirety of the first land mass, creating an indescribable cyclone.

The enormous cyclone swept across the lands, causing mountains to tremble and rivers to seethe.

The cultivators from the Vast Expanse School were there within the raging winds, trembling, looking around in astonishment at what was happening. They were even able to make out faint screams echoing about.

"Revenge. Revenge!"

"We were killed by Allheaven's finger, so in death, we shall exterminate Allheaven!"

"The vengeance of the Vast Expanse Continent is like a flame that not even the Heavens can extinguish." Countless voices rang out, a cacophony like the voices of an entire world, causing a huge sound wave to surge within the windstorm. Then, Meng Hao raised his hands and pointed up toward the Heavens. In response, the windstorm, along with the countless howling ghosts, began to rise up into the air.

They were like a magnificent army charging toward the Heavens, a sight no one would ever be able to forget.

The combined forces of an entire landmass, of all the ghosts that existed there, charged up as if to vanquish the Vast Expanse. Then, as everyone watched, the sky up above was torn apart by the cyclone.

The starry sky beyond was revealed, and the Vast Expanse, and yet the windstorm kept rising up. Suddenly, within the shattered dome of the Heavens, a figure appeared. He was blurry, and impossible to distinguish clearly. Formed from mist, he stood there, looking at the endless army of ghosts, then stretched out a hand in a pushing motion.

Something like an invisible barrier apparently existed in front of that figure, and deafening rumbling sounds echoed out as it began to move downward.

When the ghosts ran into the invisible barrier, they collapsed into pieces, completely incapable of doing anything against it.

The vast disparity of power was like a huge ravine which there was no hope of crossing.

“Transcendence!” said the astonished Sect Leader. “That’s… the power of Transcendence.” Everyone else was equally astonished.

Meng Hao might have emitted some of the aura of Transcendence, but that had been somewhat of a fluke. This figure, and the outstretching of its hand… caused… the true power of Transcendence to appear.

Meng Hao stood there on the altar, watching everything play out. Inwardly, he was shaken. He could also sense the power of Transcendence, and could tell that the windstorm he had created, and the countless ghosts within it, could do nothing to stop or even shake this invisible barrier.

In the blink of an eye, the barrier destroyed half of the cyclone, and continued to grind downward relentlessly. It was now getting closer and closer to Meng Hao.

To explain by means of illustration, the power of Transcendence compared to the power of an cultivator who had not Transcended, was like… a drop of water compared to fog.

No matter how much fog there was, it could do nothing to prevent that drop of water from passing through it.

In this case, the windstorm and the ghosts were the fog, and that invisible barrier was the drop of water. Not only did it pass through the fog, it crushed everything, and could not be resisted in the slightest.

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# Chapter 1445: One Word!!

The blurry figure behind the invisible barrier apparently had long hair and was wearing a long robe. However, no facial features were visible except for his eyes.

Those eyes were cold and merciless, as if there were no life in them at all, as if they were empty, as if this figure were nothing more than… a weapon!

A weapon!

That was the distinct feeling Meng Hao got after catching sight of the figure behind the invisible barrier.

At the same time, the barrier continued to crush down. The cyclone continued to collapse, and the countless ghosts continued to dissipate. The lands shook, and crevices opened up. Mountains and rivers rumbled, and everything, even the altar, began to crumble and show signs of complete collapse!

The group from the Vast Expanse School had long since reached a state of utter astonishment. All of them rotated their cultivation bases in an attempt to resist what was happening, but it did little good.

In that moment of extreme crisis, the bronze lamp inside of Meng Hao blazed brightly, as though it were building up power which would explode out at any moment.

However, before that could happen, all of a sudden… faint fluctuations began to emanate out from the distant ninth land mass, where that huge figure was seated on the enormous throne.

They were faint, but even as they appeared, Meng Hao could hear a voice coming from the ninth land mass. It was difficult to hear at first, but it only took a moment for the volume to swell. Eventually, it was possible to make out a word. Apparently it was saying…

BE!

It was only one word, apparently the word “be,” and it almost sounded like a musical note.

That one word came out from the ninth land mass, and as it passed along, it caused the eighth land mass to shake, and the light there to grow dim. Even as the eighth land mass was thrown into turmoil, the sound passed into the seventh land mass, then swept across the sixth. The sky trembled, and roaring sounds filled the lands. Everything shook in astonishing fashion. And the sound was getting closer and closer to Meng Hao….

By the time it reached the fifth land mass, the sound had apparently changed. What Meng Hao now heard sounded more like the word “gone!”

GONE!

In fact, now it almost didn’t sound like two words had been spoken. Whistling screams accompanied the arrival of the sounds, and everything trembled. It passed through the fifth land mass, roared across the fourth, then shook the third and the second….

By the time it reached the first land mass, the explosive sounds had united. The word was not “be”, nor was it “gone.” It was one single word.

“BEGONE!”

“BEGONE!!”

“BEGONE!!!”

The sound echoed about endlessly. It was like an explosion that violently shook the Heavens!

Apparently, it had always been one word, but had been spoken at such a distance away, and traveled so quickly, that it had become split apart along the way. But now that it was here in the first land mass, it erupted with incredible power. That was a power which could destroy the Heavens and extinguish the Earth!

Incredible rumbling echoed out across the first land mass. Mountains and rivers were rocked, and a wind of madness swept about. Wild colors flashed about in Heaven and Earth!

It was a single word that was so domineering it caused everything to shake wildly!

One word crushed the Heavenly might. One word shocked all creation. One word caused the invisible barrier to begin to tremble, and then to be riddled with cracks. A moment later, it shattered completely!

That same word shook the Heavens, causing the blurry figure up above to distort and twist, as though it were being battered by a massive tempest. Then, it faded away.

This virtually indescribably shocking scene occurred because of only a single word!

A single word uttered by that figure on the enormous throne, one word, completely changed everything. The crushing might of Allheaven was dispersed, and the Heavens were shattered!

It was as if that word had become an enormous hand which swept across Heaven and Earth, crushing everything that was not of the necropolis. Even the will of Allheaven was incapable of staying, and had been driven out.

This sight left Meng Hao completely reeling. He turned to look over at the ninth land mass, mind rumbling with shock.

However, that voice… was something only he could hear. The Sect Leader and the others couldn’t detect it at all. Of course, they were still shaken, although not by the voice itself; they mistakenly believed that everything that was happening was being caused by Meng Hao.

Meng Hao looked at the ninth land mass, and was suddenly struck with the deep desire to go there and see for himself this figure was who had just uttered that word. Who was he?

The indistinct figure had clearly emanated the power of Transcendence, and whose single uttered word seemed filled with virtually infinite power…. A person like that… must be a Transcendent cultivator!!

“Was it Patriarch Vast Expanse…?” Meng Hao thought, taking a deep breath. That was the only guess he had at the moment.

After a long moment passed, Meng Hao swished his sleeve and reigned in his cultivation base power.

The sky was quiet, and the lands went still. A moment ago, a shocking tempest had been raging, but now everything was back to normal, almost as if nothing had happened at all.

Meng Hao closed his eyes, and his heart was anything but calm. Far too many shocking events had occurred, and he deeply desired to know who it was that had uttered the word “begone” just now. He wanted to know why Allheaven feared the Immortal, and he wanted to know what the arrival of the Demon meant. What did the Demon have to do with Allheaven, and why… did they have similar origins!?

Even more than all that, he wanted to know why the Mountain and Sea Realm had been fated to be destroyed. Behind the scenes, there was some entity manipulating things, and that entity was none other than… Allheaven.

In any case, the name of Allheaven was now deeply burned into Meng Hao’s mind. To him, it was a clue.

He stood there silently for a moment before opening his eyes. When he did, he saw the cultivators of the Vast Expanse School panting. Because of everything that had occurred, there was no way they could possibly maintain their calm. First was the sixteen days he had spent seeking enlightenment, then there was the aura of Transcendence shaking the Heavens. Then came the Heavenly might which had crushed down onto them. All of that left them in complete and utter fear of Meng Hao.

It took a moment for Meng Hao to compose himself, but when he did, he turned once again to gaze at the ninth land mass. Then, his third eye slowly closed. When his view returned to normal, he stepped off of the altar.

In that moment, the cultivators of the Vast Expanse School looked at him with mixed emotions.

After a moment of silence, the Sect Leader cleared his throat, and was just about to say something when, all of a sudden, the entire land mass lurched. Ripples spread out in the Heavens, and majestic light began to shine down.

That light contained boundless, indescribable heat which immediately caused the freezing coldness on the first land mass to begin to fade away.

However, that was of secondary importance. Most noticeable to Meng Hao, and to all of the cultivators from the Vast Expanse School, was that grass had sprouted from the ground beneath their feet. In the blink of an eye, everything around them was as green as jade!

Off in the distance, the ruins suddenly blurred as time seemed to flow backward, and they began to return to their original state!

A city gradually appeared, and there were some areas off in the distance where mountains and rivers could be seen….

It wasn’t just in their immediate vicinity; the entire first land mass was experiencing a dramatic transformation.

This bizarre turn of events caused the Sect Leader’s face to fall.

“Time is up! We cannot stay here any longer. If we do… we will all die! Meng Hao, even if you can command the ghosts here, you will still perish!!

“Go. All of you, go now!!” The Sect Leader transformed into a beam of light that streaked at top speed off into the distance.

The other Paragons seemed to be aware of what was happening. Faces flickering, all of them took to flight, including Jin Yunshan and Sha Jiudong.

Seeing such a reaction from them caused Meng Hao’s eyes to flicker. At the same time, he could sense that the flame in the bronze lamp was dying down, and his strange connection to the ghosts was vanishing.

Without the slightest hesitation, he flew into the air, joining the group as they sped toward the bridge leading off of the land mass.

As they sped along, the Sect Leader explained matters to Meng Hao. “When the necropolis is opened, there is a time limit in place. If you can’t reach the first land mass within ten days, then something bizarre will happen in the region outside. Once, we almost exceeded that time period and… the ruins outside of the land mass returned to their ancient state. There were even living people. But then something strange happened. They all died….

“At that time, some of our people died there too….

“The time limit once you reach the first land mass is one month. If you don’t get to the second land mass by that time, then you must leave the necropolis!

“Considering the bizarre things that happen outside of the land mass when the time limit is reached, I can only imagine what happens within the land masses.

“To say that this necropolis is one of the most dangerous places in the entire Vast Expanse is no exaggeration. It’s a restricted area even for people in the 9-Essences level.

“Right now, we have no choice but to leave. We can return in one year at the soonest, and then… hopefully we can reach the second land mass. If we can, then we should be able to stay inside a bit longer.”

Even as Meng Hao listened to the Sect Leader’s explanation, he could feel his connection to the ghosts fading away. Soon, it was gone altogether, and the bronze lamp had gone almost completely dark.

His face flickered as he turned to look behind him.

When that happened, his mind spun. He saw that all of the ruins had reverted to their previous state of glory. He saw cities that existed like mirages on the surface of the land. He saw statues suddenly appear, and he saw mountains rise up which had not been there before.

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# Chapter 1446: The Aura of the Copper Mirror!

Most astonishing of all was that he could see… countless people!!

Shockingly, there were numerous cultivators, including men and women, old people and young. Apparently, this was just an ordinary day to these people, as they went about the affairs of their daily lives.

The sound of tolling bells could be heard, and the buzz of conversation. People gave sermons on the Dao in the mountaintop sects.

There… were no mortals in this place. The entire land mass was occupied by cultivators; everyone here practiced cultivation, no matter their position.

There was something warm and genial about these people. There was nothing vicious or evil about them, and everyone seemed to be smiling and laughing. Although there might be some level of fighting and scheming, some grudges or conflicts, the overall sensation was that this place was a sublime, flourishing civilization.

There was Immortal qi, strong and abundant, and Meng Hao was even able to see one area which had been set aside to grow… the most precious of materials.

Countless Immortal creatures flew about in the sky, and the sounds of happiness filled the air. At one point, an Immortal crane flew by Meng Hao, and unexpectedly… it turned its head to look at him curiously.

That single glance left his mind reeling.

“This isn’t an illusion. What I’m seeing… isn’t a hallucination, but… real? I’m actually traveling back into ancient times with this land mass?” Even as Meng Hao was reeling in shock, the other cultivators were looking around, equally astonished.

Everything around them looked beautiful and wonderful, and yet Meng Hao could sense that within the beauty, there was immense, deadly danger!

Although he wasn’t sure what exactly was so dangerous, there was no time to ponder the matter. He took a deep breath and pushed forward even faster, flying past the 8-Essences Paragons.

Everyone was going all out with their cultivation bases, trying to build up as much speed as possible. They proceeded along for an undetermined period of time, and soon, the buildings around them were completely restored. The mountains and rivers, and in fact the entire aura of the land, was that of ancient times. All of the people were completely solid and visible to the eye. It was at this point that Meng Hao and the rest of the group spotted the border of the land mass up ahead, as well as the bridge.

Before, that bridge had been made of flesh and blood, but now, it was permeated with Immortal qi, making it an Immortal bridge. There were people on it, chatting and laughing, and when they noticed Meng Hao and the rest of the group, they stopped in place and looked over.

One of them was a young man. When he spoke, his voice was clear and filled with dignity. “Excuse me, Fellow Daoists, may I ask what has you in such a panic?”

His words caused Meng Hao’s face to turn grim. Jin Yunshan’s pupils constricted, and Sha Jiudong and the Sect Leader looked on with flickering expressions. Everyone else in the group gasped.

Although they were aware that the lands they were in appeared to have returned to ancient times, and had even seen people looking at them as they sped along, they had still harbored hope that maybe it was all just a fluke….

But now, with people actually talking to them, they realized that they really were back in ancient times.

“Ancient times…. Ancient times….” As Meng Hao looked around at everything, something suddenly occurred to him. He remembered a vision he had experienced recently, and suddenly began to pant. Then he looked up into the sky, and his face fell.

“Get out of here immediately!” he said loudly. “Do it however you can, otherwise… we’ll face deadly catastrophe!!” Even as the words left his mouth, he waved his hand, sucking his two 8-Essences Paragon subordinates into his bag of holding.

His two subordinates had never seen him act this way, and as such, didn’t refuse. After they allowed Meng Hao to place them in his bag of holding, he bit his tongue, spitting out a mouthful of blood to unleash an escape magic he had acquired from Shui Dongliu’s legacy. His speed increased dramatically, instantly placing him upon the bridge itself. A huge wind blasted out as he sped along.

Everyone else in the group was taken aback. Meng Hao’s words caused their hearts to begin to thump. There was no need for them to ponder whether he might be deceiving them. The things which were happening around them were simply too strange. They immediately unleashed divine abilities, holding nothing back in their charge toward the bridge.

The young man on the bridge frowned, then snorted coldly. He extended both hands, and was just about to prepare to block the way, when suddenly a sound like thunder echoed out in the vast blue sky up above.

The sound of the thunder instantly caused all of the cultivators’ minds to reel, and their bodies to involuntarily shiver. It was the same even with Meng Hao. His face fell as all of his doubts were swept away. He was now absolutely certain that this was the day… that he had seen in the vision, when Allheaven’s finger destroyed the world!

Only moments ago, he had sensed fluctuations coming from the ninth land mass, which indicated that someone was facing a Tribulation!!

Suddenly, colors flashed in the sky, and the sound of thunder exploded out. Heaven and Earth shook violently, and all living beings in the world looked up. The young man on the bridge ignored Meng Hao and the others as he stared up into the sky, shocked.

Meng Hao flashed past the young man like lightning, and even as he reached the end of the bridge, an icy coldness began to descend.

Without thinking about it, he looked back and saw… all of the land masses quaking. Mountains shook and rivers seethed as a gigantic finger began to descend from up above!!

The finger was so big that it filled the entire sky, and as the living beings of the world looked up, their faces were filled with complete astonishment and disbelief.

To Meng Hao, even just looking at the finger caused so much pressure to crush down on him that his head felt stabs of pain, and blood sprayed out of his mouth.

“This level of power far exceeds what I felt when I faced Allheaven earlier. Based on what I saw in the visions, this time period was when Allheaven… was at a peak level of power!!”

He coughed up another mouthful of blood and pushed forward with even greater speed. At the same time that he shot off the bridge, the Sect Leader, along with Jin Yunshan, the Second Paragon, Sha Jiudong, and everyone else, stepped onto it.

No one spoke; there was no time. They unleashed all the speed they could muster to race across the bridge and toward the exit of the necropolis.

Jin Yunshan almost immediately transformed into a golden sun, and a series of after images could be seen stretching out behind him as his speed increased dramatically. As for Sha Jiudong, his body shrank down, transforming into a stream of sand that merged with the wind and sped along at top speed.

The Sect Leader took a deep breath, then took a step forward. Although that steep seemed to carry him only a few meters ahead, he actually traveled 30,000 meters! It was as if he were transforming an entire swatch of land into a tiny stretch of space.

Everyone else used different, varied methods to speed through the world toward the exit. It was at this point that, behind them, the Heavenly finger which filled the sky began to descend onto the first land mass.

That finger was like a world unto itself, moving with such incredible speed that it gave birth to Heavenly fire. A sea of flames spread out starting from the fingertip, and as that happened, a howl rose up from far off in the distance.

“Allheaven!!” the voice shouted, filled with rage and pain. Even as it echoed out, the finger… made contact with the land!

The surface of the land shattered. Countless sects were crushed, and countless mountains were reduced to rubble. Cities and statues fell, rivers and vegetation were destroyed….

All of the people living on the land were killed in that same moment, unable to struggle or even fight back. Their bodies… were instantly transformed into ash.

One cultivator after another was incinerated, and in the blink of an eye, the entire first land mass… became a place of death. The Immortal creatures, the precious materials, everything vanished.

The group of people on the bridge, including that young man, were shredded to pieces. Their flesh and blood splashed about, turning the bridge red, filling it with gore….

It was as if an invisible shockwave were blasting out, destroying everything that it touched….

The shockwave continued out past the borders of the land mass, spreading out into the cities which floated on the outside. They were all transformed into ruins, and everyone who lived there was killed.

Meng Hao and the other cultivators from the Vast Expanse School were all fleeing for their lives!

One of the 8-Essences Paragons was a bit too slow, and was overtaken by the shockwave. He began to tremble, and was then transformed into ash. When the rest of the group saw this, their minds reeled. Looking back at the incoming shockwave, they pushed more power out of their cultivation bases, even detonating magical items to gain more speed.

Meng Hao’s face was very grim as he sped along, the fastest of the entire group. As the exit neared, he suddenly heard another shrill cry echoing out from one of the distant land masses.

“Allheaven!!” The voice said exactly the same thing it had before, but the tone was different this time. It contained sadness, insanity, and boundless enmity. In that instant, the world was plunged into sinister coldness.

Those words filled the entire world with never-ending hatred!

Meng Hao didn’t look back. He continued onward, a blur as he stepped into the exit. Even as he was about to leave the necropolis, he suddenly… sensed some very familiar fluctuations. A tremor ran through him, and he stopped in place, slowly turning his head to look behind him.

When that happened, he saw a glittering beam of light shooting out from the ninth land mass toward the enormous finger. Within that beam of light… was a copper mirror!!

Within the mirror was a cold, detached figure, a colorful parrot whose eyes blazed like lightning. It was a majestic sight as the parrot slammed head first into Allheaven’s finger!

“The copper mirror…” Meng Hao thought, his mind reeling. Under no circumstances could he ever have imagined… that he would see the copper mirror in this place!

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# Chapter 1447: Yeah, I Am!

Meng Hao stood there, one foot in the exit, a gentle force tugging at him, as if to pull him out. However, there was absolutely no way he would let his other foot step into the exit.

Trembling, he looked back at what was happening in the distant sky. The copper mirror… was something that had changed his life. Inside that mirror was the parrot, who had become his friend, his comrade!

That made him think of the meat jelly. The parrot and the meat jelly were always at each other’s throats, but… they had long since become like his family.

How could he ever forget the meat jelly’s talkativeness, or the parrot’s boasting? How could he forget how they had called themselves Lord Fifth and Lord Third? How could he forget the seafood song?

All of those things were there in his mind, to remain there for all time. In the end, in that critical life-or-death moment, the parrot had been willing to erase its mind for Meng Hao, and the meat jelly had sacrificed its undying life force.

In the end, one of his friend’s consciousnesses was wiped out, and it was taken by those two powerful forces. The other turned into a lifeless husk which was now tucked away deep in Meng Hao’s bag of holding.

“The parrot….” Meng Hao murmured. In that moment, Jin Yunshan whistled past him into the exit, and then vanished. After him was Sha Jiudong, and then the Sect Leader. All of them were rushing as fast as possible to escape.

As they left, they glanced over at Meng Hao and wondered what he was hesitating about. However, there was no time to ponder the matter, and they quickly left.

Meng Hao stood there, seemingly oblivious to the cultivators from the Vast Expanse School. As they flew past him, his eyes were glued on the copper mirror.

He saw the copper mirror slam into the finger, which trembled in response. Shockingly, the finger tilted back, and cracks began to spread out over its surface. The finger even began to tremble.

A grunt of surprise could be heard, and then the cracked finger flicked the copper mirror.

The copper mirror… shattered.

Nine shards… scattered about in all directions. Eight shards flew out into the starry sky, toward parts unknown. As for the main body of the mirror, it was not shattered, but grew dark and dull as it also flew out into the depths of the starry sky.

However… one of the shards of the mirror… landed on the third land mass….

Meng Hao saw it very clearly, and when he did, he began to shake. He was suddenly filled with the impulse to go to that third land mass and find that mirror shard!!

He had the feeling that if he could find that shard, then perhaps… he could once again sense the copper mirror. Maybe he could sense the parrot!

When the mirror shattered, the figure on the ninth land mass shot toward the finger, radiating grief and madness….

As for what happened to him, Meng Hao didn’t see. He was completely focused on the third land mass. Most of the cultivators from the Vast Expanse had already escaped. However, there were two 8-Essences

Paragons still rushing toward the exit. They were only about thirty meters away when they suddenly trembled and transformed into dust.

In that exact same moment, the bronze lamp inside of Meng Hao went as dim as if it had been extinguished. Meng Hao could sense that it was a moment of incredible danger, and that death was rushing toward him.

He knew that he was treading a razor-thin line between life and death, and yet he still chose to open his third eye. Using the third eye, he noted the exact location on the third land mass where the mirror shard had landed, and committed it to memory.

By that time, death was almost right in front of him, like an invisible mouth preparing to consume him. In that moment, Meng Hao threw his head back and bellowed, stepped fully into the exit, and vanished.

A moment later, the ripples of death inundated the area where he had been standing.

Back on Planet Vast Expanse, in the teleportation portal formation on the half-planet….

Meng Hao materialized, coughing up a mouthful of blood. His face was pale, and yet his eyes were blazing as if with raging flames.

Everyone else looked completely bedraggled. Of the dozens of people who had gone into the necropolis, only twenty came out alive. The rest… had perished inside.

Meng Hao looked over at the Sect Leader and asked, “When can we go back in!?”

“At minimum, one year. However, there’s no guarantee we can go back that soon. Various preparations must be made, and I also need to personally go ask Immortal Bai Muchen to come with us! With her and the Second Paragon, we will have six peak 9-Essences cultivators. With you included, I’m very confident that we can open the passageway to the second land mass.” The danger they had just faced did nothing to lessen the Sect

Leader’s resolve, and in fact, he was even more convinced than ever that they should go back.

With the Transcendence Daises, they all had a hope of Transcending!

Meng Hao stood there silently, then looked down at the teleportation portal upon which he stood. His heart was anything but calm; he had profited to an extreme level in this trip to the necropolis, most importantly, by getting a clue regarding the copper mirror. He was more determined than ever that he had to get back in!

“If I can find that mirror shard, then perhaps I could restore my connection to the copper mirror….” Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed with obsession. After a moment passed, he swished his sleeve, sending his two 8-Essences subordinates flying out, looking completely shaken. Although they had been inside Meng Hao’s bag of holding, he had not sealed their ability to sense what was happening in the outside world.

When Meng Hao had stopped at the exit, the two 8-Essences Paragons had felt the extreme, deadly danger of the situation.

Meng Hao’s face was grim as he stepped off of the teleportation portal. He was feeling a bit frustrated, the type that came when keen anticipation filled you, but there was no option other than to wait for what you wanted.

As he left the spell formation, Jin Yunshan was there up ahead of him. After returning to the Vast Expanse School itself, he had breathed a sigh of relief. Back in the necropolis, Meng Hao held the advantage. With countless ghosts at his beck and call, it created a deadly threat that gave Jin Yunshan no choice other than to bow his head. But now that they were back in the sect, although he wouldn’t intentionally provoke Meng Hao, he could at least give him a dirty look.

It wasn’t that he fundamentally had the desire to irritate Meng Hao, especially not with the oaths sworn by the Sect Leader and Sha Jiudong. However, after suppressing his feelings for so long in the necropolis, now that he was back in the Vast Expanse School, it was only natural that he would want to let off at least a little bit of steam.

Meng Hao’s performance on the Transcendance Dais had been miraculous, and his battle against the Heavenly might astonishing. But Jin Yunshan was convinced that Meng Hao had done all that with the help of the ghosts. Following that line of reasoning, it meant that Meng Hao had never unleashed his ninth Essence, and Jin Yunshan… simply couldn’t believe that he didn’t actually have one. In his estimation, Meng Hao was keeping it hidden away as a trump card.

Therefore, he had no intention of actually fighting Meng Hao, but had no qualms about giving him a spiteful stare. And thus he did.

Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed in response.

“Get out of my way,” he said.

Jin Yunshan frowned. They were in a very open area, and although he really was standing in front of Meng Hao, it would be very simple for Meng Hao to simply walk around him.

“Trying to start something?” Jin Yunshan replied in a grim voice, his eyes turning even icier than before.

It was a single sentence, and a single cold look. How could Jin Yunshan have ever imagined that in response, Meng Hao’s eyes would turn cold, and he would say, “Yeah, I am!”

Even as the words left Meng Hao’s mouth, he lunged forward and unleashed a powerful fist strike.

That fist strike combined the powers of the Life-Extermination, Self-Immolation, God-Slaying, and Devil-Butchering fists. Lands shook and mountains were rocked. Colors flashed in the sky. It was a dazzling spectacle.

Jin Yunshan’s face fell. He had sustained serious injuries in the necropolis, and was currently only capable of fighting with seventy percent of his full power. When he realized that Meng Hao was suddenly attacking him, he quickly performed an incantation gesture to counterattack. A crashing boom echoed out between the two of them.

Jin Yunshan fell back, trembling, feeling more insulted than ever. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and his eyes gleamed with madness.

The truth of the matter was… he really had no intention of fighting with Meng Hao. In his mind, standing there as he had been was nothing excessive. All he had done was cast a dirty stare in Meng Hao’s direction. He hadn’t done anything deliberately provocative, only acted a bit cold.

Unfortunately for him, he had no idea what kind of a lunatic he had provoked….

He had no idea, and in fact, no one did. The Sect Leader was smiling wryly, and Sha Jiudong groaned inwardly. The Second Paragon’s eyes went wide; although he was aware of how overbearing Meng Hao could be, he had never imagined that he would see something like this happening. Clearly… Meng Hao was in a bad mood, and needed to vent on someone. And that someone turned out to be Jin Yunshan….

Booming sounds rang out. Jin Yunshan felt insulted and enraged. Even as he performed an incantation gesture to unleash a divine ability, Meng Hao transformed into a huge roc. Rumbling sounds could be heard as countless feathers swirled into the air, and at the same time, his Hexing magics combined!

One boom after another rang out. Jin Yunshan was already injured, and had been cowed by Meng Hao in the necropolis. He had no desire whatsoever to fight, and as such, was beaten back no matter what he did.

The Sect Leader shook his head wryly. Finally, he and Sha Jiudong jumped in and separated Meng Hao and Jin Yunshan, who glared angrily at each other as they were pulled back.

“You psycho!” said Jin Yunshan, almost yelling. He felt more insulted and maligned than ever. “You think you can just go around hitting people because you're in a bad mood? Wasn't our grudge resolved already? I gave you that bracelet of holding!!"

When Meng Hao recalled the matter of the bracelet of holding, his expression softened, and he cleared his throat. He wanted to say something, but couldn't think of anything appropriate. In the end… it was true. Because of being in a bad mood, he had been looking for trouble.

With a cold snort, he turned and flew off toward Ninth Paragon City, where he immediately went into secluded meditation.

"Psycho! Madman!" Jin Yunshan glared at the departing Meng Hao, and vowed to himself that he would get revenge somehow. But then he thought about how Meng Hao had lasted for sixteen days on the Transcendence Dais, and about how vastly separated they were in terms of power. Meng Hao hadn't even used his ninth Essence! Most importantly, he was essentially invincible when in the necropolis, and there were surely many more trips to the necropolis coming in the future. Finally, he gave up on the idea of getting revenge.

"Dammit. I definitely have to make sure not to stand in that psycho's way in the future!"

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# Chapter 1448: A Year….

It would be easier to find a phoenix feather or a qilin horn than to find someone in the Vast Expanse School who knew about what exactly had happened in the necropolis. The group which went inside sustained serious casualties: numerous 8-Essences Paragons were killed, and the Sixth and Eighth Paragons also died.

To the Vast Expanse School, that was a huge loss. However, to the individuals who survived, the benefits were immense!

8-Essences Paragons, 9-Essences Paragons, and even the handful of peak 9-Essences Paragons all spent time on the Transcendence Dais, and gained different levels of enlightenment regarding their future path. Although the paths ahead of them were not clear, their time in the necropolis ensured that the mistiness which covered them was lifted to some degree. Each and every individual believed that if they were given the opportunity to seek further enlightenment, then… the impossibility of reaching Transcendence… might change into a distinct possibility.

Although the benefits to the 8-Essences Paragons were not as great as those received by the 9-Essences experts, they were still significant. There were even some who were already gaining an understanding of their ninth Essence, and who would surely advance by leaps and bounds.

It was possible to say that, although the Vast Expanse School had experienced significant losses, the benefits to those who had survived were worth it. All of them went into secluded meditation as soon as they returned.

Meng Hao sat in his secluded meditation temple, his expression calm. He thought back to everything which had occurred in the necropolis, and his face gradually filled with a cold, unyielding expression.

He refused to give in to the idea that he could not form the Ninth Hex.

“Allheaven fears the Immortal, and his power is of the same origin as my Demonic power. This matter… is bizarre, to say the least.” After a moment of silence, his eyes glittered, and he smiled coldly.

“I can’t use this body of mine to form the Ninth Hex. If I try, I will fail…. The Ninth Hex would transform me, causing the foundation of the Immortal to appear again, and allow me tread that path once more.

“The thing is, I don’t care whether or not I’m the Immortal. I just care about getting stronger. Immortal? Fine. Demon? Great. I don’t care, as long as I can get that ninth Essence, as long as I can extinguish the bronze lamp, as long as I can Transcend!” His eyes shone with a thoughtful gleam. If he couldn’t personally form the Ninth Hex, then he had to find some way to get someone else to help do it for him!

“Who would have thought that turning the Seal the Heavens Incantation into the Ninth Hex would cause Immortal transformation…. I suppose I could pick something else for the Ninth Hex. Maybe that would work….” He frowned.

“No. That’s out of the question.” He sighed, and then suddenly, his eyes glittered as a strange idea popped up into his mind.

“Hmm….” His eyes flickered even more brightly, until he suddenly rose to his feet and began to pace back and forth in the temple. After a moment, he stopped in place.

“If this body is not suitable to form the Ninth Hex, then… what if I create a clone without any Demonic power? He would have almost no connection to me at all. Perhaps that clone could form the Ninth Hex!!

“If a Demon cannot form the Ninth Hex, then maybe an Immortal… can successfully make the Seal the Heavens Hex!

“If the clone succeeds, and my true self merges with the clone, then… I will still get the Ninth Hex in the end!” Meng Hao’s eyes began to shine brightly.

“Although it might be a bit difficult, at least I have a direction!

“The Seal the Heavens Hex incites Immortal meridians. In that case, if my clone has a pure Immortal body, then its chances for success would increase exponentially.” The more he thought about it, the more feasible it seemed.

“This clone’s mission… will be to finish the Ninth Hex!” His eyes gleamed with determination as he thought back to all of the various cloning magics he possessed. One of them was the True Self Dao, and he also had a magical technique from Shui Dongliu’s legacy.

But all of those cloning methods involved removing a part of himself to create the clone, which wasn’t suitable. He needed a clone untinged by even the slightest bit of Demonic power. Only then could he successfully gain enlightenment of the Ninth Hex, and then eventually fuse back with his true self.

“It won’t work unless… that clone is truly me. Even if my true self dies, the clone can live on. That type of clone would be truly independent, and yet would still be something that could merge back with me!” With that, he reached up and pressed down onto his forehead.

Rumbling filled his mind as suddenly… three Nirvana Fruits appeared!

As the Nirvana Fruits hovered in front of him, emitting dazzling light, Meng Hao smiled.

“Seventh Year Tribulation…. If Shui Dongliu could come up with that elaborate plan for the Mountains and Seas all because of the strange factors within the Fang Clan bloodline, then naturally, I can do something similar!

“My clone will be different than any other type of clone. And that is because… he will be… my fourth life!!” At this point, he closed his eyes, causing their shining brightness to disappear.

Back on Planet East Victory, his Seventh Year Tribulation had caused him to wither up, and in the process, produce a Nirvana Fruit. That had occurred twice. In the seventh year of his second life, he had withered up again, and in the process of beginning his third life, produced a second Nirvana Fruit.

In that third life, his parents had accompanied him to Planet South Heaven, where he began his whirlwind of a life, a life that had led up to this very day.

Now, he wanted to forcibly begin… his fourth life. However, he wouldn’t do it with his true self, but rather, a clone. His third life and his fourth life would both exist simultaneously!

It was a situation in which the roots would be the same, but the branches would be different. Fusing would also be no problem, because the bodies would be fundamentally exactly the same! At the same time, his fourth life would be a complete separation from his third life, ensuring that no Demonic power existed on the clone.

“I can use that clone to seek enlightenment of the Ninth Hex!” He took a deep breath and sat down cross-legged. Then, he pushed down on his forehead again. Rumbling sounds began to echo out as he used his Nirvana Fruits to form the body of his fourth life.

The divine ability involved required time. As Meng Hao sat there, eyes closed, life force streamed out of the Nirvana Fruits and converged upon his forehead, where it gradually began to grow stronger.

It was only a bit of life force, like a brewing seed.

Time passed. A year went by, during which time the Sect Leader sent word to Meng Hao that the preparations to go into the necropolis again required an additional, undetermined length of time.

Although Meng Hao was anxious to get back into the necropolis, the brewing clone also needed time.

Another year passed.

Meng Hao’s clone was in a constant state of growth, and was rapidly reaching the point when it could begin to live his fourth life.

There in front of Meng Hao, a blurry figure could be seen. It was impossible to make out the facial features clearly, but its aura was completely different from Meng Hao’s. However, Meng Hao could sense that there was some connection between the two of them, a connection that would be extremely difficult to sever.

“Three years of refining. This clone will live my fourth life. The root is the same, but the branches are different. He doesn’t have an iota of Demonic power…. Before he turns seven, I will send him into the mortal world to experience life. Seven years later, his memories will awaken. When that happens, I will be him, and he will be me. However no one else will be able to detect the connection between us, our shared root. At that time, my clone can begin to cultivate the Ninth Hex!

“I can’t rush things. The Ninth Hex is critical for me being able to Transcend!” Meng Hao looked at the blurry figure in front of him, then waved his hand. The figure transformed into a beam of light which flew out at top speed. Flying along with it was a red beam of light which, upon closer examination, could be seen to contain a tiny mastiff.

The light flew out of the half planet’s starry sky and onto Planet Vast Expanse itself. Somewhere in the land mass that belonged to Meng Hao, it vanished.

He didn’t deign to do anything to hide the matter. After all, the only people who could detect it would be the handful of people in the peak of the 9-Essences level. None of them who were watching would pay much attention to such a thing.

To them, Meng Hao was a lunatic. And lunatics… were people to be avoided. That was especially true of this particular lunatic, who was invincible within the necropolis, and could not be provoked.

Jin Yunshan and Sha Jiudong both felt that way. As for the mysterious Immortal Bai Muchen, she kept herself separate from worldly affairs, and had no interest in matters like that.

Deep beneath the surface of the half-planet, the Sect Leader sat on the turtle shell above the sea of flames. A profound gleam appeared in his eyes, the glow of augury. After a moment passed, he slowly lowered his head.

“What divine ability was that? How come I can’t see it clearly? This Ninth Paragon is wrapped up in too many secrets.

“Well, those things are all trivial anyway.” The Sect Leader smiled, then closed his eyes. Meng Hao was now more important than ever, considering how things had gone in the necropolis. His battle prowess placed him among the Potentates, and the Sect Leader didn’t want to incur his displeasure by being overly curious.

In the year that passed, things were quiet in the Vast Expanse School. Although Meng Hao’s subordinates continued to expand his power and influence on the outside, on Planet Vast Expanse itself, everything was peaceful, and no major incidents occurred.

All of the most powerful experts were in secluded meditation.

Something else happened during that year. In the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, a young man appeared. He wore a green robe and had long white hair, and was accompanied by a gentle-looking woman. They entered the Vast Expanse from the outside, and came to a stop at a location near the Immortal God Continent. As soon as they entered, the Vast Expanse began to seethe, and threatening rumbling sounds began to echo out. Some unknown force within the Vast Expanse immediately began to try to expel the white-haired young man. Apparently, staying within the Vast Expanse came at a huge cost to him. It was as if the entire Vast Expanse were trying to eject him.

He looked at the Immortal God Continent, and mixed emotions played out on his face. After a while, he sighed. The woman standing next to him seemed unable to endure the sight, and closed her eyes.

"I severed that finger all those years ago, and starting then, it became very difficult enter this Vast Expanse. There are so many memories tied up with that land mass. It's a good thing… it's all in the past now. I'm not one of them any more. What use is it for them to call to me…?" The young man sighed.

"Severing that finger evoked such hatred against me… bone-deep hatred!

"As for the Fellow Daoist still wrapped up with that same hatred… once he Transcends, he'll understand everything." The white-haired young man turned. Along with the woman, he left the Vast Expanse, after which the expelling force which had risen up slowly faded away.

Another thing happened in that year. Outside of Planet Vast Expanse was a cultivator clan which was said to have existed since ancient times. The person who had led them in their recent comeback was a female Chosen, and during that year, she joined the Vast Expanse School. After being accepted into the Sect Leader's division, the Sect Leader himself appeared, which was rare. Looking at her surname, he asked her what her given name was.

The woman smiled and replied. "Bei. Disciple Han Bei at your service."

The final event which occurred during that year occurred on the border of the ninth land mass of Planet Vast Expanse. There, a small forested mountain could be seen, beneath which flowed a river. A middle-aged scholar was sitting next to that river, reading a book. Suddenly, he looked up and saw a sleeping baby floating along above the surface of the river.

The baby had a wooden tablet lying on his chest, with a name written on it. Fang Mu. Within the baby's hand was a fruit that seemed to be made of gold or jade, and yet wasn't. An aura like that of reincarnation could be detected, as well as the Dao of Nirvana. Next to the baby was a little dog, which was happily licking the baby's cheek.

The water parted for the baby, and fish leaped up excitedly. The sunlight didn't dare to strike the baby too harshly, and the countless beasts which peeked out from within the trees of the forest wouldn’t harm a hair on his head.

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# Chapter 1449: Haowie

On the border of the ninth continent of Planet Vast Expanse was a river which snaked back and forth to parts unknown, dotted on either side by little villages.

One of them was called Peach Blossom Village.

A few hundred people lived in the village, and generally speaking, they all got along well with each other. Supposedly, they descended from a group that migrated to this location from one of the great clans many years in the past. Exactly what happened along the way was unknown, but years later, Peach Blossom Village came to be.

Most of the people who live there made a living by hunting or fishing. In the morning, smoke would curl up from kitchen chimneys, and at night, the stars twinkled in the sky. It was a peaceful and auspicious place….

Occasionally, though, a commotion would break out, and one might even hear shouts of rage….

“Fang Mu! Haowie! When I get my hands on you I’m gonna spank that little butt of yours!” 1

“I don’t care what you say, I’ve had enough. Stop right there, Fang Mu! If you try to run, I’ll just have to go have a word or two with that drunkard father of yours!”

“That’s my rooster! Y-y-you… you can’t take my rooster!”

On one particular morning, as smoke rose from the chimneys, cries like this echoed out in the village. The voices belonged to the elderly, the village grownups, and even children.

Meanwhile, a six-year-old boy was hiding in the bushes in a far corner of the village, looking very pleased with himself. He was handsome, with eyes that glittered like stars and skin as smooth as jade. He wore rough, hemp garments, and even had some mud smudged on his face, but that couldn’t conceal the clever, intelligent gleam in his eyes.

His hand was clasped around the throat of a chicken. At first glance, the chicken appeared to be struggling, but closer examination revealed that it was trembling. It trembled, not because of the boy, but because of the hunting dog that was stretched out on the ground off to the side.

The dog lay there lazily, and yet it emanated an invisible pressure. Whenever the chicken started to struggle, the dog would growl, and the chicken would instantly sag listlessly in fright.

Some time passed, and the village eventually quieted down. The boy licked his lips, then slowly began to tip-toe his way back through the village, chicken in hand. The hunting dog followed along, also licking its lips.

“This isn’t for you,” the boy whispered, “so don’t even think about it. This is my tuition!” He threaded his way through the village until he found himself in front of a somewhat dilapidated house, whereupon he gave the gate an urgent kick.

“Master!” he whispered. “Open up. Hurry!”

The gate opened, revealing a slovenly old man. He reached out, dragged the boy inside, then looked around to see if anyone had noticed before closing the gate.

As soon as he was inside the courtyard, the boy spoke in a loud voice, “Master, you old fogey, I brought this rooster as my tuition. I want to study Immortal magic!”

The old man wasn’t very tall, and had a hunched back. He turned and looked at the boy with narrowed eyes, then looked at the chicken, and began to salivate.

“Excellent. Excellent,” he said, sounding very serious. “Ah, you know how to bring gifts to your Master, kid, you really have potential. Alright, fine. After I deal with this evil creature, I’ll teach you some Immortal magic!

“You just wait here for a bit while I convert the wicked, shameless beast!” With that, he grabbed the chicken and took a few steps toward the house.

“Master, how are you going to convert it?” asked the boy, eyes wide with curiosity.

“No peeking,” the old man said sternly. “Master is going to be using some magic, so you’ll probably smell something strange. There’s not much spiritual energy in this remote place, plus I’m injured, so I’m counting on you to act as Dharma Protector.

“Haowie, I’m placing my life in your hands. You must do a good job as Dharma Protector.”

The young boy nodded excitedly in response.

The old man entered the house, and a few moments later, a miserable squawk could be heard. Then came the sound of feathers being plucked, and the hiss of boiling water. Before long, a fragrant aroma drifted out.

The boy was very curious, and after a bit of time, couldn’t help but ask, “Master, since this evil creature is a monster, why is it so weak? I caught it almost without even trying.”

“That’s because Master used some magic earlier to drain its power.” By this point, it sounded like someone was eating a meal inside the house.

“Master, I’ve helped you catch a lot of monsters throughout the years. In fact, the village is almost completely cleared out of the things. That’s why my dad spanks me all the time. When are we going to leave the village to kill some monsters and fiends?”

“Oh, there’s no hurry. Yesterday, I noticed a mutt in the yard of Old Zhu’s house on the west side of the village. You should bring that dog over to me for inspection. It’s also an evil creature!” The sounds of ravenous devouring could now be heard in the courtyard.

The boy looked quietly up into the sky.

“Master, my dad’s temper is really bad. A few days ago when he was spanking me, he said I was the reason he failed in the Imperial examinations.

“Oh, another thing. He said I got picked up out of the river, right?

“I’ve been having a lot of dreams lately. I dream about weird people and strange things. I even see people flying around. Something about all of it seems really familiar. It’s almost like someone is calling out to me, as if… there are two me’s.” The boy seemed to have difficulty expressing what exactly he wanted to say, and the more he talked, the more confused he seemed.

At some point, the slovenly old man had emerged from his house, and was now standing in front of the boy, looking at him.

“Don’t let your imagination run too wild,” he said, yawning. “Two you’s? You’re talking about a clone, and only very powerful people can have clones. Yes… powerful people like your Master. Tell me, based on your feeling, where is this other version of you?”

“There….” said the boy, rising to his feet and pointing off in a certain direction, a blank look on his face. “There. Very, very far away. I dreamed about a huge temple, and lots of mountains.”

“Hahaha! Master knows exactly what place you’re talking about. That’s the Ninth Sect! The Vast Expanse School’s Ninth Sect. Now that I think about it, the Ninth Sect has been recruiting disciples in this area recently. If you serve Master well, I might be able to recommend you.” The old man chuckled. Seeing the blank look on the boy’s face, he reached out and tousled his hair.

“Alright, fine. You’ve always loved to let your imagination run wild. Poor kid. Okay, I’m going to teach you some amazing Immortal magic today. It’s a natural Heavenly Dao, something Heaven-shaking and Earth-shattering, something that ghosts and gods alike revere. We’re talking about the essence of life here, the origin of all magics, the Dao of all Daos!” The boy’s previous confusion was gone, and now he seemed excited.

“Let’s go!” said the old man, looking up at the evening sky. He led the way out of the courtyard and then down a little path behind the house. The boy followed along, as did the lazy dog.

They walked along for awhile until it was dark, whereupon they reached the back courtyard of a certain house. The old man looked this way and that, then leaped over the wall and into the courtyard with the boy. Then, he whispered, “You’re definitely not allowed to see what will happen in a moment. Just listen. There’s going to be a sermon on the Dao, understand? Master is going to be doing some cultivating. You just stand there and watch me as I, er, I mean, you stand watch as Dharma Protector.”

The boy’s heart began to pound, and he nodded eagerly. Looking pleased, the old man walked over and entered the house. Moments later, the boy heard the voice of a woman.

“What took you so long, you old bastard?”

“I’m here now, heh heh. Alright, let’s hurry things up. I’m going to perform some magic for you….”

Soon, some very strange noises could be heard coming from inside the house. The boy’s eyes went wide. He didn’t quite understand what was happening, but he suddenly remembered that Widow Li often had male visitors coming and going, bringing her various gifts.

“So, it turns out Widow Li is a cultivator!” he murmured. He was so engrossed in listening to what was happening that he didn’t notice something behind him. At some point, a blurry figure had appeared. Of course, even if the boy hadn’t been so engrossed, he probably still wouldn’t have noticed.

It was a young man wearing a green robe. He looked like a scholar, except his expression was cold. He appeared on the scene without making the slightest sound, although his arrival caused the starlight to distort somewhat. The hunting dog shivered, and a warm look appeared in its eyes.

“Seventh Year Tribulation…. Tonight, my clone’s Seventh Year Tribulation will come…. After the tribulation, his memories will eventually return. Then, he will be me, and I will be him.” That young man was none other than Meng Hao, and this boy was the clone he had sent into the mortal world to live his fourth life. He was also the clone who would seek enlightenment of the Ninth Hex.

“It should be coming any time now,” Meng Hao said softly. In almost the exact same instant that the words left his mouth, a tremor ran through the boy, and he coughed up a mouthful of blood. He let out a sudden cry as his body began to wither.

The sudden cry startled the old man, and also rang out through the quiet night to be heard by other villagers. The old man rushed out of the house, and when he saw the boy, a look of sincere concern appeared on his face. The truth was that he really did care for the child, and because of that, he quickly ran over and pushed his hand down onto his forehead. Nothing happened. The old man’s face fell. He knew that some vile ailments were best treated by medicinal plant concoctions prepared by doctors, so he scooped the boy up in his arms and raced through the village toward the doctor’s house.

It was a sleepless night for most of the villagers in Peach Blossom Village. At some point, dark, churning clouds had filled the sky, though no rain fell. Thunder boomed, and gradually a mist built up. Strangely, the mist was violet-colored, and roiled as if countless terrifying entities existed inside of it whose roars echoed out into the night.

The little boy who had somehow come to be known as Haowie lay trembling in the courtyard of the doctor’s house. Many villagers were present, including the slovenly old man. There was also a middle-aged scholar who, despite wearing his scholar’s robe, had a stubbly beard, and held a flagon of alcohol in his hand. His eyes were blank and unfocused.

This was the boy’s father. Years ago, he hadn’t been like this. However, after failing the Imperial examinations, he had abandoned himself to despair. He was as drunk as usual, and had been physically dragged over to the doctor’s house by one of the other villagers.

“I can’t save him,” the doctor said, sighing.

When the middle-aged scholar heard that, he looked over at the boy he had picked up out of the river, who was now withered and gaunt. The scholar shivered, then raised his alcohol flagon and took a long swig.

“He’s better off dead….” he murmured, sounding pained.

The other villagers in the courtyard sighed sadly. Although the boy was often a bit naughty, to see him die of illness like this was very distressing.

Meng Hao currently hovered up above, looking down silently at the events playing out. Just when he was about to reach out his hand, though, something happened.

“Who said he’s better off dead! Haowie’s not going to die!” The old man strode forward, eyes bloodshot as he once again took the boy into his arms.

“He’s not going to die, you hear me?!” he yelled. “He’s just sick, right? You people can’t save him, and his dad doesn’t care, but I’m his Master and I care!” With that, the old man carried the boy away.

Everyone was shocked, and instantly devolved into a hubbub of voices. Suddenly, people saw the old man erratically flying up into the air, which caused the entire village to break out into an even bigger commotion.

Meng Hao hovered there, watching thoughtfully. Gradually, he faded away. He could sense that his clone was gradually awakening, and that soon, there would truly be two versions of himself.

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# Chapter 1450: Joining the Sect!

“Maybe mortals can’t save him,” said the old man through gritted teeth as he floated up into the air, “but cultivators can!” His cultivation base wasn’t very high, and he had been seriously injured years ago. His longevity was nearing its end, and therefore flight was only possible for him by burning some of his life force quintessence. Even that wasn’t something he could do for extended periods of time.

He had once thought that he would simply grow old and die in Peach Blossom Village. He had never imagined that he would encounter this young boy who he now held in his arms. In fact, it wasn’t really the scholar who had raised the boy, it was this old man who had guided him through his young life.

“It’s just some illness, right?!” the old man growled. Soon, he had flown to the peak of a nearby mountain. There, he very gingerly pulled a jade slip out of his garment, an old jade slip that was worn and almost broken. After pulling it out, he looked down at it with a bit of hesitation. This was the most precious item he possessed, and even he wasn’t sure where it came from. However, he was certain that the divine ability it contained was unique and profound.

Sadly, his latent talent was only average, and he had never been able to cultivate it successfully. However, he distinctly remembered how, back in the days when he had come to acquire it, numerous cultivators had been fighting over it, all of whom had seemed very powerful to him.

Gritting his teeth, he cast aside all hesitation, and pushed his finger down onto the surface of the jade slip. Instantly, he seemed to age even more, and yet, a seal opened on the jade slip. A majestic beam of light shot up into the sky that was visible even from a vast distance away.

Obviously, the old man had unsealed the jade slip in order to attract the attention of nearby cultivators, and was planning to offer the slip itself as payment for them to save the young boy.

The old man didn’t bother to ponder whether or not this course of action could potentially be dangerous. In his mind, any danger was worth braving when compared to the hope it offered. After all, he clearly remembered seeing some disciples from the Vast Expanse School flying about recently, and after a bit of calculation, was certain it was recruitment season on the Vast Expanse School’s ninth continent.

In the past, the Vast Expanse School had very strict requirements for new disciples, but in recent years the Ninth Sect had been expanding. Cultivators from the Ninth Sect had been combing the continent looking for children with exceptional latent talent, and taking them back to the sect to begin practicing cultivation.

The light hadn’t been shining from the jade slip for very long before a few beams of light could be seen shooting through the air toward it. Three people became visible, all of them middle-aged men. They had extraordinary cultivation bases, and after they landed and saw the jade slip, their expressions flickered.

The slovenly old man immediately clasped hands and bowed deeply.

“May I ask if you are Fellow Daoists from the Vast Expanse School? I am Sun Dalei, a humble rogue cultivator. Today, I would like to offer this treasure in exchange for help from you Fellow Daoists. Please save this young boy’s life.”

The three cultivators looked at the boy, and then the leader of the small group made a grasping motion, causing the jade slip to fly over into his hand. After examining it for a moment, a smile broke out on his face.

“So, this jade slip contains a legacy.” Laughing heartily, he waved his sleeve, sending a stream of spiritual energy into the boy. Then, without another look, he turned and prepared to leave, as did his two companions, who looked just as delighted as him.

The slovenly old man was getting very nervous. The boy was still in a withered state, and didn’t really look much better than before. The old man suddenly blurted, “Fellow Daoists, this boy… has uncharacteristically rare latent talent. He has an enlightened soul, spirit bones, and spirit-attuned blood vessels!”

The three cultivators stopped in their tracks. The man with the jade slip frowned. Their mission was to find disciples with exceptional latent talent, and the bizarre transformations of Heaven and Earth which had struck the nearby village was why they had come to this location in the first place. That was also why they had shown up so quickly in response to the light from the jade slip.

After hearing the old man’s words, the cultivator who had taken the jade slip walked over to the boy’s side and placed his hand onto his forehead. After a thorough examination, the man began to tremble.

“Junior Brothers, you take a look too!” With that, the two other cultivators came over to inspect the boy. After they did, they seemed equally moved.

“That’s Superlative latent talent!”

“He really does have spirit bones, an enlightened soul, and naturally-occurring spirit-refined blood!”

“Of all the fledglings we’ve found recently, he’s the best by far!!”

The three cultivators’ eyes burned with fervor. Because of the recent expansion of the Ninth Sect, more disciples were being recruited than ever. As for these three cultivators, if they found children in the mortal world who had exceptional latent talent, and then brought them back to the sect, they would receive handsome rewards in the form of cultivation resources.

The three immediately looked over at the slovenly old man and began to ask questions.

“What’s this kid’s name?” said one of them.

“Fang Mu!” replied the old man.

“Are you a relative of his? He’s sick, and we need to take him back to the sect to be treated. Afterward we wish for him to become a disciple of the Vast Expanse School.”

The old man immediately nodded in assent. As far as he was concerned, Haowie’s only chance at survival was to go to the Vast Expanse School, which was one of the sects that he believed to be trustworthy.

The three cultivators didn’t say anything more. They picked the boy up, then transformed into beams of light that shot off into the distance. Soon, they reached a wide plain, in the middle of which was a teleportation portal. As was the norm, the teleportation portal was protected by a shield that would prevent anyone except cultivators of the Vast Expanse School from entering it.

The three stepped onto the teleportation portal, and moments later, glittering light rose up as they and the boy were teleported away.

Off in the distance, the slovenly old man could just barely see the light of teleportation, and he sighed. Although he didn’t wish to part with the boy, an expression of anticipation could still be seen in his eyes.

He had known almost from the beginning that the boy named Fang Mu had incredible latent talent, talent that could shake Heaven and Earth. His original plan had been to wait for a few more years, then take the boy out into the world. He would call upon some of his old acquaintances in the cultivation world to get the boy a spot in a sect, and thus start him on his path of cultivation.

Even though the events of the day were somewhat coincidental, as far as the old man was concerned, Fang Mu being able to join the Vast Expanse School was a stroke of luck.

Eventually, the old man sighed and headed back to the village. As the moon shone down from above, the old man looked even older than before, and a bit more lonely.

The truth was that even if the old man hadn’t brought the boy to the top of that mountain, the three cultivators from the Vast Expanse School would still have come. The transformations to Heaven and Earth that had occurred in the village had attracted them, and either way, they would have seen how special the boy was and taken him to their sect.

All of that had long since been arranged by Meng Hao.

It was the most convenient way to arrange for his clone to seek enlightenment of the Ninth Hex.

Meanwhile, a teleportation portal began to shine somewhere in the Ninth Sect. The three middle-aged cultivators appeared, carrying Meng Hao’s clone. After stepping off of the teleportation portal, they headed toward the main temple of the sect.

Before long, rumbling sounds echoed out in the sect as several beams of light shot toward the temple. That attracted the attention of a lot of nearby disciples, who looked over in curiosity to see what was happening.

Inside the temple, several old men had just sat down cross-legged around Meng Hao’s clone. All of them were pouring cultivation base power into his body, which was gradually recovering from its withered state.

“He really does have Superlative latent talent. In all my years, I’ve never seen anyone who actually has real, Superlative latent talent!”

“He even has spirit bones, an enlightened soul, and spirit-attuned blood vessels! He’s not a child, he’s a precious bodily treasure! I’ve never seen or even heard of anything like it!!”

“If this kid practices cultivation, he’ll definitely make rapid progress!!’

The entire group was abuzz with conversation. Any other type of latent talent would not have provoked such a reaction. But he had Superlative latent talent, along with spirit bones, an enlightened soul, and spirit-attuned blood vessels. This clone of Meng Hao’s was like a rare gem!

Soon, Meng Hao’s clone was no longer withered, which the old men believed to be due to their treatment. However, he looked even thinner and weaker than he had before, and was apparently now in a very deep sleep.

“Take him to one of the side chambers and have someone look after him. When he wakes up, arrange for him to formally join the sect.” The old men were all exhausted from their efforts. After making the necessary arrangements, they looked at Meng Hao’s clone, excitement glittering in their eyes. Finally, they returned to their own residences to start the breathing exercises necessary to restore their cultivation bases.

A few days later, Meng Hao’s clone opened his eyes. At first he looked confused, but then his vision focused, and his eyes began to radiate bright, cold light.

It was very strange to see a look like that in the eyes of a young boy.

Soon, the coldness faded away, and his eyes returned to normal.

“I’m awake,” he murmured. He felt as if he had just woken up from a dream. He could even sense his true self, deep beneath the surface of the main planet, on that half-planet, sitting there cross-legged in the Ninth Paragon’s secluded meditation facilities.

As of this moment, Meng Hao’s true self finally breathed a sigh of relief. At long last he could focus fully on seeking enlightenment of his eight Essences.

“This clone will live my fourth life. His only mission is to successfully form the Ninth Hex!

“As for his cultivation…. Well, I created the clone’s body after carefully observing my own body, which was re-moulded by the bronze lamp. In all of Planet Vast Expanse, and in fact, in all of the Vast Expanse itself, it would be easier to find a phoenix feather or a qilin horn than it would be to find someone whose latent talent exceeds this clone’s!

“Since that’s the case, he can elevate his cultivation base much more quickly than normal. Rise to prominence in the Ninth Sect. Reach the pinnacle, step by step. It shouldn’t be difficult.

“With no Demonic power, his body is pure in every sense of the word.” A satisfied gleam appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes.

Several days later, Meng Hao became a disciple of the Vast Expanse School. His latent talent shook the entire Ninth Sect, and when the Dao Realm Patriarch heard of the matter and investigated it personally, he dispatched people to Peach Blossom Village to make further inquiries and make sure nothing was amiss. Meng Hao was then sent to one of the Ninth Sect’s numerous subdivisions, where he became an Inner Sect disciple.

This year was tenth in which Meng Hao’s true self was the Ninth Paragon.

This year, a disciple by the name of Han Bei became one of the sect’s Holy Daughter-designates.

This year, Meng Hao’s clone Fang Mu became the Inner Sect disciple one of the subdivisions of the Ninth Sect!

Neither the slovenly old man, nor the three cultivators who had brought the clone back to the sect, nor the old men who had treated his condition, nor anyone in all of Planet Vast Expanse, could ever have imagined what a dazzling flower this Fang Mu would bloom into. Only Meng Hao’s true self knew.

He might shrivel away into nothing… or perhaps, he would blossom a bloody scarlet color….

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# Chapter 1451: Han Bei’s Secret!

The techniques of the Vast Expanse School were many and varied, and could be said to be all-encompassing. However, in terms of fundamentals, they were different than the magical techniques of the Mountain and Sea Realm. Instead of being driven by the energy of Heaven and Earth, they were driven by the energy of the Vast Expanse.

Cultivation in the Vast Expanse involved breathing techniques to absorb its energy, and resulted in forming a unique great Dao.

After he became an Inner Sect disciple, Meng Hao’s seven-year-old clone resided in a special residence set aside for him by the sect. He rarely left his home, and as such, didn’t know much about the outside world.

But that changed after a year passed. After only one year of practicing cultivation, Tribulation Lightning descended on Meng Hao’s residence. It destroyed the house and shattered the courtyard, and caused widespread shock among the surrounding disciples of the Ninth Sect.

Even some of the old-timers were astonished by the 9 successive bolts of lightning which fell from the sky. Afterward, a young boy emerged from the wreckage of the courtyard residence.

Shockingly, he was accompanied by… the aura of Foundation Establishment!

Foundation Establishment in and of itself wasn’t anything spectacular. However, the Tribulation Lightning was a bit of a surprise, and then some of the disciples realized that it was Meng Hao who had appeared from within it.

“If I remember correctly… he joined the sect last year, as a mortal….”

“How is that even possible? One year? One year!? He… he reached Foundation Establishment that quickly?”

“What’s his name again? Oh right, Fang Mu. His name is Fang Mu!”

Meng Hao’s clone Fang Mu experienced nine bolts of Tribulation Lightning, and reached Foundation Establishment. The news caused a small-scale stir, but the sect as a whole was huge, and Meng Hao was merely an Inner Sect disciple in one of many subdivisions.

Normally speaking, it was a matter that would quickly become forgotten. Meng Hao might have extraordinary latent talent, and might have reached Foundation Establishment in only a year, but Foundation Establishment didn’t count for much in the Ninth Sect as a whole. The number of Foundation Establishment cultivators in the sect was impossible to even count.

Even within that subdivision, they were as numerous as the hairs on an ox.

But… something happened a year later, in the same residence. Tribulation Lightning struck again, but this time, in greater number. 99 bolts of lightning fell onto the residence. Rumbling echoed out, and the residence and courtyard were destroyed. When Meng Hao emerged, he no longer emitted the aura of Foundation Establishment, but rather… Core Formation!!

The entire subdivision was thrown into a commotion that far exceeded that of the previous year. Countless people were completely shocked, even the Elders. The Subdivision Head personally came to investigate, and was astonished.

There were still plenty of people who were more powerful than him, but what was most shocking was the speed of his progress. To many people, such a thing was almost impossible to believe.

“Foundation Establishment in one year? Then Core Formation in another year? Don’t tell me… he’s going to reach Nascent Soul in a year too?”

“What type of latent talent does he have?”

By now, more and more people were talking about this Fang Mu. In fact, word was spreading outside his subdivision and into other subdivisions.

Then… the third year passed. 999 bolts of Tribulation Lightning descended, and Meng Hao reached Nascent Soul!

In the fifth year, he reached Spirit Severing, and 9,999 lightning bolts fell. All subdivisions of the Ninth Sect were completely shaken. The rainstorm-like hail of Tribulation Lightning shook the whole Ninth Sect, and Fang Mu’s name was the subject of countless conversations.

In the seventh year, his moment of reaching Dao Seeking was a grand occasion for vast numbers of cultivators in the Ninth Sect. Numerous cultivators watched as a tempest of Tribulation Lightning bolts descended, only one lightning bolt short of 100,000. It was a power of Tribulation that very few Dao Seeking cultivators could fight back against. It was as if Heaven and Earth, as if the Vast Expanse, were trying to completely wipe Meng Hao’s clone out of existence!

However, as the lightning fell onto the clone, his eyes shone brightly. It was as if… he was directly opposing the Vast Expanse!

The lightning fell for ten days, after which Meng Hao’s clone was in Dao Seeking!

Time flew. The tenth year arrived.

Ten years ago, Meng Hao’s clone had been nothing more than a weak child. But now, ten years later, he was a handsome and extraordinary young man. He stood tall and straight atop one of the mountains in the Ninth Sect, looking up into the sky, which rumbled as Tribulation Lightning began to build up.

It was… Immortal Tribulation!

In ten short years, Meng Hao’s clone had created a legend on Planet Vast Expanse, even a myth!

In ten years, he went from being a mortal, to reaching Foundation Establishment, Core Formation, Nascent Soul, Spirit Severing, Dao Seeking, and Immortal Ascension!

That was a process that some people never completed within their whole lifetime, and yet Meng Hao’s clone did it in ten years. The entire Ninth Sect was shaken, as was the Vast Expanse School as a whole. Even Paragons got wind of it.

The Immortal Tribulation was even more stunning than the tribulations from before it. 1,000,000 lightning bolts descended onto the ninth continent, causing all the lands to shake. People flew up into the air from all the other sects that were part of the Vast Expanse School, all to watch the Immortal Tribulation.

The Ninth Sect was very excited, and even sent someone out to act as Dharma Protector for their number one Chosen.

That person was a Dao Sovereign, a woman of extraordinary beauty. She sat on the Ninth Sect’s Dao mountain, looking up into the sky with a look of surprise.

“This is only an Immortal Tribulation, and yet the Vast Expanse sends Tribulation Lightning like this? It’s almost as if there’s a Heavenly Dao or a magical law of nature intent on preventing lightning that exceeds his cultivation base from descending. Were it not for that, the Vast Expanse would wipe him out in body and mind.” The Dao Sovereign found it very strange, especially when she realized that she could sense… fluctuations of fear.

“Fear?” she thought, shaking her head and wondering if she was mistaken. “The Vast Expanse is boundless and majestic. Even if it really does have a will of its own, how could it fear a trifling Immortal Realm cultivator?” [1]

The Immortal Tribulation lasted for three whole months before it faded away. During that entire time, Meng Hao's clone proudly closed his eyes and allowed himself to be bathed by the Tribulation Lightning.

He didn't fight back or resist it. He allowed the lightning to strike him. It was like a baptism in which he didn't move an inch. That, of course, led to widespread shock.

When the last bit of the Immortal Tribulation was about to fade away, Meng Hao's eyes suddenly opened, and he reached out, pointing his finger up at the Heavens.

He did not speak, but the gesture of pointing his finger caused colors to flash, and a gale-force wind to scream. The entire sky seemed to tremble, and countless Tribulation Lightning bolts shattered, transforming into motes of light that drifted out. At this point, the Immortal Tribulation ended, and Meng Hao's clone began to emanate Immortal qi.

But then, the sky shook, and a red bolt of lightning suddenly formed, shooting down toward Fang Mu. It was backed by a shocking will, and unexpectedly radiated the might of the Dao Realm.

Even as the red bolt of lightning descended, a red cloud appeared up above, and red rain began to fall. It was a sight shocking to all, that caused even the female Dao Sovereign's face to fall.

"The blood of the Heavens! That means… the Dao of the Vast Expanse Society is violating its own magical laws, paying the highest price to eliminate this young man by sending Tribulation Lightning against him that exceeds the Immortal Realm!" The Dao Sovereign was just about to do something when, all of a sudden, the red bolt of lightning lurched to a halt about 300 meters away from Fang Mu's head. There it remained in midair, completely unmoving.

An incredible pressure suddenly filled the entire continent. At some point, a person had appeared in the air. It was a young man wearing a black robe, with long violet hair. As he floated there, he radiated a supremely domineering aura, as if he were the most important entity in existence!

Boundless coldness roiled off of him, and a red, Demonic glow could be seen in his eyes. On his forehead was a long violet mark that was apparently a closed third eye!

“Ninth Paragon!!” blurted the female Dao Sovereign. Trembling, she dropped to her knees to kowtow. In that same moment, countless cultivators in the vast area that made up the Ninth Sect, regardless of the levels of their cultivation base, dropped trembling to the ground.

“We offer respectful greetings, Ninth Paragon!”

“We offer respectful greetings, Ninth Paragon!!”

The sounds echoed out, causing everything to shake. To the cultivators in the Ninth Sect, the Ninth Paragon was their lord, their spirit, and their leader, the most ultimate of monarchs.

This was none other than Meng Hao’s true self!

As soon as he realized that there was something out of the ordinary with this bolt of Tribulation Lightning, he came as his true self. As soon as he appeared, he reached out and grabbed the bolt of red lightning, then crushed it in his hand.

A boom rang out as the lightning bolt shattered. The cloud layers up above roiled, and a faint roar of rage could be heard.

Meng Hao’s true self looked up into the sky, eyes glowing red.

“Scram!” he said, flicking his sleeve. Then, a massive blast of energy exploded out as he flew up toward the clouds.

At the same time, his clone stood on the mountain, looking up into the sky, his eyes glowing without the slightest hint of red. They only contained pure, Immortal light.

The Heavens trembled, and the clouds ceased to seethe. In fact, they collapsed, and their redness faded away. The sky went dark, and outside of

Planet Vast Expanse, boundless ripples spread out into the Vast Expanse for a long moment before everything finally went still.

Having accomplished these things, he prepared to vanish. But then, he looked out into the void and saw something far off in the distance that made him stop.

His glance caused the void to vibrate, as if someone were out there, reeling in shock. Suddenly, Han Bei stumbled out into the open, mixed emotions on her face, including shock as she looked at Meng Hao's true self, and his clone.

A tremor ran through her, and without the slightest hesitation, she began to back up. However, even as she did, Meng Hao reached out and made a grasping motion.

The entire world seemed to freeze in place as a tremendous power rumbled out. Even as that power was about to sweep over Han Bei, fluctuations suddenly began to emanate out from her that Meng Hao recognized!

It was… the aura of Allheaven! The aura of a Demon!!

1. Since I'm sure some people are wondering, there are plenty of different words for fear, fright, being scared, terrified, etc. in Chinese. Here, the word is indeed the same word for "fear" as in "Allheaven fears the Immortal," which is a word that isn't used very often in the story

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# Chapter 1452: Leverage!

The aura was obscure. In the moment that it exploded out, it transformed into a teleportation power which whisked Han Bei away, right out from Meng Hao’s grasp.

When she reappeared, she was back in the First Sect of the Vast Expanse School, in her secluded meditation facilities. Blood immediately began to ooze out of her mouth, but it was without the slightest hesitation that she produced an ancient Feng Shui compass from her bag of holding, which she then placed onto the ground in front of her.

Ripples immediately began to spread out, filling the area and protecting her within their range.

Han Bei was shivering, her breath coming in rapid pants, her face covered with a look of disbelief.

Her mind had been thrown into chaos thanks to Meng Hao’s sudden appearance. Earlier, she had felt the tug of memory after hearing the name Fang Mu, which was why she had gone to take a look. How could she ever have imagined what would result?

“Meng Hao, Fang Mu….” She took a deep breath, performing a double-handed incantation gesture to strengthen the power of the Feng Shui compass.

**

The way Han Bei had suddenly escaped was strange to say the least, and in fact, other than Meng Hao, no one on Planet Vast Expanse even noticed her.

Meng Hao’s true self looked at the spot where she had disappeared, eyes glittering.

“Han Bei…. I can’t believe she’s here!” He couldn’t help but think back to when he had seen her on the enormous God corpse. Then he recalled all her unusual behavior back on Planet South Heaven. Of course, a thorough analysis couldn’t leave out the fact that his earliest dealings with her stretched back to the Black Sieve Sect’s Blessed Land!

That was where he had found the meat jelly, and also where the Lightning Cauldron came from. Furthermore, sealed inside that land had also been… the soul of Han Bei’s ancestor! 1

Meng Hao’s eyes shone with bright light. If he had seen Han Bei in this situation before going to the necropolis, his analysis of the situation would still have occupied him, but the conclusions he would have arrived at would be far different than the truth that presented itself now. After his visit to the necropolis, though, he had learned much about many things. Because of that, he knew that Han Bei’s method of escape contained a bit of the aura of Allheaven, as well as some Demonic power. That left him completely convinced…

That Han Bei had something to do with Allheaven!

Cold light flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes as he suddenly flickered into motion and vanished.

Meng Hao’s clone was still on top of the mountain, looking up into the sky in the direction of where Han Bei had appeared. His eyes were narrowed, but after a moment they returned to normal.

Meanwhile, Han Bei was still ashen-faced after being teleported back from the Ninth Sect. Her heart was filled with an uneasy premonition, as if a great disaster were heading her way. Deep within her, a sensation of imminent crisis was building up.

People on Planet Vast Expanse believed her to be from what was known as an ancient cultivator clan. After joining the sect, the cultivation base power she revealed was that of the peak of the Immortal Realm.

However, after seeing Meng Hao and his clone, she felt something threatening looming behind her like a razor-sharp needle.

“What are you doing on Planet Vast Expanse? I can’t believe… that you’re the Ninth Paragon? How is that even possible!?” Han Bei’s face was completely ashen. Her secluded meditation facilities were surrounded by countless restrictive spells, and yet that didn’t leave her feeling safe at all. During the clone’s Tribulation, Meng Hao’s true self had looked at her, and although his gaze was calm, it was filled with a brilliance that struck her heart with dread.

And in fact, to feel dread was the correct response. After all, it wasn’t very long after she returned to her secluded meditation facilities that rumbling sounds filled the air outside.

The sounds were intense, but apparently, they were being restricted to a small area, making it impossible for anyone outside to hear. However, the area where Han Bei was located was shaking so hard that mountains were rocking back and forth, and buildings were collapsing. However, the Feng Shui compass shone with brilliant light, blocking that force. If not, she would have been immediately engulfed in the destructive power that was buckling the surrounding area.

Han Bei then looked up to see Meng Hao’s true self standing there outside her secluded meditation facilities, prevented from entering by the Feng Shui compass shield.

He wore a black robe, and his expression was cold and icy. His hair floated in the wind, and a violet third eye could be seen on his forehead. Although it was closed, it still radiated majestic power.

“It’s always nice to reunite with old friends,” he said coolly. “Why are you so afraid of me, Han Bei?”

Han Bei shivered as she looked at Meng Hao, her expression filled with mixed emotions. She couldn’t stop from shaking; she knew that her sudden appearance would be a big shock to Meng Hao, mainly because of the destruction of the Mountain and Sea Realm. Everyone else was back on the Mountain and Sea Butterfly, so why… was she here, having assumed the identity of a Holy Daughter-designate of the Vast Expanse School?

Han Bei took a deep breath and put a calm expression on her face. She was an adept schemer, but this turn of events had been too sudden, which caused her to panic. However, now her mind had settled down and she rose to her feet, eyes flickering. She gave Meng Hao a curtseying bow, clasped hands and said, “Han Bei offers greetings, Ninth Paragon.”

Then she looked up calmly into Meng Hao’s eyes. “However, this is Junior’s first time meeting the exalted Paragon. When you say ‘old friends,’ what exactly is it that you mean?”

Meng Hao looked back at her, seemingly unfazed by her behavior. In fact, it corresponded exactly to the old Han Bei that he remembered. He suddenly smiled, although it was an icy cold smile.

Then his gaze came to rest on the ancient Feng Shui compass, upon which he could sense… the aura of Allheaven. 2

“I would never have been able to guess that you actually have something to do with Allheaven,” he said. He shook his head and flicked his sleeve. “Well, it doesn’t matter. Since you don’t want to admit it, then I presume you must have some leverage to rely on, right? I’m curious to see what it is. By the way… as long as you’re on Planet Vast Expanse, it doesn’t matter what identity you assume, finding you would be as easy as flipping over my hand.” With that, he paid her no more heed, vanishing back to Ninth Paragon City.

His purpose in coming had been to confirm his suspicions. After laying eyes on the Feng Shui compass, he was now absolutely certain and didn’t need any further confirmation.

After Meng Hao left, Han Bei virtually collapsed, gasping for breath. After a long moment, she gritted her teeth.

“Thankfully I prepared that life-saving backup plan all those years ago. It seems that now… is the time to enact that plan.” With that, she reached up and gently tapped her forehead. Her forehead then split apart, revealing a swath of pitch blackness, within which floated… a soul!

It was not Han Bei’s soul, but closer inspection revealed that it was indeed a woman. Her eyes were closed, as if she were sleeping, but if Meng Hao were here, he would recognize her in an instant. Unexpectedly, it was the soul of… Chu Yuyan!

Years ago, when Chu Yuyan withered away into death, her soul dispersed. Meng Hao fought his way into the Eighth Mountain and Sea to search for her, but the only thing he ever found was a tiny sliver of her soul.

Back then, the clues had seemed to indicate that the rest of Chu Yuyan’s soul had vanished into the starry sky. He thought that the problem was that he couldn’t find it, but the truth was that Han Bei had secretly interfered and captured the soul. From then on, it became a life-saving measure for future use.

In order to ensure that Chu Yuyan’s soul didn’t fade away into complete death, Han Bei had merged some of her own life soul into it, creating a sort of symbiotic state of existence between them.

After many years of feeding Chu Yuyan’s soul in such a way, it had become thoroughly intertwined with Han Bei’s. Only someone with the power of Transcendence could ever separate them. That meant that if Han Bei died, Chu Yuyan’s soul would well and truly disperse.

Han Bei sat there silently, mixed emotions on her face. She thought back to everything which had occurred between her and Meng Hao, and sighed softly. Finally, she gritted her teeth.

“We have different standpoints, and different missions. You want to see what my leverage is, well I’ll show you.” She waved her hand, sending Chu Yuyan’s soul flying out, where it vanished into Heaven and Earth.

In the moment that the soul flew out, Meng Hao's true self locked onto it with divine sense. After realizing who it was, a tremor ran through him, and he felt as if countless lightning bolts were striking his mind.

His eyes suddenly snapped shut, and a powerful force like a windstorm raged up from him. It swept out to cover all of Ninth Paragon City, then the entire half-planet, then all of its starry sky, and then the lands up above on Planet Vast Expanse. Soon, all of Planet Vast Expanse was shaking violently.

The other Paragons were shocked. The Sect Leader opened his eyes and looked out in astonishment. Of course, Jin Yunshan and Sha Jiudong and the others were equally stunned by Meng Hao's unleashing of energy.

"What is that psycho doing?!" Jin Yunshan though, shivering. He quickly unleashed his cultivation base defensively, worried that Meng Hao was in a bad mood and might be looking to start a fight.

Han Bei was also trembling inwardly, and yet, continued to smile as calmly as ever.

"As long as you care, that's enough," she murmured to herself.

The tempest lasted for only a moment before it vanished. Back in Ninth Paragon City, Meng Hao rose to his feet, eyes filled with reminiscence, grief, and other mixed emotions as he looked at the soul using his divine sense.

"Chu Yuyan…." he murmured hoarsely. He followed her with his divine sense as she flew into the ninth continent, into the mortal world. She eventually entered the womb of a woman… as she began the cycle of reincarnation, to become a person once again.

After a long moment, Meng Hao retracted his divine sense. How could he not have noticed that Chu Yuyan's soul was intermixed with some of Han Bei's life soul? Although Chu Yuyan was independent, they existed symbiotically.

“Well that… is some good leverage.” He finally closed his eyes, almost as if he had forgotten about Han Bei.

Time passed. The Immortal Tribulation of Meng Hao’s clone rocked all of the Vast Expanse School. Even the other Paragons of similar rank to Meng Hao had taken note.

From that day on, the name Fang Mu became well-known in the Vast Expanse School. In ten years, he went from mortal to Immortal. He shook the Ninth Sect, rocked the Vast Expanse School, and word about him even spread throughout Planet Vast Expanse.

Everyone learned that an incredible Chosen had appeared in the Ninth Sect!

At the same time, many disciples of the Vast Expanse School began to pay close attention to Meng Hao’s clone. That was especially true of the blazing suns among the Chosen, who came to view him as a formidable opponent.

However, some of the Chosen disdained him, being of the belief that in terms of cultivation base, they were far beyond him.

“Who cares if you reach Immortal Ascension in ten years? Don’t tell me he’s going to reach the Ancient Realm in ten years too?” Talk like that became the norm.

“He’s a trifling Immortal Realm member of the Junior generation, that’s all. He might have nice latent talent, but so what?! All nine sects of the Vast Expanse School have a Vast Expanse Shrine, and only by getting your name listed there are you truly a Chosen!”

“After the Vast Expanse Shrine is the Transcendence Path. Only those who walk the Transcendence Path are the true blazing suns. Other than the Ninth Paragon, which Paragon is there who hasn’t left their footprint there!?”

“The path of cultivation is a long one. Rising up too quickly is a bad thing. This kid isn’t that smart, is he? He’ll definitely pay some painful consequences later.”

2. Something that jumps out is that the words ‘Feng Shui compass’ and ‘Allheaven’ share a character, which is the character “Luo,” the one that basically means ‘net’. So Allheaven is literally the “luo heaven” and a Feng Shui compass is a “luo disc.” The Black Sieve Sect, of which Han Bei was originally a member, would be the “black luo sect.” That doesn’t necessarily mean there is a connection between them all

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# Chapter 1453: Enjoy Yourself, Prince!

Few people knew exactly how many Immortal meridians Meng Hao’s clone opened after his Immortal Tribulation. He didn’t go on to make a big show of things, but instead, went back into secluded meditation to practice cultivation.

However, his heart was very unsettled because of the matter of Chu Yuyan.

“Han Bei planned things out years and years in advance. She fused her own life soul with Chu Yuyan, creating a symbiosis…. Excellent leverage.” After a long moment, he sighed.

It took three days for him to settle his mind and heart. Afterward, he left for a time, and when he returned, he had the mastiff with him. Then, both of them went into meditative trances, continuing their cultivation in seclusion.

Time passed. Another ten years went by in the blink of an eye. During that time, Meng Hao’s clone didn’t leave the Ninth Sect. He stayed confined in meditation.

Because he stayed out of the public eye, no one knew the level of his cultivation base, or his progress. After the ten years passed, no Tribulation Lightning descended, so people stopped worrying about whether or not he was Chosen, and in fact many people even forgot about him. Those who did remember him did so with scorn.

He had no friends, nor any dealings with anyone. He remained in his subdivision of the Ninth Sect, focused completely on cultivation. To remain completely separated from the sect was an uncommon thing. Only people with a special status could do something like that. After all, Fang Mu was nothing more than an Inner Sect disciple.

However… the Ninth Sect belonged to Meng Hao. All it took was a single word from his true self to that one particular Dao Sovereign, indicating that Fang Mu was important and wasn’t to be disturbed, and the matter was handled.

Because of that, no one bothered his clone during those ten years. The only company he had was the mastiff.

Actually, Meng Hao’s true self spent those ten years in much the same way. He focused completely on gaining full enlightenment of all his Hexing Essences. With such a deep focus only on cultivation, his twenty years of work left him significantly more powerful than when he had entered the necropolis.

Preparations for the second trip into the necropolis were still being made by the Sect Leader. Apparently, he wanted to be completely and utterly prepared. Obviously, he was completely intent on reaching the second land mass in this trip.

During the ten years, news spread that Han Bei had broken through from the Immortal Realm. Now that she was in the Ancient Realm, she was no longer a Holy Daughter-designate. Somehow, she manipulated her way into becoming one of the Vast Expanse School’s nine Holy Daughters.

The Sect Leader, despite being wrapped up in preparations for the necropolis, found time to provide some assistance and advice to Han Bei, who was very important to him.

As for exactly what went on, Meng Hao didn’t pay close attention.

Another year passed, whereupon Meng Hao’s clone emerged from secluded meditation and left the Ninth Sect. No one interfered with him; most people only had a vague impression of who he was.

Both he and the mastiff transformed into beams of light that shot off into the distance. A few days later, they appeared in a small town in the mortal world.

It wasn’t very large, but it was a bustling place. The streets were packed with people who scurried about doing all sorts of things. Meng Hao walked slowly through the town, wearing a green robe and looking every bit the scholar. Eventually, he came to a stop in front of the house of an average family.

A warm look could be seen in his eyes as he looked at a group of youngsters playing outside the main gate. One of them was an eleven-year-old girl, who wore a shy smile on her face as she played with her companions.

His gaze seemed to stretch back hundreds of years into the past, recalling numerous events which had occurred once upon a time. It was currently autumn, and a crisp wind sent fallen leaves tumbling down the street. The setting sun was deep red color, filling the world with its warmth, and casting Meng Hao’s shadow long and far across the ground….

The girl suddenly sensed that she was being watched, and she looked up at Meng Hao. She seemed a bit scared, and quickly averted her eyes. A moment passed, and he was still looking at her, making her even more frightened. She whispered something to her friends, then ran back into her house.

Meng Hao laughed spontaneously, then took a deep breath, his eyes gleaming with reminiscence.

“In your last life, I owed you….” he said softly. “In this life, I’ll pay that debt.” Straightening his clothes, he walked up to the house and knocked on the gate. After a long moment, the gate opened, and he entered.

There was no need for complicated formalities. On Planet Vast Expanse, even mortals were aware of the existence of Immortal beings, and treated them with the utmost respect and veneration.

Meng Hao mentioned that he wished to take this girl, whose name was Yan’er, as an apprentice. He demonstrated some magical techniques to the girl’s parents, who didn’t hesitate for even a moment to give their assent. They looked very excited.

A few days later, Meng Hao left, followed by a sad-looking girl, and the mastiff.

After a while, she couldn’t hold back from asking, “Master… you… you really aren’t a fraud?”

In response to her question, Meng Hao bopped her on the top of her head with his palm. It hurt a little, but before she could say anything, her body was suddenly lifted up into the air. Wind blasted into her face, and when she looked down, she saw vast lands stretching out in all directions. Everything grew smaller and smaller, and her eyes grew wider and wider.

After some time passed, she saw a boundless stretch of mountains, covered by countless buildings and structures. It was none other than… the Ninth Sect.

Suddenly, Meng Hao’s soft voice could be heard in her ears, “From now on, you are the apprentice of Fang Mu. The one and only apprentice.”

From that day on, a girl lived in Fang Mu’s secluded meditation facilities in his subdivision of the Ninth Sect. With her there, things were no longer so peaceful and quiet.

She was naturally gifted when it came to cultivation, but most of that seemed focused on alchemy. Meng Hao also spent time teaching her other cultivation methods, as well as some of his own alchemy techniques.

The girl’s personality was very different from Meng Hao’s. She enjoyed exploring the Ninth Sect, and liked making friends. Soon, just about everyone in the subdivision knew that the Fang Mu, who had put on such a spectacular display about ten years ago, had taken on an apprentice.

Seven years passed. By now, it had been eighteen years since Fang Mu's Immortal Tribulation, and it was also the year that his apprentice Yan'er turned eighteen.

She was a slender and elegant teenager. As she matured, she became more and more beautiful, and soon began to distinguish herself among the other female disciples of the sect. Because of her natural gift for cultivation, especially when it came to alchemy, she was already in late Foundation Establishment, just half a step away from Core Formation.

Her Dao of alchemy was boundless and profound, enough to shake even some of the Elders of the subdivision.

Because of all of that, quite a few male disciples began to pursue the young Yan'er. Of course, her personality was a bit more like a boy's; she was definitely not the graceful and subdued type. The only time she would pout and act like a girl was in front of Meng Hao.

"Master, can I go, please? I've… I've been waiting for this day forever!

"Master, look, don't worry. Nothing's going to happen. Lots of my Elder Brothers and Sisters from the sect are going to be there. We'll all be going together."

Yan'er was currently standing in front of Meng Hao making a request. She started out begging, but in the end, when he simply sat there in meditation, ignoring her, she started to get a bit irritated. "Aiya! You old fogey! Are you gonna let me go or not!?"

"How impudent!" Meng Hao said, opening his eyes to glare at her. Yan'er had become somewhat of a headache in recent years. In the beginning, she had treated him with awe and reverence. But that attitude had slowly faded away until it was now gone.

Yan'er was clearly not afraid of her Master's glare. Smiling broadly, she hurried over and started to massage his shoulders. Eyes wide, she quietly began to plead again, in a very sweet and fawning voice.

“Master, everybody’s saying that it’s not just people from our subdivision who will be going to the bazaar. The whole sect will be there. In fact, people from the other continents will be coming too. The Vast Expanse School’s First Sect, Second Sect, I mean, basically all of the nine sects are going to be there.

“It’s going to be so exciting! Elder Brother Bi Yun is also going…. I heard that his name is in the top 100 of the Vast Expanse Shrine….” When Yan’er mentioned Elder Brother Bi Yun, her eyes suddenly grew very bright.

Meng Hao frowned, then sighed, aware that the reason his apprentice wanted to go to the bazaar was not merely the simple task of buying medicinal plants. Like most female disciples, she viewed the Chosen members of the sect with awe. Bi Yun, who was one of the blazing suns of the Ninth Sect, was a good example.

Unable to deal with her coaxing and prodding, he finally nodded and said, “Fine, fine, go ahead.”

Yan’er was immediately delighted, and even leaned forward and hugged him. Seeing her so delighted, Meng Hao’s gaze softened a bit, and he thought about Chu Yuyan.

In his last life, he had owed Chu Yuyan a debt of emotion. Unfortunately, in this life, his heart was already dead, and all he could give her was the relationship of a Master and apprentice.

Yan’er left. The next day at dawn, she was in very high spirits as she met up with some of the other disciples of the subdivision, after which they all left together toward the grand bazaar which was held every few years on the ninth continent.

Meng Hao stayed in secluded meditation. His cultivation base was at a critical juncture, and he could make a breakthrough into the Ancient Realm at almost any time. Although he had remained in the Immortal Realm for quite some time, causing many people to forget about him, the reason was because of something that no one but him was aware of. When he had opened his Immortal meridians, he actually exceeded the number previously reached by his true self, placing him at a terrifying level that nobody had ever reached before, not even in ancient times.

That was why his progress in the Immortal Realm had been so slow.

“Because of my successive breakthroughs, the Ninth Hex is getting closer to completion. However, why is it that what I used to believe was perfect in the past, now seems somewhat incomplete…?” Frowning, he proceeded with his cultivation.

Even as he was focusing on cultivation, Yan’er and her Elder Brothers and Sisters had left the Ninth Sect and run into a group of disciples from the Eighth Sect.

There were a dozen or so of them, all in the Immortal Realm. One of them was a handsome young man wearing very extravagant clothing. His friends clustered around him, and yet, within his eyes could be seen a licentious gleam. He seemed like nothing more than a carefree young man, but the truth was that he had a unique position within the Eighth Sect. That was especially evident considering that he was being shadowed by a middle-aged cultivator who was obviously his Dao Protector. The man made it seem as if his cultivation base were in the Immortal Realm, but he was actually a powerful Dao Realm expert.

Almost as soon as the two groups met, the young man took note of Yan’er, and his eyes shone with both excitement and nefariousness.

“What a wonderful looking cultivation vessel….” he said, grinning. His Dao Protector also smiled. He was well aware of the proclivities of this young Prince of his clan. Furthermore, the young man had a very high and important standing within the Eighth Sect, and even within the Vast Expanse School as a whole, there were few people who could compare. However, the Dao Protector was also careful; whenever the Prince took a liking to a girl, he would always check her background. If he discovered any girl who had connections in the sect, he would advise the young man to abandon any pursuit. However, when it came to ordinary disciples, there were plenty of ways to make sure that no problems resulted. 1

The Dao Protector pulled out a jade slip, examined it for a moment, then relaxed.

“Her background is known, and she has no connections,” he said. “She joined the sect a few years ago as the apprentice of someone named Fang Mu. Fang Mu went from being mortal to Immortal in only ten years, and made somewhat of a stir at that time. However, even he doesn’t have any connections. He’s a small-time figure, nothing more than an Inner Sect disciple from a subdivision of the Ninth Sect.

“Enjoy yourself, Prince!”

1. The term “cultivation vessel” came up before with the original Ninth Paragon. It’s a term from real Daoist sexual cultivation practices, which you can read about here. Check out section 2.5 for more information on how women are referred to as “vessels” or “crucibles”

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# Chapter 1454: You Screwed Us Over….

In response to the Dao Protector’s words, a radiant smile broke out on the young man’s face. As the grandson of Patriarch Chi Feng of the Eighth Sect, he had free reign to do anything he wished in his sect.

After the Eighth Sect’s 9-Essences Paragon perished, Patriarch Chi Feng had returned from the excursion to the necropolis and worked hard at cultivation until he was on the verge of a breakthrough. He was the most powerful expert in the Eighth Sect, and if he broke through to the 9-Essences level, he would become the official leader of the Eighth Sect, and would also become one of the nine great Paragons of the Vast Expanse School.

People like that were truly at the pinnacle of the Vast Expanse School, and that was one of the reasons why this young man could have his pick of almost any female cultivator he wanted to use as a cultivation vessel.

Of course, he was very careful. If a girl had connections or a powerful background, then he would give up any notions of even so much as touching her. Because of that, Patriarch Chi Feng, despite being aware of the situation, felt that the young man was still relatively dependable, and wouldn’t do something that made him a liability.

Smiling in response to the Dao Protector’s words, the young man said, “Well, there’s no hurry. A cultivation vessel like that is a rare thing in the Eighth Sect nowadays. Who would have thought that I would get something so wonderful here? Excellent, excellent.

“Unfortunately, we’re still in the Ninth Sect, and the Patriarch reminded me before that I can’t act presumptuously here….

“Ah well, it doesn’t matter. I’ll just figure out a way to get this cultivation vessel back to the Eighth Sect.” The licentious gleam once again flickered in his eyes.

Over the following few days, Yan’er and her companions traveled with the group from the Eighth Sect. They came to realize what a high position the young man held, and treated him with the utmost respect. Eventually, they reached the location of the bazaar, and arranged for their accommodations. On the night of the first day, Yan’er was filled with excitement and anticipation for the following days. Just as she was about to slip into a trance to do some meditation, a vortex suddenly sprang up around her. It happened without any sound or warning, and before Yan’er was even aware of what had happened, it was on the verge of swallowing her up.

In that moment, a howl rose up in the air outside of the bazaar. It was none other than the mastiff, who Meng Hao had arranged to secretly guard Yan’er on her trip.

The mastiff’s eyes flickered with killing intent as it transformed into a beam of red light that flew into the air at high speed.

At the same time, in a valley about 500 kilometers outside of the bazaar, Patriarch Chi Feng’s grandson was standing there looking at a vortex spinning in front of him. His Dao Protector, the middle-aged cultivator in the Dao Realm, stepped out holding an unconscious girl, who was none other than Yan’er.

When the young man saw Yan’er, he smiled and reached out to grab her, the carnal gleam in his eyes growing stronger.

The Dao Protector’s expression softened. This sort of thing was a simple matter for him, and something he had done on numerous occasions. He cleared his throat, and was just about to say something, when a sudden howl ripped through the valley.

The abruptness of the sound caused the Dao Protector's face to fall. Even as he turned, a red streak of light shot toward him.

Rumbling sounds echoed out, and the entire valley began to collapse. The Dao Protector coughed up a mouthful of blood as he was sent tumbling off into the distance, seriously injured. An expression of astonishment filled his face at the sight of the large crimson dog which had just appeared.

"Th-that's… a Dao Realm beast!!

"Dammit, how could there be a Dao Realm beast here!?!?" The young man was so terrified he was shaking. Grabbing Yan'er, he shot backward. By this point, she had regained consciousness, and it took only a moment for her confusion to fade, whereupon she began to scream.

"Shut up!" the young man bellowed. Even as the words left his mouth, the mastiff's eyes blazed with killing intent, and it began to speed in his direction.

"It's… it's after the girl!" The Dao Protector was shaken. How could he ever have imagined that grabbing a young girl in the Foundation Establishment stage would attract the attention of a Dao Realm beast?

"Prince, get out of here. Something's off here! Something's not right!" The Dao protector had no time to think about the matter. However, he could tell that there was something very strange about what was happening. Almost as soon as the words left his mouth, the young man pulled out a jade pendant that had been hanging around his neck, and crushed it.

Instantly, a powerful teleportation force erupted out. However, it didn't seem fast enough to get him away from the dog. The young man's eyes suddenly flared with a vicious gleam. He might seem like a carefree young man, but he wasn't stupid. His hand clamped around Yan'er's neck, and he glared at the mastiff.

"If you take one more step, I'll kill her!" he screamed. The mastiff stopped in place, and in that moment, the power of teleportation exploded out. The young man and Yan'er vanished in the blink of an eye. In that same instant, the mastiff howled and unleashed an attack, causing a huge crater to appear in the spot where the young man had just been standing.

The Dao Protector’s scalp was tingling, but it was without any hesitation that he sped backward. His mind was in complete chaos; this Dao Realm beast had obviously been tamed, and anyone who could tame a Dao Realm beast would clearly have an incredible cultivation base.

Seeing Yan’er disappear caused the mastiff to throw its head back and let out an astonishing roar. It erupted with energy as its body grew larger, and it transformed into a beam of blood-colored light which sped toward the middle-aged Dao Protector. Before the man could even react, the mastiff chewed him up and swallowed him down.

Only a bloodcurdling scream lingered behind. Even in the last moment before his death, he couldn’t fathom how a little Foundation Establishment cultivator could have caused such a disaster.

Of course, he had no way to know that the catastrophe resulting from what he and the young man had done, was only the beginning. As for the person he thought was a nobody in the sect, a trifling Inner Sect disciple named Fang Mu, even in death, he would never be able to guess his true identity.

As Yan’er faded away, the mastiff howled.

Deep within Planet Vast Expanse, on the half-planet, was Ninth Paragon City.

There, Meng Hao’s true self suddenly opened his eyes, and they shone with unprecedented coldness. Dragons usually have one weak scale on their bodies. People likewise have weak spots. For Meng Hao, it was the Mountain and Sea Realm, his family, and his friends. Originally, he had no such weakness now that he was living on Planet Vast Expanse.

But when Chu Yuyan appeared, Meng Hao knew… that she was his weak spot!

Anyone who touched her was prodding the most sensitive part of Meng Hao!

Touching that weak spot would provoke wrath that could shake Heaven and Earth, and even the Vast Expanse!

The clouds in the sky above Planet Vast Expanse were churning. Lightning crackled, and strange colors flashed in the sky. The wind screamed, and countless individuals on the surface of the planet looked up in shock.

At the same time, all of Ninth Paragon City, all of the half-planet, all of the inner starry sky, and all of Planet Vast Expanse itself filled with rumbling sounds.

This was the second time that such a thing had happened, the first being when Meng Hao had initially caught sight of Chu Yuyan’s soul. Now… for the second time, a towering murderous aura erupted out, causing everyone on Planet Vast Expanse, even the Paragons, to be shaken inwardly.

Jin Yunshan, Sha Jiudong, and the Sect Leader were all in shock as they saw Meng Hao’s true self step out into the open.

“That murderous aura,” said Jin Yunshan with a gasp. “He’s… he’s going to kill someone!!” After sensing Meng Hao’s aura, his eyes filled with vigilance.

Sha Jiudong had the same reaction, and as for the Sect Leader, he immediately left his meditation facilities. Other Paragons, both 8-Essences and 9-Essences, were all shaken.

Patriarch Chi Feng in the Eighth Sect was equally shaken. When he detected Meng Hao’s aura, he thought about how he had mercilessly cut down the Eighth Paragon years ago in the necropolis.

“I wonder what unlucky fellow managed to provoke that jinx….” he murmured. Then he paid the matter no more heed, and closed his eyes in meditation.

Meanwhile, on the eighth continent, in the Eighth Sect, teleportation light twinkled. Patriarch Chi Feng’s grandson, the young man, emerged with Yan’er. His face was pale, and he looked as if he had been roughed up, but his eyes glittered with viciousness.

“Dammit. Dammit!” he roared. “Who is it that dares to provoke me, the Prince!?!?

“That was some trifling Dao Realm beast, nothing more. I’m gonna kill it. I’m gonna… I’m gonna eat it!

“I don’t care who owns it. Anybody that provokes me will have their whole clan wiped out!!” He looked down at Yan’er, whose face was ashen and filled with terror.

“W-what… what are you going to do to me?” she stammered. “My Master won’t let you get away with this. He–”

“Shut up! Who’s your master? Fang Mu? A measly Inner Sect disciple? He’s a nobody that doesn’t even qualify to shine my shoes!” With that, the young man lifted his hand up and slapped Yan’er right across the face. Her cheek instantly swelled up, and blood oozed out of the corners of her mouth. She began to tremble, and a look of complete terror could be seen on her face.

Her entire life had been one free from care or worry, so what was happening now made her realize how fragile life really was. She felt helpless, as though she were about to be completely consumed by terror.

“Master… Master….” She began to weep in fear. She wanted to see her family, her Master, but instead, everything around her was strange. She wasn’t sure what was going to happen to her, and it left her shaking in fear.

The young man’s expression was cruel as he threw his head back and roared, “Men, come!!

“Someone’s trying to kill me! Patriarch, save me!!” As the boy’s words echoed out, the Eighth Sect was thrown into an uproar. Countless figures emerged, and when they saw Yan’er, they frowned, but didn’t say anything.

“Someone’s trying to kill me!!” he bellowed.

The young man’s shouting provoked a response, not from Chi Feng, but from a Dao Sovereign who flew out from within the Eighth Sect. “Who’s trying to kill you? I thought you just went to the ninth continent?”

As soon as he appeared, everyone clasped hands respectfully.

“Dad, I was on the ninth continent when I took a liking to this cultivation vessel. Then a Dao Realm beast… tried to kill me! It really tried to kill me!” Considering his quavering voice, and the way his clothes were ripped and torn, it was obvious that he had been fleeing for his life, and had used the teleportation device given him by the Patriarch.

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# Chapter 1455: The Ninth Paragon Arrives!

The Dao Sovereign frowned, looking over at the bruises on the young man's neck, which were clearly caused by the anxious way he had ripped the jade pendant off his neck.

He was the son of Patriarch Chi Feng, and had a cultivation base at the 6-Essences Dao Sovereign level. In the Vast Expanse School, he was at the peak of power when it came to people under the Paragon level. Normally speaking, he was the kind of person who would kill with decisiveness. Couple that with the fact that his father was likely to become the next Eighth Paragon, and it ensured that his status was constantly on the rise, and his cultivation experienced constant progress.

People in the Eighth Sect had even begun to refer to the father and son team as collective Paragon. Although the young grandson had never earned much respect, he was of the same bloodline. Therefore, if his Dao Sovereign father wished to punish him, or even kill him, no one would say anything. However, if someone struck his son with a blow, it was the same thing as striking him, or even Patriarch Chi Feng.

That was especially the case considering that Patriarch Chi Feng had reached a critical juncture in his cultivation. To the Dao Sovereign, the fact that someone had done something like this to his son was a likely indication that a competing force was trying to make a move, although with what goal, he wasn't sure.

However, he didn't need to be sure.

“It doesn’t matter who did this, whoever dared to provoke my bloodline will be exterminated!” The Dao Sovereign snorted coldly and waved his sleeve. His murderous aura surged, rippling out into the area, causing the hearts of the nearby cultivators of the Eighth Sect to grow cold with fear. They were all well-aware that the bloodline of Patriarch Chi Feng were now preparing to go on a killing spree.

“What a pity. A Dao Realm beast, huh…? This girl must have some connections in her sect. But unfortunately for her, in the Vast Expanse School, power and influence are what really matter.

“It would be easier to find a phoenix feather or a qilin horn than to find someone on Planet Vast Expanse who could compare to Patriarch Chi Feng….” Those were the thoughts running through the heads of most of the people present, and there were some who even began to radiate their own killing intent, indicating that they wished to join the Dao Sovereign in whatever action he was about to take.

The Dao Sovereign seemed pleased with this. Glaring over at the young man, he said, “What are you standing around for? Take me to see whoever it was that had the gall to send a beast like that to harm a disciple of my Vast Expanse School!”

As for Yan’er, he didn’t even bother to look at her. He was aware of his son’s vices, and although they caused him a bit of a headache sometimes, he had the same attitude as Patriarch Chi Feng. In his view, the young man was always careful, and to cultivators, being careful was the same as being dependable.

Considering the girl had a Dao Realm beast protecting her, she clearly had some connections in the sect. But to Chi Feng, such connections weren’t even worth paying attention to.

All the other cultivators in the crowd felt the same as the Dao Sovereign, that it really would be easier to find a phoenix feather or a qilin horn than to find someone who could strike fear into the hearts of the members of this bloodline.

The Dao Sovereign simply couldn't believe that in his son's journey outside of the sect, he could possibly have provoked one of those existences that they did not dare to provoke.

Even as he spoke, the Dao Sovereign's energy rose up, causing everything else in the area to shake.

The young man's eyes went wide with delight. In his entire life, he had never been more scared than he had been earlier that day. He had been so close to dying that he had almost collapsed mentally.

Laughing heartily, he looked over at the terrified Yan'er, eyes flickering with a depraved gleam.

"Hey gorgeous, you know that dog of yours? I'm going to boil him right in front of you and then eat him. Don't worry, I'll give you a few bites to try."

Shaking, Yan'er bit her lip. By this point, her heart was completely overwhelmed with terror and fear. She felt alone, helpless and hopeless, and she suddenly missed her Master more than ever.

"Master…" she whimpered, shivering. "Master…"

"Did you just say something about your Master? Hahaha! I don't care what your Master has to do with your pet. He dared to provoke me, he WILL die. And before he dies, I'll make him act like a dog!" Viciousness gleamed in the young man's eyes as his laughter rang out into the air. He was just about to lead the group off when suddenly a cold snort ripped through the killing intent of the surrounding group of cultivators. It was like a clap of thunder that caused everything to tremble on the verge of exploding.

Lands quaked, and floor tiles were transformed into ash. A tempest sprang up that instantly spread out to cover the entire Eighth Sect.

The Eighth Sect was huge, but even if it were larger than it was, the tempest would still fill it. At the same time, it was as if an enormous, invisible foot had stamped down onto the ground. A huge shockwave spread out, filling the Eighth Sect, causing all mountains, buildings, and lands to shake violently.

In addition to the physical effects on the surroundings, all cultivators in the Eighth Sect, regardless of the level of their cultivation base or what they were doing at the moment… began to tremble. It was as if mountains were crushing down onto them, causing blood to spray out of their mouths. To their astonishment, they suddenly realized that… they couldn't move a muscle.

A roar of rage filled the world with indescribable pressure, crushing down onto the entire Eighth Sect!

All cultivators were completely and utterly shocked. Their hearts filled with terror, and their minds spun. Then, off in the distance, a person approached… it was a young man in a black robe, with violet hair, who seemed to carry with him all the darkness and coldness in the world.

Behind him, the Heavens trembled as if they were about to shatter. His gaze caused the air to distort, as if it were making a path for him, and beneath him, the lands shook as if they were kowtowing in worship!

One person suppressed Heaven and shook the Earth. Everything twisted and distorted. This young man became the center of all attention… a figure who would stand for all eternity!

Even as he appeared, a cold voice echoed out that seemed to carry infinite rage and killing intent. It echoed like a thousand thunders, shaking everything. "Who dared to harm one of the disciples of my Ninth Sect?"

His voice caused countless mountains to crumble, and numerous buildings to fall. The cultivators of the Eighth Sect once again coughed up mouthfuls of blood.

When an ordinary man is enraged, blood can be spattered everywhere. When a Paragon is enraged, Heaven and Earth weep!

These people from the Eighth Sect had poked Meng Hao in his sensitive weak spot, enraging him. And when Meng Hao was enraged, instead of saying that Heaven and Earth were weeping, it would be better to say that the Vast Expanse was being buried!

As soon as the voice rang out, colors flashed and the wind screamed. Mountains collapsed and buildings toppled. The cultivation bases of all cultivators in the Eighth Sect became unstable, and blood oozed out of their eyes, ears, noses, and mouths.

“Ninth…. Ninth P-P… Ninth Paragon!!” The young man’s father, the Dao Sovereign, couldn’t stop his eyes from bulging in disbelief. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and although he couldn’t actually move, he was trembling, all the way down to his very soul.

All of that was because of… a single sentence!

It was as if Meng Hao represented the might of Heaven, and his word was Heavenly Dao and magical law alike!

The sky above the eighth continent went dark, and the cultivators of the Eighth Sect, including their Paragons, were all trembling. Patriarch Chi Feng was also shaking, and when he looked out from his secluded meditation chamber, an expression of disbelief washed over his face as he realized he was looking at that most terrifying of figures, the person who struck fear into his heart more than anything after the trip to the necropolis.

“The Ninth Paragon…. What… what is he doing here? Dammit, who provoked a terrifying jinx like that!?!?!?” Patriarch Chi Feng’s eyes were already bloodshot.

Everyone was trembling, except for Yan’er. She looked up, and through the tears streaming down her face, she could see someone approaching. Although she couldn’t make out his features clearly, he seemed familiar, and she couldn’t hold back from saying, “Master….”

As soon as the words left her mouth, all the cultivators in the area, including the young man and the Dao Sovereign, gasped as if they had been struck by lightning.

That was especially true of the young man. He sagged in place as though his bones had turned to mush. His mind reeled as the word she had just uttered echoed out.

“The vessel I took a liking to is… the apprentice of the Ninth Paragon?” The young man suddenly wanted to laugh. It was almost like he was hearing the funniest joke he had ever heard in his entire life. And yet, at the bottom of his heart, he was trembling with insanity.

As his mind reeled, his entire world was destroyed; the light left it, leaving nothing but darkness.

He wasn’t the only one to have such a reaction. His father, the Dao Sovereign, was normally a high and mighty figure. Within the Eighth Sect, innumerable people treated him with fear and dignity. But now, in front of Meng Hao, he was trembling like a stray dog. He was gasping for breath, staring in shock, his eyes bloodshot as he turned to look at his son. If he could kill anyone at this moment, he would most definitely… tear this unfilial son to shreds!

“You damned son of a bitch!” he bellowed. “Y-y-you… you screwed us all over!!”

Everyone in the crowd was shaking, especially the ones who had expressed their desire to join Chi Feng’s bloodline in wiping out the enemy. Looks of shock and disbelief appeared on their faces, and suddenly they felt a bit bad for Chi Feng’s bloodline.

Apparently… they had the audacious gall and courage to dare to provoke one of the nine great Paragons of the Vast Expanse School.

Everything was deathly silent, as people stood there in fear.

Meng Hao’s true self walked into the Eighth Sect, past the crowds of people, until he was standing in front of Yan’er. As soon as his gaze came to rest on her, his eyes turned soft and warm.

“I’m not your Master,” he said slowly. “But… any cultivator in the Ninth Sect could be considered my apprentice.”

Everyone present breathed a sigh of relief, especially the Dao Sovereign. As long as they weren’t really Master and apprentice, then everything should be fine….

Yan’er looked at Meng Hao, and although he didn’t look exactly like her Master, for some reason he seemed very familiar. The warmth in his words, and everything else, filled her with the intense sensation that she really was standing in front of her Master.

That feeling of familiarity caused tears to stream down her cheeks. She rushed forward and wrapped her arms around his chest, wailing. It was as if her tears could release all of the humiliation, fear, and terror that she had just experienced.

The Eighth Sect was completely silent. Everyone stood there trembling, looking at that most powerful of entities gently holding a young girl in his arms. When Meng Hao looked up again, his eyes were so ice cold that they seemed capable of extinguishing the light of the sun and moon.

As Yan’er wept in his arms, everyone looked on, shaking. Then, within the silence that filled the Eighth Sect, Meng Hao looked down at Yan’er’s cheek.

There… was a distinct hand print!

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# Chapter 1456: Who Else?

It was the swollen mark left behind by a vicious slap to the face. When Meng Hao saw it there on Yan’er’s face, he said nothing. However, the coldness radiating off of his body grew with explosive intensity, filling the entire area. It was as if Heaven and Earth were furious, as if the entire world were trembling with rage.

Cracking sounds echoed out as the ground shattered. The mountains which had previously collapsed were seemingly erased out of existence, transformed into nothing more than ash as an intense, indescribable pressure weighed down.

Blood sprayed out of the young man’s mouth as he was sent tumbling backward. The Dao Sovereign also coughed up blood, and his legs trembled so hard that it seemed as if his kneecaps would shatter. The crushing pressure forced him to kneel down onto the ground, as did all of the other cultivators in the area.

They were incapable of standing up to the pressure, to the rage of Heaven and Earth, to the icy coldness radiating out of Meng Hao.

The pressure was such that they felt they couldn’t hold on for very much longer. Even Patriarch Chi Feng, an 8-Essences Paragon on the verge of breaking through to 9-Essences, had the same reaction.

It was as if… an enormous hand had descended from up above… a hand to return the slap which had been inflicted onto Yan’er. Apparently, Meng Hao didn’t have to make an actual move at all: that pressure alone was enough to wipe the Eighth Sect completely off of Planet Vast Expanse.

“Exalted… exalted Ninth Paragon….” the Dao Sovereign stammered. He had no choice but to speak. If he didn’t, he would be wiped out of existence by that incredible pressure.

Even as the words left his mouth, colors flashed in the sky as numerous beams of light flew through the air at incredible speed. A moment later the Sect Leader appeared, along with the other 9-Essences Paragons.

Even Jin Yunshan and Sha Jiudong appeared, to hover there in midair, looking down. None of them spoke.

Even the Sect Leader was unsure of whether Meng Hao intended to actually destroy the entire Eighth Sect.

Some of them looked over at Yan’er, eyes glittering thoughtfully.

Meng Hao didn’t seem to care at all that the group of 9-Essences Paragons had arrived. He had long since thought the matter through clearly. As of now, he was harboring no secrets. If people knew about Yan’er, fine. If they didn’t, it was also fine. In his current state of mind, he truly didn’t care what people thought.

“Who hit you?” he asked, looking over at Yan’er. Before she could even respond, his gaze fell upon the young man. “Was it him?”

As the words left the mouth, power from seemingly nowhere crushed down onto the young man. He screamed and struggled to back up, blood spurting out of wounds all over his body.

“I didn’t do it on purpose!” he cried in a pleading voice. “I… I didn’t know, I… I…” He was trembling from fear, true fear that had reached the pinnacle. He was even more scared than Yan’er had been only moments ago.

Even in his wildest dreams, he would never have imagined that a simple outing in which he took a liking to a cultivation vessel, would result in something like this. It was something he had done many times in the past, but this time… unexpectedly… he had provoked a disaster.

As of this moment, hatred for his Dao Protector burned all the way down to his bones. He wished he could rip the man to shreds. After all, it was impossible to forget how the Dao Protector had told him… to enjoy himself with the girl.

Without the Dao Protector’s assurances, the young man would never have touched a girl with such incredibly high connections.

Furthermore, deep in his heart, he almost found it too fantastic to believe, this Yan’er had such a background, and yet… Why the hell didn’t you say anything? If you had said something, I would’ve at least confirmed it, even if I didn’t believe you. The worst thing is, you’re backed by someone so powerful he can kill us all with a single word, and yet… you didn’t say anything!!

The young man felt as if he had been deceived, wronged. However, before he could say another word, Yan’er glared at him and said in a loud voice: “Yeah, it was him!!”

Her words were like a death sentence. The young man’s vision turned dark as Meng Hao waved his finger, sending killing intent speeding toward his forehead.

A pop could be heard as the boy’s head exploded into a cloud of blood and gore, killing him instantly.

Meng Hao slaughtered him as easily as if he had popped the neck of a baby chicken. However, his rage was not sated.

“And him!” Yan’er cried, pointing at the Dao Sovereign. “He… he just said that he was going to go cause trouble for my Master!” Shock filled the Dao Sovereign’s face, and a sensation of deadly crisis exploded within him. His hatred for his own son was no less than the son’s hatred for his Dao Protector.

“Dammit! DAMMIT!” A tremor ran through him, and he was just about to say something in his defense when Meng Hao’s eyes flickered coldly. He waved his right finger, and the Dao Sovereign’s head exploded, killing him just as his son had been killed.

Before dying, the Dao Sovereign’s venomous hatred rose to intense heights. Strangely, he didn’t hate Meng Hao so much as he hated his unfilial son. He could never have imagined that all the honor and glory he had built up in his lifetime would be wiped away by someone his own son had provoked.

Everyone in the area was trembling.

“And those people too!” Yan’er said through gritted teeth, pointing out at the crowd. “All of them wanted to go cause trouble for my Master too!” Although it was impossible to tell exactly who she was pointing at, as her finger swept out over the crowd, they felt as if the gaze of the underworld were boring into their hearts.

“Him?” Meng Hao asked, pointing out an old man from Chi Feng’s bloodline, who had been coldly preparing to go to the ninth continent. The man trembled, and before he could even speak a word, his head exploded.

“And him?”

“Him too?”

“What about him?”

Meng Hao’s voice was cool. Every time he spoke, Yan’er would nod, and heads would explode. None of them even had a chance to cry out.

Soon, the ground was awash with blood. Meng Hao had killed dozens of people with brutal efficiency, all of whom had been preparing to join Chi Feng’s bloodline to go to the ninth continent.

As for the ones who had been hesitating earlier, Meng Hao didn’t ask about any of them.

There were some people who had been preparing to join Chi Feng’s bloodline who stood there ashen-faced as they waited for Yan’er to call them out. However, because of some bit of confusion on her part, she shook her head when it came to them. Tears streamed out of the eyes of those cultivators as they realized that they had just narrowly escaped death. Their gratitude toward Yan’er simply couldn’t be expressed in words.

The entire Eighth Sect was as silent as death. Everyone was on their knees, trembling, as Meng Hao gave vent to his rage like a spirit of death.

It was at this point that the Sect Leader cleared his throat.

“Ninth Paragon, calm down… the punishment has been carried out. You’re not really going to wipe out the entire Eighth Sect are you?”

Meng Hao looked over at the Sect Leader and asked, “I couldn’t possibly wipe out the entire sect. However, don’t think things are over yet.”

With that, he looked into the depths of the Eighth Sect, and spoke out in a voice that crashed like thunder.

“Chi Feng, get the hell out here!” He flicked his sleeve, causing rumbling sounds to fill Heaven and Earth. Patriarch Chi Feng emerged from the depths of the sect, his heart filled with hatred toward his son and grandson. His face was taut with bitterness, and as pale as death. Inwardly, he was roaring in rage, although not toward Meng Hao, but rather, toward his son and grandson.

To him, not even death could expunge the deeds committed by those two, which had sucked him into a catastrophe….

Without the slightest hesitation, he flew through the air to appear directly in front of Meng Hao.

Instantly, he clasped hands and bowed deeply.

“Chi Feng… offers greetings… greetings to the exalted Ninth Paragon.” His heart trembled as he completely ignored the corpses of his son and grandson. If he could, he would have killed them himself.

Other people might not know what it was like to face an enraged Meng Hao, but how could he not know? He had personally witnessed Meng Hao cut down the Eighth Paragon in the necropolis, and had also watched his battle with Jin Yunshan. He was well aware that Meng Hao was invincible when inside the necropolis, and was a figure of incomparable terror.

Chi Feng gritted his teeth. He knew full well that because of what had occurred today, he had to offer compensation, otherwise he would be killed. To the masses, he was a preeminent 8-Essences Paragon, someone who would soon reach the 9-Essences level and become the ruler of the Eighth Sect.

However, he knew that even if he became the new Eighth Paragon, he would still have to bow his head to the Ninth Paragon. He couldn't simply wait for Meng Hao to demand compensation for what had happened. He had to admit fault and take responsibility. Therefore, he quickly lifted his hand up and smashed his palm onto his forehead.

A boom rang out, and he shivered as a rift tore open on his forehead, from within which blood sprayed like a fountain. His body then exploded.

His soul flew out, trembling and clasping hands toward Meng Hao.

"Ninth Paragon, please calm your wrath…." he said, prostrating himself.

The surrounding cultivators gasped in response to what they were seeing. Everyone in the Eighth Sect was paying rapt attention, and now their hearts trembled with fear and awe as they looked over at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao eyed Chi Feng's soul, and calmed down somewhat. If Chi Feng hadn't been so straightforward, if he had waited for Meng Hao to speak, then he might not have ended up dead, but he would have been forever cut off from the 9-Essences level.

Now, his fleshly body was destroyed, which would be a big setback, but wouldn't prevent him from obtaining his ninth Essence.

Meng Hao looked deeply at Patriarch Chi Feng, then turned away, taking Yan'er with him as he left the eighth continent.

Along with his departure, the intense pressure weighing down on the Eighth Sect faded away. Everyone breathed sighs of relief. This day was one the cultivators of the Eighth Sect would never be able to forget.

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# Chapter 1457: Vast Expanse Shrine!

Meng Hao did not exterminate the Eighth Sect. He did not take the grief for the Mountain and Sea Realm that lurked in his heart and vent it upon the world. He was not young anymore. He had practiced cultivation and experienced the transformations of time. He had long since lost track of how many years it had actually been.

The debt which he owed to Chu Yuyan still had to be paid. And yet, because his heart had been taken away along with the Mountain and Sea Butterfly, in his mind, the only thing that he could give as payment was the relationship between a Master and an apprentice.

For Chu Yuyan, he could hold back from investigating Han Bei.

For Chu Yuyan, he could allow his clone, who was at a critical juncture of gaining enlightenment of the Ninth Hex, to take up the responsibility of caring for her.

Because of Chu Yuyan, his lonely existence in the Vast Expanse School… now contained something warm and familiar, something that he would not allow others to interfere with. It was a simple desire… to protect her.

Chu Yuyan had lost her memories of her previous life, but not necessarily forever. Her memories were still in Meng Hao’s possession; he just wasn’t sure whether or not he should return them to her.

However, he was still willing to allow her to be his weak spot. That weak spot had been prodded, and thus was birthed his rage toward the Eighth Sect. He had not held back, but neither had he gone on a mindless massacre.

He had killed the culprits and the accomplices, as well as those who intended to be accomplices.

By his actions, he issued a warning to all cultivators on Planet Vast Expanse, including Han Bei. No one… was to trifle with Yan’er. If they did, then Meng Hao would appear, and his rage would shock Heaven and Earth.

Along with that rage… rivers of blood would flow.

Because of what had occurred, some people now realized there was a connection between him and Fang Mu. However, Meng Hao didn’t care.

In all of the Vast Expanse School, only a few people would possibly be able to guess what that connection was. Furthermore, Meng Hao now had some new ideas regarding the path to be tread by his clone.

Currently, Meng Hao’s true self was taking Chu Yuyan back to the ninth continent and the Ninth Sect. There, in a certain mountain range, were his clone’s secluded meditation facilities. His clone slowly opened his eyes, and they shone with an icy light, as though a detached coldness were brewing inside of him.

“I’ve been in seclusion for too long,” thought Meng Hao. “Apparently, people think that anyone can provoke me. I’m still Meng Hao, but there are still things… that only my true self can accomplish. It’s a bit embarrassing.” This was Meng Hao’s clone, but it was still Meng Hao. He rose to his feet, not to leave the Ninth Sect, but rather, to head to a certain mountain peak within the sect.

At the top of that mountain was a high tower that was called… the Vast Expanse Shrine!

In the Ninth Sect, all disciples could challenge the Vast Expanse Shrine, with the results determining their standing in the rankings. It was a place that the entire Ninth Sect always paid close attention to.

All of the sects in the Vast Expanse School had a tower like this. There were nine of them, and anyone who could take first place in the rankings on one of them, would rock all of Planet Vast Expanse, and would become a Vast Expanse Chosen!

It was a completely different matter than the stir caused by Fang Mu's Immortal Tribulation.

In fact, it wasn't even necessary to take first place. Anyone who entered the top 100 would be considered one of the true Chosen of the nine sects. If Meng Hao's clone could get into the top 100 in the Vast Expanse Shrine, then he would rise from being an Inner Sect disciple in his subdivision, to being an Inner Sect disciple of the Ninth Sect's main division.

If he could enter the top 30, then he would become… a Conclave disciple!

Then there were the top 3 spots, which came with the title of Legacy disciple of the entire Ninth Sect!

Meng Hao was already walking on the path leading to the mountain, his expression calm. The other disciples he passed would look over at him in surprise. At first, most people didn't recognize him, but after a moment they would recall events from the past, and scorn would then appear in their eyes.

"Isn't that Junior Brother Fang Mu, who went from mortal to Immortal in ten years?" someone asked. "What's he doing here?"

"He's a real weirdo," replied a friend of his. "He pretty much never comes out in public. His apprentice Yan'er is a real beauty though." It was in that moment that Meng Hao suddenly turned back to look at the man.

The gaze was nothing out of the ordinary, but for some reason, it caused the man to tremble, and his mind to become a complete blank. Without even thinking about it, he backed up a few paces. By the time he regained his composure, Meng Hao was far off in the distance.

The man hesitated, and was thinking of making another comment, but his gut told him that now was the time to keep quiet. Taking a deep breath, he said nothing further.

The Vast Expanse Shrine of the Ninth Sect was located on the highest point of the highest mountain in the sect, in the very middle of the sect. Meng Hao’s expression was calm as he continued to pass more and more fellow disciples.

Most of the people were unfamiliar with him, but after he passed them, they would recall his previous actions in the sect.

The majority made joking comments as he passed them by and continued on. As he proceeded, he encountered more and more disciples.

“Isn’t that Fang Mu? This is the first time I’ve seen him here. Could it be that he’s about to have a cultivation base breakthrough?”

“Is he heading toward the Vast Expanse Shrine? How amusing. Does he really think so much of himself that he thinks he qualifies to challenge the Vast Expanse Shrine?”

Meng Hao could hear the things people were saying, but his expression was the same as ever as he proceeded onward.

Soon, he reached the foot of the mountain. When he looked up, he saw a stone stele about thirty meters tall, upon which were lines of script, which were names.

These names were the top 3,000 cultivators from the Ninth Sect who had participated in the trial by fire of the Vast Expanse Shrine.

Although everyone on the list were extraordinary individuals, only those in the top 1,000 could be considered blazing suns. The top 100 were officially Chosen.

Meng Hao scanned the list, then looked back toward the peak of the mountain.

The mountaintop pierced through the clouds, and had a staircase winding up it into the sky.

Meng Hao didn’t know much about the Vast Expanse Shrine, only what he had heard from Yan’er.

He knew that the trial by fire of the Vast Expanse Shrine didn’t just refer to the tower at the top of the mountain. It also included the staircase which started at the foot of the mountain.

The people who were able to make it all the way to the tower itself would make it into the top 100. Furthermore, one’s progress didn’t have much to do with one’s cultivation base, but rather, one’s relative battle prowess and potential.

“I’ve been hiding away for too long,” he thought. “When people heard that Yan’er’s Master was Fang Mu, it didn’t mean much, and my true self had to handle the situation.” He shook his head.

“Well then, it’s time to make a scene. Yan’er deserves a master who has taken 1st place on the Ninth Sect’s Vast Expanse Shrine. That will make the little girl happy.

“If it’s not enough, then I’ll just have to take 1st place on all nine Vast Expanse Shrines. If that’s not enough, then I might just have to try out the Transcendence Path.” Meng Hao smiled, and his eyes glittered brightly. Within the Vast Expanse School, there were more than enough locations to earn rankings of some sort or another. However, there were only two locations which people throughout the sects, and even the Paragons, took very seriously.

One was the location to test potential and latent talent, which was… the Vast Expanse Shrine. The other was the Vast Expanse School’s one and only… Transcendence Path!

It bore the name Transcendence, but the truth was… although Transcendence was a possibility, what was more likely was that those who walked it would benefit from the Baptism. According to the legends, if you could reach a certain point on the Transcendence Path, you would receive a Baptism, and thus, good fortune!

As for how far the Transcendence Path stretched, no one knew. However, it was well known that the person who had walked the furthest along it was not the Sect Leader, but rather, a woman by the name of Bai Wuchen.

She was also commonly known as Immortal Bai Wuchen! [1]

However, not even she had reached the end of the path. Perhaps the difficulty level of that path was why the Sect Leader and the others placed their hope in the necropolis.

Meng Hao gathered his thoughts, then calmly took a step forward onto the first step of the staircase.

1 step. 2 steps. 3 steps….

No one paid him much attention. In fact, few people would pay attention to anyone in the starting stages of the Vast Expanse Shrine. Meng Hao walked along, climbing up the stairs, facing increasing levels of pressure. To some people, taking even half a step would be difficult. But to Meng Hao, it was like strolling along a level path. He didn’t seem pressured at all, and maintained the same speed the entire time as he continued upward.

10 steps. 30 steps. 50 steps. 80 steps. 100 steps….

Meng Hao wasn’t the only person climbing the steps. Ahead of him were a few hundred people who had been in the process of climbing during recent days. It was a difficult process, and many of them would occasionally rest before struggling onward. To these disciples, this mountain was their hope of making a name for themselves.

Some people would even sit cross-legged to cultivate. However, when someone reached their limit, they would be teleported away. That was generally the only way people would leave.

There were quite a few people on the mountain who suddenly saw Fang Mu pass by. When they realized how casually he was walking along, and how he didn’t seem to have any difficulty whatsoever in climbing the stairs, their jaws dropped.

They saw him proceeded along rapidly, leaving all the other disciples behind, and soon, a bit of an uproar ensued.

“Hey… who’s that?!?!”

“How can he be walking so fast?!?! This is 300 stairs in, and the pressure is intense. He… he isn’t even pausing at all!!”

“How is that even possible…? Could it be… could it be that he’s one of the blazing suns!?!?” The cultivators on the mountain looked on with reeling minds, and soon the sounds of their exclamations echoed out.

That sound grew louder as Meng Hao passed one Ninth Sect cultivator after another. There were some who, upon seeing him pass them so casually, mistakenly believed that the pressure from the trial by fire had suddenly disappeared. They then subconsciously stepped out, only to be slammed down into the ground or even ejected from the mountain.

“Who is that? He… he’s already reached the 700th stair!!”

“Heavens! He’s almost past 800 stairs! Whenever someone reaches the 1000th stair, a bell tolls, shaking the whole sect!!” More and more conversations broke out on the mountain. Meanwhile, Meng Hao’s true self had arrived with Yan’er.

“You… you really aren’t my Master?” she asked as they landed outside Fang Mu’s residence. When she looked at the majestic and supreme Ninth Paragon, she didn’t feel any fear or reverence at all. In fact, she somehow felt familiar with him, which left her very confused.

Almost as soon as the words left her mouth, an ancient-sounding bell tolled out from the Vast Expanse Shrine, filling the Ninth Sect.

Dong….

The sound was clear, ancient, and sonorous, and it instantly attracted the attention of the disciples of the Ninth Sect. The sound of discussions rose up, and Meng Hao’s true self smiled and tousled Yan’er’s hair.

“Your Master is challenging the Vast Expanse Shrine. Why don’t you go cheer him on?” With that, Meng Hao’s true self turned and vanished.

Yan’er was left gaping in shock. Then, she seemed to recall something in particular, and turned to look toward the Mount Vast Expanse.

“Huh? The old fogey is challenging the Vast Expanse Shrine? Um… isn’t that something for young people to do to make a name for themselves? Elite disciples like Elder Brother Bi Yun?” Eyes flickering with disbelief, and heart pounding, she took to flight toward the mountain and the Vast Expanse Shrine.

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# Chapter 1458: The Long and Broad View

The ancient sound of the bell echoed out through the Ninth Sect. It was like a gust of wind from ancient times, filling the sect, causing the eyes of countless disciples to go wide as they looked in the direction of the mountain peak where the Vast Expanse Shrine was located.

“Someone challenging the Vast Expanse Shrine actually… passed 1,000 stairs!!”

“That’s not very common. In the past several years, only a few people have done it.”

“I wonder who it is? The 1,000 stair bell can lead to a Baptism which gives good fortune. But it will only toll the first time someone reaches that many steps. Therefore, the bell can’t be tolling for a current Chosen, only someone new!”

The buzz of conversation rose up everywhere, and yet, it wasn’t filled with the sound of shock. After all… it was only a mere 1,000 stairs. Most people were simply curious as to who was making a name for the first time in the sect.

The curiosity soon faded, and everything went quiet. In fact, no one even flew over to the Vast Expanse Shrine to check out the situation other than the few hundred people who were already nearby. And in the Ninth Sect, which had tens of millions of members, a few hundred people… was like nothing.

However, all of the disciples who were below the 1,000 stair mark were completely shocked. All of them had watched as Meng Hao walked past them onto the steps they had been unable to reach. And then the bell tolled, and they all gasped.

They had no time to wonder who he was, but all of them had the intense premonition that this person… was completely exceptional!!

“He’s going too fast!!”

“I remember watching Elder Brother Bi Yun and some of the others, and they were agile too, but… but they were all people who made it to the top 1,000. Some of them even reached the top 100!!”

“This guy… might be able to make it into the top 10,000 in the rankings!!” While everyone was shaking in astonishment, Meng Hao calmly continued on one step at a time. As he moved, he maintained the same pace, moving neither faster nor slower.

1,200 steps. 1,500 steps. He continued to pass other disciples, all of whom stared in shock as he casually walked by.

His relaxed appearance and way of walking caused more gasps to rise up.

1,800 steps…. Soon, he was approaching the 1,999th step!

On that step was a middle-aged cultivator, who stood there, eyes bloodshot, panting. His body trembled as he lifted his foot into the air, using all the strength he could muster, the full power of his cultivation base, to take that next step onto the 2,000th stair.

“You can do it, Xu Liu!” he growled to himself. “All you have to do is step down. Then the bell will toll, and you’ll receive the Baptism. Your cultivation base will make some progress, and you’ll finally be able to make a name for yourself in the sect!!” However, there was a power that seemed to rise up from the ground, making it impossible for him to lower his foot.

At this moment of incredible difficulty, he suddenly realized that there was a young man behind him. He was handsome, and seemed to have no trouble at all as he walked up. He even looked over with a smile.

The middle-aged man stared in shock. Feeling somewhat muddled, he had no chance to even react before Meng Hao walked past him, stepping onto the 2,000th step and then beyond.

“Impossible!!” the man thought, his mind reeling, his face filling with astonishment and shock. He looked at Meng Hao, and then at his own foot. To him, that step was one of incredible difficulty, and yet this young man had just walked on past it as if it were level ground. The man almost couldn’t believe what he had just seen.

Rumbling filled his mind, and his thoughts were thrown into chaos. A massive force pushed against him, making it impossible to make that final step. He staggered backward, looking up at Meng Hao’s retreating back.

It was then that the bell tolled out yet again, this time, twice.

Dong, dong….

The sound echoed out from the Vast Expanse Shrine to fill the entire Ninth Sect, causing widespread astonishment.

The main reason for that was because the time between the first tolling of the bell and the second had been too short, less time than it takes an incense stick to burn!

“What’s going on today? How funny. First someone reached the 1,000th step, and then right after that, someone reached 2,000 steps.”

“Interesting, interesting. I wonder if someone will reach 3,000 steps next?” Countless people in the Ninth Sect were surprised, but then began to laugh and joke about it. It wasn’t that people didn’t think about the possibility of a single person causing the bell to toll twice. But when they realized that only enough time had passed for an incense stick to burn, they dismissed any such notions.

It seemed to be a complete impossibility. Unless… someone was walking up the steps who qualified to be in the top 1,000 of the Vast Expanse Shrine.

Even Yan’er was shocked as she flew through the air toward the Vast Expanse Shrine. Suddenly, keen anticipation rose up in her heart.

“Could it be… could it be that Master has something to do with the tolling of the bell?” Earlier, she would probably have taken that to be impossible. But now she couldn’t shake the feeling that the Ninth Paragon and her Master were very similar. It wasn’t that their facial features were exactly the same, but there was something about them, something about their auras, that was almost the same.

Yan’er’s heart began to pound. She took out a medicinal pill and consumed it, causing her cultivation base to surge and giving her an added burst of speed.

The two bell tolls caused more disciples to gather. Before, there had been a few hundred, but now there were over a thousand, all of whom were looking up with interest at the Vast Expanse Shrine.

“It’s too bad we can’t see who it is that passed 1,000 steps, or whoever it was that passed 2,000 steps…. Maybe it’s Elder Brother Xu Liu. I remember that, years ago, he got stuck at the 1,999th step!”

“The Vast Expanse Shrine has a total of 100,000 steps. In the first 10,000, a bell will toll for every thousand steps. After that, the bell tolls every 10,000 steps. Then, once you reach 80,000 steps, you’ll be listed in the top 3,000, and your name will appear on the Vast Expanse Stele.”

“I’m actually hoping to hear that third tolling of the bell.” Everyone was talking and laughing, but no one really expected that a third bell toll would occur. But then….

The Vast Expanse Shrine shook, and the mountain shook as a third tolling of the bell… filled the air!

Dong, dong, dong!!

A series of three tolls echoed out, along with an ancient aura that buffeted the faces of the onlookers. The surrounding disciples cried out in astonishment, and their eyes went wide. Gasps could be heard as everyone looked up at the Vast Expanse Shrine.

It wasn't just that small group. More disciples in the Ninth Sect turned in their astonishment to look in the direction of the Vast Expanse Shrine.

"A third tolling of the bell!!"

"Not even enough time passed for an incense stick to burn!!"

"Who could this tolling be for…? How shocking! Three people caused the bell to toll today, one for 1,000 steps, one for 2,000 and one for 3,000…."

In sharp contrast, all of the disciples on the mountain below the 3,000 step mark were certain of what was happening. Their minds reeled, for they knew that it wasn't three people who had caused the bell tolls, it was… a single individual!

In less time than it takes three incense sticks to burn, he passed everyone. He was the one… to cause three tolls of the bell!

"How is this even possible? One incense stick's worth of time, one thousand steps…."

"Something big is happening today!!" None of these people felt much like climbing the stairs any more. They were panting as they looked up the staircase, almost as if they could see Meng Hao… causally climbing up one step after another.

To Meng Hao, it really was a casual thing. At this point, he had already climbed 3,500 stairs, and so far, hadn't felt any pressure at all. Furthermore, the three tolls of the bell left him tingling with traces of Baptism.

Unfortunately, it was always an incomplete feeling, as if the tolling of the bell hadn't reached the point where it could thoroughly Baptise him.

“Interesting,” he thought. “It seems you need multiple tolls of the bell. The best would be to make sure they keep tolling constantly.” He moved forward again, but instead of stepping up by a single step, he started taking them three at a time!

His speed tripled, and soon he reached the 3,700th step . Then 3,800. 3,900. 4,000!!

He whizzed past all of the cultivators who were between the 3,000th and 4,000th steps. They could hardly believe what they were seeing as a blurred figure raced past them, kicking up a wind.

“Who… who is that?”

Everyone was left with minds spinning as the fourth tolling of the bell rang out!!

The sound shook the entire Ninth Sect. More and more cultivators were converging near the mountain. By now, there were several thousand, and the sound of their conversations rose up into the air.

However… before much conversation could take place, a fifth tolling of the bell rang out!!

Meng Hao had increased his speed again! Instead of walking up the stairs three at a time, he was taking them ten at a time! Because of that increased speed, the sixth tolling of the bell rang out, and moments later, the seventh! They were tolling together!

Before the sound of the seventh tolling of the bell faded away, the eighth tolling began…. What a shocking turn of events! Next was the ninth tolling, which shook the whole sect. Then the tenth…. Everyone was staring with wide eyes and slack jaws.

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# Chapter 1459: You’re Fang Mu!

Dong, dong, dong, dong…. Dong, dong, dong, dong…. Dong, dong, dong, dong…. The sonorous tolling bell represented something holy, something that would attract widespread envy, and yet at the moment the sound was ringing out as though a mortal were simply pounding on a drum… and doing it as many times as he felt like.

To hear the bell tolling in this fashion was something that had never occurred in the history of the Ninth Sect. Throughout all the years, never had it sounded out so many times in such a short period of time….

“What… what… what is happening? What’s going on?! How many people are there causing the bell to toll so many times?”

“But… but how come it seems like it’s actually being caused by one person? Otherwise, it would be far too coincidental…. But if it’s a single person, that would simply be a violation of common sense. It would make more sense for it to be a coincidence than for it to be caused by one person.”

The Ninth Sect was completely and utterly stirred up by what was happening. Virtually all of its cultivators were in flight toward the mountain, whether they were in the Immortal Realm or even the Ancient Realm.

People crowded around, millions of them, even tens of millions. They came from all directions to gather around the Vast Expanse Shrine. Some of them didn’t fly over, but sent divine sense out to lock down onto the mountain.

Up in midair, Yan’er looked on with wide eyes. She heard the bell tolling, and saw countless cultivators flying up into the air, and was a bit taken aback. She almost couldn’t believe that this was being caused by her Master.

Even more shocked than everyone else were the cultivators beneath 10,000 steps in the trial by fire. They were completely and utterly astonished as they stared up the mountain peak, the sound of the bell ringing in their ears. Their minds were total blanks, and the very same types of questions were buzzing in all of their heads.

“Who is this guy?!”

“He seemed familiar, but I can’t seem to place exactly who he is!”

Most people were completely shocked, but there were certain individuals within the Ninth Sect who didn’t have much of a reaction at all. Of course, the Elders and the Dao Realm experts weren’t surprised, but there was an additional group who were similarly ambivalent. They were the blazing suns of the Ninth Sect, the weakest of whom had placed in the top 10,000 names on the Vast Expanse Shrine.

They didn’t care much at all about the commotion. Unless they felt a threat from Fang Mu, to them, it was all just a big ruckus.

“Whether it’s a single person, or a group, it doesn’t matter until they pass 50,000 steps. Before then, it’s mostly meaningless.”

“Anyone who passes 50,000 steps can be listed in the top 10,000. Likewise, 80,000 steps puts you in the top 3,000.”

“Mount Vast Expanse itself doesn’t count for much. It’s only when you reach the Vast Expanse Shrine itself that you truly count as Chosen, and can be listed in the top 100!” All of those people had incredible natural talent, and back when they challenged the Vast Expanse Shrine, had caused huge commotions. As such, they took the matter in stride, and in fact, didn’t even care.

However, there were a few of them who were slightly curious, so they flew over and began to climb up the mountain. There were actually a few thousand people who did so, their goal being, not to challenge the Vast Expanse Shrine, but to see who exactly it was that was causing the tolling of the bell. Was it a group, or was it… an individual!?

If a group was involved, then it wouldn't matter much. However, if it was an individual, that would be a different story….

Many of the people who had stepped onto the path just now had previously reached a location somewhere beneath 50,000 steps. In their minds, catching up with either a group or an individual would be a simple task.

Meng Hao was now standing on the 10,000th step, his eyes closed. As the bell tolled out, he experienced a Baptism. To most people, that was a process that would take quite some time, but for him, it only took about ten breaths of time.

After all, he was already equipped with incredible latent talent, so the Baptism was almost like a decoration on something that was already perfect. Although it did benefit him, it wasn't fundamentally shocking.

"Not bad," Meng Hao thought. "It seems I underestimated this Vast Expanse Shrine." His eyes flickered with anticipation regarding the upcoming bell tolls.

"Well, I should probably move a bit faster then." Smiling, he flickered into motion, this time, each stride took him… 100 steps!!

Ten paces, 1,000 steps. Soon, he reached 11,000 steps. 13,000 steps. 15,000 steps. 18,000 steps. And then… 20,000 steps!

To Meng Hao, 10,000 steps was only 100 paces. However, to the cultivators who were actually participating in that part of the trial by fire, it was like a blast of wind had just swept past them….

When Meng Hao stepped onto the 20,000th step, two bell tolls could be heard. However, they were different than before, deeper, more ancient, more shocking!

As soon as the sound echoed out, people outside the mountain were astounded.

Of the people charging up the mountain to try to catch up and glimpse the person causing the bell to toll, the fastest was still 10,000 steps away from Meng Hao. All of those people were shaken, and their eyes were wide with disbelief.

“20,000… 20,000 steps!!”

“That was faster than it takes an incense stick to burn! That was… a few dozen breaths of time. How could the bell already be tolling for the 20,000th step!?!?!?”

Numerous such cries rose up from the crowd outside the mountain, creating a sound wave that surged out in all directions.

As for Meng Hao, he was shaking a bit because of the Baptism from the bell toll. His eyes were shining as he sensed that his cultivation base was on the verge of a breakthrough.

He smiled, striding forward once again. 23,000 steps. 27,000 steps. Eventually… 30,000 steps!!

The bell tolled, leading to widespread astonishment and shock.

“What… what is going on today? There are so many people making breakthroughs! Hahaha. Ha ha…. How strange….”

The discussion and outcry soon died down, until silence prevailed among the countless cultivators watching the mountain.

They would have to be much more stupid than they were to not understand by this point that it was not a group doing this, but rather… a single individual!!

And yet, no one dared to ponder the matter. If the bell really was tolling for a single person, then… that would be a mind-blowing turn of events.

From the beginning until this moment, only enough time had passed for a few incense sticks to burn. If it was a single person, he had used that much time to go from the first step all the way to… step number 30,000! If anyone spoke the words aloud, it would be almost impossible to believe. In the history of the Ninth Sect, it was something that had never happened.

“Maybe it’s a mistake. Maybe… something’s wrong with the mountain?”

“Perhaps it’s just a big coincidence, and not a single person….”

The onlookers didn’t have to wait for long before the fourth tolling could be heard. Everyone was astonished, and the tolling of the bell caused them to literally shake. Strange gleams could be seen in their eyes, and their minds spun. Yan’er finally arrived at the mountain, her eyes wide and her heart racing.

The tolling for the 40,000th stair echoed out in all directions. The people who had begun to climb the steps in the hope of catching up were now completely dumbfounded, and gave up. By now, their question had been answered.

However, there was one person among that group who didn’t give up! Gritting his teeth, he pressed forward.

His speed was actually a bit greater than Meng Hao’s. By the time Meng Hao reached 45,000 steps, he was at step number 40,000. He was huffing and puffing, for although his limit was somewhere between 45,000 and 48,000 stairs, to speed up 40,000 steps in one shot was not an easy task by any stretch of the imagination.

As of this point, he could just barely make out the image of… a single person about 5,000 steps beyond him. That was absolute confirmation that it wasn’t a group who was causing this scene!

When he saw that it was indeed a single person, he gasped, and his mind reeled. Although he, like many of the others racing up the mountain, had asked some of the fellow disciples along the way, and had already been told the truth, he was still left shaken.

To verify the matter with his own eyes left his heart battered with waves of shock. Even as he proceeded onward to try to get a closer look, Meng Hao passed step number 47,000. Then, ten more paces brought him to 48,000 steps. Another ten paces, and he was at 49,000.

“This… this….” gasped the cultivator behind him, completely shocked. Considering how fast Meng Hao was going, and how relaxed he seemed, this man had the strong premonition that… the Ninth Sect would soon have a heretofore-unheard of Chosen!

“Who are you?!?!” he yelled at the top of his lungs.

Meng Hao stopped in place and looked back, a quizzical expression on his face. Although he didn’t say anything, the cultivator got a clear view of his face.

When that happened, a tremor ran through the man. Although other people didn’t have a very strong impression of Fang Mu, this particular man had been watching when he passed his Tribulation, and as such, he definitely recognized him.

“Fang Mu… you’re Fang Mu!!” The shock was so great that his heart trembled and his cultivation base grew unstable. He couldn’t keep moving, and rumbling sounds echoed out as he was teleported off of the mountain.

As soon as he appeared outside, he shouted out as loud as he could, in a voice that all of the countless cultivators outside of the mountain could hear.

“I saw him. It’s one person, not a group. It’s… Fang Mu! He’s the one who only took ten years to go from mortal to Immortal…. Fang Mu! He just went from the first step all the way to step number 50,000, in almost no time at all!”

The man’s voice rang out for everyone to hear.

Everyone was nearly struck dumb with shock, even Yan’er. Everyone was now thinking of the name Fang Mu.

Countless gasps could be heard, and after a moment, a huge commotion broke out. It was then that… the fifth tolling of the bell could be heard!!

Dong, Dong, Dong, Dong, Dong….

Ancient, sonorous, without compare. The bell was shocking to the extreme, and as it echoed out into the sect, and into the hearts of all, it merged with the name they were thinking about, transforming into something beyond incredible!

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# Chapter 1460: A Smile From the Peak!

By the time the echoing toll of the bell faded away, everyone outside of the mountain was profoundly and deeply shaken by the name Fang Mu.

“Fang Mu, who went from mortal to Immortal in ten years! The one whose Immortal Tribulation was so shocking that even the Ninth Paragon appeared? That… Fang Mu?”

“I can’t believe it’s him. After he went from mortal to Immortal in only ten years, he vanished without a trace. He hasn’t been seen at all in the sect. It’s actually him!!”

“Back then, people took him to be an incredible Chosen. Now, after twenty years, he appears again! Could it be that he had a cultivation base breakthrough and is in the Ancient Realm now!?!?”

Everyone was in an uproar as they suddenly recalled Fang Mu. All the shocking things he had done back then overlapped with what was happening now, leaving everyone completely shocked.

Even back then, there had been many people who had looked down on him. But now, such derision was pale and feeble, and couldn’t stand up at all to the tolling of the bell for the 50,000th step.

In all of the Ninth Sect, there were only about 10,000 who could reach 50,000 steps. That didn’t necessarily indicate that their cultivation bases were extremely high; the Vast Expanse Shrine tested a person’s potential and overall power. Cultivation base wasn’t really important.

In response to the tolling of the bell, Yan’er began to pant, and stare over at the Vast Expanse Shrine, mind a blank. Almost immediately, the cultivators in the area recognized her as Fang Mu’s apprentice.

One by one they began to look over, and although their expressions seemed the same as they had been moments before, deep within their eyes could be seen flickers of envy and awe. Awe of Yan’er’s Master!

Anybody could see that, considering his momentum, Fang Mu wouldn’t be stopping at 50,000 steps. As for how far he would go in the end… no one could say at the moment.

Even as the bell tolled for the 50,000th step, many cultivators who occupied the top 10,000 spots in the Ninth Sect emerged from secluded meditation and headed toward the mountain.

Before reaching the 50,000th stair, Fang Mu was on a lower level than them. But now, they could sense a threat, and thus, a stream of people began to arrive.

“Look, it’s Elder Brother Chen Zhan! He’s in the top 10,000!”

“Elder Brother Liu Yun is here!”

“It’s Elder Sister Sun Luo….” Everyone in the area was buzzing with conversation regarding the numerous extraordinary and illustrious figures from the Ninth Sect who were showing up.

As they appeared, the surrounding cultivators would back away to give them space, making them very easy to spot within the crowd.

At the same time, Meng Hao stood on the stairs on the mountain, well aware of the commotion that must be underway outside. Smiling, and not caring a bit, he immersed himself in the Baptism from the tolling of the bell. Inside of him, his cultivation base was now only a hair away from a breakthrough.

However, that was of only secondary importance. Of even greater significance was that the sealing mark of the Ninth Hex, which he had been working on from his first day in the sect, was becoming clearer and clearer.

After ten breaths of time passed, he opened his eyes and proceeded along. This time, he moved even faster than before, as if the pressure from the mountain wasn’t affecting him at all.

55,000 steps. 58,000 steps. Then, he passed 60,000, and without even a pause, he flew like the wind until he reached 62,000 steps. He whistled along, getting higher and higher. By the time the bell began to toll for the 60,000th stair, he was at the 63,000th stair. As he began to vibrate inwardly, he chuckled and increased his speed. Soon he was on the 67,000th stair, and then a huge leap took him directly to… the 70,000th stair.

It was only when he landed on that stair that the bell from the 60,000th stair ended, followed immediately by the bell for the 70,000th stair, creating a combined thirteen tolls of the bell. The entire Ninth Sect was shaken, and even the blazing suns of the sect who were in the audience wore expressions of utter astonishment.

It must be stated that when the tolling bells from the later 10,000 stairs combined, it was completely different from the combined tolling of bells in the first 10,000 set of stairs. The difference was like the difference between Heaven and Earth!

As the bell tolls combined, everyone was shaken, and not just the people in the vicinity of the mountain itself. All of the Chosen who had a spot in the top 3,000 on the Vast Expanse Shrine were astonished. Everyone began to rush over to the mountain, even Dao Realm cultivators. The only exceptions were the people in the top 100.

More people streamed over to the vicinity of the Vast Expanse Shrine, where a hubbub of conversation rose up into the sky.

“I can’t believe this Fang Mu is so inhuman! He actually connected the tolling of the bells!!”

“How did he even do it? There are 10,000 steps between the 60,000 and 70,000 mark. That level of speed is unbelievable.”

Even as the sound of shocked conversations rose up, the stone stele at the bottom of the mountain glittered with bright light. Everyone looked over with mixed expressions as the very last name, the name in the 3,000th spot, was wiped away, vanishing forever… to be replaced by another name!

The 3,000th place was now occupied by Fang Mu!

Although the name was small, and in very last place, the fact that it was even there led to a huge commotion.

Yan’er was trembling, her eyes shining with delight. When she saw her Master’s name on the stone stele, she began to dance with joy. As far as she could remember, this was the happiest moment in her life, and the most exciting, exceeding even the moment in which she had been saved by the Ninth Paragon.

By now, she had almost forgotten about Elder Brother Bi Yun.

Yan’er’s eyes shone with anticipation, and her mood soared. “Who cares about the top 3,000? My Master can definitely get into the top 100!”

At the same time, more and more people were arriving in the area. They looked at the stone stele, then up at the Vast Expanse Shrine. These were all Chosen whose names were listed on the stone stele, and their appearance on the scene caused the other cultivators in the vicinity of the mountain to become even more excited than before.

“Gu Tianyi. Shao Minghao. Guo Tenglong. Han Ruonan….”

“I can’t believe they’re all here….”

Even as everyone made shocked exclamations, a handsome young man in a green robe appeared. His expression was cold, and his appearance perfect in every aspect.

The young female disciples in the area were instantly thrown into excitement.

“Elder Brother Bi Yun!”

This young man was extremely famous in the Ninth Sect. He had climbed all of the steps on the mountain, and had even entered the Vast Expanse Shrine itself…. Bi Yun.

Even Yan’er suddenly started to feel conflicted.

Meng Hao didn’t care about what was happening outside the mountain. His expression was calm as he proceeded onward. Furthermore, his speed didn’t reduce at all. He went even faster than before!

The pressure was increasing compared to below, but to Meng Hao, it was negligible. Now, instead of taking the steps 100 at a time, it was 500!

One pace, three paces, ten paces… twenty paces!

The next spot he appeared was at the 80,000th step. The bell tolled again, and yet Meng Hao didn’t stop moving. Now, a single pace carried him 1,000 steps. Ten paces later, he was on the 90,000th step.

From there, he could look down at the entirety of the Ninth Sect and its swirling clouds. The pressure here was intense, to the point where Meng Hao was finally feeling some of its effects.

There was even a bit of sweat visible on his forehead.

“Now this is more like it,” he said, smiling. “Otherwise it would have been too simple. Meaningless really.” His eyes shone with a bright gleam. As the bell tolled, he took a deep breath, and once again increased his speed. One pace took him 2,000 steps!

He was flying upward!

Rumbling could be heard with each step. 92,000 steps. Another pace, and he was at 94,000. The Baptism from the tolling bell continued, and the fluctuations of his cultivation base grew more intense. A third pace put him at 96,000 steps.

Another step, and he was at 98,000….

Meng Hao was now only 2,000 steps from the top of the mountain. He could see the enormous tower that was the Vast Expanse Shrine, and he could see the sky stretching out above it. Below, the other mountains in the sect almost looked small. At the same time, the sealing mark of the Seal the Heavens Hex was becoming more complete.

“After these final 2,000 steps, will I qualify to enter the Vast Expanse Shrine?” His expression was calm as he lifted his foot up. When he put it down, he had crossed the final 2,000 steps, and was at the peak of the mountain!

100,000 steps!

Meng Hao’s trip from the 1st step to the 100,000th was an unprecedented miracle in the Ninth Sect. Furthermore, the total amount of time he used didn’t even exceed five incense sticks’ worth of time!

It was at this point that Fang Mu’s name rose rapidly up the stone stele. It went from 3,000th place to 2,500. Then 2,000. Then 1,000. Then 500, 400, 300, 200….

In the end, it appeared in… 100th place!

The speed with which it rose ensured that Fang Mu was now a legend!

The bell tolled, shaking Heaven and Earth. The Baptism effect on him was intense, filling his body. Also, for the first time, the group outside the mountain could actually see Meng Hao standing there outside the Vast Expanse Shrine.

He wore a long robe, which fluttered in the mountain breeze along with his hair. He seemed to have his eyes closed, and he looked every bit like an Immortal!

There was no hubbub of conversation, no cries of shock. There were only gasps as countless eyes… came to focus on that figure atop the mountain.

Meng Hao was now someone who would exist eternally within the memories of the people from the Ninth Sect.

Finally, the Baptism was over, and he opened his eyes. He looked down at the crowd which had gathered, and apparently he saw Yan'er. Even as she stood there in her excitement, Meng Hao's gaze softened. Smiling warmly, he waved at her.

His gaze, his smile, and his wave, were things that everyone in the crowd could see. Almost instantly, all eyes shifted from Meng Hao to Yan'er.

Her face flushed a bit. This was the first time she had ever been stared at by so many people, and it caused her heart to begin to thump. At the same time, an unfamiliar emotion rose up inside of her, almost like something which had existed in a previous life that was now awakening.

A strange look could be seen in her eyes as she looked at Meng Hao, an indescribable brightness. At the same time, her heart began to pound even faster.

After a long moment, she cleared her throat. Face red, she muttered to herself, "Er, the old fogey sure doesn't act like an old man at all. He really knows how to please the girls."

The sun shone radiantly, and when it combined with Meng Hao's gaze, it became…

A warmth which could pierce through to previous lives.

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# Chapter 1461: Vast Expanse Shrine! 1

By now, virtually all of the disciples in the Ninth Sect were looking at the man standing at the very top of the mountain, in front of the Vast Expanse Shrine.

He looked like a celestial spirit standing there, robe fluttering in the wind, a warm smile on his face. It was a simple, warm smile, nothing more, and when he looked away from Yan’er, his gaze came to rest… on the Vast Expanse Shrine.

Although it was called a shrine, it was actually a huge tower with a total of ten levels.

In all of the Ninth Sect, only the disciples who reached this point on the mountain could qualify to be listed in the top 100 of the Vast Expanse Shrine.

Each one of those hundred cultivators were thoroughly famous within their sects. In fact, they were also well known among people in the other sects as well.

After all… in the Vast Expanse School, there were a total of nine Vast Expanse Shrines. In some ways, it could be said that those who made it into the top 100 on one of those nine shrines were actually within the top 1,000 of the entire Vast Expanse School.

In a sect with such a vast number of disciples, to be within the top 1,000… made truly Chosen!

Therefore, when Fang Mu's name appeared among the top 100, the entire Ninth Sect was shaken. Countless individuals were paying close attention, and many had eyes shining with envy and passion. Chosen, as long as they didn't perish at some point, were destined to become pillars of the Vast Expanse School. Not only were they incredibly important to the sect, they were the type of figure others didn't dare to provoke.

As for Meng Hao, he had done something visibly different from the average Chosen. He had established a legend, having reached the top 100 in such a short time. Countless individuals within the sect were very curious about how far he would actually go in the end.

The area around the mountain was completely silent. No one cried out. All eyes were fixed on Meng Hao as he flicked his sleeve, turned, and strode toward the main door of the tower that was the Vast Expanse Shrine. When he reached it, he stretched out his hand and pushed.

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the door opened. Without the slightest hesitation, Meng Hao stepped into the first level of the Vast Expanse Shrine.

The Vast Expanse Shrine. It was a huge tower with ten levels, each one of which represented ten names. The amount of time spent within each of those levels would determine one's ranking on the list.

In almost the same moment that he stepped into the first level, brilliant light glittered, and he looked out to see a world stretching out in front of him. The sky was crimson, and the land was actually a sea of flames.

An intense pressure crushed down onto him, something so powerful that it seemed capable of crushing anything and everything. However, Meng Hao didn't seem to be affected very much at all. Although his divine sense and his soul felt incredible pressure, and he trembled, when he looked up at the crimson sky, his eyes shone with a bright light.

"It seems the first level of the Vast Expanse Shrine tests a person's willpower and tenacity. There is no pressure on the body, only the soul." Even as he stood there thoughtfully, the pressure suddenly exploded in intensity. Massive rumbling sounds echoed out, as the mounting pressure tried to force Meng Hao to submit.

He smiled. In terms of cultivation base, this clone of his couldn't be considered spectacular, but in terms of willpower… in all of Planet Vast Expanse, it would be easier to find a phoenix feather or a qilin horn than to find someone who could match Meng Hao's tenacious willpower.

His willpower had been forged within the Mountain and Sea Realm, and then had grown to new heights because of its destruction. He had experienced a complete transformation when defending the Mountains and Seas against the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm. After all of his countless years of cultivation and other experiences, he had made shocking progress.

If he hadn't developed an incredible willpower throughout his life, he would long since have been destroyed. Now, standing here in the first level of this tower, even if the pressure were increased by a hundredfold, it wouldn't be anything more than a gentle breeze to him.

At the most, it might stir his hair, or cause his mind to shiver a bit.

Amidst the rumbling, the pressure intensified, and something like an enraged roar echoed out in all directions.

"Kneel!!" the voice roared. Power slammed onto Meng Hao, but his only reaction was to smile derisively. Disdain flickered in his eyes, and Immortal qi erupted out of him as he took a step forward and waved his sleeve.

"You'll be kneeling to me!" he growled. His willpower exploded out, the combination of everything from his third and fourth lives creating a Heaven-defying pressure that erupted out, causing the first level to shake.

Wild colors flashed, the wind screamed, and rumbling echoed out in all directions. In the short time it took Meng Hao to wave his sleeve, everything trembled so violently that the pressure was incapable of fighting back against his willpower and divine sense, and began to retreat.

Meng Hao took another step forward, and then another. Without pausing, he walked forward, his mental faculties growing stronger. Simultaneously, the pressure in the area grew weaker. By the time he took a ninth step, the situation was completely reversed, and instead of the pressure crushing down onto Meng Hao, he was crushing it!

This was the first time anything like this had ever occurred in the first level of the Ninth Sect’s Vast Expanse Shrine. In the past, people had to endure for a set period of time to be able to pass into the next level.

But today… something entirely different was happening!!

It was a dazzling scene as Meng Hao’s willpower and tenacity filled the entire level, crushing the pressure and forcing it to submit to him.

In the end, he was like the lord of the entire level. His footfall could flatten Heaven and Earth, and finally, the pressure completely vanished!

The illusory world around him collapsed, and the entrance to the second level appeared in front of him.

Meanwhile, on the stone stele outside the mountain, the name Fang Mu rose up to 90th place, passing Bi Yun, much to the astonishment of people in the audience.

“Too… too fast!!” Bi Yun blurted in disbelief. He wasn’t the only person to react in such a way. Many other disciples in the top 100 had expressions of astonishment on their faces.

They knew how terrifying the first level was, which only served to increase their shock.

The disciples who had challenged the Vast Expanse Shrine in the past were already starting to speculate about what was happening. “There’s only one way he could do it so fast!” someone said. “He’s–”

Before the sentence could be completed, radiant light began to emanate from the first level.

“First Heaven! The First Heaven is appearing!!”

“I know that light! According to the stories, anyone who can create a legend in the Vast Expanse Shrine will cause the First Heaven to appear!!” The dazzling light which spread out seemed to replace the Heavens themselves, causing cries of shock to rise up from the cultivators outside of the mountain.

Even in ancient times, there was a legend related to the Vast Expanse Shrine. In any particular level, if a person could do something completely unheard-of, and reach the absolute pinnacle of a given level, then a radiant light would appear which represented… the light of Heaven!

Depending on the level involved, there were the First through the Tenth Heavens!

From ancient times until the present, it was uncommon for the First Heaven to appear. As for people who reached the Second Heaven, they were very rare, and when it came to the Third Heaven, there had only been nine people throughout the history of the Ninth Sect who had succeeded.

As for the Fourth Heaven… only two people had ever succeeded, and the Fifth Heaven… remained unseen throughout the entire long history of the Ninth Sect!

Now that the First Heaven had appeared, everyone in the Ninth Sect was boiling with excitement.

There were Dao Realm experts who appeared to bear witness; elders of the Ninth Sect, and Dao Lords showed their faces.

There were even Dao Sovereigns who flew over to the Vast Expanse Shrine.

Meng Hao stood there for a moment on the first level of the Vast Expanse Shrine, then stepped forward into the second level.

In that instant, he entered yet another new world, within which existed nothing more than a huge spell formation.

“Light up the spell formation,” a voice said. “Anyone who finishes within the time it takes an incense stick to burn will rise to the third level.”

Meng Hao sat down cross-legged, a thoughtful expression on his face. Almost as soon as he did, his cultivation base began to rotate rapidly, and his divine sense exploded out. His arteries and veins began to shine with crystalline light.

This level tested latent talent; lighting up the spell formation quickly required incredible latent talent. As for Meng Hao’s latent talent… that came from how his true self had re-moulded his body with the bronze lamp. It wasn’t even necessary to talk about how good or bad his latent talent was. This was the Vast Expanse School, and as far as Meng Hao could tell, his bronze lamp originally belonged to Patriarch Vast Expanse.

In other words, after being re-moulded by the bronze lamp, the latent talent of the clone he had subsequently created would be little different than that of Patriarch Vast Expanse himself.

Using Patriarch Vast Expanse’s latent talent to complete a trial by fire in the Vast Expanse School was essentially… like cheating!

Almost in the same moment that Meng Hao sat down, the spell formation lit up with bright light, and began to rumble.

From the time the Vast Expanse Shrine had been created until this time, nothing like this had ever happened. The spell formation was shining with incredible brightness!

Rumbling echoed out as the crowd outside saw brilliant dazzling light shining out from the second level. It was none other than… the Second Heaven!

It combined with the light from the First Heaven, creating a completely shocking spectacle.

“The Second Heaven! I can’t believe… the Second Heaven has actually appeared!”

“No, no way! It happened too fast. How could he possibly have lit up the entire spell formation on the second level so quickly!?”

“What… what kind of latent talent does he have? How is this happening? Even if he has Superlative latent talent, he shouldn’t be able to go that fast. It’s like… he’s cheating or something!” The group gathered near the mountain peak, all of whom were in the top 100, were in a complete uproar. As their voices rang out, more and more disciples were thrown into a commotion.

The Dao Realm experts and the sect Elders, even the Dao Sovereign, were all completely and utterly shocked.

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# Chapter 1462: Establishing a Legend!

Meng Hao really was cheating. On the first level, he had relied on his willpower and mental faculties. Considering the experiences of his true self, there was virtually nothing that could surpass him in terms of that.

On the second level, he had also cheated. The test was of latent talent, or essentially, whether or not one was fundamentally suited to cultivate the techniques of the Vast Expanse School. As a matter of fact, what the Vast Expanse School considered to be Superlative latent talent, might not be considered so by other sects in the outside world.

That truth was the case everywhere. In different sects and schools, in different Realms and worlds, so-called latent talent was really just a measure of how suitable a person was to cultivate certain techniques.

Within the Vast Expanse School, the latent talent of Patriarch Vast Expanse… would naturally be the absolute, optimal latent talent!

Heaven and Earth rumbled as boundless light from two Heavens radiated out, to the uproar of the crowd. Meng Hao rose to his feet, coughing dryly, and yet feeling not the slightest bit of shame as he headed to the third level.

He hadn’t been in the third level for very long when the entire place began to shine with dazzling light, which transformed into the Third Heaven. Before the tumult could die down in the crowd, the Fourth Heaven rumbled out.

Next was the Fifth Heaven, the Sixth and the Seventh. Meng Hao was truly forging a legend. Outside the mountain, the crowd was boiling with excitement, including ordinary Dao Realm experts, Dao Lords, and even Dao Sovereigns.

“This is unheard-of! This Fang Mu… is breaking all the records!”

“This is the first time a cultivator from our Ninth Sect has ever summoned the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Heavens!”

“What do you guys think, is it possible that he’ll… do something that’s never been done in the entire Vast Expanse School, and summon… the Tenth Heaven?!”

Keen anticipation filled the hearts of the audience. After all, no one in the Ninth Sect had ever even summoned the Fifth Heaven in the Vast Expanse Shrine.

However, even though the Ninth Sect’s Vast Expanse Shrine was only one of several within the Vast Expanse School as a whole, there were others who had summoned the Fifth Heaven, and even the Sixth and Seventh Heavens. As for the Eighth Heaven, the number who had succeeded was miniscule, but they did exist.

And then there was the Ninth Heaven. Years ago, there had indeed been one person who had summoned it.

But as for that Tenth Heaven, it was completely unheard-of. In the entire history of the Vast Expanse School, it had never been seen!

The sound of the uproar echoed out, to the point that even the 7-Essences Paragon who kept watch over the Vast Expanse Shrine was visibly moved, and flew out in midair to observe.

A blank look could be seen in Yan’er’s eyes. Her Master was shaking the entire world, something she almost couldn’t believe, almost didn’t dare to believe.

As the seven Heavens cast brilliant light into the sky, Meng Hao was slowly proceeding along into the eighth level. The third through seventh levels mostly tested aspects relating to latent talent in cultivation. Some of those tests looked at the blood itself, others looked at the blood vessels and arteries. Whatever the case, Meng Hao only had to step into the level to instantly do something which had never been done!

Any other result would have been impossible… him appearing in the trial by fire was almost the same as Patriarch Vast Expanse showing up. How could he not do the impossible, and complete the level perfectly?

On the stone stele, Fang Mu’s name continued to rise until it was in the top 30!

All of the Chosen whom he had passed up were able to tell how easily he had swept past them. Their records were crushed as easily as dried weeds, as if they weren’t even on the same level as him.

As for all of the disciples who still ranked above him, they were normally people who acted superior and mighty. But now, they were sitting there nervously. Even the people in the top 10 had ill premonitions bubbling within them.

After reaching the eighth level, Meng Hao slowed down a bit. It was now taking a bit of effort to make progress. By this point, the Vast Expanse Shrine was testing one’s overall level of power. As for Meng Hao’s clone, his weakest aspect was his cultivation base, which still hadn’t left the Immortal Realm.

Virtually everyone in the top 10,000 were in the Ancient Realm; Meng Hao was definitely the only cultivator in the top 30 who wasn’t. Furthermore, all those other people were at the peak Ancient realm, and some were even on the verge of breaking through to the Dao Realm!

However, the Vast Expanse Shrine had no Dao Realm experts in the rankings. It was a test only for disciples under the Dao Realm. Generally speaking, the test for people like that was the Transcendence Path.

Only a few people challenged that trial by fire who weren’t in that Realm.

Within the eighth level, Meng Hao looked up into a starry sky, within which could be seen countless red-eyed shadows charging toward him violently.

Close examination revealed that the shadows all had threads attached to them; apparently, they were all puppets under the control of someone else.

The requirement of this test not to simply slaughter the enemy, but rather to seek out whoever was controlling the puppets, and kill that person.

Without doing that, the cultivator would be overwhelmed by the huge amount of foes, and would then be forced to wipe them out by means of slaughter. Of course, with a sufficient cultivation base, that was always an option.

In fact, this test actually placed a high priority on cultivation base. All of the shadows were at the peak of the Immortal Realm, and after looking them over, Meng Hao quickly identified which one was in control, but could also tell that his cultivation base wasn't sufficient to ensure a kill.

Time seemed to slow down, and Meng Hao's eyes flickered with cold light. He knew that he had most likely reached his limit, and yet wasn't willing to just give up.

"Well, since that's the case, I might as well tackle my Immortal tribulation right here. I'll go from the Immortal Realm into the Ancient, and see if I can take 1st place!" Without the slightest hesitation, he backed up. His eyes closed briefly, then opened again, and it was as if the world were exploding.

Rumbling sounds echoed out from him as his Immortal meridians began to explode. His cultivation base rose up, and the air of the Ancient Realm began to rise up within him.

As he started to transform, and his cultivation base aura began to rise; everything was shaking violently. At the same time, he shot forward like lightning to appear in front of one of the shadows, whereupon he shoved his palm out violently.

A boom could be heard as the shadow shattered. In that instant, all of the other shadows faded, as though the trial of this level were about to vanish.

But then, Meng Hao made a slight exclamation of surprise. According to his divine sense, there was actually another person within the shadows, controlling them…. As it turned out, there wasn't one person controlling them, but rather, two.

"A test hidden within the test, huh?" Without the slightest hesitation, he flickered into motion, appearing in front of another of the shadows. His palm launched out, and the shadow shattered. The other shadows were already mostly transparent, and now they seemed to be on the verge of vanishing. However, it was at that point that Meng Hao suddenly waved his finger out in front of him.

A blast of wind shot out, slamming into one of the fading shadows some distance away, completely exterminating it!

In that instant, Meng Hao frowned as he realized that the number of individuals controlling the shadows had once again increased. It turned out there were now more than eight!

At the same time, the surrounding figures, including the controllers, were all rapidly vanishing. There didn't seem to be enough time to kill them all. Meng Hao's eyes flickered, and without the slightest hesitation he suddenly took in a deep breath, then performed a double-handed incantation gesture and pointed out.

It was none other than Demon Sealing Hexing magic! He was unleashing the Fourth Hex… the Self Hex!

Almost instantly, bizarre fluctuations began to spread out from Meng Hao. A ghost image rose up, and a second version of himself walked forward. Then a third, and a fourth, and a fifth…

In the blink of an eye, ten million incarnations of Meng Hao appeared. There were men and women, old and young, and they all looked somewhat different, and yet they were all Meng Hao!

This was the Self Hex, and as soon as it was unleashed, the countless versions of Meng Hao launched themselves toward the eight puppet controllers, cutting them down. Almost immediately, twelve new controllers appeared.

Slaughter ensued. In a short period of time, Meng Hao killed so many puppet controllers that he lost count. Eventually, the world faded away completely, and the eighth level was over.

Meng Hao’s Self Hex faded away, and his incarnations vanished. He stood there in the middle of the eighth level, his cultivation base continuing to rise as his Immortal meridians began to transform into Immortal Soul Lamps.

The Immortal Soul Lamps didn’t appear outside of him, but rather inside his body.

He took a deep breath, eyes flickering as he murmured, “That eighth level was incredible.”

He now understood that the eighth level’s test was a complex one. It tested one’s cultivation base and divine sense, as well as one’s judgement and observation. Not only did one have to identify the numerous controllers amidst the vast crowd, but then one actually had to kill them.

That was the way to pass the level, but in order to reach the absolute peak of perfection, one needed speed and instinct.

That was something Meng Hao couldn’t actually do on his own, and had been forced to rely on the Self Hex to accomplish.

“I underestimated the Vast Expanse Shrine,” he said, looking up toward the ninth level with anticipation.

It was at this point that brilliant light began to shine out from the eighth level. On the outside, all of the cultivators could now see… the Eighth Heaven!

The Ninth Sect was in a complete uproar, and was unprecedentedly shaken. From Paragons to ordinary disciples, tens of millions of people were all shouting out in excitement.

As for the Chosen in the top 20, they couldn't help but chuckle bitterly. After seeing the Eighth Heaven, they understood the grand splendor it represented. They already knew that they were all destined to fall by one spot in the rankings.

Step by step, Meng Hao was on the verge of creating… a shocking legend within the Vast Expanse School!

And that legend hinged on… the Ninth Heaven!

If Meng Hao pulled it off, and the Ninth Heaven appeared, then all of the nine sects in the Vast Expanse School would ring their bells to fill Planet Vast Expanse with the sound of their tolling.

That was… the most supreme of honors!

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# Chapter 1463: Seal the Heavens Hex!

At the same time that the crowds in the Ninth Sect were in an excited uproar, clouds began to gather in the sky up above. Soon, everything was covered over by the thick, black clouds.

Because of the brilliant light being cast out by the eight Heavens, it was initially difficult to spot them. However, the most powerful experts among the cultivators could sense an intense pressure building up in Heaven and Earth.

Soon, that sensation grew more obvious, and people began to look up. That was when their expressions began to flicker.

“That’s… Lightning Tribulation!”

“What kind of Tribulation is that? It’s so huge….”

“It makes me think of the Immortal Tribulation Elder Brother Fang Mu went through back then. I wonder if this Tribulation Lightning… is here for him?” Shocked cries could be heard as the black cloud layers rapidly grew thicker and larger. In the blink of an eye, they had covered the entire Ninth Sect, and were growing larger by the moment.

Yan’er hadn’t been there to watch her Master’s Immortal Tribulation, but she was shaken nonetheless. Not only could she overhear the conversations of the people around her, she could also sense that the clouds contained a terrifying aura of some sort.

The Dao Realm experts, the Dao Lords, Dao Sovereigns, and even the 7-Essences Paragon, all looked on with very serious expressions. If the current situation had begun to play out before the appearance of the Eighth Heaven, they wouldn’t have paid it much heed. Fang Mu’s life or death would have been up to fate.

But now, with the Eighth Heaven there shining brightly, Fang Mu’s status and importance far exceeded what they had before. He was no longer just an Inner Sect disciple of one of the subdivisions. He had the potential to become the Legacy disciple of the entire Ninth Sect. He was on the verge of establishing an unheard-of legend within the Vast Expanse School, and was also about to send the Ninth Sect rocketing to fame.

The Dao Realm experts, the Dao Lords and Dao Sovereigns, and even the reclusive 7-Essences Paragon, would not be willing to allow Tribulation Lightning to interfere with a disciple like that.

The 7-Essences Paragon snorted and shot forward, followed by the Dao Sovereigns. The Dao Lords and other Dao Realm experts also flew out. This rather large group of powerful experts all unleashed their cultivation base power; shockingly, they were attempting to help Meng Hao disperse the Tribulation Lightning.

Black clouds seethed, and lightning bolts began to fall. Even as they shot toward the Vast Expanse Shrine, the 7-Essences Paragon waved his sleeve to disperse them.

The Tribulation seemed enraged, and in the blink of an eye, hundreds of bolts of lightning began to descend. Then thousands. They were like a lake of lightning spreading out in all directions.

Meanwhile, back in the Vast Expanse Shrine, Meng Hao was speeding along into the ninth level. As soon as he entered, he looked around to find himself surrounded by countless stone steles of varying sizes. All of them were inscribed with lines of text and magical symbols.

On the first stone stele he examined closely, he found a complete magical technique. Upon further inspection of the level, he found that the stone steles here were covered with numerous types of magic, over a million in total. Furthermore, there in front of Meng Hao was one particular stone stele which was completely blank.

There was no need to spend time in thought. Meng Hao instantly understood what this ninth level tested. It tested… creativity!

The requirement was to create a divine ability or magical technique, and inscribe it onto the blank stone stele. Based on the power of that magic, one would be assigned a rank in the ninth level.

As Meng Hao's divine sense spread out, the Immortal Soul Lamps began to ignite inside of him. Both in terms of the number of lamps, and the process with which they appeared, they were completely different than the Soul Lamps his true self had possessed.

As that occurred, his cultivation base rose. Taking a deep breath, Meng Hao sent his divine sense into the surrounding stone steles, examining them and seeking enlightenment. After a moment, his heart trembled.

"Creating a divine ability wouldn't be difficult at all for me. However, nothing I created would be very useful. It would be better to use this place to perfect… the Seal the Heavens Hex!" His eyes glittered as he sat down cross-legged. After closing his eyes, he once again sent his divine sense out into the surrounding stone steles to seek enlightenment of the various techniques therein, and using bits of what he learned to add to the Seal the Heavens Hex.

As that happened, the Seal the Heavens Hex trembled and grew clearer, and at the same time, became more complicated and resplendent. As he continued to seek enlightenment and perform augury calculations, the Seal the Heavens Hex reached greater heights of perfection.

Gradually, an intense aura began to emanate out from him, a powerful aura that could shake Heaven and Earth. It was aggressive, so much so that it seemed capable of sealing the Heavens!

Incomparably domineering!

Despite being wrapped up in seeking enlightenment, he was somewhat able to detect the lightning outside of the Vast Expanse Shrine. Shockingly, there were now tens of thousands of bolts of Tribulation Lighting exploding out to rock Heaven and Earth, and yet, they were summarily blasted away by the 7-Essences Paragon and the others.

Something like a bellow of rage could be heard from within the black clouds as more than a hundred million lightning bolts shot down. It was like an explosion of lightning that caused the faces of the onlookers to flicker with shock.

Within the Vast Expanse Shrine, Meng Hao shuddered slightly. As his enlightenment progressed, the Seal the Heavens Hex grew more complete. It was now more complex than before, and at the same time, more perfect.

It was at this point that Meng Hao suddenly realized that although his original attempt at the Ninth Hex has been interfered with by Allheaven, the truth was that what he had thought to be the perfect version of the Hex at that time was actually not so perfect.

Now, with the constant additions and adjustments he was making, a perfect version of the Seal the Heavens Hex was taking shape that was completely different from the previous one.

It was impossible to say how much time passed, but soon, rumbling sounds filled Meng Hao as the sealing mark of the Seal the Heavens Hex finally reached a state of perfection. However, it was only an outline, not complete. Just when Meng Hao assumed that this would be enough, he suddenly saw lines spreading out within the outline. Unexpectedly… something else was forming inside of him… a second version of the Seal the Heavens Hex!

This sudden development left Meng Hao shaken. He once again sought enlightenment, focusing fully on the Seal the Heavens Hex. By drawing upon the more than one million perfect techniques around him, he was quickly able to identify the full shape of the sealing mark of the second Seal the Heavens Hex.

Although the shape seemed the same as before, there were certain tiny details that were different. Apparently… one sealing mark was not enough to complete the perfect version. Two were required! But then he realized that two was actually not enough, as… a third appeared!

Next was a fourth, a fifth, a sixth…. Meng Hao's mind was reeling, and excitement flooded him as he watched the Seal the Heavens Hex continuously transforming and rising to a higher level!

When the seventh version appeared, Meng Hao assumed it would be enough. But then came the eighth, and finally the ninth. Meng Hao's mind was spinning, and he was panting as he looked at the nine outlines of sealing marks.

Those nine sealing marks were the Seal the Heavens Hex!

Meng Hao's eyes snapped open, and he took a deep breath. He looked at the blank stone stele, eyes glittering, then raised his hand and placed the first sealing mark down upon it.

The stone stele trembled, and radiant light erupted out. From the feeling it gave off, it seemed like the absolute pinnacle.

Meng Hao stared in shock. He had only placed one of the nine sealing marks onto the stone stele, and yet the ninth level… had seemingly reached the pinnacle.

Meng Hao suddenly sensed a Paragon aura, and gasped.

"Paragon magic…." he murmured. "These sealing marks are a Paragon magic!"

After a moment of thought, he performed a double-handed incantation gesture. Without a moment of hesitation, he used divine will to send the second sealing mark onto the stone stele, which caused it to tremble violently.

Within that trembling, Meng Hao could clearly see that the two sealing marks were fusing together, and that the will of a Paragon was growing more intense. A boom echoed out as an incredibly powerful aura erupted out from the stone stele.

It felt like divine ability that was even more like a Paragon magic than before!

As the divine ability appeared, there was a huge crash as the million surrounding stone steles began to crack. Then, to Meng Hao's wide-eyed shock, all of them exploded!

It was as if they had destroyed themselves.

Apparently… in the face of such a matchless divine ability, all of the other divine abilities and magical techniques initiated self-destruction rather than remain in its presence!

Furthermore… that was only the fusion of two of the sealing marks. Looking excitedly at the stone stele, Meng Hao sent more divine will into the palm of his hand, then reached out and placed the third sealing mark onto the stone stele.

In that instant, it fused with the others, whereupon a terrifying aura exploded out that would strike fear into the heart of anyone who felt it.

That aura contained a sensation of deadly crisis, an indescribably terrifying power that the stone stele simply couldn't handle. A boom could be heard as the only remaining stone stele… cracked, and then exploded!

It couldn't withstand the power of a mere three fused sealing marks!

One sealing mark made a Paragon magic!

Two sealing marks destroyed millions of stone steles!

Three sealing marks were so majestic that the testing stone steles of the ninth level couldn't handle it and exploded!

Meng Hao shot to his feet, trembling, his eyes flickering with excitement. Then he threw his head back and laughed uproariously.

“I can’t fully unleash it now, and can only make imprints with divine will, even still… when I combine those nine sealing marks into one, then the Ninth Hex will appear, and I will be able to fully utilize it!” He finally had his direction, and knew what to do. He had to fill in the outlines of all nine sealing marks.

As of this moment, his foray into the Vast Expanse Shrine had resulted in unprecedented gains.

At the same time that he rose to his feet, the ninth level of the Vast Expanse Shrine erupted with dazzling light that was instantly visible on the outside. Everyone could see that above the Eighth Heaven was… the Ninth Heaven!!

Nine Heavens astonished and shocked everything in the world!

A bell began to toll which was profoundly more ancient and sonorous than anything from before. At the same time, in the Eighth Sect on the eighth continent, another shocking toll could be heard!

The cultivators there were still reeling from the events involving Meng Hao shortly before, and when they heard the sound of the bells, their jaws dropped.

Simultaneously, in the Seventh, Sixth, Fifth, Fourth, Third, Second… and First Sects, in all of the nine sects of the Vast Expanse School, the sound of ancient tolling bells could be heard. Nine bells rang out, filling the Vast Expanse School, and also Planet Vast Expanse!

The hearts of countless cultivators were shaken, and numerous powerful experts were astonished. Everyone was wondering what exactly was happening.

Soon, that shocking bell toll swept out to fill even the most remote corners of the Vast Expanse School….

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# Chapter 1464: Tolling in Nine Sects!

As of this moment, all nine of the Vast Expanse School sects on Planet Vast Expanse were echoing with the tolling of bells. All cultivators in the Vast Expanse School were completely shaken, and in fact, even cultivators who weren’t disciples, but happened to be visiting Planet Vast Expanse, could hear the ancient and sonorous toll.

“What’s happening!?”

“Wait a second… bells are tolling in the Vast Expanse School, and they sound very serious. There’s something extraordinary happening….”

As Planet Vast Expanse was shaken, there were still only a few people who had realized that the tolling of the bells was actually coming from all nine of the great sects that made up the Vast Expanse School.

But then, an ice-cold and completely emotionless voice spoke out to fill the First Sect, the Second Sect… and in fact, all of the sects, all the way to the Ninth Sect. The entire Vast Expanse School was filled with the same voice!

“Ninth Sect. Fang Mu. Ninth Heaven!”

Only six words were spoken!

However, those six words were like an enormous, invisible hand pushing down onto the Vast Expanse School from above. All of the nine sects seemed as quiet as death.

After a few breaths of time passed, just when it seemed the crowds couldn’t be more suppressed by the pressure, a huge commotion rose up, a clamor, a hubbub that filled the entire Vast Expanse School.

“Fang Mu! Fang Mu from the Ninth Sect! I can’t believe he summoned the Ninth Heaven. How.. how is that even possible!?”

“Maybe there was a mistake. Nobody can really summon the Ninth Heaven. What an absurd notion!”

“How could there be a mistake? Bells are ringing in all nine sects! Fang Mu… I remember him! He was the guy who went from mortal to Immortal in ten years!” The sound of conversations formed a roar that caused the entire planet to tremble.

The Ninth Heaven…. that was something miraculous that, in the entire history of the Vast Expanse School, had only been seen once before!

Countless people were shaken. It was in this way that the name Fang Mu instantly came to be heard by all of the disciples of the Vast Expanse School. Then, the profound shock they felt increased as they suddenly realized… that the tolling of the bells could actually be heard everywhere on Planet Vast Expanse!

“The bells are ringing in all nine sects, filling all of Planet Vast Expanse!” This fact led to widespread gasping and shock. Perhaps better ways existed to make one’s name known to all, but… for now, Meng Hao’s method was completely unprecedented.

In one brief instant, the name ‘Fang Mu’ came to be fixed in all minds.

Regardless of the level of cultivation base involved, Dao Realm experts, Dao Lords, Dao Sovereigns, and even Paragons, everyone on Planet Vast Expanse had eyes wide with shock.

It would be impossible not to be moved, all because of… the Ninth Heaven!

Throughout the history of the sect, there had only ever been one person who had summoned the Ninth Heaven, but now… there were two.

At the moment, numerous streams of divine sense were pouring out from within the First Sect. On the Holy Mountain there was an Immortal's cave, to door of which opened to reveal a handsome young man clad in a long robe. He had a unique air about him, and as he silently walked out, he looked in the direction of the Ninth Sect, his eyes glowing brightly.

He was a Chosen, and within the First Sect, he held a rank that put him on equal footing with their Holy Daughter… He was the First Sect's Holy Son. He also held the 1st place spot on the First Sect's Vast Expanse Shrine. In all of the sects, people who were in the top 10 were extremely prominent individuals.

It was the same in the Second Sect; a powerful roar could be heard as a pillar of water erupted from a deep, icy pool. It propelled a burly, bare-chested man up into the air, whose expression was both grave and defiant.

"Fang Mu…." he said, looking in the direction of the Ninth Sect.

In the Third, Fourth, Fifth… all the way to the Eighth Sect, none of the Chosen were very pleased about what was happening. That was especially true of the various Chosen who were in the top 10; all of them now had the name 'Fang Mu' fixed firmly in their minds. Not only were they unwilling to accept him, they also wanted to fight him.

They were Chosen, like prize jewels of the sect. They had access to cultivation resources that others would find difficult to even imagine. Although they might not have started out as proud and arrogant people, after reaching this point, they could pass up their contemporaries as easily as flipping over a hand. Soon, they were so far ahead that when they looked back, they couldn't see anyone following in their path. They were the people who others looked up to.

They were as lonely as eagles, soaring in the Heavens. Beneath them were mere common birds who flitted around beneath the very clouds they soared above.

It was a lonely existence in which the only people worthy of their gazes were the other eagle-like Chosen who were their peers.

If you likened such people to eagles, then, as of this moment, it was as if a roc had appeared. The pressure weighing down on them now was something they couldn’t accept, and filled them with the desire to fight.

A gale force wind was blowing through the Vast Expanse School, throwing the sects into an uproar, and causing surges of energy to appear as various Chosen powered up.

Even Han Bei appeared. As she hovered there in the air, listening to the tolling of the bells, she could sense the uproar in the First Sect, and could see other cultivators flying out in shock. Everyone, it seemed, was subconsciously turning to look in one direction.

The ninth continent, and the Ninth Sect.

At the moment, Han Bei was perhaps the calmest person on all of Planet Vast Expanse. It was as if she weren’t surprised at all to hear the name ‘Fang Mu’.

“He’s basically a 9-Essences Paragon, bullying some kids. How amusing.” She snorted coldly, and yet, was still suspicious of what exactly Meng Hao was doing with his clone. She had the feeling that there was some important plan being carried out.

While the other eight sects were thrown into an uproar, the Ninth Sect was equally filled with astonishment. As that cold and shocking voice echoed out, expressions of zealous veneration appeared on their faces, as well as delight and excitement.

“Eldest Brother Fang Mu!” It was hard to say who called it out first, but soon, the cry became a huge roar that exploded out into the air.

“Eldest Brother Fang Mu!!”

“Eldest Brother Fang Mu!!!”

The title of Eldest Brother was usually used to indicate seniority within a group. But in this case, it represented the approval and acclaim of all disciples within the Ninth Sect.

The only one who wasn't saying it was Yan'er. Her eyes went wide as she suddenly realized she had a seemingly innumerable amount of Sect Uncles now….

The Vast Expanse Shrine of the Ninth Sect radiated the scintillating light of the Ninth Heaven. The black clouds up in the sky churned, and something like a Heavenly howl of anger echoed from within them. More lightning built up, and yet the 7-Essences Paragon simply laughed and led the rest of the powerful experts to help Meng Hao counter the Tribulation Lightning.

"Fang Mu," he said loudly, "don't disappoint me. Go all out and see… if you can summon the Tenth Heaven for the Ninth Sect!"

In response to his words, a collective gasp could be heard from the cultivators in the Ninth Sect. Then, brilliant gleams began to shine in the eyes of one and all.

The Ninth Heaven was not completely unheard-of, nor was it something that was impossible to surpass. In sharp contrast was… the Tenth Heaven. If someone could summon the Tenth Heaven, then the only thing that could happen in the future would be that others might catch up. However, no one… would be able to surpass that person's achievement.

It was a glory which would last for tens upon tens of thousands of years, and would always remain within the Ninth Sect!

"The Tenth Heaven…. Eldest Brother Fang Mu, summon the Tenth Heaven!"

"Eldest Brother, get that Tenth Heaven!!"

As the crowds called out, Yan'er also shouted, "Master, summon the Tenth Heaven…."

The Chosen from Ninth Sect, even the one who held the 1st place spot on the stone stele but was already prepared to lose it, were moved. Burying their emotions, they sighed, and soon gleams of light appeared in their eyes.

If you are a roc, then please don’t bully us eagles. Go bully the other birds of prey…. That is what the current 1st place holder was thinking, and similar thoughts were running through the minds of the other Chosen.

Back on the ninth level of the Vast Expanse Shrine, the thought of bullying the so-called eagles hadn’t even crossed Meng Hao’s mind. He was very interested in this Vast Expanse Shrine. Waving his sleeve, he cleared the rubble from the ninth level, causing the entrance to the tenth level to appear.

Without the slightest hesitation, he proceeded forward to the tenth level… the highest level of the Vast Expanse Shrine.

Almost as soon as he set foot there, a strange expression appeared on his face. He was suddenly struck with the feeling that… he really was bullying children.

The test of the tenth level consisted of nothing more than a wall, which pulsed with shocking magical ripples.

Visible there was a list of ten names, which were the Chosen who had taken 1st through 10th place in this Vast Expanse Shrine.

After each name was a number. Behind the 1st place name was a number a bit higher than 70,000. Subsequent numbers got smaller and smaller, until the 10th place, which had a number at around 40,000.

From what Meng Hao could tell, the ninth and tenth levels of the Vast Expanse Shrine were complimentary. On the ninth level, the disciple would create a divine ability, and on the tenth level, the specific strength of said magic would be assessed. The result would be a number; the higher the number, the more powerful the divine ability, and the higher the ranking.

However… the stone stele in the ninth level had already exploded…. Granted, that stone stele wasn’t designed to measure the strength of the divine ability, but it was intended to help the disciple refine the divine ability, and make it more complete. Unfortunately, that stone stele… was gone.

When the Vast Expanse School had created the Vast Expanse Shrine, no one could have imagined that someone would create a divine ability that would actually cause the stone stele on the ninth level to explode. Compared to a divine ability like that, this tenth level would be about as powerful as a pile of chicken ribs.

“Well, I’ll give it a shot,” thought Meng Hao. “Since this is a special stone stele for testing the power of divine abilities, maybe it won’t explode like the last one.” After a moment of hesitation, his eyes began to shine, and he reached out. The nine sealing marks of the Seal the Heavens Hex began to shine brightly inside of him as he pointed his finger at the wall.

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# Chapter 1465: Completely Brazen!

The first sealing mark of the Ninth Hex emerged. Although it was only an outline, and illusory, it was complete.

You could even say that the sealing mark was comprised mostly of Meng Hao’s divine will, which was currently the only way he could unleash it.

The flickering sealing mark instantly appeared on the surface of the wall.

Almost immediately, the wall began to vibrate, and a rumbling sound emanated out.

The name Fang Mu appeared, and it immediately took the 1st place spot, shoving all the other names downward. Next to it was a number slightly higher than 30,000,000….

It was a number hundreds of times larger than the original 1st place spot holder, a number which could shake Heaven and Earth!!

Meng Hao didn’t really care about the name or the number. However, he could sense that the wall was apparently capable of accepting more than one of the sealing marks. He quickly performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, then pushed it down onto the wall. The second sealing mark flew out, and once again the wall shook. Intense rumbling sounds echoed out, and it took even longer this time for things to quiet down.

When that happened, the number next to Fang Mu’s name… went in the briefest of instants from more than 30,000,000… to the shocking number of 300,000,000!

The terrifying level of that number so vastly exceeded that of the previous number that to speak it out loud would cause even a Paragon to gasp in shock.

According to the rules of the Vast Expanse Shrine, 100,000 indicated that the divine ability was powerful enough to use on Dao Realm experts. 1,000,000 was the threshold for Dao Lords, and 10,000,000 for Dao Sovereigns. 100,000,000 was for 7-Essences Paragons. 1,000,000,000 was for 8-Essences, and as for 9-Essences… the number was 10,000,000,000 and higher.

This wall had revealed the divine ability's final level of power, which had nothing to do with one's cultivation base. Therefore, it was possible to tell that the combined two sealing marks of Meng Hao's Hexing magic was powerful enough to shake 7-Essences Paragons.

The terrifying level of that power was something that left even Meng Hao shaken, and caused a gleam of focus to appear in his eyes. As of this point, he was certain that his current Seal the Heavens Hex was definitely incredibly powerful.

Eyes glittering, he once again placed his hand onto the wall. Using his divine will, he placed the third, fourth, and fifth sealing marks down.

When the third sealing mark fused into the wall, the wall stayed whole, and the number next to Fang Mu's name rocketed up, reaching 1,000,000,000, then 2,000,000,000 and finally 3,000,000,000. That meant that three of the sealing marks together could shake an 8-Essences Paragon.

When the fourth sealing mark fused with the others, the wall shook so hard that cracks began to spread out over its surface, which almost immediately tried to close up. The number next to Fang Mu's name changed again, reaching an astonishing level. It went from 3,000,000,000 all the way to 10,000,000,000, then 20,000,000,000. It didn't stop at 30,000,000,000, but actually kept going all the way to 60,000,000,000!!

That incredible number resulting from the fusion of four of the sealing marks, 60,000,000,000 indicated that the divine ability could kill half of all 9-Essences Paragons!

And that… was only the combination of four sealing marks!

Next… the fifth sealing mark appeared, and more cracks spread out across the surface of the wall. A boom rang out as the wall reached its limit and exploded!

Just before it completely fell apart, Meng Hao was able to see that the number next to the name Fang Mu had broken past 100,000,000,000, and was continuing to climb. However, he wasn’t able to glimpse the final result, as the wall collapsed.

His jaw dropped, and he couldn’t help but inhale sharply. He lifted his hand and looked at it, and then a bright glow appeared in his eyes.

“Five Seal the Heavens Hex marks combined is enough to kill… a 9-Essences Paragon, even someone at the peak!” Meng Hao took a deep breath, his eyes shining brightly as his heart filled with the anticipation of seeing the final version of the Ninth Hex.

It was in this same moment that the wall collapsed, in which massive rumbling sounds echoed out, accompanied by brilliant light. The tenth level of the tower that was the Vast Expanse Shrine began to emit the dazzling light of… the Tenth Heaven!

Throughout the entire history of the Vast Expanse School, only one person had ever summoned the Ninth Heaven. Now, Meng Hao was the first to summon the Tenth! It was… completely unprecedented!

On this day, the first tolling of bells throughout the entire Vast Expanse School was because of the Ninth Heaven. The sound of those bells had just faded away, and no one had recovered from what would be a conversation topic in the cultivation world for many years to come.

And yet, it was at that point… that bells began to toll again. From the First, Second, Third… all the way to the Ninth Sect.

“What? Why are there bells tolling again?”

“Is that just an echo? I… I think I’m hearing things.”

“What’s… what’s happening now!?!?” As the bells rang, the disciples in the First through Eighth Sects looked around in shock as, yet again, a cold, emotionless voice spoke out.

“Ninth Sect. Fang Mu. Tenth Heaven!”

Everyone was flabbergasted, including the supposed eagle-like Chosen, the powerful experts in the Dao Realm, and the Dao Lords and Dao Sovereigns.

For a moment, complete silence filled the Vast Expanse School, but then a massive commotion broke out in which virtually everyone was shouting out in disbelief and shock.

“Impossible! This is completely impossible!!”

“The Tenth Heaven! How could it be? That’s the Tenth Heaven…. The Ninth Heaven just appeared! How could Fang Mu possibly have summoned the Tenth Heaven?! This… this is the making of a legend, the forging of a myth!”

“Cheater! He definitely cheated! Dammit, there’s something wrong here!” Numerous cries filled the entire Vast Expanse School, causing everything to tremble.

Most people either couldn’t believe it, or didn’t want to. The faces of the Chosen were ashen. The blow which they had just received was difficult to put into words.

Even the Paragons were shaken. The faces of the 7-Essences and 8-Essences Paragons flickered, and at the same time, the meditating 9-Essences Paragons opened their eyes.

It was impossible for even figures such as them to ignore what was happening. The Ninth Heaven was a major event, but the Tenth Heaven… was a pinnacle that no one had ever reached before.

When a disciple like that appeared in a sect, even 9-Essences Paragons had to pay attention.

The Sect Leader was the first to send his divine will out. It only took a moment for his suspicions to be aroused, and after various speculations, a wry expression appeared on his face, and he looked away.

Golden-robed Jin Yunshan and Sha Jiudong both looked similarly suspicious; their uncertainty gave them a bit of pause.

They were the only ones who picked up on the clues. All of the other 9-Essences Paragons were extremely interested about this Chosen named Fang Mu.

However, they then recalled that the Ninth Sect was run by the inhuman Ninth Paragon, and they looked away, no longer the least bit interested in Fang Mu.

Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that they didn’t dare to be interested.

The Vast Expanse School was even more excited than it had been before. The name Fang Mu was now a legend. Within the Ninth Sect, people were calling out loudly, even Yan’er.

Even as the excited cries echoed out, Meng Hao appeared at the top of the Vast Expanse Shrine. The tenth level was over, and he had become the first person in the Vast Expanse School to ever summon the Tenth Heaven. Now, he even appeared to be standing atop that very Tenth Heaven.

He looked like an Immortal being, his garments rippling, his hair floating around him. Then he looked up into the sky, and the roiling, churning black clouds.

At that point, the Ten Heavens began to fade from the Vast Expanse Shrine. It started with the First Heaven, which became a beam of light that shot up and entered Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s mind trembled, and as the beam of light entered him, he could sense it converging on the first of the nine sealing marks.

“Is this good fortune from the Vast Expanse Shrine?” he wondered to himself. “An additional bonus after the conclusion…?” At the same time, the Second, Third, and Fourth Heavens… also vanished, becoming beams of light that shot toward Meng Hao.

As they fused into him, he got more excited; the first sealing mark was rapidly becoming more solid. Then the Ninth and Tenth Heavens faded and shot into him, filling him with rumbling sounds.

In the end, he took a deep breath, and his eyes shone with delight. The first of the nine sealing marks was now thirty percent complete!!

Before he could spend much more time observing it, lightning bolts began to appear in the black clouds up above.

100. 1,000. 10,000!

Boundless Tribulation Lightning began to fall toward Meng Hao, filled with death and destruction. The 7-Essences Paragon and the others ceased to offer assistance. After all, since the lightning was clearly there just for Meng Hao, then he would need to face it alone.

As they fell back, Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed with brilliant light. As the disciples of the Ninth Sect all watched, rumbling sounds echoed out, and Meng Hao flew up into the air above the Vast Expanse Shrine, taking the initiative… to attack the Tribulation Lightning!

He flew up into the sky, fearless, laughing coldly, a gleam of disdain visible in his eyes. He clearly wanted to fight.

When the countless disciples down below saw that, they began to cheer loudly. It was an image that would be forever imprinted on their souls.

To the Chosen, Meng Hao was being extremely domineering, acting in a completely and utterly brazen fashion.

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# Chapter 1466: Who Else?

Shocking rumbling sounds could be heard as Meng Hao slammed into over 10,000 Tribulation Lightning bolts. He flicked his sleeve, unleashing the explosive power of his cultivation base. It wasn’t the power of the Immortal Realm, but the Ancient Realm. Dots of light could be seen all over his body, which made him shine brightly.

Massive booms could be heard as the 10,000 lightning bolts were destroyed. Meng Hao’s garments and hair fluttered, and as he looked at the black clouds, he took a step upward.

In response to that step, the clouds rumbled, and tens of thousands of lightning bolts fell, transforming into a lake of lighting that enveloped him. He snorted coldly, performing a double-handed incantation gesture and then waving both hands out.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

All of the lightning was destroyed. Then the black clouds churned, as a roar of rage echoed out from inside. 100,000 lightning bolts began to fall, seemingly endlessly, as if the Heavens were infuriated. After the 100,000 lightning bolts were destroyed, another 100,000 came. Then another.

It seemed as if the lightning would never end, as if the Tribulation wouldn’t stop until Meng Hao was dead.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, causing boundless mist to build up around him, which was a divine ability he had picked up from the Vast Expanse School. He extended his right hand, and the mist rapidly transformed into streams of smoke which shot out to meet the incoming Tribulation Lightning. Booms could be heard as they all exploded.

The sound was shocking. It was as if in all creation, the only thing that existed were the Heavens and Meng Hao!

One man was personally fighting the Heavens!

Everyone present was completely shaken, and the Dao Realm experts were clearly moved.

Another 100,000 lightning bolts collapsed, and behind them came yet another 100,000. It was then that Meng Hao’s laughter began to echo out. His hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture as he stepped forward again, energy surging in spectacular fashion.

“I’m seeking enlightenment of what it means to seal the Heavens, in order to complete the Ninth Hex. If I can’t seal some Tribulation Lightning, then how could I possibly strive to seal the Heavens!” Laughing, he took another step forward, raised his hands up and pushed them toward the Heavens.

The aura of the Ancient Realm erupted out, and countless shining lights appeared. Heaven shook and the Earth quaked as he fought against one round of 100,000 lighting bolts after another.

Booms rang out constantly as the lightning collapsed. At the same time, Meng Hao remained in place in mid-air, clearly visible to everyone down below. The crowds were shaken by this sight of someone actually fighting the Heavens.

Meng Hao flicked his sleeve, glaring at the clouds as he said, “Bring it on! Let’s see how many lightning bolts you can send against Fang Mu this time!”

Only someone with profound character… could say something like that!

Countless gasps of shock could be heard from the crowd down below. It was an intense image that was burned into their minds: Fang Mu standing there, facing off against the endlessly seething black clouds and crackling lightning.

Anyone who saw such a scene couldn’t help but gasp in astonishment.

The Chosen had already forgotten about how they didn’t want to accept Fang Mu. Their eyes were shining brightly because of his brazen attitude, his domineering nature, and the heroic and shocking way he fought against the Heavens.

“Fang Mu!”

“Fang Mu!!”

“Fang Mu!!!” It was impossible to say who began to shout it first. But soon, all of the Chosen, and all of the other male cultivators in the Ninth Sect, could sense Meng Hao’s heroic nature. It was a madness that could fight against the Heavens, and it left them shaken, eyes bloodshot, roaring at the tops of their lungs.

Their voices became a sound wave that shook Heaven and Earth, causing everything to tremble, as though energy itself were erupting from their mouths.

The Dao Realm experts were all moved. They looked at the disciples, and then looked at Meng Hao, their expressions filled with excitement.

Morale and spirit are extremely important in a sect, and as of this moment… a seed of valor seemed to have been planted in the hearts of all the disciples.

And it was all because of Meng Hao. He had successfully captured the hearts of all of the disciples of the Ninth Sect. Not only were they crying out to him as Eldest Brother, but their hearts were also brimming with ardor and reverence for him.

At the same time, the surrounding female disciples were looking at Fang Mu with unprecedented glows in their eyes. To see him fighting the

Heavens had imprinted his image onto their hearts for all eternity.

It was the same kind of look that the female disciples had given Wang Tengfei back in the days of the Reliance Sect, or the looks that the female alchemists had given to Chosen in the Violet Fate Sect. It was the exact same look given to Meng Hao in the various sects in which he had become a legend, a Dao Child among Chosen!

The female disciples gazed at Meng Hao with adoration and envy; they were attracted to him in a way that far exceeded the passions of the male cultivators.

It took only a moment for all of the disciples of the Ninth Sect to be whipped into an unheard-of frenzy, all thanks to the sight of Meng Hao fighting the Heavens, viciously battling the lightning, and everything else.

Yan’er stood there in the crowd, and was suddenly not very happy. She felt a sensation of crisis, something extremely, profoundly intense…. She was excited just like everyone else, but her young heart was also filled with a secret joy because of Meng Hao; somehow, he had become everything to her. Then she realized how everyone was looking at him, and she suddenly felt as if they were having aspirations regarding something that belonged to her.

“Hmph,” she thought, gritting her teeth. “There’s only one of that old man. What do you people think you’re doing? Trying to steal him? He’s my Master. MINE!”

The emotions of the Ninth Sect’s disciples bubbled over, as if they had been lit with flame. Meanwhile, the clouds churned, and more lightning formed, this time, not 100,000 bolts, but instead, more than 1,000,000.

1,000,000 lightning bolts began to fall, a shocking spectacle difficult to put into words. As they fell, they resembled, not a lake of lightning, but rather, an enormous hand!

It was a huge hand composed of lightning, emanating crashing booms as it descended toward Meng Hao. A sensation of imminent crisis rose up within him, and his eyes began to shine brightly. He threw his head back and roared, throwing both hands up into the air, causing numerous dots of light to appear.

10. 30. 50. 80… 108! 1

The 108 major qi meridians on his body were all shining brilliantly. Shockingly, within each of those 108 qi meridians, it was possible to see an image.

Closer examination revealed that those figures were, astonishingly… Immortal Soul Lamps!!

108 meridians, 108 lamps!

It was a complete and shocking sight to everyone. This was the first time for Meng Hao's clone to reveal how many Soul Lamps he had, and the result was almost beyond belief.

In the blink of an eye, all 108 Soul Lamps were blazing with light, casting Meng Hao in complete brilliance. As the enormous palm fell, he harbored no thoughts of putting up a defense, or of evading. Instead… he attacked!

He was fighting the Heavens with an incisive will!

Meng Hao took the initiative to fly out, a blur of light that shot toward the enormous lightning hand. Everything shook violently, and all eyes were fixed upon the scene, filled with both nervousness and anticipation. To them, it was as if nothing else existed other than Meng Hao.

Time seemed to slow. Everyone watched as Meng Hao made contact with the hand. Then, time seemed to return to its normal speed, and even increased explosively.

Heaven and Earth trembled, and rumbling sounds echoed out. The hand, filled with endless destructive power, intent on wiping Meng Hao out of existence, collapsed into countless fragments. The light shining out of Meng Hao dimmed somewhat, but he laughed nonetheless.

“Bring it on!” he yelled, as brazen as ever, his hair whipping about.

Rumbling sounds emanated out from within the black clouds. The clouds suddenly shrank, converging in upon themselves, sending a terrifying pressure out to cover everything. The disciples of the Ninth Sect had just begun to feel relieved moments ago, but suddenly got nervous again.

Crackling sounds rang out as the shrunken clouds suddenly exploded with an insane rain of lightning. 100,000 bolts. 1,000,000. 2,000,000. 3,000,000. 5,000,000. 8,000,000!!

8,000,000 lighting bolts converged, seemingly covering the entire world. They descended like a downpour, and from a distance, they almost looked like… a huge finger!

Although it was simply an outline, the resemblance was striking!

Meng Hao’s pupils constricted as the finger closed in on him. Just when his true self was preparing to converge some divine sense to send out in assistance, all of a sudden, a voice could be heard. It came from the group of Chosen down below; they had witnessed Meng Hao fighting the Heavens, and they could see how mismatched and unfair the battle was.

“Eldest Brother Fang, you’re fighting the Heavens alone! I hope you don’t mind if I, Sun Mou… join you in fighting the Tribulation Lighting!?” Even as the words rang out, a figure flew out from the crowd.

Almost simultaneously, more people began to call out.

“Eldest Brother Fang, count me, Liu Mu, in as well!”

“And me, Chen Ao!”

“How could I, Zhang Yunqi, possibly stay out of something like this!?”

“And me!”

“Eldest Brother, I, Cai Wei, will also join you!”

“Tribulation Lighting? Zheng Yuan will join you to fight it, Eldest Brother Fang!”

Countless individuals flew up, and innumerable voices cried out. There were men and women, all of whom flew up into the air.

1,000 disciples. 5,000. 30,000. 200,000. 1,000,000. 3,000,000… Soon, 10,000,000 disciples were up in the air, flying together!

The Dao Realm experts were shocked, and the Paragons gasped. In the blink of an eye, the 8,000,000 lightning bolts suddenly… lurched to a halt!

1. The number 108 is important in some Eastern religions. More info here.

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# Chapter 1467: Seven Sealing Marks Eradicate Tribulation!

It wouldn't be correct to say that all of the disciples in the Ninth Sect flew up to assist. But 10,000,000 was a huge number, all of whom flew up, causing Heaven and Earth to shake.

Their eyes burned with reverence and awe. Many of them were even ranked on the Vast Expanse Shrine. However, because of the Tenth Heaven, Meng Hao had thoroughly won them over, and his heroism in single-handedly fighting the Heavens had set their blood boiling.

As their voices rang out and they flew into the air, the world trembled. Meng Hao's clone looked at them, heart pounding, and a bit in a daze because of their cries.

His true self, who remained concealed nearby, was also taken aback, and felt his heart beginning to pound.

Their cries gave him a strange feeling. The truth was that before, he had never felt much of an attachment to Planet Vast Expanse. But now, thanks to the cries of the cultivators of the Ninth Sect, Meng Hao couldn't help but feel moved.

That feeling was like a seed planted in his heart, which almost immediately began to slowly grow. Meanwhile, the black clouds in the sky rumbled, and the enormous outline of the finger formed by the 8,000,000 lightning bolts seemed to seethe with rage as it descended once again.

This time, Meng Hao wasn't facing the Tribulation Lightning alone. 10,000,000 disciples of the Ninth Sect joined him, unleashing various divine abilities in a Heaven-defying display. Everything went dim, and the sky seemed to be on the verge of collapsing. The clouds layers roiled, and from a distance, it was possible to see that the truly shocking sight was not the 8,000,000 bolts of Tribulation Lightning, but rather, the 10,000,000 disciples!

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

It was an indescribably powerful offensive, a destructive attack that was difficult to put into words. Anyone who tried to illustrate it in a painting would find it very difficult. It was… completely astonishing!

It was Man versus the Heavens. The Heavens roared, and Man howled. Massive rumblings echoed out as the enormous lightning finger began to fall apart. Blood sprayed out of the mouths of the 10,000,000 disciples, transforming into a sea of blood. However, instead of falling to the ground, it shot up toward the lightning.

The intense booming sounds continued to echo out. So far, this battle with the Tribulation Lightning had lasted for over one hundred breaths of time. When the 8,000,000-lightning-bolt finger collapsed, the 10,000,000 disciples once again coughed up blood. All of them were injured, and staggered backward. However, their eyes shone with a spirit that had never before been seen therein.

Their auras were even more fierce and lively, their eyes flashing with clarity as if their understanding of the world were different now than it just had been.

It was a scene that was earth-topplingly shocking to the Dao Realm experts, Dao Lords, Dao Sovereigns and the 7-Essences Paragon. There were other 7-Essences Paragons who were rushing over, and when they personally laid eyes on what was happening, they gasped. How could they not tell that the energy of the entire Ninth Sect was now completely different than before!?

There was a vitality, a focus, an incisive power. There was the gall to fight the Heavens! Who said that only a single person could fight the Heavens!?

The Tribulation Lightning wasn’t finished. Even as the 10,000,000 disciples fell back, the black clouds in the sky seethed once more. They shrunk again, but this time, to an exaggerated degree. In the blink of an eye, they were vastly smaller than before, only about 3,000 meters across.

However, as they shrunk, the pressure they exuded emanated out like numerous crushing mountains that could destroy all.

The disciples gritted their teeth and prepared to charge in attack once more. Before they could, Meng Hao leaped up ahead of them. Surprisingly, he completely ignored the lightning, and turned back to the countless cultivators. Taking a deep breath, his eyes flickered as he clasped hands and bowed deeply to them.

“I, Fang Mu, offer many thanks to you, Fellow Daoists. You’ve done enough by helping once. After all, this is my Tribulation…. Many thanks!” Without offering any other words, he clasped hands and bowed.

Even as the words left his mouth, the Heavens rumbled, and the 3,000 meter stretch of black clouds shrank down again. Soon, it was only 300 meters wide. Then 30. Then 3. In the end, it transformed into an ink-black needle!

It was pitch black, and filled with the power of all the darkness of the starry sky of the Vast Expanse. Almost immediately, it began to whistle through the air at incredible speed, and from the feeling it let off, it seemed more apparent than ever that it wouldn’t rest until Meng Hao was dead.

It moved so quickly that by the time Meng Hao turned his head, the Tribulation Lightning needle was right in front of his forehead.

His eyes flickered; it felt as if all of the Tribulation Lightning were contained in that black needle. It contained soul-destroying power, as well as a divine will of its own.

It was a divine will that contained myriads upon myriads of transformations; if it entered the body, those transformations would explode out, filling his sea of consciousness with infinite bolts of lightning. It would become a divine ability of Heavenly might that would destroy the body inside and out.

Although the lightning might be powerless to affect Meng Hao from the outside, now that the Tribulation Lightning had chosen to use divine will to pierce Meng Hao’s sea of consciousness, it was dangerously destructive.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. Had he not experienced everything in the Vast Expanse Shrine, his only option would have been to rely on the strength of his true self to destroy the Tribulation Lightning.

But now, he had the outline of the nine sealing marks of the Seal the Heavens Hex inside of him. He couldn’t unleash them outside his body, and was forced to let them brew inside of him via divine will. Right now, the Tribulation Lightning needle was about to stab into him and enter his sea of consciousness, to unleash its transformations of divine will.

However, to Meng Hao, with his terrifying Seal the Heavens Hex in nine parts, this Tribulation Lighting… was seeking its own destruction!

A cold smile appeared on his mouth, and he didn’t even attempt to evade. He allowed the black needle to stab into his forehead, merging into him. It became countless streams of blackness that instantly poured through his body, converging onto his soul and his sea of consciousness. Then, it became a fog of black lightning that prepared to destroy him from the inside.

However, it was then that Meng Hao drew upon his divine will. Instantly, the first sealing mark of the Seal the Heavens Hex appeared, causing rumbling sounds to echo out as it faced off with the black lightning mist.

When they met, the black mist lurched to a halt, then exploded out with even more force than before. However, then the second sealing mark appeared, and the third. After that was the fourth.

They combined with the first sealing mark, utterly shaking the black mist. It began to dissipate, whereupon a roar of rage and disbelief echoed out. Meng Hao snorted coldly, and the fifth sealing mark appeared. It combined with the others to create a Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering power that completely crushed the mist, dissipating it violently.

However, things weren’t over. Neither the ninth nor the tenth levels of the Vast Expanse Shrine had been sufficient to solidify even one of the sealing marks. However, this Tribulation Lightning was the perfect subject to experiment with.

It had voluntarily entered his body, so it had opened the door, and there was no way Meng Hao would let it off the hook. His divine will rumbled as he unleashed the sixth sealing mark, combining it with the others. An indescribable rage coursed through his body, wreaking complete havoc on the Tribulation Lightning, and causing the black mist to rapidly shrink down.

In the end, it transformed back into a needle, which then attempted to flee.

“You’re not going anywhere!” Meng Hao said with a cold harrumph. The seventh sealing mark appeared, merging with the others almost instantly.

When that happened, a world-shaking power rumbled out through him, along with an indescribable sealing power. In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao’s entire body became like a cage. The needle trembled, trying like mad to break free, but was blocked at every turn.

Next, the sealing power created by the fusion of that seventh sealing mark created something like a huge net, forcing the black needle into its confines. Soon, the net had covered the needle.

The needle shivered as though it wanted to struggle, and yet had no power to endure. The combined power of the seven sealing marks continued to weigh down onto it until it cracked, collapsed, and transformed into ash.

Meng Hao shivered and then opened his eyes. A flicker of lightning could be seen therein. Then he raised his right hand up, and countless bolts of lightning shot out from his palm toward the Heavens. The Heavens trembled, and sunlight spilled down; the aura of Tribulation had vanished.

This instance of Ancient Realm Tribulation had been overcome!

It was now evening, and Meng Hao hovered in midair bathed by the warm sunlight, making it look as if he had donned a set of saffron-colored armor. It was an image which would be eternally unforgettable to all of the disciples in the crowd.

“Eldest Brother Fang Mu!”

“Eldest Brother Fang Mu!!”

“Eldest Brother Fang Mu!!!” As the voices rang out, countless hands clasped in respect. The resulting sound wave echoed out in all directions, and was joined in by everyone, with the exception of the Dao Realm cultivators.

All eyes were filled with zealous ardor.

Yan’er was there in the crowd, her young heart shaken. She had never seen her Master like this, and for some reason, she found this version of him, bathed as he was in the evening sun, to be especially good-looking.

Meng Hao hovered there looking at the adoring masses, and he caught sight of Yan’er. After a moment passed, he looked back up into the Heavens, and a bright light flickered in his eyes.

This clone of his was now matured. What he needed to do now was get the clone into the Dao Realm, where he could use his explosive cultivation base power to complete all of the sealing marks of the Seal the Heavens Hex.

Seven days after Meng Hao’s clone gained fame and renown, shaking the entire Vast Expanse School, his true self received an excited divine will message from the Sect Leader.

“Ninth Paragon, everything is prepared. This time, it might be possible to… stay long-term in the necropolis!”

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# Chapter 1468: I’m Here for the Copper Mirror!

As soon as Meng Hao’s true self heard the words, he looked up, and his eyes gleamed with determination. Then, he rose to his feet.

His anticipation regarding this trip into the necropolis could not have been greater. This time, his goal was not the Transcendence Dais, but rather, that location he had glimpsed upon leaving last time, where the shard of the copper mirror had landed.

“The third land mass….” he said. Taking a deep breath, he flicked his sleeve, vanishing from within the Ninth Paragon City.

When he reappeared, he was up in the starry sky of the half planet, heading toward the spell formation that led to the necropolis.

Even as he arrived, the air distorted as other figures appeared. The other 9-Essences Paragons could be seen, as well as the golden-robed Jin Yunshan, and Sha Jiudong.

Although there had been no previous agreement regarding the matter, no one brought subordinates this time. They had been brought along last time to fill out the vanguard position as they made their way to the continent. But now that everyone was sure of the way to go, and had been preparing for dozens of years, they were all confident in their ability to make their way alone.

The group hadn’t laid eyes on each other for dozens of years. After returning to the sect all those years ago, each one had gone into secluded meditation. Now, they looked around, measuring each other up, assessing each other’s cultivation bases, checking to see how much progress they had made.

Everyone treated Meng Hao very respectfully. This being their second time inside, his importance to the group, and his invincibility inside the necropolis, ensured that none of the other 9-Essences Paragons were willing to provoke him.

As for Jin Yunshan, he would never be able to forget the events which had occurred. Along with Sha Jiudong, he avoided standing in front of Meng Hao at all times.

Seeing that everyone was assembled, Shangguan Hong asked, “Sect Leader, earlier you said that we could stay ‘long term’ within the necropolis. What did you mean by that?”

Others quickly added follow-up questions.

“Yes, please clear this matter up, Sect Leader!”

“What does ‘long term’ mean? Could it be that you have a way to deal with the doomsday events which unfold inside?”

Even Sha Jiudong and Jin Yunshan were waiting to hear the Sect Leader’s response.

Meng Hao was just as interested. After all, the Transcendence might be helpful to the others, but to him, it was of little use, at least not at the moment.

He still needed his clone to finish forming the Ninth Hex, and then merge back into him. At that time, he would be able to take advantage of the aura of the Transcendence Dais, combine the Nine Hexes, and gather the power to extinguish the bronze lamp.

Before then, he didn’t care much at all about the necropolis. He only cared about… the copper mirror shard.

“Calm down, everyone,” the Sect Leader said, laughing. “There is still one more Fellow Daoist who hasn’t come yet. Once she arrives, I’ll explain everything.” The Sect Leader’s eyes shone with brilliant light. After dozens of years of preparation, he was now fully confident of being able to stay long term within the necropolis.

“Who else is coming?” Jin Yunshan asked, eyes glittering. Knowing expressions could be seen on the faces of the others. Apparently, everyone had an idea who the Sect Leader was talking about.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he looked off into the distance and saw a white beam of light shooting toward them. It wasn’t bright, being composed of a mist. However, that mist soon dissipated, revealing the image of a woman.

She wore a long white robe, and was gracefully beautiful. She looked almost like a female Immortal, except that her eyes seemed filled with mist, making it impossible to see her pupils. It almost was as if her eyes had been intentionally obscured with mist to prevent people from seeing them.

“Greetings, Fellow Daoist Bai.” As soon as the crowd caught sight of her, they clasped hands and bowed in greeting. Even Jin Yunshan and Sha Jiudong treated her with the utmost respect.

This woman was none other than one of Planet Vast Expanse’s four peak 9-Essences experts, the mysterious woman whom Meng Hao had never laid eyes on before this day. She hadn’t participated in the last foray into the necropolis, but here she was today…. Bai Wuchen.

Because she was like an Immortal floating in the wind, on Planet Vast Expanse she was called Immortal Bai Wuchen.

As soon as Meng Hao laid eyes on her, she turned to look at him, and their gazes met. Despite feeling as if he were separated from her by some sort of mist, he smiled, although he didn’t say anything.

She nodded at him, then looked away.

“Fellow Daoist Bai,” said the Sect Leader, “with you joining us on our trip into the necropolis, I’m much more confident in our being able to succeed.” He laughed heartily, then looked over the group and began to explain why the preparations had taken so many years, and how he planned to evade the catastrophe that lay in wait in the necropolis.

“Over the years, I analyzed everything that happened within the necropolis, and also studied the ancient records. One thing I can be certain of is that the entire catastrophe doesn’t last for very long. Only about ten days.

“What we need to do is figure out how to survive inside of the necropolis for those ten days.

“After all, once inside of the necropolis, even though it is an illusory world, if you die inside, you will die in reality. Therefore, the key is to be in a state of reality, and yet unreality, in a state of illusion, and yet not illusion.

“In that aspect, Fellow Daoist Bai can help us. If we need even more assistance, I’ve also made other preparations.” No one spoke or asked any questions during his speech.

When he finished, he didn’t wait for anyone to ask any questions. He waved his right hand, causing a turtle shell to appear, about the size of a palm. It glittered with scintillating light, like a precious treasure, and even emanated pulses of pressure. When the Sect Leader took hold of it, it almost looked as if his hand weren’t part of the world any more. His flesh was visible, and yet undetectable via divine sense.

“It took me dozens of years to prepare this particular item,” he said.

Almost as soon as the turtle shell appeared, the expressions of the others flickered.

“That item….”

“Sect Leader, are you sure about this? You can’t treat that thing lightly!”

“This object is the Vast Expanse School’s sect-protecting precious treasure,” the Sect Leader said, his voice a bit hoarse. “Usually, it is used to suppress a certain qi flow, but over the past dozens of years, I used significant amounts of my own heart-blood to suppress the qi flow to the ultimate degree. I can guarantee that for half of a sixty-year-cycle, the sect-protecting precious treasure will not be needed there.

“With this object, and Fellow Daoist Bai’s magical technique, I’m eighty percent certain that we can endure through the catastrophe. Furthermore, as Fellow Daoist Bai reminded me, she has conducted thorough research regarding the necropolis, no less than I have. She happened to find a clue in the ancient records which indicates that there is a region on the third land mass where the destructive effects of the catastrophe are significantly reduced.

“I also remember seeing some information along those lines. If I remember correctly, there is some power there which resists the world-destructive force. It is in that location that we will use Fellow Daoist Bai’s magical technique, along with the Vast Expanse School’s precious treasure, increasing our chances to well over ninety percent!” As everyone mulled over the Sect Leader’s words, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with an undetectable gleam.

Next was a bit of discussion about various details. After confirming that things were all in order, and also coming up with a backup plan for how to escape if things went awry, the teleportation portal was activated.

As Meng Hao waited inside the portal, he thought about what the Sect Leader had said. Somehow, he had the feeling that the location the Sect Leader referred to was highly likely to be connected to the copper mirror shard.

As he contemplated the matter, the brilliant light of the spell formation began to rise up. It was at that point that he happened to look over at Jin Yunshan, to find the man was looking back at him.

Jin Yunshan immediately shivered, as an uneasy feeling rose up inside of him. When he thought back to the past conflicts between himself and Meng

Hao, and the fact that they were heading back into the necropolis, he gritted his teeth and, before the spell formation could completely activate, began to walk in Meng Hao’s direction.

Everyone looked on in shock, and the Sect Leader and Sha Jiudong felt their hearts beginning to thump. Meng Hao’s eyes flickered coldly.

Suddenly, Jin Yunshan made a grasping motion, causing a bracelet of holding to appear. Face expressionless, he tossed it over to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao grabbed it and looked inside, whereupon a strange expression appeared on his face. The bracelet of holding was packed with spirit stones and medicinal pills, as well as various extraordinary magical items.

Because of everything that had occurred with the Mountain and Sea Realm, and all the other things he had experienced, his personality had changed significantly. However, there were certain things about him that existed deep in his bones, things that could never be thoroughly wiped away. After looking into the bracelet of holding, his eyes glittered brightly, and he smiled.

Seeing the smile on Meng Hao’s face, Jin Yunshan breathed a sigh of relief. He completely ignored the strange looks that had appeared in the eyes of the onlookers because of his paying a protection fee….

He could never forget how, when they had returned from the necropolis last time, Meng Hao had looked at him with disfavor, and then they had exchanged blows. When that happened, he had shouted out about how he had paid compensation already, and the result was a somewhat bashful expression had flickered across Meng Hao’s face.

“You can try to hide it,” he thought, “but my Flame Eye can see your greedy nature. Hmph! I’ve already given you a bracelet of holding, so if you look at me the wrong way again, then I’ll remind you about that fact to make sure things don’t go too far. And if you really get out of hand… well, I’ve prepared five more bracelets of holding. Don’t think I won’t be able to handle you this time!” Snorted coldly inside, Jin Yunshan stuck his jaw out, looking as proud and lofty as ever.

Meng Hao cleared his throat, feeling a bit embarrassed by the strange looks being cast in his direction. It had been a long time since people had looked at him that way.

The Sect Leader exchanged an astonished glance with Sha Jiudong, although neither spoke. As for Immortal Bai Wuchen, she had a strange expression on her face as she glanced first at Jin Yunshan and then at Meng Hao.

The other 9-Essences experts refrained from reacting, unsure of what they should even say.

After a long moment passed, the spell formation light shot up into the clouds, and the group vanished. When they reappeared, they were on the very border of the necropolis's outer region.

From a distance, the necropolis looked just like it had last time. There were endless ruins and nine land masses. It was a desolate and ancient place, filled with silence.

The instant Meng Hao appeared, he could sense the coldness in the area, and how the bronze lamp flickered in response. Yet again, he sensed how he could command the ghosts.

"In this place, I am the Emperor…. And I'm here for the copper mirror." He closed his eyes, and somehow, he could almost hear the countless ghosts in the necropolis crying out in greeting.

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# Chapter 1469: Conflicts

As soon as the entire group appeared in the necropolis, everyone turned to look at Meng Hao, with the exception of Immortal Bai Wuchen.

The Sect Leader clasped hands and bowed to him.

Meng Hao nodded, his eyes flickering. His purpose in coming to the necropolis this time was clear. He wanted to get to the third land mass and find the copper mirror shard. As for what everyone else did, he didn’t really care. In fact, he planned to leave everyone behind as soon as possible.

The ideal outcome would be to handle all matters within one month. That way he wouldn’t have to try to weather out the apocalypse with the rest of the group. Suddenly his third eye opened, and he looked out as the ruins around him completely changed.

Without any hesitation, he shot forward. Everyone else began to follow, clearly able to sense the increased coldness in the area. That meant that they were surrounded by countless ghosts, and yet, Meng Hao’s own calm demeanor allowed them to remain completely calm.

Immortal Bai Wuchen had a slightly different reaction; a strange gleam appeared in her eyes as she took everything in. In the end, she looked thoughtfully at Meng Hao.

Time passed. Previously, it had taken them two days to get through the perimeter region of the necropolis, but this time, it only took two hours to reach the bridge leading to the first land mass.

Being familiar with the bridge as well, they were able to make it across much more quickly. After only about another two hours, they were on the first land mass.

People were starting to get excited to be on the land mass again. As for Meng Hao, he didn’t even stop. He proceeded along quickly, heading toward where the first land mass connected to the second.

The Sect Leader could see how anxious he was, but after a moment of hesitation, he said, “Fellow Daoist Ninth Paragon, please wait a moment. There’s no hurry to get to the second land mass. Let’s give Fellow Daoist Bai some time on the altar to seek enlightenment. There will be plenty of time afterward.”

Meng Hao frowned, then nodded and changed directions, heading directly toward the center of the land mass. After half a day of speeding along, Bai Wuchen stepped onto the Transcendence Dais. Meng Hao looked off in the direction of the third land mass, the gleam in his eyes growing more intense.

After seven days passed, Immortal Bai Wuchen was still in the midst of seeking enlightenment. That caught Meng Hao’s attention, and yet all he did was glance at her. Eight days passed. On the ninth day, Bai Wuchen trembled, and then slowly rose to her feet, a strange look gleaming in her eyes. She glanced over at Meng Hao briefly before looking away.

By the time Bai Wuchen had finished her enlightenment, even the Sect Leader was starting to get a bit anxious. They traveled on for another half day until they were on the border of the first land mass, where it connected to the second.

In this location, there was no bridge, but instead, a staircase floating in the starry sky.

Beneath the staircase was nothing but a swath of pitch black darkness, from within which echoing roars could be heard.

The Sect Leader looked cautiously at the staircase. “These stairs are even more dangerous than the bridge. We need to–” Even as the words left his mouth, though, Meng Hao opened his third eye.

They had already wasted enough time because of Bai Wuchen, leaving less time for Meng Hao to accomplish his goals, and he had no desire to try to stay in this place to weather the catastrophe. As his third eye opened, he threw his arms up into the air, and then sent divine will out in all directions.

In almost immediate response, countless ghosts on the first land mass let out shocking howls that the living couldn’t detect. They flew up into the air and then began to rush toward Meng Hao from all directions. Even the ghosts outside of the first land mass joined in.

Soon, the coldness around them intensified, and cracking sounds could be heard as the ground began to ice over. Endless numbers of ghosts began to swirl around Meng Hao, forming a vortex. Everyone was shocked, especially Jin Yunshan, who shivered and pulled out a bracelet of holding.

Immortal Bai Wuchen’s eyes flickered with a strange light as she looked over at Meng Hao.

“Follow me, Fellow Daoists!” Meng Hao said, pointing forward. His divine will caused the surrounding ghosts to howl as they surrounded Meng Hao and the others and then shot toward the staircase.

Anyone who could actually see the ghosts would have seen what appeared to be a massive sea, howling and roaring as it carried the group up the stairs. Because of those innumerable ghosts, even the most dangerous entities couldn’t even get close. It was a truly domineering way to cross the land mass.

It only took a short period of time to fly all the way up the staircase and then land onto the surface of the second land mass.

As soon as they landed, and before the Sect Leader and the others could even get excited, Meng Hao flew up into the air and looked out at the second land mass with his third eye. Then he began to issue a calling with his divine will.

The bronze lamp inside of him flickered brightly, and within the endless ruins on the second land mass, countless ghosts shivered and began to look up. The sensation of the calling coming from Meng Hao caused them to tremble.

“The Emperor is calling to us….”

“The Emperor summons us….”

“That’s the aura of the Emperor….” No one could hear the murmured calls, but rumbling echoed out as the ghosts roared and flew into the air toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao didn’t slow down at all. Allowing himself to be swept up by all of the ghosts from the perimeter, the first land mass, and the second land mass, he began to speed away. As he did, his voice echoed out within the ears of the other members of the party.

“Fellow Daoists, I won’t be participating in the efforts with the Transcendence Dais. I have a personal matter to attend to on the third land mass. After you’re finished with your enlightenment, I can return to escort you there.” With that, he began to pick up speed. However, it was in that exact moment that Immortal Bai Wuchen’s body flickered, and she suddenly vanished. When she reappeared, she was in front of him, her hand held up, causing a field of mist to spring up, blocking his way.

“Fellow Daoist Ninth Paragon,” she asked, “the third land mass is extremely important. No matter what personal matter you have to attend to, it would be best to avoid entering it alone. Why don’t you wait for us to finish our enlightenment, and we can all go together?”

Meng Hao stopped in place and looked at her coldly, his brow furrowing. He had never had any dealings with Immortal Bai Wuchen, and had no grudges with her. And yet here she was, suddenly acting hostile.

He then thought back to how Jin Yunshan had taken action against him in the past, and his eyes flickered thoughtfully.

Feeling a bit irritated, he said, “I don’t care what sensation or perception you’ve experienced. Please don’t forget what kind of person I am. If you don’t provoke me, I won’t provoke you. “

Before anyone else could even respond, Jin Yunshan chuckled coldly in his mind. He truly wanted to ask Meng Hao who had provoked whom last time they came back from the necropolis, and if Meng Hao was currently in a bad mood.

From what Jin Yunshan could tell, Immortal Bai Wuchen must have felt the same thing he had felt last time, something like the will of Patriarch Vast Expanse, which made her decide to try to kill Meng Hao.

The Sect Leader frowned, and was just about to offer an explanation. However, Meng Hao was not feeling very tolerant at the moment, and took a step forward. Immortal Bai Wuchen smiled coldly, performing an incantation gesture with her right hand, causing her cultivation base to erupt into a windstorm that blocked Meng Hao’s path.

“Screw off!” growled Meng Hao, flicking his sleeve. The surrounding ghosts emitted piercing howls as they charged forward, blasting at Bai Wuchen like a tempest. Booms rang out, and Bai Wuchen’s face went pale. She had no choice but to fall back.

As she did, Meng Hao passed by, and began to speed off into the distance.

“Sect Leader. Fellow Daoists,” said Immortal Bai Wuchen. “The third land mass is very important to us being able to endure the catastrophe. Clearly he has his reasons for going there alone. If I don’t go to personally investigate, my heart can’t rest at ease.” Ignoring the rest of the group, she flew in pursuit of Meng Hao.

Her eyes glittered with strange light; as it turned out, Jin Yunshan had guessed wrong. She hadn’t blocked Meng Hao’s path after sensing the will of Patriarch Vast Expanse. The truth was that her real reason for coming into the necropolis was that she was after a certain object located in the third land mass.

It was something very important to her, and in fact, because of that item, something else in her bag of holding was beginning to emit pulsing fluctuations.

No one knew it, but even if the Sect Leader hadn’t asked for her help, she still would have come into the necropolis. Based on information she had gleaned from others regarding the previous trip, the gains made by the group were significantly greater than in previous attempts.

That meant that she had a much greater likelihood of acquiring that item she wanted. That was also why she had encouraged the group to try to weather the apocalypse on the third land mass. It was only after arriving in the necropolis itself that she suddenly got a strange feeling regarding Meng Hao.

She somehow had the sensation that his goal was similar to hers, or even the same.

Thus, she took action right away, and even began to chase after him. The Sect Leader’s eyes glittered, as if he had suddenly realized something. Immortal Bai Wuchen was acting completely differently than her usual cool self. Perhaps it had something to do with the Transcendence Dais, although that didn’t seem likely.

After a moment of thought, he flew into the air after her. Next, Jin Yunshan and Sha Jiudong exchanged a glance. They also could sense that something fishy was going on. Instead of worrying about the Transcendence Dais, they flew into the air as well.

As for the other 9-Essences Paragons, including the Second Paragon, they got the feeling that there was something very odd about the third land mass. However, considering that the most powerful peak 9-Essences experts were going there right now, it was likely that they themselves wouldn’t be able to benefit from anything there. Almost in unison, they began to head toward the second Transcendence Dais in the middle of the second land mass.

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# Chapter 1470: Copper Mirror Shard!

Meng Hao sped along over the surface of the second land mass, moving so quickly that any observer would only be able to see a blur that left everything rumbling in its wake.

Only he could see the sea of ghosts that surrounded him, endless numbers of them. They radiated obsession, madness, and at the same time, reverence. He was like a king, leading his armies across the lands.

More and more ghosts flew in to join that army, until both land and sky were completely covered by them. The cold was so intense that everything above and below was freezing over.

It was a majestic sight. He passed through the central part of the second land mass completely unobstructed, heading toward the border, and the third land mass.

His speed increased, and the freezing lands beneath him were like a shadow.

Behind him, Immortal Bai Wuchen was trembling inwardly. Meng Hao was like the blazing sun at noon, and was someone she actually had no desire to provoke. However, it was clear that he was working toward the same goal she was, and therefore, she had no choice but to attempt to stop him. She couldn’t permit anyone to interfere with her opportunity to return home.

Her eyes glittered with killing intent as she pushed herself faster and faster. Behind her was the Sect Leader, then Sha Jiudong and Jin Yunshan in his golden robe. The three of them flew single file through the air, muttering to themselves as they gazed at Bai Wuchen and Meng Hao up ahead.

Rumbling sounds filled Heaven and Earth like the crackle of thunder. The ghosts spun around him as he swept over the land, and when he reached the border, he didn’t pause for even a moment. Countless piercing howls rose up as he charged out into the void toward the third land mass.

Not too long after Meng Hao and the sea of ghosts passed into the third land mass, Bai Wuchen appeared, gnashing her teeth. She didn’t pause either, summoning a mist that turned her blurry as she also flew out toward the third land mass.

She was followed by the Sect Leader and the other two peak 9-Essences paragons. They hesitated for a moment, but then unleashed various divine abilities to follow. By this point, it would be impossible for them not to have come to the conclusion that the goal of both Meng Hao and Bai Wuchen lay in the third land mass.

As for what exactly that goal was, and why it caused the two of them to be so focused, the Sect Leader and the others didn’t know. It might be a bit more possible to rationalize Bai Wuchen’s actions, but as for Meng Hao, he wasn’t even the Ninth Paragon to begin with, and had only been to this place once before. However, in that first time he visited, he had clearly discovered something new.

Time passed. Meng Hao was in the lead, increasing his speed the entire time, surrounded by a sea of ghosts. Soon, he was speeding across the surface of the third land mass itself. He knew Bai Wuchen was behind him, but all he did was snort coldly and completely ignore her as he flew at top speed toward his target destination.

As soon as Meng Hao begin speeding in that particular direction, Bai Wuchen’s pupils constricted. By now, she was certain that Meng Hao was indeed heading to the exact same position as her target.

“Dammit!” she thought, her eyes flickering with killing intent. Gritting her teeth, she even drew on her longevity for more speed and power. She bit down on her tongue and spit up a mouthful of blood, transforming herself into a mist. That mist rapidly became a blood mist, which shot forward with increased speed, and an intense, murderous aura.

Almost immediately, the distance between her and Meng Hao was narrowed down dramatically. Then, she performed a teleportation, and appeared directly ahead of Meng Hao. There, her eyes turned red as she shoved her hand out toward him.

“Get back!” she said, her voice ice cold. At the same time, she unleashed the power of her cultivation base, causing Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering power to converge on her palm. The result was that the mist in front of her took the shape of a gigantic hand that crushed toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes were glacially cold. By now, he could tell that Bai Wuchen had ascertained his own goal in this place.

“Does that mean that she came to the necropolis with the same objective in mind?” Even as he reached this point in his train of thought, he snorted coldly and led the ghosts in a charge toward the mist hand. They howled, causing everything to shake as they slammed into the hand.

From a distance, it wasn’t possible to see the ghosts, but it was possible to see the hand lurching to a halt, unable to get near Meng Hao. Then, it collapsed, and Immortal Bai Wuchen’s face fell. She quickly retreated, transforming into a mist that vanished from in front of the deadly attack of the sea of ghosts.

Meng Hao turned his head to look at a seemingly empty spot in the air off in the distance, his eyes glittering with killing intent as he said, “Get in my way one more time, and I’ll kill you no matter the price I have to pay.”

With that, he turned and flew away.

It wasn’t that he didn’t want to kill Bai Wuchen. Unfortunately, her techniques were far stranger than the golden-robed Jin Yunshan’s. There was something very dangerous about her, as far as Meng Hao could sense.

Therefore, unless it was absolutely necessary, he didn’t want to force her hand.

After Meng Hao left, the mist reappeared in the spot where he had been looking, quickly transforming into the form of a woman. It was none other than Immortal Bai Wuchen, her face pale, her expression unyielding. Unfortunately, she was running out of options.

She could sense how Meng Hao seemed to be invincibly powerful, and in fact didn’t even need to attack: he could have the ghosts do it for him.

“I’ve spent years in preparation. I’ve waited and waited. My chance is finally here. That second mirror shard belongs to me, and anyone who tries to fight me over it will die!” Eyes gleaming with madness, she began to pant. Then, she turned as the Sect Leader and the others approached.

When she saw them, her eyes glittered, and her lips could be seen moving as she transmitted separate messages to all of them.

“You’re serious!?!?”

“What did you just say?!?!”

“That thing is real?!?!”

The Sect Leader and the others all blurted responses at almost the same time. The first response came from the Sect Leader, who immediately began to breathe deeply, his eyes shining as he stared at Immortal Bai Wuchen.

The second response was from Sha Jiudong. A tremor ran through him, and he almost seemed to change into a different person as he stared at Immortal Bai Wuchen. Although he concealed what he was feeling, his eyes were bloodshot, and he seemed to be profoundly shocked.

The third response naturally came from Jin Yunshan, who began to pant, his expression one of complete disbelief.

“You three will know shortly whether or not I’m telling the truth.” With that, she waved her hand, causing three jade slips to fly out, each one of which contained different sets of information. The Sect Leader and the others all caught them.

As soon as the jade slip landed in the Sect Leader’s hand, he studied it, and then his face darkened. After a moment, he took a deep breath, and something like a struggle could be seen in his eyes. Then the jade slip faded away, and his expression became very grim.

As for Sha Jiudong, when he finished looking at the jade slip, he didn’t say a word. However, his eyes seemed more bloodshot than before, and even radiated a rapturous glow.

Then there was Jin Yunshan, who gripped the jade slip so hard that veins popped out on his hand.

“Fellow Daoists,” Bai Wuchen said, “would the three of you please assist me? As for all those ghosts he’s called, I have a way to neutralize them for two hours.” Bai Wuchen looked expectantly at the three other Paragons, certain that they would be moved by her offer. She had planned long and hard to get the mirror shard, and had spared no cost in her efforts. Originally, she had prepared those jade slips to prevent them from fighting with her over the mirror shard.

But Meng Hao had changed everything, and she was now forced to do things a bit ahead of schedule.

After finishing speaking, she clasped hands and bowed. Without waiting for a response from the other three, she turned to leave. In her heart, she was completely and utterly convinced that they would agree to help her deal with Meng Hao.

After she left, Sha Jiudong was the first to take to flight, his eyes bloodshot, his killing intent rising rapidly.

The next was Jin Yunshan, veins still pulsing on his hand, but face expressionless.

Finally was the Sect Leader. He took a deep breath, and the brightness in his eyes faded a bit. His expression turned cold, and he murmured, “Please forgive me, Fellow Daoist Meng….”

With that, his energy began to rise, and he flew in pursuit of the others.

The group of three went with Bai Wuchen in pursuit of Meng Hao, who had already caught sight of the location which was his destination, not too far off in the distance.

It was a desert, the sands of which were being whipped into a frenzy by a gusting wind. As he neared, Meng Hao took a deep breath, then waved both of his hands out in front of him, simultaneously unleashing divine will.

As the countless ghosts began to spread out to lock the area down, the excitement and anticipation in Meng Hao’s face grew.

He waved his hand toward the desert, and a boom echoed out. As everything shook, the sand began to churn, slowly gathering together to form a mountain.

As the mountain took shape, the desert itself shrank. The sand mountain reached higher and higher into the sky, touching clouds. Soon, the desert was no more.

Revealed in front of Meng Hao was a stretch of ruins which had been buried underneath the desert. And in the middle of those ruins was a lake!

A closer inspection revealed that it was actually not a lake, but rather… a jagged shard of a mirror. However, it was so huge that at first glance it actually looked like a lake.

Meng Hao’s heart began to pound at the sight of the mirror shard. He thought of the parrot, of the copper mirror, and of many other things. Taking a deep breath, he reached out and made a grasping motion.

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# Chapter 1471: Righteous Jin Yunshan!

In almost the exact same instant that Meng Hao was reaching out to grab the mirror shard, rumbling sounds could be heard outside of the desert as Bai Wuchen, Sha Jiudong, the Sect Leader, and Jin Yunshan, four Potentates of Planet Vast Expanse, all attacked together!

Their combined attack caused intense, rumbling pressure. This was not the power of one attack, but numerous attacks combined. A mad tempest sprang up that, although it couldn't be said to be Transcendent, it was very close!

A slashing force like that wasn't capable of shaking the entire sea of ghosts, but it was so sharp that it could slice right through it.

The combined attack of the four powerful experts was like a blade slicing through bamboo, pushing ever closer toward the desert area.

Meng Hao ignored the rumbling sounds, and slowly closed his hand. The mirror shard flew toward him, shrinking down at the same time, until it was the size of a finger.

It looked ordinary, like nothing special at all. However, it was possible to detect that this object far exceeded even the most precious of treasures: it held faint traces of the aura of Transcendence.

As soon as Meng Hao touched it, he could sense what were apparently faint pulses of sealing power on the mirror shard, causing him to smile thoughtfully.

This mirror shard had numerous uses, and whoever acquired it would have to research it deeply to ascertain them. Except for Meng Hao. To him, uses which could be determined by means of research were all incorrect as far as he was concerned!

Only Meng Hao could use the mirror shard for its intended purpose. After all, the shard had once been part of the copper mirror, and that copper mirror… recognized Meng Hao as its owner!

Even though he had lost the mirror, and the parrot had erased its mind, that couldn't change one important fact…. Meng Hao was the master of the copper mirror during this era!

Neither Heaven nor Earth could change that.

Meng Hao looked at the mirror shard, gathered his divine sense, and then performed an incantation gesture with his left hand, pushing down onto the shard.

As he did, he forced a drop of blood out of the tip of his finger. When it merged into the mirror shard, his mind trembled, and he felt as if his consciousness were inside of the shard itself. Everything around him was rumbling. However, it was in this moment that he suddenly realized that there were certain fluctuations which he could sense, somewhere outside of the necropolis.

They were very faint, but they were there. Meng Hao instantly recognized that they were… the fluctuations of the copper mirror, and the aura of the parrot!

He shivered, and began to breathe deeply. He tried to issue a calling, but the mirror shard wasn't powerful enough. A few tests all failed.

"Only one shard isn't enough. If I can collect all the shards, though, I will definitely be able to summon the mirror!" His eyes shone with a bright light. Taking a deep breath, he ceased his attempts to call out to the copper mirror, and instead looked around quietly.

Gradually, his eyes began to shine brightly as he realized that within the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, there were eight locations which all had auras that tugged at him!

One of them was the copper mirror itself, which was the furthest away from him. It was so far that its specific location was difficult to determine. As for the other seven locations, he could sense exactly where they were, even the ones which were far away.

“I found one of the mirror shards in the Mountain and Sea Realm,” he murmured. “At that time, my cultivation base wasn’t strong enough to detect the location of the other shards.” Using his divine sense, he was able to stare directly at… the closest of the mirror shards. 1

It was so close, he was almost right on top of it.

“No wonder she knew about the mirror shard,” he thought. “So that’s how it is. She actually has one of the other shards!” His eyes glittered brightly as he realized that the nearest of the other seven mirror shards was right here on the third land mass, within the sea of ghosts, in the hands of… Bai Wuchen!

Almost in the same moment that he sent his divine sense into the mirror shard, rumbling sounds filled the air as four people appeared, shooting toward him like lightning.

They attacked with full power, blasting through the sea of ghosts and appearing near the desert and Meng Hao. As Meng Hao turned around to face them, they saw the mirror shard in his hand.

In the moment that Bai Wuchen realized what had occurred, her pupils constricted, and she shot toward him, energy surging.

“Please don’t take offense, Ninth paragon….” the Sect Leader said with a sigh. Clasping hands, he began to stride forward.

Sha Jiudong didn’t say anything, and as for Jin Yunshan, those veins were still bulging out, and his face was expressionless.

The Sect Leader was behind Bai Wuchen. Next to him was Sha Jiudong, and furthest in the back was Jin Yunshan. They were like four powerful arrows shooting toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao wasn’t too surprised to see all of them attacking. If he were Bai Wuchen, and was able to sense the mirror shard in the necropolis, then he would have made plenty of preparations, including a way to force the other peak 9-Essences Paragons to help.

“I’m not sure what you want these mirror shards for,” he said coolly, “but I have to thank you for saving me the trouble of finding yours.” His expression was the same as ever as he faced the four incoming Paragons. He waved his hand, causing the sea of ghosts to scream as they merged into a tempest that spread out to meet his four attackers.

Earlier, the group of four had attacked and dispersed only one part of the sea of ghosts which had been blockading the area. Now they were facing an attack from the combined power of all the ghosts, which was a force that was completely different than before.

As the sea of ghosts surged toward them, icy coldness froze up everything in the area. But then, a bright glimmer appeared in Bai Wuchen’s eyes. She grabbed out into the air and, all of a sudden, her own mirror shard appeared in her hand!

It was a bit bigger than the shard Meng Hao had acquired. As soon as it appeared, Bai Wuchen spit out some life force Essence aura onto it, then raised it above her head.

The mirror shard flickered brightly, shining with light that could shake Heaven and Earth. Everywhere it passed, the ghosts shivered, then suddenly stopped in place, blank expressions on their faces.

In the blink of an eye, the light had swept about in all directions, causing all of the ghosts to stop moving.

Blood sprayed out of Bai Wuchen’s mouth. Obviously, using the mirror shard in that way came at a heavy price. However, a moment later, she was charging toward Meng Hao again.

The Sect Leader began to stride forward silently, as did Sha Jiudong and Jin Yunshan. The entire group of four passed the motionless ghosts to head directly toward Meng Hao.

It almost looked like a scene in which Meng Hao was the guardian of the third land mass, and these four were invaders who had entered the place after untold hardship, and were now attempting to kill Meng Hao to win their prize.

“That’s not how to use the copper mirror shard,” Meng Hao said, his expression the same as ever. He looked up, clenching his right hand into a fist which he then punched out at Immortal Bai Wuchen.

He immediately resorted to the Devil-Butchering Fist, which contained the embodiment of the God-Slaying, Self-Immolation, and Life-Extermination fists within it. One massive fist strike shook Heaven and Earth, leaving everything trembling.

A huge boom rang out, and Immortal Bai Wuchen trembled. Blood oozed out of the corners of her mouth as she was shoved backward. However, Meng Hao was also forced back, his face flushed. As for Sha Jiudong, he transformed into a windstorm which then hurtled violently toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao snorted coldly, raising both hands up into the air. At the same time, he transformed into an azure roc which shot forward to meet Sha Jiudong. Massive booms echoed out as Sha Jiudong emerged from the sand, staggering backward several paces. Meng Hao also fell back, blood oozing out of his mouth. Then he looked up at the Sect Leader, who had mixed emotions on his face as he stabbed his finger toward Meng Hao’s forehead.

That finger attack was like the might of Heaven, causing incredible pressure to weigh down. However, in that same moment, Meng Hao performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, unleashing the Essence of the Eight Hex, space. Instantly, it was as if a separate world had been erected.

The Sect Leader’s finger clearly landed onto Meng Hao, and yet Meng Hao didn’t move a muscle. In contrast, the Sect Leader flew backward, face flickering as he waved his sleeve. As he dodged the Essence of space, he prepared to make another attack, when all of a sudden Jin Yunshan let out a piercing cry and shot violently toward Meng Hao.

Everyone assumed that he was just about to attack Meng Hao. But then, he suddenly spun in place. As he neared Meng Hao, he reached out toward the Sect Leader and then jerked his hands apart.

It was none other than his Heaven Ripping magic!

A boom rang out, and the Sect Leader frowned. His hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, causing powerful ripples to spread out in defense. The sudden change in the tide of battle was so startling that the Sect Leader had no choice but to suddenly back up. Sha Jiudong was also prevented from attacking, and Immortal Bai Wuchen was taken completely off guard.

“Jin Yunshan, are you crazy!?!?” she roared in rage. What she had offered Jin Yunshan earlier was so incredible that she had been certain he would be incapable of resisting.

“Nine Essences Redistillation Fruits might be rare in the Vast Expanse,” Jiu Yunhan said, “and if you had actually pulled one out and handed it over, I might have been impressed. But you only offered a lead on how to get one. Your information might be completely accurate, and maybe I really could find that Nine Essences Redistillation Fruit eventually, but… I’m not that kind of person! I’ve always been righteous, and I already made an agreement with Fellow Daoist Meng to cease hostilities. I take my promises seriously, so how could I possibly go back on my word!?” Jin Yunshan stuck his chin out, looking incredibly proud.

The truth was, he was cursing inside.

“You fool, Bai Wuchen,” he thought as he stood there next to Meng Hao. “Unless you’re absolutely certain of being able to kill Meng Hao, then, well fudge, considering his crazy personality, do you think he would ever let me get that Nine Essences Redistillation Fruit? In the cultivation world, promises are the least trustworthy of all things. I don’t know why the other two agreed with you. The Sect Leader has the Vast Expanse School, and Sha Jiudong is stubborn. But I, Jin Yunshan, am not easily fooled!”

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# Chapter 1472: That’s Not How To Use That Mirror Shard!

Immortal Bai Wuchen’s countless machinations hadn’t taken into consideration the indescribable level of fear Jin Yunshan felt because of Meng Hao.

Deep within his heart, he didn’t possess even the shred of a desire to provoke Meng Hao the lunatic.

It was as he had just said. If Bai Wuchen had actually offered him a Nine Essences Redistillation Fruit, he would have helped her immediately. However, a mere piece of information, no matter how certain it was, could not make him do anything to offend Meng Hao.

He had hesitated for a moment, a bit earlier. However, Meng Hao’s complete and utter calm despite the sea of ghosts being taken out of action left Jin Yunshan in a dilemma. Gritting his teeth, he had trusted his intuition regarding Meng Hao, and switched sides.

Nobody, not even Immortal Bai Wuchen, would have been able to guess that Meng Hao had frightened Jin Yunshan so deeply that he would do something like this. Meng Hao couldn’t help but look over at him in surprise.

Jin Yunshan looked askance at Meng Hao and said, “What are you looking at? Fellow Daoist Meng, don’t tell me you think I’m the backstabbing type? We had our agreement to cease hostilities, and my word is my bond. Nor will I flip out and lose my temper. When I say I’ll do something, then I’ll do it.”

He seemed quite proud, and he couldn’t conceal the bit of derision that had seeped into his tone.

Immortal Bai Wuchen’s face darkened, and Sha Jiudong sighed. The Sect Leader smiled wryly as he looked at Jin Yunshan.

Jin Yunshan cleared his throat as he continued to look over at Meng Hao.

“Fellow Daoist Meng, if you need direct assistance from me, we can discuss the matter. For the time being, I won’t get in the way of the other Fellow Daoists.” Jin Yunshan laughed heartily, then flew off to the side, acting as though he wouldn’t get involved no matter what happened.

He had chosen to switch sides, but there were different ways to switch sides. As long as he didn’t help Meng Hao fight, then Bai Wuchen and the Sect Leader, and even Sha Jiudong, wouldn’t be able to say anything.

Because of the current situation, he was now vastly more important to Meng Hao than before, and might even be able to determine whether Meng Hao survived the catastrophe which had struck him. Of course, Meng Hao would have to pay a price for that. On the other hand, if Bai Wuchen wanted to avoid a complete failure in her plan, she would also need to pay a price.

According to Jin Yunshan’s calculations, things might even develop in such a way that he wouldn’t help either side at all, but would still end up profiting from both sides. The best part of it all was that he would avoid doing anything whatsoever that Meng Hao might be offended by.

Having reached these conclusions, Jin Yunshan smiled proudly.

Immortal Bai Wuchen snorted coldly, ignoring Jin Yunshan and turning to the Sect Leader and Sha Jiudong.

“Fellow Daoists, as for the promises I made, I can swear a Dao oath that they are true!” As soon as the words left her mouth, the Sect Leader nodded, and Sha Jiudong’s eyes glittered with red light.

The three of them then once again went on the offensive. They shot toward Meng Hao, Bai Wuchen in the lead, with the other two coming from the opposite sides, completely locking him down.

Meng Hao's expression was calm as he looked at his three attackers. Even as they bore down on him, he pushed his hand out, and numerous mountains began to descend. Even as the mountains blocked his three opponents, Meng Hao's hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture. The Eighth Hex appeared. Then the Seventh, and the Sixth. They flew out in rapid succession. As Bai Wuchen and the other two dealt with the mountains, Meng Hao unleashed all of the Hexes down to the First.

"Eight Hexes, combine!" he said, eyes flashing. He performed an incantation gesture, and then waved both hands out in front of him. Instantly, the eight Hexing magics combined, transforming into numerous threads which became a huge net. That net then shot toward the group of three.

The Sect Leader frowned, performing a double-handed incantation gesture that caused the sky to grow dark. At the same time, a shocking mountain peak appeared, descending from the Heavens to hover above the Sect Leader's head.

"Cauldron Mountain Conjury!" he said in his ancient voice. Waving his hands, he caused the mountain to begin to grow rapidly, until it seemed to supercede Heaven and Earth. At the same time, it shot directly toward Meng Hao.

Meanwhile, Sha Jiudong began to spin in place, transforming into a raging sandstorm, inside of which could be seen a two-horned head. The head's eyes were crimson, and it let out a piercing shriek as it shot toward Meng Hao.

Immortal Bai Wuchen's eyes flickered. Hands flashing with an incantation gesture, her Essence power erupted out, causing all color in the world to be masked as fog billowed out.

Boundless, endless fog turned the entire world into a place of fog that sought to bore into every pore in Meng Hao's body.

Three peak 9-Essences cultivators were all attacking simultaneously, a majestic sight that caused Heaven and Earth to shake violently. Meng Hao was powerful, but not even he was a match for three peak 9-Essences experts. Blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth as he staggered backward. Killing intent gleamed in Immortal Bai Wuchen's eyes as she suddenly reached out and performed an incantation gesture, causing a mirror shard to appear.

The shard flickered dazzlingly, and a piercing beam of light suddenly shot out from it, stabbing through anything and everything as it headed toward Meng Hao.

Rumbling echoed out, and simultaneously, Meng Hao teleported, retreating a significant distance, where he stared at them coldly. At the same time, Jin Yunshan powered up his cultivation base, as if to remind Meng Hao of his presence. As long as both sides were relatively evenly matched, it was to his advantage to remain just as he was.

Meng Hao looked at him with an enigmatic smile, then turned away. From the beginning of the fight down to this moment, he hadn't shown the slightest sign of being ruffled, as if the battle was something he didn't even care about.

"I have to say that this is Meng Hao's first time fighting three peak 9-Essences cultivators at one time," he said coolly, referring to himself by name for the first time. "What a precious opportunity." He shook his head. "But now, it's time to end this farce."

He looked over at the Sect Leader, no killing intent in his gaze whatsoever; he could tell that the man was holding back. As for Sha Jiudong, however, he seemed to be attacking with as much madness at Immortal Bai Wuchen, and yet there were clues within his magical techniques regarding his true attitude.

Not even he wanted to push things to the extreme in this situation.

Immortal Bai Wuchen laughed coldly. “How arrogant! Let me tell you, if you don’t hand over that mirror shard, you will die beyond the shadow of a doubt!”

Her right hand flashed with an incantation gesture, and the mirror shard glittered again.

“That’s not how to use that mirror shard,” Meng Hao said coolly. It was his second time saying such a thing. The first time, Immortal Bai Wuchen hadn’t paid attention, but to hear him say it a second time left her heart pounding.

She wasn’t the only one. Both the Sect Leader and Sha Jiudong were starting to wonder why Meng Hao was so calm when facing all three of them in battle.

Even Jin Yunshan’s heart was starting to pound.

He waved his sleeve, and his own mirror shard appeared there in his hand. It floated up, radiating scintillating light, as if it were the most precious treasure in the entire world. “Let me show you the correct way to use a shard from the copper mirror.”

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# Chapter 1473: Because It’s Mine!

Meng Hao looked at his own mirror shard, his gaze somewhat tender as he recalled the copper mirror itself. He sent some divine will into the shard, and then, utilizing the same method he had used to control the copper mirror, caused a bright light to shine out of it that vastly exceeded the light from before.

It was like a tiny sun there in his hand, and it completely eclipsed the light from the mirror shard held by Immortal Bai Wuchen, becoming the most radiant thing in the entire world.

All other light became darkness in comparison, colorless and black. Everyone who could see the mirror shard was completely shocked by what was happening.

Bai Wuchen’s eyes widened. After working with her mirror shard for so many years, she had come to understand some of its properties, and was profoundly aware that the brighter it shone, the more power and pressure it would unleash.

Her heart began to pound, although on the outside, she attempted to maintain a calm front. However, before she could do so for very long, she saw that, unexpectedly, the mirror shard that Meng Hao held in his hand… was beginning to melt!

“What…?” Immortal Bai Wuchen’s mind began to spin. What was happening exceeded even her powers of imagination. She could never have guessed that the mirror shard would actually melt. She continued to watch in amazement as the melted mirror shard fused into Meng Hao’s right hand, spreading out to cover it, forming… a gauntlet!

It was pitch black, and appeared to part of a set of armor. There was something threatening about it, and it virtually burst with an aura of manic violence.

It was an aura that could shake Heaven and Earth, and at the same time, it seemed elated, as if it had been suppressed for countless years. Now that it could be out in the open, it was like a buried treasure which had finally been revealed to the light of day, to shine in all its glory.

Bai Wuchen stared in shock, as Meng Hao's previous words continued to echo in her mind.

"Have I been using it wrong?" she thought, her mind reeling. There was no time for her to contemplate how to react. Even as she prepared to steel herself and take action, her own mirror shard suddenly began to tremble, almost as if it were about to slip out of her control.

"This… this is impossible…." she said, her face ashen. She had studied the mirror shard for countless years to figure out how to use it in the way she did, and had always assumed she was using it correctly. But now, after seeing Meng Hao turn his mirror shard into a gauntlet, her mind was in chaos. "How… how did you…?"

Before she could finish speaking, Meng Hao calmly waved his hand. Rumbling sounds echoed out as the mirror shard hovering around Immortal Bai Wuchen, the mirror shard which she had possessed for countless years, suddenly began to shake. Then, it transformed into a beam of light as it severed its own connection to her and shot over to Meng Hao's side.

"NO!" she screamed. It was like an invisible fist slamming into her. Her face went pale white, and she coughed up a mouthful of blood. She simply couldn't accept what was happening. This was her precious treasure, her chance to return home, the object of all her hopes, something she had studied for years and years. In fact, in the past she had even been able to use the mirror shard to detect the presence of other mirror shards that were close by. But now… she found that everything she had come to understand about the shard had been mistaken.

The feeling she was experiencing was like that of raising a child to adulthood, only to find out later that the child was not even related by blood. Then that child ran off with its true family….

Bai Wuchen had even been able to sense the joy within the mirror shard, as if it were reuniting with a relative after years of wandering alone.

“Why is this happening?!?!” Bai Wuchen asked, glaring at Meng Hao with bloodshot eyes. Her hair was disheveled and she seemed to be slipping into a state of madness. Then she could only watch as her own mirror shard melted, merged into Meng Hao’s arm, and became a vambrace that covered his entire arm!

It was pitch black and radiated mysterious light, along with a shocking aura. Upon seeing the armor for the first time, Bai Wuchen, along with everyone else, was completely shaken.

The vambrace was covered with complicated, abstruse designs and cloud-like patterns. Based on the shocking aura of the armor, it almost seemed as if Meng Hao’s arm had somehow become connected to the world in some mysterious way.

As all of this happened, the ghosts which had been immobilized began to awaken. As they lifted their heads and looked at Meng Hao, they saw the armor he was wearing, and began to drop to their knees to kowtow.

The world went silent. All eyes were fixed on Meng Hao, or more accurately, on the armor which covered his arm and hand.

The Sect Leader took in a deep breath as he sensed the danger they were now in. Sha Jiudong’s pupils constricted, and the madness in his eyes was fading into a bright glow.

Only Immortal Bai Wuchen seemed incapable of accepting the sudden turn of events. Moments ago, she had held the upper hand in the battle, and had her mirror shard to rely on. But then, everything changed.

It was at this point that Meng Hao answered Bai Wuchen’s question.

“Because it’s mine,” he murmured. He looked down at the armor, and his gaze softened. The flicker of reminiscence could be seen in his eyes. When his words echoed out, Bai Wuchen heard them, and a tremor ran through her.

“That’s impossible!!” she shrieked, breaking the calm silence that had filled the area. She couldn’t accept what was happening, and as such, she lurched into motion, unleashing her cultivation base. The power of nine Essences exploded out, creating a mist that spread out to cover the entire world, then rumbled down toward Meng Hao.

She refused to yield, not even at this point, not even when her mirror shard had been taken by Meng Hao. She would still risk everything!

“Sect Leader. Fellow Daoist Sha. Please help me one last time!” Her tone was shrill, even pleading. The Sect Leader sighed, then stepped forward, transforming into a beam of light that shot through the Essence mist created by Bai Wuchen.

Then there was Sha Jiudong. He gritted his teeth, then began to spin in place, becoming a tempest that also merged into the mist. The shocking combination of all three of these powerful experts became a destructive attack that bore down on Meng Hao, causing everything in the area to quake violently.

Meng Hao looked up, eyes flickering. His desire to fight suddenly skyrocketed, and he blurred into motion, appearing directly in front of the group of three.

Then, he clenched his hand into a fist, whereupon cloud-like ripples began to spread out. The fist seemed slow, but apparently, Bai Wuchen and the others simply couldn’t dodge it. It was as if… the instant he punched out, the blow had already landed onto the Essence mist!

The mist rumbled as though a stormwind had blasted through it. It began to seethe, and booms could be heard. The mist was swept away, evaporated, revealing Bai Wuchen, who coughed up a mouthful of blood. At the same time, Meng Hao took another step forward, unleashing another fist strike at the Sect Leader.

He didn’t actually strike the Sect Leader himself, but unleashed the power of the fist right in front of him. A boom could be heard, and a massive blast of wind surged out, causing the Sect Leader’s face to flicker. At first he thought he might be able to use some divine abilities to fight back, but then he simply sighed with the realization that there was little to be done now. Instead, he took advantage of the force of the blow to fly backward, leaving the way open for Meng Hao.

Meng Hao strode forward again, turning to look at Sha Jiudong in the sandstorm. Sha Jiudong chose to do the same as the Sect Leader, and quietly backed up, sighing with the realization that he simply couldn’t fight back.

After the Sect Leader and Sha Jiudong retreated, Meng Hao appeared in front of Immortal Bai Wuchen herself, and once again threw out a punch.

Massive rumbling filled the air as the blow slammed into her torso. Cloud-like fluctuations emanated off of the armor, and Bai Wuchen coughed up a mouthful of blood, then tumbled backward like a kite with its string cut, cracking sounds filling the air the entire time. She was unable to stop at first, and coughed up more blood as she continued to fall back. Then, she finally came to a stop 3,000 meters away, where she looked up, face pale. Finally, she coughed up a third mouthful of blood.

Her aura was in chaos, as though something inside of her was reversing her flow of qi and blood. She held nothing back in an attempt to control the force, but that only resulted in more blood oozing out of the corners of her mouth.

The Sect Leader’s eyes went wide, but he said nothing. Sha Jiudong subconsciously edged backward a bit, his eyes filled with shock.

As for Jin Yunshan, he sucked in a deep breath, and couldn’t help but think to himself that he really had made the right decision earlier.

“Like I said earlier, this farce is over,” Meng Hao said coolly. He waved his sleeve, and the howling ghosts in the area began to swirl around him. They transformed into an invisible vortex which spread out in all directions. 50 kilometers. 500 kilometers. 5,000 kilometers. 50,000 kilometers. 500,000 kilometers…. It eventually stretched out so far in every direction that it seemed endless.

Meng Hao was in the very center, like a divine being within the world.

The pressure radiating off of him exploded out, supplanting the pressure of Heaven, covering the entire world. The sea of ghosts also emitted pressure, which combined with Meng Hao’s, causing the ground to quake, as though the entire world, as if all Heaven and Earth, were prostrating in worship to Meng Hao.

Jin Yunshan’s face fell, and he backed up, rotating his cultivation base. The Sect Leader sighed, clasped hands, and bowed to Meng Hao. Then he made a grasping motion, causing a bag of holding to appear, which he placed down onto the ground and then backed up. After retreating a certain distance, he rotated his cultivation base to protect himself from the intense pressure.

Sha Jiudong also sighed, then produced a bag of holding, placed it onto the ground, and backed up.

Their stance in the matter was clear. Not only had they held back earlier during the fight, they now also offered compensation. In their estimation, Meng Hao would not push the matter to the bitter end.

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# Chapter 1474: A Long, Long Path….

They were correct. Meng Hao had his way of doing things, and after glancing at the Sect Leader and Sha Jiudong, he nodded slightly, waved his sleeve, and collected the two bags of holding. Then he looked over at Bai Wuchen.

Her lips were still smeared with blood, and her face was ashen. She stood there trembling, a bitter expression on her face as she looked, not at Meng Hao, but off into the distance. Her mood couldn't be lower.

She had been completely and utterly defeated. All of her plans, all of her preparations, were like nothing when it came to Meng Hao's spectacular power.

Although she didn't want to admit it, she knew deep in her heart that what Meng Hao had said was no lie. The mirror shard really did belong to him. If it didn't, then the shard, which she had studied so deeply for so many years, would never have undergone the fantastic transformations it just had.

She also understood even more deeply that her defeat had resulted in her losing not only the mirror shard, but her path home.

"I can't go back now…" she murmured bitterly. "Not unless I Transcend…. But Transcendence is so difficult. I won't even be able to succeed with all nine of the altars here in the necropolis. Even using Patriarch Vast Expanse's Dao altar might not work." The entire reason she had been able to coerce the Sect Leader into helping her was by offering him a clue about Patriarch Vast Expanse's Dao altar.

She knew that because of the techniques she cultivated, Transcendence would be especially difficult for her, far more difficult than it was for the average person. Most importantly, she had been waiting far longer than anyone else. She was one of the first people to descend to Planet Vast Expanse from the Vast Expanse Society.

She had been inside the starry sky of the Vast Expanse for far too long. She wanted to go back, to return home, to leave this place. The power of the mirror shard, and the Transcendent will it contained, led her to the conclusion that it could cut open the Vast Expanse. Furthermore, the more mirror shards she could collect, the more likely it was that, even without a Transcendent cultivation base, she could still leave the starry sky of the Vast Expanse.

“I just want to go home….” she murmured bitterly. “I just want to leave here, to go back to my home outside the Vast Expanse….” The Sect Leader stood there quietly, and Sha Jiudong sighed inwardly. Mixed emotions could be seen on Jin Yunshan’s face.

“Outside the Vast Expanse?” Meng Hao asked suddenly, looking over at her.

“What is outside of the Vast Expanse? A world like the starry sky inside?” It was a question Meng Hao had pondered ever since his experience under the surface of the first land mass of the necropolis. In the visions he had experienced, he had gone outside of the Vast Expanse, and had seen nothing but desolate emptiness. It was empty, devoid of life. There was nothing there except the five enormous pillars. 1

There definitely hadn’t been any Vast Expanse Society!

Back then, Meng Hao had begun to wonder if the supposed origin of the Vast Expanse School, the so-called Vast Expanse Society, might be… nothing more than a sham. In that case, perhaps the world outside of the Vast Expanse, the place where Transcendent cultivators could go to… was also a sham.

“Outside the Vast Expanse is my home,” Bai Wuchen said quietly. “It’s a flourishing place that the Vast Expanse can’t even compare to. Outside, there is no mist, only a dazzling starry sky, and one planet after another after another, filled with life.

“Immortal spirit aura is thick and abundant there. What we have here can’t even compare. Here, we are like poor beggars!” Although her words were simple, as she spoke, her eyes shone brightly. In Meng Hao’s mind, he could almost imagine the celestial utopia she described, and although it was completely different from what he had seen outside the Vast Expanse, his eyes glittered nonetheless. As he looked around, he realized that the Sect Leader, Sha Jiudong, and even Jin Yunshan all seemed to be lost in their memories, just like Bai Wuchen was.

Meng Hao’s scalp began to tingle. Inside of him was the remnant of the true Ninth Paragon’s soul, which he had long since Soulsearched. At that time, he hadn’t found any memories regarding what was outside the Vast Expanse. It was as if those memories were sealed, and could not be accessed.

“What exactly is outside the Vast Expanse?” he thought. “Is it like Bai Wuchen described, or is it like what I saw?” His eyes flickered as he once again looked over at Immortal Bai Wuchen. Despite the fact that she had tried to kill him, she still cut a very lamentable figure.

She wanted to return to her home, just like Meng Hao wanted to return to his….

He sighed and looked away, transforming into a beam of light that shot off into the distance, accompanied by the ghosts.

Meng Hao had accomplished his goal in coming to the necropolis; he had acquired the copper mirror shard. In fact, he had actually acquired two of them. There was now no reason for him to stay behind. He would leave the necropolis and return to Planet Vast Expanse. Then he would follow the tug of the mirror shards he possessed to find the other six!

“Once I find them, I can call out to the copper mirror, and summon it back from wherever it is!” The glow in his eyes shone brighter and brighter as he passed from the third land mass into the second, and then finally reached the first. He crossed the bridge of flesh and blood, went through the perimeter region, and finally, stepped into the teleportation portal that was the exit. There, he stopped and looked back.

As he gazed out at the distant ninth land mass, he could just barely make out that enormous throne, and the blurry figure sitting upon it, who seemed to be looking at him.

With that, he turned and stepped into the teleportation portal.

After Meng Hao left, the Sect Leader and the others stood there silently for a moment, completely shaken. Having been defeated, Bai Wuchen’s only hope of returning to her home now rested with Transcendence. After revealing the information she had promised to the Sect Leader and Sha Jiudong, they proceeded to seek enlightenment on the Transcendence Daises of the second and third land masses. When the time came, they would seek to survive the apocalypse on the third land mass using the turtle shell.

The paths being tread were different, and thus the choices were also different. To Meng Hao, the Transcendence Daises in the necropolis were useless at the moment. Only after he successfully formed the Ninth Hex could he return, then try to make it to the ninth altar. Then, he could dispel the mists, and use the power of the altar to combine the nine Hexes.

As for the Sect Leader and the others, their cultivation bases were already at the pinnacle, which left them with only a single direction to follow: Transcendence. It might be difficult, but as long as the slightest possibility of success remained, they would not give up.

Back on the half-planet, Meng Hao stepped out of the teleportation portal, his hair floating around him. A thoughtful expression could be seen on his face as his third eye closed, reverting into nothing more than a violet mark on his forehead.

Then, he flickered into motion, returning to his secluded meditation facilities in Ninth Paragon City. There, he extended his right hand, causing the two mirror shards to float up in front of him.

Next, he sent some divine sense into the shards, and was immediately able to sense seven different locations in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse. One of them was the copper mirror, the position of which he couldn’t lock down definitively. However, the other six locations were quite the opposite; he could determine exactly where they were.

He tried summoning the copper mirror. While it was true that two mirror shards were more powerful than one, they still weren’t powerful enough to succeed in that. He would definitely need more shards.

“My clone is already on the right track,” he thought. “The moment he enters the Dao Realm, he’ll be able to fully form the first of the nine sealing marks.” His clone’s experience in the Vast Expanse Shrine had actually changed Meng Hao’s plans. However, he still wasn’t completely certain about the matter, and needed to wait until the first sealing mark was complete before making a final decision.

“Since that’s the case, there’s no reason for me to stay here in the Vast Expanse School.” Eyes flickering with bright light, he decided to leave. He would journey into the starry sky and follow the pull of the copper mirror shards, to collect the remaining six.

“A long, long path….” he thought. He could sense that the six mirror shards were scattered in a variety of locations throughout the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, and that it wouldn’t be easy to gather them together. It wasn’t something that could be accomplished in a short amount of time either.

After a moment of thought, a profound look could be seen in his eyes. He sent out some divine will, which was immediately detected by his subordinates, the 7-Essences and 8-Essences Paragons.

Meng Hao wasn’t sure how long he would be gone, and there were many responsibilities to be handled while he was gone, including matters regarding the expansion of the Ninth Sect, as well as things pertaining to his clone. After making the relevant explanations and arrangements, he left.

A beam of light shot up, leaving the lands below, leaving Planet Vast Expanse, and entering the starry sky. There, he looked out at the Vast Expanse, his eyes flickering. Based on the tug he felt, he headed in the direction of the nearest mirror shard.

Before, it would have been very, very difficult for Meng Hao to attempt to track down all of the mirror shards. However, his cultivation base was now strong enough to fight with the peak of 9-Essences, and he also had two mirror shards that could transform into armor. With all that, he was confident that… other than a Transcendent cultivator, it would be easier to find a phoenix feather or a qilin horn than to find someone who could cause problems for him in a fight.

As his true self was leaving, his clone was sitting cross-legged in the Ninth Sect. After taking 1st place in the Vast Expanse Shrine, he had been named the Legacy disciple of the Ninth Sect, and was given a mountain peak which was superior in all terms, including the view and the amount of spiritual energy.

The entire mountain belonged to Meng Hao, and was protected by numerous restrictive spell formations. No one could possibly enter without his permission. Other than Meng Hao and Yan’er, the only people on the mountain were various servant cultivators who had been assigned to work for him.

Meng Hao’s performance in the Ninth Sect’s Vast Expanse Shrine, and the matter with the Tenth Heaven, had already become somewhat of a legend. Furthermore, all of the disciples of the Ninth Sect had come to view him with complete awe and reverence.

Even all of the Chosen felt that way.

In the few days which followed the event, a constant stream of visitors came to pay respects. At first he met them individually, but soon there were simply too many, and he finally announced that he would be going into secluded meditation to restore his cultivation base. After that, he entrusted outside affairs to Yan’er.

Yan’er had no option other than to accept the arrangement. In the following days, all her time was taken up with receiving visitors from the sect. At first she was excited about the matter. After all, Fang Mu’s rise to prominence meant that she instantly had a completely different status in the sect. Now she understood what it was like to be extremely popular.

She also was able to accept countless gifts, so many that they couldn’t fit into a single bag of holding.

However, her mood gradually soured as she realized that the majority of people coming to visit her Master were female cultivators. Furthermore, it seemed like each one was prettier than the last, and all of them were making discreet inquiries about her Master.

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# Chapter 1475: Marriage Alliance!

“A bunch of fawning sycophants!” she thought. “Hmph! I can’t believe so many girls like my Master, that old fogey. As his disciple, I definitely have to keep things under control!” Yan’er took her mission very seriously. She was often less than polite to the female disciples. She would accept their gifts, but when it came to their veiled inquiries about her Master, she didn’t even respond.

The more charming and pretty the girls were, the more hostile Yan’er got. Oftentimes, after such a female cultivator left, she would look miserably down at her own body, and even stare at her face in the mirror. Then she would stamp her foot and stalk over to Meng Hao’s secluded meditation facilities to yell at him from outside.

It was on one particular day that she stood there, fists on her waist, cursing Meng Hao. “Master, why don’t you act like the old man you are!? Look at you! Don’t you have anything better to do than challenge the Vast Expanse Shrine? Do you know how many manly visitors you’ve had recently, all throwing themselves at you? Well, do you?!”

Meng Hao opened his eyes, looked out at the infuriated Yan’er, and smiled, somewhat curious about what she had just said.

“Manly?”

“Yeah. Manly women. Stout and sturdy, each and every one of them, all pimply-faced too. Women are supposed to have lovely voices right? But not them. If you want, I can bring them all over to see you here.” With that, she glared at the door of the meditation chamber. If Meng Hao dared to agree to such an offer, she would probably bite his head off like a vicious tiger.

A strange expression could be seen on Meng Hao's face. Clearing his throat, he yelled, "Get back to cultivating. I've taught you a lot of divine abilities and Daoist magics. There's the Dao of Reincarnation, the Heavengod Magic, and the Mountain Consuming Incantation. You never got them down right, so stop wasting time and get to work, alright?"

Then he closed his eyes and went back to meditating.

Yan'er snorted dramatically. Seeing that her Master was just going to continue on with cultivation, she stamped her feet and glared at the door one more time, then turned and walked away.

"Bad Master! Stinky Master! Crotchety old fogey! Shameless fossil!! Hmph! Mountain Consuming Incantation? Heavengod Magic? Dao of Reincarnation? I mastered all of those a long time ago. He's just coming up with excuses!" As she muttered to herself, she walked past the mastiff, who was sleeping just outside of the courtyard. When the mastiff heard her muttering, it opened its eyes, listened for a moment, then quickly closed its eyes and pretended to continue sleeping.

Time passed. Eventually, the number of disciples coming to visit began to decline. Just when Yan'er was about to breathe a sigh of relief, though, people from cultivator clans outside of the Vast Expanse School started to show up. There were quite a few of them, many of whom offered gifts in the form of beautiful servant girls. Yan'er was about to go mad, even more so than before.

Most intolerable was that, unexpectedly, there were some people who came to propose marriage alliances….

On one particular day, the 7-Essences Paragon who had helped Meng Hao during his tribulation brought a group of people to Meng Hao's mountain peak. Among that group was another 7-Essences Paragon. As the two Paragons chatted, they were followed closely by a young woman.

She carried herself gracefully, and was spectacularly beautiful. Although she had a somewhat arrogant look to her, she didn't seem to pleased to be here. However, she followed along as the two Paragons led her up the mountain.

“Yan’er, hurry and call your Master out,” said the Ninth Sect Paragon, smiling. To him, Meng Hao was a very important person, and since Yan’er was his disciple, it was only natural that he speak respectfully to her.

Yan’er wasn’t too pleased with the situation. She looked at the two Paragons, then the young woman, and her heart began to pound. Of all the women she had seen recently, this girl was definitely the most beautiful.

Furthermore, her cultivation base was extraordinary, being in the early Ancient Realm.

For some reason, Yan’er started getting nervous. She nodded and ran over to Meng Hao’s secluded meditation facilities, only to find that he had already emerged. If anyone else had come to visit, he would have refused to see them, but this particular Paragon had been of significant help during his tribulation, and he definitely couldn’t refuse him.

Taking Yan’er with him, he headed to the audience hall, where the Ninth Sect Paragon laughed heartily upon catching sight of him.

“Fang Mu, please offer formal greetings to Paragon Streamcloud from the Third Sect.”

The Paragon from the Third Sect looked closely at Meng Hao, obviously measuring him up. Then he smiled. Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he clasped hands and bowed.

After all the introductions were made, everyone sat down and began to chat. The beautiful young woman occasionally looked over at Meng Hao, her expression one of contempt, although she did a fairly good job of covering it up.

Yan’er sat next to Meng Hao, her dislike for the young woman growing by the moment. Then she heard the visiting Paragon explain that this girl was one of the Vast Expanse School’s Holy Daughter-designates, and that he wanted her and Meng Hao to become Daoist partners. Yan'er couldn't control herself. Her mind spinning, she subconsciously blurted, "No way! My Master doesn't need a Daoist partner!"

As soon as the words left her mouth, she suddenly shivered, and her face drained of blood. She looked over at Meng Hao and immediately dropped to her knees to kowtow, heart filled with regret. She had no idea why she had suddenly blurted what she had, and was suddenly very nervous that she might have angered her Master.

"Master, my… my mistake…."

The Ninth Sect Paragon frowned, but before he could say anything, Paragon Streamcloud snorted, and his eyes turned cold. As for the Holy Daughter-designate, the scorn in her eyes deepened.

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever. The arrival of these two Paragons hadn't ruffled him at all, and as for the matter of Daoist partnership, it was nothing surprising. His clone was incredibly famous in the Vast Expanse School, and was considered a Chosen among Chosen, the future pillar of the sect.

It was to be expected that people would propose marriage alliances and Daoist partnerships.

However, after hearing Yan'er's reaction, he couldn't hold back from smiling. He looked over at her, his expression warm, then flicked his sleeve to indicate that she should cease kowtowing.

"What mistake?" he said softly. "I never said you made any mistake." When she saw the kindness in his gaze, her heart shivered, and strange, warm emotions suddenly flooded through her.

With that, Meng Hao turned to the two Paragons, clasped hands and said, "Seniors, I'm indebted to you for the kindness you've shown. Truly, I'm very touched. However, I, Fang Mu, truly have no need of a Daoist partner."

“This….” The Ninth Sect Paragon frowned and looked over at Meng Hao. However, he could tell that his mind had been made up, and the Paragon had no desire to try to force the sect’s most important Chosen to do anything. Then he looked over at Yan’er, and recalled the warmth in Meng Hao’s gaze, and suddenly everything clicked. A strange expression appeared on his face.

Paragon Streamcloud’s expression was very grim. He, Paragon Streamcloud, had already shown plenty of respect to this Fang Mu, and besides that, the young woman he had brought from his clan was a peerless beauty. Despite all that, Fang Mu unexpectedly refused the offer.

Pressure instantly began to weigh down in the room. Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever, but Yan’er looked frightened.

With a cold snort, Paragon Streamcloud turned and clasped hands to the Ninth Sect Paragon. Then he flicked his sleeve and turned to leave. As for the young woman, she ceased any attempt to conceal the scorn on her face. As she turned to leave, her expression was one of disdain.

Just as she was about to walk out the door, she looked back and muttered, “Illicit Master and apprentice romance. How utterly disgusting.”

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# Chapter 1476: Of Course!

The words “illicit Master and apprentice romance” immediately caused Yan’er to shiver. Her face was completely ashen as she staggered backward a few steps.

The second half of what the young woman had said, “utterly disgusting”, was like a hammer blow to the pit of Yan’er’s stomach. Her mind was reeling; it was as if her most secret and hidden feelings had suddenly been dramatically revealed to everyone, as though things which had confused even her were now being proclaimed loudly for everyone to hear. It made Yan’er feel as if Heaven and Earth were suddenly spinning in reverse. She even coughed up a mouthful of blood.

“You….” she said, her vision swimming as she visibly shook. She simply didn’t know what to say.

In the instant that the words left the young woman’s mouth, a grim expression overtook Meng Hao’s face. He rose to his feet, and suddenly, incredible pressure exploded out, engulfing the young woman.

At the same time, Meng Hao took a step forward. When his foot landed, lands shook and mountains were rocked. The Holy Daughter-designate’s face fell; she had assumed Meng Hao was a soft and warm person, but in the blink of an eye, he had become like a vicious wild beast. His gaze, his energy, the pressure radiating off of him, made her feel as if she were about to be torn to pieces. Instantly, she began to tremble inwardly, and her scalp felt as if it would explode.

Paragon Streamcloud also frowned, and extended his hand as if to block Meng Hao’s way. However, in that exact moment, Meng Hao looked over at him and said, “Do you truly dare to block my way?!”

One gaze and one sentence from the mouth of an Ancient Realm cultivator was being used to threaten a 7-Essences Paragon. Anyone who saw this happening would find it inconceivable. It was an act of utter conceit, of complete audacity. It was like a praying mantis trying to stop a war chariot!

However, in that instant in which Meng Hao looked at him, Paragon Streamcloud felt something strange and mysterious rumbling inside his mind. It was something threatening, although it wasn’t coming from Meng Hao’s cultivation base. He felt a sensation of deadly crisis that caused all the hair on his body to stand on end, as though Meng Hao’s gaze contained some mysterious, unfathomable power. It was the kind of power that one felt when one’s superior was staring you in the eye.

It was very natural, completely lacking pretense and affectation, as though the person staring at him truly was the most powerful of experts. Even Streamcloud, a 7-Essences Paragon, felt like a weakling!

Even as his mind was sent reeling by a single glance Meng Hao’s words entered his ears. They should be words that could be considered the biggest joke in the world. And yet, although Streamcloud got the feeling that this person was completely mad… he also felt thoroughly shaken.

“How is this even possible!?” he thought. His mind was in chaos, and he felt so ashamed he was about to fly into a rage. Anyone with his position would feel the same way in such circumstances. However, even as his eyes flickered with coldness and he prepared to do something to Meng Hao, the Ninth Sect’s 7-Essences Paragon snorted coldly and stepped forward to block his path.

A boom rang out, and the two of them backed away from each other. The Ninth Sect’s Paragon then spoke in a coldly sinister voice that echoed out in all directions.

“Fellow Daoist Streamcloud. What exactly did this disciple of your Third Sect mean just now? We’re in the Ninth Sect at the moment, so you had better be prepared to give us a good explanation!” The Ninth Sect’s Paragon was infuriated. The fact that no marriage alliance had been formed didn’t really matter. This disciple couldn’t possibly have said what she had said by accident; it was clearly an intentional insult. Whether or not what she said was true, Fang Mu had an illustrious name and position, yet she had openly condemned him, and had used vile and biting words to do so.

The Ninth Sect Paragon's heart burned with rage, and he bitterly regretted taking the initiative to invite Paragon Streamcloud for a visit.

Meanwhile, Meng Hao looked away from Paragon Streamcloud and strode up to the Holy Daughter-designate, who was edging backward. The pressure weighing down on her only continued to grow more intense. With a muffled squeak, she began performing an incantation gesture to try defend herself. As for Meng Hao, his face was extremely grim as he reached his hand back and slapped the girl across the face.

A smacking sound rang out, and the girl screamed. A huge welt rose up on her cheek, and she even flew off the ground from the force of the blow.

Before she could land, Meng Hao's fury at her insult caused him to unleash another slap. Another smacking sound rang out from the other side of the girl's face. Blood sprayed out of her mouth, and she screamed again. By now her face was in a sorry state, and completely spattered in blood.

"Get the hell out of here, NOW!" he roared, eyes flickering with killing intent. Despite how vile the young woman's words were, with his true self out of the sect, Meng Hao knew that if he killed her, it would start a war between the Third and Ninth Sects.

However, it wouldn't do to just let things drop, so even as the words left his mouth, he crushed the young woman's Dao heart, planting a seed of fear inside of her.

Paragon Streamcloud tried to stop it from happening, but the Ninth Sect Paragon prevented him. Their clash caused a huge boom to echo out, after which the Ninth Sect Paragon's face turned very grim, and he echoed Meng Hao's words.

"Get the hell out of here, NOW!"

The Ninth Sect's power had been rising ever since Meng Hao became the Ninth Paragon, and its forces were tougher. A cold gleam could be seen in the eyes of the Ninth Sect Paragon, and he followed up with, "If I hear any word of this spreading, or hear about you defaming the name of the Ninth Sect's qilin son, then our two sects will definitely be having a war."

Paragon Streamcloud could merely chuckle coldly. There was little else to say, considering that everything that had just occurred resulted from an insult on the part of his own clan member.

Glaring spitefully at the young woman, he grabbed her and then shot off in a beam of prismatic light.

After they were gone, things were peaceful and quiet again. The 7-Essences Paragon hesitated for a moment, smiling wryly at Meng Hao. Then he looked over at Yan'er, who stood there head bowed, speechless.

After a moment of thought, he looked back at Meng Hao and said, "Fang Mu, you have an apprentice with a lot of latent potential there. You know, in all my years of cultivation, I've never had my own personal disciple. What do you say if I take the girl as my apprentice?"

His words caused Yan'er to shiver.

Meng Hao shook his head, his gaze resolute. "Many thanks for your good intentions, Paragon."

The Paragon looked at Meng Hao and sighed inwardly. Without another word, he turned and left.

The mountain peak was very quiet now, except for the whispering of the wind. Meng Hao walked over to Yan'er and bopped her head. Expression warm, he said, "Why are you so upset? She ran her mouth and so I slapped her a couple times. It's over now. My murderous aura crushed her Dao heart, and she won't ever dare to make irresponsible remarks ever again. If you still feel like venting, then focus on your cultivation, and you'll be able to go take care of her yourself one day."

Yan’er bowed her head. Placing her hands on her cheeks, she looked up at him through fluttering eyelashes, embarrassed and unsure of what exactly to say.

“Master, I….” She knew that she should say something, she just couldn’t find the words.

Meng Hao smiled and bopped her on the head again. “Alright, alright. Why don’t you go prepare some spirit fruit, Master is getting a bit hungry.”

Then he headed back toward his secluded meditation facilities.

Yan’er stood there for a moment, a blank expression on her face. Finally, she stamped her foot. Rubbing the sore spot where he had bopped her head, she hurried off to prepare some spirit fruit.

Before long, dusk had fallen. Gradually, the light faded from the sky, and the moon rose. Moonlight flowed across the landscape like water, and although everything looked like it usually did, there was a lonely beauty to it that usually wasn’t seen.

Yan’er had just arrived at Meng Hao’s secluded meditation facilities. When she placed the spirit fruit in front of him, he opened his eyes and smiled at her. Seeing the confused blankness in her expression, he couldn’t help but sigh.

“Yan’er,” he said softly. She seemed to be in such a daze that she didn’t even hear him.

“Yan’er!” he repeated, even louder this time.

“Huh?” she replied, looking up at him.

He sighed again. After a moment of silence, he stood and walked to the doorway, where he looked up at the night sky, and the moon.

“Yan’er,” he said softly, “do you remember when you were young, and I brought you here to the sect?”

“I remember….” she said, recalling the scene. She remembered that back then, she had suspected her Master of being a fraud, a belief that had persisted for some time even after arriving in the sect. Now that she thought back to the matter, she couldn’t help but smile. As the moonlight fell upon her young face, she seemed even more beautiful than ever.

Meng Hao looked at her, and then said, “Master is going to tell you a story.”

His gaze was soft, and seemed to contain many memories, memories from a time long before young Yan’er had even been alive. That was because he was about to tell her a story that came from far, far back in the stream of time.

“Once upon a time, there was a place called the Mountain and Sea Realm, where there was a heavenly body known as Planet South Heaven….”

“On Planet South Heaven there was a place called Mount Daqing….”

“…. That young man joined the Reliance Sect, and met a Chosen there named Wang Tengfei.”

“…. And that was the first time he ever saw her. At that time, she was Wang Tengfei’s fiancee.”

“…. That roc was so huge that when it flew, it filled the sky. It created a huge windstorm that swept her up along with him. They ended up inside a forbidden volcano together….”

“In the Violet Fate Sect, they became fellow disciples….”

“On the day he got married, she stood next to his wife looking at him, thinking that he didn’t notice her….”

“Later, she left with her Master Pill Demon, and went to the Kunlun Society….”

“In the Windswept Realm, she damaged her own soul to help him. She paid the ultimate price, and yet had no regrets….”

“He came to the Kunlun Society and saw her corpse. Then he used a timeshift magic to find her soul. On that day, his heart broke….”

“He searched for her in the Eighth Mountain and Sea, but was unable to find her…. However, he knew that he owed her the debt of a lifetime….” Meng Hao told Yan’er the entire story. It took a long, long time. He spoke through the entire night, and it wasn’t until the sun began to rise that he finally finished.

At the beginning, Yan’er listened a bit absent-mindedly, but the longer the story went on, the more pain she felt inside, although she wasn’t sure why. It was as if there was something slowly awakening in her heart.

When Meng Hao finished the story, she simply sat there with a blank expression on her face. A long time passed….

Then she looked up and quietly asked, “Master, what was the name of the girl in the story?”

Meng Hao looked off into the sunrise and replied, “Her name was… Chu Yuyan.”

“Is there more to the story?” Yan’er asked.

Meng Hao sat there quietly for a moment, then nodded. “Do you want to hear it?”

Yan’er shivered, and didn’t say anything for a while. However, the confusion gradually faded from her eyes. Soon she looked like she always did, simple and carefree. She finally turned back to him and shook her head. “I don’t want to hear it now. But one day… if I do want to hear the rest of the story, will you tell it to me, Master?”

“Of course!”

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# Chapter 1477: Provoking the Ninth Sect

In the starry sky some distance away from Planet Vast Expanse, were three spinning vortexes. They maintained their position there, fixed for all eternity, radiating pulses of mysterious light.

The pulses of light were primarily dim and gray, as if they represented an aura of death. However, occasionally one could see radiant flashes of brightness meandering between the three vortexes.

Meng Hao’s true self hovered outside of the three vortexes, hair floating about him. He was miniscule in size compared to them, and yet his energy was mighty enough that he could stand as their equal. In fact, the vortexes even vibrated with hostility.

According to what Meng Hao could sense, this was one of the locations that housed a copper mirror shard. He opened his third eye, and instantly the fog that made up the vortexes was lifted, revealing the true nature of what was beneath.

He saw that inside the three vortexes were three worlds. There were no cultivators, only dangerous, deadly terrain and numerous beasts the likes of which he had never seen before. There were also a few extremely brutal auras which were comparable to the 9-Essences level.

The most shocking and powerful fluctuations came from the second portal. Some sort of ancient entity inside, the master of the place, who was at the peak of 9-Essences.

Closer examination revealed the source of those fluctuations: it was an enormous, planet-sized… basilisk lizard!

All of the lands of that world apparently existed on the surface of that basilisk, and according to what Meng Hao could sense, the copper mirror shard was inside its body!

His eyes glittered as he transformed into a beam of light that shot directly toward the giant basilisk in the second vortex.

Moments later, shocking booms echoed out into the starry sky.

Meanwhile, back on Planet Vast Expanse, Meng Hao’s clone was once again deep in secluded meditation. Yan’er was back to her old self, with no confusion or blankness because of what had occurred. She was as lively and energetic as ever, and continued to reject all of the female disciples who came to meet her Master.

However, when she was alone at night, she would look up at the moon and think about the story her master had told her about Chu Yuyan. The story stirred her heart, and gradually, was causing a resonance to form with her past life.

Time passed. Meng Hao’s clone received fewer and fewer visitors, finally giving Yan’er some time to practice cultivation. However, the fact that Meng Hao was the first person to summon the Tenth Heaven in the Vast Expanse Shrine incited challenges from the Chosen of the other sects.

Their method of issuing their challenge was simple. Instead of going to the Vast Expanse Shrines in their own sects, they came to the Ninth Sect.

In the Vast Expanse School, there was no rule preventing disciples from doing that. In fact, such things had occurred before in the past. However, it wasn’t common, and usually only happened under special circumstances.

After all, challenging the Vast Expanse Shrine in a rival sect was like knocking on someone’s door and then kicking them in the shin. It was essentially a blatant provocation.

However, the fact that Meng Hao had summoned the Tenth Heaven instigated a huge stir. The Chosen who qualified to be in the top 10 in all the other sects were only able to maintain their silence for a short time before exploding into action. Then, they marched into the ninth land mass… to challenge the Ninth Sect’s Vast Expanse Shrine.

From the very first day, the sound of bells began to ring out. Virtually every day following that, the same thing occurred; the bell toll of the Vast Expanse Shrine filled the air.

The Chosen from the other eight sects took turns. It started with the Third Sect, who sent eight people over. Each one of those eight fought their way into the top 100, and two of them made it into the top 10. The highest spot attained was only 4th place, but that was still in the top 10.

Next came the people from the Fourth Sect. Then the Second Sect, and the Fifth.

The result of having the Chosen from all those other sects challenge the Ninth Sect’s Vast Expanse Shrine was that of the top 30 spots, only six were held by disciples of the Ninth Sect!

But then the Sixth Sect came, after which the Seventh and Eighth Sects arrived. Then, those six spots became five.

The situation was still somewhat tolerable, but then the First Sect came, hell-bent on coming out on top. After their efforts, only four spots within the top 30 belonged to the Ninth Sect. In addition to that, numerous Heavens were summoned.

Although no one summoned the Tenth Heaven, only the Sixth, it was still a shocking development.

Of course, no one was able to take the 1st place spot from Meng Hao, but directly beneath him in the top 30 were numerous powerful experts from other sects. To the disciples of the Ninth Sect, it was a great humiliation, almost as if their sect were being trampled beneath the feet of others.

It all led to quite an uproar. There were many arguments, and soon anger boiled over to the point that small-scale conflicts erupted. However, the overall situation couldn’t be changed. Chosen from the other eight sects didn’t seem to care at all about their own Vast Expanse Shrines, and were instead obsessed with challenging the one in the Ninth Sect.

Gradually, months went by. Roughly nine hundred of the top 1,000 spots in the Ninth Sect came to be occupied by disciples from other sects. The Ninth Sect was left with only about one hundred spots.

The sect itself was powerless to do anything to stop the situation, short of physically preventing the other Chosen from coming. However, if they did that, it would seem like they were nervous, even fearful of the challenges being issued by the other sects’ Chosen.

Considering how powerful the Ninth Sect was at the moment, they would never deign do that. The Chosen of the Ninth Sect wouldn’t agree to something like that; they had their pride, after all.

Because of the challenges from the other Chosen, and the fact that their spots on the Vast Expanse Shrine were continuing to shrink, the Ninth Sect slipped into a state of frenzy.

Virtually all of the Chosen, and even the ordinary disciples, went all-out in their practice of cultivation. They took more outside missions and participated in more trials by fire. Only by increasing the levels of their cultivation base could they earn higher spots. As they grew stronger, it was without hesitation that they went on to re-challenge their own Vast Expanse Shrine.

It was as if all of the Chosen in the entire Vast Expanse School had picked the Vast Expanse Shrine in the Ninth Sect to be their joint trial by fire. Only by having their names on that list could they be truly illustrious.

The trend didn’t stop. A year later, the battleground among Chosen expanded to include the top 2,000 spots.

After another year, it was the top 3,000 spots.

The disciples of the Ninth Sect were fuming, and conflicts broke out constantly. During the three years which had passed, people often came to pay respects to Meng Hao and ask that he do something.

But Meng Hao was in secluded meditation and wouldn't take visitors. The disciples of the Ninth Sect could understand that, but it didn't stop the Chosen from the other sects from virtually going crazy. That was especially true of those who held spots in the Ninth Sect's top 3,000. As for the few hundred from the Ninth Sect who remained in that group, their madness also increased.

Rumors even started to spread that Fang Mu had only been trying to get famous. People claimed that what had happened three years before was a mere fluke, and that now he didn't dare to show his face.

At first, such rumors were only whispered here and there. But after two years passed, and the other sects occupied ninety percent of the top 10,000 spots on the Ninth Sect's Vast Expanse Shrine, the rumors raged like wildfire.

It got to the point that the entire Vast Expanse School was talking about the matter.

"What happened with Fang Mu that year was a quirk, that's all. He's been in secluded meditation for five years and has never come out. Obviously, our challenge has him scared and hiding!"

"Even if it wasn't a fluke, I heard that after he summoned the Tenth Heaven, he experienced a Tribulation. He probably got seriously injured…."

"I got my hands on some verified information that Fang Mu was injured so badly his cultivation base won't make any progress within a hundred years! In fact, it's even regressing!"

More and more rumors spread. The disciples of the Ninth Sect were so protective of Fang Mu's name that it even led to blows on some occasions. However, the Ninth Sect was only one of nine sects, so no matter what they did, it was impossible to sway the opinions of the Chosen of the entire Vast Expanse School.

Eventually, most people came to believe the rumors. At the same time, it became completely commonplace for the cultivators of the other sects to come to the Vast Expanse Shrine in the Ninth Sect to earn their name.

Another five years passed. Meng Hao had been in secluded meditation for ten years. The conflicts over the Ninth Sect's Vast Expanse Shrine had reached a boiling point. Of the top 30,000 names, only 4,000 belonged to the Ninth Sect.

Their own Vast Expanse Shrine had been occupied by others, leaving the disciples of the Ninth Sect feeling completely humiliated and in a state of madness. Shockingly, it reached the point where the top 10… contained only two Chosen from the Ninth Sect!

Other than Meng Hao in 1st place and another Chosen in 5th place, the rest of the spots were taken by Chosen from other sects!

The humiliation and the conflicts worsened.

And yet, the Paragons of the Ninth Sect and all the other sects didn't stop any of it from happening. As long as the conflicts didn't get too out of hand, then it was viewed as a way for the overall power of the Vast Expanse School to increase. That was especially true of the disciples of the Ninth Sect, who had produced far more Chosen in the past ten years because of that pressure.

Increasing numbers of disciples came to Meng Hao's mountain to try to persuade him to do something. At one point, more than 10,000 disciples all went at the same time.

Yan'er was very annoyed by everything that was happening. Her cultivation had advanced by leaps and bounds in the past ten years, and although she wasn't even close to catching up to Meng Hao, she was in the Dao Seeking stage, very close to her Immortal Tribulation.

One day when meditating, she was forced to open her eyes because of the cacophonous clamor outside the mountain.

“Eldest Brother, please come down from your mountain!!”

“Eldest Brother, the Ninth Sect only has a few thousand spots in the Vast Expanse Shrine’s top 30,000. Please come down!!”

“Eldest Brother, rumors are flying everywhere. People are accusing you of things. Eldest Brother…. Come down from the mountain! Our frustration has been building for ten years, and we need your help to vent it!!”

Yan’er frowned. During the past ten years, she had watched in frustration as the other sects continuously challenged and provoked the Ninth Sect. She had asked her Master about the matter, but he didn’t seem to care much. Furthermore, in recent years he had come to approach a critical juncture in his cultivation, and told Yan’er not to bother him about the matter any more.

“So annoying!” she thought. “What’s wrong with these people, don’t they have their own Vast Expanse Shrine to challenge? What’s the point in showing off in the Ninth Sect?” With a cold harrumph, she walked out of her room to go console all of the fellow disciples who had come to pay respects to her Master.

As soon as she walked out, though, she frowned. Among the people who had come to visit, there were many unfamiliar faces. There were even Chosen from other sects, who by this point had begun to treat the Ninth Sect as if it were their own home, and were staring at her with cold smiles.

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# Chapter 1478: The Third Mirror Shard

The disciples of the Ninth Sect had originally wanted to join forces and kill the people from the other sects, but Ninth Sect's leadership, including its Paragon, had prevented that from happening.

In the final analysis, the Ninth Sect was part of the group of nine sects that made up the Vast Expanse School, not an independent entity. It was true that the Ninth Sect's expansion and growth in the outside was a terrifying thing to the other sects, and the sheer number of cultivators who made up their forces there was fear-inspiring.

But in the end, the Ninth Sect… had not split off from the Vast Expanse School to be independent.

Also, the Ninth Sect was actually benefiting from the matter with the Vast Expanse Shrine. Not only did the Ninth Sect have more disciples in the rankings than any other individual sect, but the way the disciples fought even harder because of the humiliation also led to spectacular results.

Most importantly, the disciples of the Ninth Sect had become completely united. The fighting and scheming which had once gone on between them was now mostly a thing of the past, and they were completely unified against the outside forces.

It wasn't that the other sects didn't realize this. They were also benefiting from the current situation, and were content to let things play out.

Of course, the main reason… was that the Vast Expanse School's 9-Essences Paragons still hadn't returned after ten years. Except for Meng

Hao, who was out searching for the copper mirror shards, the rest were still inside the necropolis.

Because of all of these varied reasons, as long as the cultivators from the other sects didn’t violate any of the Ninth Sect’s rules, they were allowed to set up camp in the Ninth Sect.

Of course, that stipulation didn’t apply to everyone, only to the people who held a spot on the Ninth Sect’s Vast Expanse Shrine. It was essentially an unwritten rule, and it ensured that if the Ninth Sect’s disciples wanted to drive away the intruders, they simply had to occupy all the spots on their own sect’s Vast Expanse Shrine.

Currently, Yan’er had just emerged from the mountain where Meng Hao was secluded in meditation. When she saw the numerous cultivators from other sects looking at her coldly, her expression was calm. Then she looked at her fellow disciples of the Ninth Sect, smiled, and proceeded to placate them, reminding them that her master was at a critical juncture in his secluded meditation.

The disciples who had come to beg Meng Hao to emerge were just as zealously devoted to him as they had been ten years ago. Regardless of the rumors flying about, they felt exactly the same way. That, coupled with Yan’er’s placating words, ensured that they quickly calmed down. However, it was at this point that a cultivator from one of the other sects walked out from the crowd, a cold smile on his face.

“Well, you certainly have a way with words, girl. You have a measly Dao Seeking cultivation base, and yet you managed to placate all these people. Well let me tell you, to the rest of us, all you’re doing is intimidating people in the name of your master, like the fox who exploited the tiger’s might to cow the jungle.

“Since your master doesn’t dare to leave his mountain, do you dare to challenge the Vast Expanse Shrine?

“Or how about this, what if we hurt you? Then will your master dare to stick his head out of the turtle shell he’s hiding in?” The cultivators from the other sects started laughing sarcastically. The disciples of the Ninth Sect bristled with rage, and it seemed like a fight might break out at any moment.

Ten years ago, Yan’er might have gotten mad, but she was different now. She had grown up, and therefore, her response to the provocation was to laugh. At the same time, her gaze turned icy cold. These cultivators from the others sects weren’t in the Immortal Realm, but rather, the Ancient Realm, and yet when she spoke to them, she seemed completely indifferent to that.

“When I was younger,” she said calmly, “there were many things about life I didn’t understand. Once, I took a trip to a local bazaar, and was kidnapped by a cultivator from the Eighth Sect, who wanted to use me as a cultivation vessel.” When Yan’er began to speak, the cultivators from the other sects were wondering what her point was, and they frowned slightly, but continued to stare at her coldly.

“In the Eighth Sect, the cultivator who had kidnapped me slapped me across the face, which hurt quite a bit. My master then requested that the Ninth Paragon interfere. He ended up slaughtering quite a few members of Patriarch Chi Feng’s clan, as well as other powerful experts who had stood by mocking me. Back then, I didn’t really understand everything that was happening, but later on I realized that among the people killed were cultivators of the Ancient Realm and the Dao Realm. There were even Dao Lords. Oh. There was a Dao Sovereign too.” She smiled slightly. At this point, complete silence prevailed.

“Because of what happened, my Master felt a bit useless, like he couldn’t even protect his own apprentice. That was why he chose to challenge the Vast Expanse Shrine, to make a name for himself, and to ensure that no one would ever dare to bully me, his apprentice.

“The result was that he took first place in the Vast Expanse Shrine, and summoned the Tenth Heaven.” Although she was smiling as she spoke, her words caused the eyes of the surrounding cultivators to go wide. Before this moment, none of them had known that the reason Fang Mu challenged the Vast Expanse Shrine was because his apprentice had been bullied.

The disciples from the other sect looked on with flickering expressions. Although they had been willing to open their mouths earlier, the truth was that they really were scared of Meng Hao.

“Oh right. There was one time when a Paragon from some other sect, I forget which one, brought a girl from his clan here to visit. She said something to offend me, and regardless of the fact that a Paragon was present, my Master slapped her twice across the face, and even crushed her Dao heart.

“So if you really want my master to come out and destroy you, then go ahead. I’m standing right here. I won’t even dodge your blow.” She smiled a beautiful smile, but when the cultivators from the other sects saw it, their hearts began to pound.

She stood there a moment amidst the silence, then spoke once again in a powerful voice, “If you don’t have the guts to do that, then please screw the hell off!”

With that, she turned and headed back to the mountain.

After Yan’er left, the disciples of the Ninth Sect laughed mockingly at the other cultivators, then slowly dispersed. The cultivators from the other sects had extremely unsightly expressions on their faces as they also left.

Many people bore witness to the event, even Meng Hao, who was watching from within his secluded meditation facilities. After the matter concluded, he closed his eyes and paid the matter no further heed, continuing on with the same thing he had been doing for the past ten years: extinguish his Immortal Soul Lamps, one by one.

By this point, he had extinguished about ninety percent of them. There were now only ten that remained lit. However, without the right circumstances, it wasn’t a simple task to accomplish.

As for his true self, acquiring the third mirror shard hadn’t gone very smoothly. Not only did the giant basilisk lizard have battle prowess comparable to Meng Hao’s true self, it was also exceedingly crafty.

Eventually, it had swallowed Meng Hao, whereupon the battle between them was fought via their souls.

After ten years, the soul battle was still raging.

Back on Planet Vast Expanse, Meng Hao’s clone murmured, “Soon enough. My true self should be able to suppress that basilisk within a few more months, and acquire the third mirror shard.”

With that, he immersed himself in the task of extinguishing his Soul Lamps.

A few months later, out in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, rumbling sounds could be heard in the second of the group of three vortexes. A massive howl of pain then echoed out, along with an explosive burst of energy. Within the vortex, the huge lizard’s body was twisting and turning as sounds like that of thunder echoed out from inside of it.

Before long, the basilisk roared, spitting out a burst of qi that became a windstorm. The vortex distorted, and a figure appeared.

It was none other than Meng Hao’s true self. Black armor covered his arm, and within his hand, a mirror shard was melting. It fused into the armor, which began to expand, growing even stronger than before.

The basilisk glared at Meng Hao, then roared again as it fell back in retreat. Even after ten years, it had failed to crush Meng Hao. In the end, had been injured and defeated, and robbed of its mirror shard.

As the basilisk watched Meng Hao’s energy rise, a glint of fear could be seen in its eyes.

“You got the treasure, why haven’t you left yet!?” the basilisk asked, its voice ancient, and its divine will so powerful that everything in the area shook.

Meng Hao’s true self glanced over at the basilisk, an arrogant gleam in his eyes. The basilisk was strong, stronger even than the Sect Leader and Bai

Wuchen. Of all the peak 9-Essences experts Meng Hao's true self had ever faced, this lizard was by far the strongest.

Were that not the case, it wouldn't have taken him ten years to get the mirror shard.

After the mirror shard fused fully into the armor, Meng Hao faced the basilisk, his eyes glittering.

"If you wish," he said, "you can leave this place and be my servant for a thousand years."

The basilisk stared in shock, then began to laugh, killing intent swirling in its eyes. "Say that after you Transcend, and maybe I might just agree."

Although it feared Meng Hao, he did not possess battle prowess equivalent to a Transcendent cultivator, so the idea of being his servant for a thousand years was laughable.

Meng Hao didn't seem offended. He gave the basilisk a profound look, and smiled slightly.

"Fine, it's settled. I'll come back for you later." With that, he turned and shot off into the distance. The lizard looked at him with disdain, turning a deaf ear to his words. After Meng Hao left, it closed its eyes and went back to sleep.

Meng Hao's true self sped through the starry sky, using the three mirror shards to detect the fluctuations of the fourth, which he immediately headed toward.

Meanwhile, back on the ninth continent of Planet Vast Expanse, in the Ninth Sect, on the mountain which belonged to Meng Hao's clone, Yan'er was preparing to face her Immortal Tribulation.

Her Tribulation was different from Meng Hao's. It was not monumentally shocking, but was more like the Tribulations faced by everyone else. Meng Hao didn't help her; he simply stood off to the side watching.

Lightning crashed constantly as Yan’er completely transformed from mortal to Immortal. As it happened, she became even more beautiful, and her aura became more otherworldly. Meng Hao was shocked as he realized that her appearance now reminded him even more of Chu Yuyan.

The Immortal Tribulation lasted for three days. In the end, the Tribulation Lightning faded away, and Yan’er emanated Immortal qi. Her Immortal meridians were fully opened, and as she hovered in midair, she looked like a celestial goddess. Finally, she turned to Meng Hao and smiled.

“Master, I’ve achieved Immortal Ascension. Aren’t you going to give me a gift?”

Meng Hao smiled and shook his head in amusement. Although he looked young physically, the air he exuded made him seem profoundly ancient. His gaze was soft as he pulled out the gift he had prepared, and yet Yan’er shook her head in refusal. A crafty glint in her eyes, she said, “I don’t want any magical items or medicinal pills or techniques. I just want to see my Master… see you… once again on top of a mountain, smiling at me.”

Meng Hao was taken aback as he realized that he wasn’t sure if he was looking at Yan’er or… Chu Yuyan.

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# Chapter 1479: Stepping On All the Sects’ Shrines!

Meng Hao stood there silently.

When he saw Chu Yuyan’s soul, he had decided to pay the debt he owed her by means of a Master and apprentice relationship. But now he wasn’t sure if that was the right decision.

He couldn’t pretend to hold any feelings in his heart other than his thirst for revenge for the Mountain and Sea Realm. He desired the Mountain and Sea Butterfly, and desired to unearth the secrets which were buried within the starry sky of the Vast Expanse.

The only thing he wanted for Chu Yuyan was to protect her, and to give her… the best of everything.

He had no desire to see her hurt, and only wanted her to be happy.

Therefore, he stood there silently, which in turn caused Yan’er to start to get nervous. She gnawed on her lip, wondering if she had said or done something wrong. Unsure of what to do, she also just stood there, looking at Meng Hao, the seemingly young old man….

Meng Hao was a bit in a daze. Time passed. Soon it was dawn. A few days ago, some disciples had challenged the Vast Expanse Shrine, and although no one made it into the top 10, the Ninth Sect Chosen who occupied the 13th and 17th places were supplanted. That in turn caused conflicts to break out between the Ninth Sect disciples and the disciples from the other sects. As a result, an even larger group of disciples from the Ninth Sect came to Meng Hao’s mountain, to ask him to do something.

“Eldest Brother, please come down from your mountain!!”

“Eldest Brother, come down from the mountain….”

“Eldest Brother… please come down!!” More and more such calls filled the air. There were tens of thousands of disciples gathered around Meng Hao’s mountain, all hoping to catch a glimpse of him, that dazzling figure from ten years ago. They had come here in good faith, filled with ardor and hope.

In recent days, increasing numbers of slanderous and salacious rumors about Fang Mu had been spread, until everyone in the Vast Expanse School was talking about them. Despite that, the disciples of the Ninth Sect did not waver in their devotion to him. They felt insulted and enraged, and they only hoped that their Eldest Brother… would make a vicious counter-attack.

As their voices grew louder, Yan’er bowed her head, looking more upset than before. But then Meng Hao’s absentmindedness faded away, and he looked softly at her. He reached out and, just as he had when she was a child, he bopped her head.

“Alright,” he said, smiling.

Her eyes widened as she looked up at him. Then she saw his smile, and it was like looking at the bright, blue sky. Her eyes began to shine, and she began to jump up and down in excitement.

“Master, Master!” she exclaimed excitedly. “I know exactly what you should do. Why don’t you go back to the Vast Expanse Shrine and summon the Tenth Heaven again?” She was hoping that such an act would be a powerful blow against the cultivators from the other sects.

“What would be the point in that?” Meng Hao asked, shaking his head. Then he swished his sleeve and began to walk down the mountain.

Yan’er followed on his heels. “What do you mean? What are you going to do, Master?”

In the years that had passed, Yan'er had grown much more mature. In public, she was a responsible adult who could take charge. But in front of Meng Hao, she was like a little girl.

Meng Hao didn't answer her question. After stepping off the mountain, the crowd of tens of thousands of disciples outside saw him, and instantly exploded in excitement. At once, a huge cheer echoed out.

As for the cultivators from the other sects, they had originally assumed that this day would be like all the others, in which Fang Mu remained hidden away. But then they saw who had just emerged, and their hearts trembled.

Meng Hao's fame was such that, despite the passage of ten years, he was just as impressive as before. The disciples from the other sects felt their minds spinning, and they began to pant. Without any hesitation, they produced jade slips which they used to inform the other top Chosen from their various sects of what was happening.

Within moments, the news of Meng Hao coming down from the mountain spread like a blast of wind through the Ninth Sect. Countless disciples from the Ninth Sect, after ten years of stifling pressure, were thrown into excitement. After ten long years, many of them had begun to grumble inwardly at Meng Hao, but now that vanished, and they all dropped what they were doing and flew out to see him.

"Eldest Brother came down off the mountain?"

"Eldest Brother left the mountain!!"

"Hahaha! The day has finally arrived! Eldest Brother came down from the mountain, and now he's going to crush everyone!"

More and more people began rushing toward the area from all directions. The crowd quickly grew from tens of thousands to a hundred thousand. Then a million. Then several million….

Beams of light shot toward Meng Hao's mountain in seemingly endless fashion.

The Chosen from the other sects that weren’t in the area were also notified via jade slip, and began to pant, their eyes shining brightly. For ten years they had been provoking the Ninth Sect. For ten years they had been trying… to force Meng Hao to do something. That was the only chance they had to potentially destroy the legend that he had created.

“Fang Mu! He’s finally come off the mountain!” In the location in the Ninth Sect which had been occupied by the First Sect, a gray-haired young man could be seen. He took a deep breath, and his eyes began to shine brightly. More and more people emerged, clustering around him as he flew up into the sky.

In the location where the Second Sect had set up camp, a woman could be seen. She rose to her feet, looking like she wanted to fight. Blood boiling, she shot up into the air. “After ten years of waiting, you’d better not disappoint me, Fang Mu!”

Chosen from all of the outside sects were in an uproar. All of them wanted to go out and challenge Meng Hao to a fight immediately.

“Ten years ago you created a legend. Now that ten years have passed, I’m going to destroy that legend!”

“I worked myself to the bone for ten years, and now I’m completely prepared. I’m definitely going to surpass Fang Mu!”

“Everyone says that Fang Mu is injured. This time is definitely my opportunity to shine!”

The entire Ninth Sect was boiling. Countless cultivators were gathering around Meng Hao’s mountain as he stood there, looking out at the crowds with a light smile. Finally, he clasped hands and bowed deeply to everyone.

Before he could say anything, everyone shouted out, “Eldest Brother!”

The sound of their voices was like a shockwave that caused the Heavens to shake.

Yan’er stood next to Meng Hao, glowing with excitement.

Meng Hao looked around at the crowds, and the Chosen from the other sects, who stood a bit further away. Smiling, he said, “Yan’er, you just asked me what I’m going to do…? I’m going to take you sightseeing!”

When Yan’er heard that, she looked surprised. But before she could respond, Meng Hao waved his sleeve and flew up into the air. Instantly, his voice rang out for all to hear.

“Fellow Daoists,” he said, eyes glittering, “please come with me to the Eighth Sect. The Seventh Sect. The Sixth Sect…. In fact, we will go all the way to the First Sect. I’m curious to see what their Vast Expanse Shrines look like.” This was his gift to Yan’er, and also a breakthrough he had to make after taking his Soul Lamps to the pinnacle.

In response to his words, the disciples of the Ninth Sect went quiet, but then, they let out a Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering roar.

Everyone was screaming and hollering in excitement. Even the Ninth Sect’s 7-Essences Paragon chuckled as he looked on from his position on his mountain.

“Well, if that’s your plan, then allow me to help out a bit,” he murmured. “These kids have been bottled up for far too long as it is.” Shaking his head, the Paragon smiled and waved his hand. Instantly, massive rumbling could be heard as a gigantic spell formation appeared.

Teleportation power began to emanate out, and Meng Hao flashed into motion, shooting toward the portal. Yan’er followed close behind, bolstered by the power of Meng Hao’s cultivation base.

At the same time, the excited disciples of the Ninth Sect took to flight toward the portal. The disciples from the other sects stared in shock for a moment, their faces a bit ashen after the words Meng Hao had just uttered. However, they also took to flight toward the spell formation.

Rumbling echoed out as the teleportation power activated. Everything shook, and the group vanished. When they reappeared, they were on the eighth continent, above the Eighth Sect.

The sudden arrival of so many people shook the whole Eighth Sect. Eighth Sect disciples looked up in surprise as Meng Hao addressed the Eighth Sect.

“I am Fang Mu of the Ninth Sect. I’ve come today to challenge the Eighth Sect’s Vast Expanse Shrine!”

Even as his voice continued to echo back and forth, and before any of the disciples of the Eighth Sect had a chance to react, Meng Hao and Yan’er flew toward the Vast Expanse Shrine. The Eighth Sect had no means or method to stop them. After all, Chosen from all the other sects had challenged the Ninth Sect’s Vast Expanse Shrine on countless occasions over the last ten years.

Yan’er followed Meng Hao excitedly through the crowds of countless Eighth Sect disciples as he headed directly toward their Vast Expanse Shrine. Soon, they were standing at the foot of the mountain.

Meng Hao looked over at Yan’er and said, “Yan’er, would you like to come with me?”

Yan’er’s jaw dropped, and her heart began to pound so hard she felt like she was hyperventilating. She simply stood there, in a daze. She had merely said she wanted to see her Master standing on top of a mountain. She had never even guessed that he would bring her here. But then she remembered how he had just said he would take her sightseeing.

“I… I…” she stammered.

“Don’t want to go?” he asked.

“I do!!” she cried, worried that he might not take her after all.

He laughed heartily, then turned and began to walk toward the Vast Expanse Shrine. Yan’er followed. With his protection, even a place as dangerous as a dragon’s pool or a tiger’s den would be safe for her!

As Meng Hao led Yan’er up to the Eighth Sect’s Vast Expanse Shrine, over a hundred million disciples from the Ninth Sect began to cheer. As for the disciples of the Eighth Sect, they didn’t look very happy. Soon, the sound of a tolling bell could be heard. It rang once. Twice. Three times. Four times… it didn’t stop!

As the bell tolled, Meng Hao took Yan’er up the mountain. 10,000 steps. 30,000 steps. 70,000 steps. 90,000 steps…. All the way to 100,000 steps!

The Vast Expanse Shrine rumbled as the First Heaven was summoned. Then the Second Heaven. And the Third Heaven…. It was like the same scene that had played out ten years ago, something so incredible it was difficult to put into words. Everyone was thoroughly shocked as, in the time it takes a single incense stick to burn… all ten Heavens were summoned!

Bells tolled in all the sects. The world was shaken. Meng Hao stood with Yan’er atop the Tenth Heaven, and the mountain breeze stirred their hair as they looked out at the clouds. As for the Baptism of the tolling bells, the benefit to Yan’er was beyond description.

However, she didn’t care about any such good fortune. Her face was flushed as she stood next to her Master, looking out at Heaven and Earth. The feeling left her intoxicated.

“Yan’er,” he said softly, “look at the clouds, the mountains, the sky, and the land. Remember this image. However grand your vision is, that is how grand your future can be. It is also how grand… your heart can be.

“We cultivators cultivate, not the body, but the heart!”

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# Chapter 1480: Challenging all the Sects!

As Meng Hao and Yan’er stood atop the Tenth Heaven, they were one with the wind. Meng Hao’s softly spoken words entered Yan’er’s ears and melted down into her heart, where they would remain forever.

It was very likely that no matter how many years passed, Yan’er would think back to this moment, remember standing next to her Master, and think about the words he had spoken to her.

Cultivators cultivate, not the body, but the heart.

As she looked out, she saw the sky stretching out over the lands. She saw how Heaven and Earth were connected, and she saw the endlessness stars. All of that came to be imprinted onto her heart.

Other than the words spoken by Meng Hao there above the Tenth Heaven, the only sound was that of the gently murmuring wind. It was as if the whole world had slowed down, and the two of them were the only ones in existence, Master and apprentice….

It was a moment that seemed to last for ages….

Eventually, the exultant cries of the disciples of the Ninth Sect rose up from below. The world was trembling, and the disciples of the Eighth Sect… looked as ashen as if they were dead.

As for the Chosen who had come from the other sects, they could hear their own hearts pounding in their chests.

“He… he said that he’s going to visit all of the Vast Expanse Shrines in all of the sects?” They exchanged glances, their faces as pale as death.

“Dammit, who said Fang Mu was injured? He… he’s not injured at all! He’s basically taking his disciple sightseeing!”

The Eighth Sect could do nothing more than stew in their bitterness. The cheering of the Ninth Sect grew more intense, until finally, everyone began chanting, “Eldest Brother! Eldest Brother!”

Then, the spell formation appeared again, and the power of teleportation shook everything. Meng Hao’s face fairly glowed as he chuckled and said, “Alright, let’s go to the Seventh Sect!”

Yan’er took a deep breath and nodded meekly. Meng Hao swished his sleeve, and the two of them led countless cultivators toward the enormous teleportation portal.

The disciples of the Ninth Sect rose up into the sky, clamoring in excitement. The hosts from the Eighth Sect remained in place, bitterness and other mixed emotions on their faces as they watched the Ninth Sect vanish.

Despite the fact that the Ninth Sect was now gone, they had left behind a legend. A myth! The disciples of the Eighth Sect were stifled. Their Chosen were left gasping for breath. On their own Vast Expanse Shrine, the name ‘Fang Mu’ could be seen as clear as day. They could well imagine that, in future days to come, people would try to take back 1st place, but would fail.

That name would remain there in the Eighth Sect for all eternity….

That was the gift Meng Hao was giving to Yan’er, and also his response to the ten years of challenges issued by the other sects…. If you come challenge the Ninth Sect’s Vast Expanse Shrine, well then… I will go to your sect and take 1st place on yours!

I will strike back with extreme prejudice, cleanly and efficiently!

Rumbling could be heard above the seventh continent, within the Seventh Sect. The teleportation portal appeared, and countless disciples from the Ninth Sect descended. Meng Hao’s voice once again rang out.

“I am Fang Mu from the Ninth Sect, here to challenge your Vast Expanse Shrine!” His voice joined the ringing of the bells, which still hadn’t faded away. Then, he led the exuberant Yan’er onto the Seventh Sect’s Vast Expanse Shrine.

The disciples and Chosen of the Seventh Sect were shaken as more bells began to ring. From the 1st step to the 100,000th, from the First Heaven to the Tenth, everything happened just as before. Heaven shook and the Earth quaked. The disciples of the Seventh Sect looked on with pale faces. At the same time, Yan’er gained indescribable good fortune. She was thoroughly Baptised, and her cultivation base even increased dramatically.

Once again, she was able to look out upon Heaven and Earth, and as she did, cracking sounds emanated out from within her, which came from her explosive cultivation base growth. Because of the Baptism and the other good fortune, she was advancing by leaps and bounds.

What was happening this day was certain to be indelibly recorded within the annals of the Vast Expanse School. It even surpassed the miracle of Meng Hao summoning the Tenth Heaven in the Ninth Sect.

On this day, Meng Hao accomplished something the likes of which had never occurred within the history of the Vast Expanse School. He… reached the pinnacle of every single Vast Expanse Shrine in all of the sects. He took first place, and summoned the Tenth Heaven!

And he didn’t do it alone either; he took his apprentice with him.

On that day, countless individuals came to learn of Yan’er, and innumerable disciples came to envy her with utmost jealousy.

And yet, all they could do was that, envy her. Meng Hao took her from the Seventh Sect to the Sixth. After summoning the Tenth Heaven there, he went to the Fifth Sect. The Fourth Sect. The Third Sect. The Second Sect….

He didn’t tarry or delay. He summoned the Tenth Heaven in one shrine after another. Because of the good fortune she received, Yan’er’s cultivation base became more boundless, more profound, and in fact even exceeded that of a Chosen.

In the Vast Expanse Shrine of the First Sect, the Tenth Heaven appeared once again. Heaven and Earth trembled, and the world shook. Countless disciples felt as if thunder were crashing in their minds. They could do little more than pant at the unforgettable, history-making events which were unfolding.

“Nine sects… and all of the Tenth Heavens….”

“Fang Mu. Fang Mu! He fully deserves to be… the number one Chosen of the Vast Expanse School!!”

“It’s too bad his cultivation base isn’t in the Dao Realm. If it were, I’d love to see how far he could get on the Transcendence Path. After all, the Vast Expanse Shrine is for those below the Dao Realm. Only the Dao Realm… can walk the Transcendence Path!”

“The benefits his apprentice Yan’er received from the Baptism of the tolling bells is impossible to even imagine!”

The entire Vast Expanse School was shaken and in an uproar. The disciples of the Ninth Sect couldn’t stop cheering. From the moment they flew to the Eight Sect… all the way to the First Sect, they continued to shout out at the tops of their lungs.

“Eldest Brother Fang Mu!” The sound echoed out without stop.

On this day, Meng Hao caused an unimaginable stir. Not only were countless ordinary disciples in the Vast Expanse School shocked, even the Dao Realm experts, the Dao Lords, and the Dao Sovereigns were all amazed by the miracle which he had pulled off.

When the Tenth Heaven appeared in the First Sect, Paragons from all of the nine sects came. They were all in the 7-Essences level, and yet they were all equally shaken. Although Meng Hao was vastly below them, they had to admit that, in terms of latent talent and future potential, this Fang Mu… had long since surpassed them. If things went smoothly for him, then he would one day stand among them as peers, or even exceed them.

“A future Paragon!” murmured the 7-Essences Paragon from the First Sect. His words instantly gained the approval of all of the other 7-Essences Paragons from the other sects.

Even Streamcloud from the Third Sect had to concede this point.

He truly was a future Paragon!

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# Chapter 1481: The Peak of the World

And that he was. His true self was already the most powerful of Paragons. As for his clone, Meng Hao was sure that if he desired to walk the Path of the Paragon, he would definitely reach the 9-Essences level.

It might take some time, but he would succeed in the end.

However, that was not what he chose to do. Having a 9-Essences Paragon clone wouldn’t help him to Transcend, and therefore, his original plan had never changed.

He would Transcend with his true self, and then, with everything he had gained in recent years, with the Ninth Sect and all its power, with the ghosts of the necropolis… he would unleash deadly violence upon the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent. And most especially… the 33 Heavens!

He would return to his home, to the Mountain and Sea Butterfly, to his family and friends. He would return to the Mountains and Seas… to get revenge!!

That was his focus, his obsession, something which could never be erased from his mind. He would reforge the Mountain and Sea Realm, he would resurrect the meat jelly, and he would call back the copper mirror. Even if that was a defiance of the Vast Expanse, he would do it.

Meng Hao stood there atop the Tenth Heaven in the First Sect. Smiling, he breathed in deeply.

Down below, the countless disciples of the First Sect looked up with mixed emotions. Their faces were devoid of blood as they stared bitterly at Meng Hao.

The Chosen of the First Sect looked on blankly. They were truly eagles, but as of this moment, they had no other choice but to admit that the generation into which they had been born contained a towering mountain.

That mountain… was something that stretched so high above them they would never be able to fly over it.

Silence prevailed. Also in the First Sect was a woman, the current Holy Daughter of the generation. She was Han Bei, and as she looked up at Meng Hao and Yan'er atop the Tenth Heaven, she felt profoundly uneasy.

Although Meng Hao hadn't caused any trouble for her throughout the years, she still feared him. The more he cared about Chu Yuyan, the safer she felt, and yet she the more she felt safe, the more that sense of safety scared her.

It was a paradox that only seemed to increase in intensity, and was influencing her mission here in the Vast Expanse School.

On more than one occasion, she had considered investigating why Meng Hao had created this clone. However, she didn't dare to even get close to him, and could only manipulate things from afar. Even then, she didn't dare to push things too far, and thus was left only with speculations.

Over the years, she had come up with numerous theories, but could not confirm any of them. Sometimes, she even felt as though all of her theories were completely incorrect.

After a moment of looking at Meng Hao and Yan'er, she sighed and looked away.

The wind blew atop the Tenth Heaven. As people looked on, Yan'er's gaze fell upon her master, and her eyes shone radiantly. It was as if this Master of hers had become the most important person in her entire life.

“Master!” she said loudly.

“Yes?” Meng Hao said, smiling.

“Master!!”

“Uh, yes?” Meng Hao gaped, looking over at her.

“Master!!” she cried again.

Pretending to look very serious, Meng Hao reached out and bopped her head. She rubbed her head, looking very resentful. However, he merely smiled at her, well aware that she was completely ecstatic at the moment.

Then he looked back out at Heaven and Earth, and his eyes gleamed with anticipation.

“The Vast Expanse Shrine offers no further good fortune for me. If I want to extinguish my last ten Soul Lamps, then… the only option I have is to walk the Transcendence Path!”

In the Vast Expanse School, the two most famous trials by fire were the Vast Expanse Shrines and the Transcendence Path. Only cultivators in the Dao Realm would tread the Transcendence Path. Of course, just walking that path didn’t guarantee Transcendence. However, there was still that hope.

That path was the traditional and proper way to try to Transcend, but to date, not even the Sect Leader or others of his level had been able to reach its end.

It was a very difficult path to travel, and it seemed endless. However, the Dao Realm experts of the Vast Expanse School were entranced with it, mostly because of the multitudinous good fortune therein, good fortune that could cause one’s cultivation base to advance by leaps and bounds.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. He had a strong premonition that… his clone would be able to complete the first sealing mark of the Ninth Hex on the Transcendence Path.

He had further speculations regarding how to complete the full Ninth Hex, and was sure that those speculations would also be verified on the Transcendence Path.

However, now was not the time. He had the feeling… that once he headed down that path, it would be a very, very long time before he came back. In fact, it was even possible that he never would.

Besides, there were still a few matters to handle within the Vast Expanse School.

He looked over at Yan’er, and could see that because of the good fortune of the Vast Expanse Shrine, her cultivation base was thoroughly stabilized, and had even made significant progress. She was now in the mid Immortal Realm. Although she had just made that breakthrough thanks to the Baptism of the tolling bells, Meng Hao could see that in the coming years, her cultivation base would continue to advance rapidly.

Her latent talent had been completely optimized by the Baptism, and her qi passageways, as well as any cultivation bottlenecks, had been cleared.

In the Vast Expanse School, good fortune like that was something only Yan’er could acquire.

You could even say that on her path of cultivation, she had already opened the way to a great Dao.

“Come on,” Meng Hao said with a smile, “Let’s go back to the Ninth Sect.” They, along with the cheering disciples of the Ninth Sect, stepped back into the teleportation portal. As the First Sect disciples looked on with bitter expressions, they vanished.

The rumbling of the spell formation shook all sects from the First to the Eighth as they returned to the Ninth Sect. The cheering shouts of the Ninth Sect’s disciples shook the Vast Expanse School. A legend had been established which no one would ever be able to top.

When the group appeared back in the Ninth Sect, those who had remained behind also started cheering loudly.

“They’re back! Everyone’s back!”

“Eldest Brother Fang Mu has returned!!”

“Eldest Brother, Eldest Brother….”

The Ninth Sect seethed with excitement. The disciples who had been too slow to join the others in stepping through the teleportation portal earlier now began to crowd around and cheer for their Eldest Brother.

On that day, a grand celebration began in the Ninth Sect.

The news of what had happened filled the other sects. For a long time to come, the disciples of the Ninth Sect would be filled with unmatched joy.

As for the disciples from the other sects who had set up camp in the Ninth Sect, they made a swift departure. None of them dared to remain behind. As for the ten years of provocation and challenges, they were now officially a thing of the past.

Only a few people were aware that what Meng Hao had done was because of a few words uttered by Yan’er. Most of the disciples thought that he had done it as a way to tell the Chosen of the other sects that if they wanted to challenge him, they could remain in their own sects to do so. There was no need for them to come to the Ninth Sect.

In order to make things easier for them, he simply put his name on their Vast Expanse Shrines….

Because of Meng Hao, the spirits of the entire Ninth Sect were instantly lifted.

Their leader was the overbearing, domineering Ninth Paragon, who was also their protector. Among their number was the ultimate Chosen, the disciple who had completely dominated the Vast Expanse School, Fang Mu!

Because of all of that, the Ninth Sect was completely different from the other sects.

The celebrations lasted for more than a month. Eventually things settled down, but deep down, the disciples of the Ninth Sect were still extremely excited. The glory and honor they felt, as well as the sense of belonging, would never be erased.

During that month, Meng Hao had no choice other than to receive the various visitors who came to offer their respects. However, after the month passed, the number of visitors didn’t decrease. In fact, they increased. Finally, he was forced to close the mountain.

From then on, he never left the mountain, and politely refused to see all visitors. However, instead of going into secluded meditation, he spent time teaching cultivation techniques to Yan’er.

Time passed. Before long, three years had gone by.

During that time, Meng Hao paid little heed to his own cultivation base. He helped Yan’er to refine her Immortal meridians, benefiting her with all of his experience regarding cultivation. He helped her gain more Dao enlightenment, holding nothing back. He spared no effort in passing on to her everything he knew.

Because of such conscientious teaching on his part, Yan’er’s cultivation base rose with shocking speed, and was far more stable than anyone else in her generation.

During those years, a certain feeling slowly rose up within Yan’er. Eventually, she began to laugh less, and when she looked at Meng Hao, it was with concern, as if she couldn’t bear the thought of parting with him.

After all her years of being dependent on him, she had come to be very sensitive to his personality. Based on everything that had happened during the past three years, she came to feel strongly that….

“Master is going to leave….” That scared her. No matter how many times she asked about it, Meng Hao would always just smile and decline to comment. However, whenever his gaze fell upon her, it was warmer than before, and it almost seemed like he was recalling past times.

Another ten years passed….

Yan’er’s cultivation base continued to climb higher and higher. However, her heart only continued to grow more anxious. One day she saw a jade slip belonging to her Master that apparently contained information about the sect’s Transcendence Path. At that point, her heart began to pound.

She knew that the Transcendence Path was something only Dao Realm cultivators were qualified to tread. Supposedly, it contained incredible good fortune, and yet few people actually dared to walk upon it.

After all, it also contained profound danger. It was not the Vast Expanse Shrine, which was located in the sect itself. It was in the outside world, located within a rift in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse.

After entering, one would be completely cut off, and would not return for dozens or even hundreds of years. It was a path that a cultivator could only step onto twice in a lifetime.

Years ago, Yan’er would have pressed her Master about the matter, and wouldn’t have given up until she figured out a way to prevent him from going to such a dangerous place. But she had grown up, and understood that it was a decision for him to make. She knew that within her Master’s heart was an obsession that even she couldn’t comprehend.

And so she said nothing.

During the thirteen years which passed, Meng Hao extinguished a few more Soul Lamps. Now, he had only seven which continued to burn.

Another year passed, and Yan’er was now at the peak of the Immortal Realm. The speed of her progress was far beyond normal, causing widespread shock among the disciples of the Ninth Sect. But when they considered who her Master was, they realized that it wasn’t such an unreasonable thing.

After all, the good fortune of eight Vast Expanse Shrines was beyond incredible.

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1482: Looking Back at This Life!

That year, Yan’er faced her Ancient Tribulation.

That day was one of utmost importance to Meng Hao as well. He personally set up the relevant spell formations, and arranged for the energy of Heaven and Earth in the Ninth Sect to act as Dharma Protector. Several days later, when the Ancient Tribulation finally concluded, he breathed a sigh of relief.

He watched Yan’er pass her Ancient Tribulation, watched her ignite her Soul Lamps, and then watched her close her eyes in meditation to begin breathing exercises. The whole time, his gaze was soft and kind. To mortals, she wouldn’t be considered young, but to cultivators in the Ancient Realm, she was like a girl. The passage of time left no scars upon her. She only continued to grow more beautiful, and at the same time, mature. To other members of the sect, she was truly a Chosen, someone who knew how to conduct herself properly and with decorum, someone everyone enjoyed being around.

It was only around Meng Hao that she would pout and act like a coquettish little girl.

Meng Hao could tell that Chu Yuyan’s aura was growing stronger and stronger on her. Sometimes, he couldn’t even tell the difference between the two.

That was especially true as he watched her doing breathing exercises after passing her Ancient Tribulation. Many memories flitted through his mind.

In her last life, Chu Yuyan had never passed through the Immortal Realm. But in this life, with Meng Hao's help, she was reaching the highest pinnacles.

Furthermore, regardless of whether her name was Chu Yuyan or Yan'er, she had earned a place in his heart for all eternity.

"It's about time for me to let go, too…." he murmured.

A few days later, Yan'er opened her eyes and glanced over at Meng Hao. From the look in his eyes, she seemed to understand what was about to happen. She loathed the idea of parting with him, but it had been years since she came to understand the choice he would eventually make. Today, there was something deep within his eyes that explained everything.

"Master…." she said, her voice quavering.

"You're in the Ancient Realm now," he said softly. "You understand how to go about extinguishing your Soul Lamps, right?

"If there are any areas you don't understand, now is the time to ask me.

"Before the Ancient Realm, cultivators can receive assistance from others. In fact, such assistance can make things much easier. However, starting with the Ancient Realm, you'll have to rely completely upon yourself.

"Never forget what I told you before. We cultivators cultivate, not the body, but the heart."

Tears welled up in Yan'er's eyes, and then began to stream down her cheeks. She was trembling. "Master…."

"I've prepared nine jade slips for you. Each one of them contains some of the power of my divine sense…. If you encounter a dangerous situation, you can be protected." By this point, Meng Hao's clone was extremely close to the Dao Realm, and he could even draw upon some of the power of his true self.

As such, the nine jade slips held some of his true self's divine sense power, and would be able to keep Yan'er safe wherever she went on Planet Vast Expanse.

"I've also prepared seven volumes of Dao treatises, which contain all of the magical techniques and divine abilities I've learned in my life.

"There are also 100,000 medicinal pills which I concocted especially for you. That should ensure your path of cultivation is a smooth one.

"As for magical items, I never did build up a huge collection, but what I did gain, I'm leaving to you.

"There are also Immortal jades and spirit stones. In the past, I used to be extremely attracted to them, but now that I think back, it just makes me sigh. I'm leaving everything to you."

"Master, I don't want any of that, I just want…." She trailed off, tears flowing down her face. She was afraid, terrified even. Although it had been ten years since she realized what her Master planned to do, she still wasn't ready for it to actually happen.

"Because of the fame I have built up," Meng Hao continued, "no one will dare to bully you while you're in the Ninth Sect. Everyone here will take care of you. I've also paid a visit to the Paragon to ask him to watch out for you.

"I might not be here, but I've made various other preparations to keep you safe, for example the mastiff, who will continue to accompany you."

Anxiety erupted within Yan'er. "No, I don't want that. I don't care, Master, I–"

"Yan'er!" he growled.

A tremor ran through her. In her entire life, she couldn't remember a single time when her Master had been strict with her. This was the first time. Even more tears flowed down her face.

“You’ve grown up,” he said softly. Then he reached out and bopped her head.

She subconsciously bowed her head, weeping.

He shook his head. “Come on,” he said. “I want to take you somewhere.” As he turned to leave, she rose to her feet, wiped the tears off her cheeks, and followed. For the first time in thirteen years, Master and apprentice left the Ninth Sect.

They traveled to the border region of the ninth continent, where they found a river, next to which was a village. They arrived around evening, when smoke was rising lazily from the chimneys of the houses. Meng Hao caught sight of the house where he had lived as a child in this life. It had long since changed ownership; the scholar who had found him in the river had passed away many years ago.

However, the old man who had cared for him was still alive. He had ended up marrying the village widow, and both of them were now completely ancient, with numerous children and grandchildren.

When Meng Hao saw the old man, he thought back to many warm memories from this life, and a slight smile touched his face.

Yan’er stood quietly at his side. She said nothing, but she could sense the tender feelings in her Master’s heart.

They left around dawn. Meng Hao didn’t actually meet with the old man in person. However, he left behind numerous age-prolonging, longevity-enhancing medicinal pills, as well as jade slips which would protect the man and his bloodline for generations to come.

It wasn’t long after Meng Hao left that the old man yawned and walked out of his room. When he looked down, he saw all the items that Meng Hao had left, and his jaw dropped. After some contemplation, he shivered and looked up into the Heavens. Finally, he smiled.

“Haowie, you came back…?” He chuckled as he recalled the young boy from so many years ago.

A few days later, Meng Hao stood at the very top of the Vast Expanse Shrine, where he clasped hands to the Heavens.

“I am Fang Mu, from the Ninth Sect of the Vast Expanse School. I desire to walk the Transcendence Path. Paragon, please open the portal!”

As his voice echoed out, the Paragon first gaped in confusion, then began to reel in shock. A buzz filled the Ninth Sect as countless disciples flew toward the mountain peak upon which rose the Vast Expanse Shrine. There, they saw Meng Hao standing at the peak, and Yan’er standing at the bottom of the mountain, looking up at him.

“He’s… going to walk the Transcendence Path….”

“Indeed. The Transcendence Path is exactly the type of place for a Chosen like him!” The other Chosen in the Ninth Sect sighed, mixed emotions playing out on their faces.

People had long since speculated that he might do something just like this. The truth was that Ancient Realm cultivators weren’t prohibited from walking the Transcendence Path. However, it was usually done only by unique Chosen with special qualifications.

As for Meng Hao, if he didn’t qualify to be Chosen, then no one in the Vast Expanse School did.

Naturally, he was qualified to walk the Transcendence Path.

Yan’er stood there silently, looking up at her Master atop the mountain. Her eyes gleamed with determination, and she took a deep breath, telling herself that she had to be strong. Yet, she couldn’t stop the tears from rolling down her cheeks.

Meng Hao’s voice was still echoing out when the voice of the 7-Essences Paragon responded from within the Ninth Sect.

“Are you sure?”

“Absolutely!” Meng Hao replied, his voice filled with a decisiveness that could sever nails and chop iron.

Moments later, an intense rumbling sound filled Heaven and Earth, as if someone were working a type of grand magic. It sounded like the sky itself were being ripped open. Everything shook as an enormous rift appeared up above.

The rift shone with a seven-colored glow, dazzling and radiant. The light then transformed into a staircase, which descended from above and came to a stop directly in front of Meng Hao. He looked up at the staircase, and could see that within the rift in the sky was another world.

It was at this point that an ancient voice echoed out: “The sect rules of the Vast Expanse School state that any disciple who enters the Transcendence Path must leave behind a Soul Lamp. If the lamp shines, the cultivator lives. If the lamp is extinguished… the cultivator has died.”

The countless disciples in the area looked on silently.

Meng Hao waved his sleeve, causing a stream of soul fire to fly out from his forehead. The soul fire swirled through the air, transforming into the shape of a Soul Lamp.

This particular Soul Lamp was different from his collection of Ancient Realm Soul Lamps. It was formed from his own soul fire, and would indicate to the outside world whether or not he was still alive. Based on the state of that flame, people outside would know the state he was in as he walked the Transcendence Path.

What people did to the flame on the outside, however, wouldn’t affect Meng Hao. He waved his hand, sending the soul fire lamp over to Yan’er.

“Place that in my secluded meditation facilities,” he said, smiling. With that, he took a deep breath, stepping forward onto the staircase and speeding upward toward the rift.

As he rose higher into the sky, the Ninth Sect’s 7-Essences Paragon spoke into his ear. “Fang Mu, there are many things in life which can’t be forced. If you reach a point where you can’t go onward, you must turn back….”

Just when Meng Hao was about to step into the rift and enter that most ancient Transcendence Path, Yan’er suddenly called out in a loud voice.

“Master, do you… do you remember back when you told me the story of Chu Yuyan? You promised that if I wanted to hear the rest of the story, that you would tell it to me.”

Meng Hao stopped and looked back down at the mountains below, and at Yan’er, standing there in the crowd. “I remember,” he said, smiling softly. “Do you want to hear it now?”

She trembled, tears pouring down her face. “No, not now,” she replied. “Master, can you tell me the rest of the story when you get back…?”

The idea of parting with her Master hurt so much that it felt like her heart was being crushed.

“Of course,” he replied, nodding. With that he turned, took a deep breath… and stepped into the rift, onto… the Transcendence Path.

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# Chapter 1483: On the Transcendence Path!

From the moment of the creation of the Vast Expanse School until now, the Transcendence Path had always been of vital importance. It could even be considered a trial by fire that gave birth to the reserve power of the entire sect.

In truth, it wasn’t really a trial by fire, not the type that disciples in sects usually participated in. Despite being part of the Vast Expanse School, the things that happened on the Transcendence Path were beyond the control of even Paragons.

Everything depended on the individual involved. Everything depended on chance and luck.

From ancient times until now, countless disciples of the Vast Expanse School had walked the path, and yet none had reached the end. Everyone who returned had done so from somewhere partway along the path.

Those who didn’t return died along the way.

Actually, the Transcendence Path wasn’t really a literal path.

It was a very unique location, so much so that even people who had been there and experienced what lay inside had difficulty explaining it to others. It was almost as if there were some magical law at play which prevented people from explaining everything that had happened inside.

The first thing Meng Hao saw after entering the rift, after stepping onto the Transcendence Path, was a lamp.

It was… a bronze lamp.

It actually looked almost completely identical to the bronze lamp inside of his true self.

Except, this bronze lamp was enormous, so large that it was impossible to describe, larger even than Planet Vast Expanse. The starry sky in this location was the type that made one’s mind reel to even look at it.

The Transcendence Path… was this bronze lamp.

The burning flame of the lamp was made up of three parts, the outer flame, the inner flame, and the heart of the flame…. Apparently, they formed three different dimensions within the world, and the light they cast illuminated everything therein.

The world was vastly enormous, as was the bronze lamp. In addition to the dimension in the flame, the body of the bronze lamp itself also contained its own dimension.

Meng Hao’s first thought upon looking at the shocking lamp was that it was actually the same lamp which existed within his true self.

Then he couldn’t help but think of the Devil Realm’s World-Butterflies, or the precious treasure that was the Mountain and Sea Realm, which became the Nine Mountains and Nine Seas.

All of those things could contain worlds of living things. This bronze lamp that he was looking at… was that same type of precious treasure.

“So, the Transcendence Path… is actually broken up into two parts. One part is in the body of the lamp, the other, in the flame.

“As for the flame… it is further broken up into three parts. The outer flame, the inner flame, and the heart of the flame….” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered with determination. With that, he transformed into a flash of light that shot toward the bronze lamp.

The bronze lamp got bigger and bigger as he approached. Time passed. Not even Meng Hao could have predicted that after flying for seven months, going all out with every scrap of power he could muster, he still wouldn’t have reached the lamp itself.

By this point, he couldn’t even see the lamp’s flame any more, only a world of bronze.

His expression was very serious as he continued to fly onward. Three months later, the lamp started to look different. He could see lands covered with buildings. He saw countless mountain ranges, and even rivers and seas.

Eventually, his vision swam until he couldn’t see. Then, when things were clear again… he was within the world of the bronze lamp.

Rumbling sounds echoed out, and an indescribable force pushed down onto him. It felt like countless mountains were trying to crush him, as if an enormous hand were pushing down onto his head. The pressure shoved him down out of the air, sending him speeding toward the ground.

A moment later, he slammed into the earth.

A boom echoed out, and afterward, he lay prone on the ground, blue veins bulging out on his neck and face. He let out a roar, and his body shook violently. After enough time passed for three incense sticks to burn, he was finally able to struggle into a crouching position.

That effort alone left his garments soaked with sweat. He was trembling physically, and his bones felt like they were on the verge of breaking. His eyes were thoroughly bloodshot.

The intensity of the pressure exceeded anything Meng Hao could have imagined, and was the most terrifying weight he had ever borne. Beneath this pressure, every rotation of his cultivation base made it seem like his qi passageways would burst.

Despite all of that, his eyes gleamed with focus, and even a tinge of madness. Gritting his teeth, he ever so slowly rose to his feet. It took two incense sticks’ worth of time, but in the end, he was standing there, roaring at the top of his lungs.

In that very same instant, one of his remaining seven Soul Lamps was extinguished.

The extinguishing of that Soul Lamp unleashed new life force which flooded into him, strengthening him and allowing him to stand tall and straight.

His eyes grew redder, but excitement filled his heart.

“So, this is the Transcendence Path huh…. I never would have guessed that one of the Soul Lamps I found so difficult to extinguish could be put out as soon as I entered.” He looked around and found himself surrounded by a desolate wasteland. Other than him, no living being could be seen.

However, he knew that he couldn’t possibly be the only person in here. There were other cultivators from the Vast Expanse School who had entered the place in the past, and were still inside after countless years.

Taking a deep breath, he took a step forward and began to walk. He felt like a mortal, plodding along. The path to be tread was a long one, that was something he had come to understand even more clearly as he drew closer to the bronze lamp.

Considering his current state, walking the entire length of the bronze lamp, and then reaching the second portion of the Transcendence Path, seemed almost impossible.

And yet, he didn’t give up. Panting, jaw clenched, he walked alone through the wasteland….

That year, some important events occurred within the Vast Expanse School.

Fang Mu, who had established an unheard-of legend within the Vast Expanse School, who had summoned the Tenth Heaven of all of the Vast Expanse Shrines of the nine sects, stepped onto the Transcendence Path with an Ancient Realm cultivation base.

His departure caused the Chosen of the other sects in the Vast Expanse School to breathe sighs of relief. Living in the same era as Fang Mu made them feel as pressured, as if Heaven were weighing down on them.

Now they could relax, at least temporarily. No one could say for sure whether Fang Mu would rise to new heights on the Transcendence Path, or whether he would fade away and never be heard of again. Time would tell.

Another thing that happened that year was that the Sect Leader and the rest of the group who had entered the necropolis finally returned. They had remained within the necropolis for dozens of years, and yet, were not able to reach the ninth land mass. They reached the seventh, but were unable to open the path to the eighth.

When they returned, some of the original party members were not with them. Those who did return were all in bad shape, and Bai Wuchen hovered on the brink of death.

However, all of the group who had returned alive had made significant progress with their cultivation bases. The faint aura of Transcendence was upon them, which caused a huge stir in the Vast Expanse School.

Also during that year, Patriarch Chi Feng made a cultivation base breakthrough, acquiring his ninth Essence and becoming the Eighth Paragon.

Outside of the Vast Expanse School, somewhere out in the boundless starry sky, Meng Hao’s true self was in the location of the fourth copper mirror shard, flying along at top speed. His face was pale, and blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth. A vast swarm of termites was chasing after him, voraciously devouring everything in their path.

At the moment, he had black armor that covered his arm and chest, giving him incredible battle prowess. By now, killing peak 9-Essences cultivators would be no difficult task for him. And yet, these termites had him bedraggled and fleeing.

The main reason was because there were so many of them they were impossible to even count. Furthermore… each and every one of them emanated brutal auras, the weakest of which was in the Immortal Realm, and the strongest… 9-Essences!

Their numbers were beyond description….

Thankfully, he had prepared well before coming into this area. After speeding along for a short time, he reached a point where he had set up a spell formation earlier. The light of teleportation flickered, and then he vanished. A moment later, the swarm of termites engulfed the teleportation portal.

Apparently, even the flickering teleportation portal was something that the termites considered to be food. Crunching sounds emanated out, and in the blink of an eye, the spell formation had been completely consumed.

However, being unable to consume Meng Hao’s true self, the termites howled in rage. Anyone who could hear the sound of it would be truly shaken.

After a while, though, they begrudgingly gave up and returned to their home, a land riddled with countless passageways burrowed here and there.

In another location in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, dazzling light flickered, and Meng Hao’s true self staggered out. He coughed up a mouthful of blood, then closed his eyes and rotated his cultivation base. Rumbling booms like thunder could be heard inside of him as numerous pustules appeared on his skin. They began to wriggle, and then tiny termites burst out from within. Each and every one screamed and then exploded.

After expelling and destroying several hundred termites, Meng Hao’s body was soaked with blood. However, when he opened his eyes, they shone brightly, and his body quickly recovered.

“I wonder how many countless ages that swarm of termites has existed. How unimaginable….” With that, he looked down at the armor which covered him, as it faded away and transformed into four mirror shards.

He had found the fourth mirror shard in the termites’ nest, and had extracted it from within the body of the termite queen herself.

“With four shards, I have half…. Now, to get the fifth shard.

“My clone is on the Transcendence Path…. Who would have imagined that path to be so difficult…? If my speculations are correct, completing the Ninth Hex is not something that can be done in a single life.

“I have to collect the rest of these mirror shards. Getting just these two took me a few dozen years, but I suspect that acquiring the final four… will take hundreds.” He looked around in exhaustion for a moment before sitting down cross-legged to do breathing exercises. After a while, he rose and sped off in the direction of the fifth shard.

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1484: Extinguishing Soul Lamps on the Path!

Three years passed.

People in the Vast Expanse School still talked about Fang Mu. As for the mountain he had lived on, only Yan'er occupied it now. It was not open to visitors, and her life was once again peaceful and quiet.

Without Meng Hao there, there was no more playful pouting on her part. Sometimes, she just sat there in a daze, daydreaming about the past.

But there was no avoiding the truth…. Her Master was gone.

Other than practicing cultivation, there was only one thing that she absolutely had to do every day, and that was to visit her Master's secluded meditation facilities, where she had enshrined his soul fire.

As long as that soul fire burned, her Master was alive.

One day, she came to visit as she always did. She kowtowed to the soul fire, and then began to speak in a murmuring voice.

"Master, you've been gone for three years. That's not too long….

"Oh, last night when I was practicing cultivation, I finally understood that one magical technique.

"Another thing you don't know about, Master. I heard that yesterday, those jerks from the other sects started making trouble again. Supposedly, they're going to start challenging the Vast Expanse Shrine once more.

“Master, there’s another thing….” Every time Yan’er came, she would speak to herself in his fashion, as if her Master were standing there in front of her. This time, even as she spoke, a tremor suddenly ran through her, and her voice faltered. Her expression flickered, and the blood drained from her face as she stared in shock at the soul fire.

For three years, the soul fire hadn’t changed at all. But just now, it had faded a bit, as though it might wink out at any moment. The sight caused Yan’er to shake, and her mind to spin. She knew that this was the flame of her Master’s life force, and that if it went out, it meant that he was dead.

Obviously, he must be experiencing some deadly situation on the Transcendence Path.

Her heart filled with bitterness and anxiety, and yet there was nothing she could do to help her Master. She could do nothing to change anything, really.

“Master, I’m so useless….” Tears began to roll down her cheeks as she trembled, still staring at the soul fire.

The truth was that Meng Hao really was facing a deadly test on the Transcendence Path. The pressure he was facing had just increased dramatically.

He had continued to walk for three years, and gradually, had become used to the pressure. He had even reached the point where he could jog for a bit. But today, he crossed into a new region in which the pressure suddenly increased by, not double, but tenfold!

It happened suddenly and without any warning whatsoever. Meng Hao had literally no time to even react before being slammed down onto the ground.

Many of his bones were fractured as he struggled against the pressure, and his flesh was smashed. Cracking sounds could be heard as his skeleton hovered on the brink of being shattered.

A sensation of imminent life-or-death crisis swept through him. On top of it all, his cultivation base was suppressed. He began to tremble, and his eyes were completely shot with blood as he let out a howl. However, at the moment, there was nothing he could do.

Any other person would have been destroyed instantly, but Meng Hao’s true self had created this clone following the pattern laid out by the bronze lamp, making it perfect in every aspect.

It was pure, lacking any impurities or defilements, and possessed the ultimate Immortal aura. In fact, it was even possible to say that this clone was an Immortal body unto itself.

When you added in the terrifying divine will of Meng Hao’s true self, it meant that the clone was just barely able to survive under this sudden tenfold increase in pressure.

Time passed. After fifteen or sixteen hours, Meng Hao’s vision was fading. However, beneath the intense, deadly pressure, he was able to extinguish one of his six remaining lit Soul Lamps.

Instantly, life force poured into him, healing his bones and mending his flesh. His cultivation base flourished, and his fading life force once again began to thrive.

Having endured through the deadly crisis, Meng Hao struggled into a sitting position. His face was pale, and he was panting as he looked behind him at the path he had walked. As of this moment, he fully understood how the Transcendence Path worked. The pressure was not something that remained constant, instead, it would increase explosively.

Obviously, the farther one traveled along the path, the more terrifying the pressure got. Furthermore, there was no warning; it would happen in an instant. Life and death were separated by a single step.

As Meng Hao’s life force was restored, Yan’er was there in his secluded meditation facilities in the Ninth Sect of the Vast Expanse School, staring at his soul fire. When the flame began to burn brightly once again, she wiped her tears away, and made a decision.

“Master, I’m going to get strong as quickly as possible. Then… I’ll walk the Transcendence Path with you.” Having made her decision, she took a deep breath and left the secluded meditation facilities.

From that day on, she didn’t remain holed up on the mountain. She left, and began to challenge the Vast Expanse Shrine. Although the tolling bells offered no benefit to her, the other good fortune within the Vast Expanse Shrine was still helpful.

That was her choice: first challenge the Vast Expanse Shrine, then walk the Transcendence Path.

Another three years passed. Meng Hao had now been on the Transcendence Path for six years. So far, he still hadn’t caught sight of anyone else. It was as if he were the only living being in all Heaven and Earth. As he proceeded onward under the incredible pressure, he gradually got used to it. Eventually, he reached the point where he could jog, just like he had before. However, he had the feeling that… an explosive increase in pressure was coming.

As the feeling grew stronger, he pressed onward with increased caution. A few months later, he finally saw someone up ahead. It was a person wearing similar clothes to himself, who proceeded forward with great difficulty, his hair completely disheveled. However, he emanated the aura of the Dao Realm.

This was the first fellow disciple he had seen so far on the Transcendence Path. However, before Meng Hao could even call out a greeting, the man up ahead took a step forward, then shuddered and immediately fell to the ground. Then, even as Meng Hao watched, he transformed into a blood mist. It only took a moment for that blood mist to be crushed down into the ground, and completely dispersed.

Moments later, there was no trace of blood left, nor any other indication that the man had existed. It was almost as if what Meng Hao had seen before was just an illusion.

Meng Hao stopped in place to think, his heart pounding. If he hadn't witnessed the man's death, things might have been a bit easier. Ever since three years before, when the explosive increase in pressure had happened without any warning, he had always thought it might be better to know beforehand so he could prepare himself.

But now he wasn't so sure.

Now that he knew where the border existed, he would be able to prepare ahead of time. And yet, that also opened the door for doubt and fear. Moments ago, he had seen a Dao Realm expert crushed into a blood mist, and that left him more than a little reluctant.

After a long moment passed, his eyes flickered brightly, and he took a deep breath. Rotating his cultivation base, he began to walk forward, filled with determination.

Eventually, he reached the border; if he took another step he would be in exactly the same spot where the Dao Realm expert had been destroyed. He lifted his foot up, and without any trembling or hesitation, he stepped forward.

Rumbling echoed out as incredible pressure exploded down onto him, pressure that was twenty times as powerful as the pressure he had faced upon entering the Transcendence Path.

A boom could be heard as Meng Hao's body began to explode. Blood spattered everywhere, and the cracking of bones echoed out. The pain was so intense that anyone would scream in response, and yet Meng Hao gritted his teeth and held his breath. Massive rumbling sounds echoed out as he rotated his cultivation base and sent out divine sense. Simultaneously, all of his Soul Lamps exploded with power.

Just when he felt like he couldn't hold on any longer, when his body would fully collapse, one of his final five Soul Lamps winked out.

The extinguishing of the Soul Lamp flooded him with life force, like rainfall onto a parched desert. He immediately began to recover, although it still took effort just to stand in place. He closed his eyes for a long time before finally continuing to plod along like a mortal.

“Four lamps left….” he murmured hoarsely, gritting his teeth as he walked along. Extinguishing one Soul Lamp in three years was a bit slow, but was a speed Meng Hao could accept. After all, on the outside, it would have taken hundreds of years to extinguish his remaining Soul Lamps.

However, the deadly pressure in this place could stimulate the potential of one’s life force; either you succeeded, or you died.

Three years later, Meng Hao had been on the Transcendence Path for nine years, and was facing pressure beyond imagination. He had originally assumed that the pressure in the next region beyond the twentyfold increase would be that of a thirtyfold increase. It was only upon stepping into that area that he found, not a thirtyfold increase, but fiftyfold increase!

The explosive level of the pressure completely destroyed half of his body. Blood sprayed in all directions, and it was only by the extinguishing of his fourth Soul Lamp that he managed to survive. After some further rest and recovery, he proceeded on.

“Three more lamps!” he thought. His hair was a mess, and his face was ashen, but he clenched his jaw and proceeded along. It was in his twelfth year on the Transcendence Path that he finally caught sight of someone up ahead.

Not just one person, but four!

They were seated cross-legged several hundred meters up ahead, doing breathing exercises. Their cultivation bases made them all 3-Essences Dao Lords, very close to the 4-Essences level.

As Meng Hao neared, their eyes opened, and they couldn’t hold back from being shocked.

“Ancient Realm?”

“The third tribulation can’t be passed by anyone below the Dao Lord level. How did he get here!?”

“From ancient times until now, Ancient Realm cultivators haven’t been prohibited from traveling this path. However, most of them stop before the third tribulation.”

“Could this be a new Chosen from the sect?” These four Dao Lords had been away from the sect for an entire sixty-year-cycle, and were thus unaware of the legendary Fang Mu. Their eyes began to shine brightly as Meng Hao walked up to them.

As he neared, one of them called out in a hoarse voice, “What sect are you from, disciple?”

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# Chapter 1485: Malicious Intentions!

“The Ninth Sect,” Meng Hao said, looking over at the four Dao Lords.

None of them said even a single word in response. After hearing that Meng Hao was also from the Vast Expanse School, their interest waned. Sometimes plotting, scheming and even open fighting went on between the various factions of the Vast Expanse School. However, most people weren’t willing to bring those conflicts with them into a trial by fire. One could very well end up hurting oneself in so doing.

The four Dao Lords ignored Meng Hao, and he ignored them. He continued walking until he was at the same point along the line as them. There he stopped, and looked at the area up ahead.

Obviously, these four men were sitting in this spot for a reason, and Meng Hao was well aware of exactly why.

“So, not even Dao Lords dare to step past this point?” he thought. Moments ago, the Dao Lords had mentioned a third tribulation. Obviously, the different areas he had entered every three years were the tribulations these people were referring to.

“The first tribulation was tenfold, the second tribulation was twentyfold, and the third tribulation was fiftyfold. Could it be that this fourth tribulation is a hundredfold?” Even as Meng Hao stood there pondering the situation, the Dao Lord who had asked him about his identity earlier opened his eyes.

“The fourth tribulation increases the pressure by a hundredfold,” he said. “You need to be careful, kid. I don’t know how you got here, but… if you step in there without having a 4-Essences cultivation base, you’ll almost certainly be killed.”

Meng Hao turned and clasped hands in thanks to to the Dao Lord. Then he turned back, took a deep breath, and to the shock of the four Dao Lords, took a step forward!

“Are you looking to die?!” That was what all four of the shocked Dao Lords were thinking as Meng Hao started to walk. Rumbling sounds simultaneously echoed out.

Almost instantly, his legs were shredded to pieces. Half of his body was destroyed! His arms burst into a mist of blood, and in the blink of an eye, the rest of his body was shredded to pieces by the hundredfold pressure!

Only his head remained within the blood mist, as well as… 108 Soul Lamps. Three of those lamps were lit, and the rest were extinguished.

Meng Hao only had his head left, but he roared nonetheless, and blue veins popped out on his skin. Then, his Soul Lamps began to vibrate, and then one of the remaining three suddenly went dark!

After the lamp was extinguished, the blood mist which had exploded out began to form back together into a body. Although it was covered with wounds, Meng Hao managed to take a breath, then cough up a mouthful of blood as he fell to the ground.

The hundredfold pressure continued to crush down onto him as he struggled up into a cross-legged position. Then he closed his eyes, rotating his cultivation base and circulating the life force which had come from extinguishing the Soul Lamp as he fought back against the pressure.

“Impossible!” The four Dao Lords on the other side all stood up, faces covered with expressions of disbelief. All of them were panting, and their eyes were as wide as saucers.

“He’s… he’s actually holding up!”

“Only 4-Essences cultivators can enter the fourth tribulation. Not even we can step in there!”

“I remember three years ago when Dao Lord Flamefire from the Seventh Sect walked in, and was killed instantly….” Their minds were reeling as they stared at Meng Hao.

A moment later, one of them suddenly whispered, “Just now, was I just seeing things, or did he have 108 Soul Lamps?”

The other three gasped. Moments ago, they had been so preoccupied with the fact that Meng Hao actually took a step forward that they hadn’t paid much attention to his Soul Lamps. Now that they thought back, they couldn’t help but exchange astonished glances.

“When did someone inhuman like this appear in the sect?”

“I noticed that he only had two lit Soul Lamps. If… if he actually extinguishes those final two, then how powerful will he be?” With each moment that went by, the men were more and more shaken.

A few days later, the group of four looked on with mixed emotions as Meng Hao opened his eyes. He took a deep breath, and then oh-so-slowly rose to his feet. It was difficult to do, but after he finished the movement, he gritted his teeth and began to walk forward, completely ignoring the four Dao Lords.

As he proceeded along, he got farther and farther away, until he disappeared from view. The Dao Lords could do nothing but sit there in silence, completely shaken by the fact that Meng Hao was walking through the tribulation that they themselves could not even enter.

“Only two Soul Lamps left,” Meng Hao thought. “The final two….” His vision was swimming, and his breath came in ragged pants as he proceeded along with great difficulty.

“After those two Soul Lamps, I can step into the Dao Realm!

“In that moment, I will be able to form my Essence, and use its power to begin completing the Ninth Hex!

“That is when I will see if my speculations are correct!” After forming the outline of the first sealing mark of the Ninth Hex all those years ago on the Vast Expanse Shrine, he had begun to speculate about a certain matter.

He had the feeling that this clone of his would actually only be able to complete one sealing mark in his single lifetime. Most likely, he wouldn’t be able to complete even two, let alone nine.

The Seal the Heavens Hex was simply far too powerful and majestic. It was a Hexing magic that, realistically speaking, shouldn’t even be able to exist in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse.

He took a deep breath as he trudged forward. Another three years passed in the blink of an eye. However, he still hadn’t reached the fifth tribulation, the reason being that he was moving much more slowly than before, and also had to rest frequently.

It wasn’t until five years later that Meng Hao reached the point where he could start jogging. Only then did he eventually catch sight of the border of the fifth tribulation.

There, he saw cultivators.

There were two of them, seated cross-legged at almost the same position along the path. Astonishingly, both were 4-Essences cultivators, and one of them, a middle-aged man in a black robe, was at the peak of 4-Essences, just around the corner from 5-Essences.

The two men took note of Meng Hao’s arrival, and one of them even looked at him with a hostile glare.

“Someone’s finally here,” said the middle-aged man. “Ancient Realm…. Wow, an Ancient Realm cultivator who can pass through the fourth tribulation. Perfect for our plan….” Obviously, any Ancient Realm cultivator who could make it here would obviously be a very important person in the sect, and most likely a future Paragon.

Because of that, he hesitated for a moment.

In that moment of hesitation, Meng Hao had already jogged up and was approaching the border itself.

The middle-aged man and the other 4-Essences Dao Realm experts exchanged a glance, and when they saw the decisiveness in each other’s eyes, they gritted their teeth and cast all doubts aside.

They looked over coldly at Meng Hao, who was now only about one step away from entering the fifth tribulation.

The middle-aged man with the hostile expression didn’t seem very anxious, nor did he seem to notice that Meng Hao apparently had the courage to immediately step into the next region. Only people with incredible power would be able to forego resting and measuring up the next area.

“Kid, why don’t we make a deal….” the middle-aged man said, his voice cold.

“Don’t worry,” said the other Dao Realm expert. “The two of us don’t wish you any harm. In fact, we want to offer you something incredibly helpful.”

Neither of them were paying much attention to where Meng Hao was standing. Both of them were of the opinion that virtually no one would ever do anything except rest here before taking another step.

However, even as the words left their mouths, Meng Hao completely ignored them, and stepped forward, his eyes glittering.

“Wait!!”

“Are you trying to kill yourself?!?!” The two Dao Realm experts were completely shocked, and rose to their feet anxiously. As for Meng Hao, a violent tremor ran through him.

The pressure that was crushing down on him had rocketed directly to… one hundred and fifty times the original pressure!

His body instantly collapsed, and not even his head remained intact. He transformed into a mist of blood, provoking grim expressions from the two Dao Realm experts. They had been waiting a long time for someone to come along and fall into their scheme; how could they ever have guessed that the person to show up would be a complete idiot?

“What a moron that kid is! He deserved to die a worse death than he did for stepping in there like that!”

“Who cares if he dies or not? He’s screwed things up for us now. Dammit!” However, their curses were suddenly cut short, and their jaws dropped in shock.

The blood mist that was Meng Hao was acting differently than similar situations they had seen in the past. Instead of dispersing, it began to form back together. It only took a moment for it to once again turn into the vague shape of a person.

When they looked closer, they were shocked to find that… 108 Soul Lamps could be seen within that figure. Two of those Soul Lamps were lit, with the rest being extinguished.

“This….”

It was at this point that one of those two Soul Lamps suddenly winked out. As a result, the life force remaining in the blood mist caused it to begin to form together, even as the intense pressure weighed down!

Apparently, some incredible power was forcing the blood mist back into the shape of a body!

However, the intense pressure seemed to be interfering, as if the power of one extinguished Soul Lamp wasn’t enough to complete the task. But then… the final Soul Lamp flickered, and then, to the disbelief of the two Dao Realm experts, suddenly…

Turned dark!

In that moment, everything went completely silent. Then, a Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering blast of energy shot out from the blood mist, sending the two Dao Realm experts staggering backward in shock!

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# Chapter 1486: The Clone Passes Away In Meditation

The peak 4-Essences cultivators outside of the fifth tribulation couldn’t help but be astonished by the intense energy buffeting them.

Everything shook violently, as though some invisible force were battering the lands.

At the same time, the blood mist continued to converge into a body.

The face wasn’t distinguishable, only the fact that it was a body. Furthermore, there were 108 Soul Lamps within that body, each of which resembled a divine being sitting there cross-legged in meditation.

The shape they formed burst with the aura of an Immortal, as if a true and authentic Immortal were now coming into the world!

The pressure in the area instantly attacked the Immortal aura, forcibly blasting it away, causing cracking sounds to emanate out, and tiny rifts to snake out in the air, as though… the air were about to be destroyed.

The two peak 4-Essences cultivators edged away. They could scarcely believe what was happening as the aura destabilized their minds and crushed down on their cultivation bases. They almost couldn’t even breathe.

Next, another astonishing, terrifying aura surged out from within Meng Hao.

This time, it wasn’t from the 108 Soul Lamps. Instead, there were nine sealing marks, which shone as radiantly as the sun as they swirled around, emanating a pressure that could shake Heaven and Earth.

The pressure caused blood to spray out of the mouths of the 4-Essences Dao Realm experts. They were sent tumbling backward as if by a powerful attack, and even as they screamed, their fleshly bodies were shredded to pieces.

Their bedraggled souls emerged, shrieking. They retreated by several thousand meters, shaking with unprecedented terror.

“What… what are those sealing marks?!?!”

“One look, one single look was enough to destroy our bodies!!” They wanted to flee, but the intense pressure crushing down on them made it impossible for them to retreat. From the look of things, they were about to be completely destroyed.

It was at this point that the nine sealing marks within Meng Hao began to emanate streams of light that connected to the 108 Soul Lamps. The radiant light seemed to burst with an Immortal aura, making them Immortal Threads that connected through all of the Soul Lamps, forming a circle, forming… an Immortal Root!

A spirit like an Immortal, and a foundation that reached as deep as the root of a tree. This was an Immortal Root!

“He’s definitely not in the Ancient Realm. That aura… it’s terrifying! It’s like a Paragon!”

“That’s… that’s an Immortal Root?” The 4-Essences Dao Realm experts were shaking violently, and their souls seemed to be fading away.

The Immortal Root was something legendary within the Vast Expanse School. Supposedly, all cultivators had Immortal Threads inside of their bodies, and when their cultivation base reached the pinnacle, or if their bloodline was powerful enough, those Immortal Threads would form together into an Immortal Root.

Only by possessing an Immortal Root could someone truly be considered… an Immortal!

When Meng Hao extinguished the last of his Soul Lamps and entered the Dao Realm, an Immortal Root appeared.

Because of that Immortal Root, something very strange happened.

His 108th Soul Lamp became the Immortal Root, which in turn created something like a huge tree. It had nine branches, which were connected to the nine sealing marks inside of him. They were like Immortal fruits growing on that tree!

Among those nine branches, the first began to shine with dazzling, multicolored light, and pulsed with colorful bursts of something that looked like lightning.

As for the other eight branches, they were dark, as though they lacked any life force whatsoever.

As the first branch of the Immortal Root pulsed with light, the first sealing mark began to shine, until it was blindingly bright!

As of this moment, the first sealing mark was complete!

A tremor ran through Meng Hao, a Heaven-sealing aura pulsed out from within him, causing everything to shake, and a huge wind to kick up. At the same time, the aura of the Dao Realm exploded out.

Then, his eyes opened.

Stepping into the Dao via Nirvana Fruit!

Meng Hao’s clone was actually formed from a Nirvana Fruit, not for the purpose of living a new life, but to utilize that bloodline power to be able to step into the Dao Realm more quickly than normal!

His eyes shone with light so radiant that a single glance from him seemed capable of completely absorbing the souls of the two 4-Essences Dao Realm experts!

Normally speaking, Dao Realm Tribulation should have descended. However, there was something special about the Transcendence Path that made it impossible for the Tribulation to find him. It couldn't even sense the Dao Realm Aura on him, let alone come to him.

Meng Hao sat there silently. The sudden transformations which had occurred because of the extinguishing of his final Soul Lamp were surprising, and yet, actually served to confirm his previous speculation.

"In this life… I can't complete the Ninth Hex. I can only complete one of the necessary sealing marks." Meng Hao looked into the colorful light cast by the first branch of the Immortal Root, and saw multicolored sparks flickering about. He poured his consciousness into them, and as he did, his life flashed before his eyes.

He saw himself floating down the river, and then saw the scholar carrying him away. He saw the old man playing with him, and then saw his Seventh Year Tribulation. After that, he awoke and joined the Ninth Sect.

He rose from mortal to Immortal, took Yan'er as his apprentice, and then stepped onto the Transcendence Path…. Those were the things he saw.

They were the complete memories of a lifetime, from beginning to end.

"So… that's how it is," he murmured.

"The path I've picked is correct. The Ninth Hex is far too shocking, and shouldn't even exist. Therefore, in my clone's single life, I can only form one part out of nine.

"Well, that's fine. As long as I'm on the right track, everything will be worth it!"

He sensed the 108 Soul Lamps which formed the Immortal Root, something that his true self had never experienced in all of his cultivation. That Immortal Root was feeding and nourishing the sealing marks of the Ninth Hex. After a moment, his eyes shone with understanding.

“The Immortal Root is the focus of the complete Ninth Hex. With that Immortal Root, the nine sealing marks can be completed.

“As for this body, it has walked to the end of its path. If I want to form the second sealing mark, I’ll have to do it another way….

“Even if my clone ended up becoming a Paragon, I would end up being stuck with only this first branch. What I need now… is that second branch.

“Each branch requires simply the memories of a lifetime. In that case, it seems this clone of mine truly must become independent. To my true self, this clone is my fourth life. But now that this Immortal Root has appeared, this clone… has experienced a first life!

“Nine branches. Nine lives…. When the memories of all those lives are combined, and come back from reincarnation, that is when the Ninth Hex, the Seal the Heavens Hex, can be completed!” The more he reached enlightenment regarding the matter, the more he realized that the Immortal Root and the nine branches truly confirmed his speculations from before.

“Reincarnation…. I need to live nine different lives, and save the memories of those lives, regardless of what they are.

“The best thing to do… is seal the memories away. In the end, after the ninth life concludes, I’ll reawaken.” After a bit of hesitation, he sat there quietly, and finally, sighed.

In some ways, he didn’t wish to part with his current life. He turned his head, and although he wasn’t really sure of what direction he was facing, he had the feeling… that he was looking at Planet Vast Expanse.

That was where the Ninth Sect was, and that was where his apprentice Yan’er was.

What he worried about most in this particular life was Yan’er.

“Seal my memories, sever my thoughts, enter reincarnation….” He sighed, waving his sleeve. The blood mist was gone, and he stood just inside the fifth tribulation, eyes shining with increasing determination.

“Enough hesitation,” he thought. He pushed his hand out in front of him, causing the air to shatter and a vortex to appear. Apparently, this rumbling vortex was the doorway into reincarnation.

As it opened, Meng Hao stretched his hand out toward the souls of the two 4-Essences Dao Realm experts who had been plotting against him. Before they could plead for mercy, he crushed them.

Rumbling sounds echoed out as their souls transformed into motes of light, something like fuel for the vortex. The aura of reincarnation grew stronger.

“Yan’er,” he said softly, “our relationship of Master and apprentice in this life… is now over.” He closed his eyes, seemingly recalling past memories. After a long moment passed, he opened them again, and they were bright and clear. Then, he sat down cross-legged, as he… chose to pass away in meditation!

His body gradually began to shine, but at the same time it withered up. In the end, when he was nothing more than a shriveled corpse, his forehead opened up and a soul appeared, shining with Immortal light.

Within that soul was an Immortal Root, and nine sealing marks. That was everything which Meng Hao’s clone had cultivated in his life. The eyes of the soul were bright, like that of an innocent infant. That was because all of the memories of the life he had just lived were severed and sealed away deep inside.

The soul of Meng Hao’s clone stepped into the reincarnation vortex, and vanished. He was leaving… to begin the clone’s second life.

Everything grew silent. Meng Hao’s body remained there, seated cross-legged, motionless….

Meanwhile, back in the Ninth Sect of the Vast Expanse School, Yan’er was in the middle of meditating when suddenly, she shivered. Her eyes opened. It felt as if a cord connecting her to something had just been broken.

Trembling, she rushed over to her Master’s secluded meditation facilities. When she pushed the door open and looked over to where her Master’s soul fire was, she felt like she had been struck by lightning. She stood there quietly, tears running down her face that seemed as if they would never stop.

After a very long moment passed, she coughed up a mouthful of blood. From the look in her eyes, it was as if her entire world… had collapsed.

“Master….”

Meng Hao’s soul fire, which had rested there for so long… had been extinguished.

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# Chapter 1487: Reincarnation!

Time passed. It was the beginning of spring, and on Planet Vast Expanse’s eighth continent, the lands were just beginning to recover from winter. In one particular town, a spring thunderstorm brought a bit of snow with the rain, and a child was born, a boy.

Ten years sped by in a flash, and child was now a young man. Because he was intelligent, and came from a good family, he ended up walking the path of a scholar. He took the Imperial examinations, and a few years later left home to work for the current dynasty of the mortal empire which ruled the eighth continent.

He rose through the ranks quickly, eventually earning a spot in the Imperial court. He soon became infatuated with palace intrigue, something at which he excelled. Eventually he earned a status as high as the sun at noon; the emperor even appointed him as the designated foster-father for his children.

His name was Fang Hao.

Nobody in the capital city of that mortal world was unaware of the name. Of course, cultivators would never pay attention to a single mortal. However, in the current dynasty, he was the ultimate power.

Fang Hao, the most powerful person in the empire next to the emperor himself, was somewhat of an eccentric. He never married, and never sired any offspring. At the age of eighty, he was no longer part of the court, but the people loyal to him, and thus his power, held sway over the entire government.

A word from him was just as powerful as an Imperial edict.

One winter, the snow started to fall, and screams rose up in the capital city. Soldiers were fighting in the streets, filling the city with icy bleakness that seemed colder than the winter itself.

In one corner of the city was a beautiful plum garden, currently blanketed in snow. There, an old man sat in a wheelchair, being pushed through the garden by a servant.

The old man wore a thick, warm coat, and his face was covered with wrinkles. He had an aura of death to him, and his eyes were nothing more than narrow slits. At the moment, he looked just like any other old person might look.

“Lai Fu, come here….” the old man said softly. Instantly, the middle-aged servant hurried around in front of the old man and bowed, a respectful expression on his face, eyes shining with reverence.

The old man’s voice was hoarse as he continued, “I remember mother saying that I was born during the last snowfall in winter.

“Now that I’m old, I keep thinking back to old times….

“I’ve been dreaming a lot lately, dreaming of a different world. I feel like I’m getting closer and closer to actually seeing that world. How interesting.” The old man looked around at the plum garden, then looked up into the sky at the falling snowflakes.

His servant did nothing but listen respectfully.

“Tell the third son that I demand his head on a platter. I’ve never liked him.

“It’s time to end this war of succession. The eighth son is a good kid, pick him.” From the calm way the old man spoke, it sounded as if he were speaking about some trivial matters, not a rebellious war of succession which affected the entire empire!

But that was just how this old man was. His eyes opened wide, and although they were somewhat clouded, there was a power shining therein that was beyond the ordinary.

Now, he was no longer just an old man. He was a supreme being who had the power to determine life or death in the empire!

This was Fang Hao, who was also… the second life of Meng Hao's clone!

The servant voiced his consent, and a few days later, a head was delivered to the old man. The rebellion over succession was ended by a single word. Suddenly, the winter didn't seem as cold as it had been.

A few months later, the last snowstorm of winter hit. The old man sat there watching the snow fall, and slowly closed his eyes. When he breathed his last breath, his forehead opened up and a soul flew out. It had nine sealing marks, and an Immortal Root. Two of the branches of that Immortal Root shone with brilliant light, and the second sealing mark gradually lit up.

The second life for Meng Hao's clone had ended. The entire country went into mourning.

His funeral hall was packed inside and out. All of the officials were present, and common people from near and far came as well. A proclamation was made that, throughout the entire empire, people were only permitted to wear black or white.

The old man had no idea any of that was happening.

His memories were buried and sealed. When he awoke, he was on the seventh continent, born into a family of hunters. It was winter.

When he came into the world, a hearty and excited voice rang out: "The son of Tiger Shi will definitely be the best hunter in the land!"

His third life had begun.

Meanwhile, Meng Hao's true self was far, far away from Planet Vast Expanse, speeding through the starry sky. Vicious-looking black armor covered over half his body, even his left arm!

“I found the sixth mirror shard!” he thought. He looked exhausted, and a bit pale in the face. He had already been away from Planet Vast Expanse for more than a hundred years. During that time, he had faced many dangers, and had already visited hundreds of worlds that were inhabited by living beings.

He was shocked by how difficult it was to acquire the copper mirror shards. Each one was a precious treasure which was guarded carefully by whoever had come to possess it.

Because of the vast stretches of time involved, the mirror shards had passed through many hands, and had all ended up among peak 9-Essences beings. Of course, all such beings were the type who had existed in that stage for countless years.

Furthermore, the majority of those beings were not cultivators, but rather, other strange entities that existed within the Vast Expanse.

Meng Hao had tracked down the fifth mirror shard in a world that had been formed into the shape of a mirror. In that world, he found what turned out to be an undying enemy. They fought back and forth for decades upon decades, and Meng Hao killed that enemy so many times it was impossible to count. Eventually, he found the weakness of the world, and only by threatening to destroy it could he convince the enemy to hand over the mirror shard.

The sixth mirror shard was even more difficult. The difficulty there lay not in a powerful opponent, but rather… the fact that the mirror shard lay in a sludge, a sludge so large that every particle which made it up was a separate dimension.

As for where exactly the mirror shard was in all that, the only way Meng Hao could find out… was to search through the dimensions one by one.

That search took him nearly a hundred years.

In addition to the actual mirror shards, there were other benefits to his adventures. Meng Hao’s experiences left him with a much deeper understanding of the starry sky of the Vast Expanse. As the decades passed, his cultivation base climbed higher and higher, especially after the battles with the powerful enemies he was facing. Furthermore, he was gaining enlightenment of all of his eight Essences.

He wasn’t even sure exactly where his battle prowess was at this point.

However, he did know that with his current cultivation base, he wouldn’t even need to use the copper mirror shards to fight the Sect Leader and the others. He would be able to fight them on his own power, even if the Sect Leader, Sha Jiudong, and Bai Wuchen joined forces.

In the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, the only people who could fight Meng Hao would be those eccentric 9-Essences experts who had lived for countless years, and who were just under the level of Transcendence.

Every time he defeated a powerful expert, he would extend an offer to join him. He was always refused, and would never press the matter, but would simply leave, a slight smile on his face.

However, he always took note of the locations occupied by those experts. Once he finished forming his Ninth Hex, he would return, whether he had Transcended or not. Then, whether they wanted to or not, he would enlist them to help take back his home!

As Meng Hao sped along, he could sense that his clone was entering his third life. Because the clone’s memories were all sealed, it made his connection to Meng Hao grow weaker. However, the basic resonance was still there. Although he couldn’t control his clone’s body after it had been reincarnated, he could see what was happening. He had the feeling that if he attempted to forcibly interfere, a disharmony would occur, which would cause even more problems in finishing the Ninth Hex.

“The second life is over, and the second sealing mark is finished. It seems it will take quite a few years… for my clone to complete the work with the Ninth Hex.

“When he finishes, I’ll be able to… return to the Mountain and Sea Realm!” His expression was one of intense anticipation. He took a deep breath and began to speed in the direction of the seventh copper mirror shard.

It was around that same time that, back on Planet Vast Expanse, the Sect Leader and the others were once again organizing an expedition into the necropolis.

Furthermore, another Chosen had appeared within the Vast Expanse School, someone whose fame rivaled even Fang Mu.

It was… Yan’er!

Bells rang as one Heaven after another was summoned. When she summoned the Ninth Heaven, the entire Vast Expanse School was shaken. And she didn’t stop at one Vast Expanse Shrine. She followed the same path as her master, challenging the Vast Expanse Shrines of all of the nine sects, leaving her name there in the rankings.

She took second place in all of them, and rocked Planet Vast Expanse with the Ninth Heaven.

Countless people were shocked, and couldn’t help but draw comparisons between her and Fang Mu. The commotion her actions caused shook the Vast Expanse School without cease.

Currently, she stood there upon the Ninth Heaven in the Ninth Sect, looking up into the Heavens. Within her eyes could be seen reminiscence, contemplation, and determination.

Just as she had sworn nearly a hundred years before, she would walk the Transcendence Path!

After seeing that her Master’s soul fire had been extinguished, she had sworn an oath which became the focus of her entire life.

Throughout the years, a few people had come back from the Transcendence Path with stories about how Fang Mu had passed away into meditation. Supposedly, his corpse still rested on the path. Strangely, though, it was impossible to actually touch the corpse.

Such stories were told by more than one person, so they had to be true.

However, Yan’er couldn’t believe that her master would simply perish on the Transcendence Path. So she would follow the same road as him. She would go see for herself what exactly had occurred.

A few days later, Yan’er, the second most astonishing Chosen to appear in the Vast Expanse School, extinguished the last of her Soul Lamps, and stepped into the Dao Realm. She experienced a shocking Dao Realm Tribulation that was witnessed by many. When it was all over, she went to the Ninth Sect’s Paragon, just like her Master had, and said the same words.

“I wish to tread the Transcendence Path. Paragon, please open the portal!” As her words echoed out through the air of the Ninth Sect, countless disciples looked on wordlessly. Mixed emotions could be seen on their faces. During the past hundred years or so after Fang Mu had passed away, she had gone from being battered and broken, to being powerful.

She was no longer the little girl she had once been. To these people, she had long since become… their Eldest Sister.

In response to her request, an ancient voice echoed out: “Why are you doing this too….?”

She clasped hands and bowed, voice ringing with determination as she said, “It doesn’t matter, Paragon, I’ve made up my mind!”

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# Chapter 1488: Little Tiger Shi

After a long moment, the Ninth Sect’s Paragon responded with a sigh. “Back then, I should never have let Fang Mu open the portal to the Transcendence Path. This time… I shall not permit such a thing to happen again!”

The death of Fang Mu had been a devastating blow to the Ninth Sect. In contrast, the Chosen from the other eight sects had breathed sighs of relief.

They no longer felt as if a huge weight were hanging over their heads. But then… not a hundred years later, Yan’er accomplished the same feat as her Master, and placed that weight right back where it had been.

When Yan’er heard the response of the Ninth Sect’s Paragon, she closed her eyes, then prostrated herself on the ground. There she remained, unmoving. Apparently, if she was refused entrance, she would remain in place right there.

She was completely focused. This was her mission in life, and she was not making a request. What she was doing far exceeded a request….

She wanted to seek her Master, to confirm whether or not he had truly perished. That was her obsession, and it would never, ever be wiped away.

One month. Six months. A year. Three years….

Spring. Summer. Autumn. Countless days and nights passed, and Yan’er remained prostrated there the entire time. No matter who came to try to convince her to give up, she remained rooted in place. She was focused, and she was determined. People were shaken, and couldn’t help but think of that other even more stunning figure from the past.

This Master and apprentice were truly alike in many ways.

Five years later, rumbling filled the sky as a huge rift opened, and a staircase descended from up above.

“Thank you, Paragon,” she said. Her face was a bit wan, but she took a deep breath and prepared to begin walking up the stairs. But then, a gentle force poured into her body, wiping away her exhaustion and filling her with more energy than before.

“Make it back… alive,” said the Ninth Sect’s Paragon, his voice soft. After the five years which had passed, even he understood the level of Yan’er’s focus, and was left sighing. He wasn’t capable of hindering Fang Mu’s only apprentice.

Rather than just watch her prostrate herself in such a manner and wait for her life force to wither away, he had instead…given in, and let her go.

As the Paragon’s sigh echoed out, Yan’er clasped hands and bowed, then looked up at the rift, her eyes shining with determination, and reminiscence.

“Master, Yan’er is going to come find you,” she said. With that, she burst into motion, flying up the stairs and disappearing into the rift.

The year that Yan’er left, the rest of the Chosen in the Vast Expanse School didn’t feel as if a weight had been lifted, but instead, that it had sunk down further.

Master and apprentice had both stepped onto the Transcendence Path, whereas the Chosen… were still fighting over the Vast Expanse Shrine. It struck them as being similar to the difference between mud and the clouds.

Yan’er slowly made her way along the Transcendence Path. She wanted to go quickly, but was not able to. As for Meng Hao, he had been able to pass through the first tribulation in three years. But Yan’er couldn’t match that speed. She needed much more time, and yet, her determination never lessened. In fact, it increased.

“Master, I’m definitely going to find your remains,” she murmured. The intense pressure weighing down on her made progress difficult, yet she trudged on. She was followed by the mastiff, who quietly walked next to her the entire time.

Time passed in a blur. Fifteen years went by.

The boy who had been born more a dozen or so years earlier in the mountainous forests of the seventh continent was now a young man. He had become one of the most outstanding hunters in the village, and although he wasn’t very tall, he was exceptionally agile. At the moment, he was dashing through the trees, a hunting bow in his hand. After enough time passed for half an incense stick to burn, he suddenly stopped in place, then nocked an arrow to his bow with lightning speed.

A thrum could be heard, and the arrow sped through the air to plunge into the head of a black bear, roughly thirty meters away. It pierced in by about four inches, enraging the bear but not killing it. The bear roared and began to charge through the trees toward the young man.

The young man calmly fell back, loosing more arrows into the bear. Blood flowed, causing the animal’s fury to mount as it raced forward. Then, the young man suddenly stopped in place and looked coolly at the beast.

Seeing that the young man had stopped moving, the bear picked up speed. Just when it was almost upon him, the ground suddenly caved in, and a huge hole appeared. The bear fell in, to be impaled upon the countless wooden spikes which had been driven into the ground at the bottom of the pit.

A howl echoed out as the bear died.

The young man took a deep breath, his eyes shining with excitement. He carefully dropped down into the pit, extracted the bear, and then headed back to the village, the carcass slung over his shoulders.

By the time the boy arrived home with the bear, he was soaked with sweat. Sitting in the courtyard was a muscular, middle-aged man with a broad smile on his face. His right leg was bound tightly; a few days before, he had broken it on a hunting expedition. Thankfully, he was in good health, and had visited the doctor immediately after the accident occurred. In the future, he would have some problems with the leg, but nothing too significant.

“Great! The Shi Clan’s little tiger cub can hunt bears now!”

The young man hurried over, smiling. About then, the door opened, and a middle-aged woman appeared. She looked dotingly upon the young man, tousling his hair for a moment before glaring at her husband.

The man shrank back sheepishly from the woman, then, trying to sound manly, chuckled and said, “Heh heh. He’s no baby any more. I think when I was his age I could hunt bears too. It’s only natural that the son of Tiger Hu could do the same.”

The young man smiled. The warmth and love in the house was palpable. This young man was the third life of Meng Hao’s clone. Little Tiger Hu. 1

The warmth and love in the household persisted for two more years. But then one winter, his father went missing on a hunt, and the warmth faded away.

That night, it was as if the boy’s world collapsed. His mother refused to believe that his father, the best hunter in the area, someone who knew the local terrain like the back of his hand, would simply go missing. Therefore, she went out to search for him. Again and again, night after night.

She never found him. A year later, his mother went blind from grief. Two years later… she passed away.

Before dying, she clasped Little Tiger Hu’s hand in her own, and her vacant eyes seemed to stare off into the distance as she whispered, “Litte Tiger, your father couldn’t have just gone missing….”

Little Tiger Hu wept that day, just as he had wept the day his father went missing. From then on, he refused to live in the village, and also refused to marry. He lived out in the mountains, where he searched relentlessly for his father.

Time passed. One year. Another. And another.

He combed all of the local mountains, high and low. For twenty years he searched. One spring day, in a far corner of the mountains, he found a rusty knife. The instant he saw it, his eyes turned red, for he knew that it was his father’s knife.

It was the first clue he had ever found. He diligently began to search the area, and about 300 meters away from the knife, he unearthed a skeleton.

After examining the skeleton, he noticed a place on the right thigh where it had been broken once, whereupon he dropped to his knees and kowtowed. This was his father who had gone missing all those years ago.

His mother never believed that his father would have gone missing, and neither had Little Tiger Hu. He had always believed that his father was too great a hunter. Even if he encountered some dangerous beast, he would have been able to come up with a way to escape with his life. Besides, the most dangerous animals in the mountains were bears.

After examining his father’s remains, he confirmed that there was no evidence that he had been attacked by a wild animal. Instead, what he found was a wound on his father’s spine, the mark of an arrow. Twenty years ago, he had been shot in the back.

Little Tiger Hu was an expert when it came to bows and arrows, so to him, the evidence was clear.

He looked at his father’s skeleton and smiled, a smile both bitter and vicious. Then, he carried his father’s skeleton back to the village and buried it next to his mother. He erected a burial mound over the two of them, which he knelt in front of and murmured, “Dad, I’ll get revenge for you, no matter what price I have to pay….”

A long time passed before he finally rose to his feet, and when he did, he seemed even colder than before. With that, he turned and left.

More time passed. Ten years later, Little Tiger Hu was an old man. He had spent the last decade using every method and means at his disposal to investigate the truth about his father. In the end, he confirmed that the killer was from a clan in another hunting village in the mountains.

The murderer who had killed his father was still alive.

Little Tiger Hu didn’t bother to investigate the details of why the murder had occurred. All he knew was that when you killed someone, you had to pay the price with your own life.

One snowy night, when everything was freezing and cold, he entered the house of the killer. When he emerged, he reeked of blood, and was carrying a severed head. He had killed the old man, and when his children fought back, he killed them too. He had slaughtered the whole family.

He ended up being fatally injured, but still managed to stagger back to his own village, severed head in hand. He threw the head down in front of his parents’ grave, and then sagged to the ground. He began to drink alcohol, and talk softly to his parents in words that no one could hear.

The snow fell harder. The seriousness of his injuries grew worse by the minute. He was like an oil lamp on the verge of sputtering out. As his consciousness faded, he suddenly seemed to catch sight of his parents.

After a while, he closed his eyes and lay down on the burial mound, as if he were reuniting with his parents, and once again feeling the warmth and love that he had as a child.

The snow covered his corpse, but it couldn’t cover up the soul which flew out of his forehead. As the soul rose up into the sky, it looked back at the burial mound and sighed. Within the soul, it was possible to see that the third sealing mark was shining with radiant light.

The soul clasped hands and bowed to the corpse, then turned and reentered the cycle of reincarnation.

His third life was over, and the fourth life… was beginning.

It was in that moment that Yan’er entered the second tribulation in the Transcendence Path. The tenfold pressure caused her to grit her teeth, but she continued on. Her cultivation base was now at the peak of the 1-Essence level.

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# Chapter 1489: Chen Lei

The clone’s fourth life also began in winter, on the sixth continent, in a sprawling mansion.

In addition to the cultivators on Planet Vast Expanse, there was also a warrior class. In some ways, warriors also existed on a higher level than mortals, although to cultivators they were little more than ants.

In his fourth life, Meng Hao’s clone was born as the Young Lord of the mansion. The mansion was located in the capital city of the mortal world of the sixth continent. For some years, it had been inhabited by a clan which had been founded by one of the most powerful warriors in the land. In fact, in the mortal world, he was known as an Arch-Warrior.

The Arch-Warrior’s surname was Chen. The day Meng Hao was born, a thunderstorm raged outside, and so he came to be known as Chen Lei. 1

On the day the clone’s fourth life began, Meng Hao’s true self was speeding through the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, away from the location where the seventh copper mirror shard had been located. Behind him echoed an enraged roar.

A dust storm exploded out, filling the starry sky, transforming into an enormous head. Its face appeared to be enraged, and yet, was too frightened of Meng Hao to go chasing after him. Its roaring caused the starry sky to tremble.

“The day I unseal myself, I’ll come looking for you!” raged the face. “I’ll wipe out your entire bloodline. I’ll eradicate everyone connected to your Karma!”

Meng Hao’s true self smiled and responded in a cold voice: “You won’t have to come looking for me. I’ll come back for you before that seal is unraveled.”

The difficulty in acquiring this mirror shard had exceeded that of all the previous ones. Despite his current level of power, he had experienced many dangerous situations before managing to get his hands on it and make an escape.

He flew along, an excited expression on his face. He now had only one more mirror shard to collect before he could call out to the copper mirror. By this point, he was already able to get a general feeling for where the copper mirror was, although it was impossible to narrow down enough of a direction to search for it directly.

“Once I get that last mirror shard, I’ll be able to call out to the copper mirror!” His eyes shone with anticipation as he shot in the direction of the eighth mirror shard.

Even considering the speed he was capable of, it took him ten years to reach his destination. As he neared the location of the eighth shard, he frowned.

There was no vortex here. Instead, he saw a flower!

It was astonishingly large, about as big as half of Planet Vast Expanse.

It’s roots seemed to meld into the void itself, and as for the flower, it was not in a state of bloom. It was still little more than a bud. However, the aura it emanated caused even Meng Hao to shiver in fear.

He could clearly sense that the eighth copper mirror shard was located within that flower bud. However, no matter what divine abilities he unleashed, he couldn’t even scratch the surface of the flower bud.

From what he could sense, the flower was currently in a state of growth, and after some time passed, it would bloom naturally, without any interference or assistance from him.

“I just have to wait until it blooms…?” he thought, frowning. After a moment passed, he tried out a few more divine abilities, but in the end, sighed in defeat.

“I guess it doesn’t matter. My clone is still in his fourth life. He needs a bit more time. I guess… I’ll just wait here and watch the flower grow.” His eyes flickered as he made some augury calculations. “At the fastest, it will probably take a hundred years, and at the slowest, a few hundred. However, once it blooms… I’ll be able to enter. Then, the eighth mirror shard will be mine.” With that, he flickered into motion, appearing on one of the flower’s leaves, where he sat down cross-legged, closed his eyes, and began to meditate quietly.

Time passed. Some years later on the sixth continent of Planet Vast Expanse, his clone’s fourth life, Chen Lei, was no longer an infant. He was now ten years old, and yet was already an important person in the clan mansion.

He had a high status, and was shockingly talented. He had advanced by leaps and bounds in his cultivation of the way of warriors, and already had developed inner qi. He had even come to be called the Junior Arch-Warrior!

Despite his talents, he wasn’t very interested in training, and spent most of his time playing. His parents weren’t happy about that, nor was his grandfather, the Arch-Warrior who had started this whole clan. However, they could do little more than sigh.

In the final analysis, it could be said that Chen Lei grew up quite pampered. In fact, when he finally reached the marrying age, he suddenly became obsessed with traveling. He took his servants all over the country, and by the time he lost interest in that, he was already thirty years old. His parents thought that he had finally reached the point of being ready to settle down, and were about to arrange a marriage….

But then Chen Lei suddenly fell in love with a girl. She was a very important person, being the daughter of the emperor. She was on an outing once when Chen Lei ran into her, and he was instantly smitten. After that, he poured all of his energy into pursuing her.

He lavished her with gifts to gain favor, and did virtually anything she asked him to do. It got to the point that the entire clan was dragged into the matter, and soon everyone began to suffer because of it. Chen Lei's grandfather was gradually weakening in his old age, and his parents, despite being powerful warriors, were not Arch-Warriors. Because of Chen Lei's pursuit of this beautiful girl, the entire clan entered a state of clear decline.

At one point in his pursuit of the princess, she manipulated him into killing an important court official, which instigated a huge catastrophe. In order to save Chen Lei's life, the clan had to part with all of its remaining wealth. In addition, his grandfather ended up serving the emperor and performing all sorts of dangerous tasks, which pushed him closer and closer to the grave.

His grandfather had originally assumed that this would be a wakeup call for Chen Lei. How could he ever have imagined that, despite waking up to reality, Chen Lei would then become entranced with Immortal cultivation? The clan was destitute, and Chen Lei was almost forty years old, and yet he still decided to head out to search for the path to Immortality.

He walked that path for an entire decade, and yet made little progress.

Ten years later, he was half a century old. His hair was graying, and he was growing weaker physically. It was with listless eyes that he finally returned home, only to find an empty and abandoned mansion, as well as numerous gravestones.

Everyone was dead. The second year after he left, his grandfather had passed away. In the eighth year, his parents had been killed by a powerful enemy. All the other members of the clan were slaughtered, and it was only because of the kindness of the surviving servants that anyone had been buried at all.

When Chen Lei saw all of this, his mind went blank. It rained that day, and he ended up standing in the downpour, shivering. Grief filled him, and he began to weep, his tears mixing in with the rainwater as they fell to the ground.

“Dad…. Mom…. Grandpa….” Now he truly awakened. He thought back to his life, and he suddenly wanted to laugh. He recalled the grand aspirations of his youth, how he had developed inner qi at such a young age, and how he had thought his entire life would be simple and easy. He had always thought that as long as he wanted to succeed in something hard enough, he would.

He had loved the finer things in life. He had traveled the world. He had fallen in love with a beautiful princess, and thrown away vast sums of wealth to try to win her heart. In the end, she used him to kill someone, someone he should never have killed. Thus had disaster been wrought.

He dragged his clan into ruin, and then ran off to practice cultivation. Now that he had returned, Chen Lei felt completely useless, a sinner who had killed his entire family and clan.

In his bitterness, he laughed until he coughed up blood, and then collapsed onto the ground, where hey lay, pelted by the falling rain.

The next day, the rain stopped. Chen Lei woke up, and looked even older than before. Although he was only fifty, it was as if he had already had one foot in his coffin.

From that day on, a new gravekeeper lived in the mansion, who would often contemplate his life, and his past madness.

Time passed. Ten years later, his back was hunched with age. He could tell that his life was nearing its end. That winter, it was extremely cold. One bright morning, snow began to fall, and he suddenly heard the sound of horse hooves. Off in the distance, a military procession could be seen.

Soldiers rode horses in tight formation around a palanquin. As the procession neared, someone in the palanquin apparently said something to the soldiers, and they all stopped moving. A pretty young woman emerged, dressed in expensive clothing. Next to her was an old lady, who she supported with her arm as they walked toward the mansion.

“Grandmother, why did we stop here?” the young woman asked, sounding a bit puzzled.

“When I saw this place, I thought of an old friend,” replied the old woman. She was an old-timer, but had aged well, and wore expensive clothing just like the young woman. Few wrinkles could be seen on her face, which radiated a healthy glow.

The grandmother and granddaughter stopped outside of the barren mansion. The granddaughter was polite, and didn’t ask any further questions. As for the old woman, mixed emotions could be seen on her face, as though she was thinking about things that had happened once upon a time. There was even a bit of remorse in her eyes.

After a long moment passed, the old woman sighed, and was about to turn and leave, when her granddaughter suddenly said, “Grandmother, someone’s there.”

The young woman pointed as the front door of the mansion opened, and Chen Lei appeared, stooped over like an old man.

Almost immediately, soldiers rushed forward protectively. The old woman studied Chen Lei’s face, and a touch of uncertainty appeared in her expression.

“You are…?” she asked.

Chen Lei bowed his head and replied in a raspy voice, “One of the servants here. I watch over the graves.”

“Have you lived here for a long time?” the old woman asked.

“Ten years,” he replied softly.

The old woman didn’t respond at first. When she did, she asked, “The Young Lord from this place… did he… ever come back?”

Chen Lei opened his mouth as if to respond, then closed it and simply shook his head.

The old woman stood there in silence for another long moment. Then she called for the soldiers to leave two pieces of silver to help pay for the maintenance of the graves. With that, she returned to the palanquin, and the procession began to move on. As it did, the old woman pulled open the palanquin curtain and looked back at Chen Lei. This time, she could clearly see his profile, and suddenly, a tremor ran through her.

Oh so slowly, her eyes went blank, and she closed the curtain.

The procession disappeared off into the distance.

Chen Lei ignored the two pieces of silver and looked up at the falling snow. How could he not have recognized that old woman? She was the very princess he had fallen in love with all those years ago.

Murmuring to himself in a voice that only he could hear, he walked back into the mansion.

The snow began to fall harder.

Chen Lei straightened up his clothing and walked into the rear courtyard, where the clan graveyard was located. He had long since dug a grave there for himself, which he slowly climbed down into. At the bottom was a coffin, which he entered. After closing the lid, he took a final breath, and then closed his eyes.

“What a waste of a life,” he thought. He never opened his eyes again.

1. Chen is a common surname, the same surname as Meng Hao’s Elder Brother Chen Fan. Lei means thunder or lightning

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# Chapter 1490: Little Mute

In his first life he was a Chosen. In his second life, he reached the pinnacle of the mortal world. His third life ended soaked in blood. His fourth life was, for the most part, a waste.

After dying in the fourth life, his soul flew out, and the fourth of the nine sealing marks glittered radiantly.

The soul entered the cycle of reincarnation, and the fifth life began.

As that happened, Meng Hao’s true self was sitting cross-legged on the leaf of the huge flower, waiting for the flower to bloom.

On the Transcendence Path, Yan’er was struggling forward with gritted teeth. She had passed the third tribulation, and was proceeding toward the fourth. She repeated to herself over and over again that she had to keep going. Based on what she had heard from others who had come back from the Transcendence Path throughout the years, she knew… that her Master was in the fifth tribulation.

And she was getting closer and closer to that very location.

“Master, Yan’er is going to find you.” The intense focus in her eyes grew stronger. Taking a deep breath, she walked on.

The fifth life began amidst winter snowfall, in a town on the fifth continent. The birth of the child brought no happiness to that family, and was in fact met with silence.

A moment or two later, the young father bitterly walked out of the house… and placed the baby down onto the street.

"It's not that dad and mom don't want you," he murmured, "it's just that you…."

The reason the baby was abandoned was because he was crippled. He was born with only a stump of a tongue, ensuring… that he would never be able to speak. Furthermore, he had a birthmark on his face, making him frighteningly ugly.

The baby's crying grew more and more hoarse as it echoed out into the freezing cold. Eventually, a middle-aged man appeared, wearing a raincoat and a wide, conical hat. When he heard the crying, he walked up to the baby.

Looking down, he sighed, then picked the baby up into his arms and carried him home. The man lived in a small, cold house, within which swirled a permanent aura of death.

Gradually, a frozen corpse became visible, which apparently the man… had performed an autopsy on.

This man was the town coroner.

"Abandoned, can't talk, and ugly as a stray dog. I'll call you Little Mute." The man looked at the baby and smiled. After taking off his hat, it was revealed that he had a long scar running down his entire face, giving him a very vicious appearance. His smile was somewhat frightening, but his eyes were kind.

Little Mute was raised on the gruel provided him by his father the coroner. He grew slowly; apparently the iciness of winter had seeped into his bones, and he was always weak and fearful of the cold. He never seemed to develop fully, and it always as if a strong enough gust of wind came along, he might be carried away with it.

Because his father was a coroner, he had frequent contact with dead bodies. Any time someone in the area was killed, the corpse would be sent to the coroner for examination. Gradually, Little Mute learned the same skills as his father.

“Remember this type of wound, Little Mute. Usually it indicates that the spleen was punctured…..”

“See, this one was obviously poisoned.”

“Cut the chest open here, Little Mute, and check for tiny white insects. If you see any, make sure not to touch them.”

“Look at this fellow, Little Mute. His head and torso have both been slashed open. What kind of power would do that? Not even warriors could inflict such precise wounds. These injuries were caused by an Immortal. I wonder what he possibly could have done to offend an Immortal.”

At first, Little Mute was afraid. However, thanks to the constant instruction given him, he eventually became quite familiar with examining corpses. By the time he was a teenager, he didn’t feel any fear at all, and would sometimes even go behind the coroner’s back to do his own autopsies.

The coroner grew older and weaker. Soon, he wasn’t taking care of Little Mute, instead, Little Mute was taking care of him.

More years passed, and eventually the coroner had trouble seeing, and could no longer perform the duties of his trade. At his recommendation, Little Mute became the new town coroner.

Little Mute was an adult, but was still physically weak, as though he had never fully grown up. The birthmark on his face grew larger, making him unbearably ugly, and he was as mute as ever. Couple that with the fact that he had frequent contact with corpses, and he developed a somewhat sinister air which ensured that no girl would ever want to marry him.

Little Mute didn’t really care about that though. He would be like his father, and live single for all his days.

He went about his coroner’s work diligently. It was almost as if he were naturally gifted in those arts. Ten years went by in which he came to be known as the best coroner in the area, and was often called out to other towns for consultations.

The old coroner continued to decline. He had no wife to accompany him, only Little Mute. He would often jabber garrulously, whereupon Little Mute would listen quietly and smile.

Although he couldn’t speak, he was able to make some signs with his hands, allowing him to communicate to some degree.

Years passed, and Little Mute became so well-known as a coroner that he came to be frequently summoned to the capital city. The old coroner eventually died. He passed away peacefully, and in no pain. Little Mute wept.

After burying the old man and paying respects, Little Mute left the town and moved to the capital city.

Year after year passed. Before long, Little Mute was fifty years of age, and was famous throughout the empire. A mere look at any corpse, and he could determine all the details about the cause of death. He could even perform such wonders with skeletons that had been dead for many years.

His understanding of corpses eventually reached an indescribable level, and he came to be known as the empire’s Grandmaster Coroner.

However, coroners were still coroners, and would always be considered lowly. Despite reaching the pinnacle of his field, it was a position that commanded true respect only from others in that same field.

And yet, Little Mute wasn’t resentful or dissatisfied. He knew that he was nothing more than a mute, incapable of speech. In his later years, he returned to his hometown and began to write a book.

He compiled all his knowledge about corpses, all of his experiences and judgements, into one prolific work. One year, winter came, and as he was looking out of the window at the snow, he thought about a story the old coroner had often told.

He had described finding Little Mute in the street one year as a baby, in the middle of winter.

Little Mute sat there quietly, thinking, and his eyes gradually turned blank. He didn’t have much life left in him, and was still as afraid of the cold as he had always been. He suddenly felt as if his life had no warmth in it at all, as if he were like a corpse.

He knew that he wouldn’t be able to last for much longer. One night, he walked out of his house and, facing the gusts of snowy wind that blew against his face, returned to the spot where the coroner said he had found him.

Looking down at the ground, he sighed softly, then laid down and looked up into the sky. He let the cold embrace him. He allowed the snow to fall onto his face. It didn’t melt.

Gradually, a smile appeared on his face, a smile that would never fade….

He went as he had come. In his entire life, he never spoke a single word….

His fifth life ended. It was a bit dull when compared to his fourth life. He had none of the glory he had experienced in his first life, none of the vast power of his second. There was no bloodshed like his third life. If anything, his fifth life had been one of mediocrity.

The only thing he had possessed was peace and quiet, as well as mastery of his field of work.

His soul rose up and seemed to merge into the wind and snow. At the same time, the fifth sealing mark began to shine brightly.

Yet again he was reincarnated, and his sixth life began.

About that same time, Yan’er was trembling as she walked along the Transcendence Path. The mastiff had been with her for the hundreds of years she had been walking along, and by this point, she was reaching the end of the fourth tribulation.

Her cultivation base had risen continuously along her journey, and her enlightenment had grown. She was now at the level of a Dao Lord. The fourth tribulation had been very difficult.

One step after another, she proceeded along, drawing ever closer to the fifth tribulation.

Eventually she reached the border, and her eyes began to shine brightly. At long last, she was able to lay eyes on her Master….

There he was, a corpse sitting in meditation, as he had sat for hundreds of years….

He was covered in dust, but his facial features were clearly distinguishable. Everything about him caused Yan’er’s heart to tremble. She quietly dropped to her knees and kowtowed.

“Master,” she said hoarsely, her cheeks wet with tears. Despite the hundreds of years which had passed, her memories of her Master were as clear as ever.

She would never forget. Could never forget.

This was her focus. Her obsession. It was why she had climbed the Vast Expanse Shrine and walked the Transcendence Path. The reason for everything was her master. She wanted to see for herself whether or not he had truly perished.

As of this moment, she could look at his corpse, but could not approach it. If she took even a step into the fifth tribulation, she would be destroyed in all aspects. She could only stand there, one step away from him, weeping. After a long moment though, her eyes began to shine with a strange light.

“Wait a second….” A tremor ran through her as she looked at Meng Hao’s forehead. After a moment passed, she gritted her teeth and extended her right hand toward his face.

To do that, she had to reach into the fifth tribulation. Pressure exploded onto her arm, which instantly began to transform into a blood mist. However, in the very moment before that happened, she managed to touch his forehead.

Rumbling could be heard as Yan’er coughed up a mouthful of blood. She staggered back, her right arm half destroyed. And yet, she didn’t care about that. In that brief moment, she had discovered a secret which no other person would have noticed.

“Master’s forehead opened up. This is the Dao of Reincarnation. That magic… was something he passed on to me. His soul… didn’t naturally disperse. Other people might think that, but not me. I’m his apprentice, and from what I can sense, Master… isn’t dead!

“But if he didn’t die, then why did his soul fire go out…? Unless….” Yan’er was not the young girl she had been so long ago. She was intelligent to begin with, and because of her understanding of Meng Hao, she had already guessed the truth. However, she didn’t want to accept it.

After a long moment, her eyes began to glow, and she began to breathe heavily. The focus in her eyes grew more intense.

“Master… even if you are in the cycle of reincarnation, then I will journey among the masses to find you….” With that, she rose to her feet. By means of medicinal pills, she regrew her right arm, then took a deep breath and gave Meng Hao’s corpse a final, long look. Then, she and the mastiff turned and headed back toward the entrance of the Transcendence Path. Her destination: the nine continents of Planet Vast Expanse, where she would search for her Master.

She understood how the Dao of Reincarnation worked, and from the clues present, she was sure that her master was currently somewhere on Planet Vast Expanse.

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1491: Xu Liuyun 1

During the last snowfall of winter on the fourth continent, the curtain opened on the sixth life of Meng Hao's clone.

He was born into the prosperous Xu Clan, which owned lots of land and property in the region, and controlled numerous profitable businesses. Most of their income came from agricultural interests.

They lived in one of the large cities in the empire of the mortal world, which was situated next to a trade canal. They were fabulously wealthy.

A child born into a clan like that was destined to live a life free from adversity, and to always have everything he needed and wanted.

Thankfully, in this life, Meng Hao's clone was not a silkpants like he was in his fourth life. He grew up into an intelligent young man who was quite prominent even as a youth. Soon, he began to assist his father in managing the family companies.

As time passed, and he grew older, he came to be in charge of all of the family's business interests. He ran things well, but at the same time, began to develop a certain ferocity. It was a fierceness manifested, not toward his fellow clan members, but toward his business opponents.

He excelled at hostile takeovers, and soon all of the other businesses in the entire city had been swallowed up by his clan. Of course, an accomplishment like that couldn't be made without a bit of killing. Soon, the hands of the clone's sixth life came to be stained with blood.

Such methods were contrary to how his father preferred to do things, and in fact, went against the entire clan. However, he didn't take such matters very seriously. He did things how he wanted to, and by the age of thirty, the Xu Clan had come to be the richest in the area!

Eventually, he came to realize that he should support the scholars and intellectuals among his clan, so he founded a college. As time passed, his support of the scholar class allowed him to influence the imperial court.

Soon, his plotting extended his network to encompass even the warrior class in the empire.

He married, but felt no attachment to his wife. It had been done as a form of business alliance, with the hope of sending the clan’s influence soaring to an even higher level.

And that was exactly what it did. By the time he was forty, the clan businesses were the most successful in all the lands. Over time, he expanded into many types of trade, and yet in the end, their foundation was always agriculture.

Under his leadership, the clan moved to the Imperial City, where they became the official Imperial merchants.

As the Imperial merchants, it was impossible for anyone to compete with them in terms of profits. Of course, in addition to the material benefits, there were other advantages to their new status.

By the age of forty-five, Xu Liuyan had reached the absolute pinnacle of his life. Numerous clan members had become officials within the current dynasty, and many of the scholars he had supported were now members of the government.

His entire clan had soared to incredible heights. Most people would likely be content to just enjoy the fruits of such labor. At first, he felt a bit confused about what to do next, but then, he realized that a storm was brewing.

That storm came in the form of a famine that had just taken grip on the land.

That winter, Xu Liuyan stood in a courtyard in the clan estates, looking at the snow falling out of the sky. Behind him were a few dozen members of the clan, standing there silently. Some of them were members of the Imperial court, some controlled powerful businesses within the Imperial City, and others were direct bloodline descendants of the clan who had been sent out to control other interests in other parts of the empire. There were even some powerful warriors present.

These were the people who controlled the power in the clan, and although it couldn't be said that their reach stretched throughout the entire empire, they weren't very far off from that.

Any one of them could be considered extremely prominent. And yet, as they looked at the man standing in front of them, their hearts were filled with reverence and awe. He was a man who, in the space of a few dozen years, had created an incredible storm of events.

Although he wasn't well-acclaimed in the Imperial court, and was even looked down upon by the emperor, the prime minister, and many others, the important members of the clan all knew… the terrifying power he wielded when it came to wealth and profit.

After a long moment passed, the sixth life of Meng Hao's clone, the man known to all as Xu Liuyan, finally spoke.

"This is an opportunity," he said. "Perhaps the Xu Clan can take the next step, and actually come to control the entire empire. Of course, there is also the possibility… that we will be wiped out." After another long moment, his eyes glittered with ferocity.

"Execute the operation!"

As soon as the words left his mouth, all of the Xu Clan's power, both within and without the Imperial City, was focused on one task. And that was… barricading off all of their farmlands from the public, in the middle of the famine!

It was a concept that, from the very beginning, seemed soaked in blood. Barricading farmlands in the middle of a famine carried the implication of driving up the price of grain goods to exorbitant levels, to the point where many people would be forced to sell their own properties to pay for food.

It would likely lead to many deaths because of starvation. Families and clans would be destroyed. However, among the ranks of the noble clans, the Xu Clan would have an incredible opportunity.

In order to carry out the plan, the Xu Clan used all of the wealth it had accumulated over the past decades. They plotted, created alliances, and killed enemies. In the end, several months after the famine ended… they controlled so much land that their power within the empire was almost without rival.

They had their own private army, and vast swaths of land, bought and paid for with blood.

By paying out numerous gifts, they managed to appease the noble class. The complicated scheming required caused more than a few gray hairs to appear on Xu Liuyun's head, and yet his mind never ceased to plan and plot.

The peace that followed lasted for fifteen years, during which time Xu Liuyun didn't make much of a stir. That made people less suspicious of him, and gave him a chance to quietly expand the interests of the clan.

One year, when he was sixty, he once again stood in a courtyard watching the snow fall. Behind him, hundreds of clan members stood quietly. Anyone who knew the identities and statuses of these people would be shocked; they were people who could shake the entire empire.

“This is an opportunity….” Xu Liuyun said, his voice hoarse. These were the same words he had spoken fifteen years ago. After a long moment, he nodded.

The nod of his head sparked a war of succession. Ten years passed by in a flash. The successor he had backed in the war became the emperor, and married a daughter of the Xu Clan. The young emperor even viewed Xu Liuyan as his foster father.

Virtually the entire Imperial court was loyal to him, even the prime minister. His word carried more weight with the army than an Imperial edict.

By this point, he had just as much power as he had had in his second life. Although it wasn't as obvious as it had been during that life, since he now operated in secret, his cold, calculating eyes could look down on the entire empire.

During this life, he had been heartless and unethical. He had no children, and yet, at the age of seventy, there was not a single person who dared speak to him without subconsciously bowing their heads.

Five more years passed, and his body began to decline. Eventually, he lapsed into a coma. Chaos was fermenting in the clan, and there were certain members who were itching to fight for control.

A year later, during the winter, he awoke from the coma. An old servant supported him with his arm as he stood in a courtyard, watching the snow fall. This was the third time in his life that he had been faced with an important decision.

"After I die, the clan will be thrown into unrest. After it passes… there may not be a Xu Clan in the empire any more." He knew that the reason for all of that was because he had no male heir.

"The only option is… to take control of the empire. Use the power of the empire to quell the clan turmoil. That way, any chaos will exist, not just in the Xu Clan, but in the empire as a whole. The result will still be favorable for in the end, though. As for the Xu Clan, it won't matter who gains control, at least the clan will continue on."

Xu Liuyun, the sixth life of Meng Hao's clone, stood there silently. This time, he spent much more time deliberating than he had on the previous two occasions. A long, long time passed. Finally, he sighed, thinking about all of the blood that had been spilt to carry out his first plan, and acquire all of that land.

In the end, he chose not to attempt to overthrow the empire. Looking older than he ever had, he gazed at the falling snow, the final snowfall of winter, and closed his eyes. Gradually, his aura faded away.

The day after he died, the Xu Clan was thrown into chaos, and that chaos caused the entire empire to be shaken. Soon, the emperor intervened. Over the course of the following months, virtually the entire clan was slaughtered.

Eventually the emperor, who was now a middle-aged man, received a message that the final remaining members of the Xu Clan had returned to the city they had come from, by the canal. They were back in their original ancestral mansion. The glory they had built up over the past hundred years was like a flower in a mirror, or the moon reflected on the waters of a lake.

This was Meng Hao’s sixth life…. His arrival rocketed the Xu Clan up to the pinnacle of grandeur, and upon his departure, he took that grandeur with him. It was as if time had flowed in reverse, returning the Xu Clan to its original state.

When his sixth life ended, the sixth sealing mark was complete. Meng Hao’s clone entered reincarnation and began his seventh life.

During those hundred years, Yan’er traveled among the continents, visiting the mortal worlds, searching for the aura of her Master.

She was completely and utterly convinced that she would be able to find his reincarnation.

If she couldn’t find him in one life, she would look for him the life after that, and the one after that… until she found him.

Meng Hao’s true self was still sitting cross-legged on the flower out in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, meditating as he waited for the flower to bloom.

The flower bud appeared to be just on the verge of opening up.

As for the Sect Leader and the other top experts of the Vast Expanse School, they were once again back in the necropolis, intent on opening the way to the ninth land mass. Although they weren’t completely confident, they had to try. If they failed, they would try again, and again after that. They were focused and filled with anticipation as they began their journey.

At the same time, the Ninth Sect continued to expand, growing larger and larger. By this point, their forces were vast, and included numerous powerful experts. They subdued one Realm and world after another.

That was when Meng Hao’s seventh life began on the third continent.

1. This surname Xu is the same as Xu Qing’s surname. Liu means “to leave behind” and yun means “cloud”

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# Chapter 1492: Mutt

The third continent on Planet Vast Expanse was unique among the other continents because it never had winter. All the seasons there were like spring. And yet, on this particular year, it snowed.

That snow didn’t fall on the entirety of the continent, but specifically on one of the deserts there. Along with the snowfall, a child was born into the world.

This was the seventh life of Meng Hao’s clone, and he was born into a very poor family who owned nothing more than a camel and a mutt dog. His father was a desert guide.

On the day the child was born, the dog froze to death, and therefore the father insisted on giving his son the name… Mutt.

Mutt was not born lucky. When he was three years old, his father was bitten by a viper while guiding a caravan through the desert. Although he made it back home, he died shortly thereafter.

His mother didn’t seem to care much about her husband’s death. After she buried him, she cared for Mutt for another five years. When he was eight years old, she ran off with a passing merchant.

On her way out the door, she told Mutt that his father had once been a bandit. Acting as a guide, he had led her family into the desert, where killed all of them except for her. Then forced her to marry him.

For her entire life after that, she had always looked forward to his death.

Mutt watched quietly as his mother made her way off into the distance. He lived alone after that. One day, an old man appeared who offered to take him to a place where there was food to eat. Mutt didn’t hesitate; he immediately left with the old man.

He had been under the assumption that they would leave the desert, but contrary to his expectations, the old man simply took him to another location in the same desert. There, he was thrown into a hell on earth.

He was one of a whole group of children of the same age, all of whom received extensive daily training. They were being molded into… assassins!

In the years that followed, Mutt saw many people die. Some were killed by others, some he killed himself. Some died during the training process.

If you wanted to live, you had to be ruthless. If you wanted to live, you had to kill.

Mutt wanted to live, so he was ruthless, and he killed. He trusted no one, and as such, had no friends. The only thing which existed between him and those around him was hostility, and the ferocity of the fighting.

Every year, a new group of children would be brought in. Every year, a vast quantity of corpses would be buried.

Mutt grew numb to it all. At a certain point, the other children came to fear him. Even some of the adults looked at him in the same way.

“Maybe I’m ugly,” he thought one day, running his fingers across his face. He was only sixteen, but his face was already crisscrossed with scars, making him look very sinister. In his second year in this place, one of the older men had tried to force him into performing a revolting act, and when he refused, the man slashed up his face.

Two years later, Mutt cut that man’s head off.

Mutt rubbed the side of his head, where his ear should be. He had lost his ear during a round of training in which only one person could come out alive in the end. His opponent had torn off his ear, but he had ripped his opponent’s throat open.

Mutt’s expression was cold as he looked at his throat in the mirror, which also had a vicious-looking scar on it.

In fact, his entire body was covered with scars, but he didn’t care.

When he was seventeen, the old man who had brought him to this place took him away, along with two other boys and a girl. All three of them were people like Mutt, who had slaughtered countless opponents throughout the course of their training.

The four of them were taken to another training ground, where there were other youngsters their same age. The same monotonous existence ensued. Three years later, when Mutt was twenty, he participated in his final trial by fire. He beheaded a hundred opponents, causing everyone to look at him with fear. Even the old man who had taken him all those years ago had the same look in his eye.

Mutt didn’t care. He just stood there quietly.

The following months were the happiest he had ever experienced. He was sent to learn etiquette, and was also treated by a doctor, who used strange medicinal plants to remove the scars from his body.

Although his ear couldn’t be replaced, the miraculous medicines changed his appearance so much that he now looked like a handsome young man.

From then on, he was sent near and far throughout the continent on assassination missions. At the direction of the old man, he killed countless targets, including men and women, young and old.

He cut down people of all types, and never asked questions about them. He killed quickly and efficiently. However, he had a particular aversion to seeing victims who had a right ear. Every mission that he accomplished, he would slice off the right ear of the target.

Time passed. Ten years later, he had lost track of how many people he had killed. However, word had begun to spread; he now had a new name in addition to ‘Mutt’.

He was called Ear-Slicer. 1

It was a macabre name.

He had always assumed his life would go on in the same way forever. But two years later, after he finished yet another mission, he was walking through a town and saw an old woman, a beggar. Her eyes had been dug out, her tongue cut off, her legs broken.

As Mutt stood in front of her, he smelled a noxious odor. He looked down and could see that her legs were putrefying, and had been broken so many times that the bones would never heal properly.

For many years, not a single emotion could be seen on his face, but now, his expression flickered. He looked at the woman somewhat blankly, and shivered.

This was the first time that, not only did he not return to the headquarters after the mission, he also killed someone other than his target.

He slaughtered many people in that town. Anyone who had threatened or harmed that old beggar woman ended up having their throats slit by Mutt, and their ears cut off.

There was one rich household in the town who was said to have once been a family of traveling merchants, and were thus particularly at fault. He exterminated the entire family. In the end, he took the old woman away with him.

The event caused a huge stir in the entire country. Numerous constables and inspectors closed in on the area, and the assassin’s guild also sent people to try to silence him in death.

The following years were spent on the run, in exhaustion. He killed many people, and found himself in many dangerous situations.

Eventually, the old woman died. She wasn’t killed; she simply succumbed to her previous injuries.

In all the years she was with Mutt leading up to her death, she never knew the identity of the person caring for her. After she died, he wrote a few words on her gravestone.

My mother.

– Mutt

He stood quietly in front of her grave for a long time. As he did, people began to appear nearby. They were familiar faces, each one being an assassin from the guild.

None of them spoke. After a long moment, their killing intent exploded out, and they began to converge on Mutt. He looked up, and began to fight like a wild dog.

One enemy after another fell. In the end, he was the only one left standing. To him, these opponents were simply too weak. Shaking his head, he cut off their ears and then left. He ended up traveling to a place where he assumed nobody would go looking for him, the desert. He was tired of killing people, and wanted to live alone in peace. Eventually, he took up the same line of work as his father, and began to guide people through the desert.

Years passed, an entire decade. One day he awoke to find his house surrounded. When he walked out the door, he found himself facing a group of assassins led by the same old man from years ago. He stood there looking at Mutt, legs trembling from the ravages of age.

After a long moment, the old man spoke out in a soft voice. “Kill him.”

A spectacular slaughter ensued. Corpses fell left and right, and wounds opened up all over Mutt’s body. He didn’t care, though. After killing all of his opponents, he sighed and walked up to the old man. The old man looked on in bitter silence at the man who he himself had brought into the guild as a boy, seemingly waiting for him to say something.

Instead, a blade flashed.

Mutt frowned as he looked around at all the bodies. He left, going to the first training facility in the desert, then the second, and finally to the guild headquarters.

He had no idea how many people he killed. It was like back in the old days when you either killed or were killed.

After slaughtering everyone in the assassin’s guild, he felt very tired. He returned to the desert, where he once again began to work as a guide. A year passed. Then another, and another. Eventually he lost track of time. One day he realized that he was an old man, and his body was very weak. There he was, was looking out at the desert, absent-mindedly feeling the right side of his head where his ear should be. Snowflakes began to flutter down from the sky, and at the same time, a beam of light appeared off in the distance. Within that beam of light was a woman.

The snow fell, and Mutt’s eye slowly closed.

Thus ended his seventh life. As his soul flew out to once again enter reincarnation, the woman flew toward his body at breakneck speed.

She was beautiful, and when she finally reached Mutt’s corpse, she could sense the power of reincarnation. Tears began to stream down her face.

“Master….” It was Yan’er. She had searched for years and years before coming to this place and sensing familiar fluctuations. However, she had been just a bit too late.

She knew that her Master was already in the cycle of reincarnation.

After a long moment of silence, she buried Mutt’s corpse. Then she turned, her eyes flickering with determination as she began to follow the already fading aura of reincarnation.

She was convinced that… she was getting closer and closer to finding her Master.

That year, Meng Hao's clone completed the seventh sealing mark. Then, his eighth life began, on the second continent. With every reincarnation, the branches of the Immortal Root would shine even more dazzlingly than before. However, his memories came to be sealed even deeper. It was really as if he were experiencing a brand new life each time.

1. Two interesting things. First is that in Chinese "Ear-Slicer" sounds very similar to "Mutt." You might even say they rhyme. Second, Er Gen's name literally means "ear"…

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1493: Wait Until I Grow Up….

Meng Hao's clone began his eighth life on the second continent.

Apparently, he really did have some special connection to snow. Each of his lives began in the snow, and this life was no exception. In the final snowfall of winter on the second continent, a baby was born into a mountain stronghold. His crying upon birth was loud and clear.

His father was a mountain bandit, the second in charge of the stronghold. As for the leader of the bandits… it was his mother.

The first time that seven-year-old Li Hao ever yelled at his parents, he cried: "I want to be a bandit too!"

In response, his mother spanked him for three days straight.

He had an older brother who was also an excellent bandit, and was quite renowned within the stronghold. His brother eventually won the approval of his parents, and was named the Young Lord of the stronghold.

As Li Hao grew up, his parents continuously presented him with servant girls to keep him company. Gradually, he came to understand what his mission in life was. He needed to provide grandchildren to his parents, to ensure that the offspring of the Li Clan would forever exist in Heaven and Earth.

It was a glorious mission, but also came with a lot of pressure. And yet… that was how his parents raised him. Every time he accomplished one of his missions, he could see how envious his older brother was.

His mission, and the looks given him by his brother, left Li Hao feeling very pleased. The harder he worked at it, the more his goal in life changed from that which he had stated at seven years of age.

“I don’t want to be a bandit. I’m going to make sure that the offspring of the Li Clan fill the entire empire! In a hundred years, the Li Clan is going to be one of the biggest parts of empire!

“In a hundred years, everyone in the Empire is going to feel like they’re related!”

His declaration stunned his parents and left his older brother shaken. In fact, everyone in the entire stronghold was completely astonished.

Li Hao quite enjoyed the expressions on their faces, and came to view his mission as extremely important. From that day on, he began to work whole-heartedly. He began to do a lot of research, and closely studied certain popular, illustrated reading materials….

His own physical training, combined with the efforts of the servant girls, ensured that his skills only continued to become more refined. By the time he was twenty years old, he had already sired 59 children.

At that point, he stood at the peak of the mountain, looking up into the Heavens, tears of pride streaming down his face.

He felt like he was a roc, a roc who was being held back by being cooped up in the mountain stronghold. In order to accomplish the mission he had originally set out to accomplish, he chose to leave the stronghold and travel the lands.

His parents thought it was a crazy idea, and his brother… actually looked at him with fear. However, he didn’t care about any of that. In his mind, his family just didn’t understand his mission in life.

“You people just don’t get it. One person… can change the world. Of course, the condition is that he has to be a man. A strapping, energetic man. And that man is none other than me… Li Hao!”

That night, he left the stronghold. Wrapped up in his ideals, he climbed down the mountain, and made his way out into the world. Experiencing the wide world really opened his eyes, and he felt as if his mission were more important than ever. In fact, he felt that every day that passed was a wasted opportunity.

He started in a village near the foot of the mountain. Thankfully, he was handsome, and had a very charming pair of eyes, allowing him to successfully accomplish his mission in the village.

How could he ever have imagined, though, that fully accomplishing his mission would be so difficult? Twenty years passed. He was now forty, and had encountered numerous difficulties. People had even tried to kill him. It was with great difficulty that he managed to sire 107 children.

Feeling just as energetic as ever, he decided to leave the village and go to… the next village.

“It’s fine,” he told himself. “Villages are small, but my dreams are big.” In the second village, he used every method at his disposal, spending all of the wealth he had accumulated in the past twenty years to get him through yet another twenty years. By that time, he had sired his 178th child in the second village.

He was moved to tears by that fact, and yet, despite being sixty years old, gritted his teeth and took all of his grown children, and even the grandchildren, in a campaign to even more distant lands.

The first destination… was the third village in this mountain range, almost ten kilometers away.

Li Hao was feeling more pleased with himself this time. He had been indoctrinating his children and grandchildren with his ideals. After all, he had long since come to the conclusion that he wouldn’t be able to accomplish his mission on his own. However, with their help, he would surely be able to reach the glorious heights which he sought.

He and his sons and grandsons only spent three years in the third village before they occupied its entirety. It was then that Li Hao could laugh heartily and, instead of traveling out himself, send his sons and grandsons out into the rest of the country.

One after another, his sons and grandsons carried out his ideals, and his mission, out from the village into other locations. Ten years passed. Every year, another one of his descendents would grow up, and would be sent out.

After another ten years passed, Li Hao was more than eighty years old, and his descendants could be found in every business and vocation throughout the empire. As for exactly how many descendants he had, not even he knew. However, in his mind, tens of thousands was good enough.

He was happy with his life, and yet he continued to live for another fifteen years. When he was one hundred years old, the clan that Li Hao had founded had reached a shocking size. There were hundreds of thousands of members, and if they all joined together at the same time, they could count as a small country.

At the moment, they were spread throughout all of the lands, but that made it all the more terrifying.

Although he was a bit lonely in his old age, when the snow began to fall one winter, and his life came to an end, he was content and proud.

“I lived an extraordinary life, and I changed the future of an empire, of the world even. I alone… changed everything.” Li Hao laughed three times, and then closed his eyes and passed away.

Meng Hao’s true self was aware of all of this, and would most definitely have gone back to Planet Vast Expanse to stop it from happening, were he not stuck next to the flower.

He could never have imagined that after seven relatively normal lives, his clone’s eighth life would have been spent doing something so absurd. Thankfully, the bodies left behind by his clones after reincarnation had no connection to Meng Hao himself.

Bodies did not reincarnate, only souls.

After the conclusion of the absurd eighth life, the memories were sealed, and the clone began his ninth life on the first continent. Meng Hao's true self was a bit worried about what would happen in this final life.

After a bit of contemplation, he decided not to interfere. He could sense that the clone's final life was just beginning to unfold. However, it was in that moment that his expression suddenly flickered, and he shot to his feet in surprise.

He had just sensed that the ninth life was completely different from the second through eighth lives. Those lives had been experienced by the soul passing through reincarnation. The bodies had not been Meng Hao's, only the souls.

However, as the ninth life began, Meng Hao could sense that this ninth life was exactly the same as the clone's first life. Unexpectedly… this life was somehow made from Meng Hao's own blood. Instead of saying that this was his clone's ninth life, it would be more appropriate to say that it was his actual clone!

The soul was his, and the blood was his. This was something completely different from before. Apparently, after his clone' body passed away into meditation on the Transcendence Path and his soul went through years upon years of reincarnation, his original body was somehow reconstituted in this ninth life. This was the similar to how the infant Fang Mu that had floated down the river, formed from Meng Hao himself, was actually the same person as Meng Hao.

Meng Hao was both shocked and nervous because of this development.

However, that mere fact alone was not what left him most shaken. The biggest twist was that this clone's ninth life felt different from anything that had happened before. He could barely sense its existence, as though the connection between the two of them was extremely faint. Meng Hao's true self couldn't see exactly what events were playing out in the clone's ninth life.

“The ninth life is the most important, the most critical. That must be the explanation for this strange development….” Having reached this understanding, he didn’t feel much better. He was just about to head back toward the Vast Expanse School, when suddenly, the enormous flower began to bloom!

As it did, the aura of the final copper mirror shard began to spread out. Meng Hao’s true self took a deep breath.

“I won’t interfere with the clone. I’ll let things play out as normal. Perhaps interfering would lead to negative consequences. Plus, if I don’t get this copper mirror shard right now, then who knows how much longer I’ll have to wait.” With that, his eyes flickered with augury calculations. Without any further hesitation, he flickered into motion, heading into the enormous flower.

So far, he hadn’t interfered at all in his clone’s lives, and therefore, he would do the same for the final life; he would remain completely hands-off!

Meanwhile, in the first continent, in the capital city….

The capital city was large, and had a sizeable population, but was located in a relatively remote region. Snow fell and the wind blew as a husband and wife emerged from a temple after having prayed to be blessed with a child.

They had been married for many years, but had never conceived any children. Over the years, they had come to the temple on a few occasions to piously pray for offspring. They were starting to reach their later years, and were getting anxious about the matter. They had even consulted doctors about the situation, but no solution had been provided.

After leaving the temple, they headed back home, stewing in their anxiety. However, as they were walking along, they were surprised to hear the sound of a baby crying. Looking over, they saw an infant lying on the ground at the foot of a wall.

They quickly picked the baby up and looked around, but saw no one. Their hearts went out to the child, but after looking at him more closely, they realized the truth. Someone had abandoned the child in embarrassment because he had been born blind.

After a bit of thought, they decided to take the baby home with them. To them, this child was like a gift from the Heavens.

The boy would never see the light of day; he would live in a world of darkness. And yet, they chose to become his parents. They gave him the name Little Treasure, and began to raise him in an environment of warmth and love.

Little Treasure didn’t realize that he was different from everyone else. He thought… that the world was simply black.

He thought that everyone was like him. He didn’t even understand… what eyes were.

The Heavens had taken away his vision, had prevented him from seeing the world. However, he had been blessed with nimble hands, and a quiet, clever personality.

His parents loved him dearly from the very beginning. They held him when he walked, even until he was four or five years old.

His life was happy, and in fact, he thought that he must be the happiest person in the world.

When he felt the warmth of the sun on his face, he would ask, “Dad, mom! What’s so warm?”

“That’s sunlight from the sun.”

“The sun?”

“It’s a huge ball of fire up in the sky….”

“Can I touch it? How did you find out about it?”

“…. Little Treasure, you… the Heavens have their eyes closed, so you can’t see. Just wait… wait until you grow up, then you’ll be able to see.”

When he heard the birds singing, he would ask, “What’s that sound?”

“A bird.”

“Mom, what do birds look like?”

“They have wings, so they can fly in the sky….”

“Oh, okay. Once I grow up, I’ll be able to see them, right? When you were kids, you couldn’t see anything either, right mom, right dad? I get it.”

To hear such words from his little mouth caused stabs of pain to fill his parents’ hearts. They would hug him, and would cry silently.

The child was unaware of their pain. He was as happy as ever, blessed even. Furthermore, he held a keen anticipation for being able to eventually grow up.

One day he heard some neighbor kids making fun of him for being blind, although he didn’t know what the word meant.

That night, when his mom was rocking him to sleep, he asked, “Mom, what does it mean to be blind?”

Suddenly, he felt his mother shiver, and could sense that she had begun crying. He reached up and gently wiped the tears away.

“Don’t cry, mom…” he said softly. “I won’t ask that question ever again.” And for the rest of his life, he never did.

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1494: Little Treasure

Starting the next day, he was much quieter. When he felt something warm on his face, he wouldn’t ask what the sun was. When he heard something singing, he wouldn’t ask what birds were.

Eventually, he heard enough from other people to understand what it meant to be blind. He learned that the sky wasn’t black, it was blue. The world wasn’t black either. It was filled with many colors.

He also realized that he was different from the other children. They had all been able to see the world from the moment they were born, whereas he….

He thought about what his parents had told him, that he would be able to see the world after he grew up. That was a lie. And yet, he didn’t want to believe that it was a lie, and continued to tell himself that after he grew up, he would be able to see.

The reason he couldn’t see… was that he hadn’t grown up yet.

He began to grow more reclusive. He didn’t want to go out and play with the other children, mostly because they always bullied him. They made fun of him for not being able to see, joked about him being blind. But inside, he wanted to have friends, so he did his best to simply smile, and not cry. When he did play with the other children, and got shoved to the ground, tearing his clothes and scraping his skin until it bled, he just smiled.

People made jokes about him being blind, and those jokes only continued to become more and more cruel. He felt so bad that he wanted to weep, but he held it in. He didn’t want to harm the friendships he had. He needed those friends.

One day, he got very excited when the other children, whom he could hear but not see, suddenly came looking for him. They said they wanted him to play a special game with them.

“It’s called blind man’s bluff. Little Treasure, you’re blind, so you have to chase us, okay!?”

“Whoever you grab, that person will become blind. Oh right, we’re going to go to a special place to play. Just wait until we say go, then you can start chasing us.”

“Um… I don’t want to play,” Little Treasure said, trembling inwardly. He knew that being blind was a terrible thing, and didn’t want to make other people become blind.

“Shut up! If you don’t play with us right now, then we’ll never play with you ever again!” Refusing to discuss the matter any further, the children dragged him out to play. He wasn’t sure where exactly they were taking him, but eventually he heard birds singing. Eventually they shoved him into a kneeling position.

“Remember, don’t start chasing us until we say go.” They started laughing, the sound of which eventually began to fade off into the distance.

He knelt there on the ground, not moving, worried that he would break the rules and start moving too soon. If that happened, maybe they wouldn’t want to play with him again. So he waited… for a very, very long time.

Soon the singing of the birds faded away, and he started to get cold and scared.

“Can we start now?” he cried out. But no one answered.

“Can we start now?” He shivered. It was getting colder, and yet no one responded to his cries.

“Can we start now…?” He slowly rose to his feet, trembling. He thought he could hear the sound of people nearby, but no one answered his question.

He was scared. The world was pitch black, and the warmth that he normally felt because of his parents was gone. Now, the world was not only black, it was freezing cold.

“Can we start now…? I… I don’t want to play any more….” He was so frightened that tears began to roll down his cheeks.

“Where are you guys? I don’t want to play anymore…. I want to go home.

“Dad? Mom? Where are you…?” Weeping, he began to walk forward, flailing his arms in front of him, but grabbing ahold of nothing but air. After a few steps, he fell.

“Mother… where are you…? I’m scared….” He struggled back to his feet, weeping in fear. The feeling of being completely alone was stifling. His garments were torn. His head was bleeding. And he was only seven years old. Stretching his hands out in front of him, he began to walk forward slowly.

What he couldn’t see that he was currently in a forest, and that up ahead of him was a lone wolf. It was slowly approaching him, staring at him with cold, merciless eyes.

Just when the wolf was about to pounce on him, it suddenly shivered, then sagged in place. A moment later, it had transformed into nothing more than ash. A young woman appeared, wearing a long green garment.

She stared at the child, somewhat in a daze, watching as he groped his way along. She saw the tears on his face, and could hear him crying out in that heartbreaking voice. The young woman bit her lip, and began to cry.

“Master….” she murmured. This was Yan’er. She had been searching for her Master for hundreds of years, and on this day, she had managed to track the faint traces of the Dao of Reincarnation to this very place. At long last… she had found the reincarnation of her Master.

The weeping boy’s foot caught on something, and he began to fall forward, but Yan’er gently caught him in her arms.

Little Treasure shivered and reached out to feel who it was that had caught him. She felt warm, almost like his mother. There was something very familiar about her. She even smelled familiar.

“You….” he whispered.

After a moment, Yan’er knelt down in front of him, smiled, and asked, “Your name is Little Treasure, right?”

“Yes,” he replied, nodding. The woman’s voice was gentle, and suddenly, he wasn’t afraid any more.

It was at that point that voices could be heard off in the distance. Apparently, a large group of people were walking along and calling out sporadically.

“Little Treasure, where are you…?”

“Little Treasure… it’s me, mom. Where are you…?”

“Little Treasure….” It was his mother and father, along with other people. They sounded anxious, even fearful, as they called out to him.

“Dad…. Mom….” Little Treasure trembled.

Yan’er hesitated for a moment, then chose not to take the boy away. Instead, she reached out and tousled his hair.

“Your mom and dad found you,” she said softly. “I’ll… see you later.”

She took a step back to leave, but Little Treasure suddenly felt as if he were about to lose something important.

“Big Sis…” he blurted, “May I… may I touch your face?”

Yan’er’s eyes glowed with a kind warmth as she looked at the boy. This was her Master, who meant everything to her.

She knelt back down in front of the boy. His hands were smudged with dirt, but she didn’t care. He reached out and ran his fingers slowly and carefully across her face, and after a long moment, he smiled. Yan’er looked at him one more time. Then, smiling, she turned and left.

Moments later, Little Treasure called out to his parents, who rushed over, weeping, and scooped him up into their arms. After leaving the forest, he never asked about what had happened. However, in the following days, he refused to play with the other children. He preferred to be alone, where he would think back to the woman he had met in the forest.

Sometimes, he felt as if she hadn’t actually left, but was next to him, watching over him. Although she never revealed herself to him, he always had that feeling.

Time passed. Ten years went by, and Little Treasure had grown up. However, he still lived in a world of darkness, devoid of any light. It was as if the Heavens had forgotten all about him.

His parents had grown old, although he couldn’t see that. And yet, he could tell that their voices had become different. Because of his nimble hands, he began to learn the same carpentry skills as his parents.

Since he rarely had anything important to do, he took up sculpture as a hobby. Although he couldn’t see, he could imagine, and as such, he carved sculptures that were incredibly vivid and full of life. They were like the dreams of a child.

He carved birds, and houses, and the people closest to him.

He didn’t care that people called him blind. He didn’t care that he couldn’t see the world. In his heart, he had come to find his place in Heaven and Earth. His wooden sculptures. They were everything to him.

Although the sculptures didn’t always resemble reality, they were what he saw in his heart. Furthermore, if he was able to feel something with his hands, then he would be able to reproduce it perfectly in sculpture form.

“Mother once said that the Heavens had closed their eyes. I want to sculpt Heavens with eyes wide open. Something that only I can feel.” Little Treasure chuckled and shook his head.

Gradually, word of his sculptures spread in the city, and he was able to start a little business of his own. His parents, who continued to spoil him, were content.

Their son might have no eyesight, but he was an outstanding person. Eventually, it reached the point that he began to care for them in their old age. It was a touching thing, and they felt very content. Their hearts were filled with the love of a lifetime.

However, they still worried about Little Treasure. Although he had the skill to support himself in life, they still felt that he should marry.

Unfortunately, being blind, few families would be willing to marry their daughter to Little Treasure.

Three years passed. Eventually, someone acted as a matchmaker, and found a young woman from a small household somewhere in the city who agreed to marry Little Treasure. She was very pretty, and the fact that she had agreed to the marriage left Little Treasure’s parents delighted. They gave their life savings as a betrothal gift, and escorted her back to their home.

That day was one of the happiest days in this old couple’s life. They held the wedding ceremony, and hosted the wedding banquet. Red lanterns were hung. After the relatives and neighbors departed, Little Treasure’s parents led him to the wedding chamber.

He was nervous. He had never even met this girl before. Everything had been arranged by his parents. However, he was a filial son, and would support his parents’ decisions, even though marriage was something he didn’t particularly care about.

Furthermore, he was curious as to why this young woman would agree to the marriage when he was blind.

When he entered the room, there she was sitting on the bed, wearing red wedding garments and a red veil. Although he couldn’t see her, he could sense her presence.

Feeling his way across the wall, he approached the bed, reached out, and touched his wife.

She shivered, but didn’t say anything.

He stood there quietly for a moment before gently lifting up her veil. “May I touch your face?”

The young woman seemed very nervous; she was gripping her garments tightly with both hands, and was breathing heavily. Her anxiety was no act; deep in her heart, she wasn’t sure if she was doing the right thing. But this was what she had always wanted, regardless of whether it was in terms of past lives or the present….

She took a deep breath and then said, “Yes.”

Little Treasure reached out and gently ran his fingers down her face, feeling her eyes, her nose, and her lips. Suddenly, a tremor ran through him.

——

Before we forget about all the previous reincarnations of Meng Hao’s clone, let’s have a fun poll to see which one we liked the most!

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# Chapter 1495: World of Ice and Fire!

“It’s you…?” Little Treasure said, his heart trembling. It was a face he could never forget. In the darkest, loneliest moment of his entire life, it was the source of the only warmth he had felt.

Eventually, Little Treasure’s hands dropped away from her face. He smiled a warm, happy smile.

Years passed.

The ninth life of Meng Hao’s clone went on quietly on the first continent. Meanwhile, Meng Hao’s true self was in the enormous flower out in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, in the middle of his search for the final copper mirror shard!

He was currently sitting cross-legged in a world frozen over with ice. “Once I get this final mirror shard, my collection will be complete, and I’ll be able to… call out to the copper mirror and summon it back to me!”

Everywhere he looked he saw nothing but ice. There were plants, but they had apparently been frozen. They were beautiful, like ice sculptures.

“What a strange place….” he thought, his eyes flickering. He had been searching this area for the copper mirror shard ever since entering the flower. However, the coldness here was so intense that it would frighten even 9-Essences experts. It pressed against him at all moments, threatening to transform him into an ice sculpture, just like everything else.

After resting for a bit, he proceeded along through the world of ice. No matter how he searched, he couldn’t find the copper mirror shard, and yet, he could sense that it was somewhere inside of this enormous flower.

As he proceeded along, he suddenly heard a powerful roar coming from somewhere off in the distance. The ice around him shuddered, and cracks appeared on its surface.

He frowned, turned to look behind him. Off in the distance, was what appeared to be an enormous mountain, fully 300,000 meters tall, its peak piercing the clouds above. The mountain was currently shaking, and was the source of the roaring he had just heard.

A closer look would reveal the truth: he wasn’t looking at a mountain, but an enormous giant. The giant was currently trying to rise from a cross-legged position, but powerful Essence-sealing symbols surrounded it, preventing it from doing so.

Meng Hao snorted coldly. This 300,000-meter-tall giant was the first life form he had encountered after entering this place twenty years ago. As soon as it saw him, it had transformed from a mountain into a giant. Eyes flickering with killing intent, it had begun to fight him.

Communication with the thing had proved impossible. Meng Hao had tried to show it good will, but it had completely ignored him, and its killing intent had even increased. Angered, Meng Hao had begun to fight it.

The 300,000-meter-tall giant was no match for him, but also seemed to be incapable of dying. Throughout the twenty years, Meng Hao had fought and defeated it several times, and yet had never been able to obliterate it completely.

In the end, he didn’t feel like fighting it anymore, and had sealed it in place so that he could search for the copper mirror in peace. Now, the giant was trying to break free from the seals.

Meng Hao looked away, ignoring the giant as he continued his search.

Years passed in which he continued to fly along. Eventually, he realized that it seemed to be getting less terrifyingly cold. At a certain point, he didn’t even feel cold.

“Could it be that I’m entering another area?” he thought, picking up speed. A few months later, he hovered in the air looking off into the distance. Unexpectedly, he saw numerous cities within the icy landscape.

They were scattered about seemingly randomly, and there were many of them. Tens of thousands. Furthermore, these cities were filled with countless living beings.

They were huge. Compared to these cities, the cities that existed in the Mountain and Sea Realm and Planet Vast Expanse were like toys.

Meng Hao hovered there in thought. During the many years he had spent searching for the copper mirror shards, he had been to many, many worlds. He had seen all sorts of living creatures that were not cultivators. There were some that looked like wild beasts, and some that even had bodies made of mist.

At first he had been shocked at the sight of such beings. But after some time passed, it became nothing out of the ordinary. He was now fully aware that there were countless bizarre forms of life within the starry sky of the Vast Expanse.

Meng Hao looked at the cities up ahead. Even though they were quite a distance away, he was still able to clearly see the living beings within them.

They looked similar to cultivators, except they were enormous. Most were about thirty meters tall, like mountains trudging along. Even the babies among them were at least three meters tall.

Some of the oldest appeared to be over 300 meters tall sometimes as tall as 3,000. With his divine sense, Meng Hao was able to locate the most powerful among these entities. It was a giant at the early 9-Essences level, and it was at least 30,000 meters tall.

He wasn't located within one of the cities, but was sitting cross-legged in the form of a mountain.

However, based on the fluctuations of the giant's aura, it was possible to tell that it was bursting with life force. Surrounding the giant were other powerful experts in the form of mountains. None of the others were 30,000 meters tall, but there were a few hundred who were 15,000 meters tall.

These giants were the native species of this world, and Meng Hao could tell that they were of the same species as the 300,000-meter-tall ice mountain giant he had seen before.

Further off in the distance, Meng Hao was shocked to find that the realm of ice ended. Beyond, he could see green plains.

There were also countless cities visible upon the plains. All of them were connected together to form something like a wall, within which were living beings that resembled cultivators. They were all of a normal height, and yet had wings growing out of their backs.

The wings changed depending on the levels of their cultivation bases. The more powerful they got, the redder they became.

"What an interesting world. One part is freezing, another is warm…. Wait, no. This is the middle of the world, where it's warm, making it suitable for inhabitation by these giants and those avian people.

"If that's the case, then further off in the distance… it must be burning hot." Meng Hao sped into motion, heading toward the green plains. His cultivation base was so far above the living beings he passed by that none of them even detected his presence.

He continued to fly along for years. Down below, the lands began to change from green to red. Burning lava flowed, casting a crimson tinge to the sky. Things started getting so hot that most living beings who attempted to enter the area would be transformed into ash.

It reached the point where even 9-Essences cultivators would be completely destroyed. Meng Hao was beginning to feel uncomfortable. Eventually, he saw something off in the distance that looked like a mountain. He also felt an aura no weaker than the one he had felt from the ice giant. That aura was now rushing toward Meng Hao as if it had just sensed him.

Everything rumbled violently as the mountain transformed into a volcano that erupted with blazing fire. As it did, a crimson Flamephoenix burst out from within. It looked at Meng Hao, its eyes flickering with killing intent and vigilance. Then, it shot toward Meng Hao, surrounded by a sea of flames.

As it neared, the Flamephoenix shrank down into the form of a woman. She was beautiful, with two crimson wings, and she stood upon a sea of elemental fire that shot through the air.

“You’re not welcome here, foreigner,” she said in a furious voice. “Get the hell out!” As her voice echoed out, the air around Meng Hao shattered, and the sea of flames roared toward him.

His eyes flickered, although he wasn’t surprised to find such a powerful entity here. The ice plains had the Icemountain Giant, and the land of flames had a Flamephoenix. The world was balanced.

“To be able to practice cultivation up to a level comparable to the peak of the 9-Essences, and even a bit beyond that, means these things are intelligent. Furthermore, they couldn’t possibly be prone to changeable emotions.

“In that case, the Flamephoenix and the Icemountain Giant immediately acting hostile must indicate… that they know about the copper mirror shard!” His eyes glittered as he fell back, waving his right hand to summon numerous mountains, which smashed into the sea of flames.

Rumbling sounds echoed out, and the world shook. The woman-form Flamephoenix’s face flickered. Killing intent swirled in her eyes, and she transformed back into a Flamephoenix, then charged toward Meng Hao in attack.

“I have a shape-changing magic too!” Meng Hao said. Snorting coldly, he changed into an azure roc, the color of which then continued to deepen until it was almost violet. A Demonic qi rose up, causing everything to tremble. The violet-colored roc shot toward the Flamephoenix, and the two collided in midair.

Heaven shook, the Earth trembled, and cracks spread out in all directions. Portions of the ground collapsed, and lava blasted up into the air. When two peak 9-Essences entities fought, it could have a huge influence on the surrounding world, and if it went on for too long, could destroy everything in the area.

The Flamephoenix let out a piercing cry, then fell back, changing back into the form of a woman. She coughed up a mouthful of blood, then glared up at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he also transformed back into human shape, and then looked coolly at the Flamephoenix.

“With a cultivation base like that, your Excellency,” the Flamephoenix said, “you can’t possibly be some nameless nobody from the starry sky of the Vast Expanse. What is your purpose here!?” Despite clearly fearing Meng Hao, she didn’t appear ready to give in at all.

“You’re a lot more reasonable than that lump of ice,” Meng Hao replied coolly. “I have no ill intentions here.”

The Flamephoenix’s eyes flickered. “Lump of ice? You saw Patriarch Icemountain?”

“Patriarch Icemountain? You mean that 300,000-meter-tall giant? Yes, I ran into him, and left him sealed where I found him.”

The Flamephoenix’s eyes narrowed as she tried to determine whether or not Meng Hao was telling the truth. She took a deep breath, looking at Meng Hao with even more fear than before.

After a moment, she asked, “Well then, why exactly have you come here, your Excellency?”

“For this!” Meng Hao said, waving his sleeve. A copper mirror shard appeared in front of him, emitting dazzling light amidst the light of the surrounding flames.

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# Chapter 1496: Decision by Battle

Meng Hao did nothing to conceal his purpose in coming. In fact, there was no need for him to do so. Considering the level of his cultivation base, acting wishy-washy could affect his mental state.

To powerful experts like Meng Hao, hiding one's cultivation base and then suddenly exploding out unexpectedly was boring and meaningless. They wouldn't do things like that unless absolutely necessary. In the long run, it could destabilize one's Dao heart. Relying on such paltry tactics could be an obstacle to striving for a great Dao.

After possessing a certain level of power, the best thing was to call upon such power openly.

No matter what plots or plans were afoot, the best thing was to be open and aboveboard, to crush everything in one's path.

The Flamephoenix found it hard to deal with Meng Hao's straightforward demeanor. She took a few steps back, panting, then said, "I've never seen anything like that thing. But since you're already here, Fellow Daoist, I can help you look for some clues. However, I have to warn you, the Ice-Fire Realm is very large. You need to prepare yourself to waste a lot of time."

Meng Hao looked at the Flamephoenix, then chuckled and shook his head. Looking very sincere, he said, "This object is very important to me. If it's truly impossible to find, then I'll leave. However, if I'm prevented from leaving the Ice-Fire Realm before it's sealed up again, then… I'll have no choice but to destroy it. This is a very important matter. I hope you can understand, Fellow Daoist."

Upon seeing the copper mirror shard moments ago, the Flamephoenix didn't have much of a reaction at all. Her face didn't even flicker. However, Meng Hao had experienced far too many things in life for her to be able to hide her shock from him.

Everything became especially obvious when she hinted about taking a long time.

He knew that this world wouldn't stay open forever. He had waited outside for hundreds of years before it had opened, and based on his calculations, he was quite sure that it would close again in about one sixty-year-cycle. If he didn't leave at that time, he would have to wait a very, very long time for another chance. It would only be when the flower bloomed again that he would be able to leave.

There would be too many opportunities for mishaps during that time, and Meng Hao wasn't willing to risk that.

Thus, the words he had spoken moment ago were no threat. They were merely a clear explanation of his intentions.

"Your lands can be destroyed, as can the ice plains," he continued in a calm voice. "If that happens, then the temperature created by the two will vanish, and all the living beings that exist here will be destroyed.

"As for you and that Patriarch Icemountain, I might not be able to kill you two, but if I can seal one of you, then I can seal the other.

"If I can't find what I'm looking for, I'm confident that, in my fury, I will seal you in a way that will ensure you can't free yourselves for a very, very long time. So long that… when the flower blooms again, I'll return and seal you again.

"A thousand years? Ten thousand years? I'll keep you sealed away indefinitely. One day, my cultivation base will be powerful enough to kill you, and then I'll do just that. However, before you die, I'll Soulsearch you, and get all the answers I'm looking for. In the end, I'll get what I want.

“Of course, that will take a very, very long time. Many people will die. Too many. I really don’t want to do that, and so I’m hoping… that you won’t force my hand, Fellow Daoist.” With that, he clasped hands and bowed. Then he looked up, smiled, and said, “As for which decision you choose to make, it’s all up to you.”

Each sentence he spoke caused the Flamephoenix’s heart to pound. By the time he finished, her heart surged with waves of rage. And yet, she had no choice but to suppress them, as she knew that everything Meng Hao had just said was true.

He really would do just as he had said, and it was highly likely that things would happen just as he had described. Although things might not play out exactly as he intended, he would likely make up for any discrepancies in his plan, and ensure that the outcome was the same.

Everything came down to the cultivation base. Neither she nor Patriarch Icemountain, despite being beyond the peak of the 9-Essences level, were a match for this young man.

What was even more telling was that, despite the calmness of his gaze when he looked at her, she could tell that there was explosive violence hidden therein. His pupils were bright red, and when she looked into them, it was almost as if she could hear countless howling voices. There was a fury inside of him that left her mentally shaken. Even her cultivation base was thrown into chaos, and the sea of flames around her faltered.

Time ticked by, but Meng Hao didn’t seem anxious. He simply waited for her reply, a smile on his face the entire time.

After the time it takes an incense stick to burn, the Flamephoenix sagged in place a bit, and let out a bitter sigh.

Then she looked up at Meng Hao and said, “The Ice-Fire Realm didn’t always look like this. According to the legends, a long time ago, a precious treasure fell out of the starry sky and split open the lands.

“It was a mirror shard, one side of which emitted intense light and heat. That side created the world of fire. The other side of the shard emanated intense coldness, which was what created the lands of ice.

“The living beings here were also changed. They gradually transformed, until years later, the Icemountain Tribe appeared, as well as the Flamephoenix Tribe.

“If you take the shard away, then you will have no need to attack the Ice-Fire Realm to destroy it. It will happen automatically. All life will perish.

“You are not the first person to come here looking for the mirror shard. Throughout the years, it has not been uncommon for foreign entities to enter when the flower blooms, with the intent of snatching the shard.”

Meng Hao frowned. He had already speculated that things would be this way. He had guessed as much as soon as he saw all of the ice sculptures, and also from the fact that the Icemountain Giant and the Flamephoenix had attacked him instantly.

After a moment of thought, he said, “Well, give me the mirror shard, and I’ll separate your worlds and seal them to keep them safe. Then, I’ll come back within a thousand years to strengthen the seals.”

“You….” The Flamephoenix simply didn’t believe that he was telling the truth.

“You’ll just have to trust me,” Meng Hao said, his eyes glittering coldly. He had long since run out of patience. He would make a promise, but if she refused to believe him, then there was nothing else he could do. The mirror shard was too important.

The Flamephoenix began to breathe deeply, and various expressions flashed across her face. Her eyes flickered with killing intent, and yet, she couldn’t take the risk of refusing Meng Hao’s offer, which would then lead to him destroying the world. On the other hand, agreeing with him also came with the risk of the world being destroyed anyway.

Deep in her heart, she still didn’t want to give in to him.

After a long moment, she looked over coldly and said, “I can’t make a decision like this on my own,” she said. “Patriarch Icemountain must also agree.”

Meng Hao chuckled. He waved his sleeve, and blast of wind shot out in all directions as he began to fly in the direction of the ice plains. The Flamephoenix gritted her teeth and flew along behind him.

This time, Meng Hao went much faster than last time. It only took a few months to cross the entire Ice-Fire Realm. The Flamephoenix was shocked, and her heart was pounding. Normally speaking, she wouldn’t have been able to keep up, but she happened to have some magical items that gave her just enough speed to follow.

A few months later, deep within the ice plains, Meng Hao and the Flamephoenix heard a roar of fury. Patriarch Icemountain, the 300,000-meter mountain, was shaking as he struggled against the seals.

The Flamephoenix looked at him, then took a deep breath as the fear inside her heart mounted. Meng Hao smiled as he looked back and forth from the Icemountain Giant to the Flamephoenix.

“If the two of you don’t agree,” he said, “then it’s going to take me a lot longer to get the shard…. Furthermore, after searching everywhere in vain, I’m getting the sensation that the mirror shard is underground….” He looked down at the lands below. The strange thing was that he had actually tried to blast the ground open earlier, and yet, despite the level of his cultivation base, he had been unable to do so.

After some thought, a flicker of determination appeared in his eyes, and he waved his finger toward Patriarch Icemountain.

Instantly, the seals unraveled, and a roar of rage echoed out as he rose to his feet. Without even a moment’s pause, he launched himself toward Meng Hao, punching out with his fist.

The Flamephoenix seemed shocked, but then she gritted her teeth and similarly attacked Meng Hao.

Meng Hao smiled. His expression didn’t change the all, but he did speak, his voice icy: “Looking to die?!”

As the words left his mouth, his cultivation base erupted with power that had been building up for several hundred years. Eight Essences were unleashed, along with the shocking power of his fleshly body. Combined with his Demonic qi, and the power in his blood, he could unleash incredible force.

It left the Icemountain Giant trembling, and the Flamephoenix shaking. As Meng Hao hovered there, an enormous head appeared behind him, radiating infinite darkness.

It had a vicious horn jutting out of its forehead, long black hair, and glowing red eyes that seemed to contain oceans of blood. The Demonic qi caused the world to distort, shaking everything violently.

If that were all there were to it, it might not be a big deal. But then Meng Hao extended his right hand, and seven copper mirror shards appeared. They then melted, transforming into black threads that spread out to cover his right hand, and then his torso, left arm, and legs. His entire body, with the exception of his head, was now covered with black armor!

As soon as the armor appeared, a savage and explosive aura erupted out, causing his power to rise.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE….

The incredible power surging out made it seem as if Meng Hao could unleash the power of the starry sky itself, as if he were the ultimate monarch, the most powerful being in the Vast Expanse.

Gradually, bits of Transcendent power began to radiate out from him. He looked down at the Icemountain Giant and the Flamephoenix, and then beckoned at them.

“Didn’t you want to fight? Let’s fight!”

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# Chapter 1497: Borrowing Power for the Search!

The Icemountain Giant’s pupils constricted; as of this moment, he could sense how powerful Meng Hao’s aura was, and knew that he was absolutely no match. However, he was still sure that Meng Hao wouldn’t be able to kill him. He took a step forward, and struck out with his fist.

The Flamephoenix erupted with power, transforming back into her avian form. A sea of flames erupted around her as she shot toward Meng Hao. In the blink of an eye, intense booms echoed out as the three of them began to fight.

The ground quaked. The world shook. Meng Hao performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, and the pitch-black head behind him howled and shot toward the giant and the phoenix.

The Icemountain Giant’s body vibrated, cracks spreading out across his surface before he completely exploded. However, in almost the same instant, he formed back together, and seemed no less willing to fight.

The Flamephoenix also fell back, her eyes shining brightly as countless flaming magical symbols appeared around her.

“Too weak,” Meng Hao said coolly as he hovered there in midair. “Time to use your trump cards. If I win, you must tell me the location of the mirror shard. If you win, then I’ll leave immediately.”

“Very well,” said the Icemountain Giant. “The outcome of this battle will determine everything.”

The Icemountain Giant didn’t seem surprised at all about what was happening. Meng Hao wasn’t sure exactly how he and the Flamephoenix were communicating, but that didn’t matter. The giant roared, beating at his chest with his fists. As a result, countless chunks of ice fell off of him, which then formed together into an enormous greataxe.

The Flamephoenix flickered as more flaming magical symbols appeared, and her body grew in size until it was 30,000 meters long. Intense, terrifying heat radiated out from her, causing the surrounding icy landscape to melt. And yet, only a moment later, it froze back up again.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, and his mouth twisted into a cold smile as he stepped forward and unleashed a fist strike. It was none other than the Devil-Butchering Fist!

That fist strike contained the Life-Extermination Fist, the Self-Immolation Fist, and the God-Slaying Fist. All of those fist strikes became the Devil-Butchering Fist. The sky dimmed, as if this fist were replacing everything above and below as it rocketed toward the Flamephoenix.

The giant howled, hefting the greataxe and then slashing it down toward Meng Hao’s fist. The giant simultaneously performed an incantation gesture with his left hand, causing intense coldness to spring out, creating an all-freezing windstorm that swept over Meng Hao.

The Flamephoenix let out a long cry, and the flames around her emitted Essence aura as they transformed into a crimson claw.

It was a bird-like claw, bright red, that shot directly toward Meng Hao.

In the blink of an eye, the giant and the Flamephoenix met Meng Hao’s Devil-Butchering Fist. When they slammed into each other, the sky shattered, and the lands were destroyed. The entire world shook violently, and Meng Hao fell backward seven or eight paces. As he looked on, the giant’s axe transformed into ash, and the giant himself shattered. A moment later, though, he formed back together, although he seemed a bit smaller than before.

As for the Flamephoenix, blood sprayed out of her mouth, and she was trembling visibly. Her injuries were serious, but only a moment later, the flames around her roared back to life.

The fear in their eyes as they looked at Meng Hao was clear. And yet, there was also an uncompromising gleam. Clearly, they would not agree to Meng Hao’s demand, and just hand over their precious treasure. Not unless there was absolutely no other choice.

However, it was at this point that Meng Hao suddenly vanished. When he reappeared, he was right in front of the giant, whereupon he waved his finger.

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the giant fell back, icy coldness exploding off of him. Even as he prepared to fight back, Hexing magic Essence suddenly erupted out onto from Meng Hao’s finger, after which he unleashed another punch.

The giant roared as cracking sounds emanated out. In the blink of an eye, he recovered, but he was still sent tumbling backward by 3,000 meters. Meng Hao instantly followed up, and at the same time, the Flamephoenix closed in.

Before the Flamephoenix could even get close, Meng Hao began to spin, his left foot sweeping through the air to create a powerful cyclone that slammed into the giant.

The giant howled, trembling as he fell back yet again. His body collapsed, but instantly recovered. At the same time, coldness exploded out of him as if to consume Meng Hao. Meng Hao snorted coldly, opening his fist up into a palm, wherein appeared a sealing mark.

He shoved his hand out in front of him, unleashing the Inside Outside Hex. A force of expulsion appeared, shoving the coldness away. Simultaneously, Meng Hao unleashed another fist strike.

The blow landed directly onto the giant’s chest. Cracks spread out, and the giant exploded into fragments of ice. Meng Hao subsequently waved his sleeve, causing a wind to spring up and scatter the fragments.

Those fragments seemed capable of piercing through any barrier, and they quickly began to form back together. However, Meng Hao’s eyes flashed with red light, and he performed an incantation gesture, then waved his finger, unleashing the Eighth Hex’s Essence of space. His target was the Flamephoenix, who was closing in behind him.

The power of space erupted out, and the Flamephoenix’s eyes widened. She let out a piercing shriek, and flames erupted off of her as she summoned a huge flame giant to take her place within the sealing power.

However, even as the Flamephoenix used a substitute to escape the Spatial Sealing, Meng Hao arrived and unleashed a fist strike. Flames burst out, but she quickly recovered, but Meng Hao then continued to unleash one fist strike after another.

He struck a total of thirteen blows. Each time, the Flamephoenix would collapse into flames, but then reform. After every blow, her face was a bit paler, and she was trembling even harder. When the final blow landed, she was sent flying backward 3,000 meters, blood spraying out of her mouth.

Just as Meng Hao was about to give chase, a furious roar echoed out.

“Foreigner, you’ve forced our hand. It’s time for you to die!” It was the reformed giant, who spread his arms wide and howled, “Ice-Plains Flower!”

As he howled, intense coldness rose up from the ice plains around him. The coldness rushed toward the giant, and at the same time, the layers of ice in the area vanished, to reappear atop his body. It only took a moment for all of the cold and ice to form together into a huge flower on his right hand!

It was a flower made of ice, resplendent and beautiful, and as it grew larger, a terrifying aura emanated out from it. The entire world shuddered, and suddenly seemed to grow completely devoid of sound.

Next, the Flamephoenix, which Meng Hao had shoved 3,000 meters away, wiped the blood from her mouth and glared at him with a powerful murderous aura raging out. Eyes flickering with killing intent, the sea of flames around her roared even more powerfully than before, transforming into a pillar of fire that shot up into the sky.

The sky turned bright red, like a sea of fire, and at the same time, the Flamephoenix cried, “Crimson-Flame Flower!”

Almost immediately, the crimson sea of flames began to form together into a gigantic flower. The seemingly everlasting flame stretched from the sky to the land, filling half the world with matchlessly intense heat.

At the same time, the ice flower emanated intense coldness which froze everything it touched.

Meng Hao watched all of this happening with an expectant gleam in his eyes.

At the same time, the giant and the phoenix said, “Combined attack!”

The giant’s body shattered, swirling up to merge into the ice flower, which radiated even more resplendent light than before.

The Flamephoenix likewise merged into the flame flower, ensuring that both of the flowers were the peak existences in this entire world.

The two flowers then shot toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao threw his head back and laughed uproariously.

“I’ve been waiting for this trump card of yours!” As soon as the words left his mouth, his energy skyrocketed. His hair rose up, and his black armor flashed as he performed an incantation gesture with his right hand. The Essence of the Eighth Hex appeared, then the Seventh, and the Sixth… all the way to the Essence of the First Hex. Then, they began to merge together.

“Eight Hexes, combine!” He threw his arms out in either direction, as the eight Hexing magic Essences transformed into threads, which then became a huge net.

The net spread out in all directions, and in the moment that it made contact with the ice and flame flowers, the world shattered. Heaven and Earth distorted as a huge shockwave blasted out in all directions. Within the blast, Meng Hao coughed up a mouthful of blood, and his body was shredded into a mass of bloody flesh.

And yet, his eyes shone brightly. This was the moment he had been waiting for!

“Copper Mirror Armor, Shake the Heavens!” The armor on his body suddenly flew off him, transforming back into seven shards. Then, they merged together, forming the almost-complete shape of a mirror!

This was the second true function of the copper mirror!

Almost as soon as that mirror appeared, the terrifying blast created by the ice and flame flowers, and the eight combined Hexes, was deflected by the mirror, changing it from an outward blast… into… a focused attack aimed at the ground!

Within the ice and flame flowers, the faces of the giant and the phoenix both fell. However, there was no time for them to do anything in response. Meng Hao’s cultivation base power exploded out like a sharp blade, joining the blast as it slammed into the ground.

In the blink of an eye, the terrifying peak power of all three of these powerful experts slammed into the layers of ice below.

BOOOOOOOOOMMM!

The lands quaked in response. Meng Hao couldn’t single-handedly break open the ground, but the combined power of all three of them caused the plains around them to collapse. An enormous crater opened up, to reveal… a sprawling necropolis!

Underneath this world of ice and fire, there was a necropolis that stretched out in all directions.

In the moment that the necropolis appeared, the aura of the eighth mirror shard erupted with unprecedented intensity. Meng Hao laughed heartily as he flew down toward the necropolis.

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# Chapter 1498: The Return Call!

Meng Hao moved as fast as lightning, shooting into the necropolis and following the tug toward the copper mirror shard.

The Icemountain Giant and the Flamephoenix were so shocked by the use of the mirror shards that they had no time to react. The ground was destroyed, and before they even had time to think about what that meant, they were flying down to try to stop Meng Hao.

“Don’t let him get the precious treasure!” These were the two most powerful entities in this world, but they were still incredibly nervous as they unleashed all the speed they could muster to fly into the necropolis.

Unfortunately for them, they were just a bit slower than Meng Hao. He was like a cascading beam of light that shot through the passageways down below. Despite the numerous twists and turns, the copper mirror shard was like a burning signal fire in his mind.

He didn’t pause for even a moment. In every location where a passage split off in two directions, he knew exactly which way to go, almost as if he had been here before.

Behind him, both the Icemountain Giant and the Flamephoenix shrank down in size as they followed in pursuit. Their hearts were filled with anxiety; the giant couldn’t stop roaring in anger, and yet it did no good.

Time passed. The pursuit went on for months, and yet the giant and the phoenix were unable to catch up to Meng Hao. As for Meng Hao, he sped along through the passageways of the necropolis until eventually… he caught sight of the final copper mirror shard!

It was in a deep pit, half of which was liquid ice, the other half being lava. In the very middle of the two was the mirror shard, which had split the area like yin and yang.

The area was filled with a pulsing aura of both fire and ice, which was apparently what had created this strange place to begin with.

Meng Hao looked down, eyes gleaming with anticipation. Without any hesitation, he stretched his right hand out toward the pit and made a grasping motion.

Instantly, the entire pit shuddered, as though it were on the verge of exploding. The mirror shard itself began to shake, then gradually loosened from its position as if it were about to fly over to him.

It was at this point that a powerful roar echoed out from inside the liquid ice, as a sinuous dragon burst out. It was snake-like, and composed completely of frigid ice. Energy surging, it shot directly toward Meng Hao.

Simultaneously, a dragon of flames burst out from the lava, roaring as it charged toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao snorted coldly. Keeping his right hand in the same position as before, he performed an incantation gesture with his left hand and then waved it downwards. Demon Sealing Hexing magic erupted out in a powerful attack, enveloping the dragons of ice and fire, shoving them away.

They spun back and were about to attack again when Meng Hao’s left hand flashed in a sealing gesture. Instantly, two streams of mist shot out, transforming into humanoid shapes, like clones. They immediately shot toward the dragons of ice and fire, grabbing them and shoving them backward physically. The two dragons were immediately pinned against the nearby rock walls.

At the same time, the two clones transformed into sealing marks which locked the dragons down. Now, no matter how they roared, they couldn’t move at all.

Next, the copper mirror shard shook even harder, and then began to rise up into the air. It was at this point that the Icemountain Giant and the Flamephoenix began to feel the world trembling around them. Their faces fell, and they pushed forward with increased speed. Within the space of a few breaths of time, they shot out of the tunnel.

“Stay your hand!” they roared. However, they were just a bit too late. As the copper mirror shard flew up into the air, the lava and the liquid ice exploded up. Meng Hao then reached out and grabbed the mirror shard.

His eyes shone with brilliant light, and he was even panting a bit. He had been searching for this shard for hundreds of years. At long last, his collection was complete.

The mirror shard itself seemed to be crying out with joy. In the blink of an eye, it melted, transforming into black threads that merged into Meng Hao’s armor. The armor now seemed more complete than ever, and the aura it emitted was shocking to the extreme.

Heaven and Earth trembled. The entire world shook. Without the copper mirror shard, the lava and ice within the pit began to mix together, and all the lands trembled. The ice mountains began to melt, and the flames began to die out. Destructive power spread out in all directions.

The Icemountain Giant trembled and let out a piercing cry. The Flamephoenix looked over, and seeing that he was about to attack, she gritted her teeth… and blocked the way to Meng Hao!

Rumbling filled the air as the Icemountain Giant roared in rage. “Flamephoenix, what are you doing!?”

“He already has the precious treasure,” she replied. “Do you really think we can get it back, even if we fight together?!” The Icemountain Giant roared, and the two of them began to argue. Then they ceased communicating verbally and began to confer via divine will.

Meng Hao stood nearby, watching. He didn’t interfere, but instead, focused on examining the summoning power of the copper mirror shards. As of this moment, he felt more strongly than ever that he could summon the copper mirror itself!

Not too much time passed before the Icemountain Giant let out another powerful roar. His expression was unyielding, and yet simultaneously, defeated. Finally, he had given in. The Flamephoenix turned to face Meng Hao. Taking a deep breath, she transformed into human form, then clasped hands and bowed deeply.

“Fellow Daoist, we were being rash earlier,” she said. “If it’s not too much trouble, we would like to request that we keep the previous agreement.”

Meng Hao looked at her coldly. As of this point, he could completely ignore this place and whatever happened to it. However, his action of taking the copper mirror shard had initiated the destruction of the entire world.

After a moment of thought, he performed a double-handed incantation gesture, causing his cultivation base power to erupt out and fill the area. Then, he unleashed Demon Sealing Hexing magic. Starting with the First Hex and going all the way to the Eighth, he drew upon his most powerful divine ability, the Eight Hexes combined.

However, this time he had eight mirror shards in the form of armor, making the divine ability even more powerful. Colors flashed, and the wind screamed. The faces of both the Icemountain Giant and the Flamephoenix flickered.

“Seal!” Meng Hao said, shoving his hands down toward the pit. That motion caused incredible sealing power to fall down onto the liquid ice and the lava.

Instantly, the two liquids ceased mixing together and gradually became still.

Cracking sounds emanated out, and at the same time, sweat dripped down Meng Hao’s forehead. His cultivation base power erupted again, and the power of the sealing mark of the combined Eight Hexes expanded, completely covering the liquid ice and the lava. Now, instead of destroying each other, they were locked in place. Although they weren’t completely separated like they had been before, they were no longer merging!

At the same time, the melting of the ice plains came to a halt. Although they were warmer than they had been before, they were still ice plains.

On the other side of the world in the lands of flame, fire once again flickered. Although it wasn’t as prevalent as it had been before, and the temperature had been reduced, the fire still existed. As for the two tribes which inhabited the world, although they were thrown into a bit of chaos, there was no deadly danger anymore.

“When I say I’ll do something, I do it,” Meng Hao said. “Right now, my cultivation base isn’t powerful enough to completely resolve the problem. However, with this seal in place, this world will be safe for the next ten thousand years.

“Once my cultivation base is strong enough, I’ll come back and remove the world from danger for all time.” He looked down once more at the deep pit, and then over at the Icemountain Giant and the Flamephoenix.

The Icemountain Giant glared, but the Flamephoenix smiled bitterly and then clasped hands and bowed.

Meng Hao likewise clasped hands and bowed deeply toward the two of them.

“This object is very important to me. Please… accept my apology for any offense I’ve caused. In the future, I’ll definitely repay you.” Although Meng Hao knew that neither of them believed him, he was being very sincere.

With that, he turned and left toward the exit of the necropolis.

Behind him, the Icemountain Giant and the Flamephoenix looked at each other with dour expressions. However, there was nothing they could do at this point. Sighing, they also left.

Now that he had the copper mirror shard, Meng Hao could fly even faster. After twenty days, he reached the exit passageway, and then flew out into the Heavens. Taking a deep breath, he looked back down at the lands below for a moment, the shot out at top speed into the void. A few months later, he emerged from the huge flower.

Now that he was back in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, his eyes flickered, and his heart thumped with excitement. For the moment, he chose not to summon the copper mirror, but instead shot off into the distance.

He tried a few times to make a connection with his clone’s ninth life, but for some reason, could only vaguely sense him. He had absolutely no way to know what exactly his clone was doing or experiencing. It was almost as if he were covered by a dense fog. However, he could sense a familiar and terrifying aura brewing inside the clone.

“Something is really strange about this ninth reincarnation. Could it be because he’s forming the final sealing mark of the Ninth Hex?” That was the conclusion he came to. The Seal the Heavens Hex, the Ninth Hex, was incredibly powerful, and didn’t even seem congruous with the world. Perhaps its incredible nature was why this unexpected turn of events had occurred.

After a few more months, he had reached a barren and remote location within the starry sky of the Vast Expanse. There could be seen a land mass completely devoid of life, and filled with sprawling ruins.

Meng Hao had passed by this place a few hundred years before, and could sense that there was something strange about this place. Apparently, the energy of the Vast Expanse was weak here. As such, this was the location he had chosen to call out to the copper mirror.

He began to set up numerous spell formations in the area, most of them being restrictive spells. He had no idea what unexpected events might occur after he summoned the copper mirror, but based on all of his experiences, he was certain that something would happen, and that he needed to be ready!

He spent ten years making all of the preparations. In the end, the area looked like it had before, but the truth was that it was now as dangerous as a dragon’s pool or a tiger’s den. Finally, he sighed contentedly. Taking a deep breath, he sat down cross-legged in front of a dusty boulder. Eyes shining, he performed a double-handed incantation gesture, and the eight mirror shards flew out and began to circulate in the air around him. Apparently, they were forming a miraculous spell formation.

Eyes focused and filled with intense anticipation, he said, “Copper mirror, parrot… the time has come to reunite!

“I call upon the power of these eight mirror shards to summon you, copper mirror! Whatever distant location you are in, return to me!” Waving his sleeve, he thought back to everything that had happened in the past, then once again performed a double-handed incantation gesture. He sent his divine will out, making contact with the eight mirror shards. That activated the miraculous spell formation. Rumbling sounds echoed out, and the eight shards formed together… into the face of a mirror, with one missing piece!

The mirror seemed to be absorbing Meng Hao’s divine sense power. Then… it exploded as a brilliant column of light that illuminated everything in the area and caused the starry sky to tremble.

“Copper mirror… return to me!

“Parrot… return to me!”

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# Chapter 1499: Familiar Fluctuations!

His voice seemed to thrum with bizarre power as it echoed out in all directions.

It was a power that came from Meng Hao’s memories, from his longing. It filled the column of light as it shot off into the starry sky of the Vast Expanse.

“Copper mirror… return to me….

“Parrot… return to me….

“Lord Fifth… return to me!”

As the column of light formed by the eight mirror shards shot up from the desolate land mass, the Vast Expanse trembled, and the starry sky trembled.

In that same moment, countless powerful experts suddenly seemed to sense something. Their expressions flickered, and they looked in the direction of the beam of light.

In the locations where Meng Hao had discovered the other mirror shards, the powerful experts he had encountered gazed off into the distance, expressions flickering.

The giant lizard. The vicious head. The Icemountain Giant and the Flamephoenix. All of them could sense the auras of the precious treasures which had once been theirs.

At the same time, there were other entities within the starry sky of the Vast Expanse who were stirred into action.

Ripples spread out from the column of light, sweeping out through the Vast Expanse. At the same time, there was apparently a will which began to wake up, that then spoke out in an indistinct voice.

“Destroy that spell formation. Stop him….” Although the voice was difficult to make out, it could be heard by countless entities, and in response, their hearts trembled. Suddenly, a power of will seemed to fill them, taking control of their bodies. Almost immediately, they began to fly in Meng Hao’s direction at top speed.

There was a fog, within which shrieking voices could be heard. Countless mysterious specters could be seen therein, which surged out into the starry sky, radiating murderous intentions.

On a crimson land mass, brutish roars echoed out as numerous 30,000-meter-long crimson dragons flew out into the Vast Expanse.

An enormous head floated amidst the dust that filled the starry sky. It had been dead for countless ages, but now its eyelids suddenly opened. There were no eyes, only empty holes, and yet suddenly glints of red could be seen inside. Moments later, a cloud of red dots flew out from within the eyes, forming something like a beam of light. Each one of those dots was a bright red bug, the lot of which flew off into the distance.

In another area, a huge coffin floated out in the void. It was broken down and dilapidated, with no corpse inside. Suddenly, a face materialized and floated above the coffin.

“That’s… the will of the Vast Expanse….” murmured a voice. The coffin vanished, and when it reappeared, it was far off in the distance, heading toward Meng Hao.

Ripples filled the starry sky of the Vast Expanse as countless entities appeared. Some were beasts, some were other types of life, but all of them were heading toward Meng Hao.

There were deathly, corpse-like spirits, minotaurs, creatures with tentacles for arms, stone golems, and extremely beautiful creatures that were only a third of the size of a normal human.

Virtually every type of existence possible could be seen….

The Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent were shaken, and countless cultivators flew out, eyes red as they charged into the Vast Expanse.

As of this moment, the entire starry sky of the Vast Expanse was trembling.

Back on Planet Vast Expanse, in the First Sect, Han Bei was sitting there cross-legged in meditation. Suddenly, her eyes opened, and they shone with a strange light. She flickered into motion, vanishing, then reappearing back out in the starry sky.

In addition to all of those things, there was something else that noticed the fluctuations. In a remote spot near the very edge of the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, there was a withered old tree, embedded into the trunk of which was a copper mirror.

The copper mirror suddenly began to vibrate and shine with bright light. Then, the image of a parrot became visible.

It seemed confused as it looked off into the distance, as if it were thinking about the past. After a long moment, a blank look filled its eyes.

“Someone… is summoning me….

“This aura is very familiar, but I can’t remember who it is….

“However, being called Lord Fifth… I like it. Seems familiar, very familiar….” After a long moment, the parrot faded away. Then, the copper mirror flew off of the tree, transforming into a current of light that shot toward the direction of the calling.

Meanwhile, Meng Hao still sat cross-legged on the land mass out in the starry sky. His divine sense was spread out in all directions, allowing him to feel how shaken the Vast Expanse was. Although he wasn't able to see it clearly, he could sense the location of the copper mirror, and could feel… that it was currently rushing toward him at top speed.

"It's coming. It's definitely coming…." A tremor ran through him, and his eyes shone with excitement. He had been waiting for hundreds of years for this chance to reunite with the copper mirror.

"What a pity the meat jelly perished…." he thought, his heart filled with grief. However, he took a deep breath, confident that the day would come in which he would be able to resurrect the meat jelly.

"According to how fast it's moving, it will need about seven days to get here!" Meng Hao's eyes glittered. Even as he sensed the copper mirror, he could also feel an incredible ill will rising up against him within the starry sky of the Vast Expanse.

It was intense, something that could seemingly affect the very essence of life. Meng Hao could tell that as the ill will spread out, countless powerful experts began to head in his direction.

Furthermore, in addition to the ill will, there was something adding a blessing to his enemies, increasing their speed dramatically, almost to the point of a teleportation, enabling them to move far, far faster than the copper mirror.

"It seems all the work I put into setting up these defenses wasn't a waste after all…." Meng Hao's eyes flickered with killing intent as he thought back over the ten years he had spent setting up all of the spell formations. It had been difficult to suppress his anxiousness to summon the parrot, but now he realized that it was definitely worth it.

It was at this point that the first species of enemy appeared in the starry sky up above. The mysterious specters closed in at high speed, invisible to the naked eye, but detectable via divine sense. They seemed matchlessly vicious and evil, and as soon as they appeared, they charged toward Meng Hao, causing rumbling sounds to echo out.

He looked up them, eyes flashing with coldness. Before the specters could even get close to the land mass, they slammed into something like an invisible net. Flashes of light appeared, and the specters let out miserable shrieks.

Via divine sense, Meng Hao was able to see their bodies being sliced to shreds by the huge net, completely destroying them. And yet, before they could even fade away, more specters appeared off in the distance.

There were clouds of them, seemingly endless numbers that swarmed around the land mass. Were it necessary to count them, there would be more than a billion, creating an awe-inspiring scene as they charged in attack.

Booms rang out, and the land mass shook, but Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he performed a double-handed incantation gesture, causing the first of the nine shield layers he had built to shine with brilliant light, destroying the murderous specters.

The specters didn’t seem to fear death at all. They blasted bodily into the shield, causing it to shudder and teeter on the verge of being destroyed. Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with killing intent, and he snorted coldly. Then, his hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, and he slapped them onto the ground.

“Detonate!”

Instantly, the first shield layer surged with blinding light, then exploded, sending a destructive blast out in all directions. It swept over the specters like a deadly tide, causing bloodcurdling screams to be heard as the specters were wiped out of existence.

There were some among them who were incredibly powerful, and yet, even they were incapable of evading destruction. By the time the blast dissipated, more than ninety-nine percent of the specters had been eradicated, leaving behind only those who were at the Paragon level.

Of those, there were seven, with two being at the 9-Essences level.

They were tattered and torn, their expressions those of confusion, and yet they continued to attack. Meng Hao snorted, right hand flashing with an incantation gesture that caused wisps of smoke to curl outside of the second shield layer. The smoke rapidly took the shape of a hand, which grabbed out toward the specters.

Booms could be heard as three of them were summarily crushed. The remaining specters fled, and just when the hand was about to pursue them, a mighty roar echoed out from the distance.

A beam of red light appeared, moving so fast it seemed like a teleportation. In the blink of an eye, it appeared directly in front of the huge hand; it was a gigantic, crimson dragon, bursting with the power of peak 9-Essences. As it slammed into the hand, the hand shattered, and then the dragon braced itself and charged onward in attack.

Even as it moved forward, more crimson dragons appeared off in the distance. One after another they could be seen, including three which were at the peak 9-Essences level. The rest were weaker, but the crimson dragons were powerful entities to begin with, and there were over a million of them. They filled the starry sky, instantly converging upon the second shield.

The lands shook violently as the previously invisible second shield began to distort under the powerful attack. A moment later, it was destroyed.

The resulting fragments blasted out like a shockwave. In response, Meng Hao sat there on the land mass below, eyes flickering with killing intent. These shields had been erected using a technique he had acquired within Shui Dongliu’s legacy, and were very similar to the Mountain and Sea Grand Aegis.

Based on the current level of Meng Hao’s cultivation base, it was far, far mightier than the shield which had protected the Mountain and Sea Realm. And yet, the crimson dragons were capable of shattering the second layer.

However, the price they paid to do so was heavy!

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# Chapter 1500: Holding the Line!

All of the crimson dragons beneath the Paragon level were shredded to pieces. Even as the reek of blood spread out in all directions, Meng Hao's hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, and three enormous hands appeared outside of the third shield. Each one radiated the power of the peak 9-Essences level, and they shot directly after three crimson dragons.

Then the starry sky trembled as, unexpectedly, countless red dots appeared on the three enormous hands. A close look revealed that each one of those red dots was a bug of some sort. In the blink of an eye, they had completely covered the hands, accompanied by an odd droning sound. More and more bugs appeared, until everything seemed to be a huge swath of red.

Then, off in the distance, a sinister aura of death appeared. It rapidly spread out in all directions, and within it could be seen an endless collection of corpses. Each one of those corpses seem to have been possessed, and they formed a huge army that charged toward the land mass.

The red bugs and the army of the dead all unleashed a massive onslaught onto the third shield layer.

Shocking rumbling echoed out in all directions.

Meng Hao said nothing. Looking off into the distance, he spread both hands out and pushed them down onto the ground. Then he closed his eyes and ignored everything happening outside the shields. His entire mind poured into the copper mirror shards to intensify their call.

Time passed. Two days later, the copper mirror was still a beam of bright light shooting toward Meng Hao's location.

As for the land mass, it was shaking violently. The third shield layer had already collapsed, and now the fourth was teetering on the verge of destruction. Half of the red bugs were dead, and most of the army of the dead was gone.

However, a host of stone golems had appeared, and because of their roaring attacks, the fourth shield was almost destroyed. The stone golems attacked with utter madness.

In addition to them were minotaurs and strange, tentacle-armed entities. The tentacled entities did not have powerful fleshly bodies, but their magical techniques were incredibly shocking. Because of all of that, the fourth shield layer was finally destroyed. Even as the explosion rippled out, the stone golems' eyes gleamed with madness, and they suddenly self-detonated.

BOOOOOOOOMMM!

The self-detonation of the stone golems caused the shockwave of the fourth shield layer's destruction to blast into the fifth shield layer. Cracks spread out as the swarms of bizarre creatures continued to attack, and the fifth shield layer disintegrated.

Next came a rain of a billion or more arrows, which whizzed toward the sixth shield layer, bursting with shocking levels of power. In the blink of an eye, the sixth shield layer was destroyed.

That caused the seventh shield layer to appear, at which point Meng Hao opened his eyes. He looked out, his expression grim. Then he took a deep breath and performed a double-handed incantation gesture, causing a blurry face to appear on the surface of the seventh shield.

It looked almost like a specter as it flew up to meet the rain of arrows. Next came a host of tiny humanoid creatures no taller than an average person's knee.

More time passed. On the third day, the seventh shield layer was destroyed by the tiny creatures. In the three days that the armies of bizarre creatures had been attacking the shield layers, they had sustained severe casualties, losing even Paragon-level entities.

Creatures of all kinds and types could be seen. Of the numerous types of beings Meng Hao had encountered throughout his hundreds of years of traveling, only a small portion were represented here. These creatures had received the summons which had echoed out from the will of the Vast Expanse, and thus, it was with bloodshot eyes that they battered against the seventh shield layer.

On the fourth day, the seventh shield layer collapsed. On the fifth day, the eighth shield layer was destroyed.

On the sixth day, the ninth shield layer was shaking. Meng Hao opened his eyes again and looked out at the seemingly infinite armies of bizarre creatures. Their vast numbers were truly a shocking sight to behold.

They had numerous 9-Essences experts. Although they didn’t represent even a fraction of the power that existed out in the starry sky, they were possessed by a madness that ensured they would not rest until Meng Hao was destroyed.

“One more day….” Meng Hao murmured. “The ninth shield layer will last for that much longer.” Meng Hao could sense that the copper mirror was still some distance away. It would definitely appear within one day.

However, it was this point that Meng Hao opened his eyes, and his face fell. Off in the distance in the starry sky, an enormous planet had suddenly teleported into the area behind the land mass he was currently on. The planet immediately vibrated as it began to pick up speed.

Rumbling could be heard as the planet crushed numerous creatures in the army in its attack on the ninth shield layer.

Even the armies of bizarre creatures could hardly endure the ear-splitting rumbling which echoed out as the area where the ninth shield layer was hit immediately shattered. Then, the enormous planet began to move as, shockingly, it transformed into a giant. It stood there tall and mighty outside of the shield, grinning down at Meng Hao.

In the same moment that it grinned, a streak of light shot through the hole it had torn into the shield and headed directly toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s face was very grim as he sat there cross-legged. He suddenly extended his right hand, then clenched it down violently. A boom rang out as he grabbed a tiny creature no taller than his own knee.

It was a woman, spectacularly beautiful, who exuded an enticing charm. However, her face was pale, and her expression one of disbelief. Apparently, she couldn’t believe that the cloaking magic she cultivated could be seen through by Meng Hao.

Before she could beg for mercy, Meng Hao squeezed his hand down, and a popping sound rang out as her body exploded.

Things weren’t over yet, though. Meng Hao rose to his feet, and his left hand unleashed a vicious fist strike. A crimson dragon suddenly appeared directly in the path of his fist. A look of confusion could be seen in its eyes as it seemingly allowed the fist strike to hit it, completely destroying its entire massive frame.

At the same time, Meng Hao tilted his head to the side to avoid a deadly attack from one of the specters. As the specter sailed past him, he suddenly opened his mouth and latched onto the specter.

Even as it let out a miserable shriek, Meng Hao inhaled deeply. The specter subsequently shrank down as it was sucked into Meng Hao to become part of his cultivation base.

All of this takes some time to describe, but happened in the briefest of moments after the planetary giant punched a hole into the shield and smiled.

Meng Hao’s expression was as calm as ever as he strode forward thirty meters. As he did, the eight copper mirror shards, which remained in the spot he had been standing earlier, emitted a bright shield.

It consisted of a riot of colors which flowed across its surface, and was… the most powerful of Meng Hao’s preparations, the tenth shield layer.

This shield protected, not the land mass, but the spell formation which was issuing the summoning call to the copper mirror.

Meng Hao stood outside of the shield, looking around, his eyes flickering with killing intent, a murderous aura swirling around him.

He said nothing, and yet his actions made his message clear…. No one would be getting past him to destroy that spell formation!

The entire battlefield went completely silent. However, that silence only lasted for a few breaths’ worth of time. Then, howls and roars broke the silence as countless figures poured through the hole which had already been punched in the shield. As for the planetary giant, it began to batter the ninth shield in other locations.

Meng Hao took a first step forward, and the lands shook. Because the energy of the Vast Expanse was weak on his land mass, the shaking of the land itself influenced everything around it, slowing down the approach of the enemy.

Because of that, a few entities shot out in front of everyone else. They were none other than the Paragon-level experts. Although only one was at the 9-Essences level, with the rest being at the 8-Essences level, they were still powerful Paragons. As soon as they appeared in the open, Meng Hao shot forward, unleashing the Devil-Butchering Fist.

Life-Extermination. Self-Immolation. God-Slaying. Devil-Butchering…. They merged together into one fist, one punch, which shocked everything and shook the starry sky. Incredible power was unleashed on the handful of Paragons, and in their shock, blasted into them even as they were still preparing to defend themselves. They were crushed as easily as dry twigs.

Booms rang out as they exploded, destroyed in body and mind. By a fluke, only the 9-Essences expert survived, blood spurting out of various wounds. But then Meng Hao took a second step forward, appearing up in midair, where he punched out a second time. However, he didn’t strike the Paragon, but someone else.

The air in front of him rippled as an old man appeared, a man with pitch-black skin and two horns sticking out of his head, who emanated the power of the peak 9-Essences level.

His expression was grave as he faced Meng Hao’s single punch. Roaring, he unleashed a divine ability, summoning a black ox, beneath whose feet swirled flaming wind.

Meng Hao’s single attacked destroyed many of the bizarre creatures who were pouring in through the hole in the shield. Even the old man himself coughed up a mouthful of blood and tumbled backward, face filled with fear.

By this point, only half of the sixth day had passed. Meng Hao took a third step, although it was not to attack the old man with the pitch-black skin. He appeared outside of the ninth shield layer… in front of the planet-sized giant.

“You’re strong, huh?” he said coldly. Even as the words left his mouth, the giant shivered, and his heart began to pound. He began to move backward.

Before he could get away, Meng Hao transformed into a black roc which shot forward like lightning, stabbing into the giant’s forehead and then bursting out from the other side of his head!

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# Chapter 1501: Set Foot In Here, and Die!

The planetary giant let out a bloodcurdling shriek that was so loud it caused numerous nearby creatures to explode.

Blood sprayed out in all directions. The planetary giant's eyes went dim, and then its head exploded. By the time its body started to topple down, Meng Hao in black roc-form was back on the land mass.

However, in that very moment, his face flickered with surprise as a sense of imminent danger rose up inside of him. In the blink of an eye, he transformed from a huge roc back into an ordinary-sized human. At the same time, a black beam of light shot through the spot once occupied by his head. Even though it didn't touch him, it left his cultivation base trembling.

Had he not reacted when he did, the attack would have blasted into the head of his roc form. Although Meng Hao wouldn't have been killed, he would have been seriously injured.

He spun around and saw a coffin some distance away. Floating in the air above the coffin was the face of an old man, who was staring at Meng Hao.

The instant their gazes met, Meng Hao suddenly got the feeling that this old man was at the same level as himself. Considering Meng Hao's current power, he was at a level past the peak of 9-Essences, and virtually anyone he met was someone he could fight with ease. However, when he looked at the face above the coffin, he was filled with a sensation of danger and crisis.

His eyes flickered as he suddenly vanished. When he reappeared, he was standing only a few meters in front of the tenth shield. If he was a match for the old man out in the starry sky, then back in this location, with the power of the lands around him at his disposal, he could definitely crush him.

After all… on the land mass itself, the energy of the Vast Expanse was weak.

The old man above the coffin didn’t enter the land mass, though. He remained outside, looking coldly at Meng Hao. Then he looked at the thirty-meter wide shield, and his eyes flickered with a strange light.

Meng Hao stood there, a cold expression on his face. Then he lifted his foot and stomped down, causing a huge boom to echo out, and shockwaves to ripple out. As the blast echoed out, countless bizarre creatures in the area, creatures who didn’t fear dying at all, were instantly killed.

Gradually, everything went quiet again. Outside of the broken ninth shield, there were still endless numbers of bizarre creatures. However, none of them dared to try to fight their way onto the land mass. Anyone who tried to get to the land mass, regardless of the level of their cultivation base, was killed in body and mind. Those who managed to escape were as rare as phoenix feathers or qilin horns.

The silence didn’t make Meng Hao nervous at all. He was trying to buy time, and could tell that the copper mirror was getting closer and closer. At the most, it would take half a day for it to appear in front of him.

However, it was at this point that, beyond the vast army of bizarre creatures, fluctuations filled the starry sky as more than ten thousand figures appeared. Astonishingly, those figures were cultivators!

Furthermore, as soon as they appeared, they radiated the aura of the Immortal God Continent. The other bizarre creatures in the area didn’t seem surprised at all, but as for Meng Hao, his eyes instantly erupted with an intense, uncontrollable killing intent.

This aura, the aura of the Immortal God Continent, was something he would never be able to forget. That aura belonged to an enemy who had caused the Mountain and Sea Realm to be destroyed, the meat jelly to die, the parrot’s mind had to be erased, and had pushed Meng Hao to the brink of death.

Instantly, the redness in Meng Hao’s eyes caused the entire area to seem somber and desolate.

However, as the saying goes, troubles come in pairs. In almost the same moment that the forces of the Immortal God Continent appeared, another group of ten thousand figures appeared from another direction. They were difficult to make out at first, but they were also cultivators. They didn’t emanate the aura of the Immortal God Continent, but rather were surrounded by the mist of the Devil Realm. In addition to that, they were led by a muscular man, who was none other than… one of the 9-Essences experts Meng Hao had fought in the past.

The instant he saw Meng Hao, his expression became one of shock, and his killing intent intensified.

Meng Hao, on the other hand, smiled, a smile filled with icy coldness. He had already been focused on slaughter, but now, his desire to kill rose to greater heights than before.

In almost the same moment that he smiled, the forces of the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent flew into the gap which had been opened in the ninth shield, and headed down toward the land mass.

Their deadly charge changed the situation on the battlefield. The other creatures in the army had been silent before, but now they began to roar and howl. They also joined in the charge, ensuring that masses of enemies were flooding through the hole in the shield.

It only took a moment for the land mass Meng Hao was standing on to begin to tremble from the force unleashed by the countless charging figures.

The army was vast, and scattered among their numbers were many powerful experts. Even the old coffin man had finally passed through the shield.

Booms echoed out. Meng Hao’s hair whipped about as he took seven steps forward. When the seventh step landed, the ground quaked as an enormous foot crushed countless enemies into a bloody pulp. Simultaneously, Meng Hao moved directly in front of the muscular man from the Devil Realm Continent.

The man’s mind reeled; he had never imagined that the person he would be fighting today would be Meng Hao, nor could he ever have guessed that after mere handful of centuries that had passed, Meng Hao would have become so powerful.

However, there was no time to ponder the matter. Meng Hao’s right hand pierced through his defenses as easily as a sharp blade through bamboo, and then latched onto the man’s neck.

“It is with you that my revenge begins.” As his hoarse voice echoed out, power erupted from his hand, and the 9-Essences expert exploded into pieces, destroyed in body and mind.

Even as Meng Hao killed the man, eight figures appeared around him. Shockingly, these people were the most powerful experts among their various races and tribes, and they were joining forces in one massive attack.

Eight enemies. Meng Hao threw his head back and bellowed, causing numerous mountains to descend. However, he didn’t send them to attack his enemies, but rather, caused them to cover over himself. In the blink of an eye, 100,000, then 1,000,000, and then 10,000,000 mountains were superimposed over him, creating a powerful shield defense. A moment later, the combined attack of the eight powerful experts slammed into the mountains.

The seemingly endless group of mountains exploded. At the same time, Meng Hao fell back, slamming into one of the powerful experts behind him. His speed was such that his enemy was blasted into a haze of blood and flesh, his fleshly body destroyed. His soul flew out, which was incapable of doing anything to stop Meng Hao from escaping the encirclement.

In that moment, the old coffin man’s eyes glittered, and he emerged from the coffin itself, looking like a specter. He took a step, appearing directly in front of Meng Hao. He extended his hand, and the full power of his cultivation base surged as he attempted to tap Meng Hao’s forehead.

“Just what I was waiting for,” Meng Hao said, smiling. Even as the man’s finger closed in, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered coldly. The old man’s face fell, but before he could react, Meng Hao waved his hand, creating four lines around the old man.

“Spatial Sealing!”

The four lines instantly transformed into a canvas. The power of the Spatial Sealing erupted out, and the old man was powerless to stop it from sealing him inside of the canvas!

When he appeared in the painting, he immediately unleashed the power of his cultivation base, causing the canvas to burst into flames. Considering the incredibly high level of his cultivation base, the sealing was only powerful enough to hold him for a moment.

However, a moment was all Meng Hao needed.

He grinned viciously, unleashing the power of his cultivation base, waving his hand as he summoned the Eighth Hex. Then came the Seventh, and the Sixth… all the way to the First. They transformed into long threads, combining into a net which he flung toward the old man.

“Eight Hexes, combined!” As the words left his mouth, the net swept out to cover over everything in the area.

The net passed through countless enemy creatures as though they weren’t even there. No one could stop it.

The Paragon from the Immortal God Continent blinked in shock as the net passed through him. The minotaurs, the specters, the stone golems, the cultivators from the Immortal God Continent, all of the various living beings from the other locations… were swept over by the net.

Not even the red bugs could evade it. They were small in size, but the net was dense. When it had spread out to its limit, Meng Hao made a grasping motion, and the net began to retract, returning through all the same beings it had passed on its way out.

The net rapidly shrunk down into Meng Hao’s palm, until it was nothing more than a dazzling light.

Then, every being surrounding him on the land mass began to tremble. Blood began to spray out everywhere… as they were sliced into ribbons. Some of them became gore that splattered around on the ground, others were turned into ash….

The armies outside of the land mass gasped, and then everything went deathly silent. Despite the fact that the will of the starry sky was urging them to attack, their instincts and their terror caused them to look at the land mass with minds spinning.

Meng Hao remained calm, but his eyes shone with bright red light. He looked up at the old man sealed in the painting, which was still burning. The old man howled as he prepared to burst out from inside.

Meng Hao stared at him coldly, then waved his hand. Once again, the scintillating net appeared, which he threw out to cover the old man.

This time, the sealing power was far greater than before, and the old man was powerless to escape its effects. All he could do was let out an unyielding roar.

Meng Hao turned his attention to the hosts outside in the starry sky. Surrounding him were countless corpses, so many that it was impossible to count.

He said nothing. However, the image of him standing there, and the thought of what he had just done in the battle, became a powerful warning to everyone who remained alive.

Anyone who sets foot in here… dies!

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# Chapter 1502: Who Am I?

Time passed. Meng Hao wasn’t standing in the exact center of the land mass, but he was certainly the center of all attention.

Outside, beyond the battered remnants of the ninth shield layer, was an army of bizarre creatures that filled the starry sky from end to end. They all hovered there silently, looking down, but unwilling to set foot onto the land mass.

The massive gap in the shield still existed; it hadn’t closed up. However, despite the many hours which had passed, not a single individual had entered through it.

The strange nature of the land mass ensured that the energy of the Vast Expanse was scant, and also made it so that the will of the Vast Expanse was weaker. Because of that, the creatures that made up the army weren’t as easy to influence as before.

Although they still radiated a murderous aura, they were still mostly under the control of their primary instincts. As such, they were kept silent and unmoving by the realization that they would surely die if they entered the land mass.

If things kept going like this, Meng Hao would essentially have won the battle. By now, he could sense that the mirror was very close and would appear in front of him very soon.

“It’s almost here…. The copper mirror!

“Parrot… return to me!” Meng Hao took a deep breath. Within the thirty meter shielded area behind him, the eight copper mirror shards radiated brilliant light. The pillar of light which rose up from them was like a torch on a dark light, almost blinding as it continued to summon the copper mirror.

Enough time had passed for an incense stick to burn, and Meng Hao began to pant as he looked off into the distance. As for all the creatures in the army, they could sense a pressure building from off in the distance, something which left them feeling very uneasy, even jittery.

They could almost make out a beam of light shooting, not through the starry sky, but through some other swath of darkness.

However, it was in this very moment that all of a sudden, ripples exploded out directly in front of Meng Hao. The air in front of him had been still and unmoving before, but now, a finger appeared!

Its appearance was ordinary in all aspects, but as soon as it appeared, it caused the entire world, and even the entire starry sky, to begin to shake. It superseded all light, and in the darkness of the starry sky, only it seemed to shine brightly!

It seemed to be moving in slow motion as it reached out towards Meng Hao’s chest.

Unexpectedly, he was completely unable to dodge it.

A boom rang out; Heaven shook and Earth trembled. Cracking sounds could be heard from the land mass as fissures snaked out in all directions. Even the ninth shield layer shattered.

Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth, and he tumbled backward, slamming into the surface of the tenth shield layer. The shield distorted, and almost instantly shattered into pieces. Meng Hao continued to tumble backward nearly twenty-five meters before grinding to a halt. Coughing up another mouthful of blood, he slowly looked up at the rippling area up ahead of him.

Now, it wasn’t just a finger that was visible. A gaunt figure appeared out of thin air, and as soon as his foot touched the surface of the land mass, everything began to vibrate. At the same time, a supreme and paramount aura exploded out from him.

It was as if he were the representative of the entire starry sky, as if a single word from him could be considered natural law in the entire Vast Expanse. Apparently, a glance from him could determine the life or death of any of the beings which existed in the starry sky.

“I am the Emissary of Allheaven,” he said coolly. The echo of his voice caused the entire land mass to crumble into nothing. The only exception was the thirty-meter area upon which Meng Hao stood. All other locations collapsed into dust from the single word uttered by this Emissary of Allheaven.

The surrounding swarms of creatures felt an indescribable reverence rising up from their souls. They bowed their heads and dropped to their knees to kowtow.

“Greetings, Emissary….”

The gaunt man seemed middle-aged, but had an ashen face and deeply profound eyes. He stood there, clad in a black robe, looking coldly at Meng Hao.

“Why haven’t you knelt yet?” he asked.

It was one sentence with only five words, but as soon as it left his mouth, a pressure burst out that defied description. It slammed into Meng Hao, causing intense rumbling sounds to echo out. Meng Hao’s cultivation base was at the peak of the 9-Essences level, but it almost seemed impossible to bear the pressure. His knees shook as the pressure became like two hands pushing down onto his shoulders, as if he were being forced to kneel.

But then, Meng Hao smiled. It was a vicious smile, complete with glowing red eyes. Shocking power erupted out, staining the surrounding starry sky with redness.

The redness might not be able to compare with the blackness of the starry sky as a whole, but in this particular area, it was like a tempest that couldn’t be resisted.

“I, Meng Hao, have never kowtowed to the Heavens, nor bowed to the Earth. What makes you think… that I would kneel to scum like you?!” The redness in his eyes intensified, and his aura began to flicker with multifarious variations. Demonic qi erupted, and not only did he not kneel, he began to walk forward, one step at a time.

His energy began to rise up, and the redness raged like flames. Instantly, intense pressure began to crush down onto the Emissary of Allheaven.

The man’s face flickered.

“You really want to die?!” he said, snorting coldly. He lifted his right hand, and killing intent exploded out as he shoved his palm toward Meng Hao. Intense pressure erupted that exceeded the 9-Essences level. If Meng Hao hadn’t been on guard already, he would have been killed in body and mind.

And yet, he didn’t stop moving for even a moment. In fact, he sped up. At the same time, his energy continued to build up, Demonic qi surged, and the red glow expanded.

Then, he clenched his right fist and unleashed the Devil-Butchering Fist. As the fist bore down on the Emissary of Allheaven, the red glow in the area rumbled, making it seem like there were infinite fists about to slam into the man.

Then, Meng Hao transformed into black roc-form, only to change again into an azure-colored roc, which instantly changed color yet again to crimson. Then, he shot like lightning toward the Emissary of Allheaven, slashing at him with razor-sharp claws.

Next were countless mountains which caused Heaven to shake and the Earth to tremble as they descended. However, Meng Hao didn’t stop at that. He unleashed the Blood Demon Grand Magic, and followed up with

Demonic qi formed into the shape of a gigantic head, which viciously snapped its mouth at the Emissary.

Booms rang out, filling the starry sky. In just a few short moments, Meng Hao unleashed his most deadly attacks, and then ended them all with the combined Eight Hexes.

The Emissary fell back repeatedly, face growing increasingly pale. Finally, killing intent flickered in his eyes as he took to flight, not to attack Meng Hao, but to try to destroy the spell formation. However, Meng Hao quickly intercepted him.

Instead of falling back again, the Emissary of Allheaven unleashed another attack. When it slammed into Meng Hao, he coughed up a mouthful of blood and tumbled backward several hundred meters. The Emissary then stepped forward, appearing directly in front of the eight copper mirror shards. Then, he lifted up his right hand and shoved it violently forward.

And yet, Meng Hao simply smiled. Eyes shining with madness, he waved his finger toward the Emissary.

As he did, a beam of light shot toward the land mass through the starry sky, moving at indescribable speed. It slashed through the hosts of creatures, destroying many of their number who could not evade, transforming them into nothing more than ash.

In the blink of an eye, an entire section of creatures was destroyed. The Emissary’s face fell as the beam of light closed in on him, then stabbed through his chest on its way to the spell formation.

Finally, the light faded away to reveal what had been inside… an ancient and primitive copper mirror!

As soon as the mirror appeared, the eight shards melted together, then flowed into the body of the mirror itself, to form… a complete mirror!

A primordial aura erupted out from the mirror, shaking the starry sky and sending boundless ripples out in all directions. The Emissary’s face fell, and he backed up. As for Meng Hao, he looked excitedly at the mirror.

“Return to me!” he said. The mirror vibrated, and a blurry figure appeared within the mirror, a parrot. It looked out coldly at Meng Hao, seemingly confused. It was as if it were looking at a stranger, and at the same time, that stranger seemed familiar.

After a moment, though, that feeling of familiarity faded. The parrot looked away from Meng Hao, and then turned and shot out into the starry sky, taking the mirror with it.

Meng Hao’s face paled, and he coughed up a mouthful of blood. Seeing the parrot flying away filled his heart with pain, especially when he knew exactly why it had seemed so confused.

“Well, it is what it is. At least you’re complete. Even though you’re leaving, severing your destiny with me, I just hope… that you can find a master better than me….”

The Emissary of Allheaven began to laugh uproariously. Although a huge hole had been pierced into his chest, no blood flowed out. He turned to look at Meng Hao, laughing the entire time.

“That mirror doesn’t belong to you any more. It erased its own mind. You spent almost a thousand years getting ready to summon it to you, and it was all a complete waste!” Somehow, this Emissary of Allheaven knew about everything Meng Hao had been doing.

“Now, since you feel like leaving the Vast Expanse, I’ll help you. I will help you follow the destiny which has long since been prepared for you!” Laughing, the Emissary of Allheaven flickered into motion, performing an incantation gesture with both hands as he shot toward Meng Hao. Then he waved his finger, and the entire starry sky of the Vast Expanse seemed to sink down, as if he were drawing upon some of its power, then merging it into his finger to attack Meng Hao.

Meng Hao defended with all of his might. Booms rang out, and blood sprayed out of his mouth. He seemed to be on the verge of being destroyed, forced into successive retreats. But then, the eyes of the parrot in the distant copper mirror suddenly flickered. It still seemed confused, and yet, a tremor ran through it. For some unknown reason, it suddenly had the feeling that if it left right now, it would regret that decision for the rest of its life.

“Who am I…? Who am I…?” The parrot shivered, and then the confusion faded from its eyes. Instead, it seemed to be struggling with itself, as though there were memories inside of it trying to awaken!

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# Chapter 1503: Transcendent Armor!

“Who is he…?

“Why does he seem so familiar? I obviously don’t know him….

“Why does it hurt so much to see him injured so? Why do I have this feeling that he’s a very important part of my life?!

“Why…? Why…? And who am I…? I’m the spirit automaton of the copper mirror. No, wait. I’m a parrot…. Then who’s Lord Fifth? Who is this Lord Fifth…?

“Aaaaahhhhhh….” The copper mirror began to tremble violently. Inside, the parrot howled, its eyes bloodshot as memories apparently bubbled up inside of it.

It couldn’t see the memories clearly, but for some reason, it knew that it couldn’t abandon the person who had summoned it. It could tell that he was very important, and that he… viewed the parrot as important too!

The feeling rising up within the spirit automaton gradually left it convinced that this person was the owner of the copper mirror!

“I can’t go!

“How could I go?!?!” The parrot howled again, its eyes bright red and its mind in complete chaos. And yet, it didn’t hesitate for another moment. It turned, transforming into a flowing beam of light that shot through the Heavens at incredible speed, leaving the starry sky flaming in its wake.

This was also the starry sky of Allheaven, and yet it couldn’t slow the copper mirror down. Everything shook violently, and a roar of rage echoed out.

Meng Hao was currently wiping the blood off his lips. His eyes glowed brightly as he performed an incantation gesture, causing his cultivation base to surge as he prepared to fight. The Emissary of Allheaven was laughing coldly, and his eyes radiated an awe-inspiring light. Just when he was about to unleash another attack, his face fell.

He turned to look over his shoulder, and saw the copper mirror and parrot returning, slicing through the starry sky at top speed!

The man’s pupils constricted, and his mind began to reel.

Meng Hao also saw what was happening, and his eyes gleamed with excitement. Then he threw his head back and laughed long and hard.

“Copper mirror, return to me!” he cried, his voice echoing out in all directions. Rumbling sounds echoed out as the parrot closed in. It flew toward him at top speed, and then slammed into his chest, and began to merge into him.

A tremor ran through Meng Hao as a familiar sensation spread out. At the same time, his laughter grew even brighter and clearer. The glow in his eyes grew warm. And that warmth was not directed at the Emissary of Allheaven, but at the copper mirror, and the parrot!

The Emissary almost couldn’t believe what was happening, and his heart began to pound in his chest.

As for the spot where the copper mirror had slammed into Meng Hao’s chest, no injury could be seen there at all, and it only took a moment for the copper mirror to vanish completely. Then, black strands began to spread out to cover Meng Hao’s entire body.

At the same time, a towering pressure exploded out from him.

Meng Hao's heart was pounding. He could sense the existence of the parrot now, and although it viewed him as a stranger, there was still some of the old sensation that came from their past connection.

He took a deep breath, and his eyes shone brightly as he laughed, floating up into the air and taking control of the copper mirror.

As his hands spread out wide, the black strands continued to cover him, spreading out from his chest toward every other part of him.

In the blink of an eye, black armor covered his chest, upon which could be seen primeval designs. It seemed to contain an aura of the most ancient type. At the same time, Meng Hao's energy began to rise up to explosive levels.

The Emissary of Allheaven had been just about to advance toward him, but the tempest which sprang up instantly slowed him down. The armor continued to cover Meng Hao, spreading out to both of his arms. As the black strands merged together, wicked spikes spread out to cover his shoulders with pauldrons that resembled parrot heads.

His energy exploded out in shocking fashion, causing all of the bizarre creatures in the huge army to tremble inwardly.

By this point, the armor had completely covered his arms, forming overlapping layers of sharp black scales. Now that the armor had covered his torso, it began to rapidly flow down across his legs.

A moment later, a huge vortex sprang up beneath his feet, every rotation of which threw the starry sky around it into chaos.

The pressure pulsing off of Meng Hao grew more intense, making him the complete focus of everything in the starry sky.

The Emissary of Allheaven was completely ashen-faced as he fell back into retreat. He was muttering, and if one listened closely, they might be able to make out the words he spoke.

“Transcendent Battle Armor!”

Many of the creatures in the army were coughing up blood, unable to stand up to the intense pressure, a pressure which surpassed the 9-Essences level, and was close to… Transcendence!

Booms echoed out, each one far louder than thunder, so loud that even Heavenly might seemed as if it would be crushed by Meng Hao’s energy.

The final extension of the armor covered Meng Hao’s head. A black mask covered his face, and a black cape rippled out behind him. It was a grand sight, with colors flashing and the wind blowing. An intense, ancient aura radiated out from Meng Hao. Then, something appeared in Meng Hao’s hand… which he remembered very distinctly. It was… the Battle Weapon!

The black Battle Weapon pulsed with a cold glow that seemed capable of reaving the starry sky and shaking the Vast Expanse itself.

The instant the Battle Weapon appeared, a gleam of reminiscence appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes. Looking down at it, he murmured,

“So old friend, we finally… meet again.”

In the instant that his armor was complete, the aura Meng Hao radiated caused everything to shake. Ripples spread out, with him at the center, a tempest which shattered the starry sky.

The wind blasted into countless creatures in the surrounding area. All they could do was scream as they were transformed into ash. The look on the face of the Emissary of Allheaven was one of unprecedented seriousness as he continued to back up.

In the blink of an eye, the entire area was wrapped up in the tempest. The Vast Expanse trembled, and countless creatures in the army gasped. Deep in their souls, they began to tremble in fear.

It was hard to say who did it first, but one by one, they began to flee in terrified madness. They knew that if they didn’t escape from the intense pressure which was building up, they would be destroyed in body and mind.

Even the 9-Essences Paragons had the same reaction.

Within the entire world of this stretch of the starry sky, Meng Hao was the ultimate existence. At the same time, an illusory image suddenly appeared behind him. It was enormous, gigantic, something that seemed capable of shaking the stars. It was a huge parrot!

The parrot's feathers weren't multicolored; they were black. It had a terrifying aura, which made even the Emissary of Allheaven gasp in fear of Meng Hao. Without even thinking about it, he began to back up even faster.

“Still not quite at the full level of Transcendence….” Meng Hao thought as he sensed the energy exploding out of him. It was the most incredible level of power he had ever experienced in his entire life up to this point.

“Even though it's not Transcendence, it still makes me… the most powerful person under the Transcendent level!” He looked up, and the red glow of his eyes shone out through the black mask, making him look terrifying to the extreme.

“Well, it makes sense, since my Ninth Hex still isn't complete….” he murmured. Then he took a step forward toward the fleeing Emissary of Allheaven. Before he could get very far at all, Meng Hao was right in front of him, whereupon he shoved out with his left hand.

“Get the hell back to wherever you came from!” he roared. The Emissary of Allheaven felt himself vibrating, and then he exploded. A roar of anger echoed out, and madness filled his eyes as the energy of the Vast Expanse quickly formed his body back together.

Meng Hao's expression was icy cold as he hefted the Battle Weapon in his right hand, and then slashed it through the void. The starry sky… was split apart! The energy of the Vast Expanse which existed in the starry sky of Allheaven was riven down to its very source!

The starry sky trembled, and cracking sounds echoed out. Shockingly, a rift spread out, forming a huge circle, like a sealing mark. The energy of the Vast Expanse was not capable of entering within that area, resulting in the Emissary of Allheaven being cut off from his power source.

“To kill you would be as easy as flipping over my hand,” Meng Hao said coolly. He began to walk forward, and each step caused massive rumbling to echo out. After he had taken three steps, the Emissary of Allheaven roared, drawing upon the energy of the Vast Expanse inside of his body to materialize a trident with vicious, spiralled prongs.

Meng Hao’s expression was calm as he then shoved out with his left hand. The trident lurched to a standstill, then began to tremble. Meng Hao’s hand gradually formed into a fist, and the trident began to twist and distort. Then, a bang rang out as Meng Hao clenched his fist tight; the trident exploded.

Black mist began to roil out from the Emissary; clearly he was deeply weakened. For the first time, a look of fear could be seen on his face.

“So, you can feel fear, huh?” Meng Hao said calmly. He took a fourth step forward, appearing yet again in front of the Emissary.

The Emissary let out a miserable shriek, and tried again to flee. And yet, no matter what he did or how he fled, Meng Hao would appear in front of him.

“The reason I sealed this place down is because… I’m very curious about what exactly you are.” Meng Hao’s let hand shot out as he grabbed the Emissary of Allheaven by the neck.

“Oh will of Allheaven,” squeaked the Emissary, “oh Lord of Allheaven, save me….” In that very moment, though, Meng Hao suddenly began… a Soulsearch!

He began to Soulsearch the Emissary of Allheaven, who represented the starry sky of Allheaven!

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# Chapter 1504: Song Daozi!

As the Soulsearching began, Meng Hao’s mind filled with rumbling sounds. Shockingly, there were no memories to be seen! There was only a voice!

“Henceforth, you are the Emissary of Allheaven….” There was only that eternal voice echoing out within his mind. It was impossible to say when those words had been spoken, but they left Meng Hao’s consciousness reeling as strongly as if he had been struck by a huge blow.

Even more astonishing was that the voice seemed to contain piercing power that reached out into Meng Hao. In the blink of an eye, the voice was echoing out in his own mind.

It was like a sealing mark, burning deep into his body, resulting in… Meng Hao being made the new Emissary of Allheaven.

His body trembled, and beneath his mask, his eyes shone with radiant crimson light. Demonic qi erupted out within him, surging to suppress the voice which echoed in his mind.

The scene out in the starry sky was of Meng Hao grasping the Emissary of Allheaven by the throat. It didn’t appear as if anything strange at all was happening. However, the truth was that Meng Hao was facing incredible danger that threatened even his soul.

It wasn’t that he hadn’t been aware that performing a Soulsearch might be dangerous; as far as he was concerned, he had had no choice. This person claimed to be the Emissary of Allheaven, and even had some of the will of the starry sky upon him. Because of all of that, and because of the things Meng Hao had learned in the necropolis of the Vast Expanse School, he was able to form some speculations.

The starry sky of Allheaven, the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, had a will, and that will was none other than Allheaven's!

As the saying went, Allheaven fears the Immortal. Furthermore, Allheaven wanted the Demon to appear. All of that caused Meng Hao to be filled with a sensation of imminent crisis, and also caused him to reach certain conclusions about why the Mountain and Sea Realm had been struck with such calamity.

Although he had no definite answers, he had a lot of clues. And therefore, this Emissary of Allheaven could be considered one of his greatest acquisitions. If he could squeeze some answers out of this man's mind, it would help him to understand the truth much more clearly. That would also give him a much greater chance at achieving victory in the future.

“You want me to become the Emissary of Allheaven? You… don't qualify!” Meng Hao let out a powerful roar, and his armor began to vibrate. The power of the copper mirror exploded out, combining with Meng Hao's Demonic qi to form a tempest which blasted out in all directions. It drove the sealing mark away, completely destroying it, wiping it out of existence.

It didn't matter how powerful that sealing mark had been in the past. After coming out from within the body of the Emissary, it was significantly weakened. Add in the fact that Meng Hao was at his peak state, and once he fought back, he was able to destroy the sealing mark and dispel the voice.

As the voice faded away, the Emissary of Allheaven trembled, and his eyes began to shine. All of the hair on his head turned white, and his skin began to wither up. In the briefest of instants, he aged into an ancient form.

At the same time, his mind was cleared of the sealing mark, and countless memories flooded back in. Because he was still in the midst of a Soulsearch, Meng Hao could see all of those memories.

He saw a world that was not the Mountain and Sea Realm, not the Immortal God Realm, and not the Devil Realm. It was not the world he had seen in the necropolis. It was a strange land, and yet it was obviously located within the starry sky of Allheaven.

It was a flourishing world, and although it hadn’t reached a level of ultimate power, there were still many powerful experts. Most importantly, the world had legends of the Immortal. Apparently, it was a place like the Mountain and Sea Realm or Planet Vast Expanse, a place where the cultivators had Immortal Threads which, if they had the right destiny, could form an Immortal Root.

In other words, it was a world in which the Immortal could appear!

In this case, the word Immortal didn’t refer to the Immortal Realm, but rather, what Allheaven feared… THE Immortal!

Meng Hao saw the Emissary of Allheaven in that world, except he was a young man. Meng Hao watched him practice cultivation and grow into a man. He started out as a rogue cultivator, who eventually exceeded all of his contemporaries. He unified the world in which he lived, reaching the absolute peak, 9-Essences.

At that time, this Emissary of Allheaven was not like he was now. He was focused on his goals, and was the center of all attention. Then, one day, Outsiders appeared from beyond. A huge war ensued, and the world was destroyed. All living beings died.

The man who would become the Emissary of Allheaven threw his head back and let out a bitter howl. Even as he was being surrounded by his enemies, he suddenly erupted with… Demonic qi!

He was forced to transform from the Immortal into the Demon, after which he used Demonic qi to slaughter his enemies. He fled up into the Heavens, and came to be focused on one thing and one thing only: revenge!

Revenge. Revenge! Revenge!!

That one thought was so intense that even in the midst of a Soulsearch, it left Meng Hao panting, shaken. All of a sudden, he was struck by… how the life of this Emissary of Allheaven was so similar to his own!

As he continued the Soulsearch, the Emissary trembled. His eyes no longer appeared to be filled with confusion. It was as if he were awakening after countless years of sleep.

He looked at Meng Hao, his eyes bright and clear. Not only did he do nothing to resist the Soulsearch, he took the initiative to cooperate with it. He opened up his memories, allowing Meng Hao to see everything.

As he did, his eyes flickered with reminiscence. Within the depths of his memories was an unyielding heart. There was regret. And there was a towering desire for revenge. But even more than all of that… there was bitter laughter.

It was a noiseless laughter that accompanied his white hairs as they fell out of his head and floated down. His body was withering up and turning into ash. It was as if his body had been fixed at a certain point in time, and then time forgot him. But now, all of the power of those years was being inflicted relentlessly upon him.

Meng Hao was shaken as he watched the memories of the Emissary of Allheaven. After escaping into the Heavens with only his desire for revenge, the future Emissary experienced many dangers, and also acquired much good fortune. His cultivation base became powerful, far more powerful than before. In fact, he even… stepped halfway into Transcendence.

It was a terrifying level of power that even far surpassed Meng Hao's current level as the most powerful person under Transcendence. What was referred to as being half a step into Transcendence came from the fact that there were three separate areas which could Transcend. Those areas were the soul, the Essence, and the body. Anyone who Transcended in even one of those areas would be referred to as being half a step into Transcendence.

The future Emissary of Allheaven had Transcended in body, reaching the same level as Nine Seals from the Mountain and Sea Realm.

After reaching that level, he came to understand that the reason his home had been obliterated was because of the Allheaven starry sky, and the will named Allheaven!

The reason his home had been obliterated was because Allheaven didn’t wish for the Immortal to appear. Instead, he wanted the Demon to come.

The man who would become the Emissary paid a huge price to discover a weakness in the starry sky of Allheaven. Astonishingly, he managed to fight his way outside, to reach outside the Vast Expanse.

That was where the memories suddenly screeched to a halt. Whatever it was that he had encountered outside the Vast Expanse, it was impossible to determine. The memories were gone. The only thing that was clear was that a certain number of years later, he reappeared, except not as himself. By then, he had become… the Emissary of Allheaven.

Meng Hao was shaking as he loosened his grip. His face flickered, and he backed up, breathing heavily. Mixed emotions could be seen on his face as he looked at the Emissary of Allheaven.

The man’s body was almost completely dissipated. He no longer seemed evil, but instead, weak and bitter. He had lived his life for revenge, but in the end, not only did he fail, he also ended up becoming the Emissary for the person he wished to exact vengeance upon.

Meng Hao stood there silently.

The Emissary looked down at his vanishing body, and then back up at Meng Hao.

“I can sense that you… are just like me,” he said, his voice hoarse and ancient.

“Back then, I was defeated… but I hope that you can succeed!” He sighed and looked out into the starry sky, into the Vast Expanse. Then, a vicious gleam appeared.

“I wasn’t always the Emissary of Allheaven. I am Song Daozi from the Seven Soils Realm!

“Allheaven, you are doomed to demise!!” Song Daozi threw his head back and laughed uproariously. It was a laughter that seemed to contain weeping. His body was slowly transforming into ash. As it did, his eyes flickered with memories, as if in this moment, he was about to finally reunite with his clan members, his family, and his friends.

However, before he vanished completely, his eyes suddenly gleamed with bright light, as if his soul had suddenly seized. He looked over at Meng Hao, an expression of disbelief on his face. He even looked anxious, as if there were something important he needed to tell Meng Hao, but didn’t have the time. Even as he faded away completely into dust, he managed to speak a few sentences to Meng Hao.

“I remember now! The weak spot in the Vast Expanse that I found all those years ago… is right here!!

“I remember now! I didn’t find this place by accident, someone pointed it out to me….

“Wait, why can’t I remember what that person looked like? I remember she was a woman….

“Her. She was the one who told me about this place….

“Fellow Daoist, the will of Allheaven is everywhere in this starry sky. Why did you pick this place??”

With that, the man was no more.

Meng Hao stared in shock at the space where the man had vanished. After seeing the look in his eyes, and hearing his final words, Meng Hao’s heart filled with intense coldness.

The reason he had chosen this place to summon the copper mirror was not because someone had told him about it. During the process of searching for the copper mirror shards, he had stumbled across it himself, and could tell that the energy of the Vast Expanse was weak here. There was almost a sensation of expulsion and division.

After hearing what the man had just said, Meng Hao's heart began to thump. He immediately backed up, rotating his cultivation base and performing an incantation gesture with his left hand. Then he waved his finger at the location where the land mass had once stood.

After his finger fell, images rose up from the past, images that no one but Meng Hao would be able to see.

He saw the battle between himself and the Emissary, he saw himself surrounded by the bizarre creatures. But then all of that faded away. And Meng Hao was there preparing the defenses on the land mass.

More time flowed backward. Twenty years. A hundred. Several hundred….

The land mass was floating along in the starry sky, completely unchanging. Meng Hao frowned as he saw himself passing by the location and noticing it for the first time.

More months passed. Then, something extraordinary happened, a full ten years before Meng Hao had discovered the location!

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# Chapter 1505: You Are The Son of Allheaven

Audio Player

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Meng Hao could see as clear as day that ten years before he passed through this area, this land mass didn’t even exist within the starry sky!

It was completely empty!!

What he saw left Meng Hao reeling. Then he watched as that spot in the starry sky suddenly began to ripple and distort. A moment later, the land mass… just appeared.

It was almost as if a huge hand had dragged it out nowhere.

His eyes flickered as Song Daozi’s words echoed in his mind. Without the slightest hesitation, he began to back up. However, it was at this point that a light sigh echoed out.

“Fellow Daoist Meng, we meet again.”

At the same time, the sealing mark Meng Hao had created around himself cracked and shattered into fragments. A will entered the area, crushing everything in its path.

Then he saw a woman strolling toward him. She wore violet garments, including a skirt decorated with countless glowing stars and planets. She was beautiful, and her eyes seemed to flicker like the Vast Expanse itself.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he said, “Han Bei!”

This woman was none other than Han Bei. However, this version of her seemed completely different than the person he had encountered recently on Planet Vast Expanse.

That version of Han Bei was enigmatic in certain ways, but was about as weak as an egg compared to him. Unfortunately, her soul was fused with Chu Yuyan’s, ensuring that if she died, Chu Yuyan would also die, otherwise Meng Hao would have long since done something about her.

But this Han Bei standing in front of him seemed, not like a cultivator, but like the entire Vast Expanse. Although it was Han Bei standing there, it was as if she were radiating the will of the entire starry sky of Allheaven, as if she were its avatar.

The Emissary of Allheaven, Song Daozi, had given him a similar feeling, although the will of Allheaven upon him had been a far cry from this. As of this moment, Han Bei seemed like the embodiment of the will of Allheaven.

It made Meng Hao feel as if, within the starry sky of Allheaven, all living beings would have no choice but to bow their heads to her. Everything would tremble in her presence, from land masses, to planets, to the countless vortexes which existed. Innumerable worlds and Realms, countless living beings, would all have the same reaction. They would all acknowledge allegiance to this embodiment of the will of Allheaven.

Everything trembled as the qi flow of the entire starry sky transformed into something like a funnel, with Han Bei resting at its very center.

The sight of it caused Meng Hao’s pupils to constrict. Furthermore, he got the feeling that Han Bei hadn’t only just appeared. She had most likely been there from the moment he began Soulsearching Song Daozi.

Meng Hao’s eyes shone with bright light as he looked at her. She returned his gaze, a slight smile on her face, a smile that seemed to be at harmony with the Vast Expanse, a smile that contained profound secrets.

“Enough with the mind games,” Meng Hao said, waving his hand and sending cultivation base power surging. The power of the copper mirror burst out and became shocking Battle Armor. Almost simultaneously, Meng Hao’s energy surged as he slashed out with the Battle Weapon.

The force of the attack ripped open the starry sky, causing rumbling sounds to echo out as the blow descended upon Han Bei. However, Han Bei did nothing to avoid the blow, and in fact continued to smile.

“The fact that you realized something strange is going on here doesn’t matter. I wasn’t counting on being able to keep things secret for much longer anyway.” She chuckled, allowing the Battle Weapon to slash into her. However, it was almost as if she didn’t even exist; the power of the Battle Weapon passed right through her, sending boundless ripples out into the starry sky behind her.

“That won’t do you any good,” she said, shaking her head. “This isn’t my true form, just a projection. Furthermore, what has sent me here isn’t the power of my cultivation base, but rather, the almighty will of the starry sky of Allheaven.”

Meng Hao’s eyes widened, and he backed up, unleashing all the power he could muster to put distance between him and her.

Han Bei shook her head again. Smiling, she said, “You can’t escape. This is a special place which has been prepared by the almighty will of Allheaven… to harvest you.”

With that, she extended her right hand and pointed at Meng Hao.

His mind was instantly sent reeling. Unexpectedly, the starry sky around him began to spin, and no matter how he tried to flee, he ended up going to the same place!

Smiling, Han Bei said, “The reason you found this land mass to begin with was because the will of Allheaven wished it to be so. Therefore, he teleported it to a place he knew you would pass by.

“And that’s because this is one of the few weak spots in the starry sky of Allheaven. The land mass might be gone now, but the weak spot is still here, a part of the starry sky itself.

“It is only by means of this weak spot that you, someone who has yet to Transcend, can step outside of the Vast Expanse.

“Meng Hao, didn’t you want to see what it’s really like out there? All you have to do is go out from this spot, and you’ll know.” She slowly reached out and then waved her hand. The space behind her then began to distort. Then, it was as if every part of the starry sky of Allheaven, as if the will of Allheaven which existed in countless places and locations… opened an eye!

Directly behind Han Bei, the starry sky converged into a single vertical line, which then slowly opened in shocking fashion to reveal an eye, pupil and all!

It was the eye of the starry sky, an eye formed from the will of Allheaven!

As the eye opened, rumbling sounds echoed out, and everything began to tremble. Then an indescribable power exploded out from Han Bei.

That power caused everything in the area to collapse, revealing an enormous black hole.

Apparently, that black hole had been ripped open by someone countless years ago. Now that it had revealed itself, the gravitational force it could exert was astonishing.

Meng Hao trembled as that force grabbed onto him. He almost couldn’t control his own body as he was dragged inexorably down toward the black hole. At the same time, a powerful force of expulsion rose up from the starry sky of Allheaven, which shoved him toward the black hole. He trembled as he began falling faster and faster.

He gritted his teeth and unleashed all the power of his cultivation base. He slashed back and forth with the Battle Weapon to try to slow down. But it did no good. He glared up at Han Bei, his eyes flickering with killing intent.

As of this point, he understand that what he was looking at was not really Han Bei, it was… the will of the starry sky of Allheaven.

“It was you!” he said, his words bursting with murder and insane hatred. “The will of Allheaven! You manipulated the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent into destroying the Mountain and Sea Realm. All to control me and my life!” His eyes were completely bloodshot, and even the red color of his pupils grew more intense!

A tremor ran through Han Bei. Apparently, it was difficult for her to remain under the sustained control of the will of Allheaven, and yet she forced herself to endure. Looking at Meng Hao, she smiled.

“Let me ask you,” she said, “how do you think the will of Allheaven is connected to you?”

Meng Hao’s mind spun. He had come to realize long ago that the word ‘Allheaven’ had also existed in the Mountain and Sea Realm. After all, the term ‘Allheaven Clan,’ contained those same characters.

He had long since come to speculate that the two were connected, but to hear the words coming out of Han Bei’s mouth right now caused his eyes to widen.

“I am the Daughter of Allheaven, and you… you are the Son of Allheaven.

“Resistance is futile. In fact, you don’t even qualify to resist. The will of Allheaven has bolstered my consciousness, a state that I will not be able to endure again for the next hundred years. But that doesn’t matter.

“I look forward… to your return. When you appear again, you will have accepted your status as the Son of Allheaven. You will have forgotten your past. Forgotten everything. Your world will no longer be that of the Mountain and Sea Realm. There will only be… Allheaven.

“And you will become the new… Emissary of Allheaven. Perhaps you will even become… the most powerful Emissary to ever exist.

“Perhaps you will become like me, a Dao Protector to the grand will of Allheaven!” Han Bei’s smile was as flirtatious as ever, but her body was clearly weakening.

Rumbling sounds filled the starry sky as Meng Hao continued to try to use the Battle Weapon to slow himself down. However, with the power of expulsion pushing him, and the gravitational force pulling at him relentlessly, he began to spin, trembling, into the depths of the black hole.

In the blink of an eye, he was swallowed up!

The black hole transformed into a spinning vortex, which gradually began to fade away. Eventually, the starry sky returned to normal. At the same time, the power of expulsion from the Vast Expanse disappeared as if it had never existed.

Light began to shine out from Han Bei, gradually turning her into glittering motes of fading splendor.

She looked at the spot where Meng Hao had been sucked away, and continued to smile just like before. Her eyes even gleamed with anticipation.

“Meng Hao…. Son of Allheaven,” she said softly. “You grew too quickly, so quickly that even the almighty will of Allheaven was on guard. Therefore, even though the seed was not mature, it was still time for the harvest.” With that, she completely transformed into light that vanished into the darkness.

Soon, the starry sky was completely quiet and dark.

Meanwhile, back on Planet Vast Expanse, in the First Sect, Han Bei’s true form was sitting cross-legged in meditation. Suddenly, her eyes snapped open, and blood sprayed out of her mouth. She aged visibly, and her face turned completely ashen.

“For the next hundred years,” she murmured. “I must not call the will of Allheaven upon me.” With that, she looked up into the starry sky. “I truly look forward to your return. Then you and I can create a new seed here on Planet Vast Expanse.”

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# Chapter 1506: Cut Off Outside the Vast Expanse!

In the same moment that Meng Hao was sucked into the black hole, his clone's ninth life, the eternally blind Little Treasure, was in the middle of sculpting. Suddenly, his hand shook, and he accidentally sliced his finger with the blade. Blood began to flow.

He slowly raised his head, and a look of confusion could be seen on his face. A strange sensation flowed through him, as though a thread which had always been attached to him had suddenly been cut off.

When that happened, Little Treasure felt as if he had lost something. As he sat there silently, a gasp could be heard from off to the side. His wife rushed over and immediately staunched the flow of blood.

"What happened?" she asked. After a long moment, Little Treasure shook his head.

"Nothing," he murmured. "I just suddenly got the sensation that I'm not complete." Because he couldn't see, there was no way for him to notice that his wife's face was as ashen as his own, and she looked just as confused.

At the same time, the 9-Essences Paragons on Planet Vast Expanse, including Jin Yunshan, the Sect Leader, Immortal Bai Muchen, and all the others, suddenly shivered. It was as if something had just flowed across them, simultaneously causing their memories of Meng Hao to suddenly grow a bit unclear.

"What just happened!?"

“Something’s wrong. My memories of the Ninth Paragon seem like they might disappear at any moment….”

The Sect Leader, Jin Yunshan, and all the others were all in their secluded meditation facilities, feeling completely shaken. Similar things occurred within the Ninth Sect itself.

Far away in some other location in the starry sky of Allheaven, beneath the new 33 Heavens, many people in the Mountain and Sea Butterfly had similar reactions.

That was especially true of Xu Qing. As she sat there cross-legged, she suddenly opened her eyes and coughed up some blood. She trembled as a wave of fear rose up inside of her, completely filling her.

As of that moment, she could clearly tell that her ability to sense Meng Hao had been severed.

Her face drained of blood, and her eyes filled with grief. Smiling bitterly, she reached out to prop herself up on the nearby wall. After a long moment, her eyes filled with a resolute gleam.

“It doesn’t matter what happened, or how much time goes by,” she murmured, “I have faith… that you won’t perish.” She repeated those words over and over, both with her mouth and in her heart.

During that moment, everywhere in the starry sky of Allheaven, any person who knew or had even seen Meng Hao, all felt a deep internal transformation. Suddenly, their relationships with Meng Hao seemed to change, to lessen.

As soon as he left, all traces of him within the starry sky of Allheaven were cut. If he didn’t return within a relatively short time, then they would completely fade away. In the years to come, the people who had known him would return to the dust, and eventually, no one would remember him.

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Outside the Vast Expanse, Meng Hao opened his eyes.

His armor was gone, having once again changed into the shape of a copper mirror, which he held in his hand. When he looked out, he saw starlight, shining down from a boundless starry sky.

There was no mist, and there was no Vast Expanse. There was only the radiant starry sky, filled with one flourishing world after another.

Meng Hao gaped in shock. It felt as if some unknown fetter had been removed from his cultivation base, allowing it to surge mightily. He could also sense that this starry sky was filled with immeasurable Immortal power.

In fact, when he looked around, the first thing he thought was that everything here was pure to the ultimate degree. It was completely different from the Vast Expanse.

There was no dust, no aura of death. There was only flourishing life force; everything pulsed with a feeling that made joy rise up in one’s heart.

“Why… do I feel different here than in the Vast Expanse?” Even as he hesitated in confusion, he saw a few beams of light shooting toward him through the starry sky. They were led by a middle-aged man, next to whom flew a beautiful woman who looked very anxious.

Once they could actually see Meng Hao, the woman shot into the lead position, her face filling with joy. She was the first to reach Meng Hao.

“Elder Brother, we finally found you!!” She seemed so happy that tears spilled down her cheeks as she threw herself into his arms. Meng Hao was confused, certain that he didn’t even know who this person was. But then pain suddenly stabbed into his mind.

“Elder Brother, it’s a good thing you and Elder Brother Chen Fan both had sealing marks placed on you by the sect back then, otherwise we might never have been able to find you.

“Oh right, Elder Brother, what exactly happened in the Arcane Pocket Realm?

“The Hundred Sects all sent Chosen into the legendary Arcane Pocket Realm of the long-since destroyed Vast Expanse. But then, a few days ago, something happened, and many of the Chosen suddenly died, and the others were forcibly teleported out.” More people arrived by Meng Hao’s side, and all of them seemed very concerned about him. They all started talking at the same time, causing Meng Hao’s confusion to increase, and his head to hurt more.

A moment later, a memory rose up which told him that he was Meng Hao, a Chosen disciple of the Blue Sea Sect, one of the Hundred Sects that existed in this starry sky. Some time ago, he had joined a group of other various Chosen to enter an Arcane Pocket Realm.

Supposedly, it was a Realm that had been destroyed ages ago, a place known as the Vast Expanse Realm.

There were certain restrictions that limited entry, therefore the Hundred Sects had amassed a large group of Chosen to all enter at the same time.

However, something unexpected had occurred within the Vast Expanse Realm, and the majority of the Chosen had been killed. Of the group from the Blue Sea Sect, only he and his Elder Brother Chen Fan had escaped.

Apparently, it was because of Elder Brother Chen Fan that this group had been sent to rescue him.

At first, all of the memories he was recalling seemed unfamiliar, but as soon as he heard the name Chen Fan, everything suddenly seemed to make sense.

“Where’s Elder Brother Chen Fan?” he asked.

The person to answer the question was the middle-aged man, who looked at Meng Hao kindly as he said, “Your Elder Brother Chen Fan was already taken back to the sect. Hao’er, do you remember everything that happened in the Arcane Pocket Realm?”

Meng Hao looked over at the man and somehow recalled that this was his Master. In response to the man’s words, Meng Hao thought back to everything which had occurred inside, and once again, stabs of pain wracked his mind. Blue veins even popped out on his face.

“Never mind,” the man said. He sighed. “Just try not to think about it. Your Elder Brother Chen Fan experienced the same thing. In fact, so did all of the Chosen who made it out alive.” With that, he flicked his sleeve, leading Meng Hao and everyone else off into the distance.

As they proceeded along, the woman continued to support Meng Hao. She seemed very concerned about him, so much so that she didn’t mind if everyone saw them being so physically close to each other. At first, Meng Hao felt that it was somewhat inappropriate, but then his memories told him that this woman was his beloved Daoist partner, and also the daughter of his Master. They had been married for a long time, and even had a son.

“No. Something doesn’t seem right….” Meng Hao’s head hurt more than ever, and his eyes flickered with confusion. After some time passed, the group reached the sect itself.

The Blue Sea Sect was located on a planet that Meng Hao found to be both familiar and unfamiliar.

As soon as he arrived, numerous fellow sect members saw him, and expressions of delight appeared on their faces. They began to rush over, and soon a crowd had formed that escorted him back to his home. There, he saw a young boy about seven or eight years old, who called him “daddy” and rushed over to hug him.

All of it seemed very unfamiliar, but then there was that name Chen Fan, which somehow made everything seem correct.

“No, this is definitely wrong. Something’s not right….” His head throbbed, and off to the side, his Daoist partner and his son looked at him with anxious expressions.

He forced a smile onto his face, and after uttering some reassuring words, he sat down cross-legged. Frowning, he thought back to everything he remembered from his life. His father was an Elder in the sect, and he himself had been born with extraordinary latent talent. After officially joining the sect, he instantly became a Chosen. He progressed rapidly, and by this point his cultivation base was already at the peak Ancient realm, just a step away from the full circle.

His wife was the daughter of his Master, and the two of them were childhood sweethearts. When they got married a few years ago, it lead to widespread envy among their peers.

“No, that’s not right….” he thought, shaking his head. He subconsciously performed an incantation gesture and pushed down on his stomach.

“Eighth Hex!”

Nothing happened. He looked down in surprise, unsure of exactly why he had said the words “Eighth Hex.” Next, he looked through his bag of holding. Everything inside seemed unfamiliar, except for….

A copper mirror.

“What’s this?” he thought, surprised. Then he remembered that after awakening earlier, he had been clutching this very mirror.

“Could it be something I picked up in the Arcane Pocket Realm?” He took out the copper mirror and studied it for a moment. The familiar feeling once again appeared, although it was somewhat different than before.

This world seemed unfamiliar, and everyone in it seemed like strangers, and yet there was also something familiar to it as well. His memories seemed strange, but this copper mirror was different. Within all of the unfamiliarity, it seemed very familiar, as if it were something very important to him.

“Just what exactly is going on…?” he blurted. For some reason, he was starting to get agitated, so much so that his wife took his son out of the room and left him alone.

After some time passed, his eyes were bloodshot. He reached up and struck his forehead with a glancing blow. In that exact moment, a knock could be heard on the door, and a worried voice spoke out.

“Little Junior Brother, I’m coming in.” The door opened, and a young man walked in who somehow radiated an ancient feeling. He looked at Meng Hao, mixed emotions on his face, as if he were thinking about the past.

Meng Hao looked up, and recognized the young man, as though he existed, not just in his surface memories, but somewhere deep inside his mind.

“Elder Brother Chen Fan….”

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# Chapter 1507: Can’t Tell Clearly

The person who had come to visit him was none other than Chen Fan!

The confusion in Meng Hao’s eyes grew. There wasn’t the least bit of unfamiliarity to this Chen Fan. Quite the opposite. Meng Hao was sure that he knew him. Not only did he exist in Meng Hao’s memories, he also had a place deep within his intuition.

As Chen Fan walked in and sat down cross-legged in front of him, Meng Hao felt stabbing pain in his head. Within his mind, Chen Fan was like a drop of water falling into a pot of boiling oil.

The resulting explosion caused random, scattered memories to flit through Meng Hao’s mind. They were like a cyclone that roared through his thoughts, none of them connected, and yet all of them featuring Chen Fan.

They were like memories from another life, and they left Meng Hao trembling, his eyes bloodshot. Demonic qi roared, and finally, he clenched his hands into fists and roared, unleashing the power of his cultivation base. That power was definitely not the power of the Ancient Realm, it was the peak of the 9-Essences level.

Although the room was being destroyed around them, Chen Fan wasn’t affected at all. He leaned forward, grabbed Meng Hao by the shoulders, and shouted, “Little Junior Brother!!”

Meng Hao began to pant, staring at Chen Fan, chaos raging within him. Not only was he bewildered by what was going on, he felt as if there were a voice inside of him yelling something at him, something he couldn’t quite make out.

As Meng Hao’s cultivation base erupted out, the entire sect was shaken, and countless individuals flew over anxiously.

“Little Junior Brother, wake up!!” Chen Fan roared.

“None of that is real! Everything you experienced in the Vast Expanse Realm was an illusion!!

“You are back in the real world now. The Vast Expanse Realm is just an Arcane Pocket Realm, the ruins of a place which died ages and ages ago!”

Chen Fan’s shouting grew louder, and it eventually pierced its way into Meng Hao’s mind. Meng Hao was panting even harder than before, and his eyes were crimson. More and more memories were flying about in his mind.

In one moment, he was experiencing familiar sensations in an unfamiliar world. The next moment, he was experiencing unfamiliar sensations in a familiar world. It made it impossible for him tell clearly what was real.

“Not real?” he asked hoarsely. He didn’t recognize his own voice, as if it weren’t even him speaking. It sounded hoarse and grating, like metal rubbing against rock.

“Not real!” Chen Fan replied. “It was all a fantasy we experienced in the Vast Expanse Arcane Pocket Realm. You’re not the only one to go through this. I had the same feelings. In fact, everyone who escaped from the Arcane Pocket Realm had the same experience.”

He clasped Meng Hao by the shoulders and anxiously continued: “A big group from the Hundred Sects went into the Arcane Pocket Realm together. Who would have ever guessed that as soon as we entered, we were sucked into a fantasy? Of course, there were upsides. For example, both you and I were able to find our own path of cultivation within the confusing fantasy.”

The bewilderment in Meng Hao’s eyes grew more intense. He believed Chen Fan, but deep inside, there was something shouting at him, and he couldn’t shake the feeling that something was off.

“I remember a woman,” Meng Hao blurted subconsciously. “She–”

“Was her name Xu Qing?” Chen Fan interrupted. Meng Hao’s jaw dropped. As soon as the name Xu Qing entered his mind, a tremor ran through him. The expression of struggle on his face grew more intense; it felt as if he were stuck in a nightmare.

“Think carefully,” Chen Fan said, “and you’ll realize that the Xu Qing you are thinking about is exactly the same as Xu Qing from the Dao of Water Sect, right? Junior Brother, you were in a relationship with Xu Qing from the Dao of Water Sect, but in the end, she chose the path of Immortality, not you.” As Chen Fan spoke, memories rose up within Meng Hao’s mind. He suddenly remembered that Xu Qing had been a fellow disciple of the Blue Sea Sect. However, because of various circumstances, she ended up defecting to another sect, and severing any connections she had to him.

“No,” Meng Hao murmured. “There’s also Fatty and Wang Youcai. What about my dad and mom, and my sister? What about Sun Hai and my Master, Pill Demon…?” However, as more memories appeared in his mind, he had to admit that he saw images of everyone he had just mentioned.

Virtually all of them were cultivators from the Hundred Sects, the same ones who had gone into the Vast Expanse Arcane Pocket Realm.

“Was it really all just an illusion…?” Meng Hao murmured bitterly.

Chen Fan nodded, mixed emotions flickering within his eyes.

“Little Junior Brother,” he said softly, gripping Meng Hao’s shoulders, “you were stuck within the Arcane Pocket Realm of the Vast Expanse Realm for far longer than me. That’s why you’re so much more confused, and also why it will take you longer to fully awaken.

“I had the same suspicions as you when I first awoke. I had many confusing impulses, and felt as if I didn’t want to awaken. I even tried to get back into the Vast Expanse Arcane Pocket Realm.

“Other people might not understand what you’re feeling right now, but your Elder Brother does!” Chen Fan seemed very earnest as he looked at Meng Hao, and his expression was one of deep care.

Meng Hao maintained his silence, and yet his eyes seemed more confused than ever. He didn’t want to believe what he was being told, and yet everything around him seemed so real. He could see the images of the people around him within his memories. That was especially true of his wife, who had always cared about him even when he was infatuated with Xu Qing.

And then there was his son, his own flesh and blood. Via divine sense, he could tell that the blood pumping through the boy’s veins was the same as his own.

Most real of all was Chen Fan.

“But,” he muttered, “the Mountain and S–” Before he could finish, Chen Fan interrupted him.

“Enough!” he said, his grip on Meng Hao’s shoulders tightening, tears welling up in his eyes. “Little Junior Brother, you need to wake up. All of that was an illusion. I know that you were just about to bring up the Mountain and Sea Realm. That’s because the first place we all ended up in after going into the Vast Expanse Arcane Pocket Realm was the ruins of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“Both of us got sucked into the same place. I remember the Mountain and Sea Realm too, as well as the Reliance Sect. Back then, I was your Elder Brother, right?!”

Meng Hao took a deep breath and looked up at Chen Fan.

“It was an illusion, all of it,” Chen Fan said. “The Mountain and Sea Realm wasn’t destroyed in our time, that happened long, long ago. Many years in the past, the Vast Expanse Realm really did exist, and inside of it, there was also a Mountain and Sea Realm. But the people who lived there were not you and me!

"It was all a dream, a dream of Mountains and Seas. We were taken back into ancient times, and that had a big impact on all of us." Every word spoken by Chen Fan was like a bolt of lightning striking Meng Hao's mind. "Stop thinking about it. It was all an illusion. What you see around you is reality."

"This is all real?" Meng Hao murmured. Bitterly, he closed his eyes. His head hurt, and every time he tried to think about the Vast Expanse, it felt like he was being stabbed to the bone.

"This is all real!" Chen Fan replied earnestly. If anyone else had tried to convince him, Meng Hao wouldn't have believed them. But this was Chen Fan, and both in the clear memories, and the vague ones, he remembered that his Eldest Brother always took care of him.

Meng Hao smiled bitterly, and then took a long breath. "Elder Brother, I understand. I sank into a dream of the Vast Expanse Realm, and it was so realistic that now I'm having trouble telling the difference between what is real and what is not."

Meng Hao's eyes were bloodshot, and he seemed older than before, exhausted.

"Just give me some peace and quiet, and I'll be fine," he said quietly.

Chen Fan looked at him, patted his shoulder, then rose to his feet.

"Get some rest, and always remember that this place… is real. You are not Meng Hao from the Mountain and Sea Realm. You are the Scion disciple of the Blue Sea Sect, from outside the Vast Expanse. Meng Hao, you are a Chosen from the Hundred Sects of the Vast Expanse Cosmos."

Meng Hao nodded bitterly. However, there was something that no one could possibly know, which was that the copper mirror inside of his bag holding was sending a hot current of energy into Meng Hao. It swirled around inside of him as he closed his eyes, slowly calming him. The surrounding members of his sect finally breathed sighs of relief, although they still continued to look at him with caring concern.

Chen Fan looked deeply at Meng Hao, then turned and left, looking completely exhausted. After he was gone, Meng Hao's wife and son returned, looking very anxious and worried. The boy lingered off to the side, looking a bit scared, as though his father was a stranger.

"It's fine," Meng Hao said, opening his eyes. "Don't worry." He forced a smile onto his face.

A few days passed. During that time, numerous fellow disciples came to offer greetings. Most of them seemed to care for him, but there were also some who secretly wished that he had died in the Vast Expanse Arcane Pocket Realm.

Within Meng Hao's memories, he didn't recall seeing those people act in such a way, but now, all it took was a look, and he could sense their true feelings.

His Master came, as did other Senior members of the sect. All of them asked a few questions here and there, and left him with some encouraging words.

Chen Fan came to visit several times. Each time he would sit cross-legged in front of Meng Hao and chat, helping him to remember things from the Blue Sea Sect and the Vast Expanse Cosmos.

Whenever they talked about the Vast Expanse Arcane Pocket Realm, they would sigh.

Meng Hao gradually came to accept his identity, although confusion continued to lurk deep within him.

A month later, when everyone believed Meng Hao to have fully recovered, he was sitting there cross-legged on one rainy night, looking at his wife, when he suddenly stood and walked out into the rain. Deep in his eyes, confusion blossomed.

Within the rain was a stiff wind which lifted his hair up as it whistled through the trees of the courtyard.

“Is this place actually… real?” he thought.

“How come I just can’t forget everything that happened in the Vast Expanse Arcane Pocket Realm? There are so many faces I can’t forget, and I can’t stop thinking about the Mountain and Sea Realm….” He reached his hand out, and as the freezing rain fell onto his palm, it felt like he was being stabbed to the bone.

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# Chapter 1508: Vast Expanse Society

After feeling the raindrops hit his hand for a while, his eyes shone with determination. “I need to go back to the Vast Expanse Arcane Pocket Realm and see for myself. If I don’t, my heart will never be able to rest at ease!”

He didn’t speak the words aloud to anyone. Instead, he spun, transforming into a beam of light that shot off into the distance.

Back in their house, his wife had just opened her eyes, and they shone with bitterness. She sighed. In recent days, she’d gotten the feeling that her husband was somewhat aloof, to the point where… he almost didn’t seem at all like her husband.

Meanwhile, on a certain mountain in the Blue Sea Sect, Chen Fan was also standing out in the rain. He seemed to be thinking about the past, and within his eyes flickered guilt and other emotions. Eventually, he caught sight of Meng Hao flying up into the air. He almost stepped forward to interfere, but then held back.

“It doesn’t matter,” he muttered to himself. “Go search for the truth, and maybe you’ll find it.” As he closed his eyes, a woman approached, who gently wrapped her arms around him from behind.

Chen Fan’s eyes turned warm. Slipping around to face her, he reached up and caressed her cheek.

She smiled kindly, then looked off into the distance, seemingly worried.

“Your little Junior Brother….”

“It’s fine,” Chen Fan said softly. “Let him look for his answers. Perhaps he’ll find what he’s looking for.”

“What about you? Did you find the answers? From what I can tell, it’s going to take Meng Hao a lot longer to get back to normal than you did.” According to the woman’s memories, Chen Fan had recovered rather quickly, which was confusing to her. In sharp contrast, Meng Hao had already been back for a month, and yet was still lost in confusion.

Chen Fan shook his head and pulled the woman up against his chest. “He was inside for longer than me. Most importantly, I had you. As soon as I laid eyes on you… I had my answer.”

He held her tightly, almost as if he feared that he would lose her forever if he let go.

The rain continued to fall even harder than before. Meng Hao was a bright beam of light that shot up into the Heavens. Soon, he reached the border of the sky itself, beyond the clouds. There was no rain here. He kept flying, shooting out from within the sky of the planet, where he felt himself being restrained by a protective spell formation.

He pulled a jade slip out of his bag of holding, and after the spell formation scanned it, it gradually released him. Without pausing for a moment, Meng Hao proceeded onward. Soon, he was out within the starry sky itself.

Surrounding him was nothing but glittering starlight. There was none of the mist that filled the Vast Expanse Arcane Pocket Realm. Everything was bright and clear, and the energy of Heaven and Earth was abundant.

His eyes flickered as he checked his cultivation base. At the moment, he only had one Soul Lamp which remained lit. His cultivation base was at the peak of the Ancient Realm.

After some thought, he became certain that the current level of his cultivation base was definitely different from what it had been in his vague memories. And yet, there were some things about it that seemed the same. However, there was no way to truly contemplate it. Over the past days, he had come to realize that if he tried to recollect certain things, it would cause splitting pain in his head and send his cultivation base into chaos.

He sighed, and his eyes flickered with determination and focus. Following the information which existed in his clear memories, he headed in the direction of the Vast Expanse Arcane Pocket Realm.

“I have to find some answers!” he thought, flying along at top speed. A few months later, after passing through multiple teleportation portals, he was about halfway to his destination.

The days of flying were draining his cultivation base, and yet he didn’t consume any medicinal pills, nor did he perform any breathing exercises to absorb the energy of Heaven and Earth.

At a certain point, after enough of his cultivation base was drained, a warm current suddenly began to flow through him, originating in his chest. That current restored his cultivation base almost instantly.

Meng Hao was instantly enlivened, and rubbed his bag of holding, a strange look gleaming in his eyes.

During the months of travel, he produced the copper mirror on more than one occasion to study it. Although he never discovered anything in particular about it, he could sense the pulses of warmth coming out of it and flowing into his body. Although that energy seemed to vanish inside of him, he felt no sense of danger from it, and in fact, it made him feel happy.

For some reason, he eventually took the copper mirror out and hung it around his neck where it could touch his skin, and allowed the current to flow out from it into his body. It was almost as if it were trying to awaken something. Because of that sensation, Meng Hao would occasionally slip into somewhat of a daze. His eyesight would swim, and after a moment, everything would turn back to normal, and yet he continued to have the sensation that he was being yelled at, although he couldn’t hear it clearly.

Most importantly, because of that flow, he didn’t have any need to absorb energy from the starry sky. It always ensured that his cultivation base remained in top condition.

The result was that, from the moment he awakened in this starry sky, to the moment he returned to the Blue Sea Sect, to his current situation of flying through the starry sky, he had never consumed any medicinal pills or absorbed any of the local energy of Heaven and Earth.

Although he wasn’t sure exactly why, he had the feeling that doing things that way was the best for him.

He patted the copper mirror hanging over his chest, and felt even more sure than ever that he needed to get back to the Vast Expanse Arcane Pocket Realm. That was where he would get his answers. He continued ever onward.

The Vast Expanse Arcane Pocket Realm was actually quite a long ways away from the Blue Sea Sect, seemingly at the border of the entire Vast Expanse Cosmos. As he journeyed onward, he ran into quite a few cultivators, as well as numerous heavenly bodies.

At the moment, he was nearing the Dao of Water Sect.

He was hoping to take advantage of their teleportation portal to get closer to the Vast Expanse Society. The Vast Expanse Society was where he would be able to make his last teleportation, getting him very close to the Vast Expanse Arcane Pocket Realm.

“The Vast Expanse Society,” he murmured. “That name sounds so familiar….” His clear memories were telling him that the Vast Expanse Society was one of the Hundred Sects of the Vast Expanse Cosmos, and in fact, was one of the top three most powerful sects in the entire organization.

It was a mysterious sect, which was constantly locked down by swirling mists that prevented its disciples from leaving the sect. However, when other sects wished to use their teleportation portal, all that was required was enough Immortal jade, and they would have access.

There were stories about the Vast Expanse Society in Meng Hao’s memories. Supposedly, they had earned the disfavor of the exalted Allheaven, who, in his wrath, had sealed their sect with mist, almost like a curse.

“The exalted Allheaven….” Meng Hao suddenly stopped in place and began to search through his memories for information about the exalted Allheaven.

Allheaven was the guardian of the Vast Expanse Cosmos, a supreme entity who had supposedly created the entire place to begin with.

All sects offered wholehearted worship to statues of Allheaven, and according to the legends, the very energy of Heaven and Earth that cultivators used in their cultivation, was actually power from the exalted Allheaven.

Everything in existence, all living beings, were the people of Allheaven.

From generation to generation, for countless years, it had always been that way….

Within the Hundred Sects of the Vast Expanse Cosmos, being Chosen was not the ultimate glory. Only by acquiring the title ‘Son of Allheaven’ could one truly be considered doted upon by the world. A person with that title was a Chosen among Chosen!

“There is only one Son of Allheaven during a given period of time,” Meng Hao thought. “Sometimes one every 10,000 years, sometimes one every 1,000 years. To date, there have been ninety-eight Sons of Allheaven, cultivators who have been blessed by the exalted Allheaven himself. It is only by cultivating the Dao of Allheaven that one can be doted upon by the world, to be worshiped by all cultivators, to be respected by all sects!” Meng Hao was panting. For some reason, after the memories became clear, he realized that he felt intensely opposed to the title ‘Son of Allheaven’.

Shaking his head, he cleared his thoughts and proceeded along his way. Ten days later, he saw a planet up ahead of him in the starry sky.

It was blue, and it was just possible to determine that it was covered with water. It looked beautiful, and seemed to be teeming with life force.

“The Dao of Water Sect….” Meng Hao murmured. As he neared, he couldn’t stop his heart from pounding as he remembered that a woman name Xu Qing lived here.

In his vague memories, he remembered being married to someone in the Mountain and Sea Realm who was just like her. At the moment, it was hard to get a grip on his thoughts, and also hard to tell whether or not he wished this place to be real or not.

If it was real, and he saw Xu Qing, then Xu Qing would be real. But if it wasn’t real, then his heart would be filled with regret and bitterness.

It was with such complicated thoughts and feelings that Meng Hao drew ever closer to the Dao of Water Sect.

Their teleportation portal was not accessible to just anyone. Only members of the Hundred Sects were allowed access.

A stream of divine sense blocked Meng Hao’s path, but when he pulled out his Blue Sea Sect identification medallion, a disciple flew out and looked him over. Before he could say anything, the disciple asked, “You want to use the teleportation portal to go to the Vast Expanse Society, and then the Vast Expanse Arcane Pocket Realm. Am I right?”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and he nodded. The disciple from the Dao of Water Sect sighed.

“I really don’t know what the deal is with that Vast Expanse Arcane Pocket Realm. You’re not the first person to pass through here, you know. Lots of people have been trying to get to the Vast Expanse Arcane Pocket Realm.” The disciple led Meng Hao down onto the planet itself, to a location where a spell formation had been set up above the surface of the water.

Meng Hao paid the tax, and as he waited for the spell formation to activate, he hesitated for a moment, then clasped hands to the disciple from the Dao of Water Sect.

“Fellow Daoist,” he said, “may I ask… is Xu Qing in the sect?”

“Elder Sister Xu?” The disciple looked over at him. Realizing that there was something familiar about him, he studied him for a moment, then recognized him and laughed.

“Ah, I thought you looked familiar. So it’s Fellow Daoist Meng from the Blue Sea Sect.” Apparently he knew all about the things which had occurred between Meng Hao and Xu Qing.

“If you want to see Elder Sister Xu, then you’ll have to wait a bit. She usually comes to the teleportation portal around this time of day on her way to the East Sea to harvest Heavenwater Pearls for her cultivation.”

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# Chapter 1509: Following the Crowd

Meng Hao clasped hands in thanks. After a moment, he decided not to step into the spell formation. Instead, he stood off to the side, waiting.

After about an hour passed, the disciples in charge of operating the spell formation were about to completely lose patience, when a beam of light appeared in the sky off in the distance.

“It’s Elder Sister Xu!” Looks of awe and veneration appeared in the eyes of the nearby disciples, and they all clasped hands in greeting.

Meng Hao looked up at the woman in the beam of light. She wore white garments, and although she wasn’t spectacularly beautiful, was pretty and emanated an indescribable air. She seemed a bit cold, but wasn’t the completely unapproachable type.

Meng Hao looked at her, trembling. Suddenly, she slowed to a stop and looked down at him. Their gazes met.

Time seemed to stop. Xu Qing hovered there quietly, and instead of proceeding along on her way, she floated down toward the teleportation portal. The disciples from the Dao of Water Sect clasped hands respectfully as she landed in front of Meng Hao.

She looked coldly at Meng Hao, and from her expression, it seemed as if she had no connection to him whatsoever other than being a former acquaintance.

“Have you recovered?” Meng Hao asked suddenly.

“I was confused for a few days,” she replied coolly, “but I can already tell the difference between reality and illusion.”

After a moment, Meng Hao smiled and said, “Congratulations.”

With that, he turned and stepped onto the spell formation.

It was at that point that Xu Qing spoke again. “Have you been well recently?”

He turned and looked back at her. “By recently, do you mean in the Arcane Pocket Realm, or… in the Vast Expanse Cosmos?”

“You were inside the Vast Expanse Arcane Pocket Realm for a long time. Everything there was nothing more than a dream. Meng Hao, stop living in the illusion. It’s time to wake up.

“The reason I came down to speak to you is that I have some news. The will of the exalted Allheaven will soon select the ninety-ninth generation Son of Allheaven. It will happen this year, and if you become the Son of Allheaven, then perhaps things can continue between us as they were meant to. However, considering the way you’re acting now, I have the feeling that won’t happen.” She shook her head, gave him one last look, and then was gone.

Meng Hao stood in the spell formation as it activated, watching her leave. He could sense her coldness, and suddenly began to laugh. His laughter grew louder and louder as the spell formation rumbled, and then he vanished.

When he reappeared in the starry sky, he was still laughing. He laughed and laughed until the laughter turned into coughing. A glint of madness could be seen in his yes.

“Have I recovered? Chen Fan recovered. Xu Qing recovered. Everything that happened in the Vast Expanse Arcane Pocket Realm is just a dream? I don’t believe it! Why do I have this pain in my heart? She’s not Xu Qing!

“She’s not…

“She’s not…

“She’s not!” Meng Hao threw his head back and laughed uproariously, his eyes glowing red. At the same time, the void around him distorted as countless invisible threads formed. They began to creep toward Meng Hao, as if to take advantage of his current state to bore into his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth.

But then, all of a sudden, the copper mirror hanging on his chest sent a flowing current through him that was far hotter than before. It filled him, causing him to shudder and then calm down. The threads which had surrounded him then shrank back and vanished.

Meng Hao’s mood gradually stabilized, and his eyes shone with a bright light. Something definitely felt wrong. His mood had changed too suddenly after encountering Xu Qing, and now that he thought back, he realized that he had seemed out of control, as if something were attempting to influence him.

He looked around, eyes narrowed, then flashed into motion, heading toward the Vast Expanse Society.

A few days later, he was in front of a huge planet, a planet that vastly exceeded the planets of the Dao of Water Sect and the Blue Sea Sect in size.

It was covered with swirling mists, making it impossible to see its surface. However, there was a satellite planet next to the main planet, which was where the teleportation portal was located.

Meng Hao looked at the planet that was the Vast Expanse Society, and the stabbing pain in his mind caused him to shake his head. He headed to the satellite planet, then entered the teleportation portal, and was gone.

A few days later, he finally arrived… at his final destination, the Vast Expanse Arcane Pocket Realm!

It was an enormous vortex which spun endlessly, sending intense rumbling sounds echoing out in all directions. Countless asteroids floated about in the area, upon which numerous cultivators could be seen, all of whom were closely studying the vortex.

Meng Hao looked at the vortex, and his mind spun. He flew onward, toward the vortex, and quite a few people noticed him and looked over.

He ignored them, keeping his eyes fixed on the vortex itself. Panting, he flew directly toward it, not pausing for even a moment.

Soon, he could hear people calling out, but he didn't pay them any heed. Then, even as he neared, he suddenly bounced off of an invisible barrier, a sealing power which prevented people from casually entering the vortex.

A boom echoed out as Meng Hao was rebuffed. He coughed up a mouthful of blood as he was sent flying back. When he looked up at the barrier, the vague memories inside of him sent so much pain stabbing into his mind that his face paled.

It was at this point that Meng Hao heard someone speak his name. "Meng Hao?"

The owner of the voice seemed uncertain. Meng Hao turned and saw a fat fellow, expression quizzical. When their eyes met, he smiled wryly.

"It really is you. I'm Li Fugui! Oh, right, maybe you don't recognize me. We were good friends in the Vast Expanse Arcane Pocket Realm." The fat man sighed and looked sympathetically at Meng Hao.

"The fact that you've come here shows that you still haven't recovered. It was only recently that I myself was finally able to think clearly. I hope you can recover soon. Don't try to get back inside, by the way. We've all tried, and it's useless. The exalted Allheaven has sealed it up tight."

Meng Hao looked at the man standing in front of him. Within his vague memories was another Fatty who looked almost exactly the same as this one.

“You’ve recovered too….” Meng Hao said, smiling bitterly.

“Yeah. Not just me. Remember Chu Yuyan, Sun Hai, and Wang Youcai? They’ve all recovered.” Even as he spoke, he turned and waved his hand. A few beams of light appeared off in the distance, as familiar figures from his vague memories flew over.

There were Wang Youcai, Sun Hai, and… Chu Yuyan.

Sighing, the three of them looked at Meng Hao, as if they were also recalling everything which had occurred within the Vast Expanse Arcane Pocket Realm. That was especially true of Chu Yuyan, whose expression was hard to read as she looked at Meng Hao. It almost seemed as if she couldn’t believe what had happened inside, as if it were impossible that she would become infatuated with Meng Hao.

“You know what?” Fatty said. “We’re all Chosen from the Hundred Sects, and I think that since we all became friends in a dream, we might as well do the same thing in the real world!” He laughed.

“All of you recovered already?” Meng Hao asked.

Sun Hai nodded his head, as did everyone else. The sympathy in their eyes was clear.

“We’ve all recovered,” Sun Hai said. “Everyone did…. You know, you should go spend some time with some of the others. After all, we all were connected by destiny within the dream. Oh right, in the illusion, Fang Yu was your sister.” Sun Hai sighed.

Meng Hao’s mind was reeling. He looked around at all of the asteroids, at the dozens of people there, and every one of the faces was familiar. In fact, one of them belonged to his older sister Fang Yu.

He saw his parents, his Master Pill Demon, Taiyang Zi, Li Ling’er, Fan Dong’er, and Zhixiang….

Head pounding, he followed Fatty around to go meet everyone, all of these people who existed in his memories. When they laid eyes on him, they sighed, and spoke emotionally of the things which had happened in the dream world.

A few days later, Meng Hao had gone to talk to everyone. Finally, he sat down on an asteroid and stared blankly at the sealed vortex. Everyone here had already recovered. Meng Hao was the only one who was still confused.

He suddenly felt very alone. The perplexity he was experiencing led him to question himself. If one person tried to convince him that what he had experienced was an illusory dream, he would never question himself. But it wasn’t a single person. It was two, three, ten, a hundred. Countless people were all telling him the same thing, and as such, he couldn’t help but question himself.

“Don’t tell me… it really was all a dream…?” he murmured.

“Of course it was,” Fatty said. He sat down next to Meng Hao on the asteroid. Taking a deep breath, he handed a flagon of alcohol over to Meng Hao. He held a flagon of his own, from which he took a long swig.

The vortex continued to spin. Although they were located somewhere far out in the starry sky, it didn’t feel any different than if they were sitting on a planet.

Meng Hao held the alcohol flagon in his hand. Instead of drinking, he sat there quietly for a while, and then began to chuckle bitterly.

“Ah well, I guess it doesn’t matter….” He said, shaking his head. At the moment, the copper mirror hanging at his chest was sending out so much heat it was burning his skin. And yet, he didn’t seem to notice. He raised the flagon up to take a drink. Because the flagon covered his eyes, he had no way to notice that everyone in the area, Fatty, Sun Hai, Wang Youcai, Chu Yuyan, Li Ling’er, Fatty, and even his parents and Pill Demon… were all looking at him, watching, waiting for him to take a drink!

And that was when something completely unexpected happened!

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# Chapter 1510: Strange Occurrences!

Just when Meng Hao was about to place the flagon on his lips and take a drink, a beam of light appeared off in the distance, approaching with shocking speed. Its target was apparently not Meng Hao, but the vortex that made up the Vast Expanse Arcane Pocket Realm.

As soon as Meng Hao saw that beam of light, he shot to his feet. It was a middle-aged man with disheveled hair. Despite his appearance, he radiated an air of imposing dignity. He moved with incredible speed, almost instantly slamming into the barrier that protected the Vast Expanse Arcane Pocket Realm.

A boom rang out, and everything shook. The man coughed up some blood. Eyes bloodshot, he threw his head back and laughed uproariously.

“You’ve sealed the Vast Expanse so no one can enter? Blocked the way? Fine!

“I’ve been dead for ages, but you used a renegade spirit to absorb my soul and try to force me to deceive my foster son? I’m afraid… that won’t be happening!” The man continued to laugh, then suddenly turned to look at Meng Hao.

When Meng Hao saw who it was, his mind began to spin with shock.

“Dad….” he cried involuntarily.

This middle-aged man was not his birth father Fang Xiufeng, but rather, his foster father, Paragon of the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect in the Ninth

Mountain and Sea… Ke Yunhai!

They had met within true spirit Night’s memory of ancient times, a place Meng Hao originally thought was all an illusion, but turned out to have affected the real world.

Back then, Ke Yunhai knew that Meng Hao wasn’t his son Jiusi, and yet loved him anyway! That was the first time in his life he had ever felt fatherly love.

The memories exploded within Meng Hao’s mind, becoming clearer by the moment. He trembled as his vision suddenly swam.

Ke Yunhai looked over at him and smiled warmly. Laughing, he said, “Hao’er, you need to see things clearly. Everything here is a sham. If I die, I can prove this place is definitely a trick. If I don’t die, then it would equally prove that this is a trick to deceive you. Because I… already died long ago!” Ke Yunhai spun in place, and as Meng Hao looked on, trembling, he slammed his head into the barrier. He moved with incredible speed, drawing fully upon his own life energy. A huge boom echoed out. As he hit the barrier, the barrier struck back with shocking power to stop him.

In that moment, he called out, “Hao’er, my foster son. Remember that the Heavenly Dao has a flaw. There is nothing perfect in the world, and nothing can be without blemish. All of this is in your heart!

“Everyone here said that I couldn’t see things clearly. That was true. But I would still prefer to die to give you a chance to see the truth!”

Power slammed into Ke Yunhai, and he was instantly shredded into a mass of blood and gore that splashed out in all directions.

He used his death to reveal the truth!

He used his death to give Meng Hao a chance to pierce through the veil of lies!

He used his death to prove that he was right!

Meng Hao threw down the alcohol flagon. Power raged within him as he looked at the spot where Ke Yunhai had died in a haze of blood. The words he had spoken caused Meng Hao to tremble. His eyes turned red, and his aura erupted.

“Dad….” he said, trembling, tears streaming down his face. Moments ago, he had been ready to give in. That attitude instantly vanished. His doubts regarding the world he was in instantly grew stronger. He began to pant and shake, and as he stared at the blood mist, and thought about Ke Yunhai, more tears flowed.

His mind felt like it was about to explode from the countless strands of thought which were lurking hidden therein. It was as if those thoughts were about to flood out to fill every part of his being. Suddenly, light began to shine out from within him, and yet at the same time, a pressure appeared in the local starry sky.

That pressure arrived without any warning, and completely enveloped Meng Hao. It suppressed him, as well as the countless thoughts that seemed to be on the verge of forming.

The power of awakening and the power of the pressure were using his body as a battleground. Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth, and he staggered in place as his thoughts were crushed.

He looked down, his face pale, at his chest, which now was wracked with stabbing pain. The copper mirror was sending a flowing current into him, filling his body, causing him to pant. He looked up, eyes bright red.

Numerous sighs could be heard, as everyone, including Fatty, looked on with complicated expressions.

“I never would have thought that Ke Yunhai would have the hardest time waking up, and not Meng Hao….”

“Yeah, that’s right. That’s what happens when you don’t recover, when you can’t tell the difference between reality and fantasy….”

At this point, just about everyone began talking to Meng Hao.

“Meng Hao, did you see that? He went crazy. You can’t let yourself stay confused. Everything in the Vast Expanse was an illusion, a dream.”

“If you don’t pull yourself together, you’ll end up like that! Your mind will shatter!”

“Meng Hao, wake up!”

“Meng Hao, why can’t you see things clearly? That guy, whoever he was, was stuck in the dream for too long, and thus couldn’t face up to reality. I know you, and I can tell that you were close to him somehow, but you can’t let that affect you!”

“Meng Hao, all the relationships and friendships from the dream weren’t real! You have to wake up to reality!”

Meng Hao’s mind felt as if it were spinning; the battle between the awakening memories and the suppressing pressure reached a boiling point, and finally, he looked up and shouted, “Shut up!”

His words echoed out like thunder. Suddenly, the aura of the 9-Essences level exploded out, filling the area. Meng Hao clutched his head in his hands, then roared.

“Shut up!

“Shut up!!

“SHUT UP!!!”

He threw his head back and howled, creating a sonic attack that mixed with the power of the 9-Essences level. Rumbling filled the area as the sound wave swept out, transforming countless asteroids into nothing but ash. Numerous figures, never having imagined that Meng Hao would unleash an explosive attack like this, were battered by the sound wave, shaking violently until they exploded.

Fatty, Chu Yuyan, Li Ling’er, Fan Dong’er, Fang Yu, Sun Hai…. One figure after another from Meng Hao’s memories were eradicated.

The instant they died, the air distorted, as if a roar of rage was rippling through the area, as if the source of that roar had been completely unaware that Meng Hao would do something like this.

Everything in the area vanished. Meng Hao coughed up some more blood. Hair disheveled, he looked around at the void, and the ash that was the remnants of the dead. Then he began to chuckle hoarsely, a laughter that rapidly turned more and more bitter.

He looked over at the barrier which sealed off the vortex, and began to fly toward it.

“My death will prove whether or not this is a trick!” His head throbbed as his bitter laughter echoed out. In the blink of an eye, he had reached the barrier. Boom!

Instantly, a Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering power blasted back against him, send him flying. His bones were crushed, and his flesh was shredded.

And yet, he didn’t die….

He struggled to right himself, and once again shot toward the barrier. It was at this point that an enraged roar echoed out. It was his Master and Chen Fan, as well as numerous others from the Blue Sea Sect. His wife was also there.

Chen Fan grabbed Meng Hao, and his wife threw her arms around him, tears streaming down her face.

“Meng Hao, have you gone crazy!?” Chen Fan roared. The others from the Blue Sea Sect came forward to restrain Meng Hao.

He looked at them, as well as at his wife and his Master. Finally he turned to Chen Fan. He wasn’t sure what to say. He opened his mouth to speak, but then simply coughed up some blood and lost consciousness.

When he woke up, he was back in the Blue Sea Sect. His wife was standing protectively next to him, her eyes sunken with worry and anxiety.

Meng Hao lay there quietly. His eyes seemed empty. People came to visit, but those empty eyes never changed. He didn’t speak, and in fact, spent most of the day by the window looking out at Heaven and Earth. No one had any idea what he was thinking.

He was the only one that was aware that the flow from the copper mirror was growing stronger. At first, it had pulsed out only once a month or so. But now, it pulsed out many times. Furthermore, his view of the world constantly rippled, as if what he was looking at was about to be peeled away to reveal something beneath.

The warm flow made its way through his body, but did nothing to heal any of his injuries, not that he cared about them to begin with. He simply stared out the window.

The consequences for slaughtering Fatty and the others were already playing out. The other sects were furious, and had joined forces to try to force the Blue Sea Sect to hand over Meng Hao.

The Blue Sea Sect had refused to give in, and thus, a war began.

The fighting escalated rapidly. Soon, the rumbling of battle could be heard on the Blue Sea Sect’s planet. Countless disciples died. Some of the allied sects had already managed to fight their way into the Blue Sea Sect itself.

The sound of explosions filled the world, but Meng Hao didn’t care. Nor did he care about the looks cast upon him by his wife, or the other fellow disciples. They were looks of concern, anxiety, reproach, and even hatred.

Meng Hao didn’t respond to such looks.

Gradually, voices rang out within the sect itself, calling for Meng Hao to be handed over. However, his Master, Chen Fan, and other fellow disciples vowed to die before doing such a thing. Meng Hao watched this happen silently. Inside, he could feel ripples of emotion when he saw what was happening, but he violently suppressed them.

He wanted to see exactly how far things would go.

Eventually, a month later, the allied sects broke through the main gate of the Blue Sea Sect. Slaughter ensued. Meng Hao watched his wife sustain serious injuries protecting him. He watched a flying sword stab into his son’s forehead. As the boy died, he cried out weakly for his father. Meng Hao ignored that, although he trembled with grief.

“Enough, enough….” he said, laughing bitterly.

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# Chapter 1511: I’m Meng Hao!!

The Blue Sea Sect wasn’t exterminated. Even as Meng Hao stood there silently, grief filling his eyes, his heart trembling, a will spread out that caused all the bitterly fighting cultivators to suddenly drop to their knees.

It was the will of Allheaven, which became a radiant, seven-colored light that filled the starry sky.

It wasn’t just in the location of the Blue Sea Sect; it actually spread out to cover all of the Hundred Sects in the Vast Expanse Cosmos….

“Oh ye people of mine….” It was an ancient voice that filled the minds of all cultivators in the Vast Expanse Cosmos, and told them that from this moment on, slaughter was not permitted.

The dispute was over. And that was because… the identity of the ninety-ninth generation Son of Allheaven was soon to be announced.

The majestic will told all people and all sects that in a mere half-year, the trial by fire to win the title of Son of Allheaven would begin, a grand battle royale. In the end, only one person… would be named the ninety-ninth generation Son of Allheaven.

That person would receive the blessing of Allheaven, and would represent Allheaven to step into the Vast Expanse Arcane Pocket Realm and accomplish a very special mission….

The voice faded away, and the light became countless motes that rained down onto the Hundred Sects of the Vast Expanse Cosmos. Any location with cultivators experienced that rain of light.

They were Allheaven seeds, and any cultivator who wished to participate in the trial by fire to become the Son of Allheaven needed to absorb one of them in order to qualify.

The disciples from the allied sects withdrew. None of them dared to countermand the orders of Allheaven. Not a single one hesitated for even a moment.

Thus, the war ended.

Silence replaced the bitterness in the Blue Sea Sect. It was almost as if everyone forgot about the bloody, bitter battle which had just been raging. All of the remaining disciples and Elders of the sect gathered together. With the exception of the very old, everyone was given an Allheaven seed.

One of them was delivered to Meng Hao by Chen Fan.

“Still confused I see,” Chen Fan said bitterly. “You don’t care how many people died in your sect, do you? Even your own son…. I thought you said none of this was real, and that only what you experienced in the Vast Expanse Arcane Pocket Realm was real.” Various emotions could be heard in his voice.

“Well, absorb this seed. Once you become the Son of Allheaven, you can go back into the Vast Expanse Arcane Pocket Realm. Then you can see for yourself what is real and what is not!” Chen Fan placed the Allheaven seed in front of Meng Hao, then stood there, waiting for Meng Hao to absorb it. Everyone else looked on with varied expressions. Some had hatred in their eyes, some seemed torn. All seemed to rue the war which had been sparked by Meng Hao.

Meng Hao looked at the Allheaven seed, and shivered. His wife was off in the distance, holding their dead son. She was giggling madly, seemingly in a daze.

Meng Hao stood there silently. He picked up the seed and examined it. It wriggled. Just as Chen Fan had said, by absorbing this seed, Meng Hao could become the Son of Allheaven. He could go back into the Vast Expanse Arcane Pocket Realm.

And yet, the current flowing into him from the copper mirror continued to grow hotter. It seemed to have reached a critical juncture, as if it were about to fuse with him. The indistinct voice he could hear was growing clearer by the moment.

His vision swam, and he suddenly saw a different version of himself. He saw himself sitting there cross-legged in the Blue Sea Sect. He saw himself absorb the seed and participate in the fight to become the Son of Allheaven. He took first place, and was named the Son of Allheaven.

That different version of himself offered formal greetings to Allheaven. The will of Allheaven filled his body, causing the seed to grow. It soon filled him through and through, after which he entered the Vast Expanse Arcane Pocket Realm.

As soon as he entered, he saw a beautiful woman. As soon as she caught sight of him, she smiled.

“Like I said, once you returned, you would be the Son of Allheaven.”

A tremor ran through Meng Hao. The dream suddenly ended, shattering to pieces. He opened his eyes, and everything became clear. The seed was still laying there on his palm. Even as he looked at it, it began to melt, as if it were about to bore into his flesh.

The heat from the copper mirror grew hotter than it ever had. It filled Meng Hao’s body, whereupon a bronze lamp appeared. Apparently, it had always been there, somehow concealed from Meng Hao’s perception. Now that it was visible, it began to shine brightly, sending out light that prevented anything from entering him.

As the light filled him, the confusion in his eyes faded away. His mind filled with crackling sounds. He thought about Ke Yunhai, and he thought about how Fatty and all the others had died. He thought about how his son had been killed, along with so many other fellow sect members.

But then, those memories became somewhat indistinct. At the same time, it was as if a veil had been ripped from his mind. Memories of the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, and the Mountain and Sea Realm, flooded into his mind. The voice which had been calling out to him so indistinctly was now as clear as crystal.

That voice was his own, and it was speaking four simple words!

“I am Meng Hao,” he murmured. He looked at Chen Fan, and his eyes clear, lacking any confusion whatsoever. Sighing, he rose to his feet. “Elder Brother Chen Fan, I am no longer confused.”

He looked over at his wife, his gaze warm.

Chen Fan seemed more torn than ever, as though he were sighing inwardly. Meng Hao’s wife shivered in response to his words. Tears streaming down her face, she rushed over and embraced him.

“There there, everything’s fine….” Meng Hao said softly. More tears flowed as she held him tightly, as if she feared that loosening her grip would cause him to leave forever.

Meng Hao’s eyes were bloodshot, but he seemed completely calm as he looked down at his wife.

No one knew that after his eyes opened just now, his view of the world became completely different.

The sky was no longer clear, but rather, was full of mist. The mountains were not lush and green; they were barren and empty. The beautifully decorated architecture of the sect was now nothing more than crumbled ruins.

His wife was actually a dessicated corpse, as was virtually everyone else in the sect. What had once been flourishing spiritual energy was really the sinister aura of death and an aroma of decay.

His son, the eight-year-old boy, was actually not a boy. He was a dwarf, and also a dessicated corpse. His eye sockets didn’t contain eyes, only writhing black maggots.

In all of Heaven and Earth, there was only one other person besides Meng Hao who was different. Chen Fan.

Meng Hao looked around at everything, then closed his eyes.

His wife was smiling, seemingly elated that her husband had finally recovered. She was just about to say something when…

Meng Hao reached up and stroked her hair, his gaze warmer than ever. However, if you looked very closely, you would see a tiny flicker of pity in his eyes.

“Little Junior Brother,” Chen Fan said, looking more torn than ever, “you need to absorb that Allheaven seed as soon as possible. I’ll–”

“Elder Brother Chen Fan,” Meng Hao interrupted calmly, “even after some contemplation, I can’t think of any time that I ever let you down. Not once. I’ve always respected you, and no matter what happened, you have always been my Eldest Brother.” Meng Hao held his wife and looked over at Chen Fan.

Chen Fan’s heart thumped, and he was just about to say something else, when Meng Hao’s voice spoke out, seemingly filled with magical power.

“I cannot forget! I cannot forget those things which you say are illusions. I cannot forget that which exists in my mind. If those real things are actually illusions, a mere dream… then I would rather sink into that dream than ever wake up.” He felt his wife suddenly go stiff. His eyes filled with pity as he suddenly pushed his hand down hard onto her back.

Under the shocked glances of all present, that simple movement severed his wife’s aura and exterminated her soul. Meng Hao slowly rose to his feet.

“It’s better to release you,” he said softly. “That way no one can control your corpse or soul after death.”

The surrounding crowds were as shocked as if they had been struck by lightning. After a moment of silence, enraged howls rose up, and their bloodshot eyes filled with shock and fear.

The sect Elders took to flight. The Sect Leader and even the Dao Realm experts were flabbergasted.

“Meng Hao!” Chen Fan roared in disbelief.

At the same time, an anguished cry rose up from Meng Hao’s Master, who was also his father-in-law. He flew over, trembling, staring first at his daughter’s corpse, and then at Meng Hao. Coughing up a mouthful of blood, he began to laugh, and then lunged at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes were calm. The world had completely transformed. As of this moment, he was not being attacked by a middle-aged man, but rather, a corpse, a corpse with a huge, empty hole in its chest….

Meng Hao sighed and closed his eyes. Just when the man was almost upon him, Meng Hao opened his eyes again. Although they were still bloodshot, the pupils were now crimson. He clenched his right hand into a fist and punched out, shredding his Master into a haze of blood and gore.

That was the battle prowess of the peak 9-Essences level, which exploded out from Meng Hao.

“Elder Brother Meng is bedeviled!!”

“Kill him!” Roars of fury and rage echoed out from the mouths of the Elders. As they charged toward Meng Hao, his eyes flickered with pity, and he moved forward. He became a blur, and every person he encountered, regardless of the level of their cultivation base, was destroyed in body and mind by the single flick of a finger.

Soon, all Heaven and Earth was sinking into darkness. Miserable shrieks rose up. Wherever Meng Hao went, death followed. Blood flowed across the ground, and bodies could be seen everywhere.

However, what Meng Hao saw was a bit different. The blood which flowed was not red, but rather black and filthy. Furthermore, the corpses which lay in his wake had been corpses long before he struck them down.

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# Chapter 1512: It All Falls Apart!

Everything was quiet in the sect. Only Meng Hao and Chen Fan remained standing.

“Meng Hao, y-you…” Chen Fan was trembling in disbelief at everything which had just occurred. His eyes were filled with grief, rage, and conflict.

Meng Hao looked around at the corpses and sighed. Then he looked at the Allheaven seed which was trying to force its way into his palm, and crushed it!

Chen Fan looked at Meng Hao, his expression torn. “You exterminated your own sect! Killed your own wife and Master! All because of a world that’s an illusion? Was all this worth it, Meng Hao?”

Meng Hao looked up at him. “Chen Fan, I’ve always respected you as my Elder Brother…. Enough with the act. You have your path that you must follow. I’m not sure why you did this, although I’m sure you have your reasons. I can’t blame you. I have my own path too.”

Chen Fan stood there silently, bitterly. Finally, he smiled, a bitter, conflicted smile that gradually grew more resolute. “He promised me that as long as you lost yourself in here, my Ling’er would truly be resurrected. To him, something like that is as easy as flipping over a hand.

“Meng Hao, I, Chen Fan, have done anything and everything to truly resurrect my Ling’er. After all the years which have passed, this was my only hope…. Therefore, you have the right to blame me. You can even hate me. Meng Hao… I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m so sorry….”

Now Meng Hao also looked torn. Various memories flitted through his mind as he looked at Chen Fan. He knew that the Ling’er Chen Fan referred to was none other than Shan Ling from the Solitary Sword Sect.

Meng Hao shook his head, ignoring Chen Fan as he contemplated the danger he had just been in. If it weren’t for the copper mirror, for the enlightenment provided by the death of his foster father Ke Yunhai, and his own unimaginable willpower… he would surely have lost himself in here and become exactly what Han Bei had described. He would have returned to her side as the Son of Allheaven.

It was time to leave. He took a step forward and made a ripping gesture with his hand. Rumbling echoed out as a rift was torn open into the air in front of him, which he prepared to step through.

“Meng Hao, you can’t leave!” cried Chen Fan, tears streaming down his face. “You have to stay!” His eyes filled with determination, with obsessed focus. He lifted his hands up, and the world shook. Apparently, a will was descending, a will which then flowed into Chen Fan himself.

Chen Fan’s energy skyrocketed, and his cultivation base power soared. Blue veins bulged out on his face, and he shook visibly. His eyes turned crimson, and seemed to suddenly lack conscious thought. Only obsession remained.

Suddenly, he turned into a blur that shot toward Meng Hao. He lifted his right hand, whereupon Heaven and Earth seemed to back him, and the starry sky seemed to exist within his hands. Apparently, the will of Allheaven had taken over Chen Fan’s body, and was using him as its shell to act within the world.

Rumbling echoed out, and Meng Hao fell back. Blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth, and his eyes shone with grief. The person in front of him was his Elder Brother, someone he had known all the way back in the Reliance Sect. Back on Planet South Heaven, he had almost been like a blood brother to him.

But now, they had no option other than to fight.

There could be no holding back or surrendering. Chen Fan could not retreat. He had gambled everything, all in the hopes of resurrecting his wife.

Neither could Meng Hao retreat. If he was defeated, he would be lost in this place, and would lose everything. This place was both real and false. The objects were real; what was false was that they existed, not in the present, but the past.

Meng Hao smiled bitterly. He slapped his chest with his palm, and the copper mirror flew out, transforming into innumerable black threads which spread out to cover his entire body in a suit of armor. The Battle Weapon appeared in his hand, and he transformed into a beam of light that shot toward Chen Fan.

Incredible rumbling echoed out. Heaven and Earth were shattered, and mountains were transformed into rubble. The sect became nothing more than ash as the two of them rose up into the starry sky as they battled.

Chen Fan was fighting with the power of the will of Allheaven, and the divine ability he unleashed was bizarre. Unexpectedly, it was… a memory magic!

It was a deceptively unthreatening magic that targeted specific memories in Meng Hao’s mind, causing all of the versions of Chen Fan which existed there to simultaneously attack him.

It wasn’t just the current Meng Hao that was being targeted, it was all of the different versions of him throughout history, including Planet South Heaven and the Reliance Sect.

When put into words, it is a difficult thing to describe, but the end result was that even as Chen Fan and Meng Hao fought in reality, countless stabs of pain filled Meng Hao’s mind.

He felt his memories diverging from reality, as if all of his memories of Chen Fan were rising up and exploding. This magical technique was no mere divine ability, it was a Dao which went far beyond any sort of natural or magical law.

It was something the likes of which Meng Hao had never before experienced.

However, he knew that the only way to vanquish Chen Fan was to defeat him in all of the past memories that existed in his mind.

As they fought in reality, Meng Hao thought back to the time when the 33 Heavens were about to descend upon the Mountain and Sea Realm. Even as he prepared to defend the Mountains and Seas, Chen Fan suddenly attacked him.

At the same time, back on Planet South Heaven, Meng Hao was visiting Chen Fan in his sect. They were drinking in front of the rock that was Shan Ling, when suddenly, Chen Fan’s eyes flickered with killing intent, and he slashed his sword out at Meng Hao.

Simultaneously, he was back in the lands of South Heaven, shortly after leaving the Reliance Sect. He had just arrived in the heart of the Southern Domain when he was reunited with Chen Fan. Chen Fan was delighted to see him, but then, his face twisted viciously, and he attacked.

They were back in the Reliance Sect, when all of the other great sects came to try to seize the Sublime Spirit Scripture. As the other disciples were taken away, Meng Hao stood alone on the mountaintop, watching bitterly as a middle-aged man from the Solitary Sword Sect asked Chen Fan if he wanted to be taken as a disciple of his sect.

Chen Fan was just about to respond when his eyes flickered. Without any warning, he suddenly turned and attacked Meng Hao.

There was another moment in which Meng Hao and Chen Fan were sitting together in the Reliance Sect. Chen Fan was introducing the sect to Meng Hao, when suddenly, his eyes flashed with coldness, and he attacked.

Back on the very day Meng Hao had joined the sect, he and Fatty were there together being escorted into the servants district, when suddenly a blur appeared, shooting down from one of the mountain tops. That blur shot directly toward Meng Hao, intent on killing him.

All of these things happened at the same time. Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth as he watched himself be killed by Chen Fan over and over again, and simultaneously, watched himself kill Chen Fan over and over again. The memories piled up onto one another, and at the same time, their real fight intensified.

The memories of them fighting transformed into seeds, seeds which, by means of some unique fashion, were implanted into his mind.

“Meng Hao,” Chen Fan cried, “become the Son of Allheaven. Become the Emissary of Allheaven. Get rid of your pain! All of this has been foreordained!” Then he roared: “Allheaven Transformation!”

A boom could be heard as his muscles and blood evaporated. He was left as nothing more than skin and bones, and the resulting bloody mist was filled with the will of Allheaven as it surged out to cover Meng Hao.

At the same time, the seeds inside of Meng Hao exploded, likewise turning into a mist which disseminated the will of Allheaven. The mist spread out, as if to infect Meng Hao inside and out with the will of Allheaven, to force him to become both the Son and Emissary of Allheaven.

Just when Meng Hao was about to fight back, he realized that the power of his own bloodline was doing nothing to defend him. In fact, it was even possible to say that his blood was perfectly suited to be able to act as a host for the will of Allheaven.

It was even the same with the Demonic qi inside of him!

It was as if everything about him had been prepared specifically for the will of Allheaven. If the will of Allheaven had entered the body of any other person, the process would not have occurred so efficiently.

It was as if this were the perfect possession, as if Meng Hao truly had been prepared specifically for the will of Allheaven.

In and out, whether it was the bloodline or the Demonic qi, whether it was within his memories or without, the will of Allheaven exploded, and Meng Hao seemed powerless to do anything about it. But then, the will of Allheaven suddenly lurched to a halt.

That will could occupy his soul, his blood, and even his Demonic qi. However, as it spread out through him, attempting to take control, it encountered fierce resistance.

That resistance came from the bronze lamp!

Furthermore, his body had been remoulded by the bronze lamp itself, and was therefore not perfectly suitable for the will of Allheaven. Because of that, at this most critical of moments, the will of Allheaven suddenly stopped moving.

In that moment, the flame of the bronze lamp ignited, causing a majestic glow to spread out and to fight the will of Allheaven. The two seemed as incompatible as fire and water.

As that happened, the seemingly boundless will of Allheaven that existed in Heaven and Earth tried to force its way into Meng Hao to eradicate the flame of the bronze lamp.

It was a critical juncture. Meng Hao coughed up a mouthful of blood, and his eyes shone with red light. In the same moment that the bronze lamp and the will of Allheaven began to contend with each other, he extended his right hand and then made a sharp chopping motion at himself!

“Hexing magic: Karmic Hexing!”

Astonishingly, he was using Demon Sealing Hexing magic to find Chen Fan’s Karma. Countless Karma Threads appeared on his head, among which was a pitch-black strand that connected him to Chen Fan.

“Sever!” He roared, slashing down onto the thread with the Battle Weapon!

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# Chapter 1513: Five Pillars!

Without the bronze lamp, Meng Hao’s Karmic Hexing would have been incapable of affecting his memories of Chen Fan, which were the extension of the will of Allheaven. But now that the bronze lamp had tied up the will of Allheaven, Meng Hao made his move, thus putting an end to the final bit of dangerous power being levied against him.

Moments ago, they had been on equal footing, but now that changed as the Battle Weapon completely destroyed Chen Fan’s Karma Thread.

Now, no Karma existed at all between Meng Hao and Chen Fan. All of the images of Chen Fan within his memories were forcibly wiped away.

The seeds that had been formed by the will of Allheaven let out roars of rage as the brilliant light from the bronze lamp swept over them, driving them out.

Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth, and he suddenly seemed much older. Even the slightest mistake moments ago would have resulted in him being wiped out of existence.

He thought back to the Emissary of Allheaven, Song Daozi, who had stepped outside the Vast Expanse with a cultivation base half a step into Transcendence, and had returned as the Emissary of Allheaven.

He could well imagine Song Daozi facing a similar situation as he had. And yet, even being half a step into Transcendence, he had been unable to avoid the fate which awaited him. Meng Hao knew that without the bronze lamp, he would likely have walked the same path as Song Daozi.

As the will of Allheaven was forcibly severed from Meng Hao, Heaven and Earth began to shake violently, tearing rifts open throughout the starry sky.

Amidst the rumbling, the rifts opened up longer and wider, spreading out in all directions. As for Chen Fan, he was there in front of Meng Hao, his body withered up. He looked at Meng Hao, and smiled. It was a smile of grief, pain, and release.

“Meng Hao, your Elder Brother let you down!” Chen Fan let out a roar, then smashed his hand viciously down onto his own forehead.

Meng Hao’s face fell, and he moved forward to intervene, but Chen Fan was too fast. A boom rang out, and Chen Fan exploded. He was killed in body and mind.

For the sake of Shan Ling, he had turned a blind eye to the destruction of the Mountain and Sea Realm. He had chosen to turn on his little Junior Brother, to cooperate with the will of Allheaven to try to erase his mind. In the end, he had even gone so far as to allow the memories in Meng Hao’s mind to be infected by the seeds of the will of Allheaven.

Despite all that he had done, Chen Fan had never been cruel and merciless. Hesitation had always lurked in his heart as guilt.

In the end, when it was obvious how things would end, he didn’t even have the face to look at Meng Hao. In his bitterness, he chose simply to end his own life. Perhaps his death could be some form of compensation.

Meng Hao quietly looked at the spot where Chen Fan had died, heart aching with bitterness. Even though Chen Fan had chosen to attack him, Meng Hao didn’t feel any hatred for him. Nowadays, he had fewer friends than ever, and he cherished all of them.

Chen Fan’s death caused the destruction of the surrounding world to speed up. Soon, ear-splitting rumbling sounds could be heard as everything fell to pieces.

When that happened it was like a veil being lifted away, revealing… what was truly outside the Vast Expanse.

Everything was barren. There was no mist like in the Vast Expanse, nor were there any signs of life. Everything was in ruins, and filled with an aura of death.

Wreckage and corpses were strewn about. There was also dust that floated there eternally.

Long ago, this truly had been the Vast Expanse Cosmos, with the Hundred Sects and countless cultivators. That was all true….

But now, their glory had faded into nothing.

It was an enormous place, but even still, it was possible to make out something very far off in the distance. There were five pillars which seemed impossibly high, stretching up into the starry sky.

This was not Meng Hao's first time seeing the five pillars. Back in the underground tunnel in the necropolis, he had seen them via divine sense. This time, though, he was able to see them with his own two eyes. 1

However, there was something different about them this time…. Back in the fresco, all five pillars had stood strong and tall. But now, three of them had been destroyed!

Only two of them were whole as they stretched up into the starry sky.

Meng Hao looked at them quietly for a moment, and then his eyes glittered. Because of his bloodline, his Demonic qi, and also because of everything that had happened in the Mountain and Sea Realm, he had already guessed much of the truth.

"A plot which was hatched long, long ago.

"The Allheaven bloodlines. Apparently they were created for the express purpose of benefiting Allheaven!

"And the Demon… comes from the Immortal. I'm not the first Demon. There were many before me. All of them transformed in the moment when they were about to become the Immortal. And the Demon… is what Allheaven wants to appear.

“Perhaps I’m thinking of things in a bit of a one-sided fashion. Perhaps in all of the years in which this starry sky has existed, the true Demon has never actually appeared. Perhaps in the critical moment, Allheaven stopped them all.” Meng Hao couldn’t help but think of Song Daozi.

He looked thoughtfully at the enormous pillars, then began to fly in their direction at top speed.

Time passed. He wasn’t sure how long he had flown, but he kept getting closer and closer. Eventually, he reached the location of one of the destroyed pillars. As he hovered there, he sensed an aura which could shake Heaven and Earth. It was not the aura of the Immortal or the Demon, but rather, the Devil!

As soon as he sensed the Devil aura, he thought of the Devil Realm Continent. Then, he slowly reached his hand out toward the indescribably large column, and gently pushed down onto its surface.

Meng Hao was left panting. When he pulled his hand away, he looked at the destroyed column with a complicated expression. After a long moment, he turned and headed toward the next column.

This column was not destroyed. It was one of the two that stretched high up into the starry sky!

When he reached out to touch it, he saw nothing inside except for emptiness. There was no Transcendent cultivator, but there was shocking Immortal qi, which was apparently brewing inside of the column. Just visible within the Immortal qi were countless images, all of which seemed to depict people.

“Those people were all cultivating the magic of Immortality, and were on the path to becoming the Immortal!

“There has never been a Transcendent Immortal….” Meng Hao murmured. After examining it further, he realized that the column was weak, almost to the point of collapse. If the true Immortal ever appeared, it was likely that the column would immediately be destroyed.

Meng Hao pulled his hand away. After some more thought, he began to fly toward the fourth column, which was the final destroyed column.

Time went by. After passing through all of the dust and ruins to arrive at the fourth column, he took a deep breath, reached out, and touched it. Rumbling filled his mind, and he caught sight of a young man. He wore a robe decorated in flowers, and seemed different than the two other young men Meng Hao had just seen. A sarcastic smile could be seen on his face, and his eyes glittered with intelligence. His features were delicate and even pretty, and he almost looked as if he were recovering from an illness.

Meng Hao watched the young man silently. He didn’t know who he was, but as he looked on, the young man created the copper mirror. He also held a bronze lamp in his hand. Furthermore, the robe he was wearing was the same robe Meng Hao had seen being worn by the person who had faced the Immortal Tribulation and been killed by the finger from the Heavens. Meng Hao instantly realized who this was.

Patriarch Vast Expanse!

Eventually, Meng Hao watched as Patriarch Vast Expanse also went outside the Vast Expanse. He destroyed another of the fingers, and then disappeared into the void.

Eventually, Meng Hao pulled his hand back. After a moment of thought, he proceeded toward the last of the pillars, one of the two which were still erect.

As he flew closer and closer, a powerful Demonic qi from the column began to form a resonance with him.

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# Chapter 1514

The instant that resonance formed with the Demonic qi, Meng Hao’s eyes began to shine with a deep, profound light. He had already surmised that of the five pillars, there was one for the Ghost, God, Immortal, Devil, and finally…

The Demon!

He increased his speed, and eventually arrived at the final staggeringly large pillar which stretched up into the starry sky. After a moment of thought, he reached out and touched the pillar. Then he frowned.

Eventually, he pulled his hand away, and his eyes flashed.

“The other pillars don’t seem to have much to do with me. But this pillar… represents the Demon. There is a resonance with me, and yet, when I touch it, no strange transformations occur….” He wasn’t quite sure what that meant, but he could tell that the resonance was growing stronger. Gradually, a sensation of deadly crisis began to build up within him.

Eyes flickering, he spun. Instead of spending any more time in contact with the final pillar, he decided to leave.

He was soon 30 meters away, then 300. The pillar still stood in place, and the farther away he went, the weaker the resonance became.

He didn’t seem to be reacting much to that, but inwardly, he was focused on examining himself. When he reached the 3,000-meter mark, he hesitated a bit. It wasn’t that he wasn’t curious about the column. Rather, he had to forcibly resist the urge to rush back and touch it.

He definitely needed to come to a deeper understanding of what dangers lurked in this area.

After the 3,000-meter mark, his eyes flickered, and he pushed himself faster. When he was several thousand meters away, he increased his speed yet again.

Even when he was 30,000 meters away, nothing had happened. Finally, he stopped in thought for a moment, then gritted his teeth and headed back toward the pillar. Moments later, he arrived, then reached out to touch it.

Rumbling filled his mind, and as his Demonic qi blended with the aura of the pillar, the resonance exploded in intensity, and he suddenly realized that there was an illusory world within the pillar.

It was like the mist of the Vast Expanse, boundless and majestic. At first, there didn’t seem to be anything other than mist, but soon, Meng Hao realized that within the very center of the world was a bright red thread.

It was a thread that looked like a blood vessel, except it was huge. Soon, he realized that the thread twisted and turned around on itself, forming a shape. The shape of a person!

There were four limbs visible, as well as a head. Apparently, that thread really was a blood vessel, and it really was forming into the shape of a person.

There was no flesh or blood, and no bones. Just a system of blood vessels.

Shockingly, there appeared to be fruits growing from the blood vessels!

In total, there were ninety-eight of them.

Some were large and some were small, and they were located throughout the shape which the blood vessels formed. All of them were withered, as though their life and quintessence had been absorbed, and they were what had enabled the shape of the person to take form.

Upon closer examination, it was clear that the various fruits had faces on them, all of whom had their eyes closed, and were completely motionless.

As Meng Hao examined all of this, his heart began to pound. Eventually, his eyes fell upon the ninety-eighth fruit, and the ninety-eighth face. Shockingly, that face… was the same face which had attempted to interfere with Meng Hao summoning the copper mirror, the Emissary of Allheaven.

It was Song Daozi!

“These faces….” Meng Hao gasped as an idea suddenly struck him, a vast, monumental idea that left his mind completely spinning.

“These faces are all of the people who were turned from Immortal to Demon… From ancient times until now, there have been many people like Song Daozi, all of whom were turned into… the Demon! No, that’s not right. The true Demon hasn’t appeared yet, otherwise, this pillar would look very different!

“These people all… became food for this person-shaped outline, in the moment that they were about to transform into the true Demon!” Meng Hao’s mind reeled at the sight of all the faces on the fruit, and the human-shaped network of blood vessels. Suddenly, he was struck with the realization that the shape… wasn’t complete. It lacked a final fruit.

That empty location was where the heart should be. With a fruit there, the outline of this person would be complete and perfect.

Almost as soon as his eyes fell upon the empty location of the heart, all of the ninety-eight faces’ eyes suddenly opened, and they looked at Meng Hao.

His mind was left reeling, his scalp tingling. The ninety-eight faces staring at him caused him to recall how there had been ninety-eight Sons of Allheaven.

Even as he began to pull back his divine sense, the ninety-eight faces all smiled.

They were sinister smiles, mysterious to the extreme, and the instant they appeared, the faces spoke.

“You’re the missing piece… don’t go… don’t go…”

The bizarre voices filled the world, and Meng Hao’s mind spun. His Demonic qi suddenly seemed to be on the verge of erupting.

Almost simultaneously, the faces began to transform one by one into beams of light which shot toward him.

There was no time for Meng Hao to do anything other than sever his divine sense. Outside of the pillar, he quickly pulled his hand away and backed up.

In almost that same instant, the pillar began to shake, and ninety-eight faces suddenly shot out from it into the starry sky outside the Vast Expanse. Without pausing for a moment, they began to speed in Meng Hao’s direction.

As they neared, Meng Hao’s hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, and he unleashed a divine ability. Numerous mountains descended to block the path of the faces. And yet the bizarre faces simply passed directly through the mountains as they closed in on Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s face fell, and he punched out with his right hand. The Devil-Butchering Fist created a massive tempest, and yet the faces completely disregarded it, and were soon almost right in front of him. Apparently, no matter what techniques he unleashed upon them, it could do nothing to stop them.

His eyes flashed with killing intent, and he let out a cold harrumph. Suddenly, the copper mirror armor appeared, and he slashed out with the Battle Weapon. It split open the void, creating a vast rift which separated him from the faces.

This time, it seemed much harder for the faces to keep going, and over ten of them were actually split in half from the effort. And yet, they didn’t dissipate, but kept speeding toward him.

Meng Hao was continuously falling back, his face grim. No matter what ideas he came up with to deal with the situation, none of them worked. He sent out his Demonic qi, only to watch as the faces devoured it. Apparently, it was like fuel for them.

Meng Hao’s face flickered as he pressed on, followed by the swarm of faces. They quickly caught up to him, and began to surround him, blocking his path. Then, they smiled oddly and lunged toward him with gaping jaws.

They bit into his flesh, apparently intent on chewing into his body and consuming him.

“Screw off!” Meng Hao said, eyes flashing coldly. His cultivation base erupted, and the Battle Weapon flashed as he swung it. A blast of wind swept out in all directions, and yet it didn’t seem to affect the faces at all.

Blue veins popped out on Meng Hao’s face, and he gritted his teeth violently. It was at this point that the bronze lamp sent blazing light out in all directions, and the faces began to tremble. Screaming, they fell back.

Meng Hao finally took a deep breath, and used the opportunity to flee.

However, almost as soon as he broke free from the faces, they pounced on him again. The light of the bronze lamp still caused them to scream, and yet they didn’t give up. They endured the pain and tried again to chew into Meng Hao’s flesh.

The intense light from the bronze lamp caused them to tremble on the verge of melting, and yet Meng Hao’s aura was something they desired, something that was like food for them… Demonic qi.

Meng Hao’s own Demonic qi was absorbed by the faces, nourishing them, giving them strength to fight the light of the bronze lamp.

Pain wracked Meng Hao, inside and out, and his eyes were completely bloodshot. Having been sent outside the Vast Expanse by Han Bei, he managed to unveil many secrets, and dispel many doubts. And yet, he had been placed in incredible, deadly danger.

Whether it was the illusion of which Chen Fan had been a part of, or the personal arrival of the will of Allheaven, or these faces, they were all situations in which the slightest mistake would lead to eternal doom!

He could well imagine what had occurred to the ninety-eight cultivators like Song Daozi whom these faces represented. They were people who had reached a point very similar to this, and none of them had been able to escape. All had perished in the end, becoming components of the person-shaped outline that he had just seen.

As for Meng Hao, he had dispelled the illusion and cast out the will of Allheaven. And yet, he was not quite strong enough to deal with the faces, no matter how much he wanted to.

His eyes were crimson, and he simply couldn’t give in to the idea of being defeated. His clone was almost finished with his work, meaning that the Ninth Hex was close to completion. He was unprecedentedly close to Transcendence.

Just when everything was almost complete, this sudden turn of events occurred. Suddenly, deep hatred for Han Bei rose up within his heart.

Rumbling could be heard as the faces continued to chew into his body, to devour his life force, his Demonic qi, his soul, his everything.

It took only a moment for him to become extremely withered. It was as if his fate were unavoidable. And yet, he refused to believe that. He lifted his right hand and prepared to call upon his final trump card, a divine ability that he wouldn’t use unless there were absolutely, positively no other options left. The price to be paid to use it would be unimaginably high.

But then, suddenly, a piercing cry rang out from within his armor. All of a sudden, the parrot flew out!

How quickly the tide had turned!

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1515: Call Me Lord Fifth, Bitches!

The parrot’s eyes were bright red as it hovered there by Meng Hao. Back when they were first reunited, its memories had been in chaos. However, despite being unable to see things clearly, it knew that Meng Hao was very important, and had thus chosen to return to him.

It saw everything that happened after that, the result being that the shattered memories in its head seemed to increase constantly. It was as if there were a tiny node inside of its mind, a node which contained the image of Meng Hao. After Meng Hao appeared in the flesh, that node burst open, allowing the parrot’s erased mind to appear once again.

Eventually, in this moment of deep crisis, its erased memories were fully fused together, and erupted with great power.

RUUUUUUUUUUMBLE!

Memories exploded out into the parrot’s mind. It saw itself meeting Meng Hao for the first time, saw itself facing danger with him in numerous adventures. Everything began to awaken.

Back when its mind had been erased, it had managed to bury that node deep inside of itself, and it was that which eventually gave it the chance to recover!

The parrot was crafty, and although things had ended tragically back then, and it had been filled with grief, it had still managed to devise a backup plan.

“Lord Fifth!” the parrot roared. “Call me Lord Fifth, bitches!!” It remembered. It remembered everything. It looked over at Meng Hao being devoured by the faces, and suddenly let out a powerful squawk. Meng Hao’s armor shattered, creating countless black sparks that, under the parrot’s control, swirled around him, moving faster and faster until they formed a vortex.

The power of the vortex created numerous streams of gravitational force. However, that force didn’t affect the world in general, just the faces latched onto Meng Hao. Gradually, they were dragged away from Meng Hao, whose expression brightened. At the same time, the glow of the bronze lamp grew even more intense.

The faces let out bloodcurdling screams at they were ripped off of him. Then they were sucked into the vortex, where they shattered into pieces. That didn’t kill them, though, it just created countless other, tinier faces. More and more of them appeared. There weren’t just dozens now, but hundreds, then thousands, then tens of thousands.

Meng Hao was panting, and his body was dangerously withered. However, now that the faces were no longer consuming him, his battle prowess and cultivation base began to recover quickly. At the same time, he unleashed his own power, causing the vortex to spin even more quickly.

Soon it was a raging tempest, whereupon the parrot let out another squawk, sending it shooting off into the distance.

“Fudge!” it shrieked. “How dare you try to fight Lord Fifth! You might not have any fur or feathers, but Lord Fifth is going to go all out to put you down!” Meng Hao looked over at the parrot, his eyes shining with excitement. The fact that the parrot had recovered its memories was a momentous thing. Now, parrot and man both unleashed incredible speed to get as far away from the vortex as possible.

However, the tens of thousands of broken and shattered faces immediately gave chase. Apparently sensing that they wouldn’t be able to catch up, the faces then merged together into one huge swath of skin!

The skin had no bones, no muscle, and no blood. It was simply a patch of human-shaped skin that whistled through the starry sky toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao and the parrot fled, and the skin chased them from behind. The parrot let out a mighty squawk, as if it were going to hold nothing back.

“What do we do, Meng Hao? Dammit! Lord Fifth’s memories were just restored, only to be pulled into this situation? Whadda we do? Whadda we do??

“We’re outside of the Vast Expanse now. If we delay, the will of Allheaven will fully awaken, and then we’ll be dead for sure. Only a bit of his will is awake now…. We have to get back into the Vast Expanse! The will of Allheaven won’t be able to directly affect us in there.

“Meng Hao, can you create a distraction? Give me the time it takes an incense stick to burn, and I can sacrifice some of the Essence power of the copper mirror to set up a teleportation portal. That will be able to get us back into the starry sky of the Vast Expanse!” Despite the incredible speed with which the parrot and Meng Hao were moving, the patch of skin was moving even faster, and was closing in rapidly.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. They were in a deadly trap, a trap set up to target him, and as such, his eyes flickered with killing intent.

“The time it takes an incense stick to burn? I think I can do that….” After a moment of thought, he gritted his teeth. If the parrot hadn’t recovered its memories and taken the initiative to help, he would already have resorted to that one certain magic.

It was his trump card, a magical technique that was not yet complete, and might even spawn some unexpected side-effects. As for whether such transformations would be beneficial or detrimental, it was impossible to tell.

At the moment, though, there were no other options. Meng Hao’s eyes glittered coldly as he suddenly spun in place and waved his hand.

“Start setting up the spell formation!” he growled. He and the parrot had worked together for so long that there was no need for deliberation. Instantly, black threads shot out from the parrot and began to spin in place behind Meng Hao in the form of a teleportation portal.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. His eyes shone with a brilliant light as he extended his finger out into the starry sky and murmured, “Ninth Hex!”

What he was about to unleash was none other than… the Ninth Hex! His clone had already completed eight of the sealing marks that would make the final version. Because the final mark wasn’t complete, if Meng Hao unleashed the Ninth Hex, it could have some unknown effect on his clone. He wasn’t sure what exactly would happen, but now was not the time to contemplate misgivings.

He performed an incantation gesture with his left hand, and then shoved his hand out.

“First sealing mark!” Rumbling sounds filled Heaven and Earth, and everything shook. The starry sky vibrated as an indescribable power began to converge in front of Meng Hao.

As soon as the sealing mark appeared, the patch of skin suddenly lurched to a halt, and a strange gleam appeared deep in its eyes.

Next, Meng Hao performed another incantation gesture, causing the second sealing mark to appear. It merged with the first sealing mark, causing the energy to rocket even higher, reaching a level ten times higher than before. Then came the third sealing mark, and the fourth. One by one, they all appeared and merged together, and the terrifying energy reached an unbelievable level, causing everything in the starry sky to shake violently.

Next were the fifth, sixth, and seventh sealing marks…. A level of power appeared that the Vast Expanse Shrine had been unable to withstand, a power that would cause even peak 9-Essences cultivators to tremble. With seven sealing marks, it already seemed possible to seal the Heavens.

The patch of skin seemed shocked. For the first time… it began to back up instead of chase. However, it was in that very moment that the light in Meng Hao's eyes shone, and he threw his arms up. The seven sealing marks formed a dazzling magical symbol that began to speed forward, emanating a will that could seal the Heavens.

The light that shone out from it was majestic to the extreme, a light that seemed capable of sealing anything and everything, that could cause everything bright to grow dark, that could cause all living beings to bow their heads. Rumbling echoed out as the sea of light swept through the starry sky toward the patch of skin.

"What is that…?" Countless howls began to echo out from within the skin. However, no matter how it tried to evade, there was no avoiding the light, which slammed into the skin.

Behind Meng Hao, the parrot gaped in shock at what was happening.

Meng Hao shivered, and blood sprayed out of his mouth. Using the incomplete Ninth Hex in this way could be done only by paying a great cost.

Roaring sounds spread out in all directions, and at the same time, bloodcurdling screams echoed out from the skin as it was shredded to pieces by the light. Numerous bedraggled faces appeared, which immediately began to fly back toward the column they had come from.

Meng Hao's face was pale, and he was swaying back and forth. The parrot immediately gushed, "Alright, alright, I'm almost ready. We can teleport out in just a moment."

Meng Hao looked up, and in the iciest of voices said, "How could I flee?"

He took a step forward, and his cultivation base surged with power. "How could I run?"

With that, he transformed into a beam of light which shot at incredible speed toward the pillar that the faces were fleeing to.

“Ever since that bitch Han Bei sent me here, this place has tried to kill me over and over again. First was the illusion with Elder Brother Chen Fan, then the will of Allheaven trying to possess me. Then these five pillars showed up, and the Demonic qi faces tried to eat me….

“After all that, how could I flee? How could I run?” Roaring, he shoved his arms out in front of him, causing boundless light to surge up.

“I’ve been forced into unleashing my incomplete Ninth Hex. Well then… I’m definitely not going to waste the opportunity!

“In the past, there was the underworld Ghost, the white-haired cultivator of the Immortal Gods, and the Transcendent expert from the Devil Realm. They destroyed three columns, and although I might not be ready to do the same thing, I might as well do a dry run!” Rumbling echoed out as Meng Hao shoved the light of the combined sealing marks directly toward the column of Demonic qi.

As he flew along, the starry sky shattered, and the faces screamed. The light picked up speed, and as it neared the column, killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes. Then, he performing an incantation gesture and roared, “Eight sealing marks!!”

With that, the eighth sealing mark appeared, glittering brightly. As it merged into the brightness, and fused with the other seven sealing marks, the light began to shine a bright violet color!

The violet light caused the starry sky to go quiet. Everything began to vibrate in complete helplessness. The faces faded away, screaming, as the light slashed into the pillar representing the Demon.

The sky shattered, and everything was thrown into chaos as the Demon pillar shuddered.

Meanwhile, back in the starry sky of Allheaven, on Planet Vast Expanse, on the first continent, in one of the cities of the mortal world, the ninth reincarnation of Meng Hao’s clone, Little Treasure, suddenly coughed up a huge mouthful of blood. Then he teetered in place for a moment before collapsing onto the ground.

The entire household was thrown into chaos.

He began to shiver and spasm as numerous sealing marks began to shine brightly on his forehead.

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# Chapter 1516: The Return!

The fight continued outside the Vast Expanse.

The light formed from the eight sealing marks of Meng Hao’s Ninth Hex was so powerful that it surpassed the 9-Essences level. Meng Hao wasn’t sure how far away it was from the Transcendent level, but he was sure that not a single 9-Essences cultivator would be able to survive an encounter with it!

Ear-splitting rumbling sounds spread out in all directions. The faces weren’t even able to get back into the column before they were incinerated.

Before dying, they let out miserable screams, which faded away almost before they even began. Just before dissipating, their expressions seemed to be those of release and gratitude.

Soon, everything was quiet and still. It happened faster than either Meng Hao or the parrot could ever have imagined.

The parrot looked over at the Demon pillar, which was still trembling, and Meng Hao, who was radiating an air of madness.

The parrot couldn’t help but take a deep breath as it gaped at Meng Hao. After all the years that they had been separated, it turned out that Meng Hao was still… the type to seek revenge over the smallest grievance!

“What… what is he planning to do?” the parrot thought, eyes wide with disbelief. “How vicious! That… that pillar can only be destroyed by a Transcendent cultivator. He wants to try to destroy the Demon pillar now?”

The parrot looked around at the destruction and chaos in the starry sky, then back at the pillar. A moment later, after the light faded away, a cracking sound rang out.

At the same time, it was possible to see that a crevice had appeared on the pillar. Although the pillar wasn’t crushed, the crevice which had opened up could obviously not be mended.

The parrot shivered and then yelled, “Meng Hao, that’s enough. Really, enough is enough. The spell formation is ready. We need to get out of here as soon as possible!” The parrot then turned toward the completed spell formation, which began to rumble to life.

Meng Hao immediately began to back up. Although the battle had been bitter, he had won a stunning victory.

“I can’t destroy this pillar now,” he thought, eyes glittering coldly, “but one of these days, I’ll come back here and wipe it out of existence!”

In almost the same moment that the crack had appeared, the person-shaped outline inside of the pillar had begun to shrink. The fruits on it exploded, and soon, a piercing shriek rang out. The shriek passed out of the column into the world beyond, echoing out in all directions.

Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth as he heard the sound of the cry. Without the slightest hesitation, he increased his speed. Simultaneously, the pillar that represented the Immortal began to shrink and wither. That in turn caused the pillar of Demonic qi to begin to recover.

And yet, the crevice which had appeared remained. Shockingly, it was at this point that the will of the Vast Expanse rose up, causing the starry sky to shake. Then, a huge eye abruptly appeared up ahead.

It was enormous, and completely bloodshot. It was a mass of chaos, and seemed to contain the seething mist of the Vast Expanse. This eye was apparently the will of Allheaven, the final gambit to be played in this day’s events. As soon as it appeared, everything went completely still and quiet.

The opening of the eye caused Meng Hao to be filled with a sense of intense crisis. He could tell that the natural laws in the area were being destroyed, and as the eye gazed upon him, he felt a terrifying aura that caused his scalp to go numb. Immediately, the bronze lamp began to shine brighter than ever, transforming Meng Hao into a figure of light.

Almost in the same moment that the eye opened, Meng Hao reached the spell formation put together by the parrot.

The parrot howled as the spell formation began to activate. However, even as the light was still beginning to shine, the seemingly eternal eye caused the starry sky around it to twist and distort as a huge mouth appeared. Then, the mouth lunged toward Meng Hao and the parrot as if to consume them.

The parrot's eyes were bright red, and it howled again. Cracking sounds could be heard, which came from the cracks spreading out over the copper mirror. By damaging the mirror, it was possible to negate the effects of the changed natural law caused by the will of Allheaven. A moment later, rumbling sounds echoed out as the parrot and Meng Hao vanished.

That was when the mouth arrived. It took a huge bite, causing the starry sky to shake, and leaving a gigantic, smoking crater in the spot where the teleportation portal had been.

The eye glared off into the distance, and a piercing shriek was just barely audible from the direction of the Demonic qi pillar.

As that happened, the brilliant light of teleportation appeared in a dusty corner of the starry sky of Allheaven. A moment later, Meng Hao and the parrot appeared.

Meng Hao immediately coughed up some blood, and the parrot listed weakly. The light of teleportation faded away, and the copper mirror appeared, covered with cracks. Although it wasn't destroyed, it was clearly in worse condition than before the trip outside the Vast Expanse.

"Dammit!" the parrot said, looking very irritated. "Lord Fifth just woke up and was immediately thrown into grave danger? I quit. I quit, you hear? Meng Hao, you'd better give Lord Fifth a good explanation for all of this!"

Meng Hao’s responded with a question: “Was that eye… Allheaven? Is Allheaven the will of the starry sky of the Vast Expanse?”

Fear could be seen in the parrot’s eyes as it began to speak. “Legends say that the world Essence of the starry sky of the Vast Expanse has a will, a will who is called Allheaven. The main body of the will exists outside the Vast Expanse. And yet, that will can also fill the Vast Expanse itself. In the beginning, that will blessed all living things, and supposedly, even taught all living beings how to practice cultivation. But as time went on, it began to weaken, and then go mad.

“However, I have a vague memory deep inside that seems to indicate… that this Allheaven actually has a different origin. What exactly that is, nobody knows…. Even I’m not sure. Dammit, how could I not know?” The parrot shook its head in confusion.

A thoughtful look could be seen in Meng Hao’s eye as he stared at the parrot and asked another question. “Were you created by Patriarch Vast Expanse?”

“Patriarch Vast Expanse….” the parrot murmured, its eyes gleaming with reminiscence. After awakening, its memories had slowly been revealed. After a long moment, it nodded, but then suddenly seemed to hesitate. Apparently… Patriarch Vast Expanse had created the copper mirror, but not the parrot. Apparently… the parrot came from a time before Patriarch Vast Expanse was even alive!

The parrot didn’t want to think about the past, and as such, began to yell at Meng Hao. “Forget about it. Meng Hao, you owe me an explanation. Dammit, Lord Fifth’s memories were just restored, and then I got scared nearly to death!!”

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with killing intent as he looked off in the direction of Planet Vast Expanse. “I’m going to go get an explanation, for you and me both!”

It was just as he said; the next thing he was planning to do was to go get an explanation.

From what he could tell, the will of Allheaven could only affect him directly if he was outside of the Vast Expanse. Apparently, it couldn’t do anything within the Vast Expanse itself, which meant that Meng Hao was temporarily safe.

The parrot’s explanation had confirmed his suspicions. Meng Hao turned, killing intent flickering in his eyes as he made his way off into the distance.

The parrot immediately began to follow.

“Hey,” it asked, “where’d the meat jelly get off to, that old fart?” Its words were met by silence on Meng Hao’s part. The parrot suddenly shivered. “What… what happened?”

Sadness filled Meng Hao’s face as he opened his bag of holding and carefully pulled out the shattered remnants of the meat jelly armor. The parrot stared in shock for a long, long time before letting out a cry of anguish.

The moment of silence which followed seemed to last an eternity. Eventually, the parrot turned to Meng Hao, and its eyes were completely bloodshot.

“Meng Hao, I’m going to ask one thing, and you’re going to answer me. When… do we go slaughter them?!”

“Soon,” Meng Hao murmured in reply, his eyes equally as red. “We’ll slaughter the 33 Heavens, we’ll slaughter the Immortal God Continent, and we’ll slaughter the Devil Realm Continent. Then… we’ll go outside the Vast Expanse and slaughter the will of Allheaven!

“Soon….” with that, he transformed into a beam of light that shot like lightning through the starry sky.

As he flew along, he rotated his cultivation base, but his withered body wasn’t recovering very quickly. He looked incredibly gaunt, and thus, incredibly fierce. His eyes flickered with red light, making him look almost like he had just climbed up out of the grave.

Shocking rumbles echoed out in Heaven and Earth as he flew toward Planet Vast Expanse with deadly intent. It only took a few months of travel. After all, he hadn’t been very far from Planet Vast Expanse to begin with. Soon, he was looking at the planet from some distance away.

As he neared, the planet’s protective shield sprang up as if to block him. Meng Hao didn’t even look at it. He passed directly through it, whereupon a somber, dignified voice echoed out.

“Respectful greetings, Ninth Paragon! Welcome back!”

Even as the voice rang out, Meng Hao entered the atmosphere of Planet Vast Expanse. As soon as he did, the other Paragons could sense his presence, and the intensely murderous aura caused them all to look up.

Jin Yunshan, the Sect Leader, and all the others had returned from the necropolis. They still hadn’t successfully made it to the ninth land mass. After their successive failures, they had been sitting cross-legged in meditation, but now, looks of shock could be seen on their faces.

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# Chapter 1517: Hunting Down Han Bei!

Jin Yunshan was shaking more than anyone. Once he realized who that killing intent belonged to, he subconsciously reached down and rubbed his bracelet of holding, whereupon he felt a bit better.

“It’s the Ninth Paragon…”

“This aura. How… how could he have become so strong?!”

“He’s been missing for hundreds of years, I can’t believe he’s finally back!”

Faces flickered as Meng Hao hovered there in the air above Planet Vast Expanse for a moment before speeding toward the first continent.

In the Holy Daughter Palace on the first continent, Vast Expanse Holy Daughter Han Bei was seated cross-legged in meditation. Her face was pale, and she looked exhausted. Suddenly, she sensed the aura emanating from above, and a smile broke out on her face.

But that smile quickly froze, and she shot to her feet, a look of disbelief and shock on her face.

“I can’t believe he woke up! This is impossible!” Trembling, Han Bei began to back up. Suddenly, the glow of teleportation sprang up around her, and she vanished. A moment later, an indescribable pressure descended and slammed into the Holy Daughter Palace.

The entire palace was instantly incinerated, wiped away. In its place was a huge crater, above which Meng Hao hovered, eyes flashing with killing intent as he looked off into the distance.

“You can’t escape!” he said through gritted teeth. “You will die this day. I won’t rest until that happens.”

Outside of the Vast Expanse, he had brushed far too closely with death, causing his hatred for Han Bei to seep into his very bones. He had vowed to slay her, and as far as Chu Yuyan was concerned, he was prepared for how to deal with that situation.

His eyes flashed like lightning, and then a massive boom echoed out as the air was ripped apart. Meng Hao’s vicious, murderous aura spread out to cover the entire planet, joined by his divine sense. All living beings on the planet, including mortals and cultivators, even the 9-Essences experts, were left trembling. It was as if some great disaster had suddenly come to loom over their heads.

“What happened!?” Jin Yunshan gasped. He could sense the raging, murderous aura coming off of Meng Hao, and it was obvious that it was exponentially more powerful than the last time the two of them had tangled.

Jin Yunshan, just like the Sect Leader and the others, had made progress in recent years thanks to the multiple forays into the necropolis. The entire group had experienced increases in their cultivation bases. By this point, Jin Yunshan believed himself to be at the utter peak of the 9-Essences level. And yet, now that he sensed Meng Hao’s energy, his face fell, and he had to admit that as of this moment, Meng Hao’s aura was completely and utterly terrifying.

“Why is he trying to kill a disciple from the First Sect?” Although Han Bei was a Holy Daughter of the Vast Expanse School, in comparison to a 9-Essences expert, she was nothing more than a disciple. “That’s not any ordinary disciple. Whoever it was managed to escape before he landed his blow on the First Sect!”

Jin Yunshan’s eyes flickered as he emerged out in the open. He wasn’t going to interfere with Meng Hao; he merely wanted to see exactly what was happening.

It wasn’t just him. Sha Jiudong emerged from a sandstorm that raged in Planet Vast Expanse’s huge desert, looking extremely frightened. He took a deep breath, and his eyes flashed because of the uneasy feeling he was experiencing. He could tell that something bad was about to happen, and immediately sped off to observe.

Immortal Bai Muchen hesitated for a moment. At the moment, she didn’t dare to show herself to Meng Hao, not in his current state, so she simply sat there quietly, pretending that she hadn’t noticed his aura.

She was the only one who didn’t show herself. The Sect Leader and the other 9-Essences Paragons were all flying through the air of Planet Vast Expanse to see what was happening.

Their hearts were pounding from the sheer awe-inspiring nature of Meng Hao’s aura, which left them completely shaken.

That was especially true of the Sect Leader, whose cultivation base was so high that he had assumed he must be at the absolute pinnacle. He was even sure that he would prevail against the combined forces of Jin Yunshan and the other 9-Essences Paragons.

But as of this moment, Meng Hao’s aura left him terrified. The intense level of pressure was almost impossible to accept.

“How… did he become so powerful!?” the Sect Leader thought. “It’s understandable that our cultivation bases rose, thanks to the altars in the necropolis. But he simply vanished for a few hundred years, and now that he’s back, he’s suddenly unimaginably stronger!”

The Sect Leader’s eyes flickered, and he pushed forward with greater speed. After all, disciple Han Bei of the First Sect was actually his apprentice.

He had accepted her as his only apprentice, and now Meng Hao was trying to chase her down and kill her…. Clearly, there were secrets at play.

As everyone was speeding toward the first continent, Meng Hao suddenly appeared in a different location, a place where the aura of teleportation was strong. This was none other than the location Han Bei had teleported to.

It was a small-scale sect that was not directly subordinate to the Vast Expanse School. As soon as Meng Hao appeared, everything was thrown into a commotion. The sect itself was built upon nine different mountains, all of which began to shine with bright light. Clearly it was a spell formation. In addition to that, a moment later, nine blasts of sword qi to suddenly shoot out toward Meng Hao.

The lands in the area shook as the nine mountains themselves then rose up into the air. There were also hosts of cultivators, whose eyes shone red, and who didn't even seem in control of their own minds as they charged madly toward Meng Hao.

Han Bei had been on Planet Vast Expanse for many years, and had always been on guard against Meng Hao. Although she had grown a bit lax recently, her preparations were all still in place.

This was one of the locations she had set aside especially to deal with Meng Hao.

“Kill him!” roared the tens of thousands of cultivators. In combination with the spell formation, the nine mountains, and the nine beams of sword qi, they shot aggressively toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao's eyes flashed, and his killing intent surged stronger than ever. Since these people were trying to stop him, that meant they were allied with Han Bei, and thus, were his enemies!

“Die!” he said impatiently, shoving his hand out violently. Everything went dim, and a gale force wind blew as a huge hand materialized.

The hand slammed into the nine streams of sword qi, which were powerful enough to cause problems for an ordinary 9-Essences cultivator for at least a short time. But when they slammed into the magical hand sent out by

Meng Hao, they shattered instantly. They weren’t even powerful enough to stand up to a single blow.

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the sword qi was destroyed. Next, the hand slammed into the mountains. The mountains shook as cracks spread out across them. Then, they exploded into countless fragments. The entire matter happened almost in the blink of an eye.

The hand didn’t seem to have been slowed down in the slightest. It smashed into the cultivators and the spell formation, causing a deafening boom to spread out.

A huge handprint was smashed into the ground, surrounded by cracks which snaked out in every direction. The spell formation was completely destroyed, and the cultivators who had been charging in attack were reduced to a bloody pulp.

Everything went quiet. If Meng Hao had been an ordinary 9-Essences cultivator, this little trap might not have resulted in his death, but would have at least delayed him a bit. And what Han Bei needed right now was time.

However, to the current Meng Hao, destroying this place was as easy as taking a breath.

His eyes flickered as he waved his hand through the air to locate Han Bei’s aura. After some examination, he snorted coldly, then sent his divine sense out in all directions. However, he could find no trace of Han Bei.

“Parrot!” he said anxiously.

The parrot flew out from his bag of holding, radiating dazzling light, its eyes shining brightly. Meng Hao sent his divine sense out again, and this time, the parrot let out a squawk as it bolstered his divine sense.

Everything began to tremble violently. RUUUUUUUUUUMBLE!

A huge wind whipped up, with Meng Hao in the middle of it all. As his divine sense surged out exponentially, it filled Planet Vast Expanse, until finally, he caught sight of Han Bei in another small-scale sect.

As soon as he locked down onto her position, he stepped forward, ripping the air apart and stepping through the rift. It took only a moment for him to appear in the exact location he had just identified.

The instant he appeared, Han Bei was stepping onto a teleportation portal in the sect. She suddenly looked around to find Meng Hao speeding through the air toward her.

Her face went pale, and she suddenly slapped down at the spell formation with her hand. A boom echoed out as the spell formation began to activate. At the same time, she declined to wait for Meng Hao to destroy the preparations she had made in the sect. She destroyed the entire sect herself, then borrowed that power to fuel the teleportation formation. Radiant light glittered, surrounding her. She began to fade away, as if she would be teleported away at any moment.

But how could Meng Hao let that happen? He extended his right hand and pointed his finger directly at Han Bei.

“Eighth Hex!”

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# Chapter 1518: Nearing the Ninth Reincarnation!

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the Essence of space of the Eighth Hex descended and locked everything in place. Space was sealed, the air was sealed, everything was sealed!

Even the beam of light lurched to a halt. Meng Hao strode forward, completely ignoring the light and the destructive power that filled it, as he stepped inside.

The light washed over him, distorting a moment before being blasted away. Meng Hao stepped onto the spell formation, reached out, and grabbed the half-transparent Han Bei.

Almost as soon as his hand latched onto her, she laughed bitterly.

“If you kill me, Chu Yuyan dies!” she shrieked. Even as her words echoed out, and before she could speak another sentence, Meng Hao’s face turned icy cold. Without the slightest hesitation, he snapped her neck.

Han Bei couldn’t believe what was happening as a boom rang out and she exploded into a haze of blood and gore. She had been destroyed in body and mind.

“This isn’t your true self,” Meng Hao said coolly,” only a tool to be discarded, or perhaps a clone to be used as a seed for rebirth.

“Now that I’ve killed this body, I’m curious to see what other means you will use to try to evade my wrath.” He closed his eyes as he followed the aura of Han Bei’s flesh and blood to try to track her down yet again.

Han Bei was crafty to the extreme, and had prepared many life-saving backup plans. Strangely, even Meng Hao was having trouble detecting the signs of where exactly she had teleported away to.

He had followed various clues to this place, and found her clone. Han Bei was certainly clever. Clearly, her true self and her clone had fled in different directions. If Meng Hao ended up following her clone, then that would suit her plans nicely. If he followed her true self, then the clone could make its escape and be the seed for rebirth if he ended up killing her true self.

“Gotcha,” he said, eyes flickering as he looked off into the distance. There, his divine sense had spotted a figure who hadn’t been there moments ago.

It was the fleeing figure of… Han Bei’s true self!

Her hair was in disarray, and her face was ashen. She seemed shocked, in disbelief, as if she could never have imagined that Meng Hao would have the mental fortitude to survive and track her down from outside the Vast Expanse.

It really seemed impossible to her. No one could survive the experience of going outside the Vast Expanse, especially not… Immortals who had transformed into Demons!

“He wasn’t assimilated and wasn’t consumed. He’s still himself. He didn’t become the Emissary of Allheaven! How did he do it? Dammit!!” A tremor ran through Han Bei as she thought about Meng Hao’s raging, murderous aura. She could well imagine that Meng Hao’s heart was completely fixed on the notion of slaughtering her.

Furthermore, she had no desire to test out whether Meng Hao had slipped into a state where he didn’t care about Chu Yuyan’s soul. If he had, Han Bei knew that he could kill her as easily as flipping over his hand.

“There’s no way he doesn’t care about her!” she thought, gritting her teeth. As she flew along, suddenly, one of the cities of the mortal world appeared in front of her!

When Meng Hao realized what direction she was flying in, his pupils constricted. Beyond the mountains on the horizon was the city where his clone’s ninth reincarnation was living. There, on the sprawling plains, was the enormous capital city of the mortal empire.

Meng Hao had very little connection to this ninth reincarnation. He could sense him, but that was all. And yet, that sensation allowed him to pinpoint exactly where the clone was located.

That didn’t help him to check the clone’s current situation though. Not even divine sense revealed anything more than a blurry haze. However, he could sense a familiar aura brewing within his clone’s ninth reincarnation.

It was the complete aura of the Ninth Hex, an aura which could change all lives in unpredictable ways. It was an aura that could cover over all life, that twisted the air, making divine sense impossible to penetrate the area.

“How does Han Bei know where my clone’s ninth reincarnation is? Could it be just random chance?” His eyes glittered brightly.

Of course, he had no idea that Yan’er had become a part of his clone’s ninth life. It was only because Han Bei was connected to Chu Yuyan’s soul that she was going in that direction. She had no idea of knowing that his clone’s reincarnation was obscuring the divine sense in Chu Yuyan’s area. However, she was able to determine the general location.

And therefore, she was speeding there to try to track Chu Yuyan down!

Even as Han Bei sped along, Meng Hao let out a cold harrumph, and blurred into motion as he gave chase.

Rumbling sounds filled Heaven and Earth. Han Bei was moving so quickly that she was soon in the air above the capital city where the clone’s reincarnation lived.

“This must be the place!” she thought, face gleaming with delight. This was her final life-saving backup plan. She knew that even if she fled to the farthest corners of the Vast Expanse, Meng Hao would still be able to track her down. Furthermore, because of the injuries she had sustained, it was impossible for her to safely summon the will of Allheaven upon her. Therefore, her final chance at survival lay with Chu Yuyan.

She hoped that, in the case that Meng Hao had lost himself in his hatred, suddenly seeing Chu Yuyan in the flesh would awaken him.

Unfortunately, even though she knew Chu Yuyan’s general location, she couldn’t pinpoint exactly where she was. She only knew that she was in this city, which was somehow covered with a blanket of obscurity.

However, she had no way of knowing that the closer she got to her target, the stronger Meng Hao’s killing intent grew. After all, how could he possibly allow anything bad to happen to his clone?

Even as Han Bei arrived outside the mortal city, sounds like muffled thunder filled the air. Suddenly, the air seemed to rip apart, and Meng Hao emerged to hover in front of Han Bei.

His eyes were icy cold, and his killing intent swirled madly. Han Bei suddenly shivered and began to pant.

Apparently, Meng Hao’s appearance provoked a reaction from the clouds up above. More thunder crackled, breaking the clouds open and causing rain to begin to fall. Moments later, the lands were soaked in rain.

Countless mortal citizens in the city scurried about to get out of the rain; it was currently evening, and as the sky darkened, the rain began to fall even harder.

In a narrow alley in one particular corner of the city was a carpenter’s shop. Little Treasure sat there, carving a piece of wood, relying on his memory to sculpt the shape he remembered. Outside, thunder rumbled, and the sound of rainfall could be heard. Normally speaking, those sounds would stir his imagination, and make him think about what it might look like outside.

But today, he felt uneasy, as though something important were about to happen.

Soon, he heard footfalls behind him. It was his wife, who sat down next to him and leaned on his shoulder. A smile broke out on his face, and suddenly, the uneasy feeling in his heart gave way to calmness.

His wife looked at him warmly and also smiled. Her belly appeared to be slightly swollen; a tiny little life was there inside, slowly growing….

Because of the blanket of obscurity, Meng Hao's true self was unaware of what had occurred in his clone's ninth life. At the same time, the person who had accompanied that reincarnation through life had no way to detect the familiar aura which existed beyond that obscurity.

"If you kill me, Chu Yuyan's DEAD!" Han Bei said shrilly. She was nervous, and very afraid.

Thunder crashed, and the rain fell. Meng Hao didn't use his cultivation base to prevent the rain from touching him. He hovered there in the air, eyes swirling with killing intent, and as the rain landed on him, it turned into ice which fell down toward the ground.

Meng Hao looked over at Han Bei, then said, "The first time we met was when we went into the Black Sieve Sect's ancient Blessed Land."

His eyes flickered with memories. In the past, he would never intentionally take the time to indulge in nostalgia. But as the years went by, he grew more lonely, and then experienced the destruction of the Mountain and Sea Realm. Eventually, he reached the point where he would reminisce.

If it were possible, he would prefer that all of the people who had once been his friends not perish. That was especially true… of those he killed himself.

He felt that way about Chen Fan, and also felt that way about Han Bei.

Han Bei looked back at him quickly, eyes flickering with mixed emotions as she thought back to the past.

Then, Meng Hao's eyes shone with bright light. What he had said just now had been seventy percent sincere and thirty percent duplicitous. He truly had been sighing, but the intention had been to cause Han Bei to think about the past!

In the blink of an eye, Meng Hao’s right hand flashed with an incantation gesture. Karmic Hexing appeared, and the wave of a finger caused Han Bei to begin to tremble. All of her Karma Threads appeared above her head, from which Meng Hao extracted a single thread.

It was none other than the Karma Thread which connected her to Chu Yuyan!

At the same time, Meng Hao’s hand slashed through the air. The pieces of ice which had fallen off of him moments ago suddenly flew through the air, transforming into countless sharp blades that flashed through the air toward Han Bei. More precisely, they shot toward the Karma Thread which connected her to Chu Yuyan.

Han Bei’s eyes widened, and she gasped. She immediately fell back, hands flashing in a double-handed incantation gesture. Then she shoved her hands out, unleashing the power of her cultivation base. However, she was not even close to being a match for Meng Hao. In the blink of an eye, the chunks of ice were directly in front of her and on the verge of slashing through her body.

In that moment, she shrieked. Her black pupils rapidly extended outward until they had overtaken the whites of her eyes. A boundless will then began to emanate out from her.

It was the will of Allheaven, and as it exploded out, blood oozed out of the corners of her mouth. She began to shake violently, and the sounds of breaking bones echoed out from inside of her.

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# Chapter 1519: Han Bei Perishes!

In order to send Meng Hao outside the Vast Expanse, Han Bei had paid the heaviest of prices. She had harmed herself on a fundamental level in order to summon the will of Allheaven. As such, when she did so again, she could barely prevent herself from collapsing into pieces.

However, even as her body began to fall apart, she was able to wield astonishing power. Blood oozed out of the corners of her mouth as her internal organs were destroyed. And yet, she raised her right hand toward the incoming ice fragments and pushed out.

Rumbling could be heard as the ice lurched to a halt. Then, each and every one exploded, forming a mist. That mist then congealed into the form of an arrow. Han Bei’s eyes glinted with a cruel light as she prepared to send the arrow flying back at Meng Hao. But then her face fell as she realized that Meng Hao had vanished.

Before she could even spin around, Meng Hao had appeared behind her. She had no time to unleash any divine abilities or set up any defenses. Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he waved his right hand, summoning the copper mirror. It had a huge crack running down the middle, but it was still the same precious treasure it had always been.

The parrot materialized, letting out a fierce squawk. At the same time, the surface of the mirror floated out, and of the nine pieces which comprised it, one shot out and stabbed into the middle of Han Bei’s back.

Even still, Han Bei’s energy continued to rise, and the boundless will continued to pour into her. She performed an incantation gesture with her right hand, then pointed behind her, causing the air around Meng Hao to shatter. A blast of energy then separated them, whereupon Meng Hao vanished again. When he reappeared, he was in a different location, where he waved his hand, sending a second mirror shard stabbing into Han Bei’s forehead.

Blood oozed out of the corners of her mouth as she performed another incantation gesture. The lands below began to quake, and crevices snaked out. However, that was when the third mirror shard stabbed into her, and then the fourth.

Han Bei’s pupils constricted. She could already sense that the connection between her own soul and Chu Yuyan’s was being destroyed. Backing up, she performed yet another incantation gesture. Blood sprayed out of her mouth, transforming into a blood-colored palm print that shot toward Meng Hao.

She was now in full retreat, drawing upon all the speed she could muster to flee. She was filled with the intense premonition that these copper mirror shards had the capacity to completely end her life!

However, even as she tried to escape, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with scorn. His right hand flashed with an incantation gesture, causing numerous mountains to appear, which fell down and completely blocked off her path of retreat. From a distance, it almost appeared as if those mountains were descending from the Heavens!

Han Bei let out a miserable shriek and then slammed into the mountains. The mountains shattered, and just when she appeared to be on the verge of making her escape, Meng Hao appeared next to her. He waved his right hand, and the fifth, sixth, and seventh mirror shards stabbed into Han Bei.

Han Bei’s face was pale, and within her, the power of the will of Allheaven had exploded out in full force. She even went so far as to use the same magical technique that Chen Fan had used, causing numerous battles to fill Meng Hao’s memories.

However, Meng Hao was prepared for that. His right hand flashed with an incantation gesture, and massive power erupted out within him. It was Karmic Hexing, which instantly severed her Karma.

Then, the eighth mirror shard stabbed into her chest.

She chuckled bitterly. By this point, her connection to Chu Yuyan’s soul was almost completely gone. Glaring at Meng Hao, she gritted her teeth and, unexpectedly, chose to detonate her own soul!

“Maybe I’ll vanish forever,” she said, her eyes burning with madness, “but at least I can leave your heart in agony!” A boom echoed out as the power of the detonation began to explode out.

“Too late,” Meng Hao said coolly. He waved his hand, and the ninth mirror shard whistled through the air at an impossible speed. Han Bei couldn’t have blocked it even if she had tried. It stabbed directly into her dantian region.

“Soul Severing!” Meng Hao said quietly. The parrot squawked, shooting toward Han Bei at top speed. Simultaneously, the mirror shards exploded.

Meng Hao had set out completely intent on killing Han Bei. Even though her soul was linked with Chu Yuyan’s, after acquiring the copper mirror, he knew that he could separate the two of them. The main danger would be if Han Bei chose to self-detonate, which was something he couldn’t prevent.

Therefore, he didn’t immediately attack Han Bei with full force. Instead, he had intentionally talked about past times, all to provoke the flow of memories within Han Bei’s eyes. In that moment when she recalled the past, he unleashed Karmic Hexing as a tactic to sever her soul!

Severing Karma wouldn’t be enough to undo her fusion with Chu Yuyan’s soul. Everything he had done before had been a feint. His true goal was to use the copper mirror and the parrot to completely separate their souls!

The parrot’s squawk echoed out at the same time that the nine mirror shards began to explode. The parrot then pierced through Han Bei’s body, which was a simple thing considering it wasn’t using its corporeal form.

As it passed through her, it latched its beak down onto a strand of soul, which was none other than the piece of Chu Yuyan’s soul which was nestled inside of Han Bei’s soul. The blurry soul fragment began to stretch out as it was pulled inexorably away from Han Bei’s soul.

It was in that moment that the full power of the detonation of the mirror shards surged out. Nine separate explosions ripped through Han Bei, slashing at the point where the two souls connected. Han Bei let out a bloodcurdling scream as her soul was severed from Chu Yuyan’s.

A massive boom echoed out as the parrot soared through the air, circling back around to Meng Hao with Chu Yuyan’s soul fragment. As for the mirror shards, they reformed and floated back to the copper mirror, where they once again became an intact mirror face.

As of this moment, Meng Hao’s desire to kill Han Bei had not lessened at all. He shot forward to appear directly in front of her, whereupon he unleashed a fist strike.

A boom rang out as Han Bei’s body exploded into a cloud of gore. Her soul flew out into the air, where she stared at Meng Hao, smiling bitterly.

“Meng Hao, you’ve really surprised me…. You truly deserve to be the Son of Allheaven. The blood of the Allheaven Clans runs strong in you…. However, your fate is sealed! The fate of all the starry sky of Allheaven is sealed! It can’t be changed. Nobody can alter it!” She began to laugh bitterly. Her soul was so damaged because of calling upon the will of Allheaven that Meng Hao didn’t need to do anything to it now. She was like an oil lamp on the verge of sputtering out. Her soul trembled as cracks began to spread out across its surface.

Soon, she was completely fragmented, and was apparently on the very brink of falling apart.

“Tell me, what are the Allheaven Clans?” Meng Hao suddenly asked.

“You know. You already know. What need have you of further proof…? Well, I guess it doesn’t matter now. Allheaven Clans are forged from the bloodline of the will of Allheaven. They were scattered among the starry sky with the sole purpose… of helping the will of Allheaven to climb back to the pinnacle!

“In this life, I am the Daughter of Allheaven, and you are the Son of Allheaven. Things between us aren’t over yet!” Her laughter grew louder and louder until her soul couldn’t sustain itself any longer. A boom like thunder echoed out as she exploded into ash!

Meng Hao hovered there quietly. After returning from outside of the Vast Expanse, he had already come to many conclusions about certain matters. Sighing, he looked up into the Heavens, his eyes glittering.

Eventually, Jin Yunshan, the Sect Leader, and the others appeared. They hovered there quietly, hearts battered by waves of shock. The bizarre performance put on by Han Bei, the unexpected appearance of the will of Allheaven, and Meng Hao’s incredible power left them all panting.

Eventually, they clasped hands and bowed to Meng Hao, then began to depart in beams of colorful light.

The last to leave was the Sect Leader. He looked at Meng Hao with mixed emotions, then glanced thoughtfully at the spot where Han Bei had vanished. Finally, he clasped hands and left.

After they were gone, Meng Hao looked down at Chu Yuyan’s soul strand. The parrot was perched on his shoulder.

After a long moment, Meng Hao murmured, “Han Bei was right. I’ve known the truth for some time now.

“There is a will outside the Vast Expanse called Allheaven…. In the past, Allheaven created the world, created life, and created cultivation. He is like the lord of all things.

“But he grew weak, and eventually reached the point of death. His body began to vanish, and in the end, all that remained were five fingers.

“Those fingers represent the Immortal, the Ghost, the God, the Devil, and the Demon…

“Every time one of them appears, it pushes Allheaven closer to death. Those fingers represent his life, an entity which exists above the Heavenly Dao, and is the will of all things.

“As for why Allheaven fears the Immortal, perhaps there are many answers, but regardless… if the Immortal appears, it will take the power of his life, and become strong to an unimaginable degree. In fact, if the Immortal appears, Allheaven will die instantly!

“When the Immortal is about to appear, worlds are destroyed!

“When Patriarch Vast Expanse was about to become the Immortal, the will of Allheaven intervened, and destroyed the Vast Expanse land masses. From then on, Patriarch Vast Expanse was not the Immortal, but instead, the Ghost. Back when I was fleeing with the Mountain and Sea Butterfly, I encountered that old man, and he told me all of this. Way back then. 1

“In Patriarch Vast Expanse’s grief, he transformed the land masses into his necropolis, then went outside the Vast Expanse to destroy Allheaven’s finger. That was all he could do, as he was not strong enough to kill Allheaven himself.”

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# Chapter 1520: Sculpt the Heavens!

“After that came the Devil and the God. They also destroyed one of the Allheaven’s fingers each. I wonder if the three of them were working together to completely destroy Allheaven, but just weren’t able to pull it off.

“In any case, they were waiting. Waiting… for the Demon to appear. I wonder where they got the idea that the Demon could put an end to Allheaven.

“Allheaven was waiting too, though, fearful of each person who approached the status of the Immortal, waiting for Demonic qi to appear inside of them. Then, just before they completed the process and became the true Demon… he absorbed those quasi-Demons, consumed them, used the multifariousness of the Demon, and their Nirvanic rebirth, to give himself new life!

“Perhaps the Allheaven Clans really were created by the blood of Allheaven, and yet, they were also clans which could give birth to the Demon!

“My fate is like that of a Demon, and I am the true Demon.” Meng Hao sighed. Perhaps his understanding wasn’t complete, but after everything he had experienced, he was sure that it was seventy to eighty percent true.

“That is the origin of Song Daozi and the other ninety-seven faces. They were from different worlds of the past, and they all became quasi-Demons.

“And I am the ninety-ninth. I was prepared by Allheaven to be the last of the group.” He shook his head and hovered there silently for a long moment. The rain ceased to fall, and the moon was now visible, hanging in the sky. As it cast its light down onto the lands below, the reflection cast within the puddles was the picture of beauty.

Meng Hao eventually made his way through the night into the city of mortals down below. Following the tuggings of his senses, he walked through the streets until he found himself at a certain street corner, leading into a small alley.

Deep within the alley was a small shop.

The door was closed, but based on the sign, and the woodpile outside, it was obvious that it was the shop of a carpenter.

This was the home of his clone's ninth reincarnation. Meng Hao stood there for a long time. The obscuring mist which seemed to cover the area was strong here, as was the sensation that something was brewing that could shake the Heavens.

After a long moment passed, Meng Hao sent his divine sense out in an attempt to see what was in the shop. However, that was as effective as throwing a stone ox into the ocean. He could see nothing.

A moment later, he vanished. When he reappeared, he was inside the carpenter's shop, looking around at the neatly arranged carpentry tools. There were also rows up on rows of little wooden sculptures, which left Meng Hao a bit taken aback.

There were birds, dogs, cats, all of them remarkably lifelike. They were so lifelike, in fact, that it seemed as if they might start walking around at any moment. They even seemed to glow with a faint light that no mortal would be able to detect.

It was the light of life… and it was very strong. It was like a life force that wasn't present in the wood itself, but which had been imparted unto it by means of the act of sculpting.

Meng Hao simply couldn't imagine what hands would be capable of sculpting such lifelike statues.

It was at this point that his eyes came to rest on one particular little sculpture, which depicted a woman. A tremor ran through him, and his eyes went wide. He almost couldn't believe what he was seeing; it felt as if lightning bolts were crashing in his mind.

From the look in his eyes, it was as if he were looking at something so outlandishly preposterous that it defied imagination.

"That's…. How is this possible? Why would my clone's ninth reincarnation have sculpted her…?" His heart began to thump as he realized that certain shocking and irreversible developments must have occurred during this ninth life.

It was in that very moment that he heard footsteps behind him. A middle-aged man emerged from the room in the back of the shop. He was blind, and yet was able to walk as confidently as if he still possessed his eyes. He seemed very familiar with the little shop, as if had been carved into his mind. He walked over to the middle of the shop and took a sculpting knife off of the shelf, then sat down and began to work on an unfinished sculpture.

The sculpture wasn't even half complete, and although no one else would be able to see what it was, Meng Hao could tell at a glance that it was the ninth sealing mark of the Ninth Hex.

Little Treasure couldn't see Meng Hao, and didn't know that he was there with him. If a picture could be painted of the scene, it would depict Meng Hao standing there in front of his clone's ninth reincarnation, looking down at him slowly carving away at the block of wood.

A very strange feeling filled Meng Hao's heart as he watched his ninth reincarnation. This reincarnation was different from the others. From the second life to the eighth, Meng Hao had been able to observe what was happening, and even felt a sense of familiarity with the various reincarnations.

He could sense that this was definitely his clone; his soul and his blood had both come from Meng Hao. But this ninth reincarnation felt very unfamiliar.

Time passed in which Meng Hao simply watched the clone working with the sculpture. He had never seen the ninth sealing mark take shape in such a way, in such a clear and corporeal fashion.

It had always appeared as an outline in his mind and heart, but this time, in the hands of Little Treasure, it was taking physical shape in the world, one knife stroke at a time.

“So this is my final, ninth life…?” Meng Hao murmured. He stood there for a long time… until a woman walked out of the room. She couldn’t see Meng Hao any more than Little Treasure could, but as soon as Meng Hao saw her, he understood why Han Bei had been coming to this location.

“Yan’er….” he murmured to himself with a sigh. After seeing Yan’er depicted in the wooden sculpture, he had begun to suspect the truth. But to see her here in the flesh caused complicated emotions to rise up within him. Now he understood that in this ninth life, an unexpected twist had occurred. His clone… had ended up marrying Chu Yuyan.

Her belly was swollen with child, and her expression was warm as she placed a thick coat onto her husband’s shoulders. Then she sat next to him, watching him sculpt. From the way she watched him, it seemed she would never tire of sitting there like that, not for her entire life.

Eventually she looked down at the sculpture, and when she couldn’t tell exactly what it was, she quietly asked, “Is it almost finished?”

“Not yet,” Little Treasure replied, rubbing the wood gently. “It’s about a third done.”

She looked at it a bit closer, and then asked, “What exactly is it? I can’t tell.”

Little Treasure smiled and replied, “These are… the Heavens, as I see them.”

“The Heavens?” The woman looked a bit surprised.

“Yeah. These are the Heavens, with their eyes closed. Like me, unable to see.” Little Treasure sighed. Yan’er sat there quietly.

Suddenly, Little Treasure looked up, and although he couldn’t see Meng Hao, it was almost as if he were looking at him. “Yan’er, sometimes I have the feeling that this is my purpose in life.

“It was foreordained that I be blind, to live in a world of darkness.

“But I want the Heavens to open their eyes. It’s too bad that I can’t reach up and touch them.”

Meng Hao looked at Little Treasure and Yan’er for a long moment. Finally, he sighed and turned to leave. Before walking out of the shop, he looked back at Yan’er, and the little bump on her belly.

He could sense the life inside, and although it was true that the child inside was the offspring of his clone’s ninth reincarnation, it was also true that it was his own flesh and blood.

This ninth reincarnation was unlike any of the other lives, and this child was also different.

Meng Hao stood at the threshold of the door, his expression one of many mixed emotions.

He did nothing to interfere with the lives of Yan’er and Little Treasure. There was no need.

He had chosen to let both of them go, and therefore, he would not break them apart now.

Because of the matter of the Ninth Hex, this ninth reincarnation apparently had keen intuition, to the point where Meng Hao was left shocked. Not only was he actually carving out the ninth seal of the Ninth Hex, he had uttered words which were thought-provoking even to Meng Hao.

“How can you seal the Heavens without being able to see them?” he murmured, shaking his head.

“No. There’s more to it than that. People think that he can’t see the Heavens, but the truth is that in his world of blindness, he can see them.

“He is sculpting those Heavens, one knife stroke at a time. The ninth seal represents those Heavens!

“When that sculpture of his is complete, my clone’s ninth reincarnation will close his eyes and pass away. The purpose of his life has been to sculpt that ninth sealing mark.” Meng Hao walked quietly off into the distance.

He didn’t leave the city of mortals. He bought a house some distance away from Little Treasure and Yan’er’s, where he waited for his clone’s ninth reincarnation to finish his work.

Eight months passed in the blink of an eye, and Little Treasure became father to a baby girl. She wasn’t blind. She could see the world in all its multitudinous colors. Her bright, cheerful laughter often filled the house.

Her mother picked her name, a single character which meant ‘Perfection.’

From the time she was born, her parents called her Perfect.

It was a bit of a strange-sounding name, but Little Treasure liked it, and so did Yan’er.

Little Treasure was extremely excited from the moment she was born. He often held his tiny daughter in his arms and laughed with joy. Later, he carved his daughter’s likeness into wood, which he placed on the headboard of her bed.

A few years later, Little Treasure’s daughter was eight years old, and the ninth sealing mark was about half finished. On that day, a white hair appeared on Little Treasure’s head. Soon after, young Perfect snuck up behind him, then pounced on him, laughing with joy. Chuckling, Little

Treasure scooped her up into his arms, and suddenly, Perfect spotted the white hair on her father’s head.

“Daddy, you have a white hair! Don’t move, I’ll pluck it out for you.” She reached out with her little hand, found the white hair, and plucked it out.

Little Treasure stroked his daughter’s cheek and gave her a loving smile. He was happy, blessed even. The years continued to pass.

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# Chapter 1521: The Heavens Inflict Punishment!

A year later, in the dead of night, Little Treasure was in the middle of sculpting the statue that was the ninth sealing mark. Suddenly, the sculpture glimmered with a faint light; it was now half complete.

It was in that very moment that thunder rumbled in the sky outside. It filled the first continent, as if some powerful will were expressing its anger by roaring in rage. The Heavens seemed to transform into an eye which scoured the lands below it, as if it were searching for something. In the end, the eye vanished.

Even as the clouds above seethed, Meng Hao's true self was sitting in his home not too far away from Little Treasure. He slowly looked up into the sky, his eyes cold.

In that moment, Little Treasure couldn't shake the feeling that someone up above in the sky was looking down at him. He looked up, but of course, couldn't see anything.

That night, as the clouds churned, rain began to fall.

It fell, not just on that particular city, but… upon the entire first continent.

Rain was a natural occurance, so people didn't pay much attention to it. The mortals didn't even care, much less the cultivators. But the rain continued to fall for a total of seven days!

Because of the unending downpour, some low-lying areas began to fill up with water. A disaster was unfolding. Soon, the mortal empire began to get nervous, and started taking measures to control the flood of water.

The rain didn’t stop after seven days though. There was a brief respite with a bit of sunny sky, but then thunder boomed, and the rain began to fall again. It seemed to pour down without end. Rain fell for a second week, then a third, then a fourth….

Then a second month, a third, and a fourth….

Normally, a bit of rainfall was nothing anyone would worry about. But when the rain continued to fall for month after month, soaking the lands, completely inundating them, it was a completely different matter.

By now, it was a true disaster, to the point where the cultivators in the first continent attempted to intervene and stop the rain. However, not even the Paragons were capable of doing so.

The best they could do was create canals that led the rainwater to the oceans.

However, that was not a long-term solution. Furthermore, many of the cultivators who attempted to intervene would subsequently make critical errors when practicing cultivation, and then die.

It was almost as if they had offended the will of the Heavens, and were being punished with death.

The mortal world was completely saturated with water. The city Little Treasure lived in was no exception. Certain portions of the city wall were so soaked that they had collapsed, as had many buildings throughout the city. The citizens could do little more than brave the downpours to try to bolster their residences against the rain.

It reached the point where virtually no one was able to prevent the water from flowing into their homes. As the water rose, sickness and disease spread.

Little Treasure’s house was one of the few in which it was relatively dry. He had no idea why that was the case, nor did his daughter.

Only his wife knew. She had taken certain measures to protect her family.

“When is this rain going to stop…?” Little Treasure said with a sigh. Because of what had been happening, business had ground to a halt. Thankfully, they had some food saved up, but if the rain kept on the way it was, that food wouldn’t last for very long.

Little Treasure sat there quietly, sculpting away. With every stroke of his knife, another sliver of wood would fall, just like the rain outside.

More and more cultivators were mobilized. They began to set up spell formations and hew out canals. However, all that did was alleviate a bit of the pressure, not solve the problem.

It was in this fashion that three years passed.

During that time… the rain never stopped. People began to move to other locations on the continent as one village after another was swallowed up by water. Plains vanished, and eventually, even the city Little Treasure lived in sank beneath the waters.

Little Treasure and his family left with the other refugees, heading to higher ground. Along the way, Little Treasure’s parents fell ill.

They were old, and had grown frail, and nearly lost their lives to the illness. However, just when it seemed hopeless, they made a sudden recovery. Little Treasure was delighted, although he couldn’t see how ashen his wife’s face was in that moment.

The rain fell harder. People died on a daily basis. Among all of the refugees who were traveling to higher ground, only Little Treasure and his family kept their spirits up. Furthermore, Little Treasure never stopped sculpting. Every day he would spend time working on his statue.

The exodus took a full year. Eventually, they reached a tall mountain, which gradually came to be packed with more and more refugees. Suddenly, the rain stopped. Everyone began to cry out in joy, only to feel a frigid wind blow across their faces, a wind which seemed to drain them of all warmth. In that instant, their spirits turned as cold as ice.

The rain had stopped. But the snow had just begun.

The temperature on the first continent dropped rapidly.

Snow began to fall, and Little Treasure shivered. He felt the snow landing on his face, and he could hear everyone around him crying out in alarm.

It was a depressing sound, a sound filled with death and despair….

Before, everything had been wet, but now, everything was freezing cold. This sudden change in the weather took the disaster to a new, unprecedented level.

Snow filled the lands, and the temperature plummeted. The ground froze over, and vile coldness reached its claws everywhere. Not even the canals could escape, and were frozen solid.

More cultivators attempted to interfere with the Heavens, but any who did would eventually drop dead with no warning. There was even an 8-Essences Paragon who, in the midst of attempting to stop the disaster, was suddenly blasted by a wind so cold it froze his soul, and he died instantly. After that, no one dared to do anything.

Because of the rain, and then the snow, the First Sect was uprooted and forced to move. According to their understanding, the Heavens had sent this disaster to destroy the first continent.

There was nothing that could be done. There was no resisting it. Even the Sect Leader could do nothing but shake his head bitterly. Furthermore, he had the feeling that the disaster was far from over.

The First Sect evacuated.

On that night, Little Treasure’s wife Yan’er was looking up at the falling snow. She knew that the First Sect was leaving, and finally decided that it was time to take Little Treasure and their daughter away from the first continent. However, just when she was about to unleash some magic, the energy of Heaven and Earth that existed in the first continent vanished.

Just like that, all of the spiritual energy, all of the energy of the Vast Expanse, was suddenly gone, as if it had been cut off. Not a single trace was left behind.

Something shocking resulted because of the disappearance of the energy of Heaven and Earth. In that instant, all of the cultivators on the first continent gaped in shock. It was as if a huge pressure had suddenly descended onto them. All of their years of cultivation, all of their cultivation base power, was gone. No matter how they fought or struggled to keep it… as of this moment, all of them fell back down into the mortal realm. They… were now mortals!

It was as if a huge blanket had been tossed over the lands of the first continent, making it impossible for anyone to leave, and also ensuring that no one dared to enter.

Any cultivator who cross the border into the first continent would instantly become a mortal.

The entire Vast Expanse School was stirred into action. All of the 9-Essences Paragons gathered at the borders of the first continent, which they stared at in shock. All of them were trembling deep in their hearts.

“The wrath of the Heavens!!” the Sect Leader murmured inwardly. He looked up into the Heavens, into the starry sky of Allheaven, and based on the level of his cultivation base, he could tell that, for some reason, the entire starry sky seemed enraged at the first continent.

At the same time, numerous cultivators who were proficient in prophesying and performing auguries began to call upon their skill to investigate. One after another, they were hit with backlashes that left them coughing up blood. And yet, they all came to the same conclusion.

“Punishment from the Heavens!”

“The Heavens are enraged!”

“Something happened which infuriated the Vast Expanse, right here on the first continent!”

“There is a power building up on the first continent, a power that the starry sky of the Vast Expanse views as an enemy!”

“We have to separate ourselves from that power. We have to seal this place off. Otherwise, the power might spread out from the first land mass and affect all of the starry sky!”

Such predictions and explanations only grew more numerous. Eventually, the first continent was completely sealed off.

All of the cultivators there who had lost their cultivation bases could do nothing but shiver as they looked in despair at the falling snow. Yan’er was among them. She smiled bitterly, and yet knew that there was nothing she could do to change the situation.

Little Treasure wasn’t aware of how his wife had changed. However, he could feel death approaching. He knew the world had changed. It was unfamiliar now, and filled with rage and murder.

More people died. Violent chaos filled the lands. In the midst of a disaster like this, the worst side of people was what showed. That was how people survived.

The entire continent began to degenerate. As the snow fell and the temperature dropped, more people turned into corpses. The survivors could do nothing more than search for places to try to survive the cold.

Some survivors formed groups, which huddled together in caves in the mountains as they fought to live.

Food grew scarce, making it even more difficult to keep going. In order to get even a bit of food, many young women did things they would never have done before. People fought and killed others, and stories of cannibalism began to circulate.

Pretty women often had it the worst, so Little Treasure’s wife, having lost her cultivation base, used a knife to disfigure her own face.

On that night, Little Treasure wrapped his arms around his wife and daughter, and they all wept together.

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# Chapter 1522: Oh How Cruel

In that moment, Meng Hao was floating in the air far up above. He was the only person on the first continent who didn’t seem to have been affected by the sudden disappearance of the energy of Heaven and Earth.

He looked down at the ninth incarnation of his clone, a complex expression twisting his face. He looked down at Yan’er with her disfigured face, and Perfect. He looked at the family down below, and after a long moment passed, he sighed.

At the moment, he still felt that the best thing to do was refrain from interfering.

A few months passed. Little Treasure, despite being blind, was very skilled in carpentry, which was a valuable skill in the frigid world in which they lived. Because of that, he was one of the few people among the refugees who was permitted to live inside the cave on the mountain where they resided.

There was little to eat, so Little Treasure slowly began to lose weight. It was the same with his wife. She was no longer beautiful like she had been, and her hair was plastered onto her like a wilted flower.

The truth was that in these deadly and critical times, Yan’er had the option of living a much better life, if she wanted. Despite having lost her cultivation base, her body still retained its regenerative powers, and as such, despite having disfigured herself, she soon recovered, and was beautiful just like before. A beautiful person like that could easily find ways to have a nice life, despite the disastrous state of the world.

Instead, she chose to disfigure herself again, and continued to do so each time she recovered. She would rather stay with Little Treasure and her daughter. They were her family.

It was just like the year when she had first laid eyes on Little Treasure, and realized that he was the reincarnation of the Master she had been searching for. Just as she had then, she murmured, “I’m here to protect you….”

Time passed, and things only got worse. It was so cold that people who stayed outside of the caves for too long would often freeze to death. Eventually, Little Treasure stopped doing any woodworking at all. He focused only on sculpting the ninth sealing mark. That was his focus, his obsession, his purpose in life. He never stopped.

He had already had a relatively low position among the refugees in the cave. Eventually, the most vicious people among the refugees decided that a carpenter wasn’t very useful, and Little Treasure’s situation got worse.

Despite her scarred face, Yan’er had a very attractive body, which made things even more difficult considering that they were surrounded by bored and tormented individuals who were losing touch with their humanity.

Worst of all, their daughter was now sixteen years old.

One night, Perfect went missing.

On that day, Little Treasure trembled. He felt as if his world had collapsed. His wife was also left trembling. The two of them left the cave to search for their daughter.

“Perfect….”

“Perfect, where are you…?” They called out miserably as they searched. Little Treasure couldn’t help but think back to the time he had been alone in the woods, and had wept in fear and anxiety. He was scared now too, but he forced his thoughts under control and reminded himself that he was searching for his daughter.

Eventually, he and Yan’er split up. He kept his hands on a wall, which he followed along, simultaneously calling out for his daughter. Eventually, he could tell that the sun was rising, and yet he hadn’t found a single clue.

No one helped them search. The others in the caves simply looked at them coldly.

“Perfect… My Perfect….” A bitter smile twisted Little Treasure’s lips as he continued to search for his daughter. Yet even his wife couldn’t find her, let alone him, a blind man. He couldn’t see the world, and as of this moment, felt more useless than ever. Completely useless….

Then he heard a miserable cry, a cry filled with despair. It was a cry that seemed to come from the lips of someone who wished to end their own life. It wasn’t Perfect’s voice, but rather, his wife’s.

A tremor ran through Little Treasure. Although his eyes were sightless, they were still bloodshot. He immediately began to walk toward the sound, which wasn’t too far away from where he stood.

He began to run. He fell. He hit his head on rocks. He was soon bleeding all over. But he continued to run. When he reached the voice, he heard a sinister laugh.

“Damned slut. You’re pretty ugly, but I’ve taken a liking to you, hear me? It’s your lucky day! Give me what I want and I’ll give your family a kilo of meat. What do you say?”

Up ahead, Yan’er was holding a dagger up to her own throat. She had been backed up against a cliff face by three burly men. If she had her cultivation base, she could kill them with a mere glance. But now, she was nothing more than a frail mortal woman.

Tears welled up in her eyes as the men inched closer. She bit her lip, and was just on the verge of killing herself, when she saw Little Treasure lurching her way, covered in blood.

She wasn’t the only one who noticed. The three burly men turned and started laughing.

“The blind man’s here! Great! You two grab him. Alright, listen up, bitch. Be a good girl for daddy, otherwise I’ll boil your husband in front of your own eyes and then eat him!”

Yan’er looked over at Little Treasure, and the dagger she held trembled. As two of the men walked forward to grab Little Treasure, the other one grinned viciously and closed in on Yan’er.

It was at this point that Little Treasure suddenly smiled. It was a very vicious-looking smile, considering that his face was spattered in blood. He suddenly rose to his feet, seemingly bursting with strength. It was as if all the potential strength of his life force had erupted. His teeth ripped into the neck of one of the men, who had been completely unprepared to be so viciously attacked by a weak blind person. He screamed, clamping his hands down onto the wound. Off to the side, the second man gasped.

Little Treasure’s ear twitched, and then he pounced onto the screaming man, madly ripping one chunk of flesh after another out of him. The burly man who had been advancing on Yan’er let out a bellow of rage, and was about to leap into the fray, when Yan’er lunged and began to stab her dagger into his back over and over again.

The remaining man instantly fled, his face filled with terror.

The maddened Little Treasure had ripped so many bloody chunks out of the man’s skin that he was now dead. Little Treasure stumbled forward until he found his wife, whom he wrapped up in his arms. Together, they wept.

They never found their daughter. When they returned to the cave, the other refugees looked at them with fear. In a world which seemed to have reached the end of days, people only feared ferocity and repulsiveness.

The more repulsive, the more terrified they would be.

Later, people told them that during the previous night, a group of young men had kidnapped Perfect and taken her away.

Originally, it had been assumed that Perfect would never be seen again, whereas the young men would. However, after day broke, even the young men didn’t return.

As for what exactly had occurred, people had their suspicions, but no one knew for sure.

Of course, nobody in the caves knew that at the bottom of the mountain, in another set of caves, a group of four corpses was already growing cold.

They were four young men, whose faces were plastered with expressions of terror and disbelief.

At first, Meng Hao had decided not to interfere with the life of his clone’s ninth reincarnation, not even when it came to his relationship with Yan’er. But as time went on, and the ninth reincarnation’s life changed, Meng Hao started to waver.

Then, Perfect was kidnapped by the four young men, and Meng Hao simply couldn’t stand idly by. After all, the daughter of the ninth reincarnation was also his own flesh and blood.

He took Perfect away to the ninth continent. Meng Hao was the Ninth Paragon, leader of the Ninth Sect, and with that status, all he had to do was tell the other Paragons of the Ninth Sect that she was his daughter.

That ensured that Perfect would have a respectable status for the rest of her life.

As for the ninth reincarnation, the purpose of his life was to complete the Ninth Hex. And Yan’er was an adult who could make her own decisions. She had her own Karma.

But Perfect was innocent, and didn’t deserve to be subject to such bitterness on the first continent.

Meng Hao looked warmly at Perfect, then turned and left the Ninth Sect. He returned to the first continent, and the caves. There, the day was growing brighter.

From that moment on, things changed for Little Treasure and Yan’er. They had shown their vicious side, especially Little Treasure, who despite being blind, had ripped a man to death with his teeth. When people saw the corpses of the men they had killed, they gasped.

The small group which had previously bullied Little Treasure was left completely shaken and afraid.

In the days to follow, Little Treasure and Yan’er eventually learned of the four corpses in the other cave. Other people confirmed that those were the four young men who had kidnapped Perfect.

They had been dead for some time, and yet there was no trace of Perfect. It was as if she had simply vanished.

Although it was a bitter end to the matter, at least Little Treasure had hope. For some reason, he was convinced that Perfect wasn’t dead, and was in fact more blessed than she had ever been.

Because Little Treasure was blind, he couldn’t see the look on his wife’s face as they stood above the corpses of the four young men. At first she looked confused, and then, somewhat dazed. She wasn’t sure who had rescued Perfect, but was convinced that whoever it was had been a very powerful person. Despite the fact that the current state of Heaven and Earth made it impossible to unleash one’s cultivation base, that person must somehow have been able to leave the first continent.

In that case, it meant that Perfect was most likely safe.

However, the entire matter was still a heavy blow to Little Treasure. He was struck with a deadly illness which rapidly deteriorated his body.

When the end of days struck the world, falling ill was like a sentence of death. Yan’er worked herself to the bone to take care of him. A year later, he actually recovered, but by that time, Yan’er was like skin and bones.

The truth was that without his wife, Little Treasure would definitely have died.

He had never been inclined to words, but after his illness, he spoke even less. Most of the time, he focused on sculpting. He had been working on the sculpture for decades now, to the point where it was as smooth as glass and as dark as night.

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# Chapter 1523: My Destiny!

He continued to sculpt. One knife stroke at a time. The statue was gradually taking shape. Another decade passed. It was now ninety percent complete, and the world outside was colder than ever.

The wind blew, and food grew even more scarce. Even the caves got colder and colder. It was not uncommon for people to fall asleep and never wake up.

Things got worse until the caves were little warmer than the outside. Things began to freeze over, and soon, there was so much ice that the people left had only one choice. Stay and die, or leave the caves and try to find some other place to live.

The first group of people who left never returned. Then a second group left, and a third….

One morning, Little Treasure woke up to a very strange feeling. He reached out to touch his wife and realized that she was very stiff. He began to massage her, eventually holding her in his arms, until she finally awoke. He knew why she was like this: at night, she would lay next to him in such a way that the wind didn't blow on him.

After a moment of silence, Little Treasure said, "Let's leave this place!"

A few days later, the fourth group of people marched out into the wind and snow. The world was completely white as they searched for another location to hunker down in. Three days later, an avalanche suddenly struck, burying the entire group.

Meng Hao hovered in midair up above, looking down. By this point, he had suppressed the impulse to intervene on too many occasions to count. But now, he really felt as if he had no choice. He was just about to do something when his jaw dropped.

Down in the snow, one area began to shake, and then a woman crawled out. It was Yan’er. She was a cultivator, so despite having lost the use of her cultivation base, her body was a lot tougher than a mortal’s.

Despite her weakened state, she was able to drag a person with her out of the snow, which was the unconscious Little Treasure. Within the world of ice and snow, everything was quiet. Yan’er wrapped her arms around Little Treasure to warm him up, then slung him over her shoulder. Looking around blankly for a moment, she then began to trudge onward.

Meng Hao felt deeply and profoundly shaken. Yan’er was very weak by this point, but she used what energy she had to press on with determination.

She walked for three days, during which time Little Treasure lapsed in and out of consciousness. His skin was very hot, although not from fever, but rather, because he was on the verge of freezing to death.

Tears leaked out of Yan’er’s eyes. She called out to him, and held him close to keep him warm. Little Treasure’s aura was growing weaker and weaker.

By this point, Meng Hao could even see his soul was on the verge of emerging. That told him that his clone’s ninth reincarnation was reaching the end of his life. Eyes glittering, he extended his finger toward the clone.

But then he suddenly stopped, and his hand quivered. There was something pushing back against him, making it impossible for him to interfere.

Furthermore, Meng Hao could sense that the eight complete sealing marks had suddenly cracked. Apparently, if he did anything more to interfere, they would be destroyed, and the ninth sealing mark would also completely vanish.

Meng Hao sank into his silence. Although this was his first time attempting to take control of the ninth sealing mark, he had long since anticipated that something like this might happen.

“Is it all a failure…?” he thought, gazing blankly at Little Treasure’s soul as it struggled to emerge and fly away.

However, it was at this point that Yan’er did something that completely shocked Meng Hao. She looked at Little Treasure’s ashen face, and at his chest, which was barely rising and falling. A tender expression appeared in her eyes.

“Master, I love you,” she murmured. “I loved you in my last life, and it’s the same in this one….” She lifted her wrist up to her mouth and bit down hard. Then she lowered it down to Little Treasure’s mouth, allowing the blood to flow into him.

Her own blood was the warmest part of her.

The wound closed up a moment later, so she ripped open another gash. The pain meant nothing to her. As long as the hot, nourishing blood could help Little Treasure to recover, she was willing to do it. Little Treasure’s destiny hadn’t been fulfilled, nor was he dead. So she picked him up and struggled back to the caves where they had lived for so many years. After they arrived, she collapsed into unconsciousness.

A few days later, Little Treasure woke up. He couldn’t see his wife, but he knew that she had saved his life yet again.

In his bitterness, Little Treasure began to weep. Eventually, Yan’er wrapped her arms around him, and the two of them sat there in the coldness of the cave, feeling each other’s’ warmth.

After some time passed, Little Treasure suddenly reached up and began to pat his clothing. When he didn’t find what he was looking for, he began to tremble.

The wooden statue was gone.

It was more than ninety percent complete, and had been with him for years upon years. But now, it was buried somewhere in the snow.

A moment passed. Little Treasure felt as if he lad lost his soul. He sighed bitterly.

When his wife realized what had happened, she didn’t say anything. However, later that night, after Little Treasure had fallen asleep, she rose to her feet, straightened her clothes, and then walked to the mouth of the cave. After turning to look back at Little Treasure for a moment, she gritted her teeth and walked out into the snow.

She knew what her husband’s destiny was.

She followed the same path they had taken when they left. Because of the blood loss, she was now very weak, like a flame that could be snuffed out at any moment by the freezing wind.

After walking for a few days she reached the place where the avalanche had struck. Then she began to dig. She dug and dug until her hands were stiff.

She dug up one corpse after another, corpses belonging to the group they had been traveling with. Her vision was swimming by the time she found the little wooden statue.

She smiled, put the statue into her garment, and then, fighting the urge to pass out, turned and walked back. A day later, she was getting hot, but was in much better spirits.

She began to walk faster, and continued to get hotter. Two days later, she reached the cave, and smiled. She wasn’t even sure how she had returned. She entered, and as soon as she saw Little Treasure, she stumbled and fell into his arms.

“Little Treasure,” she said softly, “I managed… to get your statue back…..

“I should stay to protect you, but I don’t think I can….

“Master, I… I love you.”

Little Treasure trembled as Yan’er’s aura faded away.

**

A few days earlier, Little Treasure had awoken to find his wife gone. He wasn't sure where she had left to, and considering he was blind, it wasn't really possible to track her down.

He could only sit there in the cave, shivering, paying close attention to the sounds he heard. However, all he heard was the whistling of the wind, and not his wife's footsteps.

He waited a whole day. Then another, and another. Soon he began to lose hope. Eventually, he began to chuckle bitterly, and recall that time in the forest when he was a child.

"Why did I have to be born blind!?" He had always deceived himself into believing that it didn't matter that he couldn't see the world. But as of this moment, he hated the fact that he was blind.

"Everyone's gone. Dad and mom are gone. Perfect is gone. And now you're gone…. I'm the only one left…." Tears flowed down his face. His hair had long since turned gray. There he sat, an old man in a cave, crying alone.

He wasn't sure how much time passed. First it was hours, then days. Eventually, he heard footsteps in the wind, very familiar footsteps. He began to tremble as he rose to his feet, and suddenly, she fell into his arms.

She was cold. Freezing cold.

"Little Treasure," she said softly, "I managed… to get your statue back…..

"I should stay to protect you, but I don't think I can….

"Master, I… I love you."

Those three sentences truck Little Treasure like lightning. Trembling, he held her body, unsure of what to say. His throat seemed stuck shut, unable of emitting sound. His heart felt as if it had just been stabbed through.

He suddenly coughed up some blood, which splattered onto his wife's body like crimson flower petals.

He thought back to the young woman he had met in the forest as a boy. He thought about the night they were married. He thought about how he had lifted her veil and touched her face.

He thought about the day Perfect was born, and how everyone had been so happy. He thought about how, when it started to rain, his wife stuck with him the entire time, even when he was sculpting. He thought about how sad he had been when his parents died, and how she had comforted him.

He thought about how she had cared for him when he was sick, and how she blocked the wind with her own body. Finally, he thought about how she had nourished him with her own blood after the avalanche. That taste still seemed to linger in his mouth.

He held her in his arms for a long, long time. Eventually, her aura was gone, and yet Little Treasure didn't want to believe it. More tears flowed.

"It's fine, it's fine," he murmured. "I'm here. You rest for a bit. You're so cold, let me try to warm you up." Little Treasure carried his wife's corpse deep into the cave, where he tried to warm her with his own body.

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# Chapter 1524: Nine Reincarnations Together!

Unfortunately, no matter how he tried to warm her, he couldn't prevent her from becoming colder and colder. His anxiety grew, and his mind began to race. Eventually, he bit at his wrist and tried to pour his blood into her mouth. He smiled.

“It's fine. Everything's going to be fine,” he murmured. Eventually, he passed out.

He was now alone in the cave. Everyone else had left. The only ones who stayed behind were the corpses.

After some time passed, he woke up again. He reached out to touch his wife, and she was as cold as ice. Little Treasure went mad. He ripped open his other wrist with his teeth to pour more blood into her mouth, but her mouth had frozen shut.

“Drink it,” he murmured. “Drink my blood and you'll be fine! It's warm… Don't get any colder, please….” Tears streamed down his face as he babbled on. Eventually, he wrapped his arms around her corpse and wept.

The sound of his wailing echoed out in the cave until the wind rose up and drowned it out.

He was soon overwhelmed with a feeling of complete and utter loneliness. But then, strangely, he wasn't afraid any more.

He stroked his wife's face, feeling how cold it was, and softly said, “You know, back when we got married, I knew something that my dad and mom never knew. You’re not a mortal. You’re an Immortal.”

His eyes had no pupils, and yet, they seemed to radiate warmth.

“How could I not know that the person who saved me in the forest was you?” He continued to stroke her face, wiping away the frost that was forming. From his expression, it was clear that he was thinking about the past.

“Back then,” he murmured, “I knew that you had to be one of those legendary Immortals, and yet, I couldn’t figure out why you would choose me….

“Sometimes when you were looking at me, though, I could sense that the person you saw wasn’t me….

“The person you truly loved wasn’t me, was it? It was your Master.

“I’m blind, unable to see the world that the rest of you live in. But the world that exists in my heart, is a world that none of you can see. And there is something about that world that no one could possibly know….” Little Treasure smiled as he talked to his wife.

“I’ll tell you, okay? I’ve never told anyone before, not even my parents….

“I’ve seen people before, in my world. They lived on different continents, and they lived different lives than mine. One was very happy, one was a businessman, one was a hunter. One of them wielded incredible power. Another was a coroner, and there was even an assassin….

“There was another person, an Immortal, and he had an apprentice named Yan’er. She looked a lot like you.” He smiled faintly.

“Do you know why I’ve been working on this little sculpture? It’s because all of those other people. All of them have been insisting that I have to finish sculpting it. I have to finish making this wooden statue. I have to force the Heavens open their eyes, or to close their eyes.

“Having the power to force them to close their eyes isn’t enough. What those other people want… is the power of absolute control over the eyes of the Heavens. To FORCE them to open their eyes. If I want the Heavens to close their eyes, they will have no choice but to comply!” Little Treasure chuckled. Stroking his wife’s freezing face one more, he turned his head and said, “Am I right?”

Although Little Treasure was blind, when he spoke those words, he was looking directly at a person. A person who was standing right behind him.

It was none other than Meng Hao.

Meng Hao looked down at Little Treasure, his eyes shining with bright, piercing light.

As of this moment, his heart was pounding.

The development he had most feared… had occurred.

Something had occurred which made it so that Meng Hao was incapable of controlling the ninth reincarnation of his clone. Perhaps there was something unique about the ninth reincarnation’s body, or perhaps it was a result of using the incomplete eight sealing marks of the Ninth Hex when he was outside the Vast Expanse.

For whatever reason, Meng Hao had been very reluctant to interfere. Eventually, when he finally gave in and tried to do something, he met with resistance. And now, he found that something completely unexpected had occurred.

The ninth reincarnation was him, but obviously, had developed an independent mind. He was different from the previous reincarnations. He could not be controlled.

Although Little Treasure couldn’t see the world around him, he somehow seemed to be looking directly at Meng Hao as he said, “I could sense a thread connecting me to all eight of those people who appeared in my world. And that thread connected to someone else, too.

“That person is you.

“My guess is that I am your clone. Yan’er’s Master was also your clone. Am I right?”

After a moment of silence, Meng Hao said, “Yes. Both you and the other reincarnations you saw were created for a single purpose. To complete my Ninth Hex.”

Little Treasure nodded thoughtfully. “So that’s how it is. And what about her? Was she really your apprentice?”

Meng Hao looked down at Yan’er. Without her, this ninth reincarnation would have long since died. “She was the apprentice of my clone. In her previous life, I came to owe her a huge debt.”

By this point, Little Treasure looked very, very old. “What about my daughter? Well, I guess she’s your daughter too, right?”

“She’s safe,” Meng Hao replied softly. “In the Ninth Sect on the ninth continent.”

“I guess we’ve reached the end of it all. I… have no last words to say, I suppose.” Little Treasure sat there quietly. After enough time had passed for an incense stick to burn, he reached down and pulled the wooden statue out from his wife’s garment. He rubbed the wood, and sighed.

“I really hate the idea of other people controlling my destiny. Even when that person is my true self. I still hate it.

“You know, I could sever the thread that connects the two of us at any time.” Little Treasure picked up his sculpting knife, and in that moment, he somehow seemed to possess the power to sever Karma.

If he did, then it wouldn’t matter if the Ninth Hex were completed, Meng Hao would not be able to even touch it.

Meng Hao stood there silently.

Little Treasure looked over at his wife, grief playing across his face. After a long moment, his knife moved. He didn’t sever the thread, but instead, began to sculpt the wood.

He cut with incredible speed, as if he were pouring all the power of his life into his work. Gradually, the eighth reincarnation appeared behind him, then the seventh, the sixth, the fifth… all the way to the first.

Nine reincarnations were all contained in one body. Together, they controlled the knife, causing the final sealing mark of the Ninth Hex to gradually take shape. Outside, thunder boomed. It seemed enraged, and its roars filled the world. Wind screamed, and snow battered the lands.

It was in that moment that Little Treasure’s knife stopped moving. The wooden statue was ninety-nine percent complete. It only required one more knife stroke.

“It’s difficult to perfect something I’ve never touched….” he murmured. Instantly, his soul, as well as the images of the other eight reincarnations, suddenly flew out of the cave. As the will of Allheaven roared up above, they shot high into the sky, touching the Heavens, feeling the will of Allheaven.

For the first time ever, the will of Allheaven trembled. For the first time, it felt fear. For the first time… it retreated.

That was Little Treasure’s aura, in the form of the eight incarnations. It was also a Heaven-Sealing aura!

That aura was the result of the nine perfected sealing marks. After combining, they formed the true… Seal the Heavens Hex!

As soon as it appeared, it spread out to fill Heaven and Earth. In the starry sky of Allheaven, the will of Allheaven which existed everywhere was now shaking, and the fear it felt continued to mount. Thunder boomed, and the clouds churned. It appeared as if the will of Allheaven were truly being forced to flee!

It was pushed out of the first continent, pushed out of the lands. The Seal the Heavens Hex might have seemed weak initially, but it actually existed on a completely different level than the other Hexes. In fact… it existed on a higher level than the will of Allheaven. It was a power that caused even that will to be completely shocked!

This was Meng Hao's Ninth Hex, the Seal the Heavens Hex!

"I felt it," Little Treasure said, smiling. He opened his eyes. All of the other reincarnations also smiled. Then, they merged together, transforming into a beam of light that shot back down to the lands below, back into the cave, to Little Treasure's body. Then he lifted his knife to make the final cut on the wooden statue.

Boom!

The knife cut the wood, and the statue was complete!

The nine sealing marks of the Ninth Hex, the Seal the Heavens Hex, were, as of this moment… complete. The entire starry sky of Allheaven began to shake and tremble. A tempest sprang up with Planet Vast Expanse at the center. It spread out, wider and wider, covering everything.

In that moment, the barrier which had surrounded the first continent began to fragment and crack. A moment later, it exploded, sending a huge shockwave out in all directions!

All of the snow on the first continent melted instantly, transforming into a mist that rose up into the air. The mist was then caught by the wind, and vanished!

The lands were restored. The plains appeared again. Mountains stood tall. Cities reappeared. Even the First Sect could be seen again.

At the same time, an indescribable power filled the lands, causing grass to sprout on the plains. The withered trees in the forests suddenly began to grow again, and all of the mountains became lush with vegetation.

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# Chapter 1525: Goodbye, Yan’er

Everything in the past which had died, regardless of whether they had frozen to death or drowned, regardless of whether they were cultivators or mortals, regardless of whether they were animals or plants, were all resurrected!

Even if the corpses had vanished, they returned to life from nothing!

The shattered buildings and collapsed mountains were restored in the blink of an eye. All of the lands… were like they were before!

According to the ancient saying, when one man achieves the Dao, all those beneath him will also ascend. That was exactly what was happening with the Seal the Heavens Hex. From within death, life appeared!

Rumbling sounds filled the first continent as everything was restored. As that happened, Planet Vast Expanse was shaken, as were all of the lands that filled the starry sky of Allheaven. All worlds, all realms, all the dust, everything was vibrating.

All cultivators, all species, all forms of life, everything that existed trembled in shock and astonishment.

Jin Yunshan gasped, and Sha Jiudong was left shivering. Bai Muchen’s eyes went wide with amazement.

The Sect Leader’s jaw dropped, and all of the other 9-Essences cultivators were battered by waves of shock. Each of them felt compelled to drop to their knees and kowtow to the first continent. It was almost as if something were being born there… that surpassed the Vast Expanse itself!

In the first location where Meng Hao had acquired a copper mirror shard, the enormous basilisk lizard with the peak 9-Essences battle prowess was currently sleeping. Suddenly, it trembled and looked up, astonishment shining in its eyes.

In the Ice-Fire Realm, the Icemountain Giant and the Flamephoenix could feel the fluctuations rolling out through the starry sky of Allheaven, and were suddenly struck with fear.

On the flourishing Immortal God Continent was a certain sect that held the most prominent position among all of the other sects. It was a powerful sect, and within that sect was a disciple by the name of Dao-Heaven, a new Chosen within the sect.

He was currently sitting there cross-legged in meditation. For years, he his heart had been filled with various questions and speculations. And yet, he had never been able to prove whether or not they were right. In fact, the ideas in his head seemed almost too fantastic to believe.

However, as of this moment, the entire Immortal God Continent suddenly trembled. Every entity in those lands stopped what they were doing and looked up. Mortals, cultivators, and even the animals, all suddenly seemed to lack the energy to even move. The entire world went completely still and quiet.

Except for Dao-Heaven. He could move. A tremor ran through him as he suddenly sensed a familiar aura. A smile broke out on his face, and tears began to stream down his cheeks. Finally, he threw his head back and laughed uproariously.

Dao-Heaven, of course, was the former Echelon cultivator of the First Mountain and Sea!

A similar scene played out on the Devil Realm Continent. It was the same in the 33 Heavens above the Mountain and Sea Butterfly. Outside the 33 Heavens, sitting there on guard, was the monkey Dao Fang, whose heart suddenly trembled.

In all of the starry sky of Allheaven, things were shaking, and rumbling like thunder could be heard.

At the same time, the will of Allheaven seemed to cause everything to shake with its rage. It roared in fury, as well as… terror!

It was terrified, because it could sense that a new aura had appeared within the starry sky. It was a new power, a Dao… that superseded the Heavenly Dao!

That Dao could be called… the Seal the Heavens Dao!

The Seal the Heavens Dao was boundlessly domineering. It refused to allow anyone to offend it. It refused to allow any other will to change it.

It… could make the Heavens open their eyes, and could make the Heavens close their eyes. If I want the Heavens' eyes closed, they won't dare to refuse!

What I want, the Heavens shall NOT lack! What I don't want, had BETTER not exist in the Heavens!

Back on Planet Vast Expanse, on the first continent, everyone was resurrected. However… Yan'er remained frozen.

After making the final knife cut, Little Treasure flicked his sleeve, and the statue and knife flew over toward Meng Hao.

As of this moment, his eyes were different. Before, they had no pupils, but now they did. He looked around at the world, and saw light. Of course, he didn't care about the world. He slowly looked down at his wife, and smiled. This was the first time he had ever seen her appearance.

She was ugly, her face covered with scars and wounds. But to Little Treasure, she was the most beautiful thing in existence.

He knelt down and wrapped his arms around her, smiling contentedly. Eventually, he closed his eyes, and his aura vanished.

His soul flew out. It, along with the souls of all the other reincarnations, became a beam of light that shot toward the statue in Meng Hao’s hand. The light entered the statue, which then glowed brightly. It was now truly complete.

That wooden statue was Meng Hao’s Ninth Hex. Once he absorbed it, he could… combine the Nine Hexes!

And yet, he felt no joy. It was hard to pinpoint exactly what emotions he felt as he looked down at Little Treasure’s corpse, which was gradually transforming into motes of light that floated through the air and merged into Meng Hao. After all, he had been part of Meng Hao to begin with.

Meng Hao knew that Little Treasure could have refused to cooperate. Meng Hao was the true self, and he was the clone, a part that had essentially been cut out from Meng Hao.

He didn’t like being controlled, didn’t like others being in charge of his destiny. And yet, in the end, he chose to complete the Ninth Hex, and to help Meng Hao.

Of course, Meng Hao knew that he did it, not for him, but… for Yan’er.

This ninth reincarnation of his clone loved Yan’er much more than Meng Hao’s true self did.

Meng Hao stood there in the cave for a long, long time. Eventually, the motes of light that were Little Treasure merged fully into Meng Hao. All traces of the clone’s existence had been wiped out, except for the sculpting knife and the wooden statue.

Meng Hao sighed. Yan’er’s body was also transforming into motes of light that gradually began to fade away. Her soul hovered there, complete and whole, just in front of Meng Hao.

She was looking at her fading corpse, and the empty spot next to it, where another person had been laying moments ago. Some time passed, after which she turned and looked at Meng Hao.

“Should I call you the Ninth Paragon?” she asked softly. “Or Master. Or… Little Treasure.”

Meng Hao extended his right hand, within which were two soul strands. One was the strand which had been fused with Han Bei. The other contained memories of a previous life.

The two soul strands merged together into one, becoming a beautiful stream of light that flowed over to Yan’er.

“That is a part of your soul,” Meng Hao said quietly. “If you absorb it, your soul will be complete, and you’ll remember everything from the past. You will remember… who exactly I am.”

Yan’er looked quietly at the beautiful light, a calm smile slowly growing on her face. “What happened to Perfect?”

“She’s in the Ninth Sect.”

Yan’er nodded and looked off into the distance. Some more time passed before she spoke again.

“This ninth reincarnation was enough for me. What need is there of past memories? Now that I think about it, I’m sure that there are many regrets within those memories.

“All I know is that you are my Master, and that I lived a good life.” She closed her eyes for a moment, and when she opened them again, they were bright and clear. She waved her finger at the soul light, the light which contained the memories of her past life. The light faded away.

With that, she clasped hands and bowed to Meng Hao.

“This life is over. Master, I won’t interfere in your world any more. Thank you for caring for me throughout the years.” She looked at Meng Hao one last time, then turned away. In front of her, a reincarnation vortex appeared. Just as she was about to step in, she stopped in place.

“You promised to tell me the rest of the story of Chu Yuyan. But, I already know what happens.” She smiled and took a deep breath. She had long since come to the conclusion that she herself was the second half of Chu Yuyan’s story. Apparently, she had finally chosen to free herself from all burdens. What she had just said was no lie; she was content. Looking free and at ease, she waved at Meng Hao and then stepped into reincarnation.

To her, spending an eternity with the one she loved wasn’t necessary. She was happy with one lifetime.

Meng Hao stood quietly in the cave, eyes somewhat blank. The Ninth Hex was complete, but he didn’t feel happy at all. In fact, melancholy gripped at his heart.

After some time passed, he shook his head and buried his feelings deep inside. He walked out of the cave and felt the soft breeze on his face. It lifted his hair and rustled his garments, almost as if it were taking away the bad memories with it.

A look of determination appeared on his face, and his eyes began to shine. His cultivation over the past thousand years, and all of the things he had experienced, had forged him into something even harder than before.

His face looked young, but if you looked closely, there was something about him that could only be seen on someone who had existed for many years, and seen many things. There were even some faint wrinkles visible around the corners of his eyes. He did nothing to conceal the changes.

“It’s time to go back….” He thought, looking up at the blue sky and the white clouds. Off in the distance was a red beam of light flying toward him. It was the mastiff, who landed in front of him and looked up quietly.

He stroked the mastiff’s fur, and the light in his eyes grew more incisive than ever.

“After I absorb the Ninth Hex and ensure that it’s complete, I can combine the Nine Hexes and extinguish the bronze lamp. Then I will Transcend. And after that… we can go home!” Although he didn’t speak very loudly, it was as if his voice merged with Heaven and Earth and spread out through the starry sky.

Back in the world of the Mountain and Sea Butterfly, a faint voice could suddenly be heard.

“I’m coming back!”

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# Chapter 1526: A Place to Transcend!

As his voice echoed out, countless people were left shaken. Xu Qing was sitting cross-legged in meditation. Her eyes slowly opened, and tears of joy rolled down her face.

Everyone had been waiting for hundreds of years, and at long last… the Demon Sovereign was going to return!

In the world of the Mountain and Sea Butterfly, Fatty, who was now the lord of an important sect, was in the middle of reprimanding some people, when suddenly a tremor ran through him. He then began to laugh until tears streamed down his face, to the bafflement of everyone else.

Somewhere deep within the world of the Mountain and Sea Butterfly was an area of extreme coldness. There, a middle-aged cultivator was sitting cross-legged, surrounded by freezing air. He looked very sinister, and his eyes were closed, although that was because he was blind.

Suddenly, a tremor ran through him, and his eyelids opened to reveal black pits. As he opened his eyes, a tempest sprang up around him, and a smile broke out on his face.

In another location in the Mountain and Sea Butterfly world was Li Ling’er, who continued to carry out Paragon Sea Dream’s final wishes. After accepting Sea Dream’s legacy, she had founded the Sea Dream Association, which had grown large over the past several hundred years.

As she sat cross-legged in the sect’s secluded meditation facilities, she suddenly shivered, and her eyes opened. She looked up into the sky and smiled. Despite the fact that her hair was white with age, her smile was just as beautiful as always.

In another area was a house on top of a mountain, where Meng Hao’s sister lived with Sun Hai. They had long since married, and had a son and a daughter. Their children were grown, and had borne grandchildren, making them their own little clan.

“Little brother is coming back,” Fang Yu said, her eyes shining with reminiscence.

Everywhere in the Mountain and Sea Butterfly, people were shaken, including one woman by the name of Zhixiang, who was smiling with anticipation.

There was another young man who happened to be seated cross-legged on the back of a huge whale, which was flying through the air. The young man was leaning up against a coffin, and he held an alcohol flagon in his hand, from which he sipped. A smile broke out on his face.

“He’s coming back, Night,” said the young man. He was Ke Jiusi, and the whale was true spirit Night.

There was a sect in the world of the Mountain and Sea Butterfly called the Kunlun Society. Back when the Mountain and Sea Realm was destroyed, the Kunlun Society had been preserved. They even managed to save many of their most important objects from within the sect, which they took with them into the Mountain and Sea Butterfly.

One of those objects… was a coffin, made from Immortal jade and filled with Meng Hao’s divine sense!

The highest mountain in the Kunlun Society didn’t have a sharp, jagged peak. Instead, it had a hollow depression at the top. Within that basin were countless spell formations, as well as piles of Immortal jade. In the middle of it, was that very coffin.

Inside the coffin was a very beautiful woman. Her eyes were closed, as if she were sleeping. It was none other than Chu Yuyan's true self. Because of the power of Meng Hao's divine sense, and the protective measures set up by the Kunlun Society, she had been preserved down to this day.

Even as everyone in the Mountain and Sea Butterfly who was familiar with Meng Hao sensed that he was coming, a white-haired old man was standing next to that coffin, looking at the woman inside. He was Pill Demon, Meng Hao's Master, and also Master to Chu Yuyan.

Pill Demon gazed at Chu Yuyan for a while, then sighed. He was just about to turn and leave, when a tremor ran through him. He looked back at Chu Yuyan, and for some reason, was convinced… that he had seen her eyelashes flutter.

Pill Demon gasped. "This…."

He looked closer, and although Chu Yuyan clearly wasn't awake, he could definitely see… faint signs of life!

As everyone was shaken in the Mountain and Sea Butterfly, back on the first continent of Planet Vast Expanse, Meng Hao strode forth, his eyes gleaming with profound light.

The mastiff tagged along at his side, and moments later, the parrot flew out. As soon as it saw the mastiff, it whooped in delight.

"Woooo! Your fur is so luxuriant! It's making me horny! Dammit, why do I feel like crying…?"

Meng Hao didn't say anything in response. He returned to the ninth continent, and then the half-planet under the surface of the ground. Once he was back in Ninth Paragon City, he entered his secluded meditation facilities.

Unfortunately, he simply couldn't shake the melancholy that had come to grip him after everything with Chu Yuyan. Some time passed, after which he subconsciously lifted his right hand and performed an incantation gesture, sending divine sense spreading out. After confirming that Perfect was doing well, he began to search for the signs of Chu Yuyan in reincarnation.

“She… didn’t reincarnate?” he thought, looking off into the distance. He wasn’t a completely heartless person, and although his heart was fully occupied with his desire for revenge, there were some emotions he couldn’t simply ignore. In his mind, the only person he actually owed anything to in this life… was Chu Yuyan.

For some reason, he thought back to the coffin which existed in the vortex, which the Mountain and Sea Butterfly rested upon. That coffin had a line of text written on it.

“The entire starry sky owes me a debt, and likewise… I owe you a debt. You could awaken from slumber if you wished, but you do not …” 1

Those words, and that concept, formed a resonance with Meng Hao. He sat there quietly in his bitterness for a long time. Eventually, he waved his hand, and the statue of the Ninth Hex appeared. After examining it for a bit, determination appeared in his eyes, and he sent his divine sense out in an attempt to absorb it.

However, in the instant he did that, the will of Allheaven which had just been expelled descended upon him in full madness.

His eyes flickered, and a vicious smile appeared on his face as he continued to absorb the Ninth Hex, and simultaneously resist the will of Allheaven.

A few days later, his eyes were bright red as he reached out and pushed his hand down onto the ground. A wind blasted out, and although nothing in the area was damaged or destroyed, it fought back against the will of Allheaven even more strongly. Eventually, Meng Hao’s eyes were completely bloodshot.

By now, he realized that if he wanted to absorb the Ninth Hex in peace, he simply couldn’t do it here. He might be able to force it to happen, but it was also possible that along the way, he could ruin everything.

Absorbing the Ninth Hex was too important to him, and he couldn’t allow room for mistakes. After some thought, his eyes gleamed brightly.

“I need a place where the will of Allheaven cannot go. Only in a place like that will I be able to smoothly absorb the Ninth Hex…. The only place I know of like that is the necropolis!

“It seems a little trip to the necropolis is in order. If the will of Allheaven wants to get in there, it will have to fight against the necropolis and everything in it. And that includes….” Meng Hao thought about the first time he had visited the necropolis. He had heard a voice speak out from the ninth land mass, which cowed the will of Allheaven with a single word.

As he sat there, he examined the bronze lamp inside of him. Yet again, he could sense the feeling of worship directed at him from the ghosts. The determination in his eyes grew stronger.

“To the necropolis!” he said, rising to his feet. He put the wooden statue away and flickered into motion, heading toward the half-planet’s teleportation portal.

Once he was there, he reached out and activated the portal, causing the power of teleportation to begin to build up.

Before the spell formation could fully activate, several beams of light shot through the air toward it. It was Jin Yunshan, Sha Jiudong, Bai Muchen, the Sect Leader, and the other 9-Essences Paragons. Not a single one was missing.

These people were all as crafty as foxes, and had long since begun paying close attention to Meng Hao. As soon as they detected him activating the teleportation portal, it became obvious that he was planning to go into the necropolis, and thus they appeared.

They looked at Meng Hao with mixed emotions, looking shaken. The Sect Leader took a deep breath, then clasped hands and bowed.

“Fellow Daoist Meng, would you please permit the rest of us to come along with you? We’ve tried on multiple occasions to enter the ninth land mass, but have never succeeded. If you can open it, Fellow Daoist Meng, we hope you’ll give us a chance to go in too.”

He wasn’t lying. During the past several hundred years, they had never been able to get past the eighth land mass. They had tried every method they could think of, and had met with failure every time. They had finally reached the conclusion that the barrier separating them from the ninth land mass was something they would never be able to pass.

Although they weren’t sure why Meng Hao wanted to go into the necropolis, he was obviously completely determined to do so. After all the years they had practiced cultivation, and after everything they had experienced within the necropolis, they had developed certain speculations regarding how Meng Hao was connected to the terrifying aura they had sensed that one time on the first land mass.

The opportunity they had now was not something they would abandon lightly. Not only did the Sect Leader clasp hands and bow, all of the other 9-Essences Paragons, including Sha Jiudong and Bai Wuchen, all did the same.

Bai Wuchen was filled with bitterness because of it, but the prospect of Transcendence prompted her to acquiesce.

Only Jin Yunshan stood there, unabashed and arrogant. He waved his hand, causing a total of thirty bracelets of holding to appear, which represented virtually all of the wealth he had accumulated in recent years. Heart filled with pain, he gritted his teeth and waved his sleeve, sending the bracelets of holding flying toward Meng Hao.

“That’s my entrance fee!” he said coolly, sticking his chin out. He was completely confident in this action, and was even a bit derisive of how, even after all these years, nobody else understood Meng Hao like he did. As long some money was thrown his way, he could accept anything.

Meng Hao’s face twitched as he watched the thirty bracelets of holding flying through the air toward him. He was inclined to reject such an insulting offer, but then he waved his arm, sucking the bracelets of holding into his sleeve and clearing his throat. He had to admit that, despite how much he had grown, and how cold he had become, insults like this were something he was happy to accept.

When the other Paragons saw what was happening, they were instantly enlivened. Without any hesitation, they began to produce various precious holding items, which they handed over. Most people offered ten or so, a few offered several dozen.

Meng Hao looked them over and even scanned them with divine sense. Despite his current level of battle prowess, he was still profoundly shocked by what he saw.

Both in terms of spirit stones and other precious materials, the contents were virtually impossible to count. Meng Hao couldn’t prevent his heart from leaping.

“I’m already at the peak of 9-Essences,” he murmured to himself. “The most powerful under Transcendence. How could these people… be so insulting!?” After looking over the hundreds of precious holding items, he took a deep breath and smiled. Waving his sleeve, he collected them up, then coughed dryly.

“Fellow Daoists,” he said somberly, “considering how well you’ve cared for me in my time in the Vast Expanse School, I am duty-bound to take you into the necropolis with me!

“However, this incursion will involve great danger. If you still want to go in, though, and I’m able to open the way to the ninth land mass, then I’ll do everything I can to take you with me.”

Everyone else smiled and nodded. They weren’t worried at all about any dangers. After all the times they had been in the necropolis, they were used to that.

After a final look around, Meng Hao continued to power up the spell formation with the aid of everyone else present. The speed of activation immediately increased.

After a few breaths of time, the spell formation rumbled, and teleportation light shot up into the air. Even as that happened, everything on Planet Vast Expanse shook. The lands quaked and the seas churned as a powerful will descended.

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# Chapter 1527: Vast Expanse Leads the Defense!

The entire planet was shaking. All natural and magical laws, all space and time, all Daos, were utterly and thoroughly suppressed.

The descending will became the only thing that existed in Planet Vast Expanse. An endless mist spread out, such that if you looked at the planet from a distance, it looked like it was composed of nothing but mist. The entire planet was covered by it.

The will pervaded everything, like a Heavenly Dao. In the blink of an eye, it appeared above the half-planet, where it attacked the teleportation portal, blocking the teleportation power.

Everyone present was shocked, and couldn’t help but feel that an incredible disaster was imminent.

Everyone began to cry out.

“What’s happening?!”

“Who’s attacking the spell formation?!?!”

“Is an army invading the Vast Expanse School? Impossible!”

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with killing intent. Obviously, the will of Allheaven had arrived to try to prevent him from entering the necropolis.

It was in that exact same moment that something like a voice echoed out within the minds of Meng Hao and the other 9-Essences Paragons.

“Any and all teleportations are prohibited!”

The voice was cold, emotionless, and stern. Other than Meng Hao and the Sect Leader, the entire group was left trembling. Sha Jiudong, Jin Yunshan, and Bai Wuchen all coughed up blood. Everyone else seemed to be on the verge of exploding. Their bodies were being shredded to pieces, gravely injured by a single sentence.

Blood oozed out of the corners of the Sect Leader’s mouth, and Meng Hao’s eyes were shot with blood, although that was the extent of his injuries.

“Fellow Daoists, if we don’t fight back, the danger will only escalate!” Meng Hao grinned viciously, waving his hand. The copper mirror appeared, instantly transforming into countless black threads. His suit of armor formed, and the Battle Weapon appeared in his hand, which he used to slash up at the sky.

A boom echoed out as Allheaven’s descending will trembled. At the same time, an immense pressure began to weigh down. The teleportation portal itself even began to crumble apart.

Everyone, regardless of whether they were inclined to or not, had no choice but to unleash the full power of their cultivation bases. An explosion of energy occurred as all of them began to fight back against the will of Allheaven.

Boundless Essence power erupted out. Although they were being crushed by the pressure, these people were all 9-Essences cultivators, with some being at the peak of 9-Essences. Furthermore, all of them had benefited from eight chances to meditate on a Transcendence Dais. All of them had traces of Transcendence aura, which made it possible for them to resist the will which was arrayed against them.

Rumbling echoed out, and the spell formation trembled. The light twisted, and the lands shattered. The half-planet was shaking, and more cracks were spreading out across the surface of the teleportation portal. If it broke, then it would make it very difficult for the Vast Expanse School forces to enter the necropolis. The entrance would be sealed tight.

It was at this point that the descending will manifested in the blurry shape of a hand. The hand filled the sky as it bore down on the spell formation.

Everyone, even Jin Yunshan, looked up at it in despair. It was something they simply couldn’t fight against, the will of the entire starry sky of Allheaven!

The hand blotted out everything else, but as Meng Hao looked up at it, his eyes glittered. He considered taking out the wooden statue. He didn’t want to, and in fact, the last time he had been in secluded meditation trying to absorb the Ninth Hex, and the will of Allheaven interfered, he had only relied on his own power to fight back.

As far as Meng Hao could tell, using the Ninth Hex before it was complete would result in irreversible losses, and would make it less effective in the future!

But now, it seemed he had no choice but to unleash it. However, in the very moment when he was about to do so, the Sect Leader threw his head back and let out an enraged roar.

“This is the Vast Expanse School, a branch of the Vast Expanse Society! This is the legacy of Patriarch Vast Expanse, and no will has the right to interfere with us!” His hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, and he pointed up into the sky. Immediately, the ground off in the distance began to quake, and an ancient aura erupted out.

The instant it appeared, the hand up above trembled to a stop.

Then, a voice could be heard, murmuring and indistinct. And yet, Meng Hao was able to make out the word being spoken.

“Ghost….”

The hand suddenly surged back into motion, moving with even greater speed than before. At the same time, a crevice opened up in the ground, from within which brilliant red light spilled out. Then, a pillar of lava exploded up, at the top of which was, unexpectedly, a turtle shell!

The turtle shell radiated an ancient power which caused everything to shake violently. It was almost as if something profoundly old were underneath it, trying to escape. The turtle shell began to spin, giving rise to a tempest which spread out in all directions. As soon as the hand touched it, the tempest collapsed, and blood oozed out of the corners of the Sect Leader’s mouth. His eyes were bright red; he was aware of the critical danger they were in, so he gritted his teeth and then roared, “Vast Expanse Precious Treasure, come forth!”

As soon as the words left his mouth, the spinning turtle shell stopped in place, and something stretched out from within it…. A skeletal hand!

It was completely gold, and appeared to be the hand of a cultivator!

An intense and pure Immortal qi emanated off of it, something which exceeded the imaginations of everyone. None of them had ever seen anything so pure and powerful, except for Meng Hao, who had made contact with a similar Immortal qi when he visited the column of the Immortal outside the Vast Expanse.

As soon as the skeletal hand appeared, the bronze lamp inside of Meng Hao began to flicker wildly.

Meng Hao immediately thought back to the first time he had visited Planet Vast Expanse, and what he had felt from the bronze lamp. Most others would not be able to discern whose hand that was, unless they were familiar with certain legends or stories. But Meng Hao was sure, based on his feelings, that this skeletal hand… actually belonged to…

Patriarch Vast Expanse!

He had been transformed from the Immortal into the Ghost, and was the first person in the starry sky of Allheaven to Transcend. He was also the first person to destroy one of Allheaven’s fingers.

Clearly, although he had transformed into the Ghost, one of his hands ended up becoming that of the Immortal. He left it behind as a legacy, which became the guardian treasure of the Vast Expanse School.

As soon as the skeletal hand appeared, the descending will of Allheaven began to tremble, and let out an enraged roar. The skeletal hand flew up, growing larger and larger until it was enormous, and actually looked like a hand. Then, it slammed into the descending hand which was the will of Allheaven.

It was like two giants crossing time and space to slam into each other directly above the teleportation portal!

Rumbling sounds echoed out through Planet Vast Expanse, causing crevices to open up throughout the lands. The hand of the will of Allheaven instantly shattered into pieces, and another furious roar echoed out into the world.

Everything trembled, and the half-planet seemed to be on the verge of collapsing. But then, golden light spread out from the skeletal hand, covering everything, protecting everything, ensuring that the will of Allheaven could do nothing against it!

In the moment that the hand formed by the will of Allheaven collapsed, the teleportation portal surged into action. Rumbling echoed out, and a brilliant light shot up into the air. Meng Hao and everyone else vanished.

As they did, cracking sounds emanated out from the teleportation portal. However, because of the golden light covering everything, it did not shatter. Much of it crumbled, but the main form stayed intact.

The will of Allheaven fell silent, and then slowly faded away. At the same time, the golden light gradually receded. The golden hand shrank back down, turning skeletal once again. Then it settled back down underneath the turtle shell, which sank back down into the ground with the lava.

The crevice in the ground slowly closed back up, and everything went back to normal….

When Meng Hao and the others reappeared, they were inside the necropolis.

Blood was oozing out of Meng Hao’s mouth, and the others were in worse shape. Expressions of lingering fear could be seen on their faces. As they thought back to the danger they had been in, their hearts quivered.

If that descending hand had managed to land, not only would the teleportation portal have been destroyed, but the entire group would have been killed in body and mind.

Everyone began to look over at Meng Hao. All of them could tell that the sudden developments which had occurred had something to do with him.

That was especially true of the Sect Leader, who looked at Meng Hao with a deep and profound gaze.

After a moment of silence, Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed deeply to the others.

“What I have promised,” he said, “I will absolutely live up to.” In response, the Sect Leader’s expression softened a bit. Another moment passed, and the others nodded.

“Thank you for your trouble, Fellow Daoist Meng,” the Sect Leader said.

Meng Hao didn’t say anything more. He took a step forward and looked out at the ruins that filled the necropolis. Casting his senses out, he confirmed that this place was almost completely devoid of the will of Allheaven. Although there were faint traces, they were incredibly weak.

Furthermore, the deeper one got into the nine land masses that made up the necropolis, the more faint those traces became. In fact, the ninth land mass seemed to have no trace of the will of Allheaven at all.

“This is definitely the place for me to Transcend,” he thought. He opened his third eye, and the world changed. Far off on the ninth land mass, he could see the huge throne, and the figure sitting upon it. That figure’s eyes opened, and looked directly at Meng Hao.

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# Chapter 1528: The Necropolis Again

“Over the past several hundred years, we’ve come here on numerous occasions,” said the Sect Leader, his brow furrowed. “We know exactly how to avoid the catastrophe which strikes this place, and have the perfect place to weather the storm.

“However, we were never able to get past the eighth land mass. We always end up stuck at the threshold of the ninth.” After all of their visits, they had never been able to come up with a method to get into the ninth land mass.

Bai Wuchen stood a bit off to the side. “The entryway to the ninth land mass is a door,” she said. “Only by opening that door can you enter.”

Meng Hao nodded in response, then began to move forward. By this point, the countless ghosts which inhabited the outer region of the necropolis began to swarm excitedly toward Meng Hao as he flew along.

This was not the first time that the Sect Leader and the others had seen Meng Hao’s power within the necropolis, but they were still shaken. That was especially true of Immortal Bai Wuchen, who couldn’t help but think back to the time she had been defeated by Meng Hao all those hundreds of years ago.

Sighing inwardly, the group unleashed all of their power to follow Meng Hao as he flew along.

Whenever they had come here on their own, they had to act with extreme prudence and caution, even in the outer area.

But with Meng Hao leading them… it was exactly the opposite. With him, the monarch of the ghosts, nothing in the place could harm them at all.

Everywhere they passed, rumbling could be sensed as the surrounding ghosts clustered around Meng Hao, their eyes radiating ardor and worship.

It almost seemed as if Meng Hao could simply tell them to destroy themselves, and they wouldn’t hesitate to comply.

He looked around at the ghosts, his eyes shining with a strange light. Back when he first came here and experienced the strangeness of the ghosts, an idea had begun to form. At that time, though, even though he could control the ghosts, he felt that it was a bit unrealistic.

But now, with the Ninth Hex on the verge of being completed, he starting thinking about that same old idea. This time, he didn’t think that it was unrealistic. In fact…

He was sure that he could do it!

He would take all of the ghosts in the necropolis with him as his subordinates. With them and the Ninth Sect, he would have a huge army that he could use to go back and destroy the 33 Heavens!

Of course, he wasn’t underestimating the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent either. Even if he Transcended, he still would never underestimate his enemies. He had some speculations about the true nature of those two enemies, but even still, he wanted to be completely prepared to face them.

He was also aware that if he successfully absorbed the Ninth Hex and Transcended, then once he left the necropolis, the will of Allheaven would go mad to an unprecedented degree.

His eyes flashed coldly as he proceeded along. The ghosts which surrounded them joined him as he headed toward the first land mass. When they reached the bridge, Meng Hao didn’t hesitate at all. He flew across it without the slightest pause, surrounded by a sea of ghosts.

Behind him, the Sect Leader and the others saw how different things were from their previous trips over the past several hundred years, and they smiled wryly. In all of their past trips after the first one with Meng Hao, they had always been forced to tackle that bridge with extreme caution.

But now, Meng Hao simply barged across it. They couldn’t help but be a bit envious.

“It’s like this place is his home…” Jin Yunshan murmured as he followed along.

Even as Meng Hao was flying across the bridge, and just when he was about to step onto the first land mass, a roar echoed out from down below the bridge. It appeared as if some dark and sinister being from down below was about to leap out and block their path.

Upon closer examination, they saw that it was a huge tiger, fully 300 meters long, and so black in color that it seemed to merge with the void around it. Last time Meng Hao had been here, and had fallen down into the abyss beneath the bridge, he hadn’t seen anything like this tiger.

He looked down, and their gazes met. Then, the tiger shivered. Apparently, it wasn’t frightened of the ghosts, but Meng Hao’s gaze caused its heart to tremble. It shrank back, tail between its legs, and then vanished.

Meng Hao looked away and proceeded onward to step onto the first land mass. In the past, that tiger had been a big headache for the Sect Leader and the others, so to see it flee like that caused them to smile wryly yet again.

It was powerful, with incredible battle prowess, and the way it could merge with the void around it made all of its divine abilities and magical techniques even more effective. It was also particularly brutal in its attacks. When angered, it could unleash a storm of vengeful spirits that were incredibly fierce. Over the past hundreds of years, the Sect Leader and the others had been forced to expend a lot of effort to get past it across the bridge.

But now….

“This place really is like his home….” thought the Sect Leader, sighing inwardly. However, he was also filled with hope that this time, they really might be able to make it to the ninth land mass.

In fact, he had the feeling that if Meng Hao couldn’t get to the ninth land mass, then no one could.

After stepping back onto the first land mass, Meng Hao took a deep breath. This was his third time in the place, the first being on the initial foray into the necropolis, and the second being when he came for the copper mirror shard.

“This is my third time, and perhaps my last. When I leave, I will have Transcended!” A strange light appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes as he flickered into motion. He shot forward at top speed, throwing his head back and letting loose a long cry. As he sped across the first land mass, the ghosts there all trembled and began to fly over.

“It’s the Emperor….”

“The aura of the Emperor… for the third time!”

“The Emperor is summoning us….”

Countless ghosts appeared in all directions. The sky trembled, and the lands shook as they swirled around Meng Hao.

The Sect Leader and the others had seen similar things happen before, and were prepared, but still couldn’t help but be shaken and also slightly envious.

As more and more ghosts gathered around him, he picked up speed. Anyone who could see the ghosts would have seen a vast, seemingly endless sea around him.

Compared to that vast sea, the cultivators were tiny and insignificant. As for Meng Hao, he actually didn’t need to fly on his own power, he simply stood there as the scintillating sea carried him along.

Everything trembled as the sea of ghosts completely disregarded the passageway between the first land mass and the second. It couldn't be stopped at all, and a moment later, Meng Hao was on the second land mass.

The ghosts there were equally shaken, and began to swarm toward him, joining the enormous sea.

The sky darkened, and everything in the world shook violently. Meng Hao waved his sleeve, and the ghosts shot toward the third land mass with indescribable speed.

The Sect Leader and the others gasped. Although they couldn't see the ghosts, they could sense the incredible coldness, and were already all starting to wonder the same thing.

"If things keep going on like this… then how many ghosts will he have accumulated by the time we reach the eighth land mass?" The entire group exchanged shocked glances.

Rumbling sounds could be heard in all Heaven and Earth as the boundless sea of ghosts swept Meng Hao on toward the fourth land mass.

The entrance to the fourth land mass was a huge abyss filled with countless vicious eyes that seemed intent on devouring all life forms that entered.

In addition to the eyes were hulking figures in crude clothing whose bodies were covered in rotting flesh. They looked like giants who had been stitched together with the skins of numerous corpses.

As Meng Hao neared with the sea of ghosts, the giants roared and flew out. The eyes began to shine with red light as they too shot out of the abyss to block the path.

But then they saw Meng Hao and the sea of ghosts. The giants gaped in shock, and the vicious expressions on their faces disappeared, to be replaced by fear. Screaming, they retreated into the abyss at top speed.

As for the eyes, they seemed even more shaken and terrified, and immediately fell back.

In the blink of an eye, the sea of ghosts was sailing over the abyss onto the fourth land mass.

Meng Hao didn’t even look at the abyss. As for the Sect Leader and the others, they smiled wryly as they thought about how much effort it had taken them to get past this obstacle in the past. The same figures which had been so terrifying in the past had fled in fear this time.

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# Chapter 1529: Flying Over the Land Masses!

The fourth land mass was covered in ruins, and looked even more wild and abandoned than the first three land masses. In fact, Meng Hao even spotted corpses!

They were withered after all the years which had passed, and none of them were whole. They were so broken apart that it was impossible to tell which were male or female, or to determine the level of their cultivation base when they were alive. But they were a shocking sight nonetheless. As Meng Hao flew through the air over all of them, he couldn’t help but recall the scene in which the finger of Allheaven destroyed this world.

“The previous three land masses contain nothing but ruins,” explained the Sect Leader, mixed emotions flickering in his eyes. “There are no corpses there. The corpses show up starting in the fourth land mass. What you see here counts for almost nothing. The further in we go, the more corpses we will see. By the time we reach the eighth land mass, we will see them… everywhere, some of them even completely intact.” Considering their previous visits to this place, plus further information gleaned from the ancient records, the Sect Leader had a much deeper understanding of the necropolis now.

“You’ll even see some magical items, some of which are excellently preserved. However, you mustn’t allow yourself to get greedy, Fellow Daoist Meng. You can’t touch any of the things you see…”

At this point, Jin Yunshan broke in: “The first time we saw such treasures, there was one individual who greedily attempted to lay hands on them. That gave rise to a powerful backlash, and a terrifying force of expulsion from the entire necropolis itself. The offending person was transformed into a pool of blood in front of our very eyes.” Although the fear in his eyes was clear, it was also obvious that he felt it was a pity that they couldn’t take any of the treasures away with them.

Meng Hao nodded. He sent his divine sense out, and could feel all of the countless ghosts in the fourth land mass. This was his first time here, and almost as soon as his divine sense began to spread out, the corpses littering the ground began to tremble, and then ghosts flew out from inside of them, as well as from within the various ruins that dotted the landscape. Soon, the entire fourth land mass was teeming with activity.

The scene playing out in front of them caused the Sect Leader and the others too look on with wide eyes. Although this wasn’t anything unexpected, the intense coldness they were experiencing increased by several fold.

Rumbling sounds filled Heaven and Earth as countless ghosts sensed Meng Hao’s presence on the fourth land mass, and woke up, eyes shining with madness.

“The aura of the Emperor….”

“It’s the Emperor….”

All of the ghosts on the fourth land mass took to the air and sped toward Meng Hao. As the intense, shocking coldness spread out, Meng Hao’s eyes shone, and he flicked his sleeve. Without pausing for a moment, he flew into motion.

As he proceeded along, more ghosts from the fourth land mass streamed toward him. As soon as they caught sight of him from a distance, they would bow in worship. The sea of ghosts around him continued to grow larger and larger as he swept across the land mass. Eventually, he reached a cliff face that led to the fifth land mass.

A huge statue was visible there, fully 30,000 meters tall. It was a stunning sight, like an enormous mountain that blocked the way into the fifth land mass.

“There is no fighting against this mountain,” the Sect Leader said. “We spent a lot of time trying to figure out how to get into the fifth land mass. Eventually, we found that you have to wait approximately half a year.

“Around that time, the mountain will gradually shrink until it’s only 300 meters tall. Then, at its smallest state, it can be passed with relative safety.

“If you try to barge past the mountain now, it will become enraged. Even considering the level of our cultivation bases, it can still pose a danger to us. After all, this statue was built back when these lands were alive and thriving, making it boundlessly powerful…. Fellow Daoist Meng, I suggest we just wait here for a bit.” Even though the Sect Leader had seen this mountain before, every time he looked at its majestic height, he was left shaken.

“Half a year?” Meng Hao said. “I can’t wait that long,” Before the Sect Leader could say anything else, Meng Hao’s eyes flashed, and he pointed at the huge mountain.

“Move this mountain for me!” he said coolly, bolstering his words with divine sense. The ghosts in the vast sea around him immediately began to howl and surge with energy. The aura which began to spread out left the Sect Leader and the others with tingling scalps.

Vast quantities of ghosts surged forward toward the enormous mountain. Rumbling echoed out as it began to shake, and even rock back and forth.

The Sect Leader and the others gasped as they noticed that as the mountain shook back and forth, it unexpectedly… began to rise slowly into the air.

The lands quaked as the mountain was ripped away from them.

Meng Hao could see the ghosts themselves, surrounding the mountain. Howling, they unleashed shocking power to do exactly as Meng Hao had asked, to move the mountain!

Rumbling sounds filled the air as the enormous mountain continued to rise. Soon, to the shock of the Sect Leader and the others, it had been lifted up thirty meters above the surface of the ground!

At the same time, a howl echoed out from the peak of the mountain. Countless rocks and rubble tumbled down as the mountain opened its enormous eyes. A nose appeared, and then a mouth. Shockingly, the entire face became visible.

It was an ancient face whose eyes radiated fury.

“Who… disturbs my slumb– huh?” The voice contained incredible pressure and dignity, and even the power of natural law, as if it could alter Heaven and Earth. Before it could finish speaking, though, it suddenly fell silent.

The face stared at the countless ghosts, and the boundless hostility they radiated, which was like an explosive will that shouted a single sentence!

“Shut up!”

Lands, mountains, sky, everything was trembling.

“Dammit, where did all these ghosts come from!?” the face blurted. Then its mouth snapped shut.

It looked at Meng Hao, its expression flickering with fear. After a moment, it closed its eyes and sank back down into the surface of the mountain, doing nothing to prevent the ghosts from moving the mountain.

The Sect Leader’s eyes were wide. The other 9-Essences Paragons who stood around him exchanged shocked glances. When they had come here by themselves, everything along the way required extreme caution and hard work. However, Meng Hao could disregard everything in his path. At the most… he simply had to speak a few words to resolve any situation he faced.

Jin Yunshan’s face twitched, and then he looked contemptuously over at the mountain. He couldn’t forget what had occurred the first time they had reached this point and tried to force their way past the mountain. To their shock, it had contained power like Heavenly might.

Jin Yunshan’s contempt grew as… the mountain, apparently fearful for its safety, shrank down, making it easier for the ghosts to move it. Jin Yunshan was left completely speechless.

Sha Jiudong took a deep breath, and Bai Wuchen completely abandoned any sort of unyielding attitude from years past.

Soon, the mountain was completely moved out of the way and then placed down off to the side. The ghosts swept about, completely clearing the path to the fifth land mass.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he flew forward. A moment later, he was on the fifth land mass. After taking a deep breath, he continued onward.

From the time they had entered the necropolis until this moment, not even ten days had passed.

They sped along through the fifth land mass for a few more days. This place was even bleaker than the other land masses. Meng Hao eyed the corpses down below as he flew along toward the end of the fifth land mass, where a huge wave of water existed, completely separating the two land masses.

This time, the Sect Leader didn’t say anything. Considering that Meng Hao had his ghosts, he decided that the best thing for him to do was simply followed Meng Hao’s lead.

He was right. Meng Hao waved his sleeve, and the sea of ghosts shot forward. Now that the ghosts from the fifth land mass had joined in, the sea was even more majestic than before. It slammed into the huge wave, which was powerless to resist. It shattered, and Meng Hao led the ghosts flying over into the next land mass.

Within ten days, they had passed from the sixth land mass into the seventh, and after that, the eighth!

Meng Hao’s sea of ghosts continued to grow larger. By the time they reached the eighth land mass, it was like a massive vortex swirling around him. It was so powerful that the Sect Leader and the others could only look on with wide eyes.

There were so many ghosts swirling around in the vortex, that they formed together… into something that looked like an enormous, illusory ghost head, which everyone could see!

If that were all there were to it, it might not be a big deal. However, even more shocking was that the countless corpses on the eighth land mass rose to their feet, and their previously empty eyes seemed to burn with flame.

All of them sped onward toward the border of the eighth land mass.

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# Chapter 1530: The Ninth Land Mass!

The barrier between the eighth and ninth land masses was an enormous door, surrounded by a wall that seemed to stretch off into infinity.

The Sect Leader and the others had never made it past this point. They had tried skirting the door by going to the left or right, but not even by traveling to the very border of the eighth land mass were they able to find a point where they could get through.

The only way to proceed was to do so through this door. That was the only way to get to the ninth land mass.

No matter what ideas they came up with to push open the door, no matter how much power they drew upon, it did no good.

The Sect Leader was now looking up at it, explaining everything he knew about it to Meng Hao, including all of the ways they had failed to open it.

Meng Hao stood there, surrounded by a boundless sea of ghosts, who maintained complete silence, waiting there with bowed heads as he thought about the situation. A single word from him, and they would spring into action and become the fiercest of spirits, completely oblivious to their own safety.

Seeing Meng Hao lost in thought, Jin Yunshan and the others didn’t dare to disturb him. They had learned hundreds of years ago that in the necropolis, Meng Hao was both the monarch and the Emperor.

After a moment, Meng Hao burst into action. In the blink of an eye, he was directly in front of the door. In terms of size, he was like nothing compared to it, and yet, the power radiating out of him caused everything shake, and sent the entire surroundings into chaos.

He took a deep breath as he reached out and pushed on the door.

Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering power erupted out. It quickly reached the peak of the 9-Essences level, which exceeded the power of the Second Paragon and the others like him.

However, it didn’t stop there. It continued to rise with explosive force, surpassing Jin Yunshan, Sha Jiudong, and Bai Wuchen, and causing their eyes to widen.

Although they were completely aware of how terrifying Meng Hao was, it was only now that they could sense the true astonishing level of his cultivation base.

Things weren’t over yet. Increasingly boundless cultivation base power exploded out. As Meng Hao’s power continued to climb, he eventually exceeded even the level of the Sect Leader. It reached the point where he was above any and all 9-Essences cultivators. And yet, the door didn’t so much as budge.

Meng Hao frowned at the lack of reaction. Throwing all of the power he could manage at it was as good as throwing a stone ox into the ocean. Eyes flashing, he waved his right hand, and the copper mirror appeared. Black threads spread out, covering his entire body in the form of a suit of armor.

With the black armor, his energy rose even higher, and a tempest sprang up around him. The Sect Leader and the other 9-Essences experts all gasped and began to back away.

They didn’t come to a stop until they were several hundred meters away, where they looked at Meng Hao with fear and shock.

Meng Hao was so terrifyingly powerful that they weren’t sure they could fight him even if they all joined forces.

With the suit of armor, his cultivation base was at its very pinnacle. He reached out and once again shoved against the door. As far as the Sect Leader could remember, they had never seen the door move at all during the past several hundred years. However, as of this moment, it shuddered.

Although it only lasted for a moment, it left the Sect Leader’s mind spinning, and he began to pant in anticipation. It wasn’t that he lacked willpower. Rather, after stepping into the 9-Essences level, all of his dreams had become wrapped up with the hope that lay in this necropolis.

Blue veins bulged on Meng Hao’s face as he unleashed incredible power through his hand. The result was that the door vibrated slightly, and yet, didn’t move.

A vicious expression appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes as he raised his left hand to also push against the door.

Energy blasted out in all directions, and a booming sound like that of a bell echoed out through the eighth land mass, then to the seventh, the sixth… and all the way to the first land mass.

The door vibrated again, and a cloud of dust rose up, but the door still didn’t open. Meng Hao frowned.

He was at the peak level of power, and yet even then, couldn’t open the door. That seemed to indicate that only someone who had Transcended could open it.

“But someone who had Transcended wouldn’t need the altar on the ninth land mass. Therefore, the method to open the door can’t relate to Transcendence. There must be some other way.” After some thought, Meng Hao sent his divine sense out to fill the eighth land mass. It took some time, but he managed to lock down on some of the scant will of Allheaven that existed in the area.

Although it was only a scrap, it was enough that it could cause problems if he tried to absorb the Ninth Hex.

“Starting from the first land mass, the will of Allheaven grows weaker and weaker. Here on the eighth, there’s only a tiny bit. Therefore, the ninth… is likely to have none of the will of Allheaven at all!

“That is the only place suitable to absorb the Ninth Hex, all the while avoiding interference from Allheaven, and potentially Transcend!” Meng Hao’s eyes shone with determination, and he took a deep breath. Then, he backed up a few paces and reached out to the ghosts with his will!

“Break open this door!”

The instant Meng Hao’s will transmitted those orders, the masses of ghosts raised their heads. Eyes glowing, they surged into motion, howling and roaring as they battered against the huge door!

BOOOOOOOOOMMM!

Waves of ghosts smashed into it, causing it to shake. Some of the ghosts who were especially gigantic and fierce slammed head-first into the door.

Rumbling echoed out, causing all Heaven and Earth to shake violently in the necropolis as the ghosts battered the door.

It was a shocking scene. Endless streams of ghosts unleashed incredible power, causing the door to rumble and vibrate even more intensely than when Meng Hao had pushed against it.

The combined power of the ghosts of all eight of the land masses was something that even Meng Hao with his battle prowess would be fearful of. Now, it was causing the door to tremble, making it seem like opening it wasn’t an impossibility after all.

The Sect Leader and the others were completely shaken. Beyond this door was the hope they sought. It had blocked their way for hundreds of years, but now seemed like the most likely moment in which it could be opened!

Jin Yunshan was the first to take action. Roaring, he unleashed his cultivation base and his Essence power, reaching out with both hands to push against the door.

The Sect Leader followed a moment later, unleashing divine abilities and Essence power to create a huge hand that shoved against the door.

Next was Sha Jiudong, who transformed into a sandstorm that swept out with incredible power. Then was Immortal Bai Wuchen, who summoned powerful mists. All of the other 9-Essences Paragons unleashed their cultivation base power. They kept nothing hidden, utilizing everything at their disposal to slam against the door.

Under their combined assault, the door leading to the ninth land mass, which had blocked their path for so long, began to rumble loudly, and shake visibly. It seemed as if the door might open at any moment.

Meng Hao's eyes were bright red as he transformed into a huge roc which, in the blink of an eye, shot forward to slam into the door.

Mountains shook and the lands quaked. The door trembled, as if it might open by a sliver.

However, that tiny sliver was like the difference between Heaven and Earth. Despite the combined assault of the entire group of cultivators, plus the endless army of ghosts, the door still didn't open. The Sect Leader and the others were beginning to despair.

“We can't open the door in this way…?”

“How do we do it? Could it really be true that only a Transcendent cultivator can open it?!”

“Impossible. Why would a Transcendent cultivator ever try to get to the ninth altar!?” In their despair, everyone was pushing as hard as they could, even coughing up blood.

The ghosts emitted soundless screams. Everyone was pushing out with all the power they could muster. Meng Hao began to pant. Finally, he sent out his will via divine sense, filling the entire eighth land mass.

It was like a bolt of lightning that landed upon the various corpses on the land mass, within whose eyes burned white, burning light. They began to run, faster and faster, until soon they became visible off in the distance.

More and more corpses appeared, running toward the door itself, which they then began to push against. They seemed endless, and as they pushed against the door, at long last, it opened up by a sliver.

That completely enlivened the Sect Leader and the others. Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed with anticipation, and he pushed forward even harder. Finally, the door opened!

Meng Hao in azure roc-form shot forward through the opening, followed closely by the Sect Leader and the others. It was with complete and utter excitement that they flew through the air at top speed.

Finally, they were able to enter… the ninth land mass!

This was the final land mass in the necropolis, and also the location of that huge throne.

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# Chapter 1531: Charge!

Meng Hao floated above the ninth land mass, backed by the Sect Leader and the others, as well as the vast sea of ghosts.

“The ninth land mass!” The Sect Leader threw his head back and laughed uproariously. The excitement on his face was clear. He and the others had been waiting a long time for this day. This was where lay their hope to Transcend.

The Sect Leader wasn’t the only one with such feelings. Jin Yunshan, Sha Jiudong, Bai Wuchen, and all of the other 9-Essences Paragons were equally excited.

The Sect Leader took a deep breath, then turned to Meng Hao, clasped hands and bowed deeply.

“Fellow Daoist Meng, this is a kindness I will never, ever forget. If you the day comes in which you need my assistance in some matter, simply say the word!”

After the Sect Leader, Jin Yunshan, Sha Jiudong and Bai Wuchen all clasped hands and bowed as well.

“I will never forget this kindness for the rest of my life!”

“Thank you, Ninth Paragon!”

Their attitudes were sincere. All of the ill feelings from the past had long since dissipated, and their thankfulness toward Meng Hao was deep and genuine.

Compared to the chance to stride toward Transcendence, past grudges were completely insignificant. All cultivators sought to reach Transcendence in the end. These three all stood at the peak of 9-Essences, and therefore, the hope to Transcend was the greatest yearning that existed within their hearts.

They had no way to know if they would succeed or not, but as long as there was even a bit of hope, they would try.

Meng Hao could see their excitement and sincerity. Their hearts lacked any desire to fight, and contained no schemes or plots. Now that they had reached the ninth land mass, the hope of Transcendence left them excited and profoundly thankful.

Smiling, he clasped hands and bowed deeply in return.

“We have all come here for Transcendence,” he said. “Whether or not we succeed will depend on the will of Heaven, on our own good fortune, and on our own preparations. I sincerely hope that all of you succeed in Transcending, Fellow Daoists, and I hope that you all may walk a great Dao!”

Jin Yunshan took a deep breath, flicked his sleeve, and then spoke in a voice that echoed like thunder. “Forget the will of Heaven and good fortune! Our success will be determined by our own preparations! Fellow Daoist Meng, if I Transcend, then I will personally help you take care of your grudge with the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent! In fact, even if I don’t Transcend, I’ll still help!”

The Sect Leader laughed heartily, then echoed Jin Yunshan’s words.

“Count me in too!”

“Fellow Daoist Meng,” said Sha Jiudong, “considering we’ve been friends for hundreds of years, then… I will help too!”

“The moment we stepped onto this land mass, our conflicts from the past vanished like smoke,” said Bai Wuchen, her voice soft. “Fellow Daoist

Meng, I would like to help you, sir. Thank you for giving me a chance to return home.”

All of the other 9-Essences Paragons laughed and made similar statements and promises.

Meng Hao was moved. After a moment of silence, he once again clasped hands and bowed deeply to them.

“Fellow Daoist Meng,” said the Sect Leader, “let us all head to the Transcendence Dais together!” Laughing, he flew up into the air, followed by the rest of the Paragons.

However, Meng Hao shook his head.

“Why don’t you go on ahead of me, Fellow Daoists. Before visiting the Transcendence Dais, I need to go pay my respects to a certain individual.” Meng Hao did nothing to conceal his true aim, and after he spoke, the others looked back thoughtfully for a moment. Although Meng Hao had never fully explained how he could control the sea of ghosts, they had long since come to certain conclusions of their own. Therefore, they all understood completely.

They did nothing to convince him otherwise. After saying their goodbyes, the group shot off toward the center of the ninth land mass… and the ninth Transcendence Dais.

Meng Hao watched them leave, then took a deep breath. His path to Transcendence was different than theirs. Although Allheaven would surely attempt to stop them also, the lengths he would go to regarding Meng Hao’s Transcendence would be like the difference between a puddle and an ocean.

Therefore, Meng Hao needed to be very careful. Although he couldn’t sense any of the will of Allheaven on this ninth land mass, he wanted to be prepared for all possibilities. As such, he decided that the best thing would be to go pay respects to the person who had, with a single word, prevented the will of Allheaven from interfering with him on the first land mass.

“Patriarch Vast Expanse….” he murmured. With that, he burst into motion, heading toward the far end of the ninth land mass, where the huge throne was located.

With every day that passed, the throne grew clearer and larger, and within Meng Hao’s heart, the waves of excitement which battered him also grew larger. At a certain point, the sea of ghosts hadn’t dared to proceed any further, and were now waiting some distance behind him, prostrated toward the person on the throne.

Clearly, that person far exceeded Meng Hao, as… the true Emperor of this place.

The bronze lamp inside of Meng Hao was shining with unprecedented brightness, making him look almost as if he were made from light.

As he got closer to the throne, it became clear that it had been crafted from enormous slabs of green marble. It almost looked like a mountain, rising from the very end of the ninth land mass. As for the figure seated upon it, he looked like a giant statue.

Although he wasn’t a flesh-and-blood person, he was incredibly lifelike. Even from a distance, it was possible to see the expression on his face. It was one of grief and loss.

Deep within his eyes was a gleam of reminiscence. It was as if he were looking out at all the lands of the necropolis, and thinking the only thing he had left: his memories of the past.

He seemed lonely, a feeling which somehow seeped into Meng Hao as he neared.

He stopped about 3,000 meters in front of the statue, where he looked up at it, studying it for a while before finally clasping hands and bowing deeply.

The copper mirror flew out of its own volition, and the parrot appeared within it. It was uncharacteristically quiet as it looked at the statue. It appeared to be thinking about past times as it flew over and circled around the statue a few times. The grief in its eyes was clear.

Meng Hao looked on. The bronze lamp inside of him was shining more brightly than ever, making Meng Hao look like a dazzling sun. Suddenly, the statue’s gaze seemed to shift. Instead of looking off into the distance, it was as if he were now looking at Meng Hao, the grief in his eyes replaced by kindness.

Perhaps that was just Meng Hao’s imagination. Regardless, he once again bowed, then began to speak in a soft voice.

“Junior offers greetings, Patriarch Vast Expanse!

“I will never forget the kindness shown by your bronze lamp, which saved my life.

“Thank you also for the copper mirror, which has accompanied me for all my days.

“I’ve come here to attempt to break through to Transcendence. Patriarch, I would like to request that you act as Dharma Protector….”

After a long moment, he looked back up at the statue. After gazing deeply at it for a moment, his eyes filled with determination. As of that moment, there wasn’t the slightest bit of hesitation within his heart. He would not go to the Transcendence Dais.

That altar might be useful to the Sect Leader and the others, but Meng Hao had long since picked a different way to go about things. He didn’t need the Transcendence Dais, he needed this ninth land mass, a place where Allheaven couldn’t interfere, or at least, would have a very difficult time doing so.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and sat down cross-legged. Unexpectedly, he had chosen this very spot, in front of the statue and the throne, to attempt to reach that most paramount of Realms, Transcendence!

Transcendence was also known as the Daosource. It was something that countless powerful experts yearned for in their dreams. However, the number of people who had succeeded was minute. From ancient times until present, only three people had ever truly succeeded within the starry sky of Allheaven.

Meng Hao's eyes glittered as he sat there quietly, his legs crossed. After a moment, he extended his right hand, and a wooden sculpture appeared, which was none other than the Ninth Hex!

He held the statue out in front of him and opened his Dao eye, sending out powerful divine sense. The divine sense wrapped around the statue, which floated up into the air in front of Meng Hao and then began to dissolve!

Meng Hao poured all of himself into the wooden statue, cutting off all connections to the outside world. He sealed off his senses as he focused utterly and thoroughly on the statue.

Gradually, a shocking aura began to rise up. The ninth land mass began to tremble, and at the same time, the starry sky of Allheaven outside of the necropolis filled with ripples as an enraged roar echoed out.

The ripples then began to converge in the void just outside the necropolis. If anyone were standing outside to observe, they would be able to see the outline of a huge person standing there.

All of the lands were shaking as a will stretched out that could shake the world.

In that same moment, the Sect Leader and the others were seated cross-legged on the ninth land mass' altar, attempting to break through and Transcend.

In all their past forays into the necropolis, they had come to the realization that seeking enlightenment alone was far inferior to acting together.

Therefore, the best thing to do now was join forces to seek enlightenment. Their minds were linked, making them more powerful, and increasing their gains as they sought enlightenment. The result was far superior to acting alone.

In the same moment that Meng Hao began to work on the Ninth Hex, the Sect Leader and the others converged their power and divine sense, causing an invisible column of qi to rise up into the air.

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# Chapter 1532: All Ye Living Beings Art My Sons

It was actually a blessing for them to be able to make their attempt at Transcendence along with Meng Hao. Normally, the first difficult step would be to deal with the will of Allheaven. However, that will was now completely ignoring the Sect Leader and the others, and was targeting… Meng Hao, and Meng Hao alone!

It could not simply allow Meng Hao to Transcend!

Rumbling echoed out as the will of the starry sky of Allheaven converged outside of the necropolis, and then prepared to enter it!

The will of Allheaven would easily be able to enter any other location. But the necropolis was not like any other location; it was a very difficult place to enter. It could expel other Transcendent cultivators, and could unleash that same force upon the will of Allheaven.

There was a boundless hatred within the necropolis, and the will of Allheaven was the source and object of that hatred.

Under any other circumstances, the will of Allheaven would never choose to try to enter the necropolis. However, as of this moment, it was holding nothing back in its effort to do so. The entire necropolis was shaking, and cracking sounds emanated out in all directions.

And yet, most of the will of Allheaven was still prevented from entering. Despite its relentless bombardment, only a small portion actually manifested inside.

That power instantly became a flood that surged across the first eight land masses, transforming into an enormous hand that bore down on the ninth.

However, the huge door that Meng Hao had recently moved was now back in place, and it prevented the hand from entering the ninth land mass. The hand slammed into the door, and a deafening boom rang out. The door was shaken, but refused to open, leaving the will of Allheaven trapped outside.

Meng Hao was completely focused on melting the wooden statue. By now, about half of it was gone, having transformed into tiny drops of black fluid, each of which contained sealing marks.

Eventually, when the entire statue was dissolved, and the black drops of fluid were absorbed into Meng Hao, he would be able to combine them into a sealing mark within his soul. And that would be… the Ninth Hex!

Currently, he was still working on the first step of that process.

By now, rumbling sounds had filled the necropolis as the will of Allheaven repeatedly failed to batter its way inside. Finally, a roar of rage echoed out through the starry sky of Allheaven, causing asteroids in numerous locations to begin to tremble and shake. Then, they were instantly teleported away.

Billions upon billions of asteroids then began to crash into each other, merge together and then shrink down. Within the space of a few breaths of time, all of the asteroids which dotted the starry sky of Allheaven vanished from their original positions and began to merge together. Under the control of the will of Allheaven, they began to form nine enormous spikes!

Each of the nine spikes was fully 3,000,000 meters long, and completely astonishing in appearance as they hovered within the void outside the necropolis. Then the will of Allheaven split apart and fused into the nine spikes.

A moment later, intense energy erupted off of the spikes, and rumbling sounds could be heard as they shot toward the necropolis.

The necropolis shuddered, incapable of resisting. Cracking sounds echoed out as the first spike pierced through the necropolis' defenses, destroying the sky as it shot toward the first land mass, a blur of light.

As it descended, the expulsion power targeting the will of Allheaven grew even stronger. The spike fought back fiercely, causing flames to burst out all over it. Soon, it began to crumble and shrink down, until it was only 300,000 meters long, and no longer sharp. In the end, it was simply a gigantic asteroid hurtling down toward the first land mass.

When it made contact with the ground, everything shook, and massive crevices spread out.

Next came the second spike, the third, and the fourth, which pierced through the defenses to descend toward the second, third, and fourth land masses respectively.

They also burst into flames, shrinking down rapidly as they sailed past the first land mass. Of course, the deeper they got into the necropolis, the stronger the resistance they faced.

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the three asteroids closed in on their targets. The asteroid that landed on the second land mass was only 150,000 meters wide. The one that landed on the third land mass was only 60,000 meters wide. And as for the fourth, it was only 30,000 meters wide.

What a significant loss in power!

However, things weren't over. The fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth spikes tore through the sky, destroying the necropolis' defenses as they hurdled toward the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth land masses.

The sky of the necropolis was completely obliterated, and yet the will of Allheaven still had incredible difficulty entering the necropolis. The lands quaked as the spikes burned, getting smaller and smaller the further they got into the necropolis.

The asteroid that landed on the fifth land mass was less than 30,000 meters wide. The sixth asteroid was 15,000 meters wide. By the time the eighth asteroid hit, it was only 3,000 meters wide.

And then there was the ninth spike. By the time it reached the ninth land mass, the flames had reduced it to nothing more than ash, and it couldn’t enter.

Moments ago….

The sculpture in front of Meng Hao was about seventy percent dissolved, and he was surrounded by scintillating drops of black fluid.

Only a short bit of time remained before it would be completely dissolved.

Meng Hao was trembling. He couldn’t sense what was happening on the outside, but could well guess that the will of Allheaven was going to any and all lengths to try to stop him. Therefore, he focused all of his divine sense on dissolving the statue.

“Faster. Must go faster!” Blue veins popped out on his face as he fought to take advantage of every second of time available to him.

It was at this point that he heard a massive boom coming from the first land mass. As the first asteroid smashed into the ground, a figure appeared from within the rubble.

He was humanoid, but had no facial features. He was almost just an outline. He looked up at the ninth land mass, then took a single step forward, causing him to blur into motion.

Only moments later, the second and third asteroids exploded, and even as the ash drifted out, figures appeared from within them as well.

The same thing happened on the fifth through eighth land masses.

All of the figures which appeared began to walk toward the ninth land mass, although the one which had come from within the first 300,000 meter asteroid was the fastest.

His first step took him onto the second land mass, where he merged together with the figure which had stepped out of the second asteroid. As soon as that happened, he changed, becoming less blurry and indistinguishable. Then, he took a second step.

The second step placed him on the third land mass, where he merged with the third figure. Now his facial features could be seen, and he looked like a young man.

He didn’t stop there; each step he took brought him to another of the land masses. On the fourth, fifth, and all the way to the eighth land mass, he absorbed the other figures, until he was standing there on the eighth land mass, looking up at the enormous door. By that point, everything about him was clearly visible.

He was a young man with long black hair, dressed in a long blue robe. He was exceedingly handsome, with an expression that was calm, yet simultaneously cold and indifferent.

Unexpectedly, a closer look revealed… that he looked exactly like the statue of the man seated on the throne on the ninth land mass!

“All ye living beings in the Vast Expanse art my children. This place is the necropolis of the Ghost, thence, I take his appearance.” This young man who could take the form of anything which existed in the starry sky of Allheaven extended his right hand and pushed onto the door, whereupon it swung open.

Then he took another step, and was on the ninth land mass. Almost instantly, a shocking force of expulsion hit him, pushing him back slightly.

His expression was the same as ever as he began to walk forward, despite the power of expulsion. Although it was a monumental effort, none of that showed on his face.

Another step, and he appeared by the Transcendence Dais. He looked over at the Sect Leader and the others, and then waved his right hand.

A boom echoed out, and the Transcendence Dais shook. The Sect Leader and the others all coughed up mouthfuls of blood, and their efforts at Transcendence were broken. There were even some of the weaker 9-Essences Paragons who let out blood curdling screams as they exploded, killed in body and soul.

Everyone else was astonished. Even as they looked over at the young man, he took another step, taking him to the position of the enormous statue. There, the boundless sea of ghosts all turned and looked at him, their expressions blank. However, that blankness only lasted for a moment before it was replaced by madness and hatred.

It didn’t matter that the will of Allheaven had taken the form of Patriarch Vast Expanse. That couldn’t change the aura which emanated off of him, and these ghosts hated that aura with a vengeance that would last for all eternity!

They surged into motion with a howl of fury. The enmity which came from their deaths, and which had transformed them into angry ghosts, would never dissipate. Now, they leapt into action, charging toward the young man that was the embodiment of the will of Allheaven.

“Oh ye my children,” the young man said coolly, “dead are ye, and yet ye persist in wickedness. Thence, I strip ye of your bodies of reincarnation, and strip ye of your power of movement.” His face was completely and utterly expressionless, and he didn’t even seem to look at the ghosts. He took another step forward, completely focused on the person sitting there cross-legged, dissolving the wooden statue.

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# Chapter 1533: Dissolving the Hex!

This was not the first time that the will of the starry sky had made a move on Meng Hao. However, this was its first time taking such a form in his presence.

However, Meng Hao currently couldn’t see that. All of his senses were sealed, as he focused completely on the task at hand. He had to dissolve the wooden statue as soon as possible.

By this point, the statue was almost eighty percent dissolved. Soon, that number would reach ninety percent.

“Only ten percent to go. Must go faster!” Meng Hao’s divine sense was exploding out to a level that made it almost impossible to sustain as he tried to dissolve the statue even faster.

It was in that exact same moment that the embodiment of the will of Allheaven pierced through the boundless sea of ghosts. Strangely, when the ghosts tried to approach the will of Allheaven, they suddenly came to a halt, as if they had lost the ability to move.

In the blink of an eye, all of the ghosts began to tremble, and then cease all movement. Their eyes went wide, as though it wasn’t just their bodies, but also their spirits, and their simplistic ghostly minds, were suddenly stripped of the power of movement!

The embodiment of the will of Allheaven took another step, putting him directly in front of Meng Hao. He looked down, and his expression flickered, as though he were befuddled, or confused.

“Why are you unwilling to merge with me?” he asked coolly. Then he reached out to tap on Meng Hao’s forehead.

However, it was in that moment that a piercing cry suddenly rang out. The parrot appeared, flashing through the air to pierce directly through the chest of the embodiment of Allheaven.

The embodiment paused for a moment, and then prepared to continue moving his finger toward Meng Hao. But then a voice rang out, speaking a single word that caused everything to tremble violently.

“BEGONE!”

The words came out of the mouth of the huge statue. They filled the world, creating a powerful tempest which shook the entire necropolis.

The embodiment of the will of Allheaven began to tremble, then staggered backward as if he couldn’t control his own body. When he was about thirty meters away from Meng Hao, his flesh exploded, sending blood and gore splattering out in all directions. The skin and muscle of his body was more almost completely destroyed, revealing the bones underneath. Only half of his head remained intact.

As the voice which had just spoken faded away, the embodiment of the will of Allheaven slowly looked up. His wounds rapidly healed, and in the blink of an eye, he was back to normal.

In that same moment, there was a world out in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, in which all of the life forms suddenly withered up. Their blood and life force vanished, and the entire world instantly became as still as death.

It was that very power of blood and life force which allowed the embodiment of the will of Allheaven to recover. As he looked up at the statue, his expression flickered again. He seemed confused, even dazed.

“So, it’s you, my eldest son,” he said coolly.

An incisive gleam appeared within the eyes of the figure on the throne. Massive rumbling sounds echoed out as the statue slowly rose to its feet amidst a cascade of falling rocks and rubble. The falling stones and rubble soon formed a small mountain, from within which emerged a young man.

He looked exactly like the embodiment of the will of Allheaven, without a single difference.

However, his body clearly wasn’t made of flesh and blood. This wasn’t the true Patriarch Vast Expanse, but rather a clone, which he had left behind inside the necropolis to reminisce and guard the place.

When he emerged, the sky shook and the lands quaked, and the entire ninth land mass seemed to be on the verge of collapsing. Patriarch Vast Expanse’s clone took a step forward, placing him directly in front of Meng Hao, separating him from the embodiment of the will of Allheaven.

He didn’t speak, nor did his expression change in any way. He waved his right sleeve out in front of him, and an aura exploded out that seemed like both Immortal and Ghost, and yet was neither. A black mist sprang up, which was filled with countless vicious ghosts. It immediately engulfed the embodiment of Allheaven.

The embodiment waved his right finger, which caused the natural and magical laws of the world to form together. A boundless, indescribable will then erupted out.

At this point, the embodiment of Allheaven said, “In front of me, all powers within the Vast Expanse shall be either stripped away or absorbed.” The vicious ghosts within the black mist began to tremble, then faded away, as if they were being erased from existence.

However, in the moment before they were about to be completely wiped away, the clone of Patriarch Vast Expanse let out a cold harrumph. Instantly, the black mist sank down on itself, and the vicious ghosts converged together to form… a single vicious ghost, astonishing in appearance!

It had black mist for skin, and looked like the most vicious of spirits. Most shocking of all was how it stooped over at the waist, making it seem almost hunchbacked in appearance. Shockingly, the reason for that was because it carried a world on its shoulders.

Countless buildings could be seen, which resembled Yama King palaces. As for the ghost’s arms and legs, they were wrapped and bound by countless black chains. The ghost roared, and power of natural law erupted from the world on its back.

That power was something that not even the embodiment of Allheaven could strip away. That was the power of Patriarch Vast Expanse, the power of… the Ghost!

That power caused an explosive force of expulsion to blast into the embodiment of Allheaven.

The will of Allheaven sighed as his body was shredded into a haze of blood. However, he didn’t seem to care. He raised his right hand and point out with his finger, causing intense, gray light to shoot out in all directions. At the same time, the air behind him ripped open, revealing a single finger.

It was a finger which could supercede a world, which could exceed the Heavens. As soon as it appeared, the finger reached out to slam into the vicious ghost.

BOOOOOOOOOMMM!

Beneath the power of the finger, the ghost trembled, and then began to fall to pieces. The buildings on its back vanished into smoke, crushed like dried weeds. However, at the same time, the chains which covered its limbs wrapped around the finger, binding it tighter and tighter until it exploded.

Apparently, they were evenly matched!

As the sound of the explosion echoed out, the embodiment and the clone staggered backward away from each other.

Patriarch Vast Expanse’s clone slowly looked up and, in a voice both hoarse and ancient, said, “You’re not taking this kid away!”

A powerful pressure spread out from him, which instantly began to crush down onto the will of Allheaven.

It didn’t matter that the embodiment represented the entire starry sky of Allheaven, the clone of Patriarch Vast Expanse didn’t show any fear of it whatsoever.

The embodiment of Allheaven looked expressionlessly at Patriarch Vast Expanse’s clone, then said, “Oh my eldest son…. You have already departed, what need is there to remain so obsessed?”

With that, he extended his right hand and the pointed out with his finger.

“Power,” he said. Instantly, explosive power radiated out from him, transforming into an enormous magical symbol, which was in itself covered with even more magical symbols. This symbol represented the natural law of the Dao of power within the starry sky of the Vast Expanse!

This was something that not even 9-Essences cultivators could do.

It was a magical symbol formed from magical symbols, and as soon as it appeared, it bore down on Meng Hao and Patriarch Vast Expanse’s clone.

At this point, all magical laws within the starry sky of Allheaven that had to do with power suddenly faded. They were weakened to form the huge magical symbol which was currently slashing down in attack. Patriarch Vast Expanse’s clone looked on with glittering eyes. He suddenly performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, causing his entire hand to fade. No blood or flesh was visible, neither any bone, only a spectral arm.

It was not black, but multi-colored, and it emanated a Dao, a personal Dao that came when one became an Essence.

It was… the Ghost Dao of Patriarch Vast Expanse!

When his hand made contact with the magical symbol, Heaven shook and the Earth trembled. The lands cracked and split as a shockwave blasted out, shaking the entire necropolis.

By this point, the sculpture in front of Meng Hao was ninety percent dissolved. The final ten percent continued to melt rapidly. Soon ninety-four percent was dissolved. Then ninety-seven, ninety-eight… until finally, one hundred percent!

It was completely dissolved, and the statue no longer present. It now existed as one hundred drops of black liquid, no more, no less. In that very moment, Meng Hao's senses, which had been sealed completely shut, suddenly opened.

His eyes glowed brightly despite the terrifying fluctuations emanating off of the will of Allheaven. No matter how much that will wanted to kill him, Patriarch Vast Expanse's clone made it impossible. It was now filled with an intense rage and fury that could only come from being in Meng Hao's presence….

Meng Hao took a deep breath, and as he did, the one hundred drops of black liquid transformed into beams of light that shot into his forehead.

Sounds like rumbling thunder filled his mind, as though a hundred black bolts of lighting were striking his head.

When the last one merged into his forehead, and the final thunderclap rang out, a power that could end the Heavens and crush the Earth rose up in his sea of consciousness.

He began to tremble violently, and a mouthful of frothy blood exploded out of his mouth. The hundred drops of black liquid swirled together within his sea of consciousness, and as they did, the aura of the Ninth Hex began to emanate out!

Although it wasn't complete yet, the moment it exploded out, the embodiment of the will of Allheaven shivered. An expression of fiery rage appeared on his face, and his eyes erupted with killing intent.

"Screw off!" he roared, launching himself toward Patriarch Vast Expanse's clone!

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# Chapter 1534: Fuse With Me!

Rumbling echoed out, and simultaneously, Patriarch Vast Expanse's clone laughed. He didn't back down even for a moment; black mist swirled as he once again shot forward to block the path of the embodiment of the will of Allheaven.

Behind him, Meng Hao was trembling as the aura of the Ninth Hex exploded out from within him. Even as he shook, the necropolis also trembled, causing boundless ripples to spread out into the starry sky of Allheaven outside.

At the same time, within Meng Hao's sea of consciousness, the one hundred drops of black liquid were rapidly forming a shape!

Ten percent, twenty percent, thirty percent, forty percent….

In the blink of an eye, it reached a state of seventy percent completion. As it did, the complete outline of the Ninth Hex began to appear.

Eighty percent, ninety percent. Before the will of Allheaven could do anything to stop him, Meng Hao closed his eyes yet again. At the same time, a rumbling sound began to fill him, a sound so shocking it could shake Heaven and Earth.

Thunder and lightning boomed in the outside world as well, and although that occurred within the starry sky of Allheaven… it was not caused by the Vast Expanse. Instead, it was caused by the Ninth Hex; it was Heaven-Sealing lightning!

Within Meng Hao's sea of consciousness, the black liquid… had formed into something that caused the starry sky of Allheaven to tremble… the Ninth Hex!

The Seal the Heavens Hex!

In the instant that it appeared, the world of the necropolis shook violently, sending shockwaves out in the starry sky outside. Everything which existed, all living beings, felt themselves trembling, filled with indescribable astonishment.

Apparently… something new had come to exist within the Heavens above… a naturally occurring enemy of Heaven!

Apparently there was a new will which existed in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse!

Apparently, within the countless worlds of reality, there was a new natural law!

It was the Seal the Heavens Hex… a Dao which existed above all other laws!

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE!

As the intense rumbling sound echoed out, Meng Hao took a deep breath. Then his eyes snapped open. He had completed the first step on his path to Transcendence. He had fully absorbed the Ninth Hex, which had been formed by the accumulation of the nine incarnations of his clone. They were now an inseparable part of him, completely and utterly part of Meng Hao.

However, that was only the first step. Meng Hao was acutely aware that time was of the essence, and that he needed to take the second step as soon as possible.

That second step was…

“Nine Hexes, combine!” Meng Hao said. As soon as the words left his mouth, all surrounding natural and magical laws shattered, as if they simply couldn’t stand up to the domineering existence of the Nine Hexes.

In the moment that Meng Hao prepared to combine the Nine Hexes, the embodiment of the will of Allheaven looked on with widening eyes. A bright light began to shine within those eyes, and at the same time, the void outside of the Vast Expanse began to twist and distort, as a huge eye appeared.

The eye slowly began to open, and when it reached the halfway point, a shockingly powerful will began to surge out from it, its target being Meng Hao. It wanted to prevent him from Transcending.

However, it was at this point that, without any warning, a person appeared in front of the eye. It was a young man with white hair and a cold expression. Furthermore, it was possible to tell that this was a clone, not this person's true self.

The clone looked like Slaughter, as well as the young man who had appeared outside of the Immortal God Continent, the Transcendent cultivator.

He reached out and placed his hand onto the huge eye, preventing it from opening any further.

A tremor ran through the eye, and a roar of rage could be heard. Then, within the boundless void outside the Vast Expanse, a second figure appeared. He was also a young man, and he radiated a sinister aura of death. He had long, violet hair, and his eyes seemed to shine with starlight. His expression was calm as he hovered there, staring at the boundless eye.

As the eye struggled to open, an enraged voice roared, "You people failed back then. You do not qualify to try to eradicate me. You might have become more powerful since then, but you… do not qualify to stand in my way!"

Everything in the area began to tremble and shatter.

However, the two young men didn't seem ruffled at all.

“The Fellow Daoist who can wipe you out is currently Transcending. We might have lost our qualifications, but we can still stop you from interfering.”

The eye remained half open, mysterious light glittering within.

Meanwhile, back in the necropolis, the embodiment of the will of Allheaven gritted his teeth. Eyes gleaming with ferocity, he ceased his attempts to call upon power from outside the Vast Expanse, and instead focused on drawing upon the power within the starry sky of the Vast Expanse!

Within the depths of the starry sky were numerous vortexes which housed various worlds and realms. Within thousands of those locations, bloodcurdling screams echoed out as the living beings there withered up. Their flesh and blood, along with their life force, was all sucked away.

It wasn’t just the life forms within those locations. The worlds themselves were all transformed into ash, their World Essences sucked away.

Thousands of worlds were gone in the blink of an eye, completely wiped out of existence. There were even entire regions near the border of the starry sky of Allheaven which withered away as if they had just died.

Most shocking of all was that the energy of Heaven and Earth within the starry sky was suddenly reduced by thirty percent. If it were reduced by any more than that, the entire Vast Expanse would collapse. It was a limit which apparently couldn’t be passed.

All of that power was absorbed by the embodiment of the will of Allheaven. It took a single thought to accomplish, and then an indescribable power converged outside of the necropolis, and began to tear it open!

The sky of the necropolis was completely destroyed, revealing the starry sky of the Vast Expanse beyond. The will of Allheaven descended in full, completely destroying the first land mass. Next was the second, third, fourth, and in fact, all of the land masses except for the ninth. Everything was transformed into rubble by the will of Allheaven.

The descending will of Allheaven was like a flood of water. In the blink of an eye, it converged onto its embodiment. Instantly, that embodiment’s features twisted and changed. Six more arms sprouted out of its body, giving it a total of eight. Furthermore, three heads emerged!

It had a total of four heads and eight arms!

A roar of rage transformed into a powerful sound wave that blasted into the ninth land mass, causing it to tremble violently. Patriarch Vast Expanse’s clone looked on with widening eyes.

“I am… Allheaven!” said the four-headed, eight-armed figure, its voice echoing like thunder. At the same time, its body began to grow blurry, revealing something completely unexpected inside: countless stars, planets, vortexes and worlds.

It was as if the entire starry sky of the Vast Expanse had become its body. It was using the full power of the starry sky to try to wipe out the clone of Patriarch Vast Expanse.

It would destroy that clone, then wipe out Meng Hao to prevent him from Transcending, and bring everything back under its control!

Patriarch Vast Expanse had only left a clone behind here. However, because of the bronze lamp inside of Meng Hao, that clone chose to help him.

With that bronze lamp, Meng Hao became the legacy successor of Patriarch Vast Expanse. That legacy was a legacy, not of the cultivation base or the bloodline, but rather, of thought!

It was… a continuity of thought, a desire to destroy the will of the starry sky of the Vast Expanse. Because they both harbored that intent, the clone chose to help Meng Hao.

However… it was only a clone. The real Patriarch Vast Expanse was a figure from countless years in the past. It was impossible to say where he was now. As for his clone, he could hold out for a while against the will of

Allheaven, but considering how madly that will was fighting, sparing no cost to win… it meant that the clone was reaching its limit.

And yet, it continued to stand against the attack. It was falling apart into destruction, but it knew that if it were completely destroyed, then Meng Hao, who was still in the midst of his effort to combine the Nine Hexes, would be facing grave danger.

In this critical moment, the clone’s eyes suddenly flickered. His right hand shot out toward Meng Hao and made a grasping motion. What it was beckoning to though, was not Meng Hao, but the parrot!

The parrot blurred into motion, transforming into the Battle Weapon, which the clone grabbed and slashed out into the air!

Heaven shook and the Earth trembled. A huge rift opened up, which erupted with the explosive power of time travel. That power became a windstorm which swept out to cover the ninth land mass, as well as the rest of the crumbling necropolis.

Time was being reversed!

Instantly, 10,000 years passed. Then 100,000 years. 1,000,000 years. Endless years blurred by in a tempest, and when everything became clear again, the world was completely different.

The sky was now bright blue, and the eight destroyed land masses were restored. Countless cultivators could be seen flying here and there. It was a bustling, flourishing place.

A gentle breeze blew as the lands of the necropolis returned to ancient times!

The Sect Leader and the others gasped in response. However, it wasn’t a huge shock, considering that they had seen similar things occur in the past. Every time the necropolis experienced the apocalyptic catastrophe, it returned to ancient times, when the will of Allheaven destroyed the world.

However, this time it was the clone of Patriarch Vast Expanse who had reversed time, taking all of the memories of the apocalypse which existed in the necropolis and unleashing them early.

With that, the clone took a deep breath, and then stabbed the Battle Weapon down into the ground. Rumbling echoed out as the clone's divine sense filled all the lands with a single thought.

And that thought was… destroy the starry sky of the Vast Expanse!

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1535: I Am Meng Hao, Here I Transcend!

In the blink of an eye, countless cultivators and other living entities on the land masses settled down cross-legged and combined their divine sense into a massive wave. That wave then surged out like a tempest to batter against the embodiment of the will of Allheaven, with his eight arms and four heads.

You use the life force of the entire starry sky of the Vast Expanse? Well I'll use magic to reach into the past and use the power of my people to fight back!

This was a magical technique that would exceed the comprehension of most cultivators. However, considering the realm Patriarch Vast Expanse was in, time and space could be molded into divine abilities and great Daos.

The four-headed, eight-armed embodiment of the will of Allheaven stared with bright red eyes. Then he waved his arms, unleashing waves of crackling lightning to fight the windstorm.

Rumbling filled the air, and at the same time, thumping sounds emanated out from Meng Hao as his energy erupted, the result of the process of combining his Hexing magic!

"First Hex!" He waved his sleeve, and the Beginning-Ending Hex appeared. That was the beginning of the series of Hexing magics, and also the ending piece in the puzzle that Meng Hao had assembled. He didn't create it himself, of course, but rather, obtained it by means of the legacy of Shui Dongliu, who himself was created by a fragment of the will of Paragon Nine Seals.

After absorbing it, it became Meng Hao’s First Hex!

His eyes glittered as the Hex appeared, and at the same time, a point of light began to shine on his forehead. As soon as it did, the redness in the eyes of Allheaven’s embodiment grew even more intense.

Then, Meng Hao’s eyes flashed as he performed an incantation gesture. He was unleashing the…

“Second Hex!

Real-Unreal Hexing. Finding the real in the unreal, taking the unreal and making it real. A second point of light appeared on Meng Hao’s forehead. At first glance it seemed like an illusion, but closer examination revealed that it was corporeal. It even seemed capable of absorbing minds!

That was the Second Hex!

Meng Hao took a deep breath. Thanks to the magic of Patriarch Vast Expanse’s clone, Meng Hao was actually standing within an ancient era, although things didn’t look very much different than they had before. The sky was blue, and the ground was covered with green limestone. The air was thick with spiritual energy.

From a distance, rainbows could be seen stretching across the sky. As for Patriarch Vast Expanse’s clone, he was converging the divine sense of all of the cultivators of his lands and slamming it against the embodiment of the will of Allheaven.

“Third Hex!” Meng Hao’s hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, and rumbling sounds filled Heaven and Earth.

The Third Hex was Present-Ancient Hexing, and as soon is it appeared, it instantly harmonized with the current state of the world. A resonance formed, which made sense considering that Meng Hao was surrounded by ancient times, where he himself was from the present. Present and ancient existed simultaneously, causing the power of time to spread out along with the appearance of the Present-Ancient Hex. At the same time, a third point of light appeared on Meng Hao's forehead.

Three points of light glittered radiantly, and Meng Hao's energy continued to rise. Without pausing for a moment, he waved both of his hands out in front of him.

"Fourth Hex!"

The Fourth Hex was among the most powerful of the first eight Hexes. It was called the Self Hex, and could create seemingly infinite clones, enough to fill an entire world. As soon as it appeared, Meng Hao was immediately surrounded by countless different versions of himself.

One of those figures caused Meng Hao's mind to reel the instant he caught sight of him. It was Little Treasure….

Unfortunately, now was not the time to ponder the matter. Meng Hao immediately glanced away and prepared to perform an incantation gesture to unleash the Fifth Hex. However, it was in that very moment that a massive force surged against him. He shook visibly, and blood sprayed out of his mouth as he was shoved backward.

At the same time, Patriarch Vast Expanse's clone exploded. Just as he was about to reform, the four-headed, eight-armed embodiment of the will of Allheaven waved a sleeve, which instantly slowed down the process. The embodiment of Allheaven was riddled with so many wounds that he looked like a mass of flesh and blood, and yet he instantly charged toward Meng Hao.

Almost as soon as he moved, the divine sense of the countless living beings on the land mass forged a barrier, yet again making it impossible for the embodiment to reach Meng Hao.

"Screw off!" he roared, waving his numerous arms, unleashing massive force against the barrier, which subsequently began to collapse, layer by layer.

Meng Hao’s eyes were crimson as he backed up, yet again performing an incantation gesture.

“Fifth Hex!”

The Fifth Hex was the Inside-Outside Hex. As soon as it appeared, a force of expulsion erupted out, creating a black hole in front of Meng Hao. That black hole spun rapidly, shrinking down until it became the fifth point light on Meng Hao’s forehead.

By that point, the embodiment of Allheaven had almost completely broken through the barrier. The countless streams of divine sense were in the midst of collapse.

Meng Hao continued to back up.

“Sixth Hex!”

Life-Death Hexing!

“Seventh Hex!”

Karmic Hexing!

“Eighth Hex!”

Body-Mind Hexing!

When those three Hexing magics emerged from Meng Hao’s hands, brightly colored light flashed in Heaven and Earth, and massive winds screamed. Everything shook violently. It was also in that exact same moment that the embodiment of Allheaven blasted away all of the divine sense of the living beings in the world. Then, he shot forward to appear directly in front of Meng Hao.

As he reached his hand out to wipe Meng Hao out of existence, the pressure radiating off of him caused Meng Hao’s mind to reel. However, even as the pressure crushed down on him, Meng Hao’s eyes glittered brightly, and he unleashed his Ninth Hex!

“Ninth Hex!”

Seal the Heavens Hex!

A mighty power descended, something boundlessly domineering. It was a power that said, If I want your eyes opened, they shall NOT be closed. If I want them closed, they had BETTER not be open!

What I want, the Heavens shall NOT lack! What I don’t want, had BETTER not exist in the Heavens!

“BEGONE!” Meng Hao roared. A power that did not come from the starry sky of Allheaven erupted from the Ninth Hex, something like a mad wind that blasted into the embodiment of the will of Allheaven.

The world shook as that power became an attack force. Meng Hao was shoved backward, as was the embodiment of Allheaven, whose expression was that of terror. However, his eyes were also filled with intense killing intent. He forced himself to grind to a halt, holding nothing back as he fought against the power. His body trembled violently, and suddenly, two of his heads exploded, as well as several of his arms. And yet, he gritted his teeth and took a step forward.

However, it was at this point that the clone of Patriarch Vast Expanse, whom Allheaven’s will had destroyed moments ago, formed back together. He instantly teleported directly in front of the embodiment of Allheaven, whereupon flames erupted from him, along with a terrifying aura.

He waved his right hand, yet again blocking the path of the severely damaged embodiment.

Allheaven’s embodiment roared, then transformed into countless motes of light. As they spread out, they flew up into the sky to transform into a gigantic finger!

The boundless, majestic finger stretched down from the starry sky, rumbling down toward Meng Hao and the clone of Patriarch Vast Expanse.

As it descended, countless black flowers appeared on its surface. As they bloomed, vicious creatures flew out, all of them with three heads and six arms. Their energy surged as they charged in attack.

By this point, Meng Hao’s Ninth Hex was fully deployed. A ninth point of light appeared on his forehead, whereupon all of the other lights merged together with it to create something that looked like a sun.

Nine Hexes, combined!

Meng Hao threw his head back and roared. Rumbling sounds echoed out, along with the aura of Transcendence. The starry sky shook, and the universe trembled. After the nine Hexes combined, they all transformed into Essences, causing Meng Hao’s cultivation base to truly… reach the 9-Essences level!

After that, his cultivation base power skyrocketed, growing intensely powerful, breaking through all barriers. Wind screamed around him as the finger formed from the will of Allheaven began to shake.

But, things weren’t over yet. Meng Hao’s eyes were bright red as he looked up and roared, “Converge nine Essences, cultivation base breakthrough!!”

BOOOOOOOOOMMM! His nine Essences converged together. Nine became one… and the door of Heaven and Earth opened; the limitations of the Vast Expanse were destroyed. A clap of thunder rang out, which could be heard by all lives and in all worlds throughout the starry sky of Allheaven.

Within that thunderclap was Meng Hao’s voice, which echoed out through all of the Vast Expanse.

“I am Meng Hao. Here I Transcend!”

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# Chapter 1536: Extinguishing the Bronze Lamp!

Countless people and other life forms heard the words. They echoed out in the Immortal God Continent, the Devil Realm Continent, countless other worlds and Realms, and even in the Mountain and Sea Butterfly. Everyone heard.

Within the Mountain and Sea Butterfly, many people who knew Meng Hao were left flabbergasted by the words.

Boom!

As soon as the words left his mouth, the entire world within which he stood went completely silent. With his Essences completely combined, an aura which did not belong to the starry sky of the Vast Expanse raged up. It grew more and more powerful, and as it did, countless illusory chains appeared all around Meng Hao. One by one, those chains exploded!

As those chains were destroyed, his aura grew more shocking and incredible. This cultivation base breakthrough put him at a level in which he could… directly fight back against the will of Allheaven!

Within his qi passageways, any power which had anything to do with the natural laws of the Vast Expanse… vanished. They were replaced by a Demonic qi that could shake Heaven and Earth, that could stain the world red. Meng Hao’s hair turned crimson, and suddenly, an endless ocean of blood appeared around him.

He had the feeling that this world, this starry sky, could be changed by him with a single thought. He could manipulate it or even destroy it if he wished. At the same time, he felt a force of expulsion appear, something that apparently wanted to drive him away.

The enormous finger up above began to shake, and the three-headed six-armed figures looked at Meng Hao with fear, as if they didn’t dare to get close to him.

Meng Hao looked around, and everything seemed different.

He saw the natural and magical laws of the world. He saw threads running here and there. He saw things that he had never been able to see before. He saw that the clone of Patriarch Vast Expanse was actually a Soul Shadow. He saw that the finger up above was actually composed of countless magical symbols, sealing marks.

“So, this is what it feels like to Transcend,” he thought. “It’s too bad… I don’t count as having fully Transcended. Cultivation base, body, and soul. Only by breaking through in all three areas can one truly be considered Transcendent.

“For example, Paragon Nine Seals only achieved fleshly body Transcendence.

“As for me, my cultivation base has Transcended, but not my body or my soul….

“Well, I might as well use my Transcendent cultivation base to extinguish the bronze lamp. With that good fortune, I can then push toward Transcendence with my fleshly body!

“With my cultivation base and my fleshly body both in Transcendence, the resonance they create will enable my soul… to transform, and also step into Transcendence!

“At that time, I will truly be in… the Daosource Realm!

“That is because I will be the source of the Dao, an Essence. What I wish to be natural law, will exist. Whatever magical laws I don’t approve of, will not exist.” With that, he waved his sleeve, and… the bronze lamp appeared!

As of this moment, no one could stop Meng Hao on his path to Transcendence!

Not the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, nor the will of Allheaven!

Within the ancient sky of the necropolis, the enormous finger formed from the embodiment of the will of Allheaven trembled. A brutal aura erupted from within it, raging in all directions, causing everything in Heaven and Earth to blur. Only the finger remained clear.

Rumbling sounds could be heard as the pressure emanating off of Meng Hao because of his breakthrough, was shattered. Meng Hao might have reached this point, but the will of Allheaven could not accept that he might successfully continue to Transcend.

The power of expulsion from the starry sky of the Vast Expanse suddenly exploded out. It affected the entire ancient world, causing all of the cultivators who had appeared to tremble.

Patriarch Vast Expanse’s clone looked on with glittering eyes. He was just about to take action, but after looking over at Meng Hao, he smiled slightly and then looked off into the distance, seemingly oblivious to what was happening.

The enormous finger continued to descend, and the lands shook. A huge crevice opened up, spreading out rapidly. Apparently the entire land mass was about to collapse.

The finger superseded the sky, drawing ever closer. Soon, what Meng Hao was looking up at wasn’t a finger, it was a series of mountains and plains!

Those were… the fingerprint, within which was the power of the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, a power completely focused on slaying Meng Hao before he could fully Transcend.

However, even as the finger descended, Meng Hao swished his wide sleeve, and the bronze lamp floated up front of him, burning brightly, its appearance ancient, even primitive. Meng Hao took a deep breath. Eyes shining with anticipation and focus, he focused the power of his Transcendent cultivation base, and then…

Blew a breath out of his mouth!

That breath was like a storm, a tempest that linked Heaven and Earth, a cyclone that rose up and slammed into the finger formed by Allheaven.

A huge boom echoed out. The sky shattered and the land crumbled. However, the cyclone was incapable of fighting the destructive finger of Allheaven, and vanished.

However, by the time that happened, Meng Hao's breath, which was backed by the power of his Transcendent cultivation base, had already blown across the bronze lamp. As it did, the flame flickered wildly, then bent over to the side… and was extinguished!

That was Meng Hao's final Soul Lamp!

That was the bronze lamp which he had acquired in a stroke of incredible good fortune, which had saved his life!

That was Patriarch Vast Expanse's bronze lamp!

As of this moment, it was extinguished!

Instantly, green smoke appeared, which rapidly entered Meng Hao's eyes, ears, nose, and mouth.

When the last bit of green smoke left the bronze lamp, it turned into drifting ash. It was as if, after completing its mission, it dissipated into Heaven and Earth.

It was in that exact same moment that the finger of the will of Allheaven, the finger which was bursting with the power to destroy worlds, reached a position 3,000 meters away from Meng Hao.

Meng Hao looked up at the fingerprints, which resembled vast mountains and plains. His clothes were whipping back and forth in the wind, and his hair was completely disheveled.

The finger accelerated.

“DIE!” screamed a voice from nowhere. It seemed to command ultimate authority, to contain within it the natural laws of the Vast Expanse, the power of the starry sky as a whole. All of that was rumbling toward Meng Hao.

It only took a moment for it to be directly in front of Meng Hao. It was as if the Heavens themselves were descending upon him. But Meng Hao simply reached out and pushed against the finger with his hand.

The moment his hand made contact, rumbling sounds filled him, and blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth. Crevices snaked out from beneath his feet as everything crumbled. The entire land mass shattered into rubble which dropped down. Now there was nothing beneath Meng Hao but an empty starry sky.

However, Meng Hao himself didn’t move an inch. He hovered there, bracing himself against the finger of Allheaven. Although blood was oozing out of the corners of his mouth, his eyes shone with a terrifying glow.

His pupils were bright red, which was the foundation of the Demon, and could not be changed. Perhaps instead of calling it Demonic, it would be more appropriate to call it chaotic. It was the ultimate form of chaos, a chaos from within which could be born a completely contradictory natural law.

This was Meng Hao’s version of the Demon. However, that was not his Essence. His Essence was more than that. In what had once been the whites of his eyes, a new color appeared. Violet!

He had violet eyes and red pupils, and the aura he emanated was completely impossible to describe with words. It was as if he were the ultimate form of chaos, as if he were completely at odds with the entire world, with Heaven and Earth.

Even as his right hand pushed against the finger, he smiled.

“By this point, nobody can destroy me. Nobody can control my fate. Nobody… is qualified to manipulate my path.

“Even the will of the starry sky of the Vast Expanse… does not qualify!

“You are dismissed!” He shoved his hand forward, and thunderous rumbling emanated out. Beneath his skin could be seen numerous wriggling, snake-like objects. However, they weren’t snakes, they were the strands of green smoke he had absorbed from the bronze lamp.

Numerous strands of smoke flowed like mad through his body. They contained boundless life force which strengthened him, causing him to grow more powerful by the moment.

RUUUUUUUUUUMBLE!

Veins bulged out on Meng Hao’s neck and face as he took a step forward, pushing onto the finger, which had no choice but to fall back.

It didn’t want to, but the power of Meng Hao’s fleshly body could shake Heaven and Earth, and was forcing it backward.

The light of time flickered dully, and the world seemed to be on the verge of collapsing completely. An enraged roar echoed out as the finger pushed out with more power than before, still intent on wiping out Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes shone with bright red light. His qi passageways had reached their limit, and began to explode. Countless motes of scintillating light filled his body, and at the same time, his flesh and blood began to transform. His bones, his body, his qi passageways, and even his blood apparently ceased to exist.

However, from the outside, he looked the same as ever. That was because, by this point, his body was neither mortal nor cultivator. A thunderous, Heaven-rending Earth-crushing boom rang out. It was as if the starry sky was bearing witness to Meng Hao as he took another step forward, threw his head back, and let loose a long cry.

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# Chapter 1537: Daosource Complete!

The sound of the noise split the starry sky, echoing out in all directions. The finger began to tremble as Meng Hao emanated dazzling red light, his hair whipping about around him.

That red light was the same color as his soul and his eyes!

As soon as it appeared, a tremor ran through him, and his fleshly body power broke through to a higher level, to a level that could shake Heaven and Earth. And that was… Transcendence!

The moment he entered Transcendence, it was as if a gate had been opened in Heaven and Earth, a gate that erupted with the power of time. At the same time, Meng Hao’s body created a new starry sky.

It was a starry sky that existed inside of him, which transformed into a spinning vortex. He took a deep breath. Now that his fleshly body had Transcended, it meant that, in some ways, even if Heaven and Earth rotted away, he would not.

“Screw the hell off!” Meng Hao roared. His energy skyrocketed, and rumbling sounds echoed out as he violently waved his hand. The enormous finger was shoved backward, and even began to show signs that it would soon fall apart.

As of this moment, not even the clone of Patriarch Vast Expanse could measure up to Meng Hao. After all, he was just a clone, and this was Meng Hao’s true self.

He was a being like the Ghost, the God, or the Devil. Although he was only about seventy percent Transcendent, and was still lacking a Transcendent Soul, the energy he could unleash put him in a position to fight back against the finger formed by the will of Allheaven, and in fact, to have the upper hand!

The finger of Allheaven was pushed back, and Meng Hao hovered there in the void, surrounded by boundless crimson light. When he looked up, his eyes shone with piercing light.

“Next to Transcend will be my soul.” He flicked his sleeve, and his cultivation base erupted with terrifying Transcendent power. No one could face such power and not be struck to the heart with fear. It stood above all sorts of natural and magical laws. It was the Daosource.

Everything around Meng Hao twisted and distorted; all Heaven and Earth acknowledged allegiance to him.

As his cultivation base rocketed up, he took a deep breath, which caused the air around him to shatter, as though he were sucking away the life force of his surroundings, causing everything to wither.

At the same time, his Transcendent fleshly body radiated fear-inspiring power that combined with his cultivation base power to form a shocking resonance.

Because of that resonance, his soul began to transform. His aura grew completely petrifying as it spread out in all directions. In the end, his soul completely transformed, leaving Meng Hao fully Transcended. In that moment, his aura, and the terrifying ripples spreading out from him, suddenly vanished. He no longer seemed ostentatiously awe-inspiring. As he hovered there, he actually looked like a mortal.

And yet, because of his current state, the ancientness around him faded away, and the world returned to its previous state. The nine land masses of the necropolis reappeared, and the starry sky formed up above.

Thunder boomed. Down on the ninth land mass, the Sect Leader and the others were trembling, their eyes radiating intense reverence. When they laid eyes on Meng Hao, they gasped, then dropped to their knees.

“Greetings, Transcendor!”

“Greetings, Transcendor!” Jin Yunshan’s eyes were as wide as saucers, and Sha Jiudong’s mind was reeling. Bai Wuchen appeared to be in a daze. All three were trembling. The pressure from Meng Hao completely enveloped them, and the feeling exceeded even that of Heavenly might. It was as if a single glance from him could kill them where they stood.

“Greetings, Transcendor!” All three immediately kowtowed.

“Greetings, Transcendor!” The other 9-Essences Paragons took deep breaths and also kowtowed, their eyes filled with reverence, fanaticism, and awe.

These were 9-Essences cultivators who hadn’t kowtowed to anyone for countless years. But now, they didn’t hesitate to bend over until their foreheads were touching the ground. They didn’t hesitate at all to offer him the most formal of respectful greetings.

Within the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, Transcendent cultivators were something out of legends. They were individuals who could single-handedly destroy worlds with impunity. They were Essences unto themselves, who not even the will of the Vast Expanse could interfere with.

Transcendence, and the Daosource Realm, were completely independent of natural and magical law. Such cultivators were their own form of natural law, and gave birth to their own Essence.

They were completely and utterly independent!

The Sect Leader and the other 9-Essences cultivators weren’t the only ones to kowtow. The countless ghosts who were still waiting off in the distance all looked at Meng Hao with complete reverence, then dropped to their knees and kowtowed.

“Greetings, Transcendor!”

Within the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, countless entities, countless life forms, countless worlds, were all shaking. All living things looked in the direction of the necropolis, and bowed their heads.

It was an impulse from within their souls. Although they didn’t know who it was who had Transcended, they could feel it, as though new Heavens had suddenly appeared up above.

From ancient times until now, throughout the countless years which had passed, there had only been three true Transcendent cultivators. The Ghost. The Devil. The God. But now, there was a fourth!

He possessed unending command over magic.

He was of the Boundless Dao.

He was of Heaven Trampling.

He was… Meng Hao!

Suddenly, the finger which had been formed by the will of the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, the finger that had just collapsed, formed back together. Simultaneously, thousands upon thousands of worlds withered up. All living things within them instantly died, their life forces sucked away to fuel the new finger.

Rumbling could be heard as the finger began to descend toward Meng Hao in shocking fashion.

Meng Hao looked up, his expression calm. Then he lifted his right hand and pointed out with his index finger.

As he did, the red, rippling light which surrounded him rose up into the air, swirling around and around in circles as it transformed into the image of a finger, a finger that could match up in every way to the finger formed by the will of Allheaven. Without any pause, the crimson finger began to fly up into the air.

When the two huge fingers collided, it seemed as if the entire starry sky of the Vast Expanse were about to be destroyed. A shockwave blasted out in all directions which that could not be described with words.

The finger formed by the will of Allheaven shook violently and then exploded, becoming countless motes of crystalline light. As for the finger formed by Meng Hao’s personal Essence, it also exploded into a blast of red light.

As soon as the finger formed by Allheaven’s will collapsed, the seemingly infinite motes of light that appeared suddenly transformed into lightning bolts. Rumbling could be heard as the endless bolts of lightning shot down toward Meng Hao.

This was Tribulation Lightning, sent by the starry sky of the Vast Expanse as Transcendence Tribulation.

Any one of those bolts of lightning could wipe a peak 9-Essences expert out of existence. As they descended en masse toward Meng Hao, he let out a light sigh.

Then he waved his right hand, causing all of the light which had formed his finger moments ago to coalesce into the shape of a gigantic head.

It had a solitary horn jutting out of it, and flickering red eyes. As it faced the incoming lightning, it grinned viciously, then opened its mouth and began to breathe in.

Instantly, the lightning bolts began to twist, and were subsequently sucked into the mouth of the huge head. The head looked up at the starry sky, then began to shrink down, flying toward Meng Hao’s palm, where it eventually became a spinning vortex.

The spinning vortex was only the size of a hand, but there seemed to be no end to it on the inside, as though it contained countless heavenly bodies, as if it had its own starry sky.

Everything went completely silent. Patriarch Vast Expanse’s clone looked thoughtfully at the vortex in Meng Hao’s palm. At the same time, a figure appeared within the starry sky of the necropolis.

It was merely an outline, and inside of it could be seen ninety-eight fruits. It was exactly the same entity Meng Hao had laid eyes on in the Demon pillar outside the Vast Expanse.

It was none other than the true body which was being rebuilt by the will of the starry sky of the Vast Expanse.

It was hard to say exactly when he had appeared up there, but there he floated up, looking down at Meng Hao. He seemed especially focused on the starry sky vortex Meng Hao held in his hand.

Meng Hao looked up at the figure.

After a long moment, the outline spoke, its voice cool. “Half a step into Ancestor….”

With one final look at Meng Hao, he faded away.

“Half a step into Ancestor….” Meng Hao smiled. It was only after his cultivation base, fleshly body, and soul had all entered Transcendence that he realized the truth. When it came to Transcendence, the Daosource Realm wasn’t the only Realm.

There was another Realm, which was the Ancestor….

That was the peak of Transcendence. As for Meng Hao, when he Transcended, he went all the way to the great circle. In fact, he went beyond that, taking him half a step into the Ancestor Realm.

The hallmark of the Ancestor Realm was that a starry sky, a world, would appear within one’s own body.

The nine land masses were completely silent. Meng Hao looked over at Patriarch Vast Expanse’s clone, then clasped hands and bowed deeply.

“Many thanks, Patriarch!”

He said nothing more. However, the assistance provided to him by Patriarch Vast Expanse was something he would never forget. He bowed with complete sincerity and gratitude.

Patriarch Vast Expanse’s clone looked at Meng Hao, face expressionless.

“The three people who came before you have long since left,” he said coolly. “Perhaps they have returned, but it would only be to observe a bit before leaving again. Compared to the Universe in which they exist, this place is insignificant.

“I’m just a clone, and my days are numbered. At the most, I will last another 10,000 years before passing away into meditation. Then I will vanish. However, it is a true blessing to have been able to witness a fourth Fellow Daoist Transcend here in my old home.” Patriarch Vast Expanse’s clone smiled, then stepped back toward the huge throne. The rocks flew back up into the air, covering him, transforming yet again into a huge statue. Soon, everything looked like before, with the statue staring out over his homeland.

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# Chapter 1538: A Universe!

The first through eighth land masses, which had been pulverized into nothing more than dust, were now reformed just as they had been. Everything in the necropolis was just as it had been before.

Meng Hao once again clasped hands and bowed deeply. By now, he had abandoned his idea of taking the ghosts away to fight for him. It wasn’t that he was incapable of doing such a thing; rather, it was not the right thing to do.

This was their home. They had been born here, and they had died here. It was a place they shouldn’t be separated from.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, then turned and waved his sleeve, sweeping up the Sect Leader and the others. He took a step forward, and without the need for any teleportation portal, was instantly outside of the necropolis.

As soon as he appeared in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, he could sense a terrifying power of expulsion pushing against him, and could even hear what sounded like the voice of the will of Allheaven.

“Leave. Leave. Leave… LEAVE this place!”

Meng Hao looked up at the starry sky. The feeling of being expelled was intense. All of the natural and magical laws within the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, all of the Essences, were now trying to expel him.

He, a Transcendent being, was something that the starry sky of the Vast Expanse could not accept. Wherever he stood, he replaced all Essences, all natural laws and all magical laws.

That, of course, created a conflict.

Meng Hao’s expression was normal as he looked away from the starry sky toward the Sect Leader and the others. All of them were panting, and as soon as he looked at them, they quickly bowed.

“Congratulations, exalted Transcendor….”

As he hovered there in the starry sky, Meng Hao realized that all existence, even the starry sky, were contained within his thoughts.

Before, the Vast Expanse had seemed endless and infinite, but now, he could send his divine sense out to its borders.

Of course, the borders were so distant that even someone at the peak of 9-Essences couldn’t reach them within a lifetime. As such, it wasn’t necessarily incorrect to call the starry sky of the Vast Expanse neverending.

Before, there was something about the Vast Expanse that Meng Hao had been incapable of noticing. But now, he could clearly see that the starry sky… contained countless rifts.

Some were large and some were small, but they filled the starry sky, and also emanated an aura of decay, which was the source of the mist that filled the Vast Expanse.

That decay was a sign of imminent death, of age, of weakness. This starry sky was on the verge of dying.

It was like an old man lying on his deathbed. However, the starry sky didn’t wish to pass away into death, which was why all of this was happening. As of this point, Meng Hao understood everything.

If he wanted to, he could rip open the starry sky and step outside of the Vast Expanse. He could enter the void outside, where the five columns existed.

Were it his wish, he could rip his way out of the Vast Expanse… to enter the true Universe.

In fact, he had already been outside in the past. He suddenly sent his divine sense raging out in all directions. He suppressed the power of expulsion, driving it away, then sent his divine sense out through the rifts filling the starry sky, rifts that only Transcendent cultivators could see. That allowed him to see what was outside of the starry sky of the Vast Expanse.

He saw a quiet void, filled with dust and desolation.

Back before he had Transcended, this sight didn’t leave much of an impression on him, other than the feeling that it had once been a beautiful and flourishing place.

Now, that feeling was stronger than ever. In fact, he even noticed signs that living beings had once existed out here. Based on the desolation which surrounded the Vast Expanse on the outside, he was sure that ages ago, before the will of Allheaven had grown old, there had been countless heavenly bodies and worlds out here.

There had been many forms of life which multiplied and grew. However, as the will of Allheaven grew old, the starry sky began to wither, beginning with the area outside the Vast Expanse.

The planets here were broken and crumbled. Everything was dead, and the only thing that remained behind amidst the rubble… were the five columns.

After pondering the pervasive aura of death for a moment, he sent his divine sense even further out. Soon, it filled the entire area that was immediately outside of the Vast Expanse. It was then that he noticed a barrier, filled with rifts. Non-Transcendent cultivators could spend a lifetime and never pass through that barrier, but for Transcendent cultivators, it would be as simple as breathing.

A moment later, Meng Hao’s divine sense saw a new starry sky. Instantly, his heart began to pound.

What he was looking at… was something which could truly be called infinite… the Universe!

Based on his divine sense, he couldn’t see its borders at all. There was resplendent, dazzling light, and a seemingly endless sea of stars, filled with countless vortexes and other heavenly bodies.

Some of them were dim, some were bright. Some were withering in death, some seemed to have only recently been born.

Meng Hao turned to look back at the Vast Expanse Realm, and his eyes gleamed with enlightenment.

“So, this is what Patriarch Vast Expanse’s clone referred to… the Universe. The Vast Expanse Realm is just one whirlpool of stars within this boundless Universe.” He shook his head at the realization that the Vast Expanse Realm was simply a small part of the Universe. You could even say that it was like a seed. Inside the seed was the Vast Expanse, and outside of it… was the Universe as a whole.

Out in the Universe, everything was quiet. He could see countless other whirlpools of stars, and it was very possible to imagine that they were full of their own various worlds.

“The others who Transcended before me all went out into the Universe,” he murmured. Each whirlpool of stars was a world, and only by Transcending could one be qualified to leave that world.

It was impossible to say how many living things there were in the Universe, but one could imagine that there were definitely other Transcendent beings there. Most likely, many more existed than the few who had emerged from the starry sky of the Vast Expanse. However, when compared to the Universe as a whole, such people… would still be incredibly rare, as rare as phoenix feathers or qilin horns.

As he looked out at the Universe, Meng Hao felt the impulse to go out, to explore it. There was surely a much longer path for him to walk out there.

Perhaps, years later, he might even encounter the Ghost, the God, and the Devil….

In the end, he retracted his divine sense and quelched that impulse. There was still far too much unfinished business within the Vast Expanse Realm.

After returning to his body, his eyes shone with profound light. He almost looked like the young scholar he had been thousands of years ago on Mount Daqing.

Now that he had Transcended, there were no traces of age at all on his face. However, the ancient look within his eyes was even more prominent.

He heard the Sect Leader and the others greeting him formally. Apparently, time moved differently for him now. From the moment he had sent his divine sense out into the Universe, until the moment it returned, only enough time had passed to speak a single sentence.

The words, “Congratulations, exalted Transcendor,” were still echoing out as Meng Hao looked off in the direction of the Mountain and Sea Butterfly.

“Call me the Demon Sovereign,” Meng Hao said coolly.

The Sect Leader and the others shivered. Bowing their heads, they said, “Greetings, Demon Sovereign!”

Even as everyone offered greetings, Jin Yunshan took a deep breath. He had failed to Transcend, but Meng Hao had succeeded. As such, he was quick to realize that any hope he had in Transcending lay with Meng Hao.

Furthermore he could sense how vastly different he was from Meng Hao in terms of power. It was as if a single word from Meng Hao could alter natural law. It was as if a single thought from him could become Essence. It was as if a single action on his part could shake the entire starry sky.

In his view, Meng Hao was now on equal footing with the legendary Patriarch Vast Expanse. Because of the vast disparity between them, he also had the feeling that he could not be able to step into Transcendence any time soon.

“Exalted Demon Sovereign,” he said. “I am willing to be a slave for you as your vanguard. I will lead the Vast Expanse School to slaughter the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent!”

The Sect Leader’s heart trembled, and he immediately voiced similar words. The others all did the same.

Trembling, Immortal Bai Wuchen stepped forward and bowed deeply. “Your humble servant is willing to do anything for you, oh exalted one. I only hope that in the end… you will return me to my home outside the Vast Expanse.”

Even as she bowed, she looked at Meng Hao with anticipation, focus, and hope.

Meng Hao looked back at her for a moment before replying, “You really wish to go back outside the Vast Expanse?”

“Exalted one,” she replied, “I beg for your aid in doing so. I was born outside the Vast Expanse, in the Vast Expanse Society. My family, my friends, my roots… are all outside the Vast Expanse.” From the way she looked at Meng Hao, she seemed to be pleading with him.

Meng Hao sighed softly. By this point, he realized that all of Bai Wuchen’s memories were illusions. In fact, all of the people on Planet Vast Expanse who had supposedly descended from above had had their memories altered by the will of Allheaven. All of those people had been put in place by that will.

That included Han Bei. As for exactly why that was, Meng Hao wasn’t sure. However, he was absolutely certain that it had something to do with Planet Vast Expanse.

“Once everything is concluded,” he said coolly, “if you still wish to go back outside the Vast Expanse, I will help you.” With that, he made a grasping motion, and a soul strand appeared in his hand.

It was a middle-aged man who had a third eye on his forehead. After he appeared, he trembled, then immediately kowtowed to Meng Hao. Apparently, he didn’t dare to speak even a word.

That soul was… the true Ninth Paragon of the Vast Expanse School.

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# Chapter 1539: The Meat Jelly Shall Be Resurrected

Back in their original encounter, Meng Hao had promised to eventually release him from being sealed. Now, he was making good on that promise. With the wave of a finger, he created something from nothing, providing a new fleshly body for the Ninth Paragon's soul.

The others were shaken by what they saw, and their desire to reach Transcendence themselves became even stronger.

"Many thanks, exalted one!" cried the Ninth Paragon, his heart filled with both excitement and bitterness. Long ago, he had smugly assumed that he would rise to glory after descending. How could he ever have imagined that his soul would have been sealed by Meng Hao, who would then assume his identity to rise to power?

In the two thousand years which had passed, Meng Hao had Transcended, while he himself remained in the 9-Essences level.

However, he felt no resentment. Instead, he dropped to his knees and kowtowed over and over again.

Meng Hao looked around at the group of Paragons and said, "Any of you who wish to join me can meet me half a month from now outside of Planet Vast Expanse."

With that, he swished his sleeve, took a step forward, and vanished.

Everyone rose to their feet and exchanged glances. All of them were visibly moved by what had just occurred. A moment later, they transformed into beams of light which shot off in the direction of Planet Vast Expanse.

Meng Hao made his way alone out into the starry sky. Following his memories, he returned to the location near the Mountain and Sea Butterfly where he had been teleported away by the meat jelly.

Based on the parrot's memories, he then began to search for the location where he had fully fused with the bronze lamp. What he wanted to find… was the place where the meat jelly's aura had finally dissipated.

That location was where he was most confident that he could reverse what had occurred in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, and… resurrect the meat jelly!

He would essentially grab the meat jelly's soul from within the will of Allheaven and drag it out.

Several hours later, Meng Hao reached his destination, where he looked around for a moment in both grief and anticipation.

He could tell that this was the location where the meat jelly, still in armor form, had died in the midst of defending him.

Meng Hao made a grasping gesture with his right hand, and a fossilized suit of armor appeared. The parrot flew out, its expression the same as Meng Hao's, that of grief and anticipation.

Meng Hao carefully laid the armor out in front of him in the exact spot where the meat jelly had died. Eyes glittering, he performed a double-handed incantation gesture and then placed both hands down onto the armor.

The starry sky filled with rumbling sounds as ripples spread out in all directions.

Meng Hao's eyes shone with a strange light, and his expression was very serious as he unleashed Hexing magics, one type after another. Eventually, the Ninth Hex appeared, whereupon he lifted his right foot up and then stamped it down.

“By the power of my name, I hereby alter natural law, reverse time, and overturn the starry sky. Meat jelly, I call upon your soul to return from the stream of time!” His voice seemed to be filled with strange, magical power. Instantly, the surrounding laws of magic and nature began to twist and distort. It was as if the area in front of Meng Hao was being wrenched out of the control of the will of Allheaven, and conforming to Meng Hao’s Dao.

The natural and magical laws in the area all transformed into spiralling threads, which merged together to form a mighty river. It was a river formed, not from water, but from the fragments of time which existed in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse. Within that flowing river were numerous vicious beasts, one of which was a crocodilian creature fully 30,000 meters long. As it rose up from within the river, it looked like a hulking island.

“Who has the gall to unleash Hexing magic to disturb the flow of time!?” it roared in a voice like thunder. “Anyone who commits the sin of altering with time shall be imprisoned for all eternity!” It looked like a paramount celestial being, radiating pressure in all directions. However, when it saw Meng Hao, its eyes went wide, and it shivered in terror.

This creature was the embodiment of countless souls fused together, and could control the river of time. It had never seen Meng Hao before, but was aware that there were four people within the starry sky of the Vast Expanse who had Transcended, and could fight with the will of Allheaven.

As soon as it laid eyes on Meng Hao, it realized who he was, and instantly changed its tone of voice.

“Ex-exalted… exalted one… your humble servant didn’t see you just now, um… what are your orders, exalted one? I will go through hell or high water to fulfil your every request.”

Meng Hao looked calmly at the crocodilian creature, then waved his finger at the river of time. Instantly, the entire river slowed down and stopped.

That affected the flow of time everywhere within the starry sky of the Vast Expanse. All beings and entities, regardless of their nature, were suddenly rendered immobile.

The crocodilian creature shivered. A divine ability like this which could suspend the flow of time was something that surpassed any and all natural laws. Even this creature was incapable of moving, and could do nothing more than watch as Meng Hao reached his hand out into the river of time.

It seemed almost like a casual gesture. Instantly, countless motes of time appeared in front of him within the starry sky of the Vast Expanse. They were events which had occurred in a previous life, numerous images that would cause even the mind of a 9-Essences Paragon to reel. Only a Transcendent cultivator would be able to do something like this, to reverse fate and alter reality.

Meng Hao didn’t pause for a moment. He quickly found the meat jelly’s soul within the river of time, two thousand years in the past. He could see himself, and the meat jelly in armor form. He saw the meat jelly die.

He watched as the meat jelly’s soul flew away. Just when it was about to vanish into the void, he reached out and gently laid ahold of the soul.

The entire process only took a few breaths’ worth of time. A moment later, he held a soul strand in his hand.

When the parrot saw the meat jelly’s soul, its eyes lit up with hope.

A warm look could be seen in Meng Hao’s eyes as he placed the meat jelly’s soul onto the fossilized suit of armor. Instantly, a howl echoed out through the starry sky as the will of Allheaven tried to interfere.

To the will of Allheaven, Meng Hao’s actions were a brazen provocation. He was interfering with something that belonged solely to that will.

Souls of entities which had died were supposed to return to the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, but Meng Hao was completely defying that arrangement.

As the howl echoed out, the formerly still starry sky of the Vast Expanse suddenly returned to normal. The river of time flowed once more, and the crocodilian creature shivered and sank back down into its depths, not daring to even show its face.

It was well aware that it could not participate in a battle between Meng Hao and the starry sky itself.

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# Chapter 1540: The Return of Lord Third!

The howl echoed out near and far, in all times and places, seemingly intent on burying Meng Hao. As for Meng Hao, he simply snorted coldly.

Immediately, ripples spread out, distorting everything as they spread out, seemingly taking the surrounding area and cutting it away from the starry sky of the Vast Expanse.

Ignoring the howl coming from the will of the starry sky, Meng Hao pushed the meat jelly’s soul down into the armor with his right hand.

In the blink of an eye, the fossilized armor suddenly turned sleek and glossy. Then, it began to twitch and wriggle, as if life were being breathed into it.

Immediately, the will of the starry sky of the Vast Expanse began to descend, but before it could reach him, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with cold light. His right hand flashed with an incantation gesture, unleashing the Ninth Hex with the wave of a finger.

“How dare you try to threaten me with this paltry show of force. Don’t come at me again until you’re ready to pull out all the stops. Screw off!” Although he spoke calmly, every word echoed like thunder, causing rumbling sounds to echo out in all directions.

Instantly, the will of the starry sky of the Vast Expanse was crushed, destroyed as easily as a dried twig.

Paying the will of the starry sky no further heed, Meng Hao looked back at the meat jelly. More and more life force was building up inside of it, until it finally resumed its original form!

It opened its eyes, looking around in confusion before noticing Meng Hao and the parrot. It smiled.

“Hahaha!” squawked the parrot. “Third Bro, you’re finally back!” It was so excited it couldn’t stand still. It immediately flew over to the meat jelly and said, “Come, come. Do you remember Lord Fifth?”

The meat jelly blinked, and without even thinking about it muttered, “Who are you calling Third Bro? You can’t say that. It’s immoral. It’s wrong. Lord Third is going to convert you… Lord Third… Lord Third….” It’s eyes widened, and it glanced back and forth between the parrot and Meng Hao. Then it looked around the area in general. “Hey, what happened? I feel like I just woke up from a dream. In the dream, I died, and Haowie was also about to die…. Wait a second….”

The parrot began laughing uproariously in its high-pitched voice, and Meng Hao joined in. Meng Hao looked at the meat jelly, his gaze warm. He felt that this was one of the truly happy moments in his life.

“I will ensure that all which was lost is restored….” he thought. Taking a deep breath, he waved his sleeve, and a blast of wind rose up. The excited parrot and the confused meat jelly vanished.

After they all left, the natural and magical laws in the area returned to normal. The will of the starry sky of the Vast Expanse converged into the vague form of a person, who hovered there alone, looking in the direction Meng Hao had just vanished in, its eyes flickering with the intense desire to kill.

One day later… in another corner of the starry sky of the Vast Expanse…. Three land masses existed inside of an enormous vortex. They were filled with an aura of death, and contained no cultivators, only countless lizards of varying sizes.

Those lizards had fully occupied the three land masses, and were now the rulers of this place.

The central land mass was actually an enormous basilisk lizard, which spent most of its time in slumber. The world which existed on its back was a Holy Land occupied by its descendants.

All of a sudden, a figure appeared within the vortex. It was a young man in a long white robe, who looked like a mortal scholar.

He was none other than the Transcended Meng Hao!

On his shoulder was the parrot, who had a little silver bell attached to its foot. A face could be seen on that bell, and it didn't look confused at all. In fact, it was arguing with the parrot.

In the day that had passed, the parrot had explained everything to the meat jelly, including how Meng Hao had resurrected it. The meat jelly was simple-minded to begin with, so it quickly recovered from its confusion and began to talk incessantly.

“Shut up, you three-counting old fart!” the parrot squawked. “Do Lord Fifth a favor and just shut up!”

The meat jelly glared angrily at the parrot. “Lord Third was dead for countless three-year-periods. Countless three-year-periods, you hear me? You can't even count them. That's not countless two-year-periods, and not countless one-year-periods either. It's definitely not countless zero-year-periods….” If it could, it would have continued on in this line of reasoning, but after thinking for a bit, it realized that its ability to count really was quite limited.

“Anyway, I haven't been able to talk for countless three-year-periods. That simply won't do. I have to make up for all of the things I would have said during those countless three-year-periods! There are also countless bullies that I didn't convert during those countless three-year-periods. That's wrong! That's immoral. I'm a sinner…. I have to make up for all of it!” The meat jelly was not happy at all, and if it had arms and legs at the moment, it would be waving and stamping them wildly.

The parrot and meat jelly argued back and forth, and Meng Hao smiled the entire time. He didn’t feel annoyed at all. It had been two thousand years since he had experienced this sensation, and it felt like he was with family.

He hovered there in the void, looking around. This was the same place where he had found the first copper mirror shard, which he took from within the body of the gigantic lizard. Before leaving, he had mentioned that he would return to take the lizard away as his subordinate.

Back then, the old lizard had mocked his words inwardly, and yet, here Meng Hao was.

Smiling, Meng Hao said, “Hey lizard, an old friend has come for a visit, why haven’t you come out yet?” His voice filled the three worlds in the vortex, causing all of the lizards to suddenly go stiff. At the same time, an enraged roar echoed out from the central land mass.

The entire land mass began to move as the huge basilisk lizard lifted its head. As it glared in fury at Meng Hao, an intense pressure erupted out from within it.

“Dammit, you little punk, how dare you show your face in front of… wait… what?” The huge lizard’s first reaction upon seeing Meng Hao was to roar with rage. However, before it could finish speaking, its eyes went wide with disbelief. Then it gasped.

Meng Hao hadn’t unleashed any pressure at all, but as soon as the old lizard caught wind of his aura, it could tell that something was off. Staring at him, it began to tremble. Although it had never encountered a Transcendent cultivator before, it could instantly tell what Meng Hao was. It could sense that a single glance from Meng Hao could completely eradicate it.

“…. Transcendor?” The old lizard’s mind felt as if it were being toppled over.

“What did you call me just now?” Meng Hao asked coolly.

The old lizard shivered, and its eyes darted back and forth for a moment before it looked back at Meng Hao with a gaze of awe and reverence.

“A true genius, someone you might only see once in a hundred years! Heaven has laid its eyes upon me with grace, otherwise little old me would never get to lay eyes on a Chosen like this!” An expression of gratitude appeared on the lizard’s face, and even as its words were echoing about, it bowed its head in respect.

“Many thanks, exalted one, many thanks. The fact that I’ve been able to lay eyes on you makes my entire life worth it, oh exalted one. What’s more, I’ve actually been able to see you twice! Oh exalted one, back then, I could sense that you were beyond ordinary. Exalted one, your gaze is like the gaze of an eagle or a wolf. Back then, your bearing was that of a noble hero, striding forth like the dragon or tiger. You seemed like an intrepid and honorable warrior, gripping your sword as you patrolled vigilantly!”

Meng Hao looked at the lizard through the slitted eyes of a smile. Discerning someone’s true feelings by seeing their reaction to your brown-nosing was a childish ploy that Meng Hao had come to master long ago. Although he was a bit surprised that the old lizard would speak in such a manner, he took it in stride.

However, the parrot and meat jelly looked over with looks of complete disdain.

“Uncouth!” the parrot said with a snort.

“Shameless!” the meat jelly said with a cold harrumph, its eyes shining with contempt.

The old lizard was at the peak of 9-Essences, and thus had no choice but to speak words to Meng Hao that it actually found revolting. However, it still had the same temper it always had, so the reactions from the parrot and meat jelly left it feeling even more humiliated than before. It instantly glared over at the parrot and meat jelly, eyes shining with a ferocious light.

“Well, what have we here?” squawked the parrot, flapping its wings excitedly as it looked at the lizard. “Not going to back down?

“Come, come, Third Bro, we need to have some words with this old bastard. Let’s see, how many mistakes did it make when it was speaking just now!?”

A popping sound could be heard as the bell transformed into the usual meat jelly shape. It looked over at the old lizard, and began to speak in a very wise and knowing tone: “I’m not going to give a lecture here, but listen, you need to do things earnestly. Even when you’re brown-nosing, you have to do it earnestly. Only by doing things earnestly can you do things well. You need to brown-nose as if you were practicing cultivation. That’s the way to do things perfectly. Ai. All this reminds of something that happened countless three-year-periods ago. It was a fine spring day when….” The meat jelly continued speaking emotionally. However, before it could say much more, the parrot smacked it with a wing.

“Hurry up and get to the point!”

Off to the side, Meng Hao looked on with amusement. He suddenly felt very warm inside. Seeing the parrot and meat jelly talking like this reminded him of memories from more than two thousand years in the past.

After being smacked by the parrot, the meat jelly wasn’t very happy at all. The old lizard looked on with wide eyes, unable to keep himself from wondering if this meat jelly and this parrot were complete idiots. However, even as the thought occurred to him, the meat jelly cleared its throat.

“Fine, fine. Listen up, old lizard. Again, I’m not going to be giving any lectures. However, I couldn’t help but notice that you mentioned something about only being able to see someone once in a hundred years, right? Nonsense! Rubbish! You call that brown-nosing? A hundred years? My little Haowie is a Chosen you couldn’t see once in 100,000 years. No wait. From the beginning of the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, to now, there’s never been anyone like him!” The meat jelly’s eyes glowed with ardor. As soon as the words left its mouth, everything went quiet, and the old lizard gaped in shock.

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# Chapter 1541: Lost in the Act!

The meat jelly cleared its throat and then, seemingly without the slightest bit of shame, continued on in a loud voice. “And then there was the second thing you said. Heaven laid its eyes upon you? Do you even know how to talk? What is that supposed to mean? Heaven has eyes? What you should have said is this: ‘Oh Heavens, dig out my eyes, because after seeing a Chosen like this, I don’t need them!’”

The parrot was off to the side, muttering in irritation.

Meng Hao blinked, and couldn’t hold back from coughing dryly.

As for the old lizard, its eyes were as wide as saucers as it stared at the meat jelly. It couldn’t suppress the feeling that it had truly run into a master of speech….

“Remember, when you’re brown-nosing, you have to determine exactly what type of person you’re talking to. Some people like a bit of exaggeration mixed in with the truth. Others like complete and utter exaggeration. Therefore, before you begin brown-nosing, you need to analyze the personality of the person in question. At a single glance, you can tell that Haowie is a clever rogue. With people like that, you can’t rely on ordinary methods. You have to exaggerate, go overboard. The thicker you lay it on, the better. The highest realm of brown-nosing is not the level where you make yourself sick. No, the highest level… is where you actually believe what you are saying is true. That is a level that is not to be trifled with!” As the meat jelly continued to lecture in a very knowledgeable fashion, its expression was very somber. It seemed genuinely irritated at the shortcomings of the old lizard.

The lizard began to sweat nervously.

“And then there’s the last thing you said. It was far too long-winded. Alright, how about this? You just watch me. I’ll show you what the highest level looks like.” A popping sound could be heard as the meat jelly suddenly transformed into a little lizard. Its tongue flicked out of its mouth for a moment, and its eyes began to burn with passion. It was even trembling, and smoke began to rise up from its skin.

Its burning gaze seemed capable of melting mountains of ice. It was as if it were looking at the most perfect of all creations. It suddenly plopped down to prostrate itself to Meng Hao, then cried out in the most moving of voices, “Oh exalted one, I absolutely, positively must become your subordinate, sir, and bathe in the radiance of your light. If you dare to refuse me, sir, then I… will kill myself in front of your very eyes. If you try to stop me, I will kill myself this minute!” The meat jelly seemed to be lost in the act. It stuck its tongue out as if in preparation to bite it off if Meng Hao didn’t agree.

In fact, it even began to emanate the fluctuations of self-detonation. The parrot stared in shock for a moment, then smacked the meat jelly viciously to remind it that it was acting….

“Damned bird!” the meat jelly roared. “Get the hell out of my way. I’m the most respected lizard in the entire starry sky of the Vast Expanse! However, as of this day, I have come to understand that my mission in life has been to wait for your appearance, oh master!

“Sir, if you dare to say the word ‘no,’ then I will kill myself immediately!” The fluctuations of self-detonation continued to grow more and more intense. Soon the entire area seemed to be on the verge of being destroyed. Cracking sounds emanated out, and rifts opened up which emanated crimson, destructive light.

Meng Hao’s eyes were wide, and the parrot seemed completely exasperated. Seeing that the meat jelly really did seem to be on the verge of self-detonating, he quickly said, “Yes, I accept. I accept!”

Finally, the meat jelly nodded in satisfaction. The signs of self-detonation faded away, and a popping sound rang out as the meat jelly returned to its usual form. It had been so engrossed in the act that it was completely exhausted. Furthermore, forcibly stopping the imminent self-detonation had resulted in some injuries. However, the meat jelly didn’t seem to care. Looking proudly over at the old lizard, it said, “Now do you see how wrong you were?!”

The lizard remained in place, trembling and panting as it stared at the meat jelly. Suddenly, it was as if it had experienced an epiphany. Countless lightning bolts blasted around in its mind, removing the mists that had blocked enlightenment.

It had never encountered anything like the meat jelly before. Moments ago, it had been more than obvious the meat jelly really had initiated a self-detonation. If Meng Hao hadn’t acted when he did… the meat jelly might have actually blown itself up.

The old lizard took a deep breath, then clasped hands and bowed to the meat jelly, its expression one of deep respect. It was feeling very torn, and was actually considering asking the meat jelly to teach it more when Meng Hao cleared his throat.

“Alright, enough with the ruckus,” he said. “Listen, old lizard, you can follow me for a thousand years if you want. And if not, I won’t force you.” With that, he flicked his sleeve and made his way off into the distance.

The parrot and meat jelly immediately followed after him. After a moment passed, the meat jelly looked back ruefully at the lizard.

The lizard hesitated for a moment, then clenched its jaw and flew after them.

It was still feeling somewhat unsettled, and thus didn’t notice that the meat jelly and parrot were apparently transmitting messages to each other.

“Well, what did you think of that?” the meat jelly transmitted proudly. “From now on, Lord Third has some hired muscle. That old lizard’s cultivation base is at the 9-Essences level. Whenever we go out in the future, we can loot anybody we want without a single hitch.”

The parrot rolled its eyes. “You three-counting imbecile! How stupid can you be? Haowie’s Transcended already. With that kind of backing, who needs hired muscle?! Don’t you know the story of the fox who borrowed the tiger’s might? Well don’t you?!”

Inwardly, the parrot sighed, thinking about how lonely it was being Transcendent in terms of wisdom.

The meat jelly gaped mutely as it was struck by the truth of the situation. All of a sudden, it realized that losing itself in the act like it had really had been a waste. It had almost gotten itself killed….

A few days later, Meng Hao led his little group to a desolate land mass within the starry sky of the Vast Expanse. It seemed completely devoid of any life, and yet, when Meng Hao sent his divine sense out, the pressure caused the land mass to tremble, and countless termites flew out.

From the very depths of the land emerged a huge termite, larger than any of the others. When it saw Meng Hao, and sensed the terrifying fluctuations emanating off of him, it trembled and bowed its head. This termite was much more straightforward than the old lizard, and immediately chose to acknowledge allegiance.

Taking the peak 9-Essences termite with him, Meng Hao traveled to another area, where there was a huge vortex. As he neared it, his eyes shone with bright light. Instantly, the vortex ceased spinning, and even began to show signs of collapse.

A cry of terror echoed out from within the vortex as a huge head flew out. Before, a vicious expression had covered the head’s face, but now, it was staring at Meng Hao in astonishment.

It remembered Meng Hao from hundreds of years ago, when he had taken away its precious treasure. It had chased after him and tried to kill him, and now, here he was, returned with an aura infinitely more terrifying than before.

“Y-you….”

“Quit stammering!” the parrot barked. “Hurry up and decide, are you gonna acknowledge allegiance or not?!” The parrot looked quite sanctimonious and lofty, almost as if it were the one emanating the aura of Transcendence, and not Meng Hao….

The enormous face smiled wryly and thought back to what it had said last time about what would happen when it met Meng Hao again. It could do nothing but look down.

“I acknowledge allegiance….”

Meng Hao nodded. “I’ve come searching for you and others like you, not to force you to acknowledge allegiance, but to put an end to the Karma from years ago. If you wish to follow me, you can do so for a thousand years.”

What he said was true. He didn’t need their fighting power. However, after reaching Transcendence, he got the feeling that he needed to unravel the Karma he had in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse. If he didn’t, it could be used against him as a weapon.

The last place he went was the world that existed inside of the enormous flower.

The flower was no longer in a state of bloom. It looked withered, and sagged in its position within the starry sky. When Meng Hao appeared next to it, he was so miniscule as to be invisible.

As soon as he appeared, though, the flower suddenly trembled. Clearly, the flower had a life force of its own, and it could sense that Meng Hao was a Transcendent cultivator.

He hovered there in front of the flower, thinking back to how helpless he had been last time he came, when he had been forced to simply wait for the flower to open. But now… his expression was calm as he said, “Bloom.”

As soon as that single word left his mouth, the flower trembled even more violently than before, and without the slightest hesitation, bloomed.

Meng Hao entered the world inside the flower. Back then, he had promised to completely seal the fire and ice within the world, to prevent the world from being destroyed.

As he flew across the lands, he looked down to find that things looked somewhat different than before. The ice mountains were melting, and much of the flames were extinguished. As for the area in the middle where the two tribes had lived, it was now losing its vitality.

From the look of things, it wouldn’t be long before this entire world was unsuitable for life. Once the flower closed back up, no one but a Transcendent cultivator could enter, which meant that everyone living inside the world would die.

Meng Hao didn’t attract the attention of Patriarch Icemountain and the Flamephoenix. Unless he wished it, no one in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse would notice him.

Looking down at the lands below, he waved his finger, a seemingly casual gesture that actually altered the natural and magical laws. It changed destiny.

The lands began to rumble as an invisible ripple spread out in either direction. Wherever it passed, ice mountains were frozen solid, sending coldness out in all directions that would never fade away. Everything was returned to its previous state.

On the other side, flames leapt to life, sending scorching heat out in all directions.

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# Chapter 1542: Demon Sovereign!

Having done that, Meng Hao looked at the lands below one more time, then made his way off. When the flower closed again, one of the ice mountains suddenly trembled and transformed into a giant. As the giant stared around in shock, a beam of light appeared off in the distance, which was none other than the Flamephoenix.

Both of them were completely astonished, and had no idea what had just occurred. Shortly before, they had been in despair, thinking that their home was doomed to be destroyed. But then, everything had been reversed. The mountains froze up again, and the flames raged hot and bright. There was even abundant spiritual energy present which hadn’t been there before.

“What happened…?” asked the Flamephoenix. “Patriarch Icemountain, do you know?” However, a glance at Patriarch Icemountain’s expression made it obvious that he had no idea either.

After a moment of silence, Patriarch Icemountain said, “How strange. Everything suddenly changed….”

Silence prevailed for the time it takes an incense stick to burn. Then, the Flamephoenix hesitantly looked up into the sky.

“Do you think it might have been… him? Returned?”

“Impossible!” Patriarch Icemountain replied immediately, shaking his head. But then, he hesitated. With the flower closed, no one should have been able to enter the world to interfere with the lands of ice and fire. Even if they could enter, changing the situation was impossible.

Eventually, the Flamephoenix looked thoughtfully up at the sky one more time, and then turned and left.

The Icemountain Giant looked out at the lands and sighed. “Don’t tell me it was really him….”

A few more days passed, and soon the day arrived which Meng Hao had mentioned to the Paragons from the Vast Expanse School. On that day, Planet Vast Expanse buzzed with activity. There was such a commotion that even the starry sky outside of the planet was affected.

Soon, figures appeared, flying up from Planet Vast Expanse. All of them were cultivators with extraordinary cultivation bases. Powerful ripples spread out into the starry sky as an 8-Essences Paragon flew out, leading a vast host of other cultivators off of the planet. It was none other than… the Ninth Sect!

They were gathering in preparation for Meng Hao’s return!

Every Paragon, and all cultivators in the Dao Realm, Ancient Realm, and Immortal Realm appeared. There were countless numbers of them, stretching out in all directions.

They didn’t fly out of their own power. Instead, they were organized in ranks on enormous, ancient trees which had been carved into semblances of ferocious beasts.

Further off in the distance were more figures. They weren’t cultivators; they were other strange creatures and life forms.

These were various peoples from worlds that the Ninth Sect had subjugated over the years. Altogether, the forces of the Ninth Sect formed a huge army numbering over 10,000,000,000. They virtually blotted out the sky; there almost didn’t seem to be an end to the army.

The pressure they radiated caused the mist in the starry sky to seethe and churn, almost as if it couldn’t approach the cultivators. A vortex sprang up around the host, swirling around and making their aura even more shocking.

Soon, another host of cultivators flew out from Planet Vast Expanse. They were the powerful experts from the Eighth Sect. Although they couldn’t match up to the Ninth Sect in terms of numbers, their power and glory shook the starry sky.

Next were the Seventh, Sixth, and Fifth Sects… all the way to the First Sect. Planet Vast Expanse was shaken in a way that it had never been throughout all history.

A few of the well-informed rogue cultivators knew a bit about what was going on, although they weren't sure of the details. However, most rogue cultivators had no idea what was happening, and gasped in shock and fear.

“Heavens! The nine great sects of the Vast Expanse School are all mobilizing off-planet! What's happening?”

“There must be a war! The Vast Expanse School is going to fight one of the other great powers!!”

“How could that be possible? There are always small wars being fought here and there in the starry sky, but the Vast Expanse School is huge. Besides, how could they go to war when their 9-Essences experts are all focused on trying to Transcend…?” It wasn't just the rogue cultivators who were shocked. All of the other worlds located in the Vast Expanse School's sphere of influence were equally astonished.

Of course, some people were able to make speculations based on tidbits of information which had leaked out in recent days.

“Did you hear? The entire Vast Expanse School is mobilizing. I heard they're all going to support their Ninth Paragon!”

“The Ninth Paragon comes from a world that the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent destroyed. He wants revenge, and the Vast Expanse School is going to help him get it!”

“They're going to war with the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent? How… how could this Ninth Paragon convince them to do such a thing?!”

Even as everyone reeled in shock, the 9-Essences Paragons appeared from the various sects. They flew out to the front of the huge army, where they settled down cross-legged to wait.

The Sect Leader was among their number, his expression grave and murderous as he sat there in front of the First Sect.

Jin Yunshan, Sha Jiudong, and Immortal Bai Wuchen were there as well, their energy shaking the starry sky around them.

Apparently, the entire Vast Expanse School had come out. It was a shocking event which rocked the entire starry sky of the Vast Expanse. As word spread near and far, gasps of shock could be heard everywhere.

Countless worlds chose to seal themselves shut. Innumerable vortexes went dark. No one wanted to participate in what was sure to be a brutal and savage conflict.

Time passed, and everyone waited in silence. Suddenly, a powerful roar filled the starry sky as an enormous basilisk lizard appeared. It was as large as an entire land mass, and before it even got close, an intense pressure weighed down, causing everyone to tremble. The Sect Leader’s eyes snapped open, and he slowly rose to his feet.

Jin Yunshan and the others looked on with shining eyes and trembling hearts as they realized that standing on the head of the huge lizard… was Meng Hao.

The basilisk lizard filled them with intense dread, and as for the person standing on its head, it once again filled their hearts with the awesome sensation of Transcendence.

As the lizard approached, roaring sounds echoed out from behind it as an enormous termite appeared. Although it was smaller than the lizard, the aura it emanated was terrifying to the extreme.

After the termite was an enormous head, floating along with a vicious expression. It looked like the head of an old man, threatening without being angry, which emanated the fear-inspiring ripples of the peak of 9-Essences.

“Patriarch Godlizard!”

“The Holy Termite!!”

“And the Primordial Patriarch!!”

The Sect Leader and the others were completely shaken. They had heard of these three entities, and knew that they had reached the peak of 9-Essences long, long ago.

It was at this point that the 8-Essences Paragon from the Ninth Sect took a deep breath, then clasped hands and bowed deeply toward Meng Hao.

“Greetings, Demon Sovereign!”

The 10,000,000,000 Ninth Sect disciples behind him trembled inwardly. Immediately, they clasped hands and bowed, their voices forming a powerful sound wave that swept out in all directions.

“Greetings, Demon Sovereign!”

As the starry sky shook, the Sect Leader, Jin Yunshan, Sha Jiudong and Immortal Bai Wuchen, as well as all the other 9-Essences Paragons, all clasped hands and bowed deeply.

“Greetings, Demon Sovereign!” Then, all of the other disciples from all the other sects clasped hands and bowed low, their voices shaking Heaven and Earth.

The intensity of the sound echoing out caused a pulsing force of expulsion to rise up, which was the will of the starry sky reacting to what was happening.

Meng Hao looked out at the scene quietly. A moment passed, and soon silence reigned. Meng Hao suddenly flicked his sleeve, causing his cultivation base power to erupt out. Instantly, it surpassed the 9-Essences level, and radiated the fluctuations of the Daosource.

In the Daosource Realm, one became Essence, and replaced natural and magical laws. The pressure emanating from a single person could cause the minds of all living things to reel, and fill their hearts with shock.

Things weren’t over yet though. After unleashing his cultivation base, Meng Hao sent his divine sense out like a hurricane that swept over the entire starry sky.

“Transcendence! That’s… the aura of Transcendence!!”

“I can’t believe the Ninth Paragon… actually Transcended!!”

“The legends say that there have only ever been three people who Transcended in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse. Patriarch Vast Expanse was one of them. But now, there’s actually a fourth!!” Up to this point, only the 9-Essences cultivators had been aware of Meng Hao’s Transcendence.Now that Meng Hao was making no effort to conceal the level of his cultivation base, however, the 7 and 8-Essences Paragons were all completely shocked.

The Dao Sovereigns, Dao Lords, and other Dao Realm experts were all staring with wide eyes.

The Ancient Realm cultivators’ eyes shone with fervor, and they began to cry out at the tops of their lungs. Even the disciples who weren’t from the Ninth Sect were all in a fervor.

Of course, the Ninth Sect was Meng Hao’s sect, and they were completely shaken. The sounds of their cries shook Heaven and Earth, and the cultivators from the worlds which had been subjugated over the past centuries were completely won over.

“Demon Sovereign!”

“Demon Sovereign!!”

“Demon Sovereign!!!”

Countless cries and roars erupted, starting from the Ninth Sect and going all the way to the First Sect. Everyone, every being, every life form dropped to their knees to kowtow!

Even the 9-Essences Paragons did the same thing. The passions of the crowd surged. The termite and the huge head looked at him with expressions of deference and allegiance, and the old lizard trembled.

To everyone and everything present, Meng Hao was the ultimate figure of respect.

All Heaven and Earth existed for him!

He stood there, energy surging out into the starry sky, and after a long moment passed, he spoke, and his words were like magical law that rocked the Heavens.

“Many thanks, ladies and gentlemen. Now, I would like to ask for your assistance. Please join me… as I return to my home, the world sealed by the 33 Heavens, the Mountain and Sea Butterfly!”

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# Chapter 1543: Target: 33 Heavens!

Meng Hao’s voice echoed out into the ears of all of the cultivators, causing their eyes to burn red with passion and reverence.

“Heed the commands of the Demon Sovereign!”

RUUUUUUUUUUMBLE! The starry sky was split open, and the mist of the Vast Expanse was sent surging away. The countless life forms that existed within the mist began to tremble, and didn’t dare to reveal even a scrap of their auras.

Meng Hao waved his sleeve, and the massive army began to sweep through the starry sky in the direction of the Mountain and Sea Butterfly.

The mist was dispelled. Countless worlds were sealed, and countless vortexes remained dim. Even the will of the starry sky of the Vast Expanse didn’t dare to approach. A vast array of cultivators marched through the starry sky like a river, splitting apart the Vast Expanse and causing rumbling sounds to echo out in all directions.

The First Sect was in the vanguard position, and was flanked by the Second and Third Sects. They were like sharp blades piercing everything in their path as they whistled through the starry sky.

In the middle of the procession was the Ninth Sect. Countless cultivators surrounded the huge old lizard, upon whose head Meng Hao sat cross-legged.

The termite and the huge head were off to either side, radiating the energy of the 9-Essences level, causing the starry sky to grow dim.

Flanking the Ninth Sect were the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Sects, which were like wings that spread out in all directions.

The rear guard was comprised of the Seventh and Eighth Sects, like a mighty tail radiating a murderous aura.

The mighty army seemed prepared to cut down any Gods it encountered, to slay any Immortals. It rocketed away from Planet Vast Expanse, unleashing its top speed as it headed toward the Mountain and Sea Butterfly.

As they went along, countless worlds made way. Innumerable vortexes remained in concealment. Any such place which dared to stand in the path of this army would be crushed in the blink of an eye, as easily as dry twigs.

Meng Hao never reigned in his aura. From beginning to end, it raged out, announcing in grand and domineering fashion to all vortexes, to all lives, to all entities, that he was returning.

The Demon Sovereign was back!

At the same time, as the army swept along, more and more entities sensed what was happening. Trembling with disbelief, they started spreading the news even faster through the starry sky of the Vast Expanse.

“A Transcendent cultivator has appeared!!”

“A fourth Transcendor has appeared in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse!”

“Earlier, it suddenly felt as if another Heaven had been added above us. The truth is… that a fourth Transcendor appeared!”

The starry sky was completely shaken. Not even dust dared to get in Meng Hao’s path. Countless beings off in the distance couldn’t hold back from dropping to their knees to kowtow.

Every cultivator in the army was itching to fight, causing the deadly aura of the army to rise higher by the moment.

As the army advanced, it got closer and closer to the Mountain and Sea Butterfly.

Meng Hao sat atop the old lizard’s head, looking off into the distance at the butterfly, and it was impossible for him to remain calm. He had Transcended, and had thus surpassed all other cultivators. He had reached a legendary Realm, and was now the type of person that others worshipped. But despite that, he still couldn’t remain calm.

“I’m coming home,” he thought.

“Dad. Mom. Your son is coming back to see you…. Your son is coming home….

“Qing’er, I’m returning for you….

“How have you been, my family, my friends…? Do you remember me? I am Meng Hao… and I’m back!

“Oh Mountain and Sea Realm, you were destroyed in the past, and I promised to build you once again. Now, I’ve come back to make good on that promise!

“And as for you, 33 Heavens… all grievances will be laid to rest!

“Immortal God Continent, Devil Realm Continent. I now understand much more about you, and ninety percent of my speculations have been confirmed. However… I will still destroy you!

“If I don’t, then what is the point of having Transcended? You will be eradicated. Who could possibly just forget… an enmity which has festered for two thousand years?!

“As for the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, it will also be overturned!” His eyes shone with crimson light, Demonic light, and the Demonic qi which radiated off of him exceeded anything ordinary!

Numerous images flashed through Meng Hao’s mind. He saw the Mountain and Sea Realm being destroyed in the fighting. He saw the Immortal God

Continent giving chase. He saw the deaths of Shui Dongliu and Sea Dream. After the Mountain and Sea Butterfly was safe, he saw the Devil Realm Continent arrive, joining forces with the Immortal God continent to destroy the Mountain and Sea Realm.

The meat jelly died, and the parrot experienced an agonizing fate, all to help him flee. After he awoke near Planet Vast Expanse, he had set a goal!

“One day, I will return!”

RUMBLE!

The starry sky shook as the army advanced. The mists retreated. Eventually, something appeared in front of them. It was a grand and shocking spell formation. It was… the Aeon Span!

Within the Aeon Span were the thirty-three land masses, the 33 Heavens which suppressed the Mountain and Sea Butterfly. Just outside of the 33 land masses was a monkey, sitting there cross-legged in meditation. Suddenly, his eyes opened, and he shivered in terror and shock. All of the fur on his body instantly stood on end.

Beneath it all was a green bronze coffin!

The coffin glowed with soft light, and inside was a spectacularly beautiful woman who appeared to be sleeping. A butterfly could be seen atop the coffin, which seemed to nearing the end of its life.

Pressure crushed down from above, but the light from the coffin made it impossible for that pressure to touch the butterfly. It was almost as if the entire starry sky hated the butterfly; were it not for the light from that coffin, the butterfly would have long since been destroyed.

Years ago, Paragon Sea Dream had given up her life to find a safe haven. The fact that the butterfly had survived until now proved that her sacrifice really had bought safety for the Mountain and Sea Realm!

“I’m back!” Meng Hao whispered, standing on the head of the old lizard, looking at the Mountain and Sea Butterfly.

His words were spoken so softly that only he could hear them. As he looked at the Mountain and Sea Butterfly, his eyes shone with reminiscence.

Now that he had Transcended, his slightest word or action could shake the entire starry sky of the Vast Expanse. In fact, he didn’t even need to speak. A single thought could change natural law.

He had even reached the point where all someone had to do was think of his name, and Meng Hao would know. That level of divine ability and skill was one of the terrifying natures of Transcendent cultivators.

It was nothing special to the so-called Boundless Dao and Heaven Trampling.

In the moment that he murmured those words, his voice could be heard in the minds of all his old friends in the Mountain and Sea Butterfly.

His parents were there. They suddenly looked up as they sensed Meng Hao’s aura, and expressions of excitement appeared on their faces. Although it was clearly their son’s aura, it contained something that could shake Heaven and Earth. And it was getting closer!

“It’s Hao’er!”

“Hao’er is back! He didn’t die! The qilin son of the Fang Clan is back! He’s definitely going to cleave open the 33 Heavens and paint the Vast Expanse red with their blood!” Meng Hao’s father, Fang Xiufeng, threw his head back and laughed. It had been a long time since he had been so happy and excited. He wrapped his arms around Meng Li, whose eyes were wet with tears.

She looked up into starry sky above, and she knew that her son was the most outstanding individual in existence. She knew that he would keep his promises no matter how much time passed or how many incredible developments occurred.

Years ago he had said that he would return, so… he would definitely return!

Many people throughout the world of the Mountain and Sea Butterfly felt similar sensations. Xu Qing was sitting cross-legged in the main gate of her residence on the mountaintop. She suddenly walked outside, her green garments fluttering in the wind. Her long hair flowed past her beautiful face, which was already starting to show a bit of age.

However, the faint wrinkles couldn’t cover up her expression of determination and excitement.

She had been meditating moments ago, but when she heard Meng Hao’s voice, it was almost as if he were standing right next to her. I’m back….

She was sure that she hadn’t misheard. After rushing out, she stood there at the top of the mountain, looking up anxiously into the sky. She gripped her garment tightly with both hands, tears streaming down her face. Those tears contained joy, and her longing for Meng Hao, feelings which had been growing for two thousand years.

“Meng Hao….” she said, smiling. Her smile was as beautiful as a blooming flower, causing everything around her to somehow fade. She knew… that Meng Hao was back. Her husband was out there in the starry sky above.

He was back, just as he had promised!

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# Chapter 1544: Excited and Trembling!

Within the world of the Mountain and Sea Butterfly, Wang Youcai was practicing cultivation in a desert. He had spent the last two thousand years tormenting himself. Tormenting his fleshly body, his divine sense, his mind. By means of this brutal method of training, he had constantly increased his battle prowess.

He had come to be an object of veneration for countless people in the Mountain and Sea Butterfly. Normally speaking, he should never have been able to live so long, In fact, there were many powerful experts in the Mountain and Sea Butterfly whose longevity should have been cut off long ago.

However, the bronze coffin that the butterfly rested on emanated intense Time power to prevent the 33 Heavens from encroaching. That power nourished and protected those who inhabited the world of the Mountains and Seas, even those who should have died in the past.

Wang Youcai's eyes were black pits that he hadn't opened for countless years. Currently, he was trudging along through the desert, when suddenly, he stopped and looked up. Then he started laughing uproariously. Boundless cultivation base power erupted out of him, causing a tempest to spring up.

"That aura. That voice… Meng Hao! It's Meng Hao!" Wang Youcai once again laughed heartily.

In another part of the Mountain and Sea Butterfly world was a flourishing sect. Fatty was there. He was now a middle-aged man, so fat that he looked like a mountain. However, he emanated the powerful fluctuations of the

Dao Realm. Although he couldn’t measure up to Wang Youcai, he was still one of the most famous experts in the Mountain and Sea Butterfly world. Considering everything he had experienced in the past, the words he spoke in the sect were like orders from the Heavens.

He was currently crunching a spirit stone to bits in his mouth, which was his special method of cultivation, something different from others. Even as he absorbed the spirit stone, he suddenly shivered as a sensation overcame him which had experienced in the past. This time, however, it was vastly more intense. He suddenly turned into a blur of motion as he flew up into the sky.

He looked up, trembling, then let out a powerful, excited roar. After being stifled for so many years, he was at long last able to explode with madness.

All of the disciples in the sect were completely shocked. The sect Elders flew up into the air, to look in astonishment at Fatty, their Patriarch.

“Hahaha! Meng Hao, dammit! You’re finally back!

“I heard you! I heard you, Meng Hao!” Fatty roared with joy, tears streaming down his face.

“More than two thousand years. We’ve been waiting for you for more than two thousand years. At long last… you’re back!”

People down below looked up at their Patriarch, who was laughing and crying, and weren’t sure what was happening. Most of them had been born in the recent centuries, and thus couldn’t hear or sense what Meng Hao’s old friends could.

A moment later, a few hundred old-timers flew up from within the sect. They were trembling, unsure if what they had sensed moments ago had been an illusion or not. But seeing Fatty react in such a way caused excitement to rise up in their hearts.

“Was that really… Meng Hao?!?!”

“It really was! Hahaha! He’s coming back!?!?”

“It was Meng Hao. It was him! The Demon Sovereign!!” All of the old-timers began to shout in excitement. As for everyone else, their confusion gradually gave way to shock.

“Meng Hao? The exalted Demon Sovereign? According to the stories, he was the number one most powerful expert in the Mountain and Sea Realm who saved us all two thousand years ago!”

“The exalted Demon Sovereign is back? Is… is it for real?!” One disciple after another began to tremble and cry out.

In another location was a husband and wife, who were none other than Meng Hao’s sister Fang Yu, and Sun Hai. They flew out from their residence to hover in midair, looking excitedly up into the sky.

Fang Yu’s tears of joy blurred her vision as she said, “Little brother….”

Sun Hai looked very excited, and started laughing out loud. Their reaction caused three beams of light to fly up and join them. There were two men and a woman, all of them young. These three were none other than Fang Yu and Sun Hai’s children.

These three younger ones rarely saw their parents acting so emotionally, and couldn’t help but ask what was happening.

“Dad, mom, what’s going on?”

“What happened?”

“It’s your uncle,” Fang Yu cried. “He’s back!” Her eyes were shining more brightly right now than they had for centuries.

“Our uncle? Meng Hao?”

“The exalted Demon Sovereign!?!?”

Meng Hao’s nephews and niece almost couldn’t believe what was happening. They had been born into an era in which Meng Hao was a legend. In fact, to everyone born in the past several centuries, Meng Hao wasn’t even a cultivator. He was a story, a myth.

Somewhere else in the world of the Mountain and Sea Butterfly, the aura of a 7-Essences Paragon suddenly exploded out, leading to widespread shock. Suddenly, an old man appeared up in midair.

It was none other than… Grandpa Meng!

He had already elevated his cultivation base to the level of a 7-Essences Paragon, becoming one of the four grand guardians of the Mountain and Sea Butterfly.

He looked up into the sky, then threw his head back and laughed uproariously, tears of joy streaming down his face.

In another area was yet another 7-Essences aura. Rumbling sounds echoed out from a puppet which stood tall over a certain city. That puppet was none other than the Paragon from the 1st Heaven, who Meng Hao had sealed early in the Mountain and Sea War.

At the same time, far to the east, was an unearthly region in which countless dead souls flew to and fro. This was the Mountain and Sea Butterfly’s underworld, where reincarnation was governed. Shockingly, the aura of an 8-Essences Paragon emanated out from here. It was none other than… Ksitigarbha!

In the past, he had been the most powerful of the Mountain and Sea Lords!

In the far west was a boundless sea. Suddenly, a massive wave exploded up, atop which stood a young man. Gradually, an enormous whale became visible beneath him. The whale seemed to be a creature of constant transformations, with its appearance randomly changing. It was none other than true spirit Night!

That young man was the one and only… Ke Jiusi! Shockingly, he was emanating the fluctuations of the 8-Essences level!

During the past two thousand years, many shocking developments had occurred within the Mountain and Sea Butterfly. However, the most astonishing of all was that, in addition to the puppet, there were three additional Paragons.

Grandpa Meng and Ksitigarbha had been powerful to begin with, especially Ksitigarbha, who had been like an Imperial Lord. Therefore, it was no surprise that they had become Paragons. As for Ke Jiusi, before the fall of the Mountain and Sea Realm, few people had known who he was. Who would ever have thought that in the centuries that followed, he would rise to the 8-Essences level?

As of this moment, all four of the Paragons were looking up into the sky, as if they could see Meng Hao approaching from beyond the 33 Heavens.

In another location in the Mountain and Sea Butterfly world’s sea, a huge island could be seen. A glittering shield covered it, but it was still possible to see an entire country on that island, almost a world of its own.

Shockingly, a huge turtle lay beneath that island. It was… Patriarch Reliance! Yawning, he squinted and looked up into the Heavens.

“Why is that aura so familiar?” he muttered to himself. “Dammit. Think hard, Patriarch. Whose aura is that? How come it makes me… want to cry?” A young woman could be seen standing on his head. She was currently weeping with joy.

That young woman was none other than Guyiding Tri-Rain!

Behind her was a man who, despite seeming to be of middle age, had a full head of white hair. His aura was in a state of deterioration, and yet, a pearl circulated around him in the air.

He was… Dong Hu!

“I’ve been feeding this pearl with my body for so many years,” he murmured, “waiting for its owner. Considering everything, I can’t help but wonder if it belongs to Meng Hao.” His eyes shone with brilliant light.

Countless people were shocked and astonished. The world of the Mountain and Sea Butterfly was shaken in a way it never had been before. It was as if, all of a sudden, new life had been poured into it.

All of Meng Hao’s old friends were whipped into excitement, including Li Ling’er, who was carrying on Sea Dream’s legacy, and Zhixiang. There were other cultivators too, all of whom were extremely excited.

“He’s coming back….”

“Meng Hao is back!!”

“The Demon Sovereign is back!” Everyone was excited and shouting. The moment they had all been waiting for… was finally here!

At the same time, powerful ripples emanated out from the huge army. Their speed increased, sending the mist of the Vast Expanse into chaos.

The Outsiders who lived in the 33 Heavens didn’t seem to notice. They didn’t know what was coming, and apparently, didn’t even care.

The Aeon Span, as well as other defensive spell formations put in place by the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent, had rebuffed countless greedy beings who had attempted to break in during the past two thousand years.

All had been blocked, and many had been directly killed.

What made the 33 Heavens even more complacent was that inside the Aeon Span, there was… Dao Fang. He was their guardian, and thanks to the help of the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent, his cultivation base was even higher than it had been in the past.

And yet, the person they had all put their faith in, Dao Fang, was currently trembling.

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# Chapter 1545: Dao Fang, Do You Remember Me?!

Dao Fang’s fur stood on end as a sensation of unprecedented crisis raged through him. It was the most intense sensation of danger that he had experienced since the two times the Mountain and Sea Realm had been destroyed.

He almost felt as if he couldn’t breathe, and his cultivation base was trembling. He saw the army approaching, the terrifyingly endless number of cultivators. Furthermore, he could sense that there were numerous terrifying individuals within the larger army as a whole.

He couldn’t see Meng Hao, only the huge old lizard. It was as if he didn’t even qualify to see the figure who stood atop the lizard’s head. Instead, all he could see in the place that Meng Hao was standing was a swirling vortex, a vortex that could seemingly distort the entire starry sky.

Dao Fang didn’t hesitate for even a moment. There was no time for him to even cry out. He quickly performed an incantation gesture then pointed out, causing the Aeon Span to begin to rumble. Powerful ripples exploded out as the Aeon Span manipulated the mist of the Vast Expanse into creating a huge barrier that prevented the approaching army from even seeing inside of it. Dao Fang then performed another incantation gesture, causing two additional auras to emanate out from the spell formation.

Of those two auras, one represented the Immortal God Continent, and the other represented the Devil Realm Continent. They merged into the mist around them, spreading out in all directions, serving as a sign, and a warning.

They were a sign of the power of the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent, and also a warning to all that this place was not to be provoked.

Having accomplished these things, Dao Fang breathed a sigh of relief. He was still a bit nervous, but kept reminding himself of all the other terrifying entities he had encountered in his long life who were scared off by these two auras.

He could only hope that this situation would be the same.

“They’re probably just passing by,” he told himself. “Yes… definitely just passing by.

“That’s most certainly it. The 33 Heavens couldn’t have done anything to provoke such a huge army of cultivators. And none of the survivors of the Mountain and Sea Realm have been able to break free from the seal. There’s no way they could have somehow made contact with such a terrifyingly powerful group.

“That must be the case…. Besides, who in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse would ever dare to provoke the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent? Such people are like phoenix feathers or qilin horns, and would never care about a place like this.” As he comforted himself in this way, he slowly began to calm down, convinced that his analysis of the situation was correct.

And yet, he couldn’t shake the jittery fear which gripped him because of the mysterious figure in the vortex on top of the lizard, that figure who he couldn’t actually see. He had the feeling that whoever was in that vortex was the most terrifying entity in the entire huge army.

He was so nervous as he sat there waiting that he didn’t even notice that he had begun to tremble visibly. With the help of the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm, his cultivation base was now in the 9-Essences level. And yet, he was shaking all the same.

Fear swept over him like flood waters, leaving him feeling as if he were being suffocated.

He could only wait and hope that the army would simply pass by.

Outside of the Aeon Span, the mist shield. As the seal over the 33 Heavens tightened, Meng Hao's view was once again obscured.

The army slowed to halt. Countless cultivators hovered there, eyes gleaming with the desire to unleash slaughter, as well as utter confidence in Meng Hao. One by one, they turned, gazing at him with zealous ardor. Everything was quiet. Not a single person spoke. All of them were simply waiting for Meng Hao to issue orders.

The disciples of the Ninth Sect did so, as did the cultivators from all the other sects. Even the 9-Essences Paragons were no exception. The Sect Leader, Jin Yunshan, the huge termite and the gigantic head, the old lizard, and all of Meng Hao's other subordinates were completely silent.

Meng Hao stood there on the lizard, looking out at the mists, his eyes flickering with killing intent so powerful it seemed capable of taking corporeal form. Then, the mist shield seethed as the two auras erupted out from the Aeon Span.

Both of them were at the peak of 9-Essences. They weren't people; they were simply streams of divine will left behind to threaten anyone who came into the area.

“This area is under the protection of the brave warriors of the Immortal God Continent. Anyone from other parts of the starry sky of the Vast Expanse should leave immediately!”

At the same time, another voice also rang out, sinister and murderous and also rife with an aura of death.

“Whoever encroaches upon the territory of the Devil Realm will have their entire clan wiped out. Not a single individual will be left alive!”

Any other person would have been struck with fear. In fact, without Meng Hao, even the Vast Expanse School would have shrunk back. Facing either the Immortal God Continent or the Devil Realm would lead to a catastrophe that the Vast Expanse School would never accept.

But now, everything was different. Even as the messages from the two streams of divine will echoed out, none of the cultivators in the army moved a muscle. In fact, their murderous auras only grew stronger.

As everyone watched, Meng Hao slowly rose to his feet, and then waved his finger at the mist shield.

He didn’t speak a word. The simple movement of his finger didn’t even unleash a magical technique. And yet, the mist shield began to vibrate, and the two streams of peak 9-Essences divine will were instantly destroyed.

At the same time, countless Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering roars echoed out from within the army. Their killing intent rocketed up, and in the blink of an eye, vast quantities of cultivators shot out toward the mist shield.

The Sect Leader and the others, numerous peak 9-Essences cultivators, all unleashed divine abilities at the same time. The mist instantly began to collapse.

Beneath the mist shield, inside the Aeon Span, Dao Fang was getting even more nervous. He could see the mist outside being attacked in unprecedented fashion, and could also sense the two sealing marks left by the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm suddenly cracking and then transforming into ash.

They were destroyed in an instant, as if they were insignificant. Even more shocking was that as they were transformed into ash, two black threads shot through the mist shield, looking for the source of the sealing marks, as if to obliterate whoever had controlled them.

Dao Fang was completely stunned. Gasping, he shot to his feet. At the same time, the mist shield outside of the Aeon Span was being ripped away as if by enormous hands. Massive booms echoed out, and the starry sky shook. It only took a few moments… for the mist to be completely ripped open!

It was torn apart from either side, revealing the Aeon Span, the 33 Heavens, and even Dao Fang, who by now was trembling in fear.

Rumbling sounds filled the starry sky as the army advanced. As divine abilities shot out and slammed into the Aeon Span, the intense sound of explosions echoed out, startling numerous Outsiders down in the 33 Heavens, none of whom could imagine what was happening.

The Aeon Span was a shield that could not be easily broken through. Even Shui Dongliu had plotted and calculated for years and years before figuring out a way to do so. Besides, the shield had been bolstered and strengthened for a thousand years. The Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm had paid significant prices to ensure that it was stable.

But now, it only took a moment for cracks to spread out over its surface. Countless figures appeared outside, all of them unleashing relentless attacks that pushed the Aeon Span to its breaking point.

Among those figures were a golden-robed young man, an old man with white hair, a man surrounded by a windstorm, and a woman whose spectacular beauty was visible despite the mist which surrounded her.

“9-Essences… the great circle of 9-Essences!” Dao Fang was flabbergasted. All four of those people were at the great circle of 9-Essences, and any one of them could shake heavenly bodies with the tap of a foot. And these four were apparently only the vanguard!

They were joined by more than ten other cultivators, all of whom were attacking, not just with the power of 9-Essences, but rather, the peak!

“Peak… 9-Essences!” Dao Fang’s mind was spinning. He had never seen so many 9-Essences cultivators together, and couldn’t imagine how it would be possible for them to all be acting in concert. Furthermore, these people were mere soldiers; none of them were the general who commanded the army!

More terrifying than them was the old lizard a bit further off, who looked like a world unto itself. Next to the lizard was a terrifying head, and in the other direction was a huge termite whose eyes radiated merciless light.

Those three left Dao Fang feeling as if all the light had faded from the world. Despair filled his heart as he confirmed that those three were past the great circle of 9-Essences, and were borderline Transcendent.

“There’s a misunderstanding here!” he shrieked. “Fellow Daoists, we are the 33 Heavens! We don’t get involved with the enmities of the outside world. We’ve never offended anyone, and in fact, we’ve never even left our spell formation. Please, tell me what’s going on!!

“We are a subordinate world of the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm. Fellow Daoist, please, tell me why this is happening!” More figures were flying out from the 33 Heavens, and all of them were trembling in fear.

Dao Fang’s cries were filled with confusion and fury. He couldn’t help but feel that it was unfair for this to be happening, considering they hadn’t offended anyone this powerful.

It was at this point that a cool voice suddenly echoed out through the starry sky.

“Dao Fang. Dao Fang who destroyed the Eighth Mountain with a single staff strike…. Do you remember me?”

——

Note from Deathblade: When RWX and I went to meet with Er Gen recently, Er Gen mentioned that Dao Fang started out as the monkey friend of Su Ming, the MC of the book Beseech the Devil. If/when that book gets a good translation team keep an eye out for Dao Fang!

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# Chapter 1546: Destroying the Aeon Span!

There was nothing awe-inspiring about what he said. In fact, his words seemed laced with sorrow. And yet, within the sorrow, Dao Fang could also hear hatred, a hatred that would not dissipate even if the 33 Heavens were destroyed. It was the type of hatred that could spawn killing intent so powerful that it would not be sated even if the starry sky were overthrown, or the Vast Expanse destroyed and filled with the reek of blood!

As soon as he heard those words, his jaw dropped, and he subconsciously looked up toward the huge lizard outside of the Aeon Span, and the mysterious figure in the vortex on its head.

Slowly, that figure began to grow clearer and clearer. Dao Fang began to pant, and his eyes went wide with disbelief. Soon… he could clearly see the figure’s face in every detail.

Dao Fang began to tremble, and his mind felt as if it were being filled with countless lightning bolts and thunderclaps. He simply couldn’t believe what he was seeing. It was so preposterous that he couldn’t help but rub his eyes to clear them.

“Hahaha, how could it be him?” he muttered to himself, shivering. “I must be seeing things…. Ha ha….” After rubbing his eyes he looked over again, and his face drained of blood. All he could do was gape in shock, his mind devoid of thought, a complete blank.

He couldn’t prevent himself from shaking visibly, and his eyes were instantly shot with blood. He felt like his blood was about to pump in reverse; his tongue stuck in his mouth, and his mouth opened and closed as if he were speaking, and yet, no words came out.

“What? Don’t recognize me?” Meng Hao asked coolly. He began to walk forward, and the old lizard immediately lowered its head to accommodate him. As he strode out, all of the surrounding cultivators dropped to their knees, expressions of ardor on their faces. Even the parts of the army which were attacking the Aeon Span stopped and dropped to their knees.

Countless voices joined together to form a sound that could shake Heaven and Earth. “Greetings, Demon Sovereign!”

The mere sound of it caused the Aeon Span to shake.

Meng Hao walked forward, his expression the same as ever. Soon he was standing right in front of the Aeon Span. There he hovered, looking at the incredulous Dao Fang on the other side.

“M-Meng… M-Meng Hao….” Dao Fang stammered, seemingly having difficulty even speaking. From the look in his eyes, it was as if he were being faced with the most spectacularly unbelievable thing in all existence. He could scarcely believe his own eyes, or his own mind. Even just looking at Meng Hao left him feeling like his body was about to collapse, and he began to edge backward.

“Impossible!” he shrieked, shaking even harder than before. “It’s not possible that you’re Meng Hao. Meng Hao is dead. Dead, I tell you! Who are you? Why are you disguised as Meng Hao? There’s no way you’re actually Meng Hao!”

“Did you personally witness my death?” Meng Hao asked. He was in no hurry, and everything in the area was under the control of his divine sense. It was possible to say that no force or power who came here could threaten or harm the Mountain and Sea Butterfly.

Not the Immortal God Continent. Not the Devil Realm. And of course, the 33 Heavens qualified even less.

Meng Hao’s hatred had been festering for more than two thousand years. If one started counting from the moment of the 33 Heavens’ betrayal, when they began to suppress the Mountain and Sea Realm, then the hatred of the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm stretched back even farther than that.

Because of such hatred, Meng Hao wouldn’t simply destroy the 33 Heavens in one fell swoop. That would not drive away the hatred. He would torment them; he would unleash the hatred upon them. Only in such a way could he, as well as the other cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm, give vent to the resentment which had been suffocating them for years!

“I… I….” Dao Fang was nearly struck mute by Meng Hao’s words. It was true. He hadn’t personally witnessed Meng Hao die. Although it didn’t seem possible that Meng Hao could have made a comeback, within Dao Fang’s terror, he had to admit that the person in front of him… was definitely Meng Hao!

“How can he be so powerful?” Dao Fang said bitterly. “And how could he be back…?”

As his voice echoed out beneath the Aeon Span, the other cultivators of the 33 Heavens heard it, including the powerful experts who had just flown up. Among their number were Paragons who had interacted with Meng Hao in the past, and when they heard Dao Fang’s words, their faces turned ashen, and their minds reeled.

Having seen the army outside of the Aeon Span, they were already terrified and filled with anxiety. Facing such a huge army left them completely at wits’ end, and they could only be as careful as possible. Even if they had to beg and plead for mercy, they would.

For the 33 Heavens to be faced with an army like this was like a tiny kingdom facing an empire. There was simply no way to compare!

It was like a baby fighting a strong young man.

After seeing Meng Hao with their own eyes, and hearing Dao Fang's words, the powerful experts from the 33 Heavens began to shake in disbelief.

"M-Meng… Meng Hao!!"

"He's that Paragon from the Mountain and Sea Realm!!"

The experts from the 33 Heavens were in a pandemonium, especially the ones who had personally witnessed Meng Hao in action before. It was as if a huge disaster were bearing down on them from above. However, there were still some who didn't understand the height of the Heavens and the breadth of the Earth, and were still confident enough to make brazen statements.

"Impossible! It's impossible! He's dead. And even if he didn't die back then, the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent have been searching for him ever since. There's no way he could still be alive! And even if he were alive, how could he possibly have command of such a powerful force!?"

"How could he ever have convinced such a huge army to fight for him? This is ludicrous!!"

"Well he won't be able to get past the Aeon Span. It was bolstered by the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm. It will take him a while to get through, and by that time, the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm will have arrived. This Meng Hao has walked right into a trap. He's dead!"

Meng Hao hovered outside of the Aeon Span, looking at the Outsiders, eyes flickering with killing intent and hatred, which he did nothing at all to hide.

"The Aeon Span…." he said. A vicious smile broke out on his face, and he began to laugh, a laughter filled with hatred. The Aeon Span had sealed the Mountain and Sea Realm for countless years. Shui Dongliu had spent his entire life planning how to break through it and buy a chance at freedom for the Mountain and Sea Realm.

In fact, it was because of that shield, which had suppressed the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm for so many years, that the League of Demon Sealers’ mantra also mentioned… the Aeon Span.

“They all had to face the Aeon Span….” His laughter grew louder, until it echoed out through the entire starry sky.

“I, Meng Hao, hereby decree that in this starry sky, there will henceforth be no Aeon Span!” His voice echoed out like thunder, provoking an instant reaction. The starry sky of the Vast Expanse was altered. It didn’t matter whether or not the will of the starry sky agreed. Meng Hao changed it, ensuring that the Aeon Span was something that could not exist for all eternity.

He hated the Aeon Span!

Without the slightest hesitation, he extended his hand and tapped the Aeon Span!

As soon as his finger touched the shield it began to distort, and massive rumbling sounds echoed out. Apparently, natural and magical laws were being unleashed by Meng Hao. Instantly, it was as if the Aeon Span were incongruous with the entire starry sky, as if Meng Hao’s will had become the will of Heaven. Natural law was changed!

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE….

Cracks spread out from the spot where Meng Hao’s finger had touched the shield. Instantly, they spread out to cover the entire Aeon Span.

In the space of a few breaths, Dao Fang and the other powerful experts of the 33 Heavens watched in shocked disbelief as the shield that was the Aeon Span… shattered!

It completely collapsed into countless pieces, destroyed as easily as a dried twig!

As the innumerable fragments of the destroyed shield swept out in all directions, it seemed like the starry sky wished to expel them. Intense pressure crushed down on them, transforming them into powder. The shield which was the entire hope of the 33 Heavens, which had protected them from countless intruders over the years, and had simultaneously suppressed the Mountain and Sea Realm, preventing any cultivators from leaving… was instantly turned into ash.

It was blasted into smithereens!

“I, Meng Hao, hereby decree that all who practice cultivation… may no longer self-detonate or kill themselves!” Eyes flickering coldly, he waved his finger, instituting a new natural law which settled down onto the 33 Heavens.

Because of that, the countless living beings within the 33 Heavens trembled, and their minds spun.

It was almost as if the will of Allheaven wasn’t willing interfere with Meng Hao’s revenge.

Meng Hao’s hatred of the 33 Heavens, and the words he had just spoken, revealed the signs of what was to come. And that was… a complete and utter extermination, with no survivors!

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# Chapter 1547: Exterminating Dao Fang!

“Exterminate them,” Meng Hao said. His voice was soft, but his eyes burned with a murderous aura. “Don’t leave a single one alive. And don’t go too quickly. Make it slow. There are thirty-three of these Heavens, we have plenty of time.

“Do not rush to destroy them in both body and soul. You can only kill them once that way. First kill their bodies, then give their souls to me.”

The calm brutality of his voice struck icy cold deep into the hearts of all the inhabitants of the 33 Heavens.

In Karma, there is always a cause and an effect. From the moment the 33 Heavens had chosen to rebel, they were doomed to experience a day like this… in which they paid back their debt to the Mountain and Sea Realm with full interest.

That day… had come!

Almost as soon as the words left Meng Hao’s mouth, the endless army of cultivators surged into the 33 Heavens. They burst with somber, murderous auras. Considering their numbers and their power, they could quickly wipe out all of the 33 Heavens, killing everyone in body and soul. But that wasn’t the outcome Meng Hao wanted.

He didn’t just want them dead, he wanted revenge. And that revenge was for the 33 Heavens to wallow long and hard in their terror before becoming nothing.

Thus, his order to the cultivators of the Vast Expanse School was to take their time in the slaughter. Kill slowly. The entire area was sealed, making it impossible for anyone else to enter. Furthermore, natural law now prohibited anyone from killing themselves or self-detonating. As such, no one could escape the punishment that had been decided upon by a Transcendent cultivator.

Meng Hao wasn’t worried about the 33 Heavens, in their madness, harming the Mountain and Sea Butterfly. He… could prevent that from happening.

The powerful experts of the 33 Heavens who had flown out moments ago screamed and fled. They simply didn’t qualify to try to fight back against the huge army of cultivators charging toward them. Trembling, they fled deeper into the 33 Heavens. Instantly, defenses of all sorts sprang up.

However, such defenses couldn’t stand up to a single bombardment from the huge army of Vast Expanse School cultivators. They were destroyed instantly. The first to be targeted for destruction was the 33rd Heaven.

At the same time, Meng Hao stepped into the ruined Aeon Span, his expression the same as ever as he came to stand in front of Dao Fang. Dao Fang’s face was ashen, and all his hair was standing on end. As soon as he saw Meng Hao, he began to back up.

“You were pretty cocky back when you destroyed the Eighth Mountain with a single staff strike,” Meng Hao said quietly. “Where is that cockiness now?” He took a step forward, placing him directly in front of Dao Fang. His right hand shot out, and he flicked Dao Fang in the chest.

A huge boom could be heard, along with a miserable shriek from Dao Fang. Blood sprayed out of his mouth as he was sent flying backward. To Dao Fang, that flick of Meng Hao’s finger was like being struck by the entire starry sky.

That single finger flick crushed his chest into mangled blood and gore, and shattered much of the rest of his body. Of course, Meng Hao had been doing his utmost to control the force of his blow. After all, a single flick of his finger could wipe out enormous heavenly bodies, much less Dao Fang.

There was no way Meng Hao would allow Dao Fang to die so easily. Not only had this monkey destroyed the Eighth Mountain back in the war, but he had also killed countless Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators. Throughout the years, the numbers who had died by his staff as he stood watch over the 33 Heavens was impossible to calculate. There were even many among those who had died who should have had a chance to challenge the Aeon Span.

“Impossible. Impossible. What’s your cultivation base level? This is impossible!” Dao Fang coughed up some more blood. His eyes shone with madness as he glared at Meng Hao. Finally, he threw his head back and let out a bitter howl.

He was afraid. Terrified. Never in his wildest dreams could he have imagined that Meng Hao would not only return, but would have a massive army at his beck and call. If that were all there were to it, it might not be a big deal, but most shocking of all was that Meng Hao’s cultivation base had reached an unexpectedly shocking level.

Dao Fang had never met anyone who could use a single sentence to prohibit the existence of the Aeon Span, and then use a single finger to destroy it.

The truth was he had seen all of the countless powerful experts in the army who looked at Meng Hao with zeal and awe, but he simply couldn’t accept the thought of that single word….

“Transcendence….”

Meng Hao took another step forward, bringing him back in front of Dao Fang. He reached out and tapped Dao Fang’s right arm. Cracking sounds rang out as the arm shattered, and then collapsed into a haze of gore.

Dao Fang was shaking violently. He wanted to flee, but couldn’t. The pressure weighing down on him made that impossible. All he could do was glare at Meng Hao.

“Didn’t control my power well enough,” Meng Hao said, shaking his head. He reached out and pinched Dao Fang’s left hand, crushing his five fingers one by one. Shaking, Dao Fang let out a bloodcurdling scream.

After his hand was crushed into a pulp, Dao Fang could only watch in horror as Meng Hao continued to pinch his fingers up the length of his arm, crushing it bit by bit. Then came his legs. Then his torso.

All of Dao Fang’s bones were crushed, even his spine. Meng Hao smiled, a grotesque smile that made it look like he was crying. He allowed Dao Fang to scream until his voice began to go hoarse. And yet, Meng Hao wasn’t finished yet.

The cultivators from the Vast Expanse School who could see what was happening gasped. There was no need to mention the reaction from the screaming cultivators of the 33 Heavens.

Meng Hao looked over at the army from the Vast Expanse School. “Understand now?” he said. “Do it like this. Don’t let them die quickly.” After a moment of silence, the army shouted their response.

“The orders of the Demon Sovereign shall be heeded!”

It didn’t take long before bloodcurdling screams rang up from within the 33 Heavens. All of the Outsiders from the 1st to the 33rd Heavens were trembling in terror.

“Kill me!” Dao Fang screamed. “Kill me, Meng Hao!” Meng Hao shook his head. Reaching out, he pushed his hand down onto Dao Fang’s chest.

Massive power erupted into Dao Fang, causing all of the blood in his body to spray out through his fur.

His entire body was completely drenched in blood!

Dao Fang couldn’t hold back his screams. He was shaking violently, his entire body twisted and distorted, filling him with pain and terror that was almost impossible to endure.

“I’m far from finished,” Meng Hao said quietly. He reached out and waved his hand, causing all of Dao Fang’s blood to form together in the palm of his hand in the form of a single drop.

“You dying isn’t enough. Not after you’ve killed so many cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“Let me explain how Meng Hao does things. A blood debt… must be paid with blood. If you kill one of my people, I’ll kill ALL your people!” With that, he sent his divine will into the drop of blood.

“Let’s see where exactly the people of your bloodline are….” He smiled, and when Dao Fang saw that, it was the most terrifying thing he had even seen. Unfortunately, even he could detect the grief and bitterness within that smile, feelings which had been festering for centuries.

A look of madness appeared in Dao Fang’s eyes, and he began to struggle.

“Considering how hard you’re struggling, it seems there must be people you care about. People you wish to protect.” Meng Hao’s eyes glowed with red light, and Demonic qi swirled around him. As his divine sense entered Dao Fang’s blood, he found all of the beings throughout the starry sky of the Vast Expanse who had blood compatible with Dao Fang’s.

“Not many,” he said softly. “A total of 375 bloodlines. Some here in the 33 Heavens, others on the outside….” With that, he clenched his fist down onto the drop of blood, destroying it. As he did, all entities of the same blood as Dao Fang, regardless of whether they were in the 33 Heavens or elsewhere in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse… all dropped dead!

Dao Fang howled like a wild animal. It was at that point that Meng Hao’s hand came to rest on his head.

“It’s not over yet,” he said. “In addition to your bloodlines, there are also your successor disciples. Also, the person who taught you cultivation. And your other disciples…. I will take every good memory that you have, and destroy it. Just like you did to the Mountain and Sea Realm.”

Dao Fang was shaking, and a pleading look appeared in his eyes. He had never imagined that the day would come in which vengeance was inflicted upon him in this way. He fully understood that he wasn’t the only one that Meng Hao wished to torment in this way. Considering the orders he had given the army, to capture the souls of the inhabitants of the 33 Heavens, it was clear that he planned… to treat the entire 33 Heavens this way.

“Thinking of begging for mercy…? Do you remember how many innocent people begged for mercy back when you destroyed the Mountain and Sea Realm? Unfortunately, when you crushed the Eighth Mountain, I don’t think you even noticed them.” Meng Hao’s hand pushed down onto Dao Fang’s head, and suddenly, his memories appeared inside Meng Hao’s mind. Then, Karma Threads appeared, which Meng Hao began to viciously sever, one by one.

Dao Fang could hear someone scream with each severed Karma Thread. In the end, he was left shaking, his eyes blank as Meng Hao extracted his soul.

“Your fleshly body is destroyed,” Meng Hao murmured, “but your soul will not rest in peace.” Meng Hao waved his hand, and a sea of flames appeared up above. He threw Dao Fang’s soul into the fire, where it would burn and be tormented for all eternity. As long as Meng Hao lived, that torment would never end.

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As I predicted, LittleShanks is dropping his translation of “Return of the Thief” to pick up something completely different. Check it out here. Very shocking turn of events.

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# Chapter 1548: Vicious!

Meng Hao let out a long sigh as he strolled toward the 33rd Heaven. By the time he arrived, all of the Outsiders there were dead. Their fleshly bodies were destroyed all the way down to their bones. Their memories and bloodlines were destroyed, and their souls extracted.

The captured souls were then delivered to Meng Hao by the Vast Expanse School army.

He hovered in the air above the land mass itself, pouring the souls into the sea of flames, where they would suffer eternal torment.

“That went too quickly,” Meng Hao said in a soft voice. “From here on out, spend a full day wiping out each land mass.” In response to his words, the cultivators of the Vast Expanse School shivered. At this point, they fully understood the insane depth of Meng Hao’s hatred for the 33 Heavens.

With that, Meng Hao lifted his right foot and stamped it down onto the 33rd Heaven. Rumbling sounds echoed out as cracks spread out to fill the entire land mass. Then, it began to crumble. Buildings toppled. Everything was destroyed, transformed into nothing but dust. It all happened in mere moments.

The 32nd Heaven was revealed, along with the countless terrified Outsiders upon it. They began to cry out miserably as Meng Hao waved his hand, sending the army of cultivators on the offensive.

As they began their charge, Meng Hao looked down at one particular Outsider. “I remember you,” he said. “Back then, you were an Imperial Lord, and you still are now. What a pity you’ve made no progress.”

The Outsider trembled and began to back up. But then, he was dragged through the air toward Meng Hao, screaming in terror and despair.

Meng Hao grabbed him by the neck and methodically crushed his bones. His screams filled the entire 32nd Heaven as Meng Hao used a full day to destroy his fleshly body and then extract his soul. By that point, the 32nd Heaven was completely silent.

All of the Outsiders died screaming, bubbling with resentment that rose into the air in the form of a powerful aura, which then unleashed a stifling pressure.

Meng Hao looked at their souls for a moment before gathering them up and casting them into the eternal torment of the sea of flames.

“An aura of resentment? Screw off!” Meng Hao let out a cold harrumph, the sound of which echoed like thunder through the starry sky. The aura of resentment instantly shattered and vanished into nothing. “Resentment is useless. After all, the resentment of the Mountain and Sea Realm back then exceeded this resentment exponentially.”

Killing intent flickered in his eyes as he waved his hand toward the lands below. Rumbling could be heard as the 32nd Heaven shattered, transforming into nothing but ash. The remains of the sinners were wiped away, and the 31st Heaven was revealed.

It was at this point that a voice filled with madness, grief, and fury echoed out from the 31st Heaven.

“Meng Hao, If you dare to advance another step, we’ll destroy the Mountain and Sea Butterfly!” At the same time, countless figures shot out from the 1st Heaven toward the Mountain and Sea Butterfly.

When Meng Hao saw that, he laughed. That laughter grew louder and louder, filling the starry sky. The Outsiders from the 1st Heaven who were attempting to invade the Mountain and Sea Butterfly all trembled and lurched to a halt. They had lost their ability to move, and even lost control of their cultivation bases. Looks of confusion appeared on their faces as they hovered there, motionless. At the same time, a powerful pressure began to build up around them.

Within that pressure, they could sense the flow of Time power. It wasn’t Meng Hao, but rather, a force flowing out from the nearby coffin. Apparently, only those who had its permission could enter that area!

Bloodcurdling screams rang from beneath the 1st Heaven, echoing all the way up to the 31st Heaven. All Outsiders who heard it were left trembling and in despair.

However, none of them could self-detonate or commit suicide. They were forced to wait for their enemies to come kill them, to torment them, to extract their souls and send them into the sea of flames.

“Even if you don’t count the era of Paragon Nine Seals, just the hatred that I alone have experienced has lasted for two thousand years,” Meng Hao said. “To end it quickly would be wrong.

“Therefore, all Outsiders of the 33 Heavens will continue to pay the price for their destruction of the Mountain and Sea Realm.” Meng Hao did not feel that this punishment was excessive, or that he was being cruel. It was simply repayment for the countless dead of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Back when the 33 Heavens invaded the Mountain and Sea Realm, they didn’t just kill the cultivators. They also massacred the mortals. They yearned for the complete and utter destruction of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

To Meng Hao, the resulting hatred meant that no amount of torment was excessive.

The army of cultivators began to spread out through the 31st Heaven to unleash destruction. A day later, they descended onto the 30th Heaven. In the following days, they slaughtered their way down to the 15th Heaven. By that time, the surviving Outsiders’ minds were overwhelmed with terror.

They pled. They wept. They begged. But Meng Hao had no pity for them. He couldn’t stop thinking about the brutality of the destruction of the Mountain and Sea Realm, and all the despair he had seen on the faces of the people he knew before they died. Back then, he had hated the fact that his cultivation base was insufficient. He had hated the brutal injustice of Heaven and Earth.

Now, he hovered in the air above the 15th Heaven, voice laced with grief as he murmured, “Listen…. Do you hear that?!

“Souls of the Mountain and Sea Realm who fell to the Outsiders… do you hear that?!

“They are pleading, begging, weeping. What do you think? Should we forgive them?”

After a moment, he said, “I hear your response. No. We will not forgive them. Debts of blood must be repaid with blood. They yearned to destroy the people of the Mountains and Seas, so I will wipe them out completely!” He looked sad, and yet was smiling. Chuckling, he lifted his hand up, halting the advance of the army of the Vast Expanse School.

“From here on,” he said coolly, “you don’t need to do anything.” With that, he looked down toward the 15th Heaven and roared, “Hear me, ye who rebelled against the Mountains and Seas. There are three 9-Essences Paragons among your number. The three of you, get the hell out here immediately!” His voice echoed out like thunder through all of the remaining Heavens down below.

When he destroyed the Aeon Span, he could sense that the 33 Heavens were much stronger than they had been in the past. Back in the original war, they didn’t have any 9-Essences Paragons. But now they had three, or four if you counted Dao Fang.

As his voice echoed out, the fifteen land masses trembled. The three Paragons he had referred to began to shake. They hadn’t dared to try to fight Meng Hao or his army from the Vast Expanse School, and had instead fled, hoping to hold out long enough to be saved by the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm.

As soon as they showed their faces, they were grabbed by Meng Hao’s divine will and dragged out of the land masses.

One of them was an Outsider who looked like a middle-aged man. How could Meng Hao have forgotten this man? Back when the 33 Heavens invaded the Mountain and Sea Realm, he had been an 8-Essences Paragon. The other two were cultivators who had been subsequently groomed by the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent. Obviously those two forces had paid a heavy price to help these Outsiders rise to the 9-Essences level.

In the past, the 33 Heavens had never had any 9-Essences cultivators. At the most, they had people who were on the verge of breaking through.

Back in those days, the power of 9-Essences cultivators like this would have been like the might of the Heavens to Meng Hao. But now, he could see that even though they were at the 9-Essences level, their ninth Essences had actually been forced upon them.

A single glance revealed that they had not used their own Dao to acquire that final Essence. In fact, even their eighth Essence was like that. All three of them combined would have been unable to defeat a true expert of the 9-Essences level.

The three of them were trembling, their faces filled with despair as they looked at Meng Hao and the huge army behind him.

One of them gritted his teeth and said, “The Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm are coming. You’re dead, Meng Hao. Dead!”

Meng Hao didn’t respond. He waved his finger, and the 9-Essences cultivator in the middle of the group of three burst into flames, and began to scream miserably. The other two howled, unleashing all the power of their Essences as they tried to flee.

Meng Hao waved his right hand, causing a pitch black wind to spring up, which instantly enveloped one of the fleeing Paragons. His flesh and blood was flayed, and he screamed as he was dragged back to the other 9-Essences cultivators, whereupon he also burst into flames.

These magnificent 9-Essences cultivators were like ants to Meng Hao. Were it not for the fact that he wished to torment them, he could have killed them with a mere glance, or by merely brushing them with divine will.

“And that just leaves you,” Meng Hao said. “Long time no see.” The final 9-Essences expert was the middle-aged man who had once been the most powerful expert of the 33 Heavens. Now, he was trembling, and even tried to say something in his defense. Before he could, Meng Hao strode forward, grabbed the man’s head, and then began to bash it against the surface of the land mass.

Boom!

Boom!

Boom!

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# Chapter 1549: The Lands of the Sinners Shall Not Remain!

Meng Hao didn’t accompany his actions with words. He simply pounded the man’s head into the ground over and over. The man screamed as his true form was gradually revealed. He had the body of a Flood Dragon, but with no tail. He almost looked like a serpent of some sort. Booms echoed out as Meng Hao used his head to batter a huge hole into the 15th land mass.

The Outsider’s bones were smashed, his blood drained, his life force completely cut off. At that point, Meng Hao finally stopped. Extracting the Outsider’s soul, he rose to his feet.

By now, the faces of the other Outsiders on the 15th land mass were completely ashen, and their minds were reeling. They were completely consumed by terror and hopelessness.

To them, Meng Hao was absolutely the most terrifying entity in all of the starry sky.

9-Essences Paragons were looked up to by all of the Outsiders in the 33 Heavens. And yet they had just watched one of the supreme 9-Essences Paragons, someone who wielded the might of the Heavens, tossed screaming into a sea of flames by Meng Hao. His body was burned into nothing, and his soul sank into the flames, where it would remain for all eternity.

The other Outsider in the black wind experienced incredible pain as his flesh was flayed off of his body as if by millions of blades.

The third one he grabbed by the neck and proceeded to use him to bash another hole, both in the land mass, and in the hearts of the other Outsiders.

That was especially the case because… up above, the 16th through 33rd Heavens were not visible. The only thing that could be seen was a boundless sea of flames, within which were the souls of countless dead Outsiders, screaming in torment.

As the sound drifted down into the hearts of the Outsiders below, it became a wellspring of terror, causing the Outsiders to tremble in anxiety.

The worst off were the ones who had participated in the war with the Mountain and Sea Realm, whose fear was especially intense and deep. Many of them had seen Meng Hao before, and remembered everything which had happened back in the war, how countless cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm and been killed. Meng Hao had been defiled, transformed from the Immortal into the Demon. Back then, he had thrown his head back and cackled in madness. That image now superimposed with the cold, merciless person in front of them, whose eyes burned with murder.

Pleading, begging voices could be heard from the 15th Heaven, and especially from the land masses further down.

They were completely and utterly filled with fear. To Meng Hao, this was revenge. To them, it was a massacre, an extermination. There was simply no way for them to fight back against the terrifying Meng Hao and the army he had at his back.

Many of the despairing Outsiders now realized that Meng Hao’s cultivation base was so powerful that he could simply wave his hand and destroy all of the 33 Heavens, and wipe the Outsiders away in body and soul.

But he didn’t. He was using a much more brutal method, holding back his hand, going slowly but surely as he crushed them into powder.

It was a method that went beyond horrifying.

Meng Hao stood there silently. From the 1st Heaven all the way to the 15th, despairing voices could be heard crying out. It was something that was familiar to him. Very familiar. Back when the Mountain and Sea Realm had been destroyed, it had been just like this.

The aura of despair was the same, just like it had been for the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“Next,” he murmured, eyes flickering with killing intent, “I think I should force these Outsiders to fight to their deaths.

“The way you treated the Mountain and Sea Realm back then is how I will treat you today.

“That’s fair, isn’t it…?” When he thought back to all the people he had seen die, it almost was as if he were surrounded by countless ghosts, the ghosts of those valiant heroes of the Mountain and Sea Realm who had fallen in death.

Meng Hao laughed loudly as he stepped onto the fifteenth land mass. Just when the cultivators of the Vast Expanse School were about to follow him, he raised his hand to halt their progress.

As of this point, Meng Hao didn’t plan to let anyone else participate. His divine sense spread out to cover all of the Outsiders of the 15th Heaven, and at the same time, a second version of himself stepped off to the side. Then another, and another, as numerous clones were created.

First there were 100,000. Then 1,000,000. Then 10,000,000. Then tens of millions…. They didn’t seem to end. Every Outsider on the land mass was suddenly facing a version of Meng Hao.

Within a few breaths of time, Meng Hao’s clones filled the 15th Heaven. Then each clone reached out and grabbed an Outsider by the neck, regardless of that Outsider’s cultivation base level, regardless of how they struggled, regardless of how they evaded.

The Outsiders begged for mercy and howled in despair and madness. To anyone who could hear it, it would sound like hell. But to Meng Hao, it was the sound of revenge.

“I hate the 33 Heavens. I hate these lands, and I hate everyone who lives in them!” Meng Hao closed his eyes as his clones suddenly clenched their hands down.

Silence ensued. The clones didn’t crush the necks of the Outsiders. They held them high up in the air, and poured cultivation base power into them, to wreak havoc inside their bodies.

The Outsiders trembled, but because their throats were being squeezed shut, they couldn’t scream. Their bodies twisted as they tried to struggle, but they fundamentally didn’t even qualify to struggle.

Up above, gasps could be heard from within the army from the Vast Expanse School. From Meng Hao’s methods, they could sense that his hatred for the 33 Heavens had reached an indescribable level, a level which left them completely flabbergasted.

There was no way for them to truly understand. They had not participated in the brutal and shocking war in the Mountain and Sea Realm. They had not watched the Mountains crumble, and the starry sky shatter.

They had not watched the people of the numerous mortal worlds wiped out by the Outsiders. Men. Women. Old. Young. All of them had been slaughtered mercilessly.

Meng Hao couldn’t forget what he had seen back then, and couldn’t forget what had happened to the mortals during that war of genocide. The mortals were part of the Mountain and Sea Realm too, and he could remember all of their corpses. Even the pregnant women, and the babies. Endless numbers of them.

Even more revolting was how he had seen people being eaten alive by the Outsiders.

“Even if I did worse to these brutes, it would still be showing mercy.” Meng Hao never opened his eyes. His clones began to crush the Outsiders, until flowers of blood bloomed throughout the 15th Heaven.

All of the Outsiders were killed. Their bodies were destroyed, and their souls were swept up by Meng Hao before they could dissipate.

The souls were then cast into the sea of flames, where their screams echoed out into Heaven and Earth.

Countless souls filled that sea of flames, all of them burning and in agony. What they were experiencing now was something the likes of which they had never experienced in their entire lives.

“The lands of the sinners shall not remain,” Meng Hao said, opening his eyes. In that moment, all of his clones on the fifteen land mass vanished.

Finally, he stamped his foot down.

A boom echoed out as the entire land mass collapsed, transforming into ash and rubble which rained down onto the 14th Heaven.

Down below, buildings were destroyed, and craters opened up. The lands of the 14th Heaven shook, and screams echoed up from the Outsiders. They seemed to be completely despairing, descending into madness as they flew up, ready to fight, glaring at Meng Hao with killing intent.

The Outsiders from the 14th Heaven were in such a state of despair, their minds in such chaos from the intense pressure, that they automatically spoke out their true feelings.

“I only killed a few of the scumbags from the Mountain and Sea Realm that year. If there’s a next life after this one, I’ll definitely kill even more!”

“Hahaha! When I fought in the war against the Mountain and Sea Realm, I crushed dozens of cultivators, and even slaughtered an entire mortal kingdom. I also managed to consume a lot of their hearts. Now that I think about it, the flavor was wonderful!”

“The female cultivators from the Mountain and Sea Realm make excellent cultivation vessels, and they taste delicious too! I brought quite a few home with me after the war to be slaves. It’s too bad they were so weak, and ended up dying from it all.”

When Meng Hao heard their words, his eyes turned cold, and his murderous aura raged.

He didn’t speak. Instead, he simply waved his finger at the incoming figures.

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# Chapter 1550: Death Cannot Wipe Out Your Crimes!

The wave of Meng Hao’s finger caused a tremor to run through the Outsiders of the 14th Heaven. A ripple spread out from his hand, almost instantly reaching the fastest among the group of Outsiders.

In that instant, they began tremble, and then suddenly, their flesh and blood was shredded off of them. A moment later, the ripple had passed by, and they were skeletons.

The pain of having their flesh and blood flayed off of them caused the Outsiders to scream, but as their flesh and blood vanished, their ability to emit sound went with it. Soon, all they could do was experience the pain within their souls.

Meng Hao calmly stepped forward, and the ripple continued to spread, flaying alive all of the Outsiders it passed, transforming them into skeletons.

Cracking sounds began to emanate out as the skeletons, which were not yet dead, began to tremble. As they fell down, they transformed into chunks of bone and ash. However, their skulls remained, within which their souls were still trapped, letting out indescribably miserable screams.

The hosts from the Vast Expanse School were left completely shocked. Meng Hao was like an underworld deity, whose passage caused flesh and blood to vanish, and left behind only skeletons.

By the time he passed through the entire 14th Heaven, not a single Outsider remained who had a flesh and blood body. They were all skeletons, who toppled down to the ground. Inside their skulls, their souls writhed, screaming in voices that only divine sense could hear.

Their pain was impossible to describe, both the pain of being flayed alive and also the twisting of their souls. Their bodies were telling them that they were dead, and yet the pain was telling them that they weren’t.

Meng Hao looked out over the land mass, and some of the hatred within his eyes faded. And yet it was still intensely powerful. He waved his hand, causing all of the skulls to fly up and converge together in the air. It was a sea of skulls, each one containing a soul. Screams echoed out, pleading for mercy. They were begging Meng Hao, not to free them, but simply to kill them.

“Dying isn’t that easy,” Meng Hao said softly, waving his finger out in front of him. Cracking sounds emanated out as fissures spread out across the surfaces of the skulls. Instantly, the pain inflicted upon them was increased by tenfold.

As they screamed, more cracking sounds echoed out, and more fissures appeared.

A moment later, the pain was so intense that the souls were slamming against the the bone, trying to escape. They tried to kill themselves, but were unable. The only thing they accomplished was adding further cracks to the skulls, leading to even more shocking pain.

Meng Hao took his time. Several hours later, the skulls were transforming into ash. The pain experienced by the souls exceeded that of hell, or of death. Their screams caused Heaven and Earth to grow dark. The Outsiders down below trembled. Some were so shaken that they collapsed mentally, and yet, because dying was not permitted, they remained alive.

However, the fate of the souls was not complete. After their torment, they didn’t fade away. Meng Hao waved his sleeve, sending them into the sea of flames up above, to endure eternal torment.

Having accomplished these things, the hatred within Meng Hao's eyes had faded a bit. He reached down and pushed onto the surface of the land mass, and the 14th Heaven shattered. Rubble rained down onto the 13th Heaven, which shook violently. The screams of the Outsiders echoed out as mountains were destroyed and rivers choked up.

Meng Hao hovered in midair, looking down coldly at the terrified Outsiders below. Some of them flew up into the air, and just as he was about to wave his finger, a bellow echoed out from the 13th Heaven, a bellow filled with both rage and supplication.

“Meng Hao!” An Outsider flew out who looked like an old man, an 8-Essences Paragon. He looked up at Meng Hao, clasped hands and bowed.

“Meng Hao, it is right and proper for you to come to the 33 Heavens to seek revenge. Considering what we did, it is fitting that you to wish to exterminate us. But… why must you torment everyone? Just kill us!

“Not everyone here participated in the destruction of the Mountain and Sea Realm. There are innocents here, people who never fought in any war. I beg of you, torment us, but spare them!” Trembling, the man dropped to his knees and kowtowed.

The other Outsiders fell silent. Some, in their bitterness, dropped to their knees. The sight of such supplication caused the cultivators from the Vast Expanse School to sigh.

Meng Hao looked quietly at the old man. He closed his eyes for a moment, and when they opened, his expression flickered, and he looked down at the land below.

As he did, his eyes were suddenly shot with blood. To the terror of the Outsiders, he took a step forward, appearing a moment later within a vast plain.

After the Outsider Paragon realized where Meng Hao was standing, he shivered, and suddenly looked very nervous.

As he stood there, Meng Hao waved his hand, and the lands around him began to quake and crumble. A huge crater opened up, revealing a huge basin. Apparently, the reason it was now a vast plain was because countless skeletons had been buried there….

Those skeletons even contained the remains of children. Bite marks could be seen on the bones, bearing witness to the unimaginable torment they had undergone prior to death.

These bones weren’t Outsiders. They were… people of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

Back when the Mountain and Sea Realm had been destroyed, not everyone made it onto the Mountain and Sea Butterfly. Many had been captured by the Outsiders of the 33 Heavens.

Cultivators and mortals alike had become playthings to the Outsiders, and even food….

The 13th Heaven actually served as a hub for such activity. These particular Outsiders indulged in unique proclivities. Because of that, and because of the fact that they eventually gave rise to a Paragon, it ensured that most of the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators ended up here, where they became nothing more than commodities to be traded between Outsiders.

Among the skeletons were some which had died as shortly as half of a sixty-year-cycle ago. Furthermore, according to Meng Hao’s divine sense, there were no longer any living cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm within the 33 Heavens. Clearly, they had been slowly exterminated over the course of the past two thousand years, and buried here in a mass grave.

It was a massive pit of corpses.

There had been nothing like this among the land masses of the other Heavens which had been recently destroyed. Meng Hao looked at the deep pit, and then the killing intent in his eyes grew even more intense. All of a sudden, he felt as if his previous methods had been too merciful.

He turned, then extended his hand and pointed out at the land mass. No ripple spread out. Instead, he altered the natural laws, simultaneously sending divine sense into the minds of the Outsiders of the 13th Heaven.

“I will give you one chance. Those of you who never killed any cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm may experience a quick death. In addition, your soul will not be cast into the sea of flames.

“Your fate will be determined by your own memories!” As the words left his mouth, Heaven and Earth trembled. The Outsiders of the 13th Heaven began to shake, and their eyes went blank as numerous images rose up in their minds, their own memories.

They recalled everything which had occurred when the Mountain and Sea Realm was destroyed, and after. Suddenly, all of the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators who they had killed in the past suddenly seemed to live again, and began to charge toward them with hatred and murderous intent.

The Outsiders wanted to fight back, but were stunned to find that they couldn’t move. The cultivators they had killed in the past now pounced on them in their own memories.

Miserable shrieks began to ring out from the mouths of the Outsiders of the 13th Heaven.

All living beings in the 33 Heavens were Outsiders. However, their manner of giving birth was different than cultivators. The shortest pregnancy term among them was half of a sixty-year-cycle, and the longest was a hundred years.

As such, the Outsiders born after the Mountain and Sea Realm war, although they might not have actually participated in the fighting, and had been referred to as innocents, had still participated in the sadistic murder of many Mountain and Sea cultivators.

Meng Hao looked coldly at the Outsiders as black smoke began to rise up off of their heads, the density of which indicated how many Mountain and Sea cultivators they had killed over the years. As he looked out over the land mass, he could not find a single Outsider who had no black smoke rising up!

“Death cannot wipe out your crimes!” With that, he waved his hand.

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# Chapter 1551: I’ll Wait For You On the 10th Heaven!

The 13th Heaven was completely shaken. Countless Outsiders had black smoke emanating from their heads, which then swirled around them and bored into their eyes, ears, noses, and mouths. Their eyes went wide, shining with pain. Soon, they began to topple over to the ground as they were killed by the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators in their own memories!

This was the same magical technique that Meng Hao had dealt with when fighting the will of Allheaven in the form of Chen Fan. That, of course, was before he had reached Transcendence. He had never faced anything like that before, and it affected him deeply. After Transcending, his own cultivation base allowed him to understand how the technique worked.

Transcendent cultivators… were omnipotent!

All they had to do was think of something, and it could be done!

It was a Realm occupied by the Immortal, the God, the Devil, the Ghost, and the Demon!

Meng Hao waved his hand, and the 13th Heaven collapsed. The souls of the dead Outsiders were extracted and thrown into the sea of flames to burn.

As the 13th Heaven fell apart, flaming rubble smashed into the 12th Heaven below. Mountains collapsed, buildings were destroyed, cities were ravaged.

The Outsiders of the 12th Heaven laughed bitterly. They wanted to fight back, but were unable to. They wanted to self-detonate, but couldn’t. The only thing they could do was wait to die.

Furthermore, the sea of flames up above contained innumerable burning souls, which led the remaining Outsiders to clearly understand that death… was not the end for them. True death was not such an easy thing.

Meng Hao looked coldly at the 12th Heaven for a moment before sending his divine sense out.

“I hereby seal your minds, and reduce you to nothing but instinct. Slaughter your fellows!” Instantly, all of the Outsiders on the 12th Heaven began to tremble. Most of these particular Outsiders had two heads with red eyes, and grossly fat bodies that almost didn’t resemble humans. As of this moment, their minds were suddenly taken over. Erased.

The energy of Heaven and Earth was Meng Hao’s Daosource energy, and it was all-powerful. If I want you to have something, you WILL have it. If I don’t want you to have something, you WILL NOT have it!

Rumbling could be heard as the two-headed Outsiders let out ferocious roars. Their minds were gone, leaving behind only animalistic instinct. Meng Hao’s echoing voice had left them bereft of their nature, and without a second thought, they turned and began to viciously attack their fellow people.

Of course, Meng Hao didn’t completely remove their minds. They were still there, just unable to do anything other than watch. There was no way for them to interfere with their own instincts.

Meng Hao hovered in midair, watching the slaughter. A moment later, he suddenly realized that this revenge did not make him happy. He only felt deep grief.

Within that grief, he couldn’t help but ask himself if he was any different from the Outsiders back when they were exacting their revenge. After some thought, he realized something.

The slaughtering didn’t make him happy. Although he was smiling, that smile contained profound sadness. He was being ruthless to be sure, but that ruthlessness came because of bitterness that came from thousands of years in the past.

When one lives in a world of hatred, then either they die, or their enemies die!

Back when the Outsiders had been massacring the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm, they had been excited, elated even.

Meng Hao looked down at the land mass below. As the Outsiders ripped each other to shreds like animals, their bloodcurdling screams gradually began to fade away. Soon, everything was quiet.

By this point, the bloody battle royale resulted in only a handful of Outsiders remaining alive. Meng Hao waved his hand, causing countless souls to fly up into the sea of flames. Then, the 12th Heaven’s land mass was destroyed, causing rubble to rain down onto the 11th Heaven.

There, the Outsiders were trembling. They began to shout, eyes filled with hatred, fear, and entreaties.

Meng Hao looked at them calmly for a moment, the red glow in his eyes growing more intense. Then he reached out with his right hand and made a pushing gesture.

Instantly, the entire land mass began to quake and distort. Mountains twisted, the ground shifted, rivers evaporated. The entire 11th Heaven began to change shape, as if it were being kneaded by giant hands. Soon, it no longer looked like a land mass. Instead, it resembled a giant clay pill furnace!

The land mass became the pill furnace, and the Outsiders became the medicinal ingredients. When the Outsiders from the 10th Heaven saw what was happening, they were overwhelmed by despair.

Meng Hao looked at gargantuan pill furnace, then snapped his fingers. Rumbling sounds echoed out as it began to heat up, rapidly turning crimson from the intense heat. This was a pill-concocting magic in which the entire continent was used to refine all the Outsiders into… a gigantic medicinal pill of gore!

The huge pill furnace trembled, and screaming began to echo out. However, the sounds soon faded away. In the end, nothing could be heard at all. Eventually, the pill furnace exploded, and countless souls emerged, which shot into the sea of flames up above. At the same time, a medicinal pill appeared, fist-sized and the color of blood.

Meng Hao looked at the pill, his expression placid. Only by looking closely would it be possible to see the exhaustion and grief in his eyes. After a moment, he flicked his sleeve, sending the medicinal pill flying toward the old lizard.

“Take it,” he said.

The lizard gaped in shock. Then it eyed the pill for a moment before chomping it down. The lizard shivered, and then visibly grew younger.

Meng Hao looked down at the 10th Heaven for a moment, and the despairing Outsiders there, before finally closing his eyes and taking a deep breath. He had come to a realization just now.

“Getting revenge alone is a bit selfish. I’ve been suffocating for thousands of years, but so have all the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“Pressure like that can only be released by the blood of the Outsiders.” His eyes shone brightly as he waved his hand in the direction of the remaining Heavens.

“I hereby decree that all Outsiders from the other Heavens will drop an entire cultivation realm!” His words instantly changed the natural laws of the 1st through 10th Heavens. in that instant, all Outsiders trembled as their cultivation bases were thrown into chaos, and they dropped by an entire realm!

7-Essences became Dao Sovereigns. 6-Essences dropped to 5-Essences. 1-Essence Dao Realm experts reverted to the Ancient Realm. Not a single Outsider escaped.

This was not a sealing. This was a true and utter loss, something unrecoverable.

“I hereby strip away all Outsiders’ divine sense!

“I hereby strip away all Outsiders’ power of flight!

“I hereby strip away all Outsiders’ regenerative powers!” Each sentence echoed like Heaven-rending Earth-crushing thunder. Natural laws were born and changed, and as soon as the words left his mouth, they became reality.

Instantly, all remaining Outsiders’ cultivation bases dropped, their divine sense was rendered useless, and they couldn’t fly.

This was not something that could be accomplished by means of divine abilities and magical techniques. It was like a Godly miracle, an Immortal magic, or a Demonic Dao!

By now, all the Outsiders had experienced the terrifying and unimaginable nature of Meng Hao’s cultivation realm. The most powerful experts who remained alive in the various Heavens trembled as they spoke Meng Hao’s level aloud.

“… Transcendence!” The powerful experts’ despair had reached the pinnacle as they realized that even the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent would be like ants in comparison to a Transcendent cultivator.

Because the Mountain and Sea Realm had produced a Transcendent cultivator, it was destined… to shake the starry sky.

At the same time, Meng Hao’s gaze pierced down through the Heavenly land masses into the Mountain and Sea Butterfly. Kindness could be seen in his eyes as he waved his finger.

Instantly, the Mountain and Sea Butterfly shivered, and its wings flapped. It was as if the gate to the world had been opened, as countless Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators instantly flew out.

“I hereby bless all Mountain and Sea cultivators’ divine sense power!

“I hereby bless all Mountain and Sea cultivators’ power to fly through the starry sky!

“I hereby bless all Mountain and Sea cultivators’ magical techniques!

“I hereby bless all Mountain and Sea cultivators’ fleshly body power!

“I hereby bless all Mountain and Sea cultivators’ regenerative powers!

“I hereby… give all you my blessing!” As Meng Hao’s voice echoed out, the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm flying out from the butterfly felt their cultivation bases rumbling. All of them began to radiate blinding light.

Many of them were stunned. Although they couldn’t see Meng Hao through all of the land masses, they could hear his soft voice in their minds.

“Mountain and Sea cultivators, I am Meng Hao…. The hatred of the Mountain and Sea Realm has been simmering for thousands of years. Sacrifice the blood of the Outsiders to rise up from within the sea of hatred. Soar high into the starry sky. The time has come to remould the Mountain and Sea Realm. I will be waiting for you on the 10th Heaven.”

Meng Hao’s gaze then came to rest on the wings of the Mountain and Sea Butterfly. There, he could see his father and mother, as well as a young woman who was there to accompany them.

She wore a long white garment, and was beautiful. She looked just like Meng Hao remembered her: simple, pure, and resolute. However, she somehow seemed… more fragile than before.

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# Chapter 1552: The Traitorous Ninth Sea!

A tremor ran through Xu Qing as she slowly looked up at the 1st Heaven, which stretched out overhead like the sky. She could feel Meng Hao looking at her from somewhere high up above.

She smiled, a smile of anticipation, and of happiness. Numerous thoughts and memories filled her mind, and her eyes glowed with a warmth that could melt all the ice in Heaven and Earth.

Rumbling could be heard as countless figures flew up from within the world of the Mountain and Sea Butterfly. They were led by Grandpa Meng, Ksitigarbha, the Paragon puppet, and… Ke Jiusi!

Those four were the most powerful cultivators in the Mountain and Sea Realm, and it was without hesitation that they led the charge toward the 1st Heaven.

Their cultivation bases had leapt up to a higher level. They could regenerate from wounds faster, their divine sense and Daoist magics were more powerful. Their current battle prowess could shake Heaven and Earth.

The Paragon puppet had experienced an even more shocking transformation. During the centuries that Meng Hao had been away, it hadn’t moved at all. However, as its battle prowess increased, it changed. It was as though some severed connection had finally been mended.

Heaven shook and the Earth trembled as the four Paragons led everyone into battle. Fatty, Wang Youcai, Fang Yu, Li Ling’er, and Zhixiang all appeared, as did many other familiar faces. Behind them were even more

Mountain and Sea cultivators. The old-timers had experienced the destruction of the Mountains and Seas, and the younger ones had been raised hearing the legends of Meng Hao.

Now, they attacked with explosive force.

Meng Hao had endured thousands of years of pressure, as had the other cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm. Meng Hao needed to vent, to get his revenge, and they did too.

Thus, he had left the 1st through 10th Heavens for just that purpose.

The root of all of their hatred would now be cut away. Nothing would remain to drag them down.

Countless Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators fought their way into the 1st Heaven, and soon, miserable shrieks began to ring out. The Outsiders fought back, struggled, and yet their cultivation bases had been restricted. Their divine sense was gone, and the power of their divine abilities and magical techniques had been weakened. It only took moments before they were being routed.

Despite their struggling, the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators' revenge was carried out with ease. In fact, the Outsiders couldn't even injure them.

If Meng Hao could exact vengeance with such madness, there was no need to even mention how madly the other cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm would fight.

Tears streamed down their faces as they shouted, unleashing the power of their cultivation bases. Any Outsider they found, they destroyed as easily as dried twigs. That was especially true of the old-timers who had fought in the war of the past. Their tears flowed especially hard.

“Master, can you see, sir? It is for you that I get revenge!!” These words were spoken by a man with white hair and a face full of wrinkles. He seemed old, but he was in fact middle-aged. He fought with madness, weeping, cutting down one Outsider after another until he was soaked with blood. And yet he didn’t seem to tire at all.

“Shanshan, you threw yourself in front of me to save me from the blow of an Outsider. When you died, my heart broke. The only reason I kept living was for vengeance. I had to get revenge, and I had to kill the Outsiders one and all. All Outsiders must die!” A middle-aged cultivator stood on the battlefield, his eyes bloodshot, crying and laughing simultaneously as he slaughtered the surrounding Outsiders.

“Dad, mom, big brother, I’ll never forget the hatred which blossomed in my heart back then. Now, I can finally avenge you!” It was an old man who lunged forward and latched his teeth onto the throat of a terrified Outsider. When he ripped the Outsider’s throat out, blood sprayed out like a fountain. Then the man’s laughter rang out over the battlefield.

The cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm fought with madness, especially the ones who had gone through the war all those years ago.

“I’m the only survivor from my sect. Today I will slaughter a hundred thousand Outsiders as a sacrifice to the heroes who died!”

“Kill them all!”

“The only thing that kept me going was the thought of revenge!”

They fought with complete viciousness, and soon, all of the Outsiders in the 1st Heaven were wiped out. After that, they charged toward the 2nd Heaven.

As for the other cultivators who had been born throughout the past centuries, their hatred wasn’t as profound. However, from birth, they had listened to tales of the past recounted by their seniors, and they had been raised with the 33 Heavens weighing down on them from above.

They had seen depictions of the Mountain and Sea Realm of the past, and had heard the stories about the Nine Mountains and Nine Seas.

Of course, they were only stories, mere descriptions, and the Mountain and Sea Realm itself was somewhat of a vague concept. Therefore, they didn't possess a profound and consuming hatred.

But then they saw the old veterans of the Mountain and Sea War, people who were normally calm and reserved, suddenly rave with madness. The hearts of the younger ones were profoundly shaken by that.

They suddenly understood how truly intense that hatred was which had been described to them in the stories. Those old-timers… could not allow their enemies to remain alive.

The younger ones were profoundly shaken, and soon, the feelings seeped into their own veins. Scattered memories began to rise up within them, memories that all inhabitants of the Mountain and Sea Realm held in eternally within their blood.

Because of those newly awakened memories, and because of the madness surrounding them, the younger ones who had been born over the past centuries began to fight with a madness that rivaled that of the older generation.

Fatty wept as he fought. He was a massive ball of flesh, and yet he was surprisingly agile as he lunged forward and wiped out any Outsiders who got in his way.

"You killed my 300 Daoist partners! Damn you, you beasts! You killed my 300 beloved partners!!

"And my children! And my grandchildren! Damn you. I won't rest until you're dead!"

Shockingly, Fatty was surrounded by a group of over ten thousand cultivators who all called him Patriarch. Those who fought at his side included men and women, old and young. Among them were the new Daoist partners he had taken in over the past centuries, as well as his new children and grandchildren.

He had single-handedly created a vast clan, the likes of which could only be rivaled by the clan founded by the eighth reincarnation of Meng Hao's clone.

The 2nd Heaven soon shattered. The army of cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm marched with bloodshot eyes to the 3rd Heaven, and then the 4th.

The starry sky dripped with blood. Wang Youcai's eyes were closed, but he held a sword in his hand. When he unleashed his cultivation base, countless Outsiders were ripped to shreds. He left their heads intact, though, collecting them and stringing them up until they flowed like a river behind him.

That river of heads was like a cape, giving him a profoundly fiendish appearance. Any Outsiders who saw him were struck with dread.

Among the army of cultivators was the Fang Clan, who fought just as viciously as everyone else.

Soon the Mountain and Sea cultivators arrived at the 6th Heaven. Their revenge was reaching a climax. Their eyes were bright red as they exploded out from underneath the pressure of centuries.

Li Ling'er wept as she fought, her teeth clenched as she thought about Paragon Sea Dream. It didn't matter that she was a woman, she unleashed intense slaughter nonetheless. She wasn't beautiful like she had been when she was young; she was now an ancient old woman. And yet, she was willing to pay any price to continue the legacy of Paragon Sea Dream.

The 6th Heaven fell, and the battle moved on to the 7th Heaven. Zhixiang looked like a specter as she fought the Outsiders. Years ago, she had called herself Demoness. Now, she was the Sect Leader of the Demon Immortal Sect, which was one of the three great sects in the Mountain and Sea Butterfly. And that was because… Ke Jiusi had become a Paragon, and returned to join the Demon Immortal Sect.

As their revenge was carried out, and the slaughter continued, most eye-catching of all was not the fighting between the four Paragons of the Mountains and Seas and the Paragons from the various Heavens. Instead… it was a huge turtle!

Countless cultivators flew off of the back of that turtle to fight viciously with the Outsiders. The turtle head-butted the 7th Heaven, crushing it. Then he threw his head back and roared, charging toward the 8th Heaven.

“Fudge! The Patriarch’s successor disciple is back! Isn’t the Patriarch awesome!? Hey don’t run, Outsiders! Dammit. I have some good fortune for you!”

However, even as the huge turtle began to move in the direction of the 8th Heaven, countless ripples surged out as that huge land mass transformed into… a sea!

As soon as the sea appeared, Meng Hao’s gaze fell upon it.

“The traitor of the Mountains and Seas, the Ninth Sea.”

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# Chapter 1553: The Return of the Demon Sovereign!

Meng Hao stared at the Ninth Sea.

It had been hiding on the 8th Heaven, which was no surprise to him.

Back in the Mountain and Sea War, the Ninth Sea had turned traitor, casting Shui Dongliu's plan into peril. It became much more difficult for the Mountain and Sea Butterfly to escape, and also ensured that fewer Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators were able to make it to the butterfly to begin with.

The Ninth Sea's sudden betrayal at a critical moment had a huge effect on the Mountain and Sea Realm.

From that moment on, all Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators came to have a deep hatred for that sea.

The cultivators born in subsequent centuries heard the story of the Ninth Sea's traitorous act, but up to now, it had been just that: nothing more than a story….

Now, though, the entire 8th Heaven had transformed from being a land mass into a majestic sea.

Gradually, a face came to be visible within it, the face of a woman, surrounded by innumerable sea beasts.

"Ninth Sea!" growled Ksitigarbha as he delivered the death blow to one of the Outsider Paragons. His eyes flickered with killing intent, and his voice boomed like thunder. A moment later, he was flying directly toward the Ninth Sea.

Grandpa Meng looked up, eyes flickering with memories of the past. He also began to fly toward the Ninth Sea at top speed.

Patriarch Reliance had originally been planning to head-butt the land mass of the 8th Heaven. But now that he saw it transform into sea water, his eyes went wide, and he positioned himself as if to advance. However, instead of advancing, he began to retreat. Strangely, the words coming out of his mouth seemed to indicate anything but retreat.

“Kill! Kill! Dammit! Trifling seawater! The Patriarch isn’t scared of you. DIIEEE….” However, he continued to retreat until he was far off in the distance.

Soon, rumbling could be heard from within the Ninth Sea as countless sea beasts flew out toward the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators. Fatty, Wang Youcai, Li Ling’er, and all the others were joined by the rest of the Mountain and Sea cultivators as they transformed into beams of light which shot into battle.

Booming sounds rang out that could shake Heaven and Earth. The sea beasts of the Ninth Sea began to scream miserably as they were cut down by the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators. Soon, the Ninth Sea was stained red with blood.

The sea began to shrink, opening up a path to the 9th Heaven, which some of the Mountain and Sea cultivators took. Patriarch Reliance’s eyes rolled up in thought for a moment, and then he headed toward the 9th Heaven as well.

Immediately, a path was torn open through the battlefield in this region.

It only took a moment for fighting to break out on the 9th Heaven. Soon the 9th Heaven was destroyed, and finally… the army advanced to the 10th Heaven!

They didn’t immediately attack, though. Instead they looked for Meng Hao, who had spoken into their minds that he would meet them on the 10th Heaven.

To the veterans of the Mountain and Sea War, Meng Hao’s name was something engraved deeply in their hearts. To all the other cultivators born in the subsequent centuries, he was both a stranger, and yet oddly familiar.

He was a stranger because they had never met him in person. He was familiar because there were countless statues of him in the Mountain and Sea Butterfly. Furthermore, stories about his deeds were told so often that virtually everyone had memorized them.

Meng Hao had long since been deified within the world of the Mountain and Sea Butterfly!

To the Mountain and Sea cultivators, he was their god, the will of Heaven, the Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

Almost immediately, the cultivators who arrived on the 10th Heaven could see Meng Hao hovering in midair, and he looked exactly like all of the statues which depicted him!

In fact, he seemed even more grand and majestic than the statues.

However, the mere sight of him was of secondary importance. Even more shocking was that all the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm suddenly felt their blood surging through their veins. Their cultivation bases rocketed up, almost as if the person they were looking at was the source of their bloodline!

It was an indescribable feeling, and resulted in all of the cultivators who had stepped onto the 10th Heaven clasping hands and bowing.

“Patriarch Demon Sovereign!!”

“Greetings, exalted Demon Sovereign!”

“Greetings, Patriarch!”

“Demon Sovereign!!”

“Patriarch!!!” The sound of the excited Mountain and Sea cultivators shouting out caused everything to tremble.

The surrounding Outsiders took advantage of the moment to attack, and yet before they could reach the area occupied by the Mountain and Sea cultivators, they were transformed into ash. Apparently, only the people of the Mountains and Seas were permitted to be there. Anyone else who tried to enter would be destroyed in body and soul!

Everyone was crying out to the Patriarch, to the Demon Sovereign. As additional cultivators arrived, they looked up, and were profoundly shaken by the sight of Meng Hao. Their eyes burned with passion, with ardor, with veneration.

As for the cultivators who had been raised on stories of the venerated Meng Hao, when they saw him, they didn’t just bow in respect, but in worship!

The ground quaked as more and more cultivators arrived on the 10th Heaven. Even more struck with emotion were all of the old-timers who had fought in the Mountain and Sea War.

“It’s Meng Hao!”

“Meng Hao’s back!”

“He’s back, Meng Hao the Demon Sovereign!” Their voices were filled with happiness, and they wept tears of joy. Years ago, Meng Hao had fought to protect the Mountain and Sea Butterfly, blocking the path of the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm. It was something that those cultivators would never be able to forget.

As Meng Hao hovered there looking down at the crowds, he heard their cries, and tears welled up in his eyes.

It felt like he was reuniting with his family, people he had missed profoundly for centuries.

“I am Meng Hao, and… I’m back!” His voice was soft, and yet echoed like thunder, smashing through the entire 10th Heaven. With that, he began to descend.

That movement caused all of the Outsiders to tremble in fear, and let out miserable shrieks. They felt as if countless invisible mountains were crushing down onto them.

That was pressure from Meng Hao, his aura, and as he descended, the Outsiders on the land mass… all exploded.

“Demon Sovereign!”

“Demon Sovereign!!”

“Demon Sovereign!!!” Countless Mountain and Sea cultivators flew to his side, all of them shouting in passion and veneration.

“Let’s go home!” Meng Hao said. The cheering grew louder as the cultivators clustered around him and headed downward. Behind them, the 10th Heaven transformed into nothing more than ash!

As of this moment, there were no land masses above the Mountain and Sea Butterfly. There was only… a trembling, shrinking sea.

The cheering of the Mountain and Sea cultivators grew louder, causing powerful ripples to spread out in all directions. The group who had been besieging the Ninth Sea all looked over at Meng Hao, trembling.

Fatty was shaking visibly, and as soon as he saw Meng Hao, he let out a loud cry and flew toward him, laughing. A moment later, he was directly in front of Meng Hao, who he wrapped up into a huge bear hug.

“Meng Hao, Meng Hao, Meng Hao… you’re finally back. I’ve missed you so much, you don’t even know! Two thousand years. Can you imagine? Lots of people thought you were dead, but not me. I knew that you wouldn’t die. Meng Hao, Meng Hao, Meng Hao….” Fatty was so excited he was crying and laughing. The two of them had been friends for so many centuries that Meng Hao had become an inseparable part of him.

Meng Hao slapped Fatty’s shoulders, equally as excited.

Fatty’s Daoist partners and offspring all stared wide-eyed. The sight of their Patriarch acting in such a way was completely shocking. All of them quickly dropped to their knees to kowtow to Meng Hao.

Another figure appeared, shooting along at high speed. It was… Fang Yu, Meng Hao’s older sister!

She looked like a grown-up woman now, and tears poured down her face as she landed in front of Meng Hao and then hugged him.

“Sister, I’m back….” Meng Hao said softly. He looked over at Wang Youcai off in the distance. For centuries, Wang Youcai’s face had been covered with a grim expression, but now there was an excited grin.

Meng Hao saw Ksitigarbha, who looked over at him and started laughing. Then there was his Grandpa Meng, who gazed at him kindly, tears streaming down his cheeks.

Li Ling’er was there, an old woman now. Zhixiang was in the crowd as well, a complex expression on her face as she seemed to be thinking about past times. She was mostly happy, though, and excited.

There was Sun Hai, Meng Hao’s brother-in-law. His first reaction upon seeing Meng Hao was to be excited, but then he looked a bit afraid. At the same time, he felt proud. After all, he was Meng Hao’s brother-in-law….

Among all the other familiar faces was Ke Jiusi, who looked over at Meng Hao and smiled warmly. It didn’t matter how powerful Meng Hao had become, to Ke Jiusi, he was still his younger brother.

Eventually, Meng Hao looked down through the starry sky to the Mountain and Sea Butterfly. He saw his father and mother, and he saw his wife Xu

Qing, who was standing next to them. At that point, his heart filled with a warmth it had lacked for many years.

“I’m back!”

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# Chapter 1554: Transcendence Treasure!

Tears streamed down Xu Qing’s face, and she smiled. Meng Hao’s father and mother stood next to her, looking extremely excited and proud.

This was their son. Their Meng Hao!

As all of the Mountain and Sea cultivators burst with excitement, the Ninth Sea was off in the distance, battling with the Paragon puppet.

The Ninth Sea had been pushed to the limit in the fighting, and had shrunk down so much that it was no longer boundless and majestic like before.

Now, it appeared to be trying to take advantage of the commotion caused by the appearance of Meng Hao. The woman’s face appeared within it as it began to back up as if to flee. At that point, Meng Hao looked over.

“Did I say you could leave?” he asked coolly.

His gaze struck the Ninth Sea like a physical blow. It began vibrating, and the woman’s face filled with fear. His voice was like the magical law of Heaven and Earth, which instantly locked down the path of escape.

At the same time, all of the Mountain and Sea cultivators turned to look at the Ninth Sea, their gazes bursting with killing intent. That was especially true of the veterans of the Mountain and Sea War, who hated the Ninth Sea deep in their bones.

Upon facing the gazes of so many cultivators, the womanly face of the Ninth Sea let out an enraged roar.

“You forced me to do what I did. You are the Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm, and you swore an oath to erase my mind. What other choice did I have but to betray the Mountain and Sea Realm!?

“It was you! All of this is because of you! You wanted to exterminate my people, you wanted to wipe me out. I had to fight back, I had to resist. My betrayal is all your fault!”

At first, Meng Hao didn’t say anything in response to the Ninth Sea’s howling. But then he sighed.

“That scheme of yours lurked in your duplicitous heart for ages. Why try to pin the blame on me? Even without that oath of mine, you would have picked a good time to turn traitor.” Considering the level of his cultivation base, and his experience, he had long since come to a clear understanding of the Ninth Sea’s actions.

The Ninth Sea hesitated for a moment, then bitterly cried, “I wasn’t in the wrong. I just wanted to be able to think for myself. I didn’t want to be a part of the Mountain and Sea Realm forever!” Suddenly, the seawater churned, and the face of the woman shot away as if to flee.

However, it was obvious that she wouldn’t be able to escape. In fact, her decision wasn’t really an attempt to flee, but rather, a way to seek death. By this point, there was nothing she could do to change everything which had occurred.

“After you die,” Meng Hao said, “everything will be a thing of the past. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust….

“You don’t need the Mountain and Sea Realm, and the future Mountain and Sea Realm doesn’t need you….” Meng Hao extended his right hand and made a vicious grasping motion toward the Ninth Sea. It was as if an enormous, invisible hand had grabbed the woman’s face, preventing her from fleeing no matter how much she struggled, and no matter how much the water churned. Then, he jerked his hand, sending the Ninth Sea flying into the flames above.

The Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators watched as the face that represented the Ninth Sea plunged into the sea of flames and began to burn. Screams echoed out as the face shrank down and down. Soon, the only thing left behind was the Ninth Sea’s soul!

There it burned within the fire, unable to die.

Meng Hao waved his finger, causing all of the souls of the Outsiders who had been killed in the 1st through 10th Heavens to fly out into the open.

They cried out for mercy, and terror filled their faces, but all Meng Hao did was wave his sleeve, sending the boundless collection of souls flying up in a beam of light into the sea of flames.

As the souls entered the fire, they began to burn among the countless other Outsider souls.

The sight of it caused the Mountain and Sea cultivators to tremble, not from fear, but from the fact that their revenge had finally been carried out.

“See that, Master? Master, I avenged your death!”

“Dad, mom, your son has gained vengeance!”

“Di Kongzi, the day you died, I promised that if I made it out alive, I would get revenge for you. Finally, it’s happened!”

“I hope the Patriarchs and the sect can all rest in peace….” Countless wailing voices could be heard from the cultivators who had fought in the Mountain and Sea War. Every one of them had a story of their own, friends or family who had been killed. Finally, their revenge had been exacted, and they wept, wrapped up in their thoughts of the past. The sound of the crying echoed out into the void.

Fatty sobbed, as if he were able to see all of his Daoist partners and children from the past standing around him. Wang Youcai had a bitter expression on his face as he thought back to his life in the sects he had been a part of.

Ksitigarbha laughed bitterly, and also cried. Li Ling'er murmured Sea Dream's name.

Zhixiang trembled. Considering the level of her cultivation base back during the war, it was somewhat of a miracle that she even survived. Many stories could be told based on the events of her life.

Every one of the old-timers wept.

Meng Hao's eyes shone with grief as he thought back to the past, and the unforgettably bitter events which had propelled him from being almost like a silkpants cultivator to maturity.

After a long, long moment passed, something happened. It was hard to say who did it first, but the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators began to wipe away their tears and then drop to their knees.

"Many thanks, Demon Sovereign!"

One by one, they began to kowtow, until all of the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators were crying out to him.

"Many thanks, Demon Sovereign!!"

"Many thanks, Demon Sovereign!!!"

Meng Hao took a deep breath and looked around at everyone. The truth was that he could have easily wiped out the 33 Heavens by himself. But he didn't. He gave them an opportunity for revenge.

It was not his revenge alone. It belonged to all of the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

Of course, Meng Hao knew that this was only part of their revenge. The Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent still had to be dealt with. By now, he was almost completely sure that his speculations about them were true. He was also certain that the will of Allheaven would drive the two land masses to come to attack him.

“I made two promises in the past….” Meng Hao said softly, looking around at the crowds. The cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm all looked up at him, their eyes burning with passion.

“One of them was that I would come back.

“The other… was that I would return to where the Mountain and Sea Realm had been destroyed, and rebuild it!” As the words left his mouth, the Mountain and Sea cultivators began to tremble inwardly. That was especially true of the older ones. As for the ones born in more recent times, they were also filled with anticipation. After all, they had heard countless stories of the Nine Mountains and Nine Seas of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

It was their ancestral home too.

Meng Hao extended his hand and made a grasping motion. The void trembled, and rumbling sounds echoed out as a huge vortex appeared, with Meng Hao’s hand at the center. In the blink of an eye, it spread out to fill the entire area in the starry sky.

“Oh destroyed Mountains and Seas, by the power of my name, I, Meng Hao, call for you… to return!” As his voice echoed out, natural law changed, and magical law was altered. Shockingly, countless bits of dust and rubble in the area began to rise up.

A mountain boulder that had been hanging in the starry sky for centuries began to vibrate, and then shine with dazzling light!

Drops of water floating about began to move, almost as if they possessed thought, and were waking up. Brilliant light began to shine out.

The effect began to spread out all through the boundless starry sky. Boulders, shattered rock, drops of water, endless dust. Regardless of where the were or what shape they were in, they all began to fly toward Meng Hao!

These were the destroyed remnants of the Mountain and Sea Realm, fragments which were now flying through the void, flying through the starry sky, flying through time itself.

Massive booms rang out as the countless fields of rubble transformed into dazzling beams of light which began to take shape within the vortex.

“First Mountain and Sea!” Meng Hao said, eyes shining with a strange light. He raised both hands into the air, and all reality seemed to shake. All living beings which existed in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse could hear the words he spoke.

“I call upon the power of my name to take the First Hex, the Beginning-Ending Hex, and embody it in the First Mountain and Sea. Henceforth… you are the Beginning-Ending Mountain and Sea, responsible for transformations of seasons within the Mountain and Sea Realm!

“Cultivators in this Mountain and Sea may cultivate my Beginning-Ending Hex, and gain enlightenment of the Essences of beginnings and endings. This hex will now will be called the First Hex of the Mountains and Seas!”

As soon as the words left his mouth, the power of Transcendence propelled the First Hex into the First Mountain and Sea, becoming its foundation.

The Hexing magic became the bones, and the Mountain and Sea became the flesh!

Almost immediately, the shape of the First Sea and the First Mountain became visible!

The cultivators who were originally from the First Mountain and Sea were so excited they were crying. When they saw the sea and the mountain taking shape, they began to tremble. They were looking at their home.

Rumbling could be heard as the First Mountain took final shape, complete with all of its planets!

Meng Hao was not just calling back the old Mountain and Sea Realm, he was refining it, making it into… a new Mountain and Sea Realm!

It was… a Transcendence Treasure!

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# Chapter 1555: Summoning the Mountains and Seas!

The Mountain and Sea Realm with its Nine Mountains and Nine Seas was originally a precious treasure forged by Paragon Nine Seals when his world was being destroyed, for the purpose of fighting back against the two major powers and the rebel forces.

It was as powerful as a cultivator half a step into Transcendence, which was how it came to be a safe haven for later generations, and even prevented the other major powers from entering.

As time went on, the Mountain and Sea Realm continued to protect the cultivators who lived within it, until the great war occurred over two thousand years in the past. During that time, the Ninth Sea turned traitor, and numerous other events led to the Mountain and Sea Realm being destroyed.

Afterwards, the destroyed remnants were scattered hither and thither.

But now, Meng Hao had created a vortex that sent the entire starry sky rumbling, and caused all of the scattered remnants to turn into dazzling beams of light that converged together, causing the Mountain and Sea Realm to once again form in front of the eyes of all present.

Furthermore, Meng Hao wasn’t just putting the pieces back together, he was using the power of Transcendence, and his Demon Sealing Hexing magic, to completely remodel the entire realm.

This really and truly was… using Hexing magic as the bones, and the Mountains and Seas as the flesh!

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the First Mountain and Sea appeared. Then, Meng Hao’s voice echoed out and shook the starry sky. Natural laws were altered, and magical laws were torn apart. The cultivators clustered around Meng Hao continued to kowtow excitedly.

That was especially true of those who had fought in the Mountain and Sea War. The cultivators who originally came from the First Mountain and Sea were nearly hysterical, and couldn’t hold back from weeping. As the First Mountain and Sea and its planets were formed, they could finally see the home that they remembered from so long ago.

It was a new Mountain and Sea Realm, and from now on, the First Mountain and Sea would embody Meng Hao’s First Hex, the Beginning-Ending Hex!

Cultivators there would have innate superiority when it came to that Beginning-Ending Hex. As that superiority developed and expanded, one could easily imagine the final result!

Furthermore, the newly remoulded First Mountain and Sea also came to be responsible for the seasonal transformations in the Mountain and Sea Realm. The way that spring, summer, fall, and winter occurred on the First Mountain and Sea would affect the entire Mountain and Sea Realm!

Furthermore, whoever became the Lord of the First Mountain and Sea would have ultimate control over all beginnings and endings!

People only continued to be more and more shaken as more and more rubble gathered in the area. Rumbling sounds then echoed out as Meng Hao’s voice once again replaced the will of the starry sky, speaking out new natural laws for the Mountains and Seas!

“Second Mountain and Sea! I call upon the power of my name to take the power of the Second Hex, the Real-Unreal Hex, and embody it in the Second Mountain and Sea. Henceforth… you are the Real-Unreal Mountain and Sea! You are responsible for all clarity in the Mountain and Sea Realm, ensuring that all Mountain and Sea cultivators can distinguish between what is real and what is unreal, can think clearly, and remove inner devils!

“Cultivators in this Mountain and Sea may cultivate my Real-Unreal Hex and gain enlightenment of the Essences of reality and unreality. This hex will now be called the Second Hex of the Mountains and Seas!” Meng Hao’s words echoed like Heavenly thunder, and at the same time, countless complex ancient magical symbols appeared, which converged behind the First Mountain and Sea. Soon, the shape of the Second Sea and the Second Mountain took shape.

At the same time, more and more of the fragments of the Mountains and Seas began to form around the magical symbols. Soon, the Second Sea and the Second Mountain fully formed!

The Heavens shook and the starry sky trembled as the Second Mountain and Sea appeared!

Planets also formed around the Second Mountain!

The Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators were cheering in excitement at the shocking sight. As for the cultivators who had originally come from the Second Mountain and Sea, they were weeping with joy.

In the future, those who practiced cultivation in the Second Mountain and Sea would have superior command of the Daos of reality and unreality. They would be able to dispel delusions with ease, and would exceed others in understanding of magical illusions.

The Second Mountain and Sea was responsible for clarity, ensuring that the Mountain and Sea Realm remained free of inner devils. It would protect the cultivators of the realm, and ensure that their practice of cultivation went smoothly. The benefit to the Mountain and Sea Realm as a whole would be no less than that provided by the First Mountain and Sea.

Whoever was Lord of the Second Mountain and Sea would have control over the inner devils of all cultivators in the Mountain and Sea Realm. Without the Second Mountain and Sea, it would be very difficult to dispel such inner devils!

It was as if a new age were dawning. One could easily imagine how a Transcendence Treasure like this could be used, not necessarily just for fighting, but for causing its entire people to rise to new heights of glory.

This was a Mountain and Sea Realm forged specifically for its people, forged to create a new world of cultivation!

It was a level of grandeur that Paragon Nine Seals had only partly attained. Meng Hao was using the power of Transcendence to create a new Heaven and Earth.

“Third Mountain and Sea!” he roared. Brilliant light shone off of him, making him look like a divine being. He waved his finger at the vortex, eyes shining with a strange light, making him look so glorious that even the stars would bow to him.

“I call upon the power of my name to take the Third Hex, the Present-Ancient Hex, and embody it in the Third Mountain and Sea. Henceforth… you are the Present-Ancient Mountain and Sea, responsible for Time magic within the Mountain and Sea Realm!

“Cultivators in this Mountain and Sea may cultivate my Present-Ancient Hex, and gain enlightenment of the Essences of present and ancient. This hex will now be called the Third Hex of the Mountains and Seas!”

As Meng Hao’s words echoed out, rumbling filled the starry sky. Numerous magical symbols appeared, which formed together into the underlying structure of the Third Mountain and Sea. Then the surrounding rubble was sucked in, converging together until the Third Mountain and Sea was visible for all the cultivators to see.

The Third Sea’s water churned, sending massive waves back and forth!

The Third Mountain rose high into the starry sky, towering and extraordinary!

The Third Hex was the Present-Ancient Hex. Before Meng Hao created the Ninth Hex, it had been considered the most domineering of the Hexes, having been created by the Third Generation Demon Sealer, the most powerful of the Demon Sealers. It could control the flow of time, and now it formed the bones of the newly remoulded Third Mountain and Sea. Simply put, in terms of battle prowess, this Mountain and Sea would be extraordinary compared to the others.

The power of Time flowed about to and fro. Similar to the First and Second Mountains and Seas, the cultivators of the Third Mountain and Sea would have special advantages in their practice of cultivation. They would have incredible, unheard-of control over the Essence of time.

Furthermore, the nature of time in the entire Mountain and Sea Realm would be under the control of the Third Mountain and Sea.

The Mountain and Sea cultivators were prostrating in worship, and even the army of cultivators from the Vast Expanse School were shaking. The Sect Leader and the others, even the old lizard and the other eccentric beings, were all mentally shaken. Although they knew that Transcendent cultivators were all-powerful, to see the evidence in front of their own eyes was mind-blowing.

The deep envy they felt after seeing the First through Third Mountains and Seas helped them to understand the significance of a precious treasure being designed uniquely for its own people. By this point, even they wanted to live in the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“If you lived there, it would be much easier to reach the Dao Realm, and maybe even the peak of 9-Essences. In fact… it might even be possible to Transcend!”

“It’s a Transcendence Treasure. Anyone who Transcends will build… a Transcendence Treasure suitable for their people!”

The cultivators from the Vast Expanse School felt their minds spinning. As for Meng Hao, he looked at the three sets of Mountains and Seas that he had just formed, then took a deep breath and performed an incantation gesture with his right hand. He waved his finger, and the power of Transcendence erupted out, causing all the Heavens to shake.

“Fourth Mountain and Sea!

“I call upon the power of my name to take the Fourth Hex, the Self Hex, and embody it in the Fourth Mountain and Sea. Henceforth… you are the Self Mountain and Sea, responsible for the underworld and reincarnation within the Mountain and Sea Realm!

“Cultivators in this Mountain and Sea may cultivate my Self Hex, and gain enlightenment of the Essence of self. This hex will now be called the Fourth Hex of the Mountains and Seas!”

The starry sky shook under the terrifying might of Meng Hao’s Fourth Hex, the Self Hex. The Self Hex could spawn millions upon millions of the self, making it the perfect complement to reincarnation. When you added in the fact that the Fourth Mountain and Sea had always been the underworld of the Mountain and Sea Realm, where reincarnation resided, it ensured that this version of the underworld was even more shocking than before. It was truly the final destination for all cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Whoever was the Lord of the Fourth Mountain and Sea would control all the dead spirits in the Mountain and Sea Realm!

Each and every one of these four Mountains and Seas were crucial. It was at this point that Meng Hao, without the slightest hesitation, spoke out once more.

“Fifth Mountain and Sea!” he said, his voice echoing like thunder. He waved his sleeve, and the outline of the Fifth Mountain and Sea instantly took shape, causing rumbling sounds to echo out in all directions.

“I call upon the power of my name to take the Fifth Hex, the Inside-Outside Hex, and embody it in the Fifth Mountain and Sea. Henceforth… you are the Inside-Outside Mountain and Sea, responsible for the five elements within the Mountain and Sea Realm!

“Cultivators in this Mountain and Sea may cultivate my Inside-Outside Hex, and gain enlightenment of the Essences of inside and outside. This hex will now be called the Fifth Hex of the Mountains and Seas!”

Instantly, the Hexing magic formed the bones, represented by the countless magical symbols which were converging together. As the outline took shape, the rubble from the destroyed Mountains and Seas converged, and the Fifth Mountain and Sea took shape in front of everyone to hover there in the starry sky.

The Fifth Mountain and Sea relied on the five elements as the foundation of its magic. The five elements were crucial aspects to the practice of cultivation, and from this moment on, all cultivators from the Fifth Mountain and Sea would have extraordinary command of the Dao of the five elements. Whoever was the Lord of the Fifth Mountain and Sea would control the fundamental aspects of the five elements throughout the entire Mountain and Sea Realm.

“When the five elements appear, Heaven and Earth are opened!” Meng Hao’s eyes shone with bright light as he reached out and made some final adjustments to the Fifth Mountain and Sea.

The Fifth Mountain and Sea was the axis of the Mountain and Sea Realm, and the five elements there were absolutely critical. No mistakes could be tolerated.

In order to be the Lord of any of the Mountains and Seas, not only did one need the approval of the Mountain and Sea Realm itself, one also needed to gain complete enlightenment of the Demon Sealing Hexing magic left behind by Meng Hao!

The Demon Sealing Hexing magic was hidden within the various Mountains and Seas, like their bones!

Only by gaining enlightenment of that Demon Sealing Hexing magic could one eventually qualify to be a Mountain and Sea Lord. Only by that method could one become a successor of the Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm!

It was now possible to say that the Mountain and Sea Realm had Hexing magic as its bones, the Mountains and Seas as its flesh, and… the League of Demon Sealers as its soul!

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# Chapter 1556: The Most Powerful Mountain and Sea!

The League was the soul, the Hexing magics were the bones, and the Mountains and Seas were the flesh!

The doctrines of the League of Demon Sealers held sway, which were the same as the doctrines espoused by Meng Hao. By following such precepts, he had become the Crown Prince of the Mountain and Sea Realm. The year he became part of the League of Demon Sealers, he was acknowledged as the future Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

The first version of the Mountain and Sea Realm was forged by Nine Seals, who also left behind the League of Demon Sealers as his legacy. Now Meng Hao was using that legacy to remould the Mountain and Sea Realm into something new.

Anyone who became a Mountain and Sea Lord had to become a successor of the League of Demon Sealers. Furthermore, anyone who wanted to be the Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm itself had to master all of the Nine Hexes.

As for Transcendence… that would depend on one’s personal fortune.

Meng Hao looked at the Fifth Mountain and Sea for a long moment, and then his right hand flashed with an incantation gesture. The power of Transcendence erupted out to shake the starry sky as he waved his finger, a profound light shining in his eyes.

“Sixth Mountain and Sea!

“I call upon the power of my name to take the Sixth Hex, the Life-Death Hex, and embody it in the Sixth Mountain and Sea. Henceforth… you are the Life-Death Mountain and Sea, responsible for the Tribulations and punishments within the Mountain and Sea Realm!

“Cultivators in this Mountain and Sea may cultivate my Life-Death Hex, and gain enlightenment of the Essences of life and death. This hex will now be called the Sixth Hex of the Mountains and Seas!”

Meng Hao’s voice was natural law embodied. Magical symbols erupted in a tempest which radiated the power of life and death. They formed together into the outline of the Sixth Mountain and Sea, then began to rapidly absorb the surrounding rubble until the Sixth Mountain and Sea became visible.

As it descended to join the other five Mountains and Seas, a black and white aura appeared upon it. At first, there was a sharp contrast between the black and the white, but as it swirled and mixed, it became gray. Then, just as quickly, the black and the white separated again.

It was as if the difference between the realms of death and life were incredibly clear in the Sixth Mountain and Sea. This type of life and death was similar in some ways to the Fourth Mountain and Sea, and yet, was also very different.

That was because this type of life and death had to do with Tribulations and punishments, which could be unleashed upon the entire Mountain and Sea Realm. Anyone who practiced cultivation had to experience Heavenly Tribulation. Furthermore, those who committed grave mistakes would undergo Heavenly punishment. That punishment was like a blade raised aloft, transformed into a natural law. Everything had to be subject to natural law to be complete, and thus, instead of saying that the Sixth Mountain and Sea was the embodiment of punishment, it would be more accurate to say that it was natural law!

Whoever was the Lord of this Mountain and Sea could control the power of punishment, and enforce compliance with natural law.

As the Mountain settled into place, rumbling sounds echoed out. The Mountain and Sea Realm was already completely different than it had been before, as if it were more flexible and powerful, a state which was only beginning.

Without pausing for a moment, Meng Hao spoke yet again, his voice echoing out like thunder to be heard by all of the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators, as well as the cultivators of the Vast Expanse School.

“Seventh Mountain and Sea!”

“I call upon the power of my name to take the Seventh Hex, the Karmic Hex, and embody it in the Seventh Mountain and Sea. Henceforth… you are the Karmic Mountain and Sea, responsible for Karma within the Mountain and Sea Realm!

“Cultivators in this Mountain and Sea may cultivate my Karmic Hex, and gain enlightenment of the Essence of Karma. This hex will now be called the Seventh Hex of the Mountains and Seas!”

Instantly, magical symbols appeared, and the fragments of the Mountains and Seas came together. The Seventh Mountain and Sea appeared, along with an astonishing power of Karma. The power which exploded out instantly eclipsed the power from the other six Mountains and Seas, and yet just as quickly, faded away. Everything went calm. It was as if the explosion of Karma had transformed into a net which came to settle over the entire Mountain and Sea Realm.

The Seventh Hex, the Karmic Hex, had been of incredible use to Meng Hao throughout his practice of cultivation. It was also the most enigmatic. Karma existed everywhere in Heaven and Earth. It was like a circle with the starting point being the cause of the Karma, and the apex being the effect. Those two points, of course, always connected.

All worlds required Karma, although it was usually an invisible and mysterious thing. Now that Meng Hao had Transcended, he had the power to make Karma the bones of the Seventh Mountain and Sea. Cultivators of the Seventh Mountain and Sea would now be innately adept regarding the Dao of Karma.

Whoever became the Lord of the Seventh Mountain and Sea would understand Meng Hao’s Seventh Hex, and would be able to unleash Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering power.

Each of these majestic seven Mountains and Seas were different, yet they were all incredibly powerful and awe-inspiring. The Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators continued to offer worship, and many among the army of the Vast Expanse School were left gasping.

Even the countless souls of the Outsiders submerged within the sea of flames were shaken.

What was happening now was something miraculous, something unbelievable, the likes of which no one had ever witnessed before.

That was the nature of Transcendence.

What I want, the Heavens shall NOT lack! What I don’t want, had BETTER not exist in the Heavens!

Meng Hao waved his sleeve, and his eyes shone with brilliant light. After one last look at the Seventh Mountain and Sea, he thought about the Eighth Mountain and Sea, and everything he had done back when he had been there.

“Eighth Mountain and Sea!” he said. Instantly, that particular area in the starry sky began to distort.

Grandpa Meng was the most excited of all; he was now watching something occur that he had never imagined could actually happen. Not only was he able to see the Mountain and Sea Realm once again, he was also able to once again lay eyes on… the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

His reaction was the same as Ksitigarbha’s when he saw the Fourth Mountain and Sea. He threw his head back and laughed uproariously, tears of joy streaming down his face.

“I call upon the power of my name to take the Eighth Hex, the Body-Mind Hex, and embody it in the Eighth Mountain and Sea. Henceforth… you are the Body-Mind Mountain and Sea, responsible for space within the Mountain and Sea Realm!

“Cultivators in this Mountain and Sea may cultivate my Body-Mind Hex, and gain enlightenment of the Essences of body and mind. It will be called the Eighth Hex of the Mountains and Seas!”

And then the Eighth Mountain and Sea appeared in full!

Boundless light rose up, along with countless ghost images. Instantly, the space around the Eighth Mountain and Sea suddenly went completely still.

That was Meng Hao’s Eighth Hex, the first Demon Sealing Hexing magic he had learned. It had accompanied him throughout his life, and been used in battle on numerous occasions, always giving Meng Hao a shocking advantage and allowing him to turn the tide of the fight.

In terms of usefulness, it was no weaker than Karmic Hexing.

Meng Hao had a powerful attachment to the Eighth Hex, as did he to the Eighth Mountain and Sea. That was the place his mother’s clan had called home, and where his Grandpa Meng had been a Mountain and Sea Lord.

It only felt right that the Eighth Hex become the bones of this new version of the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

With the Body-Mind Hex, cultivators from the Eighth Mountain and Sea would have incredible control over the Essence of space. Later on, they would be able to manipulate space in a way that could hardly be matched in the entire Mountain and Sea Realm.

In addition to that, their control of such power gave them the responsibility of defending the Mountain and Sea Realm. That was the Dao of space, something vast and limitless.

Whoever was the Lord of the Eighth Mountain and Sea would have a very high position. Not only would that person be on equal footing with all of the other Mountain and Sea Lords, their control over the power of space would, in some ways, allow them to disregard everything else.

The cultivators of the Eighth Mountain and Sea were bursting at the seams with excitement, and followed Grandpa Meng in shouting out at the tops of their lungs.

By now, the Mountain and Sea Realm was more than ninety percent complete. Eight Mountains and Seas rose high up, radiating dazzling light. They were all different, as were the cultivators from the respective Mountains and Seas, and when it came to measuring them up against each other, it would be very difficult to determine who was the most powerful.

That was because they were all powerful, and were all critical parts of the Mountain and Sea Realm as a whole.

The First Mountain and Sea controlled beginnings and endings, and was the source of everything. The Second Mountain and Sea controlled what was real and unreal, and could clear inner devils from the hearts of cultivators. The Third Mountain and Sea had the power of the ancient and the present, and could manipulate time. There was almost no need to mention the Fourth Mountain and Sea, which housed the underworld and reincarnation. Most critical was the Fifth Mountain and Sea, the axis of the realm, a place of utmost importance regarding the five elements, the foundation of all cultivation.

The Sixth Mountain and Sea controlled life and death, the punishments and tribulations of the entire realm. Then there was the Seventh Mountain and Sea, where the Dao of Karma set all natural law.

These were the eight Mountains and Seas. And yet… a dragon without a head is no dragon. And the Mountain and Sea Realm was the same.

The Mountain and Sea Realm required… a Mountain and Sea more powerful than all of the others. It needed a symbol, a head, something with ultimate power that could cow any other Mountain or Sea which wavered from the true path.

If any other Mountain or Sea considered betraying the realm, there had to be a force which could unleash power to bring everything back into balance.

That was a power that wouldn’t be placed within the hands of a single person, but rather, would be placed… within the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Back when the Mountains and Seas had fallen in battle, the last stand had been taken in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. It had been the final line of defense. That was also where the Mountain and Sea Butterfly had come from, which now contained Meng Hao’s parents as the incarnations of the wings.

Some of the most important and critical events of the war centuries ago had played out there!

If that alone didn’t make the Ninth Mountain and Sea deserving of being the most powerful, there were two other reasons which were even more significant.

It was the location where Meng Hao had been born, and it was also the place he considered his ancestral home!

The starry sky shook, and lightning crashed. Everything twisted as colors flashed everywhere. Meng Hao’s eyes shone with radiant light as he took a deep breath, and shifted his gaze to the empty spot behind the Eighth Mountain and Sea.

“Ninth Mountain and Sea… my home….” he said softly.

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# Chapter 1557: I Bestow Upon You the Title of Ninth Sea!

Meng Hao looked at the empty spot next to the Eighth Mountain and Sea, and then spoke in a voice which was soft, yet thrummed with the power of Transcendence. Waving his finger, he said, “I call upon the power of my name to take the Ninth Hex, the Seal the Heavens Hex, and embody it in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Henceforth… you are the Heaven-Sealing Mountain and Sea, the most powerful of the Mountains and Seas, responsible for sealing the Heavens within the Mountain and Sea Realm!

“Cultivators in this Mountain and Sea may cultivate my Seal the Heavens Hex, and gain enlightenment of the Essence of Heaven-sealing. It will be called the Ninth Hex of the Mountains and Seas!”

In conjunction with his words, countless magical symbols appeared, far more than had appeared for any of the previous Mountains and Seas. Even the combination of all of the magical symbols from the previous eight Mountains and Seas added together couldn’t match up.

Those magical symbols created a raging tempest which shook the starry sky, and radiated the aura of Heaven-sealing.

That aura stood completely apart from the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, as if it were above anything and everything. The instant it appeared, the other eight Mountains and Seas began to tremble in subservience.

And things had just begun! The Ninth Mountain and Sea hadn’t even appeared in full, and yet all of the other Mountains and Seas were shaking. It was easy to imagine how powerful the Ninth Mountain and Sea would be when it finally appeared; it would truly be the strongest!

The Ninth Mountain and Sea would be able to dominate the other Mountains and Seas. With such power, and with such an Essence, the Ninth Mountain and Sea would definitely be the peak of all the Mountains and Seas!

The outline of the Ninth Mountain was now visible, and the magical symbols had already begun to shape the planets. It was now possible to see Planet East Victory, Planet North Reed, Planet West Felicity, and of course… Planet South Heaven!

The surrounding cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm were far more shaken than they had been before. That was especially true of Meng Hao’s old friends, whose eyes shone with unprecedented brightness.

Fatty was shaking, tears pouring down his face as he looked at the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Sun Hai, Fang Yu, Wang Youcai, Li Ling’er….

Everyone who viewed the Ninth Mountain and Sea as their home were now profoundly excited.

Xu Qing had the same reaction as she looked at Planet South Heaven and thought back to all the old memories….

Everyone watched as the rubble and fragments of the Mountains and Seas began to fill in the vast array of magical symbols. Even as the Ninth Mountain and Sea began to take shape in front of everyone’s eyes, something unexpected occurred….

Every time one of the previous Mountains and Seas had formed, lightning would crackle, as though the will of the Vast Expanse were trying to interfere. However, it was never very intense. This time, though, as soon as the words left Meng Hao’s mouth, the entire starry sky filled with so many lightning bolts that they were impossible to count. Rumbling booms echoed out in all directions as lighting appeared out of nowhere, seemingly pouring out from the stream of time itself.

Almost immediately, the area filled with lightning bolts whose target seemed to be the outline of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

The lightning bolts' aim was to prevent the Ninth Mountain and Sea from fully appearing, to prevent the Seal the Heavens Hex from becoming the bones of that Mountain and Sea.

Meng Hao's eyes flickered with cold light as he took a step forward. Instantly, incredible power erupted out. A huge shockwave spread out from the Ninth Mountain and Sea, spreading out in all directions and completely destroying any lightning that it touched.

"I'm in the middle of forging the Mountain and Sea Realm," he growled. "Any interference can screw the hell off!" With that, he waved his sleeve and looked up into the starry sky, almost as if he were staring directly at the will of the Vast Expanse.

As their eyes met, the starry sky trembled. Meng Hao's aura surged, and without another moment of hesitation, the will of the Vast Expanse fought back.

The entire starry sky shook, and the living beings in numerous worlds, land masses, and vortexes could all hear something roaring in their ears. It sounded like two giants standing next to each other, screaming at each other with divine sense.

Cracking sounds rang out as Meng Hao slammed into the will of the Vast Expanse. Instantly, rifts were torn open in all directions, vaporizing anything that got in their path.

After some time passed, the roar of rage from the will of the Vast Expanse faded away. However, Meng Hao still had a very grim expression on his face. He knew that his true battle with the will of the Vast Expanse was rapidly approaching.

Now that the will of the Vast Expanse had faded away and wasn't attempting to interfere, the Ninth Mountain and Sea finished forming within the starry sky.

Everything trembled, and all of the other eight Mountains and Seas bowed their figurative heads!

And that was because the Seal the Heavens Mountain and Sea was without compare!

And yet, the Ninth Mountain and Sea wasn't complete. The Ninth Mountain was fully formed, but as for the Ninth Sea, countless magical symbols formed the shape, and yet the flesh to form the seawater itself was lacking.

The League was the soul, the Hexing magic became the bones, and the Mountains and Seas formed the flesh. However, for the flesh to form, the previous elements that made up the Mountain and Sea had to be present. The Ninth Sea had turned traitor, ensuring that when the Mountain and Sea Realm was actually destroyed, there had been nine Mountains, but only eight Seas.

Meng Hao looked at the spot which should be filled with water, and the magical symbols that formed the shape, then smiled and turned in the direction of Patriarch Reliance.

Patriarch Reliance cleared his throat, but quickly realized Meng Hao wasn't looking at him, and pulled his head into his shell. He had long since come to view Meng Hao with complete awe.

Meng Hao was looking at Patriarch Reliance's back, and a young, white-robed woman who stood there. Apparently, no matter how many years passed, she would always look young. Right now, she was standing there looking at Meng Hao, a slight smile on her face. A look of anticipation could be seen in her eyes, but she also seemed nervous, as if she knew exactly why Meng Hao was looking at her.

“All those years ago, I made you a promise that I would help you become a sea,” he said softly. “Guyiding Tri-Rain, are you willing to become… the Ninth Sea of the Mountain and Sea Realm?”

The white-robed young woman shivered. This was her lifelong dream, to become a sea. Thousands of years ago, at the lake below Mount Daqing, Meng Hao had promised to help her make that dream come true.

“Yes!” she replied. Taking a deep breath, she clasped her hands and bowed to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao smiled and waved his right hand.

“I call upon the power of my name to bless Guyiding Tri-Rain with Righteous Bestowal. Henceforth, you are the Ninth Sea!”

Even as excitement and anticipation surged up within her, she flew off of Patriarch Reliance’s back, transforming into a lake with a surface like a mirror. It was an incredibly beautiful sight. In the blink of an eye, she merged into the countless magical symbols that made up the outline of the Ninth Sea.

After the fusion, a powerful aura radiated out. It was Guyiding Tri-Rain’s aura, and yet, it was becoming more and more powerful. Rumbling sounds echoed out, and her energy continued to rise to unimaginable heights. Finally… the Ninth Sea had appeared!

It was far more majestic than the other eight Seas. This new Ninth Sea possessed crushing power that caused Heaven and Earth to shake violently.

That was because the Ninth Sea was like the Ninth Mountain, with Demon Sealing Hexing magic as the bones. The Seal the Heavens Hex was the ultimate Demon Sealing Hexing magic, so much so that even the combination of the other eight Hexes couldn’t match up to it.

The Ninth Hex itself was composed of nine sealing marks, ensuring that the Ninth Mountain and Sea well deserved to be known as the most powerful of the Mountains and Seas.

The cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea would have a special understanding of the Seal the Heavens Hex. However, the Ninth Hex was fundamentally difficult to gain enlightenment of, and therefore, any person who became the Mountain and Sea Lord there had to understand a minimum of three of the sealing marks which made it up.

Now that the Ninth Mountain and Sea had appeared, the entire Mountain and Sea Realm radiated a towering pressure. Rumbling sounds echoed out, shaking the starry sky. At the same time, the aura of Transcendence emanated out.

That aura caused any cultivator who sensed it to tremble, even 9-Essences experts.

Meng Hao's eyes shone brightly as he waved his sleeve. A sphere of light appeared, which was none other than the magical technique he had gained enlightenment of when staring at the sun that year on Planet East Victory. That sphere began to gobble up all of the light in the area, and in the blink of an eye, was shining with blinding light. 1

Boundless light stabbed into the eyes of everyone present, a light filled with the power of Meng Hao's Transcendence. It was a sun, which contained terrifying power equivalent to the peak of 9-Essences.

"By means of Righteous Bestowal, I name you… the Sun of the Mountains and Seas!" Backed by the power of Transcendence, the magic of Righteous Bestowal transformed the sphere of light into a powerful sun which floated out to become part of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Even as it illuminated the Nine Mountains and Nine Seas, Meng Hao's right hand flashed with an incantation gesture. Then he waved his hand, and a violet moon appeared. It was also a magical technique from Meng Hao's collection, which he had picked up in the Fang Clan ancestral land on Planet East Victory. 2

The power of Transcendence was unleashed, pouring into the moon, giving it might equivalent to the sun!

"By means of Righteous Bestowal, I name you… the Moon of the Mountains and Seas!" As the words left his mouth, the moon began to glow with soft, radiant light. It flew toward the Mountain and Sea Realm and began to circle around it just like the sun.

Now, the Mountain and Sea Realm was complete.

The starry sky shook, and all areas of the Vast Expanse trembled. Countless worlds quaked, and countless magical items suddenly went dark. All of that was because the number one magical treasure in all of the Vast Expanse had finally appeared.

The Mountain and Sea Realm!

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# Chapter 1558: Peace and Calm

Book 10: I Watch Blue Seas Become Lush Fields 1

Meng Hao extended his right hand, and the majestic Mountain and Sea Realm began to shrink down until it was the size of his palm, where it sat, radiating brightness and glory.

“Demon Sovereign!” It was hard to say who it was who first cried out and began to kowtow, but soon the entire army of cultivators from the Vast Expanse School dropped to their knees, completely shaken by personally having witnessed Meng Hao create such a precious treasure.

“Demon Sovereign!!”

“Demon Sovereign!!!”

They weren’t the only ones. The cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm all began to cry out in excitement, until the words ‘Demon Sovereign’ echoed out without cease.

As all of the countless cultivators offered fanatical worship, Meng Hao turned toward the Mountain and Sea Butterfly and looked warmly at his parents and Xu Qing. Then he took a step forward in their direction.

Closer and closer he came, until he was upon the Mountain and Sea Butterfly. The first thing he did was kowtow to his father and mother.

“Dad, mom, I’m back!” he said, tears welling up in his eyes. Fang Xiufeng stood there trembling, and Meng Li rushed forward to lift Meng Hao to his feet. Meng Hao was about to say something when his father grabbed him by the shoulders and shoved him in front of Xu Qing. Meng Li immediately glared at her husband.

“The boy’s had it a lot rougher than us….” Fang Xiufeng said softly.

Xu Qing smiled, a warm, caring smile that contained… profound emotion.

They looked at each other for a long moment before Meng Hao stepped forward and wrapped his arms tightly around her. Trembling, she returned his embrace, tears of joy seeping down her cheeks.

“I’m back….” he said softly, holding tightly to that which was the greatest blessing in his life. For thousands of years, his heart had been unstable, but now it settled down. It was something that Chu Yuyan could not do for him. Other than his father and mother, the only person in his life who could make him feel this way was Xu Qing. He felt… at peace.

The other cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm had followed Meng Hao back into the world of the Mountain and Sea Butterfly. Up above, there were no more 33 Heavens. There was only the sea of flames, burning constantly, filled with the screaming souls of the Outsiders.

As for the army from the Vast Expanse School, they set up camp outside, where they would stand guard. Without orders from Meng Hao, they would not leave, nor would they follow him into the Mountain and Sea Butterfly.

The entire starry sky was now peaceful and quiet.

It was the calmest moment Meng Hao had experienced for centuries, and also the most joyous. He was finally able to just spend time with his parents, and with Xu Qing. They returned to the Holy Mountain of the Mountain and Sea butterfly, where Xu Qing recounted everything which had occurred while he was gone. Time passed, and Meng Hao was happy.

He didn’t force the Mountain and Sea cultivators and the Vast Expanse School to go after the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm. He knew that those two powerful forces would be coming for him. Therefore, he decided that he might as well just wait for them to arrive.

He remained on the Holy Mountain, turning away all visitors, choosing simply to enjoy the sunrises and the sunsets. His parents were very content to see him this way.

As for all of the various cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm, they spent their time preparing to move. After all, Meng Hao had created a new home for all of them.

It wasn’t just the cultivators who would be moving. There were mortals too, as well as other life forms and legacies which needed to be prepared to enter the new Mountain and Sea Realm.

After a few days passed, Meng Hao took Xu Qing traveling in the Mountain and Sea Butterfly. Their first stop was to see his Grandpa Meng, and the rest of the Meng Clan.

Because of Grandpa Meng, the Meng Clan was famous and illustrious within the world of the Mountain and Sea Butterfly. They, along with the Fang Clan, occupied the highest of positions.

The clan members who Meng Hao had personally instructed and guided when he was in the Eighth Mountain and Sea were now the pillars of the clan.

When the clan came to find out that Meng Hao and Xu Qing were coming, it caused a huge stir. A grand celebration was prepared, and the entire clan appeared to formally receive Meng Hao.

Almost as soon as he could be seen on the horizon, all members of the clan bowed and joined their voices together in a thunderous call.

“We offer respectful greetings, Demon Sovereign and Demon Queen!” As their voices echoed out, Grandpa Meng stood there in the crowd, a glowing smile on his face. Meng Hao hurried forward along with Xu Qing. Completely disregarding his status as the Demon Sovereign, he unhesitatingly dropped to his knees to kowtow.

“Grandfather….” he said softly. Xu Qing also dropped to her knees to kowtow, her heart thumping. The reason for that was not because of the fact that everyone else was bowing to them, but because they were calling her the Demon Queen, and also because this was her first time joining Meng Hao to kowtow to any of his relatives other than his parents. 2

She was like a new bride, nervously paying respects to her in-laws for the first time.

Grandpa Meng laughed heartily and quickly helped them to their feet. After looking over at Xu Qing, he clapped Meng Hao on the shoulder.

“You take care of this girl,” he said quietly. “She’s been waiting for you for thousands of years!” Meng Hao nodded and slipped his hand around Xu Qing’s. She blushed.

Meng Hao and Xu Qing stayed in the Meng Clan for several days, after which they said their goodbyes. At that time, Grandpa Meng seemed like he wanted to say something, but ended up holding his tongue. Meng Hao saw this and sighed.

“Grandfather,” he said. “The revenge is not complete. The Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm will be here soon. Then, vengeance will be had in one fell swoop.”

Next, Meng Hao took Xu Qing to Ksitigarbha’s sect, a sinister, underworldly location. As soon as Meng Hao arrived, all of the cultivators there were thrown into a commotion.

Of course, Ksitigarbha was Xu Qing’s Master, so in some ways, this sect was like her traditional bridal home. When she saw her husband strolling along with her Master, her heart overflowed with a feeling of happiness.

“How soon will they be here?” Ksitigarbha asked grimly, clearly referring to the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm. “Exalted Demon Sovereign, these foes must not be underestimated.”

“Soon,” Meng hao replied calmly. He looked up into the sky. “However, I have some speculations regarding those two continents. The only way to confirm whether or not I’m right will be to see them with my own eyes.”

Ksitigarbha nodded, and then looked back at Xu Qing, his gaze warm. Turning once again to Meng Hao, he chuckled. Although he didn’t say anything, it was clear from his expression that he wished them happiness.

They didn’t stay for long with Ksitigarbha. They soon left to find Ke Jiusi in the Demon Immortal sect, where they were received with the same fanfare as the other places they had visited. Zhixiang was there, and when she looked at Meng Hao and Xu Qing, it was with sighing and mixed emotions.

This was not the first time she regretted the past. She regretted the fact that when she met Meng Hao for the first time all those years ago, she had done nothing about the spark of romance which had flickered. Back then, she had been completely devoted to her plans regarding the Demon Immortal Sect, and had never allowed anything to develop between herself and Meng Hao.

Instead, she had chosen to part from him, and sever any connection they had.

Years later, she always experienced complicated feelings whenever she saw Meng Hao. That had been especially true when she witnessed him fighting to protect the Mountain and Sea Butterfly, something that left her heart trembling with deep feeling.

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I’m not in a very good mood today. The mother of one of my sworn brothers passed away earlier today, and I need to go to the funeral parlor. Life is a weak thing, please pay attention to your health.

I hope that all of you can exercise more, drink less, smoke less, and stay healthy.

1. The title of Book 10 is based on a common Chinese idiom which refers to seeing drastic changes over the passage of time

2. In Chinese culture, formally paying respects to new family members of the elder generation after getting married is an important custom

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# Chapter 1559: Reunions

Now that Meng Hao had returned in the most spectacular of fashions as the Demon Sovereign, there was nothing Zhixiang could do but sigh and bury her bitterness deep within her heart.

“You should have grabbed him when you had the chance,” she murmured to herself. “Instead you lost him… lost him for all eternity.” With that, she bowed her head and offered greetings to Meng Hao and Xu Qing.

Meng Hao apparently didn’t notice the look in her eye. Considering they were old friends, he prevented her from offering extended formal greetings. Of course, he couldn’t help but sigh when he noticed how much older she looked. Xu Qing, on the other hand, could sense what Zhixiang was thinking. After looking at her deeply for a moment, Xu Qing smiled.

Zhixiang was an old friend, but there was someone else in the Demon Immortal Sect who was even more important to Meng Hao. He absolutely had to go pay his respects to his older brother Ke Jiusi.

Meng Hao went alone up the mountain to Ke Jiusi’s secluded meditation chamber, while Xu Qing and Zhixiang waited together at the foot of the mountain. As Ke Jiusi emerged to talk with Meng Hao, Zhixiang suddenly said, “Congratulations….”

Xu Qing looked over at her, blinked, and then smiled.

Up at the top of the mountain, Ke Jiusi tossed an alcohol flagon over to Meng Hao, then chuckled. Meng Hao looked at Ke Jiusi, smiled, then closed his eyes and took a long swig of alcohol.

After a moment passed, he opened his eyes and quietly said, “I saw foster father outside the Vast Expanse.”

Ke Jiusi stood there for a moment before patting his hand onto the boulder he was sitting on, an invitation for Meng Hao to sit down next to him. Meng Hao sat.

“Tell me about it,” Ke Jiusi said.

Meng Hao slowly recounted the story of the time he had spent in the world outside the Vast Expanse, which had existed in another time. Ke Jiusi listened quietly, occasionally drinking from his flagon. By the time Meng Hao finished, a touch of the effects of the alcohol could be seen in Ke Jiusi’s eyes, although for the most part, there was only reminiscence.

“Back then, I was a silkpants,” he said. “Of course, you know that…. Father was always disappointed in me, and yet he still did everything he could to prepare a way for me to remain in the world, undying. That was just how he was. He treated me and you the same, because in his heart, both of us were his sons.” Ke Jiusi closed his eyes to cover up the tears which were welling up. He missed his father, and he missed the past.

Meng Hao took a long drink and then looked off into the distance. He almost felt as if he could see his foster father. He had attempted to resurrect him before, but even with the supposed omnipotence of Transcendence, it was still a very difficult thing to resurrect the soul of someone who had died so many years ago.

Meng Hao and Ke Jiusi drank together on the mountain top for seven days. When it finally came time for Meng Hao and Xu Qing to leave, Ke Jiusi stood there watching them leave. Then he took another long drink.

The final Paragon in the Mountain and Sea Butterfly was the Paragon Puppet, who had once been Paragon Eegoo of the 33 Heavens. Meng Hao could see the puppet from some distance away; it was sitting cross-legged in its appointed area, completely motionless. Its mission had been to defend the world of the Mountain and Sea Butterfly, a mission that he had left to it upon his own departure years ago.

Meng Hao walked up to the Paragon, stood there, and then quietly said, “When did you come back?”

The Paragon puppet shivered, then slowly looked down. After a long moment passed, it spoke, although its voice was hoarse as if from disuse.

“500 years ago….”

It was a puppet, and its mind had been erased. 500 years ago, though, it began to remember things. From that day on, although it was still a puppet, it had been aware of who it was. However, it was unable to part from the Mountain and Sea Realm. It saw how much the Mountain and Sea cultivators respected it, a respect that was genuine even though it was only a puppet.

It had even watched many cultivators be born into the world of the butterfly, and grow up. It was filled with strange emotions, and in the end, chose not to return to the 33 Heavens. It also chose not to betray the Mountain and Sea cultivators, and even tried to forget about the memories which had been awakened.

“You’re free now,” Meng Hao said. He patted Eegoo, releasing the bonds which restrained him. Then he and Xu Qing turned to leave.

Paragon Eegoo shivered. After a moment passed, he rose to his feet, a blank look in his eyes. However, that blankness quickly disappeared, and his gaze turned hard. Then, he sat back down cross-legged, to continue standing guard.

Off in the distance, Xu Qing hesitated for a moment and then asked, “He…?”

“He has paid for his sins and atoned for his errors. I underestimated Eegoo back then. He’s a wise person.” Meng Hao squeezed Xu Qing’s hand, and then smiled.

The world of the Mountain and Sea Butterfly was abuzz with activity as everyone prepared to move. As the preparations were carried out, Meng Hao and Xu Qing appeared in one location after another to visit people they knew.

Xu Qing was very happy. As long as Meng Hao was there with her, the world was a bright place. She didn’t demand much of him. After all, her personality was simple and uncomplicated.

The two of them visited friends and enjoyed traveling. It was as if they would never tire of speaking to each other, as if there would always be more places for them to visit.

When Xu Qing looked at Meng Hao, it was with warmth and deep passion that would last for one lifetime and all lifetimes.

“I can’t stand this,” Fatty said, sighing. “Can’t stand it, I tell you!” After Meng Hao and Xu Qing arrived at his clan, he looked over at Meng Hao with a look of pity.

“Meng Hao, look at you. You have such a high cultivation base, and yet you only have one wife? That’s wrong! That’s unreasonable. Look at me! I have a few thousand wives again, and also lots of children….” Suddenly, everything seemed to grow very cold. Fatty shivered and looked over to find Xu Qing staring at him with narrowed eyes. Realizing that she was the source of the coldness, he cleared his throat a few times.

Meng Hao smiled and looked around at all of Fatty’s progeny. Soon they were talking about past times, whereupon Wang Youcai arrived. He had a jar of alcohol slung over his shoulder, which he set down in front of Meng Hao, Xu Qing, and Fatty.

“Dong Hu’s on the way,” he said. “He should be here any moment.”

“You two worked things out?” Meng Hao asked. The conflict between Wang Youcai and Dong Hu had been severe, but it was a matter between the two of them, and Meng Hao didn’t want to press for too many details.

Wang Youcai didn’t respond at first. After a moment, he sighed and said, “It’s all in the past….”

He looked very old in that moment. Suddenly, a bright beam of light appeared up above, within which was a middle-aged man. It was none other than Dong Hu.

A complicated expression could be seen on his face as he walked over quietly and sat down next to Fatty. When he looked over at Meng Hao, he was smiling emotionally.

Feeling the tension rising, Fatty suddenly looked around and said, “Remember Mount Daqing?”

In response, Wang Youcai tilted his head up, and Dong Hu’s eyes flickered with memories. Meng Hao thought back to everything that had happened in the past. Xu Qing did the same, and she smiled.

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If you haven’t already, cast your vote in this fun poll about the ending of the story. I’ll share the final results later on.

Also, don’t miss this video with my public face reveal and also info about the grand prize to go along with the ISSTH grand finale.

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# Chapter 1560: Recalling Past Times

They all exchanged glances, and then started laughing.

“Now that I think about it,” Fatty continued, starting to laugh, “it’s pretty funny. All four of us were there on Mount Daqing that year. Me, Little Tiger, and Wang Youcai. We all got kidnapped by Elder Sister Xu….” By this point he was laughing so hard that tears were streaming down his face. Finally, he collected himself and went on. “Elder Sister Xu, you were too cruel back then. You just grabbed us and took us all away. You know, my dad had arranged for me to get married, but before I could even consummate it, you took me away. I never got to see what she looked like!” Fatty lifted the alcohol flagon to his lips and took a drink.

Cheeks a bit flushed, Xu Qing glared at him like an Elder Sister should and said, “Did you forget about how you peed your pants when I grabbed you?”

Fatty’s eyes went wide, then he smiled wryly and raised his hands in surrender.

Meng Hao burst out laughing, and Xu Qing looked a bit embarrassed. Looking back at what had occurred that year on Mount Daqing, everything seemed to be connected somehow. Here they were, the same group, thousands of years later, all sitting together drinking.

Xu Qing felt a bit dazed by it all. Who could ever have imagined that her casual trip out of the sect on a mission to grab four youngsters would have resulted in all four of them becoming such illustrious figures.

Of course, there was the final person among those four…. She would never forget the image of that little scholar bent over the edge of the cliff, his rear end sticking up into the air as he lowered a vine rope down to the others, simultaneously making fun of them for talking about Immortals.

If someone had told her back then that she would end up marrying that little scholar, she would never have believed them.

A strange look could be seen on Dong Hu's face, and he was just about to say something when Xu Qing glared at him.

"Dong Hu, as I recall, you came with me willingly. All I had to do was offer you a piece of candy." A geyser of alcohol sprayed out of Fatty's mouth. As for Dong Hu, he looked a bit embarrassed. All he could do was smile wryly and capitulate as Fatty had.

By now, even grim-faced Wang Youcai's expression had softened. Raising his alcohol flagon, he turned to Meng Hao and said, "Meng Hao, do you know why I've always considered you to be my brother all these years?

"It's because when I was finally able to go home to visit my father, he said that you went to see him once. You told him that I was out practicing cultivation…. The old man wasn't so worried after that, assured that I wasn't dead." 1 Wang Youcai took a drink, and then turned to Xu Qing. Although he was blind, the eyes within his heart caused his feelings to be plainly written on his face. "Elder Sister Xu, there's no need for you to tell the story. Allow me. Back then, I saw you flying through the air and yelled out that I wanted to become your apprentice. That was how you ended up taking me away!"

With that, Wang Youcai cleared his throat.

After hearing his three friends' stories, Meng Hao laughed until his sides hurt. It was actually his first time hearing such tales. In the past, of course, none of them would have revealed the truth so freely.

Then he thought back to how they had been calling for help from within the cave on the cliff, and how he had dropped that vine down to help them. He smiled.

“You should all be grateful I was willing to try to rescue you….” he said.

Fatty chuckled. “You know what? You were actually the smartest of us all. You went to rescue us and then got yourself thrown in as well…. I remember Elder Sister Xu saying something back then, heh heh. What was it? Something about latent talent, and that you had found your own good fortune.” Fatty even imitated Xu Qing’s tone of voice from back then, and everyone immediately started laughing again.

“The craziest of all was how, after you joined the Reliance Sect, you somehow finagled your way into getting into the Inner Sect. You didn’t shy from using even the most devious methods, and even pulled a fast one on Wang Tengfei. Then there was how you sold medicinal pills in the fighting arena. And the general store you started! However, most underhanded of all was that you… you actually managed to snag Elder Sister Xu!” Fatty’s brazen expose caused Xu Qing to glare at him once again. But a moment later she started laughing again. She laughed so hard that soon she was leaning up against Meng Hao. It was the hardest she had laughed in centuries.

Meng Hao glared at his friends and gave a sarcastic chuckle. They continued to tell stories, and Xu Qing’s face reddened. And yet, the smile never left her face, and she seemed very content.

Time passed. They laughed and drank, recalling old times, and soon Xu Qing was getting a bit tipsy. Finally, under the cajoling of Fatty, Wang Youcai, and Dong Hu, Xu Qing looked over at Meng Hao with fluttering eyelashes.

Meng Hao cleared his throat, and then gave into the pressure. Wrapping his arms around her, he gave her a passionate kiss.

Dong Hu laughed uproariously, and the normally taciturn Wang Youcai couldn’t hold back from chuckling. Slapping his thigh, Fatty raucously said, “Too bad Elder Brother Chen Fan isn’t here….”

Meng Hao froze for a moment, but didn’t say anything. He chose not to explain what had really occurred with Chen Fan. The Chen Fan that existed in the hearts and memories of his friends was by far the better version.

They laughed and chatted through the night, and it was as if the pressure which had weighed down on them all throughout the centuries slowly vanished. Around the third watch, late in the night, Fatty lit up a bonfire. Then, to the shock of Fatty’s wives and offspring, the entire group began to dance and sing.

It had been a very, very long time since Meng Hao had indulged himself. He told stories about promissory notes, about Planet South Heaven, and about all the things which had occurred when he was young.

By the time day broke, all of them were completely drunk.

Fatty wrapped his arms around Meng Hao’s leg and wept as he talked about all of his dead wives. He talked about how much he had missed Meng Hao, and about his parents, who had long since passed away. And in the end, he congratulated Meng Hao once again on being able to reunite with Elder Sister Xu.

Dong Hu and Wang Youcai sat across from each other solemnly and took turns exchanging blows. One punch after another was landed until both wept and embraced each other.

“Big Bro Youcai,” Dong Hu wept, “I… I made a mistake back then….”

Xu Qing held Meng Hao’s arm tightly, worried that if she released it, he would vanish. Her face was flush and her eyes a bit glazed as she stared at him, her beautiful treasure.

She suddenly giggled. “I love you, Meng Hao….”

He patted her back gently until she closed her eyes and fell asleep in his arms. Then he looked at his friends and smiled.

It was impossible for cultivators to get drunk unless they wished to. But at certain times it was necessary to relax. It didn’t matter how powerful they were in terms of magic, they were still just people….

A few days passed, and Dong Hu left, as did Wang Youcai. Fatty saw them off, and then Meng Hao and Xu Qing also took their leave. As they traveled through the lands, they were like a celestial couple, perfectly matched. Their next destination was Li Ling’er.

Li Ling’er, the successor of Paragon Sea Dream, offered formal greetings to Meng Hao. There was no strange expression on her face, only a warm smile. However, as she watched him leave, she couldn’t help but think… about their past marriage agreement.

“I truly wish you… lifetimes of happiness, and eternal blessing.” Meng Hao and Xu Qing slowly disappeared off into the distance.

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If you haven’t already, cast your vote in this fun poll about the ending of the story. I’ll share the final results later on.

Also, don’t miss THE Er Gen video.

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# Chapter 1561: Mountain Among Mountains!

Meng Hao and Xu Qing traveled throughout the world of the Mountain and Sea Butterfly to visit many old friends and acquaintances. They wept, and they sighed. In most cases, it was impossible to maintain the friendships of the past. After all, Meng Hao's status was now completely different from before, and led to a feeling of distance.

Eventually, they came to visit Fang Yu and Sun Hai. When Meng Hao saw the proud look on Sun Hai's face, he cleared his throat and said, "Hello, Li'l Hai."

Those words immediately caused Sun Hai's pompous, proud posture to wilt, and a fawning smile to cover his face.

One couldn't blame Sun Hai for that. Meng Hao's ferocity and fame from years past had influenced Sun Hai in a profound way. That was clear from the fact that he had no hair on his head. After all… when the two of them first met, Meng Hao had dragged him around by the hair. No matter how many years had passed, Sun Hai couldn't recall that scene without shivering in fear.

Sun Hai very much wanted to look proud and complacent in front of his brother-in-law, and yet he couldn't shake his fear.

Before he could recover his composure, Fang Yu glared at him and then hit him with a glancing blow that sent him tumbling out of the house. Sun Hai had long since gotten used to being beaten in such a manner, and in fact, their children were also used to the arrangement.

A bruise quickly rose up on Sun Hai's cheek, and yet, he was laughing loudly. It was as if the proud person from moments ago wasn't really him. This was the real him. He began to chat and joke with Meng Hao, and yet Meng Hao simply couldn't hold back from once again saying, "Li'l Hai…."

Sun Hai shivered, and yet, the one to receive the beating this time wasn't him, but Meng Hao. Fang Yu directly unleashed a fist strike, and of course, Meng Hao didn't dare to evade it. Suppressing his cultivation base, he allowed the blows to land.

When Meng Hao and Xu Qing left, Sun Hai saw them off, his face covered with numerous purple bruises. Meng Hao looked exactly the same. When facing the explosive wrath of his sister, he could only sigh. Xu Qing, on the other hand, received much different treatment. Fang Yu held her by the hand and went into great detail explaining the benefits of being violent, which left Meng Hao trembling in fear.

Finally, he clapped Sun Hai on the shoulder.

"I really sympathize with you, brother-in-law…." he sighed.

Sun Hai smiled wryly, but seemed very happy.

"You don't understand," he said. "I love it. The stronger my woman is, the better. The more explosive, the better!" Sun Hai sighed and looked over at his wife, eyes burning with passion.

A strange look could be seen on Meng Hao's face as he grabbed Xu Qing, said his goodbyes, and then flew up into the air. When he saw the thoughtful look in Xu Qing's eyes, he started to get nervous. After noticing his expression, she rolled her eyes, covered her mouth, and laughed.

Happy times always pass quickly. A month later, Meng Hao and Xu Qing had visited most of their old friends. On the way back, they happened to be flying over one particular sea when Meng Hao suddenly stopped.

"There's an old friend here I want to see," Meng Hao said, chuckling. Xu Qing wasn't sure what he was talking about. Looking out over the sea, he said, “Patriarch, I’ve come to say hello.”

There was no immediate response. The surface of the sea remained as calm as ever. Meng Hao waited for a moment, then let out a cold harrumph.

The sound entered the water, which then began to seethe as a huge turtle appeared, carrying an entire country on its back. Patriarch Reliance’s voice echoed out, sounding very annoyed.

“Meng Hao, you little bastard, what do you think you’re doing? Come to bully your Patriarch with that cultivation base of yours? Damnation! This is the student bullying the master! Y-y-you, you just think about how well the Patriarch treated you back then. Very well, right? I even handed over a lot of my treasures to you!” Patriarch Reliance glared at Meng Hao, blinking, which was the sign that he was about to attempt to pull a fast one.

Meng Hao looked at Patriarch Reliance for a moment, and was just about to say something when, for no apparent reason, the land mass atop Patriarch Reliance suddenly moved, revealing a few words on his shell.

It was a partial line of text which read, “… Hao’s turtle.”

A strange expression appeared on Meng Hao’s face. He couldn’t help but muse that Patriarch Reliance definitely had his moments of brilliance. At the moment, he was clearly very pleased with himself, and yet his face was still a mask of fury.

Meng Hao started chuckling.

Clasping hands and bowing deeply, he said, “Disciple Meng Hao has come to pay respects, Patriarch.”

The gesture caused Patriarch Reliance to suddenly soften up a bit. Eyes shining with bright light, he reveled in the wonderful experience, and even shivered a bit. Inwardly, he said, “Heavens, Heavens! He’s Transcended, and yet he’s paying respects to me, the Patriarch. Hahaha! The Patriarch is once again the smartest. Hmph! The little bastard might have a

Transcendent cultivation base, but in terms of intellect, he’s vastly below me.”

Inwardly, he was feeling wonderful, but outwardly he simply snorted coldly. Continuing to put on an expression of wizened experience, he said, “What matter has brought you here to offer respects to the Patriarch?”

“Patriarch, the new Mountain and Sea Realm has no Xuanwu turtles,” Meng Hao said with a smile. “Junior would like to request that the Patriarch take the lead in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Please assume the mantle of the realm’s only Xuanwu turtle, eternally responsible for the qi flow of the Mountains and Seas. No other turtle can do such a thing. Only the Patriarch is capable of this task.”

Patriarch Reliance’s jaw dropped. After a moment of thought, he asked, “You want me to be the qi flow turtle of the Mountain and Sea Realm? To put me permanently in command for all eternity? Me, the Patriarch, the only turtle? I… can cultivate the qi flow magic of the Mountain and Sea Realm, and gain enlightenment of the Demon Sealing Hexing magics of the Nine Mountains and Seas?”

Patriarch Reliance’s heart surged with excitement. What was happening was like a dream come true, something which would be so beneficial to him it was virtually impossible to describe.

If he became the sole Xuanwu turtle of the entire Mountain and Sea Realm, he would benefit from the convergence of the qi flow of the entire realm, and would have an incredibly prominent position.

“Yes. Patriarch, you are the only one up to the task. The Mountain and Sea Realm has the League of Demon Sealers as its soul, the Hexing magic as its bones, and the Mountains and Seas as its flesh. Patriarch, you and I are the only members of the League of Demon Sealers within the Mountain and Sea Realm. I’m afraid no one else would do.” Meng Hao looked at Patriarch Reliance, smiling. His words had been spoken quite calmly, and he had even thrown in some flattering words.

He didn’t have to do things in this way, but since Patriarch Reliance was his old friend, he didn’t mind resorting to such methods to bring him some happiness.

“But I’m not part of the League of Demon Sealers, am I?!” Patriarch Reliance blurted. However, he immediately regretted those words, and quickly changed his tone of voice. “Er, fine, fine!” he roared. “To give you some face, I agree.”

Meng Hao smiled. Voice soft, he said, “Patriarch, you are my Dao Protector, so naturally, you’re part of the League of Demon Sealers. I thank you for everything.”

With that, he extended his right hand, and the Mountain and Sea Realm appeared. He quickly performed an incantation gesture and pointed out at Patriarch Reliance.

“I call upon the power of my name to perform Righteous Bestowal on Patriarch Reliance. He shall become the sole Xuanwu turtle of the Mountain and Sea Realm, and take up residence on the Ninth Mountain!

“The Mountain and Sea Realm has Nine Mountains and Nine Seas. This Xuanwu turtle bears Mount Daqing upon his back, my Dao Corroboration Mountain. Let that mountain become the Mountain among Mountains!”

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# Chapter 1562: She Does Not Wish to Awaken

“Spirit automaton of the Mountains and Seas! You dissipated in the past, and the time has come for you to form anew. Merge with a strand of my divine sense and be born again!” As soon as Meng Hao’s words echoed out, a tremor ran through Patriarch Reliance. The seals which had been placed on him in the past vanished, and a surge of power erupted up. Gradually, a shocking qi flow appeared on him.

That qi flow connected to the Mountain and Sea Realm, forming a resonance. At the same time, the excited Patriarch Reliance shrank, transforming into a beam of light that shot into the Mountain and Sea Realm. As of this moment, he became the sole Xuanwu turtle of the Mountain and Sea Realm, protector of its qi flow.

The State of Zhao held something unique and special, the Mountain among Mountains. It was now a seed of the Mountains and Seas; should the realm ever meet destruction again, as long as that Mountain among Mountains existed, the Mountain and Sea Realm would be able to continue on.

Having accomplished these things, Meng Hao put the Mountain and Sea Realm away. Along with Xu Qing, he continued along through the world of the Mountain and Sea Butterfly. He looked for Choumen Tai, but was unable to find him. After sending some divine sense out, he confirmed that Choumen Tai was not within the Mountain and Sea Butterfly. However… he would soon be appearing in Meng Hao’s presence.

“Qing’er, there’s somewhere else I need to go….” Meng Hao said softly, his voice melancholy and tinged with reminiscence. Xu Qing looked at him thoughtfully.

A few days passed. In another location in the world of the Mountain and Sea Butterfly was a mountain range, outside of which Meng Hao hovered. He looked at the mountains with a disconsolate expression for a moment before entering.

This particular mountain range was famous within the Mountain and Sea Butterfly. It was the location of the ancient Kunlun Society, and was now an autonomous state within the Mountain and Sea Butterfly world.

Meng Hao's arrival was not detected by anyone in the Kunlun Society. It was almost as if he existed in a different space that allowed him and Xu Qing to pass by all the cultivators without their knowledge. Soon, they were deep within the Kunlun Society mountains, standing at the foot of a towering mountain.

This mountain did not have a sharp peak, but rather, a basin filled with swirling mist, and the ripples of powerful spell formations. An old man sat cross-legged at the top of the mountain, completely unmoving.

A powerful medicinal aroma emanated out from him to fill the area.

It was none other than… Pill Demon!

He was Meng Hao's Master, as well as Chu Yuyan's.

As Meng Hao stood there silently at the bottom of the mountain, his heart was filled with bitterness. He began to walk slowly up to the top, followed closely by Xu Qing. When they reached the top, they saw Pill Demon sitting there in front of a coffin, surrounded by spell formations which had been in place for many, many years.

Inside of the coffin was a beautiful woman, laying there peacefully, as if she were sleeping.

The instant Meng Hao laid eyes on the coffin, his sadness deepened, and various memories flitted through his mind. After a long moment passed, Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed deeply to Pill Demon.

“Master,” he said softly.

Pill Demon shivered. Turning, he saw that it was Meng Hao standing there behind him, and a profound gleam appeared in his eyes as he rose to his feet. After a moment passed, he sighed and walked over to Meng Hao, then clasped his shoulder. Looking over at Xu Qing, he nodded, then turned and left.

Meng Hao stood there quietly, looking at the coffin, thinking about how Yan’er had crushed Chu Yuyan’s soul right in front of him.

Xu Qing walked forward to stand next to Meng Hao. As she looked down into the coffin, her gaze softened. “Meng Hao,” she said quietly, “do you want to tell me what that happened while we were apart?”

Meng Hao stood there quietly for a long moment. Then he began to recount the story of what had happened on Planet Vast Expanse. He talked about Han Bei, and about taking in an apprentice named Yan’er.

He talked about the Ninth Hex, and about the nine incarnations. He talked about Little Treasure. He took his time explaining everything….

“After Little Treasure closed his eyes and vanished, Yan’er destroyed the memories of her previous life. I thought she had entered the cycle of reincarnation, but when I went to look for her, she wasn’t there. That was when I realized that she never did enter reincarnation. She actually returned to her original body.

“It was almost like she had been living in a dream, and in the end… she wasn’t willing to awaken.” By the end, his words were spoken in a hoarse murmur as he looked down at Chu Yuyan’s body inside the coffin.

Xu Qing listened patiently. She could almost visualize everything that had happened with Meng Hao, Little Treasure, and Yan’er. Meng Hao simply wasn’t capable of understanding the deeper meaning of everything involved, but as for Xu Qing, it gave her a profound understanding of Chu Yuyan.

“She does not wish to awaken because would rather be alone in a world of her own making,” she said softly. “She wants to forget you, Meng Hao, because she loves you. She is lost.”

She looked over at him, a smile on her face, a simple smile of determination and focus. “If she still remembers you when she wakes up, then… why don’t we all practice cultivation together?”

Meng Hao reached out and clasped her hand tightly. He didn’t say anything. Xu Qing looked down at Chu Yuyan laying there in the coffin, and felt both compassion and gratefulness.

Meng Hao didn’t say anything more about the matter. Eventually, he and Xu Qing left.

About half a month later, everyone in the Mountain and Sea Butterfly was ready to depart. Meng Hao produced the Mountain and Sea Realm, which rapidly grew larger, sending powerful ripples out in all directions.

Gradually, nine huge vortexes appeared outside of the Mountain and Sea Realm, one for each of the Nine Mountains and Seas.

The people of the Mountain and Sea Realm were given their choice as to which vortex to enter.

Boundless light shone into the air as the excited cultivators vanished one by one. When they reappeared, they were inside of the Mountain and Sea Realm, back in their home.

Soon, everyone was inside, including Fatty and all of Meng Hao’s other friends, as well as Ksitigarbha and the Paragons. Once everyone was safely inside, Meng Hao waved his finger, causing the Mountain and Sea Butterfly to shrink down until it transformed into two people. They were none other than his parents, who smiled at him before entering the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Xu Qing was the last person to remain outside.

“I’ll be waiting for you,” she said. She was well aware that Meng Hao still had revenge to seek. Giving him a profound look, she turned and entered the ninth vortex.

As Meng Hao hovered there alone, the Mountain and Sea Realm shrank down into the palm of his hand. After looking at it warmly for a moment, he put it away, then looked down… at the green bronze coffin.

After a moment, he clasped hands and bowed deeply.

“Many thanks!” he said.

The coffin emanated a pulse of gentle power, seemingly in response. Then, everything went quiet again. Slowly, a vortex once again rose up around the coffin, covering it over until it was no longer visible. Meng Hao looked away, turning his attention to the sea of flames up above, and the rest of the starry sky.

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# Chapter 1563: The Wind Stirs

Nearest to Meng Hao at the moment was the Immortal God Continent, which was covered by an endless mist as it shot through the starry sky at incredible speed.

Normally, it was a trip that should have taken hundreds of years, but in this case, only a few short months had passed. Rumbling sounds echoed out as it got closer and closer.

Meng Hao looked away from the starry sky. Down below, the green coffin was no longer visible. He took a step forward, placing him directly in front of the sea of flames. He extended his right hand, and the fire shrank down until it was the size of his palm, after which he put it away.

The huge army from the Vast Expanse School all looked over at Meng Hao, their cultivation base power surging. However, none of them said a single word. As Meng Hao approached them, their energy rose higher and higher.

They knew that the true war had yet to begin. All of them were fully aware that Meng Hao’s true enemies were the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent. The 33 Heavens had been little more than a stepping stone.

Meng Hao took his place atop the old lizard, where he sat down cross-legged and then spoke in a voice that echoed like thunder.

“Three days. In three days’ time, the Immortal God Continent will arrive.” Immediately, the surrounding cultivators’ eyes flickered with the desire to kill.

“They shall die!” roared the Vast Expanse School troops, their cultivation bases surging, their expressions gleaming with madness. There were even some who licked their lips.

To these cultivators, it didn’t really matter that they never got a chance to slaughter all 33 Heavens. They were here to fight for Meng Hao, to fight for a Transcendent cultivator. As such, the truly worthy opponents were the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent.

They knew that the Immortal God Continent was considered a top power within the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, but that only made them more excited.

They knew that their opponents… were not invincible, now that Meng Hao had Transcended!

Meng Hao was even more clear on that point. In fact, he was aware that if he wished to, it would be a simple matter for him to single-handedly wipe out the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent. However, he didn’t do that, the reason being… that his ultimate opponent was the will of the starry sky of the Vast Expanse.

That will would most certainly take advantage of the situation to try to fight him. Therefore, he needed to stay at his peak state, and could not allow any distractions to influence him.

If he concentrated on trying to destroying the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm, then the will of the starry sky of the Vast Expanse would have a chance to make a move. In fact, that will was hoping for just such a thing to occur. As long as Meng Hao could be distracted in some way, it would be worth it.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as his aura slowly grew still and calm. He looked out coldly into the stars, waiting for the final battle to begin.

Three days flew by. Suddenly, the stars off in the distance began to ripple and distort. Thunderous rumbling sounds echoed out, and a bizarre pressure filled the area. An enormous, majestic continent suddenly appeared.

The pressure instantly grew more intense as the vague shape of a hand suddenly appeared and then shot toward the Vast Expanse School army.

The Sect Leader snorted coldly. The golden-robed Jin Yunshan, Sha Jiudong, and Bai Wuchen all unleashed the power of their cultivation bases, sending a massive force flying out to defend against the hand. Everything shook wildly.

The Immortal God Continent ripped through the starry sky. It was an enormous land mass, so huge that by the time only half of it was visible, it seemed to stretch out infinitely in all directions. Numerous peak 9-Essences auras erupted out, along with ordinary 9-Essences, 8-Essences, and 7-Essences auras.

Countless figures flew out from the Immortal God Continent in beams of brilliant light.

Behind them were hosts of cultivators, all of whom radiated bleak, ferocious auras. In the blink of an eye, their numbers swelled past the 1,000,000 mark, and rapidly reached 10,000,000.

Behind that group, even more cultivators flew out; it almost seemed like they would keep coming without end, for all eternity.

The army from the Vast Expanse School didn’t speak, nor did they hesitate for even a moment. They… instantly began to power up their cultivation bases to fight!

Intense killing intent rose up from them, and yet they didn’t immediately begin to fly. Instead, they looked over at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao pointed out at the Immortal God Continent, and then his eyes glittered as he said, “Exterminate all of the cultivators from this land mass!”

It was as if an explosive wave had been unleashed as the cultivators of the Vast Expanse School surged into action. Their howls shook the starry sky as they began to fly forward in attack.

In the blink of an eye, the two groups of cultivators clashed. The sound of fierce, shocking fighting rang out. The Sect Leader and other peak 9-Essences cultivators were like a sharp sword that slashed deeply into the enemy forces.

Behind them were the other 9, 8, and 7-Essences experts, the Dao Sovereigns, and countless others. It only took a moment for the fighting to reach a fever pitch.

“DIE!”

“DIE!!”

“DIE!!!”

The roars of the fighting cultivators caused the Heavens to suddenly go dim. The stars shook, and even suns and moons seemed to cower in fear.

The war… had truly begun!

The Sect Leader took the lead in the charge. Following him, the army of the Vast Expanse School cut through the enemy like a hot knife through butter. Every advancement they made caused the front line of the Immortal God Continent forces crumbled a little bit more.

Soon, the reek of blood filled the sky, and countless casualties had been inflicted.

Meng Hao stood atop the old lizard, looking coldly at the Immortal God Continent. His vision pierced through the entire continent until it came to rest on a huge statue. That statue depicted the Immortal God Continent’s Transcendor, who had lived many years in the past. When Meng Hao’s gaze came to rest on the statue, he could sense a boundless dignity and might. However, it was in that moment that the mists around the statue swirled, and the statue distorted slightly. Suddenly it looked slightly different than before.

“Something’s different,” Meng Hao murmured.

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# Chapter 1564: Immortal God Opening Salvo!

“Or perhaps it’s always been different, and my cultivation base was just never high enough that I would notice.” He looked thoughtfully around at the fighting, and all of a sudden, noticed one particular woman.

It was the same woman who had tried to kill him in years past, whom he had bitten, tearing a chunk of flesh off of her face. Right now, she was fighting with one of the Vast Expanse School’s 9-Essences Paragons.

In the two thousand years which had passed, the woman was still in the early 9-Essences level. Her cultivation base had made virtually no progress. When Meng Hao realized that, his eyes narrowed. He had his speculations about what was going on with the Immortal God Continent, and although he was very confident that he was right, he had been unable to prove anything.

The woman cried out shrilly as she waved her hand in an attack, causing everything around her to fill with rumbling sounds. The 9-Essences Paragon she was fighting was no less focused, and their battle caused booms like that of thunder to echo out.

Back when Meng Hao had fought this woman years ago, he had paid a very heavy price. And yet now, she was like an ant. After looking at her for only a moment, he was already disinterested.

His single glance caused her to tremble. Regardless of whether she wanted to or not, she had to admit… that the familiar figure standing on the enormous lizard, just outside the battlefield, was causing an unprecedented level of pressure to crush down onto her.

Years ago, she had looked down on him with contempt, but now he had turned into something that could cause the entire starry sky to shake violently, and could destroy her as easily as flipping over his hand.

Meng Hao’s casual glance caused her to start shaking. Apparently, his gaze contained a bizarre power that could disregard natural law and shake Essences. Blood sprayed out of the woman’s mouth, and she fell back.

“How could he have gotten so powerful!?!?

“This is impossible! The last time I saw him, he was nothing more than a stray dog, but now…. I can’t believe that I’m unable to stand up to a single glance from him. Plus, he’s surrounded by countless other terrifying beings!” The woman fell back again, filled with bitterness. Booms rang out as the fighting continued.

It was almost as if nothing amazing existed in the world unless Meng Hao looked at it. Or as if his gaze was the source of all splendor.

It was at this point that a powerful shockwave suddenly blasted out from the Immortal God Continent. The shockwave shook the starry sky as an old man flew out, wearing a gray robe. He had three greatswords strapped to his back, and radiated dazzling energy has he strode through the starry sky. The emanations of his cultivation base were such that ordinary 9-Essences cultivators would be crushed by him. He was… a peak 9-Essences expert.

Although Meng Hao had never seen this old man before, he knew who he was. Back when the Mountain and Sea Realm was destroyed, Meng Hao had attempted to attack the Immortal God Continent itself. This old man had sighed, which was his form of attack, something that dissolved the attack power of the exploded Mountain and Sea Realm, and which had left Meng Hao seriously injured.

This time, the old man was clearly not acting as casually as he had been back then. He showed an unprecedented level of graveness as he made his appearance and then flicked his sleeve. Instantly, gray smoke roiled up into the sky. Massive rumbling sounds echoed out as lighting exploded out through the entire area.

“Meng Hao!” The old man’s cultivation base power instantly transformed into a powerful force of expulsion that shoved all Vast Expanse School cultivators away from him. Blood sprayed out of their mouths as they were sent tumbling away. 7 and 8-Essences Paragons gasped in response to the pressure radiating off of the old man, and even 9-Essences Paragons were shocked.

Considering the level of this old man’s peak 9-Essences cultivation base, he could be considered to be at the most powerful level beneath Transcendence, comparable to the other eccentric experts Meng Hao had in his service.

The only people who qualified to fight him were the Sect Leader, Jin Yunshan, Sha Jiudong and Immortal Bai Wuchen, and yet even they could not quite match up.

The gray-robed old man let out a howl that shook the stars, and caused blood to ooze out of the eyes, ears, noses, and mouths of countless cultivators. The old man turned into a streak of gray light that shot from his original position toward Meng Hao.

The Sect Leader snorted coldly, and instantly prepared to intercept him. In the Sect Leader’s mind, the old man was seeking death, so he might as well accommodate him.

However, Meng Hao’s expression didn’t change at all as the old man shot toward him. Next to him, the termite’s eyes glittered with cold light as it transformed into a bolt of white lightning. At the same time, swarms of smaller termites erupted out from inside of it, becoming a cloud of vicious little beasts that charged voraciously toward the old man. Simultaneously, the giant queen termite began to emanate powerful ripples which distorted the starry sky and turned into a huge vortex around the old man.

The old man’s eyes went wide. This termite was not something he could afford to underestimate. He quickly sent cultivation base power out to fight against the swarm of termites, leaving him incapable of trying to fight with Meng Hao. He was locked in place five kilometers away from Meng Hao, surrounded by booms and ripples that caused Heaven and Earth to darken.

Further off on the battlefield, the Sect Leader and the others were now on the offensive. The Immortal God Continent was suffering one defeat after another, and their casualties vastly outnumbered that of the Vast Expanse School.

It was virtually impossible for the experts of the Immortal God Continent to avoid deadly attacks, and one after another perished.

Meng Hao’s expression remained the same the entire time. He refused to believe that this was the extent of the power of the Immortal God Continent. Considering the resources they had at their disposal, he was of the opinion that the fighting had just begun.

He wasn’t in a rush. There were many ways to get revenge. Just like the 33 Heavens, he would completely and utterly destroy these enemies. Furthermore, those cultivators from the Vast Expanse School who died in battle could easily be brought back by the power of his Transcendent cultivation base.

The sound of fierce fighting echoed out with increasing intensity. The Immortal God Continent army was pushed back over and over again. At this point, a blast of energy surged out from the Immortal God Continent. It was a middle-aged man, face expressionless, a horsetail whisk in his hand. The whisk had 3,000 strands, each of which contained a great Dao. As soon as he appeared, he unleashed destruction upon the ranks of the Vast Expanse School, whose army suddenly lurched to a halt.

Voice cool, the man said, “I will exterminate the entire clan of any who dare to offend the Immortal God Continent!” He waved his sleeve, causing an explosive wind to sweep out in all directions. Jin Yunshan let out a piercing cry, and at the same time, Sha Jiudong transformed into a sandstorm. One was like the light, and the other the darkness. Instantly, they shot forward to intercept the man with the horsetail whisk.

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# Chapter 1565: Less Real Than it Seems

The middle-aged man frowned. Having no other alternative, he waved his hand, causing the 3,000 strands to transform into 3,000 beams of light. Those beams of light then turned into 3,000 white-armored wooden puppets with shockingly powerful cultivation bases. They immediately charged into the army of Vast Expanse School cultivators, slowing their advance.

At the same time, the Immortal God Continent emitted rumbling sounds, and shook visibly as numerous huge objects appeared. Shockingly, it was a group of pitch black war chariots!

Each one of them was fully 30,000-meters long, and they blotted out the sky as they rumbled forth. The chariots were being pulled by countless vicious spirits, who howled as they advanced, spreading pitch-black light everywhere they went, a light that contained power which could destroy the Heavens and extinguish the Earth.

There seemed to be no end to the chariots, which if anyone took the time to count, would number in the hundreds of thousands. Furthermore, black beams light spread out in all directions, like hundreds of thousands of black arrows that stabbed toward the army from the Vast Expanse School.

The incredible scene was almost impossible to describe. Black light and black arrows shot out in spectacular fashion, like the shadow of death bearing down on the army of the Vast Expanse School!

The rain of deadly arrows sped through the starry sky, causing everything to rumble. It took only a moment for them to pierce through the void and appear directly in front of the cultivators from the Vast Expanse School.

Their murderous auras were like ice, leaving the cultivators in the army feeling like they were about to be frozen. There were even some with low cultivation bases who were so shocked they couldn't move.

It was as if they were all about to die!

In that moment of crisis, the Sect Leader threw his head back and roared, stretching his hands out in both directions. Instantly, a huge wind kicked up, rising high up above him as suddenly, a turtle shell appeared in his hands!

It was the precious treasure of the Vast Expanse School!

Shockingly, he had brought the precious treasure with him, and now he was unleashing it in battle. As the wind screamed, the turtle shell expanded rapidly, covering all of the Vast Expanse School cultivators.

The pitch-black murderous will slammed into the turtle shell, and was completely blocked. A massive boom echoed out, shaking everything, causing minds to reel, and laws both natural and magical to be destroyed.

The turtle shell vibrated, but held strong. Countless magical symbols appeared on its surface, and it radiated an ancient and profound aura, an aura full of mystery.

Although everything seemed to happen relatively quickly, to the people involved, it was as if time were moving very slowly. Eventually, the turtle shell vanished, and the Sect Leader was left with an ashen face. Some of the other 9-Essences experts who had lent him power also coughed up blood. Killing intent flickered within the Sect Leader's eyes.

"We can't give them time to unleash another wave of those war chariots!" he cried. Instantly, Bai Wuchen and the other 9-Essences experts flew out and began to fight their way toward the Immortal God Continent itself.

Meng Hao hadn't moved the entire time. However, the incident with the war chariots gave him a much better understanding of the resources at the disposal of the Immortal God Continent.

Even as the Sect Leader and the others began their charge, three beams of light shot out from the land mass. In the lead position was an old woman with silver hair. A vicious gleam could be seen in her eyes, and her cultivation base exploded with power as she began to fight the Sect Leader and the others.

At the same time, the black light of the war chariots once again began to converge. As that happened, Meng Hao could visibly detect that the Immortal God Continent itself had withered a bit.

Turning to the huge head hovering nearby, Meng Hao coolly said, “Your turn!”

Instantly, the head vanished. When it reappeared, it was right above the Immortal God Continent, where it immediately let out boundless pressure. The natural laws of the Immortal God Continent responded with a force of expulsion that rose up from all corners of the land mass.

“Trifling land mass, you’re not worthy to try to banish me!” A vicious expression appeared on the head’s face as it suddenly let out a powerful roar. The resulting sound wave rolled over the entire world, causing the lands to shake. Mountain peaks were blasted into ash, and huge crevices opened up on the plains.

The war chariots began to vibrate, and then cracks spread out over their surfaces.

“How dare thee!!” roared a voice that echoed out across the entire Immortal God Continent. A stream of sword qi rocketed up toward the head.

The head smiled viciously and, before the sword qi could reach it, opened its mouth and blew out a blast of gray fire that set the entire land mass ablaze.

The fire engulfed the war chariots, which then began to collapse into charred rubble.

This fire was no ordinary fire. It was fire unleashed by a powerful expert at the great circle of the peak of 9-Essences. It was soul fire, fueled by his very life force….

It was in this moment that the statue of the ancestor in the middle of the continent, the statue which depicted the ancient Transcendor, suddenly began to glow. A field of light began to spread out, covering the entire Immortal God Continent, both extinguishing the flames spit out by the head and also increasing the power of expulsion exponentially.

The gigantic head was sent spinning away, forced completely out of the Immortal God Continent.

Shockingly, the head looked afraid. Even in the moment in which it was expelled, and before it could react, the sword qi shot out and stabbed toward its forehead.

Cracking sounds emanated out as the head's forehead began to split open. At the same time, a man appeared down below, radiating a murderous aura as he flew along atop a bronze sword.

The sword moved at incredible speed, bearing down on the huge head in spectacular fashion. Just when it seemed to be on the verge of stabbing through the head, the head's bloodshot eyes flickered with profound light. The area around it then distorted, sending ripples out in all directions. The Essence of Time appeared, and the sword qi was crushed as if by an enormous grinding stone, instantly transformed into countless sparks which spilled out in all directions.

The man on the flying sword looked over with coldly glittering eyes. Performing an incantation gesture, he immediately began to battle with the enormous head.

Massive booms filled the area around the Immortal God Continent. The entire world seemed to be hovering on the brink of collapse.

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# Chapter 1566: The Resources!

In addition to the fighting between the 9-Essences experts, there were other battles between the 7 and 8-Essences Paragons. The shocking nature of the fighting caused the entire starry sky to shake violently.

There were also Imperial Lords, Dao Sovereigns, and Dao Lords. The sheer numbers involved ensured that the fighting on the battlefield was intense to the extreme. Of course, the bulk of the fighting was taking place between the Ancient Realm and Immortal Realm cultivators, of whom there were vast numbers. The vast sea of battling cultivators constantly crushed those on the front lines into a bloody pulp!

Blood rained down as the death toll rose rapidly!

The cultivators of the Immortal God Continent had no reason to hold back from fighting, and the thought of retreat didn’t even exist in their minds. It was almost as if there were something inside of them urging them to forget everything else and focus only on fighting.

As for the cultivators from the Vast Expanse School, they were fighting for a Transcendent cultivator. Dying in battle would be the ultimate of honors, and besides, even if they did die, they had faith that their Transcendent leader would be able to bring them back from the dead.

And that was in fact the case.

Meng Hao stood there looking out at the Immortal God Continent and all its cultivators, and his eyes glowed with coldness.

He hated the 33 Heavens.

But he hated the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent even more!

This was a battle for vengeance!

As he stared coldly at the battle, his brow slowly furrowed. In the past, the cultivators from the Immortal God Continent had seemed particularly sharp and quick-witted. But now, they somehow seemed slower, although physically they were the same as before.

“My speculations are most likely correct,” Meng Hao thought. As far as he was concerned, he was now almost completely convinced that he was right about the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm. Beneath him, the old lizard looked around with killing intent flickering in its eyes. However, without Meng Hao’s express orders, it wouldn’t take action. Instead, it just watched the carnage unfolding. Soon, the fighting had reached an incredible climax. Screams echoed out constantly, until finally, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. Even as he looked over at the Immortal God Continent, booming sounds rang out as over a hundred volcanoes began to erupt simultaneously.

Pillars of flame rose up into the sky, causing everything else to grow dark. At the same time, numerous seven-colored puppets appeared within the fire.
1

The puppets began to form together into phalanx formations, over a hundred of them. They emanated spectacular energy, and an ancient air that seemed to stretch back through countless years of time.

The appearance of the seven-colored puppets instantly lifted the spirits of the Immortal God Continent cultivators. It was as if they were now gazing upon the key to victory.

This was one of the Immortal God Continent’s reserve powers, seven-colored puppets concealed within the volcanoes for countless years, puppets that seemed to have their own unique natural law. That natural law could influence space, and was filled with power that could alter Heaven and Earth and lead to assured victory.

Soon, the more than one hundred phalanxes of seven-colored puppets were slaughtering their way into the forces of the Vast Expanse School.

Meng Hao stood calmly atop the head of the old lizard. After looking at the seven-colored puppets for a while, his gaze shifted to the statue of the Immortal God Continent's Transcendor.

Things had not yet reached the point where he needed to intervene. The Vast Expanse School was a powerful force, and even though they were away from the sect on a campaign, unable to bring many of their most powerful reserve weapons, they were still not a force to be underestimated.

Almost as soon as the seven-colored puppets took action, the Vast Expanse School's 9-Essences Paragons joined their voices together to shout, "Vast Expanse Blood Formation!"

Instantly, the forehead of each and every one of the countless Vast Expanse cultivators opened up, and a drop of blood flew out. The drops then merged together into a vast sea of blood, from within which emerged numerous blood-colored giants. The giants threw their heads back and let out enraged roars as they jumped forward to fight the seven-colored puppets.

The intense fighting caused the entire starry sky to shake!

The Vast Expanse Blood Formation slammed into the seven-colored puppets, sending a shockwave blasting out in all directions. Almost immediately, the seven-colored puppets were shoved backward, and the light shining off of them dimmed.

Although the Immortal God Continent was strong, the Vast Expanse School was a powerful force which had given birth to a Transcendent cultivator. A battle between the two was not the type in which victory could be easily determined.

As Meng Hao watched the seven-colored puppets being forced back across the battlefield, his eyes flickered with a strange light. He looked more closely at the Immortal God Continent, and the cultivators from there, and a thoughtful look appeared in his eyes. But then, rumbling sounds suddenly filled the air.

The entire Immortal God Continent appeared to be shaking. Mountain peaks began to sway back and forth, and then cracking sounds rang out as they rose up into the air. Various sects covered those mountain peaks, of which there were fully 1,000,000. The sight of them all rising up into the air was completely shocking.

Next, it was as if a seal had been undone. The peakless mountains had apparently been opened up, as countless shocking roars echoed out from inside of them. Shockingly, dragons appeared from the 1,000,000 mountains, immediately flying high up into the air.

The enormous dragons emanated pressure that could strike fear deep into anyone's soul, and their roars caused wild colors to flash in the air. Wind screamed up into a tempest as the dragons charged toward the army from the Vast Expanse School.

"Very impressive, Immortal God Continent," Meng Hao murmured, eyes glittering brightly. He waved his hand, and the old lizard let out a howl and charged toward the fighting at top speed. Almost immediately, it appeared above the Immortal God Continent, where it suddenly changed form, transforming into something like a river of stars that stretched out overhead in dazzling fashion.

A huge roar became a sound wave filled with killing intent, and the enormous dragons began to tremble. As they fought back, the old lizard was blocked, and yet at the same time, the dragons were also held in check.

Shockingly, the old lizard was single-handedly preventing all of the huge dragons from doing a single thing.

Heaven and Earth shook wildly, and the starry sky filled with rumbling sounds. The fighting had reached an incredible level of intensity. The Immortal God Continent cultivators were being pushed back by the Vast Expanse School, until they were almost on the continent itself.

Because the old lizard was keeping the huge dragons in check, the Immortal God Continent was now in a moment of grave crisis.

“The Immortal God Continent must have more resources at their disposal than this,” Meng Hao murmured. His expression was the same as ever as he hovered there in the starry sky.

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IMPORTANT NOTE: The grand finale contest is coming in about two weeks. In order to participate you MUST register for an account on prior to the contest. I’m not sure what the exact cutoff date will be, perhaps 5-7 days before the contest starts. Make sure to register for a username and password ahead of time, otherwise you might miss out!

Contest prizes: Some of the prizes are ISSTH merchandise provided by Er Gen, but some of them are provided by me. I’m excited to announce that one of the prize items will be a poster-sized print of Meng Hao, depicted by League of Legends character concept artist Robin Ruan.

1. This appears to be a reference to a character in Renegade Immortal called the Seven-Colored Daoist

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# Chapter 1567: Not Willing!

Almost as soon as the words left his mouth, Meng Hao's pupils constricted as he sensed a very unique aura rising up from within the Immortal God Continent.

It was like a will, or perhaps a stream of divine sense, something all-powerful and supremely domineering.

A red glow rose up from deep within the Immortal God Continent, a color like that of blood. It was something domineering, aggressive, and filled with madness. It was a light… which could exterminate all life!

Almost as soon as the red light appeared, the vast hosts of cultivators from the Immortal God Continent looked extremely excited.

"Ji Realm Ancestral Light!!" 1

"We're not defeated yet! How could we lose!?" Roaring, they began to fight back against the Vast Expanse School with full power. At the same time, Meng Hao heard the words they were shouting.

"Ji Realm Ancestral Light!" Meng Hao looked at the red light as it spilled out rapidly toward the cultivators of the Vast Expanse School.

Meng Hao could sense the terrifying nature of that power, and was sure that it was something that the cultivators of the Vast Expanse School could not defend against. If it managed to spread out over the army, more than half of the force would be killed.

Meng Hao suddenly laughed and took a step forward, looking completely unruffled. Shockingly, when he reappeared, he was directly in front of the red light. Then he extended his right hand and pushed it straight out in front of him.

The red light which had exploded out from the deepest parts of the Immortal God Continent immediately reacted to Meng Hao. It began to shine even more dazzlingly than before, spreading out rapidly, then converging together in a beam that shot straight toward Meng Hao.

The speed at which it moved defied imagination. In the blink of an eye, it became something like red lightning which flashed through the air toward Meng Hao's outstretched hand.

Everything around Meng Hao was shaking violently. The starry sky was collapsing as countless red sparks of electricity raged around him. His hair whipped about his head, and his clothes flapped violently as the red light surrounded him.

By now, all of the cultivators present, both those from the Vast Expanse School and the Immortal God Continent, were all looking over in shock.

Time seemed to slow down as the red light around Meng Hao slowly began to fade away. He looked up, and then snapped his fingers.

Instantly, a sound like a thunderclap filled the world.

The red lightning bolt shattered, becoming nothing more than motes of red light that floated out to vanish into the starry sky.

"The Ji Realm Ancestral Light," he murmured softly. "Not bad. Enough to exterminate all things which have not Transcended." With that, he swished his sleeve as calmly as before, hovering there in the starry sky, looking down at the entire Immortal God Continent.

His gaze was something filled with seemingly endless dignity. At that point, all living things on the land mass suddenly trembled and then simultaneously shouted, “Anyone who assaults the Immortal God Continent shall DIIIIEEEEEEEEE!” As their roar spread out, the Immortal God Continent began to crack and crumble. Mountains were rent apart, and rivers were destroyed. It was as though two huge hands were ripping the lands apart, from within which a huge figure appeared.

It was a giant!

These were resources which had apparently been buried beneath the ground. The giant’s eyes opened, and nine glittering stars appeared on his forehead. He raised his right hand, slamming it down onto the lands to launch himself up into the Heavens.

“God Tribe!” he roared. As he flew up into the air, he began to rapidly expand, reaching a size that might even rival a planet, the sight of which caused all onlookers to be shaken with fear.

If that were all there were to it, it might not be a big deal. But then, more rifts opened up on the Immortal God Continent, and dozens of figures were revealed beneath.

Numerous giants all opened their eyes and roared as they flew up. The starry sky was shaken by the intense, ancient energy that radiated out.

One by one, the true resources of the Immortal God Continent were being revealed. However, as everything was playing out, it only served to confirm Meng Hao’s speculations regarding what was truly going on.

“All of this probably isn’t real,” he thought, looking at the charging God Tribe giants. With that, he lifted his right hand and pushed it out casually in front of him.

The air in front of him distorted as the power of time emanated out soundlessly in all directions. Natural laws were twisted, and magical laws were bent. Everyone watched in shock as the incredibly powerful God Tribe giants trembled, and then began to physically wither. By the time they reached the expressionless Meng Hao, they were so weak that they crumbled into ash.

The final 9-Star giant threw his head back and let out a roar of fear and rage. It was as if his mission was to defend the Immortal God Continent, to pay any price, even die in battle for it!

The giant roared, clenching his hand into a fist which he punched out toward Meng Hao. Despite the fact that his body was crumbling, he still managed to unleash the powerful fist strike.

Power seemed to flow from ancient times, transforming into a tempest that rumbling out in shocking fashion, exceeding the 9-Essences level and reaching that of Transcendence.

It was the power of a Transcendent fleshly body, something which could ignore natural and magical laws. Even the old lizard was shocked by the sight of it, and was left trembling. By now, everyone understood the shocking nature of the reserves at the disposal of the Immortal God Continent.

The last of the God Tribe giants poured all of his life force into the ultimate fist strike to try to take out Meng Hao, and yet, before it could touch him, the giant crumbled into ash.

Meng Hao had not Transcended merely in body, but also in cultivation base and soul. He was his own Essence, and was already half a step into the Ancestor Realm.

“Ashes to ashes, dust to dust….” Meng Hao said softly. “I have to say that I respect you. And yet… attacking like this was probably not what you wished to do. Allow me to sever your puppet strings for you.” With that, he took a step forward toward the Immortal God Continent.

By now, he had seen through to the true nature of the place, and the only way to erase the final uncertainties was to go inspect the place personally.

1. The Ji Realm is something which comes from very early in Renegade Immortal. It has nothing to do with the Ji Clan in this story, the Chinese characters are different

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# Chapter 1568: Puppets!

However, just when Meng Hao was about to actually step onto the Immortal God Continent, a powerful force of expulsion exploded out to stop him.

That power was emanating out of each and every cultivator from the Immortal God Continent, from each blade of grass and each tree limb, from every mountain and river. It was the will of the entire Immortal God Continent itself.

Meng Hao was not welcome or permitted.

His eyes flickered with bright light, and he was just about to force his way through, when suddenly, an extremely uneasy feeling gripped his heart, and he stopped in place. He looked up, and it was at this point that he noticed that the mountains and lands of the continent were all trembling as the land mass itself began to turn pitch black.

As the blackness spread, sounds like muttering voices echoed out from all of the various mountains peaks. It was like the chanting of scriptures, or the whispering of all living things.

At the same time, within the darkness off in the distance, Meng Hao could see a point of light. Closer examination revealed that it was actually a sun!

There were nine of them, rising up into the air. The power they emanated seemed capable of ripping apart the black of night, and as that power spread, Meng Hao could feel it starting to tear away at him. 1

Considering that Meng Hao had already Transcended, he felt only a slight sense of danger, and yet that was still enough to cause his pupils to constrict.

“This is some sort of divine ability….” he thought, eyes narrowing. As the nine suns rose up into the air, and their light spread in all directions, he could feel the ripping power battering at his body.

“This isn’t something that an ordinary person could create. This magical technique must have been created by the Immortal God Continent’s Transcendent cultivator!” Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly shone with a strange light.

It was almost as if he were able to pass through the ages of time, reach into the past and actually fight with that Transcendor of ancient times!

Meng Hao snorted coldly, lifted his right foot up, and then stamped it down. A huge boom echoed out, accompanied by a black mist that boiled out from inside of him and spread out through all Heaven and Earth.

“Nine suns sunder the night,” Meng Hao said coolly. “But my night is the night of the Demon. It can defile anything and everything, and cannot be destroyed!” More and more black mist roiled out, covering everything, making the darkness of night darker, making it impossible for the light of the nine suns to tear it apart.

The nine suns suddenly flickered, and the nine figures inside of them vanished. Then the area around Meng Hao began to distort, and nine black-robed figures appeared. Their cultivation bases immediately rumbled with power as they formed a deadly spell formation that could seriously injure even someone half a step into Transcendence. As for a peak 9-Essences cultivator, a person like that would be wiped out of existence.

But this was Meng Hao they were facing.

“So, you finally show your faces?” he said coolly. He didn’t seem to care at all that the nine suns were attacking in unison. He even let their divine abilities and magical techniques slam into him.

He was like a vast ocean, and the divine abilities of the nine suns were like stone oxen that disappeared without a trace as soon as they touched the surface of the water. Nothing happened at all. It was almost as if Meng Hao had consumed the divine abilities. Dazzling light flickered around him as the divine abilities then rebounded, shooting back at the nine suns with hundreds, no, thousands of times their original power.

There was literally no way to compare the two. One was like the light of a firefly, and the other was the light of the full moon.

RUMBLE!

Nine divine abilities shot back toward the nine suns. The suns groaned, and before they could even do anything, were completely overwhelmed by power thousands of times that which they had unleashed.

It all happened in the blink of an eye. Eight of the surrounding nine suns were transformed into ash, destroyed in body and soul.

Only one wasn’t killed, an old man who Meng Hao reached out and grabbed by the neck.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he held the only survivor among the nine suns up in front of him. The old man glared back, and was just about to self-detonate when Meng Hao’s divine sense crushed down onto him, quenching the power of detonation. Then, the divine sense stabbed into the man’s mind as a Soulsearch began.

What he discovered, however, was emptiness.

The old man began to shake, to twist and distort, and finally, he died under the power of the Soulsearch. Meng Hao didn’t acquire even a single memory. It was as if… the old man actually had no memories, as if the only thing he knew how to do was kill.

“A puppet,” Meng Hao murmured. “Yet another puppet.” Based on his thousands of years of experience, on his Transcendent cultivation base, and his dealings with the starry sky of the Vast Expanse and with the will of Allheaven, he had long since come to a theory regarding the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent.

His theory was that these two land masses actually contained no living people!

If these were the living descendents of the two ancient Transcendors, then none of what was happening would make sense. After all, the two Transcendors were the enemies of Allheaven!

This was a conclusion he had reached after his experience touching the three destroyed pillars outside the Vast Expanse.

“These two continents were most likely destroyed many years ago by Allheaven, just like he destroyed the land masses belonging to Patriarch Vast Expanse.” Meng Hao frowned. That was the conclusion he had reached, the only hitch being that all of the cultivators around him actually possessed flesh and blood bodies.

“The only explanation is that they’re puppets,” he thought. “And yet there is something at play that makes them not puppets.” He began to walk forward. Hordes of cultivators threw themselves at him, but not a one could get close. The wave of a hand destroyed them instantly.

He was followed by the Vast Expanse School army, which unleashed destruction onto the Immortal God Continent that caused the entire starry sky to shake.

Meng Hao had only moved forward about a hundred paces when suddenly one of the twisting rivers on the land mass suddenly began to flicker with light. Unexpectedly… the entire river rose up into the air.

Closer inspection revealed that the river was actually formed into the shape of a bow!

Almost as soon as the river-like bow rose up into the air, a young man appeared. As soon as Meng Hao laid eyes on him, he looked familiar. He is appearance was very similar to Slaughter, and also like the statue in the middle of the Immortal God Continent.

“A descendent of this place’s ancient Transcendor….”

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1. The nine suns have been talked about in ISSTH quite a few times. It wasn’t until recently that I discovered that there are nine high-level characters in Renegade Immortal who are described as having/being suns. Presumably these are those same characters

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# Chapter 1569: Rot!

The young man’s eyes flickered with killing intent. As he flew through the air, he reached out toward the river-bow, which rapidly shrank down until he grabbed it. Then he began to pull back the bowstring and take aim at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao looked on coldly as the young man let out a bellow of rage. As he pulled the bowstring, strands of qi flowed from all over the Immortal God Continent to make the shape of an arrow.

Then, rumbling sounds filled the air as the young man loosed that arrow, which shot like lightning toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao could clearly sense the terrifying power it contained. Were it wielded by an actual Transcendent cultivator, it would have been a powerful threat to him. But right now, it wasn’t. All he had to do was reach out and tap it, and the entire arrow quivered, then collapsed into pieces.

Blood sprayed out of the young man’s mouth as he fell back.

In that same moment, the Patriarch statue in the middle of the land mass began to emanate a glowing light that prevented anyone foreign to the Immortal God Continent from entering its perimeter.

The old lizard and the other eccentric experts were sent tumbling backward. The Sect Leader and the others were similarly affected. All of the cultivators of the Immortal God Continent fell back until they were inside the light, where they glared ferociously at the army from the Vast Expanse School.

The light could stop all of those people, but it could not stop Meng Hao.

He looked thoughtfully at the statue, and then took a step forward.

That step took him through the air to stand directly in front of the border of the light. Then he pierced through it, causing the light to fracture and crack.

The old lizard roared, then blurred into action, appearing once again on the battlefield. As its cultivation base spread out, everything around it was destroyed like kindling wood.

Meng Hao ignored the fierce fighting as he approached the middle of the land mass, where the statue was located. Even as he did, more arrows of light shot toward him from off in the distance.

It was the same young man from before, who was anxiously unleashing one arrow after another. Meng Hao simply swished his sleeve, destroying all of them.

The young man looked on in despair as Meng Hao approached the statue. Suddenly, a sigh rang out to fill the entire Immortal God Continent. A figure appeared along with it, an old man wearing a long, ceremonial robe. He seemed profoundly ancient as he flew up into the air and looked over at Meng Hao. Then, his right hand shot out, and he pointed up into the sky.

Instantly, the area around Meng Hao filled with soundless fluctuations, like ripples on the surface of a lake. At the same time, a well suddenly materialized in front of the old man.

The well also emanated powerful ripples, and upon closer examination, an image could be seen within the ripples. It was like a reflection depicting Meng Hao and the area around him.

The old man’s eyes glinted with fierce light as he reached out to grab the reflection of Meng Hao within the ripples of the well water. As his hand entered the water, even more ripples spread out.

The ripples in Meng Hao’s area were thrown into chaos, and something like a huge hand appeared, reaching out as if to crush him!

A strange light shone in Meng Hao's eyes. This was the second time he could directly sense how powerful that ancient Transcendor had been, and how, just like Meng Hao, he had made preparations to care for his people.

"Unfortunately, the will of the Vast Expanse is doing all of this. It was not the original intent of that Transcendor." Meng Hao looked at the old man working his magic off in the distance, and then simply kept moving forward. Every step he took caused the ripples to be destroyed, and forced the gigantic to struggle just to maintain its form.

The old man began to tremble, as if even all the power he had at his disposal wasn't enough to sustain the magic. Cracks spread out across the surface of the well, and it began to collapse. The old man let out a howl of fury. His body began to wither up as his blood and muscles were sucked away. Soon, he looked like nothing more than skin and bones. Because he was overdrawing on his cultivation base, something was revealed that had been hidden before, a slight aura of rot.

That aura was something that not even a peak 9-Essences expert would notice. But Meng Hao could feel it. His eyes flickered over to look at the old man, who roared as the aura of rot grew stronger, as if he had been decaying for years and years. Suddenly, he reached out and made a vicious grasping motion.

The air around Meng Hao began to rumble as the huge hand began to crush down toward him. Shockingly, the aura of Transcendence could be detected upon it.

Even as the hand closed in, Meng Hao let out a cold harrumph, and his own Transcendent aura erupted with full force.

BOOOOOOOOOMMM!

Fleshly body Transcendence. Cultivation base Transcendence!

The energy caused Heaven and Earth to tremble and shatter. Before the hand could get close, it shattered into countless fragments. At the same time, the air around Meng Hao transformed into a black hole.

The well couldn’t hold on any longer, and shattered, sending a blast of rubble out in all directions. The old man trembled, then coughed up a huge mouthful of decaying black blood. The aura of rot around him grew even more prominent. Just when the old man was about to retreat, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with cold light, and he took a step forward, bringing him directly in front of the old man. Instantly, his hand reached out and grabbed the top of the man’s head.

The magic of Soulsearching was unleashed.

Almost instantly, though, Meng Hao frowned. This old man was just like the nine suns; he had no memories, or if he did, they were in complete chaos, as if they had been forced into his head by someone else. They were completely impossible to analyze.

After a moment passed, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered, and he suddenly began to reel in his cultivation base. He suppressed his power until it was at the 9-Essences level. As he did, the aura of rot on the old man faded away, and his physical appearance looked more and more normal. He wiped the blood from his mouth, and it no longer contained an aura of rot. At the same time, the hatred in his eyes grew more intense.

It was at this point that roaring could be heard from the mouths of all of the cultivators of the Immortal God Continent, even from far off in the distance.

“Meng Hao, you shall die!” Rumbling could be heard as the entire world suddenly seemed to be complete. As Meng Hao’s cultivation base dropped, the surrounding cultivators seemed to grow more alert.

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# Chapter 1570: Seeing Clearly!

“So that’s how it is,” Meng Hao said, his voice cool. He waved his right hand, and a boom echoed out as the old man exploded, killed in body and soul.

Meng Hao stood there, looking at the statue not too far off in the distance. Keeping himself at the 9-Essences level, and dissipating all traces of Transcendence, he looked around at the cultivators and the statue.

There were no more mists, and the face of the statue was now completely filled with dignity and splendor.

“My cultivation base has exceeded the Daosource, and is now half a step into the Ancestor Realm…. Another bit of progress would allow me to see the truth, not just the clues.” After some thought, he waved his hand, wiping out an entire wave of attacking Immortal God Continent cultivators. Then, he powered his cultivation base up from the 9-Essences level back into the Daosource. Then his aura of Transcendence erupted out with unprecedented power, causing the entire Immortal God Continent to tremble as if in shock.

That power was not only that of fleshly body Transcendence and cultivation base Transcendence; as of this moment, the will of Meng Hao’s Transcendent soul erupted out. Boundless power surged, power that exceeded the Daosource, power… which was half a step into the Ancestor Realm!

In that very instant, Meng Hao could suddenly sense that the voices of the Immortal God Continent cultivators were growing quieter. Eventually… they faded into nothing.

They now seemed to completely lack intelligence whatsoever. As for the statue of the Transcendent cultivator, his face was distorted, making him look very different than moments ago. Furthermore, the entire Immortal God Continent was covered with mist….

Meng Hao stood there looking at the statue, and after a moment, he waved his hand, causing one of the Immortal God Continent's 8-Essences Paragons to suddenly vanish. He appeared in front of Meng Hao a moment later, who reached out and casually crushed his neck. Meng Hao studied him for a long moment, until he was able to detect an aura emanating out of him that wouldn't be noticeable without intense concentration. After seeping out of the eyes, ears, nose, and mouth of the 8-Essences Paragon, it began flowing toward a statue off in the distance.

There were actually nine such statues located throughout the land mass, eight on the periphery, and one larger one in the very middle.

"If I really want to see what's going on… it shouldn't be that difficult." He extended his right hand, and the copper mirror flew out and began to melt. It transformed into countless black threads which instantly covered Meng Hao, forming a suit of black armor.

By borrowing the power of the parrot, he was able to push his cultivation base past that half a step… all the way into the Ancestor Realm!!

RUUUUUUUUUUMBLE!

His hair whipped about as a tempest of wind screamed around him. The Vast Expanse was shaken by this peak level of power. At the same time, the parrot flew out, letting out a squawk as it shot into Meng Hao's forehead, merging with his closed third eye, the Dao eye, which began to emanate a violet glow.

With that, he closed his two eyes and opened his Dao eye. Violet light erupted out to fill the entire world, and at the same time… Meng Hao's view of the world completely changed!

He saw that the cultivators of the Immortal God Continent were actually formed from clumps of qi and blood. They were mere outlines, filled with black mist that gave them a very shocking appearance.

Regardless of whether they were men or women, old or young, and regardless of the level of their cultivation bases, to Meng Hao, they were all just clumps of qi and blood.

Whenever one of them died, they would be absorbed by the nearest statue. The black mists inside of them were apparently their souls, their true forms.

Furthermore, within that black mist, Meng Hao was able to detect… fluctuations of the will of Allheaven, and even soul strands which bore the same aura!

Meng Hao sent his divine sense out to fill the entire Immortal God Continent, and found that virtually all the cultivators were the same, with very few exceptions.

One of the exceptions was actually an entire clan. That clan was not participating in the warfare. Instead, they all sat there cross-legged, mixed emotions on their faces. Many of those faces were familiar to Meng Hao.

It was none other than… the Wang Clan.

Meng Hao even saw Wang Tengfei, with the blood of the God Tribe pumping through his veins.

The Wang Clan cultivators were all sitting cross-legged in meditation, surrounded by an enormous spell formation that continuously prevented the black mist from entering the clan.

It only took a moment for Meng Hao to realize that the spell formation was actually a teleportation portal, and a complicated one at that. It couldn’t be activated very quickly, and even more shocking… was that it seemed to lead outside the starry sky of the Vast Expanse!

Meng Hao turned his attention to another of the living beings, someone who wasn’t in the Wang Clan. As soon as Meng Hao focused his attention on that person, he recognized who it was. It was none other than the former Echelon cultivator from the First Mountain and Sea, Dao-Heaven.

He looked old, but Meng Hao could still tell who he was. Unfortunately, Dao-Heaven was laced with black mist, which was eating away at his fleshly body, something he couldn’t even detect.

After a moment, Meng Hao sent his divine sense sweeping out over the land mass once again, whereupon he detected more people who were different. There were eight of them in total, all located in different locations around the Immortal God Continent.

They were made of qi and blood like everyone else, but they had no traces of the black mist within them that was the will of Allheaven, and none of the strange soul strands.

Almost in the same moment that Meng Hao realized these eight individuals were different, they seemed to sense his presence, and turned their attention in his direction. He could immediately sense that they were filled with complicated emotions.

Eventually, Meng Hao closed his Dao eye. Then his two eyes opened, and he swished his sleeve. The black armor vanished, returning to the shape of the copper mirror, which he put away. The booming sounds of combat still echoed out around him. The Vast Expanse School truly deserved its reputation as the number one power in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse. The entire sect had been mobilized, and when you added in the superior power of the Ninth Sect, plus the old lizard and the other eccentric beings, the Immortal God Continent simply wasn’t capable of fighting back. The land mass was shaking as the Vast Expanse School cultivators battled their way in deeper and deeper.

Meng Hao ignored the fighting. Just as he was about to take action, the entire land mass trembled. Countless cultivators dropped to their knees and prostrated themselves to the Heavens. All of them were crying out the same thing.

“Patriarch, come to us!”

“Patriarch, come to us!!”

“Patriarch, come to us!!!”

Their voices joined together into a sound wave which rocked Heaven and Earth. The land mass shook, and a strange aura suddenly began to descend.

Everything began to grow icy cold, and yet, Meng Hao could sense that this will was not intelligent. It was almost as if someone had imprinted it onto a jade slip and was now forcibly unleashing it.

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# Chapter 1571: The Man in the Palace!

Another possibility was that this was not something from a jade slip, but from the memories of the starry sky of the Vast Expanse.

As the will descended onto the Immortal God Continent, it converged upon the body of the young man with the bow, who still stood some distance off. A tremor ran through him, and he let out a piercing howl as his body began to transform. His hair turned white, and his eyes became cold. With that will upon him, it was as if he were a completely different person.

He hovered there in midair, emanating an aura which surpassed the 9-Essences level. His eyes were bright red as he looked over at Meng Hao. Meng Hao looked back at him.

As their gazes met, the young man suddenly pointed his finger at Meng Hao and spoke in a hoarse voice: “Call the Wind!”

As soon as the words left his mouth, a black wind sprang up around Meng Hao, which rapidly converged into the shape of nine black dragons. When the dragons roared, black wind spewed from their mouths, wind that tore at Heaven and Earth.

“Summon the Rain!” he said. His body trembled, as though the will’s act of unleashing magic using this body was resulting in serious injuries.

As soon as the words left his mouth, drops of black rainwater appeared within the destructive wind. In the blink of an eye, they transformed into a downpour which descended upon Meng Hao.

“Magic Pod Soldiers!” growled the young man. As the raindrops fell, plopping sounds rang out, and they transformed into tiny vicious figures. Apparently, these were all people who had fallen in death to this magical technique countless years in the past.

“Mountains Crumble!”

“Lands Collapse!”

Things weren’t over yet. The young man coughed up a mouthful of blood as the force of the will caused his body to wither rapidly. However, he didn’t hesitate to unleash even more divine abilities.

Everything shook and shattered as he used the shocking magical technique of Mountains Crumble, Lands Collapse.

“And finally… Dark Moon, Clear Skies!” The young man threw his head back and let out a piercing cry. His body instantly withered even more dramatically, until an intense aura of rot emanated out from him. The will inside of him erupted out with full force, merging with the magic, causing the image of a dark moon to appear on Meng Hao’s forehead.[1]

“Exterminate!” the young man roared.

BOOOOOOOOOMMM!

Meng Hao stood there, allowing the black wind and rain to batter him. Vicious figures pounced on him. The lands beneath his feet collapsed, and the surrounding mountains crumbled. The dark moon mark on his forehead seemed to be on the verge of ripping him to shreds.

After a long moment passed, and Meng Hao was able to fully experience the nature of all of the divine abilities and magical techniques, he took a deep breath and slowly looked up. His gaze fell upon the distant figure of the trembling young man, and his eyes shone with anticipation.

“First the light of the suns dispelled the darkness, then that old man manipulated the reflections in the well. And now this six-faceted divine ability…. All of this leaves me with nothing but respect for the ancient Transcendor from the Immortal God Continent!” With that, Meng Hao waved his sleeve. The young man laughed bitterly as his body was destroyed. However, to Meng Hao, he was nothing more than a clump of qi and blood. He might have died, but that was nothing but a scattering of raw qi and blood.

By this point, Meng Hao had his answer regarding the mysteries of this place. What he needed now was to investigate the eight soul strands that were different from the others.

He looked around at the various buildings and cities which made up the Immortal God Continent, and then took a step forward.

The architecture here was different than in the Mountain and Sea Realm. Somehow, it was more refined and graceful.

Soon, Meng Hao appeared in the air above the Wang Clan. He looked down at the spell formation, and could tell that it was almost completely activated. It wouldn’t be long before all of the members of the Wang Clan were able to leave this place.

As he examined the various members of the Wang Clan, his gaze eventually came to rest on someone off to the side.

It was a skinny old man, sitting there cross-legged. Almost as soon as Meng Hao saw him, the man shivered and looked up into the sky.

The man had a somewhat lecherous look to him, and at the same time, Meng Hao could tell that he was very ancient.

The man’s face flickered, and after a moment, he looked back down. Meng Hao could tell that he was nervous.

Eventually, Meng Hao shifted his gaze to Wang Tengfei. Then, he turned to leave. When that happened, the skinny old man breathed a sigh of relief. Even now, he had a hard time believing that Meng Hao could have reached such a terrifying and unbelievable level.

After leaving the Wang Clan, Meng Hao went to find Dao-Heaven. Although Paragon Sea Dream had successfully implemented her plan from all those years ago, the final result was failure.

Dao-Heaven had become something like a rock thrown into a sea, which made little more than a splash upon entering. Paragon Sea Dream had taken the Immortal God Continent to be a real place, an actual world. Of course, it was anything but that. Because of this discrepancy, Dao-Heaven, even with his incredible latent talent, was a completely different type of person than everyone else.

He was different from everyone, and yet no one ever told him that.

Even so, he had made a great sacrifice for the Mountain and Sea Realm, and Meng Hao respected him for that. It took only a moment for him to be standing directly in front of Dao-Heaven, whereupon he reached out and touched his forehead.

Dao-Heaven blinked subconsciously, and when he saw Meng Hao standing in front of him, his jaw dropped. He began to shiver, and then clenched his teeth as Meng Hao's divine sense poured into him. The black mist was driven out, and his body withered rapidly. Afterward, he struggled to his feet, and although he was very weak, his eyes shone with bright light.

"You came…. I knew that you would.

"I've been here for two thousand years, and during that time, I learned of a secret. The Immortal God Continent is a very bizarre place. Everyone here… seems to be living under a unique set of natural laws.

"I suspect… that they're all Outsiders, and not cultivators!" The effort it took Dao-Heaven to explain his suspicions resulted in him coughing up a mouthful of blood. Then he collapsed into unconsciousness.

Meng Hao looked at him. It was hard to even imagine the trials Dao-Heaven had experienced over the past centuries. Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed to him, then waved his sleeve, sending him directly into the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“You’re right, this is a very bizarre place,” he murmured. “And you’re right, the people here… really are Outsiders, not cultivators.” With that, he turned and vanished. Upon reappearing, he was in one of the eight unique locations he had noticed earlier.

There, he saw eight people who, despite being formed of mere qi and blood, were devoid of black mist. It was a very strange situation, and Meng Hao had his speculations about what was going on. The first place he went to was a palace in the capital city of one of the mortal worlds.

Everything was quiet there. A burly man lounged on the stairs leading up into the palace. He wore fine garments, and looked like a prince. He was currently sipping alcohol from a flagon, which he put down next to him when he saw Meng Hao approaching.

The man looked directly at Meng Hao and smiled. “I bet you think it’s pretty strange that I don’t have any of those damned soul strands from the will of the Vast Expanse in me?”

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1. All of these different magics form a complete verse (or maybe two) that was one of Wang Lin’s powerful divine abilities

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# Chapter 1572: The Devil Cometh!

The Immortal God Continent continued to shake under the barrage of the Vast Expanse School cultivators. The sky was aflame, and the lands were crumbling. Crevices snaked out across the lands, as though dragons were burrowing through the ground. Mountains crumbled and fell.

It was like the end of days.

And yet, the people of the Immortal God Continent didn’t seem to care. Although they were fighting back, they seemed numb to what was happening, as if they didn’t even have emotions.

If Meng Hao dropped his cultivation base back down to the 9-Essences level, he would be seeing something very different. The cultivators who right now seemed to be numb and emotionless would instead seem to be wracked with emotion and pain.

Meng Hao retracted his divine sense and looked at the burly man in the princely robes, sitting there in the kingdom of mortals. He walked up and sat down in front of him.

Nodding, he said, “You’re right, it is pretty strange.”

The burly man smiled and took a long drink of alcohol. His eyes seemed to be flickering with memories of the past. “This land mass had a different name in the past. It was called… the Immortal-Astral Continent. 1

“Considering the level of your cultivation base, you’ve probably already picked up on the clues. The reason that I have none of those damned soul strands from the will of the Vast Expanse is… because that will can’t find any traces of my existence.

“Because of that, it doesn’t matter that it has disturbed the flow of time, creating something from nothing to bring back all these cultivators from the depths of its memory. It still can’t do anything to me. I and the others like me chose to leave some divine sense behind because we just couldn’t bear to part with this place.” He tossed the flagon of alcohol off to the side and rose to his feet. As he did, a powerful energy began to rise up within him.

It transformed into a tempest which swept out in all directions. Of course, even though Meng Hao was standing right in front of the man, that tempest didn’t so much as lift a single hair on his head.

At the same time, seven other tempests rose up in different locations on the land mass. Colors flashed in the sky above, and everything trembled.

Meng Hao’s divine sense swept out to observe the other tempests. Including the burly man in front of him, there were eight in total. Some were men, others were women. All of them began to rise up into the air, wistful expressions on their faces. Clearly, they didn’t wish to part with this place that they loved.

“This land mass was destroyed once in the past. Many people died…. Those who survived left this starry sky of the Vast Expanse. What remained behind… was not real.

“As for us, we’ve been waiting for someone to come along and wipe this place clean. To erase that which is holding our memories here.

“Thank you. I have the feeling that we might have a chance to meet again one day. Before leaving, allow me to offer you a little gift. Perhaps it can lead to a bit less slaughter, and a bit less death.” The burly man looked deeply at Meng Hao for a moment, then turned and rose up into the sky, to be joined by the seven other figures. The eight of them flew up to the highest height of the sky, where their bodies began to twist and distort, transforming into a vortex. At the same time, the spell formation surrounding the members of the Wang Clan was completely activated. The Wang Clan vanished into the vortex. Apparently, those eight people were taking the Wang Clan with them to wherever they were going.

As the vortex faded, the qi and blood which had made up the bodies of the eight individuals spread out, transforming into a huge sea. That sea of blood then began to fall down onto the land mass below.

As the rain of blood splashed down, the cultivators of the Immortal God Continent began to scream as their bodies melted. At the same time, the buildings which filled the lands suddenly began to rot, as if they were visibly aging.

All lives were melted by the rain of blood, which flowed about, filling the Immortal God Continent. It only took a few breaths' worth of time before everything was silent.

It all happened completely without warning. The cultivators in the Vast Expanse School army were in the middle of fighting when suddenly their enemies all melted into blood which flowed out into the lands below.

Meng Hao stood there watching it all happen. He watched as boundless amounts of black mist emerged from the dead and poured into the nine statues that dotted the landscape.

Soon, the statues were all pitch black, and emitted cracking noises. Then they began to crumble. As each one fell to pieces, the remaining statues grew even more deeply black in color.

Eventually, eight of the statues had crumbled into rubble, and the central statue, the most shocking of them all, was completely pitch black. A moment later, black mist exploded out, completely filling the starry sky.

A shocking will also emerged from within the statue.

The statue changed. It no longer looked fierce, and its features were no longer easily distinguishable. It was not the Transcendor from ancient times. It was merely an embodiment sent by the will of Allheaven.

It was in that exact same moment that the statue's eyes opened. Everything began to shake, and the black mists roiled as a shocking aura erupted out.

Suddenly, countless vicious heads appeared within the mists, which smiled evilly as they began to charge toward the cultivators from the Vast Expanse School. Meng Hao instantly took a step forward, placing him directly in front of the huge statue. There, he extended his right hand and then waved his sleeve, sending a burst of Transcendent power out. That changed natural law, becoming a power of extermination that instantly dispersed the vicious heads, which vanished, screaming the entire time.

At this point, the starry sky off in the distance began to distort and ripple as a huge, majestic land mass appeared. It was none other than… the Devil Realm Continent.

“I’ll handle things here,” Meng Hao said coolly. The Sect Leader took a deep breath as he looked out over the carnage on the surrounding land mass. Eyeing the black mist and the statue, he nodded and then backed up.

Soon, the army of the Vast Expanse School was advancing toward the countless cultivators of the Devil Realm Continent.

The slaughter wasn’t over yet. The opponent had changed, but the fighting went on like before, just on a different battlefield.

Back on the Immortal God Continent, Meng Hao stood in front of the statue, which stared down at him, eyes glowing with blackness. Suddenly, the statue took a step forward. Its hand, which had been clasped behind its back, suddenly shot out, its finger extended.

Instantly, the surrounding black mist began to surge toward the finger.

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1. As you can probably guess, the Immortal-Astral Continent appears in Renegade Immortal. As far as all the details relating to it, you’ll have to pick them up when you read RI!

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# Chapter 1573: Testing

The statue's finger apparently possessed an astonishing gravitational force, which transformed into a black hole. All of the surrounding mist was affected. It became like a funnel which was sucked into the tip of the finger. The finger then shot toward Meng Hao with incredible speed.

All of this takes quite a bit of time to describe, but from the moment the statue lifted its hand until it absorbed the mist, only an instant passed.

The lands quaked, and buildings collapsed. Crevices spread out across the entire land mass. That statue's one finger was converging all of the power of the Immortal God Continent into a single attack aimed at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever as he looked at the finger, which rapidly filled his entire field of view. At the same time, he reached out with his own finger.

“Allheaven, you've tested me in the past, and now here you are doing the same thing again, huh?” Even as his voice echoed out, his finger made contact with the statue's finger.

They seemed impossible to even compare. When it came to size, Meng Hao was like an ant compared to the statue. And yet, when their fingers collided, the only thing that happened to Meng Hao was that his hair lifted up a bit, and his clothes rustled. The statue, on the other hand, began to shake. The finger exploded, transforming into nothing more than drifting ash.

The effect spread, engulfing the hand, then the arm. Rumbling sounds echoed out as the torso was destroyed, then the head, then the other arm. The entire statue was completely eradicated!

Shocking booms rang out that caused everything to shake. Meng Hao’s single finger had transformed the entire powerful statue into ash!

“This is the third time you’ve tested me out,” he said. “You want to see how I fight, and use that to try to come up with a way to kill me. You want to analyze… my Seal the Heavens Hex. Don’t you?” Even as the ash from the statue drifted out, Meng Hao turned, clenched his hand into a fist, and punched down toward the ground in front of him.

Almost as soon as the fist began to descend, the ground rippled. Some areas rose up, others dropped down. Shockingly, the image of a face was revealed.

The face opened its mouth and roared, and yet that didn’t stop Meng Hao’s fist from slamming into it.

A huge boom echoed out as the face was completely destroyed. At the same time, cracking sounds could be heard from other locations on the Immortal God Continent. The ground collapsed, but then began to form back together. Unexpectedly, the entire land mass reformed into the shape of a giant.

The ground became the head, arms and legs, with the mountain ranges as the blood vessels. The rivers became the blood, while the sun and moon turned into eyes. The oceans were the mouth. The indescribably large giant looked over at Meng Hao and then let out a terrifying roar.

That roar became a tempest that could shake Heaven and Earth, causing Meng Hao’s hair to whip wildly, and his clothes to flap. There was no sky and no land anymore; there was only the starry sky.

Gasps arose from the cultivators of the Vast Expanse School, who were just now engaging the forces of the Devil Realm Continent. Even the Sect Leader and the others, as well as the old lizard, were all completely astonished at the sight of the Immortal God Continent transforming into a giant.

Meng Hao was so small compared to that giant that he was like nothing more than a speck of dust.

The giant hovered there in the starry sky, looking down at Meng Hao with shining eyes. Meng Hao frowned.

“Still testing me out, huh? Fine. Go ahead and test away!” With that, he made a grasping gesture, which immediately caused the starry sky around him to shatter and transform into a majestic stream. Apparently, this stream didn’t exist; it was as if Meng Hao had extracted it from ancient times and pulled it into the present.

Not even a 9-Essences expert could do such a thing. But to Meng Hao, all it took was a mere motion of his hand. To Transcendent cultivators, Time, Heaven, Earth, and even the starry sky were all objects that could be manipulated at will.

The starry river became a whip, like a dragon which he used to lash at the giant. The giant roared, throwing his hands out and unleashing the power of the starry sky.

The river collapsed, but the giant was forced back. Cracking sounds emanated out from it, and countless crevices were torn open across the surface of its skin. Eyes glowing, the giant extended his right hand and performed an incantation gesture, causing the void around Meng Hao to begin to crumble.

A sea of flames erupted out, a black wind surged, seawater raged, and an enormous, shocking tree appeared.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he looked around at the destructive power surrounding him. He lifted his right hand into the air and made a clutching motion, instantly causing a vortex to spring up. All of the destructive power around him then began to twist and distort as it shot toward his hand, where it formed together into a bright, scintillating sphere.

Meng Hao then clenched his hand into a fist, and the sphere shattered, sending motes of light floating out in all directions.

“Those are the only divine abilities you have?” he asked, looking up. Then, he transformed into a colorful beam of light that shot toward the giant’s face, where he reached out to touch its forehead.

“Break!” he said coolly. A single word.

Instantly, the giant that was the Immortal God Continent began to tremble. Cracks spread out all over it, becoming more and more dense until the giant collapsed into rubble.

As the rubble rained down, a cold snort echoed out through the starry sky, causing the rubble to form together into the shape of a vicious dragon, matchlessly large, which opened its mouth wide as if to swallow Meng Hao.

Meng Hao waved his sleeve and then extended his left hand toward the lunging dragon, palm spread wide.

“Seal!” he said. Again, a single word. Instantly, the vicious dragon stopped in place, trembling. A moment later, it turned completely gray. In the blink of an eye, its life force was destroyed, and it transformed into nothing more than a statue of a dragon.

It looked just as vicious as before, and it hovered there in front of Meng Hao, completely unmoving, like a corpse.

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# Chapter 1574: Qualified to Explore the Universe!

When the cultivator army from the Vast Expanse School saw what was happening, they gasped, and excitement grew. The old lizard’s eyes went wide from the thought of how Meng Hao’s power seemed to be completely limitless.

“This is Transcendence? It’s… omnipotence!” The Sect Leader’s eyes burned with hope. Jin Yunshan was panting.

Meng Hao looked down at the vicious dragon, and his eyes glimmered with profound light. Then he turned toward the Devil Realm Continent.

The cultivators from that continent were already fighting with the forces from the Vast Expanse School. To Meng Hao, it looked almost exactly the same as what had occurred with the Immortal God Continent.

He sent his divine sense out, and soon noticed one particular clan. It was… the Li Clan, the remnants of those who weren’t able to self-detonate in the Mountain and Sea War.

Like the Wang Clan, they were not participating in the fighting. They had sealed themselves away, and all of their cultivators sat there silently. One of the people present there wasn’t a member of the Li Clan. It was Yuwen Jian, Echelon cultivator from the Seventh Mountain and Sea, who had been sent to infiltrate one of the two great powers, just like Dao-Heaven had.

The Devil Realm Continent had no statues, only an enormous coffin. Furthermore, there were no cultivators present who lacked the soul strands of the will of the Vast Expanse.

Although the entire land mass seemed to be a flourishing place, that was only a façade to mask the decay and rot which was its true nature.

Just when Meng Hao was about to retract his divine sense, his eyes went wide as he noticed someone in particular who was sitting cross-legged next to the huge coffin.

Meng Hao recognized the man.

“Choumen Tai,” he said softly. He took a step forward, vanishing, to reappear next to the coffin in front of Choumen Tai.

Choumen Tai looked much, much older than he had before, and he didn’t seem to be surprised to see Meng Hao. In fact, when he looked up, his eyes focused, and a smile broke out on his face. “You came….”

Meng Hao looked at Choumen Tai, eyes flickering with various memories. Finally, he nodded. “The person you are waiting for, your Master, was the Transcendor from the Devil Realm Continent?”

“Actually, around the time the Mountain and Sea Realm was destroyed, the spell formation fully activated. My Master returned at that time. The person I’ve been waiting for since then is you.” Smiling, Choumen Tai rose to his feet and reached out to touch the coffin.

Rumbling sounds could be heard, and the coffin began to vibrate. In front of Meng Hao’s very eyes, it gradually withered up and transformed into ash. Soon, the spot previously occupied by the coffin was nothing more than an empty space.

The ash spread out, filling the entire land mass, and then slowly settling down onto the continent.

Everywhere, the land began to change, transforming into the color of blood. However, it wasn’t the crimson red of fresh blood, but the dark purple of decaying rot. What was happening, of course, was that the true color of the lands was now being revealed.

Without the power that had previously been disguising it, mountains became nothing but barren mounds. Plants became withered stumps, and numerous buildings became crumbled ruins.

Rivers turned into dusty gulches. The seas became empty basins, and countless life forms melted into blackened blood. The rot and decay which were the true base of everything in the continent was now revealed.

The Devil Realm Continent seemed to pass through time. It was as if a veil had been ripped away, revealing something from countless years in the past.

Choumen Tai looked back at Meng Hao. “The reason I stayed behind was to pass a message on to you from my Master. There are two things I need to tell you.

“The first thing,” he said softly, “is that the destruction of the Mountain and Sea Realm had nothing to do with the real Devil Realm or Immortal God Continent!

“Both of them suffered calamity long, long ago. Most of the cultivators died at that time, and those who survived escaped with my Master. They left the starry sky of the Vast Expanse and traveled far away into the Universe.

“Everything you see here is the will of the starry sky of the Vast Expanse. It was all created from nothing. The corpses were animated and filled with memories extracted from within the stream of Time.

“Anyone born inside of this starry sky will be remembered by the will of the Vast Expanse, and their memories can be used to re-create a new version of that person.

“In fact, everyone here on this land mass is unaware of what they really are. They think that they exist, but the truth is that they are either corpses, or the manifestations of memories.

“In fact, I used to be one of them myself. That was why I never gave up on trying to resurrect my Master. It wasn’t until the Mountain and Sea Realm was destroyed that I finally understood everything.”

None of this was a surprise to Meng Hao. In fact, from the moment he laid eyes on the five pillars outside the Vast Expanse, he had begun to speculate regarding the truth.

That was why the Devil and the God had destroyed two of Allheaven’s fingers, then left the Vast Expanse behind to go explore the Universe they had come to behold upon Transcending.

That Universe was filled with unending seeds, each one of which was a world unto itself, with its own starry sky.

Choumen Tai took a deep breath and said, “Therefore, if you wish to prevent the Mountain and Sea Realm from being destroyed again, you have to eradicate Allheaven!

“This is the second part of the message.

“The true Allheaven exists outside the Vast Expanse. You will only have one chance to destroy him, if that is what you wish! The Ghost tried. My Master tried. And later, the God tried. However, none of them were a match for Allheaven. The most they were able to do was destroy one of his fingers, after which they were forced to leave.

“First was the Ghost, then the Devil, then the God. With each encounter, Allheaven grew weaker. However, despite being weakened to such an extent, he was still too powerful to be destroyed by a Transcendent cultivator. The only way to destroy him… was to weaken him to the absolute level, and then send another Transcendor against him!

“You are the last hope there is to destroy Allheaven!

“When Allheaven is at his weakest, you will have one chance to eradicate him. If you fail, then you will become like my Master, or the other two Transcendors. Your true self will no longer qualify to remain within this starry sky, and you will be expelled. You might be able to leave a clone behind, but that clone would never be able to eradicate Allheaven. It wouldn’t qualify.”

“Who sets those qualifications?” Meng Hao asked, eyes glittering.

“The ultimate magical law, which exists above the Ancestor Realm. The natural law of the Universe itself!”

“Do you know how Allheaven came to be?” The longer they conversed, the brighter Meng Hao’s eyes glowed, until they were like burning suns that left even Choumen Tai trembling. “If so, please explain.”

With that, he clasped hands and bowed to Choumen Tai.

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# Chapter 1575: Battling the Devil Continent!

“It’s hard to say for sure,” Choumen Tai said softly, his eyes flickering with reminiscence. “There is an eighty percent chance that he’s from somewhere else in the Universe, from some world that even I have never heard of….

“Actually, my Master speculates that the will of our starry sky wasn’t originally that of Allheaven!

“My master, along with the God and the Ghost, are now unable to remain inside the starry sky of the Vast Expanse with their true forms. In fact, their connections to this place have been almost completely severed. Now they roam the eternally boundless Universe, where they walk the path of that which exists beyond Transcendence.

“As for you… you are also destined to walk that path. They… are waiting for you out in the Universe.”

Choumen Tai’s body gradually began to fade, transforming into a huge, rumbling vortex that sucked the Li Clan into it before vanishing.

The starry sky rumbled as a huge rift was torn open into it. Then the Devil Realm Continent went silent. The only things that remained behind were the faint echoes of Choumen Tai’s parting words.

In the silence that reigned after Choumen Tai’s departure, the forces from the Vast Expanse School looked around in shock at the decay around them. They had their various speculations about what exactly was happening, but they did nothing. One by one, they began to look over at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao closed his eyes for a moment, then opened them. They were profound and deep, to the extent that no one would ever be able to tell what he was thinking. He looked around at the ruins of the Devil Realm, then sighed.

“It’s over,” he said softly. “My hatred for the Immortal God and Devil Realm Continents has come to an end. The hatred which festered for countless years is now resolved.” As of this moment, Meng Hao realized that his hatred for the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm wasn’t even as intense as his hatred toward the 33 Heavens.

He had walked a path of slaughter and confusion, and as of this moment, despite having Transcended, his heart was exhausted.

“My enmity with the Immortal God and the Devil Realm has come to an end, but the true battle has yet to be fought!” His eyes flickered as he looked up at the starry sky. Within his divine sense, he had long since come to detect that out there in the starry sky, there were countless figures speeding in his direction.

Those were countless living beings of all sorts, heading in his direction under the control of the will of the Vast Expanse.

He knew full well that he and the will of the Vast Expanse had reached a point where only one would come out alive. The other would die.

Even as he looked out into the starry sky, the Devil Realm Continent began to shake. Just like the Immortal God Continent, it began to transform into a huge giant that radiated the aura of the will of the Vast Expanse.

Everything here had been defiled. This land mass was not the true Devil Realm; it was merely a doppelgänger made from the will of the Vast Expanse.

Intense rumbling shook Heaven and Earth as the Devil Realm Continent transformed into a giant. The mountain peaks became spikes that protruded from its skin. The mountain ranges became blood vessels, as did the rivers and the seas. Lands shook, and mountains were rocked.

Intense rumbling could be heard as a face appeared. Two of the land mass’s seas sank down into pitch black holes that were like eyes.

Then, those eyes opened.

A huge arm appeared, and its hand clenched into a fist which rumbled toward Meng Hao.

If that were all there were to it, it might not much to be concerned about, but it was at this point that, off in the distance, countless beams of light appeared. They came from all directions, seemingly endless, charging forward in a murderous attack.

The entities within those beams of light were all very bizarre. The only similarity between all of them was that they were life forms from the starry sky of the Vast Expanse. They had been born here, and thus, had no choice but to heed the commands of the will of the Vast Expanse.

If the starry sky of the Vast Expanse wanted them to attack and exterminate Meng Hao and everything around him, then they wouldn’t hesitate at all to accomplish that mission.

Rumbling could be heard as they got closer and closer. The old lizard roared as it went on the offensive. Behind the gigantic lizard was the head, then the cultivators of the Vast Expanse School. After all the fighting they had just gone through, their killing intent was no less, and they didn’t hesitate to charge towards the host of entities. Instantly, fierce battles broke out.

Meng Hao looked around at everything, at the host of living beings, and the giant’s fist, and he began to laugh.

“The Vast Expanse and I cannot exist together. Therefore, I will… topple the Vast Expanse!

“Without destruction, there cannot be creation. Allheaven, if you can become the will of the starry sky, then you can also be replaced. Neither the Ghost, the Devil nor the God succeeded in that. But this time… I will!” Meng Hao’s eyes were glowing as brightly as suns. The incoming horde of living creatures was completely shocked by the sight of it, and yet there was a voice in their minds urging them on, telling them to pay any price to unleash slaughter.

The entire starry sky was soon shaking. Meng Hao turned, clenching his hand into a fist to meet the incoming fist of the Devil Realm giant.

He was like a bug compared to the giant, completely insignificant. When their fists met, a massive boom echoed out. Meng Hao’s hair rose up a bit, and he shivered slightly. However, the Devil Realm Continent giant immediately began to shake, and then began to fall apart.

Before it could retreat, Meng Hao took a step forward, placing himself at the giant’s abdomen, where he stamped his foot down. Cracks spread out like a spiderweb, whereupon he took a second step, right above the giant’s dantian. Another massive boom echoed out. Then Meng Hao took a third step, a fourth step, and a fifth step….

With every step he took, he stamped his foot down onto the giant’s body. By the time he reached the giant’s chest, he was on his fifth step. The giant was shaking visibly, swaying back and forth, seemingly incapable of holding itself together. It was at that point that Meng Hao took his sixth step.

That step placed him onto the giant’s forehead!

Cracking sounds echoed out, and more rifts snaked out, spreading from the forehead out across the giant’s entire body. The giant roared as if it were about to fight back, but then Meng Hao snorted coldly and took his final step… the seventh step.

That step put him on the crown of the giant’s head!

One final step crushed anything and everything!

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IMPORTANT NOTE: The grand finale contest is coming in about two weeks. In order to participate you MUST register for an account to comment on prior to the contest (wordpress is fine). I'm not sure what the exact cutoff date will be, perhaps 5-7 days before the contest starts. Make sure to register for a username and password ahead of time, otherwise you might miss out!

Since there will be a short break, I would like to highly recommend a book for all of you to read. It's not crazy long like a Chinese web novel. It's Unsouled by Will Wight, and you could probably read the whole book in the time I'm taking off. I heard a while back that an established indie fantasy author had written a xianxia-style book, and had to check it out. I got in touch with the author, and he was kind enough to send me an e-book version, and I have to say, it's definitely worth reading.

Instead of writing a full review of the book, I'll mention quickly what I liked and didn't like. What I liked was the excellent writing, as well as the intriguing universe he built. The action flows great, the descriptions are awesome, and he clearly put a lot of thought into the story.

Another thing I didn't like, and in fact the main thing that stuck out to me, was that despite the xianxia-esque setting and the names of everything being "Asian," the characters and the society they live in were not Chinese at all. You could change their names to Western names, and the story could have taken place in your standard fantasy setting. I've seen this kind of thing before in which Western authors try to make kung fu, wuxia, or xianxia settings more "realistic" by "fixing" the things that seem odd to the Western audience. Unfortunately, that tends to make things not authentic at all, especially to someone who understands the culture. Believe it or not, many of the oddities you laugh at in Chinese web novels are actually founded in reality. I did this same thing back when I was an aspiring writer and had just started to get interested in Chinese culture.

However, that aspect is actually a positive in some ways. Do you have any friends or family who you've been trying to convince to read translations on , but they just can't "get into it"? This would be the perfect novel to read as an introduction, to hook them into some of the themes and concepts that readers of Chinese novel translations are already used to. I also have to point out that the universe of Unsouled is not supposed to be ancient China, so it all works out fine in the end as long as you aren’t expecting an authentic “Chinese experience.”

Check out Unsouled here!

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# Chapter 1576: All Beings Acknowledge Allegiance!

Seven God Steps.

It was a magical technique that could build up explosive power, and actually originated in the Devil Realm Continent. Now, Meng Hao was fueling it with the power of Transcendence, causing it to reach a terrifying and virtually indescribable level.

In this case, describing it as something which could crush and destroy Heaven and Earth was no exaggeration. As of this moment, that was literally what Meng Hao was doing!

BOOOOOOOOOMMM!

As that seventh step landed, the giant that was the Devil Realm Continent, the doppelgänger of the will of Allheaven, shuddered violently. Then its head shattered, transforming into countless chunks of rubble that burst out in all directions.

Next was its neck, its torso, its arms, and its legs…. Massive rumbling echoed out as this giant, which could cause even 9-Essences experts to tremble, exploded, sending a shockwave blasting out into the starry sky.

“Come out and fight, Allheaven!” Meng Hao said, swishing his sleeve and causing a huge tempest to rise up.

His words weren’t spoken very loudly, and yet they contained a majestic natural law, transforming them into a shockwave that swept out with incredible power. All of the attacking life forms who were swept over by that shockwave instantly coughed up blood and then were shredded away into nothing.

The entire starry sky shook, and countless heavenly bodies trembled. Land masses were shattered, and asteroids became dust. Arcane Pocket Realms, vortexes, and worlds all trembled beneath the sound of Meng Hao’s voice.

As of that moment, Meng Hao was truly the most powerful entity within the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, and he was issuing a challenge to the will of that starry sky. To… Allheaven!

However, the will of the starry sky didn’t seem inclined to respond to Meng Hao at all. The response to his words came from the surrounding living beings, within whose mind a cold voice suddenly spoke.

Kill! Kill them all! Spare no cost!

Stain the starry sky red with blood! Even if nothing living remains, you must kill!

To Allheaven, none of the living creatures within the starry sky of the Vast Expanse were important. The only important thing was the threat that Meng Hao posed. Allheaven had no choice but to respond, and had no choice but to feel incredible fear and terror. Before the face-to-face battle occurred, if the deaths of the living creatures in the Vast Expanse could expose a flaw in Meng Hao, then it would all be worth it. Allheaven wanted to observe Meng Hao’s Essence, wanted to understand Meng Hao’s Dao, wanted to memorize his magics. Allheaven wanted to understand Meng Hao, and thus, be more confident in being able to fight him directly!

The sounds of intense fighting instantly rose up as the countless incoming living beings attacked with red-eyed madness. The cultivators from the Vast Expanse School couldn’t possibly hold their own against such an overwhelming force, and were slowly being pushed back. The enemy forces… were simply too numerous.

There were so many that it was virtually impossible to describe. It was as if all life forms in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse were on the warpath.

There were numerous Paragons. 9-Essences experts could be seen. All of them were fighting like mad, ignoring any injury to themselves, even resorting to self-detonation.

Meng Hao looked at what was happening and then closed his eyes. However, that only lasted for one short breath of time. Then his eyes opened again, and they shone with merciless coldness. He took a step forward, and suddenly appeared on the western side of the battlefield. All of the living beings there who saw him descending began to tremble from within the depths of their hearts.

“I call upon the power of my name to seal the life forces of all beings in this area!” With that, he extended his right hand and then pushed it down. Something like infinite howling could be heard. Natural laws were forcibly altered, and magical laws were stripped away. All of the living beings began to tremble as their cultivation bases and life forces were altered by the changes to the natural and magical laws. Their cultivation bases began to crumble, and their life forces went dim. In the blink of an eye, countless beings were transformed into corpses.

Innumerable bodies floated in the starry sky, with Meng Hao being the only living person. As he hovered there, mixed emotions could be seen on his face, and yet there was no regret visible as he looked coldly at the groups of living beings in the other three directions.

Gasps rang out, but the will of the Vast Expanse urged them on with even more intensity than before. However, considering they were facing Meng Hao, an entity of unimaginable, inconceivable power, they almost couldn’t muster the energy to move, and their minds were overwhelmed with dread.

“Only those who kowtow to me and call upon my name, those who acknowledge allegiance to me, will be able to continue existing within this starry sky.

“Those who resist will die along with Allheaven.” The sight of him hovering there surrounded by countless corpses caused his words to seem even more thunderous than before.

Even as the feeling of awe filled the living beings, the will of Allheaven crushed down on them with even more intense power. It was like a howling roar that caused all of the living beings to tremble. Their eyes were bloodshot as they once again began to fight. At the same time, more creatures appeared off in the distance.

Frowning, Meng Hao let out a cold harrumph. His eyes flickered with killing intent as he took another step forward. At the same time, he spoke, his voice as cold as ice.

“I hereby deprive you of your right to practice cultivation, and also extinguish the flame of your life forces.” As soon as the words left his mouth, the void trembled and began to collapse. Blood sprayed out of the mouths of the surrounding Outsiders as the properties within their blood that allowed them to practice cultivation suddenly melted.

The flames of their life force were also extinguished. More blood sprayed about in all directions, and soon, nothing was left behind but swathes of corpses.

Meng Hao hovered there, looking around at the living creatures of the Vast Expanse. He said nothing, choosing only to raise his right hand. From the look of it, all he had to do was lower that hand, and all of the surrounding beings would be wiped out of existence.

That was the incredible level of power that was Transcendence. All of the various beings present collapsed mentally. They were shaking, petrified, and despite the lashings of the will of Allheaven, they couldn’t forget the terrifying things they had just witnessed. That in itself caused the will of Allheaven to begin to crumble.

It was impossible to say who did it first, but one by one, the various living beings of the Vast Expanse dropped to their knees, their minds blank, their hearts in complete chaos.

“I acknowledge allegiance….”

“I acknowledge allegiance!”

“We acknowledge allegiance….” Countless voices echoed out from near and far, even from those beings far off in the distance.

All beings were acknowledging allegiance!

Meng Hao hovered there in the starry sky, looking off into the distance, his eyes radiating killing intent.

“Allheaven, show your damned face right now!” he roared.

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# Chapter 1577: Severing the Root of the Bloodline!

All beings acknowledged allegiance. All life forms in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse were kowtowing to Meng Hao, bearing witness to the fact that he was truly in a position to challenge the will of Allheaven to battle.

The cultivators of the Vast Expanse School were also kowtowing, their hearts filled with intense emotions regarding Meng Hao. The Sect Leader and the others had the same feeling.

“The Heavens… are going to change….” The Sect Leader thought, gasping, his eyes shining with brilliant light.

As of this point, a cold snort suddenly echoed out to fill the starry sky of the Vast Expanse. It seemed to come from everywhere, from every living thing, from every planet, from every land mass, from every vortex, from every particle of dust.

In concert with the voice, the natural and magical laws of the starry sky twisted and distorted. In the blink of an eye, light began to swirl from all directions, and began to form together in front of Meng Hao into the shape of a person!

It was enormous. It was as if the starry sky itself were its body, the planets its eyes, the worlds its bones. It was a vague image at first, but the mere sight of it was shocking to the extreme, and caused incredible pressure to crush down onto all cultivators.

However, the figure then began to shrink down rapidly, and at the same time, the pressure increased. Every cultivator coughed up blood, and shook visibly. Meng Hao’s hair was whipping around his head, and his clothes were flapping. Soon the figure in front of him was only 30,000 meters tall, and then only 30 meters. As it continued to shrink, its features grew clearer.

It was… a young man!

He wore a long robe decorated with a starry sky. He had long hair which floated around him, and sharply angled eyebrows. He was handsome to an extreme degree, and from the aura which emanated out from him, he seemed to be the lord of all existence.

Under his gaze, all living things would prostrate themselves, and not dare to even lift their heads.

And yet, when Meng Hao looked at this young man, he could detect a very faint… aura of death!

This person was none other than Allheaven!

Of course, he was not Allheaven’s true form, he was a clone. Allheaven’s true form was incapable of actually entering the Vast Expanse. He existed outside the Vast Expanse. And yet, this clone of Allheaven was very close to his true form in terms of power. This was perhaps his most powerful manifestation, something which could never be completely separated from his true form.

He had never intended to appear in such a way so soon. He had tried all the methods at his disposal, and yet had been unable to do anything about Meng Hao. Thus, he appeared personally. The time had come for him to begin the ultimate battle with Meng Hao.

The best outcome would be to win this fight. However, even if he lost… the information learned would be of extreme benefit to his true form. Even if his true form ended up weakening further later on, it still might give him what he needed to eke out a victory.

“You should never have reached this state,” said Allheaven’s clone, his expression cold and filled with something extremely ancient.

Meng Hao looked at the young man, his eyes shining with a profound light as he said, “I never came after you looking for a fight. You plotted and schemed against me constantly. Now, I have Transcended. There’s no need to push this into a battle of life or death. I might be able to ignore your true form outside the Vast Expanse, Allheaven. However, inside the Vast Expanse, I don’t need any other Heavens above my head!”

“The only reason you exist is so that I can live,” the clone said, shaking his head. “Even if you didn’t come looking for me, I would have come looking for you. What has happened between the two of us was foreordained…. And only one of us can survive. Either you replace me, or I consume you!”

Allheaven’s eyes glittered with killing intent, and yet deeper inside was a profound loneliness that seemed to contain countless memories. “Things shouldn’t have turned out this way. You should never have reached this state. You… were supposed to be nothing more than fuel to drive my rebirth.” With a sigh, he lifted his right hand and pointed at Meng Hao.

“But since you insisted on climbing to this height, then I shall now bring order to all of this chaos!

“All true Demons who appear in this world cultivate based on my bloodline. Blood of Allheaven, inflict your punishment!” As soon as the words left the mouth of Allheaven’s clone, a tremor ran through Meng Hao, and all of the blood within his body began to boil out of control.

His veins, his bones, his flesh, all of it came from an Allheaven Clan. He was from an Allheaven bloodline, and was an Allheaven Immortal. Because of all of that, the simple wave of a finger caused all of those things to explode.

Countless drops of blood oozed out from his pores, instantly staining his clothing red. And yet, he continued to hover in place, completely unmoving.

“If you trace my bloodline back, it really does originate with you. But in the moment I reached Transcendence, what Transcended was not just my fleshly body, but also my soul, and… my blood.” By this point, the boiling of his blood had reached a fever pitch. At the same time, an enormous figure appeared behind him. It started out vague, but rapidly became clear, and soon it was obvious that it was an enormous image of Meng Hao.

He looked like a divine spirit hovering there in the starry sky. His body was covered with chains and shackles of all sorts, and yet in the same instant that he appeared, all of those bonds began to shudder, as if on the verge of shattering.

As the chains and shackles were destroyed, it was obvious that they were somehow connected to the clone of Allheaven.

“When my blood Transcended, I could tell that there was still a faint connection in there. I was waiting this whole time to face you in person, and then completely sever anything connecting me to you!”

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed with light as he lifted his right hand and then chopped it down in front of him.

That chopping motion caused the starry sky to become a sharp blade, glittering with the brilliant light of the Heavens as is it slashed down at the space between Meng Hao and Allheaven’s clone.

In that moment, the chains binding the enormous figure behind him began to tremble. Massive rumbling sounds echoed out as they began to shatter into fragments.

The figure behind Meng Hao stretched his arms out wide. Cracking sounds emanated out in all directions as the chains and shackles were destroyed. Then, the enormous figure began to grow larger than before, as if it had freed itself from some unknown restraints. This was true freedom!

Freedom and independence were the Dao of Meng Hao. As of this moment, he had now severed himself from any and all connections to Allheaven. As of this moment, his Dao was rising to the highest heights.

From this moment on, he was his own man; the origin of his blood was severed, buying him true freedom!

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Important explanation about Beseech the Devil and Renegade Immortal: I’ve been seeing a lot of comments with speculations about how the stories all tie together, and how that might give clues about the ending of I Shall Seal the Heavens. Although the three stories definitely have a lot of connections, the overall plot of each story stands alone. In other words, Allheaven does not appear in either BTD or RI. Those stories ARE NOT about the main characters severing the fingers of Allheaven.

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# Chapter 1578: Allheaven Transformation!

In that moment of severing, Meng Hao’s cultivation base advanced. Although he was still half a step into the Ancestor Realm, he made significant progress.

His hair whipped about, and his energy surged. He took a deep breath, and the entire starry sky of the Vast Expanse shook. The eyes of Allheaven’s clone went wide as he glared at Meng Hao.

“I am the will of the starry sky,” he said. “I am its soul. My words are natural law, and my thoughts are magical law!

“On this day, I lay down a new law. Wherever I stand, there shall be no safe place for this cultivator!”

As soon as the words left the clone’s mouth, the starry sky began to tremble. Rumbling like thunder could be heard, and rifts opened up above. Cracking sounds could be heard as the rifts spread out and joined together. Heaven-rending Earth-crushing power radiated out as… a new natural law appeared.

At the same time, the void around Meng Hao began to collapse, transforming into a huge black hole. It was as if this new natural law caused all existence to be unwilling to get near Meng Hao. According to this natural law, there was no safe place for Meng Hao in this starry sky!

The black hole was not a true black hole, but rather a manifestation of how the starry sky and the void itself would not permit Meng Hao to safely remain within them. As they retreated, a hole was left behind, something infinitely dark that connected to the area outside the Vast Expanse, to the Universe. If Meng Hao fell inside of it, he would eventually be driven completely away.

The battle had advanced beyond the use of divine abilities, and into the realm of fighting with natural law. It was a terrifying level of combat that exceeded the imaginations of most cultivators. It was a type of combat only for Transcendent cultivators.

At his current level Meng Hao could not create brand new natural laws with a single word. However, he could change them.

Eyes glittering brightly, he said, “My Dao is that of freedom and independence, of being unrestrained and unfettered. I do not wish to have Heavens looming over me that belong to someone else. My Dao is my Essence. Wherever I stand, I can call upon the Essence of my Dao to dispel and shatter natural and magical laws. Nobody can expel me from this place!” He flicked his sleeve, causing the power of his Dao Essence to rumble out, changing the natural and magical laws, which twisted and shattered.

Beneath him, the black hole vanished, causing everything to return to normal. Of course, only Allheaven was aware that in this battle of natural laws, the danger involved vastly exceeded anything that ordinary cultivators could comprehend.

Allheaven’s eyes flickered as he said, “I strip you of your control of the five elements, and create a new magical law!”

Meng Hao waved his sleeve. “The five elements exist within the Essence of my Dao. Wherever the light of my Dao shines, the five elements cannot be dispersed!”

Allheaven voice boomed like thunder as he said, “The light of the starry sky shall never shine upon you! I strip away your ability to see light!”

Suddenly, Meng Hao was surrounded by pitch black darkness. It was as if he couldn’t detect any light at all, as if he were fusing into the darkness, becoming a part of it.

Meng Hao snorted coldly. “I am a Transcendent cultivator, half a step into the Ancestor Realm. The light of the starry sky doesn’t deserve to touch me. You don’t need to strip it away, I hereby tell it to screw off!”

Moments ago, he had been physically fading away, but now he was as clear as day. Not only had he dispelled the light, he had dispelled and cast away the darkness too.

Allheaven’s face twisted with rage. Although he had the advantage in this battle of natural laws, and also had the initiative, he felt a sense of helplessness when facing Meng Hao. “Your soul is your flame, your Mountains and Seas your land. Henceforth, the Mountains and Seas are not permitted to exist, and your soul is not permitted to burn with life!”

“If I cease to exist, then the entire starry skies will go with me!” A look of disdain could be seen on Meng Hao as he faced these natural laws of Allheaven. At the same time, a domineering aura was radiating out from him.

“My words caused all living things to exist in this world. Now, my words will cause you to be killed in body and soul. How could you possibly survive?!” Allheaven began to walk forward, and every step he took caused the starry sky to tremble.

Meng Hao also started walking forward, and his steps likewise caused everything to shake. “You can destroy my body and disperse my cultivation base. But my soul and my Dao Essence will remain. If you, the will of this starry sky, are like a boundless sea, then I am like a mountain crag which stands eternally within those waters. No matter how your waves batter me, I will always remain!”

He fought back relentlessly against the invisible power of Allheaven. No matter how powerful the new natural laws were, he didn’t flinch from them, and in fact, crushed them underfoot.

Allheaven would create them, and Meng Hao would destroy them. Although Meng Hao actually wasn’t a full match for Allheaven, destroying natural laws was much easier than creating them.

The surrounding creatures of the Vast Expanse were falling back at top speed. The fight between Meng Hao and Allheaven was something they couldn’t participate in. They simply retreated, their minds reeling.

As for the Paragons, and the 9-Essences beings, they were completely and utterly shaken. They were trembling, and their eyes were wide as they tried their best to learn something from the battle of natural laws which was unfolding in front of their very eyes.

All of those people were a step away from Transcendence. And yet, that step was an enormous one to take successfully. But now, thanks to this battle which they were able to witness, they were receiving unheard-of benefits.

“Transcendence…. This is Transcendence!”

“In the Daosource Realm, you can actually create natural laws, and also destroy them!” The Sect Leader and the others couldn’t help but gasp as they paid rapt attention to what was happening.

Meng Hao had just severed his own bloodline to acquire true freedom and independence. Not even the natural laws being thrown against him did any good. The eyes of Allheaven’s clone glittered with cold light as he took another step, whereupon his energy surged to even higher levels.

A tempest sprang up which swept across the starry sky, causing everything to rumble. The clone’s eyes flickered with killing intent.

“Allheaven, First Transformation!”

As soon as the words left his mouth, he began to increase in size. Eight blobs of flesh sprouted from his shoulders, which began to split apart. Shockingly, they transformed into… eight heads.

Including the head he originally had, he now had a total of nine!

His body also began to change shape. It was no longer humanoid, but rather that of a snake, fully 3,000,000 meters long. His appearance could shake Heaven and Earth, and was indescribably ferocious.

All nine heads looked over at Meng Hao, and then roared, unleashing an incredible sound wave which even shifted the locations of the heavenly bodies it passed by, and shoved the nearby cultivators back.

It was a power that was second to none!

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# Chapter 1579: Emperor Dragon Transformation!

Among those nine heads were men and women, old and young, people and beasts. Their roar caused Meng Hao’s pupils to constrict. For some reason, something seemed very wrong about Allheaven as of this moment.

Shockingly, faces could be seen on all of the scales of his snake body, making him seem utterly and thoroughly terrifying.

The blast of wind caused by the roar of the nine heads was something that only 9-Essences experts could endure without being knocked unconscious. This nine-headed serpent was an entity that virtually no one recognized, and yet it filled them all with terror.

In contrast to everyone else… old lizard let out a cry of disbelief at the sight of those nine heads. All of the scales on its body stood on end.

“The Nine-Head Tribe!” cried the lizard. “It’s from the Nine-Head Tribe!!

“They were destroyed years ago in a previous epoch. According to the legends, they were one of the most powerful of the beast tribes back when the starry sky of the Vast Expanse had just been created!!

“The Nine-Head Tribe was invincibly domineering for ten full epochs….” It was entirely possible that the old lizard was the only individual present who knew anything about the existence of the Nine-Head Tribe, mostly because it actually possessed a bit of that tribe’s bloodline within it. 1

Even as the old lizard was shrieking, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. When he looked at the nine-headed serpent, he couldn’t help but think back to the

Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent.

“Everything which has ever existed in this starry sky will be remembered, and is imprinted upon the will of the starry sky itself. Allheaven can create something from nothing based on anything in his memory….”

Even as Meng Hao pondered these things, Allheaven looked at Meng Hao with eighteen eyes, eyes that glowed with brutal madness. Suddenly, he blurred into motion, leaving behind afterimages and kicking up a wild tempest. Rumbling sounds echoed out as he appeared directly in front of Meng Hao, his tail sweeping out in a vicious attack.

The starry sky crumbled under the power of the tail, which exceeded the 9-Essences level. Heavenly bodies collapsed, and Meng Hao’s eyes glittered with an icy light as he clenched his right hand into a fist and punched straight out.

As the fist made contact with the tail, the void shattered, massive rumbling sounds echoed out, and the serpent that was Allheaven shuddered. Meng Hao trembled as he tumbled backward, and yet even as he fell back, the nine-headed serpents’ eyes all closed.

A tear emerged from each closed eye, a total of eighteen. As the tears appeared, a shocking aura of resentment exploded out. Then the tears glistened, transforming into eighteen beams of light that shot toward Meng Hao.

“Nine-Head Tears! Nine-Head Tears!!” the old lizard howled. “Watch out, Meng Hao! That’s the killing move of the Nine-Head Tribe. All the resentment in his body is converged into a magic of ultimate destruction!!”

As the eighteen glistening tears bore down on Meng Hao, his eyes flickered, but he did nothing to evade. Hovering in place, he lifted his right hand and pushed it out toward the tears.

“Beginning!” he said. Immediately, a Demon Sealing Hexing magic was unleashed. Considering that his Hexing magics were absolutely complete, and backed by the power of Transcendence, their power was enough to shake the entire Vast Expanse.

In response to the single word he had spoken, the eight teardrops stopped in place, looking as though they would dissolve at any moment. As soon as Meng Hao spoke the word “beginning” from the Beginning-Ending Hex, all things returned to their basic Essence.

Seeing that the killing move had been negated, the nine-headed serpent’s eighteen eyes opened, and it roared. Shockingly, its body began to split apart!

Numerous figures burst out from inside, and if one looked closely, one would see that they were all nine-headed serpents of various sizes and shapes. There were more than ten thousand in total, all of them radiating resentment and madness as they shot toward Meng Hao.

“The Tribal Deathblow. I can’t believe… it’s the Tribal Deathblow of the Nine-Heads Tribe!!

“Supposedly, members of the Nine-Head Tribe can unleash this move in the moments before being killed. By making a self-sacrifice of mutual destruction, they can unleash the full power of their tribe to destroy any enemy!” The old lizard was trembling at the sight of what was happening.

The countless nine-headed serpents emitted shrill shrieks as they spun through the air like a huge wave, closing in on Meng Hao with raging killing intent.

“The Nine-Head Tribe might have been powerful, but they never produced a Transcendor,” murmured Meng Hao. “Even if one of them reached fleshly body Transcendence, that’s still not good enough.

“This version of the tribe was created by the first Allheaven Transformation, and didn’t come about naturally. It’s nothing more than a flight of fancy.” With that, Meng Hao clenched his right hand into a fist.

“Ending!” he barked

Rumbling could be heard as the Beginning-Ending Hex was fully unleashed. Boundless power erupted from Meng Hao’s Dao Essence, forming into his hand, which he slowly opened up into a palm. It was as if the starry sky existed within his hand, and that anything inside of his palm could be destroyed by simply closing his fingers!

RUUUUUUUUUUMBLE!

The eighteen tears were destroyed, and the rest of the nine-headed serpents all exploded, becoming nothing more than ash drifting about in front of Meng Hao.

“I can see what you’re doing, Allheaven…. You just want to study my Demon Sealing Hexing magic, don’t you? Well then, I’ll go ahead and show you!” Killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes as he took a step forward, waving his hand to unleash the Second Hex! He was not the type to wait for others to take the initiative!

“Real!” he said, and the starry sky trembled.

At the same time, even as the nine-headed serpents were fading away, Allheaven formed anew in the void up ahead, glaring at Meng Hao with the eighteen eyes of his Nine-Head form. At the same time that the Second Demon Sealing Hex was unleashed, so was… the second Allheaven Transformation!

“Second Transformation, Nine-Heads becomes a dragon, Emperor Dragon Transformation!” 2

Allheaven threw his head back and howled. His body then began to grow, and it no longer looked like a serpent. Horns grew out of his head, and he sprouted nine claws. Eight of his heads began to wither down, eventually becoming a crown that rested upon the only remaining head!

Allheaven’s clone now hovered there in the starry sky, having taken the shocking form of an Emperor Dragon!

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# Chapter 1580: Third Transformation!

Emperor Dragons primarily ate serpents. They only existed for a short time within the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, less than a thousand years. After that, the entire race vanished.

Because of that, none of the living beings that currently existed would even recognize what an Emperor Dragon was. Not even the old lizard had ever seen one.

People had seen dragons before, but not a dragon like this, with the crown of an Emperor, nine claws, and pitch-black scales. It was ferocious to the extreme.

However, the meaning of the character in the Dragon’s name actually wasn’t emperor. It was leech! 1

A Leech Dragon!

It had the normal whiskers of a dragon, but when it opened its mouth, what emerged was a razor-sharp, blood-sucking mouthpiece like that of a mosquito. Its entire appearance was shocking to the extreme.

Virtually no one was even aware that such creatures had ever existed. They were extinct. In fact, the only person in the starry sky who knew about them… was Allheaven. By creating something out of nothing, he was able to use the Leech Dragon as his second transformation!

Almost as soon as the Emperor Dragon appeared, its energy redoubled several times, reaching a completely shocking level that caused even Meng

Hao to frown.

He knew that Allheaven was powerful, and that defeating him in battle would be no easy task. Now that he could see these Allheaven Transformations for himself, especially the Emperor Dragon, he was left with an uneasy feeling of impending doom.

“This Emperor Dragon is not just Transcendent in terms of fleshly body, but also cultivation base,” thought Meng Hao. “As for its soul… that appears to be its only limitation. However, from the look of it, all it would need would be some time to make that breakthrough! In fact, I’ve never encountered something that could actually break through to full Transcendence so easily!

“Allheaven created something from nothing, and managed to make up for some of the deficiencies of the soul. This thing… is actually the same type of living being as the nine-headed serpent, but in terms of overall level, that serpent couldn’t even compare.” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as the Second Demon Sealing Hex was unleashed, Real-Unreal Hexing. Instantly, the surrounding void filled with numerous bizarre fluctuations that rapidly coalesced into the form of a mirror. Unexpectedly, visible within that mirror was another Emperor Dragon, which looked exactly like the first!

Even as the newly created Emperor Dragon roared, Meng Hao waved his hand, sending it flying toward Allheaven’s Emperor Dragon.

The sudden appearance of these two dragons was a shock to everyone present. Even as their cold gazes locked onto each other, an intense murderous aura exploded out from each dragon, which collided into the other. Both of them began to wither rapidly.

This was the trump card of Emperor Dragons, the Emperor Dragon Cosmic Corrosion!

Piercing howls echoed out as the two Emperor Dragons withered up. However, after only a moment passed, blood suddenly spurted out all over Allheaven’s Emperor Dragon. In the blink of an eye, it was stained completely blood-red. Exuding an air of domineering madness, it then flew through the void toward Meng Hao like a shooting star.

It closed in with spectacular speed, shattering the starry sky, seemingly bent on crushing anything that dared to get in its path.

This was the ultimate divine ability of Emperor Dragons, Blood Tyranny.

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the Emperor Dragon’s energy and power rose to heights that could ignore all natural laws. As it closed in, Meng Hao snorted coldly, then waved his sleeve, causing his own Emperor Dragon to utilize the exact same divine ability.

The two Emperor Dragons slammed into each other, and a huge boom echoed out. Meng Hao frowned as his own Emperor Dragon was shredded to pieces, completely incapable of harming Allheaven’s dragon, which continued on with its deadly charge.

It seemed as if all living beings, all types of power, all Transcendent cultivators, would be crushed by this attack. It was a simple attack, but an attack filled with infinitely destructive power.

The simpler and madder the attack, the more powerful it was!

RUUUUUUUUUUMBLE! The Emperor Dragon got closer and closer. 3,000 meters. 300 meters. 30 meters. The blood covering its body burned, and it looked like nothing in the starry sky could do anything to stop it. It was as if this attack was strong enough to break out into the Universe itself. It seemed invincible, unblockable, capable of turning anything it struck into ash.

The sense of deadly crisis within Meng Hao grew more intense.

“A Transcendent Emperor Dragon, making its ultimate attack…” His eyes flickered with the desire to do battle. This was the first true fight he had experienced since Transcending. The first Allheaven Transformation didn’t leave him with much of a desire to fight, but now, that feeling was burning hot within him.

“What a pity,” he said, shaking his head. Instead of fighting back, he simply reached up and pushed out with his hand.

“Unreal!”

With that single word, he completed the unleashing the Second Demon Sealing Hex, the Real-Unreal Hexing. By using the “real” aspect of the Hex, he created a projection of the dragon. But by using the “unreal” aspect, he could transform what was real into something illusory.

If I say you really exist, then even if you die, you shall still exist!

If I say you are not real, then you shall vanish into unreality!

The ripples in the area suddenly faded away into shapelessness. A shocking energy blasted into the Emperor Dragon, which then lurched a halt a mere three meters in front of Meng Hao’s hand, where it trembled, a look of disbelief shining in its eyes.

“Disperse,” he said, waving his hand gently to the left. Instantly, the Emperor Dragon’s energy, all of its domineering power, all of its invincibility, was crushed away. The dragon’s body shattered, and it dispersed.

The Real-Unreal Hexing could make things both real and unreal!

“That’s the best you’ve got, Allheaven? If so, I’m afraid you’re not going to get a chance to see all of my Demon Sealing Hexing magic.” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as coldly as a sharp blade as he looked off into the void, where Allheaven was materializing back into another clone.

His young face was ashen; although Meng Hao’s strength was not anything unexpected to him, he was still left with a feeling of lingering fear. However, he couldn’t bring himself to admit that it was true strength on the part of Meng Hao; in his mind, it was merely weakness on his part after having existed for so long within the stream of time.

“I won’t stop fighting until one of us is dead!” growled Allheaven’s clone. Even as the words left his mouth… ghost fire sprang up all over him!

It was the third Allheaven Transformation!

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1. In Chinese the two characters used here for emperor and leech here have exactly the same pronunciation, even down to the tone, making this wordplay pretty cool in Chinese.

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# Chapter 1581: You Think You Can Ruin Me?!

Allheaven created something out of nothing, using the mark of the first Transcendor from the starry sky of the Vast Expanse to create what he saw as the perfect body.

It was none other than… the Ghost Transformation!

Ghost fire flickered in the eyes of Allheaven's clone as he transformed. Soon, the clone had become a spectral figure wreathed with Ghost qi. Although his facial features weren't clearly visible, the sinister aura which emanated off of him filled the entire area.

It was almost as if he were no longer Allheaven, but instead, another version of Patriarch Vast Expanse.

Meng Hao's pupils constricted. This version of Allheaven was even more powerful than before, and the threatening pressure he exuded was even more intense. However, Meng Hao didn't hesitate to take the initiative. He flickered as he vanished, reappearing right next to the image of the Ghost, whereupon he lifted his right hand up and then chopped it down.

The Ghost let out a sinister chuckle, and his body suddenly distorted and began to spin around Meng Hao. Ghost qi erupted out, and within the blink of an eye, the two of them had exchanged over a thousand blows.

The starry sky trembled as they fought with blinding speed. Strangely, when Meng Hao's attacks landed on the Ghost, they passed right through him. It was almost as if they were completely ineffective. Similarly, the Ghost's magical techniques were not able to fully affect Meng Hao. With Meng

Hao’s Dao as an Essence, he could affect natural laws, making him as powerful as a mountain.

At first, it seemed like neither would be able to do much to the other, but then the Ghost’s eyes flickered as he performed an incantation gesture. Then he began to speak in bizarre susurrations, deathly utterances that couldn’t possibly come from the mouth of a living being.

Instantly, the starry sky in the area began to fill with more ghostly figures. In the blink of an eye, there were far too many to even count.

Voices could be heard speaking: “Millions upon millions of vicious ghosts can consume body and soul!”

The ghosts’ eyes glowed with bizarre light, and their words seemed distorted and twisted, filled with sinister malice. Then the countless ghosts howled shrilly as they began to speed in Meng Hao’s direction.

Meng Hao’s eyes widened as the sensation of deadly crisis grew even more intense. Backing up, he let loose his cultivation base power, performing an incantation gesture with his right hand and waving his finger out in front of him.

“Third Demon Sealing Hex!”

It was… Present-Ancient Hexing!

This Hex could manipulate the transformations of Time, making countless eras pass by in the blink of an eye. In a single breath of time, the sky could grow ancient and the lands could become primordial. As the effects of the Hex spread out, the starry sky withered. Before any of the ghosts could reach Meng Hao, they faded away into nothing.

With the exception of Transcendors, all living beings would have a very difficult time staving off the ravages of the passage of Time. Of course, the Ghost had Transcended, but as for all of the ghosts that had been summoned, they had no such qualifications.

As the ghosts were transformed into ash and smoke, the Ghost version of Allheaven looked on with flashing eyes. This outcome was something he had predicted would happen, and in fact, a closer look would reveal that he was actually smiling.

Even as that smile appeared, he began to speak in a bizarre voice.

“Millions upon millions of ghosts entomb the mind and transform it in my image! Go, invade the hearts of all! Shadowheart Tribulation!”

Even as the words left his mouth, his body began to distort and shrink, transforming into a shadow that couldn’t be affected at all by Meng Hao’s magical manipulation of Time. He was like a blur as he shot toward Meng Hao.

The drifting ash and dust that was all that remained of the ghosts from moments ago suddenly seemed to become sustenance for this shadow. As it neared, its power level rose to a level so high that apparently, the Ghost didn’t even need to get close to Meng Hao to hurt him. The shadow seemed to merge with the void, casting everything around Meng Hao into darkness.

Allheaven’s voice then began to echo out in all directions. “Meng Hao, I will now ruin your Demon Sealing Hexing magic, your so-called Third Hex!”

The boundless shadows swirled around Meng Hao at high speed, emanating shocking coldness. As for Meng Hao, his eyes flickered icily as he performed an incantation gesture. However, the Present-Ancient Hexing did nothing.

“Well done, Ghost….” he murmured. It was a critical juncture, and yet his expression was placid. Instead of continuing to try to force a result out of the Third Hex, he chuckled coldly and allowed the shadows to surge into his body.

Soon, they had completely merged into him, fusing with him, becoming a part of him.

This Ghost version of Allheaven might not be able to kill Meng Hao, but the truth was that he didn't intend to. He wanted to find a weakness within Meng Hao's Hexing magic, and then use that weakness to infect and even ruin that magic!

Only by doing such a thing could he have a chance to cut Meng Hao down in their final battle. The truth was, what terrified Allheaven the most was what had led Meng Hao all the way to Transcendence in the first place… his Demon Sealing Hexing magic!

"You think you can ruin my Demon Sealing Hexing magic?!" Meng Hao let out a cold harrumph. Although spectators wouldn't be able to tell, he knew that the power of Present and Ancient was completely beyond the ordinary.

If it couldn't be defended against outside the body, then how much more powerful would it be inside the body, especially when backed by the power of the Daosource? The true question was, would the ghosts inside of Meng Hao ruin the Hexing magic, or would the Hexing magic destroy the ghosts?

Rumbling could be heard as Meng Hao lifted his right hand up and touched his index finger to his forehead. In that instant, the Present-Ancient power of Time erupted out inside of him.

The boundless power of Time flowed through Meng Hao, seemingly soft, but as powerful as an ocean which, with enough time, could wear away even the most majestic of reefs.

An explosion of Time occurred inside of Meng Hao, and as that happened, the ghosts inside of him went mad. They began to weaken, until Meng Hao flicked his sleeve. It took only a single breath of time for 100,000,000 years passed by.

Ten breaths of time later, all of the ghosts inside of him were completely destroyed by the passage of Time.

He reached out his hand, and the Present-Ancient Hexing spun within his palm, filling up with countless figures, becoming a shining sphere. Finally, he clenched his hand into a fist, and a cracking sound could be heard as the sphere was smashed.

Not too far away in the starry sky, Allheaven’s clone coughed up a mouthful of blood, and within the vicious expression on his face could be seen just a touch of shock.

“Time to finish things,” Meng Hao said, his eyes flickering with killing intent. His murderous aura then transformed into a corporeal blade which slashed toward Allheaven!

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# Chapter 1582: Heavenly God Transformation!

The Fourth Hex, Self Hexing!

Meng Hao was a blur as he shot toward Allheaven. In the time it took to blink, innumerable afterimages appeared. There were men and women, old and young, all of whom looked different from Meng Hao, and yet were fundamentally the same.

That was because they were all clones produced by Meng Hao’s Self Hex!

The Self Hex could produce countless numbers of clones, entire worlds of life. It could transform Heaven and Earth, and could make the true form become an entire country!

A hundred clones appeared. Then thousands. Then tens of thousands.

Rumbling could be heard as all the different versions of Meng Hao closed in on Allheaven’s clone. Meng Hao waved his hand, and all of his clones waved their hands. The joint attack was like a tempest, shattering the starry sky, powerful enough to wipe out all living beings.

Allheaven’s clone hovered there, hair whipping wildly around his head. He was aware that he wasn’t a match for Meng Hao’s Self Hex in this state. After all, this was a clone, not his true self. Not even this clone could handle Meng Hao, who was half a step into the Ancestor Realm.

A boom rang out, and Allheaven fell back, coughing up blood. However, his eyes shone with cold light, and his expression was ferocious as he stared at

Meng Hao’s clones, all of whom possessed the same Essences as he did. All of a sudden, a look of focus appeared in Allheaven’s eyes.

“Fourth Allheaven Transformation!” he roared. “Devil Soul Transformation!”

Even as the words left his mouth, his expression distorted, becoming more ferocious than ever. Cracking sounds rang out as razor-sharp bone spurs pierced out through his flesh all over his body. His head also changed, as two long horns grew out.

Scales rippled out to cover his flesh, and at the same time, Devil fire burst out, black flames that scorched everything around him.

Allheaven’s clone had completely changed, and was now wreathed in raging black flames. He was merely 300 meters tall at this point, but as he hovered there, the Devil qi which swirled around him seemed capable of covering the entire starry sky. The sea of flames which surrounded him raged as he pushed one hand up above him, as if to support the Heavens above, and the other hand down, as though to brace against all the Earth below. Then, he began to take seven steps forward.

It was as if in all Heaven and Earth, he was the most supreme of all beings!

He was the Devil!

Within Allheaven’s starry sky of the Vast Expanse, the Devil was the second person to ever Transcend. He was the basis of the fourth transformation, the Devil Soul Battle Form!

Allheaven looked up, his face expressionless, and the sea of flames churned. His eyes were crimson, his expression merciless, as if he were willing to consume anything and everything. He apparently lost command of all faculties of reason, and instantly descended into madness.

“DIIIIEEEEEEEEE!” he howled, turning into a blur and appearing directly in front of Meng Hao. There, he clenched his hand into a fist and punched out.

That fist carried with it the sea of flames, a destructive blast of fire backed by the starry sky itself. It was as if the entire world were packed into that fist, and the sheer power caused Meng Hao's pupils to constrict. He could sense that this fourth Allheaven Transformation was explosively more powerful than the others.

It was also incredibly fast. Meng Hao waved his sleeve out in front of him, which was mimicked by all of his countless clones. A blast surged out which then converged onto the image of the Devil.

BOOM!

This stretch of the starry sky had long since turned into a shattered battleground as the void was repeatedly shredded and destroyed by the fighting.

Meng Hao and Allheaven fought back and forth like mad, wreaking such havoc on their surroundings that it seemed as if the starry sky might not be able to handle it for much longer.

The full power of Meng Hao's Self Hex unleashed countless clones that put him on almost equal footing with Allheaven. Allheaven, the Devil embodied, threw his head back and howled, a howl filled with madness that could pierce through everything. "Unbridled Devil Will!"

At the same time, a divine sense erupted out that could shake Heaven and Earth. It smashed down toward Meng Hao, filled with madness, murder, and blood. When it slammed into him, his face flickered; even with his Transcendent soul, it was actually difficult to withstand the power of the divine sense.

Blood oozed out of the corners of his mouth as he backed up. This was his first time sustaining an injury during this battle with Allheaven.

In that same moment, the eyes of the Allheaven Devil turned an even deeper red. Howling, he charged once more in attack.

“Underworld Possession!” As the words echoed out, the Allheaven Devil transformed into countless black strands which sped through the air. Before Meng Hao could react, they bored into his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, as if to possess him.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, then stretched his arms out wide.

“Self Hex! All creation becomes me!” Instantly, countless versions of Meng Hao appeared around him, different from him, and yet containing his Essence. There were so many that they were impossible to count, stretching in all directions.

“Starry sky, thou shalt become my body!” The destroyed starry sky in the area twisted, becoming almost like a mirror that cast countless reflections, making it seem as if the starry sky itself were made up of clones of Meng Hao.

“Where I stand, there doth exist my kingdom!” His eyes snapped open, and they shone like the sun. He lifted his right foot into the air, and stamped it down violently!

Instantly, the starry sky teetered.

“Children of the kingdom, unite to protect mine soul!” He took a deep breath, and as he did, the entire void around him was affected, as everything collapsed into ruin.

It was as if a giant had sucked in a breath, except there was no giant, only Meng Hao. That single breath caused everything in the area to be completely destroyed.

Along with the destruction, Meng Hao’s Essence clones transformed into beams of light that shot inside of him. The shattered starry sky, his kingdom, everything else that came from the Self Hex, all fused back into him.

Golden light exploded out from within him, until he looked like he was made of gold. Suddenly, he seemed as invincible as a fortress. His soul was now under the protection of countless Self Hex clones, ensuring that the Devil’s possession attempt was doomed to failure.

“Begone from me!” Meng Hao roared. The countless black threads which had bored into him were violently forced out. His body was like a battleground, within which the Devil was completely vanquished and removed.

However, even as the black Devil threads were blasted away, a voice echoed out like that belonging to a divine being. It was as powerful as thunder, like the voice of a deity that could cause all living things to tremble.

“Fifth Allheaven Transformation. Heavenly God Transformation!”

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# Chapter 1583: None Can Match My Strength!

As Allheaven's words echoed out, the Devil souls transformed into a deep golden color. It was an ancient, upright color, filled with explosive strength.

Then came a Heaven-rending Earth-crushing roar as a giant appeared in front of Meng Hao, so large it seemed capable of propping up the Heavens.

He was tens of thousands of meters tall, and that didn't even seem to be the limit of how big he could be. The collapse of the starry sky seemed to expand, as if this giant could supercede the starry sky itself.

He roared, causing all of the distant observing cultivators to cough up blood. However shaken they had been before, they were even moreso now.

This was a battle that not even 9-Essences experts could participate in. They could do little more than watch from a distance. The Sect Leader and the others were completely numb, and as for all of the other living beings from the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, they were retreating at top speed and didn't dare to pause for a moment.

"Meng Hao!" the giant roared. As it turned to look at him, it revealed upon its forehead… ten stars!!

Not nine stars, but ten! 1

The ten stars radiated golden light, making this giant seem like a Heavenly God. In fact, it would be correct to say that this was the God of the Heavens!

This was the fifth transformation, the Heavenly God Transformation!

Golden light emanated from the giant’s eyes, causing everything it looked at to be bathed in gold. Meng Hao’s expression flickered as he backed up. Even as he did, everything around him began to melt.

There was nothing around him except for the starry sky and the void, and yet it all melted, transforming into black liquid that emanated a stench of rot. Then, that liquid formed together into numerous enormous spheres with countless tentacles, almost like gigantic sea urchins.

“None can match my strength!” the giant roared, its gaze locking onto Meng Hao as its right hand clenched into a fist and punched out.

That fist seemed capable of wreaking ultimate destruction. It was like the pinnacle of the starry sky, and as soon as it appeared, it seemed impossible for it to miss its target.

Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed with the desire to fight. His fleshly body had already reached the ultimate peak, Transcendence, so he unleashed his God-Slaying Fist, which slammed into the giant’s incoming fist strike.

The resulting deafening boom sounded like the vague howl of some primordial beast. Meng Hao was shaken. It felt like a wild wind of Time was blasting into him, causing blood to spray out of his mouth as he was thrown backward like a kite with its string cut. However, the giant’s fist was also left trembling.

That didn’t stop the giant, though. Roaring, it took a step forward and unleashed another fist strike. Rumbling echoed out as Meng Hao defended. Simultaneously, the giant opened his mouth and let loose a powerful roar.

That roar shredded the void and destroyed natural laws. It was like a tempest that slammed into Meng Hao, causing blood to spray out of his mouth once more. Yet again, he fell back.

The power being wielded by this Heavenly God was shocking, and yet, it only caused Meng Hao to want to fight even more.

“Who cares about Heavenly Gods?!” he said, waving his sleeve. Then, his right hand flashed with an incantation gesture as he unleashed Demon Sealing Hexing magic.

In that instant, the Heavenly God giant’s eyes shone with bright, flickering light, and the desire to kill. He took a step toward Meng Hao, and his right hand began to move. However, he was doing something different than before.

Even as his roar continued to echo out, his body suddenly began to wither. It was as if all of his flesh and blood were being sucked into his right arm.

It was a shocking scene to behold as the Heavenly God giant’s entire right arm began to get larger and stronger.

Soon, it had broken through to a shocking level of power, whereupon it formed a fist that began to rumble toward Meng Hao.

The level of danger Meng Hao sensed upon that fist was the most intense he had ever felt. He had never felt power like this since Transcending. This was… a peak level power within the starry sky!

In fact, it even went beyond the natural laws of the starry sky, exceeding all limitations. This was a level of power on par with the Universe itself. This was not just simply the power of Transcendence, it went to a realm beyond that, the Ancestor Realm!

“DIE!” bellowed the Heavenly God giant. As its fist bore down, Meng Hao’s pupils constricted into tiny dots. If he couldn’t somehow handle this fist strike, he would definitely be defeated.

“Fifth Hex. Inside-Outside Hex!” Meng Hao’s eyes shone brightly as he reached out with his right hand and unleashed the Inside-Outside Hex. A vortex suddenly popped up in front of his extended palm, within which pulsed the powers of both positive and negative.

Even as the fist closed in, the power of the Inside-Outside Hex pushed back toward it.

The entire starry sky went still. A power of expulsion appeared from within Meng Hao's palm, the core of which came from Meng Hao's Dao Essence. As it exploded out, the Heavenly God giant's fist slowed down, eventually coming to a stop only a few centimeters in front of his palm.

Meng Hao's eyes were completely bloodshot. The power of the Inside-Outside Hex spread out, filling the area around him with endless contradictory power.

A deadlock appeared to have formed. Madness grew within the eyes of the Heavenly God giant, and then suddenly, one of the stars on its forehead began to shatter. As it did, the giant's power began to rocket up.

Things weren't over yet though. A second star exploded, then a third and a fourth. The explosions continued, and more power built up within the Heavenly God giant's fist, which edged closer and closer to Meng Hao.

"Still not enough!" howled the giant. "DETONATE!" A fifth star exploded, then the sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and finally, the tenth. In that moment, indescribably explosive energy surged through the body of the Heavenly God giant.

The fist, backed by the power of the self-detonation of ten stars, slammed into Meng Hao's palm. Meng Hao's hand shattered, and blood sprayed out of his mouth as he was thrown backward.

Cracking sounds emanated out as his bones were shattered, and his flesh and blood were shredded. This was the most serious injury he had suffered during the entire fight with Allheaven.

"DIE!"

1. Quasi-spoiler information about Renegade Immortal to follow. To some extent, nine is the limit of the number of stars that could appear on the forehead of a cultivator in RI. In some ways that is not the case. You will understand what I mean eventually if you read RI. In any case, the point here is that having ten stars appear is unprecedented, and indicates that this cultivator is at an extremely high level of power

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# Chapter 1584: Six Hexes Combined!

“Sixth Allheaven Transformation. I am the Immortal!” The ten stars on the forehead of the Heavenly God giant exploded, seriously injuring Meng Hao. However, the result was that the giant’s body was completely withered up. As Allheaven gave up on that body, he shrank down rapidly, and at the same time, an intense Immortal qi exploded out from his chest!

As the Immortal qi erupted out, two hands suddenly burst out from inside the giant’s chest, sending chunks of flesh and blood flying in all directions.

A ripping sound could be heard as the giant’s chest was torn open, allowing even more Immortal qi to pour out.

The incredible nature of the Immortal qi spread out, creating something from nothing as numerous amounts of Immortal jade suddenly appeared in the destroyed starry sky.

The Immortal jade glittered with radiant light, and despite the intense level of the fighting, the sight of it provoked a look of shock from Meng Hao. Then he subconsciously licked his lips.

“What a brazen strategy!” he thought. “And effective.” It took supreme effort, but he managed to restore his composure after seeing the mounds of Immortal jade.

At the same time, a figure emerged from within the giant’s chest. Surrounded by vast quantities of Immortal qi, it was a middle-aged man. He had no hair on his head or anywhere else on his body, and his expression was completely placid. After appearing, he waved his hand behind him, causing the Heavenly God giant to tremble and then collapse. However, instead of turning into ash, it transformed into a leather cloak!

It was leather formed from the skin of the Heavenly God, and as it settled down onto the middle-aged man with the Immortal qi, it made him seem completely cold and ruthless.

“I am the Immortal!” the man said softly, his eyes shining with brilliant light as he looked at Meng Hao.

“The fact that you’ve forced Allheaven to summon me means that you are an incredible foe….” Even as his voice echoed out, the man vanished and then reappeared behind Meng Hao. Before Meng Hao could even turn around, the man had placed his hand onto Meng Hao’s back.

A boom rang out, and blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth. And yet, his eyes flickered with a vicious light, and his left hand shot up to grab the man’s wrist.

“You’re not the Immortal!” Meng Hao growled. A surprised frown appeared on the man’s face as Meng Hao jerked his hand out, sending the man tumbling through the air. At the same time, Meng Hao began to fly toward him. His right hand flashed with an incantation gesture, and without any hesitation or pause, he pushed his hand down onto the man.

“Sixth Hex, Life-Death Hexing. This Hex doesn’t affect your freedom, it merely decides whether you live or die!”

Rumbling sounds could be heard as the Immortal qi surrounding the man suddenly vanished. When he reappeared, he was off in another direction. At the same time, Meng Hao’s Sixth Hex appeared to have done nothing.

“One Hexing magic isn’t enough,” said the man. “Why don’t you use your Seventh Hex….?” His eyes shone with a strange light; he was clearly using augury to analyze the situation. The truth was that Allheaven really did want to fully analyze all of Meng Hao’s Hexing magic. Although he had witnessed them in the past, he had never personally experienced them.

Only by doing so could his true form fully prepare to crush Meng Hao in battle.

“If you want to see what my Hexing magics look like now that I’ve Transcended, you’ll have to show me some more of your transformations.” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. Actually, his plans for this battle were similar to Allheaven’s. Allheaven wanted to observe his Hexing magic, but he wanted to test out all of the various Allheaven Transformations.

“I refuse to believe that your Allheaven Transformations can be augmented limitlessly,” Meng Hao said coldly. “After all, this is your clone, not your true form. There are probably some high level transformations that you can’t even use here.”

The man with the Immortal qi gave a cold harrumph. The Immortal qi swirling around him began to grow more powerful, and his eyes grew sharper than ever. “Fine. You want to see? I’ll show you. I’ll show you… exactly what the Immortal really is!

“The Immortal is a man and a mountain!” 1 This Immortal version of Allheaven raised both hands up over his head so that they formed the shape of a mountain peak.

“Mountain!” he roared. Instantly, the starry sky of the Vast Expanse began to tremble as a power began to descend from outside of the Vast Expanse. Everything trembled; planets, land masses, and worlds all creaked under the pressure.

Meng Hao could sense the power pushing him down, as though countless worlds were crushing down onto him.

At the same time, the outline of a mountain appeared noiselessly above the head of Allheaven’s clone. It was merely an outline, but it was filled with boundless pressure that seemed to lend an air of perfection to Allheaven.

The Immortal was a man and a mountain!

“Immortal magic is actually not a divine ability or a magical technique. Instead, it comes from Essence. It is… crushing pressure!

“From ancient times until now, the appearance of the Immortal signifies pressure that can crush anything not Immortal!

“Meng Hao, you said you want to see my transformations. Well, I’ll demonstrate by crushing you!” This Immortal form of Allheaven looked at Meng Hao with flickering eyes. Then, he pushed his hands out, causing the mountain to fly toward Meng Hao at top speed, emanating intense pressure.

It was a dazzling energy that could crush anything and everything!

The Immortal version of Allheaven flickered, suddenly appearing on top of the peak of the mountain as it rumbled down toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao looked up at the descending mountain, and could sense the terrifying pressure coming from it, something that vastly exceeded the power of the Heavenly God. The Heavenly God could injure Meng Hao, and even crush his bones. However, it couldn’t harm his deepest foundation. On the other hand, the power crushing down on him from this Immortal mountain caused even his Dao Essence to tremble.

“A man, and a mountain. That’s the Immortal…

“Fine. Since you’re revealing the Immortal, then the time has come for me to show you my Hexing magic combination!” Eyes filled with ultimate determination, Meng Hao waved his sleeve, performing an incantation gesture which caused his cultivation base to erupt with power. Then, Hexing magic towered up.

First Hex!

Second Hex!

Third Hex!

Fourth Hex!

Fifth Hex!

Sixth Hex!

Six Hexes all combined!

The combined power of the Hexing magics unleashed a paramount power, the power of the League of Demon Sealers, the power to seal Heaven and Earth, the power to seal everything which existed. Six Hexing magics combined into one, transforming into a gigantic hand.

That hand only had four fingers, but burst with unheard-of, shocking power. Without the slightest pause, the hand rose up to meet the man and the mountain, to kill the Immortal!

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Prizes update: One of the other prizes provided by me is a rendition of the Mountain and Sea Realm that I commissioned by a fantasy map artist. It shows the layout of the M&S Realm, and also features a map of Planet South Heaven, complete with little artistic depictions of the landmarks there. It will be provided as a high quality print to some contest winners.

1. It’s been awhile since this explanation of the character Immortal came up. As a quick refresher, Immortal is . The character for man or person is and mountain is . If you squeeze the off to side, it looks like this: which you can combine with mountain to make Immortal

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# Chapter 1585: Consuming Allheaven!

The enormous hand rose up toward the man and the mountain.

The person and the mountain made the Immortal. As for Meng Hao, he used the power of Transcendence to combine six Hexes into one. What resulted was a power that could shock all living things. It became a hand that seemed capable of ripping apart the entire starry sky.

All of this happened in the time it takes a lightning bolt to strike. In fact, other than Meng Hao himself, no one could clearly see what had happened as Allheaven’s clone transformed into the Immortal.

All they could see was a huge hand slamming into a mountain. In that instant, everything cracked and crumbled, the starry sky was thrown into chaos, and the void shattered. Cracking sounds filled the starry sky, and rifts snaked out from the spot where the hand met the mountain, gaping chasms that were like vicious dragons, roaring as they spread out in all directions.

The starry sky of the Vast Expanse was like a mirror, which was now cracking into so many pieces that it seemed as if it might shatter at any moment.

All cultivators felt blood oozing out of their eyes, ears, noses and mouths. They began to back up, trembling with more astonishment and fear than they could ever have imagined.

When the Demon Sealing Hexing magic met the Immortal, it was one of the most powerful interchanges which had ever occurred within the starry sky of the Vast Expanse. A boom rang out that burst countless eardrums. The enormous hand formed from the combined six Hexes shattered into fragments. However, before they could disperse, Meng Hao waved his hand, and they began to sweep back in his direction, becoming a raging tempest.

Within that tempest, Meng Hao’s hair whipped about his head, and his eyes shone with strange light as he stared coldly at the mountain and the man!

Currently, the mountain was shaking violently, as a spider-web of cracks expanded out over its surface. Rumbling sounds echoed out. This was an Immortal mountain, and yet it couldn’t hold on any longer. It began to collapse, and as it did, the Immortal version of Allheaven’s clone coughed up a massive mouthful of blood. His expression was one of madness as he backed up eight paces.

“Meng Hao, things aren’t finished yet!” he shrieked. Then his hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, causing the rubble of the destroyed Immortal mountain to swirl toward him. In the blink of an eye, it surrounded him and began to fuse with him!

It was impossible to say whether the mountain was absorbing the man, or the man was absorbing the mountain. They fused together, and an unprecedentedly powerful burst of Immortal qi emanated out in all directions. Now, what was standing in front of Meng Hao was completely different from before. He was a man, and bore the shape of a man, and yet he was actually a mountain.

He was the fusion between a man and a mountain. He was the true… Immortal!

“Crushing pressure!” he roared. This man-mountain combination began to spin as it shot toward Meng Hao, emanating intense, crushing pressure. This time, the energy was even more intense than before. This time, the momentum was even more astonishing!

As he closed in, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with cold light. He licked his lips, and then waved his hand, causing the tempest around him to spin with even more speed than before. Then, it began to form together in front of him in the shape of… a blade!

Six Hexing magics were combined into… the Saber of the Demon Sealers!

It was matchlessly sharp, and as soon as it took form, it caused all other magical and divine weapons in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse to tremble. Some magical items even cracked and began to crumble. This saber was clearly the type of weapon that all other weapons would prostrate in worship to.

“Want to die? I can accommodate you!” Eyes flickering with shocking killing intent, Meng Hao blurred into motion, snatching the saber and slashing it viciously toward Allheaven’s clone!

It was a blow that could shake the vault of existence, that could shock the starry sky. It was filled with completely unprecedented, dazzling power.

BOOOOOOOOOMMM!

It was the most powerful blow Meng Hao had ever struck. His cultivation base erupted with power, and Transcendent fleshly body and soul combined with the Essence of his Dao. He was half a step into the Ancestor Realm, and he was holding back nothing in this attack.

The blade descended, and Allheaven’s clone howled in fury as he fought back with all of the power he could muster. Immortal qi surged, and yet, despite having the Immortal body of this sixth transformation, he was still incapable of defending against the Transcendent Meng Hao’s six combined Demon Sealing Hexing magics.

As the blade slashed down, dazzling light flickered, and Meng Hao and Allheaven’s spun away from each other. When Meng Hao turned back, his eyes shone with cold light, whereas Allheaven’s clone looked completely shocked. He looked down at his body to see a gaping wound slashed across his torso. Before he could even say anything, his upper half toppled over as he was split in two.

One half of him crumbled into the rocks which had formed the Immortal mountain, while the other half of him remained the man portion of the Immortal. However, that portion was incredibly weak, and even emanated the feeling of decay. When he looked back at Meng Hao, his expression was one of dread, and he began to back up. Unexpectedly, he was attempting to flee.

He had no other choice. He had already unleashed all of the transformations he could: six was the limit that this clone could safely utilize. Only his true form could fight with more transformations than that.

As he backed up, the crumbling rocks which had formed the Immortal mountain began to swirl back up toward him, as if to flee with him.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever, although the truth was that this battle had been very taxing. And yet, after all the incredible fighting, how could he possibly let his opponent simply flee?

“Since you’ve sent this clone to me, I think I’ll just keep him!” he said. With that he reached out and waved his hand, causing bright red light to erupt out of him. Shockingly, he was unleashing… the Blood Demon Grand Magic!

For the Blood Demon Grand Magic to be unleashed by a Transcendent cultivator was something completely terrifying. In fact, it was something that not even the Blood Demon himself could have comprehended. Meng Hao instantly transformed into a crimson sea which soared out to pursue Allheaven’s clone, first covering over the crumbled Immortal mountain.

Instantly, the chunks of the Immortal mountain began to be absorbed. In a shocking turn of events… Meng Hao completely consumed them!

These chunks of the Immortal mountain had been part of the Immortal, and could in fact be considered to be part of Allheaven’s clone!

They were part of his quintessence, and now they were being absorbed by Meng Hao’s Blood Demon Grand Magic! As a result, Meng Hao’s cultivation base began to rise dramatically!

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# Chapter 1586: I am the Heavens!

As his cultivation base rose, Meng Hao's divine sense also experienced terrifying growth. It doubled. Tripled. Quadrupled… and kept going.

His fleshly body had already reached a pinnacle in the past, but now that he was absorbing the quintessence of Allheaven, it broke through and became even stronger.

It was the same with his soul, which was undergoing unprecedented enhancement.

Meng Hao threw his head back and roared. His eyes were bright red, and his breath came in ragged pants as he felt himself growing through his consumption of Allheaven. Slowly but surely, he was advancing toward the complete Ancestor Realm.

He was consuming Allheaven, the lord of the starry sky of the Vast Expanse!

The killing intent in Meng Hao's eyes burned as the sea of blood expanded, sucking in more fragments of the Immortal mountain.

In sharp contrast to what was happening with Meng Hao, Allheaven's clone was screaming shrilly because of the feeling of being absorbed. It was something he had never felt before, and it left him trembling. He knew with absolute certainty that there was no way for him to escape, not while he was inside of the Vast Expanse. With his true form being outside of the Vast Expanse, there was nowhere inside that he could flee to.

Before this battle began, he had been able to theorize about how powerful Meng Hao was, but had never been able to imagine being defeated by him. It was all thanks to the fatal blow delivered by the combined six Hexes.

Allheaven’s clone knew that he was in grave danger. As he watched Meng Hao rapidly devouring the rubble of the Immortal mountain, he threw his head back and howled, “I’m Allheaven! I’m the lord of the starry sky!”

In that moment, he ceased any attempts to flee. Eyes bright red, he stabbed his hands into his chest and began to rip it open.

As his chest was torn asunder, endless Vast Expanse mist began to pour out, churning and seething with indescribable power. Shockingly, within that mist… were Nine Mountains and Nine Seas!

“Seventh Allheaven Transformation! Mountains and Seas become the Demon!!” As the shrill cry of Allheaven’s clone echoed out, his body began to vanish. His life force, his will, and his thoughts all formed together. Something was created from nothing as all of those things poured into the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Rumbling echoed out as Allheaven transformed into the Mountain and Sea Realm, which then hovered there in the starry sky.

Because the Mountain and Sea Realm still existed, the fact that Allheaven had transformed into it meant that he was connected to the real version. If he were harmed, it could affect the real Mountain and Sea Realm.

By this point, Meng Hao in blood sea form had absorbed the last bit of rubble from the Immortal mountain, and his cultivation base had finished rising. The sea of blood then shrank down until it was a crimson, humanoid mass. Eventually, Meng Hao’s facial features became clear.

He hovered there, causing the starry sky around him to tremble as he sent out his will to replace that of Allheaven. Now Meng Hao was the lord of this part of the starry sky.

“Seventh transformation. Mountain and Sea Transformation….” Meng Hao’s eyes glinted with a glow like that of blood as he contemplated the previous four transformations. The third, fourth, fifth, and sixth transformations had been that of the Ghost, the Devil, the God, and the

Immortal. Therefore, it was no surprise that the seventh transformation would be that of the Demon.

However, that transformation was actually incomplete!

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the Allheaven version of the Mountain and Sea Realm, complete with nine boundless seas and nine towering mountains, radiated intense power as it shot toward Meng Hao.

The Nine Seas joined forces to crush Meng Hao. The Nine Mountains united to smash him. Meng Hao faced the Nine Mountains and Nine Seas, then waved his hand out in front of him and coolly said, “Demon Sealing Hex. Seventh Hex! Karmic Hexing!”

Even as the words left his mouth, countless Karma Threads appeared upon the Allheaven version of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

There were so many of them that any person who could actually see them would be thoroughly shocked.

Meng Hao, on the other hand, didn’t seem surprised at all. Eyes glittering, he performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, then pointed out at the incoming mountains.

“Seal the Karma of the Mountains!” he said, his words filled with the power of magic.

His cultivation base erupted, causing an enormous, invisible blade to appear, a blade which could sever Karma. That blade shot toward the Nine Mountains, not to slash into the mountains themselves, but rather… to sever the Karma which connected them to the real Mountain and Sea Realm!

BOOOOOOOOOMMM!

The blade flashed, and the Karma was severed!

The Nine Mountains trembled, then began to collapse into fragments. Allheaven screamed in defiance, but was completely and utterly incapable of doing anything!

“Seal the Karma of the Seas!” Meng Hao’s hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, and then he waved his finger again, this time at the Nine Seas. The Nine Seas began to tremble, and yet no matter how they wanted to fight back, not even a single wave could be seen on their surfaces. They had been suppressed to the ultimate degree.

Their connection to the true Mountain and Sea Realm was completely severed away!

“NO!!” Allheaven’s cry rang out into the starry sky, filling the hearts of all living beings. He wanted to fight back, to struggle, to resist. He simply couldn’t believe that his seventh transformation could be defeated so easily.

That seventh transformation might not be complete, and might only have been unleashed by his clone, but it was still incredibly powerful. How could he ever have imagined that Meng Hao could defeat the seventh transformation as easily as flipping over a hand?!

His bitter cry rang out as the Mountains and Seas collapsed. His humanoid shape once again appeared, which was the very moment Meng Hao had been waiting for.

“Seal all Karma connecting you to the starry sky of the Vast Expanse!” he said, his eyes glittering with light as cold as the deepest winter night. “Henceforth, your true form may exist outside of the Vast Expanse, but you may not step even half a pace inside. Neither your body nor your soul may enter. As of this moment, my will has replaced yours!”

Meng Hao performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, drawing upon the ultimate power of Karmic Hexing, and then shoved his hand out.

That movement caused the Mountains and Seas to shatter. At the same time, an invisible blade slashed into Allheaven’s clone form. His body was destroyed, and his connection to the starry sky of the Vast Expanse completely severed.

A huge boom echoed out, causing the starry sky to tremble. When Allheaven’s connection was severed, Meng Hao’s will exploded out, replacing Allheaven’s, taking complete control of the starry sky within the Vast Expanse.

In that moment, all life forms could sense that… the Heavens were about to be altered!

“The clone of Allheaven has been cut down. Henceforth, within the Vast Expanse, I am the Heavens!” He waved his sleeve, causing a burst of power to spread out. It was power, not from Meng Hao, but from the actual starry sky of the Vast Expanse.

Power like that was different from the power of Meng Hao’s Transcendence. However, considering the look of terror on Allheaven’s face, it was obvious that such power was still incredible.

It was at this point that the trembling and crumbling clone of Allheaven suddenly looked over at Meng Hao, then threw his head back and laughed uproariously.

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Prizes update: One of the other prizes provided by me is a rendition of the Mountain and Sea Realm that I commissioned by a fantasy map artist. It shows the layout of the M&S Realm, and also features a map of Planet South Heaven, complete with little artistic depictions of the landmarks there. It will be provided as a high quality print to some contest winners.

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# Chapter 1587: Starry Sky of the Mountains and Seas!

“Back when I was in my prime, I laced the starry sky of the Vast Expanse with a curse. The Ghost could not see it. The Devil was not qualified to activate it. Even the God didn’t trigger it. But today, you will see it, Meng Hao. You will see it….

“It is a curse fueled by the power of my true form, unleashed by the last scrap of my will within the starry sky of the Vast Expanse. It is my curse, created countless years ago….”

In response to Allheaven’s words, Meng Hao’s pupils constricted, and his heart began to pound. Clearly, Allheaven was not simply trying to sound mysterious and impressive. He had no reason to do such a thing.

His words revealed a very disturbing truth: if this so-called curse had been created during Allheaven’s prime, then considering the current level of Meng Hao’s cultivation base, it would most likely be impossible for him to break it.

In his prime, Allheaven had commanded terrifying, unimaginable power. In fact, he was so powerful that neither the Ghost, the Devil, nor the God had been able to do anything more than destroy one of his fingers!

Meng Hao’s eyes began to widen. Allheaven’s connection to the starry sky of the Vast Expanse was utterly and thoroughly severed. Even still, though, Meng Hao could not prevent a sense of dread from seeping into his heart.

He was not disheartened, though. Although he wasn’t sure about the exact nature of the curse, he was sure it had something to do with Karma.

Therefore, as long as he was willing to pay the price, he should be able to fight back against it. Even Allheaven at his prime would not be able to kill him with just a curse.

Meng Hao’s face was very grim as the crumbling, vanishing Allheaven spoke in a voice that seemed to contain bizarre and mysterious power: “Any person who kills me….”

Unexpectedly, his words began to resonate with the entire starry sky!

Shockingly, despite the fact that Meng Hao had completely severed Allheaven’s connection to the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, he was still able to form a resonance with it. That caused Meng Hao’s expression to become even grimmer than before.

“… shall find that his people, his bloodlines, everyone connected to him by Karma, everything connected to the Karma of those people, and anyone connected to that greater web of Karma, will be cursed!

“It will spread from this one point outwards, and it will spread yet again from those it spreads to, on and on until it has nowhere left to spread!

“Everyone within that range, everything within that scope, all lives… shall be cursed by Allheaven!

“My curse upon them is thus: in their lives, time is limited!

“No type of cultivation magic, no type of bloodline power, no type of precious material, no type of reincarnation, will be even slightly effective in breaking the curse!

“Because the curse does not affect Transcendent cultivators, it can exist for all eternity!”

As Allheaven’s words rang out, it was clear that he was speaking them in the present, and yet somehow, it seemed as if they were being spoken countless years in the past. In fact, if one listened closely, it almost seemed like two different voices, one in the past, one in the present, joining together, melding, causing everything to shake!

Furthermore, it seemed as if the resonance with the starry sky wasn’t being formed by Allheaven’s current power, but rather, by the Allheaven of the past, when he was in his prime. He had created this curse countless years ago, then buried it, where it had remained hidden until this day.

After the words were spoken, Allheaven looked at the shock on Meng Hao’s face, and laughed mockingly. Then his body exploded.

Allheaven’s clone, the former lord of the entire starry sky of the Vast Expanse, was dead in body and soul!

From this moment on, Allheaven’s true form could exist only in the void outside of the Vast Expanse. It would be impossible for him to come inside the Vast Expanse, regardless of what power he unleashed. Meng Hao had become the Heavens, and because of that, there would be only one voice inside the Vast Expanse, one will. And that was… the will of Meng Hao!

Meng Hao looked grimly at the spot where Allheaven had exploded. Countless motes of light could be seen there, and instead of fading away, they began to shoot toward Meng Hao. He was now the ultimate lord of the starry sky, so as the motes fused into him, rumbling sounds echoed out, and his soul experienced incredible growth. In the blink of an eye, his soul, his fleshly body, and his cultivation base all reached an unprecedented level of power.

Most importantly, his Dao Essence, the Essence of the world which he had created inside of him, also experienced exponential growth. After fully absorbing the clone of Allheaven, that world inside of him lit up with dazzling light, and life began to flourish there.

As of this moment, he was no longer half a step into the Ancestor Realm. He had taken that final step, and was… fully within the Ancestor Realm!

In the Ancestor Realm, one’s body became a world, with its own starry sky!

Meng Hao’s will spread out, filling the starry sky of the Vast Expanse. He saw all the living creatures, and looked at them silently as he contemplated the curse of Allheaven. After a long moment, he spoke.

“I am the Demon Sovereign!”

In that moment, all cultivators within the starry sky of the Vast Expanse felt their minds trembling as a voice that contained the weight of the Heavens spoke to them.

Countless individuals dropped down to their knees to kowtow. The people of innumerable planets, land masses, and worlds all offered worship, as did the countless beings who had been involved in the war.

“From this moment on, the starry sky of the Vast Expanse will no longer contain any mist!” As soon as the words left Meng Hao’s mouth, the entire starry sky cleared of mist. Everything trembled as it simply vanished. Within the space of a few breaths of time, not a single bit could be seen anywhere within the Vast Expanse!

Brilliantly lit planets suddenly became visible, as well as a boundless, majestic starry sky….

All living beings were profoundly shaken.

“From this moment on, the starry sky of the Vast Expanse will have a new name. It will be called… the starry sky of the Mountains and Seas!” With that, he waved his sleeve, and boundless life force spread out. Suddenly, the river of Time appeared, along with the giant crocodilian creature, who immediately prostrated in worship. Countless motes of light began to fly out from the river, as everyone from the Vast Expanse School army who had died in the fighting was resurrected!

Having accomplished this, Meng Hao turned and headed off into the distance.

Behind him, the voices of the Vast Expanse School’s army joined together in a powerful cry.

“Our respect, Demon Sovereign!”

“Our respect, Demon Sovereign!!”

As the Vast Expanse School cultivators cried out, the other living beings from the other parts of the starry sky all prostrated to the Heavens.

“Our respect, Demon Sovereign!!!”

The sound echoed out in astonishing fashion…. For a cultivator to have reached this level was like reaching the ultimate peak.

And yet Meng Hao felt no joy. His heart only continued to sink as he contemplated the curse of Allheaven. He slowly strolled through the starry sky until he found the location where the Mountain and Sea Realm had once stood.

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Prizes update: One of the other prizes provided by me is a rendition of the Mountain and Sea Realm that I commissioned by a fantasy map artist. It shows the layout of the M&S Realm, and also features a map of Planet South Heaven, complete with little artistic depictions of the landmarks there. It will be provided as a high quality print to some contest winners.

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# Chapter 1588: Resurrecting Old Friends!

In the same moment that Meng Hao became the lord of the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, and then changed its name to the starry sky of the Mountains and Seas, in the boundless ruins outside, an eye appeared.

As the eye opened, countless surrounding ruins outside the Vast Expanse collapsed, creating a world of dust.

Only the eye remained, unmoving, bloodshot, looking off into the distance.

That eye seemed to contain an unmatched fury, and yet, deep within that fury was terror….

That eye was none other than Allheaven’s true form!

In the past, Allheaven’s flesh and blood had vanished, leaving behind only five fingers. Of those five fingers, three had been destroyed. The final two remained intact. However, because of the rise of Meng Hao, the finger which represented the Demon had experienced dramatic withering.

A similar fate had befallen the finger representing the Immortal.

As for this eye, it was clearly much, much weaker than it had been before Meng Hao had Transcended.

After a moment, a weak voice spoke, seemingly dragged and stretched out, distorted and filled with hatred. “Meng… Hao!”

If events had played out according to Allheaven’s plan, things would not have turned out this way. Meng Hao would not have Transcended, but instead, would have become the ninety-ninth Demon seed. Allheaven would have absorbed him, and the power of Nirvanic rebirth within the Allheaven bloodline, along with the multifarious magic of the Demon, would have enabled Allheaven to craft a new body for himself.

At that time, he would have been able to free himself from his ruined and withered body. He would have been able to appear once again within the starry sky, with an even longer lifespan than before. Instead, one thing after another went wrong.

Now that his clone had been destroyed, severed away from him, he was unable to enter the Vast Expanse. He could only wait outside. Wait for Meng Hao.

The enormous eye was now so bloodshot it was bright red, and the hate which festered inside of it became icy cold killing intent.

“There is still a chance… to succeed!”

After a very long moment passed, the eye slowly closed, vanishing.

Back within the starry sky of the Mountains and Seas, Meng Hao continued to contemplate the curse of Allheaven with furrowed brow. He sent his will out, performed auguries, and yet was unable to detect any clues.

“The curse of Allheaven, from when he was at his prime….” Meng Hao sighed. By this point, he had reached the former location of the Mountain and Sea Realm, a huge vortex which had previously teemed with life, but was now empty and gray.

Meng Hao looked at the spot fondly for a moment before waving his right hand. Instantly, dots of light appeared within the vortex, light that teemed with the power of life, like countless burning stars. Soon, all areas within the vortex teemed with life, and the entire vortex was shining with dazzling, brilliant colors.

This was where the Mountain and Sea Realm had existed in the past, and now, it would exist there again!

Meng Hao reached out and stretched open his palm. Scintillating light flickered as his newly created Transcendence Treasure appeared, the brand new Mountain and Sea Realm. It slowly floated down to hover just above the vortex. Inside the Mountain and Sea Realm, all of the cultivators were bursting with excitement.

Some even flew out to observe the vortex personally, whereupon tears welled up in their eyes.

“This is the Mountain and Sea Realm’s spot within the starry sky. This is our true home….”

“I was born in the Mountain and Sea Realm, and this was where the Mountain and Sea Realm was born….”

“Home!”

“We’re back! The people of the Mountains and Seas are back!” Ksitigarbha gazed at the vortex, and simply couldn’t suppress his excitement. Grandpa Meng, Fang Yu, Fatty, Wang Youcai, as well as all of Meng Hao’s other friends and relatives had similar reactions.

As everyone looked on in excitement, Meng Hao took a deep breath, then extended his right hand and pushed it down.

That motion affected only the vortex, not Meng Hao or the others in the Mountain and Sea Realm. Everyone watched as time began to flow backward, and the vortex slowly reverted to its previous gray color.

Then, centuries passed. Meng Hao and everyone watching could eventually see the Mountain and Sea Butterfly.

Countless scenes played out. Hearts began to pound as the events of the war could be seen. By now, people were starting to guess at what Meng Hao was about to do.

“This is where the Mountain and Sea Realm first appeared,” he said softly, looking at the images, “and now we’ve returned.

“Everything that was lost, everything that faded away into time, everything that was parted from us, will now return….

“By the power of my name, I reach out to everyone who died here, to everyone who lost their lives defending the Mountain and Sea Realm… and call them back!” With that, he waved his sleeve, causing the stars to tremble. The power of the starry sky of the Mountains and Seas filled the area, transforming into numerous Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering hands, which reached out into the images of the past. One by one, everyone who had died in the past was then pulled out!

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the first person emerged. It was none other than… Shui Dongliu!

In the moment before he exploded, he was rescued. After being pulled out of the vortex, he hovered there in the starry sky, shocked, a blank look on his face. It was as if what was occurring completely exceeded his imagination. Even the half of him that was the Mourning-Death soul seemed hard-pressed to believe what was happening.

More and more people appeared, more and more familiar faces. One by one, they were extracted from vortex of the past, to appear there floating in the starry sky, where they looked around in shocked silence.

The Mountain and Sea Lords, the Nine Seas God Worlds, the Sublime Flow Sword Grottos, the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rites, and countless other sects. There was the Imperial Li Clan from Planet South Heaven. There were many, many other individuals.

Meng Hao waved his finger, and a powerful but gentle force grabbed ahold of Paragon Sea Dream, pulling her out to join the crowd.

All the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators were panting, their eyes as wide as saucers as they watched the events unfold. As soon as Li Ling’er caught sight of Paragon Sea Dream, tears began to stream down her face. Fatty saw his Master, who had died in the fighting, and began to tremble. Wang Youcai, Zhixiang… everyone was equally excited.

“They’re being resurrected!!”

“Master!!”

“Dad, mom! You’re alive again!”

“My sect. All my fellow disciples. You’re all… back!!”

People were weeping and laughing. All cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm who were capable of flight immediately flew over to their resurrected family and friends, calling out in joy and excitement.

The resurrected ones were panting, looking around in complete incredulity. And yet, it was no dream!

Paragon Sea Dream looked at Li Ling’er, and then slowly turned her head. When she saw Meng Hao hovering there like a deity, a smile broke out on her face.

After a moment of silence, Shui Dongliu shook his head, then began to laugh at the top of his lungs.

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# Chapter 1589: Time is Limited!

Glittering lights filled the vortex that was the home of the Mountain and Sea Realm as more and more familiar faces were resurrected. Cheering could be heard everywhere as countless people who had fought in the war were now returned to life.

An old man appeared who was none other than Grandpa Fang. As soon as Meng Hao caught sight of him, a tremor ran through him, and he immediately rushed forward and kowtowed respectfully, tears streaming down his face.

Grandpa Fang looked around in confusion, but then saw Meng Hao, and a smile broke out on his face. The truth was that years ago, he had accomplished the final mission given to him by Shui Dongliu, which had been to infiltrate the 33 Heavens and cause their land masses to collide against each other. That was when he had truly died. Laughing, he helped his beloved grandson to his feet.

It was in that exact same moment that someone else emerged from within the vortex. As soon as she appeared, many people recognized her. She had once been the Divine Daughter of the Nine Seas God World… Fan Dong’er!

Actually, she hadn’t died in the war. The white-robed corpse which accompanied her had dragged her down into the very depths of the void. Now she emerged, trembling, looking over at Meng Hao, and then all the other people she knew, and all the people who were being resurrected. Tears streamed down her face.

As more people were brought back to life, the other excited cultivators explained everything which had happened in the past centuries. Eventually, after everyone had been resurrected, Meng Hao waved his hand again, and the vortex began to spin.

Soon it was whizzing at top speed, and Meng Hao’s eyes were glowing with powerful light. Back when he had only been half a step into the Ancestor Realm, there had been a certain person he had wished to resurrect but could not, a person who had come to be part of his heart long ago.

But now, he had consumed Allheaven’s clone, and stepped fully into the Ancestor Realm. Although he was not yet fully familiar with all of his powers, he was definitely far, far more powerful than he had been in the past.

Considering the current level of his cultivation base, it was even possible for him to resurrect people from ancient times!

“Foster father….” he said softly, gesturing at the vortex. Time flowed backward within the vortex, causing images to flit by until the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect appeared.

No one was more moved by the sight than Ke Jiusi, who trembled visibly as he looked at the vortex. The sight of the Ancient Demon Immortal Sect caused great waves of emotion to batter his heart. They were emotions that could not be understood by anyone who hadn’t experienced the loss of a father.

“Dad….” he said, his voice filled with emotion. Meng Hao performed an incantation gesture, then gestured once more with his finger. The vortex grew still as an ancient figure appeared. Gradually, his features became clear. It was… Ke Yunhai.

Slowly, Ke Yunhai was pulled out from the vortex to join everyone else.

Meng Hao had reached back countless years into the past to resurrect Ke Yunhai!

As Ke Yunhai hovered there, a blank look on his face, Ke Jiusi rushed forward, tears streaming down his face. He immediately dropped to his knees in front of his father.

“Dad!”

Meng Hao also hurried forward. Taking a deep breath, he fell to his knees in front of Ke Yunhai.

“Foster father!”

Ke Yunhai looked blankly at Ke Jiusi, and then closed his eyes. After a moment passed, they opened again, and he seemed to understand. A warm smile appeared on his face. Then he looked over at Meng Hao, and began to laugh.

It was an unbelievable event within the starry sky of the Mountains and Seas. Everyone who had died in the war came back to life. By the time he was finished, Meng Hao, despite his incredible power, was very tired.

But when he looked at the excited, happy cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm, he felt joy in his heart.

He placed the new Mountain and Sea Realm back into the place where the old one had existed. The newly resurrected individuals were taken by their family and friends back into the Mountain and Sea Realm, where they continued to learn about the events which had occurred in the centuries after their demise.

Time passed. Meng Hao didn’t travel around through the starry sky, but instead stayed in the Mountain and Sea Realm, with Xu Qing, with his father and mother, and with Ke Yunhai.

The new Mountain and Sea Realm continued to grow and develop. Within the Nine Mountains and Seas, the Mountain and Sea cultivators made new homes for themselves, and cultivated the magic of Meng Hao’s League of Demon Sealers.

The starry sky was quiet. The cultivators of the Vast Expanse School returned to Planet Vast Expanse, and as for all of the other living creatures, they also returned to their respective homes. All cultivators knew that the place where they lived was no longer called the Vast Expanse, it was the starry sky of the Mountains and Seas.

The will of the starry sky was not Allheaven, it was Meng Hao.

Meng Hao was the lord of the starry sky.

Because of that, the Mountain and Sea Realm became the ultimate power within the starry sky, and was like a Holy Land.

Days passed. Years passed. Few people ever saw Meng Hao. He stayed in the Mountain and Sea Realm, on the Ninth Mountain, where he lived quietly. Five hundred years went by in a flash.

During those five hundred years, Meng Hao seemed calm, but the truth was that he was constantly thinking about the curse which had been pronounced by Allheaven. There was one part which made him especially anxious, which had left a deep impression on him, and that was when Allheaven said, “time is limited.”

Meng Hao wanted to change things. He wanted to break the curse created by Allheaven when he was in his prime!

But no matter what methods he attempted during those five hundred years, he could do nothing of the sort. Despite being in the Ancestor Realm, he was a far cry from Allheaven in his prime.

Because of that gap, the curse… could not be broken.

During the five hundred years which passed, generation after generation of Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators were born. As time passed, Meng Hao intentionally began to erase the evidence of his existence. He forbade people from talking about him or spreading stories, hoping that such a tactic would reduce the number of people who were connected to him by Karma.

However, that was a difficult task to accomplish. After all, the most vile aspect of the curse was that it didn’t just affect people who were connected to Meng Hao by Karma, but people connected by two degrees and on.

The effects spread far and wide, and could not be negated.

During the five hundred years, the Mountain and Sea Realm continued to thrive, and yet there were also strange things which occurred, things which could not be ignored. For example… generally speaking, Nascent Soul cultivators were supposed to be able to live for four or five hundred years, but now, that number had decreased to around two hundred.

Furthermore, some cultivators who should clearly have been able to live for much longer, gradually weakened. Their longevity wasted away, and eventually… people began to die.

However, the general growth and expansion of the realm ensured that such things went unnoticed. Except by Meng Hao. He noticed.

Whenever a person died in such a fashion, he would appear by their corpse. Every single one of the corpses whose longevity had been severed had traces of the curse on them.

“Time… is limited,” he thought bitterly. Eventually, the day came when people he actually knew began to show the withering signs of age. By now, Meng Hao was getting very anxious.

He did everything he could think of. He used magical techniques. He created countless new natural laws. He did everything possible to weaken the power of the curse, and yet, he was unable to break it.

Because of what was happening, he even went outside the Vast Expanse. After all, since the curse had been cast by Allheaven, then Allheaven was the one who could break it. However, even after utilizing all of the power of his divine sense, he was unable to find Allheaven’s true form.

Apparently he was hiding, unwilling to fight the final battle with Meng Hao. Even though Allheaven’s true form was also weakening because of that, he still didn’t appear.

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# Chapter 1590: The End of a Generation

Meng Hao searched the area outside the Vast Expanse for a very, very long time. In the end, he could only chuckle bitterly, well aware that the reason Allheaven hadn’t appeared was because he wanted to see the limitations of time be inflicted on everyone Meng Hao was close to.

Meng Hao returned to the starry sky of the Mountains and Seas, and the Ninth Mountain. There, he went mad trying to create new natural laws that could break the curse. When Xu Qing saw him like this, her heart filled with pain, but there was nothing she could do to help. She could only accompany him silently.

“Time is limited….” he murmured. “Because of that, there is no reincarnation. One life is the end….” He had already come to realize that anyone who ever had anything to do with him would not be reincarnated after dying.

Time flowed by. Another five hundred years passed. It had already been a thousand years since Meng Hao had become the Lord of the Mountain and Sea Realm. During those thousand years, concerted effort resulted in fewer and fewer people knowing about him.

It was in the thousandth year that Paragon Sea Dream passed away again. Her death was a huge blow to Meng Hao’s heart. He stood quietly, looking at her corpse, and the flickering soul fire in his palm which was all that remained of her.

He quickly took that soul fire and sealed it, turning into a fist-sized block of ice. It was a soul seed… Paragon Sea Dream’s soul, which he had extracted in the last moment before she had died.

Over the course of the past thousand years, this was the only method he had been able to devise. He transformed the dead into soul seeds, which hoped to send back into the cycle of reincarnation after breaking the curse.

Li Ling’er was heartbroken by the departure of Sea Dream. After the thousand years which had passed, she was now older than ever.

The sight of Paragon Sea Dream’s corpse caused Meng Hao to sigh bitterly. Years ago, he had brought everyone back to life, but now, there was nothing he could do other than watch the effects of the curse spread.

After Paragon Sea Dream died, Meng Hao returned to the Ninth Mountain. There, he had erected a special mountain of ice in which to store the soul seeds. At the moment, it was possible to see tens of thousands of them, and it was easy to imagine how many more would come to fill it in the future. Eventually, more and more people would die, and he would be the only one remaining alive.

The mere thought left his heart quivering in fear. He held Xu Qing quietly in his arms, looking off into the distance. It didn’t matter that he was in the Ancestor Realm, he was still powerless to do anything.

More years passed, and Meng Hao went outside the Vast Expanse for a second time. He searched relentlessly, examining everything in detail, in ways that surpassed his previous efforts exponentially. In the end, though, he never found Allheaven.

Eventually, he came to hover in the starry sky outside the Vast Expanse. It was almost as if he could hear Allheaven laughing, a cold laughter filled with venom and hatred.

He remained there for some time before returning to the starry sky of the Mountains and Seas. However, he didn’t go to the Ninth Mountain. He had sensed something within his will, someone calling out to him from Planet Vast Expanse.

He vanished, and when he reappeared, he was there above Planet Vast Expanse. Down below was a sprawling desert, within which was an oasis, where a woman was looking up at him. She seemed dazzled, but quickly dropped to her knees to kowtow.

“Greetings, Demon Sovereign.”

Meng Hao floated down and landed in front of her. She was old now, and even the fact that she was a 9-Essences Paragon couldn’t hide the aura of decay which existed upon her. She was Immortal Bai Wuchen.

Back then, she had requested of Meng Hao that he take her outside the Vast Expanse, to her home.

Now, she was calling upon him, bowing to him, once again making her plea….

“Outside the Vast Expanse, there is nothing but ruins,” Meng Hao said quietly. It wasn’t that he didn’t want to accommodate her. Unfortunately, what existed within Bai Wuchen’s memories was an illusion.

Immortal Bai Wuchen was quiet for a moment, then gritted her teeth and looked up. “Ruins or not, I want to go!”

Meng Hao closed his eyes for a moment, then sighed. Opening his eyes, he waved his hand, and a vortex appeared next to Bai Wuchen. Immediately, she disappeared into it, on her way to the area outside the Vast Expanse.

“See for yourself,” he said. “If you want to come back, just call upon my name.” He stood there in the oasis for a moment, looking at the spot where Immortal Bai Wuchen had disappeared. Then he looked over at the ninth continent, and the Ninth Sect. As of this very moment, there was a young woman there who was the center of all attention, standing at the very peak of the tallest tower. Bells were tolling throughout the sect.

That young woman was Perfect.

When Meng Hao looked at her, it was with warmth and love. Perfect knew about her past. Meng Hao had visited her a thousand years ago to explain everything.

He had given her a choice: remain in the Ninth Sect, or return with him to the Mountain and Sea Realm.

She had chosen to remain where she was.

Although he had never personally returned to Planet Vast Expanse during the thousand years which had passed, he had often sent his will to watch over Perfect.

Every time he saw her, he would think about a woman sleeping in a coffin in the Violet Fate Sect on Planet South Heaven.

As he looked over at his daughter standing there at the peak of the world, he looked especially bleak. Then he saw her smiling, and he also smiled. It was a lonely smile that lasted for a long moment. Eventually, he turned and left.

Time passed. Another thousand years.

By now, over two thousand years had passed since Meng Hao had founded the starry sky of the Mountains and Seas. After all the time which had passed few people remembered who he was. A situation arose which was very similar to the situation when Meng Hao had made his rise in the world of cultivation. Few people knew that the will of the starry sky actually had a name. Meng Hao.

During those thousand years, the power of the curse grew especially potent. One by one, all of the cultivators he had resurrected from the past began to die…. Although it appeared on the surface that it was simply a matter of their longevity coming to an end, leading them to a natural death, Meng Hao knew that they should have been able to live longer. And although they should not have been able to live forever, they should at least have been able to enter the cycle of reincarnation.

But now, they only had one life to live.

Meng Hao often wondered what would have happened if he hadn’t resurrected all of them. But in the end, he realized that even if he hadn’t resurrected them, they still wouldn’t have been able to enter reincarnation.

The power of this curse enabled Meng Hao to finally comprehend how strong Allheaven had been in his prime.

Thankfully, he did resurrect them. Thankfully, he was able to spend some time with them before they died. Thankfully, he was able to take their soul seeds and place them in the ice mountain. Every time he looked at the growing collection of soul seeds, he felt a wave of bitterness wash through him….

One year, Li Ling’er closed her eyes and never opened them.

One year, Zhixiang, her hair as white as frost, ran out of longevity….

When Li Ling’er closed her eyes, Meng Hao and Xu Qing were there with her. She was the only surviving member of the Li Clan. The rest had all left with Choumen Tai. Even back during the war, she had always chosen to remain with the Mountain and Sea Realm. It was her home.

She had never taken a Daoist partner. She died alone.

Xu Qing cried. Her hair was now graying, and her skin was wrinkled. She held Li Ling’er’s hand, and her tears fell, splashing like rose petals onto their skin.

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# Chapter 1591: Shui Dongliu’s Jade Slip

Zhixiang was beautiful. She had been beautiful when she was young, and even in her old age, her hair white, her face full of wrinkles, she was still beautiful.

During those thousand years, one person after another passed away.

Every time someone familiar to him closed their eyes for the final time, Meng Hao’s pain grew. Sometimes he laughed bitterly. He could seal the Heavens, but when it came to this curse, he was helpless.

The curse of Allheaven was a torment. It was a torment to whoever had killed him. That person would remain alone for all time, watching time pass, watching the blue seas turn into lush fields.

It was a tactic, a scheme. When Allheaven grew incredibly weak, he could use that scheming tactic to cause his enemy’s heart to rot.

It was only by such means that Allheaven would have a chance at victory!

Meng Hao was well aware of this fact. However, he couldn’t simply turn off his feelings. He couldn’t disregard what was happening. When his foster father Ke Yunhai eventually grew weak and approached death, he wept. He knelt in front of Ke Yunhai’s bed like a child, tears flowing.

“Why are you crying…?” Ke Yunhai said, his voice soft with love. “I’ve been able to live for thousands of years. I’ve been able to spend time with you, and with Jiusi. I’m content with that….” He reached out and patted Meng Hao’s head, and then the light in his eyes slowly faded away.

Throughout those thousand years, many people died. Overall, though, the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm grew strong. Many powerful experts appeared. As for the members of the older generation, as they became aware of the situation with the curse, they also withdrew from the public. Soon, there really was a brand new Mountain and Sea Realm.

Wars began, wars fought between the Mountains and Seas. Because of the natural laws of the realm, though, such wars were limited in scope.

Years passed. Another thousand. One by one, the older cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm passed away. Ksitigarbha was among them.

Before his time came, he went to see Meng Hao and Xu Qing. His face was old, and filled with a warmth and kindness that he rarely let others see.

The very night he came to see them, he slipped away quietly into death.

Next was Grandpa Meng, and after him, Grandpa Fang. Then Fan Dong’er. One by one, Meng Hao’s fellow clan members died, as did his friends. Each death was like a knife that stabbed him in the heart.

By this time, Xu Qing’s hair was white. And yet, she didn’t die. Meng Hao fed her with his own blood, which was rich with life force.

But that didn’t stop her from withering with age. Eventually, it reached the point where she could do little more than lay in bed. Despite that, her tender feelings for Meng Hao never left her eyes. It was as if looking at him for an entire lifetime wasn’t enough for her.

And yet, she didn’t seem resentful. Instead, she was content to have been able to spend the past thousands of years with him. The only thing she regretted was that she had not borne him any children. It wasn’t that she didn’t want to. Rather, she chose not to.

She didn’t want her own children to suffer under the ravages of the curse….

Time turned into a river that flowed by ever-so-slowly. Another thousand years passed. By now, the number of people who had passed away was unthinkable. Countless cultivators of the older generation had returned to the dust. Only a handful of people who had fought in the ancient Mountain and Sea War remained.

Shui Dongliu managed to hold on for thousands of years. But eventually, he too was forced to close his eyes in death. Before passing away, he smiled, and pressed a jade slip into Meng Hao's palm. Then he looked at Meng Hao, wise and farsighted light flickering in his eyes.

"Don't forget…. After you look at that jade slip, commit its contents to heart, and then destroy it. They are my deductions regarding… the method to lift the curse!"

After taking the jade slip, Meng Hao collected Shui Dongliu's soul seed and took it to the ice mountain. He examined the jade slip, then destroyed it. The gleam of obsession could be seen deep in his eyes.

More time passed. The few people who had managed to hold on for this long were finally succumbing to their longevity. Eventually, Patriarch Reliance chose to enter a state of deep slumber, which would extend his life to an almost unlimited degree.

A few hundred years later, one of Meng Hao's immediate family members left him.

It was Fang Yu, his older sister. She and Sun Hai had held on for many years, enduring the pain of watching entire generations of their children die one after another.

When the last of their beloved offspring passed away, they closed their eyes, held hands, and died together as husband and wife.

After collecting their soul strands, Meng Hao stood there quietly for a long time, thinking about past times. He thought about how his sister had always protected him. He didn't realize it, but tears welled up in his eyes until they spilled down his cheeks. Off to the side were his parents, overwhelmed with grief, weeping.

Deep in his heart, Meng Hao said, “I swear that I will start the cycle of reincarnation again… for all of you!”

After Fang Yu and Sun Hai died, six hundred years passed. By that time, there were only a few people in the Mountain and Sea Realm who remained from that early group. Other than Xu Qing, Meng Hao, and Meng Hao’s parents, there was Wang Youcai, Fatty, Dong Hu, and Pill Demon. There was also Chu Yuyan, although she was still unwilling to awaken.

Everyone else had returned to the dust, their soul seeds taken away by Meng Hao.

Because of Meng Hao’s blood, Xu Qing barely held on. Meng Hao’s parents were sustained because of having fused with the Mountain and Sea Butterfly. Dong Hu managed to hang on because of the miraculous pearl. As for Pill Demon, he was the incarnation of a medicinal pill, and was thus able to endure longer than most.

The first to give out was Wang Youcai. When his longevity ran out, he died laughing. Meng Hao felt stabs of pain in his heart. He placed Wang Youcai’s soul seed in the ice cave, and once again he wept.

However, even more painful than the death of Wang Youcai was… Fatty.

He and Fatty had been brothers for life. They began to walk the path of cultivation together, all the way down to this day. On the eve of Fatty’s death, he was no longer fat. His body had wasted away until he was little more than skin and bones. He had watched all of his wives pass away, and all of his sons and daughters.

As he lay there quietly looking at Meng Hao, he wanted to laugh, but couldn’t find the energy.

“Fudge…. Meng Hao, you have to take out Allheaven for me…. You have to win. When you finally manage to break the curse and send me into reincarnation, make sure I remember my previous life….” Fatty took his last breath, and used it to let out a powerful shout. Having expended his last bit of energy, he closed his eyes.

That year, many wrinkles appeared on Meng Hao's face.

Compared to the Mountain and Sea Realm, far fewer deaths occurred on Planet Vast Expanse. Although they did occur, because the Karmic connections there were not as deep, it did not affect a significant number of people. As for the few whose Karmic connections to Meng Hao were strong, they too would have a limited lifespan. However, since they had such strong cultivation bases, their lifespans had not come to an end as of yet.

Furthermore, if they could reach Transcendence, then the curse would not affect them.

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1592: Same Scenery, Filled with Strangers

Gone…. Everyone had gone.

Meng Hao suddenly aged visibly. He returned silently to the Ninth Mountain, to Xu Qing's bedside, who looked very, very old. He looked at her

“Why don't you just… let me go…?” she said softly, her voice hoarse.

Meng Hao shivered, but didn't respond. He continued to feed her his blood, which was the only thing keeping her alive.

Xu Qing went back to sleep. Meng Hao stood there looking at her, his eyes bloodshot. After a long moment passed, he turned and walked out of the room. Gazing up in the sky, his eyes flickered with the light of augury as he once again tried to come up with a way to keep his loved ones alive for longer, something other than the soul seeds.

Three hundred years passed, and Pill Demon died….

In that moment, he transformed into a decayed medicinal pill, which was his soul seed. The sight of it left Meng Hao weeping as he thought back to everything which had occurred in the past.

He carefully placed the medicinal pill into the ice mountain, checked in on Xu Qing, and continued to make augury calculations to try to come up with a solution.

Two hundred years later, Dong Hu's time came….

In the moments before death, he gave a pearl to Meng Hao and explained that he had been feeding it for his entire life. He had been preparing it for someone else, and that someone was Meng Hao.

As the pearl floated in front of Meng Hao, the parrot flew out. Neither the parrot nor the meat jelly had appeared during the past several thousand years. When they looked at Meng Hao in his grief, they felt that same grief rising up within their own hearts. Unfortunately, there was nothing they could do to help.

The parrot took the pearl and placed it into a certain spot on the copper mirror, and the two fused together. Radiant light glittered, and yet, Meng Hao didn't pay it any attention.

"Gone," he murmured. "They're all gone…." He went back to his augury.

Time passed. Another thousand years. By this point, it had been seven thousand years since Meng Hao had become the lord of the starry sky. During those seven thousand years, he had never made any public appearances. Most people had forgotten his name, and those who did remember had begun to speculate that Meng Hao… had left the starry sky.

For the most part, people weren't aware of how certain individuals were dying in an unusual fashion. However, there were a few people, like Jin Yunshan and the others on Planet Vast Expanse, who did notice.

They weren't completely sure though, and didn't dare to state their speculations out loud. Ambitions rose up in their hearts, but they suppressed them and continued to wait.

In the Mountain and Sea Realm, on the Ninth Mountain, Xu Qing hovered on the brink of death. Even with Meng Hao's blood, she wouldn't be able to hang on for much longer. The truth was that she should have died long ago.

It was at this point that Meng Hao thought about how Patriarch Reliance had intentionally gone into a state of slumber, and suddenly came up with a new idea. He took a trip outside of the starry sky of the Mountains and

Seas, and upon returning, stood there by Xu Qing's side for a long moment, his eyes closed. A long moment passed, and he opened his eyes.

"Qing'er," he said quietly. "Close your eyes and sleep…. I'll wake you up soon." With that, he reached out and pushed his hand down onto her forehead.

She smiled and closed her eyes. She wasn't dead. She continued to breathe as Meng Hao drew upon his personal Essence to pour power into her. She gradually reverted from her ancient appearance back to her youthful self. It only took a moment for her to be radiantly beautiful once again.

At the same time, an icy coldness passed from Meng Hao's hand into her body. Cracking sounds could be heard as layers of ice formed. Gradually, ice came to cover her completely, forming the shape of a coffin.

There Xu Qing lay, inside the coffin, sleeping, sealed with ice.

This was the final method Meng Hao had devised, something different from the soul seeds which could be sent back into reincarnation. After thousands of years of augury calculations, this was the best method he could come up with, something very taxing to himself, something that used numerous natural laws combined with Heaven-Sealing magic.

He had… separated her from the curse!

He used ice to create a tiny world the size of a coffin. Whoever slept inside that coffin would be free from the effects of the curse.

This method also had something to do with his observations of his own Dao Essence, and the world which existed inside of him. He had thought of taking people into that world inside of him to separate them from the curse, but was unable. He was in the Ancestor Realm, and yet, that world inside of him was incomplete.

He gazed at Xu Qing there within the ice coffin, then went to another location on the Ninth Mountain, where his parents lived.

His parents were the only loved ones he had left in the world.

After explaining his plan regarding the ice seal, Meng Hao's parents sat there silently. A long time passed before they exchanged a glance, then looked back at Meng Hao and shook their heads.

They did not wish to continue living in such a manner. They would rather reach the end of their lives together. After all the years which had passed, and everything they had been through, they were content for things to end.

Having watched as Meng Hao climbed to the absolute pinnacle, they had no regrets.

Meng Hao continued to try to persuade them until his father's temper sparked. Meng Hao lapsed into silence. He could tell that his parents' decision was final. In the following years, he spent as much time as he could with them there in the Mountain and Sea Realm. Another thousand years passed.

Finally, Meng Hao watched through tear-filled eyes as his parents transformed into the Mountain and Sea Butterfly, and then gradually began to fade away. However, in the moment before it disappeared, Meng Hao's eyes flashed with determination. His right hand flashed in an incantation gesture, and the power of his Dao Essence erupted out. Coldness filled the area, and cracking sounds could be heard. In the blink of an eye, the area was completely sealed in ice.

The frozen Mountain and Sea Butterfly began to shrink down until it was a coffin, which Meng Hao carefully picked up.

He knew that the real reason his parents had refused was that they didn't want him to waste any of his Essence power. They were worried that he would harm himself in order to help them.

They were willing to sacrifice anything for their son. That was the reason for their decision.

But Meng Hao was willing to do the same for his parents. They were the two most important people in his life, and thus, he made his own decision.

He placed the Mountain and Sea Butterfly’s ice coffin next to Xu Qing’s. Those two coffins contained the people in his life that he simply couldn’t part with.

Grief, pain, and loneliness rose up like the tide, completely engulfing him. He sat down quietly, and let time pass, just like it always had.

He sat there for a thousand years. By now, he had been the lord of the starry sky for ten thousand years. Finally, he placed protective seals on the soul seeds and the coffins, then walked out and looked at the Mountain and Sea Realm. Everything looked unfamiliar to him now.

“I watch the blue seas become lush fields,” he murmured. “Same scenery, but filled with strangers….”

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1593: Loneliness

Years had passed. A thousand. Two thousand. Three thousand.

Five thousand years had gone by in a flash.

After ten thousand years in which Meng Hao never appeared in public, his name had largely been forgotten by the successive generations of cultivators.

All of the older generation in the Mountain and Sea Realm had returned to the dust, and virtually no one now living had ever even heard of Meng Hao.

During the ten thousand years, it wasn’t just people in the Mountain and Sea Realm who died. Cultivators passed away in other parts of the starry sky, such as in the Vast Expanse School, although the effects in those other places weren’t as pronounced.

In the current starry sky of the Mountains and Seas, few people were aware that the starry sky even had a will of its own. People even stopped telling stories about the battle ten thousand years before, between Meng Hao and Allheaven.

There was a very, very small group of people who remembered, but most of them were Paragons. Because the Karma connecting them to Meng Hao wasn’t very profound, and because of their incredible cultivation bases, the power of the curse didn’t affect them in a significant way.

After several thousand years, Perfect’s longevity eventually ran out. Meng Hao collected her soul seed and sealed it in the ice mountain. That ice mountain contained all of the memories of Meng Hao’s entire life. Everyone he cared about, all of the good things, were there. That ice cave was also his weak spot.

He spent most of his time sitting at the foot of the ice mountain, with only his memories to accompany him.

Occasionally he would go out into the Mountain and Sea Realm. However, every time he did, things seemed unfamiliar. He almost felt as if he wasn’t even a part of the world any more.

Although he wasn’t aware of it, there was something building up within him, something that could only be described by a single word. Loneliness. And it was growing stronger.

He was the most powerful entity within the starry sky, but the feeling of loneliness only continued to grow. He never aged, and yet he felt more and more tired.

His body was not growing older, but his heart was. And he could do nothing to change that.

Years marched along within the starry sky, faster and faster. Meng Hao felt as if those years were passing him by. All he could do was sit and watch them go. He looked at the living creatures that existed within the starry sky. He watched generations come and go. He saw gifted and talented individuals rise to glory. He saw people that others would call inhuman. He saw new powerful experts make names for themselves.

The Mountain and Sea Realm continued to prosper. Few people bore the mark of the curse any more. As people forgot Meng Hao, the Karma connecting them to him grew faint. Although many of them still had slightly limited longevity, their speed of cultivation was greatly enhanced because of living in the precious treasure that was the Mountain and Sea Realm.

In the Nine Mountains and Seas, the natural laws were based on the nine great Hexing magics of the League of Demon Sealers. Because of that, it was much easier to reach the Dao Realm. In fact, throughout the ten thousand years which had passed, numerous outstanding cultivators had risen up. They created cultivation techniques unique to their generation, and also invented many, many new divine abilities.

Throughout the millennia, the cultivators from the Mountain and Sea Realm were always considered to be one of the most powerful forces within the starry sky of the Mountains and Seas. Eventually, wild ambitions began to grow within the hearts of many cultivators. It was hard to say when exactly it began, but eventually they began to expand, and to subjugate one group of life forms after another within the starry sky.

Meng Hao watched it happen. He watched the wars being fought. He even strolled through battlefields sometimes, watching the Mountain and Sea cultivators die, watching the other living beings die. He watched the blood flow, and smelled the stench of gore.

He watched it all, but did nothing. He didn’t help either side, and certainly didn’t fight.

This was the path the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm had chosen, and he wouldn’t interfere. As for exactly how it would all turn out, he wasn’t sure.

As the Mountain and Sea Realm waged war, its people grew stronger. They encountered many critical situations.

To Meng Hao, none of that was very important. The people he cared about were all gone, leaving him alone within Heaven and Earth.

One year, when he went out into the Mountain and Sea Realm, he seemed like an old man. No one could detect his passage, not even the newly arisen Paragons of the realm.

His destination was Planet South Heaven, and the Violet Fate Sect. There were only a few things within the starry sky that Meng Hao cared about any more. One was the gradually weakening Patriarch Reliance. The other was in the Violet Fate Sect, where a woman rested in slumber, ever resistant to the idea of awakening.

Whenever Meng Hao thought about Chu Yuyan, his expression grew grimmer than usual.

Dark clouds filled the sky above Planet South Heaven. Snow began to fall, and as the snowflakes accumulated on the various mortal kingdoms down below, the world turned white.

Down below on one of the public highways, a horse-drawn carriage sped along through the night. Within the carriage was a scholar, reading a book by the light of an oil lamp.

Meng Hao hovered up above, watching the snow fall, and watching the carriage speed along across the highway. He looked at the scholar, and couldn’t help but think of that time he had traveled through a snowy night in the State of Zhao.[1]

He sighed, and then continued along his way to the Violet Fate Sect.

The Violet Fate Sect was the most illustrious and famous sect on Planet South Heaven, filled with countless disciples. Within that sect was a mountain that had once been called a Holy Land.

That mountain had no peak, only a basin. It was a place that, throughout all the countless years which had passed, had come to be a restricted area. Not a single person from the Violet Fate Sect had ever set foot inside. The primary rule of the sect was that no one was allowed to go there. Many disciples of the Violet Fate Sect had speculated what was inside, and countless rumors existed about the subject.

Some of the stories were beautiful, and some were vile. Because of all the rumors, that mountain had become the most mysterious of places. For generation after generation, cultivators had stood guard around that mountain, although none of them knew exactly what they were guarding.

They only knew that no one was allowed to climb to the top. If anyone tried to do so, they would reach a certain point halfway up where progress was impossible. Likewise, anyone who looked at the mountain from up above would only see rippling distortions.

Years ago, one of the most powerful Paragons of the Mountain and Sea Realm had come to the conclusion that an ancient precious treasure was buried there. He even gathered an army to go to the mountain and take away the treasure.

However, not even that Paragon was able to get more than half way up the mountain.

Because of that, the mountain came to be known, not as a Holy Land, but as a restricted area. It was also the most mysterious location in all of the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Meng Hao appeared at the bottom of the mountain, and looked up toward the top. This was not his first time coming here. After Xu Qing left, and after everyone else he knew had died, he had come to visit.

This was actually his third time coming. He quietly took a step forward as he began to climb the mountain. No one saw him, and no one could detect his presence. He walked slowly, taking one step at a time as he headed toward the top.

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# Chapter 1594: Buried Within Time

The top of the mountain looked the same as it always had. It was separate from the world, as beautiful as a painting.

As soon as Meng Hao reached the top, he could see a coffin off in the distance, a coffin that was… empty!

It was not his first time looking at the empty coffin. He had come here after Xu Qing slipped into her final slumber, which was when he had discovered that no one occupied the coffin anymore.

Chu Yuyan had vanished.

As for where she had gone to, no one knew, not even Meng Hao. Back when he first made the shocking discovery, he had stood there looking at it, his heart equally empty.

Chu Yuyan could not have simply left on her own. Considering the level of Meng Hao’s cultivation base, and given the fact that he was the lord of the starry sky, he should have been able to detect her presence.

But she was nowhere to be found.

The only explanation was that she had somehow left when he was making the ice coffins with his Dao Essence. Because all of his energy and concentration had been focused on the task at hand, he hadn’t been paying attention to anything else. Something unexpected must have occurred with Chu Yuyan during that time.

Even still, it didn’t make sense that he wouldn’t have noticed. Unless… Chu Yuyan didn’t leave on her own. Unless… someone came and took her away.

Whoever it was couldn't be Allheaven, because he couldn't enter this starry sky. It must have been someone else.

That person's cultivation base… would either have to be at the same level as Meng Hao's, or at least very close.

There were some clues left behind. Although they were faint to the extreme, Meng Hao was the lord of the starry sky, a powerful expert in the Ancestor Realm. If he wanted to know something, then only someone with a cultivation base higher than his would be able to conceal it from him and leave behind no clues.

But there were clues, and from them, Meng Hao was able to determine that whoever had taken away Chu Yuyan had no ill intentions.

Based on the auguries he had performed, he had come to be convinced that Chu Yuyan being taken away was unprecedented good fortune for her. He even had the feeling that he might run into her again in the future.

Because of that, he had chosen not to interfere. Instead, he allowed the place to simply remained sealed away like it had been before.

After climbing the mountain, he walked up to the coffin and looked down into its emptiness. Memories flickered within his eyes, and eventually he sighed. It was almost as if he could hear the gentle voice of a young woman speaking to him.

"Master, promise me that you'll tell me the second half of the story one day."

Meng Hao felt emptier than ever. When Xu Qing fell into slumber, she took away his heart. As he stood there thinking about Chu Yuyan, it was as if his will had also been taken away.

Time passed, and Meng Hao looked older than ever. He looked up into the sky, completely engulfed by loneliness.

Eventually, he left. He strolled through the Mountain and Sea Realm, visiting the Mountains, going to the Seas. Eventually, he reached the Ninth Sea. There he stopped and looked down.

The Ninth Sea was more than half dried up. Guyiding Tri-Rain was connected to Meng Hao by Karma, and was thus subject to the effects of the curse. Just like Patriarch Reliance, she had chosen to enter a state of sleep, allowing her to prolong her life.

When he looked at the Ninth Sea, he could still sense faint fluctuations coming from Guyiding Tri-Rain. Gradually, his heart began to grow calm. He proceeded along, returning to the Ninth Mountain, and the ice cave where all his memories lay. He sat down cross-legged next to the ice coffins which contained his parents and Xu Qing, and his eyes flickered with focus and obsession.

After all the time that had passed, he still hadn't given up on the idea of breaking the curse of Allheaven.

Recently, a new idea had occurred to him, an idea that seemed like madness.

"After the Nine Demon Sealing Hexes, I wonder if there… is actually a Tenth Hex!"

Time continued to pass. A thousand years. Two thousand. Three thousand….

By now, twenty thousand years had passed since Meng Hao's battle with Allheaven. During that time, many of the people he had known in the Vast Expanse School died.

It would be easier to find a phoenix feather or a qilin horn than to find people within the starry sky of the Mountains and Seas who remembered Meng Hao. Any who did exist were ancient, eccentric beings.

During the second ten-thousand-year-period, the Mountain and Sea Realm continued to expand. It grew more powerful, but at the same time, more corrupt. The Nine Mountains became nine separate factions who schemed and fought amongst each other.

It reached the point where they even wanted to part ways from each other. Were it not for the fact that the Nine Mountains and Seas were fundamentally incapable of being separated, they definitely would have split apart. Of course, the schisms were not physical, but within the hearts of the people in the realm.

Shields were erected between the Nine Mountains and Seas. In the past, they all had dealings with each other, but now they became separate worlds. The only way to pass from one to another was by fighting and killing.

The expansion outside of the Mountain and Sea Realm was similarly divided.

As more and more living beings were subjugated, the Mountain and Sea Realm eventually reached a peak state similar to when it had ruled the 3,000 Lower Realms in the past. In fact, they even surpassed that state, and came to rule tens of thousands of other types of life forms.

There was another power within the starry sky. During the first ten thousand years, it had remained relatively subdued. But in the second, it experienced explosive expansion. It was… the Vast Expanse School!

The Vast Expanse School had been the number one power in years past, and during the second period of ten thousand years, it began to expand again. It swept across the starry sky, becoming just as illustrious as the Mountain and Sea Realm. Eventually, the starry sky was split in two.

As would be expected, friction arose. Smaller conflicts grew more intense, until eventually the two powers came to be as incompatible as fire and water.

More and more powerful experts arose. The Mountain and Sea Realm had full access to all of the powers provided by the precious treasure that was the realm itself. However, even though the older generation had all died, the new experts still were affected by Karma, and had significantly shorter longevity. Because of that, although their powerful experts were numerous, there was still a limit to their overall number.

The Vast Expanse School was in a similar situation. The most powerful experts of the older generation were either dead or in secluded meditation. They had no precious treasure like the Mountain and Sea Realm, but their powerful experts could live longer. In the end, neither side had a clear advantage, and they were relatively evenly matched.

However, the number of Paragons who rose up during that twenty thousand years vastly exceeded the number from previous times. Not counting their secret reserve forces, each of the two powers had over two hundred 9-Essences Paragons.

Because of that, the fighting grew more intense, until eventually, full-scale war erupted.

Meng Hao didn’t pay attention to any of that. He sat in secluded meditation, forgotten by the world.

By now, the very few people who actually remembered him all assumed that he had long since left this starry sky.

After all, it had been many, many years since he made any public appearances. His stories, his legend, was a thing from ancient times, buried within the depths of the past.

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# Chapter 1595: Someone Transcends!

The war between the Mountain and Sea Realm and the Vast Expanse School went on for a thousand years, and yet neither side could wipe the other out. In the end, they called a truce. The number of cultivators who died was beyond calculation.

The only reason the truce had been called was because of the innumerable casualties. The enmity between the two forces was like an ocean of blood, a Gordian knot that could never be unravelled.

Time passed. Another five thousand years went by, and Meng Hao never came out of seclusion. He almost seemed to be sleeping, but the truth was that he was sitting there cross-legged, constantly analyzing the problem of the curse. At the same time, he was solidifying his place within the Ancestor Realm.

He gave up on any attempts to look for Allheaven outside the Vast Expanse. Years ago, he had been very anxious to fight, but now he realized that only one who needed to be anxious was Allheaven, not himself.

“You want to hide? Hide then. I’ll give you plenty of time. Grief will continue to waste away at my heart, but at the same time, you will continue to weaken.” Meng Hao didn’t even open his eyes. He remained there on the Ninth Mountain, allowing time to pass.

Another five thousand years went by. By now, thirty thousand years had passed since the battle between Meng Hao and Allheaven. After spending a thousand years recovering and rebuilding, the Mountain and Sea Realm and the Vast Expanse School began to fight their second full-scale war.

This war was even more intense than the first one. In the first war, the two forces had been relatively evenly matched, but now the situation had changed. The tide of battle had shifted in favor of the Vast Expanse School, the reason being that one of their Patriarchs had joined the fighting!

That Patriarch had lived for many, many years, for so long, in fact, that many people had completely forgotten about him. To most, he was a person of the past, a person who existed only in legend.

His name was Sha Jiudong!

He had not died during his thirty thousand years of meditation. He finally emerged, his cultivation base having reached a shocking level. He was now very, very old, so much so that he emanated an aura of rot and death. Despite that, he single-handedly slaughtered numerous 9-Essences Paragons from the Mountain and Sea Realm.

He alone changed the entire course of the war. His seeming invincibility struck despair into the hearts of his enemies.

His ancient body seemed to contain limitless power, but when he looked at the Mountain and Sea cultivators, it was always with mixed emotions. He seemed to be thinking about the past, as if some terrifying and horrific entity existed deep within his gaze.

When Sha Jiudong joined the fighting, the Mountain and Sea cultivators instantly suffered a huge defeat. They were beaten back over and over by the army of the Vast Expanse School, until they were just outside their home. Slaughter ensued outside of the Nine Mountains and Nine Seas.

It was at this point, when the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators were in complete despair, that Sha Jiudong gritted his teeth and prepared to lead the charge into the realm. However, as soon as he actually entered the borders, the Nine Mountains and Nine Seas began to tremble, and power rose up that caused all cultivators to shake. That power came from the Nine Mountains and Nine Seas themselves.

It was something that could shake Heaven and Earth, and caused the entire starry sky to fill with rumbling sounds. The Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators were instantly enlivened.

“That’s… the power of our ancestor?”

“I heard a story once that the Mountain and Sea Realm is actually a precious treasure, created by some ancestor in ancient times!”

While the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators reveled in their excitement, Sha Jiudong let out an anguished cry. The explosive power he felt from the Mountain and Sea Realm left him trembling. He immediately fell back at top speed.

“My mistake. My mistake! Please, spare me, for old times’ sake!” Sha Jiudong was overwhelmed by fear and terror, and immediately began to beg for his life. The same fear from thirty thousand years ago still existed within his heart.

However, almost as soon as the words left his mouth, he sensed that this power did not come from Meng Hao, but from the Mountain and Sea Realm itself. He suddenly began to laugh bitterly.

“So, it’s not even you that’s trying to kill me. You’re not even here anymore. What’s trying to kill me is simply the power of the precious treasure you left behind. I, Sha Jiudong, have a cultivation base that borders on Transcendence. And yet I can’t even fight back against the precious treasure you left behind to–”

Before he could even retreat any further, all of the cultivators, both from the Mountains and Seas and the Vast Expanse School, watched as this seemingly invincible eccentric was enveloped by the pursuing power of the Nine Mountains and Nine Seas. That power transformed into the image of a mountain and a sea, which then crushed down onto Sha Jiudong.

A boom echoed out in all directions, shaking everyone. When the image of the mountain and the sea faded away, the only thing that remained of Sha Jiudong was a bloody paste.

He had been killed in body and soul!

Despite his incredible level of power, he had been cut down by a single attack.

His death caused the entire battlefield to go completely silent. The cultivators from the Vast Expanse School started trembling, and then shouting out in alarm. They knew they had been completely routed, and when they looked at the Nine Mountains and Nine Seas, it was with utter dread.

In direct contrast, the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm were overjoyed. They almost couldn't believe what they had just seen, and suddenly realized that there were things about their own home that they didn't fully comprehend.

That was even more so considering that many people had heard the words Sha Jiudong spoke in the moments before he died. They could tell that he was terrified, and yet, no one was sure who it was that he had been talking to.

Apparently it was someone from long ago, someone who had intentionally disappeared. Apparently, it was a supremely glorious figure who no one remembered.

And thus ended the war. As for Meng Hao, he remained in seclusion. He opened his eyes, and when he looked out at the starry sky, his gaze seemed profoundly ancient. After a moment passed, he closed his eyes and went back to meditating.

Sha Jiudong's dying words seemed to open up a new world for the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators. In the following several thousand years, many people began to research the history of their home, to search for how it all began. They gave up on expansion, and gave up on any attempts to wage war with the Vast Expanse School. Instead, they focused on tracing their history back to its roots.

Time passed. A fourth period of ten thousand years went by.

The Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators remained introspective, but the Vast Expanse School was the opposite. They swept through the starry sky, taking over more territory, although they always hesitated about whether to do something about the Mountain and Sea Realm.

That hesitation lasted for ten thousand years. But then, another of the Vast Expanse School’s Patriarchs underwent a shocking transformation.

The person who emerged from seclusion was ancient, and wore a golden robe. Everyone referred to him as Patriarch Goldrobes. It was none other than Jin Yunshan.

The starry sky was completely shaken. Countless living beings trembled, and all cultivators could feel the aura of Transcendence emanating out from the Vast Expanse School.

Tens of thousands of years had passed, and Jin Yunshan was one of the few people still alive who remembered the events of the past. He had experienced the baptism of the Transcendence Dais, and had followed Meng Hao into war. He had seen Meng Hao fighting, and had been profoundly influenced by him.

In the end, after tens of thousands of years had passed, just when his longevity was about to run out, his fleshly body reached Transcendence. He reached a state similar to Nine Seals all those years ago. He had taken his first step along the path of Transcendence. Soon after, he even managed to make a cultivation base breakthrough.

The only thing he lacked was a Transcendent soul. However, the soul was the most difficult step to take. Although his terrifying power hadn’t reached the absolute peak, with a Transcendent fleshly body and cultivation base, he was already more than half a step to completion. He could truly be listed among those who had Transcended.

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# Chapter 1596: Goldrobes Covets the Mountains and Seas!

After reaching that incredibly high level and emerging from secluded meditation, Jin Yunshan rocked the entire Vast Expanse School, and even the starry sky as a whole. The first thing he did after emerging was begin to challenge all of the peak 9-Essences experts to battle.

It didn’t matter if they were people from the past, or people who had risen up in recent millennia, he challenged all of them. Shockingly, the first person on his list was the former Sect Leader of the Vast Expanse School.

However, upon reaching the Sect Leader’s secluded meditation facilities, he stood there silently. After sensing the fluctuations of death from inside, he realized that the Sect Leader had long since returned to the dust.

Much to the excitement of all the cultivators of the Vast Expanse School, he left Planet Vast Expanse and found the old lizard, then the enormous head, and finally the termite queen.

He gained victory three times, as easily as turning over his hand. Then he began to make his way through the rest of the starry sky. Everywhere he went, the powerful experts acknowledged allegiance, and bowed their heads. Considering that he could easily defeat all of the peak 9-Essences experts, he quickly came to be known as the number one most powerful expert in the starry sky of the Mountains and Seas. After everyone acknowledged him as having Transcended, Jin Yunshan’s ambition reached incredible heights.

Countless living beings offered him worship, and countless cultivators revered him as the ultimate existence. Anywhere he went, countless voices would cry out in adoration and worship.

“Greetings, Patriarch Goldrobes!”

“Greetings, Patriarch Goldrobes!!”

Such cries rang out near and far. Countless eyes gazed upon him with fear and fanaticism. The feeling of having Transcended caused him to think about Meng Hao, and the glory and status Meng Hao had once commanded.

“I might not be as strong as Meng Hao was back then, but the gap can’t be very wide….” Jin Yunshan waved his hand, causing the natural laws in the area to flux and change. It was an intoxicating feeling that filled him with excitement, and caused his laughter to echo out through the entire starry sky.

Eventually, his gaze came to fall upon the Mountain and Sea Realm.

He refused to believe that after the tens of thousands of years which had passed, Meng Hao was still present. He was convinced that Meng Hao had almost certainly departed. Either that, or he had picked another fight with Allheaven and been either killed or seriously wounded.

Despite that, he held back. The terror of Meng Hao which existed in his heart caused him to hesitate. Whenever he thought of Meng Hao, fear filled him; therefore, he turned his gaze away from the Mountain and Sea Realm, and he waited.

Time passed. Another ten thousand years passed. Because of Jin Yunshan, the Vast Expanse School eventually came to occupy the entire starry sky, with the exception of the Mountain and Sea Realm. Jin Yunshan never invaded it. Instead, he observed and waited, not yet daring to take any action.

After those ten thousand years passed, Jin Yunshan’s patience gradually ran out. After countless augury calculations, he finally became fully focused on the Mountain and Sea Realm.

However, he managed to hold back from simply invading. Instead, he began to form numerous clones, which he sent to infiltrate the Mountain and Sea Realm. Those clones observed, tested, and waited for another ten thousand years. Finally, he made his decision!

“Transcendors always create a precious treasure. Within this starry sky, the Mountain and Sea Realm is that very Transcendence Treasure!

“Meng Hao, considering that you’ve departed, this precious treasure should belong to me!” Jin Yunshan’s eyes glittered as he began to make his way toward the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“I actually hope that you haven’t left, Meng Hao,” he murmured. “I hope that you fought again with Allheaven, and ended up being seriously injured. That way, I can consume you the same way you consumed Allheaven, and thus Transcend in soul.” His eyes glinted with profound ambition.

It only took him a few strides through the starry sky to reach the Mountain and Sea Realm. As he hovered outside, he studied the place, and his eyes flickered with praise. Years ago, he had been unable to truly comprehend how incredible the Mountain and Sea Realm was, but with his current cultivation base, he could now see all of the various dazzling aspects to the realm.

“The embodiment of nine profound natural laws. The nine Hexes of the League of Demon Sealers. Meng Hao, you left your legacy behind, sealed within this precious treasure. Unfortunately… after all these tens of thousands of years, not a single person in the Mountain and Sea Realm has been able to combine all of your Hexing magic Essences. Neither has anyone Transcended.

“Leaving this treasure here would be a big waste. I’ll take it. Perhaps it can even help me to Transcend in soul!” Jin Yunshan took a deep breath, which caused the entire starry sky to shake. Rumbling like thunder could be heard, breaking through the barriers of the Mountain and Sea Realm to fill the Heaven and Earth which existed inside.

Countless cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm were profoundly shaken, and coughed up mouthfuls of blood. Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering power erupted from Jin Yunshan, pouring into the Mountain and Sea Realm to crush down onto its innumerable cultivators.

Before any of the cultivators could react or struggle, they were slammed into the ground. Their eyes were bloodshot, and they were howling inwardly. And yet, they could do nothing but look up at the Heavens and trembled. Jin Yunshan slowly descended into the Mountain and Sea Realm, tearing apart the Heavens there, causing golden light to spread out without cease.

The protective barrier surrounding the Mountain and Sea Realm was torn open.

Behind the golden-robed Jin Yunshan, vortexes sprang up, out of which emerged countless cultivators from the Vast Expanse School. After they dropped to their knees to bow in greeting, Jin Yunshan waved his golden sleeve, sending them pouring into the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Few of the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm could even struggle against the pressure. However, there were a few Paragons among them who managed to fly up into the air. One after another they tried to fight back, but all Jin Yunshan had to do was wave his sleeve, and they were shoved back down. Blood sprayed out of the mouths of the Mountain and Sea Realm Paragons as they were slammed back down into the ground.

Over the past millennia, numerous Mountain and Sea cultivators had done extensive research into their history. Although none of them knew the full truth, they had managed to piece together various clues, and now began to call out for help from the precious treasure that was the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“The cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm are protected by the realm itself! No outside force can destroy us!”

“Precious treasure of the Mountains and Seas, please protect us from the invading cultivators!”

“Oh precious treasure of our ancestor, please do something!”

Even as their voices rose up, the Nine Mountains and Nine Seas began to tremble. Light sprang up, which instantly shot toward Jin Yunshan. That light was the exact same light which had crushed Sha Jiudong so many years ago.

However, even as that light neared Jin Yunshan….

“I hereby declare,” he said coolly, “that the natural laws of this world are now different.” He extended his right hand, and the power of his Transcendent fleshly body and cultivation base converged on his finger.

The light from the Mountains and Seas trembled for a moment, and then shattered, sending countless sparks flying about in all directions.

When the Mountain and Sea cultivators saw that, they were completely shaken, and could do nothing but stare in shock.

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# Chapter 1597: Long Time No See

“I hereby declare that all cultivators of this world must acknowledge allegiance to me,” Jin Yunshan said, his voice cool and clear. He took a step forward, and the Mountain and Sea Realm shook. The power of the Nine Mountains and Nine Seas had been crushed. All Mountain and Sea cultivators were trembling in body and soul under the pressure radiating down from Jin Yunshan. As of this moment, it seemed that they had no choice but to surrender.

“I hereby declare that from this day forth, I am the lord of this realm!” A strange light gleamed in Jin Yunshan’s eyes as he took another step forward. Heaven and Earth cracked and crumbled. The Nine Mountains shook violently, and the Nine Seas churned.

All living beings bowed their heads. Under the gaze of Jin Yunshan, they had no choice but to capitulate. Behind Jin Yunshan, the boundless horde of cultivators from the Vast Expanse School were cheering excitedly.

“Goldrobes!”

“Goldrobes!!”

“Goldrobes!!!”

The sound wave created by their cries filled the starry sky of the Mountain and Sea Realm, becoming the only sound that anyone could hear. Jin Yunshan hovered there, reveling in the unprecedented feeling of glory.

In his mind, he was finally able to experience what it must have been like to be Meng Hao, to look down indifferently at everything in the starry sky.

“Meng Hao, the world has forgotten you, but I won’t. Today… I will wipe you completely out of existence. I will take your place as the new lord of the starry sky!” He flicked his sleeve, and the Nine Mountains and Nine Seas trembled. But then, the fluctuations of the First Demon Sealing Hex arose from within the First Mountain and Sea.

As the ripples closed in on Jin Yunshan, his eyes narrowed, and his hand flashed in an incantation gesture. The wave of his finger caused the void to collapse as he fought back against the First Hex.

It was at that point that the Second Hex erupted from the Second Mountain and Sea. Then came the Third Hex, and the Fourth. In the blink of an eye, the power of eight Hexing magics were shooting toward Jin Yunshan.

It was a dazzling display that seemed capable of killing any and all living things. Time distorted, space rippled. Death was descending!

Jin Yunshan threw his head back and laughed uproariously.

“Meng Hao, if you came out in person to fight me, I might be worried. But this paltry Mountain and Sea Realm isn’t enough to kill me. BREAK!” Even as his laughter rang out, he shoved his right hand out. Golden light exploded from his palm, spreading out in all directions, causing the entire starry sky to turn golden.

Everything above and below shone like gold. The entire world was turning golden, even the Nine Mountains and Nine Seas, and it seemed like something which could never be changed.

As the eight incoming Hexing magics bore down on Jin Yunshan, they suddenly ground to a halt, and then shattered. At the same time, Jin Yunshan waved his sleeve, unleashing his divine sense and cultivation base. The power of Transcendence erupted out. He held nothing back, causing golden light to spread out in all directions. The First Mountain and Sea was stained completely golden, and the effects spread rapidly. Next was the Second Mountain and Sea. After that, the Third and Fourth Mountains and Seas became gold. The will of golden-robed Jin Yunshan forced its way into the

Mountain and Sea Realm, occupying it, transforming it into his own precious treasure.

The cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm were in complete despair. They were suppressed, their eyes bloodshot, completely incapable of fighting back.

Rumbling could be heard as the Fifth, Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Mountains and Seas all turned golden. Jin Yunshan’s laughter filled the entire realm.

It was at this point that, with no warning whatsoever, a powerful blast of energy surged out. It came from that which Meng Hao had founded the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea upon… the Seal the Heavens Hex!

As the Hex erupted, it became an enormous blade which, in the space of a single breath, bore down on Jin Yunshan. His face fell, and a tremor ran through him. Without the slightest hesitation, he swished his sleeve. Instantly, all of the cultivators from the Vast Expanse School suddenly vanished. To their shock, they reappeared in front of Jin Yunshan, a sea of people that he was attempting to use to block the blade that was the Seal the Heavens Hex.

Instantly, bloodcurdling screams began to ring out as the cultivators in front of Jin Yunshan were slashed by the blade. They were shredded into pieces, sending blood and gore flying out in all directions, to then rain down onto the Mountain and Sea Realm.

The blade continued to scream along toward the golden-robed Jin Yunshan.

His scalp was completely numb; this was the first time since Transcending that he had experienced such a sensation of critical danger.

“Impossible! I refuse to believe that I can’t fight this magical item of yours, Meng Hao!” Roaring with rage, Jin Yunshan performed an incantation gesture and then waved his finger. Rumbling sounds erupted as a huge turtle shell appeared in front of him. It was none other than the precious treasure of the Vast Expanse School, which was now being used to intercept the blade.

BOOOOOOOOOMMM!

The Vast Expanse School’s precious treasure, the turtle shell, exploded into bits. At the same time, though, the incoming blade seemed to grow blurry.

After all… the blade was not being unleashed by Meng Hao personally; it was merely the power of the magical item itself, and obviously had limitations!

Jin Yunshan’s eyes glowed with excitement, and even a flicker of viciousness. He fell back, waving his sleeve to summon numerous worlds, land masses, and planets, all to intercept the blade and defend himself.

Heaven and Earth trembled. The starry sky shook. Worlds were destroyed, planets were shattered, and land masses burst into flames. However, the blade was slowly fading until it almost wasn’t visible.

Finally, Jin Yunshan’s cultivation base erupted with the power of Transcendence. Howling, he stopped moving backward, and jumped forward to meet the blade.

As the two met, the blade faded away, becoming countless vanishing fragments. However, it still passed through Jin Yunshan. Even his Transcendent fleshly body couldn’t block it.

Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and one of his arms was completely severed. Next, his body trembled, and then collapsed into pieces.

The only thing which remained was his head. And yet, he was laughing uproariously. Unexpectedly, his body formed back together, and was whole once more.

He seemed very weak, his face drastically pale. He had been immeasurably close to death moments ago. Had the blade not dissipated when it did, he would definitely have been destroyed in body and soul.

Now, having believed himself to have defeated the precious treasure that was the Mountain and Sea Realm, he laughed and waved his sleeve, causing golden light to spill out toward the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Moments later, it seemed as if the Ninth Mountain and Sea were about to be completely transformed into the color of gold. The Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators were in a state of complete hopelessness, their world shattered.

Jin Yunshan’s eyes glowed with longing, with madness, with covetousness. At the same time, he continued to laugh uproariously.

“Meng Hao, at long last the time has come in which I completely replace you!”

In that very moment, even as the words left his mouth, a voice spoke out from behind him, a calm and very familiar voice that struck his heart like a bolt of lightning.

“Long time no see.”

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# Chapter 1598: You’re Still Here?!

“Long time no see.”

The voice was calm and completely lacking any sort of emotion. And yet as soon as Jin Yunshan heard it, his heart shook as violently as if it had been struck with lightning bolts. Waves of shock battered his mind, and he couldn’t prevent himself from trembling physically.

He somehow managed to turn around, and what he saw was a very, very familiar face.

It was a face from tens of thousands of years in the past, a face that hadn’t changed at all, except for the fact that it seemed vastly more ancient.

As soon as Jin Yunshan laid eyes on it, his heart felt as if it would literally explode, and his mind began to reel. Despite the current level of his cultivation base, he was unable to perceive how powerful Meng Hao was, who almost seemed to be fused with the starry sky itself.

He was completely unfathomable, and as a result, infinitely mysterious. That led to a suffocating pressure which caused Jin Yunshan to think of the Meng Hao of yesteryear, and how it had felt to stand in his presence.

Jin Yunshan shivered, then began to speak haltingly. “Y-you… you’re actually… you’re still here… I….”

He was the only one who could actually see Meng Hao. The Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators could not. They only saw Jin Yunshan turning around with a face as ashen as death.

“I’m not dead,” Meng Hao said coolly. “Nor did I have another battle with Allheaven. And I most certainly didn’t leave this starry sky.” Although his gaze was placid, to Jin Yunshan, it felt like a barrage of lightning, smashing his mind, battering his Transcendent fleshly body and shattering his Transcendent cultivation base.

Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and he began to back up, chuckling bitterly. A look of madness sprang up in his eyes, and he threw his head back and roared.

“Impossible! How could you still be here? How is this possible? Tens of thousands of years have passed! Everyone else is dead? It’s impossible that you could still be here!

“Why haven’t you left? Why haven’t you gone? This starry sky is so small! The Universe is so big! Why haven’t you gone?!

“I should be the lord of this starry sky! I’ve Transcended! Why are you still here?!?!” Jin Yunshan was going mad. It was impossible for him not to. He had paid an unimaginable price to continue his cultivation down to this day, and was now more than half a step into Transcendence. How could he ever have imagined that Meng Hao would suddenly pop up, like a horrific nightmare? “Well since you’re here, I challenge you to a fight!”

Roaring in fury, hair in complete disarray, his mental faculties shattered, he drew upon the complete power of his Transcendent fleshly body and cultivation base, transforming into a bright beam of light that shot directly toward Meng Hao.

Jin Yunshan’s eyes were bright red; he was going all out with this attack. It was the type of attack where he would either succeed and come out alive, or die trying. The level of energy he was unleashing was completely unprecedented, and it even caused his soul to climb to a higher level. It was with shocking battle prowess that he closed in rapidly on Meng Hao.

The entire time, Meng Hao’s face was completely calm. He lifted his right hand and extended a finger. Instantly, everything in front of him went completely calm. Even Jin Yunshan went still.

To Meng Hao, Jin Yunshan was like a baby waving a butter knife.

“Calm down,” he said, lowering his hand.

As he did, everything returned to normal. Jin Yunshan was left trembling and coughing up blood. Shock and disbelief filled him as he looked bitterly at Meng Hao.

He had no choice but to admit that Meng Hao’s strength exceeded even his own powers of imagination. In fact, he was sure that even if he Transcended in soul, thus fully stepping into Transcendence, that he would still be defeated with a single blow if he tried to fight Meng Hao.

“W-what… what realm… are you in?” he stammered.

“Even I’m not sure,” replied Meng Hao, shaking his head. That was no lie. As of this point, he was unsure of his own level of power. All he knew was that after the tens of thousands of years of augury, after the countless years of secluded meditation… he had reached a level of almost complete omnipotence. All he had to do was think, and he could transform anything into ash.

“Congratulations on beginning to walk the path of Transcendence. Your soul is still lacking, and at the moment, it’s a deficiency you cannot surpass. Leave. You already possess the power to depart from this starry sky. Go out into the Universe and search for the good fortune you need. Perhaps one day you will truly Transcend.” When Meng Hao looked at Jin Yunshan, he felt no malice or enmity.

Everyone he knew had already passed away, and he felt little connection to the current starry sky. The only reason he had appeared to begin with was because the Mountain and Sea Realm was his legacy.

Trembling, Jin Yunshan gritted his teeth and said, “I’m not going anywhere!”

“You refuse to leave, huh….” Meng Hao looked far off into the distance. After some time passed, he looked back at Jin Yunshan, his expression calm.

"That's fine. But know this: whatever progress you make, you will never be able to replace these Heavens. You must learn what it means to yield." Meng Hao waved his sleeve, and blood sprayed out of Jin Yunshan's mouth. Rumbling could be heard as he was thrown backward like a kite with its string cut. He spun and spun, flying all the way back to Planet Vast Expanse.

When he finally came to a stop, he heard Meng Hao's voice speaking coolly in his ear: "Don't show your face for the next 100,000 years."

A tremor ran through Jin Yunshan, and all the bravado which had filled him moments ago drained away. He could reject Meng Hao's suggestion to leave this starry sky, but he could not refuse the punishment of 100,000 years of confinement.

"Why? I'm almost completely Transcended. I should be the lord of this starry sky. And yet… it's like I'm still stuck in the past." Feeling bitter and resentful, Jin Yunshan gritted his teeth and went back into secluded meditation.

The crisis facing the Mountain and Sea Realm was resolved. It quickly reverted back to its normal color. Everything had happened so quickly that the Mountain and Sea Realm cultivators were left gaping in shock. They weren't sure exactly what had occurred, but they did see the supremely powerful Jin Yunshan driven away like a stray dog by some invisible power.

Many speculations and many stories began to spread.

Meng Hao looked around at the Mountain and Sea Realm, and then looked outside of it. His gaze pierced through the starry sky until it came to rest in the region outside the Vast Expanse. It was a sharp gaze, deep, profound, and filled with obsession.

He was like a divine being which had finally awoken from slumber.

"Allheaven," he murmured, "the time has come for our final battle. You've been hiding from me for tens of thousands of years, and I've also been hiding away. It's time to sort things out once and for all." His eyes flickered with icy killing intent as he took a step forward. That single step took him through the void until he was outside of the starry sky!

The final battle was about to begin!

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# Chapter 1599: Eighth Allheaven Transformation!

Outside the Vast Expanse, everything looked the same way it had for the past tens of thousands of years. Endless ruins stretched out in all directions, the remnants of former glory. However, there was one location among all the ruins that was like an oasis within a desert.

It wasn’t very large, only the size of a single mountain. It was clear that the place had once been a sect, and had been restored from its state of ruin. It was blanketed in complete and utter silence.

Beautifully decorated buildings could be seen on the mountain, but they were empty. However, there was one wooden structure in which a corpse could be seen. It was the corpse of a woman who had long since passed away into meditation.

Meng Hao materialized inside of the wooden structure, in front of the corpse. It was Immortal Bai Wuchen.

Even after Meng Hao told her the truth about what was outside the Vast Expanse, she had still begged to be sent there. She was obsessed with her illusory memories, and thus, Meng Hao sent her here, with the promise that if she ever wanted to return, she merely had to call upon his name.

In the tens of thousands of years that followed, she never called out to him. After seeing the emptiness outside the Vast Expanse, and the dust, she recalled the home that existed in her memories, and found her way back to that very sect. She cleaned it and restored it to the way she remembered, and then lived there quietly, alone.

Eventually, she passed away into meditation.

Meng Hao stood there looking at Bai Wuchen’s corpse for a long, long time. Then he turned and left. She had made her decision. Perhaps in the end she was simply happy to be able to die in the place she remembered.

After leaving the mountain, Meng Hao traversed the starry sky outside of the Vast Expanse until he was hovering near the towering columns. There, his eyes shone with a bright light as he contemplated killing Allheaven!

He knew that he would only have one chance to succeed. If he managed to slay Allheaven, then he would be able to continue to search for a way to break the curse. If he failed, then just like the Ghost, the Devil, and the God, he would no longer be qualified to remain.

“Come out,” he said quietly. “We’ve been putting this battle off for long enough.” Although he didn’t speak very loudly, his voice filled the entire starry sky outside of the Vast Expanse. Ripples spread out, a tempest that shook the starry sky as if it were mere water.

After a long moment passed, a light sigh could be heard from some distance off. A woman strolled out, wearing a smile, and a diaphanous violet garment.

Meng Hao didn’t seem surprised at all when he saw who it was.

“Brother Meng, didn’t I say that we would meet again?” Although she didn’t seem to be moving very quickly, it only took her a few steps to appear directly in front of Meng Hao. There she stood, a radiant smile on her face. It was none other than… Han Bei!

“I am the Daughter of Allheaven, and you are his Son,” she said softly. “We are destined to be together. We are destined to give birth to the lord of this starry sky, to give birth to… the most powerful and ultimate version of Allheaven!

“Why do you refuse to comply?” Her gaze was tender, like a ripple on a pond.

Meng Hao looked back at her and chuckled. “Which Allheaven Transformation are you?”

Han Bei frowned. When she didn’t respond, he waved his sleeve, and his energy surged in a completely domineering fashion.

“Allheaven,” he said, his voice as cold as ice, “I respect your power. However, respect must be mutual. Where is your respect for me!?” His voice was like thunder, echoing out with such power that the starry sky trembled on the verge of collapse.

Han Bei’s eyes flashed. Any tenderness which had been present faded away, replaced by an icy glow.

“I’m the eighth transformation,” she said. With that, she reached out and waved her finger. Instantly, the void between her and Meng Hao distorted. At the same time, Meng Hao vanished, reappearing a moment later directly in front of Han Bei. He also reached out and waved his finger.

Their fingers touched, and a boom echoed out that could end the Heavens and crush the Earth. Meng Hao’s expression never changed, but Han Bei’s face flickered, and she involuntarily fell back. Booms began to echo out as different parts of her body began to explode. Blood and gore blasted out in all directions, until she was completely soaked in crimson. Her appearance was shocking, ferocious, and ghastly.

“Meng Hao!!” she screamed, transforming into a blood-colored beam of light that shot toward Meng Hao. As she approached, she reached out as if to grab him.

Rumbling sounds could be heard as the void around Meng Hao shattered. And yet, he didn’t seem to be affected at all. He looked coldly at Han Bei, then extended his hand, causing a tempest to spring up and slam into her.

Han Bei’s eyes widened in shock. The astonishing level of power that Meng Hao was utilizing left her in complete disbelief.

Before she could even react, Meng Hao took a step forward, clenched his hand into a fist, and punched her in the pit of her stomach.

She screamed miserably as her body exploded. A moment later, she re-formed, and yet before she could do anything, Meng Hao was upon her again, unleashing another fist strike.

She exploded again, and the process was repeated. Every time she re-formed, he punched again. Ten times. Dozens. A hundred.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOOOOOOOOMMM!

“Show me your real power, Allheaven. If this is all you’re capable of, I’ll definitely be disappointed.” Meng Hao’s cultivation base surged. His next fist strike became a sea of flames, filled with infinite destructive power, power that could wither all life force. It became a flood of decay, filled with all of the power of the five elements, a fist strike of ultimate destruction.

A huge boom could be heard as Han Bei exploded into countless chunks of blood and gore that splashed about in all directions. Because of the power of the five elements that filled the chunks of her body, it made it very difficult for her to form back together.

Meng Hao’s words were still lingering in the air when another voice spoke out from the gore that remained of Han Bei. However, the voice was not Han Bei’s. It was vague, even faint, and yet it filled the entire starry sky.

“Meng… Hao….

“The eighth… Allheaven Transformation is… the Primeval Transformation….

“Countless years ago in primeval times, the first Transcendor within my starry sky was he who I dubbed the Ghost…. Come forth!”

RUMBLE!

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1600: I am the Ghost!

(click here for the soundtrack)

Even as Allheaven’s voice echoed out, the chunks of gore and drops of blood transformed into ash, vanishing completely.

A blue-violet beam of light appeared off in the distance, moving at incredible speed. By the time Meng Hao turned to face it, it was right in front of him. A single finger became visible, racing toward his chest. Just before it touched him, Meng Hao’s Dao eye opened, emitting a blast of light that slammed into the finger.

A boom echoed out, and Meng Hao staggered backward, his entire body vibrating, his face flushed bright red. When he looked back up, his eyes shone with piercingly bright light, and the desire to do battle.

“That’s what I’m talking about!” he said slowly. “Don’t hold anything back. This fight will be to the death!” A figure appeared in front of him, someone very familiar to him. It was a middle-aged man with long gray hair. He wore a gray-colored robe, and seemed to radiate disdain as he hovered there looking at Meng Hao.

He had an aura of Transcendence, and closer examination revealed that it was something beyond ordinary. It was actually half a step into the Ancestor Realm, just like Meng Hao’s aura from years past. In fact, this aura was even more mysterious.

This person was none other than… the same person Meng Hao had first laid eyes upon in the necropolis of the Vast Expanse School… Patriarch Vast Expanse!

He was the first person to ever Transcend in this starry sky, the person who Allheaven had come to call the Ghost.

His expression was cold, but there didn't appear to be any intelligence in his eyes whatsoever. The pressure that radiated off of him seemed capable of cowing the entire starry sky, and behind him was an enormous, illusory figure, matchlessly vicious, overflowing with a ghostly aura. It possessed a boundless dignity, as if it were the emperor of all ghosts!

Allheaven's eighth transformation, the Primeval Transformation, was a grand magic that only Allheaven's true self could utilize. It was a Dao the likes of which a mere clone could not unleash. It allowed him to duplicate the most powerful experts of the starry sky that existed within his memories.

The first duplicate had been Han Bei, who wasn't necessarily very powerful, but had a strong connection to Meng Hao. Now, after having borne witness to Meng Hao's terrifying power, Allheaven didn't hesitate for even a moment to use the full power of his eighth transformation to duplicate… the Ghost!

The first Transcendor of this starry sky looked coldly at Meng for a moment before suddenly taking a step forward. It was with incredible speed that his right index finger shot out toward Meng Hao's forehead, where his Dao eye was located.

Meng Hao had no time to evade, so he didn't even attempt to do so. Even as the finger stabbed into his Dao eye, sending intense pain shooting through him, his right hand flashed with an incantation gesture as he unleashed the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex. A sealing mark fell upon the Ghost, and at the same time, blood oozed down Meng Hao's face. The Ghost lurched to a halt as his body and spirit were locked into place by the Hexing magic. Considering the current level of Meng Hao's cultivation base, the Eighth Hex was something that few people in existence could remain unaffected by.

As the Ghost was locked in place, Meng Hao moved forward in a blur, body slamming him and simultaneously striking out with first his finger, then his fist, three blows in fast succession.

Blood sprayed out of the Ghost’s mouth as his chest caved in. The finger and two fists were all aimed at his forehead, which shattered immediately. However, the scorn in his eyes remained exactly the same as before, causing Meng Hao’s heart to begin to thump. It was at this point that the enormous, 30,000-meter-tall Ghost Emperor suddenly became completely corporeal. Looking completely and utterly vicious, it lunged toward Meng Hao as if to consume him.

A sensation of deadly crisis filled Meng Hao’s mind. He could tell that if this Ghost Emperor actually managed to lay its teeth on him, although he might not be killed, he would definitely lose the battle.

And if he lost the battle, he would lose his qualifications to be able to fight Allheaven ever again!

Of course, Allheaven was doing this on purpose, trying to force him to use as many of his Hexing magics as possible. In fact, he wanted to force Meng Hao to use his most terrifying Hex, the Seal the Heavens Hex. If he did, then Allheaven could duplicate it, and thus never fear it again.

“I have other tricks up my sleeve besides the Seal the Heavens Hex!” Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed with a strange light as the void behind him suddenly distorted. A piercing cry echoed out as a figure just as large as the Ghost Emperor appeared.

It had green skin, and a solitary, wicked horn. It had explosive Demonic qi, and Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering energy. This was Meng Hao’s life essence form, the foundation of his cultivation base, the Demon Sovereign!

When the Demon Sovereign appeared, it immediately began to fight the Ghost Emperor. The Ghost Emperor latched its jaws onto the Demon Sovereign, who stabbed back into the Ghost Emperor’s body with hands like blades.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLE….

The fighting was shaking everything in existence. Countless ruins in the area were transformed into ash. As the gigantic figures fought up above, Meng Hao and the Ghost brawled down below.

After exchanging over a thousand blows, blood sprayed out of Meng Hao's mouth, and the Ghost was drenched with gore. The two appeared to be very well matched.

"This Ghost is from the memories of Allheaven, a version of him from the past when he was at the peak of his power. From this alone I can see that the Ghost was no ordinary Transcendor!" Meng Hao wiped the blood from his mouth, then waved his right hand to unleash the Mountain Consuming Incantation. Numerous mountains began to descend, forming a chain that swept across the battlefield.

The Ghost snorted coldly, then became a blur as he unleashed countless clones, which then shot toward the descending mountains and shattered them.

Meng Hao's right hand flashed with an incantation gesture, causing the rubble of the mountains to transform into an enormous stone fist. As the fist smashed toward the Ghost, Meng Hao sped forward like a shooting star, merging with the fist, lending it even more explosive power.

"Gate of the Ghost Realm!" the Ghost said, eyes shining with mysterious light. He raised both hands overhead, and the stars shook as a huge rift opened up above, revealing an enormous, pitch black gate.

As the gate descended, it slowly opened, revealing a gigantic scaled hand. The hand stretched out, and Meng Hao could sense incredible pressure, making it seem as if this hand could look down on all creation. The hand immediately grabbed hold of the enormous stone fist, then squeezed down.

A boom could be heard as the stone hand shattered. Meng Hao appeared, but quickly vanished, reappearing some distance off, his eyes flashing.

"Eighth Demon Sealing Hex, Body-Mind Hexing!

“Lock down the void, the starry sky, and natural laws. Lock down everything I desire to lock down!”

——

It has begun!

Check here for the contest rules.

Use the hashtag #ISSTH on twitter!

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# Chapter 1601: You Can Call Me… Su Ming!

(click here for soundtrack)

The Eighth Demon Sealing Hex was the first of the Hexing magics that he had mastered, and the one he had used the most often. It was also the first Hexing magic that gave birth to an Essence for him.

The power of the Essence of space, once fully unleashed, was terrifying to the extreme. And of course, considering the current level of Meng Hao's cultivation base, he could utilize the Eighth Hex to the ultimate degree.

Anything which he saw could be rendered as a painting. Thus, anything Meng Hao could see could be sealed, if he wished it to be!

Rumbling echoed out as the Eighth Hex was unleashed. To Meng Hao, the entire starry sky became a canvas painting, even the Gate of the Ghost Realm, and even the ghostly hand stretching out from within it.

When the Hexing magic was unleashed, the starry sky shook and trembled.

"Break!" he said, his eyes flickering with killing intent. The canvas shattered, and the black, ghostly hand exploded. The enormous Gate of the Ghost Realm also shattered, shredded to pieces along with the canvas.

The Ghost was trembling on the verge of collapse, his face twisted and distorted as he threw his head back and howled. The vicious Ghost Emperor behind him was about to fight back when Meng Hao called up the full power of his cultivation base to fuel the Eighth Hex.

“I still haven’t used my Seal the Heavens Hex, but neither have I used my Battle Weapon. If I can’t beat the duplicate of a Transcendor from Allheaven’s memories, then how could I possibly qualify to stand on an equal footing with the real Ghost!?

“BREAK!” His eyes shone with cold light as he made a violent ripping motion with his hands. The Ghost couldn’t hold out any longer, and the Ghost Emperor was starting to collapse. However, the sensation of deadly crisis within Meng Hao continued to grow with wild speed.

Without any hesitation, he lurched to the side. At the same time, a black beam of light stabbed through his right shoulder. His right arm was completely vaporized, and blood shot out of the stump like a geyser. Then he vanished, to reappear further off in the distance.

At the same time, a frigid aura of death rose up, and a finger appeared, which stabbed directly toward Meng Hao.

His eyes shone with brilliant light, and he let out a powerful shout, causing the void and the starry sky around him to collapse, transforming into a wild tempest. Behind him, the image of the Demon Sovereign let out a roar of rage as it barrelled toward the incoming finger.

In that very same moment, a cold snort echoed out as another equally large figure materialized out of thin air. It was pitch black, and looked very similar to a demon, and yet lacked any sort of multifariousness. It was ancient, rife with death. it was… a Devil Specter!

Rumbling could be heard as the Demon Sovereign and the Devil Specter clashed, and a shockwave blasted out. Meng Hao fell back again, blood spraying out of his mouth. Having slipped out of the trap which had been set, he looked up, and his arm rapidly re-formed. He was now staring, not at the Devil Specter, with its majestic devilish qi, but the young man in the black robe hovering beneath it.

His features were ordinary, but he had strange black markings on his face, and he emanated a wild and barbaric air.

“The Devil!” Meng Hao said. He had never laid eyes on this young man before, but recognized him instantly. This was the second person to Transcend in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, Choumen Tai’s Master from the Devil Realm Continent!

In the moment when Meng Hao had been about to destroy the Ghost Emperor, this young man had made his move, injuring Meng Hao.

Without Meng Hao controlling it, his Eighth Hex collapsed, and the sealing mark on the Ghost began to fade away. It wouldn’t be long before he was free of his bonds.

When that happened, Meng Hao would be up against both the Ghost and the Devil at the same time.

“I don’t like being called the Devil,” said the black-robed young man. “You can call me… Su Ming!” His eyes shone with a bizarre light, and the black markings on his face suddenly writhed as they grew and expanded.

Even as the words left his mouth, he extended his right hand, and rumbling sounds echoed out as he began to change shape, transforming into an enormous tree with countless rustling branches. The tree began to fly toward Meng Hao, whose eyes shone with a profound desire to fight. As he watched what was happening, he suddenly laughed.

“Many thanks to you, Allheaven, for giving me the chance to fight the most powerful people from the past. I’m very interested to find out if they are stronger than me, or weaker!” He transformed into a blur, which shot toward the black-robed man. As he closed in, his hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, causing a sea of flames to rise up around him. In the space of a single breath of time, it turned violet as the Demon Sovereign once again appeared.

The Demon Sovereign and the Devil Specter clashed, and Meng Hao began to fight with Su Ming. Both of them were equally fast. They didn’t make contact with each other, but fought with magical techniques and divine abilities.

The starry sky shattered, and the void collapsed. Seemingly endless varieties of divine abilities were unleashed in a very short time. Then, Su Ming suddenly took a step forward, whereupon his energy began to rise higher. Then he took a second step, a third, and a fourth.

Laughing loudly, Meng Hao also began to walk. One step, two steps, three steps, four….

They closed in on each other rapidly, and by the time they both took their seventh steps, their energy had reached an unimaginable level. The void in front of Su Ming shattered as a huge foot descended toward Meng Hao. However, Meng Hao's seventh step resulted in exactly the same thing.

BOOOOOOOOOMMM!

An earsplitting boom echoed out. Blood sprayed out of the mouths of both Su Ming and Meng Hao as they were sent tumbling away from each other. And yet, just a moment later, they were flying back toward each other to fight.

Apparently, they were completely evenly matched!

Unfortunately, Meng Hao had the feeling that both the Ghost and the Devil had trump cards that they had yet to play, similar to his own Seal the Heavens Hex. Although, perhaps the truth was that Allheaven's memory didn't contain perfect copies of them. After all… Allheaven was currently weaker than he had ever been.

Meng Hao's eyes glittered as he once again unleashed the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex. As expected, his opponent was locked down, allowing Meng Hao an opening to attack. Their battle was causing the starry sky to shake, and transforming nearby ruins into nothing more than rubble.

It was in this very moment that the Ghost howled and ripped apart the Spatial Sealing. Then, he slowly turned to look at Meng Hao.

Without any hesitation, he joined the battle. His first move was a fist strike which caused seemingly infinite ghost images to spring up, which then converged back into his fist.

In the blink of an eye, the Ghost’s single fist strike became infinitely more powerful!

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# Chapter 1602: The God Descends!

(click here for soundtrack)

This fist strike of innumerable ghost images did not rely on raw power, but rather, speed. It was caused by tens of thousands of punches that moved so quickly that countless afterimages sprang up, and yet created an illusion of being only a single punch.

Meng Hao was shocked. He could defend against this fist strike, but to do so while simultaneously dealing with Su Ming meant that he would be facing both the Ghost and the Devil, placing him in incredible danger.

As the fist closed in, Meng Hao howled, drawing upon all of the power of his cultivation base to defend himself. A boom echoed out, and blood sprayed out of his mouth. Even as he was sent flying, Su Ming closed in and cast a divine ability.

Meng Hao’s expression was extremely unsightly as he coughed up more blood. He had lost the initiative, and at the moment there was no opportunity to get it back. The Ghost was currently bearing down with another fist strike.

Meng Hao was being beaten back relentlessly by the combined efforts of the Ghost and the Devil. His hair was in disarray, and he looked to be in very bad condition. He fell back again and again, and it truly seemed as if he were about to meet utter defeat.

Clearly, Allheaven didn’t just want to win. He wanted to consume Meng Hao, to use him to complete himself. He still hadn’t given up on his plan to use Meng Hao for his Nirvanic Rebirth.

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the Ghost Emperor and the Devil Specter knocked down Meng Hao’s Demon Sovereign. Even as they prepared to destroy it completely, a cold snort echoed out. The Ghost’s eyes flickered with killing intent. Raising both hands up above him, he once again summoned the Gate of the Ghost Realm. The black hand appeared again, reaching for Meng Hao with desolate madness.

At the same time, Su Ming’s eyes flickered with killing intent, and the black marks seemed to almost completely overtake his face. He also raised his hands into the air, and shockingly, a mountain appeared behind him. It had five peaks that looked like fingers, and at its base was a tribal stockade. Furthermore, hovering in the air above the mountain was a blood-colored moon!

An aura erupted from the illusory image, an aura that could shake Heaven and Earth, an aura with the power to destroy everything! It was as if that entire world were crushing down onto Meng Hao, and as it neared, it merged with the Gate of the Ghost Realm. The starry sky in the vicinity was transformed in all aspects.

Meng Hao had long since imagined how difficult the final battle with Allheaven would be, but he could never have guessed that things would turn out this way. Furthermore, Allheaven hadn’t truly appeared yet. This was only his eighth transformation.

At the same time, Meng Hao had to remain constantly on the alert for someone who had yet to make an appearance… the God!

Suddenly, Meng Hao looked around to find that he was in a different place. Shockingly, Heaven and Earth had become a barbaric and savage place.

It was as if he had been transported back into ancient times. Far off in the distance was a mountain that resembled a hand, beneath which was a tribal stockade. A blood-colored moon hung in the sky, and there was also a huge gate visible, out of which poured countless ghosts.

The ghosts formed into the shape of a huge black hand that stretched out toward him. Suddenly, the blood moon exploded, transforming into innumerable blood-colored bats which also sped toward Meng Hao, squealing in high-pitched shrieks.

However, things weren’t over yet. Everything around him distorted, as if the world itself were his enemy. Everything began to shrink down, apparently intent on grinding him into dust.

At the same time, people were pouring out of the tribal stockade and charging toward him. Everything in this entire world, from the blades of grass to the trees, were all becoming weapons of murder, attempting to kill him!

Meng Hao looked around quietly, his eyes glowing red. Then, he began to laugh uproariously. It was a demonic laughter, and it matched his facial expression, which flickered between something domineering, something fierce, something righteous, and something evil.

Then he waved his right hand and yelled, “Parrot!”

Instantly, a high-pitched squawk rang out as the parrot appeared. Next came the copper mirror, which now had a pearl on it.

It was none other than the pearl Dong Hu had given to Meng Hao before dying. After fusing into the copper mirror, it made the mirror vastly more powerful than it already was.

The parrot and the copper mirror instantly melted, covering his arm and then spreading out over his entire body as a suit of armor. A pitch-black Battle Weapon appeared, vicious to the extreme, nine meters long and utterly shocking.

A red cape billowed out behind Meng Hao as his cultivation base power was bolstered by the power of the copper mirror.

“Ghost and Devil? So what!?” he said, slowly floating up into the air. He raised the Battle Weapon above his head with his right hand, and laughed, his expression flickering with multifarious transformations, his eyes glowing bright red.

“You shall be severed!” he roared. Gripping the hilt of the Battle Weapon with both his left and right hands, he looked out at the world around him… and viciously slashed down with the blade!

A huge rift was torn open in the land, which spread out to fill the entire world. The ghostly hand was destroyed, and the blood-colored sky was shattered. The blood-colored bats were ripped to shreds, and the charging tribe members were eradicated. The five-peaked mountain was torn apart. All Heaven and Earth were completely sundered.

BOOOOOOOOOMMM!

The whole world was completely and utterly split in two, then collapsed into fragments. Meng Hao could again see the destroyed area that was the outside of the Vast Expanse. The ruins in the area were now nothing more than dust and ash. The Ghost and the Devil were both coughing up blood as they were forced backward by Meng Hao’s blast of energy.

As of this moment, Meng Hao’s surging energy was sending brightly-colored light flashing throughout all creation, filling Allheaven’s heart with dread.

He hovered there, clad in vicious-looking armor, the Battle Weapon vibrating slightly. He was panting slightly, and every inhalation seemed to make the starry sky shrink.

Hefting the Battle Weapon, eyes gleaming as if he were prepared to toss caution to the wind, he spoke out in a hoarse voice, “The God is the final part of the eighth transformation. When will you be showing your face?!”

Almost instantly, a cold snort echoed out, and a figure descended from above with lightning speed.

Stars swirled on his forehead, and he wore a long white robe. His hair was also white, and his expression was completely merciless. The most murderous of auras overflowed from within him.

Meng Hao had seen this face before. It was the same face as the statue on the Immortal God Continent, and was also exactly the same as Slaughter’s face!

The only difference was that, as Meng Hao well knew, the God, the Devil, and the Ghost whom he faced were not the true versions of those beings. These were simply puppets created by Allheaven, based on his memories.

Meng Hao looked at the God, then threw his head back and laughed uproariously. His desire to fight only continued to grow.

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# Chapter 1603: Peak Battle!

As soon as the God appeared with his towering murderous aura, a huge vortex sprang up behind him. He was the only one among the group who had no gigantic humanoid image behind him.

He descended with incredible speed, simultaneously waving his right hand. A razor-sharp wind spike shot out which contained boundless destructive power. In the blink of an eye, it was directly in front of Meng Hao.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered brightly as he prepared to utilize the Eighth Hex to stop it. However, in the very moment that the spike appeared, a cold snort echoed out through the starry sky.

“Immobilize!”

A tremor ran through Meng Hao as he suddenly lost all ability to fight. His pupils constricted as the wind spike smashed into the Battle Armor. Blood sprayed out of his mouth, and he fell back. The God closed in on him, waving his hand to summon a pitch-black wind, which was none other than the magic of Call the Wind.

This version of the magic was vastly more powerful than the version Meng Hao had faced all those years ago when he had fought the Immortal God Continent.

It was a destructive wind that could extinguish any and all forms of life. However, even as the wind screamed, Meng Hao lifted the Battle Weapon above his head and slashed it down viciously, cutting the wind in half!

Despite being cut in half, the wind didn’t vanish. Instead, it transformed into countless black raindrops, and then moments later, numerous fierce imps. Next came power that could crumble mountains and collapse lands. The entire starry sky around Meng Hao was being destroyed.

The image of a moon appeared on Meng Hao, and the God let out a cold harrumph. A boom echoed out as large sections of Meng Hao’s Battle Armor exploded. Even as blood sprayed out of his mouth, the Ghost bore down on him with incredible speed, summoning the Ghost Specter, which reached out to grab him.

Meng Hao was knocked backward again, coughing up more blood. Su Ming, the Devil, also appeared, unleashing a completely different divine ability than before, striking Meng Hao’s chest with a bizarre power that seemed capable of consuming his Essences.

A boom echoed out as Meng Hao fell back yet again. Next came the God, with a fist strike that distorted reality and could destroy all things. Meng Hao was yet again injured severely.

He almost seemed incapable of fighting back. The word “immobilize” reverberated yet again, once again rendering him incapable of movement. The Ghost, the Devil and the God continued to batter him non-stop.

Meng Hao wasn’t even aware of how much blood had sprayed out of his mouth. His bones were shattered, and he was in a state of constant retreat, having been beaten from one corner of the starry sky to the other.

He could easily handle any one of these opponents alone, and could have held his own against two. But to face three at the same time was impossible, not without using the Seal the Heavens Hex.

In his current weakened state, Allheaven might not be able to duplicate their most powerful trump cards, but these three were the most powerful experts of their respective generations.

When they joined forces, even Allheaven in his prime would be left trembling. They might be people from the past, but they were still capable of unleashing power that could shake Heaven and Earth.

But Meng Hao wasn’t ready to give up yet. He continued to fight. He used the True Self Dao, the Mountain Consuming Incantation, the Nine Heavens Destruction, the Seven God Steps, as well as magical techniques of his own creation and divine abilities from Shui Dongliu’s legacy. He used everything, even natural laws. The fight with these three figures of legend was shaking everything.

No such battle like this had ever taken place within this starry sky.

The bitter intensity of the combat was something that would leave anyone shocked. Meng Hao was seriously injured, but he had a Transcendent fleshly body, and could recover rapidly. Of course, it was the same with his three opponents.

That only served to make the battle more intense.

The God was especially incisive in his attacks. Eventually, he waved his right hand, causing the entire starry sky to turn pitch black. Shockingly, a sun appeared, something so bright that it seemed capable of destroying all of the darkness of night.

Things weren’t over yet. The stars on the God’s forehead began to spin. However, no image appeared. Instead, he began to rapidly grow larger, transforming himself into a God, who punched out with power to destroy the stars.

In his entire life, Meng Hao had never fought a battle as difficult as this one. Any other person in his position would have been in despair by now, would have been sapped of the desire to fight back, and would have been destroyed. But not Meng Hao.

He held on. He had long since come to the realization that this eighth transformation wasn’t without limits. At the same time, Allheaven was also being weakened severely. Allheaven was trying to force him to use the Seal the Heavens Hex, and Meng Hao wanted to use this chance to try to force the already-weakened Allheaven to exhaust more of his remaining power.

Seemingly endless booms rang out. The combined attacks of his three opponents had left Meng Hao’s Battle Armor in ruins. Many portions were completely ripped apart. His Battle Weapon was also severely damaged.

But he held on. Roaring, he summoned the Demon Sovereign, which took on the Ghost Emperor and the Devil Specter. Fists flew. Somehow, Meng Hao extricated himself from all of the deadly situations. As he retreated, he laughed. He was soaked in blood, and yet felt no despair. In fact, his laughter continued to grow more sonorous.

“It’s been a long time since I’ve had a good fight,” he said. “Tens of thousands of years in fact….” His Battle Armor was in tatters, and his hair was in wild disarray. But he hefted his Battle Weapon, and looked more than ever like he wanted to do battle.

It was at this point that the Ghost took a deep breath and waved his right hand. His entire body began to turn transparent, and his ghost qi skyrocketed.

“Unorthodox magic: Ghost Dao!” he said softly. He instantly vanished, becoming a ghostly specter that shot toward Meng Hao with the most deadly level of power he had used in the battle so far.

However, Meng Hao could see that the Daoist magic being utilized by the Ghost was incomplete, flawed. It had nothing to do with the Ghost himself, but rather, the fact that this was an incomplete duplicate created by Allheaven, and that this Daoist magic was being forcibly unleashed.

The Devil closed his eyes, then opened them again. His entire body was now covered with complex black marks. He let out a soft breath, and a hellish aura exploded out from him. It transformed into a special type of possession magic, which bored down threateningly on Meng Hao.

“Possession!”

This was also an incomplete magic!

Last was the God, who waved his sleeve and coolly said, “The Dao of the God, warrior among all cultivators! The magic of the Demon, a flame to ignite the Heavens! The tribulation of the Devil, a calamity of death!”

It was yet again, an incomplete magic!

As soon as the words left the God’s mouth, Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering energy erupted out from all three of the group. The starry sky seemed to vanish, leaving behind only them and their incomplete… trump cards!

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Check here for the contest rules.

Use the hashtag #ISSTH on twitter!

The winners for “Best Comment” will be announced along with the raffle winners some time after the contest! Thanks for the great comments. I’m having a tough time picking my favorite!

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1604: Destroying Allheaven’s Finger!

Even though they were incomplete Daoist magics, considering they were being powered by these three individuals, they were powerful to a degree that was difficult to describe even with words. The entire starry sky outside the Vast Expanse was shaking violently. In fact, even the inner starry sky seemed on the verge of collapse.

Meng Hao’s pupils constricted. He knew that Allheaven was getting very anxious in his attempt to force the usage of his Seal the Heavens Hex, and was obviously willing to pay the highest of prices to do so. However, as of this moment, Meng Hao knew that if he didn’t use that Hex, he would definitely… die!

Even Transcendors could be killed.

“You want to see it? Fine. I’ll show you…. my Ninth Hex. The Seal the Heavens Hex!” His eyes shone with radiant light, like that of the sun and moon. He took a deep breath, and the starry sky around him began to shake.

He stretched his arms out, and everything around him shattered. At the same time, a statue appeared in front of him, as well as a sword!

The statue shone with dazzling light that filled the starry sky. It slowly lifted the sword, a sword both ancient and bizarre, something filled with power that didn’t seem appropriate within the starry sky. That was because… its power exceeded the entire starry sky’s capacity to contain it.

The statue and the sword were causing everything outside the Vast Expanse to shake violently. At the same time, Meng Hao’s three opponents seemed to fade slightly.

Light spilled out from within the statue and, with Meng Hao at the center, surged out in all directions. In the blink of an eye, it filled everything in existence.

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the darkness was driven away. Outside the Vast Expanse, everything was shining brightly. The light was so bright that it even pierced the barriers to shine inside the Vast Expanse.

An indescribably domineering will was rising up from the statue, and from Meng Hao.

It was a domineering air that said, What I want, the Heavens shall NOT lack! What I don’t want, had BETTER not exist in the Heavens!

It was a madness that said, My words are reality!

The light almost seemed to be peeling off a layer of skin that existed within the starry sky. The three powerful figures from Allheaven’s memories were rapidly fading away, and their divine abilities seemed to be on the verge of vanishing.

The entire starry sky was filled with explosive rumbling sounds. This was Meng Hao’s Seal the Heavens Hex, his most powerful Daoist magic, his trump card!

As the boundless light shone out, Meng Hao dropped his left hand and pushed up with his right, stretching it high into the starry sky. Everything shook, and all of the boundless light began to converge on his hand. In the blink of an eye, a character came to be visible there.

It was the character “seal!”

Instantly, an indescribably powerful gravitational force appeared, causing all natural and magical laws, all entities, all wills, to be uncontrollably sucked in.

The starry sky was in complete chaos, and Meng Hao's three powerful opponents were starting to shake. Strange light could be seen in their eyes, as, without any hesitation, they continued to propel their divine abilities toward Meng Hao.

Ghost talons brimmed with energy. A Devilish death aura shook everything. The God Dao sent boundless magical flames surging out. The power almost instantly threatened to overwhelm Meng Hao.

But then, Meng Hao's eyes glittered, and he quietly said, “Seal the Heavens Hex!”

Instantly, the “seal” character began to expand, shining with scintillating light, causing intense rumbling sounds to fill the starry sky. The character grew larger and larger, until it was so large that it seemed big enough to seal all the Heavens.

Then, it slammed into the Daoist magics of the three Transcendors!

Ear-splitting crashing could be heard as the Ghost's divine ability was crushed and transformed into ash, which was then sucked into the “seal” character. The exact same thing happened to the Devil's possession power, and the God's powerful magic.

These incomplete Daoist magics could not stand up at all to the Seal the Heavens Hex!

The eyes of all three Transcendors seemed to fill with madness as they transformed into three beams of Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering light. All of them called upon the power of their own Essences to fly at top speed toward the “seal” character.

In the blink of an eye, they all collided, and the starry sky was shaken so violently it seemed as if it might explode. The three Transcendors' bodies twisted and distorted as though they were being blasted by a wind of destruction that was wiping them out of existence. At the same time, the intense power of their attack caused cracks to appear on the constantly expanding “seal” character.

Even still, the three Transcendors were shoved backward; no matter how Allheaven struggled to force them into action, the power of the Seal the Heavens Hex could not be resisted.

It became a wild wind that swept over everything. Meng Hao’s eyes were bloodshot, and a powerful roar erupted from his mouth as he sealed everything present. The three Transcendors were not their true selves, but rather, duplicates created by Allheaven. They had incomplete Daoist magics, and were themselves incomplete. Because of that, blood sprayed out of their mouths, and they trembled on the verge of being destroyed.

A moment later, something like a roar of fury echoed out as the three Transcendors exploded!

The eighth Allheaven Transformation had been completely broken by the Seal the Heavens Hex!

The three Transcendors became black threads that, despite the power of the Seal the Heavens Hex, converged together into the vague shape of an eye.

It was the eye of the Allheaven, glaring furiously at Meng Hao, completely bloodshot.

“Meng… Hao!”

Even as the muffled voice filled the starry sky, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with killing intent, and he waved his hand.

The sword which had appeared moments ago slashed down, and the starry sky was rent asunder. A gargantuan, boundless gash ripped open, snaking out at top speed toward the eye of Allheaven.

When it slammed into the eye, the eye was slashed in half. The power of the sword was boundlessly domineering, shockingly sharp, capable of piercing through anything. It sailed through the starry sky, its true target being one of the two pillars that seemed to prop up all existence, the pillar representing the Demon!

RUMBLE!

It didn’t pause for even a moment before directly slashing into the pillar!

Within the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, it had been countless years ago that the Ghost destroyed one of the pillars. Later, the Devil destroyed a second pillar, and the God, a third. Now Meng Hao was using the Seal the Heavens Hex…

To destroy the fourth pillar!

BOOOOOOOOOMMM!

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# Chapter 1605: Final Allheaven Transformation!

Meng Hao had previously used a lesser version of the Seal the Heavens Hex on the Demon pillar, leaving a huge crack on it. Now that the complete Seal the Heavens Hex was exploding out with incredible power, that crack grew larger, sending even more cracks out, filling the entire pillar.

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the Demon pillar then shattered into pieces, into countless chunks of rubble which began to shower down like rain.

At the same time, a roar of fury echoed out through the starry sky. Then, within the brilliant light cast by the Seal the Heavens Hex, something like an enormous hand appeared, which began to tear open a rift in the starry sky. A boundlessly ancient aura erupted out, as well as dense Vast Expanse mist. Simultaneously, an enormous eye emerged from within the rift.

Meng Hao was instantly able to tell that the eye was not illusory. It was… Allheaven's true form!

Its ancient aura was not something that could be falsified, nor could the incredible sensation of weakness that it radiated. Most importantly, Meng Hao could sense the aura of the starry sky upon it.

He was Allheaven, the former lord of the starry sky, the reason why all living beings could practice cultivation. It was because of him that people could even Transcend, and he had offered intelligence and civilization to the beings in the starry sky, countless years in the past.

Long ago, everything had been happy and harmonious. But then he had weakened, and as he neared death, he went mad….

Meng Hao watched the eye of Allheaven, his archenemy, fly out from the rift. As soon as Meng Hao sensed how weak he was, he sighed.

“You finally reveal yourself,” he said.

Allheaven stared back at him with hatred and other mixed emotions, but mostly coldness.

“I came from afar, and when I arrived, this place was nothing but chaos. The beings here had no intelligence, and lived on base instinct alone….

“It was me! I was the one who changed everything. Why must you resist me!?

“I provided the path of cultivation for all beings! You should be thanking me!

“I was also the one who protected this entire starry sky, allowing it to grow and prosper within the Universe. Why can’t you be content with that!?

“I was the one who created the natural laws here. I replaced the mindless will that existed here. I became the lord of this starry sky!” The voice of Allheaven seemed melancholy, and yet it boomed like thunder.

“I created all of you! I created everything! Therefore, when I am in need, you should repay me! That is the natural law of the Universe. Why must you struggle?!

“You should never have reached this state! I need the power of your Nirvanic Rebirth. I need you as fuel. I need you… to die!” As Allheaven’s words of fury echoed out, an indescribable pressure exploded out, causing the starry sky to tremble. The light from Meng Hao’s Seal the Heavens Hex was instantly crushed, and began to dissipate.

If Meng Hao had never used the Seal the Heavens Hex before, such a thing wouldn’t have happened. Allheaven would never have been able to crush the Hex without having first seen it in use. But having been able to observe it earlier, he could remember it, duplicate it, and destroy it.

That was why he was now revealing himself. He was weak, on the verge of dying completely, and thus had acted with extreme caution before. But now, he was completely confident regarding the Seal the Heavens Hex.

Meng Hao sighed quietly. It was hard for him to come to terms with exactly how he felt about Allheaven. However, there was one thing that could never change. Allheaven had plotted against him for his entire life. He had been responsible for destroying the Mountain and Sea Realm. To Meng Hao, the feeling of being manipulated and controlled went against his Dao.

His Dao was that of freedom and independence. He desired to be unrestrained and unfettered, for all eternity.

“We have different Daos,” he said, eyes shining with a strange, cold light. With that, he extended his right hand, causing the aura of the Seal the Heavens Hex to explode out, sending boundless light out in all directions.

“We have different Daos….” Deep within Allheaven’s eye was a profound arrogance, and an even stronger killing intent. The way for him to change everything was to consume Meng Hao.

By consuming Meng Hao, he could live again!

But now he was weak. He had reached the point where he could only make a single attack. If that attack didn’t kill Meng Hao, then he himself would have no other choice than to die.

“One attack will be enough!” he said, his voice echoing out into the starry sky as something pitch black appeared within his gaze.

“Ninth transformation!

“Allheaven Transformation!” In response to Allheaven’s voice, the starry sky outside the Vast Expanse collapsed. Everything withered up as vast quantities of energy began to converge upon the eye.

Instantly, Allheaven’s energy began to rise, and the pressure he exuded grew vastly more intense.

It was as if the starry sky itself were transforming into an ocean of fury, and Meng Hao was a little boat floating on the waves, battered by the rain, in danger of sinking down into the depths.

He could sense a level of madness that far exceeded what he had sensed from the three Transcendors. He was left shaking, and felt almost like he was a mere mortal facing the power of all Heaven and Earth.

The starry sky collapsed and withered, and power poured into the eye of Allheaven. As the eye stared furiously at Meng Hao, veins began to spread out from it, forming what looked like the overall shape of a human body. Soon, the outline of a person began to take shape in front of Meng Hao.

The outline was not unfamiliar. Meng Hao had seen this very thing years ago when he looked inside the Demon pillar.

The enormous shape was now forming in front of him, complete with the ninety-eight shocking fruits. Those fruits then collapsed, spreading out to cover the outline of blood vessels. A scream of fury echoed out as, unexpectedly… another eye appeared.

A face could now be seen, complete with facial features. There were also four limbs!

The change happened rapidly. As the starry sky collapsed and withered, life force and power converged onto the ninth transformation, feeding and fueling it.

This was the ninth transformation, the true Allheaven Transformation.

Most accurately speaking… this was the complete Allheaven!

Rumbling sounds echoed out in all directions, as well as sounds like howls of rage. Meng Hao began to pant; he suddenly felt completely unstable, as if the mere energy radiating off of Allheaven was enough to beat him back over and over again.

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# Chapter 1606: Hex Versus Hex!

“Meng Hao!” The muffled voice filled the starry sky, seemingly echoing out from the most ancient of times. At the same time, it was unmistakably clear, and boomed like thunder.

Meng Hao watched as the huge image of Allheaven formed together; the blood vessels grew more numerous, bones appeared, and then flesh and blood. At the same time, a powerful energy radiated out, an explosive energy of almost indescribable power.

It was as if some giant who had once dissipated into the void was now re-forming.

Allheaven might only be capable of unleashing a single attack, but as of this moment, that impending attack filled Meng Hao with an indescribable sensation of deadly crisis.

He was well aware that if his opponent continued to grow stronger, it would spell certain defeat. Killing intent flickered in his eyes as he watched Allheaven forming together. He quickly spread his arms wide and roared, “Ninth Demon Sealing Hex! Seal the Heavens Hex!”

Wind screamed around him, and the statue appeared once again. Boundless light began to spread out, which then surged toward Allheaven with deadly force.

Meng Hao was going all-out with his cultivation base, his will, and his soul, fueling the Seal the Heavens Hex to the ultimate degree. Blinding light shone as power which could seal all existence bore down on Allheaven.

The starry sky inside the Vast Expanse withered some as Meng Hao drew upon it as a further component of power within the Seal the Heavens Hex.

The white light which closed in on Allheaven contained Heaven-Sealing power, power from beyond the starry sky, power which contained the natural laws of the Universe.

The battle was reaching a climax, with both parties unleashing unimaginable power. When the “seal” character landed on Allheaven, his hair rose up, and his eyes shone with unprecedented brightness. Although his body hadn’t completely formed yet, he was surging with power that could shake Heaven and Earth.

Now that he had experienced the Seal the Heavens Hex, he looked at Meng Hao and smiled.

“If you hadn’t used this Hex before, it would have been difficult to defend against. But now… I can use it too!” He extended his right hand, splaying his fingers wide. Shockingly, light began to shine out, a light that looked very similar to the light cast by the Seal the Heavens Hex. The only difference was that this light was black!

The black light instantly stretched out toward Meng Hao, like a wave of fury that slammed into the white light of the Seal the Heavens Hex.

The instant they touched, a deafening boom spread out, shattering the starry sky, destroying planets. Even Transcendors like Jin Yunshan would be completely destroyed by the force.

Anyone who was not within the Ancestor Realm would be killed in body and soul by the shockwave created when the white and black lights made contact.

There were no magics that could exceed this, not within this starry sky. In fact, even within the Universe as a whole, it was something uncharacteristically rare. This battle had reached the ultimate pinnacle.

BOOOOOOOOOMMM!

Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth, and Allheaven withered. Yet, even as the explosive energy continued to blast out in all directions, they continued to fuel their magic with all of the battle prowess they could muster.

Meng Hao let out a mighty roar, and his hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture. The white light surrounding him twisted, shrinking down rapidly as it transformed into a single character.

Seal!

The “seal” character glittered radiantly!

“I shall… seal the Heavens!” He threw his hands out above his head. Instantly, cracking sounds could be heard, as though his arms might shatter at any moment. He was shaking visibly, clearing using all the power he could muster to unleash the “seal” character.

In the blink of an eye, the character began to rumble toward Allheaven, seemingly backed by the power of the Universe itself.

Allheaven’s eyes were filled with madness as he took a deep breath. The black light around him spun madly, shrinking down into his palm into a different “seal” character.

A black “seal” character!

Two huge sealing marks shot toward each other within the starry sky, and when they made contact, a boom echoed out that could shake all Heaven and Earth. Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth. Eyes completely bloodshot, he performed a double-handed incantation gesture, causing the sword to appear, which slashed down viciously.

A huge rift was torn open, which snaked through the starry sky toward Allheaven. Allheaven extended his right hand, and a black sword appeared behind him, which similarly slashed down.

“I am the true lord of this starry sky. I, Allheaven, call upon the power of that starry sky, and the laws of the Universe… I sacrifice everything to kill Meng Hao and take all that belongs to him!” The sword shone with resplendent light, growing larger and larger as it slashed out. When the two swords hit each other, the entire starry sky rumbled and even began to shatter.

As it shattered, the Universe beyond was revealed!

Blood sprayed out of Meng Hao’s mouth as the sword formed by the Seal the Heavens Hex shattered and transformed into ash. However, the exact same thing happened to the sword created by Allheaven.

Meng Hao was shaken so hard that cracking sounds emanated out from inside of him, which were bones being broken. His flesh was shredded into a haze of blood, and he was sent tumbling backward like a kite with its string cut.

His vision swam, and the world spun. His cultivation base was thrown into utter chaos, and his will was shaken.

However, Allheaven was in similarly bad condition. He was trembling, his arm shattered, half of his body almost completely sealed to the point where it transformed into dust. With the exception of his left eye, the other parts of him which survived were almost completely withered away.

Even his left eye, despite being complete, was now gray, and an aura of death emanated out from it. As for the pupil of that eye, it was growing larger; clearly, once it overtook the rest of the eye, it would signify his complete death.

However, despite the situation, a smile appeared on Allheaven’s withered face, and he began to laugh. Laughter rang out as he struggled to look over at Meng Hao, a strange expression on his face. Then, he started to breath in deeply.

Instantly, Meng Hao began to shake violently. His life force, his soul, everything about him, began to seep out through the pores on his skin, through his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. It became a white smoke that swirled through the starry sky toward Allheaven.

"The mistake you made was letting me see your Seal the Heavens Hex!" His voice was both weak and laced with madness. As the white smoke began to emanate out from Meng Hao and enter Allheaven, Allheaven's excitement grew. Slowly but surely, the white smoke began to converge inside of him in the location of the missing ninety-ninth Demon fruit!

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# Chapter 1607: Are You Coming?

Meng Hao’s face was pale as his energy flowed out. However, his expression didn’t change at all. Even as he began to wither up, he quietly said, “Oh really…?”

Endless amounts of life force, soul power, and cultivation base energy, everything that made up him, were all flowing into Allheaven in the form of a white mist. It poured into Allheaven’s eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, where it began to transform into a resplendent Demon fruit.

All of this takes some time to describe, but happened in the briefest of instants. Meng Hao became like a dessicated corpse, and a popping sound rang out as he transformed into dust, seemingly killed in body and soul.

Allheaven was trembling in excitement as his body began to reform, and the Demon fruit in his chest shone with dazzling demonic light.

“Nirvanic Rebirth. I live again!” He threw his head back and roared as his innards shrank, then began to reform. Meng Hao, the ninety-ninth Demon fruit, seemed to be on the verge of collapsing. Even as Allheaven’s eyes were shining with excitement, his expression suddenly flickered.

“Impossible!” he said, focusing on the aura of Nirvanic rebirth inside of him. That was the very aura that he desired, that he required, and yet, he suddenly realized that the Nirvanic aura was not his, but rather, was coming from Meng Hao, the ninety-ninth Demon fruit!

Allheaven’s face fell as the Demon fruit filled with cracks, causing boundless red light to seep out like threads. It was light abundant in demonic aura, and boundless Nirvanic rebirth. It spread out wildly through

Allheaven, reaching his limbs, his face, his whole body, and even his eye! As it filled him, it sealed everything about him!

This was Nirvanic rebirth, but it was the rebirth of the Demon, the rebirth of Meng Hao!

In that moment, it became obvious that within the glowing red threads, the First Demon Sealing Hex could be detected. Then the Second Hex, and the Third Hex… all the way down to the Ninth Hex. All of them were there, completely sealing the body of Allheaven, completely preventing him from doing anything! His foundation was being cut away!

“Meng Hao!!” he shrieked. It was at this point that Meng Hao’s voice spoke out inside of him.

“Your mistake was being so sure that my ultimate Hexing magic was the Seal the Heavens Hex.

“Tens of thousands of years ago, I already came to the conclusion that after the Ninth Demon Sealing Hex… there is a Tenth Hex!

“This Tenth Hex exists in a realm that I cannot grasp. Only in the right circumstances could I unleash it, for example, when the Ninth Hex is available as the foundation, with the power of Nirvanic rebirth to catalyze the Hex.

“I needed to borrow your body to unleash it!

“Tenth Demon Sealing Hex….

“My fate is to… seal the Heavens like a Demon!”

Allheaven roared in fury, and yet had completely and utterly lost control of his own body. He could only watch as his right hand lifted up and performed an incantation gesture. A sensation of terror filled him as he felt power exploding out, a power similar to the Seal the Heavens Hex, and yet different. It was infinitely domineering, something that commanded the ultimate level of respect within Heaven and Earth.

Just as Meng Hao had said….

My fate is to… seal the Heavens like a Demon! 1

Demons are full of multifarious transformations!

As of this moment, Meng Hao was using those multifarious transformations as the heart, and Allheaven as the body, to unleash the ultimate divine ability. As his right hand lifted up, the starry sky outside the Vast Expanse began to shrink down, smaller and smaller, until it was a dimly shining globe hovering above his palm!

There was no longer any such thing as the starry sky outside the Vast Expanse. Only the starry sky of the Mountains and Seas remained. Outside of that was the boundless Universe, within which Meng Hao now hovered.

Allheaven's left eye was no longer struggling. It seemed lonely, fading away. It even appeared to be relieved somehow as it looked out into the depths of the Universe….

Meng Hao was now looking out of Allheaven's left eye. Allheaven's right hand slowly lifted up, and he could do nothing as it clenched into a fist and punched at that very eye!

BOOM!

A tremor ran through him, and his eye began to shrink. Despair could be seen, a bitter refusal to accept what was happening. Then, it began to transform into ash….

In the moment before he died, Allheaven looked into the depths of the Universe. No one could possibly know what he was looking at. Perhaps just the infinite darkness of the Universe. Or perhaps he was looking at… where he came from.

Allheaven's body shivered as it transformed into ash. Cracking sounds emanated out, and he withered away until he was nothing.

Countless streams of white mist poured out, transforming into the shape of Meng Hao. As he hovered there, mixed expressions could be seen on his face, and eventually, he sighed.

The truth was that in the past, it might have been very difficult to kill Allheaven. But considering how much Allheaven had been weakened, killing him wasn’t really a very difficult thing for Meng Hao. In fact, were it not for the curse, Meng Hao would never have had such a difficult time, and would never have been forced into such deadly circumstances.

The only difficult part had been fighting the three Transcendors, which really had been dangerous. That was the only thing which had occurred that exceeded his powers of prediction.

Everything else, every action he had taken, everything he had done, had been part of his plan.

He made sure that Allheaven had the wrong information, and always believed the Seal the Heavens Hex to be the ultimate Hexing magic. Using that Hex would ensure that Allheaven would actually appear in person, thinking that he had gained the upper hand.

The truth was that Meng Hao had only used a fraction of the full power of the Seal the Heaven Hex. If he had used its full power, he could have killed Allheaven directly.

However, killing Allheaven wouldn’t be enough to break the curse. Meng Hao had come to realize this tens of thousands of years ago. The answer actually lay within the jade slip he had been given by Shui Dongliu.

It was because of that information that Meng Hao did everything he did, leading him to this point.

“I now know how to break the curse,” he said softly. “I just need time….” With that, he closed his eyes for a very long moment before opening them again and looking far off into the distance.

He almost felt as if he could see three individuals. One was Patriarch Vast Expanse, one was a young man in a black robe, and the other was the same person he had seen on the Immortal God Continent.

It was almost as if they were traveling along somewhere far off in the distance, then suddenly stopped and looked back through the Universe until their gazes fell on Meng Hao. They smiled warmly, as if they were all friends.

He suddenly heard a voice in his mind. “We’re waiting for you. Are you coming…?”

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Check here for the contest rules.

Use the hashtag #ISSTH on twitter!

The winners for “Best Comment” will be announced along with the raffle winners some time after the contest! Thanks for the great comments. I’m having a tough time picking my favorite!

1. For those of you who might have forgotten, this line is in the “synopsis” of the book! It’s been there since day one!

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# Chapter 1608: The End of an Epoch

Meng Hao had thought long and hard about whether it was true that the starry sky of the Vast Expanse had only ever had three Transcendors. The answer to that question came to him when he saw Jin Yunshan.

Perhaps the actual number of people who had Transcended wasn’t important. The key was that those three particular Transcendors had destroyed fingers of Allheaven, and were thus the perfect examples of what it meant to Transcend.

As Meng Hao looked at those three figures, he suddenly realized that there were other people like them, deeper within the Universe….

He knew by now that his true destination was that very Universe. That was the world of the Transcendors, a place where they could search for that which existed beyond the Ancestor Realm.

The path of cultivation went on and on forever. It was like the Dao, boundless. It was like the Dharma, limitless. It was like magic, neverending….

Meng Hao had learned that from Allheaven, and he could only imagine how incredibly powerful and terrifying Allheaven must have been back in his prime.

“It isn’t time to leave yet,” he thought, continuing to peer into the depths of the Universe. After a long, long moment passed, he sighed. The truth was that his connection to the starry sky of the Mountains and Seas had already grown very weak. And yet, he couldn’t simply sever that connection. He had to break the curse of Allheaven, and return the soul seeds of everyone he knew back into the cycle of reincarnation.

Smiling, he gave a farewell nod to the depths of the Universe, and then turned and headed back into the starry sky of the Mountains and Seas. Soon, he was back in that unfamiliar home of his, in the Mountain and Sea Realm, on the Ninth Mountain. When he reached the ice mountain where all of the soul seeds were stored, he looked over at the two coffins.

One of them contained Xu Qing, who was in a deep sleep, and the other contained the butterfly, which almost seemed alive.

He looked at them quietly, then sat down cross-legged. He seemed desolate, lonely, and yet filled with determination and focus.

“I know the way,” he murmured softly. “I just need time….” With that, he closed his eyes and sank into meditation.

The only way to break the curse of Allheaven… was to become Allheaven!

Allheaven was dead, but in that very moment before he ceased to exist, Meng Hao had merged with him. In that moment, he got what he needed, the seed of a memory.

Perhaps it would be better to call it a discarnate will, something that he would slowly feed until it grew whole….

Meng Hao’s face was very calm as he sat there quietly, allowing time to pass. He was absolutely motionless, his will completely retracted from the starry sky. He completely ignored everything around him, paying it no heed.

Time flowed by. 30,000 years….

Within the starry sky of the Mountains and Seas, generations upon generations of cultivators came and went. War broke out over and over again between the Mountain and Sea Realm and the Vast Expanse School.

The old lizard returned to the dust. Next was the huge head, and the termite. Eventually, even the enormous flower wilted and died.

The parrot and meat jelly seemed to have unlimited longevity, and yet even they were showing signs of age. Eventually, they took to traveling out in the starry sky, leaving behind one legend after another in their own unique style….

The Church of Lord Third appeared, and then the School of Lord Fifth. Things had been boring and dull for many years in the starry sky, but now new and amusing legends were spread.

Another 30,000 years passed. The parrot returned, looking very tired and old. Meng Hao glanced over at it for a moment, then sealed it into an ice coffin he had prepared.

The meat jelly drifted about in loneliness for a few thousand years before returning. It sat with Meng Hao, talking incessantly for a while before finally joining the parrot.

When Meng Hao broke the curse, he would call them back…. Guyiding Tri-Rain and Patriarch Reliance had held on all the way down to this point, but they were reaching their limit. With Meng Hao's help, they entered an even deeper state of sleep, which would help them endure for even longer.

Meng Hao looked over at the ice coffin containing the parrot and meat jelly, and suddenly realized that his final connections to the world were almost gone.

He was now completely and utterly alone. There he sat on the Ninth Mountain, meditating, alone.

100,000 years went by. Drastic changes occurred in the starry sky. Jin Yunshan's appointed time of confinement passed, and he emerged. Once again, he led the Vast Expanse School to sweep across the starry sky, although he didn't dare to even get near the Mountain and Sea Realm.

Despite that, he became a figure of respect and veneration among all cultivators. Time passed. After another 100,000 years, Jin Yunshan was getting bored. He still hadn’t reached full Transcendence, and thus, was still subject to the effects of the curse. Eventually, he decided to do as Meng Hao had suggested, to leave this starry sky and travel out into the Universe.

Before departing, he went to the Mountain and Sea Realm, where he stood outside the Ninth Mountain and looked up toward the peak. Eventually, he clasped hands and bowed deeply.

He was the last person within the starry sky who could be considered an old friend of Meng Hao. His departure indicated that not a single person within the starry sky remembered who Meng Hao was.

Or perhaps it was he that had come to forget the starry sky of the Mountains and Seas. No one could say for sure what the truth was.

100,000 years. 200,000 years. 300,000 years. 400,000 years….

Eventually, 1,000,000 years passed. Powers rose and fell within the starry sky of the Mountains and Seas. Powerful experts were born and died. There was even someone who reached the same level as Jin Yunshan.

It was a woman, someone with spectacular latent talent. Unfortunately, she was never able to Transcend in soul.

She led an army against the Vast Expanse School, which had stood as the peak sect for a million years. It fell, becoming a thing of the past. Now, the only thing which had existed since ancient times was the Mountain and Sea Realm.

It almost seemed foreordained that nothing connected to Meng Hao would be able to last for all eternity. Not even the Mountain and Sea Realm. After another 1,000,000 years passed, another powerful Transcendor appeared, who attacked the Mountain and Sea Realm.

There was a huge war, which the Mountain and Sea Realm managed to win, and yet at great cost. The casualties were enormous.

Years went by. The Mountain and Sea Realm came to be something of a symbol. Every 1,000,000 years, someone would step half way into Transcendence, and would try to take it. Sometimes more than one person would make that step. On one occasion, there were three.

All of them set their sights on the Mountain and Sea Realm. All of them were completely convinced that it was only by means of the Mountain and Sea Realm that they could elevate their souls and reach full Transcendence.

However, none of the successive attacking Transcendors ever managed to destroy it. That happened after 50,000,000 years passed, and the Mountain and Sea Realm rotted from the inside as it descended into civil war.

Schisms arose among the cultivators there, and eventually many of them left to wander the starry sky. Gradually, the Mountain and Sea Realm fell into ruin. In the end, it hovered there alone in the starry sky, broken, fading away into time. The First Mountain and Sea vanished, then the second. Eventually, the only thing that remained was the Ninth Mountain and Ninth Sea.

By the time that happened, Meng Hao had been secluded in meditation for… 100,000,000 years.

That year, something catastrophic occurred within the starry sky. It was something completely and utterly mysterious in nature, a wind of destruction that blew across everything, taking all life with it….

It was the end of an epoch.

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# Chapter 1609: Becoming Allheaven!

It was a black wind that not only destroyed life, but gave it. After it blew past, the starry sky was completely silent. But then, planets emerged, worlds were born, and new forms of life appeared.

Things started out very primitively, but soon reached the point where the practice of cultivation began. The relics and remnants of the past epoch were what the hosts of new living beings used as the basis for their growth.

Around this time, Meng Hao opened his eyes from his meditation. His gaze was somewhat blank as he realized that he couldn’t remember exactly who he was. He seemed to have forgotten everything from the past. It was simply too far away, making it impossible to recall.

The only reason he had even come to awaken was that he realized that his body was beginning to waste away…. Although the progress was extremely slow, the signs of it were there.

Time passed within the new epoch. One generation after another came and went. Powerful experts arose, becoming dazzling flowers floating along down the stream of time. They created a spectacular and magnificent era, and at its height, there were actually seven cultivators who stepped halfway into Transcendence.

But then things began to decline. Another 100,000,000 years had passed. The black wind once again appeared, and everything began again.

One epoch ended, and another began.

Meng Hao opened his eyes again, and found that the decay of his body had become more pronounced….

During the following epoch, the Ninth Mountain and Sea was discovered. It became a place that countless cultivators looked toward with hope, believing it to be a Holy Land for cultivation. During this epoch, everything centered around the struggles and fighting to control the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

That epoch ended, and another began.

It was like a cycle, an endless cycle. Reincarnation flowed constantly. Soon the fourth epoch passed, and the fifth. Then the sixth epoch…. Eventually, ten epochs passed, then twenty, then thirty….

Meng Hao eventually lost track of how many epochs had actually gone by. He forgot about the flow of time, and only knew that a very, very long time had passed…. As that time passed, his body showed more and more signs of decay. That decay filled him, until eventually, some parts of his body began to fade away.

It started with his feet, slowly moving up his legs until his torso began to vanish.

By that point, it was hard to say exactly how many epochs had passed for the living beings in the starry sky of the Mountains and Seas. It was a cycle that seemed as if it would go on and on with no end.

It was nothing cruel. That was simply the natural law of the Universe, and a part of the cycle of reincarnation.

Eventually, Meng Hao’s body had almost completely faded away. Only five fingers and an eye remained. At that time, Meng Hao suddenly felt fear. It was a sensation of terror which he hadn’t experienced for a very, very long time. But there it was. He instinctively wanted to prevent himself from fading away completely.

Perhaps it was because of how his body was fading away, and because of the power of his own Essence seeping out into the starry sky, that in one particular epoch, a certain person appeared. He was a powerful expert who surpassed all of the other powerful experts from the previous epochs. He eventually absorbed some of Meng Hao's Essence, and became… a full Transcendor!

In the moment that he Transcended, Meng Hao, in his confusion, attempted to consume him. Unfortunately, he was too weak, so weak that he couldn't even fully awaken. Before he could prepare himself fully, that Transcendor destroyed one of his fingers and left to travel the Universe.

Meng Hao felt pain, and began to tremble, a trembling that affected even the starry sky. Despite the fact that he wanted to, Meng Hao couldn't awaken. He needed more time.

Another epoch went by, and another person appeared who absorbed some of his Essence and destroyed a second of his fingers. The pain nearly drove Meng Hao mad, and he was left howling in rage.

Eventually, a third Transcendor appeared, who destroyed a third finger. At long last… Meng Hao awoke. The third Transcendor was able to flee, but the important thing was that Meng Hao was now awake.

He began to plan a way to live once again. He needed… Nirvanic Rebirth!

After coming to this conclusion, he began to scheme…. Unfortunately, he was too weak, so he sent his blood out in an attempt to gather enough power to perform Nirvanic Rebirth.

Eventually, someone came along who was perfect for his plan. He absorbed that person, who became the first Nirvana Fruit inside of him.

He could tell that he would need ninety-nine such Nirvana Fruits to become complete, and have his Nirvanic rebirth.

Time passed, and he eventually got his second, third, and fourth Nirvana Fruits…. He was very patient, and continued to wait for the blood he had scattered to be gathered back in.

After collecting his ninety-eighth Nirvana Fruit, the very last person he had been waiting for finally appeared.

A Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering battle resulted. The people who had severed his three fingers even managed to interfere surreptitiously. But in the end, they all failed. He successfully transformed that final individual into his ninety-ninth Nirvana Fruit, and the power of Nirvanic rebirth was unleashed.

Rumbling filled his mind, causing him to shake as he opened his eyes. When his voice spoke, it filled the entire starry sky.

“I am Allheaven!” said the muffled voice. But then, sharp pain stabbed through his mind as he recalled a memory which had been buried deep, deep within. It was something he had almost completely forgotten!

He was Allheaven, and yet, he was not complete!

He turned his head to look out in the Universe. There, somewhere deep within the Universe, he could sense an indescribably powerful aura that left him trembling. That aura contained incredible amounts of immeasurably dense Immortal qi, so much so that it was terrifying. It was the aura of… the Immortal!

The difference between himself and that aura was like the difference between a firefly and the sun!

It was an aura that seemed capable of fighting against the Universe as a whole, something so powerful it defied explanation!

Somehow, he could sense that he was connected to that entity in some ways. It was at this point that he remembered where he came from. He… came from the depths of the Universe! A war had been fought, and he was actually a clone of that incredibly powerful individual, a clone who had been severed away!

He was a clone who had been exiled to this location, where he had instinctively consumed a starry sky, becoming its lord.

Deep within his mind, he could tell that Allheaven possessed intense and incredible fear of that original entity!

RUUUUUUUUUUMBLE!

All of those memories flooded up, and he knew beyond the shadow of a doubt the general location of Allheaven’s true self. That person was in the center of the Universe, a place that was flourishing and radiant. In comparison, his current location was remote, barren… like a distant corner.

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# Chapter 1610: Whose Clone?

Meng Hao's mind was shaken, and he was also shaken visibly. At some indeterminable point in the past, a sealing mark had appeared in his brain, which now flickered with the will of Heaven-Sealing. Radiant light spread out, and Meng Hao instinctively extended his right hand and waved his finger.

"I hereby… break my curse!" The words coming out of his mouth seemed strange, but for some reason, he felt as if they needed to be said.

Instantly, rumbling like that of thunder filled the starry sky. It was especially intense in the region where Meng Hao sat. A huge rift appeared on the ice mountain where all of the soul seeds were stored.

Instantly, the soul seeds, which had long since grown dim and dark, seemed to pulse like beating hearts. All of a sudden, they brimmed with life force.

It was as if the gateway leading into reincarnation, which had once been shut tight, was now blown wide open for them.

As the countless soul seeds were restored, Meng Hao's mind experienced something like two huge hands ripping it apart. The pain was so intense that he screamed, and his eyes went completely bloodshot. He was shaking as countless memories suddenly flooded up inside of him.

He remembered the Mountain and Sea Realm, his parents, Xu Qing, Chu Yuyan, Fatty, Wang Youcai, Patriarch Reliance, Guyiding Tri-Rain, and everything else….

He remembered his battle with Allheaven, and he remembered going into meditation. He remembered Shui Dongliu… who, in the moments before dying, had handed Meng Hao a jade slip with a plan detailed inside.

Rumbling sounds filled Meng Hao's mind, and blood oozed out of his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. He slowly looked up, and spoke out in a voice that was hoarse, and yet filled with determination.

"I am not Allheaven. I… am Meng Hao!

"I am… MENG HAO!" With that, he threw his head back and roared. His roar filled the starry sky, shaking it, causing the Ninth Mountain and Sea to tremble.

He began to pant as he recalled the truth about everything. He remembered the brief moment in which he had possessed Allheaven during their final battle. He remembered making contact with Allheaven's thoughts, and he remembered that discarnate will, which he had placed in his own mind like a seed. Gradually, that discarnate will from Allheaven grew, making something like a duplicate of Allheaven that Meng Hao intentionally allowed to possess him.

That had been Shui Dongliu's plan. It was an insane plan, and the slightest misstep could have led to Meng Hao losing himself forever, to fully transforming into Allheaven. But that was the only way to break the curse. That curse… could only be broken by Allheaven. Not even killing him could accomplish it. Allheaven had to do it of his own accord.

Therefore, the only way to break the curse… had been to become Allheaven!

And that was why everything played out the way it did.

Trembling, Meng Hao looked over at the broken ice mountain. He saw the awakening soul seeds, and then started to laugh, a clear, crisp laugh that spread out in all directions. He knew that he had finally… succeeded.

"I did it. I finally did it!" Tears streamed down his cheeks, and he struggled to stand up. With every breath he took, the starry sky trembled, and his body recovered itself. His divine sense, his soul, his will, and his cultivation base were all recovering from their state of being withered.

Eventually, he managed to recover his composure. At that point, he looked out into the depths of the Universe, and remembered how Allheaven had done the same thing in the last moment before dying. Then he recalled what he had experienced after becoming Allheaven.

After recalling that memory, his heart began to pound. Although he could remember clearly what had occurred, he had a hard time believing it was true.

Back when Allheaven had been whole, he had had a profound impact on the entire starry sky. It was only by gaining enlightenment of his Essence that the Ghost, the Devil, the God, and the Demon appeared….

Those powerful Transcendors all came to be because of Allheaven. And Allheaven… was only a clone of some other entity!

That entity existed somewhere else in the Universe, and had existed for countless, countless years. The clone's connection with its true form had been severed, and he had become Allheaven.

Mixed emotions could be seen in Meng Hao's eyes as he looked out at the Universe. He knew that somewhere out there, Allheaven's true form existed as an entity of unimaginable power. Furthermore, who was it that had managed to sever a clone from someone that powerful?

It was in that moment that Meng Hao finally came to understand the meaning of that ancient saying.

Allheaven fears the Immortal!

He feared the Immortal because he feared his true self? Perhaps Allheaven's true self was… the real Immortal!

Therefore, it was actually impossible for Meng Hao or any of the others to truly become the Immortal. Even if Allheaven did nothing to stop them from doing so, they still would have failed to become the Immortal!

It was a secret unknown to the God, the Devil or even the Ghost. Perhaps they had come to have certain speculations, which was why they were traveling out in the Universe. Meng Hao was the only person to have glimpsed the truth.

“The Universe….” After some thought, a look of unprecedented anticipation appeared within his eyes. He didn’t fear the truth. In contrast, it filled him with incredible hope.

He looked forward with keen anticipation to traveling out into the Universe, to reaching its center. Perhaps one day, he would have the chance to fight that so-called Immortal!

“Now that I think about it, I bet the other three Transcendors would want to do the same thing!” With that, he waved his sleeve, wiping away all of the vestiges of Allheaven, and suppressing his desire to go out into the Universe. Now was not the time.

He took a deep breath, and looked over at the ice coffin where Xu Qing lay, his eyes filled with love. He walked over and looked at her beautiful face, then slowly leaned down. As he did, the ice melted, causing mist to roll out. Then his lips touched her forehead as he kissed her gently.

It was impossible to count how many years had passed since he last kissed her. It was a kiss which carried profound longing, a kiss which contained a focus that had lasted for epochs upon epochs.

“Qing’er… my wife,“ he said softly. “You’ve been sleeping for so long. It’s time to wake up.”

Her eyelashes fluttered, and she slowly opened her eyes. A blank expression could be seen at first, but her gaze quickly focused. She looked at Meng Hao, and then smiled. Her eyes were like deep pools of placid water.

Smiling, Meng Hao lifted her out of the ice coffin and helped her to her feet. Then he turned to look at the ice coffins containing his parents, and the parrot and meat jelly. It was only in that moment that he realized that the coffin containing the parrot and meat jelly had already melted, and they were standing there, looking at him with shocked expressions on their faces. Suddenly, miserable shrieks rang out.

Scared out of their minds, the parrot and meat jelly embraced each other and began to cry out at the tops of their lungs.

“Don’t try to kiss me! Dammit! That’s disgusting! Stop right there! Lord Third doesn’t even like you! You have no fur! Don’t even think about touching me!!”

“Back the hell away from me, Meng Hao. Lord Fifth’s chastity won’t be sullied by you, you bully! You can’t do that! That’s wrong! That’s immoral….”

Meng Hao laughed. He was happier now than he had been in ages.

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# Chapter 1611: Untitled

Xu Qing stood there next to Meng Hao, looking at the parrot and meat jelly, and she started laughing. It was a laughter so warm and beautiful it could melt ice.

Meng Hao took a deep breath as he looked over at the coffin containing the Mountain and Sea Butterfly, and his parents. As the coffin melted, the butterfly transformed into countless motes of colorful light, light that was bursting with life force. Gradually, the light formed together into a man and a woman, who stood there embracing each other.

At the same time, rumbling sounds could be heard as an enormous open door descended. It was the door leading to the cycle of reincarnation, which would ensure that the souls who were part of it never died.

The ice mountain was melting, and as it did, the awakening soul seeds inside became countless figures who floated up toward the door.

They had been waiting to be reincarnated for a very, very long time. From a distance, the soul seeds became like a river that swept into the door of reincarnation, Meng Hao’s parents included.

Within that river of souls, he saw Fatty, Wang Youcai, Li Ling’er, Zhixiang, Taiyang Zi, Fang Yu, Sun Hai, his Master Pill Demon, Perfect, as well as many other faces. They were all people who existed within his memories. They included Paragon Sea Dream, Ksitigarbha, Shui Dongliu, Grandpa Meng, and Grandpa Fang….

Meng Hao stood there watching, his heart filled with warmth, clasping Xu Qing’s hand tightly.

After all of the soul seeds disappeared into the cycle of reincarnation, Meng Hao could sense them being born again, and he smiled.

It was also in this same moment that water once again began to bubble within the Ninth Sea as Guyiding Tri-Rain began to recover!

Atop the Ninth Mountain, Patriarch Reliance, who by this point had been reduced to nothing more than a turtle shell, suddenly began to emanate signs of life. Eventually, a head emerged from inside the shell. He took a deep breath, then looked up and roared, “The Patriarch is back!”

On his back was the State of Zhao, which also began to show signs of life. Rumbling echoed out in all directions.

Beauty was blooming everywhere!

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Decades upon decades passed in a flash.

It was a new, unknown epoch in the starry sky of the Mountains and Seas. Although the Mountain and Sea Realm itself didn’t exist any more, powerful organizations of cultivators were already sweeping through the starry sky.

It was hard to say which of them was more powerful, but it didn’t really matter. On all the planets and worlds, mortals and cultivators alike were rising to new heights.

Some people said that this was an era which was destined to rise to the very pinnacle of glory. More powerful experts would appear in this time than ever had before, the reason being that in the recent decades, all of the powerful organizations had given rise to cultivators with shocking latent talent. There were even some legendary Chosen who appeared that only came along once in ten thousand years.

Because of such Chosen, the world of cultivation in the starry sky was reaching a dazzling pinnacle.

No one knew exactly why this was happening. As for that group of Chosen, it was almost as if they had all agreed to be born at exactly the same time.

Although they all came from different places, and didn’t know each other, as soon as they met the other Chosen, they felt an instant connection. Because of that, they didn’t devolve into fighting, but instead, worked together to seek out their destiny.

Now that the curse was broken, many of those who had been cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm chose to once again walk the path of cultivation. However, not everyone did. There were many… who chose to become mortals, to live peaceful and ordinary lives.

And yet, regardless of the decisions they made, they seemed to benefit from the blessing of the starry sky. That was of course the blessing of Meng Hao, which ensured that no matter how long they lived, or how many lives they experienced, their souls would never be destroyed. Even when the epoch ended, and everything faded away, their souls would continue on.

In some ways, they had become eternal. Given enough time, they would eventually Transcend, and then they would be able to remember everything from their previous lives.

A golden age was starting in the starry sky.

One day, on one particular planet, a young man stood proudly in front of a young woman, holding a spear in his hand. He had a freckled face, and was quite fat, like a ball of flesh.

The young woman was slender and beautiful, but her brow was furrowed as she glared at the young man.

“Are you going to agree or not?” asked the young man. “If you don’t agree to become Grandpa Fatty’s Daoist partner, well then….” With a mighty roar, he placed the spearhead into his mouth and bit down, whereupon a cracking sound emanated out as the spearhead shattered.

Then, he proudly continued, “Don’t you know? Grandpa Fatty has some of the best latent talent in the entire starry sky! And I understood why because of a dream I had. I’m actually the brother of the will of this starry sky! Be with me, and both of us can become immortal together!”

He was trying to sound elegant and refined, but the chunks of the spearhead in his mouth hurt quite a bit, and he was even starting to tremble involuntarily. Inwardly, he grumbled to himself that this habit that he picked up in the dream was entirely unbearable.

The young woman’s jaw dropped, and she stared at the young man with wide eyes. She was a disciple of the Godplume Sect, and this was her first time leaving the sect on training. She had never imagined that she would run into a fat kid like this. Even more unbelievable was that he had been following her around for months pestering her.

“You’re crazy!” she said. The way that he was trembling actually frightened her a bit, so she snorted coldly, turned, and walked off.

“Hey, wait for me!” the fat young man cried, and immediately hurried after her, pasting an ingratiating smile onto his face.

After they left, the sound of chuckling could be heard from the spot they had just been standing in, as Meng Hao and Xu Qing materialized. Xu Qing was covering her mouth with her hand, and a wide smile could be seen on Meng Hao’s face.

Naturally, that fat young man was none other that the reincarnated Fatty, Li Fugui.

The parrot and meat jelly were perched on Meng Hao’s shoulders, disdainful looks on their faces.

“Shameless. Completely shameless!”

“So that was how he got all those Daoist partners back in the day.”

Meng Hao shooked his head and looked off into the distance.

“Come on, let’s go check in on everyone else,” he said softly. “After that, we can leave this place….” He seemed reluctant to part with all of his friends, but the determination in his eyes was clear.

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# Chapter 1612: Missing Clues

Meng Hao and Xu Qing traveled among the powerful organizations in the starry sky of the Mountains and Seas, checking in on all the familiar faces who were rising to glory after having been reincarnated.

Zhixiang had become a princess in one of the mortal kingdoms. Li Ling’er had joined a powerful sect and become their only Legacy disciple.

Wang Youcai was a rogue cultivator with an intense, murderous aura, who had fought and killed his way to fame. Dong Hu was his younger brother, and the two of them were the most famous of all the rogue cultivators!

Taiyang Zi and so many other familiar faces all had their own stories to tell.

Paragon Sea Dream had been a powerful cultivator in her previous life, but this time she chose the mortal world. She got married and had children, and was very happy….

Then there was Ksitigarbha. He also chose the mortal world, becoming an upright and plainspoken local magistrate, who brought justice to the common people!

Pill Demon was innately skilled in the Dao of alchemy, and that didn’t change because of reincarnation. He joined the largest alchemy sect in the starry sky, where he became the most illustrious of Chosen.

Fan Dong’er became the leader of a group of rebels in one of the mortal worlds. She led the people in revolt, overthrowing the tyrannical government. Although she was merely a mortal, she shone with a brilliance that inspired trust in anyone who laid eyes on her.

Fang Yu and Sun Hai were eternally connected as husband and wife, a connection that remained even in the cycle of reincarnation. Although they started out in sects very far away from each other, as fate would have it, they ended up meeting….

Meng Hao arranged for Ke Yunhai and Ke Jiusi to once again become father and son. Ke Yunhai was the same loving father, and Ke Jiusi was a filial son.

Meng Hao traveled through the starry sky of the Mountains and Seas to see everyone he remembered from the past.

Some of them lived in the mortal world, others chose cultivation. Regardless of their choices, they all received blessings from Meng Hao. They were doted upon by the starry sky itself, and were all happy.

Sounds of laughter and joy could be heard everywhere. All of the soul seeds which had entered the cycle of reincarnation found happiness. In turn, that happiness brought a smile to Meng Hao’s face.

It was a happiness that stayed with him constantly now that the curse had been broken.

He eventually found Chu Yuyan’s daughter, Perfect. After reincarnation, she once again chose the path of cultivation. She became the Heavenly Chosen Daughter of the most powerful organization within the starry sky. Meng Hao graced her with a fatherly love, and as such, she truly could be considered Chosen by the Heavens. After all, her father was the will of the starry sky.

The mastiff grew up with Perfect, her loyal, lifelong companion.

When Meng Hao saw the smile of happiness on Perfect’s face, his eyes shone with the warmth of love. He reached out and waved his hand, leaving a sealing mark on her soul. It was a mark that would forever connect the two of them as father and daughter. After Meng Hao left, it wouldn’t matter how far away he went, that connection would always remain.

The depths of the Universe might be a bustling, thriving place, but it would also contain untold dangers. Meng Hao was confident enough to take Xu Qing with him there, but he also hoped that the friends and relatives he left behind in his starry sky… would be protected.

This was his home, and these people were his family.

“They’re happy,” Xu Qing said softly, clasping his hand. He nodded, and the two of them made their way off into the distance.

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On one particular land mass within the starry sky, the weather was very strange. According to the legends, many epochs in the past, this place had been a huge flower, divided into two worlds, one of ice, the other of fire. Eventually, a Heaven and Earth came to exist here, and yet, there were only two seasons. Half the year would be filled with snow and ice, and the other half would be scorchingly hot.

That sort of environment affected the personalities of the people who were born there, and most of them cultivated magic that had to do with ice and fire.

In the very center of that world was a mountain, half of which was freezing ice, the other half of which was covered with burning flames. However, the peak of the mountain was always as cool as spring.

A young man sat cross-legged on the mountain, smiling, a profound gleam in his eyes as he looked off into the distance. His name was Shui Dongliu. He had not been born with that name; he had given it to himself. He had simply told people that it was his true name…. Shui Dongliu.

He was a disciple of a small sect, and instead of practicing cultivation, he preferred to sit on this mountain and look off into the distance, as if he were waiting for something.

People had asked him what he was waiting for, and his answer was always the same: “I’m waiting for an old friend. He’ll be leaving soon, but he’ll come to say farewell before he does."

The days passed, icy coldness swirling on one side of him, burning flames on the other. One day, a bright light flickered in his eyes, and he turned and smiled.

"It's been a long, long time," he said.

As the words left his mouth, Meng Hao and Xu Qing materialized in front of him. Smiling, Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed deeply.

That bow was one of thanks, thanks to Shui Dongliu for discerning how to break the curse. It was also a bow of deep respect.

Shui Dongliu started laughing, a loud, clear laughter, filled with happiness.

"Meeting with old friends is always one of the greatest happinesses in life," he said. "I've already looked into your fortune, and I can tell you… that your trip into the Universe will lead to magnificent glory. As for this place, don't worry, I'll remain behind to watch over it."

"Many thanks, Senior," Meng Hao said. It was no surprise to him that Shui Dongliu had somehow recovered his memories. Shui Dongliu was a legendary figure. Whether it was his identity as Nine Seals, or that part of his soul which came from even further back in time, when it came to the Mountain and Sea Realm, and to this starry sky, he was as attached to it as Meng Hao was.

Xu Qing gave a curtseying bow to Shui Dongliu, for whom she also felt deep respect and veneration.

Shui Dongliu smiled and shook his head. He looked deeply at Meng Hao, then Xu Qing, and finally at the parrot.

Although he bore the semblance of a young man, when he spoke, his voice seemed completely ancient, filled with the power of Time.

"That parrot… comes from the same place as Allheaven. It has forgotten the past, sealed it away. Take it with you into the Universe. You have already reached the highest peak. And yet, long ago, someone told me that the Dao is boundless.” Shui Dongliu once again shook his head and smiled. Rising to his feet, he turned and walked away, away into the Heavens, into the void, far, far away….

A tremor ran through the parrot, and a blank look could be seen in its eyes, as if it had just recalled something, something vague and difficult to fully grasp. After a moment, though, it heard Meng Hao speaking.

“Don’t think about it now,” he said. “Later… I can help you search for those missing clues.”

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# Chapter 1613: A New Life for Father and Mother

In one part of the starry sky of the Mountains and Seas was a planet that, if you examined it carefully, closely resembled the old Planet South Heaven from the Mountain and Sea Realm.

When Meng Hao and Xu Qing materialized on the planet, a slight tremor ran through Meng Hao. Considering the high level of his cultivation base, there were few things in the world that could shake him mentally. This planet was different though. This place was too important.

It was on this planet that his father and mother had been reincarnated.

They had been transformed into the Mountain and Sea Butterfly, and had borne the weight of all of the cultivators of the Mountain and Sea Realm. They had slept for countless epochs, and then entered the cycle of reincarnation after the curse was broken. Their love for Meng Hao could not be topped.

It was the type of love that was completely selfless….

On one particular continent on that planet, there was a city through which a wide river flowed. Many people lived in the city, and because it was also located on a major highway in the country, it was a place where business flourished.

The city was a hubbub of voices, especially in one particular location in the southeast of the city, where a seven-story pagoda rose up above the rest of the buildings. The public square in front of the pagoda was packed with people, all of whom were boiling in excitement. Cheering and joyous laughter rose up into the air.

Young people were hurrying toward the square from all corners of the city, filled with anticipation and excitement.

“Did you hear? Grand Philanthropist Meng is marrying off one of his daughters today!”

“I heard that she’s a real beauty! Even the prince wanted to marry her! But the leader of the Meng Clan, Meng Bancheng, refused his offer.”

“Grand Philanthropist Meng is almost as rich as the entire empire itself! He can even go into the Forbidden Palace any time he wants. The only reason he still lives in this place is because he can’t bear to part with his ancestral home….”

“Come on, hurry up! Their plan for the betrothment ceremony sounds a bit silly, but it’s no joke! It’s all up to fate, not family background. Whoever catches the silk ball will become a son-in-law of the Meng Clan!”

Everyone was in a complete uproar. In fact, outside of the seven-story pagoda, there were plenty of princes, dukes, and famous scholars from the mortal kingdom, all of whom had staked out their spots and were waiting with nervous anticipation, staring up at the top of the pagoda.

The atmosphere had reached a fever pitch. On top of the seven-story pagoda was a young woman with a gauze veil covering her face, making it impossible to see her facial features clearly. However, even from a distance, it was possible to tell that she was spectacularly beautiful.

She had eyes like deep pools of water, but as she looked down at the crowd below, her gaze gradually went blank. She wasn’t sure why she felt the way she did, but she was sure that somewhere down below, someone very important was waiting for her. For some reason, she felt like it was her husband from a previous life.

In that previous life, the two of them had been a butterfly, and after flying into the cycle of reincarnation, they had been waiting for each other.

It was at this point that a voice drifted out from inside the pagoda. It was none other than Meng Bancheng.

“My daughter’s groom will not be selected by family background or status, but by fate.

“The silk ball will be thrown out, and whoever catches it will become her husband.” Meng Bancheng’s voice was laced with age, and his words seemed to be spoken a bit begrudgingly. This betrothment method did seem a bit silly to him, and he had originally he had refused the idea. However, his daughter had stubbornly insisted.

As soon as his words echoed out through the air, a wave of excitement rippled through the audience down below.

Not too far away from the crowd, a scholar was passing by who happened to be berating his apprentice for laziness. Their original plan had been to leave the city, but because of the apprentice, they missed the departing horsecart, and were now forced to find lodging for the night.

At first, the scholar didn’t even notice the commotion of the betrothment, but then a sudden gust of wind blew past him, and his eyes glazed over slightly. He looked up, and the first thing he saw was the young woman on the pagoda, wreathed in sunlight, staring down at him. Their gazes met.

It was a gaze that could endure anything….

That seemed to spring from a past life….

That could stir the soul….

That seemed to come from a past incarnation….

The scholar saw a vague image of something like a tall tower. He was standing there, and that young woman was next to him.

He saw a vague image of himself and the young woman becoming a butterfly that fluttered through the starry sky.

He saw a vague image of the two of them growing old, smiling together, always there for each other, no matter how many lives passed….

He saw a vague image of the two of them embracing each other as they entered the cycle of reincarnation.

All of the hubbub and excitement faded into calm silence, as though the scholar was suddenly not a part of the world any more. Nothing else existed except for that young woman, whose face seemed to be imprinted deep in his heart.

The scholar shivered.

He wasn’t the only one. The young woman on top of the pagoda trembled the instant her gaze met the scholar’s. Then, her eyes began to shine with unprecedented brightness.

There was a voice inside of her telling her that the reason she had demanded this type of betrothment, the reason for all the choices she had ever made in her life, was because she was waiting for someone, and that that person was… this scholar!

She smiled, and threw out the silk ball with all the strength she could muster.

The beautiful, multi-colored silk ball became a crescent streak of light that soared through the air….

Meng Hao and Xu Qing were standing there in the crowd, observing. A smile could be seen on Meng Hao’s face, and his heart was calm. The young woman, of course, was his mother, and the scholar was his father.

The scene playing out in front of him filled his heart with gladness. But then, even as the silk ball began to descend, he noticed a cultivator in the crowd who wore a cold smile on his face as he manipulated the ball to head in his direction.

Of course, that cultivator had no way of knowing who he was actually offending….

Meng Hao’s expression turned grim. For a cultivator to do something like this was far worse than wanton killing and slaughtering, as far as Meng Hao was concerned. He waved his finger, and the silk ball continued to fly toward the scholar. A moment later, it landed in his arms.

The scholar stared in shock, grabbing onto the ball and then looking back up at the woman on the pagoda. A shy smile could be seen on her face as she ducked her head down and hurried back into the pagoda.

At the same time, servants poured out from the Meng Clan and clustered around the young scholar, bowing respectfully. Under the annoyed and jealous glares of the crowd, the scholar was hurried into the pagoda. He would soon be a son-in-law of the Meng Clan, husband to one of the clan’s daughters.

Meng Hao’s expression softened even more. A few days later, the scholar and the young woman were married. The wedding feast was a grand celebration that filled the entire city with joy.

Meng Hao and Xu Qing both attended.

It was a strange feeling to attend the wedding celebration of one’s own parents, but it was a happy thing. He and Xu Qing even prepared a gift, which was a wall scroll.

It read, “Eternal happiness through all lives….”

*OceanofPDF.com*

# Chapter 1614: A Ship Approaches From the Horizon!

(click here for soundtrack)

A few days later, Meng Hao and Xu Qing left, having left his parents with his eternal blessings.

As for the cultivator who had tried to interfere with the silk ball, it goes without saying that he met a bad end. He had offended Meng Hao, the lord of the starry sky, and had done so in a way that was no better than slaughtering a sect or even wiping out a world. To Meng Hao, it was actually worse than any of those things.

The cultivator vanished without a trace. He was completely wiped out, along with the memories of him which existed in the minds of people who had known him. It was as if he had never even existed within the starry sky to begin with.

Considering Meng Hao’s status and position, he normally wouldn’t do such a thing. However, that insignificant cultivator… had encroached upon the most precious place in Meng Hao’s heart.

The cultivator was destroyed in body and soul, never even aware of the monumental disaster he had brought upon himself.

There was one last thing Meng Hao did before leaving. He took Xu Qing down the river to a fishing village.

There, they caught sight of a fisherman, a burly fellow who was in the middle of tossing out a fishing net. The river was teeming with fish, so the man was shocked when he pulled the net in to find only a gourd inside.

He looked curiously at the gourd, wondering why it would be lying at the bottom of the river. It seemed almost like it was brand new, but the top was stoppered up, turning it into a storage container.

The fisherman stood there, curiously examining the gourd, and was just about to open it when he noticed Meng Hao and Xu Qing.

“You’re Mr. Zhou from the Zhou Clan, right?” Meng Hao asked, eyes glittering as though he was very happy to be talking to this man. He smiled. “Would you mind selling me that bottle gourd?”

The burly man stared back in shock for a moment, apparently surprised that this person even knew his surname. He looked at the bottle gourd and grinned. “It’s just a bottle gourd. It’s hardly worth anything. If you want it, big bro, you can have it.” With that, he handed the bottle gourd over to Meng Hao.

Meng Hao took it, but shook his head, and his eyes sparkled. Xu Qing stood off to the side, watching in surprise. It almost seemed as if this burly fisherman were an old friend of Meng Hao’s. However, she always felt a sense of familiarity toward Meng Hao’s old friends, and this man seemed like a complete stranger.

“I insist on buying it,” Meng Hao said. “How about this: I’ll give you ten pieces of silver for it. Okay?” With that he extended his hand, within which were ten pieces of silver.

The burly fisherman’s eyes went wide. Apparently, he thought this young man was a complete imbecile. He took a deep breath and then accepted the silver, looking a bit embarrassed. Then he scratched his head and said, “Uh, this….”

“Don’t mention it, Mr. Zhou.” With that, Meng Hao took out three more pieces of silver and put them into the fisherman’s hand. “Here are three more silver pieces. Take them. All of this is to pay for a debt I owed to the Zhou Clan years ago.”

This time, the fisherman’s jaw dropped.

Meng Hao wasn’t finished. “Here are some medicinal pills. Boil them in water and drink the resulting elixir. It will bring blessings to the Zhou Clan for all generations to come in this starry sky. I wish you health and good fortune, sir. This… is the interest for a debt of three silvers, incurred countless epochs ago.” After Meng Hao gave the silver and the medicinal pills to the burly fisherman, it seemed as if a great weight had been lifted off of his shoulders. Apparently, even his cultivation base had inched closer toward a breakthrough.

It was as if a Karma Thread stretching back countless ages into the past had finally been satisfied.

Meng Hao laughed heartily, then clasped the bottle gourd in one hand and Xu Qing’s hand in the other as he took a step forward. That step took him out into the Heavens, into the vast starry sky.

Out there among the stars, Xu Qing looked quizzically at Meng Hao and asked, “Who was he?”

“Back when you pulled me into the world of cultivation, I was a scholar,” he said, chuckling. “I owed Steward Zhou from Yunjie County three pieces of silver…. After all the epochs which have passed, I’ve finally managed to pay back the debt, principal and interest!”

Xu Qing’s eyes went wide with disbelief for a moment, then she started laughing. Eventually her eyes came to rest on the bottle gourd.

“I threw this same bottle gourd off Mount Daqing, all those years ago. I guess we’ve come in a big circle. Now that I have it back, I might as well write down a new ambition, and toss it out into the Universe.” Meng Hao’s eyes shone brightly with anticipation as he gazed out into the far reaches. His expression was actually a bit bashful, and when Xu Qing noticed that, she couldn’t hold back from laughing out loud. She could only imagine the scene… of Meng Hao traveling the depths of the Universe… bashfully handing out promissory notes.

There was now nothing holding him back. He had resolved all pertinent matters, and now, his old personality was finally showing through.

“It’s about time to go,” he said. “Somewhere out in the Universe are the Ghost, the God, and the Devil. They’ve been waiting out there for ages now…. I wonder if I can get any of them to write me a promissory note.” Heart bursting with ambition, face filled with pious ardor, he took another step forward. Xu Qing was laughing so hard her sides hurt, and the parrot was squawking up a storm to the babbling meat jelly. They vanished, and when they reappeared, they were no longer in the starry sky of the Mountains and Seas, they were out in the boundless Universe.

In the majestic Universe, there were unending possibilities. There were infinite mysteries, and countless worlds, like seeds, filled with limitless life.

Up ahead, a ship appeared, which also happened to be heading toward the deeper parts of the Universe. The deck of the ship was covered, making it impossible to see inside. It was an old, dilapidated ship, and yet somehow, it radiated boundless power.

An old man sat cross-legged at the prow, and at the stern was a young man in a black robe, with an icy cold expression and a murderous aura swirling around him.

The man at the prow was Old Man Extermination!

The youth at the stern was Slaughter!

When Meng Hao saw them, he smiled. “Fellow Daoists, would you mind if my wife and I join you on your travels?” He took another step forward, and he was on the ship.

Slaughter opened his eyes, looked over, and nodded. Then his eyes closed again. However, the faintest of smiles could be seen on his face.

Old Man Extermination opened his eyes, and they shone with a strange light. He looked at Meng Hao for a long moment, then smiled.

Turning his head, he called out, “Apprentice, we have some new guests on board. Please bring out two cups of wine.”

A female voice could just barely be heard inside the cabin, acknowledging the words spoken by Extermination. Then the screen hanging at the cabin door was pushed aside, and a beautiful young woman appeared, upon whose face was a faint, enigmatic smile.

She looked at Meng Hao, and then at Xu Qing, and her eyes began to shine. At the same time, her cheeks seemed to flush with embarrassment.

“Elder Brother Fang Mu, Big Sister Xu Qing, I’m not here to cause trouble,” she said. “This is my Master’s ship, and… my Master wanted me here.” She smiled.

Meng Hao’s eyes went wide.

Xu Qing looked at her, then covered her mouth and laughed. Stepping forward, she clasped the young woman’s hands in her own.

If that beautiful young woman wasn’t Chu Yuyan, then who could she be?

The End of I Shall Seal the Heavens

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